


Tier One Intervention Curriculum  
Attendance Strategy Elementary Schools  
Fostering Parent Involvement

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The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) is one of the sixteen university campuses of The University of North Carolina. UNCG holds two classifications from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as a “research university with high research activity” and for “community engagement” in curriculum, outreach, and partnerships.

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## Tier One Intervention Curriculum Attendance Strategy Elementary Schools Fostering Parent Involvement

### Overview

#### CISNC Introduction

In the 14-15 school-year, Communities In Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) introduced a framework that aligns site and student metrics and interventions and supports to four areas that have been shown to have the greatest impact on student success: attendance, behavior, coursework, and parent involvement, or ABC+P. Both combined and individually, attendance, behavior, and coursework are among the best predictors of a student's academic success and on-time graduation. While collecting data around ABC+P is critically important to understanding the school and student, it is even more important to use the data to drive high impact intervention and support delivery to empower each student to reach their full potential. To this end, Communities In Schools of North Carolina has partnered with the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to design curricula specifically for CIS within the ABC+P framework to enhance student outcomes in school and success in life. This document is one of more than 50 modules developed to support local CIS staff and most importantly the students that are served. We encourage you to explore all of the modules available online at [www.cisnc.org](http://www.cisnc.org).

#### Using Evidence-Based Strategies


There are a multitude of strategies that claim to address attendance, but there are few that actually do so for all students. We suggest that they use an evidence-based, decision-making model to ensure that high quality information informs the decisions made.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S. Department of Education defines evidence-based decision making as routinely seeking out the best available information on prior research and recent evaluation findings before adopting programs or practices that will demand extensive material or human resources (including both funding and teacher time) and/or affect significant numbers of students (Whitehurst, 2004).

Evidence-based practice means delivering interventions and supports to students (clients) in ways that integrate the best available evidence from data, research, and evaluation; professional wisdom gained from experience; and contextual knowledge of the particular classroom, school, district, or state that might impact the design or implementation.

This document is written to provide you with attendance-related strategies based on the best evidence from prior research and recent evaluations in elementary schools. In the context of our review, we propose six strategies designed to help improve elementary school attendance:

- Monitoring Data strategy
- School-Family-Community Partnerships strategy
- Health Related strategy



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- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies (2)
- School Climate strategy

This document will focus on a school-family-community partnership strategy to inform parents of the threat that chronic absenteeism can have on their student's academic success.

### Problem/Rationale


Studies indicate that students who do not attend school regularly may be at risk of fewer gains in academic achievement, particularly as measured in literacy and math, than those students who have regular attendance habits (Baker & Jansen, 2000). Additionally, when students miss too many days, it can negatively impact their academic achievement, be disruptive to classroom instruction as teachers have to shift attention to students who need to catch up with the rest of the class, as well as, have a negative effect on the overall school climate.

Regular, on-time school attendance is vital to student academic success. Kindergarten students, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity, who are chronically absent, are likely to show lower gains in reading, math, and general knowledge during the first grade (Change and Romero, 2008). Students who do not attain essential social and academic skills during their early elementary years may require extra assistance to catch up and may also be at greater risk of dropping out of school in later years. Students from low income families often lack the resources to provide the necessary assistance to help their children make up for skills not previously acquired (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Student absenteeism may fall into three categories: those who cannot attend school, those who will not attend school, and those who do not attend school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Parents and families have a critical role in ensuring their students attend school regularly and on time; therefore, it is essential that parents and families understand the advantages of regular attendance for their student's academic success. Schools that understand the reasons for student absences can better assist parents in establishing routines and overcoming other barriers related to student absenteeism.

### Purpose

The purpose of this curriculum is to help schools illustrate to parents how critical regular and on-time attendance is for student success in school by engaging parents in an activity that will help them visualize how absenteeism can impact student learning gains. Specifically, the activity will demonstrate how the gap in 3rd grade reading grows as children have or do not have: 1) access to high quality preschool programs, 2) regular preschool and school attendance, and 3) summer learning opportunities.



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## Implementation Plan

In elementary schools, parents greatly influence children's school attendance. Studies suggest that schools can improve or sustain good attendance by implementing targeted family and community involvement activities.

*Two-Way Communications* – two-way communications between the school and home seems to help families influence their children's attendance. Three partnership activities increased daily attendance rates and reduced chronic absenteeism: rewarding students for improved attendance; providing parents with a contact person at the school to call as needed; and communicating effectively with all families about attendance issues (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

*Community and Family Action* – school and community resources can be used to improve attendance, along with families' active support. Three other partnership activities were associated with improving daily attendance rates: referring chronically absent students to a counselor; using truant officers with problem students and families; and conducting workshops to help parents understand and take action on attendance issues (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

## Uses

Schools can use the information provided in this guide to inform parents of the importance of school attendance and offer some strategies for helping to manage school attendance.


