



Engage and Build Bridges in the Summer

Attendance Awareness Campaign 2026
Webinar 2 of 4

May 13, 2026

www.attendanceworks.org



Welcome!



S. Kwesi Rollins
Interim President
Institute for Educational Leadership
Chair Emeritus, Advisory Board, Attendance Works



Hedy N. Chang
CEO and President
Attendance Works

About the Institute for Educational Leadership

IEL's vision is an equitable society in which shared leadership effectively uses all available resources for the betterment of their communities.

IEL partners with communities, working with local entities to fill service needs and support them in the long-term on their transformational leadership journey. IEL:

- identifies and implements innovative strategies particularly where educational, economic and social challenges or gaps exist.
- has developed, trained and supported thousands of leaders across various networks.
- works at the local, state and national level, investing in community leaders of all ages, stages and sectors.

To learn more visit: www.iel.org



About Attendance Works

Attendance Works advances student success in school and beyond for all students by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state and national level, Attendance Works:

- Advances better **policy**
- Nurtures proven and promising **practice**
- Promotes meaningful and effective **communication**
- Catalyzes needed **research**

Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation's “go-to” resource for improving student attendance. To learn more, visit our website: www.attendanceworks.org.

Convening Partners AAC 2026!



See the full list of national and state campaign partners here: <https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/partners-2/>

Agenda

I. Welcome

II. Attendance Awareness Campaign

Kwesi Rollins, Chief Program Officer, IEL

III. National Context

Hedy Chang, CEO and President, Attendance Works

Gisela Ariza, Associate Director of Programs, Attendance Works

IV. Panel: Bright Spot Districts and Schools

Edward Singleton, Principal, Roton Middle School, Norwalk, Connecticut

Dean Vaccaro, 8th Grade Teacher, Roton Middle School, Norwalk, Connecticut

T.J Ryan, Superintendent, Woodlake Unified School District, California

Megan Marquez, Assistant Superintendent, Woodlake Unified School District, California

V. Supporting McKinney-Vento Students in Summer

Anasofia Trelles, Senior Manager K-12, School House Connection

VI. Closing Reflections & Resources

Attendance Awareness Campaign 2026

Webinar Series

Your Presence Matters!

Note: Each session is accompanied by a discussion guide that can be used for webinar parties.

Webinar 1 [Nurturing Belonging in the Spring](#)

April 1, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 2 [Engage and Build Bridges in the Summer](#)

May 13, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 3 [Create Community in the Fall](#)

August 5, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 4 [Ensure Support All Year Long](#)

September 23, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/webinars/>



AAC 2026 Slogan!

Your Presence Matters!



<https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/resources/promotional-materials/2026-badges/>



AAC 2026 Slogan!

Your Presence Matters!

- Focuses on building trusting relationships with students, families and communities.
- Highlights the value of listening to students and families to learn their strengths, as well as understand their challenges to getting to school.
- Is a call to action for everyone to work together and remove barriers and support students in attending school.

Five Key Actions and Messages for 2026

- **Embrace a problem-solving approach driven by data to improve attendance.**
- **Engage parents and guardians as vital partners.**
- **Create a safe, connected and engaged learning environment.**
- **Support the health and well-being of students, families and school staff.**
- **Involve the whole community in your strategies and actions.**



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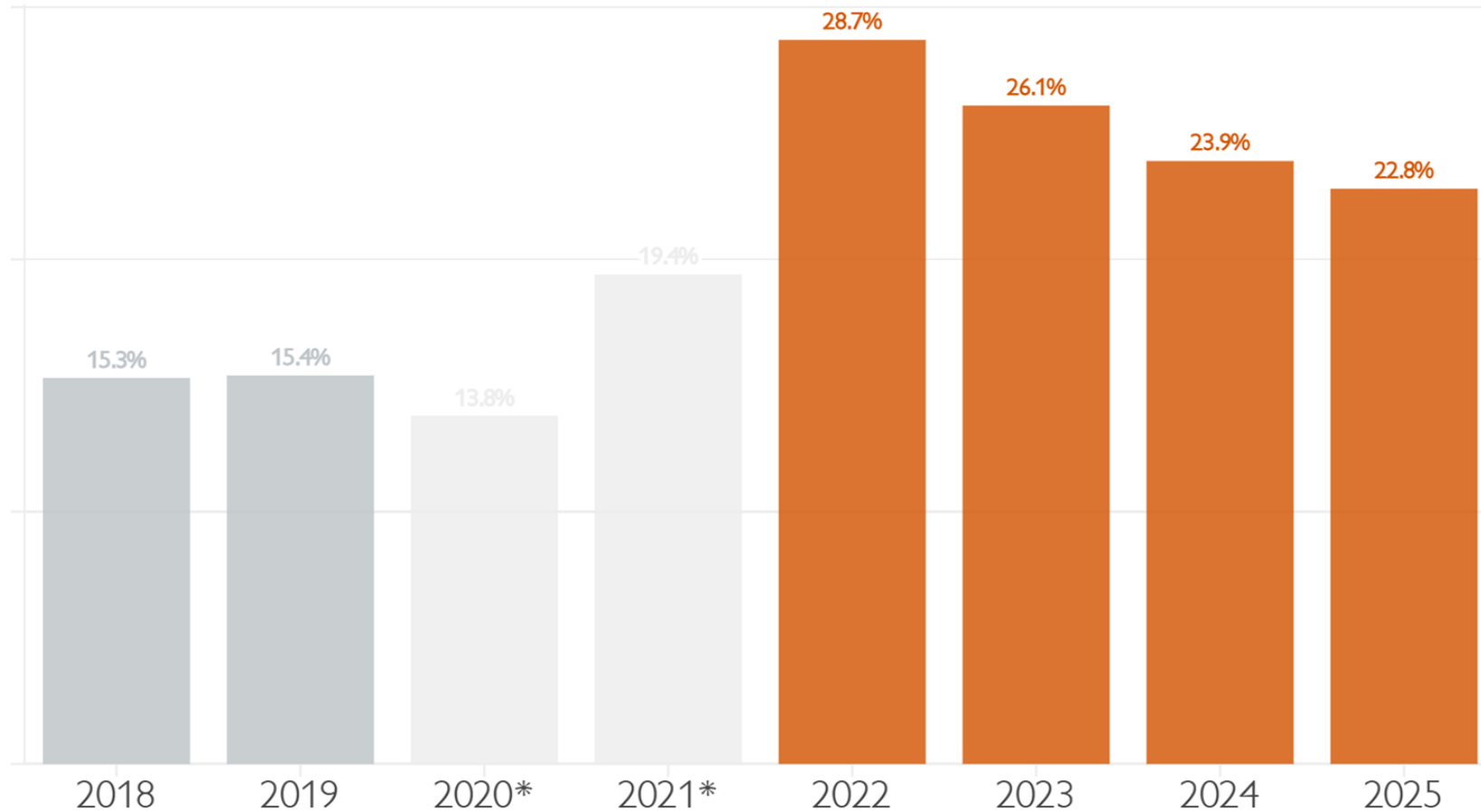
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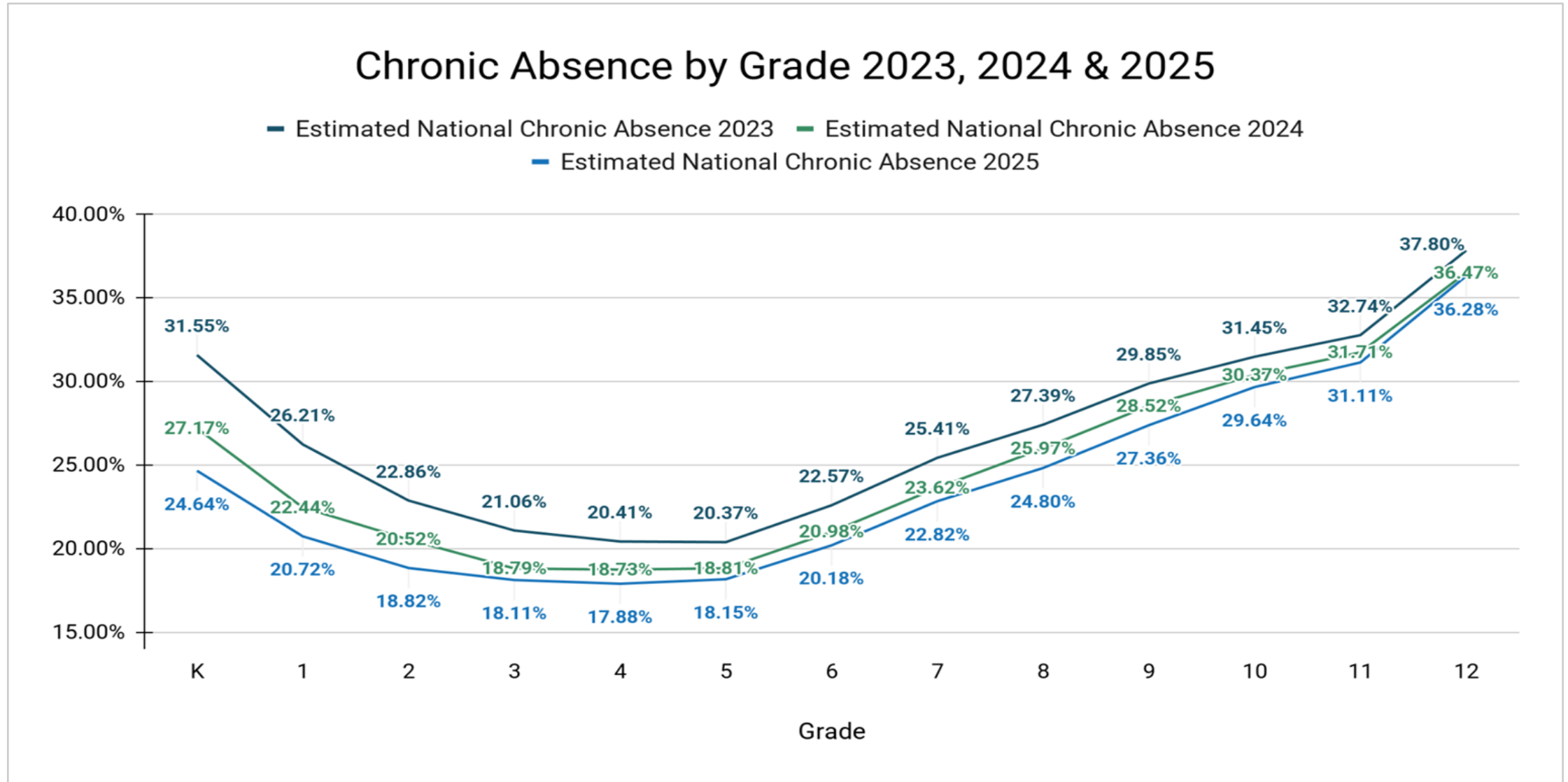


