

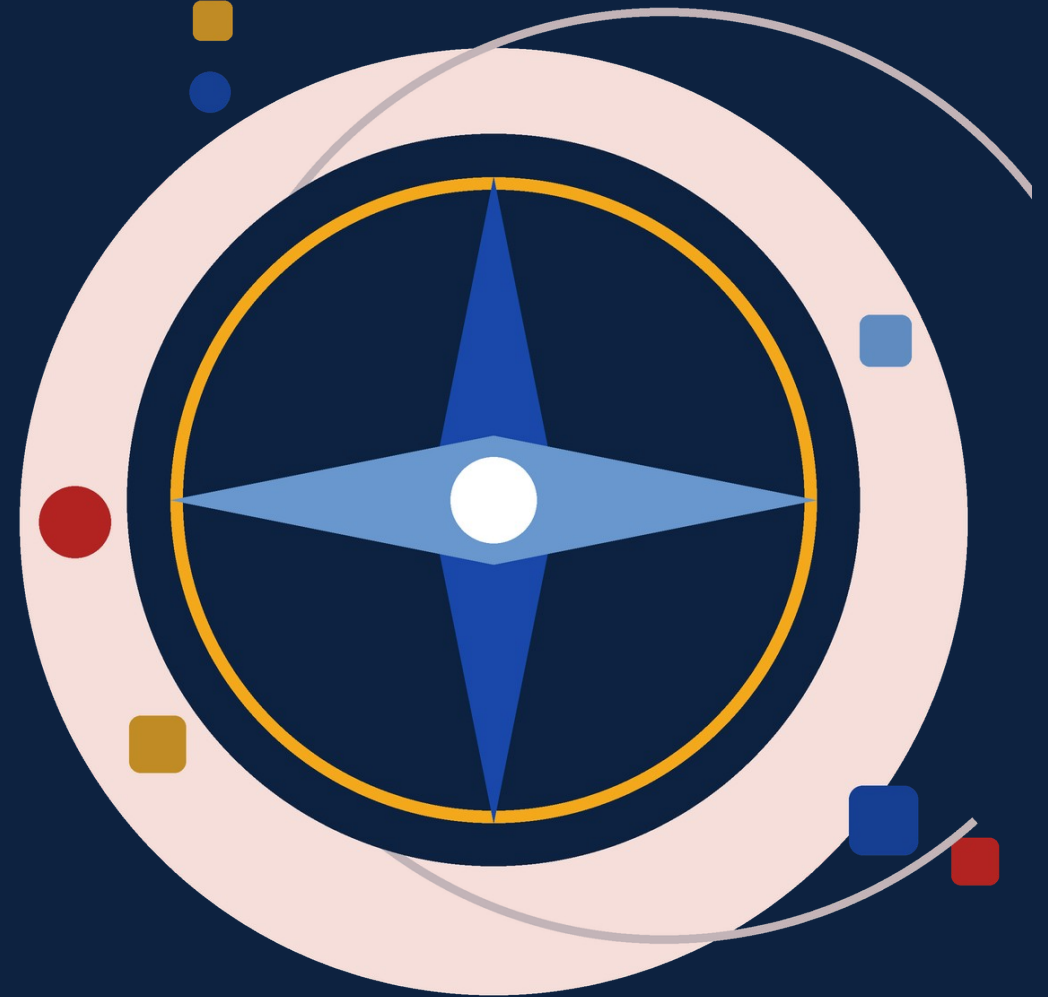


Practitioners • K-12

The Four Reasons

How do I classify an absence accurately enough to choose the right response?

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



Four children, the same twenty days

“

Four students can miss the same twenty days for four different reasons: a caregiving shift, a hostile hallway, clinical anxiety, a choice made with friends. Under most district policy today, all four receive the same truancy letter. Classification changes the intervention, not just the vocabulary.

Source: Gentle-Genitty, Schools Spared, Children Punished (Attendance USA, 2026)



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



What practitioners are asking

How do I classify an absence accurately enough to choose the right response?

1

Policies built around one word and one lever: truancy and enforcement.

2

Codes like 'unexcused' record paperwork, not cause.

3

Practitioners are asked to fix what was misclassified upstream.



Shared words before shared work



Classification

The first and most consequential decision a school makes about a struggling student.



Falsifiable

A category a specific case can prove wrong, which makes it science.



School-level metric

Chronic absence counts all absences; classification turns the count into a cause.



The numbers behind the moment

4

categories: truancy, withdrawal,
avoidance, refusal

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

6

Kit absence patterns that map onto
the four reasons

*Attendance USA Attendance Kit, Items 9 and 10 (Absenteeism Type
Cards, Intervention Tip Sheets)*

~40%

of one district's 'truancy' was
withdrawal or avoidance once re-
coded

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

Interview before you code

A direct conversation with student and family decides the category.

02

Low cost

Use the Type Cards

Match markers to the Kit's six patterns and their first moves.

03

Cost: \$0

Re-classify on schedule

Review each case at 30 days; categories can shift.



A PRESENCE™ prompt for your building



Problem definition



Research evidence



Environmental context



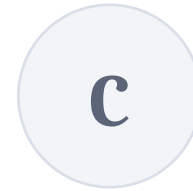
Statistical analysis



Equity assessment



Network and partnership



Compliance and legal



Evidence-based recommendations

YOUR PROMPT

Re-code a sample of last semester's unexcused absences using case notes. What share is truancy once the reasons are known?



Common missteps, and how you will know it works



Assuming the category is self-evident from attendance codes



Inferring cause from pattern alone



Treating classification as a one-time event

LEADING INDICATOR • Moves first

Cases with a documented classification

LAGGING INDICATOR • Confirms it worked

Truancy referrals avoided after classification



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

KEEP GOING IN THIS SERIES

Seat 10: SALT: A Strengths-First Response

Seat 11: The Family Stability Conversation

Seat 12: Refusal and Avoidance: Matching Care to Cause



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