

Data-based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Working Together to Increase Regular Attendance to Improve District Performance and Educational Outcomes.



“Education can only fulfill its promise as the great equalizer—a force that can overcome differences in privilege and background—when we work to ensure that students are in school every day and receive the supports they need to learn and thrive.”

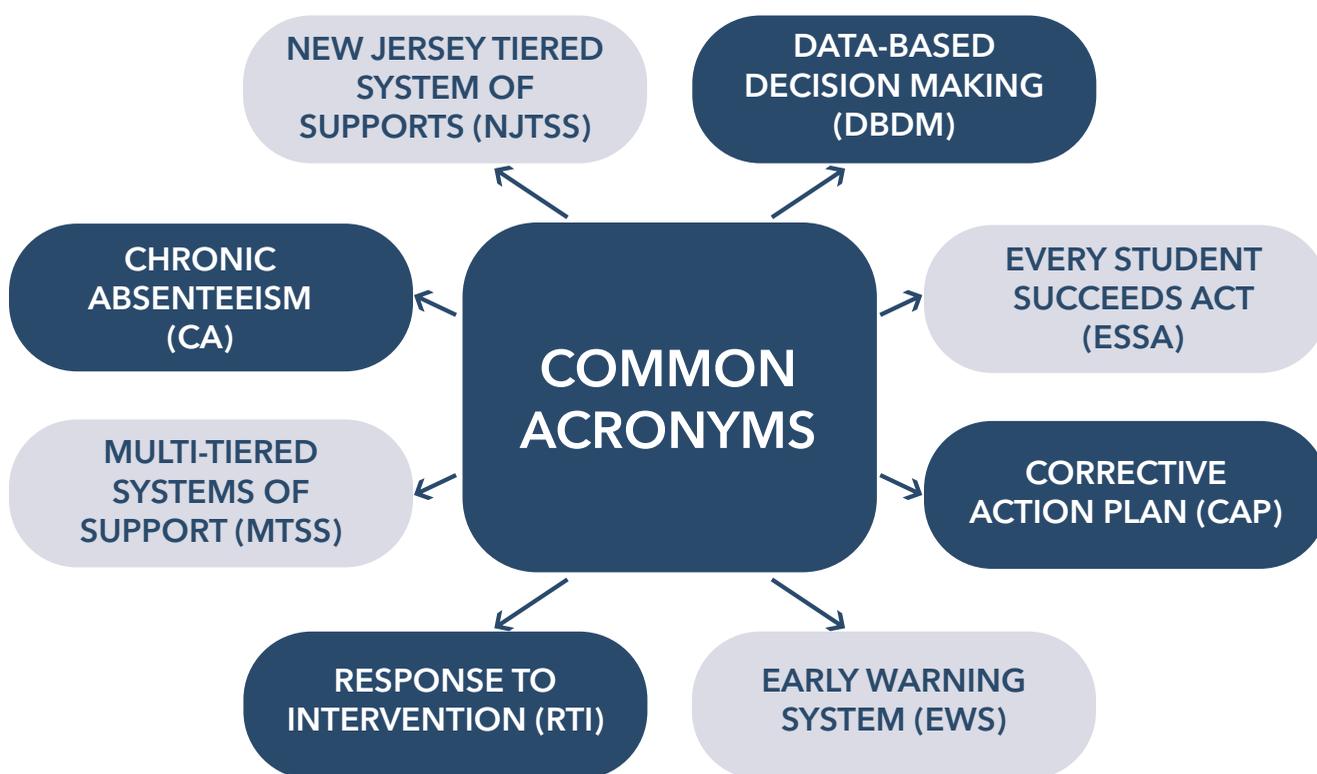


[Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools \(ed.gov\)](https://www.ed.gov)

Purpose Statement

Data-Based Decision Making for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism was developed to provide districts with guidance on responding to chronic absenteeism. The guidance incorporates New Jersey specific rules, regulations, and a span of available resources. Schools and districts can refer to this resource to develop research-based action plans that include strategies that specifically target the barriers contributing to their students' absences. This resource provides a step-by-step guide that begins with identifying key district members, collecting and analyzing actionable data, and supports district in ultimately installing and operating a tiered model to address student absenteeism and encourage regular attendance.

In order for students to learn and achieve their fullest potential, it is critical that they are in school and engaged in the learning process. The idea behind a multi-tiered approach is that the majority of students will respond to school-wide strategies for improving attendance and engagement (known as Tier 1 supports) but that these strategies won't be sufficient for all students: some students require more personalized support (Tier 2) and an even smaller number may need more intensive measures (Tier 3) taken on their behalf to reengage them with school.¹



¹ "A Tiered Approach to Ensuring Students Are Present, Engaged, and Supported in the 2020–21 School Year" [Ed Policy](#)

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Section 1:

What Is Chronic Absenteeism?

A student is considered chronically absent if the student misses 10 percent or more of the school days in session for which the student was enrolled. For more information regarding how to determine if a student qualifies as in attendance or procedures for collecting daily attendance, please consult [N.J.A.C. 32 School District Operations](#).

