



Tier One Intervention Curriculum
Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
Reinforcing Positive Behaviors – Setting Expectations

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Overview

CISNC Introduction

In the 2014-15 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.

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

- Monitoring Data strategy
- School-Family-Community Partnerships strategy
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies (2)
- Character Education strategy
- Peer Mentoring strategy

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This curriculum guide will focus on introducing a journaling activity that students can employ to explore college and career goals, develop actionable plans, and define character traits necessary for the achievement of those goals.

Problem/Rationale

Improving test scores as a means for raising educational gains receives greater local and national focus than does attendance; however, studies indicate that middle school attendance is more predictive of passing high school than middle school test scores and is as predictive of high school grades as is high school test scores (Allensworth, 2014).

Chronic absenteeism is one of the major problems faced by teachers and administrators. When students miss too many school 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. 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 school care about them and value them may be more likely to attend school (Chang & Romero, 2008).

The literature suggests that students who set goals for themselves, including academic, social, and personal, may develop behaviors that lead to increased attendance, motivation, engagement, and self-regulation, and may do better in school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). By offering multiple opportunities for students to learn about, discuss, and enact positive social behaviors, schools have a unique opportunity to explain and reinforce the core values upon which academic success is based (U.S. Department of Education). Promoting a school-wide culture and climate that encourages positive behaviors while reinforcing the school's expectations, including regular, on-time attendance, is one of the strategies that schools can use to influence student outcomes (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009).

Purpose

The purpose of this student lesson is to:

- Highlight the importance of regular and on-time attendance for school success,
- Communicate school attendance expectations,
- Provide tips for establishing routines to support regular and on-time attendance, and
- Engage students in affirming good attendance habits.

Implementation Plan

This guide will provide suggestions teachers can use to establish school attendance expectations and engage students in affirming good attendance habits. School attendance expectations should be consistently communicated to staff, students, parents, and community.

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The lesson should be taught at the beginning of the school year to establish expectations early. While the implementation of one activity is highlighted in detail in the Sample Lesson Plan section, alternative suggestions have been provided that teachers can use to incorporate the discussion about attendance in different subject areas.

Uses

Teachers can use the lesson to review with students: the important role that regular and on-time attendance has in their school success; communicate school attendance expectations; provide tips for establishing routines to support regular and on-time attendance; and engage students in affirming good attendance habits.

Audience

This guide is a resource for teachers to introduce an activity for communicating and affirming attendance expectations in middle school.

Activities

Following are some examples of strategies schools can implement to engage students in understanding expectations for regular, on-time attendance as well as the importance of school attendance for their success in school. Refer to the Sample Lesson section for a lesson of the strategy highlighted.

- Develop and communicate attendance expectations to staff, students, parents, and the community.
- Create lessons related to attendance expectations, such as:
 - **Have students develop posters that illustrate the importance of regular, on-time attendance for student school success, school attendance expectations, and routines that students and families can adopt to ensure regular, on-time attendance.**
 - Engage in a competition among homerooms to come up with a slogan promoting school attendance.
 - Use slogan throughout school communications (e.g., school banner, newsletters, communications to parents, school website).
 - Recognize winning homeroom team.
 - Have students write and perform a role play to act out issues related to attendance (English language arts).
 - How attendance impacts student school success (academic, social, etc.).
 - Reasons students miss school.
 - Routines students and their families develop for ensuring on-time and regular attendance.
 - Have students calculate attendance rates (math).
 - Students can plot class attendance rates.

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- Have students interview classmates about attendance behaviors, e.g., attitudes about attendance, reasons they miss school (social studies).
 - Discuss patterns and possible solutions.
- Have students write a letter to parents about the school’s attendance policy and why coming to school is important (English language arts).
- Establish schoolwide reward systems for students who were in attendance every day during the previous month.
 - Refer to curriculum guide on student incentives.
- Involve parents.
 - Refer to curriculum guide on parent engagement.

Materials/Equipment/Space

- Teacher:
 - Presentation on attendance (see Appendix D).
 - The Attendance Works document, *Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students*, for talking points when discussing attendance with students (see Resources section).
- Student supplies:
 - Poster board
 - Markers
 - School Expectations for attendance

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

Time

The lesson should be taught at the beginning of the school year to establish expectations early. Allow one class period to present information to students and have students complete the poster activity.

