BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME

Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence

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version 2.0

Attendance Works

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 preschool and is a warning sign that a high school student will drop out. New research suggests that chronic absence predicts whether a student will finish college. The discipline and determination to get to school every day builds a habit that helps a student persist and succeed in college. 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. 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, visit the Research page on the Attendance Works website.

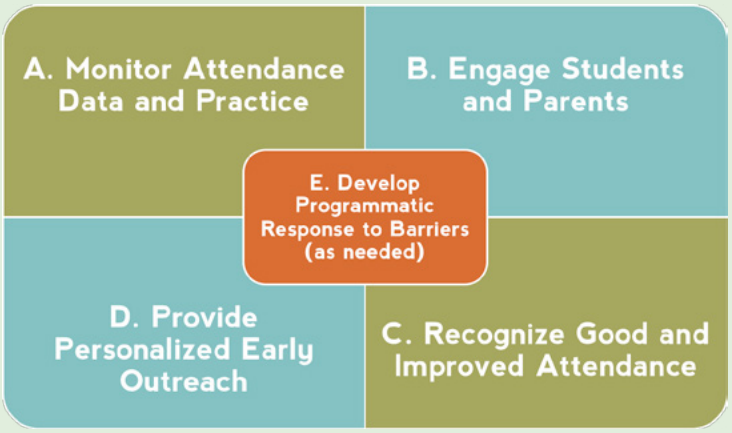
Attendance Works has created this toolkit to support parent engagement as part of a comprehensive approach to reducing chronic absence. You can see a graphic display of the key elements to reduce chronic absence on the next page or, to read about them in greater detail, visit the What Works page on the Attendance Works website.

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.

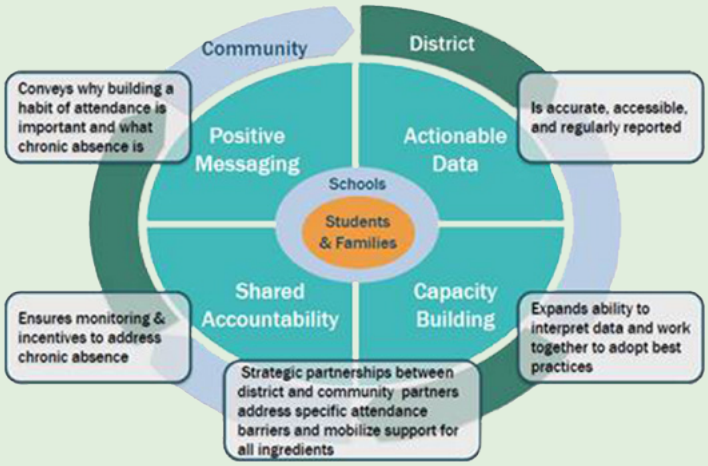
The first set exists at the school level. In our experience, schools that have these elements in place over the course of an entire academic year see measurable improvements.

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 and Community Engagement 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 and Videos** 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

Research[1] shows parent involvement has a positive impact on school attendance. In addition, Joyce Epstein and Steven Sheldon from Johns Hopkins University[2] 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.

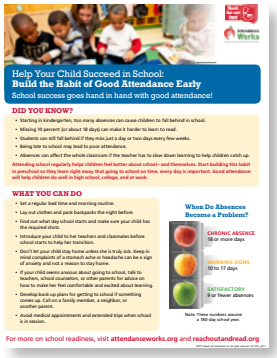
Offer support when needed. Ask parents about what makes it hard to get their child to school. When the issue is difficulties with transportation, health, lack of safe paths to school or family illness, parents may not be able to surmount those challenges without the help of someone outside the family. 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

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 one of the Attendance Works videos to explain the nature of chronic absence and explore possible solutions.



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?

