

# Sending the Right Message about Attendance to Parents and Students

## WHAT TO SAY TO STUDENTS

Beyond the talking points for parents, you should add in some messages targeted to students of all ages. As they grow older, they need to hear this message from peers, as well as teachers and parents.

- School is your first and most important job. You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.
- When you're not here, we notice because we care and we want you to be successful. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs. In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, \$1 million more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- A student who misses 10 days or more during a school year is 20 percent less likely to graduate from high school and 25 percent less likely to ever enroll in college.
- If you think missing a day here or there won't matter, think again. By missing just one day every two weeks, you would be on track to miss 10 percent of the school year – and that can happen before you know it.
- School only gets harder when you stay home too much. Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.
- We understand that you will get sick sometimes and need to stay home. The important thing is to get to school as often as possible to help stay on track with assignments.
- Chronic absence can affect your ability to earn a living. Dropouts are less likely to succeed in a career. And even those who do graduate won't do well at work without good attendance habits. Nearly 80 percent of people in prison lack a high school diploma.
- Skipping school may sound fun, but it can have serious consequences, including jail time, fines, or even the loss of your driver's license.
- If you're having trouble getting to school – issues with transportation, bullies, etc. – tell someone, such as a guidance counselor or your parents. Many schools offer services for the whole family to help, for example, with issues concerning access to health care and reliable transportation.

# EXERCISE: CREATING A FAMILY PLAN FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

**Time: 20-25 minutes**

## **Part I: Review Student Attendance Success Plan**

Hand out the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheets and Academic Calendars to participants and walk through the different parts of it so that they know what you'll be discussing:

- » My child's attendance goal
- » Strategies to reach the attendance goal
- » Your family's help bank
- » Discuss the value of creating a Student Attendance Success Plan.

Say: What we do every day in our family matters. As parents and caregivers, we can have a powerful impact on our child's attendance and success in school.

Let's acknowledge that sometimes families face particularly challenging circumstances that require formal services, but right now, we are focusing on what families can influence.

I am going to guide you through to creating your family's Student Attendance Success Plan. At the end of this process, you will have clear goals for your child's attendance, strategies you will use to support your child's attendance, a backup plan for when you need help getting your child to and from school and a way to know whether your child is on track to meeting his attendance goal.

## **Part II: Setting Attendance Goals**

Helping families develop a Student Attendance Success Plan begins with examining students' current attendance rate and absences and formulating goals for improvement. To go through this step, you can either provide school attendance data to families (if you have access to it and the family has signed a consent form), or have families self-report.

- » Direct families to the Student Attendance Success Plan. Ask them to fill out the first part of the first section of the worksheet, titled My Child's Attendance Goal. The questions included in this section are:
  - My child was present \_\_\_\_\_ days. My child was absent \_\_\_\_\_ days.
  - The number of school days that have passed is: \_\_\_\_\_

To be ready for the next grade, my goal is to ensure my child misses no more than \_\_\_\_\_days for the rest of the year.

- » Stress that 9 or fewer absences a year equals satisfactory attendance.
- » Stress that 5 or fewer absences a year equals good attendance
- » Go around the room to see if anyone needs help picking a goal for improvement.

### Part III: Identify Concrete Strategies Each Parent Can Take

Review with the group some of the possible strategies suggested on the Student Attendance Success Plan worksheet:

#### Possible Strategies To Reach Your Child's Attendance Goal

- » I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will reward my child for attending school every day with \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from chores, a special treat).
- » I will make sure my child is in bed by \_\_\_\_ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for \_\_\_\_ a.m.
- » If my child consistently complains of a stomach or head ache, I will send him/her to school anyway and call \_\_\_\_\_ to check in with my child during the school day.
- » If my child has a cold but no fever (lower than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- » I will find a relative, friend, or neighbor who I can call on take my child to school if I can't or if he/she misses the bus.
- » If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out how he/she can make up missed schoolwork.
- » I will set medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school.

