



Improving Student Attendance: Strategies and Resources

Prepared for
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Academic Recovery Liaisons

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The Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd (MACC@WestEd) helps state leaders with their initiatives to implement, support, scale up, and sustain statewide education reforms. We work closely with state leaders in the Mid-Atlantic region of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. To learn more about MACC@WestEd visit macc-atwested.org or to learn about the technical assistance network funded by the U.S. Department of Education, visit www.ed.gov.

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Disclaimer Language

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Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) requested that MACC@WestEd provide updated information on school-based strategies to address student attendance at Focus and Priority Schools. The PDE is interested in immediate strategies that Academic Recovery Liaisons could help schools implement.

The request is being made under the MACC@WestEd Year 3 WorkPlan for Pennsylvania, Priority Area: School Turnaround, Objective 1, Assistance to Academic Recovery Liaisons.

Methodology

To respond to the request, MACC staff searched federal, national, state, and local websites to obtain relevant information and resources for this document.

To prepare the summary of a multi-tiered schoolwide approach to improving student achievement, MACC relied on a major national resource, Attendance Works. Attendance Works (AW) <http://www.attendanceworks.org/> is a national non-profit organization, affiliated with the Child and Family Policy Center, which promotes better policy and practice around school attendance.

Organization of the Document

The summary first presents information on relevant Pennsylvania resources, including: the Pennsylvania Educator Dashboard Early Warning System and Intervention Catalog, and the Pennsylvania School Attendance & Truancy Reduction Toolkit.

Second, the summary includes a tool for self-assessment from Attendance Works and a list of questions for schools to consider prior to planning improvement strategies.

Third, the summary presents a multi-tiered approach and site-level strategies from Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University. Each of the three tiers is presented with categorized strategies.

The final sections include a list of available webinars from Attendance Works; additional school and district attendance-related resources; and additional dropout prevention resources.

Relevant Pennsylvania Resources

Pennsylvania Educator Dashboard Early Warning System and Intervention Catalog (EWS/IC)

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/early_warning_system/21791

The EWS/IC is a free, voluntary, web-based tool available to all LEAS within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Department of Education is providing a tool which will support increased graduation rates, student achievement, and strengthening community partnerships. The cost to a district will be the time for training and professional development for implementation.

The Dashboard Early Warning System and Intervention Catalog are based on the research of Dr. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University (Everyone Graduates Center). Built on the indicators of attendance, behavior, and course grades, students can be identified in middle school at being at risk for not completing their education.

Its purpose is to provide local school districts with up-to-the-date information on early warning metrics (students' attendance, behavior (discipline) and courses and grades (ABC's of Early Warning Indicators)).

The Intervention Catalog is a customizable tool which contains district-specific interventions. This catalog enables school districts to increase community partnerships and provides a quick reference tool for student assistance teams.

By 2014-15 SY 35 Pennsylvania school districts and charter schools are implementing the EWS/IC.

Dashboard Demo Site. To explore the possibility of using the Educator Dashboard Early Warning System and Intervention Catalog, please utilize the Dashboard Demo Site <https://www.pastudentachievement.beta.pa.gov/DashboardDemo/>

Populated with fictitious data, this Dashboard replicates the information which a school would have available to them if they choose to implement.

Improving Student Attendance: Strategies and Resources

Dashboard Demo Role	Login ID
System Administrator	KurtMcCarthy
Intervention Administrator	AngeliqueAvila
Principal	CodyWest
Specialist/Teacher	JosephineStephens
Password	123

For more information, send request to: RA_EDEWSINFO@pa.gov

Pennsylvania School Attendance & Truancy Reduction Toolkit

<http://www.patruancytoolkit.info>

In 2007, the Pennsylvania Department of Education in conjunction with other State agencies, created a School Attendance & Truancy Reduction Toolkit. The Toolkit includes information, such as legal responsibilities, systemic approaches, cross-agency integration, sample forms and letters, and resources to support professionals working with students and families to increase student achievement.

School Self-Assessment Tool and Questions

This section contains a key resource from Attendance Works: a tool for self-assessment by schools. The assessment tool can be completed individually or by a team. The tool was prepared by Attendance Works. In addition, this section contains a related set of questions derived from Attendance Works and the Columbus City Schools Attendance Toolkit. The questions can assist schools in assessing and planning strategies and practices.

