Every Student, Every Day.
My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor and Student Support Initiative

SUCCESS MENTOR IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

"We see changes in students wanting to be in school. We see changes in their joy and excitement about being celebrated, being recognized as a student. It's amazing."

Dr. Lindsa McIntyre, Headmaster of Burke High School, Boston, MA

This guide is dedicated to the thousands of educators who come up with new ways of helping every student attend school every day.

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San Antonio Independent School District (TX)
Seattle Public Schools (WA)
Sunflower County Consolidated School District (MS)

This MBK Success Mentors model is supported by a public-private network which includes the following key U.S. Department of Education collaborators:

Dr. Robert Balfanz, Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center
Ad Council
Arnold Foundation
Attendance Works
Center for Supportive Schools
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
City Year
Corporation for National and Community Service
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
Roc Nation
State Bags
United Way
Viacom's *Get Schooled*

"Whenever an opportunity arises to empower young men of color, I think it's imperative that as Superintendent, I move heaven and earth to avail such initiatives to them. In these transitional and formative grade levels, the additional support a program like this will provide will be a welcomed ally in the battle to remove barriers from our young people."

Dr. Debra Dace
Superintendent of Sunflower County Consolidated Schools

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Overview

Over six million students miss 10% of more of school each year – meaning they are chronically absent and missing out on the opportunity to gain the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Students don't show up to school for a variety of reasons, such as health issues, lack of reliable transportation, family challenges, bullying, or lack of interest in school. Some students are absent simply because they don't think anyone notices or cares or in the early grades, because their parents are not fully aware of how important daily attendance is.

The evidence is clear- chronic absenteeism presents a serious and often under-appreciated challenge to success of our nation's students and their schools. Missing 10% of school for any reason-rather its excused or unexcused leads to lower academic achievement, more grade retention, lower graduation rates, and more involvement with the juvenile justice system. In the most impacted schools rates of chronic absenteeism in elementary schools can reach 15-20%, in middle schools 20-30%, and high schools 40% or more. When rates of chronic absenteeism are this high it impacts the academic achievements and progress of all students in the school.

In November 2015, the Obama Administration announced two groundbreaking campaigns to address chronic absenteeism in high-need public schools: the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Success Mentors *Every Student, Every Day* campaign and a multi-million dollar Ad Council campaign to engage families and school communities on solving this nationwide issue.

The MBK *Every Student, Every Day* campaign aims to connect over one million students with dedicated Success Mentors in this country's first-ever effort to use an evidence-based and data driven mentor model and student support system to tackle chronic absenteeism. The campaign calls on all schools to take strategic actions to reduce the rates of chronic absenteeism, based on insights and evidence from ten school districts about what works.

Chronic Absenteeism is a multi-facetted problem that requires a multiplied effort. This guide describes how these aspects of the initiative can be applied in your school.

Here's what works...

Weekly Meetings. The Principal leads weekly *Student Success Summit* meetings with school staff and Success Mentors (or their representatives) to review school-wide attendance data and track chronically absent students, diagnose absences and determine the most strategic points of intervention (e.g., student, class, grade, school or community), direct appropriate supports to the student or family, and progress monitor the initiative.

Organize Resources. The Principal's focus on attendance makes the biggest difference for a school in combating chronic absenteeism by creating welcoming and supportive climate, offering programs that meet student needs and a system for recognizing good and improved attendance.

Personalize Student Interventions. A school based or school linked caring adult or peer mentor provides one-on-one support, encouragement, and practical problem solving, for chronically absent students. Success Mentors create positive relationships with the students and their families/care givers, respond to each absence, recognize even small improvements, and leverage these actions to unearth the root-causes of the student's absenteeism. They then connect students with the appropriate supports.

Draw on Community Resources. Schools host Parent Success Summits or other events to connect parents, families and care-givers to vital community and youth services which help students attend school every day. Schools also use the support of local community partners to get the message out about the importance of attending school regularly and provide needed services to enable this.

STARTING STRONG CHECKLIST

Start strong and use the first eight weeks of school to launch a robust My Brother's Keeper Student Success Mentor Initiative (MBK-SSMI) Every Student, Every Day campaign in your school. Use this "Starting Strong Checklist" to help you and your team stay on track during the critical first two to three months of school.

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

○ **Weekly Meeting**
Review school attendance policies and set school wide goals.

○ **Getting Started**
Identify the Point Person for the MBK SSMI initiatives in your school. Email that information to the MBK SSMI point person in your school district.

○ **Technical Assistance**
Work with your local MENTOR affiliate to develop a customized training program for your Success Mentors and get help in identifying sources of Success Mentors. Contact the US Department of Education and Johns Hopkins University point people for additional technical assistance supports around data use, monitoring, analysis, and weekly meetings.

○ **Data**
Work with the school district to get a list of all incoming students in your target year(s) (i.e., k, 6th, 9th, etc.) who were chronically absent last year. Check your school-level student information system to see if it can provide weekly updates on which students are chronically absent (i.e. missing 10% of more of school days to date).   Use the data to determine how many Success Mentors you will need. Create a target list of student's who will be assigned Success Mentors at the start of the year.

○ **Family Engagement**
Schedule your Parent Success Summit.

WEEK 1 – 2

○ **Mentoring**
Meet with your Success Mentors to explain the program and their roles. Introduce Success Mentors and other attendance initiatives to the school staff. Match Success Mentors to students (mentees), and facilitate a special activity for introductions, invite the mentees family to the event.

○ **Family Engagement**
Promote your Parent Success Summit to families and local service providers

WEEK

○ **Weekly Meeting**
Start your weekly Student Success Summit (Attendance Team) meetings.

STARTING STRONG CHECKLIST

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2 – 3

❍ **Data Community Connections**
Reach out to your after-school programs or other community partners in the school, and suggest ways they can be part of attendance initiatives.

STARTING STRONG CHECKLIST

○ **Family Engagement**
Parent Success Summit and Resource Fair held.

○ **Weekly Meeting**
Principal leads weekly Student Success Summit meetings (at set time each week) with a regular review of school-level and student-level data. Begin to identify students who were not chronically absent last year, but are trending towards by missing 10% or more of the school days to date. Have a staff member who has a relationship with the student learn why they have been absent. If they continue to miss days of school assign them a Success Mentor.

○ **Success Mentoring**
Success Mentors acknowledge the attendance of their students daily, call home when students are absent, share positive news with parents and caregivers, and interact in school with their mentee at least three times a week, with at least one meeting being a longer individual or small group meeting. In some pilot schools, special events are held or speakers brought in weekly or bi-weekly for all mentor/mentees to make the program special.

○ **School-Wide Strategies**
School wide strategies have begun (celebrations, incentives, new systems)

WEEK 3 – 8

ONGOING

○ **Planning & Check-in Tool**
Use the "Planning & Check-in Tool" (page 20) every few weeks to review progress and re-assess MBK Success Mentor initiatives in your school.

○ **Share your Stories**
Share what you are learning (stories, questions, sample handouts, plans) with other participating schools in your district and across the MBK districts

A core component of the *MBK Student Success Mentor Initiative* is data review and weekly Student Success Summit meetings. The Principal-led meetings convene stakeholders to review chronic absenteeism data to look for patterns and trends, use the information being provided by Success Mentors to establish leading root causes of why students in the school are chronically absent, look for the most strategic points of intervention, identify students in need of additional supports, and develop and monitor interventions.

1

Host weekly Principal's Student Success Summit Meetings.

MBK Student Success Mentor schools reported that a focus on data reviewed regularly, as a team, helped the school understand chronic absenteeism patterns and take action.

The Principal led meeting brings a range of resources and perspectives to the table including:

❖ selected school staff, including those involved with student supports such as, guidance counselors, parent coordinator, school nurse, and social workers, along with representative teachers from target grades, and administrators;

❖ community partners working in the school; and

❖ the Success Mentors or in schools with larger numbers of Success Mentors, representatives. Together this team looks at data and plans action. Success stories by Success Mentors about their work with individual students are an important part of the weekly Summit. (Check out our suggested agenda on page 5.)

Tips for Getting Started:

❖ Determine best time, day and place to meet. Make the meeting an expectation for all to attend.

❖ Identify the best people to attend the meeting, and remember that the Principal facilitates, and Success Mentors are encouraged to attend, if they have signed a confidentiality agreement that permits them to view student-level data.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *The team looked at "chronic chronics," those missing six consecutive days or more, and began to notice siblings. They compared attendance from previous years and noted similarities. Outreach strategies were raised: contacting mom, providing a service, finding out who drops kids off, who else is a resource in the family. And the team looked at early warning signs like the pattern of days that students miss.*

❖ *Having an appointed person prepare the data for the meeting can be very helpful. In some schools this was the school secretary, in others an attendance point person, in others it was the point*

person for the MBK initiative in school. This includes attendance trend data and specific absences and related school data for target students.

Use attendance data for action plans and assessing interventions.

2

It is good practice to look at school-level data daily so that big dips in attendance are recognized right away. School wide data can also be viewed in the aggregate for groups like grade levels or boys/girls, either weekly or monthly.

Student-level data is the most accurate way to track attendance in a school. Knowing who is at risk for being chronically absent spurs specific actions: outreach to parents, plans for re-entry with guidance staff (if consecutive days have been missed), consultation with classroom teachers to have a plan for re-connecting the student to current lesson plans, and daily greetings and informal check-ins to be sure attendance does not slip again when the student returns.

The Student Success Summit team members can use data to see if recognitions, incentives or other programs have impacted attendance.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *Attendance reports were discussed at faculty team meetings to provide the staff with data for parent conferences and to set an attendance plan of action for identified students.*

❖ *Trips in June that data showed had compromised attendance were cancelled.*

Measure outcomes.

3

To reduce chronic absenteeism, it is recommended that everyone knows the goal: What is your chronic absenteeism rate and where do you want it to be? Use data to track and report on your outcomes. Look at the students who missed 20+ days last year, your "Target List." Are they missing fewer days this year? Will they end the year missing 0-19 days? Look at your school's chronic absenteeism rate last year, the percentage of students in school last year who missed 20+ days. Will you decrease that rate this year? Share these data checks with Success Mentors, students and families and celebrate successes.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *There was an attendance chart, posted and color coded, for all the "targeted" students to follow their progress at a glance. Success Mentors developed a binder for each mentee, tracking their interactions and student responses.*

❖ *Data helped engage families. Parents seemed to be shocked to see their child's attendance numbers as it appeared on attendance reports.*

1. **Principal leads weekly meeting to demonstrate the importance.**
   - Meeting includes key school partners, nurse/social worker, and staff
   - Success Mentor captain attends on behalf of SM team

2. **Principal's Aggregate Data Presentation (5-10 minutes)**
   Purpose: to identify school wide attendance and absence patterns in order to better design school wide interventions and catch any errors in data collection.

3. **Success Mentor Report (20-30 minutes)**
   Purpose: to get an understanding of how mentored students are doing overall as well as how individual mentored students are doing, and to design/evaluate interventions for these students.

   - Have Success Mentors report in on any successes or students with particular challenges, with whom they need support connecting students/families to resources.

   - Focus on Interventions: Select one student for deeper case study for the group. If possible pick a student with a challenge that is shared by a group of chronically absent students. What's going on for this student? What interventions have been tried already? What new interventions can be tried?

4. **Early Warning Action-Needed Report (10 minutes)**
   Purpose: to identify any students who were not chronically absent last year but have become so this year or are trending towards it.

   - To identify students in each category. Download the report and filter in Excel as follows:
     i.   81-90% for Chronically Absent students
     ii. 91-95% for Trending Towards Chronic Absenteeism

   - Identify a champion to talk with the student, ideally an adult who already has a positive relationship with the students (i.e. the teacher who knows them best) to gather information on why the student has started to miss more school. Share this information at the next Student Success Meeting

   - Based on the most recent attendance data and the report from the champion determine if the student should be assigned a Success Mentor or if another intervention is more appropriate.

5. **Review School-Wide Interventions (5-10 minutes)**
   Purpose: to review what the school is doing to create a school wide atmosphere that promotes good attendance for all students.

   - What is the school doing to engage all students in school?

   - How are students, families, classroom teachers and Success Mentors being recognized for their efforts around improving attendance?

   - What strategies have been tried? What's working, what isn't and what else could be done.

- Acknowledge the team's hard work.

Planning & Check-in Tool

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

Weekly Student Success Meetings	YES	SOME	NO	NA
1. **Student Success Summit Meetings meet every week.**				
○ Meetings are led by the Principal.				
○ Success Mentors and community partners attend (confidentiality agreements are signed)				
○ Signed confidentiality agreements on file.				
○ The proposed agenda (see page 8) is used.				
○ Chronic Absenteeism data is reviewed.				
○ Programs/interventions and successes are reviewed; action plans discussed.				

Use Attendance Data for Action Plans	YES	SOME	NO	NA
2. **The school has a routine of school-level attendance data reports to track daily attendance and see chronic absenteeism rates.**				
3. **The school uses student-level data to monitor students who are chronically absent, trending towards it, and identify patterns**				
4. **Data is used at weekly meetings to show if specific interventions or programs impact chronic absenteeism.**				

Measure Outcomes	YES	SOME	NO	NA
5. **The school knows, monitors and shares outcome data to measure reduction in chronic absenteeism**.				

*This is about keeping student attendance
part of every school conversation.*

The Principal is at the forefront of the school's efforts to build and maintain systems that recognize and reward good and improved attendance. But the whole school must resound with the message and carry those systems forward.

Create a school culture that promotes good attendance.

1

In a school that promotes good attendance, everyone knows the goal: what is your attendance rate and where do you want it to be? The Principal leads with a clear attendance policy, a commitment to accurate and timely attendance taking, and by sharing attendance rates daily.
Making all students feel welcome and wanted in school, every day is paramount. Every adult in the school, needs to be committed to making students feel noticed and acknowledge. It's especially important that students who have been away for several consecutive days are greeted warmly on their return and assisted in making up what they missed when they were absent.

Addressing safety is another key place to start. Not only can clear and consistent discipline policies help prevent disruptions that take time away from class, but can ensure that students feel safe and welcomed. The Principal leads with new systems such as redesigned arrival procedures, adding a student support dean to the staff, or introducing peer mediation programs.

Academically, schools promote good attendance by offering rich and engaging learning activities and meeting students' needs in class. Students who are not successful in school may find it easier to be absent than to try to catch up. Schools consider programs like homework help, credit-recovery for overage students, or flexible scheduling to help students arrive on time.

Promising Practices from the Field:

- ❖ *A school changed lunch schedules to have family advisory groups eat together. The atmosphere became more peaceful and brought about a huge drop in the number of incidents in the school and an increase in attendance.*

- ❖ *The school put resources behind ensuring that students who arrived late were marked present as part of a commitment to improved data systems. A Family Worker kept a log of late arrivals and made sure the attendance was corrected.*

Recognize and reward good attendance.

2

Even with a safe and welcoming environment, some students still need a nudge, a special reason to attend. Principals can plan a range of possible actions, recognitions and programs to keep students in school, including morning greetings to encourage good attendance, positive calls home for every absence, home room competitions for most improved attendance, other small incentives.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *All teachers posted "100% attendance for the month" placards outside their doors so everyone could see when they walk by and say "great job!"*

❖ *Students were excited to receive raffle tickets for arriving to school early. Students exchanged the raffle tickets for prizes or for admission to a special school event. Certificates were handed out to students at ceremonies for improved attendance.*

❖ *One high school created a "Student lounge" for students with a 95% attendance for a month and no tardiness. Students gained access for one week, and could use the space before school, during lunch, and after school.*

Identify key personnel to lead new efforts throughout the school.

3

Everyone in the school can acknowledge students with good attendance, take on a few students to track when they begin to miss school, or begin to build relationships with students who are chronically absent.

One person is designated as the Point Person for the school, to maximize the school's connection to MBK resources and to continue to contribute to the school's promising practices. Also, there are the people who make up the school's updated attendance committee, called the Weekly Student Success Summit (described in section 1). They will help plan and direct the initiative.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *The school security agent, as the first person people see, was a great help. She greeted each child and parent by name, and was supportive. It was a great way to start the day.*

❖ *The parent coordinator called every absent and late student's family every day (the school is small enough for this). The school saw results: parents began to call the school BEFORE the school called when children were out.*

❖ *Target students formed a kind of club, "Attendance Achievers," who met once a week at lunch period with the dean. Other school staff, like guidance counselors, rotated in to be part of these*

lunches and lead workshops for the students.

4 ··

Set up new systems and structures.

What system will the school have for holding the meetings? What data reports will be needed and who will prepare them? Before a school can deal with the most entrenched absences, there must be an attendance plan in place that both supports students who come every day and monitors those who start to fall behind.

One way to start is by targeting strategies for early and transitional grades – Kindergarten and first grade, sixth and ninth grades. Aside from the MBK Success Mentor Initiative (described in section 3), appropriate interventions might be connections to extracurricular activities, after-school programming, school-based health services, morning clubs, counseling, or other programs.

Promising Practices from the Field:

❖ *For kindergarten, one of the lowest attending grades, the targeted students went daily to the parent coordinator's room and moved Popsicle sticks into a pocket chart to say they were "here." The charts were encouraging, as the students had a visual representation of their attendance. Kindergarten attendance last year was barely 91%, and had been in the 80s most years—this school year it was almost 94%.*

❖ *Older students worked with the younger students in the breakfast program as well as in peer tutoring program, motivating buddies to get to school early each morning and improve their attendance.*

Identify school wide strategies that will promote good attendance for all students.

How will you create a culture in which all students are motivated and informed about the importance of good attendance? What types of recognitions/incentives, or new systems/programs could you offer to students or, their families?

Select your MBK Success Mentor Initiative point person.

This person will be responsible for supporting the Success Mentors (see section 3), running the weekly Student Success Summit meeting when the Principal can't be there and ensuring the data gets compiled each week for the meeting. Who is central to making this happen? Who is the best fit for this role?

Plan to introduce your attendance and MBK Success Mentor initiative (priorities and new systems) to your school staff.

When will this introduction take place? How will you create buy-in among your school staff?

Planning & Check-in Tool

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

Culture Promotes Good Attendance	YES	SOME	NO	NA
1. The school's attendance policy that defines good attendance is widely distributed.				
2. The school has at least one new practice that promotes a welcoming environment.				
3. Emphasis on acknowledging and celebrating attendance is evident (banners, bulletin boards, etc.).				

Recognize and Reward	YES	SOME	NO	NA
4. The school has a system for recognizing and rewarding good and improved attendance.				

Personnel	YES	SOME	NO	NA
5. A Point Person is selected to coordinate all efforts for the MBK Student Success Mentor and Student Support Initiative.				
6. All staff & community partners in the school have received information about chronic absenteeism and how they can help improve attendance.				

Systems and Structures	YES	SOME	NO	NA
7. The School Attendance Plan includes the school's new actions to reduce chronic absenteeism.				
8. Different activities exist to support early-warning and chronically absent students.				
○ Calls home for every absence.				
○ Before-school activities (breakfast, homework help, sports)				
○ Academic interventions (credit recovery, homework help)				

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

○ After-school activities – community partners, clubs, sports				
○ Other:				

*"He's the only person that actually made me care more,
the only person that made me come to school more than what I was,
the only person that made me think positive, rather than negative."*

NYC student on her mentor

The interest and encouragement of a Success Mentor can bring chronically absent students back to school. The approach is supported by fifty years of research documenting that children who have consistent access to caring adults have better outcomes, including higher education and lower incidents of at-risk behaviors.

Identify your "Target Students."

1

Use school or district data identify the students who missed ten percent or school or 20 or more days last year. Prioritize the following types of student's for Success Mentors, as prior evidence has shown they typically benefit the most.

- ❖ student's entering key transition grades, K-1, 6th (or the first year of middle school in the district) , and 9th grade,
- ❖ those students who attended at least 80 percent of the time last year,
- ❖ over-age high school students with any level of chronic absenteeism the prior year, and homeless and foster care students with any level of chronic absenteeism.

You should also provide Success Mentors to students who have no prior history of chronic absenteeism but become so for the first time during the school year.

Note students who were severely chronically absent the prior year, *i.e.*, attended less than 80% of the time, do benefit from Success Mentors but they likely require additional and more intensive supports as well, such as those provided by social workers, health, and mental health professionals.

Identify "Success Mentors."

2

The MBK Student Success Mentor *Every Student, Every Day* pilot schools in cohort 1 typically started an Internal Success Mentor program. **Internal (Staff) Success Mentors** are teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and parent coordinators, but also have included school office workers, security guards, cafeteria workers, and school maintenance staff among other school staff who become a special go-to person for a few students. These Mentors typically "adopt" 1 to 3 students (though some have taken as many as 5) , depending on their other role(s) in the school. They use

lunch or advisory or before and after school to connect with mentees.

External Success Mentors can come from city interagency partners or Social Work or Guidance interns from local graduate school programs, Americorps national service programs like City Year and Experience Corps, youth development organizations like after school providers or youth counseling programs, and from colleges work-study programs. External Success Mentors, in particular those that are embedded in schools full time or at least 3 days a week, can often support 10 to 15 mentees. The MBK Success Mentor Initiative works with its partner school districts to help source External Success Mentor. Some schools develop their own new partnerships, or ask existing partners to act as Success Mentors.

Peer-to-Peer Success Mentors are older students who receive training and support from organizations with experience in service learning or youth counseling. Peer Success Mentors generally have about 5 mentees.

3

Be Clear about the Role of the Success Mentor in the School

No matter what "kind" of Success Mentor, it is the school's responsibility to link students to school, and students and parents to services that address the causes of the absences.

- ❖ Mentors make students feel wanted in school and missed when they are not there. They greet students in the school, ideally in the morning and call their homes and the mentee if they are absent.

- ❖ Mentors, have at least three interactions with mentees in school each week and engage in longer one-on-one or group meetings at least weekly throughout the school year, Mentors identify, and in some cases create, activities that appeal to their mentees' needs and interests to increase their engagement with school. A number of the pilot schools in cohort 1 found that is was powerful to have a weekly program or speaker for all mentors and mentees. This help make the Student Success Mentor Initiative seem special in student's eyes.

- ❖ Mentors diagnose the root causes of mentees' absences and collaborate with others in the school to intervene with services and resources as necessary.

In addition, the Success Mentor role includes:

❖ Keeping notes about their students' attendance patterns, needs and interventions and acting strategically on the data they keep. In a number of pilot school's Mentors and Mentees used forms located on google documents to record their weekly interactions and share any insights learned with the principal and MBK point person in the school into why the student was absent and what the most effective remedies were.

❖ Celebrating attendance improvements.

❖ Attending (or being represented at) Weekly Student Success Summit meetings (see the **Weekly Meetings** section) and sharing what works and new challenges.

❖ Communicating regularly with mentees' families, connecting them to services as needed and reinforcing positive messages about school attendance and academic performance. Sharing positive news about the student with families.

Promising Practices from the Field

❖ *With Success Mentors, the students knew someone else was checking in on them. The students loved the meetings and the attention. Now, students come to the Mentors and tell them why they have been absent. The students really want the Mentors to know they are trying.*

❖ *Teachers, initially somewhat hesitant to take on the Success Mentor role, have become the program's biggest cheerleaders. Teachers were in the cafeteria early in the morning so as not to miss meeting and greeting mentees.*

❖ *Because of the Success Mentors, students want to get to school. Parents shared that when a child is eager to go to school "It makes it easier for me in the morning when it's so stressful just trying to get everyone dressed and out of the house on time."*

Have Systems to Support your "Success Mentors."

4

Success Mentors cannot make the difference on their own. Where the programs worked best, Success Mentors were introduced to the entire school staff and had a key staff member as a liaison. Success Mentors knew where to go for space to meet with students, and had access to computers and a phone, and to attendance data about their students.