Fast Facts

- A student is chronically absent if they have missed as few as two days of school a month².
- Evidence indicates that it is how many days a student misses that matters, not why they miss them when analyzing attendance and educational outcomes.
- Attending school every day increases chances of success in school and in life.
- Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of students who may eventually drop out of school.
- Chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy. In New Jersey, truancy is defined as having 10 or more unexcused absences³, whereas a student in New Jersey is typically declared chronically absent if they have 18 or more excused and/or unexcused absences within a school year.
- By the sixth grade, along with GPA, absenteeism is a top predictor of dropout⁴.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed in December 2015 with bipartisan congressional support. After ESSA was passed, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) was required to develop [a state plan](#) describing its measures for accountability. Following extensive stakeholder feedback, the NJDOE selected chronic absenteeism as its measure of school quality.
- Barring the 2020 and 2021 school year, the NJDOE has annually issued Accountability Profiles which enable schools and districts to review their progress toward meeting the state goal of 10% or fewer students being identified as chronically absent.
- The NJDOE makes [data available](#) demonstrating school-level chronic absenteeism. Schools can consider those data when determining whether they have exceeded the threshold of 10% of students being identified as chronically absent.
- The [Maximizing Federal Funds](#) website provides school district leaders, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), grant administrators, and other stakeholders with information about how different Federal funds may be used to meet their specific, identified needs.

² “The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools” [.ed.gov](#)

³ “The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools” [.ed.gov](#)

⁴ University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. (2014). Five key findings for middle grades from looking forward to high school and college” [Attendance Works](#)

Section 2:

Developing a Plan to Identify and Address Chronic Absenteeism

New Jersey Statute

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25.1, in the event that 10 percent or more of the students enrolled in a public school are chronically absent, the school shall develop a corrective action plan to improve absenteeism rates. The corrective action plan shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Identifying problems and barriers to school attendance;
- Developing recommendations to address the problems and barriers to school attendance that have been identified;
- Outlining communication strategies to educate and inform parents on the importance of school attendance;
- Establishing protocols on informing and engaging parents when a child begins to show a pattern of absences; and
- Reviewing school policies to ensure that they support improved school attendance.

In developing the corrective action plan, the school shall solicit input from parents of students currently attending the school. The solicitation shall include, at a minimum, a parental survey that includes questions related to parents' beliefs regarding the reasons why students are chronically absent and recommendations on the best ways to improve attendance. In developing the corrective action plan, the school shall engage the school's parent organization, if one exists, in identifying the causes of the school's high absenteeism rate and possible solutions. If there is no parent organization at the school, the school shall hold a public meeting to provide parents with an opportunity to provide input during the development of the corrective action plan.

The school shall present the corrective action plan to the board of education. **The school shall annually review and revise the corrective action plan, and present the revisions to the board, until the percent of students who are chronically absent is less than 10 percent.**

Section 3:

Problem-Solving Team

- Create a team or consider existing teams (e.g., I&RS Team, MTSS Team, ASP Team, SciP Team, etc.) of stakeholders that can diagnose or further investigate barriers to regular attendance by collecting qualitative data from staff, students, and families.
 - Ensure the team’s composition empowers the team in making school-based decisions that will improve student attendance, facilitate the regular monitoring and ability to respond to continuous attendance data, and optimize communication within the district describing progress and needs for improvement of student attendance.
- Mobilize and empower team(s) to deploy problem-solving data-based solutions outlined in this document.
- Establish a schedule for teams to regularly review, address, and assess student attendance at the student, classroom and school level. a
- Team(s) should include various stakeholders in the school and the district community. Consider utilizing existing teams if such teams exist (i.e. Intervention and Referral Services and /or an Annual School Planning team).

Section 4:

Data-based Decision Making

Three Steps to Assessing System Needs

Step One: Assess

- An essential first step is to create an early warning system or universal screening process to collect then review appropriate attendance data as part of a pre-screening/early warning process⁵. Available attendance data should be analyzed before any other steps are taken. Consider collating prior year and multi-year attendance data to identify areas of need or trends.
- Inventory current strategies implemented to encourage student attendance.
- Administer a Parent Survey to understand parents' beliefs regarding the reasons why students are chronically absent.

Step Two: Build and Reflect

- The second step is to reflect upon, provide and adapt school-wide supports in response to identified large-scale areas of need. Adjustments are made to district, school, and classroom processes, practices, and protocols to improve district attendance.
- School-based teams develop a continuum of supports that address the unique needs of their school community. Consider the supports provided to all students, targeted supports that could be provided to students facing common barriers to student attendance or students identified as at-risk of being chronically absent, and intensive supports that will be provided to students demonstrating significant challenges to regular attendance.

Step Three: Implement & Monitor

- The third step is to monitor district and school performance in response to universal supports and targeted interventions and to make ongoing adjustments as needed to student and district level action plans.
- Ensure shared accountability within and across the district and community to address any local and/or underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

⁵“The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools” ed.gov

Section 4:

Data-based Decision Making

Parent/Caregiver Survey

A well-designed survey will aid a school in collecting the perceptions of parents or caregivers to better understand possible factors contributing to a school's attendance issues. As required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25.1, a parental survey must include questions related to parents' beliefs regarding the reasons why students are chronically absent as well as recommendations on the best ways to improve attendance.

- Develop a parental survey to solicit input from parent(s)/guardian(s) of students currently attending the school about their experiences with the school, including the issue of regular school attendance.⁶
- One way the provisions of the law could be satisfied may include the addition of parent(s)/caregiver(s) to the school teams to develop, disseminate, and collect surveys and to interpret results of parent(s)/guardian(s) from different backgrounds.
- A survey* can consist of
 - o A list of possible causes with a corresponding rating scale;
 - o Multiple-choice questions with yes/no answer choices;
 - o Open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions.
- Consider using the most accessible format for this survey when reaching out to parents/guardians. This might include a paper copy, a digital copy, a way to complete orally, and/or a survey offered in multiple languages.

*Please note: A parental survey is not the only data available. Please consider qualitative data as well such as parent interviews and/or parent focus groups that include families with students at an increased risk for Chronic Absenteeism.

