SEAT 12

THE SEAT SERIES · HANDOUT A · SEAT CARD: DO THIS MONDAY

Practitioners · K-12

# Refusal and Avoidance: Matching Care to Cause

*How do I respond when anxiety or the school environment is keeping a student home?*



## THREE MOVES FOR THIS WEEK

### ☐ Loop in counseling

Cost: $0

Bring the school counselor in within 48 hours of a refusal pattern.

### ☐ Find the trigger

Cost: $0

Academic demand, peers, transitions or sensory load?

### ☐ Take bullying seriously

Cost: $0

Private interview, report per policy, weekly follow-up; avoid peer mediation.

## VALIDATING BEFORE PROBLEM-SOLVING

1. It sounds like mornings have been really hard.
2. What part of the day feels hardest?
3. What would make the first ten minutes easier?
4. Let's make a small plan together and try it this week.

## CLASSIFY BEFORE YOU CONSEQUENCE

**Refusal**
Fear before school, physical complaints, fine on weekends. Counselor within 48 hours.

**Avoidance**
Avoids a person, place or time. Investigate and change the window.

**Withdrawal**
Rule out home logistics before assuming anxiety.

**Truancy**
Rule out fear before assuming choice.

## AVOID THESE MISSTEPS

- x Punitive consequences for anxiety, which increase avoidance
- x Peer mediation for bullying
- x Telling families 'it's being handled' without concrete safety steps

## HOW YOU WILL KNOW IT WORKS

Leading: Refusal cases with a re-entry plan
Lagging: Partial-day to full-day progress

Evidence: Gentle-Genitty, Schools Spared, Children Punished (Attendance USA, 2026); Guinn Center / NICRP (2025), Chronic Absenteeism in Nevada, Part II; Attendance Works; OECD report on long-term student absence (causes reported).

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