Does Attendance Really Count in Our School? A Tool for Self-Assessment

Key Element	Strength	OK for Now	Could Be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How do you know?
1. Attendance is accurately taken and entered daily into district data system in all classes.						
2. Our school has a clear and widely understood policy that is culturally responsive to all communities.						
3. A team, including the administrator, reviews attendance data on a regular basis to identify chronically absent students and monitors attendance patterns by grade, race, student groups, and classes.						
4. Our school offers such rich, engaging and culturally relevant learning activities that students do not want to miss school.						
5. Our school recognizes and appreciates good and improved attendance.						

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Key Element	Strength	OK for Now	Could Be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How do you know?
6. Our school informs parents in their language about the importance of attendance and encourages parents to help each other get their children to school.						
7. Our school identifies and reaches out to chronically absent students & other families in a caring manner to see how attendance can be improved.						
8. Our school partners with community agencies that offer resources (after school, health services, volunteer mentors, transportation) and can help engage students and their families and remove barriers to getting to school.						
9. Individual learning plans are developed for high-risk students and address poor attendance along with low academic performance. All plans are examined and developed using a racial equity lens and are culturally responsive.						
10. Our school discipline policy and practices ensure students do not miss instruction due to suspensions for non-violent behaviors.						
11. Our strategies for supporting student attendance are reflected in our school improvement plan and are culturally responsive.						

Note: Chronic absence is defined as missing >10% of school including any type of absence.

Questions for Schools to Consider

1. Which of our current school improvement goals most depend on improved student attendance?
2. Do students and parents know the school's current attendance percentages and targets?
3. To what extent is chronic and severe student absences an issue throughout the school or is it concentrated in particular grades, periods, courses, or student groups? Does the level of chronic absence differ among specific students and their families? By grade level? Ethnicity? Language background? Special education status? English Language Learner status? Neighborhood of residence?
4. Do students miss school because of issues related to economics: e.g. lack of transportation, inadequate clothing, especially in bad weather, parents working long hours, insufficient nutrition, etc.?
5. What is the relationship between the school's attendance patterns and academic performance?
6. Is the value placed on student attendance clearly evident throughout the school?
7. Is attendance an integral part of the school culture? Is student attendance talked about and celebrated?
8. Does your school conduct periodic spot checks to ensure that attendance data is accurately recorded?
9. Does all staff clearly understand their responsibilities for student attendance based on their roles? Are there reminders to staff of their responsibilities to promote regular student attendance?
10. How are expectations communicated to students? How are consequences of non-attendance communicated to students? How are students involved in improving student attendance schoolwide?
11. How are parents and families made aware of the attendance policies and procedures and their responsibilities? In the beginning of the year? During the year? Does the school communicate the importance of school attendance to parents through materials sent home, school events, and interactions with staff? If so, does this include guidance about when to keep a sick child at home and how to avoid unnecessary absence by keeping children healthy and avoiding scheduling vacations and appointments during school time?
12. When and how does the school notify parents of a student's tardiness? Student absence? Student's internal truancy (in school, but not in class)?
13. What procedures are in place for students arriving late to school? How is it communicated to students, parents, and staff?

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14. What systems are in place for students in school, but not in classes?
15. What systems are in place to provide make-up work/tutoring for students who were absent for any reason?

Note: Questions based on Attendance Works and Columbus City School Attendance Toolkit.

