



RANDY SPRICK'S
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S C H O O L S

Absenteeism & Truancy: What Works in Schools and What Doesn't

Jessica Sprick

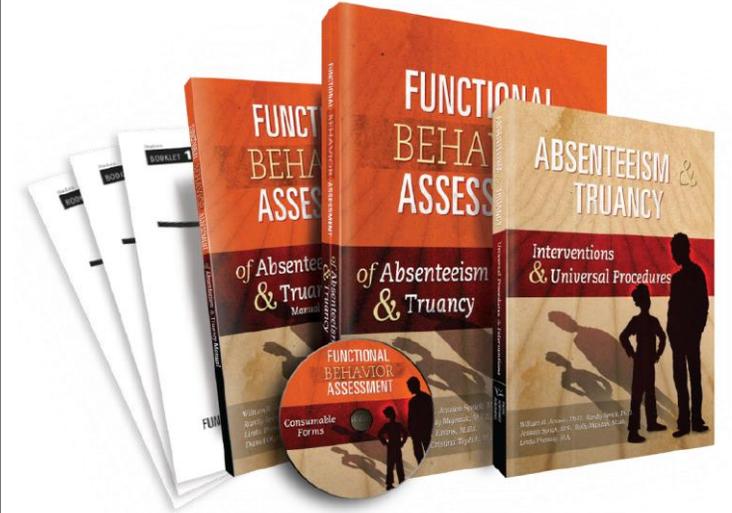
A Brief Introduction

Jessica Sprick from Safe & Civil Schools

Objectives

Q & A at the end of the session

Raffle at the end of session



Raffle Prizes

Available through Ancora Publishing

Traditional Approaches

Focused on *truancy*—generally refers to absences without permission

Implemented increasingly punitive “interventions”

Procedures often initiated only after a high number of absences occur and often after a pattern of years

A New Model

Work to build a “culture of attendance” in your school

What is required to build and maintain any culture?

Apply an Existing Model

Implement a multi-tiered approach:

- Strong universal practices that teach, motivate, and support all students to attend school
- Targeted interventions to assist students who need additional supports
- Intensive interventions for students with significant and complex needs

