

Chronic Absenteeism Interventions: Overview

Included in this document is a list (with short descriptions) of the most rigorously tested, attendance-related interventions identified in the existing literature for which an impact was identified.

Intervention	Description	Intervention Level	Grades/ Target Audience
<p>SPARK Literacy Program</p> <p><i>The Results of a Randomized Control Trial Evaluation of the SPARK Literacy Program</i> (Jones, Christian & Rice)</p> <p>Milwaukee Public Schools, 2016</p>	<p>Used in-school tutoring and family engagement to develop students’ literacy skills and help families support the literacy development of their students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were tutored in phonic skills, reading, and writing for 30 minutes up to 3 times/week by AmeriCorps members or college students • Each site has a parent partner who worked with each participating student's family through monthly newsletters, family events, phone calls and emails, as well as 2 home visits in the summer. 	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>ES/ Students and parents</p>
<p>Prekindergarten Program</p> <p><i>Evaluation of the Tennessee Voluntary Prekindergarten Program: Kindergarten and First Grade Follow-Up Results</i> (Lipsey et al.)</p> <p>Tennessee, 2013</p>	<p>Full-day pre-k program for 4-year olds from low-income families. The program in each district had to meet standards set by the State Board of Education that required the classroom to have a teacher with a license in early childhood development and education, an adult-student ratio of no less than 1:10, maximum class size of 20, and an approved, age-appropriate curriculum.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>Pre-K/ Students</p>
<p>Summer Youth Employment Program</p> <p><i>What Is a Summer Job Worth? The Impact of Summer Youth Employment on Academic Outcomes</i> (Leos-Urbel)</p> <p>New York City, 2014</p>	<p>Provided summer jobs and training to youth ages 14-21. Participants worked in a variety of entry-level jobs in the nonprofit, private, and public sectors for up to 25 hours/week for 7 weeks in the summer, and received the NY state minimum wage. 10% of their time is dedicated to education and training on topics such as work readiness, financial literacy, career exploration, postsecondary education options, and health education, but it was primarily a workforce program.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students</p>

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<p>Mailers Directly to Parents (1 of 3)</p> <p><i>Parent Beliefs and Student Absences: Large Absence-Reduction Field Experiment</i> (Rogers & Feller)</p> <p>Major metropolitan school district, 2016</p>	<p>Sent 5 mailings over the course of the school year to parents with one of three types of messages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. language around the importance of attendance and parental efficacy; 2. the same information as #1, plus the number of days the student missed; or 3. the same information as #2, plus a comparison of the student's attendance to a typical student in their school and grade. 	Student-level	All/ Parents
<p>Mailers Directly to Parents (2 of 3)</p> <p><i>A Randomized Experiment Using Absenteeism Information to "Nudge" Attendance</i> (Rogers et al.)</p> <p>School District of Philadelphia, 2017</p>	<p>Sent a postcard to parents with one of two types of messages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. language encouraging guardians to improve their students' attendance; or 2. the same information as #1, plus specific information about the child's attendance history from the previous school year. 	Student-level	All/ Parents
<p>Mailers Directly to Parents (3 of 3)</p> <p><i>Reducing Student Absenteeism in the Early Grades by Targeting Parental Beliefs</i> (Robinson et al.)</p> <p>California, 2017</p>	<p>Sent 6 mailings to parents over the course of the school year with one of two types messages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. language emphasizing the importance of regular school attendance in early grades and the number of student's year-to-date absences (each mailing focused on how attendance impacts a different academic area or skill); or 2. the same information as #1, plus a supplementary insert encouraging parents to reach out to attendance supporters (family, friends, or others in the community or school). 	Student-level	ES/ Parents

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<p>Providing Parents Information About Academic Progress</p> <p><i>Parent-Child Information Frictions and Human Capital Investment: Evidence from a Field Experiment</i> (Bergman)</p> <p>Los Angeles Unified School District, 2015</p>	<p>Sent parents information about their child's missing assignments, including homework, classwork, projects, and missing exams. Each message contained the class and assignment name or exam date; sometimes included very specific detail such as problem or page numbers of the missing work. All of this information came directly from teacher gradebooks and was sent out several times a month. Parents also received information about the student's current grades every 5-8 weeks, and notification about upcoming final exams. Parents were surveyed about what means of communication they preferred (the majority selected text messages, followed by email, then phone calls).</p> <p><i>Note:</i> this intervention impacted class attendance; no effect on full-day absences.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>MS and HS/ Students and parents</p>
<p>Text Messaging Parents</p> <p><i>Leveraging Technology to Engage Parents at Scale: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial</i> (Bergman & Chan)</p> <p>Kanawha County Schools (West Virginia), 2017</p>	<p>Sent automated text message alerts to parents about their child's missed class absences, assignments, and grades. Sent 3 types of alerts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. on Mondays: the number of assignments the child was missing for each course the previous week; 2. on Wednesdays: any class the child had missed the previous week; 3. last Friday of the month: if student had average below 70% in any course. <p>All messages also included a link to a parent portal with information on absences and assignments. Parents were surveyed about what means of communication they preferred (because 96% preferred text messages, made this a texting intervention).</p> <p><i>Note:</i> this intervention impacted class attendance; did not measure full-day absences.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>MS and HS/ Parents</p>
<p>Student Mentoring Program</p> <p><i>Impact Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education's Student Mentoring Program</i> (Bernstein et al.)</p> <p>Across the US, 2009</p>	<p>This federal grant program was implemented in different sites by a variety of sponsoring organizations (nonprofits, community-based, school-based). Priorities of the program are a focus on the academic and social needs of at-risk students. Mentors could be adults or peers, and provided general guidance, served as role models, and/or provided academic assistance and encouragement.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>MS/ Students</p>

Intervention	Description	Intervention Level	Grades/ Target Audience
<p>Health Services, Teacher Mentorship, and Family Involvement</p> <p><i>Engaging Truant Adolescents: Results from a Multifaceted Intervention Pilot</i> (DeSocio et al.)</p> <p>Northeast city, 2007</p>	<p>Included health services, mentoring, and family involvement components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health services: students were enrolled in a school-based health center to access pediatric and psychiatric services. • Mentoring: teachers served as mentors to both tutor and advocate for students when issues with other faculty emerged. • Family involvement: parents were updated on students' progress and participated in creation of a student re-entry plan that addressed changes parents could help with (such as buying alarm clocks and transportation) 	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students and parents</p>
<p>Sports and Moral Character Education</p> <p><i>Interventions designed to affect minority male attendance and truancy in a small school.</i> (Marvul)</p> <p>Urban school, 2010</p>	<p>Involved sports, moral character classes, and outreach to parents. Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participated in club sports teams which included in-school class time for sports 3 days/week and games outside of school hours, and • attended a moral character class during the school day. <p>Additionally, the researcher reached out to parents before school (between 6-7:30am) about student absences. All parents typically received calls from the school about absences, but those were made during the school day.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students</p>
<p>Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Anti-Depressants</p> <p><i>Imipramine plus cognitive-behavioral therapy in the treatment of school refusal</i> (Bernstein et al.)</p> <p>1999</p>	<p>Investigated the efficacy of 8 weeks of an anti-depressant vs. placebo in conjunction with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for treatment of school-refusing adolescents with comorbid anxiety and major depressive disorders. The CBT consisted of weekly hour-long sessions adapted from a school-refusal treatment protocol. Parents joined each session for 10-15 minutes.</p>	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students</p>

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<p>Academic Match Tutoring and Becoming a Man</p> <p><i>The (surprising) efficacy of academic and behavioral intervention with disadvantaged youth: results from a randomized experiment in Chicago.</i> (Cook et al.)</p> <p>Chicago, 2014</p>	<p>Two-prong intervention that consisted of academic Match Tutoring and non-academic Becoming a Man program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match Education tutoring model included the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily tutoring that is embedded into the school day as its own period. • Consistent tutor/student pairs over the year (the tutors do not work with more than 2 students during each session). • Tutors receive initial training and ongoing support, and are paid \$16,000 plus benefits for the academic year. 2. Becoming a Man included after-school and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After-school: 1-2 hour session to provide youth with more opportunities to reflect on their automatic responses and decision-making. Included non-traditional sports (archery, boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, handball, and martial arts) that require focus, self-control, and proper channeling of aggression. 3. CBT: students participated in up to 27 one-hour/week group sessions of CBT during the school day. Included self-analysis, discussion of cognitive models, and teaching of relaxation techniques. 	<p>Student-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students</p>

Intervention	Description	Intervention Level	Grades/ Target Audience
<p>Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System</p> <p><i>Getting Students on Track for Graduation: Impacts of the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System</i> (Faria et al.)</p> <p>3 midwest states, 2017</p>	<p>Provided schools with guidance for the early identification of and intervention with students at risk of not graduating from high school on time, supported by the use of an early warning data tool. The tool used indicators to flag students who are at risk based on their attendance, behavior, course performance, and credit accumulation, and allows schools to assign students to interventions and monitor their progress. The interventions ranged depending on the needs of the students, but examples included: tutoring, mentoring, peer mentoring, letter or phone call home, mental health service referrals, online credit recovery, and meetings with student and parents.</p>	<p>School-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students</p>
<p>Positive Action (1/2)</p> <p><i>Using Social-Emotional and Character Development to Improve Academic Outcomes</i> (Bavarian et al.)</p> <p>Chicago Public Schools, 2013</p>	<p>Positive Action was a program that included classroom curriculum, schoolwide climate development, and teacher and staff training at the beginning of each academic year. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum with 20 minute lessons incorporated into the school day focused on social-emotional and character development <p>School-wide activities, such as assemblies, newsletters, and a PA committee to promote a positive climate.</p>	<p>School-level</p>	<p>ES / Students</p>
<p>Positive Action (2/2)</p> <p><i>Impact of a Social-Emotional and Character Development Program on School-Level Indicators of Academic Achievement, Absenteeism, and Disciplinary Outcomes</i> (Snyder et al.)</p> <p>Hawaii, 2010</p>	<p>Positive Action was a program that included classroom curriculum, schoolwide climate development, and teacher and staff training at the beginning of each academic year. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum with 20 minute lessons incorporated into the school day focused on social-emotional and character development • School-wide activities, such as assemblies, newsletters, and a PA committee to promote a positive climate. 	<p>School-level</p>	<p>ES / Students</p>

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<p>Early Truancy Prevention Project</p> <p><i>A new program to prevent primary school absenteeism: Results of a pilot study in five schools.</i> (Cook et al.)</p> <p>North Carolina, 2017</p>	<p>Facilitated communication between parents and teachers, and trained and equipped teachers to respond to students when attendance issues emerged. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • universal teacher home visits (all students); • a smart phone with cellular plan for each teacher to support frequent communication with parents (all students); • gathering bi-weekly attendance data to identify emerging attendance problems (all students); • online Attendance Information System to track data, assess barriers to attendance, and provide suggested interventions (at-risk students); and • staff awareness of the available attendance resources, and coordination with truancy court and other social-work programs (chronically absent students). 	<p>School-level</p>	<p>ES / Students and parents</p>
<p>School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports</p> <p><i>Scale-Up of Safe & Civil Schools' Model for School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports</i> (Smolkowski, Strycker & Ward)</p> <p>Large urban school district, 2016</p>	<p>Comprised of multiyear training, site visits, and coaching to assist school staff with implementing school-wide behavior and support practices. Included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials to guide a variety of school staff (administrators, teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and others) through the process of examining and modifying schools' overall systems, spaces, and structures; • Training a school-based leadership team to learn how to implement improvements related to safety, behavior and discipline; • Training to collect and analyze data from observations, discipline records, and climate surveys; and • Training staff to give positive feedback, actively supervise, teach expectations, and enforce school-wide policies consistently. 	<p>School-level</p>	<p>ES / School</p>

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<p>Cash Transfer Program</p> <p><i>The Impact of a Holistic Conditional Cash Transfer Program in New York City on Parental Financial Investment, Student Time Use, and Educational Processes and Outcomes</i> (Aber et al.)</p> <p>New York City, 2011</p>	<p>Offered cash assistance to low-income families conditioned on family investments in: children's education, family preventative health care, and parents' employment.</p> <p>Families were offered incentives across 3 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (such as attendance, test scores, attendance at parent-teacher conferences); • Health (such as annual check-ups, maintaining insurance, preventative dental care); and • Workforce (sustained full-time employment, education and training while employed at least 10 hours/week). <p>High schoolers received a portion or all of the incentive payments directly for their educational incentives, which included graduation, PSATs, and passing the Regents exams.</p>	<p>Family-level</p>	<p>HS/ Students and parents</p>