



Attendance System Improvement Guide

For Building and District Leaders

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Introduction

Promoting regular attendance is a strategy states and districts are using to ensure all students have equitable opportunities to learn and that all students graduate from high school. In Washington state, Regular Attendance¹ is a key performance indicator and one measure in the Washington School Improvement Framework, the state's new accountability framework under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Regular Attendance is defined as the percent of students that miss fewer than 10% of their school days; and reflects students that are not chronically absent.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides schools in Washington state with an annual analytic report featuring statistics on Regular Attendance. As district and school leaders, you are uniquely positioned to use these data to drive positive action, such as building awareness about the importance of attendance and using attendance data to offer support to students early, before they fall behind or disengage.

This guide may be used by individual school or district leaders, but it will most benefit a team of district and building personnel and community members charged with developing and carrying out plans for improving attendance. To enrich the data review and planning process, consider including a wide variety of stakeholders on your team, including administrators, cross-sector partners, school counselors, teachers, after-school providers, community organizations, students, and families.

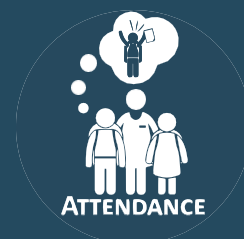
The four sections of this guide are organized sequentially. The first two sections build understanding of the rationale for addressing chronic absenteeism and improving Regular Attendance in your school or district. The third and fourth sections prompt team members to interpret this information and to develop goals and strategies for improvement. After completing all sections of the guide, the team will have answered key focus questions and developed an informed action plan.

¹ In this document, Regular Attendance is capitalized when used in the context of Washington OSPI's specific definition.

USING THE GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you and key stakeholders:

- Understand and interpret attendance data for your school or district
- Engage in a collaborative self-assessment of your school's or district's strengths and challenges regarding Regular Attendance
- Develop concrete plans to improve Regular Attendance in your school or district





SECTION 1

Why Focus on Regular Attendance?

Focus Question: What are the benefits of and rationale for promoting Regular Attendance in Washington?



SECTION 2

Understanding Your Data

Focus Question: What can we learn from state- and district-level data about Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports for students?



SECTION 3

Self-Assessment

Focus Question: What are areas of strength and barriers to improving Regular Attendance in our system?



SECTION 4

Action Steps

Focus Question: What will we do over the next one to three years to improve Regular Attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism?



SECTION 1

Why Focus on Regular Attendance?

OBJECTIVE

- Understand the rationale for focusing on attendance nationally and in Washington.

FOCUSQUESTION

- What are the benefits of and rationale for promoting Regular Attendance in Washington?

DIRECTIONS

- Read the attendance research summary below.
- Respond to the discussion questions at the end of the section.

Promoting Regular Attendance is a leading improvement strategy in Washington state.

Regular Attendance is one of OSPI's measures for school improvement, selected to advance the state's vision of closing achievement and opportunity gaps and ensuring all students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement. Regular Attendance, along with Ninth Grade On Track and Dual-Credit Completion, are included in **Washington's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** plan as a measure of school quality and student success (SQSS). Guides are available for all three SQSS indicators to help district and school leaders use data to assess their strengths and challenges and to formulate action plans.

Chronic absenteeism is high in Washington and is a critical issue of equity.

Results from a 2014 school survey by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights found that more than 6 million U.S. public school students (13 percent) missed at least three weeks of school during the year (generally equivalent to 10 percent, which is the common threshold for chronic absenteeism). Washington state had the second-highest rate of chronic absenteeism, after Washington, D.C. (Chang, 2017). These figures are likely underestimated because they do not capture students who transition between schools or leave school altogether. Further, troubling patterns emerged when the national data were disaggregated by student age, race, and ability groups, with chronic absenteeism rates of nearly 20 percent among high school students, 20 percent among both black and Hispanic students, and 25 percent among

From Chronic Absenteeism to Regular Attendance

OSPI adopted new rules on the definition of student absence in **chapter 392-401** of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), effective for the 2018-2019 school year. In Washington, a student is considered *absent* if they are not physically present on school grounds and not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved location (Chapter 392-401 WAC). A student is considered *chronically absent* if they miss 10 or more of their school days for any reason: excused or unexcused.

Instead of reporting chronic absenteeism, OSPI is now calculating and reporting Regular Attendance—the inverse of chronic absenteeism. In Washington, Regular Attendance is when a student attends at least 90 percent of school days.

students with disabilities (Balfanz, 2016). These national data reflect similar patterns in Regular Attendance across racial and ethnic groups in Washington (Figure 1).

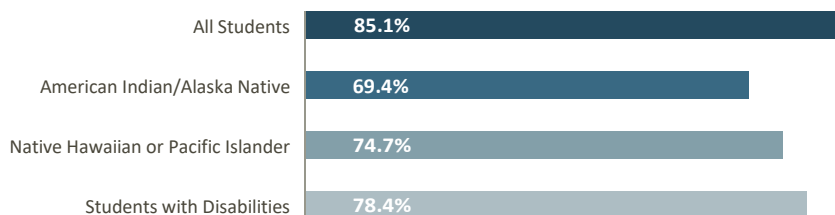
Regular Attendance is critical in the early years of school.

Evidence has shown that students who were chronically absent etc.² These findings support evidence from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) showing that chronic absenteeism in kindergarten had an immediate impact on academic performance for all children, especially Latino students, and that the long-term consequences were most significant for economically disadvantaged children (Chang & Romero, 2008). An empirical study of kindergarten students found that chronic absenteeism reduced math and reading achievement outcomes—and was also associated with lower educational and social engagement (Gottfried, 2014).

Regular Attendance has been linked to higher rates of school attainment, higher performance, and more positive behavioral outcomes.

The effects of chronic absenteeism tend to persist and accumulate over time: a national study showed that a student who was chronically etc.³ More broadly, poor attendance patterns have been shown to predict lower grades and lower high school attainment, defined as four-year graduation by diploma, graduation by diploma by age 21, or any high school completion by age 21 (Smerillo, Reynolds, Temple, & Ou, 2018). In addition, absences are more strongly linked to lower grades than tardies (Morrissey, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2014). Chronic absenteeism also plays a role in the school-to-prison pipeline; a study from Rhode Island and New York City found histories of chronic absenteeism among at least three-fourths of students involved in the juvenile justice system (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Figure 1. Washington Students' Regular Attendance



Source: Washington Office of Public Instruction

² <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Attendance-in-the-Early-Grades.pdf>

³ <http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf>
<https://gradelevelreading.net/uncategorized/study-links-3rd-grade-reading-poverty-and-hs-graduation>

