From Numbers to Action:

Volusia County's Data-Driven Attendance Initiative

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Under Dr. Balgobin's leadership, Volusia County Schools has prioritized student attendance as a critical foundation for academic success. The district's comprehensive approach combines strategic data analysis, community engagement, and innovative technology solutions to address chronic absenteeism and ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive.

YoY Chronic Absenteeism Rates: *The Challenge Ahead*

Students are considered chronically absent if they accumulate 10% or more absences during a school year. This critical threshold represents approximately 18 or more missed school days annually. The data reveals significant attendance challenges that intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic and have persisted in the post-pandemic period.

School Level	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Elementary Schools	17.4%	15.0%	13.9%	29.6%	28.6%	28.3%	29.9%	TBD Survey 5
Middle Schools	17.4%	14.8%	15.1%	33.1%	29.2%	30.2%	33.8%	TBD Survey 5
High Schools	14.8%	12.0%	19.6%	33.2%	34.2%	32.6%	35.2%	TBD Survey 5
Alternative Education	76.8%	52.5%	59.0%	79.7%	82.7%	84.8%	83.8%	TBD Survey 5
Charter Schools	19.1%	15.1%	20.4%	24.1%	29.4%	43.6%	42.9%	TBD Survey 5
Online Learning	2.7%	—	—	—	6.1%	5.5%	5.2%	TBD Survey 5
District Totals	**16.9%**	**14.2%**	**16.2%**	**31.3%**	**30.2%**	**30.9%**	**34.3%**	**29.0%**

The pandemic's impact is evident in the dramatic increase from 16.2% in 2019-20 to 31.3% in 2020-21. While we've worked diligently to address these challenges, the 2023-24 chronic absenteeism rate of 34.3% demonstrates that attendance recovery requires sustained, systemic intervention. Alternative education settings face unique challenges with consistently higher rates, while online learning programs maintain notably lower chronic absenteeism percentages.

Six Strategic Pillars Driving Student Attendance

Our thorough strategy addresses absenteeism by providing early support, recognizing achievements, and resolving issues before they escalate.

Attendance Matters Campaign

The "Attendance Matters" campaign emphasizes that just 2 days absent per month equals chronic absenteeism. We deploy multilingual materials, social media outreach, and community forums. Business partnerships offer workplace flexibility for parents, with monthly awareness themes ensuring year-round momentum.

Data Analytics Dashboard

The Data Analytics Dashboard enables intelligence-driven action with real-time tracking across all schools. It provides chronic absenteeism warnings, subgroup equity analysis, and identifies seasonal trends. Mobile access empowers administrators to make data-driven decisions during home visits, targeting resources effectively.

Recognition & Incentives

Recognition & Incentives celebrate success at every level. Students earn certificates and assembly recognition. Classes compete in "March Madness" competitions, and schools win $500 (1st place) or $250 (2nd place) per grade level. Families receive principal letters and invitations to appreciation events, building a culture of positive reinforcement.

Automated Early Warning System

Our Automated Early Warning System provides real-time intervention. Elementary families receive notifications by 10:00 AM for absences, while secondary alerts are every period. Progressive notifications trigger at days 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 14, with bi-weekly summaries and multilingual support.

Multi-Tiered Support System

Tier 1 (All Students): promotes a positive environment with recognition programs.
Tier 2 (5-9% Absences): includes personalized meetings and weekly check-ins.
Tier 3 (10%+ Absences): offers intensive case management, home visits, and support for transportation, health, and housing.

Community Partnerships

Community Partnerships remove barriers together. AdventHealth provides health screenings and telehealth services, plus 168 bikes for transportation. Businesses offer mentoring, job shadowing, and workplace flexibility. Faith groups deliver family support, and media partners amplify our message through PSAs, creating community-wide buy-in.

Implementation Plan

Volusia County Schools has developed a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to combat chronic absenteeism.

Our implementation plan combines public awareness campaigns, technology-driven notification systems, robust data analytics, tiered support interventions, recognition programs, and community partnerships.

Each component works synergistically to create a culture where attendance is valued, barriers are addressed, and every student has the support needed to attend school regularly.

Public Awareness:
Attendance Matters Campaign

Our district-wide "Attendance Matters" campaign educates families and communities about the critical connection between regular school attendance and academic achievement. Through multilingual materials, social media engagement, and community events, we're shifting the conversation around attendance from compliance to opportunity.

Campaign Highlights:

- Multilingual brochures and digital resources explaining chronic absenteeism thresholds
- Social media content featuring student success stories linked to consistent attendance
- Community forums bringing together families, educators, and local organizations
- Partnership materials for businesses and community groups
- Monthly attendance awareness themes integrated into school communications

Key Message: Missing just two days per month—seemingly minor absences—can lead to chronic absenteeism and significantly impact a student's academic trajectory. Our campaign emphasizes that *every day matters* in building the foundation for lifelong success.

Notification System: Early and Often

Proactive Family Communication

Our automated notification system ensures families receive timely, actionable information about their student's attendance patterns. By communicating early and consistently, we empower parents and guardians to address attendance issues before they escalate to chronic absenteeism.

