The Honor of Their Presence is Requested

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Questions to Consider…..

• How is attendance collected in your school?
• What is your policy regarding excused absences? Do they still count as absences?
• Do students need to/are they able to make up work?
• How does your school differentiate between absences and truancy?
• Is every effort made to keep students in class (e.g., reduce suspensions, schedule events after school)?
• Does your school have a system in place to identify students who are chronically absent?
• What (if any) is the follow-up when a student is identified?
What do you know? What do stakeholders know? Where can you find the data?

- Do you know your school’s average daily attendance?
- Has it been improving or staying the same over the last 3 years?
- How does it compare with nearby schools?
- Do you know which of your kids miss the most school?
What’s Your Guess?

- How many absences for one student could be an early sign of falling off track?

- What percent of days missed is commonly considered a red flag?
Definition of **Chronic Absence**

**Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused or unexcused.**

*Recommended by Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org)*

- If a student misses a day every 2 weeks, that is 10% of learning time missed – or almost 4 weeks of school.
- It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school.
- Distinct from truancy.
Definition of Chronic Absence - Utah

- Missing 10% of the school year (≥18 days) for any reason – not in rule, but used in USOE documents
- Truancy is described in Utah State Board of Education (USBE) Rule:
  - USBE R277-607. Truancy Prevention
    - 1A. "Habitual truant" means a school age-minor who: (1) is at least 12 years old; (2) is subject to the requirements of Section 53A-11-1-1.5; and (3)(a) is truant for at least five times during one school year; and (3)(b) fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of school authorities to resolve the minor's attendance problem required under Section 53A-11-103.
    - 1F. "Truant" means absent without a valid excuse
- UCA §53A-11-101.7 A habitual truant citation may not be issued to a habitual truant if the habitual truant: (i) is at least 16 years old; and (ii) has at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average.
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
Utah Data

A 2012 University of Utah study found that:

• Chronic absenteeism in Utah is pervasive, with approximately 1 out of 7 students chronically absent every year.

• A student who is chronically absent in any year between 8th and 12th grade is 7.4 times more likely to drop out of school.

• Chronic absenteeism is associated with lower test scores, lower grades, and lower graduation rates.
Utah Data
(Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism; University of Utah, July 2012)

- Kindergarten and first grade students tended to be chronically absent more often than their older elementary school peers.
- In junior high school, the rates began to rise, increasing each year to a peak of 20.1% of students chronically absent during their senior year.
Cumulative Influence of Chronic Absence on Dropping Out

Each year of chronic absenteeism increased the chance that a student would drop out. Students chronically absent 2+ years were more likely to drop out than they were to graduate.

*Source: Utah Education Policy Center—Chronic Absenteeism in Utah (2012)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years Chronically Absent</th>
<th>Percent of Students Who Dropped Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not Reported (&lt;1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table. Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent
Utah Data
(Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism; University of Utah, July 2012)

Table 2. The Increase in Odds of Being Chronically Absent in One Grade, Given Chronic Absenteeism in the Previous Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Being Chronically Absent in Grade</th>
<th>Odds of Being Chronically Absent in Grade 9</th>
<th>Odds of Being Chronically Absent in Grade 10</th>
<th>Odds of Being Chronically Absent in Grade 11</th>
<th>Odds of Being Chronically Absent in Grade 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.3 times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.3 times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.6 times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.1 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings show that if a student was chronically absent in one school year, his or her chances of being chronically absent in the next year increased thirteen-fold, on average.
Elementary Chronic Absence is a Statewide Challenge in Utah

In Utah, 12% (36,638) of elementary students are chronically absent.

Source: Voices for Utah Children
That’s the problem…is there a solution?
Collaborate and Take Steps

- Action Step 1: Generate and act on absenteeism data.
- Action Step 2: Create and deploy positive messages and measures.
- Action Step 3: Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism.
- Action Step 4: Ensure responsibility across sectors.
Action Step 1: Data

- Use an early warning system to collect data to identify students who may be at risk.
- Identify students at risk for being chronically absent and why they might be missing school.
- Increase students’ access to support systems before absenteeism before students miss so much school they can’t catch up academically.
- While protecting student confidentiality, explore partnerships to increase available supports.
Action Step 2: Positive Messages

- Implement supportive engagement strategies;
  - Mentoring
  - Counseling
  - PBIS

- Refrain from punitive messages;
  - Suspension
  - Threatening
  - Blaming
Action Step 3: Focus Communities

- Raise awareness about causes and effects of chronic absenteeism.
- Prioritize school trainings for school staff and partners to conduct root cause analysis of absenteeism.
- Support the development of effective strategies and use of research and evidence-based tools and programs.
Action Step 4: All Take Responsibility

- Communicate that chronic absenteeism affects the entire community.
- Based on that principle, be the driving force to develop and evaluate performance across school and partners.
- Work together as a community to ensure everyone feels responsible to successfully address the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.
Who are the partners and what can they do?

- Youth
- Parents and Families
- Mentors and Volunteers
- School District Superintendents and Staff, and School Personnel
- Early Learning Providers
- Health Care, Public Health & Human Service Agencies & Providers
- Public Housing Authorities
- Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement
- Homeless Services Providers
- Mayors and Local Government
- Community, Faith-Based, and Philanthropic Organizations
Youth

- Youth can be supported in talking to school administration and teachers about the kind of support they need in order to attend and be successful at school every day.
- Youth can help friends and classmates understand what chronic absenteeism is and how it may impact school success.

- Resources to support youth:
  - My Brother’s Keeper Initiative – [www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper](http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper)
  - Resources for homeless youth – [www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/](http://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-homeless-youth/)
Parents and Families

- Make getting to school on time every day a high priority.
- Monitor school attendance to make sure the child is in school every day.
- Contact school to discuss supports that can help the child maintain school attendance.

Resources:
Mentors and Volunteers

- Check to see that the students with whom they work are in school.
- If needed, create a safe place for students to talk about why they might not be attending school.

Resources:
School District Superintendents and Staff, School Personnel

- Invest in a sustainable early warning prevention and intervention system.
- Direct student support teams to provide services to help schools address any underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.
- Engage in and lead community-wide efforts to improve school attendance.

Resources:
- National Center on School Engagement – [http://schoolengagement.org](http://schoolengagement.org)
Communicate with schools and families the importance of good attendance in preschool through grade three.

Collaborate with community partners to ensure families have necessary supports, e.g., healthcare, transportation, child care, etc.

Resources:
Understand the relationship between chronic absenteeism and unmet health and behavioral health needs of children.

Ask about school attendance in a positive way at every health care visit.

Promote school-based mental health and behavioral health services.

Resources:
Public Housing Authorities

• Partner with LEA to track attendance of residents (may require tenant consent).
• Promote attendance through back-to-school events, outreach programs, and informational materials.

• Resources:
Reform truancy courts to avoid, where possible, court-based truancy interventions, relying on school and community-based interventions instead.

Implement positive reengagement strategies for chronically absent youth in conjunction with courts and local school districts.

Resources:
Homeless Service Providers

- Establish contact with the local liaison for the school district to identify homeless youth who are chronically absent.
- Discuss and act on possibilities for school district/service provider collaboration to support school attendance.

- Resources:
Mayors and Local Government

- Learn about chronic absenteeism and invest in systems that can help identify youth who are chronically absent from school.
- Convene and sustain a school/community/agency task force to identify root causes and recommend research and evidence-based solutions.

- Resources:
  - AARP (tutoring, mentoring assistance) – [http://aarp.org/experience-corps](http://aarp.org/experience-corps)
Community, Faith-based and Philanthropic Organizations

- Organize the congregation or community to take action within own community to support students to achieve improved or 100% attendance.

- Promote school attendance and hold back-to-school events, distribute informational material, etc.

- Resources:
Resources:

- Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism (Univ. of Utah)

- Attendance Works
  - http://attendanceworks.org

- Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism
Resources:

- Transitioning from 8\textsuperscript{th} to 9\textsuperscript{th} grade
  - \url{https://relwest.wested.org/resources/202}

- Early Warning System (EWS)
  - American Institutes for Research
    \url{http://www.earlywarningsystems.org/resources-tools}
  - Core Data Tool
    \url{http://transitionta.org/dataanalysis#dalImprovement}
  - Learning Series on EWS
    \url{https://relwest.wested.org/events/330}
Watch for…..

- A new chronic absenteeism video from WestEd at REL West…featuring three Utah schools: Highland High, South Hills Middle, and Guadalupe Charter School.
Thank you!

Questions?
Comments?
Concerns?