Overview of previous discussion for chronic absenteeism

- Emphasize importance of early childhood education - SUperintendent mentions that this was a big topic in early literacy group because early childhood is building block of early literacy
- Superintendent discusses that making school curriculum culturally relevant and more engaging is a trending topic and is a necessary topic to address.
- **Carol mentions that Ana Berdecia has done a lot of work on making school more culturally relevant. Much of it is focused on early childhood - what can we do for higher grades?**
- School district is still working on translating major documents - Spanish, French, and English. Open to suggestions on how to effectively do this.
- Perspectives of chronically absent stuents - a student who is unable to attend school on a regular basis. Chronically absent doesn't sound like that much. People don't see them or their kids as chronically absent, but sometimes they are. Students and families are also surprised to know what chronically absent means. Chronic absenteeism is 10% of year which equals two days a month.People do not understand how much this adds up over your school career. A full year of instruction+
- Chronic absenteeism is also unexcused absneces only there are only excused absneces for medical with a doctors note, religious observancess, court appearances. Children who are suspended multiple times count as chronically absent.
- **Last year, Terrance's team developed plan for addressing attendance. Will discuss this plan more.**
- Mercer Street Friends is looking to implement a program into Rivera Middle School re: chronic absenteeism (see below).
- Challenges - access to medical services may cause chronic absenteeism
- Difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy - truancy is more punitive in that they are skipping school and committing low level crimes. Truancy leads to the juvenile justice system.
- No determination between chronic absenteeism. We know chronic absenteeism leads to truancy. Reducing chronic absenteeism reduces truancy. Chronic absenteeism is highest in certain cycles during educational career. Transition years (pre - k to elementary school, especially in K and 1st grade). Stokes earlychildhood center has over 50% chronic absenteeism rate and culture supports it. From 5th to 6th grade it spikes again. From 8th to 9th grade it spikes again. Seniors are highest in high school. 10th and 11th grades tend to be good.
- From 5th to 6th students are coming from their neighborhood school to a big school. Fear and trepidation involved in that. Kids have difficulty in transportation, some are walking a larger distance to school. Some special education stuents also have transportation issues.
- Still trying to get a handle on why 8th to 9th grade there is a jump. Superintendent says they used to measure absenteeism by average daily attendance.
- Big part is to just raise the awareness and monitor individual kids. Every school had a list of students returning to them of kids who were chronically absent in the previous year.

- **Tracking the data (part of service mapping)**
- **University of Minnesota has a research based program that they have come out with called check and connect. This is a formalized mentorship program. They meet with student 1 - 4 hours a week, ask them how week is going, how are classes, are you going to classes, why or why not, check in with parents, check their grades. This has drastically reduced absenteeism in many different communities (this is a plug and play thing). Piloting in Rivera Middle School. 14 teachers signed up to be mentors. A few community members are also interested and able to come into the school. One mentor per student. They are starting with 20 students. Distric plan is to have an attendance team at every school.**
- **Check and connect - Call, visit, notes**
- **For organizations - whatever school you are in, figure out how to connect with a prinicpal and work on absenteeism. Peer pressure, bullying, and social media are other challenges. All of the peer pressure and bullying is magnifed because of social media.**
- More of a reason to track data - it is very important to check with each child. Service agencies should make sure that they are taking many steps to make sure they are getting into home.
- **Terrance is forcing change of mindset in attendance officers. They need to be able to assess their environment.**
- **May be opportunity to help train attendance officers - there is assitance needed in that area.**
- Challenge: parentified child
- Truant officers and attendance officers are two very different things.
- Trying to implement a team mindset (all staff) to help address absenteeism. This tries to keep in mind that all students are different.
- Terrance working on attendance guide that gives examples based on research of who should be on team, what are best practices, and will soon have board approved attendance guide.
- GO back and look atr how k - 8 model changed transition year chronic absenteeism performance.
- Activities play a major role in absenteeism - many activities cut may increase chronic absenteeism.
- Every single school has a partner.
- **Parent involvement and chronic absenteeism - if you don't have parents who are involved with their kids. Parent policy council, parent groups, etc. It's important to both kids and parents that someone in the school cares. Important to eliminate fear parents have of walking into high school and teach parents how to effectively communicate with their school. Fear in discrepancies in articulation and educational attainement.**
- Parent involvement drops off as kids get older in every single grade.
- Make sure Trenton data is up to date in terms of reaching guardian. Phone calls go out at 10 am for absent students with no call.
- Trenton has parent portal where parents can see attendance data.

- **How can Trenton be creative and current in reaching parents? Need strategy for increasing parental involvement and communicating information.**
- Middle school is where Mercer Street Friends is seeing "self - sufficiency" in students because of parental situation. Important for school district to be concientious of the times and think about we define parental engagement.
- Superintendent indicates they have not communicated new K learning standards that will make parents understand how important K is in terms of early literacy.
- Parents struggling with how to help kids with HW - many parents in Trenton did not finish high school. It makes parents unable to communicate importance of what they are doing.
- **There is a daycare attitude about school in general and after school programs. Child is there because of content of what they are receiving.**
- All define and raise awareness on reducing chronic absenteeism.
- Making connection between academic achievement is a huge message. Suspension is not a corrective measure. Suspensions, absenteeism, and academic achievement.
- Strategy for reducing absenteeism - El Sistema. Intensive and intentionally pro - social orchestra. Reach out to Carol about El Sistema. Are kids participating in programs showing good attendance rates??? We should track how program participant affects attendance. Maintaining fidelity of students around the year (you go in season but also go out of season). Maintaining continuity over summer may also be more helpful.
- G9 academy - help kids with summer transition from 8 to 9.
- Help analyze data properly
    - Children's Home Society starts at early head start.
- Are children attending regularly in pre - school who did or did not have early head start? Pre school to K?
- Connecting the city - are kids getting early head start to pre k and k to track and see what their attendance is.
- Peer mentor program for critical transition periods that will take on one or two mentors and keep in contact with them. - Trenton Prevention Policy Board is already working on this.
- How many kids have access to head start programs - do we have the capacity and spaces to accomadate head start? We need to figure out how to increase head start program participation.
- Meditation and mindfulness is very helpful in academic achievement.
- Inventory of after school programs and analyze the strengths of their particular problems that can be scaled up and expanded to a city for creation of more successful after school programs. Do the programs have good attendance rates????
- How are we communicating to children what the end goal is of going to school? Career planning and exposure at earlier ages. Connecting with city departments about what the job market is looking like in the next 10 to 15 years so we can have children thinking about what they are going to study. Building footprints to tomorrow.
- Fear of success is just as prevalent as the fear of failure especially in communities like Trenton.
- Programs need to know how to track their data correctly.
- Looking to get social service providers more involved in this process.