Supporting Everyday Attendance

PATRICK HICKMAN

Ohio's Attendance Advisor

Office of Whole Child Supports

Department of Education and Workforce

September 2024

Who's Here Today?

Topics

- Chronic Absence Overview

- Mindset Shift

- Resource Exploration

- Beginning of Year Strategies

- New requirement: Religious Expression Days

- Q&A

What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school for **any** reason.

Excused absences + **Unexcused absences** + **Suspensions** → **Chronic Absence**

Attendance Works

Chronic absence is **different** from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).

Gap Closing Indicator – Chronic Absenteeism

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031
All Students	24%	22.1%	20.2%	**18.3%**	16.4%	14.5%	12.6%	10.7%	8.8%	6.9%	5.0%

Table 1: Interim and Long-Term Goals

- **Meeting an improvement standard relative to the starting point of the school or district via absolute or relative improvement:** If the school or district's prior year chronic absenteeism rate is less than 36.7%, then the school or district can meet the indicator by reducing their rate by 3 percent, also known as relative improvement. If a school or district's prior year chronic absenteeism rate is 36.7% or higher, they can meet the indicator by improving their rate by 1.1 percentage points, also known as absolute improvement. The reason behind this is that 36.7% is the point where a 3 percent reduction is equal to 1.1 percentage points. This means that any prior-year percentage of greater than 36.7% will require the school or district to improve by more than 1.1 percentage points. Capping the improvement threshold at 1.1 percentage points, allows for attainable improvement for all districts and schools – regardless of their baseline or prior-year rates.

Table 2: Improvement Standard

PRIOR YEAR CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM RATE	IMPROVEMENT STANDARD
36.7% or higher	1.1 percentage points
Lower than 36.7%	3%

Table 4: Example of Districts needing 3% to show improvement

District	2022-2023 Rate	2023-2024 Rate	What is a 3% Reduction From the 2023-2024 Rate?	Actual Change	Met
District 4	25%	24.25%	-0.750% (25% x 3%)	-0.75	Yes
District 5	19.9%	19.1%	-0.597% (19.9% x 3%)	-0.8	Yes
District 6	15.1%	14.9%	-0.453% (15.1% x 3%)	-0.2	No

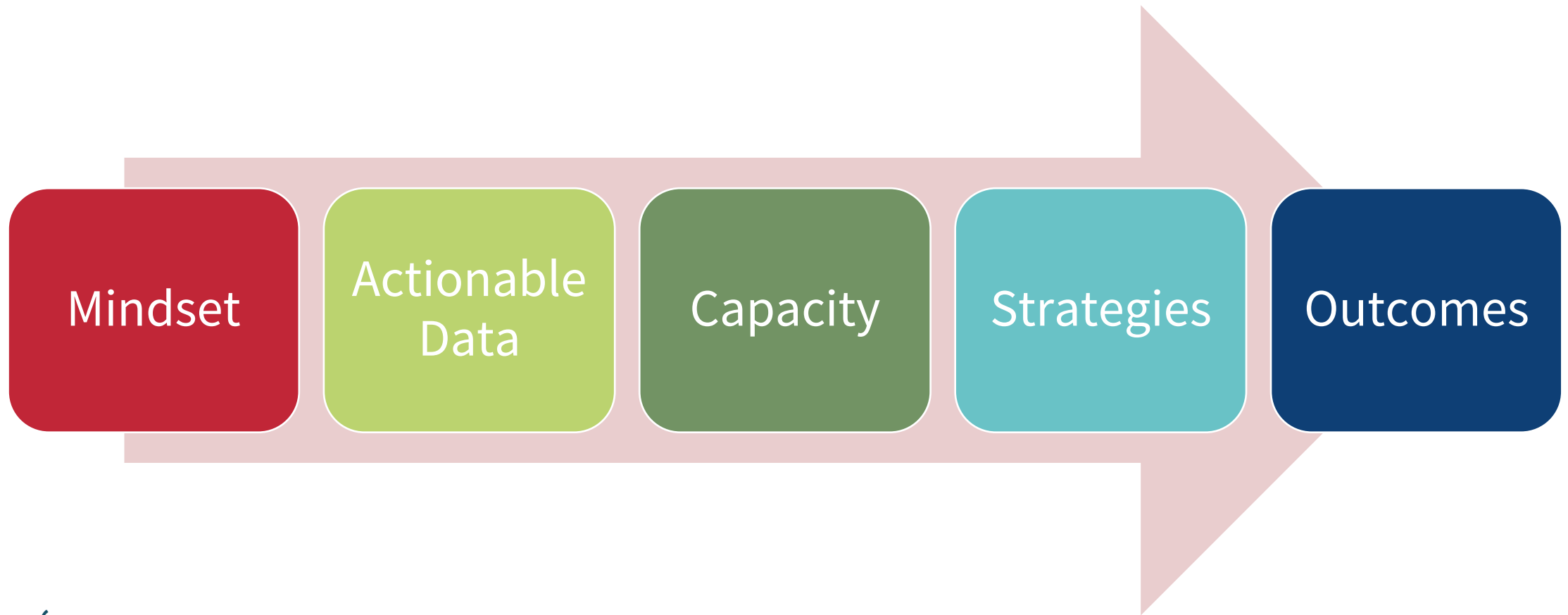# Absences Add Up!
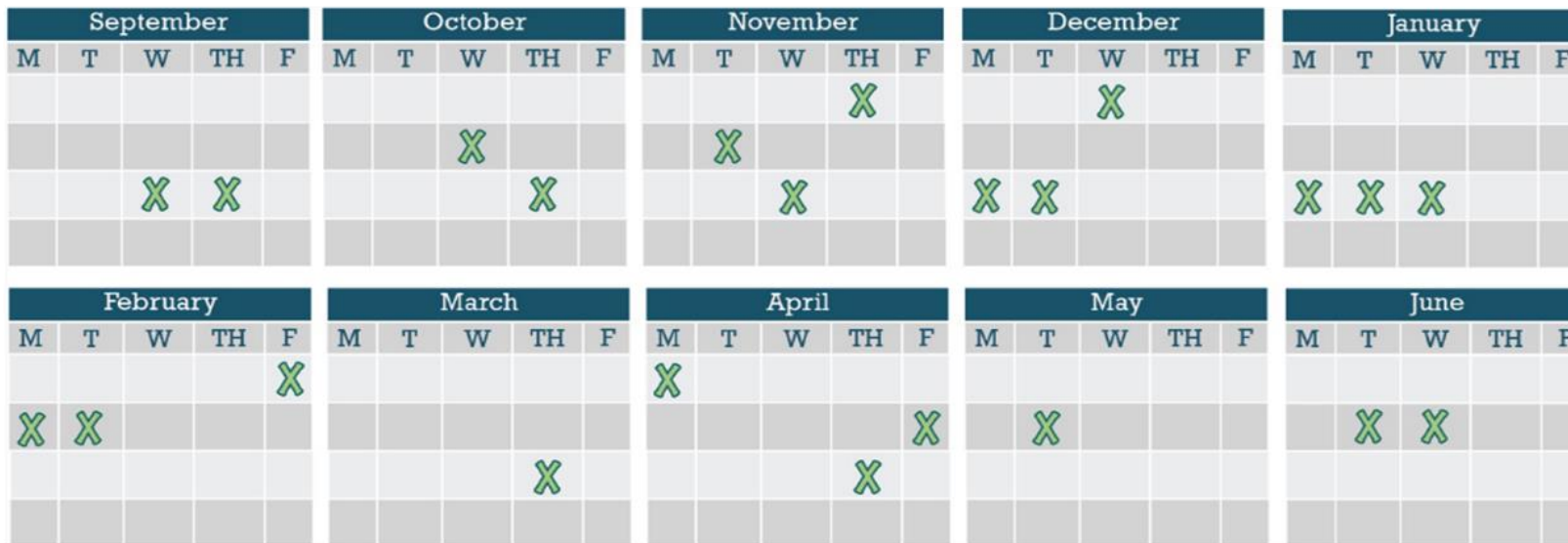
©Attendance Works

Missing just 2 or 3 days a month can lead to chronic absence.

10% of the school year = 18 days of absence

This translates to almost one month of missed learning

Pathway For Change

Mindset → Actionable Data → Capacity → Strategies → Outcomes

Building Blocks for Mindset

Attendance Is Engagement

"Schools with stronger, preexisting family engagement…had chronic absenteeism rates after remote learning that were about 6 percentage points lower than similar schools with weaker family engagement."

-EducationWeek 10/23/23

New Research Finds a Crucial Factor in Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

Are Students Subjects?

- Seen as a group to influence, impact, or be studied.

- Their views, needs, and experiences are assumed, disregarded, or minimized.

- Youth are not seen or heard in meetings, committees, etc. Decisions made on topics that impact students are often made without student input.

- Some or few students are invited to contribute to decisions. Students rarely if at all learn the impact of the data they provided (e.g. surveys).

Or Are They Knowledge Builders?

- Seen as key stakeholders and collaborators.

- Their views, needs, and experience are sought, valued, and prioritized.

- Included in sense-making, knowledge-building, and decision-making with adults.

- All students know:
  - how/where to provide feedback;
  - participate in decision-making;
  - learn how/why decisions about them were made.

Root Causes

Reasons Students Are Absent

Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
• Chronic and acute illness • Family responsibilities or home situation • Trauma • Poor transportation • Housing and food insecurity • Inequitable access to needed services • System involvement • Lack of predictable schedules for learning • Lack of access to tech	• Struggling academically and/or behaviorally • Unwelcoming school climate • Social and peer challenges • Anxiety • Biased disciplinary and suspension practices • Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations • Parents had negative educational experiences	• Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction • Bored • No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages) • Lack of enrichment opportunities • Lack of academic and behavioral support • Failure to earn credits • Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school	• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning • Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences • Sporadic absences aren't a problem • Attendance only matters in the older grades • Suspensions don't count as absence

Attendance Works ©

www.attendanceworks.org

Ohio

Resource Exploration

Student Wellness and Success Funds

- Mental health services

- Physical health services

- Homeless youth services

- Child welfare-involved youth services

- Community liaisons and programming

- Family engagement activities

- Before and after school programming

- Culturally appropriate prevention education services

Strategies

Ohio's Attendance Guide
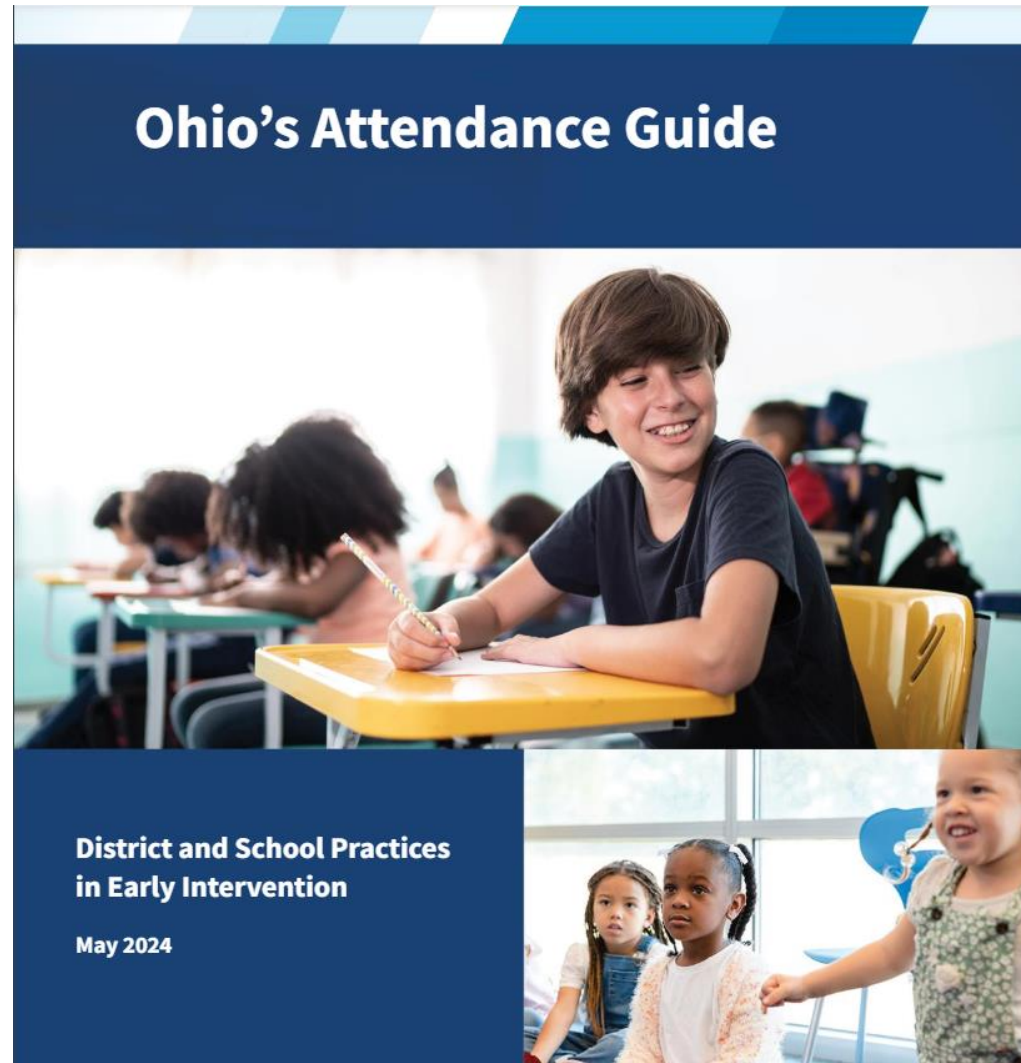
Gathering Qualitative Data

Student Shadowing

       Toolkit included

Relationship Mapping

Attendance Works Resources

       Empathy interviews and Student focus groups

       Root causes

Attendance Calendar

Welcome Back (August-October)

○ Send a "Welcome Back" letter emphasizing the importance of attendance

○ Promote greetings by the door that can continue all year

○ Distribute district-wide health guidance to families and staff

○ Identify students missing 10% of school days in the first month and identify root causes and barriers to attendance

○ Request that teachers make personalized calls to families when students miss 2-3 days of school for any reason

○ Partner with students and families to create personalized Student Success Plans

○ Engage community partners to implement a multi-tiered system of attendance support

○ Incorporate attendance messaging into parent-teacher conferences

Fall/Winter (November-February)

○ Analyze attendance trends to identify days with high absenteeism (e.g. days before or after holidays)

○ Conduct outreach through positive letters or calls to families, emphasizing partnership to address attendance concerns

○ Communicate with families about the importance of attendance around holidays, vacations, winter break, hunting season, tournaments, etc.

○ Identify students who are moderately chronically absent (missing 10-19% or 12-24 hours) and not connected to a caring adult

○ Use data to prioritize connections for student groups with high levels of absenteeism and assign mentors

○ Share positive messaging with families when students return from vacation

○ Connect students with chronic absence to expanded learning opportunities

Religious Expression Days

Discussion

Discussion

In breakout rooms →

✔	Bright Spots or Promising Practices
⚠	Challenges
👣	Next Steps

QUESTIONS?

EDUCATION.OHIO.GOV

Patrick Hickman

Ohio's Attendance Advisor

Patrick.Hickman@education.ohio.gov

Ohio Department of Education & Workforce