Chronic Absence Nearly Doubled and Remains Too High

Chronic Absenteeism Across 40 States with 2025 Data

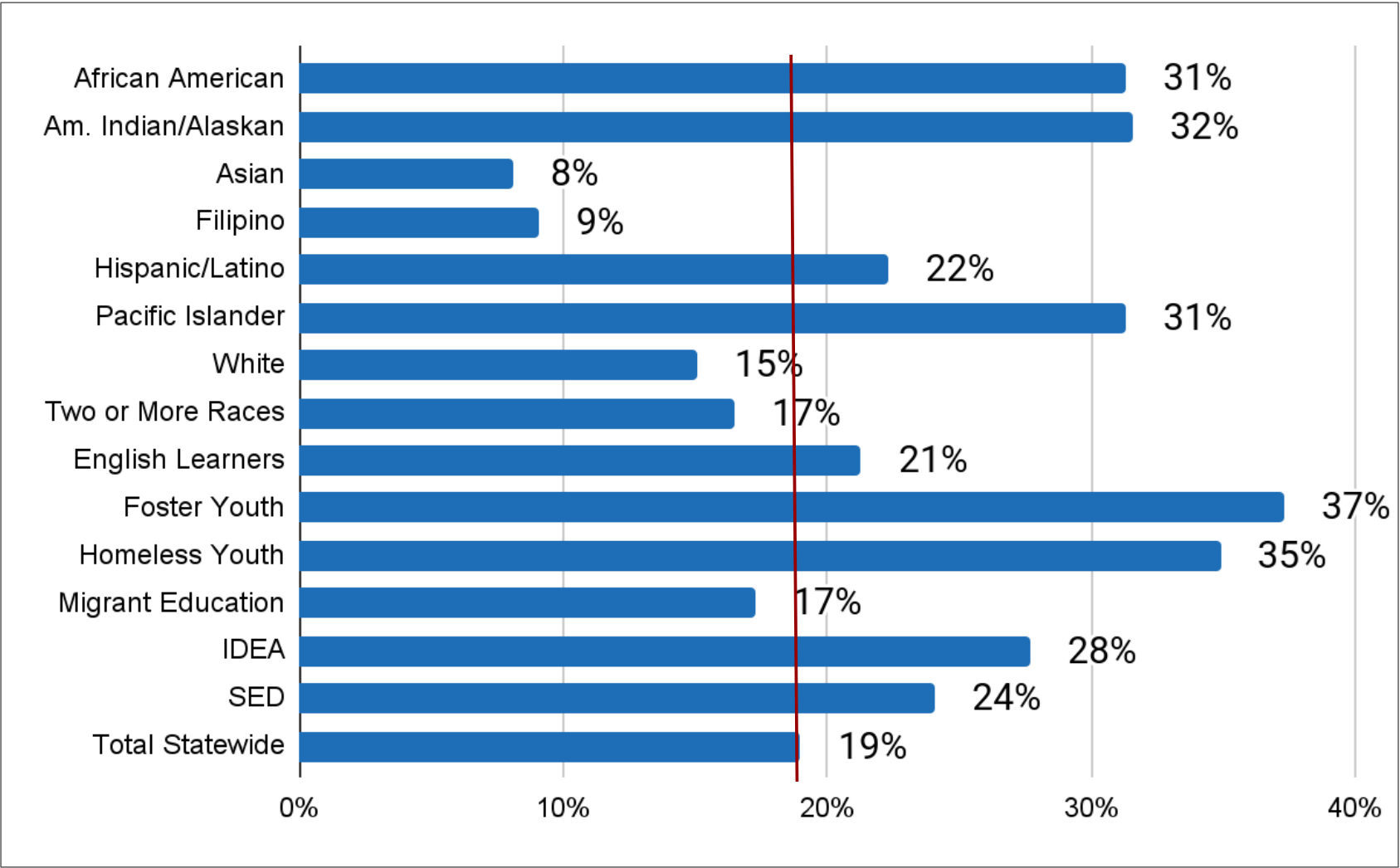


Reducing chronic absence must begin in kindergarten (ideally preschool)



Note: These estimates are based upon data from 11 states (CO, CT, DE, GA, HI, IL, IN, MI, NE, OR, WA).

Chronic Absence Disproportionately Impacts Students Experiencing Foster Care & Homelessness



Source: California Department of Education, SY 2024-25

Reducing chronic absence has a triple impact

- Improves student achievement & well-being
- Increases district financing
- Supports working families

What's the difference between ADA, truancy and chronic absence?

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

- School level measure (not student level)
- Notices aggregate attendance at certain point in time (e.g., half-days, holidays, bad weather)
- Masks individual student chronic absences

Truancy

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

Chronic Absence

- Missing 10% of school including ALL absences (excused, unexcused, and suspensions)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days and the benefits of being present
- Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies
- Cultivates family and student engagement

Visit: What's the Difference Between Chronic Absence and Truancy?

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/whats-the-difference-between-chronic-absence-and-truancy/>

Reducing Chronic Absence Requires Addressing Root Causes

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Lack of access to needed services
- System involvement
- Unpredictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech
- Impact of trauma
- Violence in the community

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Unfair disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Caregivers had negative educational experiences

Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, engaging instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults or peers in school
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Need to work conflicts with being in high school

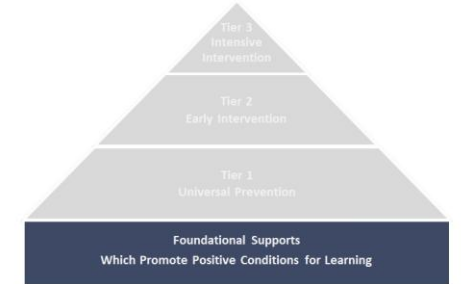
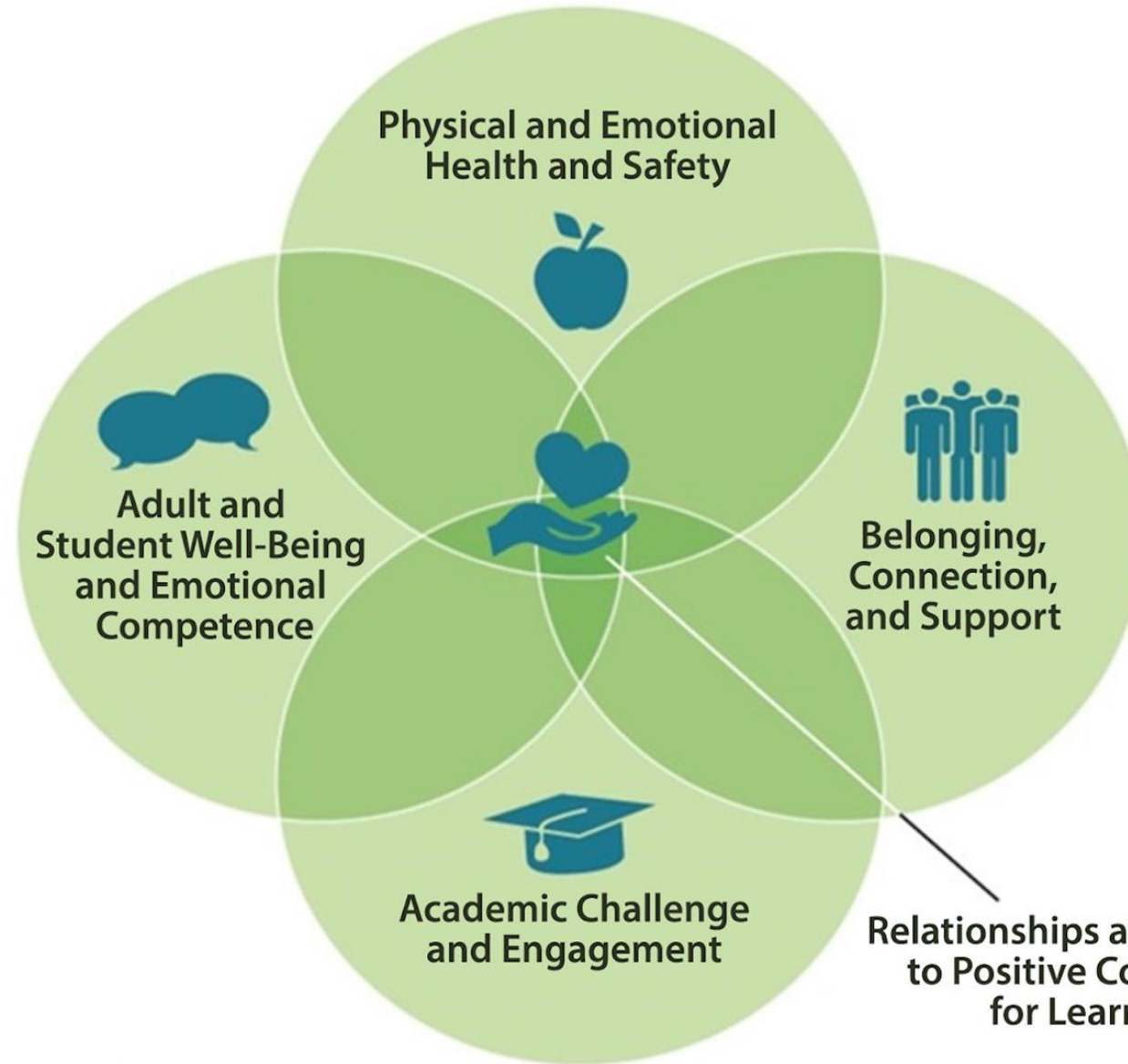
Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

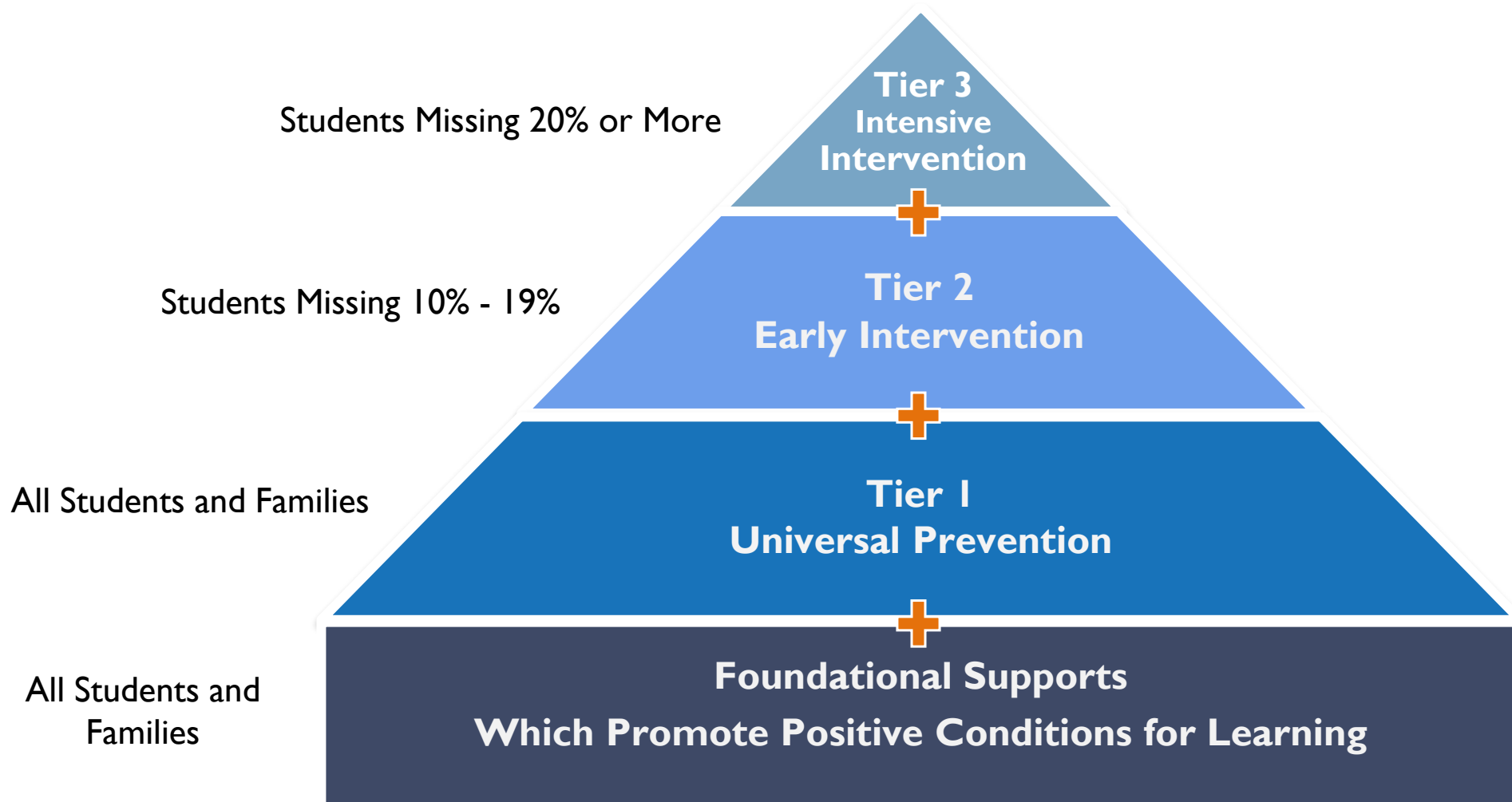
Visit: [Root Causes of Chronic Absence](https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/)

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/>

Positive Conditions for Learning Lay the Foundation



Requires A Multi-tiered System of Support



Visit: [3 Tiers of Intervention](https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/)

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>



Updated toolkit! For school principals

For Principals: Leading Attendance Through Engagement

Strategies and materials you can tailor to the needs of your community.

