



## Every School Day Counts Detroit (ESDCD) Summary of Public Charter School Attendance Case Studies

### Introduction (purpose, process, and selection criteria)

In the fall of 2020, Attendance Works and *Every School Day Counts Detroit* conducted interviews with school leaders from five local public charter schools to document their efforts to sustain school attendance during the Covid-19 pandemic. The schools chosen represented diverse grade levels. Based upon insights from the interviews, as well as the quality of their participation in peer learning activities, each school demonstrated early signs of success in adopting effective attendance strategies.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine whether these practices resulted in reductions in chronic absence rates given shifts in attendance taking practices and the challenging economic, social and health conditions facing families and communities during the pandemic. This work has been made possible through The Skillman Foundation's investment in education and increased school attendance for all children in Detroit.

### Investing in School-based Capacity Building

Attendance Works and the ESDCD Coalition worked with 28 public charter schools for three years (2018-2021), introducing school leaders to foundations of student attendance and delivering support through a multi-tiered system using data to identify the needs of students and their families. Through a peer learning model, attendance teams from each school were equipped with national and local attendance tools, resources and best practice.

The five schools highlighted in the case studies received intensive coaching and ongoing consultation to implement strategies to reduce rates of chronic absence and were headed by school leaders with high levels of commitment to the attendance initiative. The key learnings from this sample of attendance efforts include:

- Collaborative Leadership
  - Ensure school leaders maintain a strong ongoing commitment to the work of attendance
  - Engage in shared leadership by taking a team approach to engaged the whole-school
  - Cultivate teacher support and buy-in
  - Invest in strategic coordination with partners
  - Increase capacity building and coordination between district and school staff
- Student and Family Engagement
  - Reconnect with every student
  - With a student/family at the center, focus on deep family engagement, building on relationships
  - Offer personalized/individualized supports
  - Provide effective wraparound supports for students and families
- Comprehensive, Multi-tiered Strategy
  - Take a data-driven approach informed by qualitative and quantitative and data
  - Adopt universal messaging around attendance and engagement
  - Develop comprehensive plans to address chronic absence with prevention and intervention strategies
  - Align and coordinate attendance intervention to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

## **Conclusion**

Despite the stress, anxiety and challenges school staff faced during the pandemic, their resilience was manifested through their actions and innovative interventions. The five schools profiled sustained progress during the pandemic due to strong leadership and commitment to getting every student to school (in-person and virtually), maintaining a student-family focus, implementing attendance frameworks, tools and best practice. They went above and beyond to connect with all students, to address barriers to attendance, and to sustain student participation. School leaders invested more in their staff, specifically in teachers. Because of their efforts, principals and attendance teams helped ensure continued attendance progress and readiness for the new school year.

**See case studies for** [Escuela Avancemos](#), [Cesar Chavez Academy Upper Elem](#), [Covenant House Academy SW](#), [NPFE Loving Academy](#) and [University Prep Academy Art and Design](#).