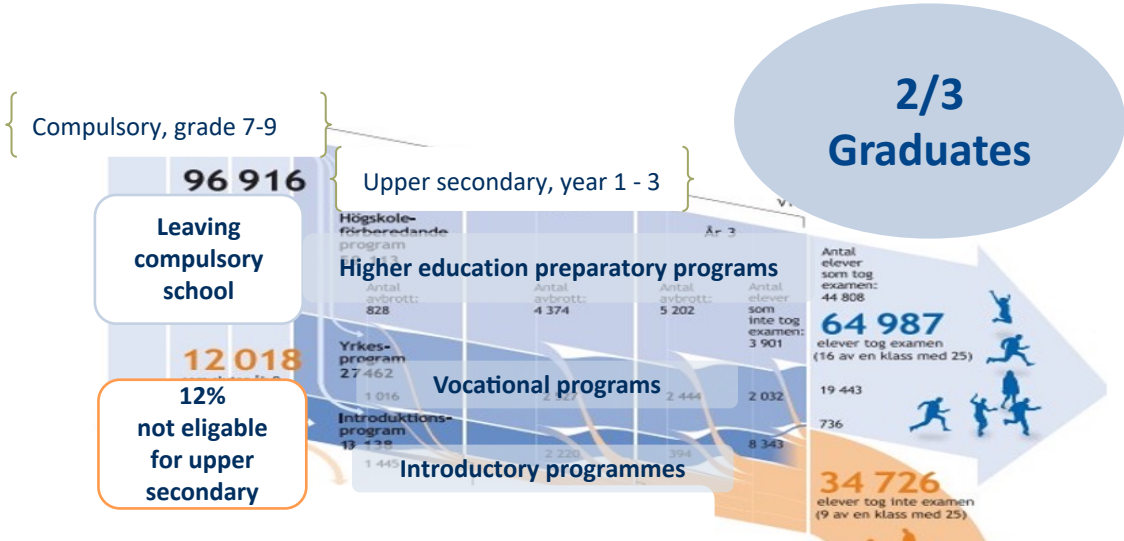


Worldwide Increase in Attendance. An Agenda for 2030.



Malin Gren Landell, med dr, INSA October 4-7, 2022



The road through the Swedish educational system for students who entered compulsory school in 2004

Absenteeism contributes to drop-out, and to exclusion



Source: National Coordinator for Neither in Education or Employment [SOU 2018:11](#)
Illustration adapted from Erik Nylund

