

Messaging Good Attendance All Year Long: Webinar Discussion Guide

Below are a suggested set of key questions to prompt discussion about what communities might do given insights shared during the Messaging Good Attendance All Year Long webinar. Feel free to use some or all to prompt a rich conversation about how to take action.

1. **Messaging Attendance – What Works and What Doesn’t:** Based on their experience in working with parents and from research, the speakers highlighted messages that were effective and ineffective in motivating better school attendance.
 - a. What are the common myths or misunderstandings about the impact of absences you need to address in your community?
 - b. What is one clear message you want to convey about absences during Attendance Awareness Month 2016 and throughout the school year?

2. **Leveraging Free Resources:** Several of the speakers shared resources that are available free of charge. How can your community tap into those resources? (e.g. Count Us In! toolkit, the California Attorney General’s Positive Parent Messaging toolkit, the USDOE’s Absences Add Up ad campaign)

3. **Beyond Messaging:** While positive messaging is an important strategy in reducing chronic absence, it is not sufficient since many of the factors that cause students to miss school are not about misunderstandings. Which of these factors might be driving absences in your school or community? What (or who) can help address them?

Myths	Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem Attendance only matters in the older grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to health or dental care Poor Transportation Trauma No safe path to school Homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child struggling academically or socially Bullying Ineffective school discipline Parents had negative school experience Undiagnosed disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of engaging and relevant instruction No meaningful relationships with adults in school Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school Poor school climate