Bright spot stories illustrate how principals have reduced chronic absence.

- **Step 1: Create or strengthen a school team to improve attendance**
- **Step 2: Use data to understand and address the challenge**
- **Step 3: Cultivate a school-wide, yearlong approach to engagement**
- **Step 4: Determine whether you are making a difference**
- **Step 5: Advocate for resources and improved attendance policies**

Find the toolkit on our website:

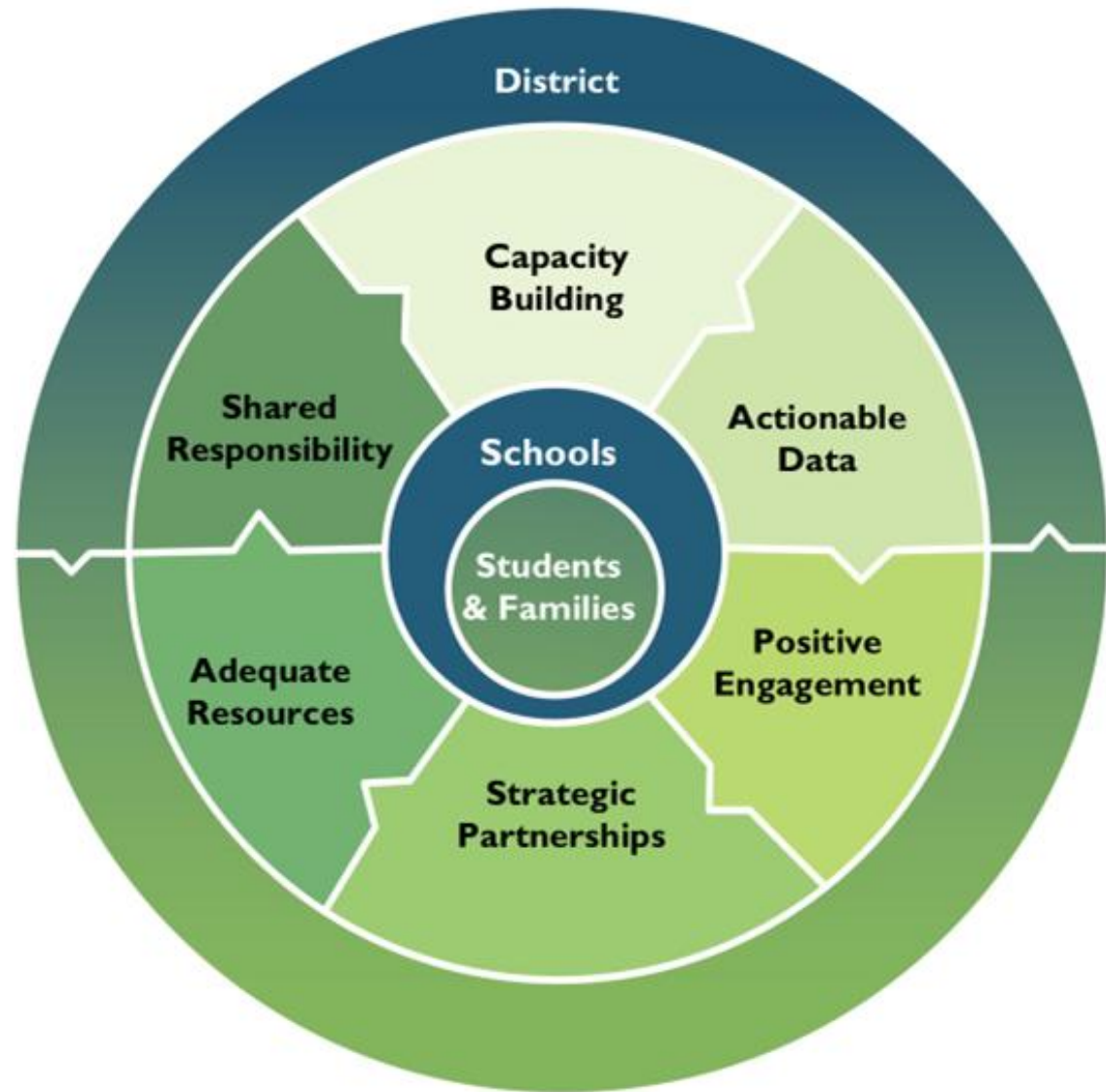
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/for-principals-leading-attendance/>

Our Theory of Action

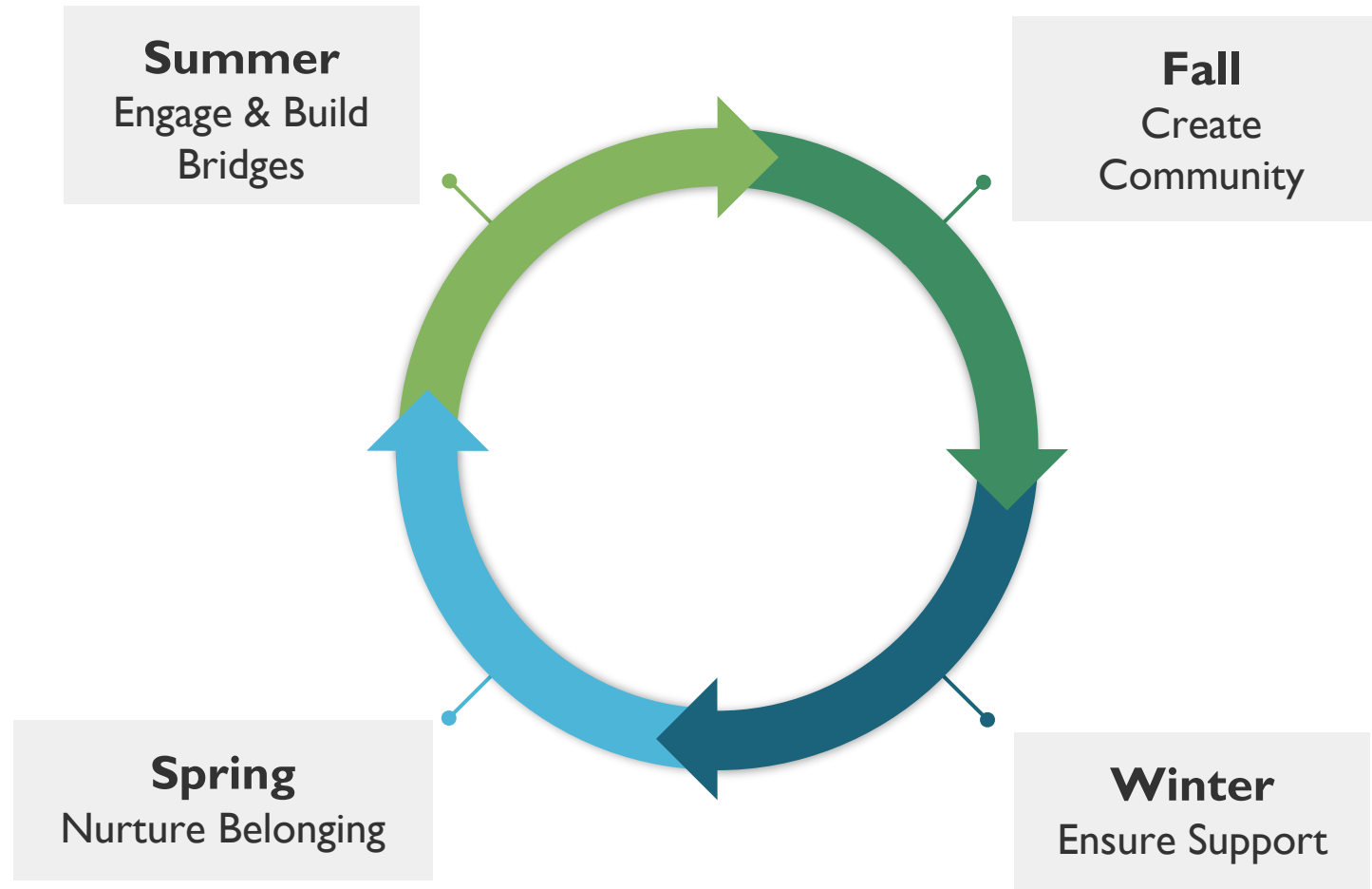
Positive change builds up from local champions, with **districts** as the **units of change** that support action in schools

States are the vehicles for scale.

Both need a **supportive ecosystem** of partners and other public agencies




Taking A Year-Long Approach



Year-Round Planning

Plan activities and events that keep a focus on improving attendance all year long.

