STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES
I. Welcome, Agenda Review, Introductions, Hopes for Session

II. Presentation: Addressing and Monitoring Attendance and Missing School During Covid 19

III. Panel: The Hickman Mills Story

IV. Open Discussion Forum / Break Out Groups
Introductions

Write into the Chat

✓ Write your name
✓ What do you hope to learn from this webinar?
About Attendance Works

Attendance Works advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state, and national level, Attendance Works:

✔ Advances better policy
✔ Nurtures proven and promising practice
✔ Promotes meaningful and effective communication
✔ Catalyzes needed research

Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation’s “go-to” resource for improving student attendance. To learn more, visit our website:  www.attendanceworks.org

Hedy Chang
Executive Director
Attendance Works
## Phases of Covid-19 Response

### 1. Decide to Close Schools
- Involve the public health department
- Monitor **absenteeism** to detect potential health challenges
- Communicate clearly and frequently with families and students

### 2. Outreach after School Closure
- Develop and implement coordinated outreach approach
- Confirm contact info
- Reach out in trauma-informed, relationship building manner
- Address needs for food, shelter and other supports
- Connect to learning supports and determine access to technology
- Link to needed virtual behavioral, emotional and physical health supports
- Leverage data (including **absences**, special ed status, and other demographic info) to triage and tailor supports

### 3. Support and Engagement During Remote Learning
- Use cross-departmental district and school teams to orchestrate a whole child/family approach to learning
- Emphasize engagement and school connectedness for students and families
- Monitor **contact, connectivity, engagement and participation** in distance learning activities
- Use **data** for real-time problem-solving
- Document challenges and interventions to inform current and future support

### 4. Transitions to School
- Take team approach to organize and implement cross-departmental school and district plans
- Partner with families to develop plans reflecting student’s situation (health, academic, **attendance & engagement** during and prior to **distance** learning)
- Use **chronic absence** (prior to closure) and other participation data to provide additional support
- Promote trauma-informed, welcoming school climate
- Support seamless transitions between virtual and in-person settings
COVID 19 Reinforces The Critical Importance of These Approaches:

✓ **A whole child/family approach** to education that pays attention to social emotional well-being and school climate along with academics and recognizes families as the first teachers of their children.

✓ **Hybrid and blended learning** that supports different learning styles and allows for asynchronous opportunities to learn when students face challenges (e.g. health or transportation) getting to the school building.

✓ **Addressing inequitable access** to resources and supports with significant attention to monitoring **absenteeism** (missing too much school) to promote prevention and early intervention vs punitive action.

✓ **Promote integrated strategies** by working across departments and organizations including supporting an investment in community schools and leveraging the assets of community partners and health providers.
Chronic Absence: A Critical Early Warning Sign When School is In Person.

Chronic absence is different from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. To ensure it acts as an early warning sign, Attendance Works recommends defining it as missing 10% or more of school for any reason.
Student Attendance is Strongly Associated with Academic Success

PK-1st Grade: Students who attend regularly in the early grades perform better on measures of academic and social and emotional capacities.

3rd Grade: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to be able to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.

Middle School Success: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have passing grades in middle school.

High School Completion: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate from high school.

College Completion: Students who attend school regularly in high school are more likely to persist in college and graduate.

Chronic Absence = Warning Sign of Academic Risk
Reducing the Adverse Impact of Covid-19 Requires Ensuring Positive Conditions for Learning in School, Whether In Person, Distance or Hybrid
The Push and Pull of Conditions for Learning

Examples of Push-Out Factors

**Feeling:**
- Ignored
- Unsafe
- That you do not belong

**Experiencing:**
- Bullying
- Boredom
- Exclusion

Examples of Pull Factors

**Feeling:**
- Cared for
- Safe
- That you belong

**Experiencing**
- Connection
- Engagement
- Inclusion
Let’s Chat!

When you think about the conditions of learning, what can your schools do to create the “pull” factors for students and families?

