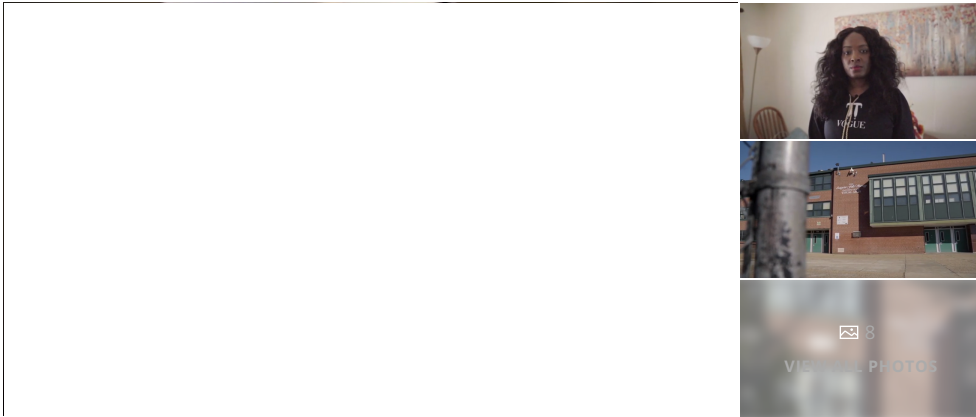


City student passes 3 classes in four years, ranks near top half of class with 0.13 GPA

by CHRIS PAPST, WBFF
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A Baltimore City Student passes three classes in four Years, and ranks near the top half of the class with a 0.13 GPA (WBFF)

BALTIMORE (WBFF) – A shocking discovery out of a Baltimore City high school, where Project Baltimore has found hundreds of students are failing. It's a school where a student who passed three classes in four years, ranks near the top half of his class with a 0.13 grade point average.

NEW | 'Fair and thorough'? City Schools investigating itself at Augusta Fells

Tiffany France thought her son would receive his diploma this coming June. But after four years of high school, France just learned, her 17-year-old must start over. He's been moved back to ninth grade.



FOX45 News Project Baltimore uncovers how much public money a failing school is receiving (WBFF)

“He’s stressed and I am too. I told him I’m probably going to start crying. I don’t know what to do for him,” France told Project Baltimore. “Why would he do three more years in school? He didn’t fail, the school failed him. The school failed at their job. They failed. They failed, that’s the problem here. They failed. They failed. He didn’t deserve that.”

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France’s son attends Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts in west Baltimore. His transcripts show he’s passed just three classes in four years, earning 2.5 credits, placing him in ninth grade. But France says she didn’t know that until February. She has three children and works three jobs. She thought her oldest son was doing well because even though he failed most of his classes, he was being promoted. His transcripts show he failed Spanish I and Algebra I but was promoted to Spanish II and Algebra II. He also failed English II but was passed on to English III.

“I’m just assuming that if you are passing, that you have the proper things to go to the next grade and the right grades, you have the right credits,” said France.

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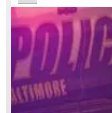
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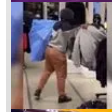
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A Baltimore City Student passes three classes in four Years, and ranks near the top half of the class with a 0.13 GPA (WBFF).

As we dig deeper into her son's records, we can see in his first three years at Augusta Fells, he failed 22 classes and was late or absent 272 days. But in those three years, only one teacher requested a parent conference, which France says never happened. No one from the school told France her son was failing and not going to class.

