



**A.T.T.E.N.D.S.**

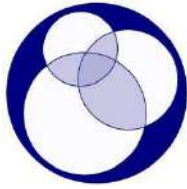
Absenteeism and Truancy Training to Engage, Nurture, and Develop Success



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## **The A.T.T.E.N.D.S. curriculum is a collaborative product of:**



### NFI Massachusetts

For over four decades, NFI Massachusetts has successfully helped thousands of youth, families and adults with diverse needs to make positive changes in their lives, to achieve personal goals, and experience the full promise of life in their communities. NFI's broad range of mental health, addictions, child welfare, juvenile justice, educational, and rehabilitative programs include home-based services, supported living, residential treatment, outpatient services, foster care, and community based programs. Working in close partnership with those we serve, our programs are supported by an experienced, highly committed, interdisciplinary staff comprised of clinicians, case managers, counselors, nurses, teachers, administrators, and medical/psychiatric professionals who employ a highly collaborative team approach to providing treatment.



### Lowell Public Schools

The Lowell Public Schools (LPS) is one of the largest districts in Massachusetts, currently enrolling more than 14,150 students in grades PreK-12. LPS has a dedicated school community committed to serving students and families. It's within the LPS vision to inspire and engage learners to discover and develop their talents by promoting critical thinking and creativity; ultimately empowering learners to become contributing members of their community. LPS fosters the limitless potential of all teachers and learners and maintains a culture that is welcoming, respectful, safe, and healthy. These values are demonstrated through investing in the professional development of all educators and building strong collaborative partnerships with families and the community. Lowell Public Schools strives to encompass equity and transparency in all actions and interactions. The Lowell Public School



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System provides an inspiring, engaging and empowering education by creating the “Pillars of Urban Excellence” to support and drive its vision.

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## ***Preface***

*In the 2014-2015 school year alone, 16.9 percent of Lowell Public School District students had missed over 18 days of school. This means that over 2,300 students were chronically absent. A growing body of research suggests that the implications of chronic absenteeism can be detrimental to the lifelong health and success of students and our community as a whole.*

*A.T.T.E.N.D.S. (Absenteeism and Truancy Training to Engage, Nurture, and Develop Success) is a curriculum developed with the collaboration of the Lowell Public School District and the NFI Family Resource Center of Greater Lowell in response to the need to eliminate unnecessary chronic absences of students in the Lowell Public School District. The A.T.T.E.N.D.S. curriculum manual provides the instructor with clear, step-by-step guidance in carrying out each training module in a timely manner, taking into consideration the learning capacities of parents, guardians and caregivers.*

*The goal of A.T.T.E.N.D.S. is to increase school attendance of students by providing parents, guardians and caregivers of students struggling with chronic absences the opportunity to engage in 3 educational modules. These modules are aimed at increasing participant knowledge about chronic absences and the impacts of absences on lifelong health and success. It is also aimed at empowering participants to manage barriers to school attendance by enhancing their knowledge of community resources and how to utilize these community resources as a tool to increase their child's attendance and likelihood of lifelong success.*

*A special thank you to Adam Murray, School Liaison, NFI Family Resource Center of Greater Lowell; Rachel Pronovost, Program Director, NFI Family Resource Center of Greater Lowell; Heather Ganley, Attendance Supervisor, Lowell Public Schools; Rosa Segarra-Morales, Attendance Monitor, Lowell Public Schools for collaborating on the development of the A.T.T.E.N.D.S. curriculum.*







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# Curriculum Overview

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## **Module 1: Attendance Matters**

This module focuses on the concepts, root causes, and long term effects of chronic absenteeism. It attempts to reveal the extreme importance of regular school attendance and how that impacts a student's success. The ultimate goal is that participants will understand the significant impact that missing school has on their student's educational journey.

## **Module 2: Health and Wellness**

This module focuses on health and wellness as it relates to school attendance. It attempts to engage participants in discussing absenteeism because of illness. This module also focuses on the concept of school refusal and how to address this issue. The goal of this module is that participants will better be able to determine when to encourage their student to attend school or when to keep them home.

## **Module 3: Pathways to Success**

This module focuses on pathways to success and overcoming barriers as it relates to school attendance. It attempts to engage participants in the process of setting achievable goals, overcoming certain obstacles, and making a plan for success. The goal of this module is to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge to set goals and achieve them.



# Program Guidelines

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## Who should participate?

Any parent, guardian, or caregiver who is responsible for a student that struggles with regular school attendance.

## Structure

The A.T.T.E.N.D.S. curriculum is divided into three separate modules: Attendance Matters, Health and Wellness, and Pathways to Success. Each module is designed to be a separate entity from the rest. The goal is that each module can be offered at different times so participants can complete one module at a time at their own pace. Ideally, each module will be offered once per week and run consecutively for 3 weeks. Then, the cycle would repeat. Participants do not need to begin with Module 1, they can start the curriculum in any module.

## Time Management

Every module is scheduled to last 120 minutes. For each section of the module, there will be a grey box with a set amount of time that it should take to complete that section. In order to complete all the sections of the module it is suggested to keep to this time schedule.

## Ground Rules

Before every module begins it is important to go over the ground rules for the group. There is a list of ground rules for each group or you can create your own.





Normally, groups would create their own ground rules together, but because new participants may be joining each week, this is not feasible.

## Program Guidelines

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### Facilitator Instructions

- The curriculum is meant to be a step-by-step guide for facilitators to effectively relay important information that engages participants around the issues of their student's success in school.
- Every module will include detailed instructions on how to implement the curriculum. The format of each module remains consistent with the other modules and will include the same components.
- The majority of the curriculum is focused on activity based learning and group discussion. This curriculum is not a “stand in front and lecture” type of curriculum. It is meant to actively engage it's participants in learning.
- There is a PowerPoint presentation that is part of the instructional tools for this curriculum. Whenever there is a  symbol, there is a corresponding PowerPoint slide to aid the facilitator in relaying the information. If you do not have access to a computer or ability to use PowerPoint, the information will need to be given verbally, or written out by the facilitator.
- There is a curriculum key on the following page that gives the facilitator a visual cue for their instructions. Pay close attention to the  symbol, as this will have important information for the facilitator.
- Each of the activities is meant to help participants learn about various topics. Feel free to use your own activities in place of the activities in the curriculum.



- Most of all, remember to treat all participants with respect. Each of them have a unique story, and a unique perspective. Focus on their strengths as parents, caregivers, and guardians instead of the weaknesses.
- Last, but certainly not least, have fun!

## Curriculum Key

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Use Flip Chart



Group Discussion



Ask Question



Supplies Needed



Important Note to Facilitator



Give Additional Handouts





Reference PowerPoint



Key Points to Relay


## Module 1:

# Attendance Matters

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## Objectives

- Participants will understand the concepts of chronic absenteeism.
- Participants will explore some of the root causes of absenteeism.
- Participants will engage in activities that demonstrate the importance of regular school attendance.
- Participants will evaluate their child's / children's attendance.
- Participants will discuss the long term effects of chronic absenteeism.


**Important Facilitator Note: You may use your discretion on whether or not to share the objectives with the participants.**  
 **Keep in mind that English may not be every participant's first**



**language. You can skip this section all together and review at the end, or state a simpler version to the group.**

## **Preparation and Supplies**

Supplies Needed:


- 
- Flip Chart
  - Markers
  - Tape
  - Computer and projection for PowerPoint
  - Candy – preferably small in size and with 5 different colors

## **Introductions**


5 Min.

Facilitator Instructions: It is important to have each person in the room introduce themselves. You can use the format below, or come up with your own.

Facilitator(s) introduction:

- 
- ✓ Your name and job title
  - ✓ Any relevant experience
  - ✓ Strategic self-disclosure (Example – Sharing with the group that you may have a child that is school-aged.)
  - ✓ Anything else that is appropriate to share

Participant introduction:

- 
- ✓ Their name
  - ✓ Children



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- o Name(s)
- o Age(s)
- o School(s) they attend
- ✓ Any other relevant information



**Important Facilitator Note: DO NOT ask or require that parents disclose who referred them for the program to the entire group. Many parents may not feel comfortable disclosing that they are involved with The Department of Children and Families, the court system, or other agency.**

## General Housekeeping

2 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: It is important to provide the following information to participants:

- In case of an emergency, where the emergency exits are and a location outside the building where the group is to meet
- Where the restrooms are located
- Any expectations around food and beverages
- Where the participants may congregate during breaks
- For participants who smoke, where that can take place



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- Any other pertinent information that needs to be relayed to the group about the site location, safety protocols, etc.

## Ground Rules

3 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: Before each group begins ground rules should be established. Ground rules are at the discretion of the facilitator and what they feel is necessary for the group to be successful.



Write the ground rules for the group on a flip chart.

Examples of ground rules may include:

- Cell phones – turned off or on vibrate
- Be respectful
- No alcohol or drug use
- Confidentiality
- No interrupting
- No side conversations
- Be on time
- No offensive language
- No judgements
- Use a “parking lot” for questions, comments, ideas that are not in line with the modules focus for the week

## Activity #1 – Ice Breaker

15 Min.

### “Candy Confessions”



Facilitator Instructions : Place a type of candy in a bowl that has 5 different colors. (Starburst, M&M’s, or Skittles, etc.). Instruct each member of the group to choose between 1 and 5 different pieces of candy – do not eat them yet! After all members of the group have selected their candy inform the group of the activity.



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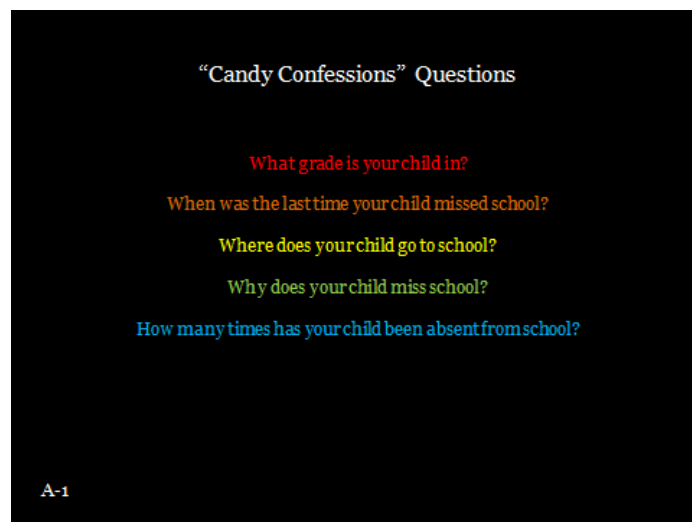
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*“We are now going to do an activity called Candy Confessions. For each candy you chose, please answer the question that corresponds to that color.”*

Reveal to the group 5 predetermined questions displayed on a flip chart (or slide A-1 on PowerPoint presentation). You can make your own questions or use the list below. It is important, however, to structure the questions related to family, school, and attendance issues.