Success Mentors should also be provided on-going training and be networked with other Success Mentors. School Districts participating in the Success Mentor Initiative can work with MENTOR and its local affiliates to design customized training sessions for their Success Mentors.

It is best to match external Success Mentors to students with attendance of at least 70%, in other

words, not with the most entrenched attendance problems. It is best to plan to sustain the mentor-mentee relationship over the course of the school year.

Promising Practices from the Field

❖ *Information gathered by Success Mentors was tremendously helpful to the Guidance Counselor and the Advisors. Parents were often more responsive to Success Mentors than to school staff. Some teachers and security staff approached Success Mentors about referring additional students.*

❖ *To support Success Mentor, the Attendance Teachers provided data, the secretary helped with procurement for incentives, and teachers communicated during family group time/advisories, or other periods when they didn't have a class.*

5 ┄┄┄

Create Easy Access for Success Mentors to their Mentees Attendance Data

It is important for Success Mentors to have easy access to their Mentee's attendance data. This can be done by first having external Success Mentors sign confidentiality agreements. Then Success Mentors can be given access to a limited portion of a data dashboard that has their student's absenteeism data. Alternatively, a Mentor leader can be given this access and then text or e-mail all the other Mentors his or her mentee's attendance data on a daily basis. If the second option is chosen, it's important to have a backup person, in case the Mentor leader is not present on a given day.

Identify your Target Students.

Which students will you target from your list of students with a history of chronic absence? Will you focus on certain key grades or groups based on what your data tells you and where you feel you can make the most impact?

Identify your Success Mentors.

Who will serve as your Success Mentors? In addition to internal school staff or might there be a partner organization that could provide the Mentors? Do you have an existing mentoring program that can include a focus on attendance? What are your expectations for your Success Mentors in terms of their responsibilities?

Select and assign target students to your Success Mentors so they are ready to go when the school year starts.

In what data system, will you match target students to Success Mentors (if you are using school staff, you want to match staff with students they would normally see in the course of their day)? How many target students will you match to each Mentor?

Select your point person (see page 12)

This person will be responsible for supporting the Success Mentors.

Plan to introduce your team of Success Mentors to your school staff.

When will this introduction take place? How will you create buy-in among your school staff for the Initiative?

Planning and Check In Tool

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

Target Students	YES	SOME	NO	NA
1. Students who missed 20+ days last year are identified and matched to Success Mentors.				
2. During the year, new, early-warning students are identified and added to Mentor caseloads, as appropriate.				

Success Mentors	YES	SOME	NO	NA
3. The school has recruited and supports staff members to serve as Internal Success Mentors.				
4. The school has an additional Success Mentor model in place.				
○ External model. Identify partner(s):				
○ Peer-to-Peer model.				
5. Success Mentors meet their mentees each day (or at least three times a week) and have a longer meeting at least once a week during the entire school year.				

Success Mentor Supports	YES	SOME	NO	NA
6. The Success Mentors know the school's Point Person and are introduced within school during the first 3 weeks.				
7. Success Mentors are introduced to their mentees through a special event or activity.				
8. Success Mentors have space and resources (phones, computers, etc.) and know all staff roles and responsibilities.				
9. Success Mentors are included in Parent Summits, Weekly Student Success Summit meetings, and other school-wide events.				

Data Dashboard	YES	SOME	NO	NA

10. External Success Mentors have signed Confidentiality Agreements.	
11. Success Mentors have easy access to their mentee's attendance data	

Draw on Community Partners to Better Connect with Families.

This is about how families and neighbors become part of the attendance improvement effort.

Communicating with families about attendance is critical – 90% attendance isn't good enough and attending school regularly boosts achievement.

Schools can engage existing community partners (like after school programs) and partner with other community centers to reach families and share the message about student attendance. These partners can be asked to make specific outreach to chronically absent students and talk about good attendance with the families they see.

1 **Host the Parent Success Summit & Resource Fair.**

The Parent Success Summit and Resource Fair, a key part of the MBK Success Mentor *Every Student, Every Day* initiative. It takes place during the first eight weeks of school. The first part engages and informs families about the importance of good attendance (including laws and the link between attendance and school performance) and the school's attendance programs.

For a successful summit:

❍ Have a performance by students or an awards ceremony.

❍ Make it part of the Open School Night, or another school function that parents traditionally attend.

❍ Include activities geared toward grandparents who are raising grandchildren.

❍ Create a personalized folder for each parent, with their child's attendance data and a resource list of community resources.

Principals use the second part, the Resource Fair, where organizations provide information about services such as housing, health care, and other resources, as an opportunity to connect with local community providers.

Promising Practices from the Field

❖ *The Parent Summit featured meaningful discussions about student support and best practices. The parents were excited to know that the White House was so involved in helping support their efforts with their children.*

❖ *The summits helped to get parents to be more aware of their children's attendance/lateness record. The school recognized parents by presenting them with certificates as well.*

Communicate with families regularly—and include the positive.

2

Schools or Success Mentors call home when students are absent every day. They set aside enough time to discuss why the child was absent and explore solutions.

Tips for successful morning calls to families of absent students:

❖ Mention the school is part of the White House's My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor Initiative.

❖ Try to find the "hook" – focusing on the child's strength or a positive action.

❖ Connect the family to any needed services and invite them to school activities,

When personal calls are not possible, make the most of "autodial" systems. A message to inform parents of absences, lateness, or to offer congratulations for attendance improvement can be recorded by the Principal, guidance counselor, or Success Mentor. Parents/guardians pay more attention to a message delivered by a person they know.

How can the attendance message move beyond the phone call, intercom and bulletin boards? Partners in your school, whether after school providers, School-Based Health Center, or youth counselors become part of the outreach, addressing attendance issues with the families they already serve. Other community centers can be asked to share the message about student attendance.

Promising Practices from the Field

❖ *The Mentor called to make sure the student was getting ready 40 minutes before school started and greeted him when he arrived. Twice a month, the Mentor sent the mother a postcard with his weekly attendance. He missed just two days this year.*

❖ *Through their special relationship, Success Mentors were good at getting updated telephone and home address information from the students.*

❖ *The holiday party with the PTA was held in the neighborhood with the highest concentration of parents of chronically absent students. These parents were not coming to the school so the school brought the event to the families' community.*

❖ *Mentors developed a "walking school bus" program. Data showed that students who missed school had younger siblings. The school called the parents/guardians, and asked if it would help to have folks walk their kids to school. They arranged for a meeting place. Parents got kids to that spot, rather than all the way to school.*

Learn ways to address the causes of absenteeism.

3

Schools can connect chronically absent students and their families to community partners that offer critical services. Of course, they can be part of the Parent Success Summit and are invited to the Weekly Student Success Summits. (See the section on **Weekly Meetings**.) They bring information for immigrant families, about day care and other services, and about supports for foster care families.

Schools reported that the *Every Student, Every Day* message made it easier to outreach and that a focus on attendance was a good way to start the conversation with community partners in their neighborhoods and to local businesses.

Promising Practice from the Field

❖ *A Success Mentor created a Resources Guide of local services, including recreational and healthcare, that was distributed to families at the Parent Summit*.

Select date and time for the Parent Success Summit & Resource Fair (in first 8 weeks).
Date & Time:

Who are the community partners you want to invite to your Parent Summit? Who from your staff will be the point person for the Summit, taking responsibility for inviting community resources and organizing the event?

Identify resources in your community with potential for collaboration.
Where are opportunities for strategic partnerships? If you have an afterschool program or other programs/services at your school run by partner organizations, how can you engage them in the fight against chronic absences? Could they target chronically absent students for their programs? Help spread the message about good attendance?

Planning and Check-In Tool

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

Parent Success Summit

	YES	SOME	NO	NA
1. At least one Parent Summit & Resource Fair was held (with one held during the first 8 weeks of school).				
2. The Summit was planned with community partners and Success Mentors.				

Communication with families

	YES	SOME	NO	NA
3. Parents/families of absent students are called every day.				
❍ Positive news is shared in every call.				
❍ Autodial messages are personalized.				
❍ Reasons for absences are solicited for action planning.				
4. At least one neighborhood organization is a partner with the school in promoting good attendance to families.				

Learn ways to address the causes of absenteeism

	YES	SOME	NO	NA
5. The community partners liaison is identified and is invited/attends the weekly Student Success Summit meetings.				
6. A school staff person has attended at least one neighborhood meeting to connect local resources to the school.				
7. community partners in the school contribute to weekly Student Success Summit meetings.				
8. School has at least one new practice to better connect families to resources (health, social, etc.).				

Our Websites

- *Every Student, Every Day*, http://www2.ed.gov/chronicabsenteeism
- *Every Student, Every Day* Blog, http://blog.ed.gov/2015/10/every-student-every-day
- Every Student, Every Day Toolkit, http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/toolkit.pdf

Additional Resources Sites

- **Attendanceworks** is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success. The website gives users access to tools for monitoring, understanding and addressing chronic absence, starting in the early grades, including a Tool Kit for engaging parents. **Be sure to sign up for AttendanceWorks email updates.**

  Special thanks to Hedy Chang and AttendanceWorks for contributions to this guide, especially the Planning and Check-in Tool.

- **AbsencesAddUp** is a joint MBK campaign with the Ad Council, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education. The campaign emphasizes to parents the importance of consistent school attendance and the impact absences have on their children's academic outcomes. The primary goal is to inform parents that, as early as elementary school, students who miss just two days of school per month are more likely to fall behind and less likely to graduate high school. **Be sure to download the toolkit to use in your community.**

- **Mentor**. The National Mentoring Partnership is the unifying champion for expanding quality youth mentoring relationships in the United States. For more than 25 years, MENTOR has served the mentoring field by providing a public voice; developing and delivering resources to mentoring programs nationwide; and promoting quality for mentoring through evidence-based standards, innovative research and essential tools.

- **Everyone Graduates Center** develops and disseminates the know-how required to enable all students to graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and civic life. Through a systematic and comprehensive approach, EGC combines analysis of the causes, location, and consequences of the nation's dropout crisis with the development of tools and models designed to keep all students on the path to high school graduation, and capacity building efforts to enable states, communities, school districts, and schools to provide all their students with the supports they need to succeed. The Everyone Graduate Center seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, to develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers, and to build local capacity to implement and sustain them.

Getting Started
How To… Know Where to Start (in PDF)

Resources and "How to . . ." Guides for the Weekly Student Success Meetings
Attendance data reports used to measure and monitor attendance depend on the quality of data collection practices, as well as their ease of use. Technical assistance is available from Johns Hopkins University/Everyone Graduates Center on attendance and early warning data use, analysis, and formatting. Please contact your district point person for the MBK Student Success Mentor Initiative to arrange this, if desired.

- How To… Get Started with Weekly Student Success Summits (in PDF)
- How To… Lead the Weekly Student Success Summits (the Agenda) (in PDF)

Resources and "How to . . ." Guides for School Wide Actions
Schools are advised to re-visit their Attendance Plans. The Plan is organized the way schools are expected to structure their initiatives: school wide, preventing absences, responded to "early warning," and interventions for chronically absent students.

- How To… Be Creative with Attendance Incentives for K-5 (in PDF)
- How To… Be Creative with Attendance Incentives for High School (in PDF)
- How To… Be Creative with Attendance Incentives for Middle School (in PDF)

Resources and "How to . . ." Guides for the MBK Success Mentor Initiative
It is important to define a "code" for each Success Mentor (or other activity) and use that code to match individual students to their Mentors. For schools, it means easier access to mentor-specific data reports. For *Every Student, Every Day* it means the ability to identify data-driven best practices.

- How To… Review Your Target List (in PDF)
- How To… Customize Success Mentors for Middle and High Schools (in PDF)

Resources and "How to . . ." Guides for Connecting to Families and Communities

- How To… Host a Parent Success Summit & Resource Fair (in PDF)
- How To… Make the Most of Morning Calls to Families (in PDF)
- How To… Have School Staff Serve as Success Mentors (in PDF)

Optional: Recommended as a self-assessment. Over the year, use this tool as a way to assess what schools are trying and to learn from schools about what works best.

		YES	SOME	NO	NA
Weekly Meetings	Student Success Summits meet every week.				
	The school has a routine of **school-level** attendance data reports to track daily attendance and see chronic absenteeism rates.				
	The school uses **student-level** data to monitor students who are chronically absent and identify patterns of absence.				
	Data is used to show if programs impact chronic absenteeism.				
	The school knows, monitors and shares outcome data to measure reduction in chronic absenteeism.				
School wide	School's attendance policy is widely distributed.				
	School has one new practice to promote a welcoming environment.				
	Emphasis on celebrating attendance is evident.				
	School has a system to recognize good and improved attendance.				
	A Point Person is selected to coordinate all efforts.				
	All staff & community partners have received information about chronic absenteeism and how they can help improve attendance.				
	The School Attendance Plan describes the school's new actions to reduce chronic absenteeism.				
	Different activities target early-warning /chronically absent students.				
	Students who missed 20+ days last year are identified and matched to Success Mentors.				
Success Mentors	During the year, students who become chronically absent are identified and added to Mentor caseloads, as appropriate.				
	The school has an Internal Success Mentor program.				
	The school has another Success Mentor program.				
	The Success Mentors know the school's Point Person and are introduced within school and to their mentees.				
	Success Mentors meet their mentees at least 3 days a week and have a longer session once a week for the whole year.				
	Success Mentors have space and resources (phones, computers, etc.) and know all staff roles and responsibilities.				
	Success Mentors are included in Parent Summits, Student Success Summits, and other school wide events.				
	External Success Mentors have signed Confidentiality Agreements.				
	Success Mentors have easy access to attendance data				
Families Community	At least one Parent Summit and Resource Fair was held.				
	The Summit was planned with community partners and Success Mentors.				
	Parent(s)/families of absent students are called every day.				
	At least one neighborhood organization is a partner with the school in promoting good attendance to families.				
	The community partner is invited/attends the weekly Student Success Summit meetings.				

A school staff person has attended at least one community partners meeting.				
School community partners contribute to weekly Summit meetings.				
School has at least one new practice to better connect families to resources (health, social, etc.).				

Every Student, Every Day.

My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor and Student Support Initiative

www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper