

## UNIVERSAL CHARTER SCHOOLS GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDANCE & TRUANCY

### I. **Purpose:**

To provide procedures and general guidelines for the attendance and truancy process for Universal Charter Schools (District).

### II. **Responsibility:**

Each District, under the supervision of the Central Education Office, is responsible for reviewing and submitting truancy referrals for students with 10 or more unexcused absences to Philadelphia Family Court for interventions and services. The interventions and services are designed to help alleviate barriers to truancy.

### III. **Criteria:**

The Pennsylvania School Compulsory Law requires students from the ages of 6-18 to attend school on a daily basis. Once a student is enrolled in school, this includes children in kindergarten; they are subject to compulsory school laws until the student reaches age 18. The student can only be withdrawn if he/she transfers out of the District. The student will remain on the District's roll and the child/family is subjected to truancy court if they do not attend school.

School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) - As required by state law, a conference is to be held, parent/guardian invited to the conference, and a SAIP created. The Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC), is a meeting for families and school staff to come together, identify barriers, and develop meaningful strategies/interventions to address the identified issues, and support the student in regular school attendance. At the end of the conference, the school must create the School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) in the Student Information System (SIS) in Infinite Campus.

### IV. **District's Truancy Process:**

- Parents receive notification of each absence via phone call, email, or text.
- Parents ***must submit*** an absence note to the school ***within three (3) days*** upon the child's return to school from an absence. The school Principal/Designee will make a determination if the note will be accepted. If the note has been accepted, it should be submitted to the main office, and the absence must be changed in the SIS (Student Information System) to an excused absence using the appropriate code.
- At the 3<sup>rd</sup> unexcused absence, the Third Day Illegal Notice (C-31) should be sent to the parent/guardian notifying that the child has missed three (3) unexcused days (consecutive/non-consecutive) of school. This document can be generated and printed in the SIS for all district schools. Please document that the Illegal Notice has been sent out via the Contact Log in the SIS, under "contact" with the prefix ATT, prior to writing the note. *As a best practice, please contact DHS for DHS involved students with three absences.*
- A SAIC should be held by the 6<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence to address the student's absences and reasons for the truancy. The purpose of the conference is to identify barriers to attendance and develop meaningful strategies to address the

identified issues and support the student. The School Attendance Improvement Plan should be completed at the conference. The school must invite the parent/guardian to the conference. A copy of the SAIP will be provided to the student, parent/guardian and any other entity identified who can support the student with this plan.

- At the 10th unexcused absence, the truancy referral should be submitted to the Central Education Office. All referrals will be checked for quality and accuracy. A completed SAIP consists of: contact log, identification of barriers, implementation of interventions that address the identified barriers, and progress monitoring. **The School Attendance Improvement Plan will serve as the truancy referral and will be required for ALL cases going to truancy court.**
- Once the Truancy Referral/SAIP has been submitted to the Central Education Office AND cleared for submission to Family Court, Family Court will process and schedule families for Truancy Court. The student/families will be notified of their scheduled hearing via a citation mailed to the home. Schools can also check the truancy court tab in the SIS (Student Information System), once a student has a court date, to view dispositions and status updates. SAIPs can be submitted at any time. All Truancy Referrals/SAIP must be submitted via email at [lfinney@universalcompanies.org](mailto:lfinney@universalcompanies.org). *(Please see "Submitting a Truancy Referral," P.3 for instructions).*

#### Who is invited to attend the School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC)?

- The Attendance Designee should take the leadership role along with the Case Manager. Because of the broad, community-based needs to attendance concerns, school counselors are in a unique position to lead with the plan development and implementation oversight.
- The Intervention Provider, is the person that will be providing the intervention/s for the student.
- The student and the guardian.
- Other people whom the guardian may believe can be helpful resource (like a grandparent, sibling, family friend, advocate, community member, etc.).
- Appropriate school personnel. This should include members of the child's IEP or 504 Team members, if the child is a student with a disability or has a written accommodation.
- Recommended service providers (like case managers, behavioral health providers, probation officers, children and youth practitioners, etc.).

