

Addressing the Absenteeism Crisis: Coffee and Conversation Between Schools and Legislators

November 9, 2025

University of Portland

Agenda

9:30–10 Registration

- Networking and coffee

10–10:40 Welcome & Framing

- Opening remarks, absenteeism issue overview

10:40–11:10 Roundtable Discussion (30 min)

- Explore barriers, supports, strategies. Identify 3 insights and 2 key questions.

11:10–11:40 Jigsaw Collaboration (30 min)

- Cross-group sharing and synthesis. Develop 1–2 actionable recommendations.

11:40–12 Reflection & Closing

- Summarize ideas and outline next steps.

Introductions

- Representative April Dobson



Purpose

- This collaborative work session brings together school administrators and state legislators to explore the causes, challenges, and policy solutions surrounding student absenteeism.
- Through structured discussion and shared reflection, participants will connect school and district-level experiences with state-level strategies to create actionable pathways for improving attendance.

Framing

- Dr. Carmen Roberti



Introductions

- Representative Lisa Fragala
- Representative Sue Rieke-Smith
- Senator Courtney Neron-Misslin



Conference Goals

- Identify barriers and policy gaps influencing absenteeism.
- Highlight site and district-based strategies that can inform legislation.
- Develop 2-3 actionable ideas to facilitate increased attendance by Oregon students.
- Build partnerships for equitable student attendance solutions.

Roundtable Discussion (30 Minutes)

Goal: Examine root causes and barriers contributing to student absenteeism.

Guiding Questions:

- What are persistent barriers to regular attendance?
- Which policies or practices help or hinder efforts?
- What's one local strategy that could be scaled?
- What additional supports or coordination would make the biggest difference?

Jigsaw Collaboration (30 Minutes)

Goal: Share findings across groups to surface themes and develop actionable recommendations.

Steps:

1. Each member summarizes their roundtable insights.
2. Identify overlapping themes, gaps, and bright spots.
3. Capture joint recommendations for policy-practice alignment.

Reflection & Closing

Actionable ideas and steps:

1. Outreach that targets meeting students' needs (food, clothing, housing)
 - Outreach generally falls on community's shoulders
2. Accountability / lack of accountability
 - HS students needing just 1-2 credits, engagement and attendance TO classes
3. Parent accountability VS need for attention of parents

Reflection & Closing

Actionable ideas and steps:

4. Schools trying to fill “gaps” for students and families
 - What re the “supports” that are in place? Protocols?
 - What is aligned across schools, levels, state?
5. Reality of safety for students and families
 - Current administration’s enforcement approach
6. Creating partnerships that care for BOTH students and families