



Dear Superintendent,

This letter comes as an invitation, a challenge and a Call to Action. We are asking you and school superintendents across the country to lift up an important and increasingly urgent issue: Too many children are missing too many days of school. Literally tens of thousands of children, even in the early grades, are chronically absent—missing 10 percent or nearly a month or more of school every year.

Whether absences are excused or not, the resulting loss of instructional time is substantial and, for many students, the academic consequences are decidedly negative. Building a habit of attendance starting in the early grades is critical to reducing the achievement gap and dropout rates. Yet, too often chronic absence remains a hidden problem because schools only track average daily attendance and truancy (unexcused absences), both of which easily mask high levels of chronic absence.

That is why the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Attendance Works applauded when the U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously adopted a **resolution** in June 2012 calling for all mayors to support the creation of initiatives to reduce chronic absenteeism.

That is why we now call upon you and superintendents across the country to raise your voices and lead the effort to improve attendance starting in the early grades in your community. While schools alone can't do all it takes to improve student attendance, every successful initiative ultimately relies on educators deciding to make the reduction of chronic absence a priority. School district leaders like you are essential to advancing and implementing solutions that work.

We challenge you to:

1. **Own the Issue:** Make clear that improved student attendance is one of your top priorities. Ask your teachers and school leaders to make it one of theirs, as well. Designate a senior member of your staff to oversee implementation. Use the next month to publicize your commitment in your communications to staff, the board, families and the media.
2. **Mobilize the Community:** Reach out to make improved student attendance a broadly owned and widely shared civic priority. Engage parents, civic and elected leaders, local businesses, clergy members and libraries, museums and service providers in developing or strengthening and implementing a plan of action.
3. **Drive with Data:** Use data to raise public awareness, establish targets and goals, track progress and ensure accountability. Make sure your community has data on how many students are chronically absent and if they are concentrated in particular grades, schools and student populations.

Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when schools, families and community partners work together to create a culture of attendance; use data to identify when chronic absence is a problem, as early as possible; and help families overcome hurdles to getting children to school. We have seen local efforts achieve measurable differences in chronic absence within a single academic year, and often before improvements in academic indicators are visible. It can offer an early win and morale booster for all involved.

Please join us. Take your first step by registering at: **www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action** to declare that you accept this challenge. We will use this information to provide you and your designee with access to a superintendent's toolkit and other materials designed to make your effort a success and make it easier for you to connect to your peers engaged in similar work. Use this **Call to Action** to make your community aware of our invitation. If you have any questions or difficulty, please contact info@attendanceworks.org.

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