CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Student Attendance & Engagement Community of Practice

March 17, 2022

Developed by the CSDE in collaboration with Attendance Works & SERC

SERC
STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER
EQUITY | EXCELLENCE | EDUCATION

Attendance Works

Welcome & Introductions

Who's here today?

Please share in chat:

- name, role, district or school

School climate poll

Attendance & Engagement Work Group

Jay Brown Education Consultant
Special Education, CSDE

Judy Carson, Education Consultant
Family Engagement, **CSDE**

Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant
Attendance & Engagement, CSDE

Megan Alubicki Flick, Education Consultant
English Learners, CSDE

Lauren D. Johns, Project Specialist
SERC

Dr. Gladys Labas, Director
Language and Equity, CSDE

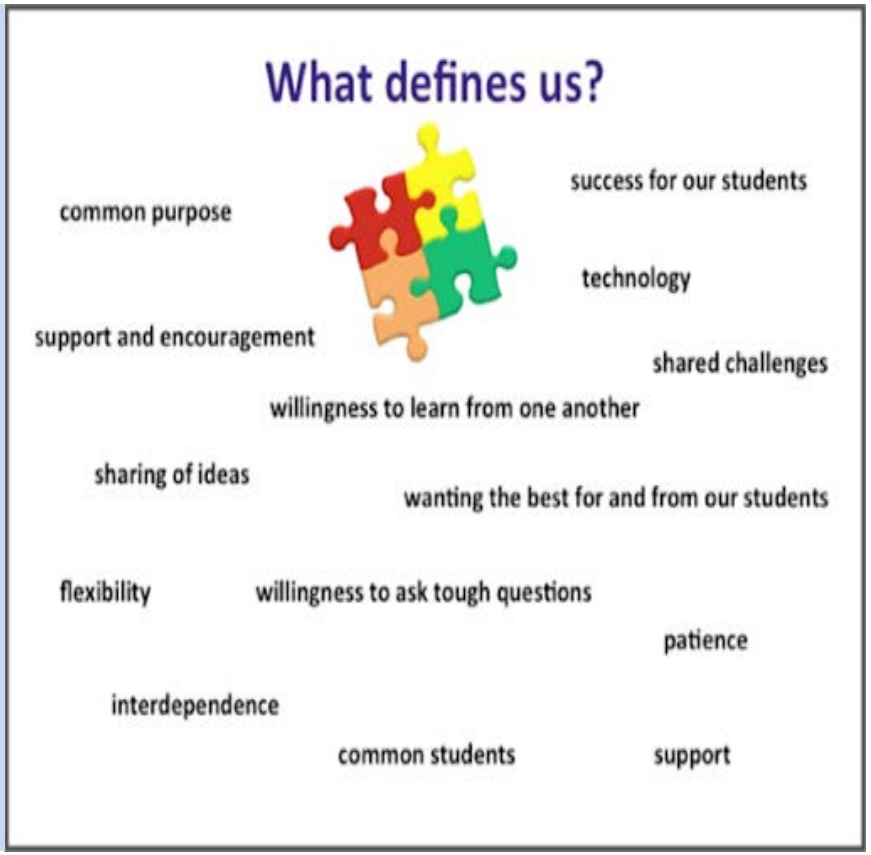
Amanda Pickett, Education Consultant
School Climate, CSDE

Stephen Proffitt, Director for **Special Education Programs and Instructional Design**, **SERC**

Louis Tallarita, Education Consultant
Homeless Education and McKinney-Vento, CSDE

Why a Community of Practice?

Communities of practice are *systems of collective critical inquiry and reflection* focused on building a shared identity and collective intelligence garnered over time.



AGENDA

1. **Welcome & Introductions** (5-10 min)
   Stephen Proffitt, Director for Special Education Programs and Instructional Design, SERC

2. **Agenda, Updates & Data from CSDE** (10 min)
   Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant, Attendance & Engagement, CSDE

3. **Deepening Relationships with Priority Groups** (5 min)
   Hedy Chang, Attendance Works

4. **Spotlight on Bristol** (20 min)
   Interview with Erika Treannie, Director of Climate, Culture and Engagement

5. **Break Out:** (20 minute) and **Report out** (15 min)
   Hedy Chang, Attendance Works / Stephen Proffit, SERC

6. **Spring Slump Resources** (3 min)

7. **Closing** (5-7 min)
   Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant, Attendance & Engagement, CSDE

What's New at CSDE

Congratulations! Commissioner Russell-Tucker

Press Releases

03/02/2022

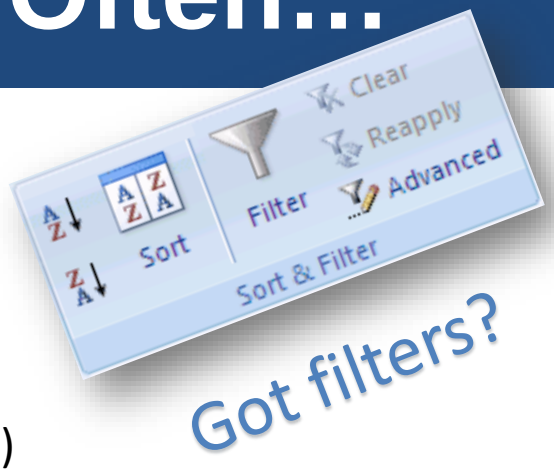
Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker's Statement on Her Confirmation by the Connecticut General Assembly

(HARTFORD, CT) – Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker released the following statement in response to the Connecticut General Assembly's vote to confirm her nomination to serve as Commissioner of Education:

"After many years in the Connecticut State Department of Education, it is an honor to continue to serve Connecticut's beautifully diverse student body, school staff and families. From my start as an Education Consultant, I have served the Department as a Bureau Chief, Associate Commissioner, Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Commissioner, and now Commissioner.

