Multi-Tiered Levels of Supports to Improve Attendance, Participation, and Retention

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My own work in this area

Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. (2014). A Response to Intervention Model to Promote School Attendance and Decrease Absenteeism, *Child & Youth Care Forum,* 43, 1-25.

http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10566-013-9222-1#page-1

Clinically

In Schools

With Schools

Nationally

And now Internationally!

Acknowledgements

- Attendance Works! www.attendanceworks.org

- My colleague, Christopher Kearney, PhD

- School personnel, families, and students with whom I have had the privilege to have worked

Thank You

Agenda: The What, The Why, and the How

The What: Key terms, At-risk groups

The Why: Research findings, Why MTSS

The How: Setting up your data system, how to interpret data to plan systemic & individual supports, evidence-based strategies by tiers, how to access additional resources

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3 Major Take Home Messages:

1. Prevention!
2. Prevention!
3. ????

The What: Key Terms

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

- Formerly: Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Often depicted as a tri-colored triangle
- Tier 3: "Neediest" - "A few" (Red)
- Tier 2: "At-risk" - "Some" (Yellow)
- Tier 1: Core practices - "All" (Green)

Characteristics of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

1. Tiered framework for providing evidence-based instruction and supports
2. Prevention Focus
3. Data-Driven
4. Multi-Step Problem-Solving Process
5. Fidelity
6. School-Family Partnerships

You Can Apply MTSS to Academics, Behavior, AND Attendance

Academic Systems

Tier 3/Tertiary Interventions — 1-5%
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- High intensity

Tier 2/Secondary Interventions — 5-15%
- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response
- Small group interventions
- Some individualizing

Tier 1/Universal Interventions — 80-90%
- All students
- Preventive, proactive

Behavioral Systems

1-5% — Tier 3/Tertiary Interventions
- Individual students
- Assessment-based
- Intense, durable procedures

5-15% — Tier 2/Secondary Interventions
- Some students (at-risk)
- High efficiency
- Rapid response
- Small group interventions
- Some individualizing

80-90% — Tier 1/Universal Interventions
- All settings, all students
- Preventive, proactive
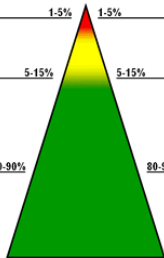
Definition of Chronically Absent

Most widely accepted definition:

Students who miss 10% or more of school
- excused absences
- unexcused absences
- Research supports this, Pre-K through Grade 12 (Preschool through Post-Primary)

Why count Excused AND unexcused Absences?

- Any absence involves lost instructional time

- Early detection & intervention

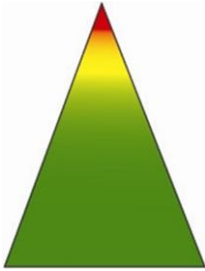- Based upon research

Option 1 Cut Scores

Tier 3: Absent: 20% or more

Tier 2: Absent: 10% to <20%

Tier 1: Absent: Less than 10%

Option 2 Cut Scores

Tier 3: Chronic Absenteeism
Absent: 10% or more

Tier 2: At-Risk for Chronic Absenteeism
Absent: >5% but < 10%

Tier 1: Satisfactory Attendance
Absent: 5% or less

School refusal behaviors*

- Student motivated behaviors

- Refusal to attend school and/or difficulties remaining in classes for an entire day:

  – Completely or partially absent from school
  – Morning misbehaviors to avoid school
  – Attend school under significant distress

*Christopher Kearney, PhD

Who are students at heightened risk in US?

- Living in poverty (90% more likely*)
- In special education (70% more likely*)
- Racial/ethnic minority (40% more likely*)
- English Learners (20% more likely*)
- Have health or medical needs
- Have anxiety issues
- In transition
- Homeless
- (I suspect – also those who are chronically tardy)
*Data from State of Utah

Who are students at heightened risk in Ireland*?

