



Session 1:

Whole School Engagement Strategies for Reducing Student Absenteeism



AZ Elementary Cohort: Professional Learning Series

April 18, 2024



Welcome!



Lori Masseur
Director of Early Learning
Read On Arizona



Welcome!



Cecelia Leong
Vice President of Programs



Maria Casey
Associate Director of Staff
Development



Tina Ochoa
Senior Fellow



Three E-Learning Sessions

During these sessions, participants will learn how to work as a team to take a multi-tiered approach to improve attendance in their schools:

- ❖ **Session 1** — Whole School Engagement Strategies for Reducing Student Absenteeism
- ❖ **Session 2** — Early Intervention Strategies: Using Teams to Monitor and Identify Students in Need of Support
- ❖ **Session 3** — Partnering to Make a Difference



Learning Goals for Session 1

Participants will:

- Draw on whole school strategies to create
 - positive conditions for learning and
 - strong relationships with students and families that prevent absenteeism
- Understand what chronic absence is and why it matters
- Be introduced to the framework of multi-tiered attendance strategies that moves schools towards prevention and early intervention
- Learn effective strategies to communicate with families about attendance



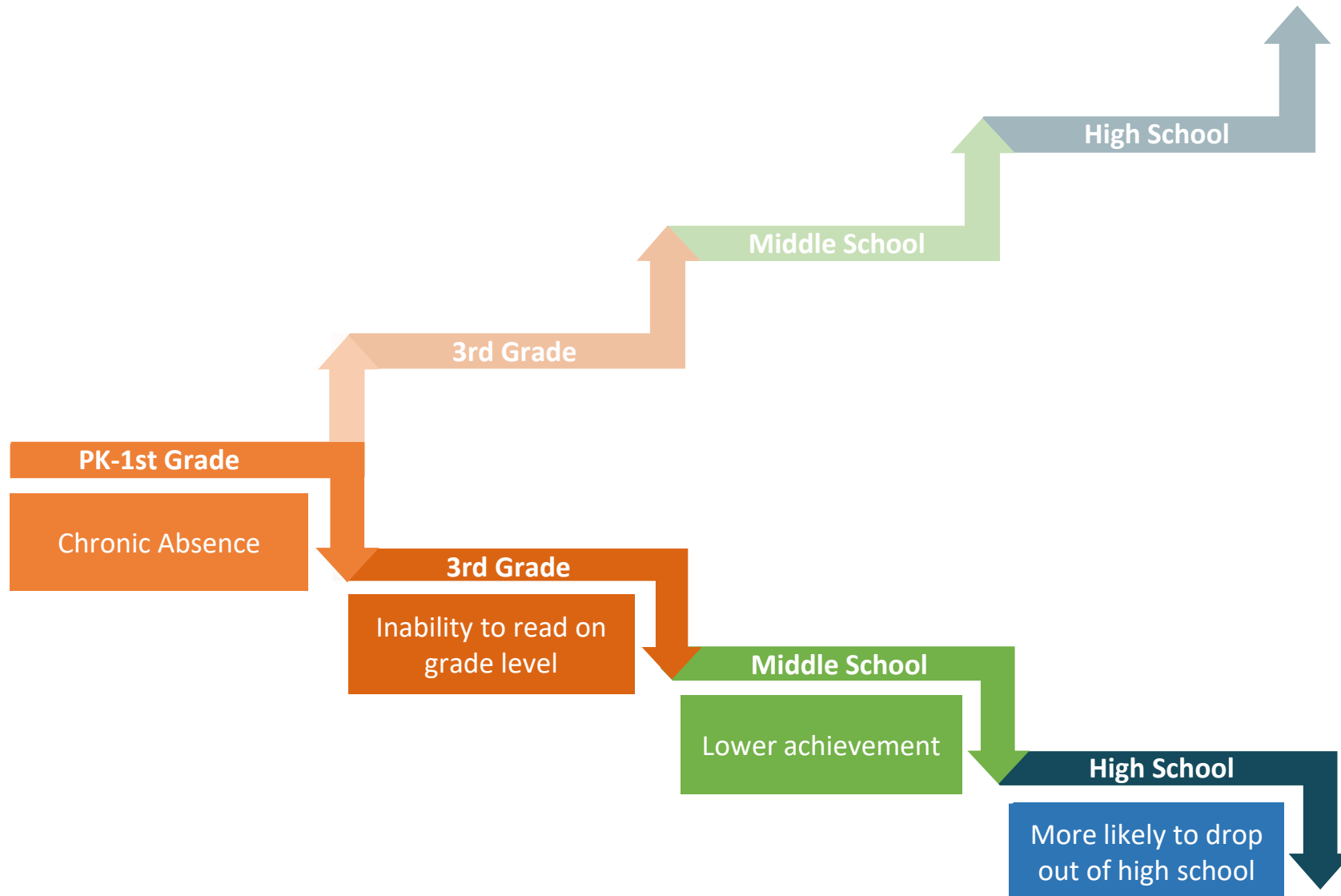
Welcome & Introductions

Use the Chat and share:

- ✓ Your name and role
- ✓ Your school and district
- ✓ ***Who or what*** motivated you to attend school every day?

Overview of Chronic Absence

Improving Attendance Matters

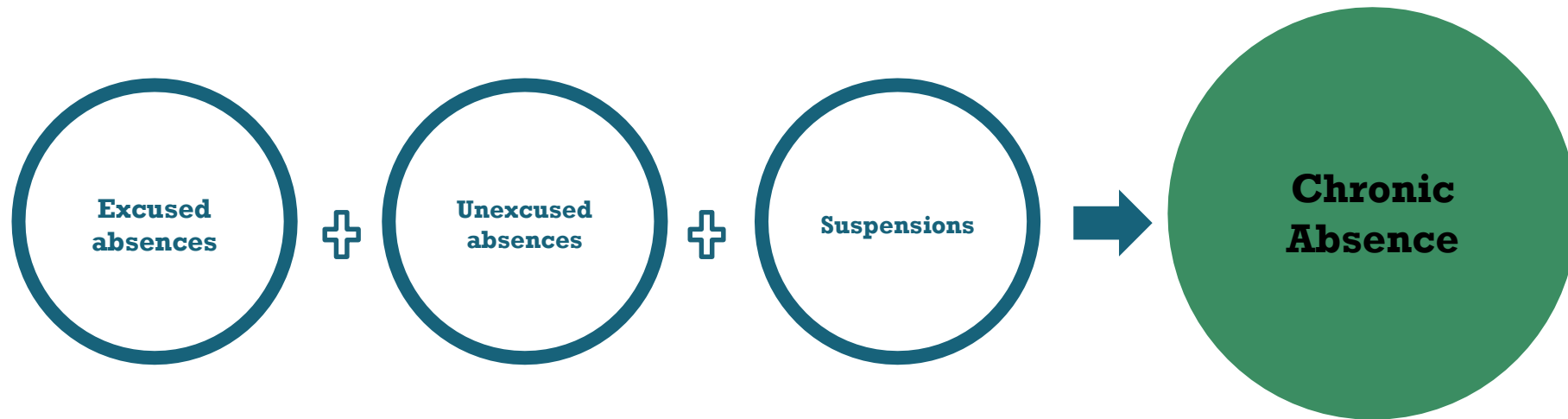




What is chronic absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk.

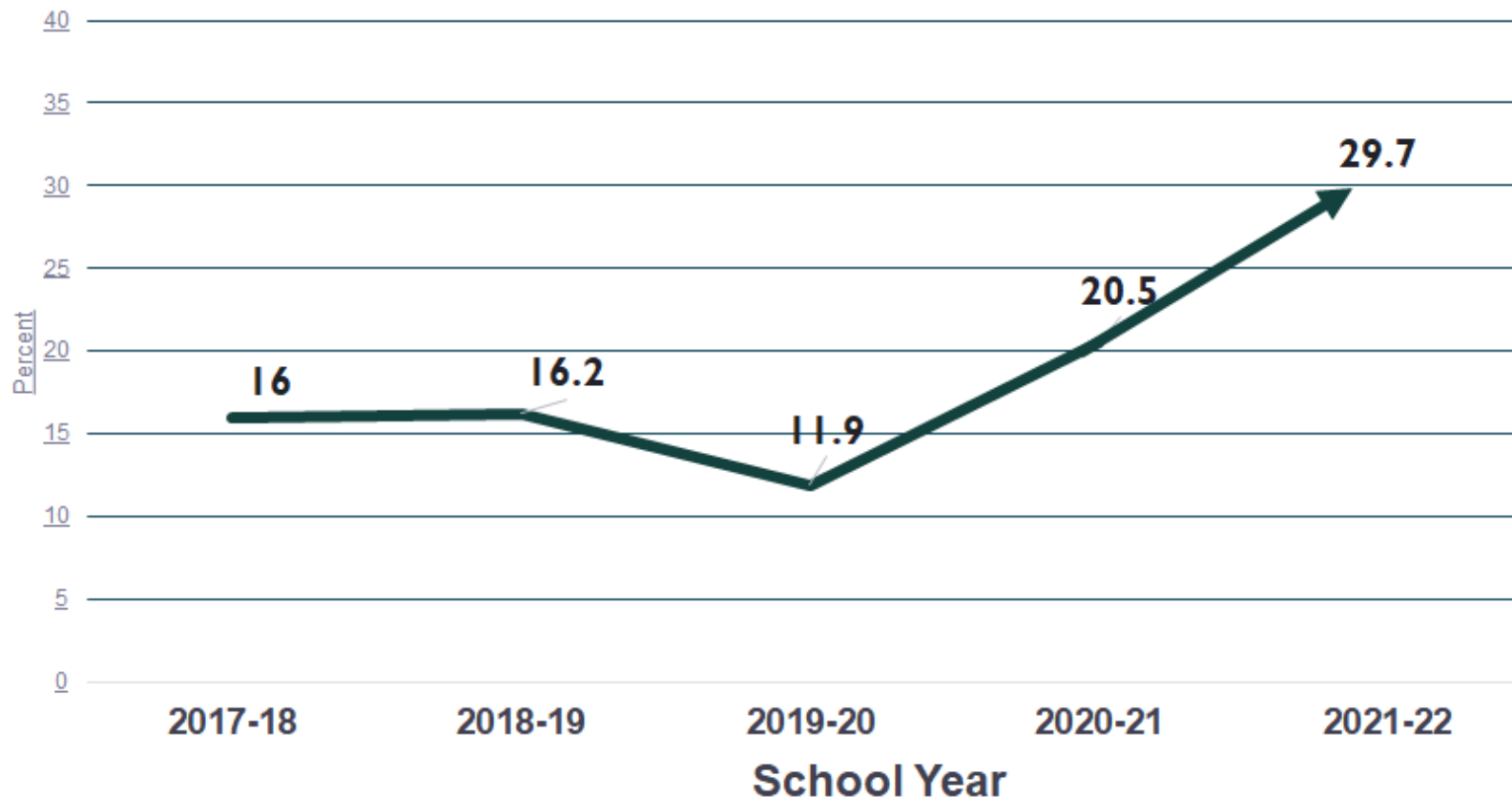
Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



