

Here

Absenteeism Campaign

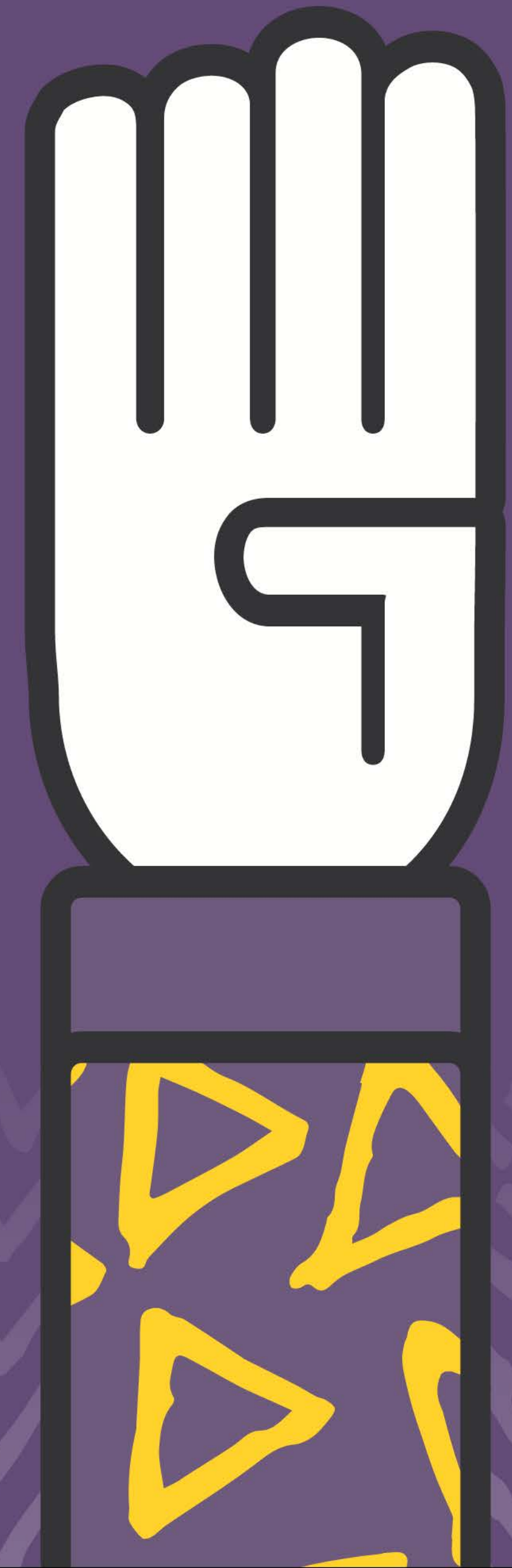
Guidebook and Toolkit

NOEL | Thunder Bay Region MISA PNC



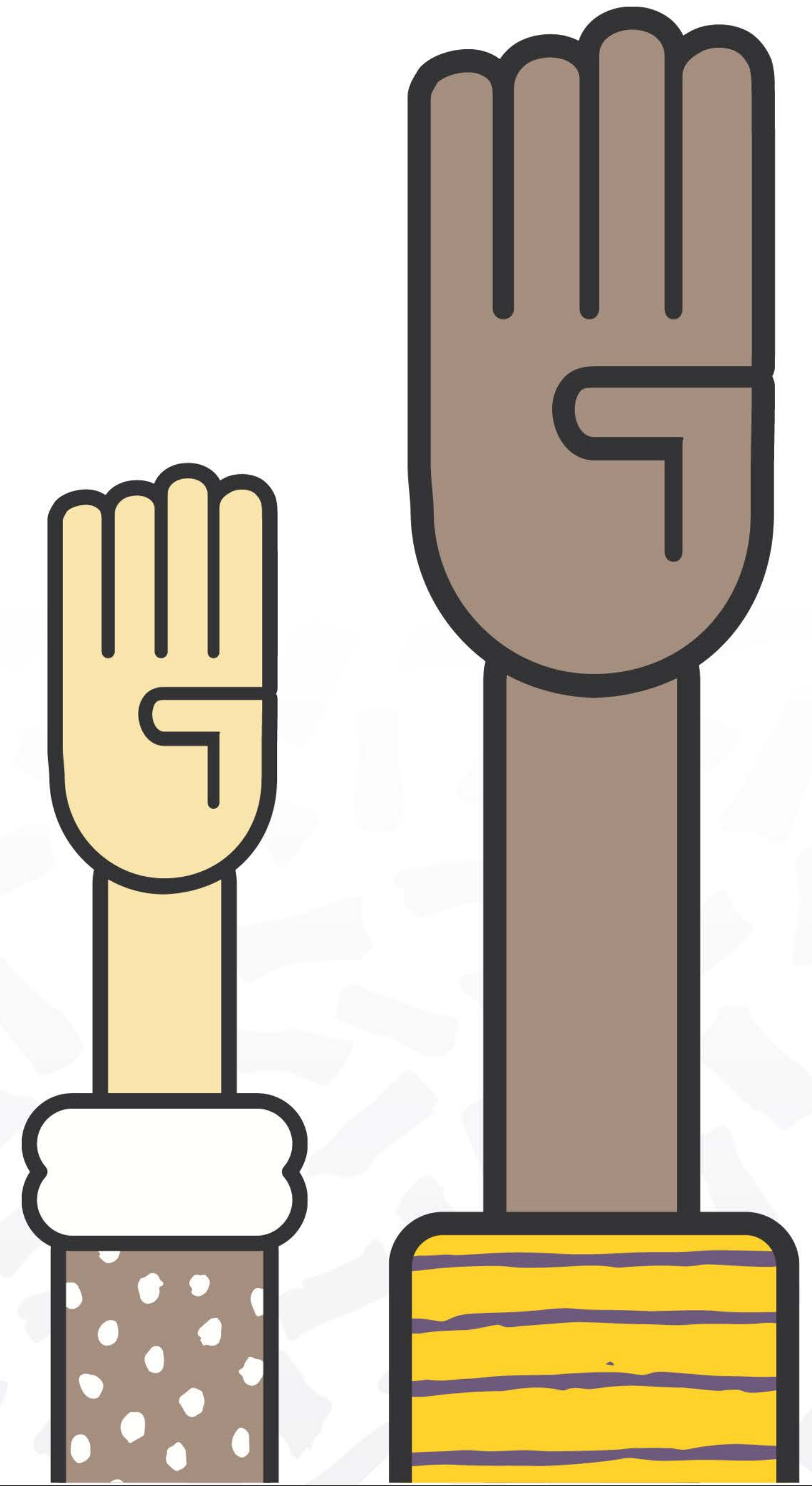
1.0 Introduction

In Northern Ontario, the scope of persistent absenteeism is wide. That's why we've created the **Here** campaign, for use by school boards across our region, to give "every school day counts" champions a brand, a name, and a voice. School board staff can use the Here campaign tools as a springboard to form directed, focused plans to combat absenteeism and bring students back to school.



1.1 Campaign Objective

This campaign's aim is to build awareness around the attendance issues in our region and to provide communication tools to help improve attendance in our schools



1.2 Why is it important?

In Ontario, school boards in the Thunder Bay Region have the highest rates of persistent absenteeism at a whopping 21.6 percent. Based on 194 days of instruction, an Ontario elementary student who misses 19 days of school is deemed persistently absent. With the number of student appointments, sporting events, family commitments, travel days, and illness, it doesn't take long to reach this number.

Studies and research support what teachers instinctively know: that student absence negatively affects academic performance and important emotional and social connections are compromised. These are a few possible outcomes for students who miss school:

Students who miss an average of two days per month in elementary school stand a 60% chance of dropping out in grade nine. (Every School Day Counts: Persistent Absenteeism in Ontario, 2016)

When students have high absenteeism in Grade 9, they are much more likely to drop out, and less likely to graduate. (Study of Absenteeism in the Toronto Board of Education, 1850 – 1997 by Robert S. Brown)

Students who are “not very involved at school” and “don’t like school much” are at greater risk of aggressive behaviour, substance abuse, smoking, violence, high risk sexual behaviour, and future attendance issues. (Statistics Canada’s National Longitudinal Study of Children & Youth 2005)

A higher absenteeism rate in kindergarten is associated with lower achievement in Grade 3. (Starting Early: A PDF Report prepared for the Education Quality and Accountability Office)

