

Truancy Reduction

Tier 2 & 3

Strategy Brief, March, 2014.

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In some communities, one out of every four students struggles with unexcused absences from school or truancy (Count us in, 2013). Existing evidence indicates that truanancies peak in the transition from middle school to high school (i.e., around ninth grade) and that racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to be truant than Caucasian youth (Baker, Sigmon, & Nugent, 2001; Kronholz, 2011). However, boys and girls tend to skip school at approximately the same rate (National Center for School Engagement, 2005).



Tier 2 & 3 Intervention

Defining Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

Truancy. Although the definition of truancy varies extensively throughout the literature, students are generally classified as truant when they fail to attend school for either part of or all of the day. Truancy differs from typical excused absences in that parent consent is not provided, and it is illegal for students to consistently fail to attend school (i.e., students are mandated to go to school until a certain age). Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht (1994) define truancy as the “unexcused and unlawful absence from school without parental knowledge and permission” (p.

203). Students who are chronically truant are those that exceed a specified number of unexcused absences during a particular period of time (Sutphen, Ford, & Flaherty, 2010).

Chronic absenteeism. Schools are also becoming increasingly concerned with chronic absenteeism as well. This term includes both unexcused and excused absences. The number of absences required before a student is labeled chronically absent vary somewhat, but generally missing more than 10% of the total number of days in a school year or semester is considered being chronically absent. It has been estimated that 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent, and that problem is more severe among students from low-income families (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Kindergartners who are chronically absent have lower academic achievement in first grade, are more likely to miss school as they get older, and are more likely to repeat a grade (Lu, 2013). Generally, outcomes of chronic absence are similar to that of truancy. Although we will use the term truancy in this document, similar interventions would usually apply to both truancy and chronic absenteeism.

Correlates of Truancy

The consequences of skipping school are extensive, as truant youth often become school dropouts (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Chronic truancy has also been found to be a strong indicator of alcohol and tobacco use, and substance abuse (Henry, 2010; Hallfors, Vevea, Iritani, Cho,

Khatapoush & Saxe, 2002). Social isolation, teen pregnancy (Baker et al., 2001), and other maladaptive outcomes are also prevalent.. Additionally, students score higher on achievement tests when they have better attendance (Ehrenberg, Ehrenberg, Rees, & Ehrenberg, 1991; Lamdin, 1996; Myers, 2000). Therefore, improvements in school attendance is one of the primary factors that may benefit at-risk youth (McCluskey, Bynum, & Patchin, 2004), as well as their school's performance outcomes.

Policies and Procedures Related to Truancy

Since the inception of mandatory school attendance, schools have developed policies and practices to address truancy.

State mandated truancy interventions.

Some states have laws requiring that schools establish procedures for intervening with truant students and their families. Since 2001, school attendance is also an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicator that schools are held accountable for reporting as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (Sutphen et al., 2010). Nebraska recently enacted a law requiring schools to report twenty or more absences or the hourly equivalent of twenty excused or unexcused absences (Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-209(3), 2011) to the County Attorney. After a recent change, schools now have some discretion as to whether to report a student in hopes of keeping students out of the court system, thus allowing the school to resolve the truancy issue on their own if possible.

Other states have different definitions of absenteeism and truancy in their laws. In Kansas, students are "inexcusably absent" if missing school for 3 consecutive days, 5 days in a semester or 7 days in a school year. A student who has five or more unexcused absences is "habitually truant" in Wyoming, while Iowa allows their school districts to determine what constitutes a reasonable excuse. These are not counted against the student under their law (Stoddard, 2011).



Truancy officers. Some schools appoint truancy officers (also called "truancy aides" or "truant officers") to intervene with truant youth and their families. Truancy officers are an extension of the school. They investigate unexcused absences and try to "mediate and solve the issue among the student, school, and parent" (Vance, Block, & Heuston, 2008, p. 28). They are community members, teachers, school officials, or even parents. In most states truancy officers, are required to have a high school education, but are not required to have any specialized training prior to employment. The court system, police departments, and schools employ truancy officers (Youth Life Choices, 2011). Specific duties involve contacting parents, making home visits, identifying the likely causes of truancy, linking reasons for truancy to appropriate interventions, transporting truant youth, documenting and monitoring absences, and generally abiding by and remaining abreast of state laws relating to truancy. In general, the role of truancy officers is not intended to be punitive. However, they serve to stress the importance of attending school, offer a personal connection to the school, and share necessary resources for families who struggle with truancy.

