

Adopted, as amended, by the Board of Education at its Regular Meeting of August 24, 2010

(Amendments incorporated)

Subject: Resolution No. 106-8A2
Early Chronic School Absence Prevention
- Commissioner Norman Yee

WHEREAS: It is the goal of the District to make social justice a reality by diminishing the historic power of demographics as it relates to student achievement and keeping our promises to students and families; and

WHEREAS: Chronic absence, defined as a student missing 10% or more days of school including all absences regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused, contributes to lower student achievement starting in kindergarten. Chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in 1st grade for all children, especially in reading for Latino children. Among poor children, chronic absence in kindergarten predicted lower 5th grade achievement. The long term impact reflects the reality that poor children often lack the resources to make up for time on task and are more likely to face challenges (such as unreliable transportation, unstable housing, or lack of health care) that lead to chronic absence occurring again in subsequent years. Students do not have equal opportunities to learn when they are chronically absent from school; and

WHEREAS: Nationwide, one out of ten kindergarteners and first graders are chronically absent. Chronic absence can reach even higher levels affecting as many as a quarter of all K-3rd graders in a school district or half of the children in an elementary school. Chronic absence, however, is often overlooked because most schools only typically track data on average daily attendance and truancy (unexcused absence). Both can easily mask chronic absence especially among young children who are not likely to miss school without the knowledge of an adult who may call in an excuse. While chronic absence rates are higher and more intractable in secondary school, it is crucial to start addressing the problem among our youngest students, before they slip off track academically and poor attendance habits become entrenched; and

WHEREAS: In San Francisco, many students starting in elementary school are missing in excess of 10% of the school days. At least 16 (or 21% of) elementary schools have a chronic absentee student rate of 15% or higher. It reached as high as 39% at one school according to data collected for the school year 2009-10 effective March 26, 2010; and

WHEREAS: The District has an existing intervention program to address truancy caused by unexcused absences. While these interventions are important, they miss an opportunity to address attendance problems even earlier before children fall academically behind due to missing extended periods of school if all absences are counted; and

WHEREAS: Many Districts have utilized a variety of strategies to reduce chronic absents including: Track absences electronically; Calculate and publicly report the levels of chronic absence district-wide, by school, grade and subgroups; Ensure underperforming schools with high levels of chronic absence identify barriers to attendance and address issue in school improvement plans; Include chronic absence in data dashboards, school report cards and other forms of electronic communications; Create incentives for schools and administrators to improve attendance and reduce chronic absence; Invest in professional development regarding using chronic absence as an early warning sign; Invest in outreach counselors to support attendance work; and Encourage community and public agencies to target relevant resources to schools with high chronic absence levels; and

WHEREAS: Schools can reduce chronic absence through site based strategies. They can: Create an attendance data team to regularly review patterns of chronic absence by grade, classroom and sub-population; Offer attendance incentives school-wide; Educate parents that attendance is important starting in kindergarten and encourage families to help each other get to school; Reach out to chronically absent students and their families and find out barriers to attendance; Connect to community resources (such as after school, preschool, and health programs) that can address barriers to attendance; and Include strategies to improve attendance in annual school improvement plan; and

WHEREAS: A careful analysis of school level attendance and chronic absence data is especially essential because it can reveal pockets of chronic absence that can be addressed with programmatic responses that can have greater impact than approaching the problem individually through case management; and

WHEREAS: Many of our students are engaged in after school activities with community based organizations in their communities and often times the students and their families have developed close relations with community workers; and

WHEREAS: The District has begun implementing the use of School Loop as a communication tool between the schools, students and families. School Loop is currently developing a chronic absence trigger that would notify parents and teachers when a child is academically at risk due to chronic absence. School Loop has also created an after school professional role that would allow parents to give after school staff access to information about their child's homework, attendance and academic records so they could help to address a problematic attendance situation; and

WHEREAS: The Department of Children Youth and their Families (DCYF) is a close partner of the District to help all students become productive citizens and is ready to work with the District to reduce the number of chronic absentee students in the District; and

WHEREAS: The District is creating a Parent Engagement Plan in which educating parents about the importance of good school attendance can be incorporated; and

WHEREAS: Education of all children can be adversely affected when teachers divert attention to meet the needs of chronically absent children. And by addressing chronic absence the district can improve our Average Daily Attendance, which would increase resources available to all students; and

WHEREAS: The District does not have a centralized plan to address chronic absenteeism in elementary schools.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District requests the Superintendent of Schools to provide an annual analysis of patterns for elementary schools by school, grade and student population and to reduce the student chronic absentee rate to no more than 10% in any elementary school by the end of the 2012-13 school year. A pilot program shall be created to focus on schools under the Superintendent Zone during the 2010-11 school year to reduce the chronic absentee rate in each participating school by at least 5%. Pilot schools will be selected based on, among other factors, the availability of School Improvement Grant funds, existing SFUSD resources, and/or external community resources. At the end of 2013, the District will reassess what should be its target for chronic absence reduction given progress made over the past three years; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That the Superintendent is requested to ask each pilot elementary school site in the Superintendent Zone to create a Student Attendance Monitoring Team. The team will review data on chronic absences by grade, classroom and, if possible, by neighborhood of residence and perform the initial analysis of barriers to attendance faced by their parents and students. Based upon that analysis of their own attendance data as well as known best practices, each school will develop a numeric target and plan for reducing chronic absence that is incorporated into its school improvement plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the District shall partner with our community partners and after school programs to help parents carry out their responsibility to get children to school, exploring the use of School Loop as a tool; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED: That the District will take steps to ensure that the ability to easily produce regular reports on attendance data including chronic absence is a feature of any new Student Information System purchased by the District.

6/8/10

8/24/10

Please Note:

- Referred to the Curriculum and Program and Budget and Business Services Committees by order of the Chair on 6/8/10.
- Taken up by the Curriculum and Program Committee on 8/16/10. Forwarded to the Board with a positive recommendation by general consent of the Committee.
- Taken up by the Budget and Business Services Committee on 8/19/10. Forwarded to the Board with a positive recommendation, as amended, by general consent of the Committee.
- Adopted, as amended, on 8/24/10.