Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absence

A Multi-Tiered Approach
About Attendance Works

Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with school entry. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:

- Build public awareness and political will
- Foster state campaigns
- Encourage local practice

www.attendanceworks.org
Learning Goals

• Know what chronic absence is and why it matters for student achievement
• Understand the value of chronic absence data to target interventions
• Review elements of a comprehensive tiered system of attendance supports
• Identify free resources for tier 1 and 2 strategies
What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason.**

Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
## Multiple Measures of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Daily Attendance</strong></td>
<td>How many students show up to school every day? The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truancy</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing school without permission? Typically refers only to unexcused absences. In California, a student is truant after 3 unexcused absences or 3 tardies over 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric in ESSA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average Daily Attendance (ADA)
Can Mask Chronic Absence

**Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with 95% ADA in 2012**

- A: 7%
- B: 12%
- C: 13%
- D: 13%
- E: 15%
- F: 16%

- **% Chronic Absence**

98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don’t know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence

**Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12**

- A: 20%
- B: 20%
- C: 20%
- D: 21%
- E: 23%
- F: 26%

- **% Chronic Absence**
Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy

Number of students missing 10% versus 10 unexcused absences (San Francisco Unified School District)

# chronic absentees - 2010-2011
# of students with 10 unexcused absences (as of May 16th 2011)
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

![Calendar with checkmarks indicating chronic absence days]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
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Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = 2-3 days a month
Chronic Absence a Huge National Problem

OVER 6 MILLION

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

That’s 13 percent of the student population—or 1 in 8 students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
http://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html
Preventing Missed Opportunity

Now available!

http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/preventing-missed-opportunity/
Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.

Where are the Nation’s Chronically Absent Students Found?

Half of the nation’s chronically absent students were concentrated in 4 percent of the 16,240 school districts that reported the number of chronically absent students. These 654 districts were spread across 47 states and Washington, D.C.

Overall, 47 percent were modest to large urban districts. About half of the urban districts had extremely high rates of chronic absence and poverty and were mostly comprised of students from communities of color (largely African American and Latino). Another 45 percent were suburban districts, and while their rates often were close to the national average, their large numbers reflect the sheer size of each district and their growing populations of low-income students.

Click on a school district to view its data.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at http://arcg.is/29jPgaz
Trend of large numbers of students in a handful of districts holds true across states.

Table 2. Concentration of Chronic Absenteeism at District Level in California and Texas 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Total Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Percent of Students Chronically Absent</th>
<th>Total Districts</th>
<th>Number of Districts that Account for...</th>
<th>Percent of Districts that Account for...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25% of CA Students</td>
<td>50% of CA Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>6,035,665</td>
<td>719,747</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>5,176,572</td>
<td>606,428</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country
Why Does Attendance Matter?

4 A School Success Framework

- Attainment Over Time
- Achievement Every Year
- Attendance Every Day
- Advocacy For All

Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America’s Promise Alliance
For more info go to http://www.americaspromise.org/parent-engagement-toolkit
Improving Attendance Matters Because it Reflects:

- **Exposure to language**: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

- **Time on Task in Class**: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

- **On Track for Success**: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

- **College and Career Ready**: Cultivating the habit of regular attendance helps students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.

- **Engagement**: Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

- **Effective Practice**: Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

(For research, see: http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/)
What percentage of students in each grade level were MODERATELY or SEVERELY chronically absent?
Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3rd Grade Reading Skills

Note: **Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as “Some Risk,” indicating the need for additional intervention and “At Risk,” indicating the need for substantial interventions.
A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored **20% lower in reading and math** in later grades and gap grows
- **2X** as likely to be retained in grade.
- **2X** likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

Attendance Matters for Achievement

Pair Share:

What is one thing that struck you about the impact of chronic absence?
How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
## Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Myths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Barriers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Aversion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disengagement</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused  
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem  
- Attendance only matters in the older grades | - Lack of access to health or dental care  
- Poor Transportation  
- Trauma  
- No safe path to school  
- Homelessness | - Child struggling academically or socially  
- Bullying  
- Ineffective school discipline  
- Parents had negative school experience  
- Undiagnosed disability | - Lack of engaging and relevant instruction  
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school  
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school  
- Poor school climate |
Think about a student who was chronically absent in your school:

• What were the reasons driving his or her absences?

• What did you do that helped improve the student’s attendance?
Recommended Site-Level Strategies

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance
B. Engage Students and Parents
C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice
D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach
E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers
Fill Out Your Pyramid

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.

TIER 3
Students at risk of missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

TIER 2
Students at risk of missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

TIER 1
All students

How many students are in each tier?

