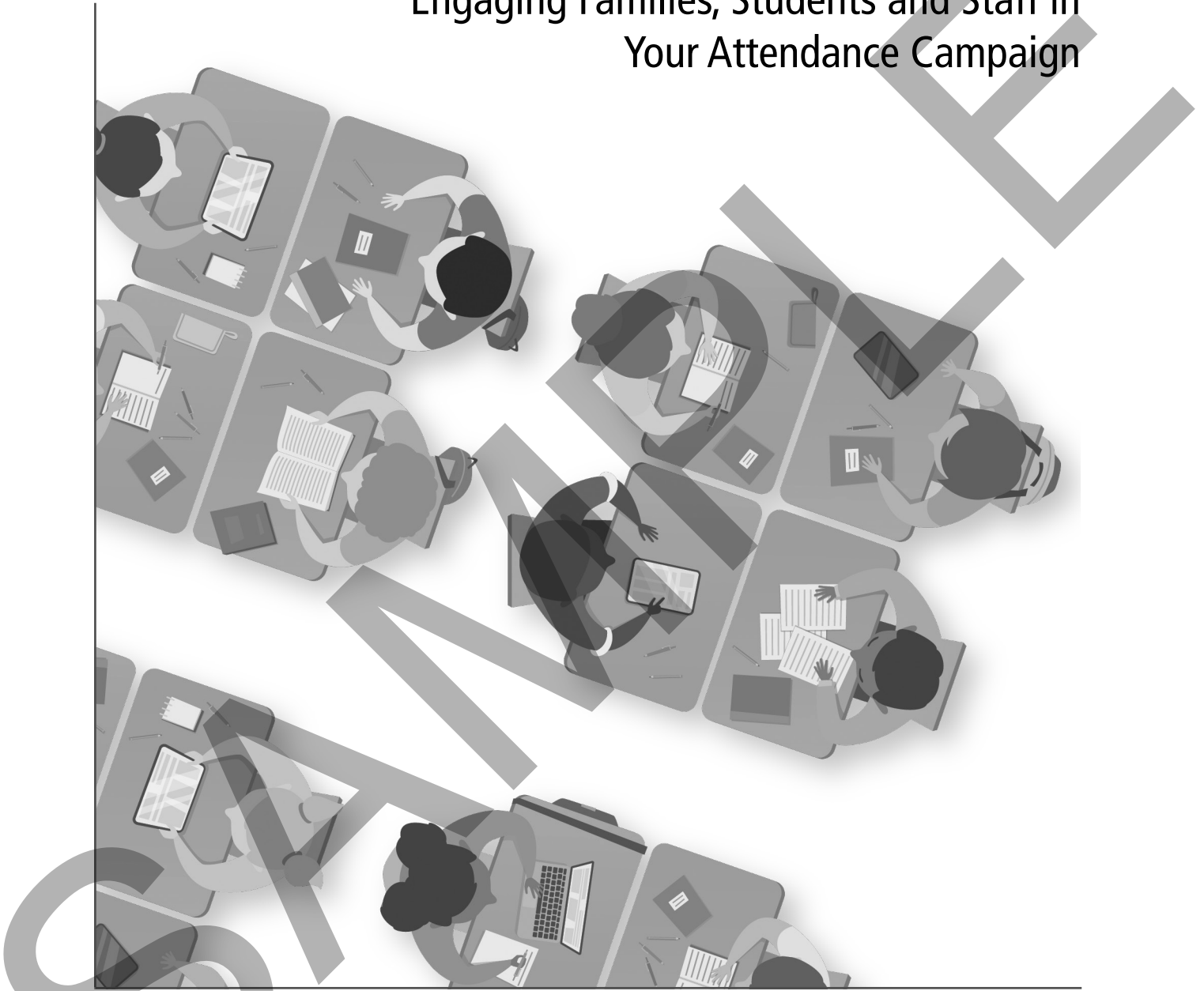


Attendance!

Engaging Families, Students and Staff in
Your Attendance Campaign



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SAMPLE



Survey families about attendance

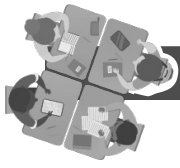
The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overstated. So why do kids miss school? Survey *families* to find out. A customizable version of this survey, which you can adapt to your needs, is available in the online portal.

