

Attendance and Mental Health

Bite (5–10 minutes)

Attendance Awareness Messaging

Each year Attendance Works supports a national Attendance Awareness Campaign. They provide a suite of messaging and resources to support local awareness-raising efforts.

To learn more, review the following resources:

- [Attendance Matters for R.E.A.L. Toolkit](#)
- [Attendance Works 2022 Campaign Key Messages](#)



Discuss with Your Team

- What communication tools and events could this messaging be embedded in?
- Who can you share this messaging and these resources with at your school(s) or district(s)?
- What talking points might you use when you share them?

Snack (30 minutes)

Option 1: Explore How School(s) will Respond to Mental Health Absences

Before discussing this with your team, review the following resources:

- [How to Organize an Effective School Team](#) (Attendance Works)
- **Preliminary** [HB 1834 Mental Health Absence](#) Guidance (OSPI)

Team Discussion



- In your school(s) which teams or which people are responsible for monitoring and responding to attendance and absences, including both excused and unexcused?
- What opportunities do you see to support “teaming on attendance,” so that this work does not rest on the shoulders of one or two individuals?



- What might your school(s) need to do differently to ensure that students who are excused absent are receiving supports and attention from school staff; and specifically, absences that might be caused by mental health concerns?
- Are there key individuals in your school(s) who would benefit from these guidance resources (Teams and Mental Health)?

Option 2: Review District Attendance Policy and Procedures



In preparation for a team discussion, locate and read your school district's attendance policy and procedure. Check to see if your district has updated policy 3122 with the recent June changes from WSSDA. Review the preliminary [HB 1834 Mental Health Absence](#) Guidance.

Guiding Questions

- Does your district policy reflect the recent changes?
- If it does, are there any gaps that still need to be addressed?
- Is there additional guidance you need from OSPI to get ready to implement this in the coming school year?

Please submit your questions and feedback to Krissy Johnson at krissy.johnson@k12.wa.us or Bridget Underdahl at bridget.underdahl@k12.wa.us.

Meal (90 minutes +)

Option 1: Watch and Discuss the May 2022 Attendance Works Webinar

What Promotes Engagement and Attendance? Insights from Students, Parents and Educators



Grounding solutions in the experiences of those most affected by educational inequities exacerbated by the pandemic is essential to recovery. During this webinar, we will hear insights gained from students, parents or caregivers, and educators about the barriers—including those related to coping with the pandemic—that they experienced over the past year. Speakers will share their views on what works to cultivate engagement and attendance and will discuss how to support students, so they participate in learning during the summer and through the fall.



Using your data is key to knowing where to invest recovery strategies. Learn how to leverage qualitative and quantitative data so you can assess whether your strategies are working and what could make them better.

Discussion Questions for Your Team

Taking a systemic and data driven approach to engagement and attendance

- What are the systems and practices that are currently in place to address absenteeism?
- Do those systems address both excused and unexcused absences?
- How could you apply what you heard on the webinar to improve the quality and use of data to inform your approach to reducing student absenteeism?



The voice of students, families, and educators

- Are you or the schools you support drawing upon the perspectives and insights of students, families, and educators to inform lessons learned from the past year and planning for the new school year? If not, how can you support your school(s) to take a more inclusive problem-solving approach, perhaps drawing on these two high-leverage tools:
 - [10 Ways to Collect Street Data](#)
 - [Speak Out! Listen Up! Tools for Using Student Perspectives and Local Data for School Improvement](#)
- What are students, families, and educators in your community saying about the challenges they are experiencing?
- Are there particular grades, schools, or student groups who are especially affected by chronic absence? What do you know about their strengths and challenges and perspectives?

Option 2: Making a Plan for Supporting Students to Reengage

National data showed that chronic absence was significantly higher last school year (2021–22) than in previous years. Anecdotally, OSPI has heard reports from school districts that absences were significantly impacted last year as well. This poses a unique challenge for starting the year strong with regular attendance and engagement; there are students that have been disengaged or out of school for significant periods of time. Now, before the start of the school year, is an opportunity



to make a plan on how to support these students to re-engage. Here are some suggested steps you can take:

Data Prep

- Identify the students who were absent for more than 20% of last year (20% represents severely chronically absent, and for a student who was enrolled the entire year, this amounts to 36 days or more)
- Identify the students who were withdrawn from your school or district and were marked with a negative withdrawal status (e.g., withdrawn with a U - Unknown or a D - Dropout code)

Team Discussion

- What other relevant data do you have for these students?
 - How many of these students have health conditions, live in poverty, are experiencing high social vulnerability, unstable housing, are in foster care?
- Who in your school, community, and region can support the re-engagement of these students?
 - Consider your Educational Service District, community partners, Tribes, local juvenile courts
- What is your school or district's process for transitioning students that have been out of school for an extended period? If you do not have a process, what could that process look like?



Option 3: Watch the Graduation Equity Webinar, “Anxiety & Absences: Exploring School Avoidance & Re-engagement Strategies”

August 10 | 10:00–11:30



The graphic features a dark teal background. At the top, the text 'Graduation Equity Webinar Series' is written in white. Below this, on the left, is an illustration of a yellow graduation cap and a tablet displaying a webinar interface with three speakers. To the right of the illustration is a bulleted list. At the bottom left is the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction logo, and at the bottom right is the text 'Washington Office of Superintendent of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION'.

Graduation Equity Webinar Series

- Designed with leadership teams in mind
- Foundational best practices from national presenters
- Washington practitioners who are implementing these practices in real life

Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Are you noticing an increase in student absences due to anxiety? We’re bringing you Dorothy Bearson from the Brooks Powers Group. She is an expert in school refusal and re-engagement strategies. Dorothy will talk about what school refusal is, how to identify it, and school strategies to support students experiencing anxiety-based school avoidance. Seattle Public Schools will be joining our panel to talk about how they’re putting this advice into action. Free Clock Hours are available for participating.

Register for the Graduation Equity Webinar [here](#).

