

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR TRANSITION-AGED YOUTH

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## ROADMAP

- Background and Context  
Attendance Matters  
Attendance Works- Framework and Tools
- Data from Office for Civil Right (OCR)
- Review 7 strategies:  
Self-assessment, Youth Voice, Effective teamwork and student-centered planning, Intersections of race and disability biases, Parent/caregiver engagement, Equitable access to Out of School Time programs and extra-curricular activities, Strategic Partnerships
- General Resources and Conclusion

## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

- “Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the workplace. Good attendance matters for school success, starting as early as prekindergarten and throughout elementary school. By middle and high school, poor attendance is a leading indicator of dropout. Developing the habit of attendance prepares students for success on the job and in life.”
- Attendance Works flyer: “Have to be Present to Win”

## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

- Chronic absence adversely impacts learning, peer relationships, classroom instruction.
- Missing 10% of school days= close to one month of school.
- Attendance Works, national leader in the field, creates messages and tools that are available on their website.

## Attendance Works Resources

- <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/>
- [http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Positive-Priority-Outreach-Toolkit\\_081914.pdf](http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Positive-Priority-Outreach-Toolkit_081914.pdf)
- <https://getschooled.com/dashboard/tool/343-attendance-counts?type=tool>

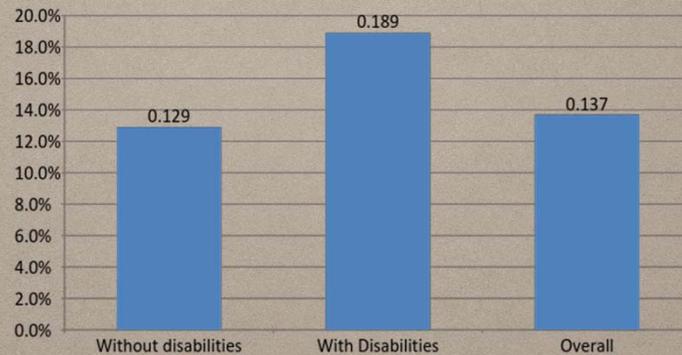
## Office for Civil Rights (OCR) DATA BIG PICTURE

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>

Nationwide: 14% of all students, more than 6.8 million students, are chronically absent (absent 15 or more school days during the school year)

High School: 19% of high school students, more than 3 million students are chronically absent

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ARE NEARLY 50% MORE LIKELY TO BE CHRONICALLY ABSENT



Source: OCR Corrected data 2013-2014 using the 15 day definition

## OCR DATA High School and more

High school students with disabilities served by IDEA are 1.4 times as likely to be chronically absent as high school students without disabilities.

- English learners are over-represented among chronically absent students at all grade levels.
- Suspensions: Students with disabilities served by IDEA (12%) are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as students without disabilities (5%).
- Elementary school students with disabilities served by IDEA are 1.5 times as likely to be chronically absent as elementary school students without disabilities.

## OCR DATA College and Career Readiness

### Lack of Access to Equitable Instructional Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are 12% of students in schools that offer Algebra II and 6% of students who are enrolled.

## School-based response

- Do students with disabilities have access to a wide range of instructional opportunities?
- Does the IEP include proper instructional and social/emotional/behavioral supports, supplementary aids and services, accommodations, assistive technology?
- What resources or other assistance do teachers need in order to fully implement the student's IEP? (barriers such as lack of access to needed materials and supplies, including assistive technology)
- Are there opportunities for internships and community-based learning?
- Are students with disabilities suspended at higher rates than typical peers?
- Are students with disabilities exposed to school police interventions at higher rates than typical peers?

## ATTENDANCE FACTORS

- Climate/ safety/ school police/ suspensions/ discipline practices
- Academics/ class sizes/ availability of instructional supports including technology as needed/ location of self-contained classes and specialized programs/ quality of art, music, gym and extra-curricular activities
- Meeting health and mental health needs
- Transportation services
- Access to quality after school programs
- Impact of disability and race biases

## Universal/ Early Intervention/ Intensive Intervention

- **UNIVERSAL**- School climate, Engaging Instruction, Opportunities for self-advocacy/ Youth Voice, Parent engagement, Mental health services and supports, Quality after school Programs
- **EARLY INTERVENTION**- Individualized attendance goal setting within all team processes including IEP and 504, using youth voice, transition planning and student directed IEPs to identify barriers, staff, student, family working together to remove barriers
- **INTENSIVE INTERVENTION**- Detailed individualized planning, designing and providing high quality positive behavior supports, "Educational champion" (adapted from National Center for Youth Law, Foster Ed,) or similar model

## SEVEN STRATEGIES

- 1. Self-assessment
- 2. Youth Voice
- 3. Effective teamwork and student-centered planning
- 4. Intersections of race and disability biases
- 5. Parent/caregiver engagement
- 6. Equitable access to Out of School Time programs and extra-curricular activities
- 7. Strategic Partnerships

## STRATEGY #1: SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Use a survey to identify what you do well and what you want to improve. It can be taken by 5-8 people in a school including principal, IEP chair, chairs of other attendance and school planning groups/teams, attendance team/group member, special educator and general educator and community partner representative
- Based upon the survey, create an action plan with goals and how to evaluate progress

