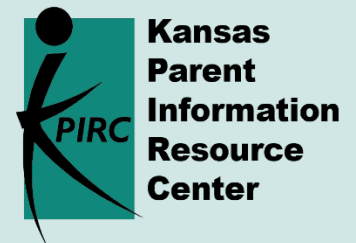




# BRINGING ATTENDANCE HOME

Jane Groff, Ph.D. Ex. Director  
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[www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc](http://www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc)



# Objective & Agenda

Objective: To provide information and strategies to support educators and families to decrease chronic absenteeism and increase attendance.

- Information for Educators
- Information for Families
  - Activities
  - Videos
- Time for Questions
- Survey

# For Educators




# Why are So Many Students Missing So Much School?

There are many reasons students are absent and they fit into 4 broad categories: **Barriers, Negative School Experiences, Lack of Engagement and Misconceptions.**

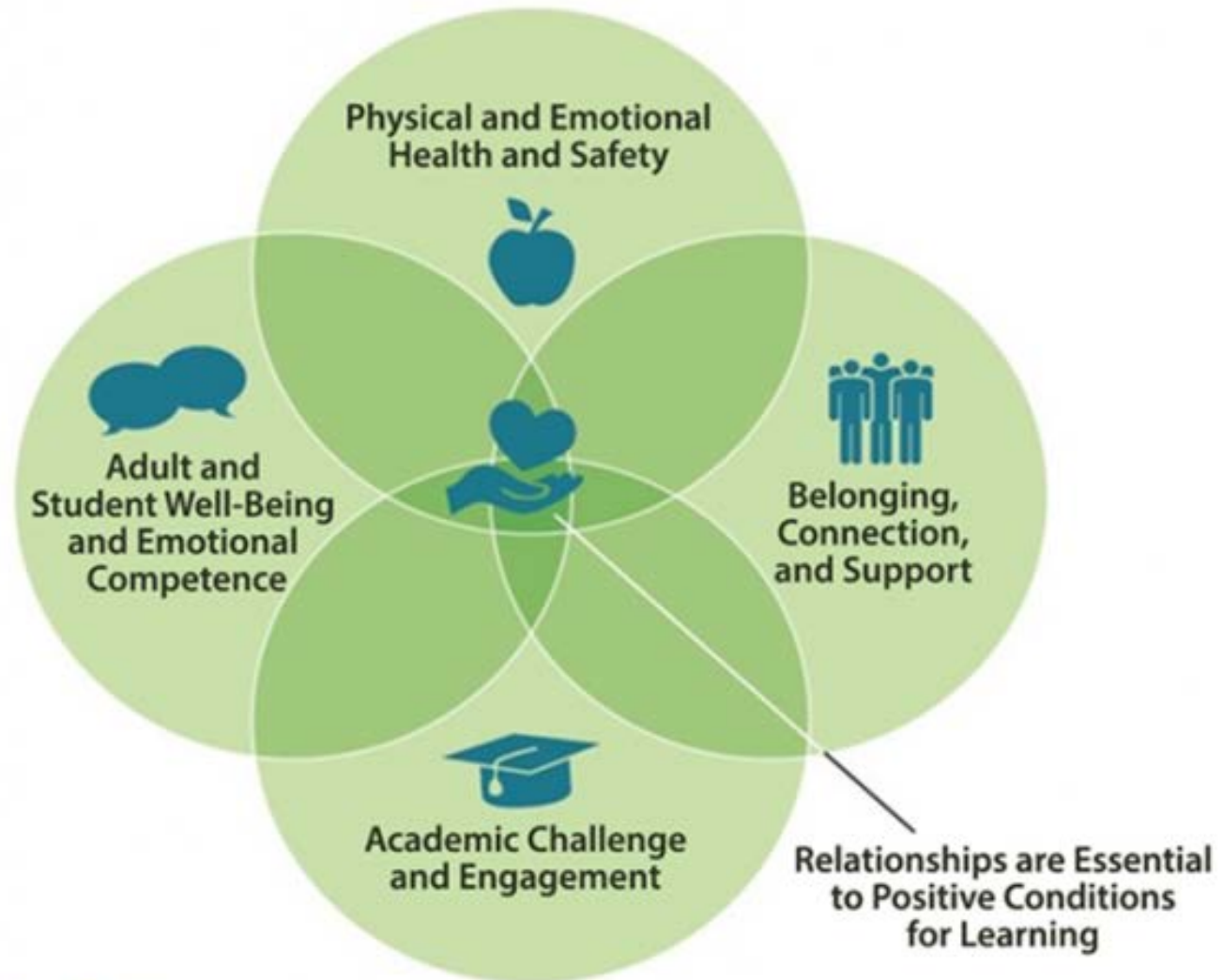
- ❖ **Barriers** are factors that impede a student from getting to school. While some barriers affect families in low-income communities more, others such as transportation cut across all income levels.
- ❖ **Negative School Experiences** include a range of challenges, such as bullying or unfair disciplinary practices, that cause a student or a student's family to avoid school.
- ❖ **Lack of Engagement** is the result of factors such as the absence of a relationship with at least one caring adult, or culturally relevant and engaging instruction, which results in a student feeling little or no connection to school.
- ❖ **Misconceptions** are common ideas about attendance that families or students believe to be true but are not. For example, too often missing class is only seen as a problem if absences are unexcused.

