



## **Department of Education & Workforce**

**Lesson Four: Understanding why students are absent**

# OVERALL TRAINING OBJECTIVES

**The focus of the Teaching Attendance curriculum is to support school staff in addressing chronic absence and improving academic outcomes.**

# Six Sessions



- Lesson One: What is chronic absence and why does it matter?
- Lesson Two: Shift to prevention and early intervention
- Lesson Three: The role of teachers in attendance
- **Lesson Four: Understanding why students are absent**
- Lesson Five: Effective communication with students and families
- Lesson Six: A Whole School Approach: Relationships Matter

# 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.

# Video: Using a Team to Understand Reasons for Absences



<https://youtu.be/qyJfYbuwxlM>

# Full Group: Video Reflection Discussion

Purpose: Explore innovative solutions to the factors that can contribute to absences.

When listening to the school staff talk as a team, what were some commonalities that stood out to you?

# Asking Powerful Probing Questions Among Staff

## 5 Whys Worksheet

### 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 and a half.

Why is that?

3. They haven't 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 himself/herself or plan for issues.

Use the 5 Whys to understand a problem and the system that produces it.

**Caution:** do not use it to lay blame on students or families

### Blank worksheet:

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Five-Whys-Worksheet.pdf>

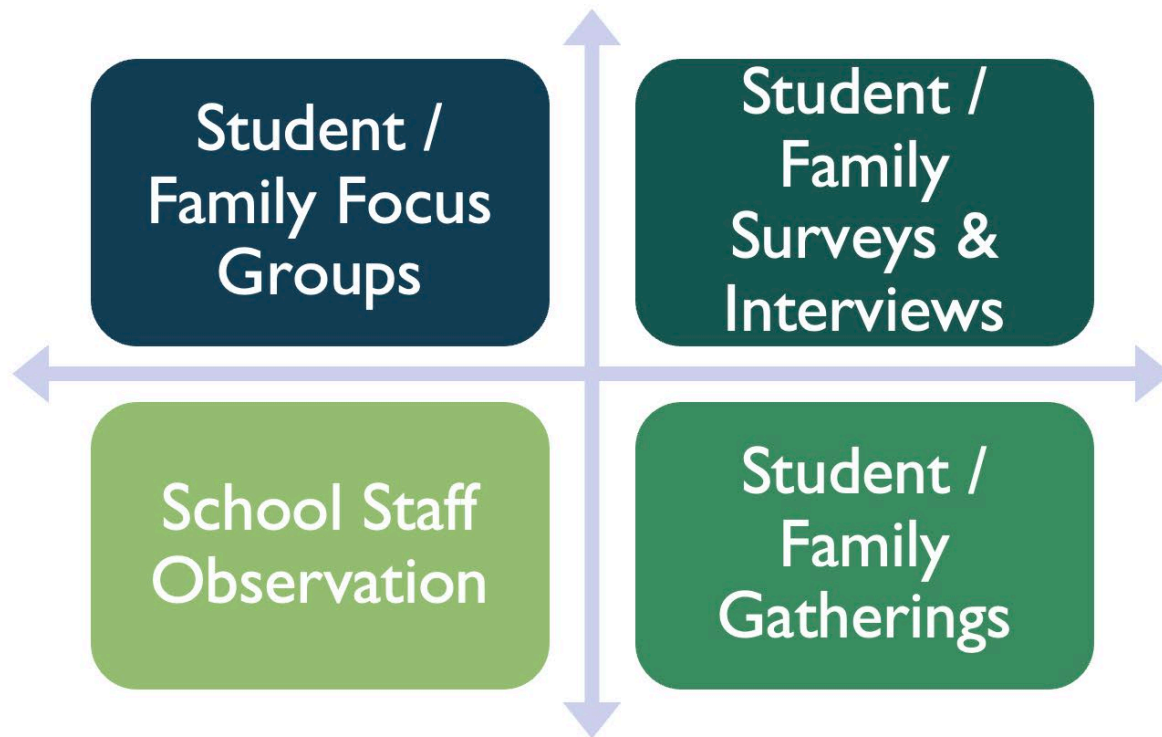
### Identified Root Cause:

Students have not been taught, coached and supported in developing successful routines for getting to school on time.