In Michigan, the process starts with notifying parents of the truancy either through letter or by phone after the student has obtained a certain number of unexcused absenc-

es (Michigan Pupil Accounting and Attendance Association, n.d.). The purpose of this contact is to express the importance of school attendance and to communicate the legal ramifications that may follow if truancy persists. If parents are not receptive and do not make attempts to increase attendance, a referral is made to the truancy officer, who is responsible for monitoring the student's attendance on a weekly basis. If the student's attendance improves, charges are placed on hold and the case continues to be monitored. If absences do not decrease, an invitation to a mediation meeting is sent (i.e., after a pre-determined number of unexcused absences is reached and in some states excused absences are included in this number). This meeting is typically held at the school with the truancy officer, appropriate school personnel, and the student if he/she is old enough (Michigan Pupil Accounting and Attendance Association, n.d.). At this meeting, an attendance agreement (i.e., contract) is created and signed. Following this stage, if the truancy continues, the case goes to the courts for a diversion conference followed by a formal court hearing.

Truancy courts. Truancy courts have been implemented in several states to assist in combating truancy. These courts are typically designed to bring together the school, courts, families and community resources to help reduce truancy. Cases can be dismissed if the student starts to attend school regularly. These courts tend to have speedier court dates and more consistent rulings. The court personnel are familiar with truancy and laws affecting attendance (National Drug Court Resource Center, 2012). Most of these courts are housed within the juvenile justice system or family court. However, in Texas and Wyoming the truancy courts are within the adult court system (Formby, 2013).

The University of Baltimore has developed a program for implementing a non-punitive truancy court. The program has been recognized as promising by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance (University of Baltimore, 2013) and is more oriented to working with families in a collaborative problem solving model. In a study

of a school-based truancy court intervention in four different middle schools, the researchers found that the truancy court was most effective in increasing the attendance rates of students with severe truancy issues. However, there was minimal effect on students who were mildly or moderately truant (Hendricks, Sale, Evans, McKinley, & Carter, 2010). Therefore, in this study truancy courts did help increase attendance rates for students with high levels of truancy, suggesting that selecting students with higher levels of truancy at the middle school might be more effective. However, court interventions rarely improve school attachment, grade point average, or decrease other types of office disciplinary referrals (Hendricks, Sale, Evans, McKinley, & Carter, 2010). Prevention efforts are a more effective, less expensive alternative to punitive efforts, and "legal action should always be the last resort" (Count us in, 2013).

Data systems. Many schools are also starting to collect data on absences so that they can detect patterns and intervene with individual students early. These schools use technology and data systems to track attendance data and give daily updates on students' attendance. There are currently eight states including Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Maryland, Oregon, Rhode Island and Utah that have examined chronic absences across the state (Lu, 2013). Individual school districts or schools have also begun to develop data systems which will alert school personnel when students meet a set criteria, such as 5 days of absence from school, permitting schools to intervene before the absences become chronic.

Individually Prescribed Interventions for Truancy

Sanctions for truancy. Traditionally, sanctions were thought to be useful with high-risk families who may need additional motivation and deterrents to reduce truancy rates. These sanctions applied to parents and/or the truant students. Laws permitted the courts to levy fines or even jail time to parents who "permit-

ted” their children to be truant. Some areas, such as the State Attorney’s Office in Jacksonville, FL, have resorted to publicized parent arrest and incarceration in order to deter families from permitting truant behaviors (Reimer & Dimock, 2005). Examples of sanctions for the students by courts have included having the truants’ driver’s licenses being revoked, or requiring community service. However, these consequences need to be meaningful in order for them to be effective (Baker et al., 2001).