Write your ideas in the chat box
Monitoring Absenteeism Helps Invest In Prevention and Early Intervention

**TIER 1**
- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

**TIER 2**
- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

**TIER 3**
- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

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**High Cost**
- Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

**Low Cost**
- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
- Students missing 5.9% (at risk)

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*High and extreme levels of chronic absence are an alert that additional support is needed to address chronic absence.*
To Take a Systemic Approach – Need to Redefine Actionable Attendance and Absenteeism Data During Distance Learning

Positive Engagement: Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

Actionable Data: Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

Shared Accountability: Ensures chronic absence is monitored & reinforced by policy.

Capacity Building: Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
The Multiple Purposes for Attendance Data Should Guide Action

Allocate Funding

Hold Harmless from Funding Cuts

Ensure Compliance with Compulsory Education

Create Alternatives to Legal Action

Accountability

Avoid High Stakes Accountability Until We Know More

Early Warning For Additional Support

Use AW Data Framework to Put in Place Expanded Metrics

Inform Program and Policy Decisions

Use AW Data Framework to Put in Place Expanded Metrics

Ensure Compliance with Compulsory Education

Avoid High Stakes Accountability Until We Know More

Early Warning For Additional Support

Inform Program and Policy Decisions
Chronic Absence Remains a Critical Measure When School Buildings are Open

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. To ensure it acts as an early warning sign, Attendance Works recommends defining it as missing 10% or more of school for any reason.

Chronic absence is different from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).
A new framework for attendance and absenteeism data is needed to:

1. Encourage states, districts and communities to monitor lost learning time in school in order to promote student success regardless of ESSA accountability.

2. Adopt a holistic approach to data collection that informs current and future efforts to improve conditions for learning.

3. Promote a tiered approach to supporting students, beginning with prevention.

4. Strategically target investments that address the digital divide, lack of supports (health, economic, nutrition, housing, etc.) and other inequities.
Additional Terms for “Attendance” During Distance Learning

**Contact**
Working contact information exists for each enrolled student and their family.

**Connectivity**
Students and families have access to technology (computer, software and internet access) and school staff are equipped to support digital literacy.

** Relationships**
Students and families feel connected, supported and engaged in reciprocal, problem-solving relationships.

**Participation**
The extent to which students show up and complete learning activities.

www.attendanceworks.org
### Additional “Attendance Measures”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What are we (districts, schools &amp; community partners) trying to find out?</th>
<th>What are school/district responsibilities, with support from community partners?</th>
<th>What data can we collect? (Possible data points)</th>
<th>What are the equity implications?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
<td>Can we reach students and families?</td>
<td>Maintain regularly updated contact information.</td>
<td>% of families with working contact information. % of students unreachable, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, zip code, homelessness, foster care, free and reduced lunch, disabilities.</td>
<td>Working contact information is essential to offering supports and learning opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connectivity</strong></td>
<td>Are we ensuring all students and families have digital access and competency?</td>
<td>Provide access to technology and equip school staff and families to use it effectively.</td>
<td>% of students/families with technology (have computer, software, and internet). % of staff who have the equipment and skills to support digital learning.</td>
<td>Lack of tech = less access to quality learning opportunities. Digital literacy requires offering support in the home languages of families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Are we establishing reciprocal relationships with students and families and creating a sense of connection and support?</td>
<td>Ensure students and families have meaningful two-way communications with staff and each other about how to improve conditions for learning.</td>
<td>% of students reporting positive relationships with at least one adult in the school % of students participating in group relationship building activities led by adults or peers (clubs, enrichment activities, advisory and mentoring) % of families reporting positive relationships with school staff % of families reporting the opportunity to provide feedback on school decisions</td>
<td>When students and families are connected to and supported by the school community students are more likely to do well academically and stay in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>Are students participating in learning opportunities?</td>
<td>Offer options to participate in meaningful learning opportunities.</td>
<td>% of students participating in learning opportunities at least 95% of the time. % of students missing 10% or more of learning opportunities</td>
<td>Students who participate regularly are less likely to fall behind academically and graduate.</td>
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Identifying Students At Risk Due to Absenteeism