Read the Commissioner's full statement.

Track Data Early and Often…



[2020-21 Chronic Absence Rates]

- State
- District
- School
- Student groups (ELs, SWDs, Grade, F/R Meals)

[February 2022 Attendance Data]

- Attendance Rates for State and Districts, Student Groups by tab (.xlsx)
- Chronic Absence Rates and Remote Attendance Information for State and Districts, Student Groups by tab (.xlsx)
- Attendance Rates for Schools (.xlsx)

https://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/Supporting%20Student%20Participation%20in%202020-21.html

Protocol Tool for Examining Monthly Attendance

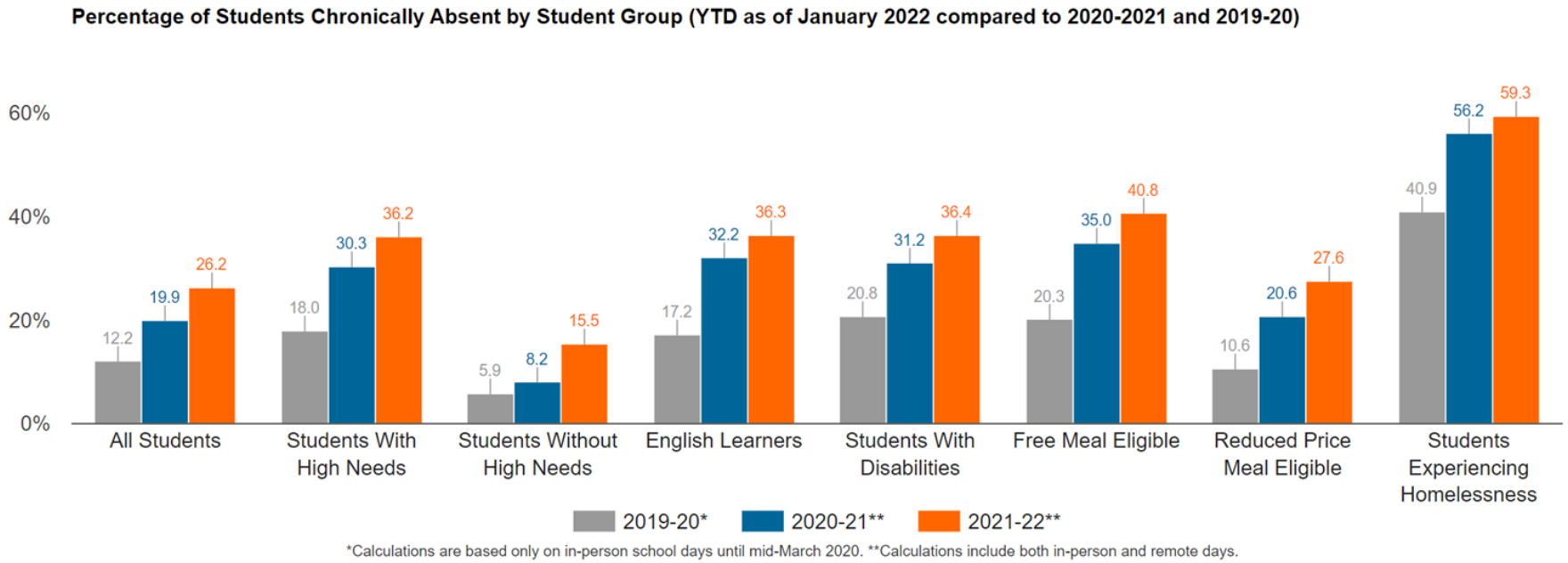
At the February 17, 2022, Attendance & Engagement Community of Practice, CSDE Chief Performance Officer, demonstrated how to use the Protocol for Examining Monthly Attendance.

Downloads available:

- PowerPoint Slides
- Recording
- Protocol Tool

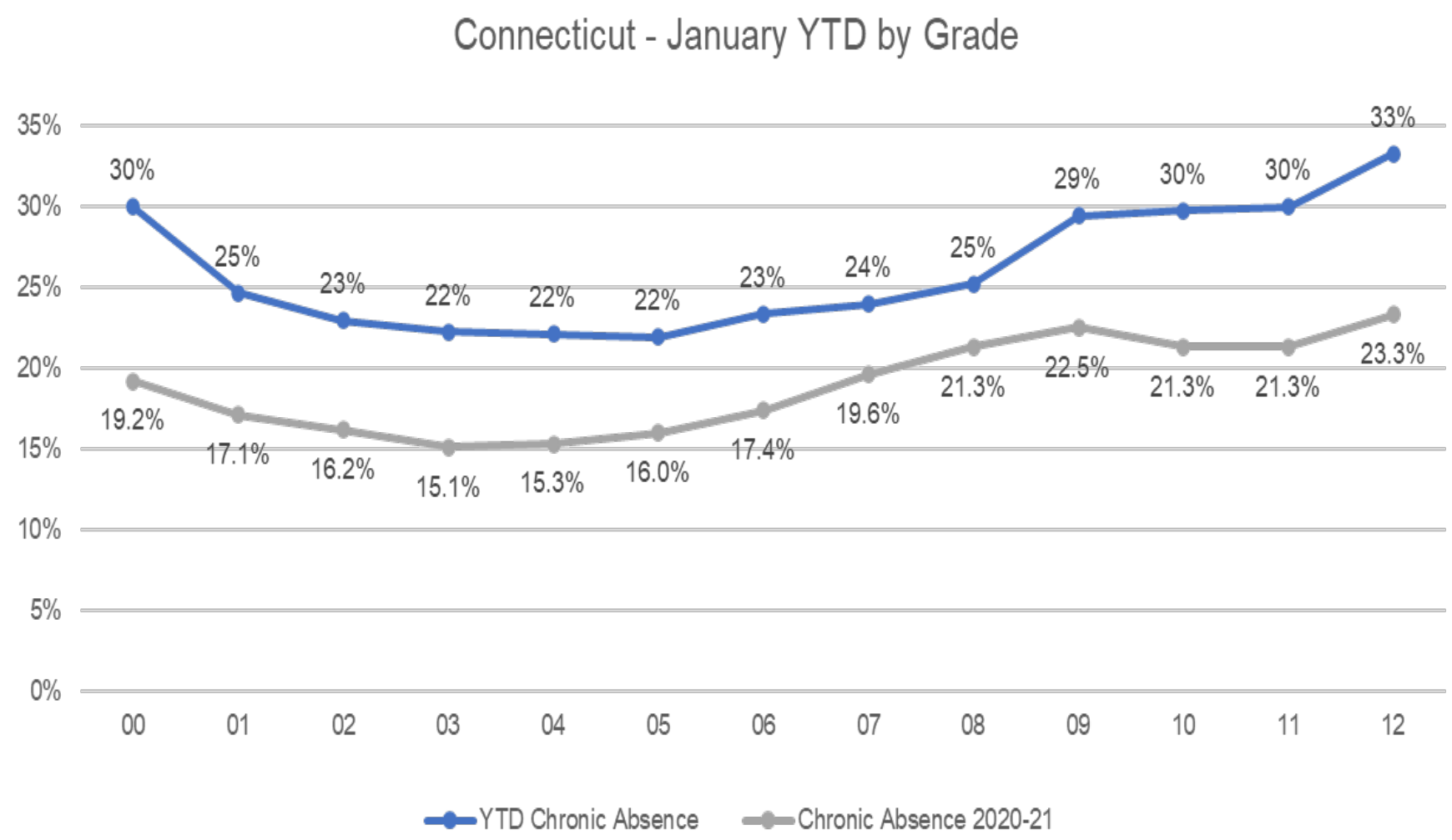
Chronic Absence and COVID-19

Add February?