Attendance Works: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/teaching-attendance-2-0/use-data-for-intervention-and-support/strategy-2-consider-needed-supports/why-are-so-many-students-missing-so-much-school/>

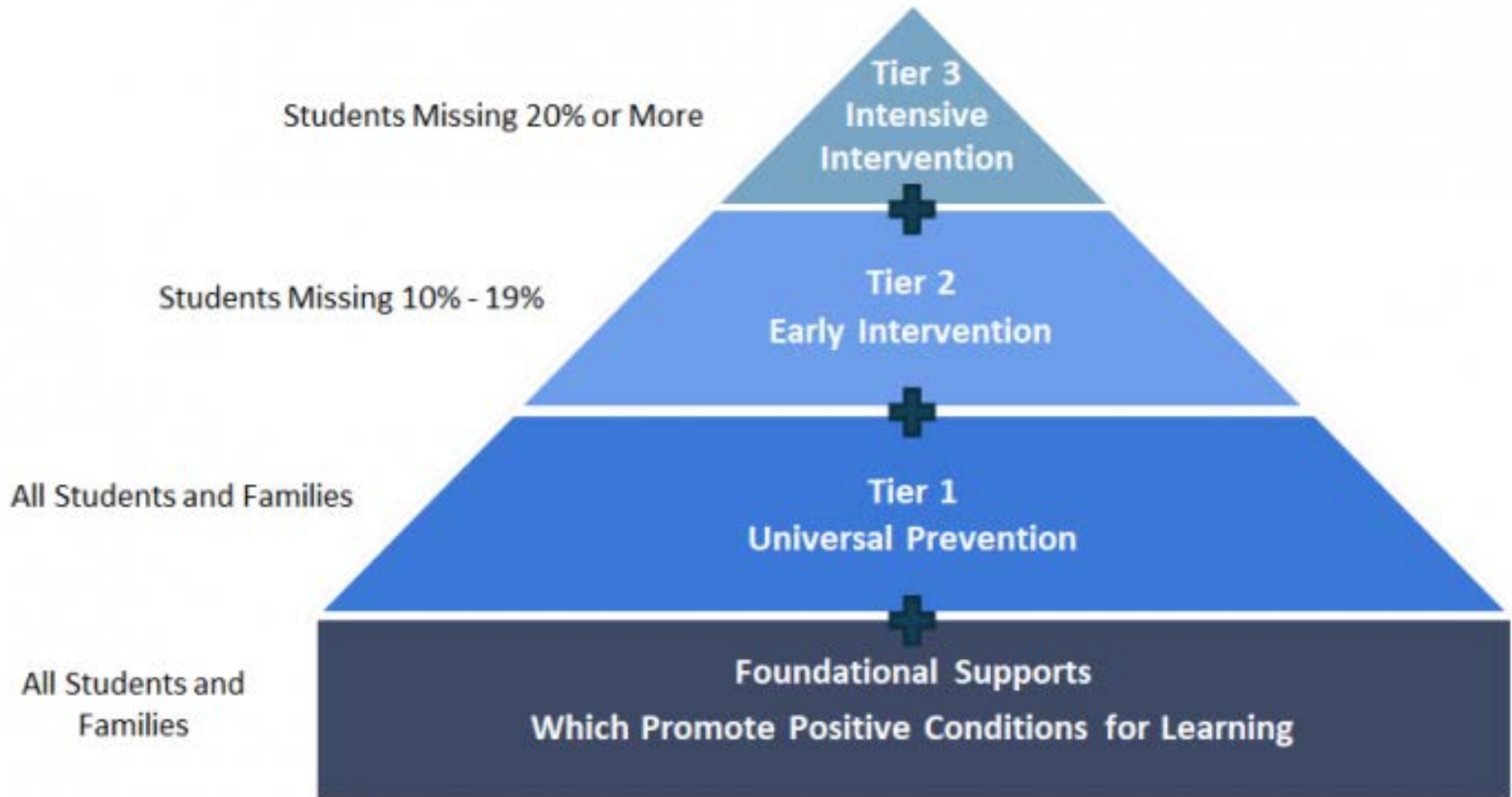


Barriers	Negative School Experiences	Lack of Engagement	Misconceptions
<p>Illness, both chronic and acute –physical and mental</p> <p>Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care</p> <p>Family responsibilities</p> <p>Trauma</p> <p>Depression or anxiety</p> <p>Unsafe path to/from school</p> <p>Poor transportation</p> <p>Housing/food insecurity</p> <p>Frequent school changes</p> <p>Child welfare or juvenile justice system involvement</p> <p>Inequitable access to resources due to bias and discrimination</p>	<p>Struggling academically and behaviorally</p> <p>Ineffective or harmful interventions</p> <p>Bored or social challenges</p> <p>Bullying</p> <p>Suspensions and expulsions</p> <p>Harsh, biased disciplinary practices especially for students of color</p> <p>Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience</p> <p>Undiagnosed disability</p> <p>Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability</p> <p>Pressure for academic success</p>	<p>Lack of or inequitable access to challenging, culturally responsive, engaging instruction &amp; enrichment</p> <p>Lack of or ineffective academic, emotional or behavioral support</p> <p>No meaningful or negative relationships to adults in the school</p> <p>Unwelcoming school climate</p> <p>Failure to earn credits/no future plans</p> <p>Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes</p>	<p>Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused</p> <p>Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning</p> <p>Sporadic absences aren't a problem</p> <p>Attendance only matters in older grades</p> <p>Suspensions are not relevant</p> <div>  <p><b>Kansas Parent Information Resource Center</b></p> </div>

