




Tier One Intervention Curriculum  
 Attendance Strategy Elementary Schools  
 Positive Behavior Incentives for Promoting Good Attendance

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# Tier One Intervention Curriculum Attendance Strategy Elementary Schools Positive Behavior Incentives for Promoting Good Attendance



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The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) is one of the sixteen university campuses of The University of North Carolina. UNCG holds two classifications from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as a “research university with high research activity” and for “community engagement” in curriculum, outreach, and partnerships.

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## **Overview**

### **CISNC Introduction**

In the 2014-2015 school-year, Communities In Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) introduced a framework that aligns site and student metrics and interventions and supports to four areas that have been shown to have the greatest impact on student success: attendance, behavior, coursework, and parent involvement, or ABC+P. Both combined and individually, attendance, behavior, and coursework are among the best predictors of a student’s academic success and on-time graduation. While collecting data around ABC+P is critically important to understanding the school and student, it is even more important to use the data to drive high impact intervention and support delivery to empower each student to reach their full potential. To this end, Communities In Schools of North Carolina has partnered with the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to design curricula specifically for CIS within the ABC+P framework to enhance student outcomes in school and success in life. This document is one of more than 50 modules developed to support local CIS staff and most importantly the students that are served. We encourage you to explore all of the modules available online at [www.cisnc.org](http://www.cisnc.org).

### **Using Evidenced-Based Strategies**


There are a multitude of strategies that claim to address attendance, but there are few that actually do so for all students. We suggest that schools use an evidence-based, decision-making model to ensure that high quality information informs the decisions made.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education defines evidence-based decision making as routinely seeking out the best available information on prior research and recent evaluation findings before adopting programs or practices that will demand extensive material or human resources (including both funding and teacher time) and/or affect significant numbers of students (Whitehurst, 2004).

Evidence-based practice means delivering interventions and supports to students (clients) in ways that integrate the best available evidence from data, research, and evaluation; professional wisdom gained from experience; and contextual knowledge of the particular classroom, school, district, or state that might impact the design or implementation.

This document is written to provide schools with attendance-related strategies based on the best evidence from prior research and recent evaluations in elementary schools. In the context of our review, we propose six strategies designed to help improve elementary school attendance:

- Monitoring Data Strategy
- School-Family-Community Partnerships Strategy
- Health Related Strategy



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- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Strategies (2)
- School Climate Strategy

This document will focus on one easy to implement positive behavior strategy for promoting and recognizing good attendance habits.

### Problem/Rationale

Regular, on-time school attendance is vital to student academic success. Nationally, it is estimated that 10-15% of public school students are not attending school regularly. That is, an estimated 7.5 million students miss between 18 or more school days each year (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). When students miss too many days, it can negatively impact their academic achievement, be disruptive to classroom instruction as teachers have to shift attention to students who need to catch up with the rest of the class, as well as, have a negative effect on the overall school climate.


Chronic absenteeism has far reaching effects. Kindergarten students, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity, who are chronically absent, are likely to show lower gains in reading, math, and general knowledge during the first grade (Chang & Romero, 2008). For low-income families, the impact can be twice as great (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012), as low-income families often lack the resources to provide the necessary assistance to help their children make up for skills not previously acquired (Chang & Romero, 2008). Students who do not attain essential social and academic skills during their elementary years may require extra assistance to catch up and may also be at greater risk of dropping out of school in later years (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Students who do not attend school or will not attend school may be positively influenced by a stronger sense of engagement and belonging at school. Students who feel that adults in schools care about them and value them may be more likely to attend school (Chang & Romero, 2008). Likewise, when parents promote regular school attendance practices at home, they also send a positive, caring message to their children. Encouraging students to develop positive behaviors, including regular and on-time attendance, can help them establish good habits early that will carry them throughout their educational careers.

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to highlight strategies schools can use to encourage positive behavior. The Student Support Specialist can use this guide to share with school staff:

- Incentives to promote regular and on-time attendance
- Strategies for communicating expectations about attendance to students
- Tools and resources to share with parents



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## Implementation Plan

### Uses

Student Support Specialists can use the information provided in this guide to help teachers understand the importance of communicating with students that they care about them, as well as the school's (and teacher's) expectations for on-time and regular attendance and commitment to students' academic success.


### Audiences

Information provided in this guide is designed for teachers and school staff to use in student activities to reinforce the positive behavior of regular and on-time attendance. Information as it pertains to discussion of school-wide expectations of student behaviors may be introduced to administrators with possible follow-up during a staff meeting if school-wide expectations are not currently, routinely, and consistently communicated.

