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# Identifying **Effective** Attendance Strategies in Michigan

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## Introduction

Chronic absenteeism remains a persistent challenge in Michigan and across the country in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic (Singer, 2024). While schools have expanded their efforts to improve attendance—implementing a wide range of practices, systems, and supports (Singer & Lenhoff, 2025)—there is still limited evidence about which of these strategies are most effective in improving student attendance. In particular, it remains difficult to disentangle the role of school-based efforts from the broader social and economic conditions that shape attendance, which makes it challenging to identify which strategies are most likely to make a difference.

This report provides new evidence on the relationship between school attendance strategies and student attendance outcomes in Michigan. We use longitudinal administrative data to construct a school-level attendance value-added measure, which isolates schools' contributions to student attendance after accounting for differences in student populations and contexts. We then use survey data from school leaders to examine how variation in attendance practices, organizational systems, staffing, and leadership corresponds with differences in attendance value-added across schools. This approach allows us to examine the extent to which various strategies are associated with positive attendance outcomes.

The following is a summary of our key findings:

- **There is substantial variation in attendance value-added scores across Michigan schools, meaning some schools are more effective than others in supporting attendance.** Schools differ meaningfully in their contributions to attendance, with differences between higher and lower value-added schools equivalent to several additional days attended per year. These patterns are highly consistent from year to year in the post-pandemic period, suggesting that school-level effects on attendance are persistent rather than short-term fluctuations.
- **Attendance value-added is higher on average in schools with more economically disadvantaged students, even though these schools tend to have higher chronic absenteeism rates and lower attendance rates.** This juxtaposition highlights the need to distinguish between the conditions that schools face and the contributions they make to student attendance. Schools in higher-poverty contexts have a broader set of practices, systems, and staff in place to improve attendance than lower poverty schools, and these school-based attendance efforts may have bigger impacts for students who need the greatest support.
- **Most attendance strategies do not strongly differentiate higher and lower value-added schools.** In most cases, schools that do and do not use a given strategy (e.g., specific practices to communicate with families or address barriers, systems related to attendance, leadership involvement, staff positions) have very similar distributions of value-added, with substantial overlap and modest (if any) differences on average.

This indicates that no single practice strongly differentiates more effective and less effective schools, and suggests that the effectiveness of a given practice will depend greatly on how it is implemented.

- **A few strategies stand out as potentially effective, especially when used frequently or implemented fully.** Practices that focus on deep family engagement (e.g., home visits) and personalized communication (e.g., text messages), and efforts to address out-of-school barriers (e.g., homelessness, transportation) are more common among higher value-added schools when used frequently. Attendance incentives and policies that threaten retention are also associated with slightly higher value-added, while court referrals are associated with slightly lower value-added. In addition, strong implementation of organizational systems (e.g., attendance teams), greater school leader engagement (especially monitoring attendance initiatives), the presence of staff focused on student and family support, and the availability of district guidance (especially when it is perceived as very helpful) are modestly associated with higher value-added.

## Methodology

To identify school practices that are associated with positive student attendance, we combined longitudinal administrative data on student attendance with survey data on schools' attendance strategies. We first estimated a school-level attendance value-added measure that isolates the contribution of schools to student attendance. We then examined how variation in school attendance practices corresponds to variation in these value-added estimates.

### Attendance Value-Added Measure

In order to identify effective attendance strategies, we first sought to identify schools that effectively reduce chronic absenteeism and support positive student attendance. Schools often operate in vastly different contexts and serve vastly different student populations (e.g., different levels of economic disadvantage). This means that raw measures of student outcomes (e.g., average daily attendance and chronic absenteeism rates) are often a reflection of those differences in the context and student population rather than actual school effectiveness. To account for these differences and better identify the school's impact on student outcomes, researchers use methods that adjust for baseline outcomes (e.g., prior-year attendance), student characteristics (e.g., economic disadvantage), and school and contextual factors (e.g., concentration of poverty). The approach we used to do this is known as value-added modeling, which predicts students' expected outcomes based on their prior performance and characteristics and then compares those predictions to actual outcomes, attributing the difference to the contribution of the school (Koedel, 2025).

We constructed an attendance "value-added" measure for Michigan schools, which enabled us to identify schools that appear to be effective in promoting positive attendance, regardless of their baseline attendance or absenteeism rates or other school demographic

or contextual characteristics (Liu, 2022). The measure is based on students' attendance rate, defined as the percentage of days attended out of days enrolled. As such, each school's value-added score represents the expected increase or decrease in the average student's attendance rate associated with attending that school. For example, a value-added score of 0.03 indicates that the average student would be expected to have a 3-percentage point (pp) higher attendance rate (about 5.5 additional days in a 180-day school year) when attending that school compared to an average school. Conversely, a score of -0.02 indicates a 2pp lower attendance rate (about 3.5 fewer days). A value-added score of 0 indicates no expected difference in attendance.

We treat these measures as purely descriptive—they do not definitively show a cause-and-effect relationship with student attendance. In other words, we cannot say with certainty that schools with higher attendance value-added cause students to attend school more regularly. Still, value-added is a methodologically sound option for identifying schools where attendance is consistently higher for a student than would be expected if they were enrolled in a different school (Liu, 2022).

### Attendance Value-Added Model

To construct this attendance value-added measure, we used a longitudinal administrative dataset that includes student attendance data over four post-pandemic school years (2021-22 through 2024-25). The dataset includes all public school students in Michigan in that period, allowing us to track students over time. For each school year, the dataset includes the school that each student attends; their total number of days enrolled and days attended; student grade level; student demographic data (e.g., economic disadvantage); school type (e.g., traditional public or charter school); and math and English/language arts (ELA) state standardized test scores (for students in grades 3-11). With records of student enrollment and residential Census block, we created measures for whether students changed schools or residential locations within and between school years. In addition, we aggregated student-level data to the school level to measure school-level demographics (e.g., economic disadvantage rate).

With this rich and longitudinal student-level data, we estimated a school-level measure of attendance value-added. Our goal is to compare the attendance rate of a student in one school to similar students attending other schools, in order to isolate the school's specific contribution to that student's attendance (Liu, 2022). We do so in two steps. First, we estimate the attendance rate ( $A$ ) for student  $i$  in school  $j$  in year  $t$  as a function of student and school characteristics, based on the following equation:

$$A_{ijt} = \beta_1 L_{it} + \beta_2 D_{it} + \beta_3 S_{jt} + \gamma_{it} + \delta_t + v_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

where  $L$  represents prior-year student attendance rate (i.e., lagged outcome) to account for student sorting across schools; as well as prior-year math and ELA test scores (to further account for student sorting);  $D$  represents student demographics (e.g., economic

disadvantage, gender, race/ethnicity, special education and English learner status), as well as whether they changed schools or residences during and between school years and the type of between-year school move (i.e., structural or non-structural);  $S$  represents school-level characteristics, including demographics (i.e., racial and socioeconomic composition, special education and English learner rate), lagged math and ELA test score averages, the school stability rate (i.e., share of students not in a transition year who remain in the school), and whether the school is a traditional public or charter school and a mainstream or alternative school;  $\gamma$  represents grade-level fixed effects, which account for systematic differences in attendance across grade levels (e.g., elementary vs. high school), ensuring that comparisons of student attendance are made among students in the same grade;  $\delta$  represents year fixed effects, which account for time-specific factors that affect attendance across all schools in a given year (e.g., policy changes, statewide trends); and  $v$  represents the residual (or unexplained) portion of a student’s attendance.

Second, we use the residual ( $v_{ijt}$ ) from the first equation to estimate each school’s value-added contribution. After accounting for a rich set of student and school covariates, the residual captures variation in attendance that is not explained by observable factors and is assumed to partly reflect the contribution of school  $j$  to the attendance of student  $i$  in year  $t$ , as shown in the following equation:

$$v_{ijt} = \alpha_j + \varepsilon_{ijt} \quad (2)$$

where  $\alpha$  represents school value-added and  $\varepsilon$  is an idiosyncratic error term. Intuitively, the residual reflects the difference between a student’s observed (i.e., actual) attendance and their predicted attendance based on Equation (1), and these residuals serve as the basis for estimating school effects. Following Chetty et al.’s (2014) method (and using the “vam” command in Stata [Stepner, 2013]), we estimated school value-added as the best linear predictor of a school’s impact on student attendance, using residualized student outcomes across multiple years. This approach aggregates information across cohorts while accounting for estimation error and temporal drift (we impose a drift limit of one year given that we only have a three-year panel). The resulting estimates are shrunk toward the overall mean, with less precise estimates (e.g., those based on smaller samples or more variable outcomes) pulled more strongly toward the mean to reduce the influence of random variation.

### Reliance on School Switchers for Value-Added Estimates

One important caveat is that in order to avoid endogeneity issues (i.e., including lagged attendance outcomes for students from the same school that they currently attend), school-level attendance value-added measures are typically estimated based only on students who did not attend the school in the prior year (Bartanen, 2020). Conceptually, this issue differs from efforts to estimate test score value-added (i.e., different outcome) or attendance value-added at the teacher level (i.e., different unit of analysis). When students are already enrolled in a school, it is hard to disentangle the school effects on attendance in the current year from the effects it may have already had on students in the prior year. This is not as

consequential for school-level test score value-added, since schools are supposed to grow students' test scores from one year to the next (i.e., growing from one grade-level to the next); and it is not an issue for teacher-level attendance value-added, since students (typically) switch teachers from one year to the next, providing clearer variation in students' exposure to teachers and thus allowing researchers to estimate their unique contribution to student outcomes. Estimating value-added based only on students who changed schools from the prior year to the current year—either by transitioning out of a school after completing its highest grade level (i.e., structural mobility) or switching schools during a non-transition year (i.e., non-structural mobility)—provides a strategy to better isolate the school's unique contribution to student attendance.

A major issue with relying solely on school switchers for value-added estimates is that switching schools is itself a strong correlate of chronic absenteeism. In particular, students who change schools in non-transition years (i.e., non-structural mobility) are much more likely to be chronically absent (Singer et al., 2021), in large part due to the role that economic disadvantage and social instability play in school mobility (Welsh, 2017). However, structural mobility (i.e., changing schools in transition years) could also have a negative impact on attendance, given that these school transitions often mean entering new and unfamiliar school settings, which can disrupt routines and relationships with peers and educators (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Benner & Wang, 2014). On the other hand, for structural and non-structural mobility alike, moving to a new school could provide students with improved opportunities for learning, support, and relationships (Anderson et al., 2000). Either way, school switchers represent a unique group of students. Though many of these likely differences are unobserved in our data, we can see some notable differences (Appendix A). In particular, non-structural switchers are disproportionately lower-income and racially minoritized, have lower attendance rates and test scores on average, and attend schools with higher chronic absenteeism rates and greater concentrations of poverty and student instability. Structural movers (i.e., transition year students) are similar to non-switchers but are overwhelmingly either 6<sup>th</sup> graders or 9<sup>th</sup> graders (i.e., transitioning from elementary to middle school or middle to high school). These unobserved and observed differences create a tradeoff in our analytic approach: while restricting to school switchers mitigates endogeneity from lagged outcomes, it introduces potential bias due to nonrandom selection into school mobility.

As a robustness check, we estimated attendance value-added models that included all school switchers (i.e., structural and non-structural mobility) as well as models that included only structurally mobile students (i.e., students changing schools during natural transition years). Because nearly every structural mover is in 6<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade, this limits reliable value-added estimates based on structural movers to middle and high schools only, and thus reduces the total number of school-year value-added estimates. Still, for those schools that have valid estimates of value-added for the model using all switchers and only structural movers, the overall estimates are comparable in magnitude, similar in their internal consistency (i.e., correlation across years), similar in their correlation with school attendance and economic disadvantage rates, and (most importantly) strongly correlated

with one another (Appendix B). Thus, to include a larger number of schools (particularly elementary schools), we use the value-added model that leverages all school switchers for our primary estimates.

## Survey Data on Attendance Strategies

After constructing an attendance value-added measure for all schools, we linked these estimates to detailed survey data on specific school-level attendance strategies. The survey included detailed information about schools' attendance practices, organizational systems, staffing, leadership, and more. (See Singer and Lenhoff [2025] for additional details about survey design, administration, sampling, respondents, and weighting.) We administered the survey during the 2024-25 school year, receiving responses from 41% of schools in Michigan. The attendance value-added scores for participating schools (i.e., those where the principal completed the survey) are not statistically significantly different from non-participating schools, which provides additional confidence that our analysis is generalizable statewide (Appendix C). We only included mainstream schools (i.e., excluding alternative schools, virtual schools, and special education centers) for this phase of our analysis. We included both traditional public and charter schools.

Using the survey data, we sought to identify whether the strategies used by higher attendance value-added schools were distinct from those with lower attendance value-added. We focused on whether or not schools used a given strategy (e.g., a specific practice or staff position). For some practices where the frequency of use varies substantially across schools, we use an indicator of frequency (i.e., frequent if daily or weekly and infrequent if monthly or yearly). Likewise, for organizational systems and guidance from districts, we use categorical measures of implementation progress or quality (e.g., partial versus full implementation, very helpful versus somewhat helpful guidance). For attendance leadership, in addition to individual items with categorical frequency measures, we constructed an index of attendance leadership involvement (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.73$ ). (See Singer and Lenhoff [2025] for descriptive statistics and other related findings for all survey data.)

To explore the relationship between school attendance value-added and specific strategies, we focused on three key datapoints. We prioritized examining the distribution of value-added scores for those with and without a given strategy. This distributional data helped us determine whether there were meaningful shifts in the distribution of attendance value-added based on adopting specific strategies, or if they were largely characterized by substantial overlap. We analyzed these distributions using kernel density plots, to visualize the distribution of attendance value-added for schools that did or did not use a specific strategy; and we calculated the overlap coefficient, which captures the extent to which two distributions overlap (Inman & Bradley Jr., 1989), to assess whether observed differences were substantively meaningful. In addition to these distributional analyses, we summarized the share of schools that have a strategy in place, how prevalent each strategy is across schools and whether observed patterns reflect widespread or relatively rare practices; and

we present mean value-added differences (and the statistical significance of those differences) for schools that did versus did not use a strategy. A complete set of results from these analyses can be found in Appendices D through H.

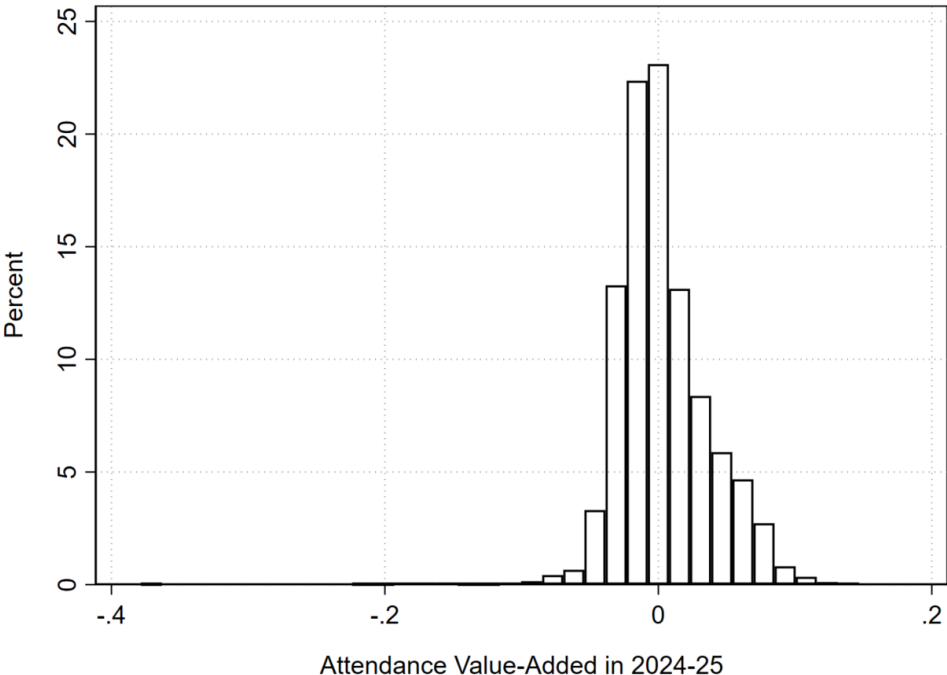
## Findings

Our findings are presented in two parts. First, we present the results of our attendance value-added estimates and describe how value-added scores vary across Michigan schools. Then, we explore the extent to which attendance value-added is associated with specific strategies (e.g., practices, organizational systems, staffing, leadership, district guidance).