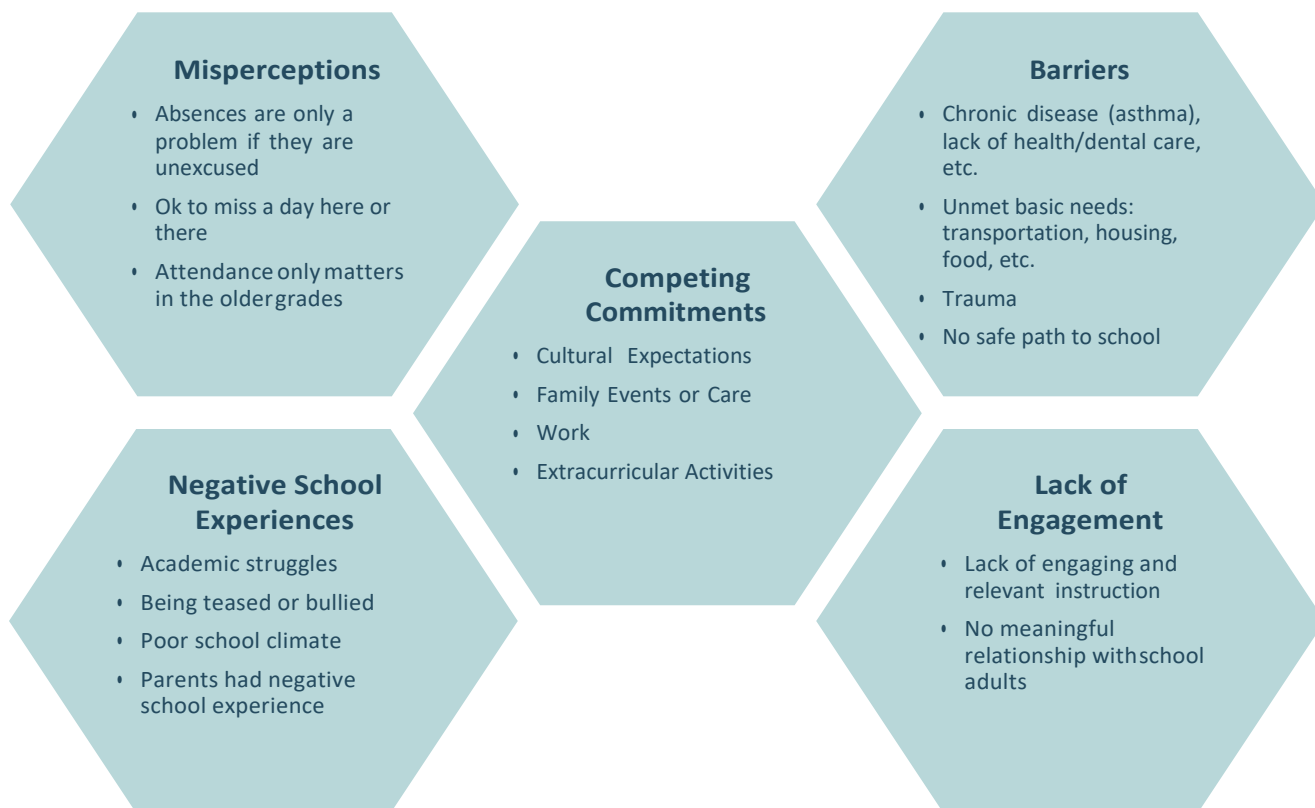
Regular Attendance is a powerful indicator of student engagement, barriers, and areas for school improvement.

Students can be absent for a variety of reasons, and factors that influence attendance are both school-based and external. School-based factors are part of a dense fabric of interrelated predictors of chronic absenteeism (see box below) and can include school climate, bullying, and classroom instruction. External factors can include reliable transportation, access to clean clothes, and stable housing. Schools may not be able to directly address all factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism. However, education systems must recognize and address the barriers and challenges that families face in getting students to school and ensure that schools are safe and engaging places for students to learn (Chang & Romero, 2008).

Districts across the nation are shifting from a historical focus on truancy to a broader focus on all absences.

Regular attendance and its inverse, chronic absenteeism, have been gaining attention from researchers and policymakers as more U.S. districts, including many across Washington state, shift their focus away from a punitive compliance approach to truancy and attendance. Many schools are examining and reducing their use of strict truancy policies—which have limited evidence of effectiveness, introduce adverse effects and risk factors of criminalization, and can perpetuate disproportionate discipline among students from historically marginalized backgrounds (Boswell, 2018; Childs & Grooms, 2018; Conry & Richards, 2018; Mallett, 2016; Flannery, Frank & Kato, 2012). Further, in the elementary grades, reporting on only truancy rates (unexcused absences) greatly underestimates chronic absenteeism because, at this grade level, most absences are excused (Balfanz, 2016). An early focus on attendance may be a more powerful way to promote positive attendance habits among students and families that will persist in later grades (Smerillo et al., 2018).

Why are Students Absent?



Schools and districts can have a positive impact on regular attendance by focusing on prevention.

The best way to increase attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism is to begin with prevention. Evidence suggests that attendance efforts should follow the principles of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), with most efforts focused on preventive activities (Tier 1), such as:

- Offering rich and engaging learning opportunities in which families are actively invited to participate (Epstein et al., 2002)
- Recognizing good/improved attendance (Balfanz, 2016)
- Promoting a positive school climate (Chang & Romero, 2008)
- Providing professional development for school staff members on the importance of attendance (Balfanz, 2016)
- Communicating with families in culturally responsive ways about the importance of school (Broussard, 2003)

What is MTSS

A **prevention-focused, problem-solving service delivery framework** that systematically connects all of the academic and nonacademic interventions, supports and services available both in the school and the community to support instruction and eliminate barriers to learning and teaching.

An MTSS contains the following components:

- Shared Leadership
- Data-Based Problem-Solving and Decision Making
- Layered Continuum of Supports
- Evidence-based Instruction, Intervention and Assessments
- Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring
- Family, School, and Community Partnering

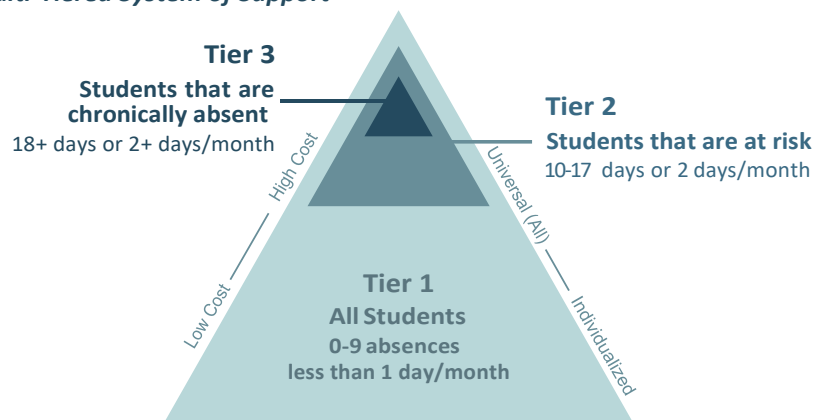
Tiered strategies of support that promote regular attendance include the following:

- **Tier 1** focuses on prevention and creating a welcoming, positive, and engaging school environment. If your school or district is just beginning to focus on attendance, you can start by defining what good attendance means, teaching these expectations to students and families, and educating families about the impacts of attendance. In Tier 1, schools incorporate culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices into their instruction and communication with families, and they engage in awareness efforts (including poster and social media campaigns, as well as partnerships with local businesses and community agencies) to spread the word about the importance of attendance and to help students succeed.

Some students may need services beyond prevention, and evidence suggests that effective intervention can make a difference for students impacted by chronic absenteeism. Along those lines, research shows that students who successfully exit chronic absentee status can get back on track for academic success (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018).

- **Tier 2** focuses on early identification of students who need more support. Attendance teams routinely monitor data to identify elevated risk factors and communicate with families in culturally responsive ways to address barriers. External partners may play a larger role in supporting students. Some Tier 2 strategies include nudge letters, skill building, and attendance contracts. See [OSPI's Attendance Best Practices](#) web page.
- **Tier 3** focuses on intensive intervention for students whose absences cross the threshold into chronic absenteeism. External referrals to partners may provide needed wraparound services. Some Tier 3 strategies include home visits, Check & Connect mentoring, and case management with external service providers. See [OSPI's Attendance Best Practices](#) web page.

Figure 2: OSPI's Multi-Tiered System of Support



Systems to support tiered interventions.