Example – A participant chose 3 candies colored red, orange, and blue. They need to answer the red question, orange question, and blue question to the group.



After the activity is completed briefly summarize some of the main points of what was discussed and transition to the next section.



*“Thank you everyone for sharing. We are now going to talk about what exactly chronic absenteeism is and why attendance really does matter.”*

## **Activity #2 – Chronic Absenteeism**


**5 Min.**

### **“Attendance Record Roundup”**



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-  Facilitator Instructions: Take pieces of paper and write each of the following students' attendance records on them. Tape the 5 pieces of paper to different areas in the room. Read each one out loud to the group.

Bobby Absent 2-3 days per month	Jose 21 Unexcused Absences	Naya 19 days due to chronic illness	Amari 10 % of the school year	Suzy 12 unexcused and 8 excused
---------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Then instruct the members of the group to *silently* get up and go stand underneath the paper of the student that they think has the most concerning attendance record and would be flagged for Chronic Absenteeism. Allow 10-15 seconds to make a decision. Ask participants why they chose which student.

Processing the activity:

On a separate large piece of paper (or PowerPoint slide labeled A-2) reveal to the group the total number of days for each student being absent from school.



Bobby = 27 days absent  
Jose = 21 days absent  
Suzy = 20 days absent  
Naya = 19 days absent  
Amari = 18 days absent

(Bobby – there are approximately 9 months in the school year, 3 days per month = 27 days)

(Amari – there are 180 days in the school year. 10% = 18 days)



**Explain to the group that although Bobby may have the most number of absences, all of these students have issues with Chronic Absenteeism. Any student whose absences exceed 10% of the school year, or 18 days, is Chronically Absent.**

## Lesson # 1 – Defining Terms

25 Min.

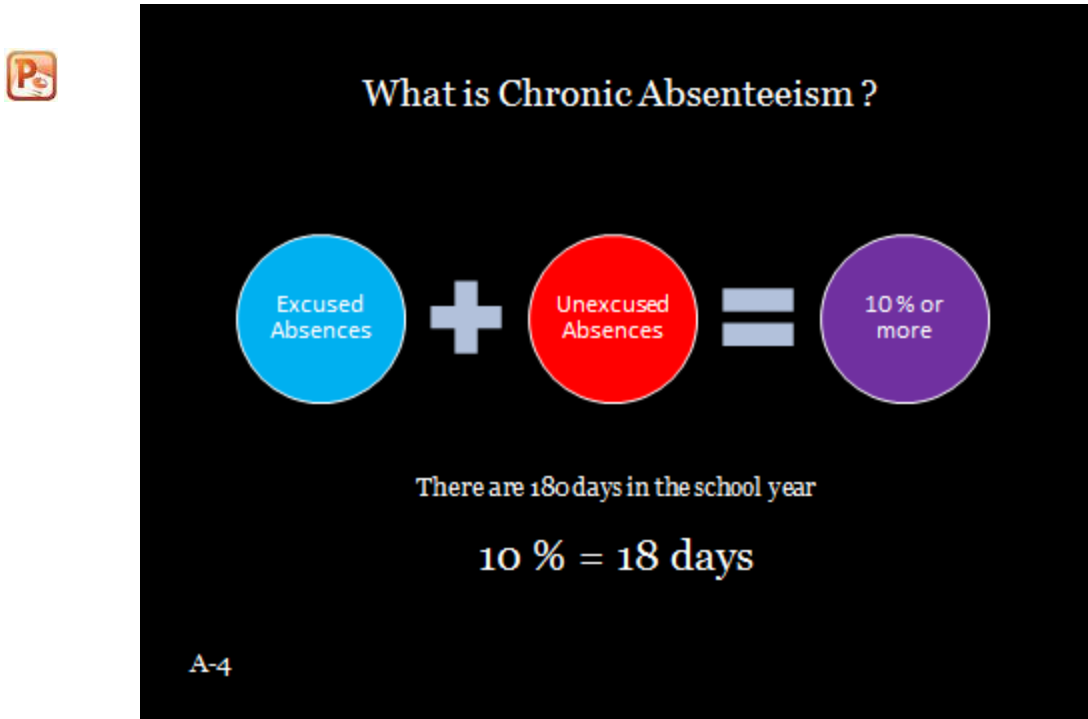


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- Facilitator Instructions: Refer to PowerPoint presentation labeled A-3 to A-9.
- ① Review the slides. Discuss the definitions of terms and concepts related to Chronic Absenteeism and why attendance matters with the group.

### Slide A-3 What is Chronic Absenteeism ?



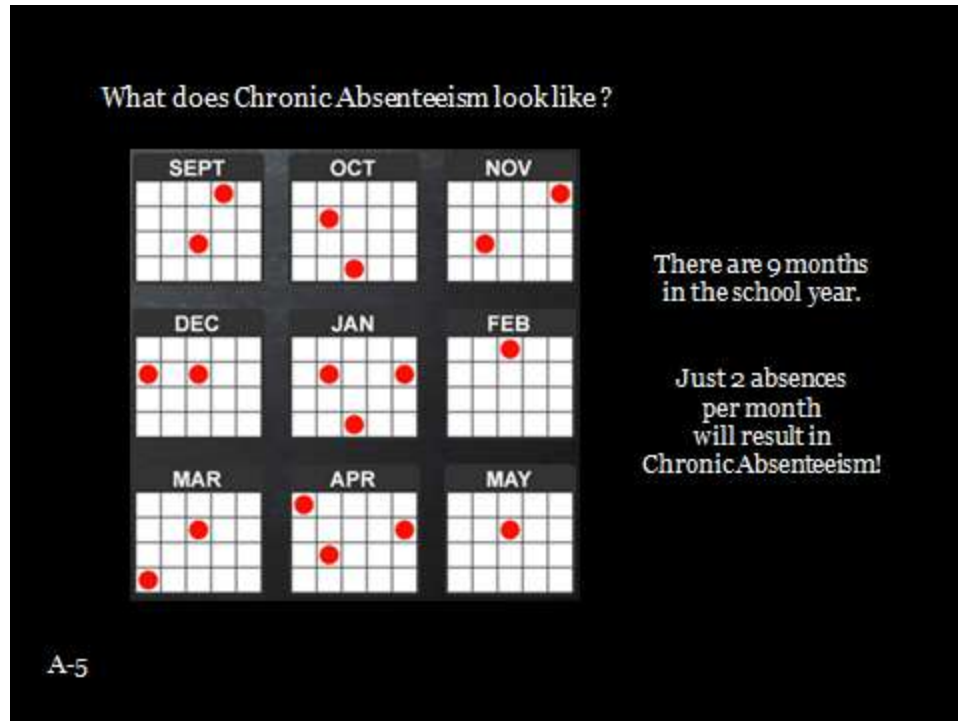
- ① This slide is meant to define chronic absenteeism as missing 10% or more of the school year. Unlike truancy, which only counts unexcused absences, chronic absenteeism counts all absences – excused and unexcused.

There are 180 days in the average school year. Missing 18 days or more in the school year categorizes a student as being chronically absent.

 **It is important to relay that just because a student does not reach the threshold of being chronically absent that they do not have attendance issues. ANY time out of school is detrimental to the success of the student.**



#### Slide A-4 What does Chronic Absenteeism look like ?



- ① This slide is meant to provide an illustration of how easy it is to miss 10% of the school year. Just a few days a month adds up quickly and by the end of the year the student has missed 18+ days of school.



**It is important to point out again that chronic absenteeism includes ALL absences, no matter the reason or if they were excused.**

**It is also important to point out that this calendar only goes until May. Many years students go to school until the end of June.**

#### **Additional Handout and Optional Activity:**



If there is enough time and the class is moving along hand out a blank copy of a school calendar (found on page \_\_\_\_ ) and ask participants to mark their student's absences on the calendar. Another option would be to send

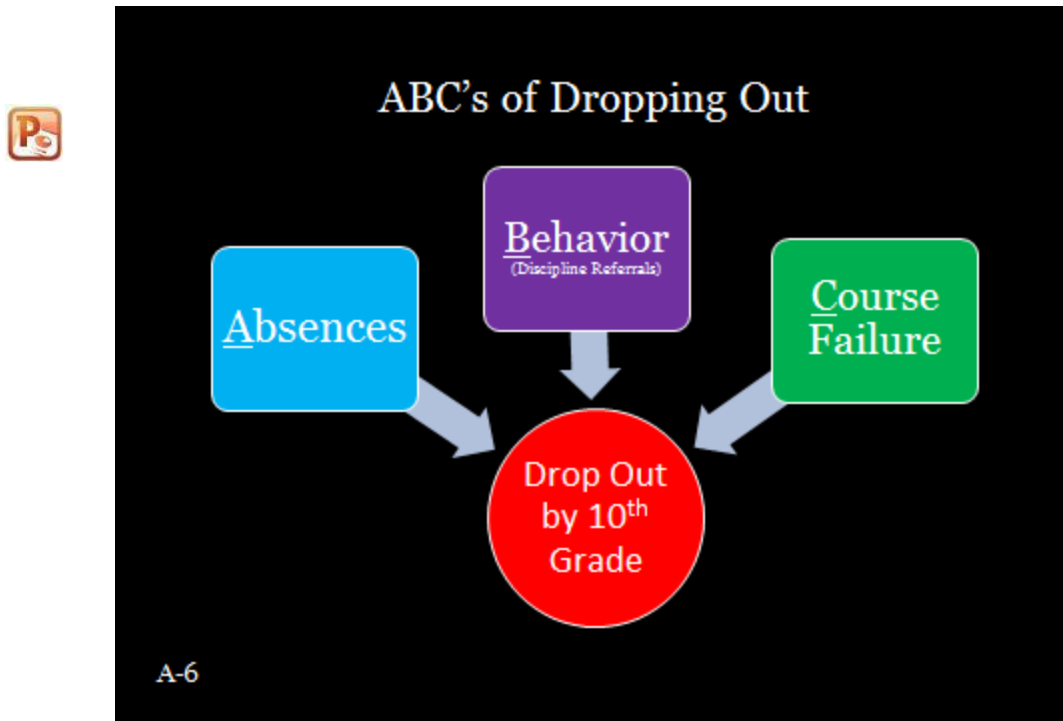


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it home and tell participants to track their student's attendance throughout the year to have a visual reminder of absences.

### Slide A-5 The ABC's of Dropping Out



**i** This slide explains the ABC's of dropping out. The three main contributing factors to a student dropping out of high school are Absences, Behavioral issues, and Course failure.

The reason that 10<sup>th</sup> grade is such a significant year:

**⚠ This information is specific to Lowell Public Schools. Use your own districts information here to explain high school drop-out rates.**

1. Most students turn 16 their sophomore year in high school and can legally withdraw from school.
2. Many students do not earn credit in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade because of absences. High school is the first time you can fail a class and receive no credit solely because of absences. It does not matter how the student does academically. If a student misses more than 4 days (unexcused absences) in a quarter / 8 in a semester, they do not receive credit for



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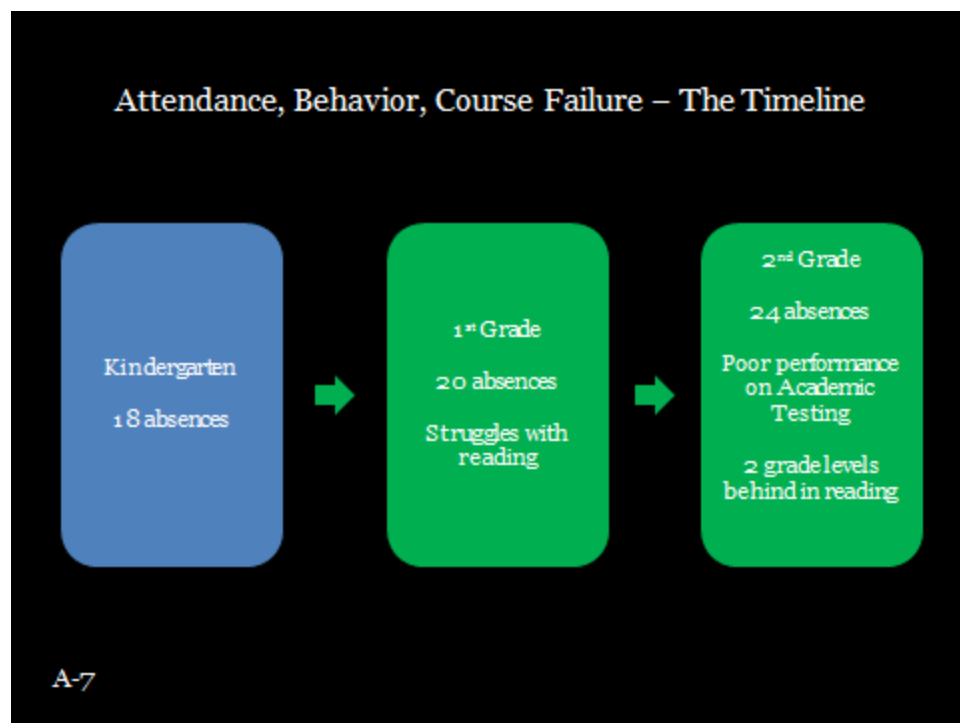
the class, regardless of their grades. Because of this, something occurs called the 9<sup>th</sup> grade bottleneck. Many student who are supposed to be sophomores, do not have enough credit and fall behind. High school is not necessarily about what year the student is in. It is about how much academic credit the student has earned. A student needs 90 credits of core classes to graduate from Lowell High School.

## Attendance, Behavior, Course failure – The Timeline

- Facilitator Instructions: The next 4 slides are a case example of a student who
- ① attended Lowell Public Schools. It attempts to demonstrate a student's educational journey which eventually led to dropping out. Go through the timeline with participants and then hold a group discussion after the slides.

It is separated by color according to Kindergarten, Elementary School, Middle School and High School.

### Slide A-6 Attendance, Behavior, Course failure – The Timeline

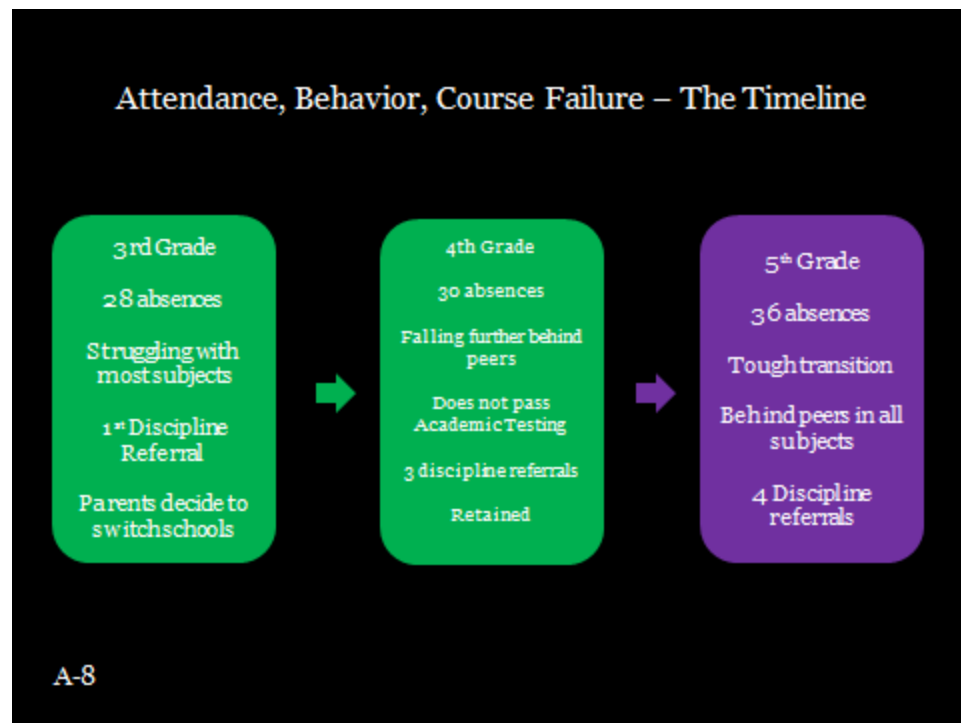


**K** This slide begins with the student in Kindergarten. The child misses 18 days of school, but otherwise has no major issues.

**1** The student then goes to first grade. Has 20 absences that year, and people begin to notice that the student is struggling with reading.

**2** The student then goes to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. 24 absences. Does not do well on academic testing. Is now 2 full grade levels behind their peers with reading.

### Slide A-7 Attendance, Behavior, Course failure – The Timeline



**3** The student is now in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade with 28 absences that year. The student begins to struggle in all aspects of school. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade the student has their first behavioral issue in school. The parents began to think that this was not the right school for their child so they changed schools ¾ of the way through the year.

**4** The student continues at the same school through the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but absences remain at 30. The student is falling behind in most academic subjects. Does not pass academic testing. Has more behavioral issues and



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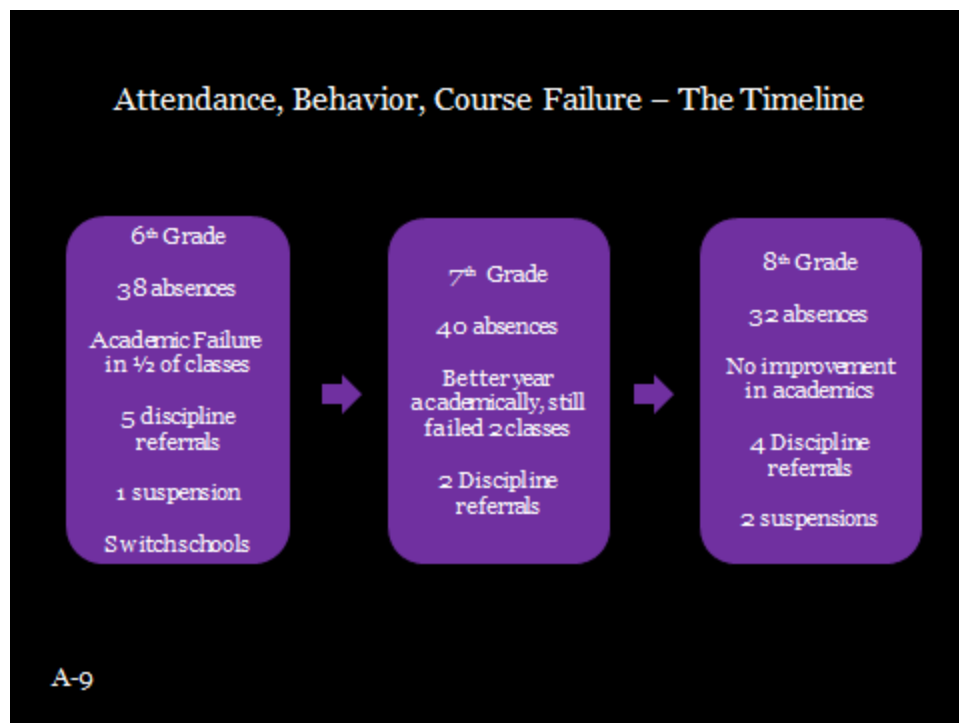
the disciplinary referrals increase. The student is retained in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade because the school does not believe the student is ready for middle school.

(4<sup>th</sup> grade is repeated with similar results, however student passed academic testing)

5

The transition is now made to middle school, where the student continued with their issues with absenteeism racking up 36 absences. The transition was very tough to middle school. The student was well behind their peers in all academic subjects and began to struggle socially as well. There was an increase again with the number of disciplinary referrals.

### Slide A-8 Attendance, Behavior, Course failure – The Timeline



6

The student is now in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and accumulated 38 absences. They failed 1/2 of their classes and received more disciplinary referrals than they have received in the past. This is the first time the student was suspended. The parents again feel that the placement is not right for their child so they switch schools during the summer so their child can have a fresh start in the fall.