⁶ "Understanding the Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence in Your School" [Attendance Works](#)

Section 5:

Planning for Sustainability

- Consider standardizing these practices and processes through the creation of manuals, documents, and a system for storing and sharing information. The main purpose of this step is to make this process more effective in regard to student outcomes, ease of implementation, and durability⁷.
- Ensure processes are fully embedded within existing school structures and official policy.
- Facilitate ongoing professional development to increase the skills of existing staff and to orient new staff.
- Review and revise institutional policies that may contribute to absenteeism like unnecessary student suspensions, and zero-tolerance discipline policies.
- Memorialize an ongoing practice for administrators to integrate these practices within new initiatives and continue to assess and remove barriers to implementation.

Adopting Restorative Practices in Education

As a district is considering policy changes that could assist in improving and sustaining regular student attendance, the district can explore adopting select restorative practices. Restorative practices in education support the overarching goal of strengthening school climate by developing a restorative mindset in the adults, building community, and responding to harm.⁸ When implementing or establishing a plan to address chronic absenteeism it is important to consider a restorative approach.

Restorative practices represent an attempt to reform school discipline and improve relationships among stakeholders while minimizing punitive disciplinary measures⁹. Central to restorative practices are the beliefs that all people are worthy and relational, and that we must build, maintain and repair relationships.¹⁰ Restorative practices put relationships first. Each engagement in a restorative school is an opportunity to build upon caring or supportive connections from the last engagement. Restorative practices provide a different way of thinking about behavior. They are more than a set of tools for managing behavior; the practices help all shift from a punishment-driven approach to a relationship-driven system.

Please consider how authoritarian and/or punitive approaches, as it relates to chronic absenteeism, can be detrimental to student well-being and relationship-building efforts needed to foster or maintain a positive school culture and climate.

⁷ Goodman, S. and McIntosh, S. (2016). *Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Blending RTI and PBIS*. The Guilford Press.

⁸ "Principles of the Restorative School" [Michigan Department of Education](#)

⁹ "Restorative Practices in Schools" [Attendance Works](#)

¹⁰ "Principles of the Restorative School" [Michigan Department of Education](#)

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25.1, in the event that 10 percent or more of the students enrolled in a public school are chronically absent, which means a student has missed 10% or more days of school, the school shall develop a corrective action plan to improve the absenteeism rate. The plan will be presented to the local board of education and reviewed and revised annually until absenteeism rates are below 10%.

Table 1: Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Overview

District Name	Principal Name & School Name	Date Presented to the Board of Education
Grade Levels	Problem-Solving Team Members (refer to Section 3: Problem Solving Team)	Start Date of CAP

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Systems Processes

In accordance with NJTSS' Data-Based Decision Making, the NJDOE encourages districts to establish a Chronic Absenteeism Early Warning System (CA EWS), which is a system to detect patterns, trends, and perception data that could indicate increased risks of a student becoming chronically absent. Data collected for the CA EWS should reflect attendance at multiple levels (school-wide, grade-level, classroom, individual students) to identify target populations and measure the appropriateness and effectiveness of current or proposed interventions. For more information about Data-Based Decision making please refer to [Section 4: Data-based Decision Making](#).

The table below provides a sample of grade-level data that can be considered when developing a corrective action plan. It will be helpful to also reflect on schoolwide and district level data.

Table 2: Corrective Action Plan Data, Systems Processes- Grade Level Sample

Chronic Attendance Early Warning System Data Source	Prior year attendance data % of students Chronically Absent	Notes
2018-2019 Grade 8 Chronic Absenteeism Data	8%	Historically, our Grade 8 students demonstrated higher chronic absenteeism than other grades in our school.
2019-2020 Grade 8 Chronic Absenteeism Data		
September 2021- December 2021 Grade 8 Chronic Absenteeism Data	6%	While providing remote instruction we saw reduced rates of chronic absenteeism throughout the school, but Grade 8 students remained the highest.
	11%	Grade 8 students continue to outpace other grades in our school in the rate of chronic absenteeism.

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Table 3: Corrective Action Plan Data, Systems Processes- Using Historical Data to Identify students at-risk of future chronic absenteeism

Unique Student Identifier (Identifying Students At-Risk for Chronic Absenteeism)	Source	Ranges of Absences	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student 1, grade 7 • Student 2, grade 5 • Student 3, grade 8 	Student Data Management System	12-17 days absent in the past school year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student 1, grade 7 • Student 2, grade 6 • Student 3, grade 8 • Student 4, grade 8 	Student Data Management System	18-22 days absent in the past school year	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student 1, grade 8 • Student 2, grade 8 	Student Data Management System	22+ or more days absent in the past school year	

- Do not include information that may identify an individual student.
- Schools can consider reviewing student data specific to student sub-groups to better target their interventions and include in their corrective action plan.

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Additional Data Sources to Consider in Chronic Absenteeism Early Warning System

Parent/Caregiver Survey

In developing the corrective action plan, the school shall solicit input from parents or guardians of students currently attending the school. The solicitation shall include, at a minimum, a parental survey that includes questions related to parents' beliefs regarding the reasons why students are chronically absent and recommendations on the best ways to improve attendance. Please refer to Section 4: Parent/Guardian Survey for guidance on developing a parent survey.

Table 4: Corrective Action Plan Data, Parent Survey Results Analysis

Total responses	Parents' perceptions regarding the reasons why students are chronically absent	Percent
98	Students are often sick (agree / disagree)	28% agree
90	School is not engaging for students	38% agree
90	Students do not feel safe at school	3% agree
80	It's okay to miss a few days (2 to 3) of school each month	22% agree

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Inventory of Current Strategies

Please review [Appendix B: Tier 1](#) and [Tier 2/Tier 3](#).

