



Support Chronically Absent Students in Returning to School

Essential Practices for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism at Scale

The District Leadership Forum



chron·ic ab·sen·tee·ism | *noun*

Missing **10% or more of the academic year** for any reason, including excused absences, unexcused absences, and suspensions

What Is the Cost of Chronic Absenteeism?

3

Most Research Emphasizes Impact on Chronically Absent Students...



Less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade

4x

more likely to drop out of high school than their peers

...But Chronic Absenteeism Harms All Students



The percentage of chronically absent classmates predicts low reading and math achievement for all students

Steep Funding Cuts Threaten District Resources

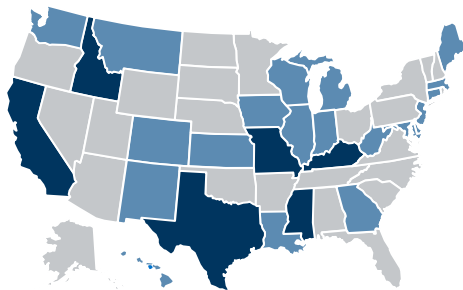
- States that fund schools based on Average Daily Attendance
- Non-ADA state where absenteeism may still impact funding¹

-\$1M

funding due to 2% chronic absenteeism growth, TX district

31%

of K-12 students live in ADA states, 2022



Funding Streams Tied to ADA in Various States:

- Special education
- Meal reimbursement
- Textbook purchases
- Transportation
- Summer programs

¹) Funding calculated based on Seat Count(s): Students in seats on a given "count day."

Objectives for Today



Pinpoint **what's changed about chronic absenteeism** and what's driving the problem today



Discuss the **three essential conditions** for addressing chronic absenteeism today



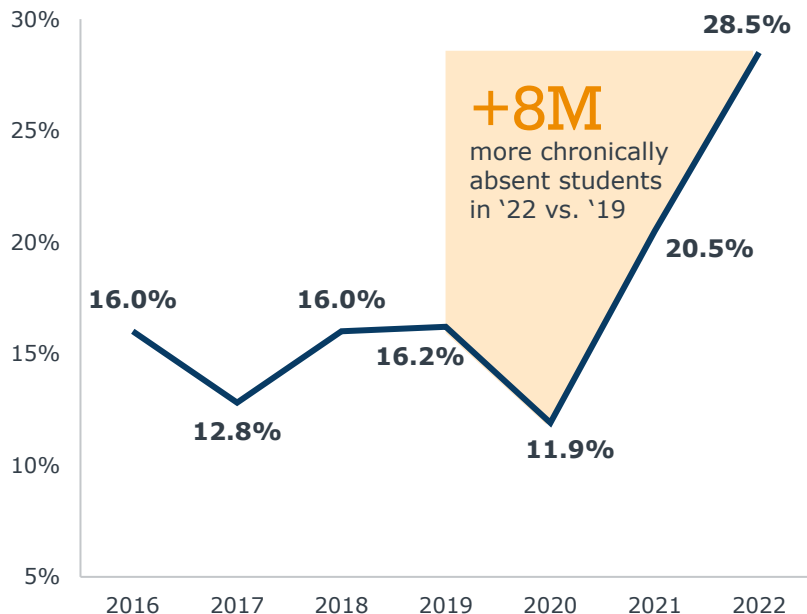
Evaluate **your district's next steps** for addressing all three conditions into next school year

School Is Back in Session, But Students Are Not

5

Chronic Absenteeism Rate Spikes Following Pre-Pandemic Plateau

Chronic Absenteeism Rate of U.S. Public K-12 Students¹



Leaders Apprehensive for SY 2023

2023 Voice of the Superintendent Survey
n=195

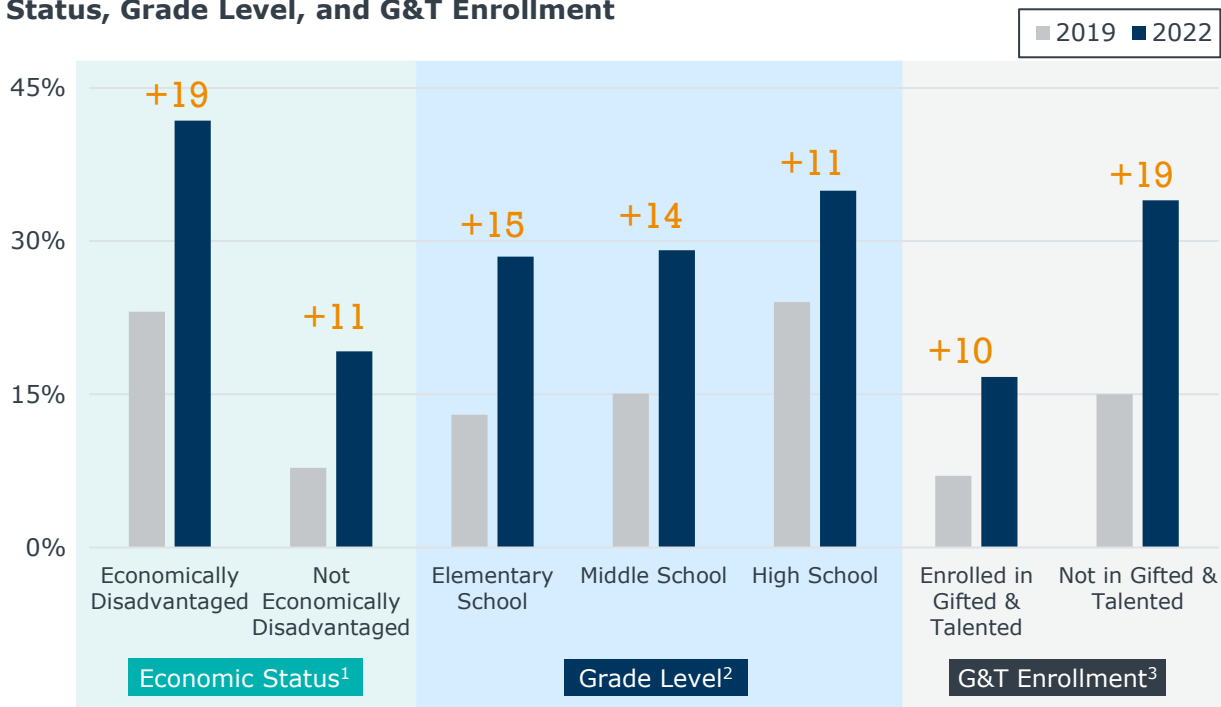
76%

of superintendents report "moderate" or "major" concern about chronic absenteeism in 2022-23

¹) Years correspond to the end of each school year (e.g., 2016 = 2015-16 school year)

Despite Disparities, Absenteeism Rises Across All Groups

Increases in Chronic Absenteeism Rates Across Economic Status, Grade Level, and G&T Enrollment



1) n=4 states (CT, MI, ND, OH, and WA)

2) n=8 states (CT, DE, DC, MD, MI, UT, VA, and WA)

3) n=1 state (WA). Washington uses the term "Highly Capable" and "Non-Highly Capable" to differentiate these groups of students in data.

