

The Campaign for
GRADE-LEVEL
READING

ATTENDANCE

SUPPORTING PARENT SUCCESS RESOURCE GUIDE



**WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH
SAY ABOUT PARENTS?**

[click here](#)

SUPPORTING PARENT SUCCESS

Parents play the most powerful and influential role in their children’s lives. As their children’s first teacher, brain builder, tech navigator, advocate and coach, parents set the stage for success in the early years and early grades. Parents can best ready children for school, establish good school attendance habits and prevent summer learning loss.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading recognizes that parents are the secret sauce! Without parents, it is unlikely that we can make progress on the Campaign’s three community solutions areas — readiness, attendance, summer — or, ultimately, on third-grade reading. This is why a focus on supporting parents should be integrated across all of our work in Campaign communities across the country.

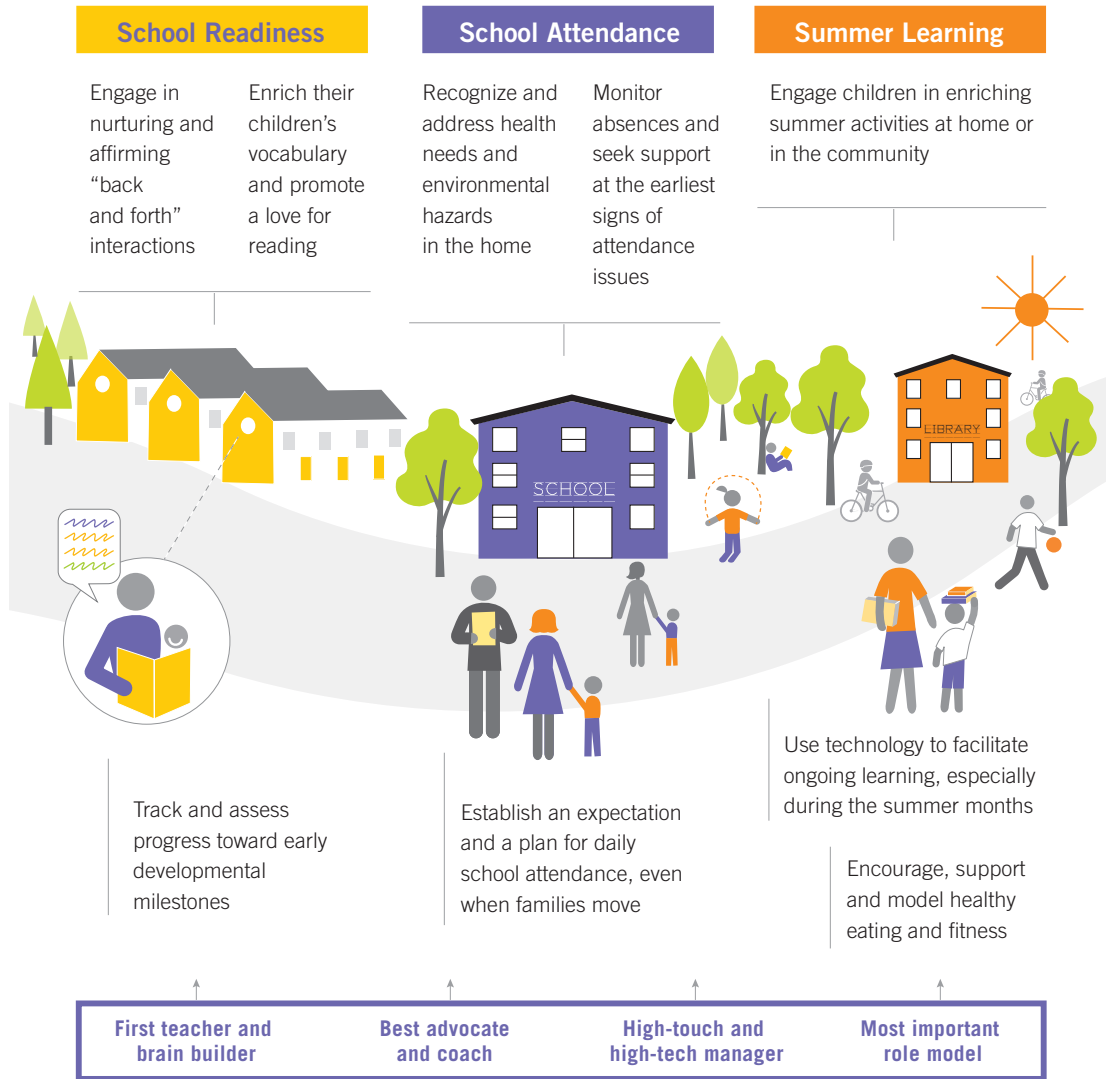
To assist communities, the Campaign has developed a framework — depicted in the infographic on the next page — that identifies nine essential competencies that communities can help parents strengthen in order to best promote their children’s school readiness, school attendance and summer learning. The competencies are supported by science, research and what the field is learning about the important responsibilities and roles parents play in helping their children succeed.

