



CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Connecticut: Every Student in School & Engaged!

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Every Student, Every Day National Conference

Washington, DC

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Panelists

Desi Nesmith, Chief Turnaround Officer

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The Governor's Prevention Partnership

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Consolidated School District of New Britain



Presentation Outline

- Understanding and Spreading Awareness of the Research and Impact of Chronic Absenteeism
- Learning from the Data
- Joining Forces with State-level Champions/Leaders to Build a State-level Infrastructure
- Leveraging Existing District-level Networks
- Promoting “Bright Spots” to Generate Change
- Impact of Connecticut’s Statewide Infrastructure and Systems Approach
- Peer-to-Peer Sharing of Successes and Challenges



Understanding and Spreading Awareness

Sharing research and the impact chronic absenteeism has on educational outcomes



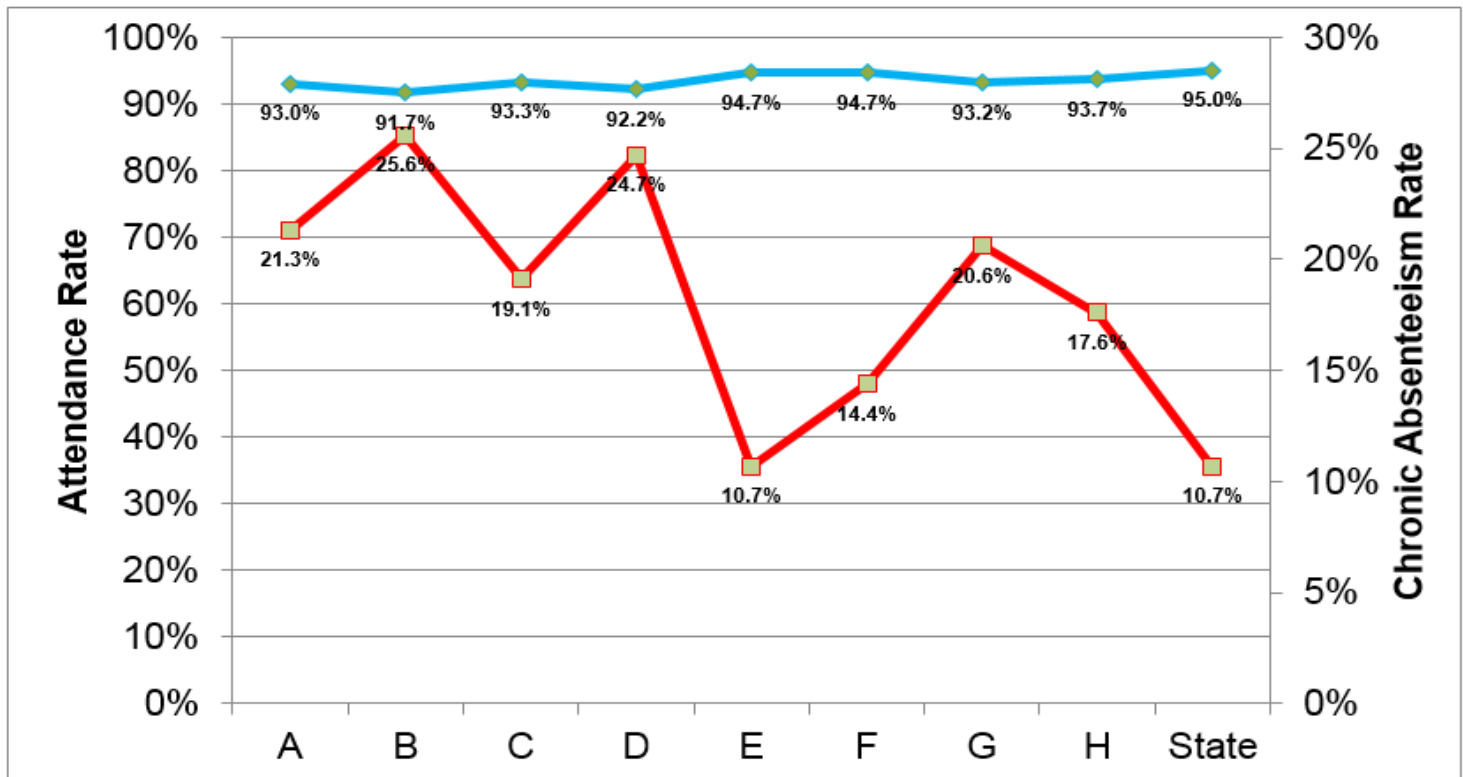
Early Work: Educate & Inform

Events	Strategic Partners
<p>“Here to Learn: Chronic Absence and the Achievement Gap,” public forum featuring Hedy Chang, Attendance Works (November 12, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legislators • government entities • state and local partners
<p>“Using a School-Linked Services Approach to Solve Chronic Absenteeism,” Connecticut State Department of Education (May 15, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local school districts • municipalities • faith-based organizations • community providers
<p>The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (13 Connecticut districts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local school districts • civic leaders • policymakers • advocates • community organizations
<p>Committee on Children’s Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report Card Project Leadership Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor • legislators • government entities • advocates • state and local partners
<p>Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and the Achievement Gap Task Force</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chaired by Lieutenant Governor • executive branch leadership



Example of Creating Visual Awareness

Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism, 2013-14
(Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)

