

# Attendance Improvement Initiative “Every Day Counts”

Resource for Parents/Guardians & Community  
Stakeholders





## **Attendance Improvement Initiative “Every Day Counts”**

Tansi, Edlánat’e, Dear Parents/Guardians and Community Stakeholders:

Northland School Division No. 61 (NSD61) is pleased to provide you this resource! In 2014, NSD61 launched the *Attendance Improvement Initiative “Every Day Counts”*. This initiative is part of NSD61’s commitment to achieving the second goal of the Ministry of Education Business Plan: “The achievement gap between First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and all other students is eliminated” – “Eliminate the Gap”.

Since implementation, overall student attendance has improved by 3%. This improvement is attributed to the schools developing strategies using the Attendance Improvement Planning Tool <http://nsd61.ca/download/73400>.

While the division is pleased with school-based efforts, overall student attendance improvement is not possible without your support. This resource explains:

- What Parents and Guardians Can Do
- What Community Members and Community Leaders Can Do
- When Absences Become a Concern
- Difference between Excused Absences and Unexcused Absences
- Consequences of Absences for students
- Data analysis showing a correlation between literacy achievement and student attendance

## What Parents and Guardians Can Do

- Know your child's teachers. Let teachers know that you want to be contacted immediately about any concerns.
- Help your child understand NSD61's student attendance procedure <http://nsd61.ca/download/21965>.
- Contact the principal to learn more about the school's attendance improvement strategies, attendance protocol and *School Attendance Committee* meetings.
- Watch for signs that your child might be at risk.
- If your child is absent, work with the teacher to make sure she or he has an opportunity to learn and make up for the academics missed.
- Attend parent-teacher interviews and community engagement events and regularly seek out information about your child's progress.
- Seek out and take advantage of programs that expose your child to educational and career opportunities in the community.



## **What Parents and Guardians Can Do**

- Establish and stick to basic routines (going to bed early, waking up on time, etc.) that will help your child develop the habit of on-time attendance.
- Teach your child that attending school is non-negotiable unless they are truly sick.
- Contact the school when your child is absent.
- Whenever possible try to make appointments during non-school hours on non-instructional days
- Come up with back up plans for who to turn to (another family member, a neighbor or fellow parents) to help you get your child to school if something comes up (e.g. another child gets sick, your car breaks down, [missed the bus] etc.).
- Reach out for help if you are experiencing tough times (e.g. transportation, unstable housing, loss of a job, health problems) that make it difficult to get your child to school. Other parents, your child's teacher, principal, social worker, school [counselor], afterschool providers or community agencies can help you problem solve or connect you to a needed resource.

## **What Community Agencies, Community Members and Community Leaders Can Do**

- Assist schools with educating parents about the importance of regular attendance starting in kindergarten.
- Contact the school about becoming a regular member of the *School Attendance Committee*.
- Help parents of older students understand that excessive absence is a critical warning sign for dropping out.
- Partner with schools to provide support to families of children with extended absences.
- Partner with schools to develop attendance incentives for students and parents.
- Address barriers to attendance by offering services (economic supports, social services, etc.) at schools and referring families to other available resources in the community.
- Inspire families to set high aspirations for their children by introducing them to successful role models.
- Help parents and students understand available career options and the pathways for gaining the necessary skills.
- Educate and support parents with courses and training on specific topics such as (family literacy, graduation requirements) and general skills (communication, decision making) so they can support their children's education.
- Community Leaders should encourage good student attendance because absenteeism contributes to high school drop-out rates, leaving students without the academic credentials and skills needed to compete in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

**When Absences Become a Concern**



**Chronic Absences**  
17+ days

**Caution**  
10-16 days

**Good Attendance**  
8 days or less

**Based on 175 Instructional Days**

Attendance during one school year	Number of days absent	Percentage of days missed
95%	8	5%
90%	17	10%
85%	26	15%
80%	35	20%
75%	44	25%
70%	53	30%
65%	61	35%

**Your children can suffer academically if they miss 10% of the school year or 17 days. That can be just one day every two weeks!**



## **Excused Absences**

Excused absences are when students are absent from school with a valid excuse and parental approval. Examples of excused absences include:

- Illness
- Medical appointments
- Other reasons deemed acceptable by the school administrator

## **Unexcused Absences**

Unexcused absences are when students are absent from school without a valid excuse. Examples of unexcused absences include:

- Babysitting
- Shopping
- Skipping Class
- Sleeping in
- Out-of-Town
- Missing the school bus
- Doing errands

## **Consequences of Unexcused Absences**

NSD61 schools are required to use the following Attendance Action Protocol (or a variation thereof) when working with daily and longer term absences.

### **Standard Action by School Staff:**

- Make personal phone call to parents
- Absence will be documented

### **3rd Day Absent:**

- Classroom teacher phones home if no contact, conducts home visit using an established protocol
- Student is flagged on the first Notice of Truancy letter log

### **6<sup>th</sup> Day Absent:**

- Classroom teacher phones home if no contact, school investigates
- Student is flagged on the second Notice of Truancy letter log
- Intervention meeting is scheduled

### **10<sup>th</sup> Day Absent:**

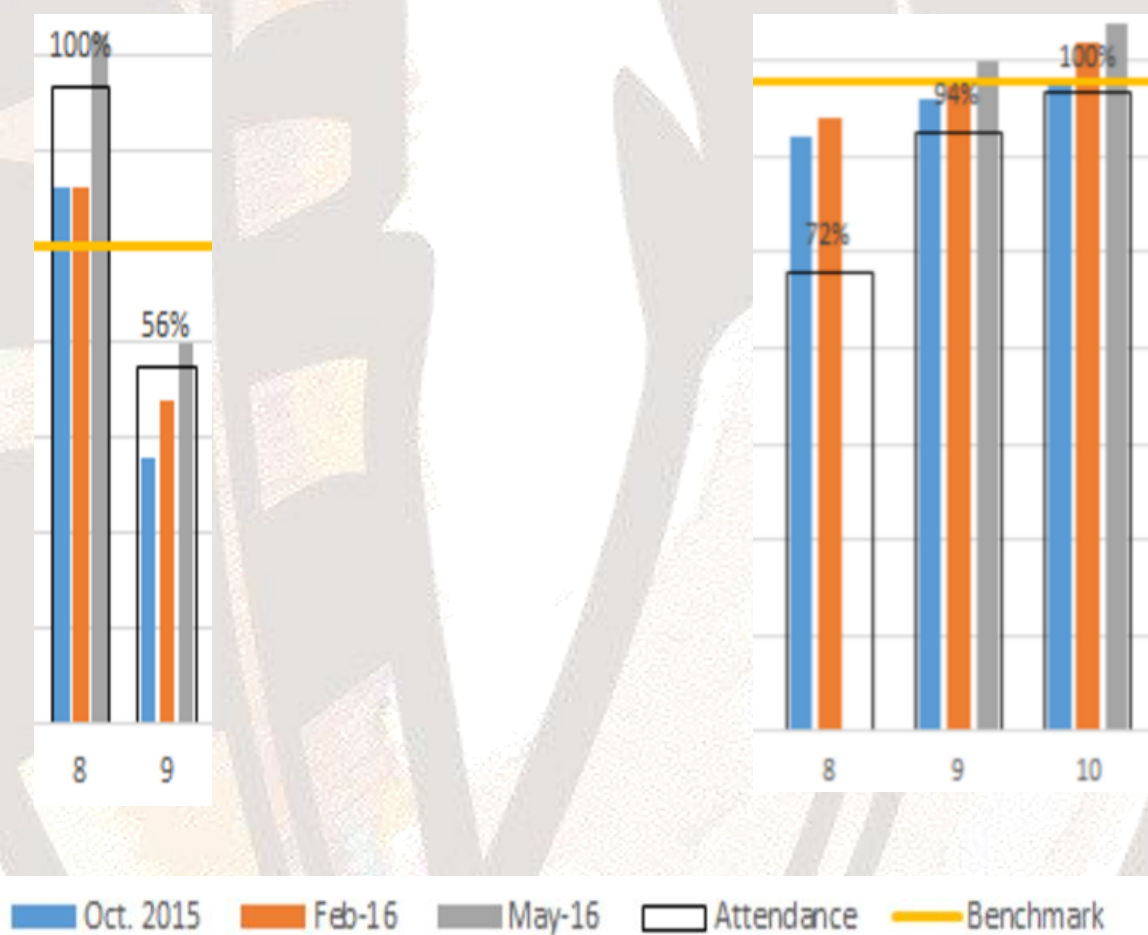
- School Attendance Committee representatives (school community liaison worker, elder, principal) schedule meeting with parents (and child if appropriate) stressing the importance of attending school
- Student is flagged on the third Notice of Truancy letter log
- An action plan for student is developed



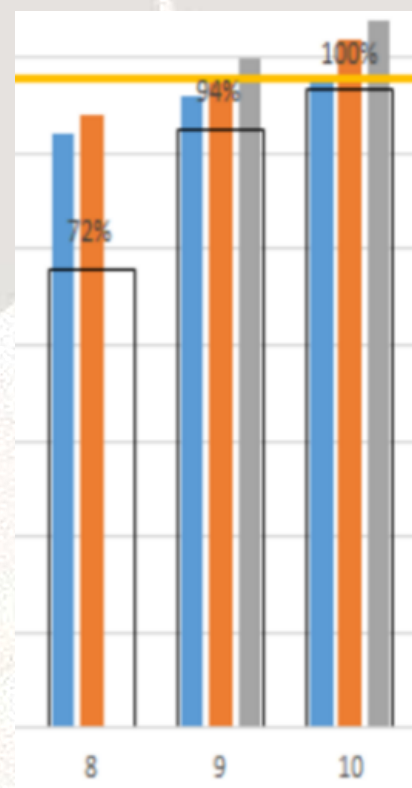
## Data analysis showing a correlation between literacy achievement and student attendance

Reading levels for students division-wide are improving! In 2015-2016, 14 out of 18 schools achieved a 7% or 8% increase in the number of students reading at grade level! The following graphs below show a correlation between reading achievement and student attendance.

**Graph # 1 - Reading level results versus student attendance example for grade 3 at one NSD61 school.**



**Graph # 2 - Reading level results versus student attendance example for grade 7 at one NSD61 school.**



- **Blue** = October 2015 reading level results
- **Orange** = February 2016 reading level results
- **Grey** = June 2016 reading level results
- **Yellow** = Reading level benchmark students should achieve
- White box = attendance percentage

## **Sources Consulted**

Alberta Education - <https://education.alberta.ca/attendance/>

America's Promise Alliance - <http://www.americaspromise.org/parent-engagement-toolkit>

Attendance Works - <http://www.attendanceworks.org/about/what-can-i-do/parents/>

Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No.37

## **Did you know?**

The School Act requires:

- Children and youth between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school
- School authorities to make reasonable efforts to ensure that a student enrolled in one of their schools attends school
- A Public School authority may make a referral to the Attendance Board when a student is not attending.
- The School Act (sections 126, 127, 128, 129 and 130) sets out all matters related to the duties, powers and establishment of an Attendance Board panel.



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