Ask participants if they can think of additional strategies not included on the worksheet that they would imagine could be helpful (to them, or to their peers) in reaching their attendance goal. Chart their ideas on a flipchart or white board.

Ask families to take time to think about 1 or 2 action steps they will commit to taking to support their child getting to school on every day on time. Have them write it down on their Student Attendance Success Plan.

Ask for 3-4 volunteers to share what actions steps they are committing to with the group. Chart them on the flipchart or white board. Alternatively, ask them to go around in a circle at their tables and share their commitments within their small groups.



# MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

- My child was present \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- My child was absent \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than \_\_\_\_ for the rest of the year. *(9 or fewer absences = satisfactory attendance and 5 or fewer absences = good attendance)*

## POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending preschool every day with \_\_\_\_\_.  
(i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from doing chores, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by \_\_\_ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for \_\_\_ a.m.
- If my child complains of a stomachache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to preschool anyway and call \_\_\_\_\_ so that he/she can check in with my child during the day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to preschool anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend or neighbor who can take my child to preschool if I can't make it.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out what he/she missed.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after 3:30 p.m.

To improve my child's attendance, I commit to the following:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*We will review progress to meet this goal in two months.*

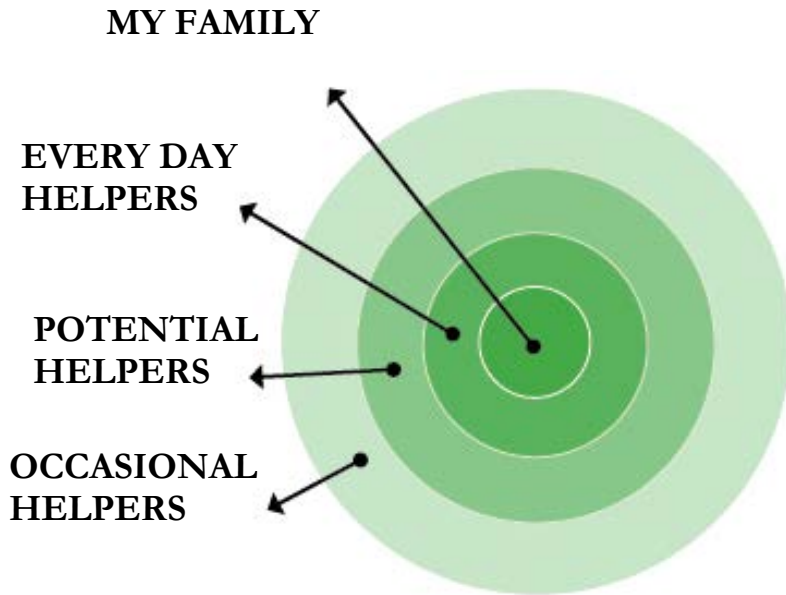
Family Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



To learn more, please visit [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)  
Adapted with permission from the DeVos Family Foundation, and from materials created by [Early Works](#) at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Oregon.

# MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK



1. **My Family:** List who lives in your house.
2. **Every day Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
3. **Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help everyday, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
4. **Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help—if you ask.

1. **My Family:**
2. **Every day Helpers:**
3. **Occasional Helpers:**
4. **Potential Helpers:**

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2016-2017 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

September 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

October 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

November 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

December 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

March 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

May 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



**CHRONIC ABSENCE** = 18 absences  
(10% of school year)

**Warning Signs** = 10 to 17 absences

**Satisfactory Attendance** = 9 or fewer absences

- My child was present \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- My child was absent \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than \_\_\_\_ for the rest of the year.



Attend Today  
*Achieve*  
Tomorrow



**DID YOU KNOW...**

Starting in preschool,  
too many absences  
can cause children to  
fall behind.



**Attendance  
Works**

Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

# Tips for Good Attendance



- Build regular routines for bed time and morning.
- Develop back up plans for getting to preschool if something comes up.
- Avoid scheduling trips when preschool is in session.
- Don't let your child stay home unless truly sick.
- Keep a chart of your child's attendance at home.
- Talk about the importance of attendance.

[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)



**Attendance  
Works**

Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence