

Reducing Chronic Absenteeism, K-12

Presented by:
Randy Sprick

Co Developers:
Randy Sprick
Jessica Sprick

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For more information contact Safe & Civil Schools
800-323-8819 or info@safeandcivilschools

Why Use a Schoolwide Approach?

Notes:

Research is pointing to chronic absenteeism as one of the most critical and yet underaddressed issues in schools:

- _____ million students each year
(_____%)
- In some schools up to 50% of the student body is chronically absent.
- Many schools do not know how many or which students are chronically absent.

Definitions

- Average Daily Attendance (ADA): total number of days of student attendance divided by the number of days of school taught during the same period.
- Truancy: missing school without _____
- Chronic absenteeism: missing _____ of school for _____ reason—excused, unexcused or suspension.
 - 3 days or more in the first 30 days of school
 - 18 days or more in a 180-day year

Why Use a Schoolwide Approach?

Goal: *no* student is chronically absent.

- No student is absent 10% or more of days

Goal: *every* student will _____ school.

- Every student has _____ days absent each academic year.
- 5% or less = _____ or less in one year
- No more than the equivalent of _____ per month

Addressing Absenteeism Through Schoolwide Systems

- Absenteeism becomes part of any school's multi-tiered approach to behavioral and academic supports:
 - _____ prevention
 - _____ identification
 - Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions
- Attendance is a measure of other climate and safety (Foundations) efforts

Foundations Content

Notes:

Module C: Presentation 4: Improving Attendance

Task 1: Develop a Common Language and Understanding About Attendance

Task 2: Design and Refine Attendance Policies

Task 3: Analyze Schoolwide Attendance Data and Identify Priorities for Improvement

Task 4: Use Practical Strategies to Promote Regular Attendance

Task 1: Develop a Common Language and Understanding About Attendance

- Definitions and goals
- Negative outcomes associated with chronic absenteeism
- Common causes of absenteeism

Brainstorm negative effects of absenteeism:

On the student:

On the class:

On the parents/community:

Negative Effects of Absenteeism in Elementary

Notes:

A recent study in California found:

- Of students who attended school regularly in K-1, _____% were proficient readers at the end of 3rd grade.
- Of students who were chronically absent in K-1, _____% were proficient readers at the end of 3rd grade.

K-1 attendance is a major predictor of reading at grade level by 3rd grade.

Negative Effects of Absenteeism in Secondary

Frequent absences is one of the best predictors of _____ and _____.

- Utah Study: Students who were chronically absent any year from 8th-12th grade were _____ times more likely to drop out than students who attended regularly.

Other Negative Effects of Absenteeism

- May not develop important life skills
 - Social and friendship
 - Resilience
 - _____
- Face dangers outside of school
- Increased involvement in criminal justice system
- Societal costs of dropout, delinquency, and incarceration
- Classroom churn
- Cannot tell if other initiatives—academic and behavioral are _____

What Can We Do About Absenteeism?

Move away from traditional approaches that focus on punitive methods:

- Parents contacts
- Warnings/lectures
- Truancy court
- Suspension for tardies and absences

Use positive and proactive approaches.

Look at Causes of Absenteeism

Notes:

- What is preventing students from attending?
- What is the student or parent “getting” from the student being absent?

Prevention and intervention must address the causes of absenteeism:

- Barriers
- Escape/Avoidance
- Lack of awareness or understanding about the importance of school
- To acquire something

As you complete the tasks in C4: Improving Attendance, give consideration to the common causes of absenteeism in your school.

Task 2: Define and Refine Attendance Policies

Attendance policies should:

- Emphasize the importance of attendance.
- Clarify definitions and how you will monitor attendance.
- Address common problems/causes of attendance issues.
- Be taught and reviewed regularly with staff, students, and families.

Use the document “School-Based Analysis of Attendance Policies” to analyze your current policy and complete revisions as necessary.

School-Based Analysis of Attendance Policies (p. 1 of 2)

This form is designed to help you consider your current attendance policies and whether they specifically and clearly address most of the attendance issues you see in your school. Information in the Module C, Presentation 4, Task 2 video and book complements this form.

