



Improving Student Attendance

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Consolidated School District of New Britain

What is Chronic Absence?

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

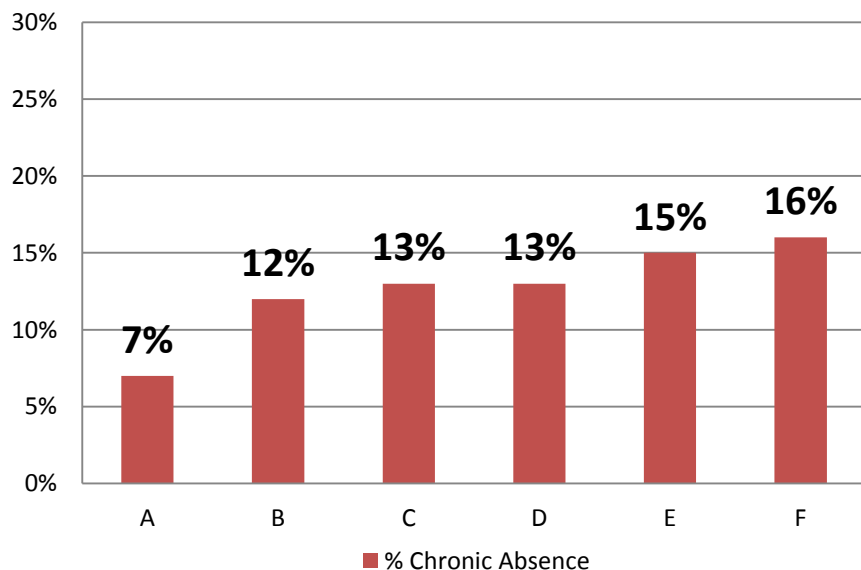


Chronic absence is different from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).

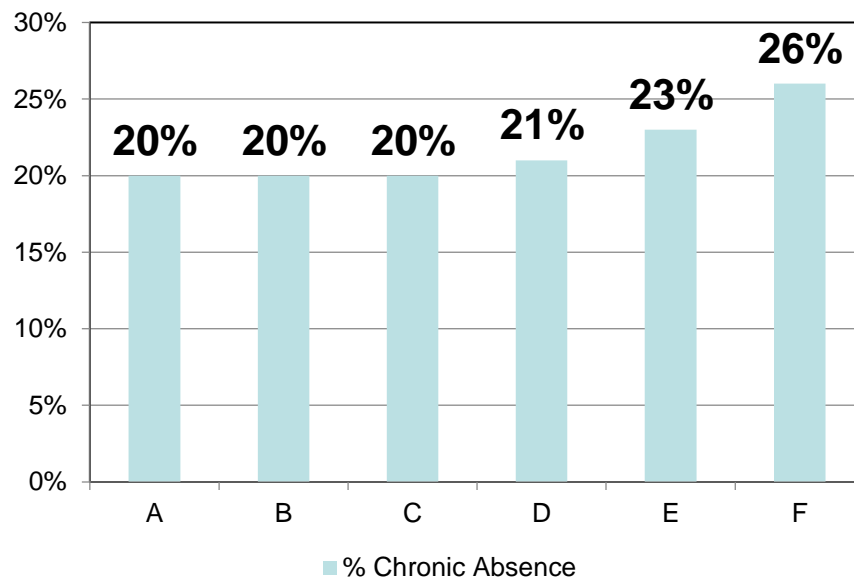
High Levels of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% \neq A

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

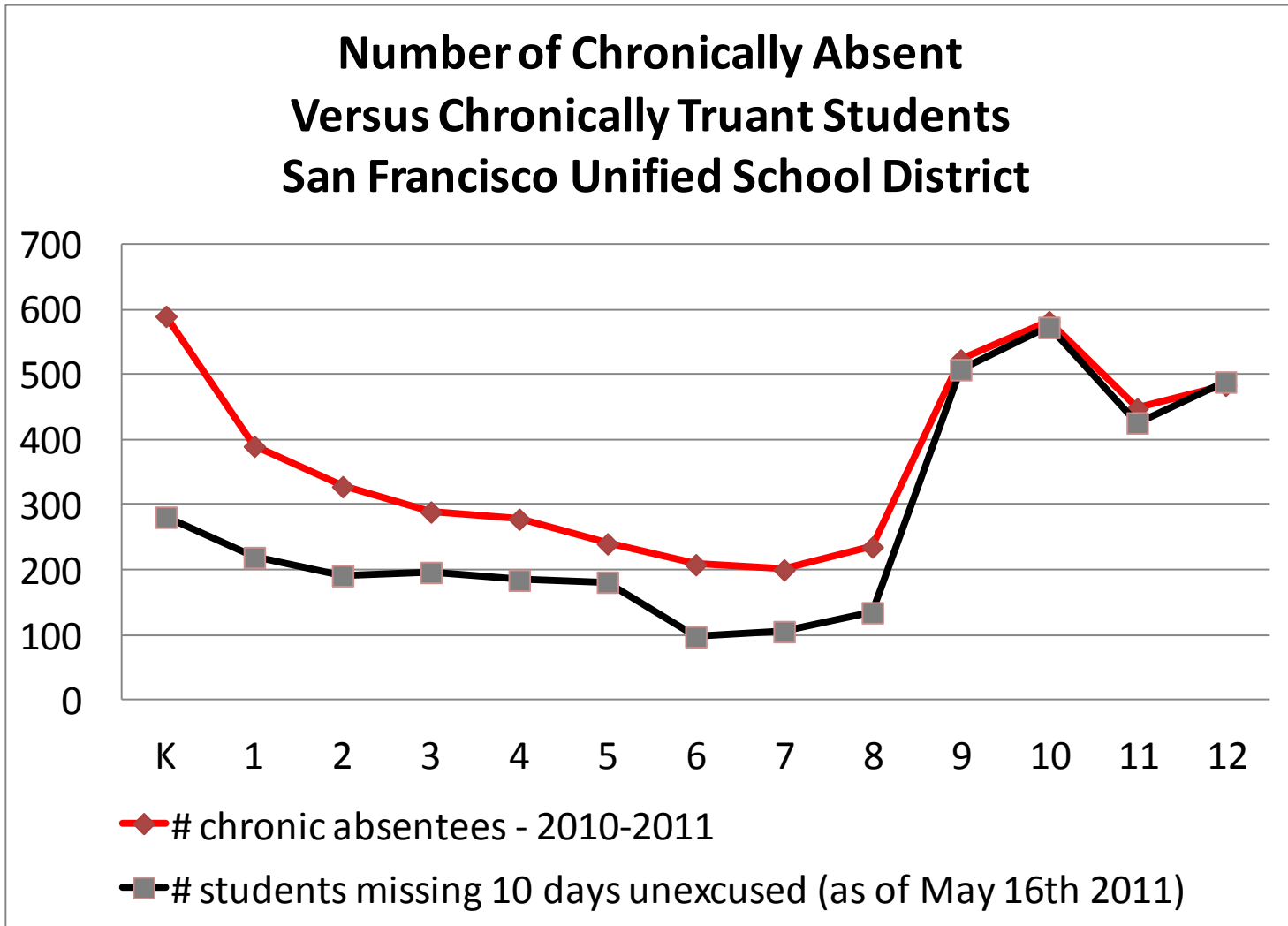


Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



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

Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



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.
- ❑ Research shows that chronically absent students **are less likely to succeed academically**, and are **more likely to be suspended and eventually dropout**.
- ❑ Poor attendance isn't just a problem in high school. It can start **as early as pre-kindergarten**.

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.

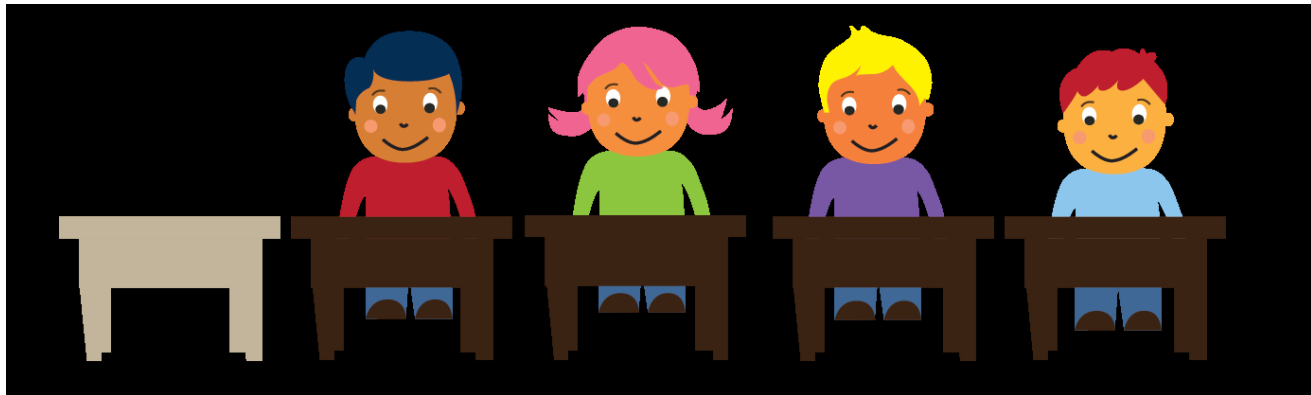
College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

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/>)

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

No safe path to school

Aversion

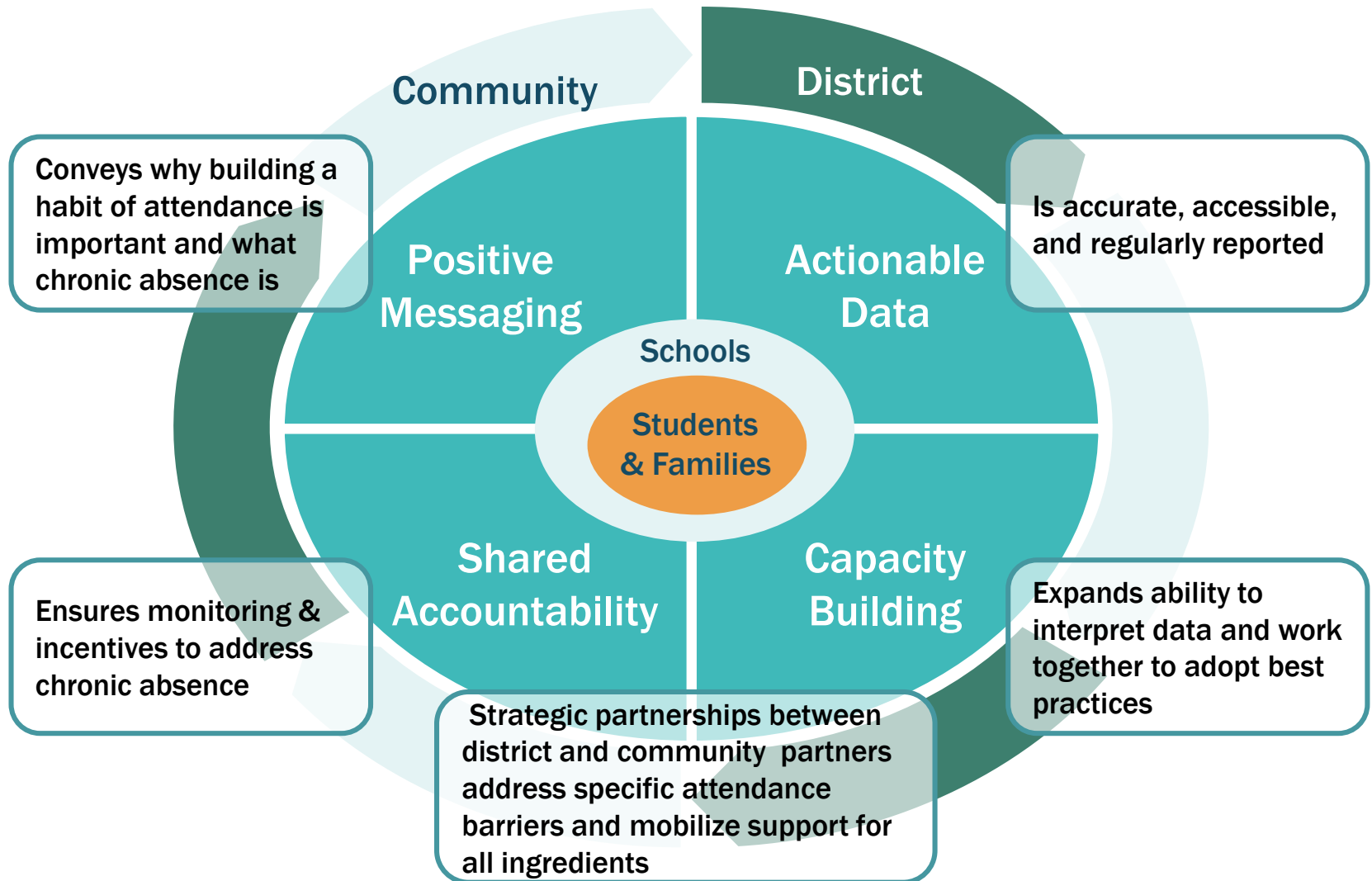
Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability





Consolidated School District of New Britain, CT



- We are aware that chronic absenteeism in New Britain is a contributing factor to our achievement gap and the lack of reading by the end of 3rd grade.
- District wide data identifies kindergarten and first grade along with high school as our most affected grade levels for chronic absenteeism.





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BACKGROUND

- **Addressing chronic absence is a key component of New Britain’s Campaign for Grade Level Reading/ Early Childhood Collaborative**
- **Support from the Campaign and the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain supported technical assistance from Attendance Works to launch the work which leveraged the district’s historical commitment to reducing truancy.**
- **New Britain is now a recognized “bright spot” in light of successes to date**



Consolidated School District of New Britain, CT



- **Professional development:** trained site administrators and teams to interpret attendance data, adopt best practices and engage in peer learning.
- **Actionable data:** sent report to school(s) every 10 days. The report indicates how many and which students are chronically absent
- **School attendance teams:** monitored the data and ensured appropriate supports are in place.
- **Home visits:** hired two family intervention specialists to conduct home visits to chronically absent kindergartners.
- **Parent engagement and communications:** messaged through newsletters, daily interactions with parents and attendance incentives.
- **Community partnerships:** used community agencies to offer supports at school sites and through a district Attendance Review Committee formed as a diversion to juvenile court and referral to the Department of Children and Families.

Sample 10-Day Report

DiLoreto

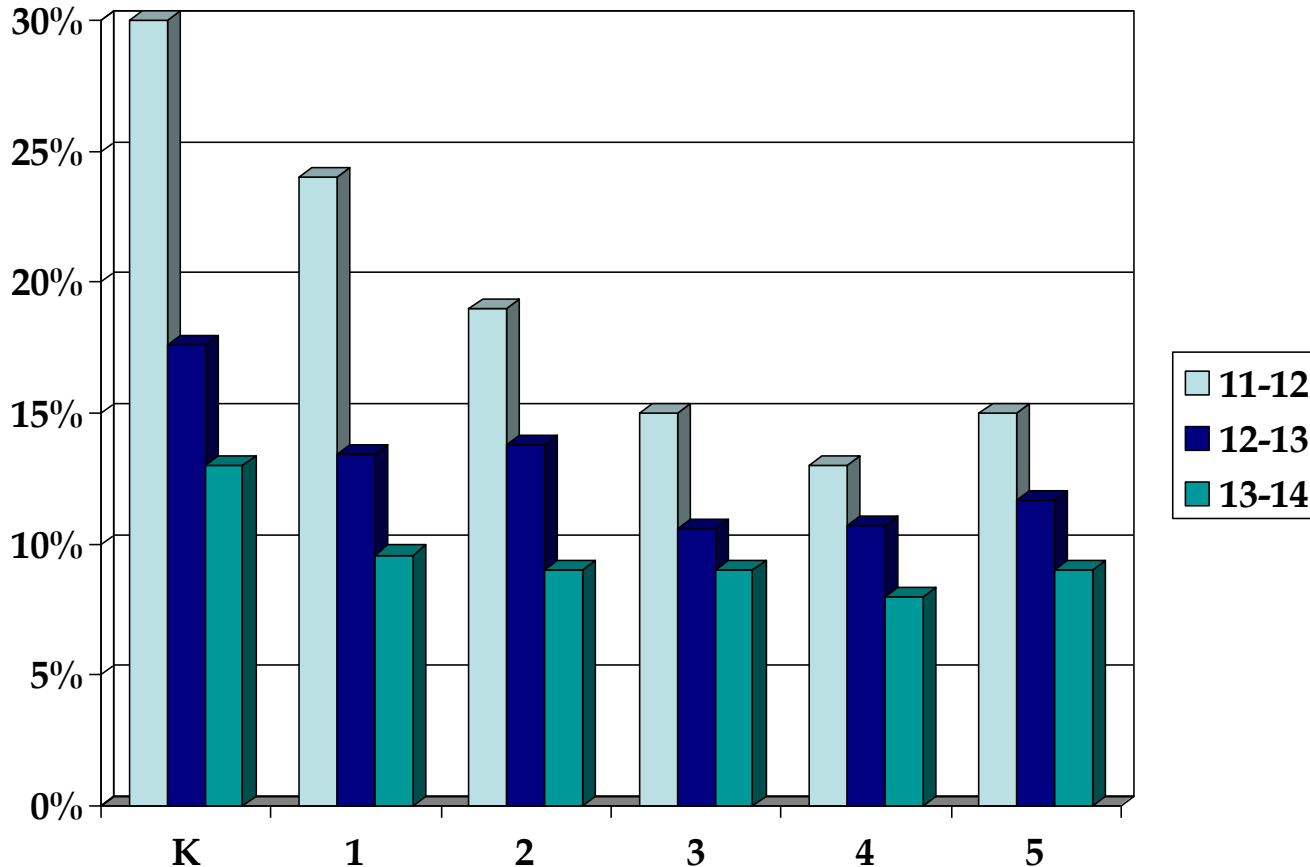
		Grade	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	ALL
2013-14 Baseline	Percentage Chronic Absence		31.08%	13.16%	11.90%	6.67%	9.59%	8.22%	10.84%	11.27%	14.29%	15.07%	13.18%
YTD 29-Sep-14 20 School Days	Total Students		80	72	81	85	86	68	78	81	69	73	773
	Total Chronic		17	8	13	11	10	10	8	4	5	6	92
	Percentage Chronic Absence		21.25%	11.11%	16.05%	12.94%	11.63%	14.71%	10.26%	4.94%	7.25%	8.22%	11.90%
	Percentage Change in Chronic Absence Rate		-32%	-16%	35%	94%	21%	79%	-5%	-56%	-49%	-45%	-10%



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**Chronic Absenteeism
by Grade Level**



Vance Village School New Britain, Connecticut





- Vance Village Urban students were missing more than 10% of the school year.
- In grades K, 1, 2: 65% of our students were below grade level in reading and math
- In grades 3, 4, 5: 55% were below grade level
- We analyzed the number of days of students who were chronically absent and compared that to the number of students who were below grade level-correlation
- **Bottom Line: Students miss out on instructional time and learning opportunities when they are not in school.**

As a school we had to decrease the number of students who were chronically absent



- Developed a school wide initiative to uncover the reasons why
- Created a team in the school – social worker, principal, 2 classroom teachers, PE teacher
- Principal participated in district professional development session with Hedy Chang, Attendance Works
- Constructed an action plan
- Reviewed plan with entire staff

Who Helps Improve Attendance?

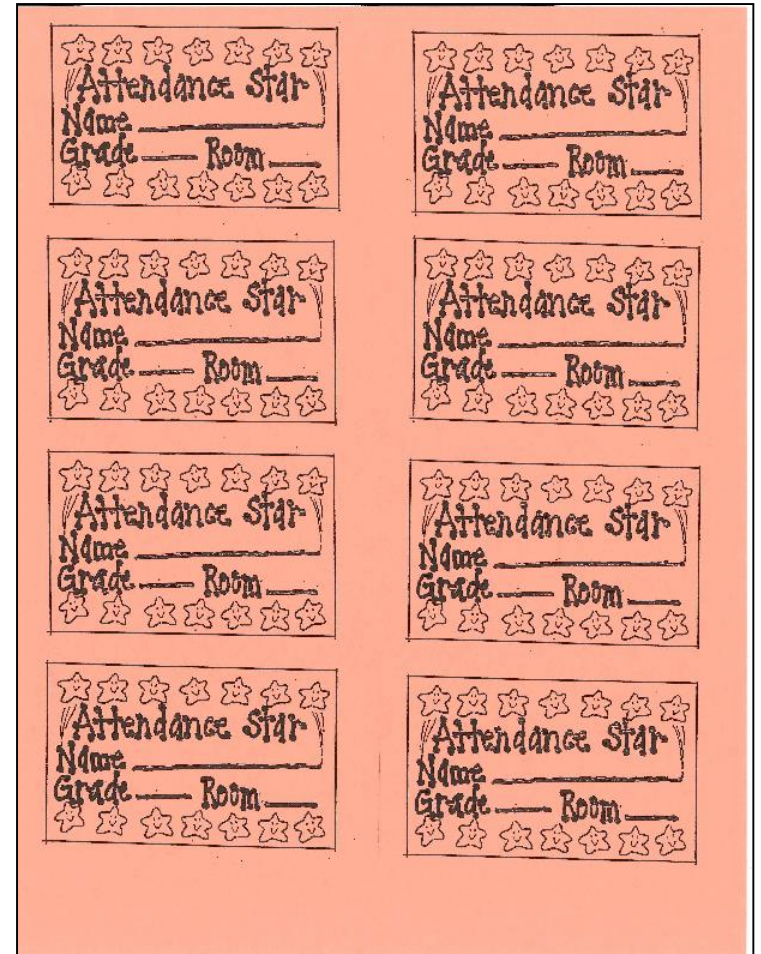
- All Vance Village Staff participate
- Community members have become partners with the school to support our initiative



Vance Village Attendance Strategies

- Welcome Back to School message sent in mail to parents from the Principal in August
- Daily morning announcement message by fifth graders encouraging students to come to school every day
- Weekly communication with families on phone message about value of attending school
- Grade level teachers send a monthly message to their students to come to school

- Daily: Students are filling out an attendance star for attending school. Attendance Stars go into box in café for a raffle
- Monthly attendance raffle
- Showcase with photos of students who win the raffle outside office
- CCSU Mentors every Friday 2-3pm



Student Attendance Meetings

- Every Tuesday at 8:45am School Attendance Team meets to review chronic absences and set up meeting schedule
- Meetings with families occur every week to dig deeper and find out why students are not attending school
- Plan of support is put in place
- Follow up date to meet is set up

What Do We Do?

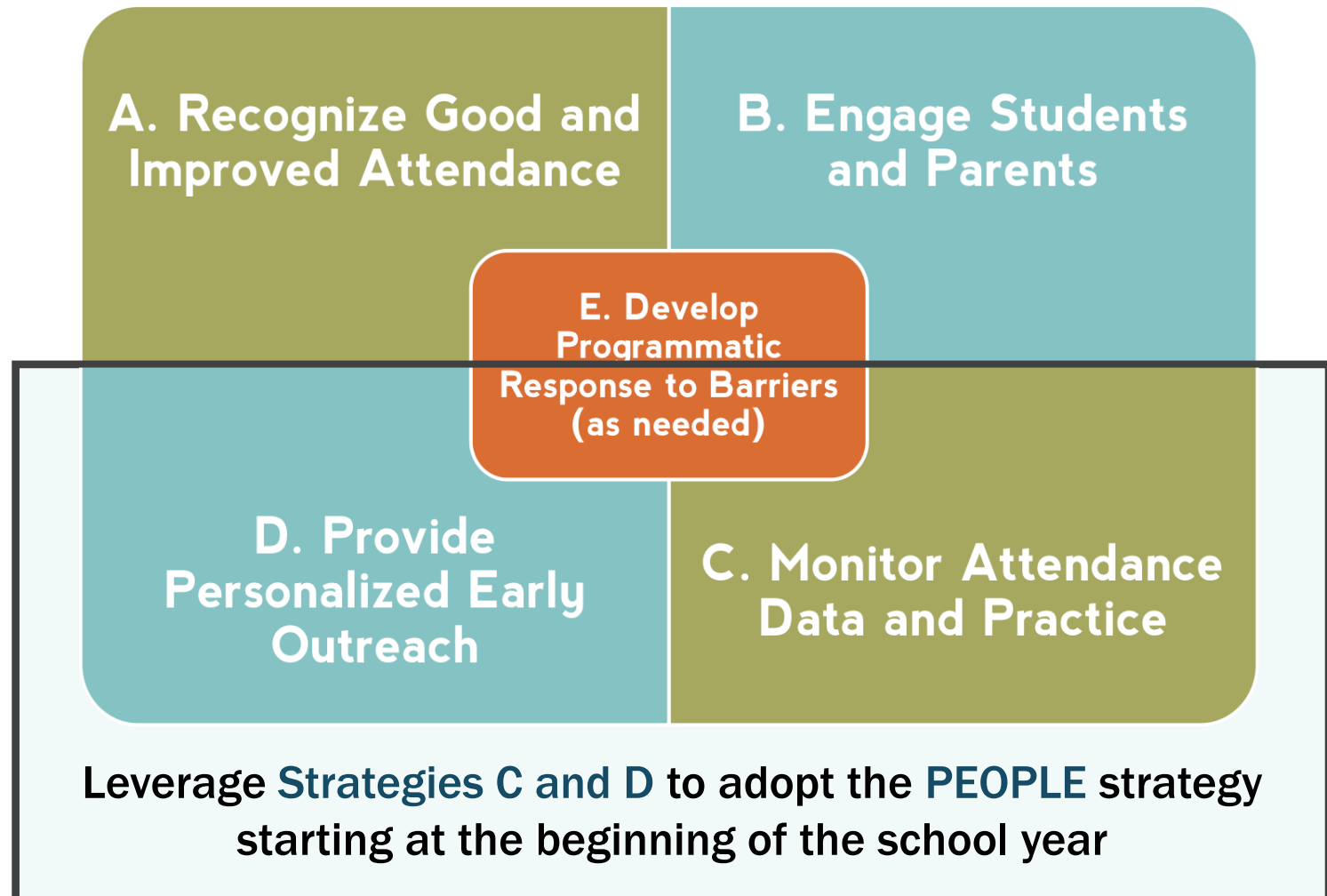
- All staff state same message!
- Raffle prizes and donations for students: South Church, Max's Pizza, Walmart, C-Town, Target
- Staff dress down days
- CCSU Mentors meet with students every Friday
- Grade-level teams look at attendance data during monthly staff meetings and devise additional strategies to support students
- In our monthly "Vance At A Glance" newsletter, we display graphs indicating our progress and photos

Our Results at Vance Village



- Students who are chronically absent has decreased the past two years. Ended 2013-201 at 8% (down from 24%)
- Higher scores on districtwide assessments from our students
- Decreased number of below grade-level students

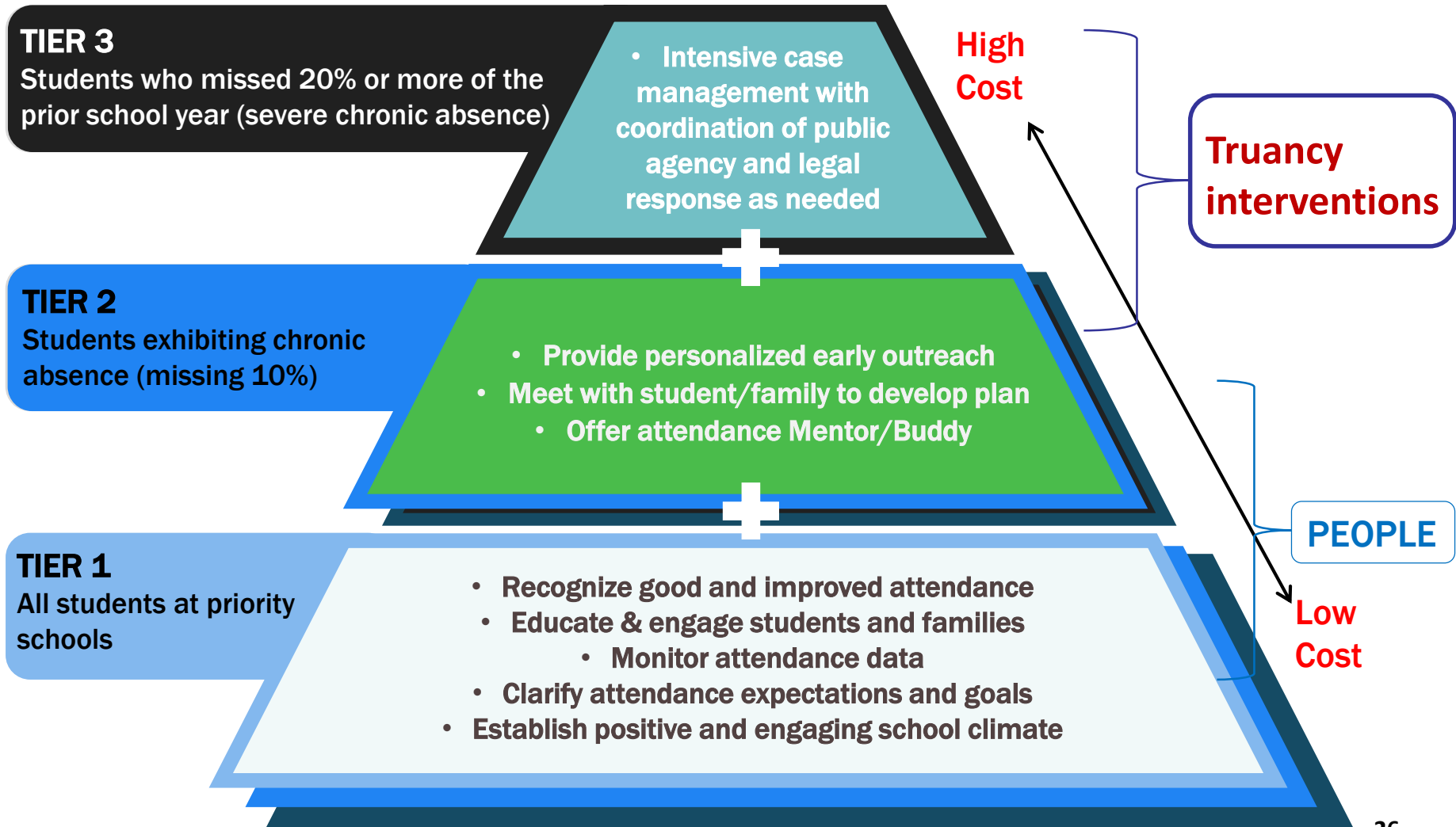
AW Recommended Site-Level Strategies



Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages and Engagement (**PEOPLE**)

