



# Attendance Matters:

How Expanded Learning Opportunities Keep Kids In School





## Pair Share

- ✓ **What is one hope you have about what you will learn while you are here today?**



## Agenda

### Presenters

**Hedy Chang, Executive Director,  
Attendance Works**

**Robin Mohr, Executive Director,  
Coalition for New Britain's Youth**

**Nancy Sarra, Superintendent,  
Consol. School District of New  
Britain**

**I. What is chronic absence?**

**II. Why does it matter for achievement?**

**III. Who can address chronic absence?**

**The role of expanded learning**

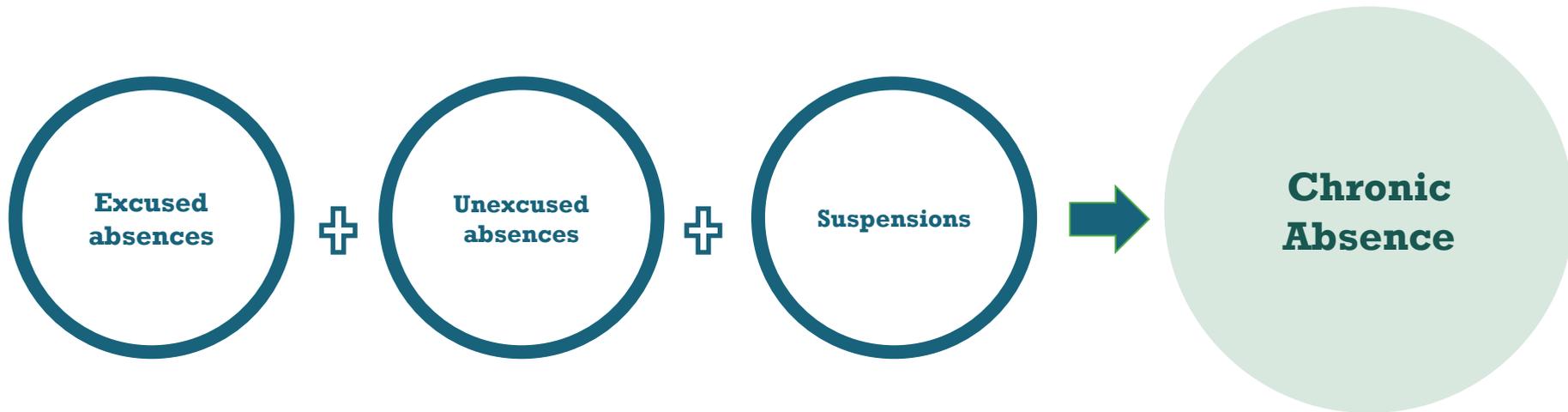
**IV. New Britain - A Case Study**

**V. Self-Assessment**



## What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it 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).



## 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.

### Chronic Absence

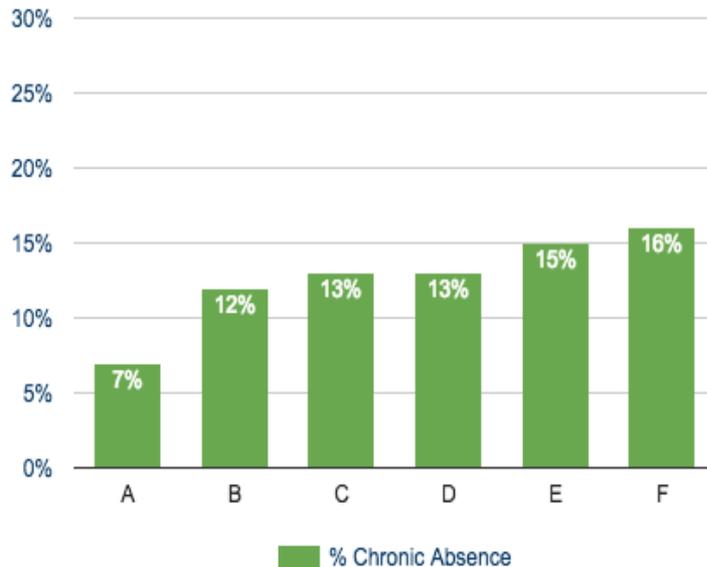
**Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?** Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. Chronic absence included in ESSA and also most recent release of data by the US Department of Education - Office for Civil Rights.



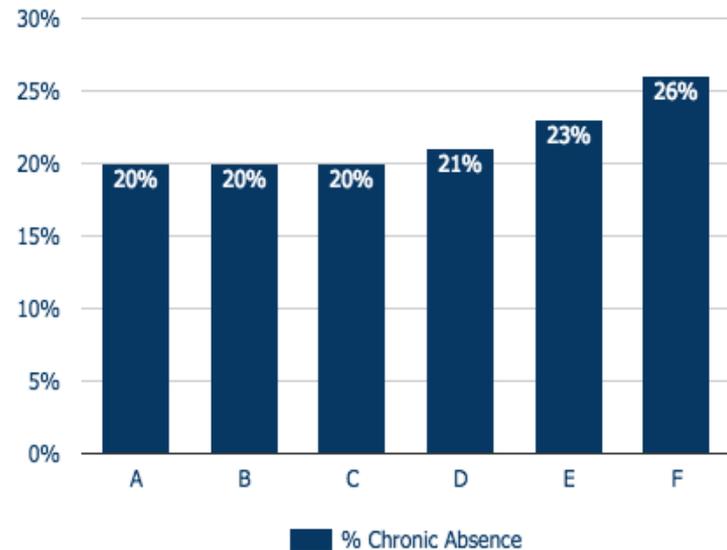
## Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