## Audience

Information provided in this guide is designed to aid school staff in communicating with parents.

## Activities

The activity highlighted is designed to communicate with parents how crucial regular and on-time attendance is for their child's success in school and life. Additional strategies listed below support this lesson, including: identifying and addressing reasons for chronic absenteeism and working with parents to create a family plan for student success.

- Hold school-wide staff meeting to identify and address reasons for chronic absenteeism (Refer to Data Monitoring curriculum).
- Remove barriers for students (and their families) who may struggle with school attendance.
- **Illustrating the Gap in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading** (Parent activity)
- Communicate with parents about school attendance policies.
  - Provide parents with school attendance policy at the beginning of the year.
  - Post school attendance policy on the school website.
  - Establish policies for contacting parents when students are absent from school.



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- Create a Family Plan for Student Success.
  - Child Attendance Contract
  - Family Help Bank
- Help parents establish routines that can ensure regular, on-time attendance.

### Materials/Equipment/Space

- Discussion with school staff:
  - Presentation slides
  - Sample lesson plan with handouts
- Parent Night Activity
  - Presentation slides

*Note: For presentations, check for access to computer, Smartboard or data projector and screen, relevant power cords, and remote slide advancer.*

### Time

- This lesson should be conducted early in the school year at a parent orientation or PTO meeting. The lesson takes approximately 10 minutes.

### Lesson Plan of Activity


Activity from:

Attendance Works (2014). *Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Absence*.

Retrieved from: [http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/080514\\_AW\\_ParentToolkit.pdf](http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/080514_AW_ParentToolkit.pdf) (page 17).


A sample presentation to accompany the lesson below can be found in Appendix E. Refer to the notes section of the slides for talking points.

Prompts and Process Notes	Slide
	Title slide
<i>Review briefly some of the effects of chronic absenteeism</i>	Slide #2 – Effects of Chronic Absenteeism
<i>Add key points about the school attendance policy</i>	Slide #3 – School Attendance Policy
<i>Frame in a positive tone, rather than a punitive one</i>	
<i>Review some of the things parents can do to foster regular and on-time attendance</i>	Slide #4 – The Parents’ Role in Ensuring Their Child Attends School
<i>Ask for three volunteers from the audience. Thank those who are volunteering. Ask for their names.</i>	Slide #5 Activity start



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Prompts and Process Notes	Slide
<p><b>Instruct the three volunteers to stand next to each other.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask <b>Volunteer A</b> to take 8 steps back.</li> <li>• Announce Volunteer A represents the child who starts school a year behind because of an incoming gap in school readiness.</li> <li>• <i>Share</i> that Volunteer A is a year behind because s/he didn't have a chance to participate in a high quality preschool experience. This child's parents also didn't have resources to offer a literacy rich early learning environment at home.</li> <li>• Ask <b>Volunteer B</b> to take 4 steps back. They attended preschool – but they only went half of the time. In fact, this child was kicked out of preschool after having poor attendance. So they didn't get the full benefit of the experience.</li> <li>• <b>Volunteer C</b> gets to stay right at the line. Having attended a high quality preschool program, he/she is entering kindergarten ready to learn.</li> </ul>	Slide #6
<p><b>Ask all three volunteers to walk forward 8 steps to represent a year of learning in kindergarten.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After they finish taking the steps, <i>ask Volunteers A and B</i> to both walk back 2 steps because they were chronically absent for the year (each step represents approximately a month of lost learning).</li> <li>• <i>Explain</i> that the 2 steps reflect both the amount of time the student actually missed and an additional month because of the disruption those missed days caused in their learning.</li> <li>• <i>Explain</i> that neither child learned the habit of attending regularly since Volunteer A never went to preschool and Volunteer B didn't develop the habit of attendance in preschool.</li> <li>• Ask <b>Volunteer A</b> to take another 2 steps back because they didn't have any literacy support over the summer so they are experiencing a summer reading loss of 2 months.</li> <li>• <b>Volunteer C</b> stays in place because s/he had satisfactory attendance and had enriching experiences over the summer so s/he experienced no summer learning loss.</li> </ul>	Slide #7
<p><b>Ask all three volunteers to walk forward another 8 steps to represent what they would have learned in 1st grade.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask <b>Volunteers A and B</b> to walk back 2 steps for chronic absence</li> <li>• Ask <b>Volunteer A</b> to take 2 steps back for summer reading loss.</li> <li>• Again, <b>Volunteer C</b> maintains his/her position due to satisfactory attendance and summer supports.</li> </ul>	Slide #8



