

CHRONIC STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

Chronic Student Absenteeism

by

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Abstract

Chronic student absenteeism, defined as a student missing 10% or more of the school year, is a significant issue for educators. This portfolio is a practical resource guide for school administrators seeking to reduce absenteeism in their schools. A literature review provides a summary and synthesis of research pertaining to chronic absenteeism. An attendance data dashboard and user guide have been created and will assist administrators to make data-driven decisions about attendance and absenteeism in their schools. An overview of a workshop presentation on chronic student absenteeism that was presented to stakeholders at the Ontario Education Research Symposium (OERS) provides an overview of the path Lakehead District School Board has taken in its efforts to improve student attendance. Curated resources, largely specific to Lakehead District School Board will support administrators and school staff to implement effective strategies to track, and potentially improve, student attendance.

Keywords: attendance, chronic absenteeism

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Chapter One: Introduction

Regular attendance is an expectation for school-age children in Canada. In Ontario, the Education Act states that beginning at age 6, pupils shall attend school “on every school day from the first school day in September in that year until the person attains the age of 18 years” (1990, c.E2). The Education Act further specifies that parents are responsible to ensure that school-age children attend school daily, and directs school boards to hire attendance counsellors to enforce compulsory attendance. In spite of this clear legislation and associated procedures, chronic student absenteeism is recognized by researchers and educators as a significant issue in publicly-funded schools in Ontario and across North America.

Chronic absenteeism - also referred to as *persistent* absenteeism - is defined as a student missing more than 10% of the school year (Chang & Romero, 2008; van Barneveld, 2019). The Ontario Ministry of Education analyzed 2016-17 data regarding chronic absenteeism among elementary school students in Grades 1 to 8, reporting that, in Ontario, 13.3% of students were considered chronically absent (*see Figure 1*). In the Thunder Bay region, the rate of chronic absenteeism in 2016-17 for students in Grades 1 to 8 was 22.5%, a higher rate of chronic absenteeism than the rest of the province.

**Persistent Absenteeism Analysis, 2016-17 Grade 1-8
Lakehead DSB**

1 in 7 students in Ontario were persistently absent in 2016-17
 1 in 5 students in Lakehead DSB were persistently absent in 2016-17

- If students were absent at least 10 per cent of the days they were expected to be in school, they are considered to be *Persistently Absent (PA)*.
- Among elementary school students in Ontario in the 2016-17 school year, 13.3 per cent of students were persistently absent.



Amongst elementary school students across the six provincial regions, students in Thunder Bay region had the highest rates of persistent absenteeism (22.5%) in the 2016-17 school year.

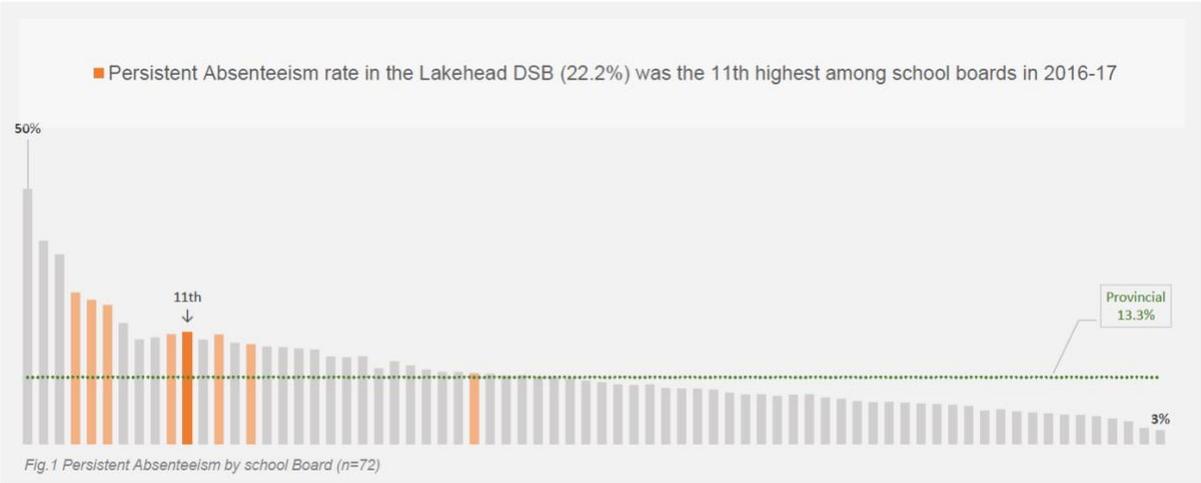


Figure 1. Persistent Absenteeism Analysis, 2016-17 Grade 1-8
 Ministry of Education, Field Services Branch, 2019
 Source: C. Kappel, personal communication, February 28, 2019.

Chronic student absenteeism is associated with lower levels of academic achievement and student well-being (Calman & Crawford, 2013; Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2010; Gottfried, 2014; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007; Schwartz, Gorman, Nakamoto, & McKay, 2006; van Barneveld, 2019). Students who are chronically absent are increasingly vulnerable to engaging in risk behaviours that negatively impact their chances of overall success in school and later in life (Couillard, Garnett, Hutchins, Fawcett, & Maycock, 2006; Gottfried, 2010). The lasting impacts of chronic absenteeism highlight the importance and relevance of this issue for educators.

As a school principal, I have a professional interest in reducing student absenteeism to improve opportunities to learn for students. My portfolio is a practical and authentic resource guide for school administrators seeking to reduce absenteeism in their schools. In order to inform my portfolio, I have focused my literature review on three key topics; impacts of chronic student absenteeism, correlates of student absenteeism, and initiatives to support student attendance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Impacts of Chronic Student Absenteeism

The impacts of chronic student absenteeism are evident in students' achievement at every level (Couillard, Garnett, Hutchins, Fawcett, & Maycock, 2006; Gottfried, 2010), including in the early years. Chronic absenteeism in Kindergarten to Grade 1 prevents students from gaining the foundational skills and knowledge necessary for subsequent learning (Chang & Romero, 2008; Romero & Lee, 2007). Students who are chronically absent in Kindergarten display lower levels of achievement in math, reading and general knowledge by the end of Grade 1 (Chang & Romero, 2008; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007), are more likely to experience lower achievement in Grade 3 (Calman & Crawford, 2013), and are more likely to score below-standard on standardized tests at all levels (Calman & Crawford, 2013, Gottfried, 2010). Lower achievement on standardized tests is an established negative indicator of future success and achievement (Couillard et al. 2006; Calman & Crawford, 2013; Gottfried, 2009) which emphasizes the significance of the correlation to chronic absenteeism. Additionally, researchers studying early school leavers were able to identify risk factors for dropping out as early as Grade 3, based partially on student attendance patterns, which revealed more absences in the elementary grades for students who dropped out than students who graduated (Lehr, Sinclair &

Christensen, 2004), suggesting that early intervention for students who are chronically absent improves academic outcomes.

While there is evidence of a positive relationship between student attendance and academic achievement (Chang & Romero, 2008; Gottfried, 2009; Romero & Lee, 2007), several researchers have focused on the type of absence when studying the impact of chronic absenteeism, questioning whether excused and unexcused absences have the same impact on student achievement. For example, Chang and Romero (2008) argued that it is important to consider all absences (i.e., excused and unexcused) equally due to the “critical importance of time devoted to learning, especially in the early years” (p. 3). They noted that young children in their study were generally not absent without the knowledge of a parent or guardian (often used as the definition for excused absences), and that any time away from school had a negative impact on student achievement. Work done by Gottfried (2009) was consistent with Chang and Romero (2008). Gottfried found that chronic absenteeism was negatively associated with academic performance, regardless of type of absence, although his six-year quantitative analysis of absences and student achievement of elementary students in the Philadelphia school district revealed that unexcused absences were more predictive of lower reading and math achievement. Gottfried (2009) hypothesized that the type of absence may reveal details about other factors that influence student absenteeism such as family engagement in education or socioeconomic status which can add to the research and discussion surrounding chronic absenteeism.

Previous research suggested that chronic student absenteeism was connected to negative academic and personal outcomes for students. There is substantively less research on the extent to which chronic absenteeism and related factors impacted different groups of students. Indigenous students are more chronically absent than non-Indigenous students (Chang &

Romero, 2008; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007; van Barneveld, 2019), and there are relatively fewer research studies with focus on attendance and Indigenous students. At Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Indigenous background was one of the main correlates of student absenteeism identified by elementary educators (van Barneveld, 2019). The impacts of chronic absenteeism on the success and well-being of Indigenous students is of particular concern to educators in the Thunder Bay area, where 12.7% of the population self-identified as Indigenous, which is the highest proportion of Indigenous people in Canada (Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, 2017).

The problem of school attendance, especially for Indigenous students, extends beyond Thunder Bay. In a report for the National Centre of Children in Poverty (NCCP), Romero and Lee (2007) highlighted that American Indian students in all grades were more absent than their non-Indigenous peers, and that although attendance for all students improved over the elementary years, American Indian students continued to miss twice as much school as their non-Indigenous classmates. Chang and Romero (2008) emphasized that assumptions should not be made about students based solely on ethnicity, and instead researchers and educators should focus on attendance patterns and contributing factors (such as poverty) by racial and/or ethnic groups. In addition, they further asserted that when more than 20% of children are affected by chronic absenteeism, “it is likely indicative of systemic issues related to schools or communities” (p. 17) acknowledging that, “chronic absence may increase, for example, if schools do not have the cultural or linguistic competence to communicate with and build relationships to families of particular language or ethnic backgrounds or address the learning needs of their children” (p. 14). The research is clear: when students are chronically absent they are less likely to succeed in school and in later life. If Indigenous students are a more chronically absent group, this becomes

an important area for administrators to focus attendance support, in order to increase student success and future opportunities.

Researchers investigated institutional racism as a correlate of student absenteeism. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) asserted that “Indigenous youth and their families are blamed for their failure to achieve in schools” (p. 94) and identified the educational experience for Indigenous youth as “too often marked by experiences of racism, individual and systemic, resulting in their lack of educational success” (p. 96). Further, they asserted that,

Within educational settings, institutional racism takes form through ethnocentric curriculum and mainstream pedagogies that serve to reinforce the knowledge and experiences of white, middle class learners. Indigenous youth struggle to find relevance in classrooms that make little or no efforts to represent their histories, values, perspectives, and worldviews. (p. 96)

For Indigenous students, institutional racism and lack of personal relevance in what is taught at school become additional risk factors that contribute to lack of engagement and absenteeism. O’Connor (2008) identified the lack Indigenous cultural knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum as a contributing factor to absenteeism and school failure of Indigenous students that “prompted calls for an increase in research that addresses the need for incorporating Indigenous cultural knowledge and methodologies with public school curriculum to enhance and support classroom learning for Indigenous students” (p. 416). Hare and Pidgeon (2011) agreed with O’Connor, and further highlighted that “Indigenous families and communities have maintained that continuity and transmission of Indigenous knowledge is the foundation for learning for their children” (p. 94). When developing and implementing interventions that are intended to support

Indigenous students, educators must keep these contexts and perspectives at the forefront and work in partnership with diverse Indigenous communities to identify potential support strategies:

The use of a community of learners approach has also been shown to create conditions for community development by reinforcing the value of Indigenous knowledge, rekindling processes of intergenerational teaching and learning, increasing social cohesion, and securing community commitment to create programs of support for young First Nations children and families. (Ball, 2004, p. 454)

Correlates of Student Absenteeism

Researchers have identified correlates of chronic absenteeism that can be grouped into three categories: person-related factors, school-related factors, and community-related factors.

Person-related factors.

An important factor that influenced student engagement is the personal connection between students and educators (Banerjee, King, Orazem, & Paterno, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2004; Velloso & Vadeboncoeur, 2015). The results of a Banerjee et al. (2012) study of over 20,000 schools in Pakistan showed a strong link between student attendance and the attendance of the classroom teacher. Results from this study revealed that if the regular teacher was away from class then student absenteeism also increased. Similarly, Klem and Connell (2004) found that students were more engaged in school, and therefore less likely to be absent, when they felt supported by their teachers. Velloso and Vadeboncoeur (2015) “highlight the importance of shifting to building community, rather than emphasizing ever clearer behavioural consequences for defined infractions” (p. 105) such as unexcused absence in order to engage students and promote regular attendance. The work of these researchers emphasized the importance of relationships to student engagement and, by extension, to chronic absenteeism. Lehr et al. (2004)

argued that efforts to address problems of chronic absenteeism and student dropout by focusing on relationships and student engagement must begin as early as possible and should be accompanied by an understanding of absenteeism and student dropout as complex issues.

School-related factors.

Student engagement was inversely correlated to student absenteeism, such that the more student is engaged at school, the less absenteeism (Klem & Connell, 2004; Lehr et al., 2004; Schwartz et al., 2006; Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, & Rosseel, 2007; Velloso & Vadeboncoeur, 2015). Further, student engagement was a strong predictor of future success (Velloso & Vadeboncoeur, 2015). When students were engaged in school and had a strong sense of belonging, they were more likely to attend regularly. Regular attendance was associated with positive student achievement and well-being. Results of a study on student well-being by Van Petegem et al. (2007) indicated that those students who attended school because they were engaged learners reported a higher sense of well-being than those who attended because they were obligated to do so. The students who attended out of obligation rather than a sense of engagement displayed increasing absences. These findings were supported by Velloso and Vadeboncoeur (2015) whose results from a sociocultural study of participation and engagement at an alternative high school in British Columbia suggested that, “school attendance was remediated as a meaningful social practice as a result of the relationships young people formed with educators and peers, rather than meaningful in and of itself or in relation to academic performance” (p. 91). The studies noted here should prompt researchers and educators to reconsider impact of the “common sense” position that students need to be at school in order to be successful. While this is confirmed by the research, as outlined in the section above, the assumption that this reason *alone* should be enough to cause students to attend school regularly

is not supported. Students showed disengagement in a number of ways, including through increasing absenteeism and ultimately by dropping out of school (Lehr et al., 2004; Van Petegem et al., 2007). In the case of elementary students who were less likely to be absent without a parent's knowledge, school engagement for students, and also for families, may be considered. Romero and Lee (2007) identified behaviours in younger students that indicated disengagement with school, including complaining about school, being upset to go to school, or claiming to be sick to stay home. School administrators should consider chronic absenteeism at all levels as a symptom of the larger issue of student disengagement from school, rather than a problem to solve in isolation.

Community-related factors.

