Tier One Intervention Curriculum
Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
Parents – Our Key to Good Student Attendance

Table of Contents

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Communities In Schools of North Carolina is leading the national network in providing the most effective student supports and wraparound interventions and supports directly in schools to support students and teachers. Working collaboratively with 400 schools across North Carolina, Communities In Schools impacts the lives of more than 230,000 youth each year. Driven by research-based practices surrounding the best predictors of student success – attendance, behavior, coursework and parent and family engagement – Communities In Schools is changing the picture of education for students across North Carolina. Learn more about Communities In Schools of North Carolina at www.cisnc.org.

The Nonprofit Evaluation Support Program (NESP) is a collaborative effort between two University of North Carolina Greensboro organizations – The SERVE Center and The Office of Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Services (OAERS). NESP's mission is to provide program evaluation services and program evaluation capacity building support to nonprofit and community-based organizations while providing authentic learning experiences for future leaders in the field of program evaluation.

The SERVE Center at The University of North Carolina Greensboro is a university-based research, development, dissemination, evaluation, and technical assistance center. For more than 24 years, SERVE Center has worked to improve K-12 education by providing evidence-based resources and customized technical assistance to policymakers and practitioners.

The University of North Carolina 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.

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.

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 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

This document will focus on one strategy for engaging families and communicating the importance of attendance for their child's academic success.

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).

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). 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).

Parents have the greatest influence over their child and the greatest responsibility for their child, thus they are the key to ensuring that their child attends school regularly, on time, and well-prepared. Parents may not be aware of the detriment poor attendance is to their student's academic success in the short-term and long-term; therefore, schools need to reach out to parents to inform them and make them active partners in ensuring their child attends school regularly, on time, and well-prepared for learning.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide one strategy for engaging families and communicating the importance of attendance for their child's academic success as well as to provide suggestions to school staff for reaching out to parents.

Schools will:
- Communicate with parents about the importance of attendance for students' school success.
- Communicate attendance policy to parents.

Parents will understand:

- Why attendance is important to their child's school success.
- How to establish routines to help their students arrive at school regularly and on-time.

Implementation Plan

Uses

School staff can use resources and presentation to plan a parent night to communicate benefits of good attendance and the school attendance policy.

Audiences

The primary audience for this document is school staff.

Activities

The primary activity is a presentation to parents to communicate the importance of attendance for student school success as well as the school attendance policy and tips for developing family routines to help students attend school regularly and on time.

Engaging parents of middle school students is a challenge. Schools must look for new ways to reach out to parents. Schools might consider:
- Holding attendance discussions:
  - Before athletic events
  - Before dramatic or art gallery events
  - At a family game night or fun night
  - As a topic at a parent coffee chat night
  - During parent/teacher conferences
    - Consider making conferences student-led conferences and have student include attendance record as part of discussion
  - Hosting an Attendance Summit

- o Invite parents, administrators, teachers, counselors, legal experts, health service providers, and other service providers to meet to discuss contextual issues that may contribute to absenteeism with identifying potential solution.
- Posting school attendance policy on school Website.
- Establishing practices for contacting parents daily when students are absent.

Studies indicate that students have better attendance on service-learning days. Invite parents to participate in service-learning or other community service projects with their child as a way of engaging parents in school activities.

Materials/Equipment/Space

For parent presentation:
- Presentation slides
- *Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students* (see Resource section)
- School Attendance Policy as parent handouts

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

Time

- Allow 20 minutes for the parent presentation and Q&A session.

Lesson Plan of Activity – *Parents – Our Key to Student Attendance*

Use the following sample lesson with parents.

A presentation slide deck is included in Appendix D.

Sample Lesson – Parents – Our Key to Student Attendance

Process Notes	Slide
- *Welcome parents and thank them for their commitment to their child's education.* - *Let parents know that you want to spend about 10 minutes talking about student attendance and how important it is to their child's academic success.* - *Let parents know that you will answer general questions at the end.*	Title Slide
Tell parents:	Slide #2

In several studies, good attendance has been shown to be a reliable predictor of:

- Academic performance – students who have good attendance are more likely to perform better in school
- High school graduation – student who have good attendance are more likely to graduate from high school
- College Completion – students who have good attendance in high school are more likely to complete college

Process Notes	Slide
Tell parents: • Chronic absenteeism is when a student misses 10% of school. 10% may not seem like a lot, but… • *Expand on this by noting how many lessons can be missed in 18 days….72 days* Remind parents: • Students who do not have good attendance in middle school are likely not to have good attendance in high school as well, so the hour of missed instruction only increases. • Chronic absenteeism throughout middle and high school could lead to more than half a year of missed instruction. Just imagine how much a student would need to make up to overcome that much missed instruction.	Slide #3
Tell parents: that we know… • Sometimes students cannot come to school because circumstances or obligations compel them to be somewhere else during the school day. • Some students will not attend school because they are actively avoiding interactions or events in school or on the way to or from school. • Sometimes students just do not go to school, not because there is something preventing them from attending or compelling them to stay away, but they decide not to attend, because they would prefer to be elsewhere, or just do not want to make the effort required to get to school.	Slide #4

