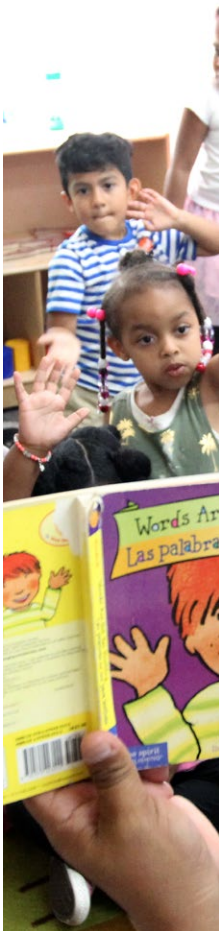

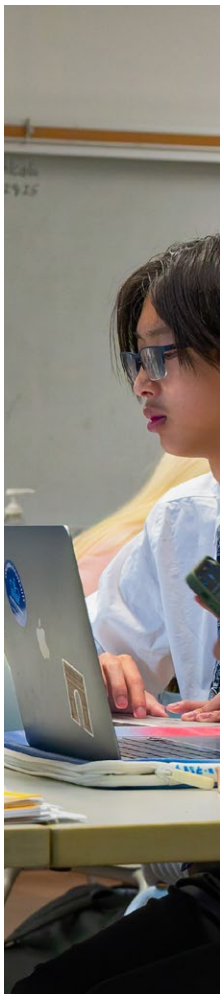

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PLAYBOOK

County of Los Angeles Public Health

Los Angeles County Office of Education

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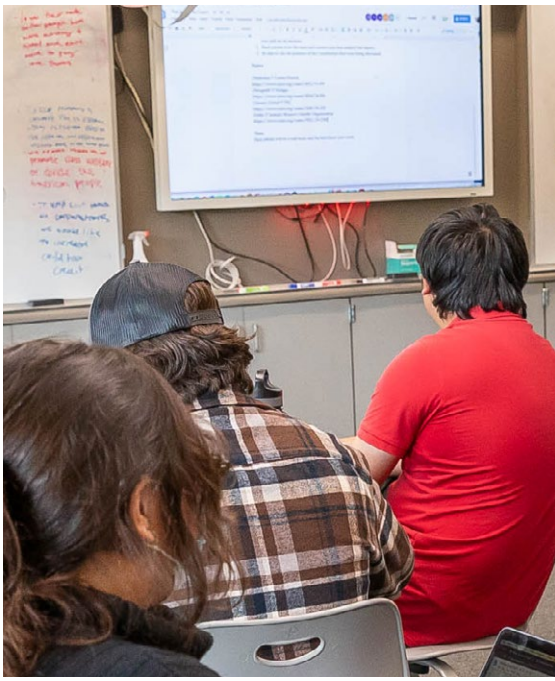
INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is proud to share our second edition of the School Attendance Playbook; a comprehensive guide designed as a roadmap to address the persistent challenge of chronic absenteeism in our educational institutions. The updated playbook builds upon the foundation laid out in Parts 1 and 2, and incorporates new research that LACOE Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA) and LACOE Community Schools Initiative (CSI) staff were able to complete with a grant from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH). Through a mixed-methods approach, we have examined trends, root causes, and conditions related to chronic absenteeism, providing a deeper understanding of this complex issue. Although aspects of the research will be discussed in this edition of the LACOE School Attendance Playbook, you can access the full report here: LACOE/LACDPH's recent study, *An Exploration of Chronic Absenteeism within Los Angeles County.*

Download the Chronic Absenteeism Study



While the previous playbook edition focused on fostering connections, increasing understanding among partners, and navigating attendance challenges during specific periods, this expanded edition includes data-driven systems and targeted interventions. We have integrated sophisticated data analytics to track attendance trends and inform interventions, enabling schools to implement more effective strategies throughout the entire academic year, including summer instruction.

Research findings have been seamlessly woven into the playbook, offering insights into the multifaceted causes of chronic absenteeism. This edition provides concrete strategies to identify and address barriers to attendance. By focusing on supporting students and families, we aim to create a more inclusive and engaging educational environment. The playbook serves as a comprehensive tool for educators and administrators to implement evidence-based practices that can significantly improve student attendance, academic outcomes, and overall student well-being.

Connection, Understanding and Community

The start of a new school year always brings excitement, hope and possibility. Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is excited to partner with you on this journey to create and strengthen systems that promote wellbeing, reengage all educational partners, and establish a framework of effective, affirming, and welcoming school communities for all.

Most importantly, to benefit from the comprehensive resources being provided in LEAs, we must intentionally connect with our students and families. As we mend from the trauma, disruption, and disconnection brought about by the pandemic, it is even more essential to see and support one another as whole people. Educators are aware from experience, and research has confirmed that showing up for class makes all the difference for students. We recognize that students must be present to thrive in school, and to benefit from rigorous, high-quality instruction and to develop socially and emotionally.

We hope that the resources in this Attendance Playbook help you create and strengthen systems that support student attendance, as well as empower all staff and partners to participate in these critical efforts.

A message from the California Department of Education: September is National School Attendance Awareness Month: Engaging Families to Reduce Chronic Absence

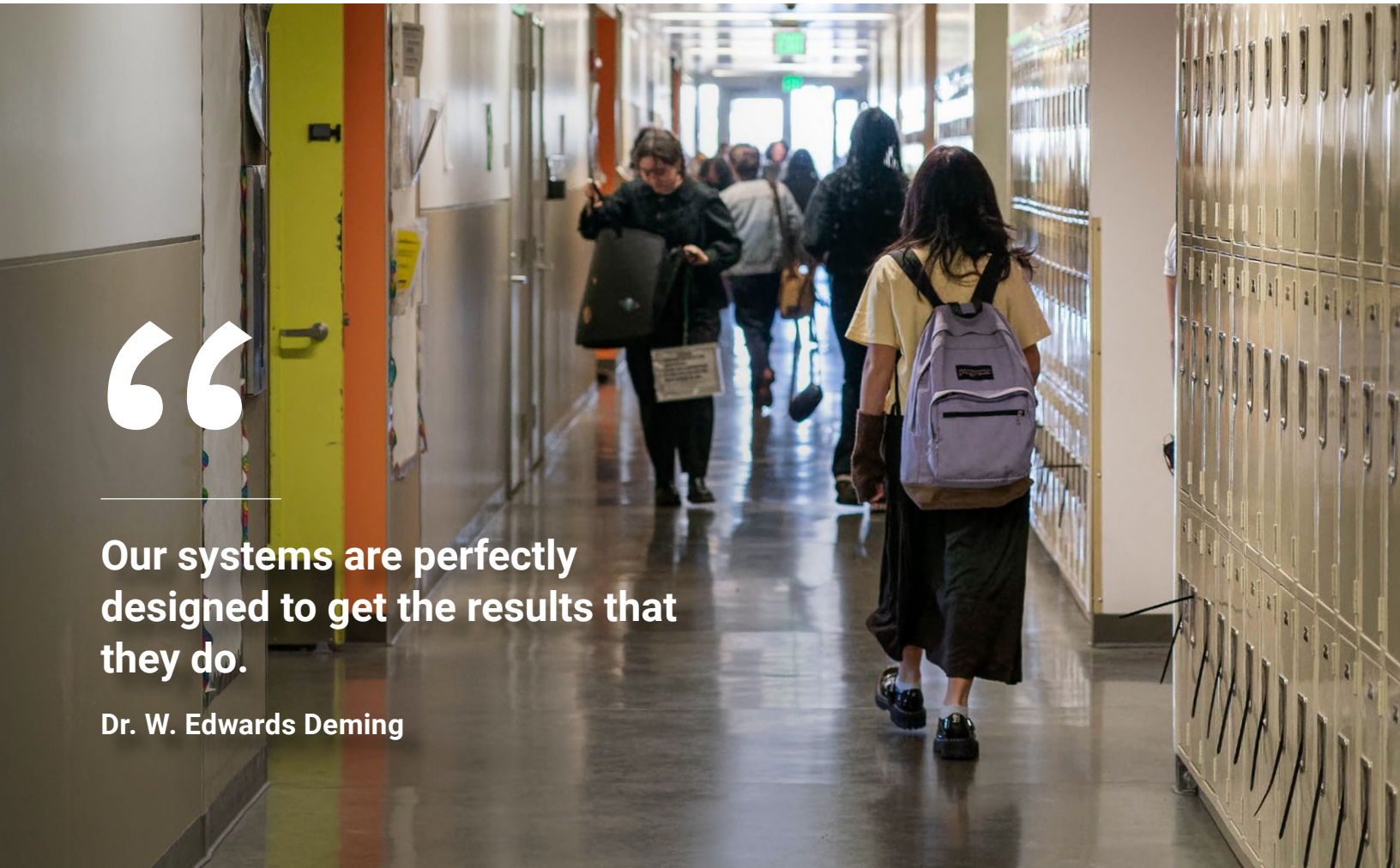
You are not alone in this work! LACOE's CWA team is here to support and connect you with the resources that you need. Please know that you, and what you do, matters!

Intentional Strategies to Improve Student Attendance

This toolkit will provide you with practical strategies and resources to support your school/district to foster connections, increase understanding among all partners, and build community to accelerate student engagement post-pandemic.

The following resources are foundational tools to expand and enhance systems of support:

- Start with Connection: Relationships Matter
- Support transition
- Establish an Attendance Team
- Review and Understand Attendance Data and Contributing Factors
- Develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support Plan for Attendance
- Put a system in place to monitor Attendance Data and Progress
- Recognize and share the Impact of Chronic Absence
- Engage with colleagues through LACOE's CWA Regional Learning Network



It All Starts with Connection: Relationships Matter

The Importance of Relationship Building

Supporting student attendance requires a collective approach. Intentional relationship building with educational partners (students, staff, parents/guardians) yields beneficial results and contributes to a welcoming school community.

Our research findings highlight the direct link between school connectedness and chronic absenteeism. Data from the recent Chronic Absenteeism Study suggests that a lack of belonging, mental health challenges, and disengagement from school culture are key contributing factors to student absences. The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data reinforces that students who feel connected to their school community are more likely to attend regularly, engage in learning, and report positive well-being.

Here are some outcomes when a positive school community has been established:

- Parents, students, and staff are engaged and feel valued. Our research findings indicate that family engagement in school activities fosters accountability and improves attendance rates. Schools that prioritize two-way communication and meaningful family involvement report stronger student commitment to attendance.
- Lived experience can be shared to build capacity and strengthen prevention efforts. Focus group research underscores that students facing chronic absenteeism often cite personal or family struggles that impact their ability to attend school consistently. Creating safe spaces for students to share their experiences can enhance preventative strategies and provide more tailored support.
- School culture is inclusive of diverse norms, values, and perspectives.
- Schools that recognize and integrate cultural and community values into their climate experience higher student attendance and engagement. Our research suggests that students from historically marginalized communities feel more supported when schools reflect their lived experiences in curriculum and programming.
- There is a sense of belonging and safety. The research report highlights that students who feel unsafe or unwelcome at school are more likely to be absent. Schools that prioritize trauma-informed practices and social-emotional learning see improvements in both attendance and student mental health outcomes.

- Communication with all partners is improved. The research indicates that transparent, proactive communication between schools, students, and families leads to earlier identification of attendance barriers. Schools that implement early warning systems and personalized outreach strategies experience increased re-engagement of chronically absent students.

Key Takeaway

Consistent and Visible Engagement Drives Attendance: Data indicates that schools where staff are consistently visible—greeting students at drop-off zones, front gates, and classroom doors—not only build relational trust but also see a measurable decrease in chronic absenteeism. This proactive presence creates an environment where students feel supported and valued, which is essential to reducing absentee patterns.

Multi-Channel, Flexible Outreach Enhances Family Connections: Findings show that when schools offer flexible meeting times for parents/guardians and display positive, affirming messages both on campus and through digital channels, they create stronger home–school partnerships. This comprehensive approach, which integrates physical engagement with strategic communication, contributes to improved student attendance and overall school climate.

Setting the Tone for Success: Creating a Positive School Climate

When building relational trust to establish a positive and affirming school climate, it is important to….

- Be visible and available to provide support
- Provide greetings at the drop-off zone, front gate, and classroom door
- Invite parents/guardians to meet with school leadership and staff at different times of the day (to accommodate parent/guardian schedules)
- Display positive and affirming messages (on campus, the school website, and marquee)

Relationships impact attendance. A positive school climate can be developed when schools or LEA's:

- Employ strategies that focus on fostering student relationships and preventing and addressing bullying.
- Provide a variety of school-wide student events,activities and culturally relevant family engagement, and encourage participation from all students to enhance their motivation.
- Cultivate strong teacher-student and student-student relationships and ensure teachers understand their students' needs and circumstances.
- Offer trauma-informed mental health training for teachers, along with support strategies for implementation.
- Encourage teachers to exhibit empathy so that students feel understood by their educators more frequently.
- Maintain a welcoming environment and ensure effective outreach and communication with all parents and guardians.
- Develop strategies to ensure staff consistently enforce local policies and expectations through an equity-focused lens.

- Demonstrate optimal customer service at critical entry points (main office, attendance office, front gate, health office, counseling office, parent center).
- Provide transparency and community engagement by regularly sharing attendance data with students, staff, and parents/guardians.
- Solicit parent/guardian and student feedback (focus groups, invite to PD meetings, surveys) to improve daily operations on campus.
- Maintain predictable daily rituals and routines to build trust and safety.

- Implement community building practices, such as CASEL's Three Signature SEL practices in classrooms and adult learning/professional development.
- At least annually, request student feedback on methods to enhance student engagement. Establish a committee at both the school-site and district level to analyze feedback and determine viable strategies that can be implemented effectively, based on available resources.
- Research validates that prevention efforts focused on positive school engagement reduce chronic absenteeism. Schools that implement proactive outreach, such as attendance awareness campaigns, school-hosted resource fairs, and culturally relevant family engagement events, report stronger student and family participation.

Student Centered Strategies

- Emphasize campaigns and health presentations for students on the importance of adequate sleep, which is crucial for proper social-emotional and cognitive development, as well as self-care.
- Enhance educational methods and strategies for students regarding the identification of adverse factors impacting.
- Mental health, while increasing resources and access to those resources.
- At least annually, engage with high school students to discuss their unique educational goals. At the start of high school, meet with incoming students to review their objectives and connect them with school-based resources and programs that support their identified goals.
- Provide educational, academic, and social-emotional support (e.g., mentorship programs) to students who may be struggling or have struggled in the previous year.

Re-establishing Connections with Students, Parents, and the Community

When re-connecting with students and families, it is helpful for school site teams:

- Greet students/parents at the door
- Provide students/parents a school resource directory of the administrative team and support services staff (mental health and counseling, academic support, health services, technology assistance, School Resource Officer, etc.)
- Incorporate attendance goals and expectations in Back-to-School, Kindergarten Orientation, Parent Conference Night, and Open House activities
- Implement a daily Check-In/Check-Out with students (homeroom, advisory)

- Provide students and families with helpful community resources to address barriers
    - https://www.findhelp.org/
    - https://211la.org/ - 211 LA County
    - https://oclawin.org/find-help/win-app-online/ - Our Community LA "What I Need" App
- School staff at school drop off/pick up zones
- Canvas the community to outreach to local businesses (provide school schedule and calendar)
- Offer Coffee with the Principal (create monthly opportunities to meet with key staff)
- Establish parent volunteer opportunities with steps to become a volunteer
- Provide parents/caregivers and students with a campus map with available on-site resources

* Resources used with permission of Attendance Works

Working with Community Partners to Provide Additional Support

Building partnerships with community agencies can be an excellent way to provide additional support to students and families. Such partnerships can help address complex matters faced by students and families such as:

- Housing/food insecurity
- Lack of childcare
- Need for mental health support
- Access to medical/dental/vision services

Creating a directory of relevant community resources can be a great resource when linking families to needed services.

The Attendance Works Student Reengagement Fact Sheet can assist you with engaging city leaders and elected officials in the plight of addressing chronic absenteeism.

