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.

Table of Contents

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).

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 Two strategy. Tier Two strategies typically focus on students who have not responded to Tier One supports and include supplemental instruction and interventions that are periodically monitored to ensure students are responding to the supports. Tier Two 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 Tier Two targeted students who are chronically absent or are at risk of chronic absenteeism. In the context of our review, we propose two strategies designed to reduce student absenteeism:
- Attendance Monitoring
- Breakfast Club

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, Gwynne, Moore, & de la Torre, 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).

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).

Students' academic achievement is most strongly associated with high family expectations for success as well as constant communication with students about their school activities (Castro et al., 2015). Structured school-family partnership programs that equip families to help their child academically, encourage greater participation in their child's academic journey, and connect with families at all income and education levels will attract families who are unlikely to become involved on their own (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Similarly, 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 document is to provide a process for planning, implementing, and evaluating a daily attendance monitoring & check-on program in high schools.

Implementation Plan

Uses

Student Support Specialists can use the information provided in this guide to develop a daily attendance monitoring and check-on program for students who are chronically absent or have attendance patterns that indicate the risk of becoming chronically absent.

Audiences

The primary audience is the Student Support Specialist or school staff who will share in the responsibility of a daily attendance monitoring program.

Materials/Equipment/Space

- Contact information for students
- Daily attendance report
- Daily attendance tracking form and follow-up contact summary
- *Student Attendance Success Plan* (refer to Resources section for link)
- Script for communicating with students and families (refer to Resources section for links to tips and handouts)

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

Time

Attendance Monitoring should be initiated early in the school year and should be based on student attendance data from the prior school year, and/or early in the school year.

The Student Support Specialist will need to dedicate time each morning to review daily student attendance reports and time to contact family members of those students who are absent. Additionally, Student Support Specialist should plan time to check in with students who have been identified for monitoring regularly (at least every two weeks), as well as, track ongoing student attendance progress.

Sample Intervention – *Attendance Monitoring*

Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
Identify Students	Student Support Specialist with School Attendance Team	*Use data to identify which students should be included in the daily attendance monitoring program. Consider:* - *Chronic absence (students who missed 10% or more of school in the prior year).* - *Students who missed 2 days in the first two weeks of school, 2-3 days in the first month, or four days in the first 8 weeks of school.* - *Students in transitional grades (e.g., 9th grade).* - *Discipline referrals.* - *Teacher referrals.* *Note: If student is unable to attend school for extended periods of time due to a chronic illness or other conditions beyond their control, then components of this strategy should be adapted according to best support the needs of the student.* *Note: The Student Support Specialist will need to sign a confidentiality agreement with the school to view individual student data. See sample confidentiality form at http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Confi-Agreement-CBO-5-4-11.pdf*

Set Attendance Goals and Strategies	Student Support Specialist	- *Work with student to set personal attendance/behavioral goals.*
		 • *Work with student to develop personal strategies for meeting goals.*
		 • *Work with student to have them identify issues that may cause their poor attendance.*
		  • *Motivational Interviewing may be an effective strategy here.*
		- *Communicate with parents:*
		 • *Let parents know that because of their child's past poor attendance, you will be monitoring their child's attendance for the next semester.*
		  o *Approach parents in a way that*

Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
		conveys concern about their child's academic success and general well-being. This should not be a negative discussion. • *Discuss with parents the importance of regular school attendance for their child's academic success.* • *Explore potential barriers that may prevent the student from attending school regularly and on time.* • *Consider meeting with the student and family to discuss strategies and complete the Student Attendance Success Plan.* • *Confirm the best person to contact when their child is absent, as well as, the best number at which to reach them.* • *Give your name and contact information to the family member and invite them to contact you when they know in advance that their child will be absent or tardy from school, of if they feel there are barriers to their child attending school.* • *If the meeting with the family member occurs by phone, send home a packet of information and letter restating the information that you discussed on the phone (if you meet in person, you should leave a copy of materials with the family).*

Attendance Monitoring		- *Track daily student attendance each morning.*
		- *Follow-up immediately with family contact of absent students.*
		  • *Conversation should be positive, not punitive (e.g., This is XXX; I noticed that XXX is not in school today and wanted to check to make sure that everything is okay).*
		    ▪ *Unless family member has mentioned that the student will be out for a specified period of time, then contact family member each day that the student is absent (even if contacting several consecutive days).*
		      • *If student is out for an extended period of time, consider planning a home visit.*
		  • *If the school has a homework website, share information with the family member to let them know that student can keep up with school work.*

