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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).

CISNC uses the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework as the basis for its practices. RTI is a multitiered framework of academic and behavioral interventions that require school staff to make instructional decisions based on data. This document focuses on a Tier 2 strategy. Tier 2 strategies typically focus on students who have not responded to Tier 1 supports and includes supplemental instruction and interventions that are periodically monitored to ensure students are responding to the supports. Tier 2 supports are targeted, structured, explicit and can take place in small groups or general education classrooms.

CISNC calls for the use of evidence-based interventions versus generally researched practices. The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) defines evidence-based interventions as:

... an intervention for which data from scientific, rigorous research studies have demonstrated (or empirically validated) the efficacy of the intervention.

Applying findings from experimental studies, single-case studies, or strong quasi-experimental studies, an evidence-based intervention improves student learning beyond what is expected without that intervention (Center on Response to Intervention [Center on RTI] at American Institutes for Research and the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII), 2014, p. 4).

A research based curricula “may” incorporate strategies that have been generally researched, but not studied using a rigorous research design. The following suggestion is based on interventions that have been studied using a scientific, rigorous research design. When incorporated with fidelity and as part of a systematic process, students should positively respond to these strategies.

This document is written to provide schools with strategies to be used with students who have been identified as being chronically absent or who are at risk of becoming chronically absent. In the context of our review, we propose two Tier 2 strategies designed to improve student attendance:

- Attendance Buddies
- Family Connections

## Problem/Rationale

North Carolina Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the 2012-2013 year was reported at 94.1 percent; however, North Carolina does not report chronic absenteeism. Considering only ADA may lead to overlooking absenteeism patterns of many children who may subsequently suffer early in their academic careers due to missed schooling.

A National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) review of the data revealed that nationally, more than 11 percent of kindergarten students and nearly nine percent of first grade students were chronically absent. By the third grade, chronic absenteeism dropped to six percent (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Research indicates that regular, on-time school attendance is vital to student academic success. 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). Students who do not attain essential social and academic skills during their early elementary years may require extra assistance to catch up and may also be at greater risk of dropping out of school in later years. Students from 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).

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).

Parents and families have a critical role in ensuring their students attend school regularly and on time; therefore, it is essential that parents and families understand the advantages of regular attendance for their child's academic success. Schools that understand the reasons for student absences can better assist parents in establishing routines and overcoming other barriers related to student absenteeism.

Monitoring attendance daily is the first step schools can take to identify students who may experience chronic absenteeism. Schools will then need to explore reasons students are absent from schools in order to find solutions to reduce absenteeism.

Student absenteeism may fall into three categories:

1. those who cannot attend school,
2. those who will not attend school, and
3. those who do not attend school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

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, n.d.).

### Purpose

Mentoring, used in conjunction with other strategies, may help students develop academic and social skills and result in an enhanced sense of belongingness and self-confidence. While mentoring programs can have multiple benefits for both mentor and mentee, and have positive impacts on attendance, schools must be cautious as poorly implemented programs can have a negative effect on students. The Attendance Buddies intervention is a type of "invisible mentoring" designed to foster caring relationships between school staff and students who are chronically absent or at risk of becoming chronically absent.

The purpose of this document is to provide a process for planning, implementing, and evaluating an Attendance Buddies program in middle schools as a means of helping students to better engage with adults and schools and to engage families as partners in their child's attendance goals as a means to reduce barriers and increase school attendance.

## Implementation Plan

### Uses

Student Support Specialists can use the information provided in this guide to develop an Attendance Buddy program to be used with students who have been identified as chronically absent or exhibit indicators of becoming chronically absent.

### Audiences

The primary audience is the Student Support Specialist.

### Materials/Equipment/Space

- Student data
- Student Support Plan
- Documents (Refer to the Resources section of this guide for links to download.)
  - Attendance Works, Attendance Buddy Planning tool
  - Attendance Works, Attendance Buddy responsibilities
- Quick Data Tracking tool

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

### Time

The time to implement this intervention is broken down by role of those involved in implementing the intervention as follows:

#### **Student Attendance Team**

Approximately two hours of initial planning time will be required to:

- Formulate goals and outcomes of the Attendance Buddy program.
- Identify initially those students who may benefit from this attendance strategy.
- Recommend and recruit school staff to serve as Attendance Buddies.

#### **Student Support Specialist**

The Student Support Specialist will need to dedicate:

- Two hours initially for planning program with School Attendance Team.
- Sixty to ninety minutes for Attendance Buddy training (as needed when new Attendance Buddies are recruited).
- Weekly check-ins with students for 10-15 minutes per student in the Attendance Buddy program (time can be combined with regular student check-ins where students are receiving more than one intervention/support service).
- Monthly check-ins for about 20 minutes with each Attendance Buddy and review of Attendance Buddy data records.



- Two to four hours per semester to review and analyze data, and make recommendations for changes in implementation of the program and/or whether additional interventions/support services may be necessary for specific students.

**Attendance Buddies**

Approximately 60-90 minutes to participate in an initial overview and training on Attendance Buddies, as well as, initial student introductions.

For the period for which the student is assigned an Attendance Buddy (for at least one semester, or longer depending on student’s needs), time will be required:

- Daily: attend to student attendance check, follow-up phone call to family contact if necessary and quick data record (5-15 minutes).
- Weekly: check-in with student and data record (15-20 minutes).
- Monthly: check-in with Student Support Specialist (10-15 minutes).

**Sample Intervention – Attendance Buddies**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Process Notes</b>
Set Goals for the Attendance Buddy Program	School Attendance Team	<i>Use the Attendance Works, Attendance Buddy Planning Tool to guide planning. Note the Planning Tool includes components that extend to the community for recruitment of Attendance Buddies. If your school decides to use only internal staff as Attendance Buddies, then disregard those sections referring to recruitment of external persons. However, schools should keep the community informed of strategies they are implementing to foster student success and encourage input and support.</i>
Identify Students	School Attendance Team	<i>Use data to identify students who may benefit from having an attendance buddy. Consider:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attendance data.</li> <li>- Discipline referrals.</li> <li>- Teacher referrals.</li> <li>- Student history.</li> <li>- Conversations with student.</li> </ul> <i>Students who may benefit from attendance buddies may be those students who:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not engage in classroom discussions.</li> <li>- Have trouble communicating with others.</li> <li>- Are loners.</li> </ul>
Recruit and Train Attendance Buddies	Student Support Specialist	<i>Work with Student Attendance Team to identify staff to be Attendance Buddies. Consider staff member’s:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time to commit to being an Attendance Buddy.</li> <li>- Interest in being an Attendance Buddy.</li> <li>- Typical demeanor with students. Note: Connecting with and building positive relationships with students is an important aspect of this intervention, which has</li> </ul>

## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES

Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
		<p><i>been referred to as Invisible Mentoring.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>It is recommended that each Attendance Buddy should mentor no more than two students at a time.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>When recruiting staff, be forthcoming about the purpose of the program, the responsibilities, and the time commitment required to be an Attendance Buddy. (Refer to the Attendance Works, Attendance Buddy responsibilities link in the Resources section).</i></p> <p><i>Once all Attendance Buddies have been identified, organize a group training to review in more detail the goals, intended outcomes, expectations, and full responsibilities of the Attendance Buddies. Also, remind staff of the confidential nature of being an Attendance Buddy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>You may consider using this time to match staff with students.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Another option would be to generate loosely a match list and allow students to identify which staff member they prefer to have as their Attendance Buddy (ask for a first and second preference).</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Identify (develop if necessary) and review a <u>quick student data tracking form</u> for Attendance Buddies to use (i.e., track number of days each week that student is absent (or late), summary of each contact with family member, summary of weekly check-ins (student progress or any concerns to inform other needed student support interventions/services).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Attendance Buddies should use this form as a basis of monthly check-ins with the Student Support Specialist as well as submit a copy as part of the student tracking data and program evaluation.</i></li> </ul>
Introduce Buddy with Student	Student Support Specialist	<p><i>Since you want to maintain confidentiality for the student and his/her family, set up a time and quiet space to introduce the Attendance Buddy and the student. For each new Buddy experience, you may decide to provide an initial overview for the student (in the presence of the Buddy). Once a staff member has experience as an Attendance Buddy, you may opt to have the staff member plan and organize their initial introduction.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Let student know why s/he has been chosen to have an Attendance Buddy and how the Buddy will support the student in an effort to help them (in this case, it means monitoring and exploring barriers to regular attendance, and in some cases contacting a family member to let them know of absences).</i></li> <li>- <i>Reassure the student that the reason for having an</i></li> </ul>



## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES



Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
		<p><i>Attendance Buddy is to support the student to be successful in school.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain to the student why attendance is important his/her success, and reinforce the school's attendance policy.</i></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Show the student his/her attendance record (if early in the year, show the previous year's record) and ask the student about his/her reasons for frequent absences (or tardiness).</i></li> <li>- <i>Allow time for Attendance Buddy and student to talk alone.</i></li> <li>- <i>Attendance Buddy should begin building relationship with student by exploring student interests, both academically and personally.</i></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Creating a trusting bond between the adult and the student is important.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Student Support Specialists should notify the student's family contact that their child has been assigned an Attendance Buddy and let the family member know what this means. Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Doing this at a face-to-face meeting if this can be scheduled and include the Attendance Buddy.</i></li> <li>- <i>Contacting the family member by phone.</i></li> <li>- <i>Sending home a follow-up letter (not in lieu of a face-to-face meeting or phone call) explaining broadly the Attendance Buddy program.</i></li> <li>- <i>Combining this strategy with the Student Attendance Success Plan and write this into the plan.</i></li> </ul>
Engage and Monitor Students	Attendance Buddies	<p><i>For the period for which the student is assigned an Attendance Buddy (for at least one semester, or longer depending on student's needs), Attendance Buddies will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Check on student each morning to ensure student is present (and arrived on time and prepared for school).</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If not in attendance, make a call to family contact as early in the day as possible to inquire about student and reason for absence.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Be sure to maintain a positive tone that expresses concern about the student's well-being, rather than a punitive tone.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Track calls, whether parent was aware student is absent, reason for absence, etc.</i></li> <li>○ <i>On the next day the student is in school, inquire with student about absence.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inquiry should stem from concern about student's well-being, not punitive.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>- <i>Check in with student formally weekly for about 10-15 minutes.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Discuss attendance from previous week – explore reasons for absences if that was the case, or give positive reinforcement if attendance was good.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES



Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Recommendations for changes to program implementation. Consider how well the following worked:</i><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Attendance Buddy recruitment.</i></li><li>• <i>Attendance Buddy training.</i></li><li>• <i>Attendance Buddy engagement and monitoring.</i></li><li>• <i>Attendance Buddy/Student relationships</i></li><li>• <i>Communication/relationships with parents</i></li></ul></li><li>- <i>Student progress: which students can be transitioned out of the Attendance Buddy program, and which students should continue or be added.</i></li></ul>

*Adapted from Attendance Works, Attendance Buddies resources. For additional resources, visit <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools-people/>.*

## Suggested Supplemental Activities

Some additional Tier 2 strategies to foster regular attendance include:

- Partner with families and students to develop Student Attendance Success Plan.
  - Help families and students:
    - Understand student’s attendance patterns and reasons for absences.
    - Recognize the importance of regular attendance (and ramifications of poor attendance to school success).
    - Set attendance goals.
      - Gain family and student commitment to achieving goals.
    - Identify habits that can make getting to school on time and prepared easier.
    - Identify a network of support to help ensure student arrives at school regularly and on time.
  - Access Student Attendance Success Plan documents (in English and Spanish) at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout>.
- Engage students in before- or after-school activities.
  - Match students with appropriate before – or after-school activities, such as:
    - Breakfast club.
    - Extracurricular activities (e.g., athletics, special interest clubs).
    - Tutoring.
    - Service Learning projects.
- Help families and students connect with other students to travel to school together (whether by bus, car pool, or walking).
  - Identify how students with poor attendance typically travel to school – both mode and route.
  - Identify how students who live in close proximity and exhibit good attendance typically travel to school—both mode and route.
  - Reach out to parents to try and connect them with other parents to help them create a support network.
    - Should be informal, not forced, and without revealing confidential information to either party.
      - For example, ask family member, “Are you aware of other families who have students at the same school who live close by with whom you could car pool? Are you aware of other students living close by who ride the same bus?” If the person, replies with “yes” or “possibly” then ask if they would feel comfortable contacting the family.
      - Consider making introductions at PTA/PTO meetings or other school events.
  - Reach out to students to try and connect them with other students to help them develop relationships and a support network.