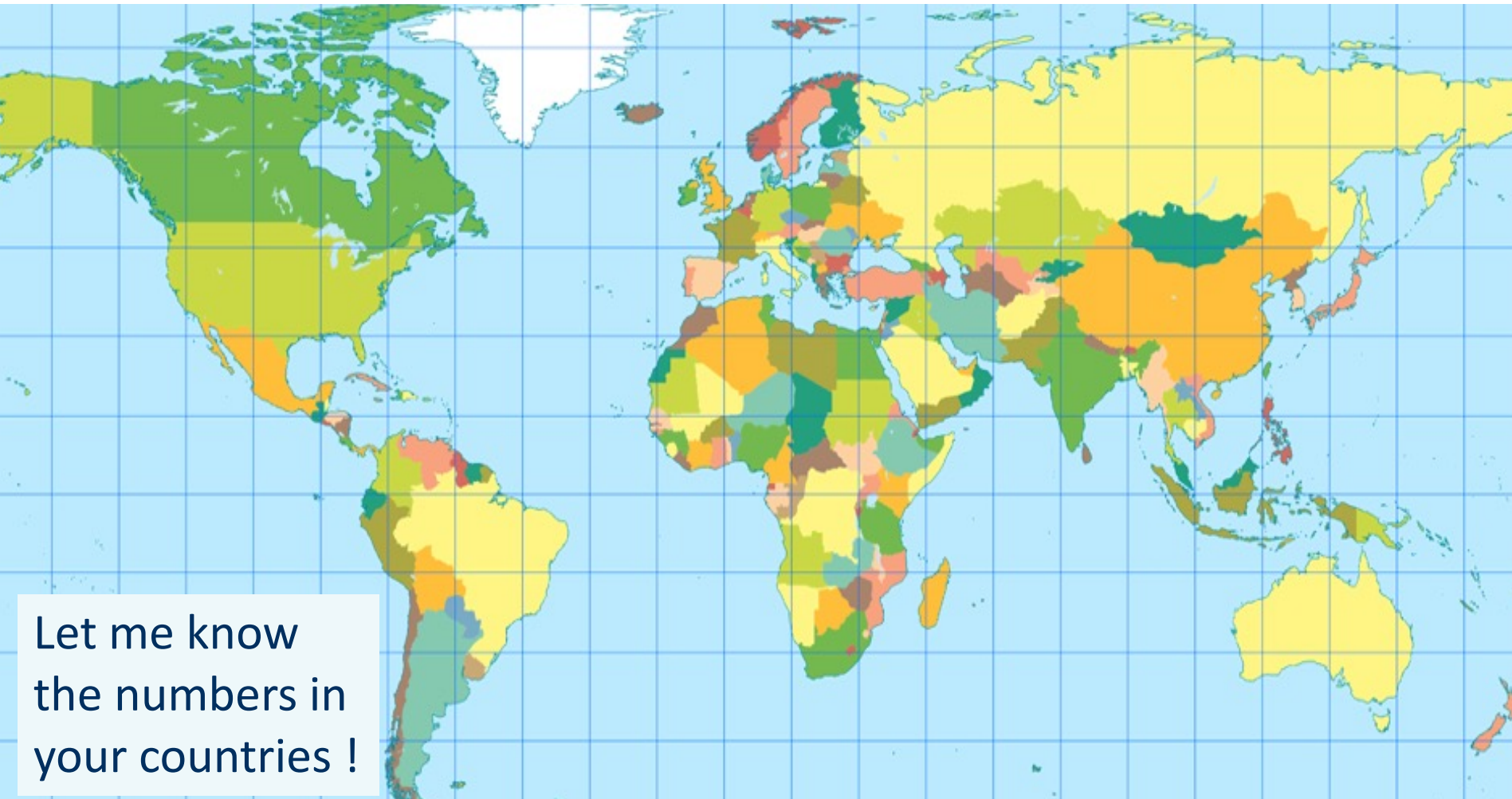
School Attendance Problems (SAPs)

Another Swedish example:

Proportion of students with $>15\%$ total absence (excused + unexcused) over 1 term:

- Autumn of 2020: 25% of all students in compulsory school
- Autumn of 2019: 14% of all students in compulsory school

[Comparison: In the UK 11% had at least 10% total absence, in year 2018/19]



Let me know
the numbers in
your countries !

Combat SAPs to reach Agenda 2030-goals



Starting point

- We don't share a common definition of the problem, worldwide
- We don't know the extent of the problem, worldwide
- We don't have required knowledge on how to decrease the problem, worldwide



Ways to reach attendance goals by 2030

1. Attendance data
2. Research studies
3. Curiosity
4. Networking

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7 reasons why... attendance data matters

1. Safeguarding – individual level
2. Identifying risk-, and protective factors for attendance – group level
3. Systematic school improvement
4. Identifying need for resources
5. Evaluation of interventions
6. Increased participation from parents, students and teachers
7. Increased attendance by informing about attendance data

Data on different levels

1. International
2. National
3. School district
4. School and classroom

Regardless of level, remember....

- Firstly, ensure high rates of adequate recordings
- Secondly, not only collect and compile
- Make sure to utilize in a meaningful way – analyse, report, use as intervention

1. International level – potential data

- The PISA-studies – a gold mine for comparisons over years and between countries?
- Include attendance indicators in other international surveys?
- Research, for example international comparative studies

International Comparative Perspectives on School Attendance Problems in Sweden, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom

- Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg & Ulf Fredriksson, Dep of Education, Stockholm University
- Åsa Backlund & Joakim Isaksson, Dep of Social work, Stockholm University
- Maria Rasmusson, Uppsala University
- Malin Gren Landell, Stockholm University, www.grenlandelliskolan.se



The project consists of 3 studies

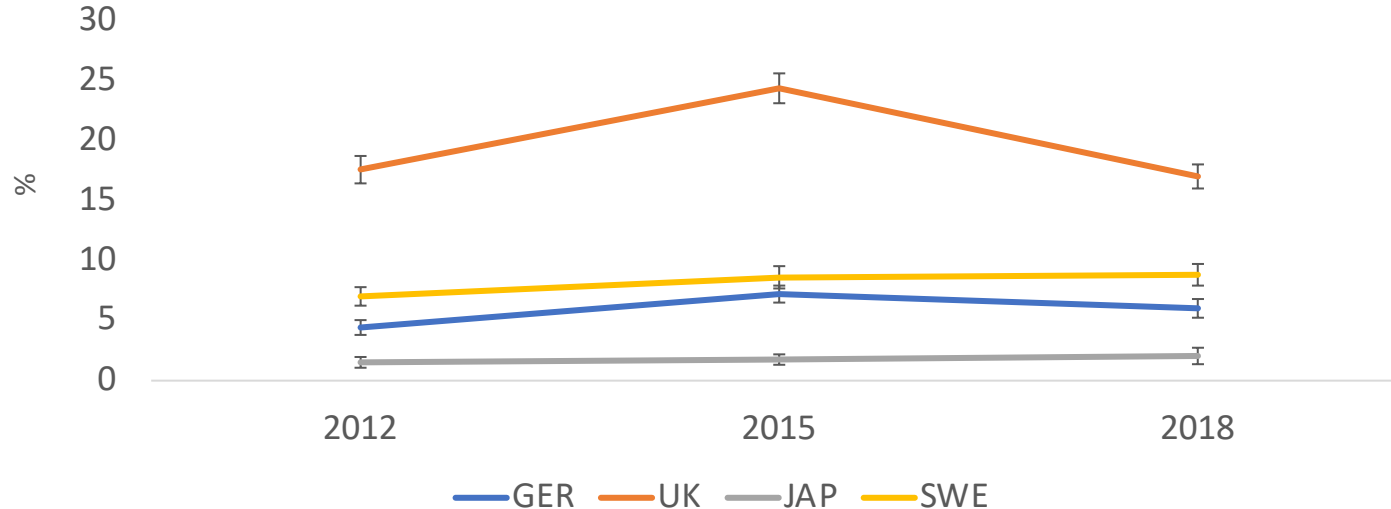
- **Study 1.** Quantitative analyses of PISA-data
 - “Understanding school attendance problems through attendance statistics”, *parallell session 1*
 - “Which students are absent from school and their results on PISA in reading comprehension, mathematics, and science”, *parallell session 13*
- **Study 2.**
 - “Organisational strategies and professional perspectives on school attendance”, *parallell session 16*
- **Study 3.** Students’ perspectives on support

Available data from PISA – the student questionnaire: “In the last two full weeks of school, how often did the following things occur?”

Item	2018	2015	2012	2009	2006	2003	2000
I skipped a whole school day *	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	?
I skipped some classes *	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	?	?
I arrived late for school *	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	?	?

* Never; One or two times; Three or four times; Five or more times

Skipped one whole school day at least once during the last two weeks

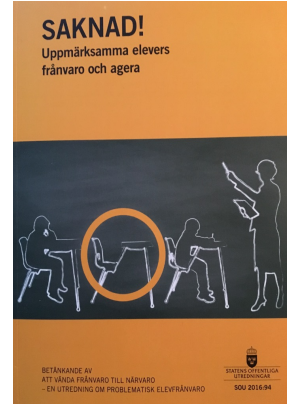


Problems with PISA

- Wording of items not based on research
- Restricted to truancy and no other forms of absence
- No data on long-term absenteeism
- Only student-reported truancy
- Attendance data in PISA-reports rarely reported and discussed (at least in Sweden)

2. National level

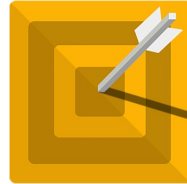
Examples of countries collecting and reporting national statistics: the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, the USA, Chile, New Zealand, Australia



3. School district and school level

- Share data between schools
- **Compare to learn, not to compete**
- Analyse data to guide systematic work to promote attendance and prevent absence

“Help! Our school has the highest rates of school absenteeism”



Do you know the figures for your school 5 years back in time?

What goals do you have for attendance?

Which schools do you compare with?

An example from Aarhus municipality, Denmark

Average days of absence/student for different schools

Skole	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Change in % (green = decreased absence)		
					2008/09 til 2009/10 (%)	2009/10 til 2010/11 (%)	2010/11 til 2011/12 (%)
Bakkegårdsskolen	10,76	13,29	11,63	10,95	23,51	-12,49	-5,85
Beder Skole	11,31	10,57	10,92	8,31	-6,54	3,31	-23,90
Center-10, Århus	-	14,21	11,14	11,76	-	-21,60	5,57
Elev Skole	8,51	9,77	9,95	9,69	14,81	1,84	-2,61
Ellekærskolen	19,31	20,64	19,53	20,14	6,89	-5,38	3,12
Elsted Skole	12,02	11,52	12	11,2	-4,16	4,17	-6,67
Engdalskolen	10,86	10,78	11,55	10,65	-0,74	7,14	-7,79
Gammelgaardsskolen	11,98	12,24	11,18	11,24	2,17	-8,66	0,54
Grønløkkeskolen	9,6	10,38	10,18	11,61	8,13	-1,93	14,05
Hasle Skole	15,91	17,65	16,49	13,24	10,94	-6,57	-19,71
Hasselager Skole	11,8	13,42	13,06	13,17	13,73	-2,68	0,84

4. School- and classroom level

- Analyse on organisational- and group level
 - Lessons or time-points during the schoolday/week?
 - Certain grades or classes?
- Use data to guide allocation of resources
- Use data to evaluate interventions

Data to communicate and intervene

- 1) Students
- 2) Parents
- 3) School staff
- 4) Politicians, policymakers and school leaders

Students

- Monitoring of attendance and absence as an intervention to prevent drop-out (e.g. Learning & Work, 2020)
- Graphs of attendance on a weekly basis – visual progress aids in increasing attendance and motivation for going to school

Parents

- Increased attendance by informing parents about days of absence (Robinson, m.fl., 2018)
- Parents notified of absence, combined with information on risk factors for SAPs, and finding help
(e.g. Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013)

School staff

- What's in it for me?
- Feed-back on registrations
- Active learning from data – an opportunity to improve workplace and learning environment
- Dialogue within school, and with policymakers

Policymakers, politicians, school leaders

- They listen to figures
- A focus on school performance; grades, graduation
- Lack of analyses of data on attendance, well-being, safety and performance
- And, they decide about resources like administrative registration systems

An old story....

The first Annual Report of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1838, Horace Mann complained of the inability of the state to collect even basic “information respecting the number of scholars attending the public schools, and the regularity of that attendance”

(Hutt, 2018, p.69 in “Measuring missed school: The historical precedents for the measurement and use of attendance records to evaluate schools.”)

A more recent story



**Attendance
Works**

www.attendanceworks.org

Action During the First 90 Days

During the first 90 days, the Biden Administration could advance the work with the following immediate steps:

First 90 Days

- 1. Assess the Scale and Scope of Lost Learning Opportunities**

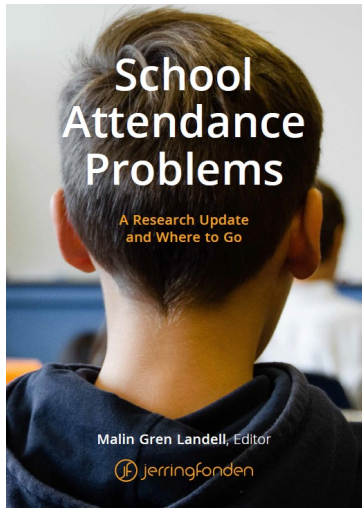
Ways to reach attendance goals by 2030

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2. Research studies
3. Curiosity
4. Networking

The Foundation and the Future

- Thanks to all funding INSA-members
- In addition, thanks to Patricia Graczyk
- Thanks to the Nordic colleagues

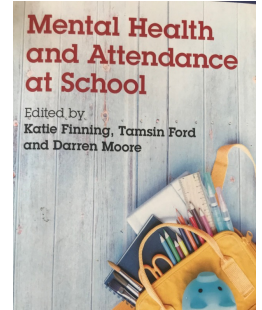
Recommendations for future studies



An international anthology

Six suggested areas

- 1) Detection
- 2) Developmental pathways and risk factors
- 3) Promotion and prevention
- 4) Assessment
- 5) Parents & youth
- 6) Treatment and intervention



Extend and Export research

Treatment models for various groups of students, like:

- Truancy, juvenile delinquency
- Neurodevelopmental disorders + anxiety and/or depression (+ mental health problems due to peer victimization?)



Opportunities to make use of

- Attendance data in research studies and surveys on children's well-being, not only in studies on SAPs
- Health care – attendance data as a search term in journals and register systems to collect data on associated problems, and on effectiveness of interventions
- Research – practice partnership
- Dissemination and implementation (Lyon & Bruns, 2019; Hughes et al., 2000)

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Are there forgotten students that miss school?

- Students with special educational needs
- Students with adverse life events like peer victimization
- Young carers
- Children in foster care
- Somatic illness
- PANS/PANDAS
- Children taken abroad for child marriage, upbringing
- Children in protected residence
- Homelessness

Keep an eye on future risk factors

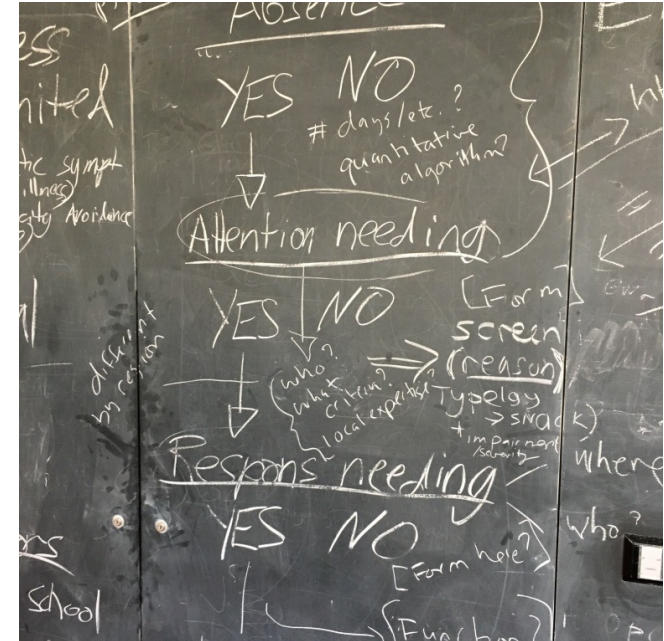
- School absenteeism as symptom of other problems
- Challenges changes over time
- Absence due to:
 - Air pollution
 - Pandemics
 - Climate change, e.g. heat waves, poverty
 - War

Ways to reach attendance goals by 2030

1. Attendance data on different levels
2. Research studies
3. Curiosity
4. **Networking**

Find and invent networks

- INSA, examples of waves
 - Swedish attendance teams get together 😊
 - Publications – e.g. Orbis Scholae special issue
 - The Jerring Anthology
- Not only INSA
 - Make use of different arenas and stakeholders
 - Fridays for future – a friend or a threat 😊
 - Networks for teachers, school agencies, social workers?



Obligations for 2030

- Call the policymakers
- Reach out to more stakeholders
- Set goals
- Establish actions



Action plan – not blah, blah, blah

- Which initiatives will you take the coming hours, weeks, years to influence the direction of the problem, to stop the increase of SAPs, to prevent more SAPs?
- Take 2 minutes for reflection and write down one potential action point



Measuring progress – a task for INSA?

