



Meeting the Chronic Absenteeism Challenge: Creating a Culture of Attendance



Attendance Solutions Network, Webinar Series Part 2
Dr. Robert Balfanz, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University
July 25, 2024

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Session 1 Recap
- Deep Dive: Creating a Culture of Regular Attendance
 - School Connectedness
 - Family Engagement & Communication
- Tools & Resources
- Good Strategies at Work
- Breakout Group Discussions
- Next Steps

Attendance Solutions Network

Starting the School Year Strong: A Four-part Webinar Series

- July 23: Recording Posted on the Webpage
- July 25: Today!
- August 6: Organizing for Success
- August 13: Aligning Existing Resources & Forming Strategic Partnerships

<https://www.partnershipstudentsuccess.org/attendance-solutions-network/>

Attendance Solutions Network

Small Group Problem Solving Discussions (optional):

Week of July 29th:

- **Building a Comprehensive Plan** (Webinar 1) – **Tuesday 7/30**

- 12:00-12:45 pm ET/9:00-9:45 am PT

- [Register Here](#)

- **Prevention: School Connectedness & Family Engagement**

(Webinar 2) – **Thursday 8/1**

- 12:00-12:45 pm ET/9:00-9:45 am PT

- [Register Here](#)

Week of August 19th: TBD

&

Peer-to-Peer Learning Community (90 minutes each):

Once monthly, beginning September 17th



- Dr. Robert Balfanz, Director Everyone Graduates Center, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University (JHU)

