



CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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NetStat Professional Learning Series

Culture and Climate: Attendance & Engagement

Breakout Session #2
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November 13, 2020

WELCOME & SESSION OVERVIEW



Session Overview

1. Welcome & Session Overview
2. Attendance & Engagement Guidance Documents
 - [Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2020-21](#)
 - [Supporting Student Attendance During Remote Learning AKA “Addendum 14”](#)
3. Learn Together, Grow Together
4. NetStat Pre-survey Questions



TRACKING DAILY ATTENDANCE ON REMOTE DAYS **FAQ**



Remote Learning and Determination of “In-attendance”

- As with in-person schooling, attendance for remote learning students should be taken on a daily basis.
- State Board of Education’s policy for what it means to be “in attendance.” This policy states that *“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.”*

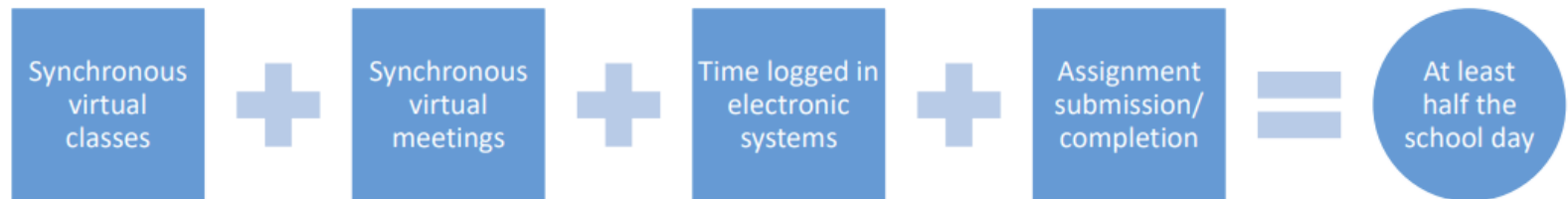


Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2020-21

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 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.

Remote Learning and how to Determine if student is “in attendance”

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.

1. Synchronous virtual CLASSES
2. Synchronous virtual MEETINGS
3. Time logged in on electronic learning systems
4. Assignment submission/completion



FAQ #1

Is attendance in synchronous virtual classes required by the CSDE for a student to be counted as being “in attendance” on remote days?

- No.
- The CSDE does not require that a student be present in synchronous virtual classes to be counted as “in attendance” on remote days for state reporting purposes.
- This flexibility is designed to allow students and families who may have difficulty attending synchronous virtual classes to demonstrate presence through other means (e.g., meetings with teachers, assignment submission/completion).
- Students receiving special education or support under a Section 504 Plan may participate in classes in a manner determined appropriate by the student’s planning and placement team or Section 504 Team.

FAQ #2

Can a district require that students attend synchronous virtual classes in order to be considered as “in attendance”?

- No.
- While the district may adopt such a general expectation, the CSDE expects districts to allow for legitimate exceptions where a student may be unable to attend synchronous virtual classes (e.g., parent work-life responsibilities, power outage, Internet bandwidth, documented disability).

FAQ #3

Does a student need to complete some time in all four approaches, every day, to be considered as “in attendance”?

- No.
- For example, one remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely with synchronous classes without submitting/completing any assignment, while another remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely based on assignment submission/completion without attending even a single synchronous class.
- The total time spent on all four components on a remote day should equal at least ½ day for the student to be reported as “in attendance” for state reporting.
- Students with disabilities may have modified/flexible attendance requirements as part of their IEP, Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan, or Section 504 plan.

FAQ #4

When should attendance be recorded for remote days?

- Since students may demonstrate presence through asynchronous methods (e.g., assignment submission/completion) at any time during the day including after school hours, and given that some students may not be able to participate in synchronous virtual classes, it is strongly recommended that attendance on remote days be recorded on the following day so all students have a chance to submit/complete work.

FAQ #5

Can a student who otherwise should have attended school in-person on a given day, be permitted to participate remotely and counted as being “in attendance” for that specific day?

