



**Department of
Education &
Workforce**



Ohio Department of Education & Workforce

Teaching Attendance Curriculum for School Leaders

Developed in partnership with Attendance Works



Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
<i>Purpose of the Teaching Attendance Curriculum.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Teaching Attendance Overview</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Guidelines for Using the Lessons</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Licensing and Legal Considerations</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Lesson One: What is Chronic Absence and Why Does It Matter?</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Lesson Two: Shift to Prevention and Early Intervention.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Lesson Three: The Role of Teachers in Attendance.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Lesson Four: Understanding Why Students are Absent</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Lesson Five: Effective Communication with Students and Families</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Lesson Six: A Whole School Approach: Relationships Matter</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Appendix: Facilitation Guidelines.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Examples of Positive Ways to Respond to Resistance.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Modeling Behaviors as the Facilitator.....</i>	<i>27</i>

Resources

- District and School Practices in Early Intervention: [Ohio's Attendance Guide](#)
- [Attendance Works](#)

Introduction

Showing up matters! Students cannot benefit from high quality instruction unless they attend school regularly.

As a principal, you are uniquely positioned to support a comprehensive approach that applies best practices for reducing chronic absence. This curriculum is an opportunity to work as a school community to improve student engagement and attendance and address chronic absence. It is designed to support your school's strengths and adds to your capacity to respond proactively to chronic absence.

Purpose of the Teaching Attendance Curriculum

1. Support school leaders with the resources necessary to facilitate staff-wide dialogue and training to increase understanding of evidence based best practices on school attendance and engagement.
2. Demonstrate how the whole school community can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance and engagement for all students and prevent chronic absence.
3. Equip teachers and school staff with the knowledge and skills needed to address chronic absence effectively.

Teaching Attendance Overview

Improving attendance and reducing chronic absence requires a shift in mindset and practices from punitive responses to early intervention and problem-solving approaches. The teaching attendance curriculum provides:

- Guidance and a collective understanding of issues associated with student attendance.
- Strategies necessary to reduce chronic absence.

The sessions should be led and facilitated by the principal. It can be offered during regular staff meetings or scheduled professional development days.

The Teaching Attendance curriculum includes a series of six (6) forty-five-minute sessions with skill building tools and resources for teachers and school staff.

- Session 1: What is chronic absence and why does it matter?
- Session 2: Shift to prevention and early intervention
- Session 3: The role of teachers in attendance
- Session 4: Understanding why students are absent
- Session 5: Effective communication with students and families
- Session 6: You can make a difference
- Appendix: Facilitation Guide

Each session includes learning objectives, a facilitator’s guide, PowerPoint, videos, and worksheets.

Guidelines for Using the Lessons

To make the lessons best meet your school culture, consider the following:

- It’s a series: This curriculum includes a series of six (6) lessons which are designed to be done sequentially. Each lesson builds on the next one.
- Incorporate school community resources: Add school resources or information to the slides and participant guides.
- Include school/district data: Include chronic absence data from your school (number and percent of students who are chronically absent).
- Share local stories: Tell local success stories and modify examples and scenarios where needed to reflect local issues.
- Address any specific requirements from your school district.
- Lessons are meant to be interactive: Keep the session as an interactive lesson and not as a lecture.
- Keep the attendance concepts, definition of terms such as chronic absence and positive, supportive messaging: The meaning, data, and concepts align with national and state best practices.
- Avoid any changes that create exclusivity or bias towards a student demographic: Do not add or give examples that stereotype groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, income, sexual orientation, or other differences.
- Talking points included: The talking points are included in the guide. It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Licensing and Legal Considerations

Materials may not be used in whole or part for commercial use. Do not add copyrighted information that does not fall under fair use for educational materials. Be sure to secure all necessary permissions for any added third-party materials including images.

Lesson One: What is Chronic Absence and Why Does It Matter?

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the first in a series of six lessons. One lesson builds on the next.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Understanding what chronic absence is and how it can affect student learning and well-being.

Audience: Educators and School-Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Define chronic absence.
- List the impacts of chronic absence on student academic achievement and overall well-being.
- Know your school's chronic absence data.

Materials Needed:

- Lesson One PowerPoint
- Video: [What is Chronic Absence?](#)
- Lesson One [worksheet](#)
- Your school's chronic absence data
- Flipchart
- Markers

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome and Lesson One PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Share with the staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year. Is it part of the school improvement plan or otherwise connected to other school wide goals?
 - Explain to staff that increasing attendance is a schoolwide responsibility and every person in the school community has a responsibility to encourage good attendance.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions.
- Slide 3: Review the six lesson topics that are part of this series and share the timeline by which your school will approach moving through them.
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives.