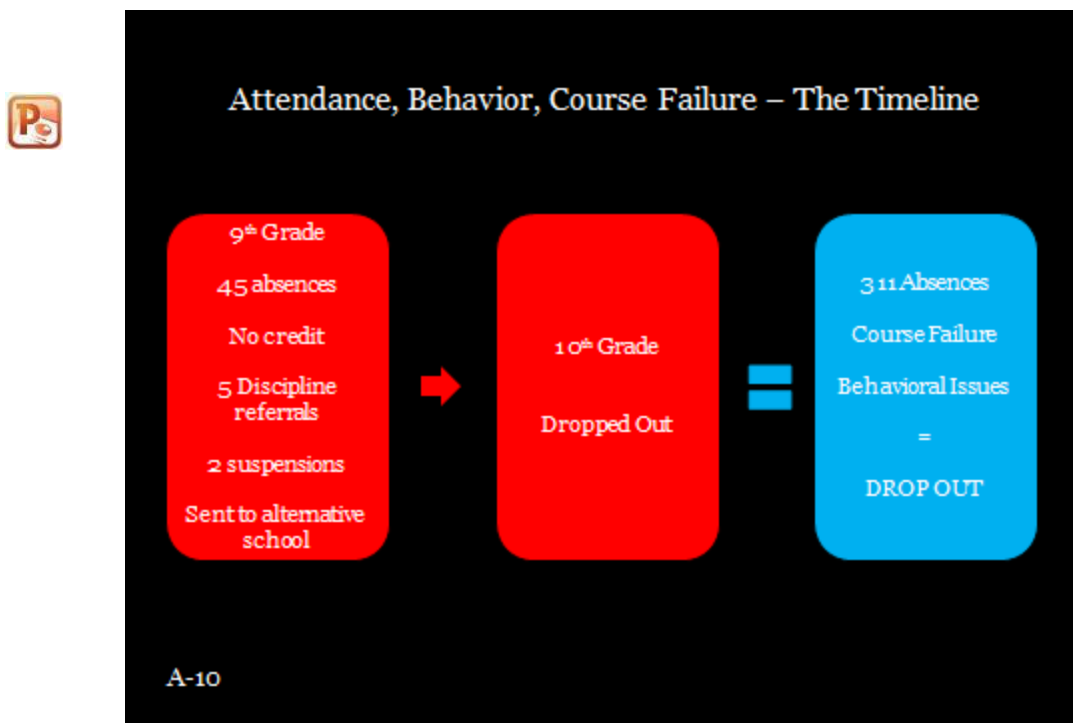


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- During the seventh grade there seemed to be some improvement. There were only 2 disciplinary referrals for minor incidents. The student and parents found a social worker and principle who really connected with the student. They performed better in most classes, but still failed Math and Science. For some reason however, the student still had 40 absences.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade – the student’s attendance improved slightly, but still had 32 absences. There was no academic improvement and several disciplinary referrals. The behaviors seem to increase in severity and the student was suspended from school twice.

## Slide A-9 Attendance, Behavior, Course failure – The Timeline



- 9<sup>th</sup> Grade – student’s absences reach an all-time high of 45. Because of the absences the student receives no academic credit. (It is important to point out again that students will not receive credit, regardless of what their grades are, if they are absent more than 4 days per quarter – again this is



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specific to Lowell Public Schools. Use your own district information here). The student's behavior becomes unmanageable in a traditional school environment with 5 disciplinary referrals and 2 suspensions. The student is sent to an alternative school.

**D** 10<sup>th</sup> grade – the student turns 16 years old during the summer and drops out of school.

**T** Totals – over the course of 10 years the student missed 311 days of school. They experienced course failure fairly early on and displayed behavioral issues beginning in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## Group Discussion # 1

10 Min.

### Attendance, Behavior, Course Failure



Facilitate a group discussion about the previous student timeline. Keep in mind the key points below and use the listed questions to help lead the discussion (you do not have to ask all of the questions, they are there in case the group discussion needs some direction).



**It is important to remember the ground rules that were discussed in the beginning of the module. Keep in mind that many parents will be defensive and hold the attitude that “this does not relate to my child” or “my child will never drop out of school”. In addition, many students do not have behavioral issues or experience academic failure. Try to focus on the following key points.**

### Key points to relay:



- A student does not have to experience behavioral issues or course failure. Attendance alone can affect their academic progress.



- Past behavior predicts future behavior. If a child has issues with Chronic Absenteeism early in their education then they will most likely have problems later in their education. Not going to school is a learned behavior and becomes much more difficult to change as the student gets older.
- It is true that not every student that has attendance issues drops out of school. However, students that have attendance issues have a MUCH lower chance of graduating from high school. Students with Chronic Absenteeism have only a 40% chance of graduating from High School.\*

*\* Statistic retrieved and used with permission from Attendance Works*

### **Questions to help lead the discussion:**

- What do you think about this student's education timeline?
- How would you feel if this was your child?
- What can you do to not let this happen to your student?
- ❓ ➤ When could someone have intervened with this student to get the best possible outcome?
- Does this student's timeline look like your own students' educational path? What is the same? What is different?
- Where did things go wrong for this student?



## Break Time

10 Min.

Allow participants to take a 10 minute break.


Remind them of the following:


- Where the bathrooms are located
- Where to smoke
- If there is any food or beverages available
- Specific time to return
- Any other instructions you have for the group

## Activity # 3: The Effects of Chronic Absenteeism

15 Min.

### “Washing the Elephant”

Facilitator Instructions: Ask for two participants to volunteer for the  activity. Instruct one participant (Person A) to leave the room, specifically so they cannot hear what is being said in the room. Once Person A leaves the room, inform the rest of the participants about the activity:

 *“We are now going to do an activity called Washing the Elephant. I am going to teach (Person B) how to wash an imaginary elephant.”*




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Proceed to physically show (Person B) how to wash an imaginary elephant.

- ① Prepare an imaginary bucket of water with soap and sponge. Wring out the sponge. Begin washing the imaginary elephant. Wash the feet, the body, the ears, and the trunk. All the while saying out loud what you are doing.

 *“Now, when (Person A) returns to the room, I would like (Person B) to repeat what we just did and “wash the elephant”. However, (Person B) is not allowed to use any words. They can only use motions.”*

- Have (Person A) return to the room and sit back down with the rest of the
- ① participants. Instruct (Person B) to proceed with showing the “class” what we just learned how to do. (Person B) will now show the rest of the class how to “wash an elephant”, but without saying anything.

After (Person B) is finished acting out “washing the elephant” ask (Person A) to repeat what (Person B) just did, but explain to the class what they are doing.

 (Person A), now please repeat the actions of (Person B) and explain to the class what you are doing.

Processing the activity:

After a few minutes of (Person A) not being able to replicate washing an elephant, fill them in on what has been going on.



Conclude with a group discussion about the activity. This is meant to be a metaphor for being present or being absent in the classroom and how information is received.



Use the following questions to lead the discussion (if needed):

- What was the difference between (Person A) and (Person B)?
- How do absences effect how a student learns?
- What happens to information when you do not get it from its original source / first-hand?

Key Points:



- When a student misses school, they miss a ton of important information and fall further and further behind the rest of their class
- Even if a student is allowed to make up work, they are still missing the first-hand instruction.

For example – in this metaphor if (Person A) was told by the teacher, “we just learned how to wash an imaginary elephant. Please show the class how to wash an elephant. Get a bucket with soap and water. Wash the feet, body, ears, and trunk”. The student would be able to get by, but probably do it much differently than the rest of the class. The student may wash the top of the feet instead of the bottom, in the ears instead of around the ears, etc.

*This Exercise was developed for use as part of a parent workshop series by the Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network, reprinted with permission.*

## Activity # 4 : Illustrating the Gap

15 Min.


Facilitator instructions: Ask for three volunteers from the group. Have them stand side by side, with ample room behind them and in front of them. Explain to the group that these three volunteers will represent





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students that are entering the school system in Preschool. This activity is meant to illustrate a gap in learning when students do not regularly attend school. There are PowerPoint slides to aid with this visual but it is not necessary to use them.


 *All three students are the same age. There are no differences with the academic ability of each student.*


 *(Person A) please take 8 steps back. You did not attend a preschool program.*


 *(Person B) please take 4 steps back. You attended a preschool program, but did not complete the program because of poor attendance.*

 *(Person C) please stay where you are. You attended a preschool program for the whole year.*

Ask all 3 volunteers to take 8 steps forward because each student attended a kindergarten program.

 *(Person A) please take 4 steps back. You did not attend any summer programming and were chronically absent for the year affecting your learning.*


 *(Person B) please take 2 steps back. You attended summer programming, but still had issues with chronic absenteeism throughout the year.*


 *(Person C) please stay where you are. You attended a summer program and had regular attendance for the year.*


Ask all three volunteers to take 8 steps forward for attending 1<sup>st</sup> grade.






 *(Person A) please take 4 steps back. You did not attend a summer program and lost some reading skills. You were also chronically absent for the year.*


 *(Person B) please take 2 steps back. You attended a summer program to keep up with your reading, but were chronically absent for the year.*

 *(Person C) please stay where you are. You attended a summer program to enhance your reading skills, and had regular attendance for the whole year.*

Ask all three volunteers to take 8 steps forward to represent what they learned in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

 *(Person A) please take 6 steps back. Your reading skills have severely suffered because of lack of attendance and loss of skills over the summer.*

 *(Person B) please take 4 steps back for issues with chronic absenteeism.*

 *(Person C) please stay where you are. You had regular attendance and kept up with your reading over the summer.*


*The above activity is used with permission from Attendance Works*



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Processing the activity:

 Conclude the activity with a group discussion. This activity is meant to illustrate what happens when there is any gap in learning for students.

Whether that is over the summer months, or being absent for one day. Any gap in learning is detrimental to a student's success.

- What do you think would happen if we kept going with this activity?
- Where would each student be in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, high school?
- What could have been done to close the gap?

### **Additional Handout:**



Give participants the “Why it Matters” hand out (on page 85) and discuss the effects of chronic absenteeism on grade level reading skills.



## Wrap up and Final Discussion

15 Min.

**i** Facilitator Instructions: Take the remaining time to wrap up any main points, continue any pertinent discussion, and answer any questions from participants.

Possible questions to ask the participants when wrapping up:

- Are there any questions you have about what was discussed today?
- Who here has a better understanding of chronic absenteeism and how it affects your student's success in school?
- ?** ➤ Can everyone tell me about something new they learned today?
- Who here is committed to helping their student improve their attendance in school?
- What are you going to do differently after thinking about the information you learned today?



