

ON TIME
A TIEMPO
ON TARGET
SOBRE MI META

The
**Perfectly
Punctual
Campaign™**



FOR SUCCESS!
¡SER UN ÉXITO!

LEADER'S GUIDE

Developed by Learning and Leadership in Families (LearnLead).

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A new way of thinking about attendance for young children

The Perfectly Punctual Campaign **is a two-generation strategy with a triple mission.**

Messaging about attendance with a playful flair.

Engaging children directly in recognizing their own attendance habits.

Honoring parents as they implement new routines to improve children's attendance.

The Perfectly Punctual Campaign (PPC) is a playful, universal messaging strategy to celebrate on time attendance as a school-wide value. PPC strategies engage young children and their families in understanding how good attendance habits from the very beginning of school — whether preschool or early elementary grades — strengthen children's academic achievement and self-confidence.

This update of the PPC Leader's Guide is free and augments the other free Attendance Works materials, messaging suggestions and strategies for young children: the toolkits *Early and Often: Showing up in Preschool Matters*; *Early Matters: Cultivating Engagement and Attendance in Kindergarten*; and, *For Principals: Leading Attendance Through Engagement*. Each of these toolkits provide practical steps to implement a multi-tiered, school-wide approach with resources to support each step.

We are excited to announce our first joint venture publication for sale through Lakeshore Learning: "Ready, Set, Go to School with Punctual Pete". This bilingual activity book, written in the voice of a child, offers programs and districts a new tool to engage families directly in supporting the development of strong attendance habits.

Warmly,
Hedy Chang
CEO and founder, Attendance Works

We extend our deep appreciation to the Heising-Simon Foundation for their generous support of our early childhood work.

Acknowledgements

The Perfectly Punctual Campaign was designed and tested by Learning and Leadership in Families (LearnLead) from 2001 through 2015 and adopted and adapted by Attendance Works from 2016 forward. We acknowledge Louise Wiener's seminal role in this work and are proud to continue and expand this important resource for preschool and elementary school professionals.

Perfectly Punctual Campaign

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LEADER'S GUIDE

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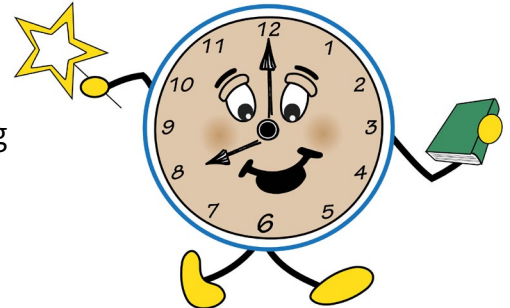
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Welcome to the Perfectly Punctual Campaign!

Meet Punctual Pete, your partner to help your students and their families be:

“On Time – On Target for Success!”

The Perfectly Punctual Campaign (PPC) helps prevent and reduce tardiness and chronic absence, which means missing 10% of school days for any reason.



Punctual Pete, the mascot, brands the work with a smile.

Attendance habits formed at the start of schooling, whether in preschool or kindergarten, establish routines that will strongly influence a child’s success in school.

Core Activities

- Use a mascot and high-visibility messaging to introduce warmth and playfulness to promote school-wide on time attendance.
- Provide structured activities that directly engage and inspire children to own and celebrate the habit of on time attendance.
- Integrate attendance awareness into family and school-wide events throughout the year.

Analyze impact through periodic review of attendance data to direct messaging and activities — including celebrations — to generate momentum.

Research and studies on chronic absence and tardiness

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, chronic absence in K-12 grades (missing 10% of school for any reason) doubled across the country and remains high. Nationwide, pre-K and kindergarten, where habits are formed, most frequently have the highest rate of chronic absence.

While chronic absence rates have started to decline, it is clear that re-establishing the regular routine of attendance requires new energy, messaging and an on-going commitment to taking a data-informed, strategic approach. Addressing tardiness can be a powerful asset in the strategy to reduce chronic absence.