Another important factor related to student absenteeism is socioeconomic disadvantage (Chang & Romero, 2008; Lehr et al., 2004; Ready, 2010; Van Petegem et al., 2007). Ready (2010) contended that, "perhaps the least disputed conclusion to emerge from educational research over the past half-century is that socioeconomically disadvantaged children are less likely to experience school success" (p.271). Combined with the negative impact of chronic student absenteeism, the risks for students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds are significant, in part because students from low SES backgrounds were more likely to be chronically absent (Chang & Romero, 2008; Ready, 2010, Romero & Lee, 2007). Students who were chronically absent in kindergarten displayed lower levels of achievement in math, reading, and general knowledge by the end of Grade 1 (Chang & Romero, 2008; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007) and into future grades. Compounded by the fact that the families of children living in poverty do not have the resources to make up for time that is lost in the classroom due to chronic absenteeism, these students fall behind their more advantaged peers (Ready, 2010; Romero &

Lee, 2007). Ready (2010) argued that “school absenteeism exacerbates social class differences in academic development among young children” (p. 271) and that school absenteeism helps to explain social class difference in cognitive development of young children. The results of his study highlighted that the “negative effects of increased absenteeism are *stronger* for lower SES children. Specifically, the negative impact of a similar increase in kindergarten absences is 75 percent larger for a low SES compared to an average SES child” (p. 279, original emphasis). Ready’s (2010) study also highlighted the positive impact of regular attendance on students from low SES backgrounds: “although they continue to achieve at lower absolute levels, socioeconomically disadvantaged children who have good attendance rates gain more literacy skills than their higher SES peers during kindergarten and first grade” (p. 271). It is clear from the research that poverty is a significant factor that influences chronic absenteeism. What is also clear is that regular attendance makes a positive difference for socioeconomically disadvantaged children. This should create urgency for school leaders to determine effective interventions that will allow all students to reach their full potential.

Initiatives to support regular attendance

The design and implementation of school interventions and initiatives that support regular student attendance operate on the assumption that attendance can be positively impacted by such interventions and initiatives (Chang & Romero, 2008; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lehr et al., 2004; McCluskey, Bynum, & Patchin, 2004). In this review I focused on four initiatives that have been researched and shown to improve student attendance; monitoring of attendance data by educators, communication, parent involvement, and creating supportive environments.

Research suggests that monitoring student absenteeism is a key aspect of understanding its reasons and for determining potential interventions. It is important for school administrators

to lead and co-learn with a variety of stakeholders as they examine school data on chronic absenteeism—working to develop, identify, and implement targeted intervention strategies. Sharratt and Fullan (2012) argued that in order to be effective school leaders, “principals must develop increasing intentionality and finite precision in their data analyses and follow-up actions and use data to make emotional connections with and to develop cognitive insights for every student in their responsibility” (p. 48). School leaders can use attendance monitoring to “tighten their focus on relevant data and the necessary subsequent actions” (Sharratt & Fullan, 2012, p.48). Sharratt and Fullan (2012) further asserted that “when data is connected to individual students it becomes more meaningful and actionable” (p. 48). Unfortunately, in Ontario, there are few existing tools that easily support the data analysis of absenteeism.

Effective communication is considered an essential component of initiatives that support regular student attendance. When principals and schools communicate with families and the greater community about chronic absenteeism, it should not be assumed there is a pre-existing awareness about concerning levels of absenteeism or the significant impacts of school absence. The 2012 New York City Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance “confirmed that knowledge about the dangers of chronic absenteeism was limited among educators, students, and parents alike” and developed a campaign “to heighten awareness about the definition and costs of chronic absenteeism” (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p. 13) throughout the community. Campaigns such as this can help to provoke and promote conversations about absenteeism among all stakeholders. To support efforts to provide meaningful and barrier-free communication with parents, Bird (2006) advocated for the use of a web-based student information system (SIS) that provided daily communication to parents about their child's attendance, grades, evaluations, and general activities. Initiatives that work to

eliminate barriers to effective communication by increasing convenience and timeliness may help educators and families work together to support regular student attendance.

In order to reduce chronic student absenteeism, research supports the theory that engaging parents and families can be an effective intervention. Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, and Closson (2005) argued that families must be invited to participate in their child's education to emphasize the potential significance of their influence over their child's success: "Invitations from important others at school may contribute significantly to more active parental beliefs about their personal role and increasingly positive beliefs about the effect of [their] actions" (p. 110). Albright and Weissberg (2010) asserted that "exemplary programs share an explicit focus on creating an atmosphere that values collaboration and promoting activities that validate educators and families as essential partners in implementing program initiatives" (p. 257). Lee and Bowen (2006) described different types of parental engagement in their child's education:

Parent involvement at school may include attending parent-teacher conferences, attending programs featuring students, and engaging in volunteer activities. Parent educational involvement at home may include providing help with homework, discussing the child's schoolwork and experiences at school, and structuring home activities (p. 194).

Through all of these types of engagement activities, both at the school and in the home, principals may provide information and supports to families about the importance of regular school attendance. Educators should be aware that parental engagement does not look the same for all families, and as determined by Lee and Bowen (2006), "in addition to structural barriers to being present at school, some parents from nondominant groups may encounter psychological barriers to involvement at school" (p. 210). Educators must keep in mind that these types of

psychological barriers, such as those derived from the impacts of residential schools, affect Indigenous students and their families. As discussed in a previous section, several studies have found that Indigenous students experience higher levels of chronic absenteeism than non-Indigenous students (Chang & Romero, 2008; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007; van Barneveld, 2019). It is important to note, however, that these studies did not suggest that Indigeneity was causally-related to absenteeism, but found a significant positive relationship between Indigeneity and chronic absenteeism. For these reasons, principals should not rely on one type of parental engagement strategy to meet the needs of all families.

A number of research studies focused on increasing parent involvement, suggested that the more parental engagement, the more student attendance (Chang & Romero, 2008; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lee and Bowen, 2006). Like Lee and Bowen (2006), Epstein and Sheldon (2002) also acknowledged that not all parents are easy to engage, and advocated for schools to look for ways to reach diverse groups of families. They identified two activities that were linked to reducing chronic absenteeism by creating supportive environments for students: providing a school contact person for parents, and rewarding students for improved attendance (p. 317). Creating supportive environments for students is considered another effective intervention to promote student attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Lehr et al., 2004; McCluskey et al., 2004; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2015); accessing additional community supports as required. When students feel supported and connected to school, they are more likely to attend regularly (Klem & Connell, 2004; Lehr et al., 2004; Schwartz et al., 2006; Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer, & Rosseel, 2007; Vellos & Vadeboncoeur, 2015). Supportive school environments must be reflective of the perspectives of all students. In response to the research that shows that Indigenous students are disproportionately impacted by chronic absenteeism (Chang & Romero,

2008; Ready, 2010; Romero & Lee, 2007; van Barneveld, 2019), it is recommended that educators

work to establish learning climates that are culturally friendly to [First Nations, Métis, and Inuit] students by encouraging all staff to learn about local culture and traditions, to feature prominent displays of culturally relevant items, and to invite local elders and community people to share their knowledge in classes. (Lakehead Public Schools, 2018, p. 5)

While the studies mentioned above suggest a positive relationship between parental engagement, a supportive school environment and student attendance, they are not all the ideal research design for the research questions. McCluskey et al (2004) critiqued these and other research studies because they lack a control group with which to compare results. All students are receiving the same supports in addition to any number of additional supports provided outside the scope of the various research studies. Also, it should be assumed that the same supports are not effective for each individual student or groups of students. It is therefore essential for school administrators to engage a variety of stakeholders to examine school data on chronic absenteeism, working to develop, identify and implement intervention strategies that are tailored to particular students or groups of students, while working within the appropriate guidelines and include a control group in studies. My portfolio is intended to support them in their work to improve student attendance, increasing achievement and well-being.

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- Vellos, R. E., & Vadeboncoeur, J. A. (2015). Rebuilding attendance practices with youth: The role of social mediation. *Educational Studies*, 41(1-2), 91-108.

Chapter Three: Methods

Throughout the creation of this portfolio I relied on the research expertise of Dr. Christina van Barneveld, as well as my own school-based professional expertise and that of my colleagues, in order to ensure that the tasks and resources included in this portfolio are,

- 1) consistent with and contribute to the larger body of research on student absenteeism; and
- 2) practical for use by administrators in schools.

I have also referenced, where appropriate, policies and procedures of Lakehead District School Board as well as Ontario Ministry of Education regulations regarding student attendance.

Chapter Four: Portfolio Tasks

Portfolio task 1: Attendance data dashboard

The attendance research team at Lakehead Public Schools, working with Dr. Christina van Barneveld of Lakehead University, developed an interactive attendance dashboard to provide an “at-a-glance” picture of absenteeism at each elementary school. The tool is intended to support principals as they engage stakeholders in discussions about student absenteeism and interventions. The dashboard allows stakeholders to quickly see the absenteeism “picture” at the school and to identify specific students or groups of students that they may wish to examine more closely.

As leader of the attendance research team, my role in the creation of the dashboard was to schedule steering committee and team meetings, collect feedback from team members, and reviewed iterations of the dashboard as school board I.T. and graphic design staff worked through the function and design. I shared the dashboard with teams of principals and educators in all Lakehead Public Schools elementary and secondary schools, recording their feedback about the dashboard itself as well as the attendance picture that it revealed for their school. Since the initial creation of the dashboard I have continued to take a leadership role in promoting its use by principals. I have generated and shared updated dashboards for each school and shared them with administrators. I have continued to work with I.T. staff to refine the function of the dashboard and to ensure that it is user-friendly. In the 2019-2020 school year I will automatically generate monthly dashboards for each school that will be sent to principals so that the discussion about student absenteeism continues in each school among stakeholders.

Attendance Dashboard Overview

The dashboard allows educators to drill-down to individual student data in order to consider appropriate supports and potential interventions. It also acts as a tracking tool to illustrate data over time, as well as at specific points in time. It supports school leaders, along with teachers, support staff, and other stakeholders as they consider the correlates of absenteeism at their school, the unique circumstances of specific students, as well as potential intervention strategies. The dashboard may be used in both the short- and long-term to track changes in student absenteeism and to consider the effectiveness of intervention strategies that are intended to promote regular student attendance and reduce chronic absenteeism. The dashboard represents a valuable contribution to the discussion and research around chronic absenteeism. As principals work with stakeholders to develop targeted interventions to reduce chronic student absenteeism, it is important that they are able to access data that will enable them to select, implement, and analyze the effectiveness of the chosen interventions.

Gap Analysis Diagram:

Desired Status	-	Actual Status	=	Gap/Need
Principals can access and use data that to identify targeted intervention strategies that will reduce chronic absenteeism.		Principals are not able to access and use data to identify targeted intervention strategies that will reduce chronic absenteeism.		A tutorial that will enable principals to access and use data to identify targeted intervention strategies that will reduce chronic absenteeism.

Audience

Elementary administrators are the intended audience of this tutorial. Providing administrators with a brief, easy-to-follow tutorial will increase the likelihood that they will

independently access the attendance dashboard to support their efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism. Administrators have previously been exposed to the dashboard. It was used during school site visits to collect information about the correlates of chronic absenteeism at Lakehead Public Schools, and has also been provided by email to administrators. An email has also previously been provided to administrators with brief instructions for how to generate a dashboard. Anecdotal comments provided by administrators suggest that when they are provided with the dashboard, they find it a useful tool to both provoke and support discussions around reducing student absenteeism. Most administrators have not independently generated a dashboard.

School administrators will be familiar with the Trillium software, and will possess a Lakehead Public Schools login and password. It is assumed that they will approach the tutorial with an entry attitude that regular school attendance supports positive outcomes for students. While administrators are assumed to be primarily motivated by care and concern for student achievement and well-being, previous exposure to the Here Campaign and presentations from the attendance research team will also reinforce that a reduction in chronic absenteeism is a school board priority. This will be an additional motivating factor for them to use the tutorial to access their school attendance data. The tutorial will also support administrators with how to use the data once it has been generated, by providing guiding questions that principals may share with teams of stakeholders. The tutorial will emphasize the moral imperative that compels administrators to think about and analyze the data in order to consider potential interventions. This will help ensure that principals aren't simply going through the motions of generating the dashboard, but that the data are used for the intended purpose: to help identify targeted intervention strategies that will reduce chronic absenteeism.

Tutorial

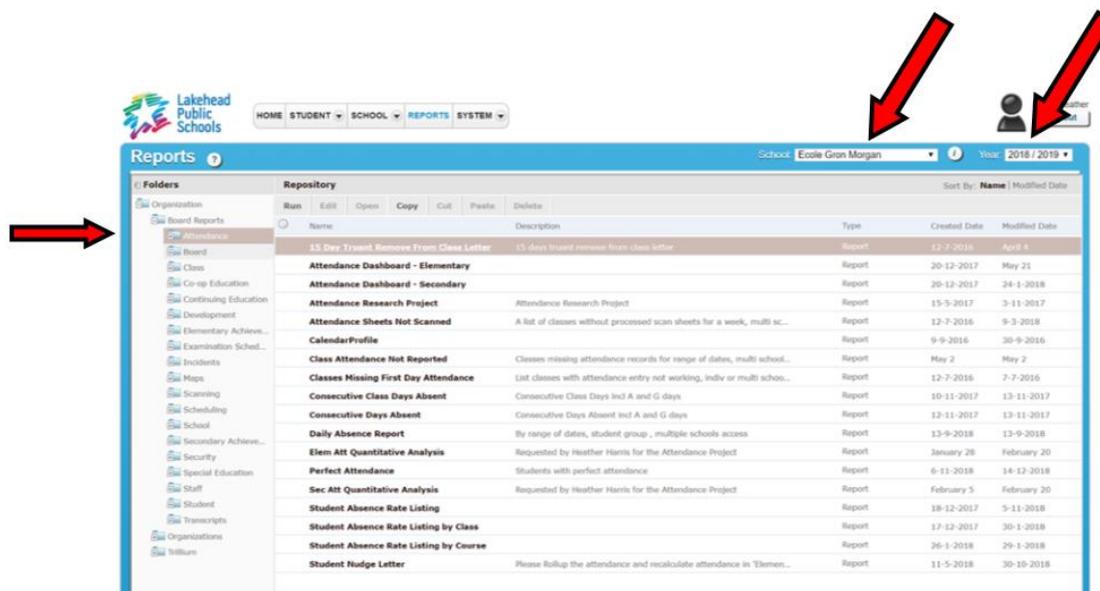
How to generate an attendance dashboard

- Using the browser Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge, go to <https://trilliumweb.lakeheadschools.ca/> and enter your login information.