- Yes, but within reason.
- Knowing which students will attend in-person or remotely on any given school day is critical for educators to plan instruction and for the school building to effectively manage health and safety protocols.
- However, there are legitimate situations when an in-person student can be permitted to switch to learning remotely for one or more school days.
- For example, the student may need to quarantine for two weeks due to potential contact with a positive COVID case, or the student may have a concerning symptom making it reasonable for the parent to determine that it is best to keep the student home for monitoring. In such situations, the district may authorize a switch to remote learning for that student for a specific day or days; such a student who meets the ½ day attendance threshold on those remote days can be reported as “in attendance.” Such flexibility will allow the student to remain engaged with the learning.
- However, the CSDE recommends that districts construe this flexibility narrowly and establish clear protocols for situations that warrant such a shift (e.g., district required quarantining, written authorization from parent regarding illness symptoms).
- Districts may choose to offer this flexibility to students for reasons beyond health/safety and illness symptoms; however, in those instances, districts are strongly advised to establish clear, quantifiable limits on such flexibility (e.g., no more than three instances during the year) so as to not create a situation where students are choosing the days they wish to attend school in-person.

**SUPPORTING STUDENT ATTENDANCE
DURING REMOTE & HYBRID LEARNING
MODELS**
ADDENDUM 14



Addendum 14

Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together

Connecticut State Department of Education



Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement during Hybrid or Remote Learning



September 21, 2020

Regular school attendance and overall student safety and well-being are always vital for laying a foundation for success during the school year. Paying attention to attendance is even more essential this year, given the unique challenges created by COVID-19 for schools, families, students, and community providers. Working together to cultivate student engagement and develop regular attendance habits, whether school is offered in person or remotely, ensures that students benefit from the learning opportunities offered. Noticing absences as soon as they begin to add up ensures preventive action is taken to address barriers before a student has lost out on so much learning that it is difficult for them to catch up. Ongoing tracking and monitoring of absenteeism — by school, grade, and student population — ensures the ability to identify and respond, as soon as possible, when the new learning models may not be working as planned. Additionally, this focused attention provides for the identification of “bright spots” or successful practices for student engagement that should be taken to scale. This Addendum describes how schools, districts, and their partners can work collaboratively to make a difference by supporting students’ attendance, engagement, and safety.

Tracking Student Attendance during Hybrid or Remote Learning Models

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is requiring attendance be taken and tracked for each student each day. Student attendance in all learning models should be consistent with the State Board of Education’s definition for attendance that, “A student is considered to be ‘in attendance’ if present at their assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day.” Please use the [CSDE guidance for tracking attendance on remote days](#) for state reporting purposes during the 2020–21 school year. This guidance applies to students who have opted-in to full-time remote learning, are learning remotely during the week as part of a hybrid model, or are learning remotely because the entire school is operating remotely.

Supporting Students and Families during Hybrid or Remote Learning Models

Supporting students and families during hybrid or remote learning models requires strong and ongoing relationships with teachers, support staff, students and parents. Trusted community providers can also play an important role to support the connection between families and schools.

Recommendations for ensuring a strong relationship is formed between home and school include:

- Listening to, understanding and addressing issues that families are facing that may interfere with student attendance, including: health, transportation, child care, housing, and employment.
- Starting the year by intentionally building strong and trusting relationships with families. See [Beginning of the Year Relationship Building Toolkit](#).

It’s important to understand the “why” attendance is important...

- Paying attention to attendance is even *more essential this year given the unique challenges created by COVID 19* for schools, families, students and community providers.
- On-going tracking and monitoring of absenteeism - by school, grade and student population - *ensures the ability to identify and respond, as soon as possible, when the new learning models may not be working as planned.*
- This focused attention also provides for the *identification of “bright spots” or successful practices for student engagement that should be taken to scale.*
- *Developed in partnership with the Department of Children and Families*



Supporting Students and Families

Supporting students and families during hybrid or remote learning models requires strong and ongoing relationships with teachers, support staff, students and parents. Trusted community providers can also play an important role to support the connection between families and schools.

