

## INSIGHTS

At the University of Chicago Charter School, achieving a culture and climate that fosters 98 percent attendance emerged as a key goal across all four of the school's campuses, which span preschool through high school and serve 1900 students on Chicago's south side.

This focus emerged from staff and leadership's engagement with research findings on the importance of attendance throughout students' academic careers: Chronically absent middle schoolers have a 50 percent chance of veering off-track in high school, and each week of absence per semester in ninth grade is associated with a more than 20 percent decline in the probability of graduating from high school.

## STRATEGIES

Staff and leadership from across campuses meet regularly to discuss attendance data, noting emerging patterns and brainstorming interventions and incentives.

Consistent communication highlights the importance of attendance for grades and college success. Parents see attendance numbers in every bi-weekly newsletter while students see graphs, charts, and other visual indicators of attendance in classrooms.

Monitoring attendance is not solely the domain of a monitor in the front office; every teacher plays a role. At one campus, each teacher receives a morning email noting which families they need to call. The campus director follows up to ensure each teacher has reached out to every family.

Perfect and near-perfect attendance is celebrated and incentivized. Classrooms with the highest monthly attendance can earn parties, and students can also earn individual prizes, like tickets to sporting events, or privileges like out-of-uniform days or admission to an "attendance" dance.

When attendance patterns indicate a family may be struggling, staff explore the root causes and problem-solve with them to address misconceptions, alter routines, or overcome logistical hurdles.



### SCHOOL OVERVIEW

#### UCHICAGO CHARTER SCHOOL

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| School Type        | Charter |
| School Enrollment  | 1,913   |
| Low Income         | 84%     |
| African American   | 98%     |
| Hispanic or Latino | 1%      |
| Diverse Learners   | 10%     |

Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 9/8/2016 at: [http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2015&code=150162990204C\\_e.pdf](http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2015&code=150162990204C_e.pdf)

## RESULTS

In the 2015-2016 school year, every UChicago Charter campus improved its attendance over the prior year.

One elementary campus achieved 97 percent attendance, and the other campus was just one percentage point behind them.

For more information on UChicago Charter School's To&Through work, contact: Michael Lackenbach, Woodlawn High School Campus Director | [michaellackenbach@uchicagocharter.org](mailto:michaellackenbach@uchicagocharter.org)