

# Does Our School District Have a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence?

## A Planning Tool for Districts and Communities

Actionable data, positive engagement, capacity building, shared accountability, and strategic partnerships all play an integral role in reducing chronic absence in your district. After assessing where you are across all five ingredients, think about the actions your district will take on its own and with the help of community partners. What are your next steps? Who is responsible for each task? When will each task be completed?

ACTIONABLE DATA	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. At least once a year, the district leaders and school board set districtwide goals for attendance and routinely report aggregate and disaggregated attendance and chronic absence data by school, grade level, and ESSA targets sub-groups to the public.				
2. At least every two weeks (ideally in real time), attendance data reports (with satisfactory, at risk, moderate and severe chronic absence) are produced and reviewed by a cross-departmental district level team that also ensures schools accurately enter daily attendance into the district student information system.				
3. At least every two weeks (ideally in real time), the district distributes attendance data to individual schools and their attendance teams broken down by grades, vulnerable student populations, zip codes and attendance categories (satisfactory, at-risk, moderate and severe chronic absence).				
4. The district ensures students and parents/caregivers have access to their own attendance data. It is easy to understand and alerts them when a student is academically at risk due to poor attendance.				

<b>POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>What are Key Next Steps?</b>	<b>Individuals or Groups Responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Resources to Leverage</b>
<p>1. District leaders consistently and clearly promote awareness among district staff, parents, key stakeholders and the general public about chronic absence, why it matters, and how it can be addressed through a comprehensive approach via flyers, handbooks, back-to-school letters, and other communications.</p>				
<p>2. The district staff ensure that schools are equipped to engage students and families as partners in reducing chronic absence including identifying attendance barriers and putting in place meaningful solutions.</p>				
<p>3. The district has explicit attendance protocols for personalized, early and ongoing outreach to families when students are absent and routinely tracks and monitors implementation of the protocols.</p>				
<p>4. District leaders publicly recognize schools and community partners that demonstrate best practice strategies and achieve measurable reductions in chronic absences, including those that demonstrate how to improve attendance of different vulnerable student populations.</p>				

<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>	<b>What are Key Next Steps?</b>	<b>Individuals or Groups Responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Resources to Leverage</b>
<p>1. The district has a widely disseminated, comprehensive attendance policy and practice manual that reflects state regulations, clearly lays out why attendance matters, describes what schools can do to build a positive culture of attendance and outlines multi-tiered strategies for reducing chronic absence.</p>				
<p>2. A cross-departmental district level team, led by a high-level administrator, is in place to implement a systemic, tiered approach (see appendix A) to improving attendance that aligns with existing strategies to improve academic outcomes.</p>				
<p>3. The district team builds school level capacity to reduce chronic absenteeism. This includes equipping schools to have functioning teams to address attendance by providing guidance, resources, and materials to identify and remove attendance barriers and support implementation of interventions tailored to the realities of each school and their students and families.</p>				
<p>4. The district team ensures that school staff receive professional development and resources to ensure sensitivity to cultural differences and challenges that vulnerable students and their families may experience when seeking to reduce absenteeism.</p>				

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
<p>1. The district team ensures that school leaders have the appropriate supports and are held accountable for: having a data-driven plan to address chronic absence, setting measurable targets for improvement, and monitoring and reporting progress.</p>				
<p>2. District leaders prioritize the distribution of financial and staffing resources to schools with higher rates of chronic absence and large populations of vulnerable students.</p>				
<p>3. The district team responds to structural attendance barriers identified by schools and negotiates contracts or MOUs with community organizations that outline how they can partner with the district and schools to address attendance barriers.</p>				
<p>4. The district makes easy-to-access, annually updated, online chronic absence reports by school, grade and sub-population so families and community stakeholders can monitor progress.</p>				

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
<p>1. The district team ensures that cross-sector partnerships are established by creating opportunities to share relevant data and district attendance plans with community partners to support efforts to improve school attendance and support vulnerable populations.</p>				
<p>2. The district team creates materials, resources and opportunities to help public agencies, non-profit organizations and civic groups work together with schools and the district to promote <b>Tier 1</b> positive messaging and engagement about the importance of daily attendance for academic success and the availability of community resources.</p>				
<p>3. The district team facilitates community and agency partnerships to implement <b>Tier 2</b> early intervention strategies and personalized outreach to connect students and families to needed supports and resources.</p>				
<p>4. The district team facilitates community and agency partnerships to implement intensive intervention that prioritizes and <b>Tier 3</b> coordinates provision of case management and service delivery to students who are severely chronically absent. Resources are tailored to address the strengths and needs of vulnerable student populations.</p>				

## Overall Reflections & Next Steps

1. What are your district's **greatest strengths** across the five ingredients? (Review the results from your self-assessment.)
2. What are the **biggest challenges** your district faces across the five ingredients? (Review the results from your self-assessment.)
3. What are the three or four **most important steps** that could be taken over the course of the next year to lay the foundation for reducing chronic absence?
4. **What is already going on** in your community and school district that could be leveraged to help take these steps?
5. If you are creating this action plan with others, **share all of your ideas** for the three or four most important steps. Identify if any of the steps are more important to achieve first to lay the foundation for others. Agree upon the top three to five shared priorities for action.
6. For each priority, **identify the following**: what are the resources that could be leveraged; who are the key groups that should be involved; who could take the lead in moving it forward; and what is your timeline for action.