### Activities


Below are listed several activities schools can implement to motivate and reinforce regular, on-time attendance. In this guide, a sample lesson will be described in the Lesson Plan of Activity section for the activity highlighted.

- Use evidence-based decision making.
  - Refer to curriculum guide on monitoring data.
- Develop a simple set of school-wide expectations for regular and on-time attendance.
  - Refer to curriculum guide on positive behavior reinforcements.
  - Develop and post attendance expectations in school hallways and classrooms.
- **Establish incentives for students who have regular, on-time attendance publically in the classroom and school-wide.**
  - Examples of classroom recognition activities could include stickers or special privileges (e.g., run errands to the office, teacher's helper for the day, etc.) for students with perfect attendance for the week and/or end-of-year certificates for students who had perfect attendance for the entire school year.
  - Allow students who had perfect attendance the previous month to enjoy lunch with the teacher in the classroom while they watch a short cartoon.
  - Publish names of students with perfect attendance in the monthly parent newsletter, place their pictures on the school's bulletin board or recognize them school-wide over the PA system or during an assembly.
  - Publicly recognize students with marked improvement from the prior month(s) in front of the entire class and/or with a note from the principal encouraging them to keep up the good work and to continue working toward perfect attendance.



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- Develop an encouraging classroom climate for regular, on-time attendance.
  - Set a classroom goal for regular, on-time attendance and communicate daily progress in morning announcements.
  - Determine first nine weeks, semester, or end-of-year reward for reaching goals. For example, a classroom incentive may be the teacher allowing the students to decide what s/he wears on celebration day or rewarding the class with a pajama day or electronics/game day when the class reaches a set goal (see Game Day activity).
- Establish a positive school-wide atmosphere for regular, on-time attendance.
  - Post a cardboard mock-up of the school's mascot, principal, sports figure, etc. at the main entrance with attendance slogans such as "Every day counts", "Our school is better because you are here today", "You are helping us reach our goal", etc. Classrooms can also compete to choose the monthly slogan.
  - Designate a week or month early in the school year as "Attendance Awareness Week" and kick off with school-wide rally or parade in the hallways. Put posters in hallways and classrooms.
  - Have classrooms compete for perfect attendance each month. Partner with local businesses to obtain gift certificates and/or discount coupons to be used as student and teacher incentives.
- Involve parents. (Refer to parent involvement curriculum guide for additional examples.)
  - Send home a letter at the beginning of the school year that outlines the positive benefits and importance of regular on-time attendance and the school's commitment to helping families achieve regular, on-time attendance. (See resource list for sample one-to-one communication tips.)
    - Include school contact information in the letter and details about how the school will keep families informed of student's attendance (e.g., calls when student is absent, teacher follow-up after certain number of missed school days, attendance tracking on progress reports and report card, etc.)
  - Send a note home to families each month indicating their child's attendance for the previous month.
    - If the student had perfect attendance, the note should be upbeat and praise the student (and parent/guardian/family) for recognizing the importance of attendance for their child's academic success.
    - If the student has marked improvement over prior month(s), the note should praise the student (and parent/guardian/family) and encourage them to keep up the good work and continue to work toward perfect attendance.
  - Announce an attendance-related family incentive during parent orientation, PTO meetings, or other parent night early in the school year. For example, students with perfect attendance the previous month can be entered into a drawing for



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prizes. Collaborate with the PTO and local businesses to obtain gift certificates and/or discount coupons to be used as family prizes.

### **Materials/Equipment/Space**

Teacher supplies: Attendance jar, marbles

*Note: For presentations, check for access to computer, Smart board or data projector and screen, relevant power cords, and remote slide advancer.*

### **Time**

- Student activity – 1-2 hours of free time on class reward day (2-4 times per year)

### **Lesson Plan of Activity**

This sample activity will encourage and motivate students to strive for regular, on-time attendance by linking positive behaviors with incentives. This activity is appropriate for all K-5 grades.

Review the resources listed in the Resource section.

Teachers should begin by sharing school-wide behavioral expectations based upon school policies and rules. Additional classroom expectations can also be incorporated, but beginning with school-wide expectations establishes a consistent message for all students. (See curriculum guide for Positive Behavior Reinforcement for Promoting Good Attendance.)

- Establish a positive tone and check for understanding.
- Provide age-appropriate strategies for maintaining regular, on-time attendance throughout the school year.


