

Attendance Matters:

Empowering School
Psychologists as Leaders in
Addressing School Attendance
Problems

Hello!

About the Presenters

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Surviving a 3-hour Workshop

- GET COMFORTABLE
- Engage when appropriate
- We will take breaks!
- Choose 2-3 takeaways



Today's Agenda

X Understanding SAP

- X Definitions
- X Scope of the problem

X Assessing SAP

- X Screening
- X Assessment
- X Progress Monitoring

X Intervening with SAP

- X Universal
- X Targeted
- X Tertiary

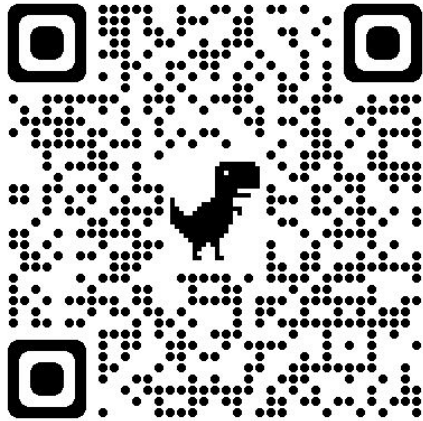


1.

Understanding

School Attendance Problems

Curious what your
district's attendance
looks like?



**Data from 2015-16 school year*

How confident are you assessing
students with school attendance
problems?

How confident are you implementing
interventions for students with
school attendance problems?

Not
Confident

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Very
Confident

What brought you here?

What about during and
after COVID-19?

- Poorer mental health
- Increased **emotional** problems due to decreased social connection
- **Female** and **Transgender/Gender Non-Conforming** Youth - increased depression and anxiety

Table 1
Chronological Overview of Terms Used in English-Language Literature to Refer to School Refusal, School Withdrawal, and Collections of School Attendance Problems

Terms	Year	Author(s)
<i>Terms for what is commonly understood as school refusal</i>		
A form of truancy associated with neurosis	1932	Broadwin
Psychoneurotic type of truancy; stay-at-home neuroses	1939	Partridge
School phobia	1941	Johnson, Falstein, Szurek, and Svendsen
Refusal to go to school / reluctance to go to school	1945	Klein
Separation anxiety	1956	Estes, Haylett, and Johnson
A variety of separation anxiety	1957	Kanner
School anxiety	1959	Morgan
Mother-philes	1960	Davidson
School refusal	1960a	Hersov
Emotional absenteeism	1964	Frick
Inappropriate home-bound school absence	1980	Waller and Eisenberg
Masquerade syndrome as a variant of school phobia	1980	Waller and Eisenberg
School refusal syndrome	1985	Atkinson, Quarrington, and Cyr
Psychological absentee	1985	Reid
Anxiety-based school refusal	1990	Last and Strauss
Internalizing school refusal disorder	1990	Young, Brasic, Kisnadwala, and Leven ^a
Anxious school refusal	1993	Mouren-Simeoni ^b
School refusal behavior	1993	Kearney ^c
Extended school non-attendance	2014	Gregory and Purcell
School reluctant	2015	Jones and Suveg
<i>Terms for what is commonly understood as school withdrawal</i>		
Unwitting, even willful encouragement of the parents	1932	Broadwin
Withdrawal of the child from school	1962	Kahn and Nursten
Voluntary absence with parental assent	1969	Berg, Nichols, and Pritchard
Parent-condoned category	1977	Hersov ^d
School withdrawal; parental complicity	1978	Berg, Butler, Hullin, Smith, & Tyrer
Voluntary withholding by a parent	1980	Galloway
Family-motivated truancy	1981	Amatu
Condoned absence	1985	Galloway
Covert support for non-attendance	1987	Blagg
Parent-motivated school withdrawal	1996	Kearney & Silverman
Parentally condoned absence	1997	Berg
<i>Terms for collections of school attendance problems</i>		
Truancy (all types)	1915	Hiatt
Failures of school attendance (all types)	1962	Kahn and Nursten
Persistent absenteeism (all types)	1976	Galloway
School attendance problems (all types)	1980	Rubenstein and Hastings
Persistent unauthorized absence (all types)	1982	Galloway
Pupil absenteeism (all types)	1986	Carroll
School avoidance behavior (all types)	1990	Taylor & Adelman
School refusal behavior (SR+TR)	1993	Kearney
Child-motivated refusal to attend school (SR+TR)	1996	Kearney and Silverman
Truancy (enrolled, no good reason for absence)	2001	Bimler and Kirkland
School avoidance (all types)	2002	Berg
School refusal (SR+TR)	2003	Egger, Costello, and Angold
Non-child-motivated absenteeism (all except SR+TR)	2003	Kearney
Chronic non-attendance (all types)	2003	Lauchlan
School attendance difficulties (all types)	2005	Sheppard
Extended school non-attendance (SR+TR)	2007	Pellegrini
Educational neglect (all types)	2011	Larson, Zuel, and Swanson
Voluntary and involuntary absenteeism (all types)	2016	Birioukov

A complicated
history makes
for an uncertain
future

- Heyne et al., 2019



A Working Definition

Children, 5-17 years old, who
struggle to attend school and/or
remain in class for an entire day.



