

BOARD MEMO

Date: February 18, 2021
For ACTION _____
For INFORMATION X
Board Agenda: Yes X
No _____

FROM: Kennetra Wood, Executive Director of Equity and Alternative Programs
Clinton Page, Ed.S, Chief of Accountability and Research

THROUGH: Dr. Julie Crawford, Ed.D., Chief of Student Services and Equity
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: MTSS and SEAL First Semester Analysis

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
Goal 3: Student Accessibility and Support

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 1: Reopening of School
Focus Area 5: Academic Disparities

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY:

MTSS including Restorative Practices and PBIS
Chronic Absenteeism among Hispanic Students

SUMMARY:

Our schools have been intentional and focused on the mitigation of Quarter 1 disparities with regard to chronic absenteeism and grade distribution since November 2020. While data on these indicators of grades and chronic absenteeism remain largely unchanged from the first quarter, we do see student growth in other data sources through mechanisms such as the Quarterly Chats with schools. An analysis of Quarter 2 data on chronic absenteeism and student grade distribution was conducted, showing little change in both chronic absenteeism and student grades from Quarter One. Chronic absenteeism remained driven by high absenteeism on asynchronous learning days (Monday). Higher rates of absenteeism and grades of F at the secondary level continued to disproportionately impact Hispanic, Black, English Learner (EL), and Students with Disabilities (SWD) students.

BACKGROUND:

Nationally, the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the continuity of learning and social-emotional development opportunities for students in schools has crossed all race,

BOARD MEMO

gender, ability, and socio-economic and regional demographics. However, it has also served to widen already existing inequities within education for traditionally underserved students. The impact on learning loss is compounded for students with learning challenges associated with special needs, limited English proficiency and other risk factors.

As schools prepare to reopen in-person learning for some students, the persistence of the pandemic's critical health and safety concerns requires schools to implement Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (SEAL) strategies through the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to address the needs of the whole child whether in-person or virtual. The Board Brief on December 18, 2020 provided an update to the Board regarding grade and chronic absenteeism quarter one student data and refinements, adjustments, and next-steps for the division. This Board Memo and attachments provides an update to the quarter one grades and chronic absenteeism data by comparing it to quarter two data, COVID-19 Brief Screener data, and current practices and refinements in place within MTSS and SEAL to address the needs of the whole student and to reduce current disparities.

Key Findings

- The division's overall rate of chronic absenteeism (percentage of students absent 10% or more of school days) for Q2 was 19%, up from 17% for Q1. High rates of absenteeism continue to be driven by high rates of absenteeism during asynchronous (Monday) learning days (40% chronically absent) compared to synchronous (Tuesday through Friday) learning days (10% chronically absent).
- Q2 grade distributions were similar when compared to Q1. The ratio of students receiving Ds/Fs/Is remained elevated at the secondary level as was seen in Q1.
- Across chronic absenteeism and student grades, Hispanic, Black, EL, and SWD students remained disproportionately impacted. For example, at the secondary level, the increase in the ratio of grades of F compared to Q1 remained largest for high school ELs (35%), high school Hispanic (33%), and high school SWD (28%) students.
- COVID-19 Brief Screener data showed students reporting elevated rates of avoiding reminders of the current pandemic and its emotional toll, and reporting symptoms of heightened emotional arousal and reactivity (ex. easily upset, argumentative, difficulty concentrating, trouble sleeping). Seventeen percent of students completing the screener fell in the recommended range for consideration of targeted or intensive interventions at the school level.

Refinements, Adjustments and Action Steps

- Development and implementation of SEAL Mondays to provide students who have an identified high level of academic and/or social-emotional with an opportunity for in-person interventions
- Research and adoption of a universal social-emotional screening tool for implementation in the 2021-22 school year
- Inclusion of evidence-based trauma-informed strategies within the SEAL curriculum for all schools, as well as the implementation of evidence-based trauma-responsive programs for students with targeted or intensive needs

BOARD MEMO

- Development of additional recommendations for emergency guidance on grading for secondary students due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Continue Phase I of MTSS Quick Guide roll out through ongoing professional learning, guidance and support via school leadership and the MTSS liaisons
- Phase II MTSS consistency and cohesion of school based processes training
- Phase II development of division-wide progress monitoring system

School teams will continue to examine student progress data to improve the efficacy of targeted supports and identify high-leverage interventions.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review this information to inform future budgetary and programmatic decisions.

IMPACT:

These data, along with ongoing implementation meetings and feedback forums, continue to inform next-steps and refinement areas within the Virtual PLUS+ implementation.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. PowerPoint - MTSS and SEAL First Semester Analysis
2. Q2 Chronic Absenteeism Analysis
3. Q2 Elementary Student Grade Distribution Analysis
4. Q2 Secondary Student Grade Distribution Analysis

REFERENCES:

1. December 18, 2020 - Board Brief: Q1 Chronic Absenteeism and Student Grade Distribution

CONTACT:

Clinton Page, clinton.page@acps.k12.va.us