¹ Can this information appear when you scroll over the text? “Thunder Bay Region School Boards: Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, Kenora Catholic District School Board, Lakehead District School Board, Northwest Catholic District School Board, Rainy River District School Board, Superior North Catholic District School Board, Superior-Greenstone District School Board, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board”

²The Ontario Ministry of Education defines persistent absenteeism as any student who has missed 10% or more of school days for any reason, including unexcused or excused absences, over an academic year. A higher absenteeism rate in kindergarten is associated with lower achievement in Grade 3. (Starting Early: A PDF Report prepared for the Education Quality and Accountability Office)

1.3 Who is this for?



For students, “I’M HERE” means they are present. They are on the roll. In their seats. We can count them in. They are “here” physically and mentally.



For teachers and staff, “I’M HERE” tells us that there are dependable, concerned, and caring adults waiting to offer children a safe, welcoming, student-centred learning environment with an investment in their academic achievement.



For parents, “I’M HERE” means they are ready to assist. Ready to encourage their children, ready to reach out and ask for help if they need to, ready to team up with teachers and ready to make plans to ensure their children get to school.



For community, “I’M HERE” demonstrates that organizations care about the children in their cities, towns and villages. They want to provide supports – medical, financial, social – to ensure that families can get their children to school.

2.0 Campaign Usage

General Campaign Guidelines



2.1 Do's & Dont's

Persistent absenteeism is a serious problem in Northern Ontario schools but with implementation of best practices and a long-term plan, it is solvable. The **Here** campaign is part of the solution. Unique to the Thunder Bay region, Here provides a cohesive visual approach with consistent messaging that helps build awareness of the importance of going to school every day. Dovetailed with individual board-wide initiatives and strategies, the Here campaign can help highlight and improve attendance at the elementary and secondary school level throughout the region.

Read on for a starting list of do's and don'ts to get you thinking as you work to increase attendance at your school.



Do address absenteeism right away. Early identification of school attendance issues is just as crucial to a child's progress as identification of learning difficulties. Ensure that interventions are immediate, non-threatening, and persistent. School administrators and supporting staff can work to deal with the underlying causes before absence becomes ingrained.



Do celebrate good and improved attendance by providing regular recognition and rewards to students and families. Don't focus on perfect attendance since children who struggle the most will be left out of such awards. Incentives and contests take advantage of the fact that students often respond better to concrete rewards and peer pressure than they do to lectures from parents and teachers.



Do ensure that your school community engages students and parents with a warm and welcoming environment that offers compelling learning opportunities and programs.



Do help families understand the positive impact of good attendance and the negative effects of chronic absenteeism. Even excused absences can cause children to fall behind. By providing consistent and intentional messaging regarding attendance expectations from early years and on, families can build the habit of attendance in early grades and improve their children's chances of graduating.

¹ Many of these ideas can be found, with supporting materials, at [Attendance Matters.org](https://www.attendancematters.org) – a comprehensive website with reams of research, including practical templates and inspiring examples from schools who have made great progress in improving attendance.

2.1 Do's & Dont's



Do model and teach resiliency, self-management, organization, and staying out of trouble skills. Use September to teach children how to be students, how to cope when things are difficult, how to persevere, how to maintain a growth mindset. Schools need to ensure that children have basic life skills, develop emotional and social intelligence, and learn self-regulation.



Do develop better processes for tracking absenteeism and responding to it. The problem seems overwhelming and has been ignored from a systemic perspective for too long. Implementing new processes is hard. Schools that track attendance more closely have better results. Dedicate staff time to attendance.



Do employ top-down team building by creating principal-led attendance teams that meet regularly to analyze attendance data and coordinate efforts to reduce persistent absence. Early data can trigger a response that starts with personalized early outreach that helps identify barriers to attendance — hunger, health, shelter, transportation or other challenges — and the supports or resources that would help improve attendance.



Do train staff, especially teachers, in how to deal with persistent absenteeism especially in the elementary grades. Use mental health professionals and behavioural modification specialists to work with staff to learn how to de-escalate situations and create calm, welcoming environments where all students can be successful.



Do meet basic needs first – food, clothing, shelter, after-school care, transportation, or other challenges.



Do use positive messaging to help parents and students realize that daily attendance is key to reaching their dreams of a successful future. Help families understand that regular attendance should be a high priority as early as preschool.



Do make referrals into the community for additional support and services for children that need more help than your school can provide.