Additional data to consider when developing a responsive CAP are the current strategies being implemented by a district. In the cells below "Inventory Current Strategies," insert the names or descriptions of Tier 1/Universal strategies currently utilized to encourage students' regular attendance in school. In the cells below "Inventory Current Strategies Reflection," insert notes reflecting upon the effectiveness of the strategy. You can consider whether the strategy is being implemented consistently and with fidelity, if the strategy broadly supports your students, or if the strategy is not having the effects envisioned when first implemented.

Tier 1

Table 5: Corrective Action Plan Inventory of Current Strategies, Tier 1

Inventory Current Strategies	Inventory Current Strategies Reflection
Fill in here (I.e., morning meeting, joy activities)	Fill in here (i.e., Since starting morning meetings our schoolwide tardiness has decreased 10 percent)
Fill in here (i.e., automatic call home when absent)	Fill in here
Fill in here (i.e., partnerships with local police to ensure safe corridors)	Fill in here

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

In the cells below "Inventory Current Strategies", insert the names or descriptions of Tier 2/3 strategies currently utilized to encourage targeted groups of students or individual students to improve their attendance in school. In the cells below "Inventory Current Strategies Reflection", insert notes reflecting upon the effectiveness of the strategy. You can consider whether the strategy is being implemented consistently and with fidelity, if the strategy addresses the specific barrier challenging the students' regular attendance, or if the strategy is not having the effects envisioned when first implemented.

Tier 2/3

Table 6: Corrective Action Plan Inventory of Current Strategies, Tier 2/3

Inventory Current Strategies	Inventory Current Strategies Reflection
Fill in here (i.e., check and connect for students with 5 or more absences)	Fill in here
Fill in here (i.e., grade level specific incentives for regular attendance)	Fill in here
Fill in here (i.e., student attendance goal-setting)	Fill in here
Fill in here (i.e., "Street Team" to serve as school ambassadors to community)	Fill in here

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Identified Areas for Improvement



Factors Contributing Towards Chronic Absenteeism

Please review [Section 4: Three Steps for Assessing System Needs](#).

After collecting and analyzing the data collected earlier in the CAP's development, use the information to memorialize areas identified for improvement and identify the school level data used to inform these conclusions.

Table 7: Corrective Action Plan Identified Areas for Improvement, Factors contributing towards Chronic Absenteeism

Area No.	Area Identified for Improvement	What school level data prioritizes this area as needing improvement?
1	Transportation to and from school	Students in particular bussing areas are not regularly attending school
2	Student Engagement	Survey Results (administered to parents, staff and students)
3	Fill in here	Fill in here
4	Fill in here	Fill in here

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Data-Informed Strategies to Address Student Absenteeism

Beginning

Please review [Appendix B: Tier 1](#) and [Tier 2/Tier 3](#). Populate the table below with proposed strategies to address the needs identified in Table 7.

Table 8: Corrective Action Plan Identified Areas for Improvement, Action Items

Tier	Data-Driven Strategies	Problem-Solving Team Member(s)	Completion Date
1 Universal	Strategy Description: Anticipated Outcome:	Name(s): Title(s):	mm/dd/yy
1 Universal	Strategy Description: Anticipated Outcome:	Name(s): Title(s):	mm/dd/yy
2 Small Group	Strategy Description: Anticipated Outcome:	Name(s): Title(s):	mm/dd/yy
3 Individualized	Strategy Description: Anticipated Outcome:	Name(s): Title(s):	mm/dd/yy

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Interim Review of CAP Progress



Progress Summary

This table should be completed midway through the school year to examine whether the strategies included in table 7 are having the intended impact on a school’s chronic absenteeism rate. This is an opportunity for schools to look closely at the strategies they have implemented and determine if they are being implemented with fidelity. Schools can rethink the strategies if they have new data suggesting that they apply other interventions to address their students’ absenteeism.

Table 9: Interim Progress Summary

Tier	Data-Driven Strategies	Data-Driven Strategies	Date
1 Universal	Fill in here	Fill in here	mm/dd/yy
2 Small Group	Fill in here	Fill in here	mm/dd/yy
2 Small Group	Fill in here	Fill in here	mm/dd/yy
3 Individualized	Fill in here	Fill in here	mm/dd/yy

Percent of population currently Chronically Absent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix A: Sample School Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Template for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Summative Review of CAP Progress



This table should be completed at the end of the school year to examine whether the strategies included in table 7 are having the intended impact on a school’s chronic absenteeism rate. This is an opportunity for schools to look closely at the strategies they have implemented and determine if they were implemented with fidelity. Schools can rethink the strategies if they have new data suggesting that they apply other interventions to address their students’ absenteeism in the upcoming school year.

Table 10: Summative Progress Summary

Tier	Data-Driven Strategies	Outcome Met Y/N	Completion Date	If outcome not met, % of students receiving intervention that remain CA
1 Universal	Fill in here	Y/N	mm/dd/yy	%
2 Small Group	Fill in here	Y/N	mm/dd/yy	%
2 Small Group	Fill in here	Y/N	mm/dd/yy	%
3 Individualized	Fill in here	Y/N	mm/dd/yy	%

Percent of population currently Chronically Absent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B:

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

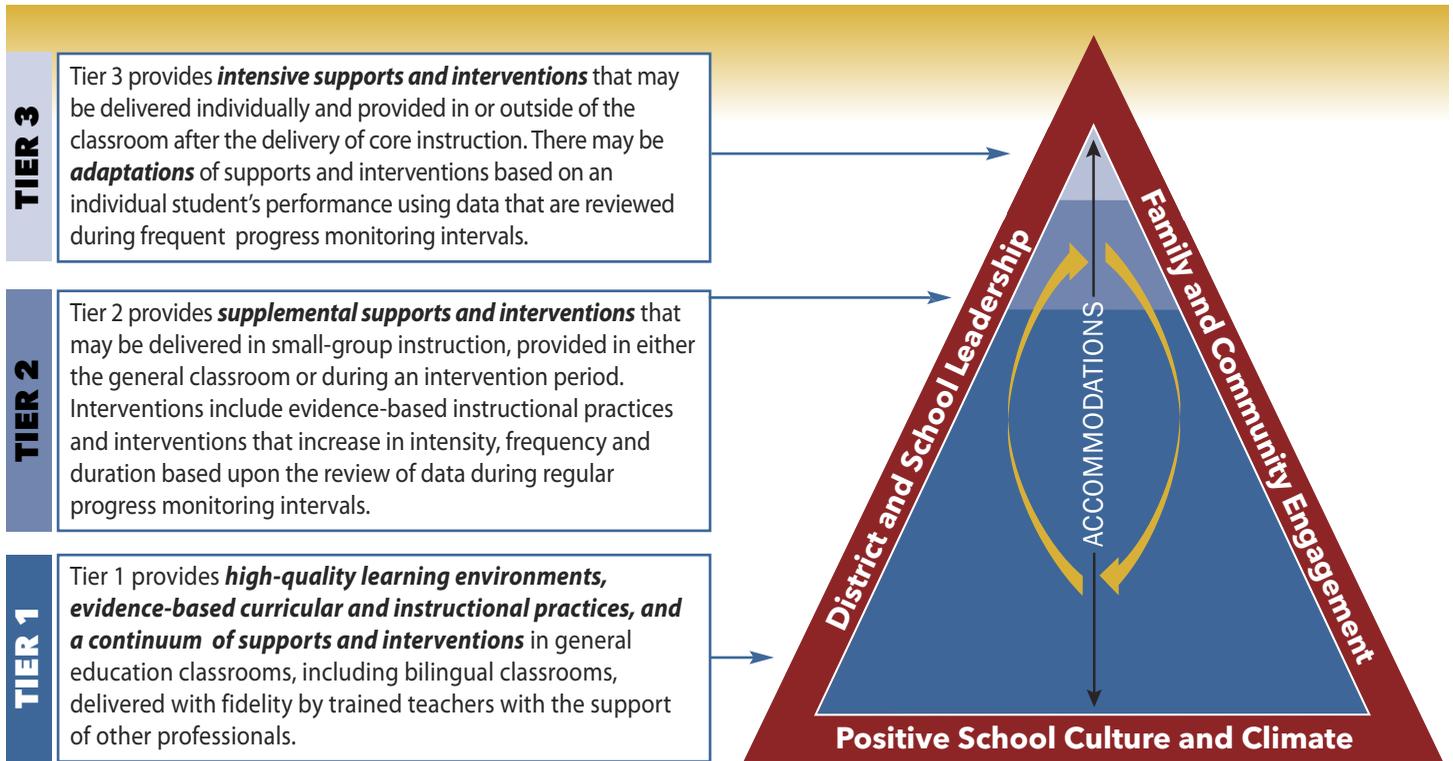
New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) Foundational Elements

The New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) is a framework of academic and behavioral supports and interventions to improve student achievement, based on the core components of multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) and the three-tier prevention logic of Response to Intervention (RTI). With a foundation of strong district and school leadership, a positive school culture and climate, and family and community engagement, NJTSS builds upon intervention and referral services (I&RS) and gives schools a structure to meet the academic, behavioral, health, enrichment, and social-emotional needs of all students. The tiered framework was developed in collaboration with New Jersey stakeholders, including educators and administrators from districts implementing an RTI/MTSS model, higher education experts, and parents.

Based on successful models of RTI and MTSS from across the country, NJTSS gives schools and districts a systematic way to address learner variability and engage all students in learning the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. NJTSS maximizes the efficient use of resources to improve support for all classroom teachers and targets interventions to students based on their needs. Through regular monitoring of student progress, along with data-based decision making by problem-solving teams and providing a continuum of supports and interventions based on student performance, NJTSS offers a variety of evidence-based practices designed to improve achievement and promote positive student outcomes. The tiered system involves the systematic development of nine essential components in schools for the effective implementation of the framework with fidelity and sustainability. Those components include:

- Effective district and school leadership;
- Family and community engagement;
- Positive school culture and climate;
- High-quality learning environments;
- curricula, and instructional practices;
- Universal screening;
- Data-based decision making;
- Collaborative problem-solving teams;
- Progress monitoring;
- Staff professional development.

More information is available on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports webpage](#).



The three tiers of supports and interventions are bolstered by effective school and district leadership committed to the implementation of the system, a positive school culture and climate that is conducive for learning, and family and community engagement in the development and implementation of the framework. Across all tiers, some students may require accommodations that provide access to instruction. These supports are not contingent upon a student’s level of instructional support but are necessary to access content and achieve meaningful participation in the instruction.

NJTSS Implications and Application to Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

In order for students to learn and achieve their fullest potential, it is critical that they are in school and engaged in the learning process. Research shows that student absences impact a child's ability to succeed in school.¹¹ Chronic absence affects nearly 8 million students in the US each year. And missing just 2 days a month over the course of a school year can lead to serious disparities in student outcomes.¹² In addition, there is evidence that chronic absenteeism from school is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of a student's risk of dropping out of school.¹³

NJTSS aligns resources, from within the schools, across school districts and within communities and counties, to provide the right interventions to the right students at the right times. The idea behind a multi-tiered approach is that the majority of students will respond to school-wide strategies for improving attendance and engagement (known as Tier 1 supports) but that these strategies won't be sufficient for all students: some students require more personalized support (Tier 2) and an even smaller number may need more intensive measures (Tier 3) taken on their behalf to reengage them with school.¹⁴

¹¹ "10 Facts About School Attendance" Attendance Works

¹² "Technical Assistance" Attendance Works

¹³ Balfanz, R. and Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

¹⁴ "A Tiered Approach to Ensuring Students Are Present, Engaged, and Supported in the 2020–21 School Year" [Ed Policy](#)

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 1

Tier 1 of any tiered support system includes schoolwide, universal strategies that support and encourage regular attendance for all students.