Questions to ask yourself	Y	N	Actions
1. Does your policy refer to state laws about compulsory education and attendance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Does the policy clearly define what counts as an excused absence and an unexcused absence? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Does the policy indicate legitimate reasons for absence? b. Does each legitimate reason for absence include additional information for clarification? c. Does the policy indicate reasons for absences that will <i>not</i> be considered excused, even with a parent/guardian call or note? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does the policy clearly define the amount of time that will qualify as an absence and indicate how this will be monitored? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Do partial-day absences count as part of the student's absence count? b. If no, will partial-day absences accumulate toward full-day absences? c. When does a tardy become an unexcused absence? _____ _____ d. Will the school monitor both numbers of tardies for each student as well as number of minutes missed for cumulative tardies? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Will the school monitor school-event absences and address potential detrimental effects of these absences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

School-Based Analysis of Attendance Policies (p. 2 of 2)

Questions to ask yourself	Y	N	Actions
<p>5. Do current policies link absences with course credit or grades? (That is, students who meet an established maximum percentage of days absent are denied course credit or their grades are automatically reduced.) Caution: If using this procedure, ensure the following are in place:</p> <p>a. How will you educate and remind students and families about the policy? _____ _____ _____</p> <p>b. How will you warn students and families when the student is at risk of losing credit or getting a reduced grade because of high absence rates? _____ _____ _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>6. Does your policy include the following statements?</p> <p>a. The school will assist with barriers and difficulties that might be preventing regular attendance. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>b. The school will take measures to help the family address absenteeism before court proceedings are initiated. (Indicate specific measures; Task 4 suggests some strategies.) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>c. The school will override excused absences when they are found to be illegitimate. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>d. The school will initiate truancy court proceedings if students and families are not making serious efforts to get the student to school or work with the school to overcome barriers. <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>			
<p>7. How will the Foundations Team use the attendance policy to educate staff, students, and parents about the importance of attendance?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			

Note: Use a separate sheet to document other policies and further actions.

Example

Notes:

Question 2: Does the policy clearly define what counts as an excused absence and an unexcused absence?

Legitimate reasons:

- Illness
- Death or funeral of a family member
- Medical or dental appointment
- Religious holiday of the student's religion
- Attend a required court-appearance
- School sponsored curricular or extra-curricular activity
- Other emergency

Provide Additional Clarity

Question 2b: Does each legitimate reason for absence include additional information for clarification?

For example: "Illness"

- All students receive "How Sick Is Too Sick for School?"
- Tier 2: conference to discuss frequent illness with family, follow up with phone calls when the student is excused

For example: Medical or dental appointment

- When possible schedule appointments outside of _____
- The student must attend prior to the appointment or return on the same day (absent only for the time going to, during, and returning from the appointment).
Note: For schools in which this is problematic, require a signed appointment note.
- Attempt to vary time appointments are scheduled to not overly impact a subject.

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Foundations: A Proactive and Positive Behavior Support System

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REPRODUCIBLE
FORM
C-24

DRAFT pages from Foundations 3rd ed.

How Sick Is Too Sick for School?

In general, children are too sick to come to school when:

- They are contagious.
- Their symptoms are serious enough to prevent them from focusing on the tasks they need to do there.

Use this checklist to determine whether to keep your child home from school.

	YES	NO
1. Does your child have a fever of 100° or higher?	_____	_____
2. Has your child vomited two or more times in a 24-hour period?	_____	_____
3. Does your child have diarrhea?	_____	_____
4. Are your child's eyes crusty, bright red, and/or discharging yellow or green fluid (conjunctivitis/pink eye)?	_____	_____
5. If your child complains of a sore throat, is it accompanied by fever, headache, stomachache, or swollen glands?	_____	_____
6. If your child complains of a stomachache, is it accompanied by fever, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, sharp pain, and/or hard belly?	_____	_____
7. Does your child have a persistent, phlegmy cough?	_____	_____
8. Does your child have lice (white, translucent eggs the size of a pinpoint on the hair or insects on the scalp)?	_____	_____

If you answered yes to any of these questions, please keep your child home from school and consider seeking medical attention. Your child could have a serious or contagious illness. Keep your child home until he or she has been symptom free for at least 24 hours or until the doctor indicates that he or she can return to school.

