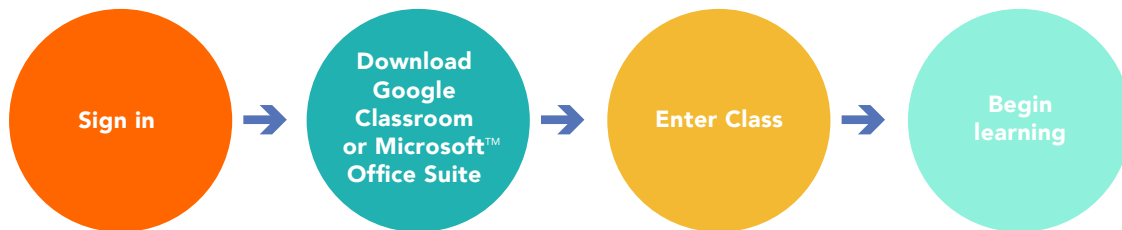**allhere**

Every student, every day,
on track for success.

The Student Attendance Journey is Anything but Linear

How to engage students and families to support student participation in remote learning

Participating in School Online Seems Like a Simple Process

Sign in → **Download Google Classroom or Microsoft™ Office Suite** → **Enter Class** → **Begin learning**

But while a straight shot to attendance looks great on paper, the truth is, every student's journey to getting online for learning is different. In fact, the journey to attendance — especially in these times — is rarely linear.

Here are some of the obstacles facing many students during a remote learning or distance learning scenario:

- Students may be sharing devices.
- Students may be struggling with connectivity.
- They may not know their logins.
- Some students can find it really hard to focus with all the distractions.
- They may not have an adult around to help answer questions or provide the support that teachers would typically provide.
- Motivation can be difficult. Maybe they don't even feel like getting started. Or maybe this new way of learning was fun at first but after some time it's hard to continue being motivated.
- Assignments can be confusing, especially with a new delivery online versus in the classroom.
- Students and parents can be hard to reach, and may prefer text messages or emails instead of phone calls, mail, and video calls.

And these obstacles aren't just about the urgent and temporary switch that students made this Spring due to Covid-19. The same will be true as students make their way to reopened schools this Fall.

Some students will continue with 100% online learning while others may be in a hybrid learning setting— combining face-to-face instruction with online learning. In the context of school re-openings, a hybrid model would reduce the number of students in the building by moving some of the course delivery online and combine traditional classroom experiences, experiential learning objectives, and digital course delivery. Some schools will fully open and have intermittent closures requiring online learning during the period of closure. Two-thirds of teachers are concerned about attendance (as found in Edweek National Survey Tracks Impact of Coronavirus on Schools). As a result of the foreseeable challenges, disengagement could go up, and attendance and participation rates could go down.

It's time for K-12 districts and schools to take the leap in helping students through their individual school attendance journeys, no matter how complex they will be. The way to do this is to remove barriers, serve as a helpful guide, and keep students and families engaged — all while keeping the student perspective top of mind. Here's how.
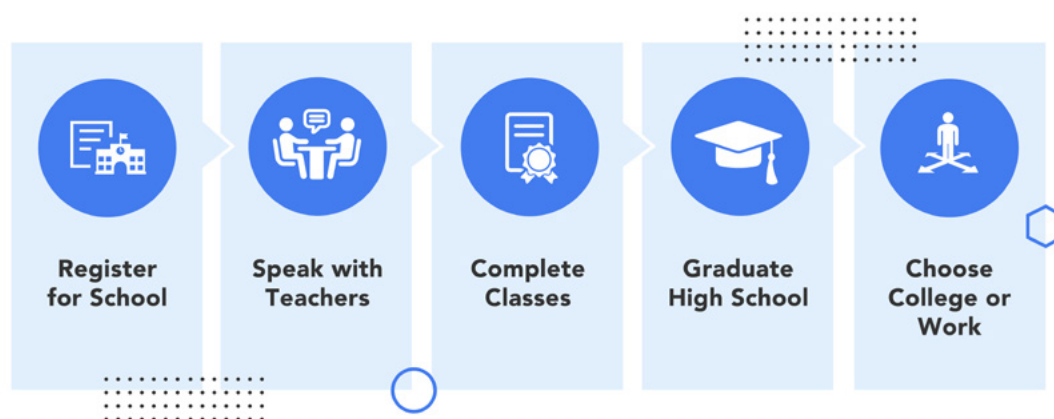
Identify Student Barriers: Mapping the Student Attendance Journey