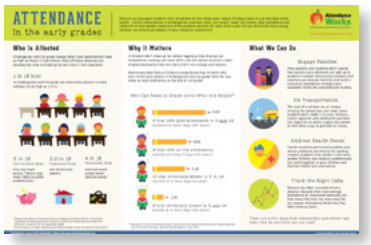
CHRONIC ABSENCE
18 or more days

WARNING SIGNS
10 to 17 days

SATISFACTORY
9 or fewer absences

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

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



ATTENDANCE
in the early grades

Who Is Affected

Why It Matters

What We Can Do

Engage Families

Fix Transportation

Address Health Needs

Track the Right Data

Keeping Kindergarten Ready: Why Attendance Matters in the Early Grades

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.

- The Attendance Imperative video explaining chronic absence
- Bringing Attendance Home video and discussion guide with parents talking to parents
- PowerPoint on chronic absence
- Flyers for parents of young children and youth (in English, Spanish and Chinese)
- Student Attendance Success Plan 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.

Full details of these exercises are in the appendix.

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

Exercise: Creating a Family Plan for Student Success

The Student Attendance Success Plan is a blueprint for how students and parents can turn around poor attendance and improve achievement. This exercise, which can be done in groups or in one-on-one settings, can help you work with families to understand the importance of attendance and the concept of chronic absenteeism, explore ways that parents can support their children's attendance and develop a Student Attendance Success Plan to reduce absences. We have created a handbook split into modules with 60-minute sessions for groups and 30-minute sessions for individuals. The one-on-one module can also be incorporated into parent-teacher conferences. A third module consists of a follow-up session to check in with parents and see how they are doing in implementing their success plan.

In both instances, you will discuss key concepts, help parents set attendance goals and ensure they develop back-up plans for getting children to school everyday.
http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout/

Exercise: Bringing Attendance Home Video

The Bringing Attendance Home video showcases real parents talking about their challenges with absenteeism and how they overcame them. The video is 6-7 minutes long and can be shown in the context of a back-to-school night or parent summit. It can also be a stand-alone, 45- to 60-minute exercise that includes an icebreaker beforehand and a facilitated conversation afterward. We have created a discussion guide to help school employees, community leaders, social workers, health care providers, family resource center staff, parent leaders and everybody else who works with families to facilitate a conversation about the importance of attendance and how to partner with schools to improve students' attendance.

The facilitated conversation allows parents to digest what they have just learned, make it relevant to themselves and discuss what they can do to improve their children's own attendance. The full group can brainstorm about what families and schools can do to reduce absenteeism.
http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-video/

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 and the Teaching Attendance 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 at info@attendanceworks.org.

Attendance Works

www.attendanceworks.org

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.

EXERCISE: ILLUSTRATING THE GAP IN 3RD GRADE READING

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.

EXERCISE: WASHING THE ELEPHANT

Time: 5 minutes

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

1. ICEBREAKER: PRESENT VS. ABSENT (15 minutes)

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 minutes)

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

EXERCISE: ATTENDANCE CAFE

Time: 30 minutes

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

EXERCISE: 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://abriendopuertasopeningdoors.org/index.php. Attendance Works wishes to thank and acknowledge Abriendo Puertas for supporting the development of Taking Action on Attendance.

EXERCISE: CREATING A FAMILY PLAN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Time: 20-25 minutes

Part I: Review Student Attendance Success Plan

Hand out the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheets and Academic Calendars to participants and walk through the different parts of it so that they know what you'll be discussing:

- My child's attendance goal
- Strategies to reach my attendance goal
- Your family's help bank
- Discuss the value of creating a Student Attendance Success Plan.

What we do every day in our family matters. As parents and caregivers, we can have a powerful impact on our child's attendance and success in school.

Let's acknowledge that sometimes families face particularly challenging circumstances that require formal services, but right now, we are focusing on what families can influence.

I am going to guide you through to creating your family's Student Attendance Success Plan. At the end of this process, you will have clear goals for your child's attendance, strategies you will use to support your child's attendance, a backup plan for when you need help getting your child to and from school and a way to know whether your child is on track to meeting his attendance goal.

Part II: Setting Attendance Goals

Helping families develop a Student Attendance Success Plan begins with examining students' current attendance rate and absences and formulating goals for improvement. To go through this step, you can either provide school attendance data to families (if you have access to it and the family has signed a consent form), or have families self-report.