The guardian is encouraged to attend the meeting to address the needs of the student. However, if the parent/guardian is not in attendance, the school will still conduct the meeting in their absence. Please be aware that all efforts to invite parents must be documented. The conference itself must be documented on the School Attendance Improvement Plan.

## V. **Submitting a Truancy Referral/SAIP:**

The SAIPs are also used as the truancy referral. Schools are required to submit SAIP to the Central Education Office. There is no due date for SAIP's, they can be submitted at any time of the month. All SAIP'S must be submitted via email at [lfinney@universalcompanies.org](mailto:lfinney@universalcompanies.org); one attachment per student, labeled with their full name, and consisting of one completed SAIP/referral and contact log. In the email subject line, place the name of the school and attach all individual SAIP/Truancy Referrals. No faxes or hand-delivered referrals will be accepted.

A completed SAIP consists of: contact log, identification of barriers, implementation of interventions that address the identified barriers, team members, and progress monitoring.

The Attendance Designee and/or the SAIP Team Members, must review and ensure that every student referred to regional truancy court, has been offered evidence based interventions listed in the SIS, and implemented with fidelity. These efforts to eliminate truancy must include all appropriate internal district staff and external partners, including but not limited to DHS, CUA or the Special Education Director.

The family will receive a citation from Philadelphia Family Court to appear in truancy court. The citation will have the date, time and location of where the family should appear. In addition, a DHS contracted truancy provider will make contact with the family to arrange a meeting. The meeting is to extend services to help alleviate the identified barrier(s) that are contributing to the truancy. The provider will work with the family until the case is discharged from truancy court. The truancy court process can last up to 120 days depending on the severity of the case. Each case is handled individually and different factors are taken into account.

### A. **Support from Dept. of Human Services (DHS):**

For grades K–12<sup>th</sup>, DHS contracts with *Truancy Providers* that will support students and engage with families once the referral has been submitted to truancy court. The provider will work with the family to help identify and alleviate barriers to regular attendance. The provider will ask for demographic and attendance information on each student that they serve from the school on record or in attendance. Information can be provided if the case manager provides the school with a FERPA consent form. In order for DHS or CUA to receive records with a FERPA form, the guardian or parent has to sign the consent form or the DHS or CUA worker must present evidence of two unsuccessful attempts to have the consent form signed. The case manager must have their work ID and the FERPA consent form in order to receive the requested information.

## VI. Absence Coding of Students:

### A. Excused/Lawful Absence

Pursuant to Universal Family of Schools attendance policy, all absences resulting in a total of three (3) or more consecutive days will require a written excuse note by a licensed health care provider. For absences that do not total three (3) consecutive days, parents may submit a written excuse note stating the reason for the absence. Notes must be given to the school within *three (3) days* upon the child's return to school. If the note is not turned in within the required time frame, the day(s) may not be excused. When a student has been absent, excused with a parent note, totaling eight (8) days (cumulative), all subsequent absences may require a written excuse note from a licensed health care provider.

Excused absences apply under circumstances such as:

- illness or injury
- teen parent leave (30 school days) after the birth of a child
- death/funeral-related absence
- educational-related trips or activities
- required court appearance
- out of school suspension
- religious holidays
- family emergency
- other urgent reasons

### B. Unexcused Absence

An unexcused absence occurs when a student is absent without a valid excuse in writing. That means that either no written notice was submitted to the school upon the student's return **or that the reason provided in the notice was deemed invalid.** Examples of invalid excuses include (but not limited to):

- babysitting
- illness of a family member
- waking up late
- vacation

### C. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts.

- Upon written request by a person in parental relation, a student may be excused during school hours for the purpose of obtaining professional health care or therapy service only if the following requirements are met:
  - (1) The health or therapeutic services are to be rendered by licensed practitioners;
  - (2) It is not practical or possible for the student to receive the services outside of school hours; and

(3) The time of necessary absence from school involves a minimum of interference with the student's regular program of studies.