Describe chronic absence and the effect on student learning: Slides 5-7 (5 minutes)

- Slide 5 Talking points:
 - Attendance matters. Students need to attend and engage in learning to benefit.
 - While showing up does not guarantee learning, a student who misses class cannot benefit. If a large number of students miss class, it is an indication of challenges that require systemic solutions.
 - While good attendance from preschool onward leads to academic progress, poor attendance has a number of negative effects.
 - Research tells us that:
 - Chronic absence in kindergarten and 1st grade can lead to the inability to read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
 - The inability to read on grade level by 3rd grade leads to lower academic achievement in middle school.
 - Students who do not read at grade level are four times more likely to drop out of high school.
- Slide 6 Talking Points:
 - Research shows that if a student misses 2 or more days a month, whether those absences are consecutive or sporadic, the effect on learning is significant.
- Slide 7 Talking Points:
 - As we shift to focusing on chronic absence as an early warning indicator, we will examine all reasons for absences whether they are excused or unexcused or if they are related to student discipline. Our goal is to take a problem-solving approach by using our data to better understand barriers to student attendance and put in place meaningful efforts to address challenges.

Video: [What is Chronic Absence?](#) Slide 8 (3 minutes)

Ohio Chronic Absence Data: Look at Trends and Patterns: Slides 9-12 (5 minutes)

- Slide 9 Talking Points:
 - We will now look at some chronic absence data.
- Slide 10 Talking Points:
 - While chronic absence has historically impacted a significant number of students in Ohio, post covid absenteeism has worsened and many more students are chronically absent, and therefore at significant academic risk (review the numbers on the slide).

- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - The data shows us that chronic absence is a significant issue from the early grades to high school, with about 1 out of 3 students chronically absent on average.
- Slide 12 Talking Points:
 - As we examine our data, we'll want to understand the student's level of attendance by attendance band (satisfactory, at-risk, moderate chronic absence, or severe chronic absence). Understanding a student's risk level can help our school provide the appropriate level of engagement and support.
 - Any student who is attending at least 95% of the time or missing on average 1 or 0 day a month has Satisfactory Attendance.
 - When students begin to miss more days, about 1 -2 days on average per month, they are at risk of problematic attendance (2 days a month equals 20 days for the school year).
 - And when a student reaches 2 or more absences per month, they are chronically absent. Depending on the number of absences per month, they can also fall into severe and extreme levels of absenteeism. Are they at risk of chronic absence? Are they moderately, severely, or extremely at risk?

Explore: What is the chronic absence rate in your district and school? Slide 13 (7 minutes)

- Slide 13 Talking Points:
 - Now we are going to look at our data.
 - Click into the reports link on slide 13 or pull up data from your district's and school's student information system.
 - Instruct people on how to access their data.

Small Group Discussion: Slide 14 (10 minutes)

- Slide 14 Talking Points:
 - Create groups of four people and hand out this Lesson One [worksheet](#).
 - Ask each group to identify a recorder. Review the discussion questions below and let them know how much time they will have (10 minutes).
 - What surprises you about the data?
 - What other data would you like to see so you can better understand chronic absence in your school or district?
 - What questions do you have about chronic absence or the data?

Large Group Discussion: Slide 15 (8 minutes)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - If you don't have a co-facilitator, invite someone to volunteer to scribe the ideas that are being shared.
 - Each group should choose one person to summarize the responses to the questions:
 - What surprised you about the data?
 - What questions does your group have about chronic absence or about the chronic absence data?
 - Reflect back the ideas that were shared.

Key Messages: Slide 16 (2 minutes)

- Slide 16 Talking Points:
 - Chronic absence is a measure of lost instructional time.
 - Missing just two days a month for any reason, or 10% or more of days, is chronic absence and can lead to academic risk for students pre-kindergarten - 12th grade.
 - Even excused absences, when they add up, can cause a student to fall off track academically.
 - While chronic absence can affect all students, some students are more likely to be chronically absent due to a variety of challenges such as economic hardship, bullying, or struggling academically and/or behaviorally.

Potential Ideas to Implement: Slide 17 (2 minutes)

- Slide 17 Talking Points:
 - Access your school's chronic absence data.
 - Pick a grade level and review chronic absence data. Consider students who are at-risk or have moderate chronic absence.

Resources: Slide 18 (2 minutes)

- Slide 18 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - District and school Data: <https://reports.education.ohio.gov/overview>
 - Public Data → Student Attendance → School/district
 - [Attendance Works](#)
 - [Using data for support](#)

Lesson One Worksheet: What is chronic absence and why does it matter?

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand what chronic absence is
2. Understand that chronic absence impacts student academic achievement and overall well-being
3. Know your school and district's chronic absence rate

During the video, Hedy Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works, shared the impact of chronic absence. Additionally, you had a chance to review your community's chronic absence data.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP:

Discuss:

1. What surprises you about the data?
2. What other data would you like to see so you can better understand chronic absence in your school or district?
3. What questions do you have about chronic absence or the data?

Report:

Each group should choose one person to summarize the responses to the questions:

1. What surprises you about the data?
2. What questions do you have about chronic absence or the data?

Lesson Two: Shift to Prevention and Early Intervention

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the second in a series of six lessons. One lesson builds on the next.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Improve attendance and reduce chronic absence through prevention and implementation of interventions at the first sign of an attendance challenge.

Audience: Educators and School-Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe what a positive problem-solving approach to reducing absenteeism is.
- Explain why it is more effective to shift to a proactive early intervention approach rather than a punitive and reactive approach to address student absenteeism.

Materials Needed:

- Lesson Two PowerPoint
- Video: [Attendance Messaging](#)
- Lesson Two [worksheet](#)

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome, use Lesson Two PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Remind staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year.
 - Reflect back on prior lesson conversations.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions
- Slide 3: Indicate which lesson you are on
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives

Review: Definition of Chronic Absence: Slide 5 (3 minutes)

- Slide 5 Talking Points:
 - Who remembers the definition of chronic absence?
 - Offer a few people the opportunity to share.

Using a Multi-tiered System of Support: Slide 6 (3 minutes)

- Slide 6 Talking Points:

- A multi-tiered system of attendance support begins with prevention and a strong foundation of building relationships and the positive conditions for learning.
- Using this foundation of connection and engagement, we can create protocols for early intervention when a student first begins to miss too much school. We then add additional support and interventions based on levels of absences and student and families' assets and needs.

Video: [Attendance Messaging](#) Slide 7 (2:28 minutes)

- Slide 7 Talking Points:
 - For us to progress in our efforts to reduce student absenteeism in our school we will be adopting/strengthening a multi-tiered system of strategies to reduce student absenteeism. Let us watch this video from Attendance Works to learn more about how other schools have approached prevention and early intervention for student absenteeism.

Large Group Reflection on Video: Slide 8 (5 minutes)

- Slide 8 Talking Points:
 - The educators in the video talked a lot about two-way communication and relationships:
 - What did you see in the video that resonates about student engagement and attendance?
 - What sparked a new idea?
 - Why is an early intervention positive approach so important?

Shifting to a Positive Problem-Solving Approach: Slide 9 (3 minutes)

- Slide 9 Talking Points:
 - Shifting our mindset is about changing our approach and the steps we take to reduce absenteeism.
 - Shifting the way we approach families and students when a student misses school will take time for people to adjust to a new mindset and practices. The continued use of a problem-solving approach will help lead to more positive outcomes and stronger connections with students and families.
 - Let's take a look at a few of these examples of how we can shift our practice. (Read through each example and the shift)
 - Open the room for people to offer a few reactions or suggestions about what a new problem-solving approach looks like.

Shifting from Blaming to Positive Approach: Slide 10 (3 minutes)

- Slide 10 Talking Points:
 - Moving from blame to action requires us to ask questions and avoid making assumptions about the reasons for absences.
 - Let's take a look at a few of these examples of how we can shift our practice. (Read through each example and the shift)
 - Open up the room for people to offer a few reactions or suggestions about questions that one could ask.

Small Group Discussion: Slide 11 (8 minutes)

- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - Create groups of 4-5 people and hand out this Lesson Two [worksheet](#) and ask them to identify a recorder. Ask each group to select one of the phrases in the worksheet.
 - Each group will discuss how they might respond to shift to a positive problem-solving approach (Use the chart in the lesson two worksheet).
 - Choose the best response to share in the large group discussion.

Large Group Debrief: Slide 12 (8 minutes)

- Slide 12 Talking Points:
 - The timing may need to be adjusted depending on the size of the group. Each group shares their group's best response to promote a problem-solving approach! Encourage a celebratory vibe.

Review Key Messages: Slide 13 (2 minutes)

- Slide 13 Talking Points:
 - Respond to absences with care and support, not judgment.
 - Utilize a problem-solving approach beginning with prevention and early intervention.
 - Clearly communicate student successes to families.

Potential Ideas to Implement: Slide 14 (2 minutes)

- Slide 14 Talking Points:
 - Every teacher (or advisor in secondary schools) sends a positive postcard or text to a family sharing a positive message about their child. This can be done over 4 to 5 weeks by sending a message to 4-5 families a week.
 - A school team or grade level team reviews attendance data to consider positive outreach for students who miss 2 to 3 days a month.