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

National Chronic Absence Crisis

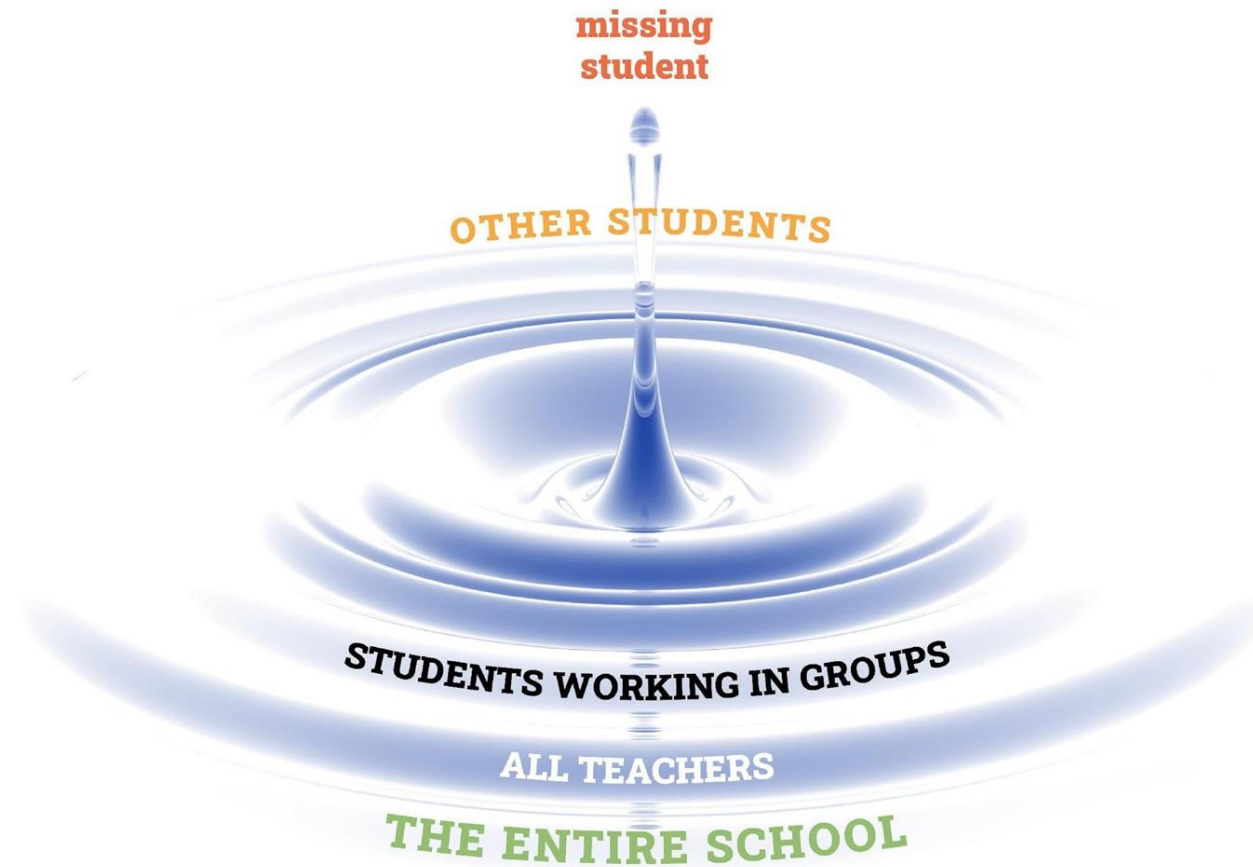
Percentage of Students Chronically Absent Nearly Doubled Nationwide Between SY 2017-18 to SY 2021-22