From multi-page forms and unexpected challenges, students face any number of challenges that can derail them from attending, engaging, and participating in learning.
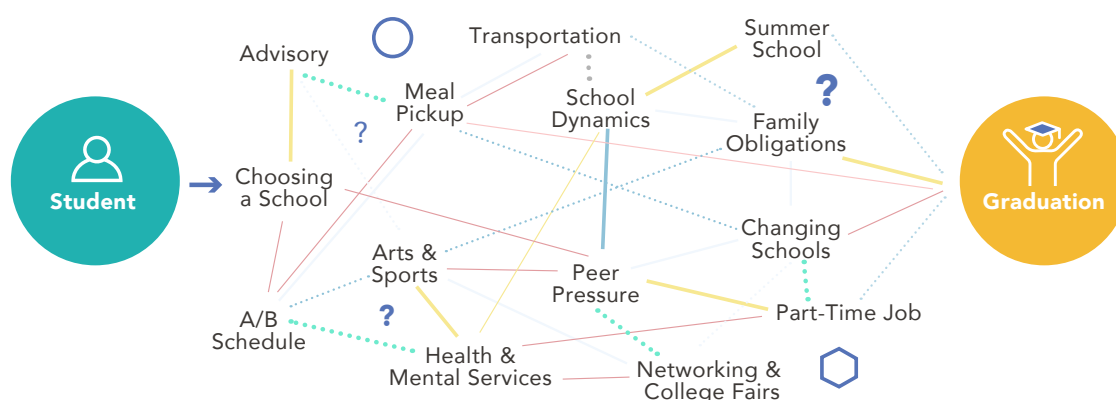
To find out where students get stuck, you'll need to first understand what they have to go through to achieve progress. The place to start is by mapping the student attendance journey.

Think of every action a student needs to take, from securing a device to understanding the schedule, to engaging well. Many K-12 schools will map the student attendance journey based on how they think it should flow to support educational outcomes. Here's the NYC attendance website which shares common reasons students miss school and other ideas around their students' attendance journey.

Below you will see an example of a path from registration to graduation.

But, as we mentioned previously, the journey to attendance — especially in these times — is rarely linear and you should think about all the touchpoints a student and a family encounters, and how those interactions affect students and families. Choosing classes, understanding hybrid learning schedules, and assembling learning resources are just a few steps that keep students from making progress. The path ends up looking more complicated.

As you map the attendance journey, it's important to not only consider actions students need to take on the path to registration or graduation but also what they're feeling and thinking, including any pain points they may be experiencing such as having trouble balancing school and family life. This will help you get a more complete view of what students and families really need to move closer to their goals.
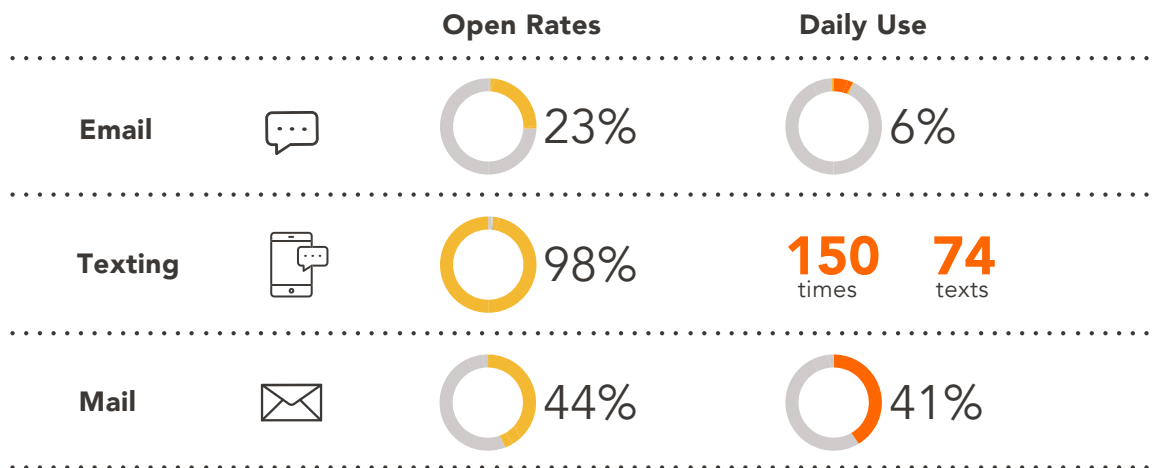
Show Students and Parents the Way

