Major Pratt Collegiate focused on at-risk students with problematic attendance. The Attendance Initiative Grant was used to increase time to the School Counselor position. The increase of time allowed the School Counselor to provide intensive support and focus on individual students and families. The additional counseling time was also used for checking attendance, collecting data, providing resources for teachers and liaison with multi-agencies.

3 Students were identified each school year. Results of intense intervention in the 2012 school year included 2 of the 3 students graduating that year. 1 returned for the 2013 school year and will likely graduate this year. In 2013, 2 of the 3 students are attending and 1 student has not returned 2nd semester.

“Studies show students with caring and supportive relationships with school personnel report more positive academic attitudes, values and good attendance.”

James P. Connell

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.”

D. Blocher

“IF students do not feel missed then there is a problem. They are tourists in the classroom not citizens of the classroom.”

NEWB Conference 2008

Bonnie Slimmon Kiliwnik
Student Services Coordinator
Park West School Division
204-842-2107
Regular attendance has been linked to higher achievement, stronger bonds to the school and community, lower rates of delinquent and high risk behaviour, and increased participation in higher education.

Focus on Attendance

The primary focus in the early implementation of Learning to Age 18 has been attendance. Low attendance is a key indicator for dropping out. It is also a symptom of other issues that students may need help in addressing. Attendance reports have been sent to schools monthly indicating students who may potentially be at-risk based on their attendance. School teams then have worked to identify issues negatively influencing attendance, and to scaffold support to students and families.

Through an initial analysis of the data, it was decided that a divisional attendance committee would be beneficial moving forward with systemic change. The committee was created to review and revise divisional attendance practices and protocols to maximize student engagement and student attendance. Priorities first identified were a transition protocol for students moving into high school, as well as the division attendance policy—the goal being to have the grade 9 transition protocol implemented Spring 2013, with the policy to be developed by June 2013 for full implementation.

Communication and consultations with schools has contributed to a building awareness of students at-risk because of poor attendance. An attendance target of 90% was established. School teams gave prompt attention to high absentee students with the intention of addressing attendance issues before they escalated. Identification of students of concern in Early Years and Middle Years is a priority so that interventions can be implemented at the onset.

School teams have identified students currently under 18 but not attending school. Student referrals to the Learning to 18 Facilitator have been made. These referrals have resulted in student assessment (using Kearney framework), individual counseling, and development of alternative learning plans. Further access of this service and support for students will be encouraged.

The biggest risk factor for failing grade nine is the number of absences during the first 30 days of high school, and failing grade nine is one of the most important predictors of dropping out. Additional support has also been provided through Learning to Age 18 to the Waywayseecappo Off-Campus Program. This has included individual counselling, graduation planning, supporting alternative learning opportunities, and consultation with program staff.

Learning to Age 18 Facilitator

The Park West School Division Learning to Age 18 Facilitator provides support to students (and their families) currently not engaged in school. The goal is to improve students’ school attendance and to decrease the number of students identified as at-risk attenders. This will be accomplished through consulting and collaborating with school teams, providing support to students, and coordinating alternative learning plans. We will also be increasing divisional and community awareness of the importance of attendance while improving student/parent communication systems. Our goal is to develop a new cultural attitude toward attendance policies and attendance expectations.
**RTI Model and Attendance:**

**Planning for Intervention**

RTI provides a tiered approach to providing the most appropriate instruction, services, and interventions to struggling students, with increasing intensity at each tier.  
*Cortella, 2005*

The Response to Intervention model is a framework that readily addresses student and school attendance needs, using both prevention and intervention strategies. RTI applies consistent monitoring of progress, as well as the ongoing collection and analysis of data to ensure effective programming for students, across all tiers of the model. Tier 1 planning supports all students, with 80% of needs met at this Universal level. Tier 2 targets at-risk students, those with attendance concerns. Tier 3 is the most intensive of interventions, addressing the needs of students with the most severe attendance issues, or those who have dropped out under the age of 18.