As a companion to the framework, the Campaign has produced three Supporting Parent Success Resource Guides, one for each Campaign community solutions area. The guides flesh out why the competencies matter; share proven and promising programs, tools and resources including implementation examples documented in Campaign-produced Bright Spots and Innovation Briefs; highlight other inspiring community efforts; and offer ways to measure the impact of community work.

The programs, tools and resources in these guides were selected because they align with the Campaign’s priorities; can be readily implemented by a local GLR campaign and implemented to scale throughout the Campaign Network; and respond to communities’ requests and concerns.

No one program, tool or resource is a magic bullet. But when a community makes a targeted effort — choosing and bundling the right strategies and supports for specific populations — and takes the effort to scale, this can have a population-level impact.

GLR FRAMEWORK ON SUPPORTING PARENT SUCCESS





The guides are intended to be continuously updated as more is learned from GLR communities, the field and science. Your input is welcome! Use the guides' thought-provoking questions to weigh in on how to build out the guides and do more to support parent success.

START OR ADD TO A CONVERSATION ON THE HUDDLE!

Click on the links below for the School Readiness and Summer Learning Guides.

School Readiness: Supporting Parent Success Resource Guide

- Engage in nurturing and affirming “back and forth” interactions
- Enrich their child’s vocabulary and promote a love for reading
- Track and assess progress toward early developmental milestones

Summer Learning: Supporting Parent Success Resource Guide

- Engage children in enriching summer activities at home or in the community
- Use technology to facilitate ongoing learning, especially during the summer months
- Encourage, support and model healthy eating and fitness

Recognize and address health needs and environmental hazards in the home

Monitor absences and seek support at the earliest signs of attendance issues

Establish an expectation and a plan for daily school attendance, even when families move



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Making sure that children show up for school every day is one of the best things parents can do to ensure that their children read proficiently by the end of third grade. Research shows that children who are chronically absent from school — missing 10 percent of the school year or more (about 18 days) for any reason — in kindergarten and first grade are far less likely to read well by the end of third grade. This is true whether the absences are excused or unexcused, whether they happen all at once or are spread out across the year.



The Campaign's indicators of progress on school attendance for 2016 are:

- More children from low-income families attend school regularly.
- Fewer children from low-income families miss school because of manageable health challenges such as asthma and preventable ones such as tooth decay.

Parents often are unaware of the corrosive effects of absenteeism and how quickly absences add up to academic trouble in the early grades. Low-income families, in particular, face challenges with health, transportation or housing that contribute to school absences.

To make progress on attendance — and our *2016 School Attendance Progress Indicators* — the Campaign encourages communities to focus on helping parents strengthen three competencies: 1) recognize and address health needs and environmental hazards in the home; 2) monitor absences and seek support at the earliest signs of attendance issues; and 3) establish an expectation and a plan for daily school attendance, even when families move.

To get started, a community should determine which competencies it wants to focus on, select strategies and practices, set measurable goals and target efforts to meet the goals. Ideally, the focus will be on all three competencies since they all contribute to improving attendance.

To explore each competency, click on the competencies at the top of the page.



RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS HEALTH NEEDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN THE HOME

WHY IT MATTERS:

- The leading cause of absenteeism in the early grades is illness. Asthma alone is responsible for 14 million missed days of school every year. Dental problems contribute to millions more.
- Mold leads to respiratory illnesses and infections that keep kids home.
- Lead poisoning can cause physical and emotional problems that contribute to absenteeism.¹

A major challenge families face is deciding whether a young child should be kept home because of illness or sent to school. Some health-related absences may be more about parent perception than real illness. Health providers are well positioned to not only connect families with needed health services but to encourage school attendance.

