



Reducing Chronic Absence: What Will It Take?

*An overview of why it matters and
key ingredients for improving
student attendance*

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Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

- The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

Chronic Absence

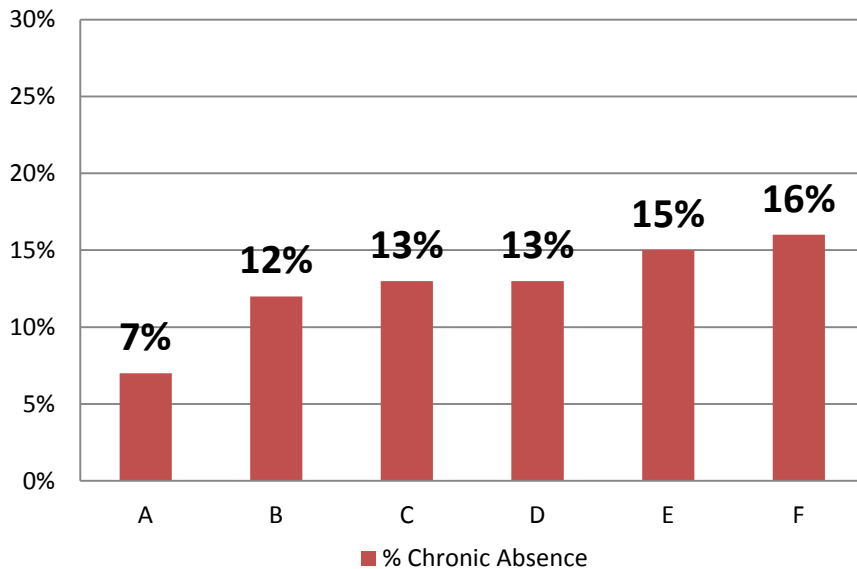
- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school starting in Kindergarten.



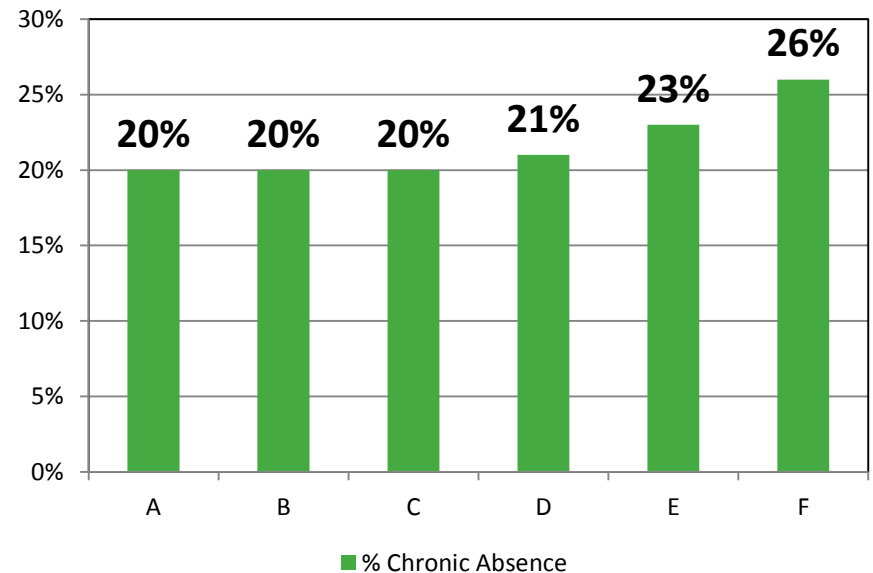
High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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



