

# TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN



This set of tips is for the superintendents and district staff who have signed on to our [Call to Action](#). It is a follow-up to our Tips for Getting Started, in which we recommend mobilizing your community by letting key stakeholders know about your attendance initiative and enlisting their support for your action plan. This provides a more detailed look at how to engage the community in developing, strengthening and implementing your plan.

## IDENTIFY COMMUNITY PARTNERS

**Mobilizing the community begins with identifying key stakeholders who want to partner with your school district. We recommend:**

- If your community is participating in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, tap the coalition in place to engage the community in improving attendance. See a list of participating communities [here](#). Attendance, along with school readiness and summer learning, are central pillars of its comprehensive approach to improving 3rd grade reading proficiency. All the right players might already be involved, or the coalition could consider using attendance as a way to engage additional partners in its work.
- Consider reaching out to other existing coalitions. Networks already organized to reform schools, promote health and/or improve communities might offer enthusiastic partnership and leadership around addressing chronic absence.
- If you don't have a plan or a coalition in place, compile a list and convene community partners who can help schools improve attendance. Natural partners include:
  - » Mayor or county leader
  - » Government agencies, including social services, health, housing and transportation departments
  - » PTA or parent advocacy groups
  - » Teachers union or leadership
  - » United Way and community-based nonprofits
  - » Local foundations
  - » Chamber of Commerce and business leaders
  - » Law enforcement
  - » Juvenile judges or prosecutors who deal with truancy cases
  - » Faith leaders
  - » Afterschool providers
  - » Healthcare providers
  - » Ethnic and cultural associations

# CONVENE AND FACILITATE AN ACTION PLANNING MEETING WITH YOUR COALITION

Once you have identified your coalition and everyone has committed to being on board, convene a working meeting to introduce key stakeholders to each other, discuss best practices in improving attendance and develop an action plan that builds upon an assessment of what is and is not currently in place.

## 1. Invite coalition members to meet for a learning and planning session

- Clearly state the intent of the meeting and share why the school district is committed to reducing chronic absence and mobilizing community partners to improve attendance. Explain that meeting will help ensure that everyone is on the same page with regard to chronic absence terms and the evidence supporting the importance of attendance for student achievement. Additionally, the goal of meeting is to identify strengths and challenges around attendance practice and develop a plan and set of next steps. Keep in mind that if the session is successful, it will likely be just the first of a series of ongoing meetings that will move solutions forward.
- Send out an agenda such as this sample [agenda](#).
- Set aside sufficient time to go through the entire agenda in one meeting (3-4 hours). If you are convening a newly formed coalition, you may need additional time for introductions and goal sharing.
- NOTE: If you have data on chronic absence in your community, you might consider holding another session to review the data, either before or after this meeting. You could also incorporate the data review into this session; however, plan to build in extra time if you do so. One option is to review the data prior to developing a work plan as a way of developing a common understanding of the scope of the issue and local opportunities for action. Or, you could review the data in a subsequent session that provides a deep dive into actionable data.

## 2. Assign one person to be a facilitator for the meeting and one person to be a scribe

## 3. Go through a round of introductions and team building

- Have everyone state who they are and what type of work they do, as well as one reason they feel combining forces to improve attendance is important.

## 4. Review or agree upon the charge of the group

- We suggest the following: to help schools and community partners work together to improve attendance and reduce chronic absence by maximizing resources available in the school and the community. Feel free to tailor this to fit what makes most sense for your community.

## 5. As a group, watch this [short video](#) and present this [PowerPoint Deck](#) on the impact of chronic absenteeism and key ingredients for improving attendance

- Both the video and the PowerPoint present the ingredients for systemic reform to reduce chronic absence: Actionable Data, Positive Engagement, Capacity Building and Shared Accountability. The self-assessment and planning portions of the meeting that will follow center on these four ingredients.
- If you would like additional information on strategies for reducing chronic absence, go to [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org).
- Have each person turn to the person next to them and discuss reactions to the PowerPoint. Share with the group.

## 6. Individually and then as a group, work through Attendance Works' District and Community Self-Assessment

- The district self-assessment is split into four sections mirroring the key ingredients for systemic reform, followed by a reflection and planning portion.
- Go through the sections one at a time, starting with Actionable Data. Tell team members to read through the section individually. Then, using dot stickers or some other type of marker, have everyone record their answers on chart paper so that the group can see how everyone responded. On the right is an example of the dot exercise, which uses the self-assessment questions in a large chart format.
- Have each person turn to the person next to them and discuss for a few minutes what they see in the group results. Then share out: What overall patterns do you see? Where do people differ in their assessments of the current situation? Discuss people's reasoning behind their responses.
- Repeat this process for the remaining sections of the self-assessment. Take breaks as needed.



## 7. Reflect on what everyone has learned and develop action steps for moving the work forward

- The last page of the District Self-Assessment has questions about strengths, priorities and existing resources. Walk through these questions as a group. You may want to use chart paper to document each person's ideas for most important next steps and to vote on the top shared priorities.
- Use this District and Community Planning Worksheet to outline a clear plan for moving forward, including deliverables, timelines, key groups involved, and who owns each piece.

## 8. Agree on process for sharing meeting notes, group check-ins and deliverable sharing and choose a date for the next meeting

- Make sure everyone is clear on their "homework" and their role in progressing the work of the team

For more information, visit [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org) or contact:

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