

Every Day Counts!

What Are DC's Attendance Policies? And How Can I Support My Child?

OSSE Parent Summit, Session 1D

Room 151B

11:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

September 29, 2018



I. Presentation (30 min)

- A. Chronic Absenteeism Intro
- B. Policy Overview
- C. The Role of Schools & Gov't Partners
- D. The Role of Families
- E. Q&A

II. Small Group Discussion (10 min)

III. Share Out (5 min)

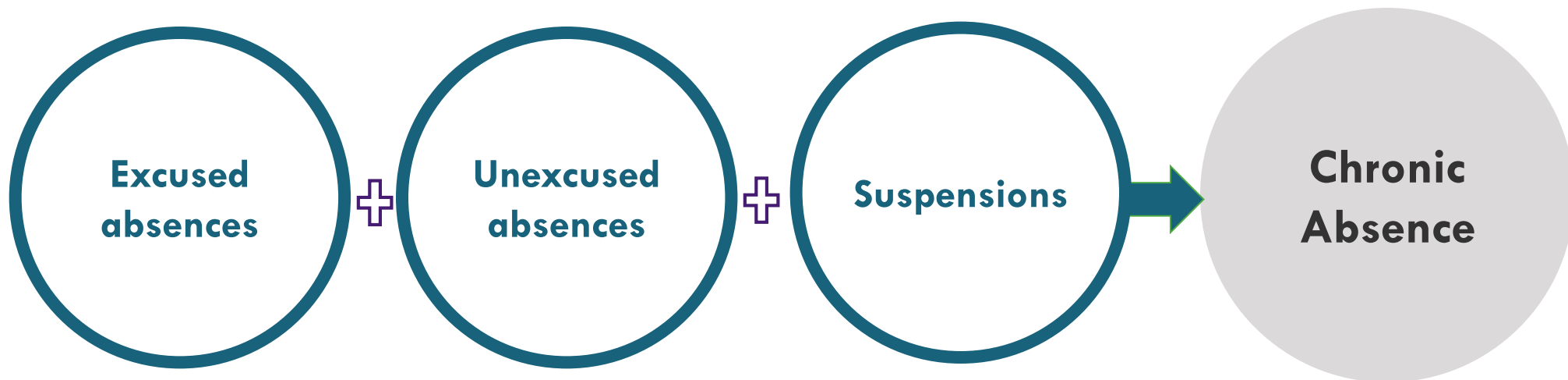
IV. Complete your surveys! Thank you!

What is Chronic Absence?



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).

- 10% = ~18 days
- 2 days per month



Common Misconceptions about Absenteeism

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Factors influencing absences are outside of the control of the school

Why Attendance Matters



Elementary School

Children that are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade.



Middle School

By sixth grade, chronic absence is a warning sign for students at risk of dropping out of school.



High School

By ninth grade, good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than eighth grade test scores.

A Look at Common Barriers Identified



- **Surrounding neighborhood not safe – 34%**
- Unsafe walking to and from school – 31%
- Bullying – 31%
- Gang/crew activity – 3%

School
10%

- **Homeless or unstable housing – 47%**
- Parent/guardian sick or not well – 15%
- Tending to younger siblings – 13%
- Domestic or family violence – 9%

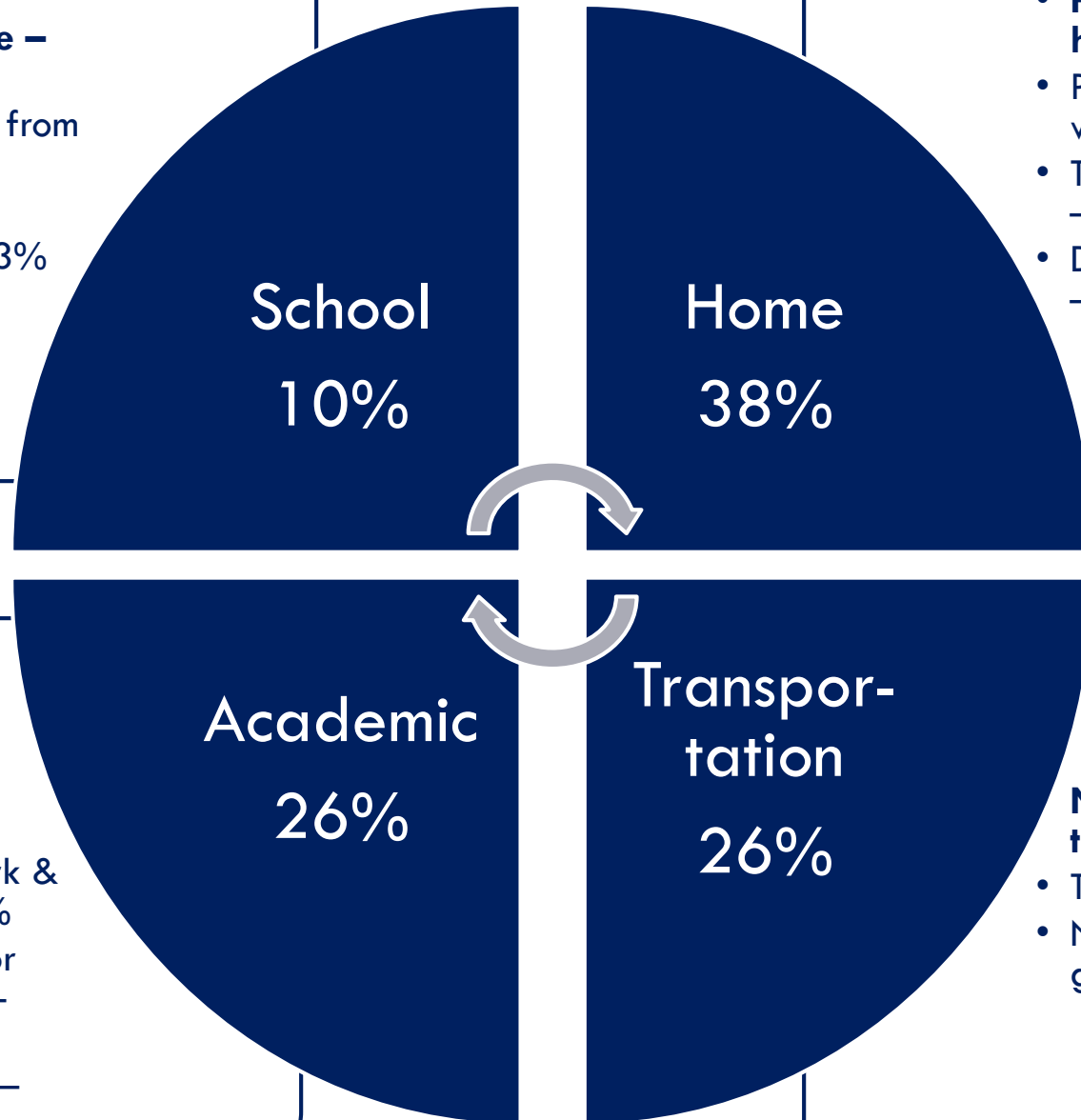
Home
38%

- **Poor academic performance - 40%**
- Fell behind in coursework & could not catch up- 25%
- Problems with teacher or other school personnel – 21%
- Suspended from school – 14%

Academic
26%

Transportation
26%

- **No money for transportation – 50%**
- Too far to go – 34%
- No reliable means of getting to school – 16%



What Are DC's Citywide Policies?

When Is Attendance Compulsory for Students?



School attendance is required by law for all students in DC who reach five years of age on or before September 30 of the current school year. Students must attend school daily until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their eighteenth birthday (DC Code § 38-202 (a)).



How Do We Track Attendance in DC?



● Attendance taken daily

Each day, schools take attendance for every student enrolled in school.