Below is a list of research and key findings related to attendance

Chronically absent kindergartners in California were 7.2 times more likely to be chronically absent in 1st grade versus nonchronically absent kindergartners, underscoring the need to tackle chronic absence early before negative impacts on learning and development accumulate. ([The Persistence of Chronic Absence Between Kindergarten and 1st Grade in California: Insights to Break the Cycle of Absenteeism](#); Kevin Gee, H. N. Chang and C. Leong, 2026).

Providing support to improve attendance in pre-K and early elementary years has the potential to reduce achievement gaps and redirect struggling students onto the pathway toward educational success. ([Pre-K Attendance Matters: Early Chronic Absence Patterns and Relationships to Learning Outcomes](#). Ehrlich, Gwynne and Allensworth, 2018).

Research documents that starting in preschool and kindergarten, chronic absence undercuts school readiness and a child's ability to read on grade level by grade three. Children who don't read proficiently by the end of fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school ([Annie E. Casey Foundation 2012](#)).

Tardiness is disconcerting for the child who is late and disruptive for the class as a whole. A formal review of tardiness was done as part of the [analysis of Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten \(ECLS-K\) data](#) by Mariajose Romero and shared at the National Head Start Association conference in 2011. Children who were tardy in preschool were 10 times more likely to become chronically absent in kindergarten or first grade and three times more likely to become chronically absent in third or fifth grade.

In addition, the socio-economic profile of the chronically absent children and the frequently tardy children was very similar. There was a high incidence among low-income, children as well as among children who have high maternal and family risk. Lower student reading and math outcomes associated with chronic absence and frequent tardiness are very similar.

The major message from all the studies on absenteeism and young children is that addressing chronic absence in the very early grades is an essential element of reducing chronic absence.

[Click here](#) for more research on the impact of chronic absence in early education.

Applying research to practice

From preschool through third grade, children gain foundational academic and social-emotional skills that support long-term educational achievement. Helping children and families develop strong attendance from the outset of schooling builds a foundation of routines that support academic success and a positive sense of self.

Family Engagement: Improving attendance requires open, caring interactions and partnerships with families. Few parents are aware of the extent to which consistent on time attendance in preschool and kindergarten can benefit their children's reading readiness, math skills and social development. PPC shares important attendance information, facilitates peer dialogue on the topic and honors parents for their efforts to get their children to school on time every day.

Timing: Establishing good attendance habits from the outset of schooling helps students achieve their families' dreams of a rewarding future. Prevention of chronic absence needs to begin in preschool, kindergarten or first grade, whichever is the start of schooling for an individual child.

Consistency: Young children need consistent and frequent reinforcement to integrate new habits. For young children, create a classroom attendance routine that encourages improved on time attendance. Consistent, daily and weekly positive reinforcement strengthens the likelihood that good attendance habits will begin to grow.

Program sequence

PPC offers a sequence of activities to prevent or reduce tardiness and chronic absence as well as nurture positive attendance habits in families with young children.

Daily activities

- Warmly greet children and the adults who bring them, to make each child feel special and wanted each day.
- Engage children in monitoring their own attendance each day with the PPC Scorecard or an alternate routine.
- Provide each child with a symbol of accomplishment each day the child is on time.
- During circle time, celebrate when everyone is present.

Weekly activities

- Send each child's scorecard home to the parent(s) to stimulate two-gen conversations or retain it for parent-teacher meetings.
- Give children an opportunity to add their voice to attendance discussions during Friday's circle time.
- Consider an honor roll for children who were on time every day they were present for the week and/or for children whose punctuality improved from the prior week.
- If you choose to do honor roll(s), consider when they stay in the classroom and when they go into more public spaces.



Periodic activities

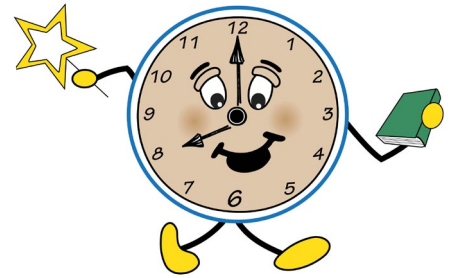
- Integrate PPC and attendance awareness into special events at school for students and/or parents/families.
- Honor parents for their children's on time attendance at a family or parent event to acknowledge progress and strengthen community.
- Honor teachers with improved classroom on time attendance in faculty meetings or larger school events.
- Change or rotate placement of attendance posters, photos and honor rolls to keep PPC messaging fresh and noticed.