- ✓ The number of chronically absent students grew from 8,095,132 to 14,660,261.
- ✓ State data from 2022–23 indicate rates remain high.



When a Student Misses School the Impact Ripples



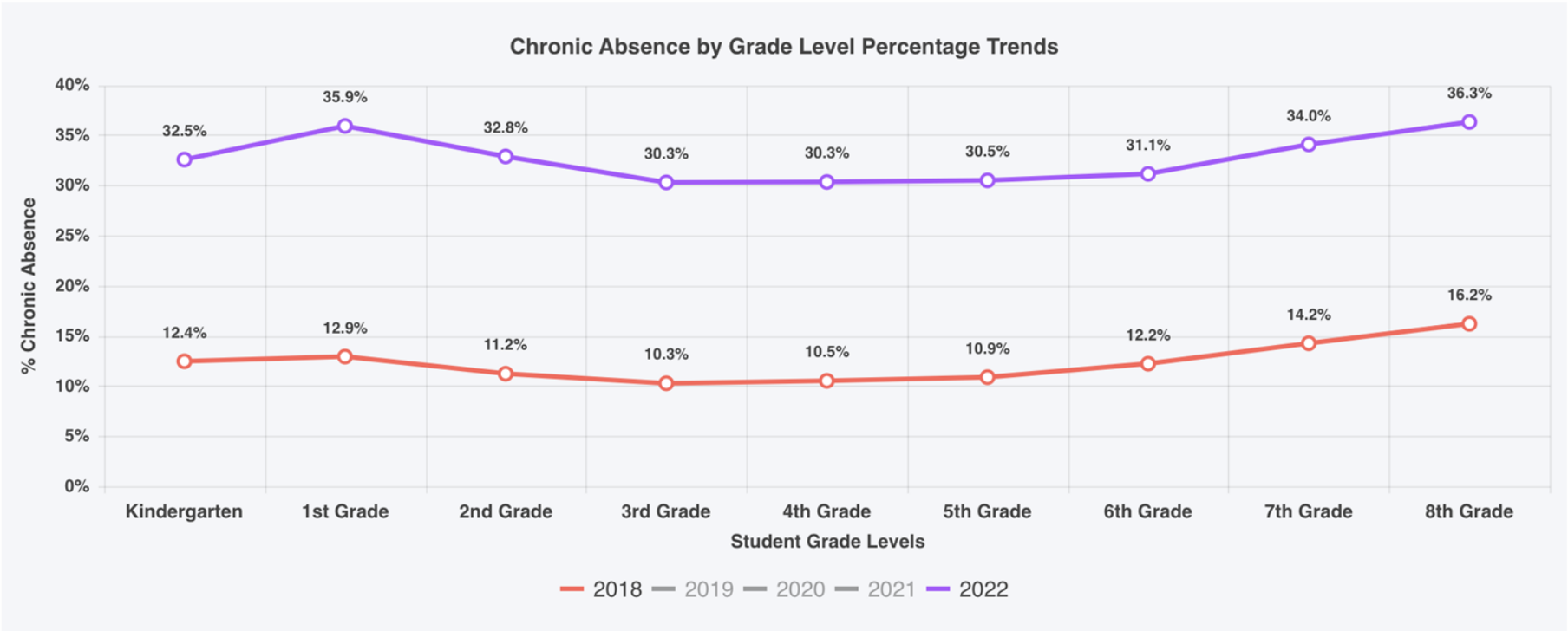
2 out of 3
students attend a
school with 20%
or more
absenteeism
(SY 2021-22)