Multi-Tiered Approach

Overview

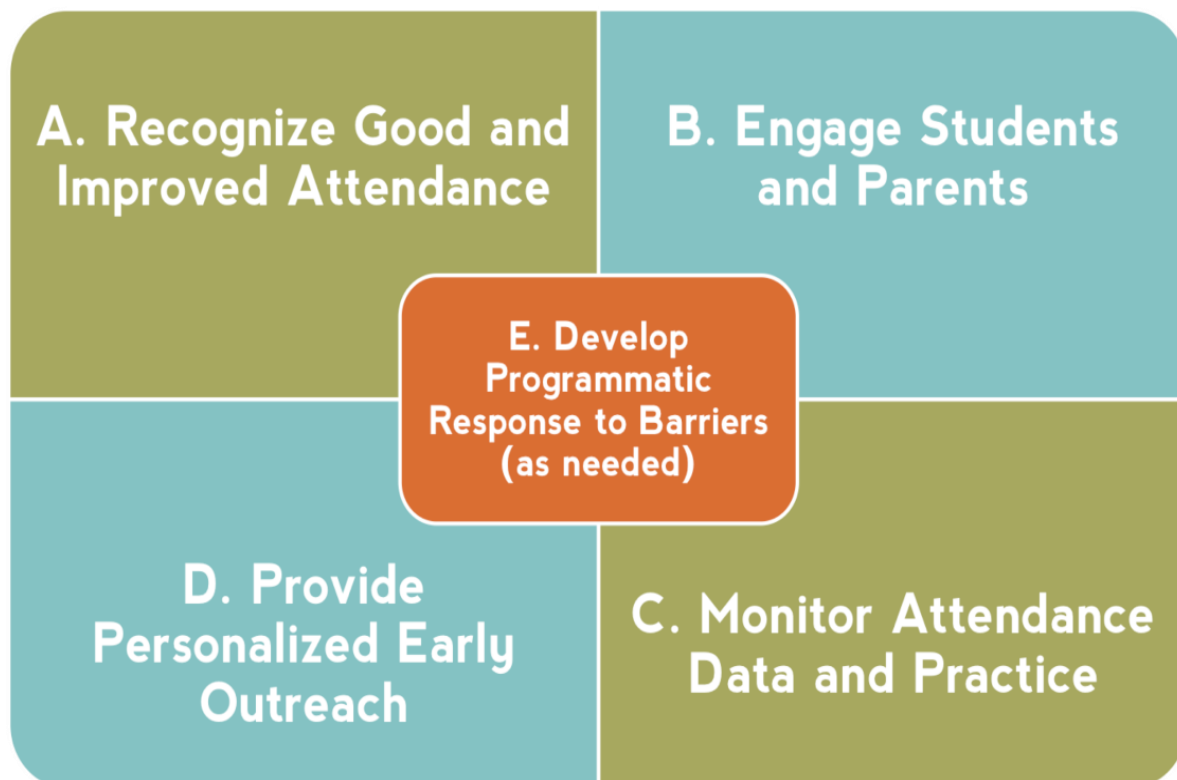
Attendance Works (AW) and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University promote the use of a three-tiered approach to help keep students on the path to graduation.

Tier 1: Universal programs and services addressing all students

Tier 2: Targeted for students exhibiting rising absences and/or chronic absences (missing 10%-19% of school)

Tier 3: Intensive, for students who are severely chronically absent (missed 20% or more of school) and habitually truant

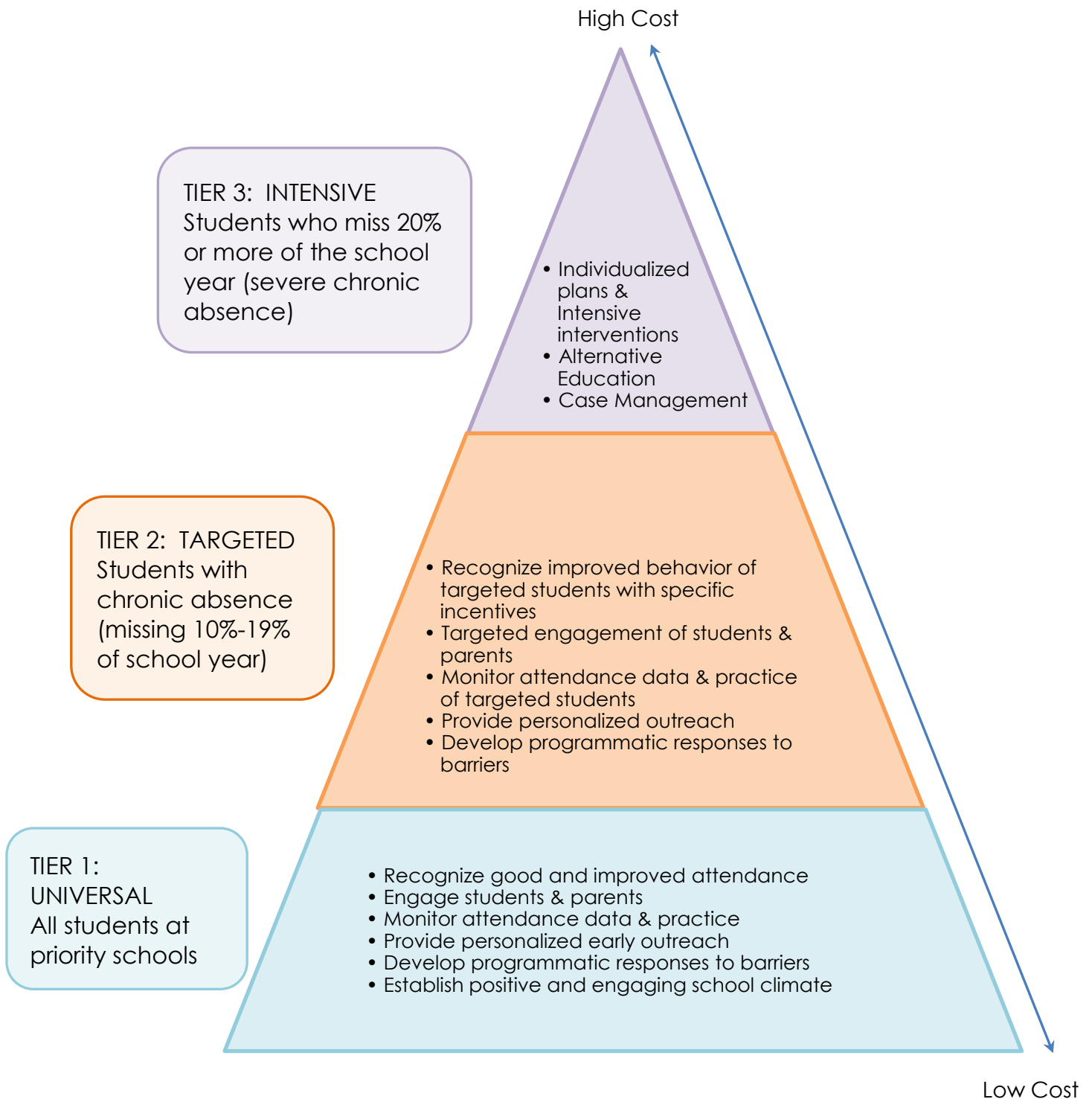
Within each tier, AW recommends the following site-level strategies:



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The next section is organized by the three tiers with lists of actions under each of the five major strategies from AW. Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the tiered approach, strategies, and actions.

Figure 1: Improving Attendance Requires a Multi-Tiered Approach



Tier 1: Universal

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

- **Clear Messages.** Send clear messages that going to school every day is a priority by providing regular recognition and rewards to students and families who have good and improved attendance.
- **School-wide Incentives.** Create school-wide incentives for good and improved attendance as part of a comprehensive approach:
 - Simple rewards – recognition from the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time or home passes, go a long way toward motivating students. Find out what students consider as motivating incentives.
 - Recognition during morning announcements
 - Certificates/awards at student assembly
 - Breakfast/lunch with the principal, superintendent, or school board president
 - Attendance T-shirts, hats, buttons,
 - School supplies (i.e., pencils/pens with logo, stickers, book covers, book marks, etc.)
 - Food coupons redeemable in school cafeteria
 - “School money” for the school store
 - Choice of donated products (e.g., movies, tickets, gift certificates)
 - Homework passes, extra points on exams, extra time at the computer or PE
 - Name on the Best Improved Attendance Wall
 - Offer weekly, monthly, and semester rewards so that students have a chance to improve each week.
 - Interclass competition is a powerful motivator. For example, a pizza party for a class with the best monthly attendance. Such strategies encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class.
 - Traveling trophy for grade-level homerooms with best monthly attendance
 - Ice cream/pizza party for class with best improved attendance

Tier 1: Universal

- Offer incentives for families not just students. Examples are transportation passes, certificates for McDonald's or Wendy's, etc.
- Adopt a ratio of four incentives (for example, public recognition for improved attendance, gift certificates for perfect attendance, daily praise for student attendance, bonus points) to each single consequence to align with research findings on behavior change and effective attendance and student engagement initiatives.

B. Engage Student and Parents

- **Increase Awareness by Targeted Messaging.** Increase student, family, and community awareness by distributing information through a comprehensive campaign (for example, "Every Day Counts").
 - Keep attending school upfront and central. Brand your attendance improvement initiatives with a catchy title and tag line that is student-focused and appeals to family and the community (e.g., "You've got to stay to win").
 - AW has a variety of resources, including PowerPoint presentations, videos, and handouts available for schools to use.
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-public-messaging/>
 - Consider using the AW resource, **Make Everyday Count: Sending the Right Message About Attendance to Parents and Students**, at the above website. The toolkit focuses on: What is your message? Who conveys the message? How do you convey your message?
- **Engage Students.** Make the first-day-of-school enrollment and regular attendance during the first two weeks of school a top priority.
 - Provide information to students and parents.
 - Teach the importance of student attendance. Use the AW resource, **Teaching Attendance: Everyday Strategies to Help Teachers Improve Attendance and Raise Achievement**
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AWTeacherToolkit-August-2014-new2.pdf>
 - Participate in the annual **September Attendance Awareness Month Campaign** <http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/> AW has a variety of promotional resources (Banners, Posters, multimedia, badges, decals, etc.) available. The **Count Us In Toolkit** outlines what schools and communities can do to participate in Attendance Awareness Month in September.

Tier 1: Universal

- **Engage Parents.**

- Explore the use of the AW toolkit, ***Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence.***

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-toolkit/>

This toolkit provides strategies, handouts and interactive exercises for engaging parents in improving their children's attendance.

- Explore the use of the ***AW Parent Engagement Toolkit*** and/or parent handouts (for all school levels, pledge cards, flyers in English and Spanish). <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/>
- Daily follow-up with parents for every absence. Conduct same-day follow-up with parents for every absence, making person-to-person contact. Explain how attendance is tied to successful outcomes such as high school graduation and employment. Try calling AND texting to all phone numbers provided by the parent. Use email and social media.

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

- **Daily Collection of Attendance Data.** Ensure that teachers submit attendance information on a daily basis. Record the reason(s) for student absences, so that appropriate school and support staff can address their underlying causes.
- **Early-Warning System.** Build an individualized early-warning system that uses multiple measures of attendance and suspensions. If the early-warning system is triggered, school attendance office staff immediately respond by, for example, convening a Student Study Team meeting or a meeting with the student and parent. At the meeting, staff share the importance of attendance and offer strategies and services.
- Consult the AW website on **Monitoring Attendance Data and Practice** at <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/use-attendance-data-to-inform-practice/>
 - AW has School and District Attendance Tracking Tools for different grade levels at the above website that are free to use.
 - There are also self-assessment tools, ***Does Attendance Data Really Count in Our School? Does Attendance Data Really Count in Our School District?*** available for schools and districts to use. (See pages 4-5 for the school self-assessment).

Tier 1: Universal

- **Analyze the Attendance Data.**
 - Explore the use of the AW step-by step guide: ***How to Conduct a Successful Data Analysis***
 - Review attendance data daily and weekly to identify students with needs and provide them with appropriate interventions.
 - Disaggregate attendance data by key demographic (race, ethnicity, gender) and educational categories (e.g., grade-level, ELL, special education).
 - Address all absences, including those that are excused and unexcused.
 - Analyze school-wide attendance rates.
 - Analyze targeted student attendance rates.
- **Collect and regularly publish school-district attendance data.** There should be a strong focus on collecting and publishing chronic absences and severe chronic absences, suspensions and other out-of-school exclusions, in addition to excused and unexcused absences.
 - Display attendance graphs in the faculty room to show attendance comparisons between current and past school years and publicize the loss of Average Daily Attendance (a.d.a.) funds due to unexcused absences.
- **Set Measurable Attendance Goals.** Set yearly concrete, measurable, and well-publicized attendance goals by the school and by district.

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

- **Use data to trigger early caring outreach to students.** Daily call parents after each student absence. Assign calling families among teachers and other staff. Maintain call logs to ensure proactivity if numbers have changed or been disconnected.
- Consider using the AW resource, ***The Power of Positive Connections: Reducing Chronic Absence Through PEOPLE: Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages and Engagement***
http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Positive-Priority-Outreach-Toolkit_081914.pdf

The PEOPLE strategy identifies the students and families most at risk and helps them build positive relationships that promote regular attendance. The five steps are: (1) Determine where to focus positive priority early outreach; (2) Establish teams to support the PEOPLE strategy; (3) Examine which students most need the PEOPLE approach; (4) Connect students and families to positive support; and (5) Reflect and celebrate.

Tier 1: Universal

E. Develop Programmatic Responses to Barriers (as needed)

- **Explore the AW website** on this topic:
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/develop-programmatic-responses-to-systemic-barriers/>

Large numbers of absent students suggests some type of systemic barrier(s) is at play. The AW website includes **Identifying Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence** and a handout **Breaking Down the Barriers**.

