

ATTENDANCE MATTERS: MAKING EVERY RESOURCE COUNT

MPAAA SPRING 2026 CONFERENCE

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WHO ARE WE

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DISCLAIMER

All counties have their own policies for handling truancy and educational neglect at the court level. Please verify with your Attendance Officer or court on legal questions or proceedings.

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AGENDA

- Terms and Definitions
- Data
- The Data-to-Relationship Bridge
- Ingham Service Area – Community of Practice (CoP)
- Other circumstances
- Questions

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LEGAL SPEAK: THE REVISED SCHOOL CODE

Summary: Compulsory Attendance Law (MCL 380.1561)

- **The Legal Mandate:** Parents, guardians, or anyone in charge of a child are legally required to ensure the child attends public school.
- **Age Requirements:** Attendance is mandatory from **age 6** until the child's **18th birthday** (unless specific legal exceptions apply).
- **Attendance Standard:** Attendance must be **continuous and consecutive** for the entire school year as defined by the school district.

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TERMS AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Educational Neglect (Grades K–5): Occurs when a parent/guardian fails to ensure their child attends school regularly.

Truancy (Grades 6–12) **Truancy** occurs when a student in grades 6–12 is absent from school without permission from the parent/guardian or from the school.

Chronic Absenteeism (All Grades): Refers to a student missing **10% or more** of the school year (at any point) for **any reason**. This represents a loss of critical instructional time and is the key indicator of academic risk. .

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CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Truancy Vs. Chronic Absence

TRUANCY

- Counts only unexcused absences
- Emphasizes compliance with school rules
- Relies on legal & administrative solutions

Vs.

CHRONIC ABSENCE

- Counts all absences: excused, unexcused & suspensions
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- Uses community-based, positive strategies



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MI SCHOOL DATA, 24-25 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

- Statewide Chronically Absent – 27.9% down from 29.5%
- Ingham ISD Chronically Absent – 31.8% down from 33.8%
- Two highest ISD's are 40.6% and 38.6% down from 41.7%
- Ingham ISD had 9 entities that exceed 31.8% of students considered chronically absent
- While chronic absenteeism is trending slowly downward, there is a lot more work to do

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THE SCOPE OF THE CRISIS: MIDWEST

- 28% of Michigan Students were chronically absent in 24-25.
- Michigan has one of the highest chronic absenteeism rates in the country, and the highest in the Midwest.
- This crisis impacts academics, funding, and the future success of our students.

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THE RIPPLE EFFECT: CONSEQUENCES

- **Academic:** Drastic decline in reading and math scores.
- **Dropout Risk:** Chronically absent students are far more likely to fall behind and drop out.
- **Legal:** Court involvement, fines, and potential misdemeanor charges for parents. (diversion programs, proactive not punitive)
- **Social:** Increased risk of delinquency, substance abuse, and long-term economic hardship.

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The Data-to-Relationship Bridge

1. The "First Touch" Strategy

Secretaries are the face of the school. How an absence is handled in the front office determines if a parent feels "policed" or "supported."

- **Customer Service as Intervention:** Shifting the morning phone call from "Where is your child?" to "We missed [Student Name] today, is everything okay?"
- **The Attendance Greeting:** Creating a welcoming environment so students *want* to walk through the front door, even if they are late.

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The Data-to-Relationship Bridge

2. Real-Time Data Cleanliness

Data specialists and accountants can't fix what they can't see. Promoting attendance starts with accurate, live tracking.

- **Closing the 24-Hour Loop:** Encouraging teachers to submit attendance in the first 10 minutes of class so the office can follow up immediately.
- **Consistent Coding:** Within the district, schools should use common coding for Excused and Unexcused absences.

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The Data-to-Relationship Bridge

3. Removing Barriers (The "Why" Behind the "A")

Pupil accountants often see the codes (Medical, Funeral, Unexcused). They can use this data to spot trends.