- See sample activities for PreK, K-12 and district teams
- Use blank calendars to customize the plan for your community
- Remember to specify who is responsible for leading and how to measure the results



Attendance Activities School Year Plan (K-12)

School Name School Year

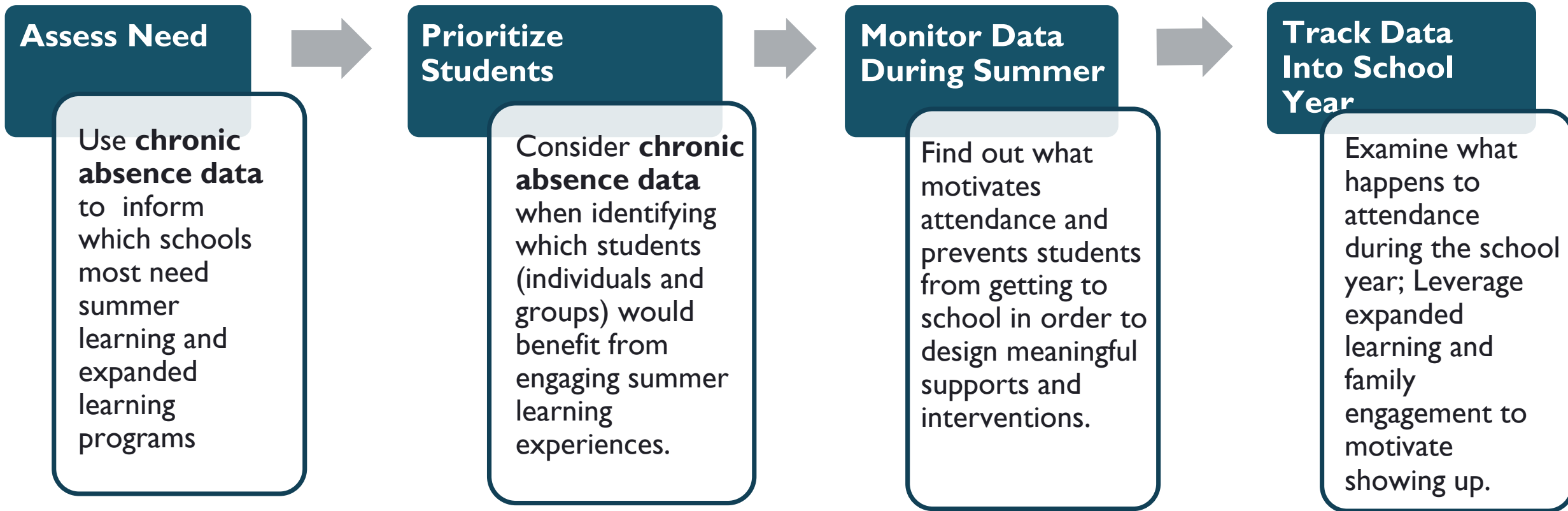
Activities in the grid are examples. You can customize the plan for your school or program. For each activity, specify who is responsible for leading and how to measure the results. You can also recreate this chart in a larger format and use sticky notes to add activities as a group exercise. Learn more about the 3 Tiers of Intervention. (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>)

Timing	End-of-Year (May/June)	Summer (July/August)	Welcome Back (August/September)	Ongoing (Weekly)	Fall Semester (October/November)	Winter Semester (December - February)	Spring Semester (March/April)
School Team	<p>Establish or confirm the members of a cross-functional school team to address attendance for the following school year. Schedule the first meeting for next year.</p> <p>Review end-of-year attendance data. Determine primary root causes for chronic absence for individual students or groups and develop a plan to address those in the next school year.</p> <p>Share data with the student's next teacher or relevant staff for smooth transitions and troubleshooting.</p> <p>Develop a yearly attendance plan with</p>	<p>Begin outreach for returning, chronically absent students (e.g., phone calls, welcome letter or postcard, relational home visit).</p> <p>Encourage school leaders to include a discussion of chronic absence and the whole school strategies at professional development days during the first months of the school year.</p> <p>Encourage your district to create an attendance messaging plan with guidance on when and how to share messaging with students and families.</p>	<p>Conduct the first team meetings by the second week of school. Identify and schedule recurring team meetings to monitor and sustain your attendance plan.</p> <p>Continue to develop a yearly attendance plan.</p> <p>Ensure the school has a tiered attendance response.</p> <p>Download a template showing what schools can do at each tier, including the specific actions and responsible staff at each level of absence, so everyone understands they have a role. Fill in this blank version.</p> <p>Share handouts staff can use to communicate with families</p>	<p>Hold team meetings to monitor attendance data and interventions.</p> <p>Continue to develop and/or implement the attendance plan.</p>	<p>Review early warning data. Ensure staff are prepared to discuss attendance in a caring manner in phone calls, in parent-teacher conferences, attendance improvement meetings, and home visits.</p> <p>Communicate with families about keeping students healthy during the winter season.</p>	<p>Revisit data to measure progress and revise school-wide strategies as needed.</p> <p>Expand the team and resources as needed to address the root causes of absences.</p>	<p>Ensure staff are prepared to discuss attendance in parent-teacher conferences.</p> <p>Assess interventions.</p> <p>Join the annual Attendance Awareness Campaign. Plan to celebrate attendance awareness month at the start of the next school year.</p>

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/year-long-planning/>

The Opportunity:

Use Expanded Learning and Family Engagement to Increase Engagement, Attendance and Achievement



Relevant research: [The Latest Research on the Impact of Afterschool and Summer Programs](#) The Afterschool Alliance, September 2024.

Panelists



Edward Singleton
Principal
Roton Middle School
Norwalk, Connecticut



Dean Vaccaro
National Board-Certified
Teacher and Director of
R.A.M.S. (Carver) After
School Program
Roton Middle School
Norwalk, Connecticut



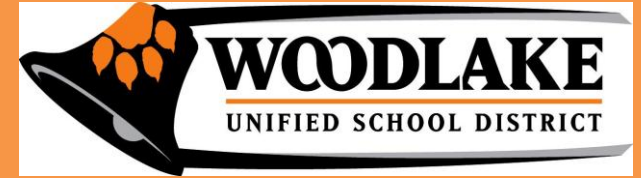
T.J. Ryan
Superintendent
Woodlake Unified School District
California



Megan Marquez
Assistant Superintendent
Woodlake Unified School District
California

**Tell us about your school/district
community and share about your
key strategies.**

About Woodlake Unified



Student Demographics

WUSD serves approximately 2,100 students. Student ethnic demographics vary little from school to school, and are reflective of the community demographics:

- Approximately 90% Hispanic or Latino, 7% are White, and the remaining 3% is made up of African American and Asian students.
- Approximately 90% of students are considered Socio-Economically Disadvantaged.
- Approximately 25% of students in the school district are designated as English Learners.

Building the Structural Foundation for a Unified District



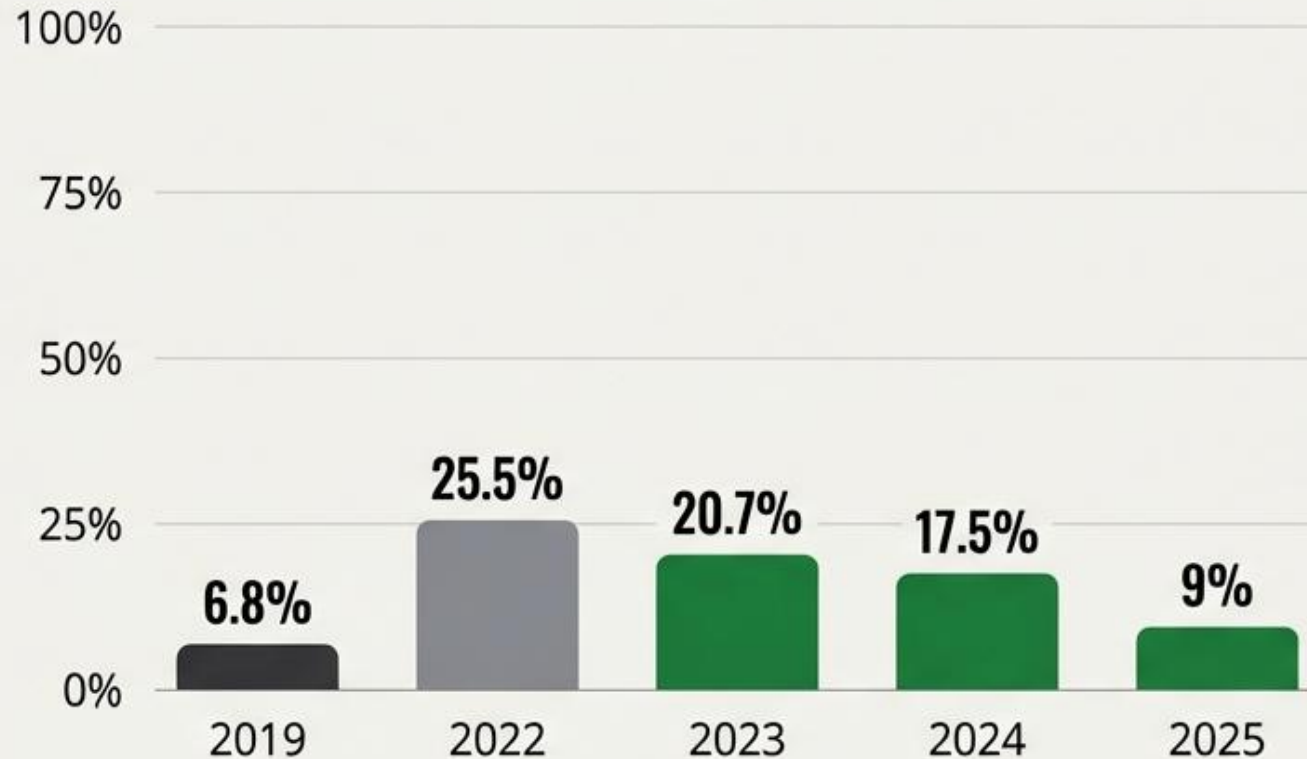
Paradigm Shift Matrix

The Old Way (Compliance)	The Woodlake Way (Connection)
Punitive, isolated, and strictly data-centric.	Proactive, relational, and whole-child centered.

The Turnaround Validated

Chronic Absenteeism By Year

Percentage of students chronically absent at least 10% or more of instructional days.



Chronic Absenteeism



9% chronically absent

Declined 8.5% ↓

Mini Equity Report



Principal Singleton: About Roton Middle School

Roton Middle School

MISSION

Roton Middle School is a caring, diverse community that celebrates every student.

We cultivate an open-minded, inclusive, and principled environment focused on inquiry, risk-taking, and effective communication. Our rigorous, culturally rich curriculum prepares knowledgeable, balanced, and lifelong learners to thrive in a changing world.



VISION

At Roton Middle School, our mission is to empower every student to excel through a rigorous, globally-minded curricula that fosters academic excellence.

Guided and supported by dedicated faculty, we cultivate holistic students, adaptable, critical thinkers, compassionate leaders, and effective communicators. Through literacy, STEM, and intercultural learning, we prepare our students to meet the challenges of the 21st century and become principled, innovative lifelong learners ready to contribute to a changing global society.