### School Attendance Value-Added

Value-added estimates reveal substantial variation in attendance value-added across Michigan schools. For example, if an average student moved from a lower to a higher value-added school, they would be expected to attend approximately seven additional days per year. For the average Michigan student, this would increase their attendance rate from about 91% to 95% (or an increase from 164 to 171 days attended in a typical 180-day school year). Importantly, the value-added estimates are stable over time, indicating that schools are consistent in their contributions to student attendance. While schools serving more low-income students have lower attendance rates overall, they also have higher attendance value-added on average. This juxtaposition highlights a key distinction between the conditions that schools face and the contributions they make; and it reinforces the point that while school-based efforts can have an impact (and school-level effects are persistent), broader structural factors continue to shape attendance outcomes.

FIGURE 1: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED IN MICHIGAN 2024-25

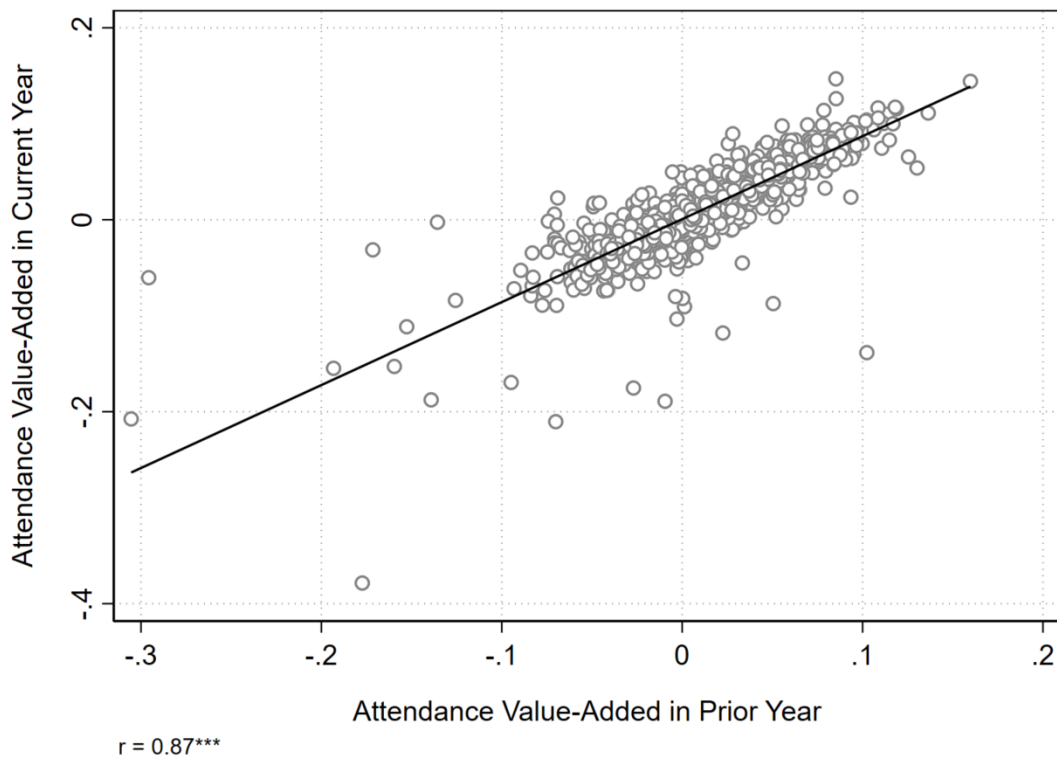


## Meaningful Variation in Attendance Value-Added Across Schools

Attendance value-added scores varied meaningfully across Michigan schools. The average school in Michigan had an attendance value-added score of 0, meaning that the average student would not be expected to attend any more or fewer days if they attended that school instead of their current school. However, many schools had value-added scores above 0, meaning that the average student would be expected to be present more often if attending that school; and many had value-added scores below 0, meaning that the average student would be expected to be absent more often if attending that school (Figure 1).

These differences in attendance value-added are substantively meaningful. The standard deviation in value-added for the 2024-25 school year is about 0.03, or a 3pp change in attendance rates, which translates to about 5.5 days in a standard 180-day school year. Schools at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile had a value-added score of about 0.02 (i.e., 2pp higher attendance rates), which is roughly 3.5 additional days attended compared to the average school. Conversely, schools at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile had a value-added score of about -0.02 (i.e., 2pp lower attendance rates), which is roughly 3.5 fewer days attended compared to the average school. In other words, if an average student moved from a lower value-added school (i.e., 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) to a higher value-added school (i.e., 75<sup>th</sup> percentile), they would be expected to attend approximately seven additional days of school.

FIGURE 2: CORRELATION OF SCHOOL VALUE-ADDED MEASURE IN CURRENT AND PRIOR YEAR



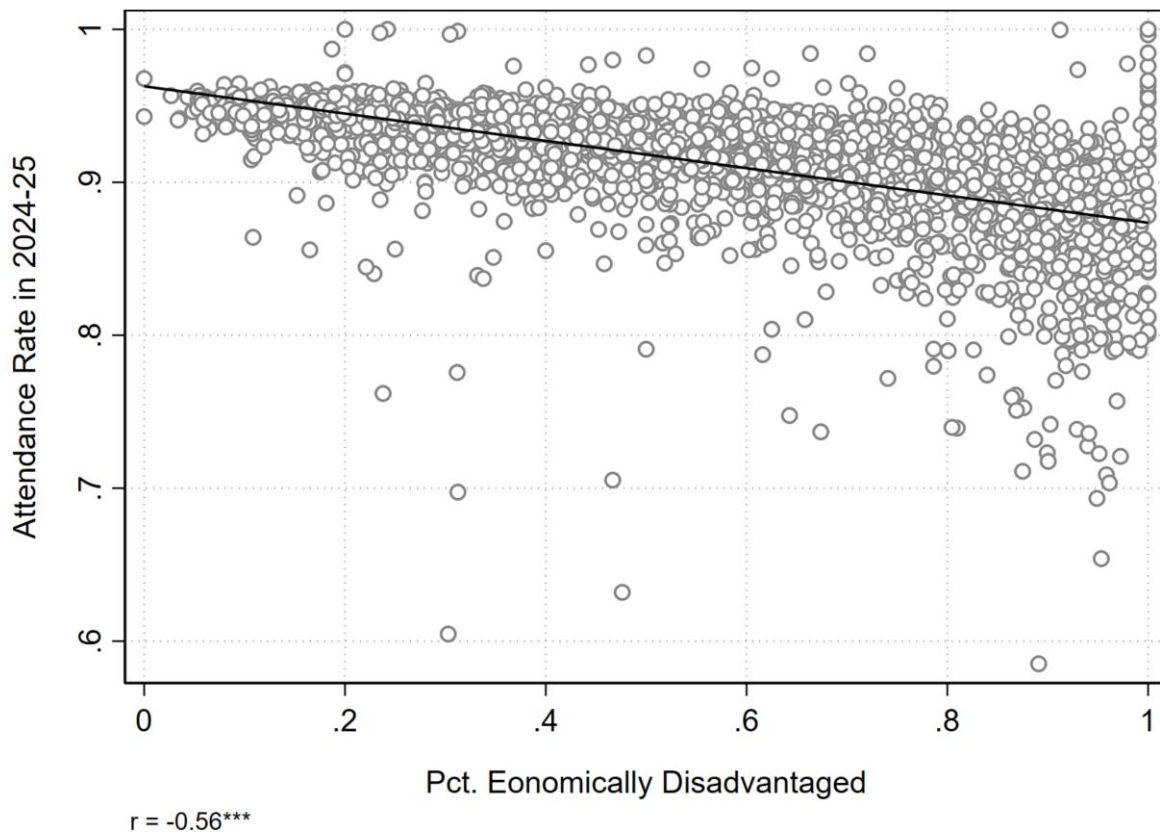
### Stability of the Attendance Value-Added Measure Over Time

Notably, school-level estimates of attendance value-added are strongly correlated over time, suggesting that schools have been relatively consistent during the post-pandemic period in their impact on student attendance. The strong correlation between a school's value-added score in the current year (t) and the prior school year (t-1) is 0.87 ( $p < 0.001$ ), meaning that schools that are more (or less) effective at supporting student attendance in one year tend to remain so in the following year, with only modest year-to-year fluctuation. With the exception of a small number of outliers, schools' value-added scores remain highly consistent across years, suggesting that the measure reflects stable, school-level differences rather than short-term fluctuations (Figure 2).

### Relationship with School Economic Disadvantage

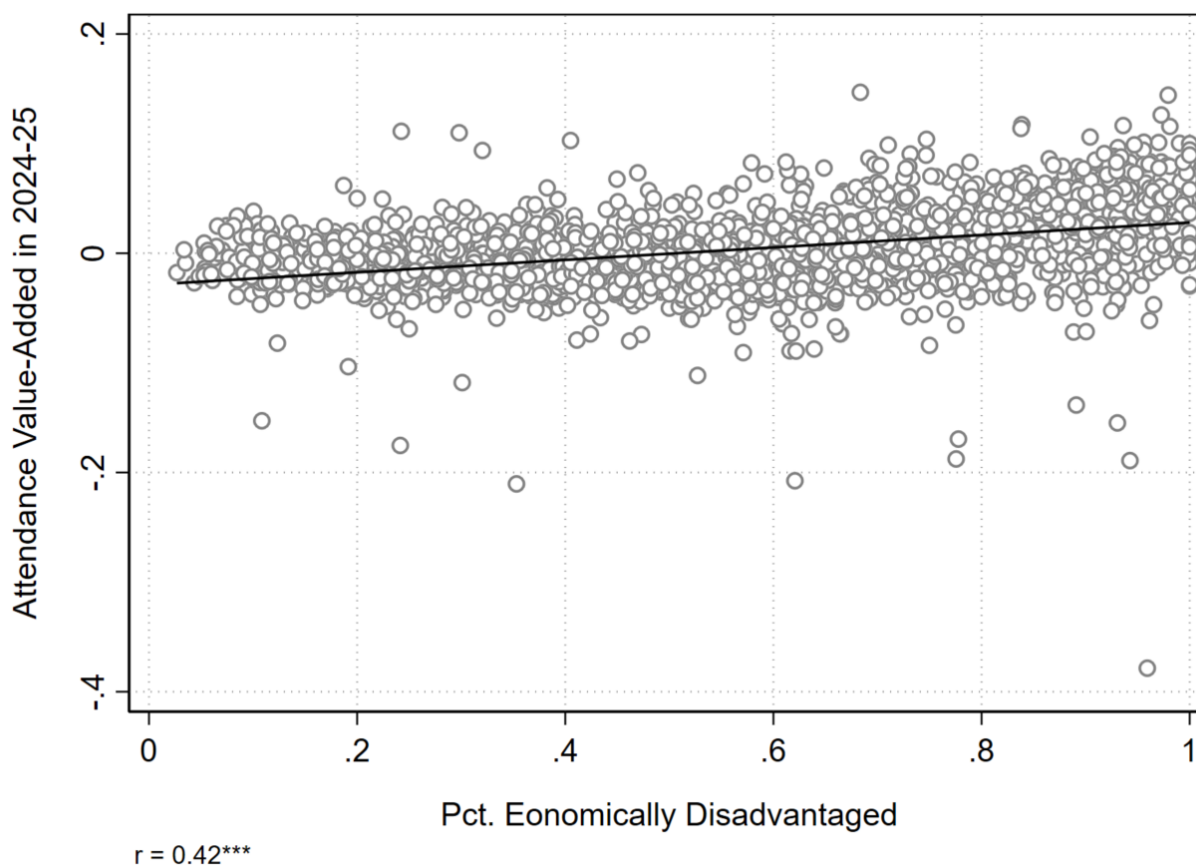
To better understand how these differences relate to broader patterns of inequality, we next examined the relationship between school attendance outcomes and economic disadvantage. There is a strong relationship between attendance and economic disadvantage: low-income students are more likely to be chronically absent (Singer et al., 2021), and schools with more low-income students have lower attendance rates and higher absenteeism rates (Singer, 2024). Figure 3 shows this correlation between school economic disadvantage and school attendance for the 2024-25 school year ( $r = -0.56$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

FIGURE 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATE AND ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE



Notably, however, a different pattern emerges when examining attendance value-added. Schools serving higher shares of economically disadvantaged students tend to have higher value-added scores—the opposite of the relationship observed for raw attendance rates. Figure 4 shows this moderate positive correlation between economic disadvantage and attendance value-added ( $r = 0.42, p < 0.001$ ).

FIGURE 4: CORRELATION BETWEEN SCHOOL VALUE-ADDED MEASURE AND ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE



Taken together, these findings highlight a critical distinction between the conditions that schools face and the contributions they make. Schools serving more economically disadvantaged students have lower attendance rates overall, but many also appear to be more effectively supporting student attendance than the average Michigan school. In other words, students in higher-poverty schools would likely have missed even more school in the absence of their schools' efforts. It is also possible that these findings reflect heterogeneity in school effects on attendance, with school-based efforts yielding larger marginal gains for economically disadvantaged students or students in higher-poverty contexts, even as broader structural barriers lead to higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

## Attendance Strategies Associated with Attendance Value-Added

Across the wide range of attendance strategies examined, there is substantial overlap in the distribution of attendance value-added between schools that do and do not adopt a given strategy. In most cases, differences in attendance strategies do not reveal large differences in the overall distribution of value-added. These relatively modest differences stand in contrast with research on academic outcomes, where a small set of instructional and organizational practices has helped account for a large share of variation in effectiveness (e.g., Bryk et al., 2010; Dobbie & Fryer, 2013). Still, the results do reveal some important patterns. In many cases, differences are not reflected in shifts in the center of the distribution, but rather in the upper tail, where certain strategies (especially those used frequently or with stronger implementation) are associated with a greater likelihood of being among higher value-added schools. These “bumps” at the top of the distribution suggest that while most strategies are not broadly transformative on their own, some may play a role in distinguishing the most effective schools when implemented well.

### School-Based Practices

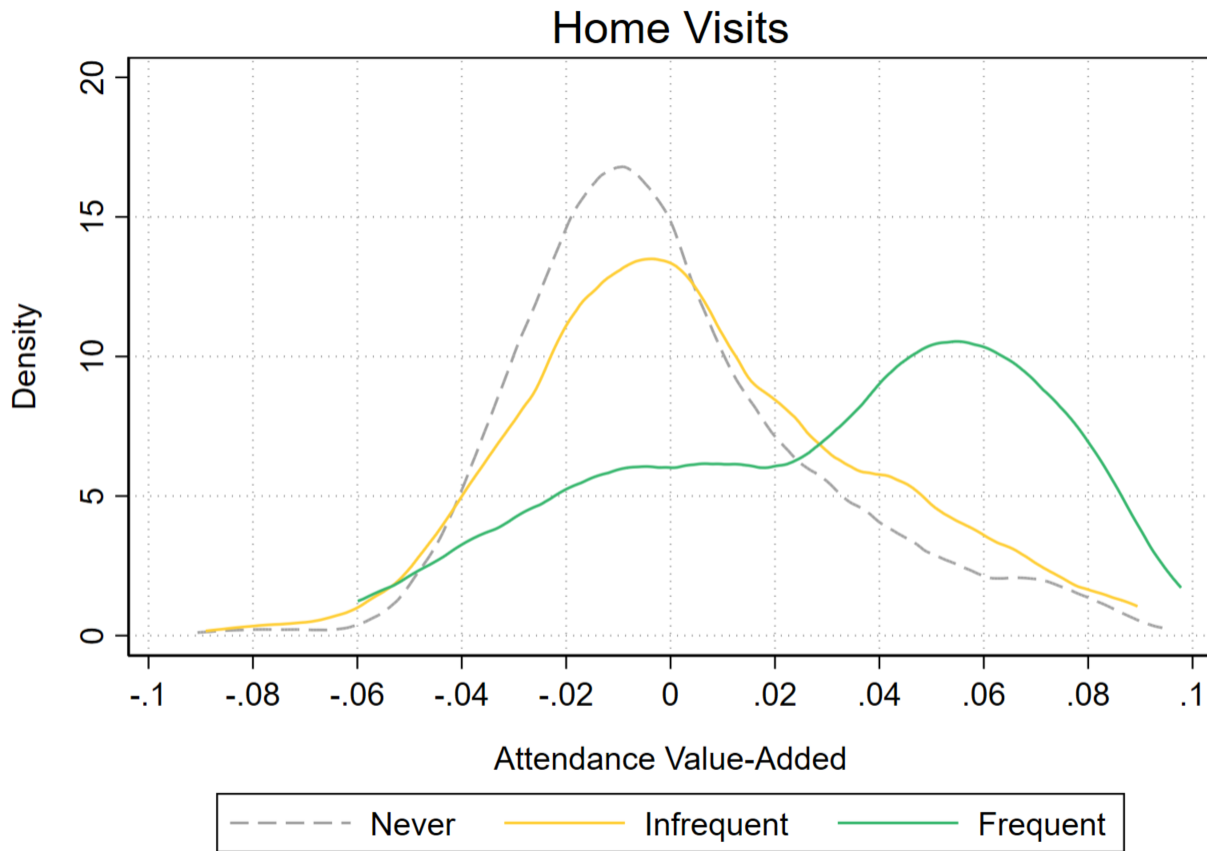
For the most part, higher and lower value-added schools do not differ greatly in the specific practices that they use (Appendix D). Across nearly all practices, the distributions of attendance value-added for schools that did and did not adopt a given strategy largely overlap. Most overlap coefficients exceed 0.90 (i.e., 90% overlap), and kernel density plots show little separation of distributions. This indicates that most strategies, on their own, do not strongly distinguish higher and lower value-added schools. While some practices are associated with statistically significant differences in mean value-added, these differences are generally small in magnitude and occur within largely overlapping distributions. Further, practices where there is less overlap (i.e., more differentiation) tend to be relatively rare, meaning that they are unlikely to greatly explain differences in attendance value-added. These findings suggest that most individual practices, on their own, do not strongly distinguish higher from lower value-added schools. Still, even with this modest relationship between specific attendance practices and attendance value-added, there are some notable findings. For several strategies, differences were not reflected in large shifts in the overall distribution but instead appeared as modest increases in the upper end, with schools using these practices more intensively somewhat more likely to be among higher value-added schools. By contrast, infrequent use of these same practices generally showed little differentiation from non-use. This was especially the case for practices that involved deep and responsive family engagement (e.g., home visits).

