

University-School Partnerships: Research and Best Practices in Attendance

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All In: When Theory Meets Practice in School Reform
CUES Spring Symposium – April 28, 2018



Role of the University

URCUES - Grounded in the University's partnership with East, CUES works to **expand opportunities to apply quality research-based solutions at East and to leverage the knowledge gained at East to have greater reach in the revitalization of K-12 urban education regionally, nationally, and globally.** Thus, CUES is creating a model for urban school improvement and a robust clearinghouse of research, practitioner guides, and other artifacts to support urban schools and the challenges they face.

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Evolution of the Initiative

Determined by data analysis that attendance was a priority at the EPO, underlying all other initiatives

Research Brief #1: Literature Review

Research to finding schools similar to East but with 90% attendance or higher

School Visits

Research Brief #2

Context

Pre-EPO (2014-2015)

Grade	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Grade 6								
Grade 7	87%	87%	85%	82%	83%	81%	83%	84%
Grade 8	88%	86%	84%	80%	81%	80%	84%	86%
Grade 9	74%	74%	71%	67%	65%	65%	68%	69%
(new)								
(continuing)								
Grade 10	81%	79%	78%	76%	75%	73%	77%	77%
Grade 11	82%	82%	85%	84%	80%	80%	83%	81%
Grade 12	83%	82%	81%	79%	76%	75%	80%	80%

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Data analysis

EPO Year 1 (2015-2016)

Grade	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April
Grade 6	97%	98%	97%	94%	95%	95%	94%	93%
Grade 7	96%	96%	95%	93%	92%	93%	91%	94%
Grade 8	90%	88%	90%	89%	87%	87%	84%	85%
Grade 9	69%	76%	74%	72%	74%	75%	74%	76%
(new)	89%	89%	87%	83%	84%	86%	84%	85%
(continuing)	52%	61%	60%	59%	62%	61%	61%	62%
Grade 10	80%	82%	82%	80%	80%	80%	81%	82%
Grade 11	87%	88%	89%	85%	85%	86%	84%	85%
Grade 12	84%	83%	83%	79%	80%	80%	80%	81%

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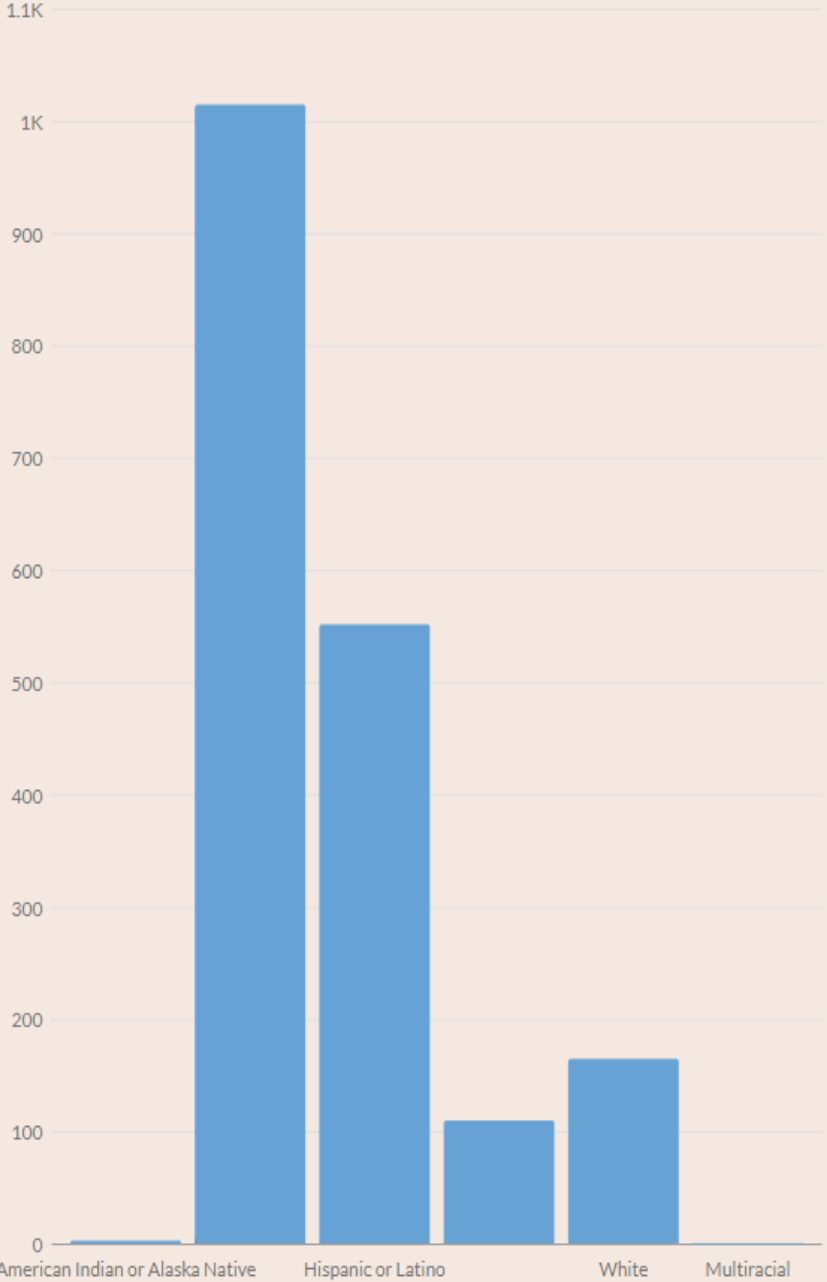
School Visits

Research Brief #2

What do we know about *who* is absent most?

- **Both race and poverty are predictors** of absenteeism; Pacific Islander and American Indian, Black, and Latinx students have the highest rates of absenteeism (Wood, 2007).
- Absenteeism is a **pressing issue in urban schools** and more severe in larger schools than smaller ones (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY



Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	4	0%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	1,016	55%
HISPANIC OR LATINO	553	30%
ASIAN OR NATIVE HAWAIIAN/OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	111	6%
WHITE	166	9%
MULTIRACIAL	1	0%

What do we know about *why* students are absent?

- Inhospitable school culture, “to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment and embarrassment” (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012)
- Student mobility (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012)
- Illness, family responsibilities, limited transportation, and a perception of school as unnecessary or invaluable (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; DOE 2016).

What do we know about absenteeism & student outcomes?

- **Low achievement** in urban districts (Durán-Narucki, 2008; Parke & Kanyongo, 2012; Roby, 2004; Steward, Steward, Blair, Jo, & Hill, 2008).
- **Low performance** on state assessments (Roby, 2011).
- **Less likely to read at grade level** by third grade (DOE, 2016).
- Four times more likely to **drop out** of high school compared to their peers who were reading on grade level in third grade (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).
- Students are more likely to be absent in secondary school if they were **absent chronically in elementary school** (Wood, 2007).

What do we know about approaches that work?

- Engaging school environment
- Commitment to attendance that involves frequent, regular, personal contact with parents and families
- Programs to address and improve attendance
- Systems and practices that measure and improve record-keeping and logistics

(Marsh, 2016)

Attendance Brief #1

Available at urcues.org

Attendance Practices That Work: What Research Says, What Practitioners Say

Research Brief | urcues.org

Written by Valerie L. Marsh, PhD

December 2016

Since the beginning of compulsory education in this country, absenteeism has been an issue, one that many educators identify as the most persistent problem schools face (Dougherty, 1999). Yet, it wasn't until this year that the U.S. Department of Education (2016) released "Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools: An Unprecedented Look at a Hidden Educational Crisis," signifying a shift in awareness of chronic absenteeism as a serious problem. According to the report, based on the 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection survey of 95,000 schools across the nation, more than 6 million students are missing 15 days or more of school a year, the defining criteria of *chronic absenteeism*. These 15 days are the equivalent of missing three weeks of school; the 6 million students equate to 14 percent of the U.S. student population, approximately one out of every seven students. Chronic absenteeism is different from *truancy* or *daily average attendance* – the more common measures in our nation's schools (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2016). Unlike daily average attendance, which measures how many students show up on a specific day, or truancy, which is a measure of unexcused absences, chronic absenteeism identifies individual students who are regularly missing significant numbers of school days. With the signing of President Obama's 2015 *Every Student Succeeds Act*, schools now need to shift to a measure of chronic absenteeism in order to be in compliance. Many believe this is a good thing, as following absenteeism by student is a more specific and useful data point to properly address school attendance and the myriad risk factors tied to absenteeism.

Who Is Absent Most?

Both race and poverty are predictors of absenteeism; Pacific Islander and American Indian, Black, and Latina/o students have the highest rates of absenteeism. English Language Learners (ELL) and children with disabilities are also more likely than their peers to be chronically absent. Poverty, often tied to minority status, is also indicative of greater risk of missing school in significant percentages (Wood, 2007). And since urban schools comprise more minority and low-income students of color, we know that absenteeism is a pressing issue in urban schools, and more severe in larger schools than smaller ones (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004).