- Direct families to the Student Attendance Success Plan. Ask them to fill out the first part of the first section of the worksheet, titled My Child's Attendance Goal. The questions included in this section are:
  - My child was present _____ days. My child was absent _____ days.
  - The number of school days that have passed is: _____

To be ready for the next grade, my goal is to improve my child's attendance rate to _____ %.

- Go around the room and see if anyone needs help calculating their attendance or absence rate, or if they need help picking a goal for improvement.
- Remember that to calculate the attendance/absence rate, divide the number of days present/absent by the total number of school days that have passed in the school year. (Note: A complete school year typically has 180 days.)

Part III: Identify Concrete Strategies Each Parent Can Take

Review with the group some of the possible strategies suggested on the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheet:

Possible Strategies To Reach Your Child's Attendance Goal

- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will reward my child for attending school every day with _____ (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from chores, a special treat).
- I will make sure my child is in bed by ____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for ____ a.m.
- If my child consistently complains of a stomach or head ache, I will send him/her to school anyway and call Counselor _____ so that she can check in with him/her during the school day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend, or neighbor who I can call on take my child to school if I can't or if he/she misses the bus.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out how he/she can make up missed schoolwork.
- I will set medical and dental appointments for weekdays after 3:30 pm.

Ask participants if they can think of additional strategies not included on the worksheet that they would imagine could be helpful (to them, or to their peers) in reaching their attendance goal. Chart their ideas on a flipchart or white board.

Ask families to take time to think about 1 or 2 action steps they will commit to taking to support their child getting to school on every day on time. Have them write it down on their Student Attendance Success Plan.

Ask for 3-4 volunteers to share what actions steps they are committing to with the group. Chart them on the flipchart or white board. Alternatively, ask them to go around in a circle at their tables and share their commitments within their small groups.

Worksheets for the Student Attendance Success Plan begin on the next page.

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- My child was present _____ days.
- My child was absent _____ days.
- My child's current attendance rate is _____ %.
- My goal for next year is to improve my child's attendance to _____ %.

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

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

We will review progress to meet this goal at the next Parent-Teacher Conference.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will reward my child for attending school every day with _____.
  (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from doing chores, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by ____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for ____ a.m.
- If my child consistently complains of a stomachache or headache and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to school anyway and call Counselor _____ so that he/she can check in with him/her during the school day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend, or neighbor who can take my child to school if I can't make it or if he/she missed the bus.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out how he/she can make up missed schoolwork.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after 3:30 p.m.

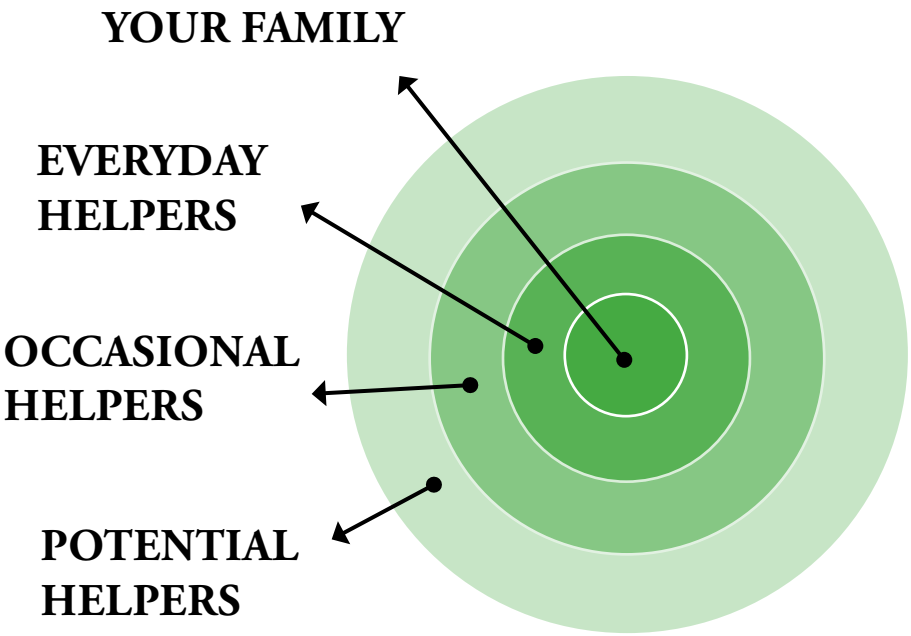
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

