



## Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) Office Hour #8 Follow-up Notes

- **Session #8; April 16 – REFOCUS- Review highlighted TIER 1, evidence-based practices**
  - Panel of School Leaders, sharing their Attendance Journeys

April 16, 2026, 3:30-4:30

**Recording:** To see the MEAC Office Hour Recording, please visit the MEAC webpage:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/meac>

Video will be posted the week of April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Summary of Session:**

This session of the Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) Office Hour focused on reviewing Tier 1 evidence-based practices for reducing chronic absenteeism. Sarah facilitated a panel discussion with school leaders, including:

- **Carol Kiesman, of Cape Cod Hill School, Mt. Blue RSD-** Gr. PK-5 Team approach: Integrated Community School, BARR, and administrative collaboration
- **Julia Levansaler, of Miller School, RSU 40-** Gr. PK-5 Schoolwide belief of positively affecting change with strong community support, and PBIS framework
- **Michelle Fiori, of Maine Connections Academy-** Gr. 7-12 Remote, virtual, charter school, effectively using the MTSS framework
- **Hayley Preble, of Mt. Valley High School, RSU 10-** Gr. 9-12 Using alternate educational pathways and early warning data to support students

The panelists shared their approaches to addressing chronic absenteeism, highlighting practices such as **positive messaging to families, early warning systems, team-based responses, and community school models**. They discussed how **data collection and family engagement strategies** have been effective in their respective schools, with particular attention to the challenges of working with high school students who often have **attendance issues that began in elementary school**. The discussion also covered **sustainability practices** and the importance of maintaining a **team approach** to attendance interventions.

#### **Evidence-Based Attendance Improvement Strategies:**

Sarah opened the meeting by introducing the format, which would **focus on Tier 1 evidence-based practices for improving student attendance**. She highlighted research showing that schools have a 77% chance of reducing chronic absenteeism when using effective approaches like early warning systems and sharing attendance data with parents. The meeting featured a panel of school leaders from across the state who were implementing these evidence-based practices.

#### **Maine Chronic Absenteeism Panel Discussion:**

The discussion focused on addressing chronic absenteeism rates across different grade levels, with statistics shared that **1 in 5 elementary students, 1 in 4 middle school students, and 1 in 3 high school students are chronically absent**. The meeting's facilitator outlined previous Tier 1 evidence-based practices discussed, including removing barriers to learning, creating safe environments, building routines and relationships, implementing early warning systems, and growth-focused attendance messaging. The session concluded with the facilitator asking panelists about what informed their approaches to matching appropriate practices with specific school community challenges.

### **School Chronic Absenteeism Strategies:**

The meeting focused on strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism in schools. **Panelists shared their experiences and approaches, emphasizing the importance of data-driven decision-making and involving families in the process.** Julia highlighted the **success of working with Jess Anderson, of Count ME In!**. Michelle and Hayley discussed the **use of surveys and engaging students and families to understand barriers to attendance.** Carol and Anita described their work in a **community school setting, emphasizing the role of community connections and family engagement in improving attendance.** The discussion concluded with an **invitation to access the Count Me In! newsletter and resources** provided by Jess Anderson.

[Sign up for e-Newsletters HERE](#)

### **Student Attendance Improvement Strategies:**

The group discussed various strategies for improving student attendance and parent communication. Julia shared how their **PBIS Tier 1 team implemented positive messaging to parents** when students are absent, which has successfully **reduced late arrivals from the 20s to just 5 students** yesterday. Sarah mentioned that **Parent Powered messaging resources** are still available (reach out to Sarah if you are interested: [sarah.nelson@maine.gov](mailto:sarah.nelson@maine.gov)), and Beth reported positive results from their pilot program using **Reach My Teacher**, particularly **benefiting multilingual learner families.** The discussion highlighted the importance of positive communication approaches, with Carol describing their practice of **teachers sending personal postcards** to families and Beth mentioning that classroom teachers in Sanford **contact families after a third absence.**

### **Challenges Encountered with Chronic Absenteeism and how they are addressed successfully:**

Participants discussed various challenges, including engaging families with **working parents** and creating **effective policies** for high school students. Several schools shared successful approaches, such as implementing **team-based attendance teams**, offering **before and after-care programs**, and using **advisory models to intervene early.** The group also discussed the **importance of sustainability** and ensuring that **attendance initiatives continue after staff transitions.**

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### **RESOURCE SHARED:**

Here is the recently released report shared, highlighting the impact of the implementation of TIER 1 evidence-based practices:

"Schools have a **77% chance of reducing chronic absenteeism** when using effective approaches, such as implementing early warning systems to analyze attendance and sharing attendance data with parents", according to a report

released Monday by the HEDCO Institute for Evidence-Based Educational Practice at the University of Oregon.

“Students **exposed to any attendance intervention** were about **9% less likely to be chronically absent** compared to those who attended schools that did not have any attendance interventions”, the report said.

<https://hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/sites/default/files/2026-03/chronic-absenteeism-2026.pdf>

- The next MEAC meeting will be on **May 21st, 3:30 – 4:30: Reflect, Recognize, and Reset with *Count ME In!* Jess Anderson**

Our final MEAC Office Hour of the 2025-2026 series will feature **Jess Anderson guiding the process of reflecting on the year’s attendance journey...** How do you celebrate your successes? How do you address challenges encountered? What can be done over the summer to prepare for the start of the new year?

