Count Us In!
Working Together To Show That Every School Day Matters

Attendance **Works**
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE

CIVIC ENTERPRISES

POINTS OF LIGHT

THE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING
3RD GRADE READING = SUCCESS MATTERS

Introduction

School attendance is essential to academic success, but too often students, parents and schools do not realize how quickly absences–excused as well as unexcused–can add up to academic trouble. Chronic absence–missing 10 percent of the school year, or just 2-3 days every month–can translate into third graders unable to master reading, sixth graders failing courses and ninth graders dropping out of high school.[1] The impact hits low-income students, who most depend on school for providing opportunities to learn, particularly hard.[2]

Chronic absence is an alarming, largely overlooked problem that is preventing too many children from having a chance to learn and succeed. It currently affects as many as 7.5 million students—more than one in 10—nationwide.[3] In some communities, chronic absence has reached epidemic proportions, affecting more than one in every four students. States that have analyzed their data find it is a problem in districts of every size, urban, suburban and rural.[4] Stemming this crisis is essential to our country's economic and educational future.

The good news is that we can fix this problem. Chronic absence can be reduced when schools and communities partner to build a strong culture of attendance and work with students and families to identify barriers to getting to school. This work starts by helping everyone in a community recognize that they have a stake and a role in ensuring that students are in school every day so they can learn.

To further this goal, we are launching the first Attendance Awareness Month throughout the country. Starting this September, we are asking parents, schools, city agencies, community nonprofits, businesses and others to deliver the message that attendance matters for success in school and in life, and that absences can easily add up to academic trouble. While it is important to send a message throughout the year that attendance matters, the start of the school year is essential. Fall is when schools and communities lay out expectations for the coming year and can develop a culture of attendance that will continue throughout the year. We hope to make Attendance Awareness Month in September an annual occurrence to launch good practices all year long. This awareness building can take a variety of forms:

- Parent summits, letters and outreach to families
- Contests, celebrity visits and other incentives for students
- A proclamation from a mayor or superintendent about the value of attendance from kindergarten through 12th grade
- Public service announcements (PSAs) on national and local media
- Improved data tracking to identify students and schools with high levels of at-risk attendance as well as determine baselines and goals for improving attendance.
- A community-wide campaign to help break down the barriers to good attendance

More than 30 national organizations are working together to ensure that everyone can participate: from a single school to a citywide coalition to a national organization. Sign up here to receive email updates on Attendance Awareness Month.

Video

Attendance Works' video spells out how chronic absence affects achievement—and how schools and communities can turn the problem around.
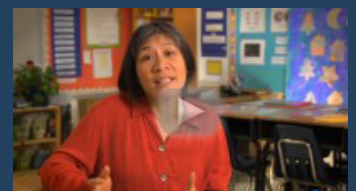
How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help you plan your involvement and enlist stakeholders who can help get the message out. You can start planning now for activities in September. We offer a variety of options for promoting good attendance. No school, community or organization should feel that they need to accomplish all of them. Instead, choose which options work best for you and build the support you need to do more in the following year.

You can:

- **Download** the entire toolkit here.
- **Browse** the Table of Contents and go directly to items that interest you
- **View** our calendar of What to Do When
- **Go** to our Activities by Stakeholder:

Mayor and Elected Officials

Businesses and Chambers of Commerce

Superintendents and School Districts

Local Philanthropy

School Principals and Teachers

Community Organizations and Faith-Based Groups

Afterschool and Early Education Programs

Health Care Providers

This is a living toolkit that we anticipate will be revised and improved over time. We encourage schools, partners and communities to contribute ideas for improving attendance and to share your successes. Submit your ideas, examples or questions here.

Toolkit Contents

Click on the items below to go directly to what interests you.

Toolkit Contents (cont.)

Click on the items below to go directly to what interests you.

I. Why Attendance & Chronic Absence

It's a big problem: Nationally, an estimated 5 million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year, eroding student performance as early as kindergarten. That's at least one in 10 students. In some communities, one in four students is missing that much school. These absences have consequences, research shows. By third grade, chronically absent students are less likely to read on grade level. By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes an early warning sign that a student may drop out of high school. By ninth grade, it's a better indicator than eighth-grade test scores. Children with certain risk factors—including poverty, homelessness, frequent moves and chronic illness—are especially hard hit since they can least afford to miss school. •Chronic absence is often higher among children with disabilities. This requires examining the nature of the disability and how well the educational needs of these children are being met. In school districts where state aid is determined by average daily attendance, chronic absence costs schools millions of dollars each year.