# Positive Conditions for Learning Lead to Students Being Engaged and Attending Regularly



# MTSS and Attendance



# Tier 1 Universal Supports

- **Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations**
- Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement
- Personalized communication to families when students are absent
- Recognition of good and improved attendance
- Impact of attendance on whole child widely understood
- **Connection to a caring adult in the school**
- Every child and their family encouraged to develop a success plan that includes attention to attendance



# Tier 2 Early Intervention

- **Common community and school barriers identified and addressed**
- Individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance
- Attendance strategies added to IEP
- Family visit
- Mentors
- Intensive tutoring
- Check in, check out
- Expanded learning opportunities
- Small group interventions and supports for students
- **Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension**

# Tier 3 Intensive Intervention

- **Educational support champions / advocates**
- Interagency case management
- Housing stability supports
- Student attendance review board
- Community-based, non-criminal truancy court
- **Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation**
- Legal Intervention (as a last resort)

# Urgent Need to Avoid Punitive Responses to Poor Attendance

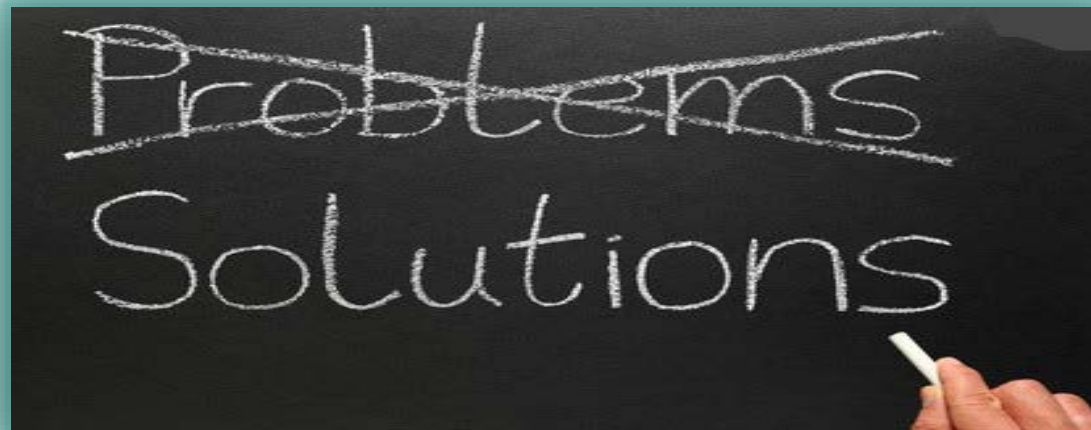
- Punitive practices have not shown to improve attendance.
- When absences start to add up, often the initial reaction to missing school is to blame the child or their family for not caring enough to make school a priority.
- This response can make it even more difficult to find a solution because it causes the student and family to feel alienated, distrustful and angry.
- What improves attendance is partnering with students and families to identify and address the [root causes](#) that lead to students to miss school in the first place, whether absences are connected to barriers to showing up for school, negative experiences in school or a lack of engagement.

[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)



# Positive Problem-Solving Approach is More Effective

- A study conducted in California, for example, found that rewriting traditional truancy notifications could increase their effectiveness by 40%.
- The key was making sure the notices did not begin with the state mandated legalistic language.
- The most effective letter offered clear, actionable data about which days a student missed, shared the potential consequence of chronic absence on learning outcomes, and reassured parents and guardians that they could help their children get to school.



Condition A (Control)  
Standard Notice

School Name  
Address  
City, State Zip

Date

Parent Name  
Parent Address  
RE: Student Name  
City, State Zip

Student ID#: XXXXXX

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Good attendance is required for academic excellence. [STATE] Education Code determines what types of absences are excused or unexcused. When a child is absent from school and/or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on three (3) occasions in one school year without a valid excuse, the law considers that child to be truant. The law and district policy requires all schools to notify parents when this occurs. The [district name] central office automatically sends these letters based on school records so that parents are aware of absences and can address these concerns.

School records indicate that your child was absent from school without a valid excuse on occasions, beginning with the following dates:

---

Thursday, September 12, 2015  
Thursday, September 19, 2015  
Thursday, September 27, 2015

---

Our goal is to partner with families to ensure that students are attending school every day. Although the following consequences may appear harsh we are mandated by Education Code Article 48260.5 to inform you of the following:

- That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school.
- That parents or guardians who fail to meet these obligation may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 48290) of Chapter 2 or Part 27.
- That alternative education programs are available in the district.
- That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the pupil's truancy.
- That the pupil may be subject to prosecution under Education Code Section 48264.
- That the pupil may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the pupil's driving privilege pursuant to Section 13202.7 of the Vehicle Code.
- That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the pupil to school and attend classes with the pupil for one day.