Lesson Plan of Activity

Review the resources listed in the Resource section.

The lesson plan includes:

- Introduction of school attendance expectations.
- Communication tips for establishing routines to support regular and on-time attendance.
- Student participation in affirming good attendance habits.

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Sample Lesson – *Creating Attendance Posters*

Process Notes and Tips	Slide
<p><i>Download in advance the Attendance Works document, “Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students,” for talking points when discussing attendance with students (see Resources section).</i></p> <p><i>Show title slide</i></p> <p><i>Before moving to the next slide</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students why they think that school attendance is important. 	<p>Title Slide – Attendance – The First Step to School Success</p>
<p>Review reasons that attendance is important to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review points on the slide, then discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staying current with learning that takes place ○ Not getting behind on learning ○ Having the opportunity to interact with teachers and peers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask questions ▪ Gain deeper understanding about content ▪ Develop important learning skills ▪ Develop important social skills ▪ Being part of the school community ▪ Not missing assignments or tests that can impact final grade <p><i>Refer to the Attendance Works document, “Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students,” for talking points when discussing attendance with students (see Resources section).</i></p>	<p>Slide #2 – Attendance is important to student school success</p>
<p><i>Insert <u>key points</u> from the school attendance policy.</i></p> <p><i>Provide students with a handout of the full attendance policy.</i></p> <p><i>Frame as desired behaviors and use a positive tone (rules are meant to help not punish), but let students know that these are expectations and there are consequences to not following the policy.</i></p> <p>Review key points from the attendance policy. <i>Include expectations, examples of excused versus unexcused absences, and what students should do if absent or tardy.</i></p>	<p>Slide #3 – Key point concerning school attendance policy</p>

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Process Notes and Tips	Slide
<p>Ask students about reasons they may not attend school.</p> <p><i>Listen to reasons students to see if any students may be raising flags about barriers to school attendance. If any student raises critical barriers (e.g., indications of bullying or unsafe conditions traveling to and from school, family issues, housing or food insecurity, etc.), you will want to alert appropriate staff to follow up and provide supports.</i></p> <p>Note: According to Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) there are three reasons students may miss school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who <u>cannot</u> attend school (e.g., illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, need to work, involvement in the juvenile justice system) • Students who <u>will not</u> attend school (e.g., bullying, unsafe conditions at school, traveling to and from school, harassment, embarrassment) • Students who <u>do not</u> attend school (student does not recognize value of attending school, parent/guardian does not recognize value of attending school, student prefers to do something else, nothing prevents student from skipping school) <p>Let students know that you understand that perfect attendance is not always possible, as students may occasionally fall ill and that there are times when students may need to stay home so their health may improve more quickly and to avoid spreading an infectious illness. Students should stay home if they: have a fever, are nauseated, are vomiting, have diarrhea.</p> <p>Reaffirm the benefits of regular and on-time school attendance.</p> <p>Remind students what they should do if absent or tardy.</p>	<p>Slide #4 – Reasons students are absent</p>
<p>Ask students about some of the obstacles they may have to getting to school on time and regularly.</p> <p><i>Listen for any issues that may be critical barriers for students, e.g., indications of bullying or unsafe conditions traveling to and from school, family issues, housing or food insecurity, etc. so that you can alert appropriate staff to provide supports.</i></p> <p>Ask students about what responsibilities they have for ensuring they have regular, on-time attendance.</p>	<p>Slide #5 – Potential obstacles to school attendance</p>
<p><i>Before advancing to content, ask students about routines they may have for ensuring that they arrive to school on time and prepared for learning.</i></p> <p>Talk through tips for establishing routines to ensure regular, on-time attendance.</p>	<p>Slide #6 – Tips for Developing Good Routines</p>

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Activity	Process Notes and Tips
<p><i>Divide students into teams so that there is one team for each school attendance expectation.</i></p> <p><i>Print school attendance expectations on piece of paper with one rule per slip of paper and fold in half so that students do not see rules.</i></p> <p><i>Put slips of paper in container and allow teams to draw on slip of paper.</i></p> <p><i>Teams will design a poster based on the attendance expectation on their slip of paper.</i></p> <p>Provide instructions to students</p> <p>Students should design a poster that illustrates the expectation, and should include information (from presentation and handouts) that highlight why regular, on-time attendance is important to student success in school. Students should also include one or more tips that they can incorporate into their lives to help ensure they attend school regularly and on time.</p> <p><i>Give students about 20 minutes to work on their posters.</i></p> <p><i>Allow time for students to present their posters to the class.</i></p> <p><i>Post completed posters around the room.</i></p>	<p>Slide #7 - Student Poster Activity</p>

