

Metuchen High School: Chronic Absenteeism Corrective Action Plan 2025-2026

From Punishment to Partnership

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A completely transparent, 15-month continuous feedback loop with over 50 individual community representatives.

**January
2025**

**April
2026**

**Parent Advisory
& PTO**

8 meetings



**School Leadership
Team (SLT) & Faculty**

10 meetings



**Student Advisory
(SL@M)**

6 meetings



The Challenge (2024-2025)

16.9%



The Mandate (2025-2026)

< 10.0%



Current Status (March 30, 2026)

9.9%



MHS Turnaround Goal

Our goal is to drop below the 10% threshold, not through harsher punishments, but by establishing both community-backed positive incentives and proactive communication.

Cohort: 18-21 Absences



Focus Range
(4 Absences)

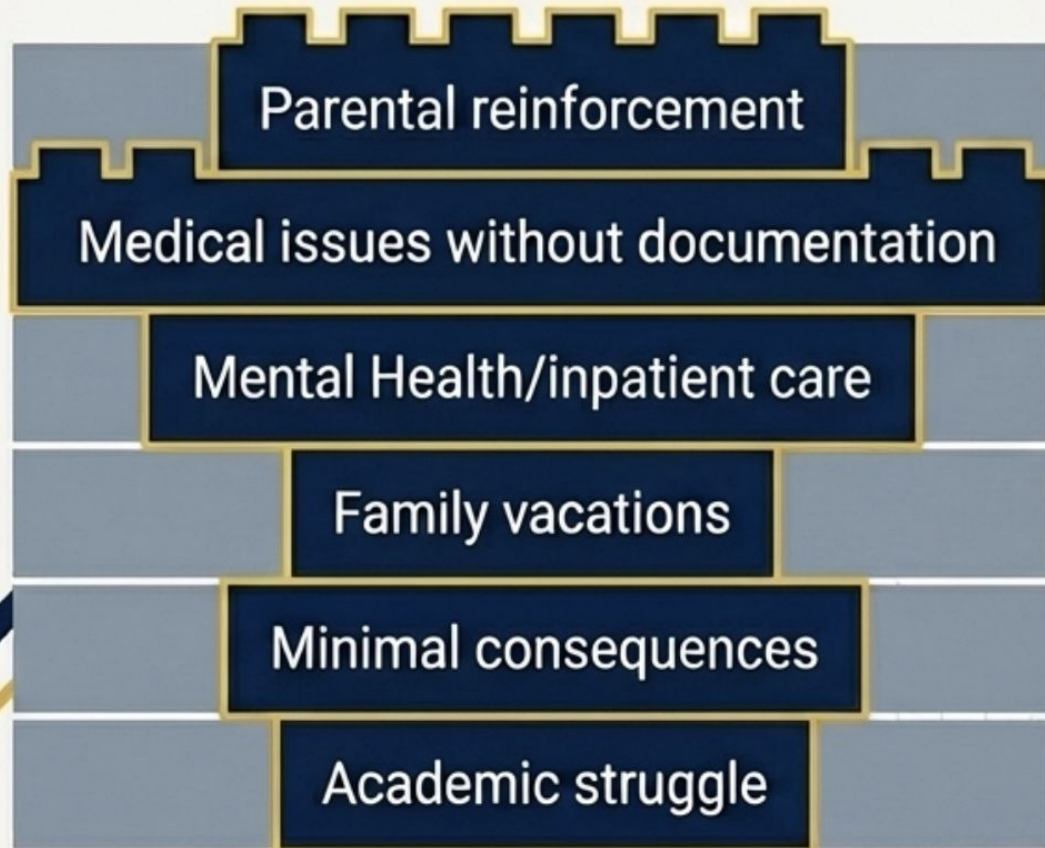
The Attainable Margin

A significant cluster of students hovered closely between 18-21 absences.

The math proved that if just this specific cohort had dropped below 18 absences, the overall rate would have plummeted to 8.7%—proving the state goal was highly achievable with targeted interventions.