Chronic Absence Surge Exceeds Support Plan Capacity

Tiered District Support Plan:

2019

2023



- **Tier 1:** Students with <10% absence rate
 - *Incentivizing/recognizing good attendance*
 - *Monitoring attendance data regularly*
- **Tier 2:** Students with 10-19% absence rate
 - *Meeting students 1:1*
 - *Conducting home visits*
- **Tier 3:** Students with 20%+ absence rate
 - *Interagency case management*
 - *Truancy court*

**Districts Already Short-Staffed,
So Practices Must Change**

53%

of districts still have support
staff shortages (counselors,
case managers, etc.)



ESSER funds for additional labor
costs run dry in Sept. 2024



Districts funded by ADA may
already be looking at cuts

Parents More Likely to Rationalize Absence Since Pandemic

A New Variable Increases the Impact of Traditional Causes for Absence



Widespread Risk Factors for Chronic Absenteeism

+



Parents' Lower Threshold for Missing School

=



Increased Likelihood of Absence Due to Each Growing Risk Factor

- *Physical illness*
- *Lack of transportation*
- *Housing mobility*
- *Threats to safety*
- *Loneliness & isolation*
- *Mental illness*
- *Academic struggles*
- *Distrust in schools*

Reasons for Lower Threshold:

- District messaging wavering on importance of in-person attendance
- Parents today becoming more
 - protective
 - transactional
 - disillusioned
 - resigned

“*In parents' minds, the **benefits of absence** are beginning to **outweigh** the benefits of attendance.”*

- California School Attendance Research Project

Students' New Reasons for Absence Go Unaddressed

Districts' Most Common Strategies...

Positive/Negative Incentives



- Attendance recognition programs
- Detention or suspension

Basic Needs Accommodations



- Free breakfast or laundry services
- "Late bus" pick-up



*We can remove every basic needs barrier to getting a student to come to school, but at the end of the day, **they need to believe that school is worth it.***

– Director of Student Services, Southwest School District

...Won't Address Students' Newest Reasons for Skipping School

Today's Students Feel...

...Unsupported

2/3

aren't comfortable telling an adult in the building about bullying

...Disconnected

1/2

say they don't belong at school

...Unsure

1/2

fear going to a teacher for academic help

...Skeptical

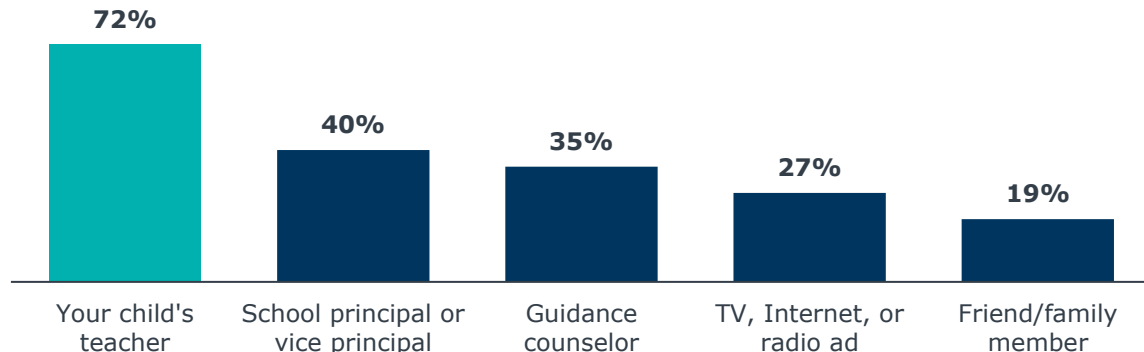
2/3

don't think classes connect to future

Teachers Underutilized in Fight Against Absenteeism ¹⁰

Parents Overwhelmingly Prefer to Discuss Attendance with Teachers¹

"Which of the following ways would you prefer to hear about the importance of school attendance?"



...Yet Most Teachers Don't Talk to Parents about Attendance...

42% of parents reported that any school employee, including teachers, contacted them personally about attendance in the past 6 months

...And Few Have the Tools to Succeed

“When I get on the phone with a parent, **I don't know what to say.** I'm new this year, and I want parents to trust me.”

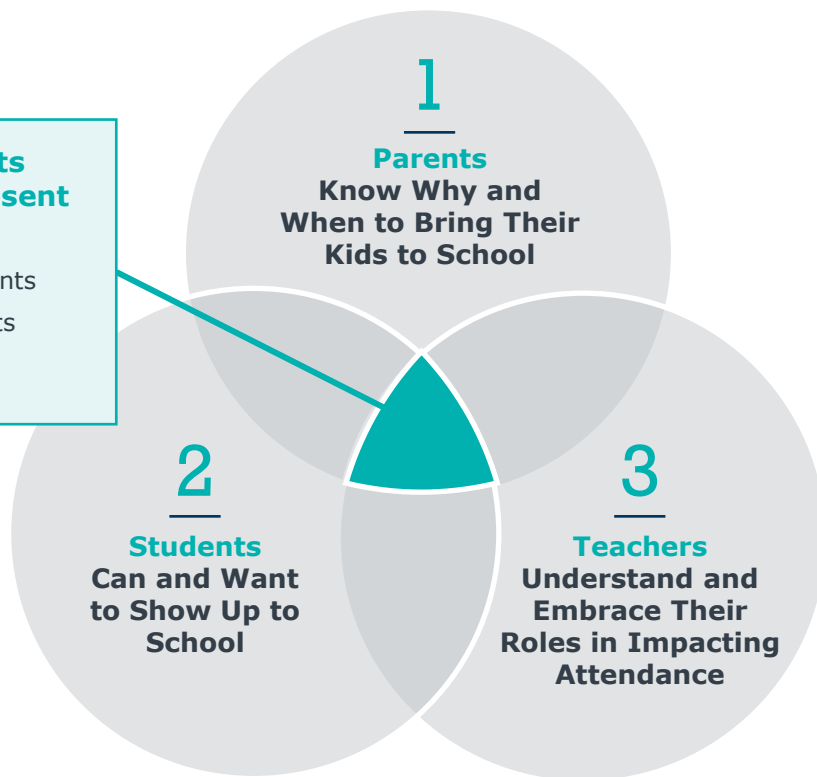
First-Year Teacher, Ohio

3 Essential Conditions for Reducing Absenteeism



Fewer students chronically absent

- Recover the influx of chronically absent students
- Proactively keep students from requiring intensive supports in the future



