Improving Attendance within a PBIS Framework

Jennifer Freeman

Thank you to Steve Goodman, George Sugai, and Brigid Flannery for contributions to content
Agenda

• Importance of Attendance
• Starting with the PBIS Framework
• Measuring Attendance
• Organize Practices within a Continuum
• Build Systems to Support Implementation
Definitions

• **Chronic Absenteeism**: Students who are repeatedly absent during the school year, for both excused and unexcused absences
  – 10% of school, 2 days per month, or 18 days over 180-day school year

• **Truancy**: typically refers to only unexcused absences

Nationally, 5 to 7.5 million students each year are not attending school regularly.

“Evidence indicates that it is how many days a student misses that matters, not why they miss them” pg 7
Why Attendance is Important

• Kids who attend school less have
  – Increased
    • internalizing behaviors (disengagement/isolation)
    • delinquent behavior
  – Decreased
    • academic achievement
    • organizational skills
    • independent work skills
    • persistence
    • graduation rates

The effects are compounded across years
The longer we wait to intervene the more difficult and expensive it is
What are you already doing to address this problem?
Traditional Practice

• Kid by kid intervention
• Implemented after a student is chronically absent.
• Typical responses
  – Letters and home visits
  – Fines for students and parents
  – Misdemeanor charges

Challenges

  Lack of resources
  Does not address contributing factors and can even worsen individual and family situations.
Why do Students Miss School?

- They **cannot** come (e.g., illness, other circumstances or obligations)
- They **will not** come (e.g., avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment)
- They **do not** come (e.g., don’t see the value in school, have something else they would rather do)

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012)
Is there any hope?

Interventions that recognize and reinforce even small improvement in absences and tardies may encourage growth towards more attainable and realistic goals, especially for students with a history of very poor attendance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Yes- but we need to work smarter!
Use a multi-tiered framework to organize your work

- Maximize effectiveness and efficiency
- Problem solve based on data (for intervention planning and continuous improvement)
- Many contributing factors of chronic absenteeism are already directly addressed
- Focus on systems to ensure fidelity and sustainable implementation
PBIS Framework

Systems

Outcomes

 Practices

Data
Why Start with PBIS?

Student Behavior Improves
- Reductions in behavior incidents
- Increased on task behavior
- Decrease in # of students with significant behavior difficulties
- Reductions in bully behavior
- Reductions in suspensions/expulsions
- Reductions in tardiness/absences

Student Academics Improve
- Increase in academic performance
- Increased instructional time

Schools Improve
- Increased school level capacity to address intensive student needs
- Increased perceptions of school safety and climate
- Perceptions of organizational health
## Possible Contributing Factors to Chronic Absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Focus of PBIS</th>
<th>Additional Needs to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not feeling connected (caring adults/friends)</td>
<td>Physical health issues (asthma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not feeling safe at school (bullying behavior)</td>
<td>Mental health issues (anxiety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior issues (suspensions for problem behavior)</td>
<td>Physical health issues (asthma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not feeling academically successful in school</td>
<td>Family issues (need to watch siblings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Doing PBIS well addresses many of the causes of absenteeism and provides a framework to organize additional supports.
The PBIS Framework helps us use resources more efficiently

- Start with an existing and representative team
- Use data to guide your work
- If ~80% of your students are not successful, intensify tier 1 supports!
PBIS Framework

How do we know?
Measuring Attendance

• Average daily attendance masks problems.
  – It’s possible to have 90% average daily attendance and still have 20%-30% of students chronically absent.

• Instead monitor the number and percent of students who are:
  – **Regular attenders**: miss 5 or fewer days a year (less than 1 day per month)
  – **At risk**: miss 5%-9% of school (about 9 days a year, 1-2 days per month)
  – **Chronically absent**: miss 10% of school (about 18 days a year; more than 2 days per month))
  – **Severely chronically absent**: miss 20% or more days of school (about 36 days a year; more than 4 days per month)
Measuring Attendance

- What percent of students are experiencing attendance problems at each level?
- What day of the week or month are the most problematic?
- What time periods are the most problematic?
- What grade levels or classes have the highest absence rates?
- What student sub-groups are most affected?
- Are attendance problems clustered in specific neighborhoods?
What are you already measuring?

What action steps should be considered to move toward more precise attendance data practices?
PBIS Framework

OUTCOMES

SYSTEMS

DATA

PRACTICES

Where are we going?
Set Clear Goals and Priorities

- Based on the specific attendance patterns in your school or district identify 2-3 priority areas and write measurable goals
- For example
  - Increase percent of students regularly attending from 70% to 90%
  - Decrease absences in grade 10 from an average of 30 per month to 15 per month
- Regularly (e.g., monthly) review progress toward goals
PBIS Framework

OUTCOMES

SYSTEMS

DATA

PRACTICES

What do we need to do to get there?
Differentiation for Younger vs. Older Students

- Younger- more emphasis on supporting families for child to attend school
- Older- increased emphasis on supporting student to attend school (e.g. self management, peer supports)
Build a Continuum of Supports

