Attendance Matters:
How Expanded Learning Opportunities Keep Kids In School
What is one hope you have about what you will learn while you are here today?
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average Daily Attendance</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Truancy</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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 absentees - 2010-2011
- # of students with 10 unexcused absences (as of May 16th 2011)
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
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<td>M</td>
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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.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
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/
Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.

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.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at [http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ](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](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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Total Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Percent of Students Chronically Absent</th>
<th>Total Districts</th>
<th>Number of Districts that Account for...</th>
<th>Percent of Districts that Account for...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25% of CA Students</td>
<td>50% of CA Students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75% of CA Students</td>
<td>25% of CA Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>6,035,665</td>
<td>719,747</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>5,176,572</td>
<td>606,428</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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. Chronically absent kindergarteners are also less likely to develop the social skills needed to persist in school. The problems multiply for students who are chronically absent several years in a row. By sixth grade, absenteeism is one of three early warning indicators that influence whether students will graduate from high school. By ninth grade, it’s a better predictor of graduation than eighth grade test scores. 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 to all states and that meets or exceeds the rigorous ESSA selection criteria for indicators. We have summarized these requirements below.

### ESSA Indicators Must:
- Be applicable to every student
- Be comparable across a state’s school districts
- Be able to distinguish differences in performance among schools
- Be valid
- Be reliable
- Have a proven Impact on Achievement

- All enrolled students are included in attendance counts; no students are excluded.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Counting errors aside, taking attendance and computing chronic absence repeatedly will yield a consistent result.
- An abundance of studies links chronic absence to academic achievement. Click here for a compilation of research on chronic absence and its relationship to student success.

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 3rd 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.

(For research, see: http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/)
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 7th 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 8th-12th Grades

How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myths</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Aversion</th>
<th>Disengagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused</td>
<td>• Lack of access to health or dental care</td>
<td>• Child struggling academically or socially</td>
<td>• Lack of engaging and relevant instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t realize just missing 2 days per month can affect learning</td>
<td>• Poor Transportation</td>
<td>• Bullying</td>
<td>• No meaningful relationships with adults in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attendance only matters in the older grades</td>
<td>• Trauma</td>
<td>• Ineffective school discipline</td>
<td>• Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No safe path to school</td>
<td>• Parents had negative school experience</td>
<td>• Poor school climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Homelessness</td>
<td>• Undiagnosed disability</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

**Tier 1**
- Recognize good & improved attendance
- Educate & engage students and families
- Monitor attendance data & set goals
- Establish positive & engaging school climate
- Identify & address common barriers to getting to school

**Tier 2**
- Provide personalized early outreach
- Meet to develop tailored action plan
- Connect to a caring mentor

**Tier 3**
- Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

- Students who missed 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
- Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
- Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
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.
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 solutions 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:

- In first 2 weeks:
  - 2 absences

- In first month (4 weeks):
  - 2-3 absences

- In first 2 months (8 weeks):
  - 4 absences

Missing 10% any time after
Possible Tier 2 Interventions

1. Assign caring mentors
2. Partner with families/students to develop Student Attendance Success Plan
3. Recruit for engaging before-or-after-school activities
4. Connect to Walk-to-School Companion
5. Offer plan or contacts for health support
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.
• 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).

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

![Figure 1: Chronic absentee rates for OST participants compared to comparable students in the same schools](chart.png)
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?
3. What have been the results?
4. 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
• **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.
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 you think are implications of action of what you’ve heard for your own work?

For program practice? (see self-assessment handout)

For policy advocacy?
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