

PULLING TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY TO IMPACT ATTENDANCE

The Attendance Collaborative of the Oakland Education Cabinet identified the actions on the following pages that communities can undertake or strengthen to make sure that more of our kids get to school more often.



WHAT CAN FAMILIES DO?

- Avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school. Try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. The same goes for doctor's appointments.
- For younger children, set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. You can lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines that allow for 8½ to 9½ hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers.
- Get to know the teachers and administrators. With younger children, make sure you introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.
- Show your child that attendance matters to you and that you won't allow an absence unless someone is truly sick.
- Don't ask older students to help with daycare and household errands during the school day.
- Turn to the school for help. Many schools offer services for the whole family.
- Ask your principal to calculate chronic absence rates for the whole school. Even if your child attends regularly, it's important to know how many students in your child's school are missing 10% or more of the school year.



WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?

- Put together an attendance team.
- At the beginning of the year, identify chronically absent students from previous year and the first few weeks of this school year.
- Develop strategies that address the unique challenges of different student groups.
- Work with community partners to support attendance strategies.
- Use the Oakland Attendance Collaborative Toolkit to Reduce Early Chronic Absence http://atschool.alcoda.org/attendance_initiatives



WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO?

- Get past blaming parents and instead help them get their children to school.
- Use community resources – mental and medical health providers, social workers and others – to address the problems contributing to chronic absence.
- Provide the right incentives to bring students to school.
- Train adult mentors of school age children to recognize the warning signs of poor attendance and ensure adult mentors are aware of the available community resources to support children and families struggling with attendance.
- Increase attention to the role that unhealthy or unsafe school climates play in children missing school.
- Expand student access to health care, particularly when medical conditions create barriers to school attendance.
- Address health needs. Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades²¹. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.
- Address transportation barriers²². The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.
- Distribute the Oakland Attendance Collaborative flyer on why attendance is important and what to do to improve it.

http://atschool.alcoda.org/files/ousd_trib_10x21_advertorial_FINAL08_18_14.pdf



WHAT MESSAGE SHOULD WE GIVE TO STUDENTS?

- School is your first and most important job. You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how to show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.
- Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs. In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, a million dollars more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- School only gets harder when you stay home too much. Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.



every day counts
ATTEND TODAY -
ACHIEVE TOMORROW!

www.atschool.alcoda.org

WHO CAN DELIVER THE IMPORTANT MESSAGES ABOUT ATTENDANCE?

- **Educators:** From the superintendent to the classroom teacher, educators across the school district can bring the messages to students and families every day. Letters to parents, back-to-school nights, school assemblies, and classroom competitions can bring more kids to school.
- **Policymakers:** Mayors, council and school board members can use their positions as community leaders to elevate attention to attendance in the media, as well as bring together key stakeholders to identify and address barriers to getting to school. They can also shape policy to improve the collection of attendance data.
- **Business leaders:** Business leaders can play an important role in attendance campaigns by helping with public messaging, as well as providing resources for school-based attendance incentives. They are more likely to get involved if they understand how poor attendance can affect their interests in ensuring students have the skills to become good employees and whether parents who are current employees show up to work every day.
- **Faith and community leaders:** Religious leaders, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs and other community organizations can reach children and families outside the school setting. Health care providers, including pediatricians and visiting nurses, can also share the importance of good attendance.
- **Parents:** Parents fundamentally shape whether children develop a habit of attendance and have the resources they need to get to school every day. Parents can deliver the message to their children and to other parents that missing too much school can put students at academic risk. A good campaign will engage parents, not blame them.
- **Students:** When young children are excited about going to school and understand that their teachers expect them to be in class, their enthusiasm can help motivate other students. High school students can talk to younger children about the importance of attendance.