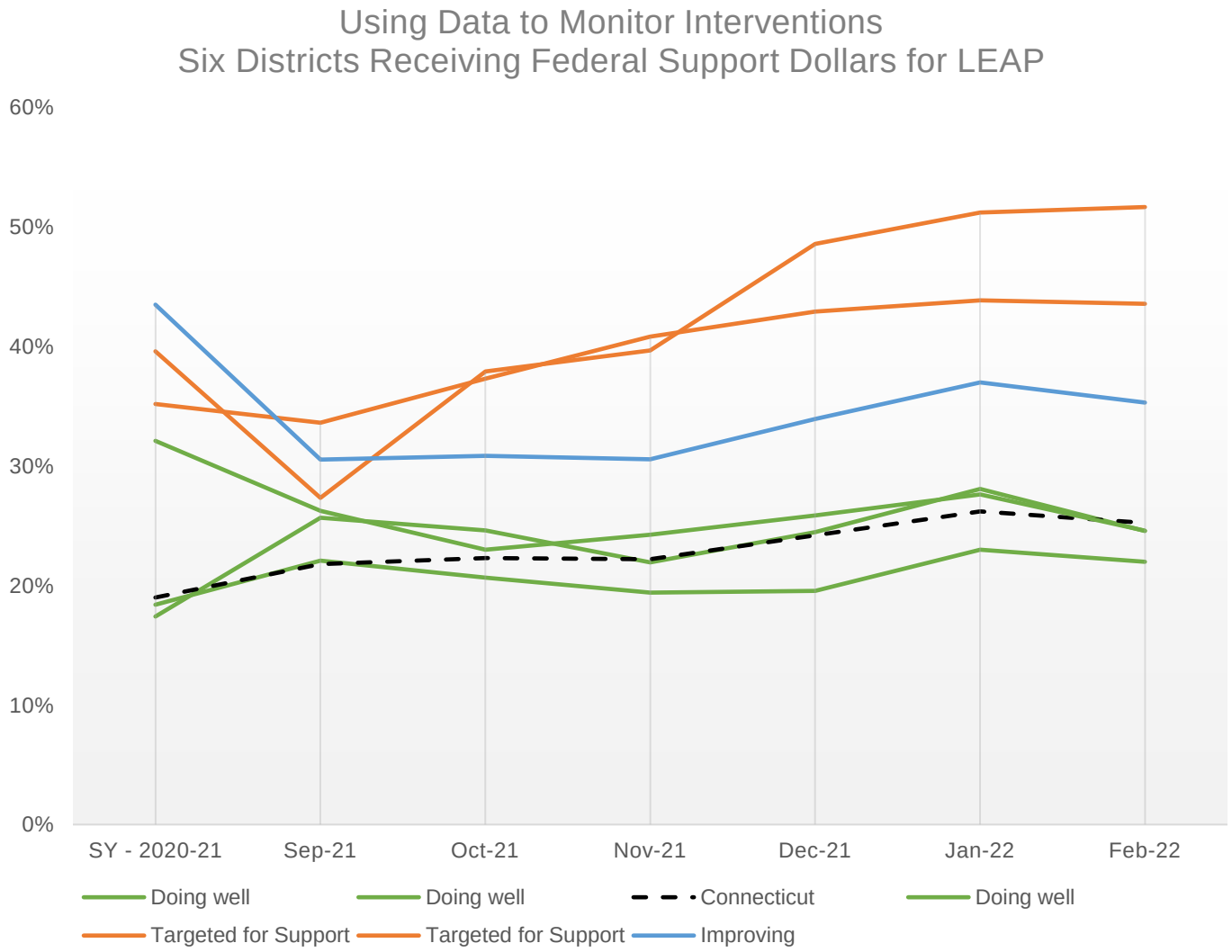


Source: EdSight

Chronic Absence by Grade Level



Monitoring Interventions (LEAP Districts)



First Semester Findings

January 2022

1. Over 98% of all school days are in-person (compared to around 40% last year; about 30% of students have experienced at least one remote day in 2021-22 (average of only 5 remote days).
2. Attendance on in-person days in 2021-22 is lower than in 2020-21 because even mildly symptomatic children may be kept home without access to remote learning.
3. Attendance on remote days in 2021-22 is dramatically lower than in 2020-21 because remote learning programs may be more “stop-gap” and not as robust as last year.
4. Students without high needs are showing bigger declines than those with high needs.
5. Omicron played havoc in December and January, but things may be stabilizing in February.
6. We’re still in a pandemic. The biggest challenges this year are not technology, school closures, or teacher quarantines, but those pertaining to student engagement, behavior, and mental health.

Predictive Value of Chronic Absence Data

The majority (approx. 55%) of students who were chronically absent last year while participating in person, mostly in person or hybrid learning continue to be chronically absent this year.

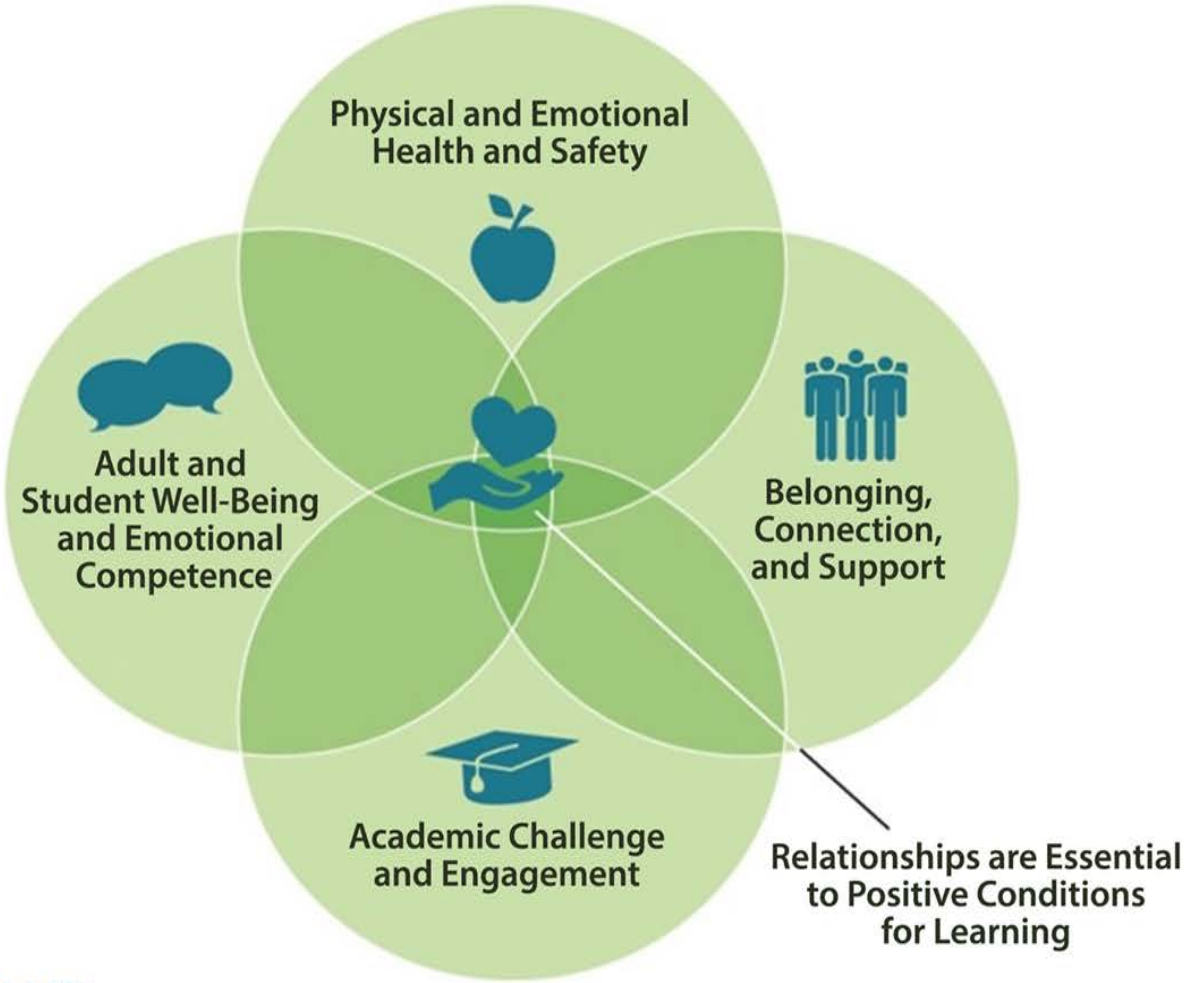
The predictive power of chronic absence is, however, even more pronounced for remote learning. Over 70% of the students who had been chronically absent in remote or fully remote learning last year continue to be chronically absent this year.

Unfortunately, participation in mostly or fully remote learning last year is associated with a greater risk of chronic absence for all students. 28% of students who participated in remote or fully remote learning last year but were not chronically absent, are struggling with chronic absence this year.

Deepening Relationships Building to Priority Student Groups

January 20, 2022

High Levels of Chronic Absence Reflect A Lack of Positive Conditions for Learning



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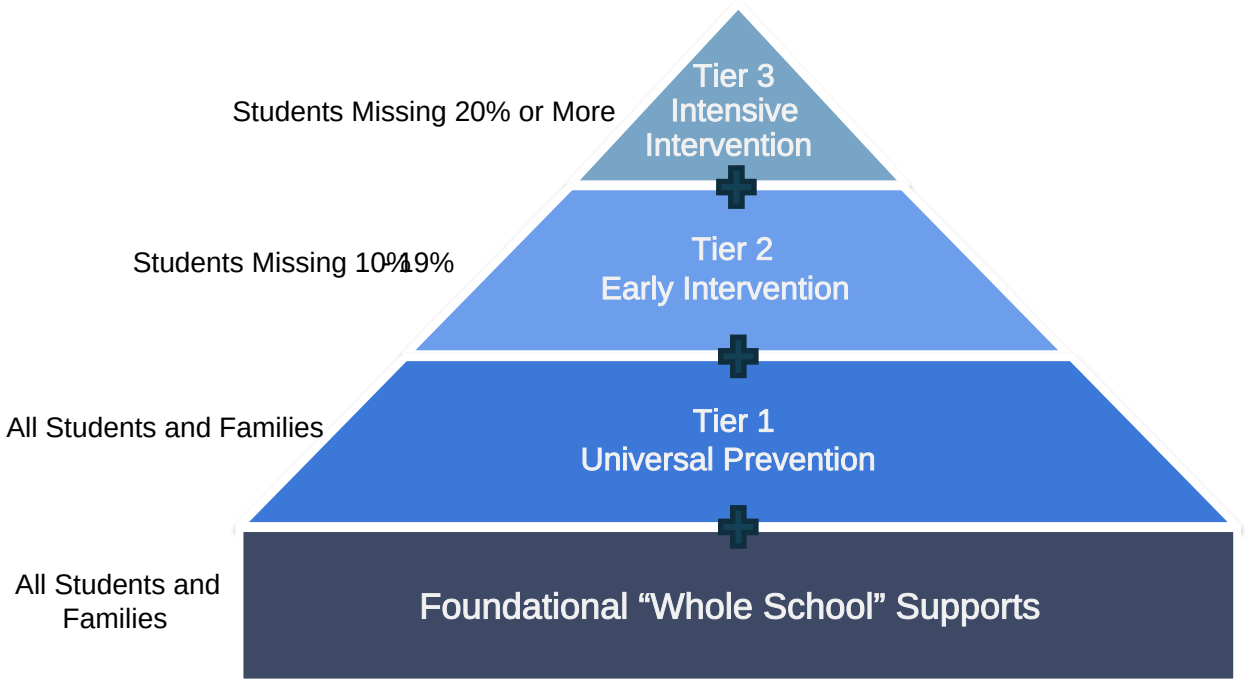
AIR

www.attendanceworks.org

Whole School and Prevention Strategies are Essential to a Tiered System of Support



https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/

The pandemic has further eroded building blocks of school that ensure connection and engagement

Healthy learning environments	Enrichment activities and clubs	Positive relationships	Active family and student engagement
Access to tech equipment and connectivity	Challenging and Engaging Curriculum	Traditions and celebrations	Support for families to facilitate learning at home
Welcoming, safe school climate	Advisories or Morning Meetings to Build Community	Learning Supports	Access to Food and Other Basic Needs

Foundational "Whole School" Supports

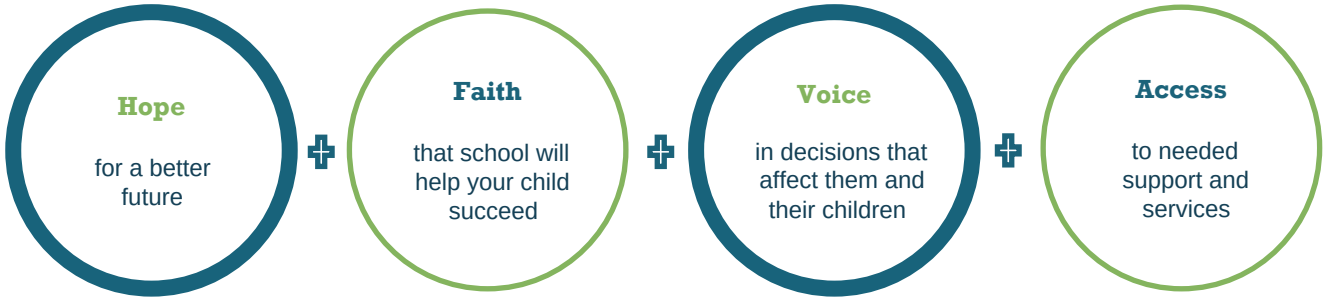
The Pandemic highlights the need to make school connectedness central

According to Dr. Bob Balfanz, Johns Hopkin's University, Everyone Graduates Center.