**Honor the progress.
If it's fun, it will be successful!**

PPC visibility materials

PPC uses a series of colorful visibility tools to unify the campaign and inspire a sense of community around on time attendance.

Three designs brand the work. The Punctual Pete mascot, the Punctual Pete button with motto and the scorecard.



Punctual Pete

You've already met Punctual Pete, PPC's multicultural, bilingual mascot on all PPC materials. Pete comes "alive" via a clock costume that fits over the shoulders.

"Pete" can be worn as a costume by adults or by older children (in elementary schools, typically fourth and fifth graders). Teachers, parents, older students, volunteers ... the principal / director! ... all have a great time playing Pete.

Successful strategies

Invite Pete to:

- Greet children at the door of the school/preschool.
- Greet parents at PTA and other evening meetings.
- Congratulate children in their classroom or on the playground as a playful reminder of the importance of on time attendance.
- Take pictures with Pete and children/teachers being honored and use them to support a culture of on time attendance.

When Punctual Pete shows up, he brings a reminder and a smile!

[Download the mascot design](#) and the [instructions for making](#) your Punctual Pete costume



Send us a picture of how you use Pete and we'll post it on our website!

Email info@attendanceworks.org

PPC button



Everyone needs a button and a smile!

Parents, teachers, principals and directors, attendance officers, outreach staff, bus drivers, kitchen staff, crossing guards, all can sport their Punctual Pete buttons!

It really helps!

Successful strategies

For adults

- Provide buttons to parents at orientation, back-to-school night, or at the start the campaign.
- Encourage teachers and staff members to wear a button to reinforce the message.

For children

- For preschoolers and kindergarteners, a handstamp of the button design may be more practical and equally exciting.
- For elementary school students, a sticker with the button design is a wonderful take-home treat any day they are on time.

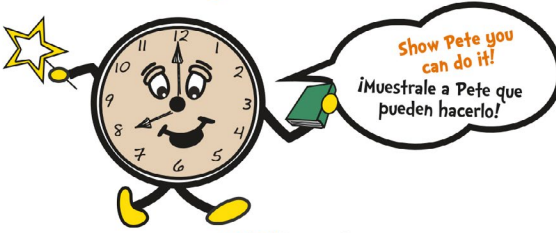
Community opportunity

- Create a HUGE button to “roll-out” the campaign!
- Delray Beach, FL created a 7-foot in diameter button and moved it from school to school to promote attendance. It was a great hit engaging families and the community at large.
- Move the outdoor “button” from school to school or site to site within the district / Head Start cluster to keep the campaign fresh and new.













PPC scorecards

Perfectly Punctual Scorecard



Week of / Semana de

	On Time A tiempo	Ran Late Tarde	We Missed You! ¿Te echamos de menos!
Monday Lunes	★		
Tuesday Martes	★		
Wednesday Miércoles	★		
Thursday Jueves	★		
Friday Viernes	★		

Designed by Learning and Leadership in Families / LearnLead.
Distributed by Attendance Works.

The PPC Scorecard supports the central daily attendance routine in class for children. The scorecard's star, running clock and sad face are playful symbols that reflect feelings children often experience around attendance.

Every day students are present they:

- Circle the star for on time arrival or circle the running clock if tardy.

Absent students circle the sad face for missed days on their return to school.

- Adopt the Wishing Well process, shared by Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) Head Start, noting who's absent and "wishing them well." They also had a welcome back to school moment at the "Wishing Well" for children returning to school.

Successful strategies

- Use the scorecard to strengthen home-school relationships.
- Place the scorecard in a comfortable, convenient place for the child.
 - In the child's cubby or attached to the back of the child's chair...
 - Be sure crayons and a flat surface for writing are nearby.
- Be sure an adult or older student is available to help young children.
 - Guiding the "how to's" of filling out and putting away the scorecard is a practical necessity, in the beginning.
 - Words of encouragement and support are critical throughout the year to nurture positive attendance habits.
 - A high-five or "good job" can be a powerful inflection point for students rarely on the receiving end of accolades.

