



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

Contents

Introduction	1
Attendance Plan Reflection Tool for LEAs	2
Section 1. Overall Approach.....	3
Section 2. Continuity of Learning.....	6
2a. Learning Access	6
2b. Pupil Participation.....	10
2c. Pupil Progress	13
Section 3. Stakeholder Engagement	16

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.

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.

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.

Defining Absences and Attendance

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.

Considerations for State and Regional Education Agencies

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.

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 <i>Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan</i>	A <i>Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements</i>	NI <i>Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately</i>	N/A <i>Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA</i>

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 <i>Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan</i>	A <i>Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements</i>	NI <i>Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately</i>	N/A <i>Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA</i>

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 1 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? Do any of them require immediate action? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work?

These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.

How do you analyze and use data to identify and support affected student groups across instructional settings?

Based on your ratings and responses, what action steps will you take?

Section 2. Continuity of Learning

2a. Learning Access

Regardless of the instructional setting, all students need access to instruction, whether in the school building or remotely via distance learning. This section addresses **how the LEA’s plan addresses student access**.

Overarching Question
What is your system for monitoring access to learning in all instructional settings?

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
<i>Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan</i>	<i>Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements</i>	<i>Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately</i>	<i>Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA</i>

Learning access	In person	Hybrid	Remote
1. Communicate system access. Our plan outlines the system(s) and data requirements for accessing instruction, with an eye for ease and consistency for all stakeholders for each instructional setting.			

Learning access	In person	Hybrid	Remote
<p>2. Support student and family access to instruction. Our plan describes how to help students with access to instruction for each instructional setting. Specifically, our plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ describes how to access transportation and supplies (e.g., class materials, outerwear, masks); ▪ describes how to develop digital literacy skills and how to access devices and connect to the internet ▪ provides clearly articulated schedules for participating in instruction across instructional settings; ▪ explains how to access IT support (for students and families); and ▪ describes how the district will identify and address patterns of students lacking access to instruction by school, student group, or grade level. <p>Note: A district may consider several ratings (for each subpoint) or a holistic rating about the general strength of its plan in this area.</p>			
<p>3. Reflect on related district policies. We have reviewed our district policies on topics adjacent to attendance to assess their impact on a problem-solving (versus punitive) approach that can support or hinder student attendance, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ truancy policies; ▪ disenrollment (e.g., withdrawing students); ▪ seat time; and ▪ flexible scheduling. 			
<p>4. Support students in transition. Our plan clarifies how the LEA will ensure access to instruction for students new to the school or district, specifically during the key transition grades (e.g., kindergarten, grade 6, grade 9) or following a midyear transfer to a new school.</p>			

Learning access	In person	Hybrid	Remote
<p>5. Maintain records of student access. Our plan describes how LEAs will regularly update which students have or do not have access to instruction by school, grade, or student population (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness).</p>			
<p>6. Support families with access. Our plan provides support to families that may experience challenges helping their children access instruction in each instructional setting—specifically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ families that speak languages other than English; ▪ families with limited reading literacy; ▪ families with low digital literacy (or low digital access); ▪ families new to the school or district; and ▪ families of children attending school for the first time. <p>Note: A district may consider several ratings (for each subpoint) or a holistic rating about the general strength of its plan in this area.</p>			
<p>7. Train instructional staff. Our plan includes training and professional development for staff who need to implement instruction across various instructional settings.</p>			
<p>8. Address chronic access issues. Our plan outlines longer term efforts to address root causes of chronic absence that may be related to challenges with access to instruction (e.g., leveraging internet service providers to reach areas with limited coverage, providing in-school health clinics).</p>			

Section 2a 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.

Where applicable, are the metrics in the plan similar across instructional settings?

Are there data verification and validation processes in place for the data collected across all settings?

2b. Pupil Participation

This section addresses the questions on **measuring student attendance consistently** across all learning settings and ensuring the related data are usable for their various purposes. The questions address policies for teachers, administrators, and district staff and focus on ensuring schools have the tools and information needed to collect the necessary data.

Overarching Questions

How does your district define student participation/attendance in instruction? Does participation/attendance differ across learning settings (i.e., in person, hybrid, remote)?

