

“Addressing Absenteeism through Belonging”



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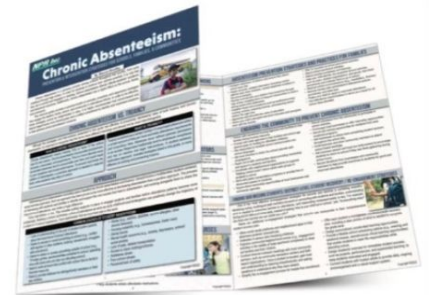
www.restorativefloeducationalolutions.com

Attendance USA

SESSION FACILITATOR



- Former Principal and Director of Student Services
- National Speaker and Consultant
- Certified Restorative Practitioner (IIRP)
- 3X Published Author
- Chronic Absenteeism



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25 Years of Service in Education

Think back...

**As a student, what did you look
forward to when coming
to school each day?**

LEARNING GOALS



Deepen your understanding of common and emerging factors that cause chronic absenteeism and impact student wellness.



Acquire practical, actionable strategies that promote student attendance and school connectedness.

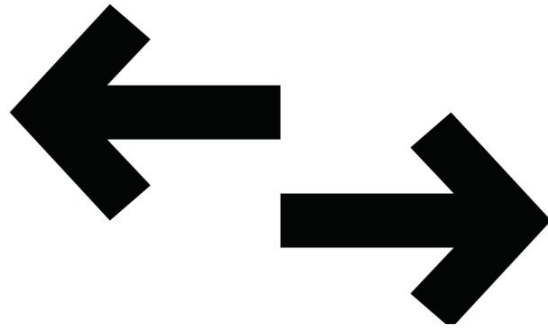


Build your skill and capacity to leverage school staff, families and community stakeholders to co-design innovative solutions for growing issues.

Chronic Absenteeism



The Difference between Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy



Truancy

Unexcused Absences Only

Traditional, Punitive Approaches

<https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Attendance-Legislation-in-the-US-Jan-2023.pdf>

Chronic Absenteeism

**Missing at least 10% of school days for
any reason**

Problem-solving

Chronic Absenteeism

What do I need to come to school each day?



APPENDIX A: Risk Factors for Chronic Absenteeism

BARRIERS	AVERSION	DISENGAGEMENT
Students <u>CANNOT</u> attend school for these reasons	Students <u>WILL NOT</u> attend schools as an avoidance strategy	Students <u>DO NOT</u> attend school due to disinterest, lack of connection, or parent mindset
Illness / Chronic Disease - physical - behavioral Family Responsibilities - childcare/caring for siblings or other family members - difficulty supporting learning) - Parent incarcerated Unmet Basic Needs (Maslow's) - housing instability - poor transportation - no safe path to school - natural disasters/ property loss Involvement with Juvenile Justice System 	Academic Struggles - avoidance of challenging work (**student may be academically behind) Social Struggles - avoidance of embarrassment - fear of stigma or being teased - language barriers Mental Health Struggles - PTSD - acute anxiety - depressive or manic episode - trauma School Climate - avoidance of bullying - avoidance of unsafe conditions Parent Concerns - fear of COVID - parents' poor experiences with school	Lack in Cultural Competence (Academic) - irrelevant curriculum - unengaging curriculum Poor Relationships and Climate - no trusted adults - lack a sense of safety, belonging, and support in school - poor peer relationships Discipline Patterns - school discipline rates - frequent discipline referrals - personal experience with suspension Questioning Value of Attending School - no perceived consequences for skipping - peer pressure to skip - interest in entering workforce/trade Student is Overage © 2022 LSU, Social Research & Evaluation Center

Disengagement

Disengagement, in its early stages, is when students simply become detached from school, feeling disconnected from peers, adults, activities, or the learning process itself.

The Research is Clear

Research shows that schools that intentionally and actively foster positive connections and promote a sense of belonging see lower rates of absenteeism and truancy.

Why is this Work So Important?

The desire for ALL students to learn and feel cared for.

There is not a single school or district initiative/priority that can be successful if the students are absent from school.

Let's Talk About It....

Improve Literacy Skills

Literacy is built through consistent exposure and practice of guided reading, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction.

Improve Math Skills

Math is cumulative—miss one concept, and the next becomes harder for chronically absent students.

Increased Graduation Rates

Attendance is one of the strongest predictors of graduation.

Improved Safety

Builds stronger relationships between students and trusted adults and increase school connectedness.

Attendance is Behavior

Behavior is Communication

**Students are absent because
something else is absent in their lives.**

Belonging

“**Belonging** or being fully human means more than having access.

Belonging entails being respected at the basic level that includes the right to both co-create and make demands of society.”



john a. powell

Othering & Belonging Institute,
University of California, Berkeley

School Connectedness

Defined as “the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals.”

—Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA

How is CARE communicated in your school to
re-engage disconnected students?

