Attending to Attendance in Live and Virtual Settings

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Today’s Presenters

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Today’s webinar is attended by folks from 25 states and the District of Columbia – WELCOME!
“All schools have shown an increase in attendance rates from January to February!

District Email to Schools: “Kudos to all schools for sticking with defining attendance, working through attendance data graphing, creating problem statements, outcome goals, coming to agreed upon criteria/decision making points, resource mapping and beginning to progress monitor interventions! It has been a lot of work but is beginning to pay off!!!”
National Attendance: How do we define it?

Freeman et al., 2020

- **Regular attendees**
  (miss less than 5% of instructional opportunities)

- **At risk**
  (miss 5%-9% of instructional opportunities)

- **Chronically absent**
  (miss 10% or more of instructional opportunities)

- **Severely chronically absent**
  (miss 20% or more of instructional opportunities)
National Attendance
Before the COVID Pandemic
FACTS

- OVER 7 MILLION students missed 15 or more days of school in 2015-16.

- That's 16 percent of the student population—or about 1 in 6 students.

U.S. Department of Education, 2021
FACTS

- 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.

- Over 8 million U.S. students miss nearly a month of school each year.

- Absenteeism and its ill effects start early. One in 10 kindergarten and first grade students are chronically absent.

Attendance Works, 2021
Research shows that missing 10% of school, or about 18 days in most school districts, negatively affects a student’s academic performance. That’s just two days a month and that’s known as chronic absence.

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, such as unstable housing, unreliable transportation and a lack of access to health care.

Attendance Works, 2021
Equity Issues

- Underrepresented and special populations have greater issues with attendance particularly students
  - with special needs
  - of racial minorities
  - from poverty
  - from single parent households
Impact upon School Achievement

- Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade or be held back.

- By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.
Attendance During the COVID Pandemic
RSHS principal: 46% of students have missed more than 10 classes in spring semester

By Shelby Nelson
March 25, 2021 8:46 pm    Published March 25, 2021 12:00 pm

The search for missing Indio High school students as grades & attendance plunge
15,000 L.A. high school students are AWOL online, 40,000 fail to check in daily amid coronavirus closures

Tracking Student Attendance Under Remote Learning Is a Complicated Mess

By Penelope Blackwell, Claire Fox, Jenna Gyimesi, Kara Grant, Carter Johnson & Kyra Senese — July 13, 2020

8 min read
A generation left behind? Online learning cheats poor students, Times survey finds

Low-Income School Districts Saw Greatest Dip In Attendance During The Pandemic

Among 25 suburban districts surveyed by WBEZ, wealthier districts were less likely to see drops in attendance last fall than poorer ones.

By Susie An
Mar. 26, 6 a.m. CT
Three Guiding Principles
Guiding Principle 1

- Supporting Schools to Improve Outcomes and Interventions
  - Help select evidenced-based interventions to allow all students to experience more instructional minutes by
    - improving attendance
    - reducing reactive, punitive and exclusionary discipline practices
    - improving engagement and on-task behavior
    - improving school – student, parent and community-partner relationships (Relational Home Visits, Mentoring)
  - Select a data-based, decision-making, multi-tiered system of supports to improve academic performance, wellness and social/emotional competencies to improve life outcomes
Guiding Principle 2

- Select Interventions and Processes that are Staff Time-Efficient and Support Staff Wellness
Guiding Principle 3

Select Interventions and Processes that are Resource-Efficient and Produce the Largest Outcomes

“Do the simplest thing that will result in the biggest outcomes”

- Rob Horner
Two Major Worries

1. **Educational staff generally lack** both the preservice and inservice training, **coaching** and **performance feedback** on the implementation of evidenced based school and classroom attendance support practices to improve meaningful outcomes.

2. Lack of effective Tier 1 school-wide and classroom practices results in both
   - increased time devoted to responding to problems
   - increased use of Tier 2 and Tier 3 practices
Three Main Reasons for Low Attendance/Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities
Reasons for Low Attendance Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities

Three main reasons

1. Students who **cannot** engage
2. Students who **will not** engage
3. Students who **do not** engage
Reasons for Low Attendance/Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities

Students who **cannot** engage in instructional opportunities due to:

- no or limited internet access,
- a lack of an available device,
- illness or family member illness, or
- other family obligations.
Reasons for Low Attendance/ Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities

Students who **will not** engage in instructional opportunities to:

- avoid aversive situations, for example, online bullying,
- discomfort in online platform, or
- instruction or activities that are too difficult in the absence of in-person support.
Reasons for Low Attendance/Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities

Students who **do not** engage in instructional opportunities because:

- Remote learning activities are not sufficiently engaging or reinforcing.
- Competing activities are more reinforcing.
- For example, online instruction may provide:
  - fewer opportunities for students to respond,
  - involve less peer or teacher interaction,
  - be ungraded or not required, and/or
  - other activities (access to video games etc.) may be more reinforcing.
Most Typical School-based Interventions are **Reactive** without Team-Based Data-Based Decision-Making

- Identify technology issues
- Parent communication teacher/staff
- Parent communications with counselor
- Parent communication with nurse
- Attendance letter home
- Phone call to DCF
- Student Meeting
- Parent/Student meeting
- SRO Home visit
- File 51A for educational neglect
- File CRA
- Mental health supports developed (i.e. counseling)
What Do We Suggest?

- Solutions to attendance will need to involve educators working collaboratively with students, families, and the community.

- Approaching this from a systematic, preventive, supportive and proactive way to support students and their families.
Steps to Solutions

1. Define the problem
2. Provide easily accessible disaggregated data at the school level
3. Resource map and tier current interventions
4. If needed, layer in additional evidenced based interventions
5. Develop efficient progress monitoring systems at Tier 1 (whole school), Tier 2 (small group, standardized interventions), and Tier 3 (individualized).
Braiding your Attendance Initiative with SWPBIS
Systems

Systems (Don’t silo your attendance team)

- Administrative support
- Representative data-based decision-making teams meeting regularly
- Access to representative disaggregated data
- All faculty looking at representative data
- Team based development of problem statements based on data
Disaggregating Data for Data-based Decision-making

- **Data**
  - By School-wide
  - By Class period
  - By Individual
  - By Day
  - By Subgroups (racial, SpEd, SES, EL, etc)

- **Important**
  - to develop problem statements for intervention planning
  - to first prioritize the least time and resource intensive e.g.; school-wide, classwide and tier 2 interventions to implement
  - to use your data to progress monitor and problem-solve
Create a Precision Problem Statement

45% of students have (5+) absences, with grade 3 being the lowest attendance % rate, on Wednesdays during virtual/remote learning.
Practices: Tier 1: 
All students, families & educational staff

- Incorporating attendance into school-wide & class-wide expectations
  - Be there

- Acknowledgement systems for attendance
  - Dojo points/Individual recognition
  - Other systems: Class competitions, class/grade/school recognitions

- Educating families on the importance of attendance
  - Educational achievement
  - Dropouts

- Sharing data with families
  - Attendance rates
Think about acknowledging attendance
Practices: Tier 2: At risk students

- Identifying students at risk of attendance concerns
  - Early in the year
  - Before it becomes a chronic problem

- Standardized protocols
  - For connecting with family in a supportive way (teacher/counselor)
  - Sharing data
  - Problem-solving

- Modified CICO
- Small groups
Practices: Tier 3 – Students with chronic attendance issues (excused & unexcused)

- Identifying students
- Individual assessment examining functions and circumstances (antecedents)
- Individualized protocols focusing supporting students and their families
Gardner Public Schools

- May Institute provided a senior Doctoral BCBA for over ten years focusing on district professional development and behavior intervention support particularly around high-risk students (students who needed Tier 3 interventions)

- Over the past year and half focused on the development and implementation of MTSS/PBIS systems, data and practices.
Since last September, under the leadership of Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent, and Mrs. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, the district has intensively focused on improving attendance.

May Inst. has actively supported the district in beginning to integrate attendance into their MTSS/PBIS initiative and their data-based decision-making teams at all three tiers.

The district looked at this as a three-to-five-year process.
Other resources

- www.pbis.org
- www.Attendanceworks.org

Both sites have several great free resources around attendance
Big ideas

- Administrative support
- Having easy and accessible disaggregated data at the school level that MTSS/PBIS teams can use to develop problem statements
- Focus on school-wide, classroom and Tier 2 interventions to prevent chronic attendance issues and to improve relationships
- Resource map interventions
- Progress monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions
- Strongly acknowledge staff, students and parents for improvements
- Have fun!!!!!
THANK YOU!

Look for our May Institute PBIS Tip of the Month

Next Free Webinar: May 26, 2021 12:00-1:00 EST
BACK TO BASICS: Supporting Students and Staff after Trauma

Questions?