- On the home screen, select “reports.”



- Select “Attendance” on the side menu. Make sure that your school and the year you are interested in have been selected.



- Select “Attendance Dashboard - Elementary” on the main menu. This will bring you to a screen that requires your input in order to generate your dashboard.

Input Controls

* Select Elementary School Family
Ecole Gron

* Select School Year:
20182019

* Select Attendance Codes to Include
 Absent
 Excused
 G-Day
 All None Inverse

* Select Reason Option to Include:
All

* Start Date
 This field is mandatory so you must enter data.

* End Date (mandatory)

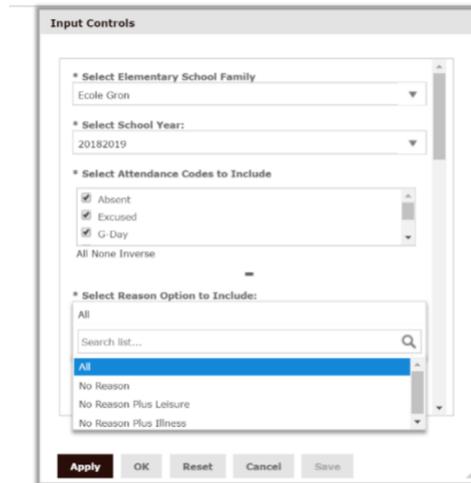
Apply OK Reset Cancel Save

- In the text box under “Select Elementary School Family” use the drop down menu to select your school. Use the drop down menu to select the school year that you would like data for. **Please note that the school and school year entered in this section must match your selections in step 3.*
- Choose which absence codes you wish to include by clicking the boxes next to each code. **Please note that for the dashboards that were previously provided to schools, “absent” and “excused” were selected.*

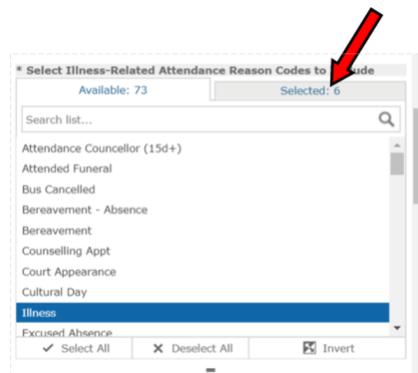
*** Select Attendance Codes to Include**

Absent
 Excused
 G-Day
 All None Inverse

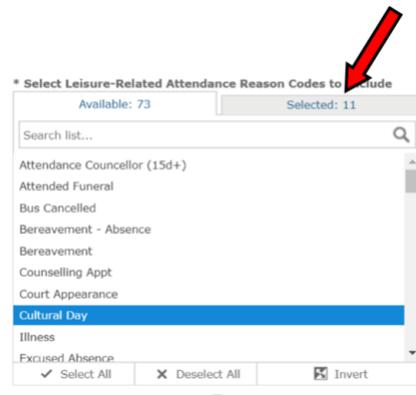
- Use the drop down menu to choose which reason for the absence to include. **Please note that for the dashboards that were previously provided to schools, “All” was the reason option selected.*



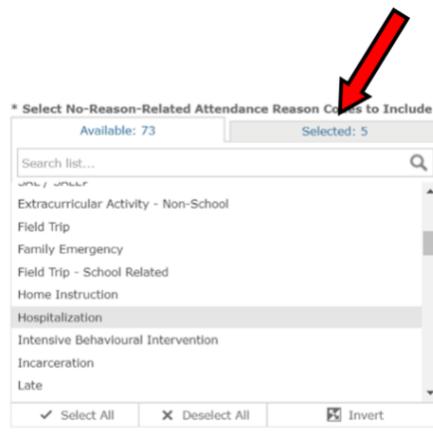
- Choose a start date and end date for the data used to generate the report. Ensure the date is within the school year that has been previously selected in Step 3 and Step 5.
- Select illness-related reason codes to include using the drop down menu. The 6 most common codes have already been selected. **If you do not have a specific reason for selecting additional codes, it is suggested to use the default setting (do not select anything and move to next step).*



10. Select leisure-related reason codes to include using the drop down menu. The 11 most common codes have already been selected. **If you do not have a specific reason for selecting additional codes, it is suggested to use the default setting (do not select anything and move to next step).*



11. Select no reason-related reason codes to include using the drop down menu. The 5 most common codes have already been selected. **If you do not have a specific reason for selecting additional codes, it is suggested to use the default setting (do not select anything and move to next step).*

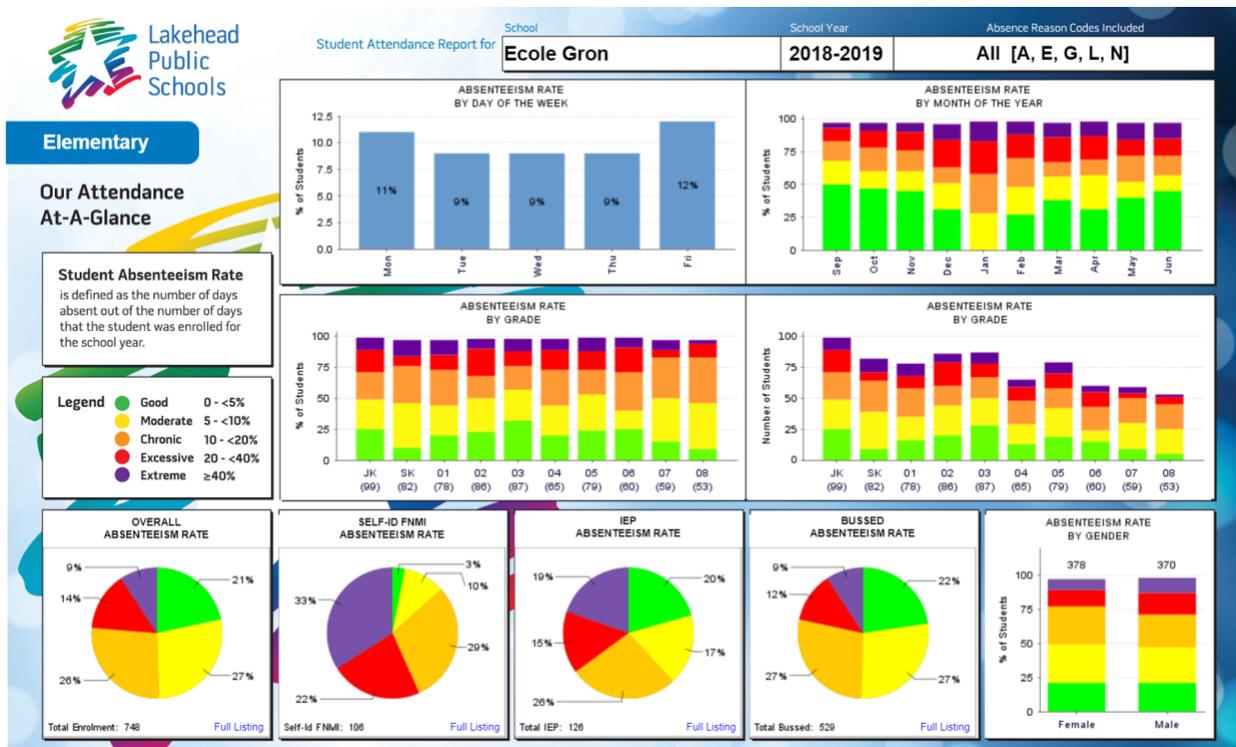


12. If you are generating the dashboard for a group of students that you have set up in Trillium, use the drop down menu to select the group. If you are generating the dashboard for your whole school, skip this step.

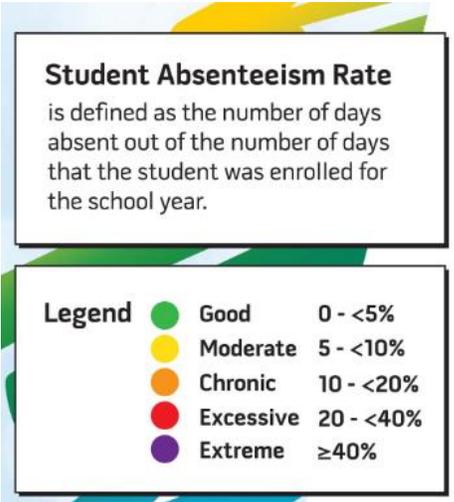
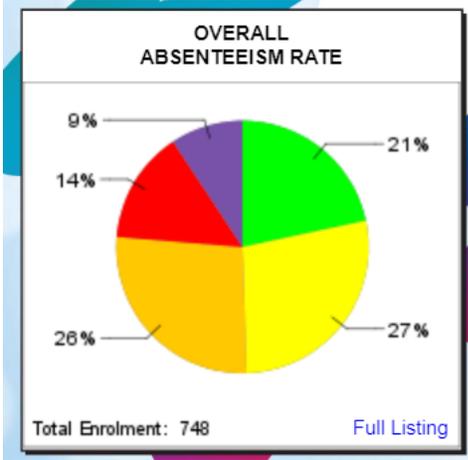
* Select a Student Group (Elementary Family)

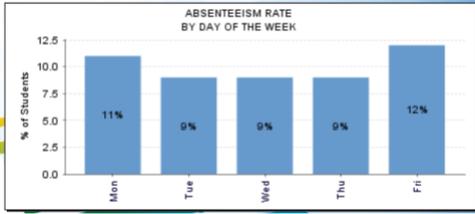
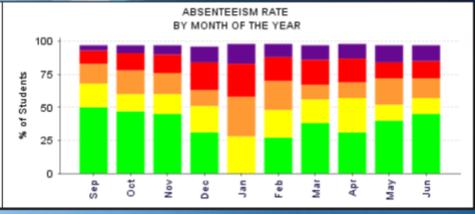
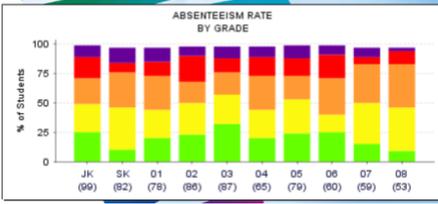
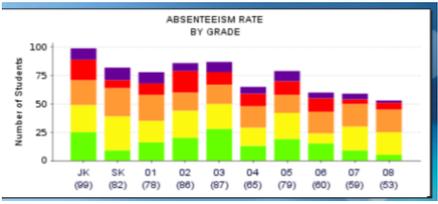
All Students | ▼

13. Click “apply” to generate your dashboard. Please be patient, as this can take a few minutes. Once the dashboard is generated (you will see it behind the data input screen), click “OK” to minimize the data input screen.

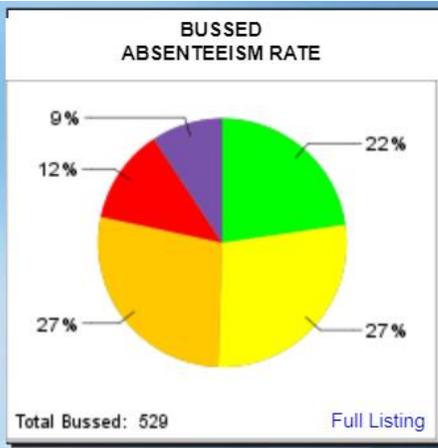
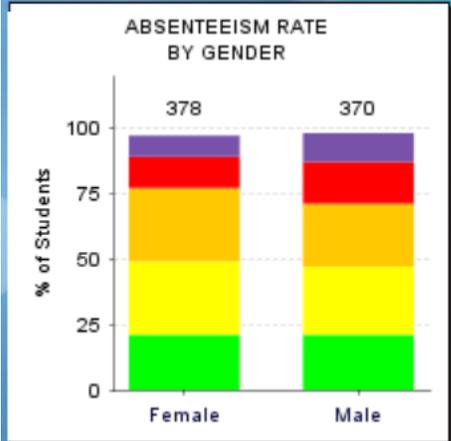


How to read the dashboard

<p>Definition and legend</p>	 <p>Student Absenteeism Rate is defined as the number of days absent out of the number of days that the student was enrolled for the school year.</p> <p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Good 0 - <5% ● Moderate 5 - <10% ● Chronic 10 - <20% ● Excessive 20 - <40% ● Extreme ≥40% 	<p>Student absenteeism rate: this may be different for different students. If a student was registered for less than the full school year at your school, the number of days enrolled for the school year will reflect only the number of days they were registered at your school.</p> <p>Legend: This shows the colours that represent the different rates of student absenteeism. A student is considered chronically absent if they are absent more than 10% of the days they were supposed to be at school (orange, red and purple).</p>												
<p>Overall school absenteeism rate</p>	 <p>OVERALL ABSENTEEISM RATE</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Good (Green)</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate (Yellow)</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chronic (Orange)</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Excessive (Red)</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extreme (Purple)</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Total Enrolment: 748 Full Listing</p>	Category	Percentage	Good (Green)	21%	Moderate (Yellow)	27%	Chronic (Orange)	26%	Excessive (Red)	14%	Extreme (Purple)	9%	<p>This shows the overall absenteeism rates for your school. In this graphic 14% of the total school population is excessively absent (red, 20-<40%).</p> <p>Total enrolment: This includes all students who were registered at your school during the school year. It may not reflect the number of students on your register on the day you generated the dashboard. Students who have moved to other schools will be counted in your total enrolment, <i>only for the days they were registered at your school.</i></p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p> <p>If you click on “Full listing” you will get a list of all students included in the calculation.</p>
Category	Percentage													
Good (Green)	21%													
Moderate (Yellow)	27%													
Chronic (Orange)	26%													
Excessive (Red)	14%													
Extreme (Purple)	9%													

<p>Absenteeism rate by day of the week</p>		<p>This shows the percentage of the total school population that was absent on each day of the week throughout the year. In this graphic, 12% of the school population has been absent on Fridays throughout the year.</p>
<p>Absenteeism rate by month of the year</p>		<p>This shows the percentage of students who were absent in each month of the year and their rates of absenteeism. In this graphic, approximately 50% of students who were absent in September had “good” attendance (green, 0-<5%). In January, none of the students who were absent had “good” attendance.</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p>
<p>Absenteeism rate by grade (% of students)</p>		<p>This shows the percentage of students who were absent in each grade and their rates of absenteeism. In this graphic, approximately 25% of students who were absent in JK were chronically absent (orange, 10-<20%).</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p>
<p>Absenteeism rate by grade (number of students)</p>		<p>This shows the number of students who were absent in each grade and their rates of absenteeism. In this graphic, approximately 20 students who were absent in JK were chronically absent (orange, 10-<20%)</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p>

