High-Yield Prevention Strategies for Schoolwide Attendance

This document provides an overview of high-yield prevention strategies for addressing schoolwide attendance.

Academic Engagement

Your school staff were recently trained in the Text Summarization strategy to support content area reading. Your school has already committed to this strategy which is designed to increase academic engagement. Your School Leadership Team will revisit the implementation of this strategy in another upcoming professional learning session.

Awareness Strategies

The following strategies are designed to bring attention to the schoolwide attendance and ensure that staff, students, and families are aware of the importance of regular attendance and impact of absenteeism.

Share Schoolwide Data

Sharing schoolwide data with staff, students, and families on a regular basis is a good awareness strategy. Set up a regular schedule for sharing the attendance data on a regular basis. Consider how to share year to date data as well as data from smaller windows to allow teams, staff, students, and families to see overall trends as well as changes across time. For example, at the 40th day of school, the leadership team can share the percent of the student body in each level of risk (on-track, caution, flagged). Then on the 80th day of school, the leadership team can share the same data from Day 1 to Day 40 and from Day 41 to Day 80. Looking at data from the previous data point to the current date will also teams (and others) to see trends, both positive and negative (Sprick & Sprick, 2019).

Provide a Rationale for the Importance of Attendance

In addition to sharing schoolwide data, the School Leadership Team can provide a summary of research about the negative impact of absenteeism. Be sure to include information that is most relevant to the specific context of your school, students, and community (Sprick & Sprick, 2019). This rationale can be used as part of the lesson plans for attendance.

Provide an Attendance Chart

Provide attendance charts for families and students to use to monitor absences across the year. Let students and families know that any time the student is absent, a space on the chart should be filled in. Be sure the chart identifies the number of absences that would place a student in

each risk category based on the total number of school days in the year. For example, if your school year is 180 days, then the chart would look something like this:

0-9 Days Absent (100-95% attendance)	10-17 Days Absent (94-90% attendance)	18+ Days Absent (89% attendance or less)
On-Track Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a solid start.	**Caution** Makes it harder for your child to make progress.	**Flagged** Your child will find it very difficult to make progress.

Table 1. Track Your Child's Attendance (Adapted from Sprick & Sprick, 2019)

1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	Flagged!

Kick-off Assembly for Attendance

The school hosts a kick-off assembly related to the attendance initiative. The presentation includes current attendance data, schoolwide interim targets, and any schoolwide motivational system that may be a part of the school's plan.

Create and Teach Lessons on Attendance

Create a small library of attendance lessons that can be delivered by each classroom teacher. These short lessons (5 to 10 minutes) are designed to increase awareness of the importance of attendance and/or teach strategies to students for addressing obstacles to regular attendance such as lack of sleep or transportation issues.

Posters & Flyers in the Community

Design and create posters and/or flyers to promote regular attendance and post these in prominent locations within your community. A variety of examples and templates for posters, flyers and social media tools can be found at the Attendance Works website.

Motivational Systems

The following motivational systems are from Sprick & Sprick (2019).

Within or Across School Friendly Competitions

Create a friendly competition within the school (e.g., among grade levels) or in partnership with another school within the district. Be sure students are taught how to encourage peers to attend (as opposed to bullying or threatening). Identify a specific target for attendance, for example:

- The grade (or school) with the most improved average daily attendance (average percent of students in the student body present each day) over the previous month
- The class with the highest average daily attendance each week
- The school (or grade) with the most improved average daily attendance from the previous year or month

Schoolwide Celebrations of Attendance

Hold a monthly or term/semester celebration of attendance in the form of a school assembly or community event. Move away from focusing on perfect attendance as it is not realistic for many students. Consider recognizing students that fall within the on-track category for attendance and those with improved attendance.

Classroom Motivational Systems

There are a variety of ways to approach the classroom motivational systems. Classroom systems can be implemented in the first period or hour of the day, in every class throughout the day, or during daily homeroom or advisory period. The following list provides examples of how classroom motivational systems could be implemented.

Individual Teacher Decision

Provide a range of options for classroom motivational systems let each individual teacher decide whether their class would benefit from such a system.

Require Teacher Use with Options

Require that each teacher select one or more motivational system for attendance to implement in their classroom. Each teacher will determine which one to use but must use at least one. Each month teachers are asked to share the attendance progress with the classroom motivational system.

Group Decision

The grade-level teams (or other logical teams based on your school's make up) review a list of classroom motivational systems for attendance and each teacher votes on which system the team should use. Each individual teacher is responsible for implementing the classroom motivational system and the progress is shared within the team and by the team to the full staff monthly.

Staff Decision

Provide a range of options for classroom motivational systems let each individual teacher vote on which strategy(s) will be implemented by all staff. The classroom system with the most votes will be implemented by the staff and data will be collected and shared monthly with the whole staff.

Staff, Student, and Family Decision

Provide a range of options for classroom motivational systems let each staff member, students, and families vote on which strategy(s) will be implemented by all staff. The classroom system with the most votes will be implemented by the staff and data will be collected and shared monthly with the whole staff, students, and families.

Michigan's MTSS Technical Assistance Center

Nudge Letter

Based on "nudge theory," a behavior science approach to changing behavior that states "any small feature in the environment that attracts our attention and alters our behavior" is a nudge (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The idea is that a simple, intentional communication home regarding attendance can serve as a nudge towards regular attendance. There are some key components to the successful nudge letters: positive message, statement conveying importance of attendance, encouragement to the family, and specific and personalized data about the student's attendance history. These nudge letters (or postcards) are sent home at specific times of year and/or when a student's number of absences meets a predetermined specific level. The research found that the physical letter or postcard mailed home had a better impact on attendance than a tech message or email (Rogers, et al., 2017).

URLs Used in This Document

[Attendance Works website](https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/posters/promotional-materials/)
(https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/posters/promotional-materials/)

References

Rogers, T., Duncan, T., Wolford, T., Ternovski, J., Subramanyam, S., & Reitano, A. (2017). *A randomized experiment using absenteeism information to "nudge" attendance* (REL 2017-252). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/edlabs.

Sprick, J. & Sprick, R. (2019). *School leader's guide to tackling attendance challenges.* Eugene, OR: Ancora Publishing.