

OFFICE OF AUDITOR GENERAL



Student Attendance Audit

June 25, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Index

<u>Report Section</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Executive Summary	1
Conclusion	2
Summary of Recommendations	3
Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans	
Board Policy	6
District-wide Governance Policies and Procedures	8
System Logic	9
Centralized Repository for Notes	11
Defined Roles and Responsibilities	12
Attendance Reason Codes	13
Attendance Recording Standards	14
Daily Attendance Calculation	16
Student Intervention Plans	17
Monitoring	19
Communication – Letters	22
Utilize Connect-Ed	24
Student Contact Information	26
Referral Forms	28
Monitoring by School Zone	29



Student Attendance Audit Executive Summary

OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the operating control environment and related controls in place to support the Student Attendance Process. Our review will evaluate the accuracy of attendance data, tracking and student monitoring to improve student achievement.

BACKGROUND

In fiscal 2008, the Youth Development & Family Services department was established under the leadership of a Chief of Youth Development and Family Services. This organization is responsible for all family related support functions at the District including Student Attendance. Historically, these various functions were not consolidated in one cohesive unit. Prior to the commencement of our review, a Director of Youth and Family and regional attendance coordinators were hired to better support the attendance function at the District.

Student attendance has been maintained in Chancery, Pearson SMS since July 2006. Although all schools utilize Chancery as the system of record, the data entry for attendance information occurs at each school. This decentralized data entry process increases the difficulty in ensuring that consistent attendance information is maintained.

SCOPE

OAG reviewed the operating controls for student attendance and evaluated policies and procedures established for recording and monitoring student attendance. Attendance records were reviewed to determine the accuracy of student attendance information. We also analyzed attendance monitoring procedures to determine if monitoring of attendance data is properly performed. Nine schools were visited in order to understand District-wide processes relating to attendance.

We made inquiries of key personnel to understand current processes and control activities for clarification and relevance. We also reviewed Chancery, Pearson SMS, the system which maintains attendance information to understand the control environment.



Student Attendance Audit Executive Summary

CONCLUSION:

Student attendance can directly impact student achievement. Board Policy 5100 provides class attendance requirements through the 2003-2004 school year; however the Chancery Student Management System does not calculate class attendance statistics to comply with this policy and no updates have occurred to reflect Board expectations after 2004. There are no formal district-wide guidelines to identify the expectations for monitoring student attendance. As a result, the attendance process was extremely inconsistent. Each school location we visited had different operating procedures and monitoring in place that could not be consistently supported by documentation provided. We also identified a number of instances where the current Chancery configuration should be reviewed against operating guidance to ensure alignment. In addition, roles and responsibilities differed from school to school and a general lack of accountability existed for the attendance process.

Formal consistent deadlines do not exist for requiring teachers to record class attendance in Chancery. The current system configuration allows teachers to enter class attendance for the entire school year. This practice does not ensure that the Chancery system has current and accurate information. School office personnel were able to produce a report to monitor attendance entry by teachers; however there was a breakdown in the frequency of review and enforcement of attendance entry. Teachers are also responsible for calling student homes and initiating attendance letters to parents. Due to a lack of automation and monitoring, it is difficult to ensure that communication consistently occurs. Utilizing existing automation, such as ConnectEd and Chancery letters could remove considerable ambiguity in the communication process and align consistent calls and letter generation with the school office.

Lastly, there was a lack of holistic collaboration between the various individuals involved with the student's attendance. Monitoring could occur by the Attendance Specialist, Secretary, Home School Assistant, Parent Liaison, Teacher, or Administrator. Currently, each person maintains a personal file for tracking student contact. Any of these individuals can be completely unaware of the various events and points of contact with a student's family. One family could receive several communications and another family could receive no communication when a student is absent. Although we were able to obtain sample communications in all schools, in many cases we were unable to substantiate that home communications occurred.



