

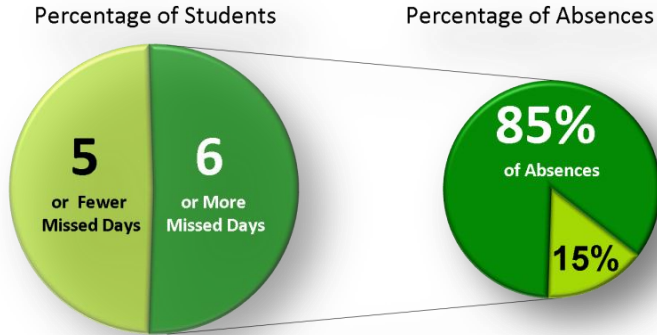
# E<sup>3</sup> Spotlight: The Central Texas Attendance Challenge

**THE CHALLENGE:** Central Texas schools have more student absences than the state average at every grade. Because schools are funded based on attendance, if we could increase average attendance by just three days, Central Texas districts would gain \$34 million in annual revenue from the state that could be used to improve educational outcomes.

**COMPELLING DATA:** An E<sup>3</sup> Alliance analysis found that there are 2.4 million student absences in Central Texas per year. Half of Central Texas students miss more than six class days per year,



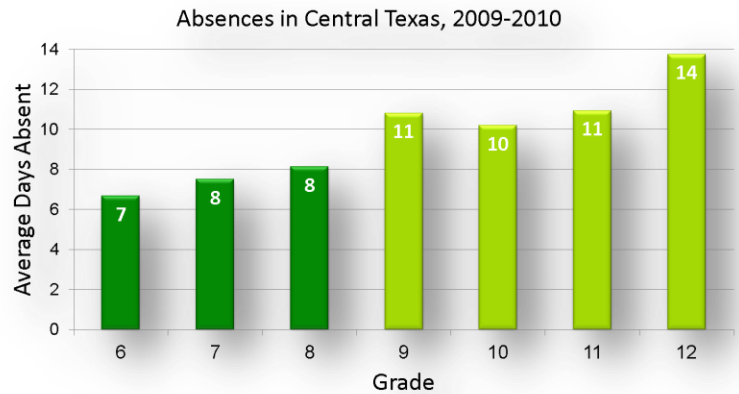
and account for 85 percent of all absences. When we look at absences by grade for middle and high school, we see a big jump in absences between 8th and 9th grade – 9th graders are missing three days more on average. And attendance is highly correlated with performance: those 9<sup>th</sup> graders who end up being retained in grade have four times as many absences (almost five weeks!) as their peers who are promoted, and are *ten times* as likely to drop out!



**THE SOLUTION: “MISSING SCHOOL MATTERS” - THE CENTRAL TEXAS ATTENDANCE CAMPAIGN:** Central Texas superintendents chose increased attendance as the number one way the community could make a difference in our schools because of the

“Triple Bottom Line” benefit:

- Students can learn when in class
- Teachers have more time to teach
- Increased revenue to districts

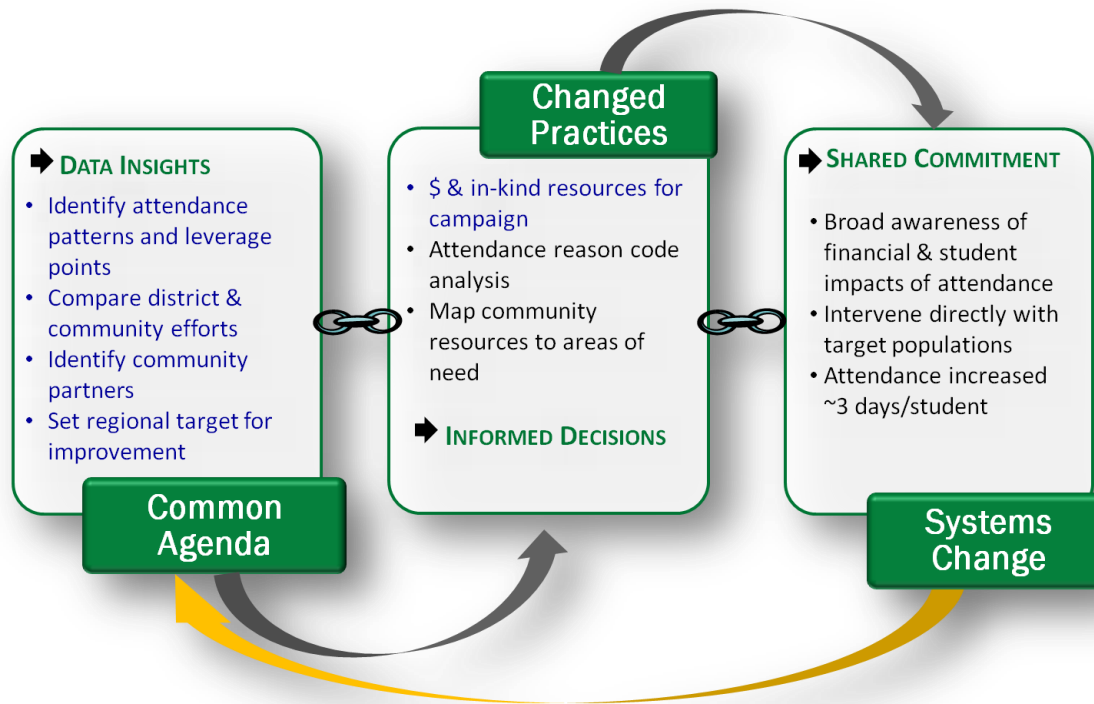


Since the spring of 2011, E<sup>3</sup> Alliance has been spearheading a regional approach to increase student attendance. Together with the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), Central Texas Education Funders, and participating school districts across the region, our goal is to increase attendance by a minimum of two percentage points, or an average of three school days per student. Students can’t learn when they are missing class. When Central Texas Schools receive the state funding for these three previously lost school days, E<sup>3</sup> estimates the region will receive an additional \$34 million.

**3 Days = \$34 Million.**

*Improving student attendance is one of the most important ways our communities can help schools. Our kids can’t learn if they are skipping out, and our schools don’t get paid when students aren’t there. This is something that we as a region can change, and E<sup>3</sup> Alliance is helping to lead the way.” ~ Jesus Chavez, Superintendent, Round Rock ISD*

**A MODEL FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:** Working directly with educators, businesses, healthcare providers, community groups and funders, E<sup>3</sup> Alliance has developed a collaborative approach to drive systemic change as well as develop succinct targeted messages directly to middle and high school students and their parents.



**THE KICKOFF PROGRAM: The Central Texas Get Schooled Fall Attendance Challenge.**

The Get Schooled Foundation works closely with middle and high schools across the country to improve attendance using a unique combination of “sizzle and substance” to engage and inspire more students to attend school. Last fall, Get Schooled, E<sup>3</sup> Alliance and Incite launched a Central Texas Attendance Challenge designed to support area schools’ work to improve their entire school’s



attendance. The campaign targeted 30,000 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in 35

schools across the region with relevant targeted messages and on campus activities in addition to radio, TV and social media outreach. Schools and students engaged in a friendly competition to see which school could earn the most points by increasing student attendance and participating in online games and challenges. At the end of the challenge, Central Texas had five schools in the top 25 across the country, and *Stony Point High School in Round Rock won the national challenge*, while improving their attendance more than 5%, and earning a school visit from a national celebrity! Many more schools will compete in the fall 2013 challenge.



In addition, E<sup>3</sup> is working with AARO and the Ad Council to promote a regional “Missing School Matters” public awareness campaign directed toward parents, educators, businesses and community groups. [www.missingschoolmatters.org](http://www.missingschoolmatters.org) is an online portal to download a promotional toolkit with resources such as logos, flyers, posters, newsletter articles, video and radio PSAs, data and other resources to create regional mindset that *missing school matters*.



**Funding, corporate sponsorships and region-wide awareness on every level will be critical for success!**