

Best Practice Guide

The Attendance Team Blueprint

A practical guide for schools and districts to drive ongoing attendance improvement

2026

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Introduction



For district and school leaders, managing attendance usually involves juggling two very different priorities: aligning with strict state-mandated requirements for tracking and communication while addressing the complex, deeply-rooted causes behind absenteeism.

Schools often find that relying only on “traditional” compliance interventions, like automated calls, notices, or truancy letters, can have the unintended effect of alienating the same families they need to reach. Instead, districts need to balance meeting necessary standards with providing support and connection for families facing attendance challenges.

That’s where your attendance team can come in. An attendance team is a dedicated committee of staff—often counselors, teachers, administrators, nurses, and community partners—who work together to keep students in class. When roles are clearly defined and responsibilities are shared, teams can do what no single individual can: spot trends early, intervene compassionately, and build lasting connections with families.

And when those teams use ParentSquare Attendance Plus, they don’t need to build processes from scratch. Instead, they’ll be equipped with real-time data, communication tools, and a way to track interventions that let them act faster and smarter.

In this guide, you’ll learn how to:

- Build and structure your attendance team
- Train team members to work together
- Implement proven, tiered strategies
- Keep momentum alive with follow-through tools
- Bonus: Supercharge your work with ParentSquare Attendance Plus



Building Your Attendance Team

Every strong initiative starts with people. Before you can tackle absenteeism, you need the right people in the room and the right roles at the table. A well-rounded attendance team is more than just a checklist of job titles; it's a collaboration of perspectives, skills, and relationships that, when combined, can make attendance improvement both sustainable and compassionate.

What It Is

An attendance team is your school's frontline defense against chronic absenteeism, but more importantly, it's a dedicated support system built on empathy and solutions for students and families.

Why It Works

By bringing together different voices (administrators, counselors, teachers, nurses, and even community partners), teams can:

- Spot barriers families may be facing (transportation, health, housing)
- Share the workload of reaching out to families
- Bring creative, relationship-driven solutions to the table

Collaboration that drives action

When teams use ParentSquare Attendance Plus, they don't need to build processes and systems from scratch—they're equipped with **attendance data, communication tools, and tracking interventions** that let them act faster and smarter.

ParentSquare Attendance Plus also makes it easier for every role to collaborate with **role-based access** and **shared intervention tracking**, so no student falls through the cracks.

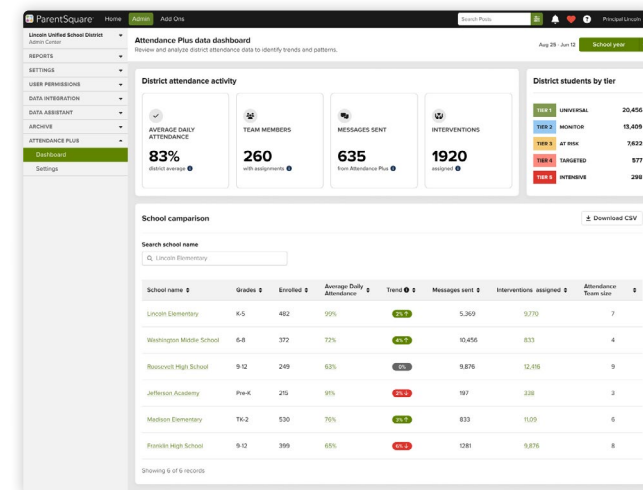
“The transparency alone has changed how we work. Now we can see what's happening at every school and respond as a team.”

— Diego Reyes, Student & Family Support Services Technician, Mt. View School District, describing how ParentSquare Attendance Plus gave district teams a shared, real-time view of attendance data.

Roles on an Attendance Team

- **Team leader (principal or assistant principal):** Keeps the group aligned with goals and supports decisions with leadership backing. When leadership is involved, the team’s work carries weight across the school.
- **Attendance clerk or administrator:** Knows your attendance data and daily attendance outreach strategy inside and out.
- **School counselor or social worker:** Brings insight into family circumstances and connects them to resources, building bridges beyond the school walls.
- **Teacher representative:** Provides classroom-level context, keeps strategies practical, and helps gain buy-in from other teachers.
- **Nurse:** Identifies when student health challenges may be impacting attendance, from chronic illness to mental health concerns.
- **Data specialist:** Tracks attendance data, spots trends, and provides a “pulse check” every week to keep the team focused on facts instead of assumptions.
- **Community partner or family liaison:** Acts as a trusted messenger for bridging school-home gaps and helping families feel supported rather than judged.

Pro Tip: Keep teams manageable. The key is consistency and collaboration, not size.



What to Watch Out For

- Teams that are **too large** often lose focus or momentum.
- Teams **without clear roles** risk duplication (or worse, no one taking ownership).
- Teams **missing key perspectives** (like a teacher or family liaison) may overlook root causes of absenteeism.

Scalable from schools to districts

ParentSquare Attendance Plus helps support attendance at both the school and district levels, with tools and workflows that give superintendents and leaders visibility into attendance trends while empowering every site team to take action.

Recruiting and Motivating Your Attendance Team

Start by framing attendance as a shared responsibility, not just one belonging to clerical staff. Invite people who care deeply about students, are willing to collaborate, and bring unique insights. Participation takes time, so celebrate team members' efforts and highlight successes regularly. A little recognition goes a long way in keeping motivation high.

When you have the right people in place, you'll notice a shift in conversations from "What's wrong with these students?" to "What can we change to help them succeed?" When this happens, you'll know that you've built not just a committee, but a team.

Once your team is set, the next challenge is making sure that everyone shares a common purpose. This starts with a strong launch.

Facilitator's Guide: Leading Team Training

Building your team is only the first step. Making an impact takes developing a shared vision, clear expectations, and a sense of urgency. While this may sound like a daunting task, it's absolutely possible to create alignment with focused, purposeful team training.

This section outlines a half-day training framework that you can use with your attendance team.

Think of this training as a foundational playbook. It doesn't need to be fancy or overwhelming, but it does need to set a clear tone and communicate that your team is in this together, that you know why it matters, and that you have a plan to act.

Welcome and Purpose (15 min)

Objective: Ground the team in why attendance matters.

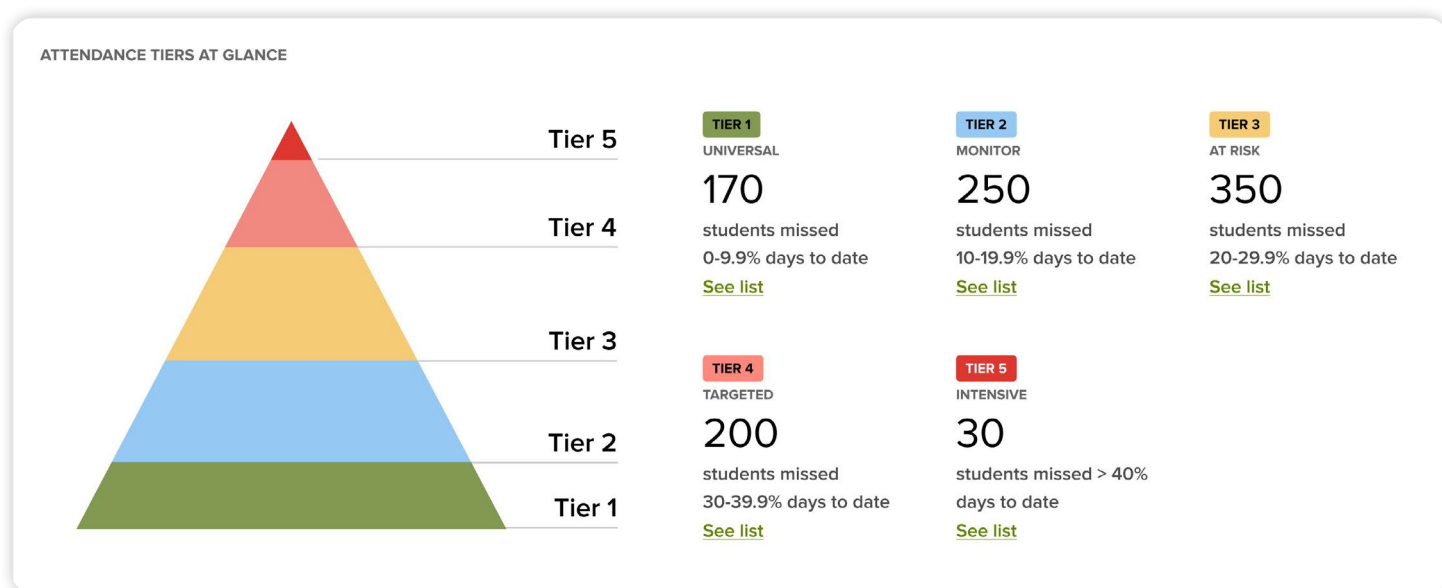
- Share district or school chronic absenteeism rates. Connect it to the human side by explaining what absenteeism means for student grades, friendships, and long-term success.
- Invite a teacher or counselor to share a short story about a student who struggled with attendance and how support made a difference.
- Emphasize: The focus of this team is about creating opportunity, not punishing absenteeism.