Student Attendance Audit Summary of Recommendations

Rec #	Audit Recommendations
1. (1 of 2)	<i>Revaluate and update the Board Policy on attendance to ensure current expectations are established for attendance.</i>
1. (2 of 2)	<i>Utilize the system functionality to align with Board attendance policy. Specifically utilize the system to report attendance on a class/period basis in support of minimum attendance credits requirements proposed.</i>
2.	<i>Establish comprehensive governance standards for the Attendance Process. These standards should be the minimum District-wide expectations for schools and include the following: Parent communication frequency and formats; Standards for parent letters (content, frequency, etc.); Standard call frequency; Connect ED standards; Standard definitions (tardy, absent, etc.).</i>
3. (1 of 2)	<i>Evaluate current Chancery system rules and logic and document how data will be interpreted by the Chancery System. Provide this documentation to Attendance management to facilitate the creation of standards. At a minimum, evaluate the following: Calculation of daily Attendance, System recalculations, Overrides in system, Dual enrollment</i>
3. (2 of 2)	<i>Review system rules and logic and request appropriate changes to ensure that the system configuration is aligned with operating standards.</i>
4.	<i>Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a system repository to consolidate, track and compile notes regarding student, log correspondences by Home School Assistant, Attendance Clerk, Teacher or other District resources. Should this not be feasible, establish a means to consistently compile all student related notes to facilitate timely attendance actions.</i>
5.	<i>Identify specific roles and responsibilities required in each school and ensure that duties can be consistently performed in a timely manner.</i>
6.	<i>Evaluate the existing attendance codes to determine their relevance for school operations and reporting. Make appropriate changes as needed, and offer specific guidance to schools to identify how the codes are to be interpreted and utilized. Ensure that system calculation rules and the related results will yield expected and useful data.</i>



Student Attendance Audit Summary of Recommendations

Rec #	Audit Recommendations
7. (1 of 2)	<i>Establish a standard for when teachers must enter attendance. Establish automated monitoring for teachers in Chancery to identify attendance not entered daily, preferably by class period at the secondary level.</i>
7. (2 of 2)	<i>Evaluate the feasibility of implementing system requirements that limit attendance changes to a specified period of time such as a grading period, in lieu of a full calendar year, which is currently practiced.</i>
8.	<i>Discontinue using unsubmitted attendance information in the calculation of student's daily attendance or do not calculate daily attendance if unsubmitted attendance exists. Implement a monitoring process to evaluate when daily attendance fields appear to be contrary to the underlying data.</i>
9.	<i>Establish a formalized district-wide process that sets minimum expectations for student intervention. Identify and model schools that are effective at targeting attendance concerns and utilize school resources to assist in targeting absenteeism.</i>
10. (1 of 2)	<i>Create guidelines and identify how and when attendance should be monitored. Include user documentation on how to utilize the attendance module in Chancery. Consider establishing Daily monitoring, weekly monitoring, an escalation process for noncompliance, administrator oversight procedures and reporting. Reinforce daily attendance expectations and repercussions in the yearly orientation Teachers Handbook.</i>
10. (2 of 2)	<i>Utilize Chancery to create exception reporting that will identify when required follow up is required in the attendance process.</i>
11. (1 of 2)	<i>Designate responsibility for coordinating communication to resources on a timely basis.</i>
11. (2 of 2)	<i>Align Chancery configuration rules for letter generation with District standards and train school attendance personnel to generate letters in Chancery. Ensure the system is able to log the letters sent from the system. The system should</i>



Student Attendance Audit Summary of Recommendations

Rec #	Audit Recommendations
	<i>allow for a more flexible approach in generating letters. Schools should have the flexibility in generating letters as they deem necessary for non-consecutive absences or on a period basis. Evaluate the feasibility of providing teachers with an attendance notation feature that triggers communication with front office indicating the need for additional resources (i.e. parent, social worker).</i>
12. (1 of 2)	<i>Evaluate and remediate barriers that hinder schools from using Connect-Ed for attendance and truancy calls. Document procedures and processes to identify how Connect-Ed can be utilized for attendance and truancy calls at the schools.</i>
12. (2 of 2)	<i>Interface Chancery to Connect-Ed to fully automate the electronic listing of student names and phone numbers in order to communicate attendance and truancy notifications to parents.</i>
13.	<i>Develop a proactive process utilizing a cross functional team to acquire changes to student contact information to facilitate timely parent interaction. Establish standard district protocols to ensure that working numbers and accurate addresses are obtained. Consider periodic contact verification procedures. Utilize current personnel that have interactions with the home visits to provide updated information. Implement a process to follow up on bad numbers identified by Connect Ed automated dialer.</i>
14.	<i>Evaluate existing forms required in the attendance process and determine feasibility of integrating with Chancery including Attendance referrals, calls and home visit documentation. Consider implementing automated workflow process for internal processes such as Attendance Referrals to Central Office.</i>
15.	<i>Establish a formal consistent process for Zone Attendance Coordinators to evaluate attendance functions at the school. This process should include performing periodic independent monitoring of attendance information. Establish monitoring reports to facilitate monitoring at the Zone Chief level.</i>



