MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Attendance Toolkit

2025-26

EXPECT GREAT THINGS!

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"Every Day Counts"
Attendance Toolkit for School Leaders

An alarming increase in chronic absenteeism is affecting school districts nationwide, including Milwaukee Public Schools. As a district, we are determined to stop the trend with a comprehensive approach to attendance in 2025–26. "Every Day Counts" is a districtwide campaign to increase student attendance.

Three Approaches to Attendance

Communication

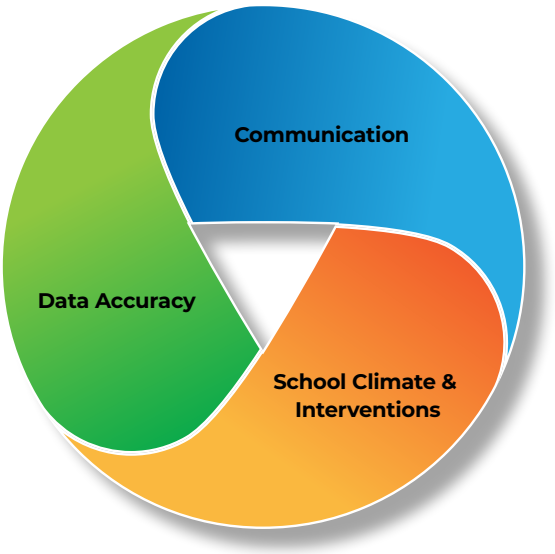
Providing consistent, positive, and two-way communication both internally and externally

Data Accuracy

Supporting schools as they report attendance accurately and make data-driven decisions

School Climate & Interventions

Building a culturally, racially, and linguistically responsive school climate for all students; while ensuring students in need of additional support are provided interventions





Attendance Plan Goals

***Climate* —** Emphasize relationship building with students and families to promote attendance.

***Systems* —** Provide systems to schools that support improved student attendance and reduced absenteeism.

***Communication* —** Increase student, parent, and community awareness regarding the impact of attendance on student achievement.

***Stakeholders* —** Develop stakeholder support in the efforts to improve student attendance.

***Joy* —** Encourage and promote student attendance success by cultivating joy throughout schools and the district.

Attendance Plan Overview

Communication	
Overarching Task	**Responsibility**
Social media posts	• Creation of templates: MPS Communications • Posting: School administrator or designee
Auto-dialer, newsletter, Remind App, SchoolMessenger, and other communication platforms	• Creation of templates: MPS Communications • Sending/scheduling: Parent coordinator and school administrator
Monthly theme/challenges	• School administrator and classroom teacher
Share information with families regarding Parent Portal and viewing student attendance	• Parent coordinator and school administrator
Share information on when a child should stay home from school and how to submit an excused absence	• Parent coordinator and school administrator

Data Accuracy	
Overarching Task	**Responsibility**
Accurate, timely data entry	• Classroom teachers
Ensure all students have a full schedule	• School programmer and school administrator
Procedures for late and tardy students	• School administrator
Monitor attendance reports daily	• Attendance secretary
Monitor school attendance-taking for accuracy	• School leader, enrollment specialists & operations managers

School Climate & Interventions	
Overarching Task	**Responsibility**
Cultivate a culture of joy and community	• Examples: Various district departments • Implementation: Classroom teachers
Positive phone calls home & IC documentation	• Classroom teacher, parent coordinator, or other staff identified by school administrator
2x10 Intervention & IC documentation	• Classroom teacher
Attendance Check-In/Check-Out & Infinite Campus documentation	• Building Intervention Team (BIT)
CICO – meeting with student daily	• Classroom teacher

“Every Day Counts” Roles & Responsibilities

District Leaders

- Provide coaching support and best practice examples to schools’ Tier 1 Climate Team and Building Intervention Team.
- Monitor data accuracy and support schools in updating data.
- Provide schools with templates for letters, postcards, social media posts, phone calls, and other communications.

School Leaders

- Organize the implementation of the attendance plan at their school. Be the lead champion for attendance in their school.
- Support school’s Tier 1 Climate Team and Building Intervention Team through active participation and follow-up.
- Secure any incentives for monthly/weekly student attendance recognitions.
- Ensure that any information related to attendance is communicated to students, staff, and families on a regular basis.
- Create a culture of joy and community throughout the school with all staff members, students, and families.

School Staff

- Ensure accurate and timely data entry daily.
- Make positive connections with all students.
- Ensure implementation of the five components of school climate for all students in all settings.
- Cultivate a culture of joy and community within the classroom.
- Regularly communicate to students and families about the importance of attendance.
- Provide identified interventions responding to data in alignment with district attendance plan.

Attendance Accuracy

Accurate collection and documentation of attendance data is critical for determining districtwide and school-wide trends in attendance and for state reporting purposes. All school leaders must:

- Establish attendance-taking procedures for school staff including teachers, attendance secretary, and administrators.
- Establish daily check-in procedures for late and tardy students.
- Monitor the classroom monitor report and daily attendance report on Infinite Campus.
- Immediately follow-up with classroom teachers who are not taking attendance.
- Ensure a system is in place for any substitute teachers to take attendance accurately.
- In alignment with Administrative Procedure 8.13 ensure two-day follow-up calls are being made and documented in PLP Contact Log under “PLP-Attendance.”