Please recognize that we are required to monitor attendance and notify parents of potential problems with student attendance. If you have concerns about your child's attendance, or if you believe there is an error in this notice, contact the school at <SCHOOL\_PHONE\_NUMBER>. The designated attendance personnel will work with you to resolve this issue. We look forward to assisting you.

Sincerely,

Principal Signature

Principal Name

- That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school.
- That parents or guardians who fail to meet these obligations may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 48290) of chapter 2 or part 27



Condition D  
Add-up Notice

We need your help. [STUDENT NAME]'s absences from school are concerning, and your partnership is critical. Students who miss just one or two days of school each month can fall seriously behind.

[STUDENT NAME] is now "truant" because [SHE/HE] missed school (or was more than 30 minutes late) without a valid excuse on:

*Thursday, September 12, 2015*

*Thursday, September 19, 2015*

*Thursday, September 27, 2015*

Being absent can lead to doing poorly in school. Students who miss many days of school are more likely to:

- Fail their classes
- Drop out from high school
- Have poor relationships with parents and teachers

We are required by [STATE] law to send you this letter and to warn you of the consequences of additional unexcused absences (see sidebar).

Please remember that every absence matters and just a couple days each month adds up. You are key to improving [STUDENT NAME]'s attendance.

Sincerely,  
Principal X

**Truancy-** [STATE] Education Code School administrators determine what types of absences are excused or unexcused based on state law and on the facts of the pupil's circumstances. When a child is absent from school and/or tardy in excess of 30 minutes on three (3) occasions in one school year without a valid excuse, the law considers that child to be truant.

Education Code Section 48260.5 requires us to inform you of the following:

- That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the pupil at school.
- That parents or guardians who fail to meet these obligations may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 48200) of Chapter 2 or Part 27.
- That alternative education programs are available in the district.
- That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the pupil's truancy.
- That the pupil may be subject to prosecution under Education Code Section 48204.
- That the pupil may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the pupil's driving privilege pursuant to Section 13202.7 of the Vehicle Code.
- That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the pupil to school and attend classes with the pupil for one day.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance or if you believe our records are inaccurate contact the school at «SCHOOL\_PHONE\_NUMBER».

We need your help. [STUDENT NAME]'s absences from school are concerning, and your partnership is critical. Students who miss just one or two days of each month can fall seriously behind.

Being absent can lead to doing poorly in school. Students who miss many days of school are more likely to:

- Fail their classes
- Drop out from high school
- Have poor relationships with parents and teachers

# Attendance: An Equity Issue

- Root causes can also be related to misconceptions about attendance, such as thinking that sporadic absences aren't a problem, or missing two days a month doesn't affect learning.
- A [new report](#) from the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, notes that “an arrest, court involvement, and/or system supervision for youth who are truant or commit other low-level offenses actually decreases their likelihood of attending school and completing high school.”
- Left unchecked, biases in how schools and communities define and respond to truancy contribute to [disproportionate numbers of youth of color](#) becoming involved in our juvenile justice system and pushed out of educational opportunity.



# Attendance and Trauma

- [Research](#) also shows that chronic absence is highly correlated with trauma.
- **The more a child has had adverse childhood experiences, the more likely they are to miss school.**
- The most effective response to trauma is asking “what happened to you, how can I help,” not saying “what’s wrong with you.”
- **Most often, an empathic, [restorative response aimed at addressing the underlying barriers](#) yields better attendance**



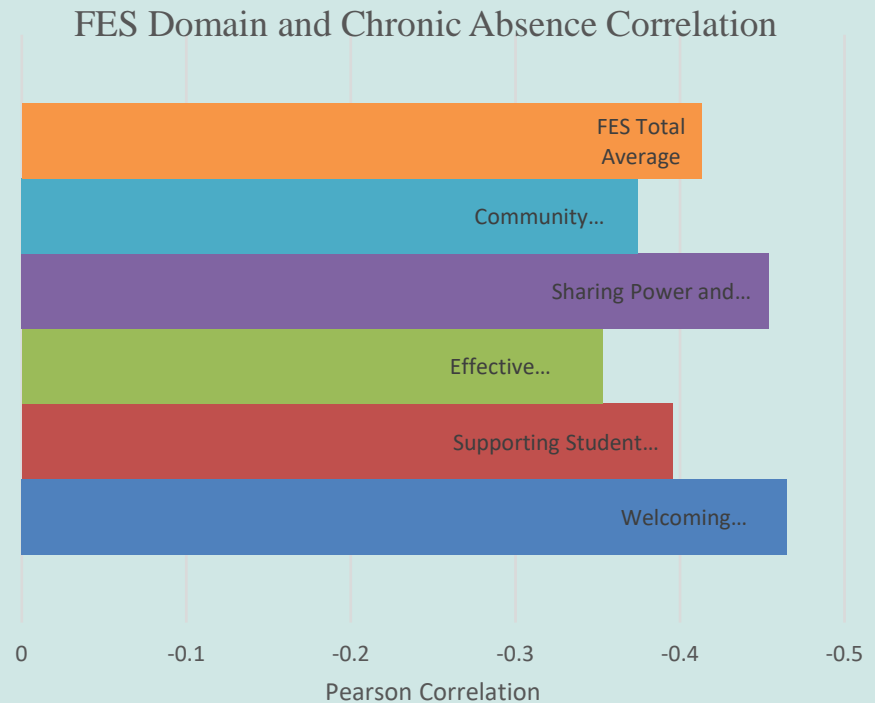


# Family Engagement and Attendance

[www.districttools.org](http://www.districttools.org)