● Submitted to OSSE

Daily attendance data from schools are submitted to the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) nightly by every LEA's student information system (SIS).

● Indicates students present

The data submitted indicate whether each student in a school was present that day.

● LEA SIS systems vary

LEA student information systems are configured differently—some send full attendance (present and absent), some only absences.

● 80/20 rule

If a student misses more than 20% of the school day, the data reflects that they were absent for the day.

● Period-level attendance

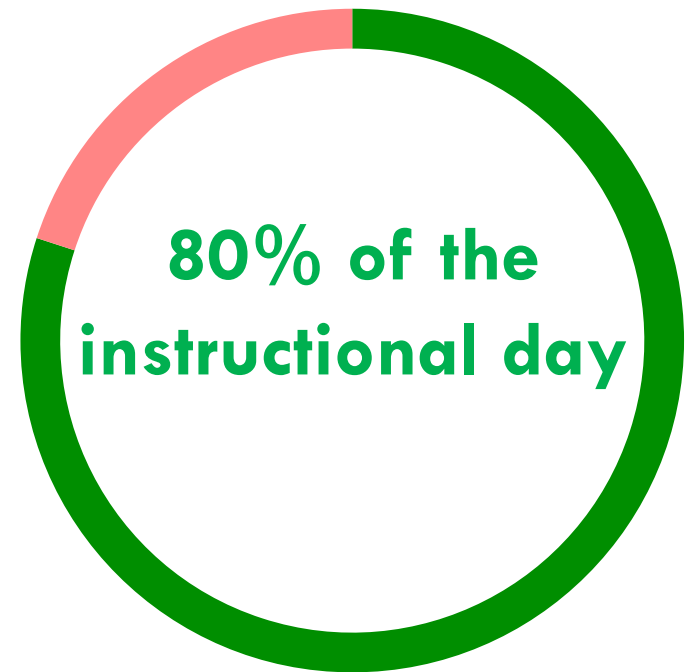
Schools track period-level attendance as well, and attendance in specific courses impacts graduation eligibility regardless of whether the student was deemed absent or present for the day.

1. The 80/20 Rule



Under the 80/20 rule, for a student to be considered present they must be physically in attendance at scheduled periods of instruction at the educational institution in which they are enrolled for **at least 80 percent of the full instructional day**, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student.

Students who are not present for 80 percent or more of the day are considered absent (5-A DCMR § 2199.1).



2. Excuse Status



A student who is absent can either have their absence deemed excused or unexcused. All public schools in DC must excuse the following reason for an absence:

- Illness or other bona fide (legitimate) medical illness experienced by the student.
- Exclusion, by direction of DC authorities, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.
- Death in the student's family.
- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena.
- Observance of a religious holiday.
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities.
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring closing.
- Failure of DC to provide transportation in cases where there is a legal responsibility.
- Medical or dental appointments for the student.
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent or a legal guardian who is in the military

Additionally, LEAs may use their discretion to excuse other reasons for absence as well. **Excuse notes must be provided writing 5 days of the student's return to school.**

Examples of unexcused absences are:

- Babysitting
- Student work that has not been previously approved by the school as part of a flexible school schedule
- Errands
- Cutting classes
- Oversleeping
- Vacationing outside of scheduled school breaks

3. Absence and School Discipline Policy



Children may **NOT*** be suspended or unenrolled for unexcused absences or late arrivals to school (DC Code § 38–236.04(c)).

* EXCEPTION: Students over 18 years of age attending a school where more than half of the students are over 18 years of age, may be subject to an out-of-school suspension or disciplinary unenrollment.



4a. Grading and Graduation Policy: DCPS

Applicable to Grades PK–8

Promotion of students in prekindergarten through eighth grade to the next level shall include consideration of the following criteria (5-E DCMR § 2201.6):

(a) Proficient or advanced marks in the core subjects of:

- (1) Reading/language arts; and
- (2) Mathematics; and
- (3) Science; and
- (4) Social studies.

