

**I.D.iv**  
**Attendance Rates**

<b>Table 5.5: Attendance Rates</b>							
<b>Annual Measurable Objective (AMO):</b>		<b>94%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Subgroups by Level</b>		<b>2002-2003</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
<b>All students</b>	Elementary	94.5	94.9	94.5	95.2	95.5	95.3
	Middle	92.9	91.8	92.8	92.7	92.7	93.4
	High	94.5	91	90.8	90.9	92.2	92.6
<b>African American</b>	Elementary	95.4	95.5	95.2	95.8	96.1	96.1
	Middle	93.8	94.1	93.9	93.4	92.8	93.5
	High	94.9	91.8	91.3	91.4	93.1	94.0
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	Elementary	0	0	0	0	0	99.2
	Middle	0	0	0	0	0	
	High	0	0	0	0	0	94.8
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	Elementary	94.8	94.4	95.2	88.2	95.4	95.2
	Middle	98.6	94.2	0	0	0	91.9
	High	0	96.2	95.7	99.1	0	96.3
<b>Hispanic</b>	Elementary	92.9	95.2	95.6	95	96	96.2
	Middle	81.6	89.3	91	89.3	91.5	95.6
	High	0	85.9	85	90.3	90.1	90.0
<b>White (Not of Hispanic Origin)</b>	Elementary	93.8	94.3	93.7	94.7	94.8	94.3
	Middle	92.2	89.9	91.9	92.3	92.7	93.0
	High	94.2	90.2	90.4	90.3	91.6	91.6
<b>Free/Reduced Meals (FARMS)</b>	Elementary	94.3	94.7	94.3	95	95.3	95.0
	Middle	92.1	90.9	91.7	91.6	91.2	92.5
	High	94	90.1	90	90.1	91.2	91.6
<b>Limited English Proficient (LEP)</b>	Elementary	95.4	96.9	95.9	93.9	95.6	96.5
	Middle	85.7	92.5	90.2	85.9	91.7	97.6
	High	96.7	0	0	0	0	98.6
<b>Special Education</b>	Elementary	93.7	94.8	94.1	94.6	94.9	94.1
	Middle	92.8	90.3	92	92	91.6	92.2
	High	93.3	88.1	87.8	86.4	88.9	89.3

## I. PROGRESS IN ATTENDANCE

### A. FINDINGS

#### 1. Middle School and High School level students slightly increased their attendance rate.

Aggregate attendance at the middle and high school levels has increased slightly each of the past three years. Middle Level attendance increased from 92.7% to 93.4%, an increase of .7 points over last year. This is an increase of 1.6 percentage points since 2004. High school attendance increased from 92.2% to 92.6% in 2008. This represents the highest rate since 2003 at this level and is an increase of 1.8 percentage points since 2005.

Although the Middle level attendance (93.4%) did not meet the State standard of 94%, a closer look at the data indicates that Somerset County's Intermediate School did meet the standard. The Intermediate School, which houses all Grade 6 and Grade 7 students, had an attendance rate of 94%. Grade 8 students who attend the two high schools, posted an attendance rate of only 92.1%.

School	2005	2006	2007	2008
SIS	92.4	92.7	93.4	94.0
CHS	91.9	90.8	90.1	92.4
8	94.7	93.0	90.7	92.4
WHS	90.2	90.9	93.6	92.8
8	93.0	92.6	92.1	91.8

#### 2. The majority of represented subgroups increased the attendance rate at the Middle and High School level.

In addition to the improved attendance at the aggregate level, six of the seven represented subgroups increased attendance percentages at the Middle school level. At the Middle Level the White (92.7%), African American (93.5%), Hispanic (95.6%), LEP (97.6%), Special Ed (92.2%) and FARMS (92.5%) subgroups all posted gains in 2008. The largest increase was by the LEP subgroup with an increase of 5.9 points. Other gains were shown by the Hispanic (4.1 points), FARMS (1.3 points), African American (0.7 points), Special Ed (0.6 points) and White (0.3 points) subgroups. These yearly increases represent the fourth consecutive year for the White subgroup and the third consecutive year for the LEP and Hispanic groups.