- **The AW website has additional resources** on the following ways to address common barriers:
 - Safe routes to school
 - Breakfast in the classroom
 - Afterschool programs
 - Recess or opportunities for physical activity
- **If transportation is an issue:**
 - Provide easier and more frequent opportunities for parents and students to give feedback about transportation (public transit, for example) services and needs, such as adding a texting or on-line complaint hotline or some questions to an annual school survey.
 - Work with public transit systems to change schedules and stops to promote school attendance and timeliness.

Tier 2: Targeted

Criteria:

Identify students with chronic absences. Attendance Works defines chronic absence as missing 10%-19% of school for any reason (including excused and unexcused absences, suspensions, and independent studies). This includes the following absences during the beginning of the school year:

- 2 absences in the first 2 weeks
- 2-3 absences in the first 4 weeks
- 4 absences in the first 2 months

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

- **Target specific incentives and recognition to students** identified at this level. Identify meaningful incentives by asking students and plan accordingly.
- **Identify personnel to oversee personalized incentives** and coordinate with school-based recognition program.

B. Engage Student and Parents

- **School Breakfast Club or Check In-Check Out.** Consider the establishment of a School Breakfast Club or Check In-Check Out. The goals of the club include: providing a breakfast, establishing a positive relationship. Set criteria for club meetings (e.g., must be on time to school for 3 days prior to club meeting with incentives for days that Breakfast Club is not in session. During breakfast club, discuss morning routines and assist students in designing their own routines.
- **Provide alarm clocks or wake-up calls** to targeted students.
- **Individual conferences with students and parents.** Consider home visits. Be sure to inform student and family the impact of student absences on grades and finishing school. Mail an attendance letter to the parent/guardian reinforcing the importance of daily attendance, expressing concern and offering support. Begin to learn about the challenges families face in terms of having their child attend school regularly. Track information and analyze it for common patterns.

Tier 2: Targeted

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

- **Student Attendance Response Team.** Consider developing a Student Attendance Response Team who reviews and monitors attendance data and plans interventions. A School Attendance Review Team (SART) is an interdisciplinary intervention team, including teachers, administrators, and student support personnel (e.g., counselors, psychologists, nurses, and other school-based health center staff). Any student with frequent absences should be referred to the SART, which is responsible for developing an individualized plan for improving the student's attendance.
- **Individual Student Attendance Success Plan or Attendance Contract.** Consider developing individual Student Attendance Success Plan or Attendance Contracts. The contract should be specific as to: 1) what the student, family, and school will do; 2) timelines for improvement; 3) duration of the contract; 4) specific levels of improvement expected; and 5) consequences if attendance does not improve. The AW has examples of plans and contracts. The AW website has examples and templates.
- **Monitor Plans or Contracts.** Identify staff who will monitor the attendance contracts with student and a tracking system to help monitor the status of contracts and progress made.

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

- **Attendance Buddy or Mentor.** Assign an Attendance Buddy or Mentor. Identify students at this tier who have not had staff connected to them personally. Select mentees for identified students based on natural connections. Attendance Works has a variety of mentoring resources on its website under this strategy.
- **Supervision of Mentor Program.** Identify staff who will oversee the mentoring program. Develop procedures for the mentoring program, including: recruitment activities; specific expectations, incentives, length of time for commitment, rules of confidentiality. Mentors need to meet with mentees weekly and have supervision weekly. The AW website has additional resources on mentoring programs.
- **Assign an adult advocate** who works individually with identified students as a case manager. The advocate should interact with the student daily and offer guidance on matters inside and outside of school, model positive behavior and decision-making skills, and be an encouraging and trusted person in a student's life. The advocate can also help address obstacles/barriers that prevent the student from attending and progressing in school (see other recommendations by What Works Clearinghouse, *IES Dropout Prevention: Practice Guide*).

Tier 2: Targeted

- **Referral to Student Assistance Team.** Consider scheduling students with chronic tardiness or three to six unexcused absences a review through their Student Assistance Team (or similar model), which will then generate a plan to address the student's needs.
- **Make-Up Classes.** Initiate make-up classes conducted on one day of a weekend when a student is deemed truant; use a "no-frill" room on campus and establish an after-school or weekend study program for students who fail to attend.