(b) Achievement of the goals of the intervention learning plan where applicable.

(c) Meet the requirements of the system's attendance policy.

Applicable to Grades 9–12

More than **thirty unexcused absences within a school year results in failure of the relevant courses and retention** in the current grade level (without a written explanation submitted by the principal) (5-E DCMR § 2103.10; DC Code § 38–781.02).

Cumulative failure of courses due to absenteeism impacts the ability of high school students to reach graduation requirements.





Individual Charter Schools Set Their Own Policies

- **How does charter school attendance impact grades or promotion?**
 - It depends. Some charter schools include attendance in school or LEA-wide grading systems that require individual course grades to be lowered or course failures for specific numbers of absences, through individual grading practices that incorporate class participation, or by giving school leaders or teachers the ability to take attendance into account on a case by case basis.
- **Where can you find charter school graduation requirements?**
 - All DC public schools – DCPS and charter schools – must follow minimum statewide graduation requirements but some schools require more. The minimum requirements can be found here: <https://osse.dc.gov/service/graduation-requirements>
 - To see specific requirements, visit the charter school's website. Graduation requirements are often found in documents call Student or Family Handbooks.
 - The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) links graduation policies to each charter school profile. Search for schools here: <https://www.dcpsb.org/find-a-school>
- **Where can you find charter school attendance policies?**
 - Visit the charter school's website. Attendance requirements are often found in documents call Student or Family Handbooks.

5. Notification and Referral Policy (1 of 4)



- For **every absence**, schools must **contact the parent or guardian** the same day to notify them of the absence and request documentation (5-A DCMR § 2103.2(c)).
- After **five unexcused absences**, students are required to participate in an **attendance conference** and are referred to a **school-based student support team** (5-A DCMR § 2103.2(c)).
- The school-based **Student Support Team (SST)** for attendance will:
 - ✓ Make reasonable and diligent efforts to communicate and collaborate with the student's parent or guardian.
 - ✓ Review and address the student's attendance and determine the underlying cause for the unexcused absences.
 - ✓ Communicate and collaborate with the student's existing individualized education program (IEP) team (if applicable).
 - ✓ Provide timely response to the student's truant behavior (if applicable).
 - ✓ Make recommendations for academic, diagnostic, or social work services.
 - ✓ Use resources to improve the student's attendance including referral to a community-based organization when available.
 - ✓ Develop and implement an action plan in consultation with the student and student's parent or guardian.

5. Notification & Referral Policy (2 of 4)



- **After 10 unexcused absences:**
 - The SST **notifies** the school administrator; and
 - The school **notifies** the Office of State Superintendent of Education; OSSE will send the student's parent an **attendance and truancy resource guide** (DC Code § 38–208 (b)).
- **After 10 full day* unexcused absences:**
 - **The school refers children age 5–13 to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)** for potential educational neglect (DC Code § 38–208 (c)(1)(A)).
 - CFSA receives and investigates reports of abuse and neglect of District young people under the age of eighteen, including reports of educational neglect. CFSA will assign a social worker to review the referral, usually within twenty-four hours the report.
 - The social worker's job is to find out whether the report of abuse or neglect is true or false. A social worker at CFSA will also decide whether CFSA or a community organization should continue supporting the family.

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

5. Notification & Referral Policy (3 of 4)



- **After 15 full day* unexcused absences:**
 - The school refers children ages 14 through 17 to
 - The school refers the parents or guardians of students ages 5–13 to the **Office of the Attorney General** (DC Code § 38–208 (C)) for prosecution. Parents may be assigned community service and placed under court supervision/probation, and may be convicted of violating the compulsory school attendance law, facing fines and incarceration.

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

5. Notification & Referral Policy (4 of 4)



- **After 15 full day* unexcused absences:**
 - **The school refers students ages 14 through 17 to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and to the Office of the Attorney General (DC Code § 38–208 (C)).**
 - Students may be referred for prosecution, diversion, and community based interventions, and may be assigned community service and placed under court supervision/probation.
 - Truancy charges may be filed against the student alleging that the student is a “Person in Need of Supervision.”
 - Within three business days of referral, **the Office of the Attorney General** notifies parents that they may be subject to prosecution for violating school attendance requirements. (DC Code § 38–208 (c)(2)).
 - Parents may be assigned community service and placed under court supervision/probation, and may be convicted of violating the compulsory school attendance law, facing fines and incarceration.

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

What Supports Are Available?

The Role of Schools & Government Partners

Every Day Counts!



Every Day Counts! Campaign

- Public messaging via media strategy and partner engagement
- Rewarding students and schools for improvement and success



Attendance Ed Stats

- Measuring, monitoring, identifying, and sharing what works



Every Day Counts! Taskforce

- Improving local policy using legislation, regulation, and reporting
- Coordinated health, education and justice agency activities focused on attendance



The Every Day Counts! Taskforce, chaired by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, is a partnership of diverse District of Columbia agencies and stakeholders that collectively advance and coordinate strategies to increase student attendance and reduce truancy.

- **Health Care, Public Health & Human Service Agencies and Providers** (CFSA, CSSD, DBH, DHS, DOH, DOT)
- **Juvenile Justice and Law Enforcement** (CJCC, DMPSJ, MPD, OAG, JGA)
- **State and School District Leaders and Staff, and School Personnel** (PCSB, DCPS, public charter school leaders)
- **Mayor, Council, State Board of Education, and Other Local Government Entities** (DMGEO, OSSE, SBOE, Office of Chairman Phil Mendelson, Office of Councilmember Grosso)

EDC! Taskforce: Where we are today.....



Citywide Self-Assessment

Tool Components	Strength Areas	Growth Areas
1. Actionable Data	Public reporting, availability of data to LEAs	Data sharing with attendance partners
2. Culture & Capacity Building	Openness to change, needs of students/families drive decisions	Support rather than blame students/families; apply a trauma-informed approach
3. Positive Engagement	Clear and consistent message, recognize positive examples and success, cross-sector approach	Training and workshops for families; early detection triggers outreach from caring adult; culture of attendance in community
4. Leadership	Public commitment from city leadership	School leadership knowledge unknown; students and families play an active role in effort
5. Shared Accountability	Citywide plan, regular meetings to review data with context, school accountability framework	Student attendance improvement plans, connection with youth/family serving organizations
6. Partnerships & Investments	School health resources, transit availability,	Professional development materials, homelessness; housing; school-level capacity to manage attendance plans; partners to do case management

Task Force

- Idea Generation
- Agencies**
- Ideas Summit
- Barriers Data
- Students**
- Design Challenge
- Resource Fairs

Generating
Fall 2017 –
Winter 2018

Task Force

- Strategic Plan Update
- Agencies**
- Planning for FY19
- Mayor/Council**
- FY19 Budget Investments

Planning
Spring 2018

Task Force

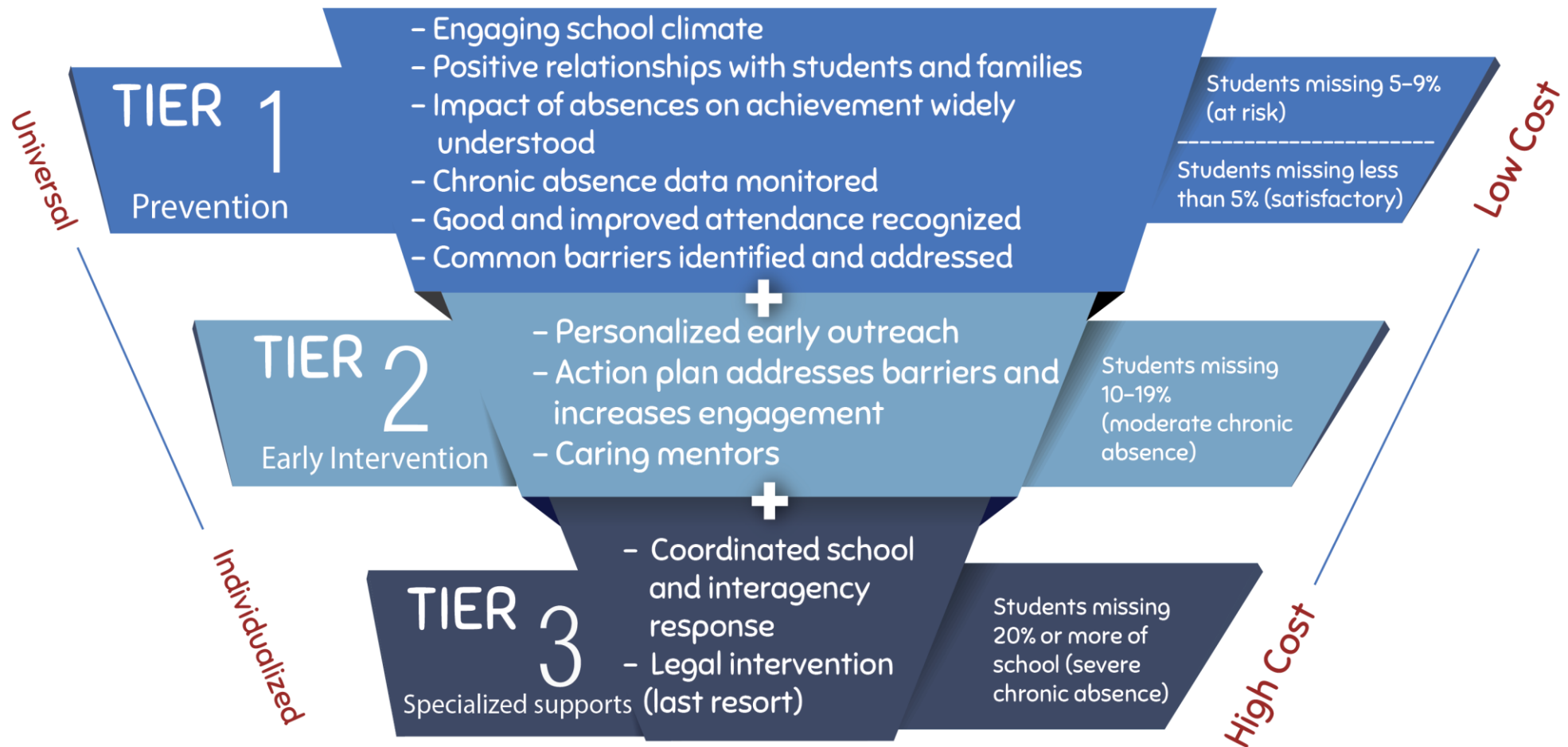
- Monitor Plan
- Agencies**
- Attendance Stat
- Cross-Agency Mtgs.
- EDC! Pilots
- Students**
- Fall '18 Youth Engagement

**Implementing/
Monitoring**
Today

The Tiers of Attendance Intervention



Why Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention?





Recommended Site-Level Framework

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

B. Engage Students and Parents

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

Every Day Counts! Website



Mayor Muriel Bowser DC.gov attendance.dc.gov

Student Attendance: Every Day Counts!

Home Policies Resources Every Day Counts! Taskforce FAQs Ed Stat

Trying to Navigate Public Schools in the District of Columbia?

Phone: (202) 741-4692 | Email: student.advocate@dc.gov | Twitter: @DC_Advocate

How to Reach the Office of the Student Advocate

Trying to navigate public schools in the District? We can help. Contact our office at student.advocate@dc.gov or at (202) 741-4692.

[Learn More](#)

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Attendance Counts

Every day of school counts! That's why Mayor Bowser and the State Board of Education partnered to reward students and schools that improved attendance this year! Find out which schools won and how you can help with next school year's competition.

[more »](#)

Did You Know...

- Missing just 10% of the school year in early grades can leave many students struggling throughout elementary school.
- By sixth grade, missing 18 days a year is strongly linked to dropping out of high school.
- Chronic absence affects every grade level and can set preschoolers back for an incredibly long period of time.
- Missing just two days a month can put students at risk of academic failure.

Featured Resources

- [Tips to Prevent Bullying](#)
- [Kids Ride Free Changes](#)
- [Homelessness Prevention](#)
- [Reengaging Disengaged Youth Ages 16-24](#)
- [Plan Ahead for SafeTrack Metro Closures](#)
- [Behavioral Health Resource Directory](#)
- [OSSE Healthy Youth Resource Guide](#)

Attendance Events

[Mayor Proclaims September Attendance Awareness Month](#)

[Every Day Counts! Taskforce \(formerly Truancy Taskforce\)](#)
July 27, 2017

Latest

[Press Releases](#)

25 Mayor Bowser Hosts Every Day Counts! Attendance Design Challenge
Public and public charter schools worked to create plans to address

- Policies
- Resources
- Taskforce
- FAQs
- Ed Stat Data

- Featured Resources
- Attendance Facts
- Taskforce Meeting Schedule
- Media

www.attendance.dc.gov

What Support Is Available?

The Role of Families




Every Day Counts! Messaging



1. **Absences Add Up**: Before you know it, just missing one or two days a month can add up to nearly 10% of the school year. And skipping just one or two classes can easily add up to too much lost time in the classroom.
2. **I Care**: Just one person showing they care – a teacher, crossing guard, school resource officer, neighbor – matters. When students and families know someone cares about their future and whether they show up, they are more likely to attend and ask for help.

Help Us Make the Shift!



Area	Current Belief		Desired Belief
Awareness	"I don't know the impact absences can have."		"Just missing two days per month can cause me (my child) to fall behind in school."
Attitude	"It's okay if I (my child) miss(es) one or two days per month."		"I don't want (my child) to miss an opportunity to learn something I (he/she) will need later."
Behavior	"I don't really think about or track my child's attendance." "I miss a few days a month and go to the important classes."		"I'm going to track my (my child's) absences and do everything I can to ensure I/he/she does not miss school." "I'm going to try to best to make it to school every day, all day, because I don't want to miss anything, and I know MY MENTOR will ask me about it later."

How Families Can Help



Before School

- Set a regular routine for waking up and eating breakfast at home or at school.
- Try to leave the house at the same time every day.

After School

- Set a regular routine for completing homework.
- Ask questions about school and friends.
- Provide incentives for good attendance and talk about consequences for missing school.



Ongoing

- **Set a regular bedtime schedule.**
- **Prepare your child's school bag, lunch, and outfit for the next day.**
- **Set an alarm on your phone or alarm clock.**
- **Set consistent expectations about attendance, reinforce why attendance matters, and refuse to write a note for unacceptable reasons.**
- **Stay informed about school policies regarding start times and excused/unexcused absences.**



Ongoing

- **Provide a note for excused absences within five school days.**
- **Avoid planning vacations and appointments when school is in session.**
- **Only keep your child at home if they are truly sick – be mindful of minor symptoms that may signal anxiety.**
- **Help out a friend or neighbor**

Additional Roles & Entry Points



- **Familiarize yourself with key attendance facts – most importantly, *ask* about attendance!**
- **Build a relationship with the school attendance counselor or central office attendance team**
- **Ensure your child has a relationship with at least one caring adult at school**
- **Join the schoolwide attendance team**
- **Adopt attendance-supportive practices**
- **Help out a friend or neighbor**

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Conversation Starters

1. What are some common barriers to attendance and/or graduation?
2. What can parents and/or schools do to increase school attendance?
3. How can parents and schools work together to increase the high school graduation rate?

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Questions?