

E³ Spotlight: The Central Texas Attendance Challenge

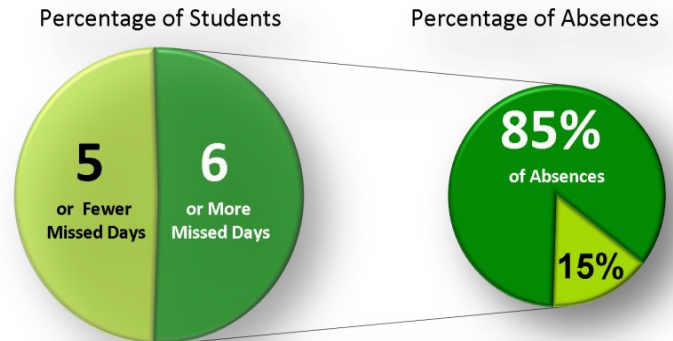


The Challenge

Central Texas schools have more student absences than the state average at every grade. Because schools are funded based on attendance, if we could increase average attendance by just 3 days, Central Texas districts would gain \$34 million in annual revenue from the state that could be used to improve educational outcomes.

Compelling Data

An E3 Alliance analysis of school year 2010-11 found that there were **2.4 million student absences in Central Texas in the year**. Half of Central Texas students missed more than six class days per year, and accounted for 85 percent of all absences. And while non-low income students across the state had about the same number of average days absent per year, Central Texas low income students had the *highest absence rates of any urban area in the state*. And attendance is highly correlated with performance: E3 data indicates that a high school student who misses 10 or more days of school is **3 more times likely to drop out** than a student who misses 5 days or fewer.



Source: UT Austin Education Research Center

The Solution

"Missing School Matters" - The Central Texas Attendance Campaign

Central Texas superintendents chose increased attendance as the number one way the community could make a difference in our schools because of the "Triple Bottom Line" benefit:

- Students can learn when they are present in class
- Teachers have more opportunity to teach
- Increased revenue to districts, because Texas school districts are funded based on attendance

Since the spring of 2011, E³ Alliance, in partnership with the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), Central Texas Education Funders, and participating school districts across the region, has spearheaded a regional approach to increase student attendance through the Missing School Matters Campaign. **Our goal: to increase attendance by a minimum of two percentage points, or an average of three school days per student, to save our school districts \$34 million.**

3 Days = \$34 Million

Improving student attendance is one of the most important ways our communities can help schools. Our kids can't learn if they are skipping out, and our schools don't get paid when students aren't there. This is something that we as a region can change, and E³ Alliance is helping to lead the way." ~ Jesus Chavez, Superintendent, Round Rock ISD

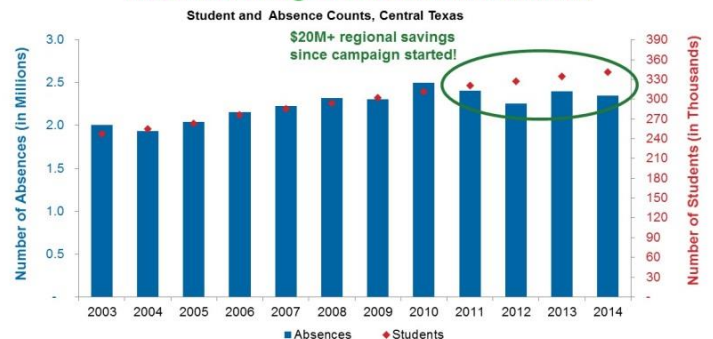
Progress to Date



Developing a culture of attendance through multiple avenues and partnerships has been at the heart of our efforts to promote school attendance in Central Texas since Missing School Matters began. In 2014-15, almost 400 educators, businesses leaders, and community partners participated in the MSM campaign to relay the importance of attendance through schools, businesses, and community groups. 33 stories in print and radio featured the campaign, and over 10,000 students were reached through SXSW visits and flyers distributed through Blue and Brown Santa programs.

E3 Alliance made special efforts to reach a wider audience through social media. Through the #CurbAbsences campaign, Yellow Cab provided ad space for the MSM PSA on the back of over 25 cabs on key routes in the Austin area, combined with a social media photo campaign resulting in even greater awareness of the importance of attendance in Central Texas and beyond. Thanks to combined community efforts since the launch of Missing School Matters in 2011, student absences have declined for the first time in two decades despite continued enrollment increases, **saving Central Texas schools over \$20M in revenues!**

Absences Diverge From Student Enrollment



Flu Immunization Campaign

When we began the MSM campaign, our goal was to go beyond simply raising awareness of absences in our region to begin discovering and addressing the root causes behind absences. So, in 2013, E3 Alliance designed and executed a ground-breaking *Absence Reasons Study* to analyze student absence reasons and patterns. The study found that the single largest reported cause of Central Texas student absences – at 48% - is acute illness. And the flu emerged as the cause of more absences than all other immunizable diseases combined. It became clear that addressing the flu could have a huge potential impact on student absenteeism as well as family and community health.

In 2014, E3 Alliance led the largest in-school flu immunization campaign in Texas history, with over 6500 vaccines given at 56 primarily Title 1 schools in five districts. The campaign brought together partners such as Lone Star Circle of Care, People's Community Clinic, CommuniCare, Travis County DSHS, Texas Department of State Health Services Immunization Branch, Superior HealthPlan and Children's Optimal Health, as well as anchor investors St. David's Foundation and Central Health.



The 2015 flu immunization campaign is expected to be *quadruple the size*, providing 26,000 vaccines in 136 schools across nine districts. The campaign should help many more students avoid unnecessary absences, improve student achievement and allow schools to regain crucial revenue.

For more information and resources for promoting school attendance in Central Texas, please visit www.missingschoolmatters.org.