

Communities Supporting Youth Attendance Toolkit

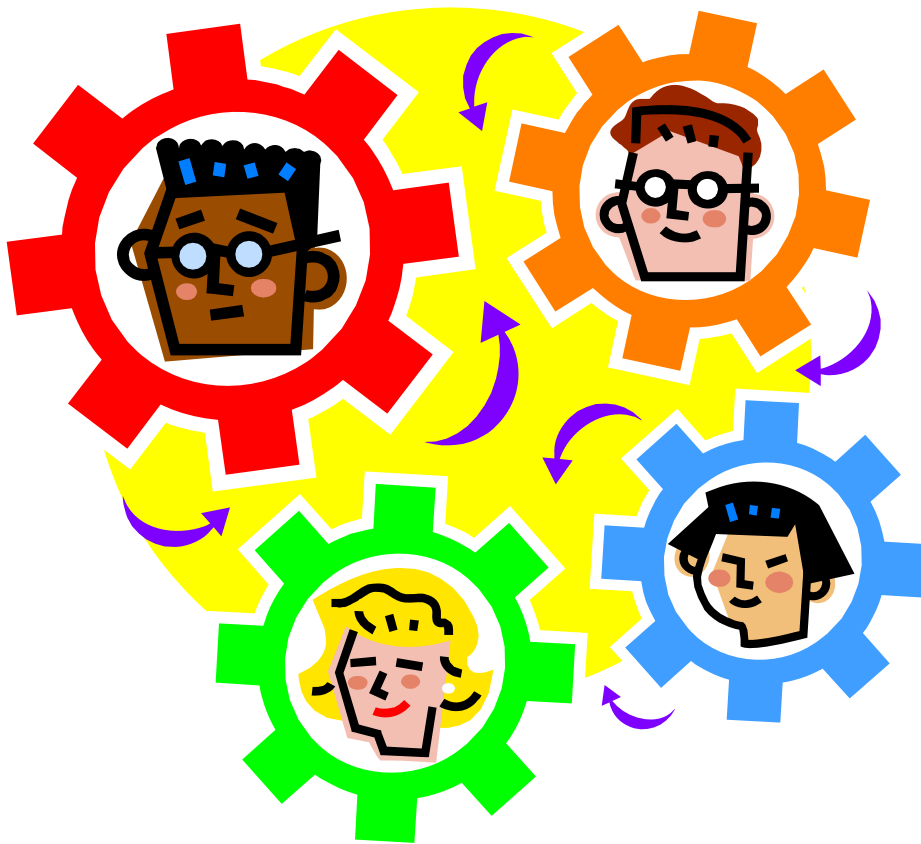


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CONTACT INFORMATION

To reach the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative, please visit our website at <http://www.pdx.edu/ccf/communities-supporting-youth-a-cradle-to-career-collaborative>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit is a compilation of materials from various sources, not a completely original document. Some of the guidance and tools were created by the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative, which is part of the All Hands Raised Partnership in the City of Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon. Many other resources were drawn from three other sources: Attendance Works, Los Angeles Unified School District, and Oakland School District. We appreciate these organizations granting us permission to use their documents in our local efforts.

A workgroup of the CSY developed this document and members from across our community offered their input and review. In particular, the Collaborative would like to acknowledge the significant contributions of several of its members. Our special thanks to April Olson, Dr. Alison Martin, Carrie Williamson, Florence Protopapas, Lisa Pellegrino, Courtney Kappes, Brett Norris, Liz Foucher-Branch and Diana Hall for developing documents and tools included here; to Frances Hall, Lena Teplitsky, Nicole Rowe and Bill Baney for guiding the organization and review phases of the project; and to Alicia Hazen for research and resource input, electronic organizing and formatting of the toolkit.

DOWNLOADING ORIGINAL FILES AS TEMPLATES

Files through out the toolkit are available to download in their original format to be used as templates. If a document is available to download, you will see one of these icons. Click on it, and it will take you online to download the file.



INTRODUCTION

Communities Supporting Youth is a cross-sector collaborative of people working at various levels in diverse organizations that aims to align and increase school and community supports – for children, youth and their families – that contribute to academic and life success with a focus on eliminating disparities. The group is part of the collective impact effort of the All Hands Raised partnership, a cradle-to-career initiative in Multnomah County.

Our mutual goal is to synchronize the community’s collective actions and guide them toward measurable, culturally responsive, and meaningful results. The result we are focused on is increasing attendance through active engagement. This toolkit is aimed at helping our schools, the talented staff inside them and their partners, determine which student populations are at greatest risk of missing school, explore why, and devise culturally responsive solutions so that *all* students have the opportunity to thrive in school. ***We want to help you get our youth to school and ready to learn!***

This toolkit is an effort to provide you—the frontline activist and an important resource in our collective effort—tools and tactics to help create an impact on the students in our community. This is the first edition of this toolkit and it is by no means complete, static, or all-encompassing. It is a resource that also offers a place to gather data from those who know our students, our parents, our schools, and our communities. ***Please reference it. Edit it. Improve it!***

We believe the resources in this type of toolkit can help to improve attendance when used by school staff. From our local and national research, we also know that the effect on attendance and engagement is exponentially increased when parents and the community (both individual members and organizations) are part of these solutions. We are committed to hearing the voices of our community members, and hope you will join us in welcoming them into this effort. Our communities are also fortunate that we have a variety of youth-serving organizations who desire to partner with schools to support student success and are willing to help in attendance efforts. Unfortunately, we often work in isolation, and our impact is diminished. Only when we are aligned and focused on common outcomes can we achieve true system change that impacts the students most in need. ***When we work in concert, rather than toiling in isolation, there is no limit to what we can do!***

How to Approach This Toolkit

This toolkit provides a modifiable framework and suggestions that are intended to help schools address attendance initiatives in a systematic and intentional way. The tools alone, however, are not enough to make the changes that will impact the students and families that are facing the greatest chronic absence and academic failure rates. This will take each of us adopting a culturally responsive lens as we implement attendance and engagement strategies.

By culturally responsive, we mean:

- Continually examining ourselves and our behavior to determine how our attitudes and feelings influence our actions and decision making.
- Employing practices in which the students and families see their cultural values, norms and input reflected.
- Consistently reflecting on our structures to determine what barriers and pathways they create for students and families, particularly students of color and those living in poverty.

So, we ask you to approach this toolkit using a culturally responsive lens. What we mean by that, is that you ask yourself and your colleagues reflective questions throughout your process that will assess how culturally responsive your processes and products are.

We offer the overarching questions below as a place to start and have incorporated other questions and elements in several places in the toolkit. We recognize that this is just a start and will be revising and improving the toolkit over time. We also encourage you to think and question beyond what is included here.

Overarching Questions

- What beliefs and assumptions am I bringing to this meeting/work?
 - What biases do I have that may affect my understanding and ability to listen to alternative perspectives?
 - Do the people involved represent the communities we serve? If not, how can we get that perspective?
- How can family voice be included? (In school teams where confidential information is shared, this could be a family liaison or SUN Community School Site Manager)
- Who benefits from the way we are doing our work? Who experiences a negative impact? (Some ways to answer this question are to look at disaggregated data and engage families to gather their input)
- Where are the junctures where we need to stop and consider where we are putting up barriers in either our approach or the structure(s) and where we are creating pathways for all students and families?
- How is relationship building embedded in our approach (both in the functioning of teams as well as in the individual interactions with students, families and school staff)?

How This Toolkit Was Designed

This toolkit was designed to provide school staff with the necessary planning and assessment tools and concrete strategies needed to meet the critical minimums around attendance set in the district protocols for the districts involved in the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative. Participating districts include Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham Barlow, Parkrose, and Reynolds School Districts and Portland Public Schools. The district protocols and the critical minimums were created in response to the growing body of research focused on the prevalence and impact of chronic absenteeism on students, schools, and districts.

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or more school days during the school year, is a significant predictor of poor outcomes such as lower math and reading scores and higher rates of high-school non-completion¹. For more information on the research on chronic absenteeism and students, schools, and districts, see the Universal Strategies section.

The pieces contained in this toolkit were developed in collaboration with school district representatives and community partners and are based on the available research and practice wisdom about what works to keep students attending school regularly. Specific templates, activities, and agendas contained within can be used with few modifications in order to reduce the burden on school staff while delivering effective interventions. Tools and resources provided were reviewed by community members through the lens of cultural responsiveness to support schools to have tangible resources to serve students struggling with attendance who come from racial and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The Critical Minimums

This toolkit's approach to attendance is aligned with other models school districts employ which have a comprehensive approach to student success, such as Response to Intervention. The approach has three tiers reflecting various levels of strategies around reducing chronic absenteeism in schools.

The Green Zone contains universal strategies and systems that promote a culture of attendance. Strong practices in this tier are integral to the success of the attendance protocol. The Yellow Zone indicates strategic interventions designed to re-engage students and families struggling with attendance, while Red Zone, or intensive strategies, are indicated in cases where previous approaches have proved unsuccessful.

The graphic in Image 1 depicts the three levels and relative proportion within the entire student population in a functioning system. The items listed under the levels represent the *critical minimums* that districts across the County have agreed upon to provide consistency for students, families and school staff.

Reference:

¹ Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing What We Know From Nationally Available Data*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

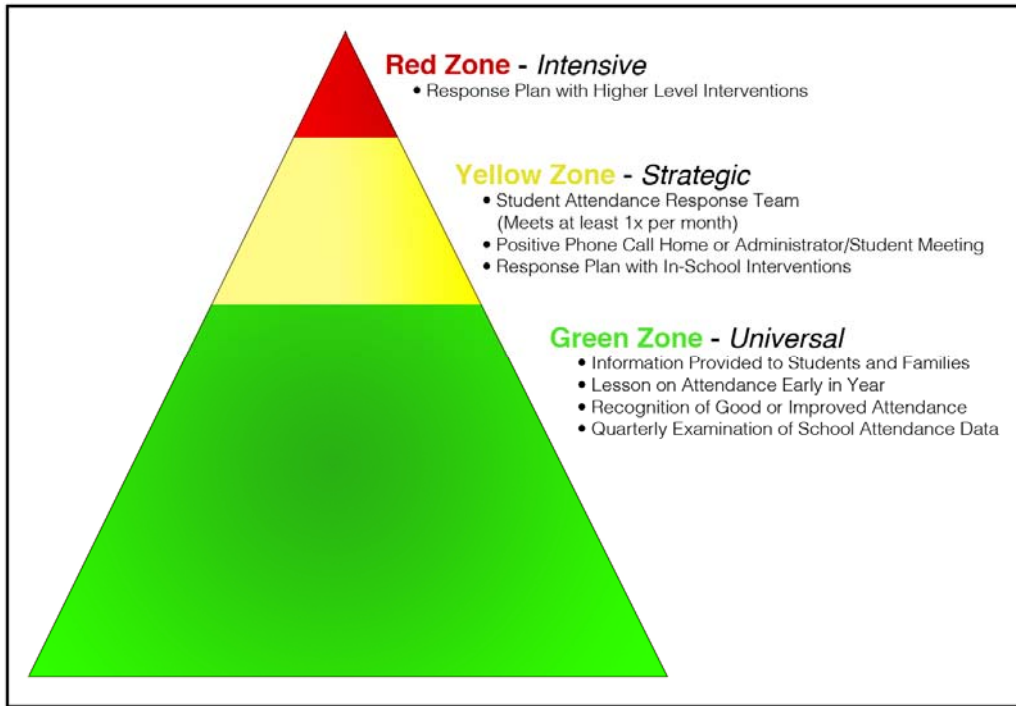


Image 1: This graphic illustrates the critical minimums agreed upon by school districts across Multnomah County and set in district attendance protocols.


The critical minimums are further described in the chart below. The chart also contains the page number within the toolkit where you will find guidance and tools for each specific element.

Critical Minimums	Notes/Definitions	Toolkit Section
<p>Universal (Green Zone)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Information</u> on the importance of attendance and school process to parents and students at beginning of the year • <u>Lesson</u> on attendance early in school year • <u>Recognition</u> of good or improved attendance. • <u>Examination of school-wide attendance</u> and development/monitoring of action plan at least 3 times a year 	<p>All students, School-wide efforts</p> <p><u>Information</u> should be included in school packets, Back to School nights, orientations, etc.</p> <p><u>Lesson</u> could be a PBIS lesson or other classroom or school-wide learning experience.</p> <p><u>Recognition</u> examples include incentives, awards, inclusion in newsletters/assemblies, etc.</p> <p><u>Examination of school-wide attendance:</u> this role could be taken on by an existing team (PBIS, Site Council, SUN Community School Advisory Committee, etc.).</p>	<p>Universal Strategies</p>

Critical Minimums	Notes/Definitions	Toolkit Section
Strategic (Yellow Zone)	Students with average daily attendance of 89% or lower	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Student Attendance Response Team</u> meets at least once per month to review attendance reports and respond to individual student attendance issues. • <u>Positive call home</u> by teacher or administrator meets with student (high school) at 1st report of 10% or more days missed. • <u>Response plan</u> with in-school interventions. 	<p><u>Student Attendance Response Team</u> role can be played by existing team (Data Team, Building Screening Committee, etc). It is recommended that attendance be reviewed more regularly than once a month. The team reviews reports of students who missed 10% or more cumulative days (yellow zone) and 20% of more cumulative days (red zone).</p> <p><u>Positive call home by teacher</u> is a proactive call home to encourage and support attendance.</p> <p><u>Response plan</u> for Mid and East County high schools would include Attendance Matters protocol.</p>	Student Attendance Response Teams
Intensive (Red Zone)	Students with average daily attendance of 79% or lower	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Response plan</u> with higher-level interventions. 	<p><u>Response plan</u> for Mid and East County high schools would include Attendance Matters protocol.</p>	Student Attendance Response Teams

Attendance and Engagement Teams

Based on national and local research and effective practices the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative gathered, two teams or groups are included in the district protocols as part of the critical minimums: a Student Attendance Response Team and a School-wide Engagement and Attendance Review (Team). It is not a requirement to create two entirely new school-based teams; some schools may have attendance-specific meetings in a standing group (e.g. PBIS, RTI, student support team). An additional Community Engagement Team is recommended. The structure and function for that team is being piloted at six Communities Supporting Youth demonstration sites beginning in the 2013-14 school year.



STUDENT ATTENDANCE RESPONSE TEAM

- Review student level data.
- Identify and determine appropriate individualized interventions for students with attendance of 89% or below, matched to students' needs.
- Support may be "intensive" or "strategic."
- Collaboratively monitor progress of individual students and intervention practices.



SCHOOL-WIDE ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT REVIEW (TEAM)

- Use a data-driven process to monitor school-wide student attendance
- Focus on the culture of attendance through continuous improvement of universal practices and prevention strategies.
- Collaboratively monitor progress of student-level data teams.
- Include family, youth and community input.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- Engage parents, youth and community members in monitoring, planning and responding to school-wide attendance and engagement.
- Review attendance data and determine solutions.
- Broker and build the additional resources and processes necessary for the success of students and families.
- Strengthen engagement among school, community and family members.

Detailed descriptions of the Student Attendance Response Team and School-wide Attendance and Engagement Team, along with a variety of “how to” documents and tools can be found in those sections of the toolkit.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INTRODUCTION

The attitudes and beliefs held by youth are integral to their academic success. Research shows that youth who feel secure in their identity, feel they belong at school, and who believe they can learn will have better academic outcomes.

A current youth engagement effort in Multnomah County Oregon is the Youth Engagement, Motivation, and Development Work Team (YEMD). The team is part of the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative whose mission is to create systemic and sustainable change that will increase school and community engagement among children, youth and families in Multnomah County. The team is a group of organizations dedicated to serving youth through high-quality programming. The goal of the YEMD team is to develop shared best practices and shared measurement tools among area youth programs.

Based on the literature review “Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners” by the Chicago Consortium on School Research, YEMD identified many non-cognitive skills that their programs affect, which help youth on the pathway to a strong academic mindset. Of these, they first chose to mobilize around Growth Mindset, as researched by Stanford Psychologist Carol Dweck, and with added considerations around equity. YEMD then developed a training called Growth Mindset and Student Achievement, which they have been sharing broadly with the community. The research, bibliography and a table of Praise vs. Encouragement used in the training are found in this document. The YEMD team is convened by Oregon Mentors. For more information, or to schedule a Growth Mindset training, contact Sarah Tollefson at Oregon Mentors (503) 517-8990.

TWO MINDSETS

CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.

Graphic by Nigel Holmes

Fixed Mindset
Intelligence is static



Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...

Growth Mindset
Intelligence can be developed



Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...

CHALLENGES

...avoid challenges



...embrace challenges



OBSTACLES

...give up easily



...persist in the face of setbacks



EFFORT

...see effort as fruitless or worse



...see effort as the path to mastery



CRITICISM

...ignore useful negative feedback



...learn from criticism



SUCCESS OF OTHERS

...feel threatened by the success of others



...find lessons and inspiration in the success of others



As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential.

All this confirms a **deterministic view of the world.**

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

All this gives them a **greater sense of free will.**

FOUR MINDSET BELIEFS

1. Belief about self
2. Belief about students
3. Students' belief about self
4. Belief about other adults and systems

MINDSET AND THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Although a fair amount of research has spoken to this issue, there is still so much we can learn about how mindset affects groups experiencing oppression. We recognize that systemic oppression exists, and that students are facing challenging and complex barriers. We see this work as one way to push back against oppression and make lasting systemic change.

- 1- **Mindset and Achievement Gap:** Teaching a growth mindset seems to decrease or even close achievement gaps. When Black and Latino students adopt a growth mindset, their grades and achievement test scores look more similar to those of their White peers. When female students adopt a growth mindset, their grades and achievement test scores in mathematics become similar to those of their male classmates. In these studies, every group seemed to benefit from holding a growth mindset, but the groups experiencing oppression gained the most. Aronson et al. (2002); Blackwell et al., (2007); Dweck, C.S. (2010); Good et al., (2003)
- 2- **Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence:** African American college students tend to get lower grades than White students, even when they enter college with equivalent test scores. Past research suggests that negative stereotypes questioning Black students' intellectual abilities play a role in this underperformance. Awareness of these stereotypes can psychologically threaten African Americans, a phenomenon known as "stereotype threat", which can in turn provoke responses that impair both academic performance and psychological engagement with academics. An experiment was performed to test a method of helping students resist these responses to stereotype threat. Students in the experimental condition of the experiment were encouraged to see intelligence – the object of the stereotype – as malleable rather than fixed. This mindset was predicted to make students' performances less vulnerable to stereotype threat and help them maintain their psychological engagement with academics, both of which could help boost their college grades. Results were consistent with predictions. The African American students reported greater enjoyment of the academic process, greater academic engagement, and got higher grades than their counterparts in two control groups. Aronson, J., Fried, C., & Good, C., (2001). Reducing the Effects of Stereotype Threat on African American College Students by Shaping Theories of Intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 1-13
- 3- **Improving Adolescents' Standardized Test Performance: An Intervention to Reduce the Effects of Stereotype Threat:** Standardized tests continue to generate gender and race gaps in achievement despite decades of national attention. Research suggests that these gaps may be partly due to stereotypes that question the math abilities of females and the intellectual abilities of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students. Seventh grade students were mentored by college students who encouraged them to view intelligence as malleable. Results showed that females who received the intervention got higher math scores than females in the control group. Similarly, these students – who were largely minority and low-income adolescents – got significantly higher reading standardized test scores. Good, C., Aronson, J., & Inzlicht, M. (2003) Improving Adolescents' Standardized Test Performance: An Intervention to Reduce the Effects of Stereotype Threat. *Applied Developmental Psychology* 24, 645-662

BRAIN GROWTH RESEARCH

Here are some different research studies that all showed how learning changes the brain.

1 - Babies' Brains: Newborn babies have lots of brain cells (called neurons), but the neurons have very few connections, or synapses, between their neurons. By the time they are one year old, toddlers have about 1,000 trillion connections. Then the brain starts to get picky; the connections that are being used the most get stronger, and the ones that are not being used disappear. The connections between cells continue to change throughout life with learning – in other words, we “use it or lose it”.

2 - Clever Cabbies: London cab drivers have to memorize the locations of many different places because their streets don't have numbers. They have to keep a “map “ of the city in their heads to find their way around. Researchers measured the size of the hippocampus – the area of the brain that remembers information about places – in London cab drivers, and compared them to other people's. The hippocampus of the average cabbie was bigger, and the longer the cabbie had been on the job, the larger it was. This shows that learning and practicing this skill made that area of their brains grow.

3 - Learning Languages: Most people think that learning a second language once you are an adult is very hard. But researchers had adults use special exercises to practice hearing different sounds from foreign languages. Using a PET scan to measure the activity in the brain, the researchers found that when people did the special exercises, areas of their brain that they had never used before became active, and they improved their ability to understand the new language. This shows that you can retrain your brain and develop new abilities all through your life if you put in effort and use good strategies.

4 - Musical Masters: When people play an instrument, they use a special area of the brain in the “motor cortex” to control the movement of their fingers. Researchers found that when people practiced playing musical instruments, the area of their brains that controlled the fingers grew larger! This shows that when you learn and practice a new skill, you can build up the brain.

5 - New Neurons: Scientists used to think that we had a fixed amount of brain cells and that we could never grow new ones. But in the past 20 years, research has shown that the brain actually grows new cells every day. The cells are grown in the hippocampus, an area of the brain that is important for memory, and then travel to other areas of the brain. They also found that the brain grows more new cells when you are learning new information and skills. So, by learning and practicing you actually add new brain cells as well as new connections.

6 - Remarkable Rats: Identical rats were raised in two different environments: either a bare cage with food and water, or a cage with lots of toys and exercise equipment to explore. In the bare cages, the “cage potato rats” just ate and drank and laid around, while in the cages full of things to do, the “summer camp rats” were busy exploring and learning, exercising their brains. It turned out that the summer camp rats became smarter than the cage potato rats – they were better at learning new things. Their brains were heavier, too: they had more connections between the neurons. This research shows that mental exercise builds up your brain and makes it smarter. Even old rats got smarter, proving that you're never too old to grow your brain!

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Research by Carol Dweck, Ph.D a professor at Columbia University, has now proven what Adler taught years ago. Praise is not good for children. Praise can create approval-seeking behavior instead of children with enhanced self-esteem. Dweck has also found that praise can hamper risk-taking. Children who were praised for being smart when they accomplished a task chose easier tasks in the future. They didn't want to risk making mistakes. On the other hand, children who were "encouraged" for their efforts were willing to choose more challenging tasks when given a choice. The following are examples of praise and encouragement

PRAISE "fixed mindset praise"	ENCOURAGEMENT "growth mindset praise"
I like how you did that	You worked really hard at that
You did it right!	You gave this so much effort
I like the way you worked with them	Doesn't it feel good to cooperate?
I'm proud of you for getting that "A"	It seems like you take pride in doing well
You're such a good girl	Your help makes a big difference
Great job	It looks like you tried really hard to do your best work
You're so smart	Your understanding of the subject has deepened
You are really awesome	Look how much effort you put into that project
You're such a great artist	It's clear that you studied a lot
You're the best speller in the class	Your growth is reflecting your hard work
You're a natural	You've made a lot of progress
I like how well you did on that test	Your hard work really paid off

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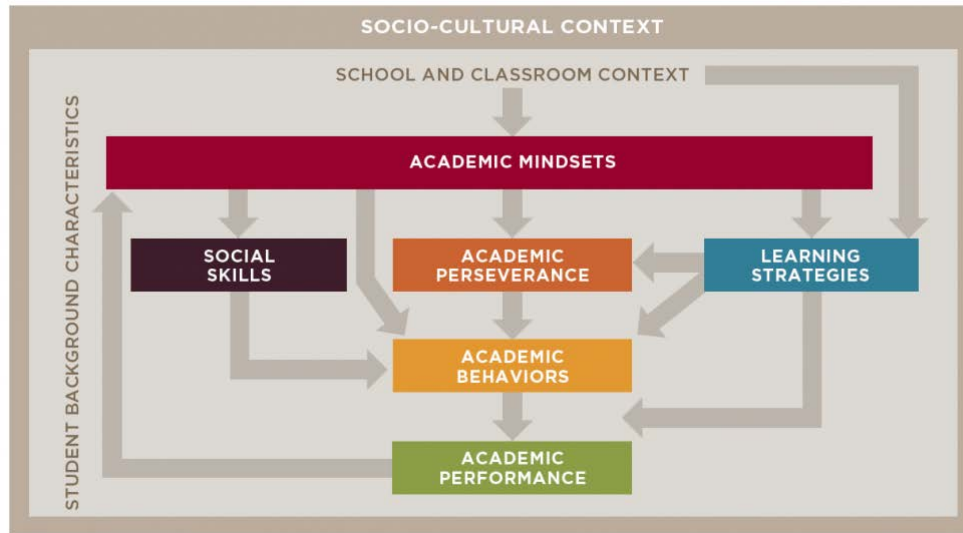
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TEACHING ADOLESCENTS TO BECOME LEARNERS

A 2012 literature review by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research called Teaching Adolescents To Become Learners outlined the role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance. The following figure illustrates how programs outside of school, using the principles of Growth Mindset, can help shape a student’s academic mindset. The corresponding boxes below contain the definitions.

FIGURE 2.1

A Hypothesized Model of How Five Noncognitive Factors Affect Academic Performance within a Classroom/ School and Larger Socio-Cultural Context



ACADEMIC MINDSETS
 I belong in this academic community.
 My ability and competence grow with my effort.
 I can succeed at this.
 This work has value for me.

SOCIAL SKILLS
 Interpersonal Skills
 Empathy
 Cooperation
 Assertion
 Responsibility

ACADEMIC PERSEVERANCE
 Grit, Tenacity
 Delayed Gratification
 Self-Discipline
 Self-Control

LEARNING STRATEGIES
 Study Skills
 Metacognitive Strategies
 Self-Regulated Learning
 Goal-Setting

ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS
 Going to Class
 Doing Homework
 Organizing Materials
 Participating, Studying

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INTRODUCTION

Family engagement as it relates to improving attendance is present in each section of our toolkit: from assessing the environment of the school, to encouraging ongoing and positive contact from teachers, and using feedback from the community (such as a Community Engagement Team) to improve attendance. Parents and family members are the first and primary educators in our students' lives; communication with and from these key stakeholders regarding attendance is critical. Parents can be, and are, the catalysts to change systemic or institutional barriers that might be causing students to miss too much school.

Beyond elements of family participation and communication strategies found in the rest of this document, we are including an exciting toolkit from Attendance Works: "Bringing Attendance Home, Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence." This resource includes their key principles to engaging families, materials to give to families (video! presentations!), and interactive activities about attendance you could use at Back to School nights, PTA meetings, or parent education workshops.



BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME

Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence

May 22, 2013
version 1.0





INTRODUCTION

"Even though I went to college, I didn't know that missing 18 days or just two days a month - even in kindergarten - could put my son behind academically," said Olga Nunez, the mother of three children. As a result, "my kid was missing kindergarten and it was because of me!" Thankfully, Nunez learned the facts about chronic absence from classes at the Parent Institute for Quality Education and her son was able to catch up. "Now that I know, I make sure that the two younger ones don't miss so many days. This can happen to anyone, and it's a message we have to deliver to parents."

Every year, as many as 7.5 million students nationwide are chronically absent, meaning they miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason, excused or unexcused. That level of absenteeism predicts poor academic performance as early as kindergarten and is a warning sign that a high school student will drop out. The good news is that chronic absence can be reduced when schools work with families and communities to debunk common myths about attendance, build a culture of going to school or preschool every day and address barriers to getting to class.

Parents and families are essential partners in promoting good attendance because they, ultimately, have the bottom-line responsibility for making sure their children get to school every day. When children are young, they are especially dependent upon adults or older siblings to help them get to school or preschool. Just as parents should focus on how their children are performing academically, they have a responsibility to set expectations for good attendance and to monitor their children's absences, so that missed days don't add up to academic trouble.

To carry out this responsibility, however, parents need to be equipped with the right information so they are not unwittingly falling into traps created by common and pervasive myths about attendance. For example, many of us view good attendance as a matter of complying with rules.

We don't recognize that good attendance is really a matter of providing children more and better opportunities to learn. We think that missing school is a problem only if a child was skipping school without permission. We don't see that too many absences, even if they are excused, can hinder learning. In fact, just two or three absence a month can add up to too much lost time in the classroom. While some absences, especially those due to illness, may be unavoidable, it is important to get children to school as often as possible. Another myth is that attendance matters mostly for older students in middle or high school. We don't recognize the adverse impact that poor attendance can have on learning as early as preschool or the importance of building a habit of good attendance from the beginning. Too few families or community members are aware of these realities.

What Parents Can Do

- » **Make getting students to school on time every day a top priority.**
- » **Alert schools and community agencies to barriers that keep kids from attending class.**
- » **Ask for and monitor data on chronic absence.**
- » **Demand action to address systemic barriers that may be causing large numbers of students to miss too much school.**

Beyond their role in delivering children to school, families play an essential role in identifying, in any particular school or community, what the barriers are to attendance, as well as what would motivate students to go to school. Consider this framework for analyzing the factors contributing to chronic absence and found on <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/>. It shows how the insights of families - combined with local data and the perspectives of educators and service providers - can help determine what needs to change to ensure all students are present and engaged in learning at school or preschool.

Parents are also key advocates for change when chronic absence is affecting too many students at their child's school. If high levels of chronic absence reflect systemic challenges - such as an unsafe school climate, high teacher turnover or absenteeism, or a lack of engaging instruction - parents should hold the school and district accountable for addressing these issues. If chronic absence is related to community challenges, such as the lack of a safe path to school or limited access to health resources, parents can play a role in developing solutions and advocating for community resources.

At every level, parent and family engagement is a key component of effective, comprehensive approaches to reducing chronic absence. All of us - schools, preschools, community agencies and parents themselves - can make a difference by engaging and helping families to nurture a habit of regular attendance so they can help their children realize their hopes and dreams.



WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

Attendance Works is a national initiative aimed at advancing student success by reducing chronic absence, defined as the percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of the school year. We promote tracking chronic absence data for each student beginning in kindergarten, or ideally earlier, and partnering with families and community agencies to intervene when poor attendance is a problem for students or schools.

