



Attendance Data Teams: Tips for Effectiveness

What makes an effective Attendance Data Team? Attendance Data Teams are successful when they both involve the right people and maintain a clear sense of purpose and responsibilities.

Who should participate? To function effectively, an Attendance Data Team needs a designated chair person/facilitator and members such as the principal and others who can understand and analyze attendance data. Ideally teams should include not only school staff but representatives of other community agencies who can help with reaching out to students and their parents, as well as offering resources for overcoming barriers to attendance.

What should they do? Attendance Data Teams have a two-fold responsibility: first, they are charged with looking at individual students who are chronically absent and ensuring their needs are met using all available resources; second, they monitor what is happening overall for all students and student sub-groups at a school site. Attendance teams can carry out both levels of work by clearly defining when they will work at each level. They can, for example, divide a meeting into two parts or alternate the meeting focus.

At the individual student level, they should:

- Examine every week the list of students with attendance issues to ensure that each student receives appropriate supports.
- Look at other data (grades, test scores, behavioral referrals, health issues, etc.) to develop a full picture of what is happening in a student's life, especially for those with more severe attendance problems.
- Use data on attendance and chronic absence to determine the nature and intensity of supports. Supports can range from a call home or a truancy letter to a more intensive intervention and case management process.
- Review outcomes of prior interventions to determine if supports were effective.

At the school level, they should:

- Help communicate the importance of attendance to the entire school staff and clearly spell out how each staff member can work with the Attendance Data Team and help students who are chronically absent.
- Work with the administration to establish positive expectations for good attendance with students and their families. This includes creating a culture of attendance as well as defining what happens when a student misses school. This may include tiered interventions to provide needed support as well as consequences.
- Examine trend information and unusual attendance trends and patterns every quarter.
- Compile data across individual students and multiple data sources to unpack common barriers to attendance and then forge partnerships to address those challenges.
- Assess the impact of programmatic efforts such as attendance incentives on reducing rates of chronic absence.

For more information:

Attendance Works has developed a Toolkit for City Leaders, case studies of communities making a difference and data tools available on our website at www.attendanceworks.org. Contact director Hedy Chang at hedy@attendanceworks.org