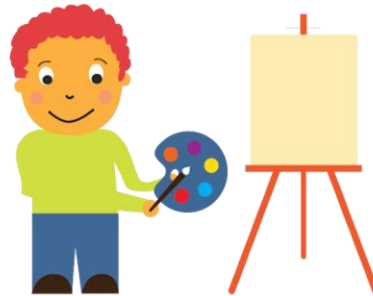




Family Engagement and Covid-19:

*Strategies for Maryland's Pre-K, Kindergarten and Early Education Programs
in the 2020-2021 Year and Beyond*





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 attend all four webinars and that you will consent to respond to the post-webinar surveys. Your responses will inform Pre-K programming statewide and help tailor the webinars to address your priorities.

The remaining two webinars will be held in the spring and in the summer prior to the 2021-2022 school year.



The Team

The Center for Early Childhood Education and Intervention at the University of Maryland (CECEI) conducts high quality research on early childhood education and early intervention programs.

Attendance Works is a national non-profit that provides technical assistance, training and advocacy to improve student learning and close equity gaps by focusing on student attendance.

Today's Presenters



Sue Fothergill
Director of Strategic Programming
Attendance Works



Shannen Coleman-Siciliano
Senior Fellow
Attendance Works



Introductions

Please type your answers in the chat box.

- 1. Your Name**
- 2. Your Organization's Name**
- 3. Your role:** Early Education Supervisors, Head Start Coordinators, Head Start Directors, Judy Center Coordinators, Community-based Prekindergarten Directors, Other – please identify.
- 4. What is the current status of instruction for Pre-K, Kindergarten and Early Education?** Remote / Hybrid / In-School



Session Goal and Objectives

Goal: Help PreK, Kindergarten and Early Education programs strengthen relationships with families to increase student participation during Covid-19 and beyond.

Participants will learn:

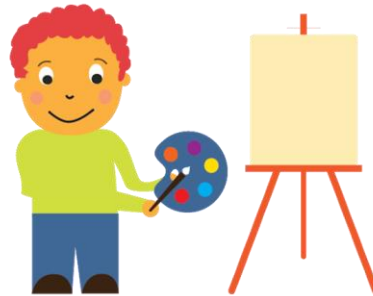
- ✓ How to adapt familiar family engagement strategies for remote, hybrid learning, and in-school learning
- ✓ Research-based principles for effective family communication
- ✓ How to use your family participation data to tailor family engagement strategies



Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. The Impact of Absenteeism on Student Learning
- III. Building Relationships with Families During Covid-19
- IV. Effective Communication about the Importance of Attendance
- V. Use Data to Inform Your Family Outreach Strategy
- VI. Opportunities for Action
- VII. Resources

What happens when children are absent from early education programming?





Many Families are Not Familiar with the Research

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
- and were far more likely to read on grade level by 3rd grade.



