In Class, Ready to Learn? Why and How to Improve Student Attendance

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Workshop Objectives

- Identify the poor academic outcomes associated with chronic absenteeism.
- Evaluate local school health, mental health, or SBHC strategies to improve student attendance.
- Apply a quality improvement approach for the SBHC, health services, or mental health services team to collaboratively work to increase student attendance.
An Antidote to Drop-Out

The 3 A School Success Framework

- Attendance Every Day
- Achievement Every Year
- Attainment Over Time

Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America’s Promise Alliance
For more info go to www.americaspromise.org/parentengagement

Defining Key Terms

- **Average Daily Attendance**: The percentage of enrolled students who attend school each day.
- **Satisfactory Attendance**: Missing 5% or less of school in an academic year.
- **Chronic Absence**: Missing 10% or more of school in an academic year for any reason—excused or unexcused.
- **Severe Chronic Absence**: Missing 20% or more days of school per year—approximately two months of school.
- **Truancy**: Typically refers *only* to unexcused absences and is defined by each state. In CA, it is missing 3 days of school without a valid excuse, or being late to class 3 times without a valid excuse. In MD, it is unlawfully absent 20% of days if enrolled 90 days.
When 90% Doesn’t Earn an “A”

Students Who Miss More Than 10% Of School Are At Grave Risk

- **Chronic Absence** (=>10% absence)
- **Warning Signs** (<10% but >5% absence)
- **Satisfactory Attendance** (=<5% absence)

Emergency: =>20% absence

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Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1st Grade Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and 1st Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No risk</th>
<th>Small risk</th>
<th>Moderate risk</th>
<th>High risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No attendance</td>
<td>Missed less than 5% of school in K &amp; 1st</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in both K &amp; 1st</td>
<td>Missed 10% or more in K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small risk</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year</td>
<td>Missed 10% or more in 1 year</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)
The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence Is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading Performance By K Attendance

Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)
Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.

Bottom Line: Poor Attendance Predicts Lower Achievement For Students of All Ages

Average reading RIT scores for two cohorts of Oregon students, by absence rates in kindergarten and 5th grade
Source: ECONorthwest analysis of ODE data, 2009-10.
9th Grade Attendance Predicts Graduation for Students of All Economic Backgrounds

Note: This Chicago study found attendance was a stronger graduation predictor than 8th grade test scores.


Moving into Action Requires Knowing If Chronic Absence is a Problem

Most Schools Only Track Average Daily Attendance and Truancy. Both Can Mask Chronic Absence.

Variation in Chronic Absence for Schools with 95% ADA in Oakland, CA
Emerging Data Shows High Levels

Over 14% (nearly 1 out of 7) are chronically absent in Oakland Unified School District

If the 5,421 students chronically absent in 09/10 had each attended 6 more days, OUSD would have received more than $1,147,000 in additional ADA.

Schools + Communities CAN
Make a Difference

Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- Partner with community agencies to help families carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- Make attendance a priority, set targets and monitor progress over time.
- Engage parents and students in identifying and addressing school, family, and community issues that contribute to chronic absence.
- Clearly communicate expectations for attendance to students and families.
- Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- Combine targeted interventions with universal strategies that nurture an engaged learning environment, build a culture of attendance and ensure physical health and safety at school.
- Offer positive supports before punitive action.
Solutions Must Be Grounded in Understanding Of What Leads to Chronic Absence

Discretion
- Parents don’t know attendance matters
- School lacks a strong culture of attendance

Aversion
- Child is struggling academically
- Child is being bullied

Barriers
- Lack of access to health care
- No safe path to school
- Poor transportation

Special thanks to Dr. Robert Balfanz, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD for providing this framework.

Proposed Universal Strategies For Influencing Discretion and Identifying Causes of Absence

Attendance Incentives
Parent Engagement
Personalized Early Outreach
Attendance Data Team
**Strategies Fit with 3 Tiered Approach**

- Recovery Programs
  - Case management and wrap-around services
  - Referral as last resort for court-based intervention
- Intervention Programs
  - Early outreach, support, mentoring for student with poor attendance.
  - Identify and remove barriers
  - Attendance contracts
- Universal/Preventive Programs
  - Safe & supportive school environment
  - Engaging classroom environments
  - Parent education about why attendance matters and how to help each other get students to school.
  - On-going attention to attendance data
  - Recognition for good and improved attendance
  - Collaboration with afterschool & early childhood
  - School-based health supports

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**Considerations for Younger Children**

- Many parents may not be aware that attendance in pre-K & K matters.
- Young children's attendance is affected by what happens to parents. Multiple maternal and family risk factors increase chronic absence.
- Participation in formal child care is associated with lower chronic absence in kindergarten.
- Developing good on-time attendance habits begin in pre-K.
- Poor health was associated with higher chronic absence for in K-3 for children from 200-300% of poverty.
- While attendance is more affected by family conditions, children's attitudes are a factor too.
Attendance is more heavily influenced by the youth although family still matters.

Older youth may miss school due to family responsibilities (e.g. caring for siblings or ill parent, holding a job).

Mental health, teen pregnancy, chronic conditions, and dental disease are top health concerns that affect attendance.

Safety issues (in-school and community) play even greater role.

Students miss school due to suspensions for non-violent behaviors.

Students become discouraged as they fall behind in credits and graduation feels increasingly unattainable.

Direct and meaningful engagement of youth in the classroom and activities on campus even more essential.

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Self-Assessment, Pair and Share

1. Please complete the chronic absence self-assessment regarding one or more SBHCs or school health programs you work with.

2. Then turn to a partner and share something you’re doing well regarding chronic absence, and something you’d like to do more work on.
**PDSA Quality Improvement: Attendance**

**OVERALL PLAN:** Improve student attendance

- Objective for **this cycle:** Establish process for assessing SBHC clients’ attendance
- Questions you may consider to help you achieve this objective:
OVERALL PLAN: Improve student attendance

- Theory of change (by doing “X” will we achieve our objective?)
- Plan for change
  - What
  - Who
  - When

How will we demonstrate the effectiveness of our actions?
PDSA Quality Improvement: Attendance

**DO:**
Carry out the plan for change. Collect information and/or data. Describe observations, problems encountered, and special circumstances.

**STUDY:**
Analyze effectiveness of plan and summarize what was learned.

**ACT:**
Plan for the next cycle: How shall we modify our existing plan, or shall we start a new one?

Repeated use of PDSA cycle

Hunches, Theories, Ideas

Changes That Result in Improvement
Suggestions for Successful QI Teamwork to Improve Attendance

- Frame as a process to formalize existing work (not a new project!), and to validate and refine the good work you are already doing
- Complete at least two time-bound PDSA cycles
- Must have a leader/facilitator
- Get the plan in writing, and hold all partners accountable
- More team members = better ideas and implementation
- Engage both school and SBHC leadership/staff in PDSA planning, implementation, and analysis

Case Study: Roosevelt Middle School

Attendance Data & Intervention Team:
- Principal
- School Social Worker (Intern)
- School Nurse/SBHC
- Attendance Clerk
- Family Advocate
- Community School Coordinator
- After School Coordinator
- Interns
CSHC Resources

Tools and Resources:

Ready Set Success! How to Maximize the Impact of School Health Centers on Student Achievement

From Vision to Reality: How to Build a School Health Center from the Ground Up

Guidelines for California’s School Health Centers

CSHC’s website: www.schoolhealthcenters.org
sections on collaboration and chronic absence in particular!

Thank you! To contact us:

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