School Attendance Improvement Strategies
Selected school attendance practices identified as having a positive effect in encouraging students to regularly attend school.

The following practices have been identified as strategies and activities that have a positive effect in encouraging students to regularly attend school.

1. Raise awareness of school personnel, parents, guardians, caregivers, community partners, and local businesses of the effects of chronic absence and truancy. This is especially important during Attendance Awareness Month each September.

2. Identify and respond to grade level and pupil subgroup patterns of chronic absence and truancy.

3. Identify and address factors contributing to chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy, including suspension and expulsion.

4. Ensure that pupils with attendance problems are identified as early as possible to provide appropriate support services and interventions.

5. Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

6. Monitor unexcused absences of more than 30 minutes in middle schools and high schools, and ensure parents, guardians, or caregivers are notified when their children become classified as “truants” (California Education Code [EC] Section 48260.5).

7. After parents or guardians have been notified that their children are classified as truants and after a conscientious effort has been made to hold a conference with the parents and pupils, make sure the parents, guardians, or caregivers are notified that their children are now deemed habitual truants (EC Section 48262).

8. When the normal avenues of intervention for habitual truants, chronic absentees, or habitually disruptive pupils are exhausted at the school site, refer the case to a School Attendance Review Board (SARB) or a district attorney or probation officer mediation program (EC sections 48263 and 48263.5).

9. Inform parents, guardians, and caregivers of the school district’s method of verification of absences due to illness.

10. Telephone or e-mail parents, guardians, and caregivers in the evening to verify absences.

11. Use bilingual aides to contact parents, guardians, or caregivers with limited English-speaking ability and send out school attendance notification e-mails or letters in the language appropriate to the family.

12. Make home visits concerning student absences if parents, guardians, and caregivers cannot be reached by e-mail, text, or telephone.

13. Refer to students with frequent absences to a school nurse, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or other pupil support personnel for case management and counseling.

14. Hold a drawing for special prizes for individual students or classes that show improved attendance.

15. Send commendation letters to students and parents, guardians, or caregivers for improved school attendance and perfect attendance.
16. Seek small or large financial incentives from the parent association to be awarded to the classroom with the best attendance record; allow teachers to spend financial rewards for any purpose selected by the class members of the teacher.

17. Refer pupils with persistent tardiness or attendance problems to a conference with school personnel and the pupil’s parents, guardians, or caregivers.

18. Initiate make-up classes on one day of a weekend for pupils who miss classes during the regular school year.

19. Initiate a “cross-age helper” or “buddy” system in which older students with good attendance are permitted to assist younger students on a weekly basis.

20. Personalize relationships between children and attendance office personnel; ask office aides, clerks, or secretaries to make individual contact with chronic absentees on a daily basis.

21. Establish homeroom periods in secondary schools, with students remaining with the same teacher all four years of high school; request that homeroom teachers monitor their students’ attendance and discuss truancy or chronic absenteeism with parents, guardians, or caregivers.

22. Emphasize the importance of regular school attendance to students with long-term, non-contagious diseases that tend to keep students at home (e.g., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and sickle-cell anemia); encourage and support these students at school. Ensure that these students are allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during excused absences pursuant to EC Section 48205.

23. If a student has a temporary disability which makes attendance impossible or inadvisable, inform parents, guardians, or caregivers about the option of individual instruction provided by the school district pursuant to EC Section 48206.3.

24. Display attendance graphs in prominent locations to show current attendance goals and comparisons between past and present school year attendance.

25. Provide schools with a pro-rata share of the increased Average Daily Attendance funds generated by their attendance improvement efforts.

26. Set high goals in the LCAP for reducing the chronic absenteeism rates of student populations or grade levels with a history of high chronic absenteeism.

27. Assess chronic absenteeism rates during the transitions from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school.

28. Request that the local SARB evaluate school-level and district-level attendance interventions for effectiveness.

29. Identify the specific school attendance barriers faced by children in poverty, foster youth, homeless youth, and any other significant student population with high chronic absenteeism rates.

30. Address the problem of chronic absenteeism, even when the absences have been excused.

For more information from California Department of Education (CDE): https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/ew/attendstrategy.asp or Contact David Kopperud, CDE State SARB Chairperson: dkopperud@CDE.ca.gov