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## Module 2:


# Health and Wellness

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## Objectives

- Participants will discuss the concepts of health and wellness as it relates to their student's success in school.
- Participants will engage in activities related to health issues and attending school.
- Participants will understand the differences between school truancy and school anxiety and how to address these issues.
- Participants will explore how to circumvent school refusal and improve their student's school attendance.

**Important Facilitator Note: You may use your discretion on whether or not to share the objectives with the participants.**

 **Keep in mind that English may not be every participant's first language. You can skip this section all together and review at the end, or state a simpler version to the group.**

## Preparation and Supplies

Supplies Needed:



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- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Tape
- Computer and projection for PowerPoint
- Flashcards

## Introductions

5 Min.

- ① Facilitator Instructions: It is important to have each person in the room introduce themselves. You can use the format below, or come up with your own.

Facilitator(s) introduction:



- ✓ Your name and job title
- ✓ Any relevant experience
- ✓ Strategic self-disclosure (Example – Sharing with the group that you may have a child that is school-aged.)
- ✓ Anything else that is appropriate to share

Participant introduction:



- ✓ Their name
- ✓ Children
  - Name(s)
  - Age(s)
  - School(s) they attend
- ✓ Any other relevant information



**Important Facilitator Note: DO NOT ask or require that parents disclose who referred them for the program to the entire group. Many parents may not feel comfortable disclosing that they are involved with The Department of Children and Families, the court system, or other agency.**




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## General Housekeeping


2 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: It is important to provide the following information to participants:

- In case of an emergency, where the emergency exits are and a location outside the building where the group is to meet
- Where the restrooms are located
- Any expectations around food and beverages
- Where the participants may be during breaks
- For participants who smoke, where that can take place
- Any other pertinent information that needs to be relayed to the group about the site location, safety protocols, etc.

## Ground Rules

3 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: Before each group begins ground rules should be established. Ground rules are at the discretion of the facilitator and what they feel is necessary for the group to be successful.



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Write the ground rules for the group on a flip chart.

Examples of ground rules may include:


- Cell phones – turned off or on vibrate
- Be respectful
- No alcohol or drug use
- Confidentiality
- No interrupting
- No side conversations
- Be on time
- No offensive language
- No judgements
- Use a “parking lot” for questions, comments, ideas that are not in line with the modules focus for the week

## Activity #5 – Icebreaker

15 Min.

### “Strange Disease Diagnoses”

- Facilitator Instructions: Each participant will come up to the front of the group and have to act out a “strange illness”. These illnesses will not be real. It is up to
- ① the rest of the group to be the “doctors” and figure out what disease the patient has. They are allowed to ask questions about the patient’s symptoms, but the patient can only answer with “yes or no”. The rest of the time they need to act out their symptoms to give clues to the doctors.

 *“We are going to do an activity called Strange Disease Diagnoses. Each of you will have a turn to act out the symptoms of a strange disease for the group. These diseases are not real, so use your imagination. The rest of the group will be the doctors. You may ask questions to the patient, but they can only answer with yes or no. I will go first to give you an example”*

- Have the following strange diseases written on flashcards to show the
- ① participants. You can use this list or create your own. Pick one out for you to do as your example.



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**Important Facilitator Note: Keep in mind that participant's reading levels may vary, so you might have to verbally tell them their strange illness.**

- You think you're a chicken
- A frog is stuck in your throat
- You have a monkey on your back
- You have ants in your pants
- Your foot has grown 10 sizes
- You can only speak like a baby
- Everyone you see looks like an alien
- You must swim everywhere, even when there is no water
- You think you are a famous singer

After all participants have had a turn, summarize the following key point:



- Sometimes children will have symptoms that you are not sure if you should send your child to school or not. It is recommended to consult with a school nurse, administrator, or pediatrician when keeping your children home from school.

## Activity #6 – Health and Wellness

25 Min.

### Take a Stand: “Stay or Go”

Facilitator Instructions: “Stay or Go” is an activity that is meant to help participants determine when to keep their student home or when to send their


- ① student to school when they are “sick”. Have all the participants stand on a “line” in the middle of the room (you can use a real line created with tape, string, or just create an imaginary line). You will read a statement to the group about symptoms that their student is experiencing. They must “take a stand” on one side of the line or the other – should they send their child to school or keep them home. Allow each person a few seconds to make a decision.

*We are now going to do an activity called “Stay or Go”. Please stand on this line in the center of the room. I am going to read a statement to the group and it is up to you to determine if your child should go to school or stay home from school. If you think your child should go to school, please stand on this side of the line (point in a direction either left or right). If*






*you think your child should stay home from school, please stand on this side of the line (point in the opposite direction).*

Facilitator Instructions: After you read each of the symptoms below, pause and  process each one with the group. Everyone will have a difference of opinion, but this is an opportunity for parents to learn whether or not they should be sending their children to school.

If they should send their child to school, it will be highlighted in **GREEN**. If they should keep their child home it will be highlighted in **RED**. Statements that would need more discussion and could go either way depending on circumstances are highlighted in **YELLOW**. Explanations for each will be listed below the symptoms.

Each symptom will have a corresponding PowerPoint slide (Slides B-1 to B-26)  that uses a stoplight. It will turn **RED** if the student should stay home from school, **YELLOW** if there needs to be more discussion around the circumstances, and **GREEN** if the student should be sent to school.

 **The following examples and outcomes are according to the policies of Lowell Public Schools. Your school district may be different so be sure to adjust accordingly.**

***Your child has a sore throat and runny nose.***



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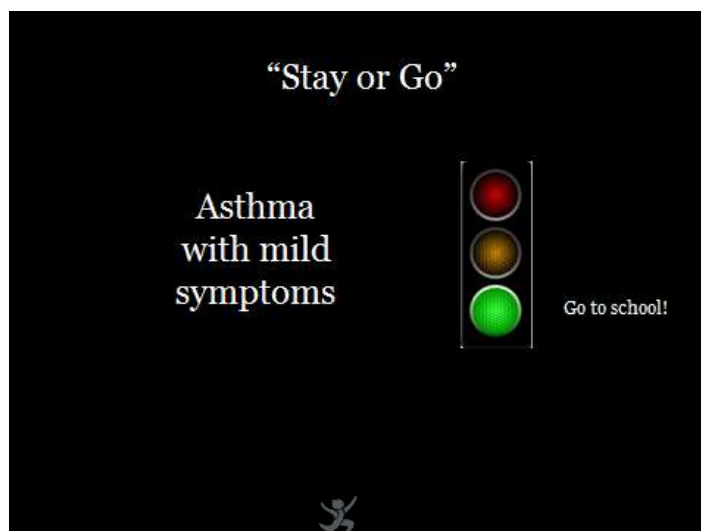
Unless it is strep, confirmed by a medical professional, your child should go to school. Contact the nurse to check on your child's symptoms.

*Your child has a high fever and coughing.*



Your child should not go to school if they have a fever of 101 or higher. Keep them home until the fever has gone below 101 without the use of fever reducing medicine for 24 hours.

*Your child has asthma and is experiencing some mild symptoms.*



Follow your child's Asthma Action Plan and send them to school.  
For severe asthma, keep your child home and contact your health care provider.

*Your child has a stomach ache and feels like they might throw up.*



Stomach ache without vomiting – send your child to school.

*Your child has diarrhea and vomited last night before bed.*



Absent

Diarrhea and vomiting (2 or more times) within the last 24 hours is reason to keep your child home from school.

*Your child was up all night with a headache and is extremely tired.*



Send your child to school and contact the nurse to let them know your child may be more tired than usual.

*Your child has some menstrual cramping and not feeling well.*



Unless they are very severe in which a medical provider should be contacted, send them to school.

*Your child has an ear infection and a headache.*



Seek treatment for the ear infection and then send to school.

*Your child has head lice*



Absent

Send your child to school after an initial shampoo treatment.

**Additional handout:**




Give participants handout on Lowell Public School's head lice policy. Discuss the policy with participants (or your own district policy) regarding head lice during this slide.

*Your child has a cough, runny nose, and headache.*



**"Stay or Go"**

Cough  
Runny Nose  
Headache



Go to school!

B-10

Unless the symptoms are severe enough to seek medical attention send them to school. Accompanied by a fever, keep them home.

*Your child says, "I'm REALLY sick".*



Absen

**"Stay or Go"**



Says, "I'm  
REALLY sick"



Go to school!

Unless your child has a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea (or other condition that it is permissible to keep them home) send them to school. Consult with school personnel to let them know your child is not feeling well.

*Your child is sad about the death of their goldfish*



Send them to school. Traumatizing events can be difficult to handle, but send them to school and seek professional help in the community if necessary.

*Your child is very anxious about a math test and has a bad stomach ache.*




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“Stay or Go”

Anxious about test  
Stomach ache



Go to school!

B-13


Send them to school. Work with the school and community supports to help alleviate your child’s anxiety symptoms.

*Your child is too depressed to get out of bed.*



“Stay or Go”

Too depressed



Maybe?

B-14

Work with the school and community supports if your child is experiencing symptoms of depression. Send them to school.



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*Your child is afraid of being bullied.*



“Stay or Go”

Afraid of being  
bullied

Go to school!

B-15

Report any bullying / potential bullying to school personnel and send them to school. Seek help from mental health professionals and community providers.

*Your child is upset and has made statements about hurting themselves.*



“Stay or Go”

Very Upset  
Made statements of  
wanting to hurt self

Stay Home

B-16

Take any reports of self-harm seriously and consult with mental health professionals. Work with the school and community supports to get your child back in school.



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*Your child is hyperventilating and crying uncontrollably because they don't want to go to school.*



“Stay or Go”

Hyperventilating  
Crying

Go to school!

B-17

Do your best to calm your child, and bring them to school. Work with school personnel, community supports, and mental health providers to figure out why your child does not want to go to school.

*Your child has a doctor's appointment.*



“Stay or Go”

Doctor's  
Appointment

Go to school!

