

**Policy Recommendations for Addressing Chronic Absence in Detroit, Michigan**  
(Draft March 5, 2015)

Below are a set of key policy recommendations to ensure Detroit monitors and addresses chronic absence as key component of its efforts to improve educational outcomes for students.

- 1) **Establish Standard Definition for Chronic Absence:** Chronically absence is defined consistently across public and charters schools as missing 10% of school for any reason including excused absences, unexcused absences and suspensions.
- 2) **Produce and Share Chronic Absence Reports** Chronic absence data is easily accessible, ideally on-line to the public and shows rates by district, school, grade and sub-population (ethnicity, gender, ELL, Free and Reduced Price Lunch, Special Education).
- 3) **Ensure Reports to Families** Policies ensure districts/schools provide families with real-time data and receive an alert if their child is at risk due to poor attendance as well as positive acknowledgments of good and improved attendance.
- 4) **Create Accountability Through School Improvement Plans.** Schools should be required to examine attendance data and address chronic absence as part of school improvement planning processes.
- 5) **Support Capacity Building.** Investments in professional development, peer learning and technical assistance ensure schools and community organizations that operate on school sites understands data and best practices, including peer learning networks.
- 6) **Establish Unified/Single Student Information System:** To ensure effective and efficient monitoring and reporting of chronic absence, Detroit should consider adopting a single unified student information system to be used across all schools. This system should have the capacity to monitor and report on chronic absence, track period attendance, generate list of student who are academically at risk due to poor attendance, to send an alert to parents as soon as kids start to be chronically absent.
- 7) **Conduct Chronic Absence and Health Analysis:** Commission an analysis of existing research and data to identify health related barriers to school attendance and then offer recommendations for potential solutions that leverage available physical, mental, behavioral and mental health resources..
- 8) **Establish Interagency Forum:** The purpose of this interagency forum would be to bring together leadership from the school district, public agencies, non-profit sector, business and residents to joint review of chronic absence data and discuss its implications for resource allocation and policy development.

**Source:** [\*The Attendance Imperative: How States Can Advance Achievement by Reducing Chronic Absence, Attendance Works \(Updated 2014\)\*](#)

