Policy and Support Frameworks for Using Chronic Absence as a School Quality Student Success measure in ESSA
To learn about and provide feedback on a framework to help states assess the impact of choices made regarding chronic absence indicators under ESSA. The framework includes four elements:
No Child Left Behind

Success determined by academic standards.

Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Each state defines and addresses truancy which typically emphasizes court based, punitive, interventions.

Every Student Succeeds Act

Success determined by academic & nonacademic standards.

States set goals; supportive framework.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Chronic absence is a required reporting & optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.
Chronic Absence Checks All of the Boxes as a Measure of School Quality and Student Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success</th>
<th>Chronic Absence</th>
<th>Validity: the degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.</th>
<th>Reliability: the degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.</th>
<th>Additional benefit: chronic absence can serve as a proxy for school climate and student engagement.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calculated the same for all schools and school districts across the state</td>
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<td>Can be disaggregated by student sub-population</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<td>Is a proven indicator of school quality</td>
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A Growing Consensus on Definition

FIGURE 2.
Definitions of Chronic Absenteeism in State ESSA Plans

Source: FutureEd 2017; authors’ analysis of state ESSA plans.
Note: A model attendee is a student attending at least 96 percent of school days or a student who has made a 3 percent gain in days attended over the prior year. Attendance rate is a continuous measure.
But there is little consensus on weight.
And significant variability on other aspects of measuring and reporting chronic absence:

- The portion of the school day that students must attend to be considered present or absent;
- The types of absences included in—and excluded from—chronic absence counts;
- The number of days students must be on school rolls to count in absenteeism calculations;
- The rules for withdrawing or dis-enrolling students;
- How the accuracy of absenteeism data is monitored; and
- The timing and content of chronic absence data that are provided to schools and the public.
Key Questions

- What is the State’s Definition of Chronic Absence?
- Are All Types of Absences Included in the Chronic Absence Count? Or are some absences excluded?
- What Counts as a day of Attendance or an Absence?
- Which Students are Included in the Count?
- What is the Rubric for Awarding Points?
- How Much Does Chronic Absence Contribute to the Overall School Performance Score?
- Are there Long-term Goals and Benchmarks for Chronic Absence Improvement?
- How are Data Monitored for Accuracy?
- When and What Data are Shared with Schools and the Public?
Are all Types of Absences Included?

- Offers clear guidance and training
- Motivates a school and community to respond
- Protects Vulnerable Populations of Students
- Is it comparable and fair across schools and districts
- Is it comparable and fair across schools and districts
- Protects Vulnerable Populations of Students
- Motivates a school and community to respond
- Offers clear guidance and training

**Ed Facts:** A student is considered present for the day if they attended at least 50% of the time.

What is the impact if:
- Students must attend only one hour in order to be counted present? A full day?
- Suspensions do not count as absences?
- Absences due to health are not included?
Are All Students – Especially Vulnerable Students - Included in Chronic Absence Data?

Ed Facts: A student counts in any school attended for at least 10 days.

What is the impact if:
• Students must be on role a significant number of days to count? E.g. 45 or 60 days
• Students are easily dis-enrolled?

- How will schools be accountable for chronically absent students who are highly mobile?
- How will schools make the case for resources to support highly mobile students?
- Will there be training and guidance on how to capture highly mobile students?
- Will schools and communities be motivated to respond?
- How will schools make the case for resources to support highly mobile students?
What is the Weight Given to Chronic Absence and How are Points Awarded?

What is the impact if:
• Chronic Absence is one of many indicators, or one of only a few?
• The weight varies by school level?
• Points are awarded based on a few thresholds? Continuously?

• Will the chronic absence data be available to the public?
• Or will the data be masked?

• Will the data be available to disaggregate and cross tabulate?

• Is the weight sufficient?
• Will the thresholds create cliffs or bubbles?
• Are there goals and benchmarks?

