

SCHOOL WIDE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The purpose of this document is to outline the foundational components of schoolwide and targeted attendance strategies. In addition, at the end of this document, there are links to specific, research-based practices for improving attendance in schools.

It is essential that schools establish and implement effective, universal systems for monitoring and supporting daily school attendance.

The following district staff are available to brainstorm and plan for local solutions to attendance challenges in DPS schools:

- Sarah Friend, OSEL partner and truancy court liaison
- Aviva Katz, transitions program manager
- John Albright, student engagement director
- OSEL partners for school networks

Recommendations from Research:

- Ensure teaching and curricula are relevant, engaging and relate to the world experienced by students outside of school.
- Ensure access to supports for academically struggling students.
- Ensure every student has a trusting relationship with at least one adult in the school.
- Ensure strong family:school communication systems.
 - Classroom teachers
 - Support staff
 - Schoolwide communications

Key Elements for School Based Practice:

1. Monitor attendance data and practices
2. Process for engaging students and parents regarding attendance
3. System for recognizing/rewarding good and improved attendance
4. Early intervention systems that are personalized for attendance strugglers
5. Root cause analysis and barrier reduction (as necessary)

Examples of Universal Attendance Support Systems:

- Establish schoolwide expectations and policies for attendance
- Determine roles and responsibilities of classroom teachers, support staff, school leadership
- Communicate to all school stakeholders
 - Send an informational letter to parents about attendance policies
- Daily calls for unexcused absences (office, teacher, etc)
- Walking School Bus or transportation supports to remove barriers
- Monthly monitoring of school attendance data
- Implement rewards and incentive systems for attendance
 - Class competitions

- School-wide assemblies
- Certificates for best and most-improved attendance

Examples of Strategic Attendance Support Systems:

- Attendance Team referral
- Attendance contract
- Family meeting
- Home visits
- Provide community resources/assist with referrals
- Regular contact/follow-up with student/family
- In-depth needs-assessment
- Monthly reports for targeted students— checking trends and analyzing data

Resources:

[DPS Attendance Procedure Manual 2016-17](#)

[DPS Attendance Intervention Guide 2016-17](#)

External Research and Strategies:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Epstein-Sheldon-Present-and-Accounted-For-2002.pdf>

Interventions start on page 8

<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/increasing-student-attendance.pdf>

PDF page 23 for individual actions that staff can take

A [Harvard study of teacher-parent communication impact on student success](#). While the intervention was specific to a credit recovery program, ***pages 39-41*** have scripts for specific, light touch, impactful teacher to parent comms that could apply to school attendance challenges

Attendance Works MS/HS parent-friendly info sheet on why attendance is important:

[English](#)

[Spanish](#)

Attendance Works [toolkit for Engaging Parents in Reducing Absenteeism](#)

At the high school level, an effective strategy is to ***engage students in designing attendance improvement efforts***. For example, students might choose to develop and lead social norming campaigns around attendance and/or peer-to-peer mentoring programs for improving attendance. The key is engaging students in designing these solutions.