<p>Self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit absenteeism rate</p>	<p>SELF-ID FNMI ABSENTEEISM RATE</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Color</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Purple</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yellow</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Red</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Orange</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Blue</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Self-Id FNMI: 108 Full Listing</p>	Color	Percentage	Purple	33%	Yellow	29%	Red	22%	Orange	10%	Green	3%	Blue	3%	<p>This shows the total number of self-identified FNMI students who were registered in your school during the school year (bottom left corner).</p> <p>It shows the absenteeism rates for self-identified FNMI students who were absent during the school year. In this graphic, 33% of self-identified FNMI students who were absent during the year were extremely absent (purple, $\geq 40\%$).</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p> <p>If you click on “Full listing” you will get a list of all students included in the calculation.</p>
Color	Percentage															
Purple	33%															
Yellow	29%															
Red	22%															
Orange	10%															
Green	3%															
Blue	3%															
<p>Absenteeism rate for students with Individual Education Plans</p>	<p>IEP ABSENTEEISM RATE</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Color</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yellow</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Purple</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Orange</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Red</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Blue</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Total IEP: 128 Full Listing</p>	Color	Percentage	Yellow	26%	Green	20%	Purple	19%	Orange	17%	Red	15%	Blue	3%	<p>This shows the total number of students with IEPs who were registered in your school during the school year (bottom left corner). This includes all students with IEPs, whether they have a formal identification or not.</p> <p>It shows the absenteeism rates students with IEPs who were absent during the school year. In this graphic, 17% of students with IEPs who were absent during the year were moderately absent (yellow, 5-$>10\%$).</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p> <p>If you click on “Full listing” you will get a list of all students included in the calculation.</p>
Color	Percentage															
Yellow	26%															
Green	20%															
Purple	19%															
Orange	17%															
Red	15%															
Blue	3%															

<p>Absenteeism rate for students who are bussed to school</p>	 <p>BUSSED ABSENTEEISM RATE</p> <p>9% 12% 27% 22% 27%</p> <p>Total Bussed: 529 Full Listing</p>	<p>This shows the total number of students who are bussed who were registered in your school during the school year (bottom left corner).</p> <p>It shows the absenteeism rates students who are bussed who were absent during the school year. In this graphic, 27% of students who are bussed who were absent during the year were chronically absent (orange, 10->20%).</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p> <p>If you click on “Full listing” you will get a list of all students included in the calculation.</p>
<p>Absenteeism rate by gender</p>	 <p>ABSENTEEISM RATE BY GENDER</p> <p>100% 75% 50% 25% 0%</p> <p>Female Male</p> <p>378 370</p>	<p>This shows the absenteeism rates for male and female students who were absent during the school year. This graphic shows that approximately 20% of male and female students who were absent during the school year had “good” attendance (green, 0-<5%).</p> <p>If you click on any of the colours, you will get a list of students who have that absenteeism rate.</p>

How to use attendance dashboard data

The dashboard shows a “picture” or “story” of absenteeism at a particular school, or among a particular group of students, and is intended to provoke and support discussion and analysis that will help identify targeted intervention strategies in order to reduce chronic

absenteeism. Administrators and stakeholders should consider the story that is revealed by the data.

- What do you see?
- Why is attendance as it is?
- What surprises you about what you see?
- What are the key reasons for absenteeism at your school?
- What initiatives do you currently have in your school to address absenteeism?
- What does this data suggest to you?

The attendance dashboard is a valuable tool that can be used to track the efficacy of an intervention. Principals can track the attendance of groups of students who are participating in an intervention as well as a “control group” of similar students who are not, in order to see whether the intervention is having the desired effects. Potential target areas can be easily identified on the dashboard, and the ability to “drill down” to student groups as well as individual students makes the data “more meaningful and actionable” (Sharratt & Fullan, 2012, p. 48).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What do the absence codes stand for?

Absence codes are defined each year in the *Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools* published by the Ontario Ministry of Education. This document contains the policies and procedures regarding enrolment and attendance for publicly-funded day schools in Ontario. Updated documents can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/forms.html> .

2. How can I track students who are late?

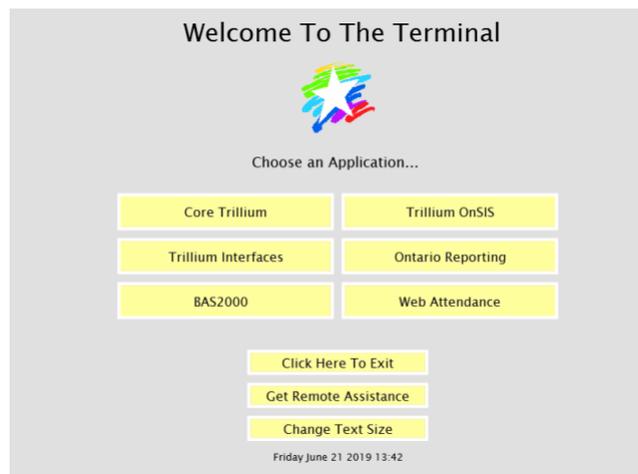
The attendance dashboard can be generated for students who are late. In step 6 of this tutorial, select “late” as the absence code you wish to include. Deselect the other codes by clicking on the checkboxes.

3. Who can this data be shared with?

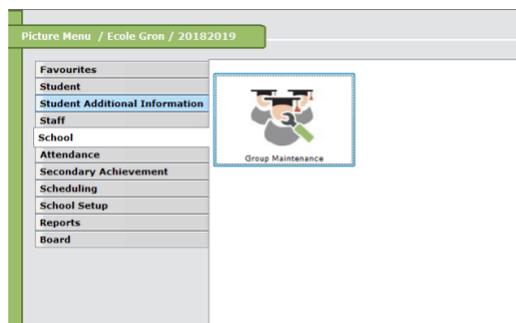
This data can be shared with any of your school stakeholders, but confidentiality should be maintained. Please do not share any data that could identify a student. For example, if a school has a very low number of self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, that graphic should not be shared outside of school staff.

4. How do I create student groups?

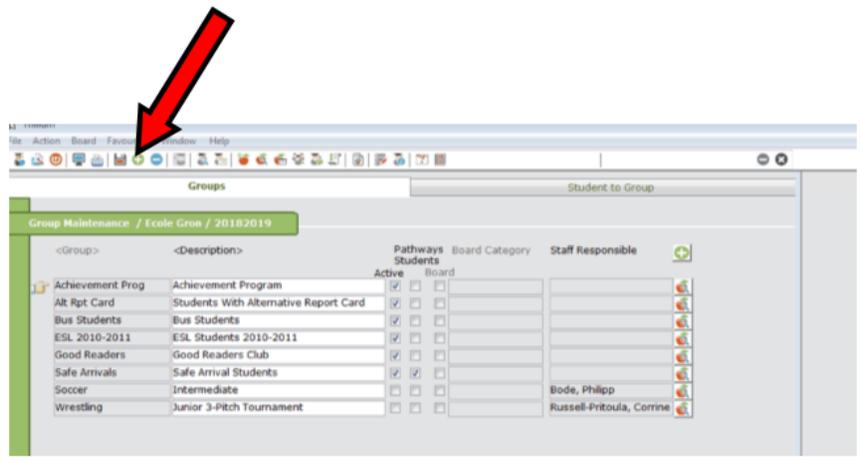
- a. Log in to Core Trillium.



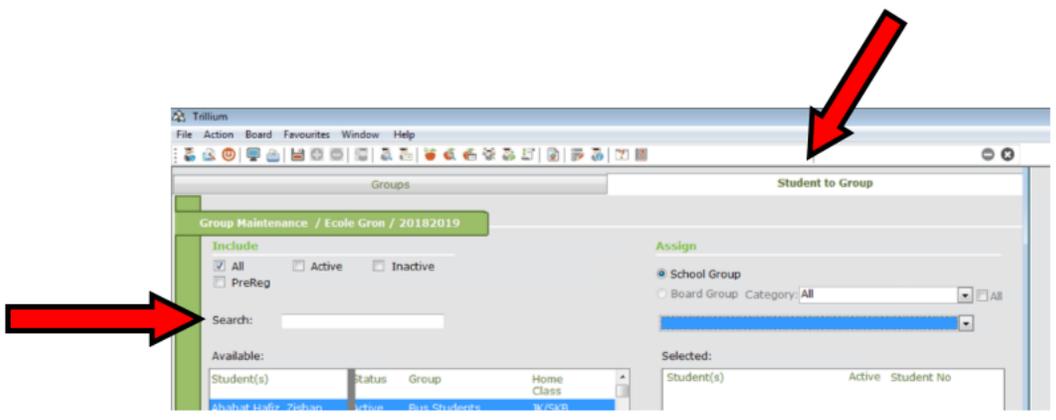
- b. Select “School” and select “Group Maintenance.”



- c. Select the green circle with a plus sign on the top tool bar to create a new group.



- d. Select “Student to Group” just under the top tool bar. Enter the names of students in the search bar. Select the name of the student you wish to move into a group and double click. Select “apply” at the bottom of the screen when the group is complete.



Portfolio task 2:**Workshop (90 minutes) at the Ontario Education Research Symposium, 2018****Reference**

Harris, H., van Barneveld, C., Nugent, B., & Loovere, J. (2018, March). *Addressing student absenteeism in northwestern Ontario: Research, initiatives, resources, and lessons learned*. Workshop presented at the Ontario Educational Research Symposium, Toronto, ON.

Symposium Overview

The 2018 Ontario Education Research Symposium (OERS) was held from February 28 to March 2, 2018. This yearly symposium “brings together researchers, educators and policy makers within the research and education communities. It gives the participants opportunities to network, gain insights into existing research relative to ministry priorities, and identify gaps for future research” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). The theme of the 2018 conference, *Advancing equity and achievement in Ontario classrooms*, provided an opportunity for our research team to share the ongoing research into student absenteeism taking place at Lakehead Public Schools. Further information about the 2018 OERS symposium is available at <https://event-wizard.com/OERSCORE2018/0/welcome/>.

Acceptance of the Workshop Proposal

From: CRO Office (EDU) [<mailto:CRO.Office@ontario.ca>]
Sent: Friday, December 22, 2017 11:46 AM
To: Heather Harris <heather_harris@lakeheadschoools.ca>
Subject: FW: Congratulations (workshop B) / Félicitations (atelier B)

La version française de ce message se trouve ci-dessous.

Hello,

Thank you for your submission to participate in the 2018 Ontario Education Research Symposium, set to take place February 28 to March 2, 2018, at the Chelsea Hotel ([map](#)) in downtown Toronto.

We are delighted to inform you that your workshop has been selected to be a part of session **B**, to be held **the morning of Friday, March 2** (exact time to be determined).

To confirm your participation, please fill out the attached form and forward it to CRO.Office@ontario.ca by **Friday, January 12, 2018**.

As stated in the Call for Proposals, workshops must offer relevant learning objectives and include an **interactive** component. The goal is to keep participants actively engaged throughout the 90-minute session.

More information on the Symposium will become available on www.rechercheeducationresearch.ca in January. We recommend that you bookmark the site and check it often as we get closer to the event date.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at CRO.Office@ontario.ca.

Wishing you a happy holiday season,

Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch
System Planning, Research and Innovation Division
Ontario Ministry of Education

Workshop Overview

Item	Rationale	Deadlines	Response
Presenter information	Provide/confirm the names and email addresses of all presenters involved.* We will send invitations in January that include the registration link and ask that you all register as soon as possible after that. * up to 3 presenters per workshop up to 2 presenters per roundtable up to 2 presenters per poster	Jan 12, 2018	Heather Harris Heather_harris@lakeheadschoools.ca Christina van Barneveld cvanbarn@lakeheadu.ca Bruce Nugent bnugent@lakeheadschoools.ca
Title	Provide/confirm the title of your workshop, roundtable or poster.	Jan 12, 2018	Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Initiatives, Resources, and Lessons Learned
Description	Provide/confirm a short description of your workshop, roundtable or poster (less than 150 words) to help participants choose which sessions to sign up for.	Jan 12, 2018	Student absenteeism is a significant issue in Northwestern Ontario. We know that when students are absent from school they are less likely to be successful. Our collaborative study seeks to identify main correlates of absenteeism at Lakehead District School Board as well as the effects of absenteeism on student achievement. Knowledge gained from the research is used to design interventions that will engage stakeholders in improving student attendance. This session will provide participants with an overview of the research process, preliminary findings as well as intervention resources that have been designed, including the innovative HERE campaign that was developed to provide resources to promote the importance of daily attendance to the 8 partner district school boards. Our approach can be adapted and implemented by other school boards that are concerned about student attendance.

Workshop Slides

Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned



Hello and Welcome!

- Dr. Christina van Barneveld
- Heather Harris
- John Loovere
- Bruce Nugent





Tweet with us!