B-18

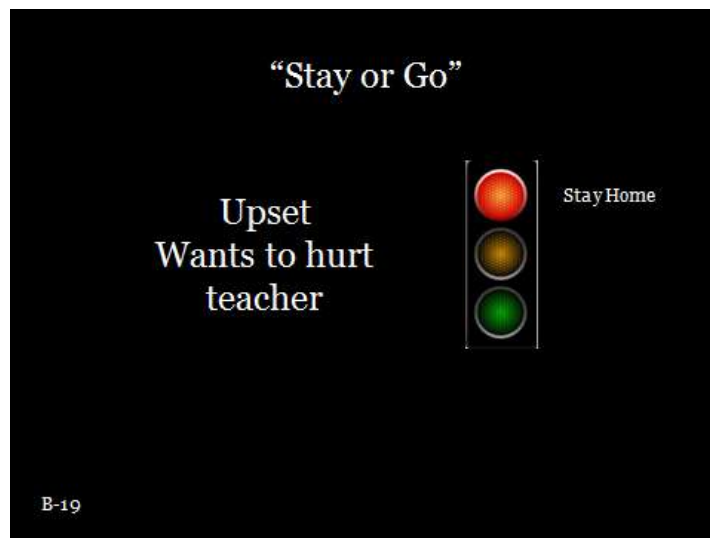


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If possible, doctor's appointments should be scheduled outside of school hours. If not, attempt to schedule the appointment in the early morning, or late afternoon. Your child should not miss a whole day of school for a doctor's appointment unless they are sick.

*Your child is upset with a teacher and made statements about wanting to hurt them.*



Any statement about wanting to hurt others should be taken seriously. Consult with mental health professionals and work with school personnel to get your child back in school.

*Your child refuses to shower, brush their teeth, or get ready for school.*



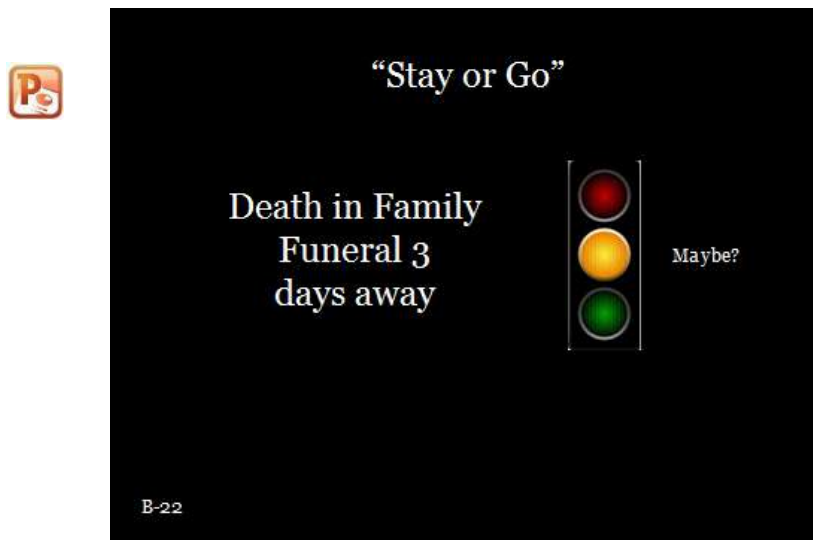
Unless this is a frequent occurrence, send your child to school. If this happens frequently or for consecutive days, it may be a mental health concern that should be looked into.

*Your child just refuses to go to school.*



Do your best to get your child to school. If this becomes a consistent issue, seek assistance from the school, community supports, or the court system.

*You had a death in the family and the funeral is in 3 days.*



Depending on the significance of the death, your child should be in school. Have further discussion with the group about this sensitive topic. Work with school personnel and mental health professionals to determine the appropriate length of bereavement time out of school.

 **Keep in mind different cultural sensitivities for grieving.**

*Your child vomited multiple times yesterday, but is feeling fine today.*



**“Stay or Go”**

Vomited yesterday  
Feels ok today



Maybe?

B-23

It depends on the last time and why your child vomited. If it was within 24 hours, consult with school personnel if you should send them to school or not. Follow district guidelines.

*Your child has a sprained ankle and is feeling discomfort.*



**“Stay or Go”**

Sprained Ankle  
Feeling Discomfort



Go to school!



B-24

Abse

Seek medical treatment and then send them to school.

*You are too sick to walk your child to school / put them on the bus.*



Send them to school. Try and build a support system that can help.

*Your other child/children are sick.*



Abse

Send them to school. It is difficult to manage many children at once, especially if one of them is sick. However, all children that are healthy should be in school.

#### Processing the activity:



Conclude the activity with a group discussion. There are many circumstances where the participant may be unsure when / if to keep their child home, or send them to school. Also, ask the participants if there are any other circumstances that they would like to talk about. Be careful not to monopolize too much time talking about individual situations. The ultimate take away here is that children should be in school as much as possible and only stay home when they are truly ill.

Use the following questions to help lead the discussion (if needed):

- Was there ever a time you were unsure if you should keep your child home from school or not?
- How often is your child sick?
- Do you always contact the school when your child stays home?
- Do you know who to contact at your child's school when you are keeping them home?



- Are there any specific circumstances you would like to discuss that we have not covered?



**Important Facilitator Note: Remind participants that documentation from medical providers is always best practice when keeping their student out of school.**

## Additional Handout

5 Min.

H.E.A.L. – Health, Education, Attendance for Life



Give the participants the handout. Go through the information and ask if there are any questions. Lowell Public Schools has clear guidelines on whether or not a parent should send their child to school, but it is impossible to cover every scenario. When the parent or caregiver is unsure, they should contact the school nurse or administrators.

**Handout can be found on page**



**Important Facilitator Note: The policies on the H.E.A.L. Handout are used by Lowell Public Schools. Policies from your school district may be different so plan accordingly or use your own handout.**



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## Break Time

10 Min.

Allow participants to take a 10 minute break.

Remind them of the following:

- Where the bathrooms are located
- Where to smoke
- If there is any food or beverages available
- Specific time to return
- Any other instructions you have for the group

## Lesson # 2 – School Refusal and Anxiety

40 Min.

- ① Facilitator Instructions: Refer to slides labeled B - 27 to B - 33. Review the slides.  
Discuss the definition of terms and concepts related to school refusal and anxiety.

### Slide B – 27

### School Refusal – Anxiety vs Truancy



#### School Refusal - Anxiety vs Truancy

##### School Anxiety

Child feels emotional  
distress about going to  
school

VS

##### School Truancy

Missing school  
without a legitimate  
reason



This slide is meant to define School Refusal. It explains the differences between school anxiety and truancy. School anxiety is when a child feels emotional distress about going to school. School truancy is when a child intentionally misses school of their own free will and without a legitimate reason (sickness, excused absence, etc).

 **Important Facilitator Note: Many students are not diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. This does not mean that students do not display symptoms of school anxiety.**

Slide B – 28

School Refusal



## School Refusal

Step One : Identify the Problem

Step Two : Understand the Problem

Step Three : Make a Plan

Step Four : Take Action

Step Five: Evaluate Progress



B-28

- ① This slide is the introductory slide for a step by step guide on how parents and caregivers can deal with School Refusal.

Review the Steps which will be broken down in the next 5 slides.

## Slide B - 29

## Identify the Problem



Identify the Problem

Is your child  
missing school?



The first step in School Refusal is to identify if a student has an issue.



Group Discussion: Facilitate a group discussion on school refusal and brainstorm with the group about what behaviors they see in their children.

Use the following prompts in the discussion:

- What does your child say or do when they don't want to go to school?
- ❓ ➤ Are there certain days of the week (after a long weekend), when your child has more difficulty getting to school?
- Are there certain triggers that might make your child not want to go to school? (bullying, social situations, academic work, problems with teachers or staff, etc)

Slide B - 30

Understand the Problem



Understand the Problem

3 A's of Refusal


Avoiding



Attention

Activities

The second step in school refusal is to understand the problem.

 This slide is meant to categorize a student's behavior and reason for refusing to go to school. There may be other categories of behavior, but the main three categories include Avoiding, Attention, and Activities.

**Avoiding:** Avoiding school can happen for several reasons. The student could be avoiding school because of school anxiety, social anxiety, phobias, bullying, social pressures, or academic evaluation (tests, school work, homework), etc.

**Attention:** Many students will pursue the attention of important people in their lives or their parents. They may demonstrate separation anxiety, worry about their parents' well-being, or have a hard time interacting with other adults besides their parent/guardian.

**Activities:** Many students will want to not attend school to participate in more rewarding activities. This could include spending time with their parent, doing things they like to do, watching TV, playing video games, etc.

## Slide B - 31

### Make a Plan




Make a Plan


Who?

What?

When?

Why?

 This slide is meant to help participants make a plan for what to do about their child's school refusal.

 **Group Discussion:** Facilitate a brief group discussion to solicit possible answers for the Who? What? When? Where? How?

**Who:** The people involved with the child's education that can assist with implementation of the plan. This should include any caregivers, family supports, community supports, and school personnel (principal, social worker, teacher, nurse, etc.)

**What:** The plan itself. The actions and interventions that are going to take place to help the student attend school regularly.

**When:** When the plan will take place. Time of day, on the weekends, etc.

**Where:** Locations where the plan will take place. At home, school and in the community.

**How:** How the plan will be implemented. This will be covered in the next sections "Take Action"

**Slide B - 32**

**Take Action**



**Take Action**

**A - Attitude**

**C - Change**

**T - Treatment**

 This slide is meant to help participants figure out how to implement a plan to reduce their child's instances with school refusal.

- Attitude: The first step in taking action is changing peoples' attitudes towards a student's school refusal. Encouraging the student to attend school regularly and making their education a high priority will be a big help. Making statements that acknowledge the students hardship, but still encouraging school attendance is vital. "I know this is uncomfortable, and I'm so sorry you are having a hard time with this. But, I know you can do it and it will get better every day."
- Change: Changes in your child's behavior will not happen without changes in your own behavior. This also refers to changing the home environment. Parents need to "demagnetize" the home by making it a "boring" place to be when the child stays home. There should be no video games, TV, or activities that child enjoys. School should be the more "fun" place and where the student wants to be during the school day.



- Treatment: Seek professional help for a child suffering from severe emotional distress and refusing to attend school. It is also important for participants and their families to seek mental health treatment, and other forms of treatment, to help themselves and their families be successful.