Every year, one in 10 kindergarten and 1st grade students misses 10 percent or more of school, nearly a month of class over the course of the school year. By middle and high school, the rates of chronic absence are far higher. Starting as early as preschool, however, too many absences can affect academic achievement, especially for low-income students unable to make up for lost time, research shows. Early chronic absence can leave children unable to read well by the end of 3rd grade, exacerbating the achievement gap. And it can set a pattern of poor attendance and academic failure for older students, fueling the dropout rate. By middle school, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign of high school dropout. For additional research on the adverse impact of chronic absence, go to <http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>.

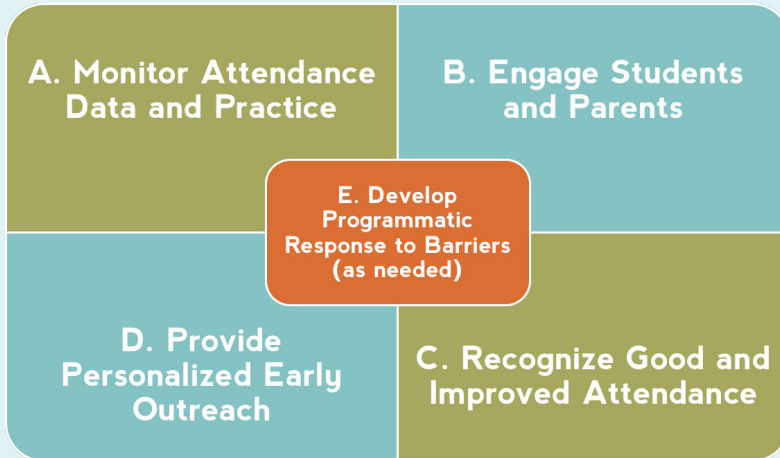
Attendance Works has created this toolkit to support parent engagement as part of a comprehensive approach to reducing chronic absence. You can see a graphic display of the key elements to reduce chronic absence on the next page or, to read about them in greater detail, go to <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/>.

Key Elements for Reducing Chronic Absence in a School

Based upon related research and our work with schools and districts over the last several years, Attendance Works has identified the following key elements of a comprehensive approach to reducing chronic absence.

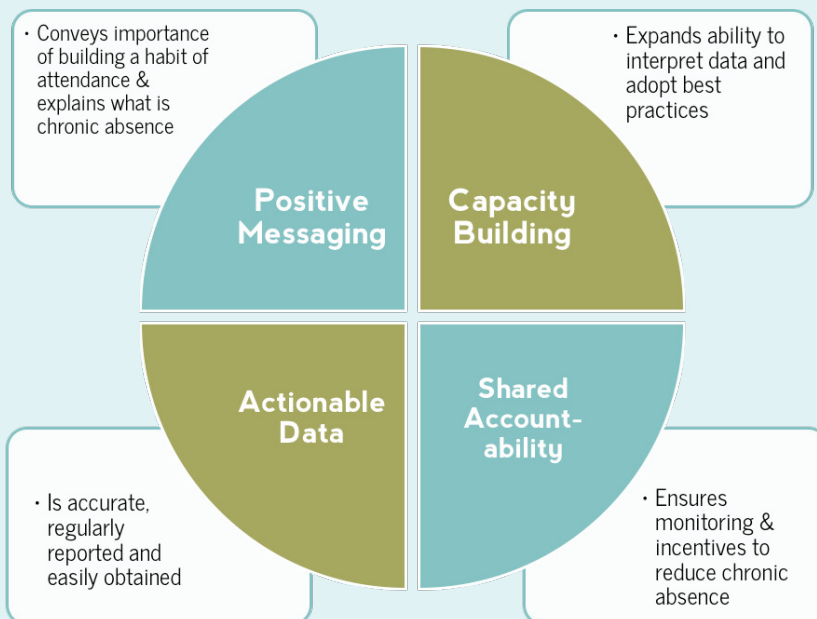
The first set exists at the school level. In our experience, schools that have these elements in place over the course of an entire academic year see measurable improvements.

School Level



District and Community Level

For the work to be sustained and taken to scale, districts and communities must support the work with these essential elements.



This toolkit aligns with frameworks on family engagement being developed by the U.S. Department of Education. The ideas, activities and materials are aimed at encouraging schools and preschools to partner with families to improve student achievement. They are based upon the premise that improving attendance requires that we respect and honor families' knowledge and potential to make a contribution to their children's education. We know that we cannot improve attendance unless we create processes that draw upon the hopes and dreams of parents for a better future for their children, as well as those parents' insights into what is needed to help their children get to school. We also know that sustaining progress will be difficult unless districts and communities deliberately build systems that support family engagement.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

This toolkit is intended to help the staff or leadership of any entity that works with parents, including schools, community-based organizations, parent organizations and faith-based institutions. Its goal is to equip these staff and leaders with the tools to help parents understand why attendance matters and how they can help ensure their children's success in school by supporting attendance.



WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit contains:

- 1. Research** showing a positive relationship between parent involvement and attendance as well as the results of new studies examining parents' attitudes about school absences and their implications for messaging and action.
- 2. Key Principles** for engaging parents on attendance.
- 3. Materials** to share with parents about the importance of good attendance.
- 4. A Set of Interactive Exercises** to spark awareness, conversation and action with groups of parents about the consequences of poor attendance on their children's futures. Ideally these activities would be embedded into existing school activities or leadership programs for parents. (Note: The exercises create opportunities for starting a dialogue and forging positive relationships with parents that written materials, alone, do not.)

The materials and exercises in this toolkit are a starting point. More tools are being created every day as people in communities across the country see the urgent need to engage parents as partners in creating a better future for all children. For example, this toolkit does not focus on personalized early outreach, an important part of parent engagement that we hope to address in greater depth later. Our initial focus is on engaging groups of parents.



1. RESEARCH: THE IMPACT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Research¹ shows parent involvement has a positive impact on school attendance. In addition, Joyce Epstein and Steven Sheldon from Johns Hopkins University² found that certain parent engagement practices contribute to improving daily attendance and decreasing chronic absence. Schools have better attendance when they:

- » Orient parents on school policies and expectations for student attendance and on-time arrival.
- » Provide parents with a school contact person.
- » Communicate often (as needed) to provide all families with information on attendance.
- » Reward students for excellent attendance. (This is not the same as perfect attendance. Attendance Works suggests rewarding students for improved attendance as well.)
- » Make home visits.
- » Refer chronically absent students to a school counselor or a truant officer who intervenes in firm, but positive, ways.

For a complete list of actions schools can take to involve parents, listen to Joyce Epstein's presentation on this [webinar](#).

While Epstein and Sheldon's work focused on K-12 education, a growing body of research and practice suggest that parent involvement also improves attendance among preschoolers. The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, has just completed a study, *Why Do Children Miss Preschool: Factors Related to Early Absences* that found that factors that schools and preschools can control, not just the demographic characteristic of families, made a difference. These factors included, for example, the level of trust between teachers and parents, parent involvement, a sense of collective responsibility among teachers for their school, and whether a preschool was seen as part of a larger elementary school.

¹ <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Research/researchpubs.htm>

² Additional resources on parent engagement are also available from the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/program.htm>

In Oklahoma, Tulsa's Community Action Project was able to reduce chronic absence through:

- » engaging parents through intensive outreach
- » emphasizing the importance of attendance at initial enrollment, program orientation and in home visits
- » using data to identify who is at risk of poor attendance and then working with the family to develop attendance plans for children missing too much school

For more information about effective practices with our youngest students, view [Right from the Beginning: Early Childhood Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absence](#)

What Does Research Reveal About Parent Attitudes Around Attendance?

As part of BoostUp, an anti-dropout campaign sponsored by the U.S. Army and the Ad Council, in-depth interviews were conducted with low-income parents whose children missed more than 10 days a year in middle school. The Ad Council's findings reinforced what we know about the myths of school attendance. Researchers found:

- » Parents are consistent in saying they want a better life for their children and see high school graduation as key to that better life. This finding challenges the common perception that when children miss school, it's a sign that their parents don't care.
- » Parents don't make the connection between attendance in elementary and middle school and eventual graduation. They say they'll get stricter when their child reaches high school.
- » Parents have a problem with their children skipping school, but not with excused absences for illness, rest, family visits, avoiding bullying or even as a reward for good grades. Hispanic mothers, in particular, expressed guilt about not spending enough time with their children, and considered letting them stay home as an expression of love.
- » Parents believe that consecutive absences can affect academics, but do not realize that sporadic absences, occurring just once or twice a month, can also present a problem.

What the Ad Council research tells us is that we must help parents see the connections between their children's attendance and future aspirations, and let them know we all care about their children's education. It is also important to recognize that many of these misconceptions are not just held by parents. They are also reflected in the attitudes of many school staff and community members. Building a community-wide habit and culture of attendance requires helping everyone to debunk commonly held myths about attendance and make getting children to school every day a shared priority.

Click [here](#) to watch our webinar, Bringing it Home: Engaging Parents as Critical Partners in Reducing Chronic Absence.

Click [here](#) to read our blog post about the research.



2. KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING PARENTS ON ATTENDANCE

When seeking to engage parents, it's important to remember these key principles:

Engage families early. Begin partnering with families to improve student attendance while children are young. Starting early is essential, because parents are typically more involved and easier to reach when children are young. Young children depend upon families to get to school, whereas older children are more likely to be responsible for taking themselves to school. The interactions with parents in preschool and kindergarten are essential opportunities for building relationships and conveying information about why regular attendance matters.

Equally important, regular attendance starting in preschool is essential to ensuring children gain the foundational skills they need to do well academically and to have a habit of attendance as they get older. If children are chronically absent for multiple years in preschool and the primary grades, they are much less likely to read proficiently in 3rd grade so they can use reading to learn in all their subjects starting in 4th grade. These early investments can avoid the need for more expensive interventions later on.

Establish a positive relationship. Before discussing a student's poor attendance, establish a positive relationship with parents. Often, schools contact families only when there is a problem. Families begin to expect that a phone call or other contact from the school means the student is in trouble. "What did he do this time?" is the question they ask. In the rush to discuss a student's attendance, we can inadvertently give the message that parents don't know much and need to do better. Instead, family liaisons who work with parents advise creating a welcoming school environment and building the trust and relationship with parents first. For example, one outreach worker we interviewed shared her approach: When she first meets with the parent of a chronically absent student, she visits the family's home and deliberately does not talk about how many days

of school the student missed. In fact, she does not say anything about attendance at all until the second meeting. The entire focus of the first meeting is on building a relationship. When parents feel welcome in a school and respected as an important partner in their children's education, they are more willing to contribute and respond openly and positively.

Communicate clear expectations and support. Orient parents to school policies and expectations for student attendance and on-time arrival. Share contact information for district or community agencies that are available to help families that may have difficulties with health issues, homelessness or lack of transportation. Help parents understand that school staff will be monitoring attendance and are available to help families address barriers, such as transportation and health problems, that might be preventing a child from getting to school.

Take a strengths-based approach. Don't assume if a child is chronically absent that it is a signal that parents do not care about the child's education or attendance. They might care deeply. Ask about what they already do that works. Find out if they can think of any positive examples of activities or supports that made it easier to get their child to school (for example, an engaging classroom activity or the availability of family members or friends to drive or walk their child to school.)

Check for understanding. Do parents know what chronic absence is and its impact on their children's success? Help parents connect the dots so they understand the impact of chronic absence on their child's future success and what it means for how they support the school success of their child.

Communicate in the parent's primary language. Share written materials in the parent's home language offering research on the importance of attendance and tips for how parents can ensure students attend school every day. If this is a phone call, consider mailing the handout to the parent as part of a follow-up communication. However, be careful not to rely on handouts and mailings alone.

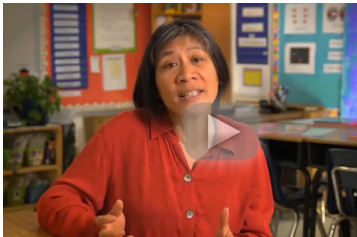
Offer support when needed. Ask parents about what makes it hard to get their child to school. When the issue is difficulties with transportation, health, lack of safe paths to school or family illness, parents may not be able to surmount those challenges without the help of someone outside the family. Discuss what would help to reduce the level of absences. Help them understand that absences - even if excused - can harm their child's ability to learn and succeed in school and that the school community wants to help.

Remember that parent engagement is an on-going process, not a one-time event. Creating on-going opportunities for dialogue with parents invites them to partner in crafting solutions. Many people at a school site such as teachers, school nurses, counselors, after-school providers or parent leaders can and should engage parents about attendance.

Discussions about attendance should be integrated into regular school meetings, parent educations and training on other topics. Let's face it: What parent would voluntarily give up an evening or part of a weekend to attend a meeting that is just about attendance? Embed the exercises into larger discussions about how to help children succeed in school, tapping into parents' hopes and dreams. You're more likely to get parents to come.



3. MATERIALS TO SHARE WITH PARENTS



Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early
School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Missing 10 percent or more of school can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 15 percent or more of school can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can catch up behind if they have a plan or work together to help.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to stop class learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit by making sure you and your child are going to school on time, every day! Remember, good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Check out your child's school calendar and make sure you understand the important dates.
- Involve your child in the routine and encourage them to help you! Remember, it's not just for you, it's for them too!
- Check for good attendance habits when you go to work, keep in mind compliance of a teacher who or teacher can be a sign of a good attendance habit when you go to work.
- If your child misses school, call the school to let them know you are sorry and ask for a plan to make sure they catch up on their learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- A good attendance habit is a habit that starts at school and continues at home.

What Do Absences Mean to a Problem?

- CHRONIC ABSENCE** (10 or more days)
- MISSING SCHOOL** (3 to 9 days)
- GOOD ATTENDANCE** (for fewer absences)

Note: These numbers are based on a 180-day school year.

For more on school readiness, visit attendanceworks.org and reachoutahead.org

ATTENDANCE in the early grades

Who is Affected

Attendance in the early grades is important for all children. It helps them learn to read, do math, and understand the world around them. It also helps them build good habits that will last a lifetime.

Why It Matters

Children who miss school often miss important lessons. This can make it harder for them to learn and catch up. Good attendance helps children stay on track and succeed in school.

What We Can Do

Parents and teachers can work together to help children build good attendance habits. This includes setting a routine, checking for good attendance habits, and developing back-up plans for getting to school.

Regular Practice

Regular practice helps children build good attendance habits. This includes setting a routine, checking for good attendance habits, and developing back-up plans for getting to school.

The Transportation

The Transportation Department is working to help children build good attendance habits. This includes setting a routine, checking for good attendance habits, and developing back-up plans for getting to school.

Address Practice Needs

Addressing practice needs helps children build good attendance habits. This includes setting a routine, checking for good attendance habits, and developing back-up plans for getting to school.

Track the Right Data

Tracking the right data helps children build good attendance habits. This includes setting a routine, checking for good attendance habits, and developing back-up plans for getting to school.

Videos, handouts, letters and info graphics can be a step in the engagement process, one that ensures everyone - school staff and families - receives the same information. Think about sharing the materials in preschool, kindergarten or school registration packets, in regular school newsletters or on school bulletin boards. Hand them out during back-to-school nights or one-on-one parent meetings to raise awareness and set expectations around attendance. Show the Attendance Works video to explain the nature of chronic absence and explore possible solutions.

Keep in mind that these materials are not a substitute for personal relationships and interactions. Parents and other family members may not always read or see written materials. Or they may absorb the message better when hearing it from respected school leaders and members of their community or experiencing it in an interactive exercise.

- » [Attendance Works video](#)
- » [PowerPoint on chronic absence](#)
- » [Flyers for parents of young children and youth \(in English, Spanish and Chinese\)](#)
- » [Calendar for parents to set attendance goals for the student and track absences \(in English and Spanish\)](#)
- » [Sample back-to-school letters](#)
- » [Talking points](#)
- » [Infographic \(in English and Spanish\)](#)



4. A SET OF INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

About the Interactive Exercises

Here are several interactive exercises that can be used to increase parents' understanding of the impact of chronic absence on their children and their school community and to encourage them to take positive actions. These exercises were designed to spark positive, two-way communication that gives insight to school leaders and parents about why children are missing school. For each exercise, we offer insights about how it could be most effective.

If you think about how busy parents are, you quickly realize that a meeting just about school attendance is unlikely to draw a large crowd. So consider integrating these exercises into an event such as Back to School Night or into a series of parent education or parent empowerment trainings rather than scheduling a stand-alone event.

What should you consider in selecting the right exercise for your group?

Each of these exercises has been used effectively in a variety of settings, ranging from parent meetings at a school site to large plenary sessions at conferences. We expect that users will want to select and adapt an exercise to their audience based on:

- » Size of the group
- » How many languages are spoken by participants
- » Setting (are you in a small room or a large auditorium?)
- » Available time
- » Learning goals

To help in your selection, we've added some notes to each interactive exercise about what factors to take into consideration, as well as a clear description of each exercise.

Exercise: How Chronic Absence Contributes to the Achievement Gap

This exercise is best used to illustrate the cumulative impact of chronic absence and lack of access to quality preschool and summer programs. Recommended for a general audience, to make the point with policy makers and with low-income and/or immigrant parents who may not understand how their choices about attendance in school or preK and the lack of enrichment during the summer contribute to the achievement gap for their children. The steps are actually based on research that establishes how many months of learning loss are associated with each factor. The exercise can be adapted for use in languages other than English. The exercise is purely descriptive so that participants and observers are not asked to disclose personal information. Because it can be done in about 5 minutes, this exercise is ideal when you have a tight agenda.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Illustrating-the-gap.pdf>

Exercise: Washing the Elephant

Washing the Elephant is a fun icebreaker for groups of varying sizes. Using humor, it gives parents empathy for how a child might feel after missing a lesson that is crucial to understanding all the subsequent material. It allows two participants to take the small risk of looking a bit foolish in front of peers but with no need for self-disclosure. The exercise can be facilitated in any language. It is a safe choice if you are not sure of the literacy level of participants.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/washing-the-elephant.pdf>

Exercise: Attendance Cafe discussion

This exercise is a facilitated discussion that helps parents to hear one another's life experiences and share information about their personal experiences - whether positive or negative - in school. The third-person discussion about obstacles parents face in getting their kids to school helps depersonalize the discussion to some extent. By asking the question "How can you help?" the exercise makes the positive assumption that parents have the ability to help one another and their school community. The exercise was originally developed as one of a series of conversations for parents with children who attend the same school. The exercise is best when it builds on group norms that assure safe discussion and positive relationships that hopefully are developing over time. Good facilitation is needed to avoid the shoals of blaming parents for absences.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/attendance-cafe.pdf>

Exercise: Taking Action on Attendance

Taking Action on Attendance can be used in its short form (25-30 minutes) or as a precursor to a longer discussion about attendance. Unlike the gaps exercise, this exercise is designed to emphasize that parents have the power to affect and support good attendance. In the exercise, each positive action by a parent results in a step forward for the child, bringing him closer to the picture of the school. Each negative parent action results in a step away from school. Because the scenarios need to be read aloud by participants, it's best to do this exercise in a group where all participants speak the same language and at least four feel comfortable reading aloud.

The suggested talking points help the facilitator and parents understand that daily school attendance is not primarily an issue of compliance but of giving students the maximum amount of time on task in the classroom so that they reach their academic goals. This version of the exercise has been designed for use with parents of young children. Facilitators who wish to adapt the exercise to different audiences are invited to contact Attendance Works to discuss their ideas.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/taking-action-on-attendance.-making-a-difference-at-home.pdf>

How can you integrate these exercises into the school calendar?

Throughout the course of a school year, schools meet frequently with parents. Each meeting is an opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of promoting good school attendance for the long-term academic success of their children and the steps that they can take on their own and in partnership with others to get their students to school every day.

Opportunities to engage parents include:

- » Back To School Nights
- » Open houses
- » Report Card Pickup
- » PTA meetings
- » Committee meetings
- » Parent education workshops
- » Awards ceremonies and special assemblies

Rather than taking a scattershot approach, you may wish to develop a year-long plan to engage parents about attendance. Appendix A offers a plan of action for connecting with families to reduce chronic absence. Beginning during the summer months, school staff and local partners can take advantage of back to school celebrations or preK boot camps to create dialogue. The first month of school is also a great time to introduce attendance activities or routines that can be repeated through the year. For more ideas to launch the first month of school, see the [Count Us In! toolkit](#).

Local organizations that have leadership development or training programs for parents can also integrate the exercises as one strand of a curriculum designed to help parents develop their knowledge and skills.

Please Share Your Ideas with Attendance Works!

This toolkit is a work in progress. We would love to hear from you about how you used the exercises, with what type of audience, changes you made and why as well as ideas for improvement. Also, if you have a parent engagement exercise that is different from the ones listed that you would be willing to share, please contact us.



Attendance Works thanks the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for its generous funding of our work in parent engagement and the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading for general support of our national work.

ILLUSTRATING THE GAP IN 3RD GRADE READING EXERCISE

Time: 5-8 minutes

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how the gap in 3rd grade reading grows as children have or do not have: 1) access to high quality preschool programs, 2) regular preschool and school attendance and 3) summer learning opportunities.

Instructions:

1) Ask for three volunteers from the audience.

2) Instruct the three volunteers to stand next to each other. Ask for their names.

- » Ask Volunteer A to take 8 steps back. Announce Volunteer A represents the child who starts school a year behind because of an incoming gap school readiness. Share that Volunteer A is a year behind because s/he didn't have a chance to participate in a high quality preschool experience. This child's parents also didn't have resources to offer a literacy rich early learning environment at home.
- » Ask Volunteer B to take 4 steps back. They attended preschool - but they only went half of the time. In fact, this child was kicked out of preschool after having poor attendance. So they didn't get the full benefit of the experience.
- » Volunteer C gets to stay right at the line. Having attended a high quality preschool program, he/she is entering kindergarten ready to learn.

3) Ask all three volunteers to walk forward 8 steps to represent a year of learning in kindergarten.

- » After they finish taking the steps, ask Volunteers A and B to both walk back 2 steps because they were chronically absent for the year (Each step represents approximately a month of lost learning. Explain that the 2 steps reflect both the amount of time the student actually missed - and an additional month because of the disruption that caused in their learning. Explain that neither learned the habit of attending regularly since Volunteer A never went to preschool and Volunteer B didn't develop the habit of attendance in preschool.
- » Ask Volunteer A to take another 2 steps back because they didn't have any supports to support literacy over the summer so they are experiencing a summer reading loss of 2 months.)
- » Volunteer C stays in place because s/he had satisfactory attendance and had enriching experiences over the summer so s/he experienced no summer learning loss.

4) Ask all three volunteers to walk forward another 8 steps to represent what they would have learned in 1st grade.

- » Ask Volunteers A and B to walk back 2 steps for chronic absence
- » Ask Volunteer A to take 2 steps back for summer reading loss.
- » Again, Volunteer C maintains her position due to satisfactory attendance and summer supports.

5) Final comments to the audience:

The picture of the widening gap is quite clear. What helps children read is that they are surrounded by a literacy rich early learning environment. This illustrates how what happens in preschool, in school and the summer does or does not contribute to a child having sufficient time to get to reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

WASHING THE ELEPHANT

Expected Outcome: Increased understanding of the effects of absenteeism on the student and other students and the school

1. ICEBREAKER: PRESENT VS. ABSENT 15 min.

Learning objective: to reflect on the effects of absenteeism

Ask one person (Volunteer #1) to leave the room and explain to the rest of the group that you are going to "wash the elephant." Using an imaginary pail of water and cloth, and informing the audience about the meaning of each move wash the sides, the legs and the trunk; lift the ears and tail and so on. A member of the group (Volunteer #2) then volunteers to demonstrate with no words what he/she has seen you do. The volunteer outside the room is brought back and silently observes the mimed demonstration, then demonstrates what he/she observed and explains what he/she is doing at every move.

2. DEBRIEF 15 min.

Now ask the Volunteer #2 to explain the demonstration to Volunteer #1 who had left the room. Observe her/his reaction. Popcorn-style, ask the following questions:

What made a difference between the first and second volunteers?

Validate responses and emphasize how crucial it is for a person to be present when someone is sharing information or giving instructions.

Why is it important for students to attend school regularly?

Say: when a student is not present in the classroom, he/she misses instruction. The more classes a student misses, the farther behind the student falls

When do you think absences seriously affect a student's ability to do well in school?

Is it when a student is absent 18 days or more during a school year? Or when they miss 10% of the total school days in a year? Or when they miss 2 days of school per month?

Explain that these are different ways of saying the same thing. A student who misses 2 days per month will end up missing 18 days during the school year, and that equals 10% of the school year. This is what is known as "Chronic absenteeism."

Key Point: Being present when information is delivered is critical.

When your child misses one day or one lesson, that means when she returns, she may have missed something critical to her understanding of the next several days of instruction.

This exercise was developed for use as part of a parent workshop series by the Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network, <http://www.parentactionnet.org/>. Reprinted with permission by Attendance Works, January 2013

ATTENDANCE CAFE

MENU:

Special Today: ATTENDANCE

APPETIZERS

- » Welcome and Parent Café Agreements
- » 3 Minute conversation with your designated partner. Each partner gets a turn to respond to these questions: How was school attendance for you when you were a student? Did you go every day? Did you miss a lot?

ENTREE

- » Discuss this question for 15 minutes: Did you know that children who miss 18 or more days of the school year (2 days a month) starting in kindergarten are less likely to learn to read by third grade and graduate from high school?
- » Discuss this question for 15 minutes: What are some of the obstacles that parents face in getting their children to attend school every day?
- » Discuss this question on the new table for 15 minutes: What are some ways that parents can overcome these obstacles? How can you help other parents overcome these obstacles?

DESSERT

- » Conversation reflection: Table Hosts summarize the conversations at their tables.
- » Volunteer to be on an attendance committee
- » One-word reflection

The Attendance Café is part of a series of Parent Cafes developed by Oakland Parents Together. Reprinted with permission by Attendance Works, January 2013. For more information on Parent Cafes, contact Oakland Parents Together, 510-452-9854, <http://www.parentstogether.org>

TAKING ACTION ON ATTENDANCE: HOW PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT HOME

Time: 20-25 minutes

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to help parents see how their choices affect whether their children are in school on time, every day for the entire day (what educators call "time on task"). Time on task matters for a child's learning and success. Through this activity, parents will know what they can do to support their children in getting to school on time, every day.

STEP A: BUILD KNOWLEDGE (2 minutes)

Use a short PowerPoint presentation, the Attendance Works video or the parent handout to talk about why attendance matters.

Ask: How many of you think that it's important for your child to have good attendance? (raise hands)

Say: Today, we will take some time to think about how we can help our children get to school every day.

School attendance is essential beginning in kindergarten. Sometimes we don't think that it is as important as good attendance in the upper grades because kindergarten is not mandatory in many states. But it is important to build a healthy habit of daily school attendance right from the beginning. Did you know:

- » Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause some children to fall behind in school.
- » How many absences are too many? Chronic absence is defined as 18 days a year or just 2 days a month.
- » Missing 10 percent or about 18 days of the school year in kindergarten can lower achievement in 1st grade and, for some students, through 5th grade.
- » Students can still fall behind if they keep missing just a day or two every few weeks.

STEP B: PREPARATION AND ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Instructions:

The goal is to get to the finish line. Use a photo of a school as the finish line.

Mark a line for the starting point. Make sure there is enough room behind the start line as some participants will move backward rather than forward.

Ask for four (4) volunteers and give each participant one of the four (4) scenarios below. If you have the chance, recruit the volunteers in advance and ask if they feel comfortable reading aloud to the rest of the group. They will each become one of the four children for the activity.

Have participants form a single line standing shoulder to shoulder. Allow space in front and behind the participants to move forward or backward. When participants are lined up and ready, read the script below.

Share with audience:

This is the story of four children (pick four names being mindful of cultural sensitivities). They all started kindergarten last fall and it is now February of their first full year in elementary school.

Listen as each one tells you about themselves and what their parents do-or don't do-to help them get to school every day. (Prompt each one to read clearly and loudly.)

Share with the four volunteers:

I will ask you a series of questions. If your answer is YES, take one step forward. If your answer is NO, take one step back. If you're not sure, don't move forward or backward.

Let's begin!

Ask each participant the following questions:

- » Do your parents help you get to school on time every day?
- » Have your parents established a regular bed time and morning routine?
- » Do your parents schedule doctors' or dentists' appointments during non-school hours?
- » Did your parents make sure you got all your shots before school started?
- » Does your family have a back-up plan for times that they cannot get you to school?
- » Does your family go on vacation only during official school holidays?
- » Have your parents, with the help of school staff, developed a plan to address chronic health conditions like asthma that might make it hard for you to go to school?
- » Do your parents notice when you missed school because you were anxious and complained of a stomach ache so stayed home even though you weren't really ill?
- » Does your family track and monitor how many days of school or preschool you've missed?

STEP C: DIALOGUE (5-10 minutes)

Instructions:

Say: Let's stop now and take a look at where each child ended up and talk about how the choices their parents made affected their child's school attendance.

- » Ask the group to reflect on this question: (You may choose to answer this question together as a large group or ask people to talk in pairs depending on how many participants you have. The point is to help the group identify positive or negative steps parents take.)

What did the parents do that resulted in their child taking positive steps forward or taking steps backward?

- » Ask parents who were role playing:
How did you feel when you moved forward or backward? (Be prepared for participants to answer as if they are one of children they are playing or from their own perspective and experience. Either one is ok.)
- » Ask the entire group:
Based on this activity, what are some ideas you have about things you can do as a parent to help your child have better attendance?

Say: The previous activity gives us a clear picture of how different things that a parent can impact-from daily routines, scheduling choices and health issues - have an effect on attendance and school success.

STEP D: PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (5 minutes)

Hand out Attendance Works flyer and review What You Can Do section (You can ask each person to read one bullet point. If someone has already suggested that idea, affirm them for doing so.)

- » Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- » Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- » Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- » Introduce your child to her teachers and classmates before school starts to help her transition.
- » Don't let your child stay home unless she is truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- » If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- » Develop some backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor or another parent.
- » Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

STEP E: STEPS TO SUCCESS ACTION PLAN (5 MINUTES)

Instructions:

Ask each parent to write an Attendance Action plan, listing at least one step that they will take to help their child succeed in school.

Ask if one or two parents would be willing to share one step they plan to take.

Thank participants and encourage them to put their Action plan up somewhere like the fridge where it will help them remember what they have resolved to do.

Taking Action on Attendance is an adaptation of an exercise called Steps to Success developed by Abriendo Puertas/ Opening Doors for its parent leadership training curriculum. To learn more about the Abriendo Puertas curriculum, go to <http://www.familiesinschools.org/abriendo-puertas-opening-doors/>. Attendance Works wishes to thank and acknowledge Abriendo Puertas for supporting the development of Taking Action on Attendance.

SCENARIOS

Scenario 1 -- Anna:

My name is Anna. I live with my mother, older brother and grandmother.

- » I love my kindergarten teacher! I met her at the Open House last spring. I look forward to playing with my friends at school.
- » Every night before I go to bed at 9 o'clock, I get to choose what I will wear to school the next day.
- » My mother drops me and my brother off on her way to work.
- » Last semester, I was late to school several times when mommy had car trouble.
- » Even though she knows I hate needles, my mommy took me and my brother to get our booster shots over the summer.

Scenario 2 -- Maria

My name is Maria. I'm 5 years old. I live with my mother in the shelter.

- » I have trouble waking up in the morning. Sometimes I can't fall asleep until very late because of the noise. My mother tries to get me going in the morning but I'm often tardy to school.
- » This year, I was unable to start school on time. I missed three days at the beginning of the year because I didn't get my booster shot. My mom did not know that this was a new school requirement.
- » I have asthma. The school nurse and my teacher keep an eye on me and help me when they see I'm having trouble breathing. With their help, I haven't had an asthma attack and have been able to stay in class.

Scenario 3 -- Aaron

My name is Aaron. I have two brothers and one sister. I am the youngest in my family.

- » I arrive late to school a lot. It's hard for us to make it on time. There is always a scramble to get me and the other three kids dressed, fed and out the door.
- » I also missed several days of school because my parents scheduled doctors' and dentist's appointments during school hours. Sometimes I would get pulled out even when the appointment was not for me but for one of my brothers or sister.
- » In November, we all missed a week of school because my parents decided to leave for vacation while school was in session.

Scenario 4 -- Carlos

My name is Carlos. I live with my parents and my baby sister.

- » My dad makes me go to bed at 9:30 every night. I usually wake up alert and eat a big breakfast.
- » Last fall, I missed several days of school. I told my parents my tummy hurt. They took me to the doctor after school. The doctor said I was not sick. My parents asked me if something else was going on at school. I just shrugged my shoulders and said no. My mom wants to talk to my teacher but she hasn't had time to follow up.
- » My baby sister is having surgery next week. So my parents have asked grandma to come and help get me to school while they take care of her.

APPENDIX A--CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENCE: A MODEL FOR OUTREACH AND INTERVENTION

Personalized early outreach is one of the key strategies that Attendance Works recommends school communities undertake to move the needle on chronic absence. How personalized early outreach looks and is integrated into school and community practice will vary, but there are a number of strategies with evidence of impact that schools should consider as they design the outreach and intervention processes that work for them.

A 3-Tiered Approach

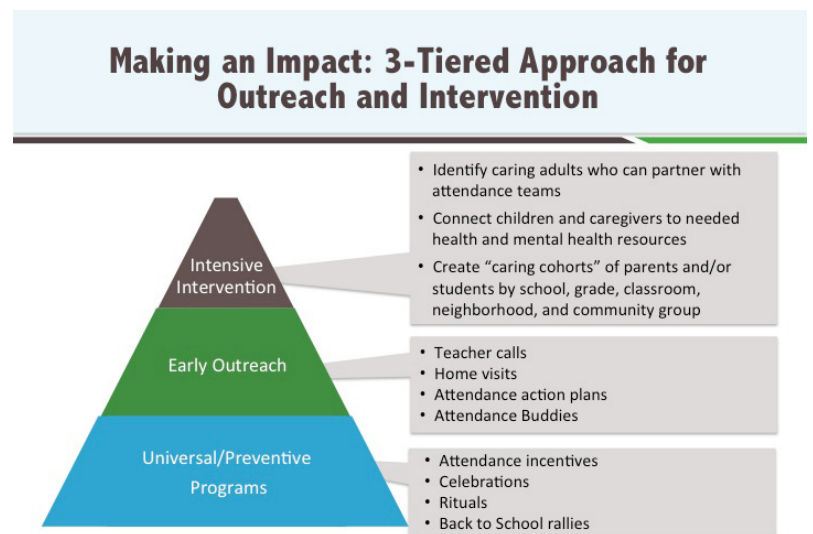
A systematic and sustainable approach to reducing chronic absence requires a combination of universal and preventive programs that build a culture of attendance throughout the school and community; early outreach that enables school and community staff to build relationships with families and stem absenteeism early on; and intensive intervention that focuses resources on the most high need students and their families.

Working with Community Partners to Develop a Coordinated Approach

Building trusting relationships with students and families is critical to effective outreach and intervention, but this work should not be left on the shoulders of schools alone. Coordinating with community partners allows broader reach, engages more stakeholders, and leverages the relationships and capacities of partners to have greater impact. Together, school staff and community partners can design an approach to outreach and intervention that starts early - before school begins - and continues throughout the year.

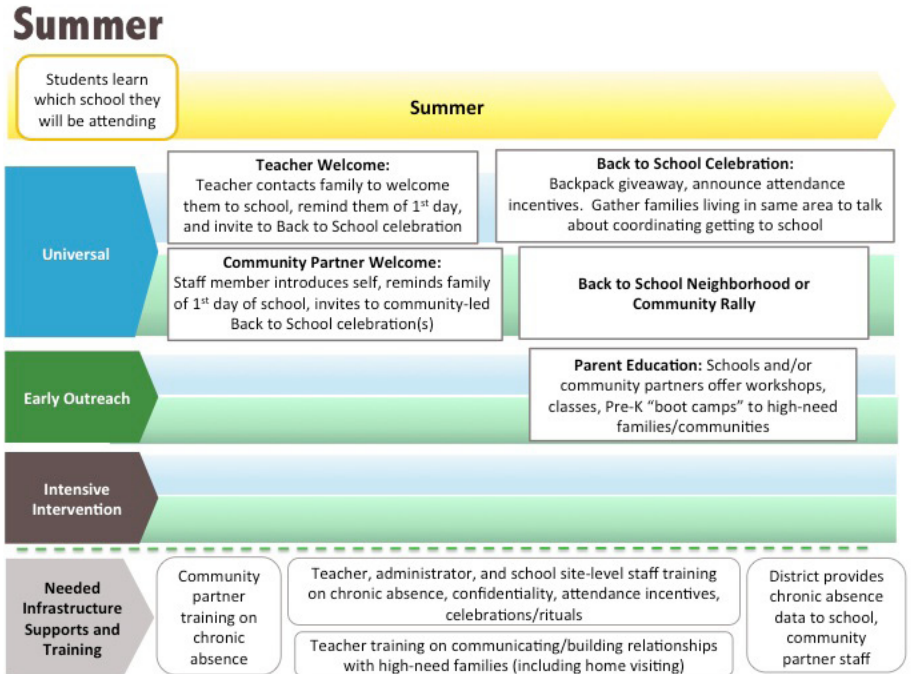
Creating a Plan for the Summer, the Start of School and Beyond

The following diagrams reflect one model for outreach and intervention that integrates the efforts of both school staff and community partner staff. In designing their own model, communities do not need to start from scratch and instead should inventory and leverage what relevant programs and practices already exist. In many cases, elements of a model for outreach and intervention may already be in place but need to be coordinated and structured in a strategic way.

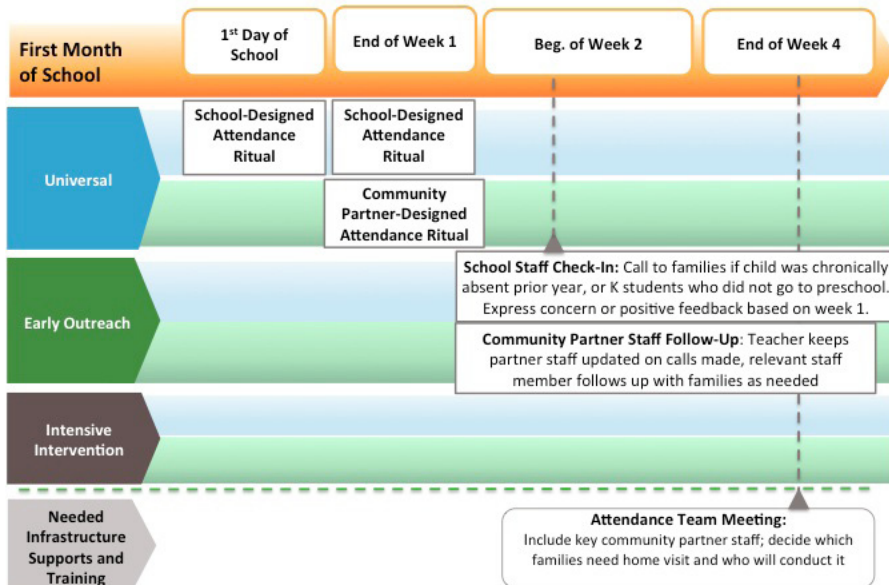


Model for Outreach and Intervention

Summer provides the opportunity to prepare for the school year and to set the tone for the rest of the year, not only for students and families, but also for school and community partner staff. Use the summer to begin to build trusting relationships with families and to equip staff with the skills, understanding and data that will enable them to stay informed about their families and work with them effectively to improve students' attendance. To ensure confidentiality concerns are addressed, schools should ensure a confidentiality waiver form is included in registration packets to get parent permission for their child's data to be shared with community partners so they can help.

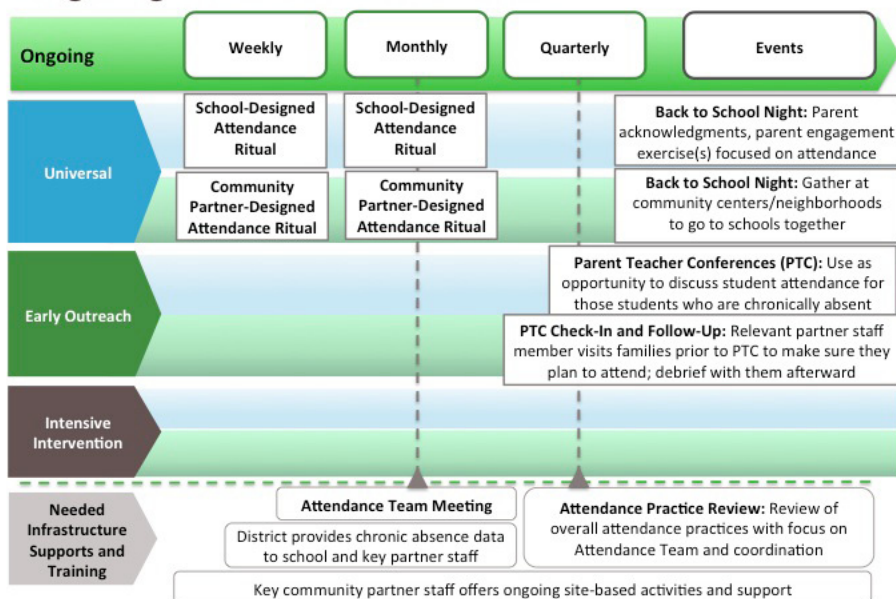


First Month of School



The first month of school is the perfect time to build a sense of excitement about the school year and to introduce students and families to expectations about attendance as well as positive incentives for attendance. It can also be a gauge for the coming year and gives teachers and community partner staff the opportunity to step in early to stem early signs of chronic absenteeism. We encourage schools and communities to consider creating "attendance rituals" where they publicly discuss the importance of attendance and celebrate good and improved attendance. Key parent-focused events, such as Back to School Night and parent teacher conferences, can be excellent opportunities to reinforce messaging about the importance of good attendance. Parents should feel supported in their efforts to get their children to school.

Ongoing Practices and Events



To be effective, family outreach, parent education, and celebrations of good and improved attendance must be sustained throughout the year. Schools and community partners should plan for regular and ongoing attendance team meetings and quarterly attendance practice reviews, to ensure that they are coordinating effectively around families in need.

Key Considerations for Effective Outreach and Intervention

- » Trusting relationships with families are a critical component for making an impact and taking the time to build these relationships is a worthwhile investment. Schools should also leverage existing relationships in the community to make connections and build their own credibility.
- » Intensive intervention strategies should be tailored to the student population and the unique barriers that families face. While trained professionals, such as school social workers, are best equipped to offer this intervention, these efforts should be coordinated with other family outreach efforts so that families have a coordinated system of support.
- » Teachers play a critical role in family outreach and intervention, but communicating and working effectively with parents can be difficult, especially for teachers who work with high need students and families. Schools should provide training to help them understand the challenges their students might face, as well as the skills to break down barriers through communication. Teacher home visits can be an effective way to build trusting relationships with parents. Teachers can share their expectations of their students, learn about their students, and hear parents' own hopes and dreams for what their children will achieve.

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING INTRODUCTION

These tools were designed to be used at the beginning of a school's attendance effort. Where a school is implementing a School-wide Attendance and Engagement Team, that would likely be a natural group to lead these efforts. Both tools should be incorporated into a process that engages a wide group of stakeholders (school staff, students, parents, partners, and community members).

Instructions for Conducting Self Assessment With a Team



This self-assessment tool can be used by an individual to help them gain a deeper understanding of what is and could be happening to improve attendance at their school. It is also an excellent tool for laying the foundation for a team of key stakeholders to begin working together to reduce student absences. Below are suggested guidelines for engaging a team. If possible, identify one person who will assume responsibility for facilitating this process and dialogue.

1. Bring together a team of key stakeholders in your school to complete this self-assessment. Participants should include the principal, attendance personnel, classroom teachers, staff from partnering community agencies, and if possible parents or other community members that may offer multiple perspectives because of their race or culture. Feel free to expand this list to include others that you think might have valuable insights to offer about student attendance in your school.
2. Ask each participant to complete the tool. Be aware of your evidence. Specifically, where can you draw from non-traditional participants, community members, etc.?
3. Hand out an extra copy of the tool and ask participant to add in their responses with a hatch mark. Make copies of the version with everyone's response. (An alternative option is to put up an enlarged copy of the tool on the wall and ask participants to add their responses using a marker. This approach allows everyone to see the collective responses without the need for additional copies). When using the latter approach please be aware of non-traditional participants. Create a safe & encouraging space for their voice. Ask the group to review the collective results. Encourage participants to identify and explore where there appear to be differences in how stakeholders have ranked a particular element. Use this as an opportunity to explore reasons for multiple/different perspectives
4. After comparing results, participants should discuss what they see as the biggest gaps or priorities to address in the near future. If needed, use dots or take hand vote to agree upon the top three next steps. For each one, discuss who needs to be involved in advancing this priority? What are the immediate next steps? Who can take responsibility for ensuring follow-up occurs? Determine how to stay in communication with each other about progress on the next steps and decide whether a follow-up is needed.

Does Attendance Really Count in Our School?

A Tool for Self-Assessment – Revised August 2013

Adapted from Attendance Works self-assessment document (attendanceworks.org)

Key Element	Strength	OK for now	Could be better	Urgent Gap	Don't know	How do you know?
1. Attendance is accurately taken and entered daily into district data system in all classrooms.						
2. Our school has a clear and widely understood policy that is culturally responsive to all communities.						
3. A team including the site administrator reviews attendance data on a regular basis to identify chronically absent students and monitor attendance patterns by grade, race, student subgroups and classroom.						
4. Our school offers such rich, engaging & culturally relevant learning activities that students do not want to miss school						
5. Our school intentionally welcomes and honors all students and families.						
6. Our school recognizes and appreciates good and improved attendance.						
7. Our school informs parents in their language about the importance of attendance and encourages parents to help each other get their children to school.						
8. Our school identifies and reaches out to chronically absent students and their families in a caring manner to see how attendance could be improved.						
9. Our school partners with community agencies that offer resources (pre-K, afterschool, health services, volunteer mentors, transportation) that can help engage students & their families and remove barriers to getting to school.						
10. Individual learning plans are developed for high-risk students and address poor attendance along with low academic performance. All plans are examined and developed using a racial equity lens and are culturally						

responsive.						
11. Our school discipline policy and practice ensure students do not miss instruction due to suspensions for non-violent behaviors.						
12. Our strategies for supporting student attendance are reflected in our school improvement plan & are culturally responsive						



2013-16 Action Plan – Attendance

Improvement Goal:

By the end of the 2015-2016 school year, increase engagement with children, youth and families, as measured by X% increase in the percentage of students in all grades with attendance of 90% or better. (Baseline 2012-2013 is X%).

*Please note improvement goal should be disaggregated by sub-groups, including race when stakeholders are analyzing data.

Implementation Activities	Timelines	Who is responsible?	Resources Needed	Implementation Status
Strategy/Practice: To develop school-wide universal attendance supports to create a culture of attendance		Evidence: 90% or more of students and staff can clearly state the expectations		Evaluation Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
1. Policies and procedures are in place <u>and in practice</u> which clearly spell out expectations and consequences for students relative to attendance, including tardiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policies and practices delineate the attendance-related responsibilities of parents, school staff and administrators. 				
2. Students are taught the attendance policies and procedures within the first week of the school year.				
3. Parents are informed of policies at the beginning of the year and at appropriate times throughout the year. The school has a mechanism in place to assure that parents have reviewed policies and procedures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent information about policies and practices is presented in such a way that all parents are likely to receive, review and clearly understand it. ○ Parent information about policies and practices is culturally specific and/or responsive ○ Opportunities are created to inform parents 				
4. Students are taught skills related to attendance and punctuality at the beginning of the school year and periodically throughout the school year.				
5. Families are positively engaged and educated around attendance and absenteeism at multiple opportunities throughout the year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent education is presented in such a way that all parents are likely to receive, review and clearly understand it. 				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent information about policies and practices is culturally specific and/or responsive ○ Opportunities are created to inform parents 				
6. Parents are contacted via person-to-person contact within two class period of a report that a student is absent without substantiated explanation (parent note, parent phone call, pre-authorization, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plans are made to ensure person-to-person contacts are in student's home language 				
7. There is a system of Incentives and rewards for attendance (individual, classroom, school, district)				

Strategy/Practice: To develop school-wide attendance data team systems to generate and analyze data on school-wide attendance and determine the effectiveness of the school-wide culture of attendance.*	Evidence:	Evaluation Methods:
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Implementation Activities	Timelines	Who is responsible?	Resources Needed	Implementation Status
1. A school-wide attendance data team is established that meets at least quarterly, and includes the following members (at a minimum): administrator, school counselor, attendance secretary, SUN Coordinator				
2. Data is generated in advance of school-wide attendance data team meetings to determine each student's attendance rate, and includes race/ethnicity and grade level.				
3. School-wide attendance data team analyzes data based on the following risk statuses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good attendance (95 - 100% attendance rate) ● Acceptable attendance (94.9 - 90% attendance rate) ● Chronic attendance (89.9 - 80% attendance rate) ● Severe chronic attendance (79.9% or lower) 				
4. Using equity lens, school-wide attendance data team analyzes school-wide data based on race/ethnicity and grade level for students with chronic absenteeism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teams should be diverse in race, culture, and gender 				
5. Using equity lens, school-wide attendance data team prioritizes need and sets a goal for the next school-wide data review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teams should be diverse in race, culture, and gender 				

6. School-wide attendance data team reviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current universal attendance strategies • Fidelity to the current program • Revisions and/or additions to the current program • Professional development needs of staff • Involvement opportunities for students and/or families 				
7. Current data, school-wide attendance goal and universal attendance strategies are shared with all staff members and professional development occurs as needed.				

*The school-wide attendance data team does not necessarily need to stand-alone from other preexisting school teams. A school may find it best to address attendance within a process that exists already (PBIS teams, Response to Intervention, Instructional Data Teams). This approach is encouraged as long as the critical minimums regarding the frequency and content of attendance conversations are met.

Strategy/Practice: To develop student-level attendance data team systems to generate and analyze individual student attendance data and assign, implement and progress monitor interventions. *	Evidence:			Evaluation Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
Implementation Activities	Timelines	Who is responsible?	Resources Needed	Implementation Status	
1. Student-level attendance data team(s) is/are established that meet at least monthly, and includes the following members (at a minimum): administrator, school counselor, attendance secretary, teacher(s), SUN Coordinator, Liaison (if possible), school nurse/health assistant (if possible),					
2. Data is generated in advance of Student-level attendance data team meetings to determine attendance rate of individual students with attendance rate below 90%, and includes race/ethnicity and grade level.					
3. Student-level attendance data team discussed individual students, considering strengths and obstacles.					
4. Interventions are selected based on student need/obstacles. Students may be grouped by intervention type. Roles are assigned and timelines are established for progress monitoring.					
5. Staff are trained on interventions as needed. Interventions are implemented with fidelity for 1-4 weeks.					

6. Student-level attendance data teams meet to review progress at the individual student level.				
7. Evaluate whether interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are being implemented with fidelity • Need to be modified • Need to be changed (more appropriate/more intensive) • Can be de-intensified or discontinued • Are culturally responsive 				
8. Student-level attendance data team meet at least monthly on this group of students until the next school-wide attendance data team cycle.				

*The school-wide attendance data team does not necessarily need to stand-alone from other preexisting school teams. A school may find it best to address attendance within a process that exists already (PBIS teams, Response to Intervention, Instructional Data Teams). This approach is encouraged as long as the critical minimums regarding the frequency and content of attendance conversations are met.

SCHOOL-WIDE ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT REVIEW (TEAM) INTRODUCTION



SCHOOL-WIDE ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT REVIEW (TEAM)

- Use a data-driven process to monitor school-wide student attendance.
- Focus on the culture of attendance through continuous improvement of universal practices and prevention strategies.
- Collaboratively monitor progress of student-level data teams.
- Include family, youth and community input.

Culturally Responsive Lens Questions for this Team

- How can we build relationships and trust among members of this team and the other partners included in this work?
- What beliefs and assumptions am I bringing to the team meetings?
 - What biases do I have that may affect my understanding and ability to listen to alternative perspectives?
- What groups are experiencing the highest chronic absence rates and greatest challenges?
- How can we really find out what those challenges are and what will be effective in addressing them?
- Where are the junctures we need to stop and consider where we are putting up barriers in either our approach or the structure(s) and where we are creating pathways for all students and families?
- Where is encouragement for relationship building with students and families included in our structure and processes?

School-wide Attendance & Engagement Team Description and Membership

Focus

100% of students, school climate, behavioral trends, school wide strategies, overall attendance rate, disaggregated attendance data

Frequency

At least three times per year

Members

- Principal or other administrator
- School staff (counselor, Title 1 staff, teachers, Special Education representative, ELL representative)
- SUN Community School Site Manager (if one exists)

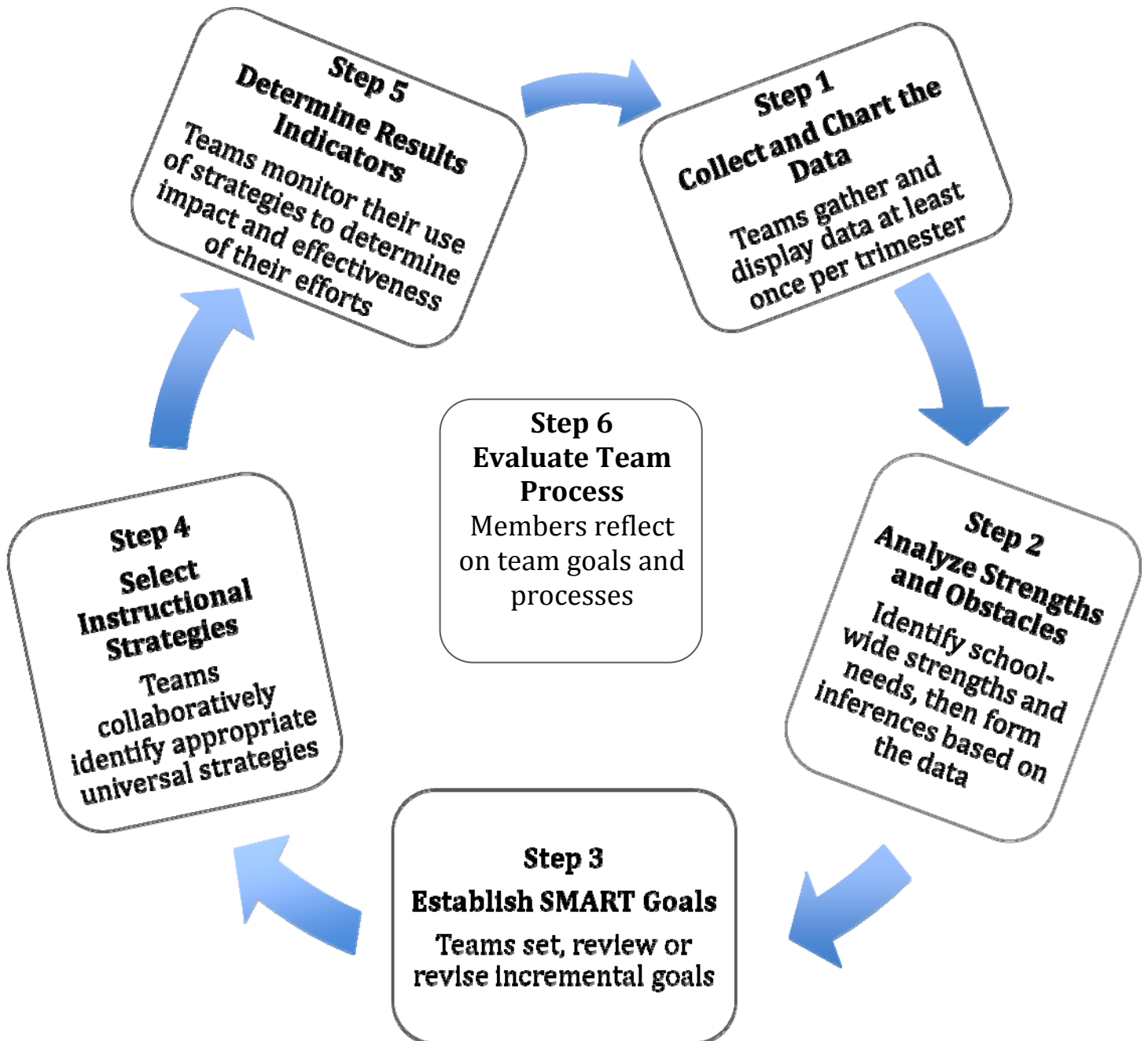
Suggested

- Community partners

Additional Thoughts

This work could happen at PBIS team meeting, site council, SUN Community School Advisory Committee, or other existing group.

School-wide Attendance Data Team Cycle



Universal School-wide Attendance Strategies

Establishing a Culture of Attendance

Attendance is a behavior. We can teach good attendance habits.

Structures/Awareness	Parent Education/Support	Positive Reinforcement/Incentives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance policies are clearly posted on school website & in parent-student handbook • PBIS lesson on attendance is taught in the first month of school • Teachers must take attendance and submit it within 15-20 minutes of the day/class • Rapid contact with families for unexcused absences • There is clarity among staff around roles (e.g. who is responsible for pulling data reports, making calls home, passing information to the attendance teams, etc) • Annual meeting to discuss attendance in the school, generate initiatives and ideas for the next school year to maintain and improve (team should include parents, youth, community members, school staff) • Bulletin board/Data wall • School-wide assemblies – share attendance data/reasons why it is important • Calendar of attendance events & initiatives (Sept: PBIS and fliers, Oct: Student video project, Nov: Attendance assembly...) • Restorative disciplinary practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One sheet flier sent home at beginning of the year with information on attendance and a link to the Attendance Works website (mid-year reminder flier also) • Information about attendance and the schools’ attendance policy is provided at kindergarten transition events, back-to-school, parent night, and at parent-teacher conferences • Attendance is addressed frequently in school newsletters • Parents know who to contact at the school to address attendance issues • Actual school attendance data is shared with parents • Teachers share attendance rate pie chart at fall conferences • Teachers send home work the child misses when he/she is not in school • Holiday/break-specific messaging • “How Sick is Too Sick?” handout • Connect families to school resources that promote attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SUN, extracurricular activities, counseling groups • Resource Fair (health clinic, mental health agencies, social services) • Walking school bus is established • Parent/community survey to assess root causes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom competitions, awards, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highest classroom attendance ○ Increasing number of classroom perfect attendance days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rotating banner ▪ daily flags ▪ earning rewards/treats ▪ extra recess ▪ recognition at an assembly • Students are formally recognized for good attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Super Attendance” bulletin board ○ Lunch with the Principal • Incentives/opportunity drawings on rainy days or days with poor attendance (Tuesday after Labor Day, Friday before spring break) • 25th instructional day celebrations for students with >90% attendance • Monthly Perfect Attendance and Most Improved awards/recognition • Plan special events/activities on Friday or Monday (to improve attendance) • Special message to parents (letter, phone call) • Special Privileges for “96% or Higher Club” • Parents are recognized along with students for improved attendance



The purpose of this form is to facilitate examination of patterns in school-wide attendance to (a) identify the need for school-wide strategies, (b) monitor the implementation of strategies, and (c) determine the effectiveness of the *school-wide programs* in promoting a culture of attendance. This form is intended to be completed each time your school-wide attendance data team meets.

Meeting Date: _____ / _____ / 20____

1. Collect and Chart Data

Fill in the number and percentage of students in each of the 3 attendance categories for the previous year (if this is the first meeting of the school year) or term (if this is the second or third meeting of the school year). Then fill in the number and percentage in each attendance category as of the date your team meets. If your school is one of the 6 Communities Supporting Youth (CSY) demonstration schools, these data are provided to you through the district. If your school is not one of the CSY demonstration schools, these data are available from the Data Warehouse. [Note: If this is your first meeting, you will come back to the annual goal column.]

