



TO: All Teachers

CC: Garth Harries, Superintendent; Imma Canelli, Deputy Superintendent; All Administrators; David Cicarella, NHFT President

RE: Teacher Attendance

DATE: January 8, 2016

There is currently a drive to improve student attendance through the “Attendance Matters” campaign. You may have seen signs up throughout our schools and city highlighting the importance of students’ attendance. It is important for students to show up to school every day ready to learn. It is equally important that when students show up to school they have the very best educators present and ready to engage them in purposeful and meaningful instruction.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you that attendance matters for educators just as much as it matters for students. Your job is a difficult one, there is no denying that, but it is also the most important one: As educators, you cause the learning to happen. When you-primed with your experience, training, and love for students - are with your students there is no limit on the learning that can occur. When you aren’t there students miss your presence which has an impact on their education and ultimately far beyond our classrooms.

At the beginning of this school year we began to look deeply at the attendance of all educators in our district. This includes teachers, administrators, and other support personnel. This letter on teacher attendance is one of many that we are sending to all educators and support staff. Separate communications and guidelines are being sent to administrators and other school support staff (paraprofessionals, security, etc). During the first 73 days of school, the average teacher attendance rate is 95%. However, as we look more closely at the number of teachers in the district that are chronically absent using the same metric that we use for students (less than 90% attendance), we have approximately 100 teachers that would be considered “chronically absent.” Concretely, this means that about 100 teachers in our district have been out a minimum of 8 days so far this year. This amounts to almost 2 full weeks of missed student instruction and we have not reached the halfway point of this school year. We will continue looking at such data and work to find supportive ways in which to improve attendance for all educators. Attendance matters for everyone!

At the start of the New Year, January 2016, all teachers covered by the NHFT contract (including school counselors, psychologists, social workers, coaches, library media specialists, etc. as well as “out-of-classroom teachers”) are expected to:

Report ALL absences from school using the AESOP system *even if you do not require a substitute*. We will be fully utilizing our AESOP system to record and report ALL teacher absences.

As school based administrators look at teacher attendance data, they may call individual teachers with a high amount of absences in to have a conversation regarding the reasons for such excessive absences. The first conversations are to determine if there are illnesses or extenuating circumstances in which the Principal or HR can help to support a teacher and the students. If there are no extenuating circumstances then principals may be monitoring attendance, having follow up conversations with the teacher, and ultimately involve HR if absences do not improve.

Our district educator attendance committee is looking at our current policy around substitute teachers and proposing ways in which we could improve the quality of our substitute teacher pool and ensure that in instances of teacher absence there are effective individuals in classrooms focused on engaging instruction.

After January 1, administrators will be provided with accurate teacher attendance data on a regular basis as well as the means for principals to access this information on their own.

When leaders recognize patterns in attendance behaviors, they will be addressing those in a respectful and supportive manner, while making certain legitimate attendance situations and extenuating circumstances are filtered out. The goal is to ensure there are effective educators in our schools and classrooms everyday as student learning is the priority of all of us here in the NHPS system

“Attendance Matters” for everyone, both students and adults, and New Haven Public Schools is committed to taking steps to ensure our students have the best educators in front of them on a daily basis.