



THE CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL HANDBOOK

**A Collaborative Effort of the
Cherokee County School District and the
Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee**

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction 3
Belief Statements 4
Underlying Causes/Reasons for School Absenteeism and Truancy 5
Protocol Statements for SY2005-06..... 6
Status Report: Protocol Statement #1 w/Action Steps..... 7
Status Report: Protocol Statement #2 w/Action Steps..... 8
Status Report: Protocol Statement #3 w/Action Steps..... 9
Status Report: Protocol Statement #4 w/Action Steps..... 10
Status Report: Protocol Statement #5 w/Action Steps..... 11
Status Report: Protocol Statement #6 w/Action Steps..... 12
Status Report: Protocol Statement #7 w/Action Steps..... 13
Goals for SY2005-06 14
Appendix A: Statutory Responsibilities..... 15
Appendix B: Statutory Language Requiring Attendance Protocol Committees..... 16-17
Appendix C: Georgia’s Compulsory Attendance Law (§ 20-2-690.1)..... 18
Appendix D: School Board Policy Regarding “Absences and Excuses” (JBD)..... 19-22
Appendix E: The Cherokee County Truancy Panel..... 23-24
Appendix F: CCSD Student Attendance Rates..... 25

CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

HB1190 (2004) as an Answer to the Federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) Requirements

HB1190 was passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 2004 as a means of assisting the Georgia Department of Education in complying with requirements found in the Federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation (2002). Within NCLB, all states were charged with establishing a single accountability system by which local schools/school districts would be deemed to Meet/Not Meet “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP).

Along with a standardized, statewide assessment, which has served as the primary indicator for AYP, all states were required to designate a “Second Indicator” by which individual schools were also assessed. In the State of Georgia, this “Second Indicator” for AYP was declared as **Student Attendance**. Student attendance was designated as a high priority for schools/school districts due to the research-based correlations between good school attendance and high student achievement, and poor school attendance and low student achievement. Consequently, in the State of Georgia, each individual school (as a whole) continues to be assessed on this indicator, with the following rubric serving as the “school grade designations” relative to appropriate rates of student attendance:

Descriptor	Designation
Schools with 5% or less of students absent 15 days or more in a given school year.	Exemplary
Schools with 6%-14% of students absent 15 days or more in a given school year.	Acceptable
Schools with more than 15% of students absent 15 days or more in a given school year.	Unacceptable

While the “attendance-based” designations began in Georgia prior to the passage of HB1190, the Georgia Department of Education recognized the necessity of local schools/school districts involving school and community stakeholders in addressing the issue of student truancy. Accordingly, statutory requirements relative to truancy intervention was established in HB1190, and these provisions called for the creation of Attendance Protocol Committees.

The Creation of Attendance Protocol Committees

Pursuant to statutory requirements found in HB1190 (2004), every school district in the State of Georgia was required to establish an “Attendance Protocol Committee.” Relative to these requirements, the Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee has been established and will continue to assist the Cherokee County School District with ongoing efforts to eliminate truancy and improve overall student attendance. Consequently, in meeting its statutory requirements, this committee has completed the following tasks, which further supports applicable School District policies, programs and procedures:

- Established appropriate representation of community stakeholders on the committee;
- insured the coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues;
- produced and adopted a student attendance protocol for the local school district; and,
- provided a copy of the student attendance protocol to each agency, official or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents/guardians with respect to student attendance.

CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE BELIEF STATEMENTS

The Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee recognizes the following belief statements relative to student absenteeism and truancy:

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- 1) Students do not learn when they are absent from school. They miss critical instruction for understanding key concepts and fall behind quickly in completing assignments. Good school attendance often correlates positively to good academic achievement.
- 2) Students who are truant from school often drop out of school later. Dropping out limits students' future alternatives, both in getting a higher education and getting a job.
- 3) Coming to school every day, being on time, and completing daily school assignments are all job-related skills. Students who learn to be regular in their school attendance and complete their schoolwork on time are more prepared to be regular in their work attendance and more able to complete their work duties as adults.

INCLUSION OF STAKEHOLDERS

- 4) Schools/School Districts must work with students, parents, and other school stakeholders to establish high expectations for students relative to school attendance, and work on resolutions to the issues surrounding truancy.
- 5) Schools/School Districts must work with school stakeholders to establish viable truancy interventions such as incentive and mentoring programs.
- 6) Parents must be involved in the process of improving student truancy since “parents, guardians or other persons who have charge of the child” are ultimately responsible for that child’s attendance in school.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

- 7) Parents must reinforce the importance of good school attendance and make every effort to send their child to school on a regular basis.
- 8) The State Board of Education must develop policy that defines truancy in accordance with the State’s compulsory attendance laws.
- 9) The State Department of Education, working in accordance with State Board of Education Policy, must develop rules consistent with current “Adequate Yearly Progress” accountability as outlined in the Federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation.
- 10) The School District must develop local policy that defines truancy in accordance with the State’s compulsory attendance laws and subsequent State BOE policy and rules.
- 11) The School District must work with each of their local schools in identifying causes and solutions for truancy.
- 12) The School District must expect local schools to operate under the same, consistent student attendance expectations and procedures.
- 13) The School District must implement procedures by which students may be adjudicated for truancy and/or parents may be investigated for educational neglect related to their child’s school truancy.
- 14) School Principals and leadership committees within the local school play a pivotal, primary role in improving student attendance by frequently communicating the expectations to students, parents and staff.
- 15) Local schools must employ research-based “best practices” aimed at improving student attendance, and ultimately, raising the level of student achievement.
- 16) Local schools must keep accurate data to reflect students’ excused and unexcused absences, as well as tardies and early checkouts.
- 17) The Cherokee County Truancy Panel will only review/intervene in truancy cases that have involved documented unexcused absences, tardies and early checkouts.
- 18) The School District will only submit truancy cases to the Juvenile Court following previously unsuccessful interventions by School Counselors and School Social Workers.
- 19) The School District will only submit truancy cases to the State Court following previously unsuccessful interventions by the Cherokee County Truancy Panel, or that involve extraordinary circumstances involving a student’s truancy record.

CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE UNDERLYING CAUSES/REASONS FOR SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

The Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee for Cherokee County recognizes the following causes/reasons for student absenteeism and truancy:

STUDENT-RELATED CAUSES

- Student Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Ignorance of Attendance Policy/Compulsory Attendance Law
- Physical Ill-Health
- Emotional Ill-Health
- Lack of Personal Incentive
- General Apathy
- Influence of Truant Peers/Friends
- Lack of Proficiency
- Working at Low Achievement Levels
- Poor Influence of Siblings
- Transition Struggles

SCHOOL-RELATED CAUSES

- Inconsistent Policies Relative to Absences
- Meaningless Penalties/Consequences for Absenteeism
- Limited Cultural Tolerance for Minorities
- Poor Teacher Attitudes Toward Students
- Limited Personal Support by School Personnel
- Low Expectations Toward Student Achievement
- Unsafe Environments
- Size of School/Lacking Points of Connections

FAMILY-RELATED CAUSES

- Lack of Parental Guidance
- Lack of Parental Supervision
- Parental Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Ignorance of Attendance Policy/Compulsory Attendance Law
- Parents with Differing Views of School

ECONOMIC-RELATED CAUSES

- Students Employed and Working During School Hours
- Single-Parent Homes
- Lack of Transportation (if student misses school bus)
- Use of Student as Caregiver Due to Lack of Child Care
- Student Serving as Caregiver to Parent Due to Illness
- High Mobility Rates
- Parents with Less Supervision Due to Multiple Jobs
- Homelessness

* **While research is clear that the issues listed above are typical causes of student absenteeism and truancy, the Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee is aware of the numerous, effective truancy prevention policies, programs and procedures that have been instituted by the School District and other agencies to resolve this problem—Most notably has been the work of the Cherokee County Truancy Panel, which has worked within a limited scope of authority to assist the School District in eliminating truancy and improving student attendance.**

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
PROTOCOL STATEMENTS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #1:

School/School District Policy and procedure will continue to be reviewed for compliance with State's compulsory attendance law and inclusion of research-based "best practices."

PROTOCOL #2:

The schools/School District will continue to develop progressive discipline strategies relative to dealing with truant students.

PROTOCOL #3:

The schools/School District will continue to implement incentive programs relative to promoting and reinforcing good and/or improved attendance rates.

PROTOCOL #4:

The schools/School District will continue to implement appropriate parental notification methods relative to concerns over individual truancy and/or high rates of absenteeism.

PROTOCOL #5:

The schools/School District will continue to involve school stakeholders and members of the community in identifying the causes of and solutions for truancy.

PROTOCOL #6:

The schools/School District will continue to work cooperatively with appropriate agencies within the county that have responsibilities related to assisting children and their parents/guardians comply with the State's compulsory attendance laws.

PROTOCOL #7:

The schools/School District will continue to work cooperatively with the courts and other appropriate agencies within the county to conduct the Cherokee County Truancy Panel, which identifies and resolves truancy-related complaints before they rise to the level of court referrals.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #1 AND ACTION STEPS:

School/School District Policy and procedure will continue to be reviewed for compliance with State's compulsory attendance law and inclusion of research-based "best practices."

- 1.1 Action Steps Involving School Board Policy regarding "Absences and Excuses" (JBD):**
- Policy will continue to provide definitions and parameters for "lawful absences" as provided by GA law (§ 20-2-690.1).
 - Policy is being updated to include unexcused tardies and early checkouts in the definition of truancy.
 - Policy is being updated relative to the withdrawal and notification procedures for truant students beyond the compulsory attendance age.
 - Policy is being updated to establish notification procedures to the GA Department of Motor Vehicles (GA DMV) for student attendance-related violations of the GA's Teen and Adult Driving Responsibility Act (§ 40-5-22).
- 1.2 Action Steps Involving the CCSD Student/Parent Handbook and Discipline Code:**
- The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish GA's compulsory attendance law (§ 20-2-690.1) in the Appendices.
 - The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish definitions for excused absences, tardies and early checkouts.
 - The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish language regarding the consequences for student truancy.
 - The CCSD Handbook is being updated to provide language for students relative to obtaining/maintaining a GA driver's license/learner's permit.
 - The CCSD Handbook is being updated to provide "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) relative to GA's TAADRA law (§ 40-5-22) in the Appendices.
 - The CCSD Handbook is being updated to provide language for students relative to obtaining/maintaining a GA worker's permit (§ 39-2-11).
 - The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish the daily start/end times for all CCSD schools.
 - The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish the school year calendar with clearly delineated student school days/holidays.
- 1.3 Action Steps Involving the Individual School Handbooks:**
- The school handbooks published/distributed by all schools will continue to reinforce current CCSD Policy and procedures relative to: (a) excused/unexcused absences, tardies and early checkouts; (b) providing written excuses for absences, tardies and early checkouts; (c) notification of school start/end times; and (d) consequences for truancy.
 - The school handbooks published/distributed by the middle and high schools will continue to reinforce current statutory law relative to obtaining/maintaining a GA driver's license/learner's permit and obtaining/maintaining a GA worker's permit.
- 1.4 Action Steps Involving School Improvement Plans:**
- The School Improvement Plans for all schools will continue to include a localized student attendance plan, referred to as the "Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plan," which may contain school-site consequences and interventions for students in violation of GA's compulsory attendance law.
 - These "Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plans" will continue to emphasize school-wide, consistent interventions aimed at resolving underlying reasons for students/school subgroups to exceed acceptable absentee rates.
 - These "Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plans" will continue to utilize an attendance focus group, to track student attendance patterns and recommend any necessary modifications to school-site programs and interventions aimed at improving student attendance.
 - To insure schools are working with accurate student attendance data, the "Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plans" will continue to review attendance record-keeping protocol for school staff.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #2 AND ACTION STEPS:

