



The Time is Now:

Leveraging the Power of Chronic Absence to Improve Achievement





About Us

Attendance Works is a non-profit initiative that advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation's "go to" resource for student attendance with more than a quarter million annual users of our website (www.attendanceworks.org)

We work at the local, state and national level – with each level of practice informing and influencing the other. Our cross-cutting objectives are to:

- a. Nurture proven and promising practice
- b. Promote meaningful and effective communications
- c. Advance better policy
- d. Catalyze needed research

Our work began with a focus on elementary schools. We now offer support to K-12 schools, and are expanding to address chronic absence starting in preschool.



Multiple Measures of Attendance

Average Daily Attendance

How many students show up to school every day?
The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

Who is missing school without permission? Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention. In Alabama truancy = 7 unexcused absences.

Chronic Absence

Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Ed Facts and Alabama's ESSA plan define it as missing 10% of school.

This Is a Watershed Moment

No Child Left Behind

Success determined by academic standards.

Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Each state defines and addresses truancy which typically emphasizes court based, punitive, interventions.

Every Student Succeeds Act

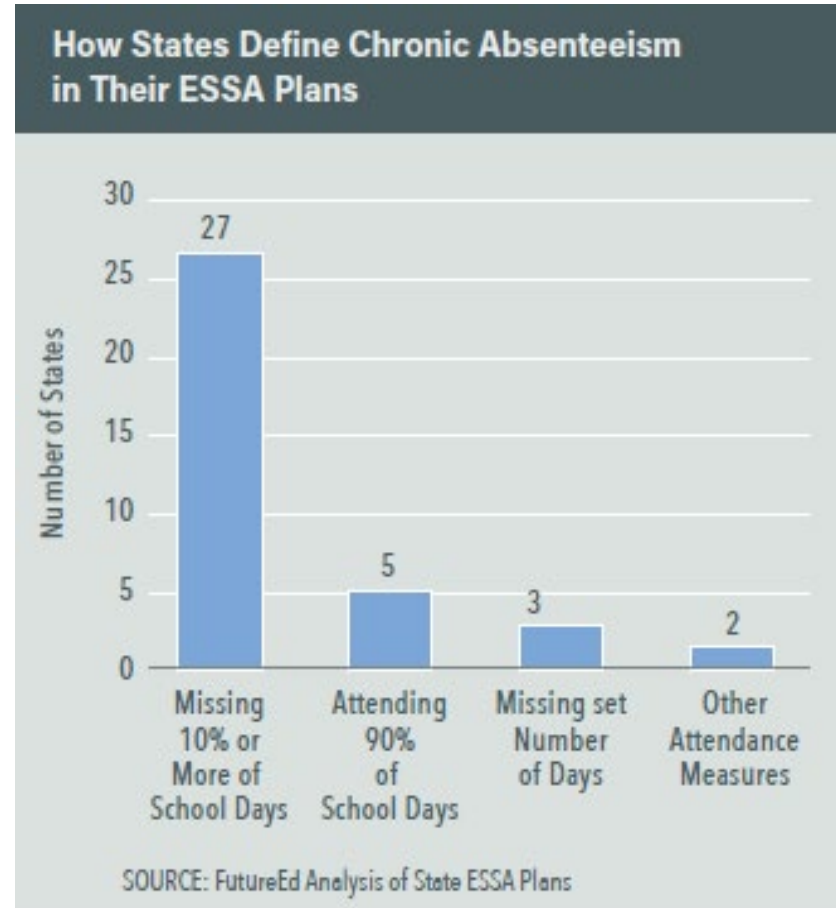
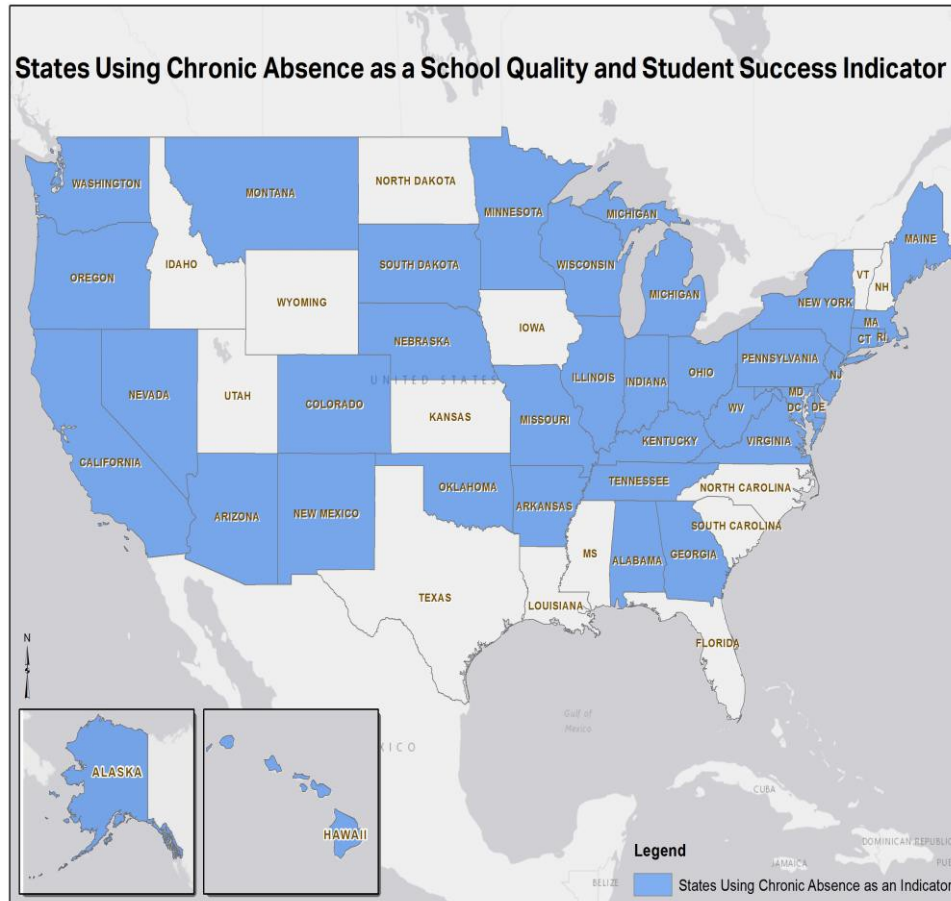
Success determined by academic & nonacademic standards.

States set goals; supportive framework.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Chronic absence is a required reporting & optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.

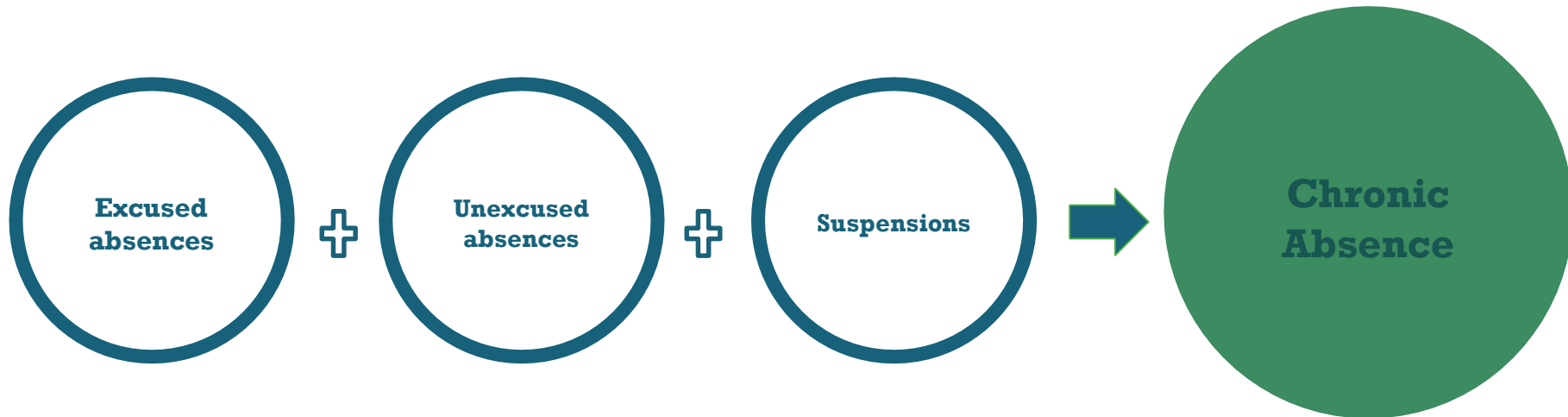
36 States and District of Columbia adopted chronic absence as a metric in their ESSA plan





Defining Chronic Absence

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).



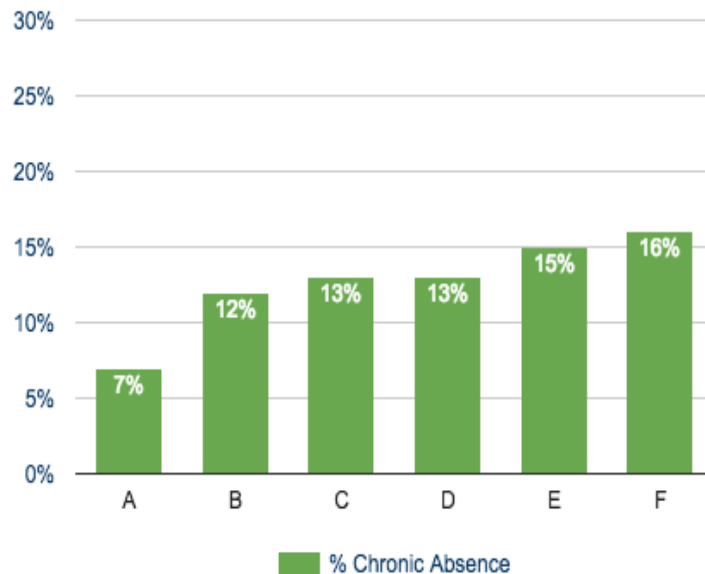
ED Facts Definition: The unduplicated number of students absent 10% or more school days during the school year. Include all students grade Kindergarten through grade 12 who meet the definition of chronic absenteeism. Include students who were enrolled in the school for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year, and who missed 10% of the school days in which they were enrolled in the school.