Adapted with permission from materials created by Early Works at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Ore. www.childinst.org/our-initiatives/early-works

YOUR FAMILY'S HELP BANK



1. **Your Family**: List who lives in your house.
2. **Everyday Helpers**: Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
3. **Occasional Helpers**: Identify people who probably cannot help everyday, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
4. **Potential Helpers**: Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help — if you ask.

1. **Your Family**:

2. **Everyday Helpers**:

3. **Occasional Helpers**:

4. **Potential Helpers**:

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

_____	_____
Name	**Best Contact Number**
_____	_____
Name	**Best Contact Number**
_____	_____
Name	**Best Contact Number**

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Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

Adapted with permission from the DeVos Family Foundation

2014-2015 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

September						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

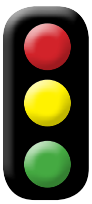
January						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



CHRONIC ABSENCE = 18 absences (10% of school year)

Warning Signs = 10 to 17 absences

Satisfactory Attendance = 9 or fewer absences

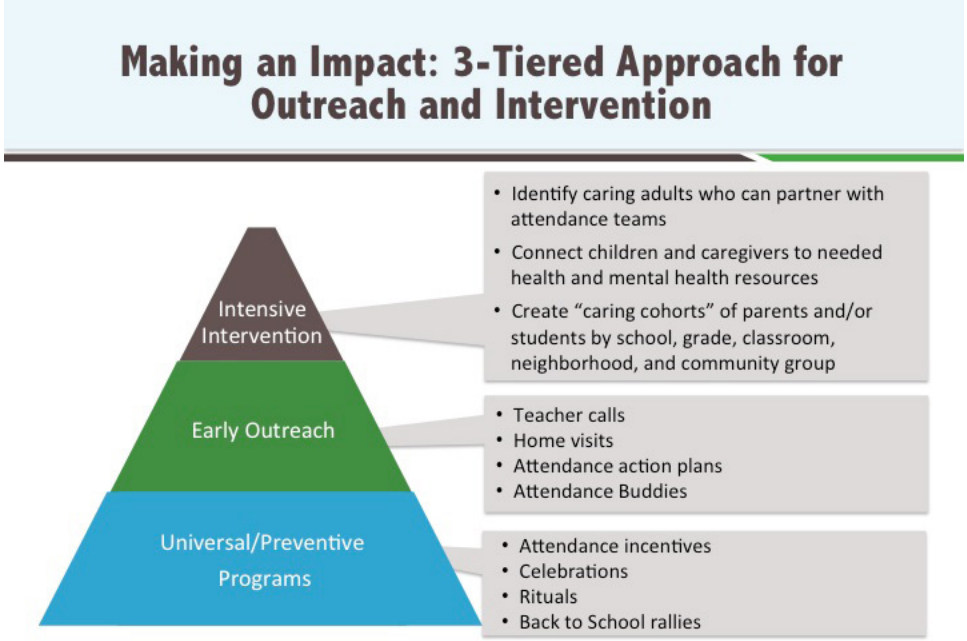
- My child was present _____ days.
- My child was absent _____ days.
- My child's current attendance rate is _____ %.
- My goal for next year is to improve my child's attendance to _____ %.

