Tiered Attendance Follow-Up and Chronic Absenteeism in a Junior High School

An Action Research

[Copy for blind review: the researchers' names, positions, and school are removed. The final copy lists them here.]

Conducted June to August 2026

Abstract

This action research tested whether a tiered follow-up of absences would reduce chronic absenteeism in a public junior high school. From week 6 of Term 1 of School Year 2026–2027, advisers called a parent on the day of every absence, held a conference after three absences in 20 class days, and visited the home after five. The design was an interrupted time series with a historical comparison: the same eleven weeks of the previous school year, under the usual practice. All 640 learners were included, and 628 in the comparison year. Daily attendance came from School Form 2; two researchers coded the reasons parents gave for absences. Weekly attendance rates were read as a run chart; changes in chronic absence, defined as missing 10% or more of class days, were tested with McNemar's test; and learners chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 were compared with the previous year's with the Mann–Whitney *U* test. All six weeks of the follow-up were above the baseline median, while the previous year's fell below its own. Chronic absence fell from 14.5% to 11.7%, $x^2(1, N = 640) = 4.05$, $p = .044$, and did not change significantly in the comparison year. The learners targeted lowered their absence rate by a median of 7.7 points, against 2.6 in the previous year's cohort, $U = 2{,}699$, $p < .001$, $r = .38$. Illness, weather, and household work were the most common reasons. The school will keep the follow-up and act on the reasons it found.

Keywords: chronic absenteeism, attendance, parent communication, home visits, interrupted time series

Acknowledgment

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Context and Rationale

A learner who is not in school misses what is taught that day, and the days add up. DepEd counts them: a learner absent for more than 20% of the class days "shall receive a failing grade and no credit, unless justified" (Department of Education [DepEd], 2026c, Annex D, para. 22), and teachers are to "monitor learner attendance and provide timely interventions in coordination with parents or guardians, particularly by the end of Term 1 or when a learner reaches approximately twelve (12) absences" (para. 70). The law and DepEd's school forms act earlier: the teacher in charge reports a child's absences to the parents "the moment these exceed five schooldays" (Presidential Decree No. 603, 1974, Art. 59[7]), and for a learner absent for five consecutive days, the adviser provides interventions "including but not limited to home visitation" (DepEd, 2014, School Form 2, Guidelines, item 5).

Our school's records show why these rules matter early in the year. In the first eleven weeks of School Year 2025–2026, 14.8% of our 628 learners missed 10% or more of the class days in weeks 1 to 5, and the school's attendance rate fell from 95.04% to 94.56% as the July rains came. The school then followed the usual practice: an adviser noted absences on School Form 2 (SF2) and visited a home after five consecutive absences. In eleven weeks, that rule led to one home visit. By the time a learner had missed five days in a row, the pattern was set.

Researchers call this pattern chronic absenteeism. It has no single standard definition, but it is often defined as missing 10% or more of the school days for any reason: excused absences, unexcused absences, and suspensions (Attendance Works, n.d.; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In a national sample of kindergartners in the United States, chronic absence lowered reading and mathematics achievement and weakened the children's engagement in school (Gottfried, 2014). Kearney and Graczyk (2014) proposed a response-to-intervention model in three tiers: a light touch for every learner, targeted help for learners at risk, and intense, individual help for the few who are chronically absent. Much of the evidence on the first tier concerns parents. Personalized information sent to the parents of 28,080 high-risk students throughout a school year reduced chronic absenteeism by 10% or more in its most effective versions (Rogers & Feller, 2018); weekly automated alerts to parents about missed assignments, grades, and absences increased class attendance by 12% (Bergman & Chan, 2021); and a kindergarten that kept in touch with families by text message ended its pilot year with a chronic absenteeism rate of 13%, against 24% for a comparison school built from other schools' data (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Across 22 controlled studies, however, attendance interventions had small effects in comparisons between groups, weighted $g = 0.25$, and the confidence interval for family–school partnerships included zero (Eklund et al., 2022).