#### *Frequent Home Visits and Family Engagement*

Perhaps the starkest finding is that schools conducting frequent home visits are much more likely to have high attendance value-added (Figure 5). Only a small share of schools (5%) reported that they conduct home visits frequently (i.e., daily or weekly). Still, these schools have higher value-added scores on average and much lower overlap with schools that do not use home visits. These findings align with prior studies showing that home visits are effective for reducing absenteeism (Brunner & Ross, 2024; Stemler et al., 2022). Notably, schools that

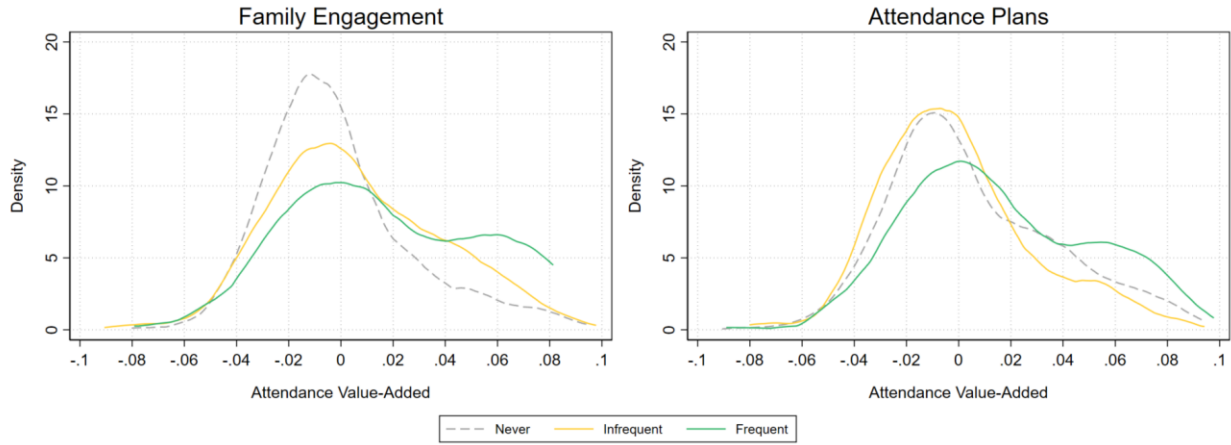
conduct infrequent (i.e., monthly or yearly) home visits are not meaningfully differentiated from those that do not conduct home visits, suggesting that frequency is an important component. Differences in frequency may also represent differences in the nature of those home visits (e.g., supportive and solutions-oriented rather than compliance-oriented or punitive).

FIGURE 5: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF HOME VISITS



The findings on home visits are partly corroborated by similar findings related to family engagement initiatives to strengthen school-family relationships and helping families make an attendance plan for their children. Again, only a relatively small number of schools reported frequently using family engagement strategies (8%) or making attendance plans (17%). Still, it is notable that schools that do so have higher value-added on average and less overlap than most other practices, especially for family engagement (Figure 6). Schools that use family engagement initiatives infrequently also tend to have slightly higher value-added than those that never use them, while schools that help families make a plan infrequently had slightly lower value-added, though these differences are smaller and occur within a largely overlapping distribution. Taken together, these findings highlight the potential effectiveness of deep outreach and engagement with students and their families.

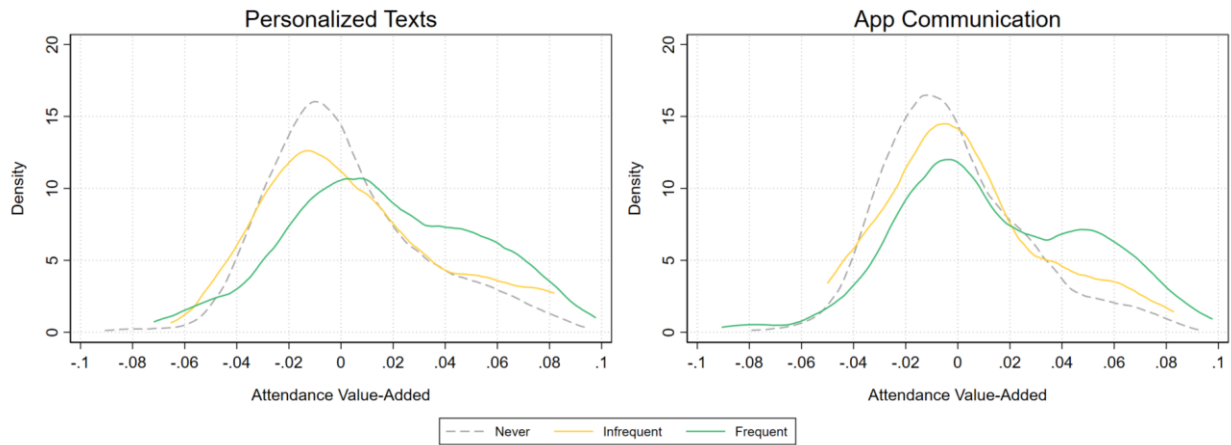
FIGURE 6: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND ATTENDANCE PLANNING PRACTICES



*Personalized Text Messages, Apps, and Other Forms of Communication*

For most forms of communication (e.g., phone calls, letters home, automated text messages), there was a high degree of overlap in the distribution of value-added for schools that did and did not use each practice. Two forms of communication, however, had higher average value-added and notably lower overlap than other practices when used frequently: personalized text messages to families about their children’s attendance and sending messages through an app to families about their children’s attendance (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES



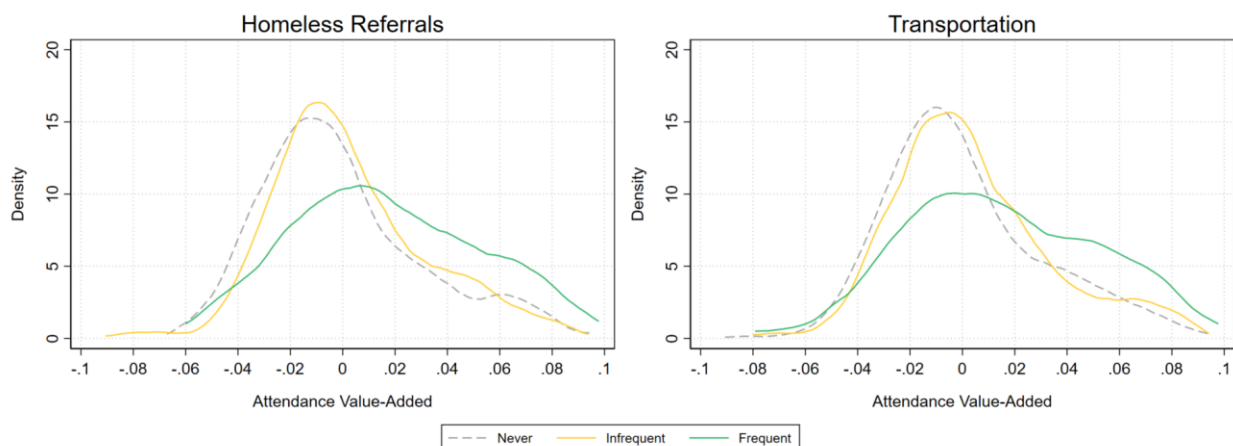
Compared to other communication-based practices, the use of personalized text messages and app-based communication are distinct in that they are more responsive or tailored to individual families and likely require specific organizational and technological infrastructure to support implementation. Other studies have shown that these forms of tailored messaging can positively impact attendance (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). In both cases, it is the frequent use of these strategies (as opposed to infrequent) that appears more

strongly associated with higher attendance value-added. This may reflect not only how often schools are using both practices, but also the specific way they are used (e.g., the type and content of messages, degree of responsiveness and personalization, consistency of outreach).

#### *Homeless Referrals, Transportation, and Other Efforts to Address Out-of-School Barriers*

For practices related to addressing out-of-school barriers, frequent use was in many cases associated with higher attendance value-added. Again, there was still substantial overlap in value-added scores for schools that did not use these practices and those that used them infrequently, even when there was a slightly higher average value-added score associated with the practice (e.g., providing clean clothing or uniforms, referring students to the doctor). Two practices that stood out for lower levels of overlap were arranging transportation for chronically absent students and referring students to the school homelessness liaison (Figure 8), both related to common out-of-school barriers to attendance (Edwards, 2022; Erb-Downward & Watt, 2018; Lenhoff et al., 2022). Again, it was relatively uncommon for schools to frequently arrange transportation (11%) and make homelessness referrals (12%), but those schools that reported doing so had somewhat higher value-added on average.

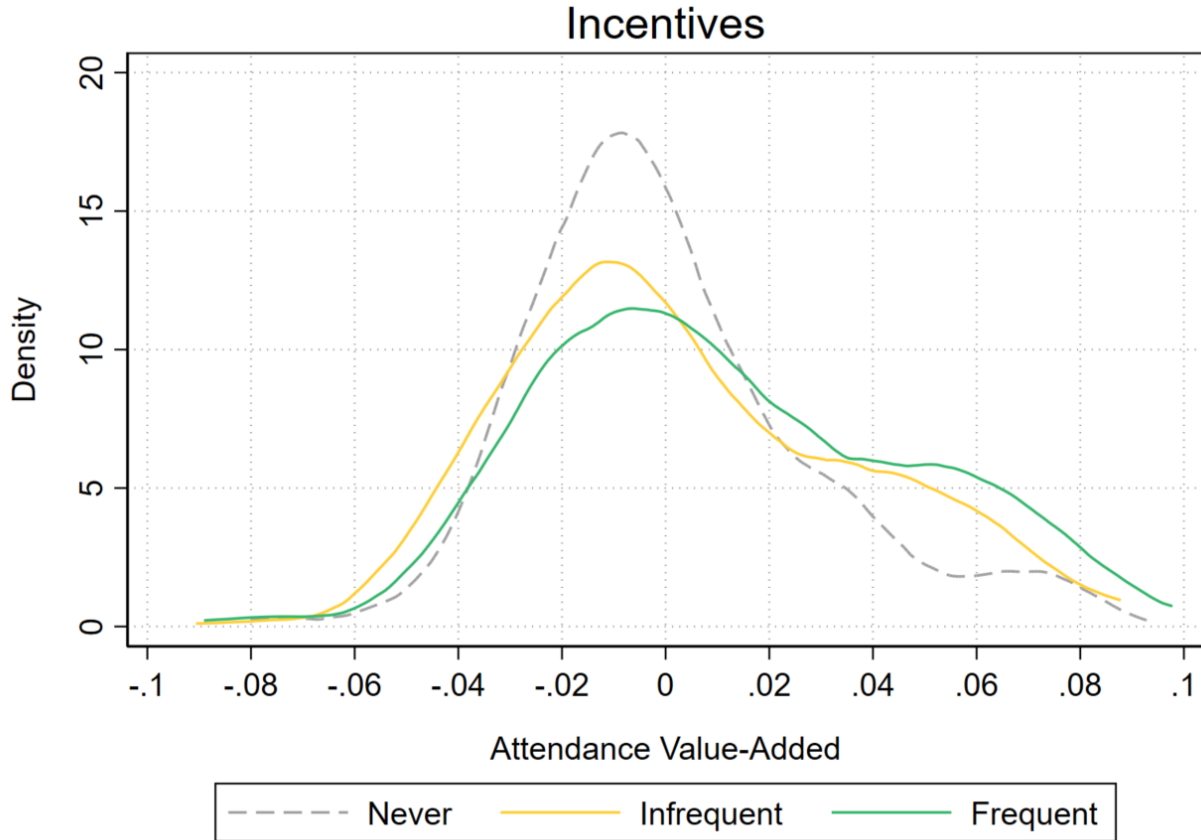
FIGURE 8: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF PRACTICES TO ADDRESS OUT-OF-SCHOOL BARRIERS



#### *Incentives, Court Referrals, and Attendance-Based Retention*

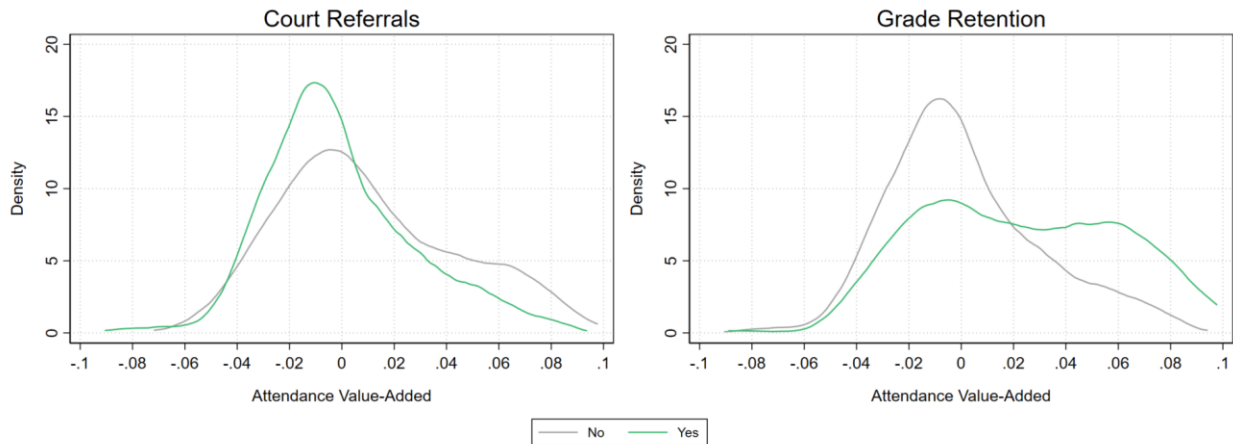
School-based incentives for attendance are a common strategy aimed at positively motivating students, though there is limited evidence on their effectiveness (Balu & Ehrlich, 2018). Our findings do show that schools that use incentives, especially frequently (i.e., daily or weekly), do have somewhat higher value-added scores on average than those that do not use incentives. That said, there is substantial overlap in attendance value-added for schools that do not use incentives, those that use them infrequently, and those that use them frequently (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF ATTENDANCE INCENTIVES



Two other strategies—referring students (or their parents) to court and retaining students (i.e., holding them back) if they miss a certain number of days—are essentially negative (or punitive) rather than positive forms of motivation. Both are infrequent practices (i.e., they usually occur on a yearly basis), though court referrals are much more common across Michigan schools (60%) than attendance-based retention (10%). As with other practices, there is substantial overlap in attendance value-added for schools that do and do not use each practice (Figure 10). Notably, schools that use court referrals have somewhat lower value-added on average than those that do not. These findings align with prior insights on the counterproductive nature of court-based action (Conry & Richards, 2018; McNeely et al., 2019; Weber, 2020). For retention, however, the few schools that do use attendance-based retention have higher value-added on average than those that do not. Since the threat of retention typically does not lead to actual retention, even in the context of legislatively mandated retention requirements (Berne et al., 2026), it is unclear whether actual retention would improve attendance.