When students are connected to school, they
- do better in school,
- have better mental and physical health,
- recover better from trauma, and
- engage in fewer risky behaviors.

- Students are connected to school when they
  - believe there is an adult(s) in school who knows and cares about them as person,
  - when they have a supportive peer group,
  - are engaged in pro-social activities, and
  - feel welcome in school for who they are (sense of belonging)

Going to School Reflects When Students and Families Have…



Relationships instill hope, nurture faith, allow voice and ensure understanding of needed supports. They also help children and adults recover from traumatic experiences.

MAKING CARING COMMON PROJECT | HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

GRADES
K–12

IMPLEMENTED BY
School Administrators

TIME & RESOURCE INTENSITY
low → high

CAPACITIES PROMOTED
Relationship-building; Student confidence; Shifting school norms

Key Elements

See all students at-a-glance.

A *Relationship Map* lists *all* students in a school (or grade, team, etc.).

See who is well-supported and who needs support by adults.

A *Relationship Map* allows adults in a school to have a quick and visual snapshot of students who are well supported and who most need support. Knowing this, adults can then strategize about how to best reach out to students who most need positive and supportive relationships with adults.

Involve *all* adults in relationship mapping.

A *Relationship Map* is most effective if *all* adult stakeholders with a connection to students participate in its creation. This includes administrators, teachers, counselors, sports coaches, mentors, community partners, and other school staff.

Key Benefits

Connect all students to at least one school adult.

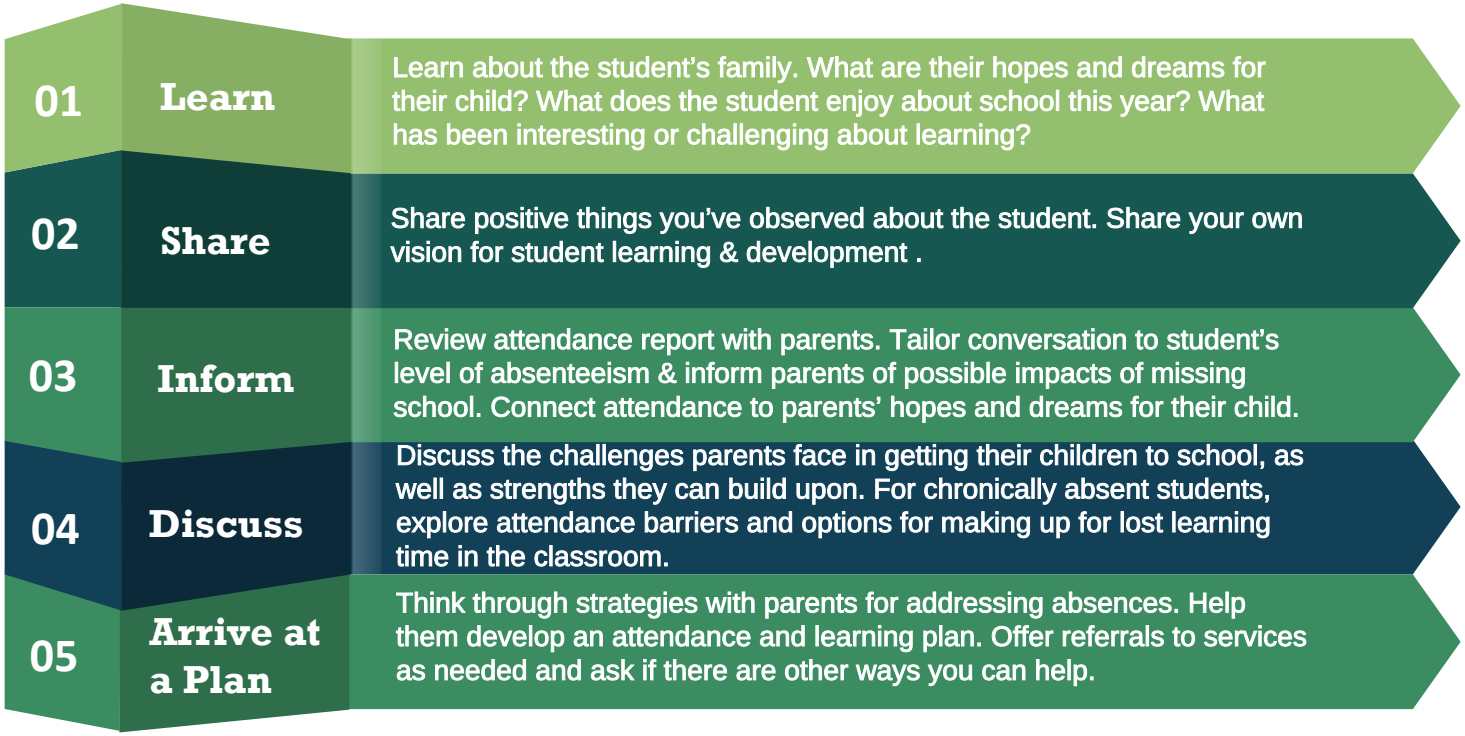
A *Relationship Map* helps identify students who do not already have adult connections and provides opportunities for adults in school to build positive relationships with those students.

Download in-person and virtual versions of this guide at https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy

Interview with Erika Treannie – Bristol

1. What do you know about who is chronically absent? Which groups are most affected?
2. How are you helping schools know whether these chronically absent students are connected to adults and other students?
3. What insights have you gained about who is not as connected? Ho might you strengthen their relationship building and connection? Have you used our Caring Conversations?
4. What are barriers to doing this work? How can you overcome them?

The "Caring Conversations for Attendance" Process



Adapted with permission from materials created by © High Expectations Parental Service, 2011

Steps 1 & 2: Learn and Share

Share in Chat:

1. What excellent questions can you ask to learn about a student's family?

2. What are some positive observations about a student you might share with the student or family?

01	**Learn**	Learn about the student's family. What does the student enjoy about school this year? What has been interesting or challenging about learning? What are their hopes and dreams?
02	**Share**	Share positive things you've observed about the student. Share your own vision for student learning & development.

Step 3: Inform

03 Inform

Review attendance and participation report with parents. Tailor conversation to student's level of absenteeism & inform parents of possible impacts of missing school. Connect attendance to parents' hopes and dreams for their child.

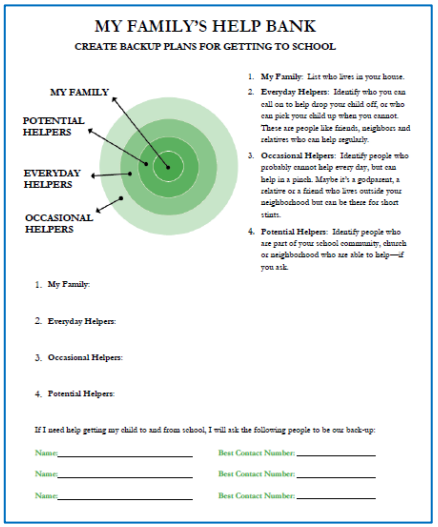
1. Show absences marked on a school calendar
2. Identify patterns
3. Share what key concepts a student missed relating back to the hopes and dreams that the student or parents shared

Step 4: Discuss

04 Discuss

Discuss the challenges parents face in getting their children to participate at school or from home, as well as strengths they can build upon. For chronically absent students, explore attendance barriers and options for making up for lost learning time in the classroom.

1. Learn about student motivations.
2. Discuss reasons for absenteeism.
3. Explore what would help reduce absences and increase engagement.
4. Identify opportunities to make up for lost learning in the classroom.
5. Use help bank to identify support systems.



MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK

CREATE BACKUP PLANS FOR GETTING TO SCHOOL

MY FAMILY

POTENTIAL HELPERS

EVERYDAY HELPERS

OCCASIONAL HELPERS

1. **My Family:** List who lives in your house.
2. **Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off, or who can pick your child up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
3. **Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
4. **Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help—if you ask.

1. My Family:
2. Everyday Helpers:
3. Occasional Helpers:
4. Potential Helpers:

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name:_____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name:_____ Best Contact Number: _____

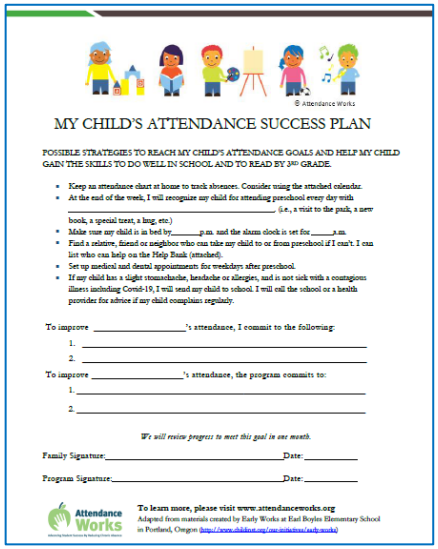
Name:_____ Best Contact Number: _____

Step 5: Arrive at a Plan

05 Arrive at a Plan

Think through strategies with parents for addressing absences including difficulties in participating online or completing schoolwork. Work with them to develop a plan. Offer referrals to services as needed and ask if there are other ways you or others can help.

1. Work with the family to identify specific steps that will help to prevent absenteeism in the future.
2. Develop and complete a plan for attendance and learning
3. Ensure that the plan includes any support that the school will offer as well
4. Provide a copy of the plan to the student/parent
5. Agree on a timeline to check in and see how things are progressing



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MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS AND HELP MY CHILD GAIN THE SKILLS TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL AND TO READ BY 3RD GRADE.

- Keep an attendance chart at home to track absences. Consider using the attached calendar.
- At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending preschool every day with _____ (i.e., a visit to the park, a new book, a special treat, a hug, etc.)
- Make sure my child is in bed by_____p.m. and the alarm clock is set for_____a.m.
- Find a relative, friend or neighbor who can take my child to or from preschool if I can't. I can list who can help on the Help Bank (attached).
- Set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after preschool.
- If my child has a slight stomachache, headache or allergies, and is not sick with a contagious illness including Covid-19, I will send my child to school. I will call the school or a health provider for advice if my child complains regularly.

To improve _____'s attendance, I commit to the following:

1. _____
2. _____

To improve _____'s attendance, the program commits to:

1. _____
2. _____

We will review progress to meet this goal in one month.

Family Signature:_____Date:_____

Program Signature:_____Date:_____

Attendance Works

To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

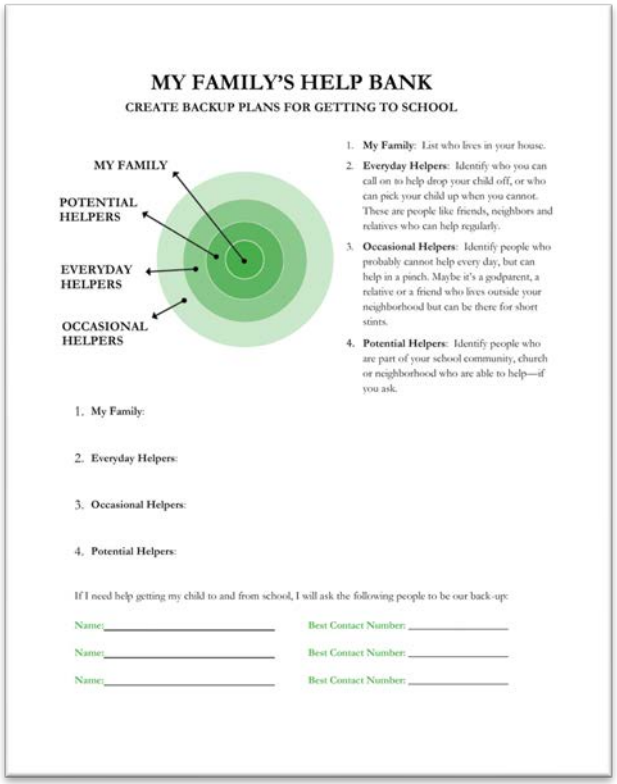
Adapted from materials created by Early Works at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Oregon (http://www.childrens.org/our-initiatives/early-works)

Caring Conversations Worksheet *(example)*

	Key Points	Questions and Messages
1. Learn	• Gather information • Ask open-ended, supportive questions	*What is your vision for student's future? (ask parent and student)*
2. Share	• Positive observations about student so far • What you want students to accomplish this year • One goal is helping students acquire good habit of attendance	*_____is such a good listener. We love having her (you) in our class.*
3. Inform	• Progress you've seen (start positive) • Areas where child is struggling • Review report card & update parents on child's attendance • Deliver appropriate attendance messages	*_____ is excelling at math! and is making progress with reading. Reading remains the area that needs work.* *_____ has been late five times and has missed two days during this first month of school. Absences impede reading and overall learning progress.*
4. Discuss	• Challenges, attendance barriers • Learning at home activities • How to stay connected	*What makes it hard for _____ to get to school?* *What helps ____ catch up on learning given their absences?*
5. Ask & Arrive at a Plan	• Are there any questions? • Is there anything you can do to support a partnership between home and school? • Make referrals to community resources	*What questions do you have?* *How can I help you?* *Would it help you to work with…?*

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Caring-Conversation-Worksheet-2-16-22.docx

Resource: Updated Student Success Plans



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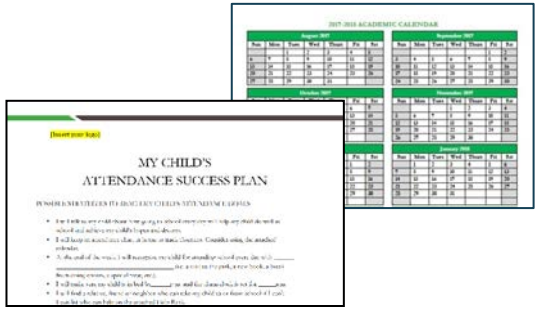
Name:_____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name:_____ Best Contact Number: _____

- ✓ Set attendance goals
- ✓ Make backup plans
- ✓ Track absences
- ✓ Recognize success!



2017-2018 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans/

Small Group Discussions

Questions

Think about the students who are chronically absent in your district, how might you help them? (10 min)

What are barriers to doing this work? How can you overcome them? (10 min)

Small Group Options:

- Preschool
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School

Time: 20 minutes

Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Raise your hand to speak
- Ask clarifying questions
- Explore differences of opinion
- Create space for everyone to speak (and use the chat to express ideas)
- Use the jamboard for notes!
- Person whose last name is closest to A helps facilitates.
- Person whose last name is closest to Z takes notes and reports out!

Report Out

For your small group, share and highlight

- 1-2 key strategies for improving connection
- 1-2 top barriers to address

Spring Attendance Slump Resources

Spring Dip Resources for Schools and Districts

- Send families a letter (updated for Covid) reminding them that instruction continues before and after the spring break.
- Download our handout with activities, for in-person or remote instruction, that can encourage students to attend and participate and help build relationships.
- Work with students and families to create an attendance success plan (updated for Covid).
- The Edwards-Knox Central School planned a month of spirit activities and drawings to boost attendance during the pandemic. Read our blog post about their Month of Earning and Learning.
- Download Sprinting through Spring, a calendar of sample daily spirit activities, that can be adapted for any month. Add or revise the activities to suit your school community and grade levels.

https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/spring-attendance-slump/

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Ideas for Special Events

- Outdoor Activities – Field days, Fitness Fridays
- Spring Events – Earth Day, Pi Day, Read Across America
- School Spirit Days
- Teacher Appreciation Days
- Pantry Pickup – Invite families to pick up groceries the day before spring break

Look in the toolkit for more ideas!
https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Avoiding-Spring-Dip-030222.pdf

Create Your School Plan!

1. Open the Spring Activities handout
2. Pick one or two ideas that you think would engage your students and that your team can manage alone or with the help of partners.
3. Begin filling out the blank calendar and developing a plan to increase engagement and improve attendance!

Any final thoughts?

Put in the chat:

I used to think …….. but now I know ……..

Mark your calendars! Next CoP is on Thursday, April 21, 2022.

Hope to see you then!