Table 12

<p>Effective Tier 1 supports are vital to operating a successful tiered system of supports. The strength of the supports offered in Tier 1 directly impact the outcomes of Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.</p>	<p>Tier 1 foundational strategies help to establish a strong school community, build relationships, set the operational structures of tiered system and ensure effective communication.</p>	<p>By first focusing on the outer triangle of the NJTSS Framework (Figure 1), educators are able to better ensure a healthy NJTSS system.</p>
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The following strategies are meant to proactively promote good attendance for all students.

Effective District and School Leadership and Collaborative Problem-Solving Teams

- Create a school leadership/collaborative problem-solving team devoted to understanding the impact of chronic absenteeism on educational outcomes.
- Ensure that attendance expectations are clearly presented in your school and district code of student conduct.
- Use multiple media to publicize attendance goals in ways that are accessible to all students, families and the community (e.g., opt-in text messaging, sending postcards home, displaying posters, district and school web pages, morning announcements, parent-teacher organization meetings and email and school newsletters).
- Make attendance an item for discussion at all school events including back-to-school night, parent conferences and other opportunities to share goals with various stakeholders.
- Ensure resources and funding are sufficient to ensure all students receive a quality education and similar opportunities to thrive and achieve in school, career and college.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships between the district, school and community to provide for a full range of resources and supports to address barriers to attendance.
- Create a team who are able to diagnose or further investigate barriers to regular attendance by collecting qualitative data from staff, students and families.
- Establish a schedule for teams to regularly review, address, and assess student attendance at the student, classroom and school level.
- Develop positive messaging campaign using the principles of NJTSS.
- Seek resources to provide more intensive strategies like mentoring or counseling.
- Consider schoolwide practice changes to adopt Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports methodology.
- Gather data indicating student, family and community needs that may contribute to chronic absenteeism.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 1

Family and Community Engagement

- Welcome each family and child at the beginning of the year¹⁵. There are many good examples; staff ready to greet families and students at drop-off points and offer directions, a friendly greeting to each family and student at the classroom door, a post card or note welcoming the student to your classroom or a phone call before school begins. If your school has a web-based parent portal, add a warm message to your classroom's page. Choose a personal and positive way that says, "I'm glad you are here. I look forward to being your teacher and seeing you in school every day."
- When possible, start your relationship with your families on their home turf by offering a home visit. When educators invest upfront in relational home visits, attendance improves and schools can reap many other positive benefits. Ideally, school staff will get trained and then conduct voluntary home visits to families during summer or early fall. This helps open lines of communication and establish a positive home-school relationship before problems arise.
- Launch a schoolwide Attendance Campaign for all families during the first 30 days of school. Include a kickoff event with a parent or community speaker, a catchy slogan, and branded items distributed to students and caregivers (pencils, pens, notepads, noisemakers etc.).
- Participate in Attendance Awareness Month activities throughout the month of September.
- Use social networking tools to inform stakeholders of the impact of missing school throughout the school year.
- Post daily student attendance percentages conspicuously (e.g. in the cafeteria, in a major hallway, on web site).
- Consider community outreach opportunities, such as holding parent forums, creating newsletters and creating district literature outlining the importance of going to school and how it positively impacts student outcomes.
- Offer before care, after care, and early education.
- Include attendance records on report cards and progress reports.
- Provide families with bus schedules prior to the start of school. Have open lines of communication to discuss any scheduling discrepancies.
- Give families an opportunity to do a "dry run" for the bus.
- Consider collecting survey data regarding transportation and barriers that community members may face.
- Allow non-English speaking parents/guardians to submit necessary school [documentation](#) in their native language, if possible.
- Regularly communicate that chronic absenteeism is a problem that affects the whole community, not just those students who are chronically absent and their families.
- Offer parents education opportunities regarding matters related to public health and safety, such as immunizations and other attendance requirements.

¹⁵ "Toolkit" Attendance Works

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 1

Positive School Culture and Climate

- Create a culture of attendance by taking a positive, not punitive, approach to absenteeism that is centered on belonging and engagement and help everyone to understand why daily attendance matters starting Pre-K through grade 12.
- Host virtual or in-person homeroom, every day.
- Consider taking attendance, orally, every period to increase accountability and visibility.
- Take attendance by greeting students by name and welcoming a student back after an absence.
- Conduct an [annual school climate survey](#) to measure your school's conditions for learning, and using the data collected, develop and implement a data-informed school climate improvement plan to address identified needs.
- Provide a [safe, clean environment](#).
- [Safe Routes to School](#).
- Provide [breakfast to students](#). Students who eat breakfast at school attend an average of 1.5 more days of school every year. When offered in the classroom, breakfast can be an opportunity to bond with the teacher and get kids ready for class (Attendance Works).

High-Quality Learning Environments, Curricula, and Instructional Practices

- Ensure that the materials and curricula in your school reflect your students and their interests.
- Provide clubs, activities, and extracurriculars (both virtual and in person) that promote attendance.
- Partner with local community colleges and vocational schools to consider adding high school courses that qualify for trade school or college credit.
- Promote [culturally responsive teaching](#) and [social and emotional learning](#). This may include the implementation of a Character Education program to promote positive school climate and culture.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 1

Universal Screening & Data-Based Decision Making

- Use past and current attendance data to screen students at risk for chronic absenteeism.
- Input daily attendance into a database for real time insights on student attendance.
- Consider creating a data dashboard that will depict trends in absenteeism disaggregated by grade level, classroom, student sub-groups, and other categories that may assist a school in targeting their resources most effectively.
- Establish a system to notify appropriate personnel when a student is absent for two school days in a month, four school days in a marking period, or eight school days in a marking period. In each case, those students could be considered at risk for chronic absenteeism.
- Monitor early attendance in real time and collect data from the first few weeks of school.
- Develop a system and use data to monitor chronic absence (e.g., [Every School Day Counts](#)).
- Collect accurate attendance data and follow the [Guidance for Reporting Student Absences](#) provided by NJDOE.

