

Exploring Implementation of Attendance Supports to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism in the Providence Public School District

In 2018 Rhode Island’s Providence Public School District (PPSD) implemented a Student Attendance Policy that required schools to track and address chronic absenteeism.¹ PPSD encouraged schools to implement such attendance supports as attendance teams, leveraged partnerships, parent engagement specialists, nudge letters, phone calls, text messaging, and mentorship programs. This study examined schools’ use of attendance supports and dove more deeply into implementation of one support: text messaging to parents and guardians. The findings are descriptive and do not provide a causal explanation.

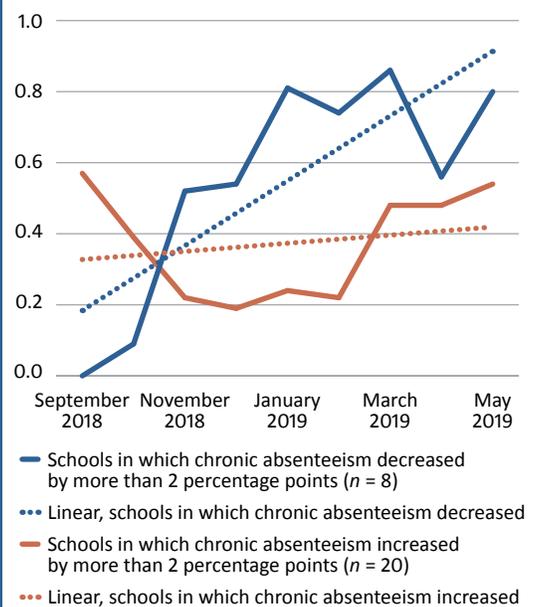
Key findings

- Schools in which chronic absenteeism decreased between 2017/18 and 2018/19 implemented phone calls, mentorship programs, and text messaging with moderate or high fidelity more frequently than schools in which chronic absenteeism increased.² The largest difference between schools in which chronic absenteeism decreased and schools in which it increased was in the implementation of text messaging (88 percent versus 45 percent implementing with moderate or high fidelity).
- During the 2018/19 school year the use of attendance-related text messaging increased more quickly in schools in which chronic absenteeism decreased between 2017/18 and 2018/19 than in schools in which it increased, where the use of attendance-related text-messaging remained flat (see figure).

District and school leaders can use these findings to develop guidance for implementing attendance supports with high fidelity. Future research is needed on which schools use attendance supports to decrease chronic absenteeism and why different supports might be more appropriate for certain schools.

During the 2018/19 school year the use of attendance-related text messaging increased more quickly in schools in which chronic absenteeism decreased between 2017/18 and 2018/19

Attendance-related text messages sent per month per student



Source: Authors’ analysis of text-messaging data from the Providence Public School District, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

1. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10 percent of instruction days during the school year, including excused and unexcused absences and out-of-school suspensions.
2. See the full report for details on the three categories of implementation fidelity—low, moderate, and high—that were defined according to a set of criteria developed by the Providence Public School District.