The following systems can help to ensure successful delivery of tiered interventions in a multi-tiered system of support.

- Including attendance in an early warning system (Balfanz, 2016)
- Monitoring absences effectively—and contacting families when children begin to have patterns of excessive absence—to identify and help address barriers (Van Eck, Johnson, Bettencourt, & Johnson, 2017; Chang & Romero, 2008)
- Using a response-to-intervention (RTI) model (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014)

In addition, promising but mixed results exist for specific, targeted interventions to promote regular attendance, such as incentives (Balu & Ehrlich, 2018), summer programs (Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2015), and mentoring programs (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018; Weinberger & Forbush, 2018).

Partnerships and system alignment are important.

Partnerships and system alignment are important because the root causes of chronic absenteeism are multifaceted, schools should consider partnering with organizations (such as mentor programs, health providers, youth programs, faith-based organization, and community centers) to leverage their expertise and knowledge (Childs & Grooms, 2018). Further, attendance should be an integral part of a school's approach to early warning systems (see the **Ninth Grade on Track** guide for more information).

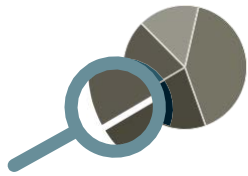
The guiding questions, self-assessments, action-planning tools, and reflection questions in this guide are organized around the following research-based themes:

1. Schools should monitor attendance data early and frequently.
2. An MTSS is effective in preventing chronic absenteeism and providing students with the services and interventions they need.
3. Building strategic community partnerships provides a robust, whole-community approach to attendance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Focusing questions for further discussion

1. Who in your district could use the information provided in this section? How would they use it?
2. Who are the key stakeholders in your district and community involved in addressing chronic absenteeism?
3. Who in your district and community should be part of the team to work on improving and increasing equity in Regular Attendance?



SECTION 2

Understanding Your Data

OBJECTIVES

- Understand basic information about state and district attendance data available to you.
- Use the suggested guiding questions to review your data from the perspective of an MTSS.
- Identify additional questions and information needed.

FOCUSQUESTION

- What can we learn from state- and district-level data about Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports for students?

DIRECTIONS

- Review information about the Washington School Improvement Framework and district-level data and then select the available data sources to examine with your team.
- Respond to the “Understanding Your Data” questions.
- Discuss the “Reflecting on Your Data” questions with your data team and/or district stakeholders.
- Use the “Further Analysis” questions to examine your district- or building-level data.

What are the available sources of attendance data?

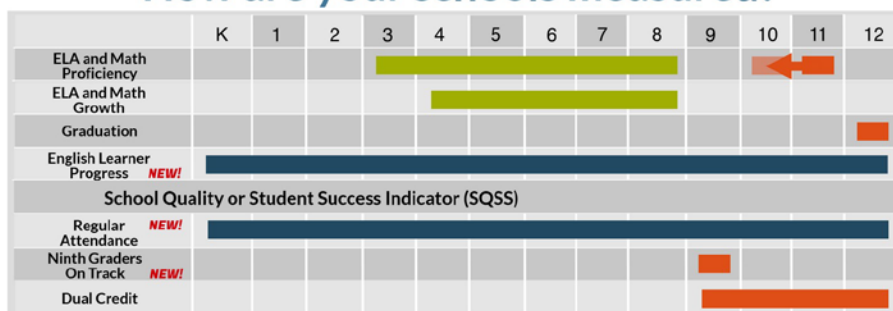
Released in March 2018, the Washington State Improvement Framework identifies how schools can improve the education of all students. The framework includes schools' Regular Attendance, graduation, and proficiency, as well as the other indicators of English learner progress, dual credit completion, and Ninth Grade on Track.

Although they allow for comparison of schools and can function as a helpful snapshot, WSIF's indicators are just the starting point for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of a school or district. Accessing your school- and district-level data will allow for a more contextual exploration of chronic absenteeism.

Washington School Improvement Framework: Highlights & Key Updates

The WA School Improvement Framework includes **each student group individually**, creating a holistic vision of a school through two lenses: the performance of the all students group and that of their student group populations.

How are your schools measured?



Coming Updates!

High School ELA and Math Assessments will be moving from 11th grade to 10th grade in 2018. Science will be included after the new Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science test has been given.

New Definitions

English Learner Progress

% of students making adequate progress to transition out of program within six years

Regular Attendance

% of students attending 90% or more school days

9th Graders On Track

% of first time 9th graders who earned all credits attempted



Measures Combine into Overall Score

Each indicator noted above is mapped to a 1-10 score. These scores are combined based on the grade span of the school, creating the Framework.

The lowest performing 5% of school scores establish a support threshold - any school under the threshold will be identified for comprehensive support, and any school with a student group under the threshold will be identified for targeted support.

Student Privacy - Minimum Number



To protect student privacy, a minimum number of students is required so no one student can be identified. For the Framework, the minimum number of students is 20 students over three years.

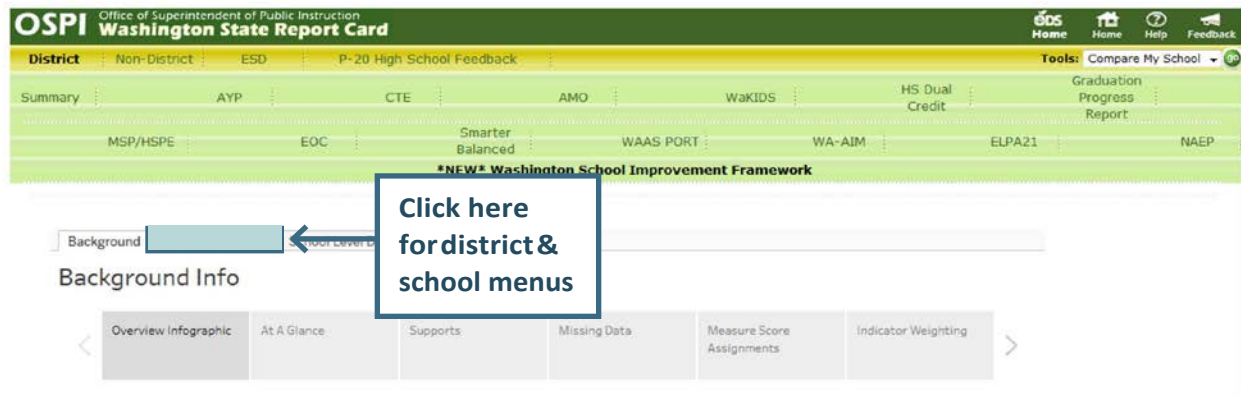
For more information about the Framework, visit <http://www.k12.wa.us/ESSA>
For data related inquiries, email us at AccountabilityData@k12.wa.us



