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The Nature and the Degree of the Relationship between Chronic Absenteeism and Student Achievement in a Large Metropolitan School District and a Small School District in Florida

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ABSTRACT

NANCY C. KLINE: The Nature and Degree of the Relationship between Chronic

Absenteeism and Student Achievement in a Large Metropolitan School District and a

Small School District in Florida

The Bring It 180 study provides insight and awareness into the importance of student

attendance and its influence on student achievement. This study examines the nature and

degree of the relationship between chronic absenteeism and academic proficiencies. The

research findings identify meaningful correlations between attendance and student

achievement in two Florida school districts.

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THE NATURE AND DEGREE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRONIC
ABSENTEEISM AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN A LARGE METROPOLITAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT AND A SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICT IN FLORIDA

Kline, Nancy C., Ed. D

Lynn University, 2014

UMI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to thank my husband, Tye and my sons Lawson and Aaron for always believing in me, and giving me the support I needed to complete this goal.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

Purpose and Background of the Study

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the nature and degree of the relationship between chronic absenteeism and student achievement in a large metropolitan school district, and a small school district, both located in Florida. The study of absenteeism and student achievement is important because determining why children are chronically absent can help in the identification and prevention of related issues, and intervention with successful actions to reduce low attendance (Balfanz, 2008).

Chronic absenteeism is disturbing since students who do not attend school regularly are doing long-term damage to their academic progress, according to a study by researchers from Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), in their study titled "the importance of being in school," find that absenteeism is one of the predictors of students dropping out of school prior to graduation. Additionally, their research indicates that children who miss 10% of school per month will have a higher incidence of dropping out of school, scoring lower proficiencies on standardized tests, and not graduate with their cohort (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Research studies link chronic absenteeism to low academic achievement and low graduation rates. Schools in New York, Illinois, California, and other states have identified the need to address the adverse effects associated with chronic absenteeism (Grad Nation, 2013). Students from families with low socio economic status make up a large percentage of chronically absent children (Attendance Works, 2010). Additionally, a direct prediction factor exists for poor children, who are chronically absent, to test lower on standardized tests

and miss more school days than children from higher socio economic status families (Balfanz, 2013).

The U.S. Census Bureau has been tracking the history of school attendance since the mid 1940s (Census Bureau, 2012). States legislate compulsory attendance laws that require children to attend school regularly. In Florida, local state and federal funding mandate school attendance beginning at age five, and also offer a free 540-hour Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program for children beginning at the age of four (Florida Department of Education, 2014a).

Statement of the Problem

The socially accepted norm is for school-age children to regularly attend school, with the exception being when they are ill or attending a special event. However, five million students are absent, one month of the school year or 10% of the school year, according to the study titled, "the importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools" by Robert Balfanz and Vince Byrnes (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

As a former educator in the classroom, and the chief administrator of a Local Education Agency (LEA), this researcher supports the idea that chronic absenteeism is detrimental to a student's individual learning. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012), in their research, identify the magnitude of the challenges facing educational leaders, policy makers, and school administrators with regards to chronic absenteeism. Their work focuses on the nation's public schools' attendance rates and reports on both high chronic absenteeism and national dropout rates (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Hedy N. Chang (Chang & Jordon, 2012), and non-profits such as *Attendance Works* and *Get Schooled,* advocate for policies that will provide solutions to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Rule changes restricting the number of days of absence is not the only measure necessary to improve attendance rates (Attendance Works, 2010). In this researcher's opinion the most meaningful policy changes will come when states mandate consolidated and transparent attendance reporting, and also by adequately funding average daily attendance through a weighted mechanism to incentivize consistent attendance for all students.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

When compared with children who attend school regularly, research indicates that children who miss school two days per month will have a higher incidence of dropping out of school, scoring lower proficiencies on standardized test, and possibly not graduating with their cohort (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Students who are poor, homeless, in shelters, foster care, or the dependency system make up a large percentage of chronically absent students. Children from low socio-economic households miss more school days than do children from higher socio economic households. In addition, it is predicted that children who are chronically absent will test lower on standardized test than will children who attend school on a regular basis (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

The rewards of parent participation and collaboration have been shown to be effective in increasing both attendance and student achievement. Comer (2005) found that parental involvement was a positive factor in increasing students' achievement. In addition, Comer identified a positive relationship between school attendance and increased student achievement.

Sheldon's (2007) research showed that students with attendance rates at over 90% had higher levels of achievement than did students with poorer attendance rates. Moreover, Sheldon found that chronic absenteeism was linked to lower levels of achievement. By addressing chronic absenteeism, Sheldon's study has significant implications for improving student achievement. Furthermore, recognition from educational stakeholders, and parents can be beneficial when action is taken regarding student absenteeism (Chang & Jordan, 2012).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Methodology

The data collected in the study titled *Bring It 180* are aggregate percentages of pre-published material regarding attendance, graduation, dropout, and truancy rates in two Florida school districts. The data used are accessible from the Florida Department of Education (Florida Department of Education, 2014). Additionally, data for the State of the District (2008-2012) in Martin County is utilized, along with information from the assessment and research department from the large metropolitan school district in Florida (District Data and Assessment, 2013).

This study compared attendance rates to academic proficiency, then examined the negative implications of missing 11 days or more of school annually by measuring test scores and comparing them to academic achievement. The study design and subsequent evaluation revealed correlational evidence that student absences over 11 days negatively impacted proficiency rates in math and reading when using the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

Operational Definitions of Terms

Average Daily Attendance: Defined by the Florida Department of Education is a measurement calculated as follows: Average attendance x membership enrollment x 100.

Chronic Absenteeism: Defined by Florida Department of Education as a student absent 21 or more days during the school year.

Truant: Defined by the large metropolitan school district as a student who is absent 15 days in any 90-day period.

Multiple Intelligence: Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences identifies that humans have several different ways of processing information, and has identified his eight intelligences: linguistic, logic-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner is informally considering two additional intelligences, existential and pedagogical.

Cohort Graduation: As defined in 34 C.F.R. §200.19(b)(1)(i)-(iv), the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who form the adjusted cohort for the graduating class. From the beginning of 9th grade, students who are entering that grade for the first time form a cohort that is subsequently *adjusted* by adding any student who transfers into the cohort later during the 9th grade and the next three years and subtracting any student who transfers out, emigrates to another country, or dies during that same period (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009).

Bring It 180 Toolkit: The Toolkit is defined as a series of documents, templates, strategies, website support, and resources combined into a user-friendly format that schools and districts implement to improve average daily attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Chronic Absenteeism: The Florida Department of Education defines it as missing more than 21 days of school per year, or approximately one month absent including both excused and unexcused absences.

Florida's Annual School Calendar: consists of 180 total days of school instruction for students (Florida Department of Education, 2014b).

Educational Theorist

James Comer discussed in his book, *School Power*, that when schools and parents work together, they can dramatically improve student attendance and achievement while simultaneously cultivating strong parent-teacher relationships. Comer's philosophy is extremely powerful in that it concentrates on improving the achievement of minority children by addressing positive relationships between home and school (Comer, 2005). Howard Gardner's theory of *Multiple Intelligence* illustrates how, effective teachers think differently about each student's achievement and intelligence, altering their methods of instruction to accommodate individual learners. As a teacher and district-wide educational leader I argue that exceptional teachers differentiate instruction for students by incorporating the use of multiple intelligences within their learning strategies.

Gardner's innovative approach to instruction identifies educator's instructional methods to meet the needs of diverse populations. His theories on multiple intelligences informed teachers about varied learning styles. This is important because we understand that children are less likely to attend school if they are discouraged with the learning process (Get Schooled, 2014).

Gardner's proposed methods of modifying teaching and learning, to match unique intelligences for students, goes a long way towards targeted intervention of chronically absent students. In Gardner's recent book, which he authored with Katie Davis, *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World,* he discusses the incorporation of educational technology in the classroom. In this book, Gardner and Davis captured the fast paced digital learning styles of the 21st century learner and agreed that children learn differently, and that these differences must be

cultivated and understood to keep students engaged and interested in consistently attending school (Education World, 2012). Using theories from Gardner on differentiating instruction, and from Cromer on cultivating positive teacher student and parent relationships, I argue that children and parents benefit from a learning environment that is readily understandable and enjoyable, and where both students and parents feel acknowledged and accepted (Comer, 2005).

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Correlation Between Attendance and Achievement

The correlation between attendance and achievement is shown in Figures 1-6), and display

lower student proficiency levels, with increases in student absences. Reading and math

FCAT scores in elementary, middle, and high schools are compared to absences ranging

from zero to five (0-5) days, and 20 or more (≥20) days. In each set of data, student

proficiency rates drop substantially as absences increased. The degree of the relationship

between attendance and achievement grows as the number of absence increases. The overall

implications for both the large and small districts is that reading and math proficiency

significantly decline when absences accumulate for more than 11 days, annually, and

considerably more at ≥20 days of absence.

Shown in Figure 1 is a small school district's elementary math, proficiency vs.

attendance in 2011-12 for fourth and fifth grades. It indicates that a decrease in proficiency

occurs as students accumulate more absences ranging from 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, and 16-20, and

≥20 days. The total proficiency rates for elementary school math drops from 66% proficient

at 0-5 days of absence to 29% proficient with ≥20 absences (Source: State of the District

2008 – 2012, Public Access).

N=2530

■ Non-Proficient   ■ Proficient   ■ Above Proficient
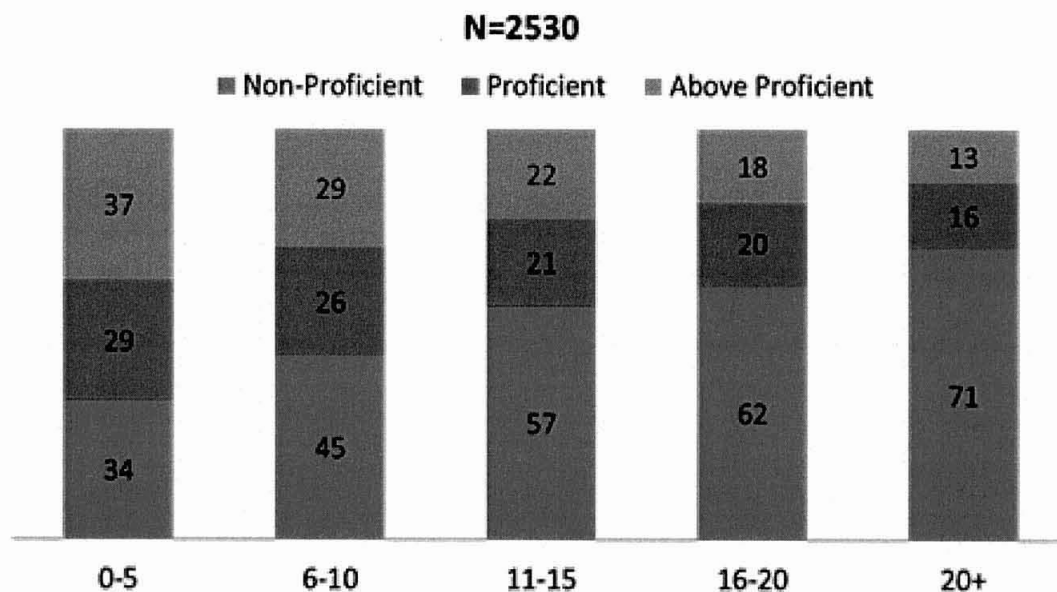
Figure 1. Small School District in Florida

Shown in Figure 2 are reading and math proficiency vs. school attendance rates in a large metropolitan school district, indicating a decrease in proficiency when correlated to low student attendance. The results of the correlation indicate a slightly negative but significant correlation between attendance, and reading and mathematics performance in a large metropolitan school district (Student Assessment and Research Department Data, 2013). On January 23, 2013, the Broward County Student Assessment and Research provided a data report to the Student Services Department, which contained the following:

The results of the correlation analysis showed a slightly negative but significant correlation between attendance and reading ($r = -.283$, $n = 156,352$, $p = .01$) and mathematics ($r = -.277$, $n = 114,122$, $p = .01$) performance. Furthermore, the correlation was strongest in the highest-grade levels grade 10 reading ($r = -.347$, $n = 23,104$, $p = .01$) and grade 8 mathematics ($r = -.330$, $n = 19,133$, $p = .01$).

Additionally, the figure below examines the relationship between attendance and academics. The figure shows, the proficiency rate drops dramatically as students

accumulate more unexcused absences. Overall, students with no unexcused absences

registered 70% and 73% proficiency in Reading and Mathematics, respectively.

Students with 11 or more unexcused absences registered 28% and 31% proficiency in

Reading and Mathematics respectively (p. 8).
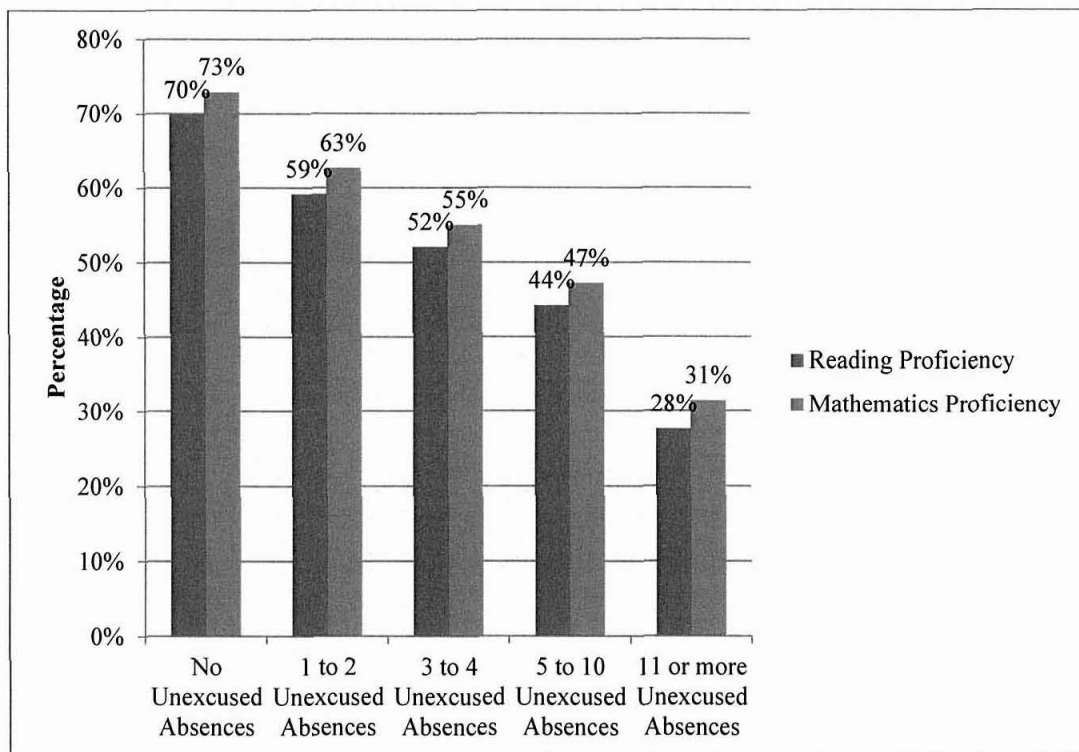
Figure 2. Unexcused absences compared to reading and mathematics proficiency, 2011-12
(Source, Broward County School District, Student Assessment and Research Department,
2013, Public Access).

Results and Analysis

Florida's student attendance data for 2012 classified 9.1% of the total state population

of pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students as chronically absent. Florida is one of six

states, nationally, that defines and reports chronic absenteeism. Florida records chronic

absenteeism percentages for all 67 counties as well as average daily attendance rates by

county (Florida Department of Education, 2014b). The argument is made that this is a

conservative rate because it measures only students who are enrolled in school for the full

year, and does not capture the absentee rates of students who move in and out of their home school. Given that school mobility is linked to increased absenteeism, it seems clear that these percentages are undercounts. In addition, chronic absenteeism is shown to increase achievement gaps at all school levels, and decrease on-time graduation rates. Dynamics such as dropout rates, at-risk graduation rates, and cohort graduation rates change for students who are chronically absent from school (America's Promise Alliance, 2014).

Bring It 180 Toolkit

Upon completion of the Bring It 180 study, this researcher designed a comprehensive evidenced-based toolkit incorporating strategies and best practices into a user-friendly package for use in both schools and districts, or central office. This contemporary program is designed to help districts and schools increase student attendance. The toolkit contains helpful tips and best practices for the identification, prevention, and intervention of chronic absenteeism. The toolkit includes an itemized checklist for each month beginning in August and ending in May, to direct and monitor attendance rates and reduce student truancy. Components of the program have been used successfully as represented in published data (State of the District, 2012).

The toolkit is designed for use right out of the box, and is divided into sections with sample documents and templates for review and editing, to collaborate with and meet the needs of individual districts and schools. The toolkit is linked to a website with additional technology support and digital assistance. The web support is accessed at www.bringit180.com. Included in the toolkit is an attendance manual that delivers a prescriptive framework in a user-friendly kit. End users implement tools within the toolkit to identify and improve average daily attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Results and Analysis: Bring It Toolkit

The Bring It 180 study shows that the implementation of an attendance initiative will increase student achievement through improved student attendance. Students who miss fewer days of instruction reach higher levels of academic achievement according to both the large metropolitan district and smaller Florida district data assessment findings. In addition, districts and central offices can benefit through increased funding from the state by increasing the number of students present during full time equivalent (FTE) survey weeks (Florida Department of Education, 2014b).

An analysis of the large metropolitan school district's attendance records and FCAT data show a direct correlation between attendance rates and student achievement levels. Eleven or more absences in eighth and tenth grades show a dramatic decrease in reading and math achievement. Figure 3 shows proficiency levels for reading and math for students registering no unexcused absences, or absent 11 or more days. The data indicates a drastic decline in academic achievement when absence rates are compared to FCAT proficiency.
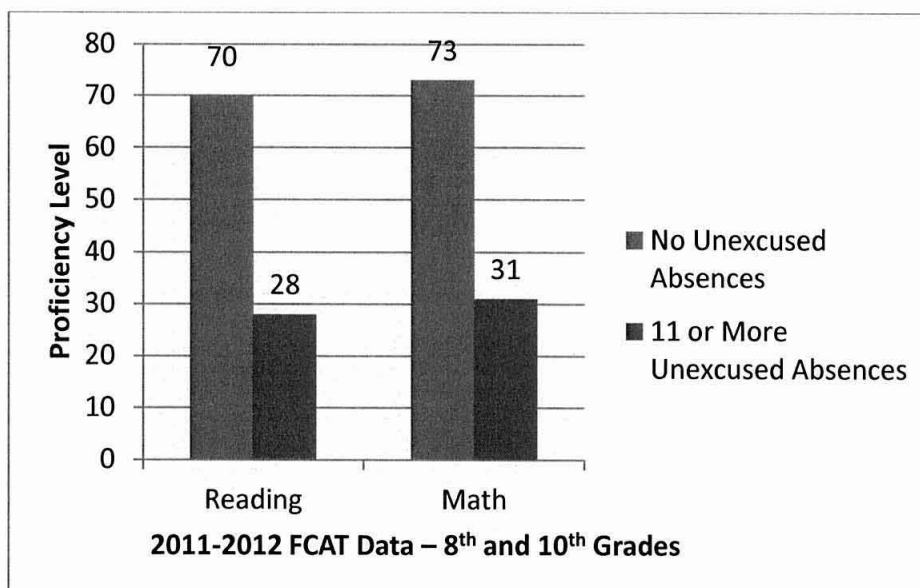
Figure 3. Large metropolitan school district's correlation between attendance and achievement levels

The goals of an attendance initiative such as Bring it 180 are to encourage and promote regular school attendances, identify best practices, and implement ongoing action steps for improving average daily attendance rates at school. The fundamental benefits of these goals include increasing student achievement and capturing all of the available state funding associated with student attendance. Comparison of Average Daily Attendance and Truancy Levels show elementary schools have the highest attendance and lowest truancy, while high schools report the lowest attendance rates and highest truancy levels in this study of a Large Metropolitan School District.

Figure 4 shows the percent of average daily attendance rates for elementary and high school attendance during the 2011-2012 school year. Elementary school attendance rates are significantly higher than high school attendance rates.
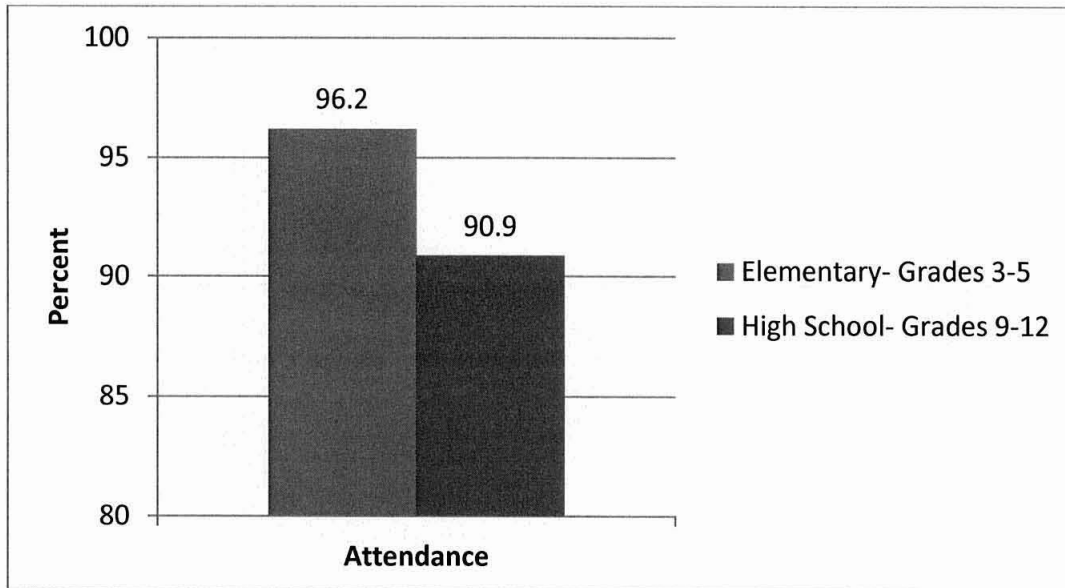
Figure 4. Large Metropolitan School District's Correlation between elementary and high school attendance. Percent comparison of elementary and high school truancy shows a 5.3 percent difference.
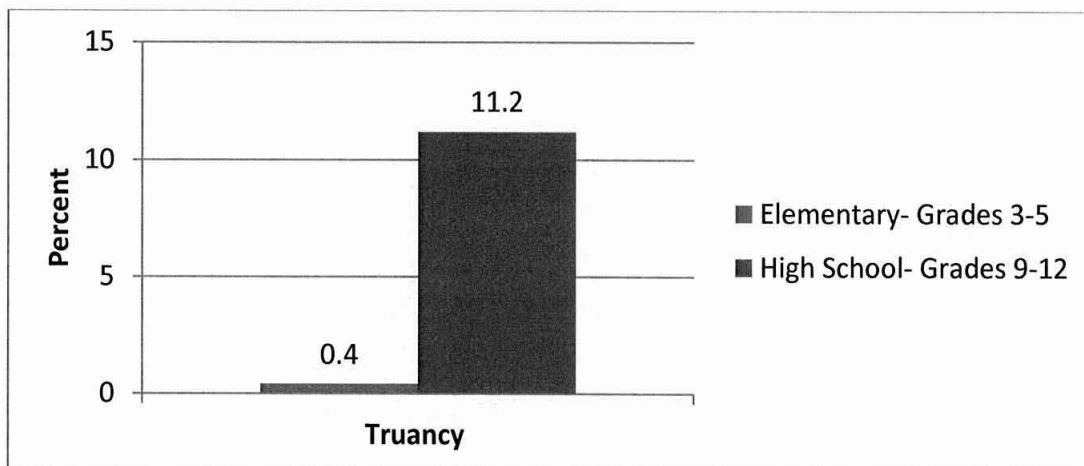
Figure 5. Large Metropolitan School District's Correlation between elementary and high school truancy. Truancy rates differ by a 10.8% difference between elementary and high school.

Of additional concern is the increase in the large metropolitan school district's

dropout rates as evidenced by data published by the Florida Department of Education. The

state's dropout rate is a single-year indicator of the number of students dropping out of

school and is not represented as a four-year cohort measurement. This Large Metropolitan

District's dropout rate decreased slightly in 2010-2011, but increased significantly in 2011-2012 to a point significantly higher than the state average. Continuation of increases in dropout rates signals a need to implement a comprehensive approach to increasing attendance rates and student achievement, to prevent further increases (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2011).

Shown in Figure 6 are the dropout rates for a large metropolitan school district from 2010-2012, and an increase in total students leaving school without a diploma prior to graduation.

Figure 6. Large Metropolitan District Dropout Rates for 2010-2012

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

During my years as a teacher, school board member, and most recently as Superintendent of Schools and Educational Consultant, this researcher experienced firsthand the realities of how poor attendance impacts academic performance. Low attendance is usually a symptom of greater underlying factors influencing a student's ultimate success. If a stu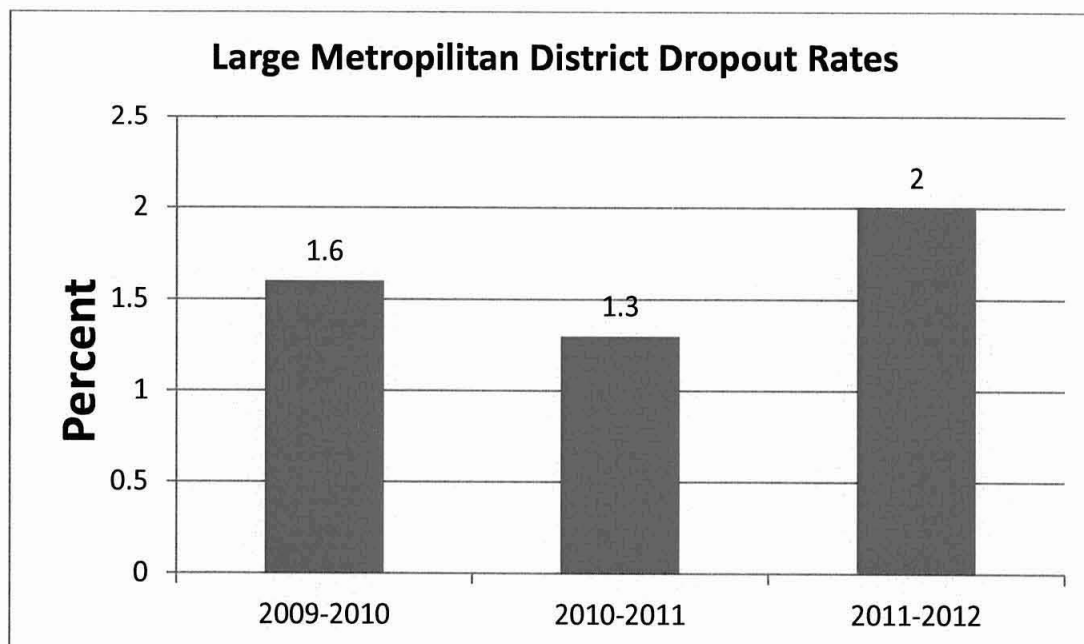dent is not in school, he or she is not participating in the learning that takes place in the classroom and is missing the valuable instruction and social interaction delivered by the teacher.

While the primary mission as educators is to develop students' academic skills, it is also important to teach good citizenship and foster positive social skills. By reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance as well as coming to school on time each day, students are learning important lessons of responsibility and accountability. In addition, students' learning is enhanced and supported, and academic opportunities in the classroom are increased.

Afterschool programming plays another critical role in the positive social growth and development of students. Both chronic truancy and absenteeism lower a student's achievement at all levels and may effect on-time graduation (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). A component of the Bring It 180 toolkit includes a partnership with Central and District offices and school sites. Several diagrams are included in this Executive Summary that outline the methods and strategies of an attendance initiative. Shown in Figure 7 is the conceptual framework of the District Attendance Committee, with sub-committees identified to lead the work of the Committee.
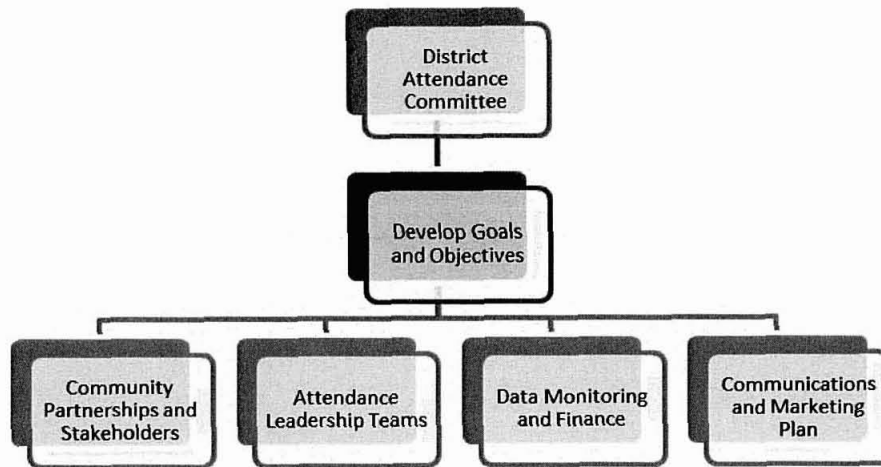
Figure 7. Conceptual Model for the District Attendance Committee (DAC)

Shown in Figure 8 is the conceptual framework of the Attendance Leadership Team at a school site. This structure places the student at the center of the initiative, supported by stakeholders and staff.
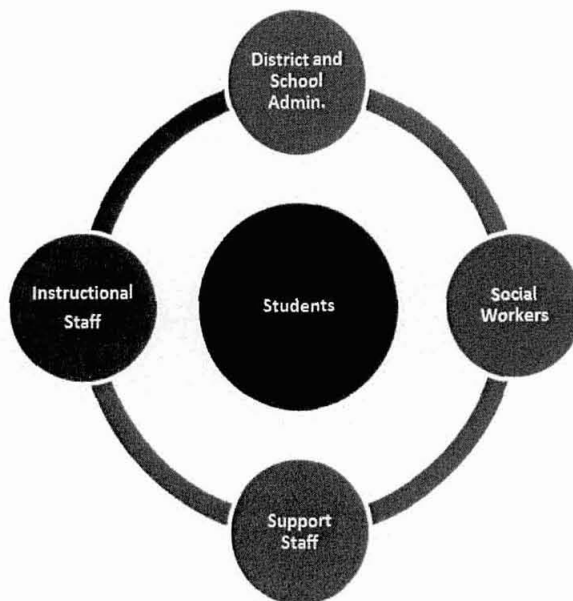
Figure 8. Conceptual Model for the Attendance Leadership Team (ALT)

In order to begin the collaboration and create a baseline, the DAC and the ALT can use data from prior years to monitor progress. For comparison purposes, the attendance rates for neighboring or similar sized districts are also collected. Information gained through extensive data analysis is shared with school administrators on a regular basis through professional development opportunities. Best practices and model strategies are provided in the Bring It 180 toolkit to assist schools in developing action plans that will have the highest impact on their unique populations.

In conclusion, a district-wide or school-based Bring It 180 attendance initiative, or other evidenced-based programs can result in improved daily attendance rates, a decrease in dropout rates, improved student achievement, increased communications between district departments, greater collaborations between the district and schools, and better community awareness about the value of regular student attendance. Also, the Bring It 180 initiative provides a model for reflective practices through in-depth study of attendance data, planning a chart for improvement, and monitoring the effectiveness of increased attendance outcomes.

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APPENDIX: PATENT

United States of America
United States Patent and Trademark Office

BRING IT

Reg. No. 4,477,851
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Int. Cl.: 41

SERVICE MARK

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

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FOR: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, NAMELY, DEVELOPING, ARRANGING AND CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND PROVIDING LECTURES TO EDUCATORS ALL IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS OF EDUCATION; EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, NAMELY, CONDUCTING CLASSES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS OF EDUCATION; EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, NAMELY, PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SPEAKERS IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS OF EDUCATION; CONSULTATION IN THE FIELD OF INCREASING STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN K-12 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS, IN CLASS 41 (U.S. CLS. 100, 101 AND 107).

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Deputy Director of the United States
Patent and Trademark Office

BRING IT ®

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Bring It with a Positive Attitude

Bring It Ready to Learn

We Have an Opportunity!

Low attendance rates are significantly correlated to low proficiency in core academic subjects, and graduation rates. Therefore, it is imperative to improve student attendance in order to increase student achievement and graduation rates (Balfanz, 2012).

The purpose of the Bring It 180 Toolkit is to utilize a manageable system of support to increase student attendance while gaining the benefit of better student achievement, and graduation rates. This Manual will describe the process for forming an Attendance Leadership Team (ALT) additionally, the team will and set two goals related to increasing student attendance and improving daily attendance. Finally, strategies will be implemented to address school wide tardiness.

- **Goal 1: Improve average daily attendance rates by 1% from 2016 to 2017**
- **Goal 2: Reduce the number of students chronically absent by 50% from 2016 to 2017**

Operational definitions of terms you need to know:
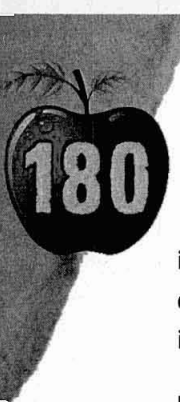
Chronic Absenteeism – Defined by the Florida Department of Education as a student absent 21 or more days during the school year (FLDOE, 2012).

Average Daily Attendance Percentage – Defined by FLDOE attendance is calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Average Attendance}}{\text{Membership Enrollment (Total Enrollment)}} \times \textbf{100} = \text{Average Daily Attendance}$$

What Is a Bring It 180 Toolkit?

Bring It 180 Toolkits contain a series of documents, templates, strategies, and resources combined into a user-friendly kit that a school will implement in order to improve average daily attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism. Students are required to attend school one hundred and eighty days of school annually.

Bring It 180 Toolkits are helpful to schools because it provides a continuum of support for individual schools to increase attendance utilizing an evidenced based program. The Toolkit is designed to assist schools with promoting a united message to increase student achievement by improving average daily attendance, and reducing chronic absenteeism.

How Do I Use The Toolkit?

The **Bring It 180 Toolkit** is designed for use right out of the box. You will begin by reviewing the manual and first forming an Attendance Leadership Team (ALT) that will follow the prescriptive instructions and sample documents to suit the unique needs of the school.

The Toolkit contains helpful tips and best practices for implementing **Bring It 180**, and provides simple checklists every step of the way. At the conclusion of each section, sample documents and templates are provided for the Attendance Leadership Team (ALT) to review and edit to meet the needs of individual schools. The Toolkit is arranged according to the responsibilities of the ALT. It is advisable to review all of the checklists and develop an action plan towards achieving the goals and implementing tasks.

