Addressing Chronic Absence

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Menlo Park Elementary Attendance
Objectives

- Understand effective structures for responding to chronic absence at the individual and universal levels, with an awareness of racial/ethnic disparities
- Roles of community schools
- Tools and resources for chronic absence efforts
- Understand the critical role of culturally responsive youth and parent engagement in effective attendance and engagement efforts
- Think about an initial action plan to respond to chronic absence in your local community school
Agenda

- What is chronic absenteeism
- School district protocols
- Tools
- Small group discussions
“Could someone help me with these? I’m late for math class.”

Seeing The Cause
Why Chronic Absenteeism?

KEY DEFINITIONS & NATIONAL RESEARCH
Definitions

**Average Daily Attendance:** the percentage of enrolled students who attend school each day

**Satisfactory Attendance:** missing 5% or less over the course of an academic year

**Chronic Absence:** missing 10% or more of school in an academic year for any reason (excused or unexcused)

**Severe Chronic Absence:** missing 20% or more days of school per year – approximately two months of school

**Truancy:** refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state, according to NCLB.
Why is Chronic Absence Important?

- Chronic absence in elementary school is associated with **negative outcomes** including **low academic achievement**, **school truancy**, **dropping out**, **delinquency** and **substance abuse**.

- The **educational experience** of regularly attending children can be **adversely affected** when teachers must divert their attention to meet the learning and social needs of chronically absent children when they return to school.
Economically disadvantaged students were consistently more likely to be chronically absent; by high school, two out of five were chronically absent.

Percentage of Oregon students who are chronically absent, by grade and economic disadvantage
Source: ECONorthwest analysis of ODE data, 2009-10.
What does it look like?

- District Attendance Protocol (critical minimums & other district specific practices) & Roles
- Teams (or functions)
  - School-Wide Attendance
  - Student Attendance Response
  - Community Engagement Team
- Practices
  - Culturally responsive lens
  - Family and community engagement
  - Data points & use of planning/tracking tools
  - Tracking of student level data and response
Critical Minimums

**Red Zone - Intensive**
- Response Plan with Higher Level Interventions

**Yellow Zone - Strategic**
- Student Attendance Response Team
  (Meets at least 1x per month)
- Positive Phone Call Home or Administrator/Student Meeting
- Response Plan with In-School Interventions

**Green Zone - Universal**
- Examination of School-wide Attendance and Planning (at least 3x per year)
- Information Provided to Students and Families
- Lesson on Attendance Early in Year
- Recognition of Good or Improved Attendance
## Critical Minimums in Detail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Minimums</th>
<th>Notes/Definitions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Universal (Green Zone)</strong></td>
<td>All students, School-wide efforts</td>
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<td>• Information on the importance of attendance and school process to parents and</td>
<td>Information should be included in school packets, Back to School nights, orientations, etc.</td>
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<td>students at beginning of the year</td>
<td>Lesson could be a PBIS lesson or other classroom or school-wide learning experience.</td>
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<td>• Lesson on attendance early in school year</td>
<td>Recognition examples include incentives, awards, inclusion in newsletters/assemblies, etc.</td>
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<td>• Recognition of good or improved attendance.</td>
<td>Examination of school-wide attendance: this role could be taken on by an existing team (PBIS, Site Council, SUN Community School Advisory Committee, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Examination of school-wide attendance and development/monitoring of action</td>
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<td>plan at least 3 times a year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic (Yellow Zone)</strong></td>
<td>Students with average daily attendance of 89% or lower</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Student Attendance Response Team</strong> meets at least once per month to review</td>
<td>Student Attendance Response Team role can be played by existing team (Data Team, Building Screening Committee, etc). It is recommended that attendance</td>
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<td>attendance reports and respond to individual student attendance issues.</td>
<td>be reviewed more regularly than once a month. The team reviews reports of students who missed 10% or more cumulative days (yellow zone) and 20% of more cumulative days (red zone).</td>
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<td>• <strong>Positive call home</strong> by teacher or administrator meets with student (high</td>
<td><strong>Positive call home by teacher</strong> is a proactive call home to encourage and support attendance.</td>
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<td>school) at 1st report of 10% or more days missed.</td>
<td><strong>Response plan</strong> for Mid and East County high schools would include Attendance Matters protocol.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Response plan</strong> with in-school interventions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intensive (Red Zone)</strong></td>
<td>Students with average daily attendance of 79% or lower</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Response plan</strong> with higher-level interventions.</td>
<td><strong>Response plan</strong> for Mid and East County high schools would include Attendance Matters protocol.</td>
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Culturally Responsive Lens

- Continually examining ourselves and our behavior to determine how our attitudes and feeling influence our actions and decision making.

- Employing practices in which the students and families see their cultural values, norms and input reflected.

- Consistently reflecting on our structures to determine what barriers and pathways they create for students and families, particularly students of color and those living in poverty.
Schools + Communities Can Make a Difference

Characteristics of Effective Strategies

- Partner with community agencies for parents to carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- Make chronic absence a priority, set a target and monitor progress over time.
- Examine factors contributing to chronic absence, especially from youth & parent perspective.
- Combine universal and targeted strategies.
- Offer positive supports before punitive action.
- Underlying causes of absenteeism should be addressed.
Family Engagement

- How can family voice be included? (Student voice too!)
  Community Engagement Teams

- Consider barriers in either our approach or structures, and where we create pathways

- Relationship building/ Trust building
  - Assertive Engagement Skills
What is Assertive Engagement?

- AE is an approach to working with people.
- AE keeps the client centered and respected as the expert on their family and their situation.
- AE guides the worker in how to develop a healthy and trusting relationship.
- AE focuses our work on drawing out and exploring the client’s wishes, desires, challenges and abilities.
- Rather than focusing on fixing the client’s problems for them, AE allows the client to be the agent of their own change and their own success.
Who we are in charge of...

- Focus on our own actions and how they affect our clients
- Our actions can decrease reactivity and other negative responses
- See every interaction as an opportunity
But I care...

- My families are in need...
- I have knowledge and insight...
- My families could benefit from my knowledge and insight...

...So why should I be careful before I share?
The Case for Caution

- The Ravine
- Hierarchy
- Tunneling
The Ravine Leads Us to...

- The Importance of Relationship
- Client as Expert
- Listening
- Ask- Offer- Ask
- Non- Judgement
- Arguing One Side of Ambivalence
- The “Righting Reflex”
Listening

- Why Listen? (AKA- The Power of Listening)
- Activity
How to Give Information

ASK - OFFER - ASK

1. Ask what they already know
2. Ask permission to provide new information
3. Offer the information
4. Ask what they think
Non-Judgment

- The Flatscreen TV
- The Doctor who Drinks
- Where else do we struggle with Judgment?
Tools Available

- CSY Toolkit https://multco.us/file/8299/download
- Self assessment tool: building-level
- Cultural Responsive Lens
- Action Plan
- Attendance Works Website www.attendanceworks.org
- Roles
- Attendance Specialist Overview
Turn and Talk

- School-level data (school-wide, individuals, trends) questions
- Juncture of partners and chronic absence work
  - Collaboration
  - Family work
- Family engagement & voice, culturally responsive practices & strategies
Thank you...

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