Chronic Absence + No Connectivity + Little or No Participation + Lost Contact + Lack of Relationships = Lost Learning Time in School
Use Data to Identify and Address Inequities

a) Analyze data for chronic absence prior to closure, plus contact, connectivity, engagement and participation data overall, broken down by school, grade, race/ethnicity, home language, disability and zip code.

b) Use qualitative information, especially drawing upon the perspectives of students and families, to deepen an understanding of the contributing factors and how they might be addressed.

c) Determine how to address unequal access to resources.
Use Data to Support An Integrated Multi-tiered System of Support

- Tier 1a: Universal Prevention
- Tier 1b: Personalized Outreach
- Tier 2: Early Intervention
- Tier 3: Intensive Intervention
### Early Warning Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>What activates personalized outreach? (e.g. 1 missed interaction, 1 missed assignment)</th>
<th>Who provides this? Teachers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>What activates more ongoing sustained early intervention? (e.g. Multiple missed interactions over a week or month, 2 missed assignments)</td>
<td>Who is involved in outreach and support? Attendance staff? Counselors? Nurses? Others depending upon need for intervention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>What activates intensive intervention? (e.g. Loss of contact?)</td>
<td>Who is involved in outreach and support? Social Workers? Staff of public agencies, etc.?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensive Intervention</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Take a Data Informed Transition to Support School Staff, Students and Family

1. Map Assets
   - Begin the work in Summer
   - Engage your school student support or attendance team in organizing a planning process (virtual if needed)
   - Ensure behavioral, emotional, and physical health for school staff, including warm welcome
   - Identify trauma informed strategies and resources to promote health, relationships, wellness, and support for students and families. Examine needed revisions given Covid19

2. Examine Student and Family Data
   - Begin the work prior to the beginning of the school year
   - Reflect on what has been learned from families about needed resources such as food, counseling, housing assistance, internet, and other learning materials etc.
   - Expand data analysis to include prior to COVID-19 chronic absence along with information about student participation with remote learning

3. Develop (Re) Engagement Strategy
   - Begin the work prior to the beginning of the school year
   - Engagement activities that are welcoming for returning and new students and families
   - Targeted supports for vulnerable students and families
   - Establish or strengthen two-way communications with students and families

4. Welcoming, Restorative, and Trauma Informed School Culture
   - Begin the work during the first two weeks of school explicit restorative practice activities for all students and staff
   - School plan in place agreed upon activities and staff roles and responsibilities
   - Intensive supports for students for whom data show require additional engagement strategies
Panel: The Hickman Mills Story

➢ **Dr. Carl Skinner**: Interim Superintendent Hickman Mills School District

➢ **Dr. Kia Turner**: CEO Red Apple Education Corporation

➢ **Edsel Edwards**: Lead Family School Liaison Hickman Mills School District
1. What did Hickman Mills do this year to strengthen its efforts to supporting student attendance?

2. How did school closure affect the work?

3. After closures, what data did you collect to monitor contact, connectivity, relationship and/or participation in learning activities? What did you learn from it?

4. How are you preparing for the transition back to school?
Questions from the Audience
Additional Resources
Attendance Playbook: Solutions

Each page:

- Defines the problem
- Provides the research case
- Outlines effective programs
- Defines evidence level under ESSA
- Recommends the best tier for uses
- Provides links to research and resources
- Adds considerations for Covid-19
Go Virtual

Some attendance interventions can be delivered online:

• Home visits
• Mentoring
• Telehealth for physical and mental needs
How to Use the Attendance Playbook

The Guide to the Attendance Playbook offers practical tips for:

• Forming a team
• Using attendance data to determine the number of strategies
• Analyzing why students are absent and selecting strategies that address those reasons
• Realistically assessing your team’s capacity to implement each strategy
• Selecting strategies that are likely to have the greatest impact for the lowest effort
• Making an implementation plan
• Assessing how well the strategies worked

https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/attendance-playbook/
Strategies for Connecting with Students and Families

The ideas below provide options to help you locate students and families who have not been in touch with your school or district during the coronavirus pandemic. When reaching out keep in mind that the reason for making contact is to express your concern for the safety and wellbeing of each student and family. Ask families and students what they need, and don’t talk about missed virtual attendance or school work at this time. If possible translate messages into languages spoken in your community.

