

Start Strong Webinar Discussion Guide

Below are a suggested set of key questions to prompt discussion about what they might do given insights shared during the Start Strong Webinar. Feel free to use some or all to prompt a rich conversation about how to take action.

1. **Mapping the Gap:** The theme for Attendance Awareness Month 2015 is “Mapping the Attendance Gap” What can we do to map the gap?

Have we seen chronic absence data for the students in our community or state? If not, who is positioned to ask our school district or state department of education to find out if these data exist or if they could conduct an analysis?

If yes, what do we know about the biggest attendance gaps in our local schools? What grades? What neighborhoods? What demographic groups—low-income children, special education students, racial and ethnic groups?

2. **The Attendance Gap in the Early Grades:** What are our reactions to research about the impact of early chronic absence? How aware are our local leaders about the impact of early absenteeism on student achievement? To what extent are families of young children aware of the importance of attendance in preschool and kindergarten? What key messages do we need to get across about school every day?

3. **Eliminating Barriers to Good Attendance:** The guest speakers from Chicago and Baltimore identified a number of reasons why young children miss school including chronic health conditions, problems with transportation and unidentified developmental issues. What are the barriers to good attendance in our community? Which community partners can we tap to help us reduce chronic absence? Who’s currently helping in our local schools?

What could we ask them to do? (*Promote awareness, support incentives, volunteer mentors, help families overcome barriers like health, transportation and housing*)