### **Sample Activity: Electronics/Game Day Activity**

Begin by reminding students of the school's expectations for regular, on-time attendance.

- Check for student understanding.

Introduce the "attendance jar" and 40 marbles (or appropriate number determined by the teacher).

- Tell students that each marble represents one day of perfect attendance for the entire class. For each day that the class achieves perfect attendance (i.e., every student is present in class and on-time), the class will place a marble in the jar. When all the marbles are placed in the jar, the class will receive a classroom reward.



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- Explain that the class will receive the reward on the Friday of the week after all the marbles went into the jar (or designate another day).

Tell students for their reward, they will be allowed to bring in one handheld electronic (e.g., iPod, DS, etc.) or board game (e.g., Twister, monopoly, etc.).

- Each item should be labeled with the student's name on it. Teachers can request that electronic games be fully charged (i.e., no adapter or chargers are allowed).
- When students arrive at school that day, students will place their games in a designated basket until game time.


Teachers should allocate at least one to two hours at the end of the reward day for this activity.

- Teachers may also allow the students to bring snacks for afternoon game time and blankets for sitting on the floor as they play games with their classmates.
- To sweeten the deal, teachers could allow students to wear pajamas to school on game day.

Teachers should also send a note home to parents informing them of the importance of regular, on-time attendance and the school's and class's commitment to student success.

- Explain that as an incentive for full class participation, the class will receive a reward every time the class attendance goal is reached.
- State the class attendance goal.
- Explain the terms of the reward.
- Ask parents to sign and return the note stating that they have read and understand the class goals and commitments.





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## Tier 2 Intervention and Support Examples

Positive behavior support for at-risk students can be implemented in more targeted and meaningful ways. Establishing a school-based behavior support team and coaching teachers how to use positive reinforcement are among some of the strategies that schools have employed to tackle chronic absenteeism.

### Example 1: PBIS Team

School-based PBIS teams can determine the types of interventions that will occur. For example, they can create “clubs” for students who are struggling to attend school and in a subtle way, impart the school’s expectations.


McNamara, K., Rasheed, H., & Delamatre, J. (2008). A statewide study of school-based intervention teams: Characteristics, member perceptions, and outcomes. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 18*(1), 5-30.

Newton, J. S., Horner, R. H., Todd, A. W., Algozzine, R. F., & Algozzine, K. M. (2012). A pilot study of a problem-solving model for team decision making. *Education and Treatment of Children, 35*(1), 25-49.

### Example 2: Coaching for Teachers

Coaches collaborate with teachers and school staff to provide effective classroom and school-wide behavior management.

Hershfeldt, P. A., Pell, K., Sechrest, R., Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2012). Lessons learned coaching teachers in behavior management: The PBIS<sup>plus</sup> coaching model. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 22*(4), 280-299.



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## Resources

The following resources are identified as part of the activity. Read through these resources carefully to become familiar with any concepts and instructions as they pertain to the content and activity.

Attendance Works. *Make Every Day Count*. Retrieve from:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/MakeEveryDayCount2.pdf>

- Sample letter to parents/guardians on the importance of attendance (in editable Word document, see link on page 7)


Attendance Works. *Promoting Attendance Through One-on-One Communications*. Retrieve

from: [http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Attachment1\\_promotingattendancethrough1on1communications.pdf](http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Attachment1_promotingattendancethrough1on1communications.pdf)

Attendance Works. *Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives*. Retrieve from:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AW-Incentives-two-pager-1-4-111.pdf>

*Note: All posters, images, and activity guides identified are copyright cleared for non-commercial use.*



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## Measuring Success

Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of PBIS strategies can help the school track quality of implementation as well as the effectiveness of these strategies. Following are some suggestions that schools may find useful to begin measuring success.

Assess students' attitudes and knowledge about the importance of school attendance:

- Ask students why they think coming to school every day will help them to do better in school.
- Ask students what they might have missed from the current day (or day before if doing this activity early in the day), if they had not come to school.
- Ask students to name some responsibilities that come with being a student.
- Ask students to identify things they can do to help ensure they are prepared for school and arrive on time.

Assess students' attitudes and knowledge about school and/or classroom rules as they relate to school attendance:


- Ask students to identify school/class rules about attendance.
  - Ask students to explain in their own words what the rules mean.

How many students were recorded as having perfect attendance each month?

- Chart data at the classroom level, grade level and school-wide.
  - Establish a baseline and compare during future years.

How many classroom or school-wide incentives were earned?

