

Case Study

How Joliet Improved Attendance With Positive, Proactive Communication

Like many districts, Joliet Public Schools confronted stubbornly high absenteeism after the pandemic. When leaders looked for possible solutions, it quickly became clear that their attendance interventions weren't doing enough to get students back to school. Staff sent letters inconsistently. The tone felt punitive instead of supportive. And because outreach often started late, the district ended up in truancy court far too often.

In 2021, Joliet partnered with SchoolStatus Attend to build a more consistent and effective approach. They wanted to use automation, clear data, and positive messaging to reach families early and give every school a reliable way to support students with attendance challenges.



District

Joliet School District



District Size

9,100 students, 21 schools



Location

Joliet, IL



Products Used

SchoolStatus Attend



Unlocking Data-Backed Insights

Joliet knew they needed reliable data to guide the right actions. Their SIS offered basic attendance information, but it was limited. Data was not disaggregated by student groups. Patterns were hard to spot. And because information often arrived late, staff could not respond when it mattered most.



SchoolStatus Attend changed this. Nightly syncs kept data current, so teams always saw an accurate picture of student attendance. Instead of building custom reports by hand, staff could use ready-made reports that highlighted key trends across schools and grade levels.

This visibility gave leaders what they needed to act early. They could see which grades were struggling, which schools needed support, and how many conferences each school was completing. They could also track how those conferences impacted student attendance, which helped them refine their approach over time.

In the 2025–2026 school year, Joliet added another layer of insight with Attend’s Early Warning Insights feature. The tool analyzed the first 60 days of attendance data and identified students who were likely to become chronically absent by year’s end. With this information in hand, staff could offer more intensive support to students who needed it most and prevent chronic absenteeism before it took hold.

Dr. Sunni McNeal,
Assistant
Superintendent for
Equity and Student
Services, explained,

“ Working with SchoolStatus has allowed us to turn data into meaningful action. The platform is intuitive, and the insights we've gained have directly contributed to the successes we're seeing across Joliet Public Schools District 86.

Automated Positive Outreach

More consistent, targeted, positive outreach was one of the reasons Joliet chose SchoolStatus.

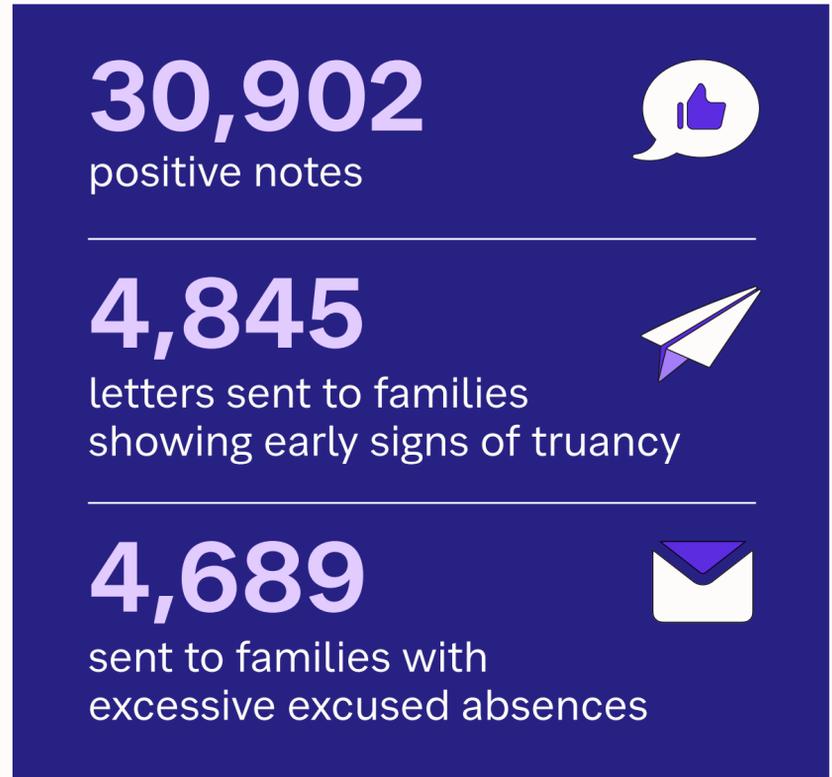
So far, getting the right message to the right family at the perfect time is working. Fifty-two percent of students who receive one SchoolStatus-powered letter never trigger the next intervention. Districtwide, the improvements are even more striking. Chronic absenteeism dropped from 31 percent in 2023–2024 to 29.4 percent in 2024–2025. At the same time, the number of students with excellent attendance grew from 3.8 percent to 5.8 percent.

52% of students who receive one letter never trigger the next intervention



Case Study: Joliet SD

Without question, this improvement is in part due to the large amount of varied communication they've sent to families, which includes:



Whether a family received a mailed letter encouraging consistent attendance or a digital note celebrating improvement, every message focused on support. Messages were also translated into families' home languages, ensuring everyone could respond and engage. This focus on accessibility helped drive a 44 percent attendance improvement among Hispanic students.

44%   attendance improvement among Hispanic students driven by a focus on accessibility

Lessons Learned

After five years with SchoolStatus, Joliet has a clear sense of what works. First, relationships matter. Consistent outreach, scheduled conferences, and real two-way conversations helped staff understand the reasons behind absenteeism. With that insight, they could offer support that matched each family's needs students back to school more often.



Second, understanding patterns helps drive better decisions. Tools like the Stoplight on Attendance report helped the district spot high-absence days, anticipate seasonal trends, and respond to grade-level spikes. Clear data helped Joliet plan ahead instead of reacting after students had already fallen behind.

Finally, shared responsibility keeps gains in place. Because both district and school staff could access SchoolStatus Attend, everyone played a part in improving attendance. Monthly spotlight emails highlighted what was working across the system, giving teams practical ideas they could use right away.

As Joliet looks to the future, they plan to keep building on these lessons. Consistency, acting on data, and involving the full team will remain central to their approach.

See What SchoolStatus Can Do For Your District

Want to learn how SchoolStatus Attend can impact your district's attendance rates? Contact our team for a personalized demo.

[Request a Demo](#)