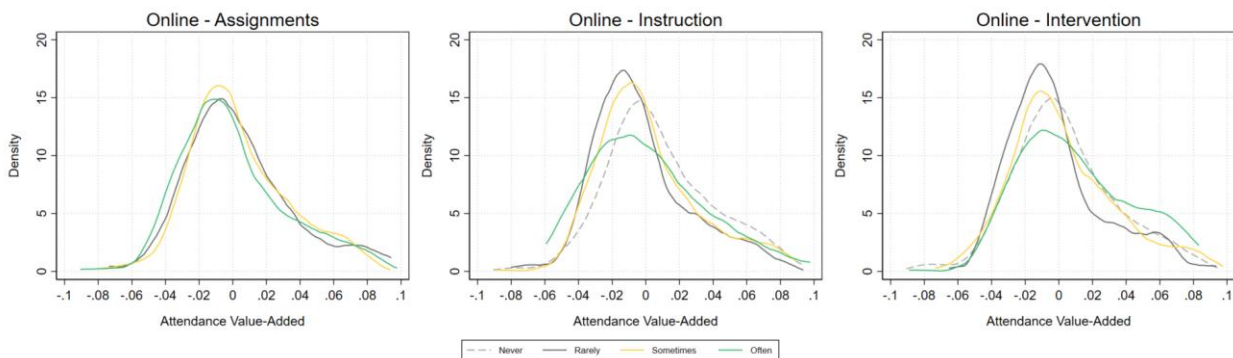
FIGURE 10: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF COURT REFERRALS AND GRADE RETENTION



### Instructional Technology and Flexibility

Finally, we looked at the extent to which a school’s teachers provide assignments, direct instruction, and intervention online; and whether they provide flexibility to students when completing assignments and assessments (Figure 11). These items are meant to capture potentially relevant shifts in instructional practices and expectations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Jacob, 2024; Jacob & Stanojevich, 2024) and which could impact attendance (Bowden et al., 2023; Rapaport et al., 2025). Schools that provide assignments and instruction online (whether rarely, sometimes, or often) have slightly lower value-added scores on average, but there is a very large amount of overlap. Notably, schools that use online intervention frequently have slightly higher value-added scores on average, which could be due to a positive association with tutoring (Lee et al., 2025), but again the level of overlap is high.

FIGURE 11: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY USE OF ONLINE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE



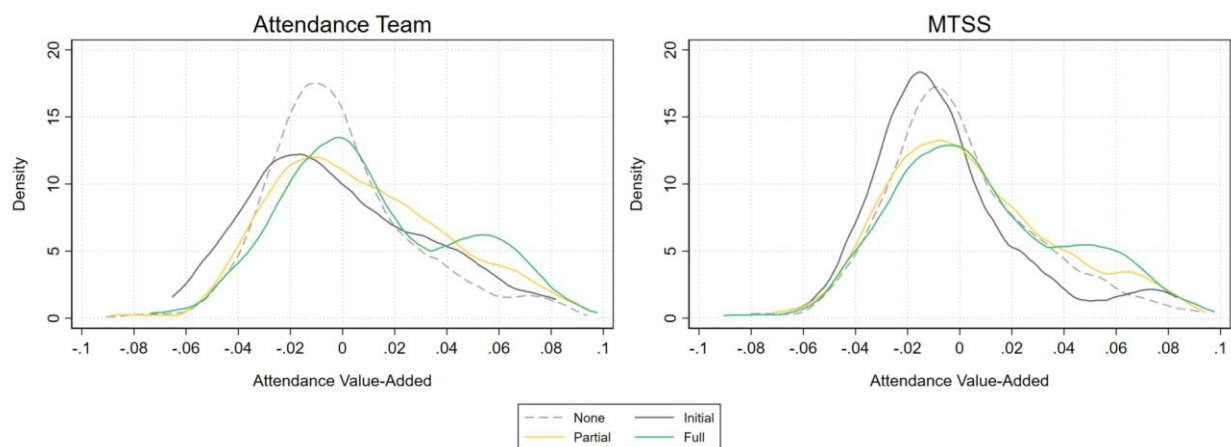
For flexibility on assignments (i.e., allowing students to complete assignments after the deadline) and assessments (i.e., allowing students to retake tests), nearly 100% of principals reported that teachers at their school ever allowed flexibility (even if only rarely), so we compared schools whose teachers rarely offered this sort of flexibility to those who

did so sometimes or often. In these comparisons, we found a high degree of overlap and no significant differences in the value-added scores on average.

### School Organizational Systems

As with specific school-based practices, organizational systems related to attendance did not emerge as a major differentiator between higher and lower value-added schools (Appendix E). Most overlap coefficients exceed 0.90 (ranging from 0.87 to 0.99), indicating that these organizational systems do not strongly distinguish higher and lower value-added schools on their own. Where there are notable differences in the distribution of value-added, they are for schools that report full implementation (rather than initial or partial implementation). Specifically, value-added scores were slightly higher on average for two systems when fully implemented (Figure 12). The first is an attendance team to plan, implement, and monitor school attendance initiatives; and the second is a multi-tiered system of support for attendance. These systems help create formalized, schoolwide infrastructure for identifying and responding to attendance issues (Singer, 2025). Still, it is important to note that even for schools that fully implemented these systems, there is substantial overlap in the distribution of value-added scores with schools at lower levels of implementation and without these systems at all.

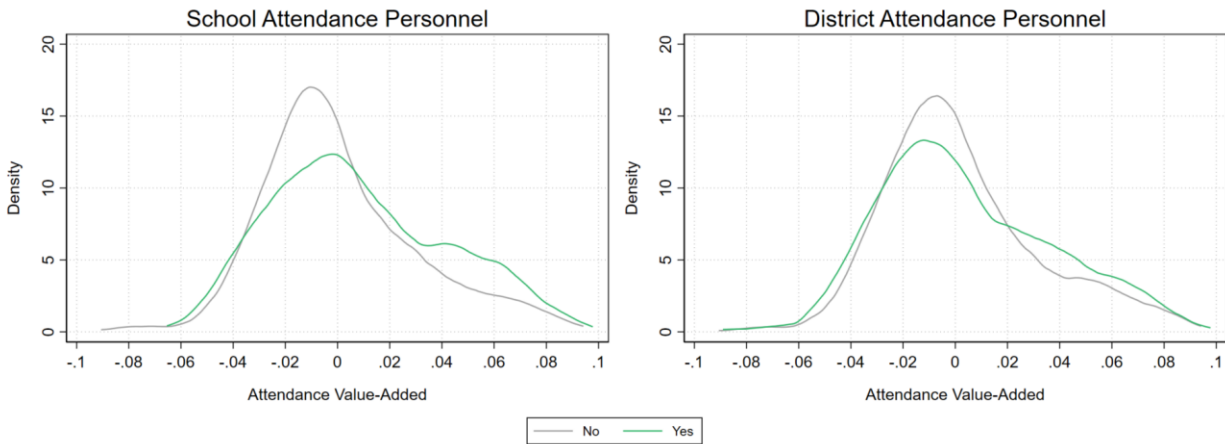
FIGURE 12: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY IMPLEMENTATION OF ATTENDANCE-RELATED SYSTEMS



### School Staffing

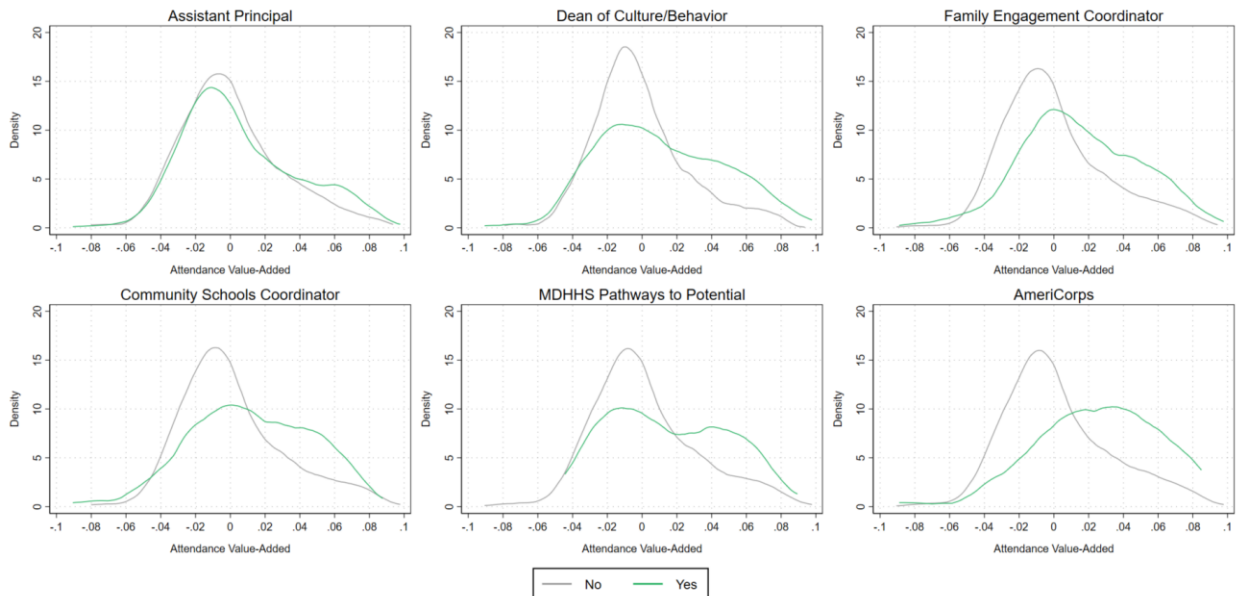
The presence of various school staff positions also did not reveal major differences between higher and lower value-added schools (Appendix F). Where there were positive associations between staff and value-added, they were modest. For attendance-related staff members specifically (Figure 13), schools with school-based attendance personnel (e.g., attendance liaisons) had slightly higher value-added scores on average, though there was substantial overlap with schools without school attendance personnel (0.90). There was no difference in value-added for schools with or without district-based attendance personnel (e.g., district-wide truancy officers).

FIGURE 13: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY PRESENCE OF ATTENDANCE PERSONNEL



Several other staff positions were associated with higher attendance value-added (Figure 14). These positions fall roughly into two categories. The first is school leadership support: assistant principals (41% of schools) and deans of students (33%). The second is a less common set of positions which focus on providing students and families with social, academic, and economic support: family outreach coordinators (17%), community schools coordinators (13%), MDHHS “Pathways to Potential” success coaches (9%), and AmeriCorps members (3%). Schools with these types of staff, but especially those that provide support to students and families, had higher value-added scores on average (though there was still substantial overlap with schools without each position).

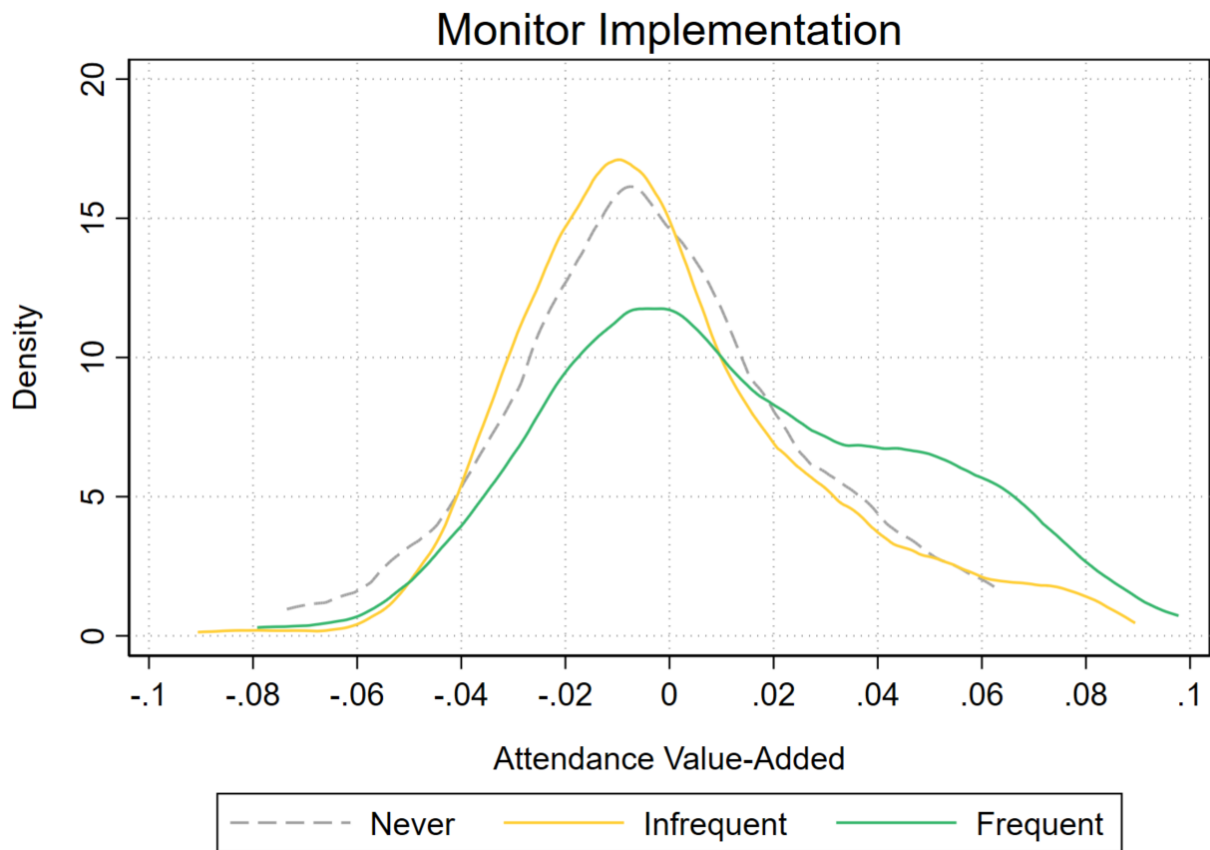
FIGURE 14: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY PRESENCE OF STAFF



## School Leadership

School leader involvement was moderately associated with attendance value-added. As with other factors discussed above, there was significant overlap in value-added scores for schools that did and did not use the school leadership activities we included in our survey (Appendix G). Of those, monitoring the implementation of attendance initiatives had the clearest positive association with value-added. Specifically, school leaders who reported monitoring attendance initiatives frequently (as opposed to infrequently or never) had higher school value-added for attendance on average (Figure 15). Schools where principals frequently participated in attendance team meetings also had higher value-added on average, but this is partly explained by the association between attendance team implementation and value-added, as school leaders' involvement is conditional on the team being in place.

FIGURE 15: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY



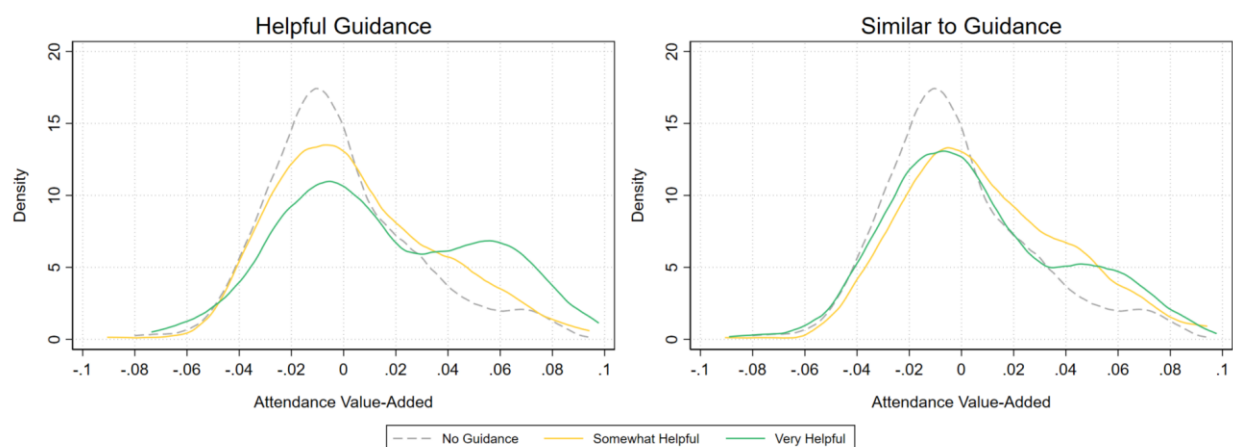
A composite measure of school leadership activity (including data review, implementation monitoring, and communicating with families) was positively correlated with attendance value-added ( $r = 0.20, p < 0.001$ ), underscoring the positive but modest relationship between school leader engagement in attendance and value-added. In addition, schools

where the principal listed attendance as one of their top three priorities had slightly higher value-added on average, though again there was a very large degree of overlap (0.91).

## District Guidance

Finally, whether or not a school received guidance from their district on specific strategies to improve attendance was modestly associated with attendance value-added (Appendix H). Again, there was significant overlap in value-added scores (Figure 16). Still, schools that received guidance had higher attendance value-added on average. This was particularly true when principals described that guidance as very helpful, as opposed to somewhat helpful or not helpful. Schools with somewhat helpful guidance had small differences and greater overlap (0.92) with schools receiving no guidance, whereas schools with very helpful guidance had larger differences and less overlap (0.81). Schools where principals reported that their attendance strategies were either somewhat similar or very similar to their districts' guidance also had slightly higher value-added on average, though there was greater overlap with "no guidance" schools (0.89-0.90 overlap coefficients) and no substantial difference between them. Taken together, these findings suggest that district guidance may help schools improve their attendance effectiveness, particularly when it is perceived as very helpful and when district guidance aligns with school strategies—though overall differences remain small and distributions largely overlap.

FIGURE 16: ATTENDANCE VALUE-ADDED BY DISTRICT GUIDANCE



## Implications

This report provides new evidence on how school attendance strategies relate to student attendance outcomes in Michigan. Using a value-added approach, we show that schools differ meaningfully and consistently in their contributions to student attendance, even after accounting for differences in student populations and contexts. At the same time, we find that most individual strategies—whether practices, systems, staffing, or leadership activities—do not strongly differentiate higher- and lower-value-added schools on their own. Instead, differences in effectiveness appear to reflect more complex patterns related to how strategies are implemented, how frequently they are used, and how they are combined

within broader school contexts. Taken together, these findings suggest that improving attendance is not a matter of adopting a single “best” practice, but rather of building coherent, well-implemented systems of support that are responsive to students’ needs. They also highlight the limits of school-based efforts alone, particularly in contexts where structural barriers to attendance are most pronounced. Below, we outline three key implications for policy and practice.

## Implementation Matters for Improving Attendance

No single strategy consistently differentiates more effective schools. Across nearly all practices and organizational features examined, there is substantial overlap between higher- and lower-value-added schools. This suggests that the mere presence of a strategy—whether a practice, system, or staff role—is not sufficient to meaningfully improve attendance outcomes.

Instead, variation in attendance value-added likely reflects differences in implementation quality, intensity, and coherence. Schools that report frequent use of certain strategies, more fully implemented systems, or more active leadership involvement tend to have somewhat higher value-added on average. These patterns suggest that how strategies are carried out—how consistently, how intentionally, and how well they are integrated into broader school efforts—may matter more than whether they are adopted at all. This finding aligns with broader research on school improvement, which emphasizes that effective schools are not defined by isolated practices, but by the strength and consistency of their implementation (Bryk et al., 2010). For attendance, this means that building routines, systems, and staff capacity to support ongoing engagement with students and families may be more important than expanding the number of discrete strategies in use.

In addition, these findings highlight the need for focus on a broader set of educational conditions and practices that may impact attendance, rather than focusing exclusively on specific strategies related to attendance. For example, prior researchers have highlighted a strong association between student attendance and school climate—especially the strength of relationship and student safety and belonging (Graham et al., 2026; Hamlin, 2020; Liu, 2022). Similarly, researchers have found that effective teachers can boost student attendance (Gottfried et al., 2022; Jackson, 2018; Liu & Loeb, 2019). Given that our analysis did not show that any single attendance-specific strategy (or set of strategies) clearly differentiated higher and lower value-added schools, schools must also focus on the everyday conditions, relationships and educational experiences that shape whether students feel connected to and supported in school.

## Some Specific Attendance Strategies Stand Out

Although no single strategy differentiated higher and lower value-added schools, our findings point to several potentially promising approaches. Practices that involved deeper and more personalized engagement with students and families—such as home visits, family engagement initiatives, and personalized or app-based communication—were more

common among higher value-added schools when used frequently. These approaches likely reflect a more responsive and relational model of attendance work, in which schools strengthen relationships with students and families, and seek to better understand and address the underlying reasons for student absences.

In addition, some efforts to address out-of-school barriers—such as arranging transportation or connecting students with homelessness supports—are also associated with higher value-added when implemented frequently, though they remain relatively uncommon. There is also more modest evidence that other practices, such as attendance incentives, are associated with higher value-added when used frequently, though these differences are smaller and occur within largely overlapping distributions. While the small number of schools using attendance-based retention have higher value-added on average, it is unclear whether this reflects the effect of retention itself or other underlying differences across these schools. Court referrals, which are more common, are modestly associated with lower value-added on average. In sum, the findings for individual practices are mixed, with modest positive associations for some strategies and little or negative association for most others.

Beyond specific practices, there is also some evidence that broader organizational supports matter. Schools with fully implemented attendance teams and multi-tiered systems of support tend to have somewhat higher value-added, suggesting that formalized structures for identifying, monitoring, and responding to attendance problems may help schools translate concern about absenteeism into more coherent action. Similarly, some staff positions that expand schools' capacity to coordinate supports for students and families—school-based attendance personnel, assistant principals, deans of culture or student behavior, family outreach coordinators, community school coordinators, MDHHS Pathways to Potential staff, and AmeriCorps members—are more common in higher value-added schools.

School leader engagement also appears to matter. Schools where principals are more actively involved in attendance, and especially where they more frequently monitor the implementation of attendance initiatives, have somewhat higher value-added on average. Finally, schools that receive district guidance on attendance strategies also have somewhat higher value-added—especially when that guidance is viewed as very helpful, and to some extent when school strategies and district guidance are better aligned.

These differences are generally modest and occur within largely overlapping distributions, so they do not point to any single organizational feature as a decisive driver of attendance effectiveness. Still, taken together, they suggest that more effective schools may be characterized by greater capacity, coordination, and focus in their attendance efforts. In other words, what may distinguish high value-added schools is not simply whether they adopt a particular strategy, but whether their approach is supported by a stronger organizational infrastructure (e.g., clearer roles, more engaged leadership, adequate staffing and resources, and helpful guidance).

## Schools Can't Solve Chronic Absenteeism Alone

Finally, our findings highlight the importance of considering the broader context in which schools operate. Schools serving higher shares of economically disadvantaged students have lower attendance rates overall, but higher attendance value-added on average. This pattern suggests that while schools in higher-poverty contexts face greater challenges, many are also working effectively to mitigate those challenges. Indeed, these schools tend to have more strategies in place: more practices, more systems, more staff, and more intensive engagement with students and families. This “bundled” response likely reflects both greater need and greater effort and may help explain why value-added is higher on average in these contexts.

Still, even with these efforts, attendance outcomes remain lower in higher-poverty schools, underscoring the limits of school-based strategies alone. These findings reinforce the argument that substantially reducing chronic absenteeism, especially in high-absenteeism contexts, will require more than just school-based solutions (Lenhoff & Singer, 2025). Schools can and must develop strategies to improve attendance, and in fact many are working effectively to mitigate absenteeism. Yet, they are doing so within broader social and economic conditions that continue to shape students' ability to attend school regularly. The fact that attendance rates remain lower in higher-poverty contexts, despite higher average value-added to attendance, underscores that even strong school-based efforts are not sufficient on their own. Addressing chronic absenteeism therefore requires not only improving school practices, but also confronting the out-of-school barriers that schools cannot solve alone (e.g., transportation, healthcare, housing, and economic instability).

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## Appendix A: Summary Statistics for Students by School Switch Status

Table A1: Summary Statistics for Students by School Switch Status

Variable	No School Switch (N=2,706,399)	Structural Move (i.e., School Transition) (N=562,775)	Non-Structural Move (i.e., School Mobility) (N=395,065)
Attendance Rate	0.91 (0.11)	0.91 (0.10)	0.86 (0.17)
Chronically Absent	0.27 (0.44)	0.26 (0.44)	0.45 (0.50)
Lagged Math Score (Standardized)	0.04 (0.99)	0.08 (0.99)	-0.43 (0.97)
Lagged ELA Score (Standardized)	0.04 (0.99)	0.08 (0.99)	-0.39 (0.97)
White	0.65	0.67	0.47
African American	0.16	0.15	0.34
Native American/American Indian	0.01	0.00	0.01
Asian	0.04	0.03	0.03
Hispanic/Latino	0.09	0.09	0.09
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	0.00	0.00	0.00
Multiracial	0.05	0.05	0.06
Economically Disadvantaged	0.52	0.51	0.75
Special Education	0.15	0.14	0.18
English Language Learner	0.07	0.06	0.07
Female	0.49	0.49	0.49
Within-Year School Mobility	0.02	0.03	0.15
Within-Year Residential Mobility	0.04	0.06	0.21
Between-Year Residential Mobility	0.08	0.11	0.31
School Pct. White	0.64 (0.29)	0.67 (0.27)	0.51 (0.33)
School Pct. African American	0.17 (0.26)	0.15 (0.23)	0.30 (0.34)
School Pct. Native American/American Indian	0.01 (0.03)	0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
School Pct. Asian	0.04 (0.08)	0.04 (0.07)	0.03 (0.08)
School Pct. Hispanic/Latino	0.09 (0.12)	0.09 (0.11)	0.09 (0.12)
School Pct. Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
School Pct. Multiracial	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)
School Pct. Economically Disadvantaged	0.53 (0.26)	0.49 (0.24)	0.66 (0.25)

School Pct. Special Education	0.15 (0.08)	0.13 (0.06)	0.16 (0.10)
School Pct. English Language Learner	0.08 (0.14)	0.06 (0.11)	0.07 (0.13)
School Pct. Female	0.49 (0.04)	0.49 (0.03)	0.49 (0.05)
School Stability Rate	0.90 (0.09)	0.93 (0.08)	0.77 (0.19)
School Lagged Math Score (Standardized)	0.00 (0.51)	0.05 (0.46)	-0.29 (0.57)
School Lagged ELA Score (Standardized)	0.01 (0.47)	0.04 (0.42)	-0.26 (0.52)
Alternative School	0.04	0.02	0.19
Charter School	0.10	0.04	0.20
Kindergarten	0.01	0.00	0.03
1st Grade	0.09	0.01	0.09
2nd Grade	0.09	0.02	0.09
3rd Grade	0.09	0.04	0.09
4th Grade	0.09	0.02	0.09
5th Grade	0.08	0.07	0.08
6th Grade	0.04	0.30	0.07
7th Grade	0.08	0.07	0.09
8th Grade	0.10	0.01	0.08
9th Grade	0.02	0.43	0.09
10th Grade	0.10	0.02	0.09
11th Grade	0.10	0.00	0.07
12th Grade	0.11	0.00	0.06

Note: Mean values with standard deviation in parentheses for continuous variables, rounded to two decimal places. Only school switchers are included in value-added models.

## Appendix B: Comparing Value-Added with Different School Switcher Populations

**Table B1: Summary Statistics for Different Value-Added Estimates**

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
VA with all switchers	7,736	0.002	0.035	-0.379	0.160
VA with structural movers only	5,563	0.002	0.027	-0.307	0.164

Note: Observations are unique school-year value-added estimates.

**Table B2: Correlations Between Current and Prior Year Value-Added Estimates**

Current-Year Measure (t)	Prior-Year Measure (t-1)
VA with all switchers	0.86***
VA with structural movers only	0.80***

Note: Table shows correlation between school value-added measure in year t with value-added measure in year t-1. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table B3: Correlation Between Different Value-Added Estimates**

	VA with all switchers	VA with structural movers only
VA with all switchers	1.00	-
VA with structural movers only	0.83***	1.00

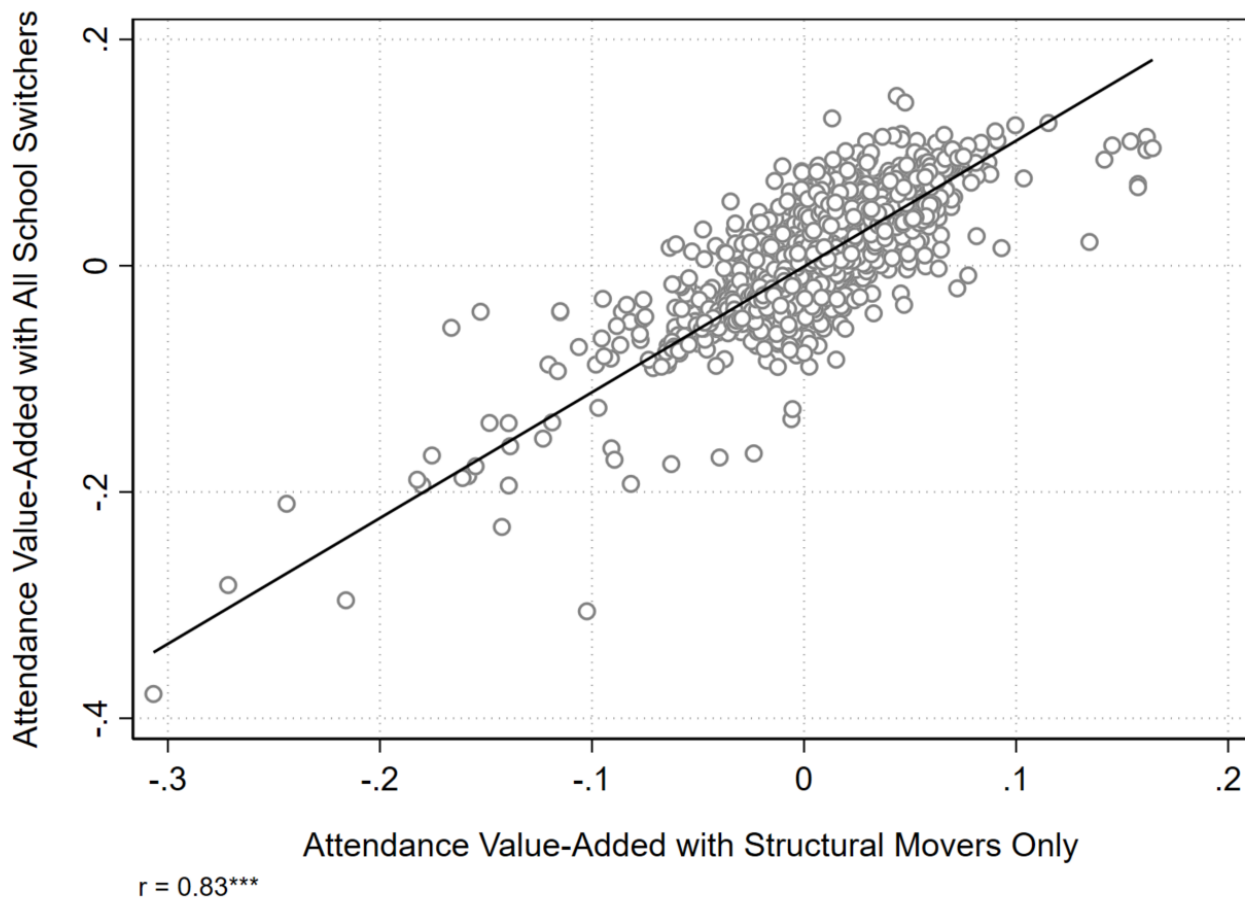
Note: Table shows correlation matrix for school-year value-added measures using different school switcher populations. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table B4: Correlation Between Different Value-Added Estimates and School Characteristics**

	VA with all switchers	VA with structural movers only
Attendance Rate	-0.27***	-0.14***
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	0.36***	0.27***
Pct. Economically Disadvantaged	0.41***	0.30***

Note: Table shows correlation between school-year value-added measures using different school switcher populations and school attendance and economic disadvantaged measures. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Figure B1: Correlation Between Different Value-Added Estimates



Note: Figure shows correlation matrix for school-year value-added measures using different school switcher populations.  
\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

## Appendix C: Attendance Value-Added by Survey Participation Status

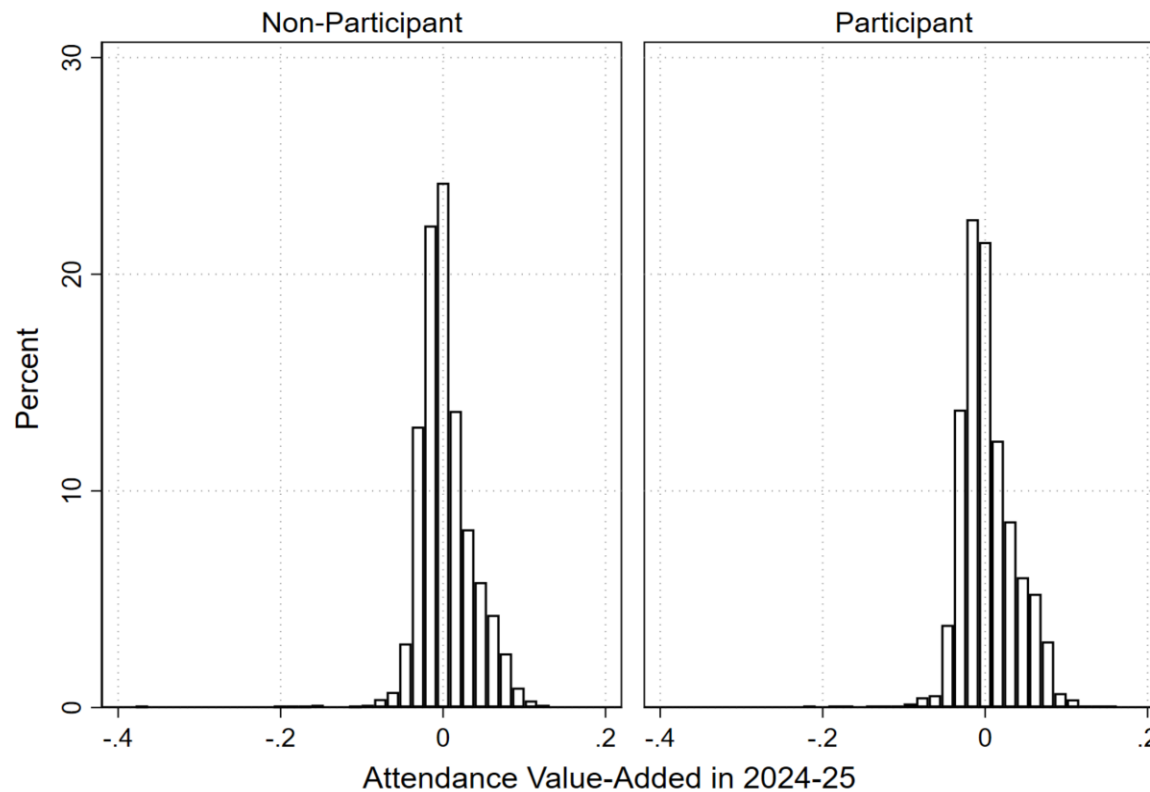
Table C1: Attendance Value-Added for Participating and Non-Participating Schools

	Participant	Non-Participant
Attendance Value-Added	0.0030	0.0027

Note: Table shows mean value-added measure for 2024-25 for schools that were survey participants and non-participants.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Figure C1: Attendance Value-Added for Participating and Non-Participating Schools



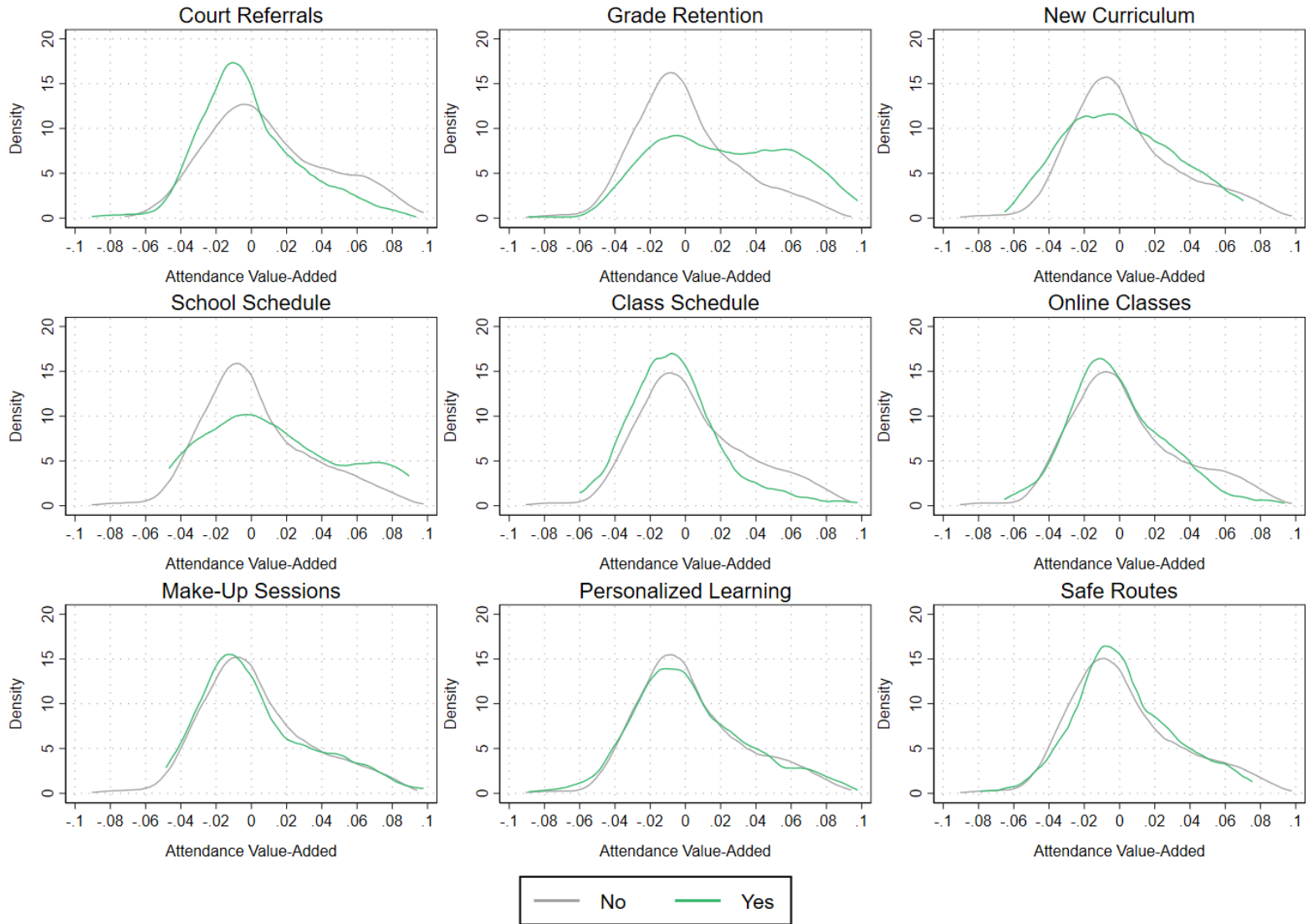
## Appendix D: Attendance Practices and Attendance Value-Added

Table D1: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Binary Practice Variables

Survey Item (Yes or No)	Share of Schools Using Practice	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Referring students who are chronically absent to court.	0.60	0.83	-0.010**
Adopting new curricula that will motivate students who are chronically absent.	0.09	0.94	-0.005
Personalized learning opportunities for students.	0.21	0.98	-0.001
Adjusting the school schedule (e.g., start and end times, school calendar) for all students.	0.04	0.87	0.011
Adjusting individual class schedules for students who are chronically absent.	0.14	0.82	-0.010***
Offering virtual or online learning for students who are chronically absent.	0.18	0.93	-0.006
After-school or weekend sessions for students to “make-up” for absences during the school day.	0.09	0.89	0.000
Retaining students in grade (i.e., holding them back) if they miss a certain number of days.	0.10	0.76	0.021***
Safe Routes to School for children who walk or bike to school.	0.14	0.90	0.000

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools that do or do not use these practices. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported ever using the practice. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools that do or do not use the practice. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools that do or do not use the practice (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure D1: Kernel Density Plots for Binary Practice Variables



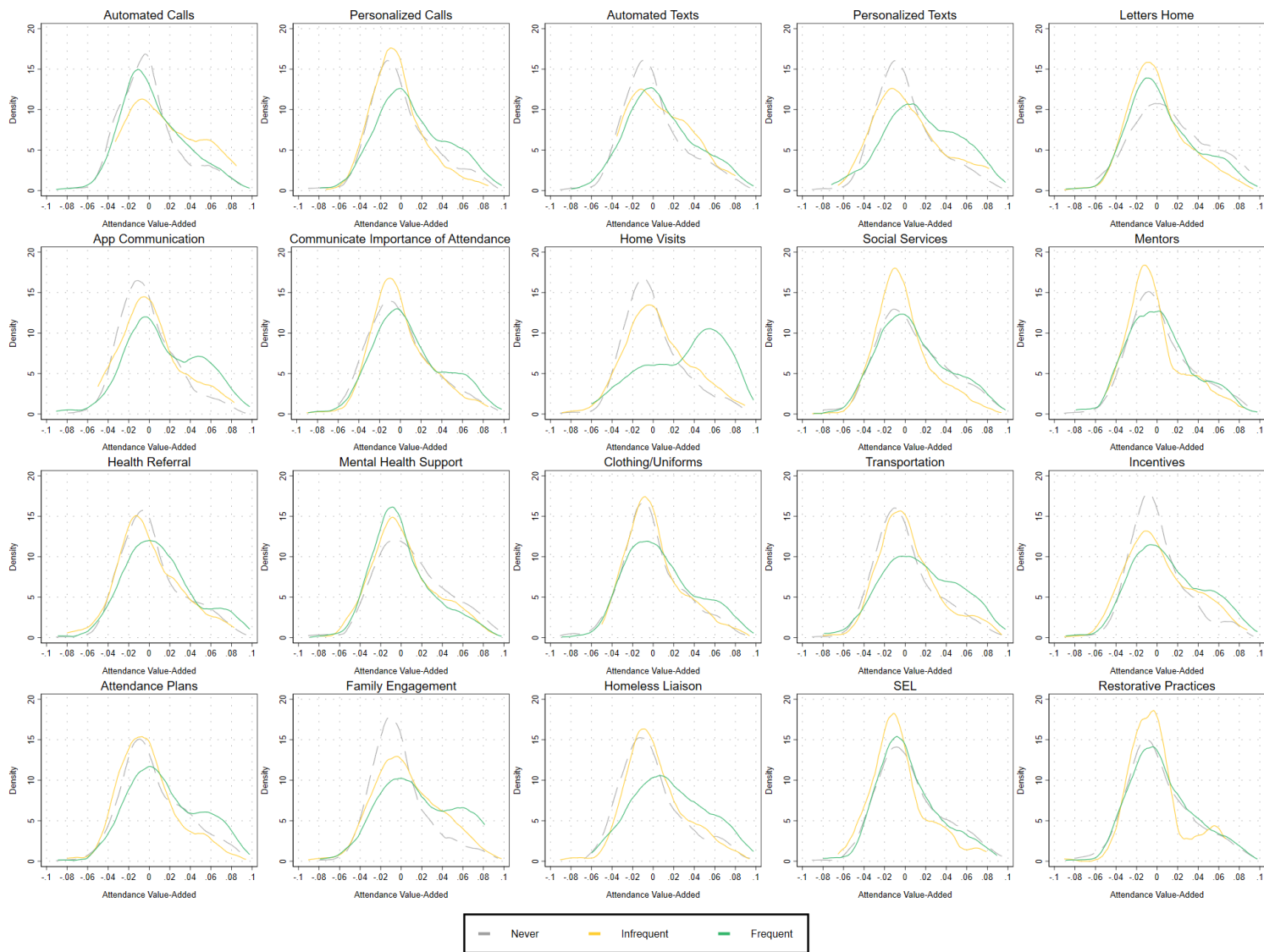
**Table D2: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Frequency Practice Variables**

Survey Item (Frequent, Infrequent, Never)	Share of Schools Using Frequently	<i>Infrequent</i>		<i>Frequent</i>	
		Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Automated phone calls to families (i.e., “robocalls”) about their children’s attendance.	0.61	0.82	0.016*	0.96	0.003
Personalized phone calls to families about their children’s attendance.	0.36	0.92	-0.002	0.89	0.010***
Automated text messages to families about their children’s attendance.	0.22	0.88	0.011	0.90	0.007*
Personalized text messages to families about their children’s attendance.	0.09	0.91	0.006	0.82	0.015***
Letters home to families about their children’s attendance.	0.29	0.74	-0.007	0.79	-0.001
Sending messages through an app to families about their children’s attendance.	0.25	0.93	0.006	0.80	0.017***
Communicating about the importance of good attendance to students/families.	0.31	0.97	-0.002	0.90	0.007
Home visits for students who are chronically absent.	0.05	0.94	0.005	0.66	0.031***
Referring students for social services (e.g., financial support, food/nutritional, childcare).	0.23	0.89	-0.009**	0.97	0.002
Referring students to the doctor for health issues.	0.08	0.97	-0.002	0.87	0.011*
Providing mental health support for students.	0.65	0.87	-0.004	0.85	-0.007
Helping students get clean clothing or uniform donations.	0.37	0.99	0.001	0.89	0.009**
Arranging transportation for students who are students who are chronically absent	0.11	0.95	0.003	0.83	0.011**
Creating attendance incentives to motivate students who are chronically absent.	0.17	0.93	0.004	0.84	0.012***
Helping families make an attendance plan for their children who are chronically absent.	0.09	0.91	-0.005*	0.87	0.012**
Mentors for students who are chronically absent.	0.14	0.90	-0.004	0.95	-0.001
Family engagement initiatives to strengthen school-family relationships.	0.08	0.90	0.008***	0.78	0.019***

Referring students to the school homelessness liaison.	0.12	0.97	0.002	0.80	0.018***
Implementing social-emotional learning.	0.58	0.83	-0.010**	0.94	-0.002
Implementing restorative practices.	0.47	0.85	-0.002	0.94	0.003

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools that use these practices frequently (daily or weekly) and infrequently (monthly or yearly) to those never using the practices. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported ever using the practice. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools that use the practice (frequently or infrequently) compared to those never using the practice. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools that use the practice (frequently or infrequently) compared to those never using the practice ( $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ ).