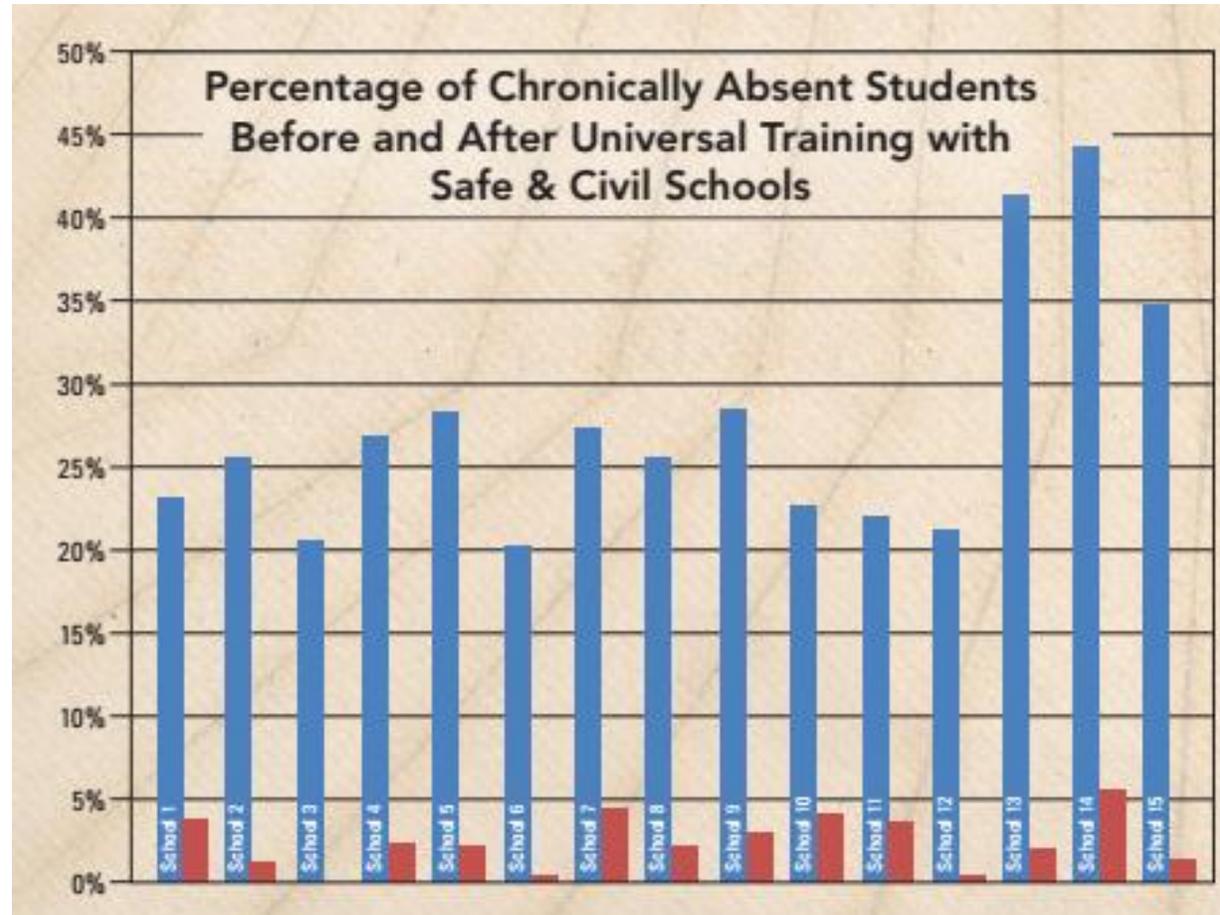
What Doesn't Work

- Believing that attendance is something that is out of our control or “not our job”
- “It’s a parent problem”
- “We will work with the kids when they are here”

What Does Work

- All initiatives suffer when students are not present
- In fact, we have great power to influence change
- Many parents and students simply don't know the negative impacts of nonattendance

Example of the Power of Universal Approaches



What Doesn't Work

- Only measuring truancy or Average Daily Attendance

What Does Work

- Monitoring and intervening with *Chronic Absence*
 - Students who are absent 10% or more of days
 - Combines unexcused absence, excused absence, suspension

What Doesn't Work

- Assigning one or two people to “fix” attendance problems

What Does Work

- Involving all staff members
 - Administrators
 - Teachers
 - Interventionists
 - EAs, custodians, cafeteria workers...

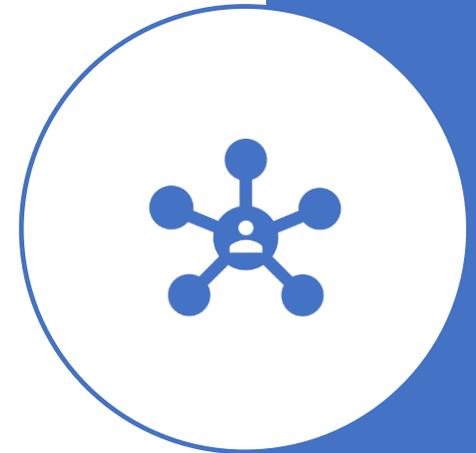
Poll: Which staff members are regularly involved in addressing attendance in your school?

- A. None
- B. Interventionists and/or attendance personnel (e.g., clerk)
- C. Administrators and interventionists
- D. Teachers, administrators, and interventionists
- E. EAs, teachers, administrators, and interventionists
- F. All staff

Example of the Power of Involving All Staff

Officer John

- Appearances on local news
- Attendance rap
- Connections with individual students who were chronically absent



What Doesn't Work

- Assigning one or two people to “fix” attendance problems

What Does Work

- Involving all staff members
 - Administrators
 - Teachers
 - Interventionists
 - EAs, custodians, cafeteria workers...
- Using a team-based approach to drive universal prevention efforts

FIGURE 2.3 **Agenda and Minutes for a One-Hour Attendance Team Meeting**

Meeting Date and Time: _____

Members in Attendance:

- Agenda and Reminder** about this meeting was sent out a week before.
Date reminder was sent: _____
- Start the meeting ON TIME.** Time started: _____
- Review tasks from last meeting.** Report status of current tasks and discuss tasks that still need to be done. (10 min.)
- Review potential next tasks and decisions to address.** (5 min.)
- Discuss what needs to occur to make the next tasks and decisions happen.** (30 min.)
- Write down who is going to do what and when that person will do it.**

