Attendance Supports Reflection Tool *for State Education Agencies* (Version 2.0)

Introduction

Taking attendance serves many purposes. It is one of the few measures providing regular and timely feedback on the extent to which students have access to instruction and are engaged 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, hybrid, or other alternative socially distanced settings. These nontraditional instructional settings have raised questions about the most effective and meaningful approaches to measuring, collecting, reporting, and using attendance data.

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.

What is the purpose of this tool? The Student Engagement and Attendance Center developed this tool to help state education agencies (SEAs) review their attendance guidance and supports to identify opportunities to strengthen these supports for LEAs across instructional settings. This tool comprises considerations and reflection questions to help SEAs identify areas in which they can strengthen attendance guidance and supports for LEAs, and should not be construed as a compliance instrument.

Who should use this tool? SEAs play a powerful role in providing guidance and expertise to LEAs grappling with the realities of collecting attendance data and providing supports. The tool's primary intended users are SEA staff who work closely with attendance data, attendance policies, or attendance-related supports. SEA 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 SEAs review when engaging in reflection with this tool? This reflection tool can be used with

Considerations for LEAs

SEAs and other intermediaries that support LEAs (e.g., education service centers) may also use the companion *Attendance Plan Reflection Tool for LEAs* for distribution to LEAs as guidance on the contents of district attendance plans.

▸ 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 plans or guidance; or

▸ guidance for funding or accountability pertaining to attendance.

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, SEAs may consider other scenarios (e.g., snow days, summer school, natural disasters) in which similar SEA guidance on attendance in a variety of instructional settings may be applied.

Attendance Supports Reflection Tool for SEAs

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 consideration questions for your team to discuss in assessing the strengths and areas for improvement in your attendance guidance and supports. 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 guidance and supports define an approach for each relevant instructional setting: in person, hybrid, and remote. Some guidance and supports 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 below). In cases where criteria include several subpoints, you may rate each consideration separately or indicate a holistic rating. If an instructional setting is not applicable to your context (e.g., your state does not allow hybrid instruction) or a particular criterion 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

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Attendance Supports Reflection Tool for SEAs: Overarching Questions

Section 1. Overall Approach
- Do your existing attendance supports and guidance address physical school closures and/or remote learning? Do you provide guidance for LEAs 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 Progress.** Do your supports and guidance discuss how the attendance data will be collected and analyzed to support LEAs and, ultimately, students?

Section 3. Stakeholder Engagement
- Has your SEA clearly defined the key stakeholders 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
We address this issue well; strength of our support	*We adequately address this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*We do not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable in our state*

Section 1. Overall Approach

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

Overarching Question
Do your existing attendance policy, guidance, and supports address physical school closures and/or remote learning? Specifically, do your attendance guidance and supports provide direction for LEAs on how learning should take place and how attendance should 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 guidance and supports set expectations 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
We address this issue well; strength of our support	*We adequately address this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*We do not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable in our state*

Overall approach	In person	Hybrid	Remote
Considerations			
1. **Define attendance across instructional settings.** We provide a statewide definition of attendance that includes guidance on what constitutes a day of instruction for each instructional setting (fully remote, hybrid, fully in person) in which students will participate.			
2. **Provide uniformity of definitions**. We have provided LEAs with guidance and support on how to accurately measure attendance (e.g., participation, mastery) for all students in all grades.			
3. **Provide guidance on attendance-related policy.** We have provided LEAs with guidance and support on how attendance and chronic absenteeism factor into state policy (e.g., hold harmless policies, funding decisions).			
4. **Provide guidance on use of data**. We have provided LEAs with guidance on coding and updating data within their district's student information systems and our state data system to use data as a diagnostic tool to help determine why students may not be attending and as a reflection tool.			
5. **Provide data analysis.** We have conducted data analysis and ▪ used it to determine our next steps and supports; and ▪ provided it to LEAs for their own decision-making.			
6. **Identify affected student groups.** We require LEAs to disaggregate attendance data by student population groups and grades to determine which student groups need support most.			

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 your state's strengths? Did any of these strengths surprise you? *These are areas you rated "S," or Strength.*	
Where are there gaps in the support that suggest needed improvements? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work? *These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.*	
How do you analyze the attendance data you receive and use these data to improve guidance on definitions or data collection?	
Based on your ratings and responses, what action steps will you take?	

Section 2. Continuity of Learning

2a. Learning Access

Regardless of instructional setting, all students need access to instruction, whether in the school building or remotely via distance learning. This section addresses **how you support LEAs in student access to instruction across all instructional settings**.

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 supports define 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
We address this issue well; strength of our support	*We adequately address this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*We do not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable in our state*

Learning access	In person	Hybrid	Remote
1. **Provide learning management system or infrastructure**: We have provided, or provided guidance on, the system(s), access, and data requirements for any learning management system (LMS). ▪ We have provided the infrastructure (technology, funding, etc.) necessary to assist LEAs with accessing or obtaining an LMS that meets state requirements and does not hinder student access to learning. ▪ We have provided guidance on data reporting requirements pertaining to data that may be located within an LMS.			
2. **Support student and family access to instruction.** We have codified best practices around supporting student and family access to instruction, such as ▪ how to access transportation and supplies (e.g., class materials, outerwear, masks); how to develop digital literacy, access devices, and connect to the internet; how to set up IT supports (for students and families); how to communicate with students and families to ensure they can access these supports; ▪ how to identify and address patterns of students lacking access to instruction by school, student group, or grade level; ▪ how to best support student populations for whom instruction through technology may not be appropriate (e.g., students with disabilities, early childhood); and ▪ how to leverage resources to support necessary equipment purchases and establish IT supports. Note: You may consider several ratings (for each subpoint) or a holistic rating about the general strength of your support in this area.			

Learning access	In person	Hybrid	Remote
3. **Reflect on related state policies.** We have reviewed our state laws and 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 ▪ truancy laws and policies; ▪ disenrollment (e.g., withdrawing students); ▪ seat time; and ▪ flexible scheduling.			
4. **Support families with access.** We have codified best practices around supporting family access to education (instruction, educators, meetings, school building, technology, etc.), such as ▪ families that speak languages other than English; ▪ families with limited reading literacy; ▪ families with low digital literacy; ▪ families new to the school or district; and ▪ families of children attending school for the first time. Note: You may consider several ratings (for each subpoint) or a holistic rating about the general strength of your support in this area.			
5. **Address chronic access issues.** We have plans for 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).			

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 your state's strengths? Did any of these strengths surprise you? *These are areas you rated "S," or Strength.*	
Where are there gaps in the support that suggest needed improvements? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work? *These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.*	
Are there data verification and validation processes in place for the data collected across all settings?	
In responding to these questions, what immediate actions did you want to take?	

2b. Pupil Progress

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

Overarching Question
Do your supports and guidance discuss how the attendance data will be collected and analyzed to support LEAs and, ultimately, students?

To unpack the overarching question, please reflect on the considerations below. For each consideration, reflect on whether your attendance supports define 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
We address this issue well; strength of our support	*We adequately address this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*We do not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable in your state*

Pupil progress	In person	Hybrid	Remote
Considerations 1. **Use attendance data to assess learning implications.** We provide guidance to LEAs on using attendance data 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
2. **Calculate chronic absenteeism.** We encourage (and, if applicable, require) LEAs to calculate and monitor when students are chronically absent at regular intervals (ideally weekly or at least monthly).			
3. **Disaggregate chronic absenteeism data and analyze results.** We encourage (and, if applicable, require) LEAs to disaggregate data by grade, school, and student population for each instructional setting and analyze chronic absenteeism across groups at regular intervals (ideally weekly or at least monthly).			
4. **Use attendance data to prioritize supports to LEAs.** We use attendance data to identify schools and districts with higher absenteeism rates to understand which students are most likely to be absent within the state and within LEAs.			
5. **Define tiered engagement guidance and supports for student engagement.** We codify guidance and supports that incorporate a tiered approach for each instructional setting, beginning with universal supports to prevent disengagement. We also explain what behaviors or data activate higher tiers of support. Our codified guidance and supports describe how ▪ to use data to identify individual students who are disengaging and require intervention for each instructional setting and how to use data to monitor students assigned to interventions; ▪ schools can motivate attendance by creating a sense of belonging, connection, and support in each instructional setting; and ▪ to evaluate suspension and behavior data in concert with absenteeism data to assess which students are experiencing chronic absence and also struggling with behavior. Note: In this area, your attendance support may address social-emotional learning, behavior, trauma, and academics and take a tiered approach (e.g., PBIS, RTI, MTSS).			

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 your state's strengths? Did any of these strengths surprise you? *These are areas you rated "S," or Strength.*	
Where are there gaps in the support that suggest needed improvements? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work? *These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.*	
Are there data verification and validation processes in place for the data collected across all settings?	
In responding to these questions, what immediate actions did you want to take?	

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 supports and guidance (e.g., parents, staff), partners in the collection of attendance data and provision of supports (e.g., LEAs, nonprofit organizations, out-of-school-time providers), and colleagues (e.g., other departments within the SEA, state administration organizations, teacher organizations, state boards of education). Stakeholders are involved in the development of supports and guidance and their implementation. They also are recipients of the data and communication produced as a part of any implementation; therefore, this section also includes stakeholder communication.

Overarching Question
Has your SEA 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 supports and guidance provide direction for LEAs 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
We address this issue well; strength of our support	*We adequately address this issue, but our approach would benefit from improvements*	*We do not address this issue; urgent gap to address immediately*	*Instructional setting and/or situation is not applicable in our state*

Stakeholder engagement	In person	Hybrid	Remote

Considerations
 	
1. **Promote interagency collaboration and review of data.** We describe 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).
 	
    ▪ We use these data to identify root causes of chronic absenteeism, including those with interagency implications.
    ▪ We provide guidance and, at times, assistance on how stakeholders can work with LEAs to support improved attendance, share data across agencies, and otherwise coordinate services and supports.
    ▪ We specifically promote partnerships around MTSS, truancy, and other interventions.			

2. **Integrate stakeholder perspectives.** Our supports and guidance explain how the SEA engages stakeholders who are representative of the student population to understand potential challenges facing families in each instructional setting.			

3. **Communicate best practices.** We share best practices with LEAs around
 	
    ▪ communication;
    ▪ contact information;
    ▪ family notification; and
    ▪ overall stakeholder engagement.			

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 state's strengths? Did any of these strengths surprise you? *These are areas you rated "S," or Strength.*	
Where are there gaps in the support that suggest needed improvements? What do you need to overcome barriers to this work? *These are areas you rated "NI," or Needs Improvement.*	
In responding to these questions, what immediate actions did you want to take?	

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 reflect on your responses to the tool, are there other stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, community-based organizations) with whom you should review your answers?	
As you got farther down the tool, did your more detailed responses require you to revisit your overall approach?	
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.	