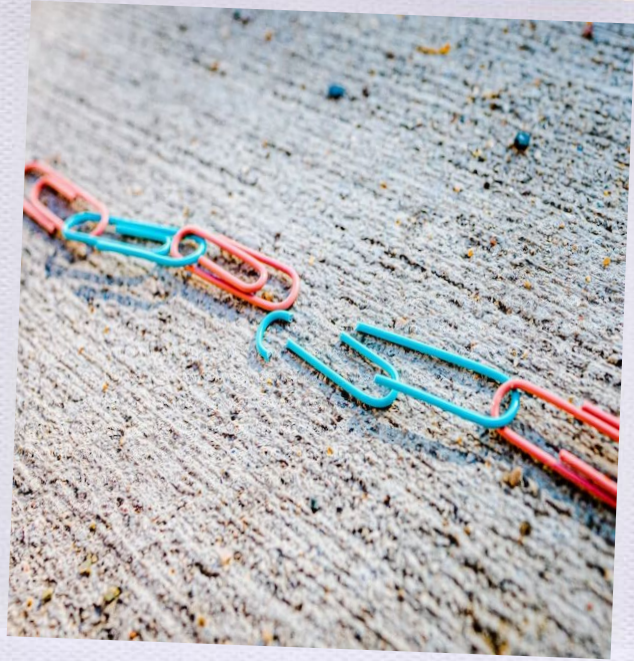
When do School Attendance Problems Become Problematic?

- a) Significant difficulties with attendance for at least 2 weeks
- b) Absent for 2.5 total school days for over 2 weeks (approx. 25%)
- c) Absent 10 days in 15 weeks (approx. 13%)
- d) Recent research suggesting after missing 6 days of school over 3 months (approx. 10%)



Impact from School Attendance Problems

- Missing 0.5 school years can result in...
 - ...0.7 year delay in reading scores
 - ...1.0 year delay in math scores
- Ongoing absences can increase risk of drop-out by 37%



\$276,000,000

Financial impact due to student absences
related to feeling unsafe at school.

(Baams et al., 2017 - based on 2011-13 CHKS data)



Understanding School Attendance Problems

Influenced by multiple factors...

- Medical
- Mental health
- Family/community
- School-related
- Contextual

Occurring on a spectrum of severity...

- Tardiness
- Missing a class period
- Intermittently throughout the day
- Entire days
- Attending despite difficulty

Different types of absences...

- Excused or unexcused
- Chronic or acute
- Routine, excessive, or inconsistent

A Neglected Population...

...Attendance problems can often go unaddressed and without treatment for up to 1-2 years.

Common Prevalence Reports...

...5-28% of students present with school attendance problems

- x Monitoring the Future Survey: 11-27%
- x National Comorbidity Survey: 11-27%
- x School Crime Survey: 5.5%
- x National Survey on Drug Use and Health: 11%

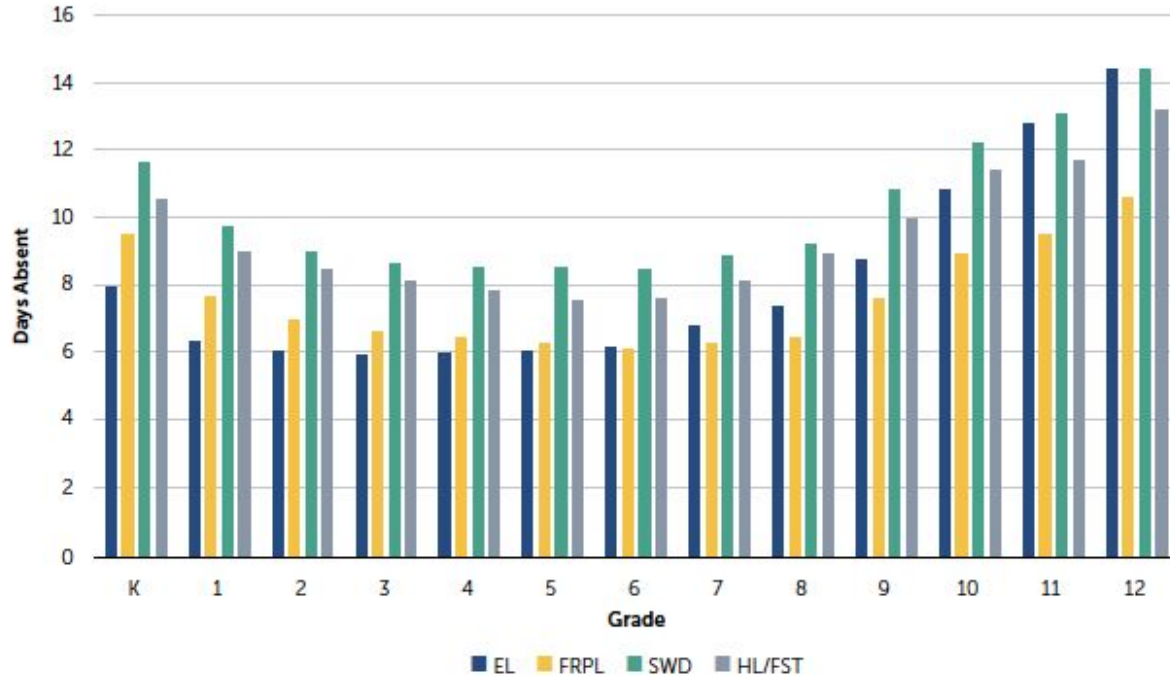


Important Demographic Context

- Grade level
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Race/Ethnicity
- Socioeconomic background



Figure 1. Mean Days Absent by Subgroup and Grade



Note. Averages over 2014–15 to 2017–18 school years. Includes data from six CORE districts.