- As family engagement increases (**average FES rating**), chronic absenteeism decreases
  - Moderate significant correlation
- Two domains of family engagement are significantly correlated to lower chronic absenteeism:
  - **Welcoming Environment**
  - **Sharing Power and Advocacy**

In this instance, negative correlations are good (lower percentage of students who are chronically absent)



# For Families: Workshop



# Just Like Me

I am a parent/guardian/grandparent – Just Like Me

I have two daughters – Just Like Me

I have one son – Just Like Me

I'm excited to learn new things about attending school– Just Like Me

I have a dog – Just Like Me

I am one of seven children – Just Like Me

I have 2 sisters – Just Like Me

I have 4 brothers- Just Like Me

My shoe size is an 8 – Just Like Me

I want my children to be successful in life – Just Like Me

I want my children to get a great education – Just Like Me

I want to support my children's education. Just Like Me

I want to be a positive example for my children throughout their life. – Just Like Me.

# Group Norms

- Create opportunities for everyone to participate
- Respect different perspectives and experiences
- Share only what you feel comfortable sharing. You can take a pass if you don't want to share.

# School Definitions

---

Attendance – to be present at or to go to school

---

Absence – not present or at a usual expected place;  
missing school

Tardy – Being late to school

---

Excused Absence – missing school with an  
allowable excuse

---

Unexcused Absence – missing school without an  
allowable excuse

---

Chronic Absenteeism – missing too much school,  
two days a month or more or 10% of school year  
both excused and unexcused

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>

# Excused Absences

---

Illness of the student or medical appointments

---

Urgent need of the child to be at home due to illness in the immediate family

---

Death in the family

---

Absences for religious observances

---

Participation in a district approved or school sponsored activity or event

---

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>

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# Unexcused Absences

- Oversleeping/alarm failure
- Arriving to school 10 minutes after the start of school or checking out more than 10 minutes before the end of the day without an acceptable reasons
- Leaving school during the regular school day without approval of a school official or other non-emergency situations.
- Personal grooming appointments (hair, nails, tanning, etc)
- Employment/job interview
- Shopping/errands
- Driver's Education (classroom or behind the wheel)
- Skipping class/leaving campus without following proper procedure
- Family vacations that have not been pre-approved
- Needed at home/babysitting
- Car trouble
- Missing the bus/ride
- Needing sleep or rest

# Icebreaker

- What makes it hard for you as a parent to get your child or children to school every day?
- What motivates and helps you to get your child to school despite these challenges?



# Did You Know?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher must slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and can develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with schoolwork, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

[https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit /](https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/)

# The Importance of School Attendance



# Reactions to the Video

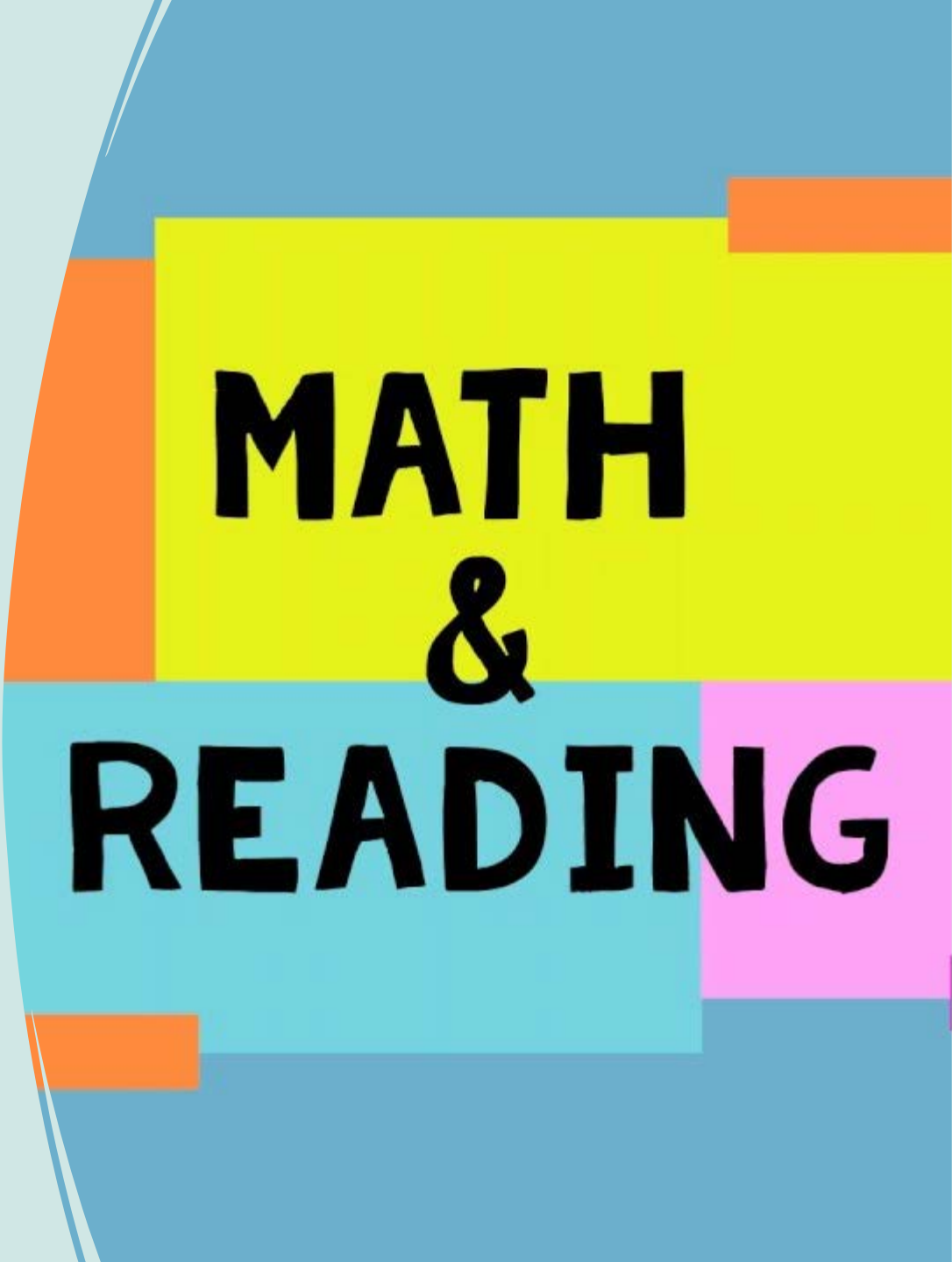
What did you learn from this video?

