



Attendance Improvement Initiative

"Every Day Counts" Report



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Preamble

The [Northland School Division Inquiry Team Report](#) provides a framework and impetus for system-wide change and improvement. Since its release in November 2010, Northland School Division No. 61 (NSD61) has made significant progress in areas of leadership, curriculum and instruction. Division work has developed on several different fronts.

- First Nations Métis and Inuit (FNMI) language and culture is weaved daily into classrooms across NSD61 to ensure that students see themselves, parents and grandparents in the curriculum.
- The Division-wide [Literacy Initiative](#) is now in its third year of implementation with more students than ever before reading at grade level.
- Land Stewardship, Land-based learning – no matter the term used, classroom walls are falling away making way for learning opportunities on traditional hunting grounds for experiential hands-on learning for students. For example, [Cultural Weaving Project in Peerless Lake](#), cultural camps organized through the [Northland School Division-Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council partnership agreement](#), cultural camps organized through a partnership with the [Sustainable Communities Initiative](#) and the [Calling Lake Project-based Learning](#).
- The expansion of junior and senior high school program offerings by means of [Career and Technology Studies \(CTS\)](#) and [Career and Technology Foundations \(CTF\)](#). Industry funding and grants provide the means to engage learners with exposure to real-life career related opportunities while earning credits leading to high school graduation.
- [Aboriginal Teacher Education Program \(ATEP\)](#) has enriched our classrooms with local home-grown teachers.
- A new *Northland Act* may soon usher in a governance structure to guide the Division into the 21st Century.

Although system-wide improvement continues in earnest, attendance patterns have not improved over the past ten to fifteen years. Student attendance cannot continue to be the sole responsibility of the school – the school, parents and the community at large need to grapple with engaging and re-engaging youth in the educational process. More than ever before there is acknowledgement of the need to work together to affect positive sustainable change at all levels.

Together with the ongoing improvements in leadership, curriculum and instruction, this report – *Attendance Improvement Initiative – Every Day Counts*, acknowledges Required Action#3 of the *Northland Inquiry Team Report* by setting into motion actions that further support student engagement by building bridges with our parents and school communities.

Background & Terms of Reference

With authority and direction from the Northland School Division No.61 (NSD61) Board an *Attendance Improvement Committee* was established in April, 2014 to review current Division attendance practices and offer recommendation for improvement. The committee met on seven separate occasions between April 2014 and January 2015. A final *Attendance Improvement Initiative – Every Day Counts Report* was presented to the Board on January 30, 2015.

Attendance Improvement Committee members include:

- Louis Cardinal, Board Advisory Committee Member, Peerless Lake
- Kim Courtoreille, Board Advisory Committee Member, Wabasca
- Robin Guild, Board Advisory Committee Member, Wabasca
- Elmer Gullion, Board Advisory Committee Member, Trout Lake
- Ken Shaw, Board Advisory Committee Member, Gift Lake
- Maureen Chernipeski, Pedagogical Supervisor
- Charles Greening, Teacher, Mistassiniy School
- Curtis Walty, Communications Coordinator, Central Office
- Peter Bailey, Teacher/Assistant Principal, St. Theresa School
- Bernard Woodfine, Teacher/Principal, Conklin Community School
- Nora Yellowknee, First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Curriculum Consultant
- Don Tessier, Associate Superintendent, Central Office

Scope of Committee's Work

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* believes that any and all suggestions offered must be adapted locally to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) values and pedagogy including local traditional teaching, ways of knowing and community cultural practices.

The scope of the committee's work includes but is not limited to:

1. A review of *Procedure 301* and *Procedure 306*
2. A review of student attendance practices at the school-level with a focus on:
 - Who records daily attendance and when is it taken?
 - How is attendance information communicated to the school community?
 - Attendance practices around late arrivals and departure in the morning and afternoon
3. A review of attendance practices at Central Office with a focus on:
 - Examine current Division tracking and communication methods
 - In what ways could central office attendance gathering and communication be improved?
4. Identification of successful attendance strategies in other jurisdictions
5. An examination of survey results from administrators as to effective improvement practices around student attendance.
6. An examination of information from '*Tell Them From Me*' student surveys
 - What insights can be gleaned from '*Tell Them From Me*' information?
 - What insights can be gleaned from the Accountability Pillar Surveys?
7. An examination of feedback from students, parents, Elders, community members, Métis Settlement Chairperson and Council, First Nation Chief and Council, Municipal Districts, community agencies and industry leaders about how student attendance could be improved
8. An examination of the attendance literature about effective practices that lead to improved student attendance
9. An examination of the role and responsibilities of the School Community Liaison Worker
10. Do Division maintenance practices affect student learning and achievement?
11. What does it mean to be chronically absent from school? Is there an appropriate Northland S.D. definition for chronic absenteeism? What are the immediate and longer term implications of chronic absenteeism?

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* also offered guidance to the Northland Board in the following areas:

- A bus operating temperature during cold weather
- A Division-wide attendance target

Key Components to School Attendance Improvement

The Committee believes any effort to improve school attendance must include the following:

- **Use of Data:** data helps identify where to focus attendance improvement efforts, which students to engage and to evaluate success.
- **Welcome Incentives:** schools should develop incentives to support and encourage attendance.
- **Involve the School Community:** students, staff, parents, Elders, community members, Métis Settlement Council, First Nation Chief and Council, Municipal Districts, community agencies and industry leaders.
- **Build Capacity:** Help students, parents, Elders, community members, Métis Settlement Chairperson and Council, First Nation Chief and Council, Municipal Districts, Child and Family Services, health agencies, local business and industry leaders understand the 'prevention and early intervention improvement plan'.

Attendance Improvement Committee

Required Actions

“Poor attendance is a major indicator of gradual alienation and disengagement, and may lead to a student dropping out permanently....”

(Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from research and practice, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 2004, page 4)

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* report has tabled 29 Required Actions to address attendance in the jurisdiction. Although there is overlap in a number of the required actions, the required actions are grouped according to division authority, namely:

- Schools & School Administration
- Central Office & Division Leadership

Schools and School Administration

Required Action #1 – Division Attendance Goal

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 establishes a minimum base attendance goal of 95% for all students to strive to achieve.

Background and Rationale:

“It is more necessary than ever before for schools to create a culture of high expectations that rewards effort that is supportive, welcoming and respectful for all ... students.... *(Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from research and practice, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 2004, page 5)*

Students need to have a high rate of attendance in order to achieve academic excellence in school and complete Grade 12.

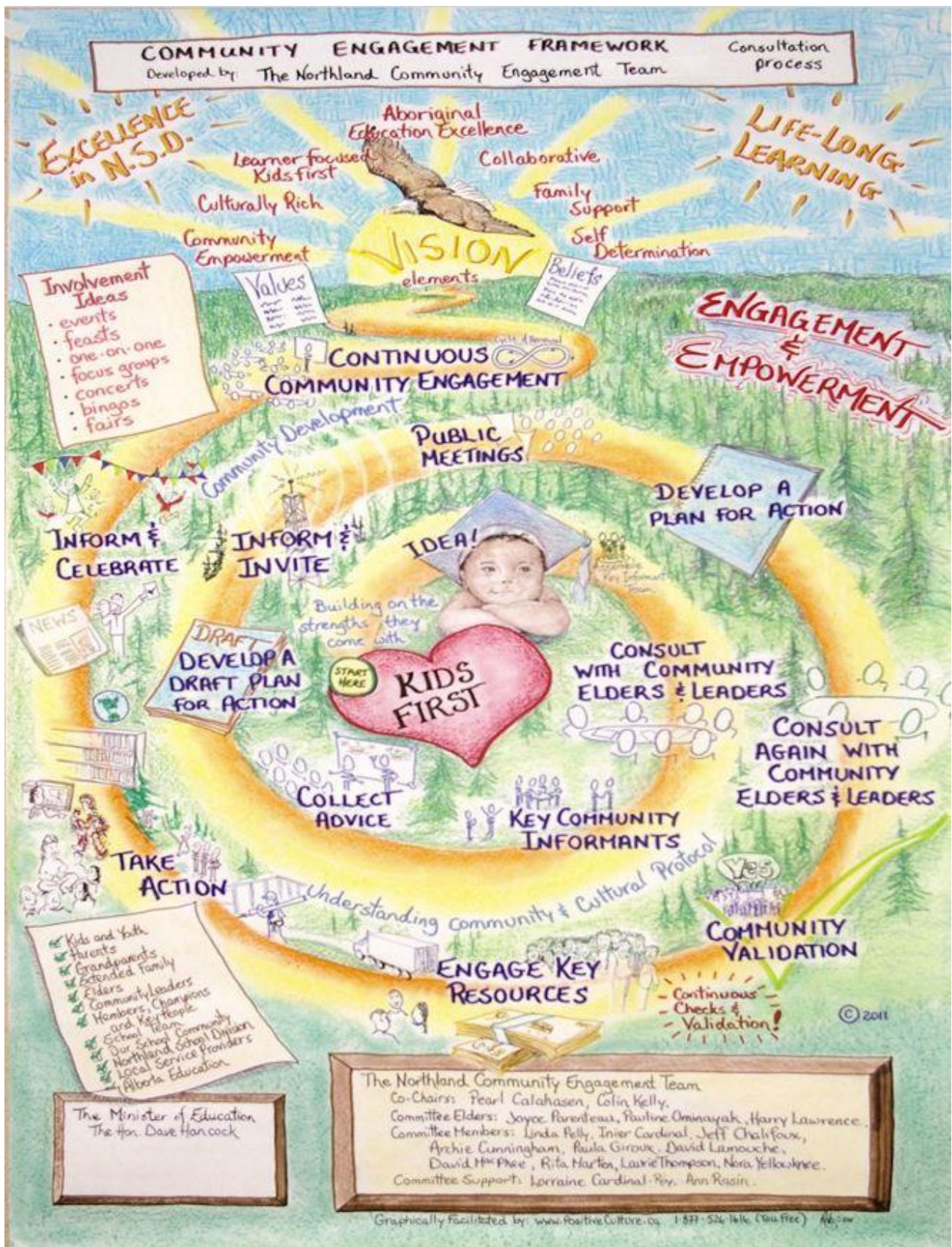
Required Action #2 – Community Engagement Framework

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that schools employ the *Community Engagement Framework* to develop a process for involving their communities in a dialogue of how to improve student interest and engagement that results in improved school attendance rates. (See image on page 8).

Background & Rationale:

“... a single area for treatment is unlikely to be effective. It is suggest[ed] that success is more probable if community members and organizations, parents, students, and school staff share the task of identifying solutions” (*Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from research and practice*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 2004, page 7)

Student attendance is a community endeavour using local familiar resources involving Local School Board Committees, Elders, Chief and Council, Métis Settlement Council, Child & Family Services, Health agencies, industry and local businesses and NSD61 Central Administration and Leadership, students, parents and school administration and staff.



The Minister of Education,
 The Hon. Dave Hancock

The Northland Community Engagement Team
 Co-Chairs: Pearl Calahasen, Colin Kelly.
 Committee Elders: Joyce Parenteau, Pauline Ominayah, Harry Lawrence.
 Committee Members: Linda Pelly, Inier Cardinal, Jeff Chalfoux,
 Archie Cunningham, Paula Giroux, David Lamouche,
 David McPhee, Rita Martin, Laurie Thompson, Nora Yellokjee.
 Committee Support: Lorraine Cardinal-Poy, Ann Rusin.

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Required Action #3 – Quality Learning Experiences

The Attendance Improvement Committee believes that everyone from students to parents, the community, school staff, administrators and central office have an important role to play in educating our children. Since teachers work directly with students in the classroom, they have a direct and obvious impact on student learning.

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends that delivering quality learning experiences for students be a priority for school leaders and staff. An effective and engaging school and classroom environment with high expectations and strong teacher-student relationships is essential for learning, achieving and keeping students in school.

Background and Rationale:

John Hattie suggests “... that we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference [on student learning and achievement] – the teacher. We need to ensure that this greatest influence is optimised to have powerful and sensationally positive effects on the learner. Teachers can and usually do have positive effects, but they must have exceptional effects. We need to direct attention at higher quality teaching, and higher expectations that students can meet appropriate challenges - and these occur once the classroom door is closed ...” (Hattie, *Teachers Make a Difference What is the research evidence?*, p. 3)

Hattie proposes that it is the classroom teacher that makes the greatest difference to student learning and that “excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement”. (p. 4)

Teachers need to focus on what Doug Willms (2009) states are four key factors that support healthy sustained student engagement –

- Quality of Instruction
- Teacher-student relations
- Classroom learning climate and
- Teacher expectations for success

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/Summer2011.pdf>

Required Action #4 – Elders Program

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that a community Elders program be established in each school community to support student attendance and achievement efforts.

Background and Rationale:

Community Elders are highly respected and are community knowledge holders. An Elders program is an essential aspect of any school attendance improvement initiative.

Required Action #5 – Cultural Pride

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 schools develop strategies to increase cultural pride reflecting FNMI values, language, community traditions and history. By doing so, students, parents and the school community may better connect with their schools with a sense of pride and ownership.

Background and Rationale:

Northland School Division “is re-defined as a special purpose system for Aboriginal education” (NSD Inquiry Team Report, November 2010, page 4).

Required Action #6 – School Attendance Committees

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 school-based leadership make attendance a high priority by leading the following initiatives:

A. School Attendance Committees

In September of each year, schools will create a *School Attendance Committee*. This committee will meet once per month or as needed to establish guidelines relating to:

- Attendance initiatives
- Discuss ongoing attendance concerns
- Discuss, support and follow-up on student early intervention efforts

The principal (or designate) will chair the committee and assume responsibility for developing the agenda and maintaining minutes for each meeting. The agenda and minutes will be forwarded to the Associate Superintendent on a monthly basis. (Refer to Appendix 2 for a sample meeting agenda template.)

This group may consist of teachers, school administrators, parents, students, Elders, RCMP, and other outside support agencies. The Local School Board Committees will be kept apprised of attendance improvement efforts at regular board meetings.

Although individual student names and specific attendance histories cannot be discussed with outside agencies, the committee meetings should focus on attendance support and prevention strategies and early interventions.

B. Establish and Communicate Attendance Incentive Programs

- Reward programs should recognize both high levels of attendance and also growth and improvement.
- At the start of each school year, schools will receive an attendance budget to off-set and support attendance reward programs.
- School reward programs/systems will be communicated to the Division as part of the Annual Education Results Report.

Background and Rationale:

To institute change leadership is needed. There is an expectation that school administrators and their staff will support and direct student attendance improvement at the school community level.

Required Action #7 – Attendance Tracking & Communication

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* believes any effort to improve school attendance must include the analysis and communication of monthly school attendance information – both at the school and central office levels. Attendance data helps identify where to focus attendance improvement efforts, which students to engage and to evaluate success.

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends school staff, with guidance from school administration, meet regularly (or as often as needed) in Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions or staff meeting groups to discuss student attendance information, plan and strategize early intervention approaches. A monthly strategic planning session should include such topics as:

- **Tracking and Communicating to the school community:**
 - Students attending at levels of 90-94% and 95-100% for recognition at assemblies, newsletters and community recognition.
 - Solicit feedback and success stories from students/staff/parents/community as a way to celebrate school attendance successes.
- **Tracking with staff and follow-up with the *School Attendance Committee*:**
 - Students attending 80-89% for early intervention and support
 - Students attending below 80% to ensure that daily interventions (home visits, school organized meetings) have been undertaken and a follow-through plan developed
 - Chronic absenteeism
 - Patterns of non-attendance for focused intervention
- **Evaluate school-wide student attendance improvement efforts.**

Required Action #8 – Central Office Attendance Tracking & Awards

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends central office continue to receive monthly school attendance information through Principal Monthly Reports (PMRs) and Maplewood for analysis to focus attendance improvement efforts and communicate Division successes to our school communities, education partners, interested supporters and agencies.

On a monthly basis, central office will integrate information supporting attendance for the Division *Achimowin* Newsletter and for upload to the new Northland website.

The “Every Day Counts ...” portion of the newsletter could include:

- Importance of attending school every day
- Students-on-track for Gold, Silver and Diamond Certificates at year-end
- Monthly Attendance Chart(s)
 - School-By-School Attendance
 - School Attendance by Division – ECS, Div. 1,2,3 & 4
 - Comparison of School Attendance and Division Goal (95%)
- School Attendance Success Stories

Required Action #9 – Transitioning Students Back to School

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that schools develop a transitioning/re-integration plan for students who have been identified as at-risk. Strategies associated with a return-to-school plan will include but not be limited to:

- Northland schools establish a strategy for students who have been identified as at risk/transient/chronically absent. These students require a ‘transitioning back to school’ intervention plan.
- The administration, in collaboration with the *School Attendance Committee*, will review student profiles and formulate a plan for integration. The student ‘return-to-school’ plan would incorporate strategies supporting the successful return of at-risk students to the school learning environment.
- Re-integration can be part of a student’s learning plan. The student ‘return-to-school’ plan could be signed by administration, student, and parent as evidence of a commitment and pledge to meet the goals of the return-to-school learning plan.
- Junior and High School interventions and return-to-school plans may include but not limited to:
 - ✓ Modular Based Learning
 - ✓ Inter-division sharing of information and online resources
 - ✓ Division wide Timetabling (common block)
 - ✓ Shortened day
 - ✓ Setting goals for attendance
 - ✓ Ongoing staff mentoring support

Background and Rationale:

Chronic absence leads to drop out and failure. Students with chronic absenteeism face many return-to-school challenges. There is an expectation that schools will create a return-to-school transitioning plan for chronic absence.

Required Action #10 – School Climate

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that in-service opportunities are offered to school staff in relation to the theory and practice of school climate. These staff training opportunities could be supported by industry funds and Division budget allocations.

Areas of school community professional development that support a welcoming, healthy, respectful school climate that should be considered:

- **School-wide Anti-bullying Campaign**
- **Safe & Caring Schools (SACS) Initiative**
- **School-wide Tribes TLC program**
- **School-wide Boys and Girls clubs**
- **School-wide Wellness Initiatives**

Background and Rationale:

“School climate impacts how students feel, their willingness to get involved, their excitement to contribute and their sense of self and others. School climate matters and our commitment to broadening the vision of inclusion and engagement requires school climates to reflect the characteristics of respect, equity, dignity, honesty, justice and safety. This type of school climate requires the engagement of all education stakeholders, not just students and not teachers alone; but from all administrators, school staff, parents and community partners. Thus every stakeholder is given the opportunity and expected to contribute to creating and sustaining an effective quality school climate...”

http://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Project_Unify/TheImportanceOfSchoolClimate.pdf

Required Action #11 – ‘Tell Them From Me’ Student Surveys

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends that all NSD61 schools with Grade 4 to Grade 12 programming participate in the ‘Tell Them From Me’ (TTFM) student engagement surveys.

There is an expectation that school principals will guide staff through an in-depth analysis of the TTFM surveys in order to develop a yearly school strategic improvement plan that increases what Doug Willms, developer of *Tell Them From Me*, refers to as *social, intellectual and institutional engagement*. (See an explanation of the three engagement types below.)

The TTFM Strategic Improvement Plan will form part of the AERR report due in November of each school year.

Background and Rationale:

Any school attendance improvement initiative must include student input. Student voice ensures that their needs and wants are heard and included in school improvement strategy efforts.

Since 2009, a select number of Northland schools participated in ‘Tell Them From Me’ surveys. In February 2014 nine Northland schools participated in these surveys.

According to Doug Willms (2009), schools and school staff can increase learning by focusing on three areas of student engagement, namely: social, institutional and intellectual.

- *Social engagement* refers to a student’s sense of belonging, participation in sports and clubs and positive friendships at school.
- *Institutional engagement* includes such measures as attendance, positive behaviour, study habits and the degree to which school outcomes are valued.
- *Intellectual engagement* includes a student’s level of interest & motivation, effort and whether the student is suitably engaged and challenged.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/Summer2011.pdf>

Required Action #12 – Standardizing Attendance Procedures

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 ensures that attendance information is accurate by standardizing the following processes:

- A person with Maplewood expertise needs to be hired (or trained) to act as Division contact for all processes and procedures involving Maplewood. This individual would organize training programs / in-service opportunities for C.O. personnel, administrators and school-based staff.
- Continue to provide relevant annual training/information sessions for school staff who require Maplewood training, skill enhancement and upgrading.
- Monitor and review school attendance monthly at the school and central office level.
- Ensure attendance records are accurate and stored on Maplewood.
- Ensure teachers are taking daily attendance and the recording procedures for students arriving late to school and leave early are recorded consistently across the division.
- Work with the school community to develop initiatives to address attendance.
- Incorporate monthly attendance, chronic absenteeism and suspension data into school planning and reporting.
- Students who are frequently late will be referred to school administration and the local *School Attendance Committee* for immediate intervention.

To ensure accurate ongoing school attendance information, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* further recommends that school-based administrators implement the following attendance routines and practices:

- Student attendance is entered into Maplewood on a daily basis.
- Teachers must enter their own student attendance into Maplewood using their ConnectED profile. Principals are asked to ensure that teachers have a ConnectED profile. The Records Management Clerk will assist with teacher profile set up and, if necessary, the resetting of teacher passwords.
- When the principal is certain that a student no longer attends the school, he or she must report the exit date into Maplewood which will then show the student is not attending school.
- At month end, the following Maplewood attendance reports are due at Central Office: (a) Principal Monthly Reports (PMRs), (b) Student Admissions, (c) Student Retirements and (d) Daily Attendance Registers.

Background and Rationale:

It is imperative that the collection and reporting of attendance data is accurate and that the monitoring of attendance patterns for improvement purposes is routinized.

Required Action #13 – Attendance Action Protocol

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 schools use the following protocol (or a variation thereof) when working with daily and longer term absences.

Attendance Action Protocol

EACH DAY
ABSENT

Level 1 Action Standard Action EXCUSED/UNEXCUSED

- Make a personal phone call to parent/guardian.
- Document reason for absence.
- Enter appropriate absent code into Maplewood.
- Update student contact information.

Level 2 Action (include Level 1 action)

3RD DAY
ABSENT

EXCUSED	UNEXCUSED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule parent conference (at home/school) Implement strategies outlined in site attendance support plan Alert <i>School Attendance Committee</i> If needed, refer family to appropriate school-based resources or support agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom teacher phones home and if no contact, conducts home visit using an established protocol Flag students on the first Notice of Truancy letter log If needed, refer family to school-based resources and/or support agencies Alert <i>School Attendance Committee</i>

Level 3 Action (include Level 1 action)

6th DAY
ABSENT

EXCUSED	UNEXCUSED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule parent conference (at home/school) Implement strategies outlined in site attendance support plan <i>School Attendance Committee</i> Meeting convened If needed, refer family to appropriate school-based resources or support agencies Action plan for student in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom teacher phones home and if no contact, conducts home visit Flag students on the 2nd Notice of Truancy letter log If needed, refer family to school-based resources and/or support agencies <i>School Attendance Committee</i> Meeting convened Hold a intervention meeting Action plan for student in place

**10th DAY
ABSENT**

Level 4 Action (include Level 1 action)

EXCUSED	UNEXCUSED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule parent conference (at home/school) • Implement strategies outlined in site attendance support plan • <i>School Attendance Committee Meeting</i> convened • If needed, refer family to appropriate school-based resources or support agencies • Action plan for student in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i)Ease Back strategy outline in plan (ii)Learning modules in place for student • Mail chronic absence letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>School Attendance Committee</i> representatives (Liaison worker, elder, principal) schedule meeting with parent (and child if appropriate) • Flag students on the third Notice of Truancy letter log • <i>School Attendance Committee Meeting</i> convened bringing together all available agencies (health, child and health services, school, elder and parents if possible) • Hold a intervention meeting • Action plan for student in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i)Ease Back strategy outline in plan (ii)Learning modules in place for student • Mail chronic absence letter Referred to Superintendent (or designate) for follow up attendance gathering meeting with school & parents.

Background and Rationale:

To support schools, an attendance action protocol is needed to offer guidance and direction to staff when working with daily and longer term absences.

Required Action #14 – Engaging Students with CTF and CTS

To heighten interest and engage students in the learning process, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that schools create alternative options/programming emphasizing hands-on and land-based learning opportunities.

School administrators and teachers will work with the CTS School/Industry Partnership Administrator to develop and implement Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and Career and Technology Foundations (CTF) program opportunities for students.

Schools will work with our First Nations, Métis and Inuit Director of Education and local community experts and resources to continue to strengthen languages (English and Aboriginal), Aboriginal cultural content within the curriculum, and the processes of developing land-based curriculum aligned learning opportunities for all students.

Background and Rationale:

“The world around us is evolving at an unprecedented rate and the speed of change is increasing every day.

We need to prepare Alberta’s students for their future—not our past. The way in which we’ve previously delivered education is no longer sufficient. So, together, we’re changing our way of thinking. ...

We’re shifting our focus and putting students first.

We want to expand on traditional methods of teaching, not replace them.

We’re investing in our students and giving educators license to be more creative. To inspire innovation and excellence....”

<https://inspiring.education.alberta.ca/what-is-inspiring-education/>

Required Action #15 – Importance of Early Childhood Services

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 schools recognize the importance of early childhood programming (Early Child Services and Kindergarten) by supporting the following actions:

- Northland schools actively seek the support of community agencies/parents to promote kindergarten attendance.
- Develop engaging messages and materials to encourage kindergarten attendance using parent handbooks and key messages in school newsletters.
- Employ the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) to screen pre-kindergarten students offering support interventions when and where needed.
- Schools work to develop an 'Early Grades Attendance Strategy' for kindergarten through to grade three.
- Schools work closely with the NSD61 Student Services Supervisor to implement an 'Early Grades Attendance Strategy'.

