



Attendance & Truancy Among Virginia Students

Session Six

Integrating Attendance into Parent Engagement

Presentation Description

Module six provides schools and school divisions strategies for integrating attendance into parent engagement activities.

Participant Goals

- Examine the connection between attendance and family engagement.
- Learn why attendance should not be treated as a separate educational issue.
- Identify opportunities to integrate attendance into existing family engagement activities.
- Find out about available resources and materials for helping communicate to families about attendance and chronic absence.

Facilitation

Have the participants review the module and reflections. Each reflection is designed to help participants further their understanding and learning of key concepts, frameworks, and strategies for reducing chronic absence.



Even though I went to college, I didn't know that missing 18 days or just two days a month – even in kindergarten – could put my son behind academically. As a result, my child was missing kindergarten and it was because of me! Now that I know, I make sure that the two younger ones don't miss so many days. This can happen to anyone, and it's a message we have to deliver to parents."

-Olga Nunez, Mother of three, Los Angeles, California



10/20/22

Attendance & Truancy Among Virginia Students

**Module 6: Integrating Attendance into
Parent Engagement**

The Purpose

- This PowerPoint serves as No. 6 in a series of modules designed to equip Virginia school divisions to reduce truancy and absenteeism.
- This module encourages schools and community partners to integrate attendance messaging into on-going activities aimed at engaging students and families in school.

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

Think about a child you know with good attendance. What do you think motivates his or her parents to ensure that child attends school every day?

Warm Up Notes

Reflection Two

Think of a child you know who is having trouble with attendance. What do you think contributes to their poor attendance? Is it a lack of hope, faith or capacity for the child or family? What could you do to help instill hope, faith or build their capacity?

Going to School Every Day Reflects When Families Have

...
Hope
for a better future
+
Faith
that school will help you or your child succeed
+
Capacity
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school

Reflection Notes

Reflection Three

Do these resonate with your experience? What might you add?

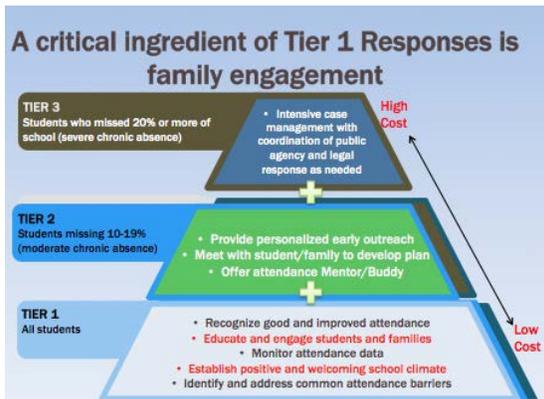
Key Principals for Engaging Parents:

- Engage families early. Begin partnering with families to improve student attendance while children are young and parents are typically more involved.
- Establish a positive relationship with parents, before discussing a student's poor attendance. Often, schools contact families only when there is a problem.
- Communicate clear expectations and support. Orient parents to school policies and expectations for student attendance and on-time arrival.
- Take a strengths-based approach. Don't assume if a child is chronically absent that it is a signal that parents do not care about the child's education or attendance.

Reflection Notes

Reflection Four

Does your school(s) engage in these Tier 1 practices? Any ideas that you would add to this list?



Creating a Welcoming Environment

Some ideas include:

- Greet students, by name, at the door in the morning
- Welcome back students who missed school, let them know you noticed
- Promote a sense of belonging and connection with classmates and school officials
- Contact families regularly with good news & bad so they feel connected to the school

Reflection Notes

Reflection Five

If your campus has a nurse, is he or she focused on the need to improve attendance? If your school(s) doesn't have a nurse, is there a health provider who could be engaged to help?

Ensuring Your Campus is Healthy

- Eliminate mold and vermin that can exacerbate asthma & respiratory illness
- Make sure your school is properly ventilated
- Promote healthy habits such as hand washing
- Provide access to health care through a school nurse or health and dental providers who visit the site

Reflection Notes

*Additional information can be found on the last page of this guide

Reflection Six

What steps does your school or division take to ensure that students feel safe at school and on the walk there? How do you deal with bullying?

Ensuring Students Feel Safe

21.2% of U.S students say they miss school because they don't feel safe.

15.5% of students who are bullied say they missed 1-2 days because of safety concerns.

- Start with the route to school. If traffic or community violence is a problem, work with parents on a safe walk-to-school effort
- Deal with bullying swiftly and effectively
- Create an environment sensitive to students who suffer trauma

Reflection Notes

*Additional information can be found on the last page of this guide

Reflection Seven

List ways in which your school and community can send messages about attendance before the school year begins.

When are good times to message about attendance?

1. Start before the school year begins
2. Encourage principals and teachers to talk about attendance at back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences & other opportunities
3. Get involved with Attendance Awareness Month

Ideas for Before School Year Begins

Back-to-school letters, social media, phone calls or visits from teachers should convey:

- The connection between attendance and achievement
- The date and time that school starts
- Reminders about required immunizations
- The school system's policies on excused and unexcused absences

Encourage partners— summer learning, afterschool programs or health providers—to share the message.

