Creating Equitable School Systems
A Roadmap for Education Leaders

Focus on effective instruction.

Evidence-based strategies for supporting students experiencing barriers to attendance and engagement
Attendance is a leading indicator of equity.

- There is a positive, statistically significant relationship between regular attendance and various educational and life outcomes into adulthood.

- When students regularly “attend” school, they have access to academic and other support programs and services that are important for cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development and wellness.

- If educators can't proactively, reliably, and easily identify students in need of extra support, there is a substantial risk of struggling students falling further behind.
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Access + Engagement → Attendance (Opportunity to Learn)
Identifying Students At Risk Due to Lack of Opportunity to Learn

Lost Contact + No or Poor Connectivity & Access = Lack of Positive Relationships

Prior Chronic Absence + Insufficient Participation/Attendance (Missing 10%) = Lost Opportunities to Learn
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are we (districts, schools &amp; community partners) trying to find out?</th>
<th>What are school/district responsibilities, with support from community partners?</th>
<th>What data can we collect? (Possible data points)</th>
<th>What are the equity implications?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
<td>Can we reach students and families?</td>
<td>Maintain regularly updated contact information.</td>
<td>% of families with working contact information. % of students unreachable, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, zip code, homelessness, foster care, free and reduced lunch, disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connectivity</strong></td>
<td>Are we ensuring all students and families have digital access and competency?</td>
<td>Provide access to technology and equip school staff and families to use it effectively.</td>
<td>% of students/families with technology (have computer, software, and internet). % of staff who have the equipment and skills to support digital learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Are we establishing reciprocal relationships with students and families and creating a sense of connection and support?</td>
<td>Ensure students and families have meaningful two-way communications with staff and each other about how to improve conditions for learning.</td>
<td>% of students reporting positive relationships with at least one adult in the school. % of students participating in group relationship building activities led by adults or peers (clubs, enrichment activities, advisory and mentoring). % of families reporting positive relationships with school staff. % of families reporting the opportunity to provide feedback on school decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Are students participating in learning opportunities?</td>
<td>Offer options to participate in meaningful learning opportunities.</td>
<td>% of students participating in learning opportunities at least 95% of the time. % of students missing 10% or more of learning opportunities.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Measuring attendance and engagement during remote learning

- William McKinley School, School District of Philadelphia
William McKinley School, School District of Philadelphia

- Teachers cross reference each other’s Google classroom meets sessions to confirm that attendance is correct
- Daily communication with parents on Class Dojo to verify attendance
- When appropriate:
  - Students can be marked present by completing daily course work
  - Offer a Modified Instructional Plan where they provide an option for weekly virtual classwork packets
  - Attendance may be counted for students who attend optional, drop-in office hours, where staff members support students in completing assigned work
Identifying barriers to attendance and engagement

• Center for Student Learning Charter School at Pennsbury

• William L. Sayre High School, School District of Philadelphia
Center for Student Learning Charter School at Pennsbury

- Early Warning Indicator System
- Check & Connect mentors work with students flagged through the EWS
- Ex. barriers working to mitigate:
  - Alternative pathways for work completion and credit accumulation for older students that need to work to support their family
  - Leveraging staff with positive relationship with students to assist with work to mitigate negative learning experiences
William L. Sayre High School, School District of Philadelphia

- Early Warning Indicator System
- Student Attendance Improvement Conference/Plan (SAIC/SAIP)
- Ex. barriers working to mitigate:
  - School-based teams (and partners) focused on solutions to barriers
    - Technology
    - Mental/behavioral health
    - Work area issues
    - Teen pregnancy/parenting
    - Lack of electricity
    - Housing insecurity

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As schools and communities devise strategies to address chronic absence and habitual truancy, it is imperative that they draw from evidence-based strategies.
Foundational Supports are Building Blocks of Schools that Promote Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physically healthy learning environment</th>
<th>Enrichment activities and clubs</th>
<th>Positive relationships</th>
<th>Support for families to facilitate learning at home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to tech equipment and connectivity</td>
<td>Access to Learning Supports</td>
<td>Routines, rituals and celebrations</td>
<td>A culture of continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming, safe, trauma-informed school climate</td>
<td>Home rooms and/or Advisory</td>
<td>A published schedule of classes</td>
<td>Active engagement of families in planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foundational Supports**
Tier 1 Strategies: Establishing a foundation for positive attendance

- Sto-Rox Primary Center, Sto-Rox School District
- Pittsburgh King K-8, Pittsburgh Public Schools
- Wagner Middle School, School District of Philadelphia
- Kensington Health Sciences Academy, School District of Philadelphia
Sto-Rox Primary Center, Sto-Rox School District

- Tech squad composed of teachers and school counselors visit homes or provide virtual support

- Schedule includes one hour per day for teachers to call homes and support families

- Lunch bunch in central location where families pick up school lunches and get support/answers
Pittsburgh King K-8, Pittsburgh Public Schools

- Partnership with professional sports team and local hospital to provide incentives for positive attendance

- HBCUs provide paraphernalia to encourage post-secondary education

- Partnership with local church:
  - Drives (winter coats, desks/lamps for virtual learning spaces)
  - Offering learning hub during school day

- Peer-to-peer learning among teachers focused on strategies for engaging students
Wagner Middle School, School District of Philadelphia

- Student-Teacher and Family-Teacher relationship building
- Student Attendance Improvement Conferences
- Students keep own attendance trackers
- Partner organizations: clubs/extra-curricular activities, mentoring, social emotional support groups, items to meet basic needs
- Ongoing professional development on trauma-informed practices
Kensington Health Sciences Academy, School District of Philadelphia

- Advisory model expanded to include daily one-on-one meetings with advisees
- Monthly attendance challenges
- School community-building events
Tier 2 Strategies: Supporting students at-risk and/or those already chronically absent or truant

- John Harris High School, Harrisburg School District
John Harris High School, Harrisburg School District

- Support for English Learners in 9th grade
- Conferences with student, family, and school team
- Pair student and family with mentor that speaks home language
Tier 3 Strategies: Supporting the most vulnerable students and/or students missing more than 20% of instructional time

• Crispus Attucks Charter School
Crispus Attucks Charter School

- Person Centered Planning

- Mentors for students demonstrating warning signs of disengagement from school
Breakout Room Discussion Prompts:

• How is your school or LEA measuring attendance and engagement this year? Are you seeing differences across grade levels, instructional delivery models, student groups?

• What are the barriers to attendance and engagement students in your school or LEA are experiencing? What are the strategies you have implemented to address these barriers?

• Is there a current problem of practice related to attendance and engagement your school or LEA would like to pose to the group for thought-partnership?
For more information on measuring, reporting, and improving Attendance in SY 2020-21, please email:
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For more information on Act 138: Safe Schools Truancy, please email:
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