- Initiate student morning meet and greet program.
  - Have upper classmen available to meet greet students each morning at bus and car pool drop offs.
    - Upperclassmen form an informal line to shuttle students into the building.
    - Students arrive into the school building safely and are greeted by multiple older students along the way.
    - Upperclassmen have chance to serve as mentors and set tone for appropriate behaviors upon arriving at school and interacting with the school community.
    - Helps car pool traffic to continue moving and provides reinforcement to parents that their child will enter the school building safely.
  - Upper grade classrooms can rotate responsibilities for morning meet and greet duty.
    - Opportunity to reinforce expectations and develop mentoring skills among upperclassmen.
- Daily attendance monitoring.
  - Track daily attendance of students who have a history of chronic absenteeism or exhibit warning signs of becoming chronically absent.
    - Contact parents of students who are absent on the day (morning) that the student is absent.
      - Track calls, whether parent was aware student is absent, reason for absence.
        - Be sure to maintain a positive tone that expresses concern about the student's well-being, rather than a punitive tone.
      - Check in with student weekly and review attendance for the past week. Congratulate students on good attendance and work with students who continue to have absences to identify reasons and possible solutions.
- Offer additional supports: Student Support Specialist can connect families with additional supports (e.g., health supports, transportation issues) to help remove barriers that may prevent students from being able to attend school.

## 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** – <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

*The Power of Positive Connections*

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/power-positive-connections-toolkit/>

Engage Students and Families with Personalized Outreach

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/engage-students-and-families-with-personalized-outreach/>

- Attendance Buddy Planning tool (handout)
- Attendance Buddy responsibilities (handout)

The following optional resources will provide additional information and suggestions for enhancing or extending activities. 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.

**Attendance Works** – <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

Student Attendance Success Plan documents

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout/>

Key Attendance Messages

[http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAMMessages\\_2014.pdf](http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAMMessages_2014.pdf)

Handouts for Parents

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/>

**National Network of Partnership Schools (Johns Hopkins University)**

<http://www.jhucsos.com/>

**National PTA**

Tips for Teachers on Family Engagement

<http://www.pta.org/>

**National Mentoring Partnership**

Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring: A Checklist for Mentoring Programs.

[http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring\\_1225.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1225.pdf)

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## Measuring Success

Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of the intervention can help track the quality of implementation as well as the effectiveness of the intervention.

### Students

Track individual student attendance data and chart (e.g., baseline data; monthly attendance monthly; interventions/support services provided).

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

- Why they think coming to school every day will help them to do better in school.
- What they might miss out on when not at school.
- To name some responsibilities that come with being a student.
- To identify things they can do to prepare for school and to arrive on time.

Collect data from students concerning their experiences with their Attendance Buddy:

- Frequency and length of meetings.
- Whether they felt having an Attendance Buddy:
  - Changed their attitudes about coming to school; and if so, how.
  - Made them feel more connected to the school; and if so how.
  - Made them feel more connected to adults in the school.
- What were the most meaningful aspects of having an Attendance Buddy?