Most of that evidence comes from schools unlike ours, where families have email and transport is not washed out in July. Whether early calls, conferences, and home visits reduce chronic absence in a Philippine junior

high school during the rainy weeks, and why our learners miss school, are questions for our own records. This action research tested a three-tier follow-up of absences and recorded the reasons parents gave. The study addresses the Teaching and Learning theme of the Basic Education Research Agenda, under its questions on learners (DepEd, 2016).

Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

The innovation, which we called *Tawag, Usap, Dalaw* ("call, talk, visit"), replaced the five-consecutive-day rule with three earlier steps, each triggered by the learner's own record.

The Three Tiers

Table 1

The Three Tiers of the Follow-Up

Tier	When	What the adviser does	Record
1. Call	Every absence, the same day	Calls or texts a parent before 4 p.m., asks how the learner is and why the learner is absent, and says the learner is expected the next day	Call log: date, learner code, parent reached or not, reason in the parent's words
2. Conference	The third absence within 20 class days, counting from the start of the follow-up	Meets the learner, and the parent where possible, within three class days, with the guidance designate; agrees on one step	Conference form
3. Home visit	The fifth absence since the follow-up began, or five absences in a row	Visits the home within five class days, with the guidance designate or a barangay official, and agrees on a plan with the family	Home-visit form; referral to the Child Protection Committee where needed

Note. Tier 3 includes the visit after five consecutive absences that School Form 2 already asks for (DepEd, 2014).

Advisers used their own phones with prepaid load from the study's grant. They were trained in one 90-minute session on July 15, 2026, on the

log, the scripts for calls and conferences, and when to refer a case. A message to a parent named only the learner and the absence; it never went to a group chat or to anyone but the parent or guardian.

Strategy and Evaluation Plan

The follow-up ran from July 20 to August 28, 2026 (weeks 6 to 11 of Term 1, counted from the first week of lessons, June 15). Weeks 1 to 5 were the baseline. Every Friday the guidance designate checked each section's log against SF2 and reminded advisers of any missed call. We decided in advance to count the follow-up successful if the weekly attendance rate showed a shift above the baseline median (Perla et al., 2011), and if the share of chronically absent learners fell significantly at the .05 level.

Action Research Questions

The study answered four questions:

1. How did the school's weekly attendance rates before and during the follow-up compare with the same weeks of the previous school year?
2. Did the share of chronically absent learners change significantly from weeks 1 to 5 to weeks 7 to 11?
3. Did the learners chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 reduce their absences more than the learners chronically absent in the same weeks of the previous school year?
4. What reasons for absence did parents give?

Two null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant change in the share of chronically absent learners from weeks 1 to 5 to weeks 7 to 11.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between the change in absence rate of the learners chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 of School Year 2026–2027 and that of the learners chronically absent in the same weeks of School Year 2025–2026.

Action Research Methods

Research Design

The study used an interrupted time series with a historical comparison series (Shadish et al., 2002). The school's weekly attendance rate was followed for five weeks before and six weeks during the follow-up, and set beside the same weeks of the previous school year, when no follow-up ran. The comparison year shows what the rainy weeks of July and August do to attendance without the follow-up. Within this design, the learners who were chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 were compared with the learners chronically absent in the same weeks of the previous year, because learners chosen for a high absence rate tend to miss fewer days later even without help, a regression to the mean (Barnett et al., 2005). The reasons for absence were studied by content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Participants and Other Sources of Data and Information

All learners of the school took part, so no sampling was done: the follow-up was the school's way of responding to absences, and its records cover every learner. Table 2 shows the learners in both years. No learner transferred in or out during the eleven weeks in either year.

Table 2

Learners Enrolled in Weeks 1 to 11, by Grade and School Year

Grade	SY 2025–2026	SY 2026–2027
7	166	168
8	160	164
9	154	158
10	148	150
Total	628	640

Note. Each grade had four sections; the sixteen advisers in SY 2026–2027 carried out the follow-up.

Ninety-three learners were chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 of each school year. With 93 learners in each cohort, a sensitivity power analysis in G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) for the Wilcoxon–Mann–Whitney test of two groups showed a power of .80 to detect a difference of $d = 0.42$ or larger at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed.