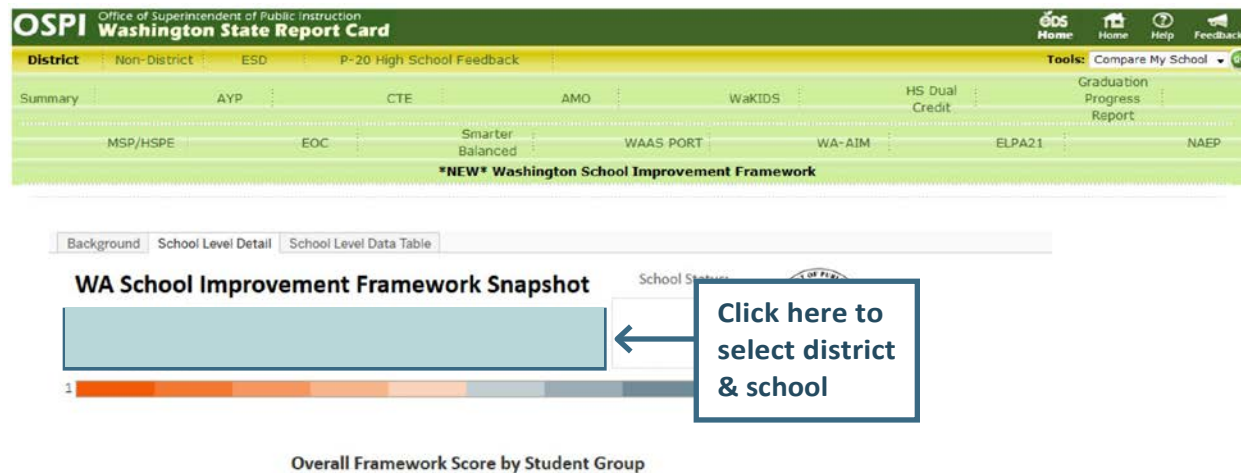
Accessing and discussing your Regular Attendance data using the WSIF tool

STEP 1: Click on the WSIF link *Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF)*

STEP 2: Select “School Level Detail” tab (see arrow on screenshot)



STEP 3: Select your district and the high school in your district you want to view first



Measures by Student Group

	All Students	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latinx of any race(s)	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White	English Learners	Low Income	Students with Disabilities
ELA Proficiency Rate	62.5%		65.0%	46.1%	54.5%			69.9%	22.0%	49.1%	26.4%
Math Proficiency Rate											
ELA Median SGP											
Math Median SGP											
Graduation Rate	85.9%		90.1%	83.4%	75.5%			88.2%	76.3%	80.5%	73.2%
EL Progress Rate*	78.3%										
Ninth Grade On Track Rate	81.2%		93.0%	59.1%			85.2%	93.0%	71.1%	63.4%	55.5%
Dual Credit Rate	73.6%		75.2%	62.1%	70.1%		76.2%	80.8%	52.1%	64.8%	41.3%

STEP 5: Record your school's Regular Attendance rate in the table provided

School 1 name _____

	All students	AI/AN	Asian	BLK/AA	Hisp/Latx	Hawaiian Pac Isl	2+ Race	White	Engl. learn	Low income	Students disabl
Regular Attendance rate											

Repeat Steps 3-5 to retrieve data for other schools in your district

School 2 name _____

	All students	AI/AN	Asian	BLK/AA	Hisp/Latx	Hawaiian Pac Isl	2+ Race	White	Engl. learn	Low income	Students disabl
Regular Attendance rate											

School 3 name _____

	All students	AI/AN	Asian	BLK/AA	Hisp/Latx	Hawaiian Pac Isl	2+ Race	White	Engl. learn	Low income	Students disabl
Regular Attendance rate											

How does OSPI report Regular Attendance and chronic absenteeism?

As indicated in Section 1, the state reports Regular Attendance. To calculate Regular Attendance at the school level, Regular Attenders (students enrolled for at least 90 calendar days of the school year who have missed less than six full days) are divided by the total number of students enrolled for at least 90 calendar days of the school year (Figure 3). A full-day absence is defined as missing 50 percent or more of a student's scheduled day. An example of a ratio that meets this requirement is three periods out of a six-period day.

Calendar days provide a standard measure across the state, regardless of different holidays, teacher prep days, and start and end dates. Note that absences are cumulative (a student does not have to miss two days per 30 days enrolled; they have to miss an average of two days out of 30 over the course of the year).

The difference between Regular Attendance and average daily attendance rates.

Regular Attendance and chronic absence numbers tell a different story than average daily attendance rates, which are the percentage of enrolled students, on average, who are in school each day. Measuring only average daily attendance can mask emerging problems with individual students who miss school for any reason (Adam, 2016; Balfanz, 2016). For instance, a school could have an average daily attendance rate of 92 percent and still have a fifth of its students missing a month or more of school because different students miss school on different days (Balfanz, 2016).

Figure 3. How to Calculate Regular Attendance at the School Level

Regular Attendance - Who is counted?	
REGULAR ATTENDERS Students that have missed less than 6 full-day absences that are enrolled for at least 90 calendar days.	For each additional 30 days of enrollment, a student will be considered regular attending if they do not have 2 more absences.
DENOMINATOR Students enrolled for at least 90 calendar days in the school.	A student does not have to miss 2 days in each 30-day period.
Who is counted and how?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">If a student is enrolled in School 1 for 90 calendar days, and misses 3 full days of school, they are included in the denominator (for meeting 90 day minimum) and they would be counted in the numerator (they did not meet the threshold of 6 absences to be considered chronically absent). <i>This student is a Regular Attender.</i>That student moves and enrolls in School 2 for 120 calendar days and misses 10 full days while enrolled in School 2. They would NOT be included in the numerator (they exceeded the threshold of 8 absences to be considered chronically absent) but they are included in the denominator for School 2. <i>This student is NOT a Regular Attender.</i>That student moves again and enrolls in School 3 for the last week of the school year. They would not be included in the numerator or denominator for that school because they were not enrolled for 90 calendar days.	

School- and district-level data

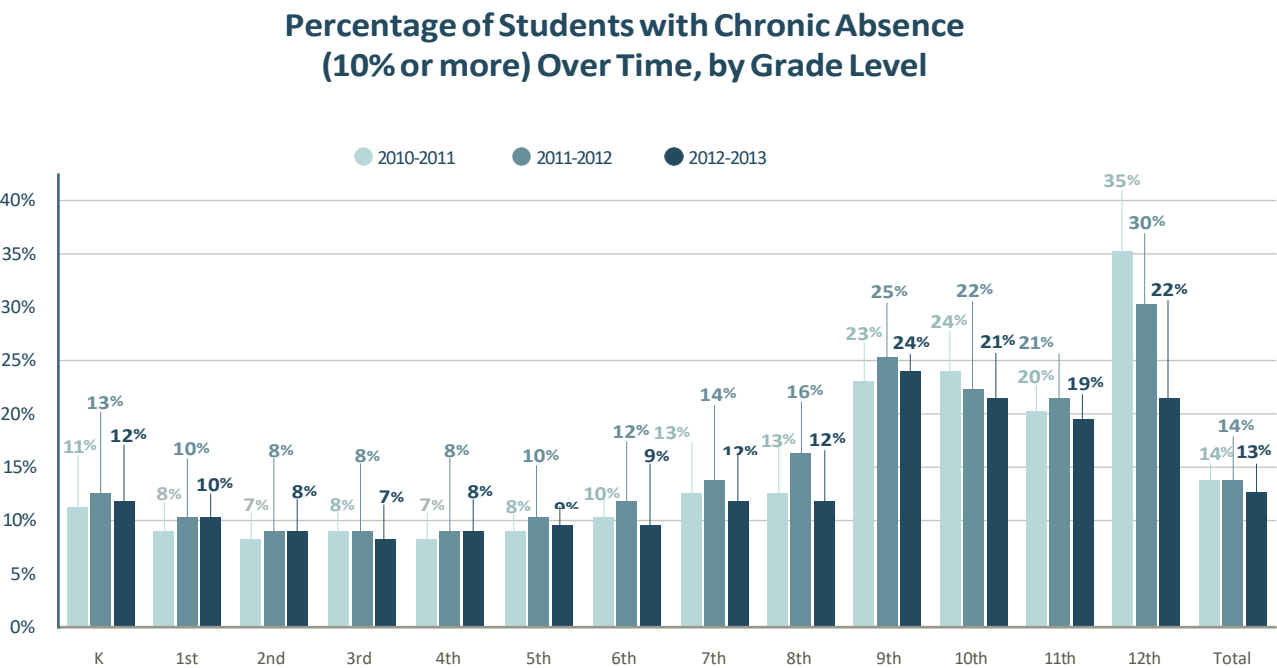
To begin exploring your school’s or district’s attendance data, you can start by pulling reports from your student information system that tell you:

1. Who was chronically absent last year?
2. Who is on track to be chronically absent this year?
3. The number and percentage of students who fall into the three MTSS tiers, as your school defines them (see suggested thresholds in Figure 2 in Section 1)

You can disaggregate these data into specific student groups to identify gaps and differences across grades, schools, classrooms, and demographics.