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #1

Board Policy

The current Board policy is outdated and attendance requirements stated in the policy are not aligned with current practices. The Chancery system is not configured to provide attendance statistics at an individual class level. The current Board policy establishes guidance at class attendance level. However, the system has not been configured to maintain the information at a class level. The attendance business rules do not report attendance at a period/class level. Attendance is recorded at a daily level and the attendance rate by class is not calculated. Board Policy 5100 identifies minimum attendance expectations for graduation. These standards were established for the period from 2000-2004. There has not been an update since then. In addition, historical attendance goals do not align with current practices. The Board Policy should be reexamined and updated to reflect attendance expectations and the system should be configured to meet the expectations set in the Board policy.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #1

Reevaluate and update the Board Policy on attendance to ensure current expectations are established for attendance.

Board Response:

This recommendation will be forwarded to the Board of Education Policy Committee for consideration and resolution.

Responsibility: Policy Committee

Due Date: TBD



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2)	Observation #1
<i>Utilize the system functionality to align with Board attendance policy. Specifically utilize the system to report attendance on a class/period basis in support of minimum attendance credits requirements proposed.</i> <u>Management Response:</u> The Office of Student Attendance is reviewing the New York State attendance requirements with the Office of Accountability and will make recommendations to the Board for any needed changes to the attendance policy. We are in the process of drafting formal District-wide Superintendent Regulations on Attendance which will encompass any modifications required to comply with New York State guidance. Upon completion, these regulations will be presented to the Superintendent for approval and implementation. Chancery SMS is configured to capture Classroom/Period Attendance at the Secondary Level. A summary report will be created to identify percentage attendance by class/period. <u>Responsibility:</u> Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer <u>Due Date:</u> October 31, 2009	



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #2

District-Wide Governance Policies and Procedures

Attendance Procedures

There are a lack of District-wide policies and procedures governing the attendance process. There are no standard District procedures for the attendance process. Each school is expected to establish their own attendance procedures. Governance for attendance recording, tracking, parent communications and monitoring are subject to individual school preferences. Chancery, however, is consistently used to consolidate and report the attendance information. While some similarities existed, there were no two schools visited by OAG that were performing attendance procedures alike. Some procedures noted were rigorous, while others were inconsistently performed. There should be guidance provided through District-wide policies and procedures to facilitate the attendance reporting and monitoring process. If basic guidance is provided, it can improve consistency in the quality of information reported. Schools should be able to personalize their procedures in order to meet their individual differences; however a consistent baseline will improve attendance information.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #2

Establish comprehensive governance standards for the Attendance Process. These standards should be the minimum District-wide expectations for schools and include the following: Parent communication frequency and formats, Standards for parent letters (content, frequency, etc.), Standard call frequency, Connect ED standards, Standard definitions (tardy, absent, etc.).

Management Response:

The Office of Student Attendance in the process of finalizing an Attendance Procedures and Protocol Manual. This manual will encompass standard attendance procedures for the buildings. It will also include procedures for other district programs where students are under dual enrollment, definitions and acronyms. It will be communicated to Administrators and placed on Sharepoint.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #3

System Logic

The Chancery system was implemented in July 2006 as the District Student Management System. Since then, there have been a number of leadership changes regarding responsibility for system configuration and data ownership. In addition, some operating processes have changed. We were unable to obtain comprehensive documented system rules and logic to understand how the system is interpreting data. We were also unable to clearly understand how different inputs could affect the underlying data. Due to new leadership over the attendance process and the creation of updated operating standards, it is imperative that system rules and logic is documented so that management will understand how changes may effect reporting.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #3

Evaluate current Chancery system rules and logic and document how data will be interpreted by the Chancery System. Provide this documentation to Attendance management to facilitate the creation of standards. At a minimum, evaluate the following:

- *Calculation of daily Attendance*
- *System recalculations*
- *Overrides in system*
- *Dual enrollment*

Management Responses:

Information Management & Technology (IM&T) will create documentation of the Chancery system rules and logic and we will determine how the data is being interpreted once the rules are defined. This information will be provided to the Office of Student Attendance to facilitate their ability to ensure the system rules are aligned with operating policies and procedures.