#OERSabsenteeism

#LPStb

@mylakehead

@lakeheadschools



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Learning Objectives

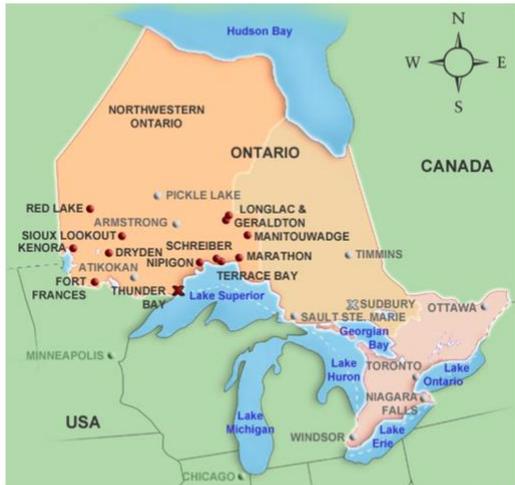
By the end of this workshop we will:

- 1. Examine research methods used to study student absenteeism in northwestern Ontario.**
- 2. Identify correlates of student absenteeism.**
- 3. Analyze descriptive absenteeism statistics.**
- 4. Share examples of interventions designed to support regular attendance.**



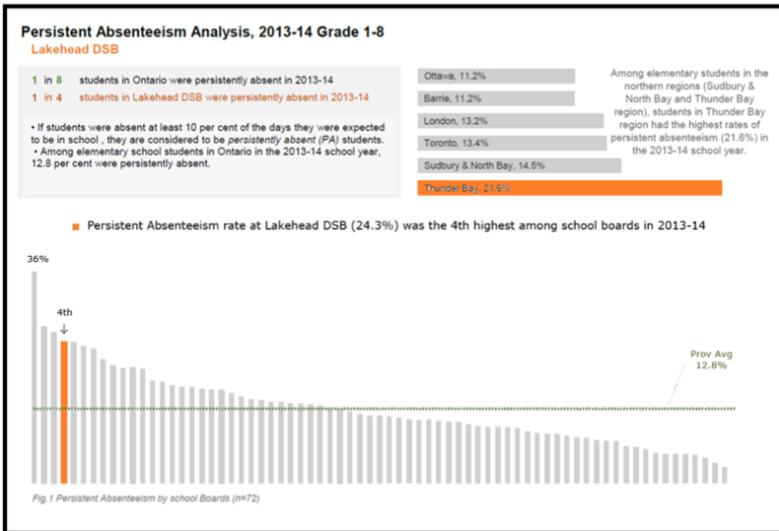
Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Northwestern Ontario



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

The Problem



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Responding to the problem

- **Understanding student absenteeism**
 - Research project with Dr. Christina van Barneveld
- **Connect with the region**
 - MISA/PNC, NOEL school boards
- **Examine our practices**
 - Safe arrival, staff training
- **Intervene**
 - Nudge letters, school-based initiatives, HERE Campaign



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research Plan (Overall)

The purpose of the research was to investigate and identify key issues related to absenteeism at LDSB schools.

Two research studies

Current Research

- **What is the prevalence of chronic, moderate, and excessive levels of absence for the board?**
- **What are the main predictors of student absence in Grades 1-8 and 9-12?**

Future research

- **What is the relationship between absenteeism rate and student achievement?**



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research Actions and Outcomes

Actions	Outcomes
Review research literature	List of correlates of absenteeism
Consultation with the regional partners	Concerns about validity of data
Investigation of validity of the absence data	Regional survey of absence coding/data entry Descriptive analysis of codes in Trillium Absences are underestimated by approximately 5%.
Consultation with school board research team	Team decisions regarding research plan implementation. E.g., site visit dashboard
Create absenteeism reports for each school	Interactive online absenteeism dashboard
School visits (small group interviews with teachers and administrators)	Data on issues/concerns/correlates of absenteeism



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
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Site Visits

- Meet with school-based teams to review absenteeism data to determine correlates of absenteeism
- Determine trends in the data
- Share best practices
- Consider which schools might be suitable for a case study (future research)



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned



Activity #1 - Dashboard analysis

Riverview PS

- Urban, dual-track English and French Immersion

Queen Victoria PS

- Urban

Pleasant Valley PS

- Urban

Maple Leaf PS

- Rural



Introduction to the list of correlates of absenteeism (from the literature)

- Several lists of correlates of absenteeism...
- Direction of correlation with absenteeism:
 - Positive: as these increase, absenteeism increases
 - Negative: as these increase, absenteeism decreases
- Levels:
 - Student
 - School
 - Neighbourhood
- Some examples...

	Positive	Negative
Student level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility • Asthma • Poor relationship with peers at school • Poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement • Social trust • Parental involvement • Relationship with caring adult in and out of class
School level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher short-term absence • School violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean washrooms • Staff PD on behaviour and absenteeism
Community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family-school-community partnership activities



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Activity #2 - Guess the correlates of absenteeism

Please complete 2 survey questions where you are asked to choose the 5 correlates in each area that most relate to student absenteeism.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z6NP6B3>



Get the link to the survey on twitter!

[@lakeheadschools](https://twitter.com/lakeheadschools)



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research results (to date)

Why are K-8 students absent? (student-level)	Number of schools	Percent
Illness / Injury	22	96
Poverty	21	91
Anxiety	21	91
Parenting	21	91
Travel/ Vacation	19	83
Siblings	19	83
Transportation / Walkability	19	83
Mobility / Transience	18	78
Lack of home routines	17	74
Home responsibilities (e.g. caregiving, working)	16	70
Sports / Activities	16	70
Student Mental health	16	70
Chronic lates	16	70
Indigenous Background	15	65
Kindergarten parents not ready to send child	15	65



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research results (to date)

School-level correlates?	Number of schools	Percent
Boring teachers / student engagement	9	38
Teacher short-term absence due to illness	7	30
Bullying	4	17
School size	2	8



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research results (to date)

Clusters of correlates

CORRELATE	OCCURRING WITH	CO-OCCURRENCE
Illness	Anxiety	21 out of 22
	Poverty	20 out of 22
	Parenting	20 out of 22
	Residence segregation	18 out of 22
	Travel/Vacation	18 out of 22
	Siblings	18 out of 22
	Transportation	18 out of 22

* note that these clusters depend on the number of occurrences, so those correlates with higher occurrences will also tend to co-occur with other correlates



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Research results (to date)

Clusters of correlates

CORRELATE	OCCURRING WITH	CO-OCCURRENCE
Poverty	Illness/Injury	20 out of 21
	Anxiety	20 out of 21
	Siblings	17 out of 21
	Travel/Vacation	17 out of 21
	Home responsibilities	16 out of 21
	Student mental health	16 out of 21
	Lack of home routines	16 out of 21

* note that these clusters depend on the number of occurrences, so those correlates with higher occurrences will also tend to co-occur with other correlates



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Next steps in the research

- **Quantitative analysis of data**
- **Secondary school site visits**
- **Case studies of 3 elementary schools and 2 secondary schools**
- **Investigate the connection between student achievement and absenteeism**
- **Continue to work with regional and community partners**



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Examining our practices

- **Safe arrival**
- **Staff training and support**
- **SWAT team**
- **Communication**

School-level initiatives

- **Community Breakfast program**
- **Incentive and recognition programs**
- **Engaging parents**



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

Dear [redacted]

At [redacted] School, we know the attendance has a huge impact on student success and well-being.

Research shows that students who attend do better in school. They are more engaged in their learning and are more likely to graduate. We realize some absences are unavoidable due to illness or other circumstances. We also know that when students miss too much school - regardless of the reasons - it can cause them to fall behind and become discouraged. We know that absences can add up quickly, and we are here to help.

Below is a snapshot of your child's attendance at [redacted] School as of October 27, 2017.

Student absence % out of total days of school

Category	Percentage
Absent	43%
Present	57%

[redacted] has been absent 14.5 days.
[redacted] has been late 7.0 times.

Dealing with challenges to regular attendance can be overwhelming for many families. If you have any questions, concerns, or need more information, please contact your child's teacher or school administration. We are here to help!

Sincerely,

[redacted] Principal

 Lakehead Public Schools  Lakehead UNIVERSITY  Faculty of Education **Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned**

HERE Campaign

I'm Here!

The Here campaign is for school boards across the region to give "every school day counts" champions a brand, a name, and a voice.

Here	H
Here	H

 Lakehead Public Schools  Lakehead UNIVERSITY  Faculty of Education **Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario: Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned**

HERE Campaign

Stakeholder Input

During the research phase various stakeholders from eight participating district school boards were interviewed including:

- Teachers
- Principals
- Social workers
- Attendance Counselors
- Parents and Guardians



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

HERE Campaign

Campaign Objective:

To build awareness around the attendance issues in the region and to provide communication tools to help improve attendance.

HERE Campaign Target Audiences:

- Students
- Parents and guardians
- School staff
- Community



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

HERE Campaign

HERE Campaign Start Up Kits:

- Introduction card
- Toolkit assets on USB
- Posters
- Lanyards
- Buttons



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned

<http://www.heretoolkit.com>

- Print ad templates
- Digital ad templates
- Social Media ad templates
- Posters
- Video
- Radio ad template
- Roll up displays and Banner
- Toolkit newsletter template
- Presentation Template



Addressing Student Absenteeism in Northwestern Ontario:
Research, Resources, and Lessons Learned



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Portfolio Task 3:

Attendance Resource Guide for School Leaders

Introduction

As school leaders, principals in Ontario are in charge of both “the instruction and the discipline of pupils in the school” as well as “the organization and management of the school” (Education Act, 1990, c.E2). Pupil attendance can be considered a priority under both of these categories, and is therefore a major responsibility of school principals. Currently, principals are provided with a variety of documents, websites, and supporting materials that they may choose to access as they attempt to improve student attendance. These materials are not provided in a formal, comprehensive, or systematic way, and it is likely that many principals, particularly those who are new to administration, are not using them and may not be aware that many of them exist.

This resource guide for school leaders is intended to be comprehensive, practical, and easily-navigable single document of curated resources for attendance at Lakehead Public Schools.

The Infographic

I developed the following infographic as a quick, one-page reference for school leaders. It will be used as the cover of this resource guide and will also be provided to school leaders as a separate printed and electronic handout that can be posted in a convenient place. Following the infographic is a curated resources guide comprised of various documents that are relate to and inform the infographic.



Absenteeism at Lakehead Public Schools: Supporting regular student attendance



1

Champion the Safe Arrival Program

All students are registered in the Safe Arrival program. Ensure that the automated call-out is completed promptly once attendance has been taken. This program helps to ensure that students are safe and encourages families to get in the habit of reporting student absences.



2

Record Student Attendance Accurately

Accurate records are important to identify potential absenteeism issues for particular students or groups of students. Absence codes can be found in the Enrolment Register Instructions at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/forms.html>



3

Examine Student Absenteeism Data

The attendance data dashboard is automatically sent to schools at the end of each month, and can be generated by you at any time. This data will help identify target areas for interventions and can show you whether or not interventions have been effective.



4

Connect with Students and Families

Let families know that attendance is important by including information in newsletters and on social media. Welcome families into the school and celebrate improved attendance! Keep parents informed about their child's attendance by sending home nudge letters.



5

Access HERE Campaign Resources

HERE campaign resources will help you share the message that attendance is important and we are here to help. Communication tools and helpful tips can be found at www.heretoolkit.com. Questions? Looking for HERE swag? Contact Bruce Nugent.



6

Implement Targeted Interventions

Different interventions will support different students or groups of students. Find out what the barriers are for your students and implement strategies to eliminate or reduce barriers wherever possible. Think outside the box and share best practices!

Questions? Contact Heather Harris or John Loovere

Curated Resources

Section 1 of the Resource Guide: Champion the Safe Arrival Program

In 2016, Lakehead Public Schools implemented an automated call-out Safe Arrival program. A review of practices found that the Safe Arrival programs at various schools were inconsistent. In an effort to ensure the safety of students, as mandated in the Education Act, a mandatory Safe Arrival program was implemented at all elementary schools. The program was piloted at three elementary schools prior to the system-wide roll out. Since the automated Safe Arrival program has been implemented, principals report an impact on absenteeism:

- More parents and guardians are using the automated system to report student absences;
- Students are arriving at school earlier (the Safe Arrival phone call is a “wake up” call); and
- More awareness of the importance of regular attendance, as seen by increase in the number of discussions with families about absenteeism.

Section 1 Contents:

- Safe Arrival Procedures (School Secretary)
- Safe Arrival for Families resource

Safe Arrival Procedures

After **all classes** have completed their morning attendance, and you have entered all absences/lates reported to you by phone, sign-in or by the emailed safe arrival report:

1. Log into School Connects using the school's supply secretary credentials:
<http://lakehead.schoolconnects.com> (or you can go into the Lakehead Public Schools website, click on 'Staff' and at the bottom of the page click on 'Synervoice')
2. On the left-hand side, click on '**Attendance**'. On the right-hand side you should see the 'Safe Arrival Absence Message' that is prepared to be dispatched to your absent students. ***This list gets created at 8:45 every morning. If there have been a lot of changes to attendance since it was created you can delete the list and within 5 minutes, a NEW up-to-date list will be created (to delete the list, click on the check box on the left and click delete at the top).*** Once you have a satisfactory list:
 - a. Click on the icon that has a picture of a pencil on it.
 - b. At the bottom of the screen, click on the 'View List' button.
 - c. If you see students in this list that you know are at school, or that you don't want to call, click on the check box next to their name. (Note: you may see multiple occurrences of one student - one per contact phone number - you only need to click on one of the instances.) The software will prompt you to remove all instances of the student's name.
 - d. Once you have selected all of the students you do not wish to call, click the 'Suspend' button at the top of the list. Click on "OK" for both of the two pop-up confirmation boxes.
 - e. Return to the previous screen by clicking on the red arrow on the top-right of the screen.
3. Next, start the call out process by clicking on the Clock Icon.
 - a. Click on the 'Time Settings' tab. Click in the 'Weekday End Time' box and use the sliders to set the hour and minutes to at least 20 minutes from the current time.
 - b. Click OK, and then click the 'Save' button. The calls will start immediately.
4. At the end of the call out time, **two reports** will be emailed to the school (the supply secretary account as well as the regular secretary's email account).
 - i. **The first report** will be the absences reported by parents report similar to the one you already received earlier in the morning, but with any additional absences now reported by parents during the call out. For those students not previously reported, you can now update their absences in Trillium at your convenience
 - ii. **The second report** will be the critical "not contacted report" – meaning there was no answer, the line was busy, the phone number is out of service, or the parent heard the message but did not follow the prompts to report the reason their child was absent.

You **MUST** go over this list with the school administrator (Principal, Vice Principal, supply Principal, or Teacher-in-Charge) to determine what further action is required for each student still unaccounted for. This may include: buzzing into the class to see if the student is in class or if the teacher knows where the student is; calling phone numbers

where the automated call was hung-up on; calling the work phone numbers of parents; calling all the phone numbers of the nonpriority 1 & 2 emergency contacts; or asking outside agencies to intervene.

If you still cannot determine where the student is after taking these steps, the **school administrator** will decide whether to file a formal missing persons report with Thunder Bay Police or the Ontario Provincial Police.



Frequently Asked Questions

SafeArrival for Families FAQ

What is SafeArrival?

SafeArrival is an absence management system that improves student safety and makes it easy for you to let the school know about your child's absence.

You are asked to report your child's absence in advance whenever possible using one of these convenient methods:

FREE SchoolMessenger App (Replaces previous SchoolConnects app)

1. Provide your email address to the school.
2. Get the app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store (or from the links at <https://go.schoolmessenger.ca/>).
3. Tap **Sign Up** to create your account.
4. Select **Attendance** from the menu, and then select **Report an Absence**.