**Parents as Partners**

Parent involvement is a critical component of supporting attendance. Increasing awareness and education of parents regarding the importance of good attendance will be done at both a divisional and school level. This awareness will be developed through a range of approaches including, but not limited to, conversations, newsletters, websites, and school handbooks. Engaging parent, the community, and multi-agency partners will facilitate greater success with intervention planning.

Another component of early intervention is the development of positive student attendance in early and middle years. This must include the early identification of attendance issues and students at-risk, teaching attendance, high expectations, and parent engagement and communication.

Data driven: Identifying Patterns and Making Change

An important component of the Learning to Age 18 Facilitator role has been to establish baseline data on student attendance in Park West School Division. Through an analysis of the data, the school team is able to investigate the at-risk absenteeism, based on student variables, as well as school, family and community factors. This information is then used to design effective strategies for improving attendance, both individually and systemically, as well as raising student engagement and achievement.

### Grades with highest absenteeism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>% of Absent Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
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</table>

### Percentage of Absences

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excused</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexcused</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage of PWSD Students with less than 90% Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of PWSD Aboriginal Students</th>
<th>% of Absent Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>38.6</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>% of Gender</th>
<th>% of Absent Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14.8</td>
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### Early Intervention

With the development of a system of early intervention, every absence must bring a response. Prevention efforts must be designed to identify students at highest risk of dropping out – then target resources to keep students in school. Attendance, course performance, and behaviour act as warning indicators.

Attendance: Use regularly available data (1st month, 1st term, 1st semester) to identify students at-risk
Course Performance: Marks, credits earned, course failures (flag for possible early intervention)
Behaviour: office referrals and suspensions
School teams meet routinely to review students’ progress, with particular focus on those in their first year of high school.

### Parents as Partners

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### Being data-driven, schools can recognize the institutional factors contributing to attendance issues, and use the data to inform change.

- Dana Corr
  Division Counselling Facilitator
  Park West School Division
  (204) 842-2805 (204) 821-5575

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**Parents as Partners**

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Students with regular school attendance do better academically, are more likely to stay in school, and as a result are more likely to graduate with a high school diploma. Students who graduate are twice as likely to be employed. The relationship between attendance and students’ overall success has resulted in Manitoba Education supporting school divisions in developing programs and initiatives to improve student attendance.

This rewarding initiative fosters relationships between home, school and communities resulting in improved student success.

The Park West Initiative

Two schools presented plans to increase student attendance. Major Pratt (K-12) focused on at-risk students in the Senior I-IV. Grant money was used to increase School Counsellor time to focus on strength-based counseling and therapy for the students and parents.

Rosburn Collegiate (S1-4) presented a plan to increase student engagement through Universal Design Instructional practices resulting in increased engagement and improved attendance. Focusing on school/classroom climate and instruction would had a positive affect on student attendance.

The underlying rationale is that respecting diversity is an essential component of school climate and student well-being—and that it starts in the classroom. To this end, we have used the attendance grant to further increase our instructional capacity over four days with Jennifer Katz. Because we believe that ultimately our responsibility as educators is to attract students to learning through a greater sense of belonging, possibility and hope.

Bob Ploshynsky, Principal, Rosburn Collegiate

Divisional Perspective

The Attendance Initiative Grant was also used to provide professional development for all administrative, resource teachers, school counsellors and teaching staff. Dr. Christopher Kearney presented to S5 PWSD staff and over 100 educators from across the province on School Refusal Behavior.

Dr. Christopher Kearney—School Refusal Presentation
April 14, 2012, Brandon.

Student Voice

PWSD students at MPS and RCI took part in a Google survey. The anonymous survey allowed S1-4 students to express their opinions on attendance issues. This included feedback regarding impacting factors that affect attendance, high-risk behaviors influencing student behaviors and proactive student centered solutions to improving attendance.

Dr. Christopher Kearney: "Together WE Build Character" Rosburn Collegiate

Treatment Summary

✓ Monitor behavior on a daily basis
✓ Decide on the pace of intervention
✓ Consult with multiple professionals
✓ Understand the need for innovation

Dr. Christopher Kearney: "School Refusal Presentation"
April 14, 2012, Brandon.