



Research Brief

Attendance and Truancy Programs

Question: What are some program ideas to help encourage and support student attendance?

Summary of Findings:

According to the 2000 census, high school dropouts had a 52% employment rate, compared to 71% for high school graduates and 83% for college graduates. According to NCSE, the national dropout rate is 30% of which 80% had been chronically absent from school (*School attendance tracking: Challenges and effective practices*), which puts the high school completion rate in the United States at tenth in the world (*One-third of a nation*). Excessive absences and trancies usually equate to poorer achievement, mediocre self-esteem, lower promotion and graduation rates and lesser employment potential, all of which frequently lead to a student dropping out of school. There are many reasons that students are truant and/or do not attend school such as: boredom in classes because the work is too easy and/or has no relationship to their real life; frustration in classes due to lack of basic skills; their friends are doing it; being suspended; having poor relationships with a teacher(s); missing the bus and not having an available alternative; lack of feeling safe in school; being bullied; lack of clean and/or appropriate clothing; babysitting for siblings and/or other relatives; translating for parents; working and financially contributing to their family; and domestic violence.

Many programs work with law enforcement and the judicial system to enforce attendance and truancy policies. These programs often hold parents accountable for their child's attendance. Sanctions are often in terms of fines levied against the parents. Students are often given community service to serve on their own time as a consequence of poor attendance. In Hawaii, the School Attendance Program known as SAP, works closely with the courts. If a student is truant, they must attend a four hour Saturday session with their parents about laws and gang awareness. If they fail to report, they are referred to family court.

In Anne Arundel County, pupil personnel workers are utilized to visit homes of students who are absent or truant 36 or more days. In 2001 there were 32 workers and the county had 665 truants. In 2006, with only 12 pupil personnel workers, there were 1,105 truants. In other districts, students with poor attendance and/or truancy issues may not be allowed to drive.

It was highly encouraged in the literature that schools and districts provide incentives for students with good and improved attendance on a regular basis. Some schools offer things such as free lunch coupons, free breakfast, pizza parties, ice-cream socials, certificates and



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have regular recognition ceremonies for these students. In some districts such as Casper, Wyoming, Temecula Valley, California and Phoenix, Oregon, students with good attendance have an opportunity to win a car. In Detroit, students are entered in raffles for iPods and laptop computers. Other recommendations to encourage good attendance were to:

- offer tutoring
- provide drug prevention programs
- add additional security to deal specifically with attendance and truancy issues
- make mentors available
- educate parents and the community
- deal with families as part of the neighborhood and community
- offer a welcoming and supportive environment
- welcome back a student when they return from an absence
- have a closed campus

In the literature, there appears to be many programs that aim at curbing truancy and poor attendance. Those that report success have the following common characteristics:

- accurate record keeping. There are common definitions that are followed by all staff. There is a consistent form of keeping and reporting attendance.
- student whereabouts are known. When a student leaves class and/or is not in class, it is appropriately noted and/or reported.
- consequences are well-known and consistently followed.
- parents are contacted immediately when a student is not in class and/or school. In many cases this means that a parent is contacted at work.
- the attendance and truancy policies are well developed and known by all of the stakeholders. The community also helps in supporting this by not selling things to school aged students during school hours, unless they are with an adult.
- data analysis is done on a regular basis and used to make changes as necessary.
- adults are positive role models and there is high student bonding with adults.
- interactions between and among students and staff are respectful and nurturing.



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Online Resources:

- 10 things a school can do to improve attendance
This piece briefly cites specific ideas for improving attendance in schools.
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancypreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/6.pdf>
- Attendance violations: School's and law enforcement's responsibilities
Interventions and enforcement strategies that encourage school attendance are outlined in this article.
<http://www.iatdp.org/Articles/Journal%20Article%20Attendance%20Violations.htm>
- Best practices in developing truancy reduction programs
A one page list that briefly describes ideas for reducing truancy in schools.
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancypreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/8.pdf>
- Blueprints for violence prevention programs that reduce truancy and/or improve school attendance
Descriptions of school-based, community-based, and school-community based attendance and truancy programs are provided in this extensive document.
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancypreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/115.pdf>
- Board initiates program to help cut dropout rate
A brief description of a program to deal with students when they begin to show signs of potential attendance problems is given in this article.
<http://www.iatdp.org/Articles/Mary%20Anne%20DO%20Article%2011-13-03.htm>
- Driver's license & school attendance program
These are the guidelines from Florida on their school attendance and driver's license policy for high school students.
<http://attendanceservices.dadeschools.net/driverlicense.htm>
- How to evaluate your truancy reduction program



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Different strategies on ways in which to establish and utilize data on school truancy provided are provided in this piece.

<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/68.pdf>

- International Association for truancy and drop out prevention
This is the home site with live links to conference information and appropriate articles.
<http://www.iatdp.org/index.html>
- Joint efforts to improve school attendance
This brief article describes ideas for the legal system and community to work with the schools to help improve attendance.
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/13.pdf>
- Merced County attendance project
A final report of an attendance program in California that worked with students ages 6-15 is presented in this publication.
<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/research/res/pdf/caleval/MerCAPFinalReport.pdf>
- National Center for School Engagement
This is the home page for this organization that provides information on research and publications to promote “attendance, attachment and achievement.”
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/index.cfm/Truancy%20Program%20Registry>
- National Center for School Engagement
This page has active links to research on attendance and truanacies.
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/index.cfm/Research%20Publications>
- One third of a nation
This extensive report explores reasons why students drop out of school.
<http://search.ets.org/custres/query.html?qp=url%3Awww.ets.org%2Fresearch%2Fresearcher&qp=url%3Awww.ets.org%2Fmedia%2Fresearch%2Fpdf&fl0=AU%3A&ty0=w&tx0=+&op0=&fl1=TI%3A&ty1=w&tx1=+One+third+of+a+nation&op1=&fl2=RN%3A&ty2=w&tx2=+&op2=&fl3=SN%3A&ty3=w&tx3=+&op3=&fl4=PY%3A&ty4=w&tx4=+&op4=&fl5=KW%3A&ty5=w&tx5=+&op5=&fl6=AB%3A&ty6=w&tx6=+&op6>



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<http://www.principalspartnership.com/research-briefs/On-the-truancy-front-line.html>

- **On the truancy front line**
A description of the pupil personnel workers program and how they work to get students who are truant back in school is given in this article.
http://www.iatdp.org/Articles/Truancy_Balt_Sun.html
- **Raider News**
This is a school newspaper from Hawaii that lays out its attendance and truancy policies.
<http://teacherweb.com/HI/Kauaihigh/Raiders/h4.stm>
- **Sample policy and administrative regulation CA**
This piece provides the policy regarding school attendance in California.
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/samplepolicy.asp>
- **School attendance demonstration project: An evaluation of a program to motivate public assistance teens to attend and complete school in an urban school district**
This is an abstract on an article about a study done with students who were considered to be “at risk.”
<http://rsw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/12/2/222>
- **School attendance program Honolulu, HI**
This is a brief description of this area’s school attendance program.
<http://www.honolulupd.org/jsd/jsdsap.htm>
- **School attendance program Honolulu, HI**
This site provides sample truancy letters to parents.
<http://sssb.k12.hi.us/programdescriptions/SAP.htm>
- **School attendance and review boards handbook**
This is the handbook from CA that governs attendance in the state.
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/documents/sarb02.pdf>
- **School attendance tracking: Challenges and effective practices**
A list of suggestions that could assist in more accurately tracking attendance rates is provided in this report.



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<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancypreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/55.pdf>

- **States pull out stops to curb truancy**
This article describes numerous efforts of many states to improve school attendance through the implementation of different programs.
<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=175857>
- **Strategies to help solve our school dropout problem**
15 strategies to assist in helping curb student dropouts are briefly described in this article.
<http://www.iatdp.org/Articles/Journal%20Article%20Dropout%20Prevention.htm>
- **Statistics from Florida**
Statistics from 2004-2005 on the impact of attendance and students being able to maintain their driving privileges are provided in this section of the Florida code.
<http://www.fldoe.org/faq/default.asp?Dept=107&ID=511#Q511>
- **Student truancy**
A summary of the characteristics of student truancy is provided in this piece.
<http://www.kidsource.com/education/student.truancy.html>
- **Student truancy**
Although this article is dated 1999, it provides numerous suggestions for dealing with issues of truancy.
<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest125.html>
- **Triumph over truancy: Tips for improving school attendance**
This article describes several programs that are helping curb poor attendance and truancy.
http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin/admin442.shtml
- **Truancy in Hawaii and beyond**
Five key elements and recommendations to combat truancy are described in this article.
<http://www.hawaii.edu/truancy/bestpractices.htm>
- **Youth out of school: Linking absence to delinquency**



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This exhaustive report from Colorado describes many issues dealing with the causes of delinquency and provides suggestions for combating them.

<http://www.coloradofoundation.org/pdf/DonnerReport2.pdf>

- Youth who drop out
Reasons why students drop out of school along with active links to many sites on this topic are provided in this article.
<http://www.focusas.com/Dropouts.html>

Schools

- Elgin High School, IL
This is the attendance program policy and its description for this high school.
<http://www.u46.k12.il.us/ehs/deans/attend.htm>
- Grosse Pointe North High School, MI
This is the specific attendance and intervention policy for the school.
<http://south.gpschools.org/general/0607%20Attendance%20Policy.pdf>
- Grosse Pointe Public Schools, MI
A description of the district's attendance policy and interventions are provided in this piece.
<http://south.gpschools.org/general/0607%20Attendance%20Policy.pdf>
- Kau'i High School, HI
This is a copy of the school's newsletter from January/February 2007 and it provides a detailed description of their attendance policy.
- Lindenhurst High School, IL
This is the school's attendance policy.
<http://www.u46.k12.il.us/ehs/deans/attend.htm>
- Waipahu High School, HI
The school's attendance policy and specific steps in the program are provided in this piece.
http://www.waipahuhigh.k12.hi.us/attendance_policy.htm



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