# 8 WAYS TO PREVENT CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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David Hardy, CEO of the Lorain City School District in Ohio, writes that when children improve their attendance, they have more time to study and increase their chances of success in school and life.

Although it may seem logical that students should be in school to study, chronic absenteeism persists in K-12 schools, affecting up to 7.5 million children each year.

Although chronic truancy rates are highest in middle school, the problem occurs in every classroom. In the early grades, poor attendance delays social and emotional learning. It also prevents children from reaching important milestones, such as reaching grade-level reading by the end of third grade, which is a strong predictor of future academic success. Chronic tardiness is a leading cause of low academic achievement at all grade levels and a strong indicator of which students are at greater risk of dropping out.

Research shows that the causes of chronic absenteeism are as varied as the problems faced by students and families. While K-12 districts and schools may not be able to address all factors that affect student attendance, we can strategically support students who are at risk of missing too many classes.

Here are several ways educators can help prevent or reduce truancy while making school a place students want to be.

Announce your visit expectations

The first step to improving attendance is to communicate school attendance expectations to students and their families, such as in student handbooks, school websites, and in-person meetings. Be sure to explain the importance of attending school and why it is important to be on time. If attendance is a school- or district-wide problem, set a measurable attendance goal in the school improvement plan and regularly monitor progress toward that goal.

Create a team of participants.

The attendance team is the first line of defense against chronic absenteeism. The team monitors attendance daily, tracks attendance targets, and communicates with parents and students when issues arise. Parents should be notified of absences as early as possible. This can be done by team members or automated systems. However, when making a private call, team members can record whom they spoke with and call details, which can be useful if the problem persists.

Intervene early

To prevent small problems from turning into big ones, it is also useful to create and set "triggers" that immediately alert visiting teams and school principals about absences. For example, a student's name will be marked if they are absent for two days in a row, or if they are absent for more than a certain number of days in a certain time. This suggests that the team may need further intervention, such as parent interviews or home visits. During meetings or visits, you should develop an action plan for the visit, focusing on responsibility, but with a positive mindset. Re-emphasize why it is in your child's best interest to go to school.

Track a positive rate.

Many schools have systems for recording disciplinary infractions, which means that usually only negative behavior is monitored. Negative reinforcement, e.g. A verbal

reprimand for problem behavior stays with the student for a long time and requires a lot of positive reinforcement to get the child back on track. Using a 3:1 positive ratio can ensure that teachers are providing students with appropriate positive reinforcement throughout the school day. For example, create a school expectation that teachers acknowledge or recognize at least three positive student behaviors before recording negative behaviors. This helps teachers ensure they focus on the positive and helps them build stronger relationships with their students.

Create a positive school culture.

One of the best ways to combat chronic unemployment is to make sure that a school is a place where students are happy. When students feel happy and safe physically and emotionally, they are engaged in school. This leads not only to better attendance but also to higher academic achievement. Create an engaging calendar of events that encourage students to come to school and participate in fun and educational activities. Establish consistent behavioral expectations at the school and district levels to help teachers keep students on task and achieve positive outcomes. Implement positive behavioral interventions and supports, social and emotional learning, and other culturally specific programs. Create targeted incentives that encourage positive student attendance and behavior. All of this helps students achieve positive social and emotional character development and creates an environment that helps them feel connected to the people they learn from.

Monitor real-time data and facilitate action.

Provide a system to track daily data on attendance, tardiness, behavior, and school cultures to maximize the use of teachers and school administrators' time. Unlike paper or connected systems, mobile or web can save teachers countless hours. For example, using a school culture system called Kickboard, teachers can easily record attendance and reinforce behaviors that foster a great school culture with the click of a mouse. Having

this information in one place makes it easier to analyze and respond to individual data down to the school or district level. With real-time data, educational leaders can examine behavior and culture in real-time, which can reveal the root causes of chronic absenteeism.

Celebrate successes

Throughout the year, staff, students, and families must be informed of the school's progress in meeting attendance goals. To stay motivated, create rituals and ceremonies to celebrate personal, classroom, and school successes.

Provide additional support systems

Of course, some students may need more support. Designate a person or group of people to greet the children when they enter school and make it easy to ask for help if the day starts to be difficult. The intervention response team should recommend targeted interventions for students who are persistently absent or missing instructional time due to in-school or out-of-school suspensions. Have extra uniforms or school supplies for students who may miss school without them. Contact the student's family for additional support services or resources as needed.

When your child's attendance improves, they have more time to study and graduate and are more likely to succeed in college and career. All this happens every day.

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