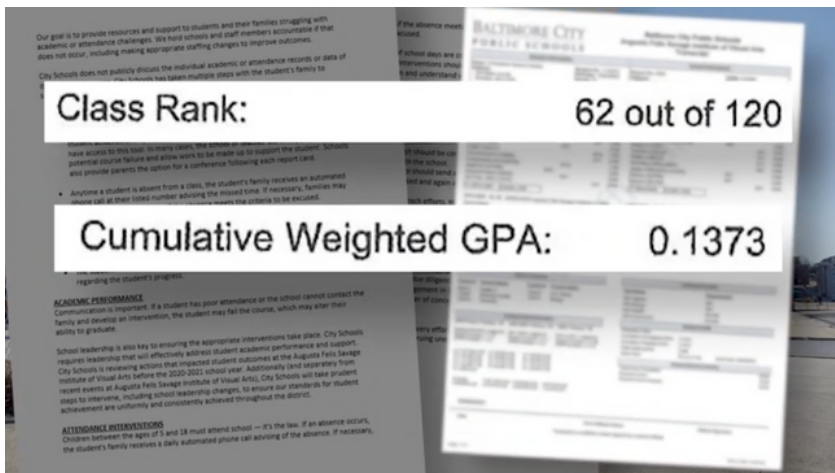
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"I feel like they never gave my son an opportunity, like if there was an issue with him, not advancing or not progressing, that they should have contacted me first, three years ago," said France.



Tiffany France thought her son would receive his diploma this coming June. But after four years of high school, France just learned, her 17-year-old must start over (WBFF)

In his four years at Augusta Fells, France's son earned a GPA of 0.13. He only passed three classes, but his transcripts show his class rank is 62 out of 120. This means, nearly half his classmates, 58 of them, have a 0.13 grade point average or lower.



The student's transcripts show his class rank at 62 out of 120. His GPA is 0.1373 (WBFF)

"He's a good kid. He didn't deserve that. Where's the mentors? Where is

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the help for him? I hate that this is happening to my child,” said an emotional France.

Project Baltimore talked with a City Schools administrator, who works inside North Avenue, but asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation. That administrator says the school system absolutely failed France’s son.

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The administrator told FOX45 News, City Schools failed because it has protocols and interventions set up to help students who are falling behind or have low attendance. In France’s son’s case, they didn’t happen.

Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott responds to a question about this Project Baltimore report (WBFF)

“I get angry. There’s nothing but frustration. We see on the news the crime that occurs, the murders, the shootings, we know that there are high levels of poverty in Baltimore. Things like this are adding to that. His transcript is not unusual to me. I’ve seen many transcripts, many report cards, like this particular student,” said the City Schools administrator.

Dr. Sonja Santelises was the City Schools CEO four years ago when France’s son was a freshman. But she will not interview with FOX45 News. Instead, we received a two-page statement, which explains what should happen when a student is chronically absent or failing.



The district says students received a letter about their academic status this past summer, and records can be accessed through the campus portal. When a student is absent, an automated call is placed to the number on file. The statement also said the school conducted recent home visits and the student's parent visited the school. France says none of that happened.

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What the statement does not address, is why France's son was promoted despite failing classes. It doesn't discuss his class rank, or the 58 other students with a GPA of 0.13 or lower. But it does say North Avenue is "reviewing actions that impacted student outcomes" at the school prior to this year.

"It took a lot for me to just build the courage to do this," France told Project Baltimore.

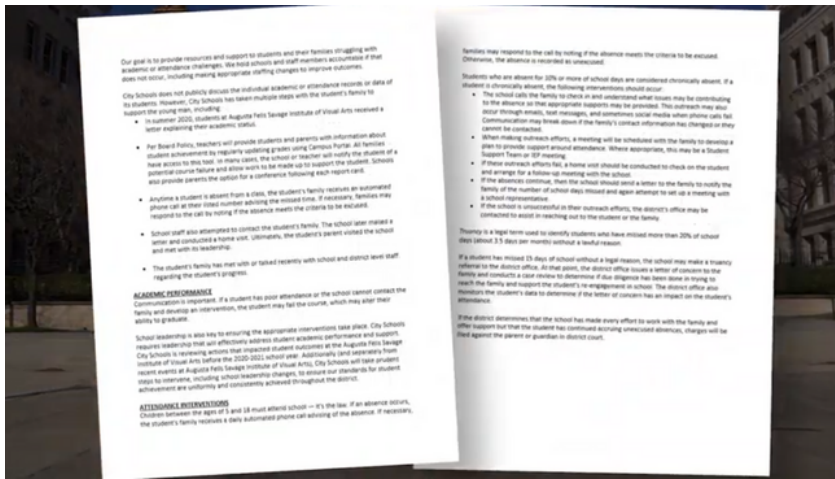
Calls to shut down Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts

Project Baltimore asked the City Schools administrator what they would say to France. The administrator replied, "I didn't have a hand on this student, but I worked for City Schools. So, he is one of my kids. I would hug her, and I would apologize profusely."

