



Dear Superintendent,

This letter comes as an invitation, a challenge and a Call to Action. We are asking you and local school superintendents across the country to lift up an important and increasingly urgent issue. Across the country, schools are dealing with a hidden crisis that is undermining student achievement as early as kindergarten: chronic absenteeism. In April 2018, the U.S. Department of Education released new chronic absence data for schools across the country, showing that about 8 million students (more than 15 percent) missed 15 or more days of school (nearly a month) during the 2015-16 academic year. This level of absenteeism leaves students struggling to read proficiently by third grade and more likely to drop out of high school. This is not simply a matter of truancy: excused absences often related to illness and lack of access to needed health supports also cost valuable instructional time, as do days lost to suspension.

As convening partners in Attendance Awareness Month campaign, we are calling on local superintendents to play a leadership role in taking a data driven, positive, problem-solving approach to reducing chronic absence. By signing on to our Call to Action, you will join a growing national movement of school leaders looking beyond average daily attendance and truancy numbers to identify and address the challenges that keep students from getting to school every day. Your participation means you are committing to:

1. Prioritize Attendance
2. Mobilize the Community
3. Drive with Data

The time is right to make a difference. Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), all states must report on chronic absence, and the vast majority have adopted chronic absence as a metric for school accountability. Local superintendents are essential to implementation. Although many people – parents, public officials, business leaders, health providers, public agencies and community organizations – understand the critical connection between school attendance and achievement, few realize how quickly absences can add up to too much lost time in the classroom. Research suggests that most families want their children to succeed and recognize that regular attendance is important. But few realize missing just 10 percent of school, as few as two days a month, can throw a child off track. Working together with community partners, district leaders can help motivate students and families to avoid unnecessary absences as well as overcome challenging barriers to getting to school.

Join this Call to Action to guarantee that all students have a chance to learn and succeed by making sure every day counts, starting in kindergarten. Take your first step by registering at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action>. We will provide you and your designees access to materials and resources designed to make your effort a success and make it easier for you to connect with your peers engaged in similar work. If you sign up and share your baseline chronic absence data with us by September 1, 2018, your name will be included in our advertisement appearing in Education Week at the end of the month. We would like to extend a special thank you to Scholastic for sponsoring the EdWeek advertisement. If you have any questions, please contact: [info@attendanceworks.org](mailto:info@attendanceworks.org).

Sincerely,

- [JOHN GOMPERTS](#), President & CEO, America's Promise Alliance
- [HEDY N. CHANG](#), Executive Director, Attendance Works
- [ROBERT BALFANZ](#), Director, Everyone Graduates Center
- [RALPH SMITH](#), Managing Director, The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
- [MARIE GROARK](#), Executive Director, Get Schooled
- [ROCHELLE DAVIS](#), President & CEO, Healthy Schools Campaign
- [JOHAN UVIN](#), President, Institute for Educational Leadership
- [TRACY HOOVER](#), CEO, Points of Light
- [DAVID SHAPIRO](#), President & CEO, MENTOR
- [MARY SELLERS](#), U.S. President, United Way Worldwide