

Absenteeism/Truancy Needs Assessment Interviews for Principals, Teachers, and Students

Individual Interview: Principal

1. Is absenteeism or truancy a problem at your school?
2. Do you think that you can predict, in elementary school, which children will be truant in later years (e.g. middle and high school)?
3. What do you believe leads to absenteeism and truancy?
4. Are there certain risk factors for absenteeism (e.g., child, family, environmental background, etc.)?
5. Do you have any programs in place to deal with (*whatever was identified above as problems*)?
6. How is that program working? Is it successful? Do you see any need for changes?
7. Are there any programs that you don't have, but you think would be useful to deal with (*whatever was identified above as problems*)?
8. Do you think teachers would agree with your opinion of the problems that lead to truancy, or would they cite other difficulties?
9. What's your opinion of the level of staff morale in the building? What do you think is the biggest concern of your staff?

In order to get a better idea of the relative weight that different variables contribute to absenteeism and truancy, we'd like you to complete the attached questionnaire. It contains many of the problem areas you've just identified, as well as some areas that we think might be important. (See forms below)

Individual Interview: Teacher

1. How long have you been teaching? At this school?
2. Is absenteeism or truancy a problem here?
3. Do you think that you can predict, in elementary school, which children will be truant in later years (e.g. middle and high school)?
4. What do you believe leads to absenteeism and truancy?
5. Are there certain risk factors for absenteeism (e.g., child, family, environmental background, etc.)?
6. What characteristics typify your struggling students? (*only if not answered above*)
7. What are the top two skills that you would like to see your students improve in?
8. Are there any programs in place, or things that you do on your own, to deal with (*whatever was identified above as problems*)?

9. How is that (program) working? Is it successful? Do you see any need for changes? (*ask separately for each program, or individual activity mentioned*)
10. Are there any programs that you don't have, but you think would be useful to deal with (*whatever was identified above as problems*)?
11. Do you think other teachers would agree with your opinion of the problems that lead to truancy, or would they cite other difficulties? What about the administration?
12. How supportive is the administration of efforts to create programs to help at-risk students?

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Group Interview: Students

1. Why do you think kids are absent from school so much?
2. What do you think could be done to increase school attendance? What would help make you more interested in coming to school? What could parents do? What could teachers do?
3. Teachers are always talking about bringing up low report card grades and scoring higher on tests like FCAT and Terra Nova. Why do you think that kids get low grades, or do poorly on the bigger tests?
4. What do you think could be done to help kids do better and get better grades? What could teachers do? Parents?
5. Do you think that kids feel safe here at school? If not, what could be done to make this a safer place and to make kids feel more comfortable?
6. Do you think there are things going on in the homes of kids that make it difficult for them to take school seriously, or to concentrate when they get to school? If so, what?
7. What do you like the most/least about school?
8. What makes learning fun for you?

Needs Assessment Questionnaires and Forms

We are interested in helping schools design a program to help reduce absenteeism and truancy. High absenteeism and truancy rates are important predictors of which students may drop out of school. Please rate the degree to which you believe each of the following are possible causes of absenteeism and truancy AT YOUR SCHOOL.

Possible Causes	Not a Cause		Definitely a Cause		
	1	2	3	4	5
Students come to school unprepared to do school work (e.g., they don't have books, papers, pencils; haven't completed their homework, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Students do not have the social skills necessary to be successful in a school environment (communication, cooperation, following rules, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Students do not have the basic skills that will enable them to learn (e.g., reading, writing, math, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

Possible Causes	Not a Cause		Definitely a Cause		
	1	2	3	4	5
Students have behavioral and/or emotional problems that interfere with learning.	1	2	3	4	5
Students have inadequate health care and are often home sick.	1	2	3	4	5
Students are not motivated.	1	2	3	4	5
Students do not feel safe and secure at school.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are not taking responsibility for getting their children to school.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are not involved with school in general.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are not involved enough with their child's academics (e.g. homework, preparedness. etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
Negative events in the child's home life are interfering with learning.	1	2	3	4	5

Possible Causes	Not a Cause		Definitely a Cause		
	1	2	3	4	5
There isn't a good method of communicating between home and school..	1	2	3	4	5
Parents do not feel welcomed or comfortable at their child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents do not know how to help their child be more successful at school.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents often do not know about meetings, conferences or other special events at their child's school.	1	2	3	4	5
Parents have too many personal problems themselves to be concerned about school attendance.	1	2	3	4	5

District/School Programs

Please comment on the need AT YOUR SCHOOL, for the following types of programs.

Program	We already have a program like this		If YES, answer here: We need to change or improve our current program.					If NO, answer here: We need a program like this.				
	Yes 1	No 2	Disagree 1	2	3	4	Agree 5	Disagree 1	2	3	4	Agree 5
Behavioral incentives geared toward increasing attendance	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Tutoring program to help students with basic reading skills	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Tutoring program to help students with general academics	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Program	We already have a program like this		If YES , answer here:					If NO , answer here:				
	Yes	No	We need to change or improve our current program.					We need a program like this.				
	1	2	Disagree		Agree			Disagree		Agree		
			1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Program to increase communications between home and school	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Program to help parents with parenting skills	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Other Programs Needed (Describe)												
Other Programs Needed (Describe)												