"He feels embarrassed, he feels like a failure," France said of her son. "I'm like, you can't feel like that. And you have to be strong and you got to keep fighting. Life is about fighting. Things happen, but you got to keep fighting. And he's willing, he's trying, but who would he turn to when the people that's supposed to help him is not? Who do he turn to?"

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France has pulled her son out of Augusta Fells. He's now enrolled in an accelerated school program at Francis M. Wood in west Baltimore. If her son works hard, he could graduate by 2023.



A statement from Baltimore City Schools (WBFF)

The entire statement from Baltimore City Schools is below:

"Our goal is to provide resources and support to students and their families struggling with academic or attendance challenges. We hold schools and staff members accountable if that does not occur, including making appropriate staffing changes to improve outcomes. City Schools does not publicly discuss the individual academic or attendance records or data of its students. However, City Schools has taken multiple steps with the student's family to support the young man, including:

- In summer 2020, students at Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts received a letter explaining their academic status.
- Per Board Policy, teachers will provide students and parents with information about student achievement by regularly updating grades using Campus Portal. All families have access to this tool. In many cases, the school or teacher will notify the student of a potential course failure and allow work to be made up to support the student. Schools also provide parents the option for a conference following each report card.
- Anytime a student is absent from a class, the student's family receives an automated phone call at their listed number advising the missed time. If necessary, families may respond to the call by noting if the absence meets the criteria to be excused.
- School staff also attempted to contact the student's family. The school later mailed a letter and conducted a home visit. Ultimately, the student's parent visited the school and met with its leadership.
- The student's family has met with or talked recently with school and district level staff. regarding the student's progress.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Communication is important. If a student has poor attendance or the school cannot contact the family and develop an intervention, the student may fail the course, which may alter their ability to graduate.

School leadership is also key to ensuring the appropriate interventions take place. City Schools requires leadership that will effectively address student academic performance and support. City Schools is reviewing

actions that impacted student outcomes at the Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts before the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally (and separately from recent events at Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts), City Schools will take prudent steps to intervene, including school leadership changes, to ensure our standards for student achievement are uniformly and consistently achieved throughout the district.

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTIONS

Children between the ages of 5 and 18 must attend school — it's the law. If an absence occurs, the student's family receives a daily automated phone call advising of the absence. If necessary, families may respond to the call by noting if the absence meets the criteria to be excused. Otherwise, the absence is recorded as unexcused.

Students who are absent for 10% or more of school days are considered chronically absent. If a student is chronically absent, the following interventions should occur:


- The school calls the family to check in and understand what issues may be contributing to the absence so that appropriate supports may be provided. This outreach may also occur through emails, text messages, and sometimes social media when phone calls fail. Communication may break down if the family's contact information has changed or they cannot be contacted.
- When making outreach efforts, a meeting will be scheduled with the family to develop a plan to provide support around attendance. Where appropriate, this may be a Student Support Team or IEP meeting.
- If these outreach efforts fail, a home visit should be conducted to check on the student and arrange for a follow-up meeting with the school.
- If the absences continue, then the school should send a letter to the family to notify the family of the number of school days missed and again attempt to set up a meeting with a school representative.
- If the school is unsuccessful in their outreach efforts, the district's office may be contacted to assist in reaching out to the student or the family.

Truancy is a legal term used to identify students who have missed more than 20% of school days (about 3.5 days per month) without a lawful reason.

If a student has missed 15 days of school without a legal reason, the school may make a truancy referral to the district office. At that point, the district office issues a letter of concern to the family and conducts a case review to determine if due diligence has been done in trying to reach the family and support the student's re-engagement in school. The district office also monitors the student's data to determine if the letter of concern has an impact on the student's attendance.

If the district determines that the school has made every effort to work

with the family and offer support but that the student has continued accruing unexcused absences, charges will be filed against the parent or guardian in district court."



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