Resources: Slide 15 (2 minutes)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - [Attendance Works](#)
 - [Tiered Framework to Improve Attendance](#)

Lesson Two Worksheet: Shift to a prevention and early intervention mindset

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Describe what a positive problem-solving approach to reducing absenteeism is.
2. Understand it is more effective to shift to a proactive early intervention approach rather than a punitive and reactive approach to address student absenteeism.

SMALL GROUP - PREVENTION

In your small group, select one of the phrases in your worksheet. Discuss how you might respond and shift to a positive problem-solving approach.

Typical Statement	Seeking to Understand	What else can we say to shift the comment to a positive problem-solving statement?
The student just sleeps late.	What do we know about why the student sleeps late?	
Their parents just don't care.	What do we know about the family circumstances that makes getting their child to school challenging?	
They never respond.	Probe: How have we reached out to the family? Have we tried different times and modes of communication? Have we gone to their place of residence and/or where they work?	
That parent never follows through on anything.	Have we talked through the steps necessary to follow through in support of their child's attendance?	

Discuss in your group, how you might respond when you hear one of these phrases to shift to a positive problem-solving approach. Choose your best response to share with the large group.

Lesson Three: The Role of Teachers in Attendance

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the third in a series of six lessons. One lesson builds on the next.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Understand how creating a sense of belonging with students and families can improve student engagement and attendance.

Audience: Educators and School-Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify ways to create a sense of belonging with students and families to improve student engagement and attendance.

Materials Needed:

- Lesson Three PowerPoint
- Video: [What Teachers Can Do to Make a Difference](#)
- Lesson Three [worksheet](#)

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome, use Lesson Three PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Remind staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year.
 - Is it part of the school improvement plan or otherwise connected to other school wide goals?
 - Reflect back on prior lesson conversations.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions
- Slide 3: Indicate which lesson you are on
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives

Video: [What Teachers Can Do to Make a Difference](#) Slide 5 (3:55 minutes)

- Slide 5 Talking Points:
 - Creating a sense of belonging among students is an essential first step for us to promote attendance and engagement. Let's watch the video to hear how other schools have approached this work.

Strategies to Create Belonging: Slides 6-10 (15 minutes)

- Slide 6 Talking Points:
 - Review/read slide 6 regarding the 4 strategies that will be reviewed in slides 7-10 with examples for each one:
 - Create and Institute Welcoming Rituals and Traditions
 - Get to Know Students and their Parents/Caregivers
 - Value and Celebrate Students and their Community
 - Engage students and families all year
- Slides 7-10 Talking Points:
 - Read each slide and invite a few people to offer additional examples.

Break Into Small Discussion Groups (4-5 people per group): Slide 11 (10 minutes)

- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - Purpose: Identify specific actions teachers and school staff can take to create belonging in the classroom and school. Divide into groups of four and use Lesson Three [worksheet](#) to discuss the following questions:
 - Why do you think connecting students with a caring adult at school helps them be more likely to attend?
 - What are some examples of classroom and school activities that create a sense of belonging for students and families?
 - What is one thing you would like to do?

Large Group Debrief: Slide 12 (10 minutes)

- Slide 12 Talking Points:
 - Each group provides a summary of the group discussion for the following questions:
 - What are some approaches to building relationships in the classroom and school that were shared in your group?
 - What can you do to increase student and family sense of belonging in the classroom or in the school?

Review Key Messages: Slide 13 (1 minute)

- Slide 13 Talking Points:
 - Teachers are critical to creating a sense of belonging for students.
 - When students experience a sense of belonging, they are more likely to be engaged and attend regularly.
 - Recognize families as essential partners by positively engaging them to improve student attendance.

Potential Ideas to Implement: Slide 14 (1 minute)

- Slide 14 Talking Points:
 - Create a welcoming ritual in the classroom or in the school.
 - Reach out to students for personalized positive contact.
 - Create opportunities for student voice and leadership.

Resources: Slide 15 (2 minutes)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - [Attendance Works](#)
 - Edutopia videos on:
 - [Starting Each Class with a Warm Welcome](#)
 - [Making Connections with Greetings at the Door](#)

Lesson Three Worksheet: The role of teachers in attendance

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify ways to create a sense of belonging with students and families to improve student engagement and attendance.

SMALL GROUP - STRATEGIES TO CREATE BELONGING

Instructions:

- Not every person has to answer every question.
- Choose a note taker and a reporter.

Purpose:

Identify specific actions teachers and school staff can take to create belonging in the classroom and school. Divide into groups of four and discuss the following questions:

- Why do you think connecting students with a caring adult at school helps them be more likely to attend?
- What are some examples of classroom and school activities that create a sense of belonging for students and families?
- What is one thing you would like to do?