The schools/School District will continue to develop progressive discipline strategies relative to dealing with truant students.

- 2.1 Action Steps Involving School Board Policy regarding “Absences and Excuses” (JBD) and the CCSD Student/Parent Handbook:**
- Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding parent notifications and/or conferences.
 - The CCSD Handbook will continue to provide a progressive discipline policy to include multi-leveled school-site consequences for truancy (These consequences might include detentions, Saturday schools and/or assignments to in-school-suspension).
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding referrals to School Social Workers.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook is being updated to provide language regarding the notification to GA DMV regarding suspension of driver’s license/learner’s permit.
 - The CCSD Handbook is being updated to include language regarding the review of GA worker’s permit due to poor attendance patterns.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding School Social Worker referrals of students/families to Cherokee County Truancy Panel.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding School Social Worker referral of student/family to Cherokee County’s State Court.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding School Social Worker referral of student to Cherokee County Juvenile Court.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide language regarding student removal/withdrawal from school due to truancy.
- 2.2 Action Steps Involving Individual School Handbooks:**
- School handbooks will continue to reinforce current CCSD Policy and procedures relative to progressive discipline procedures.
 - School handbooks will continue to outline any additional school-site discipline procedures relative to truancy.
- 2.3 Action Steps Involving School Improvement Plans:**
- The School Improvement Plans for all schools will continue to include a localized student attendance plan, referred to as the “Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plan,” and may be updated annually relative to any new or modified school-site discipline procedures.
- 2.4 Action Steps Involving School-Site Staff:**
- Principals and/or designees will continue to work with appropriate district-level or school-site staff to identify students with a history of truancy and/or excessive absences so that appropriate restrictions may be placed on the student in terms of required medical documentation of absences.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #3 AND ACTION STEPS:

The schools/School District will continue to implement incentive programs relative to promoting and reinforcing good and/or improved attendance rates.

3.1 Action Steps Involving the CCSD Student/Parent Handbook:

- The CCSD Handbook will continue to publish protocol for certificates of “perfect attendance” and “excellent attendance.”

3.2 Action Steps Involving Individual School Handbooks:

- School handbooks will continue to reinforce current CCSD Policy and procedures relative to rewarding good attendance.
- School handbooks will continue to disclose any school-site incentive programs for good attendance, and may be annually updated relative to new or modified programs.

3.3 Action Steps Involving School Improvement Plans:

- The School Improvement Plans for all schools will continue to contain a localized student attendance plan, referred to as the “Attendance and Truancy Intervention Plan,” which may contain descriptions of incentive programs relative to promoting good attendance.
- The School Improvement Plans for all schools will continue to outline community-based partnerships and may be annually updated to describe how new or modified partnerships may be structured to reinforce/reward good student attendance.
- The School Improvement Plans for all schools will continue to outline parent-based partnerships (PTA and others) and may be annually updated to describe how new or modified partnerships may be structured to reinforce/reward good student attendance.

3.4 Action Steps Involving School-Site Staff:

- Principals and/or designees will continue to work with appropriate district-level or school-site staff to identify students with histories of truancy or excessive absences so that appropriate positive reinforcement strategies can be developed for those students.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #4 AND ACTION STEPS:

The schools/School District will continue to implement appropriate parental notification methods relative to concerns over individual truancy and/or high rates of absenteeism.