Importantly, some “punishments” for truancy, such as suspension, are often ineffective since they reinforce students’ desire to skip school to avoid being punished, and as a result further decrease the time that students spend in classroom instruction. Zero-tolerance policies, suspensions, and expulsions are generally ineffective in combating truancy (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Still, Flannery, Frank, and Kato (2012) reported that exclusionary methods, particularly in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS) were utilized as responses to truancy in over 35% of incidents. This investigation also found that when OSS was used as a consequence, it was significantly related to growth in truancy rates over time among ninth graders. Additionally, many schools default to retention (i.e. retaining students in their current grade as a result of academic failure) as a consequence for extensive truancy, or social promotion (i.e. promoting students when they have not mastered the content of their current grade’s curriculum) as a result of frequent truan- cies (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1996; Spencer, 2009). These options have proven ineffective in reducing truancy, are detrimental to students’ academic and social success in school, and are opposed by major research and professional organizations in the field (National Association of School Psychologists, 2011; National Dropout Prevention Center, 2000).

In Nebraska, the legislature has stated that it does not intend for suspensions and expulsions to be used as punishments for truan- cies or excessive tardiness (Nebraska Student Discipline Act, § 79-267, 2008). Recently, the Nebraska

legislature developed a task force to make recommendations on how to better handle truan- cies and excessive tardiness (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-529.01, 2012).

Rewards for consistent attendance. Other programs attempt to use rewards for improved or high attendance. These may include recognition at school assemblies, certificates provided by the school, options for earning tangible prizes or free food coupons (from local businesses, etc.) or a variety of other rewards. At the extreme, in Anchorage, Alaska, a Jeep Patriot automobile is to be given away by lottery to one student who has had perfect attendance (An- chorage Public Schools, 2013)! School districts in California, Connecticut, and Wyoming have also given away cars or trucks to combat truancy (Fox News, 2006), although it is unclear whether these high profile rewards have had any real impact on truancy generally. Some schools have assigned students to mentoring programs like the Big Brothers Big Sisters program to support attendance(Reimer & Dimock, 2005).



Addressing why are students truant? Both sanctions and rewards by themselves offered relatively little overall improvement in truancy reduction. Even though there are discrepancies in how truancy is defined, there is a consensus that truancy is simply an indicator of underlying problems relating to poor school attachment, such as a lack of parental support for school attendance, academic deficits, minimal positive adult relationships at school and ineffective school policies (Baker et al., 2001; Heilbrunn & McGillivray, 2005; Riddile, 2010). Overall, a pattern of truancy is the likely result of a mix of both home and school problems (Kronholz,

2011). Thus, the factors that uniquely precede the truancy issues need to be identified and corrected in order for schools to increase their attendance rates and reduce truancy, therefore helping produce gains in achievement (Lu, 2013). A list of some of the frequently mentioned reasons for potential truancy is included on the left side of Figure 1.

These factors represent a very wide range of potential causes of individual student truancy. Among these are employment, pregnancy, health issues, transportation, motivation, conflict or safety issues, and social or emotional issues..

Schools with low truancy rates typically encourage students' input and incorporate individualized approaches to education (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Since the reasons for truancy are very diverse, it is logical that the most effective interventions for individual students would be measures tailored to address the specific issues or reasons for their school absences. A functional behavior assessment of an individual student's circumstances and motivations is an important step towards developing an individually tailored plan to address truancy for that student. [See the Strategy Brief on Functional Behavior Assessment]. Based on the results of the assessment, a plan can be developed to specifically address the "causes" of truancy for that student.



There are a wide variety of actions schools can take based on individual determinations about the potential causes of truancy (See the right column of Figure 1). This may require flexibility and solutions which are not necessarily ones which have traditionally been employed by schools. Some of these require collaboration with community agencies, but others are actions schools can take on their own. Springfield, Massachusetts created "walking school buses" which is when a group of students are put together with a teacher or parent to walk to and from school to promote safety (Lu, 2013). Some schools have begun to incorporate preventative strategies that make truanies less likely to occur, such as wake-up and "go to bed" phone calls for at-risk youth, and providing bus passes to ensure that a lack of transportation does not interfere with school attendance (Kronholz, 2011). New York City even provides wake-up calls from celebrities. Baltimore students make posters and videos to encourage students to attend school (Lu, 2013). The options for providing both motivation and for addressing specific reasons for student truancy are limited only by the creativity and resources of the individual school.

Generalized School Intervention Strategies to Reduce Truancy

Consistent procedures. Schools need to develop consistent procedures for responding to truancy and chronic absenteeism behaviors (Baker et al., 2001). The goals of truancy reduction programs mainly consist of synchronizing mechanisms that will result in consistent school attendance to prevent truants from entering the court system. Attempts to address truancy are typically made after a pattern of absences has persisted for some time (Mogulescu & Segal, 2002). Many schools have made this the responsibility of administrators, counselors, and social workers, as well as designated truancy officers. In one Oakland, California school, the chronic absenteeism rate went from 15% to 8% in one year and raised scores on standardized tests 30 points by using data to make decisions about how to improve attendance, engaging the full community and having district leadership sup-

port. This school gave certificates for improved or good attendance, developed an attendance team which set goals and met every two weeks to discuss how to help individual students who were chronically absent, and conducted family conferences to develop an improvement plan with students who continued to miss school (Balfanz & Chang, 2013)

Staff-student relationships. There is evidence to suggest that building strong, personalized relationships between students, their families, and school personnel may be enough to increase school attendance (Kronholz, 2011). [See strategy brief on Staff-Student Relationships]. Railsback (2004) states, "...schools which have created smaller and/or personalized learning environments have higher attendance and lower dropout rates" (p. 12). [See strategy brief on Academic Supports]. This trend may explain why higher truancy rates are more characteristic of schools with large student populations (Puzzanchera, Stal, Finnegan, Tierney, & Snyder, 2004) and inner city schools (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002) compared to smaller, rural schools. It makes sense that in areas with small student populations it is much easier to become familiar with at-risk students and intervene when they are truant. Therefore, it is important for schools to reach out to families and build relationships in order to communicate to students that they are wanted at school and that someone cares about their attendance.

Mentoring programs. Mentoring programs assign a mentor, tutor, or advocate for truant youth and/or their families to act as a guide and monitor their attendance. These programs are particularly appropriate for students who do not have a close relationship with their parents or are from a household that does not value education (Teasley, 2004). Students who struggle with truancy "report that having a person at school who is checking up on them, gives them the sense that someone cares and motivates them to come to school" (Gonzales, Richards, & Seeley, 2002). See strategy briefs on Mentoring and Tutoring.

Interventions targeting parents and families. Family and school collaboration is an im-

portant characteristic of truancy reduction programs (U.S. Dept. of Education and U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1996; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Educational neglect is a misdemeanor for which parents can be held accountable for in some states (Kronholz, 2011). In addition, family variables, such as family conflict, may influence a student's decision to be truant, as well as engagement in corollary behaviors, such as drug use or sexual activity (Henry, 2010). Schools can foster engagement and prevent truanies by involving families through simple practices such as homework hotlines, opportunities to be involved in the classroom, and regular involvement in school decisions. Parents who are involved in their child's homework and schooling increase their child's attendance rates in school (Corville-Smith, Ryan, Adams, & Dalicandro, 1998). Positive, frequent communications between parents and the school are also needed (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Furthermore, appropriate truancy prevention strategies may involve early childhood and literacy interventions, which have shown some promise in maintaining long-lasting school engagement (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Sheldon and Epstein (2004) found that reducing chronic absenteeism requires schools to take a comprehensive approach to involving families and the community, including communicating with families, finding mentors in the community, and celebrating good attendance with the students and their families. Further, schools which had more attendance-focused activities were more likely to reduce their chronic absences (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

School engagement and attachment interventions. Interventions that focus on building school attachment are especially appropriate for schools with high levels of truancy. When students are truant they are often unsupervised and not engaging in pro-social activities (Henry, 2010). The rationale behind these strategies is that encouraging involvement and making schools appealing places to be (i.e., improving school climate and positive relationships) will increase attendance. [See strategy brief on School Climate]. A student's attitude about school is "the single most important factor in combating truancy" (Gullatt & Lemoine, 1997, p. 1). One approach to helping students with

their attitudes is motivational interviewing, which is “an empathetic approach to communication that promotes self-awareness and self-directed behavior change through the development of personal responsibility [and] self-efficacy” (Cloth, 2013, p. 32). This approach has been found helpful in effecting behavior change, building intrinsic motivation, and improving self-regulated behaviors. This is an evidence-based behavior-change framework that can be used alone or in conjunction with an attendance program like mentoring, action planning or progress monitoring (Cloth, 2013).

