Attend to Achieve

How Chronic Absence Affects Student Academic Outcomes

February 23, 2015
Chronic Absence

Attendance Works recommends defining chronic absence as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason.**

- **Excused Absences**
- **Unexcused absences**
- **Suspensions**

**Chronic absence** is different from **truancy** (3 unexcused absences, tardies of 30 minutes or more) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
High Levels of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

Chronic Absence for 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with 95% ADA in 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% Chronic Absence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% Chronic Absence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don’t know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence
Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence

Number of Chronically Absent Versus Chronically Truant Students
San Francisco Unified School District

# chronic absentees - 2010-2011
# students missing 10 days unexcused (as of May 16th 2011)
Nationwide, as many as 7.5 million students miss nearly a month of school every year. In California, the Attorney General estimates 250,000 elementary school students are chronically absent.

Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.

Research shows that chronically absent students are less likely to succeed academically, and are more likely to be suspended and eventually dropout.

Poor attendance isn’t just a problem in high school. It can start as early as pre-kindergarten.
Absences Add Up: Less School = Lower Scores

Impact of Prior Month Absences on National Assessment of Educational Progress (Absences Add Up)

A 10-point difference on the NAEP is equivalent to one year of learning.  
http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/absences-add/
Chronic Absence in Kindergarten and 1st Grade = Lower 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1st Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Risk</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No risk</td>
<td>Missed less than 5% of school in K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small risk</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in both K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate risk</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year &amp; 10% in 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>Missed 10% or more in K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)
Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade.

Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:
- Lower 6th grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

Oakland Unified School District SY 2006-2012, Analysis By Attendance Works
Chronic Absence, Starting in the Early Grades, Contributes to the Achievement Gap

The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates are Cumulative

With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>% of students dropping out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chronic Absence in High School Predicts Lower College Participation

In Rhode Island, only 11% of chronically absent high school students persisted into a 2nd year of college vs. 51% of those with low absences.
How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
Find Out Why Students are Chronically Absent

Myths
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

Barriers
- Chronic disease
- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor transportation
- No safe path to school

Aversion
- Child struggling academically
- Lack of engaging instruction
- Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
Going to School Every Day Reflects When Families Have ...

Hope
for a better future
+

Faith
that school will help you or your child succeed
+

Capacity
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school
AW Recommended Site-Level Strategies

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance
B. Engage Students and Parents

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach
C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice
Improving Attendance Requires a Multi-Tiered Approach

**TIER 1**
- All students
  - Recognize good and improved attendance
  - Educate & engage students and families
    - Monitor attendance data
  - Clarify attendance expectations and goals
  - Establish positive and engaging school climate

**TIER 2**
- Students exhibiting chronic absence (missing 10%) or receiving 3 NOTs.
  - Provide personalized early outreach
  - Meet with student/family to develop plan
    - Offer attendance Mentor/Buddy

**TIER 3**
- Students who missed 20% or more of the prior school year (severe chronic absence) or were chronically truant.
  - Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

Truancy interventions

High Cost

Low Cost
Tier 1: Communication, Education, and Engagement
Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
- And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:

  - In first 2 weeks: 2 absences
  - In first month (4 weeks): 2-3 absences
  - In first 2 months (8 weeks): 4 absences

Missing 10% any time after
Possible Tier 2 Interventions

- Assign Attendance Buddies
- Partner with families/students to develop Student Attendance Success Plan
- Recruit for engaging Before- or After-School Activities
- Connect to Walk-to-School Companion
- Offer plan or contacts for Health Support
Key Finding: Success Mentors & Supporting Infrastructure Substantially Improved Student Attendance

- Students with prior histories of chronic absenteeism who were paired with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school (9 days), which is educationally significant.

- In the top 25% of schools, students with Success Mentors gained one additional month of school.

- High School students with Success Mentors (including those overage for their grade) were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year.

- Mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their attendance, schoolwork, motivation, and confidence.
Tools for Tier 2: 
The Power of Positive Connections

The Power of Positive Connections
Reducing Chronic Absence through PEOPLE: Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages and Engagement

www.attendanceworks.org
Attendance data can help identify how to target community resources.

This analysis divides all chronically absent 1st graders in Oakland Unified district into 4 tiers (almost quartiles) based upon their level of absence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absence Rate Range</th>
<th>Average Absence Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 1</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 2</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 3</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 4</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability

**Positive Messaging**
- Conveys why building a habit of attendance is important and what chronic absence is

**Actionable Data**
- Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported

**Shared Accountability**
- Ensures monitoring & incentives to address chronic absence

**Capacity Building**
- Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients

**District**
- Expands ability to interpret data and work together to adopt best practices

**Community**
- Conveys why building a habit of attendance is important and what chronic absence is
Accountability for Chronic Absence Built into LCAP Eight Priorities

1. Teachers, Materials, Facilities
2. Academic Standards
3. Parent involvement
4. Student achievement
5. **Pupil Engagement**: Measured by all of the following, as applicable: School attendance rates; Chronic absenteeism rates; Middle school dropout rates; High school dropout rates; High school graduation rates.
6. **School Climate**: Measured by all of the following, as applicable: Pupil suspension rates; Pupil expulsion rates; Other local measures, including surveys of pupils, parents, and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness.
7. Access to Courses
8. Other student outcomes.
Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

### Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools (2009-10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with &gt;20.1% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. Schools</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest % of Chronic Absence</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest % of Chronic Absence</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
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Los Angeles Attendance Improvement Program

• **Data-driven action:** Data are used to identify where to place counselors, which students to target and to evaluate success.

• **Attendance Improvement Counselors:** Attendance Improvement Counselors, along with Vista national service members, helped the schools track data, adopt universal & targeted interventions, create incentives for good attendance, reach out to students and parents, and ensure a timely response to poor attendance.

• **Capacity-building:** The Attendance Improvement Counselors are also charged with building the capacity of the school staff, parents, and community partners to understand attendance laws, use data, and develop a comprehensive approach that includes prevention and early intervention.
LAUSD Attendance Improvement
Program Outcomes

Program Impact in Year 1 (2011-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Missing 7 days or less (96%+)</th>
<th>Missing 15 or more days (&lt;91%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIP Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>37.24%</td>
<td>57.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>51.45%</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Wide</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>63.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>54.29%</td>
<td>58.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Program operated in 77 schools, including 52 elementary and 25 high schools with poor K and 9th grade attendance
Characteristics of More Successful AIP programs

- **Strength-based approach** with more positive perceptions of parents; higher expectations of their students and parents

- Greater levels of **parent engagement**

- A shared belief that **everyone had a role** in improving attendance and should work together

- **Deeper levels of commitment** to program implementation and delving into the causes of absence

- **School leadership** made improving attendance a high priority
The Superintendents Call to Action

Own the Issue

Mobilize the Community

Drive With Data

To sign up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit: www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action
Chronic Absence =
The Warning Light on a Car Dashboard

The Parallels

• Ignore it at your personal peril!
• Address early or potentially pay more (lots more) later.
• The key is to ask why is this blinking? What could this mean?