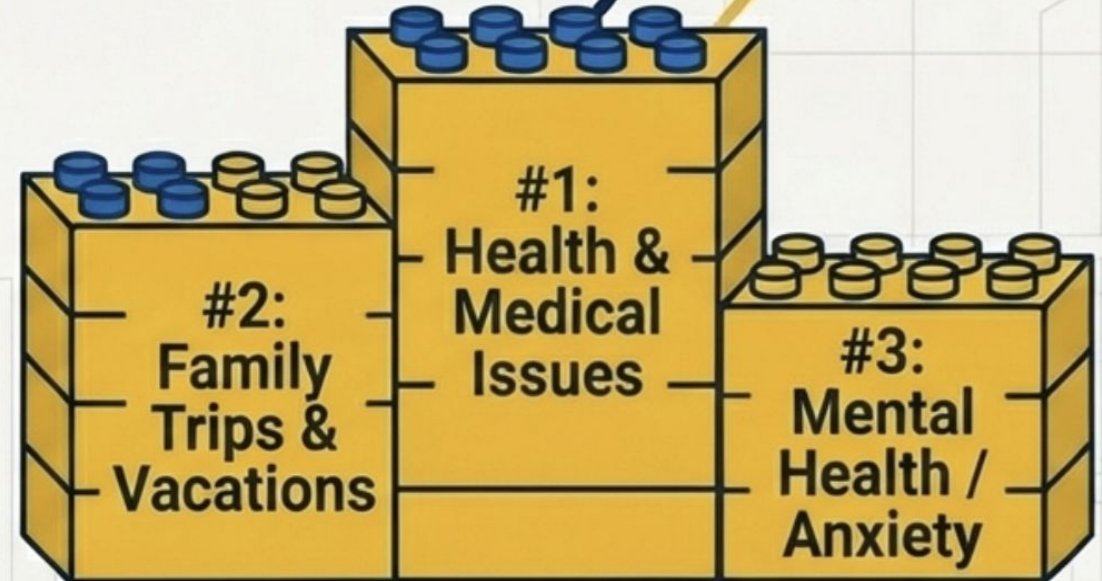


Leadership Observations



Winter 2026 Parent Survey Realities

Parent Advisory, Student Advisory,
and School Leadership Team.



Insight: Absence was rarely driven by deliberate school avoidance. Interventions needed to address medical documentation gaps, family travel planning, and mental health support.

The Core Pivot: Planning in Winter/Spring 2025 for 2025-2026



Addressing absenteeism through punitive measures would likely generate negative resistance. The strategy shifted: Do not focus on what students lose by being absent; focus entirely on what they earn by being present.

The MHS 2025-2026 Strategic Framework is built directly on the top three community-endorsed initiatives.



Parking and Arrival Privileges

**The Baseline Standard: 90% Attendance & Tardy Rate
(Max 18 days absent/tardy per year OR 9 days per semester)**

**Class of 2026
(Seniors)**

Senior Privilege: Late arrival
(9:15) / 7th period release.

Parking: Maintain **90%** in Fall
'25 for Spring '26 pass.

**Class of 2027
(Juniors)**

Senior Privilege: Maintain **90%**
in '25-'26 to unlock privilege for
'26-'27.

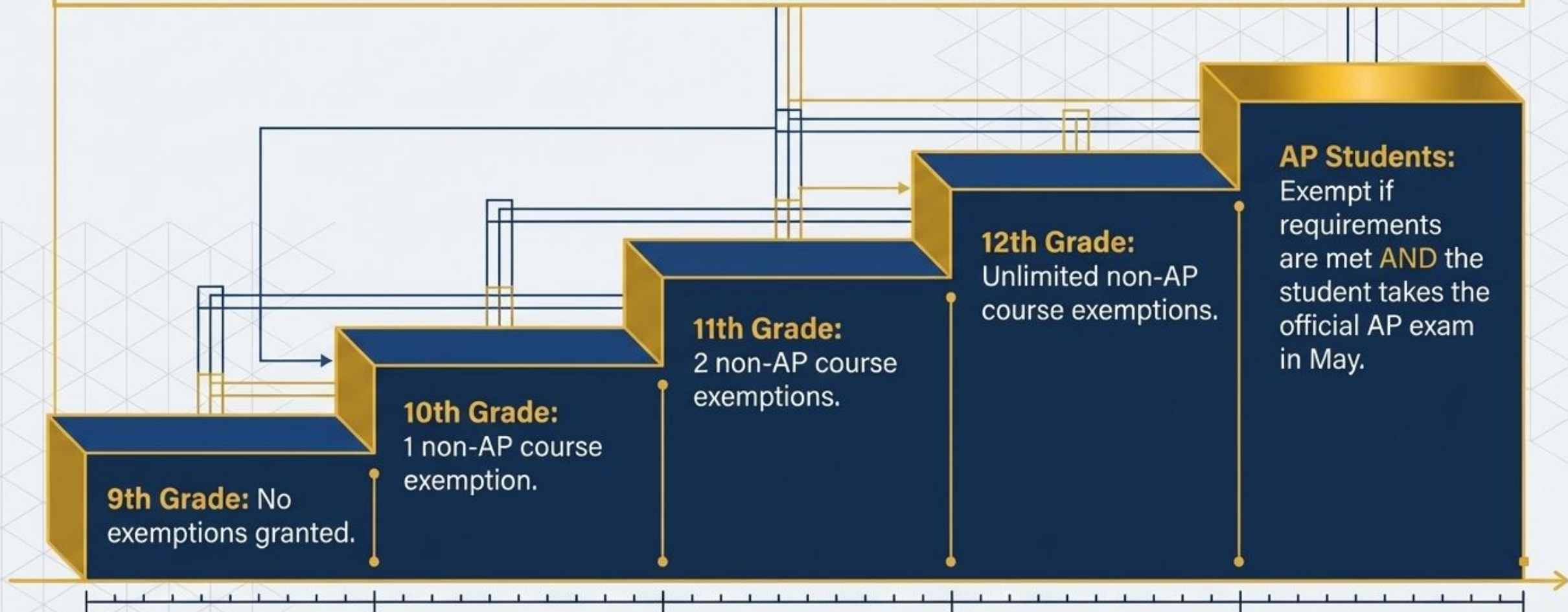
Parking: Maintain **90%** in Fall
'25 to unlock Spring '26 pass.