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

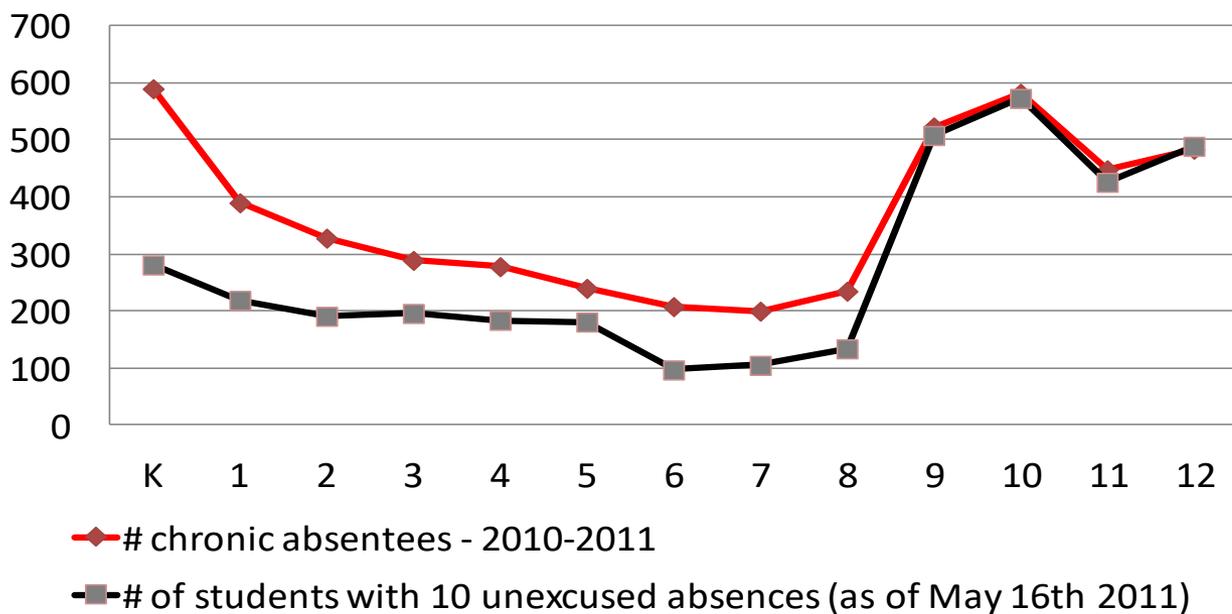
95% ADA = don't know

93% ADA = significant chronic absence



## Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy

**Number of students missing 10% versus 10 unexcused absences  
(San Francisco Unified School District)**





## 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		

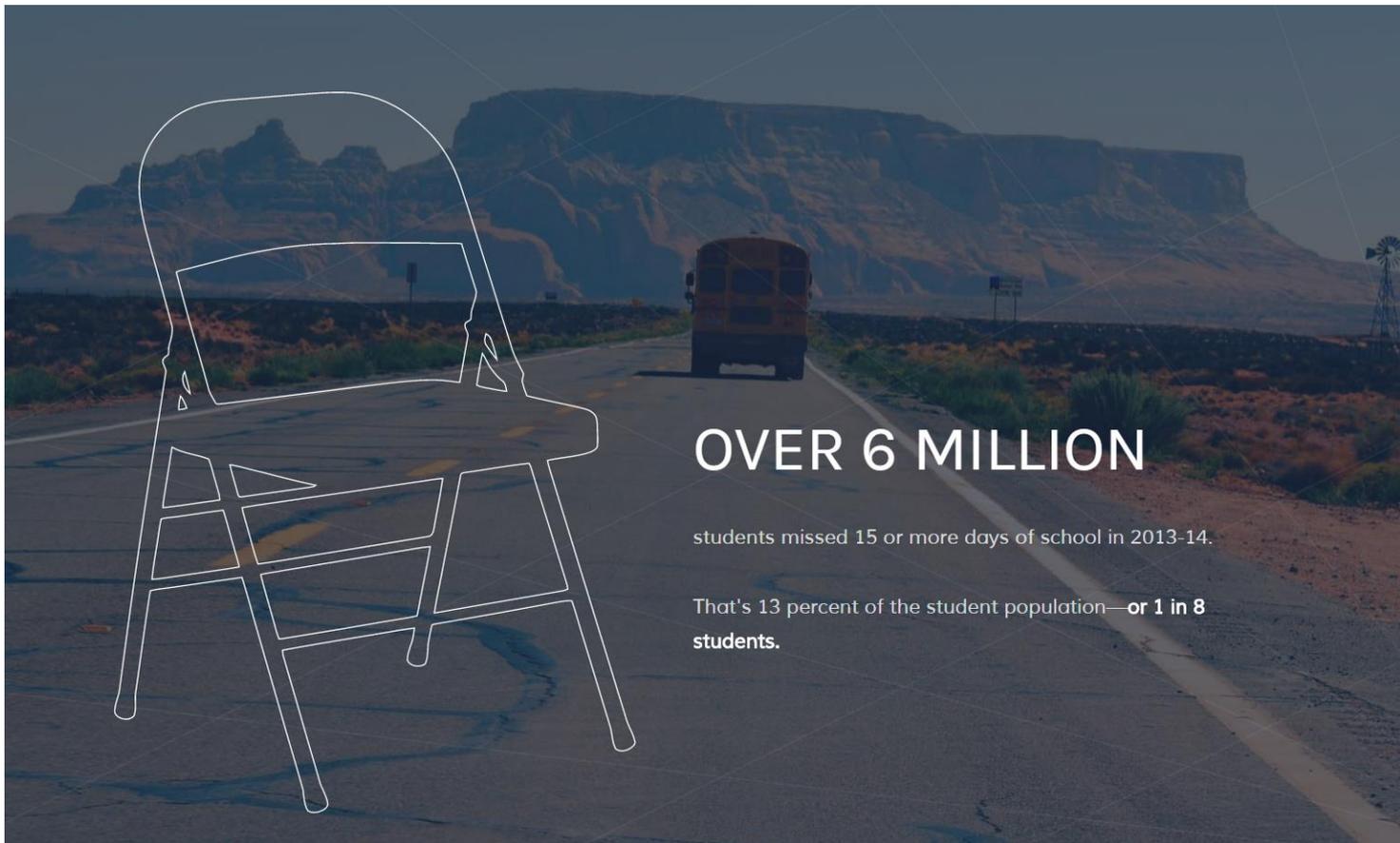
  

February					March					April					May					June					
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	
				X						X															
X	X													X		X						X	X		
							X					X													

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few As 2-3 days a month**



## Chronic Absence a Huge National Problem



**OVER 6 MILLION**

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

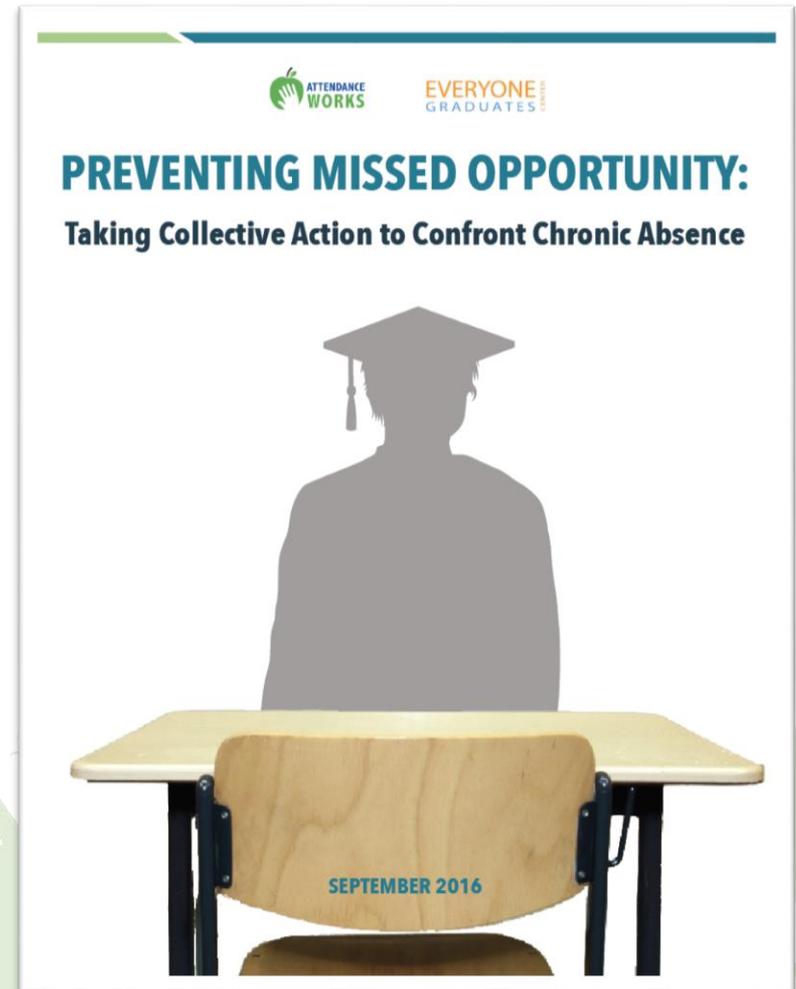
That's 13 percent of the student population—or **1 in 8** students.



## Preventing Missed Opportunity

### Data Sources:

- ✓ **Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Data Collection(SY 2013–14):** Data is available at the school level and was aggregated up where reported at the district and state levels. Chronic absence defined as missing 15 days.
- ✓ **National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data:** % minority students or % eligible for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program
- ✓ **American Community Survey (US Census):** Children ages 5-7 living in poverty using 5-year average 2009–2014



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/preventing-missed-opportunity/>

These included 2 types of districts: relative affluent, large which still have a large number of students in poverty and high poverty, racially segregated urban districts with high rates of chronic absence

Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.



### Where are the Nation's Chronically Absent Students Found?

Chronic Absence Story Map



- Introduction
- Where are the 4% of Districts?
- Two Large Suburban Districts
- High Minority-High Poverty Urban Districts
- High Rates - Mostly Rural
- Data Notes

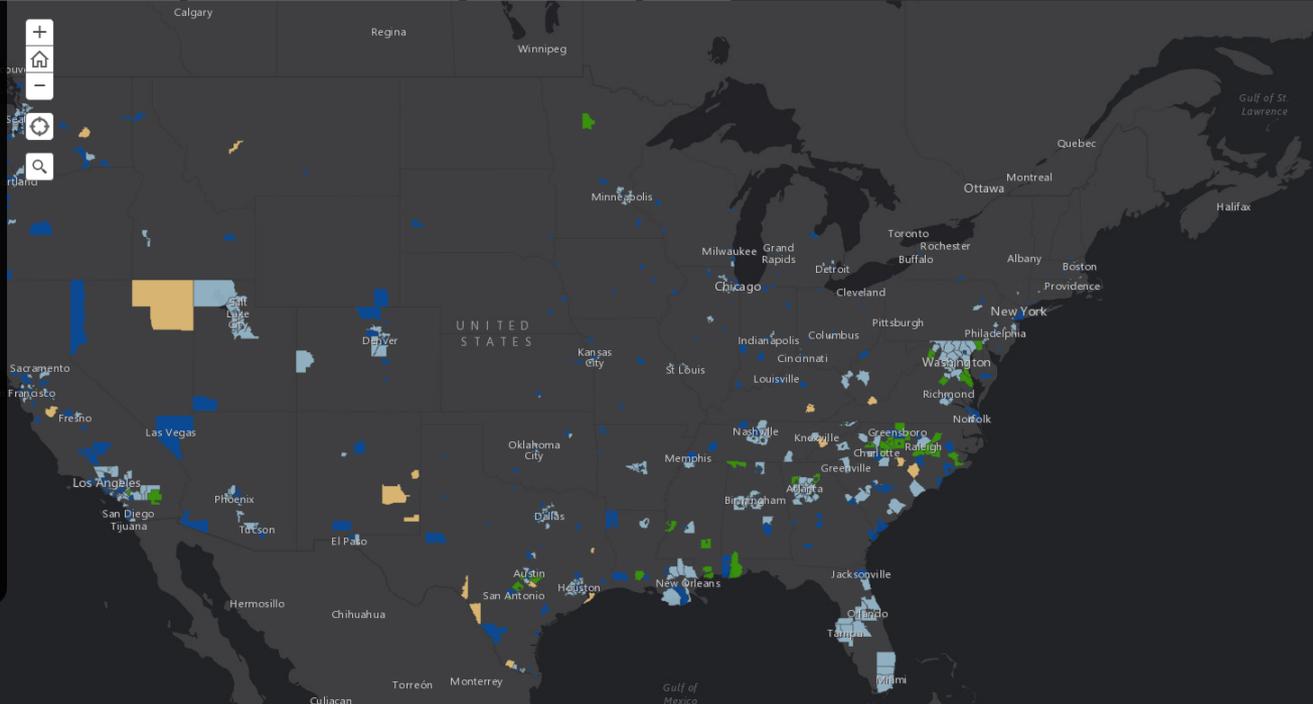
Half of the nation's chronically absent students were concentrated in 4 percent of the 16,240 school districts that reported the number of chronically absent students. These 654 districts were spread across 47 states and Washington D.C.

Overall, 47 percent were modest to large urban districts. About half of the urban districts had extremely high rates of chronic absence and poverty and were mostly comprised of students from communities of color (largely African American and Latino). Another 45 percent were suburban districts, and while their rates often were close to the national average, their large numbers reflect the sheer size of each district and their growing populations of low-income students.

Click on a school district to view its data.

#### School Districts

- City
- Suburb
- Town
- Rural

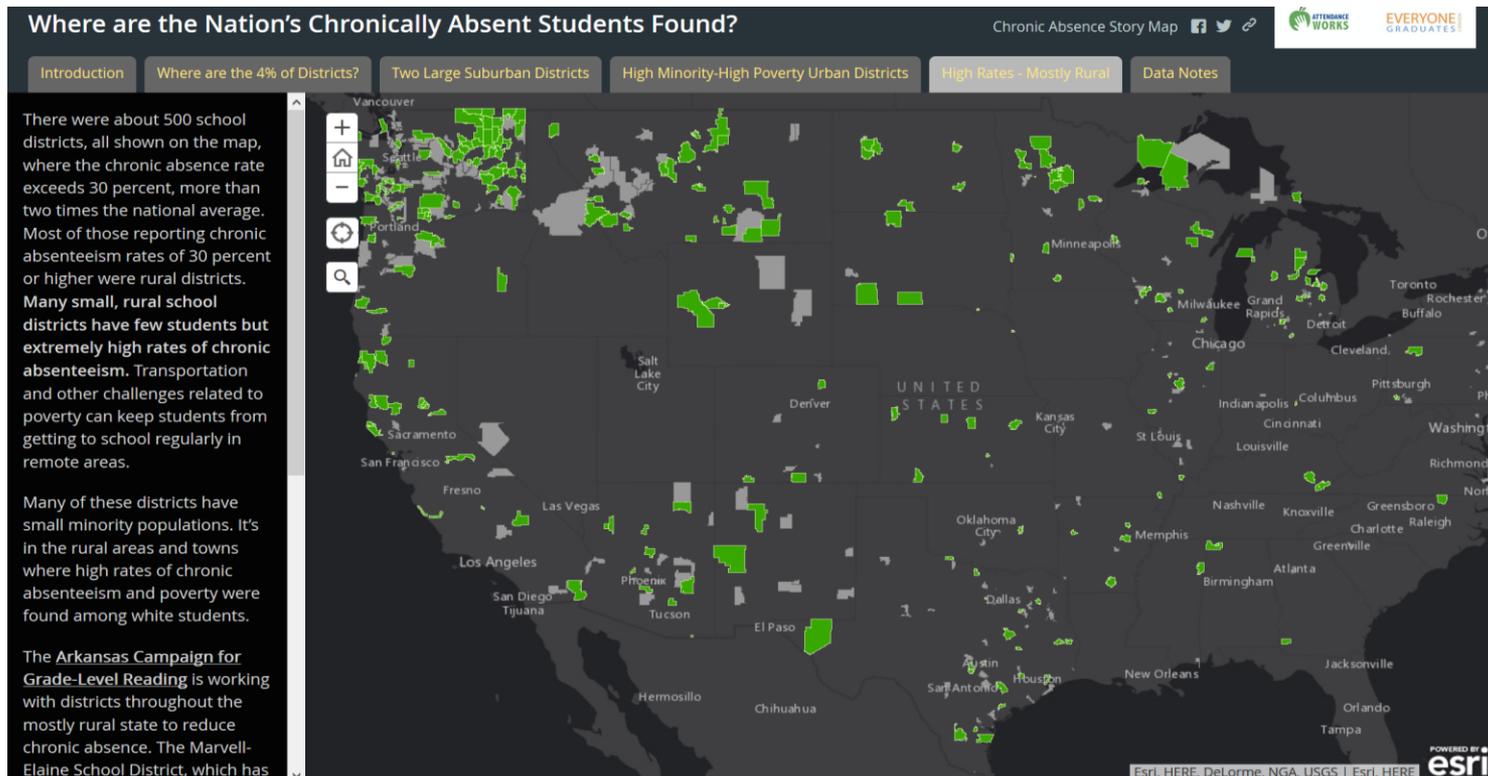


See Chronic Absence Story Map at <http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ>



## What about rural communities?

Many small, poor rural school districts have few students but face high rates of chronic absenteeism.



See Chronic Absence Story Map at <http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ>



**Trend of large numbers of students in a handful of districts holds true across states.**

**Table 2. Concentration of Chronic Absenteeism at District Level in California and Texas 2013-2014**

State	Enrollment	Total Students Chronically Absent (CA)	Percent of Students Chronically Absent	Total Districts	Number of Districts that Account for...			Percent of Districts that Account for...		
					25% of CA Students	50% of CA Students	75% of CA Students	25% of CA Students	50% of CA Students	75% of CA Students
CA	6,035,665	719,747	12	1,019	14	61	167	1	6	16
TX	5,176,572	606,428	12	1,202	16	53	136	1	4	11



## ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) offers opportunities to create greater accountability.

ESSA already requires State Education Agencies receiving Title I to produce a state report card including chronic absence. It also allows use of Title II funds for professional development on chronic absence.

Chronic Absence could also be added as an indicator of school quality or student engagement. It meets all requirements.

- ✓ Applicable to every student
- ✓ Can be Disaggregated
- ✓ Can be used to distinguish performance across school
- ✓ Valid
- ✓ Reliable
- ✓ Proven impact on achievement

New Brief Available in Policy @  
www.attendanceworks.org

### Chronic Absence: Our Top Pick for the ESSA School Quality or Student Success Indicator



A Policy Brief

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives states the responsibility of choosing at least one indicator to measure school quality or student success. This brief makes the case that the chronic absence rate, either alone or as a part of an index, is among the best measures that states could choose to fulfill this requirement. Chronic absence, defined as missing 10 percent of school days within one academic year for any reason, is a powerful early warning predictor of student performance. It also meets or exceeds all of the rigorous criteria ESSA has established for accountability measures. Finally, and importantly from a cost standpoint, it is a measure which school districts must already report to the U.S. Department of Education and is based upon data that they already maintain in their systems.

#### What is Chronic Absence and What is its Impact?

Most children miss a few days of school each year without long-term consequences. However, when they miss many days, the effects are almost always negative. Researchers have defined absences as “chronic” when they reach the level at which a child’s school success is at significant risk. Chronic absence is different from truancy, which counts only unexcused absences, and average daily attendance, which reports the average number of students who attend school each day.

As early as pre-kindergarten, students who are chronically absent are less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade and more likely to be retained in later grades.<sup>1</sup> Chronically absent kindergartners are also less likely to develop the social skills needed to persist in school.<sup>2</sup> The problems multiply for students who are chronically absent several years in a row.<sup>3</sup> By

sixth grade, absenteeism is one of three early warning indicators that influence whether students will graduate from high school.<sup>4</sup> By ninth grade, it’s a better predictor of graduation than eighth grade test scores.<sup>5</sup> And, even if they manage to graduate, high school students with a history of chronic absence are less likely to enroll and persist in college. Importantly, chronic absenteeism, especially when defined as a percentage of days missed, is a leading indicator and can reveal that a student needs help long before test scores or grades do.

#### Why Choose Chronic Absence as the ESSA School Quality or Student Success Indicator?

Chronic absence is one of the few metrics available now to all states and that meets or exceeds the rigorous ESSA selection criteria for indicators. We have summarized these requirements below:

ESSA Indicators Must:	
<b>Be applicable to every student</b>	All enrolled students are included in attendance counts; no students are excluded.
<b>Provide summary and disaggregated data</b>	Chronic absence rates can be reported separately for all subgroups of students in a school, district, and state.
<b>Be comparable across a state’s school districts</b>	States already have protocols that standardize attendance taking and reporting. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights has recently required states to track and report a standard measure of chronic absence. As a result, chronic absence rates will be comparable within states and, unlike many indicators, across the nation.
<b>Be able to distinguish differences in performance among schools</b>	Chronic absence levels vary substantially among students and schools within any district or state. These variations are not random; they represent meaningful differences in student engagement, achievement, and success. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Be valid</b>	Test scores are measures of test success, which can be strongly or weakly related to subject matter mastery. Chronic absence, on the other hand, measures how much school has been missed.
<b>Be reliable</b>	Counting errors aside, taking attendance and computing chronic absence repeatedly will yield a consistent result.
<b>Have a proven impact on Achievement</b>	An abundance of studies link chronic absence to academic achievement. Click <a href="#">here</a> for a compilation of research on chronic absence and its relationship to student success.

<sup>1</sup> See CORE district experiences at <http://coredistricts.org/why-is-core-needed/>

# Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

*What we know from research around the country*





## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.
- ✓ **College and Career Ready:** Cultivating the habit of regular attendance helps students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.
- ✓ **Engagement:** Attendance reflects engagement in learning.
- ✓ **Effective Practice:** Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.



## Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long- Term Academic Outcomes

Chronic absence in  
kindergarten

Lower levels of  
literacy in first grade

Lower achievement as  
far out as fifth grade

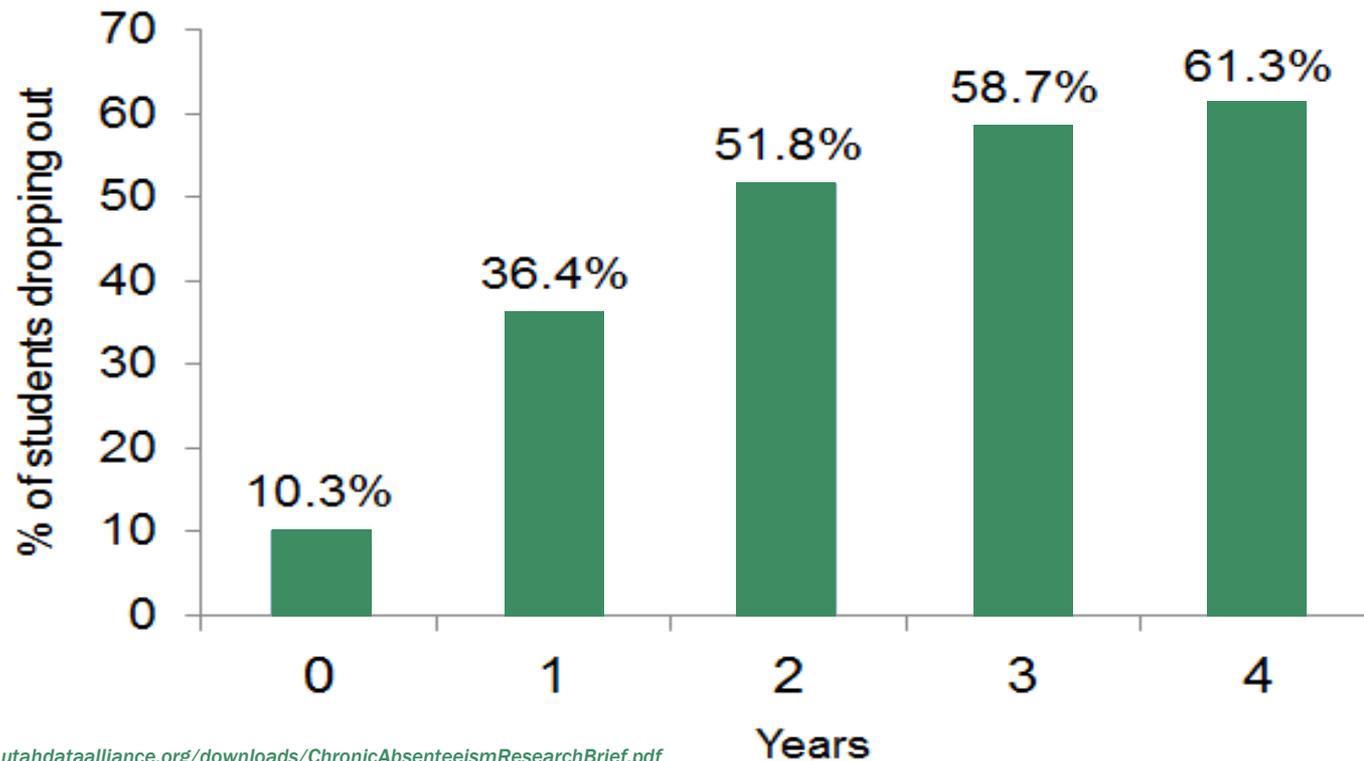
A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- 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 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent



## The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades



# How Can We Address Chronic Absence?





## Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

### Myths

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Don't realize just missing 2 days per month can affect learning
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

### Barriers

- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor Transportation
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Homelessness

### Aversion

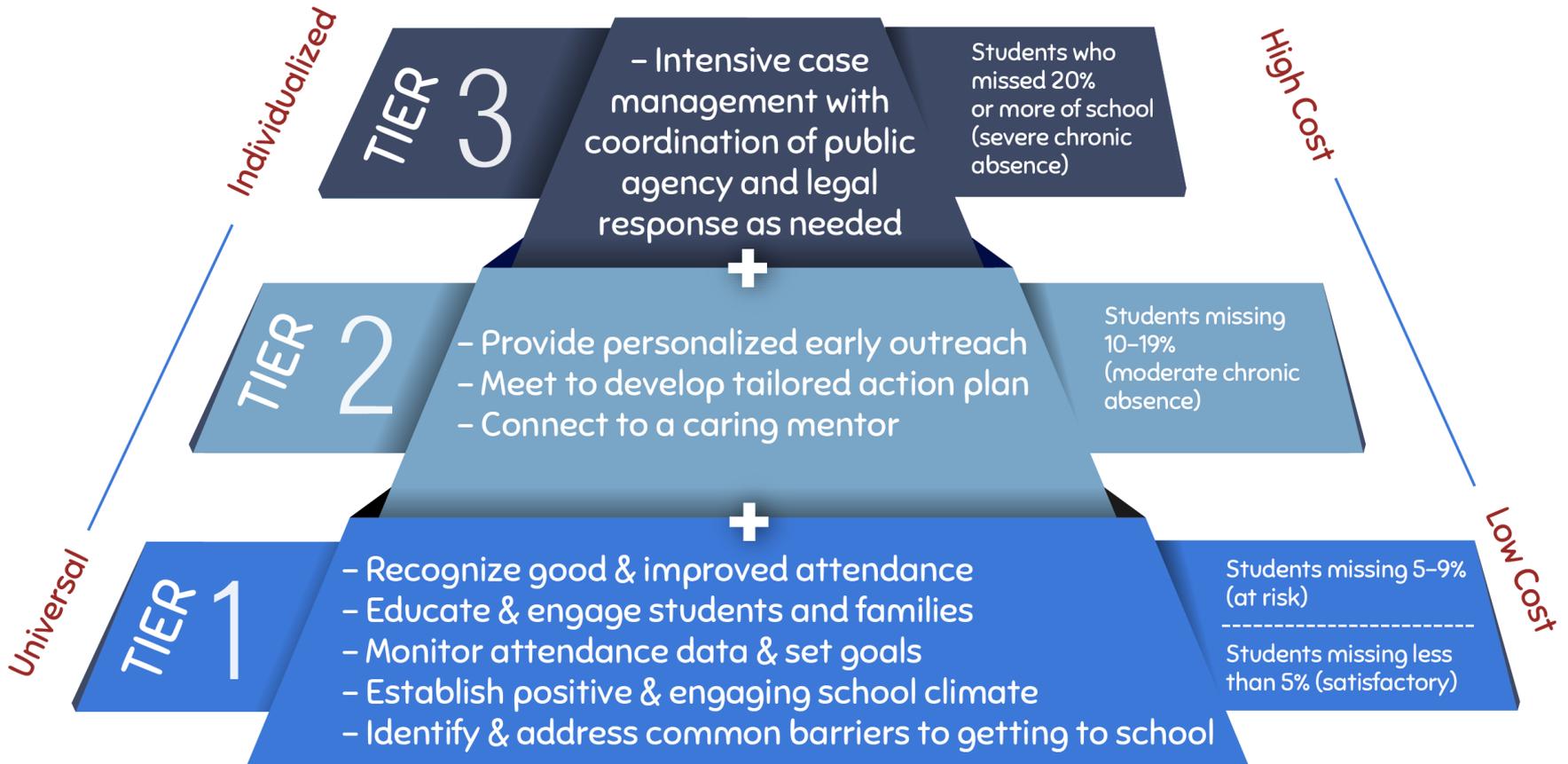
- Child struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### Disengagement

- Lack of engaging and relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school
- Poor school climate



## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





## Parents underestimate the number of year-end absences

Ad Council research commissioned by the CA Attorney General asked parents with students with a history of absence about their children's absences in two ways:

1. Was your child absent an average of 2 or more days a month?
2. Was your child absent more than 10 days over the year?

**60%** of parents said their child was absent an average of 2+ days a month, **but not** 10+ days a year

**The math: If a child is absent an average of 2+ days a month, then he/she is absent far more than 10+ days a year**

**Missed an average of 2+ days per month 90%**

**Missed 10+ days annually 30%**



## More Ideas for Creating a Culture of Attendance

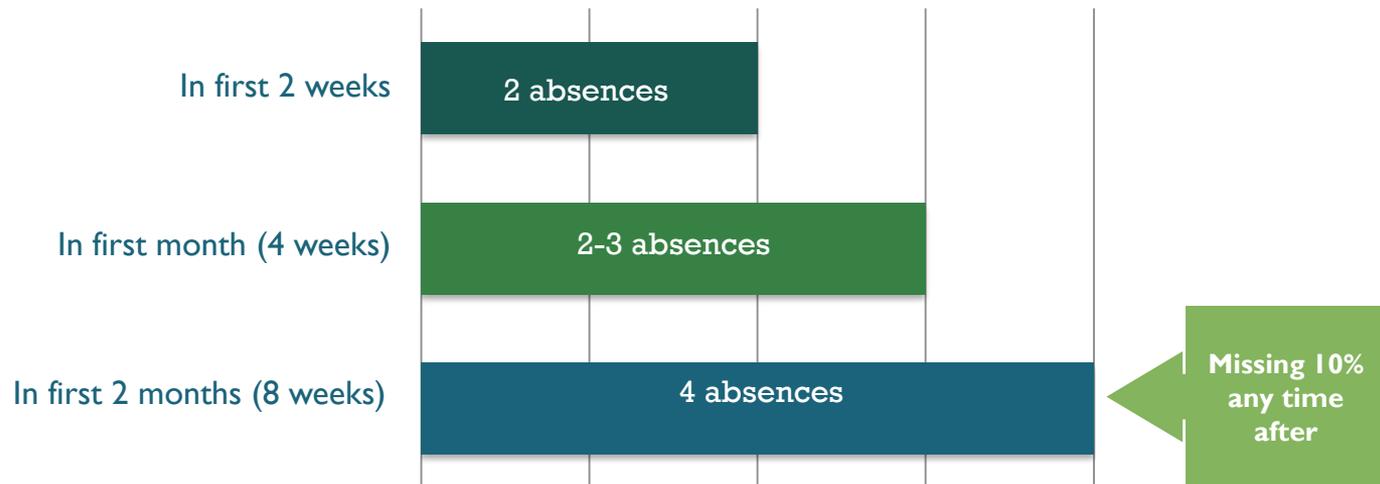
- ✓ Take roll every day in a caring manner
- ✓ Partner with schools to educate families and students about the importance of attendance
- ✓ Reach out to students/families with poor attendance
- ✓ Offer incentives for good and improved attendance
- ✓ Use engaging program activities to motivate students to come to school.
- ✓ Analyze program attendance data to identify areas in need of improvement.
- ✓ Engage students in analyzing barriers and generating solution to attendance
- ✓ Enlist students in developing messaging on attendance

*What would you add?*



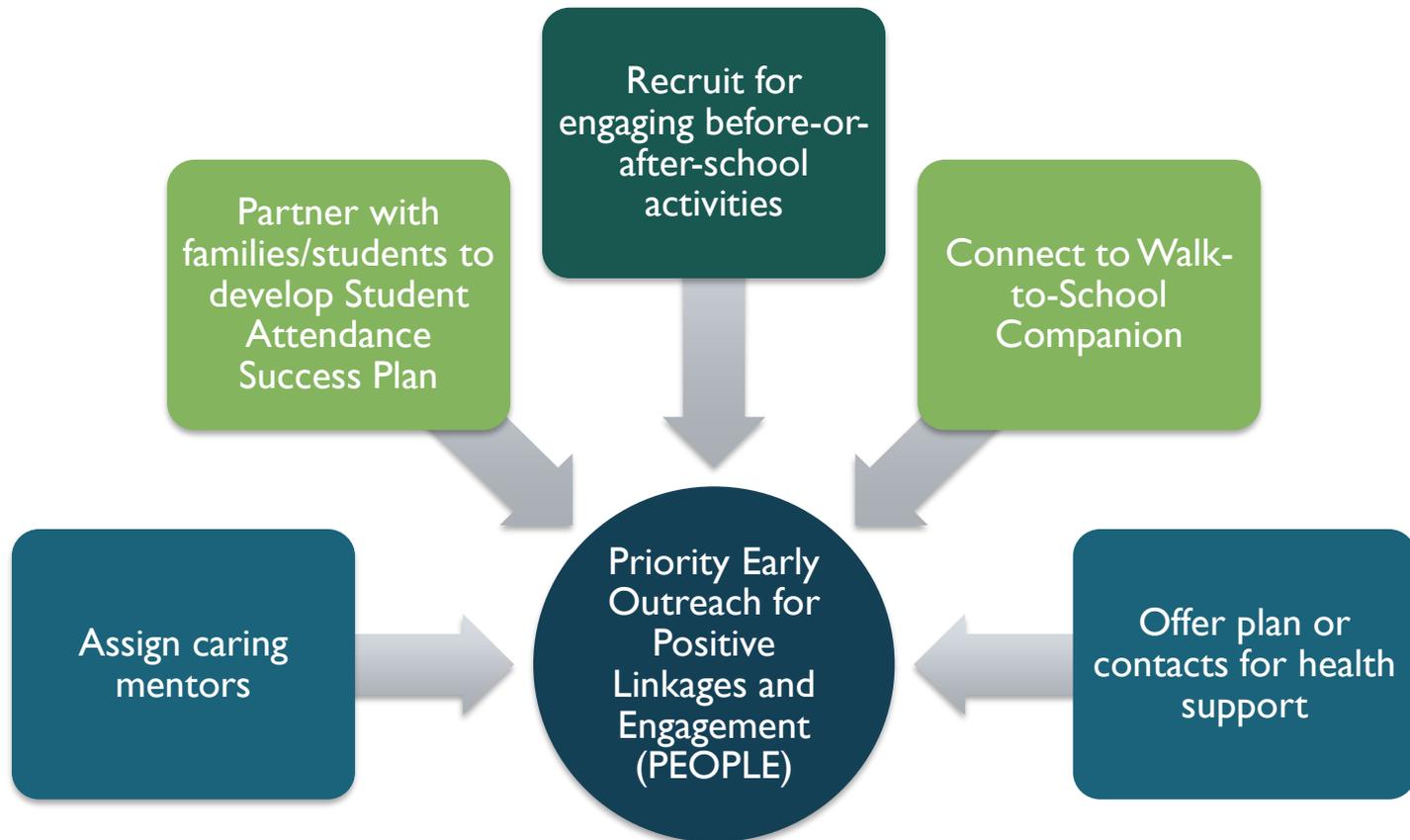
## Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

- ✓ 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:





## Possible Tier 2 Interventions





## Why the impact on attendance? (What the research shows)

### Quality afterschool programs:

- Provide socialization and peer attention in a supervised venue
- Re-establish the link between effort and results—first in a non-school activity
- Engage students in challenging activities that help them develop persistence
- Provide consistent contact with caring, stable adults
- Increase the sense of belonging at school.



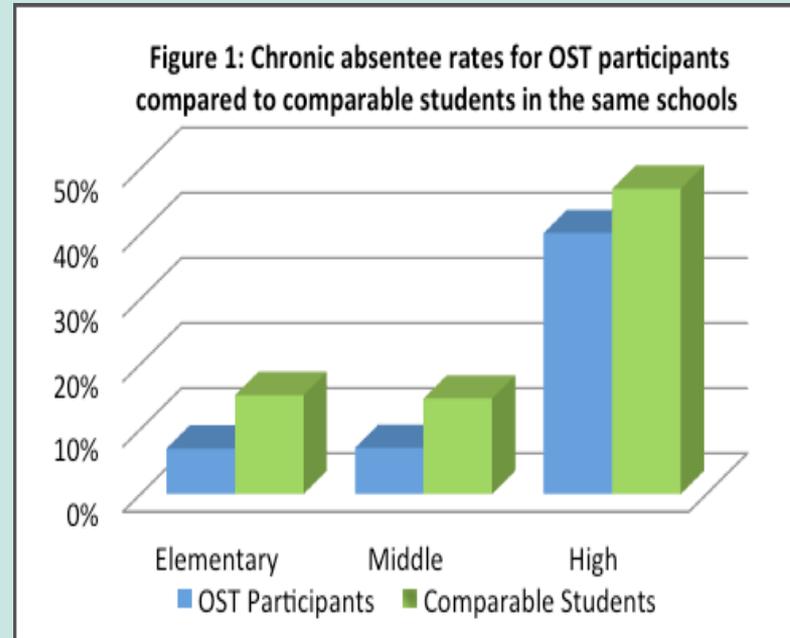
## Impact of Quality Out-of-School Time on Attendance

For more research:  
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/tools-for-afterschool-providers/>

- 7th and 8th graders attending Boys & Girls Club afterschool programs skipped school fewer times, increased school effort and gained academic confidence. (2009)
- Afterschool participants attending Pathways to Progress in Minneapolis and St. Paul came to school an average 18.4 more days than their peers. (2004)
- School-day attendance improved for students in California's Afterschool Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program. Students absent 10 % of the year came an additional 11 days. (2002).

# Out of School Time Attendance Highlights

- Students who attended OST programs regularly **were less likely to be chronically absent** in 2011-12 than comparable peers across the district.
- There was **a reduction in chronic absenteeism** for students in their first year of OST participation.





## What Can Expanded Programs Do for Tier 2?

- ✓ Get in-school attendance data on program participants in order to provide extra supports to those with attendance challenges.
- ✓ Recruit students who are chronically absent to your program
- ✓ Use poor attendance in afterschool or summer learning to identify students who might begin to have trouble showing up to school day program
- ✓ Partner with school staff to unpack and address challenges facing students with poor attendance



## What Can Expanded Learning Programs Do for Tier 2?

- ✓ Learn if your school has a team that monitors attendance data; Seek membership on the team or at least access to review school day attendance
- ✓ Find out what the school is doing to reduce chronic absence and improve attendance.
- ✓ Identify if there is a role for the expanded learning program

**Addressing Chronic  
Absence in Practice:  
The New Britain, CT Story**

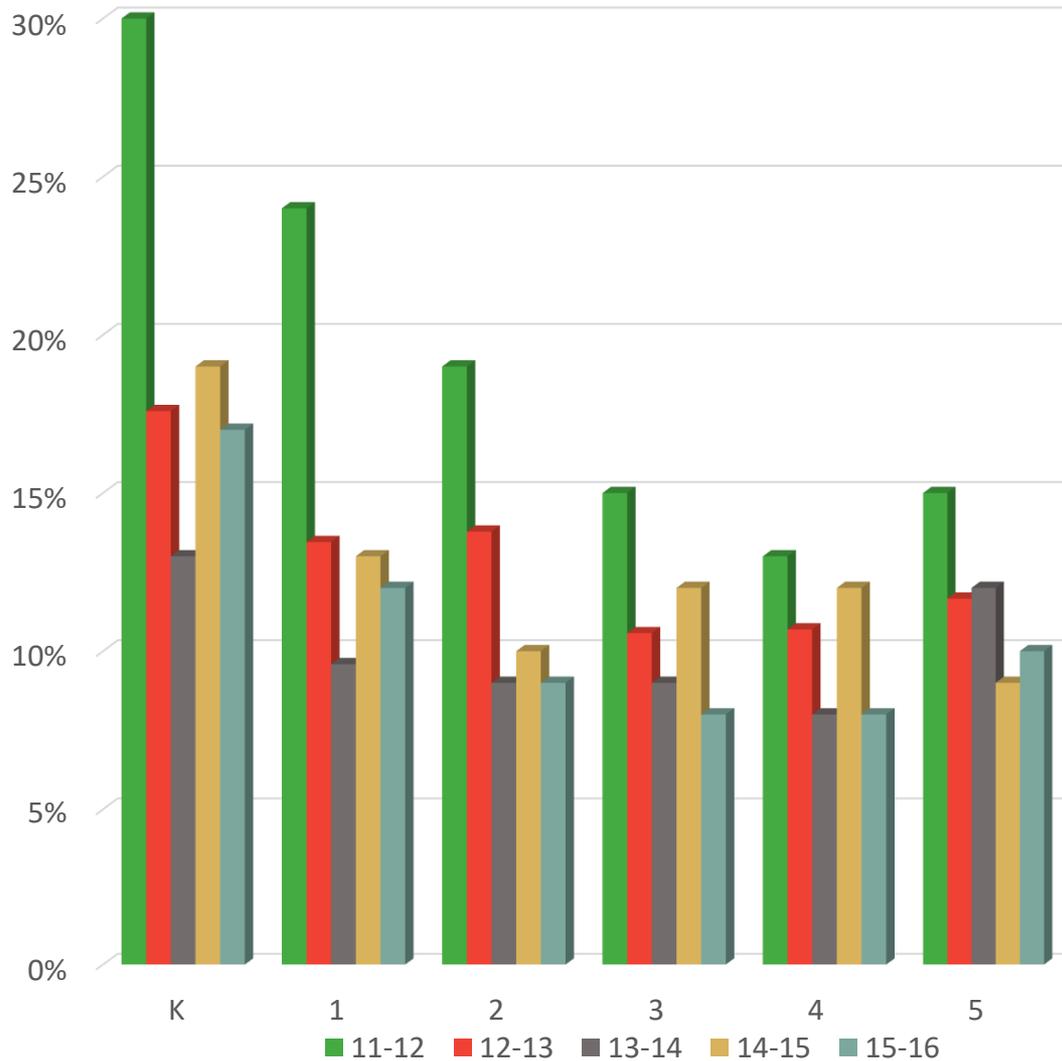
## **Key Questions:**

1. Why is chronic absence a priority for the New Britain School District?
2. What has New Britain done? How has chronic absence been addressed through expanded learning programs?
4. What have been the results?
5. What are your next steps?

# New Britain District Profile (2015-16)

- Approximately 10,000 students in the district
- 5,093 elementary school students
- 64% of students identify as Hispanic
- 14% of students identify as Black
- 16% of students are English Language Learners
- 81% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- 18% of students receive special education services

# Chronic Absenteeism by Grade Level





## CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

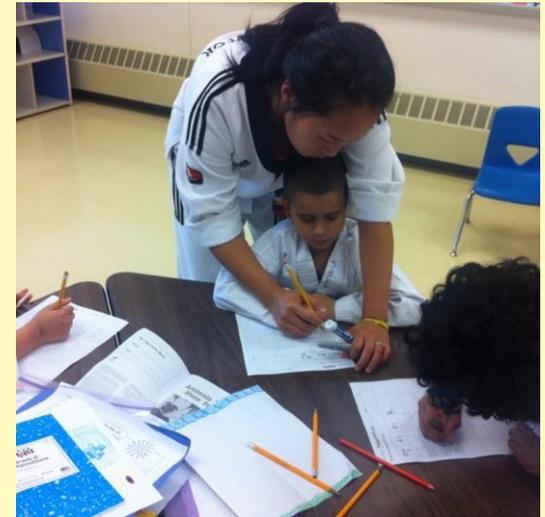
- **Professional development:** trained site administrators and teams to interpret attendance data, adopt best practices and engage in peer learning.
- **Actionable data:** send chronic absenteeism reports to schools every 10 days. The report indicates how many and which students are chronically absent.
- **School attendance teams:** analyze data, assess the situation and ensures appropriate interventions are put in place for student success.
- **Home visits:** hired three family intervention specialists to conduct home visits and be a member of school attendance teams to address chronically absent kindergartners and preschoolers.
- **Parent engagement and communications:** messaged through newsletters, phone calls, daily interactions with parents, and attendance incentives.
- **Community partnerships:** working collaboratively with community stakeholders to ensure district-wide interventions at all schools are addressing chronic absenteeism and ensuring a positive and productive outcome for students and families.

# S.E.E. your place in the community.



# Tracking Expanded Learning

- American Savings Foundation has local license for A+, a system used to collect attendance data for out of school time
- Originally used for Middle School only
- Last year, expanded to all Elementary Schools



# Tracking Expanded Learning

- Attendees at SEE are first students placed into after school programming
- Beginning to collect data for all school-related activities/clubs at the High School





# Broadening Our Impact: Growth and Trajectory of S.E.E.

- **Systemic and strategic integration and alignment of school day, school year, and summer**
  - Build a strategic connection to year-round out of school time opportunities including afterschool programming for S.E.E. students
- Increase in-kind support
- Develop and utilize tools for data management and accountability

# Student Results (2013-2016)

**Indicator:** Attendance rate during the SEE program

- Attendance in SEE across all sites was **80%**, as compared with a 76% attendance rate in the 2014 program.

**Indicator:** Increase or maintain positive attendance trend during the academic year as compared to the prior year, demonstrated by a decrease in the rate of chronic absenteeism.

- For students who attended SEE in 2015, there was a **decrease of 47%** in the number of students who were chronically absent during the school year.
- For students who were invited to SEE in 2015 but did not attend, there was a decrease of 30%.



## Discussion

**What do think are implications of action of what you've heard for your own work?**

**For program practice?** (see self-assessment handout)

**For policy advocacy?**

# Contact Information

## **Nancy Sarra**

Director of Teaching and  
Learning  
Consolidated School District  
of New Britain

[Sarra@csdnb.org](mailto:Sarra@csdnb.org)

860-827-2270

## **Tracey Madden-Hennessey**

Associate Director  
YWCA New Britain

[tmadhen@ywcanewbritain.org](mailto:tmadhen@ywcanewbritain.org)

(860) 225-4681 ext 288

## **Kimberley Russo**

Executive Director  
The Fund for Greater Hartford

[krusso@fundforgreaterhartford.org](mailto:krusso@fundforgreaterhartford.org)

860-232-3113

## **Robin Lamott Sparks**

Executive Director  
Coalition for New Britain's Youth

[robin@coalition4NBYouth.org](mailto:robin@coalition4NBYouth.org)

860-229-6018 ext 309