- 4.1 Action Steps Involving School Board Policy regarding “Absences and Excuses” (JBD) and the CCSD Student/Parent Handbook:**
- The CCSD Handbook will continue to provide a signature page for students/parents to signify they have been provided with the GA Compulsory Attendance.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook is being updated to provide information relative to parent contacts by the school staff (teachers, counselors and administrators) for unexcused absences, tardies and/or early checkouts. This information should contain the usage of certified mail if all other reasonable attempts to contact parents have failed.
 - Policy/CCSD Handbook will continue to provide information relative to parent contacts by the School Social Workers for truancy and excessive absences. This information will include language relative to home visits, referrals to the Cherokee County Truancy Panel, the Cherokee County Juvenile Court and the Cherokee County Superior Court.
- 4.2 Action Steps Involving District-Level Staff:**
- The Superintendent and/or designees will continue to disseminate literature to the community and parents relative to NCLB-reportable student attendance rates for the schools/School Districts, as well as accounting for the District’s efforts to promote good student attendance.
- 4.3 Action Steps Involving Individual School Handbooks:**
- School handbooks will continue to reinforce current CCSD Policy and procedures relative to parental notifications for unexcused absences, tardies and early checkouts (per Policy, notification must be sent to parents following the second, fifth and seventh unexcused absence).
 - School handbooks will continue to outline additional parental notifications for excessive student absenteeism (to include lawful absences).
- 4.3 Action Steps Involving School-Site Staff:**
- School Principals and/or designees will continue to disseminate literature to parents about NCLB-reported student attendance rate, as well as information relative to the school’s efforts to promote good student attendance through progressive discipline, parent notifications and incentive programs.
 - Schools will continue to send home notification to parents of students with unexcused absences, tardies and/or early checkouts (per Policy, notification must be sent to parents following the second, fifth and seventh unexcused absence).
 - Schools will continue to send home notification to parents of students with absenteeism nearing/above the 15-day NCLB-reportable rate.
 - School procedures are being updated to include notification to parents of students being reported to the GA DMV for truancy.
 - Schools will continue to send notification to parents of students being withdrawn for excessive truancy.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #5 AND ACTION STEPS:

The schools/School District will continue to involve school stakeholders and members of the community in identifying the causes of and solutions for truancy.

5.1 Action Steps Involving the School District:

- The School District will continue to work with the agencies represented on the Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee to identify potential causes of and solutions for truancy.
- The School District will continue to work with the Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee to identify appropriate attendance protocols aimed at eliminating truancy and improving overall student attendance.

5.2 Action Steps Involving Individual Schools:

- Schools will continue to involve appropriate school stakeholders and parent groups to identify potential causes of and solutions for truancy. This will continue to be accomplished through informal/formal focus groups, needs assessment surveys, and/or the school improvement process.
- Schools will continue to involve appropriate school stakeholders and parent groups in identifying, establishing and implementing incentive programs for good attendance.
- Schools will continue to communicate with parents of truant students to identify potential causes of and solutions for that student's truancy.
- Schools will continue to involve appropriate government agencies in identifying potential causes of and solutions for the truancy of specific, identified students.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #6 AND ACTION STEPS:

The schools/School District will continue to work cooperatively with appropriate agencies within the county that have responsibilities related to assisting children and their parents/guardians comply with the State's compulsory attendance laws.

6.1 Action Steps Involving Schools/School District:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to enlist the help of, and cooperate with, appropriate community agencies in developing and implementing effective truancy prevention strategies.

DFACS:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to work with DFACS relative to appropriate referrals on behalf of homeless families, or for other conditions which might cause the student to be absent from school.
- The School District and individual schools will continue to work with DFACS relative to the timely enrollment of students in their custody regardless of the family's/guardian's ability to immediately provide the documentation required for admission into the school (documented guardianship must be provided to the school).
- The School district and individual schools will continue to extend reassignment privileges to students displaced through a change in custody/residency by DFACS.
- Per statutory requirement, the School District and individual schools will continue to work with DFACS or with other agencies to facilitate the timely enrollment of homeless students, regardless of the family's/guardian's ability to immediately provide the documentation required for admission into the school.

DJJ/JUVENILE COURTS:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to make timely truancy-related referrals so cases necessitating a subsequent referral of the student to the Department of Juvenile Justice/Cherokee County Juvenile Courts can be dealt with in an expedited manner. In turn, the aforementioned agencies will make every attempt to schedule truancy-related cases in a manner so cases will not be held over for extended periods or from one year to the next.
- The School District and individual schools will continue to facilitate the enrollment of students either arrested and/or adjudicated/convicted when the students' felonious actions would not deem their presence at school to be a disruptive element.
- The School District and individual schools will continue to seek alternative enrollment opportunities for students who: (a) are 16 or 17 years of age, (b) have been withdrawn by the school due to truancy, (c) have poor grades/discipline records, but (d) have been ordered by the courts to attend school.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY/SOLICITOR/SUPERIOR COURT:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to make timely truancy-related referrals so cases necessitating a subsequent referral of the parents/guardians to the CCSD Police Department, and ultimately, the Cherokee County District Attorney's Office, the Cherokee County Solicitor's Office, and Superior Court can be dealt with in an expedited manner. In turn, the aforementioned agencies will make every attempt to schedule truancy-related cases in a manner so cases will not be held over for extended periods or from one year to the next.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to work with the various county and municipal law enforcement agencies relative to their policies and practices for the enforcement of the State's compulsory attendance law.

PUBLIC HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH/CHEROKEE FOCUS:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to work with the public health agencies, mental health agencies and Cherokee FOCUS relative to identifying underlying causes of and solutions for student absenteeism and truancy.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
STATUS REPORT: PROTOCOL STATEMENTS AND ACTION STEPS FOR SY2005-06**

PROTOCOL #7:

The schools/School District will continue to work cooperatively with the courts and other appropriate agencies within the county to conduct the Cherokee County Truancy Panel, which identifies and resolves truancy-related complaints before they rise to the level of court referrals.

7.1 Action Steps Involving Schools/School District:

- The School District and individual schools will continue to enlist the help of, and cooperate with, appropriate community agencies in conducting the Cherokee County Truancy Panel.
- The School District will continue to annually assess the Cherokee County Truancy Panel and publish those results to the individual schools, the Cherokee County Attendance Protocol Committee and other appropriate organizations.
- The School Social Workers are updating current procedures in order to assist in the creation of school-site “truancy panels” at each of the middle schools in the School District.