Arizona Chronic Absence Data by Grade Level: 2018 & 2022

Chronic Absence Data by Grade Level

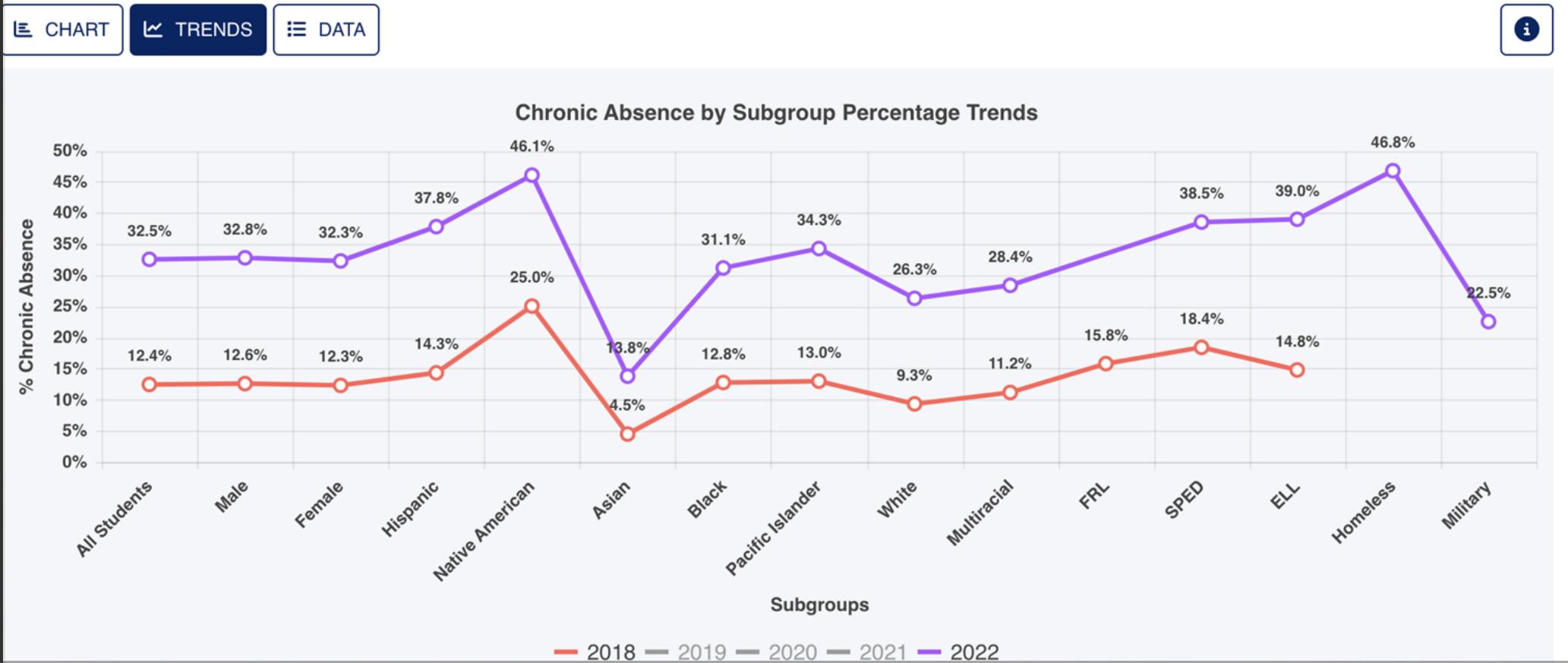
Arizona

CHART TRENDS DATA



Arizona Chronic Absence Data by Student Group: 2018 & 2022

Chronic Absence Data by Subgroup Arizona





**What is the relationship
between absences & gaps?**

**Chronic absenteeism is a *leading*
indicator and a *cause* of
educational disparities**

What's the difference between ADA, truancy & 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

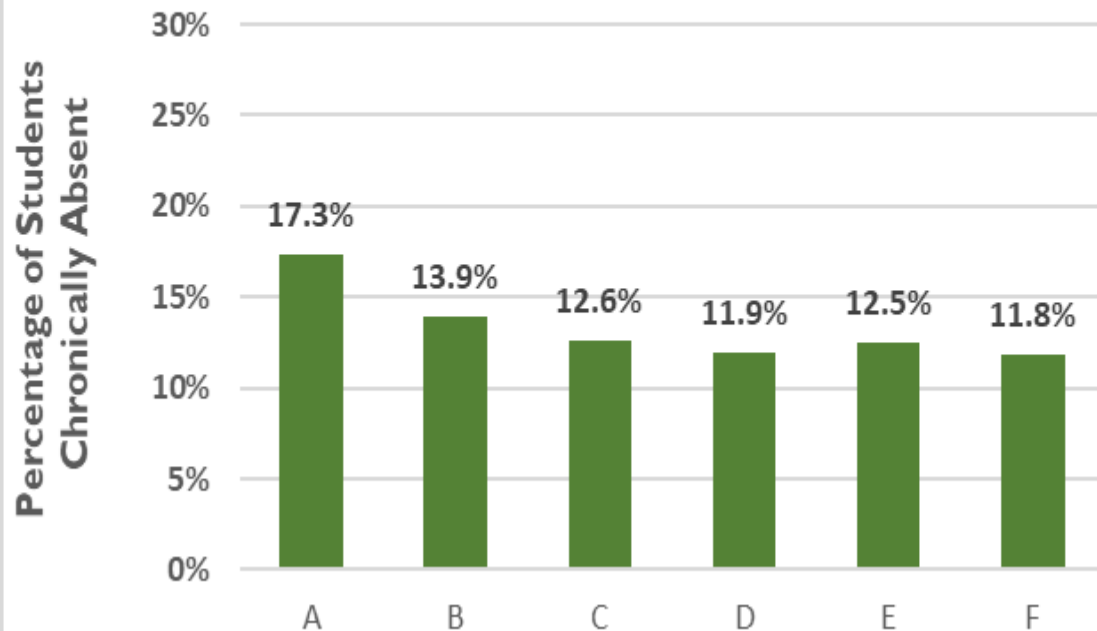
- Counts ALL absences (*excused, unexcused, and suspensions*)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days and the benefits of being present
- Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies
- Cultivates family and student engagement



