

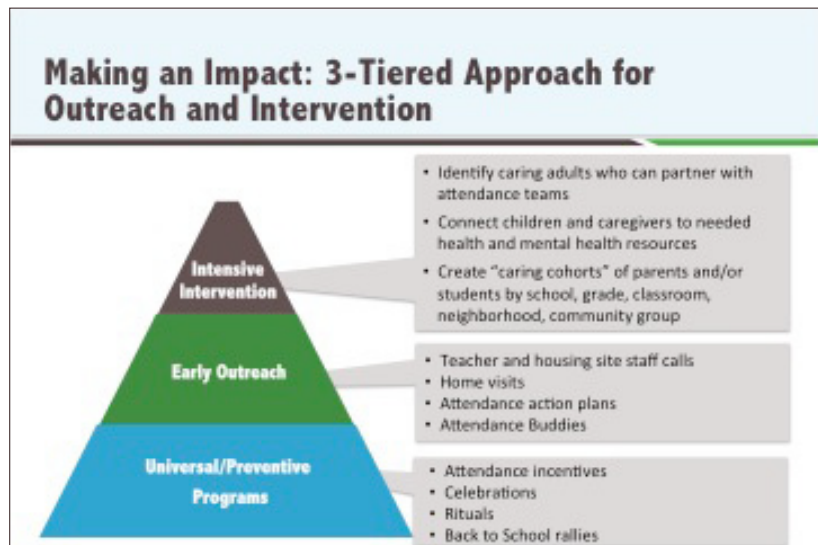
Connecting with Students and Families to Reduce Chronic Absence:

A Model for Outreach and Intervention

Personalized early outreach is one of the key strategies that Attendance Works recommends school communities undertake to move the needle on chronic absence. How personalized early outreach looks and is integrated into school and community practice will vary, but there are a number of strategies with evidence of impact that schools should consider as they design the outreach and intervention processes that work for them.

A 3-Tiered Approach

A systematic and sustainable approach to reducing chronic absence requires a combination of universal and preventive programs that build a culture of attendance throughout the school and community; early outreach that enables school and community staff to build relationships with families and stem absenteeism early on; and intensive intervention that focuses resources on the most high need families.



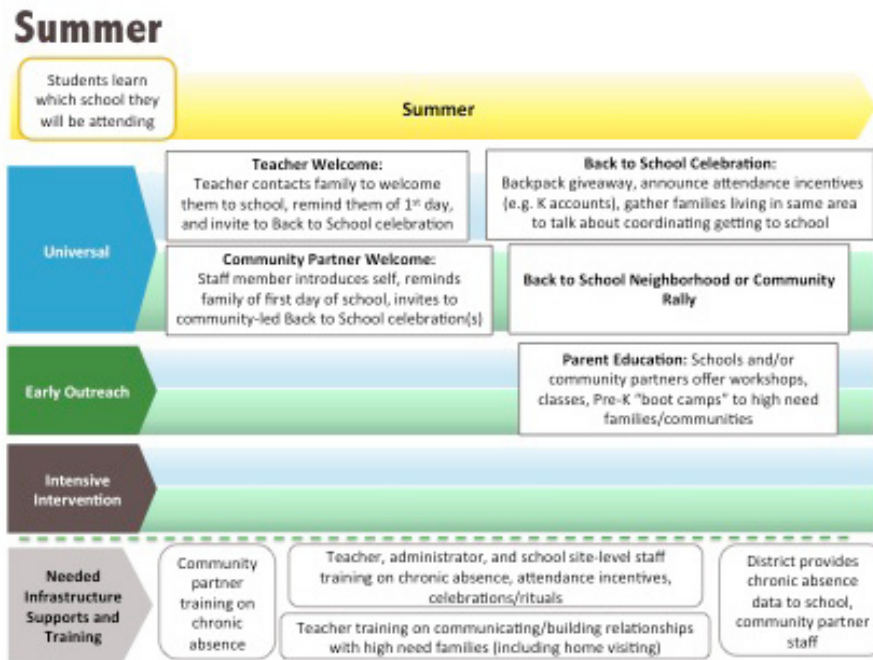
Working with Community Partners to Develop a Coordinated Approach

Building trusting relationships with families is critical to effective outreach and intervention, but this work should not be left on the shoulders of schools alone. Coordinating with community partners allows broader reach, engages more stakeholders, and leverages the relationships and capacities of partners to have greater impact. Together, school staff and community partners can design an approach to outreach and intervention that starts early—before school begins—and continues throughout the year.

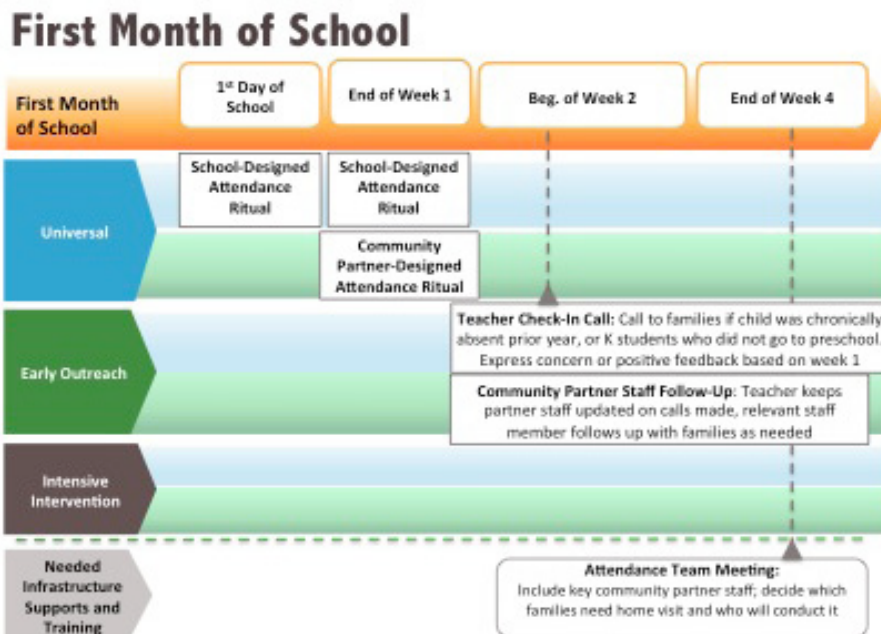
Creating a Plan for the Summer, the Start of School and Beyond

The following diagrams reflect one model for outreach and intervention that integrates the efforts of both school staff and community partner staff. In designing their own model, communities do not need to start from scratch and instead should inventory and leverage what relevant programs and practices already exist. In many cases, elements of a model for outreach and intervention may already be in place but need to be coordinated and structured in a strategic way.

Model for Outreach and Intervention

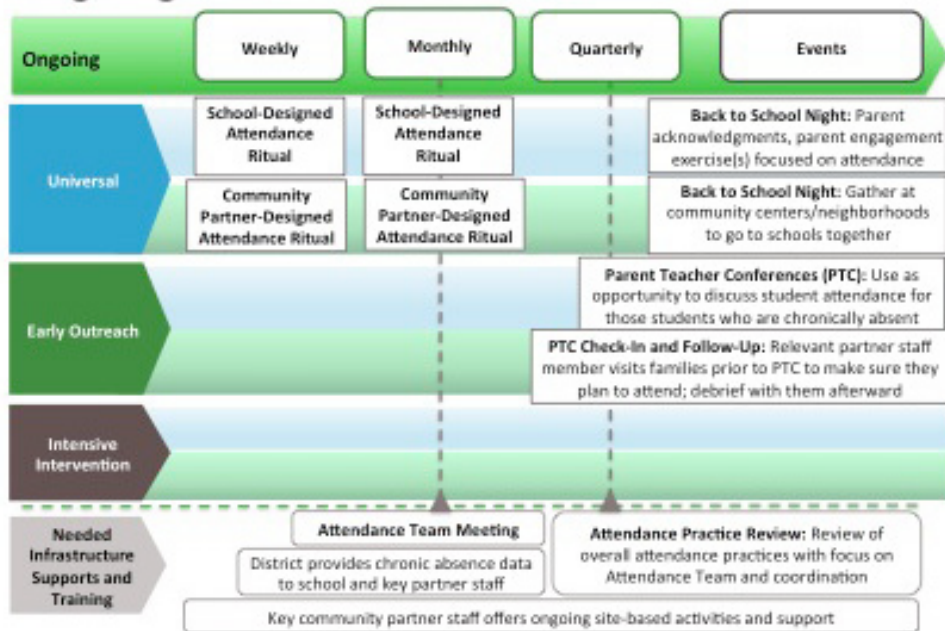


Summer provides the opportunity to prepare for the school year and to set the tone for the rest of the year, not only for students and families, but also for school and community partner staff. Use the summer to begin to build trusting relationships with families and to equip staff with the skills, understanding and data that will enable them to stay informed about their families and work with them effectively to improve students' attendance.



The first month of school is the perfect time to build a sense of excitement about the school year and to introduce students and families to expectations about attendance as well as positive incentives around good and improved attendance. It can also be a gauge for the coming year and gives teachers and community partner staff the opportunity to step in early to stem early signs of chronic absenteeism. Key parent-focused events, such as Back to School Night and parent teacher conferences, can be excellent opportunities to reinforce messaging about the importance of good attendance. Parents should feel supported in their efforts to get their children to school.

Ongoing Practices and Events



To be effective, family outreach, parent education, and celebrations of good and improved attendance must be sustained throughout the year. Schools and community partners should plan for regular and ongoing attendance team meetings and quarterly attendance practice reviews, to ensure that they are coordinating effectively around families in need.

Key Considerations for Effective Outreach and Intervention

- Trusting relationships with families are a critical component for making an impact and taking the time to build these relationships is a worthwhile investment. Schools should also leverage existing relationships in the community to make connections and build their own credibility.
- Intensive intervention strategies should be tailored to the student population and the unique barriers that families face. While trained professionals, such as school social workers, are best equipped to offer this intervention, these efforts should be coordinated with other family outreach efforts so that families have a coordinated system of support.
- Teachers play a critical role in family outreach and intervention, but communicating and working effectively with parents can be difficult, especially for teachers who work with high need students and families. Schools should provide training to help them understand the challenges their students might face, as well as the skills to break down barriers through communication. Teacher home visits can be an effective way to build trusting relationships with parents. Teachers can share their expectations of their students, learn about their students, and hear parents' own hopes and dreams for what their children will achieve.