**CHEROKEE COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEE
GOALS FOR SY2005-06**

In cooperation with the School District and the agencies represented on this committee, the Attendance Protocol Committee will focus on the following during the next calendar year:

- Insure the effectiveness of the court referral process for students and/or parents/guardians for violations of the State's compulsory attendance law.
- Assist each of the representative agencies to identify policies and practices which can result in (a) identifying underlying causes of truancy common to the families served by their agency; and, (b) implementing interventions in order to effectively resolve family-based issues so that the situation does not result in a truancy referral to the courts.
- Examine local student attendance data in order to identify possible student truancy problems relative to specific geographic areas in Cherokee County. After determining the location of some of the highest rates of truancy, the committee can help facilitate a community-wide strategic plan aimed at not only improving attendance, but also "quality of life" improvements.
- Identify other agencies and non-profit organizations that could serve a productive role through their service on the Attendance Protocol Committee.

APPENDIX A

STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES *	
1	The student protocol committee shall have the appropriate representation of community stakeholders (as determined by HB1190, 2004).
2	The student protocol committee is responsible for ensuring coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies and program involved in compulsory attendance issues.
3	The student protocol committee shall, by June 1, 2005, produce and adopt a student attendance protocol for the local school district. This protocol shall include but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify procedures for identifying, reporting, investigating and prosecuting violations of the State's compulsory attendance law. • Specify methods used to determine the causes and solutions for student truancy. • Include recommendations for policies related to student tardiness.
4	The student protocol committee shall provide a copy of the protocol to each agency, official or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents/guardians with respect to student attendance.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES *	
1	Each local board of education will consider and publicly announce its decisions regarding the protocol committee recommendations for student attendance.
2	Each local board of education will report annual student attendance rates to the student attendance protocol committee and the State BOE by September 1 st following each school year.
3	Each local board of education will be responsible for providing a copy of the adopted written student attendance protocol to the State DOE no later than July 1, 2005, and upon any subsequent revisions or amendments.
4	Each local board of education will adopt policies and procedures to reduce unexcused absences that shall include but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Notification/Notification by Certified Mail • Statement of Receipt of Compulsory Attendance Law • Driver's License Denial • Truancy/Minimum Standards for Student Attendance • Student Withdrawals for Truant Students/Withdrawal Notification • Definitions for Attendance Protocol • Grades and Absences

* Noted in the State Department of Education's "Student Attendance Guidelines" (April, 2005)

APPENDIX B

STATUTORY LANGUAGE ESTABLISHING ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL COMMITTEES

HB1190 (SECTION 11) (§ 20-2-690.2)

Said title is further amended by inserting a new Code section to be designated Code Section 20-2-690.2 to read as follows:

(a) The chief judge of the superior court of each county shall establish a student attendance protocol committee for its county. The purpose of the committee shall be to ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests which are required to be administered under the laws of this state. The chief judge is responsible for ensuring that all members of the committee are notified of their responsibility to the committee and shall call the first meeting of the committee in each county. The committee shall elect a chairperson and may elect other officers.

(b) Each local board of education shall participate in, consider, and make publicly available, including but not limited to posting in a conspicuous location, its decision regarding the recommendations of the committee as provided in this Code section. Independent school systems may participate in the committee in the county where the system is located. Independent school systems whose geographic area encompasses more than one county may select one of such counties in which to participate. An independent school system that elects not to participate in the committee of the county where it is located shall request that the chief judge of the superior court of a county encompassed by its geographic area to establish an independent student attendance protocol committee in the same manner as established for the county school system.

(c) Each of the following agencies, officials, or programs shall designate a representative to serve on the committee:

- (1) The chief judge of the superior court;
- (2) The juvenile court judge or judges of the county;
- (3) The district attorney for the county;
- (4) The solicitor-general of state court, if the county has a state court;
- (5) The Department of Juvenile Justice, which may include representatives from area youth detention centers or regional youth detention centers;
- (6) The superintendent, a certificated school employee, and a local school board member from each public school system in the county and a certificated school social worker from each public school system, if any are employed by the school system;
- (7) The sheriff of the county;
- (8) The chief of police of the county police department;
- (9) The chief of police of each municipal police department in the county;
- (10) The county department of family and children services;
- (11) The county board of health;
- (12) The county mental health organization;
- (13) The county Family Connection commission, board, or authority, or other county agency, board, authority, or commission having the duty and authority to study problems of families, children, and youth and provide services to families, children, and youth; and
- (14) The court approved community based risk reduction program established by the juvenile court in accordance with Code Section 15-11-10, if such a program has been established.

- (d) The committee thus established may appoint such additional members as necessary and proper to accomplish the purposes of the committee.
- (e) Each committee shall, by June 1, 2005, adopt a written student attendance protocol for its county school system and for each independent school system within its geographic boundaries which shall be filed with the Department of Education. The protocol shall outline in detail the procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of Code Section 20-2-690.1, relating to mandatory school attendance. The protocol shall outline in detail methods for determining the causes of failing to comply with compulsory attendance and appropriately addressing the issue with children and their parents or guardians. The protocol shall also include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness. The Department of Education shall provide model school attendance protocols, if requested by the committee.
- (f) A copy of the protocol shall be furnished to each agency, official, or program within the county that has any responsibility in assisting children and their parents or guardians in complying with Code Section 20-2-690.1.
- (g) The committee shall write the summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under Code Section 20-2-690.1 for children and their parents, guardians, or other persons who have control or charge of children for distribution by schools in accordance with Code Section 20-2-690.1. The summary of possible consequences for children shall include possible dispositions for unruly children and possible denial or suspension of a driver's license for a child in accordance with Code Section 40-5-22.
- (h) The committee shall continue in existence after writing the student attendance protocol. The chief judge of the superior court of each county shall ensure that the committee meets at least quarterly during the first year, and twice annually thereafter, to evaluate compliance with the protocol, effectiveness of the protocol, and appropriate modifications.
- (i) Each local board of education shall report student attendance rates to the committee and the State Board of Education at the end of each school year, according to a schedule established by the State Board of Education."

APPENDIX C**GEORGIA'S COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW (§ 20-2-690.1)**

(a) Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program; and such child shall be responsible for enrolling in and attending a public school, a private school, or a home study program that meets the requirements for a public school, a private school, or a home study program under such penalty for noncompliance with this subsection as is provided in Chapter 11 of Title 15, unless the child's failure to enroll and attend is caused by the child's parent, guardian, or other person, in which case the parent, guardian, or other person alone shall be responsible; provided, however, that tests and physical exams for military service and the National Guard and such other approved absences shall be excused absences. The requirements of this subsection shall apply to a child between his or her seventh and sixteenth birthdays who has been assigned by a local board of education or its delegate to attend an alternative public school program established by that local board of education, including an alternative public school program provided for in Code Section 20-2-154.1, regardless of whether such child has been suspended or expelled from another public school program by that local board of education or its delegate, and to the parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of such child. Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to require a local board of education or its delegate to assign a child to attend an alternative public school program rather than suspending or expelling the child.

(b) Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall violate this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction. Each day's absence from school in violation of this part after the child's school system notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence for a child shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused days of absence without response, the school system shall send a notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested. Public schools shall provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each child enrolled in public school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under this Code section for children and their parents, guardians, or other persons having control or charge of children. The parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child or children shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties; children who are age ten years or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties. After two reasonable attempts by the school to secure such signature or signatures, the school shall be considered to be in compliance with this subsection if it sends a copy of the statement, via certified mail, return receipt requested, to such parent, guardian, other person who has control or charge of a child, or children. Public schools shall retain signed copies of statements through the end of the school year.

(c) Local school superintendents in the case of private schools or home study programs and visiting teachers and attendance officers in the case of public schools shall have authority and it shall be their duty to file proceedings in court to enforce this subpart.

APPENDIX D**(PROPOSED) SCHOOL BOARD POLICY RELATIVE TO “ABSENCES AND EXCUSES” (JBD)****A. Introduction**

The Cherokee County Board of Education recognizes that, in order to receive maximum benefit from the instructional program, students are expected to attend school each day. It is understood that good attendance habits positively impact the learning process. While administrators and teachers are responsible for providing quality instruction in an environment where learning can flourish, parents/guardians and students must assume responsibility for being punctual and attending school regularly.

Although circumstances may necessitate that a student be absent from school, the Cherokee County Board of Education recognizes that optimal learning takes place when the student is present and involved in classroom activities. Accordingly, it is critically important that parents/guardians make every effort to have their children attend school.

B. Lawful/Authorized Absences from Class/School

A student will not be absent from class or school or other required school activity except for illness or other providential cause, unless with prior written permission of the Principal or designee. No student shall encourage, urge or counsel other students to violate this policy.

As permitted under state law and State Board of Education policies, a student’s absence, tardy or early checkout may be excused for the following reasons:

- a. personal illness and when attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others;
- b. serious illness or death of an immediate family member;
- c. mandated by order of governmental agencies, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, or by a court order;
- d. celebrating religious holidays;
- e. conditions that render attendance impossible or hazardous to one’s health or safety; and
- f. registering to vote or voting, for a period not to exceed one day.

Note: For school attendance purposes, students shall be counted present when they are in attendance at least one-half of the instructional day, serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly or able to document their service as a poll worker on an election day.

C. Excuses

Excuses for absences will be provided by the parent/guardian in writing on the day the student returns to school, and will contain the student’s name, date of the absence, reason for the absence, and the signature of the parent/guardian. All written excuses will be evaluated by the Principal or designee to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.

D. Requiring Medical Documentation for Absences

In the event that a student's personal illness or attendance at school endangers a student's health or the health of others, the school may require the student to present appropriate medical documentation upon return to school for the purpose of validating that the absence is an excused absence.

In the event that a student has excessive absences for health reasons, the school may require a physician's excuse in order to consider the absence as an excused absence. The school may ask for physician's excuses if one or more of the following conditions exist:

1. A persistent, systematic pattern of absences has been established (example – out every Monday).
2. Seven or more days of absences have been accumulated during the semester.
3. Twelve or more days of absences were recorded the prior school year.

Physician's notes must be specific as to the number of days the illness is to be excused or must state when the student is expected to return to school.

E. Qualifying for Hospital/Homebound Instruction

If major sickness or injury occurs and the absence is lengthy, the student may receive credit by instruction through application of the School District's hospital/homebound instructional process.

F. Make-Up Work

It is the expectation of the Cherokee County Board of Education that all work missed due to absence will be made-up. Some work, by its very nature, is impossible to make-up and may necessitate alternative assignments. The Principal (or designee) is the final authority in determining alternative assignments.

The responsibility for arranging to complete work missed due to absence is to be assumed by the student and parent/guardian, in conjunction with the teacher. Make-up work is to be completed at the time specified by the teacher/Principal.

The time limit to complete missed work is not to exceed ten school days after the date the student resumes attendance. Exceptions will be decided by the parent/guardian, student, teacher and Principal, with the Principal having the final decision.

G. Incentives for Good Attendance

Each individual school is responsible for providing incentives for good and perfect attendance.

H. Truancy, Parent Notifications and Reporting Protocol

Truancy is the act of willful and/or continued unexcused absences, tardies and/or early checkouts from school. Absences, tardies and early checkouts of this nature are unlawful within the State's compulsory attendance law and can result in penalties under that law. Students and parents/guardians are notified of the State's compulsory attendance law on an annual basis through the School District's Student/Parent Handbook.

Parents/guardians of students with five unexcused absences will be notified by the school regarding the consequences of such absences. This notification will be accomplished through certified mail, if all other reasonable attempts to notify the parents/guardians have failed.

Students with seven or more unexcused absences in a class per semester will be referred to a school social worker for truancy. It is the role of the school social worker to work collaboratively with the school, student and parents/guardians to resolve truancy issues.

When all administrative actions taken to correct truancy have not had the desired effect, the school social worker may require families to attend the Cherokee County Truancy Panel and request them to sign a contract designed to help improve attendance, file proceedings in Cherokee County Juvenile Court for violation of the Georgia Compulsory School Attendance Law for students under sixteen years of age or refer families to the Cherokee County School Police if proceedings need to be filed against parents for failure to send their children to school.

Chronic truants will be referred each school year to the school social worker. School administrators will not assume that cases will be held over by the social worker for monitoring from one school year to the next. Some cases that have been referred to the Cherokee County Truancy Panel or to court may be held over; but an updated referral by the school may be requested.

I. Absence Notification Procedures

School personnel will monitor absences by following the steps below:

1. Student absentee phone calls are made to parents/guardians and documented in a log at each school.
2. The classroom teacher will invite the parents/guardians in for a conference immediately after the second unexcused absence has been recorded.
3. The school will notify the parent/guardian on the fifth unexcused absence that continued absences will result in a referral to the school social worker.
4. On the seventh unexcused absence in any class during a semester, a referral to the school social worker will be filed.
5. The school social worker will notify the proper authorities if unexcused absences continue.

J. Additional High School Absence Procedures

Any student having seven or more excused, approved or unexcused absences in a semester-length class or 14 or more excused, approved or unexcused absences in a year-length class will receive no credit for that class unless a waiver is granted by the School Attendance Committee. However, students will not be denied credit for a course if they have seven or more excused absences in a semester-length class or 14 or more excused absences in a year-length class when the following conditions are met: (1) the absences are validated by the School Attendance Committee as excused; (2) make-up work is satisfactorily completed; and, (3) a passing grade has been earned for course work during the semester. Eligibility for credit will be restored if recommended by the School Attendance Committee. The Principal has the final decision on this matter.

The Attendance Committee is a standing committee composed of five members appointed by the Principal and chaired by an administrator. The chair shall vote only in case of a tie.

A high school student under the age of 16 who has seven or more unexcused absences in a semester-length class or 14 or more unexcused absences in a year-length class will be referred to the school social worker.

K. Student Withdrawals and Notification

Any student who is absent unlawfully either ten consecutive days or forty total days in a school year, is beyond the compulsory attendance age or is not receiving instructional services from the School District through hospital/homebound instruction or instructional services required by the Federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), may be withdrawn. The Principal has the discretion of entering or re-entering in the present grading period any student 16 years old or older, who has failed to attend for unlawful reasons.

In the case of a school's plan to withdraw a student, the Principal shall use reasonable measures to notify the parents/guardians if the student is not eighteen years old.

L. Driver's License/Learner's Permit Denial

The School District will establish appropriate protocol relative to State law regarding the denial or suspension of driver's licenses/learner's permits for truant students.

APPENDIX E

THE CHEROKEE COUNTY TRUANCY PANEL

Section I: Background

In 1998, The Cherokee County School District, in conjunction with then Cherokee County Juvenile Court Judge Jackson Harris, implemented an intervention-based body that could work with truant students and their parents on school attendance remedies so that the current situation might be resolved without a referral to court. Recognizing that students who do not attend school regularly might need attention from various agencies that serve families relative to the State's compulsory attendance law or other community agencies that could provide critical services, the Cherokee County Truancy Panel was created in partnership with these agencies.

Since its inception during SY1998-1999, the Cherokee County Truancy Panel has served over 200 students and their families. With an 80% impact rate based on the improved school attendance of students, this panel has obviously played an important role in addressing and resolving student truancy issues in Cherokee County.

Section II: Mission

The Cherokee County Truancy Panel is committed to providing a collaborative approach toward identifying the underlying causes of and solutions for individual truancy cases through the active involvement of the school, the School District, the parents/guardians, and appropriate members of community agencies that can assist the student and family.