### Families

Collect data from families concerning their experiences with their child's Attendance Buddy:

- Frequency and length of contact with Attendance Buddy.
- Whether they felt more connected to the school by having someone to communicate with regarding their child's attendance (including obstacles to regular, online attendance).
- Whether they felt that by their child having an Attendance Buddy:
  - Their child's attitudes about going to school was changed; and if so, how.
  - Made their child feel more connected to the school; and if so how.
- How would they rate the frequency and quality of communication from the school regarding their child's attendance (including with their child's Attendance Buddy)?
- What were the most meaningful aspects of having an Attendance Buddy?

### School Staff

Ask staff participating in the Attendance Buddy program about their experiences and perceived benefits for students and staff, as well as, challenges in implementing the program.

## Appendices

A. References

B. Research Alignment





## Appendix A: References

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## Appendix B: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Baker, D., &amp; Jansen, J. (2000). Using groups to reduce elementary school absenteeism. <i>Social Work in Education, 22</i>(1), 46-53.</p>	<p>Described the use of attendance groups among elementary school students to reduce absenteeism. Participating students were grouped by grade level, with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders grouped together and 3-5<sup>th</sup> graders grouped together. Both groups focused on three goals: improving attendance, developing a more positive attitude toward school and learning, and enhancing self-esteem.</p>	<p>14 students at one elementary school.</p>	<p>Of the 14 group members, 13 had fewer absences while the group was in progress. The mean number of absences for the Primary group pretest was 9.4 and 2.7 posttest. The mean number of absences for the Secondary group pretest was 9.4 and 2.7 posttest as well. All 14 students exhibited improved attitudes toward school and learning. Results indicated improved self-esteem in all group members, as measured by teacher report for primary students and the Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale Profile for 3-5<sup>th</sup> graders.</p>	<p>The groups met weekly for a four-month period beginning in February. The primary group met each Monday for 20 to 25 minutes and the secondary group met for 35 minutes every Tuesday morning. Themes were adopted by both groups and incorporated into many group activities: “I’m cool, I don’t miss school” and “School is cool.”</p>

## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES



Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Cole, J. F. (2011). Interventions to combat the many facets of absenteeism: Action research. <i>Georgia Schools Counselors Association Journal</i>, 18(1), 62-70.</p>	<p>This article described an AR project on absenteeism to support students in an elementary school. The PI wanted to examine if students' attendance would improve if they felt engaged in the school community.</p> <p>The program design included a check-in system with a student advisory team (SAT) member. The AR provided participants the opportunity to earn rewards throughout AR based on their attendance. The students used a punch card system for the daily check in and were eligible for a reward if they were at school all week.</p>	<p>10 students; 5 in kindergarten and 5 in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.</p>	<p>Baseline data indicated that group attendees had an average of 8.8 absences. After the six week intervention, the attendees had an average of 1.7 absences. Seventy percent of the students increased attendance during the AR.</p>	<p>The intervention, Operation SCATT (School Counts ALL The Time), lasted six weeks. A letter and brochure were sent home to parents of the participants to inform them of the program to track attendance.</p> <p>The participants met in the school's cafeteria for an overview of the program where they learned about the daily check-in and rewards.</p> <p>Students check in with a SAT member to receive a stamp for being present. Incentives are rewarded for stamps.</p>

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>Fantuzzo, J., Grim, S., &amp; Hazan, H. (2005). Project START: An evaluation of a community-wide school-based intervention to reduce truancy. <i>Psychology in the Schools, 42</i>(6), 657-667.</p>	<p>The purpose of the present study was to conduct an evaluation of a citywide implementation of Project START. Project START (Stop Truancy And Recommend Treatment) is a collaborative interagency effort including the city school district, judicial system, Department of Human Services, and community social service organizations to reduce truancy through community-based interventions.</p> <p>The students were chosen for the intervention if they had a history of 25 or more unexcused absences and a pattern of attendance problems. Students were placed in</p>	<p>567 truant students from elementary, middle and high school, in one school district.</p>	<p>Unexcused absences were measured at four time periods: baseline, 0-30 days, 30-60 days, and 1 year post court.</p> <p>Truants referred to both types of court demonstrated significant reductions in absence rates between baseline and 30 days post disposition and evidenced significantly lower absence rates during this period compared to non-referred truants. During the third period, truants referred to community-based court continued to demonstrate an absence rate significantly lower than baseline. At 1 year post court, the community-based court students returned to baseline</p>	<p>Common to both community-based family court and traditional family court interventions are the following basic steps: (a) referred truants and their legal guardians are summoned to family court, (b) each case is reviewed by a court master, who may require multiple court visits, (c) the court master determines the disposition of the case and orders the next steps, and (d) court sanctions are in place if parents do not comply, including involvement of children's protective services.</p> <p>The community based court plan also involved two major elements: the location of court proceedings and the involvement of</p>

