

# Attendance & Engagement System of Support & Professional Communities

# Talk Tuesdays

Developed by the CSDE in collaboration with SERC

**October 3, 2023**



# Today's Agenda

## **Welcome**

Christine Kuehlewind, Stephen Proffitt, Ann Marie Cordisco, and Elisa Palmieri Laudati,  
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

## **What's New at CSDE and Partners**

Kari Sullivan Custer, Attendance & Engagement Consultant, CSDE  
Jay Brown, Bureau of Special Education Consultant (Academic Office), CSDE

## **Attendance Awareness Campaign: "School is Better with You!"**

Caroline C. Calhoun, Professional Learning & Attendance Specialist (Learner  
Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) Coordinator), EdAdvance  
Nicole Lenti, Group Director (Strategy), Odonnell Company

## **Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings**

Christine Kuehlewind, SERC



# Welcome

## August 18, 2023

- [Commissioner's Back-to-School Meeting](#)
- [Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Kindergarten through Grade 12](#)

## August 21, 2023

- [Are Your District's Contacts with CSDE Up to Date?](#) For details, [watch Behind the Numbers: From Data to Dashboards, Session 2 of 3](#)

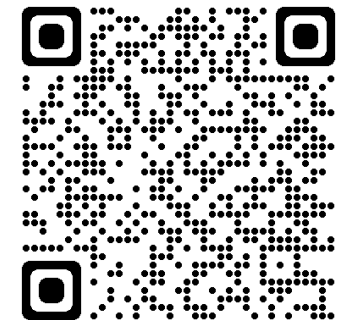
## August 28, 2023

- [Press Release: Connecticut Sees Improvement in Attendance, and Math and Science Scores](#)

## August 31, 2023

- [CSDE Launches Grades 3-6 English Language Arts Model Curriculum](#)

[Superintendent's Digest](#)





# Welcome

## September 12, 2023

- [Review the State Board of Education's 2023-28 Five-Year Plan Draft](#) and [submit your comments](#).
- [Register for the 2023 Performance Matters Forum \(PMF\)](#) and [view conference details](#)
- [Grant Expenditure Dashboard on EdSight Public](#) (New)

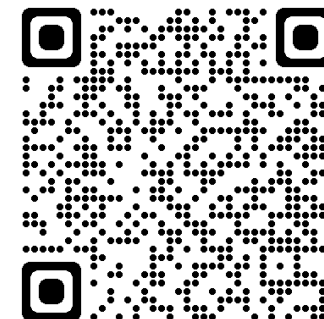
## September 14, 2023

- [View the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator and Leader Evaluation and Support 2023 \(CT Guidelines 2023\)](#) and [read the Commissioner's memo](#)

## September 18, 2023

- [Celebrate National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week](#)
- Calling Connecticut Educators! [Apply to Participate in Smarter Balanced Item Reviews in ELA and Math](#)- Review the [necessary qualifications, application process, and other information](#) and the [FAQ](#)
- [Internet Safety Training – On behalf of the US Attorney's Office, District of Connecticut and the Department of Children and Families](#)
- FAFSA Data Sharing Agreement Expiring – [District Signature Required on Amendment](#)

## [Superintendent's Digest](#)





# Welcome

## September 21, 2023

- [CSDE-Hispanic Heritage Month PD Playlist](#)
- Please see our most recent press releases: [FAFSA Challenge Schools Show Significant Gains](#),
- [2023 National Blue Ribbon Schools](#), [EdSight Dashboards](#)

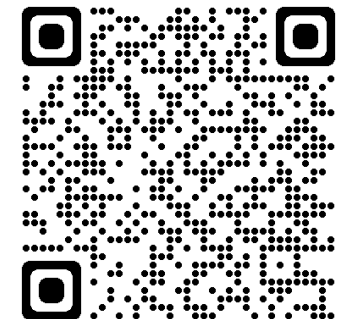
## September 25, 2023

- [International Day of the Girl Panel: Using Digital Platforms to Progress Change](#)

## September 28, 2023

- [Register for Informational Webinar for Districts who have Requested a Waiver of Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs](#)
- [Connecticut Automatic Admissions Program \(CAAP\) Update](#)
- [Dual Credit Grants Awarded](#)

[Superintendent's Digest](#)





# What's New at CSDE and Partners

Kari Sullivan Custer  
Attendance & Engagement Consultant, CSDE

# Understanding Reasons for Absences

## Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech
- Community violence
- Etc. and many more!

## Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Parents had negative educational experiences

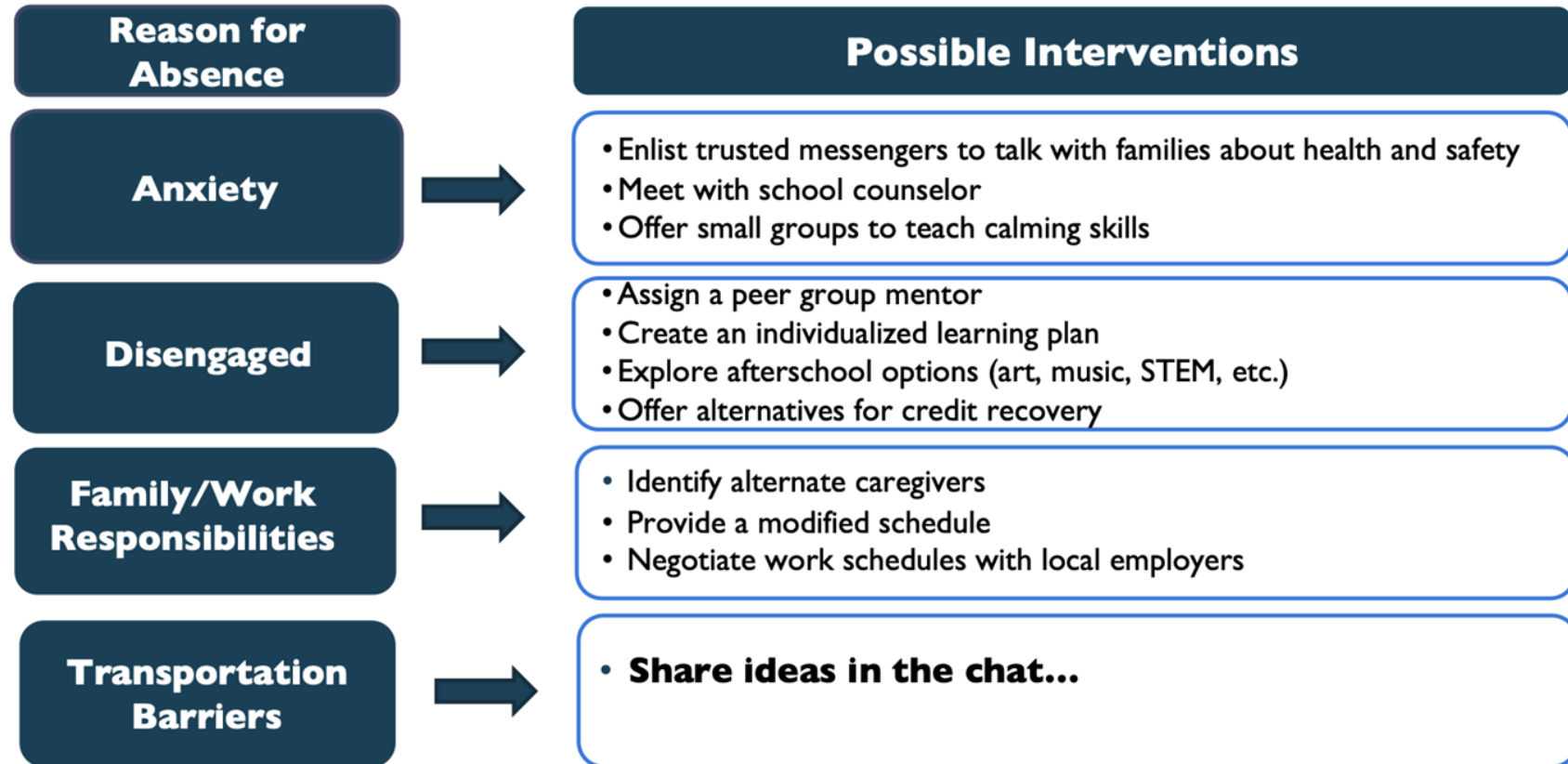
## Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school

