

Does Attendance Really Count in Our School?

A Tool for Self-Assessment - (Revised August 1, 2014)

Key Element	Strength	OK for Now	Could be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How do you know?
1. Attendance is accurately taken and entered daily into the district data system in all classrooms.						
2. Our school has a clear and widely understood attendance policy.						
3. A team including the site administrator reviews attendance data on a regular basis to identify chronically absent students and monitor attendance patterns by grade, student sub-groups and classroom.						
4. We offer such rich and engaging learning activities that students do not want to miss school.						
5. We recognize and appreciate good and improved attendance.						
6. We inform parents about the importance of attendance and encourage families to help one another get their children to school.						
7. From the beginning of the school year, we identify and reach out to students at risk for chronic absence and their families in a positive, caring manner to see how we can support good attendance.						
8. Our school partners with community agencies that offer resources (pre-K, afterschool, health services, volunteer mentors, and transportation) that can help engage students & their families and remove barriers to getting to school.						
9. Individual learning plans are developed for high-risk students and address poor attendance along with low academic performance.						
10. Our school's discipline policy and practice ensure students do not miss instruction due to suspensions for non-threatening behaviors.						
11. Our strategies for supporting student attendance are reflected in our school improvement plan.						

(Note: Chronic Absence is missing=> 10% of school over a year including any type of absence; Satisfactory Attendance is missing=< 5% of school over a year)

Instructions for Conducting Self-Assessment With a Team

This self-assessment tool can be used by individuals to help them gain a deeper understanding of what is and could be happening to improve attendance at their school. It is also an excellent tool for laying the foundation for a team of key stakeholders to begin working together to reduce student absences. Below are suggested guidelines for engaging a team. If possible, identify one person who will assume responsibility for facilitating this process and dialogue.

1. **Bring together a team of key stakeholders** in your school to complete this self-assessment. Participants should include the principal, attendance personnel, classroom teachers, staff from partnering community agencies, and if possible, active parents. Feel free to expand this list to include others that you think might have valuable insights to offer about student attendance in your school.
2. **Ask each participant** to spend 10 minutes completing the tool.
3. **Hand out an extra copy of the tool** and ask participants to add in their responses with a hatch mark. Make copies of the version with everyone's responses. (An alternative option is to put up an enlarged copy of the tool on the wall and ask participants to add their responses using a marker. This approach allows everyone to see the collective responses without the need for additional copies.)

As a group, review the collective results. Encourage participants to identify and explore where there appear to be differences in how stakeholders have ranked a particular element. Use this as an opportunity find out why the other person might have different perspectives. Keep in mind that the goal is to deepen understanding of why the differences of opinion might exist; agreeing upon a rating is not essential.

4. **After comparing results**, participants should discuss what they see as the biggest gaps or priorities to address in the near future. If needed, use dots or take hand vote to agree upon the top three next steps. For each one, discuss: Who needs to be involved in advancing this priority? What are immediate next steps? Who can take responsibility for ensuring follow-up occurs? Determine how to stay in communication with each other about progress on the next steps and decide whether a follow-up meeting is needed.