Students who are struggling to attend and engage need someone to guide them through processes that will seem new, familiar, or just plain overwhelming. However, schools typically don't have enough resources to assign an advisor to every student in need.
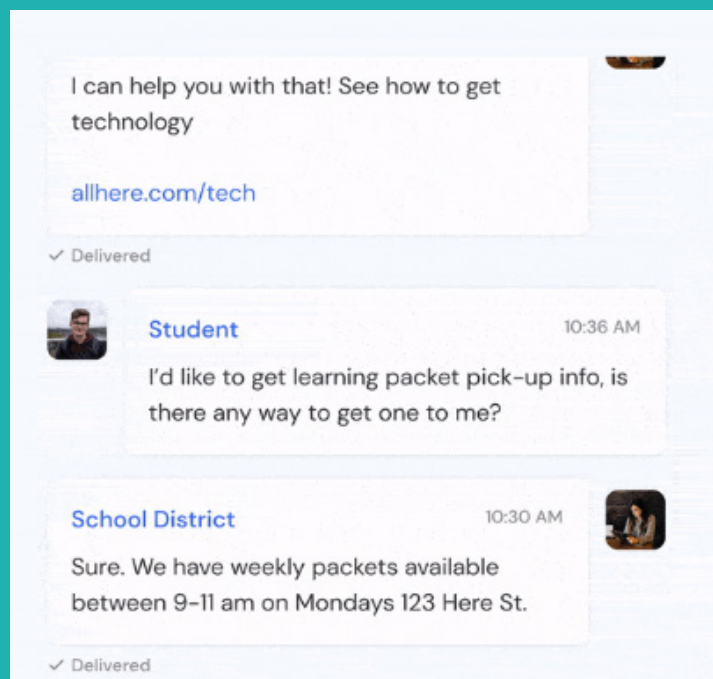
One way to guide every student to success at scale is to offer a virtual resource. One that students can access any time of the day or night to get quick responses to their questions, whether it's knowing the deadline for submitting scheduling preferences or finding out about the latest school events.

Going Mobile

Research shows that we are a mobile-centric world with 82% of adults owning their own mobile phone and an estimated 3K+ text messages sent every day. When you combined with the stat that 57% of parents in lower-performing schools are not satisfied with the communication they receive from their child's school about their academic progress (Bridgeland et al., 2008) you know you need to explore texting as the key way to communicate with students and families. The result? It works.

		Open Rates	**Daily Use**
Email	💬	23%	6%
Texting	📱	98%	**150** times **74** texts
Mail	✉	44%	41%

SMS chatbots via mobile enable personalized communications at scale, handling routine questions that most students and families ask, while allowing school staff to help with more complicated issues.

I can help you with that! See how to get technology

allhere.com/tech

✓ Delivered

Student — 10:36 AM
I'd like to get learning packet pick-up info, is there any way to get one to me?

School District — 10:30 AM
Sure. We have weekly packets available between 9-11 am on Mondays 123 Here St.

✓ Delivered

Technology Enables Automation and Ability to Scale

What do you mean by Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots?

Artificial Intelligence

A flexible rational agent that can perceive its environment and takes actions that maximize its chance of success at some goal. The term "artificial intelligence" is applied when a machine mimics cognitive functions that humans associate with other human minds, such as learning and problem solving.

Chatbots

A chatbot is a service, powered by rules and sometimes artificial intelligence, that you interact with via a chat (or SMS/text) interface. The service could be any number of things, ranging from functional to fun.

Chatbots can be leveraged as a virtual assistant to dramatically save staff time in supporting large numbers of students and families at scale. A chatbot armed with knowledge base software built for real student and family conversations can dramatically boost a school team's ability to handle the large volume of communications that takes place each day. Best of all, the more students engage, the greater the knowledge base grows, and the "smarter" the AI becomes. Finally, analytics can transform real student conversations into actionable insight.

The science of nudges and guided support – with artificial intelligence and natural language understanding to strengthen the connection between educators and students. The virtual assistants will not only respond to student questions automatically, but also proactively guide students through complex learning participation processes, gather student data, send reminders, conduct student surveys, and connect students with human advisors. This will increase rates of learning participation during the COVID-19 crisis and facilitate student attendance and reduction of student learning losses, whether students are remote or in-person. There is the opportunity to combine behavioral science-nudges and guided support-with artificial intelligence and natural language understanding to strengthen the connection between educators and students.

Previously, educators focused on the implementation of human-intensive (often face-to-face) interventions to ensure that the right student received the right intervention at the right time.

Based on the latest research conducted with district leaders from the top 100 districts by enrollment, in the past 4 weeks, results find that:

✓ With COVID-19, current staffing in K12 districts suggests that we can't look to school counselors and social workers as a sole solution to this challenge. The national student to counselor ratio is almost 500/1. This will make it nearly impossible for each and every student to receive personalized attendance support.

✓ In considering these challenges, we see an opportunity to use technology — specifically artificial intelligence and text messaging — as the best way to provide individualized guidance to everyone, and to reach those students who need the most assistance attending and engaging in class.

This is a new paradigm in K12. Many other industries have had great success in using chatbots to offer a personalized experience at scale. Chatbots, which are personalized virtual assistants, can be used to help guide students to and through school. Chatbots allow you to automate the sending of timely reminders and information about assignments, participation, collect key survey data, and answer questions students and parents may have day or night.