Tell parents:
• *As a transition year, students may feel some anxiety because:*
   • *They are attending a new school and physical surroundings are new*
   • *May be introduced to many new students*
   • *Are suddenly the youngest students in the school*
   • *They change classes*
   • *Have multiple teachers*
   • *Have increased responsibility for their own learning*
• *Let parents know that all of this can be overwhelming for students and may need additional encouragement and support at home as they get used to their new school environment and routines*
• *Assure parents that the school understands potential anxieties and works to make the transition less stressful for students*
   • *Provide some examples of how school welcomes and attempts to ease the transition for 6th graders (and new students in other grades)*
	Slide #5

Tier One Intervention Curriculum
Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
Parents – Our Key to Good Student Attendance

	Slide #6
Share these examples for each of the slide bullets: • Set regular bedtimes. • Decide what to wear and pack backpack and lunches the night before. • Set alarm for wake-up time. • Establish regular morning routines. • Call on friends or family if something arises, e.g., needs to leave for work before student catches the bus, or someone student can call if misses the bus.	

Tier One Intervention Curriculum
Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
Parents – Our Key to Good Student Attendance

Process Notes	Slide
Communicate who the parent should contact. Provide a handout with all pertinent contact information. *Tell parents that the school:* - Cares about the well-being of all students as well as their academic success and… - Will work with parents to provide supports for students who may be unable to attend school for extended periods of time. - Want to know about anxieties students may have about school so that the school can address any issues that may be causing anxieties or provide supports to help reduce or eliminate anxieties. - Want to know immediately about any unsafe conditions so that students do not experience harm.	Slide #7
Add <u>key points</u> parents need to know about school attendance policy here to this slide. *Frame in a positive tone (rule are meant to help).* *Don't overwhelm parents by posting the full attendance policy here, but give them a copy of the full attendance policy to have on hand and to post at home.* *Add image of school mascot to the slide.*	Slide #8
Allow about 10 minutes for questions from parents. *Have staff on hand who can answer questions – principal, counselor, and teachers.* *Don't become defensive about questions being asked.* *Don't get bogged down with student-specific issues, rather arrange to meet parent at the conclusion of the question period to answer his/her question.* *Be sure to thank parents for their participation and their commitment to not only their child, but to the school community as well.*	Slide #9
References only	Slide #10
End slide	Slide #11

Tier 2 Intervention and Support Examples

At the middle school level, strategies to improve student attendance involve one-on-one mentoring and daily attendance check-in with students and parents. Parent liaisons work with families and school staff to set goals and monitor student progress.

Example #1: School-Based Mentors

School staff including teachers, principals and counselors work collaboratively with parents to set goals for the student and determine how best to achieve those goals. Students are then matched with school-based mentors who provide one-on-one mentoring to improve their academic, behavioral and social skills. Parents also receive additional support through classes that build their knowledge and skills to academically support and set high expectations and boundaries for their child.

> Gordon, J., Downey, J., & Bangert, A. (2013). Effects of a school-based mentoring program on school behavior and measures of adolescent connectedness. *School Community Journal*, *23*(2), 227-250.

Example #2: Check and Connect

Another approach may be to intensively engage students in their school through various strategies such as checking in every day (as a form of building relationship with students and their families), monitoring attendance and other misbehaviors and working with parents on strategies they can use at home. A school-based monitor would be assigned and could help with the multi-approach efforts to improve student engagement.

> Maynard, B. R., Kjellstrand, E. K., & Thompson, A. M. (2014). Effects of check and connect on attendance, behavior, and academics: A randomized effectiveness trial. *Research On Social Work Practice*, *24*(3), 296-309.

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.

National Network of Partnership Schools (Johns Hopkins University). www.csos.jhu.edu
National PTA. www.pta.org
- Tips for Teachers on Family Engagement

Attendance Works – http://www.attendanceworks.org/
- *Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students*. Retrieve from: http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/messaging-attendance-to-families1.pdf

National Network for Partnership Schools @ Johns Hopkins University – http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/
- Ellis Tech Coffee House and Family Game Night. Retrieve from: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/2014/pdf/PPP_2014_62.pdf
- Family Fun Fair. Retrieve from: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/2014/pdf/PPP_2014_63.pdf
- Student Ambassador Program. Retrieve from: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/2014/pdf/PPP_2014_55.pdf

The following optional resources will provide additional information and suggestions for enhancing activities related to attendance monitoring and using data for making decisions about strategies for reducing absenteeism. Read through the resources carefully to become familiar with any concepts and instructions as they may pertain to the content and the extension of activities.

Agronick, G., Clark, A., O'Donnell, L., and Steuve, A. (2009). *Parent involvement strategies in urban middle and high school in the Northeast and Islands Region* (Issues and Answers Report, REL 2009–No. 069). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands. Retrieved from: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs.

SEDL (American Institutes for Research). http://www.sedl.org/
- The SEDL National Center for Families and Community Connections with Schools
http://www.sedl.org/connections/

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Measuring Success

Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of 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.