**Class of 2028
(Sophomores)**

Parking: Maintain **90%** in '25-'26 to unlock eligibility for their Junior
year.

Scaling Final Exam Exemptions with Student Maturity

Base Rule: All exemptions require a 95% class attendance rate (≤ 9 missed classes) and a 90% cumulative academic average, with teacher approval. Excused absences do not penalize students.



The Radar - Early Warnings

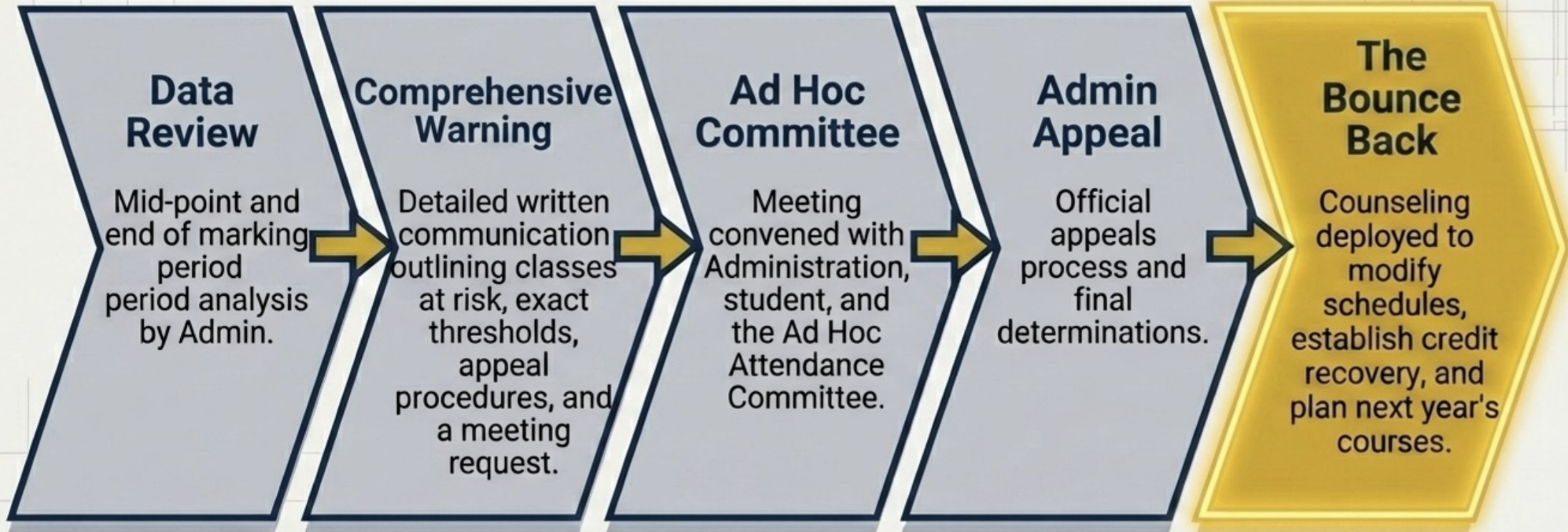
Automated daily notifications triggered via Thrillshare/Genesis (Calls, Emails, Texts) for daily absences.

The Response - Human Check-ins

Approved excessive absence letters sent to homes, instantly followed by mandatory 1-on-1 personalized meetings with students to address underlying trends.

The Review - Monthly Data Check

Monthly attendance reports routed to Counselors, 504/CST Case Managers, Clinicians, and Admin.



Policy & Structural Refinements

Policy 5200 Updates (Nov 2024)

Explicitly defined what constitutes an Excused Absence (aligning with NJDOE) and established strict requirements for written medical documentation.