*Chronic absence is missing 18 days of school over the course of a year, or just 2-3 days each month, both excused and unexcused.*

# Benefits for Attending School Regularly

1. Achievement: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to do better on reading and math assessments than students who do not attend school regularly.

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>



**MATH  
&  
READING**

# Benefits for Attending School Regularly

2. Opportunity: Being in school every day gives students opportunities to learn from others and to learn important information about future aspirations.

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>



## Benefits for Attending School Regularly

3. Exposure to the English Language: Regular school attendance can also help students who are learning English by giving them the opportunity to master skills more quickly.

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>



# Benefits for Attending School Regularly

4. Being Part of the School Community: Just by being present at school, your child is learning how to participate in the school community and learning valuable social skills.

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>



# September is Important!

Did you know that absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year?

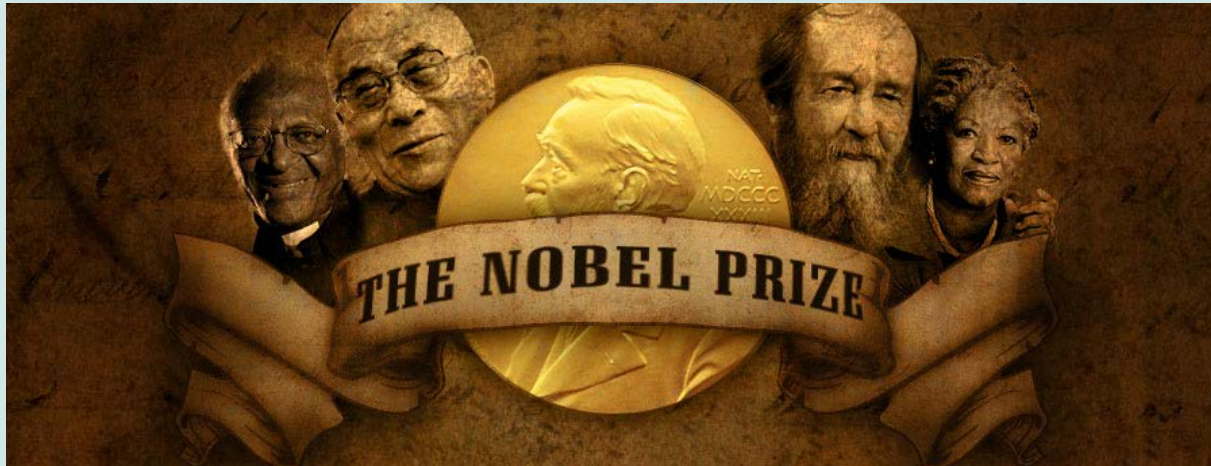
Students who missed 2 to 4 days in September were 5 times more likely than those who missed fewer than 2 days to be chronically absent for the year.

Students who missed fewer than 2 days in September continued to average fewer than 2 days absent each month.



# 2 Volunteers

- It won't be dangerous 😊
- It will be fun!
- You win a prize!



