Why are Students Absent and What Can We Do About It?

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E³ Alliance is a Catalyst For Educational Change in Central Texas

Mission

E³ Alliance uses objective data and focused community collaboration to align our education systems so all students succeed and lead Central Texas to economic prosperity

E³ Alliance serves as the Central Texas regional P-16 Council
2.4 Million

Student Absences in Central Texas per Year

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at UT Education Research Center; 2010-2011 school year.
Absenteeism Generally Increases After 5th Grade

Average Number of Absences in Central Texas, By Grade, 2015-16

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
20% of Students Miss More Than 2 Weeks of School

Percent of K-12 Students by Number of Absences, Central Texas, 2015-16

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
More than 15% of High School Students Chronically Absent

Percent of Students Chronically Absent*, By Grade, Central Texas, 2015-16

* Absent 10% or more of days enrolled for any reason

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
Students With More Than 10 Absences Account for Nearly 70% of All High School Absences

Percentage of High School Absences, Central Texas, 2015-16

- Missed 1-5 days: 12%
- Missed 6-10 days: 19%
- Missed more than 10 days: 69%

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
Low Income High School Students in Central Texas Miss an Extra Day of School

Average Number of Absences in High School, 2015-16

Average Days Absent During School Year

Non-low Income
- Central Texas: 8.2
- Texas: 8.0

Low Income
- Central Texas: 12.9
- Texas: 11.9

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
Tells Us Who, What, Where, When

But not WHY students are absent
Absence Reasons Study
Absence Reasons Study

✓ First of its kind study in Texas (maybe US?)
✓ Data to drive regional decision-making
  How health and community systems interact with student attendance and achievement
✓ Hays & Pflugerville ISDs collected absence reasons for 2 months
  Attendance staff called parents and collected detailed absence reasons
✓ Representative of regional population
What Did We Find?

% of Absences by Absence Reason

- Acute Illness: 48%
- Skipping: 5%
- Chronic Illness: 4%
- Family Emergency: 4%
- Routine Dental Appt: 3%
- Preventative Medical: 2%
- Travel: 2%
- Mental Health Issue: 2%
- Suspension (not ISS): 1%
- Family Responsibility: 1%

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
Medical Absences More Variable Than Non-Medical Absences Over Time

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
% of Absences Treated Varies by Absence Type

Proportion Health Absences by Whether Student Treated by Medical Professional

Overall
- Treated: 59%
- Not Treated: 41%

Acute Illness
- Treated: 51%
- Not Treated: 49%

Chronic Illness
- Treated: 72%
- Not Treated: 28%

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13

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Most of Skipping by At-Risk Students

Skipping Absences by Demographic Subgroup

- Special Education: 23%
- English Language Learner: 24%
- Males: 61%
- Low Income: 62%
- At Risk: 70%

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
Low Income Students Have More than Their Share of Non-Medical Absences

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
At-Risk Students Have More than Their Share of Absences for Many Reasons

% of Absences by Reason for At-Risk Students

- All Absences
- Acute Illness
- Chronic Illness
- Asthma
- Mental Health
- Dental Treatment
- Student's Child Sick
- Family Responsibility
- Transportation Issue
- Skipping
- Court/Legal

% of Students At-Risk

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13

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Chronically Absent Students Have Far More than Their Share of Absences

% of Absences by Reason for Chronically Absent

- All Absences
- Acute Illness
- Chronic Illness
- Asthma
- Mental Health
- Dental Treatment
- Student's Child Sick
- Family Responsibility
- Transportation Issue
- Skipping
- Court/Legal

% of Students Chronically Absent

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
Secondary ‘Flu’ Peak Matches Acute Illness Absences

Absences By Week August – March for 2012-13

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD August 2012 through March 2013
Influenza-Like Illness doctor visit data from Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services
Evolution of Attendance Initiatives

Missing School Matters

Absence Study & Flu Immunization

Chronic Absence in Schools

Data Analysis & Continuous Improvement
Student and Absence Counts, Central Texas

$33M regional savings since campaign started!

Source: E3 analysis of PEIMS data at UT Austin Education Research Center for 2002-2013; TEA ad hoc request for 2014-16
Implications for Action on Improving Attendance

- **Chronically absent** students at any grade – account for vast majority of absences
  - And are absent for many reasons
- For **Low income** students, and students **at-risk** of dropping out, focus on **non-medical reasons** for absence
- Acute illness absences track with illness outbreaks
  - School-based flu immunization reduced absences during peak of flu season
What Can We Do About It?
Zones of a Student’s Daily Life

- Students’ social, physical, and mental health
- Family Background
- Neighborhood Context
- School Environment
How Might We…

Improve the school attendance of chronically absence students in the 9th and 10th grades?
SUCCESS
MENTORS
INITIATIVE

2017 Cradle to Career Network Convening
#BeTheChangeC2C
Evidence from NYC

- Chronically Absent Students with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school (9 days)
- High School students with Success Mentors were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year
- Mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their attendance, schoolwork, motivation, and confidence

http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/new-york-city/success-mentors/
Our Goal

is to reach

All Chronically Absent
6th & 9th Graders
REACHING SCALE: How Do We Get Enough Mentors?

Internal Success Mentors
School staff including coaches, teachers, office staff, etc

External Success Mentors
School partners including After-School Providers, Tutors or Nearby Businesses

Peer-to-Peer Success Mentors
Upperclassmen for 9th graders and 8th graders for 6th graders

College Success Mentors
Clinical study credit from undergraduate, social work or education schools
How Might We…

- Improve the school attendance of chronically absence students in the 9th and 10th grades?

**Intervention to Test:**

School Success Mentor intervention: pairing internal and external mentors with targeted chronically absent students
Progress Towards Target

SMART Target(s):
Travis HS, 9th Grade: Improve 9th grade SSM student attendance by 3% by end of February compared to end of previous year’s attendance rate.

Travis HS, 10th Grade: Improve 9th grade SSM student attendance by 3% by end of February compared to end of previous year’s attendance rate.
## Austin ISD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reason Name</th>
<th>Reasons Description and Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>Routine Dental Appointment</td>
<td>Went to dentist for reason other than pain/infection, such as cleaning, checkup, or cavity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>Dental appointment to treat pain or infection</td>
<td>Went to dentist because of pain or infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Join military</td>
<td>Participating in activities necessary for joining military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Military family visit</td>
<td>Visiting with parents or guardian who is on active duty in the armed forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reason Name</td>
<td>Reasons Description and Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexcused</td>
<td>School refusal/school avoidance</td>
<td>Refused to go to school, often because of anxiety about something at school; parent is usually aware of absence (if anxiety is not about school, code as mental health issue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexcused</td>
<td>Skipping</td>
<td>Absent (and not on campus) for no particular reason, parent is usually unaware of absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexcused</td>
<td>Truant</td>
<td>Absent from class but on campus (somewhere not allowed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unwilling to provide detailed reason</td>
<td>For any AISD reason code triggering request for further detail, where student/family did not provide information needed for detailed reason code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Reasons Description and Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Family responsibility (such caring for siblings)</td>
<td>Had family responsibility such as caring for younger siblings or elderly family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Funeral or family emergency</td>
<td>Attended a funeral or had a family emergency (do not need to know what family emergency is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Oversleeping/Family planning issue (not transportation)</td>
<td>Student or parent overslept or other issue where family not organized to get child to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Student’s child ill</td>
<td>Illness of the student’s child where the student has to provide care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reason Name</td>
<td>Reasons Description and Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Acute illness</td>
<td>Usually contagious, short-lived, one-time illnesses such as cold, flu, sinus infection, stomach flu, strep throat, mono, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Asthma or difficulty breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Diabetes or diabetes complication (described as such by parent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Chronic illness</td>
<td>Any long term or regularly recurring physical condition other than diabetes or asthma, such as allergies, cedar fever, recurrent infections, autoimmune disease, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 KEY STEPS – Year 1 Implementation

- Created a TARGET LIST of Chronically Absent 6\textsuperscript{th}/9\textsuperscript{th} graders
- Campuses Selected Mentors from the following 3 buckets:
  - Internal Staff (administrators, teachers, coaches, security guards). Principal should lead recruitment of internal staff.
  - External Partners (after-school, tutors, other partners)
  - Peers (11th/12th graders for 9th; 8th graders for 6th graders)
- Match Mentors and Students
- HOST KICK-OFF Event
- Access Scheduled Support
  - Mentor Training
  - Peer Mentor Training
## PDSA

### Intervention/Project: Travis School Success Mentors

### Test Population: SSM students in 9th and 10th grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAN</th>
<th>Attach reasons to individual absences to determine appropriate interventions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Create a run chart based on the data and look for patterns and trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDY</td>
<td>Results did not match our prediction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>We will adopt and develop a plan for implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Made the MBK Success Mentor Model Powerful?

- Clear Model with Evidence of Impact
- Measurable Outcome (can tell rapidly if it's working)
- District and School Flexibility on How Model is Actualized
- Not Another Initiative but an Enabler of Multiple School Improvement Efforts
- Cost Effective Can be Largely Driven Through New Application of Existing Resources
- Can be Continually Improved and Enhanced
- Multiple stakeholders
The conclusions of this research do not necessarily reflect the opinions or official position of the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, or the State of Texas.

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Thank You!