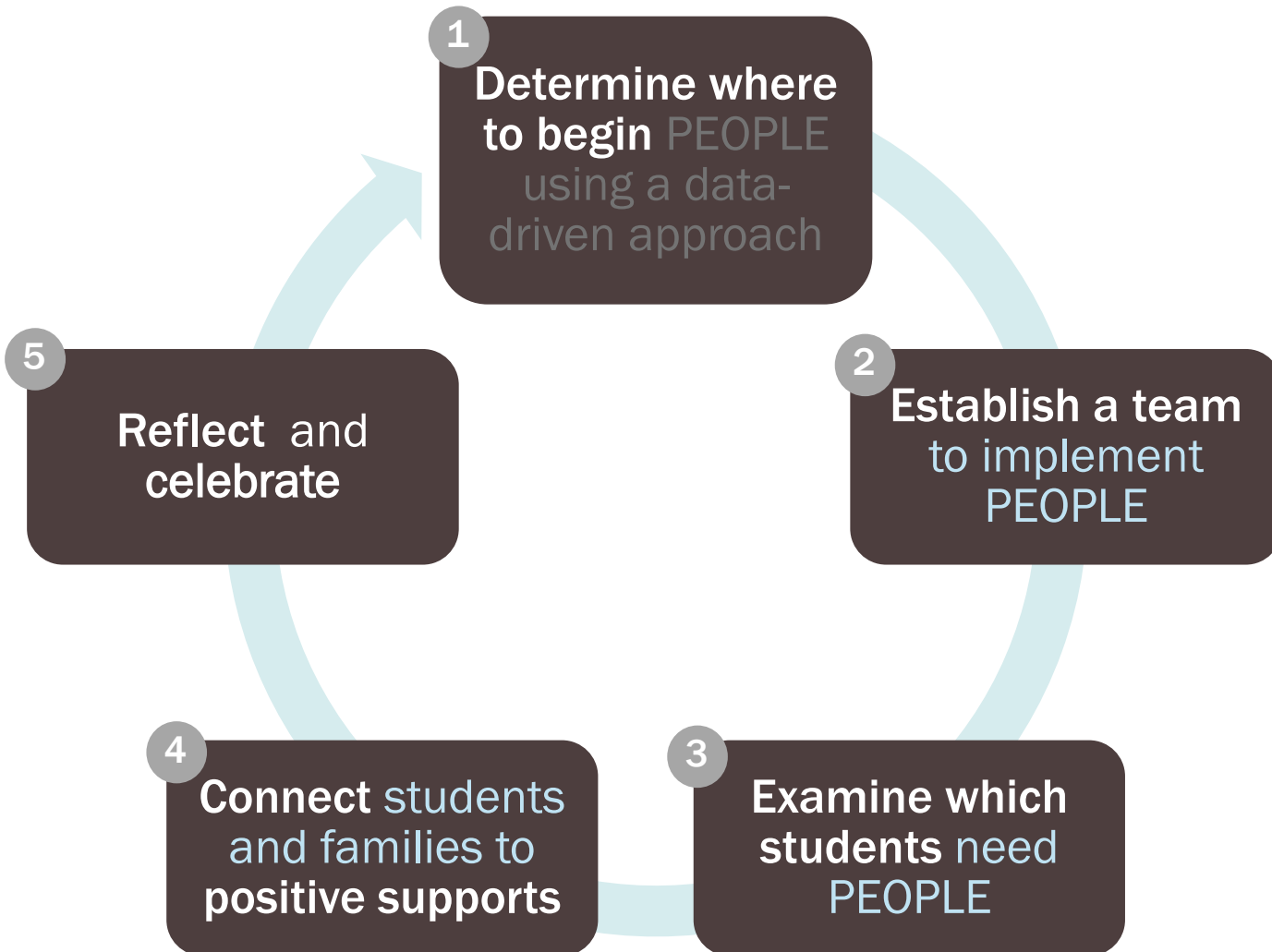
- **Priority:** Focuses on at-risk students in grades, schools and neighborhoods with high levels of chronic absence
- **Early:** Begins with the start of school.
- **Outreach:** Connects to students and families
- **Positive:** Promotes preventive, supportive approaches rather than punitive responses
- **Linkages:** Taps the full community for support
- **Engagement:** Motivates showing up to class & offers students & families a role in improving attendance.