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

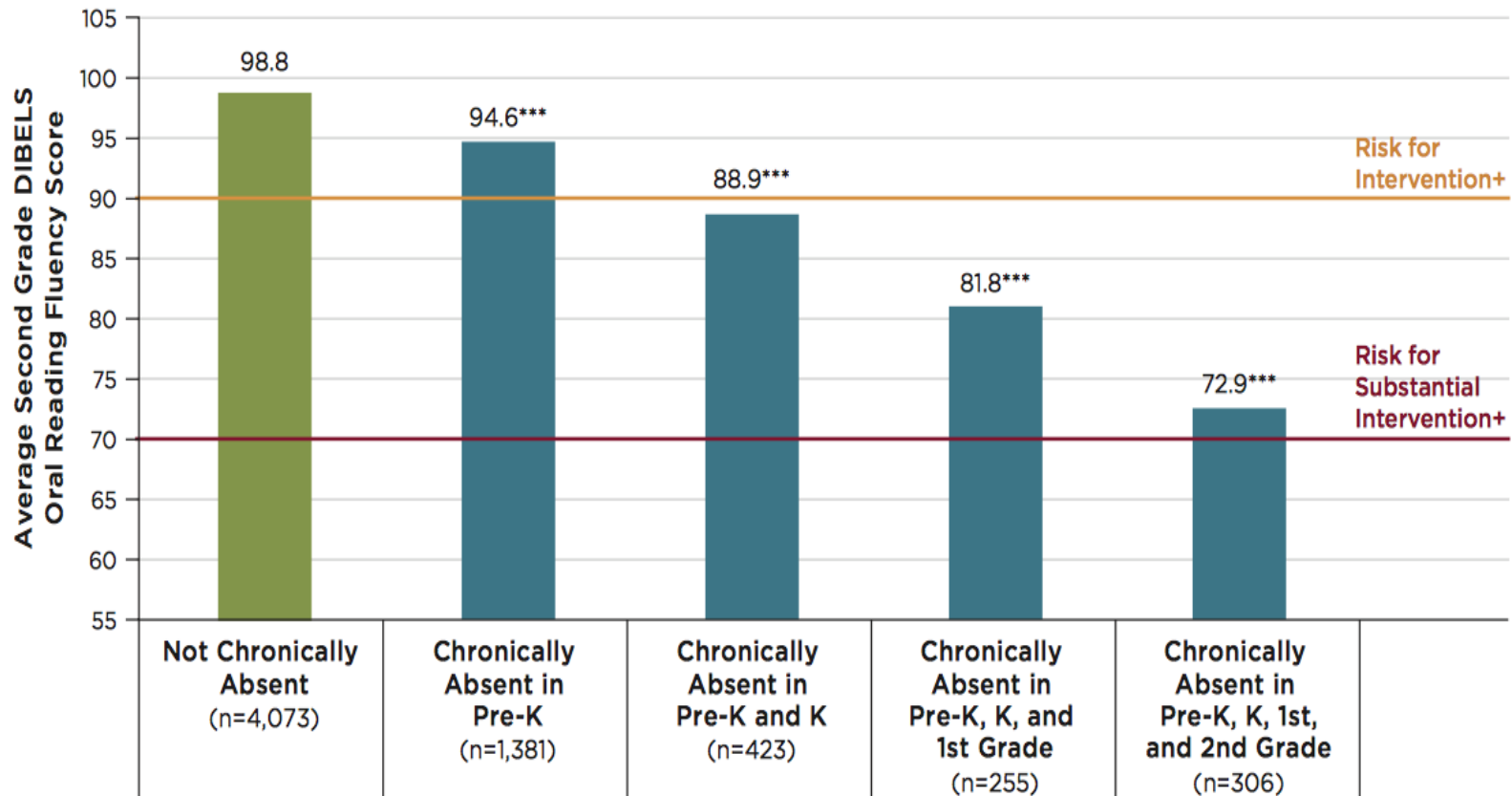
Ehrlich, Stacy B., et al. University of Chicago, 2014, pp. 1-64,
Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools Relationship with Outcomes and Reasons for Absence.

www.attendanceworks.org



Many Families Underestimate the Long-Term Consequences

Each year of chronic absence contributes to declining levels of grade-level reading.



Note: ***Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as "Some Risk," indicating the need for additional intervention and "At Risk," indicating the need for substantial interventions.

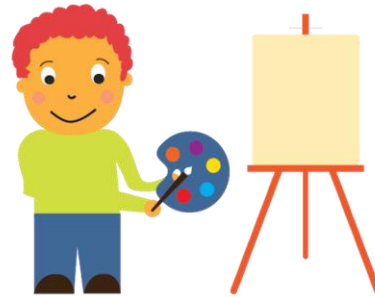


The Impact of Covid-19: Exacerbating Existing Inequities

[A study](#) published by McKinsey & Company predicts that if in-person instruction does not resume until January 2021:

- **Black students may fall behind academically by 10.3 months,**
- **Hispanic/Latinx students by 9.2 months, and**
- **Students living in poverty by more than a year.**

What do families understand about early grades attendance?