Edward Singleton

Roton Middle School

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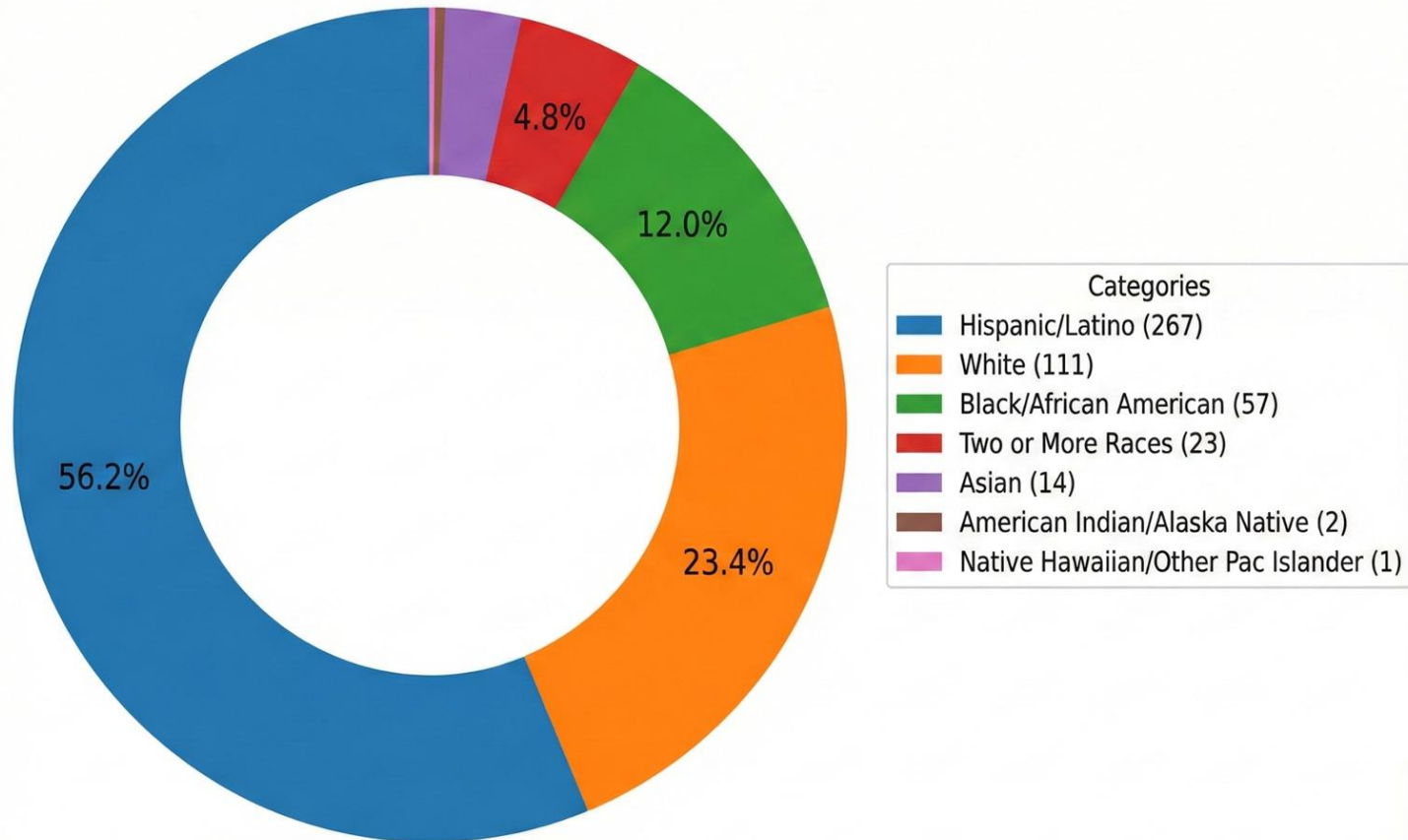
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Roton Middle School Institutional Profile: Student Demographics & Composition (2025-2026)

Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (Grades 6-8)

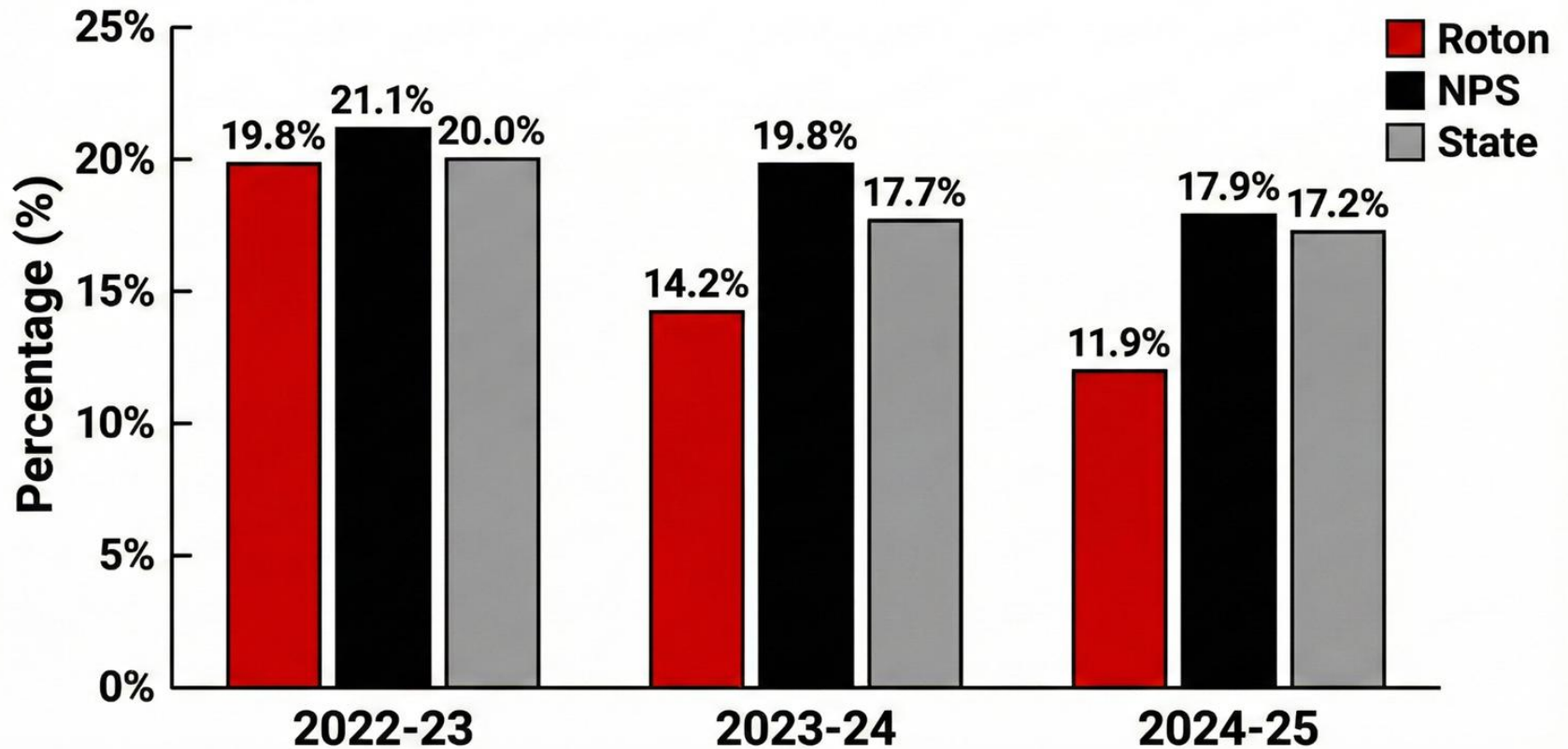
475 students enrolled





Longitudinal Analysis: Three-Year Reductions in Chronic Absence

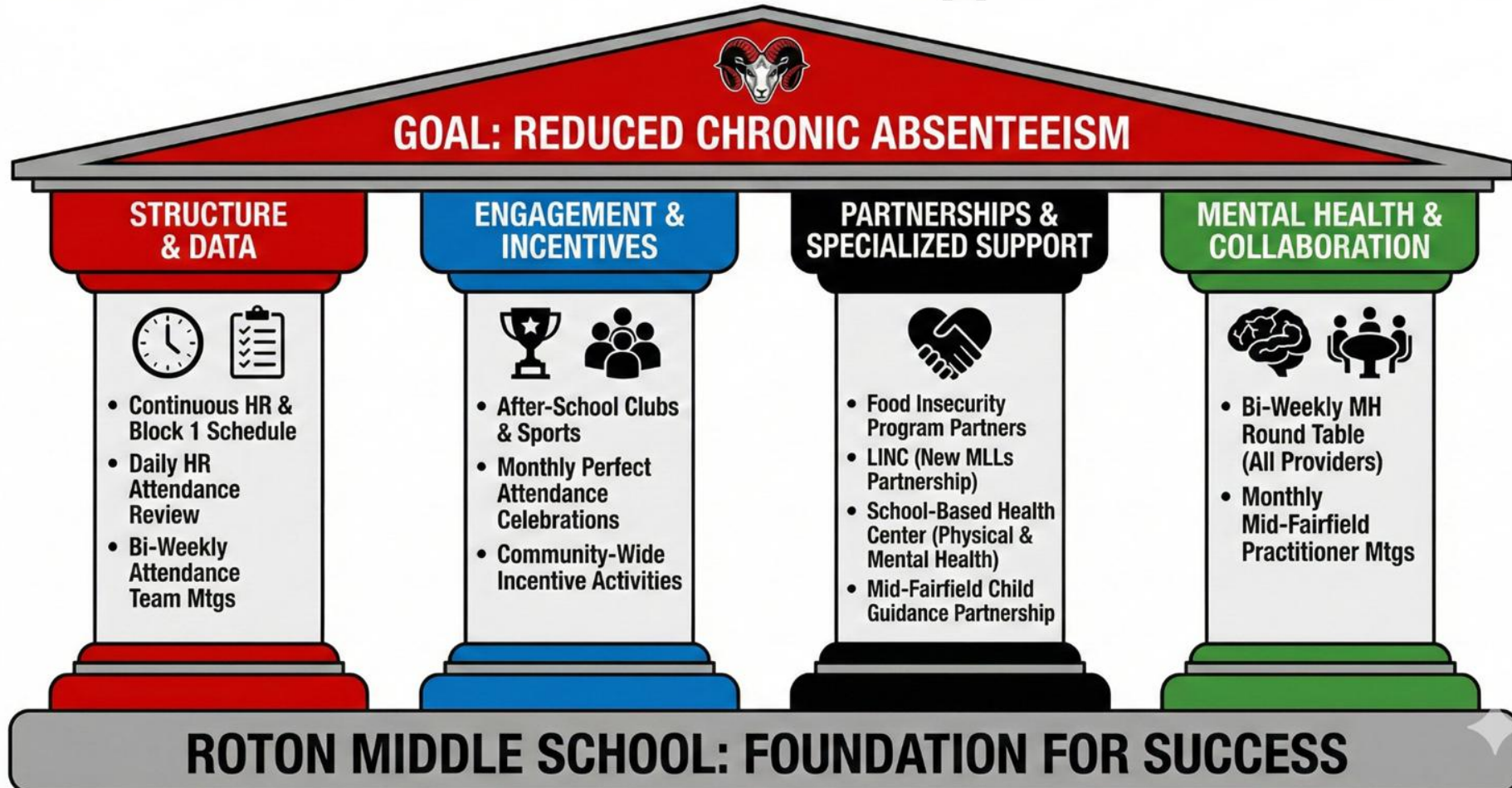
Chronic Absenteeism Rates: Roton Middle School vs. District & State (2022-2025)





Actionable Methodologies: Improving Attendance Outcomes

Roton Middle School: Prioritized Supports for Attendance



How do you use the summer months to engage students and families and prepare them for the fall?



