

Parent Engagement in Portland Public Schools

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The why

Data collected by the Office for Civil Rights for the 2015–16 school year identified Portland Public Schools (PPS) as having a (really) high rate of chronic absenteeism.

PPS was partnering with Multnomah County and All Hands Raised to address chronic absenteeism by

- developing standardized data reports to identify students who were chronically absent,
- setting up and supporting attendance teams at multiple schools districtwide, and
- raising awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Parents did not have a sense of how absences link to achievement and graduation rates or how they add up throughout the year.



The how

Twenty-six (26) K–5/K–8 schools were identified to participate in the study. Each school had over 15% chronic absentee rates in the K–5 grade levels.

Central office attendance staff

- worked with AIR and IT to review and set up the weekly messages sent to families prior to the launch of the project and
- supported each of the participating schools with requirements for the text messaging pilot—permission slips, opting out, and individual outreach.



Lessons learned and considerations

Be clear about your WHY

Texting works! It can reduce barriers to communication. It gives parents a greater sense of control.

Districts need to invest the necessary resources—TIME and STAFF—to set up systems (IT, risk management, professional development).

Know your audience—texting parents in a K–5 setting is different than texting middle school or high school students directly.



Resources

How to Text Message Parents to Reduce Chronic Absence
Using an Evidence-Based Approach

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf>