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Tier 2 Intervention and Support Examples

Presuming schools are routinely examining their data, some students will be identified as needing Tier 2 strategies. The examples below can be modified and managed by the CIS Student Support Specialist.

Example 1: Stress expectations

Some students need programs that stress expectations and include their families and positive incentives. The truancy court program was modeled on the nationally recognized Truancy Court Diversion Program (TCDP). In that program, a student received a family assessment and the family worked with a Family Advocate to establish goals and reduce barriers that prevented the student from attending school and being academically successful. The team met weekly with the students and caregivers for 10-12 weeks before school. When students achieved a goal they were given small incentives at the discretion of the school. The program also included positive fun activities (i.e. Family Fun Nights).

Hendricks, M. A., Sale, E. W., Evans, C. J., McKinley, L. & DeLozier Carter, S. (2010).
Evaluation of a truancy court intervention in four middle schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 47(2), 173-183.

Example 2: Precorrection Strategy

Another option involves working with all staff members on their behavior management skills. Precorrection is a strategy that can help reinforce expectations. The strategy involves learning seven steps that can be used in classrooms and schoolwide for teaching, monitoring, and reinforcing expectations.

Ennis, R. P., Schwab, J. R., & Jolivette, K. (2012). Using Precorrection as a Secondary-Tier Intervention for Reducing Problem Behaviors in Instructional and Noninstructional Settings. *Beyond Behavior*, 22(1), 40-47.

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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. Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students. Retrieve from: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Sending-the-Right-Message-about-Attendance-students.pdf>

Attendance Works. Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in Middle and High School. Retrieved from: http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/AW_HS-flyer_3-15-12.pdf

The following optional resources provide additional information and concepts for sharing with others or expanding the activity. Read through these resources to become familiar with the information and to determine the level of usefulness within the school setting.

NYC Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance
<http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NYC-Chronic-Absenteeism-Impact-Report.pdf>

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Measuring Success

Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of strategies implemented 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.

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Appendix A: Glossary

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

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) – is 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) – is 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 – “is 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 antisepsis.

Hand sanitizer – alcohol-based: for alcohol- based hand sanitizers, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (5) recommends a concentration of 60% to 95% 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 – The 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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Appendix C: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness
<p>Horner, R. H., Todd, A. W., Lewis-Palmer, T., Irvin, L. K., Sugai, G., & Boland, J. B. (2004). The School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET): A research instrument for assessing school-wide positive behavior support. <i>Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions</i>, 6(1), 3-12.</p>	<p>This study examined the psychometric properties of an assessment tool to be used to measure implementation and effects of school-wide positive behavior support (PBIS) procedures. The instrument is called the School-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET). It consists of 28-items organized into seven subscales based on the key features of school-wide PBIS.</p> <p>The seven key features of SWPBIS are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School-wide behavioral expectations are defined; 2. These expectations are taught to all children in the school; 3. Rewards are provided for following the expectations; 4. A consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is put in place; 5. Problem behavior patterns are monitored and the information is used for ongoing decision-making; 6. An administrator actively supports and is involved in the effort; and 	<p>N= 45 elementary and middle schools</p> <p>N=8 elementary schools used for test-retest reliability</p> <p>N=17 elementary schools used for inter-observer agreement</p> <p>N=31 schools used to determine construct validity (5 middle schools, 26 elementary)</p>	<p>The instrument was found to be very reliable ($r=0.96$). The test-retest's reliability averaged 97.3% and the average inter-observer agreement was 99%.</p> <p>To test construct validity, SET score were compared to EBSSAS scores (another measure of school-wide behavior support systems with 15-items) completed during the same time period. The SET is conducted by an external observer whereas the EBSSAS is completed by the faculty and staff members of the school and includes questions about parental participation and "booster training". The total scores were found to be correlated with a Pearson $r=0.75$.</p> <p>To test for sensitivity, 25 schools implemented a school-wide PBIS</p>

