ATTENDING SCHOOL EVERY DAY:
MAKING PROGRESS, TAKING ACTION
IN OAKLAND SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY TERMS:

Chronic Absence: Missing 10% or more of school days. 18 days out of the entire school year. Includes any absence, excused or unexcused.

Satisfactory Attendance: Missing less than 5% of school days, 9 days in the full school year.

OUSD is making progress on improving attendance.

Oakland Unified is a leader in tracking and addressing chronic absence. The District has reduced chronic absence steadily, from 16 percent in 2005-06 to 11 percent in 2012-13.

Chronic absence has a strong negative effect on reading and math scores.

Students who are chronically absent are less than half as likely to score proficient or advanced on the state reading and mathematics assessments than other students.

Chronic absence is a greater problem in the early school years and in high school.

15% of kindergarteners and 16% of tenth and eleventh graders were chronically absent, compared to sixth graders, the grade with the lowest chronic absence rate of 7%.

Disparities are pronounced.

- Different ethnic groups within OUSD have widely different rates of chronic absence (see left).
- Students in foster care had a 19% rate of chronic absence.
- Students with disabilities had a rate of 18% chronic absence.
WHAT CAN WE DO TO CONTINUE PROGRESS ON ATTENDANCE IN OAKLAND?

**What can schools do?**
- Put together an attendance team.
- At the beginning of the year, identify chronically absent students from the previous year and the first few weeks of the school year.
- Develop strategies that address the unique challenges of different student groups.
- Work with community partners to support attendance strategies.

**What can families do?**
- Give your child the message that attendance matters.
- Avoid extended vacations during school time.
- Set bedtime and morning routines.
- Don’t ask older students to help with daycare and household errands during school time.
- Turn to the school for help.
- Hold schools accountable for providing chronic absence data.

**What can the community do?**
- Stop blaming parents and 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 and an engaging curriculum that will bring students to school.
- Train mentors to recognize the warning signs of poor attendance and make them 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 contribute to 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 grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.
- Address transportation barriers. 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.

**Who can deliver the message about attendance?**
- Educators
- Policymakers
- Business Leaders
- Health Professionals
- Faith and Community Leaders
- Parents
- Students