High Cost
Tier 3
Tier 2
Tier 1

Low Cost
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 3</th>
<th>Missing more than 20% of school (4+ days per month)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>Missing more than 10% but less than 20% (2-3 days per month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1b</td>
<td>Missing between 5% but less than 10% (1+ days per month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1a</td>
<td>Missing less than 5% of school (&lt;1 day per month)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

**TIER 1**
- Recognize good & improved attendance
- Educate & engage students and families
- Monitor attendance data & set goals
- Establish positive & engaging school climate
- Identify & address common barriers to getting to school

**TIER 2**
- Provide personalized early outreach
- Meet to develop tailored action plan
- Connect to a caring mentor

**TIER 3**
- Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

- Students who missed 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
- Students missing 10–19% (moderate chronic absence)
- Students missing 5–9% (at risk)
- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
### Tier 1: Family and Youth Engagement Strategies

**Tier 1**

- Family and youth engagement strategies powerful enough to get them to successfully partner with the school for academic success without any further intervention.

**Who needs Tier 1?**

- All students in your school
- Families of all students enrolled in your school

**For whom is Tier 1 sufficient?**

- Families who partner with the school
- Youth who have had good experiences with school in the past
- Families who have had good experiences with school in the past
Tier 1: Creating a positive, engaging school climate that supports attendance

Attendance is higher when schools:

☑ Promote a sense of belonging and connection including noticing when students show up
☑ Make learning engaging so students don’t want to miss class
   Engage in restorative practice not punishment
☑ Meet the basic needs of our most economically challenged families so all have the opportunity to get to school
☑ Build awareness about how absences can easily add up to too much time lost in the classroom
Parents underestimate the number of year-end absences

We asked each parent about his or her child’s absences in two ways:

1. Was your child absent an average of 2 or more days a month?
2. Was your child absent more than 10 days over the year?

60% of parents said their child was absent an average of 2+ days a month, **but not** 10+ days a year

**The math:** If a child is absent an average of 2+ days a month, then he/she is absent far more than 10+ days a year
What Teens Think About Attendance

Get Schooled found the two messages that are most likely to resonate tie attendance into longer term goals: the impact missing school has on life success and the impact missing school has on graduation. The nearer term message of high school graduation is more likely to resonate with middle school students.

Schools inadvertently reinforce some absence-causing beliefs

Reinforce Attendance

- Class rewards for good attendance (e.g. popcorn or fun activities)
- Individual recognition for students with good attendance

Big motivators for kids, but not for parents

Reinforce Absenteeism

- Impersonal letters
- Teachers send work home in response to absences
- Teachers do not address absenteeism issue with the parent
- Parents do not feel their child is safe in school
- High levels of absenteeism in the class

Reinforces parents’ existing attitudes & behaviors

Impersonal Letters:
- Easy to disregard
- Many parents felt the school miscounted—but parents couldn’t verify because they weren’t tracking absences
- Many parents felt that the school didn’t understand them

Sending Work Home:
- Parents thought that completing a makeup packet caught their child up for the missed day’s work

Teachers Not Addressing Absenteeism:
- Most parents reported that they regularly communicate with their children’s teacher, but never about absences
1. In what ways does your school currently communicate with parents about absenteeism?
2. In what ways does your school currently communicate with students about absenteeism?
3. How might the communication be inadvertently reinforcing absenteeism?
4. How can your school improve messaging? How would you involve students in that effort?
Check out the Attendance Works Website:

http://www.attendanceworks.org
Parent Video & Discussion Guide

Bringing Attendance Home Video (6 minutes)

- Facilitated conversation
- The consequences of chronic absence
- How to improve absenteeism
- Family practice
- Increase social capital
- Identify how school can help
- Community services

Help families make back-up plans

MY CHILD’S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD’S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will review my child’s attendance. If my child misses no more than ___ days, I will praise him/her for attending school every day.
- If my child misses ___ days, I will meet with the teacher to develop a plan to improve attendance.

To improve my child’s attendance, I commit to the following:

1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Family Signature: __________________________ Date: ______________
Teacher Signature: __________________________ Date: ______________

To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

MY FAMILY’S HELP BANK

2. Everyday Helpers: Identify who can help during the day. These are family members, neighbors, and individuals who can help regularly.
3. Occasional Helpers: Identify people who can help occasionally. These are family members, neighbors, and individuals who can help in times of need.
4. Potential Helpers: Identify people who can help in an emergency. These are family members, neighbors, and individuals who can help in times of need.