Table 1. School-wide Attendance Data

Attendance Category	Previous Year or Term		Current Year-to-Date		Annual Goal
	n	%	n	%	%
Green Zone (<i>Acceptable Attendance</i>) – Attendance rate greater than or equal to 90%					
Yellow Zone (<i>Chronic Absenteeism</i>) – Attendance rate between 80% and 89%					
Red Zone (<i>Severe Chronic Absenteeism</i>) – Attendance rate lower than 80%					

Fill in the number and percentage of RED and YELLOW ZONE students in each subgroup category. Fill in the number and percentage of students for the previous year (if this is the first meeting of the school year) or term (if this is the second or third meeting of the school year). Then fill in the number and percentage in each attendance category as of the date your team meets. If your school is one of the 6 Communities Supporting Youth (CSY) demonstration schools, these data are provided to you through the district. If your school is not one of the CSY demonstration schools, these data are available from the Data Warehouse. [Note: If this is your first meeting, you will come back to the annual goal column.]

Table 2. Red (*Severe Chronic Absenteeism*) and Yellow (*Chronic Absenteeism*) Zone Data for Subgroups of Students

Indicator	SubGroup	Previous Year or Term		Current Year-to-Date		Annual Goal
		n	%	n	%	
Attendance Percent of students with <i>Chronic Absenteeism</i> (attendance rate is lower than 90%)	Kindergarten					
	1 st grade					
	2 nd grade					
	3 rd grade					
	4 th grade					
	5 th grade					
	LEP*					
	SWD*					
	Title X					
	American Indian/Alaskan Native*					
	Black*					
	Hispanic*					
	Pacific Islander					
	Asian					
White						

* These categories are included in the Underserved Students/Disadvantaged Students subgroup for Achievement Compact reporting (see *K-12 ESD Achievement Compact Definitions Final*, OEIB adopted 3/27/2012).

2. Analyze Attendance Data

As a team, review the data in the tables 1 and 2.

(a) With what grades or groups of students is the attendance rate acceptable (90% or better)? What supports exist that enable these groups to have high attendance rates? What should your school and community continue to do to support continuation of these attendance rates?

(b) What grades or groups of students have chronic absenteeism (lower than 90%)? What barriers exist that might prevent these groups from achieving a higher attendance rate? What should your school and community do to promote a higher attendance rate for these groups?

(a) The data show acceptable attendance levels with what groups of students ?	Reflecting on these results, what conclusions does your team draw?
(b) The data show chronic absenteeism with what groups of students?)	Reflecting on these results, what conclusions does your team draw?

School-Wide Attendance Data Team Meeting Form

3. Establish SMART Goals

After reviewing and reflecting on data for your school, identify groups that your school will target and set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-based) goals for each group. Determine a date by when these goals will be achieved. Include these goals in the “goal” columns for the appropriate subgroups in tables 1 and 2. [Note: Your school may choose to target more or fewer subgroups than the 4 rows provided in this table. Please add or delete rows as needed for your school.]

Subgroup	Attendance Category	%	Date

4. Select Strategies

Identify strategies that are needed to achieve your attendance goals. Complete the attached Strategy Description Form for each universal attendance strategy (i.e., a strategy that addresses the entire school or subgroups of students. Not a strategy for individual students) implemented by your school. Complete Questions A.1-A.9 when planning the implementation of the strategy. Complete Questions B and C during your mid-year or year-end review of the strategy. Copy the forms for as many strategies as you implement.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGY PLANNING

A.1. What is the name of your strategy? How would you describe the strategy? *(Please write the name and 1 sentence explaining the strategy.)*

Strategy name: _____

Strategy description: _____

A.2. Based on the Toolkit's "Universal School-wide Attendance Strategies" types, what type of universal strategy is this? *(Please check one response.)*

- School structure/awareness (e.g., attendance policies are posted on school website, assemblies to discuss attendance, attendance walls)
- Parent education/support (e.g., attendance fliers, "how sick is too sick" brochures, or student attendance rate data are shared with parents)
- Positive reinforcement/incentives (e.g., formal recognition of student attendance, incentive or opportunity drawings, special events held on low attendance days)

A.3. On what date will implementation of the strategy occur or begin? *(Please enter the date using the mm/dd/yyyy format.)*

____ / ____ / 20 ____

A.4. How often will this strategy be implemented? *(Please check one response.)*

- Annually
- Quarterly
- Monthly
- Bimonthly
- Weekly
- Daily
- Other, *please specify:* _____

A.5. What group will the strategy target? *(Please check one response.)*

- The entire student body

- Families/parents
- A subgroup(s), *please specify:* _____
- A grade level(s), *please specify:* _____
- A classroom
- Other, *please specify:* _____

A.6. Who will have primary responsibility for implementing the strategy? (Please check all that apply.)

- Parents
- School administrators
- School support staff
- School teachers
- Students
- SUN staff
- Other, *please specify:* _____

A.7. What resources, such as community partners, money, staff, time, supplies, etc., will be needed to implement this strategy? (Please provide as complete a list of resources as possible.)

A.8. What professional development, if any, is needed to improve school-wide (or targeted subgroup) attendance? How did your team identify this need?

A.9. What opportunities are there for your school and community to involve students and families in strategy planning, development, or implementation?

School-Wide Attendance Data Team Meeting Form

UNIVERSAL STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING

B.1. Did you implement the strategy described in Questions A.1-A.7 as planned?

Yes

No → *If no, B.2. What changes were made? What was the reason for those changes?*

B.3. Having reviewed your Year-to-Date data for the current year, has this strategy helped you make progress toward your annual attendance goals? Why or why not?

C.1. Having reviewed Year-To-Date data for the current year, will your team continue to implement this strategy as described in Question B? (Please check one response.)

Yes, our team will continue to implement the strategy as we have thus far this year. → *You have completed the Strategy Description Form.*

No, our team will modify the strategy. → *Please continue to Question C.2.*

No, our team will discontinue use of the strategy. → *Please continue to Question C.2.*

C.2. What are the reasons for modifying or discontinuing the strategy?



Glenfair Elementary School
15300 NE Glisan Street
Portland, OR 97230
503-252-3479 • FAX 503-262-3788



Attendance Questionnaire

The Glenfair Attendance Team is working hard to improve attendance at school. There are many factors that contribute to absenteeism. We want to know what things make it hard for your student to come to school. We appreciate your honesty, we are only looking support your student and work together better.

Do any of these things make it challenging for your students to come to school? Please check all that apply.

- Bullying/Problems with Peers
- Kept home to Babysit
- Chronic Health Issues with Parent
- Transportation Challenges
- Oversleeping
- Academic Challenges
- Transportation issues
- Chronic Health Issues with Student
- Homelessness
- Vacations

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you! We greatly appreciate your time
PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE MAIN OFFICE

A great place for learning.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE RESPONSE TEAM INTRODUCTION



STUDENT ATTENDANCE RESPONSE TEAM

- Review student level data.
- Identify and determine appropriate individualized interventions for students with attendance of 89% or below, matched to students' needs.
- Support may be “intensive” or “strategic.”
- Collaboratively monitor progress of individual students and intervention practices.

Culturally Responsive Lens Questions for this Team

- How can we build relationships and trust among members of this team and the other partners included in this work?
- What beliefs and assumptions am I bringing to the team meetings?
 - What biases do I have that may affect my understanding and ability to listen to alternative perspectives?
- What groups are experiencing the highest chronic absence rates and greatest challenges?
- How can we really find out what those challenges are and what will be effective in addressing them?
- Where are the junctures we need to stop and consider where we are putting up barriers in either our approach or the structure(s) and where we are creating pathways for all students and families?
- Where is encouragement for relationship building with students and families included in our structure and processes?

Student Attendance Response Team Description and Membership

Focus

Students who are chronically absent – having attendance of 89% or lower.

Frequency

Monthly at a minimum. More frequent meetings (weekly or every two weeks) have been shown to have the most effect.

Members

- Principal or other administrator
- School counselor
- Attendance secretary
- SUN Community School Site Manager (if one exists)
- Attendance Liaison/Case Manager (if one exists)

Suggested

- Teachers
- Nurse or Health Assistant

Additional Thoughts

- This team could be a standing Response to Intervention (RTI), Building Screening Committee (BSC), Student Success, or other meeting that can focus on attendance in its rotation of weekly areas.
- This team mirrors the 20% teams that are part of PBIS or RTI structures that schools often use, with a focus on attendance rather than behavior or academics.



Attendance Data Teams: Tips for Effectiveness

What makes an effective Attendance Data Team? Attendance Data Teams are successful when they both involve the right people and maintain a clear sense of purpose and responsibilities.

Who should participate? To function effectively, an Attendance Data Team needs a designated chair person/facilitator and members such as the principal and others who can understand and analyze attendance data. Ideally teams should include not only school staff but representatives of other community agencies who can help with reaching out to students and their parents, as well as offering resources for overcoming barriers to attendance.

What should they do? Attendance Data Teams have a two-fold responsibility: first, they are charged with looking at individual students who are chronically absent and ensuring their needs are met using all available resources; second, they monitor what is happening overall for all students and student sub-groups at a school site. Attendance teams can carry out both levels of work by clearly defining when they will work at each level. They can, for example, divide a meeting into two parts or alternate the meeting focus.

At the individual student level, they should:

- Examine every week the list of students with attendance issues to ensure that each student receives appropriate supports.
- Look at other data (grades, test scores, behavioral referrals, health issues, etc.) to develop a full picture of what is happening in a student's life, especially for those with more severe attendance problems.
- Use data on attendance and chronic absence to determine the nature and intensity of supports. Supports can range from a call home or a truancy letter to a more intensive intervention and case management process.
- Review outcomes of prior interventions to determine if supports were effective.

At the school level, they should:

- Help communicate the importance of attendance to the entire school staff and clearly spell out how each staff member can work with the Attendance Data Team and help students who are chronically absent.
- Work with the administration to establish positive expectations for good attendance with students and their families. This includes creating a culture of attendance as well as defining what happens when a student misses school. This may include tiered interventions to provide needed support as well as consequences.
- Examine trend information and unusual attendance trends and patterns every quarter.
- Compile data across individual students and multiple data sources to unpack common barriers to attendance and then forge partnerships to address those challenges.
- Assess the impact of programmatic efforts such as attendance incentives on reducing rates of chronic absence.

For more information:

Attendance Works has developed a Toolkit for City Leaders, case studies of communities making a difference and data tools available on our website at www.attendanceworks.org. Contact director Hedy Chang at hedy@attendanceworks.org

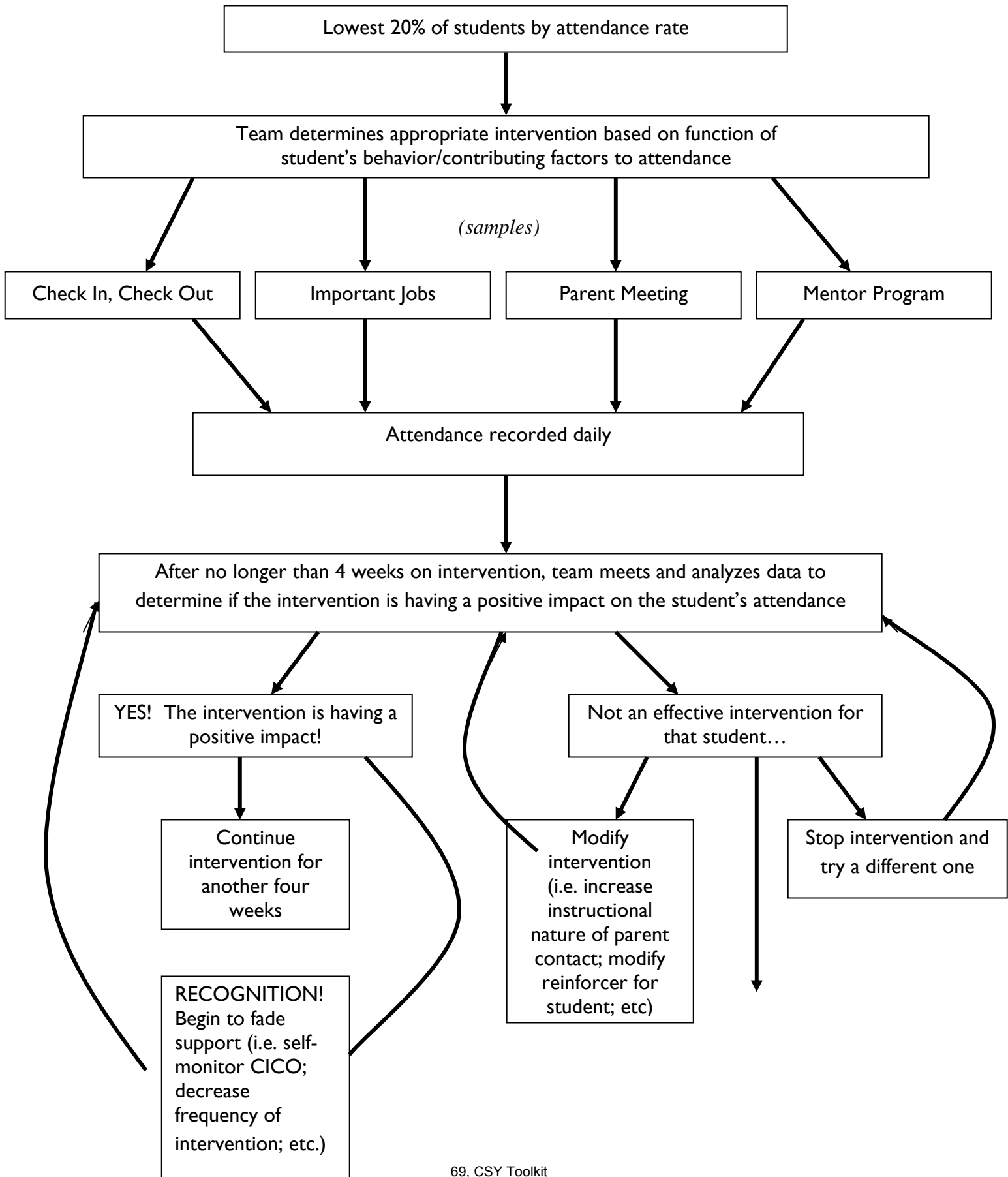
Student-level Interventions

We intervene with students having attendance problems.

We monitor attendance and need to assess the effectiveness of our interventions.

Discretionary Reasons	Aversion	Real Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to SUN; First choice of SUN class/activity • Student workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Importance of attendance ○ How to study better ○ Support groups • Check-In, Check-Out (CICO) • Important jobs • Tutoring/academic remediation/credit recovery • General parent meeting • Letter home • Parent phone calls (positive) • Attendance contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In, Check-Out (CICO) • Referral to SUN; First choice of SUN class/activity • Attendance Buddy • Mentor Program • Parent phone call (positive) • Problem-solving meeting with parent, school counselor • Attendance contract • Social skills supports • Case manager/advocate or other community partner (ex. Social and Support Services for Educational or SSSES within SUN Service System) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact by school nurse/health assistant when absence is illness- or injury-related • Problem-solving meeting with parent, school counselor, SUN, attendance liaison • Referral to social services; health; mental health; housing assistance • Case manager/advocate or other community partner (ex. Social and Support Services for Educational or SSSES within SUN Service System)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT/SST referral • Referral to school-based support staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visit by school nurse when over 20% absences due to illness/injury • Home visits to provide needed resources

Student Attendance Response Team Decision Rules





Student-level Attendance Intervention/Engagement Strategy Form: Strategy Planning

Please complete this Intervention/Engagement Strategy Form for each student receiving an attendance intervention. Complete the Questions A.1-A.7 when planning the implementation of the intervention.

A.1 Date _____ / _____ / 20 _____

A.2. Student name: _____ Grade: _____

Current YTD Attendance Rate: _____

A.3. Primary Reason(s) for Absences

Which of the following categories are reasons for the student's absences? (Please check one response for each reason.)	Yes	No	Don't know
<i>Aversion Reasons</i>			
01 Bullying/Problems with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Failing classes or other academic challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Skipping/Truancy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Discretionary Reasons</i>			
04 Kept at home to babysit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Overslept	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
06 Not feeling well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
07 Vacation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Real Barriers</i>			
08 Chronic health issues – student (e.g., addiction, asthma, dental, mental health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
09 Chronic health issues – family (e.g., addiction, asthma, dental, mental health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following categories are reasons for the student's absences? <i>(Please check one response for each reason.)</i>	Yes	No	Don't know
10 Homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Safety concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Transportation barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Other, <i>please specify:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A.4. Required Interventions *(Please list the date using mm/dd/yyyy format.)*

Positive phone call home: _____ / _____ / 20 _____

A.5. Interventions from District Response Plan

What is the name of the intervention? How would you describe the intervention? *(Please write the name and 1 sentence explaining the intervention.)*

Intervention name: _____

Intervention description: _____

A.6. On what date will implementation of the intervention occur or begin? *(Please list the date using mm/dd/yyyy format.)*

_____ / _____ / 20 _____

A.7. How often will this intervention be implemented? *(Please check one response.)*

- Once
- Quarterly
- Monthly
- Bimonthly
- Weekly
- Daily
- Other, *please specify:* _____

A.8. Who will have primary responsibility for implementing the intervention? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- Parents
- School administrators

- School support staff
- School teachers
- Students
- SUN staff

A.9. What resources will be needed to implement this intervention? *(Please provide as complete a list of resources as possible.)*

Student-level Attendance Intervention/Engagement Strategy Form: Strategy Monitoring

Please complete this Intervention/Engagement Strategy Form for each student receiving an attendance intervention. Complete Questions B and C at each progress monitoring meeting for this student.

B.1. Date _____ / _____ / 20 _____

B.2. Current YTD Attendance Rate: _____

Attendance Rate for the Previous Month: _____

B.3. Additional or New Reason(s) for Absences (Use list of reasons, or describe “other”):

Which of the following categories are reasons for the student’s absences? (Please check one response for each reason.)	Yes	No	Don’t know
<i>Aversion Reasons</i>			
01 Bullying/Problems with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Failing classes or other academic challenges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Skipping/Truancy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Discretionary Reasons</i>			
04 Kept at home to babysit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Overslept	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
06 Not feeling well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
07 Vacation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Real Barriers</i>			
08 Chronic health issues – student (e.g., addiction, asthma, dental, mental health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
09 Chronic health issues – family (e.g., addiction, asthma, dental, mental health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following categories are reasons for the student's absences? <i>(Please check one response for each reason.)</i>	Yes	No	Don't know
11 Safety concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Transportation barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Other, <i>please specify:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B.4. Did you implement the intervention described in Questions A.1-A.9 as planned?

- () Yes
- () No → *If no, B.5. What changes were made? What was the reason for those changes?*

B.6. Has the intervention been successful in increasing the student's attendance rate?

C.1. Having reviewed this student's current Year-To-Date and monthly attendance rate data, will your team continue to implement this intervention as described in Question B? *(Please check one response.)*

- () Yes, our team will continue to implement the intervention as we have thus far this year. → *You have completed the Strategy Description Form.*
- () No, our team will modify the intervention. → *Please continue to Question C.2.*
- () No, our team will discontinue use of the intervention. → *Please continue to Question C.2.*

C.2. What are the reasons for modifying or discontinuing the intervention?



Attendance Intervention Step 1: Positive phone call home

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

_____ has been identified as meeting the criteria of 10% year-to-date missed school days and/or 20% missed school days this month.

Please make a “good news” phone call home. Perhaps share with the parent(s)/guardian(s) how much you enjoy having their child in class, something they did well today, or a strength.

This is *not* a call to share statistics about attendance, Oregon law, their child’s poor attendance record, etc. The goal is to build a positive relationship with the family resulting in the child’s desire to attend school and to encourage the families to invest in school attendance.

It is okay to start the conversation by saying “I had a couple minutes before my next class and thought I would give a quick call to let you know how great it is to have _____ in my class.” It is also okay to plan the call when you know the family is at work and you can leave a message for when they get home.

Note on the back and return to me how the call went (i.e. left message, went well, parent responded) and anything you have done to address the student’s attendance issue this year. The attendance team meets once a month (INSERT TEAM NAMES HERE) to discuss students’ attendance progress.

Thank you so much for your help!

Attendance Intervention Step 1: Positive phone call home

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

_____ has been identified as meeting the criteria of 10% year-to-date missed school days and/or 20% missed school days this month.

Please make a “good news” phone call home. Perhaps share with the parent(s)/guardian(s) how much you enjoy having their child in class, something they did well today, or a strength.

This is *not* a call to share statistics about attendance, Oregon law, their child’s poor attendance record, etc. The goal is to build a positive relationship with the family resulting in the child’s desire to attend school and to encourage the families to invest in school attendance.

It is okay to start the conversation by saying “I had a couple minutes before my next class and thought I would give a quick call to let you know how great it is to have _____ in my class.” It is also okay to plan the call when you know the family is at work and you can leave a message for when they get home.

Note on the back and return to me how the call went (i.e. left message, went well, parent responded) and anything you have done to address the student’s attendance issue this year. The attendance team meets once a month (INSERT TEAM NAMES HERE) to discuss students’ attendance progress.

Thank you so much for your help!



Talking Points for Teachers Calling Parents about Attendance

Student _____ Teacher _____

Vacation Days/Location/Details _____

Student's current attendance rate: _____%

- We understand that families have business during the school year that might require extended absences.
- Families that take extended leaves now have an added responsibility to make sure their student's attendance for the rest of the year is good
- Students have their best chance of meeting benchmarks and making academic growth if they are in school 90% of the time or better.
- If they miss extended periods of time for vacation or family travel and then they get an illness or an injury that takes them out of school, they have now missed twice the amount of time.
- If there are other reasons your child is not attending and you'd like help, please let us know.



Date

To the Parents/Guardians of:
Student Name
Address

Dear (Parent's Name):

We know you care about your child and believe it is very important to give children the best opportunity to learn the skills necessary for success in their future. Attending school on a regular basis is one way to support your child's education. This letter is to inform you that your child has missed __ out of ___ days enrolled. This equates to an attendance rate of ___%. Acceptable attendance, as reported to and mandated by the state, is being present 90% or more of the time.

Good Attendance----- 95% or better
Acceptable Attendance---90.0%-94.9%
Chronic Absence----- 80.0%-89.9%
Severe Absence-----less than 80%

If your child has to miss school because of illness, an appointment, or family emergency, please call the office (_____) to report his/her absence. Otherwise, we will call you at home after we take attendance to verify their absence. A note should be sent explaining the absence once your child returns to school. If there are special circumstances causing these absences, please contact us. Our school nurse or counselor may be of help to you.

If you would like more information on why good attendance matters, please visit www.attendanceworks.org. If you have any questions, contact myself or _____, Counselor.

Sincerely,

Name
Records Clerk

Cc: Principal
Counselor
Classroom Teacher
Student File
L1/A

Date

To the Parents/Guardians of:
Student Name
Address

Dear (Parent's Name):

This letter is to express concern about ___'s absences from school. According to our records, your child has missed ___ out of ___ days enrolled. This equates to an attendance rate of ___%. Research shows chronic/severe attendance contributes to low reading scores and an increased dropout rate of children. **Oregon law requires students to attend school (ORS 33.020 "Duty to Send Children to School")**. Acceptable attendance, as reported to and mandated by the state, is being present 90% or more of the time.

Good Attendance----- 95% or better
Acceptable Attendance---90.0%-94.9%
Chronic Absence----- 80.0%-89.9%
Severe Absence-----less than 80%

___ has missed important classroom instruction this year and may fall behind if the attendance pattern continues. I want your child to have a successful school year and to develop good school attendance. Thank you in advance for your efforts to insure that ___'s attendance improves.

Please call me at _____ to discuss ways we can work together to improve your child's attendance. I am here to assist in whatever way I can.

Sincerely,

Counselor

Cc: Principal
Classroom Teacher
Student File

L2/A

Date

To the Parents/Guardians of:
Student Name
Address

Dear (Parent's Name):

Attendance is very important, and I am committed to having students attend (school name) every day, on time. Our records indicate that ____ has missed __ out of ___ days enrolled. This equates to an attendance rate of ___%. This is considered a chronic/severe attendance problem. As previously notified, **Oregon law requires students to attend school (ORS 33.020 "Duty to Send Children to School")**. Acceptable attendance, as reported to and mandated by the state, is being present 90% or more of the time.

Good Attendance----- 95% or better
Acceptable Attendance---90.0%-94.9%
Chronic Absence----- 80.0%-89.9%
Severe Absence-----less than 80%

A meeting has been scheduled for (insert date and time). We will be discussing ways we can work together to improve this attendance issue. If this time is not convenient, please call me to re-schedule. If you cannot schedule a conference at this time, I will be contacting you to set up a home visit. If we are unable to schedule a conference or home visit, I will be contacting the Assistant Superintendent's office, and possibly making a call to the Department of Human Services to report our concerns.

Thank you in advance for your support in assisting your child with consistent school attendance.

Sincerely,

Principal

Cc: Counselor
Classroom Teacher
Student File

L3/A

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CONTRACT



DATE OF MEETING: _____

Student: _____ Grade _____

School: _____

% of days present _____ # of days absent _____ # of tardies _____

People present _____

REASON(S) FOR ATTENDANCE DIFFICULTIES:

Student's explanation for attendance difficulties:

Parent's view of attendance difficulties:

School staff input regarding attendance difficulties:

AGREEMENT:

Student agrees to the following to address the above attendance concerns:

Parent agrees to the following to address the above attendance concerns:

School staff agrees to the following to support the attendance improvement of the student:

Signature of Student: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Parent: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Staff: _____

Date: _____

Check in Date: _____ # of Absences _____ # of Tardies _____

- Check in Date: _____ # of Absences _____ # of Tardies _____

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES INTRODUCTION

Section 5 includes background information on national and local best practices and research, along with a wide array of information and tools for universal attendance efforts.

A national research summary conducted by Communities Supporting Youth members and local best practices gleaned from site visits to local Portland-area schools can be found in this section.

Also included are examples of planning and implementation documents developed and used by [AttendanceWorks](#), [Los Angeles Unified School District](#), [Oakland Unified School District](#), and David Douglas School District.

Please use this section as a reference for Back to School initiatives and events, campaigns, lesson plans, and incentive/recognition materials. Additional tools for communicating with parents and families about attendance can be found in the Family Engagement section. Your school district team and community leaders may also have curriculum, tools, and protocols that are already successful and resonate with your students and community. Your local parents and youth are experts in knowing your school and what will help them most; please use what you have that's already working – and share it with the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative if you are willing to add to our growing pool of shared knowledge.



Promoting Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: Best Practices and Current Initiatives

Introduction and Summary

The causes of chronic absenteeism are myriad and may vary significantly from one school building to the next. Hedy Chang, Director of Attendance Works characterizes the reasons that children don't attend school broadly into three categories:

- 1) **Discretionary reasons:** parents allowing children to miss school for a variety of reasons;
- 2) **Aversion:** children are avoiding school because of a negative environment or lack of interest in the curriculum, and
- 3) **Real barriers:** such as transportation, chronic health problems such as asthma.

National research and local efforts to address truancy, chronic absenteeism, and to promote better school attendance have identified many of the same general causes across communities: health problems (physical/mental), school environment including lack of engagement in curriculum, academic failure, home environment (including need to babysit siblings), and alcohol and drug use (parent/student).¹ Practitioners generally agree that any effort to reduce chronic absenteeism must start with an investigation of the reasons behind absenteeism in the particular school community.

There is not a wealth of studies that evaluate the efficacy of specific practices to improve attendance and specifically decrease chronic absenteeism. However, there is wide agreement in the practice literature on the general elements necessary to meaningfully decrease the number of children chronically absent in any given school which include the following:

- Generate and analyze data on who is chronically absent;
- Create universal attendance supports that reach students, staff and parents;
- Engage family positively around attendance generally, and absenteeism specifically;
- Create incentives and rewards for attendance (individual, classroom, school, district);
- Collaborate with community partners to provide individualized supports when necessary;
- Use sanctions as a last resort.

These elements appear in the research as well as in the local examples of attendance support systems detailed later in this document.

Best Practices Research on Attendance: Strategies for Schools and After-School Programs

National Center for School Engagement: Truancy Prevention Best Practices (2005-2007)

- **Collaboration** between school, parents and community-based agencies.
- **Family involvement** that starts before any problems arise and that actively seeks to find allies in families to resolve attendance issues.
- **Comprehensive approach** that focuses simultaneously on prevention and intervention. Individualized responses with a range of supports available (from TANF assistance, dealing with transportation issues, and other social services) have the best results.
- **Incentives and Sanctions:** use a continuum of positive supports and sanctions that are meaningful to youth and their families.
- Develop a **supportive context** in which to operate truancy prevention/intervention efforts.
- **Evaluate** effectiveness.

¹ National Center for School Engagement, Literature Review, 2005-2007, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/pr/217271.pdf; New York City Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism and School Engagement, Parent Information, www.nyc.gov/everystudent; Multnomah County Student Attendance Initiative Draft Evaluation Report, 2002.

Present and Accounted for: Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement (Johns Hopkins 2002)

Practices that showed statistical significance in BOTH improving daily attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism in **urban elementary schools**:

- **Awards** to students for good attendance
- **Communications with families**: the degree to which schools overcame the challenge of communicating effectively with diverse groups of families (including families that don't speak English and families whose students have serious attendance problems) is key to improved outcomes
- **School contacts for families**: providing families the name and number of someone who is officially designated to discuss attendance issues
- **Attendance workshops for parents** that deal with attendance policies, procedures and consequences
- **After-school programs**: schools with after-school programs on site showed better attendance outcomes

In addition, referrals of students to counselors and truant officers helped increase daily attendance, and home visits helped decrease chronic absenteeism.

Building a Culture of Attendance: Schools and After-School Programs Can Make a Difference (Hedy Chang, 2012)

- Build a strong **culture of attendance** in the school and afterschool programs
- **Target students** with at risk levels of absence **for** recruitment and engagement in **after-school programs**
- **Share data** on AS program and school day attendance
- **Combine resources** to engage families around the issue of attendance

Make **better use of attendance data that is already gathered** (i.e. figure out how to turn it around and make it usable to people on the ground in real time.)