Why Kids Are Missing School

Students miss school for various reasons and for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities, ELL, students with disabilities, and students who live in poverty, those reasons

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Identifying Exemplar Schools

School	City	Enrolled	Grades	Low SES	Minority	Graduation	Attendance
Bronx Latin	Bronx	549	6-12	94%	99%	89%	91%
Mott Hall V	Bronx	662	6-12	88%	99%	80%	91%
Poughkeepsie HS	Poughkeepsie	1137	9-12	84%	89%	58%	93%
Roosevelt Early College Studies	Yonkers	831	9-12	86%	89%	71%	91%
East	Rochester	1592	7-12	92%	92%	45%	79%

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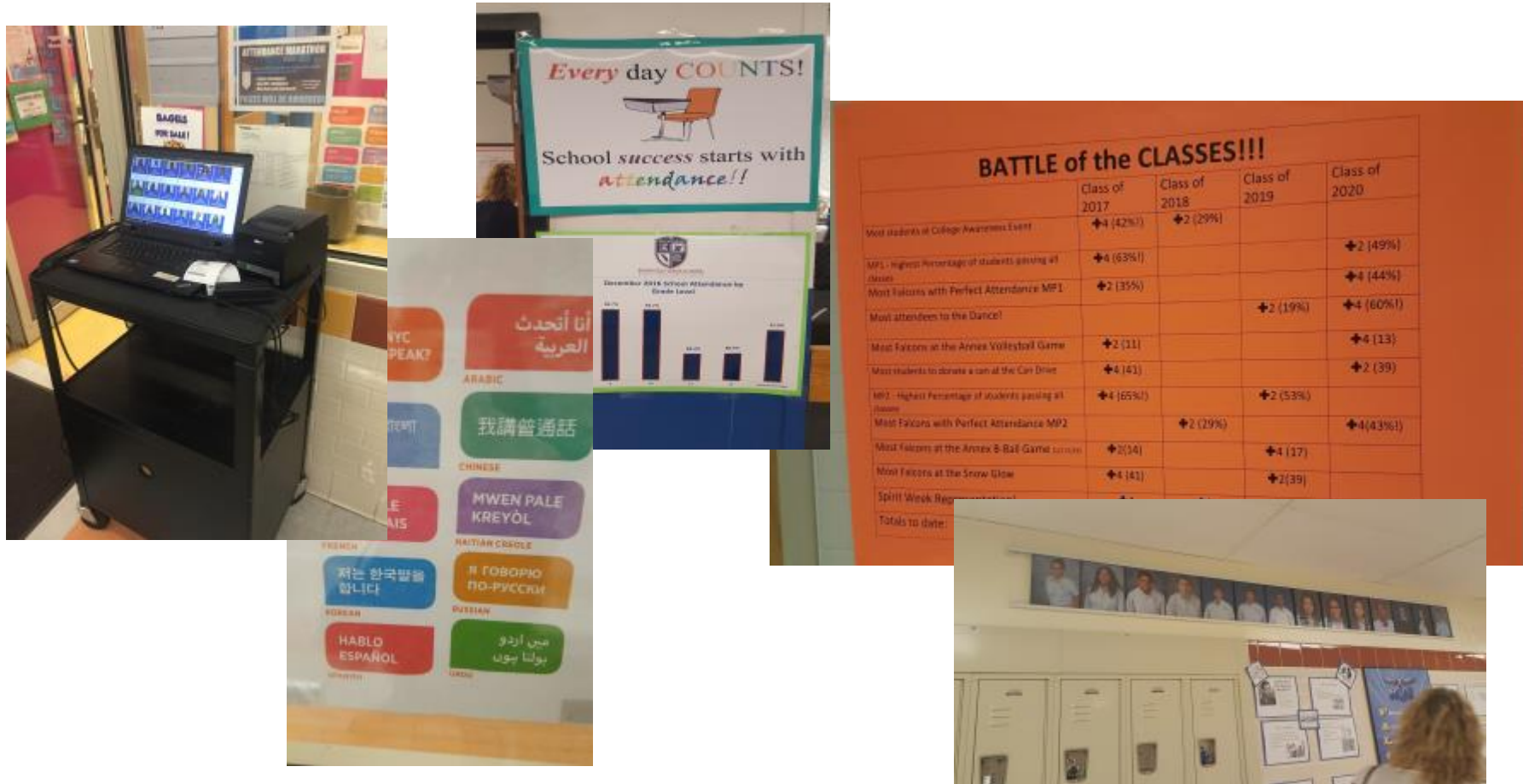
Research Brief #2

What We've Noticed

Attendance Up Close: Reflecting on School Visits (Marsh, Meier, Festenstein, & Nelms, 2017)

- Engaging School Environment – relationships, culture
- Commitment to Attendance Involving Personal Contact with Parents & Families
- Commitment to Improve Attendance through Programs & Systems
- Record Keeping & Logistics

