Right. We also like to thank all of the staff that make these sessions possible, starting off with staff from the Department of Education Dr. Tracey Scott, Bryan Keohane, and Liz Lembo. And again, I'm Jarle Crocker, and I'm joined by my colleague, Sarah Frazelle who's my co project director from the American Institutes for Research, and you'll meet the rest of the staff that make these sessions possible in our breakouts.

All right. So with that, I want to turn it over to my colleague Megan Gildin, to go ahead and get us started for today. Megan, take it away. Great, thank you so much, Jarle, and welcome everybody. As Jarle said, my name is Megan Gildin, and I'll be your facilitator for today. So we'll start with an overview of the series.

Throughout the series, we've explored school wide strategies for supporting attendance, focusing in on two strategies, messaging and school climate. We have reached our third and final session today, where we'll have the opportunity to apply what we have learned through a peer exchange. Our participants will share challenges and receive feedback from our peers.

So with that, our objectives for today are to deepen our understanding of proactive school wide strategies and connect with peers to brainstorm ideas to support implementation. Our agenda for today includes a brief recap of themes from the series to start us out. We'll then spend the majority of our time in a peer exchange.

For this exchange, participants who signed up in our planning sheet, which we will link in the chat for you to peruse, will go into team breakouts. Don't worry if you did not sign up for a challenge in advance. We have other topic area breakout rooms that you will be able to join. And we'll go over all the details of that in a few minutes.

So after we finish the breakout rooms and the peer exchange, we will come back together to share some final reflections and close out the series. So let's start with some of the foundational themes from our learning series. First, we know that proactive school wide strategies, or Tier 1 strategies, are foundational and universal approaches to encourage positive student attendance behaviors.

These strategies are designed to reach each and every student and family, and establish that culture of belonging that then supports positive attendance behaviors. Next, SEAs can provide guidance, resources, coordination, and invest in local capacity building to then be able to support LEAs in their local implementation of these proactive schoolwide strategies. So everyone here has a role. Finally, positive school climate and positive conditions for learning include components like physical and emotional health and safety, adult and student well-being, academic challenge and engagement, belonging, connection, and support, and relationships. And we know that all of these elements are linked to high attendance.

They're linked to high or improving attendance in schools. So focusing in on those positive conditions for learning is one great strategy for improving attendance. Getting into the first two sessions in a little more detail. In session one we talked about the strategy of messaging. So Hedy and Cecilia from Attendance Works shared some tips with us and some new ideas.

First, one is the need to adapt messaging to meet the emerging challenges and misconceptions around attendance. They shared two common misconceptions that are arising. First is around the value of school on this idea that being absent won't affect anything. And the second is around health-related concerns.

So thinking about physical health, when do we send students to school? When do we keep them home when they're sick and then also that mental health aspect. So, feeling knowing that students aren't feeling connected or safer, that sense of belonging or maybe feeling anxiety. How are we messaging around mental health concerns?

Since these misconceptions have evolved since the pandemic, we also then need to make sure that our approaches and our messaging are evolving to match and be able to address these misconceptions. As always, we want to ensure that messaging is positive and welcoming to all families.

Then in session two, we talked about school climate. Greta Colombi from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, or NCSSLE, shared that focusing on school climate improvements can help students feel more connected and foster a sense of belonging. So directly thinking about that challenge that came up in session one, and fostering that sense of belonging and connection then links to improving attendance.

She also noted that LEAs and SEAs are likely already doing things related to school climate rather than it feeling like one more thing. Based on research and what we see on the ground, school climate really is foundational to a variety of initiatives that support those positive conditions for learning.

Things like comprehensive school mental health and social-emotional learning, trauma informed care, so making those school climate improvements are

actually really critical in the system that supports these initiatives that support school climate. So, I want you to keep these key themes in mind as we get into this peer exchange. You'll be thinking about what are recommendations or things that we can think about as we're addressing these challenges.

And so these key themes hopefully will come up in your conversations as part of a guide. Okay, so now the fun part. We'll get into our peer exchange. If you bear with me, there's a few minutes of instructions, will be a little bit of coordinating folks to get you all into the right rooms. So if you can extend some grace and patience for a few minutes, we would appreciate that.

So in a moment, we'll get into breakout rooms. As I mentioned, there's two kinds of breakouts. First are these team breakout groups. So again, if you look into the planning sheet a signup sheet, and I'll bring it up here, you'll see that we've named every team in the planning sheet. There are some teams that have multiple teams from one state.

So if you are, for example, from Illinois, you've got Illinois 1, 2, and 3. So 1, go ahead and find your group and then underneath your group, we have listed the breakout room that you will be in. So, when we open the breakout rooms, you'll see your name and the title of the breakout room. You'll also see it in this planning sheet.

So, whatever is most useful to you to figure out where you need to go, feel free to use that. So, if you are in a team breakout room. Your structure will look like this. You'll have two or three teams in your room. The first team will share their challenge, and then the other teams will ask clarifying questions and provide feedback, really to help you brainstorm how to address that challenge.

And then we'll repeat that same cycle with the other one or two teams in your room. You will have a facilitator in your room to help you keep track of time and guide the discussion, so no need to worry about that. Now, if you do not see your team in the sign-up sheet, you will go for the second option, which is the topic area breakout groups.

So, for this, you can select a topic area. We have messaging, school climate, SEA coordination, and youth and family engagement. So, pick the topic that feels most resonates with you today. So you'll go into that topic area group where collectively you'll discuss some common challenges, talk through some potential solutions or promising practices and any resources or supports that may be helpful. For the topic area breakout groups we have, for each one, a room A and a room B. So, just trying, not a perfect science, but trying to break up groups into even groups. So, if your last name starts with A through M, go to room A. And if your last name starts with N through Z, go to room B, is the suggestion. Once we get into rooms, if we find we need to rearrange a little bit, we'll do that to make sure that we have a fruitful discussion in every rooms or in every room.

We'll also have Padlets to record. So we'll share those in the chat and your facilitators will help document all the wonderful practices that you'll share in the breakouts. So we can go ahead and open the breakout rooms again. If you're a team breakout, look for your team name. If you're not in a team breakout, pick a topic area of your choosing, and we will see you back here in about 40 minutes.

We'll give folks a few minutes to get back in the main room. I hope we didn't cut anyone off in the middle of a thought. But as we're waiting for folks to get back in, if there are any thoughts that you did not get a chance to share, feel free to add those into the Padlets, or start thinking about what you might want to share

with the whole group. All right. It looks like we've got everybody back. Welcome back. I hope you all had wonderful discussions. We've got some time now to share any next steps or solutions you may have discussed or any key takeaways, depending if you're in a topical group or a team group. What are some things that are maybe aha moments, next steps, key takeaways?

Feel free to share in the chat or raise your hand, and we'll call on folks to come off mute.

And we see a lot of great things and tablets. I know the discussions were wonderful. Megan, this is Kelly from team group 8. We were having a great discussion that was unfortunately, Louisiana was cut off right at the time. And Louisiana, we spent a lot of time on a conversation around mental health issues of parents.

And I don't, I'm not sure whether she would be interested in bringing that up because I don't know. I'm not sure that we even got an opportunity to really get a lot of feedback to her. So, I mean, I can speak 1 is. Yeah, she's not. She's not scared. I just, what I brought to the group is that one struggle of when you have a parent who has mental health issues, and because of that's hindering the child from coming to school.

And so how do we help with that? How can that help? And I'm not talking about a child missing one or two days. I'm talking about like maybe 10 days or more. All right. And so that's what we were discussing when the time ran out because that's a big issue when parents are the reasoning for, well, parents are always behind children not being at school.

But especially when parents' mental health has gone in that condition that they can't function and they don't bring the children to school so that they therefore don't see the need to bring their child to school. Because we talked about that before, having making sure that, we see the need for children to be there, but if you're, if you are struggling mentally, if you can't get out of the bed, I don't know if any of you have ever been depressed, but if you've been depressed, if you're depressed and you can't get out of the bed for whatever reasons, how do you get, and you can't get your child there, how the, how does the school system help with that parent?

And so that's what we were discussing. Yeah, but come up with any solutions. That is so important that we often talk about how are we supporting student mental health, and if the conversation is really how are we supporting the adults as well, both educators and families. It makes me think of how can we partner with

community based organizations and other entities that may be able to provide services. I say, Chaska, did you want to share something related to the mental health conversation or something new? I think you're on mute. Well, it's within the same realm. It has something to do with the attendance and with the mental health, because I know I'm not sure of every school district or how, which departments they have, but I know here in EBR, where I worked for 10 years as a school social worker, we have a child welfare and attendance department where they handle attendance, where they handle truancy, where they handle community outreach for those actual students who are experiencing very high rate of attendance, because we also have a person when they miss so many days, it flags.

That I forgot what their role is in EBR, but I've had to call that person many times when we're checking attendance and we see this child has missed 20 days, that needs to be flagged. And when it's flagged, it gives to that particular person to call the parents, see what's going on, see why they're missing school.

So, I think for with Ms. Dunn, we're discussing, I think within that school, they should have something to address that attendance. Like I said, in EBR, we have child welfare and attendance, and we also have parent liaisons in the school

where they will help and they would have community outreach for the parents as well.

They will even have like the workshops at night where they will have vendors to actually come out and address those different needs also with mental health too, because that's what child welfare and attendance sometimes do, because they also have stuff the child welfare and attendance workers a lot of our past social work, so everybody kind of work

together, but that's what I wanted to add to that. Well, the only problem is by the time that happened, the parent no longer has a telephone with the working number and they have moved. So there's no agent. Yeah, and then that leaves whoever worked for truancy kind of out because now they can't even find they can't find the family.

That's what I'm saying. Yeah, that brings up a good point that it's often not just one challenge that you're thinking through. It's a collection of challenges that maybe need to be addressed to actually be able to get to that student or get them back in school. So thinking about what are the things, what are the dynamics that work together and who all can help with those different pieces, right?

So, even if the collective come together, if they moved, I don't have a phone number, the collective still can't provide the resource. So, we've got to go ahead and respond to me. I'm sorry. I have a question when the child moves. Or the parent moves and the number is not working. Do you not contact CPS or Child Protective Services or something of that nature to see if they have anything on them?

Because I know that's what we're required to do. That's why I'm asking the question.

That, that might normally be the case, but by the time that this particular, this is just a particular case that I ran into this past week. And that might be normal procedures that those things happen in the, what you just said, Child Protective Services. But this is a family from, not from our country, you know, not from the country.

So you don't have any of those things in place that if you the liaison went to the job where the person was working before, they did every, I mean, they did due diligence trying to find the family, went to the friend where they had seen them before, but it's just like they vanished, you know, so, yeah. I was just wondering

because we have all those things, all the normal things happen, but I'm just saying what when what happens when they're not the normal things in place.

Okay. Okay. What kind of safeguards can we, I guess, put into place? What can we do? How can we learn from this experience? That's what I'm thinking. And I, and since we're in this group, we're talking about chronic absenteeism. I just thought it was a perfect place to bring this to the group, that maybe somebody else can think outside of the box and help me.

That's it.

Thank you so much for sharing and surfacing, I think, many challenges that people are facing across states and in different contexts. So yes, if anyone has solutions, feel free to share in the chat. I want to be mindful of our time. There's a few things in the chat box around resources for engaging parents and families and some other key takeaways.

So continue to peruse the Padlets. They'll stay open. And if you have any ideas. That is our purpose here is to crowdsource some thoughts or some new solutions or next steps to address these challenges that are very complex and ever changing. So we'll start to close out for today. First, as always, we appreciate your feedback.

We'll share a link to a feedback survey in the chat. We're always looking to improve and make sure these sessions are meeting your needs, so if you can take the next few minutes while we're closing out to fill that in, it would be greatly appreciated. This concludes our 1st learning series, but I want to share a couple of upcoming opportunities that we have.

Our next learning series starts in April. And is focused on promoting attendance in early grades. We also have a webinar focused on state strategies to reduce chronic absence featuring colleagues from Connecticut and New Mexico. The registration links for those have just been shared in the chat. And as always, we appreciate you participating in today's session, especially because it really was

you all sharing with each other. So appreciate you taking the time to connect and share your challenges and share your insights. We will follow up with a copy of the final slides and resources. And if you're interested in some additional technical assistance, if we either didn't get to your challenge or there are challenges that remain that you're wanting more support, also feel free to reach out to either Taneco or Sarah, whose emails are in the chat, and we can provide some additional assistance and support there to learn more about. And to learn more about SEAC you can also visit our website where you'll be able to access additional tools and resources, and we'll share that in the chat as well.

And then to close out as a reminder, this webinar does not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education or endorsement by the federal government. This was very much a crowdsourced effort and peer support. And so just want to close again by thanking you all for taking the time to share today and have a wonderful rest of your day.