3 Essential Conditions for Reducing Absenteeism



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1

Parents

**Know Why and
When to Bring Their
Kids to School**

1. "How Can We Help" Self-Service Messages
2. Attendance Checklist "Nudges"

2

Students

**Can and Want to
Show Up to School**

3. District Leader Checklist for Equitable Grading
4. Positive Relationship Mapping
5. Student Interest Conversations
6. Career Relevancy Root Causing
7. Group-Model Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

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**Understand and
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8. District-Wide Teacher Expectations for Combatting Chronic Absenteeism
9. Best-Practice Guide for Talking About Absenteeism

Guiding Question for Each Practice:



How would this practice fit in my district's priorities and approach?

How do I see the underlying problem in my district?

What is my district currently doing to mitigate this problem?

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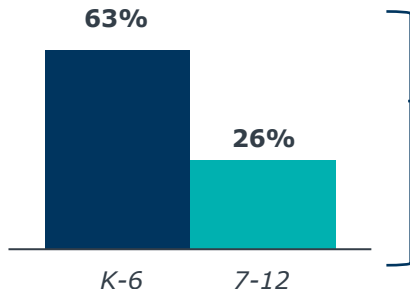
More Parents Doubt Value of In-Person Education



15

Leaders Say Parents' Misconceptions Are Top New Cause for Chronic Absence

% District Leaders Ranking Parent Misconceptions as #1 Cause, Feb-Mar 2023



Despite Grade Level Split, Almost All Agree Parents Value Attendance Less

86%

of district leaders "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" parent value of attendance is lower today than in previous years

91% of leaders that ranked a different cause as #1 still agreed with this statement

“

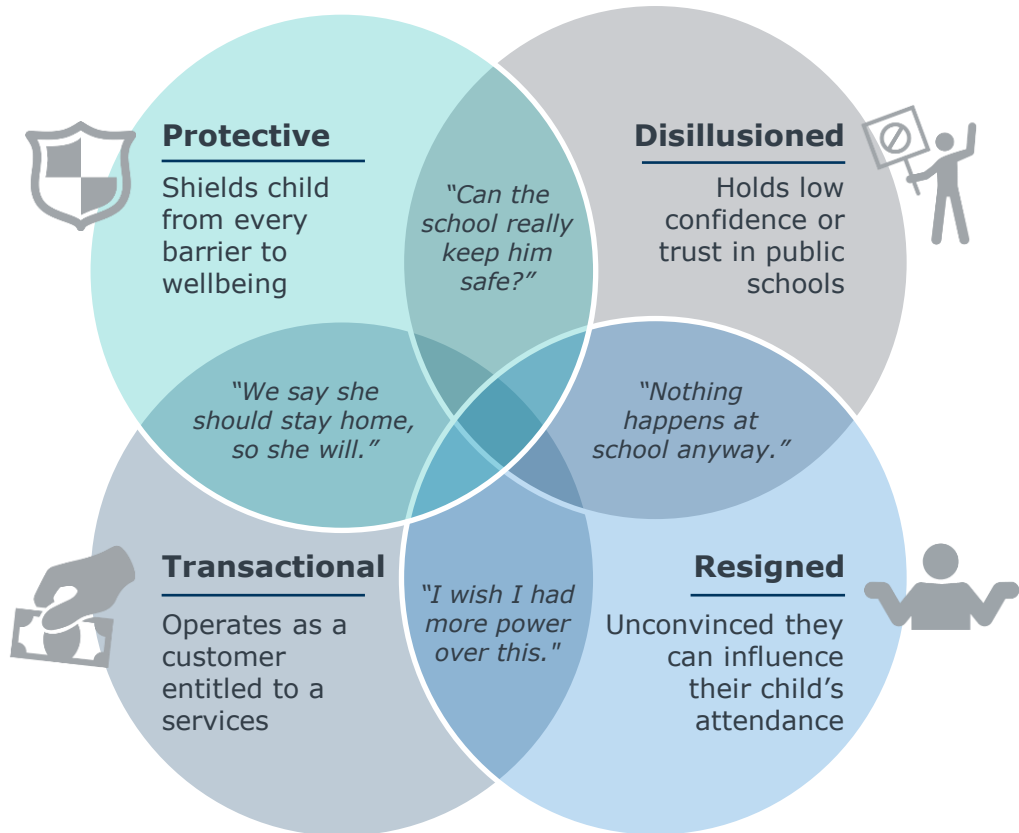
Coming off the pandemic, the perception of parents is, 'Well, my kid made it. They're okay. **They can miss – it's probably not as critical that they're there.**'

Superintendent,
Midwestern School District

”

Four Traits of Parents More Likely to Keep Students Home

16



Bringing Families Back Requires Partnership, Not Punishment

“Preaching and prosecuting typically backfire;
**what doesn't sway people may actually
strengthen their beliefs.**”

*Dr. Adam Grant,
Organizational Psychologist*



Source: New York Times, [The Science of Reasoning With Unreasonable People](#), 2021. EAB interviews and analysis.

The Science of Motivating a Behavior Change

Clinical Practitioners Rely on Four Key Actions



Express Empathy

Show understanding
without placing blame



Support Self-Efficacy

Empower others to
ask for help



Avoid Confusion

Remove room
for interpretation



Develop Discrepancy

Clarify the costs
of current mindset

Practice #1:



"How Can We Help" Self-Service Texts

Practice #2:



Attendance Checklist "Nudges"

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Traditional Absence Letters May Push Parents Further Away

20

The Journey of the Traditional Absence Letter:



Student
absent
5 days

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The following notice is to **inform you of the number of absences** from school involving your child. Some of these identified absences may be excused and/or unexcused. This letter is a **review of our process for addressing attendance**.

Your child has 5 absences.

