



## TRANSCRIPT

# Video: Attendance Matters – Kerman Unified School District

## NARRATOR

Attending school every day really matters. When students miss school, they miss out on learning, which can have lasting effects from grade to grade and hurt their chances to graduate. With about 8 million students nationwide missing significant numbers of school days each year, absenteeism is no small problem.

Fortunately, it's a problem we can address – by joining together as families, schools, and communities to make sure that students are present and accounted for every day.

Students are considered “chronically absent” when they miss 10 percent or more of school days for any reason – whether their absence is excused by a parent or guardian or unexcused. That 10 percent is just two days a month.

There's a lot of evidence showing that when absences add up, student achievement goes down. For example, chronically absent preschool and kindergarten students are academically and developmentally behind their classmates who attend school regularly; by 3rd grade, chronically absent students have lower reading and math achievement, signaling academic problems ahead; being chronically absent in 6th grade raises the likelihood of not graduating from high school; and students are 7 times more likely to drop out if they are chronically absent even just one year between 8th and 12th grade.

It's also worrying that chronic absence is so widespread. Nationwide, about 1 in 7 students is chronically absent. In California, 1 of every 10 students is chronically absent. And in many communities, the rate is even higher. These rates also vary by grade level. Absenteeism is typically high in kindergarten, dips in the elementary grades, and then increases from the middle grades up, peaking in high school.

To better understand the causes and consequences of missing school, let's meet two students, Ricky and Crystal, who are like many students we know.

Ricky loves school. Every day he arrives on time and ready to participate. Crystal likes school too, but like her siblings, she has missed so many days this year that she's dropped behind in her learning and also feels left out socially.

Some of the common reasons students like Crystal miss school are problems with transportation, housing, or health; being bullied; or feeling discouraged about academic struggles.

In some cases, parents – or students themselves – don't realize how important daily attendance is to school success.

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While Ricky is on track to move up through the grades and earn a high school diploma, Crystal's multiple absences have caused a number of setbacks. She struggles with reading and has fallen behind her classmates, which affects her attitude and behavior at school, resulting in school office visits and causing her to miss even more class time. It's also caused her to lose out on recess and some other activities she likes, further separating her from classmates.

By being chronically absent this year, Crystal is headed for more academic trouble in years to come.

Chronically absent students need help in avoiding the barriers that can limit school attendance. And schools are using a number of promising practices to boost attendance for students like Crystal.

Here in California's Central Valley, Kerman Unified School District is making a difference by using data to monitor absenteeism, building a culture that promotes attendance, engaging parents, taking care of students' needs, and working with partners like its school-based health center.

ROBERT FRAUSTO, SUPERINTENDENT, KERMAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

A few years ago, we weren't really happy with the rate of our attendance, percentage-wise. And so one of the things we wanted to look at in our district is to increase that average daily attendance. So we kind of brainstormed with our staff, with principals, what were some ways that we could do that.

We're trying to be more strategic now, really looking at students that are chronically absent and identifying those kids. Because research shows that students who miss a lot of school struggle in reading, and that could lead to high dropout rates.

NARRATOR

Reducing chronic absence starts with data to identify which students have so many absences that they need some form of intervention.

ROBERT FRAUSTO

One of the things that we really have been trying to do is really looking at data. Number one, identifying those kids that are chronically absent. The principals know who they are, the teachers know who they are, and really just flagging...it's something that we've really never done...even the term chronically absent student is a fairly new term.

KATHY GOODLAD, PRINCIPAL, KERMAN-FLOYD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

As a staff it's important for us to keep track of our chronic absenteeism and our students who are not coming to school. And so we gather the data, I share it in the bulletins, I share it at



staff meetings, and the teachers have a list, and so when those students are not here they make phone calls and then we try and find a solution if they have a problem for not being here.

NARRATOR

For some students, attending school every day is challenging. Giving consistent messages about the importance of attendance and providing supportive interventions are key to reducing chronic absence.

KATHY GOODLAD

We're all about building a culture of attendance because we know that attendance is very important, and we need to start at the beginning so it grows with them. Every student at our school knows what our attendance goal is; they will tell you that it is 97 percent. And they know that it matters to us and it matters to them. And if we make our goal we do a 1-minute dance. The kids love it. We also have pizza parties for a class that has perfect attendance for ten days in a row, which is really hard.

Excuse the interruption, but we have met our attendance goal for today. We are at 97.12 percent, which is our goal of 97 percent. So congratulations, we know attendance is important. So here is your one-minute dance!

TEACHER

It's our dance party. Find a friend. Want to dance with us, Aileen? Alright! (Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling" plays over PA system)

KATHY GOODLAD

And we want to have that culture that they know that we are aware of their attendance and we applaud them for being at school.

So one of the things that we like to do is make sure that we have informed parents. And so we let them know at back to school night the importance of attendance. We also do a parent information night midyear, and then we also do a kinder orientation for our incoming kinders, because we know our kinders have about 35 percent of our chronic absenteeism.

We also do some preventive education as well. We talk to them about simple things like handwashing...

STUDENTS

(Singing) Add the soap, scrub, scrub, scrub, scrub, rinse and dry them, too.

KATHY GOODLAD

...because we know that communicable diseases are transferred by touch.



ROBERT FRAUSTO

We understand that kids come to school with different barriers. If a kid's not in his seat, the kid's not learning. So ultimately our goal has been working on programs, working with students to really relieve these barriers so they can be in the classroom and they can learn.

RICK JIMENEZ, DIRECTOR OF CHILD WELFARE AND ATTENDANCE, KERMAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Here we partner with agencies to reduce barriers. Help students get food, clothes, school supplies, help with their homework, whatever it takes. We also work closely with the families to educate them about the importance of daily attendance and about the resources and programs to support them.

ROBERT FRAUSTO

You know, if we can alleviate a lot of these issues early on in life, in kindergarten, first, second, third grade, it'll make a difference throughout the rest of their life as they get older in middle school and high school.

KATHY GOODLAD

Some of the solutions that we have come up with is, we work in partnership. We do have a school-based health center that is located on our campus, which has been a big help.

JEANY LOPEZ, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS, VALLEY HEALTH TEAM

Valley Health Team is here to support the community as a whole. We work closely with the school district to make sure that we are a safety net for all of the students here.

In this exam room our providers will see students and kids from the community for well-child visits, sports physicals, hearing and vision screenings, as well as many other services.

Our behavioral health suite is down the hall here. And we can see students who come in who might have experienced some trauma or who just need someone to talk to.

STUDENT

I love my school-based health clinic because they help me with my asthma.

STUDENT

It makes me feel healthy.

DR. PARMALA BANGER, PEDIATRICIAN, VALLEY HEALTH TEAM

Our whole goal is to make sure our kiddos are healthy and ready to go back to school and learn. Because if you're not there, you're not learning. At the school-based health center, we offer a



wide variety of services from medical, dental, and even behavioral health. We are here to serve newborns all the way to adults.

When children are at school, they can sometimes have accidents. We had a kiddo who fell down and hurt her arm, and she came in today with her mother and we were able to take care of her and get her back to school.

I think she's gonna be just fine, okay? So we'll just clean it up, we'll put a little bit of antibiotic on it and then give her a band-aid and we'll get her back to class!

NARRATOR

Everyone in the school community can help boost attendance and make a difference in the lives of students.

ROBERT FRAUSTO

Really, it takes a village to raise a child and that's kind of the, that's kind of the angle that we take in Kerman Unified to make sure every student is successful.

RHONDA ARMSTRONG, MAYOR, CITY OF KERMAN

In our community we're committed to the success of every student. And we partner to make sure that happens. And that starts with attendance every day at school.

TERRI CUBILLIOS, OFFICER, KERMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Our department works very hard to keep our students safe and in school every day.

DREAM TEAM STUDENT LEADER, KERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

At my high school, every student matters. I'm part of a dream team where we focus on every individual student's needs by attendance to homework, to just being there for them by support.

BOY'S BASKETBALL, KERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

**Attendance matters every day!**

BOY'S WATER POLO, KERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

**Attendance matters every day!**

GIRL'S VOLLEYBALL, KERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

**Be a winner, be at school!**



BOY'S BASEBALL, KERMAN HIGH SCHOOL

We won! Attendance matters every day!

STUDENT

It's the happiest day of my life because I'm at school!

NARRATOR

This video is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. To learn more about REL West, please email [relwest@wested.org](mailto:relwest@wested.org) or visit [ies.ed.gov](http://ies.ed.gov).

For more information about local efforts to reduce chronic absence, please contact your local school district office or your child's school principal.