Attendance Communication

School-to-home communications build connections with our families and are essential to attendance success. Reach out to families before day one to share information about the upcoming school year, things to look forward to, key dates, and attendance facts about the importance of daily attendance.

The "Every Day Counts" campaign requires two attendance-based messages to families per month. Communicate via social media, print or electronic newsletter, the SchoolMessenger or Remind app, auto-dialer, or other communication tools. Communication topics can include exciting developments in 2025–26, learning and attendance goals, procedures for keeping students home, submitting excused absences, and accessing Parent Portal. Focus on the importance of attendance, highlight "Every Day Counts" success stories, and remind families about monthly themes and challenges that promote friendly competition and a culture of joy around attendance.

Campaign challenges are student-first, fun, and promote perfect attendance. Campaign messages and calendars highlight the total number of school days each month rather than attendance percentage. School vs. school challenges, classroom challenges, and individualized competitions are tied to a monthly theme. Schools can create their own activities and incentives that connect to themes: traveling trophies, social media posts, classroom acknowledgements, and more. Schools, classrooms, and individual students may be recognized for meeting or exceeding theme-based attendance goals.

Attendance Facts

- Students who miss less than nine days per school year are more likely to stay engaged, be successful, and stay on track to graduate.
- Each 10% attendance increase correlates to 5.5X greater academic outcomes.
- Students who consistently attend school gain more opportunity to build friendships and feel connected to their school community. They experience higher self-esteem, pride, emotional stability, and less anxiety.
- Research indicates greater than 90% attendance (ideally 95%) support on-track progression and on-time graduation with college and career readiness skills equipping the student for post-graduation success.
- Students who miss school in the primary levels are less likely to be reading proficiently by 3rd grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.
- Missing 10% (about 18 days) of school can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- A child who misses two days of school per month misses 18 days of school over the course of the school year—almost a month of school days!

Campaign Communication Resources and Templates

Message templates and examples can be found in the MPS attendance resource folder.

Additional resources to share with families:

- **Children's Wisconsin –** How to know when a child is too sick for school
- **Children's Hospital of Denver –** How sick to too sick?
- **Wisconsin DPI:** Too sick for school?
- **Attendance Works –** handouts for families

Monthly Themes, Challenges, Communication, and Resources

September 2025

Month	**September**
Theme	***Expect Great Things!***
Attendance Challenge	**Top attendance for the month**
Days of Attendance	**21**
Monthly reminder for families	**Sign up for Parent Portal**
September resource folder	**September Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**September Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- Emphasize the importance of the first day of school, highlight the date and time school starts.
- Share enthusiasm for the school. Highlight why you are proud to work at the school and why students should be proud to attend the school.
- Highlight any upcoming events for the month.
- Communicate procedures to report absences and the importance of reporting absences the day a child is absent.
- Provide Parent Portal Account how-to information. Ask families to ensure phone numbers and contact information is accurate in Infinite Campus.
- Highlight the importance of Third Friday and related activities and attendance challenges.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

Day One through Third Friday — During the first three weeks of school, all elementary schools are setting aside 60 minutes daily to create a culture of joy and connection. Traditional middle and high schools will dedicate their advisory or find additional time—30 minutes a day —during the first three weeks of school. The culture of joy culminates in Third Friday activities on September 19, 2025.

In the table below, you will find the districtwide theme for each day and suggested school-based activities. District themes will be communicated to the community through social media and other communication channels.



SEPTEMBER 2025 — Week One: *"Welcome to Our School Family"*	
Day	**Focus & Activities**
Tuesday, September 2 ***"You belong here"***	• Greeters (staff, seniors, 8th grade students) outside the school cheer, provide high-fives, smiles, etc., as students enter school. • Art action: Decorate hallways, doorways, and classrooms with welcome signs, quotes, birthday charts, etc. • Assembly: school-wide or grade-level assembly, games, skits, and other activities to build excitement for the school and the school year. • Classroom connection circles: students share their names, interests, hopes for the year, and other information. Staff members participate, too.
Wednesday, September 3 ***"All about us"***	• Art action: Classrooms create a bulletin board or door decoration. All students contribute. • Art action: Students create an "I am" poem or drawing. • Classroom connection circles: students share their names, interests, hopes for the year, and other information. Staff members participate, too. • Students write a letter to themselves about their learning goals, dreams, and concerns for the year ahead. Younger students can draw a picture. Students review their letter/picture and progress at the end of the year.
Thursday, September 4 ***"Make a connection"***	• Lunch bunch or table talk cards present discussion topics, would-you-rather questions, and riddles for students. • Kindness challenge/student shout-outs: Announce them in class or share on a bulletin board. • Promote all clubs, activities, and sports offered at school. • Group activity: escape classroom, brain busters, walk & talk, etc. • Two-person activity: find-a-friend, name two, human bingo, freeze dance, relay, walk & talk, etc.
Friday, September 5 ***"Learning in community"***	• Co-create classroom expectations, norms, learning agreements. • Review syllabus and learning goals of each class. Students set individual learning goals. • Create a "student voice" board, posting what students want to learn throughout the year. • Student panel streamed online to each classroom with seniors/ 8th grade students taking questions and talking about their journey at the school.

