



TRANSCRIPT

Video: Every Student, Every Day: A Multi-Tiered Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence in Elementary Schools

April 2019

NARRATOR

Attending school every day really matters. When students miss school, they miss out on learning, which can have lasting effects from grade to grade and hurt their chances to graduate.

With about eight million students—or about one in seven—nationwide missing significant numbers of school days each year, absenteeism is no small problem. Fortunately, it's a problem we can address by joining together as families, educators, and communities to make sure that students are present and accounted for every day.

In this video, we'll make a case for monitoring chronic absence, introduce a multi-tiered approach to address absenteeism, and share examples of how three districts are tackling this problem.

Students are considered chronically absent when they miss 10 percent or more of school days for any reason, whether their absence is excused by a parent or guardian or unexcused. That 10 percent is just two days a month.

There's a lot of evidence showing that when absences add up, student achievement goes down. For example, chronically absent preschool and kindergarten students are academically and developmentally behind their classmates who attend school regularly. By third grade, chronically absent students have lower reading and math achievement, signaling academic problems ahead. Being chronically absent in sixth grade raises the likelihood of not graduating from high school and students are seven times more likely to drop out if they are chronically absent even just one year between 8th and 12th grade.

Let's learn about some strategies that we can use in the elementary grades to boost attendance.

We can start by looking at data to identify students who struggle with attendance and to better understand their reasons for being absent. Also, data can be used to monitor their attendance progress and the effectiveness of interventions.

DEBORAH TERRY

One of the most important tools we have is data and we run that data on a daily, weekly, monthly basis. We share that data with the people that need to know it that can help students. Our principals know who their students are who were chronically absent from school or beginning to have a problem with attendance, our clerical staff knows, our teachers know, and our attendance liaisons know, and those people can actually make a change in those students' lives.



NARRATOR

Using local student-level data, we can design and carry out many promising strategies to reduce chronic absence. These strategies are typically organized into a multi-tiered approach, starting with Tier 1 prevention efforts and progressing to Tier 2 early interventions and Tier 3 more intensive interventions that boost attendance by removing barriers to learning and school success. Let's see what these tiered strategies look like in practice in three school districts in California's rural Central Valley: in Kerman, Parlier, and Tulare.

Of course the best way to reduce chronic absenteeism is through prevention. Tier 1 strategies are the most commonly used and they encourage and support good daily attendance for all students. Conveying the importance of attendance helps everyone in the community better understand why being at school every day matters.

In Kerman and Parlier, the districts use billboards, banners, posters, and school marquees, as well as kindergarten orientation and back-to-school events and even superheroes, to make the connection between attendance and achievement.

STUDENT 1

Good morning.

STUDENT 2

Thanks for coming.

NARRATOR

Districts also use simple incentives and rewards to celebrate good attendance and, even more importantly, to recognize improved attendance.

ALAN MACEDO

And congratulations to Ms. Van Wallace's sixth grade class on the attendance awards. You get the banner and then you also get the trophy and the two Golden Cougar Dollars. And in the lower grades, congratulations to Ms. Paulino's second grade class for attendance awards. We're very proud of you for 97 percent.

STUDENTS

Yay!

NARRATOR

Students were rewarded with pizza parties, VIP lunches in the cafeteria, extended recess, trophies, and dance parties.

KATHY GOODLAD

Excuse the interruption but we have met our attendance goal for today. So congratulations. We know attendance is important, so here is your one-minute dance.



TEACHER 1

It's our dance party. Find a friend.

NARRATOR

Caring relationships between school staff and students and their families are key for fostering a positive school climate and for keeping students engaged in school.

ALAN MACEDO

Every kid is important and that goes from the ABCs: academics, attendance, behavior, and character; knowing our kids by name; greeting them every morning out on the curb; talking to parents...creates a welcoming and safe learning environment.

Hey, hey. Good morning. How are you, sir?

Good morning, sunshine. How are you?

Hey cougars. Good morning, good morning, good morning, and good morning.

NARRATOR

Keeping students healthy is essential to keeping students in school. In Kerman and Tulare, building good attendance habits starts with teaching their youngest students about germs and proper hand washing.

TEACHER 2

Can you guys show me how you scrub your hands? Scrub, scrub, scrub. I like how you're doing top and bottom. Get between your fingers.

STUDENTS

Bye, bye germs.

NARRATOR

For those students flagged by data for starting to miss too much school, Tier 2 strategies are early interventions that address the individual barriers that get in the way of attending school every day.

There are many reasons why students are chronically absent, such as bullying, unmet health conditions, and lack of basic needs including food, clothes, and stable housing.

YESENIA FLORES

When kids don't come to school, we try to figure out what's going on in their lives. We do home visits. We find out the kids sometimes they're missing school, not because they want to, just because sometimes they have problems in their lives and we try to help them with transportation, clothes, food, and even haircuts.



NARRATOR

Tier 3 strategies are for students with the most challenging attendance issues. On a case-by-case basis, these districts work with community partners to provide individualized intensive interventions to get students back on track, both academically and personally.

PRAXADES TORRES III

Every student, every classroom, every day—that is our goal. The district, the schools, the school-based health centers, our police officers, our parents, the entire community, works together.

NARRATOR

Everyone in the school community can help boost attendance and in Kerman, Parlier, and Tulare this means more students are attending school.

For more information about how Kerman, Parlier, and Tulare are reducing chronic absence, please see the video links below.