

MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITIONS: CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Attendees spent time looking at current (baseline) data on Chronic Absenteeism within the STEPS Neighborhood.

This included:

- Students who were chronically absent by race, by grade, and income.
- Measures linked to chronic absenteeism.
- Percentage of students chronically absent by neighborhood region
- Risk factors prior to age 13 by population (by neighborhood region)
- Chronic absent rate ratio between low income and not low income by community

Data was from *Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, and measures linked to chronic absenteeism from the *National Association of Elementary School Principals*.

After looking at this data, STEPS grantees were asked:

- What stands out to you?
- What surprises you?

Juneau

- What is happening in Juneau that is not happening in Sitka/smaller communities?
- Juneau has low absenteeism overall but high low income. How does that work?
- Income factor that goes to measures in community- if you have kids that need to be more independent, care for ourselves, might not be same elsewhere.
- *In Juneau:* our threshold is the 45%, 50% (when thinking of chronic absenteeism). We have a population of kids that are missing up to 50% of instruction and a sub-population, families that leave 2-3 weeks at a time for holiday, which impacts data.
- *In Juneau:* Students get to choose what school get to attend, so what was a neighborhood school is now a city school, and these numbers- driven by sections of classes but not days of classes. ex. kid missing first period
- *In Juneau:* Middle School (MS) to High School (HS): MS has closed campus; HS has open campus so allows for selective actions of students (going to lunch and deciding whether to come back).

- Looking at 4th grade, 24% is a high percentage, our district doing work on it. For Sitka- spike here- academic activity were incorrectly added to it, but even correcting for hit not where we want to be.
- We want to look all the way back to kindergarten– families going to struggle even there- how can we have policies in handbooks to support students all the way through?

Yakutat

- Coming from small community- we were worried kids not coming to school because of lack of activities, they tend to blame that then looking at other reasons. But that's not the issue- lot of other stuff going on as other communities with lots of activities have this issue.

Hoonah

- Came to realization absenteeism is not one of our issues, but students being tardy to school is. The same kids are late every day.
- Some students are 3 hours late every day, but not considered absent, but if add the tardys together they are.

General Comments (for all communities)

- Support differences between ways we support kids at elementary level.
- At the Middle School and High School levels, we are putting on students a lot more.
- Have awareness of different communities and schools.
- Can we dig into the data more, based on months, year, or why it goes down from 4th to 5th grade and 7th to 8th.
- Students from low income families are at very high risk for chronic absenteeism between 8th to 9th grade transient time. Why?
- Want to add housing and transportation as measures for chronic absenteeism; what else might be factors- seasonal? What else is missing?
- Small number impacting results- impact possible

What is the call of action for us?

- Where is the shift directing funding to lift up cultural knowledge?
- Where is the history of place and language professional development?
- What are our systems doing to decolonize itself?
- When is our history of place not optional?

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM?

Sitka

Develop a plan for each student:

- “We have plenty of students who miss 30 days of year due to activities; not worried about them, because there’s a plan in place [for what to do about missing school].”
- “So that should be the answer for every kids... the kid having trouble getting up in morning, kid taking care of family and can’t get in... needs to be a plan instead of a policy or protocol because then dealing with individual circumstances.”

Hoonah

Discussed what is working in their community:

- 88% of our students feel safe.
 - Kids that come to school because it is safe and feel less safe outside, could be because peer to peer relations in school is low.
- Hire good people and keep good people.
- Having teachers as partners makes all the difference.
- Even though kids are late they are still showing up.
- Relationships are key.

Juneau

- Talked mostly about resources that we know are becoming limited in our state, such as class size, exploratories, different means to access learning,
- Providing a social worker in district for secondary schools to connect families with school, to be a bridge between community and school.
- AVTEC: Look at what their goals and skills are, as they have a huge completion rate.

General Comments (for all communities)

- Look at what’s really going with the students (who are missing school) when in school.
- How mitigate what we don’t have control of?
- Relationships
- Trauma Informed work will impact this.

