

Regional Meeting 4 Best Practices & Highlights: Postcards

Postcard Design

- Make postcards not only informative, but also warm and friendly to create a positive reception from families. This can help encourage dialogue with families about improving student attendance.
- Postcards should be easy to read so that parents/caregivers understand their purpose and the information that postcards are communicating. There should be enough room for teachers to fill out content that the student missed.

System for Intervention Implementation

- If teachers are filling out and sending home postcards, consider having a weekly document to easily inform them which students were absent that week and how many total days students were absent for quarter/semester.
- Consider if it makes sense to involve other members of your staff to help fill out postcards. For example, you may be able to have an attendance secretary fill out student name and attendance data to give to the teacher to fill out content missed.
- Is there a specific day (Monday vs Friday, or other day) that makes the most sense for your district to send out postcards? Does your school already have a process in place where families are accustomed to receiving information on a certain day (for example, Friday Folders)?
- For remote or hybrid students: Are you able to mail, e-mail or text an image of postcard to communicate with parent/caregiver?
- If relying on sending postcards home with students, have a backup plan if families do not receive their child's postcard. For example, a student is absent when on the day postcards are sent home or parent/caregiver are not receiving postcards.
- Have a plan for when parents/caregivers contact school for support around their student's attendance. Will they reach out to teacher directly, guidance counselor, social worker, administrator, etc.?

Miscellaneous

- Tie the postcards into other discussions about attendance with families as a reference to create a holistic approach.
- Before officially launching, do a practice run of your postcard system to ensure staff know their roles and make last minute improvements.
- Ensure that you have internal stakeholders, such as teachers and attendance staff, bought in to the process of sending home postcards. This will help ensure that everyone communicates consistently about the importance of attendance.

Regional Meeting 4 Best Practices & Highlights: Mentoring

Launching Mentorship Intervention

- Have students or teachers pick their mentor/mentee match based on someone they already feel like they have a good relationship with or who may have similar interests.
 - If a student still needs a mentor, ask the student what their interests are and find another staff member with similar interests. For example, for a student who loves to read, a librarian may make great mentor or a student who enjoys sports may make a good mentee match with a physical education teacher.
- Create a space/time during the school day to have the initial mentoring meeting. This initial meeting is crucial in getting the mentorship off to a great start and occurring regularly.
 - For example, you can present the mentorship program to all participants (mentors and mentees) and then allow for time at the end for participants to have their initial meeting.

Mentor Meetings

- Have time built into school day to have meetings or encourage that meetings take place on certain day of the week where there is time to do so.
- In the beginning, use the mentor meetings to set goals with students (these can be personal and/or academic). Then you can use the weekly mentor meetings to check in on mentees' progress towards their goals.
- Give mentees the power to approach mentor meetings to discuss topics such as homework and attendance. Use this as a time to build relationships with students and not necessarily an extension of schoolwork. This can help build positive rapport between then mentor and meet and not make students interpret having a mentor as being a punishment.

Miscellaneous

- Have an intervention point person who supports mentors or supplies additional resources.
- Create a form to track mentor meeting occurrences and data from meetings.
 - Using the data from their internal form, one district created a graph that showed students who were meeting more regularly with their mentor had a decrease in absences. They presented this data to staff, which in turn helped build momentum among mentors when they saw the impact that their mentoring was having.
- Form a Professional Learning Community to engage with mentors to make improvements to your school's mentorship program, share best practices and successes, as well as help troubleshoot any challenges that come up.

Regional Meeting 4 Best Practices & Highlights: Personalized Messaging

Framing of Personalized Messages

- For students that have no absences or only one absence, create a congratulatory message to make the intervention more personalized and encourage good attendance.
- Use this as an opportunity to connect with caregivers. Some responses include making sure their child's attendance is up to date or asking for additional supports.
 - Expand the conversation beyond attendance while you have a caregiver's attention. See if there are any other areas a child is struggling in beyond attendance and have a plan to help provide supports or connect with resources.
- Create a perception that receiving a message is not a punishment and is instead informational and proactive when informing families about the intervention.

Sending out Personalized Messages

- Identify which method of sending out messages is better for communicating with families. Do you notice caregivers are more likely to see and read messages if they are sent by phone call, text message or email?
- Messages should be sent consistently every 4-6 weeks. Is there a time where sending messages seems more to line up well with your school calendar? For example, consider sending messages out at the midpoint and end of a quarter or at the end of each month.
- This intervention can be handled by a small group due to the automation of sending out messages using a template and a communication tool. If sending across multiple schools, consider have one person in charge of sending messages (this is typically an administrator) at each school.
- Test out your communication tool to see what its capabilities are and how to best automate sending messages.
- Create a plan for collecting and ensuring that you have the most up-to-date parent/caregiver contact information before launching.

Regional Meeting 4 Best Practices & Highlights: Family Engagement

Framing of Outreach

- Ensure messages are short and to the point. This makes them more digestible and easier for caregivers to respond, if needed.
- Make sure that outreach allows for two-way communication. This is an opportunity to start having conversations about providing support(s) for their student and connecting them to additional resources at the school and in your larger community.
- Know your audience – keep in mind how families respond to certain conversations and tailor communication for what has worked best with them.
- Despite using a communication tool, this intervention is grounded in building relationships. A tool is only as good as its user!

Systems for Outreach

- You may have to identify a time and day of the week to send out messages to caregivers to best reach their attention. For example, you may want to consider sending out a message on a Sunday or Monday, early in the week, versus waiting until the end of the week.
- Does your district have the ability to create consistency when communicating certain types of messages? For example, for more general pro-tip and informational texts, consider sending these out on the same day every week using your school's messaging software.
- Designate specific personnel to be able to identify school supports and community resources for students/families.
- Intentionally match students with a family engagement interventionist. This helps create a system that works best not only for families, but for staff that are helping implement the intervention.
 - Be strategic on who (staff) you are involving so that the intervention responsibilities do not fall on a small group of individuals.
 - Keep in mind that this is an opportunity to build lasting relationships with families. Consider keeping students matched with the same interventionist for as long as possible.
- If using a specific communication tool, how will you get families to sign up? You may want to consider signing up relevant families and then make messages opt-out.
- Before launching, make sure you have the most up-to-date contact information for students. If using text messages, create a way to identify types of phone numbers to make sending messages to cell phones easier.