National Examples of District-Wide Attendance Initiatives

New York City Attendance Initiative “Every Student, Every Day”

- Multi-component citywide campaign focused on decreasing chronic absence
- Includes higher-level strategies like an ad council public awareness campaign, getting celebrities to record wake-up calls to students, and forming city-wide partnerships with businesses who donate incentives and rewards for attendance
- Effort started in 2010 and was piloted in 50 schools; is in 100 schools for current school year
- School-based efforts include success mentors focused on attendance in the task force schools, electronic dashboard with attendance, behavior and test score information available to success mentors (who are sometimes non-school staff²), coordinated attendance outreach focused on first critical months of school, and creating an interagency infrastructure to help schools identify existing services and partners in the community that can join forces with the schools to improve attendance.
- Building-level strategies employed are as follows:
 1. **Weekly attendance summit** run by principal that includes school staff, success mentors, community based organizations working in the school and Community Partnership Program Liaison. Identify severely chronically absent students (0-80% attendance), chronically absent students (81-90% attendance), and at risk students (91-95% attendance). Review early warning reports that can be generated weekly and identify all youth who have missed 5 days and 10 days to date. Analyze and discuss school wide attendance data, and review/discuss school-wide engagement efforts.

² Community based organizations that supply and/or supervise mentors sign confidentiality agreements before being given access to the dashboard. The success mentors are the primary users of the dashboard and they can enter up to two contacts per week with their mentees. School staff can then see the contact entries for the relevant students. Mentors only have access to data on their own mentees through the dashboard. The dashboard takes data from the local department of education database but access to the dashboard does not furnish general access to the department of education data generally which is generally only available for department of education employees.

2. Create a **school culture that promotes good attendance** including education regarding attendance policies, incentivizing and rewarding attendance, identifying an attendance point person for the school, and setting up any new structures and systems necessary to create the focus on attendance.
 3. Pair students who missed 20 or more days in the previous school year with a **success mentor** for the current school year. The initiative has not defined or specifically prescribed when additional success mentors or other resources should be directed at a child who was not absent for 20 or more days in the previous school year, but who begins to show chronic absence problems in a given year. Schools use the early warning reports and have discretion to implement interventions when they see warning signs. Success mentors can be school staff, stipended volunteers from community based agencies, or counseling/social work interns whose supervision is paid for by a CBO.
 4. **Engage community partners** such as after-school programs and the housing authority to reach families with the attendance message. Most typically the guidance counselor does this work, but sometimes it is a parent engagement coordinator. Efforts are sometimes hampered by a lack of staff to do the connection and follow up work. Community partners can help organize and host a parent success summit and resource fair, communicate with families, and use the liaison assigned to the school to help connect parents to needed resources.
- **Results:** the initiative is currently in its third year of implementation. The only published results to date are as follows:
 - Over the two year initiative, pilot elementary schools reduced chronic absence by 25% (twice the reduction in chronic absence achieved by non-pilot comparison schools), middle schools by 16% (more than twice the reduction in chronic absence achieved by non-pilot comparison schools) and high schools by 3% (more than two and a half times the reduction in chronic absence achieved by non-pilot comparison schools).
 - 49% of elementary students and 23% of high school students who had success mentors for a full year exited chronic absence status as compared to 42% and 18% respectively that exited chronic absence status but did not have success mentors.

Los Angeles Unified School District

- Launched a **pilot program** to address chronic absenteeism in September 2011 at 25 high schools and 52 elementary schools with a focus on attendance in kindergarten and 9th grade (grade levels with the highest levels of chronic absence in the district).
- **Goal** in 2011/12 was to increase the percentage of students attending at least 96% of days from 61% to 66%; goal for 2012/13 is to increase from 66% to 71%.
- **Overall approach** consists of reviewing and analyzing data, using prior year's attendance data to guide prevention/early intervention, teaching and reinforcing clear attendance expectations, providing incentives and recognition for good attendance, and setting up a system of tiered interventions and supports.
- **Attendance improvement counselors** (employed by district) were tasked with developing, implementing and evaluating targeted, grade specific absence prevention and attendance incentive programs, analyzing and sharing school wide and grade level attendance data with teachers, administrators, parents and students, teaching and re-teaching clear attendance expectations, and assisting with the development of attendance and dropout prevention plans.
- Building-level **strategies** employed are tiered by attendance level of the student in the previous school year and are as follows:
 1. For students who have **attended less than 92% of school days** in the previous school year, buildings are directed to employ strategic interventions that can include a letter home after 3 or more absences to set up a mandatory parent meeting, personal phone calls home, home visit, referral to school based support staff and/or services, referral to community resources, incentives and rewards for improvements, referral of parents to services/supports, referral to District Attorney parent meeting.
 2. For students who have **attended between 92% and 95% of school days**, buildings are directed to employ re-teaching strategies that can include incentive programs, improvement recognition, letters home to set up parent meetings after 3 or more absences, student workshops focused on supports for academics including credit recovery, personal support groups, and developing an attendance plan.

3. For students **attending 96% - 100% of days**, buildings are directed to employ maintenance strategies that include various means of recognizing students and parents for good attendance.
- **Results:** LAUSD met their first year goal of increasing the percentage of students that attended 96% of school days to 66%. In addition, they saw gains in the targeted grades as follows: chronic absence rates declined from 31% to 17% in kindergarten and from 27% to 20% in 9th grade; the percentage of students attending at least 96% of days increased from 37% to 62% in kindergarten, and from 51% to 63% in 9th grade.

Oakland Unified School District

- Superintendent prioritized attendance in 2011 strategic plan and in January 2012 the district hired an attendance coordinator. They consulted with Attendance Works in developing their approach.
- **Goals:** 1) reduce chronic absence to 5% of students; 2) 85% of students at each school attend 95% of school days
- Oakland is focusing on a **comprehensive approach** that establishes district and school targets for attendance, identifies schools where chronic absence is concentrated, identifies schools that are beating the odds for further study, emphasizes the importance of attendance early on (kindergarten/1st grade), monitors attendance data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, treats chronic absence as an early warning sign, partners with others to address barriers to school attendance that schools cannot easily solve, establishes a culture of attendance and engages school leadership.
- In creating a **culture of attendance**, schools focus on educating parents about the importance of attendance, making school engaging, providing alternatives to suspensions and punitive discipline, involving the whole staff and extended day program staff in the attendance effort, and intervening early with a particular focus on chronic absence in kindergarten and first grade.
- **Specific Practices:** teachers are used as a first line of communication with parents; multiple school staff sit on site-based attendance teams; attendance teams meet regularly to review data and plan action; attendance data use is integrated into the site plan for each school and all schools are expected to have a plan; after-school providers receive training on chronic absence and the importance of fostering school attendance; attendance incentives and awards that include getting to school/class on time; partnering with housing authority to have them make personal phone calls and send out back-to-school information at the beginning of the school year; using restorative justice circles at the high school level for gang involved youth instead of punitive discipline strategies.
- By **disaggregating attendance data**, they found that African-American students had the highest rates of chronic absenteeism followed by Latinos. They launched an African-American male achievement initiative to focus on the high chronic absence rate for African-American males and to develop strategies to address it. The district appointed a single administrator to lead efforts to reduce chronic absence in this population and focused on involving parents and community organizations serving the population. Individual schools regularly review disaggregated attendance data to assess whether efforts are making an impact.
- **Results:** in comparing 2010/11 attendance data to 2011/12 data, they found that chronic absence decreased across all levels of school (elementary, middle and high), and that the percentage of students attending 95% of school days increased across all levels of school (elementary, middle and high) with a 7 point gain in the percentage of high school students attending 95% of school days. They are still a long way away from their two targets of reducing chronic absence to 5% of students, 85% of students at each school attending 95% of school days: in the last school year, 17 of 80+ schools met the first goal and 8 met the second.

Local Examples of Attendance Support Systems, Policies and Protocols

Southern Oregon Education Service District, Attendance Audit Process

Attendance Support System Design

- Universal attendance support systems including inviting school environment, consistent school-wide attendance messages, positive family outreach, teaching attendance expectations regularly;
- Systems of reinforcement including school and classroom incentive systems for good attendance;
- Parent communication systems including emphasis in all parent communications, rapid contact with families for unexcused absence, positive contact with parents when trends are positive;

- Individual assessment and support systems including outreach, identification of specific barriers, and providing support;
- Community supports and legal consequences including collaborating with community based programs, coordinating with case management and seeking support from law enforcement.

Attendance Support System Implementation Process

- Identify an attendance team at the building level, design a data collection process and collect data on chronic absence.
- Analyze data, survey students, parents and teachers, and develop an action plan that addresses needed policy level changes, and creates protocol for attendance.
- Review implementation of strategies and progress made and recommend improvements.

David Douglas K-8

School Wide Practices

- Parent education at kindergarten round-up, evening events, back to school night, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, annual flyer on attendance
- Individual student recognition for 95% and up attendance at assemblies and in class; quarterly treats
- Recognize classrooms with highest monthly attendance average, and daily flags for classrooms with no more than 1 student absent, and no more than 2 tardies
- Attendance policies and information posted on school websites
- Attendance information and policies in school handbooks
- Teachers discuss and teach about the importance of good attendance as part of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (?) lessons
- Formation of attendance teams at each school that meet at least monthly.
- Attendance data generated to show all students below 90% YTD and below 80% monthly (**NOTE: does not say how often these reports are generated, and who is responsible for generating them and reviewing them.**)

Interventions for Students Exhibiting Chronic Absence

- **Positive parent phone call** home by teacher at first report of 10%+ missed school days
- **First letter home** from attendance secretary noting # of days missed and attendance percentage, attendance policies, and asking that the parent call the school to discuss ways they can work together to improve attendance; attendance team at school brainstorms possible in-school interventions including an additional phone call home, determining whether other community partners are working with the family
- **Second letter home** from school counselor noting # of days missed and attendance percentage, citing OR statute regarding school attendance, and the expected attendance rate of at least 90% of days. Also asks that parent contact the school to discuss attendance issues. Attendance team brainstorms other interventions including home visit, calls from counselor, in-classroom reinforcement, counselor reinforcement, robo call to wake student up
- **Third letter home** from principal noting # of days missed and attendance percentage, citing OR statute regarding school attendance, and noting date/time of meeting with parents to discuss attendance issues and solutions. Letter offers to reschedule if parent cannot make meeting date, or to schedule a home visit if that is more convenient. Letter also notes that if school is unable to schedule a meeting or home visit, school will contact Ass't Superintendent's office or DHS to report concerns.
- **Attendance contract** filled out after meeting with parents and notes attendance issues and what the child, parent and school agree to do to address the issues.
- If all other efforts fail, **final letter** sent from Ass't Superintendent with a possible follow up home visit from a Student Resource Officer.

East County School Districts High School “School Attendance Matters”

The “School Attendance Matters” project is in place in Gresham-Barlow, Reynolds, Centennial, and Parkrose high schools. A similar program was instituted at Milwaukie high school and in its first year of operation, 92% of truant students returned to school without parent citations or fines.

- **Overall approach is early intervention** to minimize days missed, and involve youth and parents in addressing the root causes of truancy/chronic absence.
- Track attendance data and flag all students who miss at least 8 half-days in a 4 week period. **First letter** is sent to parents citing OR statute regarding school attendance and offering assistance to resolve any issues that are affecting school attendance. Letters translated into Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese.
- Parents/youth have access to a range of in school supports including credit recovery, evening academies, remedial classes, 1:1 support and assessment, tutors, parent meetings, SUN, and restorative justice programs.
- **Second letter** sent if attendance issue is not resolved in 30 days. Statute is reiterated and family meeting with school attendance officer is required. In addition to mailing, letters can also be delivered by school personnel or community based agencies working with the family or the community of which the family is a part.
- If attendance issues remain unresolved after the second letter and follow-up, **parents are cited** by School Resource Officer to Mult. County Circuit Court. Parents may pay the fine, work with the court for a continuance pending resolution of the attendance issue, or request a court hearing.
- If after 30 days the school deems the issue settled, the school will notify the court and the parents, and the case will be dismissed.
- If the attendance issues have not been resolved, parents will be required to appear and the Court will exercise discretion to resolve the matter.

Links to Resources and Toolkits

Attendance Works Tools and Technical Assistance: Attendance Works has put a range of tools up on its website to assist schools and school districts in improving attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism including tools for self-assessment at the district and school levels, handouts for parents of elementary, middle and high school children, and tools for after-school, health care and early education providers.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/>

New York City, Every Student, Every Day Toolkit: There is a toolkit for schools available on the initiative website, as well as resource center that links to a variety of resources for schools and parents.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/truancy/html/resources/resources.shtml>

Oakland Unified School District Toolkit: This complete toolkit is based on many of the tools from the Attendance Works toolkit but includes some unique items including attendance fliers translated into multiple languages.

http://www.alcoda.org/files/Every_Day_Counts_Complete_Toolkit.pdf

Los Angeles Unified School District: This toolkit includes data, school and community assessment tools, letters and memos to parents, and incentive ideas.

http://pupilservices.lausd.net/sites/pupilservices.lausd.net/files/AIP%20Toolkit%20for%20Schools_1.pdf

LAUSD also revised its attendance manual in conjunction with its attendance initiative. The below is to a bulletin that summarizes the changes to attendance policy.

http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_ORGANIZATIONS/STUDENT_HEALTH_HUMAN_SERVICES/PAGES%20FROM%20BUL-4926.1.%20ALONE..%20PDF.PDF



Key Findings from Schools Beating the Odds Around Chronic Absence
Earl Boyles ES, Menlo Park ES, Clear Creek MS & Alice Ott MS

May 17, 2013

Attendance Structures: *Frequency and Consistency*

- Low chronic absentee rate as part of school's overarching goals
- Weekly attendance meetings with Principal, Counselor, SUN Community School Site Manager
 - Chronically absent students identified and prioritized for targeting
- Strong partnership between Counselor and SUN Community School Site Manager
- Daily phone calls home for unexcused absences, home visits for chronically absent students -
 - Focus on building the relationship with the family, not shaming
- Continually screen attendance data and make changes to students who are being tracked where needed

School Culture: *Build a climate that kids, parents and staff want to be in*

- Building relationships and trust with students
 - Staff visible in hallways, outside, in between classes
 - Lunch with the Principal and staff as rewards
 - Student ambassadors
 - Transition days for incoming students
- Building relationships between Administration and Staff
 - Clear communication channels for staff to provide feedback to administration
 - Administration demonstrates behaviors they expect from staff (participating at afterschool events, making phone calls home, in hallways during school)
 - Have meaningful and efficient meetings with set structures
 - Changes are thoughtful, deliberate and communicated well
- Incorporate attendance into PBIS
 - Assemblies
 - Team/Class/Individual Awards
 - Attendance flags
 - Pictures in slideshows/ bulletin boards

- SUN Community Schools
 - Robust, collaborative SUN Community School (SUN CS)
 - SUN CS site manager involved in attendance structures and teams
 - SUN staff available to school staff and families
 - Utilize SUN after school activities as incentive for students to come to school

Communication and Engagement: *Every interaction is an opportunity to make a positive connection.*

- Parent Groups – Parents as resources for connecting with other parents
- School Events –
 - **Traditional:** Back to School Night, Kindergarten Round-up, Teacher Conferences
 - **Special:** Curriculum/Grade Level Night, College Night, Transition Nights
 - **SUN/Family:** Latino family nights, morning clubs, resource fairs, movie nights
- Direct contact with families – Respectful, but firm
 - Phone calls home from: Principal, teachers, counselor, SUN - focus on giving information to the parent/guardian about students (both good and bad)
 - Home visits for targeted students
 - High staff participation at afterschool events

Overall: *Relationships, Communication, Priorities, Adjusting*

- Relationships are KEY
 - Between: teachers - administration/staff - students/ parents - staff/ community partners
- Clear and Consistent Communication between EVERYONE
- Prioritize key areas for focus
 - Focusing on attendance and tardiness at same time is too much
- Consistently review data and make adjustments where necessary: to the systems, targeted students



<p>Clear Creek Middle School: Gresham</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Attendance Meetings – Gather data from ESIS, SIP, Data Warehouse/ Counselors, Admin and SUN • Daily phone calls home for students w/ unexcused absences (done by Attendance Secretary) • Triage Meetings – For “red” students: includes School staff, SUN, community partners where appropriate • Working directly with Parents – letters/ phone calls/ home visits • Attendance Contracts (incorporated into CC Athlete Contracts) – signed by 80-90% of students/families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility – Staff members (including Admin) present in halls, outside areas • PBIS – Utilize the 4 ‘R’s – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Respect: For staff and self ○ Relationships – Staff loops with students all three years: helps foster positive relationships between staff and students/staff and parents ○ Results – Focus on what’s working and moving that forward ○ Rigor – High expectations for all (staff and students alike) • Wild Cat Wonders – “ambassadors” for school (attendance is one criteria for qualifying) • Positive Reinforcements for students – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Principal’s lunch w/ staff member (specific to attendance) ○ Grade Team Rewards ○ Wild Cat Bucks – used at school store and events • SUN – Has a big pull for students/changed to focus more on what students want out of SUN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Treat “school” day and “SUN” day as the same ○ Not at school – no SUN programming ○ Follow up w/ students about grades ○ Make phone calls home • Transition Days – Set up a K-12 mentality making process of transitions from school-school more fluid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bring 8th graders over to HS before other students are in session ○ Bring 5th graders into CC before end of year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to School Night • Teacher Conferences • SUN hosted Parent/Gaurdian nights – conducted in both English and Spanish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Booster Classes ○ Activities focused on strengthening families ○ Bring in police to engage w/ families in a positive setting • Utilize Spanish Liaison to help engage the Latino Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Host Latino family nights w/ teachers and bilingual staff • Automated phone calls to remind families about upcoming events <p>*School’s location creates makes it difficult to get the community in the door, not located in the “community”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining RELATIONSHIPS – especially during hard times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being aware/ paying attention • Utilize strategic and long-term planning • Admins role to take as much as possible off of “teachers’ plates” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responsiveness to commitment – showing staff rather than just telling them • Turning attendance from punitive to positive – build intrinsic motivation (SUN) • Utilizing resources that are present (don’t need to reinvent the wheel)
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<p>Alice Ott Middle School: David Douglas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Douglas Attendance Protocol • Weekly PLT for chronically absent students (focus on 6th grade) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pull past attendance data for incoming 6th graders to identify “high flyers” ○ Counselor checks attendance list daily - make adjustments when needed ○ Home visits made by Principal and Counselors when students are absent – leave “sorry we missed you” door hanger ○ Daily morning check-in w/ Counselors(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers always in hallways in between periods, Principal very visible/knows everyone’s name • Constant communication between staff and administration • Teachers have strong/impactful relationships with students • Staff not required to do “prep meetings” with team – have “focus weeks” that change depend on need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Required to make at least 10 phone calls home/week to check in w/ parents about students (Have GoogleDoc to track all phone calls so EVERYONE is called) • 6th Grade Transition Day – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First day of classes only 6th grade attends • Quarterly Award Assemblies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance ○ Grades ○ Educational Achievement (chosen by teachers) • High Flyers – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance card checked daily by counselor w/ weekly rewards and monthly awards • PBIS • Discipline is handled by VP – allows more flexibility for Principal (doesn’t always have to be the “bad guy”) 	<p>Every parent/guardian interaction is an opportunity to make a positive connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to School Night } <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Conferences } <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% attendance ← goal reinforced • Phone calls home to all students (especially in 6th grade) • Family Nights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In coming 6th grade Family night – meet with students and families in small groups ○ Give presentation on chronic absenteeism and the negative impact it has on students • Bagels & Books – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Morning meetings where students and families can come to get breakfast and books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships and Communication between – staff, students, families • Staff that is “bought into the cause” • Accountability – for staff, students, families
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Back to School and Attendance Awareness Materials





Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our goal this year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly.

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent—which means missing 18 or more days over the course of an entire school year. Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9th grade good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!!

Clearly going to school regularly matters!

We don't want your child to fall behind in school and get discouraged. Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session.
- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- Develop back up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

Let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school on time every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information please contact your child's school.

Sincerely,



Attendance Works

Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students

Overview

This September we are encouraging organizations and communities across the United States to celebrate Attendance Awareness Month. Our goal is to start the school year off engaging everyone in raising awareness about the importance of attending school and conveying the right message to the parents and students. Attendance messaging builds a habit and a culture of attendance by helping everyone understand why going to school regularly matters and what they can do to ensure students are in school.

No attendance initiative is complete without attention to parents, who are crucial in turning around chronic absence. In some cases, especially in the early grades, parents may not understand the importance of good school attendance or realize how quickly absences can add up. In the high school years, they may not know that their children are skipping school.

A good campaign will engage parents, not blame them.

What to Say to Parents

Stress that good attendance will help your children do well in high school, college and at work.

- **Your children can suffer academically** if they miss 10 percent of the school year or about 18 days. That can be just one day every two weeks, and that can happen before you know it.
- **Some absences are unavoidable.** We understand that children will get sick and need to stay home occasionally. The important thing is to get your children to school as often as possible.
- **Sporadic absences, not just those on consecutive days** of school, matter. Before you know it – just one or two days a month can add up to nearly 10 percent of the school year.
- **If too many absences occur, it is still a problem whether they are excused or unexcused** because they represent too much lost learning time in the classroom.
- **Attendance matters as early as kindergarten.** Studies show many children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.
- **Preschool is a great time to start building a habit** of good attendance. Young children with poor attendance in preschool also lose out on valuable learning time and if chronic absence continues into kindergarten, it can pull down academic achievement.
- **By middle and high school, chronic absence is a leading warning sign** that a student will drop out.
- **Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom**, creating churn and slowing down instruction.
- **Families should avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school.** Try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. The same goes for doctor's appointments.
- **For younger children, you can set a regular bedtime and morning routine.** Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. You can lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.

- **For older children, you can help them develop homework and bedtime routines** that allow for 8 ½ to 9 ½ hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers.
- **Get to know the teachers and administrators.** With younger children, make sure you introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.
- **Above all, set an example for your child.** Show him or her that attendance matters to you and that you won't allow an absence unless someone is truly sick. Avoid asking older students to help with daycare and household errands.
- **You can turn to the school for help.** Many schools offer services for the whole family.
- **You can ask your principal to calculate chronic absence rates for the whole school.** Even if your child attends regularly, it's important to know how many students in your child's school are missing 10 percent or more of the school year.
- **Seek help from the school or community** if you are facing tough challenges related to access to health care, unstable housing, poor transportation or lack of food. More schools and community agencies are working together to offer help for the whole family.

What To Say to Students

Beyond the talking points for parents, you should add in some messages targeted to students of all ages. As they grow older, they need to hear this message from peers, as well as teachers and parents.

- **School is your first and most important job.** You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how to show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.
- **Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs.** In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, a million dollars more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- **School only gets harder when you stay home too much.** Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.

ATTENDANCE

in the early grades

Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids

in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.¹



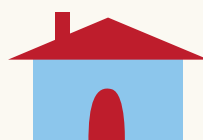
2 in 10
low-income kids

miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.¹



2.5 in 10
homeless kids

are chronically absent.²



4 in 10
transient kids

miss too much school when families move.²



¹ Chang, Hedy; Romero, Mariajose, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty: NY: NY, September 2008.

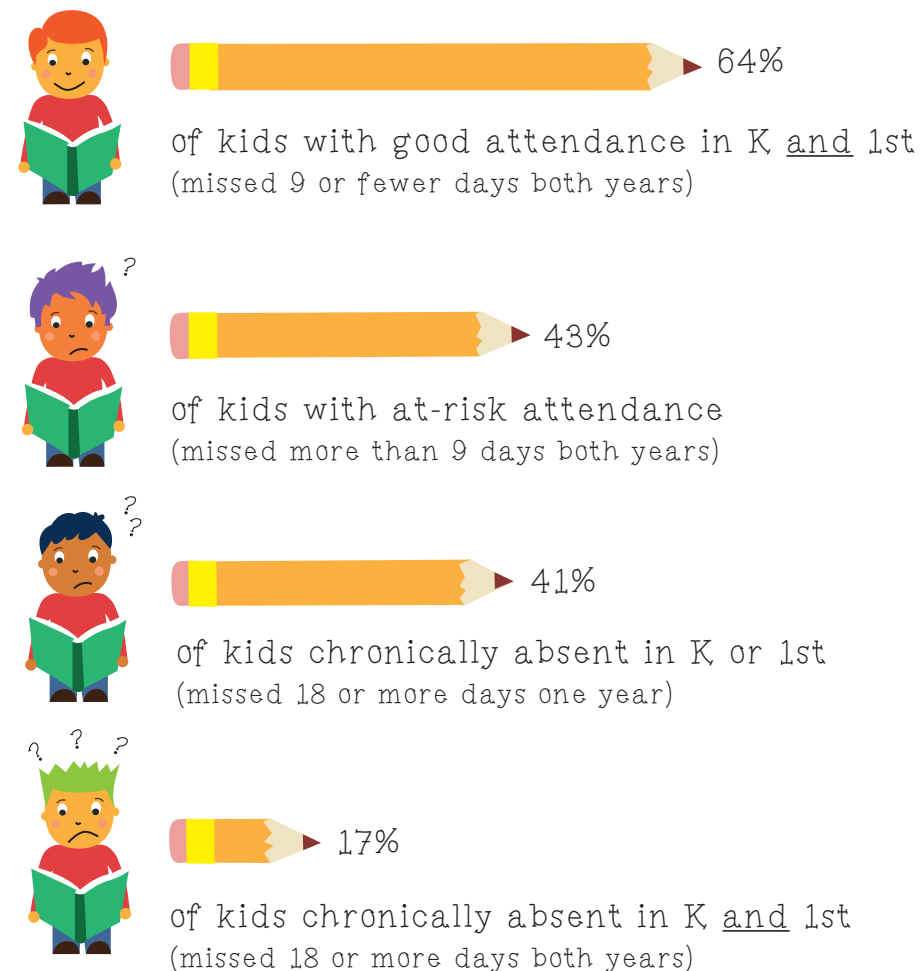
² *Chronic Absence in Utah*, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.

Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?³



³ *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes*, Applied Survey Research Center, May 2011.

What We Can Do



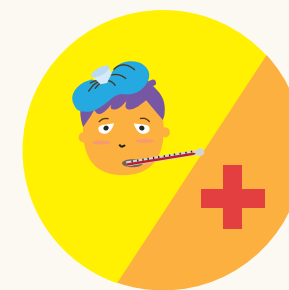
Engage Families

Many parents and students don't realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.



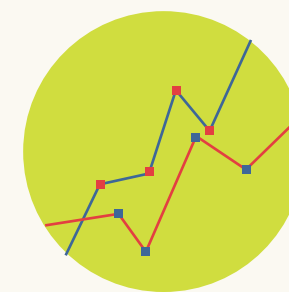
Fix Transportation

The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.



Address Health Needs

Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.



Track the Right Data

Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.

These are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

ASISTENCIA

en los primeros grados

Muchos de nuestros estudiantes más pequeños faltan a la escuela el 10% del año escolar - como 18 días al año o sólo dos días al mes. La ausencia crónica en kínder e incluso en la pre escuela, puede predecir bajas calificaciones en exámenes, mala asistencia escolar y baja retención en los próximos años escolares, especialmente si el problema de ausencia persiste durante más de un año. ¿Sabe usted cuántos niños pequeños están ausentes crónicamente en su escuela y comunidad?



Quién es Afectado

Los estudiantes de kínder y 1er grado frecuentemente tienen niveles de ausencia tan altos como los de la preparatoria, (high school).

Muchas de estas faltas son justificadas, pero igual, se suman al tiempo perdido en clase.

1 de cada 10 niños

en kínder y 1er grado es crónicamente ausente. En algunas escuelas es tan alto como 1 en cada 4 niños.¹



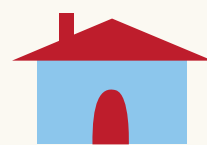
2 de cada 10 niños de bajos ingresos

faltan demasiado. También es más probable que tengan problemas académicos.¹



2.5 de cada 10 niños sin hogar

están ausentes crónicamente.²



4 de cada 10 niños migrantes

faltan demasiado cuando la familia se muda.²

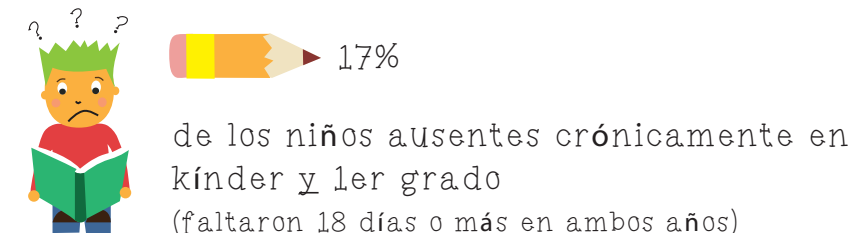
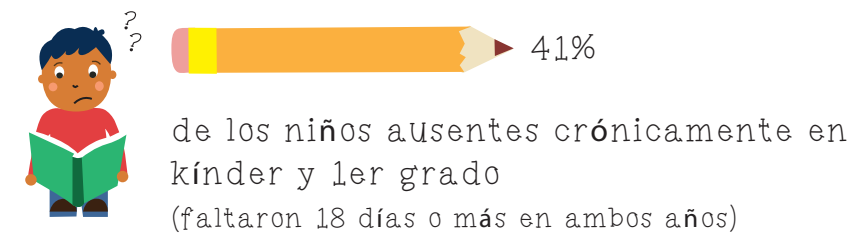
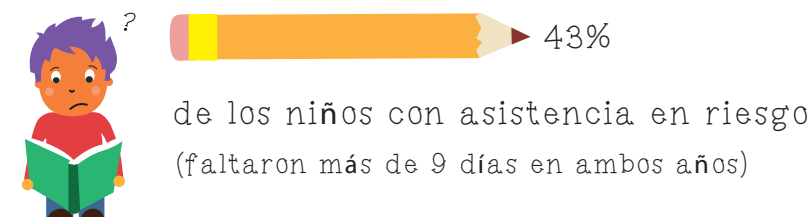
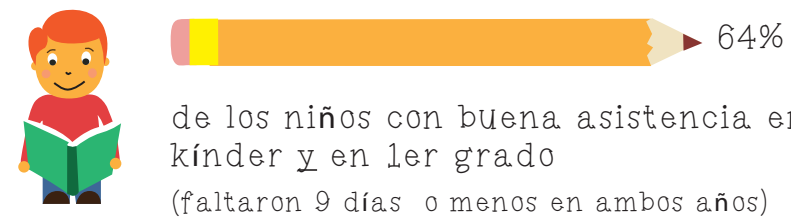


Por Qué Importa

Si los niños no asisten regularmente, pierden habilidades fundamentales de lectura y matemáticas y la oportunidad de crear el hábito de buena asistencia, que los conduce a la universidad y una carrera.