The other sources were the call logs (712 absences in weeks 6 to 11), the 95 conference forms, the 35 home-visit forms, and the previous year's SF2.

Data Gathering Methods

Attendance Records

Attendance came from SF2, the Daily Attendance Report of Learners, on which the adviser marks each absence with an "x" (DepEd, 2014). Late arrivals and cutting classes, which SF2 marks separately, were not counted as absences. The guidance designate entered each section's daily marks into a workbook every Friday, and a second researcher checked a random 10% of the entries against the forms; no entry differed.

The weeks were counted from the first week of lessons: in SY 2026–2027, the week after the Opening Block of June 8 to 11 (DepEd, 2026b, Annex B), and in SY 2025–2026, the week the school year opened (DepEd, 2025). Weeks 1 to 5 (June 15 to July 17, 2026) had 25 class days. Week 6 (July 20 to 24) was the follow-up's first week, while advisers learned the log, and is left out of the learner-level comparison. Weeks 7 to 11 (July 27 to August 28) had 24 class days, August 21, Ninoy Aquino Day, being a non-working holiday. In the previous year, weeks 1 to 5 (June 16 to July 18, 2025) had 25 class days and weeks 7 to 11 (July 28 to August 29) had 23, August 21 being Ninoy Aquino Day and August 25 National Heroes Day. A learner was chronically absent in a period if absent on 10% or more of its class days, which in every period here means three or more absences.

Call Logs and Forms

The call log, the conference form, and the home-visit form were drafted by the researchers, reviewed by the division's guidance coordinator and two advisers for clarity and coverage, and tried out by two advisers in week 5. One change followed: the log gained a column for "parent not reached", so a missed call would still be recorded.

Content Analysis of the Reasons

For each absence whose parent was reached, the adviser wrote the reason in the parent's words. Two researchers built a codebook of ten categories from the first week's entries; the first researcher then coded every reason, and the second coded a random 20% independently. Agreement was measured with Cohen's (1960) kappa.

Data Recording and Storage

Each learner was given a code (A001 to A640 in SY 2026–2027, B001 to B628 in the previous year) after the class lists were shuffled, and only the codes appear in the data set and this report. The key linking codes to names stayed with the guidance designate in a password-protected file. The paper forms were kept in the guidance office's locked cabinet.

Ethical Considerations

The Schools Division Research Committee approved the proposal before the follow-up began; its reference number is withheld for blind review. The follow-up was part of the school's own duty to act on absences, so every learner received it. Parents were told at the July 10, 2026, general assembly and by letter that the school's attendance records, without names, would be studied, and that they could ask for their child's records to be left out; no parent did. The previous year's Grade 10 learners, who had left the school, were covered by the same notice posted at the school and on its official page, and their records too were used only by code. Information about a learner's education is sensitive personal information (Republic Act No. 10173, 2012, Sec. 3[l][2]), so calls and messages went only to the parent or guardian. Where a home visit raised a concern of neglect or abuse, the case went to the school's Child Protection Committee under DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 (DepEd, 2012); such cases are not described in this report. The researchers declared their use of an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in Appendix E (DepEd, 2026a).

Data Analysis

The weekly attendance rate was the number of learner-days present divided by the number of learner-days enrolled. The weekly rates were plotted as a run chart, with the median of weeks 1 to 5 extended over the later weeks, and read with Perla et al.'s (2011) rules; a shift is six or more consecutive points on one side of the median. The same was done for the previous year's weeks.

The change in the share of chronically absent learners was tested with McNemar's test without continuity correction, which Fagerland et al. (2013) accept where small, occasional excesses over the nominal level are acceptable; the mid-*p* McNemar test, which they recommend in any situation, was computed as a check. The effect size was the odds ratio of the discordant pairs as the effect size and its 95% confidence interval computed on the log scale. Each targeted learner's change in absence rate (the rate in weeks 7 to 11 minus the rate in weeks 1 to 5) was compared between the two cohorts with the Mann–Whitney *U* test, because the changes were skewed, with the rank-biserial correlation *r* as the effect size (Kerby, 2014). Within each cohort, the change was checked with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test; jamovi reports its *W*, the sum of the ranks of the positive differences (weeks 1 to 5 minus weeks 7 to 11), with a continuity correction. The rates, the run chart, McNemar's test, the rank-biserial correlation, and kappa were computed in Microsoft Excel; the Mann–Whitney and Wilcoxon tests were run in the free program jamovi (The jamovi project, 2026), whose Independent Samples T-Test reports the smaller of the two *U* values.

Discussion of Results and Reflection

Implementation

From July 20 to August 28, 2026, the advisers logged 712 absences and reached a parent the same day for 590 of them (82.9%). Ninety-five learners reached Tier 2 and had a conference, 89 of them within three class days; 35 reached Tier 3 and had a home visit, 31 of them within five class days. Of the 93 learners chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5, 57 had a conference and 27 a home visit. In the same weeks of the previous year, one home visit was made.

Question 1: Weekly Attendance in Both Years

The weekly attendance rate rose during the follow-up, while the previous year's fell in the same weeks (Table 3 and Figure 1).

Table 3

Weekly Attendance Rate (%), Weeks 1 to 11, by School Year

Week	SY 2025–2026	SY 2026–2027
1	95.48	95.34
2	94.75	95.53
3	95.41	95.03
4	95.19	95.41
5	94.36	95.66
6	94.27	96.00
7	93.98	95.53
8	94.49	95.78
9	94.87	96.19
10	94.90	96.72
11	94.63	96.88

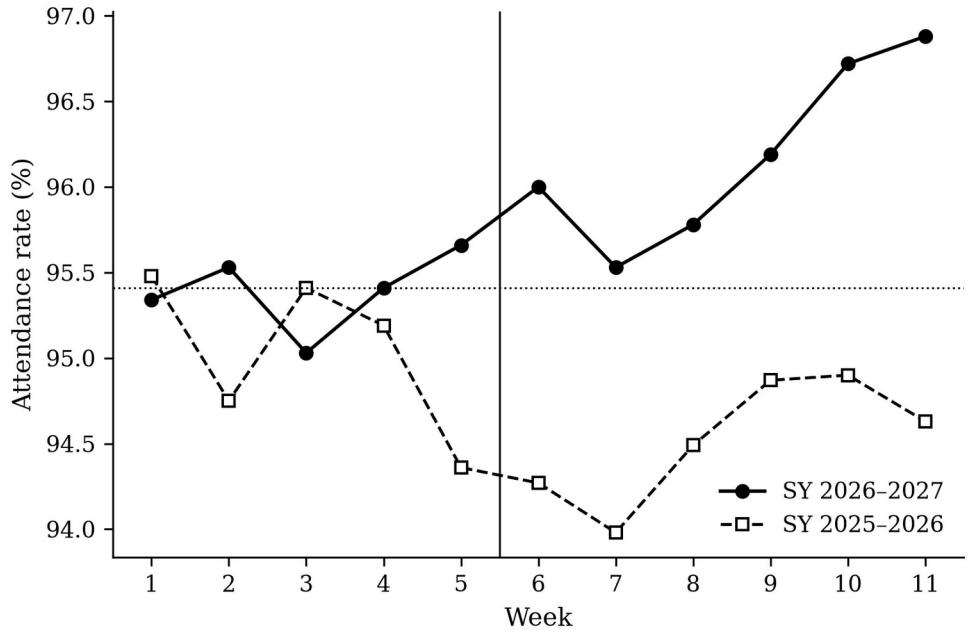
Note. Learner-days present divided by learner-days enrolled. The follow-up began in week 6 of SY 2026–2027.

All six weeks of the follow-up were above the baseline median of 95.41%, a shift by Perla et al.'s (2011) rule. In the previous year, all six of the

same weeks were below that year's baseline median of 95.19%. Over weeks 7 to 11, the attendance rate was 96.20% against 95.39% in weeks 1 to 5; in the previous year it was 94.56% against 95.04%. The difference between the two changes, computed before rounding, 1.28 percentage points, stands for about 197 fewer absences in weeks 7 to 11 than the previous year's pattern would have led us to expect.

Figure 1

Weekly Attendance Rate, Weeks 1 to 11, School Years 2025–2026 and 2026–2027



Note. The dotted line is the median of weeks 1 to 5 of SY 2026–2027. The vertical line marks the start of the follow-up.

Question 2: Chronic Absence

Chronic absence fell from 14.5% of the learners in weeks 1 to 5 to 11.7% in weeks 7 to 11 (Table 4). Of the 93 learners chronically absent at first, 49 were no longer chronically absent in weeks 7 to 11, while 31 learners became chronically absent. McNemar's test showed a significant change, $x^2(1, N =$

640) = 4.05, p = .044, with an odds ratio of the discordant pairs of 1.58, 95% CI [1.01, 2.48]. H_{01} is rejected. The result is close to the line: the mid-p test gives p = .045, but with a continuity correction the p value would be .057, and the interval's lower end is just above 1. We report the test planned before the data came in.

Table 4

Chronic Absence in Weeks 1 to 5 and Weeks 7 to 11, SY 2026–2027

Weeks 1 to 5	Chronic in weeks 7 to 11	Not chronic in weeks 7 to 11	Total
Chronic	44	49	93
Not chronic	31	516	547
Total	75	565	640

Note. Chronic absence is missing 10% or more of the class days in the period: three or more absences.

In the previous year, chronic absence rose from 14.8% to 15.4% over the same weeks, $x^2(1, N = 628) = 0.27$, p = .606. Without the follow-up, the rainy weeks did not reduce chronic absence.

Question 3: The Chronically Absent Learners

The 93 learners chronically absent in weeks 1 to 5 lowered their absence rate more than the 93 learners chronically absent in the same weeks of the previous year (Table 5 and Figure 2). The difference was significant, U = 2,699, $p < .001$, with a rank-biserial correlation of r = .38, a medium effect. H_{02} is rejected.

Table 5

Absence Rates of the Learners Chronically Absent in Weeks 1 to 5, by School Year

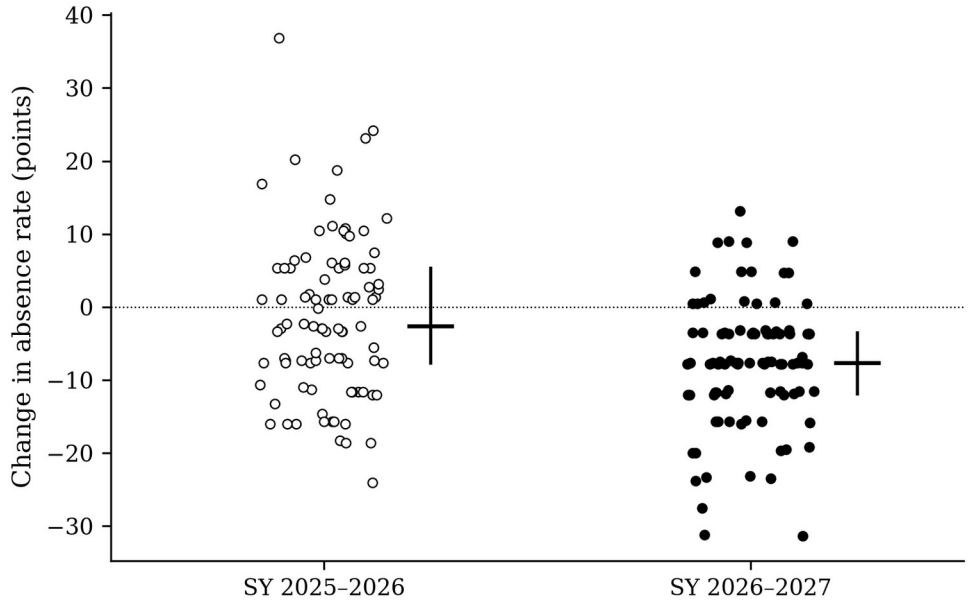
Measure	SY 2025–2026 (n = 93)	SY 2026–2027 (n = 93)
Median absence rate, weeks 1 to 5 (%)	16.0	16.0
Median absence rate, weeks 7 to 11 (%)	17.4	8.3
Median change (percentage points)	−2.6	−7.7
Interquartile range of the change	−7.7 to 5.4	−11.8 to −3.5
Still chronically absent in weeks 7 to 11	65	44

Note. The change is each learner's rate in weeks 7 to 11 minus the rate in weeks 1 to 5.

The previous year's cohort also improved a little, a median change of −2.6 points, W = 2,642, p = .081, without any follow-up. This is the regression to the mean that a comparison of the targeted learners with themselves would have counted as success; the follow-up year's change, W = 3,872, p < .001, is larger than it by about five points.

Figure 2

Change in Absence Rate of the Learners Chronically Absent in Weeks 1 to 5, by School Year



Note. Each dot is one learner. Bars show the median and the interquartile range.

Question 4: Reasons for Absence

A parent was reached for 590 absences and gave a reason for 573 of them (Table 6). Illness of the learner was the most common, followed by the weather and household work.

Table 6

Reasons for Absence When a Parent Was Reached, Weeks 6 to 11, SY 2026–2027 (n = 590)

Reason	Absences	%
Illness of the learner	198	33.6
Weather, flooding, or an impassable road	102	17.3
Household chores or caring for siblings	73	12.4
Illness or emergency in the family	49	8.3
No fare or no ride	44	7.5
Work: farm, fishing, or vending	36	6.1

Reason	Absences	%
Lost interest or behind in lessons	36	6.1
Family event or travel	24	4.1
No reason given	17	2.9
Conflict with classmates or bullying	11	1.9

Note. Coded from the parents' words in the call log. Two coders agreed on 105 of the 118 entries coded by both (89.0%), Cohen's κ = .86.

The two coders' agreement was almost perfect by Landis and Koch's (1977) benchmarks, κ = .86. Eight of the 13 disagreements set the learner's own illness against an illness in the family, as when a parent said "Inalagaan niya ang kapatid niyang may lagnat" ("[The learner] looked after a sibling who had a fever"). The codebook's rule now codes the reason by who was ill.

The reasons point to different responses. Illness and the weather, half of the reasons, are partly outside the school's hands, but the home visits found three learners whose "illness" absences followed days of fieldwork and two who could not cross a flooded creek. Household work, fare, and work for money, a quarter of the reasons, are where a conference with the family and the school's links with the barangay can help. The 36 absences from learners who had lost interest or fallen behind call for help with lessons, not attendance alone.

Reflection

The follow-up was followed by a rise in attendance during the weeks when, in the previous year, attendance fell. The weekly rates shifted above the baseline median, chronic absence fell while it did not in the comparison year, and the learners targeted reduced their absences by more than the previous year's learners, whose own small improvement shows how much a simple before-and-after comparison would have overstated. These results are in line

with studies of early, parent-centered responses to absence (Rogers & Feller, 2018) and with the tiered model Kearney and Graczyk (2014) proposed. Controlled studies, though, find the effects of such programs small on average and least certain for partnerships with families (Eklund et al., 2022), which is one more reason to read our own result with care.

We cannot say that the follow-up alone caused the change. The comparison is with another year, with other learners and another year's rains; if the rains of 2025 were heavier, part of the difference is the weather. Advisers knew the study was running, which may have changed how they marked SF2 as well as how they followed up. The McNemar result for the whole school is close to the line: the confidence interval of its odds ratio, [1.01, 2.48], only just excludes 1, no change. The run chart is short: its median rests on five baseline weeks, fewer than the ten or more points run chart guides advise for a median (Provost & Murray, 2011), so we read the shift beside the previous year's weeks rather than alone. The two cohorts are not wholly separate: this year's Grades 8 to 10 were last year's Grades 7 to 9, so some learners may be in both, which the Mann–Whitney test does not allow for. The study lasted six weeks, too short to show whether the follow-up keeps learners in school through the year or improves their learning.

The cost fell mostly on the advisers. Each logged and called for an average of 45 absences over six weeks, and home visits beyond regular work hours earned them vacation service credits under the school's usual rules (DepEd, 2024a, 2024b). A follow-up that depends on unpaid evening calls will not last unless the school protects that time.

Action Plan

Table 7

Action Plan

Activity	Objective	Persons involved	Timeline	Resources	Success indicator
Present the results at a learning action cell (LAC) session and to the School Governance Council	Decide whether to keep the follow-up	Research team, advisers, school principal, council members	November 2026	Report, one-page brief	Decision recorded in the minutes
Keep *Tawag, Usap, Dalaw* for all sections	Hold the gains through the year	Advisers, guidance designate	Term 2 and Term 3, SY 2026–2027	Prepaid load, logs	Same-day contact for at least 80% of absences
Agree with the barangay on safe passage during floods and a fare fund for learners from the far sitios	Act on the weather and fare reasons	School principal, barangay council, PTA	December 2026	Barangay and PTA funds	Agreement signed
Refer learners with repeated illness to the school health personnel and the rural health unit	Act on the illness reasons	Advisers, school nurse	From November 2026	Referral slips	Referrals logged
Offer catch-up sessions to learners who said they were behind	Act on the lost-interest reason	Subject teachers	Term 2, SY 2026–2027	Learning materials	Attendance at the sessions
Propose a follow-up study over a full school year	Test whether the gains last and whether learning follows	Research team	2027 BERF call	BERF grant	Proposal submitted

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Financial Report

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Table 8

Statement of Expenses

Date (2026)	Particulars	Receipt No.	Category	Budget (PhP)	Actual (PhP)
July 13	Photocopying of call logs, conference forms, and home-visit forms (800 pages)	OR 0712	Reproduction	1,200.00	1,150.00
July 17 and August 14	Prepaid load for 16 advisers, two months (PhP 300 per adviser per month)	OR 3341, 3388	Communication	9,600.00	9,600.00
July 20 to August 28	Transportation for 35 home visits	Acknowledgment receipts	Domestic travel	4,200.00	4,350.00
October 26	Printing and binding of the final report (4 copies)	OR 0821	Printing and binding	1,400.00	1,400.00
October 27	One-page brief for parents (200 copies)	OR 0822	Reproduction	400.00	400.00
	Total			16,800.00	16,900.00

Note. Receipt numbers are invented for this sample. The PhP 100.00 by which expenses exceeded the grant, from more home visits than planned, was paid by the researchers.

Appendices

Appendix A. Data Set

The executive data set is the Excel workbook submitted with this report: every learner's daily attendance in both school years, by code; the weekly rates and the run chart; McNemar's test; the targeted cohorts with the rank-biserial correlation; the call log with the coded reasons; and the two coders' agreement with kappa. The rates, the run chart, McNemar's test, the cohorts' changes with the rank-biserial correlation, and kappa are live formulas; the counts of conferences and home visits come from the forms. The Mann–Whitney and Wilcoxon tests come from jamovi, and the power analysis from G*Power.

Appendix B. Notice to Parents

The letter about the use of the school's attendance records is kept at the school and left out of the archived report.

Appendix C. Forms

The call log (date, learner code, parent reached or not, reason in the parent's words, adviser's initials), the conference form, and the home-visit form, each with the codes only.

Appendix D. Home-Visit Guide

1. How is the learner, and how is the family?
2. What keeps the learner from coming to school?
3. What would help the learner come every day?
4. What can the school do, and what can the family do?
5. When will we check together again?

Appendix E. Declaration of AI Use

We, the researchers, declare that we used [name of the AI tool] only to check the grammar of the English text of this report, for the purpose of finalizing the research study. The prompt used was: "Check the grammar of this paragraph. Do not change its meaning or add content." We have reviewed, edited, and understood all the content, and we take full accountability for it. No names, Learner Reference Numbers, attendance records, or other personal information were entered into the AI tool.