



Ohio

Ohio's Resource Guide to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

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Getting Ohio's Students to School Every Day

It is important for every student in Ohio to attend school every day. Missing too much school has long-term, negative effects on students, such as lower achievement and graduation rates. There are many reasons students miss school, but districts often can directly impact their students' attendance. By using data to identify and support students who may need extra support and services, districts can target supports to get students to school every day.

In December 2016, the Ohio General Assembly passed [House Bill 410](#) to encourage and support a preventative approach to excessive absences and truancy. Further, House Bill 410 directs the Department to develop materials to assist school districts in providing teacher and staff training on the implementation of the strategies included in the State Board of Education's [model policy](#) for violent, disruptive or inappropriate behavior, including excessive absences that stresses preventative strategies and alternatives to suspension and expulsion. Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, several changes take effect. Schools cannot suspend or expel students for missing too much school. Districts will amend or adopt policies that outline their interventions and plans for students who miss too much school.

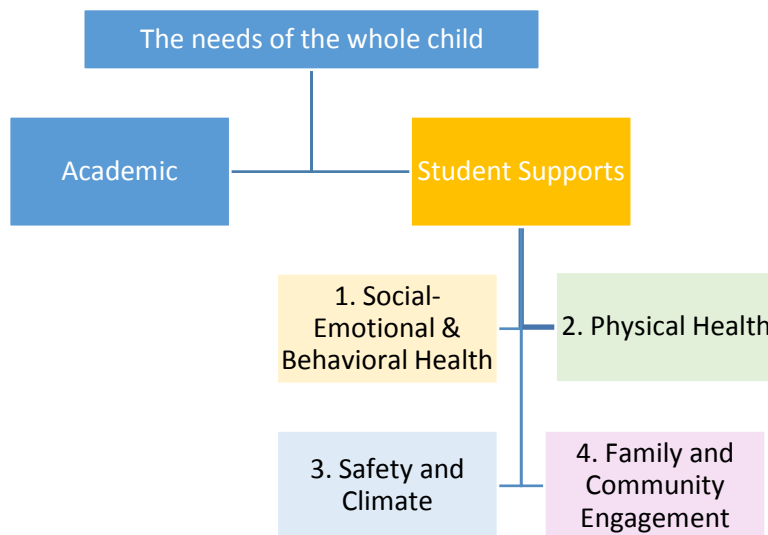
The Ohio Department of Education has produced this resource guide: *Ohio's Resource Guide to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism – Getting Ohio's Students to School Every Day*. The purpose of the resource guide is to assist school districts in strategically planning and implementing prevention and interventions universally and at the student-level to reduce absenteeism because it is important for Ohio's students to be in school every day ready to learn. Oftentimes, non-academic barriers keep students from attending school every day. By systematically incorporating student supports into district and school improvement activities, many of these barriers can be addressed before they keep Ohio's students out of the classroom. Further, community partnerships can augment this work and inform the work of schools and districts. Lastly, developing personalized attendance plans for students who are chronically absent or habitually truant allows teams to address unique barriers to attendance.

When developing policies and implementing programs to address attendance concerns, it is important to understand that students often face non-academic challenges that keep them from being present and engaged in school every day. Addressing the needs of the whole child includes both a focus on academic supports and student supports that address a variety of needs.

Student supports can be considered in four categories, although these categories are often connected and overlap: social-emotional and behavioral, physical health, safety and climate, and family and community engagement. More information about these categories can be found on pages 20-21. A student may face barriers in each of these four areas and interventions should be tailored to the student's unique needs. Not all students and not all communities will have the same needs, but assessing the needs of students within these categories can help create a strategic action plan.

Ohio already does *much* work to support the needs of students beyond just academic concerns, but often there could be a more balanced emphasis on high quality instruction aligned with content

standards and the right conditions for motivation and learning. The following chart is a simplified visual of the crucial categories of student supports. While this resource guide is focused on the supports needed to implement the HB 410 requirements for proactive approaches to attendance, it will do so from the perspective of these categories of student supports.



This guidance will answer six key questions for schools and districts:

1. What is chronic absenteeism?
2. What factors impact attendance?
3. Why is chronic absenteeism a priority for Ohio?
4. What can a district do to improve attendance?
5. Who else can be involved to reduce absenteeism?
6. What are examples of strategies that schools are implementing to meet the needs of students that may help address attendance concerns?

This guide also provides resources to assist districts in implementing attendance policies, implementing preventative and supportive strategies for attendance and discipline, and facilitating conversations about attendance with students and families.

Please send any comments or questions about Ohio's Resource Guide to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism to school_improvement@education.ohio.gov.

Understanding Chronic Absenteeism and How to Reduce it

DEFINITIONS

It is important to use common language and definitions when developing student support strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism. Below are several definitions Ohio uses to describe student attendance and student supports as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Ohio Revised Code, and Ohio Administrative Code. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically.

Chronic Absenteeism: ESSA defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason — excused absences, unexcused absences and absences due to out-of-school suspensions. Students who are chronically absent are missing a significant amount of school, thus, missing out on important classroom time. Chronic absenteeism is different from truancy and from average daily attendance.

Habitual Truancy: Ohio Revised Code defines habitual truancy as “any child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty or more consecutive hours, forty-two or more hours in one school month, or seventy-two or more hours in one school year.”

Excessive Absences: Ohio Revised Code defines excessive absences as a child of compulsory school age who “is absent with or without a legitimate excuse from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty-eight or more hours in one school month, or sixty-five or more hours in one school year.”

	Consecutive hours	Hours per school month	Hours per school year
Habitual Truancy	30 <i>without</i> legitimate excuse	42 <i>without</i> legitimate excuse	72 <i>without</i> legitimate excuse
Excessive Absences	--	38 <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse	65 <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse
Chronic Absenteeism	--	--	10% <i>with or without</i> legitimate excuse

While chronic absenteeism, habitual truancy and excessive absences are not interchangeable, there is overlap in definition. Truancy only looks at unexcused absences, whereas, chronic absenteeism and excessive absenteeism take all absences into account. Research from Attendance Works shows that the reason a student misses school does not matter, but the amount of days he/she misses has an impact on learning. Responses to truancy are typically administrative and can lead to court intervention. Schools and districts should create a plan to reduce chronic absenteeism by implementing strategies in partnership with families and community organizations that address root cause in an effort to prevent student absences.

A student may be both habitually truant and chronically absent due to how each are defined and calculated. For instance, if a student has missed 72 hours without legitimate excuse, this also may be 10 percent of the school year if school has only been in session for 720 hours thus far in the year. On the other hand, a student can be chronically absent without being habitually truant if the absences have been with legitimate excuse. Similarly, a student may be excessively absent and chronically absent at the same time depending on the point in the school year and the number of hours missed.

Review Ohio's Habitual Truancy and Excessive Absences FAQ for all House Bill 410 requirements [here](#).

Excuses from School Attendance: [Ohio Revised Code Section 3321.04](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code 3301-69-02](#) set forth the situations in which an absence can be excused, including the following:

- Illness of the child;
- Illness in the family necessitating the presence of the child;
- Quarantine of the home;
- Death of a relative;
- Medical or dental appointment;
- Observance of religious holidays;
- College visitation;
- Absences due to the student's homeless status;
- Absences due to a student's placement in foster care or change in foster care placement of any court proceedings related to the student's foster care status;
- Emergency or other set of circumstances in which the judgement of the superintendent of schools constitutes good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

Districts also are permitted to add to the list of excused absences as provided in state law.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): [The OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports](#) defines PBIS as a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. More information about PBIS can be found on page 24.