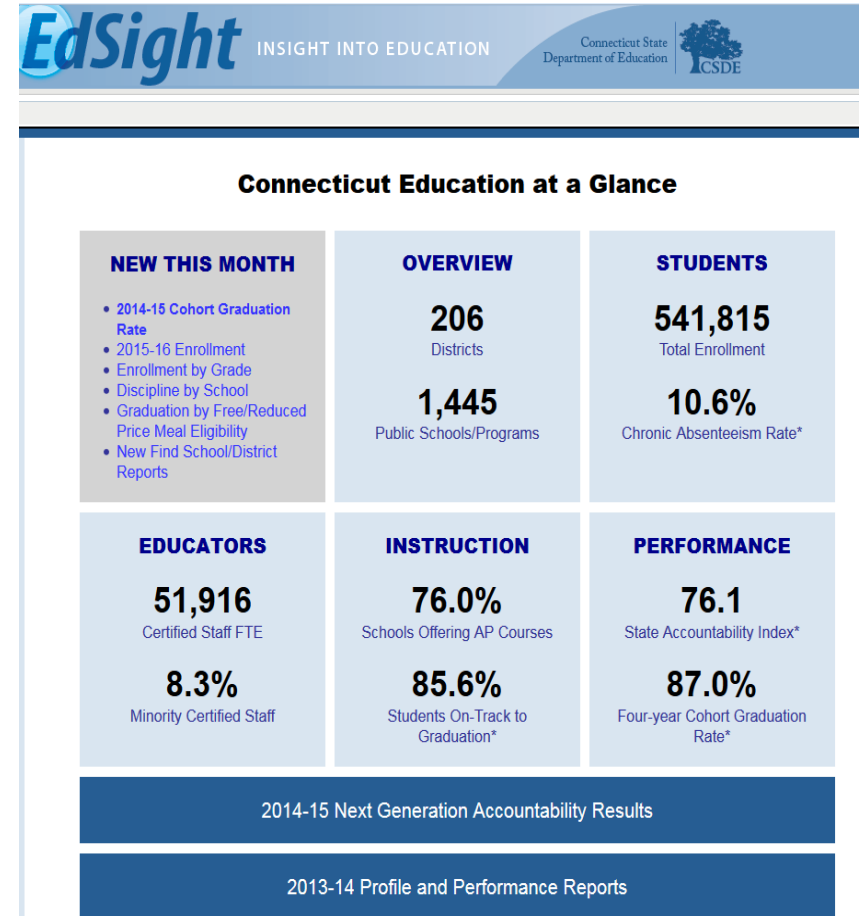


Learning from the Data

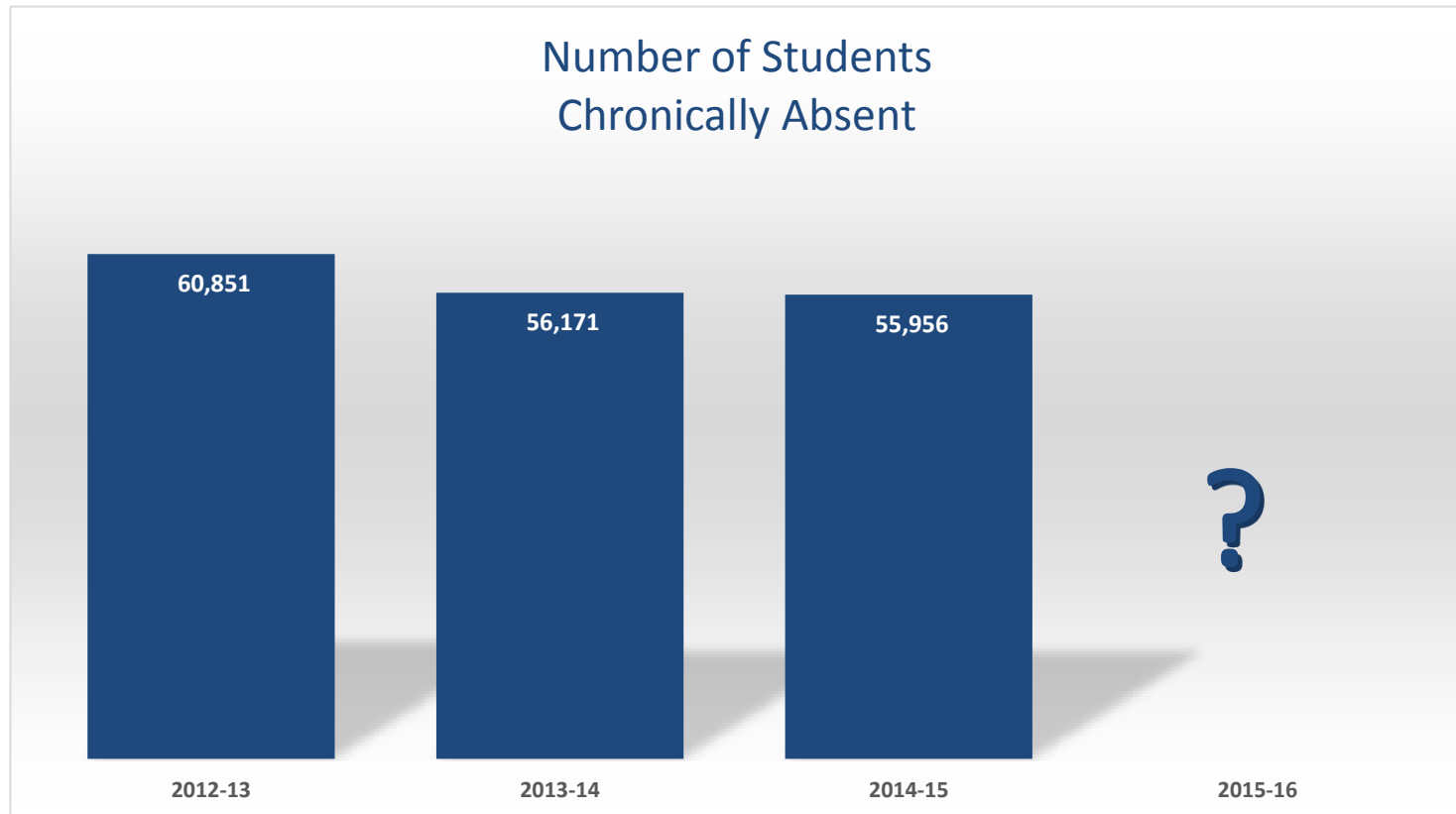


Data and Accountability

- State longitudinal student data system includes chronic absence data
- Data used to identify high levels of chronic absence
- Visual graphics used to achieve understanding
- Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report Card included chronic absence as a headline indicator
- [EdSight](#) and Next Generation Accountability System includes chronic absence indicator

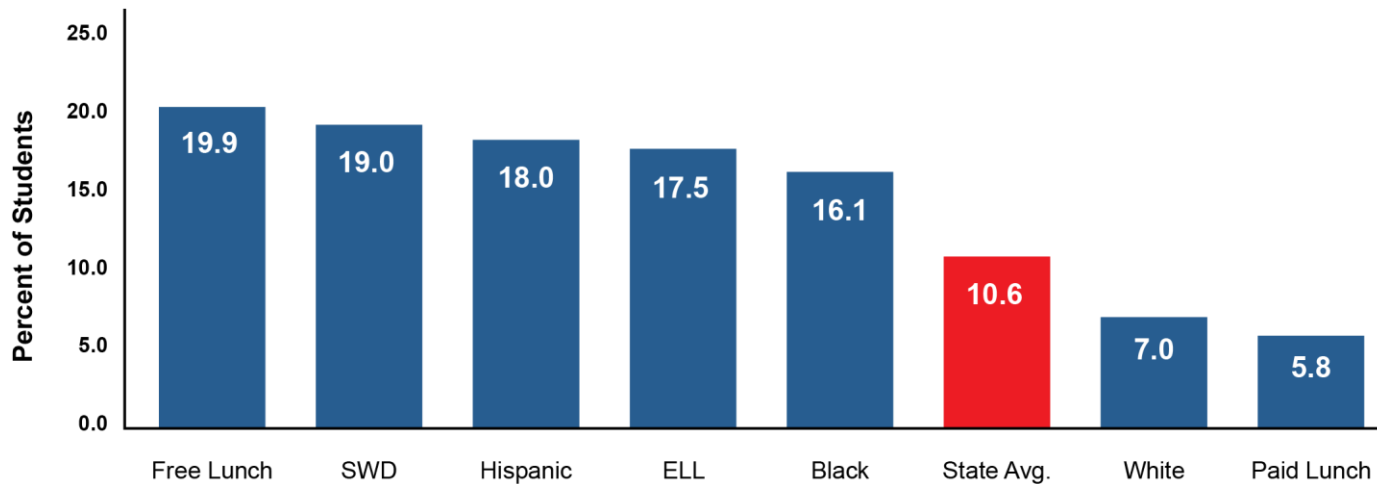


Why is chronic absence an important issue in Connecticut?

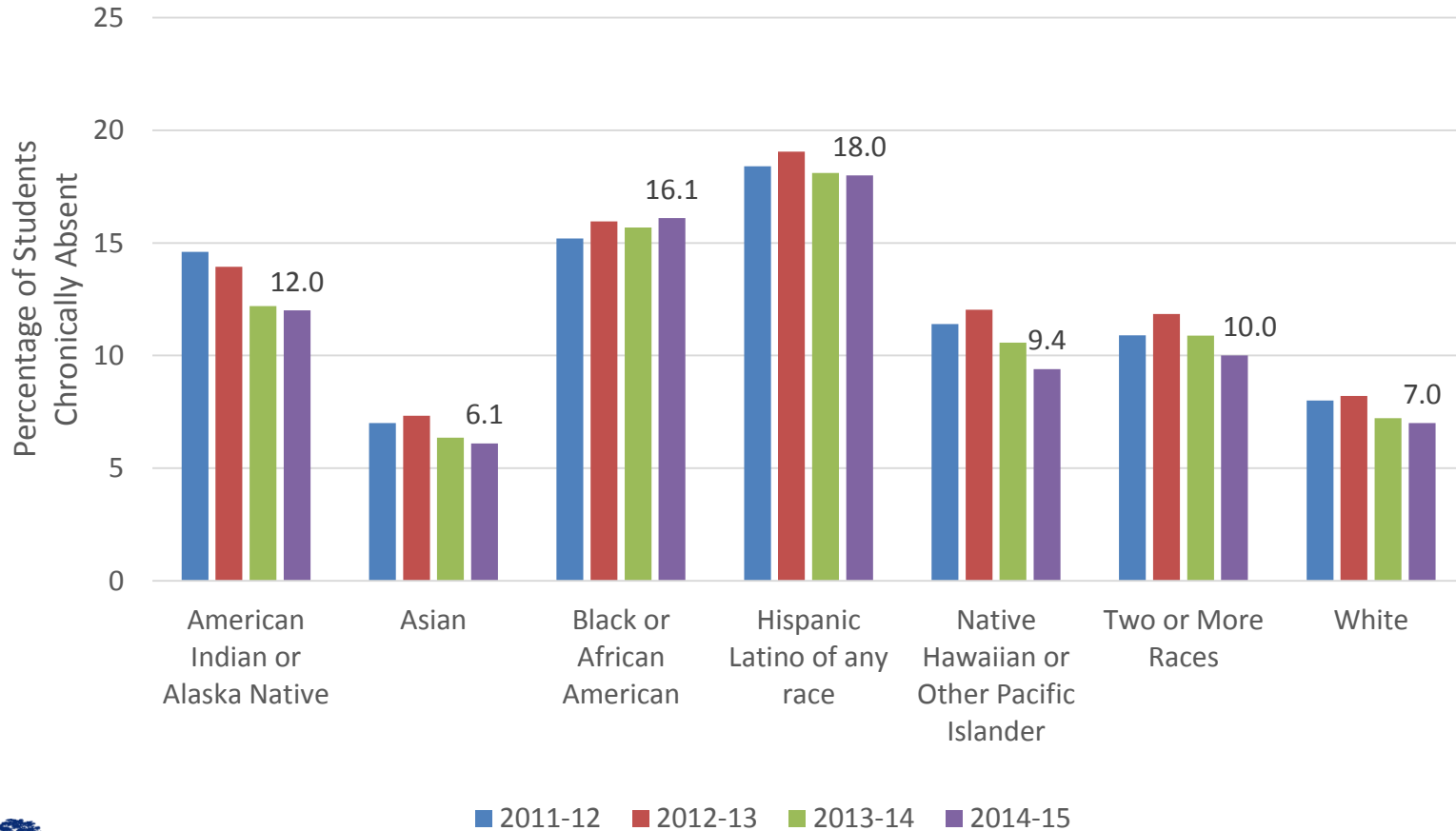


Who is chronically absent in Connecticut?

Snapshot
Percent Chronically Absent, 2014–15

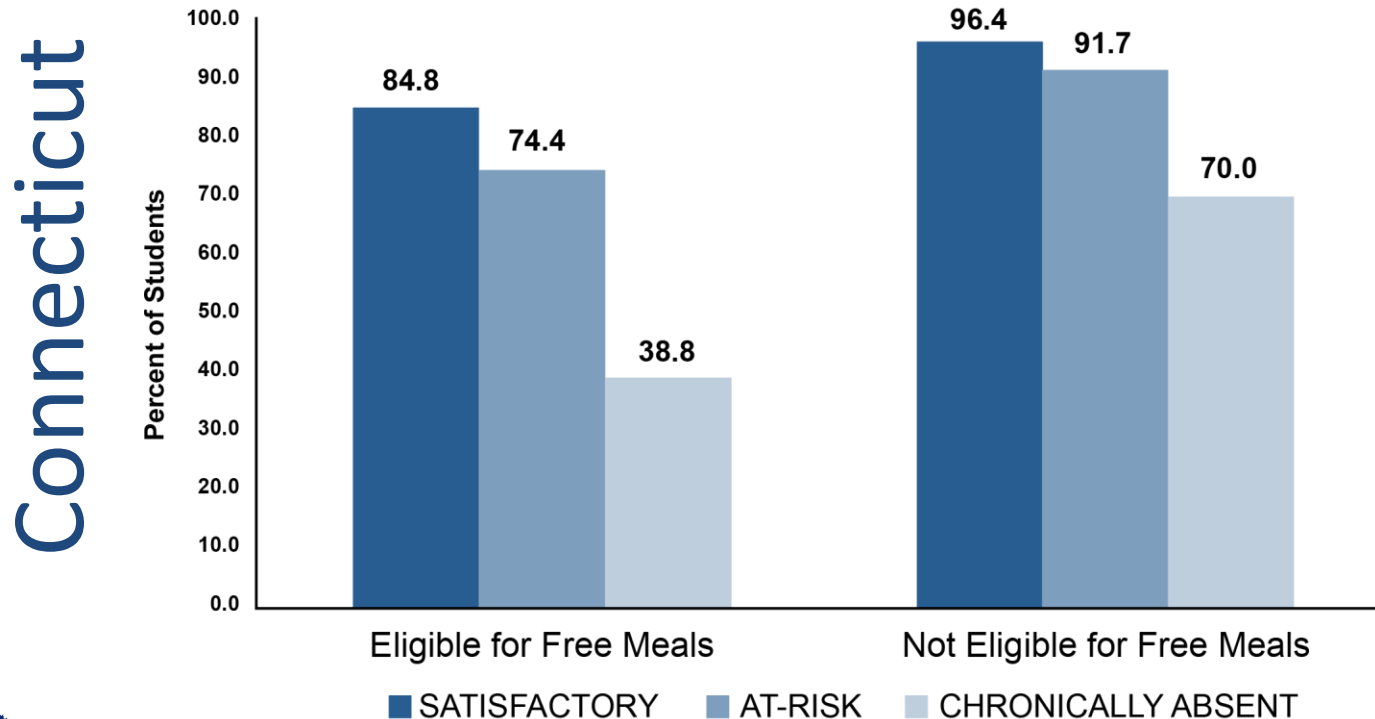


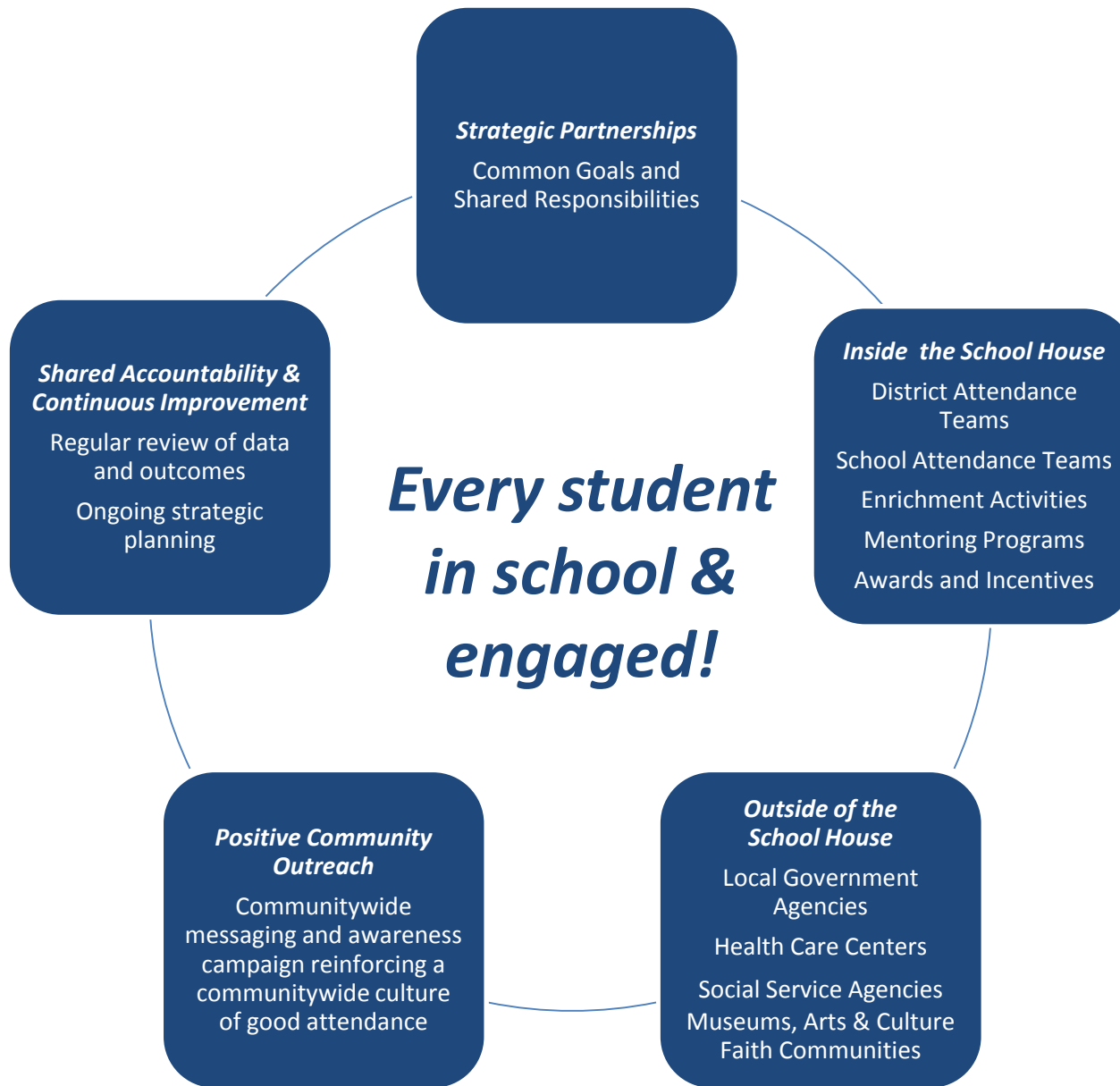
Chronic Absence Rates by Race/Ethnicity



What is the link between chronic absence and graduation rate?

Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in 4 Years by Meal Eligibility, 2012–13 Cohort





Joining Forces

*State-level champions and leaders role in
building state-level infrastructure*



Leadership Matters

- CT Kid's Report Card Leadership Committee, RBA Children's Report Card, 2011, results statement:

*All Connecticut children grow up in a **stable** living environment, safe, healthy, and prepared to lead successful lives.*

- Chronic Absence Strategic Action Group, January 2014

Serves as a centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new practices to address chronic absenteeism, promote communication and collaboration among critical state agency and community-based partners.



CT Kids Report Card Leadership Committee

Stable, Safe, Healthy and Successful Children

- Engages key partner agencies and organizations
- Provides input to the Legislature's Committee on Children
- Promotes strategies that ensure Connecticut's young people grow up in *stable environments, safe, healthy, and ready to lead successful lives*



Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group

*Centralizing force for existing initiatives
and promising new practices to address
chronic absenteeism.*

Four Goals:

1. Data Issues/Data Development
2. Best Practices – Building Capacity
3. Engage Strategic Partners
4. Report Card – *Turning the Curve*



Data Issues/ Data Development

To ensure that data are available and accurately inform policy and practice.

- Public reporting of attendance data disaggregated by grade, race, free/reduced lunch, English learners and Special Education
- Developed and disseminated Alliance District Data Analysis Profile Reports
- Partnered with the Connecticut Data Collaborative to initiate attendance data mapping pilot project
- Continued exploration of consistent attendance definitions for data gathering and reporting



Best Practices – Building Capacity

To ensure that policies and practices with proven results are implemented to improve outcomes.

- Focused the Spring 2015 Alliance District Convening on attendance and featured Attendance Works
- Conducted initial structured conversations with targeted communities and local United Ways
- Interviewed Alliance Districts on their own “stories behind the curve” for inventory of best practices
- Presentations at conferences/meetings, e.g., Faith, Families & Schools Conference, Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap; Discovery Communities Peer Exchange & Learning Meeting



Engage Strategic Partners

Strategic Action Group members are identified and represent all strategic partners with a role to play in improving results/“turning the curve.”

- Expansion of membership to include Office of Early Childhood as a key Planning Team member
- Partnered with The Governor’s Prevention Partnership to promote mentoring as an intervention to improve attendance
- Continued membership review to engage all key strategic partners



Report Card Development

Turning the Curve

Report Card is utilized as a communication tool to promote policy decisions.

- Secured State Board of Education resolution requiring chronic absence action plans for Alliance Districts
- Included chronic absenteeism as an indicator in the new Connecticut State Department of Education enhanced Accountability System
- Promoted chronic absence through presentations, reports and media coverage
- Introduced the Chronic Absence e-Bulletin



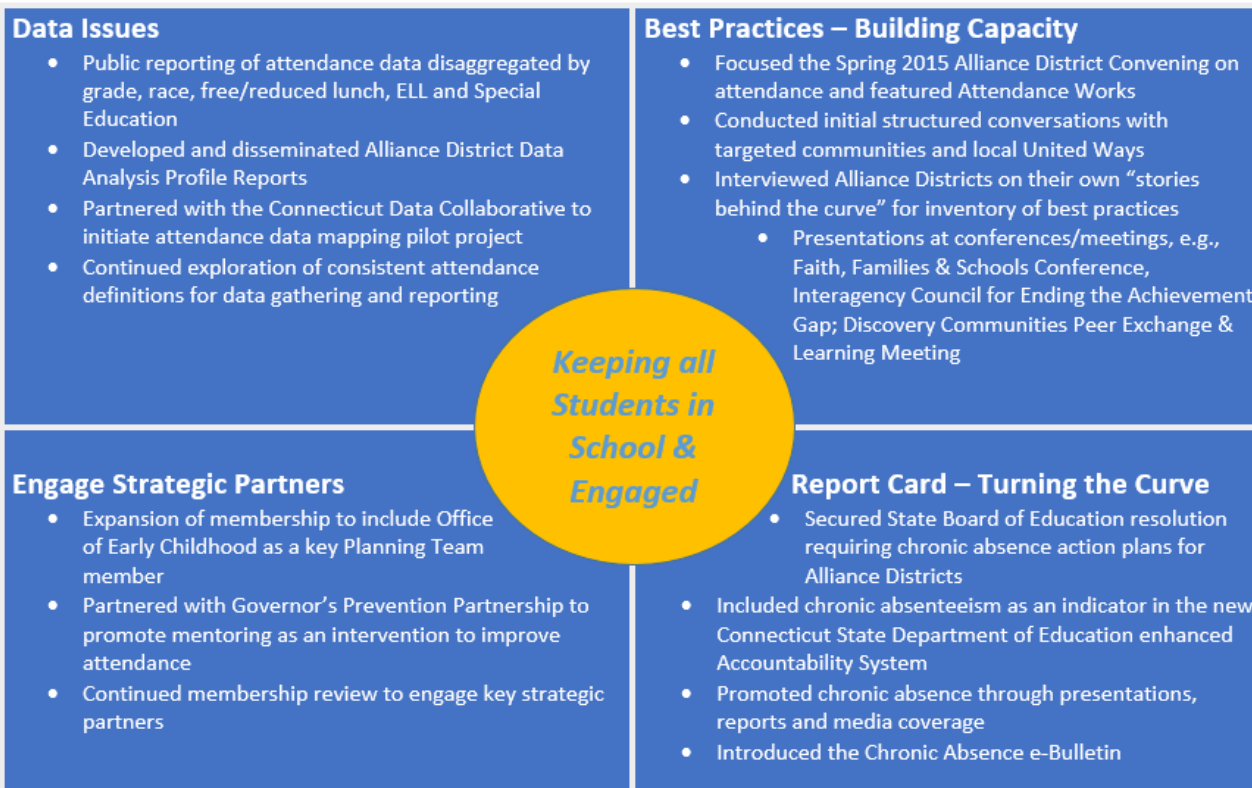
A “Snapshot” of Progress

Connecticut Kids Report Card

Stable, Safe, Healthy and Successful Children

Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group Snapshot of Accomplishments 2014-15

Purpose: To improve attendance in Connecticut schools by: (1) serving as the centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new approaches to achieve measurable better result; and (2) promoting statewide coordination and communication among critical partners involved in “turning the curve.”



Linking to Federal Effort to Combat Chronic Absenteeism

Every Student, Every Day: Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism

United States Departments of:

- Justice
- Health and Human Services
- Housing and Urban Development
- Education

Action Steps:

1. Generate and act on absenteeism data
2. Create and deploy positive messages and measures
3. Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism
4. Ensure responsibility across sectors



Leveraging Existing District-level Networks



Leveraging Existing Networks

- Policies and practices that are research and evidence-based are embedded into all meetings and professional development opportunities
- Examples of networks in place that are positioned to include chronic absenteeism into their education reform efforts:
 - Alliance School Districts (30 districts)
 - Commissioner’s Network Schools
 - Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
 - The Campaign for Grade Level Reading (13 districts)
 - The Governor’s Prevention Partnership’s School-Based Mentoring Roundtable
 - Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs), organized by juvenile court regions
 - Community conversations with local United Ways
 - Community providers invited as partners at Alliance District Convenings



Promoting “Bright Spots” to Generate Change



Demonstrating Success

- “Bright spots” demonstrate that reducing chronic absence *can be done*
 - Middletown Public Schools
 - Consolidated School District of New Britain
 - Vernon Public Schools
- Promotion of successes can start a *ripple effect*
- *Momentum builds* and more districts unpack their data, find the trends and implement a strategic plan



Impact of Connecticut's Infrastructure and Systems Approach



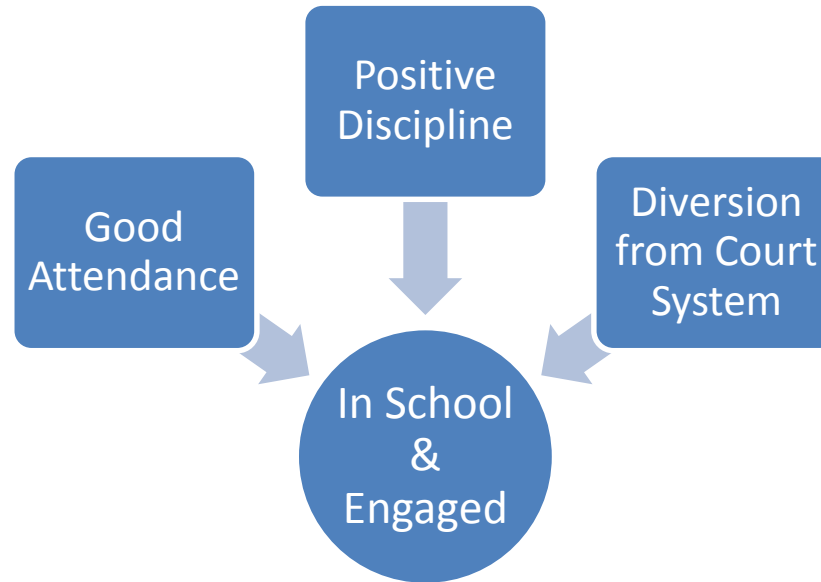
Looking Back...

Alignment of efforts has had a transformative impact including:

- Reduction in chronic absence at both the state and local levels
- Implementation of Public Act, 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism that included:
 - development of a Prevention and Intervention Guide
 - district and school-level attendance teams where chronic absenteeism rates are high
 - adoption of official definitions for chronic absence
- State Board of Education resolution (February 2015) requiring plans to address chronic absence in applications for state funding
- Capacity building professional development events and peer-to-peer learning opportunities
- Next Generation Accountability System/[Guidance](#) and EdSight



Convergence of Efforts



Next Steps

Release prevention and intervention chronic absence guide

Launch statewide September Attendance Awareness campaign

Build internal and external capacity to support districts

Expand Connecticut's partnership with Attendance Works



Example of Strategic Messaging

...we can dramatically improve the academic and life outcomes of millions of young people who have been disengaged from a daily, supportive school experience.

The health and well-being of our nation demands that we do no less.

Source: October 7, 2015, Letter on Federal Effort to Combat Chronic Absenteeism at Schools



Message Customized for Connecticut

*...we can dramatically improve the
academic and life outcomes of
56,171 young people who have been
disengaged from a daily, supportive
school experience.*

*The health and well-being of
Connecticut demands that
we do no less.*



Peer-to-Peer Sharing



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