E. Develop Programmatic Responses to Specific Barriers (as needed)

- **Staff follow-up with families to help address barriers** through community partnerships (e.g., social services, child welfare, law enforcement).
- **Offer plan or contacts** for health supports or other supports needed by families.
- **Ensure that school-based health staff uses attendance and chronic-absence data** to target their outreach and prioritize services and follow-up care for dental, nutrition, asthma, mental health, or other health needs.

Tier 3: Intensive

Criteria:

Identify students who miss 20% or more of the school year. Often these students have substantive barriers and issues that require specialized and individualized interventions.

Services for these students usually include:

- **Individualized Plans.**
- **Intensive Interventions** (e.g., individual and family counseling, multi-agency services and programs).
- **Placement in alternative education arrangements or programs.**
- **Case Management Support.** Students who have more than six unexcused absences should be referred to a community agency capable of supporting, through case management activities, any family needs that may be affecting the student's attendance, in addition to school-based supports.

Note: In Pennsylvania, various school districts and counties have anti-truancy programs as described in the **Pennsylvania School Attendance & Truancy Reduction Toolkit** <http://www.patruancytoolkit.info> (see p. 3).

Webinars from Attendance Works

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/peer-learning-resources/>

Ready, Set, Go! Launching Attendance Awareness Month 2015	April 15, 2015
Every Day Counts: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism	February 23, 2015
Leading Attendance: Strategies to Help Principals Raise Achievement by Leveraging Student Services and Improving Attendance	January 16, 2015
Safe Routes to School as a Tool to Address Chronic Absenteeism	December 15, 2014
Developing Plans to Address Chronic Absence	November 15, 2014
The Power of Positive Connections: Reducing Chronic Absence Through People	September 30, 2014
Can You Hear Us Now? Amplifying Key Messages about the Improvement of Attendance	August 6, 2014
Reducing Chronic Absence: A Key Element for Student Academic Success	July 23, 2014
We Need You! Enlisting Allies for Your Attendance Campaign	May 28, 2014
Count Us In (Again)? Launching the 2014 Attendance Awareness Campaign	April 8, 2014
Driving With Data: Your District's Call to Action	March 11, 2014
Making Attendance Matter: Tips for Moving from Awareness to Action	November 6, 2013
Toward Smarter School Attendance Policies: Common-Sense Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism	September 16, 2013
Forging Partnerships to Get Students to School	August 27, 2013
Absences Add Up: Practical Tips for Communicating to Parents and the Media	August 7, 2013
Must Be Present to Win: How Local Communities Can Encourage Student Attendance	June 7, 2013
Early Intervention: How Addressing Chronic Absence Can Reduce Dropout Rates (with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities)	May 24, 2013
Bringing It Home: Engaging Parents as Critical Partners in Reducing Chronic Absence	March 13, 2013
Data Innovations: Focusing on Chronic Absence in Early Warning Systems	February 4, 2013

Additional School and District Attendance-Related Resources

- Balfanz, R. (2011, May). *A systematic approach to reducing chronic absence: Why it matters, what have we learned, and how to get started*. PowerPoint presentation for the Superintendent Policy Forum: Taking Attendance Seriously. Retrieved from <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Bob-Balfanz-Powerpoint.pdf>
- Balfanz, R., & Brynes, V. (2013). *Meeting the challenge of chronic absenteeism: Impact of the NYC's Mayor's Interagency Taskforce on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance and its implications for other cities*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Everyone Graduates Center. Retrieved from <http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NYC-Chronic-Absenteeism-Impact-Report.pdf>
- California Department of Education. (2014, November). *Developing plans to address chronic absence*. A webinar sponsored by California Department of Education, Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation, and Attendance Works. Retrieved from <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Developing-Chronic-Absence-Plans-November-13-version-7-jc-edits.pdf>
- California Department of Education, Safe Schools and Violence Prevention Office. (2000). *School attendance improvement handbook*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/cw/documents/schoolattendance.pdf>
- Columbus City Schools, Student Support Services. (no date). *Attendance tool kit: Supports, programs, and services: Missing school matters*. Columbus, OH: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsos.us/Downloads/Attendance%20Supports,%20Programs%20and%20Services%282%29.pdf>
- National Forum on Education Statistics. (2009). *Every school day counts: The forum guide to collecting and using attendance data*. (NFES 2009–804). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009804.pdf>
- New York City, Mayor's Taskforce on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism, and School Engagement. (2012). *Every Student. Every Day. Principal's guide. 2012-2013 academic year*. New York: Author. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/PGuideSY13_FINAL.pdf

