

# Chronic Absence in the Early Grades Workshops

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## Notes from Attendance Support Systems Small Group Discussions

### Universal Attendance Support Systems

#### What works?

- Positive behavioral supports (PBIS)
- After school programs
- Recognition events
- Parent- teacher conferences – discuss attendance!
- Child care on-site
- Social events for families
- Breakfast and supper
- Clear communication
- Welcoming each child each day
- Free breakfast
- Before-school activities
- Greeting kids by name
- School-wide recognition
- Open gym in am
- Partners have same rules
- Free tutoring

#### What are the challenges?

- Policy (compulsory education age 7!!)
- Funding

### Systems of Reinforcement

#### What works?

- Monthly awards assembly for attendance
  - Perfect/practically perfect
  - Recognition of student (certificate) and caring adult
- School recognition of classroom attendance
  - Ribbons in hall
  - Rotating trophy

- Yearlong vs. trimester vs. weekly recognition
- Grade/class competition (MS). First in lunch line
- Competition with rival school (HS)
- Pizza challenge
- Post tracking graph in common area/morning assembly
- Pizza party (leftovers from parent night)
- Recognition of classrooms with 95% attendance
  - Weekly ribbon
  - Rotating monthly trophy
- Competition (first in lunch line) by grade
  - Also between rival high schools
- Post tracking in common areas/morning assembly
- 4 to 1 positives (ex: notes home to parents spec. to attendances)
- Assemblies/incentives
- Top attendance per grade level
  - Recognition
  - Trips/prizes
  - Free dress
  - Follow through
- Visual props in classroom
- Curriculum engaging and interesting (project lesson plans/student choice in activities)

### What might work?

- Classroom attendance sticker chart/graph
- Post pictures of students with perfect monthly attendance
- Monthly classroom celebrations
- Attendance bulletin board
  - Students maintain as attendance incentive/reward
- Attendance tracking chart (K/1) with reward
- Good news postcards sent home
- Classroom award when class has perfect attendance
- Point system: point for each day of attendance
- Computer check-in/game-type format
- Announce student names/classrooms with perfect attendance
- Class/student who meets attendance goal gets privilege, go to assembly first
- What do we do to reward parents?
- Set goal to decrease chronic non-attendance, and reward school community with Blazer players/reptile assembly, etc.
- School wide parent incentives
  - Recognition in newsletter
  - Forgiveness of fines
  - Gift cards

- Early childcare providers access to parents
- Letter phone call
- Class competition
- Awards assembly
- Pre k- kinder field trip
- Recognition

### What are the challenges?

- Buy in
- Moral (low)
- Consistency
- Communicate- sharing data (across the board)
- Kids left out (especially when it's not their fault)
- Using ADA (average daily attendance) for celebrations masks CA (chronic absence)
- \$\$\$
- Privacy concerns (when posting student names/pictures)
- Sadness of kids who aren't coming and not own fault

## Parent Communication Systems

### What works?

- Greeting parents who come to school (knowing names)
- Reaching out positively
- Communicating through newsletters, online and phone systems
- Communicate in native language
- Use parents as resources for a peer relationship
- Designated call person for students absent without notification
- Home visits
- Meet parents at the car when students are late to reinforce start time and encourage on time arrivals
- Communicate about resources available through school
- Culturally specific events for families
- Inviting partnership with parents
- Cultural liaisons
- Needs assessment followed by resources
- "Courageous Conversations"
- "Front Line" people at school need to be welcoming
- Newsletters
- Home visits
- Conferences

- Phone calls- automated vs. personal
- Letters home after # of tardies or absences
- Making school offices welcoming places- language, availability of staff
- Utilizing times when parents are in the building
- PTA meetings/school events in other locations- apartment complexes
- Partner/team effort to address absences
- Teacher phone calls/homes- more personal
- Post cards to kids
- Parent meet-ups
- Share information with parents (the research we've learned today)
- Including parent supports during transitions (groups before kindergarten starts)
- Communication log books with parents
- Staff teams visiting homes for outreach
- Recognition- share strategies that work
- Encourage parents to introduce themselves to each other at assemblies, etc.
- Be honest about attendance expectations. Use existing opportunities when parents are gathered
- Kindergarten roundup, parent nights, newsletter, SUN showcase
- Try and sustain full day Kindergarten
- Kindergarten focused parent/activity nights
- Phone calls home on day of absence in the family's native language
- Look at data for subgroups and consider interventions that are culturally focused
- Home visits upon reaching 7 absences (or some # or % of a given time period)
- Short, focused attendance effort/campaign
- Give parents kudos for attendance
- Have kids write post cards home
- Ensure all staff have key 2 or 3 talking points/ reasons why this matters

### What might work?

- Multi-disciplinary team to work through messaging to families- also multi-gender/ethnic
- Go out to the large apartment complexes to host social events to get families connected
  - Grant?
  - On-site coordinator connection
  - Programs coordination
- Become more purposeful to maximize the time when parents do come to school (conferences)
- Analyze who does not come to events or conferences- find out why
- Provide transportation to school events or conferences
- Provide free childcare for conferences and events
- Survey/ask parents what barriers might be
- Wake up calls using 'robo' system
- Get "famous" voices to record phone messages that go out to parents

## Individual Assessment and Support Systems

### What works?

- Mentor program- incentive charts
- Breakfast club-PLT- targeted data
- Health clinic on site- mental health services available
- Well-child checks with officer
- Student support meetings that are very specific re: needs- infuse absenteeism data (counselor, MSN, SUN, School staff). Look closely at reasons behind it
- Use functional behavior assessment strategies and apply to attendance (overlays nicely with other behavior efforts)
- Target K-1 students (do-able) use existing ESIS reports
- Record number of minutes students miss and share with parents at conferences
- Variety of Kindergarten transition activities to reach everyone
- Be specific at conferences re: amount of time and what research says
- Connect with families after registration and before school
- Seat people with neighbors at open house to make connections and build neighborhood mentality of attendance
- Email chain for carpooling/walking together
- Expand bus service to be closer than 1 mile
- For kids we already know are at risk- intentionally build relationships
- Need a system school-wide (pro-active)
- Team approach to divide up and know all students/families
- Summer K and parent transition program (PPS example at Woodmere/Whitman)

### What might work?

- Parents tracking their student's own attendance
- Designated personnel tracking/monitoring
- Metrics designed to capture chronic absence data/aggregate and individual
- Make time for meetings with teachers, counselors, etc., to talk about at-risk kids (SUN Site Coordinator- good communication)
- Coordinating multiple sources of information- connecting the dots
- Student and parent meetings- including a number of teachers, principal, SUN staff, etc.
- Designated person/group to disseminate information and create coordinated action plan
- Texting students with chronic absenteeism
- Transportation- providing alternatives- e.g. leveraging SPED transportation
- Parent/family phone tree/buddy system

- Communicating with parents about attendance norms and effects of chronic absenteeism
- Existing agency or someone with relationship- partner and make connection
- Educating parents about educational impact and attendance
- Home visits every month, talking to parents, outreach to community by k teachers- dedicated time given by school
- RTI: Response to intervention
- Behavior, social support services, SUN, attendance, other risks
- Next steps, follow up by grade, monthly meetings
- Case managers- outside of school phone calls, home visits, parent engagement coordinators

### What are the challenges?

- Language barriers
- Communication- no working phone
- Negative school experience
- ? Data available- identify

## Community Supports and Legal Consequences

### What works?

- In school case management
- Wrap-around supports
  - Housing
  - Counseling
  - Transportation, etc.
- Student success team
  - Identifying students for special support
  - Get parents involved early on
- Early childhood programs such as Head Start
- “Knock and Talk” by police officers
- In-school suspension
- In-school community based organizations such as SUN or family resource center
- Cultural parent groups that attract minorities to schools
- School attendance effort
- Attendance team/social work meetings- weekly
  - Attendance sec, counselor, admin, SUN, Dreamer School dir, skills tmr, title I
  - Discuss specific students with attendance issues and/or other social/mental health/poverty needs
  - Wrap-around services, assign one person/staff to follow up
    - Home visit, phone call, resource connections

- Address the family not just individual child
  - Follow-up to team at future meeting or email
- Touchstone
- Home visits
- Someone from the school going to pick students up each morning

### What might work?

- Focusing case management on younger students
- Lengthen time students are under case management (more than 1 year)
- More money in regional SSES case management
- “Dress for Success”/AVID-like classes to teach skills to get ready in the morning and why school is important
- Positive incentives for chronic absentees through community partnerships
- Educate DA on importance of addressing attendance
- Parenting classes required by county
- Coordinating with TANF re: attendance requirement

### What doesn't work?

- Letters home to parents
- Phone calls from SUN coordinator, counselor, sec, teachers
  - Unfortunately, unless principal gets involved, families don't take it as seriously
- Minimally staffed attendance initiative
- Fining families, court appearances (or just the threat)

### What are the challenges?

- Getting kids with attendance issues in programs
- Getting someone at school who deals specifically with case management
- No knowledge of resources by school administration/lack of resources
  - Lack of school counselors
  - Lack of case managers
  - Supports/case management focuses on older students
- No space for agencies to be at schools
- No legal consequences for students missing school- cost
- Time- importance of carving out/setting aside time with no interruptions