SEPTEMBER 2025 — Week Two: *"Our Stories Matter"*	
Day	**Focus & Activities**
Monday, September 8 ***"Your place"***	• Students share their place in life: birthplace, travels, where is home to them, etc. They can share through a poem, song, spoken word, picture, etc. • Activity: Identity mapping • Art action: students create a collage of their life featuring places they have visited and influential events or key moments.
Tuesday, September 9 ***"Your name"***	• Students share the history behind their name, including cultural and familial importance and context. • Art action: Students use pictures, drawings, print outs, and cut-outs to create "This is Me" collage. • Read: *Your Name Is a Song,* and ask students to share the story or meaning behind their names
Wednesday, September 10 ***"Our place"***	• Activity: scavenger hunt (nurse, office, library) incorporating hallway behavior expectations, school songs, or chants • Share family traditions (foods, holidays, music) and make a class book of cultural stories or photos. • Share the history of your school and its community.
Thursday, September 11 ***"Our name"***	• Activity: What's in a name? • Read: *The Day You Begin or Same, Same But Different* and discuss. Create Venn diagrams that show how we're alike and how we're different.
Friday, September 12 ***"Our stories"***	• Activity: Students give a short, autobiographical Ted Talk-style presentation. • Art action: Students create a mural or handprint poster titled *We Belong Together,* with names, ages, and other information they feel comfortable sharing. • Assembly: School or grade-level gathering featuring student stories or gallery walk featuring student artwork

SEPTEMBER 2025 — Week Three: *"We Grow Together"*	
Day	**Focus & Activities**
Monday, September 15 ***"Freedom Dreaming"***	• Read: *The Magical Yet,* or *Giraffes Can't Dance,* or *I Can't Do That, YET: Growth Mindset* by Esther Pia Cordova • Read Bettina Love's article "Freedom Dreaming" or watch the TED Talk. • Art action: Ask students about their dreams for the future and how they will achieve them. Students can draw a picture of their last day of school, graduation day, or another milestone. • Academic pep talks or panel discussion from 8th grade or senior students
Tuesday, September 16 ***"How we learn"***	• Art action: "This Year I Want to…" writing or drawing activity; create a hallway gallery. • Activities: learning styles survey, values voting
Wednesday, September 17 ***"Affirming each other as learners"***	• Activity: Classroom affirmation walk • Literacy or math stations with music so students can rotate through mini academic games
Thursday, September 18 ***"Road to Success"***	• Art action: Write a letter or draw a picture for a future student • Classroom connection circle: "What do you like best about school so far?"
Third Friday: September 19 ***"Together We Shine"***	• Spirit day • Talent show • Assembly: School-wide celebrations like a talent show or field day event • Party time: dance party, karaoke lunch, silent dance party • Photo booth at lunch

October 2025

Month	**October**
Theme	***World Series of Attendance*** ***Resources:*** **October Attendance Resources**
Attendance Challenge	**Top attendance for the month**
Days of Attendance	**21**
Monthly reminder for families	**When to stay home, when to come to school**
October resource folder	**October Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**October Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges.
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, September attendance results
- **Message:** When is a child too sick for school?
- **Remind:** Reporting absences on the day your student is absent, creating a Parent Portal account

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community



"World Series of Attendance" overview for elementary schools — Each percentage of a class that is in class daily is a hit, always rounding down. For example, if 22 of 25 students are present in first period, that is an attendance rate of 88%, or eight hits. For each student who is tardy, you lose a hit. Each day of the week is an inning. Schools should pair classrooms to compete against each other. Pairing could be by location in the school (like each hallway competes) or by grade level or school-wide. Each week is a separate game, so the score is reset every Monday in October.

"World Series of Attendance" overview for traditional middle and high schools — Each percentage of a class that is in class each period is a hit, always rounding down. For example, if 22 of 25 students are present in first period, that is an attendance rate of 88%, or eight hits. For each student who is tardy, you lose a hit. Each period of the day is an inning. Schools should pair classrooms to compete against each other. Pairing could be by location in the school (like each hallway competes) or by grade level or by subject. Each week is a separate game, so the score is reset every Monday in October.

November 2025

Month	**November**
Theme	***Thankful that you are here***
Attendance Challenge	**Largest increase compared to last month**
Days of Attendance	**14**
Monthly reminder for families	**How to submit an excused absence**
November resource folder	**November Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**November Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Aspects of school pride, upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, October attendance results
- **Message:** Tips for preparing for colder weather and resources for coats, hats, warm clothing

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

November activities ask students to reflect on and understand the importance of their presence in the school community and how their attendance impacts learning, their friendships, and the overall school climate.

All schools are encouraged to engage in a relationship mapping activity to identify students who might not have those positive relationships and connections to adults at the school.



"Thankful that you are here" activities for elementary schools:

- Gratitude board where students post what they love about school
- Student shout-outs for peers and staff
- Starting the day with a morning meeting and having students go around in a circle
- Thankful tree: Staff put paper leaves on a tree. Every leaf represents a student and shares one reason why staff are thankful the student is part of their community.