Required Action #16 – Maintaining School Facilities

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* believes that school facilities are a home away from home for students. Since our schools are often the hub and centerpiece of our communities, school buildings need to clean, warm and inviting learning spaces for the school community. The school environment should reflect the culture of the students, have positive messages of hope, and showcase evidence of student success such as examples of student work and other accomplishments.

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61’s caretaking staff and maintenance department commit to ensuring our schools are clean inviting community learning settings.

Background and Rationale:

“The focus on school environments has evolved from an initial discussion on indoor air to a comprehensive view recognizing that total environmental quality is related to teaching and learning performance.... school officials must recognize the value of cleaning and maintenance programs to positive educational performance.

A school’s interior climate, appearance, and cleanliness send either a positive or negative message to students, teachers, and staff. Emerging evidence suggests that environmental conditions that create a sense of “well-being” and send a “caring message” contribute directly to positive attitudes and elevated performance as measured by fewer health complaints, improved student attendance, teacher retention, and higher test scores.

Schools are special environments that exist for the purpose of teaching and learning.
... Schools are high activity environments that need constant attention in the form of cleaning, maintenance, and repair. ...

... There is a direct connection between environmental quality, comfort, health and well-being, positive attitudes and behaviour, and higher levels of educational performance.

The quality of the school environment shapes attitudes of students, teachers and staff. Attitudes affect teaching and learning behaviour. Behaviour affects performance. Educational performance determines future outcomes of individuals and society as a whole.

Recent studies of high performance schools find that an academically successful school radiates a sense of “well-being”. This sense of “well-being” is the essence of a healthy environment. For school environments to be healthy there must be a serious, if not passionate desire accompanied by positive action, to keep the environment sanitary or to restore non-performing schools to a constant healthy state....”

Source: (Berry, Michael, A. *Healthy Schools are Clean, Dry, and Productive*)

http://www.canadiancarpet.org/carpet_in_schools/pdf/7.%20HealthySchoolCleanDry.pdf

Required Action #17 – Alberta Attendance Board

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 schools employ the services of the *Alberta Attendance Board* (or Local Attendance Boards for Federal students) as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis after all local attendance efforts have been exhausted.

Background and Rationale:

School jurisdictions have access to the *Alberta Attendance Board* in matters of chronic absenteeism.

“Truancy is a serious concern of parents and teachers since it leads to school dropout and failure. In today's society, the opportunity for employment and a career is severely limited without an education. The Attendance Board was established by legislation in 1988 to help students who were developing a record of truancy. When a student who is under 16 years of age fails to attend school as required by law, the school board may ask for a panel of the Attendance Board to deal with the matter. Truancy is often the first visible sign of other problems a student may be experiencing. In most cases, truancy problems are resolved at the local school level where students, parents and school board employees can work together before there is a need to involve the provincial Attendance Board. Where a truancy problem cannot be resolved locally, school boards may refer the matter to the provincial Attendance Board for assistance and a ruling.”

<http://education.alberta.ca/parents/role/workingtogether/board.aspx>

Required Action #18 – LSBC Attendance Report Motion

To ensure division-wide ongoing commitment, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends:

- **School-based administration present and discuss the final approved Report with school staff and local school board committee members,**
- **School-based administration present and discuss the final approved Report with students, parents and the school community in school sponsored community engagement events,**
- **Local school board committees pass a motion at the first LSBC meeting following the Report’s approval in January 2015 indicating the *Attendance Improvement Initiative – ‘Every Day Counts’* Final Report was presented and discussed,**
- **‘Student Attendance’ is placed on LSBC agendas for review and discussion.**

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* further recommends that

- **School-based administration, in collaboration with the school community, develop and present an action plan for implementing the report’s Required Actions commencing at the Principals’ meeting in May 2015.**

Background and Rationale:

The Required Actions contained in the report need ongoing school staff and local school board committee commitment to ensure that student attendance improvement remains ever-present on school community agendas.

Central Office and Division Leadership

Required Action #19 – Tracking Chronic Absences

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends that NSD61 develop and implement the following attendance procedural actions:

- **That a common definition for chronic absence is established and that it is tracked. By way of example, chronic absenteeism means missing 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason.**
- **That beginning in kindergarten, student attendance is tracked and timely interventions embarked on when absence becomes a problem.**
- **That chronic absence is considered a Division policy priority with clear direction for schools to identify contributing factors and outline interventions in Annual Education Results Report (AERR) improvement plans.**
- **That non-specific case attendance data is shared with social service agencies to focus appropriate interventions.**
- **That a search be undertaken to identify possible grants to support the tracking of attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism.**

Background and Rationale:

“... Students need to attend school daily to succeed. ... Educators and policymakers cannot truly understand achievement gaps or efforts to close them without considering chronic absenteeism.

Chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy or average daily attendance....Chronic absenteeism means missing 10 percent of a school year for any reason. A school can have average daily attendance of 90 percent and still have 40 percent of its students chronically absent, because on different days, different students make up that 90 percent....” (p. 3)

<http://new.every1graduates.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReportMay16.pdf>

Required Action #20 – Bus Operations in Inclement Weather

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that when inclement weather conditions are questionable, the principal consult with the local school bus driver(s).

It is also recommended that barring unforeseen extenuating local circumstances, school buses will operate up to and including -40 Celsius (ambient air temperature).

Background and Rationale:

A consistent standard for operating buses during the winter months should be established across NSD61.

Parental choice is always involved when transporting children to and from school.

Required Action #21 – Transportation Committee Support

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* supports the approved actions set out by the Transportation Committee and recently supported by the Advisory Committee and approved by the Official Trustee.

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* is recommending that:

- **NSD61, in partnership with local industry, will create a *Bus Driver Incentive Program* that incorporates monetary incentives for individuals pursuing bus driver training and employment with the Division.**
- **That Northland Bus Drivers receive competitive wages comparable to industry norms for drivers to ensure a consistent, safe, and reliable transportation system for the students.**
- **That the transportation budget includes provision for one emergency bus per community in the event of bus breakdown and for school-based field trips. By way of example, an extra bus could be used to support and extend classroom instruction to land stewardship experiential learning.**

Background and Rationale:

A reliable bus transportation system is needed to ensure students are able to access schooling opportunities as required by the *School Act*.

Required Action #22 – Attendance Awards & School Recognition

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 formally recognize the importance of schooling and regular attendance by:

- **Establishing a yearly attendance recognition program whereby deserving students are presented with ‘attendance certificates’ at the first school assembly in September.**

By way of example, based on the 7 Sacred Teachings, certificates of attendance could be presented to students accordingly:

1. ***Buffalo Award (Respect) Attendance Certificate:*** Awarded to students with a yearly attendance of 90-94%
2. ***Eagle Award (Love) Attendance Certificate:*** Awarded to students with a yearly attendance of 95-100%
3. ***Bear Award (Courage) Attendance Certificate:*** Awarded to students with the greatest % growth in attendance over the course of the school year or the previous school year

Schools will forward the above mentioned attendance information to the Records Management Clerk in June.

- **To provide yearly recognition to a Northland school (or schools) for creativity and innovation resulting in attendance improvements. The Long Service and Recognition Awards Banquet in May would be an appropriate venue to acknowledge schools.**

Background and Rationale:

There is a general consensus by the *Attendance Improvement Committee* that students respond favourably to attendance reward programs. Since school attendance is a division-wide priority, all authority levels have an attendance improvement role to play.

Required Action #23 – School Community Liaison Worker

To ensure alignment with Northland School Division’s Attendance Improvement Initiative and the Community Engagement Framework, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends the following changes to the School & Community Liaison Worker’s job description. (Refer to page 30)

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recognizes that School & Community Liaison Workers are paraprofessionals and not trained counsellors.

- The role of ‘student counsellor’ should not be imposed upon the School & Community Liaison Worker (SCLW). SCLW have knowledge of the community and families and can therefore advocate for children by listening and engaging with students about overcoming barriers to school success.
- The role of the SCLW needs to be clearly defined.
- The SCLW should utilize the current resources at NSD61 to assist in the development of a communication plan to convey a positive image of the school to the community.
- The many roles of the SCLW may need support (financial and otherwise) for successful implementation of school based intervention and motivational strategies focused on improving school attendance. It is recommended that NSD61 provide the SCLW with the necessary level of support and training to carry out their responsibilities.

The role of the SCLW is to assist with building positive and trusting relationships between students and their families and school staff.