Datos preliminares de un estudio en California encontró que los niños que fueron crónicamente ausentes en kínder y 1er grado tuvieron menos probabilidad de leer a nivel al final del 3er grado.

¿Quién puede leer a nivel después del 3er grado?



Qué Podemos Hacer



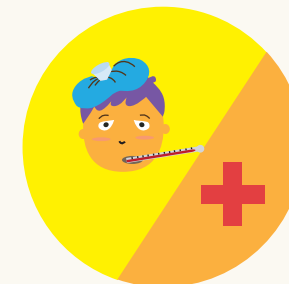
Involucrar a las Familias

Muchos padres y estudiantes no saben cómo las ausencias en los primeros años pueden aumentar rápidamente los problemas académicos. Miembros comunitarios y maestros pueden educar a las familias, creando una cultura de asistencia escolar, dando información temprana, incentivos y atendiendo estadísticas.



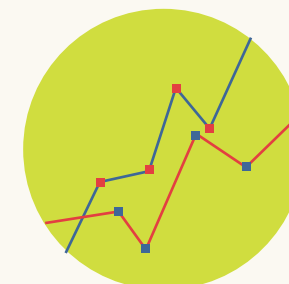
Hacer Arreglos para Llegar a la Escuela

La falta de un carro o perder el bus escolar causan que algunos niños no vayan a clase. Las escuelas, agencias de transporte y miembros comunitarios pueden organizar viajes compartidos en carro, proveer pases para el bus u otras maneras para que lleguen a la escuela.



Atender las Necesidades de Salud

Problemas de salud infantil, particularmente el asma y los problemas dentales, son de las principales causas de ausentismo escolar durante los primeros años. Escuelas y médicos pueden trabajar juntos y proveer atención médica y recomendaciones a los niños y las familias.



Monitorear los Datos Correctos

Con frecuencia las escuelas ignoran las ausencias crónicas ya que monitorean el promedio de asistencia o ausencias sin excusa, y no cuántos niños faltan muchos días por cualquier razón. Attendance Works tiene herramientas sin costo, para dar seguimiento a estos datos.

Estos son algunos pasos que las comunidades y escuelas pueden tomar. ¿Cómo puede ayudar usted?

¹ Chang, Hedy; Romero, Mariajose, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty: NY: NY, September 2008.

² *Chronic Absence in Utah*, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.

³ *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes*, Applied Survey Research Center, May 2011.



Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early

School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

DID YOU KNOW?

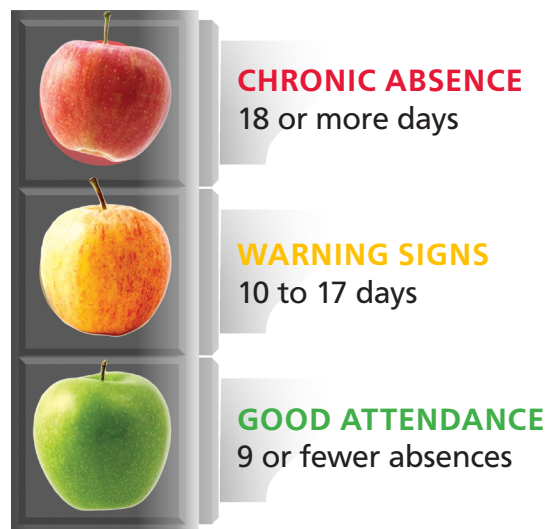
- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your child to her teachers and classmates before school starts to help her transition.
- Don't let your child stay home unless she is truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.



Ayude a su hijo a tener éxito en la escuela: Creando el hábito de buena asistencia a temprana edad ¡El éxito escolar va de la mano con una buena asistencia escolar!



¿SABÍA USTED QUE...?

- Empezando en el kínder, muchas ausencias pueden causar que los niños se atrasen en la escuela.
- Faltar el 10% (más o menos faltar 18 días en el kínder) puede bajar el rendimiento en el primer grado y hacer que cueste más aprender a leer.
- Los estudiantes se pueden seguir atrasando aunque sólo falten uno o dos días durante varias semanas.
- Las llegadas tarde en los primeros grados pueden predecir que el estudiante tendrá mala asistencia en los años siguientes.
- La falta de asistencia a la escuela puede afectar a todos en la clase, ya que el maestro tiene que disminuir el aprendizaje para ayudar a los niños a ponerse al día.
- Las escuelas pueden perder dinero para programas educacionales porque frecuentemente la asistencia es la base para la asignación de los fondos.

Asistir regularmente a la escuela, ayuda a los niños a sentirse mejor en la escuela—y consigo mismos. Empezar a crear este hábito en la edad preescolar, los hará aprender rápidamente la importancia de ir a la escuela a la hora indicada y todos los días. La buena asistencia ayudará a los niños a tener éxito en la preparatoria, la universidad y en el trabajo.

QUÉ PUEDE USTED HACER

- Establezca una hora consistente para acostarse y la rutina de cada mañana.
- Prepare la ropa y las mochilas la noche anterior.
- Averigüe el día en que empieza la escuela y asegúrese que su hijo tenga las vacunas requeridas.
- Presente a su hijo a sus maestros y compañeros de clase antes que la escuela empiece, para ayudarlo con la transición a la escuela.
- Sólo deje que su niño se quede en casa si está realmente enfermo. Tenga en mente que las quejas de un dolor de estómago o de cabeza pueden ser señal de ansiedad y no una razón para quedarse en casa.
- Si su hijo parece ansioso por ir a la escuela, hable con los maestros, consejeros u otros padres para que le aconsejen sobre cómo hacerlo sentir cómodo y motivado a asistir a la escuela.
- Prepare opciones para llegar a la escuela si algo inesperado sucede. Contacte con anterioridad un familiar, un vecino u otro padre para que le ayude en esos días.
- Evite citas médicas y viajes prolongados durante el tiempo de escuela.
- Contacte al personal de la escuela u oficiales de la comunidad para encontrar ayuda sobre transportación, vivienda, empleo o problemas de salud.

¿Cuándo las ausencias se vuelven problema?



Nota: Números asumen un año escolar de 180 días

Para más información sobre cómo preparar a su hijo para la escuela, visite attendanceworks.org y reachoutandread.org/esp



幫助貴子女學業成功： 要盡早養成一個好的出勤習慣

學業成功與好的出勤率是密切相關的！



你是否知道？

- 在幼稚園開始，太多缺席能導致兒童的學業退步。
- 有百分之十（或大約18天）的缺席能夠使閱讀學習方面帶來困難
- 若學生每幾星期有一天或兩天缺席亦能使他們在學習方面退步。
- 上學遲到可以引致差的出勤率。
- 若老師要緩慢教學進度去幫助缺席的學生追上課程，是會影響全班同學的學業。

定期上學會幫助學生對學業——和對他們自己有更好的信心。要在幼稚園開始培養這個習慣，使他們能夠及時學習到每天準時上學的重要性。好的出勤率將會幫助兒童在高中、大學和工作上能夠有更好的表現。

你能夠做些甚麼？

- 設定睡眠時間和早上的程序。
- 在晚上預備好第二天要穿的衣服和整理好書包。
- 要知道開學日期和確定貴子女已經注射所有規定的防疫針。
- 在開學前介紹老師和同學給貴子女認識，幫助他渡過開學時期。
- 除非貴子女真的患病，否則不要讓他留在家中。要知道說肚痛或頭痛是焦慮的一種徵狀而不是留在家中的理由。
- 若貴子女似乎對上學有焦慮，請與老師、教務主任、或其他家長傾談，聽取有關怎樣使他對學習感到舒服和興趣的意見。
- 要有上學的后備計劃，若有事情發生，要求家人、鄰居、或其他家長幫助。
- 避免在上學期間約見醫生和延長旅行時間。

在甚麼時候缺席 會變成問題？



注意：這些數字是假設學年有
180天

欲知更多有關預備上學的資料，請瀏覽下列網站：

www.attendanceworks.org 101 CSY Toolkit www.reachoutandread.org

THE GIFT OF ATTENDANCE: MESSAGING ATTENDANCE IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON



TALKING POINTS:

Attendance Works has developed talking points and sample messages for school leaders hoping to encourage good attendance around the winter holidays. Consider using these talking points in your interactions and communications with students and families.



- This holiday season, the best gift you can give your child is a good education. And the best place to get that education is in school. Every day. On time.
- Building a habit of good attendance is your child's ticket to success in school and eventually on the job.
- But every year, absences spike in the weeks before and after winter break. It's time to break that cycle.
- We know it's tempting to extend your vacation by a few days on either side of the holiday.
- We recognize that holidays are an important time for reconnecting with families far away and exposing your children to your home and language, whether you grew up in another part of the United States or a different country. The costs of plane tickets often influence when you want to travel. But keep in mind the costs to your children's education if they miss too much school.
- Just a few missed days here and there, even if they're excused absences, can add up to too much lost learning time and put your child behind in school. This is as true in kindergarten as it is in high school.
- So make sure your child is in school every day, right up until vacation starts. Our teachers will be teaching, and our students will be learning. But it's harder to teach and it's harder to learn when too many students are absent.
- So give your child the gift of attendance and the habit of attendance.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS OR ROBO CALLS:

You can use local radio stations or the robo-call system in district schools to broadcast your message. Feel free to use these template scripts or tailor them to your community. Read our [tips for creating PSAs](#).

PSA 30 seconds

This holiday season, the best gift you can give your child is a good education. And the best place to get an education is in school. It's tempting to extend your vacation by a few days, but remember, those days count as absences. Just a few missed days here and there, even if they're excused, can add up to too much lost learning time. So make sure your child is in school every day, right up until vacation starts. Our teachers will be teaching, and our students will be learning.

PSA 15 seconds

Every year, school absences spike in the weeks before and after winter break, as families squeeze a few more days of vacation into the holiday season. Let's break that cycle. Make sure your child is in school every day. Because the best gift you can give your child is a good education.

SAMPLE LETTER OR EMAIL:

We hope your family had a good Thanksgiving break, and we're happy to see so many students back in school, ready to learn this week. As we enter the holiday season, we want to reinforce the importance of school attendance. Every year, absences spike in the weeks before and after winter break as families squeeze in a few more vacation days. It's time to break that cycle. This holiday season, the best gift you can give your child is a good education. And the best place to get that education is in school. We know that just a few missed days here and there, even if they're excused absences, can add up to too much lost learning time and put your child behind in school. This is as true in kindergarten as it is in high school. We also know that attendance is a habit that children should learn early on if they're going to succeed in school and eventually on the job.

We recognize that holidays are an important time for reconnecting with families far away. The costs of plane tickets often influence when you want to travel. But keep in mind the costs to your children's education if they miss too much school—and the message you will be sending about the importance of attendance. Our teachers will be teaching, and our students will be learning, right up until vacation starts. [Our schools will be offering incentives and contests to encourage students to come to school every day.] You can help us convey that message. Give your children the gift of an education and the habit of attendance.

INCENTIVES:

The Los Angeles Unified School District has developed a number of suggestions in its [attendance toolkit](#) for low-cost incentives and competitions designed to bring students to school in the days before and after winter break. They include:

- Plan an activity that will bring students and parents to your school on the last day before winter break (awards assembly, holiday program, parent raffle, etc.)
- Offer incentive “door busters” to the first 10 (target grade level) students who arrive at school/class during the last week before break.
- Provide a lesson plan for teachers in early December emphasizing the importance of good attendance
- Plan, promote and implement “A Day Without an Absence” campaign for the first week of school after winter break
- Develop a seasonal theme such as
 - » Celebrating A Season of Good Attendance
 - » Giving the Gift of Attendance
 - » On the 1st Day of Attendance my teacher gave to me
 - » Stuffing Our Stockings With Good Attendance
 - » Good Attendance is Coming to Town

Month Specific Attendance Themes and Strategies





Month Specific Themes and Strategies

AUGUST

1. Form an attendance team and review prior year's data [[click here to access the Attendance & Dropout Prevention Plan Guide and Template](#)] and incentive ideas.
2. Create publications delineating attendance expectations (newsletters, brochures and posters) and post at all entrances, exits and common areas throughout the school.
3. Prepare an attendance bulletin board (highlight class, individual and staff attendance success. Show how your school compares to neighboring schools regarding attendance. Document your desired attendance goal based on performance meter data).
4. Outline incentive ideas for the school year. Recruit parents and staff to assist with the implementation of incentives.
5. Provide students with attendance notifications informing him/her of the attendance band they are currently in. Send a copy of the notification to parents.

SEPTEMBER

Elementary

1. Calendar check-in at home ([click here for calendar template](#)):
 - a. Send home a calendar where the parent is reminded of the 96% in attendance goal for the year and where the parent marks in it every day the student attends school. The parent then returns at the end of each month for a chance to win a price in the monthly raffle.
 - b. Sign-in Song: Every morning have students participate in a morning attendance song (Tune by Frere Jacques, "Are You Sleeping") by table. When their respective table number is called the students will say how many students are present on that day from their table. Students will also include the number of students who are absent. Lyrics:
Teacher: "Where is table 1, Where is table 1?" Students at table 1: "We are here, we are here;" "All of us are present, nobody is absent, we are six." If a student is absent then the song changes to, "Some of us are present, one person is absent, we are five, we are five."

Secondary

1. Introduce a technology-based project during the first month of school.
2. Have students create a commercial /infomercial about school attendance or products (stop watch, alarm clock, cell phone) that will improve student attendance. Start by leading a 9th grade class discussion about the characteristics of commercials/infomercials that are particularly memorable to viewers (jingles, great tag lines, strong images, etc.). In addition you create a "sample commercial" to serve as a model for students.
3. Have students create a five-minute video biography. Try to have students include details about their early childhood years, life at home, hobbies, interests, and lifelong goals they can achieve through daily school attendance.
4. Use these party favors to send positive messages to students on the first day of school. For each student, fill a resealable plastic bag with the following objects: an eraser, to signify that it's okay to make mistakes; a small plastic gem that means each one of us is valuable; a little pack of Smarties candies to show there are many different kinds of "smart"; a stick of gum so we all stick together; a star (sticker or bead) because we always shine and do our best; and a

heart (sticker or bead) to show your 9th grade classroom is a safe and caring place to be present every day. Hold up the objects one at a time and reveal their hidden meanings.

OCTOBER

Social Media Tools that Enhance Attendance Improvement Efforts

STUDENTS

- a) www.collaborizeclassroom.com
- b) www.twitter.com
- c) www.xtranormal.com
- d) www.pollanywhere.com

PARENTS

- a) <http://cel.ly/school>
- b) www.animoto.com
- c) www.facebook.com

STAFF

- a) <http://i1.studyhallapp.com>
- b) www.edu.glogster.com
- c) www.voicethread.com

NOVEMBER

1. Meet with ADP team to analyze school-wide & grade specific attendance trends (prior year & current year) and incentive ideas/activities.
2. Create, Implement, and/or support an activity that addresses school climate that is consistent with the theme for this month.
3. Plan an incentive to implement on Wednesday, the day before the Thanksgiving break.

DECEMBER

1. Send a Blackboard Connect message to students who have maintained 96% and above attendance to date.
2. Weekly PA announcement recognizing the class with the highest attendance (from current/previous week)
3. Highlight the teacher(s) with the highest class attendance, lowest attendance discrepancy rate or highest attendance submittal rate in the school bulletin/newsletter.
4. Post class/grade level attendance data in three common areas on campus (cafeteria, front gate, main corridor, etc.)
5. Provide teachers with one attendance lesson plan to teach or facilitate an attendance lesson to grade level classes.

Prevention

1. Provide parents with a brochure (disburse before & after school) that provides community resources: mental health, medical/dental, winter camps, meal assistance, etc.
2. Plan an activity that will bring parents to your school on the last day before winter break (awards assembly, holiday program, parent raffle, etc.)
3. Offer incentive “door busters” to the first 10 (target grade level) students who arrive at school/class during the last week of school.
4. Plan, promote and implement “A Day Without an Absence” campaign for the first week of school after winter break.

Intervention

1. Invite community organizations (asthma mobile, CA dept of public health to present to students and parents.
2. Invite parents of FBB and BB students to participate in a focus group to identify barriers to attendance. Invite community partners to participate and provide incentives to increase participation and attendance.
3. Feature students who have the “Most Improved” attendance (on the teacher’s/school door) on a weekly basis.
4. Provide parents of students with improved attendance with weekly attendance updates and “Thank You for Improving Your Child’s Attendance” note from the principal.

Theme Ideas for December

- Celebrating A Season of Good Attendance
- Giving the Gift of Attendance
- On the 1st Day of Attendance my AIC Gave to Me...
- Stuffing Our Stockings With Good Attendance
- Good Attendance is Coming to Town
- Deck the Halls with Perfect Attendance

JANUARY

1. Implement activities that address school climate:
 - <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/examining-your-schools-climate>
 - <http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/activity>
 - <http://www.tolerance.org/activities>
 - [http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/school%20climate.pdf \(pgs. 11-12; 20; 24-26\)](http://www.schoolcounselor.org/files/school%20climate.pdf)

Suggested Activities

- Create a “Dream Wall” and have students and teachers post their dreams.
- “If I Were MLK Day” Have students come dressed like a person who was instrumental to the civil rights era and offer prizes/contests for participants. Have students identify the core beliefs of Dr. MLK and have students practice that trait throughout that day/week.
- Disburse, collect, record and share the results of the “School Climate” survey.
- Conduct a “Town Hall” meeting with students in the Below & Far Below Basic attendance bands and brainstorm the barriers to good attendance and create solutions/alternatives.

- “March to School with a Friend Day”. Hold a contest for the student(s) who can influence the most students to come to school and/or get to class on time.

Teaching School Climate:

- Collaborate with support staff to create & implement weekly activities that focus on one of the 40 developmental assets each week.
- Partner with other support staff to launch a “Bucket Filling” campaign.

Suggested Activities

- Create bucket cut-outs and place on classroom doors. Students can place kind words or thanks in the bucket for their teachers. Students can tape the same cut-out at their desks or on their notebooks for others to fill their buckets.
- Random Acts of Kindness Campaign~ students will be challenged to perform a specified number of RAK and will be awarded a ticket for doing so for a raffle/award of some kind.
- Sponsor a bully prevention activity. One example would be to have a “backwards day” where students wear clothing backwards to “Turn their Backs to Bullying”.
- Facilitate “No Yelling Week” which focuses on speaking kindly to others and teaches effective communication strategies and anger management (great activity for teachers too).
- “Star Student/Teacher/Parent of the Month”. Create a display and place on the classroom door or hallway bulletin board that recognizes improved attendance, parent volunteers or teacher volunteers.
- “Trusted Adult” certificates. Trusted Adult certificates are stored in a central location for students to receive and give to teachers/staff whom they consider a “Trusted Adult”. Staff will display the certificates in their classrooms/offices to promote awareness of “Trusted Adults” on campus.

FEBRUARY

Prevention

1. Launch an “Ambassadors of Attendance” campaign in conjunction with President’s Day.
2. Solicit help from students or student government members to promote an Attendance Campaign Poster/Video Contest.
3. Work with students to create an Attendance Public Announcement Address
4. Launch a “Wake-Up Wednesdays” (or date of your choice) wakeup call via Blackboard Connect offer door prizes/bonus points to students who arrive on time

Intervention

1. Send weekly attendance letters to absent students. The letter will read, “These are the things that I missed during my absence.” Collaborate with kinder teachers for this information.
2. Send a monthly attendance notification to proficient and advanced students that reads, “These are the things that I’ve learned because I attended school.”
3. Facilitate parent trainings and/or guest speakers based on “Needs Assessment”

New Semester Activities

1. Be sure to check your school's finals schedule!
2. If there are days where students are not taking final exams, propose to teachers and staff to offer those days as "Make-Up" days. Students will be allowed to use this time to complete make-up work and assignments during class time to improve their chances of passing their classes.
3. Conduct an end of the semester assembly recognizing students with Proficient/Advanced/Improved attendance.
4. Develop a mini-Student Recovery Day at the beginning of the semester for students who have not returned from first semester or who have become inactive or have excessive absences (collaborate with other school-based staff).

MARCH

Student Engagement Activities

Elementary

1. Students who are first to arrive for school are given an opportunity to lead (with teacher's assistance) circle time.
2. Parent and me welcoming team. Each student and their parent will volunteer one day per month to stand at the kinder gate and welcome parents and students as each enters. You can give each team matching smocks, necklaces, etc. that identifies them as the "greeter" for the morning. You can also have the parent and student provide attendance information at this time.
3. What I Learned Today/This Week Display. Create a display near the kinder entrance that features a project or description of what students learned for the day/the week. Students in attendance are allowed to post a representation of something they learned on the board.

Secondary

1. Utilize student government or homeroom representatives to survey students regarding programs they would like to see in their school.
2. Create "student attendance improvement teams" to assist with the attendance improvement campaign. (Use students from each of the bands and change teams bi-monthly).
3. Arrange attendance service activities for students with chronic tardies. Such activities will include disseminating attendance brochures, updating bulletin boards, designing attendance posters, etc.
4. Have students assist and participate in focus groups. Invite college students, former non-grads, business owners to speak with targeted groups about their high-school experiences, attendance and life after high school.
5. Create a column in the school newspaper or on the school website where students can write about their obstacles to attendance and how they plan to overcome them.

Student Attendance Resources

- ✓ <http://www.theattendancechallenge.co.uk/salford/resources.html>
- ✓ <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/>
- ✓ <http://pupilservices.lausd.net>

- ✓ <http://www.childtrends.org/LINKS>
- ✓ www.getsschooled.com

Teaching Attendance

Elementary

1. Invite the school mascot to visit classes one day per week/month (preferably on a day when attendance trends are low) and take attendance.
2. Have students engage in a morning attendance song every day when they arrive.
3. Create a calendar display that features the number of days of attendance each student currently has. Have the students increase the number every day they are present.

Secondary

1. Have students complete an Individual Student Attendance Action Plan
2. Create large attendance posters throughout the school that features one attendance fact weekly.

Educators Teaching Attendance (Elementary)

1. Have morning/beginning of class routines that focus on attendance and accountability.
2. Display class/individual attendance charts in class for students to review daily.
3. Create class routines for students who are absent (absent folder that will include work from previous days, class notes, etc.) that will make the student's transition back to school less complicated/stressful.

Community Collaboration Activities

- Have local businesses support schools by refusing service to students during school hours and contacting the school to inform them about loitering students. Provide local businesses with signs that read, "If You're Skipping School, Skip This Business."
- Encourage local businesses to create good work experience programs.
- Ask local business owners to participate in "mock" interviews and employment workshops with students.
- Enlist popular hosts and disc jockeys of popular children's/teen programs to act as speakers at school assemblies.

Parent Activities (Elementary)

- ✓ Create opportunities for families to connect and discuss how they can assist one another (student pick-up/drop-off, translation assistance) in times of need/emergency.
- ✓ Help parents identify extra-curricular activities that are available in the community that will encourage their kids to be more involved in school.
- ✓ Offer "Parent and Me" workshops. During these workshops parents will learn and practice techniques to assist their child in learning key math and reading concepts.

Parent Activities (Secondary)

- ✓ Offer "homework help" classes for parents. This workshop will provide parents with useful tools, resources and tips for assisting their student with homework.

- ✓ Invite parents to come and share their school experiences with students during targeted group sessions.
- ✓ Form parent teams to welcome parents of incoming freshman. Have the team parents participate in school tours and new parent assemblies.

MARCH

Theme Ideas

- “MARCH attendance MADNESS”
- “MARCH into 96% Attendance”
- “Spring into Excellent Attendance”
- “Celebrate Pi Day” on 3/14 (activities include pie eating contests, measuring the diameter and circumference of round objects to calculate Pi and other games related to circles)
- “Go Green” for Attendance
- “You’re Solid Gold”
- “We Treasure 96%”

APRIL

Considerations for the month of April

- ✓ Sustaining attendance improvement by providing tailored interventions and incentives.
- ✓ Increasing attendance awareness by implementing strategies/activities that are parallel to existing school-wide initiatives.

Ideas for Students by Attendance Bands (Elementary)

Proficient & Advanced:

- Perfect Attendance Day~ Monthly/quarterly students will be rewarded with a day that celebrates their attendance. Suggested activities include a visit from a super hero/ school mascot; an exclusive lunchtime activity; puppet show; perfect attendance balloon; exclusive school supplies and special privileges (exclusive lunch table, chair or front of the line pass).
- Exclusive story time monthly and free paperback book.
- Attendance coupons are awarded daily for students with perfect attendance to redeem for prizes at the end of each week.
- Student of the Month for Attendance (a special poster is created featuring a student who has maintained perfect attendance over the course of the school year and placed on the teacher’s door or the main office door).

Basic:

- 10-Day Attendance Challenge. Students receive an award/reward for every 10 consecutive days without an absence. Parents receive a positive note/letter from the principal.
- “Improve the School” parent focus groups. Parents receive the opportunity to discuss the barriers of good attendance and provide constructive feedback to schools for improvement.
- Parent-teacher-student after school ice cream socials about learning.
- Absence notes home with attached work that was missed.
- Parent & Student Attendance Pledges

Below Basic:

- “Give Me 5” Attendance Challenge. Create a cut-out of the student’s hand and adhere to the student’s desk. Every day the student is present the student will color one finger. A prize that has been selected by the child will be given on the 5th day of attendance.
- Meet with the parent and complete an attendance plan with a monthly goal. Include a list of resources for the family and create a plan for follow-up (telephonic, written, or in-person).
- Provide positive recognitions (weekly attendance goal progress reports; parent thank-you notes; most improved recognitions; class kudos and parent incentives).

Far Below Basic:

Daily

- o Check-In with student and give “High 5” for attendance.
- o Send a positive note home with a progress report informing parent about the incentive for the week.
- o Include information about the lessons from the day/what the child learned in class.

Weekly

- o Present student with weekly prize for attendance (extend the goal from weekly to bi-weekly after the 4th week).
- o Send home incentive information for the following week. Include a tip for attendance success for the parent (routines, resources, etc.)

Monthly

- o Parent /student homework hour. Parents receive assistance from teachers on reinforcing school lessons.
- o Parent support groups
- o “Most Improved” recognition for parents.
- o Coffee and Conversation with the Principal.

Far Below Basic

Intervention/Follow-Up

- o Consistent plan for follow-up (pick a day during the week when parents can anticipate communication from you/teacher).
- o Utilize the 4:1 method (four positives for every 1 corrective) when communicating successes and challenges.
- o Contact the parent (not voicemail) when the student is absent.

Ideas for Students by Attendance Bands (Secondary)

Proficient & Advanced:

- Invite students to create Public Service Announcements for Attendance Awareness
- Create a blog about the importance of attendance
- Feature students with proficient attendance in the school newspaper.
- Feature students with perfect attendance on the school website (embed a link that lists students with perfect attendance for the month).

Basic:

- Have students participate in “Improve This School” focus group. Students will address school concerns and brainstorm solutions. Utilize “School Climate” Surveys for this activity.
- 4-part workshop that covers the following topics: Solving Everyday Problems I & II (see attachment); Jobs, Careers and Interviewing; and Wrapping Up and Moving Forward (Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring)
- Conduct weekly check-in activities where students provide a “daily” teacher log showing attendance. Students will receive an incentive for “checking-in.”

Below and Far Below Basic:

- Have students complete a “needs assessment,” graduation and attendance plan (include mini goals).
- Provide small group learning opportunities monthly.
- Enlist assistance from community outreach programs and invite each to host interventions on campus (check with administration regarding MOU’s).
 - <http://www.lasuperiorcourt.org/outreach/ui/>
 - <http://dcfs.lacounty.gov/edu/freetutoring/tutoringbycity.html>
- Host quarterly family festivals for students and their families who have met attendance goals.
- Send letters of recognition for improved attendance to students and parents every 5 days (or consistent with current goal).
- Pair student with a campus teacher to provide individualized homework instruction. A similar intervention is known as “Campus Parent” or “Surrogate Advocate” in which a campus teacher assists students with homework, provides daily check-in/check-out services and monitors the student’s grades.

MAY

Celebrating Attendance Ideas

1. Create the Attendance Hall of Fame for students who maintain Perfect Attendance for the semester/school year. This Hall of Fame can be in the form of a plaque, awards case or mural.
2. Reading Recognitions~ Give students a book with a significant message that chronicles their attendance achievement. Might I suggest calling the Doctor (Seuss, that is!)? Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are? or Oh, The Places You’ll Go! And what about, “The Little Engine That Could”? There is no better way to tell someone, “I think you can, I think you can, I think you can...”
3. Recognizing Mom~ Give students with improved, proficient and/or advanced attendance the R.O.S.E. Award (Recognition of Superior Effort). Students will be presented with a certificate and a rose for their mom.
4. Balloon Surprise~ provide a Mylar balloon (in the shape of a star or inscribed with a special message) to students meeting attendance goals.
5. “Hats Off To...”~ Cut top hats out of paper and award them to teachers who have supported the attendance improvement program.
6. *The Link Award*: provide administrators, staff members and parents with a link to a chain (paper can be used as a substitute) that includes the person’s name and inscription that reads, “I am An Important Link to Improving Student Attendance.”

