



Promoting Attendance Through One-on-One Communications

Regardless of whether you are conducting a parent teacher conference, paying a home visit or placing a phone call home, you can find ways to use this interaction to help parents understand the importance of attendance and what it means for how they support the school success of their child. Below are some suggestions. Review this list. Use your creativity to come up with other ideas.

1. Prior to meeting with or talking to the parent, take a look at this student's attendance record. Calculate the percent of days missed in school through the grading period. Note whether the student has
 - Satisfactory attendance (misses 5% or less of class)
 - Chronic absence (misses 10% or more of class)
 - Severe chronic absence (missing 20% or more of class)
2. Offer positive reinforcement to those students and families with satisfactory or better attendance.
3. For those who are chronically absent, plan to discuss the importance of attendance and find out parents' perspectives what is contributing to the excessive absences. Ask parents both about what makes it difficult to get to school. Find out if they can think of any positive examples of activities or supports that made it easier to get their child to school (whether that is, for example, an engaging classroom activity or when family members or friends are available to help drive or walk their child to school.) Discuss what would help to reduce the level of absences. Help them understand absences – even if excused – can harm their child's ability to learn and succeed in school.

If appropriate, consider referring the family to 2-1-1 (assuming it exists in your community) to help the family obtain extra social and economic supports. 2-1-1 is an information and referral line supported by local United Ways in many communities across the United States. If you aren't sure whether it exists, try typing 211 and the name of your community into an internet search engine like Google to find out if it is in place locally.

If you are on the phone, consider scheduling an in-person meeting or home visit during which you could have this discussion.

4. Share handout offering research on the importance of attendance and tips for how parents can ensure students attend school every day. If this is a phone call, consider mailing the handout to the parent as part of a follow-up communications.

