

Leveraging Data for Safer Schools

Subtitle

Whenever administrators take time to step back and look at the full picture, they can use attendance, behavior, and wellness data to understand where students may need more support. When these data streams are viewed together, they reveal patterns that help schools strengthen safety, connection, and well-being across the entire school year.

Attendance as an Early Signal

Changes in attendance often show up before other concerns. Chronic absenteeism can point to academic struggles, social-emotional challenges, or instability at home. When administrators review attendance trends over time, they can spot early signs that a student may need additional support. This makes attendance patterns one of the most valuable early indicators of student well-being.

Behavior and School Climate

Behavioral data, such as office referrals, suspensions, peer-conflict reports, tell a story about how students are experiencing school. When students feel connected and safe, behavior tends to stabilize. When they don't, patterns of conflict or dysregulation often emerge. Reviewing behavior trends helps leaders understand where students may be struggling with belonging, regulation, or safety, and where the school climate may need attention.

Wellness and Mental Health Indicators

Wellness data, such as nurse visits or counseling referrals, may reveal stressors that are not immediately visible in attendance or behavior. These indicators help schools understand what students are carrying with them into the classroom, including fatigue, anxiety, health concerns, or emotional strain. Looking closely at wellness indicators allows administrators to plan supports that address root causes rather than just surface-level symptoms.



How to Use These Data Streams Together

1. Build a Multi-Tiered Early Warning System

Bringing attendance, behavior, and wellness data into a single dashboard helps schools see the whole student. A unified system makes it easier to identify who needs support, what kind of support they need, and how urgently they need it.

2. Look for Patterns, Not Just Incidents

Administrators can review:

- Grade-level patterns
- Seasonal dips in attendance
- Behavior spikes during transitions
- Wellness trends

These patterns help leaders plan targeted interventions before the year begins.

3. Strengthen Partnerships Based on Data

Data can highlight where community partnerships are most needed, such as in the areas of mental health, transportation, family support, or safety. Reviewing community partnership needs helps schools align resources with the students who need them most.

4. Use Data to Shape Staff Training

If the data shows rising anxiety, bullying, or absenteeism, summer professional development can focus on:

- Trauma-responsive practices
- Relationship-building strategies
- Identifying mental-health concerns

Training becomes more meaningful when it's tied directly to what students are experiencing.

5. Communicate Findings Transparently

Families and staff engage more deeply when they understand the “why” behind school initiatives. Summer newsletters or back-to-school communications can highlight:

- Key trends
- Planned interventions
- How families can help

Transparency builds trust and shared responsibility.



Practical Steps Administrators Can Take

- Run a three-year attendance analysis to spot chronic absenteeism patterns.
- Map behavior incidents by location and time to identify supervision needs.
- Review wellness data to determine staffing needs for counselors or nurses.
- Update early warning thresholds for absences, nurse visits, or behavior changes.
- Meet with community partners to align supports for high-need students.
- Prepare staff training modules based on the insights gathered.



Data is one of the most powerful tools administrators have to create safer, healthier schools. By taking time to analyze attendance, behavior, and wellness indicators, leaders can anticipate challenges, allocate resources wisely, and build a school environment where students and staff feel supported from day one.

