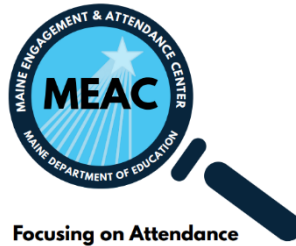


Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) Office Hour #7 Follow-up Notes



- **Session #7: March 19 – Engaging families through proactive, supportive outreach**
 - **Leslie Monroy of Mano en Mano -**
 - March 19, 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 recording will be posted as soon as possible.

Summary of Session:

Our Office Hour focused on discussing challenges and strategies for supporting migrant and English language learner students in Maine schools, with Leslie from Mano en Mano sharing insights about working with these populations. Leslie explained how cultural barriers, language differences, and systemic issues impact student attendance and engagement, particularly during transitions between grade levels. She described Mano en Mano's approach to removing barriers through services like food pantries, transportation support, and cultural celebrations, while highlighting the importance of relationship-building with families. The discussion covered successful practices, including **orientation programs for new students, mentorship opportunities, and the Blueberry Harvest School program**, which provides 3-week summer sessions for students aged 3-15 in a culturally responsive environment. The conversation also touched on the role of school staff in needs assessments and potential funding opportunities through Title I programs for supporting coordinators and liaisons working with migrant populations.

Cultural Education Barriers Discussion

Leslie discussed the challenges of education for students from cultural backgrounds, particularly the transition from elementary to high school, where students feel less prepared and welcome. She highlighted how extracurricular activities and sports help

improve attendance, but issues like transportation and access to basic needs in rural areas present significant barriers. Leslie emphasized that **meeting students' basic needs**, such as food and transportation, **must be prioritized before focusing on education**.

Community Food Pantry and Transportation

Leslie discussed Mano en Mano's food pantry, which serves the local community without discrimination or requiring documentation, making it welcoming to diverse groups, including the Latin and Haitian Creole communities. She highlighted transportation challenges faced by teenagers, particularly around obtaining driver's licenses, noting that many students need financial assistance for driver's education and may lack reliable vehicles. Leslie also mentioned that Native students often change schools frequently, which creates additional challenges in their education.

U.S. School System Transition Support

Sarah and Leslie discussed improving support and orientation practices for students unfamiliar with the U.S. school system, particularly **focusing on smoother transitions** from 8th to 9th grade. They highlighted the importance of flexible attendance policies, better collaboration between Native and high schools, and mentorship programs involving older Native students. The conversation also touched on the need for awareness of diverse student populations and the importance of inclusive practices, such as integrating English language learners into regular classrooms rather than isolating them.

Blueberry Harvest School Program Overview

Leslie discussed Mano's community events, including the well-attended Mother's Day and Posada celebrations, which help represent cultural heritage for children. She explained the structure and approach of Blueberry Harvest School, a 3-week summer program held at Cherryfield Elementary School, which serves children aged 3 to 15 and incorporates multilingual staff and cultural activities. The program is restructuring its age groups based on feedback and will implement a block-based learning approach with two staff supporting each classroom. Leslie also described their process of conducting school needs assessments in collaboration with teachers and school counselors to align family and educational goals.

Migrant Student Support Strategies

The meeting focused on strategies to support migrant students and English language learners, with Leslie sharing insights on funding opportunities and support staff roles. Sarah and Jessica Anderson, of Count ME In, reported positive trends in chronic

absenteeism rates for migrant populations, and Sarah highlighted available attendance resources in Spanish on the Maine Engagement and Attendance Center webpage. The group discussed the importance of building relationships with families and using

Month	Strategy	Student Attendance Actions	Family Attendance Actions	Educator Attendance Actions	Administrator Attendance Actions
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proactive strategies, such as summer connections and orientation programs, particularly for transitional grades.

March	Engage families through proactive, supportive outreach	Participate in student-led conferences	Respond to outreach positively	Call families with praise and concern	Train staff in family-centered communication outreach
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This month, our TIER 1 Evidence-based practice focus: **Positive recognition and motivation reinforce expected behaviors.**

MARCH – Proactive communication and engagement with families facilitate collaborative problem-solving rather than reactive, disciplinary measures.

Don't Wait to Reach Out

Research: Sheldon, 2007; CCERC, 2022

[Sheldon, 2007;](#)

[CCERC, 2022](#)

Check: Who's at 6–9 absences already?

Try This: Use 2x10 strategy. Check in with families at risk. Summer family planning for high-risk students.

- Warm, non-punitive outreach: Focus on listening and support.
- Home visits or personal calls: Build relational trust.
- Accessible calendars and tips: In families' home languages and through preferred platforms.

- **Wrap-up and reminder: Join the next MEAC Office Hour, April 16 – REFOCUS- Review highlighted practices:**

For our next session on **April 16 (3:30–4:30 PM)**, *REFOCUS: A Review of Highlighted Practices*, we are convening a panel of school representatives who have implemented one or more of the strategies highlighted throughout the MEAC Office Hours series.

- Removing logistical and emotional barriers to learning
- Creating safe, supportive environments
- Building routines, relationships, and relevance
- Establishing early warning systems and team-based responses
- Using consistent, growth-focused attendance messaging
- Strengthening school–home partnerships
- Recognizing and motivating positive attendance
- Engaging families through proactive outreach

Panelists will briefly share their experiences supporting attendance, including what informed their approach, what has been effective, any challenges encountered, and next steps.

Practices to consider implementing in the next month:

- **Things to consider implementing before we meet on March 19th:**
 - **Connect – w/Leslie Monroy of *Mano en Mano* to discuss Engaging families through proactive, supportive outreach. [Mano en Mano’s website](#)**
 - lmonroy@manomaine.org
 - **Connect with Courtney Angelosante (PBIS) for support with implementing positive recognition and motivation strategies**
 - courtney.angelosante@maine.edu
 - **Connect with Rita Pello for support with strengthening school-home partnerships**
 - rita.pello@maine.gov
 - **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
 - <https://countmeinmaine.org/about-count-me-in/>
- Attend future MEAC Office Hours

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

Positive recognition and reinforcement motivate students, families, and staff

What are schools doing well to make this happen already?

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

Student

- Attend summer planning meetings
- participate in student-led conferences

Family

- respond to outreach proactively
- reflect on attendance strategies
- attend family engagement events

Educator

- Teacher makes positive contact with all parents or guardians within the first month
- PBIS- clear expectations across spaces

- What if parents received updates from teachers about specifics (what students are missing) and it was in their first language?
- Summer newsletter with exciting things happening in the first month of school (and a personal letter)
- Call families with praise and concerns
- celebrate attendance growth and progress and set goals for next year
- Welcoming calls before school starts for the year

Administrator

- gather feedback related to attendance efforts and celebrate
- positive post card
- train staff in proactive family centered communication, monitor outreach consistency
- call families of historically truant students before school starts" how has summer been, what questions/needs do you have?"
- Meet and greet AM & PM
- newsletters

Community

- volunteers-parents-foster grandparents
- join school outreach events
- prepare summer supports and outreach

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
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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?