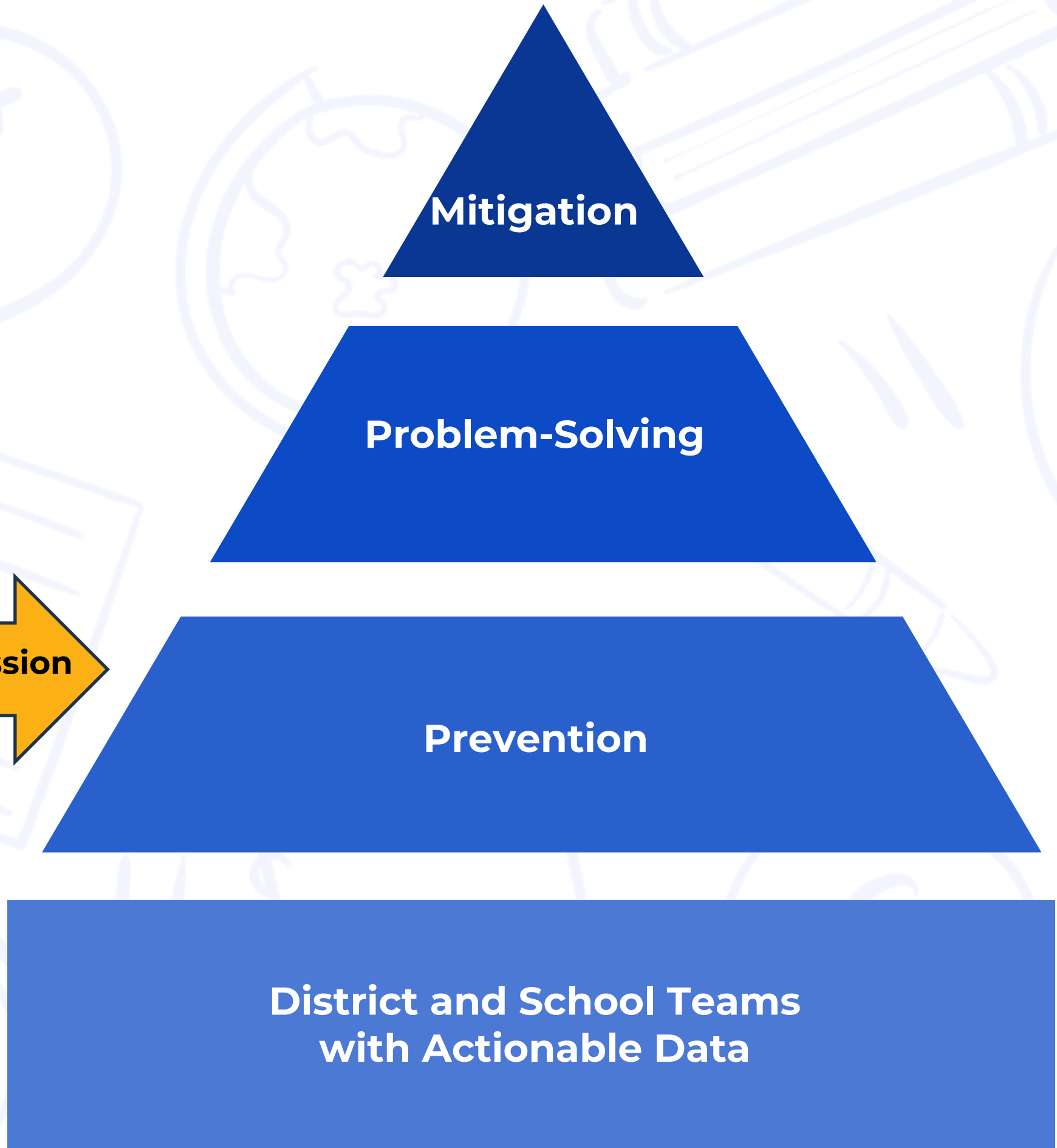


Session 1 Recap

Building a Plan – A Comprehensive Approach

- Understanding the Challenge
- Organizing Your Response
- Gathering & Aligning Resources

- [Webinar 1 Recording](#)
- [Webinar 1 Slide Deck](#)



**ORGANIZE
YOUR
RESPONSE**

**Need a
Systematic
Approach**

Prevention:

Creating a Culture of Regular Attendance

Effective Practices:

- Increase school connectedness.
- Family engagement.
- Messaging campaigns. (E.g. “School is a good place to be.”)
- Nudge letters.

District/School Actions:

- Take supportive—not punitive—response to absenteeism.
- Improve school climate, access to extra-curriculars, show how schooling connects to locally meaningful outcomes and opportunities.
- Anti-bullying efforts. (In-person and social media.)

School Connectedness



NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR *Student Success*

Vital to Youth Health, Well-being & Educational Achievement

- It improves attendance
- It improves mental health
- It increases middle and high school grades, high school graduation, and college enrollment rates

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm

School Connected is...

- Believing you are welcomed, wanted, cared about, and needed in your school
- As a result, school is a place you want to be

How Can Schools Increase this?

Students feel that someone at school knows and cares about them

- Strong relationships can be maintained through two short, and one longer interaction each week
- Conduct a relationship audit
 - Use google docs, and/or other digital tools, to have teachers in each grade, identify students who may not have a strong connection to an adult in the school, and then identify an adult to reach out to the student
- Create new possibilities for connections, have both students and teachers, fill out an interest survey, and then connect students and teachers with similar hobbies or interests.

1 to 1 Relationships

Students have Supportive Peer Groups

- Rebuild existing student activity structures to be inclusive – don't make students have to earn participation
- Create new affinity groups or student activities linked to a broad range of student interests
- Involve students in identifying and leading new student groups
- Community and Service Learning projects are good ways to create opportunities for students to make meaningful connections with each other

Students are Engaged in Helping Others

- Set up peer coursework and homework “hotlines”
- Homeroom Captains – older students support the attendance and belonging of younger students
- Think of activities that help others, that can be accomplished with many individual efforts

School is a Welcoming Place

- Talk with students and families to understand and address concerns around safety, transportation, learning environment, and school climate
- Create mechanisms for students to provide voice and insight on how best to make school welcoming
- Focus on Belonging and Engagement

School Connectedness can be Measured

- Establish a baseline, make improvement efforts, monitor their progress, and modify until you succeed*
- Have teachers put a sticker next to every student on their roll with whom they have a good relationship. Identify how many students have no stickers.
 - Which students do teachers observe as primarily being alone
 - Which students do not participate in any extra-curricular activities
- Give a short three-question survey: Do you feel welcome and as if you belong in this school? Are students supportive of each other? Do you have opportunities in school to participate in activities that help others?

Family Communication & Engagement



NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
FOR *Student Success*

Family Communication

TO ADDRESS INFORMATION GAPS

Families of chronically absent students often experience **information gaps** or misconceptions, which acts as a barrier to strong attendance. When these information gap are addressed throughout the year, attendance can improve.