System Features:

- **Real-time absence alerts** sent via text and email every period
- **Early and Often Letters** at day 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 14 day notification
- **Bi-weekly attendance summaries** providing schools and families with clear absence tracking
- **Multilingual support** ensuring accessibility for all families in preferred language
- **Two-way communication channels** allowing families to respond and request support

> This approach means families aren't surprised when attendance becomes concerning—they've received multiple touchpoints offering support and resources along the way.

"The early notification system has been transformative. Instead of discovering attendance issues at report card time, we're having productive conversations with families when there's still time to intervene meaningfully." HS Principal

Data Systems and Reporting Features

School-Level Attendance Analytics Dashboard

Principals and school leadership teams access comprehensive attendance data through an intuitive dashboard that transforms raw numbers into actionable insights. This real-time visibility enables data-driven decision-making at the school level.

Dashboard Components:

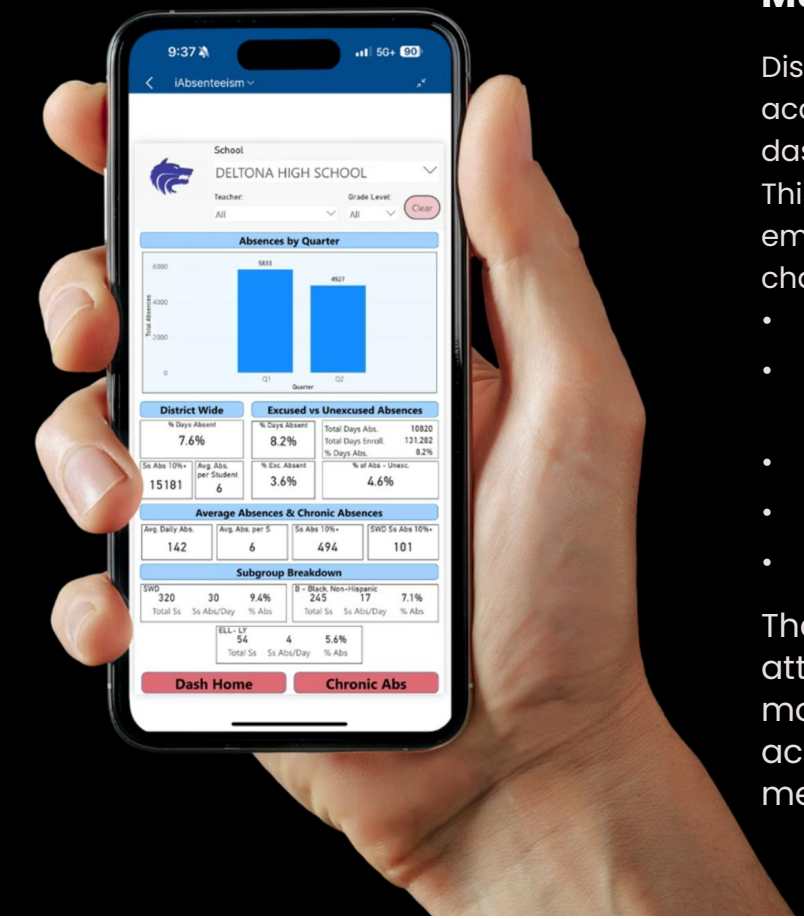
- Attendance Overview with trend visualizations
- Attendance Summary by grade level and classroom
- Chronic Absenteeism tracking and early warning indicators
- Variance & School Choice attendance patterns

Key Attendance Metrics

- Quarterly Data Trends revealing seasonal patterns
- Attendance by Subgroups identifying equity gaps
- Average Daily Attendance for state reporting
- Average Absences per Student for targeted intervention
- Attendance by Students on Variance for program evaluation

The data guides our decision-making and helps us create targeted interventions where they're needed most. By disaggregating attendance information by demographics, grade levels, and other variables, schools can identify specific student populations requiring additional support and allocate resources accordingly.

VCS Attendance Mobile Dashboard



Multi-Level Attendance Analytics

District administrators, area superintendents, and school leaders access real-time attendance data through responsive mobile dashboards, enabling monitoring and intervention from anywhere. This accessibility ensures that leadership can respond quickly to emerging patterns and support schools in addressing attendance challenges.

- **Quarterly absence patterns** revealing seasonal trends and intervention opportunities
- **District-wide comparison statistics** identifying high-performing schools and schools needing support
- **Excused vs. Unexcused analysis** highlighting potential policy or communication issues
- **Average & Chronic Absence metrics** for comprehensive attendance and data results
- **Subgroup breakdown data** ensuring equity in attendance interventions

The mobile-first design means principals can review attendance data during morning rounds, district leaders can monitor trends between school visits, and support staff can access student information during home visits or community meetings.

Tiered Support Systems: Meeting Students Where They Are

Recognizing that students face different barriers to attendance, Volusia County Schools implements a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework for attendance interventions. This approach ensures appropriate resources are directed to students based on the severity and nature of their attendance challenges.

Tier 1: Universal Prevention

All Students

- 5 Unexcused absences in 30 Calendar
- Positive school climate and engaging
- Clear attendance policies communicated to all families
- Monthly attendance campaigns
- Recognition programs for attendance
- Family engagement events promoting school connection

Tier 2: Early Intervention

Students with 5-9% Absences

- Individual attendance tracking
- Personalized phone calls and meetings with families
- Identify barriers to attendance
- Connection to community resources (transportation, health services, CINS/FINS)
- Customize individual attendance plan
- Increased check-ins and progress monitoring with weekly check -ins

Tier 3: Intensive Support

Students with 10%+ Absences (Chronically Absent)

- Comprehensive family needs assessment
- Case management & wraparound services
- Collaboration with community agencies and social services
- Home visits by social workers & deputies
- Referral to student services teams and possible court involvement
- Intensive mentoring and counseling support

This tiered approach ensures we're investing resources efficiently while providing increasingly intensive support as student needs escalate. The goal is always to intervene as early as possible, preventing chronic absenteeism before it impacts academic outcomes.

Recognition and Incentives:
Celebrating Success

Positive reinforcement plays a crucial role in building a culture of attendance. Volusia County Schools has developed a comprehensive recognition system that celebrates attendance achievements at individual, classroom, and school levels. These incentives motivate students while acknowledging the efforts of families and educators in supporting regular attendance.

Individual Student Recognition

Students with perfect or excellent attendance receive certificates, special privileges, and recognition at school assemblies. Monthly "Attendance Matters" are featured in school communications and social media.

Classroom Competitions

Friendly competitions between classrooms encourage peer support for attendance. Winning classes receive special activities, extra recess time, or classroom celebrations. March Madness

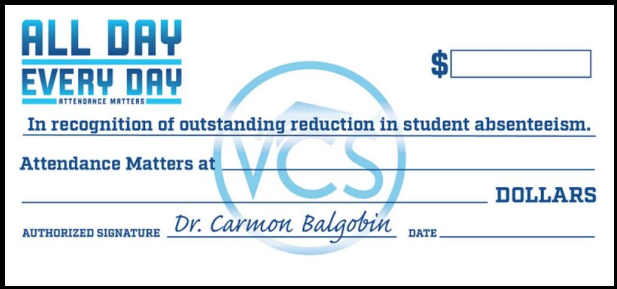
School-Wide Incentives

Schools meeting attendance improvement targets receive district recognition, funding for special programs, and opportunities to showcase their strategies with other schools.

1st Place: $500 & 2nd Place: $250 for Elementary, Middle and High

Family Engagement

Families of students with improved attendance patterns receive recognition letters from the school principal and invitations to special appreciation events, reinforcing the home-school partnership.



Community Partnership in Action

Addressing chronic absenteeism requires collaboration beyond school walls. Volusia County Schools has cultivated strategic partnerships with community organizations, local businesses, healthcare providers, and civic groups to create a comprehensive support network for students and families.

AdventHealth Partnerships

Collaborations with local health departments and clinics provide on-site health screenings, vaccinations, and telehealth services, removing health-related barriers to attendance.

Transportation Solutions

Working with community organizations to provide alternative transportation options for families facing logistical challenges, including volunteer driver networks and public transit vouchers.

Business Community Engagement

Local businesses provide mentoring programs, job shadowing opportunities, and attendance incentives that help students see the connection between school attendance and career success.

Faith-Based Organizations

Partnerships with churches and religious organizations extend our reach into communities, providing additional mentoring, family support services, and weekend programming that reinforces attendance values.

Community Campaign:

All Hands-on Deck

Our comprehensive community campaign extends the "Attendance Matters" message beyond school buildings and into every corner of Volusia County. Through targeted outreach, public service announcements, and community events, we're making attendance improvement a shared community value.

Campaign Elements:

- **Media partnerships** with local radio, television, and newspapers amplifying attendance messages
- **Community ambassadors** who champion attendance at local events and gatherings
- **Public awareness events** during key times like back-to-school and Attendance Awareness Month
- **Social media campaigns** featuring student testimonials and attendance success stories
- **Business placards** displaying attendance messages in high-traffic community locations

When attendance improvement becomes a community priority—not just a school priority—the entire ecosystem supports students in getting to school every day. From employers allowing parents flexibility for school drop-off to neighbors offering rides to community centers reinforcing attendance messages, every stakeholder plays a role in student success.

Contact Information

For more information about Volusia County Schools' attendance initiative or to discuss partnership opportunities, please reach out to our leadership team. We welcome collaboration with other districts and are happy to share resources, strategies, and lessons learned.

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> *"Every student deserves the opportunity to succeed, and that opportunity begins with being present in the classroom every day. Through data-driven decision-making, community collaboration, and unwavering commitment to our students, Volusia County Schools is transforming attendance from a compliance issue into a culture of opportunity and achievement."*
>
> — Dr. Carmen J. Balgobin, Superintendent