*Resources provided with the permission of Attendance Works

Support Transitions

Intentional Strategies to Improve Student Attendance

Important Transitions for Students
As students transition through critical points in their educational career, it is important to create a system of support to facilitate seamless transitions, such as:

- Pre-Kindergarten/Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten
- Elementary school to middle school
- Middle school to high school

Strategies to Support Important Student Transitions

Strategies to help ease big school transitions may include:

- Meet and greet with new teachers prior to the start of the school year
- Coordinated "warm hand-offs" between teachers and support staff at the school site
- Early screening for any health-related requirements or conditions upon entry (e.g., dental/vision screenings, immunizations, asthma plan, etc.)
- Inquire with parents if the student has any special needs requiring support or an existing IEP or Section 504 Plan
- Home visits and phone calls welcoming new students and parents to the upcoming school year, with a focus on those with prior history of chronic absenteeism (if prior year data is available)

Considerations for grade-level transitions

- Early preparation for grade transitions is key to student success
- Incorporate early habits of mind regarding the importance of regular, on-time attendance and attendance expectations
- Plan annual events around big grade transitions (e.g., orientation for newly enrolled Pre-K/TK/Kindergarten students, incoming 9th grader welcome night, student/parent orientation middle school)
- Students may have questions and needs over time and may need continued support
- Parents often need preparation and support during grade transitions

Best Practices to Support Transitions and Matriculation

Elementary school to middle school:

- Invite parents or guardians of incoming 6th graders to visit the middle school before the school year starts
- Host an informational event or orientation for incoming 6th graders before the school year starts
- Middle school students or staff visit the elementary school and assist incoming 6th graders with course selection
- Allow students to observe or enroll in middle school classes while they are still in elementary school
- Elementary school and middle school teachers meet to discuss articulation of content and requirements
- Create summer program prior to middle school that provides supplemental instruction in academic subjects
- New students receive an older student buddy/mentor and/or an adult mentor
- Place 6th grade students into a small learning community or 6th grade academy
- Place 6th graders into an advisory, seminar, or advisement class

Middle school to high school:

- Allow parents or guardians of incoming 9th graders to visit the high school before the school year starts
- Host an informational event or orientation for incoming 9th graders before the school year starts
- Allow high school students or staff to visit the middle school and assist incoming 9th graders with course selection
- Allow middle school students to observe or enroll in high school classes while they are still in middle school
- Support middle school and high school teachers meeting to discuss articulation of content and requirements
- Create a summer program prior to high school to provide supplemental instruction in academic subjects
- New students receive an older student buddy/mentor and/or an adult mentor
- Place 9th grade students into small learning community or 9th grade academy
- Place 9th graders into an advisory, seminar, or advisement class

Strengthen Communication

Methods to Communicate Attendance Goals and Expectations

- Welcome Letters (simple, clear, concise and inclusive home language)
    - Principal's Welcome Letter
    - Preschool/Kinder Back-to-School Welcome Letter
- School Website
- Phone Calls (personalized calls, automated calls/blasts)
- Home Visits (outreach to "no show" students)
- Text Messages
- Flyers/School Bulletin Boards
- School Signage (Marquee, school entrances/exits, front office, gate banners)
- Monthly newsletter for students and parents/guardians.
- To access sample informational materials of the preceding information, please visit: https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/

Tips for Written Correspondence to Parents/Guardians

Here are some helpful tips and formatting techniques when constructing attendance letters:

- Ensure messaging is positive and supportive (offer assistance with resources to remedy the

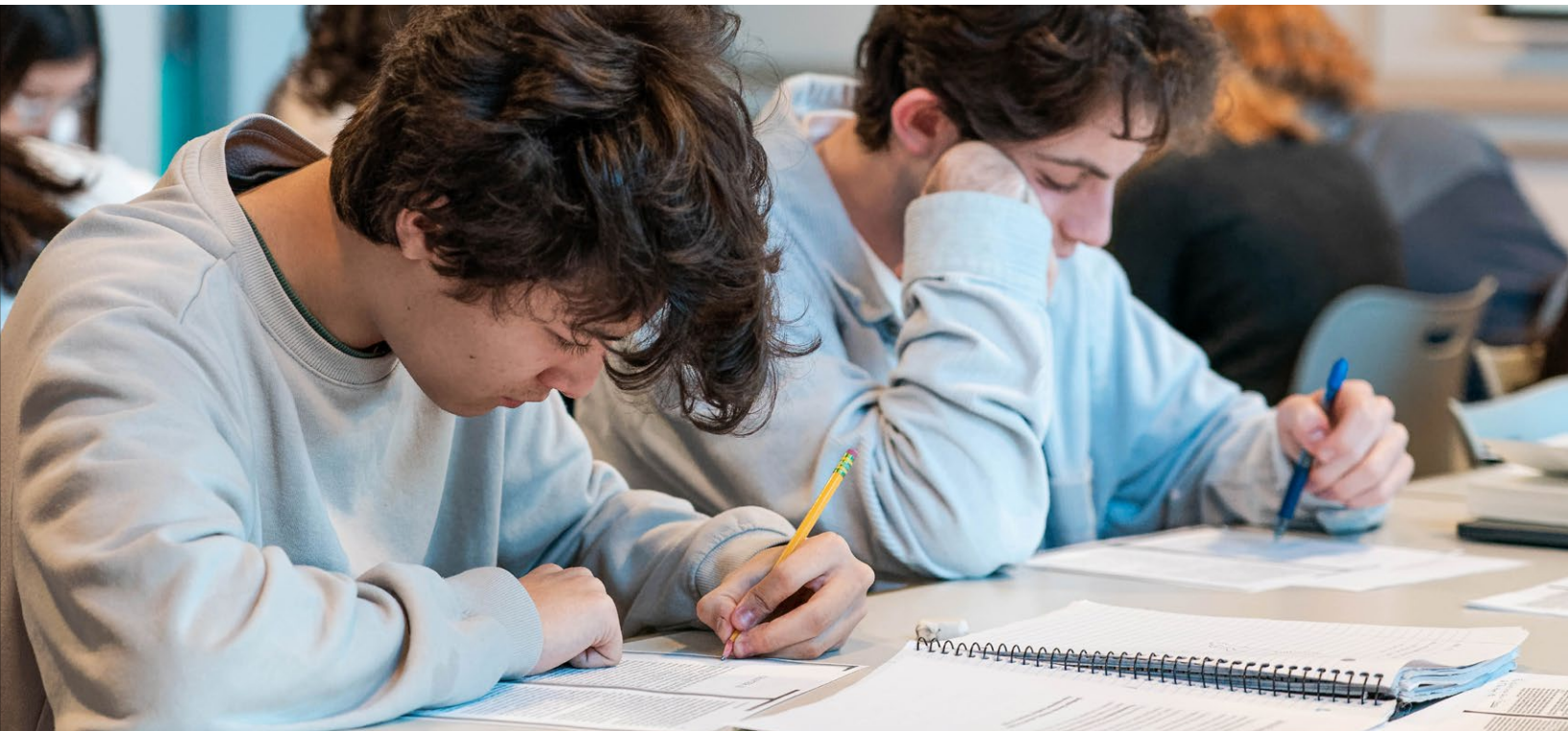
underlying problem/barrier)

- Keep wording clear, concise, and to a minimum
- Use larger font (at least 14-point font)
- Decrease reading level (4th or 5th grade is suggested)
- Use bullets, bold text, or highlighting when communicating important points
- Consider only citing Education Code in correspondence as attendance cases progress to Tier III interventions

Promoting Student Attendance Throughout the Year

Implementing school-wide attendance awareness campaigns can be a fun way to engage and motivate students while recognizing their efforts. Attendance campaigns can incentivize students to continue to maintain good attendance or strive for improvement. Your school-site team, with feedback from your educational partners, should meet to determine what campaign or initiative fits best with your school culture and climate.

Attendance Works has curated many helpful attendance campaign ideas (e.g., Count Me In! campaign) and tools to help teams build out effective programs. To access their campaign toolkit, please visit: https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/resources/count-us-toolkit/



Establishing an Attendance Team

The Purpose of an Attendance Team

Attendance teams are essential to school communities as they help to:

- Review previous year's attendance data to adapt systems and differentiated outreach in preparation for the upcoming school year. The LACOE/LACDPH Chronic Absenteeism Study findings highlight that early identification of attendance patterns can help schools implement targeted interventions that address barriers such as health concerns, transportation issues, and mental health struggles.
- Examine and disaggregate attendance data to identify absence trends occurring within the school year and with particular student groups.
- Findings from our study emphasize that chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects students with unmet mental health needs, students experiencing housing insecurity, and those from historically marginalized communities. Attendance teams can use disaggregated data to ensure equity in intervention efforts.
- Review data from the first few weeks of school to identify students in need of additional support. According to our research, early attendance patterns can predict long-term absenteeism issues. Schools that engage students and families within the first 30 days of school see increased attendance rates throughout the year.
- Organize and facilitate school-wide attendance strategies and/or campaigns.
- The research underscores the importance of community-wide efforts in promoting attendance, highlighting that schools with active attendance awareness campaigns see higher levels of student engagement and family involvement.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for all staff to maximize student engagement and connectedness.
- A multidisciplinary approach ensures that attendance interventions are well-coordinated. Data from our chronic absenteeism study suggests that when all staff—teachers, counselors, and support personnel—are involved in attendance efforts, students feel more supported and connected to their school community.
- Click here for tips to ensure your teams are effective.

Attendance teams may also:

- Identify barriers to regular, on-time attendance and formulate a response.
- Our research identifies health concerns, family responsibilities, and transportation challenges as top barriers. Teams should conduct needs assessments to understand and address these obstacles proactively.
- Mobilize the school and local community to support and encourage student attendance. Community engagement strategies informed by our findings show that collaboration with health agencies, mental health providers, and local organizations strengthens attendance initiatives and improves student well-being.
- Ensure that attendance policies and expectations are clearly and positively communicated. Schools with proactive communication strategies—such as multilingual outreach and culturally responsive messaging—see stronger family engagement, a key factor highlighted in our study.
- Monitor tiered promotion/prevention and intervention efforts and determine if and when adjustments are needed. Our research data reinforces those tiered interventions—ranging from universal messaging to individualized outreach—help prevent chronic absenteeism and keep students engaged.

Key Takeaway

- **Targeted Barrier Identification and Community Mobilization:** Research highlights that rigorously identifying attendance barriers—such as health issues, family responsibilities, and transportation challenges—through proactive needs assessments can lead to tailored solutions. Coupled with mobilizing local partners like health agencies, mental health providers, and community organizations, these strategies form a critical network that improves student well-being and bolsters attendance initiatives.
- **Culturally Responsive Communication and Adaptive Interventions:** Findings show that clear and positive communication of attendance policies, including multilingual outreach and culturally responsive messaging, significantly enhances family engagement. In addition, monitoring tiered strategies—from universal messaging to individualized outreach—allows schools to adjust their interventions effectively, contributing to a reduction in chronic absenteeism.

Essential Roles for an Effective Attendance Team

Successful teams are comprised of individuals with diverse experiences who are reflective of the school community. Our research emphasizes that having a team with varied expertise ensures that attendance solutions are holistic and responsive to student needs. Effective teams have a shared vision and established roles such as:

- Team leader (Principal or Administrative Designee) – Provides leadership and ensures alignment with school-wide goals.
- Meeting facilitator – Keeps meetings focused and ensures action items are addressed.
- Data coordinator – Analyzes trends and ensures data-driven decision-making.
- Note taker – Documents discussions, strategies, and progress.

Additional Members of your Attendance Team

Additional members of the school community to include on Attendance Teams may be:

- Classroom teacher – Plays a key role in student engagement and early identification of absenteeism patterns.
- Data coordinator – Ensures attendance data is accessible and used effectively.
- School social worker, counselor, and/or school psychologist – our research confirms that students with mental health support have improved attendance. Mental health professionals on the team can provide interventions and referrals.
- Attendance clerk/office manager – Facilitates communication with families and ensures accurate data entry.
- Support staff (Special Education, Student Support Services, etc.) – Helps tailor attendance solutions to meet diverse student needs.
- Expanded learning program staff – Engages students in after-school programs that promote attendance consistency.
- Nurse – Addresses health-related barriers, one of the top causes of absenteeism identified in our research data.
- School safety officer/ambassador – Ensures a safe school climate, which the research identifies as a key attendance driver.

Components of a Successful Team

Effective attendance teams have:

- Established group norms, expectations, and a routine meeting structure (e.g., bi-weekly and quarterly meetings encouraged) that are implemented throughout the school year.
- Access to the student information system to generate attendance reports – Chronic Absenteeism Study findings stress that real-time data access improves early intervention efforts.
- Agreed upon roles and responsibilities – Clear delineation of tasks improves efficiency and accountability.
- A scheduled timeline for monitoring and tracking attendance data – Regular monitoring ensures that interventions are timely and responsive to trends identified in our research.
- A system of communication for attendance data, policies, and expectations that is conveyed to school staff, students, parents/guardians, and the local community.
- Regular intervals throughout the school year when good/improved student attendance is recognized and celebrated.
- A process to calibrate school-wide and student group attendance goals based on school attendance data.

If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.

Henry Ford

Attendance Team Meeting Structure

Attendance Team Meeting Structure Bi-Weekly Meetings

Attendance Teams should be consistent and have scheduled meetings that are implemented with fidelity. Most effective teams hold bi-weekly and quarterly meetings with a set agenda.

Bi-weekly meetings allow for opportunities to:

- Track and analyze attendance data via your local School Information System (e.g. Power School, Aeries, etc.)
- Plan appropriate strategies and interventions based on tier of support needed
- Examine the effectiveness of tiered interventions
- Identify student groups who are chronically absent

Our partners at EveryDay Labs have created helpful meeting agendas to help structure your *bi-weekly* Attendance Team meetings.

Attendance Team Meeting Structure Quarterly Meetings:

Quarterly meetings permit teams to:

- Review long-term data
- Make modifications to ineffective intervention strategies
- Create a schedule of anticipated drops in attendance per data trends and implement student-centered interventions to re-engage students

Our partners at EveryDay Labs have created helpful meeting agendas to help structure your *quarterly* Attendance Team meetings

Review and Understand Attendance Data and Contributing Factors

What are Some Collateral Sources of Information?

To incorporate additional qualitative and quantitative information, Attendance Teams should include useful collateral sources, such as:

- Parent/guardian, student, and staff surveys
- Parent/guardian, student, and community member direct feedback
- School Climate Surveys (PBIS School Climate survey guide) OR the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) tools; LACOE is hosting information sessions on Sept 13 and 14 about free access to CHKS for L.A. County LEAs – click HERE to register)

Considerations for Your Attendance Team Discussions: Data

Below is a list of questions your Attendance Team should review and discuss as the data is examined:

- What is the chronic absenteeism rate for your school, if applicable?
- How is this information disseminated to students, staff, and parents/ guardians?
- Are there noted trends among certain student groups (e.g., youth in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, or grade levels)?
- Does your attendance data reveal certain days during the school year when students are likely to be absent?
- How will you use your attendance data to tier student interventions and identify students in need of immediate support?
- What attendance barriers has your team identified? How will you respond
- What have been the attendance "bright spots" and demonstrate what has worked well?

Root Cause Analysis

Conducting a root cause analysis can help Attendance Teams strengthen their school improvement planning efforts in a variety of ways. Root cause analysis is a process for identifying the underlying causes of a problem and developing solutions. It's a more effective way to solve problems than just treating symptoms. This type of analysis allows the group to obtain a collective understanding of the causes of the current problem (i.e., chronic absenteeism, trends in attendance data, etc.).

When conducting a root cause analysis, you would take the following steps:

1. Define a problem to be addressed and gather data and evidence relevant to the problem.
2. Identify potential causes of the problem and determine the root cause(s) of the problem.
3. Identify evidence-based strategies to address the problem.

Participating in a root cause analysis exercise can:

- Help Team members generate deeper insights about the needs identified and
- Support Team members with prioritizing which problems, factors, or root causes to address first (i.e., those that have the greatest impact)

A Sample Approach to Root Cause Analysis: The Fishbone Diagram

The Fish Bone Diagram is a way to brainstorm cause-and-effect relationships visually. When completing a Fish Bone Diagram follow these five steps:

1. Agree on a problem statement. This is written at the mouth of the "fish." Be as clear and specific as you can about the problem (e.g., unhoused students have higher rates of chronic absenteeism).
2. Agree on the **major categories** (e.g., health reasons, temporary housing, family obligations, etc.) and **causes** contributing to the problem (written on the branches from the main arrow).
    - Brainstorm all the possible causes of the problem. Ask "Why does this happen?"
    - Write down the sub-causes branching off the cause branches

3. Continue to ask "Why?" to generate deeper levels of causes and continue organizing them under related causes or categories. *The Five Whys Technique* involves asking "Why?" or "What caused this problem?" to drill down to the root cause of a situation.

Additional Considerations: Specific Student Groups

It is important for Attendance Teams to recognize particular student groups who may need additional support. An analysis of the data, in particular to chronic absenteeism, can highlight disproportionality and students requiring additional attention and resources.

Examples of such students from special populations include:

- Students experiencing a transition (e.g., entering kindergarten, going to middle school, entering high school, newly enrolling in any grade)
- Marginalized and/or historically underserved students
    - Students of color
    - LGBTQ+ students (resources)
    - Students experiencing homelessness
    - Students in foster care
    - Students with disabilities
    - Students who are newcomers
    - Multilingual learners

Interventions may include extra engagement and outreach, as well as coordination of services and resources to address attendance barriers.

The Importance of Developing Data-Driven Attendance Systems

The outline below provides an overall view of Part III of LACOE's School Attendance Playbook:

Focus on Data-Driven Systems and Targeted Interventions:

- Build on systems from Part I and II of the Playbook.
- Use data analytics to track attendance trends and inform interventions.
- Equip schools with tools for a strong finish in promoting attendance.

Data Systems to Inform Action:

- Track attendance trends and identify areas of strength and of concern.
- Use data insights to support students in overcoming attendance barriers.

Support for Specific Student Groups:

- Tailored strategies for diverse student populations facing unique attendance challenges.
- Evidence-based practices and culturally responsive approaches to promote equitable outcomes.

Interventions for Sustained Improvement:

- Incentive programs and personalized support plans to sustain attendance.
- Empower schools to engage families and foster a sense of belonging and accountability.

Commitment to Success:

- A roadmap to navigate attendance management complexities.
- Promote student success academically, socially, and emotionally through collaboration and innovation.

Datasystems

Using Data to Look Across Our School System

The educational landscape throughout Los Angeles County is vast and ever-changing. With 80 school districts and over 370 charter schools, alongside numerous private school institutions, the county's LEAs serves a richly diverse community and offers a diverse array of educational options. In total, approximately 1.3 million students are enrolled in schools across Los Angeles County.

Examining various data sources facilitates understanding of trends and informs educational decision-making. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can leverage data to pinpoint areas of excellence as well as areas of concern, thereby enhancing their capacity to improve educational services for all students and their families. The exploration and analysis of data are essential for assessing students' academic progress, attendance patterns, and identifying areas requiring targeted intervention. LEAs can employ focus groups, surveys, and studies to gather both qualitative and quantitative student data and relevant information.

In the next section, we will review publicly available student information systems, their databases, functions, and attributes that can help your school team to track key indicators.

Information	CA State Dashboard	Calpads	DataQuest	Edu-Data	EPS Passport System	Student Information System (SIS)
About Datasystem	CA State Dashboard provides performance information on multiple indicators for K-12 schools and districts across the state.	CA State Dashboard provides performance information on multiple indicators for K-12 schools and districts across the state.	Data Quest is a powerful provides performance tool that provides access to a wide variety of reports, including school performance, test results, student enrollment, etc.	Ed-Data provide comprehensive data about K-12 education in California.	Education Passport System (EPS) is data specifically related to foster students.	Student Information System (SIS) are information technologies that are utilized to monitor student progress.
Data Grade Span	**CA Dashboard Data** Grade Span: Kinder through grade eight grade.	**Calpads Data** Grade Span: Kinder through grade twelve	**DataQuest-Data** Grade Span: Kinder through grade twelve	**Edu-Data** Grade Span: Kinder through grade twelve	**EPS Passport System** Grade Span: * Limited: Depending on school district, grade span is based on academic offering	**SIS Data** Grade Span: * Limited: Depending on school district, grade span is based on academic offering
Key Data Areas	• Chronic Absenteeism • College/Career Readiness • Academic Performance • Suspension Rate	• Chronic Absenteeism • Demographics • Enrollment and graduation data • Suspension/ Expulsion Data	• Absenteeism Data • Suspension and expulsion Data • Assessment Data • Graduation, Enrollment	• Chronic Absenteeism • Expulsions • Academic Performance • Demographics	• Transcripts • Enrollment History • Education Rights • CSW Info • District Reports	• Attendance • Enrollment • Grades and Test Scores • Discipline/ Suspension Data
Accessibility	Public Website www.dachooldashboard.org	Closed to the public Calpads access must be granted: Please contact your data team for more information	Public Website www.dg.cde.ca.gov/	Public Website www.ed-data.org	• Closed to the public • EPS access must be granted : Please contact your data team for more information	• Closed to the public • SIS access must be granted: Please contact your data team for more information

Overview of Primary Data Systems

California uses an array of information technologies to maintain K-12 educational data and critical student information. We have compiled a list of primary educational data systems that will be helpful in exploring current student data, trends, and other school-based information. A comparison of student data systems and their attributes are below:

- California State Dashboard: https://www.caschooldashboard.org/
- DataQuest: https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/
- Educational Data Partnership: https://www.ed-data.org/

Educational Data Partnership (Ed-Data)

(Ed-Data) is a partnership between the California Department of Education, EdSource, and Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). The Ed-Data website was designed to offer educators, policy makers, the legislature, parents, and the public quick access to timely and comprehensive data about K-12 education at LEAs across California and elevates information about:

- Enrollment
- Student Groups
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Suspensions and Expulsions
- Student Attendance
- Test Scores
- Graduation Rates

Information is provided as charts and graphs that are easy to understand, download, and share. Many of the graphs have layers of data which allows the user to drill down to view students by race/ethnicity, grade, and school type.

Why is this resource important?
Ed-Data's data comparison functionality makes it easy to generate a report on multiple schools or LEAs, or the county based on the selected values.

For a comprehensive guide on navigating this website, refer to this Ed-Data Tour video.

California Dashboard

The California State School Dashboard is an online tool designed to help communities across the state explore important information to gain insights into the educational performance of schools and LEAs across the state.

Information is pulled from CALPADS, LEAS and testing vendors to create the interactive state-wide

dashboard. This information is based on CA School Accountability System that measure schools and LEAs performance data via state and local indicators. The Dashboard features easy-to-read reports on the six state measures and allows for comparisons across all local educational agencies.

- Academic Performance
- Chronic Absenteeism
- College/Career
- English Learners Progress
- Graduation Rates
- Suspension Rate

Why is the Dashboard important?

LEAs and student groups receive performance colors on the Dashboard; Blue indicates the highest performance, and Red indicates the lowest performance.

Performance colors are determined based on a combination of **Status** (current year performance) and **Change** (current year performance compared with prior year performance). Review the California Dashboard Technical Guide and review online video to access more key information.

California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)

CALPADS is a powerhouse of data systems. All student K-12 education data is sourced through CALPADS data reporting systems. To meet the requirements of California EC 60900, LEAs shall retain and report CALPADS individual and staff records including:

- Statewide Student Identifier (SSID) data
- Student enrollment and exit data
- All necessary data to produce required demographic, graduation and dropout rates

CALPADS collects data from school LEAs and other educational entities across California. It provides a centralized system for managing student enrollment, assessment results, and

demographic information. The data gathered through CALPADS supports various state and federal reporting requirements. The web-based application does not require special hardware, but users will need login credentials.

Why is CALPADS important?
CALPADS provides LEAs with access to longitudinal data and reports on their own students, and new students which allows LEAs to place students appropriately and to determine whether any assessments are necessary.

DataQuest

DataQuest is a powerful reporting tool, offered by CDE that shares a wide range of data about K-12 LEAs such as student demographics, academic achievements, enrollment figures, teacher demographics, and attendance rates for informational, research, and policy needs. The tool allows the user to:

- Explore current and previous raw attendance data, along with suspension, graduation and chronic absenteeism rates
- Generate reports based on large datasets across diverse student groups such as Foster, Homeless, Special Education, English Learners, Race/Ethnicity, and more…

DataQuest is accessible to the public. Users can subscribe to the DataQuest listserv via subscribe-dataquest@mlist.cde.ca.gov.

Educational Passport System (EPS)

(EPS) is a data sharing system hosted by LACOE that facilitates information sharing between all LEAs within Los Angeles County, with a focus on foster youth and other highly mobile student groups. EPS was developed in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to coordinate educational services, respond to the needs of the juvenile court system and ensure timely and secure transfer of education records. EPS is a powerful tool that can be used to access the following data: (https://www.lacoe.edu/services/technology/eps#accordion-503861da84-item-6a3b07d87d)

- **CalPADS** - 5.7 Foster Youth Report.
- **Counselor Management and Tracking Modules** - LACOE Foster Youth Program Counselors facilitate education case management, including service logs, group home programming, tutorial services, and training for LEA AB490 liaisons.
- **District Reports** - Request and view student documents, including transcripts.

- **Education Rights Holder and Social Worker Contact** - Student information provided by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).
- **Instant Access to Enrollment, Attendance, and Progress Reports** - Student academic data provided by participating LEAs.

Why is EPS important?

Rather than a request for records and student information taking days to be made and returned, this valuable enrollment information is available within minutes to ensure swift and accurate student placement and services to this vulnerable student population. To learn more about EPS, please explore the following links EPS Newsletter, guided tutorial videos, or schedule a training today.

Student Information System (SIS)

Student Information Systems help LEAs collect, store, and organize student data. LEAs rely on their SIS for daily operations and data management of student demographics, enrollment, discipline records, test scores, referral services, home visits, contact information, track attendance, and more. Some sys-tems allow LEAs to document interactions and interventions. Although some LEAs may create their own, the following is a sample list some of the most commonly utilized SIS platforms:

- Aeries
- Power Schools
- Infinite Campus
- Synergy
- Panorama

Many SIS systems optimize use of data by providing in a user-friendly dashboards. Staff members can securely log into a portal to instantly retrieve real-time data displayed in charts, graphs, and lists. They also have the flexibility to customize data protocols, ensuring students and parents can only access relevant student information.

Why is SIS important?

SIS allows LEAs to track student attendance, grades, progress, and other key data, which may be utilized to generate reports that aid in the identification of areas for improvement and resource allocation. LEAs are encouraged to query and review their own attendance, discipline and other data regularly to chart progress and revise plans as needed.

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

LCAP/LCFF and their role with School Attendance

The LCAP is a three-year, district-level plan, updated annually, as part of California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). It promotes transparency, engagement, and accountability within the education system, with school attendance being a critical metric tied to student engagement and success. It is also a critical method for LEAs to plan and leverage resources to meet strategic goals to improve student outcomes.

Attendance Strategies in LCAP:

- Prioritizes improving student attendance rates.
- Implements attendance promotion and targeted intervention efforts like incentive programs and community partnerships.
- Highlights the link between governance, community involvement, and student engagement.

The LCFF requires LEAs to monitor **chronic absenteeism** as a measure of student engagement. This requires LEAs to address chronic absenteeism in their LCAPs.

Chronic Absenteeism Support:

- Building relationships with students and parents
- Providing information and training on the importance of attendance
- Helping families find solutions to barriers to attendance
- Offering solutions like bus passes, carpool arrangements, or gas cards
- Materials from Attendance Works help LEAs measure chronic absenteeism and set improvement goals.
- Access resources: Attendance Works

To support your efforts with the LCAP as well as for more information relating to the LCAP/LCFF, please visit our LACOE 2025-2026 LCAP website: https://lacoepd.instructure.com/courses/588/pages/2025-2026-lcap

Parent/Caregiver Participation

The LCAP and LCFF also prioritize parent/caregiver involvement in planning and decision-making, regardless of home language or immigration status. Engaged parents contribute to better student outcomes.

Benefits of Parent Involvement: Engaged parents contribute to better student outcomes.

- Improved attendance, behavior, and academic performance.
- Better social skills and adaptation to school.
- Lifelong love of learning is tied to long-term success.

For more information on fostering parent involvement:

- California Department of Education
- Research on Parent Involvement

California Healthy Kids Survey

The California Health Kids Survey https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/chks.asp (CHKS) is a confidential, customizable survey for students aged 10 and older, and is administered in grades five, seven, nine, and eleven. It focuses on key areas that impact school and student performance.

Five Critical Domains:

- Student connectedness, motivation, and attendance
- Positive school atmosphere and inclusive culture
- School safety (addressing violence, bullying, and victimization)
- Physical and mental well-being, including social-emotional learning
- Student support systems (e.g., supportive relationships, high expectations)

For more information on the domains, please visit: https://calschls.org/about/the-surveys/

LACOE has established a collaboration with WestEd to provide CHKS with behavioral health module at no cost to Los Angeles County LEAs

For more information, LEAs are encouraged to register directly through WestEd by contacting Leslie Poynor at lpoynor@wested.org.

LEAs may also reach out to Toumic Asatorrian at asatorrian_toumic@lacoe.edu or mhsc_unit@lacoe.edu with any questions.

How CHKS Supports Attendance

CHKS provides insights into student well-being by gathering data on perceptions of school climate, safety, connectedness, and risky behaviors. This data can help identify factors impacting attendance, such as bullying, substance abuse, or mental health challenges.

Using CHKS to Improve Attendance:

- Identify correlations between risk factors and absenteeism.
- Implement targeted interventions to address underlying issues.
- Foster supportive environments to improve attendance and student success.

Encouraging Collaboration

District leaders should collaborate with community organizations to explore what contributes to student attendance and causes of student absenteeism. Use CHKS data, along with other local health, economic, and social data, to recognize barriers to attendance, especially in schools and/or populations (e.g., specific grade levels) facing higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

Strategies for Success:

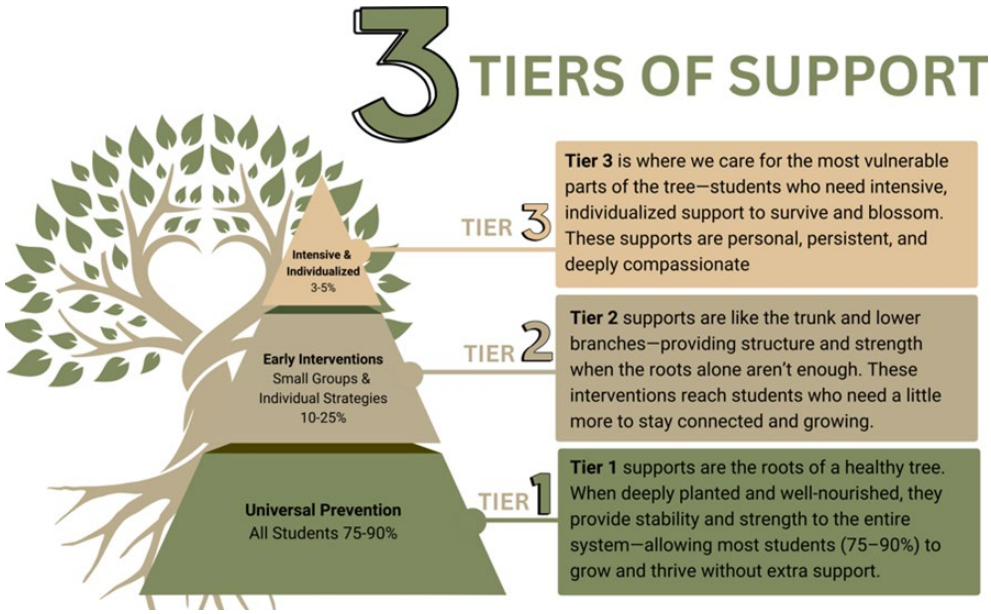
- Partner with local universities or community groups to engage affected populations.
- Visit CalSCHLS resources for practices and strategies to improve school climate based on current research.

Develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support Plan for Attandance

MTSS integrates multiple strategies, programs, and initiatives to support student success. It fosters collaboration among educators, families, and communities while aligning resources, policies, and practices.

The Attendance Plan: Setting Student Attendance Goals

One of the most important factors in improving education outcomes for students is to improve student attendance. The school site Attendance Plan should reflect services and actions that support your attendance goals (Goal Worksheet).



Consider incorporating the following best practices as you formulate goals:

- Know who is absent and why
- Include baseline data as a starting point for goal setting
- Build capacity at the school site to improve attendance
- Connect attendance with other priorities (e.g., LCAP, school site and districtwide attendance goals, etc.)

Key Takeaway

- **Data-Driven Goal Setting Enhances Attendance Outcomes:** Schools that systematically identify who is absent and why—and use baseline data as a starting point—can set realistic, targeted attendance goals. Research shows that this data-driven approach supports early interventions and improves overall student engagement, laying the foundation for reducing

chronic absenteeism.

- **Integrated Capacity Building Strengthens Multi-Tiered Support:** Aligning attendance goals with broader priorities (such as LCAP and districtwide objectives) builds school-wide capacity to address attendance challenges. Evidence indicates that when schools embed attendance planning within a multi-tiered support system—coupled with ongoing data analysis and targeted capacity building—interventions are more effective in boosting student outcomes.

Importance of Attendance Goals

To know if your team is on the right track, it is important to know where you started and where you want to go.

Attendance goals set a clear standard for consistent presence, which directly impacts academic achievement, student engagement, and overall development, ensuring individuals don't miss crucial information or learning opportunities by being present in class or at work regularly, making it a key factor for student success.

Considerations When Formulating Attendance Goals

Determine what specifically your team is trying to accomplish.

- What does the team want to improve? (Clear, operational definition)
- By how much do you want to see improvement? (Measurable, specific, numerical value)
- By when do you want to see improvement? (Provide a timeline, date of goal attainment)
- What group or system do you wish to see improvement? (Targeted student group, particular system or process)

SMARTIE Goals Related to Attendance

SMARTIE = Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

SMARTIE goals in the Attendance Plan allow educational partners understand what is being measured and the changes expected through successful implementation of the plan.

Example of a SMARTIE Attendance Goal

By June 2026, we will reduce chronic absenteeism for 9th grade students who are Multilingual Learners from 27% to 24%.

Your goals should be specific to your school site based on historical data and include the following steps in a continuous loop for improvement:

1. Analyze Data (sample Data Trackers)
2. Create SMARTIE Goal
3. Deliver Focused Intervention
4. Monitor Progress
5. …begin again at step 1

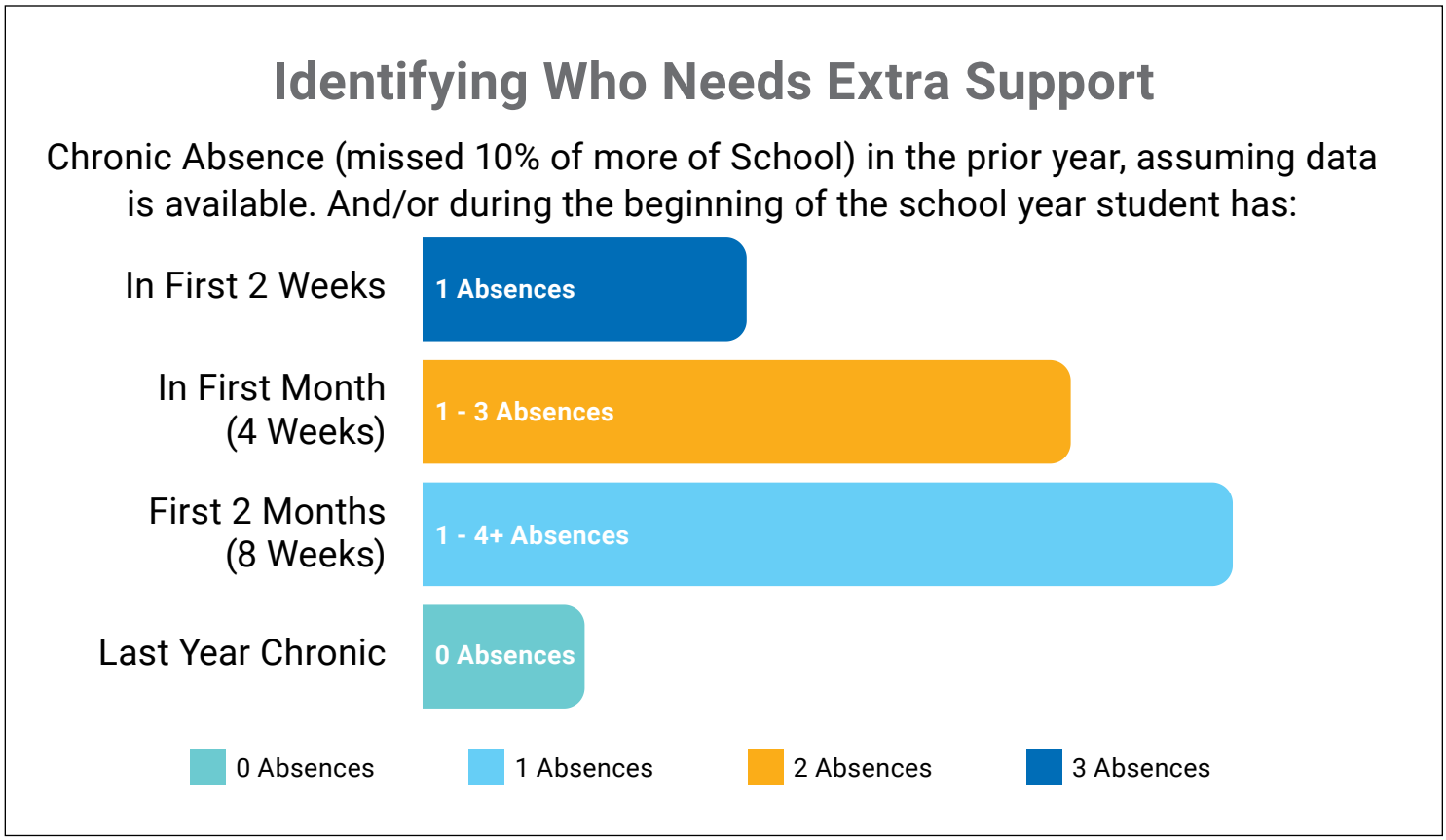
As your team determines which students would benefit from additional support, it is helpful to examine the following data points:

- Students who were chronically absent the prior school year *AND*
- Students who show a pattern of absenteeism early on in the school year.

Which Students Need Additional Support?

As your team determines which students would benefit from additional support, it is helpful to examine the following data points:

- Students who were chronically absent the prior school year *AND*
- Students who show a pattern of absenteeism early on in the school year.



Taking a Team Approach to Lean into Attendance and Engagement

To ensure a comprehensive response to address absenteeism in schools, it is imperative for schools or LEAs to be inclusive to build a supportive school community representing all educational partners.

In your efforts to mobilize support around attendance, who should be included as partners in the school community?

- Students
- School Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Community Members

Attendance Works has curated helpful strategies and tools (videos, flyers, infographics, and banners) to support schools/LEAs cultivate a school wide culture of attendance.

Teaching Attendance Expectations to Parents, Students, and Staff

When implementing a shared vision regarding attendance expectations, clearly communicating ideas is key to successful implementation and support from educational stakeholders.

Expectations should be:

- Concise and communicated with administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents/guardians
- Clear and positively stated (e.g., our goal is for all students to achieve a 96% or higher attendance rate through the year, which means missing 7 or fewer days during our 180-day school year)
- Conveyed via classroom presentations to teach and reinforce expectations throughout the year (e.g., homework passes, traveling trophy, popcorn and a movie, certificates for improved attendance.)
- Made available to students and parents/guardians in the monthly newsletters and school calendar
- Incorporated in opening year events and scheduled school activities (e.g., Back-to-School night, Kindergarten orientation, Open House)

Useful Attendance Data Tracking Tools for Parents/Guardians

Attendance Works created a Student Attendance Success Plan that supports parents/guardians:

- Track their children's attendance
- Work with school staff to set appropriate goals
- Maintain a calendar of key instructional dates inclusive of district and school-wide events for the current school year.

Student Attendance Success Plans have been created and deemed helpful for preschool, elementary (Eng / Span), and secondary students (Eng / Span).

Helpful school calendars can be great tools to help parents track attendance and track key dates. Attendance Achievement Calendars can also help track student attendance for every 25 instructional days.

*Resources used with permission of Attendance Works

Teaching Attendance Expectations to Parents, Students, and Staff

Another great resource to help improve attendance is the My Family's Help Bank to list supports and resources. This resource encourages families to think about their back up plans for getting students to school.

Educators should consider distributing these helpful attendance tools to families. These resources are also available in additional languages via the Attendance Works website.

Reinforcing Attendance with Students, Parents, and Teachers

- Incentives/Events and based on meeting attendance goals/milestones
- Monthly classroom competitions with rewards and recognition for students
- Phone calls home before the start of school and when students are first absent to convey interest and concern
- Incentives for teachers who submit attendance on time
- Recognition certificates to parents for supporting their student's attendance
- Attendance certificates for elementary and secondary students are a great way to celebrate improved attendance
- A Student Attendance Pledge can help students set a written goal for attendance

Monitor Attendance Data and Progress

Common Pitfalls When Monitoring Attendance Progress

In an attempt to understand student attendance, some schools/LEAs may solely focus on their Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rates to track their progress.

Average Daily Attendance...

- looks at the percentage of all students' attendance on any given day aggregated for the year
- is a running figure that records the percentage of students present each day AND combines them with the number of current school days held that year

ADA and Chronic Absenteeism

Examining ADA without considering chronic absenteeism can lead to inaccurate understanding of a school's/district's attendance progress.

EXAMPLE: District A has 1000 students on May 1.

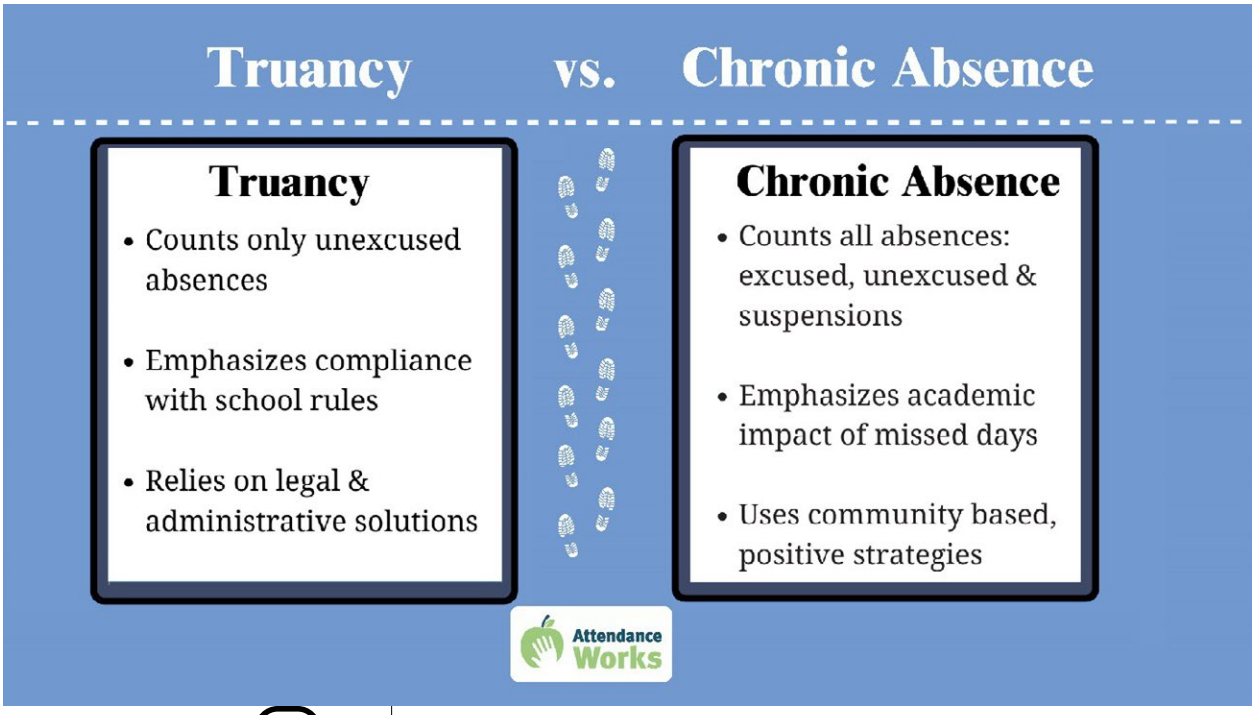
- 400 of them have 95% attendance
- 200 of them have 93% attendance
- 200 of them have 89% attendance
- 200 of them have 88% attendance

FINDINGS

- District A has a **92%** Average Daily Attendance rate
- District A has a **40%** Chronic Absenteeism rate

The Difference between Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

The state of California defines **truancy** as missing three or more days of school without a valid excuse and/or absence from class without a valid excuse for 30 minutes or more on three school days. The repercussions of truancy are typically **punitive in nature, guided by compliance, and geared toward Tier II** and/or **Tier III interventions** (SART, SARB, Attendance Contracts, etc.).



Chronic absenteeism is defined by the state of California as missing 10 percent or more of the school year (18 days in a 180-day school year), including excused, unexcused absences, and suspensions. For more information about the differences between Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism, click here.

Recognize and Share the Impact of Chronic Absenteeism

The Impact of Chronic Absenteeism

Being chronically absent equates to missing about two days a month of instruction over a school year. Here are some other salient facts regarding students who are chronically absent from school:

- Missing school has been linked to **poorer reading skills** in young children and **higher high school drop-out rates** in older children.
- **One in seven U.S. children** were chronically absent before the pandemic, but experts estimate it is **twice that today.**
- Absenteeism in the **first month of school** can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.
- Students who live in communities with **high levels of poverty** are **four times more likely to be chronically absent** than others often for reasons beyond their control (e.g., unstable housing, lack of transportation, poor access to health care).
- Frequent kindergarten absences correlate with **lower cognitive skills in early childhood** and **poorer academic performance at age 15.** Consistent absences from kindergarten through 8th grade decrease the chances of pursuing higher education, for example, missing 10 classes in 9th grade **reduces college attendance likelihood by 2%.**
- Students with just one year of chronic absenteeism are **seven times more likely to drop out of school.** This pattern often starts early, with students unable to read proficiently by third grade being four times more likely to drop out of high school.
- Long-term consequences include **lower lifetime earnings** and **poorer health outcomes.**
- Chronic absenteeism and truancy often lead to disengagement from studies and disconnection from peers and the school community. This isolation can negatively impact a student's well-being and hinder the **development of essential social skills** and friendships.

https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/the-effects-of-chronic-absenteeism-in-schools

Tier I: Universal Prevention - Building a Culture of Attendance

Who receives Tier I interventions? EVERY SINGLE STUDENT! The focus in Tier I is on prevention and creating a culture of attendance. A culture of attendance ensures that students, families, and staff understand that attendance is not just about being present—it is about being engaged, committed and part of a supportive community. This foundation includes daily weekly, monthly, and quarterly practices that consistently reinforce the value of attendance for all stakeholders. This section aims to equip educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to cultivate a school environment where attendance is not just a statistic but a gateway to a brighter educational future.

Supporting Students in the Learning Environment

Practical Solutions to Stabilize Students in their Learning Environment

School closures and the loss of social connections, attendance habits, and routines—along with mental health challenges and school avoidance exacerbated by the pandemic and recent local natural disasters—continue to contribute to a significant increase in student absences, as well as declines in well-being, educational engagement, and achievement.

In addition to these concerns, recent findings from the LACOE/LACDPH research highlight the impact of student mental health on school attendance. For example, while 25.7% of students who were absent three or more days reported, another 35.3% admitted to feeling sad and hopeless every day seriously attempting suicide. These statistics indicate that some students may not recognize—or may be unable to articulate—how mental health challenges are directly affecting their attendance and academic progress.

To begin reversing these trends, schools can take several supportive measures in collaboration with students and their families.

Prevention

Prioritizing mental health education, outreach, and access is crucial to help students gain insight into what they may be experiencing. Some suggestions/strategies include:

- Create or expand campus-based mental health resources (e.g., counseling services, crisis

lines, referral systems).

- Establish regular check-ins with students who exhibit signs of disengagement or absenteeism.
- Provide professional development for staff to recognize early indicators of mental health challenges.
- Partner with community organizations to offer workshops or seminars for students and families on mental health awareness.
- Implement peer support groups or student-led mental health advocacy clubs.

By recognizing how social-emotional factors intersect with attendance, school teams can tailor interventions that bolster students' engagement in learning and foster healthier school communities. Additionally, Schools can work together with students and their families on multiple supportive initiatives to help reverse these challenges:

- **Mental Health Support**: Schools can prioritize mental health by offering counseling services, mental health awareness programs, and fostering a supportive and stigma-free environment. Students facing mental health issues are more likely to attend school when they feel their emotional well-being is recognized and supported.
- **Individualized Plans:** For students exhibiting school avoidance behavior, schools can develop individualized attendance support plans that consider the identified needs and concerns and coordinate efforts with parents/caregivers, youth, and supportive adults on campus.
- **Flexible Learning Options if needed/possible:** The pandemic along with other recent natural disasters have emphasized the need for flexible learning arrangements. Schools can offer remote or hybrid learning options for students, when possible, who may have health concerns or face other challenges related to the impacts of the pandemic. An LEA is required to create and implement a comprehensive state school plan that identifies various flexible learning options. These plans can prioritize student health and safety while ensuring that they do not fall behind academically.

Communication: Establishing open lines of communication between schools, students, and their families is essential. Regular check-ins and updates through letters, phone calls, and text reminders can help identify problems early and provide necessary support. The Chronic Absenteeism study highlights that families who receive proactive, culturally responsive communication from schools are more likely to engage in their child's education. Schools that provide multilingual outreach,

personalized communication strategies, and ongoing family check-ins see improved attendance outcomes. It also reinforces the importance of attendance and ensures families are aware of available resources.

Additionally, the findings from the Chronic Absenteeism study indicates that at least one-third of students feel school is “really boring” and not engaging. This concern becomes even more pronounced among those with lower attendance rates, with approximately one in two students expressing boredom. By giving students, parents/caregivers, and communities a genuine voice in shaping the educational experience, schools can foster greater engagement and encourage a deeper commitment to attending regularly.

Collaborative Problem-Solving

- Schools can work collaboratively with students and families to identify the underlying causes of absences, whether they stem from academic struggles, mental health issues, health concerns or other personal challenges. Reach out to parents and caregivers promptly to discuss any attendance or engagement concerns. Encourage them to share insights about underlying issues that may be impacting their child’s school participation.
- Research data underscores that a lack of connection between schools and families is a key factor contributing to chronic absenteeism. The findings suggest that when schools create spaces for open dialogues such as family engagement nights, student voice initiatives, and culturally responsive support groups feel more comfortable discussing attendance barriers and seeking solutions. Provide students with a platform, such as surveys, focus groups, or student advisory councils—to share what support they need and to co-create solutions that resonate with their experiences.
- The Chronic Absenteeism study also indicates that schools using a strength-based, problem-solving approach, rather than punitive measures, experience higher rates of student re-

engagement. Implementing restorative practices, personalized attendance interventions, and mental health support can reduce chronic absenteeism and strengthen school-family partnerships. Include counselors, teachers, administrators, and relevant community partners in joint problem-solving sessions. This collective approach ensures diverse perspectives and resources are considered.

- Schools can create opportunities for peer-to-peer counseling, mentoring, and social engagement. According to findings from our research, many students struggle with motivation, with over half of those surveyed citing peer relationships as their primary reason for attending schools surpassing academics or other school-controlled factors.

Community Resources

- Schools can connect students and families with on- and off-campus community resources, such as mental health services, housing support, and healthcare access, that can provide additional interventions.
- The Chronic Absenteeism study finds that health-related concerns, including untreated mental health conditions, are among the top reasons for student absences. Schools that establish formal partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), school-based health centers, and public health agencies are more effective in addressing attendance barriers.
- By integrating community partners into attendance strategies, schools can provide wraparound services, including:
    - School-based mental health counseling
    - Healthcare referrals for chronic conditions
    - Family case management and resource navigation
    - Transportation support for students facing barriers to attendance

Inclusivity and Understanding

- Creating a compassionate and understanding school environment is essential. Students and their families need to feel that they belong and that their unique circumstances are acknowledged and respected.
- Our research reinforces that school climate plays a significant role in student attendance. Students who report feeling valued, seen, and included in their school community are significantly more likely to attend regularly.
- Schools that implement trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, and student-driven initiatives experience lower rates of absenteeism. By fostering inclusivity and providing staff training on implicit bias, cultural competency, and mental health awareness, schools can create environments where all students feel safe and supported.

By acknowledging and addressing the impact of mental health, health, school avoidance behavior, the pandemic and other unmet needs on student attendance, schools can take proactive steps to support student well-being and educational progress.

The Chronic Absenteeism study emphasizes that early intervention and strong school-family partnerships are essential to mitigating chronic absenteeism. Schools that work closely with students and their families to find solutions that meet their specific needs see higher rates of attendance recovery and student success.

Key Takeaway

- Proactive Well-Being Interventions Improve Attendance: Research shows that acknowledging and addressing factors such as mental and physical health challenges, school avoidance behavior, and pandemic-related disruptions is crucial. Schools that implement early, targeted interventions to support student well-being are more successful in reducing chronic absenteeism and promoting educational progress.
- Strengthening School–Family Partnerships Boosts Recovery: Findings underscore that robust, early collaboration between schools and families is essential. When schools work closely with families to tailor solutions to each student's unique needs, attendance recovery rates increase, and students experience improved academic success.

Effective Communication to Strive for Excellence

Communication for Excellence: Best Practices

We previously discussed the best practices when communicating with all education partners. LEAs with low chronic absenteeism rates anticipate and prevent attendance dips through communication. This communication starts at the beginning of the year when LEAs outline attendance expectations, provide families with an annual calendar, and encourage vacations to align with school breaks. If travel cannot be avoided, LEAs may also offer alternatives such as short-term independent study. These messages and resources are provided on multiple platforms.

It is also important to consider the accessibility and aesthetics of communication. Some messages get lost when they are too wordy or too busy. In fact, visual aids or infographics are often more effective than words. It is essential that communication is kept simple and accessible. We have included some examples of attendance talking points that were created for various audiences by the San Diego County Office of Education.

More important than aesthetics in communication is the clarity and consistency of the actual message being conveyed and whom it is intended to reach. We often find that messaging is not aligned or shared amongst all educational partners. Reflecting on the adage “if you aim at nothing, you hit nothing” is the best way to describe the outcome when our goals are not communicated to all education partners.

It is essential for LEAs to assess if their school community has a clear understanding of their shared attendance goals and vision.

Below are some questions to ask your Attendance Team:

- Do we have a positive attendance goal, beyond perfect attendance? This recognition can be inclusive of "improved" or "good" attendance.
- When discussing our attendance goals, is it clear to all students and families how many days they can miss a year and still hit our goal/have excellent attendance?
- Do all educational partners know excellent attendance is 96% of the total school days?
- Do faculty and staff know this goal as well?
- Do students and parents receive information regularly about their attendance and how close they are to our attendance goal?
- Do all partners understand how many absences put students into the chronic absenteeism category?
- Are parents/guardians/caregivers recognized for supporting regular, on-time student attendance?

When communicating, we should also examine how often our communications are one-way and the limitations of such communications in relation to our overall goals. There are times when **two-way communication** is not necessary; however, reciprocal communication:

- Encourages engagement and participation
- Allows for assessment and checking for understanding
- Proactively limits miscommunication
- Solicits feedback for improvement
- Confirms and identifies who received the communication

It is also essential to consider the tone of the message when communicating with our families. The first consideration is prior interactions. It is often reported by parents that the first form of communication regarding absences is often presumptuous, negative, or threatening. It is best practice to communicate with the families routinely. Moreover, communication should include positive reports throughout the year, and when there has been improvement. When discussing absences specifically, families should have already had various forms of communication regarding

prevention prior to individualized intervention communication. Here is an outline example of a positive Tier I prevention messaging for school to keep students engaged.

Communication should also be judgement-free and helpful; Sometimes when families are in crisis or have had a significant life changing event (e.g., deportation, death, illness, incarceration, eviction, housing insecurity, divorce, etc.) for various reasons, their attention to school procedures may be temporarily impacted or diminished. This does not mean that the parent is apathetic or devalues education. This may, however, indicate that the parent is not comfortable sharing the information, or may not see the school as a resource, or consider them part of their community or safety net in the event of a crisis.

Below are some strategies to build relationships to ensure that parents see their child's school as a safe and resourceful place.

1. Excel in customer service
2. Engage in positive, proactive, and respectful communication from the time of enrollment, prior to the start of school, and periodically throughout the year
3. Prepare staff to serve as resources to families by identifying and sharing community resources that may be offered to families who may be experiencing a crisis
4. Have a trained professional follow up with families if needed
5. Create a culture of transparency

Tier II: Early and Targeted Intervention to Absenteeism

Who receives Tier II supports? Tier II supports are needed for students facing barriers to attendance who are not responding to Tier I supports.

Understanding Attendance Dips and Causes

What are Attendance Dips?

Drops in attendance are common during certain times of the year, particularly in the days leading up to breaks or holiday weekends; these drops are known as Attendance Dips. Student attendance holds a critical role in the educational journey of students. In this section, we will discuss why Attendance Dips happen and how Local Educational Agencies (LEA) can minimize the adverse effects of Attendance Dips. Additionally, we will explore how attendance impacts students' academic, social, and personal growth.

Understanding the root causes of student absences during the holiday season and breaks are essential for educators and parents to ensure students' academic success and well-being. It is also important to prepare for and offer reasonable accommodation and/or alternatives when absences are unavoidable. It is imperative, at the same time, to communicate to parents and caregivers early in the school year the importance of regular, on time attendance as a critical factor contributing to student connectedness, well-being, and academic growth.

Causes of Attendance Dips and Suggestions to Address Them

The following are a few common reasons for attendance dips:

- School Adjustment for Early Learners
- Family Travel and Foreseeable Absences
- Personal Reasons (Family Emergencies)
- Illness (Acute and Chronic)
- School Avoidance due to Bullying
- Weather-Related Issues

Addressing attendance is key to abolishing chronic absenteeism. PowerSchool recently wrote an article on strategies to prevent holiday absences. Additionally, the National League of Cities' Work website contains information on student reengagement as a means to prevent dips in attendance.

Strategies to Proactively Address Attendance Dips

Encouraging Positive Attendance Habits for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students

School attendance is crucial for students in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten (K), as it lays the foundation for their educational journey. Young children are at a critical development stage where they acquire essential skills, socialize with peers, and build the fundamental knowledge that will shape their future academic success.

While it is true that students in this age group are not always subject to compulsory education laws due to their age (e.g., in California being younger than six years old), there are several reasons why early attendance remains vital:

- **Early Learning:** The early years are a prime time for cognitive and social development, and consistent attendance ensures that young learners benefit from structured, developmentally appropriate instruction.
- **Socialization:** School attendance fosters social interactions, helping children develop essential social and emotional skills that are foundational for later academic and life success.
- **Building Routines:** Regular attendance helps children establish routines and adapt to the school environment, setting the stage for a smoother transition to higher grade levels.

- **Academic Foundations:** TK and Kindergarten (K) provide the building blocks for reading, math, and other academic subjects, and consistent attendance is essential to acquire these foundational skills.

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Among Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Students

Causes for school absences in TK and K can include adjustment and attachment related concerns, illness, family events, and childcare. Additionally, as these students are typically not bound by compulsory education laws, some parents and caregivers (and even school staff) may hold the misconception that attendance is less important for young children.

To address this misconception, schools can:

- **Inform and Empower Parents:** Schools should communicate the benefits of consistent attendance for early childhood development. Parents need to understand that regular school attendance plays a significant role in their child's growth and success.
- **Offer Support:** Schools can provide support and resources for parents who may be dealing with challenges related to attendance, such as transportation or childcare issues.
- **Foster Engagement:** Creating a positive and engaging learning environment for young children can make school more appealing to both students and parents, reinforcing the importance of regular attendance. Consider reaching out to families prior to the start of school to get to know each student. This will also help schools plan for any accommodation needed ahead of time.

Reconciling Absences for Personal Reasons and the Academic Impact

Families occasionally choose to take vacation during the school year, which can have a significant impact on attendance. Research demonstrates that post-pandemic, parents'/caregivers' beliefs about the value and importance of daily school attendance have declined. When students miss school for vacations, they not only miss out on valuable classroom instruction and social connectedness but may also struggle to catch up on missed coursework, potentially affecting their academic progress. It's essential for families to balance the value of vacations with the importance of consistent school attendance. By working together, schools and parents/caregivers can mitigate the impact of vacations on a child's education, helping them stay on track and succeed academically while still enjoying valuable family time.

To address this matter and minimize the academic impact, consider the following strategies:

- **Short –Term or Long-Term Independent Study:** These two options allow teachers to prepare assignments and make-up work, minimizing the disruption to the child's education.
- **Make-Up Work:** With proper notice, schools may provide students with make-up assignments or resources to complete while they are away, helping them stay on track academically.
- **Inform/Empower Parents:** Schools should inform parents about the potential impact of extended absences on their child's learning and sense of connection to school and classmates. Parents need to be aware of how missed instructional time can affect their child's progress and sense of community/belonging at school.
- **Attendance Policies:** Schools can establish clear attendance policies and procedures, outlining expectations and impacts of vacations during the school year. This can help parents make informed decisions.
- **Flexible Learning:** In some cases, schools can offer flexible learning options such as online access to classroom materials, allowing students to stay engaged with their studies while traveling.
- **Supportive Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication between schools and parents. This can help address concerns, provide resources, and ensure that students can transition back into the classroom smoothly after a vacation.
- **Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between parents and teachers to create a plan for catching up on missed work and addressing any academic challenges that may arise.

Independent Study Program Referral as an Option (Short-Term)

There are various reasons for a student's participation in independent study. Independent study should

be offered if maintaining the existing learning schedule will cause the student to accumulate multiple absences, all day or partial day independent study should be presented to students and their caregivers.

A Short-Term Independent Study Agreement can be used when a student will miss school one (1) or more days but does not exceed fifteen (15) school days cumulatively throughout the school year. Short-term independent study allows LEAs and families to mitigate and/or prevent the disruption of the students' academic progress and can be signed anytime during the current school year.

For Local Education Agencies (LEAs), independent study (IS) is an alternative to classroom instruction consistent with an LEA's course of study and aligned with State content standards. An IS program can serve as a voluntary alternative instructional strategy to meet the academic needs of students outside of the traditional classroom setting. This document includes key policy amendments, program requirements and sample language for LEAs to consider.

Resource	Links	Description
LACOE Guide for Navigating Updates to Independent Study	CWA Canvas Resources- IS	2024-25 SY Independent Study Information with extensive resources
Master Service Agreement Requirements Changes	CDE SB 153 Letter Sample written agreements: CWA Canvas Resources- IS	• Updates to IS policy include the repeal of the three-day minimum for claiming ADA. LEAs can claim ADA as of the first day of IS. • Short-term IS is now up to 15 days, and the Master Services Agreement can be signed anytime. • Long-term IS is 16 days or more and requires written agreements to be signed ahead of time. • Eligible evidence for asynchronous instruction now includes online work.

Policies	CWA Canvas Resources- IS	• Board Policy and Administrative Regulations incorporating state education code and local policies in regard to Independent Study.
CDE Independent Study FAQs	CDE Independent Study Frequently Asked Questions	FAQs include references to statutes and best practices.
CDE - Attendance Accounting (AA) & Instructional Time (IT) Independent Study FAQs	AA & IT Independent Study FAQs (CA Dept of Education)	CDE's Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about independent study requirements, attendance accounting (AA) and instructional time (IT).
Lozano Smith Attorneys at Law	Independent Study Program Updates (August 2024)	A firm dedicated to public agencies and school districts provided important updates regarding IS programs based on SB 153.

Considerations When Supporting Students with an Acute or Chronic Illness

An acute or chronic illness can significantly contribute to student absences, as affected students may experience ongoing health challenges that require medical treatment and recovery periods. These absences can have a substantial impact on a student's academic progress and overall well-being. To address this issue, schools can work collaboratively with families to ensure that arrangements are made to support the student's success in school.

Below are some strategies to support students who may have an acute or chronic illness:

- **Medical Documentation:** It is essential for families to work with schools for the appropriate medical documentation to confirm the chronic illness and outline any specific care or treatment requirements. This helps schools better understand the nature and severity of the condition and how they can support families and educational continuity.
- **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans:** For students with chronic illnesses, schools can develop IEPs or 504 Plans that outline accommodations such as modified assignments, extended deadlines, or Home and Hospital Instruction, if applicable, to address the unique needs of the student.
- **Communication:** Frequent communication between teachers, school staff, and parents is

vital. Parents can inform the school in advance about potential absences, and teachers can share class materials and updates with the student to keep them engaged during periods of absence/their recovery.

- **Online Content/Learning:** In cases where in-person attendance is not possible due to chronic illness, schools can offer access to online or remote learning platforms to ensure the student continues to receive instruction and complete assignments.
- **Tutoring and Support Services:** Schools can provide tutoring services or additional academic support to help students catch up on missed work and maintain their academic progress.
- **Home and Hospital Instruction:** If needed, a referral to the Home and Hospital Instruction Program can provide instruction to a student with a temporary disability in the student's home or in a hospital or other residential health facility, excluding state hospitals. The temporary disability does not include a disability for which a student is identified for special education services.

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- **Peer Support:** Encouraging classmates to support and include the student with a chronic illness can contribute to their emotional well-being and a sense of belonging.
- **Flexibility:** Schools should be flexible in their approach, understanding that the student's health may fluctuate. This flexibility can include allowing for makeup work and accommodating the students' needs as they change over time.

These strategies help students maintain their academic progress and minimize the negative impact of chronic illness-related absences and/or other prolonged absences on their overall educational

experience. The Attendance Works website contains an article that provides tips for families on partnering with health providers to reduce health-related absences. Additionally, the San Diego County Office of Education has compiled these resources and informational materials, addressing chronic illness, health, and attendance.

Promoting Good Health and Hygiene

During the pandemic, the world joined in the promotion of good hygiene. Many gained a deeper awareness of how communicable diseases are contained or spread. The greater takeaway was that we witnessed systemic strategies to manage a global health crisis. The same framework and strategies can be used to manage both illnesses and chronic illnesses to maintain excellent attendance.

Educating, promoting, and practicing good hygiene became every community member's responsibility. In fact, it was hard to avoid signage or visual aids that promoted hand washing and face masks. We no longer were allowed to sneeze without everyone taking notice nor was it allowable to sneeze or cough without covering your mouth. The National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness created a piece that illustrates how health services can promote attendance.

Preparing for Flu and COVID

In a post-COVID pandemic era, many parents and caregivers are unsure when to send their students to school. The messaging and expectations changed because of the unfamiliarity and contractibility of the virus in the height of the pandemic. Today, we remain in the recovery phase, and LEAs are watching the health of the community closely in the event adjustments must be made. Here are two strategies that schools are using today to ensure their school community remains informed and safe.

I. Designing a system to communicate changes and updates to all educational partners (Administrators, Schools, Faculty, Students, Families and Community)
    a. LACOE provides professional development, guidance and technical assistance to support school health services regarding best practices, legal compliance, feasible practices, and resources. For more information, please visit LACOE's Health and Safety webpage.

II. Consider bookmarking the **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Educator Tool Kit** to stay up to date on current public health regulations and requirements.

Key Takeaway

- **Systemic Health Protocols as a Foundation for Improved Attendance:** The pandemic highlighted the power of coordinated hygiene practices—such as widespread handwashing and mask usage—to manage health risks. Adapting these systemic strategies for both acute and chronic health challenges enables schools to create safer environments and maintain higher attendance, as supported by our research findings.
- **Community-Driven Health Education Enhances School Engagement:** With community-wide responsibility for promoting good hygiene through visible signage and consistent public health messaging, schools that embed these practices into their health policies see a positive impact on attendance. This approach not only reinforces individual health literacy but also builds a resilient framework that supports student well-being and academic success.

Bullying: The Impact on Student Attendance

Bullying is a serious issue that can have profound and lasting effects on students' well-being. It involves repeated aggressive behavior, intentional harm, and a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. Bullying can take various forms, including verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying. To create a safe and inclusive school environment, it's essential to address and prevent bullying, as well as to educate all school community members about this issue and to distinguish bullying behavior from developmentally appropriate interpersonal conflict.

Some essential tips to prevent bullying:

- **Educate Students:** Start with education. Teach students about what constitutes bullying, its impact on others, and the importance of preventing it.
- **Anti-Bullying Policies:** Schools should establish clear anti-bullying policies that outline expected behavior and consequences for bullying. Ensure that these policies are communicated to students, parents, and staff.
- **Peer Support Programs:** Implement peer support or mentoring programs wherein older students may mentor younger ones. Positive peer relationships can discourage bullying.
- **Open Communication:** Create a culture of open and honest communication among students, staff, and parents. Encourage reporting of bullying incidents without fear of retaliation.
- **Cyberbullying Awareness:** Educate students about responsible online behavior and the consequences of cyberbullying. Encourage them to report any cyberbullying incidents.

- **Upstander Empowerment:** Train students to be active upstanders. An upstander is someone who witnesses a harmful situation and takes action to intervene and make things better. Encourage them to practice strategies that support and protect themselves and one another, and to report bullying incidents. Upstanders play a crucial role in preventing bullying.

Tips to Support Anti-Bullying Efforts

Community and Empathy Building

- Consistent positive and engaging community-building activities support all students and adults on campus to get to know and connect with one another, encouraging pro-social and accountable behavior.
- Our research underscores the importance of school climate in reducing bullying-related absenteeism. Findings from the study show that students who feel a sense of belonging and social connection are less likely to be involved in bullying incidents, either as perpetrators or targets.
- Key Strategies from our research:
    - Implement Restorative Practices to foster accountability and strengthen peer relationships.
    - Organize peer mentorship programs that connect older students with younger ones to model positive social behaviors.
    - Promote student-led initiatives such as anti-bullying campaigns, kindness challenges, and peer mediation programs.

Key Takeaways

Schools that invest in structured social-emotional learning (SEL) programs see a significant reduction in bullying incidents and increased student attendance.

Application of Consequences

- Enforce consequences for bullying behavior consistently and fairly. This sends a message that bullying will not be tolerated.
- The study suggests that consistent enforcement of anti-bullying policies—when paired with positive behavior interventions—reduces repeated bullying behaviors.
- **Key recommendations from our research:**
    - Implement a tiered response system that includes both accountability measures and

restorative interventions for students involved in bullying.

- Ensure that consequences are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.
- Provide targeted support for students who demonstrate repeated bullying behaviors, including behavior contracts and social skills development programs.

Key Takeaway

Schools that shift from punitive-only approaches to a balance of accountability and social-emotional intervention report higher engagement from students and families in bullying prevention efforts.

Mental Health Support

- Recognize that both students who engage in these behaviors and those they target may need emotional support. Provide access to counseling and mental health services for those affected by bullying.
- The study confirms that bullying, whether as a target or an aggressor, has direct links to mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, and school avoidance. The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data further emphasizes that students who experience bullying are more likely to exhibit chronic absenteeism due to emotional distress.
- **Key strategies from our study:**
  - Ensure on-campus access to school counselors, social workers, or mental health professionals for students impacted by bullying.
  - Provide trauma-informed training for teachers and staff to recognize signs of bullying-related anxiety and depression.
  - Incorporate wellness check-ins and self-referral systems so students can seek help confidentially.

Key Takeaway

Schools that integrate mental health services into their bullying prevention strategies see a decline in absenteeism related to bullying.

Parent Involvement

- Involve parents in anti-bullying efforts. Provide resources and information on recognizing and preventing bullying. Encourage them to reinforce pro-social behavior and communicate with

the school if they suspect their child is involved in or aware of bullying behaviors.

- The findings emphasize the importance of family engagement in bullying prevention. Schools that actively educate and involve parents in anti-bullying efforts experience greater student accountability and fewer bullying incidents.
- **Key recommendations from our research:**
    - Host parent workshops on bullying prevention, social media safety, and emotional regulation strategies.
    - Provide clear guidance on how families can report bullying concerns and access school-based support services.
    - Encourage consistent communication between schools and families, including multilingual outreach when needed.

Key Takeaway

Schools that develop family-school partnerships for anti-bullying efforts experience higher reporting rates of bullying incidents, improved intervention success, and stronger student emotional well-being.

By incorporating these LACOE/LACDPH research-backed strategies, schools can enhance their anti-bullying efforts while simultaneously promoting student well-being, improving school climate, and reducing bullying-related absenteeism.

Building a Bullying Prevention Plan

LEAs should take steps to develop a bullying prevention plan. Additionally, it is important to be trained to recognize the signs of bullying, whether it's physical, verbal, social, or cyberbullying. If bullying happens, it's important to create an intervention plan and post-intervention plan.

Here are some key bullying resources to support your efforts:

- Bullying Prevention at School
- Bullying Strategies that Work
- Bullying How to Stop on the Spot
- Bullying Prevention Tips and Guidance

Essential Activities to Support Student Wellness

As the semester ends, LEAs begin to administer exams and assessments. This can be a particularly stressful time of the year for students, causing attendance dips as students may experience pressure and anxiety when faced with challenging tasks. Additionally, with the colder weather and shorter days, our energy level and engagement may be impacted.

Consider incorporating the following Wellness Activities:

- Establishing a Fitness Routine for Physical and Mental Well-being
- Scheduling and taking Mental Breaks
- Engaging in Mindfulness Activities
- Practicing Breathing Techniques and Exercises
- Visualization Exercises
- Yoga /Stretch / Stress Reduction Classes

Creating a Multidisciplinary Coordination of Services Team

Tier II and III Support for Identified Students: COST Meetings

At the mid-point of the academic year, it is generally clear which students are struggling with chronic absence and likely to end the year being chronically absent (missing 10% or more of their enrolled time). It is essential to act quickly and methodically. In addition to school-wide attendance teams that design and implement tiered supports with a focus on Tier I (Universal) strategies for all students. Tier II (Targeted) strategies to consider may be the Coordination of Services Teams (COST) and Student Support Teams (SST). COST and SST can be used for students who require Tiers II and III support and intervention.

Coordination of Services Teams (COST) is a proven strategy to coordinate services, identify support services and provide resources for students. COST consists of a multidisciplinary team created to regularly meet and discuss students' progress. Additional benefits of COST teams include:

- Allocation of proper resources
- Coordination of staff and customized interventions
- Minimization of duplication of service
- Ensures services and supports are equitable

COST participants may include the following:

- Site administrators
- Counselors
- Community partners
- Special Education staff
- Afterschool Program staff
- Parent/Family Support staff
- Attendance staff
- Nurse/Health office staff

Tier II and III Supports: A Comparison

Below are some comparisons regarding differences in the implementation and purpose of COST and SST meetings.

COST vs SST	
Coordination of Service Team	**Student Success Team**
Purpose	**Purpose**
A multidisciplinary team of adults work collaboratively to: • Triage referrals for student support services and assess student support needs • develop and monitor coordinated interventions and supports at the student/site level • facilitate communication between school staff and providers in order to link students/families with support	A group of adults responsible for the success of an individual student, work collaboratively to: • develop a strength-based plan • provide academic, social-emotional, and behavioral support and interventions • support the student to achieve educational success
Participants	**Participants**
• Site administrators • Community partners • Afterschool Program staff • Attendance staff • Counselors • Special Education staff • Parent Support staff • Nurse	• Site administrators • Teachers • Student's support provides • Student's parents • Student (depending on age)

Timelines	Timelines
Next COST meeting, revisit referrals made.	Every 6 to 18 weeks, reconvene SST team to review success of interventions/supports.
For Who	**For Who**
Collaborate and coordinate services across the school site for all students.	Collaborate and coordinate supports and interventions for an individual student.
Numbers	Numbers
Multiple students per COST	One student per SST

Effective Tier II and III Interventions: Home Visits to Connect and Assess

As LEAs invest in relationship building it is important for school staff to be seen not only on campus but in the community. Research shows that when LEAs see a dip in attendance it is imperative that expeditious outreach efforts are made to recover students. The sooner the outreach attempts are made, the less likely students are to disengage completely from school.

Home visits are a mechanism to assess student need and may be utilized as a check-in process to re-engage students and families. Home visits are also an opportunity to empathize and connect with families.

LEAs should consider the following:

- Routinely (monthly) provide outreach in the community to re-engage students and parents/guardians/caregivers
- At minimum, outreach should take place before and after a school break (e.g., before school starts, Thanksgiving, winter and spring break, etc.)
- Outreach should include a diverse school team (site administrators, teachers, counselors, support services staff, etc.)

Key Takeaway

- **Timely, In-Person Outreach Prevents Disengagement:** Research consistently shows that when LEAs initiate prompt outreach—such as home visits—at the first signs of declining attendance, students are less likely to disengage entirely. Early, expeditious contact enables schools to assess individual needs, reconnect with families, and set the stage for rapid attendance recovery.
- **Diverse, Routine Community Engagement Strengthens Trust and Recovery:** Findings emphasize that a coordinated outreach effort involving a diverse team (administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff) is key to addressing complex barriers. Regular community visits, especially scheduled around school breaks, build relational trust and create a holistic support network that effectively re-engages students and improves long-term attendance outcomes.

Effective Tier II & III Interventions: Home Visits to Connect and Assess

There are many opportunities to engage with the community when doing outreach. It is recommended that individuals have an outreach toolkit with the following items:

- School schedule
- Program flyers and information
- Calling card/Door hanger These personalized notices serve as a vital communication tool when families are not home, allowing school personnel to reinforce connections, build trust in attendance intervention efforts, provide key contact information, and encourage follow-up engagement.
- School contact information (pertinent names, phone numbers, and email addresses)
- Referrals as needed
- Phone list of district support services and community resources

Interventions for Credit Deficient Students

Tier II interventions for students who are credit deficient

It's important to review attendance data to identify students needing Tier II support. As the second semester begins, some students may not realize they are credit deficient. Early interventions can help address this. Here are a few key strategies:

Credit Recovery Programs:

Credit recovery programs can help high school students earn credits they need to graduate. These programs can help students who have failed classes, fallen behind, or need to improve their grades. These programs may be in-person, virtual, or self-paced.

- Provide sufficient instructional support.
- Focus on competencies, not seat time.
- Offer flexible options (e.g., evenings, weekends, virtual, self-paced).
- Individualized approach which tailors the learning to the unique needs of the student.

Alternative Education:

Provides different pathways to meet students' needs. Types of programs include:

- Flexible Blended Learning Models: Programs that mix in-person and online instruction, giving students the flexibility to manage their learning pace and schedule.
- Credit Recovery Programs: Self-paced, modular courses that allow students to retake or make up credits through online or intensive learning sessions.
- Alternative High Schools: Institutions or specialized programs offering nontraditional learning environments, flexible schedules, and personalized support for credit-deficient students.

These alternatives aim to provide multiple pathways to meet diverse student needs and help them overcome credit deficiencies while preparing for future academic or career success.

Zero Period:

Offers an additional period of support before school, but access may be limited due to transportation issues and potential negative impacts from reduced sleep.

Embedded Instruction:
A scheduling intervention that provides extra support within the school day. For example, a 20-minute tutorial period within block scheduling for students needing additional help.

Community College Courses on Campus:
LEAs can partner with community colleges to offer students courses that meet district graduation requirements. Many college courses are equivalent to a full-year high school course.

Students Who Work in the Entertainment Industry

Child actors/performers can maintain their academic progress without compromising their education through structured strategies that balance work and schooling. In California, regulations mandate that minors in the entertainment industry receive a minimum of three hours of instruction per workday, supervised by a certified studio teacher on set.

The student must:

- Obtain a work permit: The student is required to have an entertainment work permit from the State of California Department of Industrial Relations, which often requires proof of satisfactory academic performance.
- Consideration must be given to the student's academic standing. Regular assessments of the student's educational progress will help to identify any area needing additional support.
- Get tutoring on set: The studio will arrange for qualified tutors or studio teachers to provide instruction during work hours, ensuring the student keeps pace with their studies.
- Develop a relationship with the school site: Maintain open communication with the student's school to coordinate assignments and ensure academic requirements are met.

By implementing these strategies, child actors/performers can successfully reconcile attendance requirements with their academic responsibilities, ensuring a well-rounded development.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

In California, students who are pregnant or parenting have specific rights and protections in school settings, supported by both state laws and federal Title IX regulations. Schools are required to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure pregnant and parenting students can fully participate in their education. These accommodations may include breaks for health needs, excused absences

for appointments, access to online or remote educa-tion, and adjustments to schedules or coursework. This applies to pregnant/parenting teen mothers and fathers.

While schools may offer separate educational programs for pregnant and parenting stu-dents, participation must be voluntary, and the programs must be equal in quality to the standard curriculum. This includes adult or alternative education or other credit recovery programs. These options offer a great voluntary pathway to help students stay engaged while managing parenting responsibilities.

High School Completion under State Requirements Eligibility

Under Education Code (EC) 51225.1, a student experiencing homelessness, placed in foster care, former juvenile court school student, child of an active military family, or migratory youth who are not on track for high school graduation with their four year cohort, and transfer after what should be their second year of high school, or newcomer students who are in their third or fourth year of high school may be eligible to graduate by completing the minimum state graduation requirements, which includes completing 13 year-long specific courses, when certain criteria are met. EC 51225.3 identifies the specific course requirements.

Exemption notification and other requirements must be followed by the school site.

Adult School Programs:

Adult schools offer high school diploma programs for students aged 16-24 who are credit deficient or have dropped out. The exemption applies to:

- Qualifying students enrolled in an adult education program, regardless of their age and
- Students enrolled in an adult education program, who, while enrolled in high school, would have qualified for this provision

Note: As of January 1, 2025, Assembly Bill 2251, went into effect and clarified that the governing board of a school district is expressly authorized, at its discretion, to adopt a policy to exempt pupils from its additional coursework requirements. This means that students who do not fit into the requirements described in EC 51225.1 may also be able to graduate with the minimum state graduation requirements of 130 credits, if the LEA has a policy that allows this consideration. This could be a game changer for students in the identified special populations of students that did not change schools after the tenth-grade school year or have struggled in school but are not one of the groups identified in EC 51225.1.

Tier II: Pre-Student Attendance Review Team (SART) Intervention

Interventions prior to SART

It is recommended that prior to initiating a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting, several Tier II strategies should be utilized. These interventions should be documented along with follow-up conversations. Interventions prior to SART include:

- Written notification to parent of attendance concern and benefits of proficient attendance
- Individualized outreach to parent/caregiver by phone or home visit
- Parent Conference with student and/or parent to assess reasons for non-attendance and interventions to address the following four categories of causes:
    - Barriers
    - Aversion
    - Disengagement
    - Misconceptions
- Phone calls to parent to discuss status and progress of interventions
- Home visit to gain a deeper understanding of student's life outside of school

For more information on specific **Pre-SART: Tier II interventions and strategies please** click here.

Tasks before meeting with students and/or parents:

Below are some suggested best practices to do prior to holding a SART or SARB meeting.

- Research student information database for pertinent information
    - Identify Parent, guardian, or caretaker
- Review the student's cumulative record/file
    - Focus on attendance, behavior, and academics
    - Identify patterns in attendance, behavior, and academics
    - Review history of schools
    - Look for indicators of connectedness of student and parent

    - Identify at least three strengths of the student
    - Look for reoccurring themes
- Research previous interventions and progression
- Develop a goal for the interaction/meeting
- Determine if an interpreter is needed

Tier III: Intensive Interventions to Absenteeism

Who receives Tier III support? Tier III supports are needed for students facing barriers to attendance who are chronically absent and not responding to Tier I or Tier II supports. Tier III supports are designed to care for the most vulnerable students. These supports are personal, persistent, and deeply compassionate.

Student Attendance Review Team (SART)

SART PROCESS

Student Attendance Review Teams (SARTs) are formed at local schools to address attendance issues under California Compulsory Attendance Laws (EC 48200). Their goal is to resolve attendance barriers early by engaging families and providing supportive interventions. Research underscores that early intervention through structured, multidisciplinary teams can significantly reduce chronic absenteeism by addressing root causes such as health concerns, mental health barriers, and family hardships.

A SART should include a written plan outlining:

- Attendance expectations to promote consistency and clarity for families. Interventions tailored to student needs, including mental health services and social support, as recommended by the study findings.
- Referrals to school- and community-based resources, including healthcare providers, behavioral health specialists, and transportation assistance, as needed.

Key Takeaway

Schools that establish clear attendance improvement plans—which include family engagement, student check-ins, and wraparound support—see better attendance outcomes and increased student engagement.

The School Attendance Review Team can include, but is not limited to, the following members:

- Parent(s) – Our research highlights that parental involvement is a key factor in attendance improvement. Families should be actively engaged in the process and provided with resources to support attendance at home.
- Student – Student voice is essential in identifying motivation for attendance, as well as challenges and co-developing solutions that address their unique interests and needs. Student participation
- School Administrator or Designee – Provides leadership and ensures that SART interventions align with school policies.
- Academic or Attendance Counselor or Designee – Monitors attendance trends and works with students to create individualized attendance action plans.
- Nurse –research identifies health-related absences as a leading factor in chronic absenteeism. Nurses play a critical role in assessing medical needs, facilitating healthcare referrals, and addressing school health barriers.
- School Counselor or School Social Worker – Supports student well-being by addressing mental health concerns, social-emotional challenges, and external factors impacting attendance. Increasing access to counseling services is a proactive strategy for reducing absenteeism.

The team may be composed of anyone working with the family who has a viable interest in the student's school attendance. This can include:

- Mental health professionals to support emotional well-being.
- Community liaisons who can help connect families to housing, food assistance, and medical care.
- Student support specialists who provide mentorship and peer accountability strategies.

Key Takeaway

Schools that adopt a whole-child approach in SART meetings—incorporating health, academic, and social-emotional support—see higher attendance improvements than those focusing solely on compliance-based interventions.

By aligning the SART process with evidence-based practices schools can proactively address attendance barriers, engage families in meaningful ways, and support students holistically.

SART MEETING:

- Introductions/Welcome
- Review student strengths, interests, goals, connections to peers/adults on campus, along with current attendance concerns and patterns
- Review interventions that were done prior to SART and status
- Discuss "the why" of daily attendance and express concern for the student's social-emotional and academic progress
- Outline LEA attendance policy, attendance laws, and consequences for continued unexcused absences, and LEA attendance goal
- Identify issues that may be impacting attendance and further assess family dynamics and potential supports/resources, for example:
    - Any major changes in the family unit (death, job loss, divorce, housing or food insecurities, etc.)
    - Parenting challenges
    - Academic challenges
    - Behavioral challenges
    - Substance abuse issues (student or parent)
    - Mental health or health needs
    - Assess access to healthcare
    - Assess current/previous involvement with the following systems:
        - Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
        - Department of Probation
        - Department of Social Service (e.g. CalWORKS, Cal Fresh, SSI)

- Common referrals made during a SART meeting may include, but not limited to:
    - Health Care Provider
    - School/District support services (Nursing, Special Education, McKinney-Vento liaison, etc.)
    - Counseling/mental health services
    - School based agencies or community partners (e.g., Parks and Recreation, after-school programs, mentoring, volunteer programs, ...)
    - Parenting Support/Education Classes
    - Tutoring
- Offer a Comprehensive Attendance Plan/contract and resources to assist with addressing any identified issues (e.g., mental health counseling, parenting, substance abuse counseling, mentoring, childcare, alternative education and more)
- Discuss how the student/family will access these resources and identify/mitigate any barriers to access (ideally, school staff provide a warm-hand-off / linkage to a specific person and/or schedule the appointment with the family and the service provider(s))

- Review written agreements, referrals, and recommendations
- Explain the next step of the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) process if unexcused absences continue after the SART meeting.

Conclusion of SART: A contract is completed, signed and provided to all parties. If the family is a no-show, attempt to reschedule the meeting.

- Ensure follow up on student progress using a 30-60-90-day timeframe.
- If the student begins to regress use a 5-10-15- day timeline to ensure timely follow-up
- If attendance continues to regress schedule an appointment for Pre-SARB Panel

Pre-School Attendance Review Board (SARB)/ Resource Panel

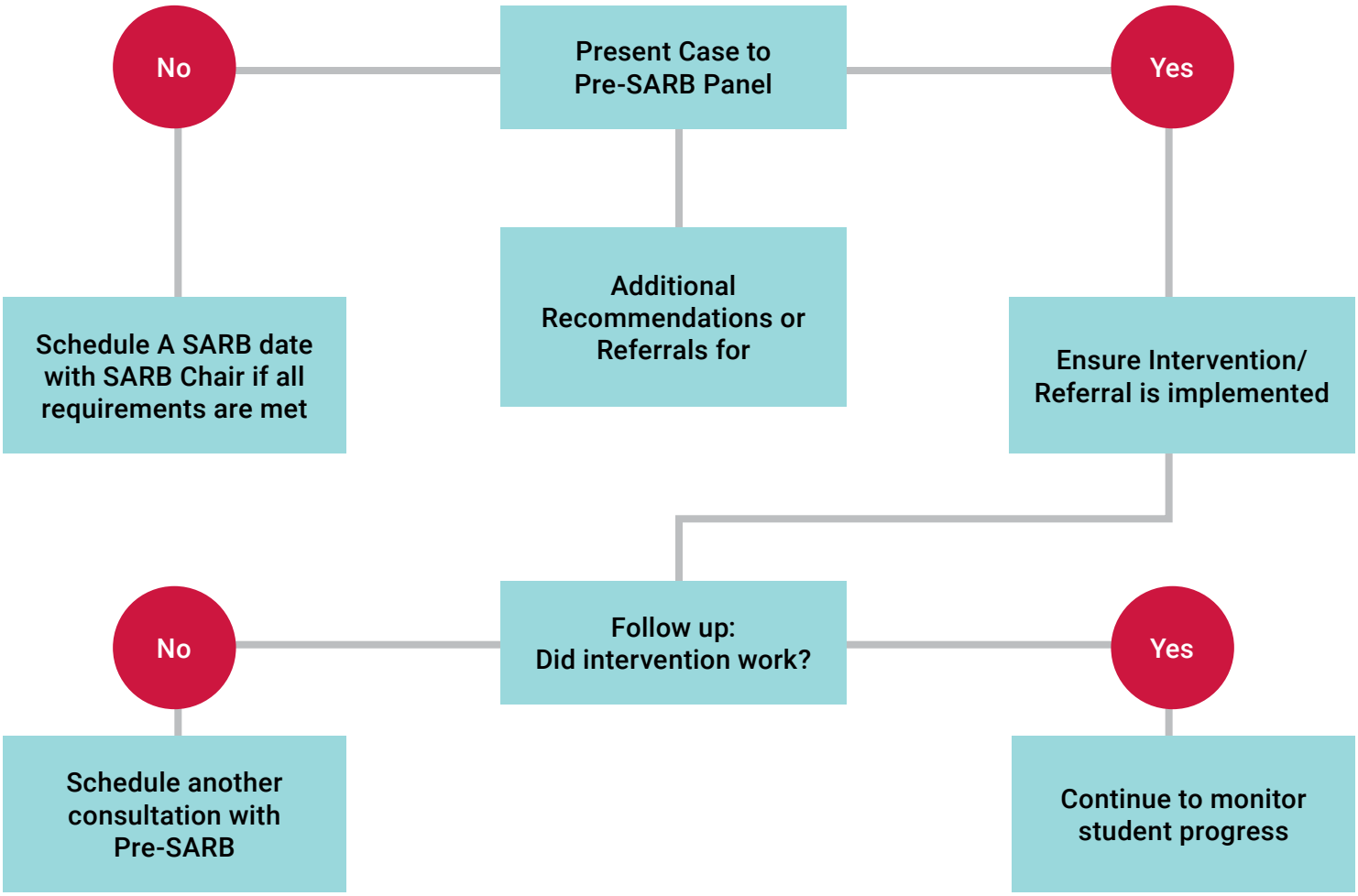
Pre-SARB/Resource Panel:

A Pre-SARB or Resource Panel is recommended to thoroughly review the circumstances and supports offered/provided before scheduling a SARB meeting to ensure due diligence and that all

reasonable supports and/or interventions have been attempted.

1. The SARB Chair can host a panel with designated school personnel to screen each potential SARB case
    a. Discuss and review with the person requesting the SARB all interventions and referrals made
        i. Type of outreach: letters, telephone calls, home visits,
        ii. Response of family and students to outreach
        iii. Types of referrals and supports on site or in community provided
    b. Determine if additional interventions and/or referrals are warranted
        i. If so monitor and follow through with Resource Panel recommendations
2. Schedule a SARB date with SARB Chair if all requirements are met

Pre-SARB Panel Flow Chart:



Tier III Case Management

School Attendance Case Management

Tier III interventions must be individualized, trauma-informed, and holistic—addressing the root causes of absenteeism, including mental health concerns, chronic illness, transportation barriers, and family instability. Schools that implement data-driven case management strategies and leverage community resources see improved attendance outcomes and stronger student engagement.

Attendance enhancement at this level focuses on three key components to promote consistent school attendance:

Prevention

- School-wide events, activities, and culturally relevant family engagement.
- Research validates that prevention efforts focused on positive school engagement reduce chronic absenteeism. Schools that implement proactive outreach, such as attendance awareness campaigns, school-hosted resource fairs, and culturally relevant family engagement events, report stronger student and family participation.
- Regular personalized communication with families—through letters, phone calls, and text reminders—reinforces the importance of attendance and ensures families are aware of available resources.

Early Detection

- Identifying attendance issues through communication and monitoring.
- Early idenitifcation and intervention are critical to preventing chronic absenteeism. Schools that conduct weekly attendance reviews and student

check-ins can identify emerging attendance issues before they escalate.

- Implementing a tiered early warning system enables schools to identify students showing early signs of chronic absenteeism and provide targeted interventions based on absence patterns.

Self-reported health-related concerns remain one of the most common reasons students miss school. Schools should partner with on-campus health professionals and community-based providers to offer medical and mental health support for students.

Intervention

- Direct, personalized outreach—rather than automated attendance notices—significantly improves re- engagement rates. Schools should prioritize one-on-one family conversations through home visits, parent meetings, and student attendance action plans.

- Restorative approaches, such as goal-setting conversations, attendance mentors, and peer support programs, help students feel connected and accountable.
- Comprehensive wraparound services—including transportation support, food assistance, and access to counseling services—remove attendance barriers and support student well-being.

Key Takeaway

- Schools that recognize good and improved attendance (for groups, e.g., grade levels, classrooms, and individual students) through incentives, celebrations, and peer engagement programs see higher student motivation to attend regularly.
- Early intervention leads to better re-engagement than waiting until chronic absenteeism is established.
- Schools that use a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach—rather than punitive responses—see higher long-term attendance improvements and stronger family engagement.

By aligning Tier III Case Management strategies with evidence-based practices from our research, schools can ensure students receive the personalized interventions they need to overcome attendance barriers, stay engaged in learning, and succeed academically.

Addressing Chronically Absent Students

This level of case management typically involves a multidisciplinary team (e.g., educators, administrators, school counselors, school social workers) working together to create personalized intervention plans

Key Strategies:

- Home visits and regular check-ins.
- Academic and emotional support.
- Access to community resources.

The goal is to address the root causes of absenteeism, helping students return to regular attendance and achieve academic success.

To assist with the implementation of Tier III strategies relating to case management, consider the following resources:

- SARB Information
    - California Department of Education - School Attendance Review Boards Handbook & Forms and other Strategies
- Three Tiers of Support Resources
    - Attendance Works: Three Tiers of Support Resources
    - Attendance Works: Strategies to Support Improved Attendance Module 3
    - TIERS OF INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE
- Messaging Resources during Spring Break and Holidays:
    - Attendance Works: Strategy 2: Use Effective Messaging
    - Attendance Works: Spring Attendance Slump
    - Attendance Works: Suggested Timeline for Messaging
- Data Review Support Guides

    - Oklahoma Education: Attendance Data to Action Toolkit
    - CSBA.org: Supporting school attendance
- Assembling an Attendance Team
    - EveryDay Labs: 5 Tips for Building an Attendance Team
- Additional Support:
    - District Strategies to Reduce Student Absenteeism
    - The Collective Tiered Actionable Strategies to Address Chronic absenteeism
    - Chronic Absence
    - San Diego Office of Education website: Attendance
    - MTSS Corner: Top Tier Meetings— 5 Steps to Create a System for High Quality Tier III Attendance Conferences

Mental Health Supports

School-Based Telehealth

Telehealth services provide accessible support for students with social-emotional issues affecting their school attendance. Virtual sessions offer:

- Convenience: Support from any location, overcoming physical distance barriers.
- Timely Interventions: Quick access to mental health care.
- Ongoing Support: Tailored strategies to address mental health challenges and improve attendance.

LEAs have different resources on site or within their local community to support the mental health of students and families.

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Los Angeles County offers several resources for students needing mental health support. The county's Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and other organizations like Los Angeles Unified School District, Crisis Text Line, and The Trevor Project provide services including crisis intervention, counseling, and support groups.

- **LA County Department of Mental Health (DMH)**: Offers a range of services including crisis evaluation teams, information and referrals, and field deployments. (800) 854-7771
- **LAUSD School Mental Health Clinics and Wellness Centers**: Provide accessible and free mental health services to LAUSD students and families in need.
- **Crisis Text Line**: Offers 24/7 free counseling through text messaging – text 741741.
- **988 Lifeline**: Provides immediate support for mental health and substance use crises through phone and text.
- **The Trevor Project**: Offers crisis and suicide prevention services specifically for LGBTQ+ youth.
- **TimelyCare**: A virtual health and well-being platform partnered with some schools, offering 24/7 access to virtual care.
- **211LA**: Provides information and referrals to various community resources, including mental health services.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**: Offers resources, education, and a national helpline for mental health support.

Additional Resources:

- **LA County Department of Mental Health (DOHM) ACCESS Line**: Provides service referrals, crisis assessments, and field deployments.
- **Substance Abuse Service Hotline (SASH)**: Offers support for substance use disorders.
- **Emotional Support Warm Line**: Provides trained active listeners.
- **Veteran Line**: Offers mental health support and connections to veteran programs.

- **Edelman Child and Family Clinic**: Provides various outpatient services for children and families.
- **Didi Hirsch**: A leading provider of mental health, sub-stance use, and suicide prevention services.

Sustaining Engagement, Celebrating Success, and Preparing for the New Year

Let's explore strategies and practices to encourage regular school attendance, supporting student progression and graduation.

Articulation, Matriculation, and Graduation: Supporting students through key educational transitions and highlighting the importance of attendance.

Promoting Regular Attendance During Summer Instruction: Encouraging participation in summer programs for credit recovery and enrichment.

Finishing the Regular School Year Strong: Maintaining high attendance rates with incentives and celebratory events.

By implementing these strategies, you can create a motivating environment that encourages regular attendance, coursework completion, and academic achievement.

Let's work together to ensure every student succeeds and reaches their full potential!

Preparing for Next School Year

Best Practices to Prepare for a New School Year

Effective articulation practices are important for preparing and supporting students. Strategic planning can help improve student engagement and attendance from the start. The following best practices provide guidance on essential areas such as classroom organization and setting clear rules and routines.

Applying these strategies will help to facilitate a smooth transition and support an effective learning environment for all students:

Download the Attendance Campaign Toolkit

Assist Teachers in Creating an Optimal Classroom Environment

- Create interactive bulletin boards and learning centers
- Decorate campus entryways to create a welcoming environment
- Utilize your learning management system, parent portal and district/school site website to post attendance expectations, bell schedules, academic calendar, lunch menu, and announcements

Support Teachers with the Implementation of Classroom Rules and Routines

- Create morning and dismissal routines
- Create a routine for reporting attendance, lunch and restroom breaks and providing supervision of students
- Determine follow-up procedures when students are absent
- Provide classroom presentations related to expectations for student attendance and behavior

Preparing for the First Week of School

- Create a student/parent welcome letter to send home and introduce yourself, providing the various resources on your campus
- Prepare classroom icebreaker and Back-to-School activities to welcome students
- Read through student cumulative folders to get to know them better and examine patterns (e.g., attendance, grades, behavior)
- Create and distribute family newsletters to keep parents/guardians in the know regarding

school-related activities, resources and events

Proactively Collaborate with Teachers

- Collaborate as a team to prepare summer materials that will equip students for the upcoming grade to mitigate summer learning loss

Involving Parents in Their Student's Transition to a New Campus

Transitioning to a new campus is a major step for students, and administrative preparation and family engagement are key to reducing absenteeism and promoting a sense of belonging. Our Chronic Absenteeism study highlights that students who feel connected to their new school environment early on are more likely to attend regularly, engage academically, and experience lower levels of school-related anxiety.

Effective strategies help students adapt, ease anxiety, and build community. Best practices include engaging families in annual events, running orientation programs, and establishing clear communication plans.

By implementing the practices below, schools can create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere that encourages student engagement and promotes a strong start at their new campus:

Educate Parents/Guardians on Steps to Support Their Child's Transition

- Conduct workshops that emphasize effective support for children during transitions, encouraging consistent attendance from early childhood.
- Our research suggests that early parental involvement in school transitions helps improve student attendance and engagement. Parents who understand the emotional, social, and academic challenges of transitioning students are better equipped to support consistent attendance.
- Schools should provide resources on school readiness, attendance expectations, and mental health support to ensure families feel prepared.

Key Findings

Schools that implement transition-focused parent engagement programs report higher attendance rates and stronger family-school partnerships.

Host Parent Orientation Programs

- Offer school tours for students and families with flexible hours and days to accommodate different schedules.
- Schools should offer multiple orientation formats (in-person, virtual, multilingual) to ensure all families can participate.
- Clear communication on school policies, attendance expectations, and available student resources ensure families feel informed and engaged.
- Schools can distribute family-friendly attendance toolkits that include tips for building strong attendance habits and accessing school-based resources.

Key Findings

When parents feel comfortable with the school environment, students experience fewer transition-related absences.

Students and families who participate in structured orientation programs are more likely to develop early relationships with school staff, leading to greater trust and attendance consistency.

Offer Introductory Sessions for Parents/Guardians, Teachers, and Staff

- Facilitating introductions between parents, students, and school staff creates a strong support network for student success.
- Schools should create structured meet-and-greet opportunities where parents can ask questions, discuss concerns, and build connections with key school personnel, including counselors, teachers, and support staff.

- Schools should provide information on academic schedules, extracurricular activities, and available mental health support to help families navigate the transition.

Key Findings

Students whose families actively participate in school events and relationships demonstrate higher attendance rates and lower transition-related anxiety.

Families who receive ongoing, proactive communication about school policies and attendance expectations demonstrate higher engagement and participation in school activities.

Research data emphasizes that early school-family relationships reduce absenteeism by fostering trust and collaboration.

Create a Buddy System and Peer Mentorship Opportunities

- Pair incoming students with existing students for support and guidance

Support and Promote Extracurricular Activities

- Inform and encourage involvement in extracurricular activities and clubs
- Host club rush week at the beginning of each semester
- List activities and club information in enrollment/admissions office and around school

Provide Academic Support

- Assign academic counselors to meet with incoming freshmen and students new to your campus
- Review academic and behavioral data from the year prior to determine students in need of academic or mental health intervention and connect to school-based resources

Facilitating Transitions Through Workshops

- Offer student and parent workshops to develop study skills, time management, and organizational strategies
- By incorporating the recommended strategies into school transition programs, schools can proactively address attendance barriers, reduce student anxiety, and foster strong family-school partnerships that support long-term student success.

Incentives to Celebrate and Recognize Improved or Excellent Attendance

Recognizing Success: End-of-Year Attendance Celebrations and Incentives

Recognizing commendable or improved attendance throughout the school year fosters a positive school-wide culture. This should be coupled with a firm commitment to ensuring that students actively engage in both the school community and classroom activities upon their arrival. This approach is a vital element of a tiered attendance framework.

Key Considerations for Effective Attendance Incentives:

- Emphasize effort and improvement to encourage all students to be on time and regularly attend.
- Recognize attendance frequently (e.g., weekly or monthly) rather than annually.
- Avoid overemphasis on perfect attendance, which may discourage students who are absent for excusable reasons.
- Adjust strategies if results are not effective, ensuring inclusivity across all student groups, for example, monitoring attendance metrics regularly helps establish a routine of reviewing attendance data and identifying trends or gaps across student demographics, ensuring that incentive programs are grounded in measurable outcomes.

Guidance and Resources:

- For end-of-year attendance incentive guidelines, visit Attendance Works.
- For evidence-based incentive frameworks, explore research from the University of Chicago.
- For insights from the Attendance Playbook (FutureEd & Attendance Works) on reward timing and strategy adjustments, visit their website.
- For step-by-step attendance challenge planning, access the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Be There Attendance Campaign guide.

Key Takeaway

Schools that recognize good and improved attendance (for groups, e.g., grade levels, classrooms, and individual students) through incentives, celebrations, and peer engagement programs see higher student motivation to attend regularly

As schools address learning disruptions, declining enrollment, and equity gaps, it is important to note that these strategic attendance initiatives play a crucial role in re-engagement efforts. For toolkits on engaging families and addressing absenteeism, access the following toolkits from the Attendance Works' resource hub:

Explore Early Matters: Cultivating Engagement and Attendance in Kindergarten: Assisting our youngest learners and their families in overcoming obstacles to regular school attendance and re-establishing a daily routine is crucial for building the social, emotional, and academic skills necessary for early school success. On their website, Attendance Works discusses the importance of creating a culture of attendance and fostering a collaborative approach to supporting kindergarten students and their families.

California: Cultivate a School-wide Culture of Attendance: Every school should foster a welcoming atmosphere that emphasizes the importance of daily attendance. Principals can lead by example and engage staff in consistently communicating this message. Another toolkit by Attendance Works includes recent studies showing that effective communication involves not only discussing the benefits of attendance but also informing parents about the negative effects of absences on learning and stressing that students should only miss school when necessary.

Senior Engagement Activities and Graduation Incentives

Seniors in Transition and Supports

As students enter their senior year and approach the finish line, each completed assignment and passing month brings them closer to graduation day. With the conclusion of high school nearing, seniors may experience a variety of emotions about transitioning to life after high school. It is important for LEAs to provide support to seniors in maintaining motivation and focus on completing their studies.

Here are key strategies to support attendance and senior achievement:

1. **Prom:** Encourage regular attendance for prom eligibility.
2. **Extra Graduation Tickets:** Award extra tickets based on senior year attendance.
3. **Senior Ditch Day:** Hold assemblies stressing the importance of attendance and advising against ditch day activities.
4. **Awards and Incentives:** Offer rewards such as senior breakfast, prizes and recognition ceremonies.
5. **Outreach to Students from Special Populations Eligible for Graduation Exemptions:** Identify students who qualify for graduation exemptions under EC 51225.1 This law permits certain student groups to graduate with the state requirements of 130 credits. New legislation EC 51225.3 allows an LEA to support similar efforts for other students outside of the special populations noticed above to graduate with reduced requirements. This exemption has restrictions and will impact a student's post-secondary pathway.

Summer School Strategies to Encourage Positive Attendance and Student Engagement

Strategies to Retain Students During the Summer Months

Summertime provides an opportunity to offer students support and school-based services. Research indicates that summer academic and recovery programs are crucial in preventing learning loss and improving long-term attendance patterns, especially for students who are chronically absent during the regular school year.

LEAs can provide summer instruction to help students gain essential lessons and information. Due to the shorter summer schedule, proactive attendance efforts are crucial. LEAs can implement strategies such as:

- Pre-Planning for summer school retention by developing an action plan. Our findings suggest that schools with early enrollment efforts, clear communication about summer program benefits, and targeted outreach to at-risk students have higher summer attendance rates.
- Conducting summer planning and encouraging district staff to offer educational services to meet the needs of students and families. The research emphasizes that multilingual, culturally responsive communication increases family participation in summer learning opportunities.

- Implementation of retention strategies during summer school to improve student outcomes. Providing wraparound support, including meal programs and transportation assistance, removes barriers that may prevent students from attending summer sessions.
- Encouraging less punitive policies to support student attendance. Our research confirms that schools using restorative, incentive-based approaches—such as attendance recognition and positive reinforcement—see greater student engagement in summer learning programs.

Promoting Consistent Engagement in Summer School Programs

To underscore the importance of attendance among students and families, summer programs can:

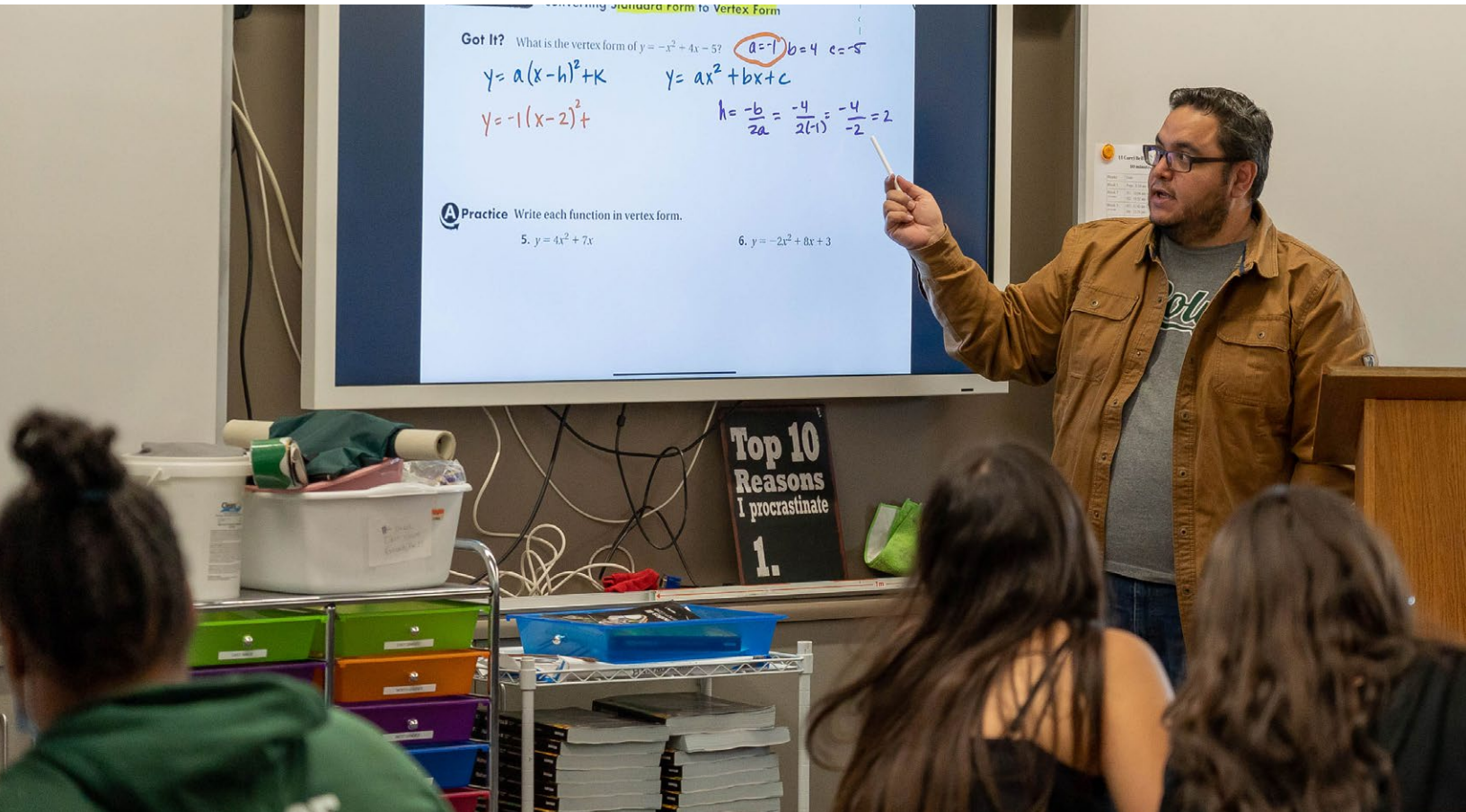
- Educate parents about summer learning loss and encourage them to prioritize regular attendance throughout the entire session, minimizing absences due to vacations.
- Engage with families to identify and address any obstacles—such as health concerns, transportation issues, or housing instability—that hinder regular attendance at the summer program. Provide linkage to the appropriate resources to overcome these challenges before the school year commences.
- Prepare students and parents for the first day of summer school and the upcoming school year by sharing key calendar dates and discussing what to anticipate in the upcoming grade, in some cases, at a new school.
- Advise parents to schedule visits to new school sites, participate in orientation activities, pre-fill enrollment packets and provide proof of necessary immunizations.
- Assist families in devising a plan to ensure daily attendance.
- Implement a structured attendance tracking system, taking attendance daily to emphasize its significance to children.
- Foster a culture of attendance by acknowledging students who consistently attend and supportive adults who facilitate their attendance. Utilize various methods such as songs, activities, and contests to underscore the value of attendance.
- Create stimulating learning opportunities that inspire students and families to participate actively, helping them understand how daily attendance contributes to skill development.

Implementing these strategies with fidelity can foster a culture of positive attendance and academic engagement. A 2021 research study conducted by Curriculum Associates shows that better attendance leads to improved student outcomes. For more information on the findings from this

research, click here.

For additional ideas and resources in promoting attendance engagement during summer instruction, the Jumpstart Toolkit from the California Department of Education as well as the following websites are excellent resources for Educators:

- Schools and summer program providers can use the concepts in R.E.A.L. (Routines, Engagement, Access to resources and Learning) to strengthen their summer learning efforts as well as their attendance initiatives during the school year.
- The California Department of Education has compiled a list of frequently asked questions regarding summer programs.
- The California School Board Association has provided helpful information on how summer programs can aid in learning recovery and acceleration as well as provide opportunities for students to practice essential skills and make academic progress.
- Evidence shows that students benefit from summer programming; an article by the RAND research organization provides guidance to make sure your district's program is effective.
- For further insights into the impact of positive attendance on summer learning, please visit the Attendance and Summer Learning page on the Attendance Works website.



Getting an Early Start: Analyzing Data for the Upcoming School Year

Analyze and Communicate Attendance Data

Clear communication of data and goals is key to improving school attendance. Regular updates through various platforms ensure everyone, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, stay informed. Sharing target goals and relevant data aligns educational partners, while using data helps identify students for tailored interventions and support.

The following suggested practices provide guidance on maintaining transparent, consistent, and inclusive communication to drive collective efforts toward improving student attendance through data collection, review, and analysis:

- Plan interventions to address underlying causes and motivate students.
- Leverage historical data for informed analysis (e.g., tap into data from the previous school year to determine when "attendance dips" or trends occur).
- Identify targeted student groups, campaigns or classroom challenges as a focus using data insights.
- Regularly communicate data and goals with educational partners.
- Utilize various communication platforms (e.g., post attendance expectations in common areas; leverage your learning management system, parent portal, text messages, auto-dialer calls to inform).
- Ensure all stakeholders are aware of the target goals and supporting data.
- Detect any disproportionality among student groups.
- Determine the underlying reasons for frequent absences and develop targeted interventions accordingly (i.e., use of root cause analysis).

For more on data analysis, visit our presentation in collaboration with EveryDay Labs: Foundational Principles and Practices: Evidence-Based Strategies to Improve Student Attendance.

Conclusion

Final Thoughts and Reflections: Embracing Engagement and Celebrating Achievements

As we conclude the School Attendance Playbook, we reflect on the vital importance of sustaining student engagement and celebrating achievements. By promoting regular attendance through effective incentives, recognitions, and supportive practices, we can foster an environment where students feel valued and motivated to succeed.

- **Connection, Understanding, and Community:** We began by emphasizing the importance of building strong relationships, fostering a sense of community, and understanding the unique needs of our students.
- **Promoting Positive Student Attendance:** Next, we explored strategies to encourage and maintain positive attendance habits among students, highlighting proactive and preventive measures.
- **Navigating Attendance Systems towards a Strong Finish:** We then examined the technical and procedural aspects of attendance management, including data systems, Tier II interventions, and processes like SART (School Attendance Review Team) and SARB (School Attendance Review Board).

- **Supporting Educational Transitions:** The importance of smooth articulation, matriculation, and successful graduation, emphasizing how consistent attendance is key to these critical educational milestones.
- **Summer Instruction Strategies:** Techniques to maintain high attendance and engagement during summer programs, ensuring that students stay on track and continue their learning journey.
- **Finishing the School Year Strong:** Creative ideas for maintaining high attendance rates through the end of the school year, including practical incentives and celebratory events that recognize student commitment and effort.

Our goal is to create a positive and encouraging school culture where every student understands the value of regular attendance and feels celebrated for their efforts. By implementing these strategies, schools can build a community that supports academic achievement and prepares students for future success.

Thank you for your dedication to enhancing student attendance and engagement. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of our students, helping them reach their full potential to achieve their dreams.

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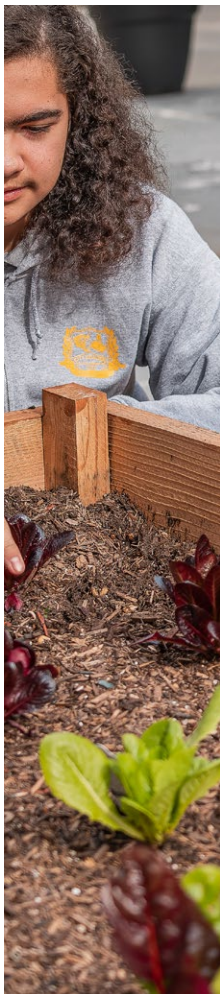
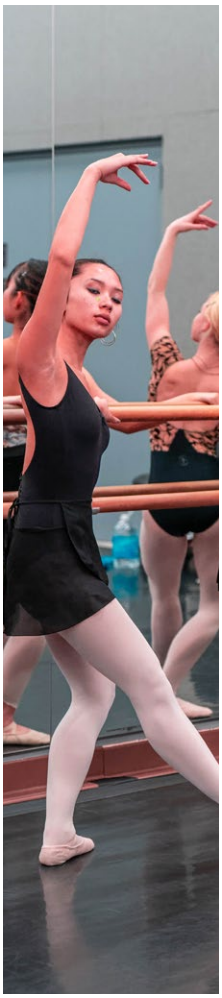
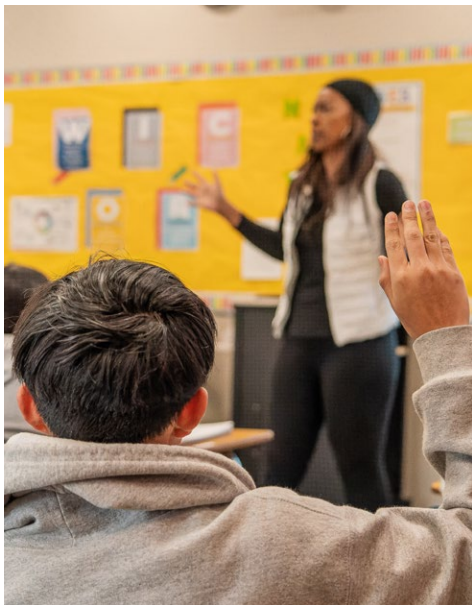
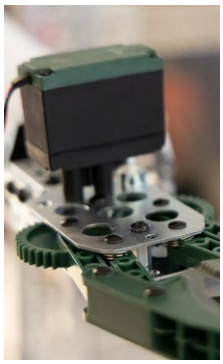
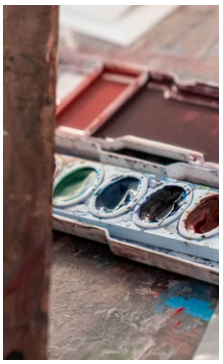
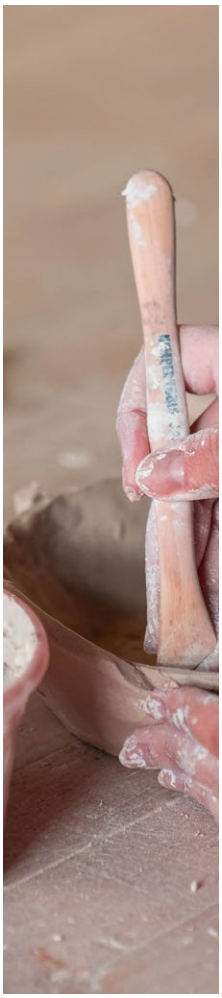
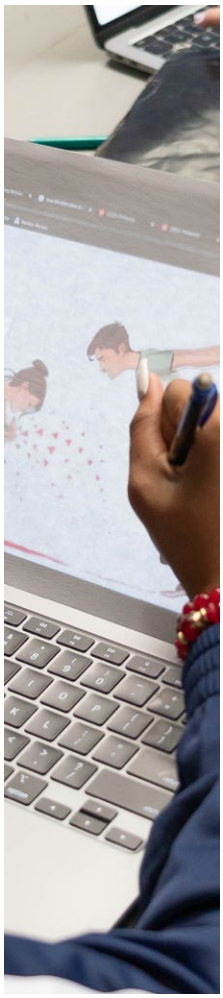
Special thanks to:
Los Angeles County Office of Education

Alicia Garoupa, L.C.S.W., *Chief of Wellbeing and Support Services*
Elizabeth Maderias, *Bilingual Division Secretary*, Child Welfare and Attendance
John Parago, *Lead Visual and Graphic Designer*, Public Affairs and Communications

Special thanks to:
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Rachel Bonkovsky, M.Ed., *Director of Education Partnerships and Programs*

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