"Thankful that you are here" activities for traditional middle and high schools:

- Affirmation circle
- Peer shout-out bulletin board
- Student selfie station
- "I'm thankful I'm here" poem, pictures or songs

December 2025

Month	**December**
Theme	***Countdown to winter break***
Attendance Challenge	**Largest increase compared to last December**
Days of Attendance	**15**
Monthly reminder for families	**Scheduling vacations and appointments after school or non-school days**
December resource folder	**December Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**December Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, winter break dates, November attendance results
- **Message:** Tips for preparing for colder weather and resources for coats, hats, warm clothing
- **Remind families:** Do not let absences spike around the holidays.
  – Schedule vacations around district days off so students can attend school 15 days in December.
  – If missing school is unavoidable, talk to your children's teachers in advance to create a plan for making up missed work.
- Watch school calendars and keep track of dates.
- This holiday season, the best gift you can give your child is a good education.
- Make sure your child is in school every day, right up until vacation starts. Our teachers will be teaching, and our students will be learning. It's harder to teach and it's harder to learn when many students are absent.



Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"Countdown to winter break" activities for elementary schools — Students build an "illustrated" snowperson, adding a specific item to their picture for each day of attendance: nose, buttons, hands, scarf, etc. Students are challenged to get all 15 items on their snowperson. Schools can also have a daily surprise box. All classrooms with 90% (or 95%) attendance earn what is in the surprise box each day. Items in the surprise box: five extra minutes of recess, a 10-minute dance party, candy cane, read-aloud with the principal, etc.

"Countdown to winter break" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Challenge students to attend all 15 days in December and have various "prizes" on the last day of school depending on how many days a student attended. For example, students with 14 of 14 days go to a "Winter Jam" dance party and social on the last day. Students with 10-13 days get hot cocoa and candy canes in the lunchroom.

January 2026

Month	**January**
Theme	***New Year's Resolution Challenge***
Attendance Challenge	**Highest Attendance year to date**
Days of Attendance	**18**
Monthly reminder for families	**Signing up for Parent Portal**
January resource folder	**January Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**January Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges.
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, December attendance
- **Remind families:**
  - How to report absences on the day a student is absent and why it's important.
  - Visit MPS website and social media accounts and/or follow local television and radio stations and their social media accounts to learn about school cancellations due to weather
  - Use WheresTheBus app to monitor bus drop-off and pick-up times, and reach out to transportation company if your child's bus is more than ten minutes late
  - Layer up during the cold winter months to keep warm on the way to school. If your child needs winter gear, reach out to your school social worker.
  - Review your child's class schedule.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"New Year's Resolution Challenge" activities for elementary schools — School creates New Year's resolution attendance goals or students make their own. Resolutions must include an attendance goal and one thing a student can do or work on to improve attendance. Post resolutions anonymously, read them during daily announcements, share them during assemblies, etc.

"New Year's Resolution Challenge" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Students create a two-part attendance goal or New Year's resolution. Resolutions must include an attendance goal and one thing a student can do or work on to improve attendance. These could be submitted and returned at the end of the year so students can reflect on their progress, posted anonymously on a school or classroom bulletin board, or read during daily announcements.

February 2026

Month	**February**
Theme	***Share your love by attending***
Attendance Challenge	**Largest increase compared to last February**
Days of Attendance	**18**
Monthly reminder for families	**When to stay home, when to come to school**
February resource folder	**February Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**February Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges.
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, January and first-semester attendance
- **Remind families:**
  – When is a child too sick for school?
  – Joining extracurricular activities can boost a child's academic progress, attendance, and overall well-being.
  – Share an encouraging note with your child about the importance of attendance.
- As we reach the second half of the year, we continue to share school pride, build excitement for the school community, and ensure every student feels connected to their school community.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

All schools are encouraged to engage in relationship mapping activity to identify students who might not have those positive relationships and connections to adults at the school.

"Share your love by attending" activities for elementary schools — Classroom teachers will share personalized letters to each student and family showing appreciation they are in their classroom and why they are a valued member of the school community. Classrooms will create attendance chains of paper hearts linked together and every day a student attends will add to the school-wide or classroom-wide chain. At the end of the month one long chain of attendance hearts will be displayed the power of all students attending regularly.

"Share your love by attending" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Schools will have a "candy-gram" system throughout the year with students meeting attendance challenges given the opportunity to send a "candy-gram" to a friend. Staff members will also send "candy-grams" to students showing positive growth in their attendance. A "love your future by attending now" messaging will be utilized that messages to students how attending now in school sets them up for their future success.

March 2026

Month	**March**
Theme	***March Madness of Attendance***
Attendance Challenge	**Highest monthly attendance**
Days of Attendance	**19**
Monthly reminder for families	**Scheduling vacations and appointments after school or on non-school days**
March resource folder	**March Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**March Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, February attendance results
- **Remind families:**
  – How to get a Parent Portal account
  – To schedule doctor and other appointments before/after school or on non-attendance days
- Every day is a new day to start having a great attendance.
- Stay focused and keep pushing forward.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"March Madness of Attendance" overview for elementary schools — Create classroom brackets (could be randomly assigned, by grade level, etc.) and each week classrooms compete head-to-head on attendance for the week. The winning team moves on to face the next winning team, and the losing team continues to play against other teams that lost. Winning teams earn trophies or medals. Schools can coordinate March Madness challenges in individual classrooms with individual students going head-to-head on weekly attendance or competing for top attendance in March.

