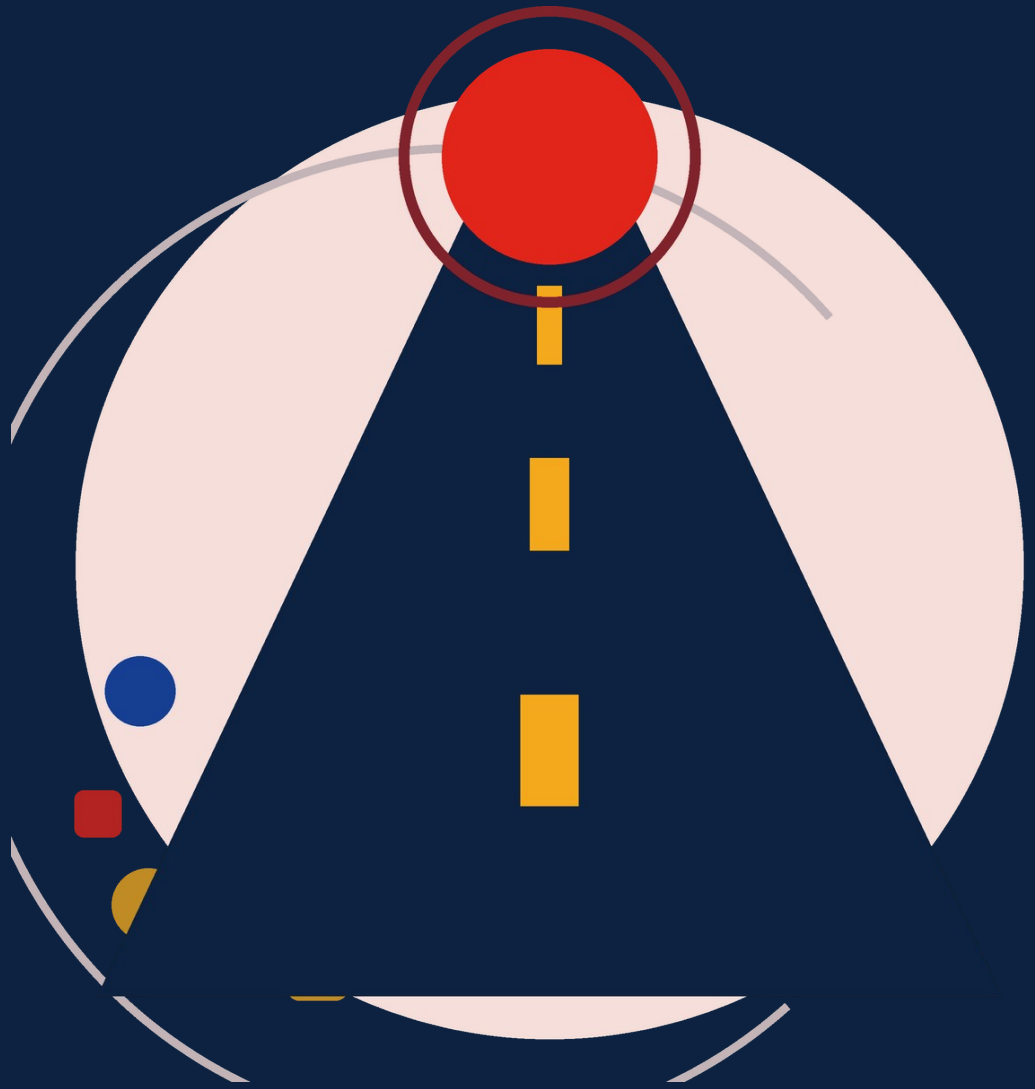
THE SEAT SERIES · FREE ATTENDANCE SCIENCE™ RESOURCE

SEAT 05

Teachers · Grades 9-12

When Showing Up Has to Lead Somewhere



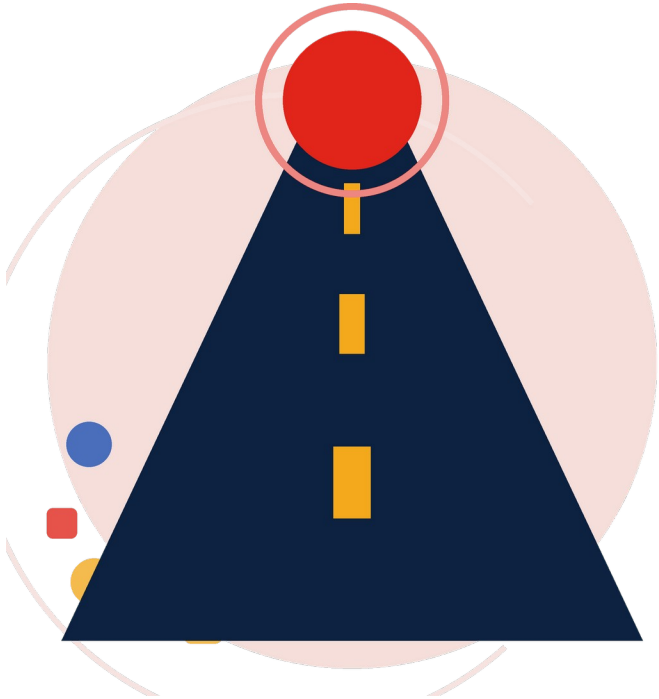
How do I keep high school students coming when school feels disconnected from their future?

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

DeShawn and the visible destination

DeShawn, a bright junior, stopped attending regularly because nobody had connected his classes to any job he could picture. He re-engaged after a community partnership linked his coursework to a paid internship: concrete proof that showing up led somewhere.

Source: Schools Spared, Children Punished, Ch. 9 (DeShawn, composite case)



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

What teachers are asking

How do I keep high school students coming when school feels disconnected from their future?

1

Students weigh school against work and family needs.

2

Pathways exist on paper but feel invisible to students.

3

Chronic absence climbs in the upper grades.

Shared words before shared work

W

Withdrawal of effort

Disengaging because the return on showing up stopped making sense.

L

Labor force participation

The share of people 16 and older working or looking for work.

D

Demographic wall

Fewer graduates entering an economy that needs more credentialed workers.

The numbers behind the moment

36.5%

employment-population ratio for U.S. 16-19 year olds, July 2026

BLS, The Economics Daily (Aug 26, 2026)

<3.4M

projected U.S. high school graduates by 2041, down from near 3.9 million in 2025

WICHE, Knocking at the College Door, 11th ed. (2024)

~65%

of U.S. jobs now require some college, up from 28% in 1973

Schools Spared, Ch. 9

Classify before you consequence

Withdrawal

Work shifts, sibling care, rent. Ask about schedules and flex options.

Avoidance

A class or peer group that feels hostile. Change the setting.

Refusal

Anxiety and depression rise in the teen years. Connect to care.

Truancy

Choice-driven. Show the destination before the consequence.

Three moves you can make this week

01

Cost: $0

Name the destination

Link one unit each month to a local job or credential students can picture.

02

Cost: $0

Ask about work

Ask students directly whether jobs or family duties collide with school.

03

Partner

One mentor connection

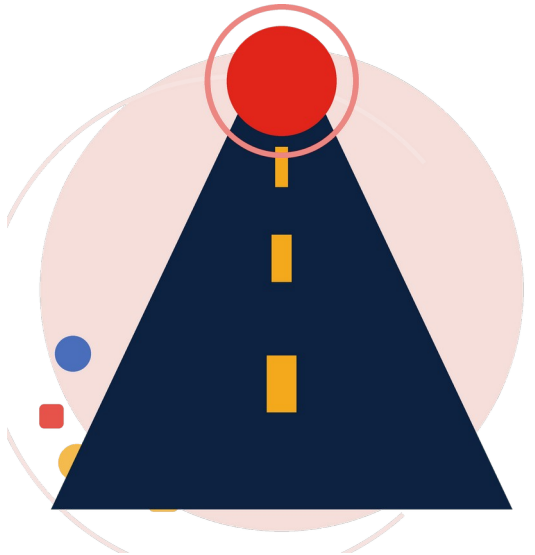
Invite a working professional into class for a pathway with high absence.

A PRESENCE™ prompt for your building

P	R	E	S	E	N	C	E
Problem definition	Research evidence	Environmental context	Statistical analysis	Equity assessment	**Network and partnership**	Compliance and legal	**Evidence-based recommendations**

YOUR PROMPT

Compare chronic absence by career pathway with your workforce board's projected shortages. Where they overlap, your first partnership is waiting.



Common missteps, and how you will know it works

- ✕ Treating a pathway's existence as student engagement with it
- ✕ Assuming working students do not care about school
- ✕ Waiting until senior year to make the destination visible

LEADING INDICATOR · Moves first

Students who can name a goal linked to a class

LAGGING INDICATOR · Confirms it worked

Grade 10 to 12 chronic absence

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HANDOUTS Seat Card (A) and Find Your Data worksheet (B)

KEEP GOING IN THIS SERIES

Seat 01: Classify Before You Consequence
Seat 02: Early Absence Is a Logistics Signal
Seat 03: Building the Habit of Showing Up

Take Your Seat

1,000 Seats campaign

Every seat filled is one more person working to make showing up possible.