



ATTENDANCE DATA REVIEW PROTOCOL

Tiered Framework for MTSS Attendance Teams

This protocol gives district and building attendance teams a consistent, repeatable process for reviewing attendance data and matching students to the right level of support. It is designed to plug directly into existing DLT, SLT, and MTSS meeting structures.

GROUNDING IN EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

This protocol synthesizes recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse (Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools, NCEE 2017-4028) and Attendance Works' national framework, cross-referenced against tiered data-review practices adopted by peer state education agencies:

- South Carolina Department of Education, Handbook on Attendance (April 2024) — developed in partnership with Attendance Works
- Arizona Chronic Absence Resource Guide — Read On Arizona / Arizona Chronic Absence Task Force
- Minnesota MnMTSS Attendance Guidebook (June 2025) — Minnesota Dept. of Education, Attendance Works, and TNTP

1. Purpose

Regular, structured review of attendance data allows teams to intervene early — before a pattern of missed days becomes chronic absence. This protocol establishes who reviews attendance data, how often, what data to examine, and how to move from data to action within a tiered support system.

2. Build the Data Review Team

Effective attendance teams are small, consistent, and cross-functional. The roles below reflect common practice across state attendance frameworks; districts should adapt titles to fit local staffing.

Role	Recommended Member	Core Responsibility in Data Review
Data Coordinator	Teacher leader, home room teacher, advisor, office staff	Prepares the attendance data pull before each meeting (whole-

Role	Recommended Member	Core Responsibility in Data Review
		school, subgroup, and individual reports) and maintains documentation.
Family/Community Liaison	Family engagement or district liaison (as available)	Represents family voice and connects the team to community-based barriers and resources.
MTSS Coordinator	MTSS lead	Aligns attendance data review with the district's broader MTSS problem-solving cycle.
Student Support Lead	Counselor or school social worker	Leads root-cause conversations for Tier 2/3 students and connects families to services.
Teacher Representative	Rotating grade-level or content teacher	Brings classroom-level context on engagement and flags students of concern early.
Team Lead	Principal or Assistant Principal	Convenes the meeting, ensures data pull is current, and owns follow-through on schoolwide action items.

Adapt roles to available staffing — small schools may combine roles under fewer people.

3. Set the Review Cadence

Tier 1 data should be scanned frequently and reviewed in depth at benchmark points (fall, winter, spring). Tier 2 and Tier 3 data need more frequent review because they involve individual students whose circumstances can change quickly.

MTSS Tier	Data Reviewed	Recommended Frequency	Primary Reviewer(s)
Tier 1 (Universal)	Whole-school and grade-level chronic absence rate; daily attendance trends	Monthly, with a deeper review at fall, winter, and spring benchmarks	Building administrator + Data Coordinator
Tier 2 (Targeted)	Small-group / subgroup attendance patterns	Every 2 weeks; formal progress check every 6–8 weeks	Designated Student Support Lead +

MTSS Tier	Data Reviewed	Recommended Frequency	Primary Reviewer(s)
	for students in the 5–19% absence range		Teacher Representative
Tier 3 (Intensive)	Individual student attendance and intervention progress for students at 20%+ absence	Weekly, within SST/MTSS individual student meetings	Full Data Review Team

4. Know the Tiers: Attendance Thresholds

Use consistent thresholds so every building in the district is identifying and responding to risk the same way.

Attendance Tier	% Days Missed	Typical Response
Satisfactory	0–4%	Universal Tier 1 practices: positive climate, recognition, clear expectations.
At Risk	5–9%	Early, low-intensity outreach — postcards, calls, or check-ins before patterns solidify.
Moderate Chronic Absence	10–19%	Tier 2 targeted support: mentoring, attendance contracts, root-cause conversation with family.
Severe Chronic Absence	20%+	Tier 3 intensive, individualized SST/MTSS plan with case management and community partners.

Chronic absence = missing 10% or more of enrolled school days for any reason, excused or unexcused.

5. The Data Review Process — Step by Step

1. Compile current data before the meeting. The Data Coordinator prepares whole-school, grade-level, and individual-student attendance reports in advance so meeting time is spent on decisions, not data entry.
2. Review Tier 1 trends first. Look at the whole-school and grade-level chronic absence rate and compare to the prior period and to the same period last year.

3. Disaggregate by subgroup. Check rates for ELLs, Hispanic, American Indian/ Native students, economically disadvantaged students, students with IEPs, and other locally relevant subgroups to identify disproportionate impact.
4. Identify students crossing tier thresholds. Flag any student who has moved from Satisfactory into At Risk, or from At Risk into Moderate or Severe Chronic Absence, since the last review.
5. Discuss the root cause, not just the number. For each flagged student or group, identify the root cause—whether it is a barrier (transportation, housing, health), an aversion (bullying, academic struggle, anxiety), a lack of engagement (relevance, belonging), or a misconception (families underestimating the impact of missed days).
6. Match the response to the tier and the root cause. Select an intervention that fits both the severity of absence and the underlying reason — a Tier 2 mentoring match will not resolve a Tier 3 housing barrier.
7. Assign an owner and a follow-up date. Every action item leaves the meeting with a named owner and a specific date for the next check-in.
8. Document and monitor. Log decisions in the tracking table below and carry unresolved items forward to the next meeting.

6. Guiding Questions for the Team

Frame every case discussion around three questions drawn from the Attendance Works framework:

- Who is chronically absent, and how severe is the pattern?
- Why might this student or group be missing school? (barrier, aversion, disengagement, or misconception)
- What tiered, evidence-based response fits both the severity and the root cause — and is it working?

7. Data Review Meeting Agenda Template

A 55-minute template teams can adapt to their own meeting length.

Time	Agenda Item	Lead
5 min	Review action items and outcomes from prior meeting	Team Lead
10 min	Tier 1 pulse check: whole-school and grade-level attendance trend, disaggregated by subgroup	Data Coordinator
15 min	Tier 2/3 case review: identify newly at-risk students; review progress for students with active plans	Student Support Lead
10 min	Root-cause discussion for new/flagged students (barrier, aversion, disengagement, or misconception)	Full Team
10 min	Match interventions to identified need; assign owner and follow-up date	Full Team
5 min	Document decisions and confirm next meeting date	Data Coordinator

8. Documentation & Follow-Up Log

Use this log to track decisions across meetings. Carry forward any row without a resolved outcome.

Student / Group	Tier	Suspected Root Cause	Intervention & Owner	Next Review Date

References

- What Works Clearinghouse. Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools (Educator's Practice Guide, NCEE 2017-4028). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.
- Attendance Works. Attendance tiers, root-cause framework, and data-use guidance. attendanceworks.org.

- South Carolina Department of Education (April 2024). Handbook on Attendance. Developed in partnership with Attendance Works.
- Read On Arizona / Arizona Chronic Absence Task Force. Arizona Chronic Absence Resource Guide: A framework of evidence-based strategies for school administrators, districts, charter networks, and community partners.
- Minnesota Department of Education, Attendance Works, and TNTP (June 2025). Minnesota Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MnMTSS) Attendance Guidebook.