Trauma-Informed School: A trauma-informed school is one in which all students and staff feel safe, welcomed and supported and where the impact of trauma on teaching and learning is addressed at the center of the educational mission, thereby ensuring that all individuals (students and staff) meet their maximum potential (adapted from <https://traumasensitiveschools.org>). More information on trauma-informed schools can be found on page 24.

Positive School Climate: Every district should develop a definition of positive school climate that reflects local community values and priorities. One example of a definition of a positive school climate is:

A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting and caring relationships throughout the school community, no matter the setting. More information on positive school climates can be found on page 26.

Restorative Practices: Restorative practices seek to address interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict through dialogue among those harmed by and those engaged in wrongdoing. More information on restorative practices can be found on page 26.

Integrated Student Supports: Integrated student supports focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement to improve student learning, increase student attendance, build stronger families, and develop healthier communities.

Community Learning Center: Ohio Revised Code defines a community learning center as a school that works with community partners to provide comprehensive educational, developmental, family and health services to students, families and community members during and outside of school hours. A community learning center is one model for schools and districts to integrate student supports into building and district improvement activities. More information on community learning centers and integrated students supports can be found on page 27.

What do we know about Chronic Absenteeism in Ohio?

16.4%

The Every Student Succeeds Act requires chronic absenteeism to be a reported measure as part of the state's accountability system. Ohio has chosen to use chronic absenteeism a measure of school quality or student success on school and district report cards.

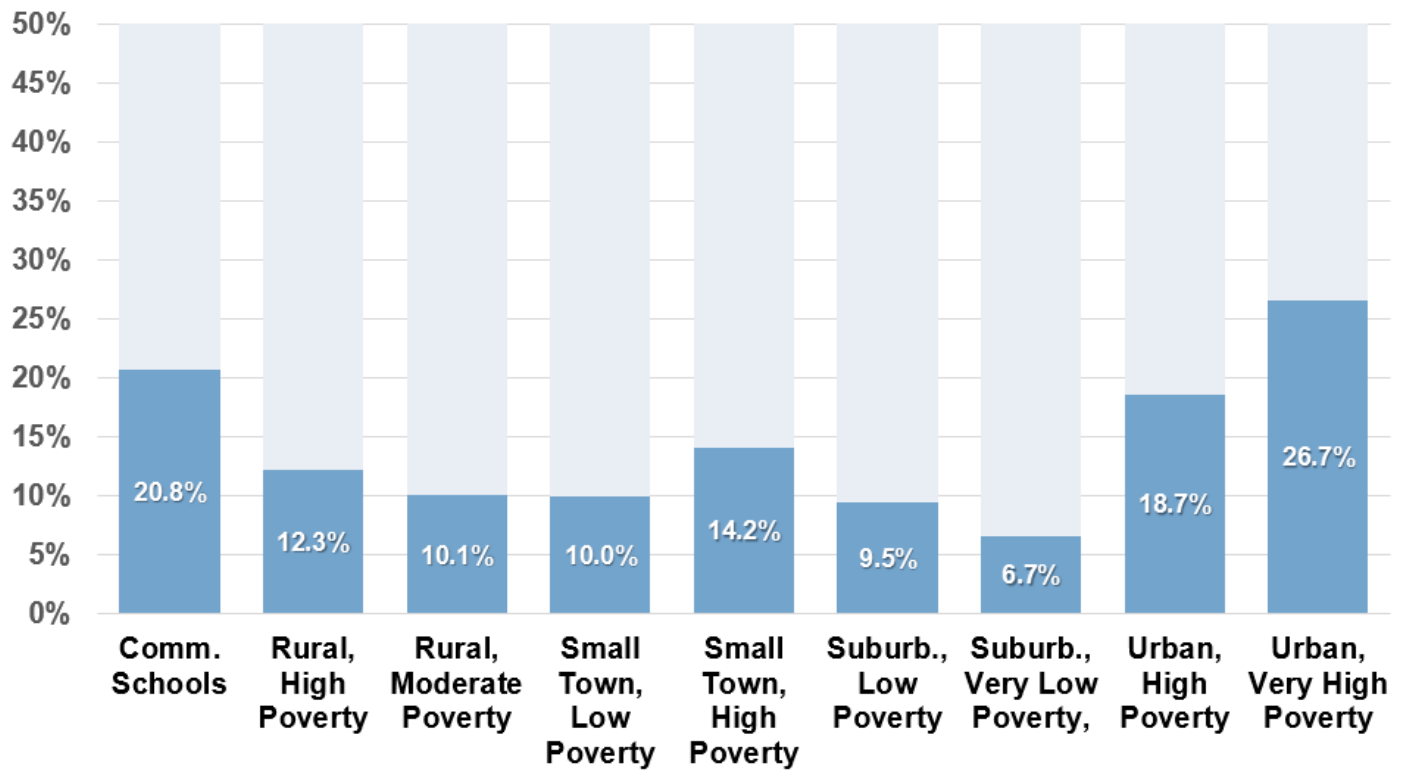
According to Attendance Works [*10 Facts About School Attendance*](#), chronic absenteeism is a leading indicator for student achievement and graduation rates. By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Children who are chronically absent in early grades are less likely to read on grade level by third grade.

Attendance is impacted by multiple issues; therefore, chronic absenteeism spans across multiple demographics. Chronic absenteeism rates differ among typologies, subgroups, and grades, but every district, every subgroup and every grade still has students who are chronically absent.