Five of the seven represented subgroups increased attendance at the High School level in 2008. The LEP subgroup increased from 76.2% to 98.6%, a 22.4 point increase. The Asian subgroup increased by 19.7 percentage points to 96.3%. The African American subgroup had 94% attendance at the high school level which was

a 0.9 point increase over the previous year. Special Ed and FARMS increased by 0.4 points.

## **B. PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTED PROGRESS**

### **1. Maintenance of Secondary Attendance Clerk Positions**

Establishing and maintaining Attendance Clerks at the two high schools improved the monitoring of attendance and allowed for more contact with parents and guardians. An attempt to contact parents is made for every student absence. Attendance Clerks notify the Learning Support Specialist if there are problems consistently reaching parents. Home visits are made when considered appropriate.

Attendance records were more accurate as a result of the daily contact by the Attendance Clerks with staff, students and family members. These contacts resulted in the adjustment of records, when necessary, being completed in a timely manner.

### **2. Counseling Programs and Initiatives**

Counseling initiatives such as home visits, individual and group counseling were used to address students with chronic attendance issues. Referrals to outside agencies; such as DSS, the Health Department, and other Mental Health Agencies were made when more intensive services were indicated. The PBIS program, offering incentives for good attendance, was instrumental in establishing a culture of regular attendance.

The addition of a second supervisor in the Student Services Division allowed for one supervisor to focus on each level (Elementary and Secondary). This provided a more focused approach on the attendance initiatives at each level.

### **3. Truancy Court for Chronic Absentees and Coordination with Other Agencies**

Chronically absent students and their parents are referred to the Truancy Reduction Program when they have excessive unexcused absences and are in danger of failing. Truancy court continues to be effective with these students by connecting them to services that assist the student and family. Services such as, family/individual counseling, substance abuse screening, and physical exams are monitored by the court for a period of 3-9 months. The addition of a second supervisor provided for increased follow-up with truant cases once they returned to school.

### **4. Attendance Policy Change to Eliminate Make Up Time**

The Somerset County Public School Attendance Policy is reviewed every year. In 2007, it was revised based on attendance data and feedback from staff and parents. Changing the policy to eliminate make up time made students more accountable for their presence in school. Students were no longer able to spend time after school to correct unexcused absences. This required students to be more focused on their presence in class, increasing their academic exposure and attendance percentages.

**C. RELATED RESOURCES**

<b>RELATED RESOURCES FOR ATTENDANCE</b>	
<b>Staffing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained 9 Counselors, 7 Learning Support Specialists and 3 Behavior Intervention Specialists</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$1,153,427  <b>Source:</b> Local - \$880,864            SS/HS Grant - \$272,563  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained 2 Attendance Clerks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$30,972  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added 1 additional Student Services Supervisor (Dec. 07 – June 08)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$40,504  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<b>Core Program</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued the Implementation of PBIS</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$2,000  <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<b>Intervention</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participated in Truancy Court</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$ 0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided Individual/Group Counseling K-12</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$ 0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State</p>
<b>Materials, Supplies &amp; Equipment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided PBIS Incentives</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$7,500  <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided Attendance Incentives</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$1,445  <b>Source:</b> Local/State</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided General Supplies Used to Implement Strategies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$1,140  <b>Source:</b> Local/State</p>
<b>Professional Development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trained LSS/Counselors in Dealing with Students/Families who Have Barriers to Successful Education</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cost:</b> \$5,400  <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant</p>

## **II. CHALLENGES TO INCREASING THE ATTENDANCE RATE BY GRADE BAND AND SUBGROUPS**

### **A. FINDINGS**

- 1. Four of the seven represented elementary subgroups decreased the percentage of attendance and the aggregate attendance dropped by 0.2 points.**

The Elementary Attendance rate decreased slightly from 95.5% to 95.3% while still meeting the state standard of 94%. Attendance dropped in 4 subgroups: Asian (0.3 points), White (0.5 points), Special Education (0.8 points), and FARMS (0.3 points). The Special Education students had the largest decrease. In addition the African American subgroup stayed the same as 2007 at 96.1%. This is the first decrease for these subgroups in three years. Each of these subgroups still met the 94% standard.