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

POSITION TITLE: School & Community Liaison Worker
CLASSIFICATION TITLE: Paraprofessional
DEPARTMENT: Instruction
IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR'S TITLE: Principal
REASON FOR SUBMISSION: _____ X _____
Creation Change Update

Date: May 2013

POSITION SUMMARY

Reflecting Board policy and procedures, the School and Community Liaison Worker will work with the school staff and parents to coordinate a school based counselling service, which supports the personal and academic growth of each student, and to help set up a network of agencies to provide community support for the students and the school. A valid Class 4 Driver's License is required for the performance of these duties.* The School and Community Liaison Worker shall maintain strict confidentiality where appropriate in the performance of his/her duties.

*In special circumstances that would permit the transportation of students in privately owned vehicles, Procedure 312 Transportation of Students in Private Vehicles, shall be adhered to.

MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. General Responsibilities

- 1.1. Develop programs and activities to promote personal development and self-esteem for students.
- 1.2. Work with parents, school and community to provide support for bussing and boarding home students attending school in other jurisdictions.
- 1.3. Work with students and staff in setting up beneficial "work experience" programs in the community. (RAP, Career Counsellor)
- 1.4. Work with staff to provide parents and students necessary information about existing school and community programs and activities.
- 1.5. As part of regular communication with students/parents, work with staff, parents and students to develop and implement an action plan to address attendance.

As a school attendance committee member, work with staff, parents, and students to investigate and address any attendance concerns utilizing a school-based attendance committee model where possible.
- 1.6. Work with staff to develop and implement an orientation system for new students/staff into the school.

- 1.7. Provide support and assistance for any school based intervention and/or motivational strategies to keep students in school.
- 1.8. Assist in developing and conveying a positive image of the school and community.
- 1.9. Adhere to a personal conduct contract, as well as a confidentiality agreement.
2. Career Counselling (In absence of/ in conjunction with Career Counsellor)
 - 2.1. Provide students with information and contact with universities, technical schools, colleges, and industry.
 - 2.2. Work with the principal to facilitate the delivery of career workshops that are relevant to students' needs and aspirations.
 - 2.3. Provide information to parents and students regarding post-secondary education grants and assist them with applications for financial assistance, if requested.
 - 2.4. Work with the staff to **distribute** career information into all relevant grades.
3. Office Duties:
 - 3.1. Maintain accurate, up-to-date confidential files on all contacts.
 - 3.2. Maintain a file of agencies and service providers.
 - 3.3. Attend all staff meetings and **relevant** divisional initiatives.
 - 3.4. Attend in-services as approved by the school principal.
 - 3.5. Continue education through upgrading **pursuant to the role of liaison and review of current related literature.**
 - 3.6. Prepare, in consultation with the principal, a **flexible** personal timetable, which allows for regular home visits and agency contacts necessary to fulfill duties.
 - 3.7. Prepare reports as requested by the principal, which will be provided to the Local School Board Committee, **for discussion and action.**
4. Bussing, Boarding and Home Schooling Students
 - 4.1. **Assist parents in the process of requesting boarding home applications and with selecting boarding homes for approved students, as requested.**
 - 4.2. Work with parents, principals, and counsellors in registrations and student orientations to receiving school and/or receiving home.
 - 4.3. In cooperation with the principal, monitor and report on the status of home schooling students.
 - 4.4. Set up informal ways and means for the home school and community to maintain contact and support for boarding students.
 - 4.5. Maintain regular written and verbal contact with the counsellors at the receiving school regarding the students' progress and development.
 - 4.6. **Liaison workers will work with the school and home to address bussing concerns especially as they relate to attendance.**

5. Other Considerations

5.1 Other duties as assigned by the principal such as

(i) Delivering school related documents

(ii) Translation services

NOTE: Revisions are labeled blue.

Background and Rationale:

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* believes the School Community Liaison Worker's job description needs to be updated to align with the Community Engagement Framework.

Required Action #24 – Division Attendance Improvement Officer

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that a “*Division Attendance Improvement Officer*” role be created to oversee division-wide improvement efforts. At the present time, the superintendent assumes the role of “*Division Attendance Officer*”.

Background and Rationale:

Division-wide initiatives that are designed to improve attendance require concerted effort, planning, collaboration and coordination. A full time position may need to be created to oversee and coordinate the division’s attendance improvement program. The alternative is to designate someone at the division level to assume this important role.

Required Action #25 – Student Services

The *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends that NSD61 continues to work with our local community agencies and Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD) partners to provide additional mental health service supports for identified high needs schools. By way of example, students ‘on the spectrum’ with high learning needs require teachers with a specialized skill set. In certain circumstances these teachers will require specialized support (i.e. training and/or professional development) and access to appropriate assistive technology.

Background and Rationale:

There is a general consensus that NSD61 will utilize student services to support attendance issues and inclusion as per policy.

Required Action #26 – Partnering with Community Agencies

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends that schools, in collaboration with NSD61 Supervisor of Student Services, work closely with local, provincial and federal agencies in the delivery of appropriate learning and early intervention supports for students.

Specifically, Child and Family Services and the R.C.M.P. are two community support agencies with mandates to work closely with schools in support of children and their families.

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends:

- **Schools, in partnership with Child & Family Services, could work to implement school supports for students in foster care. Regular meetings between the school and this agency could be a platform for early intervention in support of families in crisis.**
- **Schools, in partnership with local RCMP detachments, could work to support student learning through the delivery of Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) programs which focus on such topics as the responsible use of personal technology (i.e. cell phones, i-pads, & personal social networking), forms of bullying and the legal implications, involvement in gangs, and drug & alcohol abuse. Regular opportunities for the RCMP to meet with school staff and students in the delivery of important messaging for youth are beneficial and support student awareness and personal growth.**

Background and Rationale:

Partnering with Community Agencies makes sense given that -

- Child & Family Services is responsible for the well-being of children in foster care and for the prevention of abuse and neglect.
- Success is dependent on partnerships with organizations that are already in children's lives – such as the school system.
- The use of technology as a form of bullying is increasing - students must be made aware of the dangerous/tragic consequences associated with such behaviour and the possible criminality of such actions.
- Simple data sharing approaches help both community agencies and schools better care for vulnerable children.

Required Action #27 – Procedure 301 - Student Attendance

To align *Procedure 301 – Student Attendance* (original found in Appendix 1 of this report) with the Community Engagement Framework, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends the following changes:

Background

“Poor attendance is a major indicator of gradual alienation and disengagement, and may lead to a student dropping out permanently....” (*Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from research and practice*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 2004, page 4)

Student attendance is a community priority involving the local school, Elders, First Nations Chief and Council, Métis Settlement Chief and Council, Child and Family Services, health agencies, industry and local businesses and Northland Central Office. There is an expectation that schools employ the Community Engagement Framework to develop a process for involving their communities in a dialogue of how to improve student interest and engagement resulting in improved school attendance rates.

Regular attendance by students in all of their classes enhances their performance and contributes substantially to their educational progress. While students have a right to access an educational program they also have a responsibility to attend classes regularly.

The *School Act* requires students to attend school regularly and punctually, and requires School Boards to follow procedures outlined in the Act. The Superintendent (or designate) has been designated as the attendance officer for the division.

Procedures

1. The principal shall ensure that an accurate record of student attendance is maintained for every registered student.
2. Teachers will record attendance daily.
3. Schools will follow the Attendance Protocol (or variation thereof) as outlined in Required Action#13 of this report. This protocol details specific actions and expectations within a four tiered set of action objectives involving school staff, community resources and agencies. The attendance protocol operates with a philosophy dictating:
 - Attendance is a whole community responsibility.
 - Schools are expected to maintain home contact at all levels of absentee concern.
 - Tiered actions are targeted for elementary students missing 1-3-6-10 days.
 - Tiered actions are targeted for Junior, Senior High students missing 1-4-7-10 days.
 - Specific school actions are expected at each level and beyond.
 - Students missing more than 10 days will be referred to school administration for further action.
4. Each school shall form a *School Attendance Committee* including but not limited to the following roles:

- Meet monthly to discuss attendance data trends.
- Meet as needed to formulate initiatives to support students and families of students showing higher levels of absenteeism.
- Involve the community at large using agencies and local resources in enacting positive and proactive attendance action plans for students.
- Establish a rewards system for attendance based upon the philosophy that not only students meeting attendance goals are rewarded but also students showing improvement.

5. Student attendance issues will be responded to in a proactive manner within the following level of increasing actions:

- I. *School Attendance Committee* planning
- II. Teacher response (recording data, establishing cause, home contact)
- III. Principal response (in coordination with teacher and School Community Liaison Worker and the School Attendance Committee)
- IV. Referral to Superintendent or designate
- V. Referral to Alberta Attendance Board

6. Each school will develop attendance targets based on the divisional target of 95%.

6.1 It is understood that the *School Attendance Committee* can set targets as per specific student cases that may include attendance levels lower than the Division target. These goals may be individualized and based upon significant improvement.

