

The Benefits of Regular Attendance and Supporting Attendance through Quality Partnerships



Research shows regular school attendance is a benefit to children; supporting child learning and success!

- Children are more prepared to learn when routines are established in classroom, and home learning environments.
- When children miss school, they not only miss out on educational content and learning opportunities in a social context, but upon their return, they must put most of their energy into readjusting to classroom schedules, relationships and expectations. This is especially true for the ages of children we serve in Early Learning.
- When learning is not interrupted, each day the child attends they build momentum as they move from one learning concept to another. It also increases opportunities for us to observe and improve quality of support to children and families; including supporting child health and development, connecting them to special supports and services if needed within all service areas.



In partnership with parents we can support school readiness by supporting regular attendance.

- When we build better connections between home and school, family engagement is enhanced.
- Enrollment and orientation are both opportunities we can use to build partnerships with parents.
- Home visits provide a level of opportunity for engagement that is rich and rewarding.
- Respecting families and their cultures, being mindful of our biases, and focusing on family strengths, will help open doors to trusting relationships.

- **Information, motivation and support are powerful words when they work together for a common purpose.**
- When we provide information about the benefits of regular school attendance and connect it to the family's hopes, dreams and goals for their child, we help them internalize the importance of school readiness.
- When we encourage families, help them remove barriers, and provide support to the parents through resources, we empower them to get their children to school every day.



Take judgement out of the equation!

A child's missed attendance is impacted by many things, and even if it's from something we might have negative opinions about, living in that place hinders our opportunities to build positive relationships and does nothing to support the family and child towards their goals, attendance or school readiness. Here are some things you may come across that could have a negative impact on attendance.

- Past negative personal experiences in an earlier school setting
- Family or child health, or mental health concerns
- Family participation in cultural traditions/events
- Impact of past or current drug use
- Adjusting to new routines
- Crisis situations
- Housing
- Transportation
- Barriers to food, clothing and other basic needs.
- ...and more

Building strength-based relationships with families, opening the doors of trust and communication, and being familiar with community resources, enables us to have more meaningful conversations with families and provide better support. From this foundation we can help remove obstacles to regular attendance, and support family development and school readiness in other areas as well.

Knowing our purpose helps drive the work we do with children and families.

As you read and follow the ERSEA Procedure on Attendance, keep in mind the benefits to regular school attendance and be mindful of the children who are missing class - not just for the purpose of "taking attendance", but for the lost opportunities for the children, and then, for the 'found' opportunities you can create in partnership with families and your team.



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Falling through the cracks...

A colleague recently shared with me, there are a couple of ways children can fall through the cracks around attendance, even if all procedures are being perfectly kept.

- When children are only absent a day or two, every now and then. They don't meet the length of time required for a "follow-up" home visit, so we may not notice their irregular attendance as easily, nor how their absences might be building over time.
- When a center consistently reaches 90% attendance, irregular missed attendance can be more easily overlooked.
- Having 90% attendance is certainly a positive thing, and it has great value for the center and all the children who are attending regularly, but the question we might ask ourselves, is:
 - "What of the 10%?"
 - Who are the faces of the 10%?
 - How are they impacted as individuals?
 - How can we reach out and support regular attendance for all children to ensure their best learning?

Perhaps we can keep this in mind as we continue to support children and families in the important area of attendance.

Consider you are not alone in this effort as family support or teaching staff and remember this is a collaborative effort.

- Attendance is not only a partnership between staff and parents, it's also a collaboration between family support, teachers and center leadership. Partner with each other and work through attendance concerns; brainstorm ideas to resolve them together.
- Support can also be found through your PSESD support teams, leadership and more.



For more ideas in how to support attendance refer to the [ERSEA Procedure](#) as well as <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

~Kathy Binkley~