Figure D2: Kernel Density Plots for Frequency Practice Variables

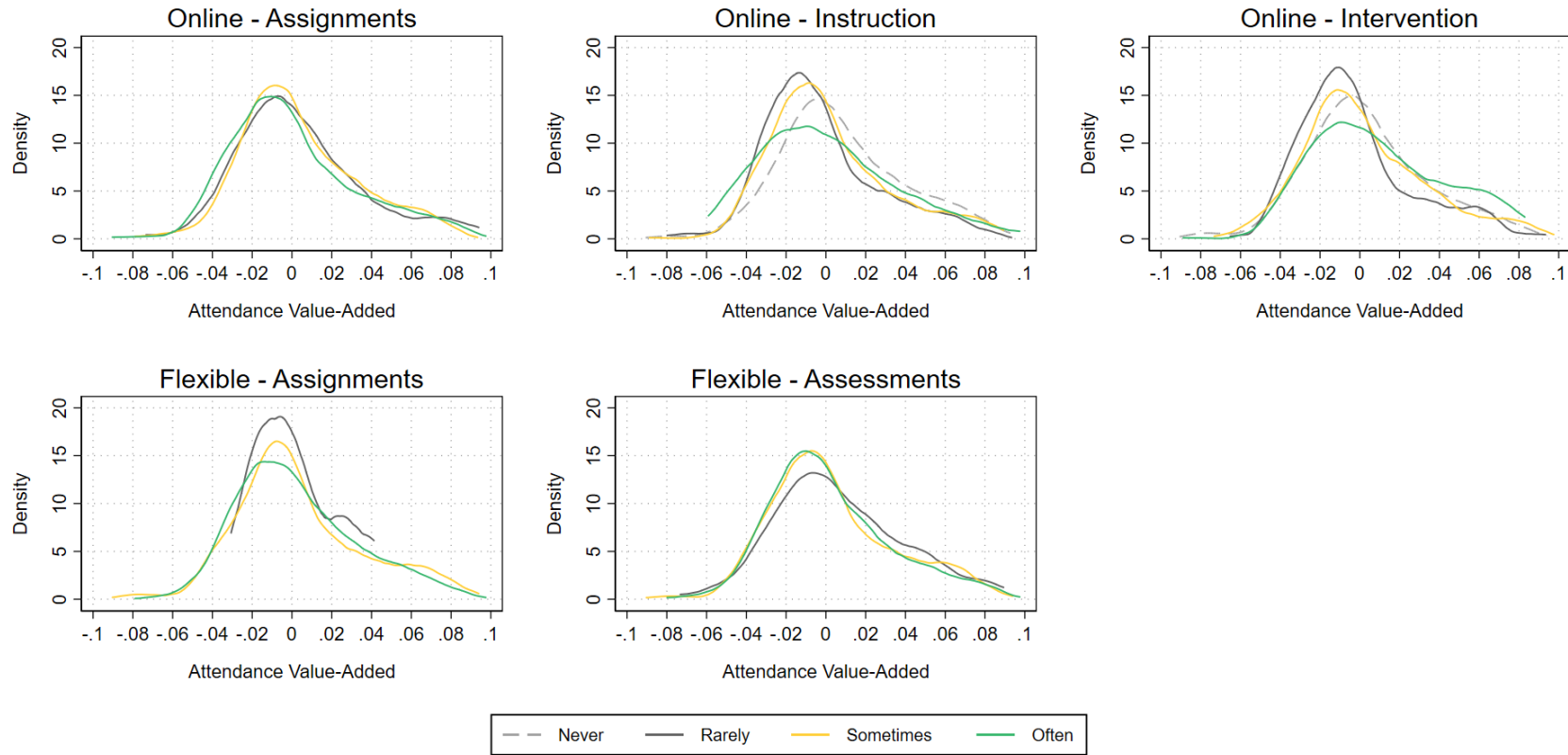


**Table D3: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Instructional Practice Variables**

Survey Item (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often)	Share of Schools Using Practice	Rarely		Sometimes		Often	
		Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Teachers in our school post assignments for students to complete online (e.g., on a class website or in a Learning Management System).	0.90	0.87	-0.010	0.87	-0.010*	0.84	-0.013**
Teachers in our school deliver instruction to students online (e.g., virtual or hybrid teaching, posting recordings of lessons online).	0.58	0.87	-0.011***	0.92	-0.007*	0.86	-0.006
Teachers in our school deliver academic intervention to students online (e.g., tutoring program on the computer).	0.60	0.94	-0.004	0.97	-0.001	0.90	0.008*
Teachers in our school provide flexibility for students to complete assignments after the deadline.	0.99	0.63	-0.014	0.85	-0.013	0.81	-0.013
Teachers in our school provide flexibility for students to retake tests.	0.99	0.65	-0.023**	0.58	-0.030***	0.57	-0.030***

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools that use these practices rarely, sometimes, and often to those never using the practices. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported ever using the practice. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools that use the practice (rarely, sometimes, and often) compared to those never using the practice. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools that use the practice (rarely, sometimes, and often) compared to those never using the practice (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure D3: Kernel Density Plots for Instructional Practice Variables



## Appendix E: Attendance Organizational Systems and Attendance Value-Added

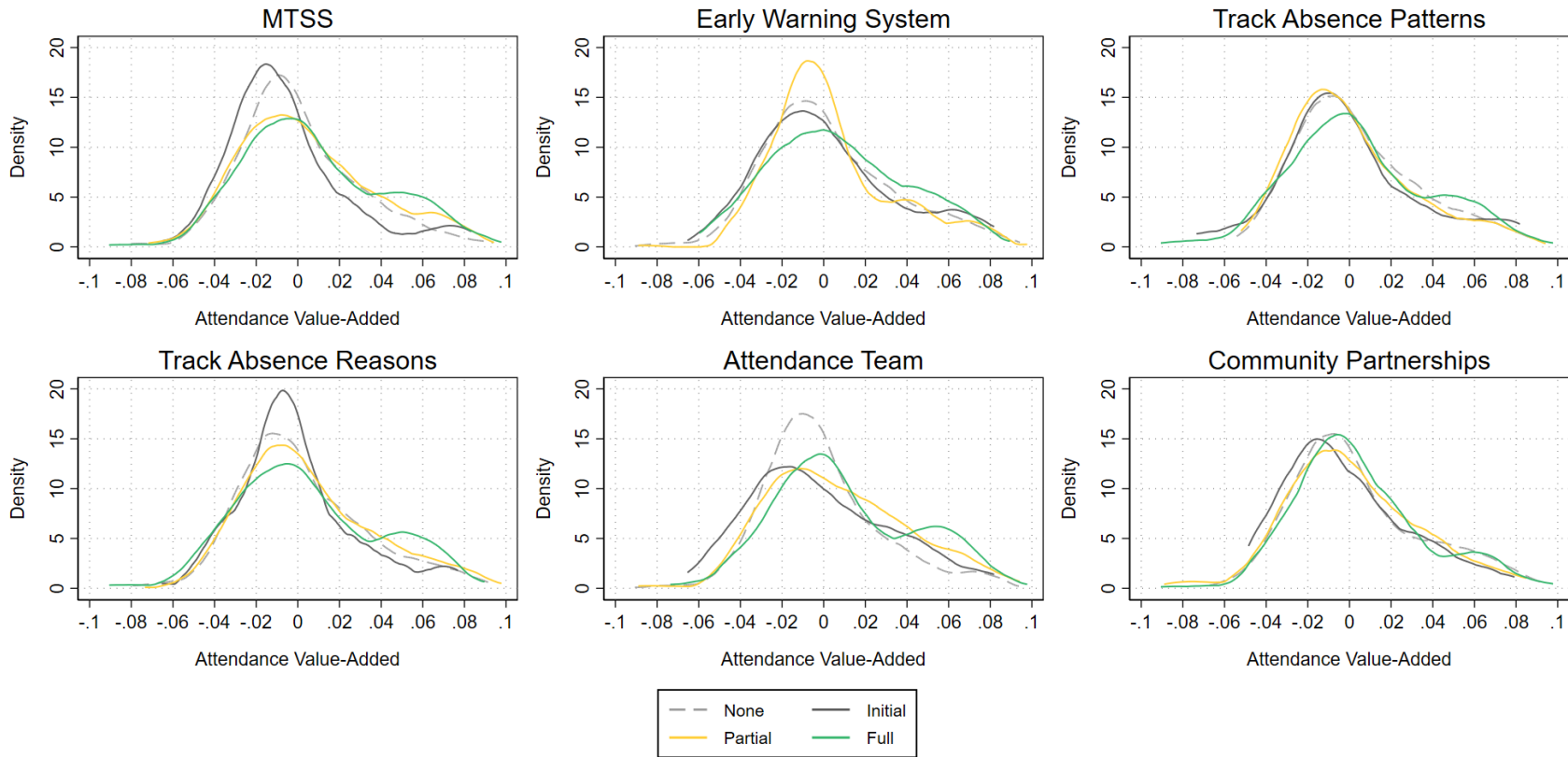
**Table E1: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Organizational System Implementation**

Survey Item (No System; Initial, Partial, or Full Implementation)	Share of Schools at Full Implementation	<i>Initial Implementation</i> Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	<i>Partial Implementation</i> Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	<i>Full Implementation</i> Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for attendance/chronic absenteeism.	0.24	0.96	-0.002	0.94	0.005*	0.89	0.009**
Early warning system to monitor and identify chronically absent students.	0.07	0.98	0.000	0.99	0.001	0.93	0.006
Data system to track and analyze student attendance patterns.	0.25	0.94	-0.002	0.94	-0.004	0.96	0.001
Data system to track and analyze the reasons for student absences.	0.19	0.90	-0.003	0.96	0.003	0.94	0.004
Attendance team that plans, implements, and monitors school attendance initiatives.	0.20	0.99	0.000	0.91	0.007	0.87	0.011*
Community and/or agency partnerships to provide resources to students and their families.	0.19	0.91	-0.008	0.96	-0.003	0.93	0.000

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools that have reached initial, partial, and full implementation for these organizational systems. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported ever using the organizational system. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools that use the organizational system (initial, partial, and full

implementation) compared to those without the system. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools that use the organizational system (initial, partial, and full implementation) compared to those without the system ( $*p<0.05$ ,  $**p<0.01$ ,  $***p<0.001$ ).

Figure E1: Kernel Density Plots for Organizational System Implementation



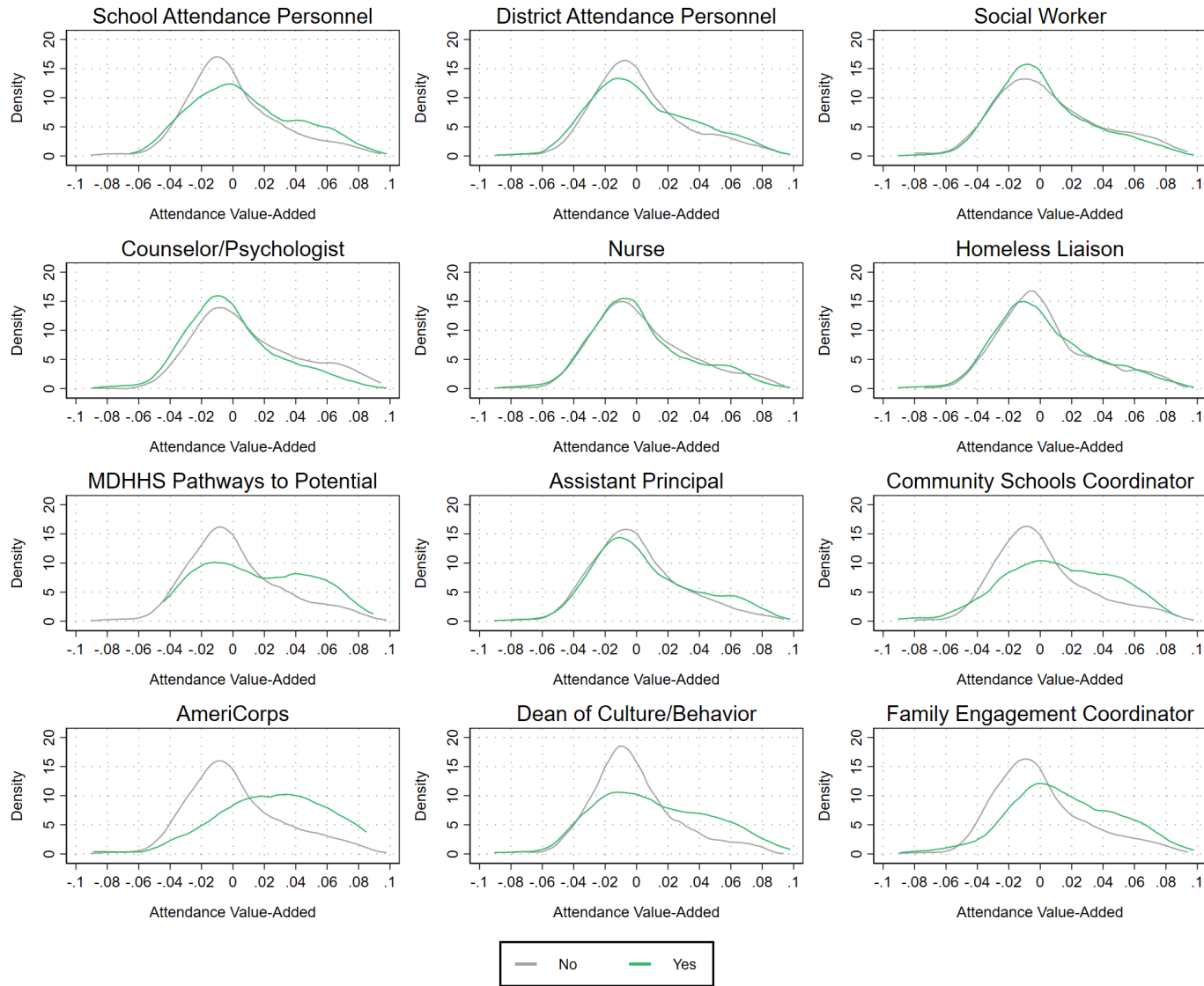
## Appendix F: Staffing and Attendance Value-Added

Table F1: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Staff Positions

Survey Item (Yes or No)	Share of Schools with Staff Position	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
School-based attendance personnel	0.28	0.90	0.009**
District-based attendance personnel	0.33	0.94	0.001
School social worker	0.82	0.92	-0.002
School psychologist/counselor	0.66	0.87	-0.011***
School nurse	0.47	0.98	-0.002
Homeless liaison	0.72	0.96	-0.001
MDHHS pathways to potential	0.09	0.83	0.015*
Assistant principal	0.41	0.92	0.006*
Community school coordinator	0.13	0.86	0.012**
AmeriCorps members (e.g., City Year)	0.03	0.72	0.026***
Dean of culture/student behavior	0.33	0.83	0.013***
Family outreach/engagement coordinator	0.17	0.81	0.016***

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools that do or do not have each staff position. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported having each staff position. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools with and without each staff position. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools with and without each staff position (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure F1: Kernel Density Plots for Staff Positions



## Appendix G: Attendance Leadership and Attendance Value-Added

Table G1: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Attendance Leadership

Survey Item (Frequent, Infrequent, Never)	Share of Schools with Frequent Leadership Activity	<i>Infrequent</i>		<i>Frequent</i>	
		Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Review attendance data.	0.37	0.92	0.006	0.82	0.016
Monitor implementation of attendance initiatives.	0.27	0.93	0.002	0.76	0.016**
Communicate with families and students about attendance.	0.33	0.67	-0.029	0.80	-0.020
Participate in attendance team meetings.	0.13	0.95	0.004	0.81	0.016**
Engage with community and/or agency partners.	0.13	0.95	-0.003	0.96	0.001

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools with school leaders who engage in the following activities frequently (daily or weekly) and infrequently (monthly or yearly) to those never engaged in these activities. The second column shows the total percentage of schools for which principals reported ever participating in these activities. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools with school leaders who engage in the following activities (frequently or infrequently) compared to those who never do. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools with school leaders who engage in the following activities (frequently or infrequently) compared to those who never do. (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure G1: Kernel Density Plots for Attendance Leadership