Do use engagement strategies to increase student attendance like creating family/community gatherings around food and entertainment in casual, culturally appropriate environments rather than traditional parent-teacher meetings. Employ food, games, and music.



Do develop a separate space for kids to go where they can be with like-minded kids in a safe, caring environment but still be at school.



Do ensure that every child has a champion. Caring adults developing a one-to-one relationship with every student and/or parent is the best first step. Students should expect that teachers, administrators, and community agencies are caring and friendly. Kids don't learn from people they don't like. You must discover what reason children need to come to school.

2.1 Do's & Dont's



Do mobilize a community coalition to help communities understand that all students MUST be in school every day.

Networks already organized to reform schools, promote literacy, reduce dropout rates, address health needs and improve communities could offer partnership and leadership around addressing chronic absence. Such a coalition could include:

Mayor and council
First Nations Bands
First Nations organizations/healthcare groups
Government agencies, social services, health, housing, and transportation departments
PTA or parent advocacy groups
Teachers union or leadership
United Way and community-based non-profits
Local foundations
Chamber of Commerce and business leaders
Law enforcement
Juvenile judges or prosecutors who deal with truancy cases
Faith leaders
Afterschool providers
Healthcare providers
Ethnic and cultural associations



Do increase Indigenous content in schools – both environment and curriculum. Children need to see themselves in the place where they learn.



Don't simply tell parents to send their children. Detail the services, supports, and positive experiences that will make them want to. Insist on excellent teaching with solid school programming including more experiential hands-on opportunities and more student-centric learning. Don't give up. It's never too late to encourage students (and parents) to seek help when they are behind in school. Schools can provide extra help to get a child caught up and help them feel better about showing up for school.



Don't use negative tactics that are punitive, blaming, or threatening to compel attendance.

Offer extra-curricular activities that appeal to many different kinds of children. Students will have a new way to see their teacher while having fun doing something they like.



Don't assume that parents don't care if their children attend school.

Some parents may not know how to help their child get to school or may have exhausted their personal resources. Encourage parents to learn more about parenting by recommending local courses and seminars such as the Triple P Positive Parenting Program offered through a number of regional organizations such as health units and children's centres.

2.2 Messaging Matrix

The causes of chronic absenteeism are vast and varied. Therefore, the way we communicate needs to match our specific goal. The “Messaging Matrix” below offers a cross-section of various headlines and ‘call to actions’ across objective type and tone. You’ll find these message types used throughout your HERE toolkit.

Headlines / Messages

Informative	Students who miss two days a month in elementary school stand a 60% chance of dropping out in grade nine.	Missing 10% of school days drastically affects academic success.	Absence in the early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.	
Outreach	Having trouble making it to school? Talk to a teacher.	Feeling overwhelmed and behind? Speak to a teacher.	Is there something standing in your way of getting to school? Talk to a teacher.	Does school make you feel nervous or anxious? Speak with a teacher.

Call to Action

Helpful	We’re HERE for you/them	We’re HERE to help	We’re HERE for your/their success
Encouraging	Strive to be HERE	Improve success by being HERE	We need you HERE
Optimistic	Being HERE matters	Your future starts HERE	
Focused	Be HERE	Let’s get them HERE	



Campaign Toolkit



3.1 Logo & Badge



Logo & Badge

The HERE logo and badge act as symbols to unite our joint initiatives against chronic absenteeism. Use it to build awareness of the problem and to aid your action towards a solution.

Toolkit Inventory:

HERE Logo	.EPS / .AI
	.PDF
	.PNG
HERE Badge	.EPS / .AI
	.PDF
	.PNG

3.2 Toolkit: Print Ads

Print Advertising

Making sure people are aware of the issue is the first step. Use the various print collateral from the HERE toolkit to get the word out to your community via your local newspaper / publications.

Toolkit Inventory:

1/8 Page

Horizontal	8.383" x 3.36"
Square	5.208" x 5.36"
Vertical	3.093" x 8.93"

1/4 Page

Horizontal	8.383" x 6.64"
Square	7.325" x 7.64"
Vertical	4.039" x 13.35"

1/3 Page

Horizontal	10.5" x 7.14"
Square	8.383" x 8.92"
Vertical	5.208" x 14.28"

1/2 Page

Horizontal	17.85" x 6.267"
Square	10.5" x 10.71"
Vertical	8.383" x 13.35"

Absence in early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.