## Misconceptions

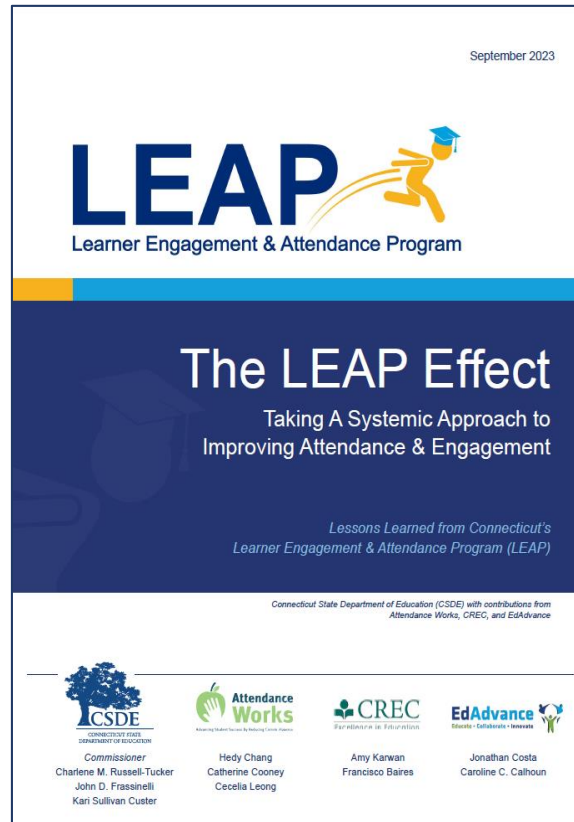
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

# Align Interventions to Reason for Absences





# New Resource



- **Systems and Structures that Support LEAP Implementation**

- **Dedicated District and School LEAP Coordinators** – Each district and school ideally has a person responsible for coordinating implementation, informing the School Attendance Team, bridging relationships with classroom teachers, and engaging in ongoing problem solving.
- **Opportunities to Hear Family and Student Voices** – Student and family voices are essential to understanding the realities facing students, including what helps motivate them to show up to school and what barriers impede attendance. LEAP training emphasizes collecting, documenting, and sharing insights gleaned from conversations with students and families.



- **Attendance Teams that Meet with Fidelity** – As a Tier II intervention, the LEAP program should be embedded within a larger tiered approach to improving attendance that is coordinated and supported by a team. The team should also help to share responsibility for ensuring students receive needed support or resources identified through the home visit process. It is also important for attendance teams to work with LEAP coordinators to monitor implementation and measure impact of home visits.

- **Collaboration with Community Partners** – Community partners are essential for ensuring home visitors have access to supports and services needed to support student engagement and address barriers to attendance. Home visitors need to know what types of resources are available in the community and how to ensure families can access them.
- **Timely and Accurate Data Collection/Monitoring** – Each district should ideally already have a system in place to monitor data on attendance, chronic absence, achievement, and behavior, and provide real-time reports at the student and school level.
- **Consistent Use of a Home Visit Log** – Home visitors maintain home visit logs to identify common barriers and needs of families. Data is submitted to the state to allow for analysis across the state and regions as well as within districts. Substantial attention is paid to coordination and reducing duplication with data collected by other surveys, as well as improving the log over time.

[www.ct.gov/LEAP](http://www.ct.gov/LEAP)

# What supports effective implementation of LEAP?



**LEAP**  
Learner Engagement & Attendance Program  
*Building relationships for student success*

**NEW FALL & WINTER DATES!**  
**Virtual LEAP 101 Trainings**  
*Learn the LEAP Approach to relational home visits*  
**Register Now!**

September 27, 2023  
<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterLEAP101September>

October 18, 2023  
<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterLEAP101October>

November 8, 2023  
<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterLEAP101November>

December 8, 2023  
<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterLEAP101December>

January 17, 2024  
<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterLEAP101January>



Questions? Contact Francisco Baires at [fbaires@crec.org](mailto:fbaires@crec.org)

LEAP (Learner Engagement & Attendance Program) is Connecticut's research-based, relational home visit model proven to increase student attendance and family engagement.