- 2. The Middle and High School aggregate student groups did not meet the state standard.**

Middle and High school level attendance rates did not meet the state standard of 94%. Middle students (93.4%) missed the AMO by .2 percentage points but still increased their attendance over 2007 by .7 points. High School students did not meet the AMO of 92.9%, missing the target by .3 points but increasing their rate by .4 percentage points over 2007.

The Asian (91.9%), African American (93.5%), White (93.0%), Special Education (92.2%) and FARMS (92.5%) subgroups did not meet the Middle Level AMO for attendance. The White (91.6%), Hispanic (90%), Special Education (89.3%) and FARMS (91.6%) subgroups did not meet the High School attendance standard.

### **B. PROGRAMS, PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO ADDRESS CONCERNS AND OVERCOME CHALLENGES**

- 1. We are challenged to increase parent and guardians' value and support of daily attendance for their elementary children.**

A stronger emphasis will be made this year on regular school attendance through the PBIS programs in the elementary schools. Students and parents will be notified about attendance incentives and celebrations will be held at each school on a regular basis for students with good attendance.

The Student Services Division has developed an improvement plan for elementary schools. The additional supervisor services will allow for closer monitoring of the implementation of this plan. Truancy Court has most recently been extended to elementary students and will address those families who have chronic attendance issues. Case management of students with academic, behavioral or attendance issues through the Learning Support Team (LST) process will also allow for

increased services to these students. Individual improvement plans are developed and implemented for students referred to the LST.

**2. We are challenged to motivate and develop a habit of regular school attendance by middle and high school students.**

Individual Learning Plans (ILP) will be developed with all middle and high school students to monitor their success and manage any difficulties they may have with academics. The data indicates that students who are not successful academically do not come to school. Including attendance as a part of the ILP will allow counselors to discuss the importance of regular attendance with students at the same time they have conversations about academics.

Attendance Clerks will be maintained to increase communication with parents/guardians about the importance of regular attendance. The focus this year will be on better communication between the Attendance Clerks and the Learning Support Team in order for intervention to happen as early as possible. Increased PBIS initiatives by the LST will also be used to encourage regular attendance.

Data indicates the transition Grades (Grade 6 and Grade 8) have the highest rate of retention. The Student Services Division is working with the Intermediate and high schools to develop improved transition plans for students between levels as well as providing support for students who have been retained in earlier grades. The data shows that if the students are not supported after being retained in order to be successful, they will not want to come to school. Where possible, these students will be provided a mentor through the various programs available.

**3. We are challenged to provide engaging, meaningful instruction that inspires students to be consistent regular attendees.**

All Somerset County schools are partners with the *Coalition of Essential Schools* (CES). This partnership is providing professional development opportunities targeting teaching methods that engage students and make instruction compelling. CES has conducted SLICE visits which evaluate planning and instruction on the basis of cognitive level. Somerset teachers and administrators recognize if learning is reduced to mere memorization of facts, learning ceases to be meaningful for many students. When students understand the reason a topic is included or can make a connection to their own life, the learning creates stronger motivation and encourages regular attendance.

Professional development activities provided during the week long secondary content area workshops focused on activities that interest and motivate students and showed teachers how to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse student needs. Technology integration is a major strategy for the school system this year. The Promethean Interactive Classrooms at the Intermediate School will be extended to all Grade 5 and Grade 8 classrooms in 2008-2009. Somerset County Public Schools is committed to the belief that if students see their school as exciting and meaningful many attendance problems will be solved.

### C. RELATED RESOURCES

<b>PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, &amp; STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES</b>	
<b>Staffing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain 8 Counselors, 5 Learning Support Specialists and 4 Behavior Intervention Specialists</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$906,885  <b>Source:</b> Local - \$683,163  SS/HS Grant- \$223,722  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain 2 Attendance Clerks</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$34,052  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain Elementary and Secondary Student Services Supervisors</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$174,437  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<b>Core Program</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Implementation of PBIS</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$2,000  <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 – 2009  <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Individual Learning Plans for all Secondary Students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a new Transition Program for 6<sup>th</sup> &amp; 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>
<b>Intervention</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Individual/Group Counseling in Grades K-12</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide Mentoring Programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$39,732  <b>Source:</b> Mentoring Grant  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend Truancy Court to Elementary level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$0 – Staff Time  <b>Source:</b> Local/State  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>
<b>Materials, Supplies &amp; Equipment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide PBIS Incentives</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$7,000  <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant  <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009</p>

<b>PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, &amp; STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide General Supplies Needed to Implement Strategies</li> </ul>	<b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$2,500 <b>Source:</b> Local/State <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create “High Tech” Classrooms for at 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade teachers</li> </ul>	<b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$218,490 <b>Source:</b> Ed Tech -\$ 150,000 Local - \$ 68,940 <b>Timeline:</b> Fall 2008 <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
<b>Professional Development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train LSS/Counselors in Dealing with Students/Families who Have Barriers to Successful Education</li> </ul>	<b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$10,000 <b>Source:</b> SS/HS Grant <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009 <i>*Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Elementary Early Dismissal Times for PD on Student Engagement and Success</li> </ul>	<b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$0- Staff Time <b>Source:</b> Local/State <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 - 2009 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of APD Time for PD on Student Engagement and Success</li> </ul>	<b>Amount Budgeted:</b> \$ 312,680 <b>Source:</b> Local/State <b>Timeline:</b> 2008 – 2009 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>

**D. CORRELATION OF PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES WITH MASTER PLAN EXTENSION 2008-2010**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Action Step</b>
<b>5.1.4 PBIS:</b> All sites use PBIS to continuously improve student behavior as reflected in discipline data.	<b>5.1.4.1.</b> Develop and implement PBIS site plans for each school.  <b>5.1.4.2.</b> Analyze discipline data monthly in order to develop and implement strategies to positively change behavior.
<b>6.1.1 Elementary Attendance:</b> All elementary schools meet and/or exceed the State Standard for attendance	<b>6.1.1.1</b> Monitor student attendance bi-monthly through the school counselor  <b>6.1.1.2</b> Monitor attendance by subgroups and analyze findings.
<b>6.1.2 Intermediate Attendance:</b> The Intermediate School meets and/or exceed the State Standard for attendance	<b>6.1.2.1.</b> Monitor student attendance bi-monthly through the school counselor  <b>6.1.2.2.</b> Monitor attendance by subgroups and analyze findings
<b>6.1.3 Secondary Attendance:</b> Each high school meets and/or exceed the State Standard for attendance	<b>6.1.3.1.</b> Monitor student attendance bi-monthly through the school counselor

**6.1.5 Attendance Clerks:** Student attendance in Grades 8-12 is monitored through the office of the Attendance Clerk

**6.1.6 Truancy Court:** Students identified as truant are referred to Truancy Court for case management.

**6.2.1 Individual Learning Plans:** All secondary students have a personalized, monitored individual learning plan to guide immediate choices and long term goals.

**6.4.2 Mentoring Programs:** Mentoring programs, internal and external, are operating in each SCPS site.

**6.1.3.2.** Monitor attendance by subgroups and analyze findings

**6.1.5.1** Document parent and student contact utilizing the monthly Log

**6.1.5.2** Refer attendance issues/concerns to the school counselor

**6.1.6.1.** Refer students with 5 to 8 unexcused absences to LST to avoid development of chronic absenteeism

**6.2.1.2** Develop an ILP for every student in Grades 6-12

**6.4.2.1.** Document current internal and external student mentoring activities at each site

**6.4.2.5** Investigate external resources for mentoring and refer students as appropriate