- **Listening to and understanding issues** families are facing and addressing any that may interfere with student attendance, including: transportation, child care, housing, and employment.
- **Providing training opportunities for families on device use and access to school platforms.** Planning ways to engage families in person at the beginning of the school year, following all health and safety rules, since the target audience may not be able to access training online.
- **Implementing high-impact family engagement strategies** by applying the [guiding principles](#) in [Connecticut's Framework for Family Engagement](#).
- **Communicating, in a variety of modes, clear attendance and participation expectations** during remote learning to families and students early on in the school year and continuously during the period of time that students are in remote learning models.
- **Identifying special populations of students that may require additional supports** and connect with school or community partners that can assist them, e.g., students with a history of chronic absence; English learners; students with chronic health issues; students with disabilities.
- **Keeping lines of communication open and accessible** by providing parents with an email or phone number they can use to easily address issues related to attendance or connectivity during remote learning.
- **Launching a local campaign** as part of the national [2020 Attendance Awareness Campaign](#) with Attendance Works.



Strengthening Schools to Support Attendance

Districts must ensure that schools are prepared to support families and students in remote learning by:

- **Training and supporting teachers and school support staff** on how to engage families and accurately track attendance during remote learning (e.g., estimating the amount of time to complete an assignment; understanding of attendance codes; and accurate data entry).
- **Equipping educators with realistic self-care strategies** is essential to supporting student wellness and the well-being of the overall school community, particularly during a time of isolation due to school closures and social distancing restrictions. See: [Healthy Schools Start with Healthy Adults](#).
- **Developing approaches to discipline** that consider educator input and avoid setting unreasonable expectations for staff or students/families as outlined in [Addendum 10, Reframing and Reopening: School Discipline Amidst COVID-19 Guidance](#).
- **Ensuring a free appropriate public education (FAPE)** to each student determined eligible and for whom the parent has provided written consent for the provision of special education and related services as described in [Addendum 6, Reopening Guidance for Education Students with Disabilities](#).
- **Working with families and health care providers to ensure that school health and immunization requirements are met** prior to missing deadlines that could result in school exclusion for noncompliance. The CSDE resource, [Improving Attendance by Addressing School Health Assessments and Immunizations](#), outlines best practices for working with key partners, including school personnel, families and community-based providers.
- **Engaging the school nurse** to connect with families where health or COVID-19 are barriers to participating in remote learning.



Structures and Systems of Support

- Convening district and school **attendance teams**.
- **Monitoring attendance early and often** ([Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning, Attendance Works](#)).
- **Assigning roles/responsibilities to team members** to connect with families immediately, ascertaining the root causes and implementing solutions or interventions to assist with improving attendance.
- **Pinpointing common barriers or causes of students missing school** and partnering with community partners to assist with solutions.
- **Reviewing and revising the schools tiered system of interventions** to better align with the remote learning model ([Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the COVID Era and User's Guide](#)).
- **Promptly referring to a planning and placement team (PPT)** any student whose attendance is considered unsatisfactory or at a marginal level of acceptance.
- **Continuously tracking and monitoring the effectiveness** of all interventions.
- **Partnering with your regional DCF office and local YSB** to develop strategies to address attendance issues *prior* to the need for an official referral for educational neglect (DCF) or truancy (YSB).



Addressing Student's Safety and Well-being

A trauma-informed approach that is sensitive to the family's needs should be taken prior to considering a student to be truant or a family to be suspect of educational neglect. Districts should ***prepare staff, including staff working directly with families,*** to identify issues related to abuse and neglect in the context of the pandemic and comply with all mandated reporting requirements.

It is important that districts and schools ***ensure that the following efforts to improve attendance occur prior to filing a referral:***

- **Meeting/s held with parents and student** to understand family's needs and reasons behind missing school, including making and documenting multiple efforts to contact the family if the family is not immediately responsive.
- **Planning and placement team (PPT)** held or scheduled.
- **Appropriate interventions** determined, implemented, and monitored to support improved attendance.
- **Services and/or referrals and made with community agencies** providing student and family services.



Addressing Student's Safety and Well-being (continued)

- Particularly given the trauma the community has experienced during this pandemic and its effect on our students, referrals for educational neglect should be considered only after all supports and resources have been exhausted.

