Attendance Plan Reflection Tool *for Local Education Agencies* (Version 2.0)

Contents

Introduction

Taking attendance serves many purposes. It is one of the few measures providing regular and timely feedback on the extent of students' access to instruction and engagement in learning. As a result of COVID-19, local education agencies (LEAs) across the country have experienced disruptions to their traditional instructional delivery model, and some continue to operate in remote,[1] hybrid,[2] or other alternative socially distanced settings. These nontraditional instructional settings have raised questions about the most effective and meaningful approaches to measuring, collecting, and reporting attendance data and strategies for using these data to inform student supports.

> **Defining Absences and Attendance**
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> The U.S. Department of Education offers guidance on defining student absences and setting attendance thresholds. While all states collect accountability data on chronic absenteeism, state-level guidance on defining attendance and chronic absences varies.

What is the purpose of this tool? The Student Engagement and Attendance Center developed this tool to guide LEA staff in a review of existing attendance plans and approaches to identify opportunities to strengthen those plans across instructional settings. This tool comprises considerations and reflection questions to help LEAs identify areas in which they can strengthen. This tool should not be construed as a compliance instrument; rather, it is intended as a technical assistance resource to support state education agency (SEA) and LEA student engagement and attendance activities.

Who should use this tool? The tool's primary intended users are LEA staff who work closely with attendance data, attendance policies, or attendance-related supports. LEA leadership looking for a set of high-level reflection questions may consider the callout box on the next page, which summarizes the overarching questions in each section of this tool.

> **Considerations for State and Regional Education Agencies**
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> SEAs and other intermediaries that support LEAs (e.g., education service centers) may also use this tool for distribution to LEAs as guidance on the contents of district attendance plans. To complement this LEA tool, the Center has also developed a companion *SEA Attendance Supports Reflection Tool* for use by SEAs in establishing state-level attendance policies or guidance.

What types of planning materials might LEAs review when engaging in reflection with this tool? This reflection tool could be used with

- continuity of learning plans in response to COVID-19 (e.g., remote learning, hybrid learning, other reopening or recovery plans);
- the attendance portion of an LEA or SEA COVID-19 reopening or recovery plan; or
- the attendance portion of an LEA handbook.

How might this tool be used in the context of disruptions to schooling? While COVID-19 and the resulting disruptions to instructional delivery were the impetus for developing this tool, LEAs may consider other scenarios (e.g., snow days, summer school, natural disasters) in which similar LEA guidance on attendance in a variety of instructional settings may be applied.

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[1] In this tool, remote learning refers to instruction with students not in the school classroom (i.e., learning at a distance).

[2] Hybrid learning refers to a combination of instruction, where some students are in person in the school classroom and others are remote (i.e., remote learning). Hybrid refers to the myriad situations covered: where the populations are static, where situations vary by day of the week, etc.

Attendance Plan Reflection Tool for LEAs

This document has three sections: (1) overall approach, (2) continuity of learning, and (3) stakeholder engagement. Each section has one or two overarching questions, followed by a set of considerations for your team to discuss to assess the strengths and areas for improvement in your attendance plan. In general, the questions get more detailed as you progress within each section. If there is insufficient information to provide a rating for some questions in a given section or the question is not relevant to your context, you may wish to skip that question or come back to it at a later date.

> For each consideration, reflect on whether your attendance plan defines an approach for each relevant instructional setting: in person, hybrid, and remote. Some approaches may be consistent across instructional settings, while others may have specific differences.

> Record a self-assessment rating for each consideration using a simple scale (see next page). In cases where the considerations include several subpoints, you may rate each consideration separately or indicate a holistic rating for the overall approach. If an instructional setting is not applicable to your district (e.g., your district does not provide hybrid instruction) or a particular consideration is not applicable to that setting, indicate "N/A."

> Following each section is a set of reflection questions to guide your next steps as a team. This tool is designed to inform continuous improvement and is not intended to be used for accountability purposes.

Instructional Setting Definitions

In person: traditional school setting, in which all students are in the classroom

Remote: virtual learning, in which students connect to the classroom through a video conferencing platform and/or learning management system

Hybrid: may refer to settings in which students learn in person for part of the week and remotely for the remainder; may also refer to settings in which some students are in person and others are remote.

Attendance Plan Reflection Tool for LEAs: Overarching Questions

Section 1. Overall Approach
- Does your existing attendance plan address physical school closures and/or remote learning? Does your attendance plan provide guidance for schools on how learning will take place and how attendance will be taken during disruptions to traditional schooling?

Section 2. Continuity of Learning
- **2a. Learning Access.** What is your system for monitoring access to learning in all instructional settings?
- **2b. Pupil Participation.** How does your district define student participation/attendance in instruction, and does participation/attendance differ across learning settings?
- **2c. Pupil Progress.** Does your plan discuss how the attendance data will be collected and analyzed to support students?

Section 3. Stakeholder Engagement
- Has your LEA clearly defined who the key stakeholders are and how they will be engaged in attendance planning and communication?

Self-Assessment Scale

Strength	Adequate	Needs Improvement	Not Applicable
S	A	NI	N/A
Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan	*Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA*

Section 1. Overall Approach

This section focuses on the **overall approach of the attendance plan,** including instructional setting and consideration of how various settings may affect different student groups.

Overarching Question
Does your existing attendance plan address physical school closures and/or remote learning? Specifically, does your attendance plan provide guidance for schools on how learning will take place and how attendance will be taken during disruptions to traditional schooling, such as weather closures, maintenance closures, or public health closures?

To unpack the overarching question, please reflect on the considerations below. For each consideration, reflect on whether your attendance plan defines an approach for each relevant instructional setting: in person, hybrid, and remote. Record a self-assessment rating for each consideration using the self-assessment scale.

Self-Assessment Scale

Strength	Adequate	Needs Improvement	Not Applicable
S	A	NI	N/A
Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan	*Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA*

Overall approach	In person	Hybrid	Remote
Considerations 1. **Define attendance across instructional settings.** Our attendance plan defines each potential instructional setting (remote, hybrid, in person) students will participate in during the school year for which the plan will be used (e.g., identifies which students will attend in person, the criteria used to determine changes between settings of instruction, frequency of evaluation and refinement of plans).			
2. **Identify affected student groups.** Our plan describes a process for determining which student groups need support most. Specifically, the plan includes ▪ information about which students or schools experienced chronic absenteeism prior to COVID-19 closures; and ▪ information about whether and how the pandemic exacerbated attendance or engagement concerns during 2020–21 for specific student groups (e.g., by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, housing status).			

Section 3. Stakeholder Engagement

In this section, you will consider **stakeholder involvement in planning and communication about attendance**. Stakeholders are individuals with an interest in this plan (e.g., parents, guardians, staff) and partners in the collection of attendance data and supports (e.g., nonprofit organizations, out-of-school-time providers). Stakeholders are involved in the development of the plan and its implementation. They also are recipients of the data and communication produced as a part of the plan; therefore, this section also includes stakeholder communication.

Overarching Question
Has your LEA clearly defined who the key stakeholders are and how they will be engaged in attendance planning and communication?

To unpack the overarching question, please reflect on the considerations below. For each consideration, reflect on whether your attendance plan defines an approach for each relevant instructional setting: in person, hybrid, and remote. Record a self-assessment rating for each consideration using the self-assessment scale.

Self-Assessment Scale

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Section 3 Reflection

Use this space to reflect on your self-assessment ratings for this section of the tool.

As you look at your responses across this section, what are the plan's strengths? Did any of these strengths surprise you? *These are areas you rated "S," or Strength.*	
Where are there gaps in the planning that suggest needed improvements? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work? *These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.*	

Overall Reflection

Use this space to reflect on your completion of the tool.

As you look at your responses across this tool, did anything surprise you?	
As you got farther down the tool, did your more detailed responses require you to revisit your overall approach?	
As you reflect on your responses to the tool, are there other stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, community-based organizations) with whom you should review your answers?	
Did your overall approach cause you to rethink some of the ways you approached continuity of learning or stakeholder engagement?	
List the action steps you would like to take based on your reflections.	