School Connectedness

Research suggests that when students are connected to:

- Trusted Adults
- Peers
- Clubs/Activities
- Curriculum

They are MORE likely to come to school.

Educator Goals

Students



Close Learning Gaps

Students/Families



Close Trust Gaps

Trust

Trust is established through consistent, small actions taken each day, rather than occasional grand gestures.

As trust increases, families are more inclined to disclose barriers hindering regular attendance.

Schools can more effectively address the underlying reasons for absenteeism.

When a flower doesn't bloom,
you fix the environment in
which it grows, not the flower.

Alexander Dan Hager



Safe, Affirming Learning Environments for Students

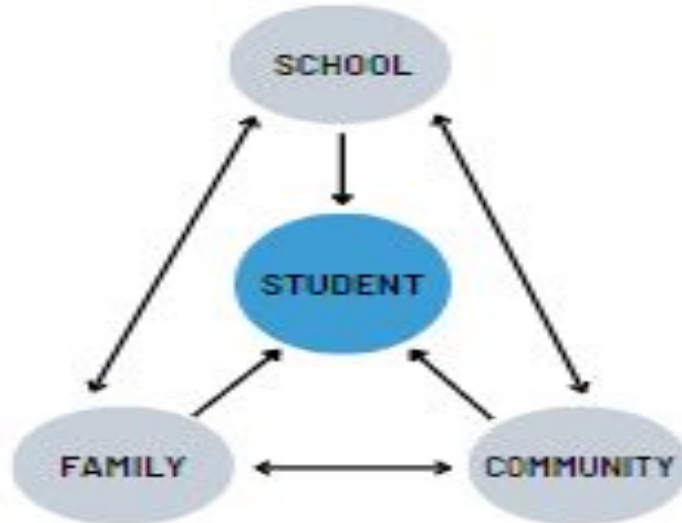
Welcoming School Environments for Families

Safe, Supportive Working Environments for Educators

Approach

Student Centered, Collaborative and Multifaceted

Identifying and building upon the **strengths/contributions** of students, families, educators and community partners is what leads to innovative strategies that can meet and exceed the common goal of student attendance.



APPROACH

Accept
COLLECTIVE Responsibility
as a
COLLECTIVE Body
to make
COLLECTIVE Change

**Intentional Actions that Build
Belonging and Connectedness**

Bus Drivers

The first adult interaction of the day can set the emotional tone for a student's entire school experience.

Imagine the power of a bus driver who smiles, pronounces a student's name correctly, and offers a fist bump, high five, or greeting of choice as students board the bus.

Administrators

Prioritize Connection During the First Days of School

During the first few days of school, focus only on community-building activities amongst students, staff and families before instruction. Studies reveal that students treat each other better and learn more together when they know more about one another.



Restorative Practices

Responsive Restorative Practices is a **relational approach** based on processes that build healthy communities and **REPAIRS HARM AND RESTORES RELATIONSHIPS.**

During a restorative dialogue, participants are asked:

1. To reflect on the conflict or problem
2. To identify their needs and interests
3. To make a plan

Teachers

Co-Design Respectful Relationship Agreements

Collaboratively establish respect agreements, not rules, with students that define how everyone will treat one another in the classroom. Shared ownership strengthens accountability and trust.

Create Buddy Systems

Assign attendance buddies who check in when classmates are absent. Peer relationships can become a powerful motivator for attendance.

Relationship Agreement Activity

Student

Student To Student

Be kind
Keep drama out of class
If you borrow, give it back
Help each other with problems

Student To Teacher

Be on time
Pay attention and listen
Be quiet while the teacher is talking
Have a positive attitude

Teacher To Student

Provide choices
Make learning fun
If you must call me out, please do it in private
Don't give up on me, even if I am having a bad day

Everyone Respecting the Classroom

Take care of the books
Clean up around your desk
Follow the campus expectations
Only write on paper and whiteboards

Counselors

Create Intentional Connection Opportunities

Counselors can host “Lunch Bunch” groups for students who regularly eat alone, helping students build friendships and meaningful peer connections.

Parent Liaisons

Recognize Families as Partners

Families should feel valued, respected, and included in the educational process. Schools thrive when family strengths and contributions are acknowledged and celebrated.

Front Office Staff

Extend Kindness When Students Return From an Absence

Instead of asking:

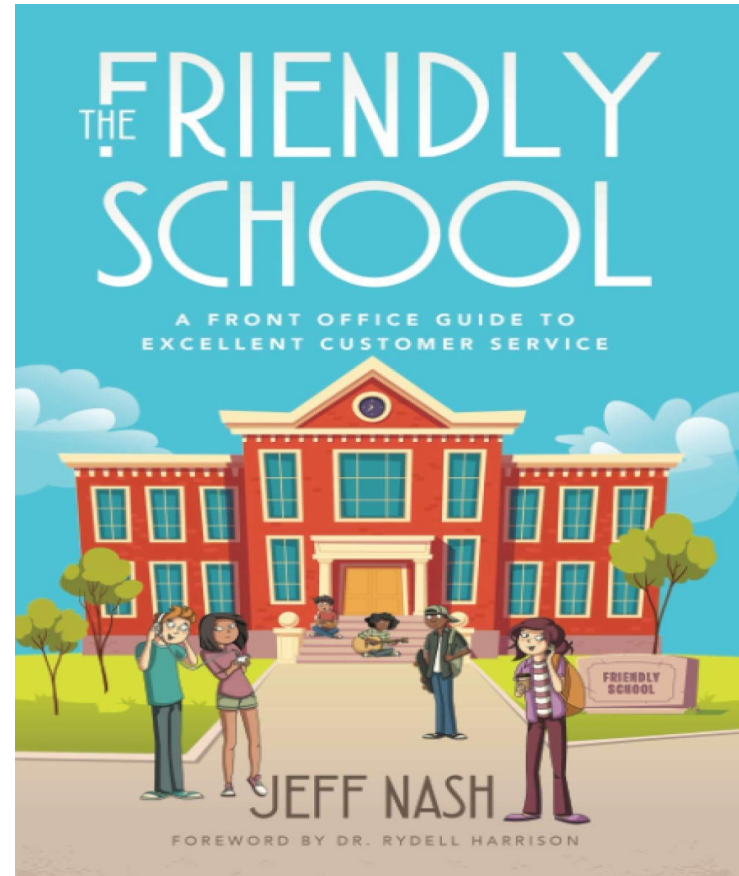
“Why weren’t you here yesterday?”

Try saying: “Now that you are here, our school is complete.”

Words matter. Students should feel welcomed back, not shamed for returning.

Welcoming

Spaces



The C's that Build Trust and Boost Attendance

Engage with **curiosity**, not assumptions.

Listen to students and families with **care**.

Accept **collective** responsibility and **commitment**.

Provide clear **communication** and expectations.

Focus on **connection**.

Relationships and Connection

It's important to meaningfully connect with students daily. Research supports that students they more likely to attend school daily and learn at their highest rate.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzvm1m8za5g&list=PPSV&t=2s>

Attendance Improvement

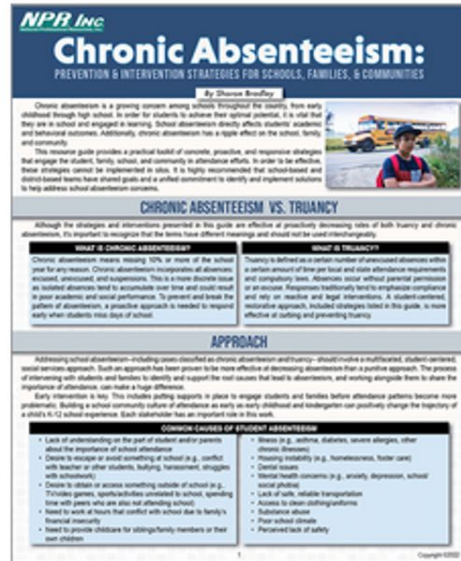
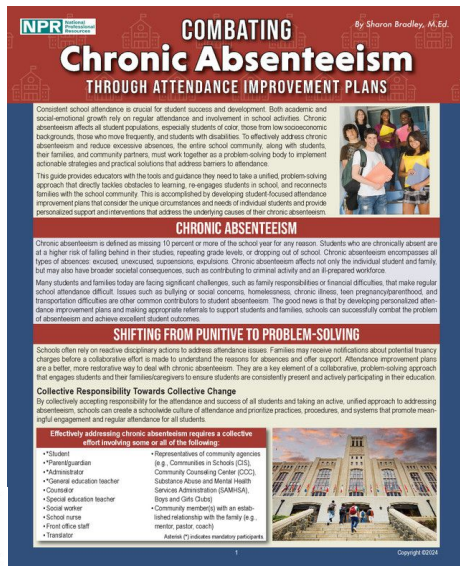
Through these intentional shared commitments, we can create a better, brighter learning environment where happy, healthy and whole students **WANT** to be rather where they feel they **HAVE** to be.

Let's continue to **SHOW UP** so that students can be **PRESENT**.

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

-African Proverb

Resources



National Professional Resources, Inc.
www.nprinc.com



now live!

**THE
ATTENDANCE USA
CONNECTION
PODCAST**



WITH SHARON BRADLEY AND SHELNEKA MARSALONE

LISTEN NOW



A large group of graduates in black gowns are celebrating, with many throwing their caps into the air against a clear blue sky. The graduates are looking upwards with expressions of joy and excitement. The caps are scattered across the upper half of the image, some still in motion.

QUESTIONS

Thank You!

LET'S STAY CONNECTED



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