

Research Brief

**Preventing Absences in a Remote Environment:
An Evaluation of EveryDay Intervention in the
Los Angeles Unified School District**

August 2021

Executive Summary

Over the summer of 2020 EveryDay Labs partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District to evaluate the impact of EveryDay Intervention on attendance in an online learning environment. EveryDay Intervention is a proven restorative approach to absence prevention. The program leverages communication strategies informed by behavioral science to effectively reach families through personalized mail nudges and two-way texts that are designed to help them:

- Keep track of their children’s attendance
- Overcome barriers to K–12 attendance
- Understand the relationship between attendance and achievement
- Connect to district and community supports

Over six weeks, the district implemented EveryDay Intervention to help more than 40,000 students enrolled in their remote summer school program spend more days present and engaged in learning. All communications were sent in English or Spanish based on the families’ first language.

The pilot tested and optimized messages personalized with schedules and attendance data. In addition, a Family Support Bot responded to families’ questions by text and directed them to district resources or EveryDay Labs’ multilingual Family Support Team.

Impact Evaluation

The program was evaluated using a series of rapid-cycle randomized control trials (RCTs) and a follow-up family survey. RCTs are the gold standard for program evaluation, and the required evaluation method to meet the Strong Evidence standard under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

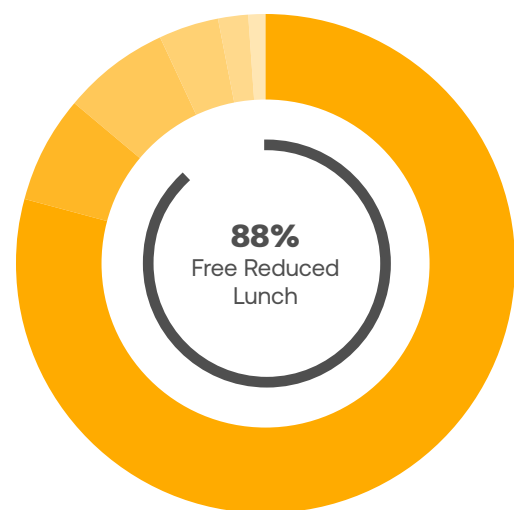
The RCTs were designed to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the program to prevent class absences
- Optimize communication content and frequency
- Understand the impact of adding personalized attendance data to two-way text communications

The family survey was designed to:

- Understand families’ perception of EveryDay Intervention’s helpfulness
- Assess families’ interest in receiving communications in the fall
- Test how accurately families recalled program content
- Pulse-check concerns about remote learning

Program at a Glance



- 80% Latino
- 7% Black
- 7% White
- 4% Asian
- 30% Multiple
- 1% Other



40,100+ students



27% bilingual learners



Remote learning



Participating grades: K–12



300,000+ messages



45% Spanish
55% English communications



Strong Evidence under ESSA

Program Impact

Analysis of the program showed that the EveryDay Intervention's strategically timed and layered two-way text and print communications were a statistically impactful strategy for preventing online class absences and were well-received by participating families.

Attendance and Engagement Outcomes

The series of RCTs included a total of 40,124 students. The final analysis consisted of 30,447 students still enrolled at the end of summer school. Each student's family received messages for one to five weeks throughout the pilot, depending on their experimental condition and their child's summer school enrollment status. Students were marked as absent or present for remote summer classes on a per-class basis in the district's SIS. As reported in the district's SIS, attendance behavior after outreach served as the basis for evaluating the program's effectiveness.

Key Findings

- **Attendance:** The program reduced class absences by 12% in a given week relative to not receiving the communication.
- **Messaging:** Including personalized attendance data was about 50% more effective than only including personalized information such as the student's class schedule.
- **Engagement:** Families engaged with messages and the Support Bot over time, going back to overcome barriers to attendance like uncertainty about schedules and login information.
 - More than 10% engaged by clicking a link or asking for support from the chatbot.
 - 3% percent of families called EveryDay Labs' Family Support Team.
 - Fewer than 2% of families opted out.



Key Outcome

Overall the program effectively prevented 12% of absences in a given week in a remote learning environment.

Family Engagement Outcomes

Participating families were invited to respond to the family survey via a link sent out by text message. A total of 4,542 families, or about 10% of participating families, responded. Based on survey data, the perception of EveryDay Intervention was positive among families who responded. The majority of respondents felt that the program was helpful and provided them with new information. Additionally, 54% of families that responded to the survey reported concern over knowing whether their student would be logging in and participating in remote learning when school started in the fall, making communication about remote attendance critical.

Key Findings

- **Interest:** 97% of respondents reported being interested in receiving text communications during the 2020–2021 school year.
- **Helpfulness:** 54% said they received information they didn't already know.
- **Recall:** 85% of respondents correctly remembered receiving text communications.
- **Expectations:** 74% of respondents correctly identified their child's schedule at the end of the program.



Key Outcome

97 percent of respondents reported being interested in receiving text communications during the 2020–2021 school year.

Impact Discussion

COVID-19 created an unprecedented shift in education. As school buildings across the country and in the LAUSD closed, learning moved out of the classroom and into remote environments. Disruptions to learning across the country put students from communities experiencing marginalization at a high risk of learning loss that threatens to further exacerbate the equity gap.

To help overcome this challenge, the LAUSD provided its students and families with devices, internet, and access to high-quality summer classes to overcome learning loss and keep students on track to meet grade-level benchmarks. Before COVID-19, the district partnered with EveryDay Labs to implement an evidence-based program to prevent in-class absences. As both organizations pivoted to support students and families with online attendance, they partnered to evaluate the impact of a restorative approach to family outreach on absence prevention in a remote environment.

The findings of this research partnership are not only exciting, they also present a new evidence basis for what works when it comes to preventing absences in a remote learning environment due to the RCT methodology of evaluation. EveryDay Intervention reduced class absences by 12% in a given week when implemented as a Tier-1 and Tier-2 early prevention attendance strategy.

Beyond attendance, one of the district's goals was to take a restorative approach to family outreach to keep families connected and engaged as partners in their children's learning. Just as promising as the evidence of efficacy, the family survey provided strong feedback on how families perceived the program. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with 97% of responding families reporting interest in receiving text communications in the fall.



Through this partnership, the program underwent continued evaluation in the 2020–2021 school year and adapted its content as learning modes shifted to overcome the evolving challenges of COVID-19.

To learn more, visit:

everydaylabs.com

Dr. Todd Rogers, Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University, oversaw the RCT design, data analysis, and evaluation of statistical impact. For more information about this brief, please contact info@everydaylabs.com.

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