



Attendance & Truancy Among Virginia Students

Session One

Understanding Chronic Absenteeism

Presentation Description

Module one lays the foundation for why paying attention to chronic absence is important, the definition of chronic absence, and how it impacts academic achievement for students in elementary and secondary schools.

Participant Goals

- Educators will learn what chronic absence is and how it differs from other measures of attendance.
- Educators will learn how chronic absence affects academic outcomes.

Facilitation

- Have the participants read the quote below and discuss their perspectives on its meaning.
- Assist the participants in discussing excused and unexcused absences and the perceptions of school personnel.
- Have participants discuss attendance and the impact on student achievement.
- Assist the participants in clarifying their goals as educators in the area of attendance.



The reality is an absence is an absence, excused or not, and that child is not in that classroom benefiting from the instruction on that day. We have to work in our community, with our schools and our families to build a culture of attendance.”

-Ralph Smith, Executive Vice President,
Annie E. Casey Foundation



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Module 1: Reducing Chronic Absence
Why Does It Matter?

The Purpose

- This PowerPoint serves as No. 1 in a series of modules designed to equip Virginia school divisions to reduce truancy and absenteeism.
- This module defines chronic absence and demonstrates its impact on academic achievement.

Virginia Absenteeism & Truancy Professional Development Series

1. Understanding Chronic Absenteeism
2. Learning What Works to Reduce Chronic Absence
3. Establishing School Attendance Teams
4. Using Data to Drive Action
5. Messaging Attendance
6. Integrating Attendance In Parent Engagement
7. Utilizing Parent-Teacher Conferences to Talk with Families about Attendance
8. Recognizing Good and Improved Attendance
9. Providing Personalized Early Outreach
10. Identifying barriers
11. Creating opportunities for peer learning
12. Engaging Community Partners
13. State Attendance Laws and Regulations

Warm Up - Reflection One

Remember a time that you helped a student or a school improve attendance:

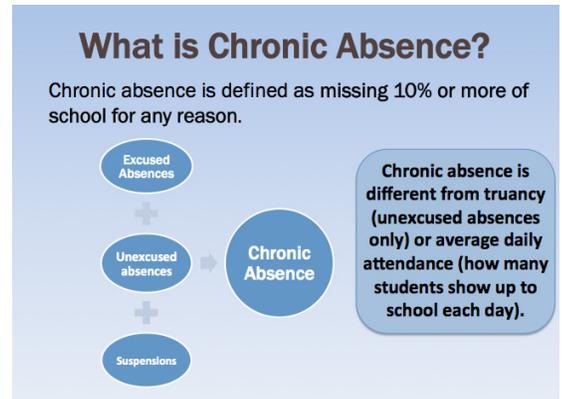
1. How did you know that the student was missing too much school or that the school had high rates of absenteeism?
2. How were the absences affecting the academic outcomes of the student or the students at the school?

Warm Up Notes

Reflection Two

Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason, just two days a month.

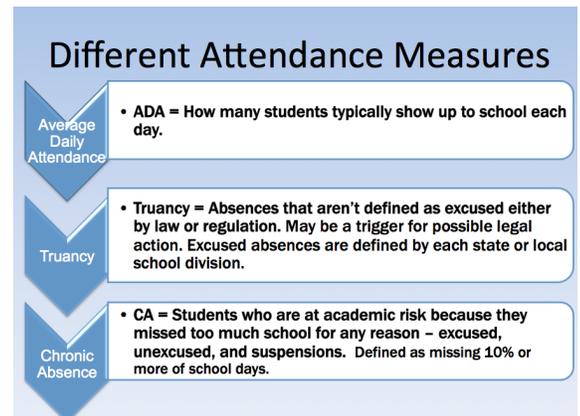
Does your school division look at the cumulative impact of lost instructional time irrespective of the reason for absence? Why or why not?



Reflection Notes

Reflection Three

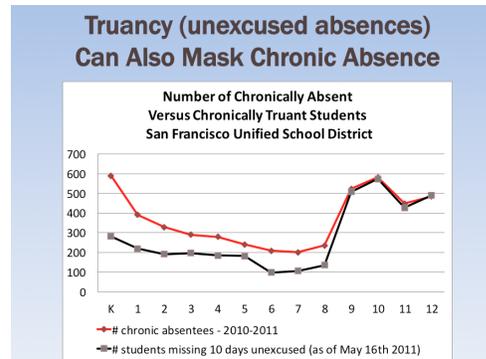
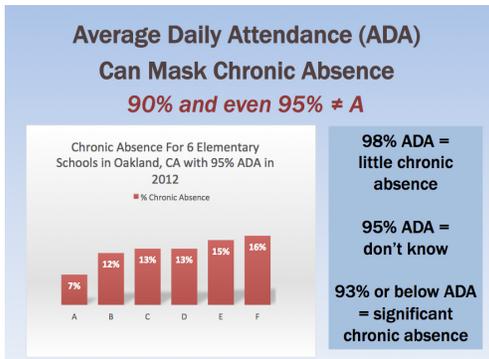
Recall that average daily attendance and truancy can mask the rate of chronic absence. Why do you think it would be important to know who the students are that are missing 10% of school days for any reason?



Reflection Notes

Reflection Four

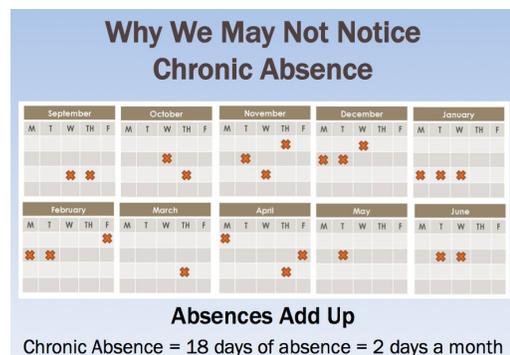
Do you know chronic absence levels for the school or schools in your division? How does it compare to data on truancy (unexcused absences) or average daily attendance (the typical percent of students who show up every day)?



Reflection Notes

Reflection Five

In your experience, do sporadic absences receive less attention than consecutive absences? What can your school or division do to ensure that chronic absence doesn't go unnoticed?



Reflection Notes

Reflection Six

What top three reasons would you use to make the case that attendance matters for achievement?

Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country

Improving Attendance Matters Because It Reflects:

Exposure to language: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

Time on Task in Class: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

On Track for Success: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

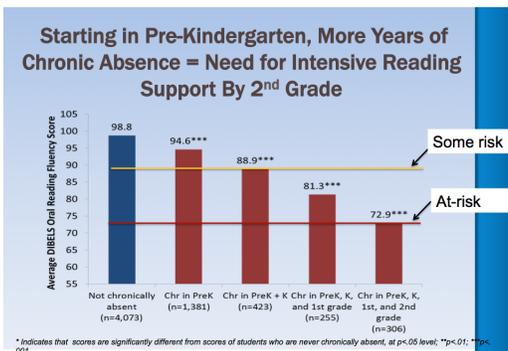
College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

Engagement: Attendance reflects engagement in learning.
(For research, see: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>)

Reflection Notes

Reflection Seven

Research demonstrates that absenteeism in the early grades contributes to students not reading on grade level by third grade. In your experience, when a student is struggling academically is their attendance included in the evaluation? If not, discuss why you think that it would be important to determine whether the student's attendance is contributing to their lack of academic success?



Chronic Early Absence Connected to 3rd Grade-Level Reading

Chronic absence in kindergarten → Lower levels of literacy in first grade → Lower achievement as far out as fifth grade

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend 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

Reflection Notes

Reflection Eight

Discuss the barriers listed in slide 16. How has your school sought to help a student and their family when struggling with significant barriers?

Chronic Absence is Especially Challenging for Economically Disadvantaged Children

- ❑ Poor children are **4x** more likely to be chronically absent in K than their highest income peers.
- ❑ Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic supports that ensure a child is more likely to get to school. They often face:
 - Unstable Housing
 - Limited Access to Health Care
 - Lack of Safe Paths to School
 - Inadequate Food and Clothing
 - Chaotic Schools with Poor Quality Programs, etc.
 - Poor Transportation

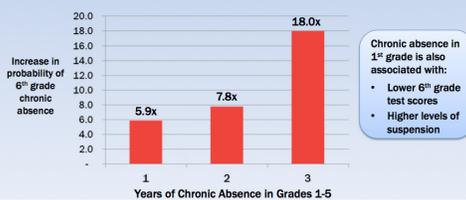
Reflection Notes

Reflection Nine

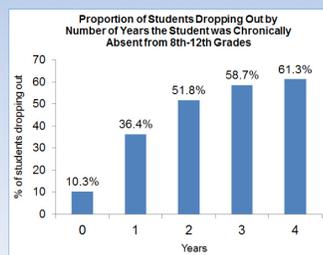
Students who are chronically absent just one year between 8th and 12th grade are three times as likely to drop out of school. What is one strategy that a school can put in place to support students transitioning into high school to encourage their regular attendance?

Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade



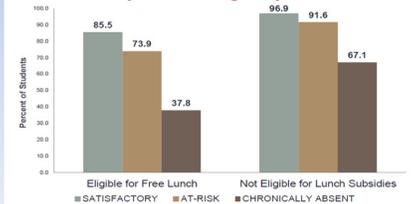
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Attendance Is Even More Important for Graduation for Students In Poverty

Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in 4 Years by Lunch Eligibility

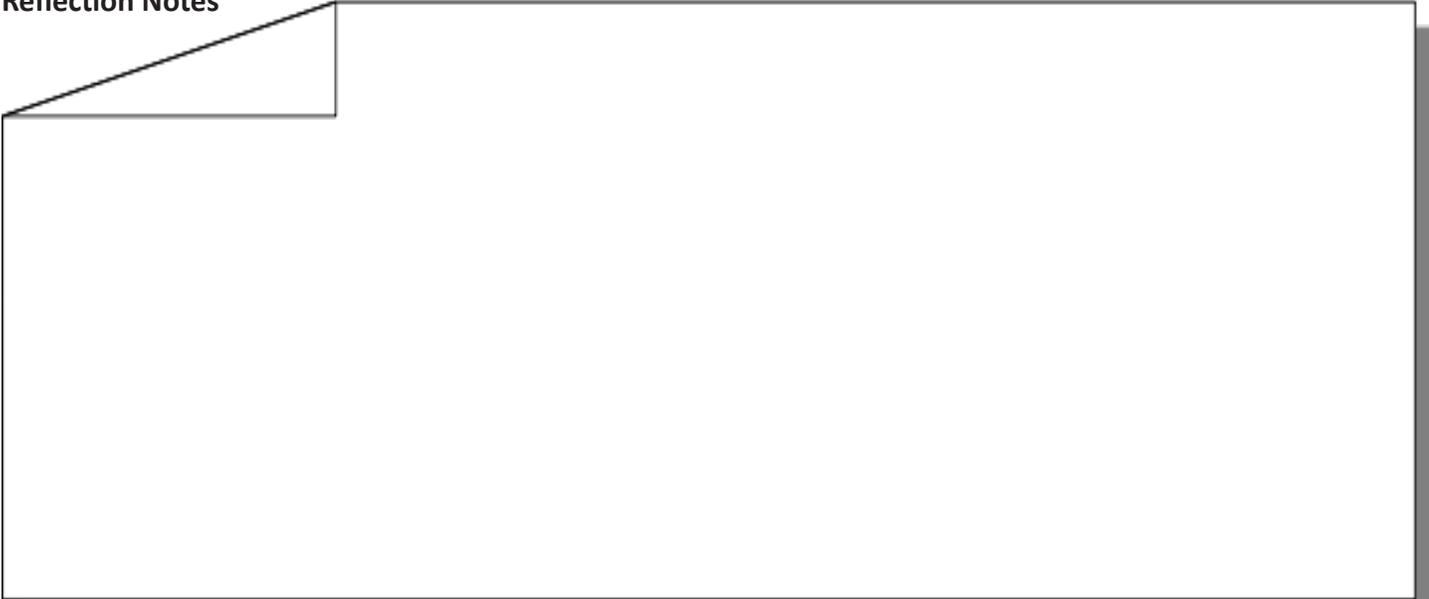


Reflection Notes

Reflection Ten

Write down one thing you learned about chronic absence or one thing that surprised you about the data. If you are in a group, turn to the person next to you and share what you wrote down.

Reflection Notes



Reflection Eleven

Does the shift from a focus on truancy and unexcused absences to using chronic absence as an early warning indicator for intervention make sense to you? What is one compelling reason that you heard today that made the case for you?

Reflection Notes



Learn More

Before moving on with the additional modules, we would like to encourage you to learn more about this issue. Specifically, please consider reading:

- Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, September 2008. (http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf)
- Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success, Attendance Works, August 2014. (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/absences-add/>)
- New Britain, Connecticut ,a national bright spot (<http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/new-britain-focus-on-kindergarten/>)