Activity	Lead Responsibility	Process Notes
		Check in with student on the next day the student is back. *Again, conversation should convey a tone of concern about the student's well-being rather than to reprimand for missed school day (conveys a sense of caring about student's well-being; lets student know that they are seen/do count and that their absence is noticed).* *Provide suggestions to student for working with teachers to make up their assignments missed while absent (conveys an expectation that student will complete his/her work even though absent).*
Student Support and Progress Monitoring	Student Support Specialist	*Check-in with student at least every two weeks (every week if attendance is inconsistent and/or is not improving). During check-ins:* *Review attendance goals and discuss progress being made (or not).* *Be sure to recognize improvements.* *If student attendance is not improving, don't reprimand student, but do let student know that regular on-time attendance is an expectation of all students.* *Review strategies initially discussed when setting goals.* *Expose student to positive learning activities to foster improved attendance and behavior (e.g., before-or-after school programs or activities matched to student interest and level of need, Attendance Buddies, Breakfast Club, PBIS activities).* *Explore reasons why student is not attending school – has student been unable (e.g., sick), or unwilling (e.g., has anxiety issues related to attending school), or does not (e.g., is unmotivated, family does not value education).* *Work with the School Attendance Team to track student progress.* *Assess student data quarterly.* *Award quarterly certificates to students with perfect attendance or who have shown significant improvement.* *Organize an end of semester celebration for meeting attendance goals.*

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Suggested Supplemental Activities

Some additional Tier Two strategies to foster regular attendance include:
- Initiate an Attendance Buddy program.
- Initiate additional before-school activities such as athletics (early morning basketball) and clubs (Breakfast Club, or special interests) to motivate students to arrive at school early.
- Help families and students connect with other students to travel to school together.
- Initiate student morning meet and greet program.
- Engage families in completing the *Student Attendance Success Plan* to set student attendance goals and develop family strategies to help students get to school.

Resources

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/

The Power of Positive Connections
http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/power-positive-connections-toolkit/
Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in Middle and High School.
http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/AW_HS-flyer_3-15-12.pdf
*Student Attendance Success Pla*n documents
http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/student-success-plan-facilitator-handout/
Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students
http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Sending-the-Right-Message-about-Attendance-students.pdf
Key Attendance Messages
http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAMMessages_2014.pdf
Engage Students and Families with Personalized Outreach
http://www.attendanceworks.org/engage-students-and-families-with-personalized-outreach/
Handouts for Parents
http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/
Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives.
http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/AW-Incentives-two-pager-1-4-11.pdf

Check and Connect – http://checkandconnect.umn.edu/

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

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/supports 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 comes with being a student.
- To identify things they can do to prepare for school and to arrive on time.

Assess impact of learning activities (e.g., Career camp, service learning projects, etc.) on:
- Attitudes about going to school.
- Feelings of connectedness/belongingness at school.
- Importance of setting and meeting personal goals.
- Academic progress.

Families

Collect data from families concerning their experiences with the school:
- Whether they felt more connected to the school by having someone to communicate with regarding their child's attendance (including obstacles to regular, on-time attendance).
- How would they rate the frequency and quality of communication from the school regarding their child's attendance?
- Observed improvements in their child's attitudes, behavior and academics.

Appendices

Appendix A: References

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., & 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.

Castro, M., Exposito-Casas, E., Lopez-Martin, E., Lizasoain, L., Navarro-Asencio, E., & Gaviria, J. L. (2015). Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review, 14*, 33-46.

Center on Response to Intervention (Center on RTI) at American Institutes for Research and the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII), (March 2014). *RTI glossary of terms*. Center on RTI and NCII: Washington, DC.

Chang, H. N., & Romero, M. (2008, September). *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

Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, *91*(3), 289-305.

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*, 133-145.

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 B: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
DeSocio, J., VanCura, M., Nelson, L. A., Hewitt, G., Kitzman, H., & Cole, R. (2007). Engaging truant adolescents: results from a multifaceted intervention pilot. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 51(3), 3-11.	This article assessed the effectiveness of a truancy intervention, using mentored relationships with teachers and school-based health services, on youth problems of high absenteeism and school engagement. Student selection was determined by a history of 15 or more unexcused absences. Teachers were selected as mentors based on their enthusiasm for working with students and their positive beliefs and ideas about helping students. Their primary role was to build relationships with students to promote	103 students; 29 in the intervention group, 37 in the "unable to enroll" group, and 37 in the control group.	For analysis, unable to enroll group and intervention were combined and called "intent to treat". Students in the intent to treat group were significantly more likely to remain in school than were students in the control group, p = .027. After the third grading period, (one period after intervention), students who received the intervention had significantly fewer absences from least-missed classes than students in unable to enroll or control groups, p = .004; and significantly fewer absences from most-	The intervention was delivered from January through June. Mentors participated in an orientation in preparation for the intervention. Mentors facilitated two after-school tutoring sessions weekly to assist students with homework and encourage positive peer relationships.

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
	self-development and school engagement. The mission of the school-based health center (SBHC) was to provide comprehensive health services to students. Students in the intervention group received access to the SBHC and had teachers as mentors.		missed classes than students in the other groups, p = .047.	
Fantuzzo, J., Grim, S., & Hazan, H. (2005). Project START: An evaluation of a community-wide school-based intervention to reduce truancy. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42(6), 657-667.	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	567 truant students from elementary, middle and high school, in one school district.	Unexcused absences were measured at four time periods: baseline, 0-30 days, 30-60 days, and 1 yr post court. Truants referred to both types of court demonstrated significant reductions in absence rates between baseline and	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

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
	district, judicial system, Department of Human Services, and community social service organizations to reduce truancy through community-based interventions. 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 three groups: multidimensional, community-based family court (Project START), traditional, one dimensional family court, and nonreferred truants. Each group contained 189 students.		30 days post disposition and evidenced significantly lower absence rates during this period compared to nonreferred 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 while traditional and nonreferred students had an increase in unexcused absences.	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. The community based court plan also involved two major elements: the location of court proceedings and the involvement of 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

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Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
				community-based court to promote family utilization of community services.
				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.
Marvul, J. N. (2012). If you build it, they will come: A successful truancy intervention program in a small high school. *Urban Education*, 47(1), 144-169.	To assess whether a 5 month program involving attendance monitoring, sports participation and a moral character class would reduce absenteeism. Students were randomly assigned to intervention and control groups.	40 students.	The intervention group had less absences than control students, 7.35 vs. 21.85, $p < .01$; showed more positive attitudes toward education, 4.2 vs. 3.47, $p < .01$; had higher educational expectations, 6 vs 4.65, $p < .05$; and had higher emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement, $p < .01$.	The intervention included three major components: monitoring of attendance and parent notification when a student was absent, tardy or truant, participation in a moral character class, and participation in club sports. A flag football club and a basketball team were formed for intervention students.

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness	Implementation
				An attendance outreach program began and every school day calls were made to the homes of intervention students to discuss absences, tardies, class cutting and unacceptable behaviors. Parents were also told about triumphs and positives in the students' lives. Intervention students learned the six pillars of moral character, wrote journal that responded to everyday moral dilemmas, prepared oral presentations on moral issues and discussed situations that raised ethical and moral concerns.

Best/Promising Practices

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/Limitations
Attendance Buddies, Invisible Mentors or "Follow the kid Program"	Count Me In! *Examples of attendance strategies and interventions: A comprehensive data-driven approach.* www.countmeinmaine.org	The purpose of these strategies is to foster a caring relationship between students and staff. School staff check-in daily with students, call home at each absence, and connect when necessary, with staff members who can assist with referring students and families to needed resources. Another option for older students is to give them a list of names and let them choose the staff they will check-in with every day. Activities: • Analyze and identify at-risk students. • Identify staff to oversee the program. • Recruit attendance buddies or invisible mentors (consider those with natural connections, common interests or ease of access to the student). • Mentor small groups of students. Results showed increased student engagement, increased attendance and decreased discipline referrals.
Breakfast Club	Count Me In! *Examples of attendance strategies and interventions: A comprehensive data-driven approach.* www.countmeinmaine.org	Small groups of students meet with school staff over breakfast every day or multiple times a week before class begins. Community volunteers can join the group once a week. Activities: • Staff and community volunteers analyze data and identify at risk students. • Adults check-in/check-out with students. • Work with students to have them design both fun as well as formal activities.

Promising Practice	Source(s)	Comments/Limitations
		Results showed increased attendance and on-time arrival for targeted students. Children also developed relationships with staff members/volunteers who led the breakfast club group.
High School student mentors for the Elementary School students	Count Me In! *Examples of attendance strategies and interventions: A comprehensive data-driven approach*. www.countmeinmain.org	The program was modeled after Big Brothers Big Sisters. High school "Bigs" meet with their respective "Littles" one-on-one once a week for 50-60 minutes during the regular school day. Activities: • Analyze data, identify at-risk students. • Speak to elementary students and their families. • Recruit high school students who have good attendance. • High school students complete application and are interviewed by school counselors. • Provide 1 hour training for high school students. • Match students based on interest. • Arrange transportation between high school and elementary school. • Counselors check-in with high school students and provide support as needed. Results showed increased attendance and engagement for both elementary and high school students, a decrease in discipline referrals, and most of the high school students continue with their "Little" until graduation.

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