Lesson Four: Understanding Why Students are Absent

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the fourth in a series of six lessons. One lesson builds on the next.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Learn how to get to the root of why chronically absent students are missing school.

Audience: Educators and School-Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Understand the various reasons why students miss school.
- Learn how to get to the root cause of why chronically absent students are missing school.

Materials Needed:

- Lesson Four PowerPoint
- Video: [Understanding Why Students Are Absent](#)
- Lesson Four [worksheet](#)
- Flipchart Paper
- Markers
- Sticky Notes

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome, use Lesson Four PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Remind staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year. Is it part of the school improvement plan or otherwise connected to other school wide goals?
 - Reflect back on prior lesson conversations.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions
- Slide 3: Indicate which lesson you are on
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives

Video: [Understanding Why Students Are Absent](#) Slide 5 (2 minutes)

Video Reflection Discussion: Slide 6 (4 minutes)

- Slide 6 Talking Points:

- Review the Purpose: Explore innovative solutions to the factors that can contribute to absences.
- Facilitate a group discussion: When listening to the school staff talk as a team, what were some commonalities that stood out to you?

Review the “5 Whys” Exercise: Slide 7 (2 minutes)

- Slide 7 Talking Points:
 - Now we will use a tool called the “5 Whys” to identify the root causes of absences because we can’t address the problem by just looking at the symptom.
 - Walk the group through the slide starting with the problem statement: A large number of students from your school are tardy or absent in November.
 - We then ask the question: Why is this happening in response to each suggested cause in an effort to get past the presenting reason to the real reason students are tardy.
 - Ask as many whys as you need in order to get at a deeper level of insight (asking five times is typical). You will know you have reached your final “why” because it does not make logical sense to ask why again and the root cause is something you can address.

Understanding the Perspectives of Students and Families: Slide 8 (2 minutes)

- Slide 8 Talking Points:
 - Understanding the perspective of students and families matters, read the bullets on the slide:
 - Students have untapped expertise and knowledge.
 - The goal is to hear student opinions and experiences while attending school and not make assumptions about the student’s situation.
 - Understanding when many students and families experience similar challenges allows you to create scalable solutions.
 - Engagement strategies you create are inclusive of students’ and families’ cultural norms.

Gather Information from Families and Students about why Students Do and Do Not Attend School: Slide 9 (2 minutes)

- Slide 9 Talking Points:
 - It is essential that we gather information directly from families and students about attendance. We can do that through focus groups, surveys, conversations, and during our school gatherings.
 - When other districts checked in with students about why they were missing school, the common barriers they heard included stress, family instability, and having to work.

Use What You Learned from Students and Families to Align Interventions to Reasons for Absences: Slide 10 (2 minutes)

- Slide 10 Talking Points:
 - Through our relationships with students and families and by asking the right questions we'll be in a position to identify the right intervention that is aligned to solve the problem. Let's review a few examples.
 - Walk the group through one of the rows. Start with the underlying barrier, then the root cause and then look at the intervention examples.
 - The key message is that the intervention has to align to the root cause.

Partner with Students and Families with a Student Success Plan: Slide 11 (2 minutes)

- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - Once we understand the root causes about why students are missing, use the student success plan to work with families to identify steps that can be taken to improve attendance including anything that the school can do to be supportive.
 - Notice that this is an asset-based approach and is very different from an attendance intervention plan that is required in Ohio for chronically absent and truant students.
 - The Help Bank is designed to foster an asset-based conversation with families.
 - The calendar helps both students and families visually see the absences over time and how they add up.

Small Group Exercise-Aligning Intervention to the Root Cause: Slide 12 (20 minutes)

- Slide 12 Talking Points:
 - Purpose: Learn how to identify potential interventions to address the root cause.
 - Review the five whys on the Lesson Four [worksheet](#) based on the problem statement: A large number of students from your school are tardy or absent in November.
 - Brainstorm potential interventions that align with the root cause.

Large Group Debrief: Slide 13 (5 minutes)

- Slide 13 Talking Points:
 - Share potential interventions that align with the root cause.

Review Key Messages: Slide 14 (1 minute)

- Slide 14 Talking Points:
 - There are many contributing factors to why students miss school.
 - The key is to leverage our relationships to understand what is making it hard for students to attend.
 - Uncovering the causes of absences should rely both on information from students and families and the knowledge of staff.

Potential Ideas to Implement: Slide 15 (1 minute)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - Conduct a focus group with chronically absent students and/or their families to learn about the barriers to attendance.
 - Compare what you thought affected attendance with what you heard from students and/or families.