Who is absent?

PACE, 2020: The effects of absenteeism on academic and social-emotional outcomes

The Persistent and Substantial Impact of SAP

Learning & academic
achievement

1

Employment and higher
education opportunities

3

Social & emotional
development

5

2

At-risk behaviors (drug
use, teen-pregnancy,
graduation)

4

Family stress &
financial strain

6

Poor mental
health



Why is school
attendance
important to
school
psychologists?

2.

Assessing

School Attendance Problems

Screening can be conducted using a systematic tool or process with an entire population, such as a school's student body, or a group of students, such as a classroom or grade level(s).

Universal Screening

"A 'wait-to-fail' model must be avoided."

(Kearney & Graczyk, 2014)

Identify:

- Students at risk for poor outcomes
- Students who may need monitoring or intervention (e.g., targeted supports for emerging adjustment problems, intensive supports for chronic behavioral issues)
- Effectiveness of universal social/emotional/behavioral curriculum
- Wellness & risk factors/ distress

Informs decisions about services and the level of support needed.

CSMH, 2018



Screening for School Attendance Problems

The School Non-Attendance Checklist (SNACK)

“For practitioners, the predominant function of the SNACK is to support efficient identification of the type(s) of SAP in a given case, to facilitate more focused assessment, in turn supporting case conceptualization and intervention.”

Heynes et al., 2019, p. 27



Using the SNACK

School Refusal Items

-Reason # 3

Truancy

-Reason # 4

School Exclusion

-Reasons # 12 & 13

Non-problematic absenteeism

-Reasons # 1, 2, 8, 9,
10, 11, & 14

School Withdrawal

-Reasons # 5, 6, & 7

"Other Reasons"



Time for a
10-minute
break.

Formal Assessment

How to assess students with
school attendance problems

Why do we typically assess?

- 1) Establish diagnosis/eligibility
- 2) Guide interventions
- 3) Inform ongoing progress monitoring



Relevant and important assessments...

- x Psychoeducational
- x Functional Behavioral Assessment
- x Educationally Related Mental Health Services
- x Manifestation Determination

Important questions to ask...

- x Where are referrals coming from and how?
- x What interventions can be implemented prior to assessment?
- x What are potential (and likely) limitations when assessing students with attendance problems?

*WHEN do
we assess?*

HOW should we assess?

- Developmentally sensitive and culturally responsive approach
- Comprehensive approach (social, emotional, behavioral, medical, and contextual factors)
- Multidisciplinary teams
- FLEXIBILITY
- Limitations to scope of practice



ANOTHER Acronym!

R. = Records

I. = Interviews

O. = Observations

T. = Testing

of

I. = Instruction

C. = Curriculum

E. = Environment

L. = Learner

O. = Onset

F. = Frequency

A. = Antecedents

I. = Intensity

D. = Duration



Domains	Review	Interview	Observe	Test	Comments
Academic					
Cognitive/ Processing					
Medical/ developmental					
Social/ Emotional					
Behavioral					
Contextual Variables					

USING R.I.O.T.



Review of Records

What are some
important records
you gather in these
cases?

Things to Get Ahead of Time!

- X Course schedules, grades, work completion, accuracy of work, work samples, required makeup work, etc.
- X General social skills or behaviors of the child in school and at home
- X Data indicating past school attendance problems
- X Goals and attitudes of school officials, teachers, family, and peers regarding the child and their attendance
- X Procedures and timelines for reintegrating the child into school
- X Potential obstacles to reintegrating the child into school



How I Prepare for Assessment

What domains do you include in your report?

...

- Background, Family, etc.
- School history
- Medical, developmental, psychiatric
- Speech, language, communication
- Academic and school functioning
- Cognitive, processing
- Social, emotional, behavioral
- Factors specific to suspected disability(ies)



“...a hallmark of the assessment processes and perhaps the most common method used to obtain information to evaluate individuals.”

(Busse & Beaver, 2000)

Interviews

Who do you typically talk to when evaluating for SAP?

Who to Interview

- x THE KID!!
- x Past school psychologists
- x Teachers (past & present, gen ed & sped)
- x School counselors
- x Principals or admin
- x Attendance clerks
- x School nurse!
- x Other relevant school staff
 - x Classified staff, bus driver, cafeteria worker, front desk clerks, etc.
- x Mental Health Professionals (e.g., social workers, therapists)
- x Community-based providers



Interview Questions (Kearney & Albano, 2018)

- 1) How often does your child refuse school, specifically because he/she is generally distressed or upset about school?
- 2) How often does your child refuse school specifically because he/she wants to escape social and/or evaluative situations at school?
- 3) How often does your child refuse school specifically because he/she wants to get attention from you or a significant other?
- 4) How often does your child refuse school specifically because he/she wants to pursue tangible rewards from some source outside of school?
- 5) Does your child refuse school for a combination of reasons that we just discussed?



OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE:

Conducting observations across multiple settings, and if possible, during family's morning activities or routine.

- Kearney & Albano, 2018



Observations

“Observing” an absent student?

Behaviors to focus on during observation:

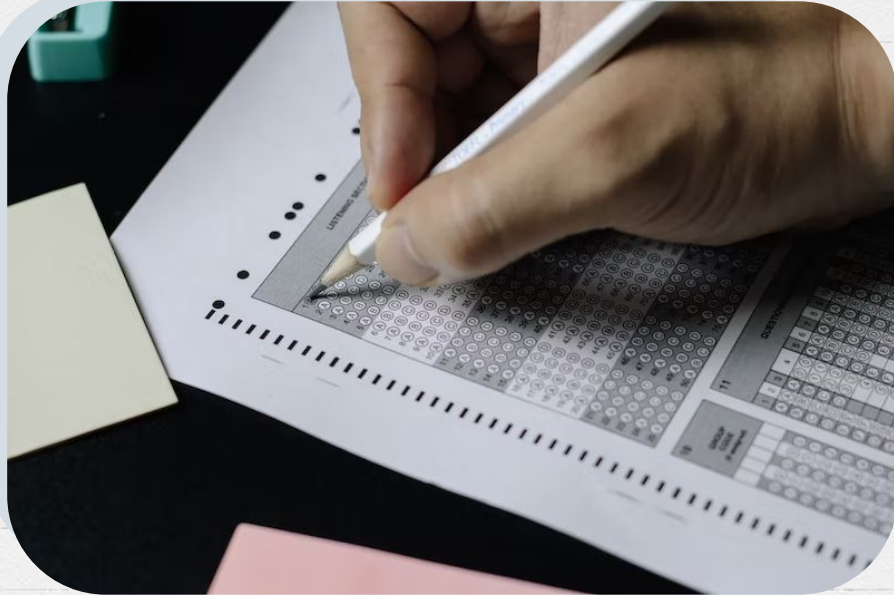
- Anxiety prone behaviors
- Somatic complaints
- Attention-seeking behaviors
- Excessive reassurance seeking behaviors
- Interactions with peers or adults
- Performance-based evaluations
- Timed or high-pressure activities
- Oppositional behavior
- Behaviors intended to gain removal from classroom
- Participation in P.E. activities
- Responses to others' requests or offers to leave the classroom and natural transitions
- Requests to leave the classroom or visit the office or restroom
- Parents and school officials' reactions to anxious and/or refusal behaviors
- School preparation behaviors and their efficiency
- Sudden changes in child or parent behaviors
- Academic abilities and behaviors



Important Things to Observe

- Parent-child interactions at home, prior to departing for school
- Parent-child separation points (curbside or outside of the classroom)
- Difficulties on or getting on bus or transportation
- Difficulties on school grounds before start of school
- Unstructured social settings and interactions (playground, lunch, snack, transitions)
- Critical academic settings (struggling, thriving)





Testing

Consider alternatives to
giving teachers rating scales
for kids they have never
met!

Common Assessment Tools

Broad-Band Rating Scales

- x BASC
- x Conners
- x ACBC
- x BYI

Narrow-Band Rating Scales

- x CDI
- x RADS
- x RCMAS
- x MASC
- x Piers-Harris

Attendance-Specific Rating Scales

- x SRAS-R
- x SNACK
- x ISAP
- x SCREEN

Tools for Assessing SAP (González et al., 2021)

X Self-Efficacy
Questionnaire for
School Situations
(SEQ-SS)

X School Refusal
Personality Scale
(SRPS)

X Assessing for School
Non-Attendance
(ASNA)

X School Refusal
Evaluation Scale
(SCREEN)

X Inventory of School
Attendance
Problems (ISAP)

Less about SAP, but still
helpful...

X Visual Analogue Scale for
Anxiety-Revised (VAA-R)

X Screen for Child Anxiety
Related Emotional
Disorders Revised
(SCARED-R)

X School Anxiety Inventory
Short-Version (SAI-SV)

Kearney & Colleagues' Functional Assessment Model

1. **Avoiding** school-based stimuli that provoke negative affectivity
2. **Escaping** aversive social and/or evaluative situations
3. Pursuing **attention** from significant others, and/or
4. Pursuing **tangible reinforcers** outside of school



Using a Functional Behavioral
Approach to Assessing SAP

Determining **what function** a
student's school refusal
behavior serves, and the
degree of impact.



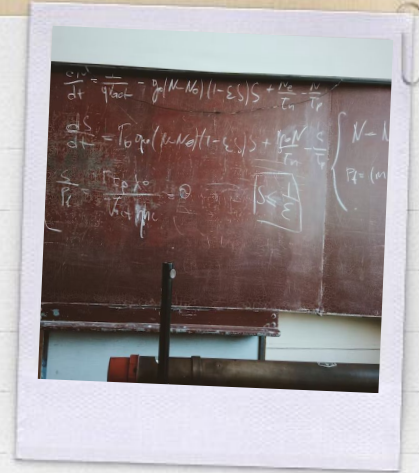
SRAS-R (Kearney & Albano, 2018)

- A 24-item measure pertaining to the 4 functional conditions of school refusal behavior (6 questions each).
- Completed with child first, followed by parent(s) or caretaker(s)- each separately.

Mean scores are computed in the functional areas for each, the area with the highest score is considered to be the primary reason for school refusal.

Important to note inconsistencies.

Formulate hypothesis, based on interviews, rating scales, observations, record review, and SRAS-R to confirm in treatment.