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
	<p>three groups: multidimensional, community-based family court (Project START), traditional, one dimensional family court, and non-referred truants. Each group contained 189 students.</p>		<p>while traditional and non-referred students had an increase in unexcused absences.</p>	<p>community-based service providers. Courtrooms were created within designated school buildings so barriers to court participation were reduced. Also, caseworkers from service organizations were present in the community-based court to promote family utilization of community services.</p> <p>Traditional family court required truants and families to attend the central city municipal family court and no community-based service providers participated in the court proceedings.</p>
<p>Ford, J., &amp; Sutphen, R. D. (1996). Early intervention to improve attendance in</p>	<p>This article described the development of an attendance incentive program in the</p>	<p>9 students.</p>	<p>Comparisons of the pre and post intervention absences of the children in the focus program</p>	<p>The focus program was implemented in two phases: first, an intensive intervention during the</p>

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>elementary school for at-risk children: A pilot program. <i>Social Work in Education</i>, 18(2), 95-102.</p>	<p>elementary setting. The program included both a school-wide attendance promotion and a focus program that developed individual intervention plans for high-risk children. We will only examine the implementation and results of the focus program.</p>		<p>were positive overall. Overall, there was a significant decrease in average absences for the group from 7.5 in the first quarter to 5.1 in the second quarter, <math>p = .037</math>. During the maintenance phase average absences increased from the intensive quarter but still remained lower than in the initial quarter.</p>	<p>second quarter of the school year, then a maintenance program to be continued over the 18 weeks of the third and fourth quarters of the school year. The focus intervention was also implemented using a school-based and home-based approach.</p> <p><b>School-based intervention:</b> each child was provided with an attendance chart that was monitored by social work students. During the intensive phase, the social work students met with each child on a daily basis and gave verbal praise and encouragement for attending school. Each child also had daily counseling sessions with the social work students lasting from 15 minutes</p>

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
				<p>to an hour. During the maintenance phase of the program, social work students met with each child on a weekly basis to check attendance charts, award tokens and provide counseling and encouragement.</p> <p><b>Home based intervention:</b> individualized family interventions were developed to address specific problem areas. Home visits were made and parents were called to encourage them to become more attentive to and involved in their children’s school activities and responsibilities.</p>
Shoenfelt, E. L., & Huddleston, M. R. (2006). The truancy	The TCDP is a voluntary program that bridges the communication barrier	74 elementary and middle school students in the	Overall, the rate of unexcused absences for the TCDP students	After a student is referred to TCDP, teachers interview these students





Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
<p>court diversion program of the family court, warren circuit court division III, Bowling Green, Kentucky: An evaluation of impact on attendance and academic performance. <i>Family Court Review</i>, 44(4), 683-695.</p>	<p>between parents and schools in order to promote the best interests of the children through counseling and open communication about the difficulties faced by the family and child that contribute to the truancy problem.</p> <p>Students are referred to the program after they have accumulated enough unexcused absences or tardies to be considered truant.</p>	<p>intervention group matched with 74 students in the control group.</p>	<p>dropped significantly during their participation in the intervention (Pre-TCDP mean = 5.23; D During-TCDP mean = 2.09).</p> <p>For students in elementary school, during and after participation in TCDP, truant students had rates of unexcused absences equivalent to those of non-truant control students (Pre-TCDP mean= 4.40; During TCDP mean=1.72; After TCDP mean= .82).</p>	<p>to ascertain their willingness to participate in the program. The TCDP mails letters to parents of truant children to give them the opportunity to circumvent formal court proceedings by participating in TCDP.</p> <p>Scholastic and personal data is collected on the child; the judge meets with children, parents, counselors, and principals to perform an initial interview (15-30 minutes). Parents and students complete consent forms and behavior contracts. Case plans are then generated for each family.</p> <p>The court judge and director of TCDP meet with students biweekly for the duration of the</p>

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
				treatment. Interventions that ensure continued success of the child are also provided.

### Best/Promising Practices

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/ Limitations
PEOPLE Strategy	Count Me In! <i>Examples of attendance strategies and interventions: A comprehensive data-driven approach.</i> <a href="http://countmeinmaine.org/site/">http://countmeinmaine.org/site/</a>	<p>Priority Early Outreach through Positive Linkages and Engagement (PEOPLE) is a strategy that aims to develop relationships with at-risk students and provides positive supports that facilitate students attending school every day.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review attendance data to identify common patterns and needs.</li> <li>- Award certificates to students with good and improved attendance.</li> <li>- Share attendance goals with community.</li> <li>- Connect teachers with students and families.</li> <li>- Strategically assign staff members to follow up with absent students and their families.</li> <li>- Meet with family regarding those students whose attendance rates did not improve.</li> </ul> <p>Results showed increased awareness in the community about school and student attendance. Chronic absence rates were reduced from 15% in 2010-11 to 8% in 2011-12. Academic achievement rose 30 points in the</p>



## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/ Limitations
		last year as a result of the increased time in school.
Walking School Bus	Count Me In! <i>Examples of attendance strategies and interventions: A comprehensive data-driven approach.</i> <a href="http://countmeinmaine.org/site/">http://countmeinmaine.org/site/</a>	<p>The urban attendance program targets elementary students who are chronically absent and live within walking distance of the school. The program relies on volunteers meeting students outside their homes and walking with small groups of students to school.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyzing student data.</li> <li>- Working with families to identify barriers to getting children to school.</li> <li>- Target small group of students for initial implementation.</li> <li>- Complete home visits.</li> <li>- Recruit, screen, and train volunteers.</li> </ul> <p>Results showed increased attendance and student engagement. The program initially started with 6 students, by the end of the year it expanded to 30 students in two schools. It also expanded to the summer meals and literacy program.</p>
Check & Connect	Lehr, C., Sinclair, M., & Christenson, S.L. (2004). Addressing student engagement and truancy prevention during the elementary school years: A replication study of the check and connect model. <i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk</i>	<p>“Monitors” who keep in contact with students and families over the course of the program; relationship building, monitoring and individualized and timely intervention with students at risk for dropping out of school.</p> <p>Check &amp; Connect has been implemented with a variety of student populations, students in urban and suburban settings, and students attending middle and high school.</p> <p>Prior to referral, 83% of Check &amp; Connect students were in the disengaged categories (absent 2-20 days/month). After at least two years with the</p>

## TIER 2: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BUDDIES

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/ Limitations
	<i>(JESPAR)</i> , 9(3), 279-301.	<p>program it was down to 60%. This reflects a 28% reduction in the incidence of students across the disengaged categories.</p> <p>About 40% of Check &amp; Connect students were engaged and regularly attending school (0-1 days absent per month). This reflects an improvement of 135% over baseline behavior.</p>
Truancy Assessment and Service Centers (TASC)	Rhodes, J. L., Thomas, J. M., Lemieux, C. M., Cain, D. S., & Guin, C. C. (2010). Truancy assessment and service centers (TASC): Engaging elementary school children and their families. <i>School Social Work</i> , 35(1), 83-100.	<p>(Pilot Program) Incorporates a holistic and multilevel assessment of family functioning, as well as identifies individual-, family-, school-, and community-level targets for intervention. TASC works with elementary school-age children and their families to decrease chronic absenteeism and social risks as well as to increase protective factors.</p> <p>Preliminary results suggest (data from 2007-2008 pilot) that there was 36% reduction in truancy among TASC participants.</p>