Important to Remember:

- The winter season is one of the most challenging times for attendance; plan Attendance Challenge Days and strategically place Spirit Days to reinforce attendance when students might be less motivated to come.
- Plan a back to school motivator for the day after Thanksgiving and Winter Break. When the students have something to look forward to, they are more likely to get back on time.

Celebrating Our Wins!

- Entering into Week 10, CPS is holding on to a 95% attendance average
- As of 10/30 this year, we have 492 of 674 schools at 95% or better; the same time last year, we had 476 of 663 schools at 95% or better
- As of 10/31, District Chronic Absenteeism and Chronic Truancy is lower than it was last year

Best Practice Sharing from Network 13’s Metcalfe ES

Principal Stephen Fabiyi is in his second year at Metcalfe. He was kind enough to co-present with Attendance and Truancy (A&T) at the principal conference this summer around attendance practices. Everyone shared how much they appreciated his honesty around building an attendance culture at his school. A&T was not surprised to see that Metcalfe was 3% higher in attendance compared to this time last year.

When asked what was different this year, he shared that the school changed their mission and vision. It was important to get focused and really capture what it was that Metcalfe had to be. Their mission: We will develop the academics, sportsmanship and creativity in every member of our community. Their vision: We are preparing leaders to solve global challenges.

Principal Fabiyi shared, "We decided this school belongs to the community. We have to develop the children, each other, the parents, the businesses, the teachers, everyone in our building, and let that spill into the community. We have to grow together to be a better school. It's not just about academics. It's about fostering the talent that needs to be nurtured but is intrinsic in our students and their families. Last year was about motivating students to come to school but this year it's about accountability. Last year was incentive based, this year it's about cultivating the intrinsic aspect of the necessity of coming to school. We make a big fuss about our kids not coming AND coming to school." They use the PA system to bring attention to great attendance behavior by giving shout outs at the end of each day. They use Check In/Check Out to support students as well. Their Climate Team is new this year, and it has an important role. The Climate Team goes around to each classroom between 8:15-8:30am, and they collect shout-out lists--names of students who deserve praise; the team then makes calls for a half hour. It really has changed the relationship between the school and the families. Even the security guard is part of this positive call effort.

The staff has a running slogan, "If we know the rules of the game, we have a chance at winning." Principal Fabiyi makes sure that data is always shared and everyone is looped in so they know the targets and they know the administration will back them up. It is a shared responsibility. "When I shared where we landed on the SQRP because of attendance, it crystallized it for everyone." There is a collaborative willingness and honest spirit about what has to get done, but the school needed a vision and plan.

When Principal Fabiyi took a pulse check at week 5, he saw that Metcalfe was at 97% this year vs. 93% last year. "There were just a few shifts that needed to be made to improve the culture. I can really truly start seeing that the actions we are taking now are putting the school on top; it's about incremental growth, so it's sustainable. The people in the neighborhood are seeing that we have music and dance studios, jazz cafes, prairie-lands, the kids are going on field trips like kids are supposed to. We have a comprehensive gifted program. The kids need to be here so we can do all this; they are coming, so the possibilities are limitless."
Best Practice Sharing from Network 10’s Blair Elementary

Attendance and Truancy had the privilege of speaking with Principal Karen Bryar of Blair ES. Blair ES services students in grades PE through 1. Principal Bryar stated that attendance at Blair is about whole child development, engaging the child throughout the entire school day. Ms. Bryar said that each child is not only educated in the traditional learning process, but each student is also trained physically and cognitively, as Blair educates the entire individual as a whole. Language, fine motor skills and gross motor skills come together like pieces of a puzzle and the students benefit fully as their personalities are revealed and they embrace the process of learning.

To help cultivate the children of Blair, several other programs are introduced which parallel nicely with Blair’s literacy program. Blair has a therapeutic gardening program, a music program and an arts & dance program, all of which support Blair’s method of learning to engage the child. Instruction must stimulate the mind and inspire the whole self.

Principal Bryar also discussed the importance of parent partnerships and school wide activities. “We do trainings with our parents once a month so that they understand what is going on in the classroom and how to continue these lessons at home.” Blair hosts an annual Thanksgiving Feast where community partners, parents, and students eat together and express how grateful they are for all that others do for them. The students love to share in creating the feast by designing centerpieces for each table, dressing in period clothing and breaking bread as a group. The shared goal is that the families and the school staff learn about the child together. A dialogue is created that empowers both the school staff and the families.

Blair also has wonderful support from the community. Last Christmas a company’s photographer volunteered to create a school calendar that was used as a fundraiser. Several companies provide donations to Blair, and Blair students learn to give back the generosity shown to them by creating care packages for homeless shelters, collecting supplies and donations for the shelters. “Modeling generosity is part of the lessons taught to Blair students, because their own successes have benefitted from such a spirit of giving.”

Principal Bryar has been at Blair for nine years and does not hesitate to state that she has the greatest staff that anyone could ever have. “Nothing is accomplished without their dedication and what they do. Because each child is different, each lesson is tailored to fit the individual’s need; the staff treats the children as their own. They are all amazing.”

“When asked about specific wins of which she is proud, Principal Bryar paused and said, “I get wins every day because I get so many firsts with these students.”

Pictured Principal Bryar with (1) Aiden Richart, (2) Isabel Barrios, and (3) Leonardo Hernandez.

Best Practice Sharing from Network 12’s Coles Elementary

This year Coles ES has launched their attendance newsletter—The Coles Chronicle. It is a weekly publication put together by AP Estes. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform the teachers and keep them updated and involved with attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is OUR Goal? Attendance: 95%</th>
<th>Where are WE? Attendance: 96.47%</th>
<th>Last Week: 96.44%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Here’s Lozano ES of Network 6 doing an amazing job spreading the word about strong attendance!
Best Practice Sharing from Network 8’s
Hedges Elementary

At Hedges Elementary, the Attendance Committee played a key role in bringing the school’s attendance rate two percentage points above where they stood at this time last year. The Committee members developed an attendance procedure that is followed every day at the school, with each member taking responsibility for one piece of the process. The morning bell signals the start of school at 7:45 am, and teachers are required to submit their attendance by 7:52 am. After allowing time for tardy students, at 8:30 am the office clerk checks to make sure all attendance has been submitted, and then conducts a head check in each classroom. This check ensures that head counts match the attendance submitted, and the clerk corrects any discrepancies. Next, a Hedges School Community Representative (SCR) works with the clerk to phone the homes of all absent students. The Dean of Students and SCR then conduct home visits to the homes of students who have repeated absences. Meetings with parents are ongoing, and sometimes include students, as the school identifies at-risk or struggling students.

Teamwork and shared responsibility are key to the success of the attendance initiative at Hedges. No single person is responsible for attendance; instead, the school team works together to troubleshoot and make sure nothing is overlooked. The team anticipated that time would be their biggest hurdle, but were able to overcome that challenge by supporting one another when the need arises, and monitoring each other to guarantee persistent vigilance. As Principal Garcia said, “The responsibility lies with each member. Each member has a step in the process they are responsible for; if a piece in the process is missing then the next step cannot be completed.” This team attitude and collaboration has paid off for Hedges, and we celebrate their attendance achievement!

Resources:
- Did you review the monthly attendance report and priority group deep dive report?
- Did you review the webinar on how to maximize the benefits of the Attendance Dashboard Page [https://sites.google.com/a/cps.edu/1357924465/home?](https://sites.google.com/a/cps.edu/1357924465/home?)

Keep an eye out!
The Attendance and Truancy website ([www.cps.edu/attendance](http://www.cps.edu/attendance)) is about to be upgraded. The site will be your one-stop location for all A&T documents, forms, policies, and other information. Pages will be targeted for parents, schools, and Networks. A&T will provide training on the new website when it goes live. We know this will be a useful resource for your attendance work moving forward.

HYDE PARK ACADEMY SCREAM-FEST with Power 92, 106.3, Katie Got Bandz and Network 9—a celebration for students with C’s or better, 90% or above attendance and zero suspension infractions.

Network 4’s Alcott Elementary is proud to be a 95% Attendance School!
NEW TO YOUR ATTENDANCE ROLE, OR NEED A REFRESHER?
In October, Attendance and Truancy launched the first-ever comprehensive online training for attendance. Called "Essential Procedures for Student Attendance", this training includes four short modules that cover general and technical knowledge of attendance procedures, leave codes, attendance communications, and data reporting. The modules are baseline training for anyone who does attendance work and the knowledge is essential to creating outstanding attendance systems. Each school is required to have two representatives complete the training and pass the final quiz with a score of 90% or better. The training can be accessed in the Learning Hub by searching for "Student Attendance" or for those without a cps.edu login, please contact amusher@cps.edu for instructions.

BEST PRACTICE

Are you...
• Celebrating Growth?
  • Recognize the students who have perfect attendance this quarter, but also highlight and recognize those who have improved from last year, or who had a rocky start but are showing growth.
• Putting a graduation contract in place for your 8th and 12th graders?
  • Students should feel great about walking across the stage, but it has to be something earned. Coordinate with grade level teachers and require students and their families to know what they are earning and what behaviors, academic and attendance expectations are required. Set them up for success!
• Sharing the ownership of attendance?
  • Everyone owns attendance, from the principal, to the parents, to the teachers, to the security guard. Students cannot improve in school if they are not present. Students who feel behind often act out and disengage. Being proactive about keeping everyone engaged goes a long way. Having everyone be part of the conversation makes attendance an easier lift.

Are you...
• Connecting all your school teams together?
  • There are more things to do than hours in the day. Make sure that school teams (e.g., ILT, MTSS) are complementing each others’ work and not doing the same thing. Often, everyone is talking about the same students who need support.
• Utilizing the Dashboard to identify students who are trending towards chronic behavior?
  • This past June, CPS was recognized by the US Department of Education for our Early Warning System Dashboard feature that allows schools to see students who are trending towards becoming chronically absent or chronically truant. Use this tool. Doing the heavy lifting now will require less intensive work later.

STOP AND SHARE!
How are you keeping attendance exciting?
How do you combat the Chicago cold from hurting your attendance?
Send in your ideas or photos of how you as a school or classroom are keeping your school motivated around attendance;
ZAMohammed@cps.edu