6.2 Schools will report monthly attendance rates, incentives and initiatives related to improving attendance to central office.

7. Local School Board Committees will be advised monthly of school attendance data.

Background and Rationale:

There is a general consensus by the *Attendance Improvement Committee* that *Procedure 301 – Student Attendance* needs to be reworked and aligned with the Community Engagement Framework and the Required Actions outlined in this report.

NOTE: Suggested revisions are labeled blue.

Required Action #28 – Procedure 306 – Suspension and Expulsion

To align *Procedure 306 – Student Suspension and Expulsion* with Northland School Division’s Attendance Improvement Initiative and the Community Engagement Framework, the *Attendance Improvement Committee* recommends the following changes:

Background

To ensure a satisfactory climate for learning, school rules and regulations must be observed by students and teachers and principals must be empowered to enforce those rules and regulations. Students who do not conform to the behavior code and discipline policy may negatively affect the school’s learning environment.

The suspension or expulsion of a student from school is a very serious matter and should only be taken when other measures have proven to be ineffective or when the seriousness of the offense warrants such action. *Under certain circumstances, a restorative justice model could be used as an alternative.*

Section 12 of the *School Act* identifies expectations for student conduct and sections 24 and 25 deals with student suspensions and expulsions.

Procedures

1. The school discipline policy shall describe the suspension procedures to be followed in the school.
2. The principal shall review, and become familiar with, the provisions in the *School Act* that provide the legal framework governing student suspensions and expulsions.
3. The following circumstances may be considered as reasons for student suspension when all other disciplinary actions have been ineffective:
 - 3.1 Habitual neglect of duty.
 - ~~3.2~~ **3.2—Chronic truancy.**
 - 3.3 Open opposition to authority.
 - 3.4 Use of improper or profane language.
 - 3.5 Disruptive behaviour.
 - 3.6 Deliberate and wanton destruction of property.
 - 3.7 Violation of the Local School Board Committee’s smoking, alcohol and the use or possession of illegal drugs **procedure** policy. Actions that are injurious to the moral tone or well-being of the school or other individuals.

3.8 — Chronic non-completion of schoolwork.

4. A teacher may suspend a student for a class period subject to the following:
 - 4.1 The teacher confers with the principal prior to making the suspension;
 - 4.2 The teacher informs the student about the suspension, its consequences and the reasons the suspension is being given;
 - 4.3 The student is provided with the opportunity to offer an explanation for his/her action;
 - 4.4 The teacher directs the student to the principal to remain under the supervision of the school until the student's normal dismissal time from that class;
 - 4.5 The teacher reports all of the circumstances surrounding the suspension to the principal in writing;
 - 4.6 The teacher informs the parents of the suspension and the circumstances surrounding it as soon as possible; and
 - 4.7 The teacher recommends follow-up designed to resolve the issue which led to the suspension.

5. A principal may suspend a student from class, from school, or from riding on a school bus subject to the following:
 - 5.1 The principal shall confer with the affected staff members or other individuals involved with the student to gather information about the student's misbehaviour.
 - 5.2 The principal shall prepare a written record of all actions taken in regard to the incident.
 - 5.3 The principal will inform the student about the proposed suspension, its consequences and the reason the suspension is being considered.
 - 5.4 The student will be given an opportunity to offer an explanation for the behaviour.
 - 5.5 If the principal is of the opinion that a suspension is warranted, the principal will inform the student of the reasons for the suspension and the length of the suspension.
 - 5.6 The principal shall inform the parents by telephone of the suspension, including reasons and length, and shall immediately report in writing all the circumstances of the suspension to the parents with a copy to the superintendent.
 - 5.7 The principal shall, if requested, provide an opportunity to meet with the parents, and the student if the student is 16 years of age or older, to discuss the reasonableness of the suspension.

- 5.8 If the student is not to be reinstated within five school days of the date of suspension, the principal shall immediately report in writing all the circumstances of the suspension and provide a recommendation, ~~to the to the Local School Board Committee and to the Board office of the Superintendent.~~
- 5.9 The Principal may recommend that the board expel the student if the student has:
- 5.9.1 Displayed an attitude of wilful, blatant and repeated refusal to comply with the provisions of the *School Act*; or
- 5.9.2 Engaged in conduct that is injurious to the physical or mental well-being of others in the school.
- 5.10 The ~~Board Local School Board Committee~~ shall within ten school days after the date of the suspension either re-instate or expel the student.

6. Expulsion of Students

- 6.1 Upon receiving the report from the principal and the principal's recommendation as noted in procedure 5.8 above, the ~~Board Local School Board Committee~~ shall within ten school days after the date of the suspension either reinstate or expel the student. ~~If the chairperson of the Local School Board states that the committee does not wish to deal with the matter, the matter will be dealt with by the board. The Superintendent shall immediately contact the Chairperson of the Local School Board Committee to determine if the Local School Board will be proceeding with the hearing in accordance with the School Act and the procedures as outlined in sections 2, 3, and 4 below.~~
- 6.2 Prior to the ~~Board board~~ making a decision on the recommendation of the principal, the student's parents and the student if the student is 16 years of age or older, shall be advised of the date, time and location of the board meeting at which the decision will be made and of their right to make a representation to the ~~Board board~~ with respect to the principal's recommendation. The student and the student's parents will also be advised of their right to attend the hearing with, and be represented by legal counsel.
7. The procedure to be followed in conducting the hearing into the recommendation will be as follows:
- 7.1 The ~~Board Local School Board Committee chair or a designated member of the board~~ will chair the meeting; outline the purpose of the meeting and the procedure to be followed.
- 7.2 The principal will present the report documenting the details of the case and the recommendation to expel the student.

- 7.3 The student and the student's parents will be given an opportunity to respond to the information presented and to add any additional information that they feel is relevant.
 - 7.4 The ~~Board members of the Local School Board Committee~~ will have the opportunity to ask questions of clarification from both the principal and the student and the student's parents.
 - 7.5 ~~The Local School Board Committee will meet, without either the administration or the student and the student's parents present, to discuss the case and the recommendation.~~
 - 7.6 ~~Should the Local School Board Committee require additional information, both parties will be requested to return in order to provide the requested information.~~
 - 7.7 The ~~Board Local School Board Committee~~ will then make a decision to either reinstate or expel the student.
 - 7.8 The ~~Board's Local School Board Committee's~~ decision shall be communicated in writing to the student and the student's parents with copies being provided to the principal and the superintendent.
8. If the ~~Board's Local School Board Committee's~~ decision is to expel the student; the following information must be included in the letter to the student and the student's parents:
 - 8.1 The length of the expulsion, which must be greater than 10 school days.
 - 8.2 The educational program to be provided to the student and the name of the individual to be contacted in order to make the necessary arrangements.
 - 8.3 The right of the student and the student's parents to request a review of the decision by the Minister of Learning. The Minister's telephone number and the mailing address of the Minister's office should be provided.
 - 8.4 That if the student had completed two-thirds of a course or program, the student may write the final exam(s) and receive a grade for the course or program. It is the responsibility of the student to become informed regarding the time and place where the examination will be written
9. The Board ~~Local School Board Committee~~ may re-enrol a student that has been expelled.