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This month, our TIER 1 Evidence-based practice focus: **REFOCUS- Review highlighted TIER 1, evidence-based practices**

**Calendar of Attendance Strategies for Maine students, families, educators, administrators**

Month	Strategy	Student Attendance Actions	Family Attendance Actions	Educator Attendance Actions	Administrative Attendance
April	Remove logistical and emotional barriers to access learning (REFOCUS)	Share feedback on ongoing needs and ideas for improving attendance	Request help when challenges arise	Provide alternative learning options, conduct check-in w/ families and offer supports	Survey for needs, key messages, guide strategy, alignment policies

Share your ideas for improving school attendance.

Join support meetings to strengthen existing attendance plans.

Conduct check-ins with families and offer support updates.

**Host collaborative family workshops to problem-solve barriers.**

**Help connect families to local support services.**

**APRIL** – *Combat Spring Slumps with Clear Health Messaging*

**Try This:** Share when-to-stay-home guidance. Keep messaging proactive.

**Check:** Are staff and families aligned on absence policies?

**Research:** Future Ed, 2023

#### **FEATURED CONTENT EXPERTS and their Contact Info.**

- **Connect** – with **Leslie Monroy of *Mano en Mano*** to discuss Engaging families through proactive, supportive outreach. [Mano en Mano’s website](#)
  - [Imonroy@manomaine.org](mailto:Imonroy@manomaine.org)
- **Connect with Courtney Angelosante (PBIS)** for support with implementing positive recognition and motivation strategies
  - [courtney.angelosante@maine.edu](mailto:courtney.angelosante@maine.edu)
- **Connect with Rita Pello, Office of Fed. Programming Title 1- Family Engagement** for support in improving attendance through family and community partnerships
  - [Rita.Pello@maine.gov](mailto:Rita.Pello@maine.gov)
- **Connect with Rebecca Honig, of Parent Powered** for support in developing and implementing consistent growth-focused attendance messaging
  - [rebecca.honig@parentpowered.com](mailto:rebecca.honig@parentpowered.com)
- Review **growth-focused attendance messaging templates** from Count ME In!, Oct. e-newsletter: [October Communication Toolkit](#)
- **Connect with Jess Anderson of Count ME In!** for support in establishing early warning systems and team-based responses
  - [janderson@countmeinmaine.org](mailto:janderson@countmeinmaine.org)
- **Connect with Jim Boothby** for support in building routine, relationships, and relevance
  - [Jaboot6280@gmail.com](mailto:Jaboot6280@gmail.com)
- **Connect with Stacy Barlow** to explore Creating a Culture of Care in Schools using Restorative Practices: [Creating a Culture of Care: Training Sequence](#)

- [Stacy.barlow@maine.gov](mailto:Stacy.barlow@maine.gov)
- **Connect with [Aubrie Howard](#) for school climate supports**
  - [Aubrie.howard@maine.gov](mailto:Aubrie.howard@maine.gov)
- **Connect with [Signe Lynch](#) for student / McKinney-Vento supports**
  - [signe.lynch@maine.gov](mailto:signe.lynch@maine.gov)
- **Sign up for the CMI (Count ME In!) Newsletter**
  - [Sign up for e-Newsletters HERE](#)
- **Attend future MEAC Office Hours**
  - [REGISTER for MEAC Office Hours HERE](#)

*Tips from PREVIOUS MEAC Office Hours:*

- **Greet students daily at the door, by name, in an engaged and unbusy manner:**
  - Develop your own 'Greeting at the Door' Routine and visual [Brain-based Benefits of Greeting Students at the Door](#)
- **Establish morning meetings** or advisory periods
  - Consistency throughout the school, with everyone agreeing to participate
  - Classroom Routines: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/beh1/cresource/q2/p06/>
- Ask students in focus groups how **relevant and connected** they feel to **instruction**
  - Link lessons to locally relevant issues
  - [Relevant, Engaging Learning - Attendance Works](#)
- Create a system to **assist students** in **setting their own attendance goals**. Provide their personal attendance **data** to help guide this conversation.
- Use **project-based learning** with **student input**
  - [Research Briefs - Lucas Education Research](#)
- Foster TIER 1 practices through **community partnerships**
- Connect with BARR

- [www.barrcenter.org](http://www.barrcenter.org)
- **Sign up for the CMI (Count ME In!) Newsletter** <http://eepurl.com/h6FSZT> (CMI e-news)
  - <https://countmeinmaine.org/about-count-me-in/>
- **Connect with Jim Boothby** for support in **building routine, relationships, and relevance** OR to **visit a BARR school**
  - [jaboot6280@gmail.com](mailto:jaboot6280@gmail.com)
- **Connect with Aubrie Howard** for **school climate supports**
  - [Aubrie.Howard@maine.gov](mailto:Aubrie.Howard@maine.gov)
- **Connect with Signe Lynch** for **student / McKinney-Vento supports**
  - [Signe.Lynch@maine.gov](mailto:Signe.Lynch@maine.gov)
- **Connect with Stacy Barlow** to explore **Creating a Culture of Care in Schools using Restorative Practices**: [Creating a Culture of Care: Training Sequence](#)
  - [Stacey.Barlow@maine.gov](mailto:Stacey.Barlow@maine.gov)

The Maine Engagement and Attendance Team is part of the Maine DOE Office of School and Student Supports (O3S).

For further assistance, please contact Maine DOE O3S Specialist Sarah Nelson at [Sarah.Nelson@maine.gov](mailto:Sarah.Nelson@maine.gov).



**Remember... we each hold a vital role in increasing attendance.**

**What can YOU focus on today to support increased attendance in Maine's schools tomorrow?**