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness
	7. The school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff training opportunities, and data collection options.	schools) N=13 schools participated in the pre-posttest for sensitivity (3 middle schools and 10 elementary schools)	procedures. Thirteen (13) of the schools participated in a SET evaluation prior to implementing the procedures and again 6-24 months after completing the training. A paired t-test comparing pre-SET and post-SET mean scores showed that the SET is sensitive to implementation changes meaning scores do change over time once school-wide PBIS is implemented.
Nelson, L. P., McMahan, S. K., & Torres, T. (2012). The Impact of a Junior High School Community Intervention Project: Moving beyond the Testing Juggernaut and into a Community of Creative Learners. <i>School Community Journal</i> , 22(1), 125-144.	This was a 2-year mixed-methods study of a community partnership initiative influence on attendance at an urban junior high school using a quasi-experimental design. The researchers wanted to demonstrate how attendance, dropout rates and students attitudes could be changed by a school-community intervention project, what type of project programs were most successful in changing the school climate and what factors should be considered when implementing and sustaining a new community-school partnership.	The intervention school consisted of N=758 7 th and 8 th grade students from a school who's population was economically disadvantages and mainly ethnic minorities with a school attendance rate	A three factor ANCOVA (gender x ethnicity x time) was applied to this mixed model repeated measures design in order to increase the ratio of variance explained by the other independent factors. The between-subjects factors were gender and ethnicity, while the within-subject factors were the three independent time measures. There was a significantly positive change in

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness
	<p>The school's administration changed in the second year. The new administrator focused on test scores and the community-school partnership suffered. The momentum achieved in the first year was stalled or decreased in the second year.</p> <p>General findings of the study showed that 58% of the students stated that they did not attend school because they disapproved of existing school rules and routines, followed by dislike of teachers 12% and dislike of peers 8%.</p>	<p>of 94.6%. The comparison school was demographically similar and consists of N=428 7th and 8th graders with a 95% attendance rate.</p> <p>During the two-year intervention cycle the qualitative portion of the study included individual interviews, student focus groups and individual student reflections. The third-year follow up included interviews with key students</p>	<p>climate during year wrong ($p < 0.001$) and a significantly strong negative change in student attitude/climate in year 2 ($p < 0.001$).</p> <p>The attendance rates increased at the intervention site during year one from 94.6% to 96.6% and then decreased to 93.9% in year two. There was little variability in the attendance rates at the control site.</p>

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Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
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		(N=2), staff (N=4) and faculty (N=3).	
<p>Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. <i>School Community Journal, 14</i>(2), 39-56.</p>	<p>As part of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, thirty-nine schools provided information on their rates of chronic absenteeism and the activities they've implemented to combat it. Respondents were asked if they had implemented various strategies from a list provided (caregiver practices, communication practices, collaborating with the community, encouraging activities). They were then asked to rate the effectiveness of the strategy on a four-point scale.</p>	<p>N=39 schools (10 middle schools and 29 elementary schools)</p>	<p>Providing awards and incentives was reported to be one of the most frequently implemented practices and the most effective ($\bar{X} = 2.45$). Celebrating excellent attendance was found to have a strong effect on lowering the rate of chronic absenteeism ($\beta = -0.209, p \leq 0.05$). Also, celebrating good attendance continued to reduce students' chronic absenteeism after its effects on the previous year's rates were accounted for.</p>

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Best/Promising Practices

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/Limitations
Incentives are an effective tool in encouraging positive behavioral change in students	Balfanz, R. & Byrnes, V. (2013). <i>Meeting the challenge of combating chronic absenteeism: Impact of the NYC Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance and its implications for other cities</i> . Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins School of Education. http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NYC-Chronic-Absenteeism-Impact-Report.pdf	The evaluation discussed this initiative but it did not partition out its effectiveness on students’ or school outcomes. Survey results from principals and mentors showed that they believed the incentives were an effective tool in encouraging positive behavioral change in students. The task force’s website offers a toolkit with information on how to implement an incentive program in a high school. http://www.nyc.gov/html/truancy/html/resources/incentives.shtml No specifics on sample size, impact/effectiveness or implementation.