

Attendance Counts!



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The Facts:

(PORTRAITS OF CHANGE · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY · www.attendanceworks.org)

TABLE 1

% Students Chronically Absent	# Schools	% Schools
Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)	9,921	11%
High Chronic Absence (20-29%)	10,330	11%
Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)	28,320	31%
Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)	21,190	23%
Low Chronic Absence (0-5%)	22,572	24%
Grand Total	92,333	

A recent report finds extreme chronic absence levels in 11% of our nation's schools.

Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% (or more) of school days due to absence for any reason.

The precedence of early absences serves as an indicator of more to come.

Nationally, an estimated 5 million to 7.5 million students are at risk academically each year because they are chronically absent. Serious consequences result from absenteeism, such as drug use, delinquency, crime involvement, bullying, future absenteeism, and increased likelihood of dropout.

Important statistics/facts

Starting as early as kindergarten and prekindergarten, chronic absence can have **SIGNIFICANT** adverse consequences for academic achievement.

By third grade, chronically absent students are less likely to read on grade level.

By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a warning sign that a student will drop out of high school.

More to Consider!

By ninth grade, it's a better indicator than eighth-grade test scores.

Children with certain risk factors (including poverty, chronic health conditions, homelessness, frequent moves and disabilities) are especially hard hit.

Children of color are also disproportionately affected.

In school districts where state funding is determined by average daily attendance, chronic absence costs schools millions of dollars each year.

Stories from the field!

- While on a site visit in a city located in southern MA, attendance had become a HUGE issue....to the point of funding two people to SOLEY serve as attendance supporters/monitors/data-keepers.

- Sharing the story!

The Research:

No single universal “go-to” intervention that is consistently, significantly effective exists. (Penicillin/strep!). However, various interventions collectively did show improvement of an average of 4.69 days. **Meaning . . .**

There might not be one particular paved course of action, but do SOMETHING.

More research is needed and likely more interventions are needed. The need presents itself across differing profiles of youth. **Meaning . . .**

Different students in varying situations need different and varying interventions.

One size does not fit all.

So, What Can We DO? Start here:

Monitor attendance - what method is used to collect and store this data? Know how to use it. Keep an eye on students.

Physical health - curriculum regarding hand-washing can make a significant difference in attendance ie:

<http://www.itsasnap.org>

Mental health - any signs of anxiety or depression in the student(s)? School-avoidance and refusal behavior has a noticeable effect on rates of chronic absenteeism and truancy (Kearney, 2008)

School culture & community - does the school environment & administration value and respect individual students? They need to know that it MATTERS whether or not they are present.

Student engagement - do they have a connection and/or a sense belonging? Even ONE significant relationship makes a difference.

Academic support & mentoring - do students have a lifeline when feeling academic slips and challenges?

Parent & family outreach - are families & parents connected to the school? Feel welcome there?

Court-based and law enforcement related programs - last resort - resource officers visits homes, parents legally should be getting their kids to school, etc.

Directly From:

Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 (www.attendanceworks.org)

District Action

Step 1. Form a local leadership team. Operating at the district level, this cross-sector team takes responsibility for monitoring data, setting priorities, implementing a work plan, engaging key partners and continually assessing how to strengthen the work.

Step 2. Map assets and secure additional partners. Identify the people and organizations most likely to care about chronic absence and enlist their support.

Step 3. Unpack Causes. Use quantitative and qualitative data to pinpoint major factors causing chronic absence. Understanding why students miss school is essential to designing effective solutions.

Step 4. Develop and implement solutions. Put in place a tiered approach that begins with prevention and then provides the most at-risk students with personalized interventions that address their barriers.

Step 5. Assess results. Use attendance and chronic absence data to secure immediate and ongoing feedback about the effectiveness of current strategies and how they can be improved

We owe our kids more!