Let's get them
Here



Partner Logo Area



Missing 10% of school days drastically affects academic success.




Let's get them
Here




Partner Logo Area

Students who miss two days a month in elementary school stand a 60% chance of dropping out in Grade 9.



Let's get them
Here

Partner Logo Area



3.3 Toolkit: Digital Ads

Digital Advertising

To further bolster your awareness efforts, use the toolkit’s digital advertising to get the word out online via your school’s website, school board’s website and partnering websites.

Toolkit Inventory:

Leaderboard	728 x 90px
Big Box	300 x 250px
Square Box	250 x 250px
Skyscraper	120 x 600px
Large Rect.	336 x 280px

Missing 10% of school days drastically affects academic success.



Strive to be **Here**

Missing 10% of school days drastically affects academic success.

Be Here




Students who miss two days a month in elementary school stand a 60% chance of dropping out in Grade 9.




Be Here

Absence in early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.



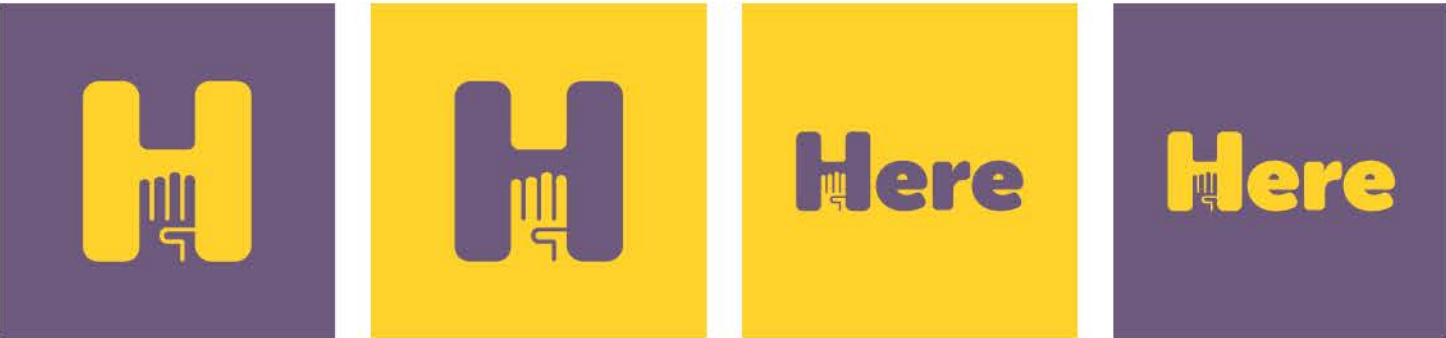
Strive to be **Here**

Absence in early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.



Strive to be **Here**

3.4 Toolkit: Social Ads & Assets



Social Advertising & Assets

More and more, social media is becoming a great medium to communication with parents, students and the community at large. These supporting graphics will aid your absenteeism messaging on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and more!

Toolkit Inventory:

Social Profile Pics	500 x 500px
Facebook Cover Photos	828 x 315px
Facebook Ads	1200 x 628px
Instagram Ads	1000 x 1000px
Twitter Headline Photo	1500 x 500px

3.5 Toolkit: Posters

Posters

Traditional posters work great within interior environments. Print and use these within your school(s) and within partnering community venue where you can count on your audience seeing them (ie. Boys and Girls club, Community Centres etc)

Toolkit Inventory:

11 x 17" (6 Designs)

