

Research Brief

Preventing Absences in a Remote Environment
An Evaluation of Evident in LAUSD

August 2020

Executive Summary

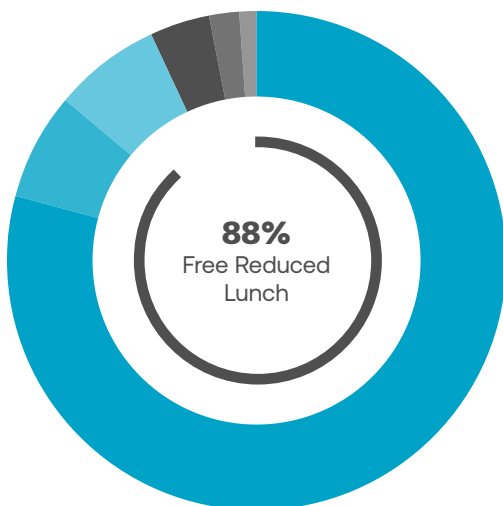
Over the summer of 2020 EveryDay Labs partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District to evaluate the impact of Evident on attendance in a remote learning environment. Evident is a proven, restorative approach to absence prevention. The program leverages communication strategies informed by behavioral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

- Keep track of their student’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 Evident to help over 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 chatbot responded to families’ questions by text and directed them to district resources or EveryDay Labs’ multilingual Family Support Team.

Program At A Glance



80% Latino
7% Black
7% White
4% Asian
2% Multiple
1% Other



40,100+
Students



27%
Bilingual
Learners

Impact Evaluation

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

The RCTs were designed to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the program on preventing class absences
- Optimize the 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 Evident's helpfulness
- Assess families' interest in receiving communications in the fall
- Test how accurately families recalled program content
- Pulse-check concerns about remote learning



Remote Learning



300,000+ Messages



Strong Evidence Under ESSA



Participating Grades: K-12



**45% Spanish
55% English Communications**

Program Impact

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

Attendance and Engagement Outcomes

The series of RCTs included a total of 40,124 students. The final analysis consists 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 student’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 percent in a given week relative to not receiving the communication.
- **Messaging:** Including personalized attendance data was about 50 percent more effective than only including personalized information such as the student’s class schedule.
- **Engagement:** Families engaged with messages and the chatbot over time, going back to overcome barriers to attendance like uncertainty about schedules and login information.
 - Over 10 percent 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 percent of families opted out



Key Outcome

Overall the program effectively prevented 12 percent 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 percent of participating families, responded. Based on survey data, the perception of Evident was positive among families who responded. The majority of respondents felt that the program was helpful and provided them with new information. Additionally, 54 percent of families that responded to the survey reported concern over knowing whether their student is logging in and participating in remote learning when school starts in the fall, making communication about remote attendance critical.

Key Findings

- **Interest:** 97 percent of respondents reported being interested in receiving text communications during the 2020–2021 school year.
- **Helpfulness:** 54 percent said they received information they didn't already know.
- **Recall:** 85 percent of respondents correctly remembered receiving text communications.
- **Expectations:** 74 percent 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 the LAUSD closed, learning moved out of the classroom and into remote environments. Disruptions to learning across the country put vulnerable students at a high risk of learning loss that threatens to exacerbate the equity gap further.

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 for 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 remote 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 and conclusive, but 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. Evident reduced class absences by 12 percent in a given week when implemented as a Tier-1 prevent 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 student'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 percent of responding families reporting interest in receiving text communications in the fall.



Through this partnership, the program will undergo continued evaluation in the 2020–2021 school year and adapt content as learning modes shift to overcome the evolving challenges of COVID-19.



To learn more, visit:

www.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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