Use the scorecard to strengthen home-school relationships

- We recommend that teachers retain the scorecards until the first parent-teacher conference of the year and integrate them into the meeting.
- Sharing and discussing scorecards with parents before you begin to send them home weekly helps parents understand the importance of timely attendance, can help inform teachers about family challenges and fosters stronger home-school partnerships for addressing attendance issues.

PPC vests



Vests can be worn to enhance greetings and emphasize on time attendance!

Staff, students, parents, principals or community volunteers can wear a vest or sash to greet children and families on arrival.

Successful strategies

- A staff member greets the children wearing the vest.
- Invite a parent, neighborhood or community leader to be “greeter of the day” to welcome and encourage children.
- Welcome “upper classmen” (4th and 5th graders) to become “greeter of the day” for students in the preschool or kindergarten classrooms.
- Honor a child from the class who’s made progress (maybe first-time progress!) by wearing the vest and joining the teacher or an adult in greetings for a day. For most pre-K, K children the vest is coat length and they love it!

Download the Pete or [button design](#) to print on the vest.

Business-size “Reminder” cards

The business card format reminds parents when doors open and students are welcome and when they are considered late.

Download and personalize the [front](#) and the [back](#) with the name of your school or program. Use them liberally to be sure families have this core information.

Successful strategies

Provide the card as a:

- Friendly reminder at parent meetings, back-to-school nights, school events.
- Use the “business card” design on the front of note paper to send a note about great progress, or a caring outreach to suggest a conversation is needed.



Build a bridge with parent and family events

Routines that Rock is a PPC hallmark activity. This playful workshop adventure results in take-home tools.

- The chart making activity engages parents and children to create a chart with Velcro stickers that children use to acknowledge morning or evening routines when at home. [Download the chart making activity.](#)
- The song-making activity inspires parents or parents and children together to set new lyrics to children's familiar tunes. Sharing tunes and lyrics created in the workshop with same grade level families spreads the joy and acknowledges family contributions. Download the Routines that Rock [song-making activity](#) in English and Spanish.



Both Routines workshops start with a conversation about family concerns and successes around attendance, moves to facts about the impact of attendance on children's school readiness, academic progress and positive sense of self before launching into hands-on activities.

Routines that Rock can be presented as a parent or family workshop. The parent workshop format strengthens home-school relationships, validates parents' experiences and networking among parents. The family workshop format models playful conversation and substantive interactions with children and families around attendance. The group setting doubles the fun.

Punctual Pete's pajama party

Modeled on *Tell Me the Day Backwards* by Albert Lamb, or *Ready, Set, Go to School with Punctual Pete*, Punctual Pete's Pajama party is a family literacy event for preschoolers, kindergarten and early elementary students and their families. Children, parents and teachers who come in pajamas start with a pajama parade leading to a big circle to listen as a book is read aloud. Then they talk about daily routines.



Children and parents create their own book of daily activities, share their work with the community and leave with their own creation to read at home.

Inspire momentum, celebrate progress!

Celebrate progress periodically to keep the excitement and interest about attendance alive throughout the year. Don't let the word "perfect" overwhelm the work. Set the standard or range of improvement that's likely to promote meaningful change in your environment and celebrate. Use the celebrations to reinforce your school's respect for and outreach to families.

Integrate celebrations of good and improved attendance in the context of larger community gatherings such as school assemblies and family programs. Three elements mark celebrations: strategic timing, special guests and the award itself.

Timing. Set a calendar of celebrations throughout the year.

Celebrate during family events and right before typical low attendance times, such as after winter or spring breaks and holidays, to inspire continued on time attendance. Create a "welcome back" event to celebrate the first day after school breaks to motivate attendance.