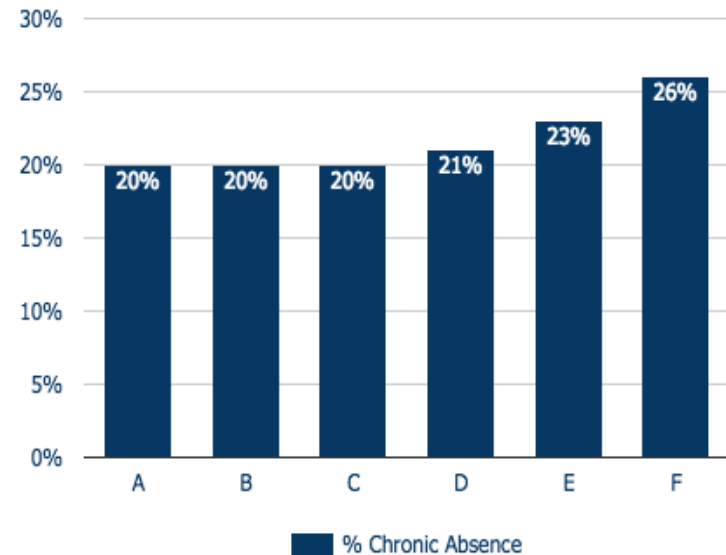
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

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



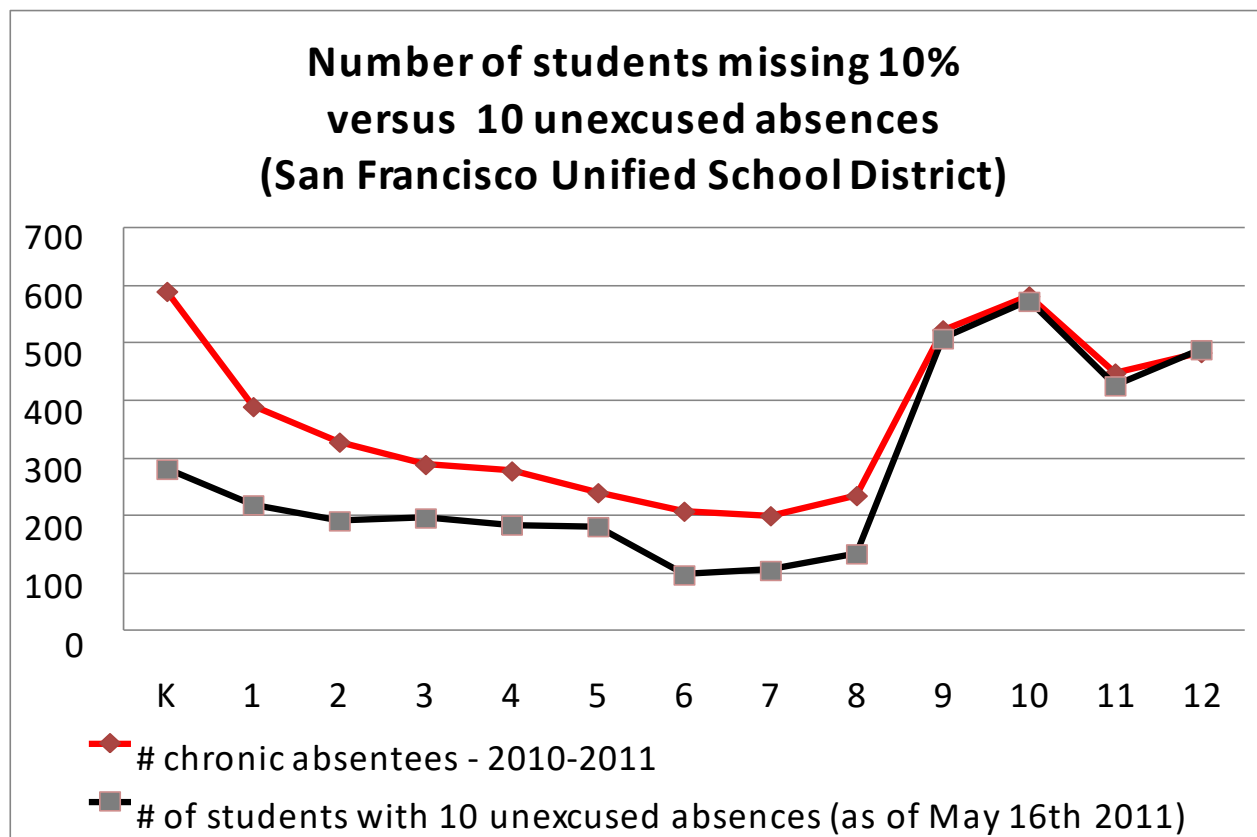
98% ADA = little chronic absence

95% ADA = don't know

93% ADA = significant chronic absence



Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy





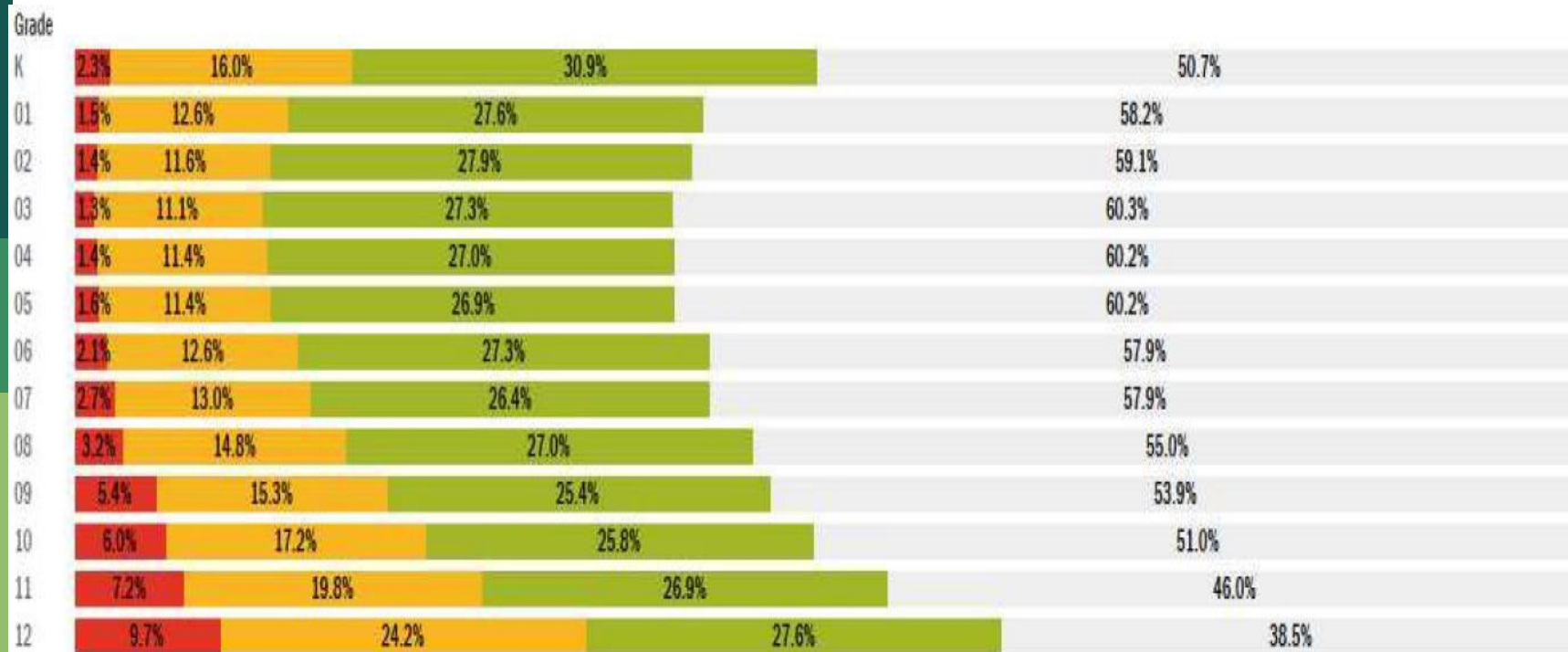
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

September					October					November					December					January				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
													X				X							
							X				X													
		X	X					X				X			X	X				X	X	X		

February					March					April					May					June				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
				X						X														
X	X													X	X						X	X		
								X					X											



Chronic absence was defined as missing 15 days or more; will shift to 10% in future years.





Reflects New Paradigm on Attendance

Truancy

- Counts unexcused absences
- Emphasizes individual compliance with rules
- Uses legal, typically more punitive solutions

Chronic Absence

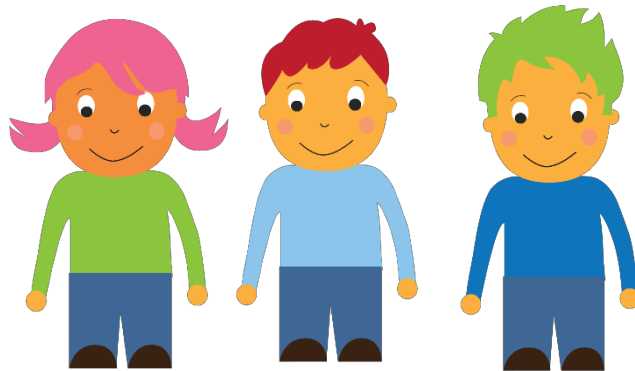
- Counts all absences
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days.
- Focuses on systems change: prevention, engagement, problem-solving

Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country



Illustrating the Gap



Instructions found on **Bringing Attendance Home Toolkit**

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-toolkit/>



Student Attendance is Strongly Associated with Academic Success

K-1st Grade: Students who attend regularly in the early grades perform better on measures of academic and social and emotional capacities.

3rd Grade: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to be able to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.

