Maine Engagement and Attendance Center (MEAC) Office Hour #3 Follow-up Notes

- Session #3: **Nov. 20 – Establishing early warning systems and team-based responses**

Nov. 20, 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 w/in 5 business days. The holiday schedule may impact timing.

Summary of Session:

Our November MEAC Office Hour focused on **establishing early warning systems and team-based responses for student engagement and attendance**, with Jess Anderson, of Count ME In!. as our content expert, focusing on strategies to improve graduation rates and monitor student data. The group explored various data sources and indicators for tracking attendance and engagement, discussed implementation strategies for early warning systems, and shared experiences and resources for improving student success.

Early Warning Systems for Attendance:

Sarah welcomed participants to the third session of the Maine Engagement and Attendance Center, focusing on establishing early warning systems and team-based responses. Jess Anderson, director of Count Me In!, introduced herself and explained her organization's work. The group discussed the importance of simple, proactive systems for monitoring student data related to attendance, behavior, and academics. The discussion included an overview of evidence-based Tier 1 foundational practices and highlighted the importance of integrating data on attendance, behavior, and academics to inform interventions.

Student Attendance Monitoring Strategies

The group discussed various data sources and indicators for monitoring student attendance and engagement, including the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), Panorama surveys, and truancy data. They explored how different thresholds and definitions of chronic

absenteeism and truancy apply at different grade levels, with Julie noting that approximately 23% of Maine students are chronically absent. Lynn shared her experience as the new Student Engagement and Attendance Coordinator in Lewiston Public Schools, where she uses real-time data to track attendance and intervene with families. The discussion concluded with Jess presenting research-based indicators for early warning systems, which include attendance, behavior referrals, grades, and course failures, and the group considered how these apply in their respective contexts.

School Early Warning Systems Implementation

Sarah and Jess discussed the implementation of early warning systems in schools, focusing on indicators such as chronic absences and multiple Office Discipline Referrals within a six-week period. Jess highlighted a universal risk screener used at Cony Middle and High School, which helps identify at-risk students and can be adapted for different contexts. Make a copy of Cony's Attendance Tracker. Jess suggested creating systematic daily updates and weekly summary reports to track student performance and mentioned a shared spreadsheet tool developed by Count Me In! for the DOE. (Located on 'The Basics' page of the Attendance Toolkit, Resource: Attendance Tracker with Truancy -Elementary)

MTSS Early Warning Systems Overview

Jess presented on early warning systems and student success systems, emphasizing the importance of data collection, intervention strategies, and team collaboration. She discussed the three tiers of support in MTSS and provided examples of universal screeners and early warning indicators. Lynn, who is new to her role, shared her current practices and expressed interest in implementing more systematic approaches to attendance intervention. The group discussed resources available through the MEAC website and upcoming office hours focused on growth-focused attendance messaging.

Month	Strategy	Student Attendance Actions	Family Attendance Actions	Educator Attendance Actions	Administrator Attendance Actions
	• **Wrap-up and reminder**: Join the next MEAC Office Hour, **Dec. 18 – Using consistent, growth-focused attendance messaging, with Rebecca Honig of Parent Powered.**				
November	**Establish early warning systems and team-based response**	Track your own attendance streaks on a visible chart	Check child's attendance weekly on school portal	Celebrate class attendance streaks using visible tools	Use real-tim dashboards respond to t Create atter response tea

This month, our TIER 1 Evidence-based practice focus: Systems should flag concerns early, not react after chronic absence has set in.

NOVEMBER – *Spot Absences Early, Act Quickly*
Check: Are you watching for 2+ absences per month?
Research: (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Kearney, Dupont Fensken, & Gonzálvez, 2023)

- Early Warning Systems: SIS or dashboards that track trends in real time.
- Use data to identify school-wide attendance patterns and areas where positive conditions for learning can be improved.
- Cross-functional MTSS/Attendance Teams: Weekly reviews of data and next steps.
- Attendance thresholds: Trigger outreach after 2–3 absences in a month.

Slide deck from MEAC Office Hours #3, Nov. 2025:

MEAC Office Hour #3. Using Early Warning Systems to Improve Attendance

➢ Practices to consider implementing in the next month:

- **Connect with Jess Anderson** for support in **establishing early warning systems and team-based responses**
  - janderson@countmeinmaine.org

➢ **Consider Core Practices for a Strong Early Warning System**

- ➢ Real-Time Data Use
  - Daily review of the absence list
  - Weekly summary report for teams
  - Shared spreadsheet with reasons (secretary/nurse)
- ➢ Team-Based Response
  - Quick, 10–12-minute weekly meeting
  - Decide: Who needs outreach? Who will call? What supports?
  - Document action + follow-up
- ➢ Supportive Communication
  - Call families after the first missed day
  - Ask what's getting in the way
  - Share attendance streaks

        - Reinforce belonging + readiness
- **Start Building Your Systems**
    - Universal Screeners
    - Early Warning Systems
    - Student Success Systems
        - Start small:
            - Choose 2–3 early indicators (e.g., 2 absences/month, 3 nurse visits).
            - Create one shared spreadsheet or dashboard view.
            - Add a 10-minute early warning huddle to your weekly schedule.
        - Use the bright spots you already have:
            - Secretary calls → integrate into the system
            - Teacher check-ins → document weekly
            - Nurse outreach → track patterns
            - Family portal use → encourage weekly check
- **Keep the focus on students' belonging and access to learning**

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

Systems should flag concerns early, not react after chronic absence has set in.

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

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

Student Attendance Actions:

- track your (winning) attendance streaks on a visible chart

Family Attendance Actions:

- share changes in family dynamics
- check child's attendance weekly on school portal

Educator Attendance Actions:

- weekly team meetings to discuss students and plan interventions
- contact families when a student is out 1+ days in a week. Call or send a message
- Celebrate class attendance streaks using visible tools
- biweekly teacher/student check-in
- BARR program meeting weekly with pod
- nurse contacts parents when children are sick or have chronic complaints
- The secretary calls when parents don't reach out, and she keeps a spreadsheet with the reason

Administrator Attendance Actions:

- use real-time data dashboards to spot and respond to trends
- create attendance response teams
- periodic review at RTI meetings
- consider the barriers and connect with supports (potential housing problems)
- biweekly report facts: nurse visits, grades, attendance, behavior incidents,
- automatic alerts sent to families for students whose absence is unexcused
- track attendance
- identify resource needs
- contact families after 3 and 5 absences
- identify at 3 absences and contact families

Community Attendance Partner Actions:

- collaboration on interventions
- assist schools in strengthening tech and data systems

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/
- **Register to attend the PBIS Annual Conference**: Conference — Maine PBIS,
    - Nov. 13th, Augusta Civic Center 8:30-4:00
        - If you have been identified for additional school support, you receive 3 free school-level registrations to the Maine PBIS conference
- **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 questions, please contact Maine DOE O3S Specialist Sarah Nelson at **Sarah.Nelson@maine.gov**.