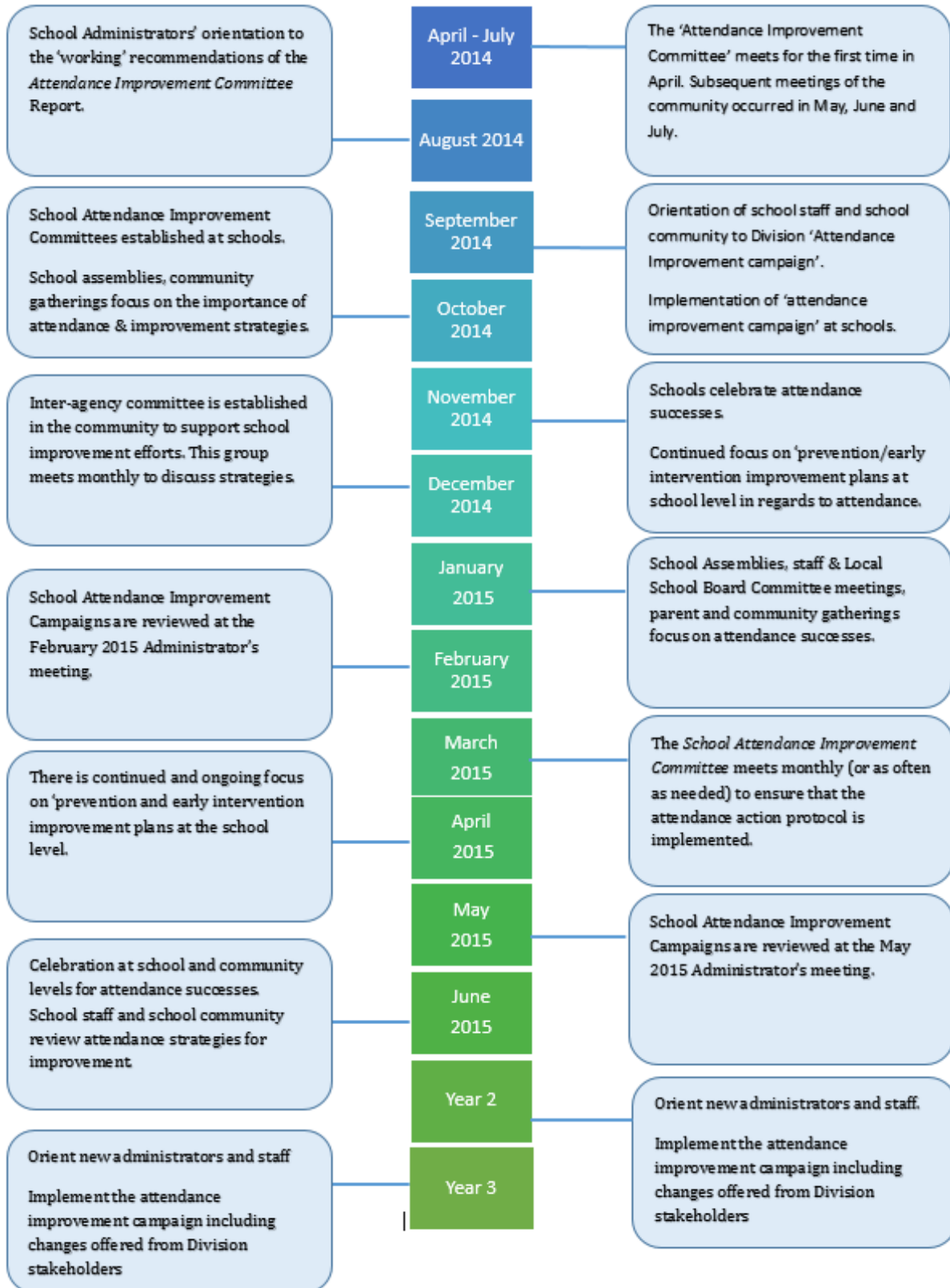
Required Action #29 – Attendance Improvement Budget

The Attendance Improvement Committee recommends that a budget line be created to provide yearly financial support at the Division and school levels in order to carry out ongoing attendance improvement initiatives. It is further recommended that the following line items be included in a ‘best-guess’ attendance improvement budget for the remainder of the 2014-2015 school year:

- Radio Advertising
- Newspaper Advertising
- Brochures
- Promotional Materials
- Yearly Certificates for gold, silver and diamond Awards
- Year-end Recognition for Schools
- School-based Attendance Initiative Funding
- *Attendance Committee* Travel/Expenses

Moving forward, the allocation of monies to support division-wide attendance improvement will need to be tracked, reviewed and adjusted on a yearly basis to align with the Division’s fiscal reporting requirements and long-term funding sustainability.

Attendance Improvement Initiative Timeline-at-a-Glance



Attendance Improvement Initiative Timeline

August-September 2014

Schools & School Administrators

- Review working with the required actions of the *Attendance Improvement Report* with school administrators.
- Layout key messages relating to the importance of school attendance “Every Day Counts ...” at first student assembly (Share common definition for chronic absence).
- Schools to establish a *School Attendance Committee* (group may consist of teachers, school administrator, parents, students, Elder and community members).
- Develop or build onto school-wide attendance incentive programs (refer to toolkit for ideas).
- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates will assist schools with a communications plan in relation to *Attendance Improvement Initiative* (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, and information for NSD61 website, NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters, Facebook and Twitter pages).
- School staff to work closely with literacy supervisors and leads, CTS/CTF Division principal and the FNMI Director of Education to ensure school programming is engaging and relevant.
- Familiarize staff with the *Attendance Action Protocol* as outlined in Required Action#13 of the *Attendance Improvement Committee Report*.
- At month end, schools to submit attendance information to Records Management Clerk (average daily school attendance, chronic absence, etc.).
- Use Community Engagement Framework to garner community support for *Attendance Improve Campaign* (i.e. this process could begin at the school’s first community engagement gathering and continue to be developed throughout the school year).

Central Office & Division Leadership

- Share work of the *Attendance Improvement Committee* with school administrators during New Teacher Orientation in August.
- Identify ‘chronic absenteeism’ as an issue and its immediate and long term impact on student achievement.
- Highlight the importance of tracking and monitoring of attendance; that absenteeism is routinely measured, reported and acted upon.
- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates will assist schools with a communications plan in relation to *Attendance Improvement Initiative* (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles and information for NSD61 website, NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters).
- Discuss and familiarize staff with the *Attendance Action Protocol* as outlined in Required Action#13 of the *Attendance Improvement Committee Report*.

- Explain what is included in the attendance toolkit and how to use it.

October 2014

Schools & School Administrators

- Layout key messages relating to the importance of school attendance “Every Day Counts ...” at second assembly with staff, students and parents.
- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates will assist schools with a communications plan in relation to *Attendance Improvement Initiative* (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, information for NSD61 website and NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters, Facebook and Twitter pages).
- *School Attendance Committee* creates a mechanism for gathering baseline data that could be used as a comparison for tracking attendance success.
- Work to create an Elder’s program to support attendance and achievement efforts.
- School administrators will be responsible and hold staff accountable for tracking and monitoring attendance and addressing issues when they arise.
- *School Attendance Improvement Committee* meets on a monthly basis (or as needed) to ensure that *Attendance Action Protocol* is being implemented.
- School staff and the *School Attendance Committee* work to develop a return-to-school transitioning plan for students who have a history of chronic absenteeism.
- School administrators will inform Local School Board Committees of attendance progress and successes monthly.
- Schools continue to reach out to the school community to support school attendance by organizing gatherings and opportunities for members to connect and dialogue about how attendance be improved. At the end of this gathering, another planning meeting is organized for the following month.
- The school administrator meets with key members of the community to talk about how best to organize monthly inter-agency meetings with a focus on school attendance, achievement and community wellness.
- Select schools administer ‘Tell Them From Me’ (TTFM) surveys. The fall/winter survey window is October 14 – December 5, 2014. The administration, TTFM School Coordinators and staff work together to glean insights from student data to improve programming.
- Annual Education Results Reports (AERR) to be completed by school and forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools identifying key attendance improvement strategies.
- Discussion commences between administrators, kindergarten teachers/instructors and the Supervisor of Student Services to develop strategy for improving kindergarten attendance.
- At month end, schools to submit attendance information to Records Management Clerk (average daily school attendance, chronic absence, etc.).

Central Office and Division Leadership

- Administrators reflect on school attendance ‘successes and challenges’ at the October Administrators’ Meeting.

- *Attendance Improvement Committee* seeks feedback from Northland School Division stakeholders on ‘working’ the required actions within the *Attendance Improvement Initiative – Every Day Counts Report*.
- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates will assist schools with a communications plan in relation to *Attendance Improvement Initiative* (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, information for NSD61 website, NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters).
- Central office staff designates to work with schools to make sure they monitor and track attendance properly and address issues when they arise.
- Central office staff designates to assist schools with Annual Education Results Report (AERR) are to be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools and the report must include key attendance improvement strategies).
- Supervisor of Student Services will assist schools to develop a kindergarten attendance strategy.
- Select schools administer ‘Tell Them From Me’ (TTFM) surveys – fall/winter survey window is October 14 – December 5, 2014. The administration, TTFM School Coordinator and staff work together to glean insights from student data to improve programming.

November-December 2014

Schools & School Administrators

- Continue to reinforce the importance of school attendance at assemblies.
- Continue to celebrate success stories at staff meetings, Local School Board Committee Meetings, assemblies, parent and community gatherings, newsletters, website, Facebook and Twitter.
- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates will assist schools with a communications plan in relation to *Attendance Improvement Initiative* (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, information for NSD61 website, NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters, Facebook and Twitter pages).
- School Administrators’ will be responsible and hold staff accountable for tracking and monitoring attendance and addressing issues when they arise.
- *School Attendance Improvement Committee* meets on a monthly basis (or as needed) to ensure that *Attendance Action Protocol* is being implemented.
- *Division Attendance Improvement Committee* seeks feedback from Northland School Division stakeholders on ‘working’ recommendations.
- At the monthly staff meeting, engage staff in an attendance strategy planning session with a focus on ‘What’s working?’ ‘What’s not working?’ – with the idea of reflecting on progress thus far and ‘twiggling’ in areas for improvement and effectiveness.
- Select schools administer ‘Tell Them From Me’ (TTFM) surveys – fall/winter survey window is October 14 – December 5, 2014. The administration, TTFM School Coordinators and staff work together to glean insights from student data to improve programming.
- The principal organizes an informal/formal gathering with parents and members of the community to discuss the school’s achievement and attendance successes and challenges.