Resources: Slides 16-17 (2 minutes)

- Slides 16-17 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - [Attendance Works](#)
 - [Gathering and Using Qualitative Data](#)

Lesson Four Worksheet: Understanding why students are absent

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand the various reasons why students miss school
2. Learn how to get to the root cause of why chronically absent students are missing school

SMALL GROUP – ALIGNING INTERVENTION TO THE ROOT CAUSE

Purpose: Learn how to identify potential interventions to address the root cause.

1. Review the five whys on the worksheet based on the problem statement:

Define the Problem: A large number of students from your school are tardy or absent in November.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

1. Students are not waking up early enough to get to school.

• Why is that?

2. Students have not been in the routine of showing up in person every day for the past year.

• Why is that?

3. They have not had the opportunity to practice daily routines or allow extra time for unexpected issues, such as the bus being late.

• Why is that?

4. Many students do not have guidance to help them develop and stick to positive routines.

• Why is that?

5. Adults overestimate a student's ability to organize themselves or plan for issues.

IDENTIFIED ROOT CAUSE: STUDENTS HAVE NOT BEEN TAUGHT, COACHED, AND SUPPORTED IN DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL ROUTINES FOR GETTING TO SCHOOL ON TIME.

2. Brainstorm potential interventions that align with the root cause

Lesson Five: Effective Communication with Students and Families

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the fifth in a series of six lessons. One lesson builds on the next.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Learn how to promote effective communication between school staff, families and students.

Audience: Educators and School-Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Implement effective communication practices.
- Understand how to have caring conversations with families to improve student attendance.

Materials Needed:

- Lesson Five PowerPoint
- Video: [Effective Communication with Families](#)
- Lesson Five [worksheet](#)

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome, use Lesson Five PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Remind staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year. Is it part of the school improvement plan or otherwise connected to other school wide goals?
 - Reflect back on prior lesson conversations.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions
- Slide 3: Indicate which lesson you are on
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives

Video: [Effective Communication with Families](#): Slide 5 (2:21 minutes)

- Slide 5 Talking Points:
 - We always want communication with students and families to be positive and motivate positive actions that benefit students. Effective and positive communications with students and families are a key component to increase engagement.

Large Group Discussion on Effective Communication with Families: Slide 6 (4 minutes)

- Slide 6 Talking Points:
 - Purpose: Discuss what we learned about talking with students and families about attendance.
 - When listening to the school staff talk about their approach to attendance, what were some commonalities that stood out to you?
 - Why do you think it is important to make a personal connection to learn the “underlying why” a student is absent?

Forging Partnerships with Families to Support Engagement and Attendance: Slide 7 (2 minutes)

- Slide 7 Talking Points:
 - Review the points on the slide.

Caring Conversations for Attendance Improvement: Slides 8-11 (12 minutes)

Video [Listening to Parents](#): Slide 9 (1:45 minutes)

- Slide 9 Talking Points:
 - Families have reported repeatedly that they trust their child’s teachers to tell them information that they need to know that is important for their child’s success in school.
 - However, parents/caregivers frequently also share that their child’s teachers don’t always talk with them about attendance and the impact of attendance on their child’s academic and social development. We have an opportunity to change that here.

Tailoring Conversations: Slide 10

- Slide 10 Talking Points:
 - Improving attendance is about partnering with families and connecting attendance to the goals that they and their students have. Attendance is connected to academic and social success in school and beyond.
 - When we talk with families and students about attendance, using a structure like Caring Conversations helps to ensure that we begin with what is most important, the student and their family and their hopes and goals.
 - The steps to Caring Conversations are Learn, Share, Listen, Discuss, and Arrive at a plan. It starts with building a positive connection with the family.

Review the Caring Conversations Process Slide 11

- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - When we take time to follow the Caring Conversation process, we are more likely to have a more engaging conversation with students and families about attendance. Review each step 1-5 and the key points for each step.
 - Generally, when talking with students and families about attendance, we sometimes skip steps 1 and 2 and go straight to step 3 informing them that there is a problem. By skipping steps 1 and 2, we can create a less trusting atmosphere and maybe even put the student or their parents/caregivers on the defensive.

Caring Conversations Small Group Discussion Lesson Five [Worksheet](#): Slide 12 (6 minutes)

- Slide 12 Talking Points:
 - Again, the steps to Caring Conversations are Learn, Share, Listen, Discuss, and Arrive at a plan.
 - In your small group, discuss what questions you can ask to promote sharing and learning about a student and family. (i.e., share positive things you have observed about the student).

