What are best practices for reducing truancy?

A brief summary of research related to truancy prevention for middle school students
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What does the research say?

Reviews of truancy programs offer promising results regarding their effectiveness.

An increase of almost **5** **more days of school** on average for students who received programs

In a review of 28 studies of indicated truancy programs, findings showed a .46 standardized mean difference between intervention and control groups, which translates to an increase of 4.69 more days of school on average for students who received an intervention.[1]

In a separate 2013 review of programs focused on dropout prevention, effects were mixed for attendance outcomes, suggesting that schools with truancy challenges may find the best outcomes from programs targeting truancy specifically.[2]

What are important program considerations?

According to a report by the National Dropout Prevention Network, there are six key components of successful truancy prevention programs:[3]

1 **Collaboration**
Establish a multidisciplinary group to guide and implement truancy programming.

4 **Supportive Context**
Build infrastructure and promote policies that sustain energy and resources for programming.

2 **Comprehensive Approach**
Integrate flexibility into the approach to take into consideration individual students' needs.

5 **Rigorous Evaluation**
Evaluate program effects continuously and make changes as needed throughout implementation.

3 **Family Involvement**
Target family participation in activities and address family-based needs to support attendance.

6 **Incentives & Sanctions**
Utilize a combination of motivating incentives and accountability-based sanctions.

Evidence-Based Programs for Truancy Prevention

Achievement Mentoring Program

Achievement Mentoring Program is designed to modify students' behaviors and help students improve their academic performance and adherence to school policies.
- Mentors participate in weekly interviews with teachers to gather information regarding students' behaviors, attendance records, and general performance.
- Mentors hold weekly, small-group sessions or individual sessions with students.
- Students receive a weekly report card that provides feedback from teachers on attendance, classroom behavior, and academic performance.
- Mentors maintain contact with caregivers to provide feedback/encouragement.

Family Involvement	Clearinghouse Summaries	Notes
Indirect involvement: mentors maintain contact with caregivers throughout	Blueprints "Promising Program" Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness "Promising"	This program has been used in Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

EveryDay Intervention

EveryDay Intervention is a partnership with schools and districts to reduce absenteeism by delivering Absence Reports to parents and guardians with actionable, personalized information about their student's attendance. After establishing a district partnership and securely receiving attendance data, EveryDay Intervention runs analyses to identify students who are at risk of being chronically absent and most likely to benefit from the program. They generate personalized Absence Reports with content tailored for each student and mail them directly to caregivers.

Family Involvement	Clearinghouses	Notes
Direct involvement – caregivers receive personalized Absence Reports.	Blueprints "Promising Program" Evidence for ESSA "Strong"	This is the program being used in Washington, D.C.

Positive Action

Positive Action is a whole-school reform strategy designed to improve social-emotional, attendance, and achievement outcomes by building school climate, self-control, goal-setting, problem-solving, persistence, and other skills. Students learn these skills through structured discussions and activities, games, and role plays. Teachers receive detailed manuals and materials to support 140 15-20 minute lessons per year (4 days per week).

Family Involvement	Clearinghouses	Notes
Indirect involvement: caregivers receive handbooks that parallel school lessons	Blueprints "Model Program" Evidence for ESSA "Strong"	This program has been studied in Chicago schools showing evidence of success.

Whole-School Change

Whole-School Change is a training program for staff, with a focus on transforming school climate. Staff learn skills to proactively connect with students and respond when things go wrong. All staff attend two one-day events. Then, selected staff attend a two-day event, and individual staff receive support to evaluate and reinforce the full continuum of practices throughout the school system. Schools are required to designate a team of at least three members (administrator, interventionist, and teacher) who meet monthly.

Family Involvement	Clearinghouses	Notes
No direct involvement but family involvement may be part of the strategies staff learn.	Evidence for ESSA "Promising"	Website quote: "My students are now in a better place – academically and behaviorally – than they've ever been." Rhonda Richetta; Baltimore, MD

Family Perspectives from Baltimore Elementary Schools

Eight parents were interviewed as part of a dissertation focused on understanding family beliefs around chronic absenteeism.[4] Barriers to attendance included transportation and motivation. Parents emphasized wanting the school to involve them in problem-solving to support their children.

> "Getting their parents' point of view, getting their ideas, getting their feedback in a lot of situations... I think that would be very helpful because you have parents that know what they need. They don't have the resources or anything. When there's no one that they can talk to, or there's no one that will listen, it's like the situation goes unresolved."

References

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2. Tanner-Smith, E. E., & Wilson, S. J. (2013). A meta-analysis of the effects of dropout prevention programs on school absenteeism. Prevention Science, 14, 468–478.
3. Reimer, M., & Dimock, K. (2005). Best Practices and Model Truancy Programs. Truancy Prevention in Action Series by the National Dropout Prevention Network. https://files-eric-ed-gov.uoregon.idm.oclc.org/fulltext/ED491287.pdf
4. Felder, A. (2022). Parental Voice and Its Impact on Mitigating the Causes of Student Absenteeism: A Qualitative Study on Interventions in Urban Elementary Schools—ProQuest [Northwest Nazarene University]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2672724284?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses

Methods

Findings presented in this brief come from a literature review of academic peer-reviewed studies, as well as a review of research and findings from non-partisan think tanks, foundations, and organizations. Given the rapid nature of this search, other relevant studies may exist. In addition, please note that we did not use formal methods for summarizing results, assessing study quality, or exploring reasons for differences in findings across studies.

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