Preparations for New Students

- ✓ Provide a health fair that offers the required immunizations and health screens for school admittance.
- ✓ Identify students in feeder schools by attendance bands and provide a host of services and transitional activities (new student picnic, teacher meet and greet, new student fun day).
- ✓ Host a freshman activities fair where students can sign up for school clubs, teams and extra-curricular activities.
- ✓ Have current ninth grade students create a handbook or video diary for incoming freshman to follow.
- ✓ Organize a new student tour and corresponding activities.

Incentive Ideas

- Host a summer job fair for eligible students. Provide a letter of recommendation for students who achieve proficient/advanced attendance for the month, semester or year.
- Give all students who are present on the 175th day or the last day of school a “Super Ball” (large playground ball) as a reminder that they are Super.
- “Cute As A Button” incentive. Reward parents with a button with their child’s picture and the phrase of your choice (Ex: “I’m one day smarter because I have good attendance”).



Teaching Attendance

The following core concepts must be taught and modeled to all students, their families and to the communities in which they live. All school staff should be trained to teach and reinforce the core attendance concepts. Teaching should be universal and continual.

Core Attendance Concepts

1. Clear expectations of positive attendance
Goal = 96% in-seat attendance
2. Compulsory attendance laws
3. Benefits of good attendance (motivational and relevant)
4. School calendar and schedules
5. Morning and evening routines (importance, what they should look like, how to encourage at home)
6. Plans for coming to school (people to support you coming to school)
7. Creating “back-up” systems. Build relationships with others to support you in times of need or emergencies
8. Attending school is non-negotiable unless truly sick (define “sick”)
9. Identify non-academic activities (drama, art, SUN) that can help motivate interest in school and learning, and seek out those experiences
10. Self-care (best practices for staying healthy, sleep requirements, mental health)
11. Consequences of poor attendance



David Douglas PBIS Lesson on Attendance

Draft 5-11

Step 1: Review School Wide Rules

Be Safe: Protect people’s bodies and feelings.

Be Respectful: Be polite and cooperative with others.

Be Responsible: Be honest about your thoughts and choices, whether good or bad.

Step 2: Teach expectations for specific settings

BE SAFE	BE RESPECTFUL	BE RESPONSIBLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come to school unless you have a fever or are throwing up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time to class every day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Be Ready Night Routine Morning Routine •Every Day on Time •Have a backup plan if you miss the bus or parent is unable to bring you

Step 3: Tell why attendance is important

Good Attendance-----95% or better (missing 9 days or less over a school year)

Acceptable Attendance-----90%-94%

Chronic Attendance----- 80%-89%

Severe Attendance-----less than 80%

- Learning-important skills and concepts are taught every day. It can be difficult to make up missed work.
- Friendships/belonging-Hard to have friends if you miss a lot of school. Sense of community
- Good Attendance is building the foundation for a successful future/life: What do you want?

Step 4: When to come and when to stay home

- **Example:** You come everyday unless you have a fever and or are throwing up.
- **Example:** If you have a Dr. or Dental appointment the morning or afternoon you can still come before or after
- Role Play Scenario: Nighttime/Morning routine role play. Ex. Homework in back pack by the front door. Lay clothes out night before. Use an Alarm Clock to wake up.
- For Middle School: Can also talk about time management
 - Role play additional scenarios (of your choice, appropriate to grade level) to show how to act safe, respectful, and responsible in these setting. Encourage and support appropriate discussion/responses. Minimize attention for inappropriate responses.
- Class/partner discussions.
- Brainstorm a list of what appropriate behaviors “look like” and “sound like” (T-chart).
- Perform a skit.
- Students can teach other students about rules, in native languages.

Incentive and Recognition Tools





Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives

School attendance is a simple, easily understood measure of student performance. One strategy for improving attendance is engaging students, parents, educators and community members in a campaign that offers positive rewards for getting to school on-time.

What to Remember:

- Attendance incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance. Incentives should be part of creating a school-wide culture of attendance and accompanied by a deep commitment to ensuring students are engaged in the classroom once they show up.
- Incentives don't need to be costly. Simple rewards—recognition from peers and the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time, homework passes or even dancing in the hallways—go a long way toward motivating students. Ask students what they consider a meaningful incentive.
- Interclass competition is a powerful motivator. The sense of competition between classes (with rewards like a party for the class with the best monthly attendance) can be a powerful motivator. Such strategies encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class.
- Avoid recognizing only perfect attendance. Perfect attendance is not always the goal since it is not wise to encourage children to come to school when they're sick. Students should be rewarded for improved attendance, not just perfect records. Offering weekly perfect attendance awards can allow students to still have a chance to succeed the next week if they are absent.
- Reward timeliness not just showing up to school. Since tardiness also has an adverse impact on learning, many schools only count on-time attendance toward rewards.
- Send home information highlighting both the value of attendance and incentives and the consequences of poor attendance. Ensure families know about the incentive program and the importance of attendance for academic success, as well as school policies in which poor attendance can result in failing a course or being retained. Sanctions should never be used without incentives.
- Offer incentives for families, not just students. Often, families appreciate access to resources such as food baskets, transportation passes, etc.
- Implement incentives school wide. To fostering a culture of attendance, every classroom needs to participate!!

Ideas for Incentives

Teachers can offer:

- Positive comments to children
- Positive notes home to parents
- Extra time at the computer or PE
- Free homework pass
- First-in-line privileges for lunch or dismissal
- Pencils, pens, stickers, posters, book covers, book marks, etc.
- Team certificates for the best record or most improved record
- Name on the “Attendance Wall” in the classroom
- Chance to act as teacher’s assistant

Administration, PTAs and Boosters can provide:

- Recognition during morning announcements
- Certificate/award at student assembly
- Breakfast/lunch with the principal, superintendent, school board president, mayor, etc.
- School supplies, i.e. pencil with logo
- Food coupons redeemable in school cafeteria
- Smoothie/pizza party for class with best attendance
- “School money” for the school store
- Choice of donated product (movie, tickets, gift certificate)
- Traveling trophy for grade-level homeroom with best monthly attendance
- Attendance T-shirts/hats/buttons
- Age-appropriate rewards for most improved attendance
- Parking space near building for student with most improved attendance

Good attendance helps kids succeed in school and bolster their self-esteem. Improving attendance requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond sanctions and includes incentives.

Here are some steps schools are taking:

When students at Michigan elementary school achieve perfect attendance for a month, they become a STAR (Studios, Thoughtful Accountable and Respectful) student. They earn a gold T-shirt saying “I am a STAR student.” Their picture is displayed on the television in the school lobby.

A California elementary school improved its on-time attendance with an interclass competition that promised a pizza party to the first class with enough days of perfect attendance to spell out the words “Perfect Punctuality.”

Another California elementary school awards the class with the best attendance an extra 15 minute recess on Fridays supervised by the principals. The students enjoy the attention from their principal and the teacher gets an extra-long lunch break.

An Oklahoma elementary school issues “school dollars” to students with good and improved attendance. Students can use the dollars at the school store to buy Christmas presents for family.

A Georgia middle school recognizes good attendance on a weekly, monthly and semester basis. Students who attend for a full week receive popcorn passes. The homeroom class in each grade level with the best attendance each month receives milk and doughnuts. Students with fewer than two absences can enter end-of-semester drawings for prizes.

A Georgia high school comes down hard on students who skip school: Seven unexcused absences a semester can mean course failure. But the high school also offers incentives: Those with fewer than two excused absences can receive 10 extra points on final exams.



Attendance Works is a national and state initiative working to improve the policy and practice around attendance. For more information go to www.attendancework.org.



every day counts

ATTEND TODAY -
ACHIEVE TOMORROW!

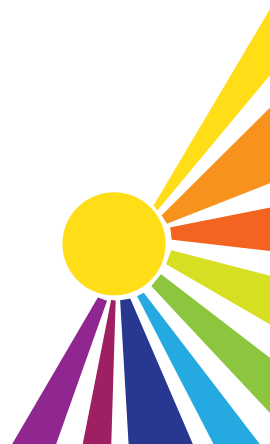


Establishing School-Wide Attendance Incentives

School attendance is a simple, easily understood measure of student performance. One strategy for improving attendance is engaging students, parents, educators and community members in a campaign that offers positive rewards for getting to school on-time.

Overarching Issues to Consider:

- **Attendance incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach** that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance. Incentives should be part of creating a school-wide culture and emphasis on attendance and accompanied by a deep commitment to ensuring students are engaged in the classroom once they show up.
- **Incentives don't need to be costly.** Simple rewards—recognition from peers and the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time, homework passes, even dancing in the hallways—go a long way toward motivating students. Ask students what they consider a meaningful incentive.
- **Interclass competition is a powerful motivator.** The sense of competition between classes (for example, a pizza party for the class with the best monthly attendance) can be a powerful motivator. Such strategies encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class.
- **Avoid recognizing only perfect attendance.** Perfect attendance is not always the goal since it is not wise to encourage children to come to school when they're sick. Students should be rewarded for improved attendance, not just perfect records. Offering weekly perfect attendance awards can allow students to still have a chance to succeed the next week if they are absent.
- **Reward timeliness, not just showing up to school.** Since tardiness also has an adverse impact on learning, many schools only count on-time attendance toward rewards. Consider taking this approach to ensure children are arriving to class on-time.
- **Send home information highlighting both the value of attendance and incentives and the consequences of poor attendance.** Ensure families know about the incentive program, why school attendance matters for academic success and understand school policies when poor attendance results in failing a course or being retained. Sanctions should never be used without incentives.
- **Offer incentives for families, not just students.** Often, families appreciate access to resources such as food baskets, transportation passes, etc.
- **Implement incentives school wide.** In order to foster a culture of attendance, every classroom needs to participate!



Adapted with permission from materials provided by Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org)





Ideas for Incentives

Teachers can offer:

- Positive comments to children
- Positive notes home to parents
- Extra time at the computer or PE
- Free homework pass
- First-in-line privileges for lunch or dismissal
- Cookie coupon
- Pencils, pens, stickers, posters, book covers, book marks, etc.
- Team certificate for the best record or most improved record
- Name on the “Attendance Wall” in the classroom
- Chance to act as teacher’s assistant

Administration, PTAs and Boosters can provide:

- Recognition during morning announcements
- Certificate/award at student assembly
- Breakfast/lunch with the principal, superintendent, school board president, mayor, etc.
- School supplies, i.e. pencil with logo
- Food coupons redeemable in the school cafeteria
- Food give certificate for McDonald/s, Wendy’s, etc.
- Ice cream/pizza party for class with best attendance
- “School money” for the school store
- Choice of donated product (movie tickets, gift certificate)
- Traveling trophy for grade-level homeroom with best monthly attendance
- Attendance T-shirts/hats/buttons
- Age-appropriate rewards for most improved
- Parking space near building for student with most improved attendance

Source: New York State Department of Education Student Support Services

Promising Approaches

Good attendance helps kids succeed in school and bolster their self-esteem. Improving attendance requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond sanctions and includes incentives. Here are some steps that schools are taking:

Burton Elementary School

Grand Rapids, Mich.

When Burton students achieve perfect attendance for a month, they become a STAR (Studious, Thoughtful Accountable and Respectful) student. They earn a gold T-shirt saying, “I am a STAR student.” Their picture is displayed on the television in the school lobby, and they join in an ice-cream social with the principal.

Julian Elementary School

San Diego County, Calif.

Julian has improved its on-time attendance with an interclass competition that promises a pizza party to the first class with enough days of perfect attendance to spell out the words “Perfect Punctuality.”

Gladden Middle School

Murray County, Ga.

Gladden recognizes good attendance on a weekly, monthly and semester basis. Students who attend for a full week receive popcorn passes. The homeroom class in each grade level with the best attendance each month receives milk and doughnuts. Students with fewer than two absences can enter end-of-semester drawings for prizes.

Creekview High School

Cherokee County, Ga.

Creekview comes down hard on students who skip school: Seven unexcused absences a semester can mean course failure. But the high school also offers incentives: Those with fewer than two excused absences can receive 10 extra points on final exams.

For more information, visit our website at:

www.school.alcoda.org



every day counts



ATTEND TODAY -
ACHIEVE TOMORROW!



Certificate of Achievement

FOR GOOD AND/OR IMPROVED ATTENDANCE THIS SEMESTER

Awarded on: _____

Tony Smith, Superintendent
Oakland Unified School District

Mayor Jean Quan
City of Oakland



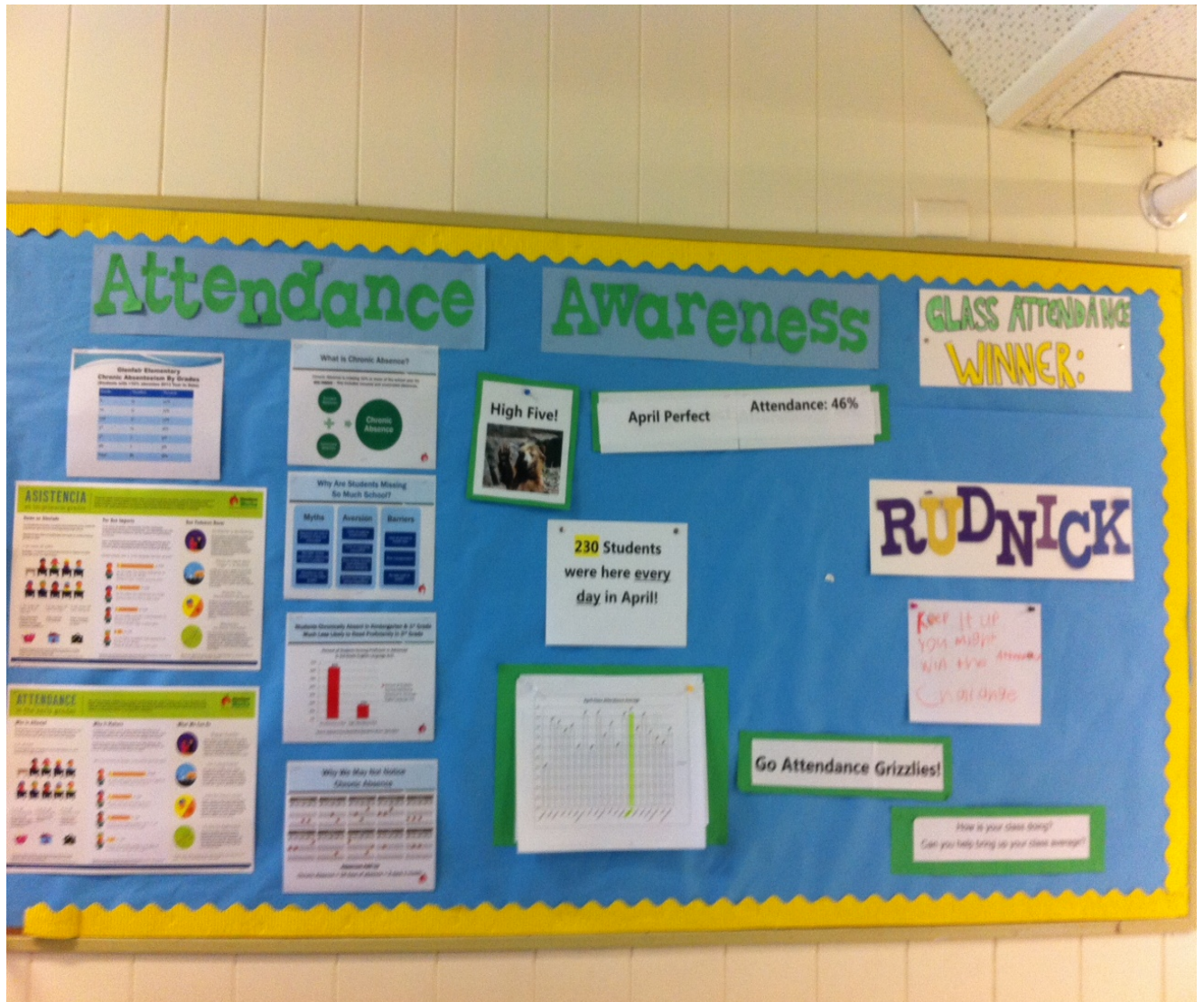
ATTENDANCE CHALLENGE

The class with the **HIGHEST ATTENDANCE AVERAGE 4/21 - 6/10** will receive a class set of t-shirts!

Can YOU challenge yourself to be at school EVERY DAY from now until the end of the school year? Encourage your friends and classmates to do the same!



Students must be present to get their t-shirt on June 11th, the last day of school.





Attendance Incentive Ideas for Students, Elementary

MONTHLY		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Classroom Goal/Competition</u> Use Apple Tree template to track class attendance. Fill in one apple each day that all students are present in the class. Once the apple tree is full, reward the students with a class prize or party.	Apple Tree Description/Template
	<u>Classroom Competition</u> Have classrooms compete for best attendance rate each month. Award or recognize the class with the highest attendance rate each month.	ISIS Attendance Classroom Report
	<u>Bulletin Board Recognition</u> Post pictures or names of students /classrooms with 100% attendance, most improved, or 96% and above on a bulletin board to recognize their achievements.	MyData Extract
	<u>Individual Recognition</u> Hold an assembly to acknowledge individual students with perfect attendance for specified month. Present certificate of recognition and/or a certificate to be redeemed at a local eatery.	ISIS Attendance Report Student Certificates
	<u>Individual Award</u> Award students a monthly "Treat With the Principal" for perfect/most improved attendance for that particular month	Treat With the Principal Description ISIS Attendance Incentive Report
WEEKLY		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Classroom Competition</u> Utilize Fish Bowl template to track the class attendance for the week. Each day that all students are present in the class, add/color a fish to the bowl. Once the bowl is full, reward the class.	Fishbowl Description/Template
	<u>Individual Student Recognition</u> Recognize students on a weekly basis utilizing High Five Club. Students who have attended the full five days of the school week receive an award/recognition.	High Five Description/Template
	<u>Individual Student Recognition</u> Provide weekly congratulatory notices/phone calls to parents.	Notification Letter / Blackboard Connect

Attendance Incentive Ideas for Students, Elementary

DAILY		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Positive Recognition</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher/school staff can give daily compliments to students/classrooms. Principal can announce over the PA the classroom with perfect attendance for that day. 	ISIS Classroom Attendance
	<u>Daily Chance</u> Every day that a student is present, they are entered into a drawing. Each week a name is drawn for a "Homework Pass" or "Lunch Line Pass."	Homework Pass/Lunch Line Pass
	<u>Random Recognition</u> Teacher/Administrator randomly gives tickets to those students recognizing that they were at school and/or on-time.	Caught HERE Today Tickets Template
TARGETED TIME PERIODS		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Targeted Recognition</u> "King/Queen Friday's" to help increase attendance on a specific day. For example, low attendance days tend to fall on Fridays and Mondays.	Refer to King/Queen Friday Incentive Description
	<u>Random Drawing Opportunity</u> Identify low attendance days. On these days, draw names of students that are present for a reward/prize. For example, a school may choose to conduct drawings on Mondays to increase student attendance.	Students are only eligible to participate in the raffle if they are present the day of the drawing. Refer to Monday Raffle Incentive Description
	<u>Holiday / Extended Vacation Incentive</u> Provide rewards or plan special events the day before or returning from vacation.	School Calendar

Attendance Incentive Ideas for Parents and Teachers, Elementary

TARGETED TIME PERIODS		
	Incentives / Recognition	Reports/Tools
PARENTS	<u>Most Improved Recognition</u> Recognize parents for bringing their child to school on-time and/or meeting his/her personal improvement goal.	Certificate/Letter Template
	<u>Personal Recognition</u> Set aside some time each week to make phone calls to parents whose students have improved attendance.	ISIS Report Extract: Classroom Attendance Totals by Date Range
TEACHERS	<u>Teacher Appreciation</u> Provide teachers with a certificate acknowledging their hard work for having: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Highest Attendance Rate in their grade/ school • The most improved attendance. Utilize donations from local businesses to reward teachers. Post a picture of the classroom(s) with the highest monthly attendance rate.	ISIS Classroom Attendance Percentage Certificates Camera



STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: Treat with the Principal

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve individual student attendance

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Treats (ice cream, cookies & milk, popcorn).
2. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST: Cost of treats
Get local eateries to donate cookies/popcorn
Try asking cafeteria manager for milk

REWARD PERIOD: Monthly

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Step 1: Monthly ISIS extract to see who had perfect attendance for that month.

Step 2: Students with perfect attendance for the month will receive a ticket for admission to have a “treat” with the principal the last 15 minutes of school.

FORMS NEEDED: None

STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: Perfect Attendance Apple Tree

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve classroom attendance

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Apple Tree worksheet attachment
2. Apple Stickers or you can also color in the Apples
3. Mystery prizes for each student in the class
4. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST: None

REWARD PERIOD: Every 25-days or less (depending on how many apples you put on the tree)
Each day a class has perfect attendance they may place an apple sticker (color in an apple) on their tree. On rainy days the class places two stickers (colors in 2 apples). Once the class has completely filled their tree with all apples, each student will receive their first mystery prize. Repeat the process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

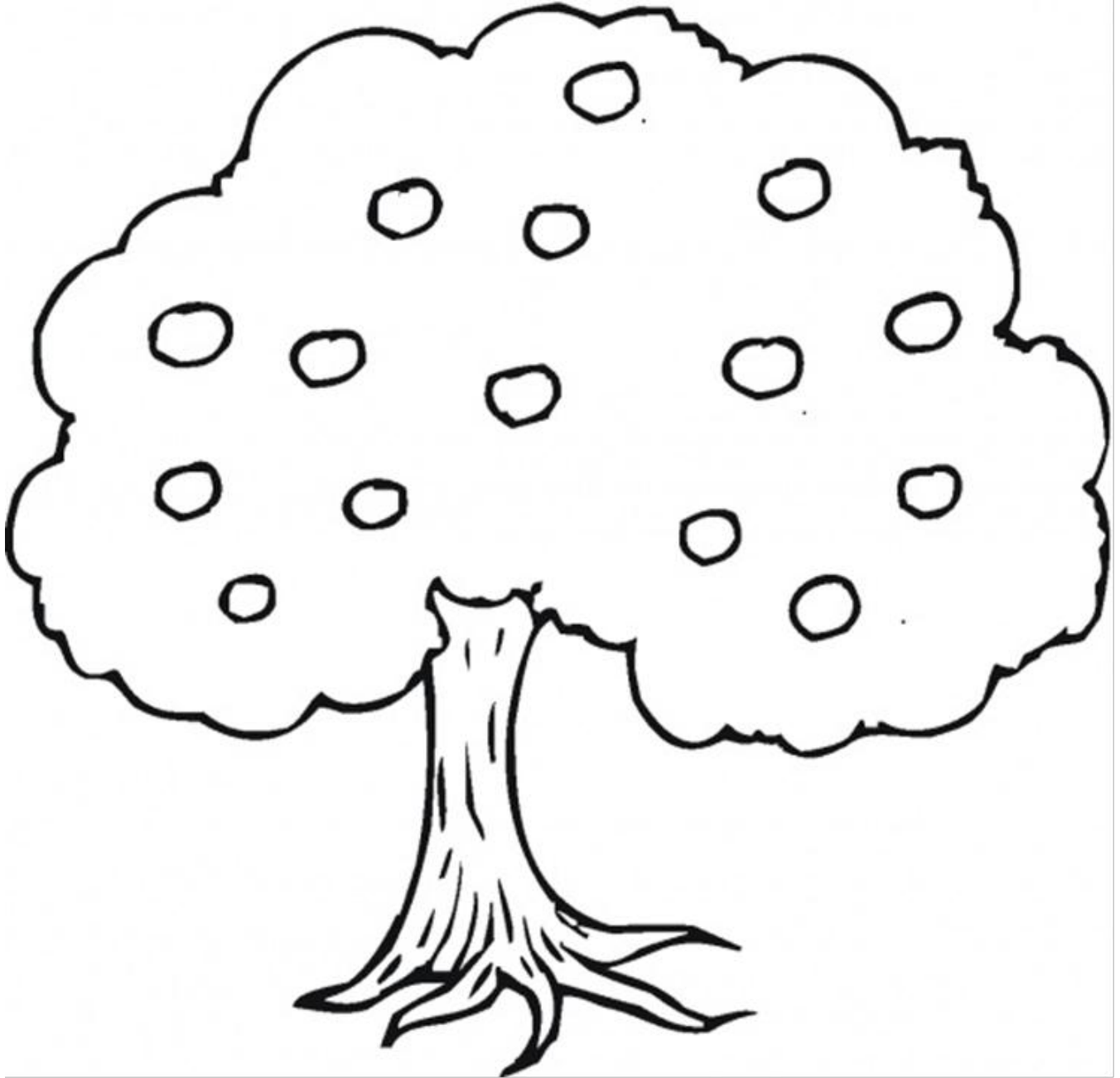
Step 1: Revise Perfect Attendance Tree to reflect each teacher, track, and grade. Laminate and if possible blow up poster Size

Step 2: Distribute Perfect Attendance Tree and the apple stickers to each teacher. Ask the teacher to post the tree in a visible location.

Step 3: Motivate students by telling them about the great prizes in the morning assembly or overhead speaker.

FORMS NEEDED: Sample Apple Tree worksheet attachment

The Perfect Attendance Apple Tree



STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: Fish Bowl

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve classroom attendance

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Fish Bowl worksheet attachment
2. You can color in the Fish
3. Mystery prizes for each student in the class
4. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST: None

REWARD PERIOD: Every 5 days of perfect attendance.

Each day a class has perfect attendance they may color in a fish in the bowl. On rainy days the class colors in 2 fish. Once the class has completely colored in all the fish in the bowl, each student will receive their first mystery prize. Repeat the process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Step 1:

Distribute Perfect Attendance Fish Bowl worksheet to each teacher. Ask the teacher to post the worksheet in a visible location.

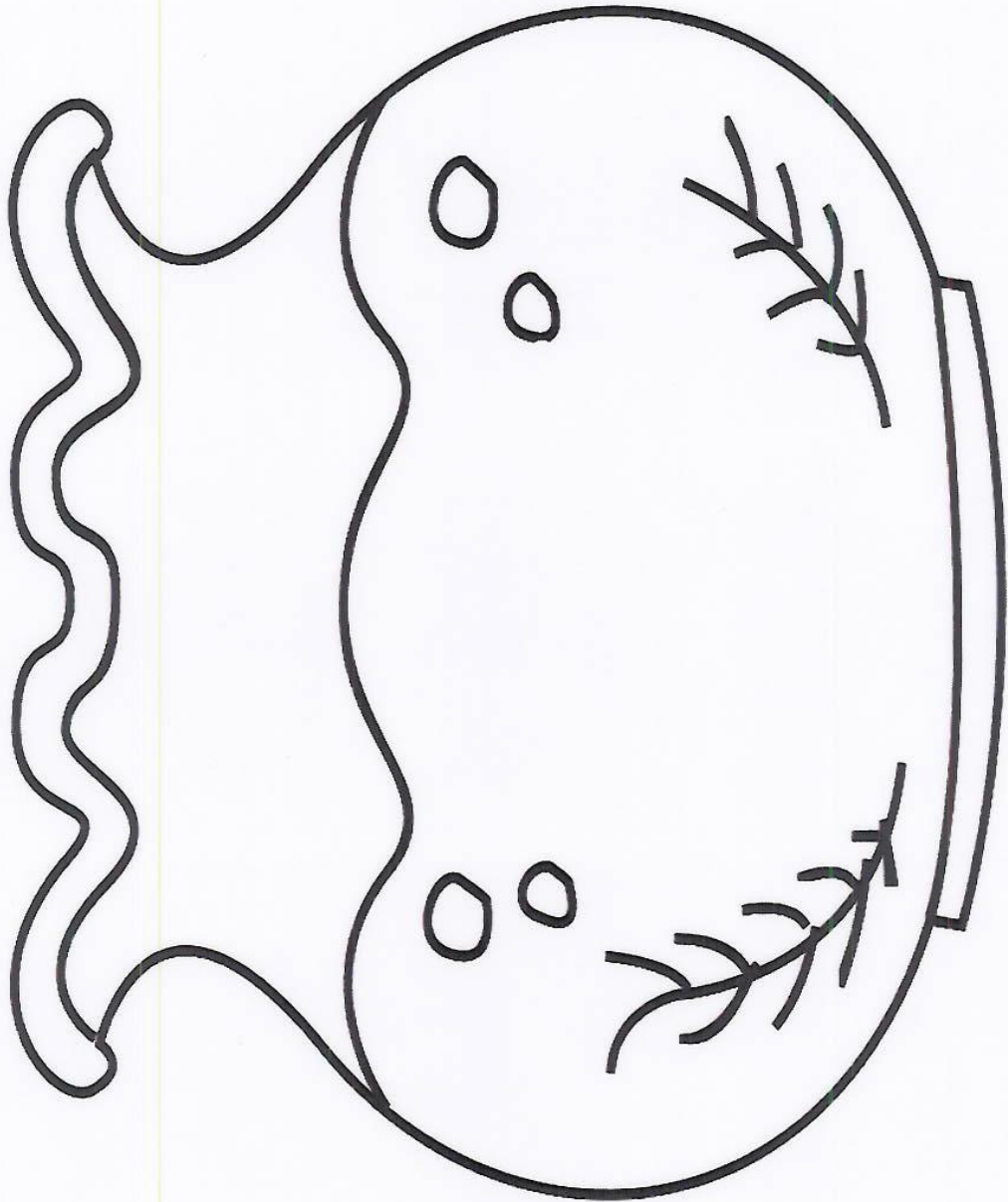
Step 3:

Motivate students by telling them about the great prizes in the morning assembly or overhead speaker.

FORMS NEEDED:

Sample Fish Bowl worksheet attachment

Perfect Attendance Fish Bowl



STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: High 5 Club

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve individual daily/weekly attendance

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Badges (4 to 5' in diameter) with High 5 Club Printed on them (See attachment).
2. Safety pin to pin the badges on the shirts of the student or use a lanyard made of yarn to hand the badge on the student's neck.
3. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST:

Cost of safety pins or yarn.

REWARD PERIOD: Weekly

Badges are awarded every Friday for Kindergarten Students with Perfect Attendance all week (5-days).

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Step 1:

Design, create, order or use existing design to print badges

Step 2:

Keep track of Perfect attendance for the Kindergarteners. Run an ISIS extract or determine based on teacher rosters.

Step 3:

Every Friday Hand out Badges to the students with perfect attendance that week.

Step 4:

Teachers are encouraged to give high fives to those students wearing the badges as a way of congratulating their attendance success.

FORMS NEEDED:

High 5 Club Badges attachment

High Five Club Sample Badges



STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: King/Queen Fridays

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve individual/classroom attendance for a specific day (in this case Fridays)

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Foam Sheet Crowns
2. Stickers
3. Yarn
4. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST: \$1.00 for 24 Crowns
\$1.00 for 1 book of 200 stickers

REWARD PERIOD:

Every Friday that students are present they wear their crown in the form of a necklace. Each Friday that they are present in school, they earn a sticker to be placed on their crown.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Step 1: Hand out crown necklaces to all students who are present on Friday.

Step 2: Reward each student with a sticker to place on their crown each Friday.

Step 3: Beam with joy every Friday that you are named King &/or Queen for attending school.

FORMS NEEDED:

None

STUDENT ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM, ELEMENTARY

NAME/TITLE: Weekly Monday Morning Attendance Assembly

TARGET POPULATION: K-5

OBJECTIVE: To improve weekly attendance as well as attendance on Mondays

SUPPLIES OR MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. A bowl
2. Drawing/raffle tickets
3. (2) 99¢ prizes each week
4. For Free or Inexpensive Rewards refer to the Reward Ideas PDF

APPROXIMATED COST: \$2.00/week

REWARD PERIOD:

Every Monday the names of every Kindergarten Student who was present in school from (Monday – Friday) the week prior to the drawing date (Monday), is entered into a bowl. Two students are selected for having perfect attendance, and they win a prize.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Step 1: On the Friday prior to the drawing, all teachers will place the tickets of those students who were present all week in an envelope.

Step 2: All teachers will place their drawing tickets in the bowl for the drawing.

Step 4: The Attendance Mantra is sung before the drawing begins.

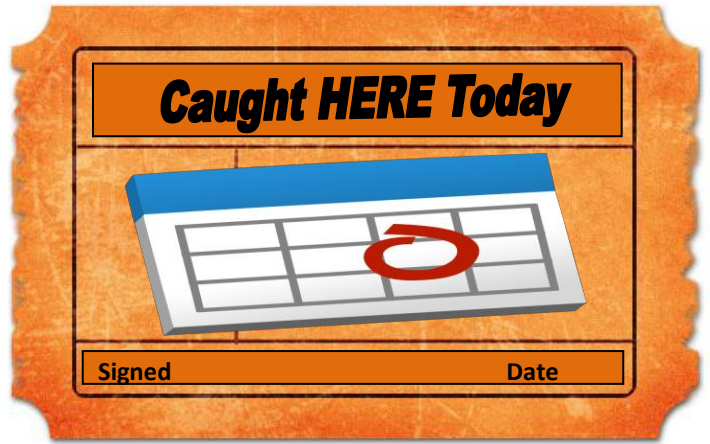
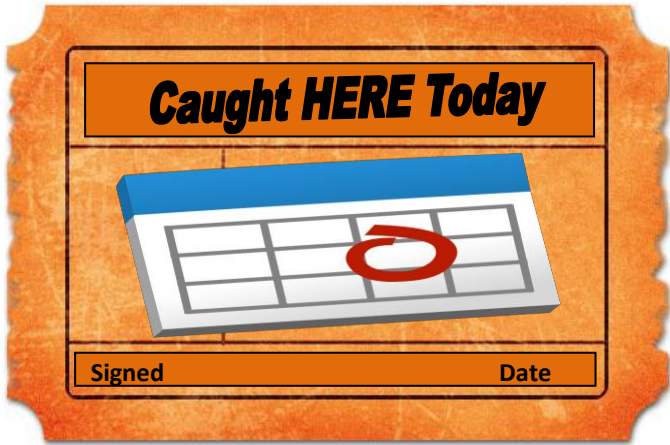
Step 5: Two student's names are selected from the bowl, and they are awarded a prize.

FORMS NEEDED: None



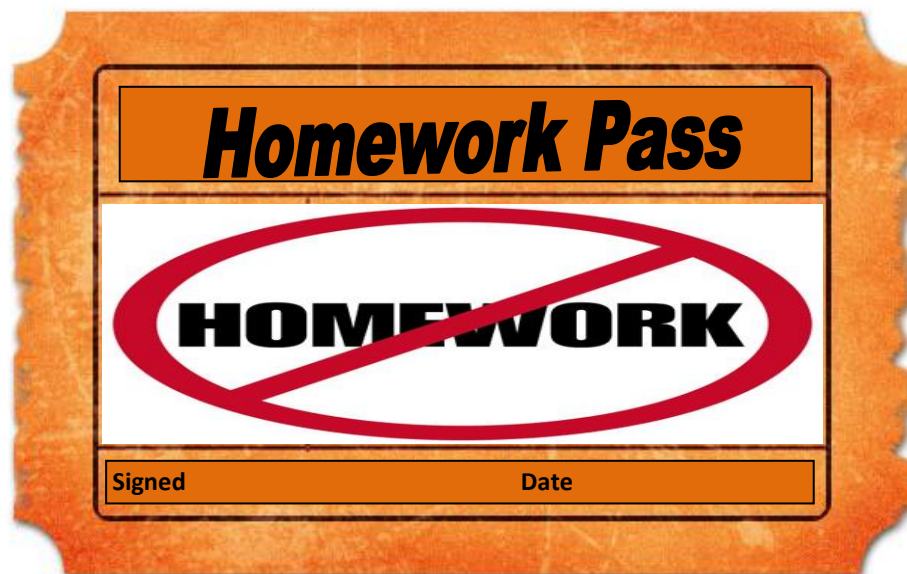
Incentive Samples and Templates

[Click on the image to be taken to the template.](#)



Incentive Samples and Templates

[Click on the image to be taken to the template.](#)



Attendance Incentive Ideas, Secondary



MONTHLY		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Classroom Competitions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling Trophy to class with highest attendance % Ice Cream Party, Popcorn Party, Pizza Party, or Nachos, class with highest attendance. 	AT24 Monthly Report Traveling Trophy Instructions Ice Cream Party Instructions
	<u>Bulletin Board</u> Picture displayed to recognize students with Perfect Attendance for the entire month.	The Great Race Instructions
	<u>VIP Invites</u> Provide students a VIP ticket for access to VIP seating area for a school event, assembly, concert, etc.	Tickets
	<u>Assembly</u> Acknowledge students with Perfect Attendance/Most Improved Attendance during an assembly.	Certificate
	<u>Publicized Announcements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge students or classes with Proficient/ Advanced Attendance in school newsletter. Announce names of students with Perfect Attendance over the PA. 	AT24 Report Monthly Newsletter
	<u>Attendance Awareness Month</u> Promote attendance through weekly themes such as: Pajama Day, Twin Day, Sports Day, School Spirit Day, Backwards Day, etc.	Pajama Day Flyer
WEEKLY		
Incentives / Recognition		Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Student Recognition:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual student recognition Provide classrooms with small certificates for students with perfect weekly attendance. Names to be read out loud. Raffles (School functions, games, prizes) Weekly phone calls made to parents, Congratulations/Keep it up notices sent home. 	AT24 Weekly report BlackBoard Connect
	<u>Mentor Program</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrator, teacher, counselors, office staff, etc. paired up with a student to help them move up in bands. Weekly check-ins, 	Spend time with favorite staff member
	First In Line Pass	Weekly pass drawing

Attendance Incentive Ideas, Secondary

DAILY		
	Incentives / Recognition	Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Positive Comments/ Compliments for Attending Class</u>	Teacher/School Staff can give daily compliments to students Administrators can announce classrooms, SLCs, or Homerooms with PA for the day.
	<u>PA Announcement of attendance drawing</u>	Students are awarded a ticket for each day of attendance
	<u>Each day of PA earns you "bucks", "coupons".</u>	Issue daily, collect weekly/monthly for prizes
TARGETED TIME PERIODS		
	Incentives / Recognition	Reports/Tools
STUDENTS	<u>Extra Points/Double Incentives</u>	AT24 Weekly Attendance (M/F)
	<u>25th, 100th, 175th day of School Celebrations</u>	
	<u>CST Random Drawing Opportunity</u>	Promote attendance during CST
	<u>Holiday / Extended Vacation Incentive</u> Provide rewards or plan special events the day before or after returning from vacation.	School Calendar
PARENTS	<u>Attendance Assembly</u> Recognize parents with a certificate acknowledging their hard work & effort for Proficient & Advanced attending students.	MyData Certificate
	<u>Personal Recognition</u> Make BlackBoard Connect calls directed to parents for their role in students attending Proficient and Advanced.	MyData SIS extract BlackBoard Connect
TEACHERS	<u>Teacher Appreciation</u> Provide teachers with a certificate acknowledging their hard work for having: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Highest Attendance Rate in their grade/ school ✓ The most improved attendance. 	AT24 Monthly Attendance Certificates
	Utilize donations from local businesses to reward teachers.	Incentives
	<u>Bulletin Board Recognition</u> Post a picture of the classroom(s) with the highest monthly attendance rate.	AT24 Monthly Attendance Camera

Student Attendance Incentive Program, Secondary



Program Title: The Great Attendance Race

Appropriate Level: Secondary

Supplies Needed:

1. An enclosed display case in a highly visible location, such as main hallway, or school entrance
2. Black Butcher Paper to draw “Race Track”,
3. Yellow Tempera Paint & paint brush to divide tracks (one per class)
4. Different color “Car cut-outs” (one per class)
5. Fast Food meal coupons (McDonald’s, In-N-Out, Carl’s Jr., etc) to be given to the winning classes (amount depends on # of students per classroom).

Cost: Meal vouchers can be requested as donations from local eateries or businesses in the community after AIC Counselor writes request letters at the beginning of the school year.

Reward Period: Attendance reports can be run at the beginning of each month for the month prior.

Description: The display case shows: a) the race cars that represent each grade 9 homeroom/designated class and where their respective class attendance is on the race course that month. The “race track” is marked with signs that say “94%, 95%, 96%” etc. Generate an **AT24 by school month by Homeroom in SIS**. Position each car after the attendance has been calculated for the month. This case is near the Main Office, so it’s highly visible to students and visitors. The winning class will receive a meal coupon for a fast food restaurant in the community.

Forms Needed: A description of the attendance incentive program and the goals for the students should sent home to parents at the beginning of the school year.

Student Attendance Incentive Program, Secondary

Program Title: Ice-Cream Party

Appropriate Level: Secondary

Supplies Needed:

1. Ice-Cream
2. Individual Student Advanced or Proficient Certificates

Cost: Ice-Cream can be purchased from Student Body funds, donated by a local business, or purchased with a donated gift card from a local market (after AIC Counselor writes request letters at the beginning of the school year).

Reward Period: The homeroom/SLC with the best attendance will receive an Ice-Cream party. Certificates will be issued to individual students reaching the goal of 96% or better attendance.

Description: Make a memorandum with details of the Ice-Cream Party Incentive for all homeroom teachers/SLCs. Display boards advertising the Party in the school hallways, or area with high 9th grade traffic. Generate an **AT24 by school month by Homeroom in SIS**. Announce the winners on the PA system. Have the school principal or administrator read the results. Award the class by awarding individual students with Adv./Prof. Attendance certificates and bringing them Ice-Cream to their class.

Forms Needed: A description of the attendance program and the goals for the students (send home to parents at the beginning of the school year), program introduction letter to teachers, letters to businesses for donations, and posters to be placed in hallways.

Ice-Cream can be substituted with Popcorn, Nachos, or Pizza.

Student Attendance Incentive, Secondary

Program Title: Traveling Trophy

Appropriate Level: Secondary

Supplies Needed:

1. Trophies, # depends on the amount of classrooms competing, marked “Best Practices” and “Most Improved Attendance” (approx. 4-6)
2. Fast food meal coupons (McDonalds, In-N-Out, Carl’s Jr., etc.) to be given to the winning classes (# depends on the # of students per winning classroom).

Cost: Trophies can be purchased from Student Body funds, donated by a local business, or purchased with a donated.

Reward Period: The homeroom/SLC with the best attendance will receive an Trophy. Certificates will be issued to students in that class room.

Description: Make a memorandum with details of the The Traveling Trophy incentive for all homeroom teachers/SLCs. Display boards advertising the incentive in the school hallways, or area with high 9th grade traffic. Generate an **AT24 by school month by Homeroom in SIS**. Announce the winners on the PA system. Ask the school principal or administrator to read the results.

Forms Needed: A description of the attendance program and the goals for the students, teachers and office staff. Flyers or posters to advertise the incentives.

Traveling Trophy P.A. Announcement Script

Good morning [Your High School]. This is your [title] Ms. Soandso. I would like to congratulate all of those students who have perfect attendance for the month of _____. If you have perfect attendance for the month of _____, expect your certificate in the mail!

Also, on behalf of the attendance office staff and myself, we would like to congratulate the following Homeroom/SLC classes for having the highest attendance for the month of

_____.
9th grade

In Third place we have _____ with _____%

In Second place we have _____ class with _____%.

And In First Place we have _____%. _____ please send a student to pick up your trophy, which you will keep until the end of the month. Congratulations once again!

Please send a student to pick up you trophy, which you will keep until the end of [month].



Sample Lunch Line Pass

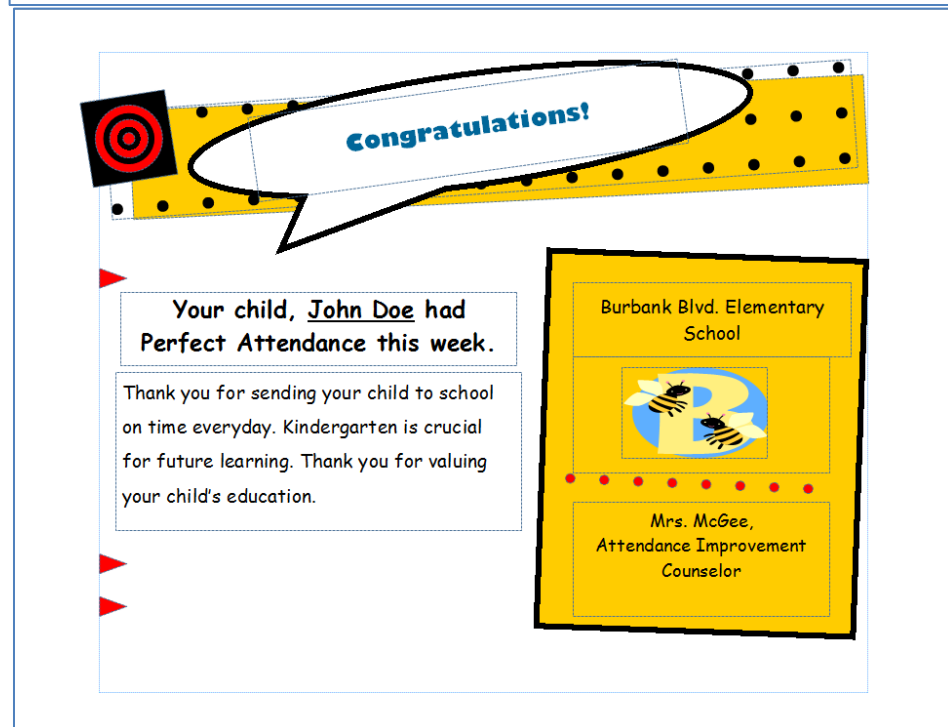
[Click on the image to be taken to the template.](#)



Sample Parent Postcard

[Click on the image to be taken to the template.](#)


Burbank Blvd. Elementary School	PLEASE PLACE STAMP HERE
To the Parents/Guardian of: John Doe	



Appreciation/Recognition Certificate templates

[Click on the image to be taken to the template.](#)

Student, Parent, Staff

Certificate of Appreciation	
This certificate is awarded to the <i>parents</i> of:	
David Aguilar	
In recognition for your child having Perfect Attendance for month 6: February 13-March 9	
Burbank Blvd. Elementary School	
<i>Ms. Gena</i>	04/26/12
Principal	Date
<i>Ms. McGee</i>	04/26/12
Attendance Improvement Counselor	Date

Meeting Attendance

Certificate of Appreciation	
This certificate is awarded to	
<i>Parent/ Guardian in Attendance to the 9th Grade Meeting</i>	
In recognition of outstanding attendance	
Eric Burns, Attendance and Improvement Counselor	Date
Jenny Liu, Diploma Project Counselor	Date

Pajama Day Attendance Incentive Flyer

Click on the image to be taken to the template.

RISE AND SHINE.
COME TO SCHOOL IN YOUR PAJAMAS
TO **CELEBRATE THE 150TH DAY OF
SCHOOL.**


Who: Students

What: Wear your pajamas to school

When: (Date)

Why: **To Celebrate 150 days of instruction**

**DON'T MISS OUT. COME TO
SCHOOL ON TIME EVERYDAY!**



LEVÁNTATE Y VEN A LA ESCUELA EN TUS
PIJAMAS **PARA CELEBRAR EL 150 DÍA DE
INSTRUCCIÓN.**

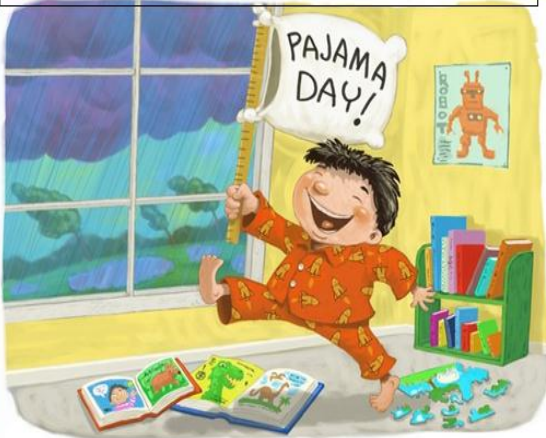
Quien? Estudiantes

Que? Venir vestidos en tu pijamas

Cuando? (Fecha)

Por que? Para celebrar el 150 día de instrucción

**NO PIERDAS NINGÚN DÍA. VEN A
LA ESCUELA TODOS LOS DÍAS A
TIEMPO!**



Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative Demonstration Sites

As part of the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative effort to improve school attendance, the Collaborative developed a school-level attendance response model, which incorporates the critical minimums, teams and approaches described in this toolkit. The model was implemented in the 2013-14 School Year as part of a “plan-do-check-act” cycle of continuous improvement. Six demonstration sites, one from each partner district, were chosen as “learning labs” for the initial implementation phase.

The six demonstration sites in 2013-14 were:

- David Douglas High School (David Douglas School District)
- George Middle School (Portland Public Schools)
- Glenfair Elementary (Reynolds School District)
- Highland Elementary (Gresham Barlow School District)
- Oliver Elementary (Centennial School District)
- Shaver Elementary (Parkrose School District)

Lessons from the first year of demonstration work at the six sites are captured in the *Continuous Improvement Lessons: Early Learnings From the Six Demonstrations Sites in 2013-14*.

For more information on the demonstration sites’ work, please contact Kamesha Robinson with the SUN Service System at kamesha.robinson@multco.us.



Continuous Improvement Lessons: Early Learnings From the Six Demonstrations Sites in 2013–14

Background

In 2012, the Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative selected improving school attendance as its five-year goal and began developing strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism.¹ Collaborative members studied current research and promising practices at both the local and national level and created a comprehensive toolkit for school-based efforts. Districts designed a set of “critical minimums” for application of attendance protocols countywide. The Collaborative developed a school-level attendance response model and was ready for implementation as part of the “plan-do-check-act” cycle of continuous improvement. Six demonstration sites, one from each partner district, were chosen as “learning labs” for the initial implementation phase. Training occurred in October 2013 for school teams to deepen their understanding of the model and build their plans for the year. Teams had access to daily student-level attendance reports. Demonstration site roles were defined, with the SUN Community School Site Manager being identified as a pivotal player within the effort. With the tools and infrastructure in place, the Collaborative got to work.

The Model

The Collaborative’s approach targeted three levels simultaneously: students and families, schools and the community at large (see Figure 1). Rather than create new teams to address each level, demonstration sites were encouraged to leverage existing structures, supplementing or modifying as needed.

Figure 1: Guidance for School Teams

	Team Name	Primary Functions
Student	School Attendance Response Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review student-level data. 2. Determine appropriate interventions for students with attendance below 90%. 3. Monitor progress of individual students & intervention practices.
School	School-wide Attendance & Engagement Review Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a culture of attendance. 2. Use data to monitor school-wide trends.
Community	Community Engagement Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engage parents and community members in monitoring, planning for and responding to school-wide attendance and engagement issues. 2. Broker partnerships and leverage community resources.

During regular meetings of the Collaborative throughout the school year, schools provided updates on implementation issues and shared preliminary findings. In February 2014, schools submitted their half-yearly reports to the conveners of the Collaborative and in May, their year-end reports.

In late May a convening of principals, SUN Community School Site Managers, district representatives and other school staff allowed the six schools to debrief outcomes and

¹ Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

practices that appear to relate to reductions in chronic absence in order to help identify improvements for 2014–15.

Several trends are clear at the demonstration sites though additional data are needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn. Without this information, the Collaborative cannot definitively know which practices are worthy of expansion and replication.

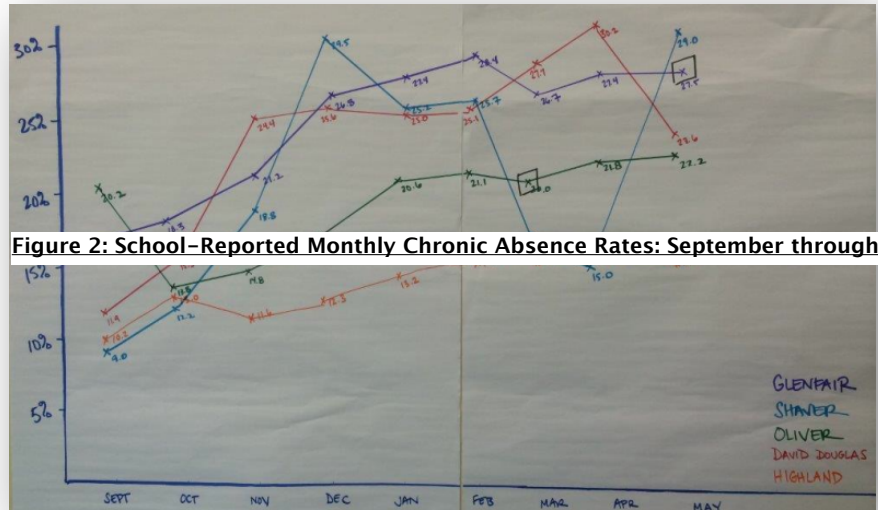


Figure 2: School-Reported Monthly Chronic Absence Rates: September through May

School Outcomes

Figure 2 shows monthly chronic absence rates from September 2013 through May 2014 based on data drawn from the schools’ reports and shared on May 16th during their year-end debrief session. Highland Elementary, which had its School Attendance Response Team up and running early in the school year with weekly discussions about data and interventions, experienced the lowest chronic absenteeism rate of any demonstration school. Historical rates of 19–22% per year dropped to 13%, with the monthly average never exceeding March’s high of 15.4%. At David Douglas High School, monthly chronic absence climbed during the year, peaked in April and dipped in May. Glenfair Elementary showed significant improvement over prior years despite a sharp upward incline and notable dip in March (a result of concerted teacher outreach to families). Shaver Elementary had the most varied monthly results, creating a “Z” shaped line that struck lows in September and April, and peaks in December and May. Oliver, which was able to implement very few of the attendance practices, experienced a slight improvement in chronic absenteeism compared to prior years.

Figure 3 shows school-level chronic absence rates for the preceding three years and the first year of strategy implementation.

	Strategies			
Figure 3: School-Level Chronic Absence Rates	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Glenfair Elementary (Reynolds)	29%	35%	29%	27%
Highland Elementary (Gresham Barlow)	19%	22%	20%	13%
Oliver Elementary (Centennial)	23%	32%	23%	21%
Shaver Elementary (Parkrose)	25%	24%	18%	14%
George Middle School (Portland Public)	24%	29%	25%	**
David Douglas High (David Douglas)	30%	28%	23%	**

Focusing on Individual Students

Causes of absenteeism can

Source: ODE for all years except 13–14 which uses preliminary school-reported data. **For middle and high schools, Synergy coding issues resulted in delays in obtaining accurate attendance rates which were not resolved by the time of this report. George MS

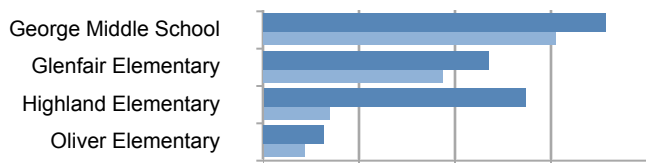


Figure 4: Students Identified for Tailored Intervention & Number That Improved

vary widely from one student to the next and best practice suggests tailored intervention to address diverse needs. Most demonstration sites used student-level reports early in the school year to prioritize students, conduct outreach and follow up based on individualized needs, and monitor improvement. Figure 4 shows the number of students that received tailored intervention at four of the sites, and the number of those targeted students for whom attendance improved.

Promising Practices During Implementation Year 1

Preliminary results suggest that specific school-level and student-level practices had a positive relationship with declines in chronic absence rates. These include:

Student-Level

1. **Student Attendance Response Teams meet consistently** (a minimum of two times per month, optimally weekly) during the year.
2. **Positive contact happens early** and consistently and follows the defined school district protocol starting with phone calls or meetings with the student and progressing to letters, meetings or home visits with parents. It is currently unknown whether contact by the student's teacher has more impact than contact by other staff.
3. **Teams give data about students' chronic absences to teachers** along with information to allow teachers to have timely conversations with students and families.
4. **Teams have access to current and accurate attendance data at every meeting.**

School-Level

5. **Attendance improvements are intentionally recognized and celebrated.** While the form of recognition varies by age and grade, examples include:
 - a. Bulletin boards displaying attendance results by classroom or grade level
 - b. Incentives for improvement
 - c. Surprise classroom recognition
 - d. Attendance check-in system with calendars and stickers for students
 - e. Play time and/or time with adults
6. **Recognition activities are multiple and varied.** Schools employ diverse strategies to recognize attendance improvements or goals. It may be that varying the recognition strategies helps maintain student interest and attention to their attendance.
7. **Communication about the importance of attendance – with both students and families – occurs early in the school year.**

Community-Level

8. **Using data on chronic absenteeism – with parents, youth and community members – raises awareness and supports engagement.** While group composition varies at each site, all demonstration sites share school-wide attendance data, brainstorm about solutions to address barriers to children coming to school, and generate ideas to

■ Identified for Action
■ Improved Attendance

mitigate those challenges.

Other Structural & Contextual Factors

Several factors hindered or facilitated implementation, including:

1. **Data availability** challenges. The conversion to a new statewide student data system (Synergy) at five of the six districts introduced complexities with data and report accuracy. In September, a customized student-level report designed by the Collaborative was available for schools. Some schools were able to access it early in the school year; others experienced technical difficulties that were not resolved until late spring; and attendance data in secondary schools continued to be inaccurate in Synergy through year end. Most issues (e.g., coding for full- and half-day kindergarten) were resolved during the latter half of the school year.
2. **Data collection** on student-level intervention activities happened using various tools and was not consistent across sites, making it impossible to compute consistent correlations between specific practices and attendance rates.
3. **Significant investments of human capital** were needed in schools where full implementation took place. Demonstration sites were creating new roles, adopting new techniques, changing their practices and, to varying degrees, tracking student- and school-level intervention activities. A portion of this need was met by re-purposing or re-prioritizing existing work. In addition, all schools received a \$2,500 stipend to provide release time to SUN Community School Site Managers so that they could take on additional work related to model implementation.

Recommendation: Concentrated Data Collection in Fall 2014

In addition to the critical minimums, demonstration schools were encouraged to employ a significant number of practices that were identified in the toolkit. Several practices implemented during the 2013–2014 school year appear to have had a positive influence on student- and school-level attendance outcomes. Collaborative organizers recommend collecting more complete data to conduct analyses that will produce more conclusive findings. Therefore, in the fall of the 2014–15 school year, the six schools will be encouraged and supported to:

1. Start Student Attendance Response Team meetings immediately in September, including review of student-level data,
2. Thoroughly track student-level interventions, potentially using AmeriCorps or other supplemental staffing
3. Rigorously apply and monitor a narrower, more focused set of practices from September to December.

Using data collected from schools during the fall semester, All Hands Raised and the SUN Service System will coordinate data analysis during January and February of 2015. Collaborative organizers also will hold in-depth conversations with school staff to learn their perspectives on the practices that produce improved outcomes. These findings are expected to shape recommendations for implementation at other schools in the region beginning in School Year 2015–16.

Immediate Next Steps

To ensure implementation of the recommendations above, the following actions will be instituted:

Convening Partners

1. Disseminate the narrower set of practices that showed promise at demonstration sites in the first year. This will serve as a supplement to the attendance toolkit in School Year 14–15.

2. Orient one new school, Lynch Wood, which replaces Oliver, and new staff at other demonstration sites to the model and key roles.

Designated District Representatives

3. Deliver School Attendance Response Team training on September 22nd. Emphasize the distilled list of promising practices.

Principals

4. Oversee the creation of the annual school plan for student- and school-level activities that impact absenteeism.
5. Champion the launch of weekly School Attendance Response Team teams in September to review student-level data. Discussions about school-wide engagement also need to begin early in the year using school-level data to guide decisions and shape activities that are grade-appropriate.

SUN Community School Site Managers

6. Consistently track data on student-level interventions using a common database tool across sites.
7. Submit attendance data monthly to SUN Service System staff to allow for tracking and disaggregation of chronic absence rates by race/ethnicity.

All Hands Raised Data Committee and District Data Managers

8. Support data collection, tracking and analysis using Synergy with modest enhancements to capture reasons for individual absences and types of student-level intervention.

Superintendents

9. Continue to champion the overall efforts and pursue/sustain additional resources to expand capacity for tailored interventions, such as Department of Human Services Family Stability Case Workers.