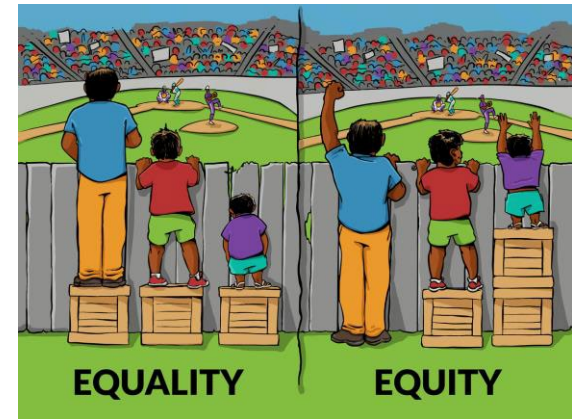
Middle School Success: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have passing grades in middle school

High School Completion: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate from high school

College Completion: Students who attend school regularly in high school are more likely to persist in college and graduate



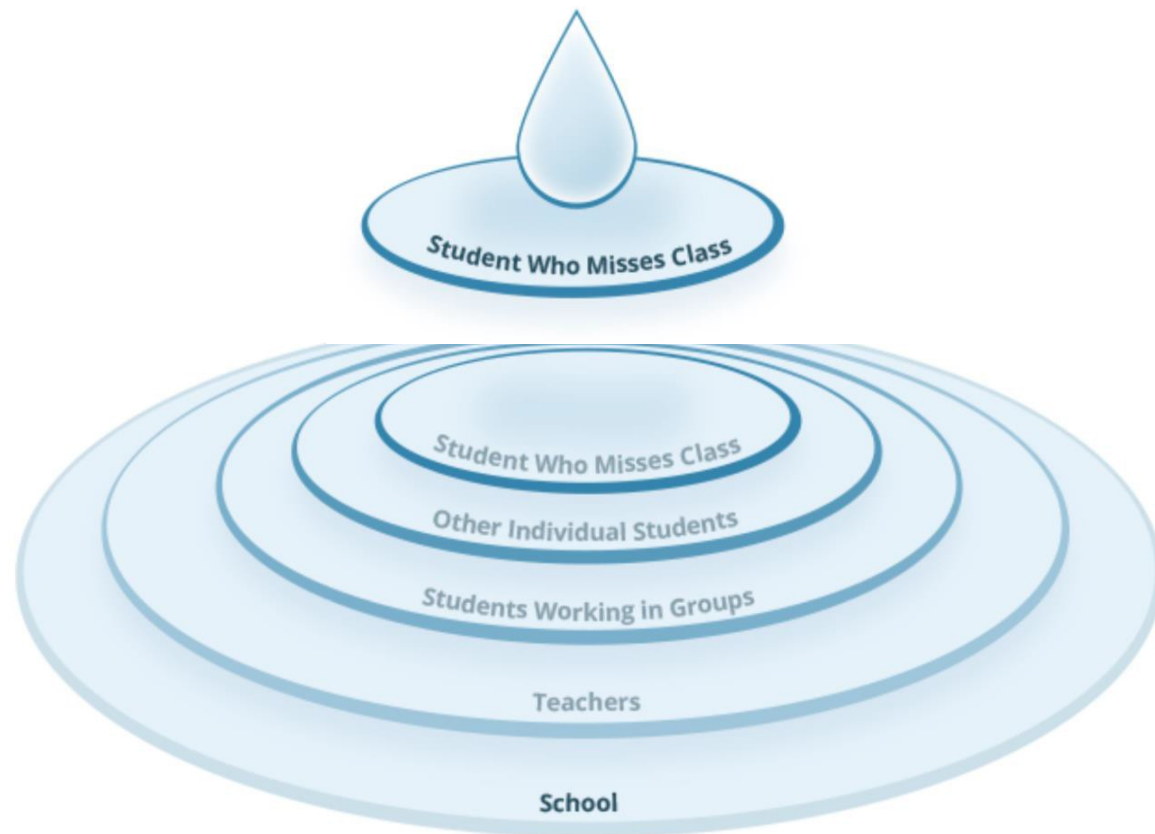
Reducing Chronic Absence Can Help Close Equity Gaps



- Vulnerable children, especially those living in poverty, are 2-3 times more likely to experience chronic absence at earlier ages.
- Vulnerable children are much less likely to have the resources to make up for lost learning time in the classroom.
- Vulnerable children are more likely to experience multiple years of chronic absence



When a Student Misses School the Impact Ripples



How Can We Address Chronic Absence?



Reflection

Think about a child you know who struggles to get to school every day.

- What is a key barrier he or she faces?**
- What helps him/her get to school even when it is difficult?**



Factors That Contribute to Chronic Absence

Barrier

- Illness, both chronic and acute
- Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care
- Trauma
- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor Transportation
- Frequent moves or school changes
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems

Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability

Lack of Engagement

- Lack of culturally relevant, engaging instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/ no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades



Recognize that Going to School Reflects When Families Have

Hope

for a better future



Faith

that school will help you or your child succeed



Capacity

Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



Recommended Site-Level Strategies

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

B. Engage Students and Parents

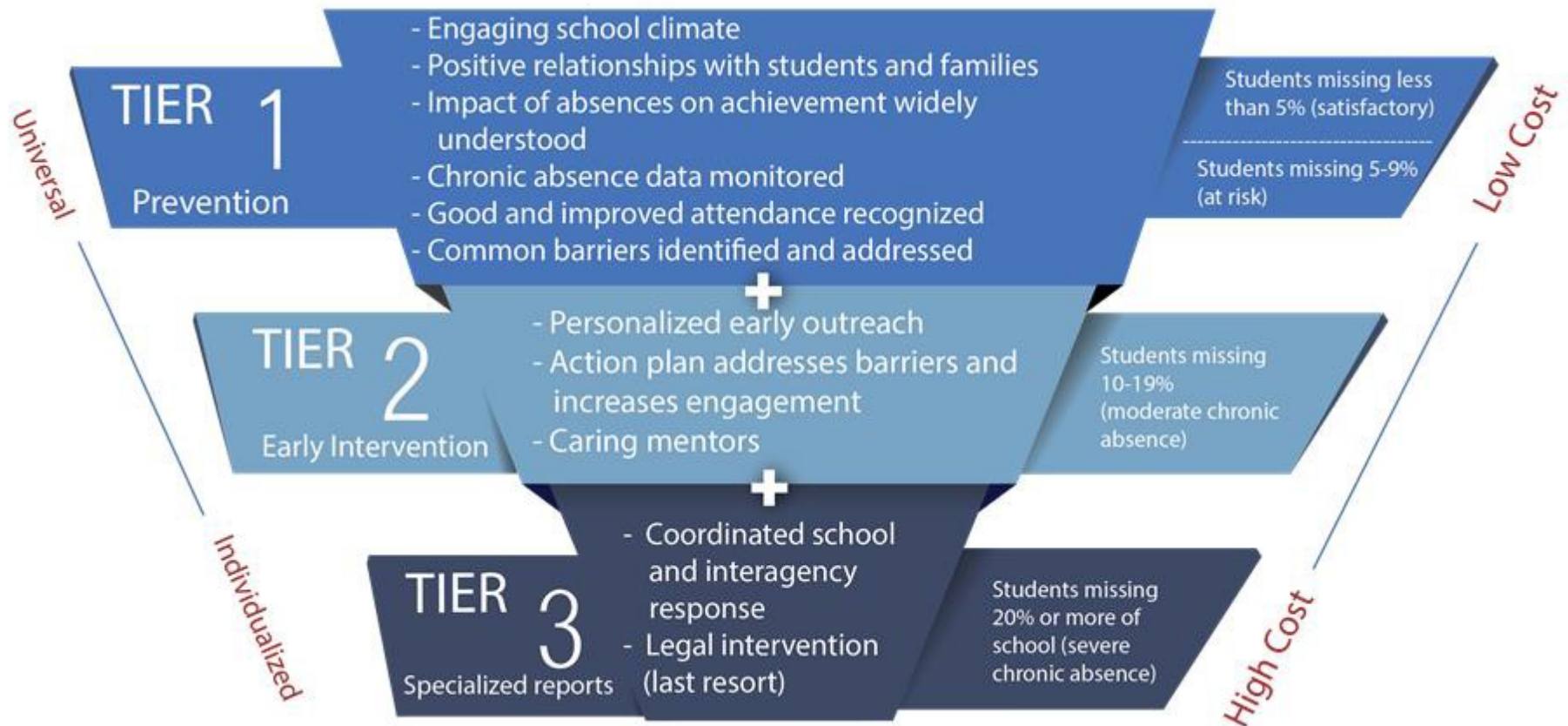
E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

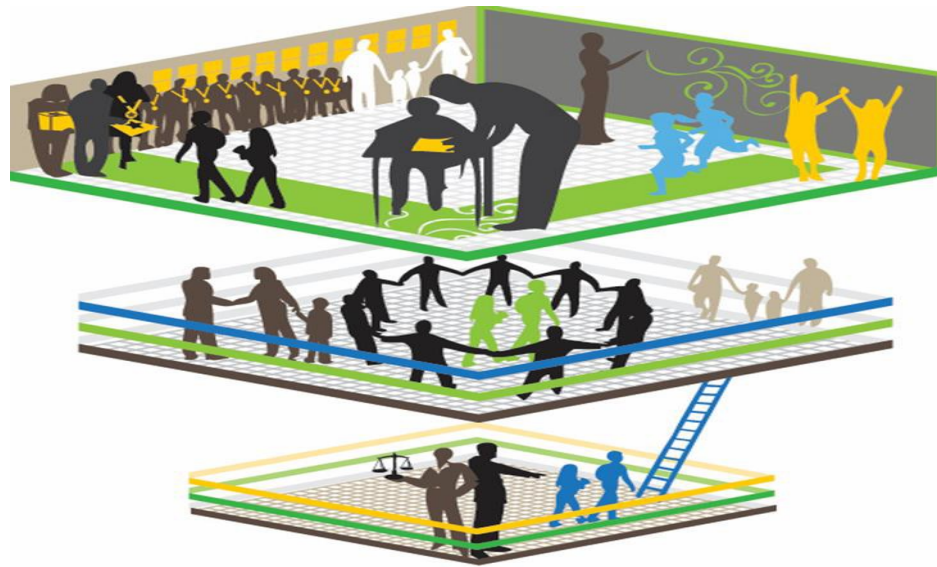
D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice



Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





Tier 1: Engagement and Prevention



**Attendance begins with
creating a warm and
welcoming school climate**

Let's watch a video that highlights the importance of a welcoming and engaging school environment.