- **Connecticut Home Visit Hub**



- To build capacity to conduct home visits, the CSDE created a professional development home visit hub housed at CREC, one of the state's six RESCs. The Hub offers a variety of professional development opportunities including:
  - **LEAP 101 Trainings** are designed to teach staff who are new to the LEAP home visiting approach. These virtual sessions focus on preparing home visitors for their initial contacts with families and the first visit through role plays and discussion. Trained coaches assist participants with role-playing and deepening their understanding of the home visit experience.
  - **District-specific LEAP Trainings** allow district leaders the opportunity to collaborate with the Hub staff to adapt and integrate the LEAP model into existing family engagement programs and design virtual trainings with this local context in mind.
  - **Connection Sessions** offer home visitors virtual space and opportunities to share their experiences with home visits, learn from and be inspired by each other, and to flag areas where they need additional resources or training.
  - **Social Emotional Health and Wellness & Mental Health First Aid Trainings** are opportunities for home visitors to learn from experts in order to be well-versed in how to respond to a variety of related needs that a family may share.
  - **Talk Tuesdays**, offered by CSDE every other Tuesday, are informal, virtual discussion opportunities open to all Connecticut school district and community partner staff interested in conversations and learning about all things attendance and engagement-related in order to build broad capacity and best practices statewide. Talk Tuesdays are hosted by SERC, Connecticut's State Education Resource Center; they are recorded and available [online](#).
  - **District Coordinator Meetings** are monthly opportunities for district LEAP Coordinators to come together with CSDE LEAP leadership to share updates, learn from one another, identify any implementation challenges, ensure fidelity of implementation, and make any necessary course corrections.
  - **The LEAP Family Roundtable** is an opportunity for families to share insights about their experiences with LEAP in order for the program to continuously improve. This work is in partnership with the [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center](#) (CPAC).
- The Home Visit Hub initially trained home visitors from the 15 districts who received funding. It has expanded and is currently also conducting statewide trainings for districts across Connecticut, as well as interested states around the country, and in Canada. The Hub has trained more than 1,700 home visitors in the LEAP approach.

[www.ct.gov/LEAP](http://www.ct.gov/LEAP)



U.S. Department of Education



Student Loans

Grants

Laws

Data

## Raise the Bar: Resources for Parents and Families

### Welcome back to school, parents, families, and caregivers!

You have done so much to get your child ready for a successful school year, and your child's school is gearing up for an exciting year of learning. Now, it's time to welcome *you* back to school!

Parent partnership with schools is key to supporting students' academic success and overall wellbeing. The questions below can help guide your back-to-school conversations with teachers and other school staff, support building your partnerships, and help lay the foundation for your child's success. These questions focus on building strong relationships with your school, sustaining two-way communication, and structuring support for your child between home and school.

### Sample Questions for Parents and Families to Help Build Strong Partnerships with Schools



## How Do I Find...?

- Student loans, forgiveness
- Higher Education Rulemaking
- College accreditation
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- FERPA
- FAFSA
- 1098, tax forms
- More...

## Information About...

- Elevating Teaching
- Early Learning
- Engage Every Student
- Unlocking Career Success
- Cybersecurity



# Attendance Awareness Campaign: "School is Better with You!"

Caroline C. Calhoun

Caroline C. Calhoun, Professional Learning & Attendance Specialist (Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) Coordinator), EdAdvance

Nicole Lenti

Group Director (Strategy), Odonnell Company

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# overview



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# introduction

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# campaign



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# campaign objectives

To promote positive messaging statewide via a comprehensive media strategy that increases awareness of the importance of school attendance and engagement in order to improve school attendance.



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# audiences

## Primary:

- Parents/Grandparents/Caregivers of K-12 children
- High school students

## Secondary:

- School-based staff/district staff
- Community organizations

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# research



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# research approach

In order to better understand the campaign audience groups and the barriers they are facing in connecting to attendance, OC conducted the following research steps:

- Review of existing research materials
- Subject matter expert interviews
- Digital surveys parents/caregivers:
  - In English and Spanish

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# survey results

An approved list of questions was built into 2 Survey Monkey surveys (English; Spanish)

- The survey links were distributed via contacts from CSDE, EdAdvance, and Odonnell Company
- The survey was open for 2 weeks, 7/25-8/14/23

A total of 5,488 survey responses from adults with children in grades K-12

- 4,990 English-speaking
- 498 Spanish-speaking

A representative mix of residents of counties across CT

- Larger counties had the greatest number of respondents (New Haven & Hartford)

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# survey results

- Mental health was a major topic that was brought up again and again
- While the English and Spanish language respondents had similar responses, the percentages often varied
- COVID-19 mindset shift about absences
- A large amount of respondents aren't aware of the number of days that are considered chronically absent

