Spotlight on Education: Engaging Volunteers to Confront Chronic Absence

Senior Corps Tuesday Talks: January 10, 2017
3:30pm ET
Housekeeping

• Please mute your phone!
  – *6 on a touch-tone phone
  – Hit the blue microphone on Skype

• This call is being recorded

• Webinar and slides available on Managing Senior Corps Grants under Training Opportunities

• Audio problems? Try calling:
  – 1-866-670-8282
  – Conference ID: 407-462-53
Heather Rieman, Senior Advisor for Education, CNCS

Prior to Heather’s current role, she was the Chief of Staff in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education and also served as a Senior Policy Advisor. Before joining the Department she was the Co-Director and Co-Founder of Critical Exposure, a nonprofit organization that teaches youth to use the power of photography and their own voices to become effective advocates for school reform and social change. Heather was also a Senior Policy Analyst for the Education Policy Program at the New America Foundation. In 2001, she was named a Presidential Management Fellow and worked at the U.S. Department of Education as a program and policy analyst in the budget office. She holds a master's degree in public policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and a bachelor's degree from Tufts University. Heather lives in Washington, DC with her husband and twin daughters.

Cecelia Leong, Associate Director for Programs, Attendance Works

Cecelia Leong oversees the development of Attendance Works’ online and in-person resources for reducing chronic absence. She works closely with the Attendance Works team to identify emerging technical assistance needs and create innovative tools such as Attendance Works’ free data tools and toolkits for teachers and principals. In addition, Cecelia facilitates online learning between researchers, practitioners and consultants through the Peer Learning Network which lifts up examples of strategies that work to reduce chronic absence. She also manages Attendance Works’ in-person peer learning networks and workshops. With 16 years of experience, Cecelia uses her skills as a writer, researcher and evaluator to document innovation and best practice on issues affecting children, youth and their families. Cecelia received her Bachelor’s degree from Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges and her Master’s in Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley.
Reducing Chronic Absence

Why does it matter? What can Senior Corps do?
**Attendance Works** is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with school entry. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

**Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:**

- ✓ Build public awareness and political will
- ✓ Foster state campaigns
- ✓ Encourage local practice
What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it as \textbf{missing 10\% or more of school for any reason.}

Chronic absence is different from \textbf{truancy} (unexcused absences only) or \textbf{average daily attendance} (how many students show up to school each day).
## Multiple Measures of Attendance

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<td><strong>Average Daily Attendance</strong></td>
<td>How many students show up to school every day? The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.</td>
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<td><strong>Truancy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who is missing school without permission?</strong> Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention.</td>
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<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?</strong> Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric in ESSA.</td>
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Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with 95% ADA in 2012

98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don’t know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence

Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12
Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy

Number of students missing 10% versus 10 unexcused absences (San Francisco Unified School District)

- # chronic absentees - 2010-2011
- # of students with 10 unexcused absences (as of May 16th 2011)
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

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Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few As 2 days a month**
Chronic Absence a Huge National Problem

OVER 6 MILLION

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

That’s 13 percent of the student population—or 1 in 8 students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
http://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html
Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country
Why Does Attendance Matter?

4 A School Success Framework

- Attainment Over Time
- Achievement Every Year
- Attendance Every Day
- Advocacy For All

Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America’s Promise Alliance
For more info go to http://www.americaspromise.org/parent-engagement-toolkit
Improving Attendance Matters Because it Reflects:

✓ Exposure to language: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

✓ Time on Task in Class: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

✓ On Track for Success: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

✓ College and Career Ready: Cultivating the habit of regular attendance helps students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.

✓ Engagement: Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

✓ Effective Practice: Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

(For research, see: http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/)
Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3rd Grade Reading Skills

Note: ***Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as “Some Risk,” indicating the need for additional intervention and “At Risk,” indicating the need for substantial interventions.
Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long-Term Academic Outcomes

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored *20% lower in reading and math* in later grades and gap grows
- *2X* as likely to be retained in grade.
- *2X* likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

How Can Senior Corps Volunteers Address Chronic Absence?
Levels of Support Volunteer Programs Can Provide

- District wide Approach to Chronic Absence
- Principal Led School Attendance Team
- Caring Adult Volunteers
- Student
Caring Adults Are Key

Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.
Equip Volunteers to Address Absenteeism

Educate your volunteers about the impact of chronic absence on achievement during training:

- Share an infographic or flyer, http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/parent-handouts/
Encourage them to build a culture of attendance.

Volunteers can:

- Greet each student by name
- Show they are happy to see students in school
- Notice when students are absent
- Welcome students back. (I missed you. When you were out, we had an exciting lesson/activity about __________.)
- Express concern when absences start adding up (more than 2 days a month)
Volunteer Programs Can Support School-wide Efforts

District wide Approach to Chronic Absence

Principal Led School Attendance Team

Caring Adult Volunteers

Student
School-Level Strategies to Improve Attendance

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

B. Engage Students and Parents

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers
1. Be part of a school-wide effort to Recognize good and improved attendance. Help organize events such as assemblies or celebrations to recognize good and improved attendance.

2. Engage Students and Parents - Assist in welcoming students and parents to the school

3. Work with principal and school attendance team to
   - Offer insights into the causes of student absences
   - Make calls home when students are absent (Personalized Early Outreach)
   - Work 1:1 with a chronically absent student to set and reach attendance goals
Volunteers Can…

NOTICE A CHRONICALLY ABSENT STUDENT

CONNECT WITH THEIR STUDENT

01 Meet and greet each morning.
02 Reach out and engage mentee’s family
03 Call home if mentee misses school
04 Meet with mentees 1-on-1 or in small groups
05 Track mentees’ attendance and improvements
06 Recognize & celebrate successes
07 Work with school staff for support & intervention
Provide volunteers with key contacts in the school. Who can help students or families find resources that can address attendance barriers?

- Attendance team
- Community schools coordinator
- School nurse
- Counselor
- Principal
- Social worker
Positive Engagement: Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

Actionable Data: Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

Shared Accountability: Ensures chronic absence is monitoring & reinforced by policy.

Capacity Building: Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
Partner and Coordinate at a District and Community Level

1. Participate in district or community work groups to understand how many students are chronically absent and where they are located
2. Coordinate assignment of volunteers to schools with greatest need
3. Develop positive messaging for larger community
4. Monitor collective impact of attendance interventions
Questions from the Audience
Additional Resources

www.attendanceworks.org