If your student information system allows it, consider using the **free district attendance-tracking tools and school attendance-tracking tools** created by Attendance Works. These data tools are self-calculating spreadsheets organized into three modules for grades K-5 (elementary school), 6-8 (middle school), and 9-12 (high school). Schools and districts can upload attendance data and receive an analysis of chronic absenteeism rates by school, grade, and racial/ethnic breakdowns, as well as a list of chronically absent students. Although they cannot replace a district’s regular data system, the tools are helpful for providing a snapshot of the levels of chronic absenteeism in a school or district (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Snapshot generated by Attendance Works data tool



Understanding your data

PHASE I. Define your tiers and thresholds

Once you have your data, refer to the MTSS model (see Section 2) and determine which students meet the criteria for your Tier 1, 2, and 3 supports.

PHASE II. Determine the levels of chronic absenteeism and its inverse, Regular Attendance

As a team, look at your data and discuss the guiding questions:

1. What percentage of students in your school or district are chronically absent? Does the level of chronic absenteeism affect a significant proportion of the student population (10 percent or more)?
2. How do school levels in the district compare to one another? How does the chronic absenteeism rate in the district compare to the state average and to similar districts?
3. Do the levels of chronic absenteeism and Regular Attendance differ among specific students and their families? By grade level? Race or ethnicity? Language background? Special education status? English language learner status? Neighborhood of residence? Free or reduced-price lunch status?
You can use the geographic mapping tools on [OSPI's website](#) to learn more about geographic trends in attendance in your area.
4. Elementary school teams: How many hours of the morning or afternoon constitute an absence? Does your policy on when a student is tardy versus absent reflect the intent of the rules, which is to collect full-day absences (defined as missing 50 percent or more of the instructional day)?

PHASE III. Reflect on your data

When looking at any data, it is important to avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Along those lines, before diving into “the why” behind the patterns you observe, first reflect on what the data show. The following questions can be helpful starting points.

1. Are you surprised by your school's or district's Regular Attendance rate?
2. Are any student groups for your district not disaggregated here? Do you think those groups' Regular Attendance rates might be higher or lower than the average for all students?
3. How does attendance relate to other outcomes of interest in your district? Does this relationship vary based on student characteristics?
4. What equity gaps do you see?

FURTHER ANALYSIS

After reflecting on what you see in the data, the next step is to understand the root causes of patterns of chronic absenteeism across groups. The following questions can get your team started on this analysis.

For information about conducting a thorough root cause analysis, please refer to Attendance Works' resource "Understanding the Factors Contributing to Chronic Absence in Your School."

1. What additional data do we need to answer questions about chronic absenteeism in our district?
2. What are barriers underrepresented groups may face in attending school?
3. How might the observed patterns in the data relate to:
 - a. School staff members' beliefs and attitudes about attendance and how they communicate these beliefs and attitudes to students and families?
 - b. Family values and norms about attendance in your school or district?
 - c. The educational experience students are having at school?
 - d. The roles family- and youth-serving community agencies play in promoting regular attendance?
 - e. Resources and school outreach initiatives that promote regular attendance?
 - f. Social, health, and economic factors in the community that contribute to chronic absenteeism?
4. How might district, school, and community members collaborate to close equity gaps you see in your data?

For further guidance on working with attendance data, please refer to the resources on OSPI's "Getting Started with Attendance" webpage



SECTION 3

Self-Assessment

OBJECTIVES

- Assess the strengths and challenges of attendance programs or initiatives in your school or district.
- Identify changes needed to improve Regular Attendance and related outcomes.
- Lay the foundation for a team of key stakeholders to begin working together to reduce student absences.

FOCUS QUESTION

- What are areas of strength and barriers to improving Regular Attendance in our system?

I. Activity: Warm-up discussion about attendance in your school or district

Directions: Answer the following questions individually and then discuss as a group for 10 minutes.

1. What are the features of your school's or district's current approach to promoting Regular Attendance?
Check all that apply.
 - ☐ Specific and measurable goals to strengthen and improve Regular Attendance
 - ☐ Goals to reduce equity gaps in Regular Attendance
 - ☐ Rich and engaging learning activities
 - ☐ Communication with families about the importance of attendance
 - ☐ Encouragement for families to help one another get their children to school
 - ☐ Accurate and timely data collection
 - ☐ Early identification and intervention
 - ☐ Attendance data monitoring plan
 - ☐ Partnerships with community agencies that offer resources (e.g., pre-K, after-school, health services, volunteer mentors, and transportation) that can help engage students and their families and remove barriers to getting to school
 - ☐ We do not have a specific plan or approach
 - ☐ Other:
2. How can you engage students and families to get their perspectives on actions you might take to improve Regular Attendance in your district?
3. Have you taken any steps in the past three years to strengthen and/or expand your resources or programming to reduce inequities in chronic absenteeism? If so, what is the status of your actions?

II. Activity: Assess specific attendance strengths and challenges

Directions: This activity invites you and your team to assess the development of your attendance programming or initiatives across four key components:

1. Attendance vision, goals, and program alignment
2. Partnerships, systems coordination, and resources
3. School-level programming or initiatives
4. Student and family participation and support

The content of this rubric draws from **Attendance Works' self-assessment tools**.

STEP 1. For each of the four components, work individually to:

- a. First, answer the reflection questions.
- b. Review the rubric for each component and give each element a score of 1–3 to indicate whether this aspect of your attendance programming is in (1) a developing, (2) an implementing, or (3) a mature and sustaining phase.
- c. Answer the summary questions, which invite you to identify strengths in your system, barriers to improvement, and ways your district might address barriers and needs.

STEP 2. As a group:

- a. Compare and discuss your answers and ratings.
- b. Note areas where your group feels your system is strong.
- c. Note areas where your group feels your system could improve.
- d. Use these areas for improvement to develop goals for your school or district. From these goals, you can develop action steps in the next section of this guide.

COMPONENT 1:

Attendance vision, goals, and program alignment

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Does your school or district have a vision for promoting Regular Attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism? Is your district actively building and/or strengthening a culture of Regular Attendance? If so, does it include an understanding of the role schools and partners play in realizing the vision? Is that understanding shared by district and school staff members? How about community members, students, and families?
2. Does your district have specific, measurable goals for improving Regular Attendance? If so, do they include equitable access and outcomes for all students? If so, how were those goals developed? Who knows about them?
3. To what extent are your attendance programs coordinated with one another and aligned with other district initiatives (e.g., dropout prevention and re-engagement)? For districts, how does this coordination and alignment look across elementary, middle, and high schools?
4. Do you use data to track progress toward your goals and refine your strategies? Does your data system enable you to identify groups of students who have greater needs for support?

Component 1 Rubric: Attendance Vision, Goals, and Program Alignment

THEMES	DEVELOPING (1)	IMPLEMENTING (2)	MATURE/SUSTAINING (3)
Vision SCORE ① ② ③	<p>Vision for attendance programming is being developed, but it may not yet be known to district and school staff members and has not been used to guide planning. School or district has not yet identified a lead and/or team responsible for developing and ensuring implementation of a systemic, tiered approach to reducing chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Vision is established and used to guide planning. It is visible to most district and school staff members and some stakeholders (e.g., via website). School or district is taking steps to identify a lead and/or team responsible for developing and ensuring implementation of a systemic, tiered approach to reducing chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Vision is established, vetted through stakeholder input process, highly visible, and consistently used to guide planning. District and school stakeholders can articulate the goals of attendance programming, and statements are routinely reviewed and may be adjusted. School or district has identified a lead and/or team responsible for developing and ensuring implementation of a systemic, tiered approach to reducing chronic absenteeism.</p>
Goals SCORE ① ② ③	<p>School or district is developing goals to improve Regular Attendance, including data-informed equity goals, but they are not specific or measurable, and few district staff members are aware of them.</p>	<p>School or district has specific and measurable goals to improve Regular Attendance, including equity goals. Some district staff members are aware of goals. Goals are infrequently reviewed or revised.</p>	<p>School or district has specific and measurable goals to improve Regular Attendance, including equity goals. Most district staff members are aware of goals. Goals are routinely reviewed and revised based on data and evidence. Goals follow the principles of multi-tiered support.</p>
System-Level Data for Progress Monitoring SCORE ① ② ③	<p>Data on attendance outcomes are available, but district has not developed a systematic plan to use data to track progress toward goals and refine strategies. Data are not disaggregated by demographic groups and are not coordinated across the K–12 systems.</p>	<p>School or district has a monitoring plan to collect and analyze aggregate and disaggregated data to track progress toward goals, including equity goals, and inform development of new goals or strategies. Disaggregated data on chronic absenteeism are calculated at least annually. There is some coordination of data across the K–12 systems and sharing with key stakeholders.</p>	<p>School or district has developed a monitoring plan to collect and analyze aggregate and disaggregated data on chronic absenteeism across the system at least monthly to track implementation of attendance initiatives, refine strategies, track progress toward goals and inform development of new goals. Data are coordinated across the K–12 systems, and reports are routinely shared with key stakeholders.</p>
Policy SCORE ① ② ③	<p>School or district does not yet have attendance policy and practice guidelines in place.</p>	<p>School or district has an attendance policy and practice guidelines, but the policy needs more details that illustrate why attendance matters, that describe what schools and the district do to build a positive culture of attendance, and that outline when and how to respond to absences. Policy needs to be more consistently implemented.</p>	<p>School or district has a widely disseminated, comprehensive attendance policy and practice guidelines that illustrate why attendance matters, that describe what schools and the district do to build a positive culture of attendance, and that outline when and how to respond to absences. School or district has also considered how other policies (such as discipline) influence attendance.</p>

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What's going well in this area? How can your school or district sustain progress?
2. What barriers might get in the way of improving the attendance vision, goals, and program alignment in your school or district? *List possible barriers below.*
3. How can you build on strengths and progress that has been made in this area? How can you address barriers and improvement needs?

COMPONENT 2:

Partnerships, systems coordination, and resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does your school and/or district partner with community agencies that offer resources (e.g., pre-K, after-school, health services, volunteer mentors, and transportation) to help engage students and their families and remove barriers to getting to school? What communication structures are in place?
2. Are there stakeholders that are not involved in your partnerships? If so, why not? How could you engage these stakeholders?
3. Do staff members involved with attendance programming have adequate time, resources, knowledge, and skills to advance the school or district toward its goals?
4. Does your school or district collect and analyze cross-sector data on attendance? If so, how are these data used by all stakeholders in the system? Are data shared with community stakeholders?

Component 2 Rubric: Partnerships, Systems Coordination, and Resources

THEMES	DEVELOPING (1)	IMPLEMENTING (2)	MATURE/SUSTAINING (3)
Partnerships SCORE 1 2 3	<p>Individuals communicate about attendance programming, but communication is ad hoc, infrequent, uncoordinated across different sectors, and focused primarily on case management, not prevention of chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Most school sites have improvement plans and/or teams that include district, school, and some partner representation. Teams use communication structures and protocols for planning and monitoring, but routines are not yet established, and the team does not yet engage a broader range of stakeholders (such as community organizations or coordinated service providers) to support prevention of chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Each school site has a multi-tiered support plan for attendance that includes steps it will take with community partners to maintain or improve attendance. Site teams (including partners) routinize and continuously improve communication structures and protocols, and they engage stakeholders to ensure ongoing program improvement to both prevent and respond to chronic absenteeism.</p>
Roles and Staffing SCORE 1 2 3	<p>School and community partners (city government, businesses, family organizations, social workers, health providers, etc.) are aware of attendance goals, but competing priorities may be preventing them from devoting sufficient time to advance them. Some team members have the necessary skills and knowledge to advance the district's attendance goals.</p>	<p>Implementation is a priority for most school and community partners. Roles and responsibilities have been outlined, but may not be well understood or coordinated, and partners may not have sufficient time. Most team members possess the skills and knowledge necessary to advance the district's attendance goals and build a positive culture of attendance.</p>	<p>Successful implementation is a high priority for all school and community partners. Roles and responsibilities are clear and coordinated, and partners possess the skills and knowledge necessary to implement a cross-sector approach to building a positive culture of attendance through student and family engagement, as well as recognition of good and improved attendance. Systems are in place to train new team members and ensure transfer of knowledge when staff turnover occurs.</p>
Resources SCORE 1 2 3	<p>Some available resources, e.g., funding, technology, or transportation, have been identified and allocated to support implementation of attendance programming. Additional resources are still needed to support maximum implementation.</p>	<p>Multiple available resources have been identified and allocated to support implementation. Current resources may not be sustainable or sufficient to support maximum implementation.</p>	<p>Sufficient and sustainable resources have been identified and allocated to school and community partners to support maximum implementation across sectors.</p>
Cross-Sector Data Accuracy SCORE 1 2 3	<p>There is little communication between school/district data system staff members and other relevant stakeholders to coordinate and align data efforts. No contracts or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) are in place with community organizations.</p>	<p>There is some communication between school/district data system staff members and other relevant stakeholders to coordinate and align data efforts. No contracts or MOUs are in place with community organizations.</p>	<p>School/district data system staff members communicate regularly with community partners and stakeholders. When appropriate, contracts or MOUs with community organizations outline how they will share and receive data, how they can support the school and district in improving attendance, and how they can assess whether their contributions are having an impact.</p>

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What's going well in this area? How can your school or district sustain progress?
2. What barriers might get in the way of improving **partnerships, systems coordination, and resources** in your school or district? List possible barriers below.
3. How can you build on strengths and progress that has been made in this area? How can you address barriers and improvement needs?

COMPONENT 3:

School-level programming or initiatives

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do schools feel supported by the district to address chronic absenteeism using a multi-tiered approach? What further supports do schools need?
2. Do schools have attendance teams in place that use data to identify and respond to student needs? How can the district support them in creating data teams?
3. Do schools' attendance programs and initiatives follow the principles of MTSS (See Section 1)?
4. How do schools' discipline policies influence student absences and missed opportunities for instruction?

Component 3 Rubric: School-Level Programming or Initiatives

THEMES	DEVELOPING (1)	IMPLEMENTING (2)	MATURE/SUSTAINING (3)
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support SCORE 1 2 3	<p>The school's attendance efforts tend to focus on serving students at elevated (Tier 2) or acute (Tier 3) risk of chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Attendance is addressed at multiple tiers in accordance with the principles of MTSS, but more efforts are needed at the Tier 1 level (prevention).</p>	<p>Attendance efforts follow the principles of MTSS, with most efforts focused on preventive activities (Tier 1), such as offering rich and engaging learning activities, and recognizing good/improved attendance.</p>
District Support SCORE 1 2 3	<p>School staff members do not regularly receive guidance or support from the school or district in addressing chronic absenteeism.</p>	<p>Administrators and school staff members receive guidance and support from the district, but the guidance and support are not standardized, and school staff members need further preparation and/or training to understand what chronic absenteeism means and how to address it.</p>	<p>Administrators and school staff members understand what chronic absenteeism is and how to address it. They are prepared to lead and coach school and community partners in working together to improve attendance through a tiered approach. Administrators routinely receive guidance and support from the district.</p>
Attendance Teams SCORE 1 2 3	<p>School does not have a team in place for working together to identify students in need of support.</p>	<p>Individuals review attendance data and practices, but there is no formal team in place that is responsible for using data to identify students in need of support.</p>	<p>A team, including the school administrator, reviews attendance data regularly to identify student needs by grade, student groups, and classroom. Students needing support have attendance improvement plans that set attendance goals and identify how to attain them with support from families, school staff members, and community partners, as needed.</p>
Discipline Policies SCORE 1 2 3	<p>The school's or district's discipline policy often results in students missing instruction due to suspensions.</p>	<p>The school's or district's discipline policy sometimes results in students missing instruction due to suspensions.</p>	<p>The school's or district's discipline policy and practice ensure students do not miss instruction due to suspensions or other exclusionary practices.</p>

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What's going well in this area? How can your school or district sustain progress?
2. What barriers might get in the way of improving school-level programming or initiatives in your school or district? *List possible barriers below.*
3. How can you build on strengths and progress that has been made in this area? How can you address barriers and improvement needs?

COMPONENT 4:

Student and family participation and support

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do school and district staff members communicate to students, families, community members, and school employees about attendance?
2. Do our outreach efforts address linguistic, logistical, or cultural differences to help ensure understanding and participation among underrepresented groups? How could these aspects of our outreach efforts influence patterns of underrepresentation in the data?
3. Are high-quality, culturally responsive trainings and workshops available throughout the year and in the home languages of families to support their role in student attendance?
4. When signs of chronic absenteeism are detected, how do school and community partners reach out to the student and their family?
5. Do students and families have access to student-level data to identify students who need support and to monitor their progress in improving their attendance?

Component 4 Rubric: Student and Family Participation and Support

THEMES	DEVELOPING (1)	IMPLEMENTING (2)	MATURE/SUSTAINING (3)
Outreach and Participation SCORE 1 2 3	Materials and outreach efforts exist, but messages need more consistency, more input from stakeholders, and a stronger focus on reaching underrepresented students and families.	Materials (flyers, handbook, website, back-to-school letters, etc.) are informed by stakeholder feedback, and some outreach efforts address barriers, such as language, transportation, event timing, child care, and cultural bias (gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation).	All materials (flyers, handbook, website, back-to-school letters, etc.) and outreach efforts are informed by stakeholder input and address linguistic, logistical, and cultural barriers. Materials clearly and consistently convey messages about the importance of daily attendance and reducing absences to families and the general public, as well as other key stakeholders (such as community service providers).
Family and Education Awareness SCORE 1 2 3	The school or district does not yet consistently offer trainings or workshops for families.	Some trainings and workshops are offered to families to support their role in student attendance, but efforts are needed to make trainings and workshops more inclusive and more asset-focused.	High-quality trainings and workshops are available throughout the year and in the home languages of families to support their role in student attendance. These include explaining why attendance matters, how to access data on their children's attendance and performance, and what family members can do to ensure daily attendance. The district recognizes positive examples of students, families, teachers, schools, and community partners improving attendance and uses these examples to inspire action and identify best practices.
Family and Student Supports SCORE 1 2 3	Families and students receive notification when signs of chronic absence absenteeism are detected, but support is inconsistent and/or punitive.	When signs of chronic absenteeism are detected, someone (from the school, district, community partner, health provider, volunteer organization, etc.) reaches out to the student and family, but contact needs to be more supportive, comprehensive, and/or positive.	As soon as signs of chronic absenteeism are detected, someone (from the school, district, community partner, health provider, volunteer organization, etc.) reaches out to the student and family in a positive way to let them know they were missed, to encourage improved attendance, and to identify needed supports. Follow-up is pursued until contact is made.
Student-Level Data SCORE 1 2 3	Student-level data are available but are not accessible to students and their families.	Student data are collected and shared post hoc with students and their families. Attendance data are not linked with problematic academic performance or behavior that may be related to absences.	Students and families can access their own attendance data in a format that is easy to understand and shows them if the student is at risk due to chronic absenteeism (tracking problematic academic performance or behavior that may be related to absences).

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What's going well in this area? How can your school or district sustain progress?
2. What barriers might get in the way of improving student and family participation and support in your school or district? *List possible barriers below.*
3. How can you build on strengths and progress that has been made in this area? How can you address barriers and improvement needs?

SECTION 4

Action Steps

OBJECTIVE

- Identify areas that are working well and need to be maintained
- Revisit current goals and/or set new goals for improving attendance outcomes
- Identify strategies you will pursue to achieve your goals
- Map action steps for your improvement efforts
- Set an implementation timeline and monitoring agreements

FOCUS QUESTION

- What will we do over the next one to three years to improve Regular Attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism?

DIRECTIONS

- Identify in which areas we are doing well, what we want to keep, and which strategies are helping us sustain our progress.
- Pick one or two areas you most want to improve and use the template provided in this section (or your own district-based strategic planning tool) to record current and/or new goals for improvement in these areas.
- For each goal, discuss and record strategies* and action steps you will take toward your goals. Identify a strategy leader and describe how you will monitor the effectiveness of the strategy over time.
- For each action step, record a most responsible person (MRP), timeline, and how you will monitor implementation.

**Note: Rubric components and themes in this guide can also serve as strategies.*

ATTENDANCE AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

SMART Goal: [District name] will increase participation in [dual-credit program] among [student group, e.g., Latino male students] by X percentage points (from X percent to X percent) by [date].

Strategy 1: For example: outreach, partnership development/coordination, staff/resource development, instruction, curriculum, counseling/tutoring/mentoring, financial/logistical support, data use.

Rationale: [e.g. (X) student group has consistently higher rates of chronic absenteeism in (X) program]. Research finds that regular attendance can improve students’ academic outcomes. Our district does not effectively target outreach about attendance to the (X) community. Therefore, we will focus on strengthening our outreach efforts to ensure we are adopting culturally responsive approaches to increase awareness of attendance strategies.]

Most responsible person: [Name, Role]

Monitoring effectiveness: What ongoing formative evidence will be gathered to show this activity is making a difference in student outcomes? When will we collect and reflect on this evidence?

Activities to Implement This Strategy? <i>What activities will occur? What steps will staff members take?</i>	Professional Development <i>How will staff members acquire the necessary skills and attitudes to implement the activity?</i>	Timeline <i>When will this action begin and end?</i>	Resources Available <i>What are the existing and new resources that will be used to accomplish this activity?</i>	Who’s Most Responsible? Who’s Involved? <i>Who will provide the leadership? Who will do the work?</i>	Accountability <i>Who will check for completion? Who will provide needed support to ensure action plan steps are finished?</i>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Achievement gap	The disparity in academic performance among identified groups or the difference between how a group performs compared with what is expected of that group.
Absent	In Washington, a student is absent when they are: (a) not physically present on school grounds; and (b) not participating in the following activities at an approved location: (i) instruction; (ii) any instruction-related activity; or (iii) any other district- or school-approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.
Action plan	A step-by-step outline of the actions that need to be taken to implement an initiative and achieve a desired outcome. For each major action, plans typically identify the resources needed, measures of effective implementation, who is responsible for the action, and a timeline for implementation.
Aggregation	Data that are presented in summary (as opposed to individual student-level data or data broken down by subgroup).
Average daily attendance	Average daily attendance is typically calculated by dividing the aggregate number of days of attendance of all students during a school year by the number of days school is in session during that year. In Washington, Regular Attendance is tracked instead of average daily attendance.
Capacity building	Providing opportunities, such as staff development, data analysis, and time for collaboration, that enhance the ability of staff members to improve attendance rates.
Chronic absence	In Washington, chronic absence (used interchangeably with chronic absenteeism) is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason—excused
Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS)	The Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) is a longitudinal data warehouse for educational data. Districts report data on courses, students, and teachers. Course data include standardized state course codes. Student data include demographics, enrollment information, schedules, grades, and program participation. Teacher data include demographics, certifications, and schedules.
Collaboration	To work jointly with others, especially on an intellectual endeavor.
Correlation	A mutual relation between two or more things. Correlation does not imply causation.
Cycle of inquiry and action	The cycle of inquiry is a process in which educators analyze data—such as demographic, perceptual, school process, and student achievement data—to understand how these elements are interrelated and what they suggest about students' learning needs. As a multistep process, the cycle of inquiry often involves analyzing data to better understand student needs, developing hypotheses about instructional practice, formulating and implementing action plans to improve student learning and achievement, and then once again analyzing data to evaluate student progress and inform next steps.
Data-based decision making	Systematically collecting and analyzing various types of data to guide a range of decision and improve the success of students and schools. Also referred to as data-driven decision making, data-informed decision making, and evidence-based decision making.
Data champion	An individual who is passionate about using data and who can lead the quest for a culture of inquiry and systemic data use.

Term	Definition
Data coach	An individual charged with helping schools or districts use data effectively to make decisions. Often, data coaches organize school-based data teams, lead practitioners in a collaborative inquiry process, help interpret data, or educate staff members on using data to improve instructional practices and student achievement.
Data culture	Data culture describes a school and/or district environment that includes attitudes, values, goals, norms of behavior, and practices accompanied by an explicit vision for data use by leadership and that characterizes a group's appreciation for the importance and power that data can bring to the decision-making process. It also includes the recognition that data collection is a necessary part of an educator's responsibilities and that the use of data to influence and inform practice is an essential tool that will be used frequently.
Data inventory	A catalog of the data available in a school, who controls the data, the location of the data, accessibility, and how the data are being used.
Data literacy	The ability to ask and answer questions about collecting, analyzing, and making sense of data.
Data manager	Generally, a staff member in the Information Technology department who coordinates the systems for the collection, storage, and dissemination of data at the district and/or school level.
Data point	A data point is one score on a graph or chart, which represents a single point in time.
Data quality	The attributes of a dataset that make data useful, such as validity, reliability, completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance to the question being investigated.
Datasets	Sets of data made up from separate elements, which can be manipulated and analyzed in an effort to answer a question.
Data teams	<p><i>School data team:</i> A representative group of individuals that builds the capacity of building-level staff members to effectively use data by providing structures, training, and support. A primary mission of a school data team is to create a culture of inquiry and data use at the building level.</p> <p><i>District data team:</i> A representative group of individuals that builds the capacity of district-level staff members to effectively use data by providing structures, training, and support. A primary mission of a district data team is to create a district-wide culture of inquiry and data use and to support school-level data teams</p>
Data use improvement plan	An action plan designed to eliminate one or more barriers that limit effective data use in the school.
Disaggregation	Summary data split into different subgroups (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, economic status).
Disproportionality	Disproportionality occurs when a given subgroup is represented in a larger or smaller proportion in a particular program or educational environment than would be predicted based on the representation of that subgroup in a total population
Enablers and barriers	Terms used in the data use theory of action to describe policies, structures, capacities, or processes that either support (enablers) or hinder (barriers) effective data use in the schools.
Evaluation	Evaluation is the comparison of actual impacts against strategic plans. It looks at original objectives, what was accomplished, and how it was accomplished.
Evidence	An outward sign or indication; something that provides proof.

Term	Definition
Evidence-based practices	Evidence-based practices are educational practices and instructional strategies that are supported by scientific research studies.
Factual observations	A statement about what the data say without any interpretation. Factual observations are the first step in the data analysis process, and they provide the basis for making sound inferences.
Fidelity of implementation	Fidelity refers to the accurate and consistent provision or delivery of a dual-credit program in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed.
Formative evidence	Student-, building-, and district-level data focused on attendance. Analysis of this data occurs routinely and systemically with the express goal of improving
Full-day absence	In Washington, a full-day absence is when a student is absent for 50 percent or more of their scheduled day.
High-level data	Typically aggregate data that can be used to initiate the inquiry process. The review of high-level data will result in the creation of focusing questions that will help identify more granular data that can be used to extend the inquiry.
Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)	<p>A prevention-focused, problem-solving service delivery framework that systematically connects all of the academic and nonacademic interventions, supports and services available both in the school and the community to support instruction and eliminate barriers to learning and teaching.</p> <p>An MTSS contains the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Leadership • Data-Based Problem-Solving and Decision Making • Layered Continuum of Supports • Evidence-based Instruction, Intervention and Assessments • Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring • Family, School, and Community Partnering
Objective	Very specifically stated, measurable result of a strategy or an action steps taken to implement that strategy, such as parent education to increase attendance.
Outcome	A longer-range measurable change in behavior, such as continuously improving attendance rates.
Population	Every student who is eligible to become a member of a specific sample of students. For example, the population of 10th-graders is all 10th-graders who may be enrolled in the district.
Problem statement	A clear, succinct, evidence-based statement of the problem revealed through analysis of data related to the issue under investigation.
Questions types	<p>Guiding question: A question that guides deeper inquiry into the initial issue and suggests additional data that may need to be collected and analyzed.</p> <p>Focusing question: A high-level question related to an issue of interest that serves to initiate an inquiry and suggests the preliminary data that need to be collected and analyzed.</p> <p>Reflection question: A follow-up question that encourages further exploration of an issue and leads to next steps.</p>

Term	Definition
Regular Attendance	The inverse of chronic absenteeism. In Washington state, Regular Attendance means participating in instruction or instruction-related activities on school grounds or at an approved location during at least 90 percent of school days.
Sample	A group of students included in a data set. For example, the group of 10th-graders in a district for any one school year is a sample of the entire population of 10th-graders who may be enrolled in the district. The extent to which that group of 10th-graders is representative of the entire population is the extent to which generalizations can be made to 10th-graders in the future.
Stakeholder	Any individual who is involved with or is affected by a course of action or who has a vested interest in the enterprise, its policies, practices, and outcomes.
Strategy	A plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal.
Target	A relatively short-range measurable change, such as an annual increase as part of a multi-year goal.
Timeline	The date at which an action step will be completed; for an ongoing action, when it is “up and running.”
Trend line	A trend line is a line on a graph that represents a line of best fit through a set of data points.
Truancy	In Washington, a student is considered truant if they miss five or more unexcused days in a month or 10 or more unexcused days in a year.

Glossary adapted from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Glossary—District and School Data Team Toolkit. Retrieved February 2017, from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: <http://www.k12.wa.us/CEDARS/Data/Toolkit.aspx>

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