

ATTENDANCE

To ensure students get the most out of Pre-K for All services, programs must stress the importance of regular attendance.

What You Need to Know

ATTENDANCE OVERVIEW

Students attending Pre-K for All programs are offered a minimum of 176 days of instruction during the program year. Research has shown that students in regular attendance benefit most from the services offered in pre-K.¹

By collecting attendance data, developing strategies for improving attendance, and reaching out to at-risk students and their families, you have the ability to improve student attendance at your program.

Clear attendance and communication policies along with collaboration with families, are crucial to improving student attendance:

- Set out the attendance expectations and policies for absences and lateness, including what is considered excused, what documentation is required and what families need to do when a child is absent, late, or must leave early.
 - You should work with families to understand reasons for low attendance, discuss strategies to address those reasons and, where necessary, discuss the impact of low attendance on their child's pre-K experience.
 - Your communications with families during orientation, parent/teacher conferences, and via written/online communications should clearly articulate the expectation that students attend pre-K on a regular basis.
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ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

You are responsible for setting policy, tracking student attendance, and conducting follow-up communication with families. Staff should be trained and have a clear understanding on their role in ongoing tasks related to student attendance.

MAINTAINING ACCURATE RECORDS OF STUDENT ATTENDANCE

You must maintain accurate records of daily attendance for all enrolled students utilizing all of the following methods.

¹ *Mapping the Early Attendance Gap: Charting a Course for Student Success*. Attendance Works & Healthy Schools Campaign, September 2015.

- Daily attendance must be recorded for each student on their [Pre-K Attendance Card*](#).
 - You are required to enter a “P” for present, an “A” for absent, and an “E” for excused absence. Excused absences, which are still counted as absences, shall include, but are not necessarily limited to:
 - Student illness (for more information on when students should be asked to stay home please see the section on Excluding Students due to Infectious Illnesses below)
 - Any student who is out for 3 or more days due to illness must provide a note from a physician
 - Family emergencies
 - Transportation or weather emergencies
 - You should communicate to families what absences are considered excused and any documentation required.

**Classrooms funded directly through EarlyLearn NYC must use the Roster Book.*

- Daily attendance must also be entered in PreKIDS*.
 - Attendance must be entered and verified at least once per month
 - Data entered into PreKIDS* must match the data collected on the Pre-K Attendance Cards or Roster Book (as applicable).
- A [Daily Attendance Record Form](#) must be filled out and signed by parents/legal guardians or escorts (if applicable) daily. (Required for Article 47 providers and recommended for Article 43 and Group Family Day Care providers)

**Classrooms funded directly through EarlyLearn NYC programs must use the Web-based Enrollment System (WES) to input daily attendance.*

RESPONDING TO STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

When students are absent, it is important that you communicate with families to understand the reason for the absence and determine if the child/family require additional supports or services.

Unless a family has notified you in advance of an absence, you are responsible for calling families:

- On the first day of an absence
- On each day of additional absence

**Automated calling systems may not be used as a substitute for calling families.*

If you fail to reach a child’s family by phone you should utilize other methods of communication such as e-mail, text-message, and letters to try and contact the family and when necessary emergency contacts.

- A log must be kept of all communications made to families regarding absences. If you are unable to contact a child’s family successfully, you must document that you have attempted to reach the family.
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FREQUENT ABSENTEEISM

Regular participation in pre-K enables students to get the most out of daily learning opportunities.

You should take a proactive approach and work with families of children who are frequently absent. In these cases, you should discuss the following with the family:

- The nature of the child's irregular attendance
- Actions to be taken by the family
- Actions to be taken by staff
- Actions to be taken in the event the attendance problem continues
- The time of the next meeting to review the progress of attendance
- How they can coordinate with other families in the program who can share the responsibility of pick up and/or drop off.

Visit Attendanceworks.org for tips and guides that staff can share with families, including research about how attendance in pre-K predicts later academic progress.

RECURRING ABSENTEEISM

In pre-K, recurring absence is defined as:

- 10 consecutive non-excused absences
- 20 non-excused absences in a four month period

If a student's absences reach these thresholds you must:

- Report the case of recurring absenteeism in writing and by telephone to your designated DECE Field Office
- Request that the family come to your site for a Discharge Review Conference to determine if the child should be removed from the program in order to permit a child on a waiting list to be registered and enrolled in his/her place.*

No child will be discharged before the family is given an opportunity to explain the recurring absenteeism and without DECE Field Office approval. Additional guidance on Discharge Review Conferences is forthcoming.

**Not applicable for classrooms funded directly through EarlyLearn NYC.*

If a child accumulates a high number of excused absences due to illness, family emergencies, etc., you must work with the family to determine if additional supports may be required to enable to child to attend on a regular basis. Supports may include assisting the family:

- Access health care
- Find a more reliable source of transportation
- Access community resources
- Access counseling services

Contact prekfamilyengagement@schools.nyc.gov if you need further guidance. *EarlyLearn NYC program can contact their ACS Team Leader for further guidance.*

Strategies for Improving Student Attendance

You must monitor and analyze student attendance data with the goal of developing interventions and strategies toward improving attendance at your site. Both long-term and short-term analyses of student attendance data can guide your attendance strategies.

Analysis

You should have a system in place that ensures program staff are able to identify:

- Cases where a student is approaching frequent absenteeism
- Cases of recurring absenteeism
- Classrooms with low and high attendance rates
- Other attendance patterns

EarlyLearn NYC programs should refer to FAQ #1 for additional requirements on when the program must conduct an analysis of the causes of low attendance.

Improvement Strategies

You should work with families in an effort to improve their child's attendance. Potential strategies include:

- Engaging families in their child's curriculum to demonstrate why regular attendance matters
- Clearly communicating expectations for attendance to families
- Having regular celebration events for classrooms with improved attendance
- Offering supports to overcome common barriers to attendance
 - Assistance in accessing health care
 - Assistance in finding a safe and consistent transportation route to the program
- Engaging families in identifying and addressing family and community issues that contribute to frequent absenteeism (e.g. students in transient housing)
- Ensuring families have the opportunity to meet with program staff to discuss concerns families may have about their child's participation in the program, and to brainstorm solutions to those concerns

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

Smooth transitions into your Pre-K for All program lay the foundation for a successful year. Your program should be prepared to assist students and families with their transition into pre-K.

STAGGERED SCHEDULE

- If appropriate for your families, establish a staggered schedule during the first week of school to help students and families adjust.
 - Please view the DECE's [Sample Staggered Schedule](#)

MODIFIED SCHEDULE

- On a case by case basis where a family and program agree that a student may benefit from a modified transition schedule at the beginning of the school year, a program, family, and a program's assigned Early Childhood Social Worker or Program Specialist may agree on a plan that temporarily shortens the length of a student's day or week.
 - A student's parent/legal guardian must give voluntary written consent on a form provided by the Social Worker or Program Specialist. This must be kept on file and made available upon request.
- The modified schedule should gradually lengthen the student's schedule to support their transition into your Pre-K for All program. Modified transition schedules may be implemented for a time period **not to exceed three weeks** to support the student's full participation in the regular program schedule. Programs and families should work together to support the child to attend for a full schedule (6 hours and 20 minutes, 5 days a week, or a weekly equivalent) by the end of this period.

Any changes to programmatic structures must not discriminate against any student or family, where a student or family's right to successfully engage in a full day of high quality pre-K is limited due to any characteristic or perceived characteristic of that student or family.

For further assistance with staggered entrance or modified schedule planning, programs should contact the DECE at (212) 374-0351 or earlychildhood@schools.nyc.gov. Information is also available on the [Early Childhood Website](#).

EXCLUDING STUDENTS DUE TO INFECTIOUS ILLNESSES

To avoid the spread of diseases and illnesses in school:

- Students with fever, vomiting or diarrhea should stay home until the symptoms are gone or until a doctor approves readmission into the program.
- Students who develop breathing problems should stay home until their cough is gone.

Families must report to the program within 24 hours any absences due to the following illnesses:

- Chicken pox, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, diphtheria, food poisoning, hepatitis, haemophilus influenza type b infection, impetigo, measles, meningitis (all types), meningococcal disease, Methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, rubella (German measles), salmonella, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, or any other disease or condition which may be a danger to the health of other children. *Such disease or*
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condition shall not include acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

EXCLUDING STUDENTS DUE TO LICE

To avoid the spread of lice and/or nits (eggs) in school:

- Students who have lice must be excluded from the program for 24 hours after receiving treatment and becoming lice/nit free.
- Students can still be sent home if the family has not complied with the “nit-free” policy of the DOHMH Bureau of Child Care, even when a health care provider sends a student back with a “clearance” from a physician.
- Staff at the child care center should check the student’s head to see that the student is “nit-free” before readmission into the program. *A note from a physician is not a requirement for a child who has lice to return to child care.*

**Note: The NYCDOE policy for school-age children, which states a child only needs to be “lice free,” is different from the DOHMH readmission policy to child care for pre-K.*

BED BUGS

Bed bugs are not known to cause or transmit disease and the risk of person-to-person transference in school is very low. This is NOT a communicable disease. In case of the possibility of bed bugs:

- Programs should not exclude a child from attending the program or send a child home, nor does the child need to see a physician when there are bed bugs in the home.

EXCLUDING STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED ALL REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS

For information on the immunization requirements of New York Public Health Law §2164 and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) please see the [“Immunizations”](#) section of the Policy Handbook.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. When are EarlyLearn funded classrooms required to conduct an analysis of the causes of low attendance?

When the monthly average daily attendance falls below 85 percent, an analysis of the causes should be conducted. The analysis should include:

- The pattern of absences for each child
- The number of absences that occur on consecutive days
- The initiation of family support, if the absences are the result of anything other than illness