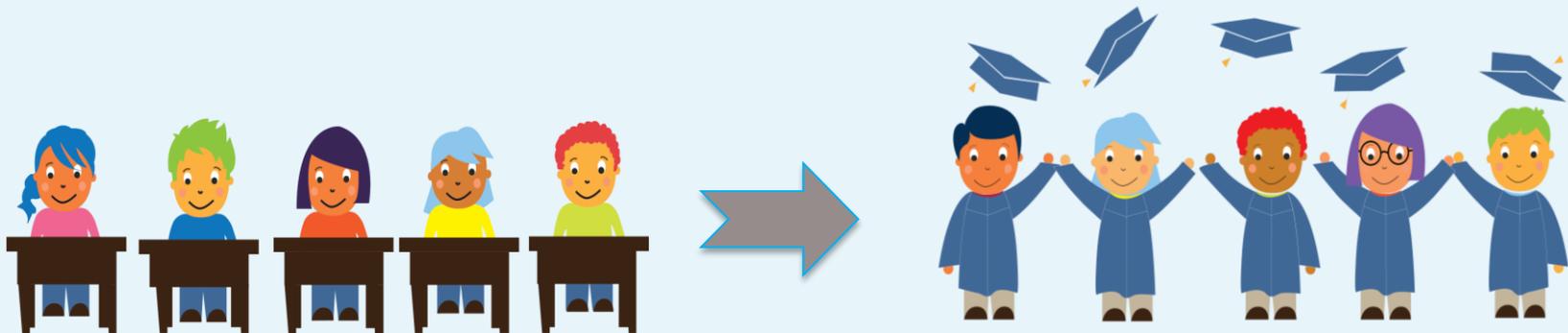


Reducing Chronic Absence

Why Does It Matter? What Can We Do?



Chronic Absence

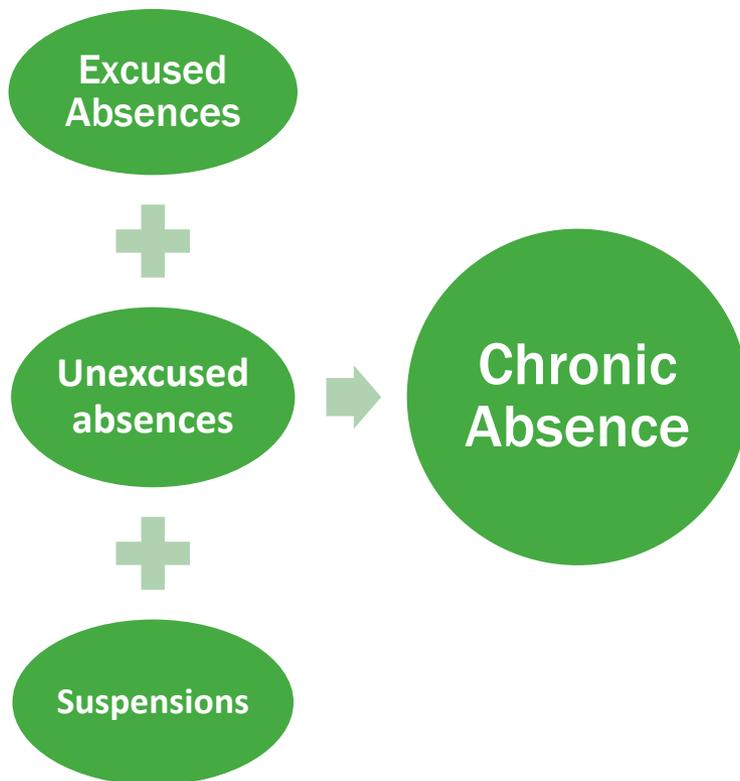
A Hidden National Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as **7.5 million students** miss nearly a month of school every year. That's **135 million** days of lost time in the classroom.
- ❑ In some cities, as many as **one in four students** are missing that much school.
- ❑ Chronic absenteeism is a **red alert** that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.



What is Chronic Absence?

Attendance Works recommends defining chronic absence as missing **10% or more of school for any reason.**



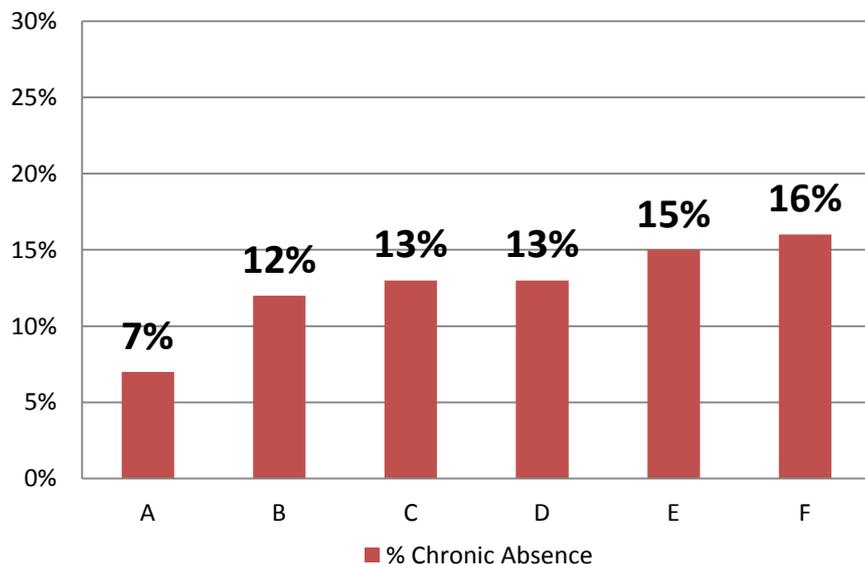
Chronic absence is different from truancy (defined in CT as 4 unexcused absences in a month or 10 unexcused absences over a school year) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).



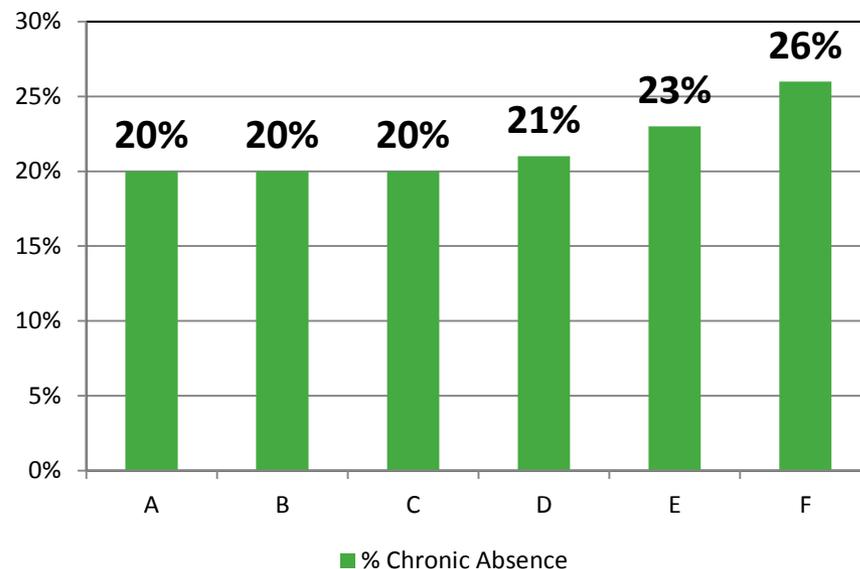
High Levels of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% \neq A

Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with 95% ADA in 2012



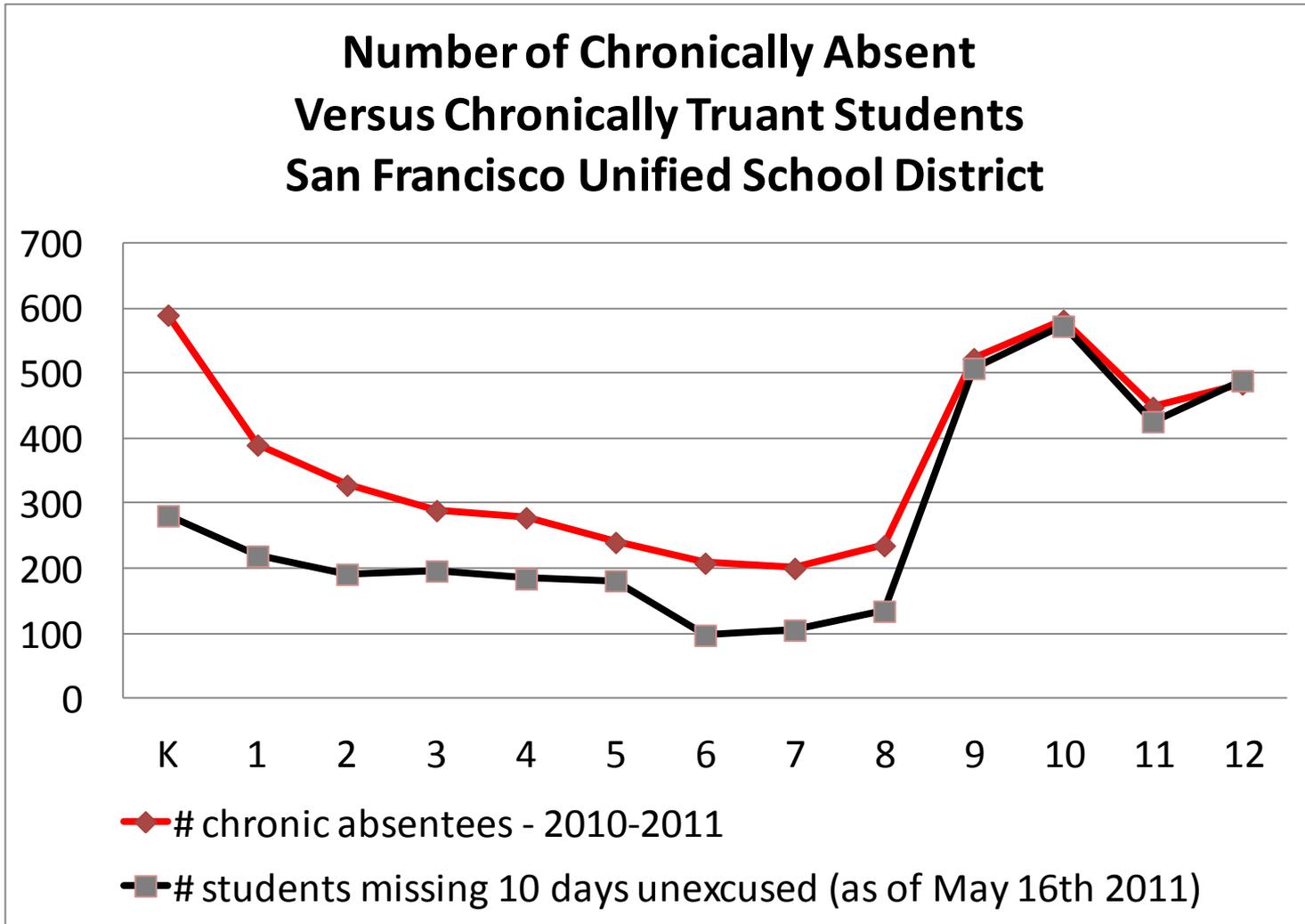
Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