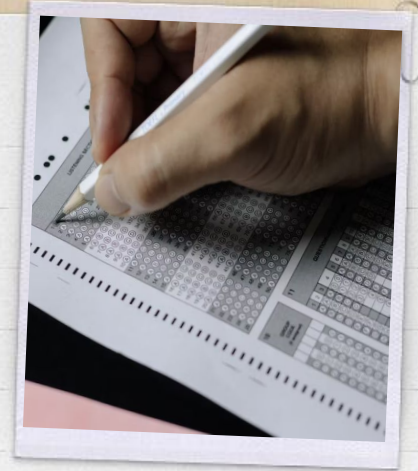
School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (SRAS-R), Parent and Child forms

- Kearney & Albano (2018)

SRAS-R Child Form



SRAS-R Parent Form



Meet Maria

- X 16 yo, female, high school sophomore
- X Mother's history of substance abuse and recovery
- X Previously removed from home, lived with grandmother, recently reunited with mother (estranged from father)
- X Spent a year in and out of hospital due to leg infection and complications
- X **Missed a year of school content**
- X Social, smart, interested in cosmetology school, played softball, successful in electives, able to make friends but connected to some local gang conflict
- X Transition to mom's, insecure about weight, new school = no friends, very behind in school, inattention difficulties, impulsive, oppositional, no morning routine



Maria's Attendance

Sample Write-Up



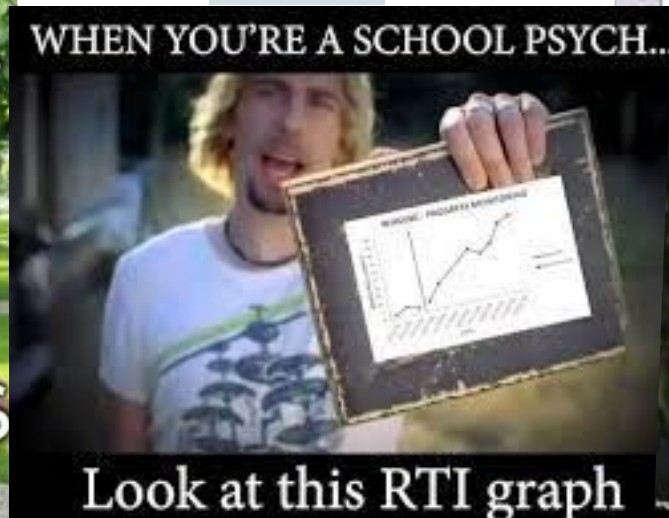
- x History of full-day SAPs (hospitalization)
- x Would come to school close to noon (access meal)
- x Would leave early from classes and walk home (bored or frustrated)
- x Gained employment through school, contingent on attendance (70% of the day)
- x Incident walking to school - threatened by local gang, mother's history tied to gangs, students attended her school

1



Let's take a break...

2



3



And look at memes...



3.

Intervening

School Attendance Problems



What is...

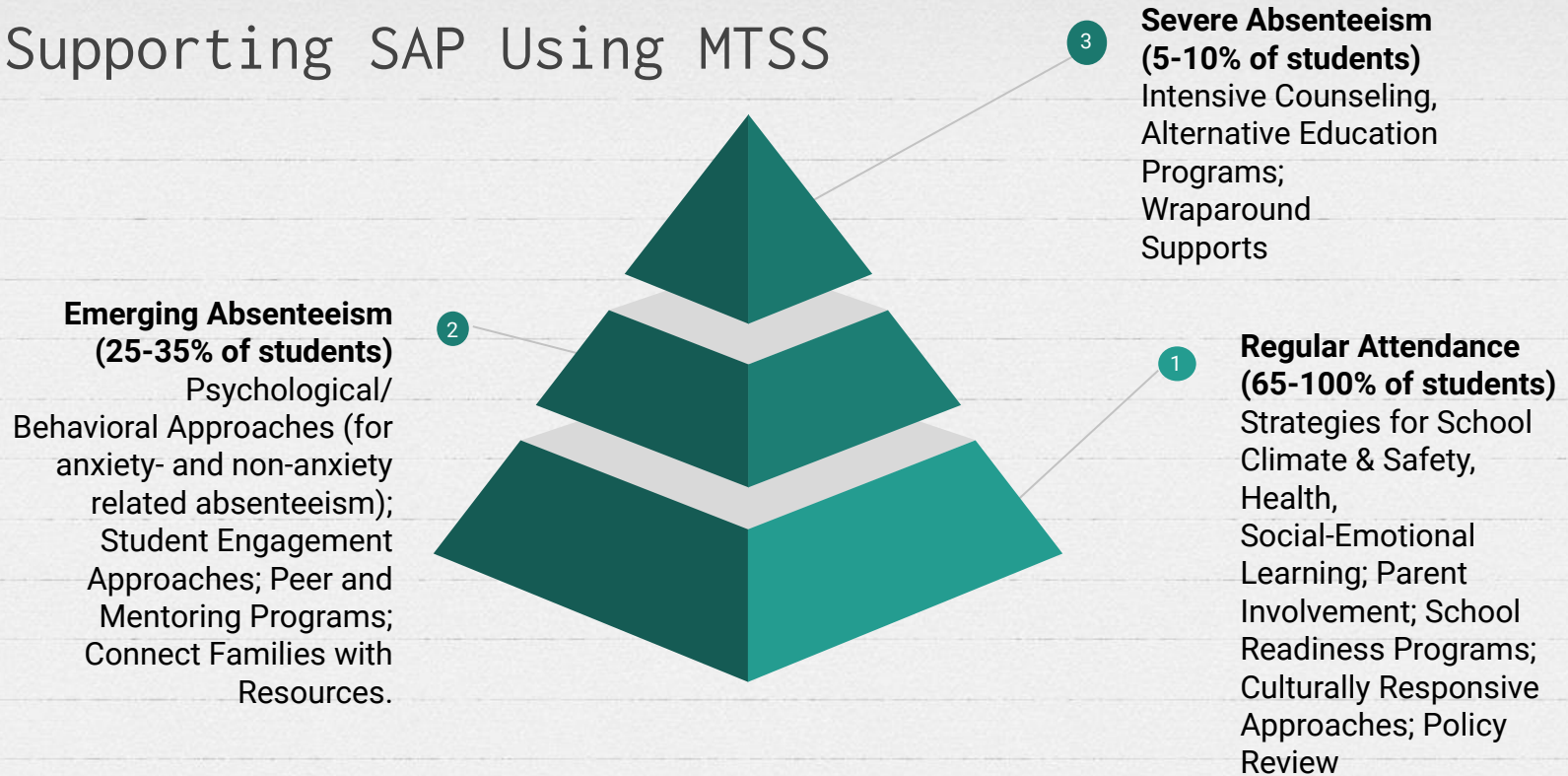


...the purpose...



...of education?

Supporting SAP Using MTSS



Critical Components

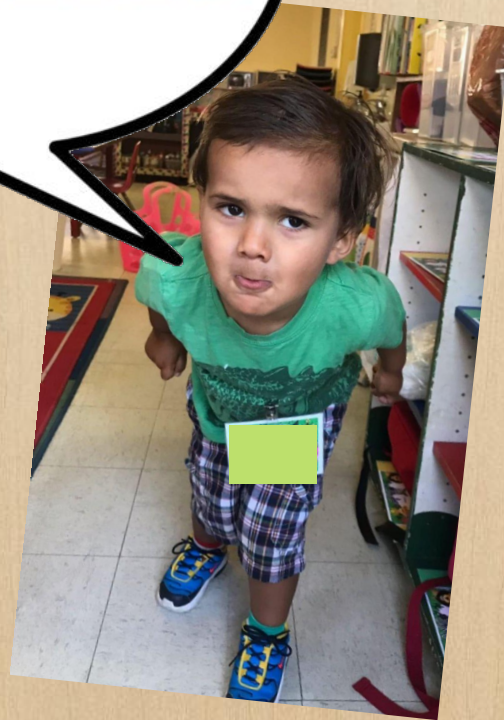
- x **Data drives intervention-** we know how to do this!!
- x Leadership buy-in; need capacity to **assess** and **support** students
- x Remember academic components
- x Don't Add → Integrate



**GET
INVOLVED**

Tier 1

Universal Interventions



Tier 1: Data Driven Interventions

X School-wide Attendance data	X Overarching SA issues—, narrow down problematic areas
X Well-being & safety	X School Climate and Well Being Interventions X SEL skills and safety (focus: marginalized groups)
X Office disciplinary referrals	X Address Behaviors & Bx Management X Restorative practices/PBIS
X Written policies and procedures	X Review and amend policies
X Academic data (school, class level)	X Enhance school readiness and academic programs
X Caregiver & community engagement	X Develop caregiver and community programs

**Choose 1 or 2
to begin**

- X Restorative Justice
 - Resources/Community Circles
 - X Oakland Unified
 - X IIRP
 - X Home Room: Highs and Lows
- X PBIS with attendance incentives
 - X School Examples
- X SEL: Casel
- X Wellness and Psychological Well Being

Tier 1 Universal Interventions Resources

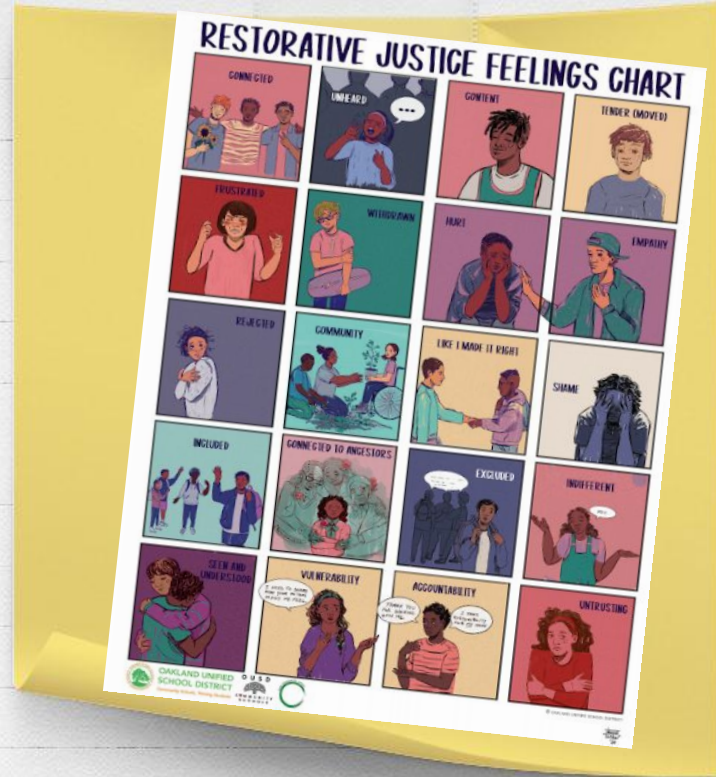


Tier 1: Case Example

- x School ABC had attendance issues (86% daily attendance)
 - x 20% in grades 1-5 missing more than 20 days
- x Culturally and linguistically diverse population
- x High rates of bullying reported
- x Kids w/ SAP: high ODRS and suspensions.
- x Enhanced existing PBIS schoolwide/ caregiver engagement
- x Mindfulness lessons
- x Restorative circles for misbehavior
- x 83% decrease in suspensions
- x Increased to above 93% attendance rates



What are some Tier 1 approaches that have worked for you to improve attendance and community?