Attendance Survey for Families

Below are some common reasons students are absent or tardy during the school year. Check all the reasons that apply to your child's absences or tardies. Please use the back of this sheet for explanations or additional comments. Your information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time!

Reasons for absences or tardies (*please check all that apply*):

- I was not aware that my child was absent or tardy until notified by the school.
- My child does not feel safe going to and from school.
- My child does not feel safe at school.
- My child has poor relationships with teachers.
- My child has poor relationships with other students.
- My child is bullied at school.
- The school attendance policy is hard to understand.
- My child has not completed homework.
- My work schedule makes it difficult to get my child to school.
- Family issues make regular attendance difficult.
- My child has changed schools.
- My child is sometimes needed at home to care for a family member.
- My child can't keep up with schoolwork.
- School is not challenging. My child is bored at school.
- Family trips and vacations.
- Cultural and religious holidays.
- Medical and dental appointments.
- Language problems.
- Custody issues.
- Transportation issues.
- Financial issues.
- Family emergency.
- My child has been ill.
- My child sometimes misses the bus.
- Other. (*Please explain.*) _____



Plan a year-long attendance campaign

Improving attendance is key to increasing student achievement. A year-long campaign to boost student attendance can lead to a year of academic success. Start out with a strong emphasis on attendance during the opening weeks of the school year and then keep interest high with activities every month of the year.

If possible, start planning your year-long attendance campaign before school ends in the spring. That way, there's plenty of time to hit the ground running with a great campaign when the new school year begins. But keep in mind that there's no wrong time of year to implement an attendance campaign. The following ideas can be used throughout the year.

School-year milestones at your first faculty meeting

- Introduce the idea of having a year-long attendance campaign to the entire staff.
- Show the staff version of the presentation, *Attendance Matters!*
- Share statistics on how regular attendance leads to increased academic performance and higher test scores. (See page 7.)
- Provide student attendance data from the previous year.
- Review your school/district attendance policy. (See page 7 for more information on forming an attendance policy.)
- Share resources for overcoming barriers to regular attendance.
- Inform staff of resources they can use that come with this kit.

During the first week of school

- Have teachers impress upon students the importance of regular school attendance. Use the lesson plans provided on page 69 in this binder.
- Kick off a contest to come up with an attendance slogan for the year.
- Ask each class to create an attendance decoration for the door to their room.
- Show that you have specific goals by posting a visible measure for student attendance in a prominent place in the school entry area.
- Include your school or district attendance policy with the lunch menu sent home to families.
- Highlight attendance in your first newsletter, on your school website and on social media. (See Section 9 in this binder for newsletter articles on attendance.)
- Have teachers call the families of every student who is absent or tardy. Most students don't miss school during the first week. Those who do may have problems that should be addressed immediately.



Working with low-income families

It's important to consider the needs of low-income families during your campaign to improve attendance. Research has shown that schools with high dropout rates have lower attendance rates—and a high percentage of students from low-income homes.

Family economic status can act as a barrier to attendance for many reasons. Low-income families may be unable to get their children to school regularly due to inflexible work schedules, lack of transportation or unreliable child care for younger siblings. They may feel their parenting skills are being called into question by the school. Students from low-income families may view working to support the family as more important than attending school. In addition, low-income families may be unable to provide children with school supplies or appropriate clothing.

Fortunately, there are things your school can do to support low-income families and promote good attendance. Your school can:

- **Help families meet basic needs.** Family liaisons can link families with community organizations to help with the basics of food, clothing and shelter. See page 54 for more information on connecting struggling families with community agencies.
- **Inform families about the importance of attendance.** Students from low-income families tend to move more frequently than their more affluent peers. Let families know how frequent moves can affect their child's school performance. Some families, given these facts, may delay a move until the end of the school year.
- **Provide before-school and after-school child care.** Children from low-income families are more likely to arrive at school late or be picked up from school early because of families' work schedules. If these families do not show up at work, they don't get paid. Before- and after-school child care ensures that children can experience a full day of school.
- **Consider forming teen, single and working parent peer support groups.** Families might be able to pool their resources for things like child care on days off from school and transportation to and from school for their children.
- **Be careful when making weather-related school closing decisions,** especially early dismissals. Working families may have no child care resources, and students may miss out on free or reduced-price school meals.
- **Make sure low-income students have basic supplies.** Work with community business partners to ensure that all children have access to the items on your school supply list. It's also critical that students who need menstrual hygiene products have access to them—an increasing number of schools are making these products available for free in student restrooms as well as in the school health room.



