SEND THE MESSAGE THAT SHOWING UP MATTERS!

What Are the Attendance Awareness Campaign Key Messages 2023?

Starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, regular attendance is essential for students gaining the academic and social skills they need to thrive. Research shows that when students are chronically absent (missing 10% or more of the school year or 18 days over an entire year), they are less likely to read proficiently by third grade, achieve in middle school and graduate from high school.

Chronic absence has more than doubled since the start of the pandemic, from 8 million to an estimated 16 million students nationwide. That's one out of three students. Absenteeism has risen among all student groups, at every economic level. Black, Latino and Native American students, students living in poverty, students with disabilities and English language learners have been especially affected.

Monitoring chronic absence — and tracking whether absences are excused, unexcused or due to suspension — is key to responding strategically to the academic and social losses experienced by millions of students, including the development of skills such as listening, paying attention, problem-solving and self-regulation, all which are needed to grow and learn.

The good news is that efforts to improve engagement and attendance can benefit our entire society. We all prosper when children and youth, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, neighborhood, economic status or family income, have the opportunity to gain skills and abilities that prepare them for success in school, work and life.

Below are key messages that everyone can use this year to rally their school communities to support students and families in order to improve attendance, connection and achievement.

1. **Respond to absences with care and support, not blame.**
   a. Partner with students and families to understand and address the challenges they face inside or outside school that cause them to miss school and disengage.
   b. Emphasize the value of regular attendance for maintaining routines that support well-being, building relationships and accessing resources as well as gaining opportunities to learn.
   c. Use chronic absence data to help identify which student groups and families need extra support and engagement.

2. **Building trusting relationships that promote belonging is fundamental to improving student attendance and engagement.**
   a. Recognize families as essential partners through trusting relationships that support student learning at home and in school.
   b. Building strong relationships is helpful with all families but essential for working with children and family members who have experienced any form of trauma.
   c. Developing relationships takes time. Begin when you can and continue your efforts throughout the school year.

3. **Students are more likely to engage in learning and attend school if they feel safe, connected and supported.**
   a. All school staff members, especially teachers, are critical to creating a culture that encourages engagement and attendance by fostering a belief among students that they can achieve and encouraging families to become involved.
   b. Students engage in learning when given supportive conditions with access to individualized learning and behavioral support when needed.
   c. Consistent, predictable routines for learning every day, whether students are in the school building or involved in distance learning, are essential and can create a sense of safety.
   d. Community and local government partners can support environments in which all students are welcomed, are affirmed and feel they belong in school.

4. **A positive, problem-solving approach driven by data will improve attendance.**
   a. Share chronic absence data so everyone is aware of the size and scale of the attendance and engagement challenge.
   b. Regularly review data to identify which and how many students have so many absences that they require some form of early intervention.
   c. Chronic absence is easily masked by average attendance rates and truancy (unexcused absences).
   d. Adopt a tiered approach that starts with investing in positive conditions for learning for the whole school or district.

5. **Supporting the health and well-being of students, families and school staff improves attendance.**
   a. Help students and families take steps to stay physically and emotionally healthy and avoid illness. Work with health professionals to communicate with parents, caregivers and educators about when students should stay home and when to return to school after being sick.
   b. Expand access to school-linked and school-based health and mental health services.
   c. Invest in clean, well-ventilated school buildings.

6. **When the whole community collaborates with families and schools, we can overcome systemic barriers to attendance and engagement.**
   a. Local leaders, public agencies and community organizations are essential partners for addressing attendance barriers such as transportation, housing and food insecurity and ensuring that positive conditions for learning are in place for students of all backgrounds.
   b. Districts can share chronic absence data to guide investments from public agencies and community partners.
   c. State leaders can promote the availability of timely data, support professional development, and allocate funds and programs to reduce chronic absence and ensure positive conditions for learning are in place.
   d. Leaders from every sector can call for a positive, prevention-oriented approach, including participating in the national Attendance Awareness Campaign.

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