Tools for Understanding Chronic Absenteeism

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http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/index.html
Advance Organizer & Objectives

• Chronic Absenteeism Overview
• RCA & RCA-P Findings
• Implications for Practice
• Questions

• Participants will:
  • Understand chronic absenteeism
    • How it is measured and contributors
  • Understand the features and findings of RCA survey studies
  • Understand how these tools may be used in districts/schools
Chronic Absenteeism
Chronic Absenteeism (CA)

- No standard definition
  - Often based on total number of days missed
    - Does not differentiate reasons for absences
      - Includes: excused, unexcused and suspensions
  - Frequently defined as:
    - Missing 10% or more of instructional days
      - HB7069 K-8 EWS
      - FL reports students missing 21 or more days per year
    - Missing 15 or more days of school per year

- Important Differences -
  - **Truancy** = unexcused absences (s. 1003.26(b), F.S.)
  - **Average Daily Attendance** = how many students show up each day
  - **Chronic Absence** = missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at-risk - **missing 10% or more of school**
Average Daily Attendance and CA

Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism, 2013-14
(Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)
Prevalence of Chronic Absenteeism

• Based on national research, conservative estimates:
  • 10% of US students miss 21+ days of school per year
  • 14-15% of US students miss 18+ days of school per year

5-7.5 million students each year!!

• 13/14 OCR data found 6.8 million students missed 15+ days of school

Easy to Overlook Patterns of Chronic Absence in Individual Students

Get Schooled Interactive webpage:

Make A Prediction....

• How many FL students missed 21+ days of school during the 15/16 school year?
  1. 50,000 or fewer
  2. 50,000-100,000
  3. 100,000-200,000
  4. 200,000-250,000
  5. 250,000-300,000
  6. 300,000-350,000
Prevalence of CA in FL

• According to data reported to FL DOE during the 2015/2016 school year, 10.10% of K-12 students were absent 21+ days

318,787 students- an increase from 304,060 students in 14/15
2015-16 District 21+ Absence Rates

Statewide Average 10.10%

Source: Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida Department of Education
What does 318, 787 students look like?

88,548-90,000+

82,300

65,657

76,100
Patterns in Chronic Absence Across Grade Levels

- Rates typically drop after Kindergarten through 5th grade.
- Rise significantly in middle and high school.

Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012
Chronic Absenteeism by Demographics

Chart 4 - Chronically Absent Students By Demographic Background

Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012
2015-16 SWD Chronic Absenteeism Rates

- **0 – 9.9%**
- **10% – 14.9%**
- **15% – 19.9%**
- **20% – 30+%**

**Statewide Average 15.05%**

Source: Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida Department of Education
What are the Implications of CA?

Missing 10 percent or more of instructional days has significant impact on student outcomes. Chronic absenteeism is associated with:

| Decreased reading levels and overall academic performance | Decreased on-time graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment | Increased dropout rates |

(Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Chang & Romero, 2008)
Problem Solving Chronic Absenteeism

- Missing 10% or more of instructional days
- RCA: aggregate and individual
- Use EWS to monitor attendance
- Intervention based on reasons for absences
Proposed Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism

Balfanz & Byrnes (2012)

Barriers/Can’t

Something prevents them from attending (illness, transportation, child care or family obligations)

Aversions/Won’t

Avoidance of interactions or events at school (affective or perceptions physical/psychological safety issues, school climate, stress)

Disengagement/Don’t

Would rather be somewhere else, do not make the effort to attend school and/or do not see the value in school
## Tools to unpack chronic absenteeism: RCA & RCA-P

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism (RCA)</th>
<th>Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism- Parent (RCA-P)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Self-report survey for chronically absent 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>  
  • Completed online  
  • Measures the reasons for chronic absenteeism  
  • Designed for use at the aggregate or individual level to inform data-based problem solving and intervention development | • Self-report survey for parents* of chronically absent PreK-12 students  
  • Completed online  
  • Measures reasons for chronic absenteeism  
  • Parent & student focused items  
  • Designed for use at the aggregate or individual level to inform data-based problem solving and intervention development |
Why These Instruments?

• To develop interventions aimed at reducing absences:
  • Accurate understanding of why students are not coming to school
  • Need comprehensive and efficient tools
    • PreK Parents
    • K-12 Parent
    • 6th-12th Students
Content Domains

**Barriers**
- Health
- Transportation
- Housing/Material Instability
- Adult Responsibilities
- Suspensions
- Court/DJJ

**Aversions**
- Bullying/Harassment
- Personal Stress
- School Stress
- School Climate
- Safety/Conflict

**Disengagement**
- Value of School
## Scoring Rubric

For each survey item, students or parents rate the item as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This is never a reason you/your student have/has missed school.
- This is not very often a reason you/your student have/has missed school.
- This is a reason you/your student have/has missed school more than 3 times.
- This is often the reason you/your student have/has missed school.
RCA & RCA-P Samples

RCA Sample
- 8 states
- 21 districts
- 91 schools
- 5,790 students

RCA-P Sample
- 2 states
- 5 Grantees & 1 district
- 67 schools
- 1,124 Parents
Student/Parent Response Data

Quantitative Responses
• Within each category (Health Related, etc.), the percentage of students/parents who endorsed items as “Sometimes” or “Usually” was totaled:
  • Overall
  • By State
  • By District
  • By School

Qualitative Responses
• For each open-ended item, student/parent responses were coded into themes and the instances of a theme were totaled
## Quantitative Responses by Category

### Student Versus Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Student Percentage</th>
<th>Parent Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Related</td>
<td>1  92.6</td>
<td>1  93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2  53.0</td>
<td>3  38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Stress</td>
<td>3  41.8</td>
<td>4  24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Activity Outside of School</td>
<td>4  41.0</td>
<td>2  40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of School</td>
<td>5  38.8</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Stress</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Conflict</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Responsibility</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>5  24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal System Involvement</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Material Instability</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PreK/Head Start versus High School Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>PreK/Head Start Percentage</th>
<th>High School Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Related</td>
<td>1  94.3</td>
<td>1  87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>2  39.0</td>
<td>2  20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Stress</td>
<td>5  22.9</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Activity Outside of School</td>
<td>3  38.6</td>
<td>2  59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of School</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3  58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Stress</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4  46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Conflict</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Responsibility</td>
<td>4  23.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal System Involvement</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Material Instability</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overall vs SWD Reported Reasons for CA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Overall Percentage</th>
<th>SWD Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Related</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Stress</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Activity Outside of School</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of School</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Stress</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Conflict</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Responsibility</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal System Involvement</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Material Instability</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accurately Recalled/Reported Absences

MESSAGING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/PreK Parents</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Parents</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions of Absences: Compared to Peers

- Students:
  - Fewer: 23.9%
  - Same: 31.3%
  - More: 44.8%

- Parents:
  - Fewer: 15.3%
  - Same: 40.9%
  - More: 43.8%
### Perception of Typical Numbers of Absences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Absences Per Year</th>
<th>Parent Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 days</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 days</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 days</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 days</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ days</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68% of parents perceived average absence rates to be consistent with “good” attendance
Parent Level of Concern Related to Absences

BAD NEWS!

Percentage of Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Concern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Concerned</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student Reported Supports to Improve Attendance - 4525 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Responses</th>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Instances Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Difficulty/ Strictness</strong></td>
<td>(Less homework, more fair rules, lenient dress code)</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illness Prevention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging Environment</strong></td>
<td>(More interesting/ fun, more hands-on)</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved Climate/Relationships</strong></td>
<td>(Nicer peers/adults, less drama, less bullying)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School schedule</strong></td>
<td>(Later start time, shorter classes, more time to pass between classes)</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Support</strong></td>
<td>(Tutoring, better teachers, help from teachers)</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsure</strong></td>
<td>(I don’t know, not sure)</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent Reported Supports to Improve Attendance - 639 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Instances Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illness Prevention</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Schedule (Later start time, shorter classes)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Support (Parent support for school attendance, persistence in taking child to school, support from family members, improves time management, utilizing after-school hours for children’s medical appointments)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure (I don’t know, not sure)</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## High School Parent Reported Supports to Improve Attendance - 118 Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Responses</th>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Instances Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Schedule</strong></td>
<td>(Later school start time)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Support</strong></td>
<td>(Help from a teacher, individual attention)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging Environment</strong></td>
<td>(More interesting, fun, or hands-on instruction)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tougher Consequences</strong></td>
<td>(Punishments for skipping school, misbehavior)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climate/Relationships</strong></td>
<td>(Nicer peers/adults, more friends, less bullying)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Do We Address CA?

Collect Data to Analyze the “Why” of CA-for Groups of Students
Prioritize Resources
Implement Interventions to Address the “Why”: Health, Transportation, Social/Emotional, School Climate
Consider Wrap-Around Supports
Monitor Effectiveness of Interventions (EWS: Attendance, Grades, Graduation)

Collect Data to Analyze the “Why” of CA-for Individual Students
Implement Interventions to Address the “Why”: Health, Transportation, Social/Emotional, School Climate
Consider Wrap-Around Supports
Monitor Effectiveness of Interventions (EWS: Attendance, Grades, Graduation)

Attendance/CA Goals
Consistent Attendance Collection (Classroom Procedures) and Monitoring (EWS)
Messaging to All Stakeholders Re: Absences/Attendance Goals
Policy/Practice Analysis
Recognition/Celebration of Good/Improved Attendance
Health Promotion Strategies

ALL
FEW
SOME
Implications for use

• How have these tools been used in your district/school?
• How can you see them being used in your district school?
How did we do?

• Participants will:
  • Understand chronic absenteeism
    • How it is measured and contributors
  • Understand the features and findings of RCA survey studies
  • Understand how these tools may be used in districts/schools
Reflections

- What are some take-aways from the parent and student surveys?
- What questions do you have?
- What are ideas for next steps?

“Every problem has in it the seeds of it’s own solution” - Norman Vincent Peale
RESOURCES
Tools for Self-Reflection

School-Level


District-Level

Tools for Analyzing Your Data

• http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-calculating-chronic-absence/

Tools for Analyzing Your Data: RCA

http://www.floridarti.usf.edu/resources/topic/chronic_absenteeism/index.html
Tools for Messaging: Attendance Works & Nudge Letters


‘Nudge’ letter example

Once every quarter, Tacoma Public Schools mails parents a copy of their children’s total absences compared with other students. This is one example of a "nudge" letter that school officials hope will improve attendance.

Dear Parent/Guardian of [name]:

In Tacoma Public Schools we strive to improve the attendance of our students. Each minute of the school day provides opportunities for learning, and it’s noticeable when students miss time.

[Name] has missed 13 days — or 11% of school this year, more than the typical student at our school or in the district for the same grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Absent from School as of February 21st, 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical student in our school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All elementary students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11%
3%
4%

We are worried that if [name] continues to miss school days, it will be difficult to stay on track in the classroom.

Source: Tacoma Public Schools

EMILY M. ENG / THE SEATTLE TIMES
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http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/presentations/index.html
Additional Readings


Additional Readings Continued