Connect families with community agencies

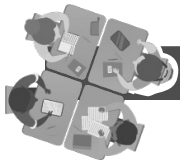
Schools are equipped to teach students—but sometimes family problems get in the way of attendance. Make sure teachers, counselors and the rest of your staff have access to a list of community agencies and resources, along with each agency’s contact information and a brief summary of what each agency does. Check with your community, county or state government if you’re not sure what’s available in your community. Be sure to update the list often.

Some agencies that may be available in your community are:

- **Family services.** These services will likely make up the bulk of your list, including children’s services, domestic violence and abuse help, food and other assistance, foster care, homeless shelters and social services.
- **Career support services.** These agencies may provide assistance in finding a job or child care.
- **Health services.** This includes preventative medicine, emergency medical services, nutrition assistance and support groups.
- **Court services.** Families might not know where the court is or how the system works.
- **Library services.** Encourage families to know where their local libraries are and that libraries are equipped with valuable resources to help their children with learning and homework.
- **Mental health and substance abuse services.** These usually include treatment and counseling facilities.
- **Parks, recreation and community services.** These agencies help families find information about sports leagues, after-school programs and summer camps, among other things.
- **Transportation services.** Families might be unaware of bus, train or other transportation options in your community.

In addition to the government-run agencies, include nonprofit agencies on your list as well, such as your local:

- **Food pantry or soup kitchen.**
- **Second-hand shops.**
- **Religious or civic organizations** that help struggling families.
- **Habitat for Humanity.**

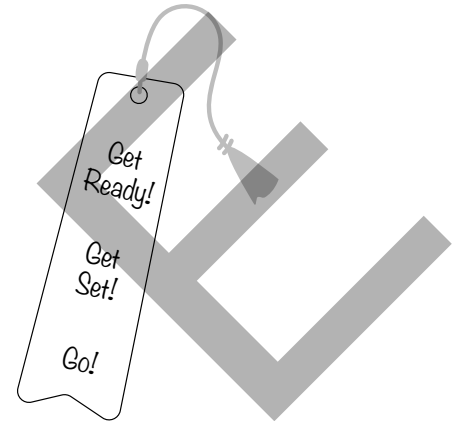


Examples *(student handout)*

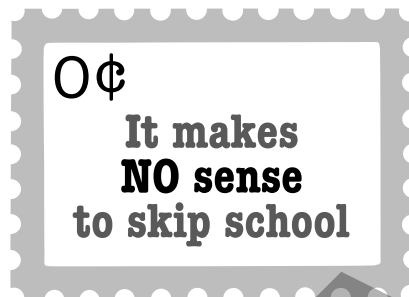
Bookmark example

To make sure you get to school every day:

- **Get ready!** Take a few minutes at night to lay out everything you need for school the next day.
- **Get set!** If you stay up half the night playing computer games or texting your friends, you'll never get out of bed in the morning.
- **Go!** There are days we all want to stay in bed. But remember—even a few absences can really hurt your learning. So get up and get out the door.



Stamp example



License plate example



T-shirt example





Lesson plan: If you fail to plan ...

Overview

In this lesson, students will discuss the impact of *tardiness* on individual students and on the entire class. Then they will create an action plan that focuses on how they can get to school on time every day.

Objectives

Students will:

1. **Read and review information** on tardiness and absences.
2. **Discuss the impact of tardiness** on the student who is late—and on the entire class.
3. **Learn the “Seven-Step Problem-Solving Method.”**
4. **Apply this method** to the problem of tardiness or other problems.
5. **Create personal action plans** to address tardiness or other problems.