Progress Monitoring

- Continue to maintain close oversight on students identified at-risk of chronic absenteeism to determine the impact of strategies being implemented to support improved attendance.
- Advertise on the school calendar events focused on student engagement and school spirit and continuously monitor student engagement and participation at said events.
- Schedule regular meetings for Collaborative-Problem Solving Team members to review data indicative of attendance performance.
- Celebrate improved attendance, especially for students identified as at-risk of being chronically absent.
- Communicate to parent(s)/caregiver(s) how student attendance is improving or remains an area of concern.

Staff Professional Development

- Provide professional development to district and school staff and community partners so they have the skills and knowledge they need to take a data-driven approach to supporting student attendance, participation and engagement.
- Nurture staff skills to manage blended learning environments and multiple school transitions, promote digital literacy, and respond to the social-emotional and physical needs of the school community.
- Offer professional development to aid staff in implementing interventions or strategies selected to address chronic absenteeism.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 2

Tier 2 strategies are for students and families who need additional support beyond what is provided for all students. Tier 2 supports supplement high quality Tier 1 strategies already in place. While it is critical in Tier 1 to build strong, positive relationships between school staff, students and families to create an overall positive school climate, Tier 2 strategies involve building caring supportive relationships through programs and practices targeted to some students whose attendance after a month or two of school puts them at risk for chronic absenteeism.

In this section you will find intervention strategies for students at-risk for Chronic Absenteeism. This includes students currently missing 5 to 10 percent of school or who were chronically absent the last school year.

For example, the collaborative problem-solving team monitoring attendance data may determine that a student is missing more than two days of school in a month. Discussion with the teacher and the principal might reveal that the student has been bullied or is struggling with academics. Small group counseling or a small group academic intervention might be needed to address the root cause of the absences. Tier 2 supports may involve multiple stakeholders, such as guidance counselors, school resource officers, attendance officers, teachers, parents/guardians and administration. Tier 2 supports address other barriers to strong attendance including unreliable or no transportation, unsafe paths to school and unmanaged chronic health conditions.

If a school is using a tiered system like NJTSS for prevention, intervention and enrichment, the collaborative problem-solving team, or the team that reviews student-level data and makes decisions about interventions, can be utilized to review attendance data and make determinations about supports. Criterion can be established with regards to absences that the team can use to determine which students are in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports. Strategies are only as effective as the data that is informing them.

Administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals representative of all student subgroups are essential to implementing Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies; creating a welcoming environment that makes students and families feel connected to school; and taking positive and early action when a student is absent. While a welcoming first impression helps all students, it is vital for helping the most vulnerable students feel safe and supported, especially if they are in an unfamiliar school setting. The following strategies illustrate potential supplemental supports and interventions.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 2

In-School Supports

- Develop personal connections with students who are in danger of, or are currently, chronically absent.
- Make personal calls to families of at-risk students if a student is absent 2 or more days in a month.
- Request weekly check-ins with appropriate school personnel.
- Partner with the transportation department to promote predictable schedules. Provide a way for families to be notified in case of delays.
- Utilize your [Intervention and Referral Services](#) or collaborative problem-solving (NJTSS) team for individualized strategies and interventions for responding to absences due to learning, behavior or health difficulties.
- Identify resources available to improve chronic absenteeism rates among various student populations.
- Provide students with resources to launder clothes or uniforms, or exchange clothes or uniforms when necessary.
- Offer access to health care through a school nurse or other health and dental providers who can come to the school.
- Use data available to look for trends among siblings, both within the same district and within the same school. This data can be useful in both a preventative manner and in a problem-solving manner.
- Develop a Mentoring Program in Your School by
 - o Placing students with mentors based on attendance records from prior year(s). Assign mentors at a ratio of 4:1, students to mentors;
- Train teachers with the most effective, [research-based practices for English language learners](#).

Out-of-School Supports

- Make home visits for students who have excessive absences.
- Create and send personalized “We missed you!” postcards home when a student is absent.
 - o. Messaging with cumulative absences are two times more effective than messaging without. Exact wording is important for all written communications (letters, text messages, postcards).
- Develop attendance plans with families and students. Consider requiring families/ guardians and students to sign an attendance contract.
- If applicable, consider mental health needs when communicating with parents/ guardians.
- Share and connect families with community resources to fill a pressing need that may be hampering school attendance, e.g. need to find transitional housing; need to combat food insecurity; need to get counseling referrals for parent and/or student(s); need to provide interpretation for limited English proficient family members.
- Consider weekly parent/ guardian check-ins.
- Connect with community organizations that may help with fostering a more culturally-responsive school environment.
- Connect students with appropriate medical care and/or homebound services when needed.
- Keeping students, families, and school staff physically healthy and emotionally healthy supports attendance.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 3: Intervention Strategies for Students Who Are Chronically Absent

Tier 3 offers more intensive, individualized interventions and supports for students and families determined by the school data, intervention and referral services or collaborative problem solving (NJTSS) team. Tier 3 strategies complement Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies and complete the continuum. These strategies will be necessary for only a few students who are already chronically absent or have a history of chronic absence.