6th Grade Transition Program

- A 5-week summer program for incoming 6th graders
- In collaboration with the George Washington Carver Program
- 6-7 teachers support the core courses
- Bus transportation is provided

For other students:

- For 7th graders: there are activities and camps from Parks and Recs (as first come first served)
- For 8th graders: high school summer program





6th Grade Transition Program

Programming:

- (1) **Fun, Engaging Academics** - Math Skills & Competitions, ELA reading and writing ("Putting the Lit back in Literature"), STEAM Science Projects, Robotics (new this summer!)
- (2) **Enrichments:** Arts & Crafts, Cooperative Game Room, Gym Games, Outdoor Team Games, Cooking
- (3) **Trips** - The Grit Ninja (exercise, physical endurance), It Adventure Ropes Course (make goals, overcome fears, build confidence), Beach Day (with team-building beach games and marine studies beach walk)
- (4) **Special Enrichments** - Curious Creatures (live animal program), Tie-Dye Day with Mrs. Bronner
- (5) **Getting to Know Roton Middle School**

Summer Partners:

- (1) The George Washington Carver Center
- (2) Venues and partners mentioned above
- (3) Norwalk Parks & Rec, Ripkas
- (4) BMHS high school math teacher & volunteer students (does math games once a week)





6th Grade Summer Orientation Day

August 19, 2025 | 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM



8:00: Arrival and Check-In



8:30: Welcome, Administrator presentation and 6th-grade teacher introductions

- **Parents remain outside with parent groups**
 - **Coffee**
 - **Student Governance Council & PTA**
 - **Roton Merch Sale**

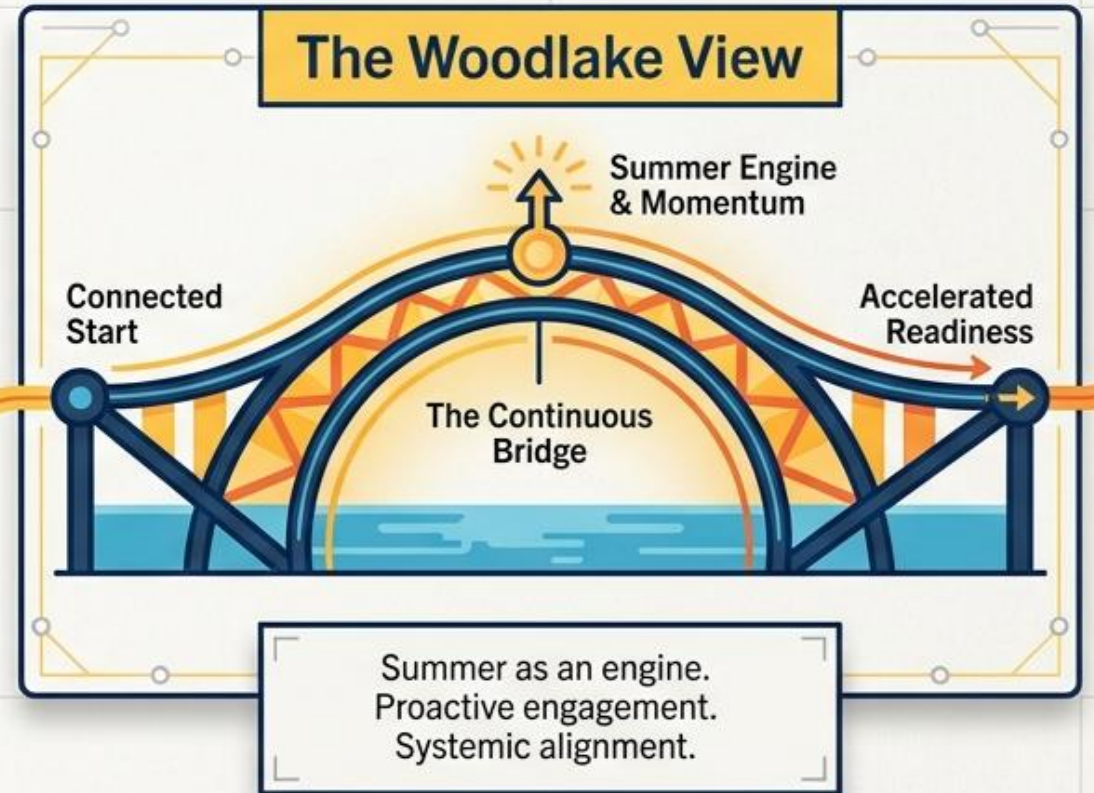
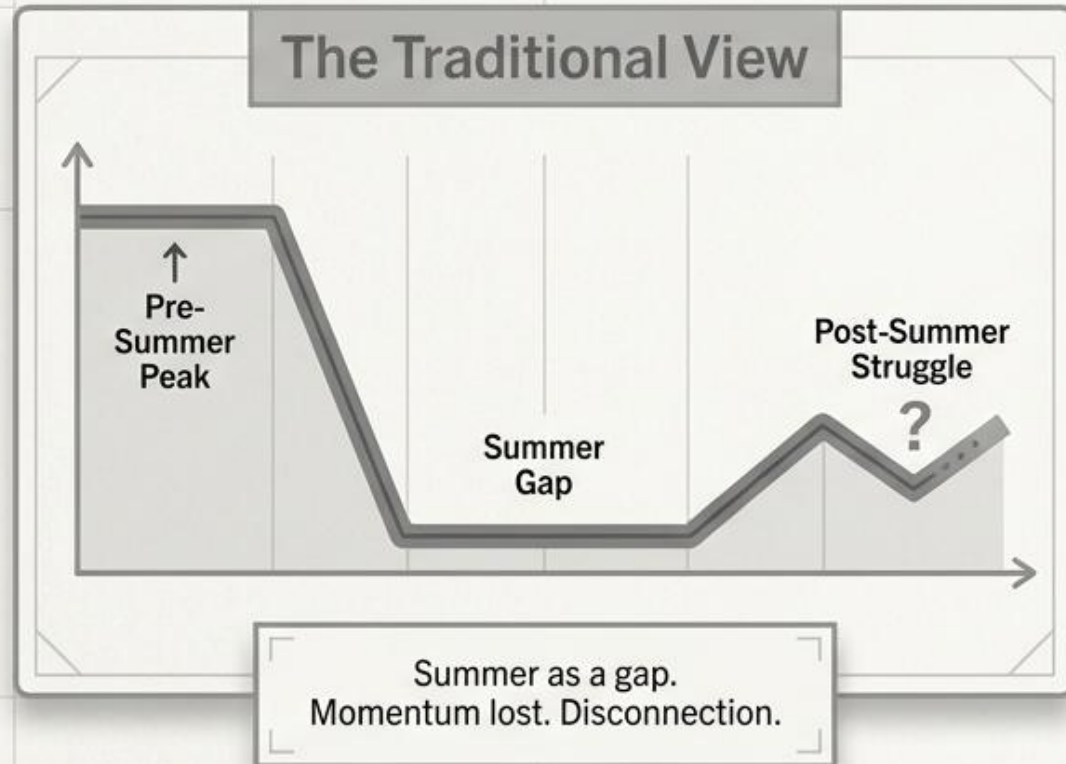


9:30-11:00: Learn schedules, practice lockers, change classes and explore the school!

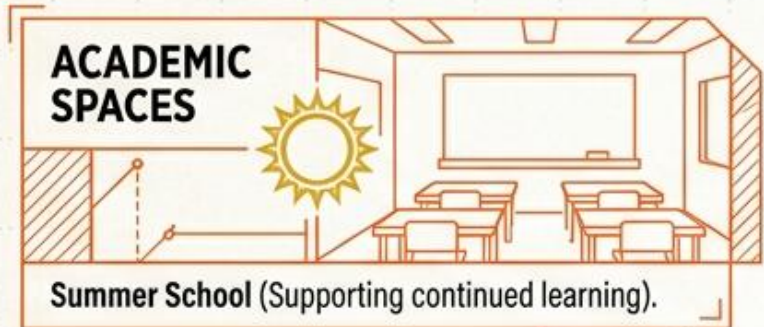


Redefining the Summer Months

In Woodlake, the summer months are an opportunity to stay connected and accelerate readiness. We reject the concept of summer as a pause.



SPANNING THE GAP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY



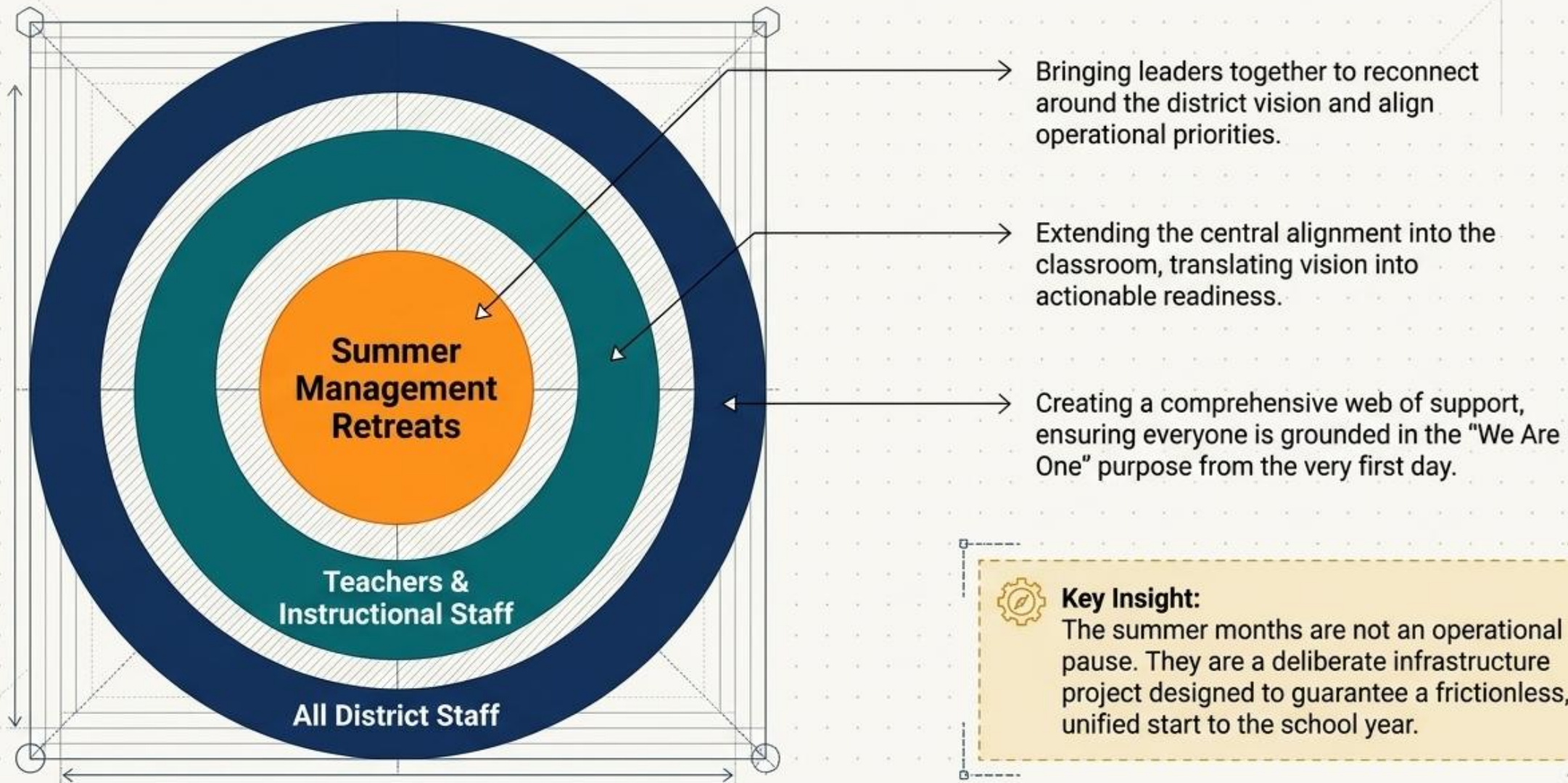
Positive, consistent messaging and visible engagement.

Creating space for families to share needs, allowing us to develop tailored success plans before the school year begins.

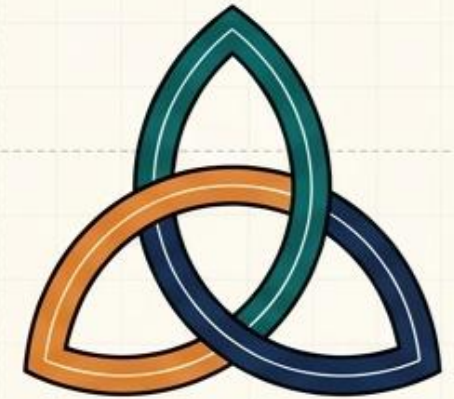
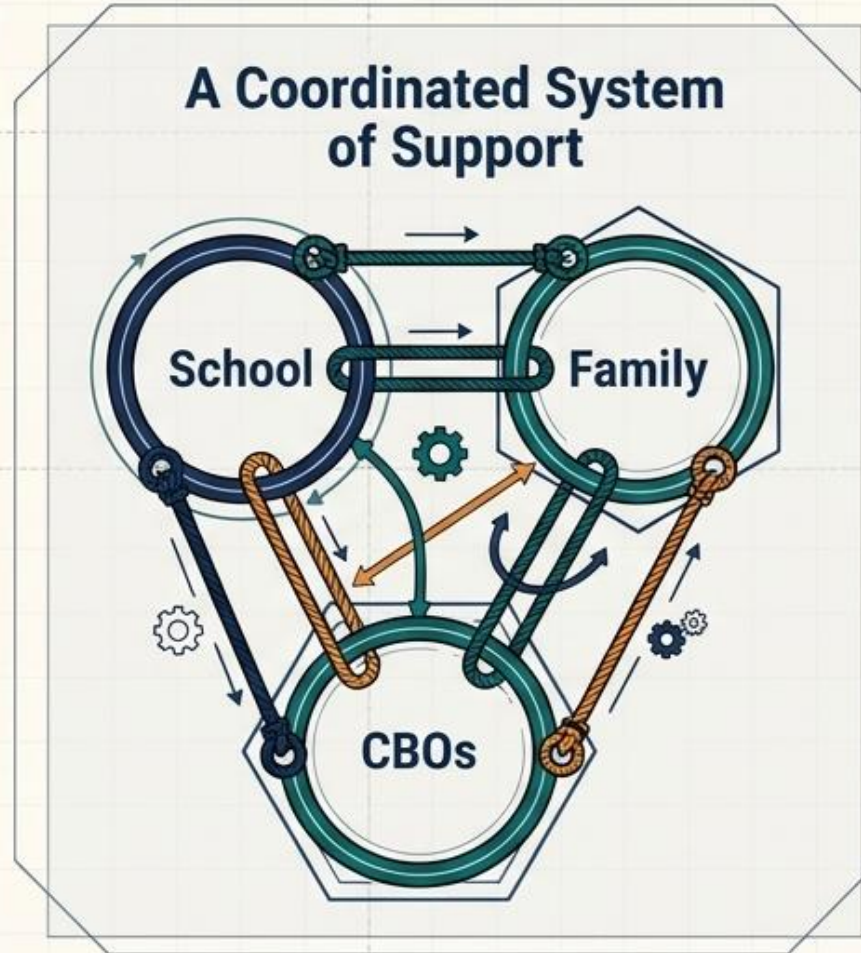
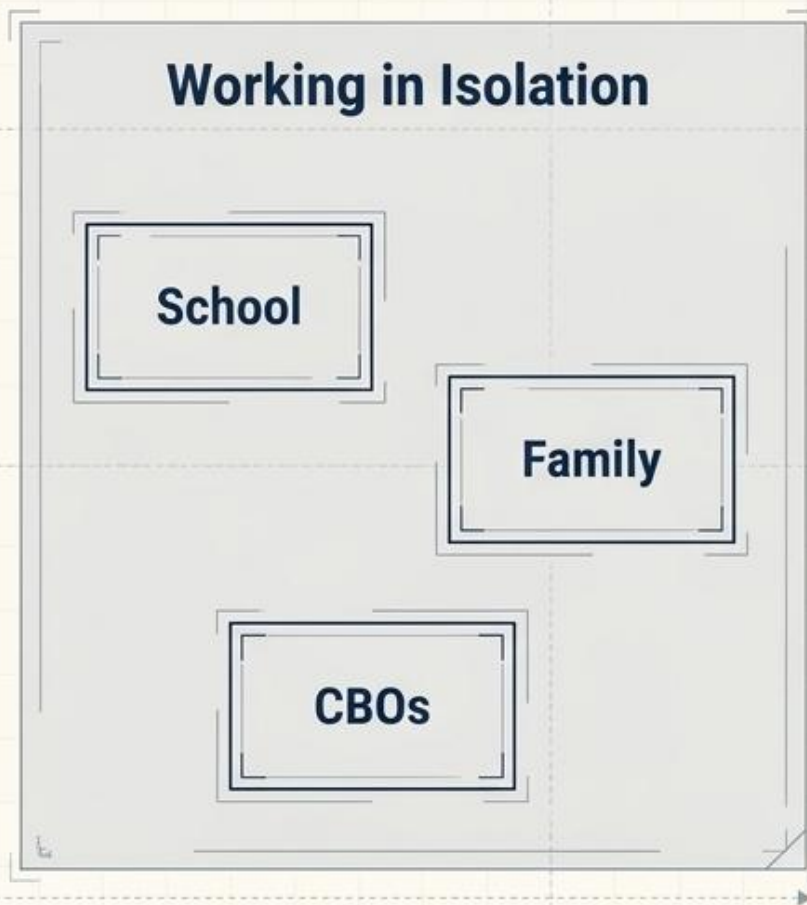


How do you use the summer and early fall to prepare staff and community partners?

Reinforcing the Internal Supports Before Day One



Engineering a Fully Coordinated Ecosystem of Support



- **Shared Vision:** Aligning staff and leadership under the “We Are One” purpose.
- **Active Collaboration:** Meeting with community partners during summer and early fall to assess specific family needs and coordinate services.
- **Coordinated Systems:** Structurally linking resources so families are fully aware and supported.

Great districts aren't built by having good programs in isolation; they are built by engineering a system where leadership, staff, families, and community partners are permanently and structurally linked.



Preparing Staff and Community Partners

- **Investment in staff training to build their capacity** which supports the **shift to a positive approach**, and **consistency** in efforts to support attendance and engagement.
- **Strategic partnerships and coordinated efforts:**
 - Mentoring opportunities: My Brother's Keeper and My Sister's Keeper
 - Programs: sports, drama club, chorus, tech team
 - Staff and partners meet once a month to coordinate efforts
- Teachers gather **student information** in the summer, which helps in the fall.

Q & A





Anasofia Trelles
Senior Manager, K-12
SchoolHouse Connection



SchoolHouse Connection



SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness, from prenatal to postsecondary, through strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with youth, families, schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, and service providers.

Learn more:

schoolhouseconnection.org

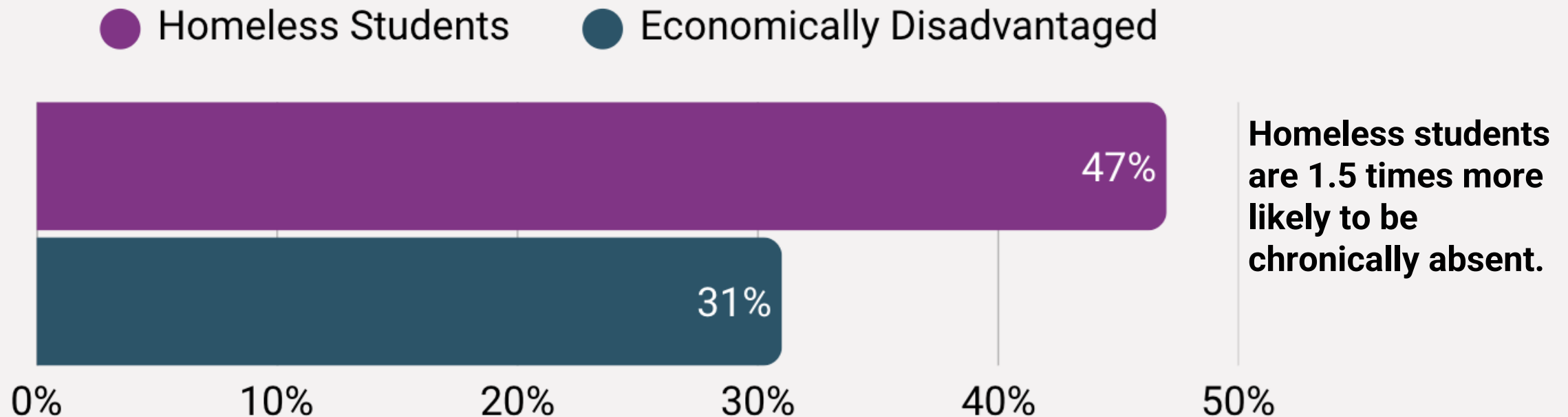
Join our Newsletter:

bit.ly/4brxbor

The McKinney-Vento Act: A Blueprint for Educational Access and Success

- Originally passed in 1987
- Last updated in 2015 as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act
- **Applies to all local educational agencies and public charter schools**
- **Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a McKinney-Vento Liaison 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)**
- Text of Law: [42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq](#)
- Some key educational protections for students identified as homeless under the law include:
 - **Immediate enrollment**, even without typically required documents
 - **School of origin rights**, when in the student's best interest
 - **Transportation to the school of origin** without barriers to attendance or participation
 - **Automatic eligibility for free meals and access to Title I, Part A supports**

Nearly Half of Students Experiencing Homelessness Are Chronically Absent



Based on state data currently available for SY 24-25.

Key Message: Homelessness creates attendance barriers beyond poverty alone.


Dramatic Increase in the Number of Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness



Implication: Districts must identify and support a growing population of students facing homelessness.

Builds on What Works: 10 Strategies for Improving Attendance

1. Train school staff to help identify students who are eligible to support.
2. Track attendance data and use the findings to drive change.
3. Break down silos across school district departments
4. Demonstrate respect for family and youth circumstances
5. Focus on transportation to remove one of the biggest barriers.
6. Provide mental health support.
7. Engage community -based organizations.
8. Tap local education foundations to provide flexible funds.
9. Maximize Title I Part A homeless set-aside funds to increase staff capacity and services.
10. Encourage states to supplement local and federal funding. .




Ten Key Strategies to Improve Attendance for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Public schools identified nearly 1.4 million students experiencing homelessness in the 2022-2023 school year – a 14% increase over the previous year. At the same time, chronic absenteeism rates for these students are **far higher** compared to other students, including compared to other economically disadvantaged students.

In late 2024 and early 2025, SchoolHouse Connection and Attendance Works spoke to school districts across the country to distill some successful approaches and effective tools for improving attendance among students experiencing homelessness. Ten key strategies are described below.

1. Train school staff to help identify students who are eligible for support.



A key step to reducing chronic absence among students experiencing homelessness is figuring out who needs support. Families and youth may say they're "in transition" or living with other people, rather than identify themselves as "homeless."

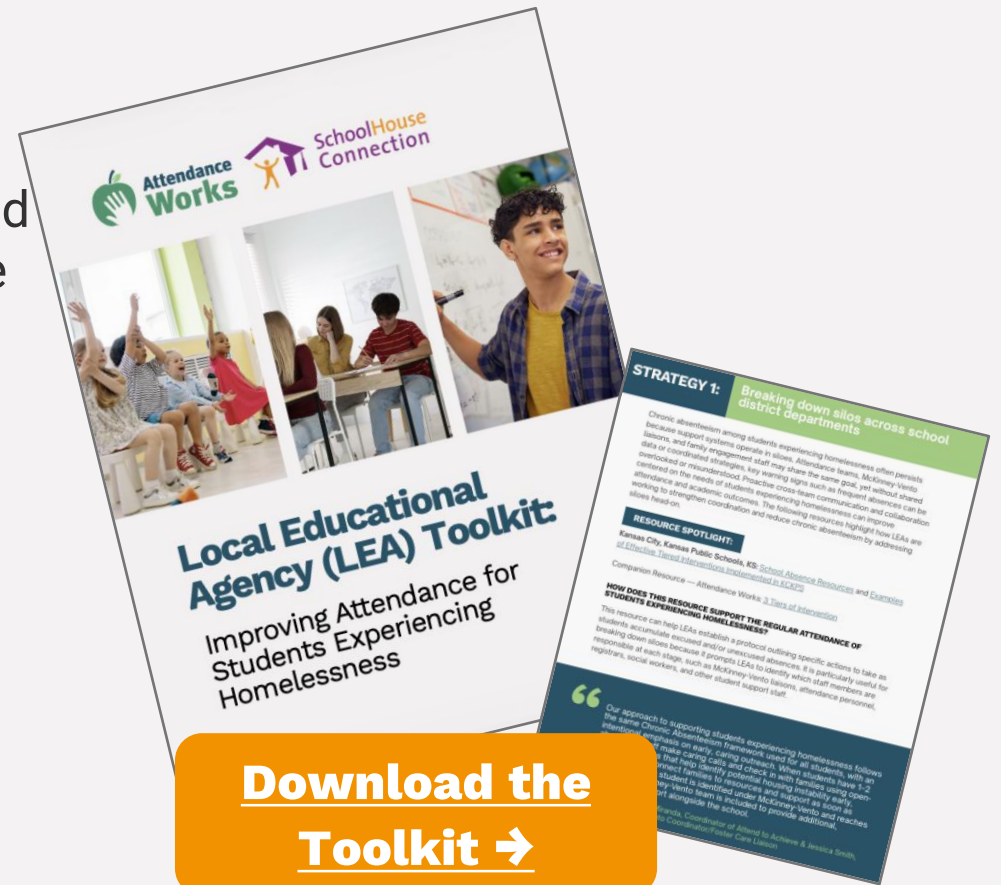
School districts are adjusting their **registration forms** to reflect different sorts of temporary living arrangements. They are also **training** attendance clerks, **school counselors** and administrators to recognize the signs of housing instability.

Kansas City, Kansas, for instance, gives a presentation at new employee orientation. Some teams are going into the community to identify students. In Henrico County, Virginia, for instance, the McKinney-Vento team hosts summer events at motels where homeless families live and signs up students for services. In Albuquerque, team members visit homeless shelters and RV parks regularly to find **students in need**.

[Ten Key Strategies to Improve Attendance for Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)

The LEA Toolkit: Improving Attendance for Students Experiencing Homelessness:

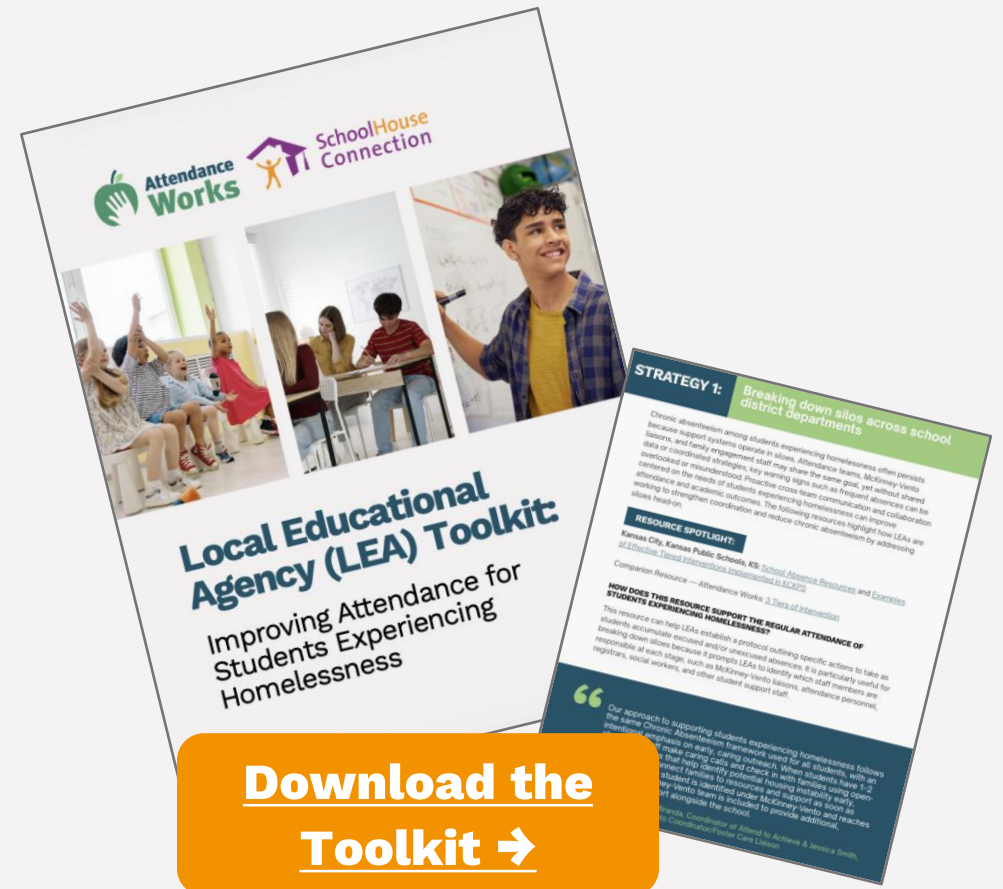
1. Provides practical and adaptable tools, templates and resources that are actually in use by LEAs across the country
2. Reflects practices from LEAs of varied sizes and geographic contexts
3. Is designed for McKinney-Vento liaisons and attendance personnel



[Download the Toolkit →](#)

The LEA Toolkit: 6 Key Strategies to Move Ideas to Action

1. Break down silos across school district departments
2. Identify McKinney-Vento students who are chronically absent
3. Track attendance data and using the findings to drive change
4. Strengthen capacity through strategic funding
5. Focus on transportation to remove one of the biggest barriers
6. Engage community-based organizations



[Download the Toolkit →](#)

Keeping Homeless Students Connected and Supported During Summer Months

Eligibility under the McKinney-Vento Act is determined annually based on the state-defined school year.

Challenge: Barriers for students experiencing homelessness to access summer activities

Strategies:

- **Share information about summer opportunities with students and families experiencing homelessness** in clear, accessible formats.
- **Waive or cover participation costs** for eligible students.
- **Provide transportation options** to support access to programs and activities.

Keeping Homeless Students Connected and Supported During Summer Months

Eligibility under the McKinney-Vento Act is determined annually based on the state-defined school year.

Challenge: Summer staffing limitations and rising needs caused by homelessness.

Strategies:

- **Designate a primary point of contact** for student and family support **during the summer months.**
- **Conduct a needs assessment** to anticipate demand and determine appropriate staffing.
- **Partner with community organizations** to connect students and families with housing, food, and other basic needs resources over the summer.
- **Expand staff capacity through additional hours, stipends, or temporary summer contracts.**

Summer Engagement and Support Examples from the Field

- **Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland:** Has provided scholarships for identified students to attend community academic and enrichment programs
- **Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, Texas:** Offers a summer camp option specifically for students experiencing homelessness.
- **Bridgeport Public Schools, Connecticut:** partnered with a community-based partner [Filling in Blanks](#) to provide weekend and summer food supports.

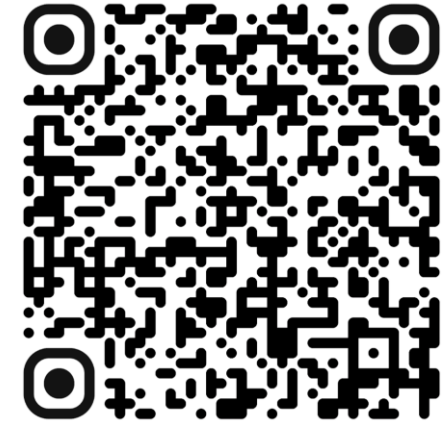
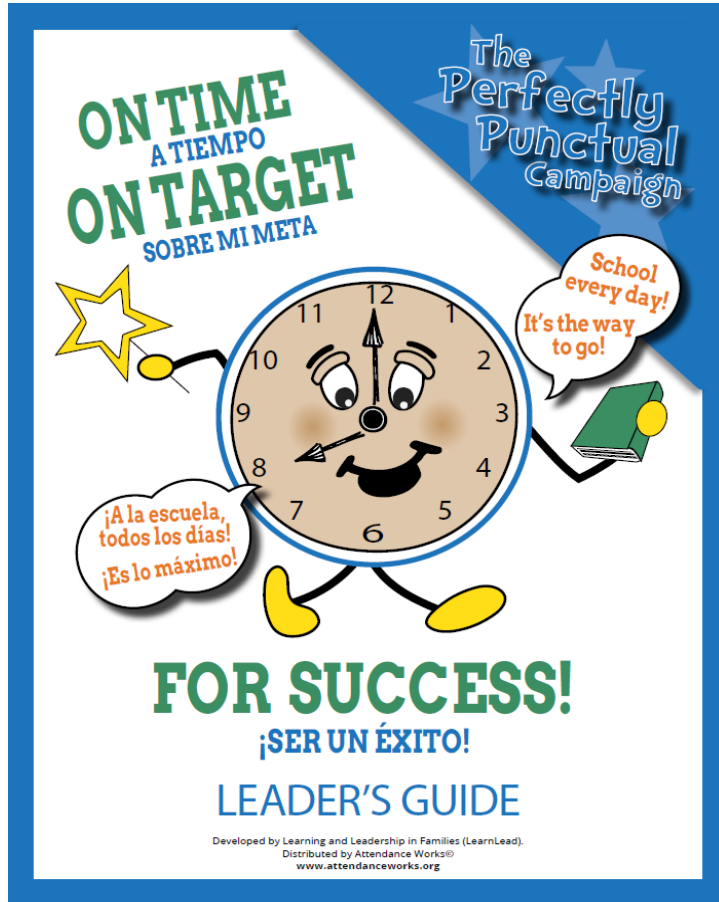


Q & A





Updated: Perfectly Punctual Campaign



The Perfectly Punctual Campaign (PPC)

- playful, universal strategy
- celebrates on time attendance as a school-wide value
- strategies engage young children and their families

Find the resources here:

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/perfectly-punctual/>

Join us for CSxFE26 in Long Beach, CA



Scan for Early Bird registration!



IEL's 2026 National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference is in Long Beach, California, a beautiful city with one of the busiest seaports in the country!


Just as lighthouses guide ships through uncertain waters, **Guiding Lights, Brighter Futures** reminds us that every day matters for every child.



Key Resource: Attendance Awareness Website

- ✓ **Proclaim September Attendance Awareness Month building off our sample proclamation**
- ✓ **Share our free social media materials with local districts!**
- ✓ **Follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and X**
- ✓ **Add an AAC badge to your signature line website or materials**
- ✓ **Access the Count Us In! toolkit**

PROMOTE THE CAMPAIGN



Attendance Awareness Campaign 2026

Attendance Works About Resources Partners Sponsors
Blog Newsroom Donate Contact Join the Campaign!

Your Presence Matters!
Join the campaign and receive regular updates.

Sign Up

Join 48,000+ listserv members and receive updates:
www.awareness.attendanceworks.org



Webinar Recording

We will post a recording of this webinar
within 72 hours:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/webinars/>



Feedback



Please let us know how we can improve:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AAC-May-2026>

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And special appreciation to our philanthropic partners!

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