

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism: An Evidence-Based Tiered Approach



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Agenda

The What

- Key Terms
- Recent Federal and State Initiatives

The Why


- What we know - Students who are chronically absent
- Recent federal and state initiatives

The How

- Data & criteria by tiers
- Function-based approach to school refusal
- Overview of Key EBPs attendance at each tier
- Begin to draft your own tiered system of supports
- Additional Resources

Acknowledgements

- Attendance Works: www.attendanceworks.org
- Christopher Kearney
- The students, parents, and educators with whom I have had the honor to work



Key Terms


- **Average Daily Attendance:** % of enrolled students in school each day
- **Tuancy:** Legal term – *Unexcused* absences as defined by state of Illinois (5%)
- **Chronically absent?**
- **At-risk?**
- **Regular attendance?**

Chronically Absent

- Most commonly accepted definition: Absent 10% or more of the time
 - Due to unexcused, excused, and suspensions
 - Why? Early detection and intervention, research
- DOE Office of Civil Rights: Missing 15 or more school days in prior year

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- Tiered framework of supports that is systematic and data-driven
- Most often depicted as a tri-colored triangle
 - Green, Yellow, Red
- Tier 1: Core practices "All"
- Tier 2: "At-risk" "Some"
- Tier 3: "Neediest" "A few"



You can apply what you already know about RTI/MTSS to attendance!

Academic Systems		Behavioral Systems
Tier 1 (Universal Interventions) 1-5% Individual students Assessment based High intensity	1-5%	Tier 1 (Universal Interventions) 1-5% Individual students Assessment based Intense, durable procedures
Tier 2 (Secondary Interventions) 5-15% Some students at risk High efficiency Rapid response Small group interventions Some individualizing	5-15%	Tier 2 (Secondary Interventions) 5-15% Some students at risk High efficiency Rapid response Small group interventions Some individualizing
Tier 3 (Tertiary Interventions) 80-90% All students Preventive practice	80-90%	Tier 3 (Tertiary Interventions) 80-90% All students Preventive practice

Adapted from Response to Intervention: Practical Considerations and Implementation (Borucki et al. 2001)

Model 1 Cut Scores*

- Tier 3: Significant Absences**
Absent: 20% or more
- Tier 2: At-Risk for Absences**
Absent: 10-19%
- Tier 1: Satisfactory Attendance**
- Absent: Less than 10%
- Absent: Less than 5%


*Attendance Works

Model 2 Cut Scores

- Tier 3: Significant Absences**
Absent: 10% or more
- Tier 2: At-Risk for Absences**
Absent: >5% to 9%
- Tier 1: Satisfactory Attendance**
Absent: 5% or less

School refusal behaviors

Christopher Kearney:



- o Student motivated behaviors
- o Refusal to attend school and/or difficulties remaining in classes for an entire day
 - o Completely or partially absent from school
 - o Morning misbehaviors to avoid school
 - o Attend school under significant distress




Why important?



When 90% Doesn't Earn "A:" Estimated Relation between ADA & Chronic Absenteeism

- ADA around 98%...
 - Chronic absenteeism rate probably relatively low
- ADA around 95%...
 - Chronic absenteeism could either be high or relatively low
- ADA around 90%...
 - Chronic absenteeism rate could be as high as 30-40%

From Attendance Works



Why focus on attendance?

- Office of Civil Rights, 13% of students (6.5 million) are chronically absent every year
 - High School: 18%
 - Elementary School: 11%
- Some urban areas: Closer to 25%
- Not just problem in HS – Can start as early as pre-K and K
- Chronic absence: RED FLAG that students are at risk for academic problems & drop out


Why attendance? Why catch 'em early?

- Approximately 75% of students who are CA may have significant mental health needs
- Absences have large impact on student achievement, *especially in math*
- Students CA absent one year - **13 x** more likely to be CA following year
- Students CA first month of school - **7 x** more likely to be CA remainder of school year

Students at heightened risk

- Living in poverty (90% more likely*)
- In special education (70% more likely*)
- Racial/ethnic minority (40% more likely*)
- ELs (20% more likely*)
- Have health or medical needs
- Have anxiety or other mental health issues
- In transition
- Homeless

*Data from State of Utah




Federal Initiative: "Every Student Every Day" (October 2015)

Overarching Goal: Reduce chronic absenteeism by at least 10% each year beginning in SY 2015-2016


Action Steps:

1. Generate and act on absenteeism data
2. Generate and use positive messages and measures
3. Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism



Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- **Requires that schools report chronic absenteeism (CA) data**
 - Doesn't define CA, leaves that to states
 - BUT does include unexcused AND excused absences
- Can use **Title 2** funds to provide PL opportunities on CA




HB 3197 in Illinois/ Public Act 099/0432

Attendance Commission to recommend ...

- Standard for attendance...in terms of *clock hours in a day*
- Ways to *improve data tracking systems* to ID students in need of individual *prevention* plans
- Best practices for creating a Multi-Tiered System of Supports AND *Prevention*
- *New initiatives* to address CA

The How: Establishing a Tiered System of Supports in your Schools



Hands-On Activity

- Take out “Three tiered model to promote attendance” template handout
- Take notes on handout as appropriate-
- Things you are doing, like to do

Level (Circle One):	Pre-K/Preschool	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Student Behavior				
Data Used				
School/Classroom Supports				

For all 3 tiers of support: 4 General Strategies

1. **Engage** students and parents
2. **Remove barriers** to attendance
3. **Recognize good *and* improved** attendance
4. **Use data** to progress monitor students




Tier 1: Promote culture of attendance


- **Positive school climate** (e.g., PBIS, nurturing positive relationships with students, parents)
 - Illinois 5 Essentials
 - Hattie’s research: Teacher-student relationships, $d = .78!$
- **Safety-oriented strategies** (e.g., bullying prevention)
- **Health-based strategies** (e.g., hand-washing, dental health, asthma-friendly classrooms, sleep education)

Tier 1 strategies

- **Mental health & Social-Emotional Learning**
 - CASEL program guides www.casel.org
- **Parental involvement**
 - Focus: Boost parent involvement & educate parents
 - Information sharing during school events
 - Posting school day hours
 - Parent self-efficacy!


Tier 2: the “Neglected Tier

Alerting staff to early signs of risk



Please let us know...

- Parents tell you that their student is very upset about coming to school or hates school
- Parents tell you that they have a battle in morning getting their student to school
- Student has difficulty coming or staying in school
- Frequent complaints of headaches, stomachaches



Please let us know...

- Students appear distressed, tell you frequently that they want to go home
- Frequent or long trips to drinking fountain, washroom to avoid being in classroom
- Change of behavior – for the worse
- Absences when there are certain events like PE, performances, exams, etc.

Function-based Interventions for School Refusal (Tiers 2 and 3)
Chris Kearney's Model

School refusal behaviors - relevant for Tiers 2 & 3

- *Student motivated behaviors*
- Refusal to attend school and/or difficulties remaining in classes for an entire day
 - Completely or partially absent from school
 - Morning misbehaviors to avoid school
 - Attend school under significant distress

To assess school refusal behavior – 3 key questions

- What is the behavior problem?
- What is/are the function(s) of the behavior problem (what use does it have for the student)?
- What is the best response or intervention to address the behaviors?

Q1: What is the behavior?

- Observable, measurable terms

Examples:

- Absent from school 5-9% of school days
- Upon arrival at school student refuses to get out of the car, cries, shouts, "I don't want to go to school. Leave me alone!" Will not leave car without two adult escorts
- Ditches school (leaves the building) at the end of 5th period.
- Refuses to get up in the morning

Q2: What is the function of the behavior? Strategy: Conduct FBA.

Kearney: 4 major functions

1. ANA: To avoid negative affect, distress (anxiety, depression) related to school
 2. ESE: To escape aversive social and/or evaluative situations
 3. AGB: To gain attention from primary caregiver (Attention-getting behavior or AGB)
 4. PTR: To pursue tangible rewards outside of school
- 1 & 2: negative reinforcement, anxiety-related
3 & 4: positive reinforcement

Tool: School Refusal Assessment Profile-Revised (Kearney, 2008)

- Ages: 5-17 years
- Parent and Student Version
- 24 items related to **four** functions of school refusal

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Q3. Function-based Interventions: Function 1

- Behavioral strategies
 - Develop fear hierarchy/ladder
 - Deep breathing, muscle relaxation
 - Exposures
 - Self-reinforcement
- Goals
 - Reduce unpleasant symptoms
 - Teach coping strategies
 - (Ease re-entry into school)



Q3. Function-based Interventions: Function 2

- Cognitive – behavioral strategies
 - Deep breathing, muscle relaxation
 - *Replacing maladaptive thoughts with coping thoughts*
 - Develop fear hierarchy, Exposures
 - Self-reinforcement
- Goals
 - Decrease social anxiety
 - Change negative thinking that interferes with school attendance



Q3. Function-based Interventions: Function 3 (attention)


- Help (grand)parent change
 - Attending to school attendance-related behaviors
 - Establish reinforcers & negative consequences based on school attendance
- Goals
 - Teach parents skills to address noncompliance to their directives
 - Put parents more in charge of home



Q3. Function-based Interventions: Function 4 (Tangible rewards)

- Strategies: Family**
- Negotiation/compromise skills
 - Communication skills
 - Behavioral contract
 - Increase supervision (home & school)
- Peer refusal skills training**
- Goals**
- Reduce family conflict
 - Increase rewards for going to school
 - Decrease rewards for missing school





If student is staying home from school...

- Time spent at home during school day related to school or unmotivating, boring
- No sleeping in
- Student does school work or school-related work during school day
- Do NOT allow students to watch tv, play video games, use technology or any other fun activities

Tiers 2 & 3 Strategies: Mentoring
The more I do this work, the more I am focusing on mentoring



I. Peer mentors (or buddies)



II. Check-In / Check-Out (CICO)

- PBIS: "Early" Tier 2 intervention
- Caring adult at start of day
- Caring adult at end of day
- Teacher rates student on behaviors
- Parents review & sign
- Data are graphed: 80% or higher as goal

III & IV. More on Mentoring

<p>Check & Connect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor keeps education salient for students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years • Systematic monitoring (Check) • Timely & individualized interventions (Connect) • Partnering with Families: Home-school communication & home support for learning 	<p>Success Mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBK, ESED initiative • Start by setting goals • Principal Led Weekly Attendance Meetings • Mentors: Internal & External – meet at least 3 times/week with mentees • Also major focus is partnering with families
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Tier 3: Intensive, individualized interventions & supports

Tier 3: Re-Entry Options

Scheduling re-entry options:

1. Start with start of school day
2. Start at middle of day & expand out
3. Start at end of day and expand to earlier & earlier
4. Start at favorite time of day & expand out

Tier 3 Interventions

- **Child Find** procedures (Remember: 75% estimated to have mental health problems)
- **Section 504, IEPs**
 - “Adverse effects”
 - FBA/BIP
 - IEP goal for attendance
- **Involvement of SROs**
- **School-Family-Community Partnerships**
 - Ongoing consultation with community mental health professionals, health professionals, non-profits, housing, courts (as last resort)

Tier 3 Interventions (cont'd)

- On-line classes, homebound tutoring
- Alternative educational placements – E.g., “School within a school”
 - Multi-year courses, project-based learning, community partnerships, support
- Referral to specialty clinic

Mental Health Needs & Chronic Absenteeism

- **Research:** Approximately 75% of students with chronic attendance issues also have significant mental health needs!
- **Common mental health issues at Tier 3:**
 - Anxiety, depression, substance abuse, conduct disorders



Raise your hand if you have seen an increase in students requiring psychiatric hospitalizations?

Resources – See Handout

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism: An Evidence-Based Tiered Approach

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Websites:

Attendance Works: www.attendanceworks.org: There is a WEALTH of great information on this website including self-assessments, parent handouts, webinars, toolkits for **teachers and educator leaders**, and materials to use to prepare and implement September Attendance Awareness Month activities. Many resources are available as **FREE** downloads.

American Lung Association: www.lung.org: This site has checklists for healthy classrooms and healthy homes, along with many other resources.

Collaborative for Academic and Social/Emotional Learning: www.casel.org: This is the premiere site for information regarding SEL. For example, you can find SEL program reviews on their site for Early Childhood/Elementary and for Middle School/High School. Many resources available there **FREE**.

Every Student, Every Day: A community toolkit to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. (2015) Available as a **FREE** download at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/initiatives/chronicabsenteeism/index.html>

Three-tiered Model to Promote School Attendance

Level (Circle One): Preschool Elementary Middle School High School

Student Behavior	Data Used	School/Classroom supports
<p>Tier 1</p> <p><u>Example:</u> Student is attending school on a regular basis (in school 95% or more of the time); rarely, if ever tardy</p> <p><u>Other ideas:</u></p>	<p><u>Example:</u> Student attendance/tardy data in e-school</p> <p><u>Other ideas:</u></p>	<p><u>Example:</u> Activities to promote culture of attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Evidence-based bullying prevention activities <p><u>Other ideas:</u></p>

Tier 2:

Example: Parent reports to a member of the school staff that student has been resisting coming to school, is hard to get their child to school in the morning

Other ideas:

Example: Parent report

Other ideas:

Example: Set up mentoring intervention

- Initiate Check In/Check Out (CICO) with caring adult

Other ideas:

Tier 3:

Example: Student is absent $\geq 10\%$ of time

Example: Daily school attendance,
daily class attendance

Examples: Implement function-based intervention to address school refusal behaviors, collaborate with community partner

- Have parent and student complete School Refusal Assessment Scale to determine function(s) of behavior
- Provide function-based interventions in conjunction with community mental health professional
- Progress monitor effectiveness of interventions

Other Ideas:

Other Ideas:

Other ideas:

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National Mentoring Project: www.mentoring.org: This site has a wealth of resources on mentoring, including a manual titled, "*Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring, 3rd Edition*" and an accompanying checklist that specifies what those elements should look like at your school.

Article:

Kearney, C., & Graczyk, P. (2014). A response to intervention model to promote school attendance and address problematic absenteeism. *Child and Youth Care Forum, 43*, 1-25.

We present a blueprint for an evidence-based RTI / MTSS to promote attendance at Tier 1 and address problematic absences at Tiers 2 and 3. Ireland has adopted our model!

Books:

Jenson, W. R., Sprick, R., Sprick, J., Majszak, H., & Phosal, L. (2013). *Absenteeism & truancy*: Publishers.

Kearney, C.A. (2016). *Managing school absenteeism at multiple tiers: An evidence-based and practical guide for professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wimmer, M. (2013). *Evidence-based practices for school refusal and truancy, 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.

PG/hs; 4/16/17