Getting ready

1. **Make a copy of the “Seven-Step Problem-Solving Method”** (see page 75) to use with a SMART Board or an overhead projector. (Note: There are two copies of the method in this lesson plan. One has blank spaces for you to write in answers to use with your class. The other is a reference sheet with examples written in as a sample for your use in preparing to guide the class through the steps.)
2. **Make a copy of “My Action Plan”** for each student (see page 77).

Procedure

1. **Ask the class to think of all the possible reasons** that students come to class late. Write the reasons on the board under the heading “Reasons for Tardiness.” Explain that although there can be some bizarre, unusual reasons students arrive late, today the list should be all of the most common reasons that occur regularly because you will be demonstrating a problem-solving process to deal with those tardiness excuses. Also ask the class to add to two other lists: “How Tardiness Affects Me” and “How Tardiness Affects Others.”
2. **Tell students that the class will work together** using a seven-step problem-solving method for an imaginary student who has a serious tardiness problem. Add details about the seriousness of the problem that are appropriate for your class and school policies concerning tardiness. As you set the stage for helping this imaginary student, choose a reason for the student’s tardiness from the list on the board to demonstrate the process. Use a SMART Board or overhead projector to demonstrate the problem-solving method.
3. **Distribute “My Action Plan” worksheets to each student.** Students can then work individually, in pairs or in small groups to use the seven-step problem-solving method to attack another tardiness problem. (Students can select reasons from the lists on the



Communicate with the community

Strong community support can turn a good school into a great school. But how can you gain the support of local businesses, agencies and colleges? The first step is communication.

Start by creating a positive public relations campaign. Cultivate relationships with all the media outlets in your area and give them leads on stories showing the positive aspects of your school. Your attendance campaign is a great place to start, as it showcases your emphasis on providing students with a good education and your dedication to making the community a better place.

Know your local media

Make contact with representatives from these media outlets:

- **Local newspaper.** Invite editors and reporters to be guests at upcoming functions. Send them copies of your newsletters and press releases about events. Put the local newspaper on your email list so that they get the same information you send to families. This will keep them aware of upcoming events they may want to cover.
- **Larger newspapers.** Regional and even national papers have local news sections. If your school is doing something really great, brag about it!
- **Local radio station.** Radio stations are always looking for local interest stories—so why not give them some about your school? Ask what types of content they would like. You could record tips for families or send a recording of a song from your school band or chorus concert.
- **Local television station.** Send press releases about upcoming events the station may want to film, like concerts, sports or plays. Don't be afraid to record events yourself and send them in unsolicited. School staff and students could even offer to script and record public service announcements.

Remember that you have access to “news outlets” at your school as well, such as:

- **Your regular school newsletter.** Write short articles to describe school happenings and upcoming events. Consider including pictures as well.
- **Your school website and social media pages.** Post upcoming events and stories about recent events. Include pictures and videos whenever possible.
- **Your school marquee.** Your marquee is a great place for news, especially if your school is located on a main thoroughfare. Think like Twitter—use short but informative messages. Advertise events and congratulate students all over town by asking business partners to post notices on their company marquees.

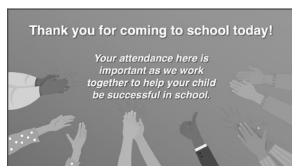


Presenter's script for the family presentation

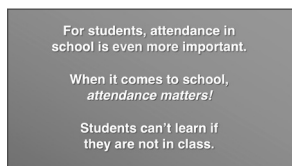
This Presenter's Script provides suggested wording if you wish to personally narrate the "Attendance Matters! Building Success Day by Day" PowerPoint presentation found in the online portal. You are, of course, free to modify the script to make the words your own, adding or deleting information as you choose. You may make changes in the presentation as well. Please note, however, that under the Resource Kit license, you may use the modifications only for your own school presentation use.



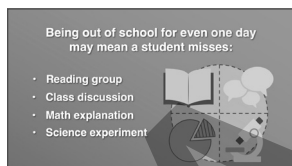
Slide 1
(Opening slide, no narration.)



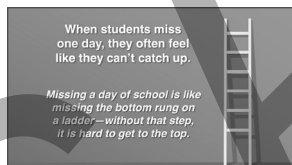
Slide 2
Thank you for coming to school today.
[+] Your attendance here is important as we work together to help your child be successful in school.



Slide 3
For students, attendance in school is even more important.
[+] Because when it comes to success in school, attendance matters.
[+] Students can't learn if they're not in class.



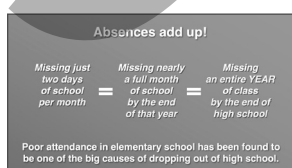
Slide 4
Missing just one day may mean your child misses out on [+] participating in a reading group or class discussion, [+] listening to the teacher explain an important math concept [+] or conducting a science experiment.



Slide 5
When students miss one day, they often feel like they can't catch up.
[+] Because learning builds on what students already know, missing a day of school is like missing the bottom rung on a ladder—without that step, it's hard to get to the top.



Slide 6
Consider the research on why it is so important for your child to come to school every day: [+] Children who miss school have lower achievement than those with regular attendance. Research confirms that even a small improvement in school attendance can result in significant gains on state and national tests.



Slide 7
It may seem like it's no big deal if your child misses a day here and there, but over time those absences can really add up. A student who misses just two days of school a month [+] will have missed nearly a month of school by the end of that year [+] and an entire YEAR of class by the end of high school. [+] That's why poor attendance in elementary school has been found to be one of the big causes of dropping out of high school.



Miss school, miss out!

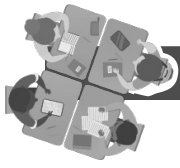
The first rule for doing well in school is a simple one: Your child needs to be there! When your child misses school, your child misses out on more than that day's lessons. Research shows that school attendance can have a big impact on success in school and in the future. Share these facts on attendance with your child and make school a top priority in your family.

Know the facts

- **Students who miss school** show lower academic achievement than those with regular attendance. Research confirms that even a small improvement in school attendance can result in higher test scores.
- **Absences add up quickly.** Students who miss just two days of school each month will have missed nearly a whole month of school by the end of that year—and a whole year of school by the end of 12th grade.
- **Students who miss** even a small amount of school are less likely to graduate. And those who leave school without a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed than those who graduate.
- **Children who aren't in school** are more likely to get into trouble. They have an increased risk of drug and alcohol use and criminal activity.

Make school a top priority

- **Let your child know** that going to school is important. Explain that a good education lays the foundation for success in life.
- **Ask your child questions** about school every day. Be interested and excited about what your child is learning.
- **Make sure your child** gets enough sleep to arrive at school well rested and ready to learn.
- **Set a regular homework time** to ensure that your child is prepared each day.
- **Manage your child's schedule.** Too many after-school activities or hours at a part-time job can leave your child too tired to complete homework or to get up in the morning.
- **Keep a sick child home** — especially if the illness is contagious. But being tired or not feeling like going to school aren't valid reasons to stay home.
- **Avoid scheduling** routine doctor's appointments or family vacations during school hours.
- **Keep track of your child's attendance.** Talk to teachers and note attendance on your child's report cards. See if there are any patterns that need to be changed.
- **Read your school's attendance policy** and review it with your child. Support the school's rules and consequences for absences and tardies.



Include information about attendance in first newsletter of the year

School is just getting started. Families are eager to know about bus schedules, room assignments and school supplies. As you share back-to-school information, be sure to remind families about the importance of regular attendance.

Make Attendance a Priority

You want this year to be your child's best year in school—but how do you help? Make sure your child is in school—every day! Research shows a link between *being in school* and *doing well in school*. Missing even one lesson—and not getting caught up quickly— can cause children to fall behind.

Clearly, a child who wakes up with a fever should stay home. But many kids miss school when they're not sick. Here are some of the top reasons for school absences—and how you can help your child avoid them:

- **Medical appointments.** Schedule routine visits to the doctor and dentist after school or during school vacations.
- **Oversleeping.** If your child is having trouble waking up in the morning, make bedtime earlier. Sleep is important—but so is school.
- **Disorganization.** If looking for homework papers and preparing lunch in the morning causes your child to be late, prepare school items before going to bed.
- **School refusal.** If your child doesn't want to go to school, make an appointment for a parent-teacher conference. Working together, you can identify and resolve problems that make your child reluctant to go to school.