



RESPONSE TO INDEPENDENT PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Prince George's County Public Schools Graduation Rates

January 2019

Key Findings

KEY FINDINGS

- **Reduced grade change use and misuse:** PGCPS greatly reduced the degree to which grade changes were used and misused.
- **Nearly eliminated ineligible graduates:** PGCPS nearly eliminated issues with graduating students who have not met the transcript or service learning requirements.
- **Increased compliance with requirements:** PGCPS significantly increased awareness of and compliance with administrative procedure and state requirements.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Insufficient oversight and support of attendance accountability:** PGCPS did not provide sufficient oversight and support to enforce attendance accountability. PGCPS leadership did not communicate the expectation of compliance with attendance-related grading requirements and failed to provide tools and processes to ensure adherence or verify data accuracy.
- **Graduation coding errors:** Coding errors contributed to inappropriate identification of five of the students in the sample as eligible to graduate although school-certified graduate lists reflected students as non-graduates.

Best Practices

BEST PRACTICES

PGCPS developed and/or implemented:

- **An online grade change form** that mirrors the existing PS-140 Form fields. The online grade change tool includes workflow functionality which integrates with PGCPS's login credentials and automatically routes the form to appropriate points of individuals for approval, and users are required to attach evidence that supports each grade change.
- **A district-wide counseling credit review** for professional school counselors to review PDS Tally Cards for errors and **a checklist verification process** helps counselors stay current with PDS Tally Cards to identify potential issues early and address issues before it is too late in the school year.
- **SchoolMAX access controls** by separating transcript manager and grade manager duties so than no one person at each school could hold both levels of access.
- **A Student Instructional Team (SIT)** process to enforce administrative procedures and other requirements and to provide limited and well-documented exceptions based on extreme circumstances.
- **A clear and detailed “Good Faith Effort” policy** in an Administrative Procedure that can support the intended purpose without compromising the quality of work / effort from students.
- **An Administrative Procedure for Grade Changes and Grade Appeals** to ensure grade changes are warranted and have proper supporting documentation. The appeals process allows parents and students to raise any grade related concerns formally.

Timeline for Implementation

WORK COMPLETED TO DATE

- **Developed** district-level monitoring process, including data analysis, on the reports from SchoolMAX to ensure all schools are following the policies outlined in AP 5113.
- **Added** step in the electronic PS-140 Form process that requires the teacher to agree or disagree with a grade change initiated by the principal or SIT chair, in accordance with the process outlined in AP 5116.
- **Included** service-learning verification as part of the graduation checklist process to confirm that each graduate has successfully met the 24-hour requirement before marking them as graduates.
- **Proactively communicated** expectations around attendance policies and procedures.

ONGOING

- **Provide substantial training** for all administrators on how to implement and monitor adherence to AP 5113 at their schools.
- **Conduct quarterly audits** of the Graduation Certification Checklists and PDS Tally Cards, using a standardized audit process and timeline.
- **Deliver annual trainings** for school registrars focusing on aspects of their role impacted by administrative procedures and other policies.
- **Provide support and resources** for the newly empowered Chief Accountability Officer organization to continue to make progress in closing the accountability gaps identified in the 2017 audit.
- **Improve the timeliness** of grade submissions to further improve grade entry timeline compliance.

ONGOING

- **Communicate future changes** and provide robust training for staff to sustain the current culture of compliance.
- **Proactively identify and address** system configuration issues, improve data quality and improve school-level understanding and use of data.
- **Improve staff training** and standardization around the graduation certification process and perform independent reviews to ensure the appropriate completion of PDS Tally Cards for all graduates.
- **Proactively ensure** that students at each high school grade level are scheduled in accordance with the Maryland Graduation Requirements for their respective graduating cohort. Seek guidance from MSDE in advance of graduation in instances when unique student circumstances do not allow a student to meet graduation requirements.

ONGOING

- **Control the use of grade changes** and maintaining focus on grade entry timeline adherence.
- **Address systems configuration issues**, improve data quality and improve school-level understanding and use of data through several steps.
- **Produce tailored data outputs** and/or develop training to allow schools to interpret and act on SchoolMAX data anomalies with validation and follow-up from the Accountability function.
- **Train school leaders** to utilize data analysis to improve visibility and ensure compliance with attendance policies and procedures.
- **Support high schools** to implement programs to address truancy and chronic absenteeism at schools mostly impacted by this analysis.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

February 2019

- Regularly review attendance data to identify data irregularities and ensure school compliance with attendance policies and procedures.
- Designate personnel within the Accountability function to continuously monitor SchoolMAX for anomalies, irregularities, and potential data quality issues, and facilitate coordination between the Accountability and Student Applications teams to ensure alignment.

March 2019

- Perform an initial audit of SchoolMAX to verify the quality and validity of its attendance data.
- Perform regular audits of SchoolMAX to illuminate potential system configuration problems, including a focus on whether automatic processes function as expected.
- Establish a standardized attendance recording process supported by administrative procedures and provide comprehensive training, monitoring, and reporting on attendance entry and updates. The administrative procedure should include requirements for timely entry and should clearly communicate the expectation that every absence should be appropriately recorded as lawful or unlawful.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

March 2019 (continued)

- Conduct a complete system configuration audit to verify the quality and validity of attendance data.
- Investigate whether SchoolMAX can enforce the SY18-19 version of AP 5121.3.
- Develop tools and processes to compare attendance and grading appropriately to enforce compliance with AP 5121.3.
- Investigate additional features of SchoolMAX that could support school-level attendance accountability. Given the AP 5113 modifications, PGCPS should now consider whether SchoolMAX can automatically assign a "zero" for missed assignments when a student is unlawfully absent.

April 2019

- Train principals and assistant principals over seniors on the graduation requirements and certification process so that they are informed when supporting the counselors and signing transcripts or PDS Tally Cards.
- Provide additional training for both principals and assistant principals on how to implement AP 5121.3 in their schools and continue to share training materials that school administrators can use with their staff.
- Continue to ensure PDS Tally Cards are kept up to date annually and list correct graduation standards to assist the tallying process.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

May 2019

- At the District level, verify that no students listed as "non-grads" on the school certified graduate lists are incorrectly recorded with as exit code C-60 in SchoolMAX and that any errors identified are quickly resolved.

June 2019

- Increase the level of detail in trainings regarding pramming of transfer student data to ensure all schools are entering credits accurately.

July 2019

- Add detail to AP 5116 regarding execution and enforcement.
- Outline a clearer process that explains: when to use the online PS-140 Form, expected timelines, and record keeping.
- Define procedures for late grade entries.
- Establish clear repercussions for grading and reporting procedure violations.
- Clarify procedures around repeated courses. For example, when can a student repeat a course for a higher grade? And how many times can a course be repeated?

August 2019

- Work to improve the consistent use of grade change forms across high schools and standardize the late grade entry process district-wide.

THANK YOU