- Chart data at the classroom, grade and school-wide level
  - Establish a baseline and compare during future years.
- Length of time to earn incentives?
  - Did the amount of time to earn incentives decrease over the course of the school year?
- Types of incentives used by classrooms and school-wide?
- Do some incentives achieve better results than others?



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## Appendix A: Glossary

Following are some key terms used in the Attendance Curriculum Guides.

**Average Daily Attendance (ADA):** the presence of a student on days when school is in session. A student is counted as present only when he/she is actually at school, present at another activity sponsored by the school as part of the school’s program, or personally supervised by a member of the staff. ADA is based on the sum of the number of days in attendance for all students divided by the number of days in the school month. No state allotments are based on ADA (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Average Daily Membership (ADM):** the total number of school days within a given term – usually a school month or school year – that a student’s name is on the current roll of a class, regardless of his/her being present or absent, is the “number of days of membership” for that student. Average Daily Membership is a calculation using data from the Principal’s Monthly Report. The calculation uses the number of days in the school month and the number of Non-violation (NVIO) Membership Days (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Chronic Absenteeism:** “typically based on the total number of days of school missed, including both excused and unexcused absences” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

**Excessively Absent:** defined in some locales as missing 20 days or more of school (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

**Expulsions:** students who are expelled are to be withdrawn from school (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).


**Germs (pathogens):** types of microbes that can cause disease.

**Hand hygiene:** a general term that applies to routine hand washing, antiseptic hand wash, antiseptic hand rub, or surgical hand antiseptis.

**Hand sanitizer – alcohol-based:** for alcohol-based hand sanitizers, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (5) recommends a concentration of 60 percent to 95 percent ethanol or isopropanol, the concentration range of greatest germicidal efficacy.

**Hand washing:** the vigorous, brief rubbing together of all surfaces of lathered hands, followed by rinsing under a stream of water. Hand washing suspends microorganisms and mechanically removes them by rinsing with water. The fundamental principle of hand washing is removal, not killing.

**Influenza:** a viral infection that attacks your respiratory system — your nose, throat and lungs.



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**Lawful Absence:** when satisfactory evidence of a lawful absence is provided to the appropriate school official, the absence should be coded as lawful (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014)

**Medically Fragile and Teacher-In-Treatment:** the 1H absence code should only be used for students who have been identified as medically fragile or for students who are enrolled at one of the six Teacher-In-Treatment sites (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Microbes:** tiny living organisms that may or may not cause disease.

**School Refusal:** refers to student absenteeism because of (short-term or long-term) emotional stressors related to school attendance (most common occurrence is in students aged 5, 6, 10, and 11) (American Family Physician).


**Suspensions:** absence of a student which results from the suspension or expulsion of that student for misconduct may not be used for a compulsory attendance violation action (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Truancy:** “typically defined as a certain number of or certain frequency of unexcused absences” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

**Unlawful Absences:** students who are willfully absent from school without a lawful excuse are to be considered unlawfully absent (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Vaccine:** a product that stimulates a person’s immune system to produce immunity to a specific disease, protecting the person from that disease. Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but can also be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose.

**Vaccination:** the act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce immunity to a specific disease.



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**Refere**

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## Appendix C: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Barber, R. M., &amp; Kagey, J. R. (1977). Modification of school attendance for an elementary population. <i>Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 10</i>(1), 41-48.</p>	<p>Behavioral program where teachers were instructed on the importance of placing positive reinforcement on students' behavior in order to improve their attendance. Introduction of attendance charts and contingent parties once a month.</p>	<p>Three first grade classes, four second grade classes, and three third grade classes; 212 total students.</p>	<p>Compared to baseline data, the experimental period had increases in attendance from Jan-April. In comparison to other schools, experimental period attendance gradually increased through Jan-April and declined in May. Application of behavioral principles increased school attendance.</p>	<p>The amount of party time children earned was based on the number of days they came to school. A child with perfect attendance for the month earned the full 1-hr of party time and admittance to four "fun rooms". Children missing one day of school earned 45 party minutes and were admitted to only two "fun rooms". Those missing two days during the month earned 30 party minutes and one "fun room" while those missing three days, earned only 15 party minutes and no "fun rooms". Children who missed more than three school days during the month were sent to a special workroom where they were required to complete constructive academic assignments. Also, children who received only partial</p>