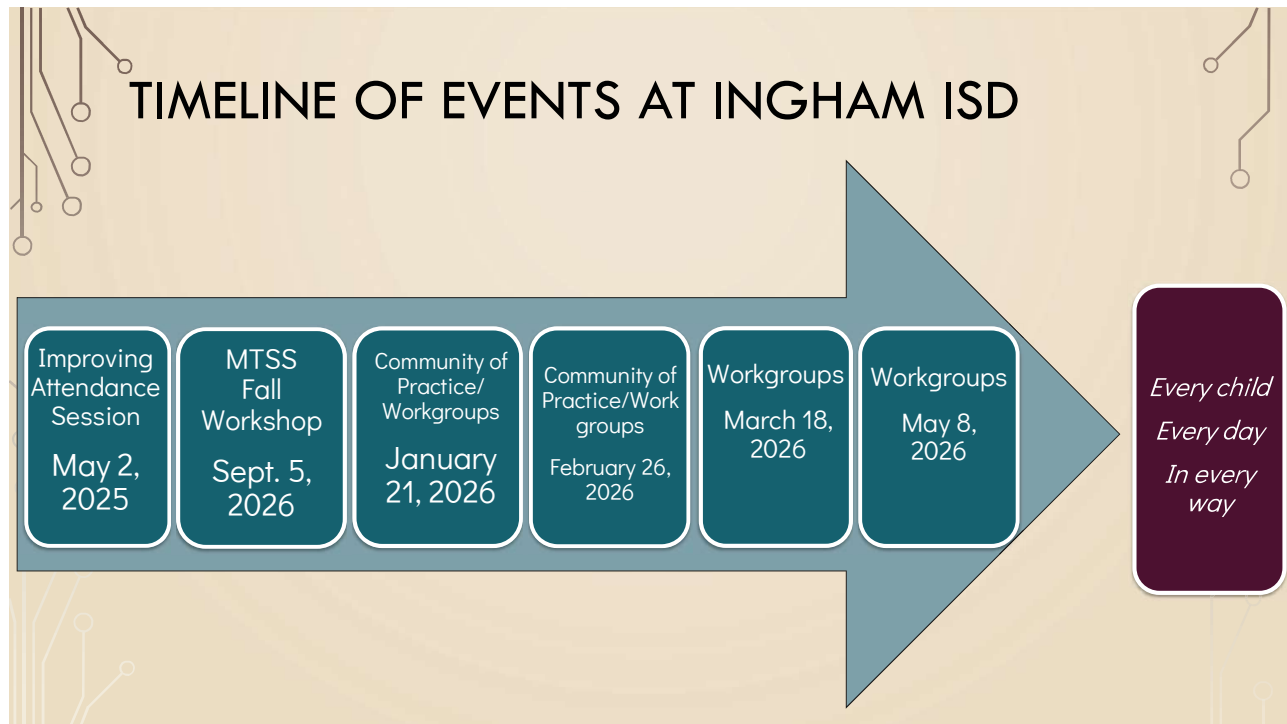
- **Trend Spotting:** If data shows a spike in "Asthma" as a reason for absence, the school can coordinate with the nurse. If it's "Transportation," the office can investigate busing or carpool issues.

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INGHAM ISD – COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP): ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

- What we are doing at Ingham ISD
- Where we started - Timeline
- Three workgroups

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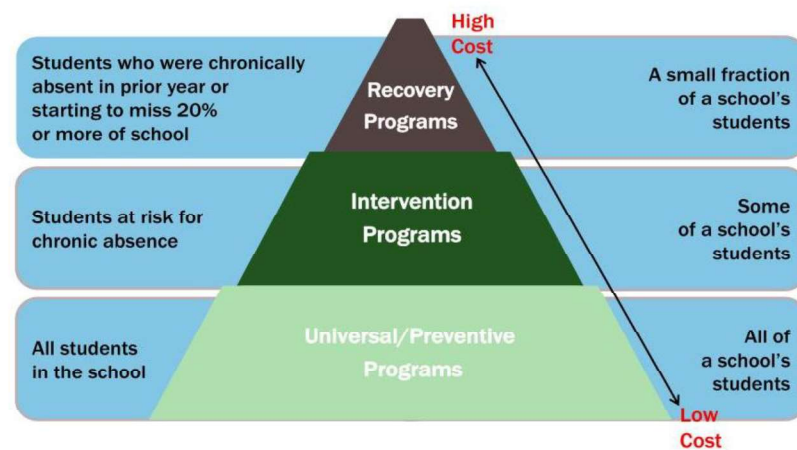
WHAT DOES YOUR IMPACT HAVE ON THOSE PUPILS?

- Enforce PBIS - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Making school a safe place
- Creating a positive school climate
- You may be that one caring person in that pupil's life.
- Engagement

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3 TIER APPROACH

Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



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TIER 1 (LOW COST/HIGH IMPACT)

- Newsletter & social media awareness for policy, expectations, data-sharing (SIS access)
- Promote positive & improved attendance (Fun!)
- All staff invested, sharing same positive messaging
- Attendance team established, meets frequently, sets goals, identifies roles and responsibilities
- Attendance policy shared early, often, clearly and widely
- Eliminate barriers to school attendance /don't create barriers
- Information shared re: value of regular attendance
- Early identification and outreach before school starts/beginning of year/previous data

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TIER 2

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Nudge letters with visuals | • Home visits to build trust/engagement |
| • Individual/small group incentives | • Mentorship with adults |
| • Consider welfare check | • Meeting w/support plan (secondary students) |
| • Re-engagement plan (important for secondary) | • Community/school partnership programs |
| • Parent meeting with attendance plan | • Add attendance strategies to IEP |
| • Community Mental Health referral | • Access community resources and partners |
| • Check & Connect/Caring Adult/Check in - Check Out | |

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TIER 3

- CPS (*Not for Attendance alone*)
- Credit Recovery Program
- Individual Case Management
- Formal Truancy Referral
- Court Involvement

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SPECIAL EDUCATION ADDED LAYERS

Chronic Absenteeism:

- IEP changes
 - Must outline how the student will receive services during periods of extended absences
- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Behavior Support

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OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO POOR ATTENDANCE

Impact of School Of Choice

- 33% of referrals in Ingham are SOC students
- What is the cost if the students are chronically absent?
- Most use transportation as a barrier to attendance
- What can we do as a district to correct the SOC chronic attendance challenge?

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OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO POOR ATTENDANCE

Homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act):

- Student absences could be impacted by homelessness or lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- A best practice is to refer these students to your district McKinney-Vento liaison.

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POLICY-DRIVEN RETENTION: THE "DO'S AND DON'TS"

- Check your Board Policy
- No Board Policy DON'T withdraw
- Keep reaching out to the family and emergency contacts
- Keep student on roster, after 60 days change to inactive (daily attendance is not required)
- Keep working through the Tiers of Intervention

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STATE AGENCY PANEL QUESTION SPRING 2025

My district & several neighboring districts currently have a practice of dropping students for non-attendance after 10 to 20 days. Admittedly this might never have been the best practice but after the horrible story from Pontiac this really seems to be a problem. Keeping these students enrolled causes concern for our building administrators since poor attendance reflects negatively on their building. What is the recommendation to keep all parties happy?

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STATE AGENCY PANEL ANSWER SPRING 2025

Do not drop students automatically for non-attendance. Instead, implement a documented, compassionate, multi-step re-engagement process that protects the student, satisfies audit requirements, and gives building administrators a defensible narrative for attendance reporting. A 30-day clock makes the most sense since it logically aligns with the 10/30-day rule already being utilized by districts.

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REFERENCES

- Attendance Works
- MCL 380.1561 - Compulsory attendance in public schools
- Office of Special Ed - Supporting Attendance for Students with Disabilities

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TRUANCY – KEEP IN MIND

- Every district has their own attendance policies.
- Have a process for early intervention, know your resources.
- All students are eligible for truancy, by Michigan law, all children 6-18 are required to attend and participate in school (Homebound, IEP, SE).
- Kindergartners (5 years old) **are not** eligible for truancy. You should still communicate.

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TRUANCY – KEEP IN MIND

- Truancy is detrimental to:
 - Students
 - Families
 - School/Classroom
 - Districts
 - Budget
- Bottom Line - FTE MATTERS!

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KEY THINGS TO TAKE AWAY FROM OUR PRESENTATION

- Not only are you helping kids but you're impacting your district's funding.
- Think outside the box, but keep it in the PAM.
- Be that one caring adult that every kid needs in their lives.

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PUPIL ACCOUNTANTS

- You are the PAM experts; you know parts of the PAM that those chronically absent pupils may benefit from:
 - Virtual learning
 - Homebound/Hospitalized services
 - SOC/Residency
 - Alternative Education programs

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