



Office of Deputy Mayor Jennifer C. Niles
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To: LEA Leaders
From: Jennie Niles, Deputy Mayor for Education 
Date: August 23, 2016
Re: Student Attendance Data Collection and Use Guidance

As you know, student attendance has been an important issue for stakeholders across the city as we determine the best supports for ensuring all children receive a high quality education. Efforts including the Truancy Taskforce, in which many of you have participated, have highlighted the work yet to be done to improve and fully understand the scope of student attendance across our schools.

To strategically address attendance citywide, we need to meaningfully measure the challenge and use data to better understand who is absent and when. As a starting point, the Truancy Taskforce recently identified some common business rules for calculating truancy and chronic absenteeism at the state level that we are excited to apply and report out on to the Truancy Taskforce this September (see Appendix A for Business Rules).

We also need to better understand the impact of the solutions in which we are investing. That means using program data to better understand what investments and interventions work best for whom. By matching state-level student attendance data with citywide health, safety and transportation data, we can assess the impact of programs like Kids Ride Free and answer critical questions about how city services impact attendance and other youth outcomes.

As we advance this work, we want to be clear and transparent about how student attendance data will be used. To that end, I wanted to share some basic information about how we will be using data to address attendance moving forward. OSSE has provided the attached Student Attendance Data Collection and Use Guidance to summarize the legal requirements and processes for use of attendance data from the 2014-15 school year, and the collection and use of attendance data from the 2015-16 school year by OSSE.

The next meeting of the Truancy Taskforce will take place on September 8, 2016. If you have not joined us previously but are interested in participating in these bi-monthly meetings moving forward, please e-mail DME Senior Advisor Aurora Steinle at aurora.steinle@dc.gov.

As we seek to align our work to national best practices around attendance and meet the needs of our educators and families, we look forward to your support.





DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Student Attendance Data Collection and Use Guidance

Issued: August 23, 2016

This document summarizes the legal requirements and processes for use of attendance data for the 2014-15 school year, and the collection and use of attendance data from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years for state-level analyses by OSSE.¹

Federal and District of Columbia Policy Requirements for Attendance Collections

OSSE collects student-level attendance data to inform activities like the Equity Reports², which are a joint effort launched by public charter schools, PCSB, DCPS, OSSE, and DME to measure and improve educational equity across all schools in the District. This effort includes the collection of student-level daily attendance pursuant to an agreement between the DME, OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB and the calculation and reporting of in-seat attendance at the state and school levels. At the start of the 2015-16 school year, LEAs began providing attendance data to OSSE via a real-time data feed.

In addition to the Equity Reports collaboration, OSSE is required to collect and report attendance data to satisfy local reporting requirements pursuant to the School Attendance Clarification Emergency Amendment Act of 2016, effective June 1, 2016 (DC Act 21-410; 63 DCR 8202) ("Emergency Attendance Clarification Act") and Section 2101.7 of Title 5-A in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations. The Emergency Attendance Clarification Act mandates that OSSE publicly report on the state of absenteeism in the District each year by October 1.

Additionally, the District's interagency Truancy Taskforce, co-chaired by DME and the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, has requested OSSE conduct statewide analyses of chronic absenteeism and truancy for compulsory aged students, and other statewide analyses using the same student-level attendance dataset. The taskforce members, including the Superior Court, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and the Child and Family Services Agency, seek to use this information to inform their work to provide comprehensive supports to students experiencing chronic absenteeism. These statewide analyses conducted by OSSE will not be broken down by LEA or school name, but may be broken down by other factors as determined in consultation with the taskforce and LEAs.³ Lastly, the

¹ School- and LEA-level analyses will be shaped by further engagement between OSSE and LEAs after which OSSE will issue additional guidance for 2016-17 data. Existing school- and LEA-level analyses produced by other entities such as PCSB, CJCC or LEAs themselves are not implicated by this guidance.

² <http://osse.dc.gov/equity-reports>

³ School- and LEA-level analyses will be shaped by further engagement between OSSE and LEAs after which OSSE will issue additional guidance for 2016-17 data. Existing school- and LEA-level analyses produced by other entities such as PCSB, CJCC or LEAs themselves are not implicated by this guidance.

U.S. Department of Education has indicated that it will begin requiring states to report on chronic absenteeism via EdFacts at the school level, beginning with data from the 2016-17 school year.⁴

Data Collection Details

The Emergency Attendance Clarification Act adds new, state-level reporting requirements to the existing attendance reporting law. To comply, OSSE must use student-level attendance data to conduct the analysis.

For example, the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act requires OSSE to publicly report on the “state of absenteeism in the District.” To calculate accurate state-level metrics, this information must be student-level and include unique student identifiers, student name, date of birth, and other information linked to individuals for all students to prevent duplicative counts. This is because students may incur truancies or unexcused absences at multiple schools or LEAs. Due to student mobility, OSSE can only report accurate student counts and metrics at various levels (*e.g.*, school, LEA, state) if it can identify that it is the same student by matching across schools, LEAs, and sectors. Without the student-level information described above, students would be counted multiple times, resulting in inaccurate reporting in the number of students with truancy or chronic absenteeism issues.

