

Calculating a Student's Daily Attendance

Maintaining accurate attendance data is essential in the educational environment. Not only is attendance vital to student achievement, but also to school and district finances. As a result, ensuring that attendance is being recorded consistently and calculated properly is of utmost importance.

When tracking attendance data, schools must first establish a well-defined process for recording student attendance throughout the day, as well as define how that attendance data translates into a Daily Attendance value. This is where the difficulty often begins, because there is no one way to do this.

Rules for how to calculate daily attendance can vary from school to school, district to district, and state to state. While some states are more deliberate in their requirements, others leave the choices more to the individual districts and/or schools. This could mean that attendance is taken once at the beginning of the day and that determines students' absence or presence for the entire day, or attendance is taken in each class and the daily attendance is calculated based on the number/percentage of classes or minutes the student attends throughout the day. In some instances, students can only be considered absent or present for the entire day while other students may earn partial attendance.

Now, it is important to understand what we are referring to when discussing Daily Attendance as it can mean different things under different circumstances. When referring to individual students:

Daily Attendance for a specific date identifies the student's absence or presence for that date. Depending on how this is defined within the school, this could mean that a student was fully absent, fully present, partially absent or partially present. Actual calculation methods will be specific to each school/district.

For example, it is quite common at the elementary level for student attendance to be recorded by the teacher, once during the day, in a "Home Room" or Attendance Period. If students arrive late or leave during the day, only that single attendance value would need to be updated. Based on the attendance policy the attendance code assigned would determine the student's absence or presence for that day.

However, when in the Middle School and/or High School environment, determining daily attendance can be more complicated. In most instances, attendance is taken in each class a student is enrolled in throughout the day. Then, based on the number of classes or minutes attended, the daily attendance value would be calculated, and this is where it can get complicated.

The threshold of being declared absent versus present and for what portion of a day, has an unlimited number of possibilities. Some schools may base daily attendance on the number of periods a student attends, others may base it on the number or percentage of minutes. Some may credit students with attendance for a portion of the day. Others don't, as students are calculated to be either fully absent or fully present.

The individual **Daily Attendance** values are in turn used to calculate each student's **ADA** or **Average Daily Attendance**. This is the value most often used to determine if there is an issue related to attendance. Typically, if a student's ADA value falls below 90% the student is considered "chronically absent", which will normally require some type of intervention from the school.

To calculate **Average Daily Attendance**, one would add up the number of days a student has been present within a specific date range, divide it by the number of days school was in session and then multiply by 100. For example, if a student was present 29 days out of 30 days in session, that student would have an **ADA** value of 96.67%.

Whatever method a school uses to determine **Daily Attendance** and ultimately **Average Daily Attendance**, ensuring that there is a clear understanding of the entire attendance process is imperative to student success.