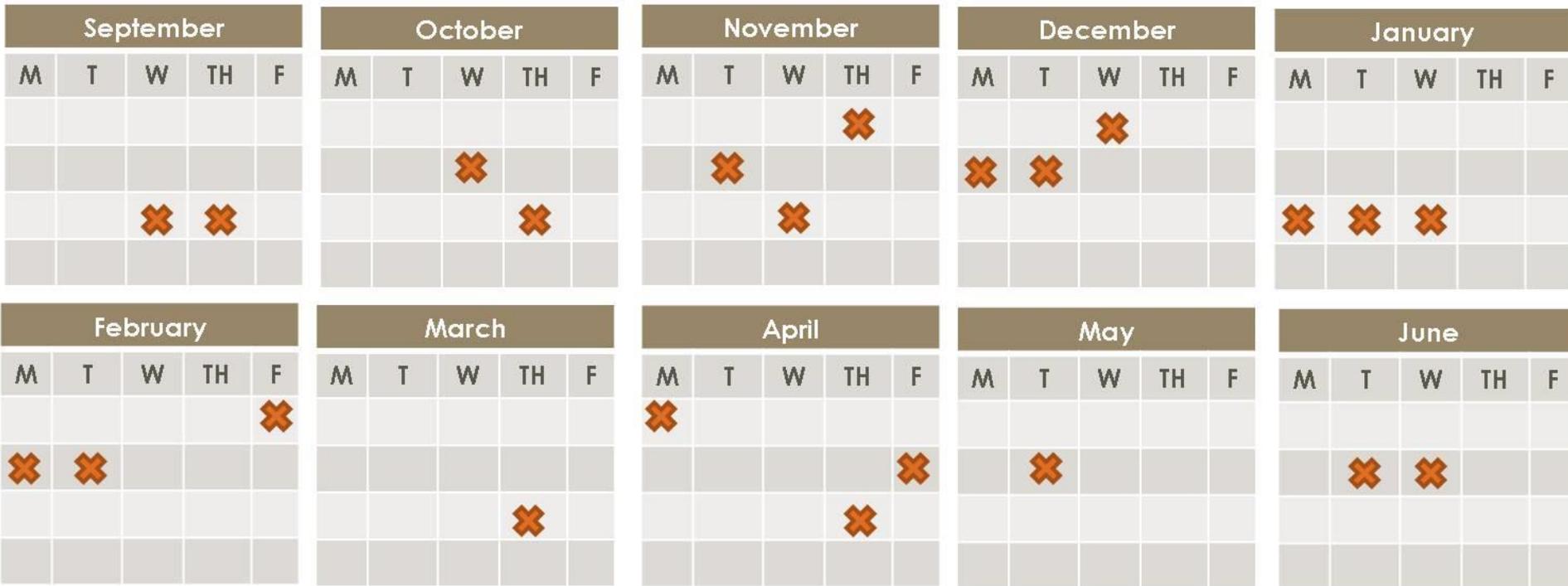
98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don't know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence



Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



Why We May Not Notice Chronic Absence



Absences Add Up

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = 2 days a month



Why Define as Missing 10% of School for ANY reason (excused, unexcused, suspension etc.)?

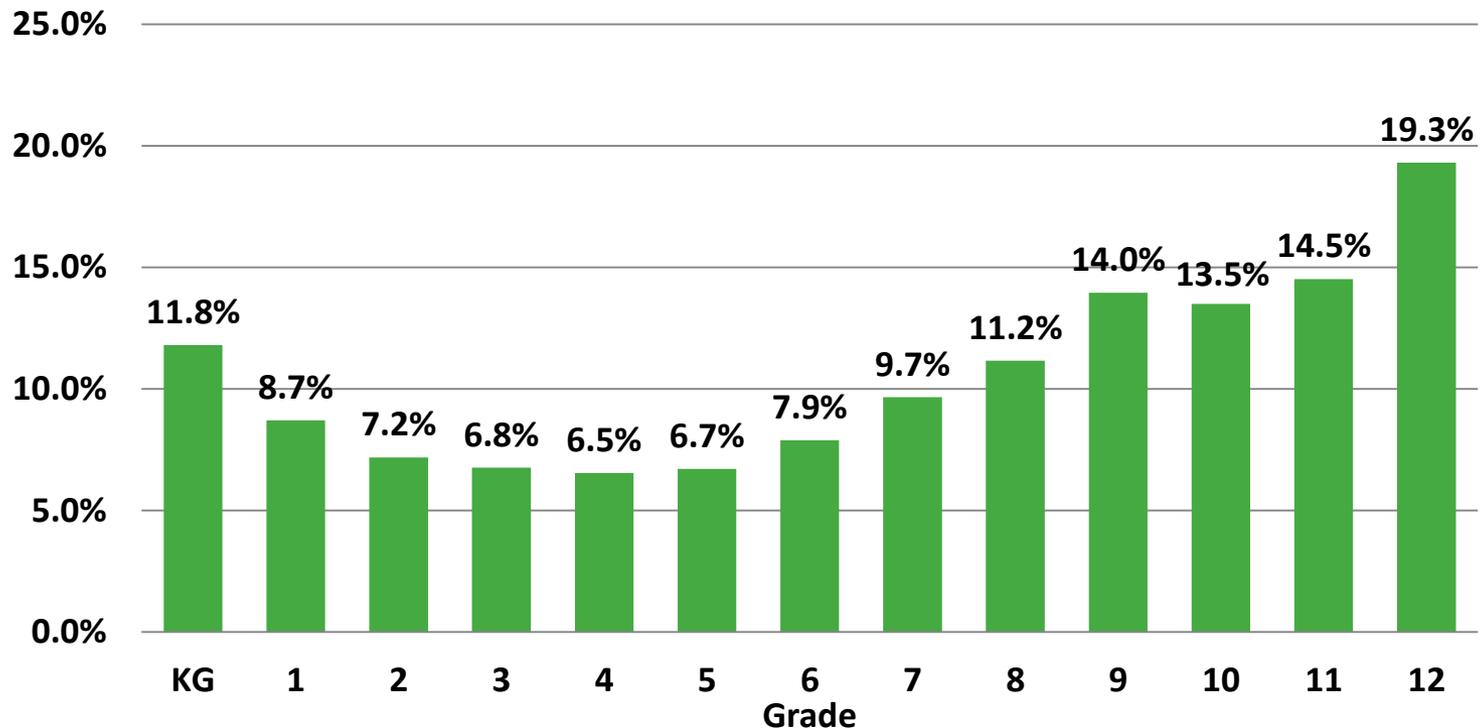
- ✓ Any absence = a day of missed instruction
- ✓ Based upon research
- ✓ Promotes early detection and intervention
- ✓ Allows for comparison across districts and states with different academic calendars
- ✓ Increases efficiency of data collection when required by all agencies



How much is chronic absence a problem in Connecticut?

Over 1 out of 10 or 56,000 students are chronically absent in CT.