Tier 2

Targeted Interventions

Tier 2: Data Driven Interventions

X Attendance data (find the frequent flyers 3 or more days)	X Weekly data review and intervention planning
	X Restorative SARB/SART meetings- family friendly spot
X Classwide and individual well being	X Small group SEL skills and well-being interventions
X Office disciplinary referrals	X Address Behaviors & Bx Management
X Distress	X Coping skills (e.g. anxiety, depression)
	X Trauma-focused interventions (CBITS, Bounce Back), Transition Supports
X Academic data (school, class level)	X Small group and specialized instruction- tutoring
X Social Struggles	X Peer, Friendship, Mentor Groups
X Caregiver and community engagement	X Caregiver groups
	X Home Visits, Community Resources

- X CBITS and Bounce Back
 - X Students exposed to a traumatic event
- X Check in / Check Out
- X Mind UP
 - X Regulate emotion
 - X Focus attention
 - X Integrated into lessons

Tier 2 Targeted Intervention Resources



Tier 2: Case Example

- X Restorative SARB/SART- meetings
- X School attendance data- identify needs and refer to groups
- X MindUP Groups
- X Parent groups
 - X 3 sessions—update on progress, give resources, win prizes
- X Incentives built in for kids to participate
- X Generate spaces related to student interests
- X Special jobs throughout the day



What are some Tier 2 approaches that you have found to be effective?



Tier 3

Tertiary Interventions

Prior to Direct Intervention

- X Address contextual factors (as best we can)
- X Consult and collaborate with professionals
- X Maintain access to academic data
- X Offer parent support for building healthy routines
- X Devise clear expectations and plans (w/ planned flexibility)



Tier 3: Data Driven Interventions

X Progress monitoring data from groups and self report during sessions	X Individual counseling- flexibility X Social Skills X Coping skills (e.g. anxiety, depression) X ACT, CBT, DBT, TF-CBT
X Psychoed assessment data	X WRAP/ Full Service Partnership X Alternative Ed Environments
X Well being, Strengths based assessment, interests	X Individualized activities X Mentor match/Peer Match
X Function of SAB per assessment	X Directly linked to function X Caregivers support and Transition Support
X Academic Data	X Link directly to academic supports, experiential service work

X Interventions linked to improved Attendance

- X Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- X Trauma-Focused CBT
- X Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- X Acceptance and
Commitment Therapy

Tier 3
Tertiary
Intervention
Resources

CBT for School Attendance Problems

Identify activities the student has stopped doing, is doing ineffectively, is avoiding, that might give them a sense of pleasure or they have reached mastery in

Establish what behaviors and thinking are incongruent with their long-term goals and values.



Using CBT to Address Different Functions

Refusing school to avoid negative stimuli

Exercises to control somatic symptoms, and progressive exposure to school.

Refusing school to seek significant others' attention

Strategies that establish educational routines and patterns in the family setting

Contingency control with reinforcement of appropriate or desired behaviors.

Refusing school to obtain tangible rewards out of school

Contingency contracts and Implementation of follow-up procedures

Regular parent communication

Rewarding for class attendance. - must be more reinforcing

DBT for School Attendance

- X Adapted version of DBT focused on attendance
- X Tracks daily emotions related to school refusal
- X Distress tolerance
- X Web based coaching for parents.
- X Morning routine - may include multiple family members



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Cognitive and Behavioral Practice 22 (2015) 317-330

Contains Video ¹

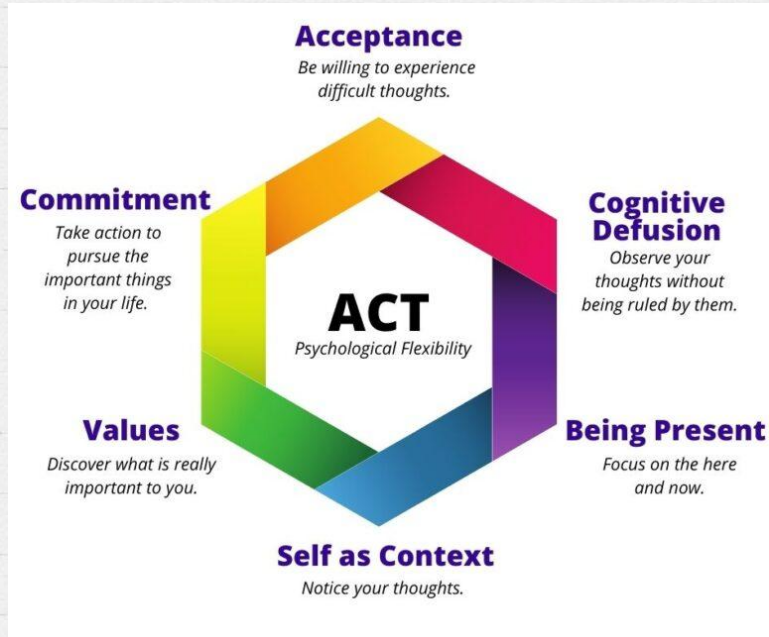
Cognitive and
Behavioral
Practice

www.elsevier.com/locate/cabp

Dialectical Behavior Therapy for School Refusal: Treatment Development and Incorporation of Web-Based Coaching

Brian C. Chu, Shireen L. Rizvi, Elaina A. Zendegui, and
Lauren Bonavitacola, *Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*

ACT for School Attendance



- X CBT with mindfulness, values-based goal setting and committed action
- X Psychological flexibility
- X Improves resilience and coping skills
- X Can be group based

What are some Tier 3 interventions that work for your team?

