



# Attendance & Truancy Among Virginia Students

## Session Seven

### *Leveraging Parent-Teacher Conferences*

#### **Presentation Description**

Module seven provides schools with an overview of tips and resources for integrating discussions about attendance into parent teacher conferences.

#### **Participant Goals**

- Educators will understand why and how they can incorporate information about attendance into parent teacher conferences.
- Educators will explore how data on absences can be used to plan for and trigger different conversations depending upon the level of absenteeism.
- Educators will learn about how to approach hard one on one conversations in a trust-building manner.
- Educators will find out about available resources to incorporate into parent teacher conferences.

#### **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.

“ *The bottom line is students miss out on instructional time and learning opportunities when they’re not in school.*”

- **Sarah Harris**, Vance Village Elementary School  
New Britain, Conn.



11/25/18

## Attendance & Truancy Among Virginia Students

Module 7: Leveraging Parent-Teacher  
Conferences

### The Purpose

- This PowerPoint serves as No. 7 in a series of modules designed to equip Virginia school divisions to reduce truancy and absenteeism.
- This module provides information on how to incorporate discussions about attendance into parent teacher conferences.

### 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

Do your schools hold parent teacher conferences? Is attendance discussed in them now? If so, how?

Warm Up Notes

## Reflection Two

What do you think about talking about attendance as an essential part of parent teacher conferences? Does this make sense to you? Any concerns?

**Parent-Teacher conferences are an ideal time to talk with families about their child's attendance.**



**Why? Because they are an opportunity to**

1. Connect with families in person
2. Share how absences are affecting learning
3. Learn more about assets as well as challenges for supporting good attendance

### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Three

Do you think parents or even teachers realize that just missing 4.5 days in the first quarter is problem? What would help them to understand?

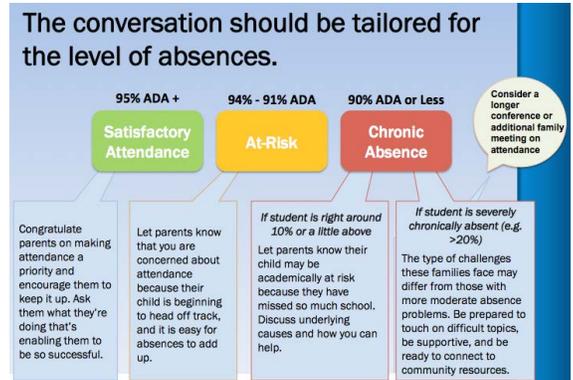
### Attendance Categories: When to be concerned about absences in the first quarter (45 days)?

<b>Satisfactory Attendance Absence</b> <5%	Student has missed fewer than 5% of school days (less than 2.5 days in the first quarter)
<b>At-Risk Absence</b> 6-9%	Student has missed between 6% and 9% of school days (between 3-4 days in the first quarter)
<b>Chronic Absence</b> >10%	Student has missed 10% or more of school days (4.5 days or more in the first quarter)

### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Four

As an educator do you have access to the attendance data for the student's in your class? Do you know which of your students fall into each of these attendance categories? If you don't currently is there a way to access that information?



### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Five

Who could help you or teacher's you know with parent-teacher conferences for students struggling with chronic absence or severe chronic absence?

### Tips for Tailoring Parent Teacher Conferences

1. Divide all your students into satisfactory, chronic and severe chronic absences.
2. Take time to warmly invite parents, especially with chronic and severe chronic absence to attend the conference.
3. Allot more time and create privacy for families struggling with attendance
4. Ask other staff (teachers, counselors, nurses) with relationships to help with struggling families.

### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Six

Imagine you are the parent, what could the teacher say that would make you feel comfortable sending Alyssa to school despite the concerns that you have about asthma. From a parent perspective, what is the worst thing a teacher could say or do in this situation?

### Talking to Families about Absence: Sample Scenario

- **Teacher Perspective:** It's October and Alyssa has already missed 8 days of school and is frequently tardy. The teacher has noticed that Alyssa seems more reserved and less attentive than normal in class.
- **Mother's Perspective:** Alyssa has asthma and its causing her to miss school. Alyssa is not skipping school without permission so these absences aren't a problem.

#### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Seven

What do you think of this process? How could it be applied to the scenario in the prior slide? What are their hopes and dreams for them? Ask how the school year is going socially and academically.