Additionally, OSSE requires data points beyond the aggregate data LEAs are required to submit to OSSE. For example, chronic absenteeism is defined in the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act as, “The incidence of a student missing more than 10% of school days, including excused and unexcused absences.” However, the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act only requires LEAs to report on unexcused absences, which is insufficient, as defined in the law, to report on chronic absenteeism as OSSE would need data on excused absences as well.

To satisfy the legally mandated reporting requirements, OSSE will use the attendance data that has already been submitted for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years to conduct statewide calculations of rates of truancy and chronic absenteeism. Using the attendance data provided to OSSE via a real-time data feed not only allows both LEAs and OSSE to meet the legally mandated reporting requirements related to absences, but also ensures accurate data and reduces the burden of duplicative data submissions. LEAs must continue to report indicators that are not provided via the real-time data feed.

OSSE will engage LEAs over the next year to determine the data collection requirements and business rules necessary to report on truancy and chronic absenteeism rates at the school level for the 2016-17 school year and beyond, as required in the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act. See *Appendix A* for more details on the governance of this data.

⁴ The U.S. Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism as the unduplicated number of students absent 10% or more school days during the school year. In accordance with the Office of Civil Rights’ guidance, chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (*e.g.*, illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.

Appendix A: Attendance Data Governance

OSSE is legally mandated to collect attendance data and publicly report on the state of absenteeism in the District based on the collected attendance data. This sensitive information will be governed in the following ways, and any changes to these processes will be informed by data governance best practices and feedback from external stakeholders:

Collection

- Each LEA provides attendance data via a real-time data feed that ensures consistent reporting and definitions that meet all local reporting requirements.

Storage

- Due to its sensitive nature, this information is not stored in SLED.
- Instead, this information is housed in a secure format outside of this system and access is limited to OSSE staff who are responsible for local attendance reporting and maintain expertise in managing personally identifiable information.

Data Sharing and Use

- This information will be used for fulfilling required local and federal reporting needs.
- OSSE will provide any state-level reports that incorporate attendance information in accordance with the District's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- OSSE will use this information to compile the Equity Reports pursuant to the agreement between the DME, OSSE, DCPS, and PCSB.
- OSSE may use this information to evaluate the impact of publicly supported services and programs (e.g., Kids Ride Free) at the state level.
- OSSE may collaborate with individual LEAs on potential additional uses and analyses that would benefit LEAs in serving individual students like an early warning system, based on voluntary agreements with said LEAs. Per existing policies, any aggregate data that is reported by OSSE will be reviewed and suppressed as needed to protect student privacy.

Business Rules

To calculate state-level truancy and chronic absenteeism rates, OSSE will apply the following business rules:

- I. **State-level Truancy Rate:**
 - a. **Numerator:** Number of students who accumulate ten or more unexcused absences across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled during the school year
 - b. **Denominator:** Number of students enrolled in the State at any point during the school year
 - c. **Inclusion Criteria:**

- i. Students will be considered to be enrolled in the State if they have a valid Stage 5 enrollment date and code at any LEA or school at any point on or after that LEA or school's first day of school
- ii. Students must be of compulsory age (aged 5.00 to 17.99) as of 9/30 of the school year
- iii. Any unexcused absences a student receives on or after turning 18.00 years old will not count toward the accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences in meeting the threshold for being designated as "truant" in the analysis
- iv. Students must have been enrolled for a minimum of 10 days during the school year to be included in the analysis
- v. For year-round schools which do not have a designated first or last day of school recorded in the ESchoolPLUS Enterprise calendar, the school year will be defined as 7/1 to 6/30
- vi. Summer school enrollments and related attendance will not be included in the calculation

II. State-level Chronic Absenteeism Rate:

- a. **Numerator:** Number of students who are absent (either excused or unexcused) on 10% or more of the school days on which the student was enrolled across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student was enrolled
 - i. Calculation of percentage of absences
 - 1. Numerator: Total number of excused and unexcused absences accumulated by a student across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled
 - 2. Denominator: Total number of school days on which the student was enrolled across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled
 - a. A student is considered to have an active enrollment at an LEA from the point at which a student has a valid Stage 5 entry code and entry date until the student is exited from the Student Information System with a valid exit code and exit date
- b. **Denominator:** Number of students with a valid Stage 5 enrollment in the State at any point during the school year
- c. **Inclusion Criteria:**
 - i. Students will be considered to be enrolled in the State if they have a valid Stage 5 enrollment date and code at any LEA or school at any point on or after that LEA or school's first day of school
 - ii. Students must be of compulsory age (aged 5.00 to 17.99) as of 9/30 of the school year
 - iii. Students must have been enrolled for a minimum of 10 days during the school year to be included in the analysis

- iv. For year-round schools which do not have a designated first or last day of school recorded in the ESchoolPLUS Enterprise calendar, the school year will be defined as 7/1 to 6/30.
- v. Summer school enrollments and related attendance will not be included in the calculation