Chronic Absence By Grade In Connecticut
(SY 2013-14)

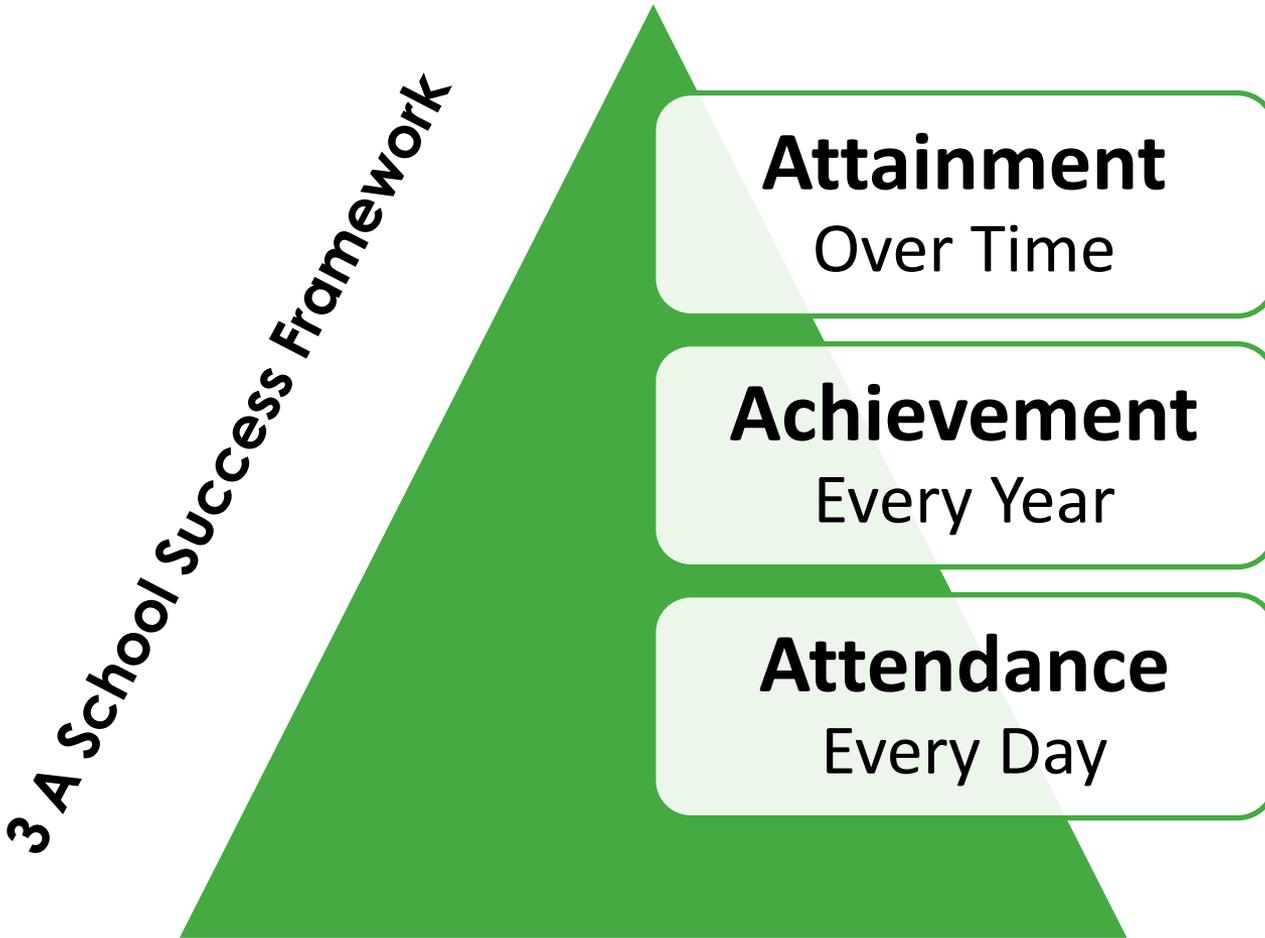


Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country



Attendance is An Essential Ingredient of Academic Success



Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America's Promise Alliance
For more info go to www.americaspromise.org/parentengagement



Improving Attendance Matters Because It Reflects:

Exposure to language: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

Time on Task in Class: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

On Track for Success: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

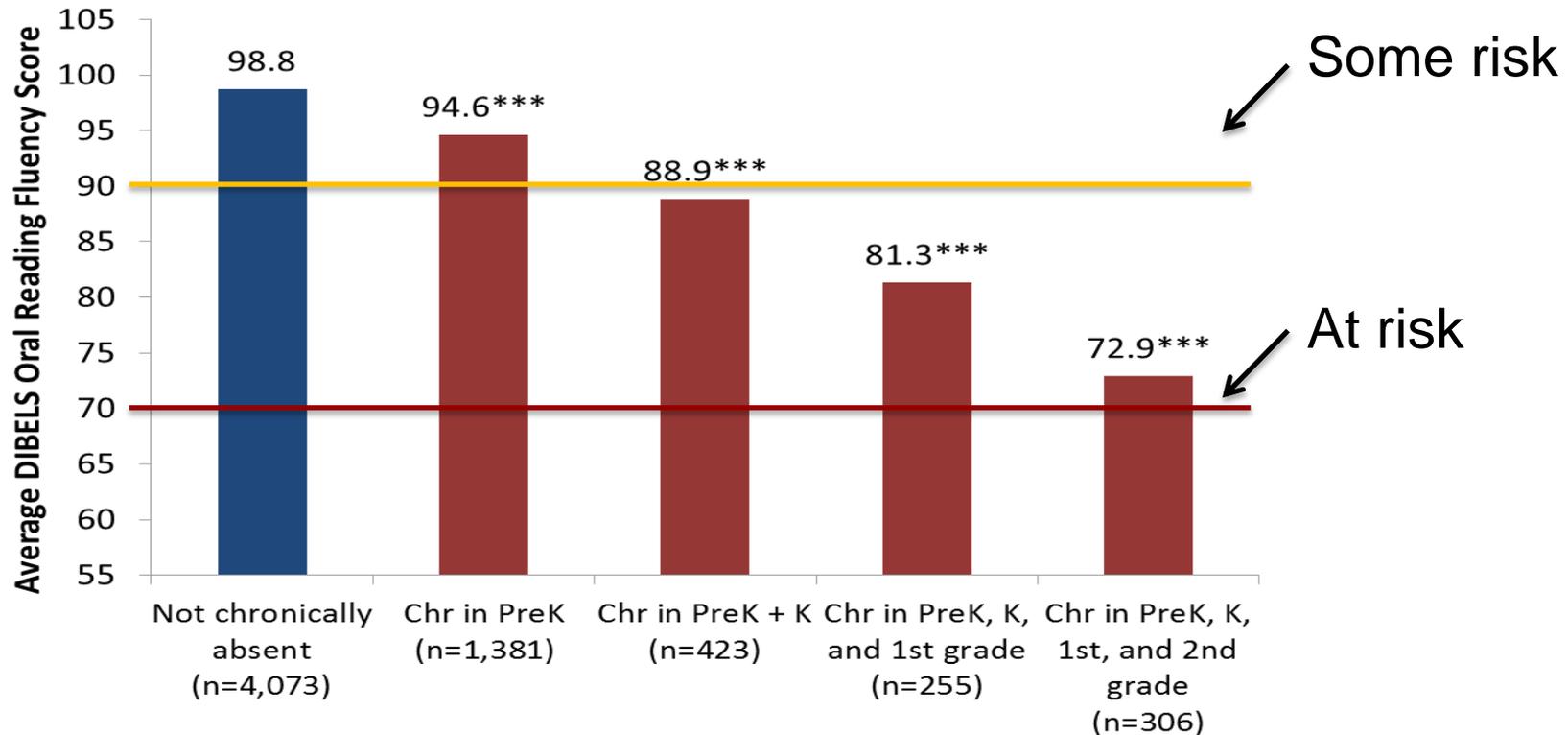
Engagement : Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

Effective Practice: Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

(For research, see: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>)



Starting in PreK, More Years of Chronic Absence = Need for Intensive Reading Support By 2nd Grade



* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Chronic Early Absence is Especially Challenging for Low-Income Children

- ❑ Poor children are **4x** more likely to be chronically absent in K than their highest income peers.
- ❑ Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports that ensure a child is more likely to get to school. They often face:
 - **Unstable Housing**
 - **Limited Access to Health Care**
 - **Poor Transportation**
 - **Inadequate Food and Clothing**
 - **Lack of Safe Paths to School Due to Neighborhood Violence**
 - **Chaotic Schools with Poor Quality Programs, etc.**



