

Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) Office Hour #4 Follow-up Notes



- **Session #4: Dec. 18 – Use consistent, growth-focused attendance messaging**

Dec. 18, 2025, 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 as soon as possible. The holiday schedule may impact timing.

Summary of Session:

In our fourth MEAC office hours session, we were joined by Rebecca Honig from *Parent Powered*. The discussion covered **strategies for enhancing communication between parents and schools, including the importance of clear attendance expectations, proactive outreach, and building trust through consistent engagement**. The conversation ended with participants agreeing to implement various communication and engagement strategies before their next meeting in January, which will focus on strengthening homeschool partnerships.

Parent Engagement Program Overview

Rebecca, Chief Content and Curriculum Officer at *Parent Powered*, presented an overview of their evidence-based family engagement program, which has supported over 2 million children and their families. She highlighted the program's focus on providing holistic **Tier 1 support across various areas, including math, literacy, and social-emotional skills, with a particular emphasis on attendance and parental self-care**. Rebecca emphasized the importance of **understanding attendance as a multifaceted issue, involving factors such as transportation, child health, and family routines**, and discussed the need for ongoing communication and support between parents and schools.

Family Engagement and Attendance Support

Sarah highlighted the **availability of family and student engagement resources on the MEAC webpage** (<https://www.maine.gov/doe/meac>), which Rebecca and her team have provided,

including "Routine Rocks" to support families in establishing routines for strong attendance. Rebecca discussed the importance of **clearly articulating attendance expectations**, including the "what," "why," "when," and "how," to provide families with a **clear understanding of the benefits of strong attendance for students and the community**. She emphasized the need to outline steps for accessing transportation, vaccinations, and other requirements, and to ensure that families know who to contact when challenges arise.

Family Engagement Strategies Discussion

Rebecca and Sarah discussed strategies to improve student and family engagement, focusing on **building trust and fostering a sense of belonging**. Rebecca emphasized the importance of **proactive, positive outreach to families, using strengths-based approaches and text messages to enhance communication**. She suggested creating easy-to-read policies and linking them to family expertise, while Sarah highlighted the value of gathering and using family insights to tailor instruction and build relationships. Both speakers agreed on the **need for continuous engagement and feedback loops** to encourage family participation and improve attendance.

Parent-Teacher Communication Strategies

Amy shared her experience as a principal of writing down parents' concerns to remember them for future discussions, **emphasizing the importance of parent engagement**. Rebecca highlighted the **need for strong communication between home and school, including communication between parents and students**, and introduced resources for **active listening**. They discussed strategies for improving communication between parents and educators, such as creating feedback loops, embedding questions in regular touchpoints, and providing clear communication channels and availability.

Family Support and Resource Strategies

Rebecca and Sarah discussed strategies to **support healthy routines and habits in families**, emphasizing the importance of providing **age-appropriate sleep guidelines and establishing consistent routines** like "hello-goodbye" rituals. They highlighted the use of **eco-mapping** as a tool to visualize a family's support network and **address barriers** to school attendance, such as access to resources like housing, food, and transportation. Rebecca shared that families often appreciate having **resource lists**, which they can use for themselves or share with others, and emphasized **using strength-based language to normalize the need for assistance**. They also discussed the importance of sharing practical tips, like knowing when to call specific contacts or how to navigate long wait times when accessing support services.

Family Engagement Strategies Discussion

Sarah and Rebecca discussed strategies for **engaging families, particularly in communities with new immigrant populations**. They emphasized the importance of **academic socialization as a**

key driver of school attendance and shared techniques for encouraging meaningful conversations between parents and children about school. Rebecca suggested using personalized tip sheets and resource maps, while Sarah highlighted the effectiveness of questions like "on a scale of 1 to 10, how was your day?... Why did you pick that number?" to **help families and educators identify patterns and address concerns**. They also mentioned a resource called "Should I Worry About My Teen" to help parents navigate potential issues with their teenagers.

Parent Engagement and Attendance Strategies

Sarah and Rebecca discussed strategies for improving parent engagement and communication about student attendance. Rebecca shared examples of **clear, supportive messaging and emphasized the importance of making requests actionable for families**. The group explored ways to **use attendance reminders as opportunities to build relationships and provide support**.

- **Wrap-up and reminder:** Join the next MEAC Office Hour, **Jan. 15th – Strengthen school-**

Month	Strategy	Student Attendance Actions	Family Attendance Actions	Educator Attendance Actions	Administrator Attendance Actions
	home partnerships w/ Rita Pello, Office of Fed. Programming Title 1- Family Engagement				
December	Use consistent, growth-focused attendance messaging	Set attendance resolution; Write "We missed you" notes to peers	Review attendance updates with student	Share progress updates; celebrate small gains	Lead positive attendance messaging campaigns

This month, our TIER 1 Evidence-based practice focus: **Clear, consistent attendance messaging helps create a culture of attendance.**

DECEMBER – *Reset Culture with Growth Messaging*

Check: Is your school-wide messaging unified and encouraging? Research: ([Robinson et al., 2018](#); [Ad Council, 2024](#))

- Growth-oriented language: Emphasize effort and improvement.
- Unified school-wide expectations: Consistent across staff and programs.

- Encouraging, non-punitive tone: Avoid fear- or shame-based messaging.

Slide deck from MEAC Office Hours #4, Dec. 2025:

The slide deck is attached to your follow-up email.

➤ Practices to consider implementing in the next month:

- **Things to consider implementing in the next month before we meet Jan. 15th – *Strengthen school-home partnerships* with Rita Pello- Office of Fed. Programming Title 1- Family Engagement**
 - **Connect with Rebecca Honig** for support in developing and implementing consistent growth-focused attendance messaging
 - rebecca.honig@parentpowered.com
 - Review **growth-focused attendance messaging templates** from Count ME In!, Oct. e-newsletter: [October Communication Toolkit](#)
 - **Connect with Jess Anderson** for support in **establishing early warning systems and team-based responses**
 - janderson@countmeinmaine.org
 - **Connect with Jim Boothby** for support in **building routine, relationships, and relevance**
 - 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
 - **Connect with Aubrie Howard** for **school climate supports**
 - Aubrie.howard@maine.gov
 - **Connect with Signe Lynch** for student / McKinney-Vento supports
 - 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](#)
 -

Attend future MEAC Office Hours, the 3rd Thursday of each month, 3:30-4:30. [Register HERE for MEAC Office Hours](#)

Clear, consistent attendance messaging helps create a culture of attendance.

Shared practices of what is already working well to make this happen...

Educator feedback from the Ed Summit, Thomas College, August 2025

Student

- set attendance "resolutions"
- write "We missed you" postcards to peers

Family

- review attendance updates with students

Educator

- share progress updates with students

Administrator

- share progress updates; celebrate small gains
- assemblies: attendance successes shared with students monthly
- social media shout outs for the most improved attendance
- attendance messaging in newsletters and reminders

Community

- lead positive messaging campaigns
- amplify consistent attendance messaging in local media
- messaging on community business message boards outside of school

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
- **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
- **Connect with Aubrie Howard** for **school climate supports**
 - Aubrie.Howard@maine.gov

- **Connect with Signe Lynch for student / McKinney-Vento supports**
 - 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

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.



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?