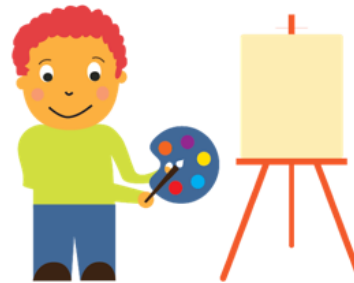




Caring Conversations with Families to Support Participation & Engagement



November 10, 2021



With Appreciation

This four-part webinar series is a part of a research study funded by a Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood grant to the Center for Early Childhood Education and Intervention (CECEI) at the University of Maryland, and its partner organization, Attendance Works.

The purpose of the research study is to understand and improve attendance and participation in early learning. Given the extraordinary circumstances of this school year, we believe the information collected from this study is more important than ever.

We hope you will view all four webinars and that you will consent to respond to the post-webinar survey today. Your responses will inform Pre-K programming.



Introductions

Use the Chat and share:

- ✓ Your name, role, and county
- ✓ Who is a key partner in your community for connecting and engaging with families?



The Learning Objectives are to...

1. Learn Attendance Works' framework, Caring Conversations, for talking with families about attendance,
2. Hear from Maryland early education program providers about efforts to support family engagement and student participation.



Agenda

I. Welcome

II. Attendance is a Leading Indicator of Engagement and Access

III. Bright Spot: A Strategic Partnership to Achieve Contact, Access, Participation and Relationships

❖ *Shadia Musa*, Family Services Coordinator, Liberty Judy Center, Baltimore City Public Schools

IV. The Story Behind Student Absenteeism

V. Family Engagement Bright Spot

❖ *Tessera Slade*, Director, Lakeland Judy Center, Baltimore City Public Schools

❖ *Kelly Longerbeam*, Coordinator for Early Learning, Washington County Public Schools

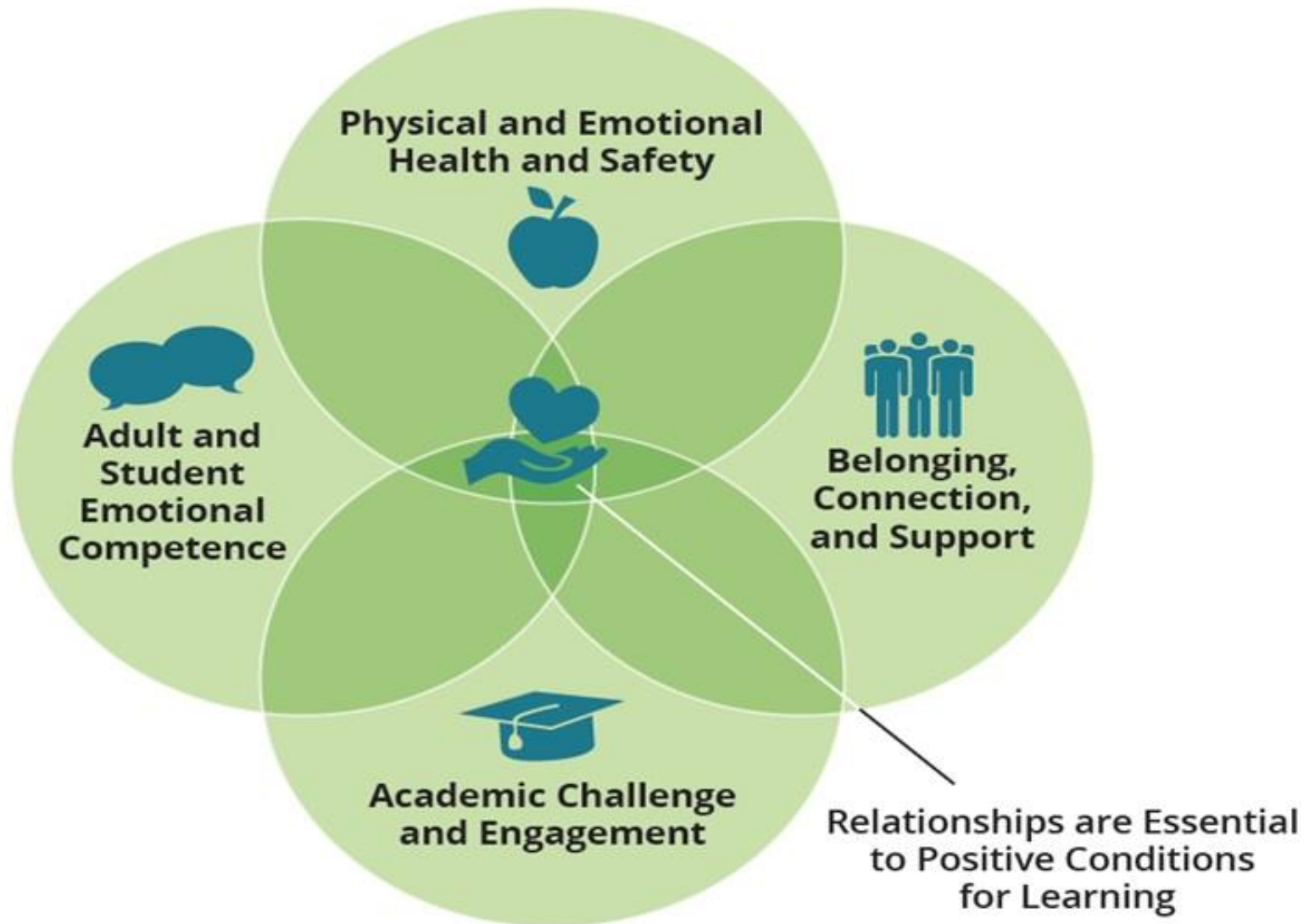
VI. Caring Conversations for Talking about Absences with Families