Data Dive (30 min)

Objective: Build a shared understanding of your current environment.

- Review baseline attendance data at the school and grade level. Highlight trends by grade, subgroup, or season (like spikes during flu season or after holidays).
- Ask: What surprises you? What concerns you?

Pro Tip: Keep the data simple. Use visuals like charts or tiered breakdowns in ParentSquare Attendance Plus rather than long spreadsheets.



Barriers Brainstorm (30 min)

Objective: Shift the conversation from blame to barriers.

- Use guiding prompts: “If students aren’t here, why not?” Consider categories like transportation, health, family obligations, school climate, mental health, and engagement.
- Write all ideas on a whiteboard or digital board. Emphasize: No judgment, just listing.
- Close by clustering barriers into themes that the team can realistically influence.

Scenario Practice (45 min)

Objective: Build confidence before real outreach begins.

- Break into pairs and role-play common situations, such as:
 - ▶ Calling a family whose child has 10 unexcused absences.
 - ▶ Meeting with a parent whose work schedule makes morning routines difficult.
 - ▶ Talking with a student who feels unsafe coming to school.
- After each scenario, debrief as a group: What worked? What could be said differently?

Supportive conversations made easier

Many staff members hesitate to call families because they fear conflict. Practicing together helps normalize compassionate, non-judgmental conversations. ParentSquare Attendance Plus makes this even easier with pre-built outreach scripts in families' preferred languages, so staff feel confident making equitable, compassionate contact.

Action Planning (60 min)

Objective: Leave training with a concrete plan.

- Draft 1–2 goals using the **SMART framework** for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals (example: “Reduce the number of Tier 2 students in Grade 9 by 10% this semester”)
- Outline your first 30-day plan: Who’s on the team, when you will meet, what you will review, and which Tier 2/3 students you will start with.
- Assign roles for data pulls, family outreach, and progress updates.

Keep the work going without the busywork

ParentSquare Attendance Plus automatically tracks interventions and outcomes, so your team knows what’s working and what needs revisiting. Plus, you can keep momentum going without juggling spreadsheets or duplicating efforts.

By the end of training, your team should not only be informed but also energized. With SMART goals, role clarity, and tools to track progress, they'll be ready to shift from planning to action. This clarity is what turns good intentions into concrete results.

Now that the team has direction, the next step is to implement tiered strategies that provide the right level of support for every student—from broad encouragement to targeted, intensive intervention

Tiered Strategies in Action

Once your team is formed and trained, you're ready to get started on strategic implementation. Attendance challenges look very different from student to student: some may need encouragement, while others face serious systemic barriers. To support this range, teams often rely on a Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) to address attendance and other student needs. This framework can help keep your strategies both equitable and targeted.

Think of tiers as widening circles of support: everyone benefits from Tier 1, some need Tier 2, and a few require intensive Tier 3 interventions. This approach prevents teams from spreading themselves too thin and helps allocate resources where they'll make the most impact.

Tier 1 – Universal Supports:

Tier 1 strategies are **designed for all students and families**, setting the foundation for a school-wide culture where attendance is both valued and celebrated.

Examples of Tier 1 strategies:

- Launch or refresh a school-wide attendance campaign.
- Celebrate attendance milestones (e.g., “On Time Tuesdays” or monthly shout-outs).
- Share positive messages in newsletters, text reminders, and social media.
- Host classroom competitions or raffles for consistent attendance.
- Send re-engagement messages after extended absences or school breaks to reconnect with families.

Pitfalls to avoid: Don't make celebrations exclusive to “perfect” attendance only. Be sure to also recognize progress, such as improved attendance streaks, so students who are trying don't feel left out.



Tier 2 – Targeted Supports

Tier 2 strategies focus on students who are **beginning to show attendance concerns**, providing targeted outreach and support to strengthen relationships before patterns become chronic.

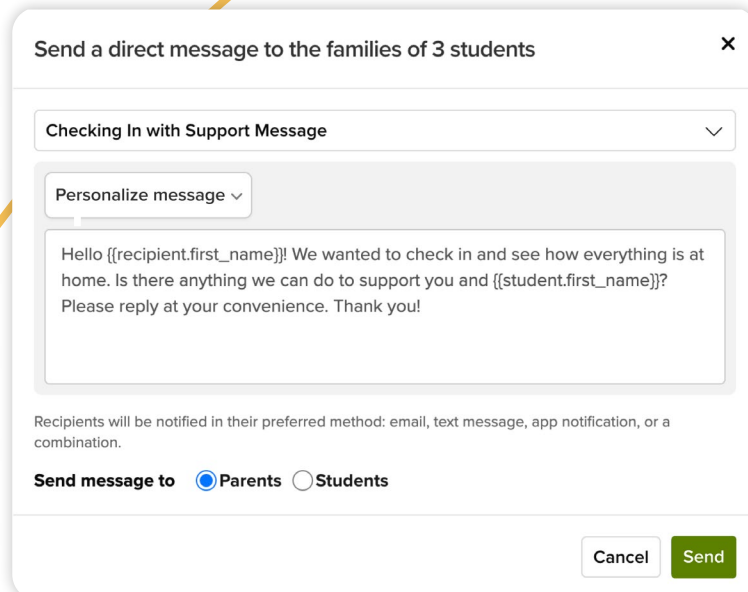
“Our attendance clerks start each day with a clear view of who needs outreach and why, and they can act immediately—sending personalized, multilingual messages from the same platform families already use and trust. We’re seeing stronger engagement, quicker interventions, and real improvements in daily attendance.”

— Michelle Ryan, Lead Data Integrity Specialist, South Whittier School District

Examples of Tier 2 strategies:

- Personal outreach calls or texts to families (using positive, non-punitive scripts)
- Weekly check-ins with a mentor, teacher, or counselor
- Small-group “attendance clubs” where students set goals and track progress
- Transportation problem-solving: carpool lists, bus route reviews, or support with passes
- Parent information nights to connect families with resources

Pitfalls to avoid: Avoid sending only generic letters or automated messages. At Tier 2, families need personalized communication that demonstrates care.



Send a direct message to the families of 3 students

Checking In with Support Message

Personalize message

Hello {{recipient.first_name}}! We wanted to check in and see how everything is at home. Is there anything we can do to support you and {{student.first_name}}? Please reply at your convenience. Thank you!

Recipients will be notified in their preferred method: email, text message, app notification, or a combination.

Send message to ☒ Parents ☐ Students

Cancel Send

Tier 3 – Intensive Supports

Tier 3 strategies are for **students missing 20% or more of the year** and who require interventions such as individualized plans, home visits, and community services.

Examples of Tier 3 strategies:

- Create individual attendance improvement plans with the student and family.
- Schedule home visits with a counselor, administrator, or community partner.
- Connect families with external supports such as health clinics, housing resources, and after-school programs
- Partner with truancy prevention programs (when appropriate) as a last resort, so the focus stays on support over punishment.
- Involve the student directly in problem-solving: What would make school feel safer, easier, or more engaging for you?

Pitfalls to avoid: Don't rely on punitive measures such as suspension for truancy because they often worsen the problem. Keep the focus on support and solutions.

When schools adopt this tiered approach, the work feels less overwhelming and more strategic. Instead of chasing every absence in the same way, teams can focus on what works for each group of students. Once those strategies are in place, the key to sustained change is follow-through and keeping the momentum going month after month.

Why tiers work with ParentSquare Attendance Plus

Managing a tiered intervention strategy can be overwhelming without the right tools. ParentSquare Attendance Plus is designed to help teams keep track of moving parts:

- Students are automatically sorted into the right tier based on attendance data.
- Pre-loaded outreach scripts (in families' preferred languages) help staff make compassionate, consistent contact.
- Dashboards track progress by tier, so teams can see whether Tier 1 celebrations are working, or if Tier 2 students are improving.

Follow-Through Tools

Launching an attendance initiative often begins with energy and optimism. The challenge comes later when staff have to sustain the effort week after week while balancing everything else on their plates. Teachers, counselors, and administrators already have full workloads, so follow-through needs to be structured in a way that makes the work manageable and sustainable, not just one more thing to juggle.

To keep the momentum going, attendance teams need structures that create accountability, track progress, and make reflection a part of their everyday routine.

Turn plans into action with task lists

Attendance work often breaks down after interventions are assigned but before they're completed. ParentSquare Attendance Plus includes task lists to give every attendance team member a personal workspace to manage their assigned students and interventions, including the ability to:

- Filter and view tasks by status, including active and completed interventions
- Send messages to individual families or bulk-messaging multiple students
- Build each student's action history with automatically recorded timestamps for completed interventions

For administrators, task lists also support clearer delegation and better follow-through by improving visibility into what's completed, not just what's assigned.

My task list

Assigned student interventions

Active (2)

Recently completed (1)

All assigned students (209)

Send bulk messages

Download CSV

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student name	Student ID	Grade	Tier 1	Intervention action	Assigned on	Assigned by	Status
<input type="text" value="Search"/>	<input type="text" value="Search"/>	Any	Any	Any	<input type="text" value="Search"/>	Anyone		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chandler, Virgil	786109	5th Grade	TIER 5	Notify Counselor	Nov 18, 2025	Mandy Fouts	Active
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collier, Branden	786007	2nd Grade	TIER 5	Notify Counselor	Nov 18, 2025	Mandy Fouts	Active

Along with day-to-day follow-through, lasting attendance improvement also depends on shared routines and planning tools. Regardless of what systems you use, the resources below can help keep your work consistent, measurable, and sustainable.

- **30-Day Attendance Team Launch Plan:** Week-by-week steps to establish roles, set SMART goals, start outreach, and review progress.
- **SMART Goal Template:** Helps teams set clear targets (e.g., “Reduce chronic absenteeism by 3% this semester”).
- **Attendance Audit Checklist:** A quick self-assessment: Do we have weekly reports? Are students assigned? Are interventions tracked?

Bonus: ParentSquare Attendance Plus in Action

This toolkit is designed to stand on its own, but imagine if your attendance team’s outreach intervention tracking, and follow-through tools were already built into a single system that millions of families and students already use and trust for school-home communications. That’s ParentSquare Attendance Plus.

- **Real-time data:** See who’s at risk and take timely action.
- **Communication:** Send personalized, translated, two-way family outreach.
- **Collaboration:** Assign cases to team members and track follow-ups.
- **Task lists:** Give each staff member a personal workspace to manage assigned students, track intervention progress, and complete follow-ups.
- **Reporting:** Show your impact on attendance goals with ease.

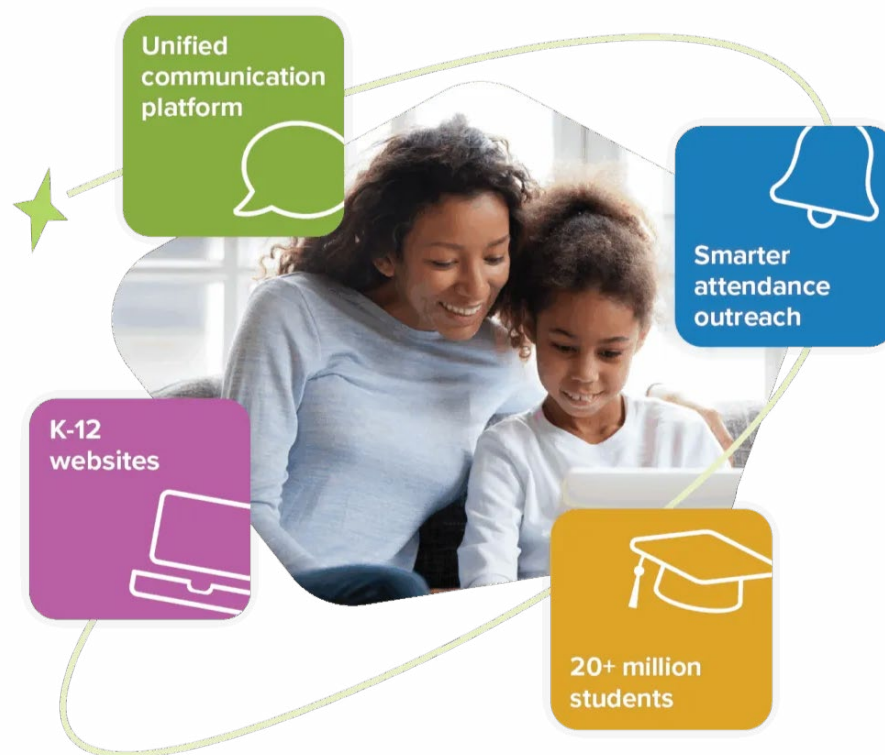
See how ParentSquare Attendance Plus can support your attendance team’s work—schedule a demo today at parentsquare.com/demo-signup or call (888) 996-4156.

Built for connection. Designed to help you act early. Powered by trust.

About ParentSquare

ParentSquare is the trusted leader in school-home engagement, helping K-12 districts nationwide reach every family with an award-winning, all-in-one communication platform. Reaching over 20 million students across the country, ParentSquare helps districts consolidate disconnected tools and outdated communication systems with personalized messaging, websites, forms, payments, and more—in one easy-to-use platform. With powerful features for achieving 100% contactability, two-way translation into 190+ languages, and purpose-built AI enhancements, ParentSquare empowers districts to invite every family to be involved in their student's education, no matter their home language or the device they use.

Recognized for growth and innovation by Inc. 5000, GSV 150, and more, ParentSquare was founded in 2011 in Santa Barbara, California. Learn more at parentsquare.com.



30-Day Attendance Team Launch Plan

This 30-day plan provides a clear, week-by-week roadmap for your school's attendance team to establish a strong foundation, set goals, and begin impactful work. Use this plan to help your team move from initial setup to proactive outreach in just one month.

Week 1: Foundations

The first week is all about building the team's structure and understanding the challenge.

- **Kick-off meeting:** Hold your first meeting to define team purpose and establish clear roles and responsibilities.
- **Review data:** Analyze previous attendance data to identify key trends and at-risk student groups.

Pro Tip: If you use ParentSquare Attendance Plus, use the School Overview Page to review your attendance pyramid and percentage of students in each tier.

- **Set communication:** Decide on a regular meeting schedule and communication method for the team.
- **Introduce SMART framework:** While you won't set your SMART goal until next week, introduce the SMART framework to your team. It's a great way to set attainable goals.

Week 2: Plan and Strategize

- **Set your SMART Goal:** Based on your data, **create a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound** goal related to attendance improvement for the school year.
- **Create outreach plan:** Develop a tiered protocol for contacting families and assign each team member a small roster of students.
 - ▶ **Tier 1:** All families should receive a positive, welcoming message. Use ParentSquare Attendance Plus to send a celebratory message to the families of students with great attendance.
 - ▶ **Tier 2:** Use ParentSquare Attendance Plus to assign an action intervention, like a personal phone call from a team member after three unexcused absences.
 - ▶ **Tier 3:** Schedule a meeting with the family after five unexcused absences. Make sure you distribute these meetings across all attendance team members.
- **Assign Rosters:** Based on your goals, assign each team member a list of 5–10 students who are chronically absent or at risk of becoming so.

Week 3: Action and Outreach

- **Tiered outreach:** Act on your outreach plan. Whether you send your messages through ParentSquare or make phone calls, be sure to introduce yourself and ask open-ended questions to understand any barriers to attendance.
- **Ask for help:** Share out your successes, areas of improvement, and encourage your attendance team to document questions or problems they encounter along the way.
- **Connect with staff:** Inform teachers and staff about the team's purpose and how they can refer students for support. The more you can share about your team's SMART goal, the better.

Week 4: Review and Adjust

In the final week, reflect on what you've learned and adjust your strategy as needed.

- **Review progress:** Discuss initial outreach experiences and analyze early attendance data to see if your efforts are making a difference.
- **Analyze early data:** Have the data analyst provide the first weekly report on attendance data. Look for any early improvements or changes in student attendance or family engagement.
- **Refine plan:** Adjust your strategies based on what you've learned. This will be the start of your ongoing monthly review process.



SMART Goal Planning Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help your school's attendance team create clear and actionable goals to improve student attendance. Use the **SMART** framework to define your objectives and plan your strategies for the academic year.

[YOUR SCHOOL NAME]'s GOAL			
Overall goal: Describe your main objective for student attendance this year. What is the key outcome you want to achieve? <i>Example: To reduce chronic absenteeism among all grade levels by 10% by the end of the school year.</i>			
		Guiding Questions	Your Answer
S	Specific	▶ What is the exact outcome you want to achieve? ▶ What specific actions will your attendance team take? ▶ Who is responsible for each action? ▶ What students or groups of students are the focus of this goal?	
M	Measureable	▶ How will you know if you have met your goal? ▶ What data or metrics will you use to track progress? ▶ How often will you review this data? ▶ Who is responsible for providing the data?	
A	Achievable	▶ Do you have the necessary resources (staff, time, tools) to achieve this goal? ▶ Is this goal realistic and attainable given your school's current situation? ▶ What potential challenges might you face? ▶ How will you overcome them?	
R	Relevant	▶ How does this goal align with your school's mission and priorities? ▶ Why is this goal important for student success and well-being?	
T	Time-Bound	▶ When is your deadline? ▶ What are the key milestones or check-in dates along the way? ▶ How often will the team meet to review progress?	

Attendance Audit Checklist

This checklist is a quick self-assessment to help your attendance team evaluate its current processes. Check off each item that your team has in place.

Item	Yes	No	Notes
Data and Reporting			
Weekly reports: Does your team receive weekly attendance reports that include all students and highlight those who are chronically absent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Data access: Is there a designated team member who has access to and is responsible for providing this data to the team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Team and Caseloads			
Student assignments: Has every student at risk of chronic absenteeism been assigned to a specific team member for outreach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Manageable caseloads: Are team members' student assignments small enough to allow for meaningful, one-on-one outreach to families (e.g., 10-20 students)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outreach and Interventions			
Tiered system: Does your team have a clear, tiered system for interventions? (e.g., a phone call for three absences, a home visit for five absences)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Intervention tracking: Is there a system in place to track all outreach efforts and interventions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Barrier identification: Does your team actively try to identify the root causes of absences during outreach? (e.g., health, transportation, housing issues)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Proactive approach: Is your team's approach primarily proactive, focused on preventing absences before they become chronic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Family relationship building: Does your team reach out to families with positive messages—not just when there are absences—to strengthen connections and show appreciation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

By going through this checklist, your team can quickly see where your systems are strong and where you might need to add more structure.