Communities can provide parents with information, supports and strategies to keep their children healthy and to advocate for healthy living environments. Below are strategies communities can employ to help parents:

- *Schedule regular doctors appointments:* Work with families to ensure every child has a “medical home,” which means having a doctor or clinic to regularly visit for annual checkups and when illness occurs.
- *Emphasize good dental care:* Expand access to dental care and ensure that parents know about good dental habits.



MOST PARENTS DON'T REALIZE THAT THEIR CHILDREN ARE MISSING TOO MUCH SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY HAVE TROUBLE KEEPING TRACK. THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, WE CAN DISRUPT CHRONIC ABSENCE

click here for the [In School + On Track Parent Communication Toolkit](#)

What does the research say about attendance?

- One in 10 kindergarten and first-grade students nationally are chronically absent, missing nearly a month of school. Rates are even higher among preschoolers, emerging research shows.
- Early absences correlate with reading difficulties and poor attendance patterns in later years. A California study found that only 17 percent of students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade read proficiently in third grade, compared with 64 percent with good attendance.
- Low-income children are four times more likely to be chronically absent and the effects are particularly pronounced. They need more classroom time to master reading and are less likely to have resources outside of school to help catch up.
- Students can begin to reverse their academic difficulties if they improve their attendance.

(Highlights from [Attendance in the Early Grades: Why it Matters for Reading by Attendance Works](#))

- *Screen children for developmental delays:* Prioritize developmental screenings and follow-up services and supports when needed. Addressing developmental delays early can help mitigate later learning difficulties that can lead to attendance problems.
- *Eliminate asthma triggers and health hazards in the home:* Share strategies for combating asthma triggers, including mold and mildew. An estimated 40 percent of asthma episodes are caused by preventable triggers in the home. For more information, see the GLR Campaign's Healthy Readers Resource Guide *on Asthma*.
- *Limit exposure to lead paint in the home:* Educate parents about the dangers of lead poisoning, which affects an estimated 535,000 U.S. children under age 6. Develop and share strategies for lead abatement.
- *Educate parents about when a child is too sick for school.* Communities can provide parents with information about the symptoms that require keeping a child home and those when the student can still attend school.

PROVEN & PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Attendance Works, a national initiative addressing chronic absence and a GLR Campaign partner, recognizes that health providers are uniquely positioned to help schools work with parents to address health related absences both real and perceived. Attendance Works publications include:

- *Make the Case: Why Attendance Matters for Health Providers*
- *Tools & Resources for Health Providers*
- *Health Handouts for Parents*
- *Health Handout for Parents (Spanish)*



The *Green & Healthy Homes Initiative* works nationally to create innovative strategies to reduce lead poisoning, asthma and injury in low-income housing while improving energy efficiency. It provides tools to help communities combine existing resources.

WHAT OTHER PROVEN & PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES WOULD YOU LIFT UP? *click here to post your ideas*

OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS



Alameda County, California. *Alameda County District Attorney's office* works with educators, school administrators, law enforcement, health professionals and community-based organizations to ensure that youth attend school every day. It provides a *Health Flier for Parents*.



Austin, Texas. *E3 Alliance*, (Education Equals Economics), a regional education collaborative in Austin, oversees a statewide effort to improve school attendance by engaging parents, family members, employers and students.

Long Beach, California. *The Long Beach (CA) Alliance for Children with Asthma* uses health workers to assess homes; educate families about the causes of asthma; provide families with nontoxic cleaning products and community resources; and monitor asthma symptoms to reinforce the asthma medication use.



Milwaukee. *Making Milwaukee Smile* staff, based at schools, help Wisconsin parents find dentists to treat children's urgent oral health issues and provides preventive services to children, many who are Medicaid eligible. It placed part-time coordinators in schools to work with parents, increase program enrollment and connect children who have urgent dental needs with care.



New York City. *The Asthma Basics for Children (ABC) program* in New York City — established by Columbia University's public health school and a coalition of community service organizations, educators, parenting programs and pediatric providers — helps early childhood educators and parents of children under age 7 learn how to reduce asthma triggers and manage asthma.

10%

s	m	t	w	t	f	s
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**MISSING 10 PERCENT OF THE SCHOOL YEAR —
OR ABOUT 18 DAYS — CAN MAKE IT HARDER TO LEARN TO READ**

[click here to read the brief](#)

Philadelphia. *Project ENGAGE*, a Philadelphia partnership between Temple University’s dentistry school and a health care provider, addresses dental needs of low-income children under age 6. It created an oral health registry, using dental claims and other information to identify children most at risk of dental problems. Community health workers provide families with information, counseling and assistance. Public health hygienists provide in-home dental care.