But it's often overlooked: Too many schools and districts have no idea how big the problem is because they don't track how many students are missing so much school—for any reason, whether excused or unexcused—that they are at academic risk. Instead these schools and districts look at average daily attendance (the percentage of students who typically show up every day) or at truancy, which generally includes only unexcused absences.

We know what to do: Schools, families and communities can work together to turn around absenteeism and build a culture of attendance in every school. Successful efforts start with educating students and families that regular attendance, from a child's first day in school, is essential to long-term academic success. Positive approaches include incentives and recognition for students and schools where attendance improves. Closer attention needs to be paid to data to identify when students are missing too much school. Data is essential to triggering early outreach, support and intervention for at-risk students. It can also identify schools with an unusually large number of chronically absent students and the "bright spots," such as schools with good attendance despite challenging conditions. These positive outliers can help inspire and teach others effective strategies for improving attendance. A common characteristic of these schools is a comprehensive approach to turning around attendance that begins with positive supports. Starting with prevention is more effective and less costly than punitive efforts involving fines and court appearances. Legal action should always be the last resort.

1 in 10 kids in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent.
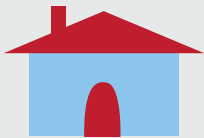
In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.

To view the full infographic, visit: http:••www.attendanceworks.org/infographic•
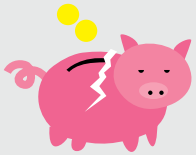
2 in 10

low-income kids miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.

2.5 in 10

homeless kids are chronically absent.

4 in 10

transient kids miss too much school when families move.

We know what to say: Based on the Ad Council's research with parents, we know that how we talk about attendance matters. All parents care about their children's success in life. But they often do not realize how quickly absences can add up to academic trouble. For example, many parents don't see absences as a problem if they are excused or if they are not on consecutive days. Parents also don't always make the connection between attendance in elementary and middle school and eventual graduation from high school. The message we must deliver, backed up by research, is that every absence matters at every grade level. Every day missed is a day of instruction missed, a day of classroom interaction with students and teachers that can't be recovered. A critical intervention can be ensuring that parents know exactly how many days of school their child has missed and at what point too many absences become problematic.

The time is right: While it is important to send a message throughout the year, the start of the school year is crucial because that is when schools and communities lay out expectations for the coming year and can develop a culture of attendance that will continue throughout the year. Many principals hold rallies or assemblies, which are perfect opportunities to share this message with students, parents and staff. School officials are often interviewed by the media at this time, which is another chance to spread this message to the entire community. September is also the right time to establish a baseline for attendance data, to measure improvement in the year ahead. We recommend looking at chronic absence numbers, an easy task for districts with automated attendance systems. This allows schools to identify individual students, as well as trends in absenteeism. Average daily attendance figures, which most schools already report, can also provide clues to where problems lie.

II. Who Should Use this Toolkit?

This toolkit is designed with three target audiences in mind. We suspect that some will be able to launch campaigns in 2013 while others might begin with small steps that lay a foundation for a community campaign in September 2014.

1. Any school, community group or agency that works with families and can deliver positive messages about why going to school every day is so important for success in school and life. It could, for instance, be a doctor's office, a housing authority, a faith-based institution, a preschool or an after-school program. Our hope is that you will use this toolkit to determine how to build these messages into your communications and everyday interactions starting in September.

2. National organizations can build attendance into their own communications, encourage their members to address this issue by building awareness of why chronic absence matters, and promote strategies that they can use to incorporate attendance into current activities and metrics. Groups can also sign on as collaborating partners.

Community Success

In Lee County, Florida, a set of Head Start programs increased attendance dramatically with a focused campaign to educate parents and students about the importance of showing up every day.

National Success

Reach Out and Read, a network of pediatricians that promotes early literacy, recently has begun incorporating attendance into its handouts and discussions with parents.

Points of Light, which supports volunteer organizations, has begun using its AmeriCorps members to help improve attendance at its HandsOn Network schools.

3. Local leaders and organizations can convene and engage the entire community in working together to address school attendance. If the resources and conditions are ripe for a community campaign, collaboration can lead to greater impact. Among the leaders who are well positioned to spearhead a campaign are:

- **Mayors and other local elected leaders** can demonstrate their commitment to partnering with schools to improve educational outcomes, since good schools are essential to a strong local economy.