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West, M.H., & Co. (2012, March). *Stepping up the pace: Improving attendance*. A "how to" mini-guide. Prepared for Philadelphia MEES. Richmond, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.mhwest.com/DOLDYS/Improving_Attendance05112012.pdf

Additional Dropout Prevention Resources

Dropout Prevention Practice Guide

Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., & Smith, J. (2008). *Dropout prevention: A practice guide* (NCEE 2008-4025). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute for Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=9>

Recommendations:

- Utilize data systems that support realistic diagnosis of the number of students who drop out and that help identify individual students at high risk of dropping out.
- Assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out.
- Provide academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance.
- Implement programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills.
- Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide skills needed to graduate and to serve them after they leave school.

National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University

www.dropoutprevention.org

Chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school are inseparable issues. The National Dropout Prevention Center lists 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the dropout rate and reports that these strategies have been implemented successfully at all education levels and environments throughout the nation. Each strategy links to an explanation of the item as education practitioners consider implementation locally. Several examples of explanations of particular strategies are provided for convenience.

The strategies are:

1. Active Learning
2. After School Opportunities
3. Alternative Schooling
4. Career and Technology Education

Improving Student Attendance: Strategies and Resources

5. Early Childhood Education
6. Early Literacy Development
7. Education Technology
8. Family Engagement
9. Individualized Instruction
10. Mentoring/Tutoring
11. Professional Development
12. Safe Learning Environments
13. School-Community Collaboration
14. Service Learning
15. Systemic Renewal

College Advising Corps

The College Advising Corps aims to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college and underrepresented students who enter and complete higher education.

Focused on advising students and their families on all types of postsecondary education opportunities, the Corps trains and places recent college graduates as advisors in high schools to mentor students, especially those most vulnerable, in navigating the path to postsecondary education programs and institutions. The Corps approach is “hand-in-glove” with the research herein on improving attendance and reducing dropout rates.

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Structuring Out-of-School Time to Improve Academic Achievement Practice Guide

Beckett, M., Borman, G., Capizzano, J., Parsley, D., Ross, S., Schirm, A., & Taylor, J. (2009). *Structuring out-of-school time to improve academic achievement: A practice guide* (NCEE # 2009-012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide.aspx?sid=10>

Recommendations:

- Align the out-of-school program academically with the school day.
- Maximize student participation and attendance.
- Adapt instruction to individual and small group needs.
- Provide engaging learning experiences.
- Assess program performance and use the results to improve the quality of the program.

Navigating the Path to College Practice Guide

Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F. (2009). *Helping students navigate the path to college: What high schools can do: A practice guide* (NCEE #2009-4066). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=11>

Recommendations:

- Offer courses and curricula that prepare students for college level work, and ensure that students understand what constitutes a college ready curriculum by 9th grade.
- Utilize assessment measures throughout high school so that students are aware of how prepared they are for college, and assist them in overcoming deficiencies as they are identified.
- Surround students with adults and peers who build and support their college going aspirations.
- Engage and assist students in completing critical steps for college entry.
- Increase families' financial awareness and help students apply for financial aid.

Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University

<http://every1graduates.org/toolsandmodels>

There are several accessible tools and models on this web site that schools can use to increase attendance and reduce dropout rates with specific doable and practical strategies. For example, one of the tools/models is **Early Warning and Response Systems**.

Three indicators in 8th grade can identify dropouts. They are: (1) Failing mathematics in 8th grade; (2) Failing English in 8th grade; and (3) Attending school less than 80% of the time.

Schools can create their own early warning response system by beginning with:

- Assembling longitudinal data for individual students on potential predictors of dropout, such as student attendance, behavior, grades, and test scores.
- Identifying a threshold level of each predictor that gives students a high probability of dropping out.
- Checking that the predictors identify a high percentage of the students in that school that drop out of school.
- In each tool/model, the suggested strategies are substantiated by research and practice.

The U.S. Department of Education has selected WestEd as the agency to operate the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC@WestEd) beginning in October 2012. The MACC@WestEd works collaboratively with the Mid-Atlantic States of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as well as with the District of Columbia to help SEAs implement, support, scale up, and sustain statewide education reforms. It is part of a federal technical assistance network of 15 Regional Comprehensive Centers and seven supporting Content Centers. The network of centers also works closely with the Regional Educational Laboratories and other technical assistance providers to ensure effective coordination of services.

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