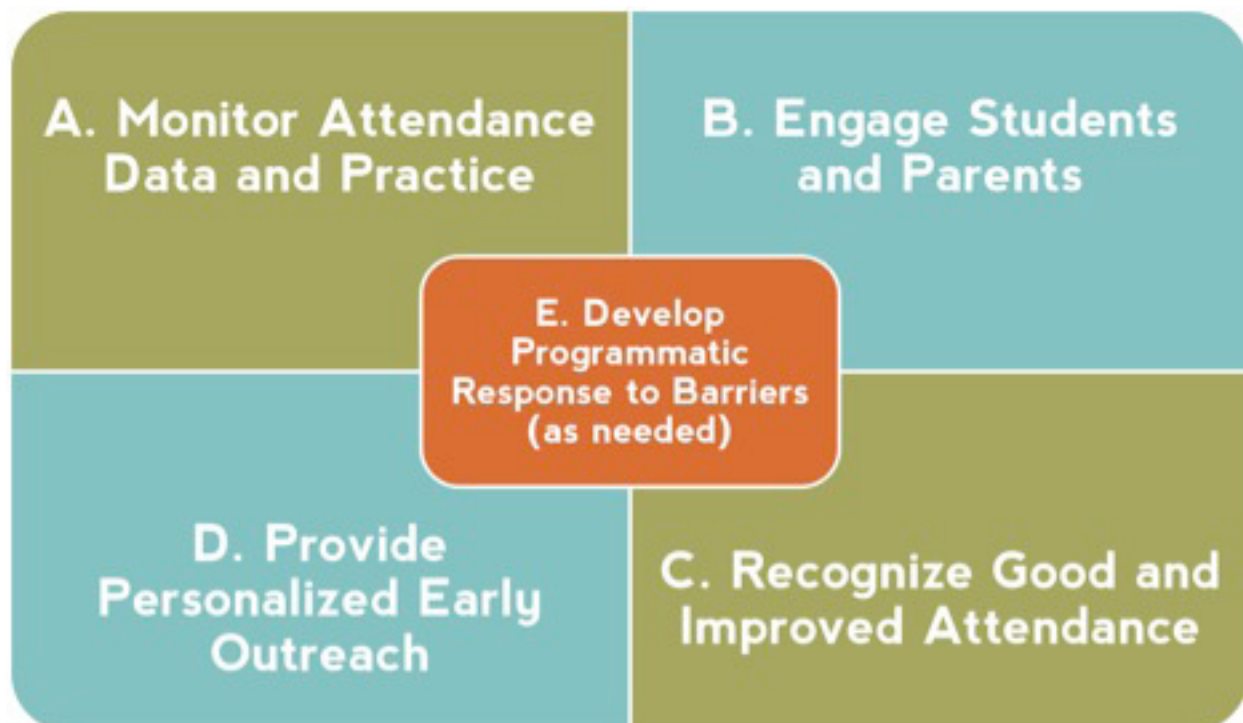
Large schools are more likely to have attendance problems than smaller schools (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Therefore, some schools have worked to establish smaller class sizes and to incorporate opportunities to build relationships with teachers. [See strategy brief on Academic Supports for more information on small learning communities]. Improving student-staff relationships and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities are additional approaches that may increase students’ attachment and affiliation with their school. [See strategy brief on Staff Student Relationships].

Structure of the school. Later school opening times in secondary school, block scheduling, and closed campuses may offer less opportunity for students to skip classes (Smink & Reimer, 2005; Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau, 2000). Some schools have created “schools within the school” to create smaller, more personalized learning communities to promote more individual attention and awareness of student problems.

Multi-component models. The Youth Out of Mainstream Program (YOEM: North Carolina) outlines five components that should be used in order for comprehensive truancy reduction programs to be effective. These include parental involvement, meaningful sanctions or consequences, incentives for school attendance, ongoing school-based truancy reduction programs, and involvement of community resources (Baker et. al., 2001). Similarly, the National Dropout Prevention Center (2000) cites best practices for truancy reduction programs through six components: 1) collaboration; 2) family involvement; 3) a comprehensive approach; 4) use of incentives and sanctions; 5) operation within a supportive context; and 6) rigorous evaluation

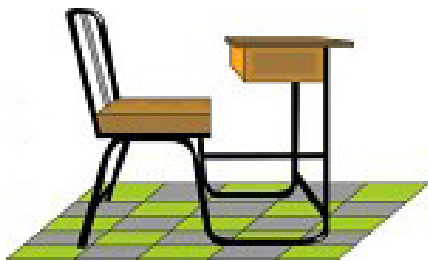
Truancy Reduction Steps from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities.

From the Dropout Prevention Strategies Newsletter, September, 2013, http://www.ndpc-sd.org/documents/Big_Ideas/BigIDEAs-2013-09.pdf.



and assessment. Schools typically implement comprehensive programs that combine many of the aforementioned strategies (Smink & Reimer, 2005). Teasley (2004) states that specific program categories include mentoring programs, efforts that connect truant youth and their parents to community-based resources, strategies to foster school engagement and attachment, and mediation programs.

Ideally, truancy reduction programs are multifaceted and are characterized by ongoing collaboration and attempts to address the barriers that may be impacting the students' absences (Wesley & Duttweiler, 2005). The strategies adopt a "no blame" approach, but send the message that attendance is highly valued. Some involve counseling truant youth or linking them to appropriate services that may underlie the truancy issues (e.g., substance abuse treatment) (Mogulescu & Segal, 2002). Plans are designed and individualized based on the discussions that result from meetings with various personnel who are involved in the truant student's life.



Truancy and Special Education

Special education students in the early stages of secondary education (i.e. grades 8 through 10) have been found to be more likely than their non-special education counterparts to miss school (Spencer, 2009). Many of these students struggle with behavioral and emotional problems or learning difficulties, which often lead to school avoidance and truancy behaviors. Additionally, Spencer (2009) reported that many eighth grade truants were English Language Learners or had been experiencing medical difficulties, such as asthma, but that these variables were often not considered in designing individualized interventions. Therefore, many truant

students may benefit from a multi-tiered model of assistance that is individualized to meet their needs. This may include a referral to a Student Assistance Team (SAT), multi-disciplinary evaluation, or a Functional Behavior Assessment in middle or high school in order to determine the particular function of school skipping behaviors. [See strategy brief on Individual Behavior Plans & Functional Behavior Assessment]. The resulting behavior functions should be incorporated into truancy interventions rather than blanket approaches that emphasize punishment.

Research Evaluating Truancy Reduction Programs

Maynard and colleagues (2012) conducted a meta-analysis for a school that wanted to improve attendance rates with students who were chronically truant. The authors of this study concluded that it is important and worthwhile to intervene with chronically truant students, but contrary to what authors of truancy programs say, they found that simple, non-collaborative interventions were as effective as collaborative, multimodal interventions. There was also no significant difference between programs that were court-based, school-based, or community-based (Maynard, McCrea, Pigott, & Kelly, 2012).

This is encouraging because it means that schools may not need to implement complicated programs with outside resources to have an impact on student attendance. Of the different programs studied, the most effective were found to be behavioral programs, alternative education programs, and school-based mentoring programs. The most effective individual interventions were found to be group guidance, parental notification and contingency management. However, because few studies were found to meet the requirements of this meta-analysis, the authors caution that they would not recommend or discourage the use of any of the interventions studied (Maynard et. al., 2012).

