Improving Attendance in a Remote Learning Environment

The purpose of this brief is to adapt the suggestions and strategies provided in Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism to guide practice during remote instruction. Strategies from both briefs will be helpful during hybrid instructional models.

Attendance Policy

In the current context barriers to student attendance and engagement have only increased. Schools and districts are encouraged to emphasize a supportive multi-tiered model for supporting student and staff engagement and attendance rather than punitive attendance or truancy policies. Leadership teams will need to be aware of and adjust policy and practice in response to local trends related to infection rates, food insecurity, and homelessness.

Measuring Attendance and Engagement

Attendance can be difficult to monitor during remote instruction, but understanding the level of student engagement is just as important. Rather than just counting students who are physically in class, consider monitoring engagement with both synchronous and asynchronous instructional opportunities. For both synchronous and asynchronous learning consider monitoring multiple dimensions of engagement including overall time engaged, % of contact opportunities, product completion, progress toward learning outcomes, and person or role engaged with (e.g., teacher, paraprofessional, social worker, etc.)

Synchronous Learning	Asynchronous Learning
Take attendance during each online activity or class throughout the day	Use software tracking tools to record the number and percent of students logging in to each instructional opportunity
Record the number and percent of synchronous assignments or activities completed	Record the number and percent of asynchronous assignments completed and turned in

Then just as with in person instruction, monitor the number and percent of students in each of the following categories:

- **Regular attendees** (miss less than 5% of instructional opportunities),
- **At risk** (miss 5%-9% of instructional opportunities),
- **Chronically absent** (miss 10% or more of instructional opportunities), and
- **Severely chronically absent** (miss 20% or more of instructional opportunities)

When reviewing attendance data consider examining the following attendance trends across:

- Days or weeks
- Class periods or times during the day
- Subject area
- Types of activities (e.g., synchronous whole class meetings, asynchronous activities)

Reasons for Low Engagement in Remote Learning Opportunities

Understanding the reasons students may not be engaging in instructional opportunities can help leadership teams problem solve and address issues more efficiently. In general, students who do not attend school fall into three categories (Balfanz &Byrnew, 2012). These categories can be helpful to consider when reviewing remote attendance as well.

- Students who **cannot** engage in instructional opportunities due to a lack of an available device, no or limited internet access, illness or family member illness, or other family obligations.
- Students who **will not** engage in instructional opportunities to avoid aversive situations, for example, online bullying, discomfort in online platform, or instruction or activities that are too difficult in the absence of in-person support.
- Students who **do not** engage in instructional opportunities because remote learning activities are not sufficiently engaging or reinforcing or competing activities are more reinforcing. For example, online instruction may provide fewer opportunities for students to respond, involve less peer or teacher interaction, be ungraded or not required, and/or other activities (access to video games etc.) may be more reinforcing.

Each type of problem requires a different type of intervention and involves different influencing contexts. Just as with addressing in person attendance issues, supporting student engagement in remote learning will require collaboration and cooperation across schools, families, and community organizations.

| Unique factors contributing to engagement in remote learning	Possible Influencing Contexts		
	School	**Family**	**Community**
Remote learning platforms that are accessible across a variety of devices	*		
Parent and student training and support to access remote learning platform	*		
Engaging remote instruction (e.g., fast-paced delivery, visuals)	*		
Variety of activities and ways to participate in remote instruction	*		
Routines to support remote attendance (e.g., regular class times, quiet work space)	*	*	
Reliable internet access	*	*	*
Access to computer or other learning device	*	*	
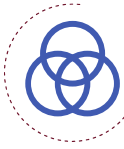
Addressing the Problem Remotely

In collaboration with members of the MTSS leadership team, consider the following modifications to practices that support in person attendance:

- Focus on building and re-establishing teacher-student and peer relationships especially for at risk students and freshmen.
    - Cultivating Positive Student-Teacher Relationships
    - Academic Seminar and Freshman Success
- Modify formal and informal mentoring programs to function in a remote environment
    - Strategies for Connecting with Students and Families
    - Adapting Check in Check Out for Distance Learning
- Provide direct instruction on skills related to engagement in the online environment with students and families. For example, directly teach and practice accessing and navigating online learning platforms, accessing support, strategies for scheduling and managing multiple responsibilities.
    - Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Instruction
- Provide acknowledgement for engagement in remote learning opportunities. Let students know being there matters and follow up with students who do not engage or miss assignments.
    - NTACT WEBINAR
- Provide frequent opportunities for student engagement including opportunities for them to provide feedback and make choices.
    - Engaging Instruction to Increase Equity in Education
    - High School PBIS Implementation: Student Voice
- Provide relevant academic remediation supports using individualized learning platforms and small groups.
    - Features of Explicit Instruction
- Provide support for families including specific training for families related to expectations and routines for online learning and, collaborate to provide school/home behavior support
    - Supporting Families with PBIS at Home Practice Brief
    - IRIS MODULE
- Provide and promote access to mental health supports including substance abuse supports. Acknowledge the increased stress and impacts on both student and teacher wellness. Proactively teach self-awareness and self-management skills and regularly screen for student or staff concerns
    - Opioid Crisis and Substance Misuse
    - Mental Health/ Social-Emotional well-being
- Provide consistent school, home, and community messaging and effective supports for physical health.
    - Returning to School During and After Crisis

After selecting practices that (a) maximize your ability to set students, families, and educators up for success in remote learning and (b) match the challenges you have identified with attendance, leverage your MTSS framework to more fully develop or adapt your continuum of practices to pro-actively support
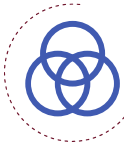
active student engagement during remote learning. As the problem intensifies the alignment between the reason for low engagement and the specific features of the selected intervention or practice must become more precise and specific. Also, once key practices are identified, consider systems needed to support successful implementation over time (e.g., training and coaching for staff, stakeholder engagement, fidelity monitoring), and examine the impact of these strategies on the rates of attendance and engagement in remote learning.

Adapting Supports

Just as with in person attendance supports, strategies to support engagement for younger students should focus on family supports and communication while those supporting older students can focus on direct student engagement strategies, skill building, and peer leadership opportunities. Additionally, supports will need to be adjusted based on the unique features of the remote learning environment such as number of teachers each student engages with, number of days per week students are expected to engage.