To solve new attendance challenges at scale, it will be necessary for schools and districts to combine artificial intelligence with human experts. It will also be necessary to use chatbots to message students via their preferred channel, especially in middle and high school, and to be available to them 24/7, providing instant answers to frequently asked questions.

It will also be key to send students reminders, gather key data, and connect students to staff only when human assistance is needed.

Research and insights are telling us that:

✓ It is critical to deliver to each student the right information at the right time, and prompt important actions on the path to and through school, whether "school" is in a living room, a housing project, the backseat of a car while an "essential worker" parent(s) are on the job, or in an in-school setting.

✓ Solutions need to be infinitely scalable and need to operate invisibly and be able to integrate with district student information systems, and other platforms used by the district community.

✓ Students and families are more likely to pay attention when schools and districts are communicating proactively. Research from Peter Bergman shows that text is a preferred method of communication for most families.

Virtual Attendance Coach Supports Each Student on their Attendance Journey

Chatbots can help schools nudge students to take the next step in their educational journey, like submitting that last item for back-to-school, or providing a list of tasks they should have ready for on-campus or at-home learning days.

Chatbots also provide opportunities to segment communication with equity, so staff can also offer specialized support to different populations of students, rather than blast emails or texts that can be too long and full of school jargon.

One of the most important steps to attendance management is to listen to students and families, and chatbots enable this at scale. A quick survey can help you gather valuable feedback such as how students feel about starting school, or what their biggest concerns are about returning to campus.

By keeping communications focused on the student and family, you can provide them with the best roadmap forward, and help your staff—2/3 of whom say that attendance and engagement in these times are one of their top 3 challenges they face.

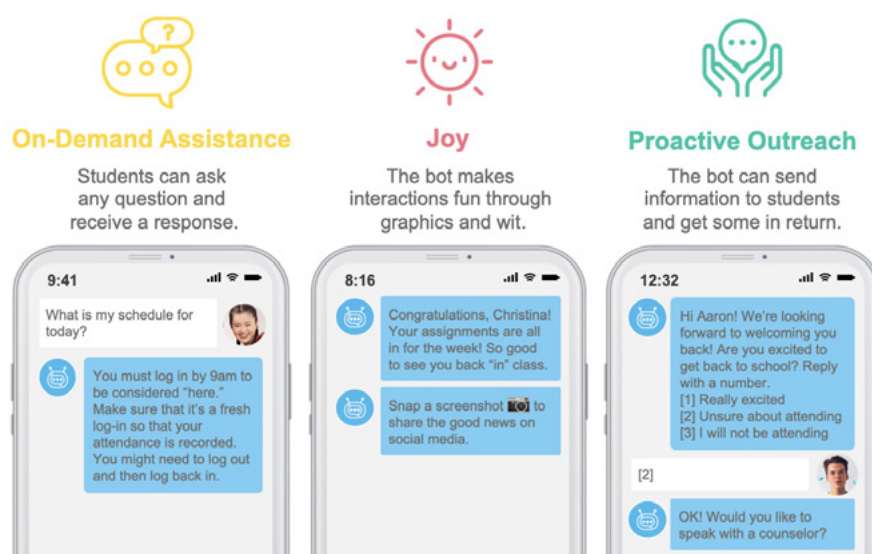Source: https://mdreducation.com/mdr-cares-act-selects/

Move Students Along for Success

Keeping students motivated to continue their journey means making information relevant, two-way, and flowing without effort from teachers, and making the learning experience fun and engaging.

That's why it's important to ensure that not only you are giving students the information they need, but that you're providing it in an interactive way. Rather than filling your students' mailboxes with letters and your website with hard-to-understand terms like "continuity of learning," "matriculate," or even "chronic absenteeism," keep language about attending and engaging simple and clear.

A chatbot can answer those questions 24/7 using conversational language that parents and students can easily understand. Finally, keep communications about attendance and engagement expectations action-oriented and relevant to student needs, and add a little personality. Conversational chatbots know how to "speak student" and family while also using emojis to provide an experience that is both helpful and friendly. And, chatbots give you plenty of opportunity to keep conversations going.

Your chatbot can have a fun name and personality so parents will keep coming back for information and students will continue moving toward their educational goals. Trying to keep every student on the same and narrow path to attending and engaging class isn't an effective strategy for today's parents and students.

On-Demand Assistance
Students can ask any question and receive a response.

Joy
The bot makes interactions fun through graphics and wit.

Proactive Outreach
The bot can send information to students and get some in return.

By embracing differences, mapping out what they need to accomplish, understanding how they feel, and guiding them with what they need to know along the way, schools can help each student succeed at their own attendance path, no matter how many twists and turns they will encounter along their attendance journey.