- **Direct skill based instruction**
  - Transportation systems
  - Job application process
  - Study skills
  - Self-management skills
  - Problem solving skills

- **Family Support**
  - Increased communication
  - Establishing positive relationships (regular positive calls for at risk students)
  - Case management support

- **Incentive based strategies**
  - Token economies
  - Group contingencies
  - Monetary incentives

- **Mentoring**
  - Check and Connect
  - Success mentors

Many of these practices are already a part of your PBIS implementation

Freeman, Wilkinson, Kowitt, Kittelman, Flannery, 2019)
Build a Continuum of Supports

- Start with what you are already doing!
- Consider “causes of absenteeism”
- Need for match between reason (function) and intervention increases as the severity of the problem increases
Can't Come

- Promote wellness (e.g., hand washing, school cleaning procedures, nutrition)
- Remove barriers (e.g., transportation)
- Clear procedures for preventing and handling harassment and bullying
- Positive, predictable safe school climate
- School-wide attendance incentives

Won't Come

- Promote family engagement and wellness and remove barriers for specific student groups or areas of the community
- Small group skills support
- Mentorship and friendship supports
- Intensify procedures for monitoring and addressing harassment and bullying.
- Small group incentive systems
- Mentorship and friendship supports
- Clarify connection between curriculum and “real life”

Don't Come

- Individualized problem solving and coordination with family and community agencies
Caution!

- Don’t do something new just because it’s new or even because it’s evidence based!
- Align practices with documented need in your buildings
- Use your data to work smarter!
  - What days of the week are most critical?
  - What student groups or grade levels need support?

[Hyperlinked resource]
Using Data to Develop Solutions

**Prevention**—How can we avoid the problem context?
- Schedule change, transportation change, etc.

**Teaching**—How can we define, teach, and monitor what we want?
- Teach self-management skills

**Recognition**—How can we systematically reward regular attendance?

**Extinction**—How can we prevent absence from being rewarded?

**Corrective Consequences**—How can we systematically address attendance issues?

**How will we collect and use data to evaluate:**
- Implementation fidelity
- Impact on student outcomes
## Solution Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution Component</th>
<th>Action Step(s)</th>
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<td>Recognition</td>
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<td>Extinction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrective Consequence</td>
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| Data collection          | • What data will we look at?  
                           | • Who is responsible for gathering the data?  
                           | • When/How often will data be gathered?  
                           | • Where will the data be shared?  
                           | • Who will see the data? |
School Example

• Summer school credit recovery program
• High number of students tardy returning from morning break
• Additional Data:
  – % of students engaged prior to break
  – Student activity during break (staff observations)
  – Student interviews

• Hypothesis: Break was too long and at the wrong time because it was disrupting students work and creating a very short time block prior to lunch that the students didn’t find useful
### What would you do?

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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
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<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Move break earlier in the morning at a more natural work break time and shorten from 20 min to 15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Re-taught expectations for on time attendance and emphasized importance of work being completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Recognition        | School-wide recognition focused on % of program complete  
                        Staff great students at the door upon return from break|

Results: After break tardies decreased to almost 0 immediately!
Individual Example

• Student regularly skipping class resulting in nearly failing grades and 2-3 in school suspension days with no change in the student’s attendance patterns.

• Additional Data
  – Student attendance was high in all classes but French and English
  – French and English fell most frequently after lunch
  – Attendance was worse when the weather was good

• Hypothesis: Activities outside of school were more important to this student than French and English Classes (Don’t come)
## What would you do?

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### Data collection
- What data will we look at?
- Who is responsible for gathering the data?
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<td>Recognition</td>
<td>School-wide recognition system allowed open campus during study hall for students on the honor roll</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Results: Student missed only 1 class in the final marking period!
Remember the Power of Tier 1!

- In both examples, relatively intensive problems were addressed with school-wide/tier 1 interventions powered by data!

- Schools can do a LOT to improve attendance quickly and easily!
- Sometimes more is needed
### Factors contributing to Absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoid uninteresting or engaging instruction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit academic skills leads to avoiding instruction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid fear regarding lack of security (e.g., not feeling safe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid bullying behavior</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain peer rewards for truancy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication regarding absenteeism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primarily school focus

Requires coordination and collaboration with partners outside of school
Family and Community Engagement

- Communicate early, openly, and honestly
  - Use multiple formats
  - Create opportunities for two-way communication (e.g., listening conferences)
  - Consider representation of key groups on school leadership team

- Consider key community organizations
  - Transportation
  - Law enforcement
  - After school providers
  - Key businesses
Caution Part 2!

- Be ready for them when they do come to school
PBIS Framework

What supports are needed to implement?
Build Systems to Support Implementation

- Team-based Implementation
- Clear Action Plan and Communication
- Staff Buy-in
- Embedded Professional Development
- Staff Recognition for Implementation
Team Based Implementation

• Start with your school leadership team
• Ensure representation and meaningful opportunities for participation and feedback

Clear Action Plan and Communication

• Everyone in the school/district should know the goal and the plan for achieving the goal
• Communicate clearly and frequently!
### What’s your Reach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Unit</th>
<th>Team Interaction Model 1</th>
<th>Team Interaction Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English department</td>
<td>Mimi MK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Center</td>
<td>Joshua Pinkleman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flannery, Mcgrath Kato, 2014
Build Systems to Support Implementation

- Team-based Implementation
- Clear Action Plan and Communication
- Staff Buy-in
- Embedded Professional Development
- Staff Recognition for Implementation
Buy-in!

Effective Messenger(s)

Effective Team...

...powered by Data

Effective Leadership

Staff

Info & Drafts

Feedback
Build Systems to Support Implementation

- Team-based Implementation
- Clear Action Plan and Communication
- Staff Buy-in
- Embedded Professional Development
- Staff Recognition for Implementation
Establishing/Replacing Habit
Charles Duhigg, 2014

CUE
- Remove competing cue
- Add desired cue

HABIT
- Teach acceptable alternative
- Teach desired alternative

REWARD
- Remove reward for old habit
- Add reward for new habit

Bottom Line: Changing habits is HARD and requires a multi-component intervention
Multi-tiered Framework of Professional Development Support

**Tier 3**
Intensive PD: Data-driven Consultation

**Tier 2**
Targeted PD: Self-Management with Peer or Coaching Supports

**Tier 1**
Universal PD: Training & Self-Management

**Progress Monitoring**
- Walk-through, Student Data Review, Teacher Collected Data

**Universal Screening**
- Walk-through & Student Data Review

(adapted from Simonsen, MasSuga, Briere, Freeman, Myers, Scott, & Sugai, 2013)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Focus of supports</strong> (precision)</th>
<th><strong>Universal Support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Support</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school and/or district provides general guidance on PCBS. Ensure that there is administrative support for PCBS through visibility, policy, and priority.</td>
<td><strong>This category identifies a more strategic approach of support that focuses on core factors that should be in place for effective implementation of PCBS</strong></td>
<td><strong>This category of specialized supports considers the unique needs of educators in implementation of PCBS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intensifying supports for educators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Performance expectations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Universal Support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Support</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations are communicated to all staff to develop a school climate conducive to learning.</td>
<td><strong>Small groups of educators express interest in or indicate need for increased support.</strong> Support is provided by giving additional information or professional development on PCBS and removal of barriers that may interfere (e.g., competing initiatives, access to training/coaching).</td>
<td><strong>Individual educators are identified for specialized support. This support is matched to the need of the educator through functional assessment to determine if there is a skills deficit (educator does not have the requisite skills to implement PCBS) or performance deficit (educator has the skillset but does not consistently implement the PCBS). Removing barriers that may interfere with effective PCBS practices (competing initiatives, access to training/coaching).</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Learning application opportunity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Universal Support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Support</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of training content that was previously provided.</td>
<td><strong>Expectations are re-iterated or re-visited with selected/some staff to further communicate the importunate of school climate for their classrooms (e.g., grade level).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expectations are communicated specifically and clearly to individual teachers about the importance of developing effective classroom environments.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Amount and frequency of the support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Universal Support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Support</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide high quality training with professional learning community to support implementation.</td>
<td><strong>Increased opportunities for coaching as a follow-up to training are provided.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provide frequent individual coaching through coaching, video review of recorded</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.**

**STRATEGIES TO INTENSIFY SUPPORTS**
### Alignment & Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Outcomes</th>
<th>Evidence-based Practices</th>
<th>Implementation Systems</th>
<th>Data Decisions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Legend:**
- **Red** indicates high alignment.
- **Yellow** indicates moderate alignment.
- **Green** indicates low alignment.

**Source:** UConn
Build Systems to Support Implementation

- Team-based Implementation
- Clear Action Plan and Communication
- Staff Buy-in
- Embedded Professional Development
- Staff Recognition for Implementation
Staff Recognition

- Sincere and connected to implementation!
- Share improvement

- Consider also recognizing staff attendance
## Group Contingency Example

### Percent of Students in Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>96.23%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/27</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>93.18%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8</td>
<td>95.45%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modified for staff:**

If 90% of staff are in attendance 4/5 days the previous week then Fridays are jeans day and lunch is provided for all staff.
What systems do you already have in place?

- Does your professional development include explicit instruction, coaching, and performance feedback?
- Do you have strategies for differentiating your professional development?
- Does your staff recognition system include sincere recognition for changing implementation behaviors?
- How do you integrate an align training to reduce the burden on teachers?
PBIS Framework

- Develop systems to support staff
- Develop a continuum of evidence based practices
- Leverage existing practices when possible
- Don’t underestimate tier 1

Develop and communicate clear data based goals
Use precise data to guide and evaluate
Bottom Line

It is our (the adults) responsibility to make classrooms and school a reinforcing and safe place, which includes

– effective instruction, contextually and
– culturally relevant relationships, and
– overt and regular positive reinforcement.

And to intensify the precision and intensity of our data, practices, and systems as student need increases

-George Sugai

When we do this well can effectively support student attendance
Questions?

Thank you

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