500 x 500px



3.6 Toolkit: Video

"I'm HERE" Photo Submission

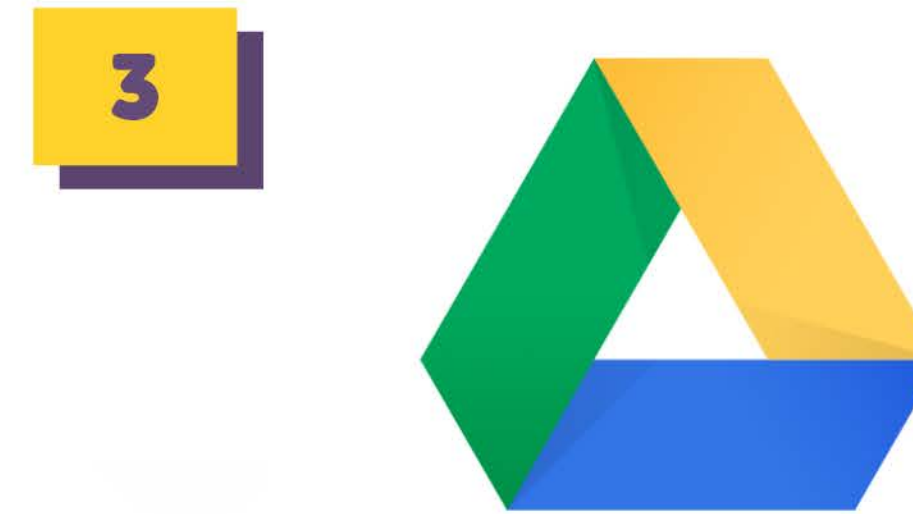
Chronic absenteeism is a problem that is only solved by working together. It is important that the **HERE Campaign's Video** reflects a region-wide effort. To do this, we are asking each board and each school to submit photo of school staff and students holding an "I'm HERE" poster to symbolize their commitment to the HERE cause. Here's how:



Distribute "I'm HERE" Posters to a cross-section of school staff: teachers, administration, support staff and students! Aim for one of each if possible.



Have them take a photo holding the "I'm HERE" Poster within a school environment with a smartphone.



Submit the photo(s) via Google Drive or email with a caption outlining who is featured!

DRIVE Visit tinyurl.com/herephoto
EMAIL wide45arts@photos.flickr.com

3.7 Toolkit: Radio Template

Radio Template

Local radio PSAs are still a great way to spread the HERE message. Start with the HERE Toolkit’s pre-produced audio templates and have your local station add your unique message to hit the airwaves.

Toolkit Inventory:

Radio Template	.WAV
	.MP3



3.8 Toolkit: Roll Ups & Banners

Roll Ups & Banners

Make a mark with your HERE events and assemblies with these Roll It Up stand signs and banner templates.



Toolkit Inventory:

Roll it Up	33.5 x 81"
Banners	6' x 3'
	8' x 3'

3.8 Toolkit: Newsletter Ads

Newsletter / Presentation Template

Speaking on an absenteeism related subject? Get started with these pre-prepared templates. The more people speaking out under the HERE banner, the stronger our cause gets!

Toolkit Inventory:

Leaderboard	728 x 90px
Big Box	300 x 250px
Square Box	250 x 250px
Skyscraper	120 x 600px
Large Rect.	336 x 280px

Missing 10% of school days drastically affects academic success.



Strive to be **Here**

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Be **Here**




Students who miss two days a month in elementary school stand a 60% chance of dropping out in Grade 9.



Be **Here**


Absence in early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.

Strive to be **Here**



Absence in early grades affects fundamental reading and math skills.

Strive to be **Here**



4.0 Resources

Resources

www.attendanceworks.org

<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>

<http://www.everystudentpresent.org/reducing-chronic-absence.htm>

<http://absencesaddup.org/importance-of-school-attendance/>

Reports

A Report on Chronic Absence in the Nation's Schools: new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/.../FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.p...

Scholarly Articles

Absenteeism: A Review of the Literature and School Psychology's Role.

Goldstein, J.S., Little, S.G. & Akin-Little, K.A. Contemp School Psychol (2003) 8: 127. doi:10.1007/BF03340901

News

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/long-term-consequences-of-missing-school/498599/>

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/06/10/480181439/more-than-6-million-u-s-students-are-chronically-absent>

https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2013/05/09/torontos_latest_start_high_school_says_absenteeism_down_alertness_up.html



5.0 Share an Idea / Request Support

Share an idea

Have a plan, an idea, a thought that is missing from the HERE Toolkit? No problem! Visit the link below and submit your idea for consideration:



www.heretoolkit.com/share

Request Support

Spearheading an initiative and need a specific asset that isn't included in the HERE Toolkit? There's a spot for you too. Simply go to:



www.heretoolkit.com/support



What's Next?

MARCH

HEREToolkit.com Goes Live

HERE Video - "I'm Here" Photo Collection

APRIL

HERE Video Finished

MAY 1

HERE Start Up Kits Delivered

Campaign Roll Out