Any outside resources that have been helpful?



Maria Follow Up

- x Academic Baseline and Support
- x Electives at identified time of day
- x Parent Communication
- x Job contingent upon attendance
- x Adult relationships
- x Validate and Remove Blame



Barriers to Improvement

- x The student's age, development, and maturity
- x The nature and function of the school refusal behavior
- x Mixed or conflicting outcomes from functional analysis during assessment
- x Poor attendance to therapy sessions
- x Hostility or resistance from caregiver(s)
- x Marital conflict
- x Noncompliance with homework assignments
- x Comorbidity of depression



FOCUS on Student Autonomy

The importance of a re-entry process being...

- x Individualized
- x Co-created by parents, student, and school
- x Designed with realistic expectations
- x Goal-oriented and progressive
- x Monitored for success



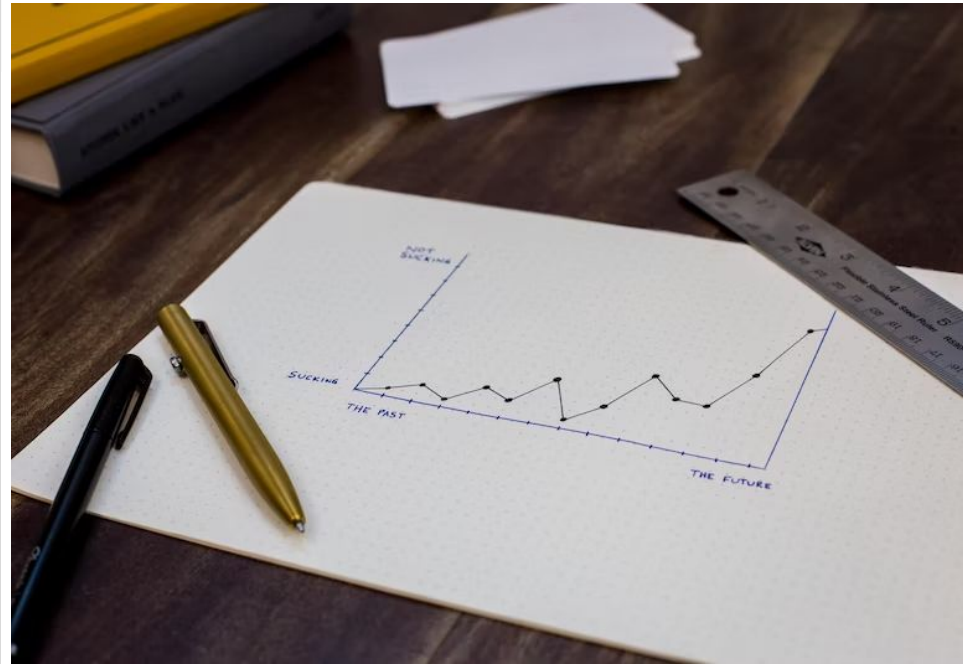
Tier 3: Case Example: Jordan

- x Significant bullying
- x High cog scores
- x 3 years out of school
- x Plan
 - x Graduated reentry-expectations clear
 - x Rubix cube
- x ED program
- x Peer buddy- similar interests
- x Built in low stakes check points
- x TF-CBT focus



Progress Monitoring

How will we
know when it's
better?



Monitor Symptoms and Impact

Anxiety



Depression



Social Skills



Impact:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Improved attendance | - Improved academic performance | - Improved social interactions |
| - Decreased mh symptoms | - Decreased behavior struggles | - Decreased stress-responses |

Attendance Resources

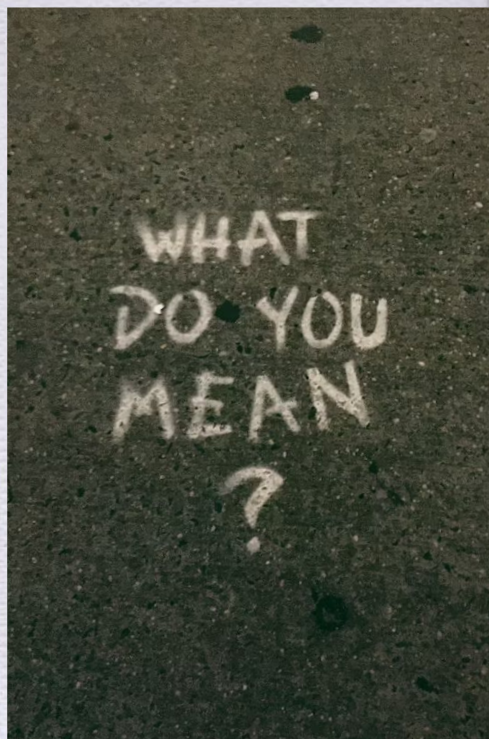
Adelman & Taylor UCLA: Center for MH in Schools

Attendance Works & Future Ed:
Attendance Playbook

Additionally

- x CDE website: Content on absenteeism
- x Attendance Works Program: Playbook Implementation Guide
- x Future Ed: Attendance Resources Page





Questions?

Questions i still have:

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- .
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- .

Thanks!

Any questions?

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