## SELF-ASSESSMENT / SURVEY SCHOOL READINESS FOR INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING

- Each item on the survey can be scored as: in place=2, partially=1, willing to=1 not at all=0
- Each item can be noted as priority, High/Medium or Low
- Survey can be used to develop a plan of action

## SELF-ASSESSMENT / SURVEY

- 1. Administration supports using attendance data to plan intervention strategies.
- 2. School has a group/team that meets regularly to review data, identify chronically absent students and plan intervention strategies.
- 3. Group/team members know who they are, their roles and schedule of meetings.
- 4. Group/team members reflect all levels of school staff.
- 5. School staff have capacity to provide positive behavior supports and interventions.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT / SURVEY (CONTINUED)

- 6. School has collaborative relationships with community-based mental health providers and other social service agencies.
- 7. School is welcoming to family and community members at all organizational levels.
- 8. School administration provides time and resources as needed for staff to receive training and coaching to implement agreed upon interventions and strategies, and time needed to advocate for and mentor students.
- 9. School administration demonstrates a commitment to youth voice and to facilitate and respond to student directed team meetings.
- 10. School embraces a philosophy of providing individualized services to youth, a commitment to inclusion and understanding disability and racial biases and has policies and procedures in place that support being a thinking organization and providing “unconditional care” when providing services to youth.

## STRATEGY 2: YOUTH VOICE Examining Opportunities for Self-Advocacy, Self-Determination and Youth Voice

- Relationships between students and adults
- Opportunities for participation in decision-making
- Student-directed IEPs
- “It all Comes Down to Me”  
<http://youtu.be/NZYI3YXg6is>.
- Good Day Plan
- Transition Planning

## STUDENT DIRECTED IEPs “Nothing About Us Without Us”

- The student attends and is PREPARED for participating in their IEP meetings.
- Teachers and other adults begin to transfer decision-making power to students.
- Teaching students about the IEP and its use in guiding their future.
- Teaching students to use the IEP process to identify barriers to school attendance and success and to get help from adults as needed.

First step: discussion with student and parent about training, willingness and courage to advocate

Second step: training for student and IEP team, partnership with youth leaders to teach and model self-advocacy and self-determination, district teaches about the IEP process and uses I'm Determined template.

## Why Self-Determination Matters

- Self-advocacy/ Self-efficacy / Choice-making /Self-awareness
- Problem Solving
- Decision making
- Goal Setting
- A combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs enabling a person to be goal-directed, self-regulated, and independent
- Understanding one's strengths and limitations
- Believing in oneself as capable and effective
- Gaining a greater ability to take control of one's life to be a successful adult
- Transition planning

## GOOD DAY PLAN

- **What it is-** The Good Day Plan is a simple tool used to help a student identify the factors that play a role in whether or not they have a good day.
- **What it does-** The Good Day Plan allows the student to view their day from beginning to end and helps them identify a structure/routine that enables them to have a good day.
- [http://www.imdetermined.org/files\\_images/general/Toolbox\\_for\\_Self-Determination.pdf](http://www.imdetermined.org/files_images/general/Toolbox_for_Self-Determination.pdf).
- [http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/amyas\\_good\\_day\\_plan](http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/amyas_good_day_plan).

## STRATEGY 3: TEAM PLANNING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- Intentional team planning processes with clear guidelines about when and what type of meeting should occur to address attendance concerns.
- All teams have access to attendance and suspension data including out of school and in-school suspensions, as well as informal removals sometimes called “send homes.”
- All teams have access to a bank of tools and guiding questions to identify and minimize barriers.
- School leadership and team members examine and constantly improve universal, early intervention and intensive supports.
- School leadership and teams ensure that students are not overly disciplined.
- School teams link with district wide teams to explore systemic solutions such as equitable access to vocational training, internships and community-based learning.

## Guiding Questions for All Teams Student support, 504, IEP

- Guiding Questions to Identify and Minimize Attendance Barriers across the areas of:
  - Instruction
  - Social/ Emotional/ Behavioral Needs
  - School Climate
  - Home issues
    - Specific deeper look questions for IEP Teams

Available with webinar resources.

## YOUR SCHOOL'S IEP PROCESS

- **Are there opportunities and tools to identify attendance barriers?**
- **Are there opportunities for self-advocacy, self-determination, youth voice, student-directed IEPs?**
- **Are there opportunities for parent/caregiver participation?**
- **Are teams engaged in practices that lead to high quality transition services?**
- **Are team members knowledgeable about when to include attendance goals and objectives in the IEP?**

## Developing Attendance Goals / Providing a Free Appropriate Public Education

From a U.S. Department of Education Report on Chronic Absenteeism:  
“The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is intended to ensure all students with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate education yet chronic absenteeism is a barrier that gets in the way of achieving that goal.”