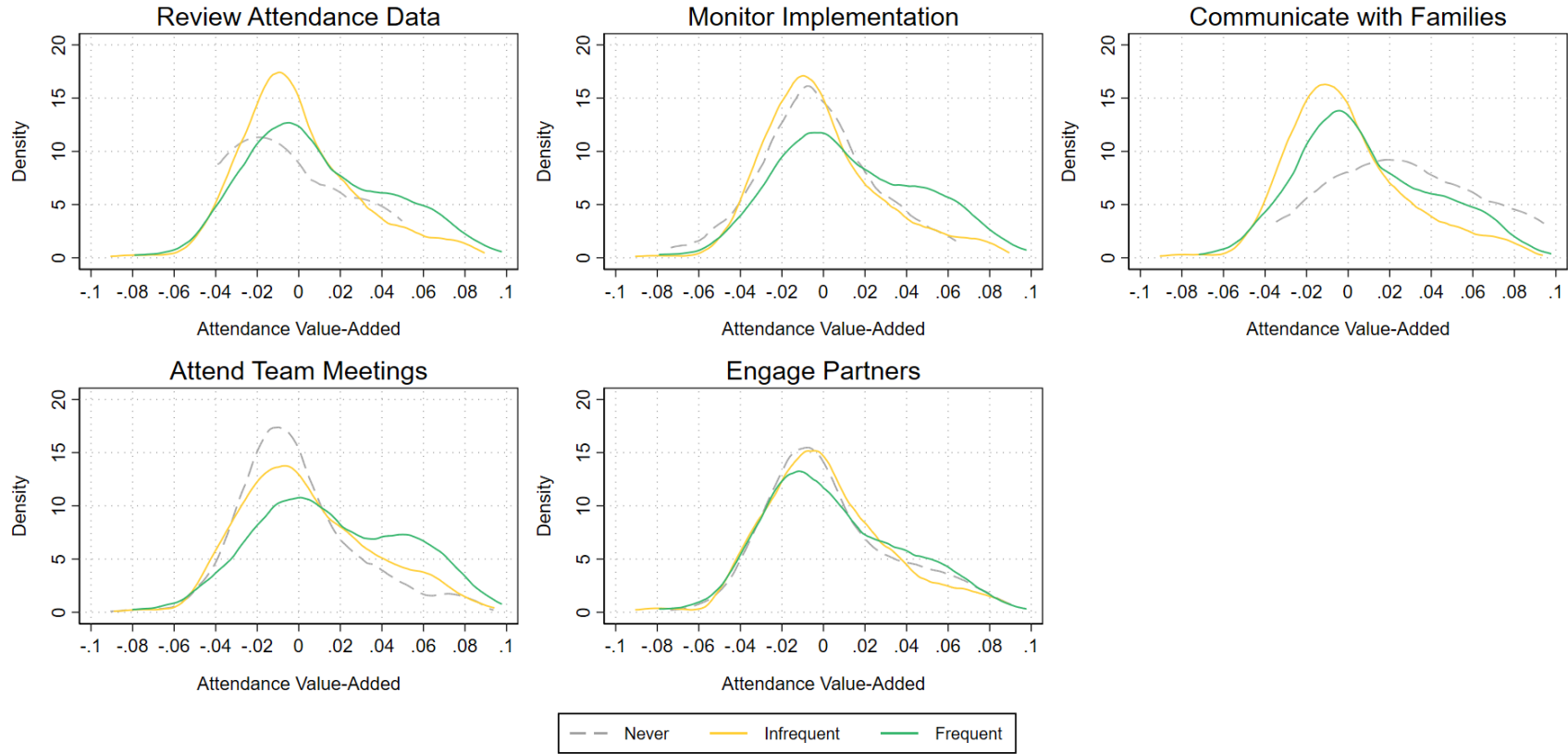
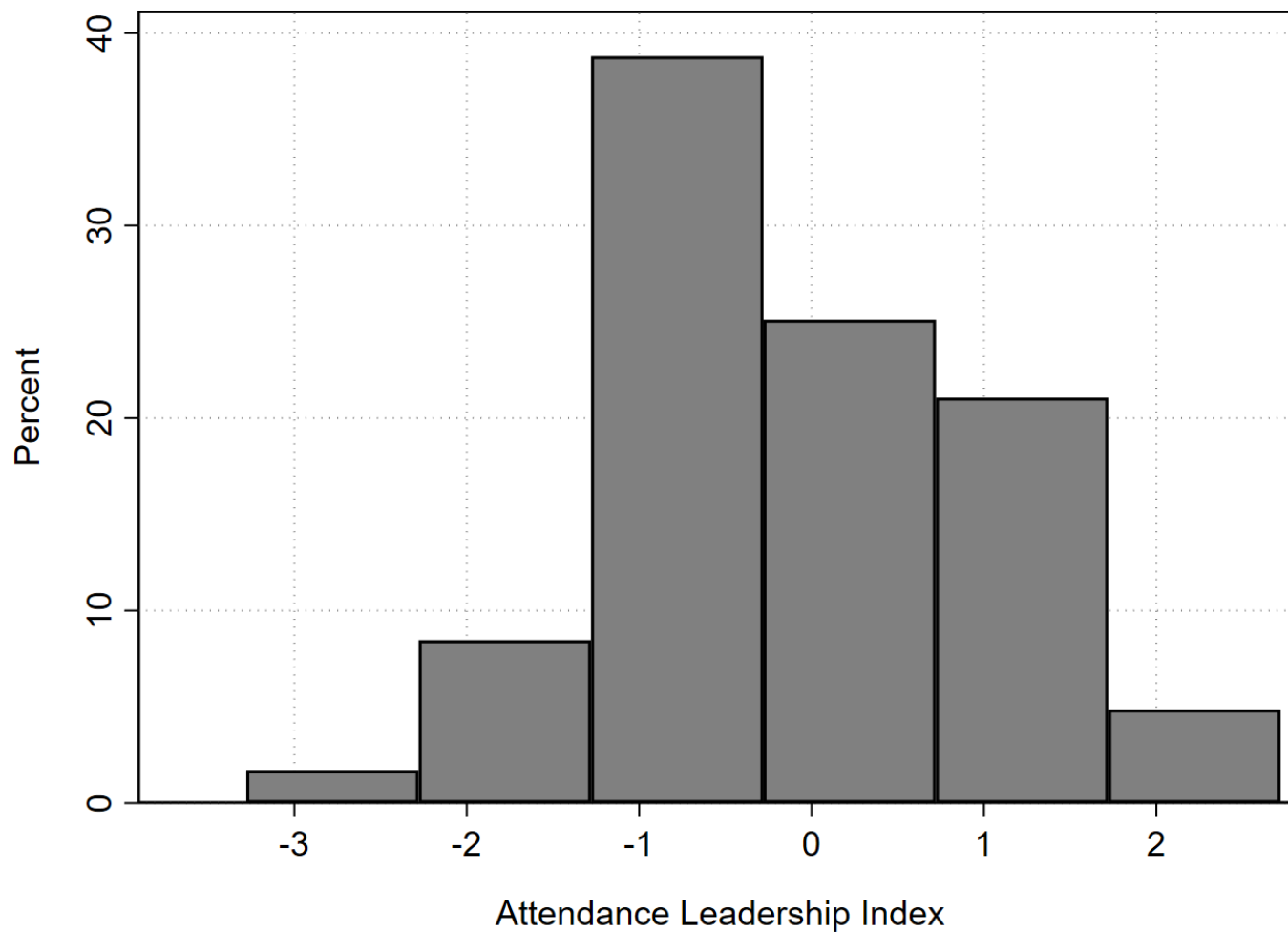
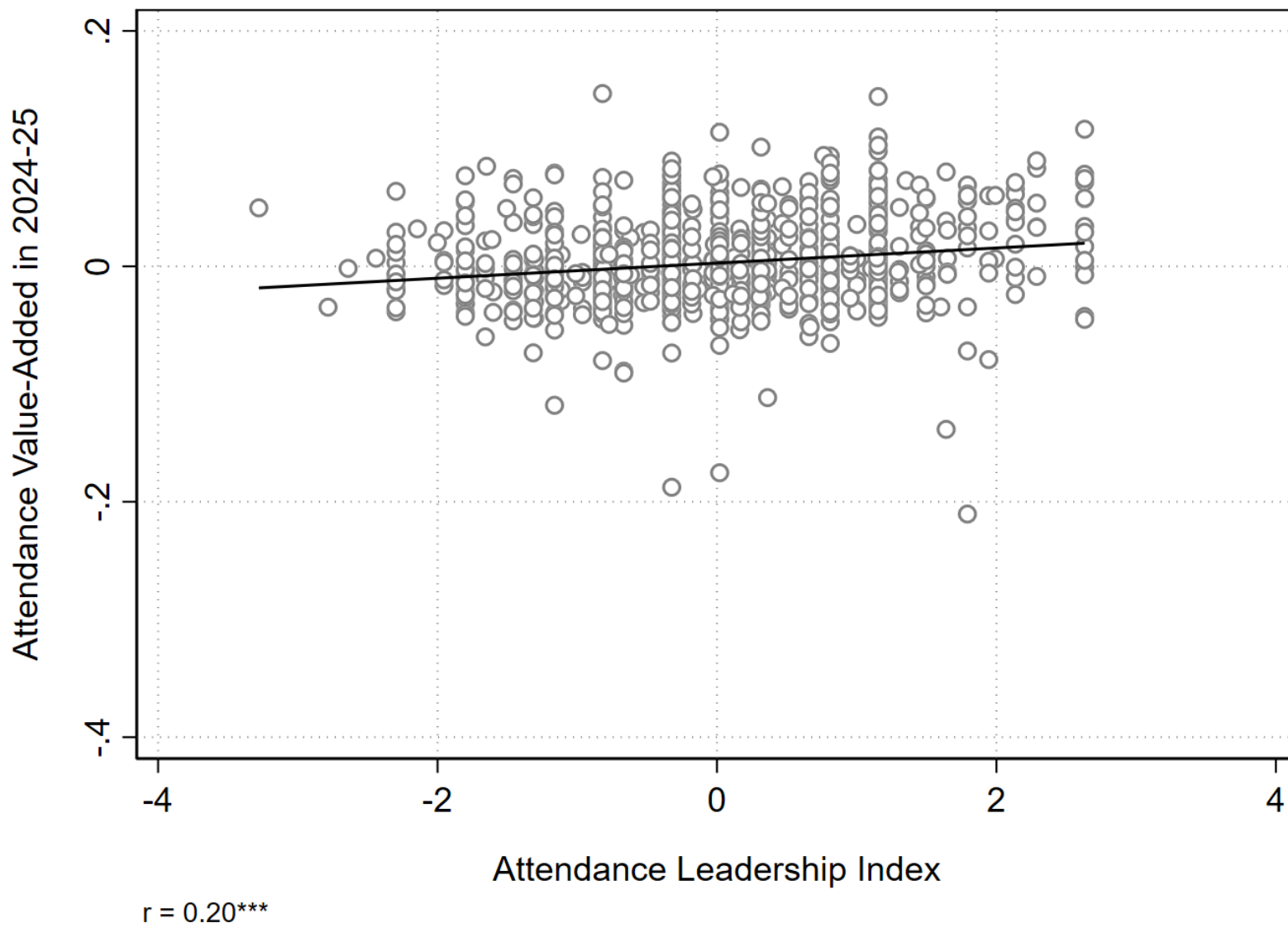


Figure G2: Attendance Leadership Index



Note: The leadership index is a standardized measure of the frequency of school leader engagement in three activities: reviewing attendance data, monitoring the implementation of attendance initiatives, and communicating with families and students about attendance. (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.73$ )

Figure G3: Correlation Between Attendance Leadership Index and Value-Added Estimates

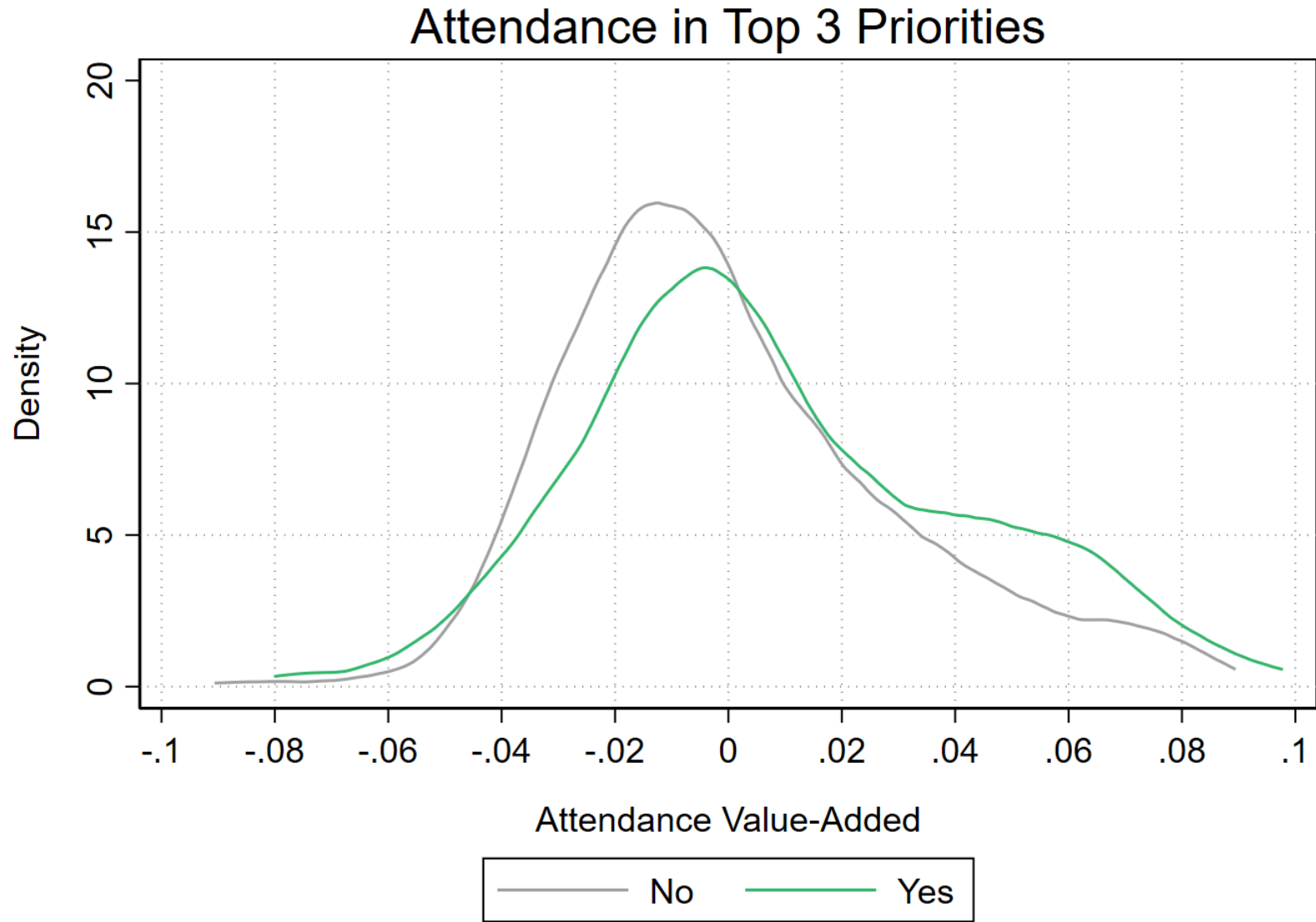


**Table G2: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for Attendance as “Top 3” Priority**

Survey Item (Yes or No)	Share of Schools with Priority	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
Attendance as a “top 3” priority for school	0.35	0.91	0.008***

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools with school leaders who reported that attendance was one of their “top 3” priorities for the 2024-25 school year (out of a list of 11 options) compared to those who did not. The second column shows the total percentage of schools with school leaders who reported that attendance was one of their “top 3” priorities for the 2024-25 school year. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools with school leaders who reported that attendance was one of their “top 3” priorities for the 2024-25 school year. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools with school leaders who reported that attendance was one of their “top 3” priorities for the 2024-25 school year. (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure G4: Kernel Density Plots for Attendance as “Top 3” Priority



## Appendix H: District Guidance and Attendance Value-Added

**Table H1: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for District Guidance Helpfulness**

Survey Item (None, Not Helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Very Helpful)	Share of Schools with Very Helpful Guidance	<i>Not Helpful</i>		<i>Somewhat Helpful</i>		<i>Very Helpful</i>	
		Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
How helpful is your district's guidance on specific strategies to improve attendance?	0.13	0.96	-0.013	0.92	0.006*	0.81	0.016***

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools whose district guidance on attendance is seen as not helpful, somewhat helpful, or very helpful compared to those that receive no guidance. The second column shows the total percentage of schools that receive any guidance from their district on attendance strategies. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools whose district guidance on attendance is seen as not helpful, somewhat helpful, or very helpful compared to those that receive no guidance. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools whose district guidance on attendance is seen as not helpful, somewhat helpful, or very helpful compared to those that receive no guidance (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).

**Table H2: Overlap Coefficient and Mean Differences for District Guidance Similarity**

Survey Item (None, Not Similar, Somewhat Similar, Very Similar)	Share of Schools with Very Similar Guidance	<i>Not Similar</i>		<i>Somewhat Similar</i>		<i>Very Similar</i>	
		Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference	Overlap Coefficient	Mean Difference
How similar are your school's attendance strategies to the district's guidance for attendance strategies?	0.30	0.58	-0.002	0.89	0.009**	0.90	0.008*

Note: Table compares attendance value-added for schools whose strategies are not similar, somewhat similar, or very similar to their district's guidance compared to those that receive no guidance. The second column shows the total percentage of schools that receive any guidance from their district on attendance strategies. The overlap coefficient shows the percentage of the distribution in attendance value-added that overlaps for schools whose strategies are not similar, somewhat similar, or very similar to their district's guidance compared to those that receive no guidance. The mean difference shows the difference in mean attendance value-added for schools whose strategies are not similar, somewhat similar, or very similar to their district's guidance compared to those that receive no guidance (\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ).