

Introduction of Strategy

In this guide, we define an Attendance Intervention System as a comprehensive, school-wide system that models and promotes school attendance while supporting students and families through a layered continuum of interventions. While the Attendance Intervention System is a subset of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), this strategy guide focuses specifically on processes, data and interventions around attendance.

Research has shown that the following components support effective attendance intervention systems. It is important to note that while there is evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of each component (see research following each component), these components are most effective when implemented together. The following components are derived from various articles and research that articulate what an Attendance Intervention System should include:

1. **Create Infrastructure to Collect and Analyze Data**
 2. **Create Partnerships to Support Family and Community Involvement**
 3. **Develop and Implement Tiered Strategies**
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Evidence Base

ESSA defines levels of research based on the quality of the study (Levels 1-4). CDE requires that schools and districts identify the research base for strategies that they select for their Unified Improvement Plans, and for applications for school improvement funds in the EASI application.

The research on attendance interventions that is cited here meets the definition of Level 3 research. The research cited focused on the impact on student achievement when all attendance intervention components were implemented. In addition, substantial research meeting levels 1-4 have been completed that found that when implemented to a high level, comprehensive and tiered attendance interventions had an impact on student achievement.

Considerations

Possible Root Causes include inadequate, inconsistent or ineffective...

- Attendance and engagement systems
- Structures to address attendance
- Family engagement

- Interventions
- Understanding student needs
- School culture

Is this strategy a good fit for your district/school?

- Does this major improvement strategy focus on a priority performance challenge and associated root cause(s)?
- Are the expected outcomes of this major improvement strategy highly valued?
- Do key leaders support this major improvement strategy? Do key leaders have the capacity to lead the strategy ongoing?
- What are the skills and competencies needed to implement this major improvement strategy with fidelity? What support/professional development do staff members need to implement this strategy effectively?
- Are the time, effort and resources needed for implementation feasible for the staff involved?

Considerations for Strategy Implementation

- What is the history of the school’s previous efforts around attendance? Has staff been involved in this work previously?
- Is there a wide range of stakeholders, including community partners, that are available to give input in the development of a comprehensive attendance system?
- Is there a wide range of stakeholders, including community partners, that will actively support the implementation of a comprehensive attendance system?
- Is accurate attendance data available on a regular basis?

Implementation Guide

Core Component 1: Create Infrastructure to Collect and Analyze Data

Elements	Description
Attendance Leadership Team	Create an Attendance Leadership Team made up of diverse stakeholders to devise and revise the school’s attendance intervention system. The team should participate in the elements below to create the system, and then meet regularly to analyze data, evaluate effectiveness of interventions, focus resources and develop additional interventions as needed. Ensure that the Attendance Leadership Team has access to information about <u>best practices and evidence-based interventions</u> .

<p>Analyze Attendance Data</p>	<p>The Attendance Leadership Team should evaluate the accuracy of attendance data, including absences, tardies and early departures from class/school, as well as the accuracy of the school’s data collection systems.</p> <p>Using available data, the team should analyze year-long data as appropriate for school level (elementary, middle or high school) to identify patterns. Absences, tardies and early departures from class should be analyzed by type including excused and unexcused, month, day of week, grade level, class period and course or subject in order to determine which students are more likely to miss class and when.</p> <p>The team should analyze year-long data to identify students who had chronic absenteeism the previous year, as well as students at risk of chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of a school year, or approximately 18 days of school or two days each month.</p>
<p>Unpack Causes</p>	<p>The Attendance Leadership Team should unpack causes to understand why students are absent. In addition to classifying absences as excused or unexcused, consider adding categories around physical illnesses, truancy, school refusal, school exclusion due to disciplinary measures, student abilities or disabilities, school culture concerns, and family concerns, such as beliefs around the importance of attendance and/or education or transportation. Disaggregate the data to look for patterns using type, month, day of week, grade level, class period, course or subject, students with 0-5 absences vs. students with 6-10 absences, etc.</p> <p>Understand level of <u>truancy</u> as an underlying cause for absences, including which students this affects, and patterns around truanancies.</p>
<p>Understand Current Practices</p>	<p>Complete <u>Policies and Practices Module around attendance</u> in order to understand which policies and practices the school currently has in place, and which policies and practices may need to be created to develop a comprehensive attendance intervention system.</p> <p>The Attendance Leadership Team should ensure that attendance policies and procedures are clearly written and communicated regularly to all stakeholders. Policies and procedures should include when and how attendance is taken, how absences are coded as excused or unexcused, what number of absences/tardies/leaving school early triggers an intervention, what interventions the school will take, expectations for communication between the school and families, and how community partners and agencies will be involved. Policies and procedures around exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as sending students home early due to behavior concerns, having students report to school late in an attempt to</p>

	prevent behavioral issues, suspensions and expulsions, should be evaluated to determine the impact on student attendance and subsequent academic achievement.
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Core Component 2: Create Partnerships to Support Family and Community Involvement

Elements	Description
School-Wide Culture	<p>Ensure that the school has a positive school-wide culture around attendance. Support teachers around understanding the value of attendance and modeling, promoting and recognizing good attendance. Set an expectation that attendance is taken daily at specific times, for example, within the first 5 minutes of each class period. Set a school-wide expectation around all staff communicating with students and families to promote strong attendance as well as acting as a personal contact for students and families who struggle with attendance.</p> <p>Ensure that there is a communication system between school staff and families. The communication system should include regular and consistent messages around the importance of attendance, consequences of poor attendance such as lower academic achievement as well as school consequences, and how the school defines a student being fully present as opposed to tardy or partially absent. Establish a communication system to report tardies and absences to families within a reasonable amount of time.</p>
Community Partnerships	<p>After unpacking causes for student absences, determine which causes require community support in order to be met. These causes may include need for childcare, clothing, healthcare, transportation or mentoring. Community partners should be sought out that can support students and families with these needs.</p>

Core Component 3: Develop and Implement Tiered Strategies

Elements	Description
School-Wide Culture Prevention Strategies	<p>Ensure that there are strategies school-wide for all students that support strong attendance. Strategies include ensuring that there is a welcoming, engaging and safe school environment as well as positive messaging that says that attending every day matters and emphasizes the need to avoid</p>

	<p>unnecessary absences. Schools should constantly recognize, model and promote good attendance through positive incentives.</p> <p>Research- and evidence-based school-wide absence prevention strategies include anti-bullying programs, social-emotional learning practices, personalized settings, individual learning plans, access to physical and mental health supports, attendance incentives, enhanced climate and safety, and reduced grade retention and exclusionary discipline practices.</p> <p>Student absences, tardies and early departures should be monitored regularly at the teacher team level. Ensure that every absence brings a response from the school, such as emails, phone calls or personalized contact depending on the student and which tier of intervention the student is in.</p>
<p>Early Intervention: Tier Two Intervention Strategies</p>	<p>Students with two or more absences in a month should trigger a referral to the school’s Attendance Team. The Attendance Team, which should include a teacher(s), counselor, administrator, parent(s) and student, investigates (reviews data and determines causes) and problem solves around the student’s attendance. In addition to student and family related causes, the attendance team should recognise the potential role of school factors in attendance problems.</p> <p>Once students have been identified as at risk of chronic absenteeism, appropriate interventions should be implemented. The Attendance Team should select one or more interventions that are likely to resolve the barriers to increased attendance for each individual student. Research- and evidence-based intervention strategies for early intervention include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a contact person at school for parents to work with. Assign a specific adult, usually one of the student’s main teachers, with the responsibility of supporting the family with the student’s attendance. This is in the form of regular family check-ins and calling the family each day the student is absent. This intervention is more likely to be successful with younger students. ● Establish a contact person at school to regularly check in with the student. This is in the form of building a closer, more personal relationship with the student; exploring the sources of the student’s disengagement from school; and checking in daily with the student and giving that student immediate feedback. This also includes calling the student each day the student is absent to communicate that the student was missed and to ask the reason for nonattendance. This intervention is more likely to be successful with older students. ● Intentionally develop a reward system for students with increased attendance. Incentives should be intentionally selected to have an

	<p>increased positive impact on each student’s attendance. Selection of incentives should consider whether the reward is for an entire class, an individual student, or the student and family together. The three categories of incentives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>encouragement</u> (such as peer support or information) ○ <u>social recognition</u> (such as displaying photos, lunch with the principal, pizza parties, extra recess time or recognition in social media) ○ financial or tangible <u>reward</u> (such as cash rewards, gift certificates or books) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct workshops for families about attendance, including short-term and long-term consequences of lower attendance, such as lower academic achievement. Workshops can also address parenting skills so parents have developmentally appropriate tools to support their child’s school attendance. ● Regularly and frequently communicate with families about their student’s attendance, including absences, tardies and early departures from class or school. ● Provide additional, regularly scheduled social-emotional support for the student. ● Encourage students to participate in after-school programs.
<p>Chronic Absenteeism: Tier Three Response Strategies</p>	<p>Students who have not improved their attendance as a result of early interventions or students who have missed approximately 10% of school should trigger a follow-up referral to the Attendance Team or the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Team to further investigate (review data and determine cause of) attendance concerns as well as academic and behavior concerns in order to problem solve. In addition to student and family related causes, the attendance team should recognise the potential role of school factors in attendance problems.</p> <p>Once students have been identified as having chronic absences, appropriate interventions should be implemented. The Attendance Team should select one or more interventions that are likely to resolve the barriers to increased attendance for each individual student. Students with chronic absenteeism should be regularly monitored. Research- and evidence-based intervention strategies for chronic absenteeism include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arrange for school personnel to do one or more home visits to further investigate and problem solve with the family. Select appropriate school personnel that will be more likely to address potential parent beliefs around attendance and school participation. ● A teacher/mentor, counselor or other school staff member should provide sustained one-on-one attention and problem solving with the student. ● Ensure that the student is receiving appropriate social-emotional support. Consider the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on the student’s school attendance.

- Encourage the student to participate in a mentoring program.
- Bring in appropriate social service, community supports and/or community partners to help address the student's and family's needs, such as transportation barriers.

Academic Studies Leading to ESSA Rating

Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center (2016). Preventing missed opportunity: Taking collective action to confront chronic absence.

Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center (2017). Portraits of change: Aligning school and community resources to reduce chronic absence. *Also see New Britain: Focus on Kindergarten.*

Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing student disengagement and keeping students on the graduation path in urban middle-grades schools: Early identification and effective interventions. *Educational Psychologist*, 42(4), 223-235.

Balu, R., & Ehrlich, S. B. (2018). Making sense out of incentives: a framework for considering the design, use, and implementation of incentives to improve attendance. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 23(1-2), 93-106.

Childs, J., & Grooms, A. A. (2018). Improving School Attendance through Collaboration: A Catalyst for Community Involvement and Change.

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 95(5), 308-318.

Finning, K., Harvey, K., Moore, D., Ford, T., Davies, B., & Waite, P. (2018). Secondary school educational practitioners' experiences of school attendance problems and interventions to address them: a qualitative study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 23(2), 213-225.

Heyne, D. (2019). Developments in Classification, Identification, and Intervention for School Refusal and Other Attendance Problems: Introduction to the Special Series. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 26, 1-7.

Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. A. (2020). A multidimensional, multi-tiered system of supports model to promote school attendance and address school absenteeism. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 23(3), 316-337.