"March Madness of Attendance" overview for traditional middle and high schools — Create a bracket of advisories or a specific class period (could be randomly assigned or by grade level) and each week classrooms compete head-to-head on attendance. The winning team moves on to face the next winning team. Teams with lower attendance compete against one another. Winning teams earn trophies or medals. Schools can coordinate March Madness challenges in individual classrooms with individual students going head-to-head on weekly or monthly attendance or competing for top attendance in March.

April 2026

Month	**April**
Theme	***Spring Fever***
Attendance Challenge	**Largest increase from previous month**
Days of Attendance	**18**
Monthly reminder for families	**Submitting an excused absence**
April resource folder	**April Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**April Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, March Madness results
- Keep building and expanding upon the attendance groundwork done in the fall.
- Don't let allergies affect attendance. Contact your school nurse for assistance.
- Teachers, Check In/Check Out with students to encourage attendance.
- Check out Summer Academy opportunities.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"Spring Fever" activities for elementary schools — Each student has their "attendance garden" that can be posted on a bulletin board, classroom door, student's desk, or in a folder. Each day a student is present they add a flower (or vegetable plant) to their garden. Classrooms can also have a classroom garden in which they add a flower each day they have 90% of students present. Gardens are displayed throughout the school or classroom at the end of the month. Competitions can be held for classrooms or students who have the largest garden at the end of the month.

"Spring Fever" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Students are challenged with planning their dream spring break trip for next school year and the more often they attend this month, the more financial support they will have to plan their trip. Each day students are present they earn $100, each day they are tardy to class they lose $50, and they can earn boosters for perfect attendance all week. At the end of the month they engage in an activity to plan their perfect spring break trip with the total funds their earned finding travel, hotel, and anything else they want to do. Students can create a poster, a presentation, or other form of presentation to share their dream spring break.

May 2026

Month	**May**
Theme	***Show your appreciation***
Attendance Challenge	**Largest increase from previous May**
Days of Attendance	**19**
Monthly reminder for families	**Finishing the year strong**
May resource folder	**May Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**May Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Upcoming events, days off or early release for the month, end of school year dates, Spring Fever attendance results
- Maintain daily attendance routines in class.
- **Remind families:**
  – Join your student for field trips and school celebrations.
  – Wait until after the school year ends to plan summer vacations.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"Momentum May" activities for elementary schools — Each student has a "Momentum Marble Jar." This can be a literal plastic jar for each student, or a printed jar on paper. Each day the student is in attendance and on time, they add a marble to their jar. Each week students focus on building momentum where the first day they are in attendance, they get one marble, the second day in a row they are in attendance, they get two marbles, the third day in a row they are in attendance they get three marbles, the fourth day in a row they are in attendance, they get four marbles, and the fifth day in a row they are in attendance, they get five marbles. Each week it resets. At the end of the marble the Momentum Marble Jars can be displayed, with contests for the students with the most marbles.

"Momentum May" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Students compete across grade level or classrooms/advisory as established by the school. The focus is on building momentum with attendance. Every day that the grade level/classroom has 90% attendance, the grade/class earns an entry into the weekly attendance drawing. Each week students focus on building momentum where the first day they earn the 90% challenge, they get one entry, the second day in a row, they get two, the third day in a row, they get three, the fourth day in a row, they get four, and the fifth day in a row they, they get five. Each week it resets. Schools then have a weekly drawing in which the grade level/classroom can win various prizes and the more entries they have, the more likely they are to win.

June 2026

Month	**June**
Theme	***Finishing Strong***
Attendance Challenge	**Highest attendance for year**
Days of Attendance	**10**
Monthly reminder for families	**Awaiting vacations until after the year ends**
June resource folder	**June Attendance Resources**
Monitor/Newsletter Graphics	**April Attendance Resources**

Suggested talking points for the month:

- **Announce:** Student, Student, grade, class, or whole-school attendance challenges
- **Highlight:** Exam schedule, last day of school, end-of-year celebrations, days off or early release days, May attendance results
- Maintain daily attendance routines in class.
- **Remind high schoolers:** Find a quiet place to complete schoolwork and prep for exams.
- **Remind families:**
  – Maintain healthy sleep patterns through the end of the school year.
  – Join your student for field trips and school celebrations.

Culture of Cultivating Joy and Community

"Finishing Strong" activities for elementary schools — Each class starts with a blank summer scene poster (beach, park, pool). Every day students attend, they add sun rays, waves, or beach balls. If the scene is complete by the last day, the class earns a summer kick-off prize.

Create a visible school-wide or classroom countdown. Every day with 90% attendance unlocks a daily reward—music at lunch, spirit dress-up day, or raffle tickets for prizes.

"Finishing Strong" activities for traditional middle and high schools — Students are challenged with planning their dream summer trip for this summer year and the more often they attend this month, the more financial support they will have to plan their trip. Each day students are present they earn $100, each day they are tardy to class they lose $50, and they can earn boosters for perfect attendance all week. Prior to exams, or the end of the year, students plan their perfect summer trip with the total funds their earned finding travel, hotel, and anything else they want to do. Students can create a poster, a presentation, or other form of presentation to share their dream summer trip.

Create a visible school-wide or classroom countdown. Every day with 90% attendance unlocks a daily reward—music at lunch, spirit dress-up day, or raffle tickets for prizes.

Attendance Intervention Continuum

Tier 1: Five Components of School Climate

Tier 1 encompasses five components that are provided to all students, all grades, and across all settings to create a positive and welcoming environment for students to learn.

- **Relationships & community**
- **Expectations & procedures**
- **Skills development**
- **Responding to student behaviors**
- **Systems of acknowledgement**

Providing these five components will create a positive school climate students want to return to, and give families access to the knowledge and information necessary to support their child's attendance and academic success. More information can be found in the Culture, Climate & Alternatives to Suspension Toolkit.

Schools are encouraged to embed attendance as a responsible behavior within their framework at school and each of the five components.

Relationships & community — Connect with students and families positively throughout the year. Ensuring students and families understand the importance of attendance and feel welcome at school.

Expectations & procedures — Embed attendance within school-wide expectations like "Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible." Ensure families understand the expectations around attendance and follow procedures when a child misses school: call school the day a child is absent, provide a reason for absence, and make plans for child to complete missed work.

Skills development — Embed behavior lessons and Second Step lessons about school attendance. Examples can be found online.

Responding to student behaviors — Monitor student attendance and connect with students and families when they are absent from school. Make a positive connection with the student and family after every absence. *Examples:*

- "I missed you yesterday."
- "I am glad you are back today."
- "Welcome back! You missed an interesting discussion on France. When other students are working today, let's talk about what you missed."

Systems of acknowledgement — Verbally acknowledge attendance success daily. *Examples:*

- "I am glad to see you today."
- "Steve, it is great to see you today! You are going to love today's lesson on volcanoes."
- Schools are encouraged to acknowledge good and improved attendance, including student, class, grade-level, and school-wide challenges.

Attendance Behavior Lessons

Schools should utilize behavior lessons regarding various aspects of attendance including coming to school, getting to class on time, and communicating absences. A variety of example lessons can be found online.

School Spirit/School Pride

Consideration should also be given to school-wide community and school spirit. Schools should ensure there are school-wide activities that create a sense of community among students and strengthen school pride.

- **Assemblies and pep rallies**
- **Bulletin boards and hallways displays**
- **School-wide challenges**
- **School cheers, chants, and slogans**
- **Sporting events, dances, field days, and other activities**

Plan and promote extracurricular activities that engage and interest students. Survey students and families to see what extracurricular opportunities they would consider meaningful and times and structures that can increase student participation.

- 50 Surefire Ways to Build School Spirit
- School-wide Events: Fun and Educational Ideas to Build School Spirit
- 74 Unique Student Council Ideas to Help Build School Spirit
- 85 School Spirit Ideas for High School

Attendance Challenges/ Acknowledgement

Schools are encouraged to coordinate attendance challenges: grade level, homeroom challenges, individual, and/or school-wide challenges.

	Example
Grade level	Graph each grade's week-to-week attendance on bulletin board. Each week's winning grade gets 10 extra minutes of recess or priority seating at school-wide pep rally.
Homeroom/ Class period	Teachers can post homeroom attendance for the week. Winning homerooms get school-wide recognition or a homemade treat from the principal. High school teachers post each class period's attendance daily. Each week's winning class period (highest attendance) receives 10 minutes of an activity or another acknowledgment.
Individual student	Set an attendance goal for the week or month, such as 95%. All students who meet that goal are entered into a raffle to have lunch with the principal and advance to the front of the lunch line.
Whole school	Set a whole-school attendance goal for the week, such as 95%. If school makes the goal, ALL students receive recognition, additional time at field day, or participate in an activity as a school.

Other ways to acknowledge attendance:

- Weekly announcement of class/student with highest attendance or greatest improvement
- Student line leader, teacher assistant, student chooses groups or activity for class, etc.
- Students participate in announcements
- Students get additional choice time or choose whole-class activity
- Classroom acknowledged with special lunch or lunch location (eat outside)
- Class period acknowledged with extra team-building activities on Friday

Tier 1: Early Intervention for Students

Step 1: Positive Attendance Phone Call

Elementary students who miss two to four days out of a month will receive a positive phone call home. Schools will determine their system for phone calls. Best practice suggests a classroom teacher should call a student's family (or home).

Traditional middle and high school students who miss three to five days out of a month will be identified for a positive phone call home. It is recommended for traditional middle and high schools to identify a class period or advisory to make phone calls.

This phone call (template provided) focuses on positive encouragement to come to school, indicating the student is missed at school, is a valuable member of the school community, and connects with the family if there is anything the school can do to encourage more attendance.

Data Dashboard provides a graph "Attendance Intervention" that displays students who miss those two days in a month. This phone call is then documented in PLP Contact Log under "PLP-Positive Attendance Phone Call."

Step 2: 2X10 Intervention

Elementary students who miss an additional two to four days out of a month after the positive attendance phone call will participate in the 2x10 intervention at the classroom level. In elementary schools, the 2x10 intervention involves the classroom teacher meeting with the student for two minutes for 10 consecutive school days to talk about whatever the student wants to talk about.

Traditional middle and high school students who miss an additional three to five days out of a month after the positive attendance phone call will participate in the 2x10 intervention at the classroom level. In traditional middle and high schools, the 2x10 intervention will entail one identified teacher meeting with the student for two minutes for 10 consecutive school days to talk about whatever the student wants to talk about.

On the first and the last day, a positive phone call is made home to connect with the family.

The 2X10 intervention is documented once in PLP Contact Log under "PLP- 2X10 Intervention."