Definition

- “[Educational neglect](#)” occurs when a school-aged child has excessive absences from school through the intent or neglect of the parent or caregiver. For children older than 12, excessive absenteeism through the child’s own intent, despite the caregiver’s efforts, is “truancy” which is handled through the school district. Additional information on truancy referrals can be found on the [CSDE Truancy webpage](#).
- DCF is continues to pilot its Electronic Reporting Process with school districts. More information can be found in the [FAQ for DCF Electronic Reporting Update](#). An additional resource from DCF includes [When to Make a Referral to the DCF Careline](#).



**LEARN TOGETHER
GROW TOGETHER**



Connecticut District Strategies

1. **Placing key staff at food distribution sites**; including hand-written notes in the bags or making connection with parent. Also providing technical assistance at food distribution sites – families can bring device with them to the drive-thru line or if more time is needed, set-up a place for cars to pull off to the side – 1 on 1 support. Update attendance procedures and protocols and ensure that everyone understands them, e.g., teachers, parents, students
2. **Connecting families with the local recreation program for childcare** on remote days
3. Placing a focus on the importance of relationships to help reengage students and families by **ensuring that there is always someone in the building that the families can connect with** or by holding Zooms after school or when families are available.
4. **Communicating clear learning expectations to parents** when students go into quarantine, including: how students can log-in and stay connected to education with their teacher in order to maintain seamless/immediate transition. They have learned that the longer it takes a family to begin to log-on, the longer it takes to get them back.



Connecticut District Strategies

1. **Revamping protocol** to identify disengaged student: 1) **teacher makes first contact**. Leaving a phone message is not sufficient. If necessary, call emergency contacts. 2.) **share with the attendance team** to help out. When communicating with families make suggestions such as setting a timer on a device to remind students of a session. Engage the family to determine the barrier to help resolve the issue. 3.) If student is still not attending, **school administrators become involved** and then, there are **home visits**. District is conducting more home visits than ever before.
2. **If students are not using device at home** – given paper school work. Some kids are back 4 days a week if they are not engaging remotely. Parents are looking for kids to be in school more often. It's been really helpful.
3. Recognizing the significance of the school/family/community partnership. SDE webinar quote – **mind shift from mandated reporters – mandated supporters. First thing we have to do is support our families**. This shift in approach has done a world of good in terms of outcomes.



Learn Together, Grow Together

1. What are some successful strategies you have used to engage and re-engage students in the learning process?
2. What are some of the challenges you have noticed in the field around student attendance and engagement?
3. What is an area of practice or new learning that you hope we can address at a future session?



NetStat Pre-Session Survey



1. What are the best strategies to achieve optimal engagement in our students?



2. What effective Tier 2 interventions and positive behavior have been observed to support regular attendance habits for asynchronous virtual learning days?



3. In addition to SRBI processes, how can schools address truancy and lack of engagement especially in lower socio economic districts?



4. Are school attendance initiatives still in place? If so, what do they look like now due to the challenges of COVID-19?



5. Are there companies out there that can provide discounts on internet for families that don't have the best internet service?



6. How will we define absenteeism?



Get Connected Campaign

https://portal.ct.gov/getonline/Content/Get-Connected

COVID-19 Information: Connecticut residents are urged to continue taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Get the facts at ct.gov/coronavirus.

ct.gov Connecticut's Official State Website

Search Connecticut Government...

Language + Settings

Get Connected

In order to determine what Internet service options are available at your home, we suggest you use these tools provided by 3rd-party organizations, BroadbandNow and EveryoneOn.

BROADBANDNOW®

BroadbandNow

BroadbandNow's tool allows you to see all of the broadband offers available in your area. All you have to do is type in your zip code and answer a few easy questions.

BroadbandNow

everyoneon

EveryoneOn

EveryoneOn's tool provides you with a list of low-cost Internet and device options in your area. All you have to do is type in your zip code and answer select eligibility information.

EveryoneOn



LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!



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Connect with CSDE for more information
on student attendance and engagement:



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