Seat Time Clarity

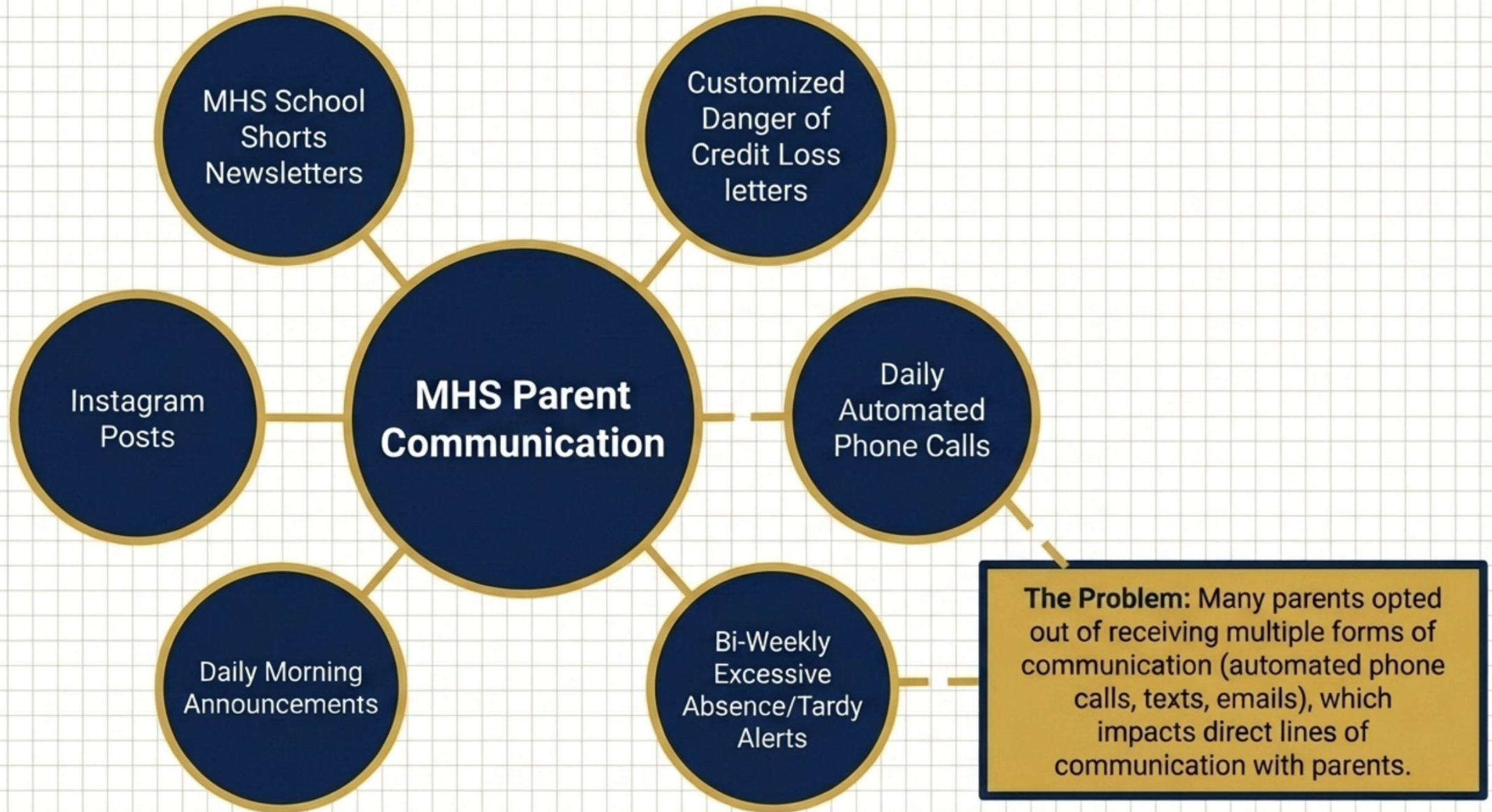
Clarified class period attendance rules determining seat time and grade credit.

System Auditing

Conducted ongoing reviews of Genesis absence coding by attendance secretaries to eliminate false unexcused reporting errors.

Bi-Weekly Pulses

Mandated excessive absence letters distributed electronically every two weeks, reviewed by CST and Counselors prior to sending.





9.9%

State Mandate: 10%

16.9%

State Mandate: 10%

71 Students

As of March 30, 2026, the number of chronically absent students has dropped from 121 to 71.

Sustaining the Momentum Blueprint

Reinforce

Continue strictly maintaining the positive incentive structures for the Class of '27 and '28.

Communicate

Provide clear communication to help parents/students understand attendance expectations and how the NJDOE counts absences. Keep parents engaged through omni-channel early warning systems to prevent Thrillshare opt-outs.

Audit

Maintain rigorous bi-weekly administrative reviews of attendance data through the end of the 2025-2026 academic year to ensure a strong finish.

By shifting from punishment to partnership, we are redefining attendance at Metuchen High School

QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!