Monitoring:

Attendance! Be familiar with your school's program or process for recording this information. ie: Aspen

In order to most effectively help with this issue, being ahead of the problem is crucial. Educators can predict which students might struggle by looking at past years' absenteeism or absences during the first month of school. Both options are high indicators. As counselors, you need to be informed and know the facts/data to best guide you as to what to do about it.

[Establishing effective monitoring practices enable educators to routinely evaluate student attendance and intervene before the student becomes chronically absent \(Balfanz & Byrne, 2012\) \(letters home from administration\)](#)

The National High School Center indicates that attendance in the first 20 days of an academic period serves as high yield indicator for students who are likely to dropout or fail to graduate. Students who miss 10% of instructional time in their first year of high school are more likely to dropout. (This is only about 2-3 days a month!) Monitoring individual student attendance and being aware when students have missed a specific number of days can provide essential "bells & whistles", so to speak, to administrators, teachers, & support personnel as to when attention & interventions should be implemented.

[Spreadsheet - as used at internship in support team meetings - letters home result from that data. Parents do not always make the connection between attendance in elementary and middle school and graduation from high school. A critical intervention can be ensuring that parents and older students know exactly how many days of school have been missed and at what point too many absences become problematic.](#)

Prevention: Focus on mental & physical health

"Buddies Hand Washing Program" showed a 50.6% decrease in absences in the test group compared to the control group.

The effectiveness of instituting a program focused on hand and general hygiene is further supported by the 34% decrease in absenteeism after multi-week instruction on hand washing done in a study by Tousman, Arnold, Helland, Roth, Heshelman, Castaneda, Fischer, O'Neil, and Bileto (2007). A more recent study of more than 750 elementary-aged school children in Chicago, found that students who received instruction about effective hand-washing had significantly lower rates of absenteeism compared with students who did not receive the instruction (Lau, Springston, Sohn, Mason, Gadola, Damitz, & Gupta, 2009)

Given asthma is one of the leading predictors of student absences (CDC, 2004), improvements in classroom and school air quality have been closely associated with improvements in student attendance (Schendell, et al., 2004).

Mind/body wellbeing treatments (including the use of meditation and lessons surrounding stress and anxiety reduction methods) can be helpful with students struggling with depression, anxiety, and school-avoidance thoughts/behaviors in general.

Ideas to Try & Thinking Outside the Box

Opportunities to bring your own ideas to the table:

Incentives and reward-based programs to improve attendance

Family & community involvement reach out to them, include them, invite them, be a TEAM ~ share programs and information with the community (workshops, presentations)

School culture/student perceptions of the school The school's culture often serves as a catalyst for school avoidance behaviors. The presence of bullying, fights, discriminatory practices or language, as well as poor student-teacher relationships all contributes to the student's reluctant to attend school. Research suggests that efforts to improve school and community should focus on teacher-student relationships as well as the learning environment.

Creative approaches:

“Kids in Nevada must now show excellent school attendance to get a driver’s permit or license. Senate Bill 269, passed during the 2013 legislative session, went into effect January first. Let’s see what happens!” (NCSE website)

Growing recognition of its importance led to its inclusion in the recently passed Every Student Every Day Act, which reauthorizes federal funding for public schools. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric under Title I and Title II funds can be used for professional development about chronic absence.

Open discussions & questions:

Any specific questions?

What is being done in your schools?

What are your experiences surrounding the issue?

Any great ideas/interventions to share?

Food for thought ~

**The power for creating a better future is
contained in the present moment:**

**You create a good future by creating a good
present.**

~ Eckhart Tolle

Resources

Articles:

Maynard, B. R., McCrea, K. T., Pigott, T. D., & Kelly, M. S. (2013). Indicated truancy interventions for chronic truant students: A Campbell systematic review. *Research On Social Work Practice, 23*(1), 5-21.
doi:10.1177/1049731512457207

Preventing Chronic Absenteeism & Truancy - <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/attendance/preventing-chronic-absenteeism-truancy>

Websites:

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/>

OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)

<http://schoolengagement.org/>

NCSE (National Center for School Engagement)

www.attendanceworks.org

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