

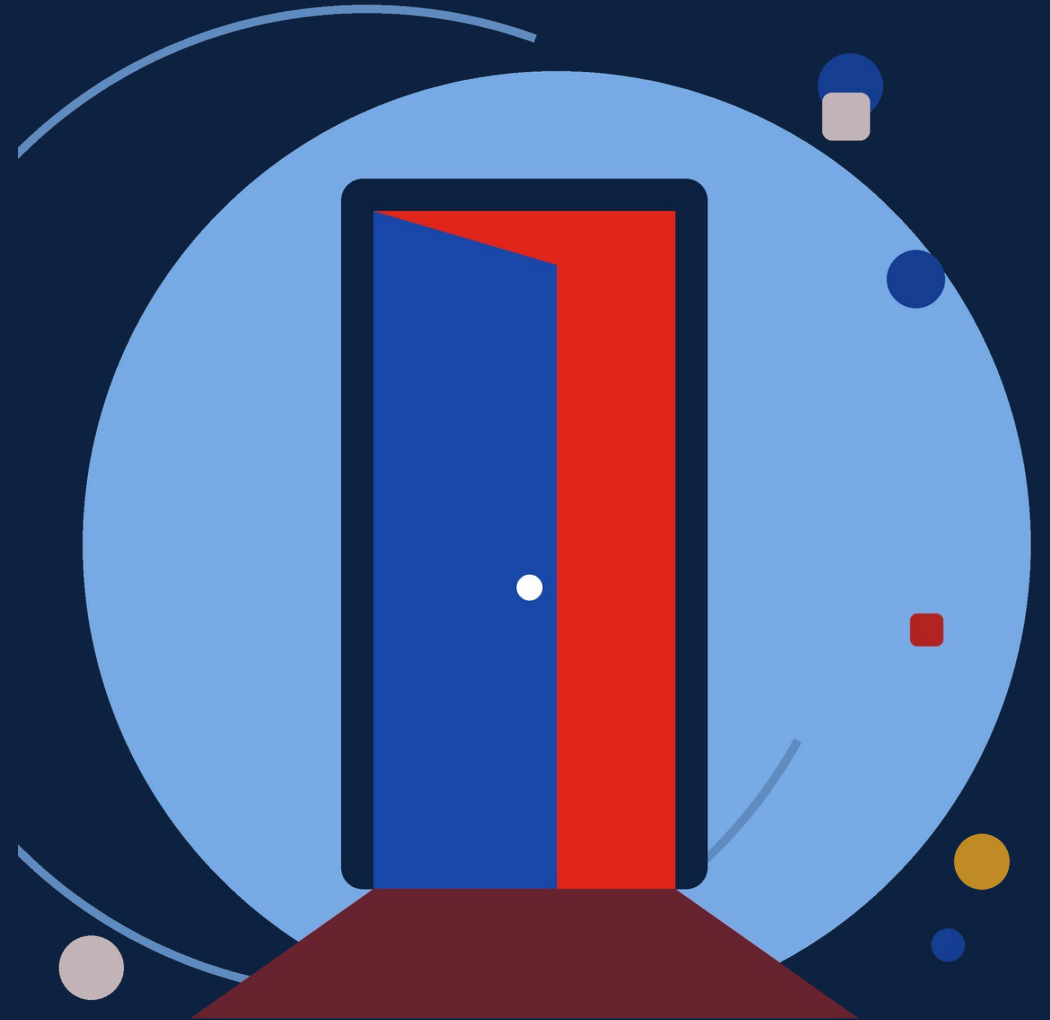


Teachers • All grades

Classify Before You Consequence

What should I do in the first ten minutes after a student starts missing school?

10 slides • 2 handouts • evidence from Schools Spared, Children Punished and the Attendance Science™ research base



Maria and the second letter

“

Maria was fourteen when the first truancy letter arrived. She was home two days a week watching her siblings so her mother could cover a shift. Nobody asked why. A second letter followed, then a referral. By the time anyone asked, she had missed six weeks of ninth-grade math.

Source: Schools Spared, Children Punished, Ch. 1 (Maria, composite case)



Every story in this series is a composite or a published case. Names are invented.



What teachers are asking

What should I do in the first ten minutes after a student starts missing school?

1

The letter goes out before anyone asks why.

2

One absence code is asked to hold four very different stories.

3

Teachers see the pattern first, yet rarely own the next step.



Shared words before shared work



Attendance

The tally: every presence and every absence.



Absenteeism

The reasons: everything around the why of an absence.



Chronic absence

Missing 10% or more of the school year, about 18 days, for any reason.



The numbers behind the moment

~22%

of U.S. K-12 students chronically absent in 2024-25, about 10.8 million

RAND ASDP (2025); AEI Return to Learn Tracker (Malkus, 2026); FutureEd (2026)

0.64 SD

lower test scores for students missing 10+ days than for peers

Economic Policy Institute (2018), Student Absenteeism: Who Misses School

~40%

of one district's 'truancy' codes re-coded as withdrawal or avoidance by its registrar

Schools Spared, Ch. 1, Another Voice from the Field



Classify before you consequence

Truancy

Choice-driven, unauthorized absence. The last-resort category, confirmed only after a real conversation.

Withdrawal

Family-centered: caregiving, shifts, housing, a ride that never came, economic survival.

Avoidance

Climate-driven: a building, class, peer or time of day the student experiences as unsafe.

Refusal

Anxiety-driven, often with clinical features. Needs health and counseling partners.



Three moves you can make this week

01

Cost: \$0

Ask why first

One conversation with the student or family before any referral: what happened on the days you missed?

02

Cost: \$0

Write their words

Record the family's own explanation so the team can classify accurately.

03

Cost: \$0

Hand off with a name

Tell your attendance lead which of the four reasons you heard and who follows up by when.



A PRESENCE™ prompt for your building



Problem definition



Research evidence



Environmental context



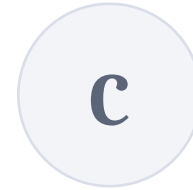
Statistical analysis



Equity assessment



Network and partnership



Compliance and legal



Evidence-based
recommendations

YOUR PROMPT

Pull last semester's codes for your class. How many 'unexcused' days would turn out to be withdrawal or avoidance after one family call?



Common missteps, and how you will know it works



Inferring the category from the code alone



Skipping the conversation because a pattern looks familiar



Treating classification as one-time; a category can shift during the year

LEADING INDICATOR • Moves first

Share of cases classified before any letter

LAGGING INDICATOR • Confirms it worked

Chronic absence rate for your focus students



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KEEP GOING IN THIS SERIES

Seat 02: Early Absence Is a Logistics Signal

Seat 03: Building the Habit of Showing Up

Seat 04: The Hallway Test



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