• Will there be training and guidance on how to use chronic absence data?

Accountability | Equity
---|---
Data | Support
Incentive to Take Action
Group Discussion

Question

• Would this framework be helpful in planning strategies to address chronic absence in your state?
• Does it apply to decisions that are underway in your states?

Resources: Summary of AR, CT, KY, and MD and upcoming report by Future Ed and Attendance Works, “Setting the Rules: Ensuring Chronic Absenteeism Works for Schools and Students”
A Framework for a State System of Tiered Supports

Intensive Intervention

Targeted Intervention

Support for All Districts and Schools
Comprehensive State Support – Tier 1

1. Create state definitions and standards to ensure the accurate and consistent collection and reporting of attendance data
2. Produce on-line public reports showing chronic absence levels by school, grade and sub-population with the capacity to cross-tabulate with other variables such as race and poverty (annual, trend over time for state, districts, schools and subgroups)
3. Provide school discipline guidance geared toward minimizing suspension
4. Offer easy to tailor attendance messaging materials
5. Identify and promote examples of effective practice
6. Ensure that Districts and Schools have attendance and chronic absence reports available in real time for monitoring
7. Ideas and materials for attendance incentives
8. Attendance Works Teaching Attendance Modules 1 and 2
9. Recorded webinars
10. Principal toolkits and other school based resources
Targeted Intervention - Tier 2

1. Provide guidance for an in-depth assessment of attendance data to identify policy and practice challenges
2. Prioritize allocation of state attendance related resources to districts with high rates of absenteeism (e.g., expanded learning, health resources, and access to early childhood, etc.)
3. Identify resources to address specific identified factors that are driving absenteeism
4. Provide training and coaching via regional entities such as county offices of education, educational service districts, and area education agencies
5. Peer Learning networks run by the state education agency or experienced peer learning facilitators
Key Questions for Targeted Intervention

• What level of chronic absence in a district or a school should trigger this support?
• What are essential tools that the TA providers need? (training on attendance teams, data, Teaching Attendance, other?)
• How many districts or schools potentially need this level of support?
• If there is a lack of capacity, how will they meet it short-term and long-term?
2017 Local Educational Agency Chronic Absence Rates

% Chronic Absence By County

- ≤9%
- 9.01% to 11%
- 11.01% to 14%
- 14.01% to 18%
- 18.01% to 31%

Note: Carroll, Howard and Talbot Counties do not include elementary school data because the numbers are too low & Calvert County does not include elementary and middle school data because the numbers are too low.

www.attendanceworks.org
2. Chronic Absenteeism Update

Distribution of percent of students not chronically absent, 2016-17

Number of Schools

Percent of Students not Chronically Absent, 2016-17
1. State team conducts audit of district attendance policies and practice and creates a plan to help the school or district develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to improving attendance.

Key Questions for Intensive Intervention

• What level of chronic absence in a district or a school should trigger this support?
• What are essential tools that the TA providers need? (training on attendance teams, data, Teaching Attendance, other?)
• How many districts or schools potentially need this level of support?
• If there is a lack of capacity, how will they meet it short-term and long-term?
• What criteria will they use to determine qualified TA providers?
## Tiered Health Interventions

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<tr>
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<th><strong>Nutrition</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mental Health</strong></th>
<th><strong>Bullying</strong></th>
<th><strong>Vision</strong></th>
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<td>- Asthma friendly schools</td>
<td>- Community eligibility</td>
<td>- School-based mental health programs</td>
<td>- Safe Routes to Schools</td>
<td>- School-based vision screening programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Environmental assessments</td>
<td>- Universal breakfast</td>
<td>- Universal interventions</td>
<td>- Bullying education programs</td>
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<td>- Asthma friendly homes</td>
<td>- Food backpack programs</td>
<td>- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment</td>
<td>- Support groups</td>
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What should be included in a state-level tiered support and intervention framework?

What would help states develop the capacity to help districts?