

Name of City/District Mayor/Superintendent/School Board Announces Local Efforts to Recognize September as Attendance Awareness Month

[NAME] *pledges to engage community, families, students
in concerted effort to reduce chronic absenteeism*

[NAME OF CITY] Mayor/Superintendent/School Board has joined a nationwide effort to celebrate [Attendance Awareness Month](#) in September and has pledged to raise awareness about the value of regular school attendance and focus on reducing chronic absenteeism in the new school year.

[NAME or CITY of DISTRICT] recognizes that good attendance is essential to academic success. But far too many students are at risk academically because they are chronically absent. Chronic absence is described as missing 10 percent of the school year—or about 18 days – for any reason, excused or unexcused. That’s the point at which absenteeism begins to affect student performance, research shows.

Nationally, 5 million to 7.5 million miss nearly a month of school in excused and unexcused absences every year. **SHARE ANY LOCAL DATA IF AVAILABLE**. Starting as early as kindergarten or even preschool, chronic absence predicts lower 3rd grade reading scores. By middle school it’s a warning sign that students will fail key classes and drop out of high school.

Chronic absence disproportionately affects children from low-income families and communities of color, creating attendance gaps that exacerbate achievement gaps in local schools. This is not just a matter of truancy. Many children, especially in the early grades, miss too much school because of chronic health problems, unreliable transportation or housing moves—barriers that city agencies and community partners can help families address.

SAMPLE MAYOR’S QUOTE “This matters to all of us, not just those with school-age children,” **[MAYOR]** said. “When our schools graduate more students, on time, our communities and our economy are stronger. We have more people who are prepared for the workplace and more engaged in our community’s civic life.”

SAMPLE SUPERINTENDENT/SCHOOL BOARD QUOTE “We know that we will never narrow the achievement gap or reduce our dropout rate until we bring this problem under control, and that means starting early,” **[SUPERINTENDENT/BOARD CHAIR]** said. “All our efforts to improve curriculum and instruction won’t matter much if kids aren’t in school.”

In September, schools, city agencies, community nonprofits, faith-based groups, businesses and others around the nation are committing time and resources to raise public awareness, map local attendance gaps and work with community partners to improve school attendance starting as soon as children enter school. **SHARE ANY LOCAL DETAILS IF AVAILABLE**

“September is a particularly good time to focus on attendance,” said Hedy Chang, director of Attendance Works, a national nonprofit dedicated to improve school attendance “Research shows that students who miss two to four days in the first month of school are more likely to become chronically absent during the school year. By paying attention to absences early in the school year and early in a child’s academic career, we can turn around attendance and achievement.”

[If you’d like a another quote from one of our national partners, please contact Phyllis Jordan at phyllis@attendanceworks.org]

During Attendance Awareness Month, we are asking school leaders, community advocates, parents and students to act upon these critical first steps to help stem chronic absenteeism:

- Build a habit and a culture of regular attendance
- Use data to determine when and with whom chronic absence is a problem, and
- Identify and address barriers to getting children to school.

Study after study shows that chronic absence is an early warning indicator that a student will drop out of a high school. A [recent study from Utah](#) found that a student who was chronically absent in any year between eighth and 12th grade was 7.4 times more likely to drop out than students with better attendance.

#####