In this section you will find intervention strategies for students who are chronically absent, which means that students have missed 10 percent or more of the school days.

The school collaborative problem-solving team can develop an inventory of school and community resources for supporting individual students and their families. These may include family counseling agencies, afterschool programs, recreation programs, social service agencies and the court system. Tier 3 interventions often require a coordinated response amongst agencies (e.g., the school, Department of Children and Families, law enforcement, and Department of Human Services) and/or [wraparound services](#). If a disability is suspected, the child may be referred to the school's child study team. If the student has an IEP, an IEP meeting may be needed to discuss and identify supports and services to improve attendance. Specific Tier 3 strategies are listed below. Please note, these strategies are to be deployed in addition to Tier 1 & Tier 2 strategies that are presently in place.

Applying the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) to Address Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

Tier 3

In-School Supports

- Reflect upon Tier 3 interventions as a place to re-assess and develop programmatic responses to barriers when needed. For example, if a large number of students are impacted by a transportation issue, use data-based decision-making techniques to develop realistic and appropriate school-wide solutions.
- Evaluate alternate transportation options.
- Evaluate alternate scheduling options.
- Utilize a [Check and Connect](#) system to prevent behavior that may lead to extended absence or suspension.
- Utilize student support staff to identify individual barriers to satisfactory attendance.
- Refer students for additional support and evaluation as needed. For instance, if a student is dealing with anxiety, a school support person such as a social worker, mentor, counselor or psychologist may be able to assist the student or suggest outside resources to parents that they may utilize.

Out-of-School Supports

- Meet with families/guardians and appropriate district and community personnel to address chronic absenteeism. Consider having parents/guardians sign a written acknowledgement of attendance planning document as well as acknowledge child's record of nonattendance.
- Provide students and families with mandatory mentoring programming.
 - o. Have the school counselor, social worker, school resource counselor, or appropriate school personnel provide appropriate mentoring services.
- Refer the Student and Parent/Guardian to Outside Agencies and Legal Intervention.
 - o. Have the school counselor, social worker or appropriate school personnel refer the student and family for additional services, such as through the Department of Children and Families' Children's [System of Care](#), [The Children's Home Society of New Jersey](#), and other community organizations.
 - o. Have appropriate school personnel refer the student and family to applicable legal intervention. As a last resort, districts are required to have policies related to truancy regarding legal intervention for families having students with excessive, unexcused absences.
- If permitted by the district, screen students for childhood trauma and make evidence-based treatment available to them.

Appendix C: Resources

Additional Websites and Resources

- NJDOE's [Attendance](#) webpage. This site features additional resources schools can utilize to prevent and address chronic absenteeism.
- To effectively address chronic absenteeism, it will require school and district teams to understand and address root causes contributing to student absenteeism. When analyzing or selecting strategies to address absenteeism we recommend school and district staff consult [NJDOE's Strategy Resource Guide](#), which includes:
 - Evidence-based and/or promising practices, "Look fors" associated with quality implementation and universal components associated with the success of any strategy
- [Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight](#)
 - At the district level, officials can start by identifying elementary schools with average daily attendance rates at or below 95 percent to collect information about chronic absenteeism and act upon it.
- [Everyone Graduates Center](#)
 - The mission of the Everyone Graduates Center is to develop and disseminate the know-how required to enable all students to graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and civic life.
- [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) Accountability Profiles Companion Guide \(state.nj.us\)](#)
 - The purpose of this document is to describe the accountability requirements and the data included in the Accountability Profiles to enable schools and districts to: 1) review the data for accuracy; and 2) begin to identify areas of need for planning.
- [Healthy Schools Campaign: Chronic Absenteeism](#)
 - Offers resources regarding the impact of student health on chronic absenteeism, the importance of addressing chronic absenteeism in the early grades and other related reports and briefs.
- [National Mentoring Resource Center](#)
 - The goal is to improve the quality and effectiveness of youth mentoring across the country through increased use of evidence-based practices and sharing practitioner innovations.
- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(OJJDP\), US Department of Justice](#)
 - OJJDP's mentoring work aims to both increase opportunities for youth to have mentors and improve the quality and impact of the mentoring they receive.
- [Regional Educational Laboratory](#)
 - Evidence-based approaches to address chronic absenteeism or improve attendance
- [School Discipline Consensus Report](#)
 - Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System
- [Tiered Systems of Support worksheet](#)
 - Use this planner to track and assess progress with tiered interventions.

You may also contact the Office of Student Support Services at attendance@doe.nj.gov with any questions.

District and School Self-Assessment Tools (from Attendance Works)

- [District-Self Assessment Tool](#)
- [District Planning Tool](#)
- [School Practice Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [School TEAM Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Early Education Program Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [School-Based Health Program Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Expanded Learning Program Self-Assessment Tool](#)

Appendix D: References

“10 Facts About School Attendance” Attendance Works

“A Tiered Approach to Ensuring Students Are Present, Engaged, and Supported in the 2020–21 School Year” [Ed Policy](#)

Balfanz, R. and Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation’s Public Schools. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Goodman, S. and McIntosh, S. (2016). Integrated Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Blending RTI and PBIS. The Guilford Press.

“Mapping the Early Attendance Gap” [Attendance Works](#)

“Principles of the Restorative School” [Michigan Department of Education](#)

“Restorative Practices in Schools” Attendance Works

Sellman, E., Cremin, H., and McCluskey, G. Restorative Approaches to Conflict in Schools, (London: Routledge, 2014), page 265.

“Technical Assistance” Attendance Works

“The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools”. [ed.gov](#)

“Toolkit” Attendance Works

“Understanding the Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence in Your School” [Attendance Works](#)

University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. (2014). Five key findings for middle grades from looking forward to high school and college” [Attendance Works](#)