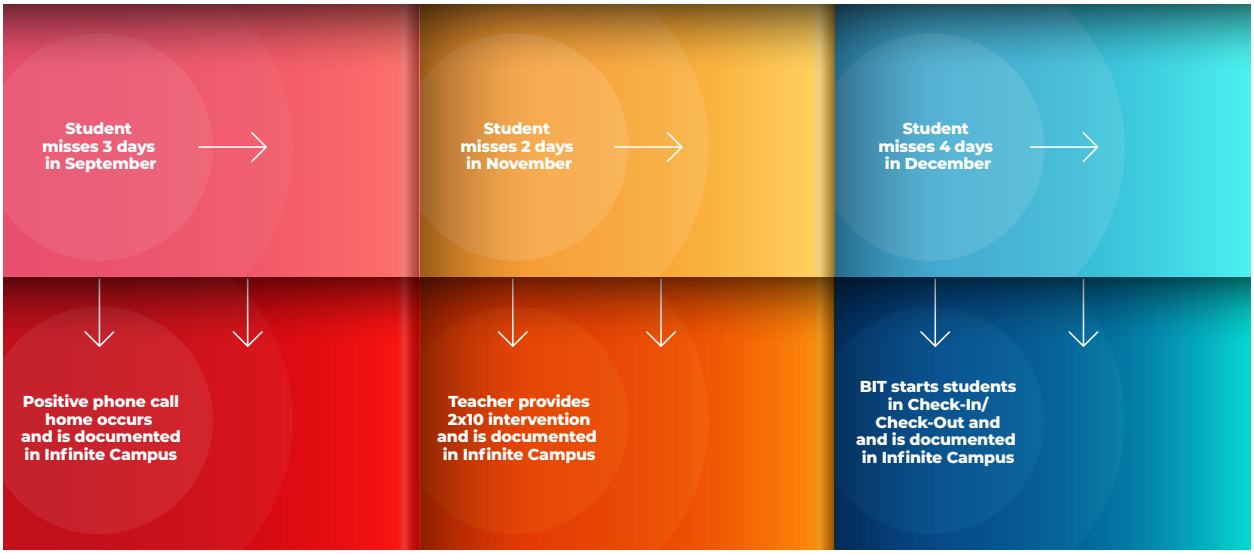
- **2X10 strategy (Truth for Teachers)**
- **2x10 and 5x5 sample lesson**

Tier 2: Tiered Intervention for Students

Elementary students who miss an additional two to four days out of a month and traditional middle and high school students who miss an additional three to five days out of a month will be referred to the Building Intervention Team (BIT) to be screened for the school's Check-In/Check-Out (CICO) system of intervention. Students participate in CICO for the remainder of the year. As students participate in Check-In/Check-Out, the BIT will monitor the student's attendance. If a student continues to struggle with attendance, the BIT may consider having the student join an attendance themed Social Academic Instructional Group. Social Academic Instructional Group (SAIG) curriculum is found on the MPS website and includes attendance lessons by grade band.

Attendance Check-In/Check-Out is documented once in PLP Contact Log under "RtI- Attendance CICO."

Example Tiered Support for Student



Positive Phone Call Home

Making a positive phone call when we have students who are absent can make a huge difference. Students may feel more connected to their school community and are more likely to attend regularly. These contacts are documented in Infinite Campus (PLP Contact Log-PLP Positive Phone Call). Below is a conversation template.

Introduction

Simple greetings are best when contacting a student's home.

"Hi, this is _____ (insert teacher's name), I am _____'s (insert student's name) teacher from _____ (insert school name). Is this the home of _____ (insert student's name)? May I speak with the parent guardian of _____ (insert student's name), please?"

Request Permission

Requesting permission at the beginning of the conversation fosters an engagement in the conversation.

"Can I have a few minutes of your time?" or "Is this a good time?"

Frame Talk and Tone

Framing absence discussion with a positive tone that focuses on concern for student success increases likelihood of parent engagement in the conversation.

"I want to do whatever I can to make sure that _____ (insert student's name) feels welcome and successful in my class." "I noticed that _____ (insert student's name) has missed _____ (insert number of days) in the last month." "Is there something that I or our school can do to help _____ (insert student's name) be in school every day?"

Relationship Building

Taking the time to listen to them can show that you value what they have to say.

"How is the school year going for you?" "Is there anything that you would like me to know about _____ (insert student's name)—such as interests, motivations?"

Reminders

Provide reminders about Parent Portal access, submitting excused absences, and determining when a student should stay home or when they should come to school.

"Don't forget to sign up for Parent Portal. I can email or send home the instructions on how to create an account and check attendance records."

"As we go into the year, remember that _____ should stay home if they are truly sick. If they are experiencing little things, such as a belly ache, they should come to school."

"To ensure _____ record is clear, remember to call in and excuse the absence every time _____ is sick or absent for an excused reason."

Sustaining Partnership

Let the parent know that you will remain in contact, however it is most convenient for them.

"Thank you. I think if we work together, we can help _____ have a successful year. Is this the best number to reach you? Do you prefer another means of communication like email or Remind App? Please contact me at school at _____ (insert your work number) or email me if that is easier for you. Thank you for talking with me. Take care."

