



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER

NEW YORK CITY

Category: Attendance

More than 200,000 New York City students miss nearly a month of school every year. Recognizing that, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg launched the nation's most comprehensive attendance initiative in the country's largest school district.

In August 2010, Mayor Bloomberg created the Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism & School Engagement and mandated that the heads of all major city agencies that intersect with youth serve as its members. The task force's charge is to reduce chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle and high schools, strengthening student achievement and communities.

The "Every Student, Every Day" campaign started in fall 2010 with 25 schools, doubled in size for the 2011-12 school year and will expand even further to reach 100 schools in the 2012-13 school year. Part of its success comes from the synergy among city agencies. For example, the task force launched the NYC Asthma Friendly Schools Campaign in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Community partners, physical education teachers, parents, city agencies and even health clubs work together to support students who have the chronic respiratory illness.

In 2011, the task force launched *WakeUp! NYC*, a multimedia awareness campaign that partners with Viacom, MTV, local radio, television stations and social media networks to spread the word about attendance. More than 6,500 chronically absent students in New York City began getting recorded wake-up calls from celebrities such as basketball Hall of Famer Magic Johnson and singer Trey Songz urging them to get to school. Now the number of students receiving calls is over 30,000.

In May 2012, the task force launched a multi-million dollar advertising campaign in collaboration with the Ad Council, proclaiming, "It's 9 a.m. do you know where your kids are?" The ads, developed with pro bono support and displayed on donated space around the city, guide parents to a website where they can find out whether their child is attending school and how to get help overcoming barriers to attendance.

Inside the 50 pilot schools, a corps of Success Mentors is working directly with chronically absent students. Each mentor is assigned 15 to 20 chronically absent students identified by the school's principal and attendance team. If the students don't turn up for school, the mentor gives them a call to find out where they are. If the student is struggling with class work or social dynamics, the mentor is there to help. The program utilizes a rigorous, evidence-based model of mentoring, creating the largest and most comprehensive in-school mentoring initiative in the nation. Preliminary data for the 2011-12 year shows that students with mentors have attended 11,820 more days than did similar students without help.

STRATEGIES

- Brought together stakeholders to identify and prevent chronic absence and improve student success
- Tapped star power and advertising agencies to expand awareness and create a culture of attendance
- Created an infrastructure and data-driven accountability
- Worked with businesses to provide incentives for good attendance
- Provided Success Mentors to build relationships that encourage attendance