Section III: Membership

The Truancy Panel consists of member agencies from within the community with at least three to four representatives serving panelists each month. Members of the Truancy Panel are from the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Highland Rivers Center for Mental Health, Cherokee County Health Department, and the Cherokee County Community Services Center. School Social Workers for the Cherokee County School District will be responsible for bringing families before the Cherokee County Truancy Panel when efforts to regulate the child's attendance have failed.

Section IV: Referrals

All referrals to the Cherokee County Truancy Panel are submitted by the School Social Workers for the Cherokee County School District. These referrals are based on the unsuccessful or unproductive attempts on the part of the schools or School District to have the student and his/her parents resolve an existing, identified truancy problem.

Section V: Panel Hearings

The Cherokee County Truancy Panel meets monthly, from October through May of each school year, from 8:30 a.m. to Noon at the Cherokee County Justice Center in downtown Canton. The meeting date is the first Wednesday of each of these months. Seven meetings a year lasting 3.5 hours each makes the total commitment from each agency representative equal to about one 24-hour day.

Protocol prior to the monthly hearings:

- Before coming before the panel, the School Social Worker will have made or attempted two or more contacts with the parent or guardian by letters, phone calls, or home visits. The Truancy Panel will listen to the concerns of the family, and the concerns of the school system and any other agency representative who might be working with the family and develop a contract with the family to improve school attendance. School administrators and/or counselors, who have input might also be present to provide information and support for the Truancy Panel.
- The School Social Worker will remind agency contacts of the meeting.
- The School Social Worker will provide each agency contact a listing of families due to appear before the panel.
- The School Social Worker will notify parents of the meeting and schedule a time for each family to appear before the panel.

Protocol on the morning of the meeting:

- The Juvenile and Family Court Programs Director will have notices posted in the Cherokee County Justice Center to direct families to the meeting room (Jury Room 213).
- The Truancy Panel will consist of a representative from the Department of Family and Children Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Highland Rivers Center for Mental Health, Department of Public Health, and the Community Services Center with one representative serving as chairperson.
- The School Social Worker will provide a summary of the current truancy problem to the Truancy Panel prior to the parents' entrance.
- The School Social Worker will provide a copy of the agreement form to the chairperson.
- The School Social Worker will introduce any school personnel present.
- The School Social Worker will introduce the family to the panel.
- The Chairperson for the panel will greet the family, introduce the panel to the family and explain the goal of the meeting.
- The Truancy Panel will listen to the family story and counsel with the family.
- The Chairperson will draw up the agreement and present it to the family and the panel for signatures.
- The Truancy Panel will provide copies of the agreement to the family, the school, and the School Social Worker.

APPENDIX F

CCSD STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATES: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ABSENT FEWER THAN 15 DAYS

	Schools	SY2004-05	SY2003-04	SY2002-03	SY2001-02
1	Arnold Mill ES	TBD	94.1	89.5	86.8
2	Ball Ground ES	TBD	92.6	87.7	86.5
3	Bascomb ES	TBD	96.6	93.7	94.7
4	Boston ES	TBD	93.0	91.5	88.4
5	Buffington ES	TBD	96.4	89.5	86.9
6	Canton ES	TBD	89.1	82.8	82.9
7	Carmel ES	TBD	91.9	86.2	89.5
8	Chapman IS	TBD	90.3	86.0	85.1
9	Clayton ES	TBD	91.6	86.6	83.2
10	Free Home ES	TBD	90.0	86.0	86.2
11	Hickory Flat ES	TBD	92.3	89.4	89.2
12	Holly Springs ES	TBD	91.4	86.1	85.3
13	Johnston ES	TBD	92.8	87.3	85.4
14	Liberty ES	TBD	92.6	89.2	
15	Little River ES	TBD	93.3	89.9	91.4
16	Macedonia ES	TBD	92.4	89.9	84.4
17	R. M. Moore ES	TBD	88.5	82.0	79.1
18	Mountain Road ES	TBD	92.9	91.5	91.7
19	Oak Grove ES	TBD	92.2	87.3	85.0
20	Sixes ES	TBD	93.0	93.5	88.9
21	Tippens ES	TBD	92.9	92.5	90.3
22	Woodstock ES	TBD	96.8	88.5	89.8
23	Booth MS	TBD	88.3	87.1	81.5
24	Creekland MS	TBD			
25	Dean Rusk MS	TBD	93.7	85.3	81.9
26	Teasley MS	TBD	81.0	77.6	81.9
27	Woodstock MS	TBD	91.6	87.8	85.0
28	Cherokee HS	TBD	86.8	86.0	79.7
29	Etowah HS	TBD	89.7	88.6	80.3
30	Sequoyah HS	TBD	91.7	85.3	81.9
31	Woodstock HS	TBD	88.6	84.6	82.0
	SUMMARY OF STATE DOE ATTENDANCE RATINGS		29 of 30 Schools Deemed Exemplary or Acceptable	24 of 30 Schools Deemed Exemplary or Acceptable	13 of 29 Schools Deemed Exemplary or Acceptable

NOTES:

(1) RATINGS:

- Denotes "EXEMPLARY" attendance (0%-5% of students absent 15+ days from school).
- Denotes "ACCEPTABLE" attendance (6%-14% of students absent 15+ days from school).
- Denotes "UNACCEPTABLE" attendance (15%+ of students absent 15+ days from school).

(2) CENTERS:

The Polaris Evening School, Crossroads Middle/High School, the Ralph Bunche Center, and the Mountainbrook Educational Center are not included in this summary.