VII. Closing

Attendance is a Leading Indicator of Engagement and Access



Children are more likely to Attend School When Positive Conditions for Learning are in Place for Them and Their Families





Students who Attend Regularly Gain Critical Learning Skills

Researchers found that Pre-K students who attended regularly (missing 0-1 days a month) are more likely to master these kindergarten readiness skills:

- Math
- Letter Recognition
- Pre-Literacy
- Social and Emotional Development



Gottfried, M. (2015). Chronic Absenteeism in the Classroom Context: Effects on Achievement. *Urban Education*, 54 (1), 3-34.



Performance Standards

Head Start Performance Standards:

- Document attendance for each child
- 85% ADA
- Implement strategies that promote attendance
- Engage families in understanding the benefits of good attendance
- Take action to address individual patterns of 10% absence

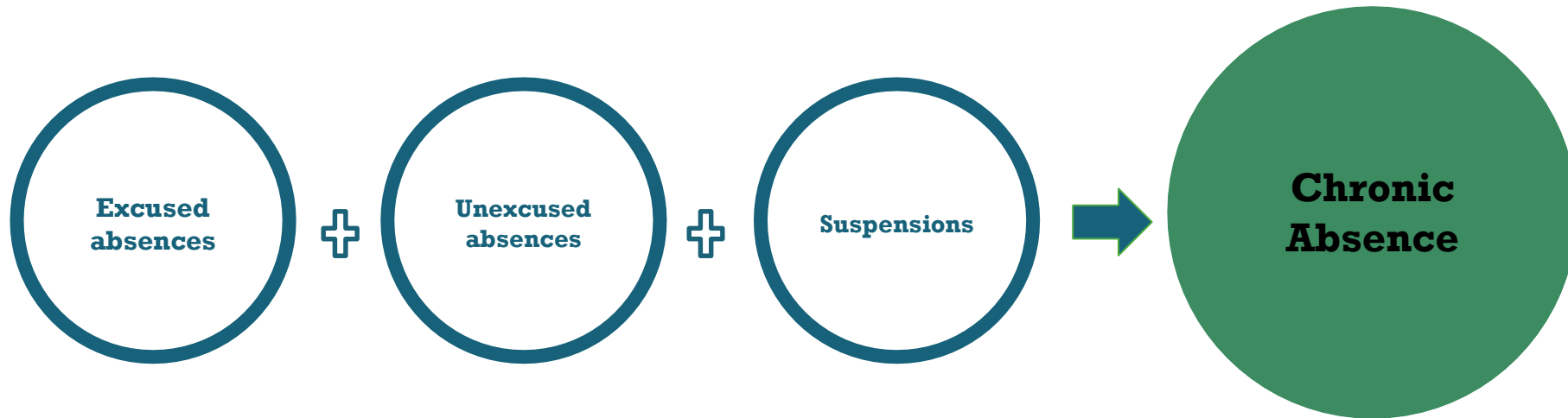
MD State Performance Standards:

- Document attendance for each child
- 15% of Maryland's Every Student Succeeds Act Accountability Rubric K-12 (not chronically absent)



Chronic Absence Measures Lost Opportunity to Learn

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

Pay Attention to these “On-Ramps” to Learning



Bright Spot:
*A Strategic Partnership to Achieve
Contact, Connection, Participation and Relationships*

Shadia Musa

Family Services Coordinator, Liberty Judy Center
Baltimore City Public Schools

The Story Behind Student Absenteeism



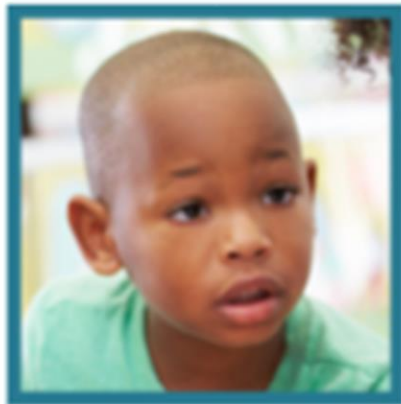


Perception vs. Reality

Dillon's Story



Dillon missed 36 days of school last year. That's a lot of instruction time missed.
Why is he absent so often, especially in these early years?



Dillon Wilson
3rd grade

THE PERCEPTION

Dillon's parents don't care enough to get him to school. Maybe they aren't at home during the day, or have other kids to deal with, but whatever the excuse, they obviously just don't care enough about his education.



Perception vs. Reality



Dillon missed 36 days of school last year. That's a lot of instruction time missed.
Why is he absent so often, especially in these early years?



THE REALITY

Dillon was diagnosed with asthma as a baby. He struggles with outdoor activities and relies on a rescue inhaler many days at school. He lives with his widowed grandmother. When the air quality is bad, his grandmother keeps him home.



Solutions Require Understanding What Factors Contribute to Chronic Absence

Please share in the chat the causes of absenteeism at your school or program.

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Etc. and many more!

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Parents had negative educational experiences

Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence



Implications for Action

- ❖ Center on equity-focused and solidarity-driven family engagement practices
 - To learn more, listen to Eyal Bergman discuss his research during the webinar, [Welcomed: Embracing Students & Families](#)
- ❖ Use enrollment and attendance data to activate early outreach and intervention
- ❖ Use enrollment and attendance data to measure the effectiveness of strategies and to identify good practice

Family Engagement Bright Spot

Tessera Slade

Director, Lakeland Judy Center
Baltimore City Public Schools

Kelly Longerbeam

Coordinator for Early Learning
Washington County Public Schools

Attendance Support and Strategies

at Lakeland Judy Center





Lakeland School and Community

- Elementary and Middle School
- Title 1
- 1000+ students
- 100+ Teachers and Staff
- Close to 70% LatinX at the ECE grades (PK - 2nd)
- 93% attendance rate
- Southwest Baltimore City
- Little to no community resource or support agencies
- Community School
- Offer space and opportunities for community resource agencies to connect with our families



Family Engagement Activities

Parent Breakfast Club - in Person (Opportunity to share what's happening in school and get family input on how things are going, what can we do better, what supports are needed))

A Day with Judy Center - virtual (Opportunity to share what's coming, promote services and initiatives, and get family input on how things are going and ideas on other things we can offer)

Playgroups - Hybrid

Family Events and Celebrations:

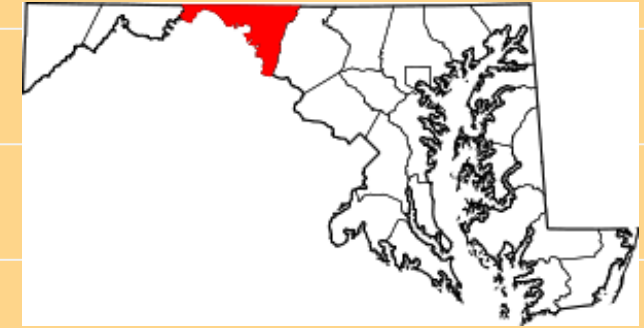
- Enrollment Events (Community Festival; Judy Center Summer Carnival)
- HHM
- Pancake Breakfast
- Black Excellence



When Students Must Quarantine

- Weekly testing for classrooms
- Positive Pool stays home - whole class virtual
 - Returns to school next day for individual testing only
- Positive student stays home - continuity of learning plan starts (daily)
 - Early learning packet
 - Live SEL check-in
 - Synchronous learning with class and teacher
 - Asynchronous work on SeeSaw platform

Washington County Public Schools, MD

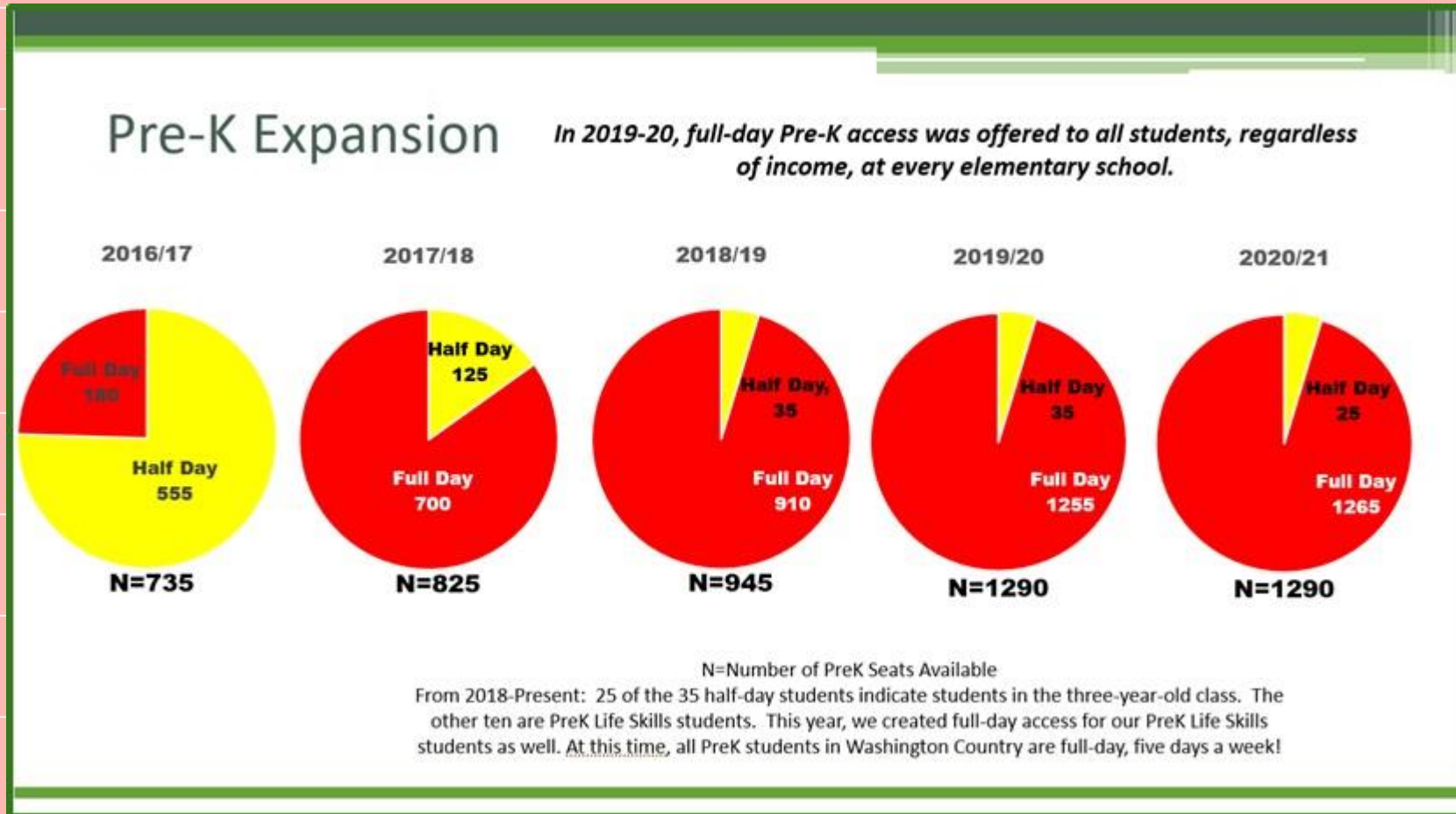


Our 48 schools serving over 23,000 students include urban, suburban, and rural demographics.

**Kelly Longerbeam,
Coordinator for Early Learning**

Early Childhood Programs

We have expanded! Universal Pre-K in WCPS!



All about Pre-K:

- ❑ 25 Elementary Schools
- ❑ One High School/Pre-K Collaboration
- ❑ Participation in EXCELS
- ❑ One Advanced Learner Pre-K
- ❑ One Behavioral Pre-K Program (Fluid)
- ❑ 5 Integrated Pre-K Classrooms
- ❑ One Pre-K 3 Classroom
- ❑ Lots of partnerships
- ❑ Incredible staff
- ❑ PD around research based foundational skills

Current Enrollment: 1,043

Enrollment Efforts

- Hopping into Pre-K
- Flyers, Signs, and Billboards
- T-shirt Promotion
- Enrollment Car Kits
- Porch Visits w/ 50 Books
- Social Media Blasts
- ECAC Summer Kits
- Community Partners
- Neighborhood Blitz
- International Welcome Center



Quarantined Students

If a student can participate in academic activities, they have access to meaningful academic activities. This should include:

- Access to a teacher, substitute, and/or tutor
- AND
- Access to meaningful instructional resources and activities

Procedures in place for students who need access to technology and/or internet services.

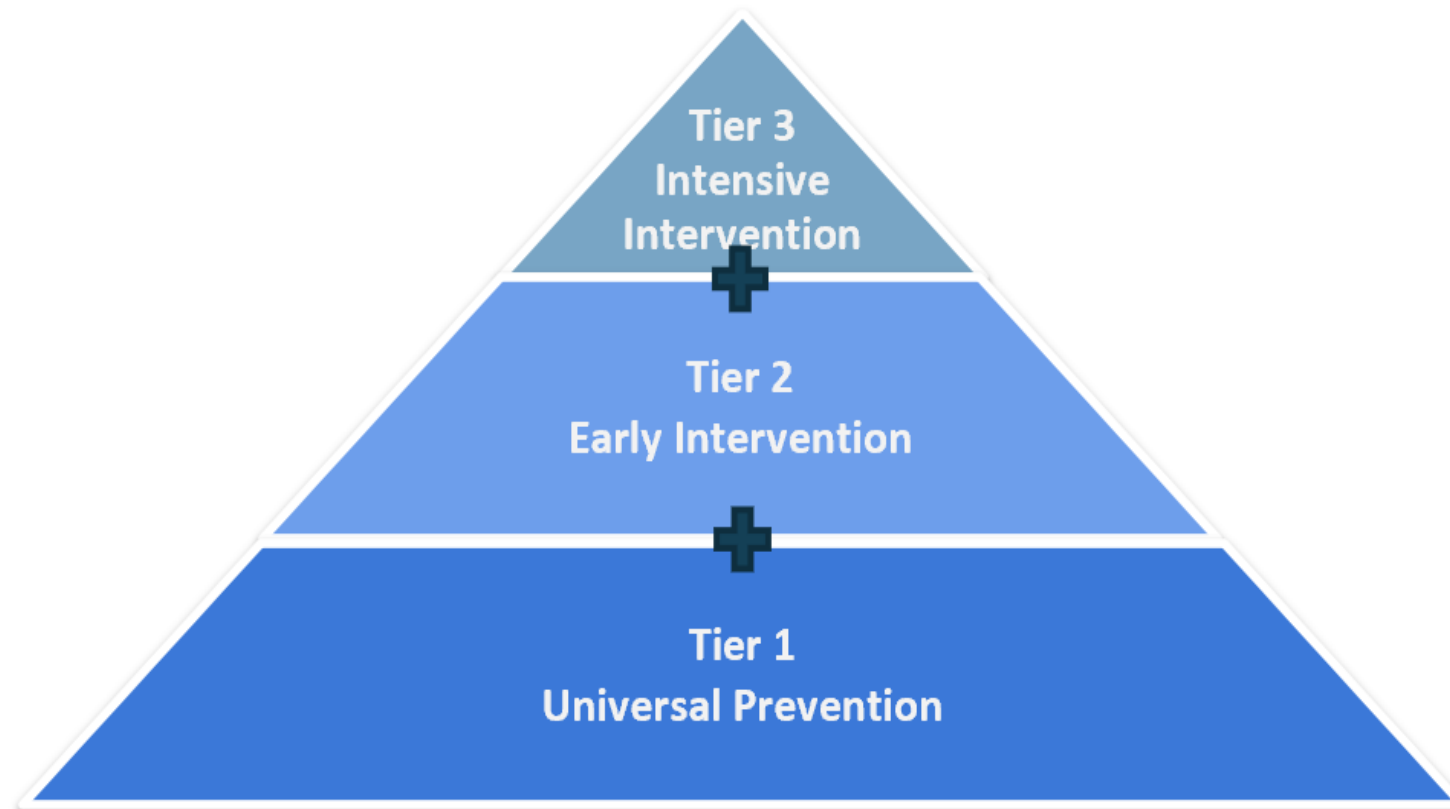


Caring Conversations for Talking about Absences with Families





Caring Conversations are a Key Component of Every Tier



Listening to Parents

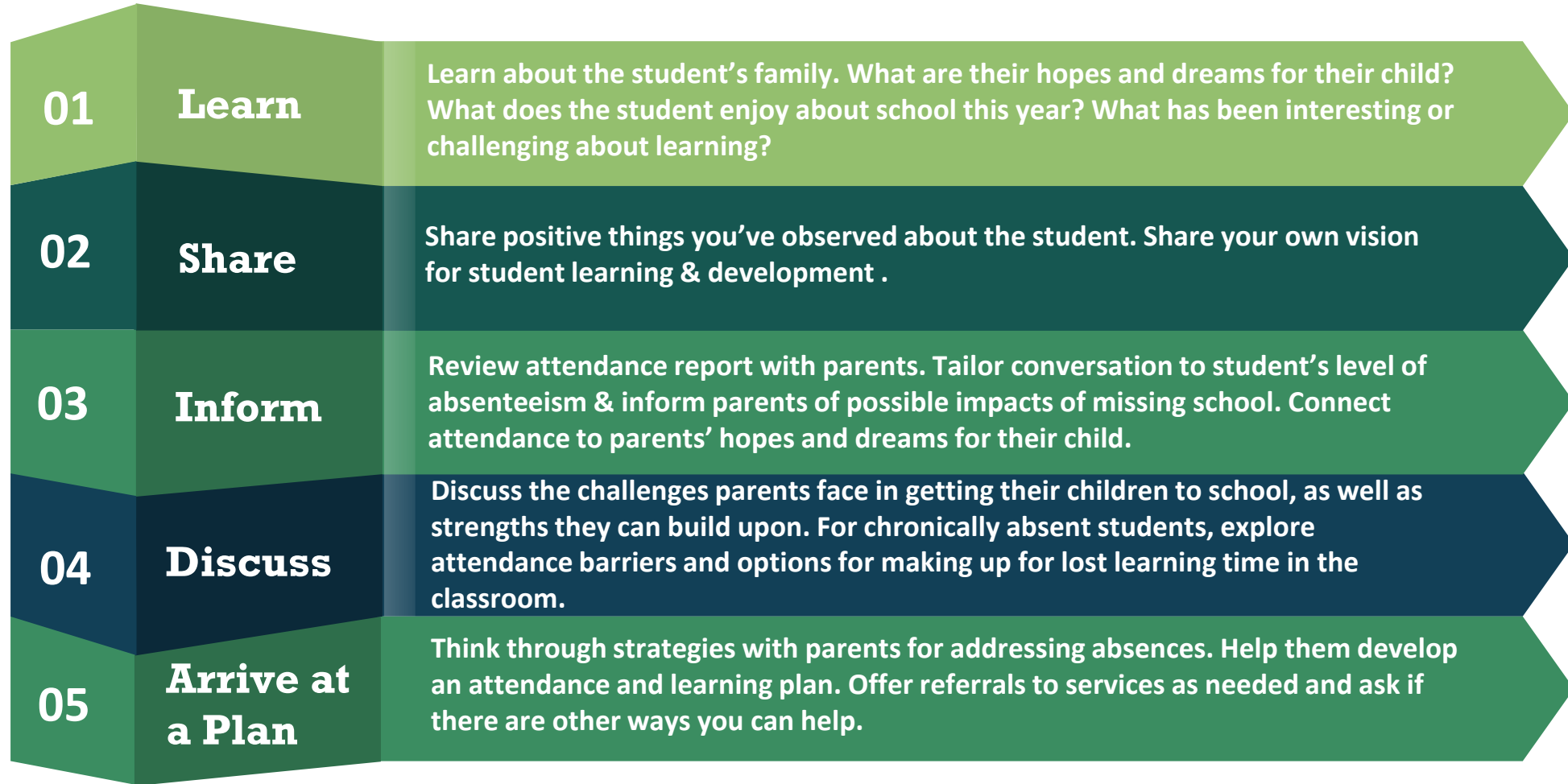


Lorri Hobson, Director of Attendance
Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) in Cleveland, Ohio

<https://youtu.be/f93RjyYvHb0>

www.attendanceworks.org

The “Caring Conversations for Attendance” Process



Adapted with permission from materials created by © High Expectations Parental Service, 2011



Steps 1 & 2: Learn and Share

Share in Chat:

- I. What questions can you ask to learn about a student's family?

01

Learn

Learn about the student's family. What are their hopes and dreams for their child? What does the student enjoy about school this year? What has been interesting or challenging about learning?

02

Share

Share positive things you've observed about the student. Share your own vision for student learning & development.



Step 3: Inform

03

Inform

Review attendance and participation report with parents. Tailor conversation to student’s level of absenteeism & inform parents of possible impacts of missing school. Connect attendance to parents’ hopes and dreams for their child.

1. Show absences marked on a school calendar
2. Identify patterns
3. Share what key concepts a student missed relating back to the hopes and dreams that the student or parents shared

2021-2022 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

September 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

February 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

April 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

July 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

August 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Step 4: Discuss

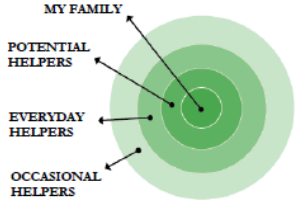
04

Discuss

Discuss the challenges parents face in getting their children to participate at school or from home, as well as strengths they can build upon. For chronically absent students, explore attendance barriers and options for making up for lost learning time in the classroom.

1. Learn about student motivations.
2. Discuss reasons for absenteeism.
3. Explore what would help reduce absences and increase engagement.
4. Identify opportunities to make up for lost learning in the classroom.
5. Use help bank to identify support systems.

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK
CREATE BACKUP PLANS FOR GETTING TO SCHOOL



1. **My Family:** List who lives in your house.
2. **Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick your child up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
3. **Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stunts.
4. **Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help—if you ask.

1. My Family: _____

2. Everyday Helpers: _____

3. Occasional Helpers: _____

4. Potential Helpers: _____

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____



Step 5: Arrive at a Plan

05

Arrive at a Plan

Think through strategies with parents for addressing absences including difficulties in participating online or completing schoolwork. Work with them to develop a plan. Offer referrals to services as needed and ask if there are other ways you or others can help.

1. Work with the family to identify specific steps that will help to prevent absenteeism in the future.
2. Develop and complete a plan for attendance and learning
3. Ensure that the plan includes any support that the school will offer as well
4. Provide a copy of the plan to the student/parent
5. Agree on a timeline to check in and see how things are progressing

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS AND HELP MY CHILD GAIN THE SKILLS TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL AND TO READ BY 3RD GRADE.

- Keep an attendance chart at home to track absences. Consider using the attached calendar.
- At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending preschool every day with _____ (i.e., a visit to the park, a new book, a special treat, a hug, etc.)
- Make sure my child is in bed by _____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for _____ a.m.
- Find a relative, friend or neighbor who can take my child to or from preschool if I can't. I can list who can help on the Help Bank (attached).
- Set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after preschool.
- If my child has a slight stomachache, headache or allergy, and is not sick with a contagious illness including Covid-19, I will send my child to school. I will call the school or a health provider for advice if my child complains regularly.

To improve _____'s attendance, I commit to the following:

1. _____
2. _____

To improve _____'s attendance, the program commits to:

1. _____
2. _____

We will review progress to meet this goal in one month.

Family Signature: _____ Date: _____

Program Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attendance Works
To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org
Adapted from materials created by Early Works at East Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Oregon (<http://www.districtofcolumbia.gov/earlyworks>)

Breakout Groups: Discuss Caring Conversations



How would the Caring Conversations framing for attendance be helpful for your school or program?

Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Raise your hand to speak
- Ask clarifying questions
- Explore differences of opinion
- Create space for everyone to speak (and use the chat to express ideas)
- The person whose first name is closest to the letter “A” should facilitate.

Small group handout: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Caring-Conversation-Worksheet-v3.docx>



Poll

***Which of the following strategies for communicating with families about attendance do you already implement?
(check all that apply)***

- Approach the conversation with concern and optimism.
- Ask questions to better understand the situation, and then work together for a solution.
- Assume the best. Almost all families want their child to be in school, but many don't understand the connection between attendance and learning to read.
- Be specific about the number of days missed and the impact on academics.



Before you leave...

Please complete the post-webinar survey and help us with the research study!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/msde-nov10>

Thank you!



Sue Fothergill

Director of Strategic Programming

sue@attendanceworks.org





About Us

Attendance Works advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state, and national level, Attendance Works:

- ✓ Advances better **policy**
- ✓ Nurtures proven and promising **practice**
- ✓ Promotes meaningful and effective **communication**
- ✓ Catalyzes needed **research**

Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation's “go-to” resource for improving student attendance. To learn more, visit our website: www.attendanceworks.org

Resources



Sample Letters



Reach out to families throughout the school year!

- ❖ Tailor the content for your school community
- ❖ Add links to district-wide guidance and resources
- ❖ Sample templates include a principal letter and one for families of early ed students

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/>



Attendance Works Resources Updated for Covid-19



Handouts for Families

- ✓ Pre-K
- ✓ Elementary & Secondary Grades
- ✓ English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Creole versions

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families/>

Sign up for the 2021 Attendance Awareness Campaign

<https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/contact/aam-updates/>



Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early

DID YOU KNOW?




- Starting in preschool and kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10%, or about 2 days each month over the course of a school year, can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just one or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences and tardiness can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Eventually good attendance will be a skill that will help them succeed in high school and college.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your children to their teachers and classmates before school starts.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Keep in mind that complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home. If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors and other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- If your child must stay home due to illness, ask the teacher for resources and ideas to continue learning at home.

When Do Absences Become a Problem?

	CHRONIC ABSENCE 18 or more days
	WARNING SIGNS 10 to 17 days
	SATISFACTORY 9 or fewer absences

Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

Visit Attendance Works at www.attendanceworks.org for free downloadable resources and tools!



Tips for Finding and Re-Engaging Students

- Update contact information multiple times a year
- Use multiple modes of outreach (text, US mail, calls)
- Try various media (social, radio, multiple languages, trusted messengers)
- Leverage personal and social networks
- School marquees and sign boards
- Engage public and private partners
- Home visits

Strategies for Connecting with Students & Families:

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategies-for-Connecting-with-Students-and-Families-rev-8-27-20.pdf>



Relevant Websites & Resources

[Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#)

[Checklist: The Science of Writing for Busy Families](#)

[Attendance Works](#)

- [Early Education Toolkit](#)
- [Early Matters: Integrating Attendance into Kindergarten Transition](#)

Student Success Plan Resources

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK

- 1. My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- 2. Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- 3. Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- 4. Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help if you ask.

1. My Family: _____

2. Everyday Helpers: _____

3. Occasional Helpers: _____

4. Potential Helpers: _____

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

- ✓ Set attendance goals
- ✓ Make backup plans
- ✓ Track absences
- ✓ Recognize success!

2017-2018 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August 2017						September 2017							
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____.
- I will make sure my child is in bed by _____ a.m. and the alarm clock is set for _____ a.m.
- If my child complains of a stomachache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will make sure to call the school nurse and not _____ to that he/she can check in with my child during the day.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans/>