Families of Chronically Absent Students Underestimated the Value of Attendance



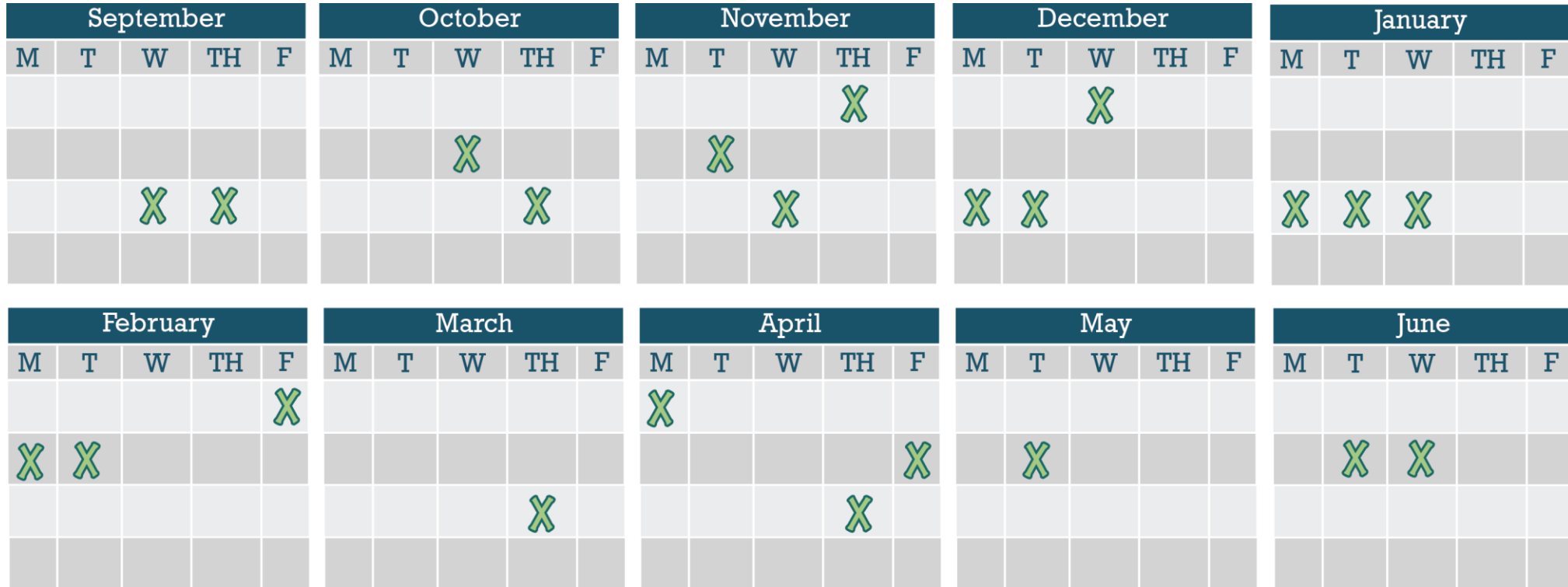
- ✓ Families generally underestimate the number of days their child has missed
- ✓ Families believe their child is absent less or the same amount as other students
- ✓ Families believe missing a couple days of school a month is not problematic
- ✓ Families are more likely to believe attendance matters for students in older grades

Ad Council: School Attendance Research Project (Issue brief). (2015). CA.

<https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/tr/toolkit/QualitativeResearchReport.pdf>



Many Families Underestimate the Impact of Sporadic Absenteeism



Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few as 2 days a month**



Let's Chat

How familiar are....

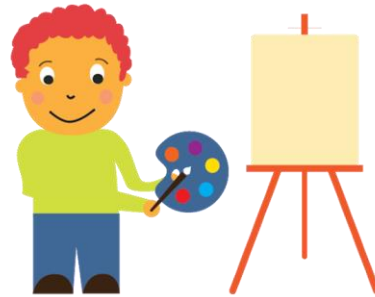
School staff with this research?

Very familiar, Somewhat familiar, Not at all

Families with this research?

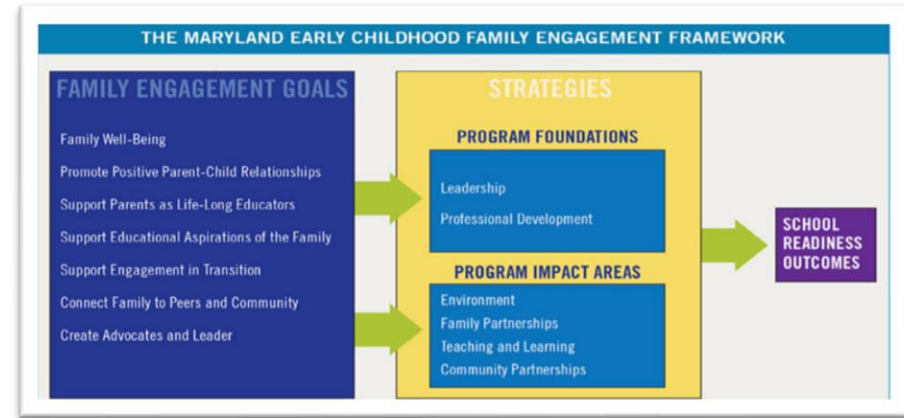
Very familiar, Somewhat familiar, Not at all

Building Relationships During Covid-19





Restorative Practices are Essential for Engaging Families



Now more than ever, families should have real and meaningful opportunities to provide input and be heard. Key elements of restorative practices are:

- **Engagement** - involving individuals in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account
- **Explanation** - explaining the reasoning behind a decision to everyone who has been involved or who is affected by it
- **Expectation clarity** - making sure that everyone clearly understands a decision and what is expected of them

(Kim & Mauborgne, 1997)

<https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/>



A Restorative Approach



James Comer: "No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship."

