

3 Tiered Approach for Increasing School Attendance

Hedy Nai-Lin Chang's research shows that regular attendance is critical in the development and learning of all students. We now realize it is not only those students who fit the traditional definition of truancy, but those who are chronically absent as well who have lower grades and are more likely to drop out than students with better attendance. Truancy, or unexcused absences, has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youth and to significant negative behavior in characteristics in adults (Bell, A.J., Rosen, L.A., and Dynlacht, D. 1994). Left unaddressed, truancy and chronic absenteeism can have significant negative effects on the student, school, and community.

Increasing school attendance is a very complex social issue that requires a team effort and a systematic approach. The collaboration of the community, schools, courts and other agencies is essential if we are to increase school attendance. Ottawa County believes in the value of regular school attendance and the impact that it has on student achievement and the overall betterment of society. In order to systematically decrease chronic absenteeism in our schools, we are taking a tiered approach. We are shifting our mindset away from Truancy that focuses on unexcused absences and relies heavily on court involvement to Chronic Absenteeism which focuses on both excused and unexcused absences and the impact that has on academic performance by using a community-based, preventive approach.

TIER 1-Universal supports and preventive components made available to every student to maintain and cultivate regular attendance. Typically students missing less than 10% of school.

TIER 2-Strategies are aimed at early intervention and designed to help students who need slightly more support to avoid chronic absenteeism. Primarily targeting students missing 10% or more of school.

TIER 3-Intensive supports for students with highest level of need or risk factors (like involvement with DHHS, CPS, juvenile justice system, homelessness, substance abuse or having a parent incarcerated). At risk of missing 20% or more.

At all tiers, these are the core components we believe each tier should encompass:

Monitor Attendance and data: Ideally schools would have a team that monitors attendance and can help identify those students and families who might need extra support.

Engage Students and Parents: We know that daily attendance improves when schools foster a warm and welcoming environment that emphasizes positive relationships with families and stresses the importance of coming to school every day. A key component of the engagement is helping families understand what their children are learning when they are in school and the negative effects of chronic absenteeism on their children's future. Often parents do not understand that the attendance habits that they establish at a young age has an impact on whether or not their child will graduate from high school.

Recognize Good and Improved Attendance: Schools can send a clear message that going to school every day is a priority by recognizing and rewarding good and improved attendance. Students often respond well to positive reinforcement. Simple rewards can go a long way in motivating students to come to school regularly.

Provide personalized early outreach: Schools can do a lot to ensure that every student feels welcomed at school. Students need to know that it matters that they are at school and that people care when they are not. Establishing positive relationships with both students and families is a key piece in motivating students to come to school.

Remove barriers to attendance: a community approach to providing students and families the resources needed to attend school consistently.

The following are **suggested** interventions to be considered at each tier. These tiers may be individualized for each local district as the resources, availability and student/family needs may be different. Please note that a truancy referral would not be made until tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 interventions have been tried and exhausted.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Monitor Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a school team that regularly reviews attendance data and trends for all students. Identify how many students fall into the different tiers. • Develop a school plan for reducing chronic absences • Use data to identify common barriers to attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review attendance every week who are chronically absent or at risk. • Look for qualitative data to assess the cause for a students continued absences. • Parent/team meeting • Involve local behavior coach/OCSN worker • Connect/make referrals to outside agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which students have a history of missing 20% or more of school and or are at risk due to other factors (CPS, DHHS, Juvenile Court, etc). • Review attendance daily. Follow up on every absence. • Conduct an FBA/BIP for attendance issues and work with local BC to implement BIP
Engage Students and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate an atmosphere where students feel respected and safe • Communication with parents is established and a priority • Provide fun and engaging activities for students and families • Information sent home about the value of good attendance • Ensure parents know how to report an absence and explain expectations for attendance to both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify family to attendance concerns and explore what help might be needed. • Home visit or conference • Use the Student Attendance Success Plan to help develop family strategies to support improved attendance • Connect families to outside resources. • Identify academic needs for the student and make a plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess student and family needs • Coordinate services and create an educational plan • Share data with agencies • Referral to Truancy • Work to ensure student is connected to positive supports and programs, i.e mentoring • Frequent meetings to review educational plan and data

	<p>parents and students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create visuals that represent attendance messaging. 	<p>to help support those needs. .</p>	
Recognize Good and Improved Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate individual progress through recognition using bulletin boards, assemblies, certificates, etc. • Recognize students and families at assemblies • Friendly classroom competitions for attendance goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create individual goals for students and recognize when they are met. • Engage students in tracking their own attendance daily • Complete a interest inventory for rewards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate appropriate positive reinforcements into a behavior intervention plan for supporting the students improved attendance.
Provide Personalized Early Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call home each day a student is absent • Attendance included on report cards • Information provided about the importance of attendance and negative impact of chronic absenteeism. • Host meetings at critical transition times (Kindergarten, Middle School, 9th grade) to help students and families get comfortable with new school, teachers, expectations and attendance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect students to the school. Morning check-in's, attendance buddy, after school activities. • Conference with parent about absences • Refer families to appropriate services • Arrange transportation • Home visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure positive and regular contact with parents • Regular meetings with team to discuss educational plan and review data • Assigned personnel to follow up on every absence.
Remove Barriers to Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite parents and community members to help address barriers that keep children from attending school. • School climate inventory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve public agencies and community partners • Connect families with school-based resources like OCSN worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement family intervention plan. Monitor for progress • Review plan regularly and revise if needed • Connect students with mental health/counseling

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Back to school letters and information about resources like backpacks and back to school supplies.		
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After all three tiers of intervention have been exhausted, a referral to Truancy should be considered.