CSDE

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Talk Tuesdays
Student Attendance, Engagement, and Support Series

October 5, 2021

Please **sign-in** using the chat - include your name, title, district/school or agency.

Developed by the CSDE in collaboration with SERC

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STATE EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER
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Notice: This meeting is being recorded.

Agenda

1. Welcome

   Kari Sullivan Custer, Attendance & Engagement Consultant, CSDE

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

2. What's New at CSDE and Partners

3. Frequently Asked Questions 2021-21

   Kari Sullivan Custer

4. Peer Discussions

5. Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

Notice: This meeting is being recorded.

WHAT'S NEW AT CSDE AND PARTNERS

What's New at CSDE

October 1, 2021
- Extension of Governor Lamont's Emergency Powers & Executive Order 14
- Education Resource Equity Toolkit
- School Bus Rebates

September 28, 2021
- SDE accepting comments on request to extend deadline for spending federal Title funds. Email kathy.demsey@ct.gov by Oct. 7, 2021.

September 24, 2021
- Rising Costs for School Child Nutrition Programs
- COVID-19 Testing Sites
- Preparing for Cyber Threats in K-12 Schools Webinar
- Executive Order No. 13G: Fillable Contractor Compliance and Declaration Form

A Message from Commissioner Russell-Tucker

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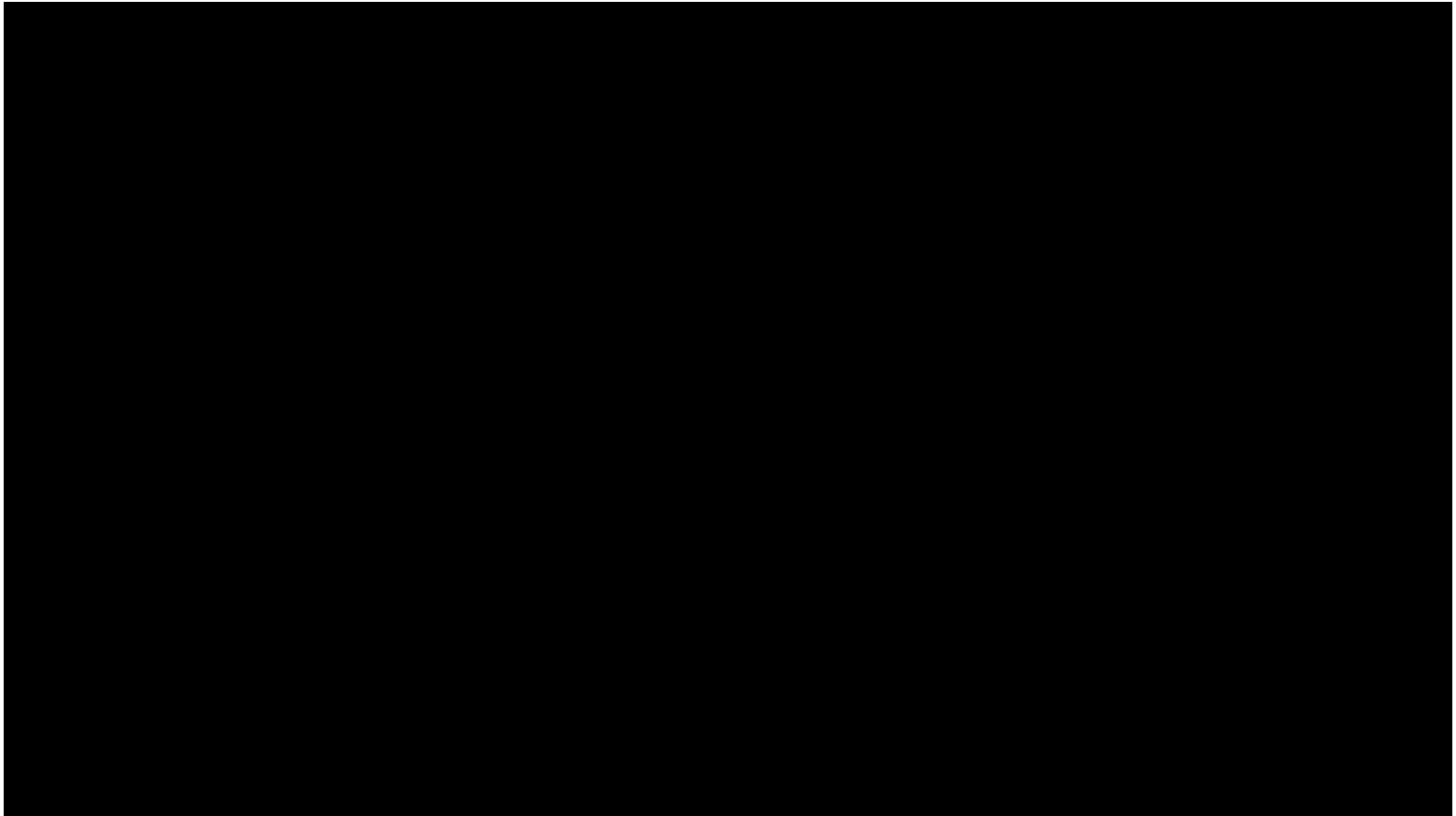
Webinars