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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
				<p>party time had to go to the work room for the initial part of the party to complete a short academic assignment.</p>
<p>Epstein, J. L., &amp; Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. <i>The Journal of Educational Research, 95</i>(5), 308-318.</p>	<p>Respondents returned a series of surveys designed to explore the relationships between school attendance policies, school practices to involve parents and changing rates of student attendance.</p> <p>Guidance from NNPS (National Network of Partnership Schools) to assist schools to develop and implement research-based family and community activities to improve school attendance.</p>	<p>18 schools returned baseline, midyear, and final surveys; 12 elementary schools and 6 secondary schools (only data from elementary schools was used).</p> <p>The 12 elementary schools in this sample ranged in size from 172 to 1,020 students, with an average school size of about 500 students. Half of the schools were located in Maryland, and the</p>	<p>On average, attendance rates increased each year from '95, '96, and '97. Chronically absent students decreased from 8% to 6.1% when school-family-community partnerships were developed.</p>	<p><b>Attendance variables:</b> Schools were asked to provide information about daily student attendance rates for 3 years. <b>Family Involvement variables:</b> Respondents asked to report whether schools conducted practices designed to reach out to parents or community groups to improve or maintain student attendance. <b>Use of practices:</b> Respondents were asked whether schools used practices of calling home when students were absent, visiting homes of chronically absent students, rewarding students for improved attendance, giving families contact information of a person from school to ask questions about attendance,</p>



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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
		<p>others were located in California, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. The schools served over 5,000 students.</p>		<p>conducting workshops on attendance and other issues, referring chronically absent students to a counselor and using truant officers to work with students who have serious attendance problems.</p>
<p>Ford, J., &amp; Sutphen, R. D. (1996). Early intervention to improve attendance in elementary school for at-risk children: A pilot program. <i>Social Work in Education, 18</i>(2), 95-102.</p>	<p>Development of an attendance incentive program within an elementary school. The program included both a school-wide attendance promotion and a focus program that developed individual intervention plans for high-risk children identified as having excessive absences.</p>	<p><b>School-wide program:</b> entire school (number of students in the school was not reported).</p> <p><b>Focus program:</b> nine students.</p>	<p><b>School-wide program:</b> school-wide attendance improved from 94.8% to 95.4 %. 73% of teachers reported the program as effective and 92% of teachers reported that the program should continue. <b>Focus Program:</b> Overall, average absences for the group decreased from 7.5 in the first quarter (baseline) to 5.1 in the second quarter (intervention phase); <math>t(8) = 2.06, p = .037</math>, one-tailed.</p>	<p>A letter was sent to the parents of all elementary students stating the school's mission to encourage perfect attendance and policy on absences and lateness. Posters were placed around the school listing the names of students who had perfect or good attendance for each nine-week grading period. Students on the list received a certificate of acknowledgement and a reward.</p> <p><b>Focus Program:</b> an intensive intervention to be conducted in the second quarter of school year (attendance charts and daily</p>



Tier One Intervention Curriculum  
Attendance Strategy Elementary Schools  
Positive Behavior Incentives for Promoting Good Attendance

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				counseling sessions) and then a maintenance program (attendance charts and weekly sessions) to be continued over the third and fourth quarters of the school year. Family based interventions were also conducted and consisted of home visits or calling parents.



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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Peek, S. D. (2009). Integrating effective and beneficial interventions to increase student attendance in an elementary school setting. <i>Georgia School Counselors Association Journal</i>, 16(1), 9-20.</p>	<p>Determine the impact of current interventions (attendance forms, attendance review teams, incentive program) to increase regular student attendance.</p>	<p>One elementary school. Twenty-nine anonymous surveys were sent out and 28 were completed and returned. All teachers with a homeroom received the survey, along with the principal and assistant principal.</p>	<p>Using the survey, 89% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that modified attendance forms were beneficial for tracking absences. 93% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that “Perfect Pals” was a good idea for increasing student desire to come to school. Using attendance records, 51 students had more than 15 absences for the school year prior to the interventions. During the implementation years (2007 and 2008) only 39 and 41 students were absent more than 15 days, respectively. Counselor documentation identified a steady average of 213 students attending the monthly Perfect Pals luncheon.</p>	<p>Interventions to the attendance process were implemented over the previous 15 months of the study. An attendance form for tracking student absences was modified to increase its use and effectiveness for teachers. Attendance Review Team (ART) was implemented to make parents accountable for attending a scheduled meeting with school staff to discuss child's current attendance. Notices sent to parents informing them of student absences. A form integrated in the ART meetings to address other areas of concern besides attendance. The “Perfect Pals” student incentive program was also started.</p>