

2014-15 PSESD Early Learning 2015 Self-Assessment: Attendance¹ - Parent/Family Input

What are current strategies to support regular attendance? Which are and aren't effective?

Successful Aspects

- **Contact from Site when child is absent**
 - **71%** of the 578 **parents** ($n=409$) reported that site staff contact them when their child does not attend school (center-based programs) or when they miss a home visit or playgroup (home-based).
 - *Note:* When responses from parents who reported that their children were never absent ($n=88$), and also from parents who did not know if they were contacted by site staff ($n=14$), are not taken into account, then the proportion of parents who report being contacted by site staff when their child is absent is 86% of 476 parents.
 - In focus groups, many parents remarked how quickly they were contacted by site staff even when they are simply late and have not made it to the sites on time.
- **Helpful Supports from staff to ensure child's regular attendance**
 - **67%** of 649 **parents** ($n=437$) cited 'phone calls' as a very helpful support from staff.
 - 38% of **parents** ($n=249$) identified 'sending a note home'.
 - 28% of **parents** ($n=181$) identified 'sending an email'.
 - 25% of **parents** ($n=162$) identified 'texting'.
 - 13% of **parents** ($n=83$) indicated having site staff 'helping parent identify challenges for child's regular attendance and finding solutions' as helpful support.
 - 5% of **parents** ($n=33$) identified other helpful supports that include "having personal conversations with parent" or "having an interpreter" that a parent can tap to communicate with site staff about child's attendance; "personal visits at home", and "providing transportation".
 - From the focus groups, **parents** also noted that they appreciate the following supports:
 - Providing transportation, e.g., school buses, or other transportation (e.g., cab sent by site staff) help for many families especially those who live far from sites (e.g., the bus route in one site is fairly wide and can pick up a lot of children).
 - Staff providing information about how to help children and family members not get sick (e.g., during the flu season; coping with lice).
 - Early Head Start staff provide parents with schedules a few months ahead of time which helps parents and families plan ahead for home visits and play groups.
 - Site staff make children want to go to school. For example in one site, the teachers always tell the kids, "I'll see you tomorrow" and the children know that their teachers expects them to come to school. Another teacher says, "Oh, I'm so glad you are here today" and makes each child feel good and look forward to coming to school.
 - Site staff are very understanding of family circumstances that are challenging and affect children's on-time arrival or attendance.
 - Being reminded to inform teachers or site staff if child was going to be absent. (E.g., some sites give out a magnet with staff phone numbers on it so parent knows who to call if child is going to be absent).

¹ Data Sources: Summary of results for this topic area are based on analysis of responses from 649 parent/family surveys. Responses are also based on 11 focus groups participated by 74 parents or other family members.

Challenges

- **Child Absences**

- Transportation issues. One parent pointed out that her child has missed at least a week every month because of transportation is not provided.
- Some families have no money for gas or bus fare.
- Some parents do not have additional childcare support and if there is an emergency (e.g., “I had to take my baby to the hospital”), then other children are not able to be brought to school.
- A few parents explain that their child is late to school because the child is not used to waking up early. At times, some parents admitted, they are quite tired from work themselves and take a while to get their child to school.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Parents suggested the following improvements to supporting strong attendance:
 - Emphasize the importance of attendance to all parents and explain why.
 - For example, a parent suggested telling parents how much a child misses on or how far child fall behind for each day missed.