

Turning Research Into Action: Improving Attendance, Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

The research is clear: Student engagement and regular attendance are strong predictors of academic success and overall well-being. At the same time, chronic absenteeism has ripple effects that extend beyond individual students – influencing school climate, enrollment trends, teacher satisfaction, and the fiscal health of education systems. Addressing it entails drawing on meaningful data, engaging in fiscal resource planning, integrating whole-child supports, and collaborating across sectors.

This infographic provides four high-level strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism and offers links to resources that can support the implementation of each strategy.

1 Use Data to Illuminate Patterns and Drive Continuous Improvement

- » Disaggregate absenteeism data to uncover patterns and differences across student groups.
- » Pair quantitative data with qualitative insights to understand root causes and identify evidence-based strategies to address them.
- » Build feedback loops whereby data inform tiered supports within multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) frameworks.

Learn More—Resources and Strategies in Action

INFOGRAPHIC

[Data Visualization Can Help Educators Address Chronic Absence](#)

This infographic provides ideas for how to examine and visualize chronic absence data to support their use in informing decision-making.

RESOURCE

[Applying a Cycle of Evidence-Based Continuous Improvement When Selecting Interventions and Project Components to Improve Attendance](#)

This resource provides guidance for using continuous improvement to select evidence-based interventions aligned with local needs to improve student attendance.

WEBINAR

[Using Attendance Data for Decisionmaking](#)

This webinar shares an inquiry process for examining attendance data to identify student needs and appropriate supports, including highlighting a district example.

Key Players and What They Bring to the Table

- » State education agencies (e.g., for data systems, reporting)
- » District leaders (e.g., for analysis, planning, resource alignment)
- » School teams (e.g., for MTSS, targeted interventions)

2 Connect Chronic Absenteeism to Enrollment and Fiscal Health

- » Recognize the direct link between absenteeism, enrollment decline, and budget shortfalls.
- » Center strategic resource planning to ensure that the impacts of enrollment decline and school closures do not disproportionately impact underserved communities.
- » Assess the return on investment (ROI) for engagement and attendance initiatives, and prioritize continued implementation of the most successful strategies.

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PODCAST

[Budgeting for Educational Equity: School Closures and Consolidations in California](#)

This podcast episode explores strategies for how district and school leaders navigating school closures driven by enrollment decline can center equity in their decision-making.

BRIEF

[Shifting Sands: Declining Enrollment in California and How Leaders Can Respond](#)

This WestEd Perspectives brief offers guidance and strategies for California leaders navigating the impact of decreased attendance and declining enrollment on school funding.

Key Players and What They Bring to the Table

- » District superintendents and chief financial officers (e.g., for budget/fiscal planning)
- » School boards (e.g., for policy and oversight)
- » State leaders (e.g., for guidance, funding alignment)

3 Strengthen Whole-Child Supports and School Climate

- » Embed emotional well-being, mental health, and belonging as drivers of attendance.
- » Expand learning opportunities before and after school to keep students engaged and connected.
- » Strengthen family engagement that invites ongoing two-way communication and feedback and improves access to services.

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GUIDE

[Quick Start Guide for Districts to Improve Attendance](#)

This guide offers six actionable strategies for improving attendance and includes whole child, school climate, and family engagement approaches.

BLOG

[Strategies to Strengthen Family Engagement and Increase Attendance](#)

This blog post shares resources for schools and educators to support strengthened family engagement.

Key Players and What They Bring to the Table

- » School leaders and student support teams (e.g., for climate, social-emotional learning practices)
- » Expanded learning providers (e.g., for after school, summer, enrichment)
- » Families and community partners (e.g., for engagement, support services)

4 Advance Cross-Sector Collaboration and Coherent Systems

- » Align partners from the education, health, expanded learning, and community sectors around shared goals.
- » Convene interest holders to map overlapping initiatives and reduce fragmentation.
- » Leverage peer learning networks and collaborative technical assistance (TA) models to sustain progress.

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Q&A

[Ending Chronic Absence Starts With Early Action and Strong Partnerships](#)

In this Q&A, [Attendance Works](#) and WestEd discuss a new attendance guide and provide their insights on chronic absenteeism and actionable steps education leaders can take to strengthen student engagement.

GUIDE

[California Attendance Guide](#)

This resource provides guidance to education leaders in support of a holistic and comprehensive approach to reducing chronic absenteeism and improving school attendance.

RESOURCE LIBRARY

[Attendance Strategies](#)

This collection features videos and other resources to support collaboration across partners in support of improved student attendance.

GUIDE

[Essential Conditions for Advancing and Sustaining Cross-Sector Collaboration](#)

This guide shares strategies for creating and sustaining seven essential conditions for effective cross-sector collaboration.

Key Players and What They Bring to the Table

- » State and county agencies (e.g., for education, health, social services)
- » District leaders (e.g., for coordination, partnerships)
- » Community-based organizations (e.g., for on-the-ground supports)

For more information:

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