# Activity

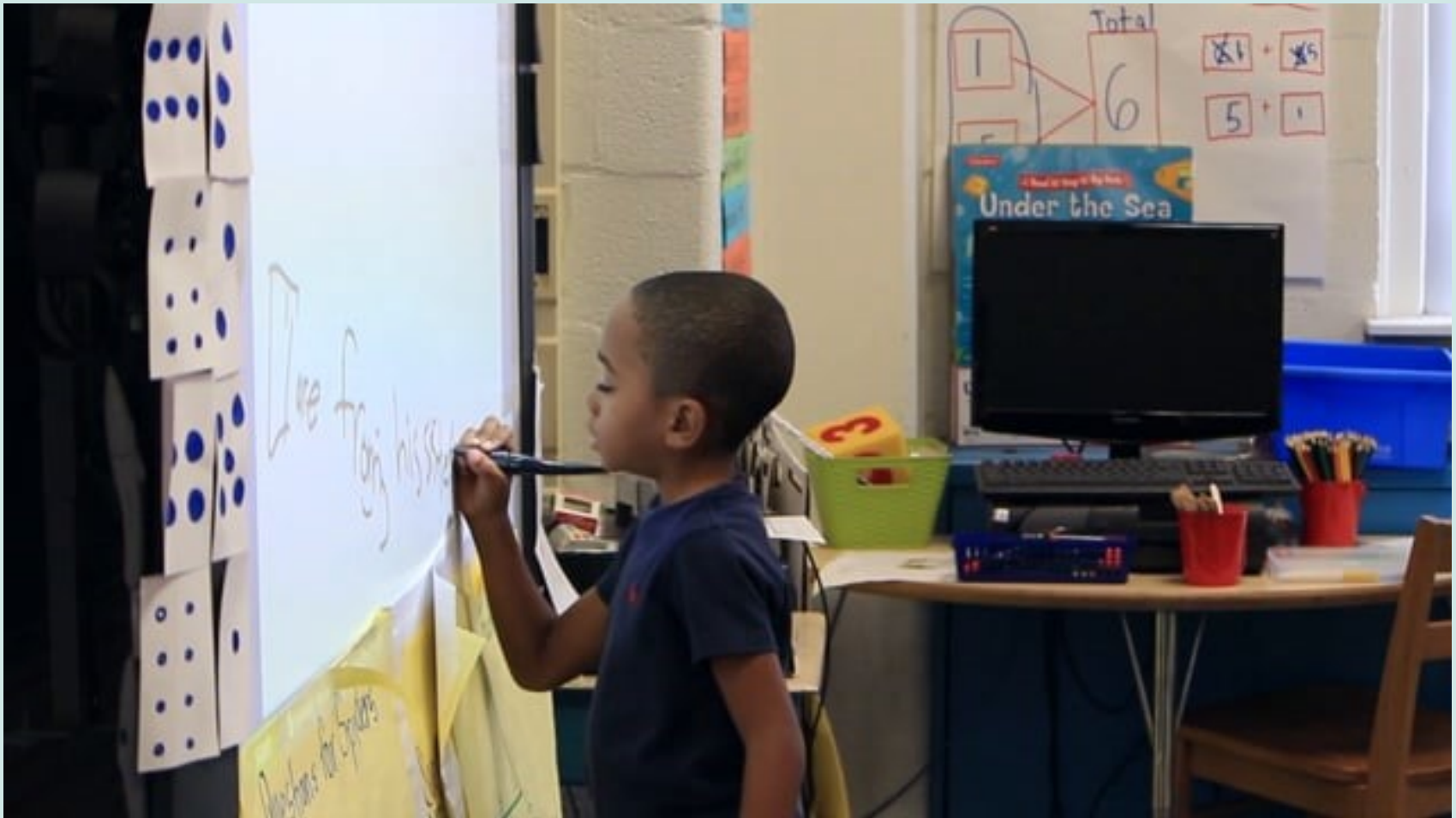
(Why Is Attending School Regularly Important for our Children?)

I need 2 volunteers  
(You get a prize)

# Washing The Elephant



# Bringing Attendance Home: A Video for Parents



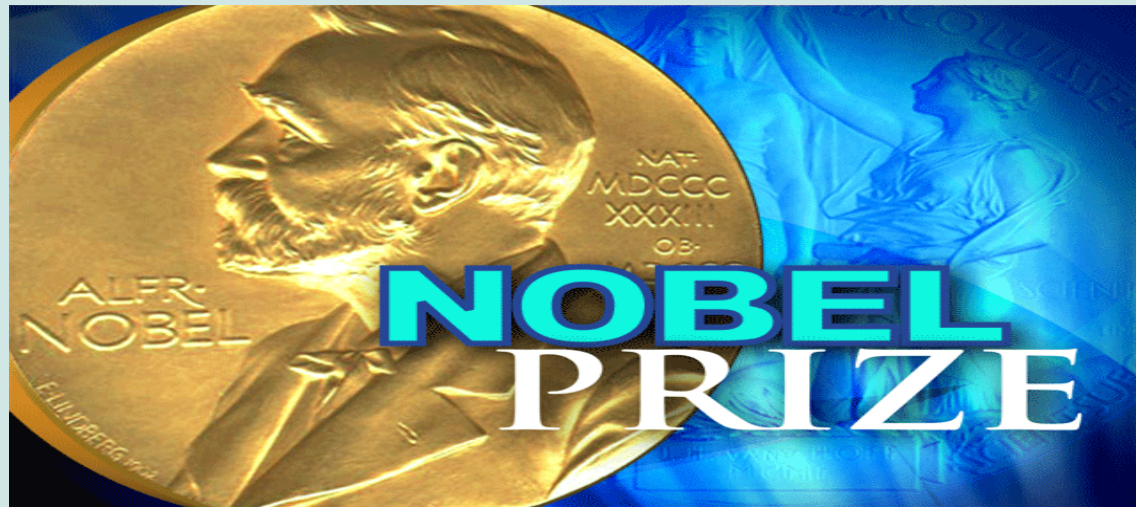
# Reactions to the Video

What did this video make you want to do regarding attendance?

*Chronic absence is missing 18 days of school over the course of a year, or just 2-3 days each month*

# Illustrating the Gap in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading

- I need 3 volunteers
- Don't have to say a thing
- Will get a prize! (maybe not the Nobel but a prize)



# Attendance in Elementary School

Absence creates gaps in learning  
which may affect a child's  
self-esteem and confidence



# What Does It Take To Get a Child To School Every Day?

## 1. Family Practices

Families nurture a habit of attendance at home

## 2. Helpers

Helpers who are relatives, friends, neighbors

## 3. Schools

Teachers, nurses, counselors, administrators, etc.

## 4. Community Services

Availability of services like transportation, health services, affordable stable housing, etc.



# 1. Family Practices

- What are some things you already do to help get your child to school every day?
- What are some reasons children might miss school and steps you can take to support your child's attendance?
- Some possible ideas...
  - Set a regular bedtime and morning routine to make sure children get enough sleep and wake up ready for school
  - Make medical appointments when school is not in session
  - Avoid taking vacation when school is in session
  - Send your child to school every day unless they are truly sick
  - Develop backup plans for getting your child to school if something comes up

## 2. Helpers

- What are some ways you can think of to call on friends or other families to help you get your children to school? Who can you call on to consistently help? To occasionally help?
- How can you help other families?

# 3. Schools

What are some ways our schools can help families with attendance?

How can we hold our schools accountable for attendance?

# One Principal's Story



**Attendance**  
**Matters**

Every student. Every day.

## IF YOUR STUDENT...

### ...HAS AN EXCUSED ABSENCE

Please EMAIL  
SEattendance@usd231.com  
or CALL the absence line at  
913-856-3749.

### ...WILL BE LATE FOR SCHOOL

Come to the office first to get a pass. CALL the office at 913-876-3700 ahead of time if your student will be late for an appointment.

### ...WILL BE ABSENT BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING ON VACATION

Please EMAIL Dr. Jones at jonesja@usd231.com ahead of time to request approval of absences. Otherwise, these will be UNEXCUSED.

### ...HAS DIFFERENT DISMISSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please CALL the office at 913-856-3700 before 3 pm. We will notify the teacher.

# For the Fridge

- Distribute to Families
- Post on Website
- Include in Newsletters
- Back to School Night
- Parent/Teacher Conferences



Dr. Jones,

I'm writing because I'm looking to take XXXX out of school several days next week to visit family. My plan is to get her out early from school on Tuesday so we can make the drive in-time to meet family for trick-or-treating. I conferred with her teacher during parent/teacher conferences about XXXX's progress in class and whether or not she felt XXXX's absence would interrupt or interfere with her progress and she did not. Mrs. XXXX also offered to send any worksheets home with XXXX so we can work on them together while she is gone.

October 31st is a special time in my family as it's my little brother's birthday, but it's also the same month in which he passed away, so we really like to spend that time together if possible. We would plan to stay there the rest of that week and she would return to class the next Monday.

Unless you feel XXXX's absence would be seriously detrimental to her progress I ask that you excuse/allow these absences.

Thanks for the ways you serve our little ones,

# Principal Response

Mr. XXXXX

Thank you for reaching out in advance with your request. I have reviewed XXXXXX's attendance and find her to be in good standing (having missed 3 days of school during the first quarter). Therefore, I can excuse the 3.5 days you are requesting.

Below is the threshold I use when considering whether to excuse absences or not. Please note, the total number of days missed is for any reason (illness or otherwise). If you are seeking additional absences for a vacation, etc. I may not be able to excuse them based on XXXX's collective attendance record. If you have questions, let me know.

Safe travels and enjoy your family time.

Jason Jones



# Attendance Matters

Elementary Schools in the District (Chronic Absenteeism Rate)

11.30%
13.20%
12.70%
8.50%
15.20%
11.40%
5.60%

## 4. Community Services

- Lack of reliable transportation or housing and health concerns are barriers that families cannot easily tackle alone. Do families in your school face these barriers to good attendance?
- What are some other barriers that families in our school face?
- What organizations offer services that can help address these barriers?

***What is one key idea that you will take away with you  
and practice?***



# Survey

English



Spanish



# Attendance Works Resources

- [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)
- <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/early-education-toolkit/>
- <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/bringing-attendance-home/>
- <https://www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc/kpirc-resources>

# Free Resources From KPIRC

[www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc](http://www.ksdetasn.org/kpirc)

[jgroff@kpirc.org](mailto:jgroff@kpirc.org)