What We've Noticed



	Class of 2017	Class of 2018	Class of 2019	Class of 2020
Most students at College Awareness Event	↑4 (42%)	↑2 (29%)		
MP1 - Highest Percentage of students passing all classes	↑4 (63%)			↑2 (49%)
Most Falcons with Perfect Attendance MP1	↑2 (35%)			↑4 (44%)
Most attendees to the Dance!			↑2 (19%)	↑4 (60%)
Most Falcons at the Annex Volleyball Game	↑2 (11)			↑4 (13)
Most students to donate a can at the Can Drive	↑4 (41)			↑2 (39)
MP2 - Highest Percentage of students passing all classes	↑4 (65%)		↑2 (53%)	
Most Falcons with Perfect Attendance MP2		↑2 (29%)		↑4 (43%)
Most Falcons at the Annex 8-Ball Game	↑2 (34)		↑4 (17)	
Most Falcons at the Snow Glow	↑4 (41)		↑2 (39)	
Spirit Week Rehearsal				
Totals to date:				

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Brief #2

Attendance Brief #2

Available at urcues.org

Attendance Up Close: Reflecting on School Visits

Research Brief | urcues.org

Written by Valerie L. Marsh

Contributors: Susan Meier, Lia Festenstein, Shaun Nelms

February 2017

While studying research provides educators with ample context and examples of best practice, spending time in high schools and conversing with staff and scholars (students) allows a different kind of learning. Hence, after synthesizing research on attendance and identifying exemplar schools ([Marsh, 2016](#)), we at the Center for Urban Education Success embarked on a series of visits to a group of schools we identified as achieving above expectations with a non-select student body. This group includes: Mott Hall V, Bronx Latin, Roosevelt High School-Early College Studies, and Poughkeepsie High School. Meeting principals, staff, and scholars as well as touring buildings gave us additional insights into schools' philosophies, cultures, and practices. We were able to ask questions directly of practitioners and scholars; we heard their stories, walked their halls. As visitors, we each brought different perspectives – research, curricula, leadership – to our encounters, and these particular viewpoints focused our reflections. They are enumerated here, organized under the four categories of successful attendance practices previously established ([Marsh, 2016](#)): 1) Engaging school environment, 2) Commitment to attendance that involves personal contact with parents & families, 3) Attendance programs, 4) Record-keeping & logistics.

Engaging School Environment

These are aspects of a school's life that scholars, staff, and administrators name when attributing credit for good attendance. This category captures the majority of what we learned during our visits, and has thus expanded into two subcategories: **Relationships** and **Culture** ([Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012](#); [Dougherty, 1999](#); [Durán-Naruckij, 2008](#); [Sheldon, 2007](#)).

Relationships. All the schools we visited place a high value on relationships and **treating the school like a home** and the **scholars like family**. Here is some of what we noticed about relationships during our visits:

- School leaders and staff **connect personally** with individual scholars, spending a lot of time walking the building, making quick, personal contact with every scholar they see.
 - Personal touch is "everything" (Principal).
 - Principal knows all of his scholars; greets them by name every day.
 - Every scholar fist bumped their principal as they passed him.
 - During a meeting we had with a group of scholars, one commented, "Some people who don't have self-esteem, they find it hard to learn in a really big



What We Did with What We Found

Attendance Protocols - Research-Practice Comparison
Document

Outcomes

Data Tracking

Attendance Tracker at East by Marking Period

Current Attendance Data

EPO Year 3 (2017-2018) *(Same chart from previous page; included here for easy comparison with charts above)*

Grade	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Grade 6	92%	93%	91%	87%	89%	88%	92%	90%
Grade 7	93%	95%	93%	84%	91%	89%	91%	91%
Grade 8	91%	93%	90%	84%	90%	88%	89%	91%
Grade 9	87%	86%	86%	83%	81%	80%	81%	86%
Grade 9 (new)	90%	91%	90%	87%	86%	85%	86%	90%
Grade 9 (continuing)	73%	65%	67%	60%	59%	58%	56%	63%
Grade 10	86%	86%	87%	85%	82%	82%	85%	87%
Grade 11	89%	87%	88%	83%	85%	84%	85%	86%
Grade 12	84%	82%	82%	77%	77%	75%	77%	80%

Attendance Trends at East

All grade levels in all months during the 2017-2018 school year demonstrate higher attendance than all grade levels in all months in the pre-EPO 2014-2015 school year

Discussion

Small group

Discuss challenges in your schools

What problem would you want to tackle?

How could you envision a partnership of theory and practice?

Take-aways

Implications for your own work.