PreK, Kindergarten and Early Education Programs should ask themselves, does each family have...

- ✓ An on-going supportive school-based relationship?
- ✓ Up-to-date contact information on file along with up-to-date emergency contact information?
- ✓ The supports they need for remote, hybrid, and in-person learning?

What do PreK, Kindergarten and Early Education programs need to do?

- ✓ Communicate with families consistently and supportively.
- ✓ Update protocols, with family input, for outreach and engagement.
- ✓ Modify family engagement activities to ensure their health and safety. Invite families to inform how activities will be modified.
- ✓ Ensure all families have up-to-date program information and who to reach out to in order to receive support if needed.



Activity: Engagement vs. Involvement

Chat: Is this an example of involvement or engagement?

Example 1. School disseminates updated safety protocols to families for hybrid learning.

Example 2. School hosts a townhall meeting with facilitated breakout sessions to review new safety protocols, answer questions and receive feedback.

Example 3. School establishes a return to school committee and invites parents to participate in the planning.

[Ed Week Blog: Engagement is “doing with” whereas involvement is “doing to”](#)

Modes of Family Engagement

Activities

- Peer learning among families
- Family and child activities
- Informal conversations with school staff

Structures

- Organized parent group
- Volunteer opportunities
- Family Council
- Formal conversations with school staff

Support

- Community partnerships
- Referral and follow up process
- Resource fair
- Provide connection to benefits

Judy Center Engagement

Activities

- Beep and Greet
- Virtual Playgroups
- Playgroup Activity Boxes
- Home Visiting
- Books to support home libraries
- Parent workshops
- Family passes (in lieu of group/school field trips) such as to the local pumpkin/apple orchard
- Virtual training/professional development for child care providers and teachers
- Meals and extra nutritional support to families
- Diaper Bank

Beep and Greet / Drive Through Events

Harvest Fest Data

- 55 Total Families
- Approx. 30 children received a dental screening and fluoride treatment from the DOH

Mudd	Turner	Infants/Todds	Head Start
60 Children	33 Children	9 Children-	3 children Not in zone
35 Adults	29 Adults	6 Adults	2 Adults
95 Total	62 Total	15 Total	5 Total



Virtual Playgroups

Wicomico Judy Center

Home

Judy Center Staff

Calendar of Events

Learning Parties

Love & Learn

Playgroup

Resources

Contact the Judy Center



Field Trips



BROOKEDALE FARM

The Beall Judy Center invites your family to a **FREE** family fun day at Brookedale Farm! You may present this coupon at the entrance of Brookedale Farm for free admission. This coupon is good for every member of your household. Children under the age of 2 are **FREE**. You may use this coupon any weekend in October!

Hours of operation:
Friday: 5 PM - 8 PM
Saturday: 1 PM - 8 PM
Sunday: 1 PM - 8 PM

Address:
George Run Rd.
Fort Ashby, WV 26719



Expires October 31st

PLEASE COMPLETE THE BACK OF THIS COUPON BEFORE TURNING IT IN AT BROOKEDALE FARM!

FAMILY FUN
HAY RIDE, CORN MAZE
ANIMALS, & PLAYGROUND

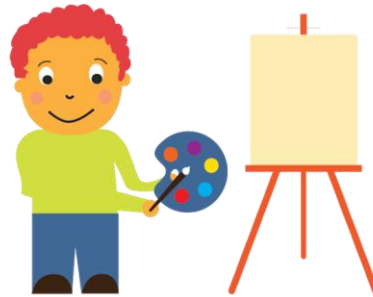


Reflection: Deepening Relationships During Covid-19

Let's Chat:

- ❖ Our Pre-K, Kindergarten or Early Education program has this activity planned between now and January 1st...
- ❖ Our Pre-K, Kindergarten or Early Education program offers these structured options for family participation...
- ❖ Our Pre-K, Kindergarten or Early Education program provides the following support for families...