<https://vimeo.com/243704317>

Turn to the person next to you and answer the following questions together:

- Do you agree with the video's emphasis that a positive climate is critical to a student's overall school performance and attendance?
- What makes it hard for schools to maintain a positive school climate?



Reflecting on your school climate

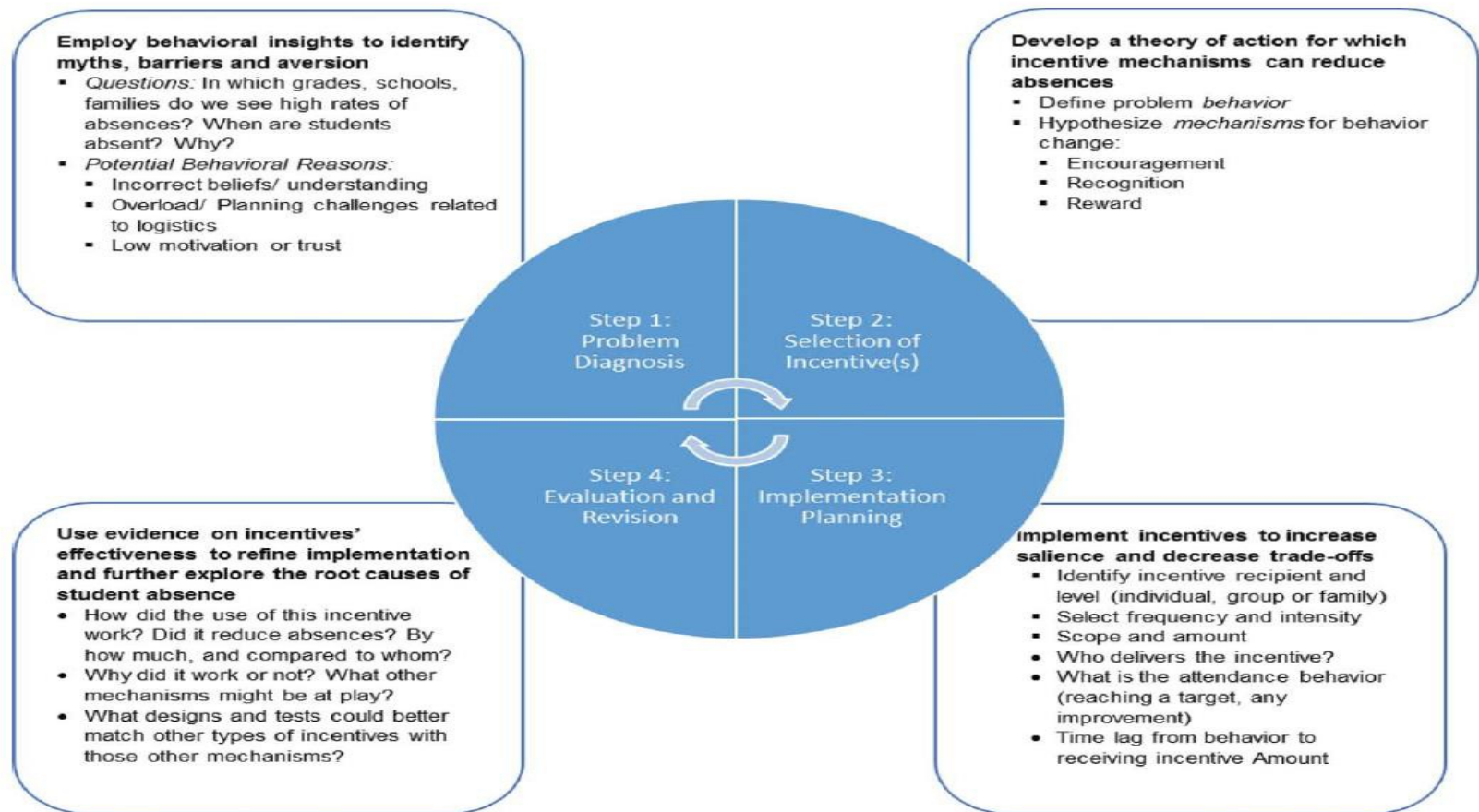
**Put yourself in a student's shoes.
Imagine that you are entering your
school...**

- Who and what do you see?
- How and when are you greeted?
- Would you feel good entering this setting?
- How are you greeted when you enter the classroom?
- What do you notice about the learning environment?

1. Write down your reflections.
2. Share as a team.
3. Discuss your insights about the schools' climate.
4. What are the opportunities to continue to build a nurturing and supportive school climate?

Use Incentives Strategically to Motivate Improved Attendance

Balu and Erlich, Making Sense Out of Incentives: A Framework for Considering The Design, Use and Implementation of Incentives for Improving Attendance (JESPAR February, 2018)





Parent Video & Discussion Guide



Bringing Attendance Home Video (6 minutes)

- ✓ Facilitated conversation
- ✓ The consequences of chronic absence
- ✓ How to improve absenteeism
- ✓ Family practice
- ✓ Increase social capital
- ✓ Identify how school can help
- ✓ Community services



Help families make back-up plans

[Insert your logo]

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

- My child was present ____ days.
- My child was absent ____ days.
- My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than ____ for the rest of the year. (9 or fewer absences = satisfactory attendance)

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____. (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from doing chores, 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 complains of a stomachache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to school anyway and call _____ so that he/she can check in with my child during the 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.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out what he/she missed.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school.

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

We will review progress to meet this goal in two months.

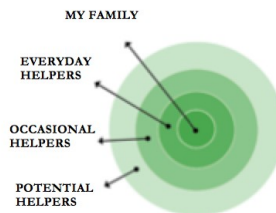
Family Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____



To learn more, please visit www.attendanceworks.org
Adapted with permission from the [DoE.org](http://www.doe.org) Family Foundation, and from materials created by [Early Works](http://www.earlyworks.org) at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Oregon.

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK



1. My Family:

2. Everyday Helpers:

3. Occasional Helpers:

4. 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: _____

2015-2016 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August 2015							September 2015						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
30	31												

October 2015							November 2015						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					

December 2015							January 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30

February 2016							March 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29						27	28	29	30	31		

April 2016							May 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31				



CHRONIC ABSENCE = 18 absences
(10% of school year)
Warning Signs = 10 to 17 absences
Satisfactory Attendance = 9 or fewer absences

- My child was present ____ days.
- My child was absent ____ days.
- My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than ____ for the rest of the year.



Take A Health Oriented Perspective For Addressing Absences

- I. Help families understand that even when absences are excused, they can add up to a critical loss in learning time.
- II. Encourage students and families take steps to stay healthy and prevent health related (physical, dental, behavioral) absences.
- III. Build awareness about know when to keep students home or send them to school when they complain of illness.



**Strategies for helping families
know what children are missing
when they are absent**

- ✓ Share what students will be learning each week – through flyers, materials on the classroom wall, conversations.
- ✓ Showcase student work.
- ✓ Tell parents and students what their children missed the day that they return.
- ✓ Use parent teacher conference to share appreciation for good attendance and concerns about what is missed with poor attendance.



Strategies for help families keep children healthy

- ✓ Provide information about keeping children healthy through health promoting practices at home and in school (e.g. encourage hand washing, sneezing into arm, making sure kids get enough sleep)
- ✓ Ensure no asthma triggers in classroom
- ✓ School nurse helps triage and connect students to health resources.
- ✓ Offer breakfast in the classroom



Communicate with Families to Reduce Unnecessary Absences

WHEN IS SICK TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL?



SEND ME TO SCHOOL IF...

I have a runny nose or just a little cough, but no other symptoms.

I haven't taken any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours, and I haven't had a fever during that time.

I haven't thrown up or had any diarrhea for 24 hours.



KEEP ME AT HOME IF...

I have a temperature higher than 99.6 degrees even after taking medicine.

I'm throwing up or have diarrhea.

My eyes are pink and crusty.



CALL THE DOCTOR IF...

I have a temperature higher than 99.6 degrees for more than two days.

I've been throwing up or have diarrhea for more than two days.