D. Homebound Instruction or Hospitalized/Partial Program/Residential Treatment Facility

Any student receiving approved homebound instruction is counted in both the school membership and school attendance.

Any student that is hospitalized or in a partial program/residential treatment facility is counted in both the school membership and school attendance for the first 30 calendar days. If the student stays longer than 30 calendar days, they should be withdrawn from the district using Withdraw Code WD02. Enter notes in to the comments section.

E. Authorized School Activities

Schools will have the ability to enter Absence Code 12 when students are participating in an approved school event (i.e., meeting with the counselor/nurse, sporting events, school trips, etc.)

F. Educational Trip/Tour (if the following conditions are met)

- The person in parental relation submits the documentation required for excusal prior to the absence, within the appropriate time frame.
- The student's participation has been approved by the Superintendent or principal.
- The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the person in parental relation.
- College, trade schools, career & technical training program tours or tours of other District schools (with prior approval)
  - The District may limit the number and duration of non-school-sponsored educational tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year.

G. Observance of a religious holiday observed by a bona fide religious group (upon prior written request from the person in parental relation)

Students participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met.

- The person in parental relation submits a written request for excusal. The request shall identify and describe the instruction and the dates and hours of instruction.
- The student shall not miss more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.
- Following each absence, the person in parental relation shall submit a statement attesting that the student attended the instruction, and the dates and hours of attendance.

#### H. Other Urgent Reasons

An unexpected, serious event that is outside of the control of the student's family, and reasonably cause a student's absence.

- May include circumstances related to homelessness, foster care, and family emergency.
- Requires parental note explaining the event, received within 3 school days of the student's return.
- School staff will evaluate if an event constitutes a family emergency.

#### I. Half-Day Absence Procedure: (K-8 Schools Only)

Any student coming to school two (2) hours after the start of the school day, or leaving two (2) hours before the end of the school day, will be marked as half-day absent. If the child has a note from a licensed health care provider (Doctor, Dentist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist etc.) they will be marked as half-day excused (Absence code in AM or PM box in the SIS). The note must be given to the school upon return from the medical provider, within **24 hours** of the visit. If the student does not have a note, the half-day will remain unexcused (absence code 2 in AM or PM box in the SIS), two (2) half day unexcused absences will equal one (1) full day unexcused absence.

Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

For students arriving two (2) hours after the start of the school day:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose the appropriate absence code in the AM box, and enter notes in comments section if applicable.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 2 in the AM box.

For Students leaving two (2) hours before the end of the school day:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose the appropriate absence code in the PM box, and enter notes in comments section if applicable.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 2 in the PM box.

#### J. Lateness (Tardy) - (K-8 Schools)

Any student that comes to school after the start of the school day, but less than two(2) hours after school starts will be considered late. If the student has a written excuse note from a licensed health care provider, it will count as an excused lateness (Absence code 13 in AM box in the SIS). If no note is provided to the school, it will count as an unexcused lateness (Absence code 14 in AM box in the SIS) and the student will be marked accordingly.

Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

For students that comes to school after the start of the school day, but less than two (2) hours after school starts:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused lateness, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 13 in the AM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused lateness, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 14 in the AM box.

K. Early Dismissal

Any student that leaves school at any other time during the day, outside the parameters set up above in the half-day absence/lateness procedure will be marked as unexcused early dismissal (Absence code 3 in PM box in the SIS). If the student has a written excuse note from a licensed health care provider, they will be marked as excused early dismissal (Absence code 4 in PM box in the SIS). The note must be turned in within **24 hours** of the student leaving school for it to be excused.

Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused early dismissal, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 3 in the PM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an excused early dismissal, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 4 in the PM box.

L. Suspensions

Refer to the Central Education Office’ - “Code of Conduct” and Student Discipline Policy for instructions

M. Funeral Leave

There are specific guidelines used by principals in authorizing the number of days to excuse student absences due to death in the family:

- Five (5) days, including day of funeral, taken within ten (10) working days from date of death: parent/step-parent, spouse or child.
- Three (3) days, including day of funeral, taken within ten (10) working days from date of death: sibling, grandparent/step-grandparent, or resident of the same household as student.
- Day of funeral: aunt, uncle, first cousin, niece, or nephew.

*Note: A funeral excuse note is required, upon the student’s return to school from funeral leave.*

**Absence Codes (effective August 20, 2018)**

Absence Code	Absence Reason	Excuse Code	Status Code
1	Other Urgent Reason (Principal's Approval)	Absent	Excused
2	Unexcused Absence	Absent	Unexcused
3	Unexcused Early Dismissal	Early Release	Unexcused
4	Excused Early Dismissal	Early Release	Excused
5	Illness	Absent	Excused
6	Quarantine	Absent	Excused
7	Recovery from Accident	Absent	Excused
8	Required Court Attendance	Absent	Excused
9	Death in Family	Absent	Excused
10	Educational tours & trips, with prior approval	Absent	Excused
11	Excused Religious Holiday	Absent	Excused
12	Authorized School Activities	Absent (Class)	Exempt/Present
13	Excused Lateness	Tardy	Excused
14	Unexcused Lateness	Tardy	Unexcused
15	Out of School Suspension (OSS)	Absent	Excused
16	In School Suspension (ISS)	Absent	Exempt/Present

**VII. Taking Attendance in the SIS:**

**K-8 Schools (Simple Schedule)**

- **Teachers are expected to record attendance** within the first 10 minutes of the start of school in the SIS. **Roll sheets will no longer be used.**
- Any student late to school must report to the office for the secretary to mark them late. Since the teacher may have already marked the absent for the day, attendance must be updated for both the AM and PM.
- Students will report to the office for early dismissals and the secretary will enter the appropriate coding of these students. Schools can then go to the Ad Hoc Letters Tab in the SIS and print out an early dismissal pass to give to the student to leave the building.
- Schools will use the SIS to resolve attendance events, such as entering an excused absence, lateness, and entering suspensions.
- Suspensions must be recorded in the SIS, using the suspension tab. Staff must also enter the out-of-school suspension absence code in the attendance module.
- If students report to an elective class for the start of the day, schools can print the sub-attendance roster for the specialist teacher to take attendance on paper and send to the office for the secretary to enter. Alternatively, the homeroom teacher can take attendance within the first 10 minutes of second period.



### Substitute Teacher - attendance recording

- If there is a substitute teacher, schools can print the sub-attendance roster to take attendance on paper, and send to the office for the secretary to enter. Alternatively, the teacher or attendance support specialist may also enter in to the SIS.

### Scheduled Classes/Instructional Periods

- We recognize the importance of daily attendance. Just as important, is attendance in each scheduled class. Students are expected to be present and on time for each scheduled class/instructional period. Class-based attendance procedures are in place, and specify if a student swipes in for the day, but is marked absent in every period, the student is marked unexcused for the day.
- When students exhibit behaviors such as class cutting, schools are expected to use the tiered MTSS framework to address the behavior. For example, if the team finds that a student is cutting class because they are struggling with the content, interventions should include additional academic support.

#### A. Corrections to a student's attendance record

If a parent or guardian feels that there is an error/discrepancy on their student's attendance record, they have the right to address it with the school. They must provide proper documentation in order for a change to be made. This documentation should consist of a written excuse note from the parent if it is less than three (3) days from the date of absence. An excuse note from a licensed health care provider is required if the absence totals three (3) consecutive days or more. Once the information is given to the school, either the principal or their designee will approve the change. If the change is approved, the change should be reflected in the SIS. Changes for the current school year can be done at the school level; changes from the prior school year must be submitted to the Central Education Office for correction. The school can forward all information pertaining to the case to the following email address [lfinney@universalcompanies.org](mailto:lfinney@universalcompanies.org), for change request.

## **VIII. Unable to Locate - Withdrawal Procedures**

### Compulsory School-Age Students (age 6 to 18 years old)

Schools are to follow the truancy process, complete an SAIP, and refer the student to the Central Education Office. If Family Court/DHS are unable to locate the family's whereabouts, the student may be withdrawn from roll, using code (WD01), and a copy of the truancy court order must go in the pupil pocket. Student's withdraw date can be backdated to the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive unexcused absence.

*Note: Once student is enrolled in Kindergarten, they are subject to the Pennsylvania Department of Education School compulsory age law.*

Non-Compulsory School-Age Students (18 years old and over)

Students who are 18 years of age and over are beyond the compulsory age for school. If a student has been absent for ten (10) consecutive days, an overage letter is to be mailed to the home. Please include information to the Re-engagement Center. If the school does not hear from the student within ten (10) days from sending out the overage letter, the student may be withdrawn from roll. A copy of the letter must go in the pupil pocket. Student's withdrawal date can be backdated to the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive unexcused absence.

Students over eighteen (18) years of age, who are absent unexcused the last 30 school days in the prior year, and do not show up at the beginning of the school year, are to be removed from roll as of the first day of school (WD01).

*Note: Special Education students should not be withdrawn from roll without consultation with the Special Education Compliance Monitor.*

**Withdrawal Codes**

<b>Withdrawal Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Use</b>
WD01	Student left school without transferring or dropped out:	a. Moved from district and/or to another state, not known to be in school. b. Quit school. c. Left school without diploma or other certification after passing age up to which the district was required to provide a free, public education.

		<p>d. Issued a General Employment Certificate, Farm or Domestic Service Exemption Permit.</p> <p>e. Attends an institution that is not primarily academic (military, Job Corps, corrections, etc.) and does not offer a secondary education.</p> <p>f. Attended Kindergarten and withdrew.</p> <p>g. Whereabouts unknown.</p> <p>h. Student kidnapped.</p> <p>i. Is not in school but known to be suspended or expelled and their term of suspension or expulsion is over.</p> <p>j. Is not in school but known to be expelled with NO option to return.</p> <p>k. Is not in school but known to be ill, NOT verified as legitimate.</p> <p>l. Attends a nontraditional education setting, such as hospital/homebound institution, residential special education facility, correctional institution, community, or technical college where the program is classified as adult education that is NOT approved, administered or tracked by a regular school district.</p> <p>m. Lacks proper immunization.</p>
WD02	Student transferred to another public local educating agency (LEA):	<p>a. Moved from district &amp; known to be in school.</p> <p>b. Transferred to or is reported by another public LEA in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>c. NOT in school but known to be expelled and enrolled in another school and/or district.</p> <p>d. Committed to correctional institution and is enrolled in an education program.</p> <p>e. Attends a nontraditional education setting, such as hospital/homebound instruction, residential special education facility, correctional institution, community, or technical college where the program is administrated by an agency that is considered a special school district or extension of a regular school district or the program is an off-campus offering of a regular school district. Special Education student who does not change district of residence, however, due to IEP is transferred to a special education placement (Student record would be updated to special education referral =Y, location code = 9999, graduation status = blank)</p>

WD03	Student transferred to a private or nonpublic school or out of the state of PA, or out of the United States:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Transferred to a home schooling program.</li> <li>b. Transferred to a non-public or private institution.</li> <li>c. Transferred out of the state of PA or foreign exchange program.</li> <li>d. Moved out of the United States, enrollment status not known.</li> <li>e. Attends postsecondary institution (early college).</li> <li>f. Attends an institution that is NOT primarily academic (military, possibly Job Corps, corrections, etc.) and offers a secondary education program.</li> <li>g. Verified physically or mentally incapacitated.</li> <li>h. Is not in school but known to be ill, verified as legitimate.</li> <li>i. Is not in school but known to be suffering long-term illness and NOT receiving education services (residential drug treatment, severe physical or mental illness).</li> <li>j. Is not in school but known to be suspended or expelled and their term of suspension or expulsion is not yet over.</li> <li>k. Is not in school but known to be planning to enroll late (e.g., extended family vacation, seasonal work).</li> </ul>
WD04	Student fulfilled graduation requirements.	Received some other recognized credential, such as a certificate of attendance or GED.
WD06	Student deceased	Student has died
WD09	Student enrolled but did not show:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Status is unknown.</li> <li>b. Attended summer school – was not enrolled during the regular school year.</li> </ul>
WD11	Student changes program, grade, residency status, etc. but stays in same school/location within the same LEA during the school year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Must immediately reenroll with an R11-Reentry same school/location code</li> <li>b. Does not affect full academic year (FAY)</li> </ul>
WD12	Student changes program, grade, residency status, etc. resulting in a change in school/location within	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Must immediately reenroll with an R12-Reentry to different school/location code within the same AUN</li> <li>b. Does affect Full Academic Year (FAY)</li> </ul>

	the same LEA during the school year.	
--	--------------------------------------	--

### **Important Information Regarding Attendance**

When resolving student attendance, do so in the SIS. All resolution must be entered into the SIS. Steppers and videos for attendance can be found on the [sishelp.philasd.org](http://sishelp.philasd.org) website.

### **Attendance Reports Available in the SIS**

The following Attendance Reports are the most commonly used reports that should be utilized by schools.

- Unexcused Daily Absence (Truancy) Report -This report lists currently enrolled students who have unexcused absences. The report can be run by the specified number of consecutive or non-consecutive unexcused absences within the selected date range.
- Attendance Percentage Report - This report provides the percentage of days present during the days enrolled. The report can be run at the student or homeroom level.
- Student Detail Attendance Report - This report lists students identified as absent or late for a specific date range. This report will list students, date(s) missed or tardy, attendance type (excused/unexcused), whether the student was absent or late, and the corresponding code.
- Class Cut Report - This report will provide information on students who have been marked present for the day and have unexcused course/section attendance. Data will reflect the student's current enrollment and schedule/roster at the selected school.

For more reports available in the SIS, including additional attendance reports, click on the link below. Report descriptions, steppers, and examples can be found at <http://sishelp.philasd.org> and are linked to the report name.

### **Daily Detail and Period Detail Reports in the SIS**

Do not generate or disseminate the **Daily Detail** or the **Period Detail** reports found on an individual student's attendance tab. These are core product features of Infinite Campus, and do not align with Universal Family of Schools Attendance policies. These reports **should not be utilized** to document student attendance events.

### **Long-Term Sub Teachers**

When a long-term substitute has been confirmed for an assignment, he/she will be entered into Advantage and should use the self-service setup or call the IT Help Desk to activate his/her account. Once a long-term substitute has activated his/her account, the principal will be able to assign them to sections in the SIS to enter attendance and grades for assigned classes. SIS Coaches can train new teachers on the system.

### **Best Practices and Strategies**

Reducing chronic absence fits nicely into the three-tiered reform systems being successfully implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism in schools and districts across the United States.

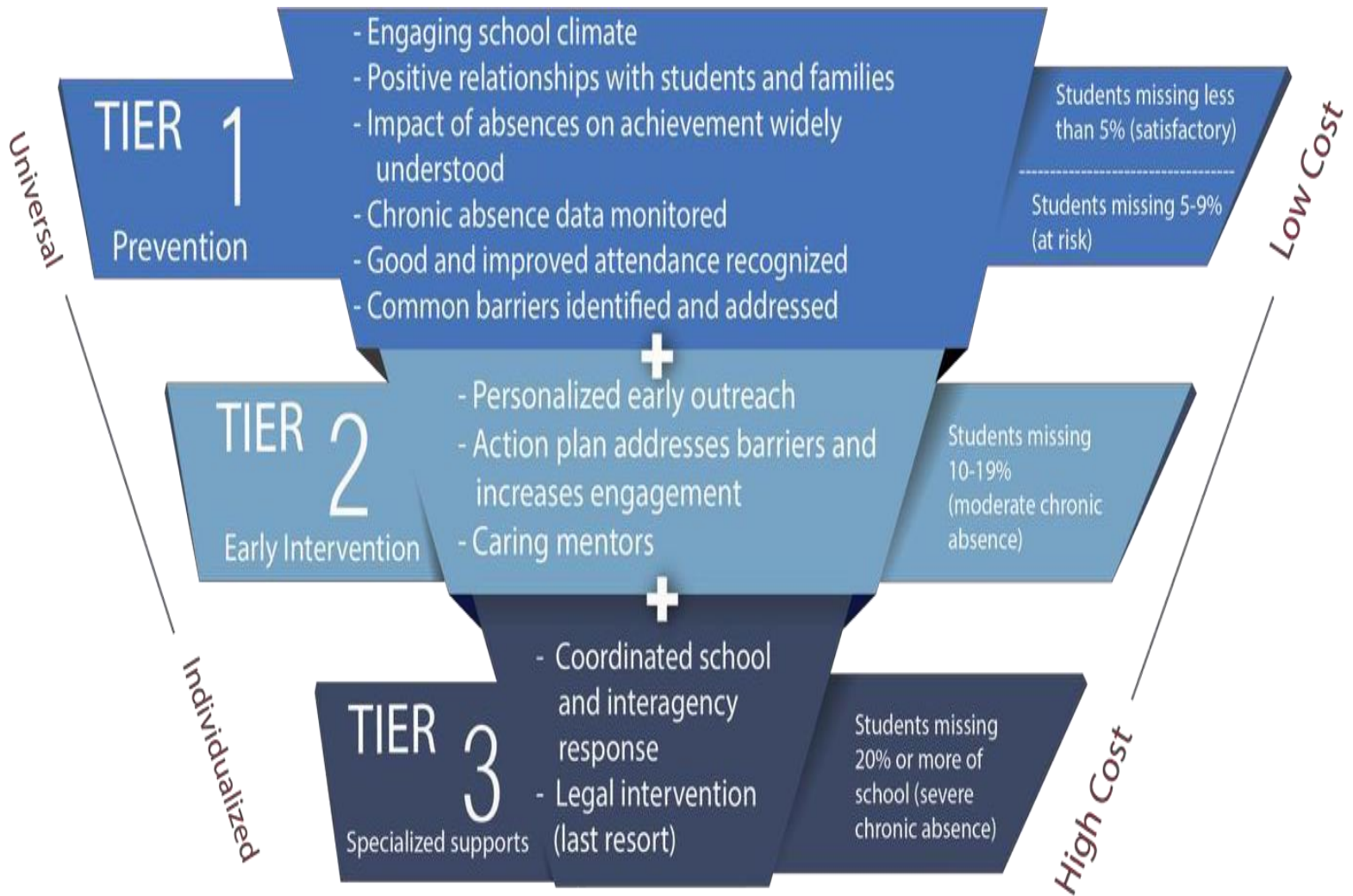
**Tier 1:** represents universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students. (Incentives, rewards, acknowledgements, 95% Club)

**Tier 2:** provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence. (meet with family/student, address barriers)

**Tier 3:** offers intensive support for students/families facing the greatest challenges to getting to school. (support/help from outside agencies truancy providers)

The pyramid graphics (below) show examples of interventions that schools should try at each tier.

**MTSS Framework for Attendance:**



**For Attendance Concerns, Questions & Technical Assistance:**

Please reach out to the Central Education Office via phone at 215-391-4161 or email [lfinney@universalcompanies.org](mailto:lfinney@universalcompanies.org)

**RELATED POLICIES**

- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Discipline
- Attendance
- Harassment and Discrimination of Students
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students
- Education Stability for Children in Foster Care