Responsibility: Jerome Underwood, Technology Officer; Jeanette Silvers, Chief Accountability Officer; Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2)

Observation #3

Review system rules and logic and request appropriate changes to ensure that the system configuration is aligned with operating standards.

Management Responses:

The Office of Student Attendance will evaluate the rules provided by IM&T and request appropriate system changes when needed. This will be done in conjunction with IM&T and the Office of Accountability.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Officer; Jeanette Silvers, Chief Accountability Officer

Due Date: November 30, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #4

Centralized Repository for Notes

There is no centralized repository to house all notes regarding student attendance from the various resources to allow coordination of efforts. Each person involved in the attendance process maintains their own personal notes for student activities. There is no centralized location for recording student specific notes, logging phone calls or logging letters sent. Copies of letters and related communications were not consistently maintained. These items were kept in classroom files, the main office, personal files, Student Cumulative Files, Administrator Offices, or the documentation was not retained. This decentralized process did not facilitate complete or effective communication for attendance matters. For example, some Home School Assistant - Attendance Specialists maintained personal paper files and others created individual databases. No one person was aware of all work performed on behalf of a student. Student information should formally documented and maintained and centralized in order to ensure that all applicable parties can access the most current information available. As a result, information is not accessible to all applicable parties and

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #4

Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a system repository to consolidate, track and compile notes regarding student attendance, log correspondences by Home School Assistant, Attendance Clerk, Teacher or other District resources. Should this not be feasible, establish a means to consistently compile all student related notes to facilitate timely attendance actions.

Management Responses:

The Office of Student Attendance is investigating the implementation of a Notes page into the student management system on the record of each student. This will allow a central location for the compilation of important information for staff to access when serving the best interest of the student towards improving their attendance and removing any barriers impeding their educational learning. This is done in conjunction with IM&T and the Office of Accountability.

Responsibility: Jerome Underwood, Technology Officer; Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #5

Defined Roles and Responsibilities

There is a lack of defined roles and responsibilities concerning attendance functions. There is no definition or clarification surrounding critical roles that should be in place to support accurate attendance. Schools have different individuals responsible for various functions in the attendance process. Responsibilities for attendance varied amongst attendance clerks, parent liaisons, home school assistants, compliance clerks, teachers and counselors. In some cases, there is overlap in roles due to a lack of formalized protocols. Without appropriate clarity some functions are performed by multiple people while others are not performed at all. There was limited collaboration and communication amongst the various roles. There was also a lack of clear ownership over the process to ensure student attendance. Generally, the individuals involved in the attendance process performed roles somewhat independent of each other. Clear definition of responsibilities should be outlined regarding the role each individual will perform to contribute to monitoring attendance. Responsibility should be assigned for attendance monitoring, counseling, and parent engagement (calls, meetings, visits). It is critical to outline a process and ensure that each role understands their responsibility.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #5

Identify specific roles and responsibilities required in each school and ensure that duties can be consistently performed in a timely manner. Roles should include: Attendance Review & Analysis, Compliance Monitoring, Counseling, Parent Engagement and Student Advocate.

Management Responses: The Office of Student Attendance will ensure that the recommendation and given examples for definition of roles will be stated in the Attendance Procedures and Protocols Manual. The manual will be communicated to Administrators and placed on Sharepoint.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #6

Attendance Reason Codes

There are approximately 30 types of attendance codes configured of which teachers can use five of them as follows: Absent excused, Absent unexcused, Present, Tardy excused, and Tardy unexcused. OAG was advised that teachers are expected to communicate separately to the Attendance Clerk if other codes should be used instead of what the teacher can enter. The Attendance Clerk can override any of the teacher's codes with any of the remaining codes if desired. It should be noted that the weekly attendance calculation rules will override the Daily code, if not already overridden by the Attendance Clerk. Weekly calculation rules are coded to result in fewer options than the teachers are provided. The weekly calculation rules and attendance reason codes should be in sync to enable the business rules required for attendance.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #6

Evaluate the existing attendance codes to determine their relevance for school operations and reporting. Make appropriate changes as needed, and offer specific guidance to schools to identify how the codes are to be interpreted and utilized. Ensure that system calculation rules and the related results will yield expected and useful data.

Management Responses:

The Office of Accountability and the Division of Youth Development and Family Services will determine which attendance codes the District will use going forward and how they will map to the State codes. This will include what is appropriate for the teacher to enter, and what the calculation should be. IM&T will assist in reconfiguring the system appropriately.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #7

Attendance Recording Standards

A formal documented standard does not exist to identify when attendance should be recorded in Chancery. As a result, the current student attendance practice does not require prompt recording of attendance by teachers. Although a formal documented standard does not exist, it was communicated by various school personnel that teachers are required to submit class attendance within a 24 hour period. Further discussion with individuals involved in the historical attendance process noted that teachers were required to submit attendance during the class period. Concerns arose for teachers that had classes in settings that computers were not available, such as with physical education. Those teachers were able to submit attendance information within 24 hours. Currently the prior exception has been accepted as the practice. Our review noted many cases where attendance was not submitted in more than one month. We also noted that attendance clerks had concerns regarding their ability and authority to enforce compliance requirements with teachers. We also noted that the Chancery system is set up to allow attendance entry and changes for the entire school year. With this flexibility it eliminates the urgency for teachers to enter attendance until the end of the school year. Accurate attendance should be submitted in the Chancery system as soon as possible to allow timely and meaningful communication to parents, counselors and other relevant resources when students are unaccounted for during the school day. A District standard should be established to identify when attendance must be entered by Teachers. If parents are not notified timely when their children are unaccounted for during the school day, they are not able to assist in getting their child to school.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #7

Establish a standard for when teachers must enter attendance. Establish automated monitoring for teachers in Chancery to identify attendance not entered daily, preferably by class period at the secondary level.

Management Responses:

The Office of Student Attendance will establish attendance standards and place this information in the Attendance Procedures and Protocol Manual. This information will also be delivered in professional development provided to district staff regarding attendance.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2) Observation #7

Evaluate the feasibility of implementing system requirements that limit attendance changes to a specified period of time such as a grading period, in lieu of a full calendar year, which is currently practiced.

Management Responses:

When Chancery was originally implemented, the operating procedures gave teachers until the end of the current day to enter their attendance. We will work with Pearson to evaluate making system changes to limit the time period within which teachers can enter past attendance.

Responsibility: Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #8	
Daily Attendance Calculation	
The daily attendance calculation is used for secondary schools to summarize attendance data from various class periods that occur during the day. The current calculation will record a student as present for the school day if the student's record reflects a present mark in any one class period during the day. Currently the system default for the attendance field is present. As a result, if attendance has not been submitted for one or more periods, the student's daily attendance record will be recorded as present. These system calculation rules should only apply to attendance actually submitted and should not allow a default value to determine the student's attendance for a day. An alternative is to not record a student's daily attendance unless all teachers have submitted attendance.	
RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES	
<i>Discontinue using unsubmitted attendance information in the calculation of student's daily attendance or do not calculate daily attendance if unsubmitted attendance exists. Implement a monitoring process to evaluate when daily attendance fields appear to be contrary to the underlying data.</i>	
<u>Management Responses:</u> The Office of Accountability will evaluate the feasibility of making this modification to the Chancery system. If this modification is feasible, we will implement this change in conjunction with IM&T. The Office of Student Attendance will Investigate an Attendance alert with the Office of Accountability and IM&T. This alert would notify all key stakeholders: Principals, Teachers, Zone Schools Chiefs and Coordinators of Attendance when attendance is not submitted and facilitate monitoring activities for compliance.	
<u>Responsibility:</u> Jeanette Silvers, Chief Accountability Officer; Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family	
<u>Due Date:</u> August 31, 2009	



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #9

Student Attendance Intervention Plans

A recurring theme at the schools was a lack of standard attendance intervention plans. There did not appear to be a holistic approach to resolving attendance issues. Functions appeared to work independent of one another without clear communication regarding an action plan to focus on overall attendance or individual students. Building resources do not appear to be effectively utilized to address the issues. Standard procedures should be established to ensure that baseline procedures occur for students with similar issues. Student intervention plans should be established and documented to address student attendance.

At one of the schools visited, an Attendance Focus Committee was established with personnel from the Main Office, Attendance Specialist, Teachers, Administrators and Guidance Counselors. As a committee they meet frequently throughout the school year to discuss and target concerns. They created processes to target certain periods to be immediately reactive to absent students by utilizing the teaching staff and having an escalation process in place. This was an exceptional process.

District standards should exist to determine minimum expectations to engage students and guardians regarding the importance of school attendance. If awareness exists, and actions are consistently taken, then it will likely have a positive impact on student attendance and ultimately overall achievement.



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES	Observation #9
<i>Establish a formalized district-wide process that sets minimum expectations for student intervention. Identify and model schools that are effective at targeting attendance concerns and utilize school resources to assist in targeting absenteeism.</i>	
<u>Management Responses:</u>	
The Office of Student Attendance has already started developing formalized operating practices and procedures, including several layers of intervention to combat student absenteeism. The Coordinators of Attendance are Central Office liaisons who work with the three zones in the district: South, Northeast and Northwest. They established Attendance Intervention teams with each school and target a set population of students who have challenging student attendance. They also work with the School Counselor and Student Support Centers to assist with different intervention services for student under the age of 16 before taking the next step of submitting an attendance referral through the Monroe County Office of Probation for Person In Need of Supervision. The referral goes to the Family Access and Connection Team to provide additional support and interventions for our families. Students above the age of 16 are referred to other outside agencies and alternative educational sites when needed.	
<u>Responsibility:</u> Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family	<u>Due Date:</u> Ongoing through January 2010



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #10

Monitoring

A consistent monitoring process does not exist to ensure compliance with daily entry of student attendance. Standardized procedures do not exist to ensure that timely monitoring occurs for student attendance information. Our review noted manual monitoring procedures that were performed by various individuals involved in the attendance process. The procedures had varying degrees of completeness, consistency, and effectiveness. This was particularly evident at the secondary level, where attendance must be performed by each teacher throughout the school day. Considerable time was spent performing manual tasks that could easily be performed through automation. These tasks lacked consistency due to a lack of a defined process and the heavy manual intervention required. In addition, there is a need for more consistent analysis and review of student attendance information to improve student attendance. Automation in the Chancery system would facilitate timely, consistent monitoring of attendance information. Accurate attendance should be submitted in the system on a daily basis, placing accountability at the source. While the oversight is still necessary, the amount of intervention should be less time consuming once accountability is enforced. Due to a lack of monitoring, attendance information and reporting was incomplete. Responsibility for accuracy and completeness of attendance information appeared to be the responsibility of office clerical staff in lieu of the teachers. Without consistent Principal oversight and monitoring, delays were experienced in receiving attendance information.



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #10

Create guidelines and identify how and when attendance should be monitored. Include user documentation on how to utilize the attendance module in Chancery. Consider establishing Daily monitoring, weekly monitoring, an escalation process for noncompliance, administrator oversight procedures and reporting.

Reinforce daily attendance expectations and repercussions in the yearly orientation Teachers Handbook.

Management Responses:

The Office of Student Attendance is exploring the implementation of an Attendance alert that would notify all key stakeholders: Principals, teachers, Schools Chiefs and Coordinators of Attendance when attendance is not submitted. The creation of the alert is in conjunction with IM&T.

The guidelines for attendance monitoring procedures and related attendance expectations will be included in the Attendance Protocols and Procedures manual. The procedures will be presented to Administrators and maintained on Sharepoint for reference.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2) Observation #10

Utilize Chancery to create exception reporting that will identify when required follow up is required in the attendance process.

Management Responses:

The following standard exception reports are available in Chancery and should be used to monitor attendance:

Bad Attendance Records	Period Attendance Exceptions
Unsubmitted Attendance	Unsubmitted Attendance by Period
Unsubmitted Attendance by Period or Homeroom	Unsubmitted Attendance by Teacher
Unsubmitted Attendance Report – Elementary	

The Office of Student Attendance, in conjunction with the office of Accountability, will provide training for the staff to insure use of above reports. We will also establish reporting to facilitate review of inconsistent data entry and other reporting, as needed.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer

Due Date: Ongoing; effective July 1, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #11