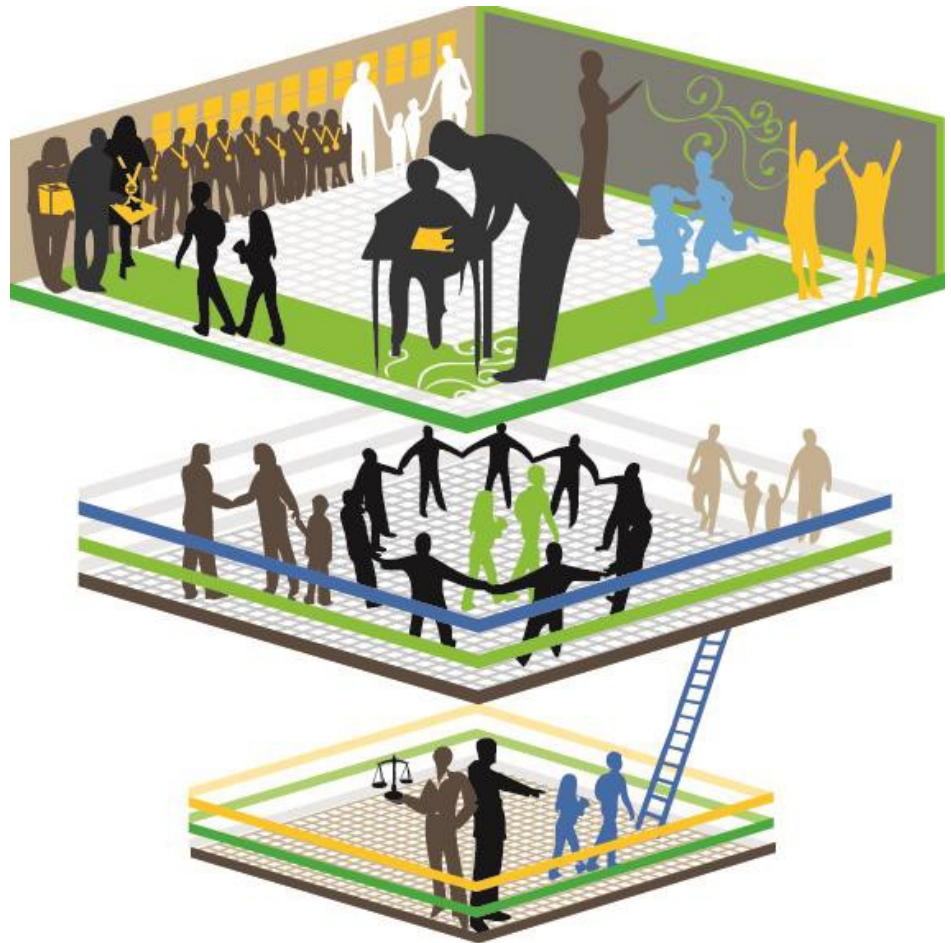
I've had the sniffles for more than a week, and they aren't getting better.

I still have asthma symptoms after using my asthma medicine (and call 911 if I'm having trouble breathing after using an inhaler).

IF YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT DUE TO ILLNESS, PLEASE MAKE SURE TO CALL THE ADMIN OFFICE AT 410-396-9140 TO LET US KNOW AND TURN IN A WRITTEN NOTE THE FIRST DAY YOUR CHILD RETURNS TO SCHOOL.

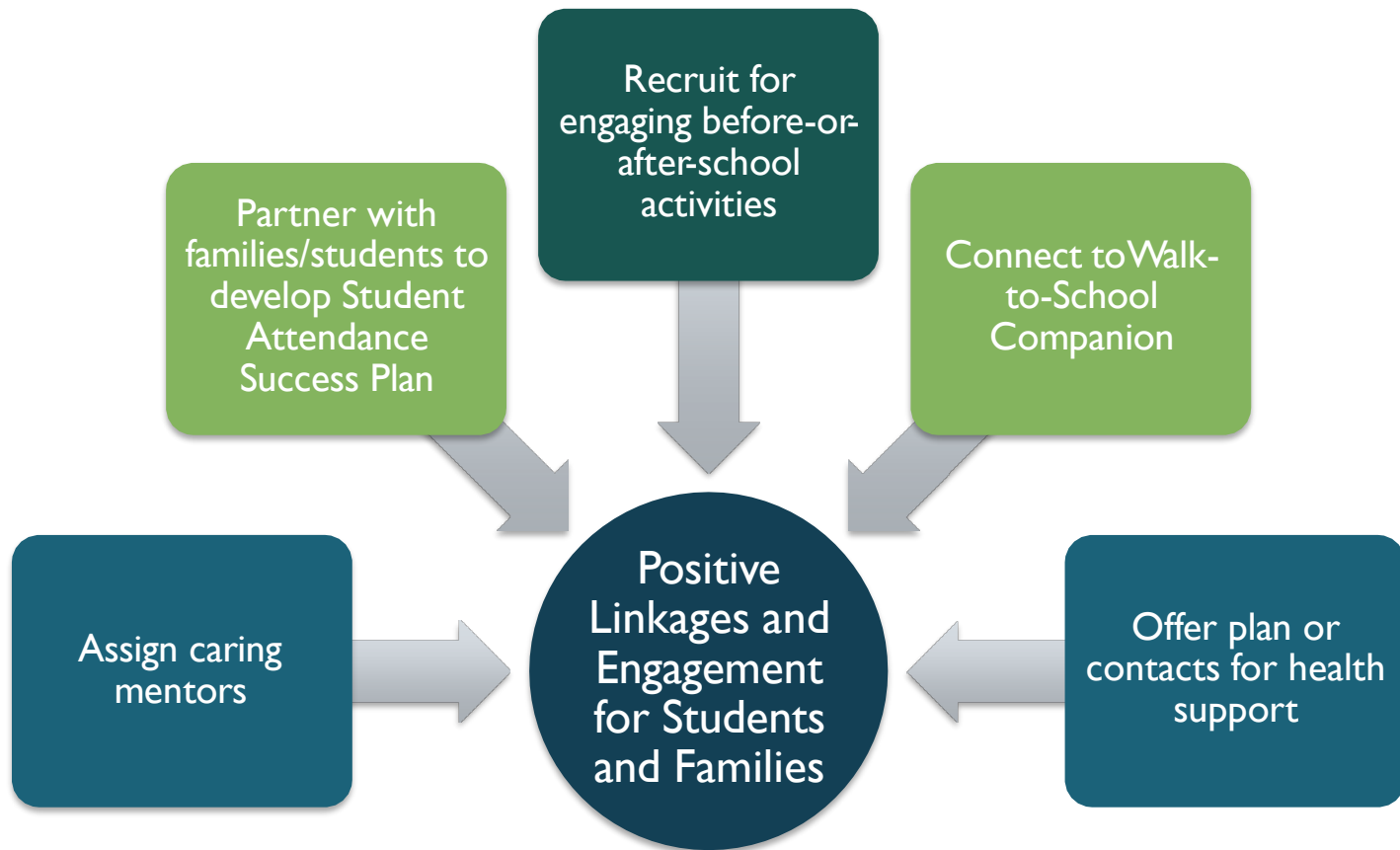
Excerpts taken from BCPS January 2014 Family Menu

Putting in Place Your Tier 2 Intervention Strategies





Possible Tier 2 Interventions





Leveraging Parent Teacher Conferences

Tier 1

Congratulate parents on helping make sure their child reaps the full benefits of the program and develops a habit of attendance starting in preschool.

Tier 2

If student is missing 10% or a little more above

Meet with the parent to find out how their child is adjusting to preschool
Explore why their student is missing school and let them know that you'd like to find out what could help improve attendance

Tier 3

If student has severe chronic 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.



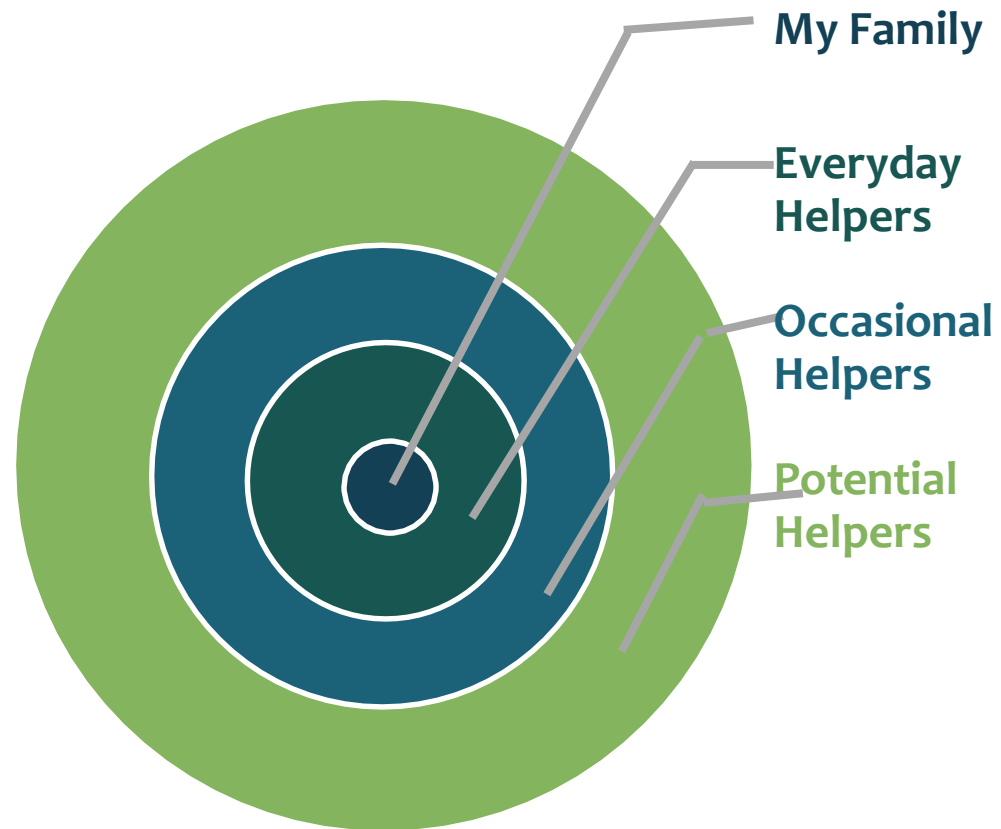
My Family Help Bank – Part of Success Plan

The help bank can be especially helpful if parents or caregivers are struggling with physical or mental health or transportation issues.

We all need the help of others some time.

Help parents and caregivers anticipate likely needs and network with one another in advance of predictable difficulties.

Use the Help Bank as a problem-solving device in a one-on-one setting with families whose children are having attendance challenges due to transportation or scheduling.

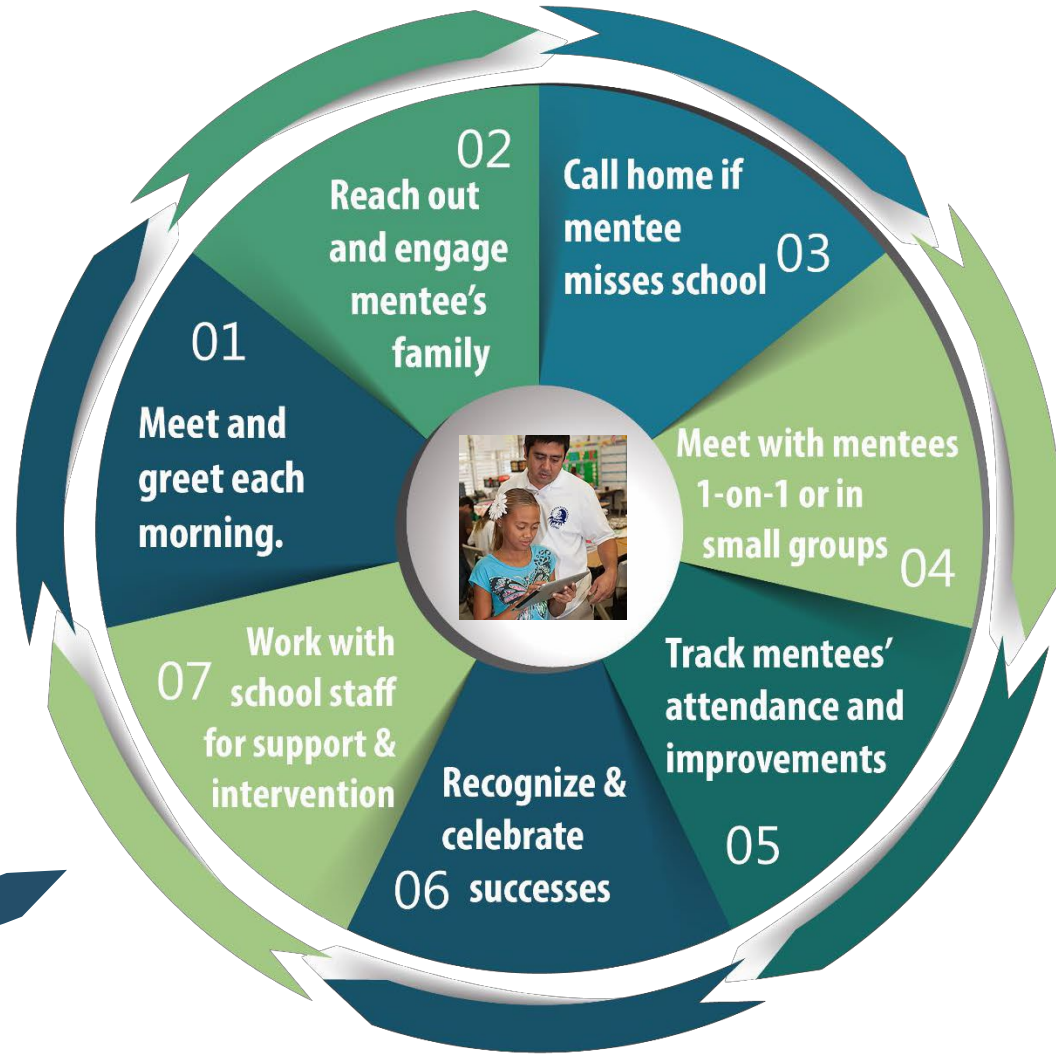


Success Mentors

**CHRONICALLY
ABSENT STUDENT**



**CONNECT WITH
MENTOR**



Learn more about New York City's Success Mentors Program here: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-works/new-york-city/success-mentors/>. Free elementary toolkit available at: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-school-districts/elemsuccessmentortoolkit/>



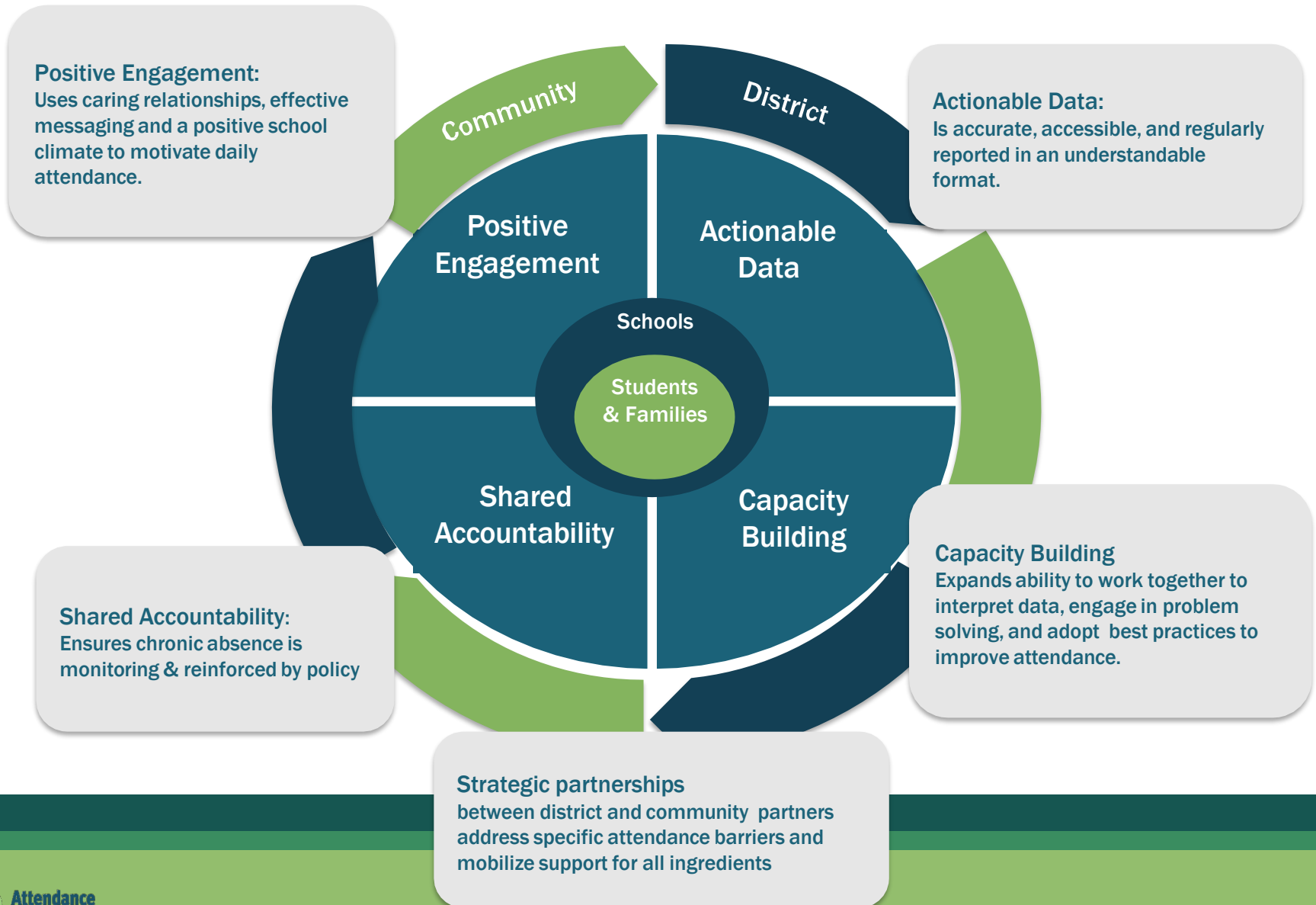
Partners for Change

The greater the size of the challenge, the more partners are needed. Many different types of partners can be enlisted but local government and public agencies are especially important.

- **Businesses**
- **Community Schools Initiatives**
- **Family Support Organizations**
- **Early Childhood Providers**
- **Faith Based Organizations.**
- **Health Providers**
- **Housing Agencies**
- **Hunger Relief Organizations**
- **Institutes of Higher Education**
- **Local Government**
- **National Service/ Volunteers/Mentors**
- **Out of SchoolTime providers**
- **Social Emotional Learning Providers**
- **Social Services**
- **Population-Specific Service or Civic Organizations**
- **Philanthropy (including foundations and UnitedWays)**

Tap into existing initiatives and coalitions to engage potential partners.

Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach





In one out of five schools, 20 percent of students or more are chronically absent, while in slightly more than half of all schools it is < 10 percent

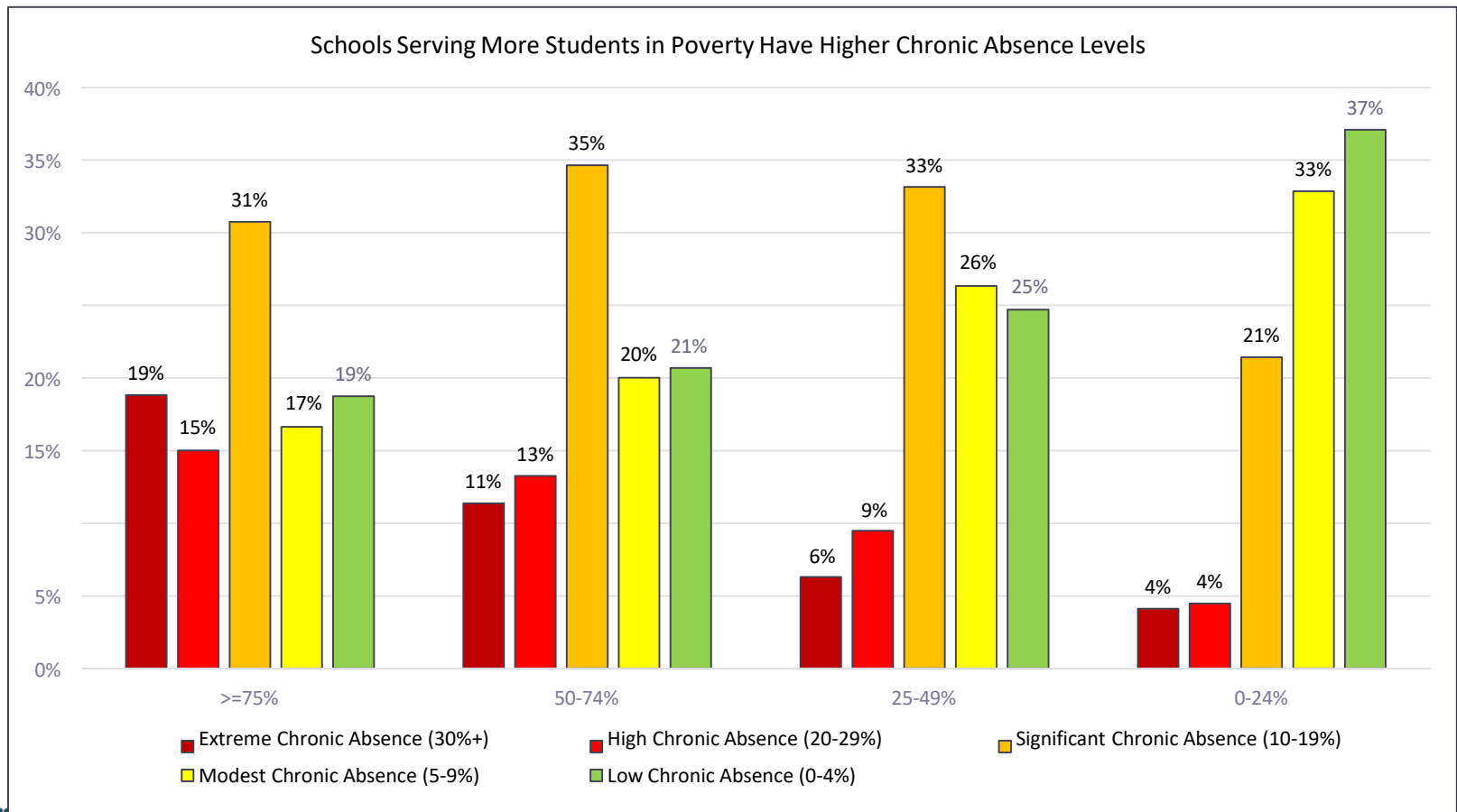
Across the United States, chronic absence affects 7 million students. It is widespread and highly concentrated.

Source: Portraits of Change

Percent of Students Chronically Absent	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
		11%
High Chronic Absence (20-29%)	10,330	11%
		31%
Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)	21,190	23%
		24%
Grand Total	92,333	



Schools with More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels

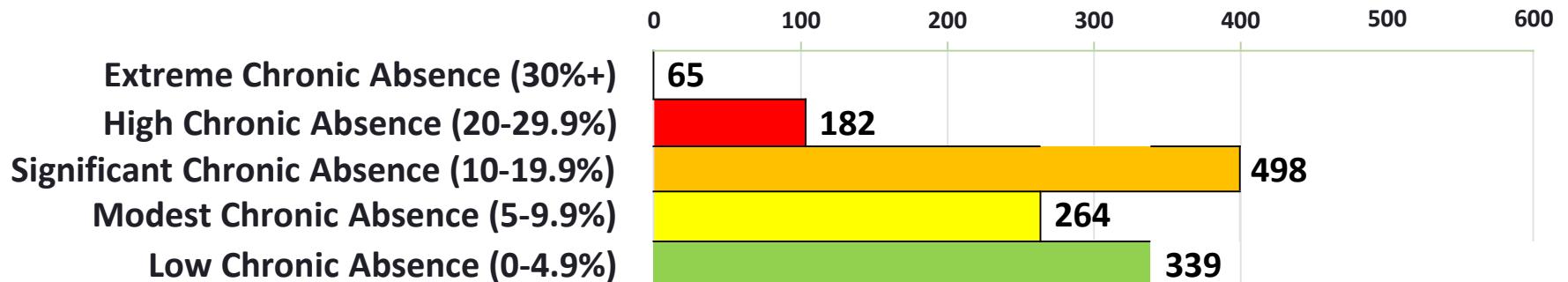




What is the situation in Alabama?

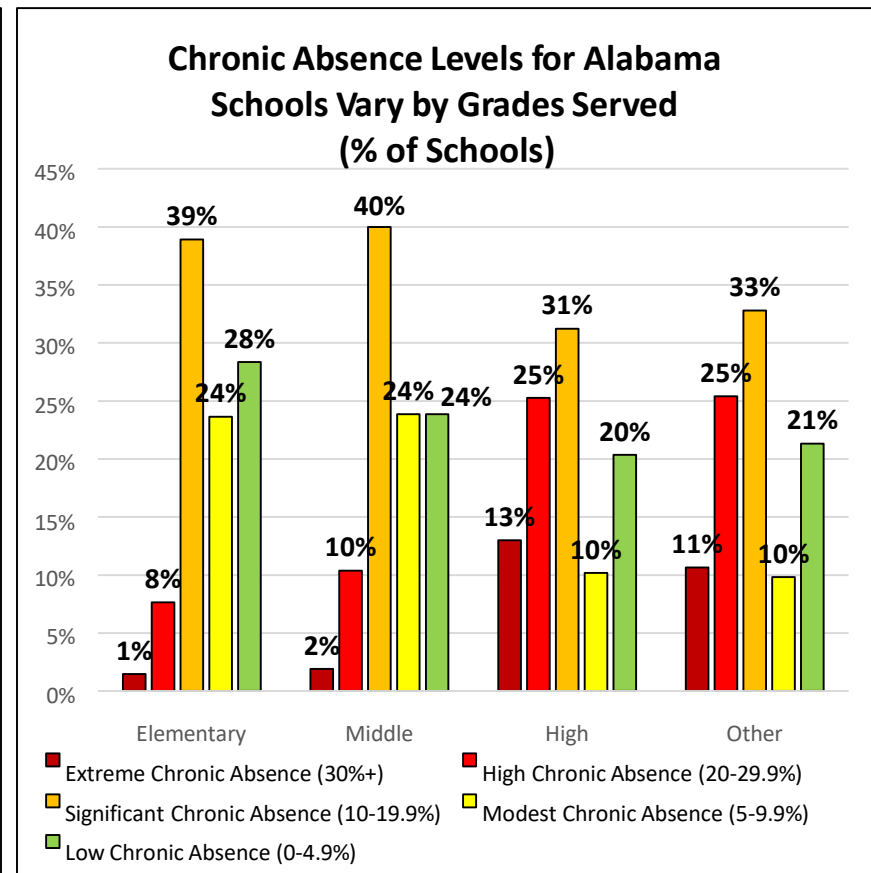
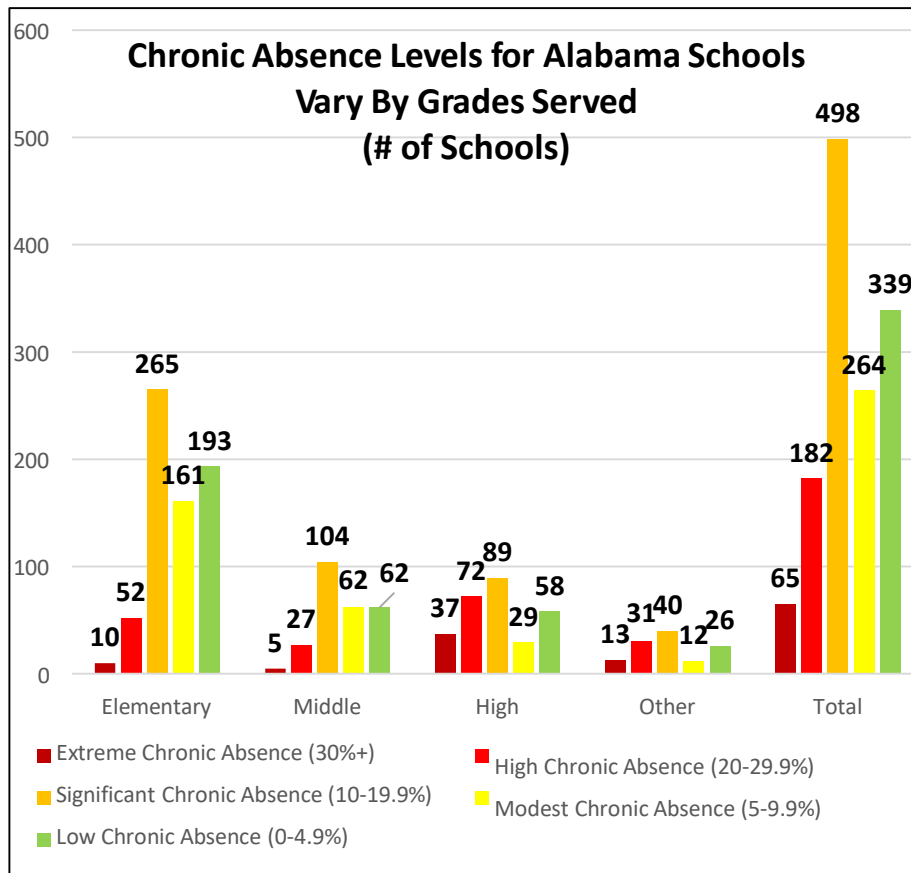
Chronic Absence Level Concentrationss	Number of Schools	Percent
Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)	65	5%
High Chronic Absence (20-29.9%)	182	14%
Significant Chronic Absence (10-19.9%)	498	37%
Modest Chronic Absence (5-9.9%)	264	20%
Low Chronic Absence (0-4.9%)	339	25%
Grand Total (n)	1,348	

Distribution of Chronic Absence Levels Across Schools in Alabama





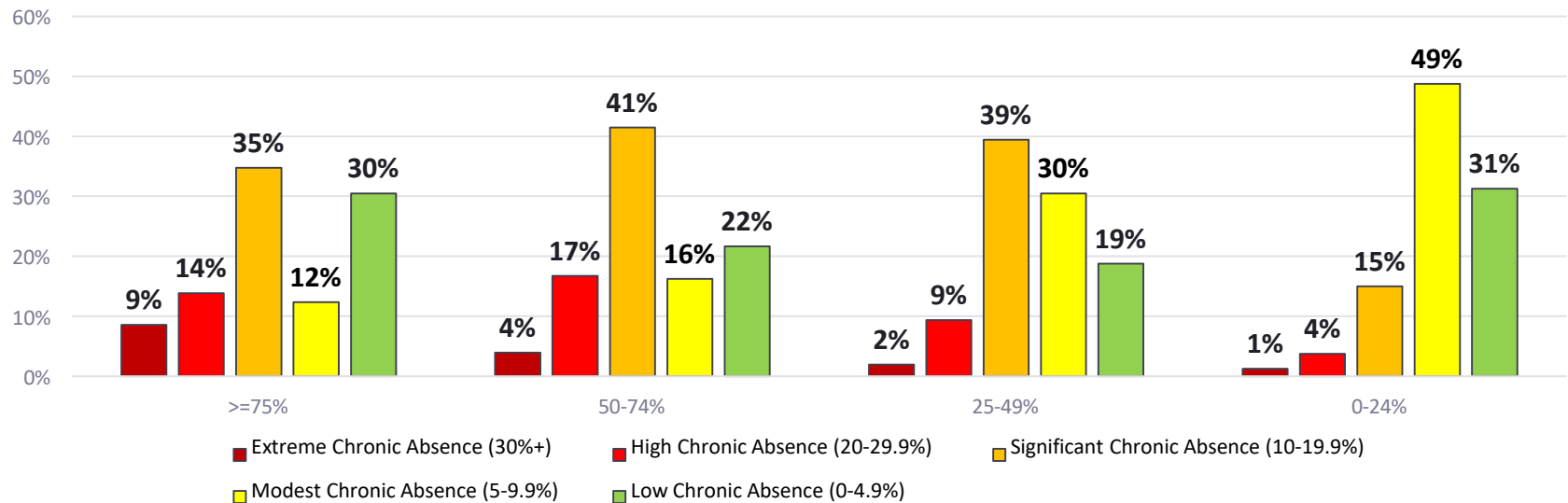
Schools with extreme and high as well as low levels of chronic absence are found at every grade





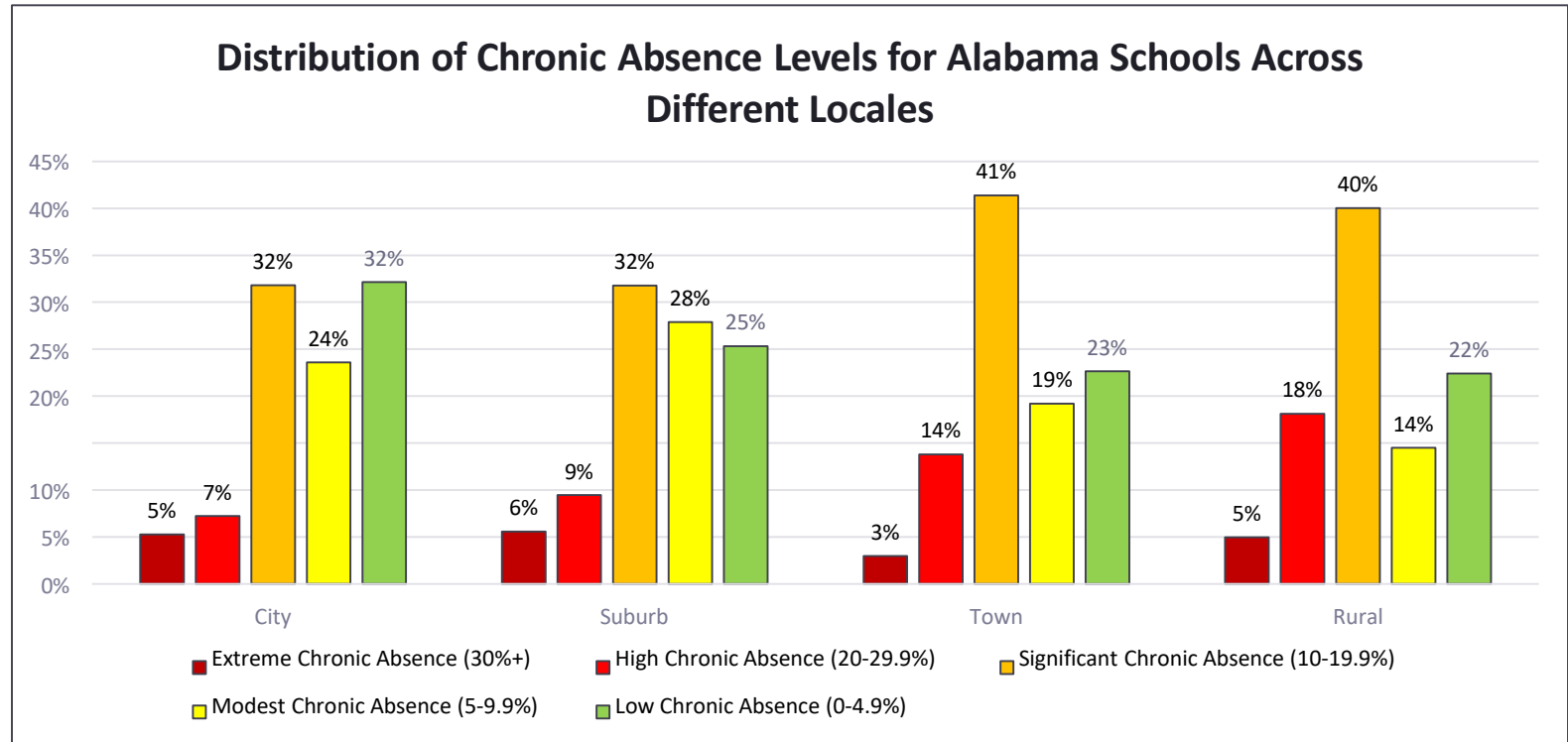
While higher levels of chronic absence are found in higher poverty schools, some high poverty schools have low chronic absence.

Alabama Schools Serving More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels





High and low levels of chronic absence are found in every setting (rural, suburban, town and city)





Recommendations for Local Action

- ✓ Step 1: Form A Local Leadership Team.
- ✓ Step 2 : Map Assets and Secure Additional Partners.
- ✓ Step 3 : Unpack Causes (Myths, Barriers, Aversion, Disengagement).
- ✓ Step 4 : Develop and Implement Solutions.
- ✓ Step 5 : Assess Results.



Reflections

- What do you know about the levels of chronic absence in your schools? Which schools need help? Which schools might be bright spots? What might explain their results?
- Who are involved as partners with your schools?
- What could you do to expand needed partnerships?

Reducing Chronic Absence Requires a Team





Attendance Teams Look for Patterns in Data

They see the **BIG
PICTURE:**
Trends Over Time
By Grade
Sub-groups and
they identify
individual students
who need targeted
support.





Attendance Teams have 3 Key Functions

1. **Review** data to understand which groups of students are most affected
2. **Develop** your school wide strategy building upon existing assets and challenges
3. **Engage** in triage for tier 2 and 3 students (make sure chronically absent students are being assigned to someone who can help)



Work as a team to take stock of the situation

[Menu](#) [Resources](#) [Help](#)



Root Causes at My School



This self-reflection exercise has two parts. First, consider the root causes you see at your school; check all that apply. Then, identify who can play a role in finding solutions to each root cause.

1. Root Causes		2. Who Can Play A Role?			
	At My School	Myself	Families	Other School Staff	Community Partners
Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chronic illness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents failing to recognize the impact of missing only two days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor school climate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social or academic struggles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: <input type="text" value="Type your response here."/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



SUBMIT

[< BACK](#)



Work as a team to fill out your pyramid so you can identify and fill in gaps.



Fill Out Your Pyramid

For each tier, fill in the activities/supports currently in place.

School District/ School Name: _____

How many students are in each tier?

Tier 3	
Tier 2	
Tier 1

TIER 3: missing more than 20% of school (4 + days per month)

TIER 2: missing more than 10% but less than 20% of school (2-3 days per month)

TIER 1B: missing between 5% but less than 10% of school (1+ days per month)

TIER 1A: missing less than 5% of school (< 1 day per month)

High Cost

Low Cost



Who Should Be on the Attendance Team?

Attendance Team Meetings should be led by the Principal and include the following members:

- ✓ School social worker
- ✓ Nurse
- ✓ Guidance counselor
- ✓ Attendance clerk / School Secretary
- ✓ Teacher (engage on an as-needed basis, related to specific students, classrooms, or grades)
- ✓ District staff (engage as needed, to identify resources and partnerships)
- ✓ Parent liaison (engage as needed, focus on whole school and population strategies)
- ✓ Site-based community partners (engage as needed, focus on whole school and population strategies)



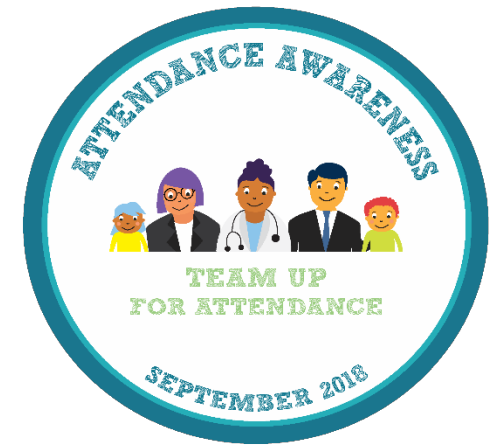
Assessing your team

- ✓ Who serves on your attendance team now?
- ✓ If you don't have a team, who could play this role. Is it an existing team? A new team? Who could be on it?
- ✓ If you have a team, is it functioning well? How might it be strengthened?



Join us for Attendance Awareness 2018

All Webinars start 2 ET



- **Leadership Matters (3/28)** will show the crucial role leaders play in mobilizing their communities to action.
- **Working Together Matters (5/8)** will focus on building and training teams in schools with robust participation from community partners.
- **Community Matters (8/15)** will focus on the role that a variety of key community partners can play in helping to reduce chronic absence.
- **Health Matters (9/12)** will showcase our brief highlighting bright spots where successful strategies to address health barriers have reduced chronic absenteeism