Improving Student Attendance

Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders (FOIL)
May 17, 2017

Student Support Services

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Coordinator Student Support Services

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School Social Work Consultant
Goals for Session

- Equip educators with knowledge and resources to understand the importance of good attendance throughout the school year

- Provide examples of how educators can work together to reduce chronic absence through data-driven approaches and tiered interventions
Remembering Why
Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

Positive Engagement: Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

Actionable Data: Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

Shared Accountability: Ensures chronic absence is monitoring & reinforced by policy.

Capacity Building: Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
Actionable Data: Chronic Absence

- Excused Absences
- Unexcused Absences
- Suspension

\[ \text{Chronic Absence} = \text{Excused Absences} + \text{Unexcused Absences} + \text{Suspension} \]

*Truancy* is different than *Chronic Absence* and *Average Daily Attendance*.

- **Truancy** = unexcused absences (s. 1003.26(b), F.S.)
- **Average Daily Attendance** = how many students show up each day
- **Chronic Absence** = missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at-risk
Being in school on a regular basis … … drives student success

✓ **Exposure to Language:** Starting in pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments

✓ **Time on Task in Class:** Student only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class

✓ **On track for Success:** Chronic absence is a proven early warning signal that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing course in middle and high school, and likely to drop out

✓ **College and Career Ready:** Cultivating the habit of regular attendance help students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.

✓ **Engagement:** Attendance reflects engagement in learning

✓ **Effective Practice:** Schools, communities, and families can improve attendance when they work together.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYTHS</th>
<th>BARRIERS</th>
<th>AVERTION</th>
<th>DISENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused</td>
<td>Chronic illness (asthma) or lack of health/dental care</td>
<td>Child struggling academically or socially, bullying</td>
<td>Lack of engaging, relevant, culturally responsive instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK to miss a day here and there</td>
<td>Caring for siblings or other family members</td>
<td>Ineffective and exclusionary school discipline</td>
<td>No meaningful relationships with adults in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance only matters in later grades</td>
<td>Basic needs not met: transportation, housing food, clothes, etc.</td>
<td>Poor school climate, disproportionate school discipline or unsafe school</td>
<td>More exciting to be with peers out of school vs. in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing only 2 days per month can’t affect learning that much</td>
<td>Trauma No safe path to school High suspension rates</td>
<td>Parents had negative school experience Undiagnosed disability</td>
<td>Poor school climate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center (NSAESC) Virtual National Convening, 2017
Does Kindergarten Really Count?

Students who experience chronic absence in Kindergarten have:

- Lower academic performance in 1st Grade
- Lower reading and math proficiency in 3rd grade
- Weak social and academic skills to help the student engage in learning
Impact of Chronic Absence During Early Years

The more years students are chronically absent in the early years, the more at-risk they are for needing reading interventions by the end of second grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Second Grade DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency Score</th>
<th>Not Chronically Absent (n=4,073)</th>
<th>Chronically Absent in Pre-K (n=1,381)</th>
<th>Chronically Absent in Pre-K and K (n=423)</th>
<th>Chronically Absent in Pre-K, K, and 1st Grade (n=255)</th>
<th>Chronically Absent in Pre-K, K, 1st, and 2nd Grade (n=306)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>94.6***</td>
<td>88.9***</td>
<td>81.3***</td>
<td>72.9***</td>
<td>Some Risk*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>At Risk*</td>
</tr>
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<td>80</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance Works, 2016
Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long-term Academic Outcomes

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attended regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored 20% lower in reading and math in later grades and gap grows
- 2X as likely to be retained in grade
- 2X likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade
- Likely to continue being chronically absent
Attendance Matters in the Middle Grades

Figure 3. Graduation Rate by Number of Absences

What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District?
Silver, D., Saunders, M. (University of California, Los Angeles), Zarate, E. (University of California, Irvine)
Attendance Matters in High School

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman Absence Rates

- 87% for 0-4 days absent
- 63% for 5-9 days absent
- 41% for 10-14 days absent
- 21% for 15-19 days absent
- 9% for 20-24 days absent
- 5% for 25-29 days absent
- 2% for 30-34 days absent
- 1% for 35-39 days absent
- 0% for 40+ days absent


National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center (NSAESC) Virtual National Convening, 2017
Easy to Overlook Patterns of Chronic Absence in Individual Students

2 Absences Per Month
× 9 Months of School
= Less Likely to Graduate from High School
Patterns in Chronic Absence Across the Grade Levels

- Rates typically drop after Kindergarten through 5th
- Rise significantly in middle and high school

Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012
# Self Assessment: Actionable Data

Does Our Local Education Agency (LEA) Have a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence?

* A Tool for Self-Assessment  
  (Revised May 1, 2016)

Actionable data, positive engagement, capacity building, shared accountability, and strategic partnership all play an integral role in reducing chronic absence in your district. While assessing yourself across all five ingredients, think about the actions your district takes on its own, as well as whether you are making strategic use of community partnerships to advance your strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONABLE DATA</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>OK for Now</th>
<th>Could Be Better</th>
<th>Urgent Gap</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>How Do You Know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attendance data is entered accurately on a daily basis for each student into an electronic database.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Data on levels of chronic absence are calculated (ideally at least monthly) for our district as a whole as well as by grade, school, student sub-population and, if possible, by zip code.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. At least once a month, school site teams and a district team receive and use data on the current level of chronic absence overall, by school, and by grade. School teams also receive a list of the students by grade who have missed 10% or more of school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Students and parents can access their own attendance data in a format that is easy to understand and shows them if the student is at risk due to chronic absence (ideally they can also track problematic academic performance or behavior that may be related to absences).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

Positive Engagement: Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

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Shared Accountability: Ensures chronic absence is monitored & reinforced by policy.

Capacity Building: Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
Positive Attendance Trends in 8 Florida School Districts

A study was conducted in 8 Florida districts (2015-2016)

Purpose:
• To determine common trends (practices, policies) that may be related to low or declining rates of chronic absenteeism

Process:
• Chronic absenteeism data (missing 10% or more of school days) from eight school districts were analyzed
• Eight districts were identified based on consistently low rates of chronic absenteeism or declining rates (greater than 5%) of chronic absenteeism
## Ranked Most Frequently Used (Top) to Least

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level Interventions</th>
<th>Florida Districts with <strong>Consistently Low</strong> Rates of Chronic Absenteeism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement</td>
<td>Florida Districts with <strong>Declining Rates</strong> of Chronic Absenteeism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Student Services Personnel</td>
<td>Utilization of Student Services Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently examination of attendance data at <strong>school and district level</strong></td>
<td>Frequently examination of attendance data at <strong>school and district level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified attendance policy procedures</td>
<td>Identified attendance policy procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions involving the legal system</td>
<td>Interventions involving the legal system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified existence of an attendance policy</td>
<td>Identified existence of an attendance policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative team involvement</td>
<td>Identified existence of an attendance policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Identified data system - ensure accuracy of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of good or improved attendance</td>
<td>District level interventions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best Practices in Improving Student Attendance

- Community Engagement
- District
- School

Best Practices: Community Engagement

• Community outreach and messaging on the importance of attendance

• Absences Add Up!
  • [http://absencesaddup.org/the-campaign](http://absencesaddup.org/the-campaign)

• Engage community partners in problem solving to assist in developing and implementing interventions to break down barriers to school attendance
Best Practices: Community Engagement

• Baltimore City Schools and a local non-profit organization, Eleve8, provided funding for an Asthma Clinic in 3 schools. Attendance improved by 30%!

• The New York transit authority provided free bus passes to parents with school-aged children.
Best Practices: District Engagement

Superintendents **Call to Action!**

- **Prioritize Attendance**
  - Clear vision, senior leadership oversee implementation

- **Mobilize the Community**
  - Engage community, parents, civic leaders, local businesses, clergy, libraries, museums

- **Drive with Data**
  - Use data to raise public awareness, establish targets, goals, track progress, assure accountability
Best Practices: District Engagement

Maine:
• Superintendent has monthly data chats with principals

Baltimore:
• Most improved attendance recognized during school board meetings

Providence Rhode Island:
• Attendance Mapping - collecting data in regions, neighborhoods to determine any trends of non-attendance
Best Practices: School Level

Building a **positive** school climate

School based teams engage in:

- Problem solving
- Analyze and interpret data
- Determine the appropriate and effective interventions
Best Practices: School Level

Pittsburgh Public Schools
- School wide attendance initiatives
- Be There Campaign

Oakland Unified Schools
- ‘I'm In’ Project
  - Send a letter emphasizing what the child is missing in school
  - Offer assistance to parents to ensure the child is in school.
Harvard research study found comparison reduced absence by 5-10% for all students, regardless of severity of absenteeism.
Best Practices: School Level

• Mentoring Programs
  • My Brother’s Keeper
  • Check and Connect

• Positive messaging to parents
• Signage at drop-off and pick up
• Personal phone call home or text message regarding students attendance
Attendance Action Map: Florida
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
1450 NE 2 Avenue, Miami, Florida

We're launching a poster or video contest, honoring attendance champions. We are running a series of attendance challenges. The elementary schools will participate in “A Day Without an Absence Challenge” and the middle and high school students will participate in the “Get Schooled Attendance Challenge”.

Contacts:
http://www.dadeschools.net
LAmica@dadeschools.net

See More Detail >
Marion County Public Schools
512 SE 3rd Street, Ocala, FL

We're integrating attendance messaging into back-to-school events, displaying an attendance exhibit, running PSAs, honoring attendance champions, establishing or expanding programmatic interventions (for example, a local success mentor initiative) Incentives for 100% attendance.

