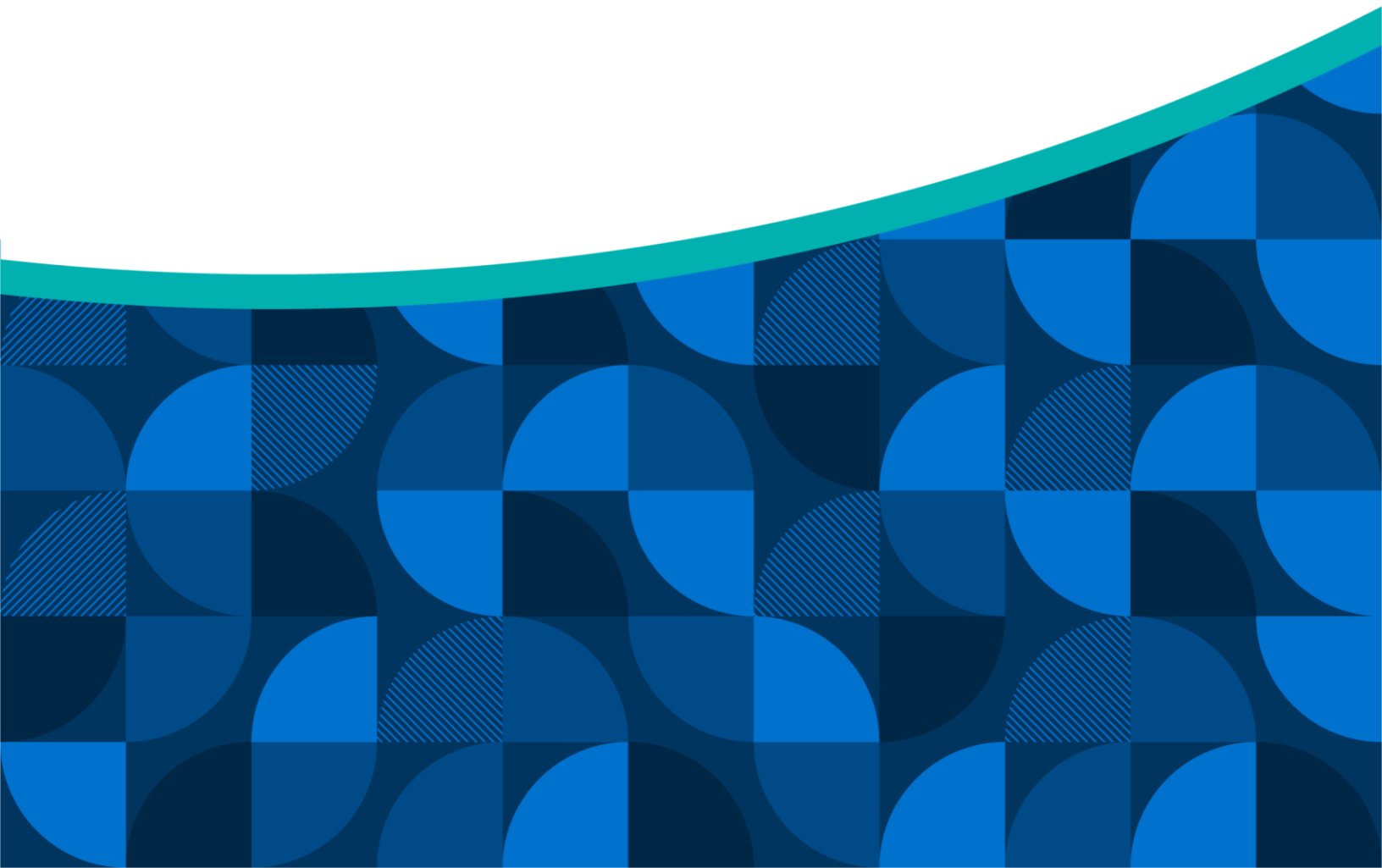




Defining Staff Roles for Combatting Absenteeism

Shareable Checklists to Reinforce Attendance Responsibilities
for Teachers, Principals, and Attendance Staff



Instructions for District and School Leaders

Why should districts clearly define staff roles for combatting absenteeism?

▶ Combatting absenteeism isn't a one-person task, and most districts expect **all staff** to play a role – yet most districts provide **little or no guidance** on why, when, or how different staff should play their part.

▶ Districts without clearly defined roles see more students with severe absence (20+ days a school year) and **fail to provide interventions in time** to prevent chronic absence.



Instructions for District Leaders:

Follow the steps below to help school leaders use this resource successfully:

- 1 Identify one leader at each school building** to guide implementation of these checklists. We recommend starting with the principal or vice principal, as they can incorporate these checklists into upcoming faculty meetings or professional development sessions.
- 2 Review and revise the checklists on pages 3-6 to fit your district's attendance goals.** Keep in mind that building leaders and principals may also need to revise the checklists to fit the organization or role titles in their individual school building.
- 3 Share (and re-share) these checklists with your delegated building leader at least once a semester** to reinforce their use. This is also an opportunity to request feedback on how to refine various staff roles for combatting absenteeism in your district.



Instructions for School Leaders:

Follow the steps below to help teachers and staff in your school use this resource successfully:

- 1 Review and revise the checklists on pages 3-6 as needed to meet the needs of your building.** You may need to edit the titles, grade levels, or specific tasks for each role to fit your school's attendance process. Keep in mind that these checklists are meant to be simple to improve likelihood of staff fidelity; try to have no more than 1-2 tasks in each checklist section.
- 2 Disseminate pages 3-7 of this resource to teachers and staff during an existing faculty meeting or professional development session.** Reference the table below for examples of different school roles that can refer to each checklist.

Staff Role	Which roles can use the checklist?
Teachers (pages 3 and 4)	Elementary and Secondary Classroom teachers, Special Education Teachers, Electives/Specials Teachers
Principals (page 5)	School Principal, Assistant Principal, Vice Principal
Attendance and Administrative Staff (page 6)	Office administrator, secretary, attendance secretary, attendance coordinator, attendance counselor, administrative assistant

- 3 Share (and re-share) these checklists via email or staff newsletter at least once a month** to reinforce their use. Encourage staff to display checklists according to the instructions on their checklist page.

Grades Pre-K to 5: Tasks to Combat Absenteeism

Instructions

Cut out and display the checklist below in a visible place, close to where you typically take student attendance (i.e., on the side of your desk, computer, or tablet). Complete each checklist item as instructed each day, week, or grading period. For more information on why each task is important, review the information to the right of each checklist item.

Teacher Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Grades Pre-K to 5

Every Day:

- Take attendance and log it in Student Information System
- Personally welcome back students returning from absence

Every Week:

- Call parents or guardians of students absent more than 2 days in a row
 - ✓ Refer to the [Teacher Guide for Discussing Absenteeism](#)
- Remind parents and students of attendance expectations by using [Attendance Policy Nudges](#) in weekly communications

Every Grading Period

- Identify and record which of your students are chronically absent. Refer to attendance reports provided by your principal.

Why Each Task Is Critical for Combatting Absenteeism

- Accurate attendance data is a legal document. In an emergency where accounting for every student is crucial, accurate attendance data saves lives.
- More than half of students feel teachers don't care if they miss school¹. Acknowledging a student's absence shows you care and builds trust.
- 72% of parents prefer that communication about attendance come from teachers rather than administrators². Communication between teachers and families increases student engagement.
- Research shows that sending regular reminders to parents about when their child should be in school can reduce rates of chronic absenteeism by up to 7%.³ Reminding parents about when a child should be in school prevents unnecessary absences.
- Chronically absent students typically fly under the radar and go unidentified by teachers, which makes their continued absences even more likely. Knowing who these students are is the first step to changing their behavior.



Display your checklist close to where you take attendance.

On the side of your computer, right above on a bulletin board, or flat on your desk are all great places for quick reference.

1) Education World, "What Students Really Think of Their Education, Teachers," 2009.
2) Ad Council, "California Attendance Parent Survey Results," 2015.
3) IES, "Can Texting Parents Improve Attendance in Elementary School?," 2020.

Grades 6-12: Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Instructions

Cut out and display the checklist below in a visible place, close to where you typically take student attendance (i.e., on the side of your desk, computer, or tablet). Complete each checklist item as instructed each day, week, or grading period. For more information on why each task is important, review the information to the right of each checklist item.

Teacher Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Grades 6 - 12

Every Day:

- Take attendance and log it in Student Information System
- Personally welcome back students returning from absence

Every Week:

- Report the names of student missing more than 3 classes in a row to your principal or grade level team
- Remind parents and students of attendance expectations by using [Attendance Policy Nudges](#) in weekly communications

Every Grading Period

- Identify and record which of your students are chronically absent. Refer to attendance reports provided by your principal.
- Discuss student absences during parent-teacher conferences referring to the [Teacher Guide for Discussing Absenteeism](#)

Why Each Task Is Critical for Combatting Absenteeism

- Accurate attendance data is a legal document. In an emergency where accounting for every student is crucial, accurate attendance data saves lives.
- More than half of students feel teachers don't care if they miss school¹. Acknowledging a student's absence shows you care and builds trust.
- Elevating concerns about students with multiple absences ensures these absences don't go unnoticed if the student isn't gone a full day.
- Research shows that sending regular reminders to parents about when their child should be in school can reduce rates of chronic absenteeism by up to 7%.² Reminding parents about when a child should be in school prevents unnecessary absences.
- Chronically absent students fly under the radar and go unidentified by teachers, increasing their likelihood of absence. Identifying these students is the first step to changing their behavior.
- Parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity to reinforce attendance expectations at a time when parents are already focused on hearing about their student.



Display your checklist close to where you take attendance.

On the side of your computer, right above on a bulletin board, or flat on your desk are all great places for quick reference.

1) Education World, "What Students Really Think of Their Education, Teachers," 2009.

2) IES, "Can Texting Parents Improve Attendance in Elementary School?," 2020.

Principal/VP: Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Instructions

Cut out and display the checklist below in a visible place, close to where you typically review student attendance (i.e., on the side of your desk, computer, or tablet). Complete each checklist item as instructed each day, week, or grading period. For more information on why each task is important, review the information to the right of each checklist item.

Principal Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Every Day:

- Greet students as they arrive at school each day

Every Week:

- Pull an attendance report from your SIS that clearly flags all students who are chronically absent
 - ✓ Share with attendance and administrative staff
- Call parents or guardians of students that have been absent for 4 days in a row

Every Grading Period

- Include [messaging about the costs of absence](#) in parent communications
- Review attendance data and policies with school staff during existing faculty meetings or professional development

Why Each Task Is Critical for Combatting Absenteeism

- ◀ Welcoming students to school each morning creates a positive school climate and builds strong relationships. Students who have more frequent positive interactions with administrators are more likely to attend.
- ◀ Monitoring student attendance data for chronic absence ensures that students are identified and connected to needed resources as early as possible.
- ◀ A call home after 4 absences allows principals to make a personal connection with families and prevent future absences so a 5-day letter isn't arriving out of the blue.
- ◀ Parents who understand the cost of absence are more likely to send their children to school each day.
- ◀ Sharing attendance data on a regular basis provides staff with a longitudinal story of how their efforts are impacting student attendance at large.



Display your checklist close to where you review attendance data.

On the side of your computer, right above on a bulletin board, or flat on your desk are all great places for quick reference.

Attendance and Administrative Staff: Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Instructions

Cut out and display the checklist below in a visible place, close to where you typically review student attendance (i.e., on the side of your desk, computer, or tablet). Complete each checklist item as instructed each day, week, or grading period. For more information on why each task is important, review the information to the right of each checklist item.

Attendance and Administrative Staff Tasks for Combatting Absenteeism

Every Day:

- Verify that teachers have submitted attendance and follow up with all teachers who did not submit attendance before 9am
- Communicate with parents or guardians of students that have been marked as unexcused to determine students' reasons for absence

Every Week:

- Send 5- and 10-day absence letters to families of qualifying students
- Review attendance reports provided by principal for students that have been flagged as chronically absent

Every Grading Period

- Meet with attendance team to set goals for improving school attendance
- Send quarterly reminders for staff to reference their checklists for combatting absenteeism

Why Each Task Is Critical for Combatting Absenteeism

- Accurate attendance data is a legal document - in an emergency where accounting for every student is crucial, accurate attendance data saves lives.
- By consistently reaching out to the parents of students marked as unexcused, you are creating an ongoing record of intervention. Without it, root causes for absence may continue to go unaddressed.
- Sending absence letters ensures that the school meets legal requirements set by the district and/or state and allows the school to continue a system of interventions to address student absences.
- Reviewing attendance helps staff identify chronically absent students and intervene. Early interventions reduce the number of students requiring intensive interventions.
- Creating attendance goals for the school, and meeting regularly, ensures that staff are actively working to combat absenteeism.
- Sending regular reminders to staff helps them solidify their role-specific expectations and emphasizes that combatting absenteeism is a priority for the school.



Display your checklist close to where you review attendance data.

On the side of your computer, right above on a bulletin board, or flat on your desk are all great places for quick reference.

Putting It All Together: How All Staff Roles Impact Attendance

All staff have a role to play in combatting absenteeism. When everyone does their part, no students fall through the cracks. The timeline below shows how the checklist tasks for teachers, principals, and attendance and administrative staff work together to combat student absences as they happen and prevent further occurrences.

Example timeline of an absent student:

Number of Absences	Teacher Task	Principal Task	Staff Task
1	Log absence in SIS		Communicate with parents or guardians if absence is unexcused
2	(Grades Pre-K to 5) Communicate with parents or guardians about student absences		
3	(Grades 6-12) Report the name of students missing 3 classes in a row to principal or grade level team		Communicate with parents or guardians if absence is unexcused
4		Call parents or guardians to discuss student absences	
5			Send home 5-day absence letter

Already, the number of touchpoints in this timeline is 5x as many as the number most districts report under their current staff expectations. By reinforcing the use of these task checklists, students are much less likely to reach levels of chronic absence before multiple staff intervene.