Communication - Letters

A comprehensive identification and communication process does not occur to align parents, counselors and other relevant stakeholders to remedy student attendance issues. The process for communicating with parents lacks structure and standards across the District. Parents receive communication through phone calls, letters, home visits, or meetings. The type and volume of the communication varies by school. There is no standardized District or school guidance that sets protocols for organizing interaction with parents. A parent could receive multiple phone calls and letters on the same day while others can receive no communication. One reason for this challenge is that inconsistent information in Chancery makes it difficult to completely rely on system information to initiate an action. A second reason for this problem is that teachers call student homes based on their judgment. Letters to parents occurred when students missed class from 3-15 days. In many cases, letters were not sent at all. The current process relies on teachers to initiate parent communications. Management should review automation for this process and moving this administrative function to the front office. The Chancery system will produce letters, however, this will only occur if consecutive daily absences occur. OAG observed that in most cases manual letters were created at the schools which circumvented the automated process and resulted in inefficiencies. Establish documented protocols that will clearly define responsibility and timing for identifying and coordinating parent, social worker, and counselor engagement for attendance related concerns.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #11

Designate responsibility for coordinating communication to resources on a timely basis.

Management Responses:

The Coordinators of Attendance meet with the schools Attendance Intervention Team monthly. Schools are given updates on their school and students' attendance. They discuss procedural concerns or questions the schools may have. A topic of this meeting is the students and letters that have been sent regarding the student attendance. The Coordinators will work with the Intervention Team to establish and document a chain of steps to be taken regarding parent notification of a student's absence.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2) Observation #11

Align Chancery configuration rules for letter generation with District standards and train school attendance personnel to generate letters in Chancery. Ensure the system is able to log the letters sent from the system. The system should allow for a more flexible approach in generating letters. Schools should have the flexibility in generating letters as they deem necessary for non-consecutive absences or on a period basis.

Evaluate the feasibility of providing teachers with an attendance notation feature that triggers communication with front office indicating the need for additional resources (i.e. parent, social worker).

Management Responses:

The following letters are currently available in Chancery:

20 Day Absent Drop Letter for Students 17 yrs +	3,5,10,18 Day Absent Warning Letter
20 Day Absent Letter for Students 17 Years +	Cumulative Absent Warning Letter

If additional letters are required (notification will come to IM&T from the Office of Youth & Family), they will be created by IM&T. The Office of Student Attendance, in conjunction with the office of Accountability, will provide training for the staff to insure use of above letters and additional reports.

Although an attendance notation feature does not currently exist in Chancery, any of the existing letters can be scheduled to run on a regular interval. However, the capability does not exist to automate the sending of the letters. This capability may be in future releases of Chancery. The delivery of the letters will need to be a manual process.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #12

Utilize Connect-Ed

Connect-Ed is an automatic dialer that sends personalized messages to parents on an as-needed basis. Many schools are utilizing this tool for school events, but the functionality is only used on a limited basis for attendance. Our testing did not note a consistent call frequency to parents for attendance concerns. Utilizing this existing functionality would ensure that all parents consistently receive school communication when school is missed. Connect-Ed was presented to Principals at a Principal meeting on October 2008.

Only a few of the schools visited used this system for attendance phone calls, but manually selected the students to call. At one school, teachers are required to have attendance entered by the fourth period of the day and absent students are manually selected in the Connect-Ed system. Since Connect-Ed has already been purchased and all schools have access, it should be utilized for attendance and truancy phone calls. This would reduce the number of manual calls made and relieve staff to perform value-added work that can not be automated.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (1 of 2)

Observation #12

Evaluate and remediate barriers that hinder schools from using Connect-Ed for attendance and truancy calls. Document procedures and processes to identify how Connect-Ed can be utilized for attendance and truancy calls at the schools.

Management Responses:

The Coordinators of Attendance from the Office of Student Attendance will work with the Communications department to provide training for additional schools to learn and utilize the Connect Ed system in attendance and truancy calls.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Tom Petronio, Chief Communications Officer

Due Date: August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES (2 of 2)	Observation #12
<i>Interface Chancery to Connect-Ed to fully automate the electronic listing of student names and phone numbers in order to communicate attendance and truancy notifications to parents.</i>	
<u>Management Responses:</u>	
Chancery SMS will provide attendance information to Connect-Ed for all Schools. The interface will occur daily. IM&T will engage the Communications Department in order to facilitate this.	
<u>Responsibility:</u> Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer	<u>Due Date:</u> August 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #13

Student Contact Information

Student contact information is often not current in Chancery due to frequent changes in student addresses and phone numbers. As a result, student attendance concerns are not addressed timely due to inability to contact parents and guardians. There are no District-wide procedures in place to obtain reasonable updates to this information. Use of the Connect Ed system will inform schools of bad phone numbers. These items once identified should be utilized to actively seek updated information.