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

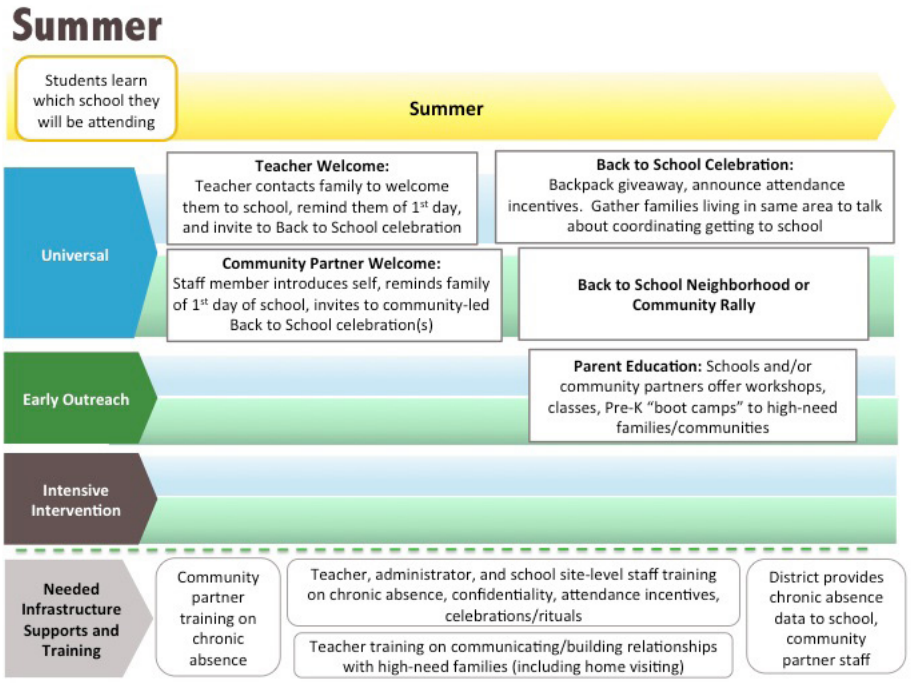
Building trusting relationships with students and families is critical to effective outreach and intervention, but this work should not be left on the shoulders of schools alone. Coordinating with community partners allows broader reach, engages more stakeholders, and leverages the relationships and 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

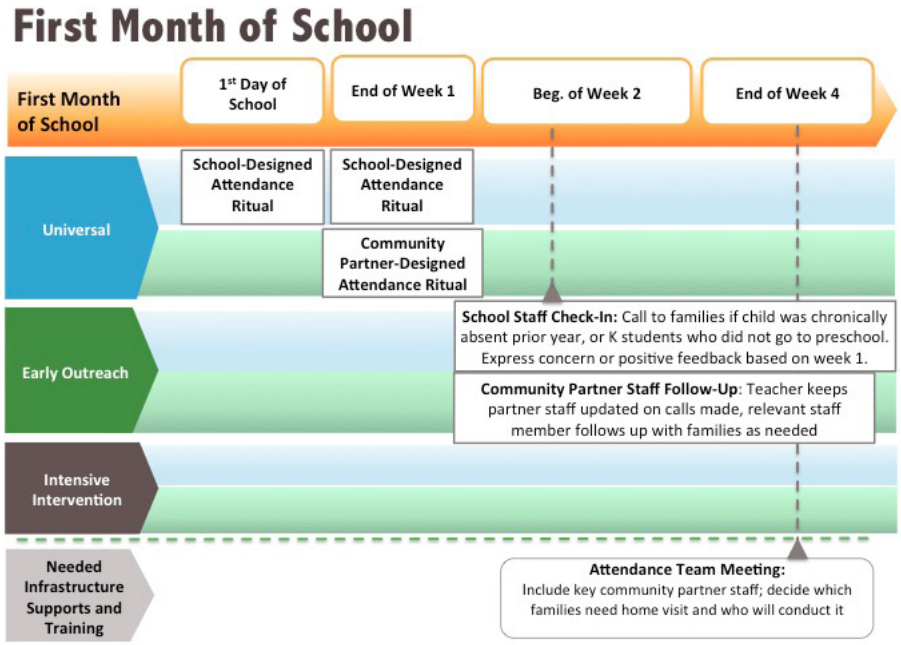
The following diagrams reflect one model for outreach and intervention that integrates the efforts of both school staff and community partner staff. In designing their own model, communities do not need to start from scratch and instead should inventory and leverage what relevant programs and practices 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.

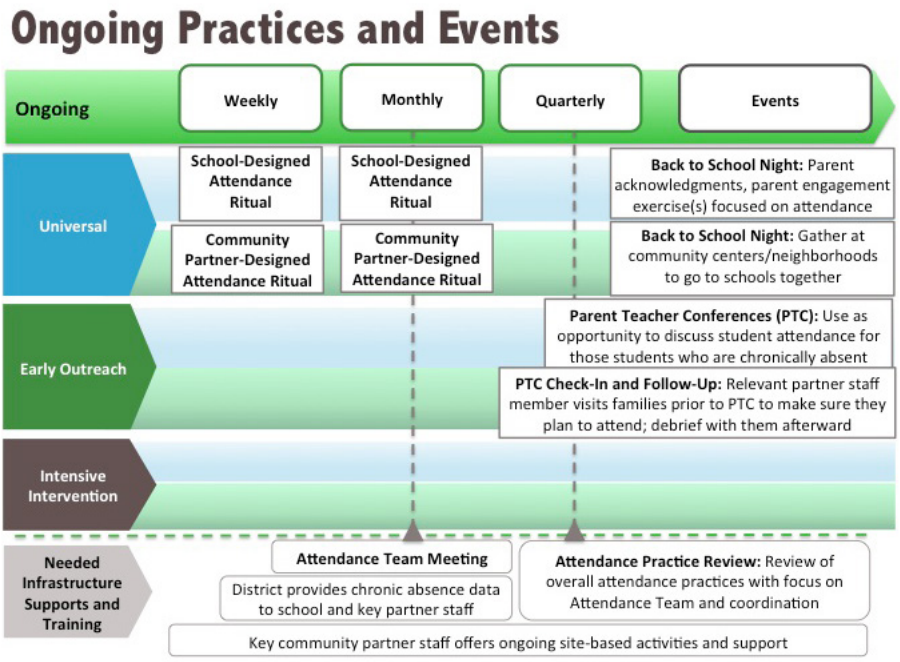


The first month of school is the perfect time to build a sense of excitement about the school year and to introduce students and families to expectations about attendance as well as positive incentives for attendance. It can also be a gauge for the coming year and gives teachers and community partner 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.



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.

APPENDIX B — PARENT VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

Revised July 15, 2014

Time: 45-60 minutes

This is a guide to help school employees, community leaders, social workers, health care providers, family resource center staff, parent leaders, and everybody else who works with families to facilitate a conversation with parents about the importance of attendance and how to partner with schools to improve students' attendance. The conversation is built around Attendance Works' parent video.

We recommend setting aside about 45-60 minutes for this activity, which includes:

- SETTING THE STAGE (including ground rules and an icebreaker) (8-13 minutes)
- SHOWING THE VIDEO (7 minutes)
- FACILITATED CONVERSATION (30-40 minutes)

SETTING THE STAGE

- Assign one person to facilitate the conversation for the group.
- Take a moment to establish some basic ground rules for a conversation such as:
  - Create opportunities for everyone to participate.
  - Respect different perspectives and experiences.
  - Share only what you feel comfortable sharing. You may pass.
- Start out with an Icebreaker to get everyone thinking about attendance.
- Ask the group to split into pairs and reflect on what it takes to get children to school every day.
- Discuss two things with your partner:
  - What makes it hard for you as a parent to get your child or children to school every day? (If a participant is not the parent of a school-age child, ask them to share what they have observed to be challenges for their neighbors, or allow them to pass.)
  - What motivates and helps you to get your child to school despite these challenges?
- With the full group, ask people to share what they heard about what makes it hard to get children to school and about what helps.

SHOWING THE VIDEO

Please use this link to the http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-video/. If you are concerned about Internet access, you can download the video to your computer or flash drive in advance of your event.

FACILITATED CONVERSATION

The purpose of this facilitated conversation is to help parents digest what they have just learned, make it relevant to themselves, and discuss what they can do to improve their children's own attendance.

With the full group, pose discussion questions on the following topics. Feel free to use the prompts provided. If possible, chart people's responses.

The Consequences Of Chronic Absence

The video stated that:

> "...By the end of the school year students can have missed so much instruction that they experience difficulty learning to read, mastering important math concepts, passing courses and ultimately graduating from high school."