Free Webinar!

The Science of Communicating with Busy Families & Educators

Friday, October 22, 2021 @ 10am PT / 1pm ET

With schools and districts sending more than the usual number of communications, making sure messages are read and understood is paramount. Attendance Works and the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) are delighted to invite Todd Rogers of Harvard University to share the science of writing so busy families and educators read, understand and take action based on our messages.

In this webinar, Rogers will illustrate that most of us don't carefully read practical communications (emails, texts, forms and mail). We skim. This has surprising implications for how we should write. Rogers will share an actionable checklist for individuals and teams, and six easy-to-apply principles for writing that is more effective, inclusive and kind.

Note: Because this is a highly interactive session, it will not be recorded or posted afterwards.

Register here: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_wrNy6F1KTSG_JJsZhap8TA

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Webinar Registration - Zoom

Will the state continue to collect monthly attendance and learning model data in 2021-22

The CSDE will continue this monthly data collection in 2021-22.

- The record layout will be unchanged and the monthly due dates are expected to be similar.

- Given the attendance challenges in the 2020-21 school year, the CSDE is continuing this collection in 2021-22 because [research conducted by CSDE last year in partnership with Attendance Works](#) affirms that the odds of being chronically absent in winter were about 17 times higher for students who were chronically absent in the fall compared to those with satisfactory attendance.

- Note that during the 2021-22 school year, students who may be learning remotely in limited/individualized circumstances as outlined in [CSDE's remote learning guidance](#) can be reported as being "in attendance" through this collection.

- Districts should use the [same four-part framework](#) to track attendance for those specific students on their remote learning days.

- For questions about the data collection and reporting, please contact Kendra Shakir at Kendra.shakir@ct.gov. For questions regarding attendance and engagement practices, please contact Kari Sullivan-Custer at Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov.

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Can remote learning occur and students marked "in attendance" while quarantined?

In 2021-22, remote learning can occur in limited, individualized cases as described in CSDE-Guidance-The-Future-of-Remote-Learning-in-CT-Schools-07-15-21.pdf . School districts are encouraged to develop a local policy to address how remote learning might be used to provide continued educational opportunities:

1. for students who must be in COVID-19 isolation or quarantine,

2. to address localized outbreaks in a school or specific school district, and

3. in rare and individualized circumstances, for students with elevated risks from COVID-19 exposure due to cohabiting family members with documented vulnerability to COVID-19.

Such policy should squarely document eligibility with equity and consistency in mind, and address the frequency and with what restrictions access will be granted.

Students who are remote in these circumstances can be deemed to be "in attendance" if they are present for at least half the school day per the four-part framework; this framework is similar to the one used last year. Note that the precise nature and design of the remote programming that is offered in these rare circumstances is up to the district.