Additional Resources

Websites

Attendance Works: https://www.attendanceworks.org/

Articles

For some kids, getting to school is really hard. They still need to go every day. https://www.the74million.org/article/for-some-kids-getting-to-school-is-really-hard-they-still-need-to-go-every-day/

Attendance: racialized factors to be mindful of. https://tenpencemore.wordpress.com/2023/09/21/attendance-racialised-factors-to-be-mindful-of/

Anti-Blackness and Attendance Policy Implementation: Evidence from a Midwestern School District. https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/MTB4UZ784HY5FEG8D95P/full#

When Students Don't Show Up, It's Not the Kids Failing. What Schools Should Do. https://www.the74million.org/article/when-students-dont-show-up-its-not-the-kids-failing-what-schools-should-do/

How Schools are Countering Absenteeism with Food, Rides and Individual Notes. https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/65696/how-schools-are-countering-absenteeism-with-food-rides-and-individual-notes

Podcasts

Mindshift: "a research based way to improve school attendance" https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/a-research-backed-way-to-improve-student-attendance/id1078765985?i=1000662391764

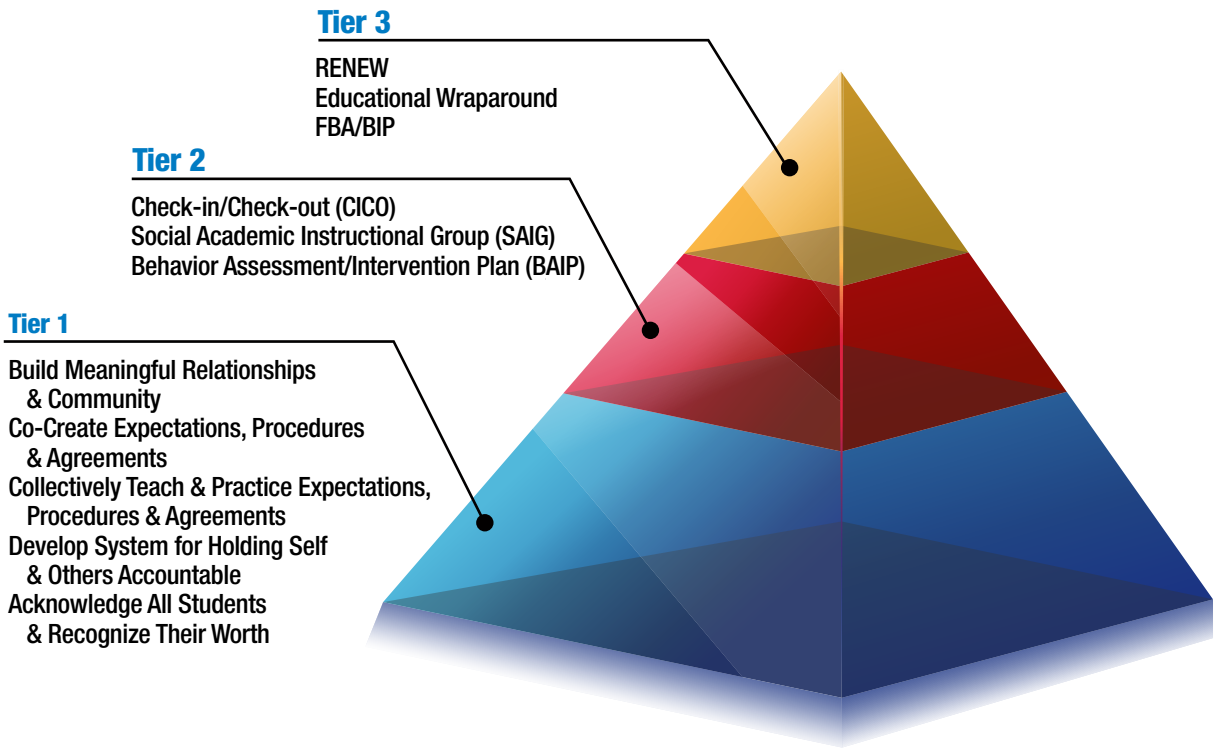
Tackling Chronic Absenteeism by Asking Students What They Need https://hthgse.edu/podcasts/tackling-chronic-absenteeism-by-asking-students-what-they-need/

Multi-Level System of Support – Behavioral Intervention Supports Framework

To address the need for appropriate discipline practices in all classrooms, including early childhood classrooms, Milwaukee Public Schools has implemented the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework. Research reveals that a PBIS framework reduces classroom disruptions and student suspensions through a school-wide, tiered intervention approach, which leads to increased student achievement. The framework uses a variety of student supports, effective practices, and evidence-based interventions across three tiers.

A multi-level system of support is a comprehensive approach that is designed to teach, nurture, and encourage positive social behaviors. All supports begin with relationship building between staff members and students, thus creating a community of learners in the classroom.

All schools create expectations for student behavior that are taught, acknowledged, and reinforced by all staff members. Students who continue to struggle to make positive choices with their behavior are provided tiered interventions through the school's PBIS framework. All supports and interventions are available to all students, regardless of special education status.



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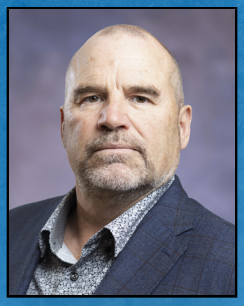
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