If children have a cold, headache, or stomachache that is not accompanied by fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, they can probably come to school.

If children have a rash, it could be contagious. Please seek medical advice before allowing your child to come to school.

Earaches are not contagious. Children can come to school as long as they can concentrate on their work.

Once your child has been treated for lice, he or she can return to school.

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Provide Additional Clarity

Notes:

Excused absence does NOT include:

- Vacations
- Minor illness (cold, stomachache, or headache without fever, vomiting, or diarrhea)
- Haircuts
- Birthdays
- Taking a driver's test
- Going shopping
- Car trouble
- Oversleeping (student or parent)

Address other common absence reasons that are problematic in your school.

Task 3: Analyze Schoolwide Attendance Data and Identify Priorities for Improvement

Set up processes for:

- Calculating schoolwide absenteeism rates on a regular basis:
Percentage of students in each of the following categories:
 - Regular—missing less than 5% of days
 - At risk—missing 5—10% of days
 - Chronic Absence—missing 10% or more of days
 - Severe Chronic Absence—missing 20% or more of days
- Analyzing trends for why students are absent
- Developing red-flag systems for individual student support

Calculate the Schoolwide Rate of Chronic Absenteeism	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Print a list of all students who have been absent 10% or more of days in the current school year.2. Count the number students on this list.3. Divide the number of students chronically absent by the number of enrolled students.	<p>I work in a school with 1,500 students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It's Day 80 in the school year. I print a list of all students who missed ____ or more days (10% of days).2. I count 217 students.3. I divide the number of students chronically absent (____) by the number of enrolled students (_____) _____ % of the student body is chronically absent.

Task 4: Use Practical Strategies to Promote Regular Attendance

- Increase _____ about the importance of regular attendance:
 - Campaign to get students, family, and staff on board and excited
 - Make an attendance focus part of the _____ of the school—emphasize the importance of attendance frequently in myriad ways
- Enhance family and community involvement

Notes:

Increase Awareness

Example: Send an Initial Letter Home

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 FOUNDATIONS SAMPLE

DRAFT pages from Foundations 3rd ed.

**Loganville Middle School
 Home of the Trojans**



Dear families,

We are looking forward to a great year, with students in classes and ready to learn every day.

We have learned that students who miss even a few days of school each month are at far greater risk of academic failure and dropout than students who attend regularly. We have set a goal that every student in our school attends regularly (has nine or fewer absences in a year).

Because attendance is so important, please send your child to school every day unless he or she has a contagious illness or is running a fever.

We have included a chart with this letter that will help you keep track of your student's absences. If your child is at risk of missing too much school, please feel free to contact Joan Ndogo at 555-1234 for assistance. We will also monitor each student's attendance across the year so we can work with families when the number of absences puts a student at risk. We will be happy to work with you to help your student attend regularly and have greater opportunities for success.

Sincerely,

Date:	Absence 10+								
Absence 1 Reason:	Absence 2 Reason:	Absence 3 Reason:	Absence 4 Reason:	Absence 5 Reason:	Absence 6 Reason:	Absence 7 Reason:	Absence 8 Reason:	Absence 9 Reason:	Note: Your student is at increasing risk for academic difficulties and school failure with each absence beyond this point.

Increase Awareness

Example: Classroom Attendance Graph

- Post in a high-traffic location.
- Add a goal line (for the number of students in attendance each day).
- Graph the number of students present each day.
- Add a _____ system as needed.

Enhance Family and Community Involvement

- Increase awareness: PSAs, newsletters, etc.
- Create meaningful partnerships with families: Shungnak parent attendance initiative
- Increase community involvement:
 - Medical offices asking for families to schedule outside of school when possible
 - Businesses providing incentives for regular attendance
 - Businesses asking for IDs for those who should be in school

Connect with Families

- Provide _____ and _____ contacts at first.
- Become increasingly _____ (and include _____ measures) as needed the more the problem persists
- When a family truly will not participate, work directly with _____.

Example: create a task analysis (checklist) of the student's bedtime and morning routine. Combine this with a high-value reinforcement system for coming to school.

Notes:

Figure B-1 Graph of Number of Students Attending Class