- Living in poverty
- Residing in urban areas
- Attending post-primary (compared to primary)
- Attending special schools
- With special needs, esp. emotional, psychological, & mental health disabilities (Banks, Maitre, & Mc Coy, 2015)
- (I suspect – also those who are chronically tardy)

*Data from Tusla report of January 2016 by D. Millar on School Attendance Data from Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2013-2014

Why focus on attendance Focus

- Not just problem in post-primary – Can (and does) start as early as pre-school or early primary grades
- Absences have large impact on student achievement, *especially in mathematics*
- Some data to suggest that approximately **75% of students who are chronically absent may have significant mental health needs**
- Chronic absence: RED FLAG that students are at risk for academic problems & early school departure (i.e., "drop out")

Why focus on attendance? Focus

Classroom "churn"
- M. Gottfried's (2009, 2014)research:
  – Students who are absent *or tardy* perform worse on standardized tests of reading and math achievement
  – Students whose classmates are absent *or tardy* **also** have lower achievement scores

Why Intervene early? Some data suggest…

- Students who are chronically absent one year are **13 times** more likely to be chronically absent the following year
- Students who are chronically absent the first month of school are **7 times** more likely to be chronically absent the remainder of the school year
  - Benefit of using percent rather than # of days as cut scores for tiers

Rationale for MTSS

MTSS promotes school attendance by its emphasis on…
- Prevention! And early intervention
- Progress monitoring with data on a regular basis – more frequently for Tier 2 and 3
- Interventions based on student needs
- Functional behavioral assessments & intervention
- Use of EBPs
- *Team-based approach*

The How

Start with a School Self-Assessment

- See handout" Does Attendance Really Count in our School?" from Attendance Works
- Rate each item:
  - Strength
  - Ok for now
  - Could be better
  - Urgent Gap
  - Don't know

School Self-assessment (cont'd)

- Administer this Spring

- Develop an Action Plan for next year

- Next year: Implement Plan, Evaluate results in the Spring, & Update for following year

- Implement Action Plan during the following year, etc.

Setting up your data set

Minimum:
- Decide which set of cut scores to use (Option 1 or 2) & set up field to sort by cut scores
- Each Student: # and % of Days in Attendance, # and % of days Absent, # and % of days Tardy, Grade level, Subgroup (e.g., Special Ed., Travellers)
- Set up: Allows you to rank order students from High to Low (Or Low to High) by Attendance & Color-coded by tiers
- Sort by Subgroup
- Sort by Days of the Week
- Sort by Month

Calculating Your School's Tiers – *I do*

If your school's student information system can't be set up to provide you with % of students at each tier, you can do it yourself!

<u>Simple Example:</u>

If you have 100 students and 68 attend regularly, then you have 68% of your students in Tier 1.

If 16 are in the "at-risk" range, then you have 16% in Tier 2.

If 16 are chronically absent, then you have 16% in Tier 3.

Calculating Your school's Tiers – *We do Together*

If 43 out of 278 students are *chronically absent*, you have _____% of students in Tier ____.

If 150 attend on a *regular basis*, you have _____% of students in Tier _____.

If 85 are in the "*at-risk*" range, then you have ___% in Tier _____.

What to look for in your school's Attendance Data

- Wide variability across grades and schools!
- Students who were chronically absent in previous year
- Students who were chronically absent the first month of school
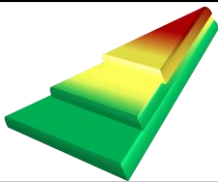- Check grade-by-grade data
- Check subgroup data

Benchmarking Attendance Data

How often should you monitor *tiered* attendance data?

- Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly?
- At least monthly; if possible weekly or biweekly

Establishing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports in your Schools

Your Turn

- Take out "Three tiered model to promote school attendance" template handout
- I have provided an example for each tier.
- Take notes on handout as appropriate throughout the remainder of my presentation

Three-tiered Model to Promote School Attendance for _____School

Circle Level: Primary   Post-Primary

| Student Behavior	Data Used	School/Classroom supports
Tier 1:		
Example: 82% of students are attending school on a regular basis	% of students in school 95% or more of the time	• Using Tier 1 school-wide system of positive behavior supports

For all 3 tiers of support: 4 General Strategies

1. Engage students and parents
2. Remove possible barriers to attendance
3. Recognize good and improved attendance
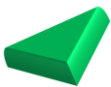4. Use data to progress monitor students