Student contact information needs to be current and procedures need to be updated as needed. Due to the frequent changes that occur for our student population, proactive actions should occur to improve this information. Inaccurate information impedes timely contact with homes. In addition, if an emergency occurs, a legal guardian may not be found. We understand that the district will start to incur additional fees for mail sent to wrong addresses. To minimize this cost, these procedures should be implemented promptly.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #13

Develop a proactive process utilizing a cross functional team to acquire changes to student contact information to facilitate timely parent interaction. Establish standard district protocols to ensure that working numbers and accurate addresses are obtained. Consider periodic contact verification procedures.

Utilize current personnel that have interaction with the home visits to provide updated information. Implement a process to follow up on bad numbers identified by Connect Ed automated dialer.



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

Management Responses:

Each school has an Attendance Intervention Team. As this team works with the students and families, they provide updated information as it is discovered. Information is given to the school's head secretary and inputted into the system. (see attached)

Connect-Ed generates a list of contacts that could not be made. That list will be followed up on by the respective school office and attendance personnel. If the phone number is valid, Connect-Ed will complete the call. The District will not know if "wrong numbers" were dialed, unless that individual calls the district and complain. At that point, someone from Communications (Tom Petronio's office) alerts the Manager of Student Information Services. The number is removed from Connect-Ed by IM&T and the School is contacted by IM&T to update Chancery with the correct phone number.

Responsibility: Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer; Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family

Due Date: October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #14	
Referral Forms	The referral documentation required to escalate significant attendance issues is manual and burdensome. Much of the information required for a referral is readily available in the existing Chancery system. Such information includes names, addresses, and attendance information, etc. Some information is required to be entered multiple times on the form and the process is completely manual. This is an inefficient use of resources. The forms are generally utilized for internal workflow or informational purposes. Efforts should be made to determine if the information could be transferred electronically and, at a minimum, determine if the forms can pull existing information from Chancery. This change would save paper storage space, mailing, and improve administrator efficiency at the schools.
RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES	
	<i>Evaluate existing forms required in the attendance process and determine feasibility of integrating with Chancery including Attendance referrals, calls and home visit documentation.</i> <i>Consider implementing automated workflow process for internal processes such as Attendance Referrals to Central Office.</i> <u>Management Responses:</u> We are evaluating the feasibility of this recommendation. SharePoint could be a partial solution. If the data exist in Chancery, a report could be written to pre-populate the form. As the Office of Student Attendance investigates the Notes page, we are also investigating the electronic referral process. <u>Responsibility:</u> Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Jerome Underwood, Technology Information Officer <u>Due Date:</u> October 31, 2009



Student Attendance Audit Observations, Recommendations and Action Plans

OBSERVATION #15

Monitoring by School Zone

There should be an established process for the Zone Attendance Coordinators to evaluate attendance functions at the schools. There should also be consolidated and school reporting at the Chief of Schools level. There is no independent verification or oversight of attendance procedures performed at the schools. There should be a periodic independent verification of attendance information recorded at the schools. This attendance data should be analyzed and unusual trends should be questioned. Verification procedures may include sample classroom counts at buildings to verify that attendance was accurately recorded.

RECOMMENDATION and MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Observation #15

Establish a formal consistent process for Zone Attendance Coordinators to evaluate attendance functions at the school. This process should include performing periodic independent monitoring of attendance information. Establish monitoring reports to facilitate monitoring at the Zone Chief level.

Management Responses:

The Coordinators of Attendance have already started meeting with the schools Attendance Intervention Team monthly. Schools are given updates on their school and student attendance. The Zone Chiefs of Schools are also provided with a weekly attendance report from the Chief of Youth Development and Family Services. We will document standard procedures and reporting to ensure that all three Coordinators of Attendance have similar practices which will assist the District with consistent monitoring and accountability.

Responsibility: Gladys Pedraza-Burgos, Chief of Youth & Family; Cheryl Holloway, Raymond Giamartino, Susan Kaufman -- Chiefs of Schools

Due Date: October 31, 2009