

Mini-Grant to Improve Attendance during the 2017-2018 School Year



United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania is a change agent that improves lives by addressing critical community needs. United Way creates long-lasting change and helps children and youth succeed, strengthens and supports families by promoting financial stability, ensures the safety and well-being of vulnerable seniors, assists people with disabilities, and provides information and referral sources meeting basic needs for residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The role of the United Way's **Be There Campaign** is to convene community partners and connect key stakeholders to school attendance work. [Be There](#) connects schools, out-of-school-time providers, and communities with materials and ideas that reinforce the importance of school attendance through positive messaging.

Mini Grant Options:

<p>General Attendance Intervention Grant To implement attendance interventions with students served. <i>Amount dependent on number of students being served: \$500-800</i></p>
<p>Be There Buddy Project Grant: an intervention specifically focusing on a group of chronically absent students. <i>\$1,000 distributed at the start of the 2017-18 school year</i></p>
<p>Attendance Package Grant: to implement both general attendance interventions and the Buddy Project. <i>\$1,500 Buddy Project funds distributed at the start of the 2017-18 school year</i></p>

Important Dates:

Proposal due: Friday, April 28th, 2017

If your organization/school receives funds for the General Attendance Incentive Grant:

Funded proposals notified: Monday, May 29th

Funding awarded: August, 2017

Mid-year evaluation due: Friday, December 15th, 2017

End-of-year evaluation due: Friday, June 1st 2018

To Apply:

Complete the application here:

<https://www.tfaforms.com/433075>

Grant Purpose:

There are around 6.5 million students across the country who are chronically absent – missing 10% or more of the school year. Multiple years of chronic absence—as early as Pre-K—is a forewarning of academic trouble. By 6th grade, chronic absence is an indicator that a student may drop out of high school. Research tells us that students who finish high school have fewer health risks, are more successful, and tend to have higher salaries. We strive to help them get there.

The Be There mini-grants give schools and communities the support they need to take an intentional, proactive approach to make sure kids have consistent attendance, setting them up for success that can last a lifetime.

Strategies:

For the past 4 years, Be There has partnered with schools and community groups to develop relevant strategies to address chronic absenteeism. Read on for tips on developing your proposal and plans for attendance activities, and you can also...

- Visit [the website](#) where you can find the Attendance Challenge Toolkit.
- Email Be There Campaign Coordinator, Jenna Baron, for more ideas: Jenna.Baron@unitedwayswpa.org

What can attendance activities look like at your school or program?

Every school has a different culture and may develop unique strategies for improving student attendance. The Be There mini-grants give capacity to set these ideas in motion. In the past, Be There partner schools have...

- Planned monthly attendance challenges, asking students to show up for 30 days straight to win a desirable prize.
- Planned a school v. school or grade v. grade attendance competition, with a field trip or large activity available for the winning group
- Coordinated a homeroom attendance competition, challenging students to track their attendance and hold each other accountable for being there. The homeroom with the best attendance was awarded with a pizza or ice cream party.
- Invited families for an awards ceremony and raffle off gift cards for parents of children with perfect and improved attendance.
- Nominated “Be There Ambassadors” – students who serve as leaders in efforts to create a positive culture of attendance.
- Established a “Be There Buddy Project”, pairing school staff members with students with attendance challenges, to check in with students and help them develop consistent attendance habits.



A parent volunteer at Brashear High School (Pittsburgh, PA), and students she inspired to serve as “Be There Ambassadors.” As Be There Ambassadors, students are champions of attendance by organizing events and activities to boost morale and improve their classmates’ attendance.

Attendance challenges are one of the most commonly used strategies to improve attendance. Read on to learn more!

Attendance Challenge Basics:

An attendance challenge is an opportunity to challenge students to come to school every day for a set period of time and reward them for their achievement.

- Set criteria and a time frame for students to meet attendance goals, e.g. perfect attendance for 30 days.
- Designate the week before the challenge as a “hype week” and promote the challenge
- Choose and continuously promote a reward to motivate student participation, e.g. dress down day, pizza party.
- Track attendance data and remind students to stay motivated.
- Celebrate winners and encourage others for the next attendance activity.

For more ideas, visit our website and download the **Attendance Challenge Toolkit**.

Staff at Wilkins Primary at Woodland Hills – a 2016 Be There Mini Grant Recipient – hype up their attendance challenge kickoff with signs and matching in “Be There Blue.”



The Be There Buddy Project utilizes relationships as an intervention to help students with attendance challenges develop consistent attendance.

Be There Buddy Project Basics:

The Buddy Project establishes positive and caring relationships between students and staff to increase student attendance.

- A principal or lead coordinator at the school identifies students who are at-risk of or who are chronically absent and pairs them with staff who serve as a student's "buddy."
- On a daily basis, buddies/school staff greet the students, track their attendance, call home when the student's missing, and encourage the student to make attendance a priority.
- Buddy Project Staff meet regularly to review students' progress and determine if students should "graduate" out of the program and if other students should be brought into the program.

For more ideas, visit our website and download the **Buddy Project Toolkit**. You can also email Jenna Baron (jenna.baron@unitedwayswpa.org) for support and resources.