Attendance Leadership Team Formation

Attendance Leadership Teams are typically comprised of 6 to 10 members. These individuals must possess a passion for increasing student achievement and attendance as well as the desire to be a part of the new **Bring It 180** initiative. Make sure that your Attendance Leadership Team has a variety of voices and stakeholders from your community. Your team should have representation from the following:

- o Administration and Leadership
- o Instructional Staff
- o Support Staff
- o Parents
- o Students
- o Private Sector
    - Faith-based Institutions
    - Charter and Partner Schools
    - Health and Wellness Centers
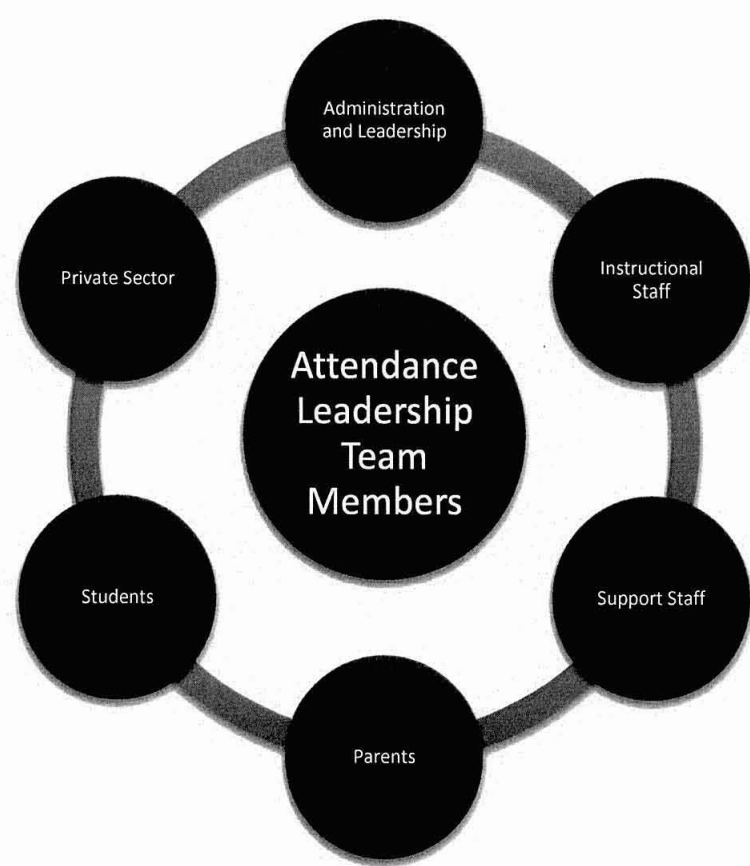
Attendance Leadership Team

Design Structure

Attendance Leadership Team Responsibilities

According to the Florida Department of Education school and district data are obtained from the following site. http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/students.stml

According to Comer & Ben-Avie, 2012, low attendance rates are significantly correlated to diminished proficiency in academic core subjects and low graduation rates. Reform measures introduced to increase attendance have shown to be effective in numerous studies (Balfanz and Barnes, 2012). Improving both average daily attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism rates can be addressed simultaneously. It is evident that these efforts can result in an increase in student proficiency based on research from Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012.

This Manual describes the importance of The Attendance Leadership Team and their eight major responsibilities. You will notice that much of the Bring **It 180 Toolkit** is organized around these eight responsibilities.

The eight responsibilities include:

1. **Scheduling and Planning**
2. **Goal Alignment with Attendance Initiative**
3. **Develop a Plan to Address Goal 1: Average Daily Attendance**
4. **Develop a Plan to Address Goal 2: Chronic Absenteeism**
5. **Master In-Service Training for Professional Development**
6. **Formulate Incentive Programs**
7. **Determine Data Collection and Analysis Process**
8. **Advise School Improvement Plan Committee of the Attendance Initiative**

Checklists

The Attendance Leadership Team has numerous responsibilities. Meeting the eight responsibilities can be easier with the help of this **Bring It 180** Toolkit. These checklists are organized by month; however, it is advisable to review all of the checklists and develop an action plan that is unique to your setting at the beginning of the school year. It is the Attendance and Leadership Team's (ALT's) responsibility to ensure that all the tasks are accomplished and to complete in a logical order for your particular school.

August Checklist

☐ Schedule weekly meetings for August and September

The Attendance Leadership Team will meet every _____ (day) at _____

(time) in the _____ (location).

☐ The pre-school will include **Bring It 180** Professional Development explaining the needs,

benefits and requirements of attendance initiative and will be presented on

_____(day) at _____ (time) in the _____ (location)

☐ _____ is responsible for preparing

and presenting this information

☐ Prepared and distributed talking points for community

☐ Calculate the average daily attendance rates for our school for the previous year

☐ Calculate the number of chronically absent students in our school for the previous year

We will improve average daily attendance by _____students to reach the ___% goal.

We will reduce chronic absenteeism by _____ students to reach the goal of___% or

to achieve a _____% decrease.

☐ _____ appointed to position of Incentive Task Force Manager

☐ _____ appointed to position of Monthly Attendance Reporter

☐ _____ appointed to position of Attendance Assemblies and Rally Organizer

☐ _____ appointed to position of Parental Involvement Organizer

☐ _____ appointed to position of Website Liaison

☐ _____ appointed to position of Document Reviewer

☐ _____ appointed to position of Court Liaison

□ Sought professional development training targeted toward increased attendance

□ Training for Attendance Leadership Team scheduled for _____

□ Document Reviewer provides teachers with a sample welcome letter to distribute to students and families.

□ Identified _____ number of students who were chronically absent last year.

□ Created and distributed to ALT list of chronically absent students.

□ Provided list to grade chair team or leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration with current attendance data.

□ Identified _____ students with at least 15-20 absences last school year.

□ Created list of same students divided by grade level.

□ Provided list to grade chair, team leaders, classrooms teacher, guidance counselor, school social worker, and school administration.

September Checklist

☐ Schedule bi-weekly meetings for the remainder of the Semester The Attendance
Leadership team will meet every 2nd and 4th _____(day) at _____
(time) in _____ (location) beginning in October

☐ Principal revises sample letter to parents

☐ Principal sent letter to parents

☐ Principal sent letter to neighborhood newsletters/newspaper and local publications

☐ Solicit support and sponsorships from local business and organizations

    ☐ Chamber of Commerce

    ☐ Faith Based Organizations

    ☐ Business Development Board

    ☐ Other _____

☐ Provided posters to hang in school

☐ Incentive Task Force Manager created 3-4 person task force

☐ Monthly meetings scheduled for _____ (day) at _____ (time) at
_____ (location).

☐ Attendance Assemblies and Rally Organizer planned Fall Attendance Assembly to occur
on _____

☐ Document Reviewer finalized and prints brochures for families

☐ Document Reviewer finalized and prints flyers and posters for open house

☐ Document Reviewer finalizes and prints orientation materials for open house

☐ Training for Instructional Staff scheduled for _____

☐ Training for Support Staff scheduled for _____

☐ Training for PTA, SAC, and SIP Committees scheduled for _____

☐ Designed Survey/Focus Group/Interview Protocol for chronically absent and at-risk students

☐ Conducted data collection

☐ Discussed and analyzed student and school data with the Attendance Leadership Team.

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for August

☐ At the end of August, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified ____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 times tardy per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair or team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration
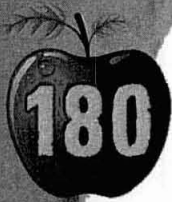
October Checklist

☐ Website Liaison reviewed material and provided Information Technology with attendance updates to the website

☐ Parental Involvement Night Organizer planned events for Parental Involvement Night

☐ Scheduled Parental Involvement Night for _____

☐ Incentive Task Force revised and sent solicitation letters to local businesses for support

☐ Incentive Task Force brainstormed additional incentive ideas

☐ Attendance Leadership Team (ALT) reviewed and provided incentive ideas and brainstorms from Incentive Task Force

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for September

☐ The end of September, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

☐ Provided list to grade chair or team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration

November Checklist

- ☐ Website Liaison followed up with Information Technology to assure accurate information on the website.

- ☐ Incentive Task Force put together and presented proposal for budgetary funding at school level to continue support of the **Bring It 180** attendance initiative

- ☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for October

- ☐ At the end of October, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

- ☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

- ☐ Provided list to grade chair or team leaders, classroom teacher, guidance counselor, coaches, school social worker and school administration

December Checklist

☐ Attendance Leadership Team evaluated frequency of meetings for the Spring Semester

The Attendance Leadership team will meet _____

_____

☐ Attendance Leadership Team evaluated success of attendance initiative in first semester

☐ Review student, and school data to drive the decision making process

☐ Attendance Leadership Team determines necessary modifications for last semester

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for November

☐ At the end of November, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair and team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration

☐ Obtained previous School Improvement Plan and reviewed attendance module and budget

☐ Evaluated effectiveness of School Improvement Plan relative to attendance outcomes

☐ Developed new School Improvement Plan recommendations addressing previous work of the Attendance Leadership Team

January Checklist

☐ Attendance Assemblies and Rally Organizer planned Spring Attendance Assembly for

_____

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for December

☐ At the end of December, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-

risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy

per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair and team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselor,

coaches, school social worker and school administration

February Checklist

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for January

☐ At the end of January, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by two absences per month or 4 days tardy per month.

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration

March Checklist

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for February

☐ At the end of February, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselor, coaches, school social worker and school administration

April Checklist

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for March

☐ At the end of March, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair and team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration

May Checklist

☐ Incentive Task Force delivered certificates for April

☐ At the end of April, the Monthly Attendance Reporter identified _____ students at-risk for chronic absenteeism as defined by 2 absences per month or 4 days tardy per month

☐ Created list of at-risk chronically absent students

☐ Provided list to grade chair and team leaders, classroom teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, school social worker and school administration

☐ Attendance Leadership Team evaluates progress and determines first meeting for following academic year

Helpful Documents and Samples

Insert a Sample School Calendar Annually

Sample Attendance Leadership Team Agenda

September

1. Review Minutes From Previous Meeting

2. Monthly At-Risk Review

3. Appointed Task Review

    a. Incentives Task Force Updates

    b. Attendance Rally Updates

    c. Open House updates

    d. Information Technology Updates

    e. Parent Involvement Night Updates

4. Master In-Service Training

5. Adjourn

Bring It 180 Talking Points

Schools Strategic Plan will place a strong emphasis on closing and eliminating the achievement gap and significantly increase graduation rates. The **Bring It 180** attendance initiative identifies and promotes these goals using research-based best practices. **Bring It 180** maximizes school and district resources by forming strong partnerships with community stakeholders to make certain that everyone's efforts are unified toward a common goal of keeping students in school and increasing student achievement and attendance rates for increased cohort graduation.