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Prompts and Process Notes	Slide
<p><b>Debrief implications of regular school attendance with the audience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask parents:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How does regular attendance fit in with your child’s academic success?</li> <li>○ What does this mean for your family’s planning to ensure that your child attends school regularly?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Prompt for responses that correspond with points on slide 4. If necessary, return to slide 4 as a refresher.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Tell parents:</i> The picture of the widening gap is quite clear. What helps children read is that they are surrounded by a literacy rich early learning environment. This illustrates how what happens in preschool, in school and the summer does or does not contribute to a child having sufficient time to get to reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. This includes regular attendance in school from an early age.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the discussion, thank parents for their partnership in their child’s success in school, and reaffirm that regular on-time attendance is an important component for student academic success.</p>	<p>Slide #9 – Activity debrief and wrap-up</p>





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## Tier 2 Intervention and Support Examples

### **Example #1: Personal Contact to Reduce Chronic Absence.**


Schools that reported conducting home visits decreased the percentage of students who missed more than 20 days of school. This strategy may help parents of chronically absent students feel more personal support from school representatives, and parents may be more likely to reinforce the school's emphasis on student attendance (Ford & Sutphen, 1996).

Ford, J., & Sutphen, R.D (1996). Early intervention to improved attendance in elementary school for at-risk children: A pilot program. *Social Work in Education*, 18(2), 95-102.

### **Example #2: Referrals of Students to Counselors and to Truant Officers.**

Elementary students who are truant usually are experiencing family-related issues. Working with counselors and truant officers may be a last, but necessary step in identifying and overcoming root causes to chronic absenteeism.

Hayden, C. (2009). Family group conferences: Are they an effective and viable way of working with attendance and behaviour problems in schools? *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(2), 205–220.



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## Resources

The following resources relate to the suggested lesson. Read through these resources carefully to become familiar with any concepts and instructions as they pertain to the content and activity.

Attendance Works (2014). Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence. Retrieve from: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>.

- Full toolkit
- “Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early” posters (English, Spanish, and Chinese)
- “My Child’s Attendance Goals” worksheet

Attendance Works (2014). Count Us In! Working Together To Show That Every School Day Matters. Retrieve from: <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/AAM-toolkit-2.0-040814.pdf>

- Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students (talking points) <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/messaging-attendance-to-families1.pdf>


The following resources will provide additional information and suggestions for enhancing activities related to parent involvement. Read through the resources carefully to become familiar with any concepts and instructions as they may pertain to the content and the extension of activities.

Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center. Retrieve from: <http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/>

National Network for Partnership Schools @ Johns Hopkins University. Retrieve from: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Student Attendance and Student Accounting Manual 2014-2015. Retrieve from: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/accounting/manuals/sasa.pdf>

SEDL (American Institutes for Research). The SEDL National Center for Families and Community Connections with Schools. Retrieve from: <http://www.sedl.org/connections/>



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## Measuring Success


Identifying outcomes and collecting data to measure the success of strategies implemented can help the school track quality of implementation as well as the effectiveness of these strategies. Following are some suggestions that schools may find useful to begin measuring success.

Assess school staff's efforts to engage parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and on-time:

- How does the school track absenteeism to determine which students may be in danger of chronic absenteeism?
- What procedures are in place to communicate with parents when their child is frequently absent or tardy?
- What procedures are in place at your school to engage families in preventing chronic absenteeism?
- What strategies are in place to work with families to understand and overcome absenteeism challenges their child may experience?
  - Cannot attend?
  - Will not attend?
  - Does not attend?

Assess parents' attitudes about the importance of school attendance by asking questions related to their child's attendance and steps they take to ensure their child attends school regularly and on-time:

- How many days has your child been absent from school this year?
- What is your child's attendance rate?
- What morning routines do you have in place to ensure that your child arrives to school on time and prepared for learning?
- Which family members or friends can you call on to help when needed to ensure that your child attends school?
- Do you know of any issues that may prevent your child from attending school?



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## Appendix A: Glossary

Following are some key terms used in the Attendance Curriculum Guides.

