

## Case Study

# From 48% to 27%: How Upper Lake Transformed Chronic Absenteeism with Data, Automation, and Empathy

When Ms. Tenderly Logan, Upper Lake's Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services, is asked to describe the district, she states simply, "We're not completely isolated from the world, but sometimes it feels like it."

As one of California's most rural areas with a high proportion of socio-economically disadvantaged students, currently 89%, Upper Lake faces unique geographical and economic hurdles. Families in the district face ongoing challenges related to connectivity, transportation, and access to basic resources. In addition, the community includes two distinct Native American tribes, each with its own history and relationship with the school system.

It would be easy to be complacent about chronic absenteeism in such a high-poverty, isolated community. Instead, Upper Lake chose a proactive path. In 2022, the district adopted SchoolStatus Attend to amplify its efforts to get students back to class. The product integrated seamlessly with the district's philosophy of "radical empathy," a term Ms. Logan embraces to describe their problem-solving, non-punitive approach to attendance.



### District

Upper Lake Unified School District



### District Size

4 schools; 954 students



### Location

California



### Products Used

SchoolStatus Attend

## A Consistent, Automated **First Step**

Before SchoolStatus, every message to families was manual. Frontline staff at each school had to identify families who would benefit from outreach and either send a digital note or mail a letter by themselves. Now, SchoolStatus Attend takes care of the first touch, whether that's congratulating a family with excellent attendance or reaching out to a family that's starting to rack up absences.

### The results have been amazing:



Families who historically only hear from the district when there's a problem are receiving positive updates, while families who are falling behind receive positive messages educating them on the importance of attendance



School staff have more time for conversations because the manual, time-consuming work associated with interventions is off their plate



District leaders, like Ms. Logan, know that the attendance process is being followed consistently

**"Even if communication is going out, I tell my team that they still need to pick up the phone and make that positive call because those families only get negative communication 99% of the time. SchoolStatus just allows them more time to really reach out to the families who need that extra support."**

**TENDERLY LOGAN**



## Data that Deepens **Connections**

Ms. Logan is a "boots-on-the-ground" leader. She's full of stories about visiting families to share tea on their front porch or volunteering at a school sports event to chat with parents. Part of her approach is a testament to her deep regard for the community she serves. She's also bolstered by data in SchoolStatus Attend that helps identify families who may need a hand.

**"SchoolStatus Attend gives us the statistics. I'm on the outskirts now, and my team calls me in when they have an extreme case that they haven't been able to move the needle on. It's often 'Tenderly, can you come in and be a thought partner in regards to next steps and out of the box thinking?'"**

**TENDERLY LOGAN**



**35%**   
decrease in  
chronic absenteeism

**14%**   
increase in  
graduation rates

Flags in the data help her intervene sooner. She's no longer reliant on just referrals from her team to know when it's time to make one of her signature house calls. The result of pairing automation with data-backed support has been staggering. Before starting with SchoolStatus Attend, Upper Lake's chronic absenteeism rate was 48.6%. In 2025, that number is 27.8%. The district's graduation rates have followed a similar path. In 2022, the graduation rate was just 80.8%. In 2025, it was 92.2%, a 14% increase over three years and a real impact for local students and communities.



## Building Family Trust Through Radical Empathy

Ms. Logan has multiple connections with the families of Upper Lake, and she's built the kind of legitimate trust that has parents turning to her as a trusted advisor.

That culture of respect has permeated the entire district. Bus drivers greet students by name. Students who arrive late get greeted with, "I'm so glad you're here," instead of a scolding. It's even visible in how the district conducts attendance conferences. They've become a place for collaborative problem solving.

**"It's really digging deep with families to show them the data in a very global, high-end way, not shoving it down their throat like, 'You're a bad parent.' It's about saying: 'We care, we want to help, what can we do? We will bend over backwards to help you.'"**

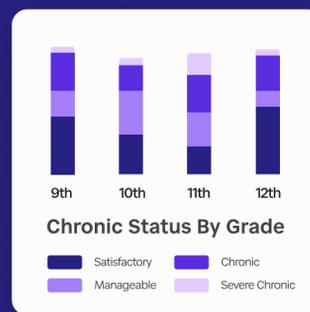
**TENDERLY LOGAN**



## What's Next? Solving Truancy

Ms. Logan has been at Upper Lake for seven years. She's been working with SchoolStatus for three of those years. In that time, she and her team have accomplished so much. They've cut chronically absenteeism nearly in half, increased graduation rates dramatically, and become partners to the families in their corner of California.

And she's not slowing down. Upper Lake is committed to spending the next seven years finding out what's holding back severely chronically absent students, those who miss between twenty and forty days of school. The solution will start with empathy. Ms. Logan shared, "I need to dig deeper into our really chronic families to find out what we can do differently for them." As she molds support to help families who are consistently missing school, SchoolStatus Attend will be around to help with data, automation, and positive messaging.



**Learn how SchoolStatus Attend can help you build an attendance strategy rooted in data and empathy.**

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