**Important Facilitator Note: It would be helpful to have a list of service providers in the area that can assist with meeting mental health needs.**

- Incentive: Reward positive decision making and behavior around school attendance. For many students, school is difficult. Incentives can be a great reward for doing things that we don't like doing. It does not have to be monetary or tangible. It can be an activity, extra time playing video games or watching tv, etc.
- Other people: Don't do it alone! Reach out to others for help and build a collaborative relationship with the student's school and members of the community. Surround yourself with a support system to work towards the ultimate goal of regular school attendance. If your child is struggling academically, reach out to the teacher. If your child is struggling behaviorally, reach out to the principle or a mental health provider. If your child is refusing to go to school, reach out to the school and community providers for support. There is help around every corner!
- No!: Learn how to say no in a healthy way. Regain some parental control and send your child to school. Say yes when it's appropriate, but say no when it is time to set a limit. Parents, caregivers, and guardians are responsible for getting their student to school.








## Evaluate Progress

Check in with your CHILD

Check in with the SCHOOL

Check in with YOURSELF

-  This slide is the last step in breaking the cycle of school refusal.

Constantly “checking in” with your child, the school, and yourself to see how the plan is working. Allow time for behavior change to take place. If after a certain period of time, things are not working, then make the appropriate changes to the plan. However, allow enough time for the change to take place.

Open and honest communication with all parties involved in the best way to make sure that your child’s needs are being met and the plan is working.

### Group Discussion:




Facilitate a group discussion on ways that participants can “check in” with their student, the school, and themselves.




## Wrap up and Final Discussion

15 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: Take the remaining time to wrap up any main points, continue any pertinent discussion, and answer any questions from participants.

Possible questions to ask the participants when wrapping up:

- Are there any questions you have about what was discussed today?
- Who here has a better understanding of chronic absenteeism and how it affects your child's success in school?
-  ➤ Can everyone tell me about something new they learned today?
- Who here is committed to helping their child improve their attendance in school?
- What are you going to do differently after thinking about the information you learned today?



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Absenteeism and Truancy Training to Engage, Nurture, and Develop Success

## Module 3:


# Pathways to Success

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## Objectives

- Participants will discuss common fears, worries, and concerns regarding their student and their family.
- Participants will explore ways to overcoming barriers and obstacles.
- Participants will engage in activities to develop the skills necessary to deal with obstacles and barriers.
- Participants will understand pathways to success for their student.

**Important Facilitator Note: You may use your discretion on whether or not to share the objectives with the participants.**

 **Keep in mind that English may not be every participant's first language. You can skip this section all together and review at the end, or state a simpler version to the group.**

## Preparation and Supplies

Supplies Needed:

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Tape
- Computer and projection for PowerPoint



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- Materials for Small Group Activity #2 – Team Building. See activity on page 75 & 76 for list of supplies (Make sure to have enough materials for multiple small groups).
- Measuring tape or yard stick
- Timer

## Introductions

5 Min.

Facilitator Instructions: It is important to have each person in the room introduce themselves. You can use the format below, or come up with your own.

Facilitator(s) introduction:



- ✓ Your name and job title
- ✓ Any relevant experience
- ✓ Strategic self-disclosure (Example – Sharing with the group that you may have a child that is school-aged.)
- ✓ Anything else that is appropriate to share

Participant introduction:



- ✓ Their name
- ✓ Children
  - o Name(s)
  - o Age(s)
  - o School(s) they attend
- ✓ Any other relevant information



**Important Facilitator Note: DO NOT ask or require that parents disclose who referred them for the program to the entire group. Many parents may not feel comfortable disclosing that they are involved with The Department of Children and Families, the court system, or other agency.**




A.T.T.E.N.D.S.

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## General Housekeeping


2 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: It is important to provide the following information to participants:

- In case of an emergency, where the emergency exits are and a location outside the building where the group is to meet
- Where the restrooms are located
- Any expectations around food and beverages
- Where the participants may congregate during breaks
- For participants who smoke, where that can take place
- Any other pertinent information that needs to be relayed to the group about the site location, safety protocols, etc.

## Ground Rules

3 Min.

 Facilitator Instructions: Before each group begins ground rules should be established. Ground rules are at the discretion of the facilitator and what they feel is necessary for the group to be successful.



Write the ground rules for the group on a flip chart.



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Examples of ground rules may include:

- Cell phones – turned off or on vibrate
- Be respectful
- No alcohol or drug use
- Confidentiality
- No interrupting
- No side conversations
- Be on time
- No offensive language
- No judgements
- Use a “parking lot” for questions, comments, ideas that are not in line with the modules focus for the week

## Activity #7 – Icebreaker

10 Min.

### “The Worry Hat”

-  Facilitator Instructions: The Worry Hat is an ice breaker that is meant to begin the discussion about what fears, worries or concerns that participants have in their lives. Each participant will write one fear, worry, or concern on pieces of paper. All the papers will be collected and placed in a hat. The facilitator will then read the papers aloud. You can ask participants to either stand or raise their hand if they have the same fear, worry, or concern. This is meant to be anonymous so participants do not have to share if they were the one who wrote the fear, worry, or concern. The point of this exercise is that participants will be able to see who has the same fears, worries, or concerns that they do and that they are not alone. The first step in tackling these issues is to acknowledge them.




*“We are now going to play a game called The Worry Hat. I would like you to write down one worry, one fear, and one concern on a piece of paper and place them in the hat. When everyone is finished I will read them out loud to the group anonymously and*



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*ask you to stand (or raise your hand) if you also have the same fear, worry, or concern.”*


**Important facilitator note:** It will be helpful to share a few  examples with the group as many people will not feel comfortable relaying their fears, worries, or concerns.

**Keep in mind the writing ability of the participants.**

**It is also important to selectively choose which statements should be read aloud to the group. Some may not be appropriate and some may be triggering for other members of the group. Use discretion.**

## **Lesson #3 – Steps to Overcoming Barriers**

40 Min.

 **Facilitator Instructions:** Cover the following steps to overcoming barriers with the participants by reviewing slides C 34 to C 44.

### **Slide C-34 Overcoming Barriers**



## **Overcoming Barriers**

**Step One : Identify the Problem**

**Step Two : Build Your Team**

**Step Three : Set Goals**

**Step Four : Take Action**

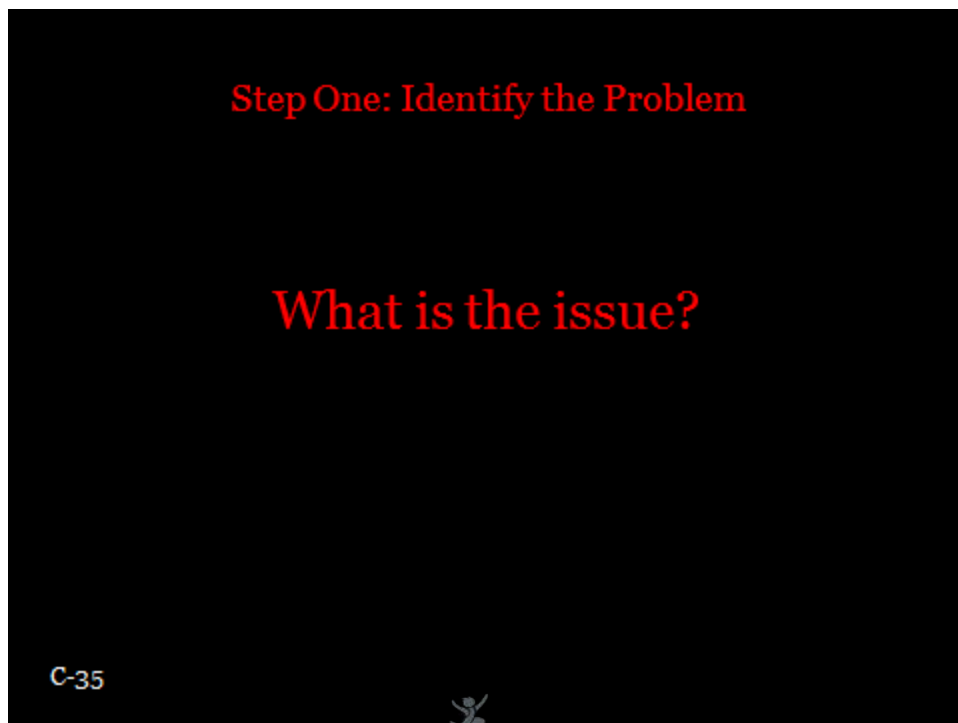
**Step Five: Evaluate Progress**



- ① This slide is the introductory slide for a step by step guide on how parents and caregivers can deal with Overcoming Barriers.

Review the Steps which will be broken down in the next 5 slides.

### Slide C-35 Step One: Identify the Problem






The first step in overcoming barriers is to understand the problem.

- ① This slide asks the question: What is the issue? It is important to identify what the REAL issue is.

For example – The identified issue may be that a student has trouble waking up in the morning. Is the REAL problem about sleeping patterns, a medical issue, morning or nighttime routines, etc? Knowing what the real issue is will help to identify the real problem and continue with the next steps.

### **Group Discussion – Barriers**

 Facilitator Instructions: Hold a group discussion about what barriers could possibly affect a student attending school. This could be anything that the participants feel would affect a student's attendance whether it is caused by the student, parent, school, community, weather, etc. Solicit responses from participants in a brainstorm style session and record all of them on a flip chart.


Continue with the remaining steps to overcoming barriers.

### **Slide C-36 Step Two: Build Your Team**



**Step Two: Build Your Team**

**Who is there to help?**



C-36

The second step in overcoming barriers is to build your team.

This slide asks the question: who is there to help?

### **Group Discussion – Who is there to help?**



Facilitator Instructions: Hold a group discussion about what types of people could possibly be there to help. It is important to relay to the participants that they do not have to overcome barriers on their own. Work together as a group to come up with a comprehensive list of people that could be there to support the participant – both within their own circle (family & friends), but also members of the community (school personnel, community providers). Record all of the “helpers” on a flip chart.

Continue with the rest of the steps to overcoming barriers.

### **Slide C-37 Step Three: Set Goals**



#### **Step Three: Set Goals**

#### **Be SMART!**

Specific


Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Timed

The third step in overcoming barriers is to set goals.

 This slide invites participants to Be SMART! SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timed. It is a commonly known acronym for setting goals that are achievable.

- Specific – The more specific a goal is, the easier it is to achieve. Having too broad of a goal can be difficult to manage and measure outcomes. It can be overwhelming, frustrating, and many people give up.

