**Management Responses and Commitments**
**re: Student Attendance Internal Audit Report 2023-2024**

Compiled by:
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For clarity, on the page numbered v:

"School attendance is a key responsibility performed district-wide by designated personnel at every site; this is commonly entrusted to the school Attendance Technician (AT), who receives support, guidance, and assistance from the school's Office Manager and Office Assistant"

The Office Assistant role is allotted to K-8 and Middle Schools over 750 students. Attendance staff is full time but are only 10 month employees outside of high school settings

"The district has two systems that support the recording of students' attendance: Synergy, used by the school's personnel, and Parent Vue, which facilitates a parent's communication with their child's school(s). Both systems are independent of each other and do not automatically upload or populate the entered communication between them."

The district uses a Student Information System (SIS), called Synergy, to record student attendance. School personnel enter and maintain daily and period attendance records through interaction with various entry methods according to their job role type (teacher, attendance technician, office manager). Synergy also offers a parent portal called ParentVUE which facilitates communication between school staff and parents. ParentVUE also allows parents to self-submit excused absence reasons, in lieu of phone messages or handwritten communication to school offices. Office staff then must review and approve those entries before they are uploaded to the system to excuse an absence.

Page 1:

"The Department of Education provides funding for most Full-Time Enrolled (FTE) students; the amount of funding varies based on the school level of each student. These funds are calculated by EDS using a formula based on the cumulative number of minutes, hours, and days of a fiscal year. Accurate documentation of students' attendance and their supporting documentation is essential for the district's funding."

Kindergarten students are funded at .5 FTE while students in grades 1-12 are 1.0 FTE (Full Time Equivalency.) Assuming "EDS" is referencing ADE, funding is based on enrolled days over the first 100 days of school.

"Synergy is also the source of student information which enables other applications to interface with and provide additional functionality such as Food Services, Student Finance – via Intouch, Parent Link, School City, Transportation, etc.2 Additionally, information entered into Parent Vue does not auto-populate into the student's records in Synergy."2

ParentVUE is a parent portal, provided as part of the Synergy SIS, that allows parents to view information about their student's school, grades, and related information. It also facilitates parent and staff communication and allows parents to submit excused absence reasons.
ParentLink is a separate messaging system, now branded Finalsite, which is used for bulk parent and/or staff communication by TUSD via phone, e-mail or text message.

Page 2:

"Any late arrivals, whether students or parents dropping off, are required to sign the front desk form to document their presence. The information from the presence document is entered into Synergy to update the student's attendance records."

This document is referred to as the sign-in/sign-out log and is used to document students who are late to school/leaving early. These tardies are recorded in Synergy for documenting missed instruction but not reported to the State.

Page 4:

"Table 1"

97.5% of TUSD students are registered for 2023-2024 using online registration, and their registration document is viewable within Synergy. With no school or specific student records cited, we can use the original ADE audit registration document findings for comparison.

Missing birth certificate 2017: 1 of 100, 2018: 3 of 100, 2019: 2 of 100
Missing immunization 2017: 1 of 100, 2018: 1 of 100, 2019: 2 of 100
Missing residency 2017: 28 of 100, 2018: 22 of 100, 2019: 17 of 100
Missing residency reaffirmation: 2017: 18 of 100, 2018: 16 of 100, 2019: 8 of 100

"PRESCHOOL: Some sites offer preschool programs (2.5 hours in the AM and PM) where preschool staff handle the registration of their new students. Unfortunately, the staff enrolling

new students do not collect the required paperwork at the time of enrollment. ATs are then tasked with contacting parents of newly enrolled preschooler to obtain missing registration Documents."

Preschool registration is outside the scope of attendance/registration staff scope. Staff are required to register PS students that continue on to KG as new student enrollments.

"Elementary through High School – Parents are encouraged to register their children online. One the child is registered ATs must follow up with parents to ensure required documents are obtained."

Parent registrations must be accepted whether parents upload required documents at the time registration is completed or not. Staff must then leverage reports showing missing documentation to follow-up with parents to obtain any missing documents.

"Registration processes vary across sites: At some high school sites, registration is done by registration staff, while at other sites, it is handled by Attendance Technicians."

Registrars', only present at the high school level, job description includes oversight of the attendance office, the autonomy of the attendance staff varies by individual site/staffing.

" Additionally, depending on the type of enrollment the site offers, some require parents to email their student's site Ambassador to enroll the child."

All schools should be assisting parents with registration, including directing them to School choice if it is for a placement only grade level at their site.

Page 5:

"Certified Copies of Student's Birth Certificate: In the analyzed random sample, five I-94 forms were examined. Out of the five reviewed, were missing the Federal stamp."

What was the number out of five?

"Language test (PHLOTE):
- Eight out of 87 forms found in student folders had English noted as the main language spoken at home, rendering this form a duplication of effort."

The Home Language Survey is required by ADE for all students new to TUSD, regardless of their primary language being English.

Page 6:

"Table 2"

With no school or specific student records cited, we can use our 22-23 H&M audit for comparison.

