

every day counts



ATTENDANCE ISN'T JUST A SCHOOL ISSUE, IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.



WHAT EVERYONE CAN DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- ✓ Help get the message out about the importance of attending school. Make sure your children get to school every day and on time. Track the attendance of your children and their grades through Parent Self Serve.
- ✓ While we have great support from our health-care partners, we want to work more closely with our providers to see if there are greater possibilities for appointments after school hours for non-emergency situations.
- ✓ We need to coordinate better with our judges and courts so that truancy court once again becomes an effective tool for dealing with students and families with chronic absenteeism.
- ✓ We ask businesses located close to our schools not to let students congregate during schools hours.
- ✓ We want to work with businesses employing our students so that students are not forced to choose between job responsibilities and school responsibilities.
- ✓ We are always looking for incentives that may be used to reward improved attendance.
- ✓ Mentoring is very effective in keeping students engaged in their school communities. What you do as mentors can have a profound effect on a student's success, resilience, and commitment to attend school.

Simple Ways YOU Can Help Improve Attendance:

Parents

- Get your child to school on time, every day, and make sure homework assignments are completed on time.
- Absences due to car trouble, a late bus, and bad weather are considered Unexcused and will go on your child's permanent record.
- Extended vacations, long weekends, and frequent doctor appointments scheduled during school hours will cause your child to fall behind in class.
- Being in school every day raises your child's chances for scoring well on important tests throughout the year.
- Follow the proper school guidelines for reporting excused absences in a timely manner.
- Allow your child to stay home only when he/she has a contagious illness or is too sick to be comfortable.
- Make sure your child exercises, eats a balanced diet, and gets plenty of sleep. This will help him/her to be mentally and physically ready to learn, and strengthen the immune system.
- Read all information sent home by the school. Post important dates on a family bulletin board or on the refrigerator.
- Give your child enough time to get ready for school in the morning. Prepare lunches, pack school bags, and

lay out clothing the night before.

- Monitor your child's attendance through Parent Self Serve (<https://grades.austinisd.org>).

Students

- Arrive to school and all of your classes on time every day.
- Come to school each day ready to learn with homework and materials in hand.
- Actively participate in class and ask questions.
- Notify the attendance office of your absence in a timely manner.
- Plan family vacations during non-school days.
- Assume responsibilities for behaviors which support regular attendance.
- Find at least one adult, other than a parent, who will support your success in school.
- If you are working after school, make sure your work hours don't interfere with your homework time.

Teachers

- Make students and their families feel welcome. Greet them when they arrive and post signs in their native languages.
- Let students know when they are not in school, they are missed. Talk to them about why they were gone, and if there is anything you or the school can do to help.
- When a student is absent, immediately talk to a family member by personal phone call during the day or evening.
- Create an environment of mutual respect in which students are comfortable speaking up.
- Make assignments and schedule tests on Mondays and Fridays to encourage attendance on those days.
- Seek referrals to other agencies or district support when students face challenging family problems.
- Provide high expectations for all students. Help them focus on their strengths, and challenge all children to work to their full potential.
- Create learning opportunities for students to work together—either during whole-group or small-group lessons, or with peer tutoring. Research indicates that this encourages students' motivation and engagement.
- Incorporate subjects, such as student behavior, rights and responsibilities into the curriculum.
- Give responsible roles to "difficult" students to redirect their energies in positive ways and provide different forums for students to identify ways to increase attendance.
- Re-engage students through mentoring.

Be alert and observe types of attendance problems:

- Monday "blues" — Friday "boredom"
- Frequent winter absences
- Observe attendance patterns of siblings
- Monitor frequent "family business" absences
- Limit hall passes and period absences
- Begin plugging "truancy loopholes:"
 - Arriving late, picking up "late card" and not reporting to class
 - Reporting to office without notifying anyone and hanging out 2-3 periods
 - Constantly going to nurse, counselor, locker, etc.
 - Claiming they have band, music, pep squad, athletics, etc.

Administrators

- Make the school a place where parents and students feel welcome and want to be.
- Be clear with your students and let them know at the beginning of the year that attendance is very important.
- Teachers, principals and other school staff should set a good example and try to avoid taking sick leave or vacation days as much as possible.

- Meet with parents at the beginning of the school year to let them know how important attendance is. If the attendance problem is extreme, you can require parents to call the school secretary as soon as a child is absent or suggest a referral to IMPACT for additional support.
- Make sure the entire school has the same policy regarding absences. It is very confusing for students when one teacher is very lax and does not mind absences and another teacher is very strict.
- Give out monthly awards to students who were never absent that month. Even making mention that a student has not been absent since the beginning of the year when calling roll or reading the morning announcements can make an impact.
- Talk to students about why they were gone and let them know they were missed. If students start slacking off with school attendance, deal with the problem right away.
- Find out underlying reasons for poor attendance, so you can deal with the real problem. For example, is there a bully students are scared of? Is there a very strict teacher students are trying to avoid?
- Forge a relationship with local law enforcement and make them allies in showing the community, family and students that school is the place to be.
- Forge a relationship with local businesses so that they cooperate in encouraging students to go to school and not congregate at businesses during school hours.
- Ask community organizations to sign a pledge around the campaign theme.
- Work with the faith community to make parents aware of the importance of attendance and what the law requires.

School Staff

- Take attendance every class period.
- Notify parents of student absences in a timely manner.
- Follow-up on uncleared absences.
- Work with parents of students with “poor” attendance and refer them to resources such as IMPACT
- Put together a team of appropriate staff members to assist students to improve attendance.
- Establish protocols for early identification, support for and tracking of “at risk” students.
- Implement alternative learning opportunities with flexible schedules and expanded hours.
- Actively engage all stakeholder groups: parents, students and families, businesses, social service agencies, higher education and faith-based organizations.
- Conduct annual transcript audits to monitor students for on-time graduation.
- Evaluate programs and services for outcomes and impact.
- Communicate in different venues with parents who can’t read.

Businesses and Community

- Support business practices that encourage school attendance and completion.
- Make school enrollment a condition of employment for teens.
- Provide recognition or incentives for parents whose children have a certain attendance rate. One community pays \$100/month of rent in public housing.
- Limit employee student work schedules to 10:00 p.m. on school nights.
- Request to see report cards, progress notes, etc.
- Allow adult employees to attend school/teacher conferences without penalty.
- Participate in outreach efforts such as neighborhood walks and phone banks/telethons to improve attendance and recover dropouts.
- Establish, solicit for and award college scholarships for good attendance and grades.
- Establish college trust funds and match contributions.
- Establish internships and other school-to-work opportunities.
- Coordinate with neighborhood associations to identify places students congregate during school hours. Recruit block captains who will monitor specific sites, apartment buildings, etc.

Faith Community

- Locate and register all students within attendance boundaries.
- Support students and parents in school success, character development and church attendance.
- Provide homework help/tutorials at the place of worship.
- Host school events and community forums to support educational initiatives.
- Announce school events and key dates to include open house, report card dates, testing dates, etc.
- Celebrate academic and school accomplishments at church events and in newsletters.
- Provide incentives to students who have improved attendance and recognize them in different venues (church services, church bulletin boards).
- Develop community-service and work opportunities that provide financial support for college.
- Establish scholarship funds for aspiring youth members.
- Assist with school clothing and supplies.
- Set annual and long-term goals for increasing youth attendance at worship service and use this as an opportunity to encourage good school attendance.

Social Services and Health Agencies

- Expand medical/health services through the Family Resource Centers and campus-based clinics.
- Include information about educational requirements and opportunities during service delivery.
- Sponsor back-to-school events that include provision of school clothing and supplies.
- Collaborate with schools to make educational outcomes a part of the agency's service plan.
- Consider on-site tutorial and homework support .