State statute section 39.9 through 40.5 states all students 5-18 shall attend school daily. **Non-compliance will lead to disciplinary action** by the principal and/or the School Board it's designee.

- If attendance does not improve, a referral may be made to School Social Work Services. Social worker(s) will work with the family to address continuing challenges. Social worker(s) **may refer the case for court involvement through the county truancy court.**

Support staff are available to help if students encounter barriers to attendance. **Please contact school** staff before significant attendance difficulties develop.

Parent receives
**state-mandated
warning letter**

- *Informative, not actionable*
- *Punitive focus*
- *Riddled with legal jargon*



Parent
reacts

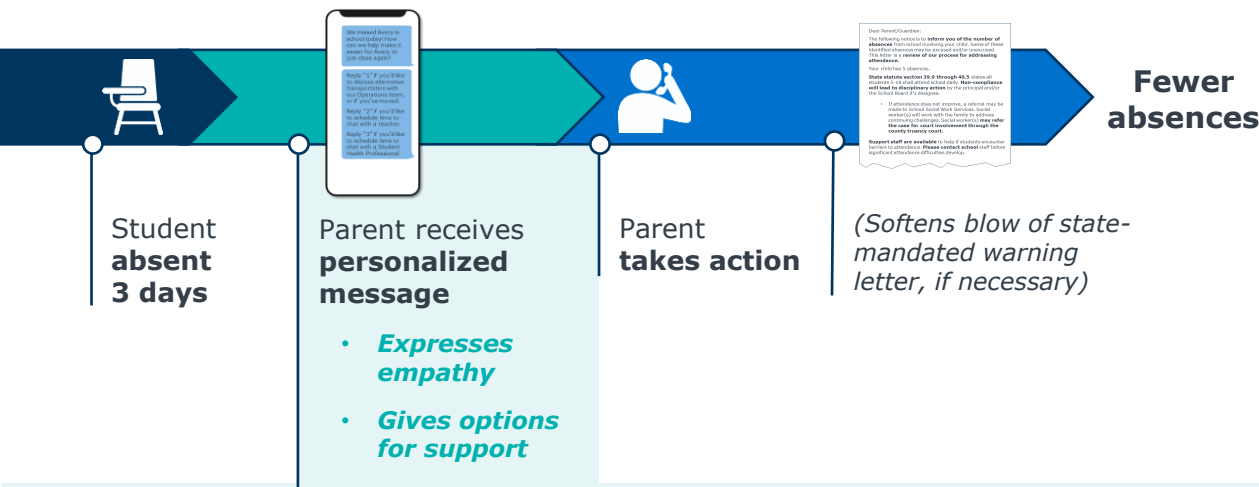
- *Fear*
- *Denial*
- *Misunderstanding*
- *Silence*

**No change
in behavior**

Insert Moment of Empathy & Action Before Warning Letters

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The Journey of the Trust-Building Buffer:



What Districts Need to Make This Happen:



System for prompting parents to take action from list of available support options



Faster, more direct line to parents and guardians



Multiple-Choice Texts Help Parents Choose Partnership

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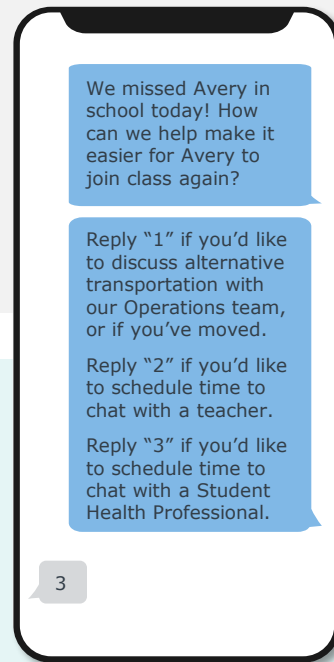
How This Works:

- 1 Source service ideas from district staff with stake in absenteeism
- 2 Identify number of consecutive absences to trigger text message (e.g., >3 unexcused days)
- 3 Triage replies and follow-up to appropriate staff

Why This Works:

-  Predetermined list of options prompts immediate action and self-efficacy
-  Text messages more reliable and accepted than mail/email

Example text message:



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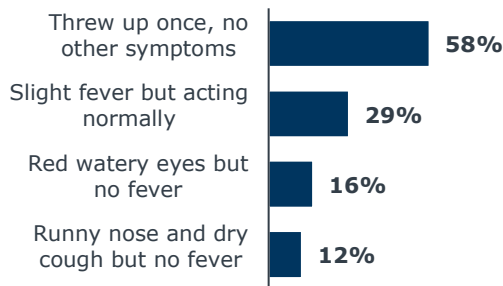
Attendance Checklist "Nudges"

Parents Even More Uncertain of When to Keep Child Home

25

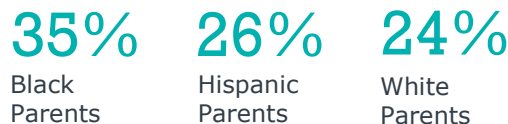
Even Before Pandemic, Parents Split on Which Symptoms Warrant Absence

% Who Say They're Likely to Keep Child Home with Each Symptom¹, 2017



As Late as Nov 2021, Many Parents Still Cautious About In-Person Learning

% "Not That Comfortable," "Not at All Comfortable," or "Don't Know"



Spikes in student illness throughout Winter 2022 exacerbated parent uncertainties

Sudden Shift in Messaging Fails to Address Parent Concerns

"Last year, we were still saying, 'if you're sick, stay home.' This year our messaging is different, yet parents are still keeping their kids home more than before."

Assistant Superintendent, Southern School District

What Districts Need:



Clear and simple attendance policies for parents



Just-in-time communication of attendance policies



A cohesive narrative about the costs of absence



See You in Class!

- ✓ Have a runny nose or a little cough, but **no other symptoms**
- ✓ No fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours, and no fever during that time (temp. of 100.4 or higher)
- ✓ No throwing up or diarrhea for 24 hours

Heading to school! What should I know?

A day of missed school is a lost opportunity for social development. By coming to school **every day they're not sick**, your child is gaining social skills that will land them their first job as an adult.

- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Problem Solving



Best to Stay Home.

- ✓ Temperature higher than 100.4 (with or without medicine)
- ✓ Persistent cough
- ✓ Throwing up or diarrhea
- ✓ Eyes are pink and crusty
- ✓ Instructed by doctor to isolate from others

My student is staying home. What should I do next?

- 1 Notify the school by phone (555-7483) or email (health@district.org).

*If possible, let us know **before 9am** on the day of the absence.*

- 2 Repeat this checklist every morning. We hope to see your student back soon!

“Nudge” Parents with the Right Info at the Right Time

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How This Works:

- 1 Partner with district health professionals to translate attendance policy health guidelines into simple checklist
- 2 “Nudge” parents to reread the checklist once per month via email or text
- 3 Each month, embed a different cost of absence to build a district narrative around attendance

Examples from EAB:

The image displays three overlapping checklist cards from EAB. The top card, titled 'See You in Class!', has a thumbs-up icon and lists symptoms like runny nose, fever, and cough. The middle card, titled 'Best to Stay Home.', has a thumbs-down icon and lists symptoms like persistent cough, vomiting, and pink eyes. The bottom card, titled 'My student is staying home.', has a thumbs-down icon and lists reasons for staying home like illness or social development. Each card includes a 'Heading to school' section with instructions on what to do if the child is sick and a 'By coming to school' section with instructions on how to return to school. The cards are designed to be simple and easy to read, with clear headings and bullet points.

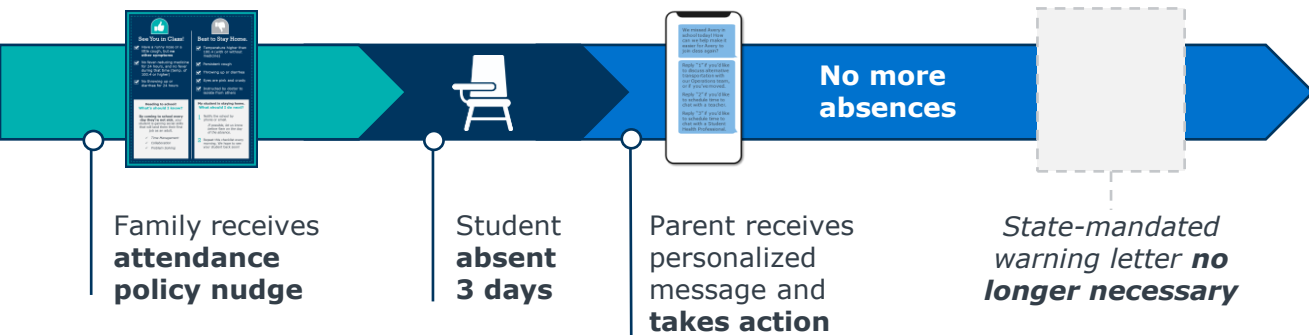
Why This Works:

-  Short checklists are proven to incite action and improve consistency
-  Repeated nudges are proven to change behavior toward intended goal
-  Consistent messaging builds a cohesive narrative

Change the Timeline to Avoid Absence & Expedite Support

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The Journey of Proactive and Positive Absence Communications



What does your district need to start implementing these practices?

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Pandemic Exacerbates Students' Low Motivation to Attend

30

To **Want** to Attend School, Students Need to Feel:



Competent and
that success is
possible



Connected to peers
and adults in the
school building



Engaged in their
school community
and activities



That school
connects to their
future aspirations



Support is
available
when needed

Pandemic, Remote Learning, and Limited Progress

After 3 Years of Limited Progress, Districts Worse Off in All Areas

71% of 13-19 year olds
now say schoolwork
makes them feel anxious
or depressed

4 in 10 students feel
less connected to peers
or adults in their school

Only 39% of students
have taken classes or
participated in programs
to explore careers

5 Practices to Increase Student Motivation to Attend School

31

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Relationship
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**Student
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**Career
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Companion Practices

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Companion Practices

Some Students So Behind, They Worry They Can't Catch Up

33



More Course Failures Means More Students Feel Underwater

Districts report alarming spikes in course failures during and after the pandemic:

2X

as many St. Paul, MN public high school students' failing a course in 2021 as in 2019

10 pt.

Increase in Sonoma County, CA students across ten districts with at least one failing grade from 2020 to 2021

Research Shows Grades Can Motivate, But Zeroes Leave Students Feeling Flat



Achievement Goal Theory

Student grades increase motivation differently depending on the goal orientation they adopt (mastery or performance-based goals)



"Zeroes only change behaviors in kids that are already motivated. **Zeroes don't change a lack of motivation.**"

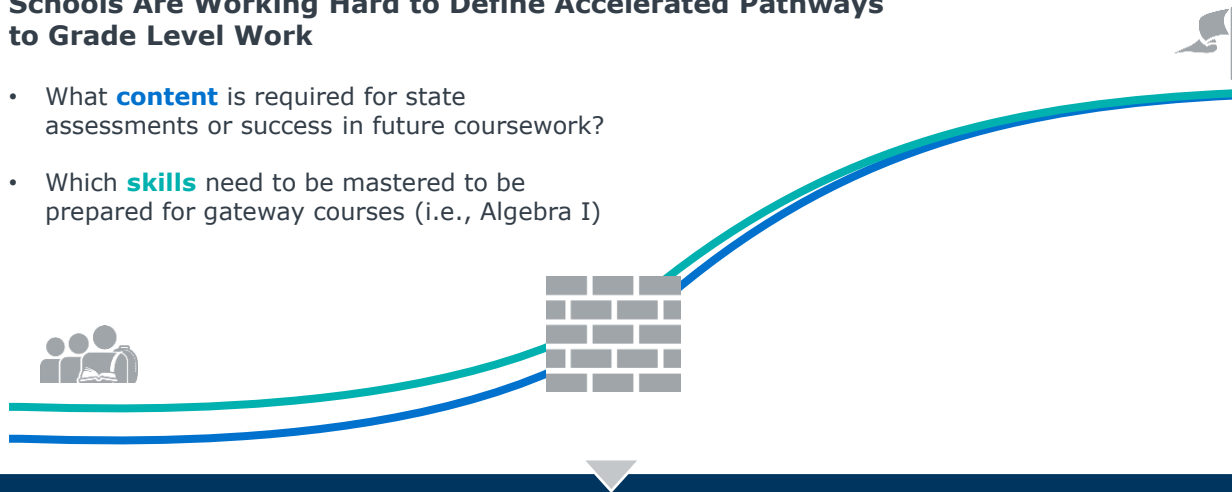
*High School Principal,
Western School District*

Recovery Requires an Achievable Path Forward



Schools Are Working Hard to Define Accelerated Pathways to Grade Level Work

- What **content** is required for state assessments or success in future coursework?
- Which **skills** need to be mastered to be prepared for gateway courses (i.e., Algebra I)



Traditional Grading Policies Present Unhelpful (and Inequitable) Barriers to Progress

40%

or more of criteria is not related to content mastery:

- × Homework completion
- × Behavior and compliance
- × Class participation



Compliance-related criteria disproportionately affect:

- Students of color
- Students from low income families
- Students with learning differences

Reevaluate What Course Grades Are Really Assessing

35

Same Level of Mastery, Different Course Grades

<i>Student 1</i>		<i>Student 2</i>	
<i>Test and Quizzes</i>	80%	<i>Test and Quizzes</i>	80%
<i>State Assessment</i>	Meets expectations	<i>State Assessment</i>	Meets expectations
<i>Homework Completion</i>	50%	<i>Homework Completion</i>	100%
<i>Class Participation</i>	40%	<i>Class Participation</i>	90%
FINAL GRADE:	C-	FINAL GRADE:	B+

Key Consideration Questions for Redesigning Grading Practices

- ▶ Does all the criteria in grades reflect content mastery?
- ▶ Which criteria may accidentally penalize students?
- ▶ How can we minimize interpretation of course requirements?

Sources: National School Board Association, [Accurate and Equitable Grading: Grading System can Perpetuate Inequalities](#), 2020. Hough, L., [Grade Expectations: why we need to rethink grading in our schools](#), 2021. EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB's District Leader Checklist for Equitable Grading 36

[Download the Audit to:](#)

- ▶ Pre-assess current grading policies for common equitable grading pitfalls
- ▶ Determine next steps for jump-starting equitable grading in your district

The image shows the cover and a page from the 'K-12 Equitable Grading Audit' checklist. The cover is blue and white with the EAB logo and title. The checklist page is titled 'Equitable Grading Audit for District Leaders' and contains a table with 7 criteria, each with a 'Yes', 'No', or 'Not Sure' column and a 'Recommended Next Steps' column.

Key Criteria	Yes	No	Not Sure	Recommended Next Steps
1. Our district reports academic and non-academic performance (behavior, participation, effort) equitably on report cards.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Configure the LMS or grade book to include two sections on student report cards: one for academic grades only reporting learning mastery and one for non-academic performance. This reduces the chances that subjectivity influences academic course grades. Refer to these standards to get started.
2. Final course grades or GPAs on transcripts are calculated only from academic grades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set the expectation that teachers only report scores from academic mastery assignments and omit non-academic factors (i.e., completion, timeliness). This ensures that subjective elements such as behavior and participation do not interfere with final GPAs.
3. Teachers provide students at least two opportunities to demonstrate mastery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set the expectation that teachers assign final grades only after students receive at least two opportunities to demonstrate learning. This ensures scores reflect true academic mastery rather than the time it takes for students to get there.
4. Our district provides equitable grading PD or training to teachers every year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reserve at least two training opportunities around equitable grading, either during PLCs or existing teacher PD days. One way to start is to use PD resources from Grading for Equity . This training helps scale consistent, equitable grading practices across classrooms.
5. Teacher coaching conversations review and reinforce equitable grading practices that the district prioritizes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporate at least one of the equitable grading practices above into informal observation rubrics or walk-through documents. This reinforces the overall use of fair grading practices and signals that equity remains a district priority.
6. Our district's formal grading policy includes a section on equitable grading.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Include your district's approach to equitable grading in your district grading policy and provide specific examples. Use student-friendly language to ensure the broader school community understands it.
7. Our grading policy is...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Post your district grading policy on the district...

Results from Districts in Year 1 of Transition to Equitable Grading:

-250 Students placed in remedial classes compared to previous year

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Companion Practices

Supportive Relationships Integral to Student Success

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Why Focus on In-School Relationships?

Controlling for all background characteristics, children with a caring adult outside of the home are:



10%

more likely to **show interest in learning**



21%

less likely to **bully another student** in the past month



28%

less likely to **feel sad or depressed**

Connections with Trusted Adults Keep Kids in School

“Two big reasons students leave school: they have no meaningful connection to an adult in the building, and no one knows their name or how to pronounce it. This work isn’t just feel-good: **We know through research that relationships and connections keep kids in school.**”

Administrator, Washoe County Public Schools

A School-Wide Review of Gaps in Positive Support

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Excerpt from Relationship Mapping Exercise:

Indicate quality and depth of knowledge about each student, even if staff doesn't mark "trusted adult"

Mark staff as "Trusted Adult" if they have positively bonded with the student and believe student would come to them with a personal problem or concern

Student Name	Name/ Face	Academic Standing	Regular Positive Feedback	2 Non- Academic Facts	Family Story	Trusted Adult Initials	Absence Level
Dante B.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	MS JN TB	Trending
Jenny D.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓		✓ ✓	JN	Trending
Sara S.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓		✓			Chronic
Peter L.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	TB	-
Maria G.	✓ ✓	✓		✓	✓ ✓	MS TB	-

Show students at risk for chronic absenteeism according to attendance data (i.e., students trending toward chronic absence or students already chronic)

Make Sure Every Student Has a Connection



How It's Done



1 Convene School Staff

Most districts meet
6 weeks into the
school year



2 Map Student/Staff Relationships

Have staff self-identify
as trusted adults and
depth of knowledge
about each student



3 Review Results

Identify gaps in
support for students
at-risk for chronic
absence



4 Discuss and Follow Up

Make a plan for filling
gaps and deepening
existing relationships

Results in Washoe County



Fewer in-school
suspensions

2X

Students with identified
relationships twice as
likely to stay in school

+18%

Growth in district
graduation rate
from 2012 to 2017

Download the Toolkit to:

- ▶ Launch a district policy for school-based relationship mapping
- ▶ Choose from a range of strategies to interact with students who lack a meaningful connection to educators at their building

[illegible]

Take the Next Step: Student Interest Conversations

42

Complete *Relationship Mapping* Exercise

Connect Student with Trusted Adult

Connect Student with School Activity

Why Focus on Extracurriculars?

Students participating in an extracurricular activity are:

↓ **28%**

less likely to have an **unexcused absence**

↓ **16%**

less likely to **skip a class**

Ask Directly About Student Interests to Guide Students Toward an Activity:

Do you have any hobbies?

What do you do in your free time?

Did you know we have a student club for that?



Keep a central **accountability report** to track which chronically absent students are participating in a club or extracurricular

5 Practices to Increase Student Motivation to Attend School

44

To **Want** to Attend School, Students Need to Feel:



Competent and
that success is
possible



1

**District Leader
Checklist for
Equitable
Grading**



Connected to peers
and adults in the
school building



2

**Positive
Relationship
Mapping**



Engaged in their
school community
and activities



3

**Student
Interest
Conversations**



That school
connects to their
future aspirations



4

**Career
Relevancy Root
Causing**



Support is
available
when needed



5

**Group-Model
Cognitive
Behavioral
Therapy**

Companion Practices

Today's Skeptical Students See More Reason for Absence

45

Most Students Doubted Relevancy *Before* Pandemic...

2012-2017

48%

of HS students feel what they're learning connects to future aspirations



...And Recent Interviews Show This Is Even More Likely for Students Today

EAB Survey and Interviews, Feb-Mar 2023

31%

of district leaders agree **students' belief that classes are irrelevant to their future** is one of the top 3 causes of absenteeism in grades 7-12¹



"At the end of the day, students aren't seeing the value of showing up, they're not seeing the relevancy."

CAO, Southern School District



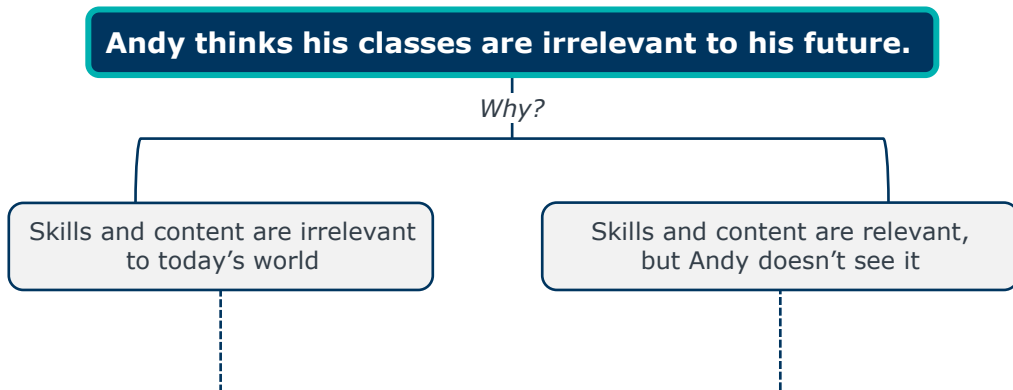
"The kids figured out that they're not missing anything by being gone."

High School Principal,
Western School District

1) n=61

Pinpoint the Root Cause for Students' Perceived Disconnect

46



- 1 *How is your district evaluating student courses for career relevancy?*
- 2 *How can you tell whether students see career relevancy?*
- 3 *How are you engaging all students in relevant courses?*

5 Practices to Increase Student Motivation to Attend School

47

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Companion Practices

Districts Struggle to Scale Mental Health Services



48

Worsening Mental Health Crisis Is a Major Driver of Absenteeism

70%

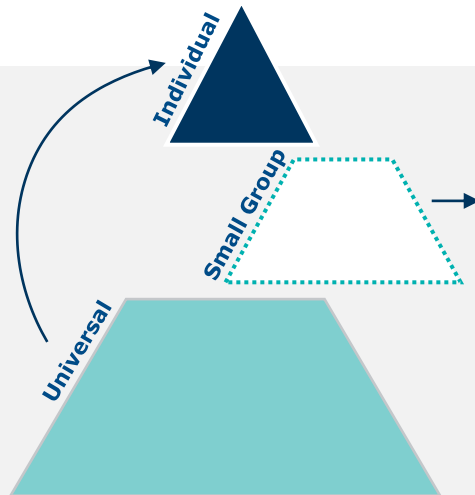
of schools report growth in students seeking mental health services since 2020

69%

of leaders rank worse student mental health as one of the top 2 causes of absenteeism in 2023

Districts Over-Rely on Tier III Services...

- Students frequently jump straight from tier I to tier III interventions
- Limited clinical capacity leaves students unserved



...While Tier II Services Stay Lacking

- Groups mostly targeted toward elementary schools
- Adolescent interventions not therapeutic or evidence-based
- Students permitted to drop in and out throughout the year

Profiled Institution:

Methuen Public Schools, MA



Group Therapy Turns Tide on Anxiety and Depression ⁴⁹

Counselors Used to Consider Group Therapy as “Second Rate”...

“Research and experience show that the **number one reason why students don't 'do' group therapy is because staff don't believe in it.**”

Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, North Carolina

...Until Group CBT¹ Proved Both Cost Effective and Preferred By Students



Key Group Characteristics

Small size: Usually fewer than 12 students per group

Time limited: Once per week for 6-8 weeks

Closed Groups: Students unable to drop in and out

-45%

Average drop in symptom presentation

-10 pts.

students scoring in “no concern” range for anxiety

-7 pts.

students scoring in “no concern” range for depression

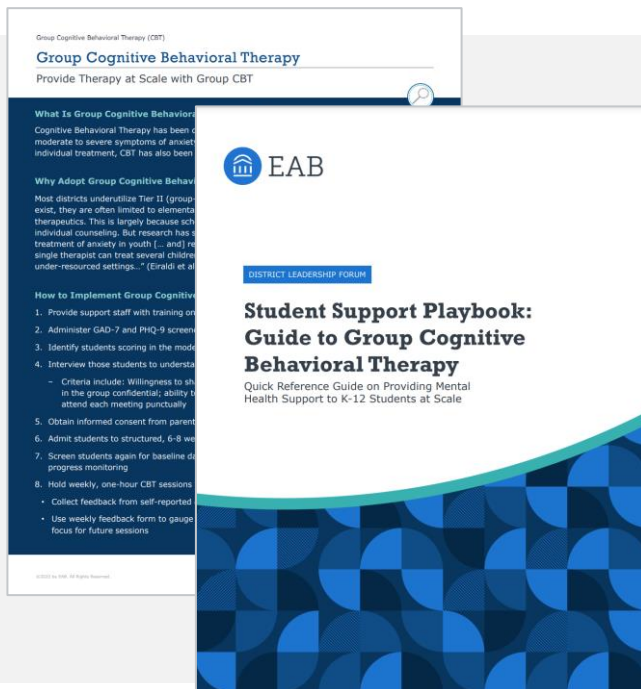
1) Group-Model Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

EAB's Guide to Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

50

[Download the Playbook to:](#)

- ▶ Launch a district policy for group cognitive behavior therapy
- ▶ Balance intensive student supports and staff capacity across schools



How Are You Addressing Student Motivation?