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
<i>Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of our plan</i>	<i>Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements</i>	<i>Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately</i>	<i>Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA</i>

Pupil participation	In person	Hybrid	Remote
Considerations 1. Document daily attendance. Our plan describes how the LEA will document attendance/participation for each school day in each instructional setting.			Empty cell for user for record self-assessment scale rating

Pupil participation	In person	Hybrid	Remote
2. Train on taking attendance. Our plan provides training on processes for taking attendance/participation in each instructional setting.			
3. Define attendance indicators. Our plan describes indicators and data the LEA will monitor by student group, grade, school (including data disaggregated by grade, disability, race/ethnicity, income, and special needs to understand and address inequitable patterns).			
4. Review attendance data. Our plan describes how school site administrators and district leaders will regularly review attendance data (including data disaggregated by grade, disability, race/ethnicity, income, and special needs to understand and address inequitable patterns).			
5. Collect qualitative contextual data about attendance. Our plan ensures schools have the tools to collect qualitative information about the reasons students miss school to determine where schools need to concentrate or adapt support services.			Empty cell for user for record self-assessment scale rating

Section 2b 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.

Where applicable, are the metrics in the plan similar across instructional settings?

Are there data verification and validation processes in place for the data collected across all settings?

2c. Pupil Progress

This section addresses the questions about **how the data gathered will be used to inform decision-making and determine student supports**. The questions address policies for teachers, administrators, and district staff and focus on ensuring schools have the tools and information needed to collect the necessary data.

Overarching Question

Does your plan discuss how the attendance data will be collected and analyzed to support students?

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
<i>Our plan addresses this issue well; strength of the plan</i>	<i>Our plan adequately addresses this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements</i>	<i>Our plan does not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately</i>	<i>Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable to our LEA</i>

Pupil progress	In person	Hybrid	Remote
Considerations 1. Use attendance data to assess learning implications. Our plan discusses how the LEA will use data on absences (in each instructional setting) to examine if a student is falling behind because they are missing school or have difficulty learning in class.			

Pupil progress	In person	Hybrid	Remote
<p>2. Calculate chronic absenteeism. Our plan ensures the LEA regularly calculates and monitors when students are chronically absent (ideally weekly or at least monthly).</p>			
<p>3. Disaggregate chronic absenteeism data and analyze results. Our plan ensures the LEA regularly disaggregates student data by grade, school, and student population for each instructional setting and analyzes chronic absenteeism across groups (ideally weekly or at least monthly).</p>			
<p>4. Define tiered engagement approaches for student engagement. Our plan articulates a tiered approach for each instructional setting, beginning with universal supports to prevent disengagement. The plan also explains what behaviors or data activate higher tiers of support.</p>			
<p>5. Identify disengaged students who need support. Our plan describes the data used to identify and monitor individual students who are disengaging and require intervention for each instructional setting.</p>			
<p>6. Support student engagement. Our plan discusses how schools will motivate attendance by creating a sense of belonging, connection, and support in each instructional setting.</p> <p>Note: In this area, your attendance plan may address social-emotional learning, behavior, trauma, and academics and take a tiered approach (e.g., PBIS, RTI, MTSS).</p>			

Section 2c 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.

Where applicable, are the metrics in the plan similar across instructional settings?

Are there data verification and validation processes in place for the data collected across all settings?

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

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

Stakeholder engagement	In person	Hybrid	Remote
<p>Considerations</p> <p>1. Engage stakeholders across instructional settings. Our plan articulates who the key stakeholders are and how the LEA will engage with the stakeholders in each instructional setting.</p>			
<p>2. Integrate stakeholder perspectives. Our plan explains how the district engages stakeholders who are representative of the student population to understand potential challenges facing families in each instructional setting.</p>			
<p>3. Communicate stakeholder preferences. Our plan explains how the district will summarize and address concerns shared by stakeholders overall (especially families) and populations with unique needs (e.g., English language learners, students with disabilities, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, students with limited technology access).</p>			
<p>4. Maintain contact information. Our plan includes a description of the LEA’s procedures to maintain and verify contact information for families or guardians throughout the school year in different instructional settings.</p>			
<p>5. Notify family or guardian of absences. Our plan provides information and training on how to notify families or guardians of absences in each instructional setting.</p>			

Stakeholder engagement	In person	Hybrid	Remote
<p>6. Notify family or guardian of weekly engagement. Our plan contains a communication plan that addresses how the LEA will inform parents or guardians about their student’s daily and weekly participation in learning in each instructional setting. Specifically, the plan describes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ translation or interpretation services for families speaking languages other than English; ▪ use of tools or resources such as family resource centers or family communication apps; ▪ direct communication with secondary students about their attendance; and ▪ professional development for educators on effective communication with families despite potential communication barriers. <p>Note: A district may consider several ratings (for each subpoint) or a holistic rating about the general strength of its plan in this area.</p>			
<p>7. Summarize attendance across courses for secondary students. For secondary schools, or when students have several teachers, our plan indicates how the information will be shared with parents or guardians (e.g., one text about missing several content classes or several texts from respective teachers). Specifically, communication clearly states which classes the student missed, reminds families or guardians of the schedule, and (if applicable) provides login information and a contact for questions.</p>			

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.