- Teachers
    - Engaged with parents as equal partners in their child's learning
    - Developed meaningful relationships with students' families
    - Worked with families to overcome absenteeism challenges

    - Data sources
        - Survey data from teachers and parents
        - Informal conversations with teachers about parent relationships
        - School contact logs

- Parents
    - Developed relationships with school staff
    - Accessed school/district and community resources that meet family needs
    - Increased attendance at school events
    - Increased contact with school

    - Data sources
        - Survey data from teachers and parents
        - Attendance rates at school events
        - School family contact logs

- Students
    - Attendance rates improve

    - Data sources
        - Attendance data

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.

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

Appendix B: References

American Family Physician. Retrieved from: http://www.aafp.org/afp/2003/1015/p1555.html

Allensworth, E. M., Gwynne, J. A., Moore, P., & de la Torre, M. (2014). Looking forward to high school and college: Middle grade indicators and readiness in Chicago public schools. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. Retrieved from: https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Middle%20Grades%20Report.pdf

Balfanz, R. and Byrnes, V., (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Retrieved from: https://ct.global.ssl.fastly.net/media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTQvMDgvMTUvMjE1dnkya3BzOF9GSU5BTENocm9uaWNBYnNlbnRlZWlzbVJlcG9ydF9NYXkxNi5wZGYiXV0/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf.pdf?sha=ffcb3d2b

Chang, H. N., & Romero, M. (2008). *Present, engaged, and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty. Retrieved from: http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_837.pdf

Flannery, K. B., Sugai, G., & Anderson, C. M. (2009). School-wide positive behavior support in high school: Early lessons learned. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*(3)*,* 177-185.

Gordon, J., Downey, J., & Bangert, A. (2013). Effects of a school-based mentoring program on school behavior and measures of adolescent connectedness. *School Community Journal*, *23*(2), 227-250.

Karcher, M.J. (2008). The cross-age mentoring program: A developmental intervention for promoting students' connectedness across grade levels. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(2), 137-143.

Maynard, B. R., Kjellstrand, E. K., & Thompson, A. M. (2014). Effects of check and connect on attendance, behavior, and academics: A randomized effectiveness trial. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *24*(3), 296-309.

Tier One Intervention Curriculum
Attendance Strategy Middle Schools
Parents – Our Key to Good Student Attendance

Public Schools of North Carolina. School Attendance and Student Accounting Manual 2014-2015. Raleigh, NC: Department of Public Instruction, School Business Services. Retrieved from: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/accounting/manuals/sasa.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. *Character education: Our shared responsibility.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/character/brochure.pdf

Whitehurst, G. J. (2004, April). *Making education evidence-based: Premises, principles, pragmatics, and politics.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research, Distinguished Public Policy Lecture Series. Retrieved from: http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/events/lectures/DPPL-Whitehurst.pdf

Appendix C: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
McNeal, R. B. Jr. (1999). Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. *Social Forces, 78*(1), 117-144	Parental involvement framed in terms of Parent-child discussion, involvement in PTOs, monitoring and educational support strategies.	Created 2 samples from NELS:88 – (1) 11,401 cases to examine academic achievement and truancy; (2) 15,663 cases to examine parental involvement's effects on dropping out	Parent-child discussion, PTO and monitoring effective in decreasing truancy for whites only. PTO effective for blacks; monitoring effective for Hispanics in reducing truancy	Secondary analysis study. No specifics on implementation.
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. *School Community Journal*, *22*(1), 125-144.	This was a 2-year mixed-methods study of a community partnership initiative's influence on attendance at an urban junior high school using a quasi-experimental design. The researchers wanted to demonstrate how attendance, dropout rates and student attitudes could be changed by a school-community intervention project, what type of project programs were most successful	The intervention school consisted of N=758 7th and 8th grade students from a school who's population was economically disadvantaged and mainly ethnic minorities with a school attendance rate of 94.6%. The comparison school was demographically similar and consisted of N=428	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 climate during year one ($p < 0.001$) and a significantly strong negative change in	Steering committee composed of 20 community partners initiated various activities and programs. In the qualitative portion of the study, three activities were consistently credited with having the most impact on attendance and school climate: an open house/field day for new students, an

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
	in changing the school climate and what factors should be considered when implementing and sustaining a new community-school partnership.

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.

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%. | 7th and 8th graders with a 95% attendance rate.

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 (N=2), staff (N=4) and faculty (N=3). | student attitude/climate in year 2 (p < 0.001).

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. | afterschool soccer program and a mural painting project on school grounds. |

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. *The School Community Journal, 14*, 39–56.	NNPS provided tools and guidelines for establishing, maintaining, and improving school-wide partnership programs that reach out to families of all students.	69 NNPS schools matched with 69 non-NNPS schools in Ohio	Schools with stronger programs of school, family and community partnerships, overall, were more likely than were schools with weaker programs to experience an increase in student attendance. The NNPS program was associated with improved rates of daily student attendance; however, there was a small to medium effect size for the difference between NNPS schools and control schools.	