Addressing Attendance to Increase Graduation Rates

Missing just 10% of school (2 days per month) can drastically affect a teen’s academic success and reduce graduation outcomes. “Students with disabilities are among those most frequently absent from school at every grade level,” (Civil Rights Data Collection 2013-2014). In fact, students with disabilities’ chronic absence rate is 1.5 times higher than their non-disabled peers nationally.

The graphs below demonstrate the percent of students who demonstrate chronic absenteeism in Wisconsin, comparing both students with disabilities to their non-disabled peers as well as a comparison of students by race. In Wisconsin during the 2018-2019 school year chronic absenteeism is double for students with disabilities when compared to their non-disabled peers. Wisconsin sees disproportionate numbers of chronic absenteeism relating to race, making it imperative to utilize culturally responsive practices to support the increase of attendance with students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Source: Wisconsin WISE Dash Public Portal, retrieved 12/2020

Attendance Works shares that addressing chronic absenteeism is a whole school/community project. Attendance Works is an action research project that uses continuous quality improvement to evaluate gaps in knowledge and capacity building. Constant assessment of intervention leads to updated and new tools and approaches in reducing chronic absence.

To support students with disabilities in increasing their attendance, “districts and schools have a more direct problem-solving role” in increasing attendance rates. Teams should look at a wide range of support systems to increase attendance for students with disabilities. In the below chart teams will find strategies and tools for educators, families, and community agency partners, brings a direct focus on attendance support for students with disabilities, as well as discusses attendance practices during the Coronavirus Pandemic. There are direct links within the chart that can bring teams to small toolkits to support attendance. In addition, teams can look at up to-date information on supporting attendance during the Coronavirus Pandemic and watch a webinar of best practice strategies.

Links:
Specific Resources:
https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/teens-and-their-families/
Self Assessment and Planning Tool:
Family Engagement Tools:
Tools and Resources for Community Partners:
https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/community-and-agency-partners/
Highlighted Tools and Strategies:
https://www.future-ed.org/attendance-playbook/
Smart Strategies Webinar:
https://vimeo.com/436840674

A research study from The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory cites various strategies to make attendance interventions culturally responsive to serve all students. The study cites that supporting attendance must be a collaborative effort including: schools, families, and community-based organizations that are directly involved in the communities in which the schools wish to serve, (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory). The infographic below shares the findings and strategies from the above-mentioned research study.

In order to fully support attendance for students who demonstrate chronic absenteeism, a community approach must be utilized. Schools cannot change attendance practices alone and must work with families and community members from the communities in which students live in to develop a wrap-around approach to teaching the importance of attendance, supporting needs that may be a barrier to a student’s attendance, and working together to build up students so they are not only attending, however, feel engaged and encouraged to attend school. The resources shared in this article, provide teams the opportunity to look at building this community approach to attendance support. For more information or support, please contact your Regional TIG Coordinator.

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