

Instructions for Conducting A School Practice Self-Assessment

The goal of this self-assessment is to help school leaders identify strengths and opportunities to develop a systemic approach to reducing chronic absence. Ideally, this assessment is completed in partnership with a team. Below is a suggested process.

1. **Bring together a team of key stakeholders** in your school to complete this self-assessment. Participants should include the principal, attendance personnel, classroom teachers, staff from partnering community agencies, and if possible, active parents. Feel free to expand this list to include others that you think might have valuable insights to offer about student attendance in your school.
2. **Identify one person** who will assume responsibility for facilitating the process and dialogue.
3. **Ask each participant** to spend 10 minutes completing the tool.
4. **Hand out an extra copy of the tool** and ask all participants to add in their responses on a single copy with a hatch mark. Make copies of the version with everyone's responses. (An alternative option is to put up an enlarged copy of the tool on the wall and ask participants to add their responses using a marker. This approach allows everyone to see the collective responses without the need for additional copies.)
(See: [Instructions for Using Self-Assessment Tool](#))
5. **As a group, review the collective results.** Encourage participants to identify and explore where there appear to be differences in how stakeholders have ranked a particular element. Use this as an opportunity find out why stakeholders might have different perspectives. Keep in mind that the goal is to deepen understanding of why the differences of opinion might exist; agreeing upon a rating is not essential.
6. **Develop a plan.** Participants should discuss what they see as the biggest gaps or priorities to address in the near future. If needed, use dots or take hand vote to agree upon the top three next steps. For each one, discuss: 1) Who needs to be involved in advancing this priority? 2) What are immediate next steps? 3) Who can take responsibility for ensuring follow-up occurs? Determine how to stay in communication with each other about progress on the next steps and decide whether a follow-up meeting is needed.
7. **Communicate the results:** The team should communicate the results of the assessment with school (and potentially district) staff and community partners and engage them in executing the plan.

Does Attendance Really Count in Our School?

A Tool for Self-Assessment

Key Element	Strength	OK for Now	Could be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How do you know?
1. Accurate Data: The principal ensures that teachers and school staff take attendance accurately and that it is entered daily into the district data system.						
2. Attendance Team: Our attendance team, led by an administrator, meets at least every two weeks to: (a) monitor attendance data and trends; (b) coordinate the school's multi-tiered attendance strategy; (c) examine the reasons for absences using quantitative and qualitative data, and; (d) ensure chronically absent students receive needed supports.						
3. Engaging Climate: Our school has a welcoming and engaging climate that promotes safety, great teaching and learning, and interpersonal relationships with students, families, and staff.						
4. Culture of Attendance: Our school promotes a culture of attendance in year-round communication to families and students (back to school events, letters, flyers, personal phone calls, etc.) and regularly recognizes good and improved attendance.						
5. Family Engagement: Our school staff reaches out to families and engages them as partners in problem-solving.						
6. District Policy: Our district policy promotes taking a problem-solving approach that includes all staff, students, families and partners at our school.						
7. Policy Dissemination: Our school ensures the district attendance policy is communicated to families through printed materials, posted on our website, and shared at school events.						
8. Staff Capacity: Our school ensures staff knows what is chronic absence, why it matters, and what are best practices for reducing it.						
9. Improvement Plan: Our strategies for supporting student attendance are reflected in our school improvement plan.						
10. Community Partners: Our school partners with community agencies that offer resources (afterschool, health services, mentors) that help engage students and remove attendance barriers.						

(Note: Chronic Absence is missing => 10% of school over a year including any type of absence; Satisfactory Attendance is missing =< 5% of school over a year)