**Average Daily Attendance (ADA):** the presence of a student on days when school is in session. A student is counted as present only when he/she is actually at school, present at another activity sponsored by the school as part of the school's program, or personally supervised by a member of the staff. ADA is based on the sum of the number of days in attendance for all students divided by the number of days in the school month. No state allotments are based on ADA (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Average Daily Membership (ADM):** the total number of school days within a given term – usually a school month or school year – that a student's name is on the current roll of a class, regardless of his/her being present or absent, is the "number of days of membership" for that student. Average Daily Membership is a calculation using data from the Principal's Monthly Report. The calculation uses the number of days in the school month and the number of Non-violation (NVIO) Membership Days (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Chronic Absenteeism:** "typically based on the total number of days of school missed, including both excused and unexcused absences" (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

**Excessively Absent:** defined in some locales as missing 20 days or more of school (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).


**Expulsions:** students who are expelled are to be withdrawn from school (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Germ (pathogen):** types of microbes that can cause disease.

**Hand hygiene:** a general term that applies to routine hand washing, antiseptic hand wash, antiseptic hand rub, or surgical hand antisepsis.

**Hand sanitizer – alcohol-based:** for alcohol-based hand sanitizers, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (5) recommends a concentration of 60 percent to 95 percent ethanol or isopropanol, the concentration range of greatest germicidal efficacy.

**Hand washing:** the vigorous, brief rubbing together of all surfaces of lathered hands, followed by rinsing under a stream of water. Hand washing suspends microorganisms and mechanically removes them by rinsing with water. The fundamental principle of hand washing is removal, not killing.



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**Influenza:** a viral infection that attacks your respiratory system — your nose, throat and lungs.

**Lawful Absence:** when satisfactory evidence of a lawful absence is provided to the appropriate school official, the absence should be coded as lawful (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Medically Fragile and Teacher-In-Treatment:** the 1H absence code should only be used for students who have been identified as medically fragile or for students who are enrolled at one of the six Teacher-In-Treatment sites (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Microbes:** tiny living organisms that may or may not cause disease.

**School Refusal:** refers to student absenteeism because of (short-term or long-term) emotional stressors related to school attendance (most common occurrence is in students aged 5, 6, 10, and 11) (American Family Physician).


**Suspensions:** absence of a student which results from the suspension or expulsion of that student for misconduct may not be used for a compulsory attendance violation action (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Truancy:** “typically defined as a certain number of or certain frequency of unexcused absences” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

**Unlawful Absences:** students who are willfully absent from school without a lawful excuse are to be considered unlawfully absent (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2014).

**Vaccine:** a product that stimulates a person’s immune system to produce immunity to a specific disease, protecting the person from that disease. Vaccines are usually administered through needle injections, but can also be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose.

**Vaccination:** the act of introducing a vaccine into the body to produce immunity to a specific disease.



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## Appendix B: References

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Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing What We Know From Nationally Available Data*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.


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## Appendix C: Research Alignment

Citation	Brief Summary of Strategy	Sample Size	Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness
Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. <i>The Journal of Educational Research</i> , 95(5), 308-318.	Guidance from NNPS (National Network of Partnership Schools) to assist schools to develop and implement research-based family and community activities to improve school attendance.	18 schools returned baseline, midyear, and final surveys; 12 elementary schools and 6 secondary schools (only data from elementary schools was used).	On average, attendance rates increased each year from '95, '96, and '97. Chronically absent students decreased from 8% to 6.1% when school-family-community partnerships were developed.
Lehr, C., Sinclair, M., & Christenson, S.L. (2004). Addressing student engagement and truancy prevention during the elementary school years: A replication study of the check and connect model. <i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)</i> , 9(3), 279-301.	<p>“Monitors” who keep in contact with students and families over the course of the program; relationship building, monitoring and individualized and timely intervention with students at risk for dropping out of school.</p> <p>The monitors engage in weekly conversations with students and inquire about their progress, the importance of regular attendance, and provide strategies on dealing with daily challenges.</p>	One hundred and forty seven students involved in the program at least 2 years.	Check & Connect has been implemented with a variety of student populations, students in urban and suburban settings, and students attending middle and high school. Prior to referral, 83% of Check & Connect students were in the disengaged categories (absent 2-20 days/month). After at least two years with the program it was down to 60%.





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<b>Citation</b>	<b>Brief Summary of Strategy</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Impact/Evidence of Effectiveness</b>
Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. <i>The School Community Journal, 14</i> , 39–56.	NNPS provided tools and guidelines for establishing, maintaining, and improving school-wide partnership programs that reach out to families of all students.	69 NNPS schools matched with 69 non-NNPS schools in Ohio	Schools with stronger programs of school, family and community partnerships, overall, were more likely than were schools with weaker programs to experience an increase in student attendance. The NNPS program was associated with improved rates of daily student attendance; however, there was a small to medium effect size for the difference between NNPS schools and control schools.



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