Idea One: Multiple Modes of Outreach

- Divide the list of students who have not been contacted among school staff and assign student names to each staff person.
- Each staff person can reach out to students and families using all available modes of communication, such as email, phone, text message and social media. Try using these methods at different times of the day and on different days of the week.
- Consider sending a letter expressing concern for the student and family by registered mail with delivery confirmation. This will let you know that someone at the home has received the correspondence.
- Keep written communications short and use simple language so they can be understood by readers with a low literacy level. Consider using bullets next to the most important messages so readers can skim the text. If possible translate messages into languages spoken in your community.
- Offer to hold virtual meetings with family members through Zoom or other online services.

Idea Two: Media

- Prepare and distribute a public service announcement (PSA) asking families and students to get in touch with their school. Place the PSA with popular radio shows and talk shows that reach the community you serve.
- For families that speak a language other than English, work with radio stations to translate PSAs into home languages.
- Leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others. Search by first name or any nicknames of the student that you may know. Logging onto the Facebook page of one student and observing their friend list may give you access to other students and their family members who are on Facebook.
- Create a school social media page on Instagram and other platforms that are popular in the community, or consider asking your after-school provider or other trusted partner to create a page for you. Post messages asking students and families to get in touch with the school. Offer resources, such as access to food or health services, as incentives for engagement.
- Ask a local celebrity or trusted community leader to reach out via social media to ask students and families who have not been in touch with their school to call.

Idea Three: Leverage Personal and Social Networks

- Identify school staff members who have a relationship with the “missing” students, or who might know other people who might be in touch with them. Staff members with this relationship could be teachers, coaches, non-profit partners or other school staff in the building.
- “Tech one, reach one” Identify the friends and classmates of the students you want to contact, and ask them to reach out to the students you are not in touch with using the phone, social media or online games such as Facebook. This can be particularly helpful for secondary students.
- If possible, use the emergency contact listed on the student’s “emergency card.” Contact information should be documented and updated in a school database throughout the year.
- Have all staff (including social workers, secretaries, counselors, school liaison officers, etc.) maintain one-on-one contact with assigned students. Ask each staff person to contact their “mentees” weekly to see how they’re doing. These relationships can help to identify students who suddenly lose contact. These relationships might also help to ensure other students are less likely to go missing without someone at the school knowing.
- Engage established school partners, such as community organizations/agents or after-school providers, to obtain student/family contact information.
- Tap into the expertise of school staff and community partners to communicate in families’ home languages.
- Host virtual group lunch meetings for students with an adult that has close relationships with these students. This can be especially important for students who are at home alone.

Idea Four: School Marquees and Sign Boards

- Use school marquees and sign boards to post messages. Messages can offer information about where to find meals, pick up lesson packets, access resources, etc.
- If districts can coordinate phone calls, the schools can encourage families to call and leave a message on a district phone number. On this message ask families if they are safe, have moved and/or have new contact information.

Idea Five: Home Visits (Please follow the guidance of local health officials and local school district. Also, see the safe home visiting protocols at the end of this document)

- Require all school personnel to follow the local safety protocol. If allowed at the local level, consider these home visiting strategies gathered from practitioners across the country.
- Consider leaving a letter and information about how to obtain a resource (e.g., food, internet access, other supports) and your request for the family to get in touch. Offer multiple response options including phone, text, and email.
- While in the neighborhood, first take all recommended safety precautions. If allowable, ask neighbors if they know where the student or family may be located. Leave messages with neighbors letting them know that educators at the school are concerned about the student and family and would like them to contact the school. Remember to leave your contact information behind.

Open Discussion

In your small groups, discuss the question:

1. What can you do, in your current role, to support the transition back to school?

Please designate a speaker who will report back highlights for 1-2 minutes to the large group.
Please take poll now and complete evaluation survey sent with thank you email!

Stay tuned for “Learning Together Every Day” Attendance Awareness Campaign 2020
THANK YOU!