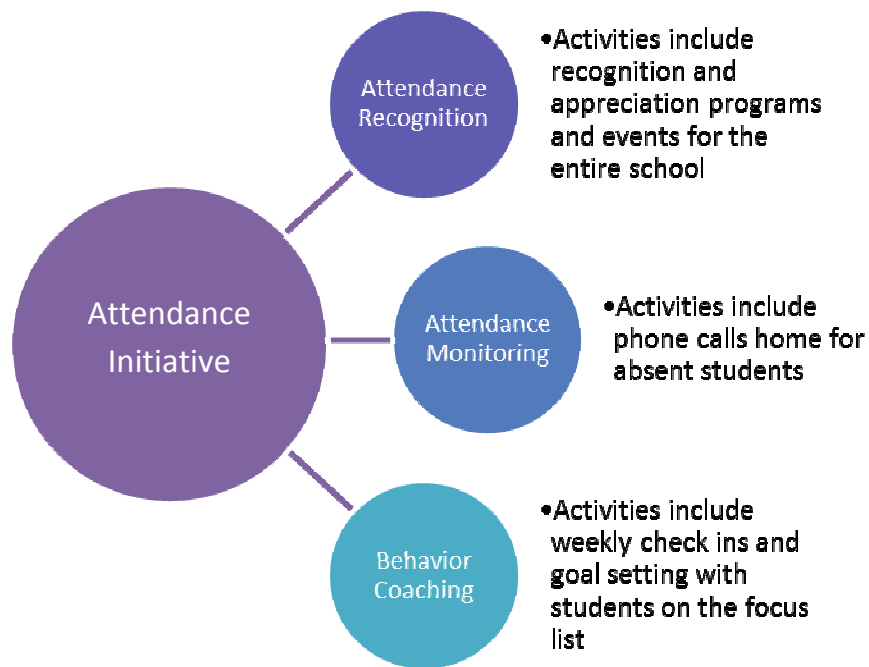




Attendance Initiative

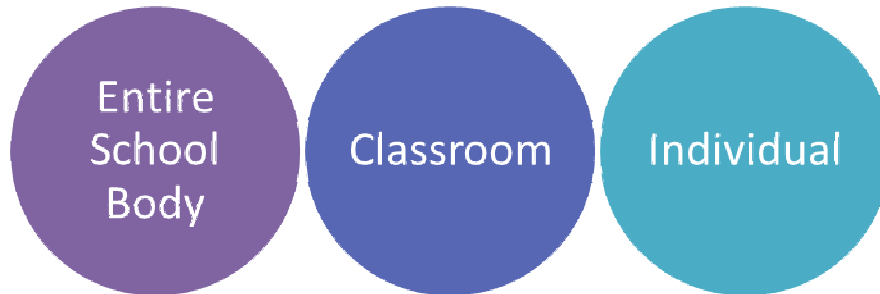
PITW #167: If there is no goal, there can be no success.

Successful students consistently attend school, and students who feel safe, supported and have a sense of belonging at school are more likely to regularly attend school. City Year's attendance initiative seeks to support regular school attendance while accelerating the development of capable, committed learners who are school-connected and community-minded by providing recognition programs for the entire school body and classrooms (Tier 1 supports), as well as targeted interventions for an identified focus list group of students for each corps member (Tier 2 interventions).



ATTENDANCE APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION

Attendance Appreciation and Recognition Programs help to make school a more welcoming place by helping the entire school community appreciate attendance improvements as well as create strong relationships with a focus list of students off-track and/or below average for school attendance that will help them get back on-track.



The most effective practices seem to fall into a few categories; in each category corps members track attendance rates and provide recognition for improved and excellent attendance (above 90%):

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

Attendance monitoring is part of City Year's overall effort to help a student stay in school and be on track to graduate. Each day, corps members receive a list of students who are absent from their homeroom or classrooms and place phone calls home during or after the first period (homeroom/advisory).



At the beginning of the year it is important that Program Managers work with the school liaison to identify a school staff person as the

point for attendance calls home; this point person should also be responsible for sending a *parent notification letter* regarding City Year's efforts to monitoring student attendance.



Initial Phone Call Home

As corps members are assigned names of homes to call, please be aware of gender and language concerns. The *phone call home script* provides ideas for conversation and is a helpful resource in troubleshooting potential challenges. When corps members initially make an attendance call home it will be important to be able to refer to parent notification letter.



Post Phone Call

Document the date, time, phone number, and person you spoke to. Jot down a few notes and the parent's thoughts/suggestion for helping the student as well as



follow-up notes. It is important to document calls even if no one picks up the phone. We recommend that you use the *weekly call log* to capture all the records on one document. The *daily call log* sheet is good to use to collect the initial information while you are on the phone.



ATTENDANCE COACHING

Attendance coaching is targeted intervention that supports regular school attendance as well as helps students develop various lifelong skills. An integral part of attendance coaching is building trust with the students; corps members will set high expectations and coach students to internalize high expectations. Through a deliberate, gradual release, students will increase their ownership over their behavior, leading to future independence.

Structure

Corps members will use the Check In Check Out approach to structure attendance coaching conversations.

- What: Check in Check out is a weekly check in system that involves corps members and students discussing issues affecting student attendance, problem solving and setting goals regarding their attendance.
- How: Corps members check in with students on Monday (to set goal, discuss potential challenges) and Thursday (to review goal, discuss any concerns or issues). If student is absent on those days, it should be addressed the next week. Corps members will use their *attendance coaching check in check out logs* (can be found in the learner and leader plan) to track goals and conversations with students.
- Why: Check In Check Out provides meaningful support and problem solving to students while providing an opportunity for corps member and student to build relationship.
- When: Corps members should schedule 5-10 minutes during lunch, recess, before school, afterschool or homeroom on Mondays and Thursdays.



During attendance coaching conversations corps members should get to know why a student is not attending school as this will help them problem solve and set goals. The most commonly cited reasons that students have given for not attending school include (Clement, Gwynne, & Younkin, 2001;Wagstaff, Combs, & Jarvis, 2000):

1. View classes as boring, irrelevant, and a waste of time
2. Do not have positive relationships with teachers
3. Do not have positive relationships with other students
4. Often suspended
5. Do not feel safe at school
6. Cannot keep up with schoolwork or is failing (and there were no timely interventions)
7. Find classes not challenging enough (worksheets and reading with lectures were the predominant activities), and students can miss class days and still receive credit

8. Have trouble balancing work and going to school at the same time

It is important that you understand why each student is struggling to consistently attend school in order to guide your coaching conversations with individual students. Below you can find sample discussion topics:

Reason for student absence	Discussion topics
<p>If student “doesn’t feel like coming to school,” thinks school is “boring” or doesn’t understand why coming to school is important, focus on...</p>	<p>Discuss how student can find relevancy in classes and school activities</p> <p>Encourage student to think about short term and long term goals and brainstorm how school can help them achieve those goals</p>
<p>If student is struggling with academics (feels too far behind or not challenged enough), focus on...</p>	<p>Encourage student to use school resources, like City Year homework help or school specialists</p> <p>Encourage student to review academic progress frequently</p> <p>Design intervention sessions that engage students in grade-appropriate challenges using both lower and higher order thinking questions</p>
<p>If student is struggling to building positive relationships (with adults and/or peers), focus on...</p>	<p>Encourage student to participate in activities with other students like afterschool</p> <p>Encourage student to take leaderships opportunities when available (ex: student council)</p> <p>Encourage students to have positive interactions with adult and think through those interactions.</p>

Reason for student absence	Discussion topics
If student doesn't feel safe at school, focus on...	Find out primary reasons the student feels unsafe and help create a plan for addressing (note: depending on what the student discloses you may need to involve school personnel)
If student is being suspended often or missing school to avoid getting into trouble, focus on...	If possible, invite student to join 50 Acts of Leadership behavior coaching Encourage student to reflect on actions and decisions that are causing him/her to get into trouble and miss school
If student has other responsibilities that impact getting to school, focus on...	Discuss alternatives and back up plans for getting to school when responsibilities like work or child care are present Discuss the people that can support the student in coming to school

Attendance coaching by the numbers

1

2

3

- Each corps member will have a focus list of **4-6** students
- Each corps member should have at least **2** check ins with each focus list student each week
- Each group is expected to meet for (a minimum of) **8** weeks over the course of the school year



Students are more likely to remain and achieve in schools where people care about them (Benard, 2004; Green, 1998; Steinberg & Allen, 2002; Wimberly, 2002).