Partnering to Improve Student Attendance from the Early Years

2013 Attend Today, Succeed Tomorrow Forum:
Reducing Chronic Absence: What Will It Take?

An overview of why it matters and key ingredients for improving student attendance

Hedy Chang, Director

September 9, 2013
Thanks to our generous partners for co-sponsoring this event
Unpacking Attendance Terms

**Average Daily Attendance**
- Nationally, ADA is generally understood as the % of enrolled students who attend school each day. In California, for funding purposes, it is also defined as total days of student attendance divided by total days of student instruction.

**Truancy**
- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws. In CA, it refers to a child absent 3 days without a valid excuse or late 3 times to class by at last 30 minutes without a valid excuse.

**Chronic Absence**
- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school. Note: this new measure is now part of CA Local Control Funding Formula.
High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with @ 95% ADA in 2012

Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12

98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don’t know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence
Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence

Number of Chronically Absent Versus Chronically Truant Students
San Francisco Unified School District

- # chronic absentees - 2010-2011
- # of combined chron/hab truants (as of May 16th 2011)
Nationwide, as many as 10-15% of students (7.5 million) miss nearly a month of school every year. That’s 135 million days of lost time in the classroom.

In some cities, as many as one in four students are missing that much school.

Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.

Poor attendance isn’t just a problem in high school. It can start as early as kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.
The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is focusing on three challenges to reading success that are amenable to community solutions:

• The Readiness Gap: Too many children from low-income families begin school already far behind.

• The Attendance Gap (Chronic Absence): Too many children from low-income families miss too many days of school.

• The Summer Slide (Summer Learning Loss): Too many children lose ground over the summer months.
Students with lower preschool attendance have lower kindergarten readiness scores
Not controlling for prior knowledge

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- * Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students with absences between 0% and 3.3% at p<.05 level;
- **p<.01; ***p<.001

* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students with absences between 0% and 3.3% at p<.05 level; **p<.01; ***p<.001
Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2nd grade scores

* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.05 level; **p<.01; ***p<.001
Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1st Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1st Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance Risk</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No risk</td>
<td>Missed less than 5% of school in K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small risk</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in both K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate risk</td>
<td>Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year &amp; 10% in 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>Missed 10% or more in K &amp; 1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)
The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading performance by K attendance for children living in poverty. Academic performance was lower even if attendance had improved in 3rd grade.

Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)
Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.
Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade.

- Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:
  - Lower 6th grade test scores
  - Higher levels of suspension

Oakland Unified School District SY 2006-2012, Analysis By Attendance Works
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>% of students dropping out</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reducing Chronic Absence is Key to Reducing the Achievement Gap
Why Are Students Chronically Absent?

**Myths**
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

**Barriers**
- Lack of access to health care
- Poor transportation
- No safe path to school

**Aversion**
- Child struggling academically
- Lack of engaging instruction
- Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
Going to School Every Day Reflects...

Hope
for a better future
+

Faith
that school will help you or your child succeed
+

Capacity
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school
Universal Strategies for Building a Culture of Attendance & Identifying Barriers

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance
B. Engage Students and Parents
D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach
C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice
E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)
Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts

- **High Cost**
  - Recovery Programs
    - Students who were chronically absent in prior year or starting to miss 20% or more of school
  - A small fraction of a school’s students

- **Intervention Programs**
  - Students at risk for chronic absence
  - Some of a school’s students

- **Universal/Preventive Programs**
  - All students in the school
  - All of a school’s students
Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

**Chronic Absence Levels Across SFUSD Schools (2010-11)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Elementary/Middle</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Alternative High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Schools with &gt;20.1% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. Schools</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Alternative High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest % of Chronic Absence</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest % of Chronic Absence</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Successful Efforts

**New York City:** Citywide interagency task force led by Mayor; “NYC Success Mentor Corp.”, largest school-based mentoring effort in nation reaching about 9,000 at-risk students; interagency data sharing; community impact strategies; celebrity WakeUp! NYC calls; incentives & public-private partnerships. Pilot reduced chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle and high schools, outperforming comparison schools. Students with Success Mentors gained more than 11,800 days of school.

**Baltimore:** Fewer unnecessary suspensions, reduced middle school transitions, expanded monitoring of attendance data, and a citywide campaign have helped cut middle school chronic absence in half. Baltimore is now turning its attention to preschool and elementary school and to public messaging.
Ingredients for Success & Sustainability in a District and Community

- **Positive Messaging**
  - Conveys importance of building a habit of attendance and explains what is chronic absence

- **Capacity Building**
  - Expands ability to interpret data and adopt best practices

- **Actionable Data**
  - Is accurate, regularly reported and easily obtained

- **Shared Accountability**
  - Ensures monitoring & incentives to reduce chronic absence
Why September Counts

• The beginning of school is when expectations and norms are set for the year.

• The more days of instruction a student misses, the larger the negative impact on achievement.

• Chronic absence is missing 10% of days which would be 2 days by the end of the first month of school. Schools could use this as a trigger to intervene before students fall so far behind they need more intensive remediation.
Join us in September for Attendance Awareness Month

Count Us In!
Working Together To Show That Every School Day Matters

BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME
Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence

http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/
Key Message #1: Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the work place.
Key Message #2: Absences add up. Excused and unexcused absences result in too much time lost in the classroom.
Key Message #3: Chronic absence, missing 10 percent of the school year or more, affects the whole classroom, not just the students who miss school.
Key Message #4: We need to monitor how many days each student misses school for any reason — excused, unexcused or suspensions — so we can intervene early.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Middle Name/Initial</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Absence Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>chronic</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>at risk</td>
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<td>STUDENT</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>satisfactory</td>
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<td>STUDENT</td>
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<td>at risk</td>
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Key Message #5: Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community, including parents and schools, gets involved.
Key Message #6: Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.
Key Message #7: Reducing chronic absence can help close achievement gaps.
Panelists

• Laurel Kloomok, Executive Director, San Francisco First 5 Commission

• Masharika Prejean Maddison, Executive Director, Parents for Public Schools San Francisco

• Maria Su, Director, Department of Children, Youth and Families

• Kevin Truitt, Associate Superintendent, San Francisco Unified School District
Ingredients for Success & Sustainability in a District and Community

- Conveys importance of building a habit of attendance & explains what is chronic absence
- Expands ability to interpret data and adopt best practices
- Is accurate, regularly reported and easily obtained
- Ensures monitoring & incentives to reduce chronic absence

Positive Messaging

Capacity Building

Actionable Data

Shared Accountability
Questions for Panelists

1. Why is reducing chronic absence important to you and your agency?

2. How is or could your agency promote one or more elements of this key ingredients framework? Please offer a couple of examples.
Discussion

Part 1: Turn to the person next to you.
1. Does this resonate for you?
2. How can we work together in San Francisco to reduce chronic absence?

Part 2: Large Group Discussion
1. What are implications for collaborative action?