Special guests. Invite a community leader from the arts, sports, politics or business to salute the families being honored at an assembly or evening events to add prestige and excitement to the celebration. Hearing a community role model talk about the importance of on time attendance as a lifelong asset reinforces the school's actions. Be sure the families being honored know they will be honored in advance of the event.

The award. PPC's celebration for families with young children is a flower, typically a red carnation (sturdy and inexpensive!) for the parents whose child's punctuality and/or attendance is good and/or has improved over multiple weeks. Good or improved on time attendance over months merits a certificate of achievement. Change the background color of certificates to create different levels of certificates to recognize progress.

Getting children, especially little ones, to school on time is easy to say and hard to do! When schools recognize the effort parents expend on on time attendance and honor them for it, parents feel appreciated and heard — a big step toward home-school reciprocal relationships.



Download the [Family Certificate](#) on the Attendance Works website.

Parent and community volunteer opportunities

Engage the parents and community leaders from the outset. There are many creative and honorary opportunities for adults to both engage with children and/or engage with peers. Help encourage relationship building with some creative, fun-filled good deeds!

Here are some suggestions to consider:

Start of day

- Greet children at the start of school in the Pete costume or wearing a PPC vest.
- Help children fill in the scorecards.

During school hours

Even pictures become “part of the furniture” and fade into the background after a few weeks.

At the school’s direction, volunteers can:

- Hang posters and other high-visibility hallway messaging.
- Update the bulletin boards and pictures that tell the story of your classroom or school’s progress.
- Circulate or place new attendance materials in the entry and hallways to keep materials fresh and noticeable.

Anytime during the day

- Help organize the PPC family events 2 - 3 times per year.
- Follow-up on invitations for those who have not responded.
- Recruit local businesses like barber shops, groceries and fast-food restaurants to support good attendance with posters, visibility materials and warm words.
- Assemble materials for hands-on activities.

Evening hours at family events

- Help with hands-on activities.
- Take and share photos on the school’s social media platforms.
- Print and hang photos at the school site.

Data assets: qualitative and quantitative


Attitude surveys

Surveys will help you to understand the differences in perceptions about the importance of attendance among key constituencies and allow you to be strategic with your messaging. Share surveys with administrators, teachers and other school-based professionals, parents and students in elementary school as well as the older grades 3-5.

Use the survey results to shape meaningful, playful and open-hearted professional development as well as parent and family programs to bring about the changes you want to see. Examples could include meaningful, morning announcements and newsletter messages.

Survey results can help you tailor your messaging to address local knowledge and attitudes. For example, after reading the results of a survey, some programs were surprised by how many parents did not know at what time children were considered late. Based on those results, PPC developed the “business card,” which is a small card with critical information such as start and end times.

Gather information at the start of the year and after the winter break to see what progress you are making and where variation might be helpful.



Punctual Pete invites you to share your thoughts about on-time attendance to help us create a successful school year for your children.

1. My role is _____ Classroom Teacher or Educator _____ Teacher's Assistant _____
 Family Service Coordinator _____ Supervisor _____ Administrative Staff _____
 Health Staff _____ Food Staff _____ Bus Driver _____ Other _____

Teachers Only

2. In an average week, how many different children come to class late? _____
 3. In an average week, how many different children are absent in your class? _____

Everyone

My view of the impact of attendance and tardiness patterns	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
4. Attendance in pre-school and kindergarten affects how well students succeed in first grade.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Missing school only harms learning if a student is absent several days in a row.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When a student arrives late, he/she disrupts learning in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Attendance in kindergarten affects how well children succeed in first grade.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When a student arrives on time, he/she has a better day at school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Children who are often late do just as well as those who are on time.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Missing school is not important until first grade.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The amount of time a student spends in this class will impact his/her ability to learn to read on grade level.	1	2	3	4	5
12. A student coming in late makes my job more challenging.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Being late keeps students from concentrating on learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Parents understand the school's policy on punctuality.	1	2	3	4	5
15. A student being on time supports a positive relationship between the parents and teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Being late to class is a problem in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The school's attendance and punctuality policy is consistently implemented.	1	2	3	4	5

18. Complete this sentence or indicate "not sure" My school's policy on tardiness and absence is _____
Please add any additional thoughts / comments on the back of this page.
Thank you for your participation.