What is your reaction to the video's statement about the consequences of chronic absence — missing 18 days of school over the course of a year, or just 2-3 days each month?

Optional Follow-Up:

- Ask the group to reflect on Olga's story about how she did not anticipate the consequences for her son of missing too many days of school in kindergarten. What does this story bring up for them?
- Supplement the discussion with excerpts from additional resources, such as this short research summary (or this infographic summarizing the impact of chronic absence on learning.) You may even want to make copies for the parents to take home. It may be eye-opening for families to see the data and research about the effects of chronic absence.

How To Improve Absenteeism

The video emphasizes that reducing absenteeism requires that "we... work together — at home, in our schools and our communities," to get children to school every day. This concept can also be summarized in the framework below.

- Give parents the chance to explore how each of these areas impacts their ability to get their child to school every day, and what they can do to improve their children's attendance. Write up the four areas on chart paper or a white board at the front of the room so that the group can walk through them together, and keep a record of people's ideas so that the group can see what they've come up with.

Review Family Practices

The video listed several things that families can do at home to help their children get to school every day. What are some things you already do? What are some additional reasons (e.g. extended family vacations, religious or cultural observances, or extracurricular activities) children might miss school and steps you can take to support your child's attendance?

If the group needs prompts, here are some of the ideas presented in the video:

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine so that children get enough sleep and wake up ready for school.
- Make medical appointments when school is not in session.
- Send your children to school every day unless they are truly sick.
- Develop back-up plans for getting your child to school if something comes up.
- Avoid taking vacation when school is in session.

Increase Social Capital

The video proposed some suggestions for things families can do to help one another; for example, one family can help another family by getting their children to school or sharing child care.

- Are there people in your extended family or social networks who would be willing to help if you ask?
- What are some additional ways you can think of to help one another?

Identify How Your School Can Help

- What are some ways our school can help families with attendance?
- How can we hold our school accountable for attendance? (Note to facilitators: for more information on this topic, visit this online resource: http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/ You can also consider printing out copies to distribute to parents.)
- Who are the people in our school who can help? (Note to facilitators: if parents are new to the school or unfamiliar with the staff, you can suggest some possible helpers, saying, "Did you know that the counselor, the school nurse, and our family liaison can help?")

Community Services — Who Else Needs to Help?

- Lack of reliable transportation or housing and health concerns are barriers that families cannot easily tackle alone. Do families in your school face these barriers to good attendance?
- What are some other barriers that families in our school face?
- What organizations offer services that can help address these barriers?

Key Takeaways

- Help parents solidify what they learned so that the conversation can make a lasting impact and they can share it with other peers or family members.
- What is one key idea you will take away with you from this video that you will share with another parent?

Attendance Works

Thank you for sharing our parent video and being one of first users of this discussion guide. Do you have any suggestions for how might we improve the materials for other parents or for other facilitators? You can send your comments to Cecelia@attendanceworks.org or fill out this online evaluation form: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AWParentVideo. Thank you!

Attendance Works thanks the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for supporting the production of this video and our work to improve student attendance. We also express gratitude to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their on-going support.

APPENDIX C — WEBSITE REFERENCE

In order of appearance

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/

http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/

http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/

http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement

http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/program.htm

http://www.thehatchergroup.com/videos/ReducingChronicAbsence.wmv

http://www.thehatchergroup.com/videos/AW/AttendanceWorks_Feb27_2012.wmv

http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-parents-really-think-about-school-attendance/

http://www.thehatchergroup.com/videos/AW/AttendanceWorks_Mar132013.wmv

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-video/

http://www.attendanceworks.org/infographic/

http://vimeo.com/63614396

http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/messaging-attendance-to-families1.pdf

http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/PPT-for-Taking-Action-on-Attendance-exercise-5.14.2013_revised-CW.pptx

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/

http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/AWcalendar.docx

http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Draft-parent-letter.docx

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

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

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

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

http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AWTeacherToolkitFINAL4.24.pdf

http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAM-toolkit-2.0-040814.pdf

http://www.parentactionnet.org/

http://abriendopuertasopeningdoors.org/index.php

http://www.childinst.org/our-initiatives/early-works