THE SEAT SERIES · FREE ATTENDANCE SCIENCE™ RESOURCE

SEAT 10

Practitioners · K-12

SALT: A Strengths-First Response

Once I know the reason, how do I build a response that actually fits?



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

Starting with what still works

“

Applied to Devon, SALT would begin with a teacher who noticed a subject he still loved, long before touching the fifteen minutes near the buses that had become unsafe. Strengths come first; the barrier comes second; enforcement waits.

Source: Schools Spared, Children Punished, Ch. 6 (Devon and Simone, composite cases)



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

What practitioners are asking

Once I know the reason, how do I build a response that actually fits?

1

Responses default to enforcement because it is fastest.

2

Plans name problems and miss assets.

3

Practitioner and system limits go unspoken.

Shared words before shared work

S

S: Strengths

What is still working: a teacher, a subject, a friend, a routine.

A

A + L

Area of focus: the one barrier to move first. Limitations: of the practitioner AND the system.

T

T: Theory to Redress

A revised explanation and matched intervention, before any enforcement.

The numbers behind the moment

Commitment 3

of No Empty Seats: respond strengths-first, not enforcement-first

Attendance USA, No Empty Seats National Position Statement

9%

lower likelihood of chronic absence for students in any intervention

HEDCO Institute meta-analysis, University of Oregon (2025-2026), 49 U.S. studies

77%

of schools using effective strategies reduce chronic absence

HEDCO Institute meta-analysis, University of Oregon (2025-2026), 49 U.S. studies

Classify before you consequence

Withdrawal

Strength: a caring family. Focus: logistics. Theory: support, not sanction.

Avoidance

Strength: a trusted adult. Focus: the unsafe window.

Refusal

Strength: willingness to try. Focus: graduated exposure with clinicians.

Truancy

Strength: a peer or interest. Focus: belonging and goals.

Three moves you can make this week

01

Cost: $0

Name three strengths

Before any plan, list three things working for this student.

02

Cost: $0

Pick one focus

Choose the single barrier that, if moved, makes others easier.

03

Cost: $0

Write the limits

Note what you and the system cannot do, then who can.

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

For each classified case, record the SALT plan and the 90-day outcome. In a semester this becomes your building's own evidence base.



Common missteps, and how you will know it works

- ✕ Skipping strengths because the case feels urgent
- ✕ Choosing several focus areas at once
- ✕ Escalating to enforcement before a matched response is tried

LEADING INDICATOR · Moves first

Cases with a written SALT plan

LAGGING INDICATOR · Confirms it worked

Attendance at 90 days for SALT cases

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Seat 09: The Four Reasons

Seat 11: The Family Stability Conversation

Seat 12: Refusal and Avoidance: Matching Care to Cause

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