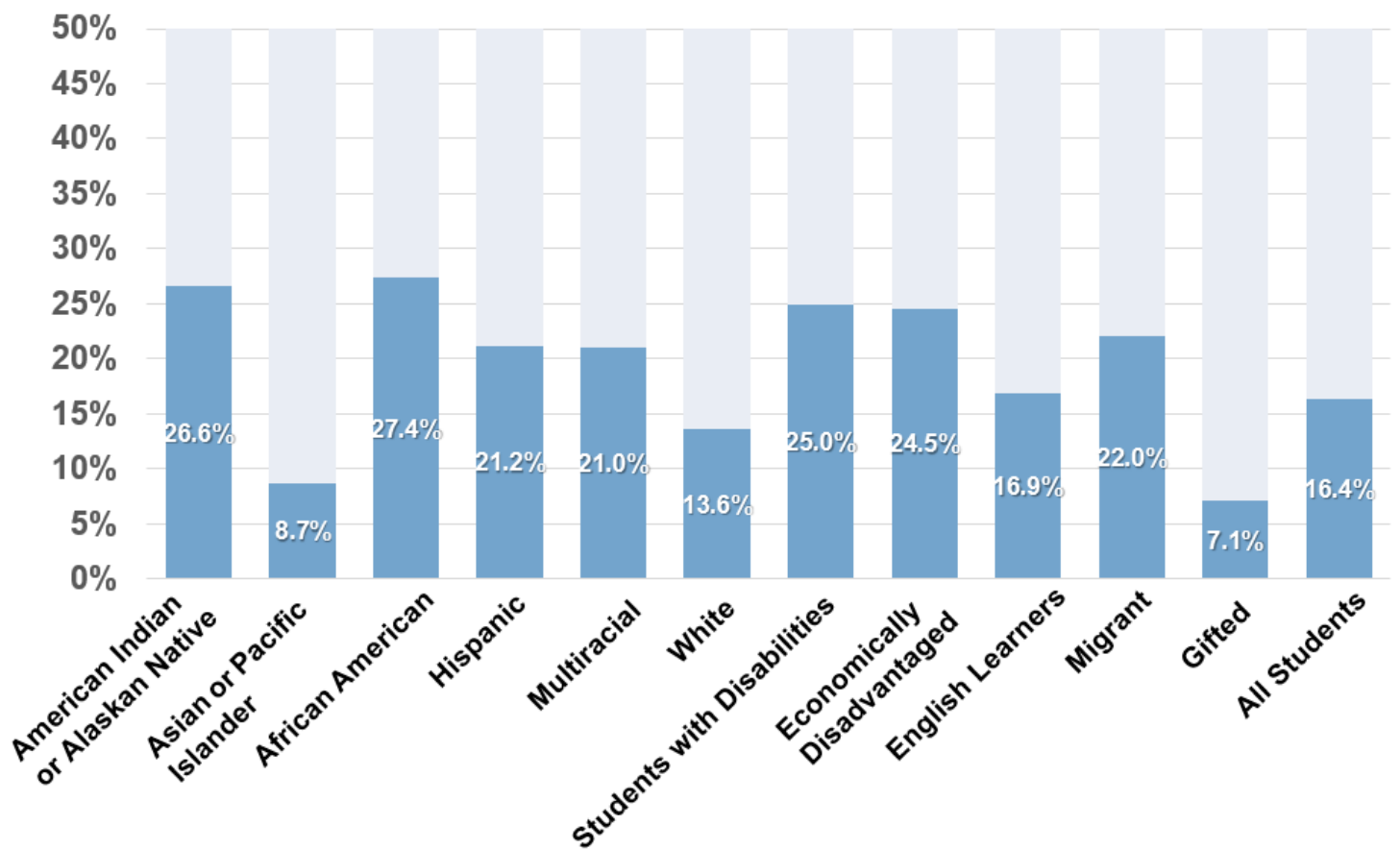
We also know that despite demographics, any student who is chronically absent is more likely to have lower achievement and is less likely to graduate than their non-chronically absent peers. Ohio's state chronic absenteeism rate is 16.4 percent, so we still have much work to do.

Data used in the following analysis is from the 2016-2017 school year.

Chronic Absenteeism by District Typology: Some typologies have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than others, but every typology has students who are chronically absent.



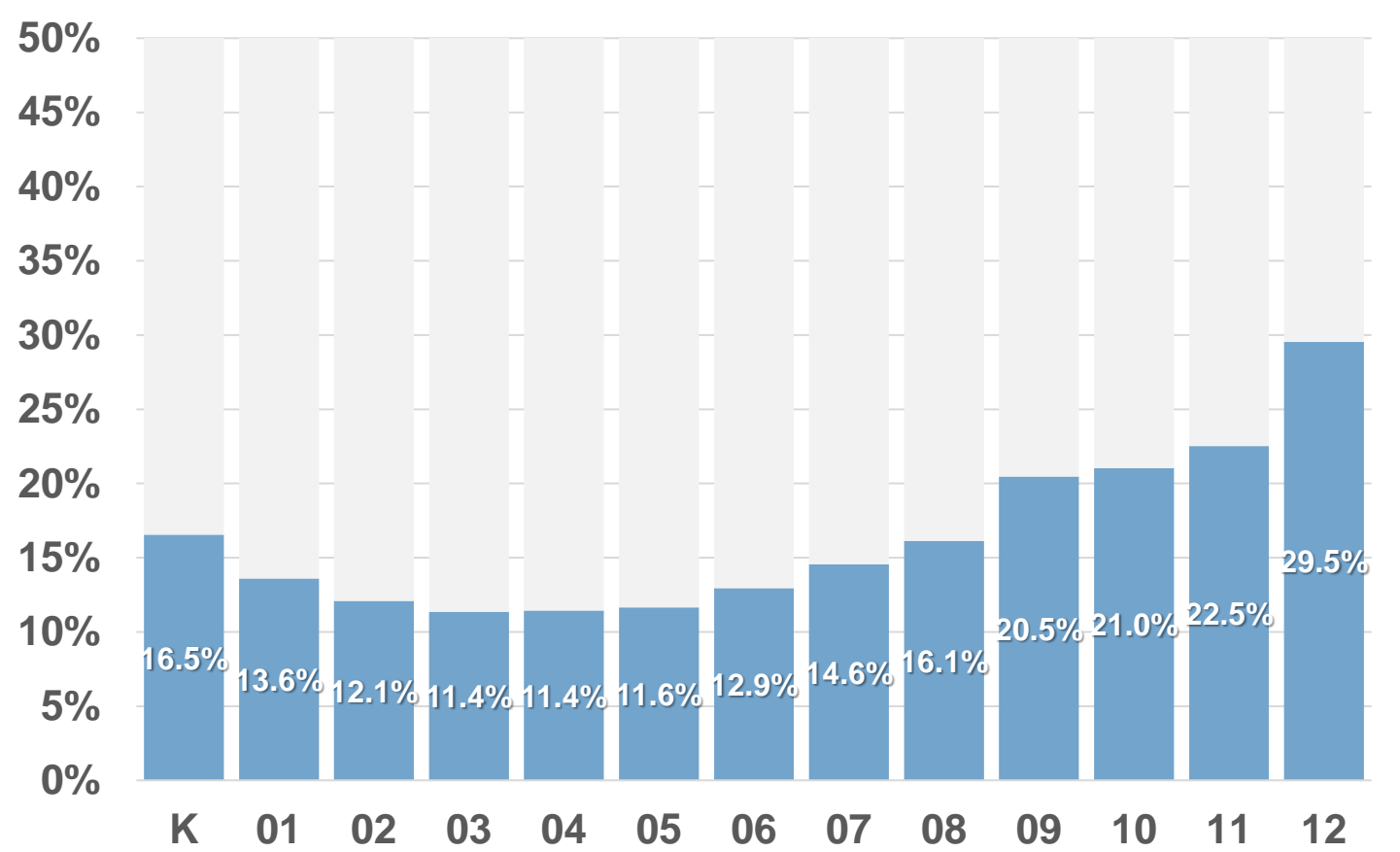
Chronic Absenteeism by Subgroup: Subgroup data helps shine a light on the problem of chronic absenteeism. By looking at subgroups of students, supports and resources can be more appropriately targeted and differentiated. For instance, what barriers do English Learners face that may be different from barriers that students with disabilities face?



