



# **School Attendance Intervention Quick Guide**



## ***How important is it for students to be in school?***

Students cannot perform well academically when they are frequently absent. An individual student's low attendance is a symptom of disengagement and academic difficulties. When many students have low attendance in classes, such behavior undermines the capacity of all students and teachers to pursue high quality education. Every student absence jeopardizes the ability of students to succeed at school and schools to achieve their mission. School attendance is a constant concern in schools. Average daily attendance rates are a common determiner of school funding, so schools funded on the basis of average daily attendance have less resources to do the job. Students who are not at school cannot receive instruction. Academic achievement scores are correlated with school attendance. Excessive school absence is a precursor to school dropout ( <http://www.dodea.edu/attendance/upload/school-attendance-research.pdf> ).

## **What is chronic absenteeism?**

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year or roughly 20 days per school year. This is critical because the evidence indicates that it is the number of days a student misses that matters, not why they miss them ( [http://new.every1graduates.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport\\_May16.pdf](http://new.every1graduates.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf) ).

The strategies listed below can support schools with reducing chronic absenteeism:

- Recognize good and improved student attendance
- Engage students and parents
- Monitor attendance data and practice
- Provide personalized early outreach
- Develop systemic responses to barriers

## **Why don't students attend school?**

Before deciding which strategies to use to increase attendance it can be beneficial to look at the reasons why students don't attend school, and equally as important, why they do stay in school. There are well-established risk factors associated with dropping out and skipping school—family background and relationships, past school performance, personal characteristics, and school or neighborhood characteristics (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams, & Dalicandro, 1998; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002).

Corville-Smith et al. (1998) found six variables that were statistically significant predictors for distinguishing absentee high school students from regularly attending students. It's important to note that the variables listed below can also apply to elementary and middle-school aged students.

### **1. Students' school perceptions:**

Absentees are less likely to perceive school favorably

### **2. Perception of parental discipline:**

Absentees perceive discipline as lax or inconsistent

### **3. Parents' control:**

Absentees believe parents are attempting to exert more control over them

### **4. Students' academic self-concept:**

Absentees feel inferior academically

### **5. Perceived family conflict:**

Absentees experience family conflict

### **6. Social competence in class:**

Absentees are less likely to feel socially competent in class

## **How can schools increase their overall student attendance rate?**

Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance ( <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/attendancedata/chapter1a.asp> ). Given the correlation between school attendance and academic success, it is vital that schools develop a comprehensive system of student and learning supports to address barriers to learning and re-engage disconnected students. Such a system includes a communication protocol, as well as a range of classroom and school-wide supports (e.g., PBIS) designed to re-engage students who have become actively disengaged from schooling.



### ***How can schools monitor attendance data?***

The best way to identify students with poor attendance is to calculate the data that schools are already collecting. The average daily attendance (ADA) numbers can provide some direction about identifying students and focusing resources. Generally, schools with ADA rates higher than 97 percent have little trouble with chronic absence, while those with rates below 93 percent almost always have too many students missing too many days ( <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/use-attendance-data-to-inform-practice/> ). To help promote a systemic approach to improving attendance data analysis and monitoring, each school may want to consider having a team in place that meets regularly to review the school's attendance data and coordinate efforts to reduce chronic absence. Schools will need to determine whether this should be a team devoted exclusively to attendance or an existing team that has attendance added to its broader functions and responsibilities.

### ***What factors should you consider when evaluating your school's attendance?***

For younger children the family structure may have a significant impact on a child's attendance. Many parents may not be aware that attendance in Pre-K and Kindergarten matters. Similarly, young children's attendance is often affected by what happens to parents. Multiple family risk factors also increase chronic absence.

With regard to older children, attendance is more heavily influenced by the child, although family still matters. Older youth may miss school due to family responsibilities ( e.g. caring for siblings or ill parent, holding a job). Mental health, teen pregnancy, chronic conditions, and dental disease are top health concerns that affect attendance. Safety issues (in-school and community) and behavior issues also play even greater role in student absenteeism. Older students may become discouraged as they fall behind in credits and graduation feels increasingly unattainable. Direct and meaningful engagement of youth in the classroom and activities on campus are essential to reducing chronic absenteeism among older children.

### ***How should schools partner with families and the community to support regular attendance among students?***

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



## **School Attendance Resources**

- <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/>
- <http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/increasing-student-attendance.pdf>
- <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/attendancedata/chapter1a.asp>
- <http://www.dodea.edu/attendance/upload/school-attendance-research.pdf>
- <http://www.schoolhealthcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/In-Class-Ready-to-Learn-Why-and-How-to-Improve-Student-Attendance.pdf>



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