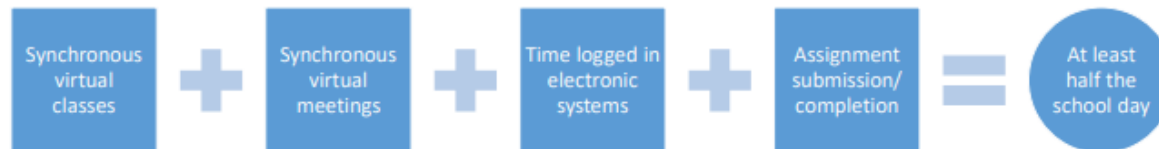# How should schools track attendance for remote learners in 2021-22?

Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2021-22

State Board of Education Policy (2008):
"A student is considered to be 'in attendance' if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day."

A remote student can be considered as being 'in attendance' on a particular day if the total time spent on one or more of the following activities equals at least half the school day.

Synchronous virtual classes **+** Synchronous virtual meetings **+** Time logged in electronic systems **+** Assignment submission/completion **=** At least half the school day

Synchronous virtual classes are live classes that are streamed real time to students using a videoconferencing platform like Google Meets, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.

Synchronous virtual meetings may be with a teacher, counselor, social worker, paraprofessional, etc. using a videoconferencing platform or via telephone. They may be homeroom opportunities, daily routine check-ins, or other synchronous conversations.

Time logged in electronic systems can be used to identify *any time over and above the synchronous virtual classes and meetings* that the student may have participated in during the school day.

Assignment submission/completion time can be determined by the teacher by starting with an estimate of time it will take for a typical student to submit/complete that assignment, and using that estimate to gauge the attendance time for the day that should be allotted to each student.

Notes:

- If a student is absent on a given day (either in-person or remote), they cannot make up for that absence on another day.
- Districts should track membership and attendance *separately* for a student's in-person *vs* remote days.

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What resources can assist us with developing policies and practices for tracking and monitoring daily attendance?

- [Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences](#)
- [Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2021-22](#) (for students learning remotely in limited/individualized circumstances)
- [CSDE Guidance Regarding the Future of Remote Learning in Connecticut Schools](#)
- [2021-22 PSIS Reference Guide](#)
    - See Appendix F – Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System (PSIS), page 50
    - See Appendix L – Reporting Information about Students who are Disengaged, page 59

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What are Mental Health Wellness Days?

[Public Act 21-46, An Act Concerning Social Equity and the Health Safety and Education of Children](), Section 19 (a) and (b), defines and allows students to have two Mental Health and Wellness (MHW) Days. The new legislation is as follows:

Sec. 19. (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2021) (a) As used in this section and section 10-198b of the general statutes, as amended by this act, "mental health wellness day" describes a school day during which a student attends to such student's emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, a local or regional board of education shall permit any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day such student shall not be required to attend school. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