According to EveryDay Labs' research, the most common information gaps are:

- Families do not know their child's attendance is problematic. A majority of parents believe their child's attendance is average or above-average
- 78% of families of chronically absent students don't know how to access additional support
- Parents underestimate their child's absences by an average of 2x
- Majority of parents believe absences do not negatively impacting their student, if they are excused

Attendance Nudges

Effective Attendance Nudges address information gaps and can support family connectedness. Research shows **effective nudges have the following attributes:**]

- **Personalized**, with actionable, relevant information for families
- Delivered via **multiple communication modes including paper/mail**
- **Engage families as partners**, using direct language
- **Accessible:** concise, written at 5th grade reading level, in home language
- Help families **easily connect to relevant resources**
- **Address information gaps:**
 - Number of absences
 - Student has more absences are average (if true)
 - Negative consequences of all absences
- **Establish a norm of attending every day;** do not inadvertently communicate “missing school is normal”
- **Sent consistently** to families throughout the year, **particularly when new absences are most likely**

Family Engagement

Building Relationships with families is key and should focus on:

- Recognizing families as partners and the experts on their own children
- Regular Asset based communication in child's home language
 - supportive tone with goal of supporting the family, so children can attend school
 - Use translation tools
 - Providing timely information to parents about their child's absences
- Responding to identified needs
 - Helping to ensure students have safe and reliable transportation to school
 - Ensuring students have access to clean clothes
 - Access to community resources and healthcare

Home Visits

The research and evidence-based **Parent Teacher Home Visit Model** has identified **Five Non-Negotiable Core Practices for Home Visits**

- Visits are voluntary and arranged in advance
- Teachers are trained and compensated for visits
- Visits focus on hopes and dreams
- Educators visit a cross-section of students
- Educators go in pairs and reflect

Tools & Resources:

Student Videos to Promote School Attendance

- A high school in Tulsa:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxkl1u2gxlc>
- Why being in school matters (with humor):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxkl1u2gxlc>
- A San Jose, CA elementary student message:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go8sbLgdL1o>

[Elk Grove Unified School District Family & Community Engagement \(FACE\)](#)

[We Love You Here](#) Campaign, Richmond Public Schools

[Free Resources](#) for Family Communication

Everyone Graduates Center: [Build a Sense of Belonging & Engagement](#) & [1:1 Relationships](#)

Good Family Engagement and Communication Strategies at Work

Lisa Levasseur

**Director for the Department of Family & Community
Engagement**

Elk Grove Unified School District (CA)

Elk Grove Unified School District





Success for Students



Teacher and Admin Professional Development

Family Wellness Series

Relationships

"People don't care about what you know, until they know you care."

FAMILY & STAFF WELLNESS SERIES

REGISTER ON EVENTBRITE



EGUSD DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



8/15: BACK TO SCHOOL! SETTING STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS

Juggling the academic and social emotional demands of school at any grade level can be a challenge for kids and families. Come learn strategies to ease the transition back to school.



8/22: YOGA AND MOVEMENT

Explore the benefits of yoga and movement in a joyful and interactive setting. We will focus on promoting holistic well-being by integrating yoga practices and mindful movement exercises.



9/13: UNDER PRESSURE: 3 PRACTICES FOR STAYING CONNECTED IN CONFLICT

Got Conflict? Come learn what your conflict style is, how that shows up when you're upset, then we will move into and practice 3 simple "moves" to support you in those moments.



9/27: TELL MY STORY: WHAT I WISH MY PARENTS KNEW

This evening includes a short film with children and teens sharing the inner struggles that they have with anxiety and depression. A mental health therapist will lead an in-depth discussion following the film.



10/5: FINDING JOY THROUGH CREATIVE DANCE

Join us for an evening of creative dance which includes integrating brain dancing, mindfulness movements, and imaginative storytelling.



10/25: UNDERSTANDING, PREVENTING AND HEALING FROM ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

Understanding our stories and how they impact us today can help us improve our own well-being and better support our children and teens.



Elk Grove Unified School District



Start with Relationships

Building Trust and Connections

Effective Family Engagement Practices:

- Parent Teacher Home Visits www.pthvp.org
- Positive phone calls and postcards home
- Welcoming Schools

District/School Actions:

- Created Family Wellness Series
 - Expanded to a Spanish Series
- Professional Development for Teachers & Admin
 - 3-part series on connecting with Students to Increase Attendance

Chelsea A. Montgomery

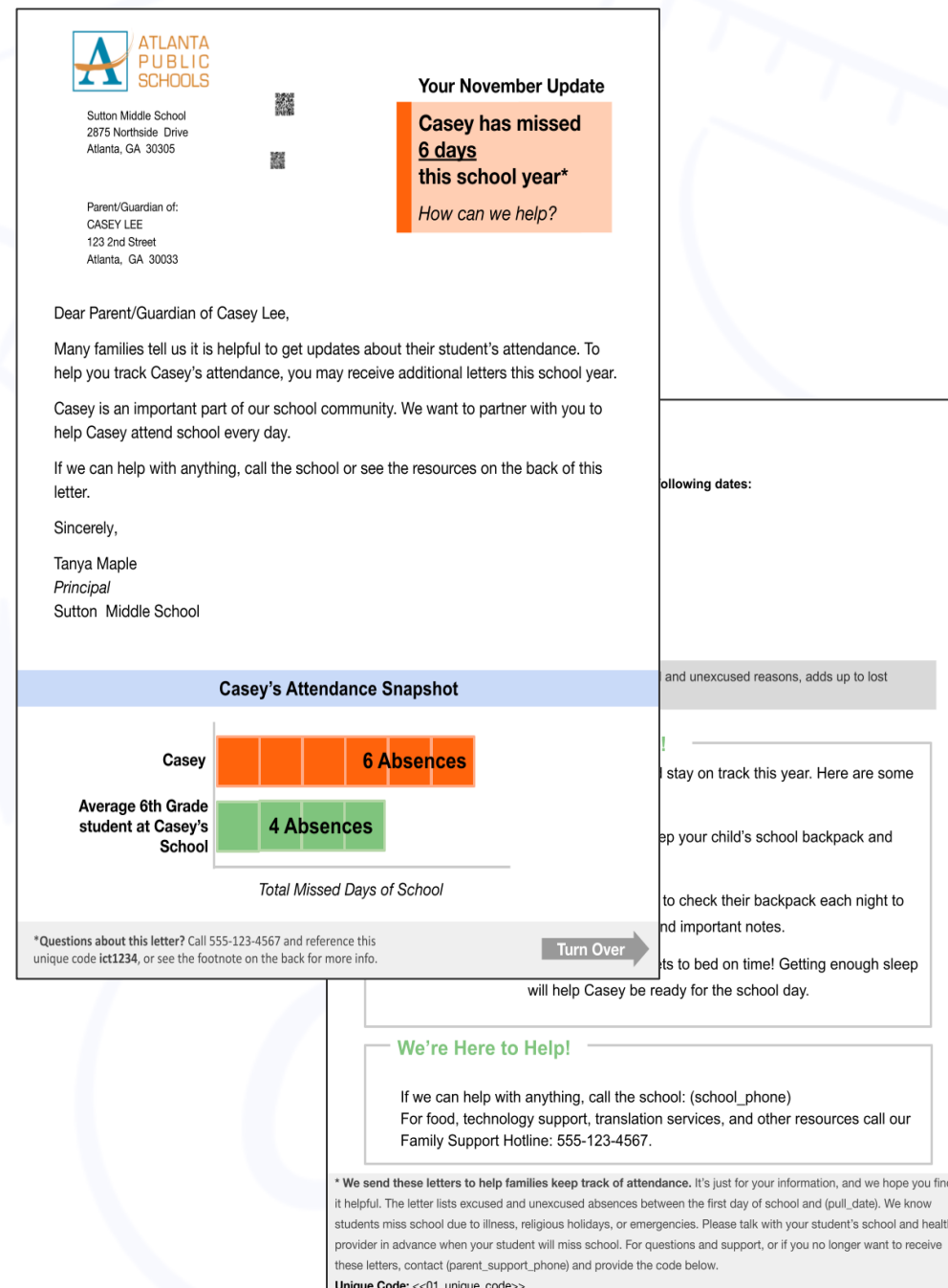
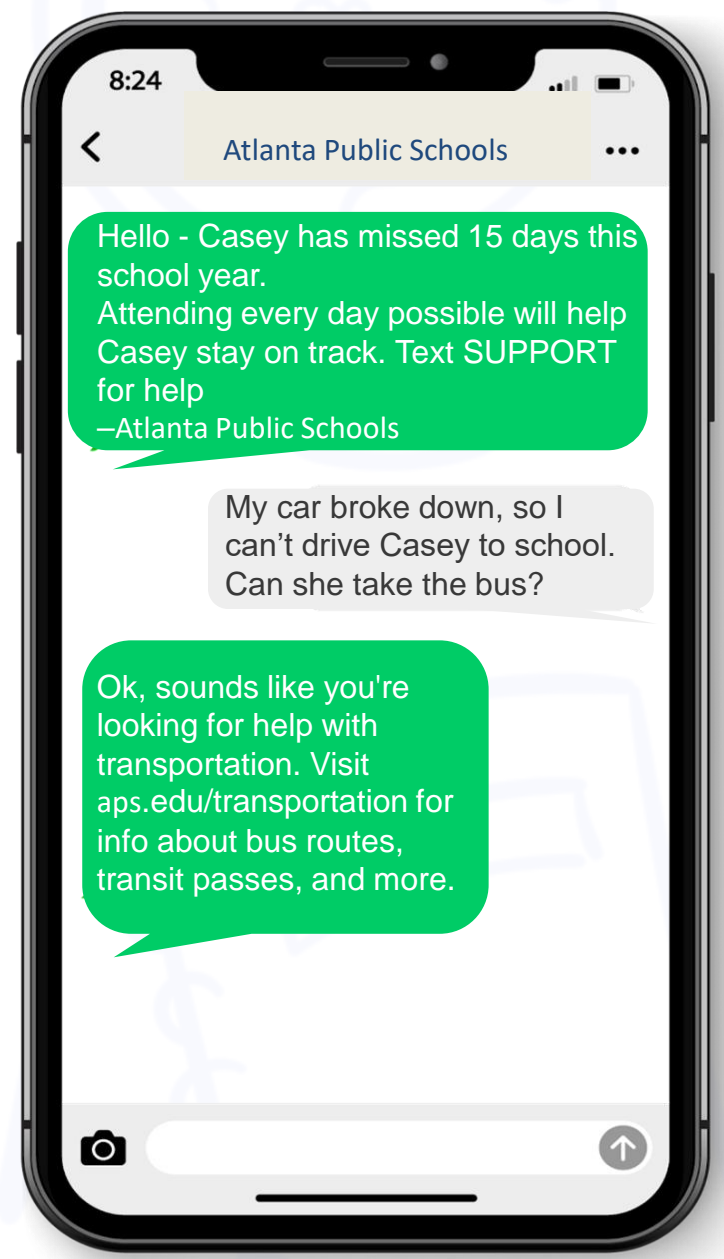
Assistant Superintendent of Student Services

Atlanta Public Schools (GA)



ATLANTA
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Design for Action: Effective multi-modal communication



- Low-lift evidence-based Tier II attendance intervention
- “Absences are absences” messaging
- Concise, personalized, actionable info
- Multi-lingual, 5th grade level
- Connect families to district & community resources through chatbot

Design for Action: Simplify Resource Access

Local Support

- Social workers at every school
- School nurse at every school
- “One-team” model

Centralized APS Student & Family Support Hub:

- Based on Community Schools Model
- Student Services Staff
- Partners organized into ongoing services, events and one-pagers

APS STUDENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT HUB
Opening October 2024

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RESOURCES, SERVICES, & PROGRAMS

- Parent Workshops
- Student Registration
- Homeless and Foster Support
- Free Store for Clothing, School Supplies, Hygiene Products, etc.
- Violence Prevention
- Truancy Support
- Sports Physicals and Immunization Events
- Informational Videos
- Student Tribunals
- Hospital/Homebound Support
- Housing, Medicaid, and SNAP Support
- FAFSA, College and Career Support

The Former Oglethorpe Building
601 (Beckwith) Dr. Thomas W. Cole Jr. Way
Atlanta, GA 30314

Breakout Groups

- Please introduce yourself – name, district, state
- If your district has been working to implement or improve school connectedness, family engagement, or messaging/nudge letters, please share some of your learnings, successes, and challenges.

OR

- What questions does today's presentation raise for you?

Group Norms

- What's said here, stays here.
- What's learned here, leaves here.

Next Steps

- Reminders:
 - Help spread the word!
 - Mark your calendars: August 6 (Webinar 3), August 13 (Webinar 4)
 - Targeted internal outreach: look ahead to topics - who else from your team should join?
 - Optional small group problem solving discussions begin next week!
 - District Examples - email jenlopiccolo@jhu.edu to share a strategy
 - Today's webinar will be posted within the week - encourage district/school teams to watch
- Survey - Help us shape this network:
<https://forms.gle/3u4YVRsMQ2JqsMsP9>

Thank you!

<https://www.gradpartnership.org>

<https://www.partnershipstudentsuccess.org/>



TWITTER

@NPS_Success



INSTAGRAM

@NPS_Success



LINKEDIN

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