Welcome!

FREE WEBINAR with Jessica Sprick
November 18, 2014, 1pm–2pm PST
For students to be successful in school…
For students to be successful in school… they need to actually *be* in school!
Goals of Webinar

Apply what works with behavior to absenteeism issues

- Data-driven decision making
- Evidence-informed practices
- Multi-tiered systems of support
  - Proactive and preventive strategies
  - Function-based approaches
Goals (cont.)

- Leave with practical, easy-to-implement strategies for each tier
  - Schoolwide prevention
  - Small group/early-stage intervention
  - Intensive intervention for an individual student
Very few schools or districts can tell you the number of students who are chronically absent.
Attendance Measures

- Truancy
  - Unexcused absence
  - Primarily triggers intervention at middle and high school
Attendance Measures

• Average Daily Attendance
  ◦ Whole school measure of percentage of enrolled students in attendance
  ◦ Doesn’t look at individuals
  ◦ Can mask a problem
Chronic absence = missing 10% or more of the school year for ANY reason
  ◦ Unexcused
  ◦ Excused
  ◦ Suspension

If the student is frequently not in school, regardless of reason, there are negative effects
Attendance Measures

A student is chronically absent if he/she misses:

- 3 days in the first 30 days of school
- 10 days in the first 100 days of school
- 18 days in a 180-day school year
If a student averages 2 days or more a month, he/she is chronically absent
Gut Check

What percentage of your student body is chronically absent?

- Estimate if you don’t know

a) 0–5%
b) 5–10%
c) 11–20%
d) 21–30%
e) 31% or more
Negative Effects on Academic Achievement

Third-grade reading proficiency

A recent study in California found:
- Regular attendance in K and 1 = 64%
Negative Effects on Academic Achievement

3rd grade reading proficiency

A recent study in California found:
- Regular attendance in K and 1 = 64%
- Chronic absence in K and 1 = 17%

~ Bruner, Discher, & Chang, 2011
Conservative estimates:

- Every year, about 10% of Kindergarten and first-grade students miss a month or more of school
- In some schools, up to 50% of students are chronically absent

~ Chang & Romero, 2008
Negative Effects on Graduation

- By sixth grade, chronic absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school
  - Chronic absenteeism
  - Poor behavior
  - Failing grades in math and/or English

~ Attendance Works
Negative Effects on Graduation

- By ninth grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than eighth-grade test scores
  ~ Allensworth & Easton, 2007

- Students in Utah who were chronically absent any year between 8th and 12th grade were 7.4 times more likely to drop out
  ~ Utah Education Policy Center, 2012
Negative Life Effects

- Students miss developing important life skills
  - Social and friendship skills
  - Resilience
  - Dependability
Increased involvement in criminal justice system

- One study found three-quarters of students in juvenile justice system had histories of chronic absence
  ~ RI Data Hub

- Truant students have been found to be far more likely to be arrested, engage in a serious property crime, or commit assault
  ~ Bell, Rosen, & Dynlacht, 1994
  ~ Dryfoos, 1990; Garry, 1996
An estimated 5 million to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year ~ Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent for students who are economically disadvantaged
Goal: Regular Attendance

- Every student will regularly attend school
- Regular or satisfactory attendance = missing 5% or less of school in an academic year
  - 9 days or less in 180-day year
  - No more than one day per month on average
How Do We Reach the Goal?

- Regularly monitor data and set priorities
- Implement preventive schoolwide measures
- Implement function-based approaches and research-based interventions for small groups and individuals
Calculate and analyze schoolwide absenteeism rates on a regular basis

- Regular: 5% or less
- At risk: 5.1–9.9%
- Chronic absence: 10% or more
- Severe chronic absence: 20% or more**
CHRONIC_ABSENCE

1. Print a list of all students who have been absent 10% or more of days in the current school year
2. Count the number of students on this list
3. Divide the number of students chronically absent by the number of enrolled students

Note: Does not account for arrivals after Day 1

Use same procedure for each of the attendance categories—appropriate percentage
I work in a school with 1,500 students.

1. It’s Day 60 in the school year.
   I print a list of all students who have missed 6 or more days (10% of days).

2. I count 217 students.

3. I divide the number of chronically absent students (217) by the number of enrolled students (1,500).

14.5% of the student body is chronically absent.
Develop red-flag systems for individual student support

- For any student with chronic absence
- Intensive procedures for any student with severe chronic absence
• Connect students to intervention systems
• If too many students are chronically absent
  ◦ Intervene with a manageable number
  ◦ Put remainder on waitlist
  ◦ Intensify schoolwide and universal prevention efforts
Universal Prevention

- Publicize the importance of attendance
  - Staff
  - Families
  - Students
  - Community
Increase Staff Awareness

- Share data
- Have staff brainstorm negative effects on:
  - Students inside and outside of school
  - Classroom and teacher
  - Parents
  - Community
Dear families,

We are looking forward to a great year, with students in classes and ready to learn every day. We have learned that students who miss even a few days of school each month are at far greater risk of academic failure and dropout than students who attend regularly. We have set a goal that every student in our school attends regularly (has nine or fewer absences in a year).

Because attendance is so important, please send your child to school every day unless he or she has a contagious illness or is running a fever.

We have included a chart with this letter that will help you keep track of your student’s absences. If your child is at risk of missing too much school, please feel free to contact Joan Ndogo at 555-1234 for assistance. We will also monitor each student’s attendance across the year so we can work with families when the number of absences puts a student at risk. We will be happy to work with you to help your student attend regularly and have greater opportunities for success.

Sincerely,

Aaron Chan, Principal

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Note: Your student is at increasing risk for academic difficulties and school failure with each absence beyond this point.
Increase Family Awareness

- Negative outcomes and detrimental effects
- School goals
- School data and their student’s data
- Tips on improving attendance
  - Creating routine
  - Sleep tips
  - Helping students manage anxiety, homework, conflict, etc.
Increase Student Awareness/Motivation

- Teach importance of school
  - Young students—social stories, songs, chants

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I’m a very important person,
And school is very important.
I come to school every day—
That I’m not sick.

When I come to school,
I see people that I know.
I learn a lot of things.
We have important work to do.

I come to school every day—
That I’m not sick.
```
Increase Student Awareness/Motivation

- Teach importance of school
  - Older students: Lessons on outcomes
    - What would you do with $250,000? What would you do with $1,000,000? (Students brainstorm, share, discuss.)
    - A high school graduate makes, on average, $250,000 more than a dropout over a lifetime.
    - A college graduate makes, on average, $1,000,000 more than a high school graduate over a lifetime.
    - Students who are chronically absent are 7 to 8 times more likely to drop out than students who attend regularly.
    - Missing even 2 days of school each month can make it much more difficult for you to graduate.
    - What things make it more difficult for you to attend? What can you/we do to overcome those difficulties?
Increase Student Awareness/Motivation

Figure B-1 Graph of Number of Students Attending Class

Goal: 27 or more students in class every day

Congratulations, students! You've earned a Mystery Motivator.

Mrs. Sparks
Increase Community Awareness

- Share goals and information through PSAs, local media
- Connect with businesses
  - To address concerns
  - For incentive opportunities
- Connect with community partners
  - DHS, CPS, Juvenile Justice
  - Community leaders and organizers
Consider Other Contributing Universal Factors

- Climate and safety concerns in school
- Overuse of exclusionary discipline
- Barriers and challenges that affect many families
- Other causes
Consider Causes of Absenteeism

Schoolwide
Individual

- What is preventing attendance?
- Why does the student or parent feel it is necessary to miss school?
- What is the student or parent “getting” from being absent?

Prevention and intervention must address these causes.
Non-Example of Intervention

Janelle

- Why were these interventions ineffective in changing Janelle’s attendance in the long term?
Poll the Group

Interventions were ineffective in the long term because:

a) Janelle just didn’t care about school.
b) Janelle did not value the rewards that could be earned.
c) Interventions did not address the cause of absenteeism—anxiety about speaking in class.
d) The school didn’t implement solid, research-based interventions.
Analysis: Non-Example

- Janelle’s problem was anxiety.
- She wanted the gift certificates, but they did not address the reason for absence.
- Eventually, anxiety outweighed her motivation for reinforcement.
Functional Behavior Approach

“A systematic, evidence-based process for analyzing the relationship between a behavior and the context in which that behavior occurs. A primary goal of Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is to guide the development of effective positive interventions…”

~Loman & Borgmeier
**Intervention: Example**

**Antecedent**
- Anxiety about speaking in class

**Behavior**
- Absence

**Consequence**
- Escapes feelings of anxiety

**Short Term**
- Teachers avoid calling on Janelle to speak
- They use alternate participation methods

**Long Term**
- Counselor works with Janelle on coping strategies
- Continue using Behavior Contract, but include rewards for attempts to speak in class

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Common Causes of Absenteeism

- Barriers
- Lack of understanding or lack of importance
- To escape or avoid something
  - Deficits
  - Climate
- To obtain something
Start by Collecting Data

If the reason for absenteeism is not immediately obvious, collect additional information:

- Survey
- Interview
- Observation/screening
- Records review
- Tracking multiple incidents
Intervention Example

A student is influenced by a group of peers to skip when he is on his way to school. They go buy snacks and play video games.

Cause of absenteeism: Peer attention/influence
Group Contingency Intervention

- Include the 2 peers who are also absent
- Include 2–3 peers who are friends but are regularly present
- Brainstorm menu of rewards with students
  - Snacks
  - Video game time
  - No cost to high cost (time and/or $)
Intervention Example

- Each Monday, select a Mystery Motivator
- Group reports to designated adult each morning, attendance is recorded, receive a snack
- On Friday
  - Draw a number from a bag
    (1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5,)
  - All students whose attendance matched or exceeded the number of days drawn receive Mystery Motivator
Additional Tools/Strategies

- Visit www.pacificnwpublish.com

- Visit www.attendanceworks.org
For information on optional training support, contact Safe & Civil Schools (800-323-8819)

Thank you for your time and willingness to address this critical issue!