- **School superintendents** can use Attendance Awareness Month to enlist the support of community partners to help build a culture of attendance. As of July 2013, 64 superintendents from 24 states have signed on to a Call to Action sponsored by Attendance Works and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

- **Chambers of Commerce** can demonstrate their commitment to the local community and the need to promote the development of skills that will be needed in the future workforce.

- **Local philanthropy and United Way chapters** can convene grantees and community partners around an issue that is easy to understand and monitor.

In Baltimore, local philanthropy spurred the mayor's office, school district, city agencies and volunteers to work together to reduce school absences. Initial efforts helped cut middle school absences in half. Now attention has shifted to the early grades. See their Best Practices brochure.

In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg launched an attendance initiative in 2010 that has significantly reduced chronic absence in its pilot schools. Every Student, Every Day relies on data tracking, school attendance committees and Success Mentors who work with students at risk of dropping out.

In Los Angeles, the school district's strategic plan to reduce chronic absence increased the number of students attending school regularly and saved the school district more than $1 million in state funding that would have been lost to student absenteeism. It also led to partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, city government and the broader community.

Who Can Help?

In the schools:

- **Students and parents** can keep track of absences and look for ways to reduce excused absences (for example, avoid scheduling doctors' appointments or vacations when school is in session).
- **Teachers** can deliver the message about good attendance in the classroom, take attendance every day in a caring manner and create incentives to encourage showing up.
- **Principals** can create an engaging school culture, offer incentives and use data to identify students or, in some cases, classrooms in need of extra support because they are dealing with high levels of chronic absence.
- **PTAs** can organize parent summits to expand awareness of how families can monitor chronic absence and help each other get their children to school.
- **Superintendents** can track chronic absence data district-wide and hold schools accountable for absenteeism.
- **School boards** can proclaim the importance of attendance and seek better tracking of chronic absence data.

In local government:

- **Mayors and other elected leaders** can proclaim the importance of good attendance and convene a coalition to address absenteeism.
- **Social workers** can address family problems that are keeping students from getting to school.
- **Housing officials** can reach out to families with chronically absent students, help organize safe walks to school and publicize information (such as reminders about when school starts) that can help families avoid unnecessary absences.
- **Police officers** in dangerous neighborhoods can provide safer routes to school.
- **Transit agencies** can provide free passes to students who lack reliable transportation.

In the community:

- **Health care providers** can address chronic illness, such as asthma, and reinforce the importance of school attendance at children's annual checkups.
- **Afterschool providers** can monitor school attendance and work with schools to turn around chronic absence.
- **Faith-based groups** can volunteer to help parents and mentor at-risk students.
- **Businesses** can donate incentives for improved attendance and share the message with their employees.
- **National service members** (e.g. AmeriCorps & VISTA) can provide an extra shift of adults to support students at risk of dropping out.
- **Local foundations** can convene community members and underwrite the costs of attendance improvement efforts.
- **Media partners** can spread the word about the importance of good attendance.

III. How Can We Deliver the Message?

1. Incorporate information about attendance into daily interactions with families

The responsibility for good attendance starts with families, and messaging efforts should start there, too. Parents want their children to succeed in school and life, but they often don't make the connection between absences and academic trouble, especially in the years before high school.

Help them make that connection through conversations in the community and by building a welcoming environment at school, in letters home and in parent-teacher conferences. PTAs can develop programs to educate parents and help families with barriers to attending school regularly. Business owners can talk to employees about the value of attendance. Community agencies and volunteers can help get the word out even before school starts.

Here are some tools and materials:

- Talking Points for Interacting with Families
- Tips for Outreach Before the First Day of School
- Tips on One-on-One Meetings
- Sample Back-to-School Letters
- Script for Back-to-School Robocalls
- Handout for Parents of Elementary School Students
- Handout for Parents of Elementary School Students (Spanish)
- Handout for Parents of Secondary School Students
- Handout for Parents of Secondary School Students (Spanish)
- Pledge Cards for Parents
- Pledge Card for Parents (Spanish)
- Info Graphic on Attendance in the Early Grades
- Info Graphic on Attendance in the Early Grades (Spanish)
- Perfectly Punctual workshops for parents
- Tips for contacting hard-to-reach parents
- Sample student survey

Parent Engagement Toolkit

BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME
Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence

May 22, 2013

Attendance Works

Created with the help of practitioners who have worked successfully with families to improve attendance, this toolkit is filled with ideas, activities and materials that you can use to spark conversations with parents.

2. Attendance Incentives and Contests

The opening of school is an excellent time to put in place a strong system of incentives to encourage better attendance among students and their families or to tweak an existing system to make sure that it goes beyond recognizing perfect attendance to encouraging improved attendance. Incentives and contests take advantage of the fact that students often respond better to concrete rewards and peer pressure than they do to lectures from parents and teachers.

Incentives

- Attendance Works Tips for Incentives
- New York City Incentive Resources
- Template Attendance Certificate
- Attendance Certificate from Oakland

Contests

- Sponsor a poster contest: Let students of all ages convey the importance of attendance
    - Sample Posters from Baltimore

- Sponsor a video contest: Let your middle and high school students create PSAs that the community can use during attendance month and beyond.
    - Tips for Video Contests

- Create an attendance month competition between classes, grades or local schools to see who can best improve attendance. The rewards can be as simple as an extra recess or as fancy as a raffle ticket for a new car. Businesses can donate gift certificates or movie tickets. Local celebrities and sports stars can visit the winning schools.

- Get involved with Get Schooled, a nonprofit that uses rock stars and celebrities to help reduce dropout rates. It offers celebrity wake-up calls and twice-yearly Attendance Challenges for secondary schools. The 12-week Fall 2013 challenge starts in October, so use September to prepare students for the contest. The challenge allows students and school communities to earn a celebrity principal for the day. Students can play educational games, brag about their amazing teachers, learn about various educational resources, and earn points as they improve their attendance.
    - Get Schooled Toolkit (2012)

In Des Moines, East High School is one of Iowa's lowest performing schools, but that didn't stop students from exceeding all expectations in a national attendance competition. With hard work and teamwork, the school improved attendance by more than 2.5 percent and won a regional title—and a visit from a celebrity—in the Get Schooled Attendance Challenge.

In Baltimore, the mayor's office is sponsoring a series of month-long attendance contests among schools serving students from preK through grade 12. The winning schools receive $1,000 grants and prizes for the students—including trips to a local children's museum and visits from the Baltimore Ravens.

3. Host Special Events

The new school year means back-to-school night for parents and assemblies for students. These are ideal times to convey the link between attendance and student achievement and to build a culture of attendance.

- **Parent summits or back-to-school nights.** This is an opportunity to orient parents to school policies and connect them to helpful resources. Think of ways to provide incentives for parents who are trying to improve their children's attendance. If you have data for your school or community, share the information with parents. Or simply share what we know about the importance of good attendance.

  In addition to the handouts listed above, here are some tools and materials:
  - Tips for school meetings
  - Get Schooled Attendance Counts Calculator
  - Talking points for principals for parents of secondary school kids
  - Talking points for principals for parents of elementary school kids
  - Interactive parent exercises
  - Attendance Works video

- **Student back-to-school assemblies.** For students, use an assembly at the start of September to introduce the topic. Also use this opportunity to explain to students why attending school is so important. If possible, have some students speak about why going to school matters.
  - Talking points for principals and teachers addressing students
  - Examples of student messaging
  - Tips for Developing Incentives

- **Attendance Exhibits.** Promote good attendance in a display in the lobby of city hall, the school district's central office, the main library or other public spaces. Retail shops and restaurants can put posters in their windows or on bulletin boards. If there is a student poster contest, decorate public spaces with the posters. Our Attendance Awareness Month Badge can be used in e-mail signatures and on websites.

You can use:
- Attendance Works Info Graphic
- Attendance Month Banners & Posters
- Attendance Month Badge
- Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Banner
- Get Schooled Info Graphic
- BoostUp Celebrity Posters

Posters & Banners

Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow

#schooleveryday

Don't Think Attendance Is Important?

Students who graduate from high school make a MILLION DOLLARS more in a lifetime than students who don't.

4. Publicly proclaim the importance of attendance and the establishment of September as Attendance Awareness Month

Mayors and other elected leaders, school boards and superintendents can signal the importance of school attendance by declaring September Attendance Awareness Month. Reach out to state legislators and education leaders. National and local organizations can also use the proclamations and disseminate them through their networks.

- Template proclamation for mayors and elected leaders
- Template proclamation for superintendents and school boards
- Template proclamation for community organizations

Join Our Call to Action for Superintendents

Superintendents and school leaders play a pivotal role in monitoring and improving school attendance. Local Superintendents can, proclaim their support and help launch their local attendance awareness efforts by signing on to the Call to Action on Attendance sponsored by Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Attendance Works. Participation announced a commitment to to owning the issue, mobilizing the community and driving withdata. Learn more and sign up here.

Chief state school officers can also help advance awareness and action to improve student attendance. They can use their position to serve as a bully pulpit for spreading the word about the importance of going to school every day, promote participation in Attendance Awareness Month and encourage local superintendents to sign on to the Call to Action.

Magic Johnson PSA

5. Develop media/public outreach to take place in September

Every year, print and broadcast reporters turn up looking for back-to-school stories. Suggest that this year's pieces focus on school attendance and the efforts by your organization or community to reduce absenteeism.

- **News Stories**
    - The Facts about Attendance
    - Tips for dealing with the media
    - Template news release for mayors
    - Template news release for superintendents
    - Template news release for community organizations

- **Op-eds and blogs.** Compose a commentary stressing the importance of attendance and the role a school or community is playing to reduce absenteeism. If you can't sell it as an op-ed piece, shorten it and offer it as a guest blog or a letter to the editor. Remember TV and radio stations allow on-air commentaries.
    - Template op-ed

- **Social Media.** Post 30 tweets and Facebook entries about attendance data—one for every day in September
    - Sample Tweets and Facebook Posts
    - Attendance Month Cover Photo for Facebook

- **Public Service Announcements.** We expect national partners to develop PSAs that will run on broadcast networks, but communities can develop their own announcements cheaply and easily.
    - Instruction sheet on how to do radio PSAs
    - Instruction sheet on how to do TV PSAs
    - PSA scripts

- **Public Television.** Local stations are often willing to partner with community initiatives. Contact your station and ask for support.

Sample Tweets for Attendance Month

September 1
It's Attendance Awareness Month. Because every school day counts! Let's do it! http://bit.ly/15COv3n #SchoolEveryDay

September 2
Nationally, as many as 7.5 million students miss 10% of school year. That's 135 million days. http://bit.ly/15CO4WX #SchoolEveryDay

September 3
Missed school days add up fast! @getschooled calculates effect of too many days out with this tool. http://bit.ly/XwfCLE #SchoolEveryDay

September 4
With "10 Steps Communities Can Take to Reduce Chronic Absence" we're making a difference. So can you! http://bit.ly/VR3TaD #SchoolEveryDay

September 5
For #Latinos, chronic absence in #kindergarten = lower academics in 1st grade, especially in reading. http://bit.ly/XwhfZQ #SchoolEveryDay

IV. How Can We Engage the Community?

If you are in a position to engage the full community in your attendance campaign, the broader approach can amplify your efforts. If possible, work with a cross-sector coalition to advance your plans. Whether you have a coalition or not, find ways to put tools in the hands of other agencies and organizations.

1. Mobilize a Community Coalition

Walking School Bus, Springfield, Mass.

- Determine who can take on the issue. If your community is participating in an existing effort focused on academic achievement or dropout prevention, such as Campaign for Grade-Level Reading or Grad Nation, tap the coalition in place to engage the community in improving attendance. All the right players might already be involved, or the coalition could consider using attendance as a way to engage additional partners.

  - List of Grade-Level Reading Communities
  - List of Grad Nation Communities

- Reach out to other existing coalitions. Networks already organized to reform schools, promote literacy, reduce dropout rates, address health needs and improve communities might offer enthusiastic partnership and leadership around addressing chronic absence. If your districts or any schools are tracking early warning indicators, they're already paying attention to attendance.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Kent School Services Network brings together school districts; funders; the United Way; and county health, mental health and social services agencies to help track chronic absence and intervene with the students, schools and communities most affected. Schools involved have seen absenteeism drop and test scores rise.

In Indianapolis, the Indiana Partnerships Center launched a Missing Matters campaign, with strategies ranging from billboards to legislative outreach. The center dedicated an issue of its newsletter to chronic absenteeism.

In Omaha, an organization called The Attendance Collaborative brings together business, civic and political leaders with the University of Nebraska at Omaha to work with schools in Douglas and Sarpy Counties to improve attendance through school and community partnerships.

- If no coalition exists to take on this issue, then consider launching your own; convene community partners who can help schools improve attendance.
    - List of possible stakeholders
    - Sample invitation letter

- Hold a meeting to discuss ideas and solicit buy-in. Consider using the house party approach:
    - Host a House Party (sample agenda)
    - Key Messages
    - Attendance Works video
    - Sample PowerPoint

- Use these materials and reports:
    - The Facts about Chronic Absence
    - Research summary on chronic absence
    - Research summary on early grade attendance
    - The Importance of Being in School: A report detailing the prevalence of chronic absence
    - Present, Engaged and Accounted For: Research documenting the effects of early chronic absence

- Ideally you would provide data on the number and percent of chronically absent students in your community. If your district has not calculated this, then consider registering for these tools.
    - Tools for crunching your data

2. Create locally tailored schools and community partners toolkit

- Attendance Works has developed a template with handouts, activities and local resources that can be easily adapted to help schools and local partners reduce absenteeism. These handouts include resources sheets that let parents know where to find help with health, transportation and other barriers keeping their children from attending school regularly. Two California districts, Oakland and Solano County, have adapted Attendance Works materials for local audiences.
    - Template toolkit that communities can tailor
    - Local toolkit from Oakland
    - Web-based toolkit from Solano County

- Los Angeles and New York City have developed toolkits to help principals and teachers reduce chronic absence.
    - Los Angeles Unified School District Toolkit
    - New York City Toolkit

- New York City developed a toolkit for community and faith-based groups.
    - Toolkit for Community and Faith-Based Groups

V. How Can we Identify & Help Students with Poor Attendance

1. Organize and train volunteers or national service members to reach out to absentee students and families

Reaching out to chronically absent students and their families often takes an extra shift of adults-- whether they are volunteers from faith-based groups, mentors from the business world or national service members from City Year.

General Mentoring Resources
- New York City Principals' Handbook on Success Mentors
- Strategies for leveraging volunteers and national service
- Sample confidentiality form for community-based organizations
- Sample confidentiality form for mentors
- City Year Student Engagement Toolkit
- RAMP Mentoring Sheet
- MENTOR toolkit for managers
- MENTOR tips for individuals
- Check & Connect toolkit
- Check & Connect monitoring form

Models
- **Check & Connect** assigns trained mentors to at-risk students to improve engagement with school and learning through close monitoring of their attendance, behavior, and grades.

- **City Year** uses AmeriCorps members who commit to a year of full-time service in schools, where they work as tutors, mentors and role models. Attendance is a key focus.

- **RAMP**: The Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program uses group, peer, and individual mentoring to build on existing career-development efforts by schools and employers.

2. Schools can assemble or reconvene attendance teams and host a first meeting in September

Student attendance teams provide a vehicle to keep track of school-wide attendance trends, as well as what's going on with chronically absent students. In addition to administrators and teachers, the team can include the school counselor and representatives of community groups or volunteer organizations working with the school.

- Tips for an effective attendance team
- New York City Principal's Handbook on attendance teams
- Tips for understanding contributing factors
- Handout on breaking barriers to attendance

In New York City, schools draw on City Year, Experience Corps and groups to provide Success Mentors for chronically absent students. The program has shown extraordinary results: Students with mentors attended nearly 12,000 more days in the past school year than similar students without the extra support. For a how-to guide, click here.

3. Ensure that every school identifies students at risk of chronic absence and reaches out to parents

The best way to identify students with poor attendance is to calculate the data that schools are already collecting. In addition to looking at school-wide averages, as most schools do, shift the data to see how many students missed 10 percent of the school year in the previous year. Reach out to their parents sometime in September. At the end of the month, look at how many students have already missed 10 percent (2-3 days) and track their attendance going forward. Attendance Works has created data tools that districts can use to examine patterns and identify which students are at risk due to poor attendance.

If you can't look at chronic absence, average daily attendance (ADA) numbers can provide some direction about where to focus resources. Generally, schools with ADA rates higher than 97 percent have little trouble with chronic absence, while those with rates below 93 percent almost always have too many students missing too many days. At schools with 95 percent ADA, chronic absence rates can vary dramatically.

- How to Conduct a Successful Data Analysis
- Data tools for crunching chronic absence numbers
- Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight, a report on the link between ADA and chronic absence
- New York State Handout

In Los Angeles, breakfast can be a powerful draw. At 52nd Street Elementary School in South L.A., 850 students joined a breakfast-in-the-classroom program in October. The percentage of kids with perfect attendance shot up dramatically, and the only thing that has changed is breakfast.

4. Use data to determine where and how to target resources that can address common challenges of getting to school and build a local culture of attendance.
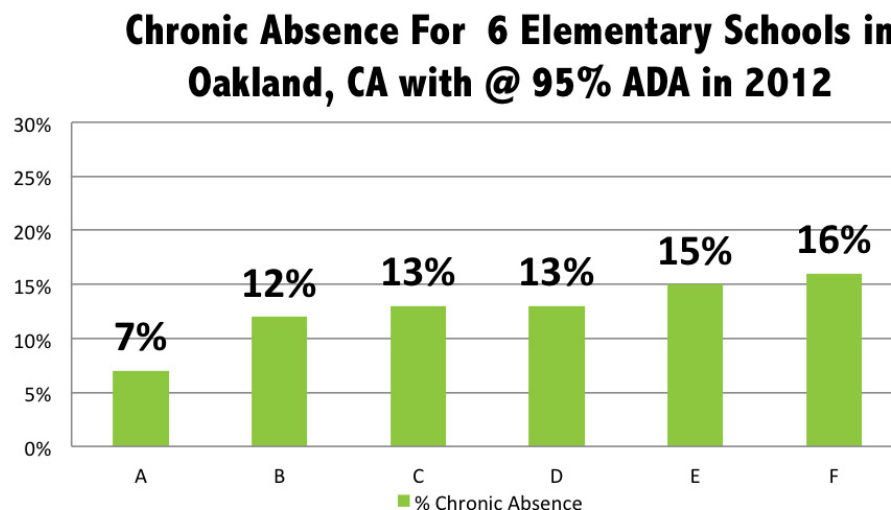
Consider targeting the schools with the highest levels of chronic absence and the community agencies with the strongest relationships there.

- **Safe Routes to Schools:** Some students miss school because of neighborhood violence or dangerous intersections in route to the campus. Schools and communities have started creating. "Walking School Buses" and other approaches to keep kids safe.
  - Safe Routes to School toolbox

- **Breakfast in the Classroom:** Students who eat breakfast at school attend an average 1.5 more days of school every year. When offered in the classroom, breakfast can be an opportunity to bond with the teacher and get kids ready for class
  - No Kid Hungry Best Practices
  - Breakfast Fact Sheet

- **Afterschool Programs:** Research shows that good afterschool programs can improves school-day attendance. Ensure that schools with high chronic absence rates have access to quality programs, and work with the afterschool providers to target at-risk students.
  - Afterschool resources
  - Tools for providers

- **Recess:** Physical activity at a well-run recess can make for more engaged students— and better attendance. A school in Boston found that the average number of absences dropped 78 percent after using the Playworks program.
  - Playworks facts on recess

VI. How Can We Measure the Impact of our Attendance Awareness Month Activities?

Crunch The Numbers

If your district doesn't already know, determine the current baseline of chronic absence as well as average daily attendance so you can identify whether your activities have an impact on improving student attendance over the school year. If you haven't crunched your chronic absence data, you can start by looking at how much average daily attendance improves—though it is important to recognize that average daily attendance might mask high levels of chronic absence.

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with @ 95% ADA in 2012

School	% Chronic Absence
A	7%
B	12%
C	13%
D	13%
E	15%
F	16%

■ % Chronic Absence

Develop your own metrics for monitoring implementation

How many parents did you reach? How many students participated in contests? How many teachers report that students are more motivated to attend school regularly? There are many quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate your success and get feedback on how your efforts could be improved.

VII. What to do When

Spring

1. Choose what activities you want to pursue
2. Recruit partners to support the work
3. Launch a student poster contest or video contest, with winning entries to be displayed during September
4. Enlist health care providers to share information on attendance during back-to-school checkups
5. If you're working with a coalition, plan a meeting and assign tasks
6. If you're planning to look at data, approach appropriate school or district officials about the availability of attendance information
7. Engage school administrators and faculty in planning what they will do or continue to do to build a culture of attendance and educate students and families.
8. Use data to identify schools that are positive outliers that demonstrate success is possible

Summer

1. Enlist elected officials to sign proclamations
2. Line up incentives from businesses and other partners for contests
3. Recruit local sports stars and celebrities for school visits and assemblies
4. Recruit local faith leaders to speak to congregations about attendance
5. Tape radio or TV PSAs
6. Meet with local newspaper editorial boards to encourage editorials
7. Submit a commentary piece to local media in mid to late August
8. Pitch a reporter about the community's or school district's renewed emphasis on attendance or a local success story highlighing an effort to improve attendance.
9. Plan an attendance display
10. Plan student assemblies and parent summits
11. Ask business and civic organizations for an opportunity to speak to their membership
12. Launch a door-knocking campaign to remind families when school starts
13. Distribute talking points to key partners
14. Include attendance in professional development sessions for teachers
15. If you're planning to look at data, crunch the numbers for chronic absence
16. If you have the data, build a data dashboard with weekly reports to principals

September

1. Release proclamations
2. Hold first-day-of-school events stressing the importance of attendance
3. Hold an end-of-the-month summit, rewarding students with good or improved attendance
4. Launch a contest among schools and classes
5. Host a press conference talking about the community's or school district's emphasis on attendance
6. Pitch reporters to attend assemblies or report on celebrity visits
7. Unveil an attendance display
8. If you've crunched chronic absence numbers, share with the school board, city officials and, if appropriate, the public
9. Post posters and distribute flyers at businesses, doctors' offices, churches, libraries, and other community gathering spots.
10. Pin your Attendance Awareness Month activities on our community action map or see what others are doing in your community.

CELEBRATING ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Fill out our participation form to be included on the map!

**Please note: Your entry will not show up on the map immediately. All entries need to be approved before posting. We will post them within 24 hours.

VIII. Additional Resources

Nonprofit Organizations

Attendance Works is a national organization dedicated to improving the policy, practice and research around attendance. It's website offers materials, research and success stories about reducing chronic absence. Attendance Works also offers technical assistance to school districts and communities.
www.attendanceworks.org

BoostUp is a partnership between the U.S. Army and the Ad Council dedicated to reducing dropout rates. It has adopted attendance as a key issue and is creating public service announcements and other materials to educate parents about the value of good attendance.
www.boostup.org

Everyone Graduates Center combines analysis of the causes, location, and consequences of the nation's dropout crisis with the development of tools and models designed to keep all students on the path to graduation. That includes tracking of early warning indicators, including chronic absence.
www.new.every1graduates.org

Get Schooled was founded on the belief that students themselves have the power to improve their future if given the right information and motivation. The organization sponsors attendance contests, wake-up callsWe leverage the key influences in teens' lives to directly engage them on their path through high school and into college.
www.getschooled.com
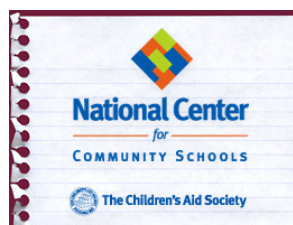
National Center for Community Schools, part of the Children's Aid Society, has facilitated the development of more than 15,000 community schools nationally and internationally. It offers consultation, advocacy and innovation, including advice on how to use chronic absence as a metric of school improvement.
www.nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrensaidsociety.org

VIII. Additional Resources (cont.)

Webinars

The Attendance Awareness Campaign has held several webinars to prepare schools and communities.

- August 7 Webinar: Absences Add Up! Tips for Communicating to Parents and the Media
- June 7 Webinar: Must Be Present to Win
- April 9 Webinar: Count Us In!

Research Institutions:

Baltimore Education Research Consortium
www.baltimore-berc.org

Consortium on Chicago School Research
www.ccsr.uchicago.edu

John W. Gardner Center
www.jgc.stanford.edu

Footnotes

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Allensworth, E. M., and Easton, J. Q., What Matters for Staying On-track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Attendance in the Freshman Year, University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago, IL, 2007.

2 Ready, Douglas D., Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development, The Differential Effects of School Exposure, Sociolog y of Education, October 2010.

3 Balfanz, R., and Byrnes, V., The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools . Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools, Baltimore, Md., 2012.

4 Hart Buehler, M., and Topanga, J., and Chang, H., Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Public Schools, June 2012,

5 Bruner, Charles, Anne Discher and Hedy Chang, Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight , Child and Family Policy Center and Attendance Works, November 2011.