51

To **Want** to Attend School, Students Need to Feel:



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Live Poll:



- ▶ Which of the above components are you already addressing in your district?
- ▶ What practices are you using?

3 Essential Conditions for Reducing Absenteeism



1

Parents

**Know Why and
When to Bring Their
Kids to School**

1. "How Can We Help" Self-Service Messages
2. Attendance Checklist "Nudges"

2

Students

**Can and Want to
Show Up to School**

3. District Leader Checklist for Equitable Grading
4. Positive Relationship Mapping
5. Student Interest Conversations
6. Career Relevancy Root Causing
7. Group-Model Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

3

Teachers

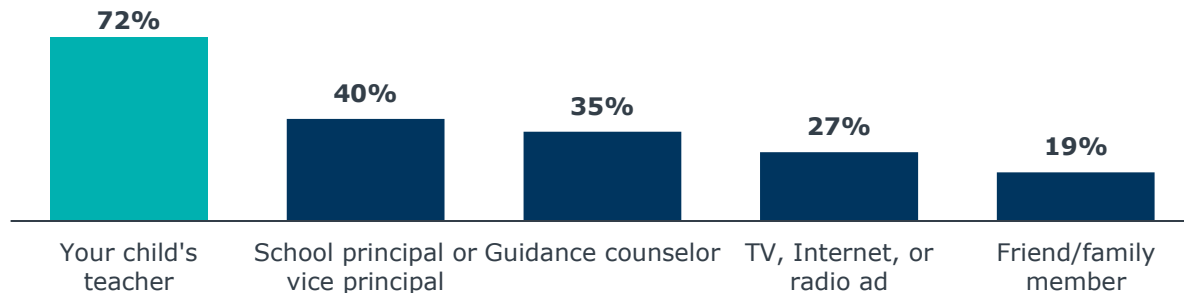
**Understand and
Embrace Their Roles in
Impacting Attendance**

8. District-Wide Teacher Expectations for Combatting Chronic Absenteeism
9. Best-Practice Guide for Talking About Absenteeism

Teachers Hold Untapped Opportunity to Improve Attendance

Parents Overwhelmingly Prefer to Discuss Attendance with Teachers¹

"Which of the following ways would you prefer to hear about the importance of school attendance?"



...But Despite Leaders Recognizing Their Potential, Many Teachers Have a Limited View of their Role in Improving Absenteeism

"Teachers play a vital role. When I was in school, my attendance only improved when my teacher didn't want me to be absent anymore."

VS.

"Teachers have felt that **attendance is not their responsibility beyond taking roll in the morning.** After that, it's up to administrators."

- Midwestern District Leader

1) n=823

Clarify How Teachers Should Prioritize Attendance

Amid Myriad Responsibilities...



...Teachers Need Clarity on **What** to Do and **How**

"Should I be contacting absent students? Should I be contacting their parents?"

"When is the best time to talk to students and parents about attendance?"

"What do I say to absent students or their parents that won't make things worse?"

Practice 1

Clear and Consistent What:

District-Wide Expectations for Promoting Consistent Attendance

Clarify the roles all teachers play in
reducing chronic absenteeism

Clarify Teacher Expectations for Promoting Attendance

Example of Expectations:

Sundale Heights¹ School District

Teacher Protocols for When a Student Is Absent

Every Day:

- ☐ Log attendance in PowerSchool
- ☐ Personally welcome back students returning from absence

Every Week:

- ☐ Call parents of students absent more than 2 days
 - ☐ Use language from *Absenteeism Conversations* resource

Every Quarter:

How This Works:

- 1 Define 1-2 teacher actions every day, every week, and every grading period that impact attendance
- 2 Have teachers post list in a visible place (i.e., desk)
- 3 Encourage instructional coaches to discuss expectations in coaching sessions

Why This Works:



Short, simple directives improve likelihood of teacher fidelity to expectations



Consistent discussions with coaches reinforces importance of reducing absenteeism

Consider including what teachers are **not** expected to do (e.g., host punitive conversations with parents of truant students)

1) Anonymized district name.

Practice 2

Support for How:

Best-Practice Guide for Talking About Absenteeism

Provide teachers precise language to use when
discussing attendance with parents

What We Heard From Partners: Teachers Need Better Tools

58

“***If we could just give teachers the right words to say, they’d be much more likely to contact parents of absent students.***”

- Superintendent,
Western School District

“***You know what would be helpful? A communication guide for teachers.***

- Superintendent,
East Coast School District

What Districts Need:



Research-based teacher talking points that build trust with parents



Consistent district narrative around costs of absence



Easy-to-access materials for when teachers need them most

Help Teachers Become Experts on Student Absenteeism

59

Clarify expectations

Take out the guesswork



Coming Summer 2023

How This Works:

- 1 Disseminate teacher guide during a faculty meeting or PLC
- 2 At least once a grading period during faculty meetings or PLCs, host a discussion about these conversations:
 - *How many times did teachers reference the guide this grading period?*
 - *What can be revised in the guide according to new student or parent needs?*
 - *How did students or parents respond?*

Why This Works:



Prepared guide reduces teacher cognitive load



Consistent use across grade levels creates a district-wide expectations around attendance



Team discussions ensure consistent use and revision of teacher guide

In Summary: What Are We Trying to Change?

Problem 1

- Parents think value of some absences outweighs value of attendance
- Parents unsure of fluctuating attendance protocols post-pandemic



1

Parents

**Know Why and
When to Bring Their
Kids to School**

Problem 2

Students don't feel:

- Competent
- Connected
- Engaged
- Supported



2

Students

**Can and Want to
Show Up to School**

Problem 3

- Teachers unsure of role in combatting chronic absenteeism
- Teachers feel unprepared to discuss absenteeism with parents



3

Teachers

**Understand and
Embrace Their Roles in
Impacting Attendance**

How EAB Will Continue to Help You Reduce Absenteeism

61

Next Steps for District Leaders:

Spring 2023



Educate Stakeholders

Make chronic absenteeism a priority in your district

Take This Presentation Home With You

Contact your dedicated advisor to present this research to your:

- School board
- Leadership team
- Faculty and staff
- Community partners

Summer 2023



Evaluate District Readiness in Each Area

- Take the diagnostic to determine which area your district needs support
- Receive resources and consultations from EAB across the summer
- Register your leadership team or staff to attend a **virtual presentation of this research**

Fall 2023



Receive Implementation Support

Check-in with EAB as you implement new practices across the school year



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