



**Attendance Works**

# ADVANCING STUDENT SUCCESS BY REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENCE



March 2015

About Attendance Works

## A Note from the Director

Our work with school districts has made one thing perfectly clear: Principals are key to moving attendance numbers. Without their leadership and commitment, schools are hard pressed to create a culture that promotes good attendance. So today we're releasing *Leading Attendance: A Toolkit for Principals*. In addition to our tools and templates, we've included profiles of school leaders who are reducing chronic absence.

The toolkit comes out just as we launch our planning for Attendance Awareness Month 2015. We'll be hosting the first of four webinars on April 15 and releasing our updated Count Us In! toolkit that day. We hope you'll join us then so we can lay a strong foundation for activities in September!

**Hedy Chang**

Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success. We aim to ensure that every school in every state not only tracks chronic absence data for its individual students but also partners with families and community agencies to help those children.

Be sure to follow us on Twitter and Pinterest and like our Facebook page!



Donate

We express a special thank you to our colleagues and friends who have included Attendance Works in their charitable contributions. If you haven't had a chance, you can donate now by clicking:

**DONATE**

Whatever the size of your gift, it will provide us with much needed support to advance our work.

Webinar

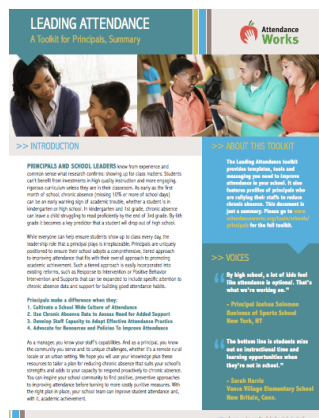
Upcoming Webinars:

**Wednesday, April 15:**  
Ready, Set, Go: Launching Attendance Awareness

## Practice Spotlight

### "Leading Attendance" Details Strategies for Principals

Principals and school leaders know from experience and common sense what research confirms: Showing up for class matters. [Leading Attendance](#), a new toolkit from Attendance Works, equips principals with the templates, tools and messaging needed to reduce chronic absenteeism. It also features profiles of principals who are rallying their staffs to improve attendance. Do you know someone like that? [Nominate them for a profile using this form.](#)



The toolkit details how they can:

- Cultivate a school-wide culture of attendance
- Use data to determine need for additional support
- Develop staff capacity to adopt effective attendance practice
- Advocate for resources and policies to improve attendance

[View the Leading Attendance Toolkit here.](#)

[Download the Leading Attendance Summary here.](#) (pdf)

## Attendance Awareness Month Planning to Launch 4/15

Attendance Awareness Month starts in September, but planning begins April 15 with the first of four webinars and the release of the revised Count Us In! toolkit providing updated resources for schools and communities. Speakers on the Ready, Set Go! webinar will describe how they rallied their communities to take action. Future webinars are set for May 13, August 12 and September 9.

Last fall, 324 communities nationwide participated in activities calling attention to the importance of school attendance. We hope to enlist even more this year. Don't miss this opportunity to address chronic absence, an urgent issue affecting our children's education!

- Register now for [April 15 webinar](#)
- Visit the [Attendance Awareness Month website](#)
- Sign up for [regular updates](#)

## Research Spotlight

### D.C. Pre-K Research Shows Power of Intervention

Washington, D.C.'s public pre-kindergarten program reduced its chronic absence rate by 13 percent using a set of interventions anchored by more contact with families, according to a [report from the Urban Institute](#).

The report released in January reviews three years of attendance data in the D.C. program, which serves about 5,000 3- and 4-year-old students. About 27 percent of students missed 10 percent or more of the 2013-14 school year, compared to 31 percent chronically absent two years earlier.

Month 2015 (2 ET/11 PT). Attendance Awareness Campaign. [Register now](#)

**Tuesday, March 17:** Connecting Chronic Health Conditions with School Attendance: Improving Data Collection and Use (2 ET / 11 PT). National Association of Chronic Disease Directors. [Register here](#)

## In the News

[Absenteeism in Oregon schools prompts bill that would tie funding to attendance, not enrollment](#), Mail-Tribune, February 25, 2014

[In L.A., missing kindergarten is a big deal](#), KPCC Radio, February 24, 2015

[Suspended students lose millions of days of instruction while out of school](#), The Washington Post, February 23, 2015

[Schools must create plans to stop chronic absenteeism](#), CT Post, February 16, 2015

[Absenteeism high in D.C. Head Start programs](#), Washington Post, January 26, 2015

[Parents & Schools: Put an End to Chronic Absence](#), National Association of Elementary School Principals, December 2014

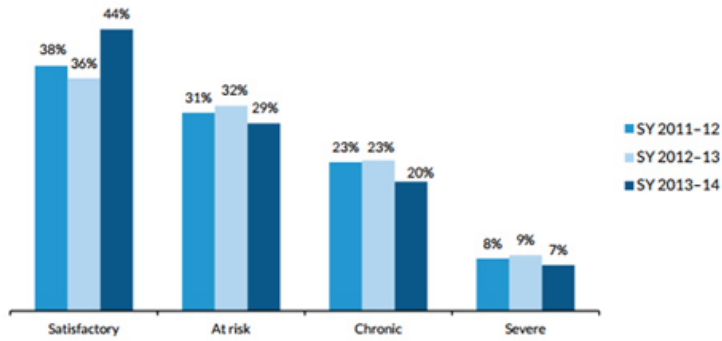
## Contact Us

Questions?

For more information contact: [info@attendanceworks.org](mailto:info@attendanceworks.org)

FIGURE 2

Percent of Students by Attendance Category, SY 2011-12 to SY 2013-14



Source: Urban Institute analysis of DCPS STARS and ChildPlus data (2014).

D.C. credits a change in policy for calling pre-K families about absences. Rather than waiting until a student had missed three days in a row, family service teams now call parents after the student misses three days any time during the school year. The interventions also take the form of home visits or meetings with the teacher or principal.

[Read more here](#)

## Suspensions Cost Students 18 Million Days of Instruction

Despite successful efforts to reduce suspensions in some school districts, students lost as many as 18 million days of instruction to out-of-school punishments in the 2011-2012 school year, a new report documents.

[Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?](#), released in February by the [Center for Civil Rights Remedies](#) at the UCLA Civil Rights Project, for the first time combines all out-of-school suspensions to calculate comparative rates for every district and state.

The good news is that more than half the nation's school districts consider suspension a last resort. But 14 percent of district suspended one in 10 black elementary students. And 21 percent suspended one in four black secondary students.

These disciplinary absences represent lost instructional time and lost opportunities to learn.

[Read more here](#)

## Policy Spotlight

### ESEA Rewrite Opens Door for Educating About Absenteeism

As Congress debates how to revise the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#), much of the discussion centers on finding other measures, beyond standardized test scores, to assess school progress.

This provides an opportunity to educate policymakers about the importance of tracking chronic absence and to push for using it as accountability metric.

Schools have long reported attendance rates, but their reporting is typically limited to how many students show up every day (average daily attendance) or how many schools miss school for unexcused absences (truancy). Chronic absence includes days missed for any reason-excused, unexcused or disciplinary. And when diagnosed properly, it can point to real solutions.

We'd like to see policymakers at all levels consider adding chronic absence as an additional metric for school accountability. We've already seen progress. Some states are starting to track students missing 10 percent of the school year for any reason, a definition recommended by Attendance Works, while others track a set number of days. The U.S. Education Department's Office of Civil Rights has just started asking districts to report how many students miss 15 or more days, with the first data set available in 2016.

We believe a percentage measure makes it easier for schools and communities to notice chronic absence earlier in the school year and start intervening before students have missed so much school they need academic remediation. It also allows for better comparison across districts with different lengths of school year.

Attendance Works would like to express its deep appreciation to the foundations that have funded our work nationally and in communities across the country: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain, Friedman Family Foundation, Kenneth Rainin Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, United Way Bay Area, Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation, Thomas J. Long Foundation, the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and Open Society Institute-Baltimore.

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