The **Bring It 180** attendance initiative encourages students to:

- *Bring It* on time
- *Bring It* ready to learn
- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

Bring It 180 tracks specific data and outcomes so that chronic absenteeism will be identified and interventions are initiated quickly. Students and families that require outside supports are channeled to existing city and county agencies where schools can be a partner in the solutions that reduce chronic absenteeism and increase student academic outcomes.

Responsibility 2:

Goal Alignment with Attendance Initiative

The School sets two primary goals with regard to attendance:

Goal 1:   To improve average daily attendance by _____%.

Goal 2:   To reduce chronic absenteeism to _____%.

Once again, Chronic Absenteeism is defined by Florida State as missing 21 or more days from school. Currently the Florida State average for chronic absenteeism is 9.1%.

The Attendance Leadership Team will look at the schools average daily attendance and chronic absenteeism numbers. Further, the team will determine precisely how many students will need to attend on average to meet the _____% improvement goal of increasing average daily attendance, and how many students will need to be removed from the chronic absentee list to meet the _____% chronic absenteeism reduction goals. This information will allow your team to have a better understanding of the work necessary in order to meet the schools goals.

Responsibility 3: Develop a Plan to Address

Goal 1 – Average Daily Attendance

Goal 1 is to improve average daily attendance by_____%.

Sending the Bring It 180 message

Bring It 180 seeks to involve the community in understanding positive attendance goals and the opportunity to increase academic achievement of its students. In the sample documents, you will find many ways to increase awareness about **Bring It 180.** The Attendance Leadership Team will review these samples, edit them to meet the specific needs of their school, and distribute them to the community stakeholders.

Committee Appointments

At this point, members of the Attendance Leadership Team (ATL) will appoint individuals to manage certain elements of the initiative. There are seven appointment responsibilities. These appointments are:

1. **Incentive Task Force Manager** – One individual is appointed to serve as the head of the Incentive Task Force. This individual will form a task force of 3-4 individuals who will help to manage the incentive program (See Responsibility 6).

2. **Monthly Attendance Reporter** – One individual is appointed to gather the monthly attendance data. He or she will present this information to the Incentive Task Force so that they may reward classrooms and students who have shown improvement or exemplary attendance. This individual will also report this in the school newsletter and local publications to build ground support in the community. Finally, the Monthly Attendance Reporter will use this information to discover new at-risk students (See Responsibility 4). He or she will inform the

Attendance Leadership Team and the student-facing staff of the updates. The work of the Monthly Attendance Reporter will show trends. Please see the sample Corrective Action Plan to address negative trends and to positively redirect student attendance.

3. **Attendance Assemblies and Rally Organizer** – This individual will plan and implement the fall and spring Attendance Rallies using the sample agenda provided and working closely with the Incentive Task Force.

4. **Parental Involvement Night Organizer** – This individual will plan and implement the Parent Involvement Night designed to further inform parents of the **Bring It 180** initiative, but also to provide tips and strategies for parents who are struggling with issues surrounding attendance.

5. **Website Liaison** – This individual will work closely with the department of Information Technology to place information from the **Bring It 180** initiative on the school website. This individual may work closely with the Parent Involvement Night Organizer to assure a unity of message.

6. **Document Reviewer** – This individual will utilize the sample materials provided to create school-specific documents, flyers and brochures for open house and school orientation.

7. **Court Liaison** – This individual will work closely with or may be the school social worker who is appointed to serve as the court liaison for truancy.

Helpful Documents and Samples

Sample Letter from Principal to Parents

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This school year, I am excited to announce that we are launching a new campaign called **Bring It 180**. This initiative focuses on raising awareness about the importance of regular daily attendance at school. The research is clear; students who miss fewer days of instruction are more likely to reach higher levels of academic achievement. When students miss school, they are missing the valuable teacher interaction, class discussion, and social development that accompany daily instruction.

As part of the Bring It 180 initiative, we are asking students to *Bring It* to school:

- *Bring It* on time

- *Bring It* ready to learn

- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

There are only 180 days of instruction during the school year. We must make every one of them count.

As part of our commitment to the **Bring It 180** initiative, we will be providing our families with regular updates on attendance at our school and initiating positive incentives for students. It is all of our responsibility to ensure our students receive a high-quality education and the resources necessary to help them reach their full potential. The first step toward learning is being in school.

Thank you in advance for your support of the **Bring It 180** attendance initiative.

Sincerely,

School Principal

Sample Automated Call Home

Good evening, this is _____, principal of _____. I am calling this evening to share with you details on our new **Bring It 180** attendance initiative. This campaign focuses on raising awareness about the importance of regular daily attendance at school. The research is clear; students who miss fewer days of instruction are more likely to reach higher levels of academic achievement. As part of the **Bring It 180** initiative, we are asking students to:

- *Bring It* on time
- *Bring It* ready to learn
- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

Throughout the school year, we will be providing you with updates on our school's progress in increasing attendance rates, as well as incentives for students and details on the important role parents and guardians have in this important initiative.

Thank you in advance for your support and for all you do to ensure your child's educational success. Have a good night.

Sample Letter to Businesses Soliciting Partnerships

Dear Business Partners:

This school year, I am excited to announce that we are launching an important new initiative called **Bring It 180**. This campaign focuses on raising awareness about the importance of regular daily attendance at school. The research is clear; students who miss fewer days of instruction are more likely to reach **higher levels of academic achievement.** When students miss school, they are missing the valuable teacher interaction, class discussion, and social development that accompany daily instruction.

As part of the **Bring It 180** initiative, we are asking students to:

- *Bring It* on time
- *Bring It* ready to learn
- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

There are only 180 days of instruction during the school year. We must make every one of them count.

As part of our commitment to the **Bring It 180** initiative, we will be providing the community and families with regular updates on attendance at our school and initiating positive incentives for students. It is all of our responsibility to ensure our students receive a high-quality education and the resources necessary to help them reach their potential. The first step toward learning is being in school.

Thank you in advance for your support of the **Bring It 180** attendance initiative. We look forward to working with all of our business partners and sponsors during the school year. Please contact _____ at _____ to discuss an opportunity to work with the school on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Sample Welcome from Classroom Teachers to Students and Families

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This school year, I am excited to announce that our school is launching a new initiative called **Bring It 180**. This campaign focuses on raising awareness about the importance of regular daily attendance at school. The research is clear; students who miss fewer days of instruction are more likely to reach higher levels of academic achievement. When students miss school, they are missing the valuable teacher interaction, class discussion, and social development that accompany daily instruction.

As part of the **Bring It 180** initiative, we are asking students to:

- *Bring It* on time
- *Bring It* ready to learn
- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

There are only 180 days of instruction during the school year. We must make every one of them count. I look forward to an exciting year and the opportunity to work with each of my new students, and to meet their parents and guardians.

See you soon!

Sample Article for the Newsletter

Student Attendance Plays a Key Role in Academic Success

The District's new attendance initiative, **Bring It 180**, strives to increase awareness about the importance of being in class each day. When students miss school, they are missing valuable teacher instruction that supports their learning.

Empirical data shows, schools have an overall improvement in student achievement with an increase in attendance. Conversely, students who miss greater than 10% of the school year are less proficient in core academic subjects.

A major component of 21st century learning is new technology that influences students' everyday lives and their future. Schools incorporate technology into daily classroom instruction, which is another opportunity for students to gain unique skills and opportunities to learn.

This year [school name] is seeking community support in helping our students to *Bring It:*

- *Bring It* on time
- *Bring It* ready to learn
- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

For more information about our school and ways you can engage and help students succeed in this exciting campaign please contact us by phone at_____

Email _____ or at our school _____

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sample Rally/Assembly Agenda

1. Welcome

2. Introductions (community partners, dignitaries, guest speaker such as sports figures)

3. Recognition of Students working to support attendance initiative

4. Presentation of **Bring It 180** Certificates

5. Identify Fun Activities (see Strategies for Positive Incentives)

6. School-wide Goal Attendance Update (this may be visual, such as a thermometer, which makes it easy to track progress)

6. Celebrating Success - Closing (make it fun, consider music and refreshments)

Sample Parental Involvement Night Activities

It is important for the Parental Involvement Night Organizer to work closely with the Attendance Leadership Team to tailor the event for the unique needs of your community. Below are a few topic ideas to begin the brainstorming process.