Chronic Early Absence Connected to 3rd Grade-Level Reading

Chronic absence in
kindergarten

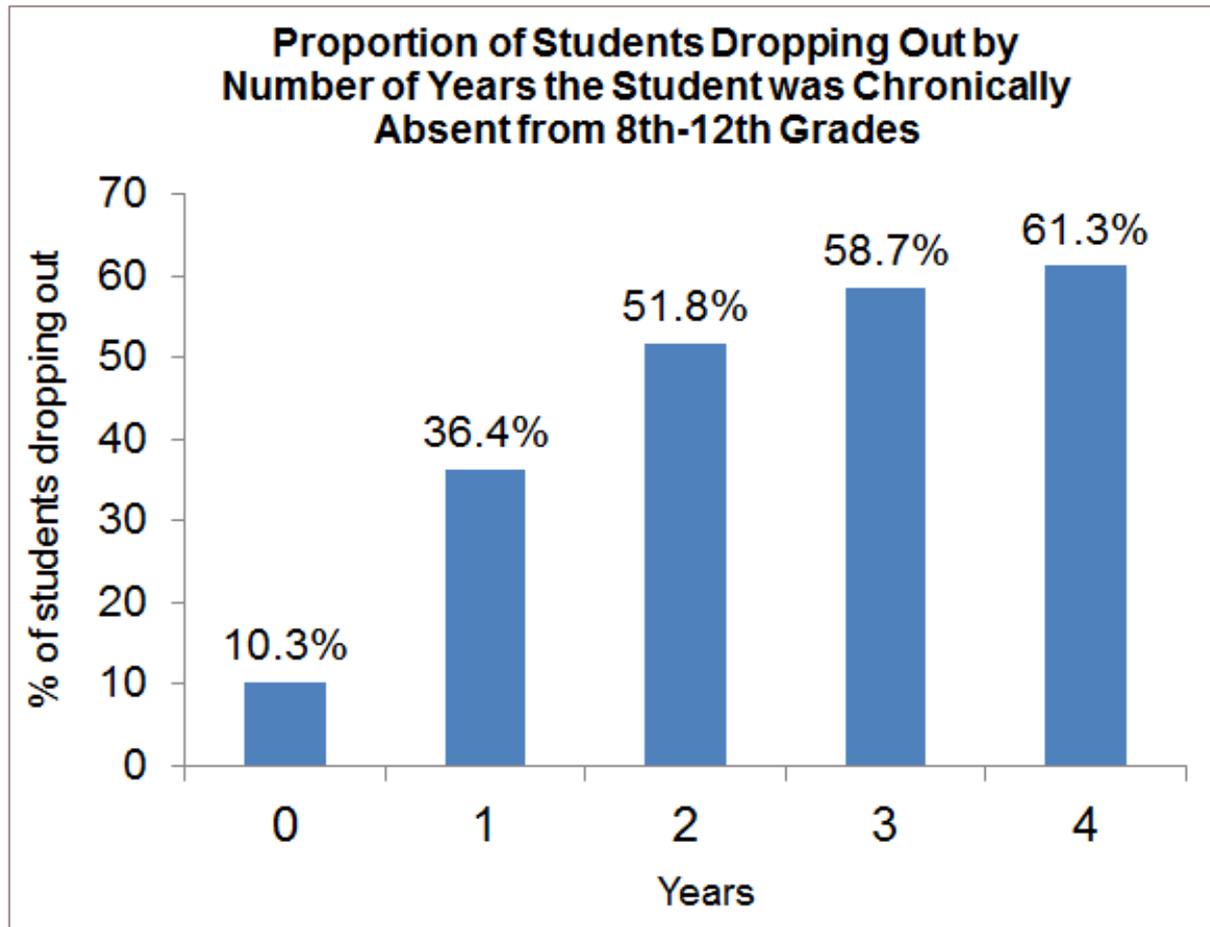
Lower levels of
literacy in first grade

Lower achievement as
far out as fifth grade

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent

- **Scored 20% lower in reading and math in later grades and gap grows**
- **2X as likely to be retained in grade.**
- **2X likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.**
- **Likely to continue being chronically absent**

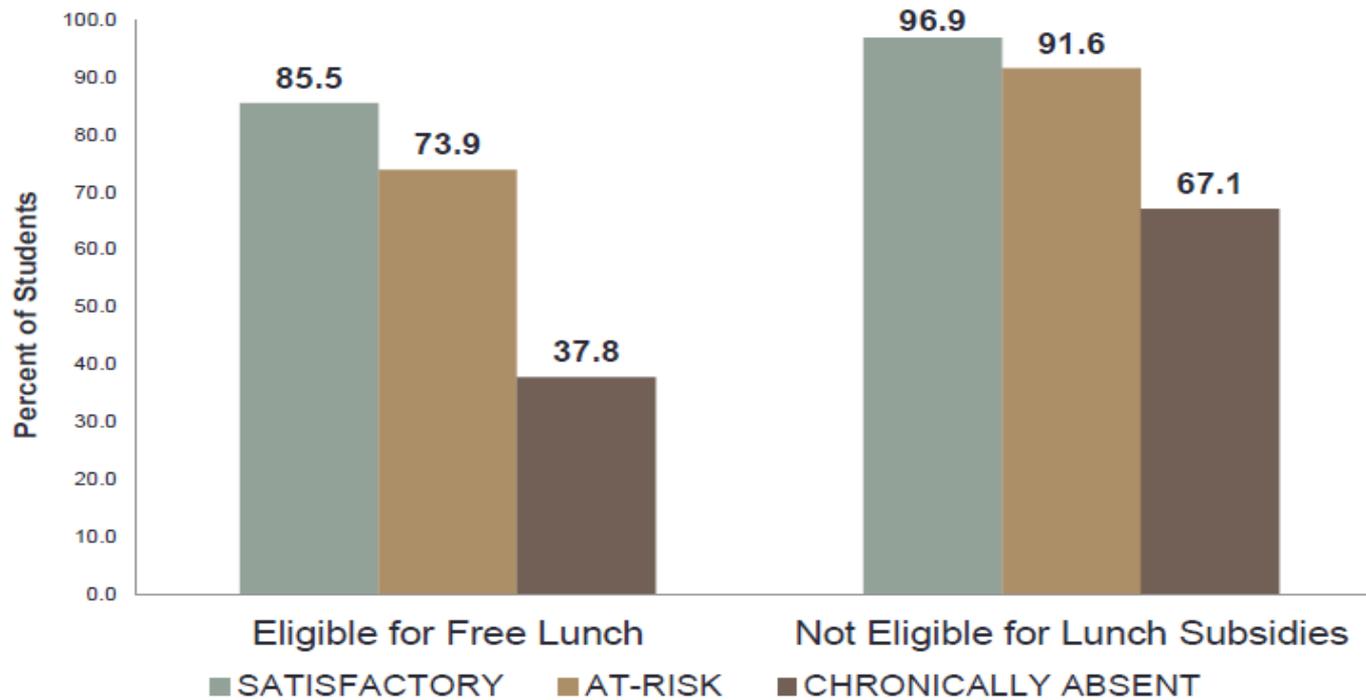
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative and Affect All Children



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Attendance Is Even More Important for Graduation for Students In Poverty

Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in 4 Years by Lunch Eligibility

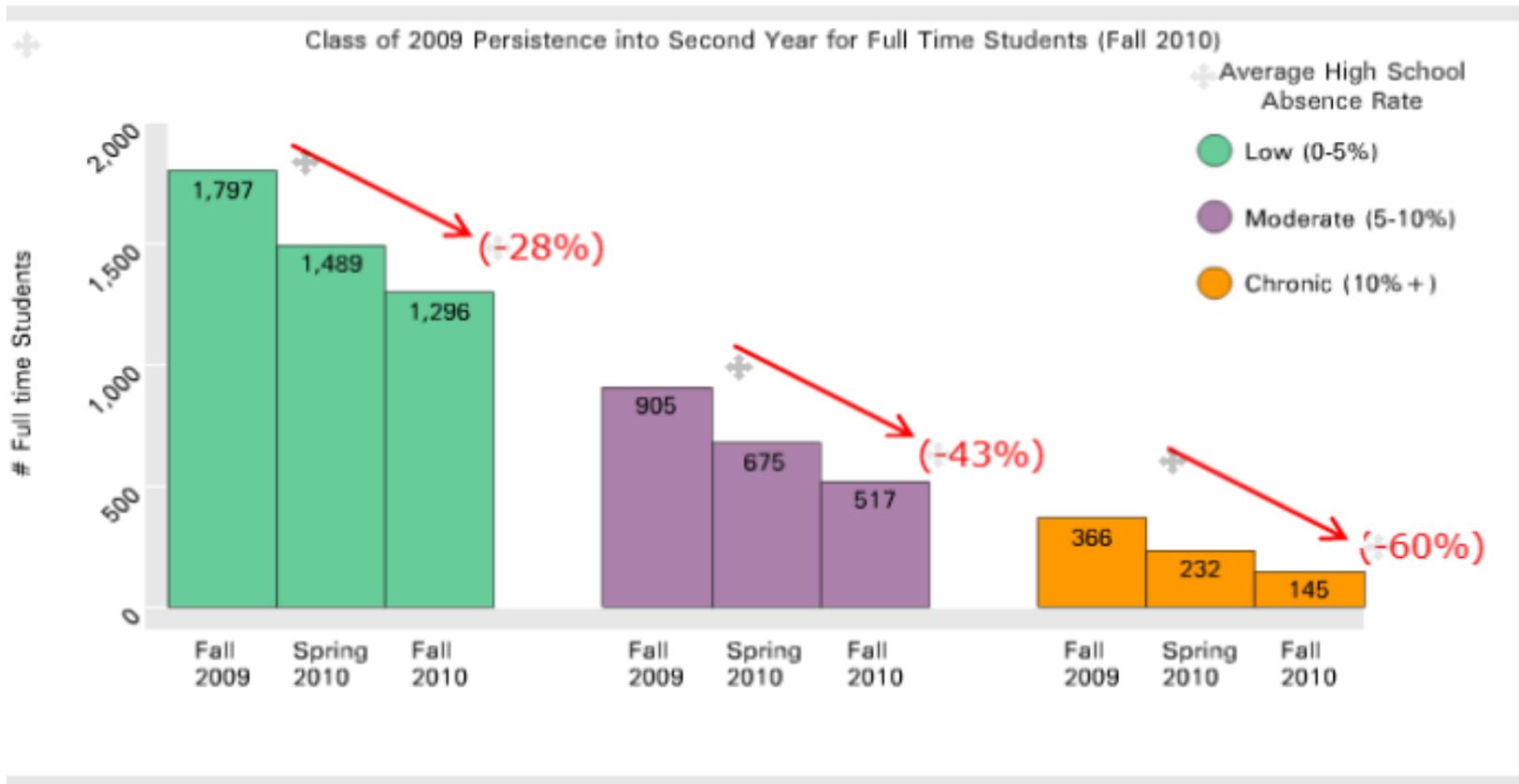


Presentation to: The Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
November 7, 2013, CT State Dept of Education.



Chronic Absence in High School Predicts Lower College Persistence

In Rhode Island, only 11% of chronically absent high school students persisted into a 2nd year of college vs. 51% of those with low absences.



How Can We Address Chronic Absence?



Find Out Why Students Are Chronically Absent

Myths

Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused

Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem

Attendance only matters in the older grades

Barriers

Chronic disease

Lack of access to health or dental care

Poor Transportation

Trauma

No safe path to school

Aversion

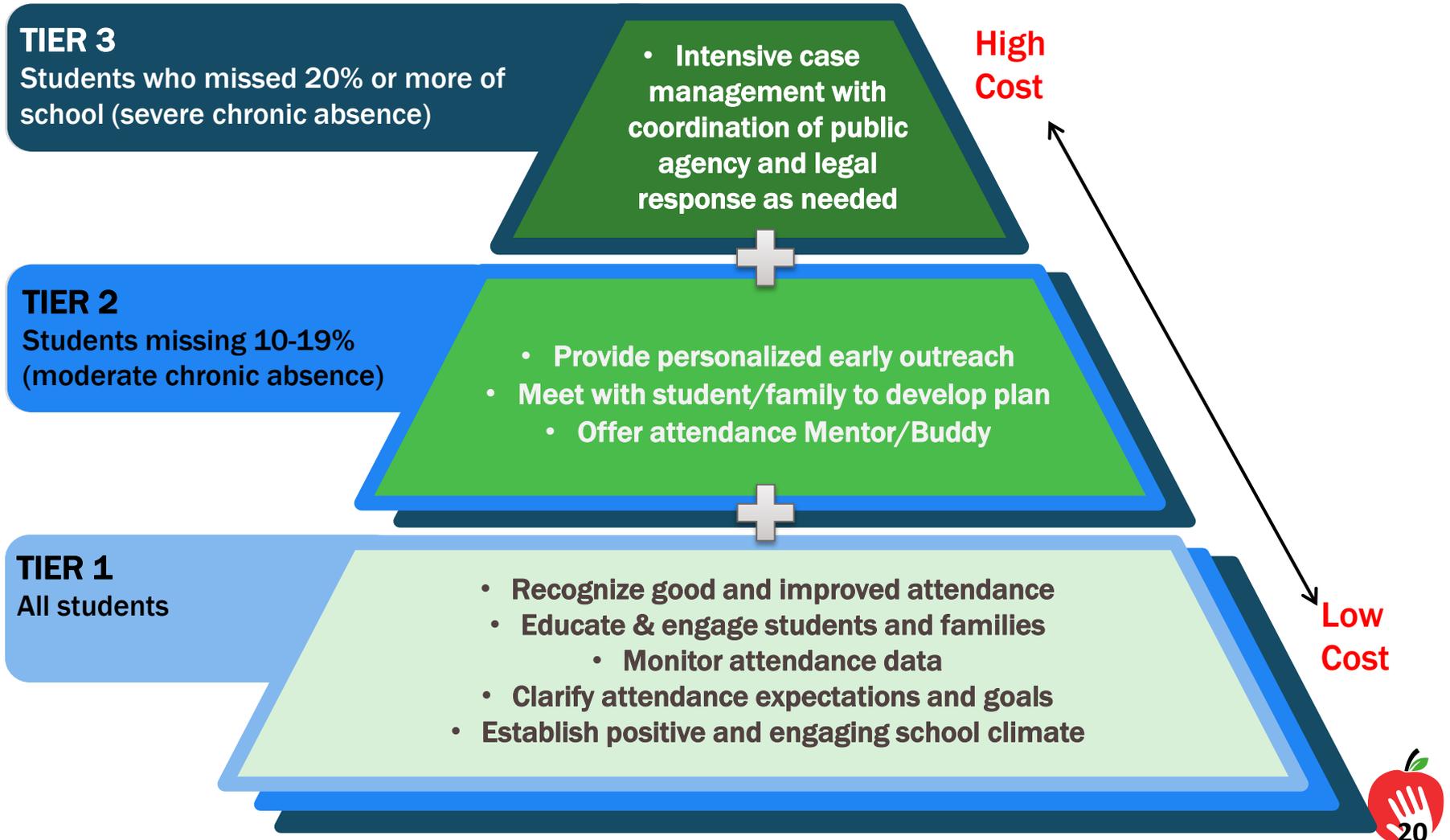
Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

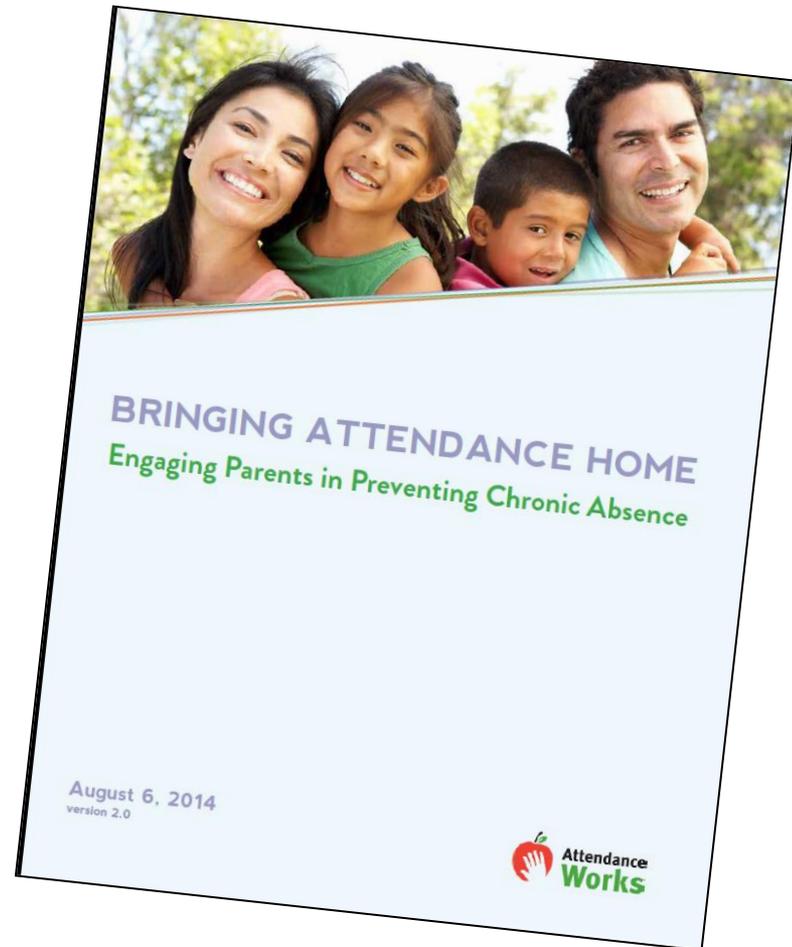
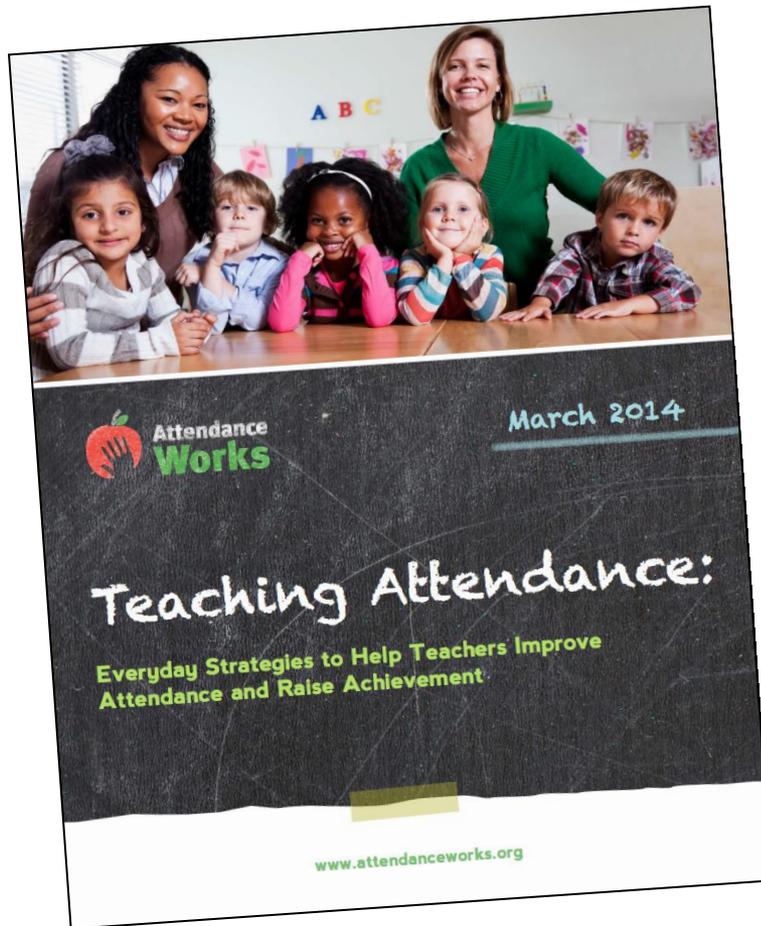
Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Improving attendance requires a tiered approach that begins with prevention

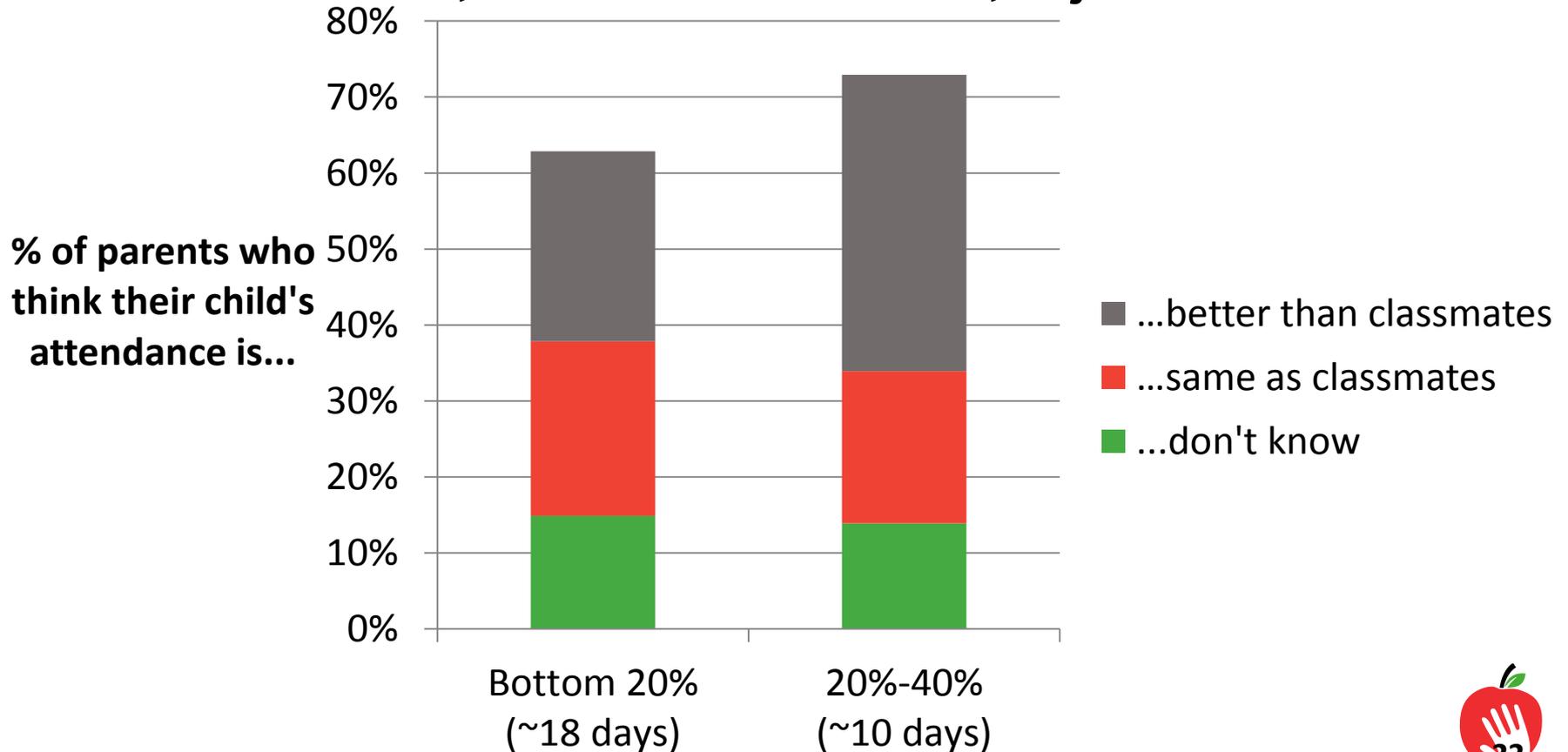


Tier 1: Communication, Education, and Engagement



Pilot Survey by Todd Rogers At Harvard

Vast Majority of Parents, Even Students Those With Excessive Absences, Believe Their Child's Attendance is same as classmates, better than classmates, or just don't know



Harvard research study found comparison reduced absence by 5-10% for all students, regardless of severity of absenteeism

ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP

[DATE]

Dear Parent/Guardian of [Todd Rogers],

[Todd] has missed more school than [his] classmates.

[Todd] was absent [6] day(s) so far this school year.

Students fall behind when they miss school - whether students are absent for excused or unexcused reasons.

You can have a big effect on [Todd]'s absences this semester - and we appreciate your help.

Sincerely,
Superintendent
School District

- Parental Efficacy ✓
- Social Comparison ✓
- Re-calibrate parental under-estimate ✓
- Correct mistaken belief about excused > unexcused ✓
- Parental efficacy ✓
- On the same team, gratitude ✓
- <50 words for low literacy individuals ✓

TODD HAS MISSED MORE SCHOOL THAN HIS CLASSMATES

Category	Total missed days of school
Todd Rogers	12 absences
Typical Classmate	4 absences

[Todd]'s absences are compared to the typical number of absences among [his] classmates in [5th grade] at [Harvard MS].

** This card is part of the XYZ Attendance Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance. This is a follow-up to cards we sent earlier in the year. The number of absences listed above includes excused and unexcused absences as of [DATE]. If you have questions, or you do not want to receive future cards, please call [PHONE], email [EMAIL], or visit www.attendanceproject.org. Please be sure to provide the following code: [UNIQUE CODE]. If you received this card in error or have already opted out of receiving these cards, please disregard this one. We apologize for the inconvenience.

- Social comparison in writing for low numeracy individuals ✓
- Red bar signifies "needs improvement" ✓
- Horizontal graphs with vertical gray axis lines tested as clearest to low numeracy individuals ✓
- Public website for more information and to opt-out of further mail ✓

Families need to know when absenteeism is a problem

**Good
Attendance**

**Missing less
than 5% of
school days**

At-Risk

**Missing
between 5-
10% of school
days**

**Chronic
Absence**

**Missing 10% or
more of school
days**



What might educators and community partners say to families?

Good Attendance

Congratulate parents on making attendance a priority and encourage them to keep it up. Ask them what they're doing that's enabling them to be so successful.

At-Risk

Let parents know that you are concerned about attendance because their child is beginning to head off track, and it is easy for absences to add up.

Chronic Absence

If student is right around 10% or a little above

Let parents know their child may be academically at risk because they have missed so much school. Discuss underlying causes and how you can help.

If student is severely chronically absent (e.g. >20%)

The type of challenges these families face may differ from those with more moderate absence problems. Be prepared to touch on difficult topics, be supportive, and be ready to connect to community resources.

Framing the Conversation to Build a Relationship of Trust

1

Learn

Learn about the student's family. Ask what their vision is for their child's future. What are their hopes and dreams for them?

2

Share

Share positive things you've observed about the student. Share your own vision for student learning & development, including helping put students on a pathway to success by encouraging a habit of good attendance.

3

Inform

Review attendance report with parents. Tailor your conversation to student's level of absenteeism and inform parents of possible impacts of missing school. Connect attendance back to parents' hopes and dreams for their child.

4

Discuss

Discuss the challenges parents face in getting their children to school, as well as strengths they can build upon. For chronically absent students, try to understand the barriers that are keeping their children from school.

5

Arrive at a Plan

Think through strategies with parents for addressing absences and help them develop an attendance improvement plan. Offer referrals to services as needed and ask if there are other ways you can help.



Make Creating Back Up Plans a Norm: Student Attendance Success Plan

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS



To improve my child's attendance, I can commit to the following:

- _____
- _____
- _____

- My child was present ____ days.
- My child was absent ____ days.
- My child's current attendance rate is ____%.
- My goal for next year is to improve my child's attendance to ____%.

We will review progress to meet this goal at the next Parent-Teacher Conference.

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

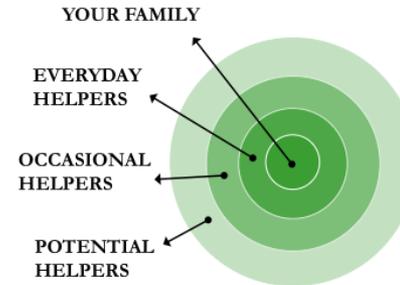
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will reward my child for attending school every day with _____.
(i.e. A visit to the park, extra screen time, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by ____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for ____ a.m.
- If my child consistently complains of a stomachache or headache and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to school anyway and call Counselor _____ so that he/she can check in with him/her during the school day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend, or neighbor who can take my child to school if I can't make it or if he/she missed the bus.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after 3:30 p.m.



To learn more, please visit
www.attendanceworks.org or www.ar-qlr.net



YOUR FAMILY'S HELP BANK



- Your Family:** List who lives in your house.
- Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help everyday, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help—if you ask.

- Your Family:**
- Everyday Helpers:**
- Occasional Helpers:**
- Potential Helpers:**

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

_____	_____
Name	Best Contact Number
_____	_____
Name	Best Contact Number
_____	_____
Name	Best Contact Number

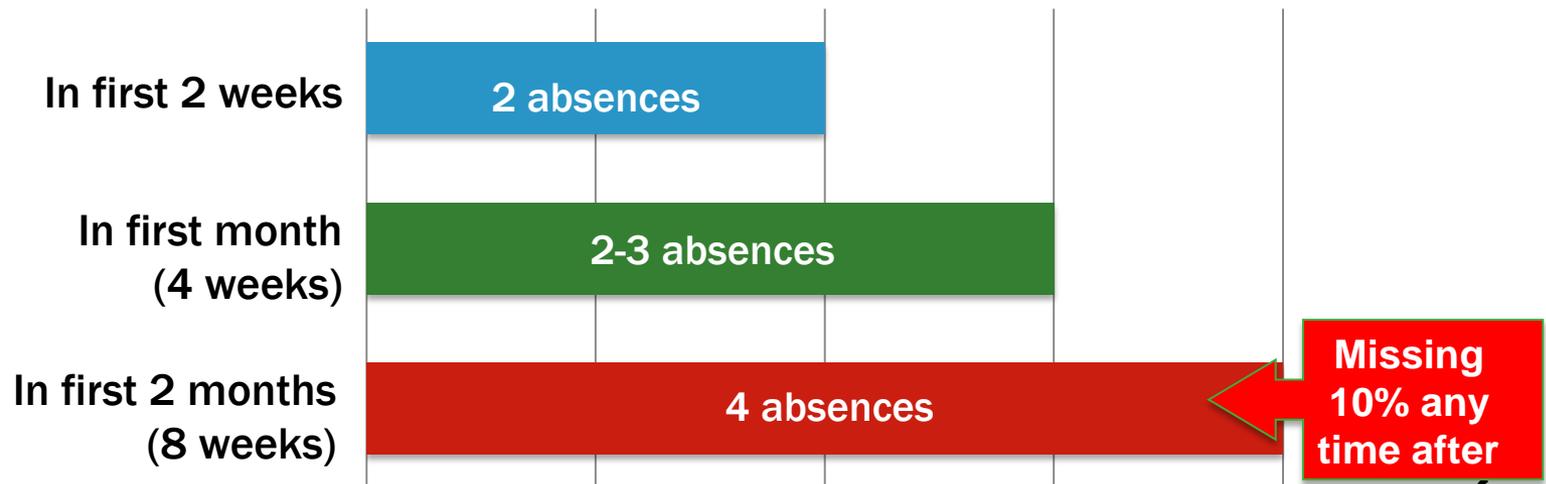


To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org
Adapted with permission of the De'Von Family Foundation



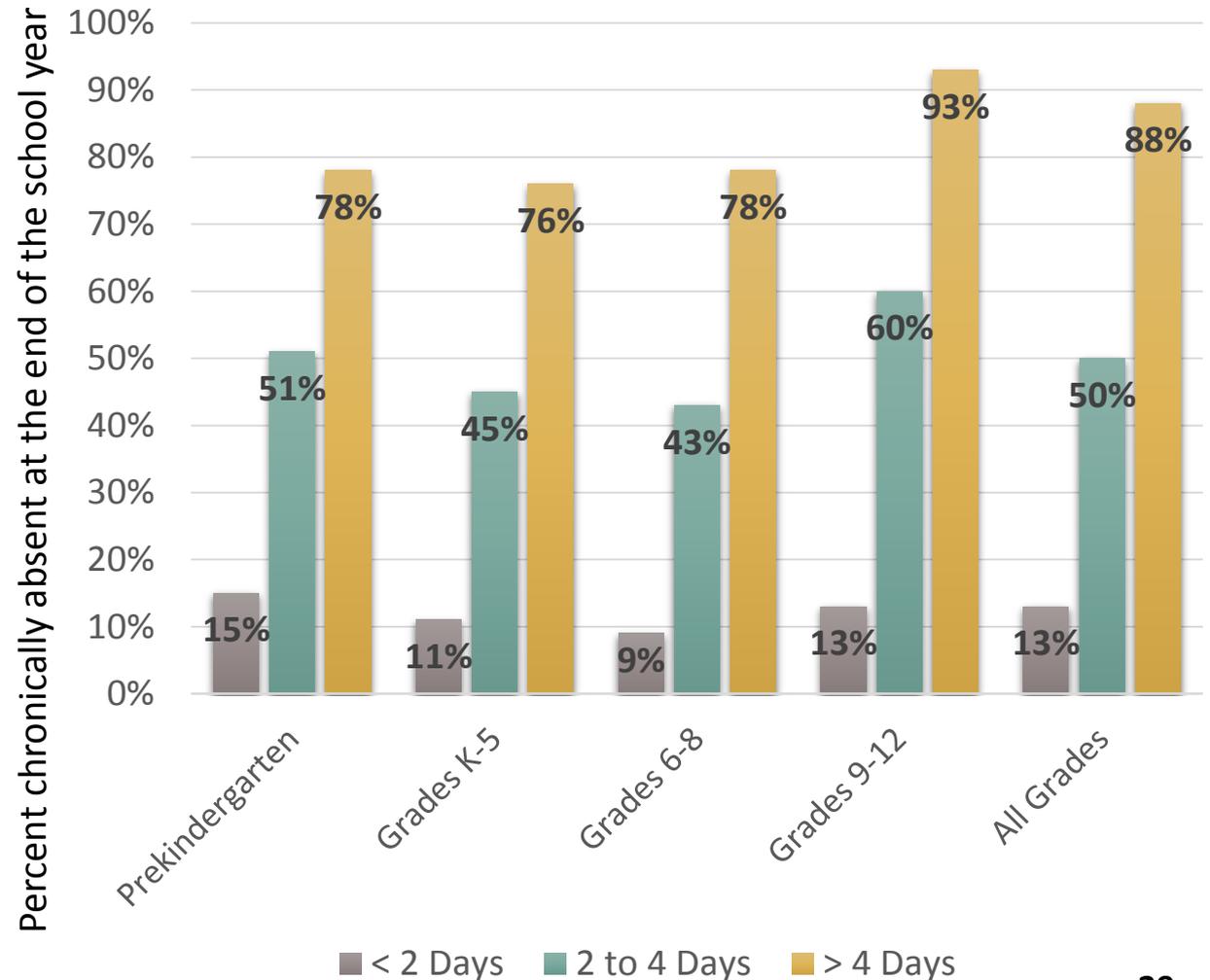
Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- ❑ Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
- ❑ And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:



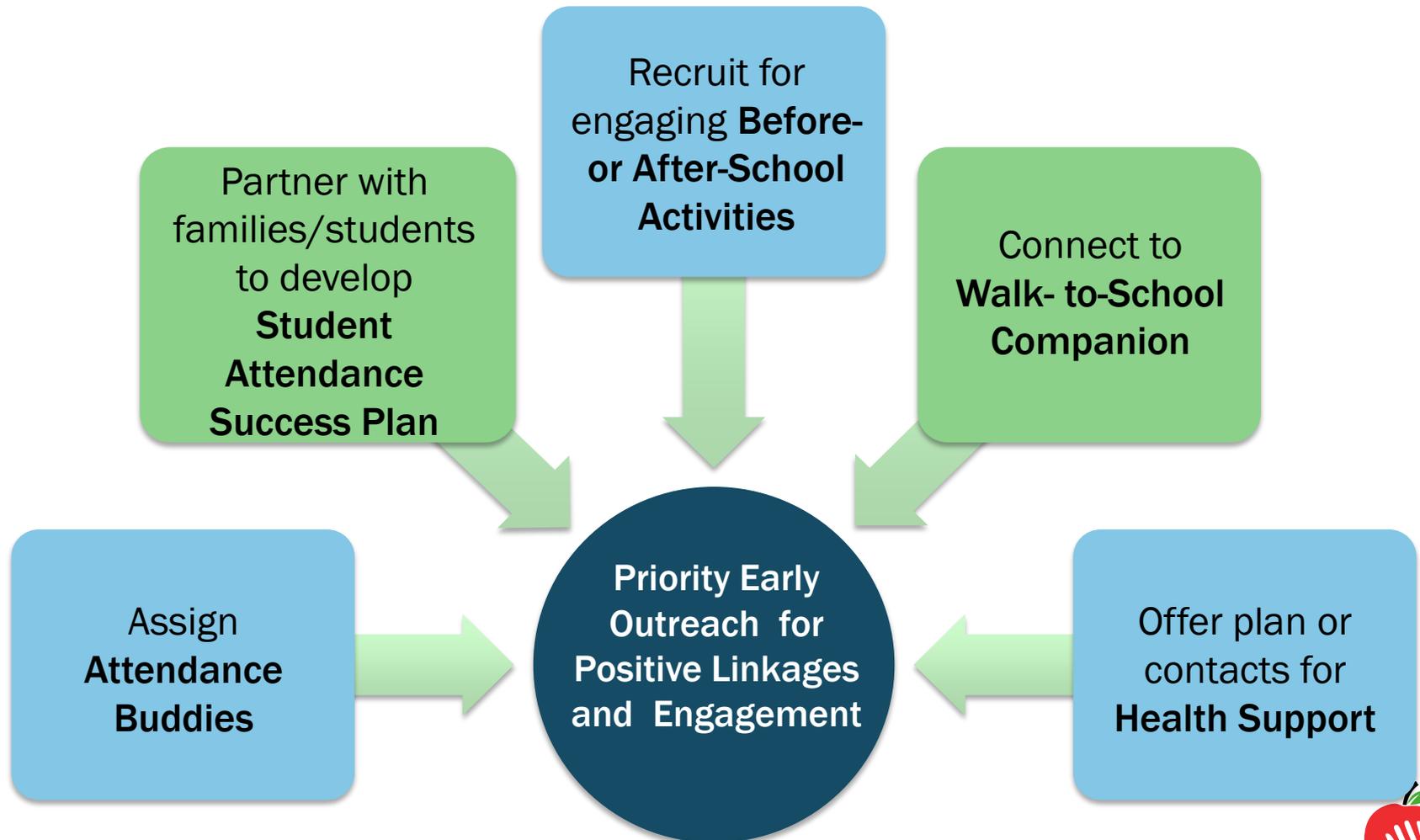
Students Who Miss 2 or More Days of School in The First Month of School Are Significantly More Likely to Be Chronically Absent by the End of the School Year

- Baltimore students who missed 2-4 days of school in September were 5 times as likely to be chronically absent.
- Students who missed 5 or more days of school in September were 16 times as likely to be chronically absent.



Possible Tier 2 Interventions

(See *Power of Positive Connections Toolkit*)



Key Finding: Success Mentors & Supporting Infrastructure Substantially Improved Student Attendance

- **Students with prior histories of chronic absenteeism with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school (9 days), which is educationally significant.**
- **In the top 25% of schools, students with Success Mentors gained one additional month of school.**
- **High School students with Success Mentors (including those overage for their grade) were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year.**
- **Mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their attendance, schoolwork, motivation, and confidence.**

Tools for Tier 2: The Power of Positive Connections



Attendance Works

August 2014

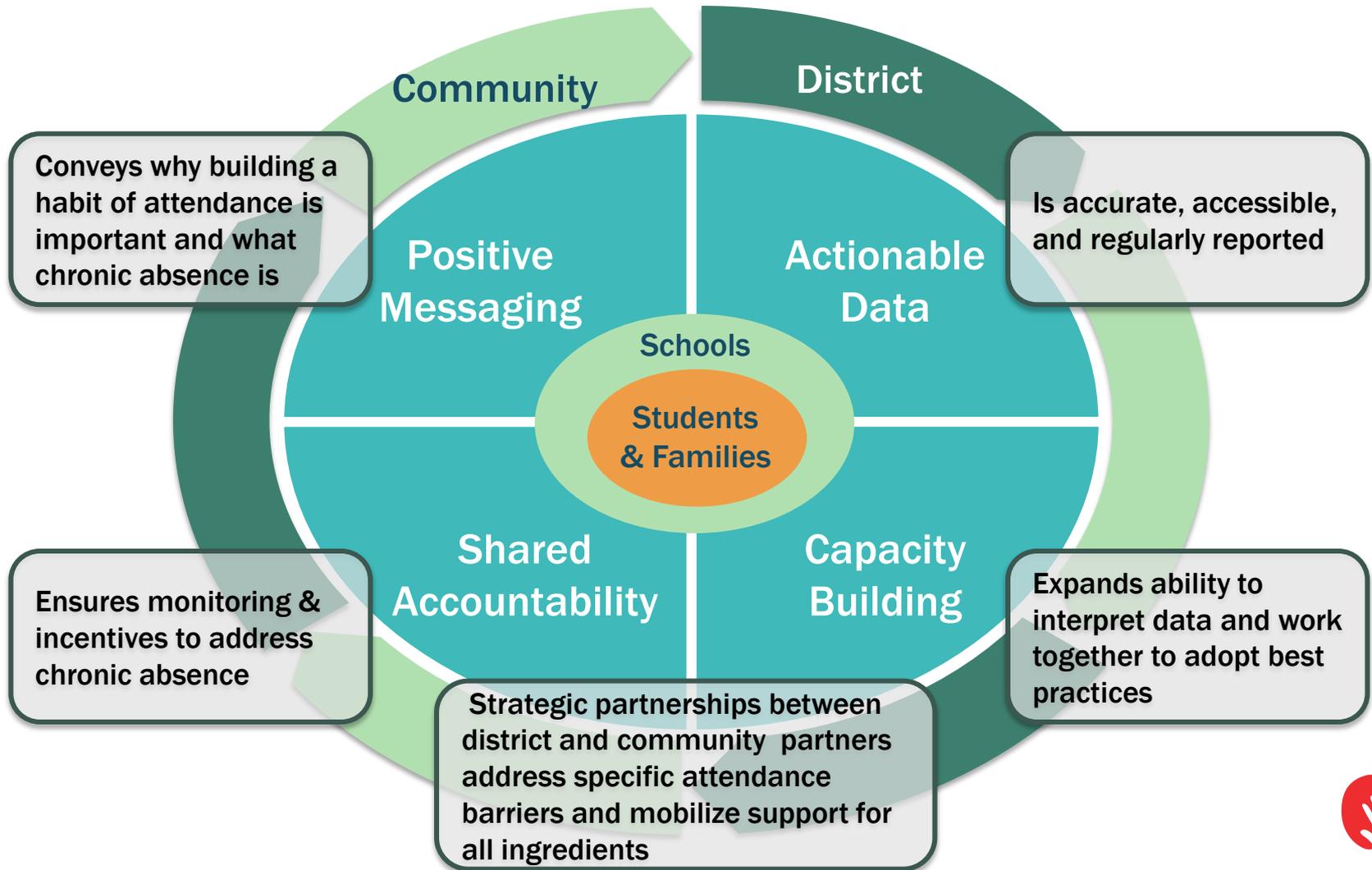


The Power of Positive Connections

Reducing Chronic Absence through PEOPLE:
Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages
and Engagement

www.attendanceworks.org

Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability



Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools (2009-10)

	Elementary	Middle	High School
# Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence	9	0	0
# Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence	17	4	1
# Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence	25	8	6
# Schools with >20.1% Chronic Absence	9	4	9
Total No. Schools	60	16	16
Highest % of Chronic Absence	31.5%	32.8%	42.1%
Lowest % of Chronic Absence	0.3%	6.9%	7.9%
Median	12.7%	14.9%	21.0%
Mean	11.9%	15.6%	22.4%

Los Angeles

Attendance Improvement Program

- **Data-driven action:** Data are used identifying where to place counselors, which students to target & to evaluate success.
- **Attendance Improvement Counselors:** Attendance Improvement Counselors, along with Vista national service members helped the schools track data, adopt universal and targeted interventions, create incentives for good attendance, reach out to students and parents, and ensure a timely response to poor attendance.
- **Capacity-building:** The Attendance Improvement Counselors also charged with building the capacity of the school staff, parents and community partners to understand attendance laws, use data, and develop a comprehensive approach that includes prevention and early intervention.



LAUSD Attendance Improvement Program Outcomes

Program Impact in Year 1 (2011-2012)

	Missing 7 days or less (96%+)			Missing 15 or more days (<91%)		
AIP Schools	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Kindergarten	37.24%	57.56%	+20.32%	31.32%	17.87%	-13.45%
Grade 9	51.45%	58.82%	+7.37%	27.65%	22.30%	-5.35%
School-Wide	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Elementary	55.56%	63.03%	+7.47%	18.64%	13.71%	-4.93%
Secondary	54.29%	58.65%	+4.36%	23.59%	20.36%	-3.23%

Note: Program operated in 77 schools including 52 elementary and 25 high schools with poor K and 9th grade attendance

Characteristics of More Successful AIP programs

- **Strength-based approach with more positive perceptions of parents, higher expectations of their students and parents**
- **Greater levels of parent engagement**
- **A shared belief that everyone had a role in improving attendance and should work together**
- **Deeper levels of commitment to program implementation and delving into the causes of absence**
- **School leadership made improving attendance a high priority**

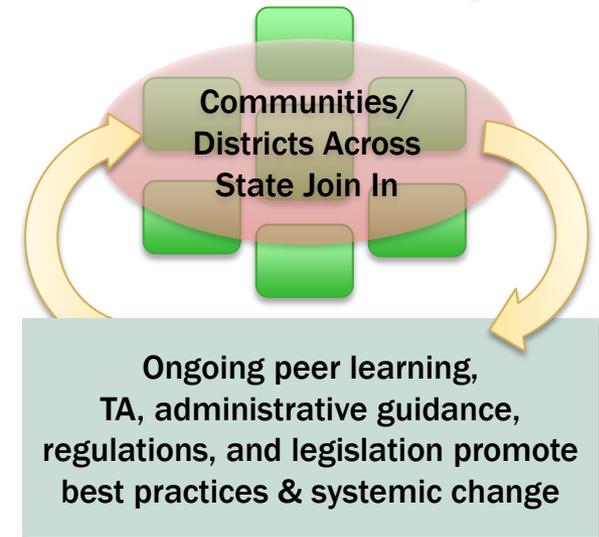
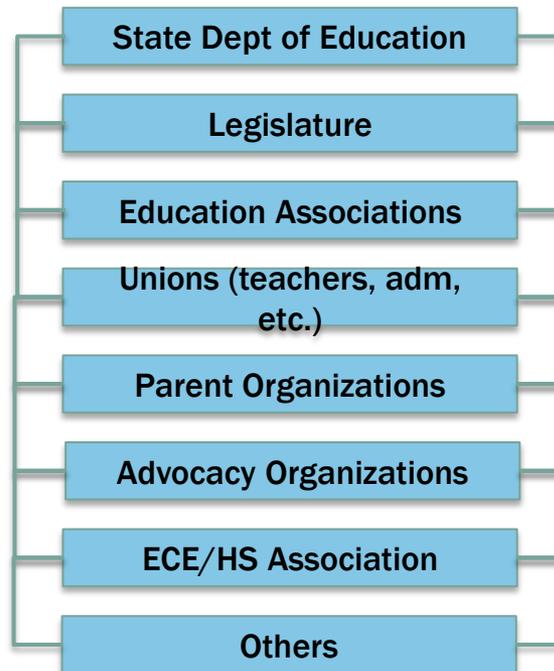
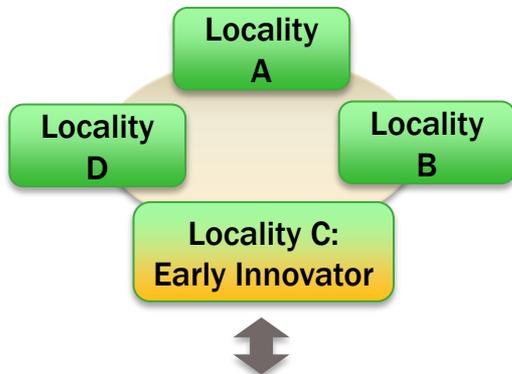


Scaling Up: Proposed Local to State Pathway

Advance local practice through peer learning

Inform state organizations with insights from local practice

Spread work state-wide through TA and policy



Reflection

- Does this resonate? What would you add or change given the success and challenges that you've experienced?
- Questions?

Additional Resources

www.attendanceworks.org



The Superintendents Call to Action

**Own the
Issue**

**Mobilize
the
Community**

**Drive With
Data**

*To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit:
www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action*



2015 Webinar Series

- **Ready, Set, Go: Launching Attendance Awareness Month 2015 ~ April 15, 2015**
(Recording available)
- **Start Strong: Address the Attendance Gap in the Early Grades ~ May 13, 2015**
- **Finish Strong: Close the Attendance Gap in High School ~ August 12, 2015**
- **Map the Attendance Gap: Use Data to Target Action ~ September 9, 2015**



What to Do When

What to Do When: At a Glance



Let's get started!

- Convene coalition
- Recruit partners
- Meet with district
- Enlist health care providers
- Launch poster contests and other marketing campaigns

Early Summer

Getting into specifics

- Distribute talking points
- Enlist elected officials & celebs
- Line up incentives
- Analyze data



Late Summer

It's Go Time

- Tape PSAs
- Begin media outreach
- Print banners & posters
- Plan assemblies and Back-to-School events
- Launch door-knocking campaigns

Back to School!

- Release proclamations
- Host Back-to-School events
- Host press conferences
- Share data
- Spread the word!



Spread the Word!

- **Host a webinar party to watch the webinars and use the Discussion Guides to digest how you can apply what you learned for your community.**
- **Write, talk, blog, tweet about Attendance Awareness Month 2015!**



Chronic Absence =

The Warning Light On A Car Dashboard

The Parallels



- Ignore it at your personal peril!
- Address early or potentially pay more (lots more) later.
- The key is to ask why is this blinking? What could this mean?