# Understanding the Perspectives of Students and Families Matter

- 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

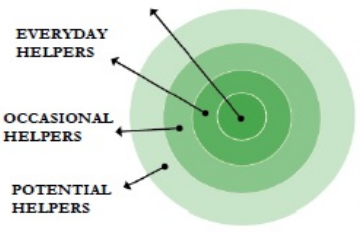


# Use What You Learned from Students/Families to Align Interventions

Underlying Barrier	Root Cause	Possible Interventions
Student/Family Lack Connection to School	Limited sense of belonging; negative experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentoring</li><li>• Targeted Positive Home Visits</li><li>• Advisory groups that meet regularly</li></ul>
Disengaged Academically	Materials not relevant; need more support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alternative schedules</li><li>• Expanded learning opportunities or universally designing lessons</li><li>• Work-based learning</li></ul>
Physical and Mental Health	Anxiety; Depression; Lack of healthcare access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small group sessions focused on supporting students</li><li>• Check and connect</li><li>• Connect nurse and nurse aide with family</li></ul>

# Partner with Students and Families with a Student Success Plan

## MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK



- My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help if you ask.

1. My Family:

2. Everyday Helpers:

3. Occasional Helpers:


4. Potential Helpers:

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_



- ✓ Set attendance goals
- ✓ Make backup plans
- ✓ Track absences
- ✓ Recognize success!

## MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

**POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS**

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with \_\_\_\_\_.
- (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a lunch from their favorite restaurant, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by \_\_\_\_\_ and the alarm clock is set for \_\_\_\_\_.
- If my child complains of a headache or stomachache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will read him/her to school every day and call \_\_\_\_\_ so that he/she can check in with my child during the day.

**2017-2018 ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

August 2017							September 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31										

October 2017							November 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31											

December 2017							January 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
							1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans/>

# Small Group Exercise – Aligning Interventions 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: *A large number of students from your school are tardy or absent in November.*
2. Brainstorm potential interventions that align with the root cause.

# Large Group Discussion

Share potential interventions that align with the root cause.

# Key Messages

- 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 the information from students and families and the knowledge of school staff.

# Potential Ideas to Implement

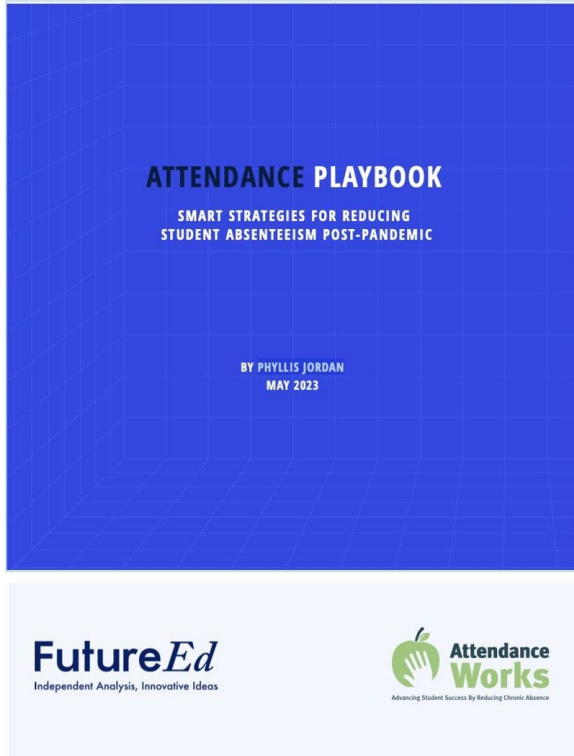
- Conduct a focus group with chronically absent students and/or their families to learn about the barriers to attendance.
- Compare what you thought affected attendance with what you heard from students and/or families.

# Resources

- [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Attendance Support](#)
- [Attendance Works](#)
  - [Gathering and Using Qualitative Data](#)



# Interventions that can be found in the Attendance Playbook



## TIER I Interventions

- Nudging Parents and Students
- Home Visits
- Positive Messaging
- Incentives
- Healthy School Buildings
- Schoolbased Health Services
- Telehealth
- School Buses and Public Transit
- A Safer Walk to School
- Breakfast for All
- Laundry at School
- Relevant—and Culturally Relevant Curriculum
- Threshold Greetings
- Rethinking Recess
- Restorative Discipline Practices

## TIER II Interventions

- Early Warning Systems
- Mentors
- Youth Engagement
- Addressing Asthma
- Targeted Transportation
- Students with Disabilities
- School Refusal
- Immigration Enforcement

## TIER III Interventions

- Truancy Courts
- Interagency Case Management
- Housing Challenges

Attendance Playbook <https://www.futureed.org/attendanceplaybook/>

Implementation Guide <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/attendanceplaybook/>