Providence, Rhode Island’s GLR campaign’s attendance work includes partnering with the health community to address the physical and mental well-being of children from birth to age 8. A state health department grant is being used to implement programs addressing the root causes of chronic absence and other issues affecting children in low-income neighborhoods. Check out this *Innovation Brief*.

WHAT OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS WOULD YOU LIFT UP?

[click here to post your ideas](#)

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MONITOR ABSENCES AND **SEEK SUPPORT** AT THE EARLIEST SIGNS OF ATTENDANCE ISSUES

WHY IT MATTERS:

Research conducted by the Ad Council suggests that families, especially those with children who have high levels of absenteeism, often do not realize how much school their children have missed. It is easy to overlook how missing just two school days every month can add up to too much time lost in the classroom. This is especially true if the family faces significant challenges with health, housing or other issues.

A key component of improving attendance is helping families to monitor how many days of school a child has missed and to seek support to reduce absences as soon as students start missing two or more days in a month.

While children's health issues are a leading reason why children miss too much school, other obstacles may include transportation, inclement weather, parent illness, homelessness and more. Families can help reduce absences by seeking support to overcome these obstacles. Even when absences are excused, they represent lost classroom time.

GLR communities can engage schools, faith communities, health providers, community nonprofits and others to ensure that parents seek and receive support at the earliest sign of attendance issues.

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PROVEN & PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Attendance Works, a national initiative addressing chronic absence and a GLR Campaign partner, offers tools for parents to set attendance goals with teachers including a *Student Attendance Success Plan* with a *Family's Help Bank* that helps parents think through who can assist in getting children to school. Other resources include *checklist of interventions* to consider in addressing barriers to attendance and *Parent Tip Sheets* for talking with social workers and school counselors.



City Year. Volunteers with City Year, a program of AmeriCorps, the national service organization, work one-on-one with elementary school students who have a history of chronic absence to set goals and make a plan to boost their attendance. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 💡

Community Schools place providers such as community school coordinators and behavioral health clinicians in high-poverty schools to help students and their families succeed. *Community Schools* in *Oakland, California*; *Grand Rapids, Michigan*; *New York City*; and *Baltimore, Maryland*, have worked to reduce absenteeism. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 💡




Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization of medical providers who use an *evidence-based* model to promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms by integrating children's books and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud into well-child visits, including by *using video tools*. Reach Out and Read serves more than 4 million children and distributes over 6 million books through nearly 5,000 program sites nationwide. Parents served are up to 4 times more likely to read aloud to their children, and children served score 3 to 6 months ahead of their peers on vocabulary tests. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 💡

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THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO TO ENSURE GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

[click here to read the list](#)


Success Mentors. Pioneered in *New York City*, this approach involves teachers and instructional aides mentoring several students with a history of absences, checking in with them daily, rewarding those present and following up with families of absent students. A New Jersey elementary school has seen its number of chronically absent students drop, thanks to strategies including Success Mentors. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 

WHAT OTHER PROVEN OR PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS, RESOURCES OR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS IN ACTION WOULD YOU LIFT UP?


[click here to post your ideas](#)

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OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS

The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's *Make Every Day Count* initiative works with school districts across the state to reduce chronic absence and develop a model attendance policy. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 

The Oakland Housing Authority's education initiative includes an emphasis on school attendance. For more details, see *Oakland: An Emphasis on Attendance*.

The Vernon, Connecticut, school district uses data-driven strategies and a community-wide response to reduce chronic absence, especially in kindergarten and the elementary grades. Schools develop an attendance plan as a team. Teachers follow up to let absent students know they were missed. Counselors provide free school breakfasts when needed. Parents are engaged. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 

WHAT OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS WOULD YOU LIFT UP?

click here to post your ideas



ESTABLISH AN EXPECTATION AND A PLAN **FOR DAILY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE,** EVEN WHEN FAMILIES MOVE

WHY IT MATTERS:

When parents establish an expectation of daily school attendance and anticipate potential obstacles, children are less likely to miss school. Being in school every day makes it more likely that children learn and keep pace with instruction. However, many families believe that going to school every day is not essential, especially for preschool and kindergarten children. Some don't know when their children are too sick to go to school. Others take their children on family vacation during school time, which may be important family time but compromises instructional time.

Community organizations, early education programs, schools and trusted family advisors can offer families messages and planning tools to ensure daily school attendance. The messages should help families understand the consequences of missing too much school, dispel the myth that preschool and kindergarten are not essential, and help families develop routines and plans for when they move or must travel.

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PROVEN & PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Attendance Works, a national initiative addressing chronic absence and a GLR Campaign partner, promotes tracking chronic absence data for each student beginning in kindergarten, or ideally earlier, and partnering with families and community agencies to intervene when poor attendance is a problem for students or schools. Its website is rich with *tools for working with parents* including:

- *Bringing Attendance Home toolkit*
- *Parent Video*
- *Reading Research Guide*
- *Infographic for parents*
- *Parent handouts*




LearnLead's Perfectly Punctual Campaign promotes positive attendance habits including punctuality via *visibility materials*, staff development, parent engagement and technical assistance. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 

- *Download a scorecard for tracking attendance*
- *Download a bilingual Punctual Pete button*

Review ways to engage families through *Parent Workshops* and *Family Celebrations*

**WHAT OTHER PROVEN & PROMISING PROGRAMS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES
WOULD YOU LIFT UP?** *click here to post your ideas*

OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS

The Consolidated School District of New Britain, Connecticut's attendance initiative benefits from the commitment of local principals to ensuring that their entire school is involved in engaging students in coming to school every day. Social workers connect with families of chronically absent students in preschool and kindergarten. Check out this *Bright Spot*. 

Head Start programs in Lee County, Florida, on attendance in a participation agreement signed by each parent. Parents agree to make regular attendance a goal and to call in when a child is sick. Head Start presents itself not as a drop-in program but as a school readiness program that kids benefit from most when they regularly attend.

The Tacoma Housing Authority in Washington partners with the city's school system to improve attendance by addressing the living situation of students at the elementary school. It also boosts the reading skills and academic performance of previously homeless kids, involves parents in their kids' education and offers economic supports that have helped double the earned incomes of the participating families.

WHAT OTHER INSPIRING COMMUNITY EFFORTS WOULD YOU LIFT UP?

[click here to post your ideas](#)

MEASURING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Suggested indicators to gauge community-wide progress include determining the percentage of parents who:

- recognize and address health and environmental hazards in the home
- monitor absences and seek support at the earliest signs of attendance issues
- establish an expectation and plan for daily school attendance, even when they move.

Local school districts can collect attendance information electronically and share publicly with community partners. They also can collect information through periodic parent surveys. A local GLR campaign can ask the local school district to provide attendance data, as well as add a few questions to a survey to garner additional information.

Local community health and/or housing organizations may collect information about health hazards in the home. If they do periodic surveys, consider partnering with them to collect Campaign attendance-related information. For example, local departments of public health may collect information on asthma, mold or lead in local housing, while hospitals report on emergency room visits.

Measuring progress on attendance-related parent competences can be challenging but here are some other ideas.

- 1) Ask your school district to provide data about students' attendance patterns — how many have satisfactory attendance (missing less than 5 percent), at-risk attendance (missing 5 to 9 percent) or chronic attendance (missing 10 percent or more).
- 2) Request that data be analyzed by school, neighborhood, grade and/or subpopulation (such as ethnic groups or special education students) to determine where the issue is most pronounced.

- 3) Partner with your school district to unpack the qualitative reasons that the vulnerable populations are experiencing higher levels of chronic absence. This can be done through parent focus groups, survey data and geography data such as health indicators. Work on this with district personnel — perhaps creating a task force or subcommittee that includes GLR coalition and district staff.
- 4) Work with the Campaign to develop a theory of change and strategies based on who is absent, why and what will help them attend. *See this chart for ideas.*
- 5) Monitor the strategies you have decided to adopt to make sure they are being used.
- 6) Measure attendance over time, monthly, quarterly and at the end of the year. Look for systemic improvements and bright spots. Assess if the schools and communities implementing your campaign’s attendance strategies are seeing reductions in absenteeism. Look for reductions in both at-risk absenteeism and chronic absence. Sometimes a less intensive strategy is enough to reduce at-risk absenteeism but not chronic absenteeism.

HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY MEASURE IMPACT? *click here to share your story*

ENDNOTE

¹ See, for example, National Collaborative on Education and Health. (2015). Brief on chronic absenteeism and school health. Retrieved from <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Chronic-Absenteeism-and-School-Health-Brief-1.pdf>; Leading Health Conditions Impacting Student Attendance. Retrieved from http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/School-Health-Chart-for-CA_Sept9_draft.docx.

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