- Discussion commences between administrators, kindergarten teachers/instructors and the Supervisor of Student Services to develop strategy for improving kindergarten attendance.
- Schools to submit attendance information to Records Management Clerk (average daily school attendance, chronic absence, etc.).
- The school administrator meets with key members of the community to formalize the establishment of an inter-agency group. The group will decide on setting a common meeting time once a month and venue.

Central Office and Division Leadership

- Communications Coordinator and central office staff designates continue to work with schools to develop an effective communications plan in relation to Attendance Improvement Initiative (creating posters, developing messages for radio and newspaper advertising, letters, brochures, pamphlets, news articles, information for NSD61 website, NSD61 newsletter, school websites and school newsletters, Facebook and Twitter pages).
- Central office staff designates to work with schools to ensure attendance is monitored and tracked and that absence issues are being addressed.
- Supervisor of Student Services works to assist schools with their kindergarten attendance strategy.
- Select schools administer ‘Tell Them From Me’ (TTFM) surveys – fall/winter survey window is October 14 – December 5, 2014. The administration, TTFM School Coordinators and staff work together to glean insights from student data to improve programming.
- Work with schools on providing school-based professional development in the area of ‘building a positive school climate’.

January-February 2015

School Administrators

- Continue to reinforce the importance of school attendance at assemblies.
- Continue to celebrate success stories at staff meetings, Local School Board Committee Meetings, assemblies, parent and community gatherings, newsletters, website, Facebook, Twitter.
- *Attendance Improvement Initiative* reviewed at February Administrators’ Meeting.
- School Administrators’ will be responsible and hold staff accountable for tracking and monitoring attendance and addressing issues when they arise.
- *School Attendance Improvement Committee* meets on a monthly basis (or as needed) to ensure that *Attendance Action Protocol* is being implemented.
- The principal organizes an informal/formal gathering with parents and members of the community to discuss the school’s achievement and attendance successes and challenges.
- The inter-agency group meet to develop strategies/initiatives to support attendance, achievement and community wellness efforts.
- Schools reflect on ways to improve on attendance improvement efforts at the school level.

Central Office and Division Leadership

- Central office staff designates to work with schools to make sure they monitor and track attendance properly and address issues when they arise.
- Establish a feedback system for ongoing input into streamlining and improving the division-wide attendance.
- Communicate with principals and the school communities our attendance successes with division-wide successes.
- *Attendance Improvement Initiative* reviewed at February Administrators' Meeting
- Communications Coordinator will work with schools to showcases successes in relation to student attendance.
- *Division Attendance Improvement Committee* submits the *Attendance Improvement Initiative – Every Day Counts Report* to the Northland Board for approval.

March-April 2015

School Administrators

- Continue to reinforce the importance of school attendance at assemblies.
- Continue to celebrate success stories at staff meetings, Local School Board Committee Meetings, assemblies, parent and community gatherings, newsletters, website, Facebook, Twitter.
- *School Attendance Improvement Committee* meets on a monthly basis (or as needed) to ensure that *Attendance Action Protocol* is being implemented.
- The principal organizes an informal/formal gathering with parents and members of the community to discuss the school's achievement and attendance successes and challenges.
- The inter-agency group meet to develop strategies/initiatives to support attendance, achievement and community wellness efforts.

Central Office and Division Leadership

- Central office staff designates continue to work with schools to ensure attendance is monitored and tracked and that there are interventions for absences.
- Establish a feedback system for ongoing input into streamlining and improving the division-wide attendance.
- Communicate with principals and the school communities our attendance successes with division-wide successes.
- Communications Coordinator will work with schools to showcases successes in relation to student attendance.

May-June 2015

School Administrators

- At Administrators' Meeting in May 2015, there is critical reflection on the attendance improvement efforts – 'What's working? What's Not Working?'
- Continue to reinforce the importance of school attendance at assemblies.
- Continue to celebrate success stories at staff meetings, Local School Board Committee Meetings, assemblies, parent and community gathering, newsletters, website or Facebook.

- School Administrators' will be responsible and hold staff accountable for tracking and monitoring attendance and addressing issues when they arise.
- *School Attendance Improvement Committee* meets on a monthly basis (or as needed) to ensure that *Attendance Action Protocol* is being implemented.
- The principal organizes an informal/formal gathering with parents and members of the community to discuss the school's achievement and attendance successes and challenges.
- The inter-agency group meet to develop strategies/initiatives to support attendance, achievement and community wellness efforts. This group participates in year-end celebrations at the school.
- Schools and students are rewarded with their attendance improvement efforts at year end celebrations.

Central Office and Division Leadership

- Central office staff designate continue to work with schools to ensure attendance is monitored and tracked and that there are interventions for absences.
- Establish a feedback system for ongoing input into streamlining and improving the division-wide attendance.
- Communicate with principals and the school communities our attendance successes with division-wide successes.
- Communications Coordinator will work with schools to showcases successes in relation to student attendance.

Year 2015-2016

- Orient new administrators and staff
- Implement the Attendance Improvement Initiative for the new school year including approved changes offered from division stakeholders

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Appendix 1

Procedure 301 – Student Attendance

Background

Regular attendance by students in all of their classes enhances their performance and contributes substantially to their education progress. While students have a right to access an educational program they also have a responsibility to attend classes regularly.

The *School Act* requires students to attend school regularly and punctually and identifies circumstances under which an absence may be deemed as excusable. The superintendent has been designated as the attendance officer for the division.

Procedures

1. The principal shall ensure that an accurate record of student attendance is kept for every student enrolled in the school.
2. Teachers will monitor the attendance of students on an ongoing basis.
3. It is the responsibility of the teacher to make every reasonable effort to inform the parent as soon as a student's attendance becomes a concern. This could be done by a telephone call or by sending a note home.
4. If a teacher judges the attendance of a student to be unacceptable, or if the student is absent 20% of the days in any one-month or more, the teacher will report this attendance information to the principal.
5. Once the principal receives a report of poor attendance on the part of a student, the principal will, in consultation with the teacher and/or school/ community liaison worker and/or parent and/or Local School Board Committee, take appropriate actions to attempt to improve the student's attendance.
6. If the local school attempts at improving a student's attendance fail, the principal shall report the case to the superintendent. This should happen no later than two months after the problem was first identified.
7. The superintendent will contact the parents of the student with poor attendance and inform them of their responsibilities and encourage them to ensure acceptable attendance on the part of their child. The superintendent shall also inform the parents of the consequences of the continuation of poor attendance by the student.
8. If after a reasonable amount of time, attendance remains at an unacceptable level, the matter may be referred to the Attendance Board or other appropriate authority.
9. The principal shall advise parents of the following:
 - 9.1 The need, if possible, to schedule medical, dental or other such related appointments at times that do not conflict with the regular hours of instruction.

- 9.2 That students are responsible to cover the material taken in class during their absence.
- 9.3 The need to phone or send a written explanation to the school to give reasons for the student's absence from class.

10. The following shall apply to students enrolled in high school programs:

- 10.1 Students who accumulate ten unexcused absences in a class shall be advised that they are in danger of not receiving credits in the class. The parents of the student and the superintendent shall also be notified in writing, that the student has accumulated ten unexcused absences.
- 10.2 A student who has been absent for over 30% of the days in a semester for any reason shall be eligible to receive credits for the courses only after a special review of their cases by the superintendent and principal.

BM: #21321/04 (Aug. 28/04)

Appendix 2

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE Sample Agenda

School: _____

Date: _____

Today's Meeting Focus (i.e. school attendance incentives, review of student absences and follow-up interventions etc.):

Person responsible for recording minutes and forwarding to Central Office _____

AGENDA:

1. Meeting Attendees
2. Review / Discuss Previous Meeting Minutes for follow-up actions
3. Report on Communication Messaging with the School Community and Community
 - a. Importance of Regular Attendance
 - b. Report on most recent inter-agency meetings by principal
 - c. Up and coming parent / community gatherings
4. Review / Discuss Current Attendance Successes
5. Review / Discuss Current Attendance Issues
 - a. General review of student red flags and follow-up actions needed and staff responsible
 - b. Are classroom and school attendance protocols working? If not, why not? Change or refine if necessary
 - c. Other
6. Future Actions of the Committee
 - a. Up and coming school events and parent and community gatherings – decide on messaging to students at assemblies, parents at school gatherings, community gatherings and events
7. Next Meeting
 - a. Set date, time and place