Who	Does What	When
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		
6)		
7)		

- Review** who is going to do what and when that person will do it. (5 min.)
- Ask if any other items need to be addressed** or need to be on the agenda for the next meeting. (3 min.)
- Document** how the information discussed will be shared with the entire faculty. (5 min.)
- Debrief** how the team did with regard to following its ground rules. (3 min.)
- Remind** people when the next meeting is.
Next meeting is _____ at _____ in _____
(date) (time) (location)

What Doesn't Work

- Assuming that kids and parents of kids who don't attend school regularly just don't care

What Does Work

- Recognizing that we often have not educated kids and families about the importance of attendance
- Understanding that many families are doing their current best just to get by
- Working to build a culture of attendance

Examples of Universal Strategies

Loganville Middle School
Home of the Trojans



Dear families,

We are looking forward to a great year, with students in classes and ready to learn every day.

We have learned that students who miss even a few days of school each month are at far greater risk of academic failure and dropout than students who attend regularly. We have set a goal that every student in our school attends regularly (has nine or fewer absences in a year).

Because attendance is so important, please send your child to school every day unless he or she has a contagious illness or is running a fever.

We have included a chart with this letter that will help you keep track of your student's absences. If your child is at risk of missing too much school, please feel free to contact Joan Ndogo at 555-1234 for assistance. We will also monitor each student's attendance across the year so we can work with families when the number of absences puts a student at risk. We will be happy to work with you to help your student attend regularly and have greater opportunities for success.

Sincerely,

Date:	Absence 10+								
Absence 1 Reason:	Absence 2 Reason:	Absence 3 Reason:	Absence 4 Reason:	Absence 5 Reason:	Absence 6 Reason:	Absence 7 Reason:	Absence 8 Reason:	Absence 9 Reason:	Note: Your student is at increasing risk for academic difficulties and school failure with each absence beyond this point.

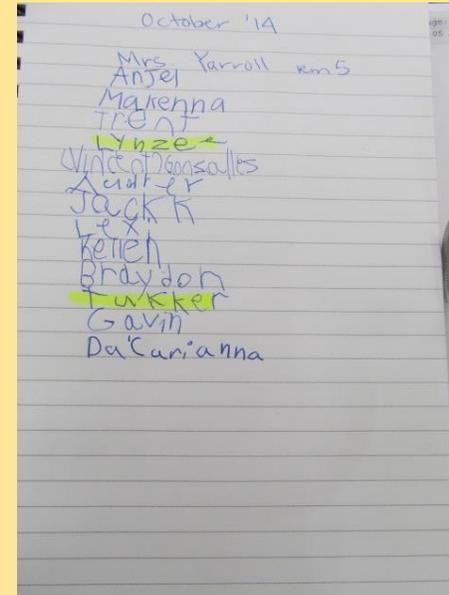
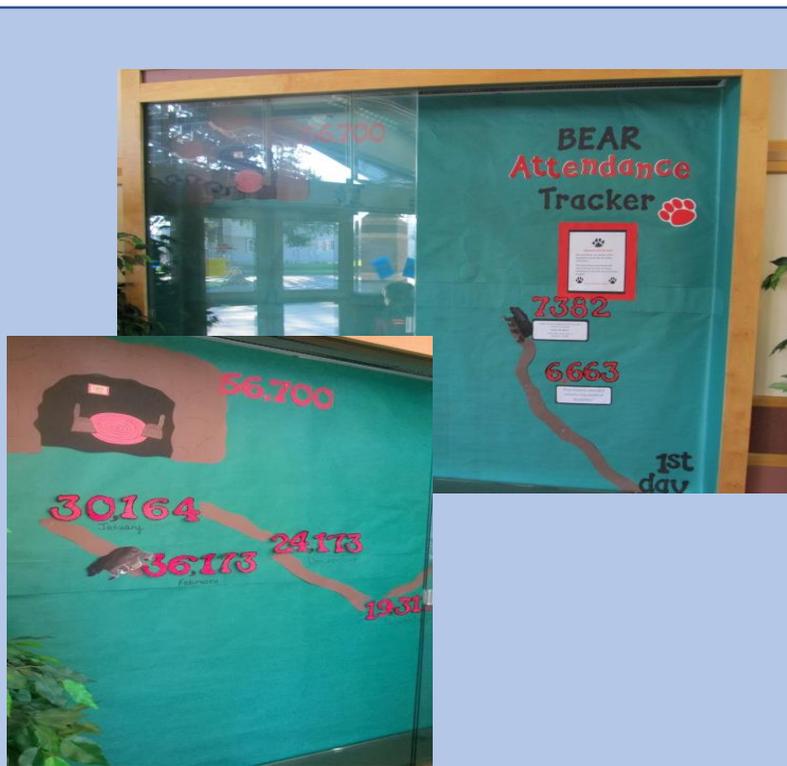
Examples of Universal Strategies

- Provide regular short messaging about the importance of attendance or how to overcome common barriers
- Use analogies
 - Why do famous football players show up for practice?

Player who shows up	Player who doesn't show up
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gets stronger•	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doesn't get any better•

Examples of Universal Strategies

- Use group motivational systems at schoolwide and classroom levels



What Doesn't Work

- Applying one-size fits all approaches across schools to address this issue

What Does Work

- Using universal strategies that are tailored to the common causes of absenteeism you see in YOUR school and district

Examples of Tailored Universal Strategies

- Hunting and fishing season
- Difficulties walking to school
 - Unsafe traffic crossings or neighborhood violence
 - Too cold
- Addressing sleep difficulties or lack of bedtime and morning routine

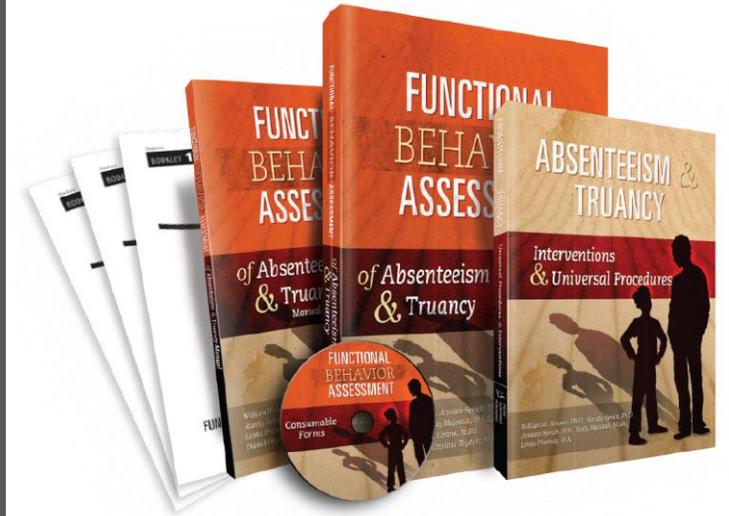
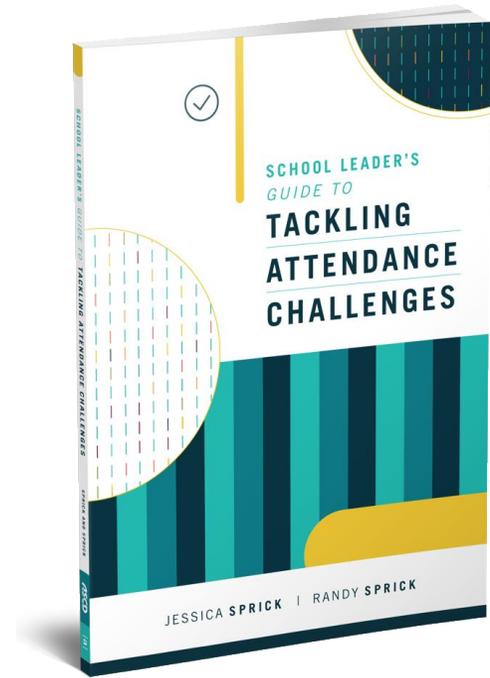
Guiding Principles of This Approach

A belief that behavior can be changed

An understanding that data can be powerful to drive decision making

An increased focus on prevention and proactive measures

An understanding that efforts should attempt to address causes of absenteeism



Raffle Prizes

Available through Ancora Publishing

Q & A

- Please type questions into the chat feature
- If we do not have time for all questions, please email me jessica@safeandcivilschools.com
- Twitter @jessicasprick
- If you are interested in possible collaboration, please get in touch!