Reflection Notes

Reflection Eight

Is attendance and the importance of avoiding absences discussed at any of these activities in your school(s)? Discuss and note how attendance could be better incorporated.

Ideas for After School Year Begins

Once the school year begins, emphasize attendance at:

- Back-to-School student assemblies
- Back-to-School nights for parents
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Monthly or classroom newsletters

Keep messages positive while mentioning that families will be contacted if absences start adding up.

Reflection Notes

Reflection Nine

When and to whom could you show this video at your school(s)?

Consider the Attendance Works Parent Video & Discussion Guide



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

- **SETTING THE STAGE**
- **VIDEO (6 minutes)**
- **FACILITATED CONVERSATION**
 - THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRONIC ABSENCE
 - HOW TO IMPROVE ABSENTEEISM
 - FAMILY PRACTICE
 - INCREASE SOCIAL CAPITAL
 - IDENTIFY HOW SCHOOL CAN HELP
 - COMMUNITY SERVICES

Reflection Notes

*Additional information can be found on the last page of this guide

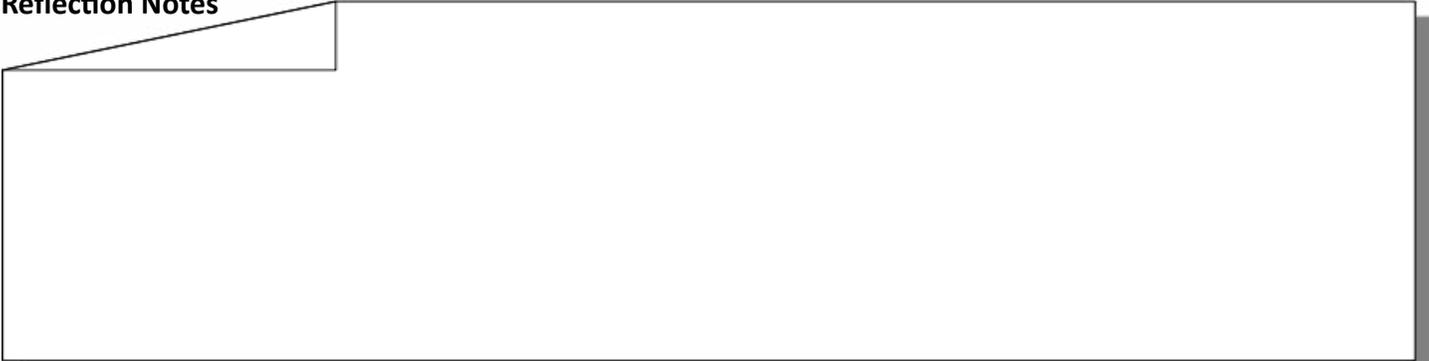
Reflection Twelve

Do you know any families who have improved their attendance or maintained good attendance despite serious challenges? How can you recognize them and highlight their story so it inspires other parents?

Tips for Engagement

- Integrate attendance into events for the entire school community
- Remember that parents are not easily motivated to show up to meetings solely focused on student attendance.
- Inspire attendance at meetings by publicly honoring families with good and improved attendance

Reflection Notes



Reflection Thirteen

1. What does your school do to spread the word about good attendance before the year begins? During back-to-school events?
---How can those efforts be enhanced?
2. What obstacles do you face to reaching families before the school year begins or at the start of the year?
--Which community partners can help you share messaging?

Reflection Notes



Reflection Fourteen

How can your school or division use Attendance Awareness Month to leverage a campaign to reduce chronic absence? How can you carry the message through the year?

Leverage Attendance Awareness Month

Throughout September, organizations and communities nationwide use [Attendance Awareness Month](#) to build awareness of the importance of attendance. To get involved, school systems can:

- Sign up for the Attendance Awareness Month list serve
- Participate in the webinars
- Review the [Count Us In Toolkit](#)
- Issue a proclamation
- Sign up for the Superintendent's Call to Action
- Host an event



Reflection Notes

Summary Reflections

To what extent does our school engage students and families in reducing chronic absence?
Are our materials conveying the right messages?
What's the first step we should take?

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/viewing:



BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME
Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence

May 22, 2013
version 1.0



Family Engagement Toolkit

The Toolkit Contains:

- Research showing a positive relationship between parent involvement and attendance
- Key Principles for engaging parents on attendance.
- Materials to share with parents about the importance of good attendance
- Interactive Exercises to spark awareness, conversation and action with groups of parents

- <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-toolkit/>
- Bullying handout: http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/fs_bullying_absenteeism.pdf
- Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators: http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn/assets/pdfs/Child_Trauma_Toolkit_Final.pdf
- Bringing Attendance Home video and discussion guide: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-video>
- Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids, Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www2.epa.gov/schools>