PEOPLE helps ensure adoption of a tiered approach that begins with prevention

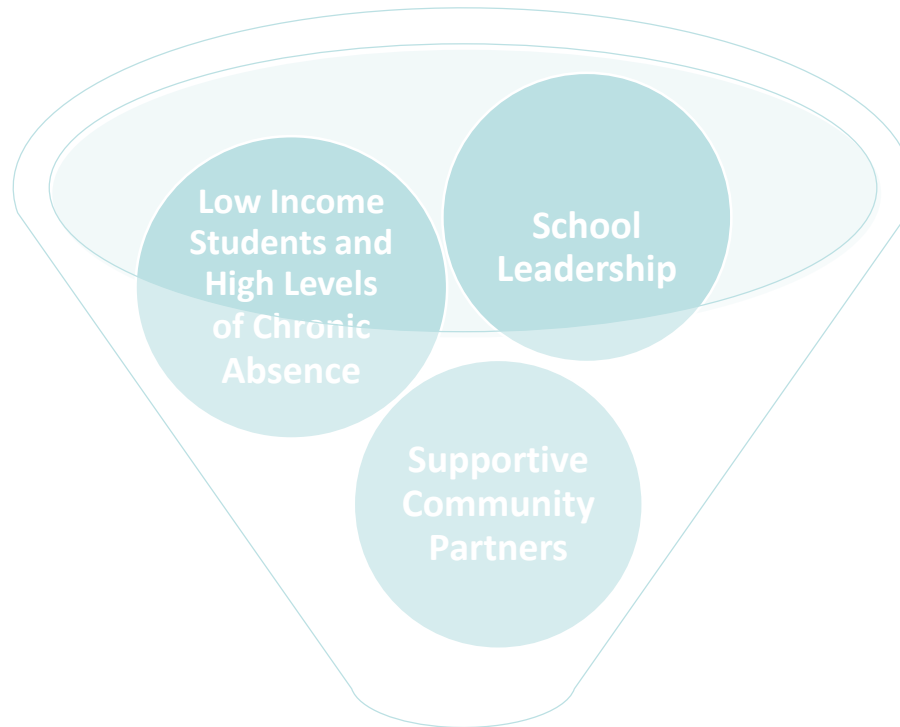


Implementing PEOPLE

(Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages and Engagement)

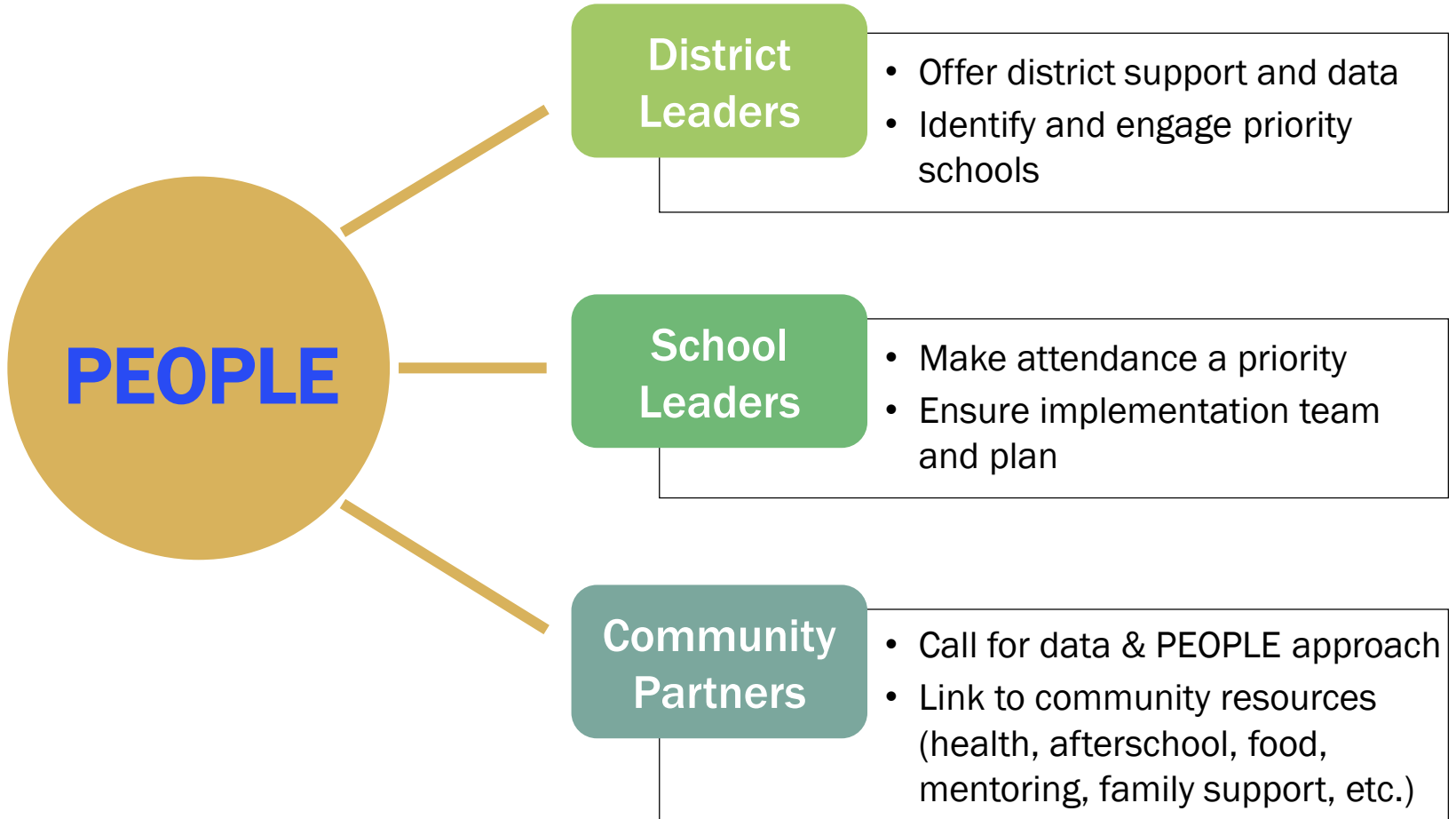


Identifying Where To Begin Implementation



**Identifies Priority Schools,
Neighborhoods or Grades within
School to Begin Implementation**

Who Can Help Advance a **PEOPLE** Approach?



Thank You for Attending!

Contact Information:

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- Attendance Works
<http://www.attendanceworks.org>