# Practice 1: Establish an Effective Attendance Team

Establish an Attendance Team that meets consistently to review both school-wide and student-level attendance data. Focus on designing and implementing activities and interventions aimed at improving attendance at the building level and also amongst individual students.

**Actions:**

- Identify staff in the building who are essential for improving attendance at the school.
- Establish a consistent meeting time that occurs at least every two weeks and commit to not cancelling the meetings.
- Ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by all members.
- Open every meeting with a review of action commitments from the prior meeting, and close every meeting with new action commitments.

**Potential Challenges:**

- Ability of the school leader (principal) to consistently participate.
- Finding a recurring time that works for all members.
- Building and student "emergencies" that pop up.
- Ensuring every team member commits to owing responsibility and assignments in between meetings.

**Implementation Tips:**

- Consider whether a separate/new meeting time is needed or repurpose an existing meeting.
- Keep the team under eight and consider these types of positions for the team: Principal, School Counselor, Attendance Secretary, key community resource partner (SUN, etc.).
- Begin meeting before school starts or as soon as possible in September to build momentum and familiarity with the work and to catch attendance issues as early as possible.
- Establish team norms and uphold roles for all members.
- Distribute meeting agendas in advance that include reminders of the commitments and timelines.
- Consider starting by focusing on specific groups of students, for example those who are attending 80-90% of school days, a specific demographic group or a specific grade in order to begin measuring impact.

**Resources:**

School Attendance Team Kit (includes sample roles

School Attendance Team Video

**all hands raised**

Education, Equity and Excellence
from Cradle to Career

# Practice 2: Use Student-Level Data

Use student-level data to track attendance and monitor intervention impacts at the individual student level. Available through Synergy (or other systems).

**Actions:**

- Extract attendance data, both cumulative and discrete, on a frequent and consistent cycle (data available every two weeks) and reflect on trends (and specific student situations) as a team.

- Enter data and notes on specific interventions.

- Reflect as a team on two key questions: What is this data telling us? and What can we learn?

**Potential Challenges:**

- Lack of consistency/ability/fidelity in entering intervention data into a centralized system and also in pulling attendance reports that allow team to conduct analysis.

- Can be time-consuming.

**Implementation Tips:**

- Designate one team member to develop competency and confidence at extracting data and preparing it for the Attendance Team to review. If you do not have a Student Attendance Response Team, identify a staff member for this role.

- If you have issues with student-level data contact your district-level attendance lead. If you don't know who that is, check with your principal

- Disaggregate data by grade and by race to look for trends among specific student populations.

- Identify which students received an intervention and which students are making improvements to identify effectiveness of interventions

**Resources:**
Sample report and analysis sheets

**all hands raised**
Education, Equity and Excellence
from Cradle to Career

# Practice 3: Positive Phone Calls Home Prior to School Starting

Using data from the prior school year to identify students whose cumulative attendance was below 90%, assign team members a set of positive outreach calls to make to students/families in the 1-2 weeks prior to school starting to build relationships early on.

**Actions:**

- Pull data on students whose cumulative attendance in the year prior was below 90%, along with family contact information and language spoken.
- Develop a positive script that includes, among other things: information on the date school starts, back to school activities and school and community resources available. Ensure callers are warm and responsive to needs that arise.
- Distribute the responsibility for calls across Attendance Team members. Utilize willing teachers if possible.
- Develop a system to track every attempted call, conversation and voicemail.
- Analyze data in the two and four weeks following the first day of school to track results and uncover learnings.

**Potential Challenges:**

- Staff availability before school starts.
- Can be time consuming (though not always).
- Finding ways to build relationships over the phone.
- Ensuring resources to address language barriers.

**Implementation Tips:**

- Be prepared to collect and share information from these calls, as the data can be critically important - from finding out about needed resources to learning that families have moved out of the catchment area.
- Spend time as a team preparing for the calls – talking about potential challenges, developing common messaging, etc.
- Use data to determine who should receive a call and then to track impact.
- Also consider positive calls home in advance of other key transitions, such as winter and spring break.
- Can be an especially valuable practice with students entering new schools (e.g., K, 6, 9). Work with district-level attendance lead to get data on those students.

**Resources:**

Positive Phone Calls Home Kit

**all hands raised**

Education, Equity and Excellence
from Cradle to Career

# Practice 4: Attendance-Focused Student Meetings (Group or Individual)

Using monthly data (or if in September, data from the year prior) to identify those students whose attendance is below 90% and initiate a student meeting to support improved attendance through goal setting, relationship building and possibly incentives.

**Actions:**

- Create the tools necessary for communicating to students and families, setting goals with students (calendars, work sheets, etc), and following up to acknowledge progress. Be intentional and clear in delivering/using the selected tools.

- Pull data on students whose attendance is below 90% and assess whether an individual or group strategy is your starting point.

- Determine whether you will use incentives, and whether individual (e.g. five days in a row = prize) or group (all here five days in a row = pizza party).

- Develop a system to track interventions and incentives. As a team, hold one another accountable for the consistency of meetings.

- Analyze data every two to four weeks, make adjustments, and determine a plan for monitoring and "graduating" students.

**Potential Challenges:**

- Pulling students from class time.

- Ensuring consistency with bringing students on and graduating them off once they reach benchmarks.

- Can be time consuming.

**Implementation Tips:**

- Consider focusing first on students whose attendance is between 80-and-90%.

- For individual student meetings be intentional: assign students evenly and using what you know about relationships with staff members. Ensure all members are using consistent themes and tools.

- For group meetings, ensure that the Attendance Team member in the lead has the support of teachers and staff and there is a venue to communicate expectations and progress.

- Ensure the family is communicated with about the meeting after it happens

- With older students, consider no-or-low budget incentives and/or group meetings to build positive accountability.
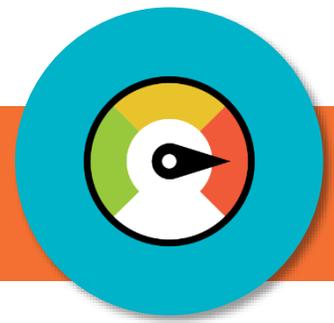
**Resources:**

Student Meetings Kit

**all hands raised**

Education, Equity and Excellence
from Cradle to Career

# Practice 5: Focus on the Most Chronically Absent Students

Schools employ a variety of support based on the nature and significance of barriers facing a given student/family. Some teams who have established Attendance Teams have identified that working with "Red Zone" students (below 80% discrete and/or cumulative) should only be explored once the attendance protocol is being executed fully and the team has made progress moving students from the Yellow (80%-89.9%) to the Green Zone (above 90%). Whatever stage in their work that a team decides to focus here, below are tips that may be helpful.

**Actions:**

- Pull data on students whose attendance is below 80%, as well as additional academic or demographic information that will be helpful in planning interventions.
- Ensure Attendance Team has access to all case notes/information to help in determining the best intervention.
- Develop a system to track interventions. Hold one another accountable for entering interventions into system.

**Potential Challenges:**

- Can be time consuming.
- These students and their families often have the most life challenges; as such awareness of multiple community resources is important.
- If not strategic in approach, can monopolize resources and drain team morale.

**Implementation Tips:**

- Assign "case loads" across the team and ensure those loads are manageable.
- Touch base with the student daily. If in school "see" and encourage them and if absent call or conduct a home visit.
- Determine the community resources connected to the needs of a student and family and work closely with your attendance lead or student services staff to determine how to best create a coordinated approach.
- Multiple, and tailored, interventions by a single adult that builds or has a relationship with the student/family are impactful.

**Resources:**

- Your district's student services staff.
- For some districts, utilization of the Attendance Matters protocol in partnership with Multnomah County Circuit Court.
- 211 Info: clearing house of social services available by phone or online.

**all hands raised**

Education, Equity and Excellence
from Cradle to Career