Caring Conversations Large Group Debrief: Slide 13 (4 minutes)

Effective Communication: Slides 14-17 (6 minutes)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - Research by the Ad Council where 1,000 families of chronically absent students were interviewed had a few revealing results that we can use to learn from and shape how we talk about attendance.
 - Research by the Ad Council also found that many of the standard approaches like impersonal or even negative letters and calls inadvertently result in negative reactions or lack of action.
 - Review the findings bulleted on the slide.
- Slides 16-17 Talking Points:
 - There are several rules we should keep in mind when communicating with families in writing about attendance.
 - Read the points on slides 16 and 17.

Review Key Messages: Slide 18 (2 minutes)

Potential Ideas to Implement Slide: 19 (2 minutes)

- Slide 19 Talking Points:
 - Identify times of the year to communicate supportive attendance messages to families (e.g., before vacations).

- Have a positive, personal conversation with families whose children are chronically absent.
- Communicate with families as soon as absences start to add-up.
- Make sure families know about available resources.

Resources: Slides 20-21 (2 minutes)

- Slides 20-21 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - Use these family communication tools from [Attendance Works](#):
 - [Handouts and Messaging](#)
 - Better Truancy Notifications

Lesson Five Worksheet: Effective communication with students and families

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand effective communication practices.
2. Understand how to have caring conversations with families to improve student attendance.

SMALL GROUP - CARING CONVERSATIONS

1. How can you promote caring conversations in your school community with the focus on building relationships through learning and sharing?

Lesson Six: A Whole School Approach: Relationships Matter

The purpose of this lesson is to facilitate a dialogue about how school staff including teachers can bring about the changes necessary to improve attendance for all students and prevent chronic absence. This is the sixth and final session in a series of six lessons.

It is recommended to review and practice talking points in advance. Feel free to put the content into your own words without changing the context.

Lesson Plan: Improving attendance and engagement is a whole school community responsibility

Audience: Educators and School Based Staff

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify whether each student has a connection to a caring adult
- Identify how everyone in the school can support student attendance and engagement

Materials Needed:

- Lesson Six PowerPoint
- Video: [We all have a role!](#)
- Lesson Six [worksheet](#)

Lesson Duration: 45 minutes

Welcome, use Lesson Six PowerPoint Slides 1-4 (3 minutes)

- Begin the session by sharing the purpose:
 - Remind staff why your school is prioritizing attendance this year. Is it part of the school improvement plan or otherwise connected to other school wide goals?
 - Reflect back on prior lesson conversations.
- Slide 2: Review the purpose of the sessions
- Slide 3: Indicate which lesson you are on
- Slide 4: Review the session objectives

Video: [We all have a role!](#) Slide 5 (3:49 minutes)

- Slide 5 Talking Points:
 - Let's watch this video that demonstrates the difference each and every one of us can make

Small Group Video Reflection: Slide 6 (6 minutes)

- Slide 6 Talking Points:

- Purpose: Understand that everybody at the school has a role to play in improving attendance and engagement.
- Break into groups of four and answer these questions:
 - Why do we need everyone in the school to play a role in improving attendance at our school?
 - Describe how different staff can contribute.

Large Group Debrief: Slide 7 (6 minutes)

- Slide 7 Talking Points:
 - Each group shares ideas on how different staff can be involved in supporting student attendance and engagement.

Strategies for Positive School Climate: Slide 8 (2 minutes)

- Slide 8 Talking Points:
 - Promoting a positive school climate and culture can help encourage students to attend more regularly.
 - Strategies to improve school climate can build relationships and a positive learning environment which includes relevant and engaging learning experiences, and ensuring that all students feel known, connected, and safe.
 - Here are some strategies to build on what we do. (Choose examples on the slide that your school does and is interested in exploring or strengthening).

Relationship Mapping: Slides 9-12 (8 minutes)

- Slide 9 Talking Points:
 - We can use a tool like this relationship mapping guide to see which students are well supported and which ones lack adult connection. The goal is for every student to be connected to a caring adult in the school building. The initial step may be to focus on a certain group of students.
- Slide 10 Talking Points:
 - The relationship mapping tool is especially effective for students with moderate chronic absence
 - Read the key elements on the left of the slide.
- Slide 11 Talking Points:
 - There are several other tools that school staff can use to build relationships.
 - Read the key steps on slide 11.
- Slide 12 Talking Points
 - Review strategies on slides

Small Group Brainstorming: Roles and Responsibilities for Students: Slide 13 (5 minutes)

- Slide 13 Talking Points:
 - Giving students responsibilities at school can encourage connection to school as students develop confidence and a sense of importance because of their role.
 - Remind staff that student roles and responsibilities should be based on the student's interests.
 - Brainstorm roles and responsibilities that could be given to students struggling with attendance who are feeling disengaged or struggling to make connections. Use Lesson Six [worksheet](#).

Large Group Debrief: Slide 14 (5 minutes)

- Slide 14 Talking Points:
 - Each group shares their list of ideas.

Review Key Messages: Slide 15 (2 minutes)

- Slide 15 Talking Points:
 - Review the points on the slide.

Potential Ideas to Implement: Slide 16 (2 minutes)

- Slide 16 Talking Points:
 - Pilot relationship mapping for students to determine which students have a connection to a caring adult.
 - Identify a group of students to pilot targeted relationship building strategies.

Resources: Slide 17 (2 minutes)

- Slide 17 Talking Points:
 - [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
 - [Attendance Works](#)
 - Harvard Common Ground [Relationship Building](#) Mapping
 - [Turnaround for Children's Strategies for Building Relationships](#)

Lesson Six Worksheet: A Whole School Approach: Relationships Matter

SESSION LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. By the end of the session school staff will Identify their role in supporting student attendance and engagement

SMALL GROUP ONE - WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY!

Purpose: Understand that everybody at the school has a role to play in improving attendance and engagement.

- Why do we need everyone in the school to have a role in improving attendance at our school?
- Describe how different staff can contribute.

SMALL GROUP TWO - BRAINSTORMING: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STUDENTS

Purpose: Identify opportunities to engage students.

Giving students responsibilities at school can encourage connection to school as students develop confidence and a sense of importance because of their role.

- Brainstorm roles and responsibilities that could be given to students struggling with attendance who are feeling disengaged or struggling to make connections.

Appendix: Facilitation Guidelines

Facilitation is:

- The process of enabling groups to work cooperatively and effectively.
- Giving opportunities for members to share, listen, make decisions, and to take responsibility.
- Bringing out and focusing **the wisdom of the group**, often as the group creates something **new** or **solves a problem**.

Implementing the teaching attendance curriculum is an opportunity to expand the responsibility for attendance from one person to a whole school strategy with everyone (teachers, school staff, and administrators) having a role to play. This requires the principal, as the building leader, to facilitate the process of building the knowledge and capacity of their school staff to adopt evidence-based practices.

Often, because teachers and school staff see attendance as an administrative task or the sole responsibility of the family, the facilitator may encounter resistance from their staff.

Skilled facilitators see direct resistance as a gift. The individual you are speaking with is honest and brave enough to tell you what is really on their mind. If this person is saying something, there may be others who are thinking it. Mitigating concerns and resistance early in the process improves program success. Objections may be caused by:

- Misunderstandings about the content, implications for them, or the goals of teaching attendance among attendees.
- Fears about the impact of changing roles and expectations.
- Lack of trust.
- A feeling of feeling overwhelmed.
- Skepticism based on past experiences with implementing innovative practices.

Facilitating discussions through open-ended, supportive questions with teachers and school staff is a powerful tool to create open, honest dialogue and help the group move forward.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE WAYS TO RESPOND TO RESISTANCE

Objection	Open-ended, supportive questions
We do not have time to build relationships with students and their families. There are so many special programs we do not have time to teach!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How are the relationships at school with students and families now? ▪ How do student absences affect your ability to teach? ▪ Are there some relationship-building activities that could be easily included into daily classroom activities? ▪ What benefits might come from having positive 2-way communication with students and families?
We have always had a chronic absence problem in this school. Why do you think this program will change anything? It is just the flavor of the month!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What has been done in the past to work on chronic absence? ▪ What are your thoughts about why those efforts failed? ▪ If the teaching attendance approach helps improve our school's chronic attendance, what benefits would our teachers, school staff and students see? ▪ How do you think our school can apply a positive, relationship building approach this school year? Are there any negatives of trying this approach?

MODELING BEHAVIORS AS THE FACILITATOR

One of the greatest challenges and opportunities in facilitating this curriculum is demonstrating the behaviors we are encouraging. Participants look at facilitators and evaluate whether they are walking the talk. The following examples are ways to demonstrate these behaviors in the lessons:

- **Give each participant a warm welcome** as they enter the session. This requires the facilitator to be finished with preparation when participants arrive.
- **Demonstrate active listening skills.** Listen attentively and reflect back on what the individual says by paraphrasing or making notes on the flipchart to confirm your understanding.

- **Create a positive environment** from the comfort of the room to the tone of the conversation. If people seem uneasy, stop and offer an observation about the situation. See what the group says. The issue could be anything from a need for a break to a lack of trust with school leadership. Address the issue and ask for participants' thoughts before resuming the session.
- **Give positive feedback.** Be sure to **use positive, appropriate social cues** such as smiles, uncrossed arms, and engaging body language.
- **Encourage everyone to participate.** Provide positive reinforcement to everyone who participates whether they have the answer or comment you expected.