Attendance Works

Leading Attendance:

Strategies to Help Principals Raise Achievement by Leveraging Student Services and Improving Attendance

Warm-Up Exercise ~ Quick Write

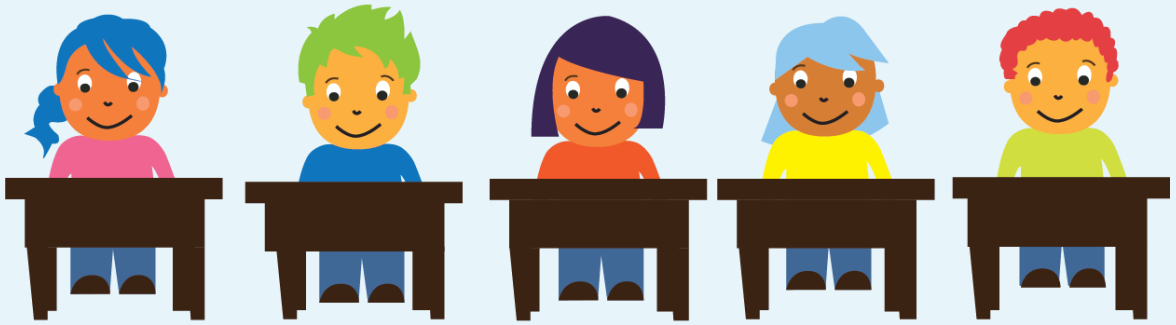
- **What is one action you've taken to improve attendance in your school?**
- **What did you learn from that experience about what works? What was hard?**

Introductions

Please share with your group of 3:

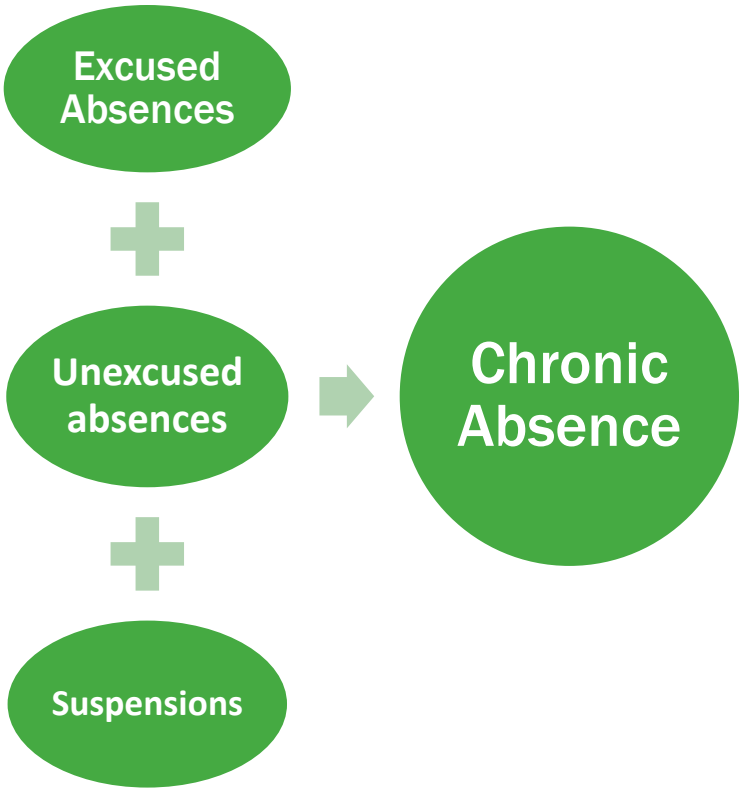
- Your Name
- Title
- Organization
- One insight from your quick write

Brief Overview of What is Chronic Absence and Why it Matters



What is Chronic Absence?

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

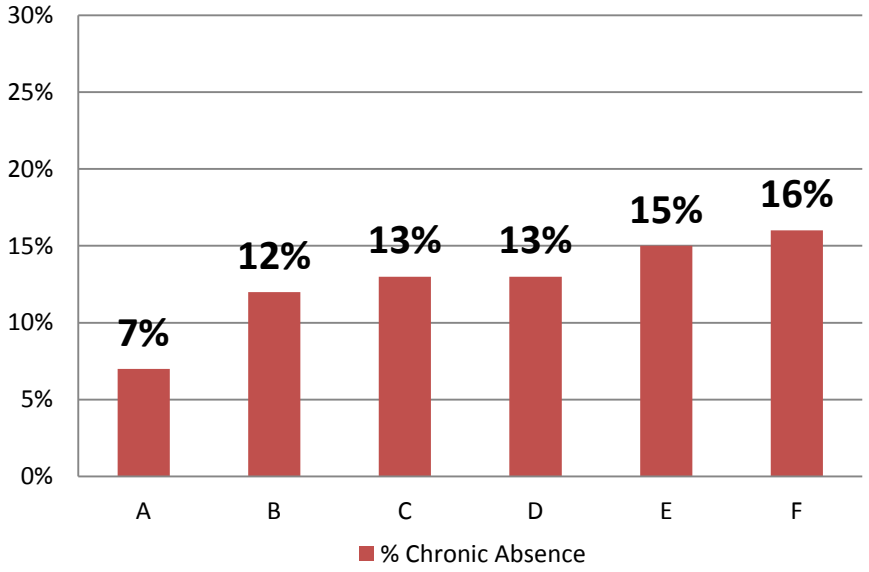


Chronic absence is different from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).

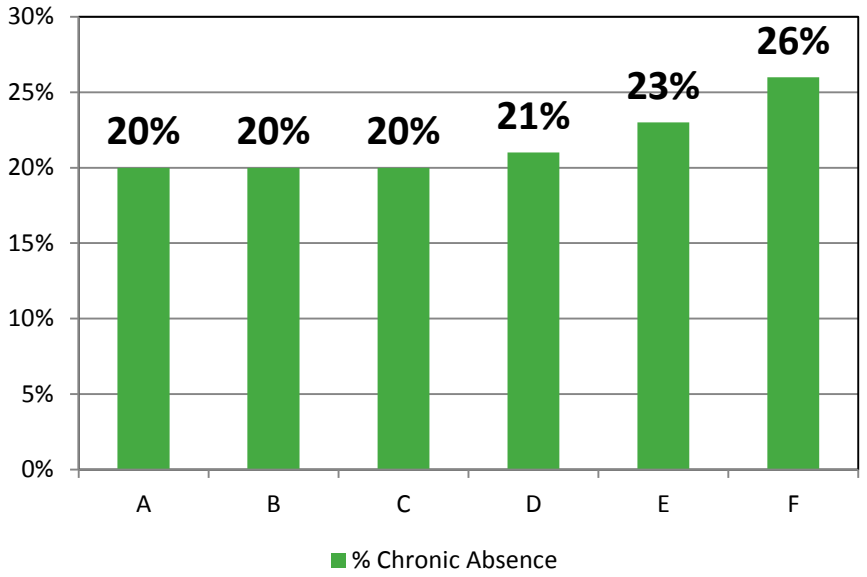
High Levels of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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

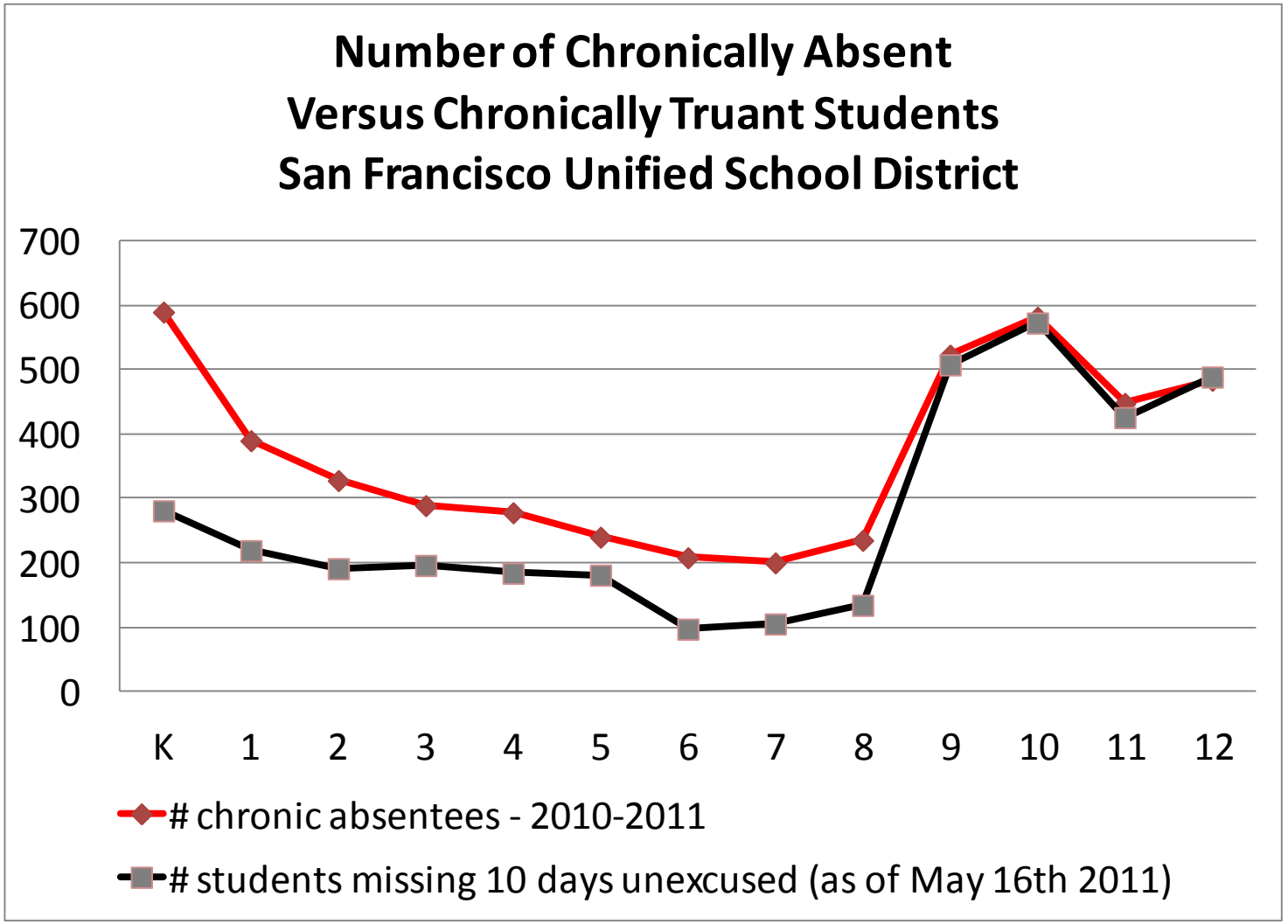


Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



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

Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



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.

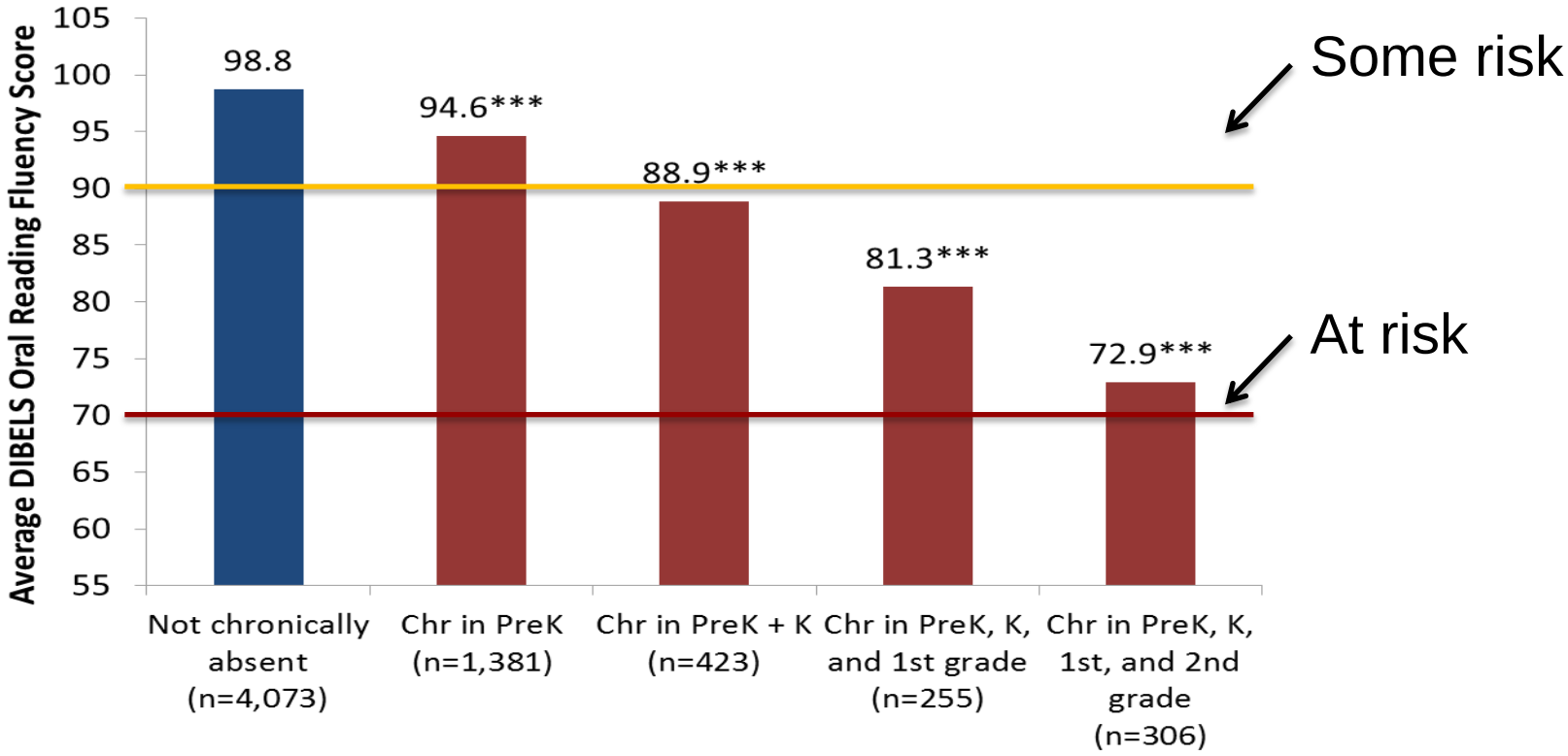
College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

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/)

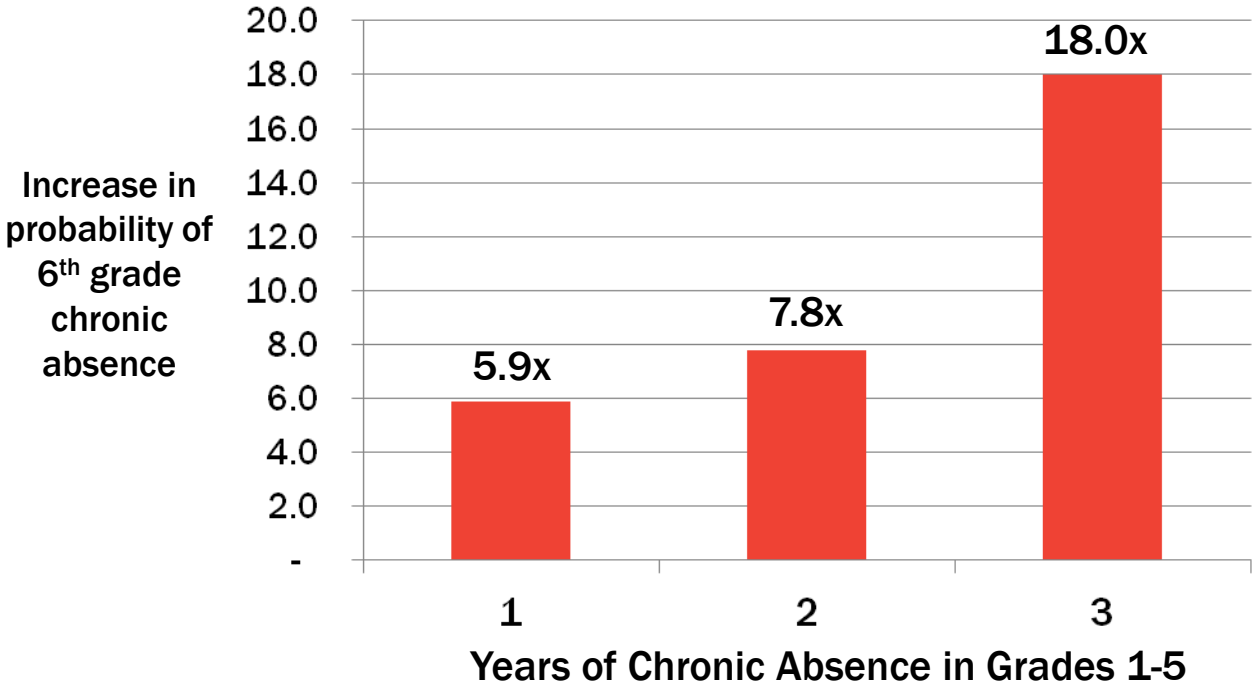
Starting in PreK, More Years of Chronic Absence = Need for Intensive Reading Support By 2nd Grade



** Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.05 level; **p<.01; ***p<.001*

Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade

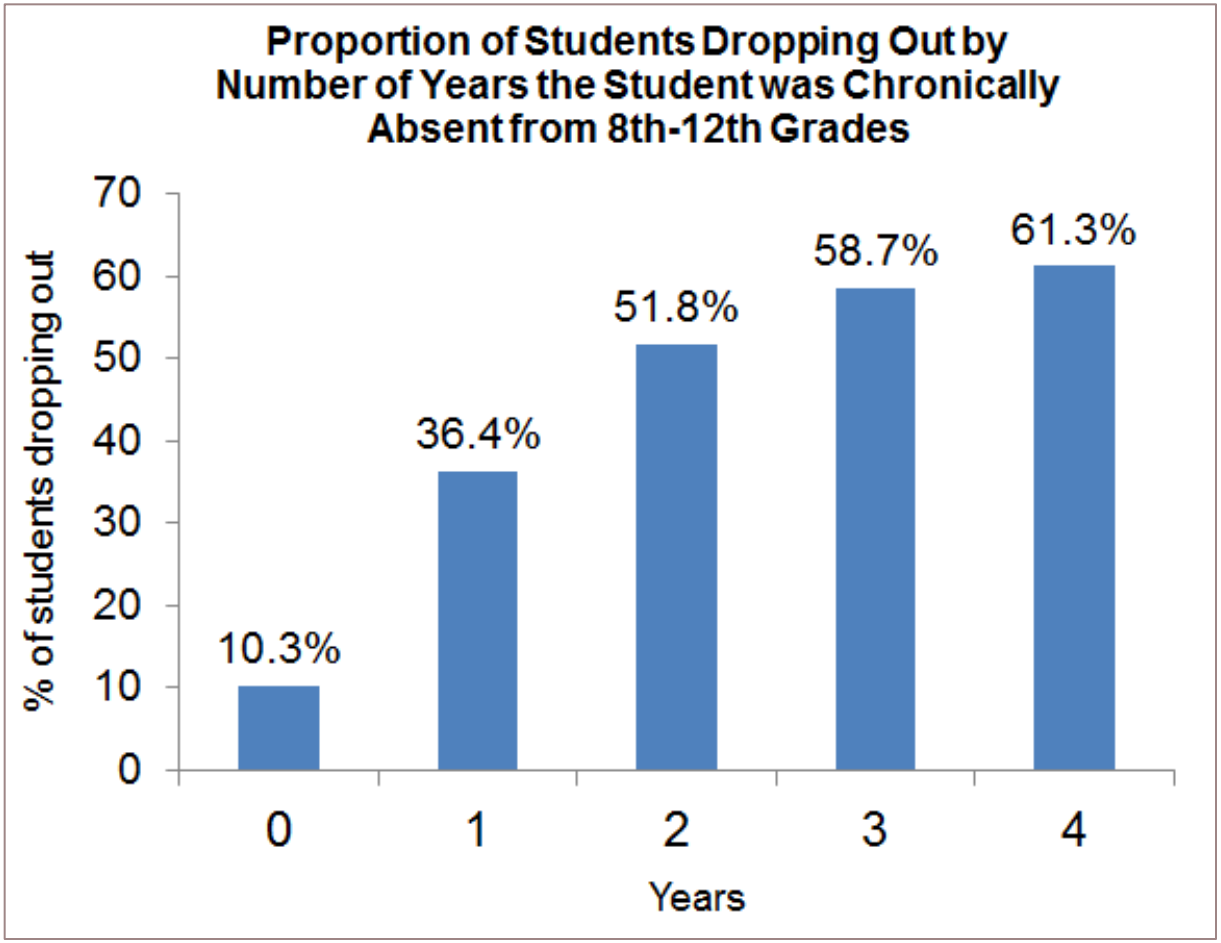


Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:

- Lower 6th grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

Oakland Unified School District SY 2006-2012, Analysis By Attendance Works

The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

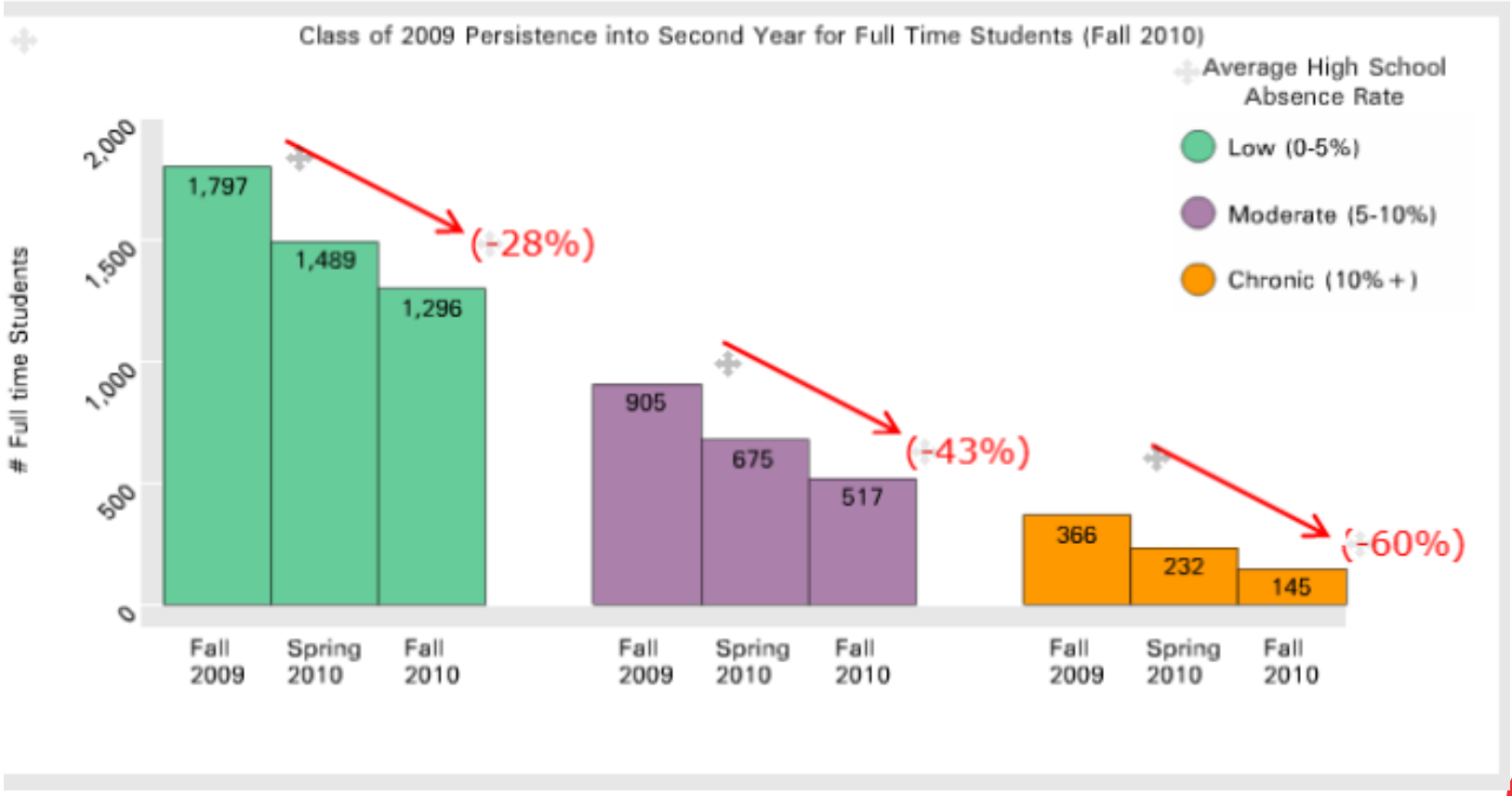


With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf

Chronic Absence in High School Predicts Lower College Persistence

In Rhode Island, only 11% of chronically absent high school students persisted into a 2nd year of college vs. 51% of those with low absences.



Rhode Island Data Hub: May 2014

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

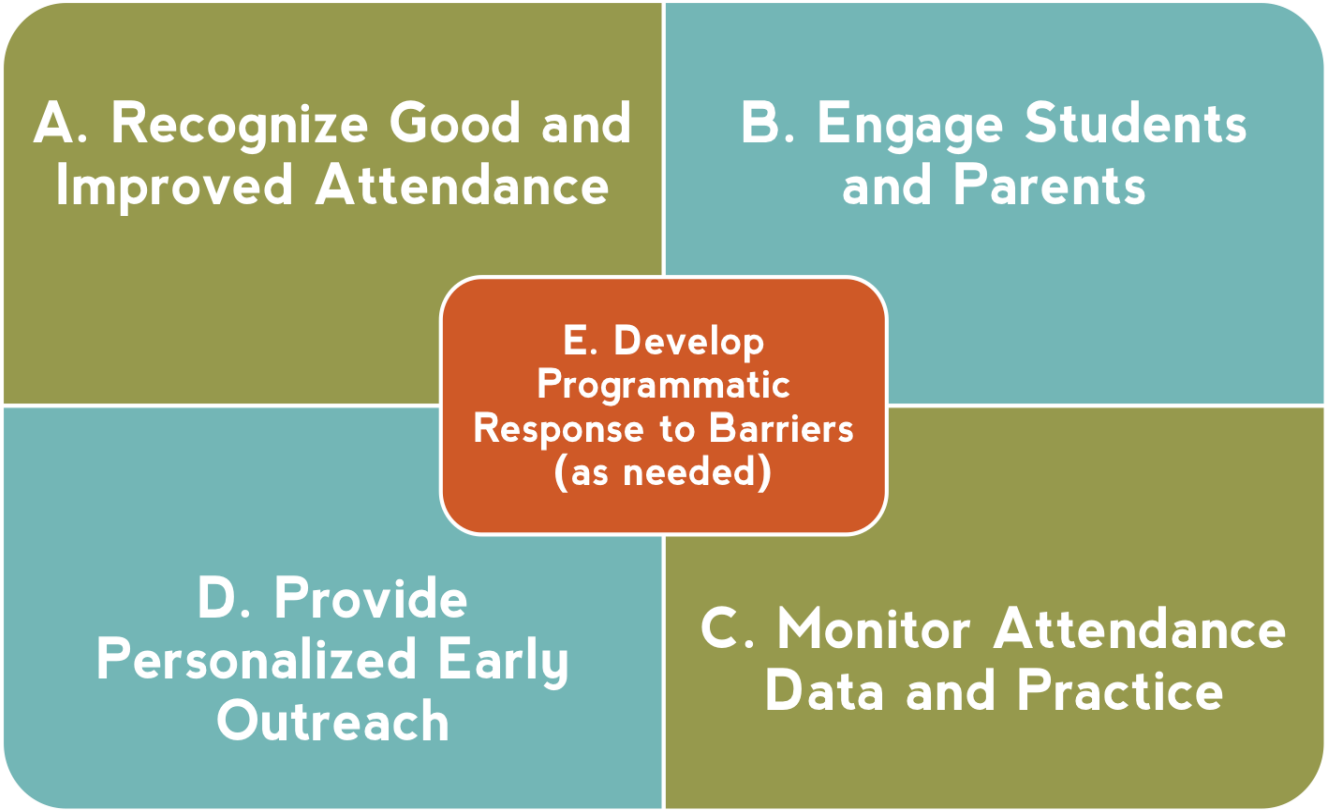
Barriers

- Chronic disease
- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor transportation
- No safe path to school

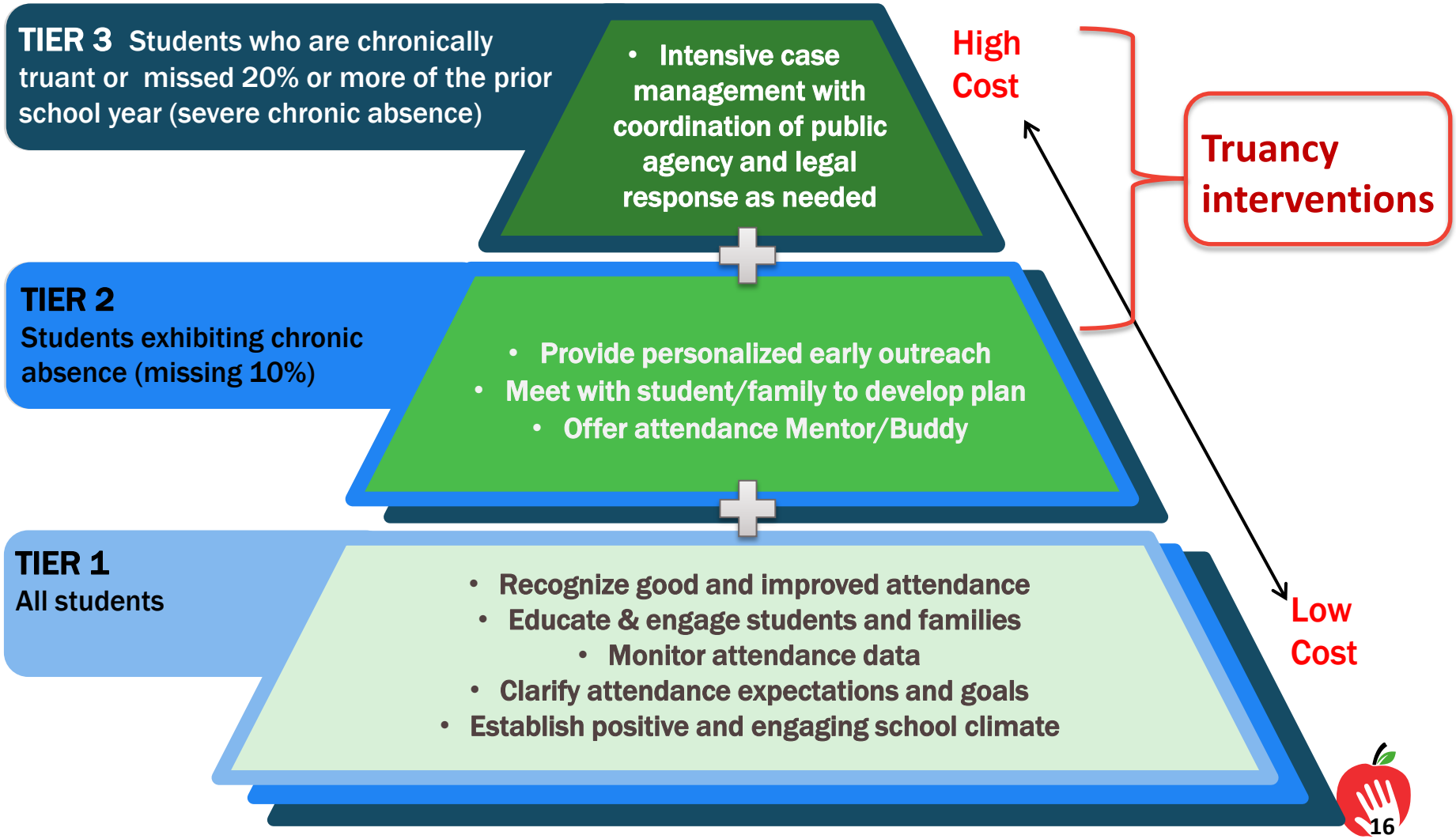
Aversion

- Child struggling academically
- Lack of engaging instruction
- Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience

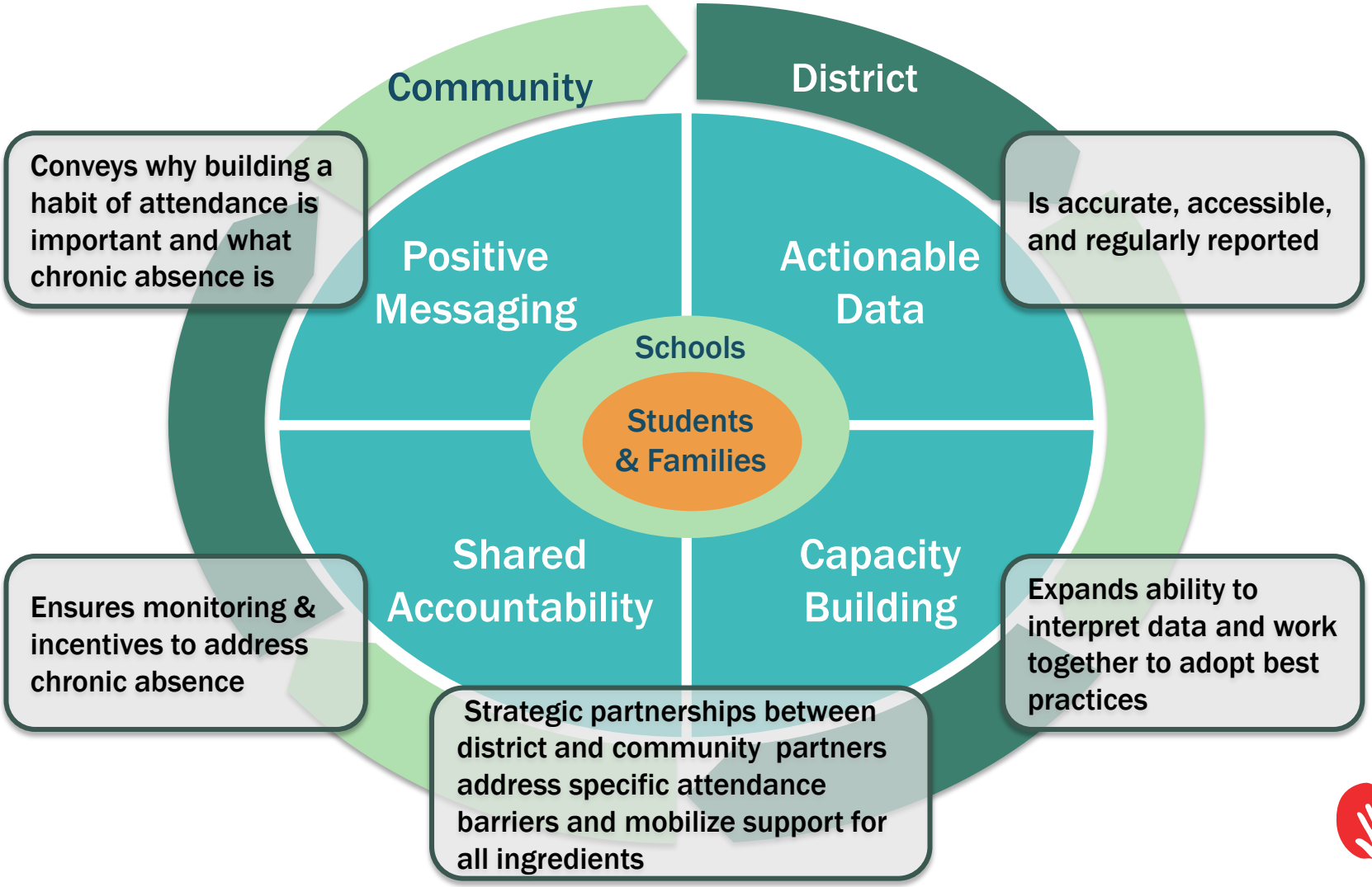
AW Recommended Site Level Strategies



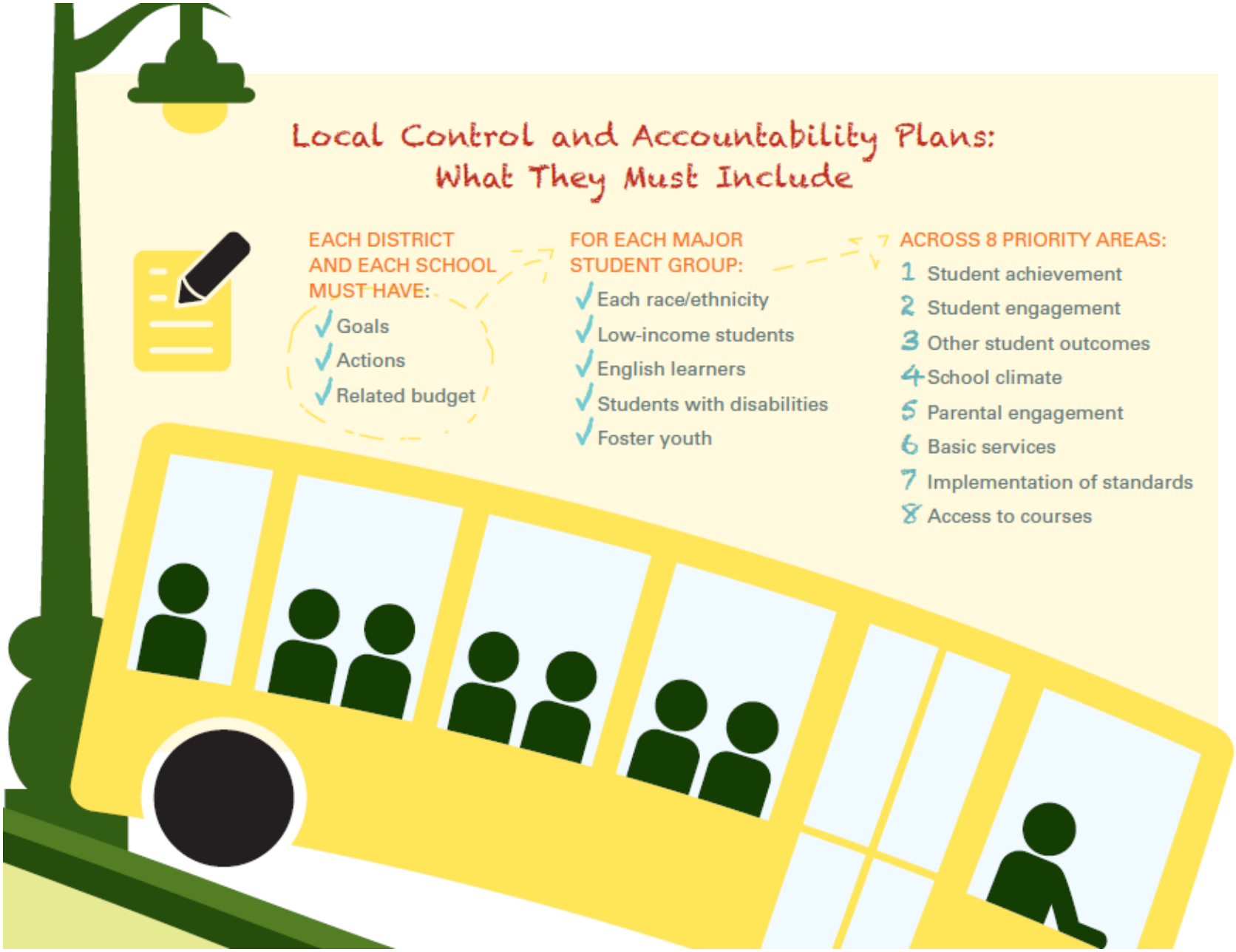
Improving attendance requires adoption of a tiered approach that begins with prevention



Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability



Local Control and Accountability Plans: What They Must Include



EACH DISTRICT AND EACH SCHOOL MUST HAVE:

- ✓ Goals
- ✓ Actions
- ✓ Related budget

FOR EACH MAJOR STUDENT GROUP:

- ✓ Each race/ethnicity
- ✓ Low-income students
- ✓ English learners
- ✓ Students with disabilities
- ✓ Foster youth

ACROSS 8 PRIORITY AREAS:

1. Student achievement
2. Student engagement
3. Other student outcomes
4. School climate
5. Parental engagement
6. Basic services
7. Implementation of standards
8. Access to courses

Plan must address eight state priorities

1. Teachers, Materials, Facilities
2. Academic Standards
3. Parent involvement
4. Student achievement
5. Pupil Engagement: Measured by all of the following, as applicable: School attendance rates; Chronic absenteeism rates; Middle school dropout rates; High school dropout rates; High school graduation rates.
6. School Climate: Measured by all of the following, as applicable: Pupil suspension rates; Pupil expulsion rates; Other local measures, including surveys of pupils, parents, and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness.
7. Access to Courses
8. Other student outcomes.

Los Angeles Attendance Improvement Program

- **Data-Driven Action:** Data are used identifying where to place counselors, which students to target & to evaluate success.

- **Attendance Improvement Counselors:** Attendance Improvement Counselors, along with Vista national service members helped the schools track data, adopt universal and targeted interventions, create incentives for good attendance, reach out to students and parents, and ensure a timely response to poor attendance.

- **Capacity-Building**: The Attendance Improvement Counselors are charged with building the capacity of the school staff, parents and community partners to understand attendance laws, use data, and develop a comprehensive approach that includes prevention and early intervention.

LAUSD Attendance Improvement Program Outcomes

Program Impact in Year 1 (2011-2012)

	Missing 7 days or less (96%+)			Missing 15 or more days (<91%)		
AIP Schools	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Kindergarten	37.24%	57.56%	+20.32%	31.32%	17.87%	-13.45%
Grade 9	51.45%	58.82%	+7.37%	27.65%	22.30%	-5.35%
School-Wide	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Elementary	55.56%	63.03%	+7.47%	18.64%	13.71%	-4.93%
Secondary	54.29%	58.65%	+4.36%	23.59%	20.36%	-3.23%

Note: Program operated in 77 schools including 52 elementary and 25 high schools with poor K and 9th grade attendance

Characteristics of More Successful AIP programs

- Strength-based approach with more positive perceptions of parents, higher expectations of their students and parents
- Greater levels of parent engagement
- A shared belief that everyone had a role in improving attendance and should work together
- Deeper levels of commitment to program implementation and delving into the causes of absence
- Principals made improving attendance a high priority

Taking Stock

Complete district assessment

Does Attendance Really Count in Our School District/Community?

A Tool for Self Assessment - (Revised October 2011)

Key Element	Strength	OK for Now	Could Be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How do you know? Who monitors this?
1. Attendance data is entered accurately on daily basis (and by period in middle and high school) for each student into an electronic data base.						
2. The district regularly calculates & shares data on multiple attendance measures - satisfactory attendance, chronic absence, ADA, & truancy -for each school, grade and NCLB sub-population.						
3. Schools throughout the district have attendance teams to review data, set attendance targets and take action.						
4. Schools and community agencies educate parents and students about the importance of good attendance starting in Kindergarten and preschool.						
5. Chronic absence is used, as part of an early warning system, to identify and reach out to high risk students and families in need of support and intervention.						
6. Educators receive professional development about early warning signs of academic risk and drop-out including chronic absence and how to address them.						
7. Underperforming schools with high levels of chronic absence are required to address attendance in school improvement plans through positive universal strategies as well as targeted interventions.						
8. Data on chronic absence are used to target and allocate district and community resources with potential to reduce barriers to attendance.						
9. District policy and budget make improved attendance and reducing chronic absence a priority.						
10. The district and key community stakeholders meet regularly to review data as well as identify and support collaborative action.						

(Note: *Chronic Absence is missing=> 10% of school over a year including any type of absence; Satisfactory Attendance is missing=< 5% of school over a year)*

Reflection and pair share

1. Write down:

   What are your district's greatest strengths?
   What are your greatest gaps?

2. Share your observations with a partner

What Principals Can Do to Launch the Work; How Can Districts Help Them?

Leading Attendance: A Principal's toolkit

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/schools/principals/

Principals are essential ingredient of success

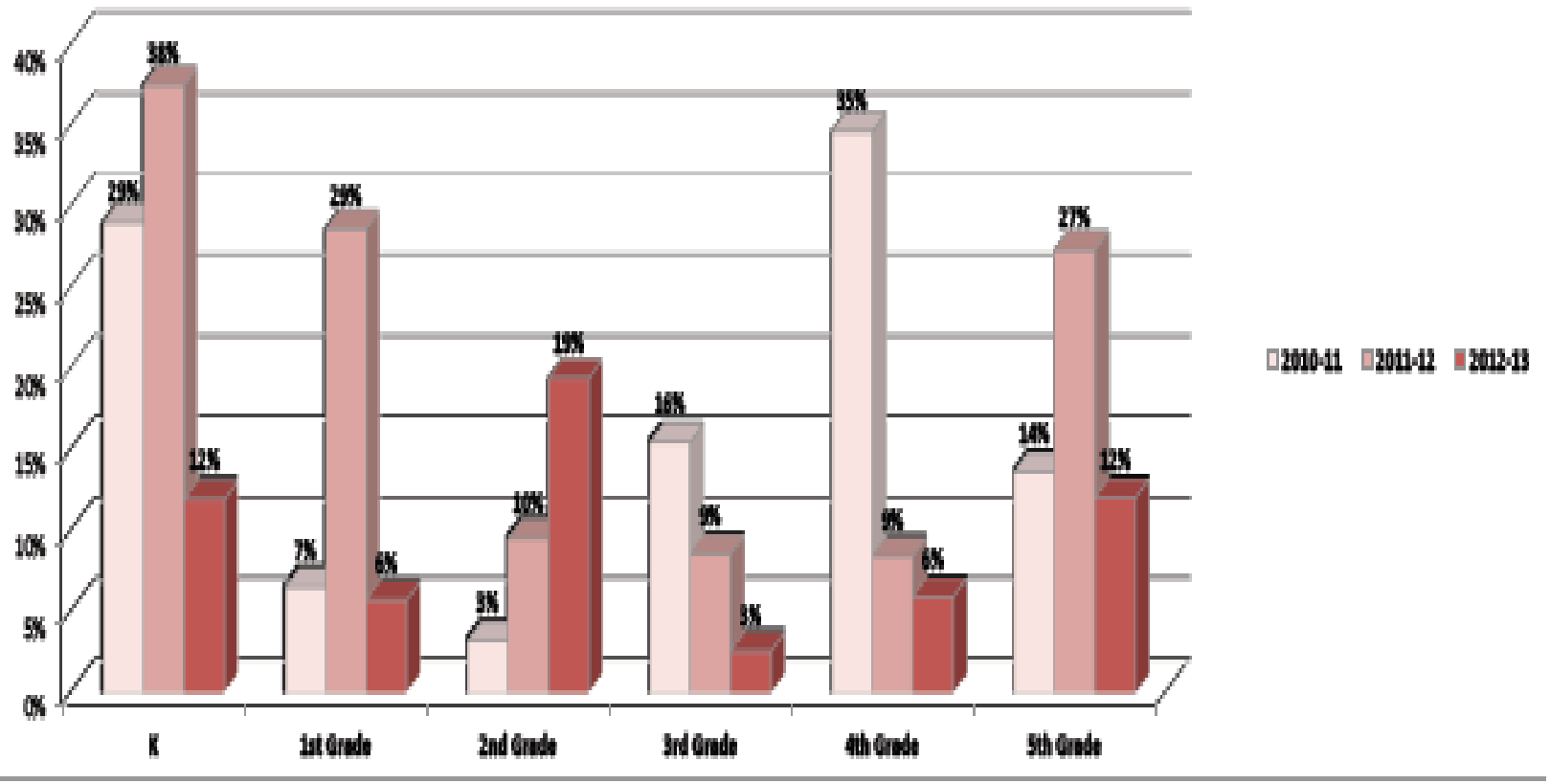
Principals are uniquely positioned to

1. Cultivate A School Wide Culture of Attendance
2. Use Data To Determine Need for Additional Supports
3. Develop Capacity to Adopt Effective Attendance Practice
4. Advocate for Resources and Policies To Improve Attendance

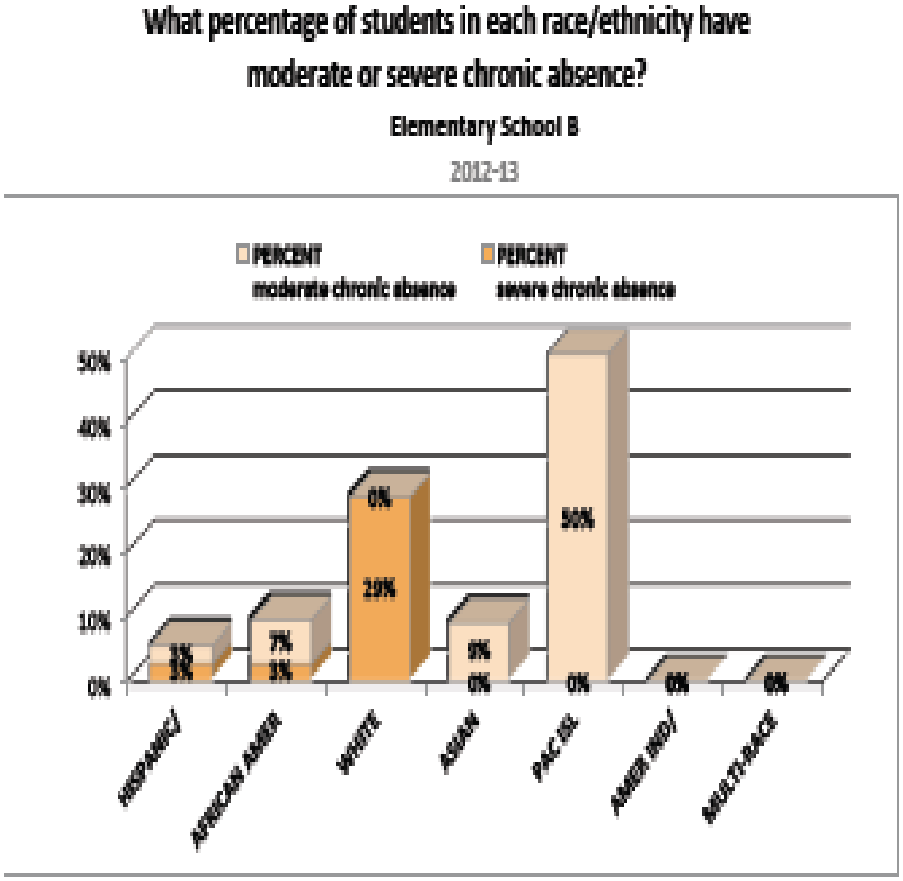
1. Provide data that helps principals (and school teams) examine:

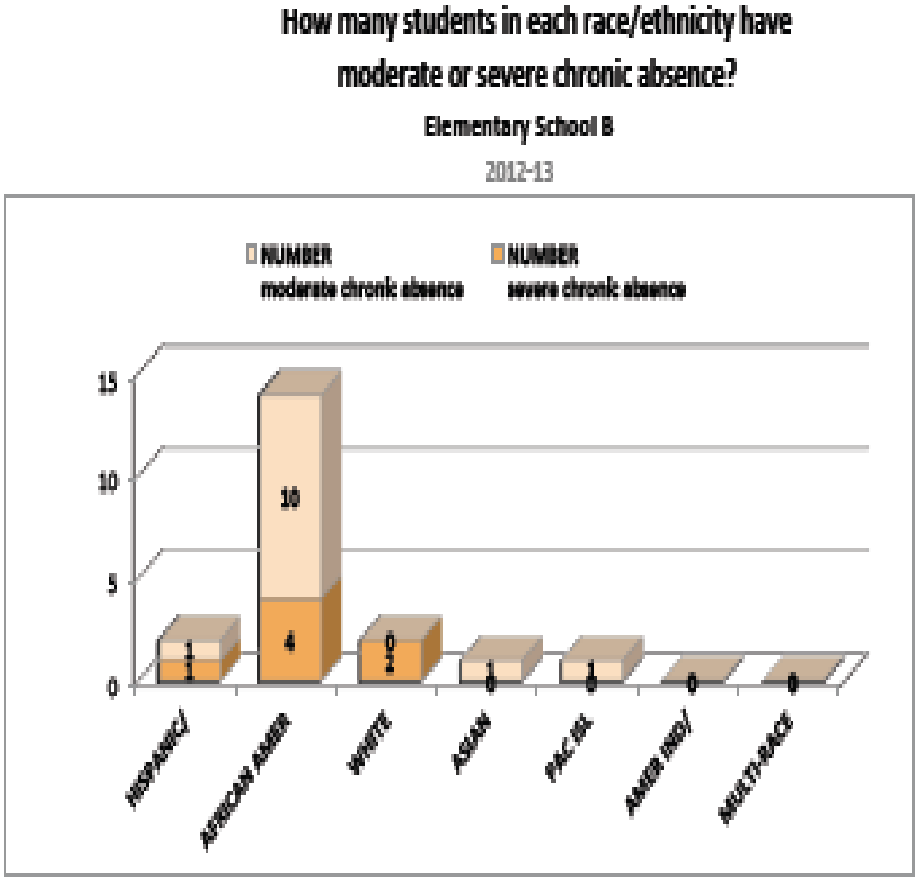
1. Is chronic absence a problem? Is it getting worse or better?
2. Is it higher among particular grades?
3. Do some grades or sub-populations have higher levels of chronic absence?
4. What might explain some of these differences? What additional information do you need to identify barriers or effective strategies in place?

Sample picture of chronic absence by grade



Sample picture of chronic absence by ethnicity





Free Attendance Works Data Resources

Go to: For calculating chronic absence in the tools and t.a. section of www.attendanceworks.org;

Request the District Attendance Tracking Tools (DATT) and School Attendance Tracking Tools (SATT) Available in Three Modules!

- Grades K-5
- Grades 6-8 and
- Grades 9-12

2. Support Identifying or Establishing A Site Team To Address Attendance

Attendance teams could be drawn from an existing structure or established for this purpose. They should include a Principal (or vice principal) and, ideally, the following:

- social worker, nurse, or counselor
- attendance clerk
- parent liaison
- teacher lead
- community based organization/partner(s) offering support that engage students or parents or address an attendance barrier

(Tip: Consider designating a staff person to facilitate the meetings as well as a note taker)

Attendance Teams…

- Should be action-oriented
- Use data to understand which sub-populations of students are most affected and what are trends over time
- Identify and mobilize school and community resources to address identified needs
- Ensure needs of individual students with poor attendance are being addressed

Attendance Teams best practices sources: Attendance Works, Children's Aid Society, the Children's Initiative, the Baltimore Education Research Consortium and the Baltimore Student Attendance Campaign

Tips on involving community partners

A) As long as data is aggregate (e.g. total number of chronically absent students for the school or particular grades), community partners can see the data without a consent.

B) Meetings can be organized so discussions about individual students only occur when partners who have consent are present.

C) Schools can build in obtaining consent into start of school registration.

3) Map the need and available resources at school site

TIER 3 Need: # of students chronically truant and/or missing 20% or more of current or prior year?

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

TIER 2
Need: # of students missing 10-19%?

- Provide personalized early outreach
- Meet with student/family to develop plan
- Offer attendance Mentor/Buddy

TIER 1
Need: All students

- Recognize good and improved attendance
- Educate & engage students and families
- Monitor attendance data
- Clarify attendance expectations and goals
- Establish positive and engaging school climate

3) More on Mapping Need & Resources

DATA: Draw upon district data to produce a list of students, calculate the absence rate by dividing # of days absent/ total days of possible attendance. Count how many students are <10%; =>10 but <20%, >20%

RESOURCES : Draw a pyramid. Invite team members to use:

* green stickies to fill in an existing resource

* yellow to fill in resources that could be leveraged to address this tier of work.

4) Use Insights to Develop A Site Plan

Develop a plan that builds upon the team's response to the following questions:

a) Where are the gaps? What are strengths?

b) What resources could we easily leverage to address gaps, especially for tier 1 and 2?

c) What are implications for who we need as partners?

d) What are our highest priority next steps?

Discussion

- What would help site administrators in your district be able to understand and address chronic absence?

- What are possible next steps for advancing chronic absence in your district in partnership with site administrators?