



every day counts

ATTEND TODAY -
ACHIEVE TOMORROW!

Resources and Tips for School and Afterschool Staff

Too many Oakland students are missing so much school that their academic futures are at risk. As a member of the school or afterschool staff, you have a unique opportunity to send the message to students and families that regular school attendance is critically important and to help build a culture of attendance at our school.

Key Messages for All School and Afterschool Staff to Convey

Parents need to understand why they should care. Start by spreading the message that...

- ✓ Children can suffer academically if they miss just 10% of school days. This is just a couple days every month and can happen before you know it.
- ✓ Absences add up! Both unexcused AND excused absences represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- ✓ Attendance matters as early as kindergarten. Children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years and often are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade.
- ✓ Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit early so they learn that going to school on time, every day, is important.
- ✓ Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.
- ✓ Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom, slowing down instruction. Getting to school late also disrupts class, and can lead to children missing important parts of the school day.

How and When Do I Get These Messages Across?

Ideas for Teachers

Teachers have a particularly important role in educating families about the importance of on-time attendance. Tips for reinforcing this message include:

- ✓ Welcome each student (and when possible, their parent) when they come into your classroom every morning. Notice when a child is absent and when they return, tell them you missed them and ask why they weren't at school.
- ✓ Make sure both students and families feel welcome and comfortable in your classroom. Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving attendance.
- ✓ Incorporate daily and/or weekly rituals that celebrate attendance and being a part of the class community every day.
- ✓ Implement incentives in your classroom that celebrate good and improved attendance.
- ✓ Discuss the importance of attendance at parent teacher conferences and give parents an update on how many days their child has been absent. Let parents know that if they need to be away for extended periods of time, they should let you know beforehand to make sure their child can keep up as much as possible.





Ideas for School and Afterschool Staff

But teachers aren't the only ones who play a key role in building a culture of attendance. Other school and afterschool staff can reinforce messages about attendance through their daily interactions with families and students. In particular you can:

- ✓ Take advantage of Back to School events. Distribute flyers, put up posters, and advertise incentives to get families thinking about attendance from the start of the year.
- ✓ Reinforce the messages and incentive programs that teachers are incorporating into their classrooms. For afterschool staff, consider setting up attendance incentives in your own program.
- ✓ Get the community involved. Help your principal by distributing the Community Partner Flyers included in the Every Day Counts Attendance Toolkit.

What Advice Can I Offer to Parents and Families?

In some cases, working one-on-one with families is necessary for helping them break down the barriers to their children's attendance. But there are also general tips you can offer them to help strengthen their children's attendance. Make use of the Parent Flyer from the Every Day Counts Attendance Toolkit and make suggestions like...

- ✓ Set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Put out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- ✓ For older children, help set homework routines. Stay on top of academic progress to make sure your child is staying on track and encourage meaningful afterschool activities that will help your child feel more engaged in school.
- ✓ Plan medical appointments and vacations when school is closed or not in session.
- ✓ If your child seems anxious about school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning. Keep in mind that complaints of a stomachache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and isn't a reason to keep your child home from school.
- ✓ Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- ✓ Turn to the school and community agencies if you need help! Oakland schools offer services for the whole family often in collaboration with community partners.