- Child development

- Literacy and reading

- Social media do's and don'ts

- Bullying and cyber bullying

- Athletic program options

- How to become involved in extracurricular activities

- Intern and Externships

- Career technical programs/volunteer opportunities

Sample Talking Points for Open House

The large metropolitan school district Strategic Plan has placed a strong emphasis on closing and eliminating the achievement gap and significantly increasing graduation rates. The **Bring It 180** Attendance Initiative identifies and promotes these goals utilizing research based best practices and data driven decisions.

Bring It 180 maximizes school and district resources by forming strong partnerships with community stakeholders to ensure that everyone's efforts are unified toward a common goal of keeping students in school and increasing their opportunities for a better the future.

The **Bring It 180** Attendance Initiative encourages students to:

Bring It on time

Bring It ready to learn

Bring It with a positive attitude

Bring It 180 tracks specific data and outcomes so that chronic absenteeism is identified and interventions are adopted quickly. Students and families that require outside supports are channeled to existing city and county agencies where schools can be a partner in solutions to reduce chronic absenteeism and increase student academic achievements.

180

Making sure students attend school daily and on time begins with you!

- Obtain a copy of the school calendar

- Plan vacations and time away from home around the school calendar

- When possible, plan doctor and dentist visits when your child is not in school

We Are in This Together

- Know the Attendance Policy

- Keep teachers informed of planned absences

- Make sure your child makes up missed work

- Encourage a healthy amount of sleep each night

- Engage your child in extra-curricular school activities

- Model good attendance for your child

- Talk about school with your child, discuss likes and dislikes and future goals

- Stay involved at school

(Attendance Works, 2014)

180

What is the Attendance Policy?

All children of school age are required to attend school 180 days a year

Excusable absences include:

Illness of student

Death of an immediate family member

College visits or special event

Required court appearance

Necessary medical appointments

Religious Holiday observance

Your Responsibilities

It is your student and your responsibility to inform the school of any excused absences

It is your student and your responsibility to seek out missed work

Bring It on time

Bring It ready to learn

Bring It with a positive attitude

(Attendance Works, 2013)

Corrective Action Plan Template

Goal 1: **To improve average daily attendance school-wide by 1%.**

Goal 2: **To reduce chronic absenteeism by 50%.**

Below are problem solving strategies to meet the goals:

Problem-Solving Process to Improve Student Attendance

Current Average Daily Attendance:

Number of students at 21 days absent:

	Strategy	Monitoring	Effectiveness	Evaluation
1	Student absence results in parental contact	Guidance Office	Data analysis	20 day attendance updates
2	Assign tardy student consequence	Classroom teacher	Repeat offenses	Tardy reduction

Responsibility 4:
Develop a Plan to Address
Goal 2 – Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism is defined by Florida State as 21 or more days absent. Currently the Florida State average for chronic absenteeism is 9.1%.

In order to address chronic absenteeism in your school there are four main tasks the Attendance Leadership Team will address:

1. Using attendance data from the previous school year you will identify students who were chronically absent last academic year. Remember that chronic absence is defined as 21 or more days absent, or approximately 10% absent.

2. Identify At-Risk students for chronic absenteeism. At-Risk students are defined as meeting one or more of the following criteria:

   a. Student missing between 15-20 school days in the previous academic year

   b. Student who has two or more absences in a single month

   c. Student with 4 or more days tardy in a single month

3. Develop a student outreach model that includes surveys, focus groups, and interviews to begin to understand why students are chronically absent at your school.

   Each school has its own unique climate, and you will understand your reasons for excess absenteeism once you collect and analyze the appropriate qualitative and quantitative data.

4. Inform student-facing staff of chronic and at risk students. Provide Master In-Service Training and Intervention Checklist (see Responsibility 5) to these individuals. The Monthly Attendance Reporter appointed by the Attendance Leadership Team maintains the student list of at-risk and chronic absent. The Attendance Leadership Team as a whole will monitor the students and the intervention plans developed by the student-facing staff.

Student Outreach

Task 3 involves the Attendance Leadership Team conducting student outreach. This outreach allows the Attendance Leadership Team to discover any systemic or personnel issues regarding absenteeism. This information will be used to inform attendance and academic policies moving forward.

In the following section, sample survey, focus group, and interview questions are provided. It is important to tailor this material to the specific needs of your school.
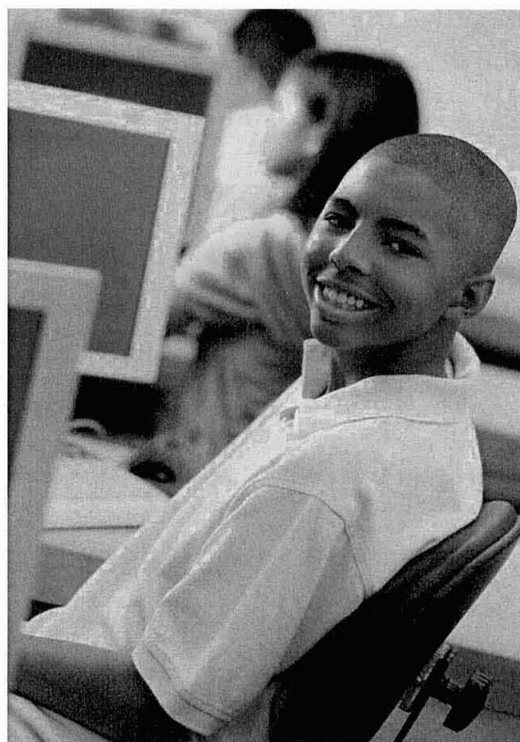
Helpful Documents and Samples

Sample Survey

The Attendance Leadership Team may determine a sample group to survey that would include all students. They may then develop a survey with at most five questions.

Examples of survey questions may include:

1. What classroom activities are most likely to motivate you?

   a. Lectures

   b. Hands-on activities

   c. Group learning

   d. Textbook and Workbook study

2. What is the number one reason you do not attend school?

   a. Doctor or dentist appointment

   b. I did not do my homework

   c. I do not like to ride the buss

   d. I feel bullied

Sample Focus Group/Interview Questions

If the Attendance Leadership Team determines a focus group would provide valuable information, it may select 10 or fewer students in a variety of grade levels and sub-groups to participate. The questions will be similar to the survey questions; however, they may be open-ended. Assign someone to take notes during the process. The focus group will last about one class period, so depending on level of discussion and the age of the student, you may anticipate needing approximately from 3 - 10 questions.

If the Attendance Leadership Team determines one-on-one interviews would be more effective, anticipate needing to interview approximately 10 students across various grade levels and sub-groups. Individual interviews are likely to take about 10 minutes each and require the same number of questions as focus groups.

Focus groups are an effective choice because of the discussion that can occur among the participants. However, be aware that individuals might be uncomfortable sharing information in front of their peers. In that instance, individual interviews may solicit information that is more accurate. The Attendance Leadership Team will weigh the options of the various methods and if time permits may elect a dual approach.

Examples of focus group questions for older students may include:

1. What is your experience when students come to class late?

2. How do you feel about the current schedule for school, in particular the start time?

3. How do you balance extra-curricular activities with your academic schedule?

4. Adjust your questions for younger students' to include feedback regarding their teacher, bus rides, aftercare and if they feel safe at school?

Responsibility 5:
Master In-Service Training for
Professional Development

Bring It 180 relies on community support and awareness to be successful. It is important that the stakeholders within the community have an understanding of the value of the attendance campaign.

The Monthly Attendance Reporter will be providing members of the community with information on students that require individualized attention in order to make improvements to attendance. Professional development is necessary so that the staff is aware of strategies they can use to meet the needs of these students.

You can expect to provide Master In-Service training to five unique school and community groups. They are:

1. Attendance Leadership Team

2. Instructional Staff

3. Support Staff

4. Parent Teacher Organizations, School Advisory Council and the School Improvement Committee

5. Community Business Partners and Sponsors, Faith Based Organizations

School Calendar

The Attendance Leadership Team will review the calendar for available early release and professional development days where In-Service training may be provided to on-site staff.

It is helpful to schedule at least two one-hour training sessions for the new Attendance Leadership Team during the pre-school week. The presentation given to the Attendance Leadership Team may be altered to meet the needs of the various community groups that require professional development.

It is extremely important to assure that each community group and school group receives adequate training. This is especially true of all student-facing staff. Providing one-hour professional development sessions during pre-school week and throughout the year will influence the initiative's outcomes.

After reviewing the information provided by the Monthly Attendance Reviewer each month, it may be helpful to have an additional professional development opportunity including school wide updates during regularly scheduled faculty and staff meetings.

Longitudinal School/Student Data

The Attendance Leadership Team will obtain three years' worth of data from the FLDOE or their district data warehouse for average daily attendance and chronic absenteeism percentages and trends. The team will analyze the changes in attendance while developing their implementation and corrective action plans.

Responsibility 6:
Formulate Incentive Programs

The Attendance Leadership Team will create an Incentive Task Force. The Incentive Task Force Manager will serve as the primary liaison to the Attendance Leadership Team. The Task Force will serve five major functions:

1. Build relationships with local business leaders to provide awareness, services and funding to the program

2. Seek budgetary support from the school internal accounts and other funding sources

3. Maintain certificate programs to reward students and classrooms for improvement and excellence

4. Liaise with Fall and Spring Attendance Rally Organizer

5. Brainstorm and plan additional incentive programs for positive changes to attendance

In the helpful documents and sample section of this responsibility, you will find sample agendas, certificates and letters to send to businesses for sponsorship and partnership support. You will also find several ideas for additional incentive programs, but the Incentive Task Force and the Attendance Leadership Team may brainstorm unique incentive ideas that are tailored to the specific culture of your institution.

Helpful Documents and Samples

Sample Letter to Businesses for Support and Funding

Dear Business Partners:

This school year, I am excited to announce that we are launching a new initiative called **Bring It 180.** This campaign focuses on raising awareness about the importance of regular daily attendance at school. The research is clear; students who miss fewer days of instruction are more likely to reach higher **levels of academic achievement.** When students miss school, they are missing valuable teacher interaction, class discussion, and social development that **accompany daily instruction.**

As part of the **Bring It 180** initiative, we are asking students to:

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- *Bring It* with a positive attitude

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Thank you in advance for your support of the **Bring It 180** attendance initiative. We look forward to working with all of our business partners and sponsors during the school year.

Please contact _____ at _____ to discuss an opportunity to work with the school on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Sample Incentive Task Force Agenda

Incentive Task Force Agenda

1. Welcome

    a. Introductions

    b. Review of Previous Meetings

2. Updates on Attendance

3. Brainstorming Incentive Programs

    a. Sponsorship Opportunities

    b. Incentive Items

4. Community Education and Outreach

    a. How to Engage the Community

    b. Business Partners

    c. Business Resources

    d. Faith Based Organizations

    e. City and County Government Agencies

5. Planning of Attendance Assemblies/Rallies

    a. Updates From the Planning Team

6. Budget Updates

7. Wrap-up

180

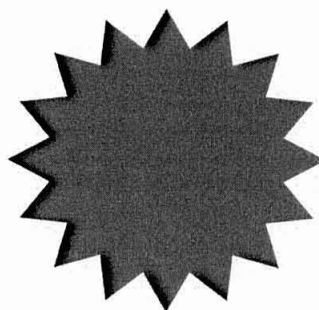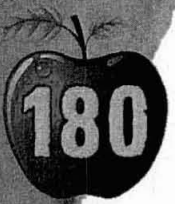# *Certificate of Achievement*

Awarded To

_____

For Attendance Excellence

_____

Attendance Leadership Team, Chair

[School]

[Date]

Ideas and Strategies for Incentive Programs

Conduct a survey or focus group with students to determine what types of incentives will motivate them. Each school culture and student group will be different.

Incentive Types:

Type 1: Intangible Rewards – Some students are highly motivated by intangible reward programs. Intangible rewards include public recognition, social rewards and positive verbal reinforcement. The students will be motivated by public recognition at Attendance Rallies, receiving certificates created by the Incentive Task Force, and being recognized in Newsletters and publications.

Type 2: Tangible Rewards – Older students are more likely to be motivated by tangible rewards. Tangible rewards will vary based on the Incentive Task Force and their ability to solicit partnerships from local businesses.

Some ideas for local business partnerships:

Local Movie Theater to provide movie passes or concession vouchers

Gift Cards, sporting event passes, school vouchers for food or supplies

Small toy or trinket donations from community members

Incentive Targeting:

Incentive programs are focused on individual attendance, group attendance, or even targeted towards entire families.

In individual targeting, attendance is incentivized through rewards to the individual student. Certificates for most improved attendance or a gift card to a local business are individual targeted incentive programs.

In group targeting, attendance is incentivized through rewards to groups of students. Classroom competition is one example to group targeting. Group targeting may include the classrooms. They may be are incentivized in the same way as in individual targeting; however, the students are far more likely to support and hold each other accountable for attendance in a group targeted incentive model. Group targeted incentives include recognizing the class with the best attendance at the Attendance Rally or providing a pizza party to the class that is the most improved (Attendance Works, 2013).

In family targeting, attendance is incentivized through rewards to a student and his or her family. This method has an additional benefit. If families are incentivized, there is an increased chance that the family will work to get their student to school. Incentive programs for families include transportation passes, movie or event passes provided to families that show improvement, or personalized letters of support and congratulation from school administrators.

As you can work to develop plans, strategies and models of effectiveness, your committee will find that each type of reward and incentive targeting has strengths and weaknesses. It is important to examine what will work best for your student population.

It is recommended that the Incentive Task Force move forward with a multi-pronged approach, utilizing several targeting methods and both incentive reward types (Attendance Works, 2013).

Responsibility 7:
Determine Data Collection and Analysis Process

Trend Analysis

The Attendance Leadership Team will need to obtain three years' worth of data from either their district data source or from the Florida Department of Education for;

- **Average daily attendance**

- **Chronic absenteeism**

The team will analyze the trends of attendance in developing their strategies, plans and implementation models.

20-day Counts

The Monthly Attendance Reporter will gather and provide 20-day attendance counts to the Attendance Leadership Team, the community, and to student-facing staff.

Based on circumstances and excused versus unexcused absences, the Attendance Leadership Team will create a list of students who are considered at-risk of chronic absenteeism, chronically tardy, or who are chronically absent but not missing 10% of the school year.

The team will look for trends in the 20-day counts. For example, one classroom might have a higher number of absent students. This will affect the intervention and professional development provided to the student-facing staff. The team will look for positive or negative overall trends in school attendance. They will also look for and recognize students who have shown improved attendance. This data will help the

Attendance Leadership Team develop strategies to monitor, continue to improve, or to correct a downward trend.

100-day Count

The 100-day count conducted by data collection methods will provide the Attendance Leadership Team with data on improvements, stagnation or decline in attendance.

Quarterly Benchmark testing, Post-FCAT data and End of Course exam analysis will be conducted on student achievement outcomes and compared to days absent. This will show proficiency levels as correlated to absences. The Attendance Leadership Team will examine cohort graduation correlated to days absent.

Responsibility 8:
Advise School Improvement Plan Committee
of the Components of the Attendance Plan

Before meeting or contacting the School Improvement Plan Committee, first obtain the plan that was submitted for the previous school year. The Attendance Leadership Team will review the former plan, particularly the elements dealing with attendance and student achievement along with staff development and budget as it relates to the above topics.

As a Committee, evaluate the effectiveness in the area of School Improvement. The Attendance Leadership Team will participate in the drafting of the new School Improvement Plan's content with regard to attendance.

Next Steps

Look to the following strategies to consider when developing the Attendance Component of the School Improvement Plan:

1. **Identify budget allocations and funding sources to increase student achievement through increased attendance**

2. **Target and plan for appropriate professional development for school and community leaders**

3. **Evaluate your plan based on a needs assessment for increasing student achievement through increased attendance**

4. **Plan to decrease chronic absenteeism and chronic tardy days for all students**
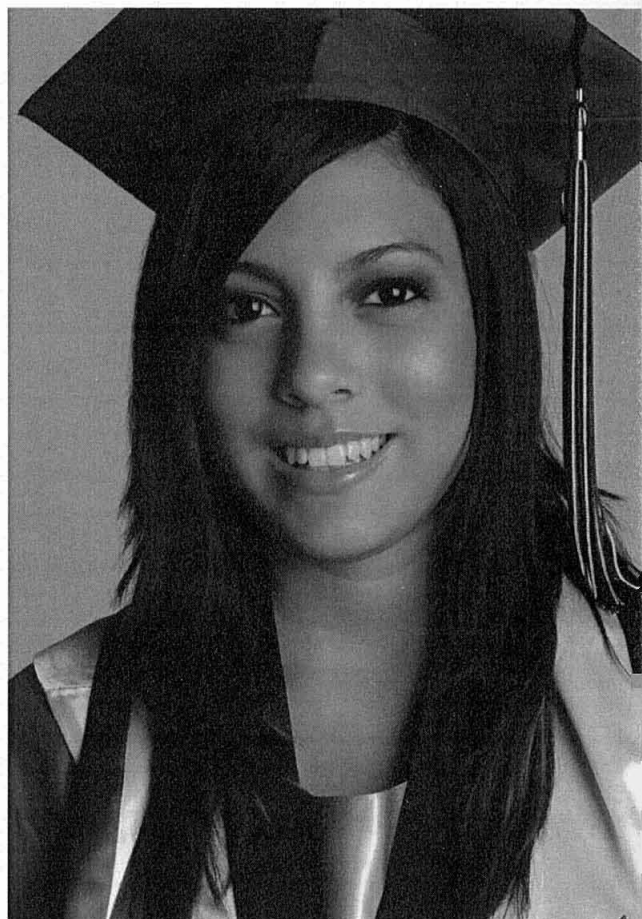
5. Monitor continued research and implement best practices as needed

This new Bring It 180 model provides for reflective practices through in-depth study of attendance data assessment, planning a chart for improvement, and monitoring the effectiveness of increased attendance outcomes as successful research based approaches. It is demonstrated through this study and recent literature that being in school leads to higher levels of student achievement (Balfanz et al., 2011). The Bring It 180 Toolkit offers a practical solution to the problems associated with chronic absenteeism. The attendance issue is significant and worthy of continued research, recognition and action on the part of parents, educational leadership, policy makers, community members, and school administration to improve overall educational outcomes for children (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

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