Provide Equal Access: Enrollment Process and Practice

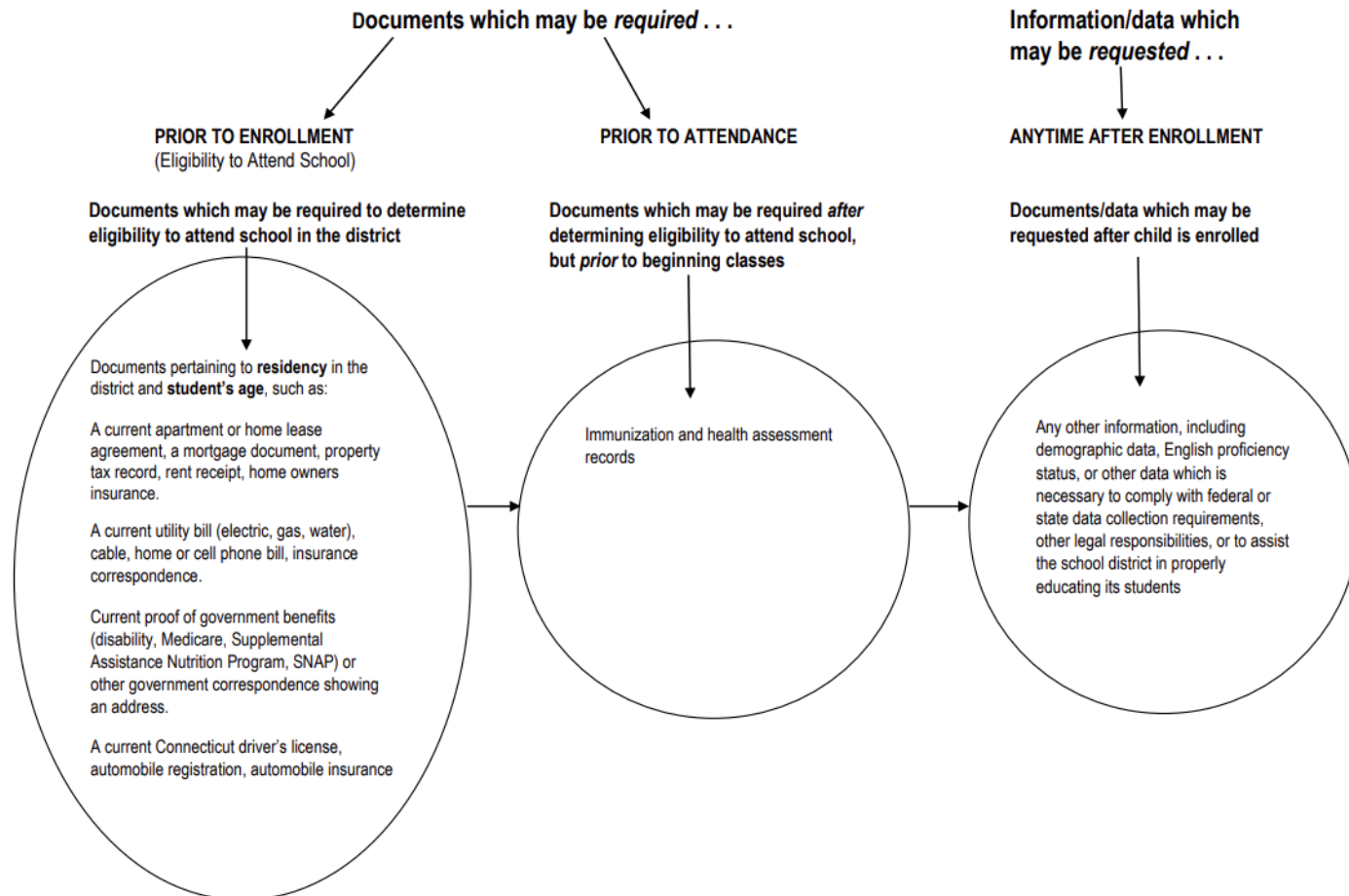**Guidance for Connecticut School Districts: Enrollment Process and Practice**

Federal and state law requires that all students – including students from other countries and homeless students – be enrolled promptly, without having to answer questions, or provide documents, that are unnecessary for confirming residency in the district or age. CSDE guidance is provided below:

- Memo: August 22, 2017
- At-a-Glance overview
- Questions and Answers
- Guidance document
- Improving Attendance by Addressing School Health Assessments and Immunizations (June 6, 2018)

Provide Equal Access: Enrollment Process and Practice

Guidance for Connecticut School Districts: Enrollment Process and Practice

AT-A-GLANCE OVERVIEW

Documents which may be *required* . . .

Information/data which may be *requested* . . .

PRIOR TO ENROLLMENT
(Eligibility to Attend School)

PRIOR TO ATTENDANCE

ANYTIME AFTER ENROLLMENT

Documents which may be required to determine eligibility to attend school in the district

Documents which may be required *after* determining eligibility to attend school, but *prior* to beginning classes

Documents/data which may be requested after child is enrolled

Documents pertaining to **residency** in the district and **student's age**, such as:

A current apartment or home lease agreement, a mortgage document, property tax record, rent receipt, home owners insurance.

A current utility bill (electric, gas, water), cable, home or cell phone bill, insurance correspondence.

Current proof of government benefits (disability, Medicare, Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program, SNAP) or other government correspondence showing an address.