Web and Mobile Web: parents.lakeheadschoools.ca

1. Provide your email address to the school.
2. Go to the website.
3. Click **Sign Up** to create your account.
4. Select **Attendance** from the menu, then select **Report an Absence**

Interactive Toll-free Phone

1. Call the toll-free, interactive telephone system at 1-844-288-7624.
2. Follow the instructions to report an absence.

Absences can be reported in advance:

- 24 hours/day
- 7 days a week

Whenever an absence is reported or updated, you will receive a confirmation notice by email and/or text message (assuming you have provided your contact information to the school).

If you don't report your child's absence in advance, the automated notification system will try to contact you (using the communication preferences if you have set them up in the SchoolMessenger app). This may include push notifications to the app, email, SMS text message, phone calls. You will be asked to provide the reason for your child's absence immediately. You may do so using the phone line, website or mobile app.

If an absence is not explained within approximately 20 minutes of the time that the school starts the notification process, school staff will follow-up to make sure that your child is safe. If you try to explain an absence using SafeArrival, but are then told that it is past the cut-off time, please contact the school directly.

If you don't want to receive notifications when your child is absent, be sure to report your child's absence in advance.

If you do receive notifications of your child's absence, be sure to provide the reason as quickly as possible, using one of the 3 methods listed above or during the phone call notification itself.



1 844 288 7624

Parents may choose to report a child's absence online



Why do I need a SchoolMessenger app account?

A SchoolMessenger app account is not required to use the toll-free phone line to report absences. However, we strongly recommend that you provide your email address to the school and set up your SchoolMessenger app account. This allows you to review and update absences, review your contact information and communication preferences and more.

Please see related SchoolMessenger app documentation for setting up your account, resetting your password, reviewing contact information, and specifying communication preferences. Once you have set up your account, choose ATTENDANCE from the menu.

If you cannot set up your account, you do not see the ATTENDANCE option, or you do not see your child(ren) listed in your account, please contact the school directly to check that your correct email address is associated with your child(ren).

How do I use the toll-free phone line?

When you call the toll-free phone line (1-844-288-7624), follow the instructions for reporting an absence.

If the phone number you are calling from matches a phone number on file with the school for your student(s), you will hear your student'(s) name(s). If the system doesn't recognize your caller ID, you will be asked to enter the student's home phone number.

If you have difficulty using the toll-free phone line, please consider using the SchoolMessenger mobile app or website. Otherwise, contact the school directly.

Section 2 of the Resource Guide: Record Student Attendance Accurately

This section highlights the legislated roles and responsibilities regarding school enrolment and attendance, including reporting requirements, timelines, and specific responsibilities. The Lakehead Public Schools' Attendance Protocol is included in this section, as it outlines the roles and responsibilities of all staff members who are responsible for student attendance. Not only is it important for the principal to be familiar with their own role, they are also responsible to ensure that staff are fulfilling their obligations regarding student attendance. At the beginning of each school year, administrators will be provided an electronic link with the most recent version of the Enrolment Register Instructions as well as a summary of the changes from the previous year. Principals will be asked to print out the enrolment register instructions and summary, and to place them in section one of the resource binder.

Section 2 Contents:

- Lakehead Public Schools Attendance Protocol
- Enrolment Register Instructions (current year)
- Lakehead Public Schools Absence Coding Resource



Lakehead Public Schools

Elementary Attendance Protocol

Procedures for Student Extended Absences - Revised August 2016

A guideline for assisting Principals/Vice-Principals/Support Staff in dealing with student absenteeism due to extended absences.

Elementary Attendance Protocol

Procedures for Student Extended Absences

This document identifies steps to be undertaken when dealing with student absenteeism due to extended absences. The guideline identifies:

- 1) Expectations when a student has been absent for 15 consecutive school days (including expectations for dealing with student absenteeism from day 1-14).
- 2) Expectations for 16 to 30 consecutive days of student absenteeism.
- 3) Expectations for 31 to 45 and 46 to 60 consecutive days of student absenteeism.
- 4) Expectations for short-term absenteeism.
- 5) The guideline outlines direction for referral to the Attendance Counsellor.
- 6) The guideline introduces the ***Social Work Attendance Team*** that will operate at the system level.
- 7) **Note:** At Lakehead District School Board, Social Workers are designated as Attendance Counsellors. Attendance Counsellors do not require consent to deal with an attendance referral for a student who is habitually absent from school (Ontario Education Act).
- 8) Please refer to the final pages in this document for diagrams that summarize the Procedures for Excused Pupils and Procedures for Prolonged Absences.

What Schools Do

To ensure that Attendance Counsellors are provided with the information necessary to fulfill their responsibilities and for audit purposes, the Education Act requires school principals to:

- Ensure the attendance of pupils for every school day is recorded either in the register supplied by the Minister in accordance with the instructions contained therein or in such other manner as is approved by the Minister;
- Ensure the enrolment and attendance records are accurate and up to date;
- Ensure all required enrolment and attendance documents (e.g. medical documentation, letters and referrals) are collected and retained
- Refer to the appropriate school Attendance Counsellor all students of compulsory school age who have not attended school as required; and
- Maintain a list of compulsory school aged students that have been removed from the Enrolment Register as a result of prolonged absences.

When to refer a student to the Attendance Counsellor?

- The absence is an unexcused absence and the student is of compulsory school age;
- Attempts by the school staff to resolve the attendance issue or contact the parents have not been successful;
- After 15 consecutive days (“G”, “N” and “PA” days, including suspensions do not break or add to the series of days) of unexcused absences
- Absence begins to show a regular pattern, such as Monday or Friday absences;
- Parents' explanations for their child's absence may be contributing to their child's frequent absences and therefore hindering their progress;
- Attendance becomes a problem due to chronic illness/stress;
- Students have moved with no explanation and the Ontario Student Record (OSR) is still not requested.

Sporadic Attendance

If a student's absence pattern is more sporadic and does not meet the threshold of 15 consecutive unexcused absences, they should still be referred to the Attendance Counsellor, if they meet the criteria of “habitual absence from school”.

School staff will use professional judgment to determine when and if an attendance referral is made for sporadic attendance.

For the First 15 Consecutive Days Unexcused Absent:

- After 3 consecutive days unexcused absence, the Classroom Teacher calls the parent / guardian to express concern about regular attendance and the importance of the child to be at school. This is an opportunity to see if there are any concerns from the parent / guardian. The Classroom Teacher tries to get the student back on track.
- At 5 days of unexcused absences, the Principal or Vice-Principal calls or meets with the parent / guardian to discuss concerns about regular attendance and tries to get the student back on track.
- For all unexcused absences of more than 5 days the Principal or Vice-Principal will document the contact made with the parent / guardian in the OSR (see attached form *Documentation of Contact for Unexcused Absences*).
- For all excused absences of more than 5 days the school will document the absence in the OSR i.e. parent note.
- At 10 days of unexcused absence, the Principal or Vice-Principal will meet with the parent / guardian and student to discuss concerns about regular attendance and to determine what changes need to be made to get the student back on track.

In the case of compulsory school age student (6 to 17 years old): The Principal or Vice-Principal sends a written referral to the Attendance Counsellor on the 16th consecutive day of absence and informs the Secretary responsible for attendance to enter “C” as the attendance indicating a referral has been made.

If a written referral is not made, the pupil will be retired from the register on the day immediately after the last day of attendance. Refer to the section *Responsibility after a Pupil of Compulsory Age is Removed from the Register* below.

In the case of non-compulsory school age student (under 6 years old): The pupil will be retired from the register on the day immediately after the last day of attendance.

For 16 – 30 Consecutive Days Absent for compulsory age student:**6 to 17 years (up to 15 years for First Nation Tuition student)**

- On the 16th day of consecutive absence, the Principal or Vice-Principal sends a written referral to the Attendance Counsellor as discussed in the previous section. A copy of this correspondence must be printed and placed in the OSR at the school.
- The Attendance Counsellor will acknowledge to the Principal or Vice-Principal, in writing (email is acceptable), that they will take the case. This acceptance must be retained in the OSR.

The Attendance Counsellor will meet with the parent / guardian and student to follow up accordingly to try to get the student back on track.

- The Attendance Counsellor will update the Principal or Vice-Principal in writing (email is acceptable) sometime within days 16 to 30 that:
 - a) confirms the specific details and date of the successful two way contact; and

b) indicates the pupil's file is active.

- The Principal or Vice-Principal will ensure the correspondence from the Attendance Counsellor is printed and placed in the student's OSR.
- The Principal or Vice-Principal will inform the Secretary responsible for attendance to enter "C" for student's attendance on the actual date of contact made by the Attendance Counsellor. Once the case has been referred to an attendance counsellor only the contact detailed in the correspondence from the attendance counsellor may be recorded on the register.
- For any contact made by the Principal or Vice-Principal with the parent / guardian and student will be documented and put in the OSR (see attached form *Documentation of Contact for Unexcused Absences*).
- For a First Nation Tuition student, at each 15 day period, the Principal or Vice-Principal will also contact the First Nation Education Counsellor to determine if the First Nation student will remain on the Enrolment Register.
- The student should be retired from the register on the 16th day of absence if:
 - a) confirmation of acceptance of the case by the Attendance Counsellor was not received;
 - b) the Attendance Counsellor was unable to make contact with the parent / guardian;
 - c) the Attendance Counsellor indicates the pupil's file is inactive;
 - d) a written report is not received from the Attendance Counsellor.

**For 31 – 60 Consecutive Days Absent for compulsory age student:
6 to 17 years (up to 15 years for First Nation Tuition student)**

If the pattern of absence continues, the Attendance Counsellor will provide a written update that
a) confirms the specific details and date of the contact that has been made with the parent / guardian and student; and
b) indicates the pupil's file is active.

This written update (email is acceptable) will be sent to the Principal or Vice Principal within each subsequent 15 day period of consecutive absence (e.g., the 31st day, the 46th day, or the 61st day), and must be printed and placed in the OSR. The date of the contact detailed in the correspondence will be coded in the attendance register on the corresponding day with a "C" by the Secretary responsible for attendance.

If the Attendance Counsellor is unable to call or meet with the parent / guardian and student in any 15-day period, the Attendance Counsellor will confirm that the file is inactive and will send documentation to the Principal or Vice-Principal recommending that the student be removed from the Enrolment Register.

If the Attendance Counsellor does not submit a report or submits a report indicating that the pupil's file has become inactive, the Principal or Vice Principal will ensure that the student is removed from the register on the day following the last 15-day period (e.g. the 31st day, the 46th or the 61st day).

Length of Time an Absent Pupil with an Active File May Remain on the Register

The student with an active file may remain on the register indefinitely provided the above procedure for prolonged absence 31 to 60 consecutive day is followed.

The Attendance Counsellor should provide a written update to the Principal or Vice Principal confirming that contact has been made with the parent / guardian and student within each subsequent 15-day period of consecutive absence (e.g., the sixty first day, the seventy-sixth day, etc.), which must be printed and placed in the OSR. The date of the contact detailed in the correspondence will be coded in the attendance register on the corresponding day with a "C" by the Secretary responsible for attendance.

If the Attendance Counsellor is unable to call or meet with the parent / guardian and student in any 15-day period, the Attendance Counsellor will confirm that the file is inactive and will send documentation to the Principal or Vice-Principal recommending that the student be removed from the Enrolment Register.

If the Attendance Counsellor does not submit a report or submits a report indicating that the pupil's file has become inactive, the Principal or Vice Principal will ensure that the student is removed from the register on the day following the last 15-day period.

Responsibility after a Pupil of Compulsory Age is Removed from the Register

Attendance for pupils of compulsory school age is required under the Education Act, and the Principal or Vice Principal must ensure that the Attendance Counsellor is advised of the removal of the names of all such pupils from the register. Even after removing pupils of compulsory age from the register, boards and or schools must continue to attempt to re-engage these pupils. The school will maintain a list of non-attending pupils of compulsory school age who have been removed from the register.

In the case of students age 6 to 13: the school or board must continue to make successful two way contact with the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian every 15 days.

Social Work Attendance Team

Referral to the Social Work Attendance Team (SWAT).

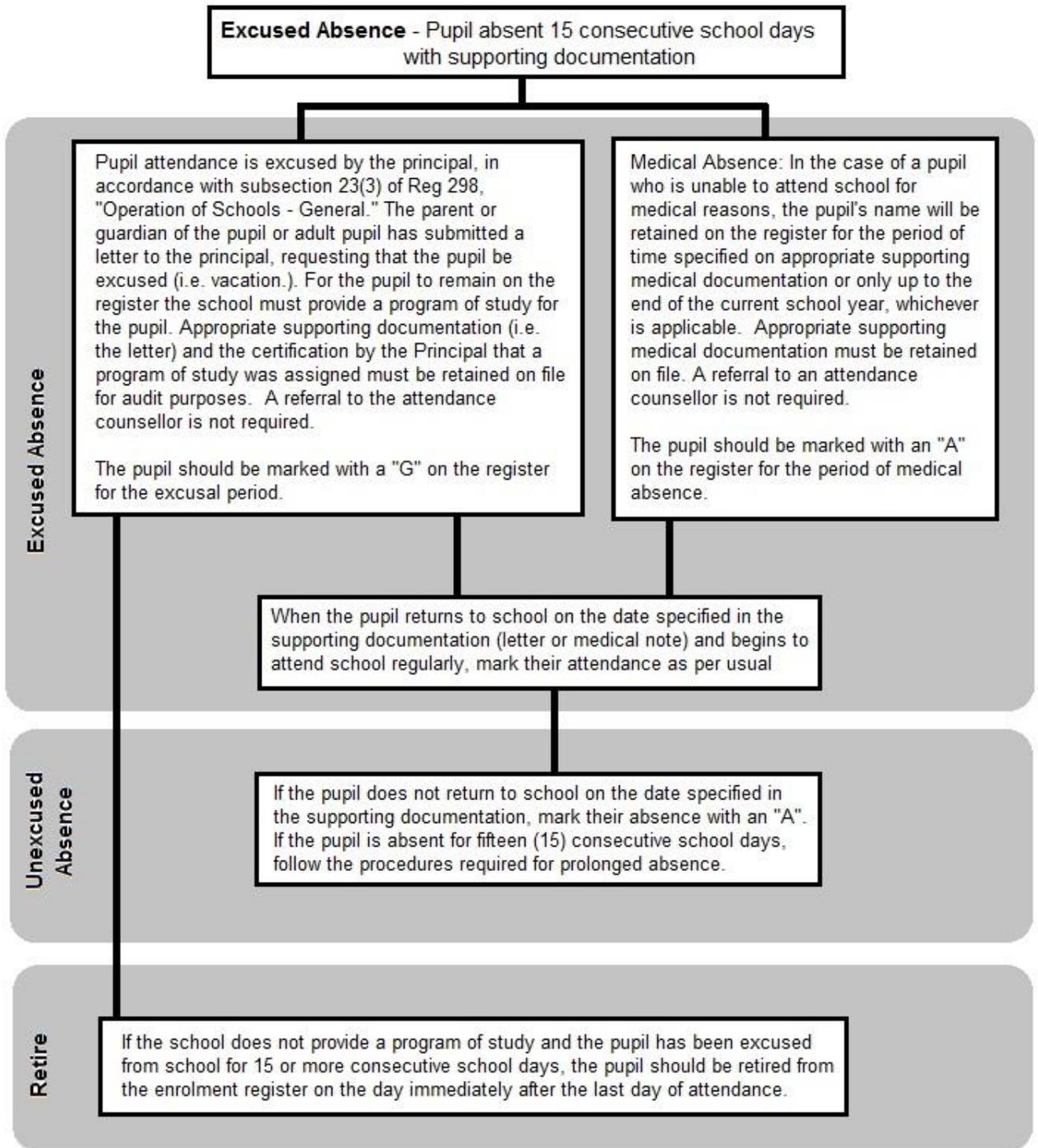
- SWAT is composed of a Superintendent of Education responsible for Social Work/Attendance Counsellors, Mental Health Leader, and the Education Officer.
- SWAT meets several times per year.
- The Attendance Counsellors will present concerning cases.
- The parent and student may be invited to attend the meeting which is seen as a problem solving case conference. The Attendance Counsellor and/or Principal/Vice-Principal will present the case.
- The parent and student are advised in regard to the expectation of mandatory school attendance and efforts are made to engage them in a plan to resolve the issue.
- The possibility of court action may be discussed if the attendance problem continues.