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[Download the parent-teacher survey](#)

Quantitative data

Virtually every school or childcare management system tracks attendance in some form. The three major preschool systems COPA, ChildPlus and Engage adopted the Attendance Works chronic absence reports to reflect preschool and kindergarten part-day, full-day and part-week formats.

Attendance Works chronic absence tools can report chronic absence status by school, by grade, by classroom and by a variety of demographics to help you recognize at a glance your progress and challenges.

Learn more about using quantitative and qualitative data to inform your attendance improvement efforts in the Attendance Works [principal's toolkit](#).

For those who have no access to electronic attendance information, Attendance Works created Excel based attendance reports at the district, school and preschool levels which can be downloaded at no cost but with registration. Learn more about the [DATT and SATT](#). [Register for PATT](#). Learn more about how the PATT works in the Attendance Works [Early and Often toolkit](#).

Electronic tardiness data is variable depending on the provider. Without access to electronic data, relying on the PPC scorecard or the record of passes for late entry may be the strongest source of tardiness data for your classrooms.

Perfectly Punctual Campaign frequently asked questions

Q & A with PPC creator Louise Wiener

This program looks bright and friendly. Is it really serious about attendance?

The Perfectly Punctual Campaign uses these bright and friendly materials and strategies to engage the children. When the children are engaged, they begin to internalize on time attendance as something THEY want. Put the materials to work for you! Wearing your PPC button will remind your students about how much you care about them being on time EVERY DAY without you saying a word.

Why is it important to maintain our Perfectly Punctual Bulletin Board weekly?

Our shared goal is to give every child a chance to succeed. While our youngest learners' attention spans are expanding, monthly success can seem as far away as the moon. We are particularly interested in the children not accustomed to success in on time attendance—it is their successes that we look to build upon by noticing them weekly. And how exciting to see the face of a child as his progress and success is noticed.

I understand that attendance is something we need to focus on, but how important is it that students are on time?

Studies have shown that tardiness is an early warning signal for chronic absence. By intervening early, we may reduce chronic absence. Additionally, disruptions to the classroom as children arrive late are no small matter. Academically, the lost instructional time due to tardiness affects student performance, the student's self-esteem, confidence and enthusiasm for learning. All of these factors impact classroom climate.

How important is it for the students to complete the Scorecard on arrival?

Very important! This activity acknowledges students' role and feelings about on-time attendance. As they monitor their attendance, they begin to develop a sense of agency about on-time attendance and a critical element to behavior changes. This is a clear example of short-term investment for long-term gain.

For preschool and kindergarten children, the first few weeks of Scorecard use can be time-consuming for teachers. What can we do to make it easier?

It takes two to three weeks to get preschoolers and kindergarten children into the groove of filling in their Scorecards. During that time recruiting a parent volunteer or two or seeking support from administrative staff can smooth the process. If parents bring children directly into the classroom, place the scorecard where parents can fill in the scorecard with the child. It reinforces the idea of the parent as a teacher and eases the burden on classroom staff.

Where are all the incentives? Where's the "stuff"?

Recognition of the student, the parents, the teachers and the community in a variety of ways serve to offer the greatest incentive of all. And one that lasts. Intrinsic rewards, the feeling of a job well done, of being invested in a process that will have profound effects on our children and their children in turn is one that we hope to encourage and support as often as we can! We encourage experiences rather than things to acknowledge and reinforce behaviors.

How do we convince parents to attend parent or family programs? The program is great for our students, but if their parents don't see the value in on time attendance they won't bring these young children to school.

We have learned that making on time attendance important to the child, makes it important to the parent. As the children engage, they will bring their enthusiasm and value for being on time home to their parents. Children are powerful motivators for parents!

Attractive invitations to workshops and a meal or a snack reinforce that parents are wanted and valued. Word-of-mouth about interactive content and the playfulness of using art, music and laughter to reinforce solid information builds parent/family audiences. Be patient with yourself, and let word-of-mouth and judicious use of photos from the event reinforce your efforts.