What does research tell us about how to communicate with families?





Research on How to Talk with Families

1. Listen to families and respond with empathy
2. Keep your message positive and straightforward
3. Provide families information about attendance expectations for the 2020-2021 SY
4. Let families know that every absence affects student learning whether school is remote, hybrid, or in-person

Sources: Attendance Works, EveryDay Labs, FutureEd



Research on Effective Messaging for Families

- Keep it Straightforward
- Make it Skimmable
- Share Relevant Information on a Timely Basis
- Personalize Messages



- bullet
- point
- lists

Chang, Hedy (2020). *Monitoring Attendance During the First Weeks Of School – An Essential Tool for Reducing Educational Inequity* [Blog post]. Retrieved November 2, 2020

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/monitoring-attendance-during-the-first-weeks-of-school-an-essential-tool-for-reducing-educational-inequity/>

Let's Practice.

What elements of the fliers align with research? What would you change?

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN

With the widespread news coverage about the coronavirus, known as "COVID-19", children may develop fears about the risk to their own health and safety. It is important for parents to listen to these fears, and learn some of the basic facts themselves.

Be aware of your own behavior

It can impact how your child may feel. If you're anxious, they could take their cues from you.

Stay up-to-date with information

This can help you understand and share the facts about COVID-19 with your children.

Know whether or not to talk about COVID-19 with them

It is important to know what children have heard about COVID-19 already. It is likely that they are talking about it in school, so just because your child doesn't bring it up, doesn't mean they aren't thinking about it.

Explain what is currently being done to contain COVID-19

Reassure children that the measures put in place are the best ways to keep them safe. The U.S. is carefully monitoring the situation and currently the risk in Chester County remains low. Health Departments, such as the Chester County Health Department, are encouraging personal preparedness and prevention tips to keep the community healthy.

Know what information your children are exposed to

Be mindful about where your children are being exposed to information about COVID-19. For example, they may overhear conversations, or pick up on the continuous news headlines that adults have on as background.

For teenagers and tweens who have access to news online and via social media, ask them what they are seeing and hearing about COVID-19. Help correct misinformation, and if you don't know the answer, be honest. You can research the answers together.

Validate their feelings and reassure them

Parents should listen to their child's fears and try to understand what they are feeling. Avoid saying things like "you'll be fine" or "don't worry about it."

Give them action items

Remind them of the importance of washing hands often (for at least 20 seconds), avoid touching their eyes, mouth, and nose, and keeping their areas clean by wiping down things that are used often. If your preparedness plans include stocking up on groceries and toiletries, like you would before a big snowstorm, ask your child to help. Invite them to go the store with you. Having a stash of their favorite snacks in the pantry may help them feel more prepared.

For more information, please visit the Chester County Health Department's website

[Chesco.org/Health](https://www.chesco.org/Health)

If you are active on social media, we recommend following these sources:



Getting Started

First, understand that your role as a parent is unique. No one knows and loves your child the way that you do. You are the expert on your child. And, while you may not have all the answers, you want your child to be successful in school and in life. Your passion, as a parent, can help you communicate brilliantly, and sometimes, it can overtake you.

Step 1 BE MINDFUL OF YOUR EMOTIONAL PRESSURE GAUGE AS YOU WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL.

If you expect to have difficulty when meeting with school personnel, your mind and body will be primed for battle. How can you communicate successfully if you are on the verge of overflowing in anguish and outrage? Don't let your mind go there. Keep thoughts of past (or present) problems at school, worst fears, and other negatives from creeping into your mind. Focus positively on your goals and the view that the school wants to do their best for your child. Keep telling yourself that you and your child will succeed.



Step 2 PRIORITIZE AND PLAN.

What's the most important thing that needs to be accomplished for your child? Make a list of the issues, questions, and possible solutions. Rank them. Decide if there are any you can pass on and which one(s) must be addressed. Plan how you are willing to give and take in order to achieve the higher goal. Map out what you need to say and practice, if that helps:

"What's most important for Jordan right now is..."
"We really need to focus on..."

Referring to these few notes, with key phrases jotted down, can help keep you and the meeting on track.



Step 3 ACTIVELY LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE.

If you don't understand what someone is saying, tell him or her. Be direct:

"I just don't understand what you are saying. Can you explain it in a different way or give me some examples?"
"Is there something you can show me, in writing, so I can fully understand?"

Keep asking and wait for responses until you do fully understand. Resist any temptation to answer your own questions or put words into someone else's mouth.

Step 4 CLARIFY YOUR STATEMENTS IF YOU SEE A PUZZLED EXPRESSION ON SOMEONE'S FACE AND ASK FOR CLARIFICATION IN RETURN.

Paraphrase, or restate so that you and others are clear in your understanding.

To be understood:

"I must not be explaining this clearly, what I'm trying to say is..."
"Here's a copy of... Let's look at this together. It shows that..."

So that you understand:

"It sounds like you're saying..."
"If I understand you correctly, you're saying... Is that right?"
"Is that written down anywhere so I can read it?"

Often, the process of clarifying one's understanding provides an opportunity to clear up a misconception or correct misinformation that could be critical to finding a satisfactory solution for your child. So, don't overlook the value of this technique.



Equip Families to Connect Attendance and Educational Success

- ✓ Encourage families to develop routines that promote attendance and participation.
- ✓ Follow up with families who are not regularly participating whether learning is remote, hybrid, or in-person.
- ✓ Integrate talking about the value of attendance into check-ins with families.



Giving the Gift of Learning for the Holidays

Idea 1: Media (PSAs, Radio, Social Media)

Idea 2: Leverage Personal and Social Networks

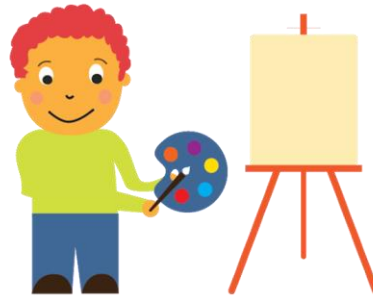
Idea 3: School Marquee and Sign Boards

Idea 4: Engage Partners

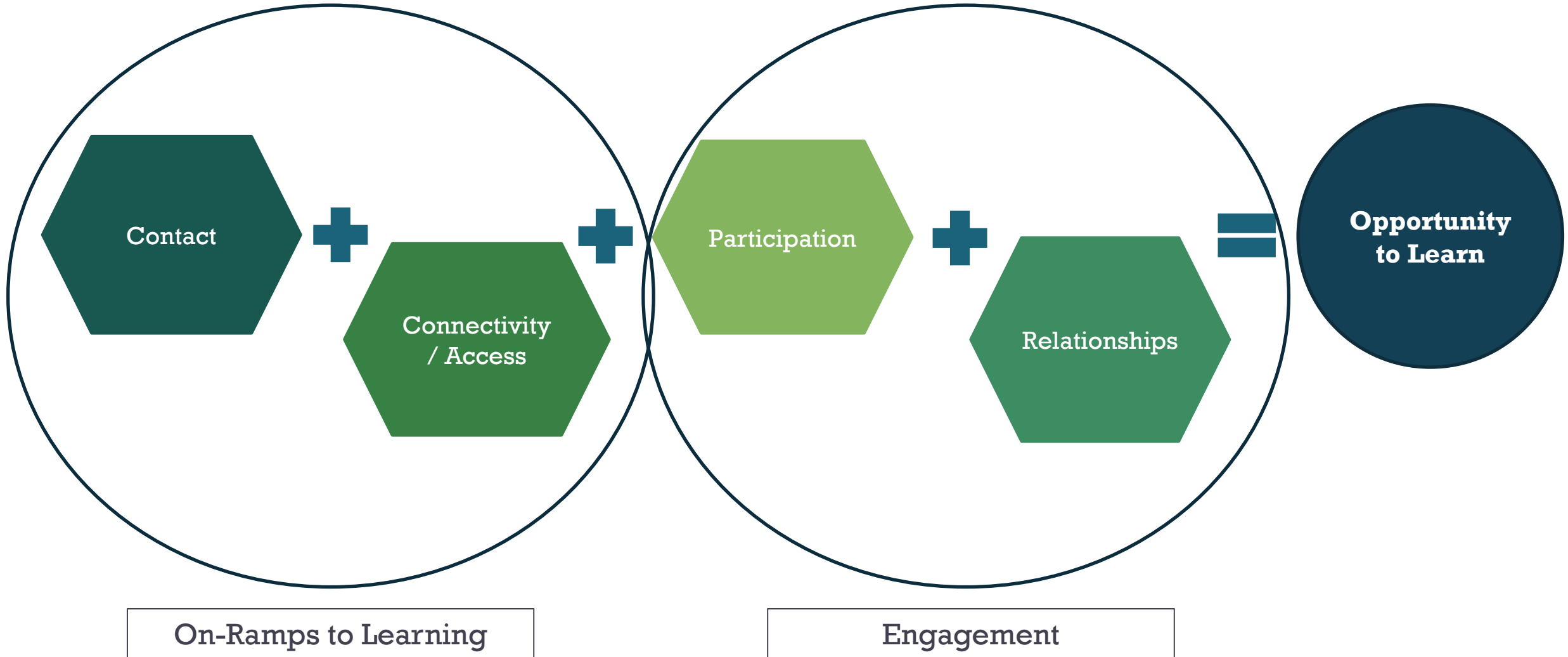
Idea 5: Home Visits (following safety protocols)

Resource: [Finding Students: A compilation of ideas](#)

Using Data to Tailor Interventions and Family Engagement Strategies

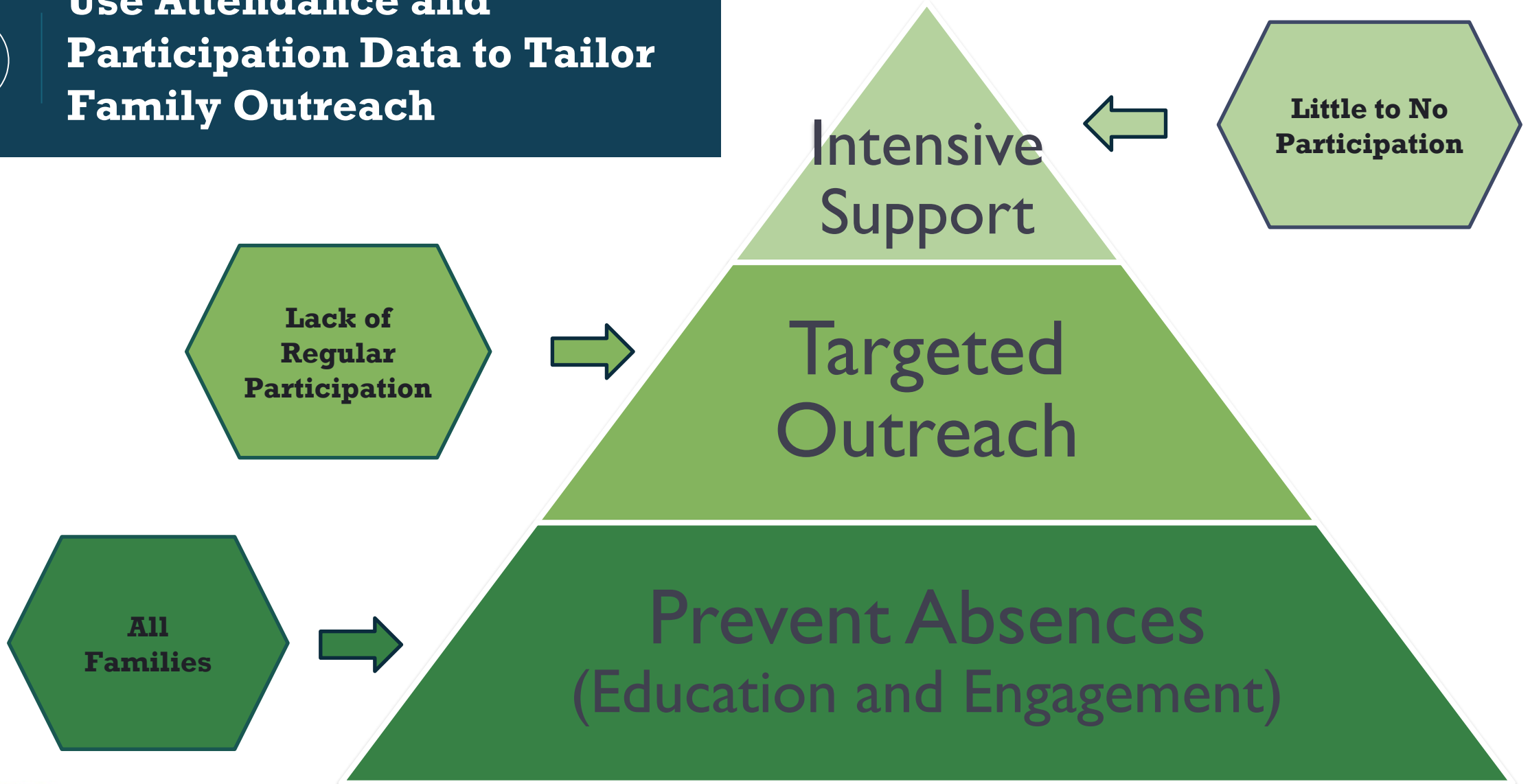


How do we measure the opportunity to learn?





Use Attendance and Participation Data to Tailor Family Outreach





How Two Systems are Tracking More Than Just Present/Absent Data

Participation: Adapted monthly attendance reports to monitor in-person attendance separately from participation in remote learning.

- **P** = Present in class
- **O** = Present Off-Site: Zoom meetings; One-on-One Learning; Packets delivered and returned
- **A** = Absent; Class scheduled but no log on from family
- **N** = Not scheduled

Relationships: Adapted Family Service Events to Track Home-School Connection

- **Meals** = food delivered to / picked up by families.
- **Home-school connection** = family participation in parent-child Zoom meetings, educational activity delivery, one-on-one home visits, parent workshops.



Intervene When Absences Add Up

Scenario: Brandon's mother moved out and has recently stopped visiting him. His grandmother has custody and is having a hard time because Brandon refuses to attend synchronous family time learning and is often crying and says he is lonely. Brandon's grandmother has started to allow him to miss a couple of days of school each week.

Brandon's teacher, having noticed the frequent absences, has scheduled a meeting to discuss attendance with his grandmother. Brandon's grandmother has shared that she is overwhelmed by online learning.

Question: *What steps can the teacher take during the call to learn the story behind the reasons for absences and demonstrate support?*



What to do next!

1. Partner with families to set a schedule for family and child engagement activities by the end of December.
2. Partner with your data systems to collect and analyze in-class, distance and hybrid attendance / participation.
3. Align communication materials to best practices.
4. Complete the post-webinar survey and participate in the study.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/msde-nov12>



Additional Considerations for Action

1. Track participation, reach out to students/families with little to no participation.
2. Schedule a variety of learning opportunities all five days of the week.
3. Hold teacher-family connect hours weekly.
4. Create small support groups within classrooms using team activities, buddy systems and ambassadors.



Thank You!

Sue Fothergill

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Shannen Coleman-Siciliano, Senior Fellow

Jane Sundius, Senior Fellow

Louise Wiener, Senior Fellow

Resources

Positive Engagement



Attendance Videos

[Learn More](#)



Exercises

[Learn More](#)



Incentives

[Learn More](#)



Messaging

[Learn More](#)



Posters and Banners

[Learn More](#)



Handouts for Families

[Learn More](#)

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/>

**Appendix:
Routines that Rock!**



Playful Activities with a Serious Mission



Routines that Rock! workshops build on family creativity and promote family engagement.

- ❖ Encourages families to think about their own routines
- ❖ Making routine charts using art, stickers, and colorful paper
- ❖ Creating routine songs to familiar tunes that children can sing



Routines that Rock!

Sing a song of on-time

Song Tune: Jingle Bells (Parent created lyrics)

Up we get, sleepyhead
Up and on our way.
It's 8 o'clock, time to rock
Success is a blink away, hey!

Hair is brushed, teeth are clean,
And your bag is ready to go.
It's Head Start at 9, then breakfast time,
So you're brain can know and grow.





Virtual Activity Outline

- ❖ Introduce the activity
- ❖ Brainstorm getting ready to learn morning and nighttime routines (e.g. brush teeth, get dressed)
- ❖ Organize into small groups of 3-5 people using breakout rooms if meeting is virtual and there are a large number of people
- ❖ Brainstorm common tunes for children, e.g “*Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*” tune.
- ❖ Write songs
- ❖ Share in large group

Appendix: Attendance Tracking Reports



Useful Attendance Reports to Adapt

Child Plus

2305 = Monthly Attendance

2309 = Reasons for Absence

COPA

201 = Monthly Attendance

236 = Reasons for Absence and Follow-up Report



Family Engagement Reports to Adapt

Use Family Service fields to track relationship building and virtual home-school connection

Child Plus

4110 = Family Service History

4130 = Family Service Actions

COPA

202 = CACFP report: offsite food distribution for families

706 = Child case follow-up notes

801N = Follow-up on missing health and dental information



Before you leave...

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

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/msde-nov12>