Material and Ideas in this Guideline are referenced and sourced from:

- (1) Ontario Ministry of Education: Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools 2016-17 School Year
- (2) Ottawa-Carlton District School Board <http://www.ocdsb.ca>
- (3) Simcoe County District School Board <https://www.scdsb.on.ca>

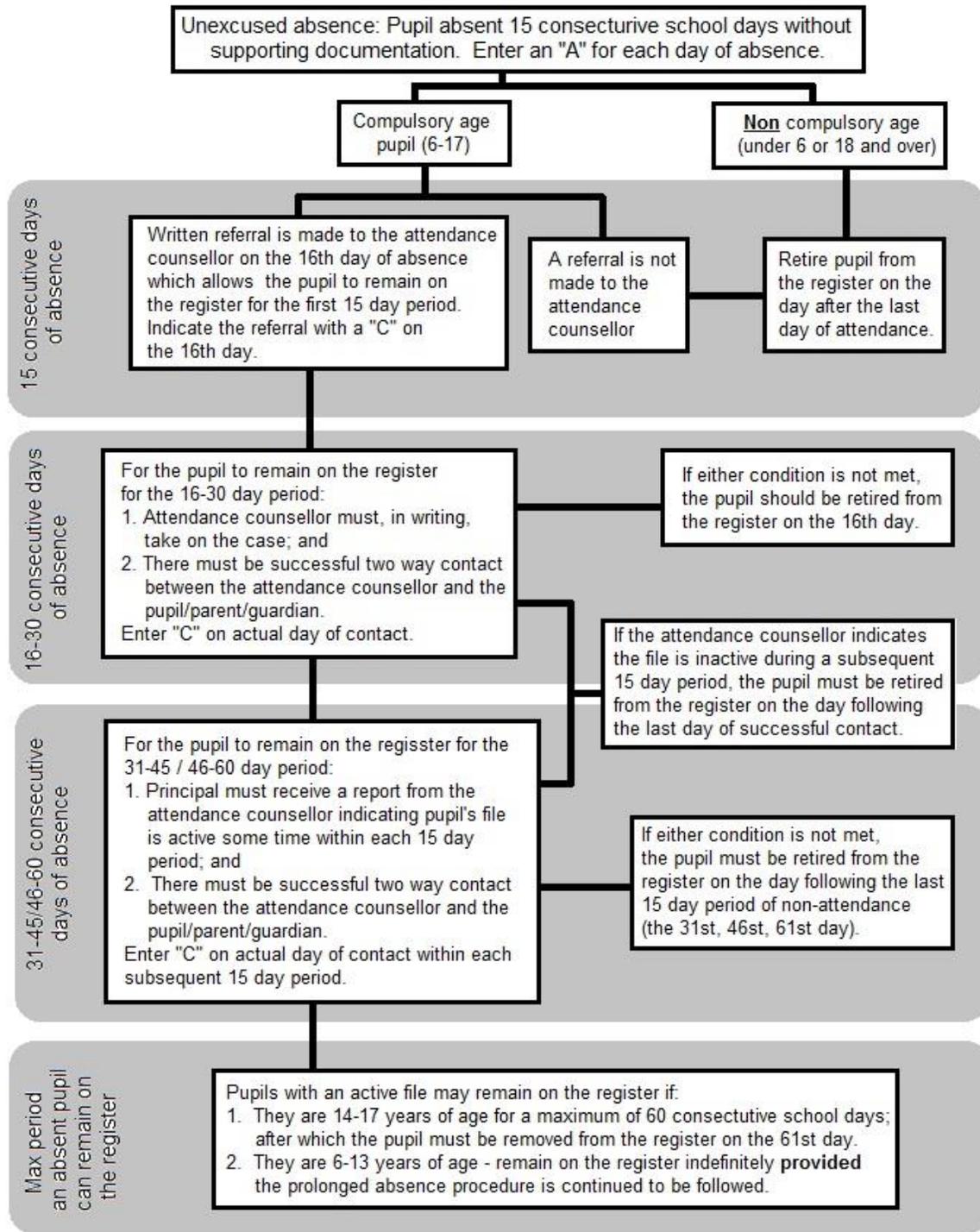
Procedures for Excused Pupils

The following diagram is from Enrolment Registration Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools 2016-17 School Year, page 50:



Procedures for Extended Absences

The following diagram is from Enrolment Registration Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools 2016-17 School Year, page 51:



Enrolment Register Instructions can be found at:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/forms/enrol/enrolment_register_instructions.pdf

Elementary – Lakehead District School Board Trillium Attendance Reasons

Absent (+ in / out)	Late	Excused (+ in / out)	G-Day	Non-Instructional
Appointment	Late	Home Instruction	Bereavement	Intensive Behavioural Intervention
Attendance Counsellor (15d+)	Other	Modified Day	Bus Cancelled	Not Scheduled - JK/SK Part Time
Extracurricular Activity - Non-School		Other	Cultural Day	Not Scheduled – Gr 1-8 Part Time
Illness			Exchange Program - Short Term	
Other			Field Trip - School Related	
Out of Town			Inclement Weather	
Sports Event - Non-School			Legislative Page	
Vacation			Long Term Medical	
			Music Lesson	
			Other	
			Plant Breakdown	
			Public Health Act Closure	
			Religious Holy Day	
			School Sports Event	
			Staggered Admission - JK/SK	
			Suspension	
		Excused, G-Day, and Non-Instructional reasons can only be entered by the office secretary.		

Elementary Attendance Scenarios Reference Document and How to Code Them in Trillium Web and Admin Attendance

General Information

- In this document, “**Parent**” refers to the parent, legal guardian, student if 18 and over or legal custodian (which may be Boarding Parent, Education Counsellor, Foster Parent etc.);
- Classroom teachers can only enter in Absence “A” and Late “L” for student’s attendance;
- For Absence “A”, classroom teachers **must** enter in a reason if it is known, but **must** leave the reason blank and **not** record a comment if unknown, as it impacts safe arrival;
- Absence “A” with or without reasons, General Absence “G” with reason, Non-Instructional “N”, Contact “C” and Excused (no Ministry Code) are for half and full day attendance;
- Admit Slips reasons are the same as the Absence and Excused reasons and are recorded with the Late “L” Code;
- Early Dismissal reasons are the same as the Absence and Excused reasons and do not have a Ministry Code;
- Use of Contact “C” occurs at 16th day of extended unexcused absence when a Principal has made a referral to an Attendance Counsellor and on the days that two-way contact was made between the Attendance Counsellor and the Parent. Attendance Counsellor must provide the date and type of contact in writing to the school (e.g. e-mail). Contact “C” can only be used once Absence “A” Reason “Attendance Counsellor (15d+) has been used”;
- For in-school suspensions, student will be marked as “Excused” with the reason of “Other” so the Classroom Teacher does not mark the student absent but will know the student is excused and in the school;
- Extended “G” day attendance reasons (e.g. medical, bereavement, cultural day etc.) require an expected return date; if the student does return by that date, contact the Parent to determine if the return date has changed. If there is no contact and the student is not attending, start recording Absences and the 15-day attendance protocol begins;
- In the case of a long-term medical absence (**more than 5 days**), the following may provide medical notes to excuse students from school (recorded as a “G” day):

· Audiologist	· Chiroprapist	· Chiropractor
· Dentist	· Dietitian	· Homeopath
· Kinesiologist	· Massage Therapist	· Medical Doctor
· Midwife	· Naturopaths	· Nurse
· Occupational Therapist	· Optometrist	· Pharmacist
· Physiotherapist	· Psychologist	· Psychotherapist
· Radiation Technologist	· Respiratory Therapist	· Speech-Language Pathologist
· Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner and Acupuncturist		

Any questions contact:

- Linda Ponting 625-5283 lponting@lakeheadschoos.ca
- John Loovere 625-5133 john_loovere@lakeheadschoos.ca
- Jennifer Tavares 625-5217 jtavares@lakeheadschoos.ca

Absent (half or full day, entered by Classroom Teacher or Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Appointment	Student is absent because of an appointment (e.g. medical, social worker etc.)	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Attendance Counsellor (15d+)	Student has been absent without reason for 15 or more consecutive days	Written referral sent to Attendance Counsellor by Principal	A; C on 16 th day
Extracurricular Activity – Non-School	Participation in organized activity (e.g. guides or scouts, dance competition) that are not school sanctioned	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying event and dates absent	A
Illness	Short term illness	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Other	Unspecified reason or reason that does not fit into existing categories for absence, but Parent has informed school	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Other	Missed school bus	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Out of Town	Student is out of town for known or unknown reason for less than 15 days	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Out of Town	Student is on extended absence of 15 days or more (e.g. vacation, visiting family member who is in hospital) and <i>program of study not provided by school</i>	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from parent specifying event and dates absent; after 15 days remove from enrolment register	A
Sports Event – Non-School	Participation in sports activity that are not school sanctioned (e.g. hockey tournament)	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from parent specifying event and dates absent	A

Vacation	Student is on vacation for less than 15 days	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	A
Vacation	Participation in an extended trip of 15 days and <i>program of study not provided by school</i>	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent; after 15 days remove from enrolment register	A

Excused (half or full day entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Home Instruction	Home Instruction Gr 1 to 8 unrelated to Long Term Medical reasons	Arrangements made by Principal with Education Officer for home instruction	n/a
Modified Day	Gr 1 to 8 Students on documented modified day or schedule with I.E.P.	Modified day is documented accommodation in I.E.P.	n/a
Other	In School Suspension	Inform Parent and teacher	n/a

Non-Instructional (half or full day entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Intensive Behavioural Intervention	JK to Grade 8 Students on I.B.I. Intensive Behavioural Intervention	Documentation about IBI program kept in OSR; retain student on Full-time register and enter Non-Instructional IBI for days not attending	N
Not Scheduled – JK/SK Part Time	JK/SK Students on modified day or schedule with or without I.E.P. or documentation for more than one day a week (e.g. partly Home Schooled, or at Waldorf or Forest School)	Move to a Part-time register that reflects time attending and use N for days not attending	N
Not Scheduled – JK/SK Part Time	JK/SK Students on modified day or schedule with or without I.E.P. or documentation for only half or one	Retain on Full-Time register and use N for day or half day not attending	N

	day a week (e.g. partly Home Schooled, or at Waldorf or Forest School)		
Not Scheduled – Gr 1-8 Part Time	Gr 1 to 8 Students on modified day or schedule for more than one day a week (e.g. modified without I.E.P., partly Home Schooled, or at Waldorf or Forest School)	Move to a Part-time register that reflects time attending and use N for days not attending	N
Not Scheduled – Gr 1-8 Part Time	Gr 1 to 8 Students on modified day or schedule for only half or one day a week (e.g. modified without I.E.P., partly Home Schooled, or at Waldorf or Forest School)	Retain on Full-Time register and use N for day or half day not attending	N

G-Day General Absence (half or full day entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Bereavement	The pupil is under bereavement – short term (15 days or less)	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying dates absent	G
Bus Cancelled	Cancelled school bus	Communication from Bus Company or Transportation Consortium that bus is cancelled	G
Cultural Day	Cultural Day (e.g. traditional hunt, Ontario Culture Days etc.)	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying event and dates absent	G
Exchange Program – Short Term	Exchange Program – short term (less than 5 months)	Retain copy of Exchange Program Agreement that specify dates absent	G
Field Trip – School Related	Participation by a student in a non-class school / Board field trip, or school / Board orchestrated event; Note: if whole class is attending school field trip or event, regular attendance is taken (e.g. Kingfisher)	Permission form from Parent and information from teacher as to dates absent	G

Inclement Weather	Bad weather (e.g., a snowstorm) prevents all pupils from going to school.	School Board has closed the school due to inclement weather.	G
Inclement Weather	Bad weather (e.g., a snowstorm) prevents the pupil (bussed, driven or walker) from going to school	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	G
Legislative Page	Pupil is serving in the Ontario Legislature as a legislative page.	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying dates absent	G
Long Term Medical	Medical Absence – long term (more than 5 days)	Medical documentation* (see list of acceptable practitioners that can write medical notes) specifying dates absent	G
Music Lesson	Pupil is attending private instruction in music for up to a half day in any week.	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent that specify dates absent	G
Other	Student has been told to stay home by the Principal for Safe School reasons.	Principal inform the Parent, student and teacher that the student is to stay at home.	G
Other	An extended trip of 15 days or more (e.g. vacation, visiting family member who is in hospital) and program of study provided by school	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying event and dates absent; documented program of study provided by Principal	G

Continued:

G-Day General Absence (half or full day entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Other	Unsafe conditions or emergency prevents all pupils from attending school.	Communication from School Board that the school has been closed due to unsafe conditions.	G
Plant Breakdown	Plant Breakdown (e.g. no heating, no electricity, no water, or fire etc.) prevents all pupils from attending school.	Communication from School Board that the school has been closed due issues with the plant.	G

Public Health Act Closure	Closure of the school to prevent the spread of disease or to protect the health of students prevents all pupils from attending school.	Thunder Bay District Health Unit has issued a closure of the school	G
Religious Holy Day	The day is a Holy Day for the student	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent specifying event and dates absent	G
School Sports Event	Participation by a student in a non-class School, Board or LEA sports event or sports trip; Note: if whole class is attending sports event or trip, regular attendance is taken (e.g. Creative Movement Jamboree, Track and Field, etc.)	Permission form from Parent and / or teacher/coach list specifying event and dates	G
Staggered Admission JK/SK	Registered Kindergarten student does not have to attend classes until a specified date	JK/SK student has to attend on first day but does not have to attend until a later date	G
Suspension	The pupil has been suspended.	Document Suspension that explains cause and dates suspended; use the appropriate attendance code	G

Admit Slips and Early Dismissal: Reasons from Absence Codes (entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Appointment	Student is late or has to leave early because of an appointment.	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	If late arrival, "L"; if leaving early, "n/a"
Extracurricular Activity – Non-School	Student is late or has to leave early because of participation in organized activity (e.g. guides or scouts, dance competition) that are not school sanctioned	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	
Illness	Student is late or has to leave early because of illness.	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	

Other	Unspecified reason for pupil being late or leaving early but parent has informed school	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	
Other	Student is late because of missing the school bus or because of sleeping in	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	
Sports Event – Non-School	Student is late or has to leave early because of participation in sports activity that are not school sanctioned	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent	

Admit Slips and Early Dismissal: Reasons from Excused Codes (entered by Administration)

Trillium Code	Attendance Situation	Required Action or Documentation	Ministry Code
Modified Day	Gr 1 to 8 Students on documented modified day or schedule with I.E.P. that the student starts late or leaves early and the amount of time is less than half a day	Modified day is documented accommodation in I.E.P.	If late arrival, "L"; if leaving early, "n/a"
Other	Pupil is sent home by Principal for Safe School reasons	Principal informs Parent that pupil is being sent home; record reason in "Comment" section	
Other	For G-day Reason of bereavement, cultural day, inclement weather, music lesson, religious holy day, etc.	Letter, note, phone call or Safe Arrival Entry from Parent; record reason in "Comment" section	
Other	For any G-day Reason of bus cancelled, school field trip, inclement weather, plant breakdown, Public Health Act Closure, School Sports Event, etc.	Communication from Principal, Board, Transportation, Teacher, or Coach record reason in "Comment" section	

Section 3 of the Resource Guide: Examine Student Absenteeism Data

In this section principals will be provided with instructions for how to generate and read the attendance data dashboard. While principals will be encouraged to generate dashboards as necessary, the software program will also be automated to electronically send a monthly dashboard to each elementary school principal at Lakehead Public Schools. This will be an additional motivating factor for principals to look at their school data and to compare the data month-to-month at the very least.

Section 3 Contents:

- Monthly Attendance Dashboards
- How to Generate an Attendance Data Dashboard

Please refer to Portfolio task 1 for more information on the attendance dashboard.

Section 4 of the Resource Guide: Connect with Students and Families

In 2017, Lakehead Public Schools piloted an attendance “nudge letter” at 3 elementary schools. The letter was intended to make sure that parents and guardians were aware of how many days their child had been absent, and to invite them to discuss attendance with their child’s teacher or school administrator. The initial feedback from schools was positive, and the letters were rolled out system-wide during the 2017-2018 school year.

The following is the body of an email that is sent to elementary principals prior to each reporting period:

Hello,

Attendance “nudge” letters can now be generated through Trillium web reports and sent home with report cards!

The purpose of these letters is to hopefully start a dialogue with families who may be struggling with attendance so that they can work together with teachers and school staff to help their child attend school more regularly. It is our suggestion that they be sent home with progress reports and report cards to give a snapshot of attendance to parents and guardians who may not realize how student absences have accumulated, but please feel free to send them home at any time during the year that suits the needs of your school.

Please note that the intent is not to send a letter home with every child, but to choose a threshold of absenteeism (e.g. 10%, 20% or 40% absent) and send letters home with students who meet that criteria. Students who are absent 10% of the days that they are supposed to be in school are considered “chronically absent” according to the Ministry of Education and other relevant research.

To print the letters:

- *log in to Web Reports: trilliumweb.lakeheadschoools.ca*
- *click on “reports” at the top of the screen*
- *choose the school and year from the dropdown menus in the blue bar at the top*
- *expand the “organization” file on the left of the screen*
- *expand the “board reports” file*
- *click on “attendance”*
- *click on “Student Nudge Letter”*
- *Select grade, minimum absence rate, effective date (this is the date printed on the letter), and end date (the last date of attendance you want included in the student data) Jenifer Tavares can provide cut off dates for report cards.*
- *Each grade will need to be done separately.*

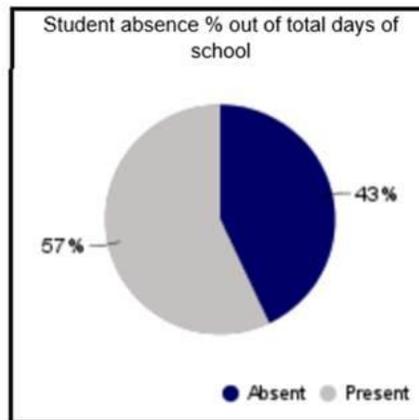
Letters will print on letterhead and look like the sample below. Thank you for continuing to support our efforts to improve student attendance! If you have any questions or require support, please contact Sophie Lis or Jennifer Tavares.

Dear [redacted]

At [redacted] School, we know the attendance has a huge impact on student success and well-being.

Research shows that students who attend do better in school. They are more engaged in their learning and are more likely to graduate. We realize some absences are unavoidable due to illness or other circumstances. We also know that when students miss too much school - regardless of the reasons - it can cause them to fall behind and become discouraged. We know that absences can add up quickly, and we are here to help.

Below is a snapshot of your child's attendance at [redacted] School as of October 27, 2017.



[redacted] has been absent 14.5 days.
[redacted] has been late 7.0 times.

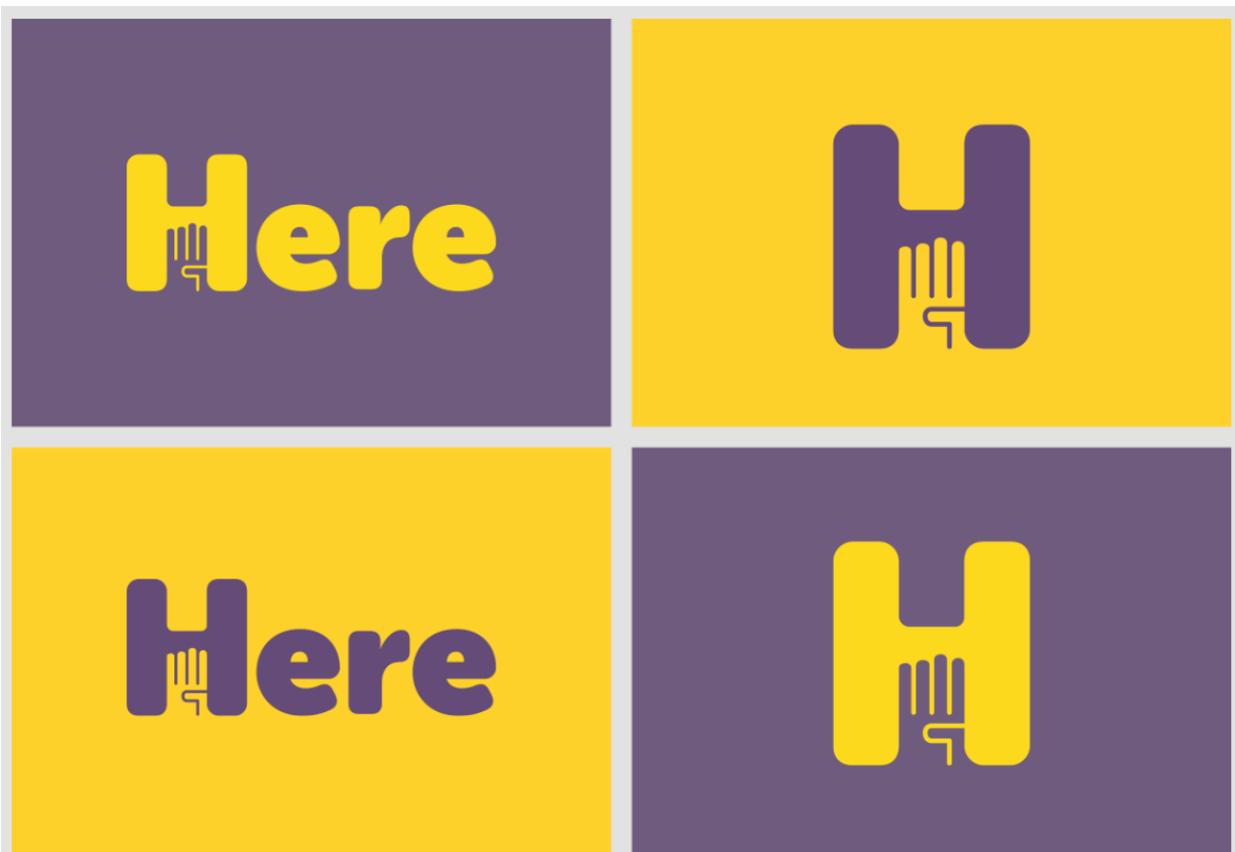
Dealing with challenges to regular attendance can be overwhelming for many families. If you have any questions, concerns, or need more information, please contact your child's teacher or school administration. We are here to help!

Sincerely,

[redacted], Principal

Section 5 of the Resource Guide: Access the HERE Campaign

School boards in the Northern Ontario MISA-PNC region worked with a marketing company to create the “HERE” attendance campaign, which was intended to build awareness around the attendance issues in the region and to provide communication tools to help improve attendance in our schools. A website was developed to provide resources that will assist schools and school boards to share the message that regular school attendance is important. Principals can access the HERE campaign materials at www.heretoolkit.com.



Section 6 of the Resource Guide: Implement Targeted Interventions

Intervention	Description	Who may benefit
Wake up calls	Families sign up for daily wake up calls from the school. The school sets an automated daily phone call using school messenger at the designated time. Messages can be recorded by a favourite teacher, have a school song in the background, or be otherwise engaging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are late for school. • Families with parents who leave the house before students leave for school.
Walking School Bus	Students who do not access transportation to school meet an adult from the school (staff or parent volunteers) at a designated time and in a designated location and the group walks to school together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walkers who are often late for school. • Younger students who are not old enough to walk to school on their own. • Families with parents who leave the house before students leave for school.
Attendance Recognition Awards	School- or class-generated awards for improved attendance reinforces the importance of regular attendance at school and also recognizes student and family commitments to improved attendance. Please note that is important to ensure that the awards target improvement rather than perfect attendance, which very few students can achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and families who are attempting to attend school more regularly.
Designated Caring Adult	Staff members are assigned a student (or multiple students) to build a relationship with. One method is to dedicate 2 minutes each day for 10 days to talk to a particular student. Please note that not only educators can be the designated caring adult. Any adult in the school may be the person who can best connect with a particular student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are, or are becoming disengaged at school. • Students who have attended multiple schools.

<p>Anti-poverty Measures</p>	<p>Initiatives that support students and families who struggle with poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast and lunch programs • School thrift shop (provides free clothing) 	
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Section 7 of the Resource Guide: Tracking Attendance Counsellor Referrals

Principals will track attendance counsellor referrals in this section.



Date Sent:		Received:	
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SOCIAL WORK REFERRAL

ATTENDANCE REFERRAL

Identifying Data:

School:		Student Name:	
Referral Source:		Age:	Birth Date (Day/Month/Year):
Telephone:		Grade:	
Parent/Guardian		Parent/Guardian	
Parent Name:		Parent Name:	
Address:		Address:	
Telephone:		Telephone:	

Reason for Referral:

<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> Social skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Child Welfare Concerns
<input type="checkbox"/> (printout attached YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checkbox"="" type="checkbox/>)</td> <td><input type="/> Personal hygiene	<input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate Clothing & Nutrition	
<input type="checkbox"/> Drastic change in behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom conduct	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative peer relations	<input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Intervention
<input type="checkbox"/> Late/absent	<input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse concerns	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal Ideation
<input type="checkbox"/> Consistent incomplete school work	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Harm
<input type="checkbox"/> School Performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Depression	<input type="checkbox"/> Grief
<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychosis	<input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosed Mental Health Issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Poses Risk to Others in School Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Trauma	<input type="checkbox"/> Undiagnosed Mental Health Issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Sexual Assault	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):

Comments:

School Interventions:

Assessments:

<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual counselling	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Parental involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Family counselling	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Timetable adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to MHAN	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological
<input type="checkbox"/> Program modifications	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech/Languag
<input type="checkbox"/> School day modified	<input type="checkbox"/> SAL Application	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceptional
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological consult	<input type="checkbox"/> IPRC initial or review	(please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance/Conduct monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Assessment & Consultation Class	
<input type="checkbox"/> OSR Search	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Dilico Day Treatment Program	
<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to School's Alternative Ed Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Child Welfare Agency (identify):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Alternative Program (name)	<input type="checkbox"/> CAS <input type="checkbox"/> Dilico Date:	

Current Community Service Providers: Probation CCTB Child Welfare Other:

Comments:

SOCIAL WORK REFERRAL
ATTENDANCE REFERRAL

Page 2

Has the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) been informed of this referral? YES NO

If NO, please explain:

Vice-Principal Comments & Recommendations:

Vice-Principal Signature:

This referral is not to be sent to the School Social Worker/Attendance Counsellor until school interventions to engage the student and parent/guardian have been exhausted.

Attendance letter sent to parent/guardian Date sent:

