Does Our State Have a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence?
A Planning Tool for State Education Agencies

Actionable data, positive engagement, capacity building, shared accountability, strategic partnerships, and adequate and equitable resources all play an integral role in reducing chronic absence. After assessing where you are across all six ingredients, think about the actions your SEA can 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. Our SEA requires Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to maintain and submit accurate attendance data which is included in our state longitudinal student database.				
2. Our SEA ensures data can be compared across LEAs through a standard definition for a day of attendance and chronic absence (ideally missing 10% or more of school for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences along with suspensions).				
3. Our SEA publicly reports chronic absence data from the prior school year for the state as a whole and disaggregated by district, school, grade and student groups.				
4. Our SEA helps LEAs produce real-time, early warning dashboards that include chronic absence rates by school, grade and student group.				
5. Our SEA publicly reports on types of absence – excused, unexcused, and suspensions – by district, school, grade, and student groups in order to examine who is affected by current truancy and disciplinary practices.				

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT	What are Key Next Steps	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. Our SEA consistently and clearly promotes public awareness about chronic absence and how it can be addressed by a variety of interested parties (i.e., district and school leaders, parents, businesses, state agencies, non-profits, and the legislature.)				
2. Our SEA provides LEAs, schools, and community partners with materials (i.e., fliers, handbooks, back-to-school letters, text messages, phone scripts, etc.) that convey the importance of daily attendance for well-being, engagement, and learning.				
3. Our SEA helps LEAs leverage relevant investments (e.g., early and expanded learning, community schools, health services, etc.) to take a year-long, PreK-12 approach to supporting and engaging students experiencing chronic absence.				
4. Our SEA publicizes bright spot schools, community partners and LEAs that achieve measurable reductions in chronic absence and uses these examples to inspire action and document best practices.				
5. Our SEA supports a positive, problem-solving multi-tiered approach to attendance informed by families and students that emphasizes prevention and early intervention, with legal action as a last resort.				

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CAPACITY BUILDING	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. Our SEA has assessed the extent to which LEAs across the state have the capacity to interpret chronic absence data, identify and remove barriers to attendance, and adopt a multi-tiered approach.				
2. Our SEA offers and broadly disseminates comprehensive attendance policy and practice guidance.				
3. Our SEA offers professional development on how to reduce chronic absence and improve attendance.				
4. Our SEA ensures LEAs are aware they can use federal and state funds, including Title I and Title II dollars, to provide principals and educators with training on attendance improvement strategies.				
5. Our SEA provides LEAs, which have high levels of chronic absence, with intensive support either directly or via intermediaries (e.g., educational service centers).				

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. Our SEA requires that schools identified for improvement utilize chronic absence data as part of the needs assessment process.				
2. Our state policy requires LEAs to have a data-driven plan to address chronic absence, measurable targets for improvement, and a process for monitoring and recognizing progress.				
3. Our SEA works with LEAs to monitor and support educational opportunities for students experiencing extreme levels of absenteeism.				
4. Our SEA creates internal structures and opportunities for staff across departments to review data and align agency resources for improving attendance.				
5. Our SEA regularly meets with representatives from other public and community agencies (e.g., physical and behavioral health, transportation, human services, law-enforcement, etc.) to: (1) review chronic absence data and (2) align resources to improve attendance.				

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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. Our SEA supports LEAs in engaging students and families as partners in identifying attendance barriers and generating solutions.				
2. Our SEA creates materials, resources, and opportunities to help public agencies, non-profit organizations and civic groups work together with schools and LEAs to promote Tier 1 positive messaging and engagement about the importance of daily attendance.				
3. Our SEA encourages LEAs to collaborate with community and agency partners to implement Tier 2 early interventions.				
4. Our SEA encourages LEAs to collaborate with community and agency partners to implement Tier 3 intensive interventions.				
5. Our SEA provides examples of contracts or MOUs for LEAs to use with community organizations and public agencies that outline how to share data and support LEAs and schools in improving school attendance and assess impact.				

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ADEQUATE & EQUITABLE RESOURCES	What are Key Next Steps?	Individuals or Groups Responsible	Target Date	Resources to Leverage
1. Our SEA has mapped resources that can support attendance and engagement including specific departments within the SEA, intermediaries, technical assistance centers, and initiatives.				
2. Our SEA has identified gaps in resources for improving attendance and engagement including for particular grades, student groups, or geographic locations.				
3. Our SEA advocates for adequate funding to address systemic barriers to attendance.				
4. Our SEA promotes using chronic absence data as a criteria for allocating resources.				
5. Our SEA assesses whether schools and LEAs with high chronic absence rates receive and benefit from resources allocated to support attendance, engagement, and well-being.				

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Overall Reflections & Next Steps

1. What are your SEA's **greatest strengths** across the six ingredients? (Review the results from your self-assessment.)

2. What are the **biggest challenges** your SEA faces across the six 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 state 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.

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