--US Department of Education,  
<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html#one>

## Deeper look: Using the IEP process Guiding Questions to Examine Transition Services

- Is transition planning based on high quality assessment tools?
- Are transition goals linking school attendance with college and career readiness?
- Are transition goals based on student’s interests and passions?
- Are transition goals affording opportunities for vocational training, internships and community-based learning?

## DEVELOPING ATTENDANCE GOALS IN THE IEP PROCESS

If chronic absence impacts learning, the IEP will include goals linked to the barriers and also a specific individualized attendance goal.

“ Regardless of the category of disability determined by the IEP team, the IEP needs to reflect all academic and behavioral goals needed to help the student to benefit from the educational setting including supplementary aids and services to improve attendance specific to the students needs”. (Wrightslaw)

## Tips for Developing IEP Goals and Objectives

- Using a scenario to train IEP teams
- Selecting documents to develop goals and objectives
- Examples of attendance goals and objectives

## STRATEGY 4: INTERSECTIONS OF RACE & DISABILITY BIAS

- Data indicate that students with disabilities and Black students are over-represented among students who are chronically absent, suspended and not completing school.
- There is often a mismatch between disability experts and youth they are serving.

## Guiding Questions/ Examining Attendance Barriers that are Rooted in Race and/ or Disability Biases

- In what ways does the school culture reflect an appreciation and value for all members of the school community?
- Are all cultures/ ethnicities/ genders represented in positions of power and authority?
- Do school suspension data and school discipline reflect disproportionality by race?
- Where and when can students and adults separately or together engage in safe discussions about race and disability biases?

## STRATEGY 5: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Quality communication between school staff and parents and caregivers
- Understanding disability-specific barriers families face
- Understanding race/cultural barriers families face
- Learning from parents/caregivers what it takes to build a shared value about the important of everyday school attendance

## STRATEGY 6: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO OST, SUMMER and EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Data reveal that students who attend after-school programs have better school day attendance and engagement
- OST and summer programs receive little inclusion support.
- Students with disabilities face barriers to equitable participation in extra-curricular activities
- **Short youtube video made by staff from one of the OST programs in the Baltimore OST Inclusion Project. It's a great example of embedding inclusive practice (at no extra cost) and finding creative ways to effectively support youth who regularly lose access to OST programs.**

<https://youtu.be/cS1Bx1GKt1k>.

## Guiding Questions/ Examining Barriers to Participation in OST and Extra-curricular Activities

- Is there a process to review extra-curricular activities and identify barriers to equitable participation?
- How do students learn about extra-curricular activities and OST programs?
- Is the invitation school-wide? Is the invitation accessible/barrier free?
- Is student participation conditioned on parent/caregiver involvement?
- Is transportation a barrier?
- Is there an expectation that activities include youth of all abilities?

## STRATEGY 7: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- Community allies
- Youth leaders
- Parent advocates
- Community health and mental health providers
- Legal & advocacy resources
  - State Disability Rights Organization
  - National Center for Youth Law

## SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

Self-assessment/ Survey (document)

Developing attendance goals in IEPs (BCPS guidance power point)

"Youth with Disabilities Face Major Barriers to School Attendance," *Unified Family Court Connection, Summer 2016 Edition, University of Baltimore School of Law,*  
[https://law.ubalt.edu/centers/cfcc/CFCC\\_Sum16\\_Vol17\\_Web.pdf](https://law.ubalt.edu/centers/cfcc/CFCC_Sum16_Vol17_Web.pdf)

FosterEd- Educational Champions, National Center for Youth Law. <http://foster-ed.org/>

Youth Voice:

Good Day Plan, [http://www.imdetermined.org/files\\_images/general/Toolbox\\_for\\_Self-Determination.pdf](http://www.imdetermined.org/files_images/general/Toolbox_for_Self-Determination.pdf). [http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/amyas\\_good\\_day\\_plan](http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/amyas_good_day_plan)

Student Directed IEPs, "It all Comes Down to Me" <http://youtu.be/NZYi3YXg6is>

Equitable Access to OST and Extracurricular Activities:

"Together Beyond the School Day" <http://www.disabilityrightsmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/OST-final-for-website.pdf>

Short youtube video made by staff from one of the OST programs in the Baltimore OST Inclusion Project. <https://youtu.be/cSI9sxiQKhk>

"Your Child with a Disability Can Take Part in Extracurricular Activities" <http://www.pacer.org/publications/pdfs/ALL-70.pdf>

## Resources (continued)

Re-designing the high school day, **earning credits through community based learning and internships**

TASC (The After-School Corporation)

<http://www.expandinglearning.org/toolkit/learn-anytime-anywhere-rethinking-how-students-earn-credit-beyond-school-hours>.

- <https://www.expandedschools.org/sites/default/files/expanded-high-school-approach-tasc.pdf>.

Intersections of Race and Disability Biases

Yes, Preschool Teachers Really Do Treat Black and White Children Totally Differently [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/preschool-biases\\_us\\_57ea8bb3e4b024a52d2aa517](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/preschool-biases_us_57ea8bb3e4b024a52d2aa517).

Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) <http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/>.

Baltimore Racial Justice Action (BRJA) <http://bmoreantiracist.org/>.

**Thank You.**

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