

Attendance Buddies

Action Planning Worksheet

Version 1.0

1. Getting Started
2. Program Implementation
3. Assess Impact on Attendance

1. Getting Started

- a. Select your Attendance Buddies point person

Who is the best fit for this role at your school? This person (or if needed co-point persons) should be a member of the team implementing the PEOPLE strategy. The person will be responsible for supporting the Attendance Buddies strategy and be the point person for the Attendance Buddies at your school. They will also be responsible for making sure that the team is aware of pertinent issues either with the implementation of the strategy or crosscutting issues that have been identified as contributing to student absences.

- b. Obtain and review your data

The data ideally would include the list of chronically absent students from the prior year as well as the students who are showing signs of risk based upon their attendance in the first weeks of school (2 absences in 1st 2 weeks or month of school; 4 absences in first 2 months). The data can also reveal chronic absence broken down by grades, student sub- group (ethnicity, ELL, special education) and if possible by zip code. Attendance Works data tools to assist with this analysis can be found here: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-calculating-chronic-absence/>

- c. Determine which students you would want to target first to be Attendance Buddies

This would be based upon a combination of factors including need (high levels of chronic absence), potential for impact (during a transition period when reducing chronic absence could ensure students don't get off track in the first place), likely potential support from school staff or community partners who can serve as Attendance Buddies, or grade levels with higher rates of chronic absence.

d. Identify who might be willing to serve as an Attendance Buddy

Who will be asked to serve as volunteer Attendance Buddies? Will you use internal school staff or might there be a partner organization that could provide support to the Attendance Buddies strategy? Do you have an existing youth service program that can include a focus on attendance? Given the group of students you have identified as most in need of this strategy, which staff or school partners have the best relationships with this group of students?

2. Program Implementation

a. Share plan with school community

When will this introduction take place? How will you create buy-in among school staff for this project? Who will create a written description of the strategy? How will the written description be disseminated?

b. Recruit Attendance Buddies

How will you match target students to Attendance Buddies? (Consider which staff members have a good relationship with the student and/or their family.) How many at-risk students will you match to each buddy? How will you recruit the Attendance Buddies?

Who are you thinking of recruiting?

c. Identify school and community-based resources for addressing barriers to attendance

Where are opportunities for strategic partnerships? Who might have resources that the Attendance Buddies should be aware of so that they can help provide meaningful support to students and families? The goal of the Attendance Buddy is to change the absenteeism behavior, which may mean helping to connect students with others who can help solve problems.

If you have an afterschool program or other programs/services at your school run by partner organizations, how can you engage them in helping you support PEOPLE (e.g., could chronically absent students be strategically recruited for the after-school program? Could they help you spread the message about good attendance to the students and families that they serve?)

d. Provide professional development

Professional development could include an orientation about the role and responsibilities of being an Attendance Buddy, respecting confidentiality, referral processes, and available resources to address common attendance barriers in your school/community. It may also include periodic check-ins every month or additional opportunities to learn about new resources.

e. Assign students

Work with the team implementing the PEOPLE strategy to finalize the group of students who will be part of the Attendance Buddy strategy and their Attendance Buddy assignments. Distribute student information to Attendance Buddies including contact information for the student's family, rate of absenteeism, and any information that is known about contributing factors to absenteeism.

f. Create check-in and support meeting for Attendance Buddies

Include checking in with the Attendance Buddy lead as a regular agenda item for the team implementing the PEOPLE strategy. The team should be reviewing quantitative and qualitative data to determine the success of the Attendance Buddies strategy.

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3. Assess Impact on Attendance

a. Review data

Review attendance data at least monthly to determine whether the strategy is having an impact and to problem-solve if reductions are not occurring. Use your data, as well as insights from teachers, students, families and partners, to identify what seems to be working well, what is not so effective, and what could be done to improve its effectiveness.

b. Revise implementation plans based upon lessons learned from quantitative and qualitative assessment

Based upon analysis of Attendance Buddies data, determine whether certain students and families need a different set of interventions and what, if any, changes need to be made to the Attendance Buddy strategy. If gains are not being achieved, what will you do differently?

c. Celebrate success!

Date, location, & time:

How will you recognize everyone involved? (the students, parents, partners, Attendance Buddies, the whole school community, and anyone who helped implement the strategy)

How will you use this celebratory event to further the campaign to make attendance a shared school community priority? How will you leverage this event to plan for the following school year, and what else can be done to improve chronic absence?

NOTE: Attendance Works welcomes your feedback about how you have used this tool and how it might be improved. Please email cecelia@attendanceworks.org with any reactions or suggestions since we are always interested in improving the resources we make available.

ⁱ Modeled on the National Center for Community Schools' Success Mentors Worksheet