Attendance Works

Tier 1: Promoting a culture of attendance & reducing barriers
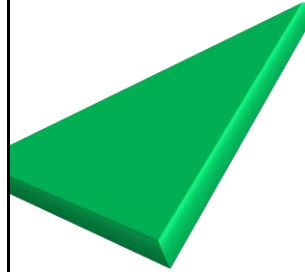
- Provided to **all** students

- Core set of strategies, supports, & regular use of attendance data

Promoting a culture of attendance

- Tier 1 Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
  - Delineating school rules
  - Explicitly teaching school rules
  - Positive incentives for following school rules
- Rewards for perfect or improved attendance
- Conduct school culture survey, act on data
- Display attendance data

Promote culture of attendance: What classroom teachers can do
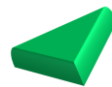
- Emphasize school attendance right from the start
- Continue focus throughout school year
- Use Parent-Teacher conferences to educate parents about importance of attendance
- Encourage parents and students to track student's attendance
- Share handouts on importance of attendance with parents & students
- Welcome students back after absence

Attendance Works (2014) Teaching Attendance

Promoting a positive school climate

- Regularly monitor school attendance and contact parents immediately following absence

- Nurture positive relationships with students & parents
  - Hattie: Teacher-student relationships - one of the largest effect sizes (d = .72)
  - Parent education AND Parent involvement

Promoting a Safe School Environment: Bullying prevention

Examples of characteristics of effective bullying prevention efforts*:
- Survey students
- Train ALL staff in BP efforts
- Have school rules & policies related to bullying
- Adult supervision in "hot spots"
- Intervene consistently & appropriately
- Examples: *Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program* (K-12), the *Bully Free Program* (Pre K-12)

*from www.stopbullying.gov

Health-Oriented Strategies

- Hand-washing

- Dental Care*

- *Healthy Air Walkthrough Classroom Checklist* – American Lung Assn. www.lung.org

Health-Oriented Strategies (cont'd): Sleep Education
Triumvirate for Good Health

According to Dr. William DeMent, a 2008 survey conducted at Stanford University revealed that over 99% of respondents had received information about the benefits of exercise, over 91% of good nutrition, and **less than 2% about the value of sleep!**

Promoting Mental Health & Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- FRIENDS program
- Incredible Years program
- Illinois SEL standards
  - Goal 1 - Self-awareness and self-management skills
  - Goal 2 - Social-awareness and interpersonal skills
  - Goal 3 - Decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts
- SEL Program Reviews: EC and Primary; Post-primary FREE at www.casel.org

Educating Parents on Importance of Attendance

- Share information about the importance of school attendance at parent events
  - AW handouts on the importance of school attendance
  - As few as 2 days absent a month can have significant impact on student achievement!
  - Share value of preschool and primary attendance!
- Post school day hours on front doors, school billboards, school websites

Tier 1 strategies (cont'd)

- Other Tier 1 strategies
  - Orientation activities (Ss in transitions are at risk group)
  - Linking with community resources to promote culture of attendance
  - Include foods that are representative of various cultures in the preschool and early primary "kitchen" areas

Tier 2: The "Forgotten" Tier
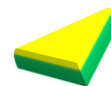
Provide PD to staff on early signs that students may be 'at-risk'

Please let us know…

Parents tells you that their student is very upset about coming to school or hates school

- Parents tell you that they have a battle in morning getting their student to school

- Student has difficulty coming or staying in school

- Frequent complaints of headaches, stomachaches

Please let us know…

- Students appears distressed, tell you frequently that they want to go home

- Frequent or long trips to drinking fountain, washroom to avoid being in classroom

- Change of behavior – for the worse

- Absences when there are certain events like PE, performances, exams, etc.

School refusal behaviors - relevant for Tiers 2 & 3

o *Student motivated behaviors*

o Refusal to attend school and/or difficulties remaining in classes for an entire day

o Completely or partially absent from school
o Morning misbehaviors to avoid school
o Attend school under significant distress

Christopher Kearney

Assessment of school refusal behavior – 3 key questions

- Q 1: What is the behavior problem?

- Q 2: What is/are the function(s) of the behavior problem?

- Q 3: What is the best response or treatment of the behavior problem?

Christopher Kearney, PhD

Q1: What is the behavior?

- Observable, measurable terms
- Looks like, sounds like
- How does it vary? Look over weekends, holidays?
Examples:
- Absence from school 10% of the time
- Upon arrival at school student refuses to get out of the car, cries, shouts, "I don't want to go to school. Leave me alone!" Will not leave car without two adult escorts.
- Refuses to get out of bed

Q2: What is the function of the behavior? Strategy: Conduct FBA.

Kearney: 4 major functions

1. ANA: To avoid negative affect, distress (anxiety, depression) related to school
2. ESE: To escape aversive social and/or evaluative situations
3. AGB: To gain attention from primary caregiver (Attention-getting behavior or AGB)
4. PTR: To pursue tangible rewards outside of school

1 & 2: negative reinforcement, anxiety-related

3 & 4: positive reinforcement

Q3. Function-Based Interventions

- For functions 1 & 2: Cognitive – behavioral strategies: Work with student
  - Deep breathing, muscle relaxation
  - Replace maladaptive thoughts with coping thoughts
  - Develop fear hierarchy, Exposures

If specific class is problematic (e.g., Math), use precorrections.

Most important interventions are behavioral!

Q3. Function-based Interventions (cont'd)

For function 3 (attention):

- **Work with parent** to change reinforcing activities
- Shift adult attention to reinforcing attendance-related behaviors
- Establish reinforcers & negative consequences based on school attendance
- Focus on regular morning routine

Q3. Function-based Interventions (cont'd)

- For function 4 (Tangible rewards outside of school) – Work with **family**:
  - Older students

  - ↑ supervision: Home, school (e.g., escorts)

  - **Behavioral contracting**

  - Problematic family dynamics

Note: Most difficult to address

Tier 2 and 3: If student is staying home from school…

Work with parents:

- Have student do school work and school-related work during hours of school day
- Get up at same time as would for school day (no sleeping in)
- Do NOT allow students to watch TV, play video games, use technology or any other fun activities

Tier 2 PBIS: Social Academic Instructional Groups (SAIG)

Types of skills-building groups:

1. **Prosocial skills**

e.g., Social awareness, Building & Maintaining Relationship, Friendship supportive skills

2. **Problem-solving skills**

e.g., Problem-solving process applied to conflict resolution skills, self-management, anger management

3. **Academic Behavior skills**

e.g., Self-management skills, study skills, organizational skills, academic support

Tiers 2 & 3: Student Engagement is Crucial

Cognitive
- Academic engagement

Behavioral
- Appropriate behavior
- Effort
- Participation

Emotional
- Social connectedness
- Sense of belonging

Mentoring: The more I do this work, the more I am focusing on mentoring

I. Peer mentors (or buddies)

Peer Mentors

- Encourage student to return to school
- Offer help to remove obstacles to attendance
- Provide social support
- Supplement teacher mentoring through tutoring, advocacy, resilience building & support
- May be more well-received if academic credit is awarded (post-primary) & program is culturally sensitive

II. Check-In / Check-Out (CICO)

- PBIS: "Early" Tier 2 intervention
- Check in with caring adult at start of day
- Check out with caring adult at end of day
- Each teacher rates student on behaviors in his/her class related to following school rules
- Report goes home to parents for review & signature
- Data are graphed: 80% or higher as goal

Tier 2 Behaviors & Data

Still looking at attendance – review weekly
More nuanced approach:
- Tardies (Frequency & Duration)
- Early school departures (Frequency & Duration)
- # of Missed classes/subjects or Percent of time away from the classroom
- Visits to Office for health or medical concerns (Frequency & duration)
- Requests to leave classroom (Frequency & duration)
- **Parent reports**

Your Turn – Tier 2

1. Please take out your three-tiered framework handout
2. Reflect on what you are already doing, ideas of strategies you'd like to add. Then jot them down on the framework.

Tier 2:	Data Used	School/Classroom supports
Example: Parent reports to teacher that student has started to resist coming to school, difficult to get child to school in the morning	Parent report	• Teacher reports to principal. Principal discusses with EWO. • EWO calls parent to discuss strategies • Parent arranges to have friend walk to school with student • Parent agrees to inform EWO if student resists coming to school • EWO monitors frequency of parent reports, monitors effectiveness of intervention
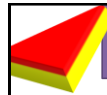
Tier 3 interventions

- Can include Tier 2 interventions but needs to be more intensive, broader in scope, more individualized
- Tier 3 also can include development of an individualized plan for:
  - Part-time attendance
  - Modified classes, schedules, or work
  - Class escorts
  - Increased supervision
  - Social skills training – such as peer refusal skills

Mentoring: Check & Connect: 4 Core Components

1. Mentor who keeps education salient for students

   Minimum of 2 years

2. Systematic monitoring of grades, attendance, etc. (Check)

3. Timely & individualized interventions (Connect)

4. Partnering with Families: Enhance home-school communication & home support for learning

C & C: The "Check" component

- Absences
- Tardies
- Suspensions
- Expulsions
- Behavioral referrals
- Failing classes
- Credits accrued

Examples of "Connect" Component

- Problem Solving:
  - Problem-solving meetings with student, parent, or parent & teacher
  - Behavioral contracts
  - Alternatives to out-of-school suspensions
- Academic Support:
  - Tutor-mentor
  - Individualized academic contract
- Recreation/Community Service:
  - After-school activities
  - Summer employment
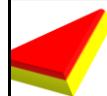
Tier 3 Interventions

- Consider for **special education** support
- Functional behavioral assessments/Function-based interventions – **more on this tomorrow**
- Ongoing consultation with community mental health professionals, physicians, family members, sometimes officers of the court
- Systems of Care / Wrap-Around Services (discussed this morning)
- Legal strategies as last resort

Tier 3: Alternative educational programs: "School within a school"

Characteristics:
- Small class size, close supervision, project-based and cooperative learning
- Individualized, often includes intense student mentoring
- Diverse instructional methods such as computers, direct experience-based learning
- Staff separate from rest of school

Tier 3: Family interventions

- Daily communication with parents

- Family therapy – educating parents, addressing family dynamics, easing logistical problems, etc.

- Parental skills training – enhance communication, parent commands, disciplinary & problem-solving skills

Tier 3: Other community-based strategies for families

- Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) encompasses intensive home-based strategies to:
  - Improve family functioning and support
  - Increase social & academic skills
  - Address psychiatric disorders
  - Reduce association with deviant peers
  - Minimize barriers to service delivery

Tier 3 Behaviors & Data

Still looking at attendance – daily
More nuanced approach:
- Tardies (Frequency & Duration)
- Early school departures (Frequency & Duration)
- # of Missed classes/subjects or Percent of time away from the classroom
- Visits to Office for health or medical concerns (Frequency & duration)
- Requests to leave classroom (Frequency & duration)
- Parent reports
- **More individualized data – more tomorrow**

Your Turn: 3 Tiered Model Template

- Reflect on what you are already doing and ideas of strategies you'd like to add.
  - Jot them down on the framework handout

Resources Handout

Resources to Promote School Attendance and Tackle Problematic Absenteeism

Compiled by: Patricia A. Graczyk, PhD (Feb 28 2016)

Websites:

Attendance Works: www.attendanceworks.org: There is a WEALTH of great information on this website from self-assessments to parent handouts, webinars, toolkits for teachers and educator leaders, and materials to use to prepare and implement September Attendance Awareness Month activities, etc., etc.

Every Student, Every Day: A community toolkit to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. (2015). Available as a FREE download at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html

Collaborative for Academic and Social/Emotional Learning: www.casel.org: The premiere site for information regarding SEL. You can find SEL program reviews on their site for Early Childhood/Elementary and for Middle School/High School. Many resources available there FREE.

Take Home Points

- Students can't benefit from the educational and social opportunities afforded in school if they are not there ----- ATTENDANCE is the plate!
- An MTSS approach to improve attendance represents a viable approach for schools