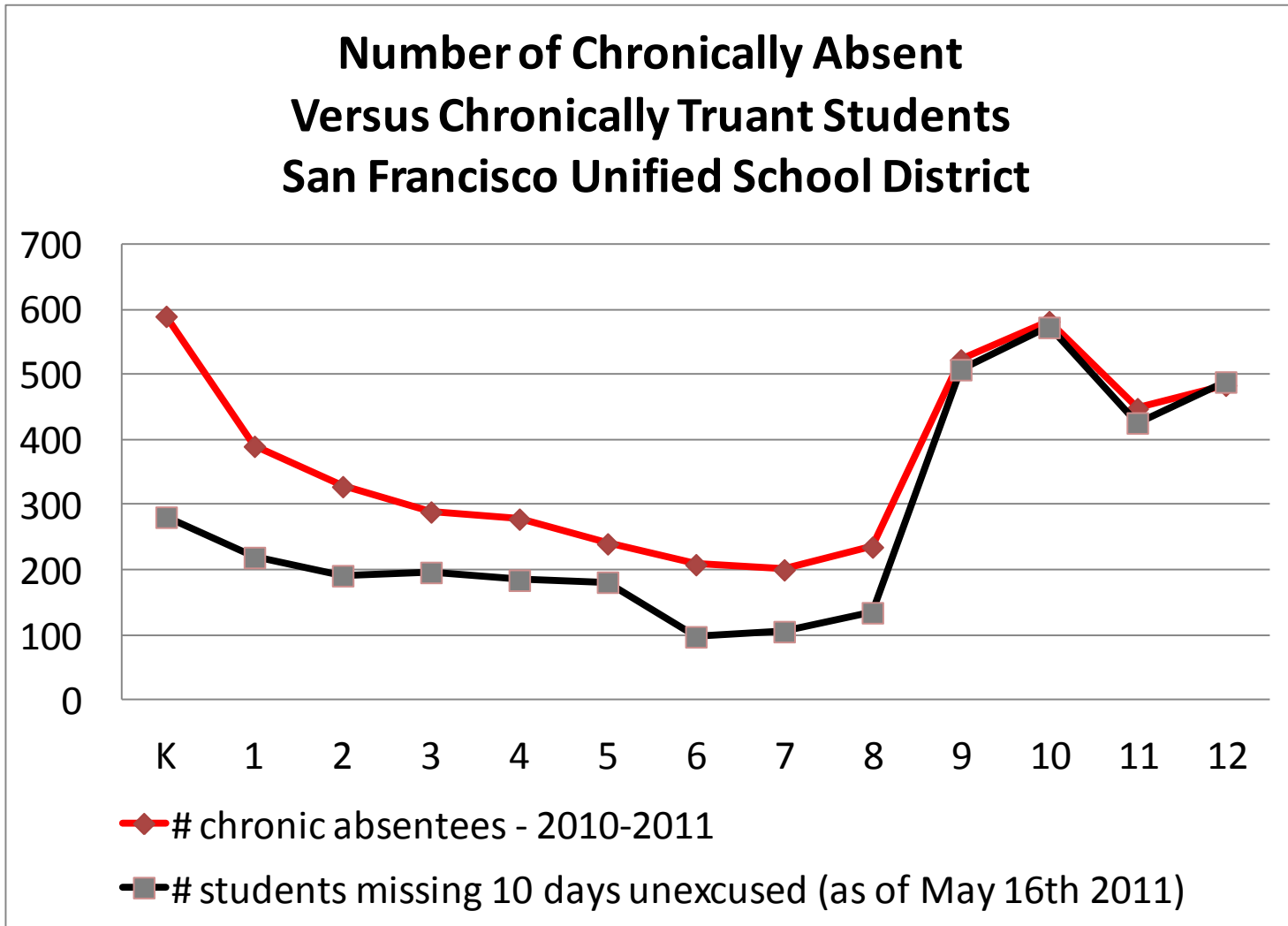
Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



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

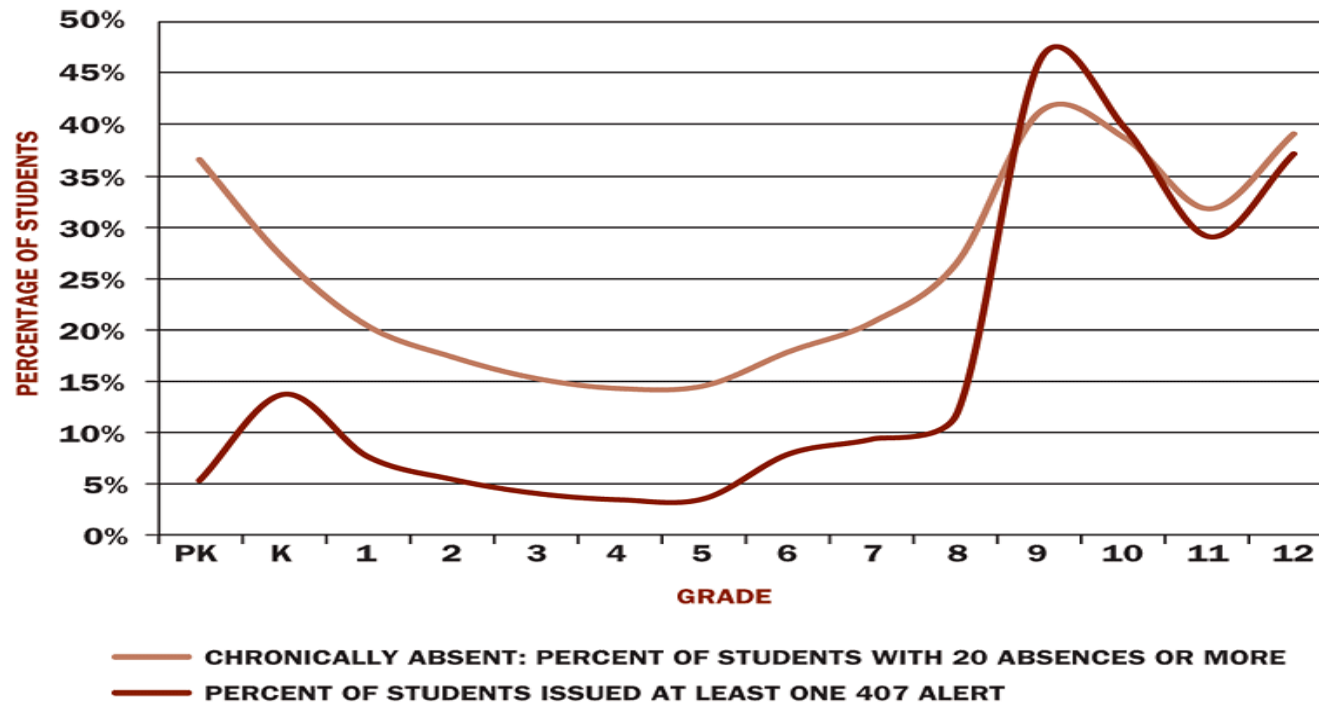


Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



Sporadic – Not Just Consecutive – Absences Matter

New York City Schools (2008)



- A 407 alert is issued when a student misses 10 consecutive days or 20 days over a 40 day period. It misses more sporadic absence.
- 1 out of 5 elementary school children were chronically absent.

Source: Nauer, K. et al, *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, Center for New York City Affairs New School, Oct 2008

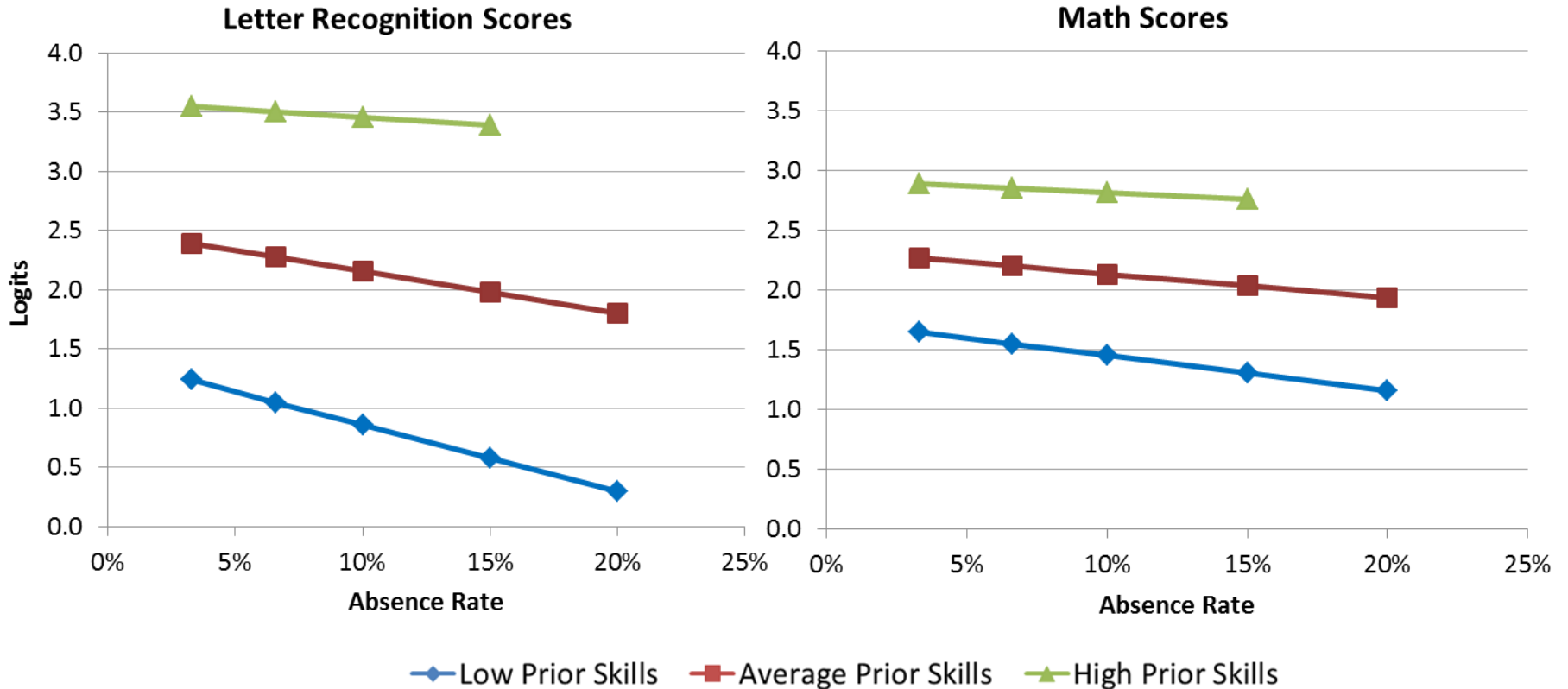


Chronic Absence: A Hidden National Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as **10-15%** of students (7.5 million) 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.
- ❑ Poor attendance isn't just a problem in high school. It can start as early as kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.

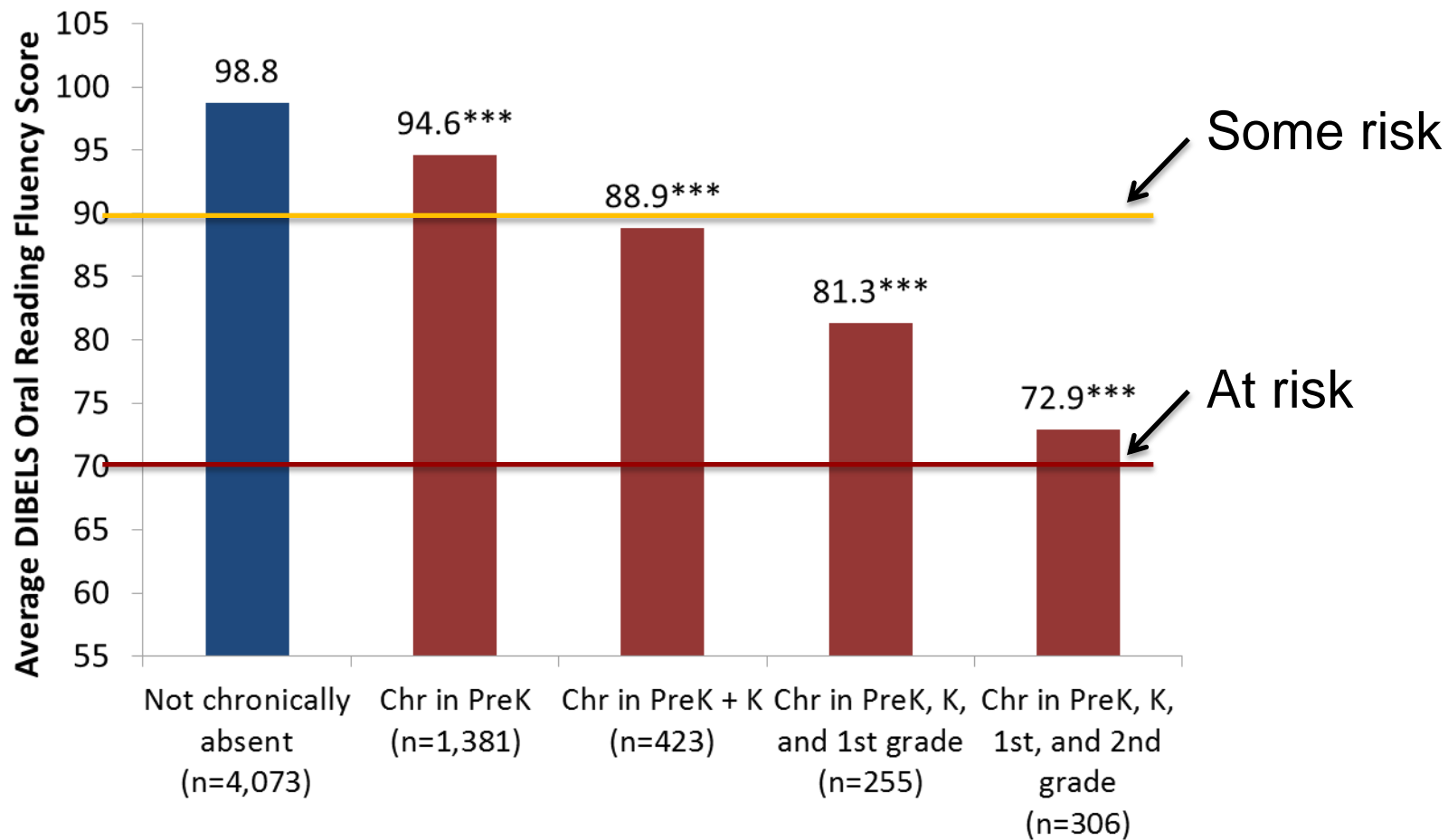


Starting in preK, chronic absence affects learning and school readiness. Attendance matters most for the children who enter the farthest behind.



Analyses control for prior preschool experience, race, gender, neighborhood poverty and social status, special education status, ELL status, and program type. Missing data points represent values with fewer than 30 students.

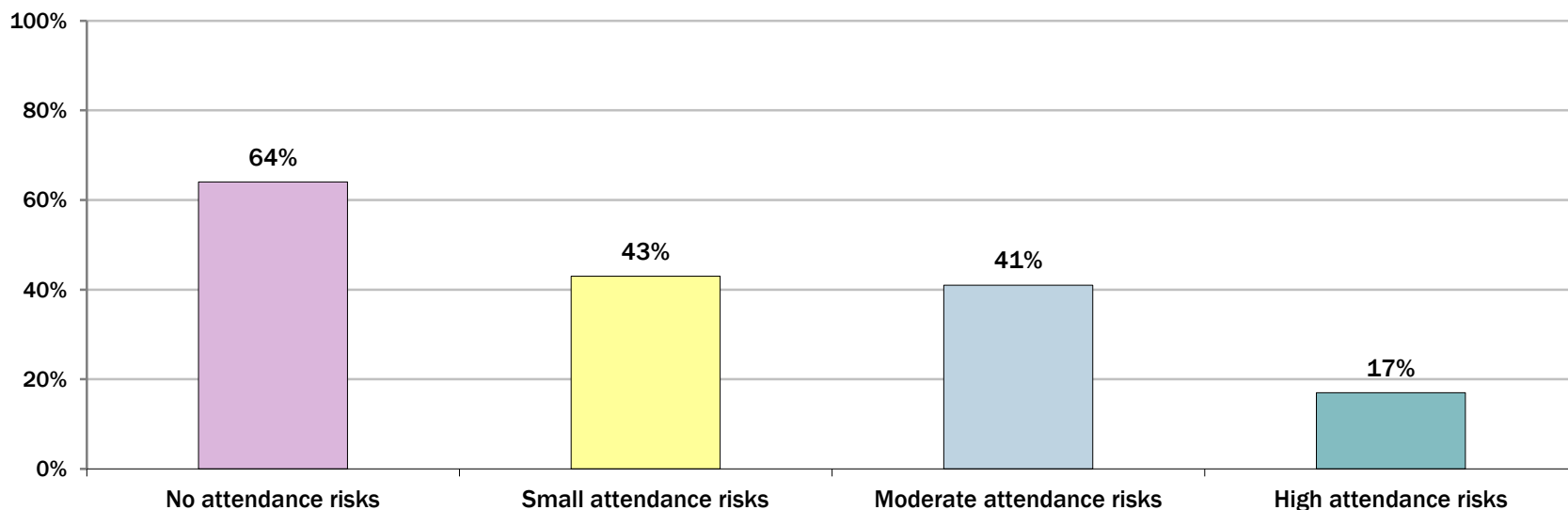
Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2nd grade scores



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

Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1st Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1st Grade



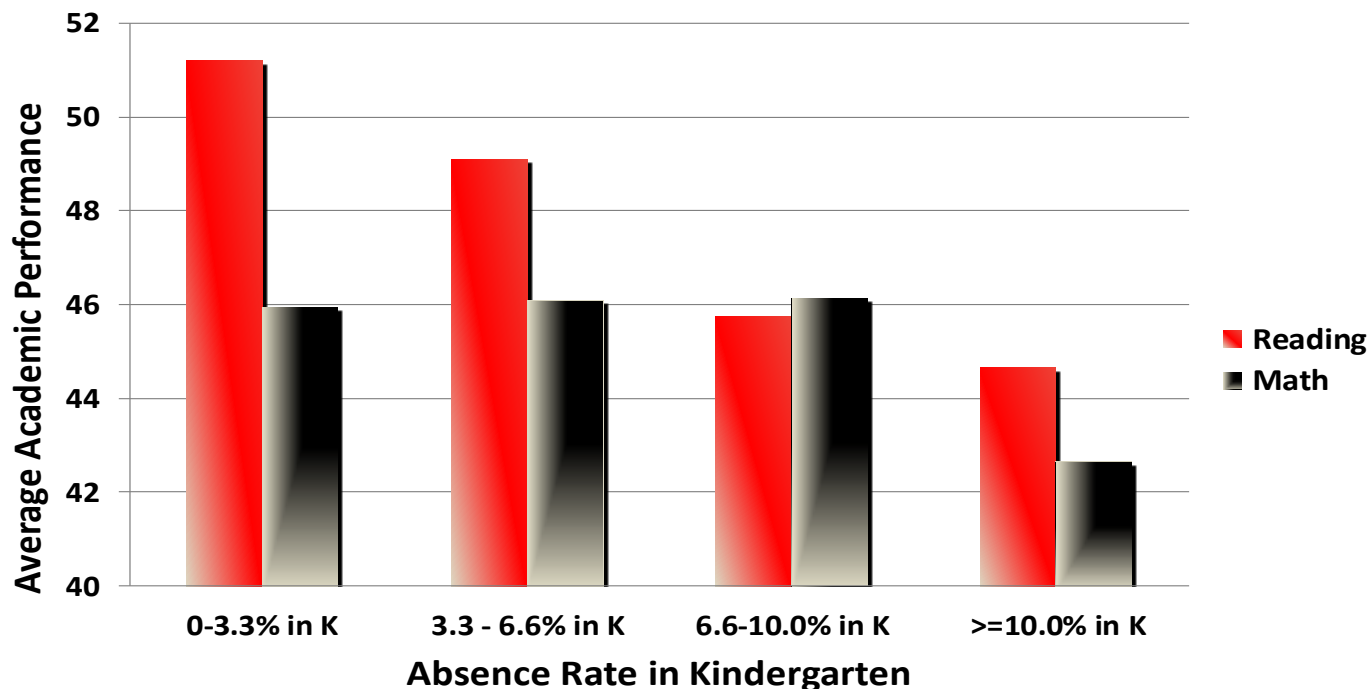
No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1st
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1st
Moderate risk	Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year & 10% or more in 1 year
High risk	Missed 10% or more in K & 1st

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)



The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading performance by K attendance for children living In poverty. Academic performance was lower even if attendance had improved in 3rd grade.



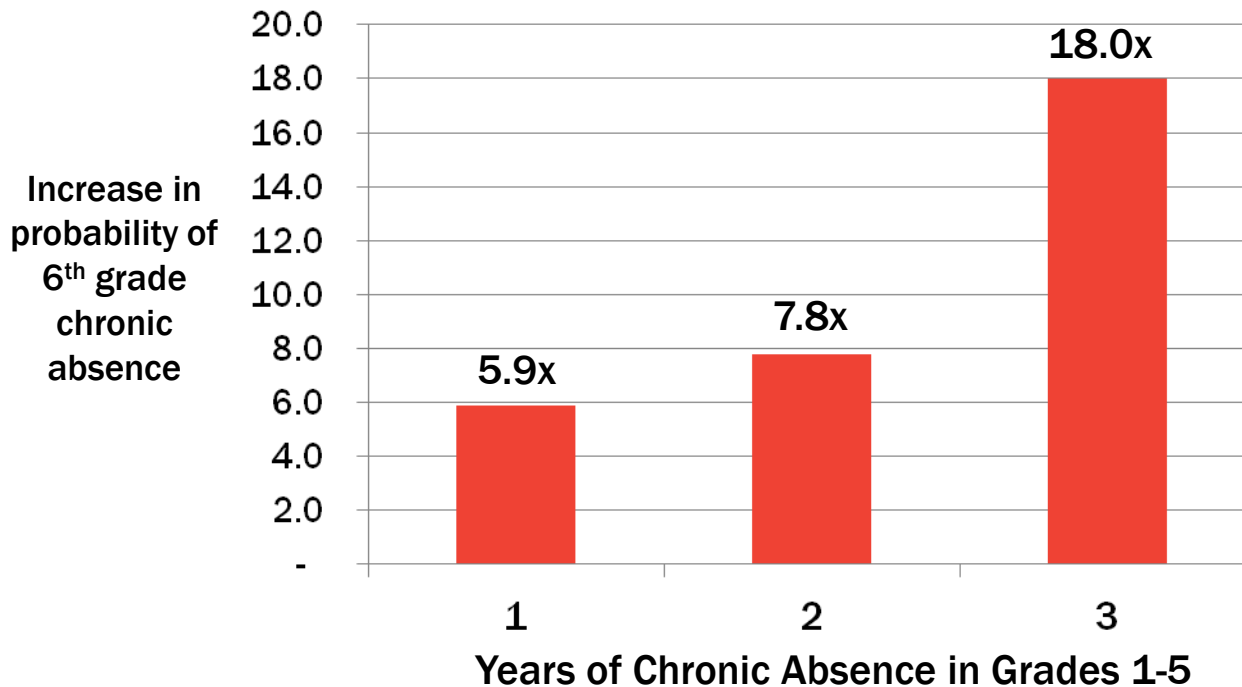
Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.



Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

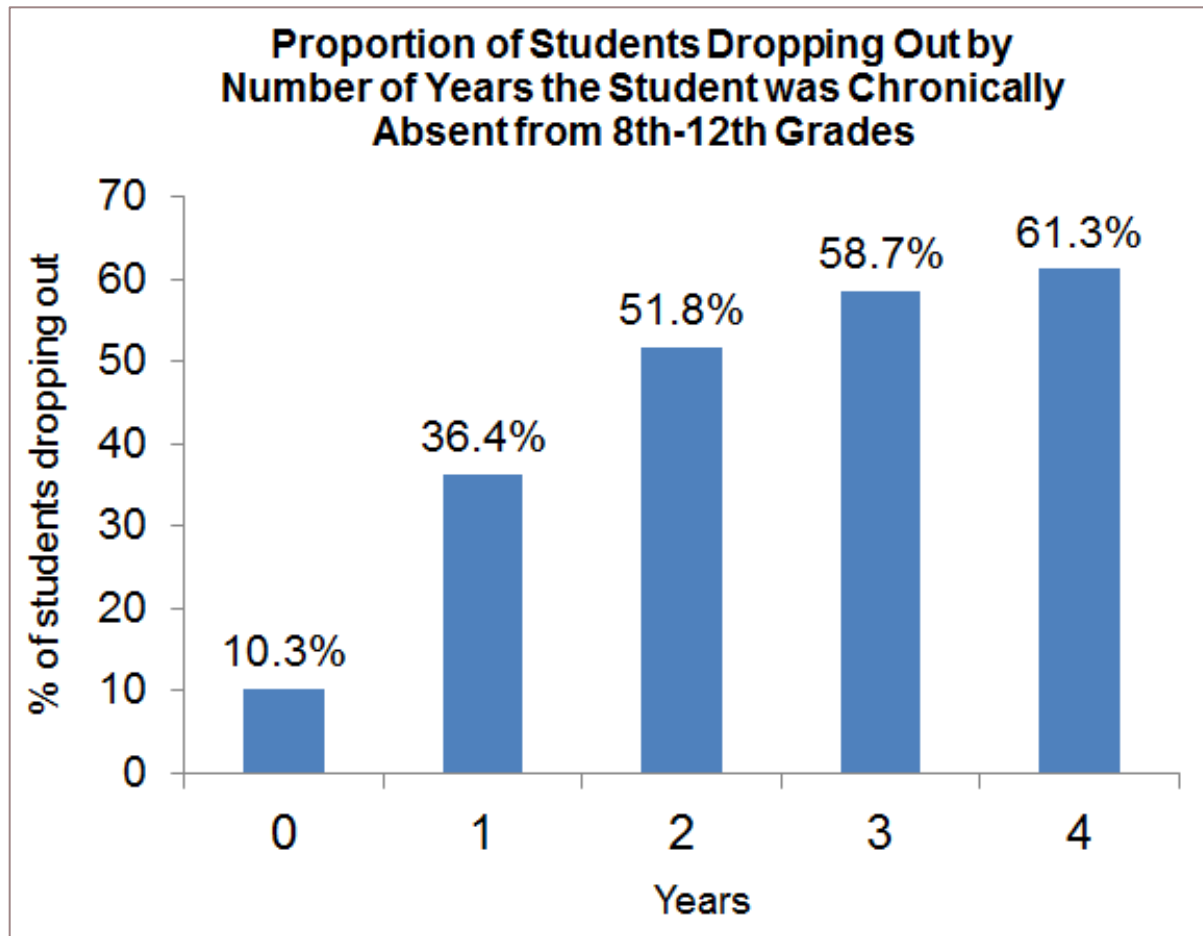
Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade



Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:

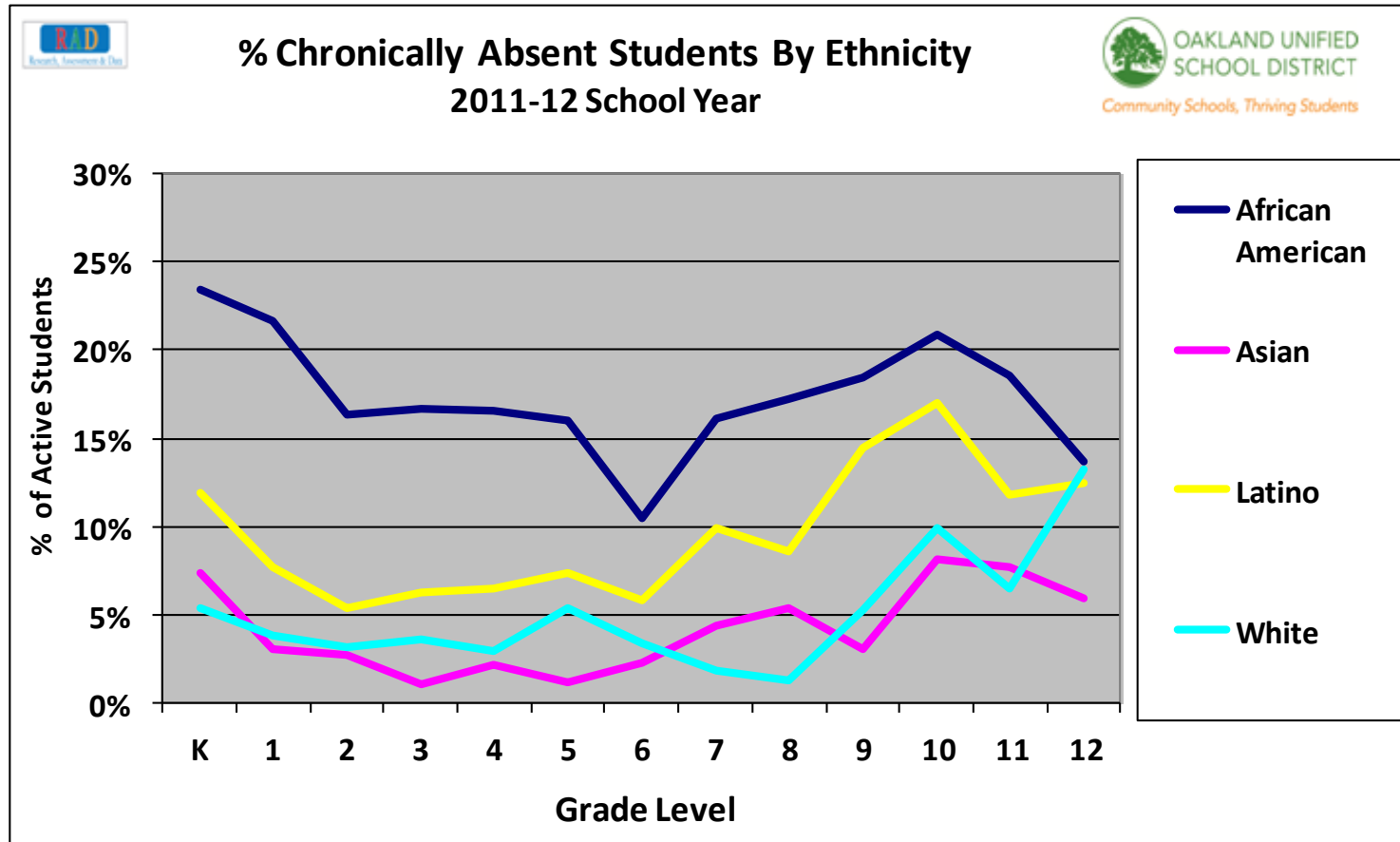
- Lower 6th grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



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

Reducing Chronic Absence is Key to Reducing the Achievement Gap



Why Are Students 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

Lack of access to health care

Poor transportation

No safe path to school

Aversion

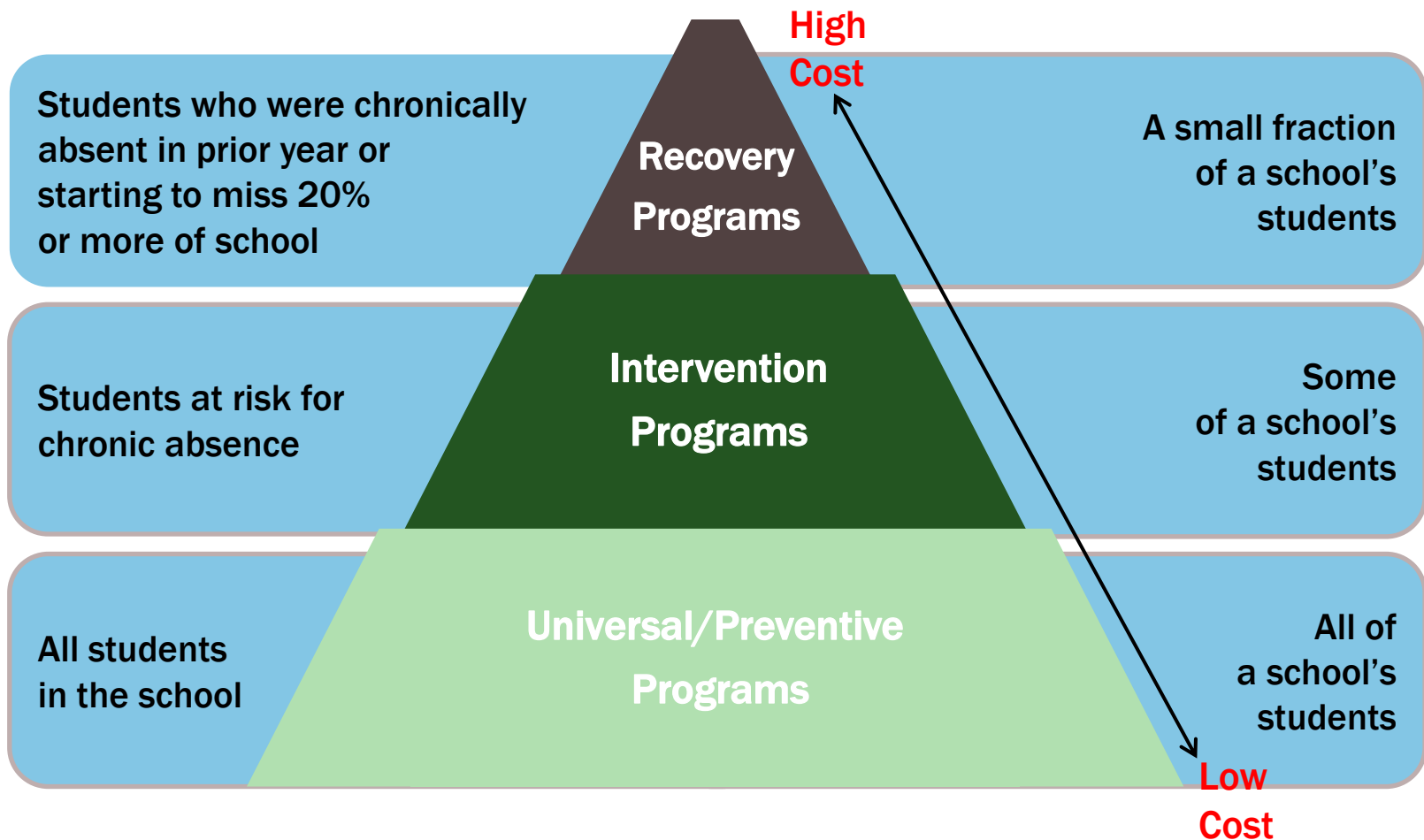
Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



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%

Examples of Successful Efforts



New York City: Citywide interagency task force led by Mayor; “NYC Success Mentor Corp.”, largest school-based mentoring effort in nation reaching about 9,000 at-risk students; interagency data sharing; community impact strategies; celebrity WakeUp! NYC calls; incentives & public-private partnerships. Pilot **reduced chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle and high schools**, outperforming comparison schools. Students with Success Mentors **gained more than 11,800 days of school**.



Baltimore: Fewer unnecessary suspensions, reduced middle school transitions, expanded monitoring of attendance data, and a citywide campaign have **helped cut middle school chronic absence in half**. Baltimore is now turning its attention to preschool and elementary school and to public messaging.

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