

SEAT

42

Parents and Guardians • All grades

Every Day Counts

How many absences are too many, and why does it matter?

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



A missed day misses more than a lesson

“

Schools provide healthcare, nutrition and social support alongside academics. When a child is absent, they miss access to all of it, not just instruction. That is why the reasons behind each absence matter so much.

Source: Gentle-Genitty, IU Office of School Partnerships Q&A (March 2025)



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



What families are asking

How many absences are too many, and why does it matter?

1

Two days a month adds up quickly.

2

Excused absences still count.

3

Families hear about attendance only when there is trouble.



Shared words before shared work



Chronic absence

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



Attendance

The count of days present and absent.



Absenteeism

The reasons behind the absences.



The numbers behind the moment

~18 days

a year, about 2 a month, makes a student chronically absent

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

0.29 SD

lower scores already at just 3-4 days missed

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

~1 in 5

U.S. students were chronically absent in 2024-25

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



Match the response to the reason

Rides and work

Tell the school. Help may exist for transportation and schedules.

Worries

If your child fears school, ask for the counselor.

Health

Ask about a health plan for frequent illness.

Something at school

Share it. Schools can change unsafe situations.



Three moves you can make this week

01

Cost: \$0

Track the days

Mark absences on a calendar at home.

02

Cost: \$0

Talk early

Call the school after two or three absences to ask for help.

03

Cost: \$0

Share the reason

Tell the school why, so they can match support.



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

Count your child's absences so far this year. Divide by the days of school so far. Is it close to 10%?



Common missteps, and how you will know it works



Waiting for a letter before talking to the school



Assuming excused days do not add up



Keeping a hard reason private when help may exist

LEADING INDICATOR • Moves first

Days missed this month

LAGGING INDICATOR • Confirms it worked

Days missed this year



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Seat 43: Little Learners, Big Habits

Seat 44: Mornings, Friends and Feeling Ready

Seat 45: When Your Child Wants to Stay Home



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