Contacts:
http://www.marionschools.net/
Kevin.Christian@marion.k12.fl.us
Follow Us on Twitter

See More Detail >
# Self Assessment: Positive Engagement

<table>
<thead>
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<th>POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Our district, from the Superintendent to our materials (flyers, handbook, back to school letters, etc.), clearly and consistently conveys messages about the importance of daily attendance and reducing absences in communications with parents and the general public, as well as other key stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. High quality trainings and workshops are available throughout the year and in the home languages of families to help parents understand how to help their children succeed in school. These include explaining why attendance matters, how to access data on their children’s attendance and performance, and what parents can do to ensure daily attendance.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. As soon as signs of chronic absence are detected, someone (from the school, district, community partner, health providers, volunteers, etc.) reaches out to the student and family in a positive way to let them know they were missed, to encourage improved attendance, and to identify needed supports. Follow-up is pursued until contact is made.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We recognize positive examples of students, families, teachers, schools, and community partners improving attendance and use these examples to inspire action and identify best practices.</td>
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between district and community
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support for all ingredients.

NSAESC April 2017 Virtual National Convening
The Good News!

Chronic Absence is reducible and its impact reversible

- Modest interventions can bring about large returns

Responding to Chronic Absence using problem-solving

- Use data to understand scope and magnitude of Chronic Absence within districts, schools, grade-levels, subgroups

- Engage in data-based problem-solving to understand root causes or contributors to Chronic Absence and match intervention to need

Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012;
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

**Tier 1**
- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

**Tier 2**
- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

**Tier 3**
- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

- Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
- Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
- Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
How to Leverage Florida’s MTSS Model to Improve Student Attendance

• Effective interventions are essential, but we cannot intervene our way to a stronger system

• Once a student has an off-track indicator (chronic absence, behavior, failing courses), you either need to solve a problem or change a behavior. This requires a strong relationship between an adult and the student

• If there are more students than adults to form strong relationships, community partnerships are a must
Possible Interventions for Students Who Need More than Prevention

Positive Linkages and Engagement for Students and Families

- Assign caring mentors
- Partner with families/students to develop student attendance success plan
- Recruit for engaging before-or-after school activities
- Connect to Walk-to-school companion/address transportation barriers
- Offer plan or contacts for health support
## In Florida, Early Warning System Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance</strong></td>
<td>Missed 10% or of instructional time</td>
<td>Missed 10% or more of instructional time</td>
<td>Missed 10% of instructional time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One absence within the first 20 days in 9th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referrals &amp; Suspension</strong></td>
<td>Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR One or more referrals with suspension</td>
<td>Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR One or more referrals with suspension</td>
<td>Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR One or more referrals with suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Failures</strong></td>
<td>Not proficient in reading by third grade</td>
<td>Failed mathematics or ELA course. Failed two courses in any subject.</td>
<td>In 9th grade: two failed courses or failed to progress on time to 10th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credits/GPAs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GPA &lt; 2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*On Track for Success: The Use of Early Warning Indicators and Intervention Systems to Build a Grad Nation.*
Core Ideas of an Early Warning System …
….. including promoting positive attendance

✓ To graduate high school ready for career and college, students need to successfully navigate several key transitions and acquire a set of academic behaviors – they need to learn how to succeed in school.

✓ Students signal that they are on or off track toward these outcomes through their behaviors (attendance, school behavior, course performance)
Core Ideas of an Early Warning System … ….. including promoting positive attendance

- By tracking early warning indicators, it is possible to identify when students are beginning to fall off track, providing time to intervene or change supports, and alter their trajectory through school and beyond.

- Using EWS, schools can capture the data that will drive decisions about how best to apply school-wide preventions, targeted supports, and intensive interventions until students are back on track.
Building Blocks of Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

• On at least bi-weekly basis, examine chronic absenteeism *trends and patterns* at district, school, and grade level

• On annual basis, conduct *surveys to understand key drivers* of chronic absenteeism at district and school level

• Build *prevention* and *intervention* systems appropriate for the scale and intensity of chronic absenteeism found
Building Blocks of Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

• *Build relationships* with students and families with prior history of chronic absenteeism and those trending toward it. Seek to understand root causes.

• Take multi-sector approach to solving *underlying issues* which cause significant amounts of chronic absenteeism in your area

• Make *school a welcoming* place for students and parents
Remember …

• It is not just a school or parent issue
• Health, safety, housing, transportation issues all contribute to chronic absenteeism
• Within each of these sectors, there are exemplary efforts to work with schools and communities to reduce chronic absenteeism
Table Discussion: Self-Assessment, Planning

- Actionable Data
- Positive Engagement
- Capacity Building
- Shared Accountability
- Strategic Partnerships

Next Steps ....
Thank You!

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In Collaboration with...