Illness, Chronic illnesses, Asthma, COVID, allergies

All the scary events that have taken place in schools all over the world

Family obligations. Emergencies (e.g., death in the family), vacation, visitors, family time

Needing breaks. Taking a mental health day – Sometimes they just need a break or a breather, burnout

Teachers' insufficient engagement with Spanish-speaking students

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# barriers to attending school

Overall:

- Shift in social norms post-COVID: in-person school is not seen as being as important as it was
- Confusion about what types of illnesses should keep a student from attending
- Parents are working from home - more likely to let kids stay home
- Families struggling
- Vacations/going to other countries

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# barriers to attending school

## Kindergarten/1st Grade

- In other cultures, K isn't full-time or considered necessary
- Lack of socialization - didn't attend Pre-K with COVID
- Parents more sensitive because of COVID - keeping child home for sniffles

## 11th/12th Graders

- Attended virtual school longer; people felt not necessary to come to school
- Didn't feel sense of belonging, not engaged, what they are doing isn't important
- Some working to support family
- Bullying/anxiety at higher levels
- Some staying home to watch younger siblings

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# benefits of attending school

- Daily routines are the key to success
- Social and emotional benefits; sense of belonging
- Support services in school (free meals, health access, mental health support)
- Fun: Recess, art, music, friends
- Trusted adults who care about you
- Pathways to careers and college
- The need to show up begins in adolescence/key for life prep, jobs, college, etc.
- Chronic absenteeism can have long-term impacts on students' health, academic achievement, graduation rates, poverty
- COVID-19 has had us all isolated; we don't want to perpetuate that



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# messaging approach



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# 10 components



identify  
with the identity



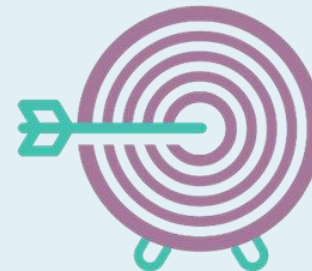
barriers  
& benefits



survival  
is social



connect  
on values



effective  
delivery



take  
an action



reward  
the action



make  
it easy



1 second  
to buy 3



reverse engineer  
the algorithms

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# behavior change & brain science

- People have a need for belonging
- School is inclusive, a stabilizing force
- Focus on school as positive place to be and a support, link to other help/bring audience in
- Connect on values - school is an important part of a successful future

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# approach

- Use brain and behavior science to engage audience in positive ways
- Raise awareness, educate, and evolve audience behaviors
- Clear, simple communications
- Supportive, understanding, and positive
- Key points for community organizations and school district staff

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**creative**



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# school is better with you

School is better with you: YOU are an important part of the school community! And school is so much better with you, in person, every day. School is where you can express yourself, grow, learn, play, and add to your circle of friends.

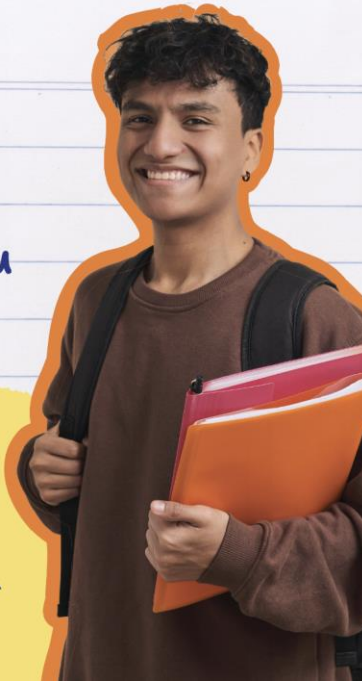
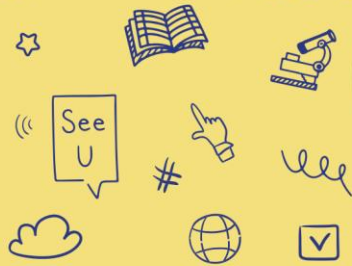
[ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou)



better with you,  
better for you



in person  
school,  
every day  
better with you



learn &  
grow in  
school





School is better with YOU!

→ In person, every day



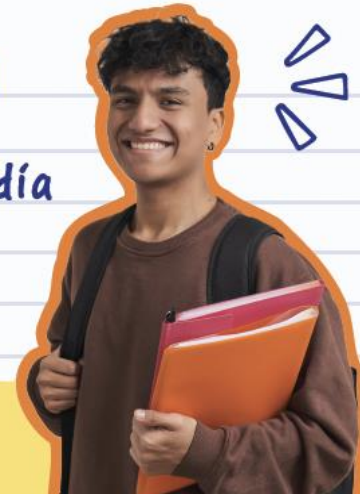
[ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou)

School is better with YOU! In person, every day

¡La escuela es mejor CONTIGO! En persona, cada día



Learn more about the importance of attendance



→ [ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou)



# Absences: What to Know

In-person learning is important for building good learning habits



**Attending school is important for good learning.**

Being in school allows a student to:

- Be part of a community
- Learn and grow with friends
- Build connections with teachers and other trusted adults



Everyone misses school sometimes, but regular attendance should be the goal.



**How many absences are too many?**

Missing even two days of school a month disrupts routines and creates a habit of missing school—also called chronic absenteeism. Send your child to school every day so they get the full benefits of in-person learning.

Visit [ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou) to learn more about the importance of in-person learning.



**Quick Tip!**  
2 absences a month  
= too many



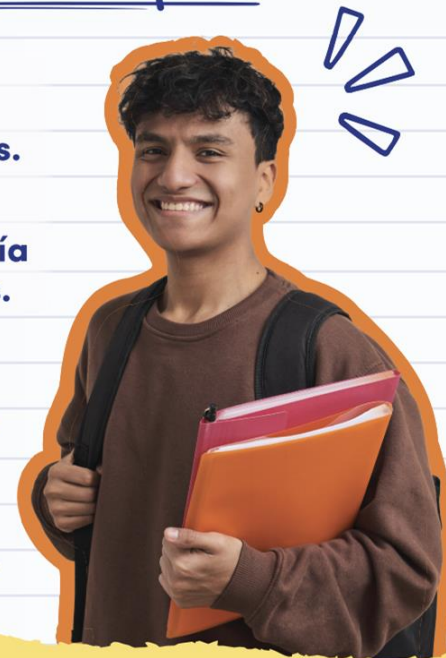
# School is better with you here!



## ¡La Escuela es Mejor Cuando Estás Aquí!

In-person learning every day has benefits.

Aprender en persona cada día tiene beneficios.



Learn more. Más info en

→ [ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou)

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# media plan



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# paid media

## English Media Tactics:

- Facebook & Instagram
- Snapchat & Tiktok
- LinkedIn
- Streaming Audio/Radio
- Broadcast TV & OTT
- Digital Banners
- Newspapers
- Billboards
- Bus Signage & Shelters

## Spanish & Other Language Media Tactics:

- Facebook & Instagram
- Digital Content
- Newspapers
- Billboards
- Bus Signage & Shelters
- Radio
- TV

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**spread the word**



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# CSDE social/web links

- [www.facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation](https://www.facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation)
- [www.instagram.com/educate.ct](https://www.instagram.com/educate.ct)
- [www.linkedin.com/company/ctcsde/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ctcsde/)
- [CT.GOV/betterwithyou](https://CT.GOV/betterwithyou)

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# utilizing toolkit assets

- Add to your school website
- Email communication to parents/caregivers
- Like/Repost/reshare elements from our social channels
- Display at school
- Share with PTA/PTSA/Athletic Associations for their distribution
- Share during faculty and/or staff meetings

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# engaging students

- Add to your school website
- Homeroom or school assembly
- Clubs re: Community/Volunteer activities
- Student Council/Student Government
- Volunteer hours for those to help spread the word
  - Putting posters in local areas
  - Share on their social media
  - Start a conversation

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# spread the word!

- Check out the toolkit elements on [ct.gov/betterwithyou](https://ct.gov/betterwithyou)
- Post information on your district social media accounts and follow the CSDE social accounts
- Connect with your Communications Director and/or Attendance Liaison!



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# questions



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**thank you!**





# Upcoming Attendance & Engagement Meetings

## Talk Tuesdays for the 2023-24 School Year

### 2023

- October 17
- October 31
- November 14
- November 28
- December 12

### 2024

- January 9
- January 23
- February 6
- February 20
- March 5
- March 19
- April 2
- April 30
- May 14
- May 28

**Register for Talk Tuesdays**





# Keep in Touch!

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