Addressing Chronic Absenteeism through ESSA

May 8, 2017
1. Welcome and Context Setting
2. Overview of ESSA and School Health and Wellness
3. Overview of Opportunities ESSA Presents for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism
4. Health-related Causes of Chronic Absenteeism
5. State Examples: Tennessee
6. Questions
Nancy Katz

Alliance for a Healthier Generation
About Alliance for a Healthier Generation
Introduction to the Every Student Succeeds Act
Opportunities for Supporting Student Health

• Title I: funding to states and school districts with high percentages of low-income children
• Title II: professional development and literacy
• Title IV: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants and community support for school success
State ESSA Plans to Support Student Health and Wellness: A Framework for Action

Download online: healthyschoolscampaign.org/state-essa-framework
Key Levers Included in the Framework

- State Accountability System
- State School Report Cards
- Needs Assessment
- Professional Development
- Transition from Early Childhood Programs to Elementary School
- Well-Rounded Education
ESSA Framework Addenda

- Addressing Chronic Absenteeism through ESSA
- Coming soon:
  - Supporting Nutrition and Physical Activity through ESSA
  - Supporting Mental Health and Wellness through ESSA
Sue Fothergill

Attendance Works
Addressing Chronic Absenteeism through ESSA

Sue Fothergill, Associate Director for Policy
Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with school entry. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:

✓ Build public awareness and political will
✓ Foster state campaigns
✓ Encourage local practice
What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason**.

Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
## Multiple Measures of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Average Daily Attendance</strong></th>
<th>How many students show up to school every day? The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truancy</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing school without permission? Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason—excused, unexcused, etc. Many researchers and growing number of states define it as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric and an optional measure for school improvement in ESSA.</td>
</tr>
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Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Underestimate Chronic Absence

Note: MD defines truancy as missing 20% of the school year.
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

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Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few As 2 days a month**
First Ever National Chronic Absence Data Released in June 2016

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html
**Criteria Required in ESSA for School Quality Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success</th>
<th>Chronic Absence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfully differentiates school performance</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statewide (with the same indicator or indicators used for each grade span)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can be calculated separately for each student subgroup (i.e., can be disaggregated)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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- **Validity** - The degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.
- **Reliability** - The degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.
• 13 plans have been submitted thus far
• 8 plans specifically identify chronic absence as a measure of school quality
• 2 plans identify attendance as a measure of school quality (to be defined)
• Several drafts include chronic absence as a measure of school quality
Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country
As a nation, we must acknowledge that frequent absences from school can be devastating to a child’s future. For example:

- Children who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the third grade.
- Students who cannot read at grade level by the end of third grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school.
- By high school, irregular attendance is a better predictor of school dropout than test scores.
Working to reduce chronic absence can serve as:

• A unifying, common goal
• Effective tool for resource allocation
• Easy to understand measure of progress and success
## Unpack Contributing Factors to Chronic Absence

### Myths
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Don’t realize just missing 2 days per month can affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

### Barriers
- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Chronic illness
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Poor Transportation
- Housing instability
- High mobility
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice system

### Aversion
- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective / exclusionary school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### Disengagement
- Lack of engaging and culturally relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school
- Poor school climate
- Discouraged due to lack of credits
Caring Adults Are Key and Relationships Matter

Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

“Could someone help me with these? I’m late for math class.”
Scott Spencer
Being Trauma Informed

• Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and identifies potential paths for healing
• Recognizes the signs/symptoms of trauma in staff, students, and families
• Fully integrates knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices and settings (designing supportive environments)
• Recognizes that healing happens in relationships
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

TIER 1  Prevention
- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

TIER 2  Early Intervention
- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

TIER 3  Specialized reports
- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
About Healthy Schools Campaign
Leading Health Conditions Impacting Attendance

- Asthma
- Oral health
- Mental health disorders
- Bullying, violence and abuse
- Food insecurity and nutrition
- Teen and unplanned pregnancies
- Vision
Addressing Chronic Absenteeism through ESSA

*National Association of School Nurses
Asthma

• 8.3% of children are currently diagnosed with asthma
• Significant health disparities exist
• Asthma accounts for 1/3 of missed school days (10,000,000 days)
• Children with persistent asthma are 3.2 times more likely to be chronically absent
Oral Health

- 20% of children aged 5 to 11 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth (13% of adolescents)
- Hispanic and African-American children are twice as likely to have untreated caries
- Children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely to miss school
Mental Health

• 13%-20% of children experience a mental health disorder in a given year
• Disorders, such as ADHD, disproportionately impact low-income, minority youth
### Best Practices and Proven Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asthma</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asthma friendly schools</td>
<td>• Community eligibility</td>
<td>• School-based mental health programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Environmental assessments</td>
<td>• Universal breakfast</td>
<td>• Universal interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Asthma friendly homes</td>
<td>• Food backpack programs</td>
<td>• Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Farm-to-school programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Health</td>
<td><strong>Bullying</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community–based oral health programs</td>
<td>• Safe Routes to Schools</td>
<td>• School-based vision screening programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School-based sealant programs</td>
<td>• Bullying education programs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mobile clinics</td>
<td>• Support groups</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
● Leading health conditions impacting attendance
● School-based, proven strategies for addressing health related causes of chronic absenteeism
● Strategies for establishing partnerships

healthyschoolscampaign.org/policy/education/
Additional ESSA Levers

• Professional development
• Needs assessments
Needs Assessments

- Information about the health status of students
- School climate and safety, such as the U.S. Department of Education’s School Climate Survey
- School discipline policies
- CDC School Health Index
- EPA’s Model School Environmental Health Program guidelines
- School staff
Professional Development

- Social and emotional learning
- Capacity building
  - Engage school, community and parents/caregivers
  - Develop and implement an early warning system
  - Maintain healthy indoor environment
Lori Paisley
Tennessee Department of Education
TennESSA+ee Succeeds
ESSA: Building on Success in Tennessee

- We believe in the strong evidence that student absenteeism has a profound influence on academic outcomes and that reducing chronic absenteeism will help improve life outcomes for our students in Tennessee.
- New measures for school quality and student success included stakeholder perspective with two key concerns: **Opportunity to Learn** and Readiness for Success After Graduation
- The **Chronically Out of School** indicator represents a measure that reflects the priority interests of stakeholders.
## District Accountability Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Six Areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Success Rate*</td>
<td>6-8 Success Rate*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronically Out of School</td>
<td>Graduation Rate + Ready Graduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Success rate includes science, ELA, math **and** ACT/SAT composite. It may also include social studies in future years.
Chronically Out of School Pathways

- **Absolute Performance:** Percent of students who are chronically absent in the district

  or

- **AMO Targets:** Target to reduce the percent of students who are chronically absent in the district (cohort-level comparison)

  and

- **Value-Added:** Student-level comparison to measure reduction in chronic absenteeism for *specific students* who were chronically absent in the prior year
  - Growth expectation based on current year state performance
Chronically Out of School

- Intended to measure the amount of class time a student has with his or her teacher of record.
- Students who are absent or suspended out of school will be included; those serving in school suspension are not.
- Indicator should be weighted and appropriately as encompassing chronic absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions.
- Student is chronically absent if he/she misses 10% of school year.
- For example, 18 or more days in a 180 day calendar.
Why is the Chronically Out of School indicator important to Tennessee?

- Multiple research studies link poor attendance with reduced academic outcomes.
- Only looking at average daily attendance rate tends to mask attendance problems, particularly within subgroups.
- Harmful effects of poor attendance are cumulative.
- Districts and schools have access to rich attendance data that can be monitored throughout the school year.
- Chronically missing school is an indication of conditions that can be successfully addressed.
Tennessee students who are chronically absent in kindergarten are 15 percentage points less likely to reach proficiency in either 3rd grade math or ELA.

Tennessee students who are chronically absent in 9th grade are 30 percentage points less likely to earn an on-time diploma (62% vs. 92%).
Steps to address the root causes of chronic absenteeism

- Step 1: review the data
- Step 2: identify differences across schools
- Step 3: unpack contributing factors, including health
Reviewing the data

- Student management system/attendance
- Student management system/discipline
- Student/family support services
- Student and parent focus groups
- Transportation, other non-traditional sources
- Coordinated School Health
### Step 2: Identify differences across schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District X Elementary Schools</th>
<th>Average daily attendance rate</th>
<th>% of students chronically absent</th>
<th>% of ED students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>77.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Unpack contributing factors

- Unexcused vs. excused absences
- Sporadic vs. consecutive absences
- Social avoidance
- Academic struggles
- Safety, bullying
- Discipline
- Family issues
- Undiagnosed disabilities
- School Climate, relationships
- Health
Health, physical or mental, plays a part!

- In 2015-16, there were 3,885,680 student visits to a school nurse. 87% percent of those visits resulted in a student’s ability to return to class instead of being sent home.
- In 2015-16, 205,254 students had a chronic illness or disability diagnosis (21% of all students statewide).
- Between 2004-05 and 2015-16, total number of students with chronic illnesses or disability diagnoses increased by 236%.
- Most common: asthma (34%), ADD/ADHD (26%), severe allergies (17%).
Local Asthma Success Story

- Coordinated School Health coordinator in each district
- Partnered with a local asthma care clinic, PFTs
- Professional development opportunities, resources
- Worked with school nurses to ensure all students diagnosed with asthma have an asthma action/management plan
- More inhalers brought to nurses following screenings
- Nurses had tangible data to be able to address symptoms
- Screenings exhibited importance of asthma education
Districts and schools in Tennessee will exemplify excellence and equity such that all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark on their chosen path in life.
Thank you!

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Questions
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