A current Connecticut driver's license, automobile registration, automobile insurance

Immunization and health assessment records

Any other information, including demographic data, English proficiency status, or other data which is necessary to comply with federal or state data collection requirements, other legal responsibilities, or to assist the school district in properly educating its students

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TRUANCY POLICIES & PRACTICES

Truancy: Definition of an Absence

Definition of an Absence

State Board of Education policy states:

> *A student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.*

According to this policy, a student who is not "in attendance" is considered absent. **The State Board definitions of excused and unexcused absences apply only to those absences that meet the standards of the above policy**. For example, the definitions do not apply to tardy students (i.e., those late for school but who would be considered as "in attendance" according to the above policy). Districts may use days tardy for local purposes as necessary.

Truancy: Legislation
C.G.S. 10-198a

Sec. 10-198a. Policies and procedures concerning truants.

(a) For purposes of this section and sections 10-198c and 10-220, "**truant" means a child age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences from school in any school year.**

(b) Each local and regional board of education **shall adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning truants who are enrolled in schools under the jurisdiction of such board of education**. Such policies and procedures shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

(1) **The holding of a meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant**, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant, provided such meeting shall be held not later than ten school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or tenth unexcused absence in a school year,

(2) (2) **coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services,**

Truancy: Excused & Unexcused Absences

Connecticut State Board of Education
Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences
Adopted June 27, 2012

The following definitions are for use by Connecticut school districts and schools for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 10-198a of the Connecticut General Statutes (Policies and procedures concerning truants), and for the purpose of reporting truancy, pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The use of these definitions for state purposes does not preclude districts from using separate definitions of excused and unexcused absences for their internal uses (including decisions on promotion/retention, grading and disciplinary action).

Excused Absences

A student's absence* from school shall be considered excused if written documentation† of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

A. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation; and

B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
   1. student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
   2. student's observance of a religious holiday;
   3. death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
   4. mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
   5. the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
   6. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

Unexcused Absences

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:
   A. the absence meets the definition for an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
   B. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

Disciplinary Absences

Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action are excluded from these definitions.

Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences (ct.gov)

Truancy: FAQs

Q: What happens when a student becomes truant?

A: In 2017, state law removed truancy and defiance of school rules as reasons that students could be referred to juvenile court.

C.G.S. Section 10-198a(b) requires each local and regional board of education to adopt and implement policies and procedures concerning truants who are enrolled in schools under their jurisdiction. These policies and procedures must include but need not be limited to *"(1) The holding of a meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant . . . (2) coordinating services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services. . ."*

Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules
The CSDE, with its partners, has developed a **Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules Form** to assist districts in developing a system to formally refer students who are truant to the community's Youth Service Bureau. A **Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide** is also available to be used as a side-by-side resource to assist in completing the Youth Service Bureau Referral for Defiance of School Rules Form.

Truancy: FAQs

Q: ***Does CSDE collect and publicly report truancy data?***

A: Yes, for 2020-21 and prior, CSDE collected school-level truancy counts and are part of the Profile and Performance Reports at [SAS Output (ct.gov)](#).

A: Beginning in SY 2021-22, CSDE will be collecting student-level truancy data in the June 2022 data collection. Additional information is provided in the [2021-22 PSIS Reference Guide](#), pages 10 and 23.

Truant – Student is truant ("Y" – Yes, "N" – No). An entry in this field is mandatory for the June collection; indicate "yes" for a student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has four unexcused absences from school in any one month (i.e., 30-calendar-day period) or ten unexcused absences from school in any school year. Truant is defined [in Section 10-198a](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Peer Discussions:
Equitable and Relationship-focused Truancy Policies & Practices

Things to consider:

- **What is the school's relationship with the family?** Can it be strengthened? Does the family know the policy? Is guidance provided in the home language.

- **What is the situation at home** that may make it difficult for a parent or guardian to document the absence, e.g., work, illness, child care.

- **Are all students treated equitably** when determining if a student's absence is excused or unexcused? What resources are lost to a student when the absences are unexcused?

- **Where do the students' absences fall within the context of chronically absent**, e.g., 10 absences in October vs. 10 absences in May?

RESOURCES

CT Attendance Awareness Campaign

In partnership with Attendance Works, CSDE has created messaging materials, in English and Spanish, for Connecticut districts and schools to use in their own attendance awareness campaigns. All materials can be downloaded and branded with a district or school's logo. The resources include banners, parent handouts, posters and coloring pages. All resources are in PDF format. Find the materials on the Connecticut Attendance Awareness Campaign webpage.

Banners
- Elementary **English   Spanish**
- Secondary **English   Spanish**

Parent Handouts
- Elementary **English   Spanish**
- Secondary **English   Spanish**

Posters English   Spanish

Coloring Pages English   Spanish

Attendance 101!

CSDE Chronic Absence Webpage – [Related Resources](#)

Supporting Attendance & Engagement

- [Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts Guide](#), basics (nuts & bolts), start with a team, unpack the data, understand root causes and develop a plan, e.g., district role, school role, tiered approach, and community role

  - **[Addendum 14: Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement during Hybrid or Remote Learning](#) (COVID-19)**

Tracking and Monitoring Daily Attendance

- [Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences](#)

  - **[Tracking Attendance on Remote Days for State Reporting & FAQs](#) (COVID-19)**

- [Public School Information System (PSIS) Reference Guide](#) - The PSIS Reference Guide contains detailed guidance on reporting student attendance, Appendix F, in the PSIS and for when to unregister students, Appendix L, who are not coming to school for extended periods of time.

  - [Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance](#)

  - [PSIS Appendix L - Reporting Information about Students who are Disengaged](#)

Reviewing & Monitoring Attendance Trends

- [EdSight](#), an on-line portal for finding district and school-level data, including chronic absence.

- [Supporting Student Participation in 2020-21](#) (monthly attendance by district and school for 2020-21 school year)

- [Ed Sight Secure](#) and the Early Indication Tool

Attendance 201!

State & National [Related Resources](#)

- [Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism](#), FutureED
- [Guide to Using the Attendance Playbook: Smart Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the COVID Er](#)a, Attendance Works
- [Attendance Works](#) has developed a range of resources specific to grades served (i.e., elementary, middle, secondary) and aligned to five important strategies designed to improve attendance: recognizing good and improved attendance; engaging students and parents; monitoring attendance data and practice; providing personalized early outreach; and developing programmatic responses to barriers. A few examples include:
    - [Attendance Awareness Campaign, National](#)
    - [Pathways to Engagement: A Toolkit for Covid-19 Recovery Through Attendance](#)
    - [Year-Long Planning Calendars](#)

- [The Governor's Prevention Partnership](#), Connecticut Mentoring Resources, Training and Guidance
    - [Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership](#)
- [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#)
- [Get Schooled](#)
- [Flamboyan Foundation](#), Building Effective Family Engagement

STAY CONNECTED
&
LEARN TOGETHER

How do I stay connected to Talk Tuesday, resources and other attendance-related events?

Talk Tuesday has a new listserv that will be the primary tool for communications related to Talk Tuesday sessions as well as new attendance guidance, events and news.
- You may already be receiving emails from the listserv if your email address was on the previous email distribution lists for Talk Tuesdays.
- Feel free to share with colleagues in your district working on improving attendance and engagement with school teachers, staff, families and students.

How do I Subscribe to the SDE_Talk_Tuesday listserv?
1. Open and address a new email to: LISTSERV@list.ct.gov;
2. Remove all text from the body of your email, including your contact information;
3. Type in the body of your email: subscribe SDE_Talk_Tuesday (first name last name); and
4. Send the email.

How do I Unsubscribe to the Talk Tuesday Listserv?
1. Open and address a new email to: LISTSERV@list.ct.gov;
2. Remove all text from the body of your email, including your contact information;
3. Type in the body of your email: signoff SDE_Talk_Tuesday; and
4. Send the email.

Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

Talk Tuesday

Tuesday, **October 19,** 2021
10 to 11 a.m.

Have a **promising practice or success**
you want to share?

Concerns you want to share through peer discussion?

Send ideas for topics for discussion to
Kari.Sullivan@ct.gov.

Community of Practice

District Attendance Leads

Thursday**, October 21**, 2021
10 to 11:30 a.m.

Save the date!

All CoPs will be held on the 3rd Thursday of
the month from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

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