1. For five of 15 elementary and junior high attendance records reviewed, absences were not reported correctly, resulting in a net understatement of 3.0 absences.

| Student Name | School | Date | Absence Claimed | Absence Calculated | Over/(under) statement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Redacted | Grijalva Elementary | 11/28/22 | 0 | 0.5 | (0.5) |
| Redacted | Grijalva Elementary | 11/10/22 | 0.5 | 1 | (0.5) |
| Redacted | Vesey Elementary | 11/9/22 | 0 | 0.5 | (0.5) |
| Redacted | Robert Naylor K-8 | 11/7/22 | 0.5 | 1 | (0.5) |
| Redacted | Wakefield Middle | 11/15/22 | 0 | 1 | (1.0) |

"Student Withdrawals:
- Forty-nine had the withdrawal code changed but no signature in
the changed code section.
- Twenty-two contained no signatures from the processor.
- One-hundred and twenty-five were signed by the AT processing
the request.
- Three had Parent/Garding signatures.
- Three of the forms had illegible signatures.
- Eight where missing the Withdrawal Type
- Four had no "Last Date" entered in the form.
- Sixteen had information whited out or crossed out without
acknowledgment from the corrector."

Parent/Guardian signatures can be obtained if the parent is present when requesting withdrawal, they would not be present in the case of a 10-day drop or phone notification.

Page 7:

"Student referred to Dropout Prevention:
- Parent's Vue is updated at the end of the day by most sites."

Parent-submitted attendance must be reviewed daily, nothing is required to update ParentVUE itself.

"- Students with excessive absences are supposed to be referred to
student retention (student equity and dropout prevention).
Of the analyzed sample, of 120 student records, only three
contained comments in their student contact log noting the
student had been referred to the Drop Out Prevention staff."

Dropout prevention have their own reports for targeting students for intervention. Sites are encouraged to contact them for assistance with chronic absence issues, but the department should drive their own process using the Synergy data the site has entered.

Page 9:

"CONDITION: ATs and selective office staff have accesses and rights in Synergy to view and modify; student's information; they are not limited to their designated school."

ATs can View the entire district but only Update/Edit their assigned school site.

"Potential glitch within Synergy:
    -    When registering a student, even minor changes, triggers the system to
start over."

All screens in OLR must be confirmed to re-submit, even if making a change on just one.

"Parents may excuse their child two weeks in advance through Parent
Vue and update absences to excused for up to the previous three days."

Two weeks in advance, but no absences can be excused retroactively from ParentVUE

Page 10:

"Example: Two different ATs, at different school sites, shared that
one user had 56 entries.
- Two families had entered attendance for the whole year."

A ticket has been submitted with Edupoint, the vendor, to resolve the future-dated entry limit.

"Parent Vue does not auto-populate information entered by the parent into the corresponding student's file."

Correct, staff must review any parent submitted absence reasons.

"There are no notifications/alerts to inform the ATs that there are parent messages in they system."

This a good suggestion, we can request an alert for when there are parent submitted absence reasons pending.

"Several ATs shared that they can sign in, through Parent Vue, as the parent of any students."

Attendance staff provides access to ParentVue and can view the parent's account to assist with online registration. This provides the same data access level as they have directly on the system.

Page 12:

"- Robo Calls go out 2 hours after the school bell rings. Several of the ATs commented that there was not sufficient time, to update the teacher's attendance, enter students from the signin/ sign-out form, check messages in Parent Vue, emails, and voice messages in the dedicated line, while continuing to
Observations
13
- attend walk-ins, prior to the automated system calling parents informing them of their child's absence."

Notification to parents of a student absent from school within 2 hours is a state requirement. The introduction of parent-submitted attendance at all schools at the beginning of the 23-24 school year was aimed at reducing the time spent on the phone at this crucial time of the day for attendance staff.

Page 17:

"Establish and maintain a retention schedule as stipulated by the State of Arizona's General Record Retention Schedule."

Student records is invited to present at both weekly recurring meetings and staff PD days on these guidelines. However, Attendance staff at the K-8 level is off contract one day after students are done and return ten days before students return. Records clean-up at the end of the year would be aided by having staff present for non-attendance days following student's departure.

Corrective actions:

Staffing at the K-8 level for more than one day beyond student exit would aid in properly preparing permanent records for departing students and ensure time for proper destruction of non-permanent documents beyond their retention period. This initiative is planned for the of the 24-25 school year.

Leveraging technology to allow attendance more time for direct parent contact regarding attendance issues is the driving force behind using parent submitted attendance via ParentVUE introduced District-wide in 23-24. This is aimed at reducing manual data entry with it's accompanying increased chance of errors, and to leave staff more time to resolve unexcused absences through timely contact with parents.

Piloted during the second semester of the 23-24 school year, a Synergy app called KioskVUE was utilized at 4 secondary schools to eliminate the daily sign-in/sign-out sheet that staff currently uses to manually calculate tardies versus absences, which must also be manually entered for each student in Synergy. This process would instead allow students to scan in to update Synergy directly. This alleviates lines at the crucial beginning of the day, when office staff has to update attendance data before attendance calls go out within the mandated time window.