In another study, Cratty (2012) followed a cohort of students from their third-grade year

until the year after they should have graduated from high school. This study explored whether being put into a gifted program assisted in reducing dropout rates. The results indicated that the gap in reading and math achievement levels between students from high socio-economic levels and lower socio-economic levels was quite small at the third grade level, but it continued to widen throughout elementary and middle school and very different secondary school outcomes resulted. Low income third-grade students with the same level of ability as higher socio-economic students were three and a half times as likely to drop out of school, while the higher socio-economic students were two and a half times more likely to take advanced placement courses (Cratty, 2012). The results also indicated that a modest improvement in math and reading skills can improve student engagement, thereby reducing dropout rates. Students who have tremendous challenges, such as low average ability, learning disabilities or high absence rates, still have the potential to achieve greater outcomes if programs that produce these gains are used. Many of the programs that can produce these gains are already being practiced in schools.

Two additional studies were conducted that followed first graders in urban schools. Both studies found significant relationships between early family experiences, multiple school placements and dropping out of high school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992). Xu, Hannaway, and D'Souza (2009) found that moving and changing schools frequently also leads to increased dropout

rates. Absenteeism, out-of-school suspensions, and retentions are also higher for students who have dropped out (Cratty, 2012). Therefore, the implementation of strategies that focus on building a strong relationship with students, families, and schools are more likely to reduce truancy than are punitive strategies.

Conclusion

Truancy and chronic absenteeism are an increasing problem in many schools that can have a serious impact on whether a student drops out or stays in school, as well as whether or not they might later have interactions with the criminal court system. Many states have laws requiring students to attend school to a certain age and require schools to enforce these attendance laws, often with punitive consequences. There are several different strategies to increase attendance rates including mentoring programs, family or parent-based interventions, locating community resources to assist in meeting the needs of students and their families, strategies to increase school engagement and attachment, modifications to the structure of school and rewards and sanctions that are linked to school attendance. These strategies may be more effective at reducing truancy than traditional, punitive discipline. Schools are particularly encouraged to identify the specific reasons why an at-risk youth may be truant, and to develop data-based, individual interventions to address these concerns. Potential Reasons for individual Truancy Possible solutions by school personnel



Note See the Resource brief on Truancy reduction in schools (2014, March). Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Department of Education. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/resources-truancy-reduction>.

Recommended citation:

O'Connor, A., Peterson, R. L. & Strawhun, J. (2014, March). *Truancy reduction. Strategy brief*. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Department of Education. <http://k12engagement.unl.edu/truancy-reduction>.

Figure 1. Reasons and Possible Solutions for Individual Truancy

Potential Reasons for individual Truancy	Possible solutions by school personnel
Academic difficulty or failure	Provide after-school programs, provide academic supports like tutoring, mentoring, or credit recovery program, summer school, Saturday school, or supplemental instruction in reading, collaborate with the parents and/or community to provide opportunities to help students with academics, use mini-courses to reinforce what is being taught in classes, arrange for homework assistance; change schedule to more appropriate classes
Anxiety about school	Use an Edupup to help with the anxiety, give the student a meaningful task at the beginning of the day that helps them to adjust to being at school, use positive reinforcement, establish a mentoring program, use staff student relationships to help connect students to the school, have a positive school climate that is welcoming, Establish one to one conferences with teachers at school specifically to discuss anxiety and how it can be managed.
Being bullied at school	Develop a PBIS program, be proactive in addressing bullying issues, using mediation, family group conferences, restitution or restorative justice to help students resolve their conflict, implementing a bullying prevention and intervention program, Identify and intervene with the bully perpetrator(s); provide safe ways to arrive and depart from school; use an adult or student to monitor.
Competing activities- games, television, movies, other...	Work with parents to diminish access to competing activities; make those activities available at school as reinforcers for attendance
Conflict/ fights/ disputes with other students at school	Provide a peer mediation program, a mentoring program, and/or a character education program, use a conflict resolution curriculum to supplement, Teach conflict de-escalation strategies, brainstorm with student possible solutions
Depression/withdrawal from social contacts	Use counseling interventions, develop staff-student relationships
Disability-based issues that impede attending school	Routinely conduct an FBA for youth with possible behavioral issues; ensure that IEP contains appropriate supports and interventions to address any such issues
Embarrassment about clothes, looks, accent or language, etc.	Develop a store where students can “purchase” used clothing at very low prices, connect students with community resources for anonymous donations, implement a character education program that helps students appreciate their differences such as culture and language
Evening employment/ lack of sleep/ too tired	Provide “time for bed” call in evening. Locate community resources to provide financial support. Assist parents to manage reasonable bed time.
Felt need to work/employment/providing financial support to family	Locate community resources to provide financial support. Provide a modified schedule that works with their work schedule (evening, weekend, flexible schedules). Provide credit recovery opportunities. Offer online coursework.

Potential Reasons for individual Truancy	Possible solutions by school personnel
Illness not reported to parents/ Health issues	Provide a comprehensive health assessment and needed treatment; find access to free health clinics
Lack of child care for siblings or student's children	Locate community resources to provide necessary child care/ establish child care at school. Provide after school programs for siblings. Collaborate with the community to provide resources for helping families with childcare
Lack of engagement/ relationship with adults at school/ depersonalization	Set up an adult mentor; check and connect program; check in/check out program; try to ensure that all students participate in at least one extra-curricular activity at school
Lack of friends/Social isolation	Set up a buddy system and peer mentors at school, begin a program like Character Counts or Developmental Assets to help students learn about being a friend and to develop character traits that help them to be a better friend, Facilitate friendship and communication specifically for this student. Tie student in to clubs or other activities.
Lack of self- discipline to get ready and get to school	Provide "wake up" call in morning; Special reinforcers for arrival on time and participation, using positive reinforcement
Lack of interest in school/ lack of motivation	Use motivational techniques, connect what students are learning to their lives, use positive reinforcement, help students see the relevance of their education through service learning or career placement opportunities
Lack of relevance of what they are learning in school and how it connects to their lives	Use mini-courses to help students explore how what they're learning is relevant to jobs they might want to someday have, bring in guest speakers to talk about the importance of education, bring in college student athletes or professional athletes to talk about how education has impacted them, develop a mentoring program; work with teachers to focus on making value clear and increasing motivation; Develop program with local businesses to provide work study and other work experience for enrolled students. Career Technical Education.
Lack of transportation	Locate community resources to provide necessary transportation/ provide transportation, collaborate with the community to develop a transportation program
Life events – family tragedies or other disruptive incidents in a student's life like caring for a sick parent	Get to know the students and their situations. Be flexible in supporting students when such things happen.
Not feeling safe at school or on the way to school	Implement PBIS, develop safety procedures to help students feel safe, create a school climate that emphasizes safety
Parents' mobility keeps students from connecting and remaining connected in school	Identify these youth and connect them with a mentor/caring adult. Have faculty go through the list of all enrolled students and identify the kids that no one knows. Divide those kids among faculty and have them connect and get to know those kids.

Potential Reasons for individual Truancy	Possible solutions by school personnel
Parents have negative attitude about school	Attempt efforts to engage and support parents to change their attitude; make home visits to talk about long term goals for their children and how education can impact that or problem solve with the parent about how to improve/solve this, find ways to reinforce parents for participation; identify one best contact at school for the parent and have that person make efforts to establish a relationship
Peer pressure to cut classes	Develop character education program like Character Counts or Developmental Assets, help students to connect and engage in school; provide a behavior contract providing reinforcements for attending classes; use a check in and check out system for key classes and overall attendance
Personal tragedy, like a death in the family	Use counseling interventions, establish a grief team that is trained to help students work through their grief
Poor school climate in general	Use school climate survey instruments with students, parents and staff to identify the things perceived as problematic. Use that information and do something about the problem(s). "Beautify" the school. Put up student art and projects. Involve the students in this project so they have some ownership of the effort
Pregnancy	Encourage attendance with support for morning sickness/ teasing or other issues. Provide a day care and/or parenting classes. Provide a modified schedule to accommodate the parents
Push factors from the school (e.g., "hostile" attendance or truancy policies, etc.)	Regularly review school policies and procedures with an eye toward things that may make it difficult for some or all students to attend school.

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