



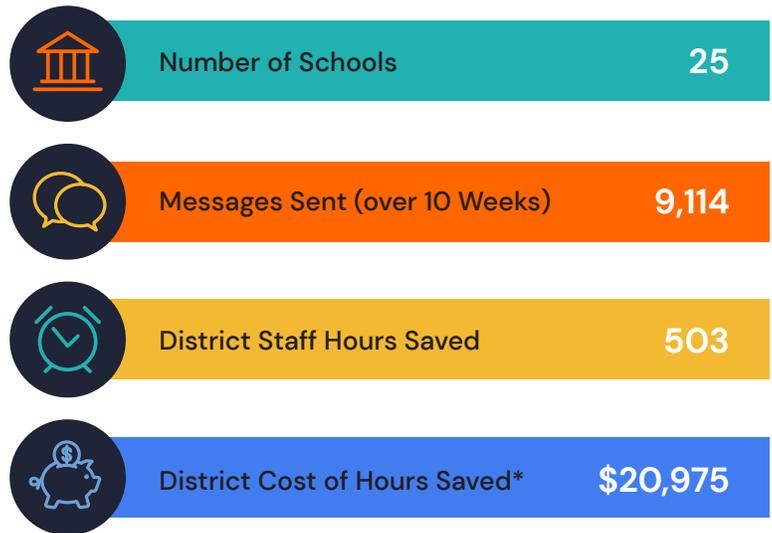
CASE STUDY

# Lansing School District, Michigan



## About Lansing School District

Lansing School District serves 10,000 students in Michigan's capital city. Its footprint covers 52 square miles and includes a diverse urban population of 117,600 residents.



\* Assuming \$41.67 hourly rate / \$60,000 salary

## Challenges

Improving attendance rates is a priority across Michigan, where more than 280,000 students are chronically absent. While the statewide average attendance rate is 92.9%, for these students, the rate is only 72.4%. The Lansing School District is taking a proactive, multifaceted approach to addressing the root causes of absenteeism. “We framed it as an issue of equity, because chronic absence affects all students in the classroom and the pacing of instruction,” said School Improvement Data Integration Specialist Dr. Liesel Carlson.

Coming out of the COVID pandemic, administrators realized they needed to re-establish a physical and emotional connection with their students. They also realized the importance of communicating systematically and quickly with all families—and ensuring that the information was consistent for parents who have children at more than one school. Finally, they wanted to prioritize families whose needs were greatest and target those students’ academic success and overall well-being.

### 6 Attendance and Engagement Goals for PreK Through Grade 12

- ✔ Build knowledge and awareness among families about the importance of attendance
- ✔ Utilize new modes of communication that are comfortable for families
- ✔ Gather data to avoid assumptions about what families know and don’t know
- ✔ Leverage scientific research as well as past experiences within the district to change behaviors
- ✔ Set actionable goals for regularized attendance
- ✔ Balance the investment in human capital and technology

## Solutions

After researching compelling national examples and looking at what efforts were showing results within their own schools, Lansing’s administrators partnered with AllHere for a pilot program utilizing mobile messaging powered by artificial intelligence at four of the district’s schools. “We see this technology now as an effective tool, like Siri or Alexa,” Carlson said. “It’s part of people’s daily lives.”

Carlson said the initial work of compiling files to populate the platform’s database and helping create the customized universe of knowledge for the chatbot was very beneficial in eventually in addressing existing barriers to attendance.

School-level leaders appreciated that there was no additional work on their part with this new tool—but they still reaped the benefits of staff time savings, which allowed them to prioritize those families who needed one-on-one support. They also saw a range of other potential applications, ranging from enhanced social-emotional learning to extra support around literacy. After seeing positive initial results from the pilot, the district implemented AllHere across all 25 schools in the spring of 2021.



## Implementation

The AllHere platform—featuring a chatbot named Mini—was a key component of the Lansing School District’s “Minutes Matter: Make Them Count” initiative. Families received positive text messages highlighting the importance of regularized attendance, based on the research conducted by Dr. Peter Bergman about the effectiveness of “nudges” in a mode that is comfortable and accessible. They also received prompts asking if they needed additional support or connection. Finally, families could receive on-demand assistance by asking Mini questions, which were answered within seconds from the district’s customized, intelligent knowledge base.



Number of parents	1,524
Incoming messages	722
Messages answered by bot	94%
Escalations	44 or 6%
Number of opt outs	62

## Results

Lansing’s district wide rollout of Mini was resoundingly successful within its “Minutes Matter: Make Them Count” initiative. Not only did schools see a greater level of connection, but educators and families both started to look at two-way communication in a different light. “Mini was able to answer so many questions, freeing up time for our humans to focus on students and families who needed the most intensive support,” Carlson said. “Families really appreciated that we were able to respond to them so quickly and devote more time and energy to those handful of escalations. We were able to maximize our human capital, and AllHere was a key piece of that.”

### Other impact included:

- ✔ Strong buy-in from administrators and teachers
- ✔ A more positive school climate around attendance
- ✔ Better identification of barriers to attendance and effective communication
- ✔ Opportunities to more deeply study frequently asked questions
- ✔ Identification of technology-related challenges

Moving forward, Lansing has set new goals of increasing the district’s attendance rate by 5% in 2022 and 10% by 2025. They will continue to look at where they can provide additional support to families and students, how they can celebrate successes, and what steps they can take to further enhance their focus on family and community engagement. “We recognize that schools can’t do this alone,” Carlson said. “We need collaboration and partnership with organizations like AllHere as well as our community.”

**For more information, details, or to set up your own comprehensive chronic absenteeism intervention management system, visit [www.allhere.com](http://www.allhere.com).**