Everyday Helpers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Best Contact Number</th>
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</table>

Occasional Helpers:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Best Contact Number</th>
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</table>

Potential Helpers:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Best Contact Number</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

301-2016 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

37
Engage Students with Developing Messaging

Positive School Climate Get Behind It!

Young people who are suspended once are 50% less likely to graduate.
Creating a Culture of Attendance through Recognition

Attendance Data Wall
Orchard Gardens, City Year Boston

VIP Lounge
Collins High School, City Year Chicago
## Tier 2 Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 2</th>
<th>Who are the families in Tier 2?</th>
<th>For which families is Tier 2 sufficient?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Targeted interventions that remove identified barriers and increase positive connections that motivate improved attendance. | • Missing 10% or more of the prior or current school year for any reason.  
• Families experiencing some challenge e.g. chronic disease, job loss, divorce, etc. | • Families with barriers to school attendance who may not understand how to access support.  
• Families who see school as “the deliverer of bad news.”  
• Families who are more successful when there is a positive relationship with someone at the school. |
Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
- And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:

  - In first 2 weeks: 2 absences
  - In first month (4 weeks): 2-3 absences
  - In first 2 months (8 weeks): 4 absences

Missing 10% any time after
The first month of school predicts chronic absence

- Baltimore students who missed 2-4 days of school in September were 5 times as likely to be chronically absent.
- Students who missed 5 or more days of school in September were 16 times as likely to be chronically absent.
Possible Tier 2 Interventions

Positive Linkages and Engagement for Students and Families

- Assign caring mentors
- Partner with families/students to develop Student Attendance Success Plan
- Recruit for engaging before- or after-school activities
- Connect to Walk-to-School Companion
- Offer plan or contacts for health support
School Based Health Supports
What makes the success mentor model powerful?

• Evidence of impact
• Clear and measurable outcomes
• An enabler of multiple school improvement efforts
• Cost effective – can be largely driven through existing resources
• Can be continually improved
• Focuses on student strengths
What does a Success Mentor do?

01 Meet and greet each morning.
02 Reach out and engage mentee’s family
03 Call home if mentee misses school
04 Meet with mentees 1-on-1 or in small groups
05 Track mentees’ attendance and improvements
06 Recognize & celebrate successes
07 Work with school staff for support & intervention

CONNECT WITH MENTOR

CHRONICALLY ABSENT STUDENT
Who can be a mentor?

Within a school:
• Caring adults such as the principal, teachers, nurses, counselors and other support staff

Community:
• AmeriCorps members, respected elders such as aunties or uncles, after-school providers
What Tier 2 Strategies Will You Use?

Fill Out Your Pyramid

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.

TIER 3
Students at risk of missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

TIER 2
Students at risk of missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

TIER 1
All students

How many students are in each tier?

High Cost

Tier 3

Tier 2

Tier 1

Low Cost
Tier 3 Interventions

**Tier 3**
- Tier 3 provides intensive interventions, often from multiple agencies or specialists within a school district or community.

**Who are the families in Tier 3?**
- Missing 20% or more of the prior or current school year for any reason.
- Already involved in the system (child welfare, juvenile or criminal justice).

**For which families is Tier 3 sufficient?**
- Families who feel hopeless because of the barriers they face.
- Families who are unable to experience success without intervention.
- Families who have a negative relationship with school.
- Families who require ongoing support for sustained success.
Who can help families in Tier 3?

- Community schools
- Head Start family liaisons
- School integrated service teams
- Family resource centers
- McKinney Vento representatives
- Public agencies

Who would you add to this list?
## Tier 3 Interventions

### Tier 3
- Tier 3 provides intensive interventions, often from multiple agencies or specialists within a school district or community.

### Who are the families and youth in Tier 3?
- Students missing 20% or more of the prior or current school year for any reason.
- Already involved in another system (child welfare, juvenile or criminal justice).

### For which families and youth is Tier 3 sufficient?
- Families who feel hopeless because of the barriers they face.
- Families who are unable to experience success without intervention.
- Families who have a negative relationship with school.
- Families who require ongoing support for sustained success.
Who can help families in Tier 3?

- Community schools
- Head Start family liaisons
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- McKinney Vento representatives
- Public agencies

Who would you add to this list?
What Tier 3 Strategies Will You Use?

Fill Out Your Pyramid

TIER 3
Students at risk of missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

TIER 2
Students at risk of missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

TIER 1
All students

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.
Thanks for attending!

Cecelia Leong, Associate Director for Programs, Attendance Works  Email: cecelia@attendanceworks.org