For example – Setting a goal to lose weight. This is way too broad and needs to be narrowed down. Setting a goal to go to the gym three days per week is better, but still not specific. Setting a goal to go to the gym on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday every week for two hours each day, is a specific goal.

- Measurable – Make sure that the goal that has been set can be measured, or in other words it can be achieved.

For example – Setting a goal to be a better person is somewhat difficult to measure. Setting a goal to volunteer at a homeless shelter for 1 hour per week is measurable.



- Attainable – Make sure that the goal is attainable. Can you reach the goal? Setting goals that are unattainable will only lead to failure and disappointment. Goals should be challenging, not unattainable.

For example – Setting a goal to solve world hunger is unattainable. Setting a goal to give money or volunteer time to an organization that helps solve the problem of world hunger is attainable.

- Relevant – Make sure that the goal is relevant. The goal should be directly related to the barrier. It should directly try to solve whatever the problem may be.

For example – If the problem is not being able to find affordable housing and the goal is to buy new furniture – the two don't really match up and the goal does not solve the problem.

- Timed – Make sure the goal is timed – meaning it has a start and end period. Goals can not be measured if they do not have an end.

For example – Setting a goal to be on time to everything for the rest of your life, is not timed. Setting a goal to be on time to all of your appointments for the month of April is timed. It has a beginning and an end.

*The use of SMART as an acronym was original published in the November 1981 issue of Management Review by George T. Doran.*

*Doran, George T. "What Is a Smart Goal ?". Acronym Smart Goals. Management Review*

## **SMART or Not?**



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- ① Facilitator Instruction: Show slides C-38 to C-42 and ask the participants: is this goal SMART or Not? If the answer is Not – ask the participants why the goal is not SMART? What part of SMART is missing? How can we make this goal SMART? Continue through each slide until they have answered all of them correctly.



**Is this goal SMART?**

**Problem : Not enough food in the house**

**Goal : By next Tuesday, I will enroll in SNAP, sign up for a nutrition workshop, and create a monthly budget.**

**C-38**

- ① Facilitator Instructions: The above goal is SMART.





 Facilitator Instructions: The above goal is Not SMART.

- ✓ Specific – Yes, the goal is specific. Making chicken soup every time their child is home sick is very specific.
- ✓ Measurable – The goal is measurable, although it is difficult. Having a goal that includes the words “every time” is difficult to measure.
- ✗ Attainable – This goal is not attainable. It is impossible to make chicken soup EVERY time their child is home sick. Some of the time would be attainable.
- ✗ Relevant – It is not relevant. Eating chicken soup may only make them feel better, it does not solve the problem of missing school due to illness.



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- ✗ Timed – The goal is not timed. It has no beginning and no end.



## Is this goal SMART?

**Problem : No reliable transportation**

**Goal : Find rides from my friends who are willing to help me out.**

C-40

① Facilitator Instructions: The above goal is Not SMART.

- ✗ Specific – The goal is not specific. Which friends would be helping?  
The goal is too vague.
- ✓ Measurable – This goal is measurable. Either you get a ride or you don't.
- ✗ Attainable – This goal is not attainable. What if no friends are available? Too many parameters involved.
- ✓ Relevant – This goal is relevant. It would solve the issue of no transportation.
- ✗ Timed – This goal is not timed.



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## Is this goal SMART?

**Problem : Student has school anxiety and is refusing to go to school**

**Goal : Get them a therapist**

C-41

① Facilitator Instructions: The above goal is Not SMART.

- ✗ Specific – It is specific, but not enough. Who is the therapist? What agency are you working with?
- ✓ Measurable – The goal is measurable. Either you get a therapist or not.
- ✓ Attainable – The goal is attainable.
- ✓ Relevant – the goal may or may not be relevant depending on the circumstances.
- ✗ Timed – the goal is not timed.



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## Is this goal SMART?

Problem : Students progress report says  
“needs improvement” in Math

Goal : Tomorrow, I will call my students  
teacher to ask what 3 things my student can  
improve upon. I will also schedule a  
meeting 2 weeks from tomorrow to make  
sure there is progress.

C-42

① Facilitator Instructions: The above goal is SMART.



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 Facilitator Instructions: Continue with the steps for overcoming barriers.

#### **Slide C-43 Step Four: Evaluate Progress**



### Step Four: Evaluate Progress

Did you reach your goal?

What is working?

What is not working?

Why?

C-43

The fourth step to overcoming barriers is to evaluate progress.



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This slide is meant to demonstrate reflection on whether or not the actions that are being taken to solve the problem are working or not. Relay to participants that if something isn't working it doesn't make sense to continue with the status quo. Go through the questions that participants can ask themselves to evaluate progress. Continue with the next step to overcoming barriers.

**Slide C-44 Step Five:**



**Step Five: Make Changes**

**Change what is not working and  
set a new goal**

**C-44**

The final step to overcoming barriers is to make changes.



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This slide is meant to demonstrate the final step in overcoming barriers. When something isn't working it is necessary to make changes and set a new goal. Relay to participants that this step is not necessary if during step four it is determined that the current course of action is effective and does not require any changes.

## Break Time

10 Min.

Allow participants to take a 10 minute break.


Remind them of the following:

- Where the bathrooms are located
- Where to smoke
- If there is any food or beverages available
- Specific time to return
- Any other instructions you have for the group

## Activity #8 – Solutions to Barriers

20 Min.

**i** Facilitator Instructions: After all five steps of Overcoming Barriers has been explained, instruct participants to break up into small groups (If there are not enough participants this can be done in one large group). Go back to the list of barriers that was created in Group Discussion #1. Assign each of the groups 1-2 barriers that is on the list and ask them to work together as group to work through all of the steps to overcoming barriers.

 Remind them of each of the steps (you may want to write them on a flip chart or return to slide C-34 for visual cues for participants:

- Step One: Identify the Problem

This step has already been taken care of by assigning the groups a barrier, but ask them if the barrier needs to be clarified or be more specific.

- Step Two: Build Your Team



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Instruct the participants to identify at least three people who would be able to help.

➤ Step Three: Set Goals – Be SMART!

Instruct the participants to set at least one SMART goal.

➤ Step Four: Evaluate Progress

Instruct the participants to hypothetically evaluate progress and find one thing that is not working.

➤ Step Five: Make Changes


Instruct the participants to make any necessary changes and develop a new SMART goal.

① Facilitator Instructions: Give the groups about 10 minutes to complete the steps for overcoming barriers for a few different examples and have each smaller group report back to the larger group. Give any necessary constructive feedback.

## Activity #9 – Team “Building”


15 Min.


① Facilitator Instructions: Ask the group to split up into teams of two or three. If it is a smaller group (under 4 people) have them work together as one team. Give each team a bag containing the following items, but ask them not to open it until you tell them to do so:


- 1 balloon
- 3 paper clips
-  - 1 plastic cup
- 1 pencil
- A ball of yarn




- 1 popsicle stick


 Facilitator Instructions: After every team has a bag, explain the rules.


 *We are now going to play a game called Team “Building”. Each team has 3 minutes to take the ingredients from the bag and build a structure that is 3 feet high, or taller, and **can stand on its own**. After the three minutes are up I will measure the structure(s) to see if you completed the task.*


 Facilitator Instructions: Ask the participants if there are any questions. Then begin the timer. During the first part of this activity do not make any comments on the structures or what the participants are doing. Just keep the time.

 **Important Facilitator Note: The first part of this game is meant to be very difficult to complete. Most teams will not be able to build a structure within the time allotted and with the materials provided.**

 Facilitator Instructions: After the three minutes are up process with the group:


-  - Was that difficult? Why?
- What could make it easier?

 Facilitator Instructions: For the second part of this activity give participants an additional bag with the following items:


- 2 more balloons
- 3 more paperclips
- 2 more plastic cups
-  - 2 more pencils
- 2 more popsicle sticks
- Tape




- Scissors

 **Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct the participants that we are going to do the same activity again. They can build upon their current structure or start a completely new one. They can use the materials they already have plus the additional materials in the bag. They will have 2 minutes to “plan” with the whole team before they start building. No building should take place in this time period. After the planning stage is over they will have an additional 5 minutes to build their structure.

*We are going to play this game again. This time you may use the additional materials I gave you plus the materials you already have. You may add on to the structure you currently have or build a completely new one. You may take all of your items out of the bag, and you will have 2 minutes to plan with your team. No building should take place during the planning phase. After the two minutes are up you will have an additional 5 minutes to build your structure.*

 **Facilitator Instructions:** If there are no questions, start the clock for the planning phase, and then the building phase. During this part of the activity give positive reinforcement to the participants about their teamwork, communication, structures, etc. Really provide an environment of “You CAN do this!” Measure the structure(s) when the time is over.

 **Processing the activity:** Hold a group discussion at the end of the activity to discuss what the point of this activity was.

Questions that could be asked:

- What was easier the second time?
- Did planning and being able to see the materials help?



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- How did you work together as a team?
- How does this relate to overcoming barriers?
- Did positive reinforcement make a difference?

**Key Points:**



- Planning and having the right resources are essential components to overcoming any barrier.
- Working together and building a team leads to greater chances of success!

## **Wrap up and Final Discussion**

**15 Min.**



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- ① Facilitator Instructions: Take the remaining time to wrap up any main points, continue any pertinent discussion, and answer any questions from participants.

Possible questions to ask the participants when wrapping up:

- Are there any questions you have about what was discussed today?
- Who here has a better understanding of chronic absenteeism and how it affects your child's success in school?
- ② ➤ Can everyone tell me about something new they learned today?
- Who here is committed to helping their child improve their attendance in school?
- What are you going to do differently after thinking about the information you learned today?



# School Attendance 2017 - 2018

September					October					November				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31				27	28	29	30	
December					January					February				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
				1	1	2	3	4	5				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	19	20	21	22	23
25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31			26	27	28		
March					April					May				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	9	10	11	12	13	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	20	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	26	27	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	30					28	29	30		



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## Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

### Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?<sup>3</sup>



of kids with good attendance in K and 1st  
(missed 9 or fewer days both years)



of kids with at-risk attendance  
(missed more than 9 days both years)



of kids chronically absent in K or 1st  
(missed 18 or more days one year)



of kids chronically absent in K and 1st  
(missed 18 or more days both years)

<sup>3</sup> *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes*, Applied Survey Research. May 2011.



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