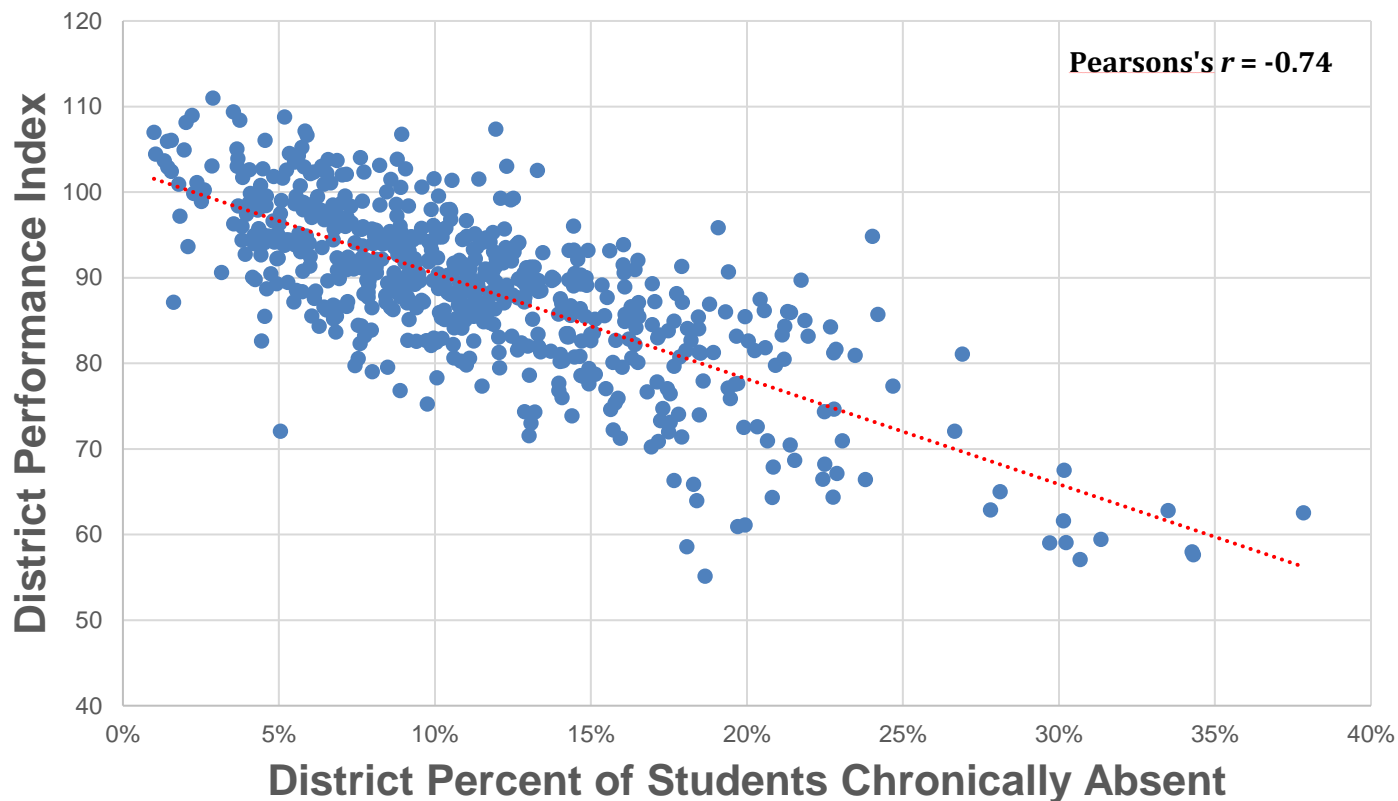
Chronic Absenteeism by Grade: We also know that chronic absenteeism varies by grade level with peaks in transition years.

Ohio’s seniors have the highest rates of chronic absenteeism. Why are our seniors missing so much school? How can we engage them differently?

We also see high rates of chronic absenteeism among our kindergarteners. We know that students who are chronically absent in early grades are more likely to continue to be absent later in their school careers. Students are less likely to read on grade level in third grade if they are chronically absent in kindergarten. When students fail to develop the habit of regular attendance in early grades, chronic absenteeism may continue. How can we engage parents to support regular school attendance — even in kindergarten? How do we promote parent teacher partnerships to support an engaging and welcoming culture and climate?



Chronic Absenteeism and Achievement: Chronic absenteeism is a predictor of lower achievement. In Ohio, districts with higher rates of chronic absenteeism have lower Performance Index scores. Performance Index measures the test results of every student. The higher the achievement level, the more points a school or district receives for the measure.



Information and Information about Chronic Absenteeism:

- The U.S. Department of Education releases information on [chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools](#).
- Chronic absenteeism is a growing concern in Ohio's schools. See the [Cleveland Plain Dealer's article](#).
- The National Association of Elementary School Principals' [Six Causes and Solutions for Chronic Absenteeism](#).
- Thomas B. Fordham Institutes' article on [Ohio's ESSA Plan: Using reduced chronic absenteeism as a measure of student engagement](#).
- [Attendance Works State Analysis and Action](#).
- [The Cleveland Campaign for Grade Level Reading Attendance Toolkit](#).
- Attendance Works [resources for early education and reducing chronic absenteeism](#).
- The Campaign for Grade Level Reading's information on chronic absenteeism and [3rd grade reading success](#).
- Attendance Works [Attendance in Early Grades](#).

WHY ARE STUDENTS CHRONICALLY ABSENT?

Attendance Works has identified four overarching reasons why students become chronically absent:

1. Myths and misperceptions about attendance;
2. Barriers to attendance;
3. Aversions to school; and
4. Disengagement from school.

Districts and buildings should analyze their data and work closely with students and their families to determine why students are absent. Communicating in a culturally sensitive manner with parents around myths and misperceptions about regular attendance is essential. Schools and districts should partner with community members, students and their families to identify and address barriers to regular attendance by developing an absence intervention plan for students who miss too much school.

Attendance Works, 2014:

Myths	Barriers	Aversions	Disengagement
Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused.	Chronic disease or lack of health/dental care.	Academic or social struggles	Lack of engaging or culturally relevant instruction
It is okay to miss a day of school here and there.	Caring for siblings or other family members.	Being teased or bullied	Peer pressure to be out of school
Attendance only matters in later grades.	Unmet basic needs: transportation, food, housing, clothing.	Poor school climate or unsafe school conditions	No meaningful relations with adults at schools
Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are seen as daycare and not school.	Trauma	Parents had a negative experience	High suspension rates and disproportionate school discipline.
	Feeling unsafe at school		

USING DATA TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Addressing chronic absenteeism can have a substantial return on investment when used as a school improvement strategy. Getting students to school every day prepared and engaged may require innovation and re-thinking current practices and policies, including the following:

- Generate and act on absenteeism data;
- Create and deploy positive messaging and measures;
- Use a tiered system to target interventions and support;
- Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism;
- Ensure shared accountability throughout the whole community;
- Positively engage parents and families.

Action Item 1: Routinely analyze and utilize data to understand chronic absenteeism:

To determine scope and magnitude of chronic absenteeism locally, districts and schools should develop systems or processes to collect, analyze and act on student-level attendance data regularly. Analyzing student-level attendance data allows districts to differentiate student supports and work with students before they become chronically absent or habitually truant. Looking at data weekly or bi-weekly allows schools and districts to see patterns of attendance problems and proactively align supports.

Producing school and district reports that disaggregate attendance data by school, grade and subgroup allows schools and districts to differentiate interventions and strategies. It also allows districts and schools to make informed decisions by highlighting patterns of absenteeism. Creating maps to track attendance by zip codes or neighborhoods can shine a light on underlying patterns due to systematic community issues. Understanding and monitoring data allows the district or school to know which students have become habitually truant and must be referred to the school or district absence intervention team.

Local data tracking and reporting should ensure accuracy of student attendance. Districts should develop local policies about tracking and reporting partial attendance and absences and collaborating with educational partners to share data. More information about attendance data tracking and reporting policies can be found [here](#).

Districts and schools should collaborate and coordinate with community partners to analyze multiple data sources, develop a plan to use student supports to reduce systematic barriers to attendance, and operationalize and evaluate a whole-system approach to addressing chronic absenteeism. Inviting community partners to the table ensures a community-wide approach to reducing barriers to attendance and strategic implementation of interventions. Having a diverse group to share and discuss data can ensure a holistic picture of which students are chronically absent and any barriers they are facing in getting to school — whether they are systematic and community-wide or student-specific.

Representatives from community agencies may include:

1. Local government agencies;
2. Hospital representatives;
3. The health department;
4. Advocacy organizations;
5. Child protective services;
6. Mental health agencies;

7. Before-/after-school organizations;
8. Juvenile court representatives, including mediators;
9. Law enforcement;
10. Faith-based organizations;
11. Local businesses.

Representatives from the district may include:

1. School health personnel;
2. Preschool representatives;
3. Student support personnel (social workers, parent liaison, attendance officers, transportation, pupil services);
4. School counselors;
5. School psychologists;
6. Data support staff.

Structures to analyze data should be incorporated into existing teams whenever possible to ensure alignment among systems and practices. Utilizing existing structures within the [Ohio Improvement Process](#) allows schools and districts to analyze attendance, achievement data and behavioral data side-by-side. Teacher-based teams, building leadership teams, and district leadership teams meet regularly to analyze data, evaluate practices and develop interventions.

Schools and districts should utilize these structures to:

1. Analyze and utilize data to inform action. All parties should bring relevant data to the table to paint a holistic picture of root causes of barriers and necessary student supports
2. Organize a systemic, community-wide response and a plan for program implementation across the whole district using community partners
3. Promote shared accountability and continuous improvement for all stakeholders
4. Adopt a comprehensive, actionable, tiered approach to improving attendance

Data should help answer the following questions:

1. Is chronic absenteeism a problem?
2. Is attendance getting worse or getting better over time?
3. Is absenteeism concentrated among particular students?
4. Is it higher or lower among particular grades?
5. Are identified Tier I and Tier II interventions effective?
6. Is there a pattern of underlying causes of absenteeism?

Key questions to ask while analyzing data:

1. Is chronic absenteeism wide spread or concentrated in specific neighborhoods or schools?
 - a. If it is concentrated in specific neighborhoods, what community resources are available to help inform the data to find the root cause and strategically plan interventions?
 - b. If specific schools have high levels of absenteeism, a culture-climate analysis could determine what may be impacting attendance for a particular school or classroom.
2. How does attendance vary among schools, grades, subgroups or neighborhoods?
3. What is the relationship between attendance patterns and achievement?
4. What is the relationship between attendance and disciplinary data?

Resources on using Data to Address Chronic Absenteeism

- U.S. Department of Education Data-Sharing toolkit for Communities. Find out [how to leverage community relationships while protecting student privacy](#).
- U.S. Department of Education's Every Student Every Day: [Realizing the Power of Chronic Absence](#) Data to Ensure Safe, Supportive Schools for all students.
- Attendance Work's [Ensuring an Equal Opportunity to Learn: Leveraging Chronic Absence Data for Strategic Action](#).

Action Item 2: Organize a strategic and systematic community-wide response

Using data allows districts and schools to develop a strategic and systematic plan to address absenteeism in their communities. Students, parents and community members should be part of the conversation and planning process by using surveys and focus groups to gain student and family perspectives on attendance, school culture and resources to uncover any underlying issues impacting multiple sectors of the community. Improving and sustaining good attendance through the implementation of a year-round approach that involves:

- Analyzing and utilizing data regularly;
- Engaging in a positive culture and climate through positive messaging to students and their families;
- Developing sustainable and strategic partnerships with community resources;
- Effectively evaluating interventions and programs;
- Ongoing engagement with students, their families and the community; and
- Creating a community-wide culture that understands the link between attendance and academic achievement.

Positive engagement is an important component to a community-wide response and should begin before the start of the school year. Positive messaging should include:

- A strategic messaging campaign for students, parents and community partners that is positive and culturally relevant;
- Emphasis on the importance of regular attendance; and
- Information on the academic consequences of missing school.

Students are more likely to show up when they have a strong connection to their school, including peers, teachers, instruction and programming. School culture should be warm and welcoming in order to help families feel comfortable participating in school activities. Schools should reach out to families to understand their unique needs and any barriers to regular attendance.

Capacity building is important to developing and implementing a community-wide response.

Districts should ensure that all school staff are trained and supported through high-quality professional development and ongoing coaching to implement school- and district-wide strategies to improve attendance. Community partners also should receive training to understand and implement strategies at the school, district and community levels.

Strategic partnerships to engage the entire community are integral to the success of a community-wide response to chronic absenteeism. Analyzing community-wide data can be a platform for developing strategic partnerships to support broad, community-wide messaging as well as addressing common barriers to attendance. Community partners may provide student supports to address attendance barriers or provide information to inform the work. If large numbers of students are

chronically absent, it is likely that systematic barriers are making it difficult for students to attend school. Schools should use attendance data along with information from families and community partners to understand what is getting in the way of regular attendance. Schools and districts should include community partners as they develop proactive practices and programs to address common barriers students are facing.

Resources for Engaging Community Partners to Address Attendance Problems

- [Every Student Every Day: A Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism](#) by the U.S. Department of Education and federal partners [here](#).
- [Attendance Work's Resources to engage community partners](#), including city leaders, school districts, schools, teachers, early childhood providers, afterschool providers, researchers, parents, funders, health care providers, policymakers and advocates.

Resources on Positive Attendance Messaging and Engagement

- Attendance Works' [Making Every Day Count: Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students](#).
- Attendance Works' [The Power of Positive Connections Toolkit](#).

Action Step 3: Promote Shared Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Increasing attendance is a continuous process that should be monitored and adjusted regularly using data and evaluation of interventions. Shared accountability ensures all stakeholders have a common understanding of the goals and how they will determine if they are making progress. Districts and schools should make the goals public and share updates on progress to key stakeholders. Everybody can celebrate the success or be a part of the solution.

District leadership should set attendance goals with realistic and achievable targets as part of the district's continuous improvement plan and then align strategies and action steps to achieve the goal. A community-wide attendance plan, including school- and district- level goals, strategies and action steps, should be developed before the beginning of the school year. The plan should be informed by the previous year's data and insights and include:

- An overview of the extent of the chronic absenteeism issue;
- An assessment of the school's capacity to address barriers students face and schoolwide strategies to address these barriers;
- Target goals;
- A description of the tiered interventions and strategies; and,
- Implementation strategy and timeline.

Action Step 4: Adopt a comprehensive, actionable, tiered approach to improving attendance

While a strong schoolwide culture of attendance is an essential component to reducing absenteeism, it is not always sufficient. Some students who are chronically absent may need more specialized interventions to get to school every day. Using data to identify students who are chronically absent or are at-risk of becoming chronically absent, schools can differentiate support. Severe absenteeism of a student may suggest a family or community challenge that requires additional layers of support for key issues such as physical or behavioral health, homelessness, domestic abuse or community violence.

Using a multi-tiered approach can leverage opportunities to address absenteeism before it becomes severe for students. It also allows the school or district team to identify students for more comprehensive interventions.

PLANNING DISTRICT AND SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS:

Using data can help differentiate tiers of support. At the state-level, this data can be used to target specific supports for districts and determine the intensity of supports. At the district level, data should be used to determine students who fall into each of the tiers of support: missing less than 10 percent, missing between 10 and 20 percent and missing more than 20 percent of school.

Multi-tiered Systems of Supports

Utilizing a multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) framework, district and school teams create a continuum of supports and interventions that are differentiated in nature and intensity in order to match student need. Following the three-tiered model of prevention and intervention, MTSS uses a range of systemic and individual approaches to meet the needs of all students.

Universal supports target the entire school population and are designed to promote positive attendance habits. Often, this is enough to capture students who would otherwise be absent.

Universal supports can include:

- Recognizing good and improved attendance through classroom attendance contests; celebrating individual progress through schoolwide programming; or hosting schoolwide or community-wide attendance events;
- Educating and engaging students and families by greeting families at the door in the morning; explaining the importance of attendance regularly; or providing enrichment activities to engage students;
- Regularly monitoring attendance data and setting goals;
- Identifying and addressing common barriers to getting to school by providing breakfast at school; providing a food pantry, creating a walking school bus to get students to school safely, or providing health interventions in the school; and
- Revising discipline policies that are keeping students out of school.

Moderate, or secondary supports, are targeted interventions designed for students who need additional supports beyond, yet in combination with, universal-level approaches. These can include:

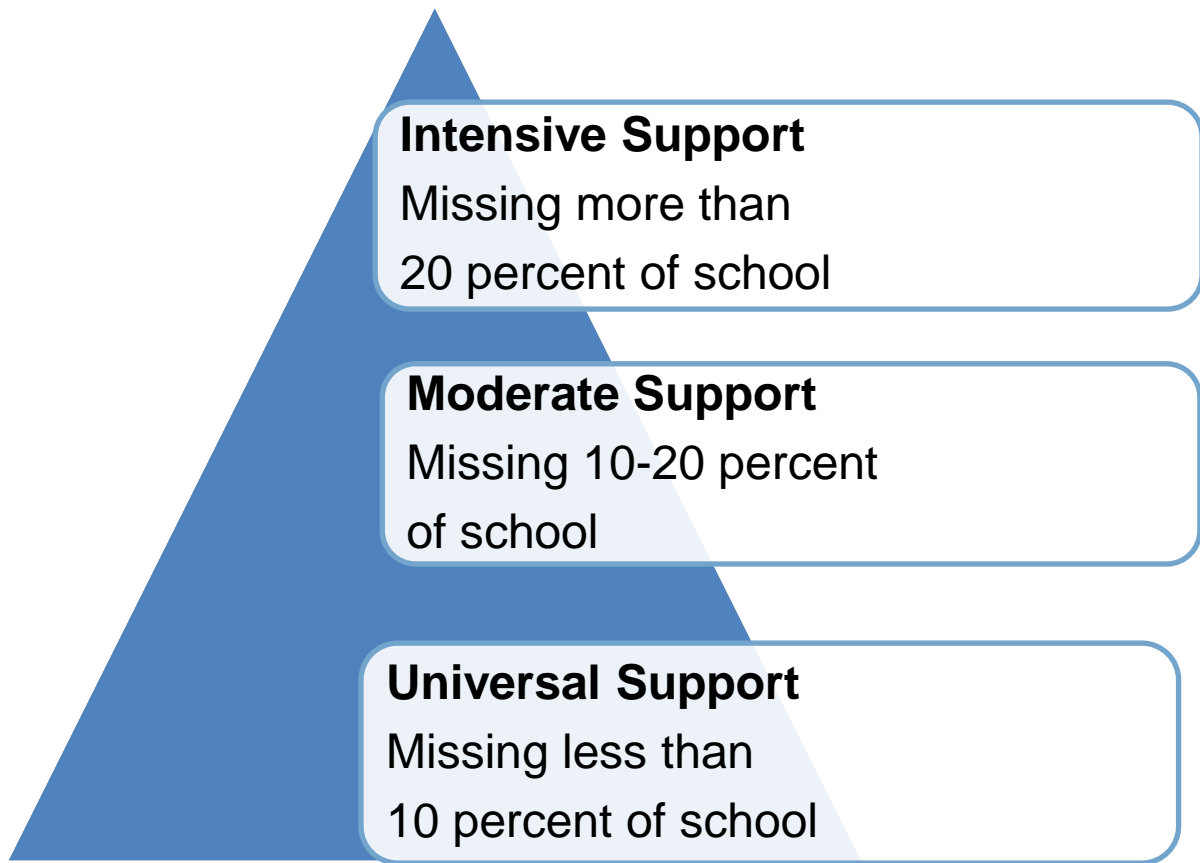
- Providing personalized early outreach, such as attendance buddies or morning check-ins for students who are at-risk of being chronically absent;
- Developing tailored attendance intervention plans for students who are excessively absent;
- Sending individualized letters home that identify the amount of missed school; and
- Connecting the student to a mentor such as a teacher, community member, or older student.

Intensive, or tertiary supports, can include:

- Case management with coordinated community partners;
- Referrals to mental health, child welfare or other support services;
- Using strategically chosen interventions and community partners to assist with this work;
- Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed; and

- Some students in this tier may be habitually truant – refer the student to the school absence intervention team.

The following tiered approach shows that universal, or schoolwide, approaches begin with early intervention and prevention and only add additional comprehensive interventions when the previous tier does not meet the needs of the student. This tiered approach should be used to drive conversation among school leaders and the school absence intervention team. Interventions and strategies at each level should align with existing interventions and the school's continuous improvement plan, such as [Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports](#), trauma-informed care, restorative justice, before-/after-school programming and mentoring. Interventions at each tier should be customized and tailored to different students and different grades.



Interventions to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Works' [3 Tiers of Intervention](#).

Attendance Works' [Improving Attendance for our Most Vulnerable Students](#).

Attendance Works' [Adding Early Intervention Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism](#).

Chronic Absenteeism Approaches for Schools and Districts

Attendance Works' [Teaching Attendance Toolkit for Schools](#).

Attendance Works' [Superintendent's Call to Action](#).

Attendance Works' [Teacher Attendance 2.0](#).

Attendance Works' [resources for working with parents](#).

STRATEGICALLY TARGETING STUDENT SUPPORTS TO ADDRESS STUDENT AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

A focus on student attendance should not happen in isolation. Addressing student needs must be considered in the context of multiple categories that may vary by community and by student.

Strategically choosing community partnerships is key to this work. Districts and schools cannot do this alone and shouldn't have to. Having strategic and sustainable partnerships are integral to providing resources to break down barriers students are facing in getting to school. Community partnerships are the force that will drive this work forward. It ensures shared accountability as well, because it is a whole-community responsibility.

Community partnerships may include:

- Gift cards to reward families when a student is at school every day for a month;
- Incentivizing regular school attendance with washers and dryers that parents are able to use, which is a way to actively engage parents and help them feel comfortable in the school;
- Partnering with county child welfare agencies to coordinate services and educational stability for foster youth.

Though it is important to have partners who offer financial or in-kind resources, everybody in the community should be invested in reducing absenteeism. Community-wide messaging could include the following:

- Having the local news weather man remind kids to get to school;
- Messaging on church bulletin boards; and
- Family physicians reminding families of attendance.

Districts and schools should work together with community partners through a strategic planning process to determine if there are common underlying barriers causing chronic absenteeism. These barriers should be addressed in both the district's and building's focused plans. Using attendance data, achievement data and data provided by community partners, teams should determine what student supports should be a priority for schools and the district and then identify district and schoolwide interventions. The district should support schools in the implementation.

As introduced earlier, the Department has defined four categories of student supports:

1. Social-emotional and behavioral;
2. Physical health;
3. Safety and climate; and
4. Family and community engagement.

Different schools and different organizations may take other approaches to defining the categories, but the important factor is to assess student needs and take a strategic approach to addressing them. Students may face barriers in each of these four areas, and interventions should be tailored to a student's unique needs. Not all students and not all communities will have the same needs but assessing the needs of students within these categories can help create a strategic plan of action.

Within each of these four categories, there are multiple subcategories. Examples of subcategories are listed below.

1. **Social-Emotional & Behavioral.** These support students' social-emotional and behavioral growth and their abilities to navigate their social worlds through interactions with adults and peers.

- a. Social-Emotional Learning
- b. Behavior
- c. Discipline
- d. Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports (PBIS)
- e. Crisis intervention
- f. Workforce readiness skills (e.g., soft skills)

2. **Physical Health.** These support the students' physical health and well-being.

- a. Exercise, physical education and wellbeing
- b. Vision, hearing and dental
- c. Nutrition
- d. Medical issues
- e. Hygiene
- f. Drug abuse and prevention
- g. Dating and sexual health

3. **Safety and Climate.** These support student (and educator) safety with a focus on classroom, building- and district-level needs.

- a. Personal safety and assault prevention
- b. [Anti-harassment, intimidation and bullying](#)
- c. [P-20 Safety plans](#)
- d. Climate
 - Norms and values
 - Student engagement
 - Shared school vision
- e. School conditions
 - Class size
 - Surroundings

4. **Family and Community Engagement.** These assist schools in working with families and community partners to support students' needs.

- a. Partnerships with community, business and nonprofit partners
- b. Academic connections, such as after-school programming
- c. Individual student/multi-agency support plans
 - Family care plans (Family and Children First)
 - HB 410 absence intervention teams
- d. Sustainable, reciprocal community engagement and planning with community
 - Open facilities (such as community meeting rooms)
 - Serving on boards and planning committees
 - Access to services (e.g., dental clinics in schools open to all community members)
- e. Integrated student supports

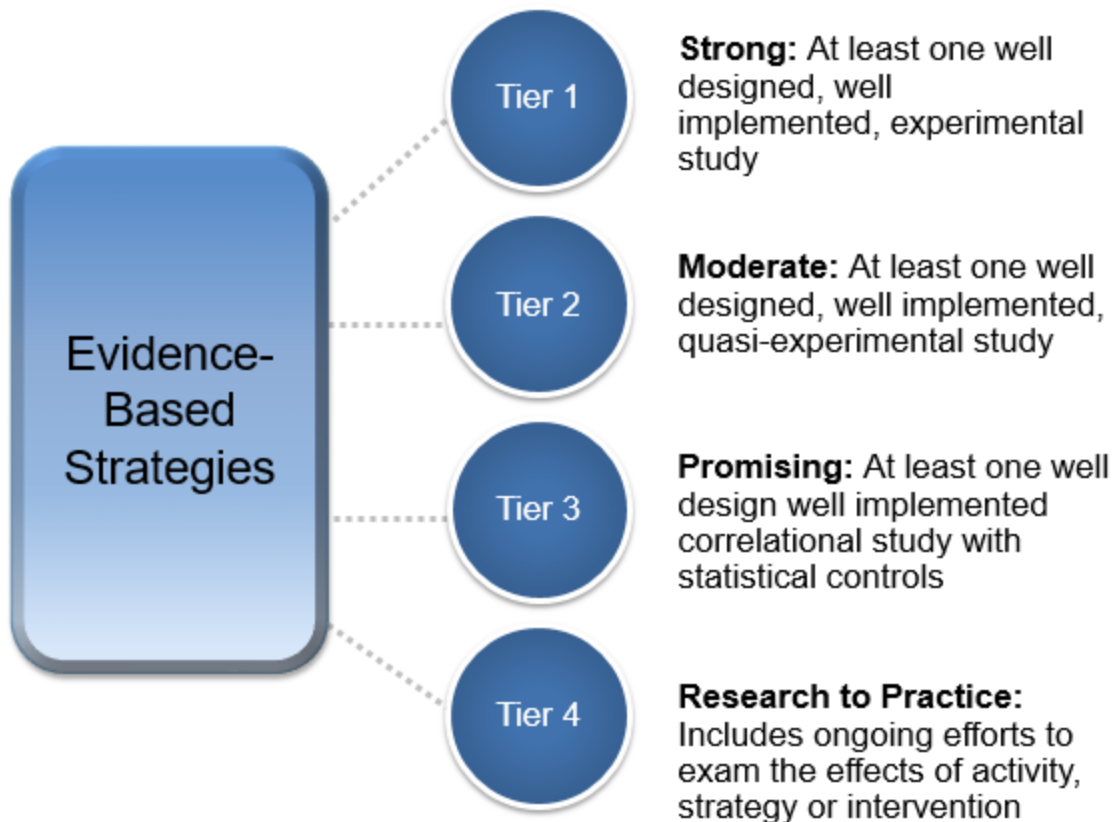
AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM

As part of its Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, Ohio has committed to developing a multi-faceted, integrated approach to providing districts with the knowledge, data, tools and resources necessary to address their students' needs with strategies that are supported by evidence of success.

What does this mean within the context of addressing chronic absenteeism? Data analysis will be an essential tool for districts as they work to target supports to students who either are chronically absent or are at-risk of being chronically absent. Further, districts will want to use a range of quantitative and qualitative data, generated by the district or by the broader community, to paint a complete picture of the reasons *why* students are chronically absent.

Once they have determined who needs additional supports and the primary reasons why those students may be chronically absent, districts are faced with the question of how to effectively address their students' attendance challenges. As districts develop their strategic plans of action for reducing absenteeism, it will be important for students, buildings and districts to focus resources on programs and interventions that work. To improve the likelihood of success, districts should aim to leverage programs, services or interventions for which there is existing evidence, established through intentional and rigorous research and evaluation that the program will lead to improved student attendance outcomes. Where such evidence does not yet exist, districts should select and implement interventions with the express intent to regularly assess effectiveness through data analysis and program evaluation.

Indeed, there will be circumstances — including for the purpose of completing school improvement plans or grant applications — under which districts will be required to identify programs and interventions that meet specific tiers of evidence as outlined in ESSA. Federal guidance includes the following descriptions of the four tiers of evidence:



Ohio is in the process of developing several new resources to further clarify these tiers of evidence and to support districts as they are determining how best to address their students' needs related to attendance. These resources will include the development of Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse, an online resource that will be designed to enable districts to easily identify evidence-based interventions, programs and practices relevant to their particular needs. In conjunction with developing the clearinghouse, itself, the state will develop a process to review, evaluate and categorize interventions in terms of their supporting evidence of success, leveraging existing, appropriate resources where possible.

Until the Department creates the Ohio Evidence-Based Clearinghouse and finalizes the process for reviewing evidence of success, there is no system or process in place whereby Department staff will be responsible for reviewing the levels of evidence associated with the particular programs, practices or interventions that districts may elect to leverage. Thus, the examples of strategies included in this document are innovative strategies and approaches that may meet the evidence-based threshold once developed but have not already been designated by the state as meeting a particular tier of evidence.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES CURRENTLY BEING IMPLEMENTED IN OHIO SCHOOLS

Social-Emotional and Behavioral

Schools and districts may find that social-emotional and behavioral health are barriers to student attendance. These pieces impact student motivation, engagement and overall behavior, which impact attendance. When students feel good about themselves, their relationships with staff and peers, and the school as a whole, they want to attend school on a regular basis. Social and emotional learning focuses on growing the social and emotional competencies of students through classroom instruction, student engagement in positive activities and active parent and community involvement in program planning, implementation and evaluation.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Behavior, whether appropriate or inappropriate, can greatly impact attendance. A student's behavior and how it is managed in the school environment can influence the student's motivation, engagement and additional behavior choices. All of which can promote or deter connection to the school and attendance. In some cases, behavior policies and practices can result in removal from the classroom and the building and contribute to chronic absenteeism. PBIS is a general education initiative that proactively addresses behavior supporting all children and youth.

The OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports defines PBIS as a decision-making framework that guides selection, integration and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. In general, PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: data for decision-making, measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices. The PBIS Framework emphasizes that appropriate behavior should be taught with the same emphasis and supports as academics. Students are taught schoolwide behavior expectations and are rewarded for demonstrating expected behaviors. In addition to teaching and reinforcing positive behavior, schools recognize the importance of student supports and intentionally plan interventions and supports that are differentiated in nature and intensity in order to meet the needs of *all* students. This includes providing a continuum of supports that address promotion of student wellness, growth and positive development, prevention for students identified with risk and intervention for students experiencing difficulties.

PBIS Resources:

Learn about [Ohio's PBIS](#).

Ohio Department of Education [overview of PBIS](#).

Ohio Department of Education [PBIS resources for educators](#).

Ohio Department of Education [PBIS resources for administrators](#).

Ohio Department of Education [Implementing PBIS through the Ohio Improvement Process](#).

Ohio Department of Education [PBIS resources for families](#).

Trauma-Informed Practices

A trauma-informed school is one in which all students and staff feel safe, welcomed and supported and where the impact of trauma on teaching and learning is addressed at the center of the educational mission, thereby ensuring that all individuals (students and staff) meet their maximum potential (adapted from <https://traumasensitiveschools.org>).

It is an approach that understands the prevalence of traumatic experiences for students and understands the effects of trauma on child development and learning. Past, present or ongoing trauma can impact a student's ability to establish relationships with staff and peers, feel safe and connected in the school environment, demonstrate safe and appropriate behaviors, and make academic progress. Struggling in these areas can result in a student disconnecting from school and increase absenteeism. In some cases, trauma experiences can be triggered or created in the school environment. This can result in a student avoiding school. Other times, this can result in a high-stress response that is demonstrated through disruptive or aggressive behavior. Students are then disciplined through classroom removal, suspension and expulsion, which may further traumatize a student. Trauma-informed approaches can help teachers and school staff understand what trauma looks like in children, how to identify trauma, how to prevent re-traumatization and how to appropriately respond to trauma. When students feel safe and supported, they are more likely to feel connected to school and have higher rates of attendance.

Resources on Trauma Informed Practices:

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [information on trauma and children](#).

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services [information and resources on trauma-informed care](#).

Washington State's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [Compassionate Schools initiative](#).

Trauma Sensitive Schools [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#).

Trauma Aware Schools website [information on trauma-informed schools](#).

[Resources for school personnel](#) from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network.

Wisconsin Department of Education [Resources for schools to help students affected by trauma learn](#).

Trauma Sensitive School [checklist](#).

Physical Health

Schools and districts may find that students are chronically absent due to barriers affecting their physical health. Students who have chronic illnesses, such as asthma or diabetes, miss more school than students without chronic illnesses. Other physical health factors to consider include: nutrition and diet, vision care, dental care, physical activity, hygiene, dating and sexual health, and drug abuse prevention. Schools and districts may need to implement strategies to address the physical health of their students.

[Start Talking!](#)

Gov. John R. Kasich and First Lady Karen W. Kasich have launched *Start Talking!*, an initiative to give parents, guardians, educators and community leaders the tools to start the conversation with Ohio's youth about the importance of living healthy, drug-free lives.

Through this effort, educators and parents have access to an array of programs aimed at arming parents, guardians, teachers and students with resources that could, in time, help young people resist the lure of drugs and ultimately turn the tide of abuse in our state.

Start Talking! features information tools; TEACHable Moments for the classroom, a program pairing student athletes and law enforcement officials; and an opportunity for schools and communities to get help building youth resiliency through evidence-based programs.

Start Talking! Resources:

Start Talking! [tips for teachers](#).

Start Talking! [tips for school districts](#).

Start Talking! [drug prevention program](#).

Start Talking! [Health and Opioid-Abuse Prevention Education Curriculum \(HOPE\)](#)

Safety and Climate

School climate and culture, including prohibitive discipline practices, may keep kids out of school. Schools and districts should review and revise policies to ensure chronically absent students are supported and re-engaged in school rather than further excluded from class through punitive discipline practices. Further, students may become chronically absent due to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.

Every district should develop a definition of positive school climate that reflects local community values and priorities. One example of a definition of a positive school climate is:

A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting and caring relationships throughout the school community, no matter the setting.

School Safety and Climate Resources:

The Advancement Project's [Student Code of Conduct Tips and Examples](#).

The Advancement Project's [Model School Discipline Policy](#).

Safer Schools Ohio [Anti-harassment, intimidation and bullying resources](#).

The Advancement Project's [Disciplinary Consequences Matrix](#).

Restorative Practices

Case Western Reserve University's Schubert Center for Child Studies provided the following information on restorative practices:

Restorative Practices seek to address interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict through dialogue among those harmed by and those engaged in wrongdoing. Rather than shaming or stigmatizing wrongdoers, the restorative approach seeks to reintegrate wrongdoings back into the community to restore relationships and reduce the likelihood of future wrongdoing. The dialogue can occur a variety of ways at school, including mediation, reconciliation, restorative conferencing, community meetings, restorative circles, and family conferencing. Restorative Practices can be applied schoolwide or in individual classrooms.

Resources on Restorative Practices:

The Schott Foundation for Public Education's [Restorative Justice Guide for Educators](#).

Oakland Unified School District [Restorative Justice Implementation Guide](#).

San Francisco Unified School District's [Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles](#).

[Restorative Schools website](#) for information and resources on restorative practices.

The Advancement Project's [Disciplinary Consequences Matrix](#).

Family and Community Engagement

Effective and inclusive family and community engagement is an important step in meeting the needs of all students – especially districts' most vulnerable students. By engaging students, their families and community organizations, districts can develop well-rounded and aligned local plans that support the learning of all students.

Integrated Student Supports

An integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement leads to improved student learning, increased student attendance, stronger families and healthier communities. Strategic partnerships allow schools to respond to unique local needs and include the voices of students, families and residents. Working with community partners is a strategy for bringing together educators, families and community stakeholders to attain collective impact — creating an environment where the community gathers to support the education of its youth and where young people are connected to learning through experiences in the community.

Schools and districts should choose which supports are integrated into their work with significant parent, student and community feedback to address unique needs and concerns in a local context. Schools and districts may incorporate school-based health, dental or behavioral health services. Opening the school to community activities in the evening and on weekends increases support for the school and students. Partnering with higher education institutions to provide after-school programming for students and their families increases engagement.

Developing a community learning center is one approach a school or district may choose when working to integrate student supports into their work. Ohio Revised Code defines a community learning center as a school that works with community partners to provide comprehensive educational, developmental, family and health services to students, families and community members during and outside of school hours.

Integrated Student Supports Resources:

[Communities in Schools](#)

[Coalition for Community Schools](#)

[Community Learning Center Institute](#)

[Cincinnati Public School's Community Learning Centers](#)

[U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods](#)

[Ohio Revised Code Community Learning Centers](#)

[Harlem Children's Zone](#)