### Framing the Conversation to Build a Relationship of Trust

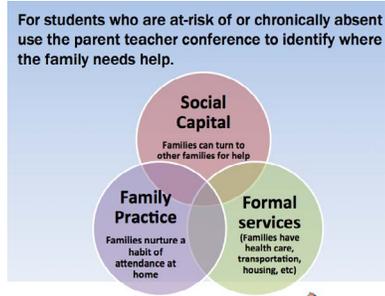
- 1 Learn** Learn about the student's family and their experience in your school or classroom. Ask what their vision is for their child's future.
- 2 Share** Share positive things you've observed about the student or that you've heard from other teachers and peers.
- 3 Inform** Review attendance report with the family. Tailor your conversation to student's level of absenteeism and connect attendance back to the family's hopes and dreams for their child.
- 4 Discuss** Discuss the challenges the student faces in getting to school, as well as strengths they can build upon. For chronically absent students, try to understand the barriers that are keeping them from school.
- 5 Arrive at a Plan** Think through strategies with the family for addressing absences and help them develop a written attendance improvement plan. Offer referrals to services as needed and ask if there are other ways you can help.

#### Reflection Notes

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

## Reflection Eight

If you were to fill out the family help bank for yourself how would you answer these questions? Who are your everyday helpers, occasional helpers, and potential helpers? Do you think that it is helpful for families to think through who they can rely on for help before an emergency happens? Why or why not?



### Student Attendance Success Plan

- Strategies to support improved attendance
- Developing a family's help bank
- Helping family's track attendance

### Developing a Family's Help Bank

- Your Family** – List who lives in your house
- Everyday Helpers** – Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors, relatives who can help regularly.
- Occasional Helpers** – Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a god-parent, a relative or friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- Potential Helpers** – Identify people who are part of your school community, church, or neighborhood who are able to help – if you ask.

### Reflection Notes

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

## Reflection Nine

How might a teacher engage a student or family in creating a visual of how their absences are adding up?

### Use visuals to help communicate with families about how absences add up

**Absences Add Up**  
Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = 2 days a month

### Reflection Notes

## Reflection Ten

List an approach that would help teachers send these messages and share the flyers and student success plans as part of parent-teacher conferences.

### Attendance Awareness Resources

#### Parent Flyers in English and Spanish



### Suggested Key Messages

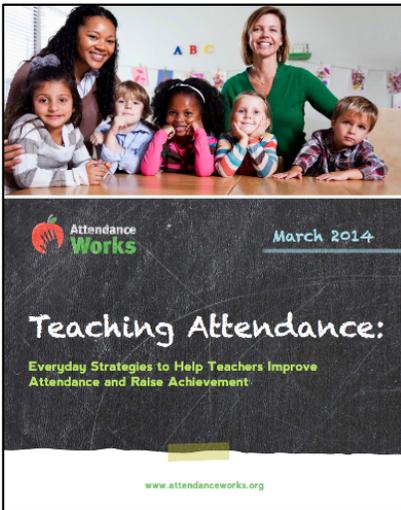
1. Attendance matters for doing well in school and life starting in kindergarten and even in pre-kindergarten.
2. Absences can add up before you know it.
3. Poor attendance is not just about unexcused absences or children willfully skipping school – excused absences can affect performance, too.
4. As a parent one of the most important things you can do to help your child succeed in school is making sure your child rarely misses school.

## Reflection Notes

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

# 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:



- As a teacher, you know first hand that too many absences can disrupt learning, not just for the absent student but for the entire classroom. School attendance is essential to academic success, but too often, parents and students do not realize how quickly absences — excused as well as unexcused — can add up to academic trouble. Use the, “Teaching Attendance” toolkit to help equip you to talk about this issue with your families.  
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/AWTeacherToolkitFINAL10.5.151.pdf>
- This framework drawing from Teaching Attendance, is outlined in more depth here: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Parent-teacher-conf-step-by-step-guide.pdf>
- For more information on how to utilize the student attendance success plan please visit our facilitator’s guide: [http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SSP\\_Toolkit\\_070615.pdf](http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SSP_Toolkit_070615.pdf)
- To access the student attendance success plan please refer to this link: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout>
- Parent Handouts: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/>