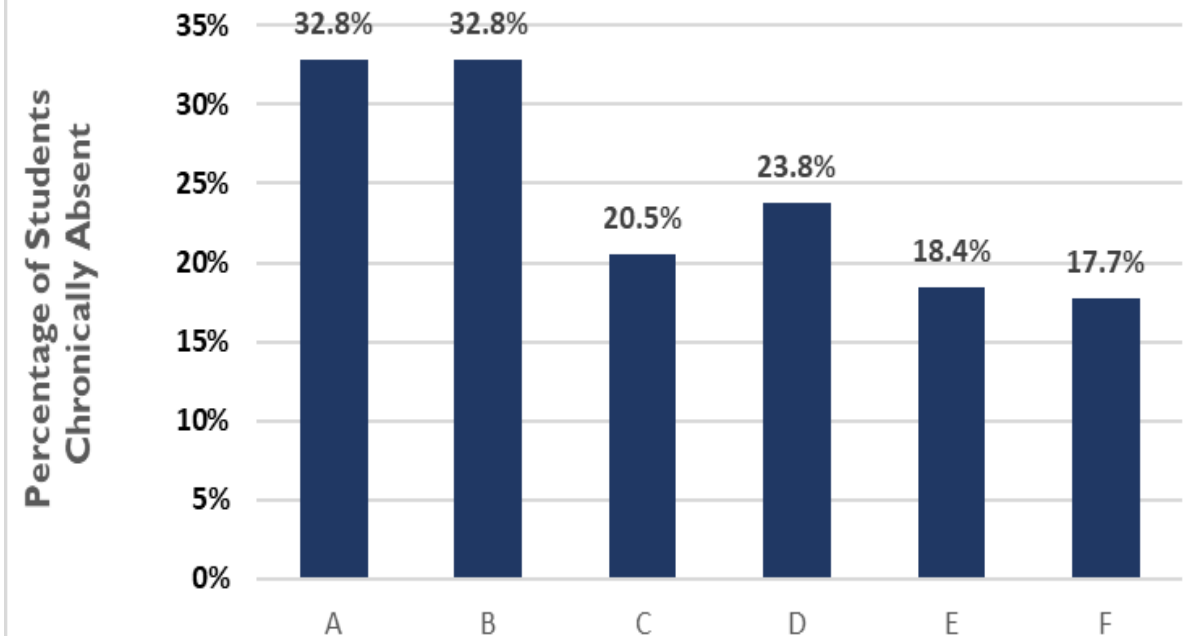
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% \neq A

**Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in Louisiana
with 95% ADA in SY 2021-22**



**Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in Louisiana
with 90% ADA in SY 2021-22**



How “Unexcused” Label Can Affect Response

Response to “Excused”	Response to “Unexcused”
✓ Help with homework	✗ Denial of help or no credit for homework
✓ Make-up exams	✗ No make-up exams
✓ Home tutoring provided	✗ Denial of class credit
	✗ Removal from extracurricular activities
	✗ Send notices of truancy
	<i>*If unexcused absences accumulate despite earlier outreach from schools and districts, courts can:</i>
	> Fine students and parents
	> Require a community service program or parenting program
	> Charge parents with a misdemeanor



Audience Poll

What attendance data are you tracking in your district or school? *(select all that apply)*

- a) Average daily attendance
- b) Chronic absence *(all absences)*
- c) Truancy *(unexcused absences)*
- d) Don't Know

The Key to Improving Attendance is a Tiered Approach



Pathway for Change

Mindset





Actionable
Data

Capacity

Strategies

Outcomes

Changing the Power Dynamics with Students and Families

Problem Focused	to	Partnership Focused
Approach family <i>only</i> to address a problem		Initial outreach focuses on building a relationship
One-way messaging to families		Start with listening to families; Find out hopes, dreams, assets, and needs
Focus <i>only</i> on barriers		Leverage student/family strengths to overcome challenges
Presume you have all the answers and know what is best for the family/student		Collaborate with families and encourage practices that build upon their assets and priorities

These concepts were adapted from this blog by the Search Institute: <https://blog.searchinstitute.org/six-shifts-better-family-engagement>

5 Day Absence Notice

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We strive to improve the attendance of our students. Each minute of the school day provides opportunities for learning and when students miss, it is easy to fall behind academically. We must work together collectively to assure your student does not miss any more days of school.

Board policy requires us to notify parents when students reach 5 absences and then again when they reach 9 absences. **Since the start of the school year, your student has missed at least 5 days in one or more of their classes.** We are concerned that if your student continues to miss school, he/she will struggle to keep up in the classroom. Each minute of the school day provides opportunities for learning and when students miss, it is easy to fall behind academically. Also, if your student is an open enrollment student, excessive absences can put them at risk of being non-renewed for the following school year.

We do appreciate when parents call in and excuse absences for their student. However, it is important to note, that when calculating total absences in a semester, the district and state policies do not make a distinction between the types of absence; It is simply an absence, whether excused or unexcused. It is also important for your student to have all of their absences excused, as it allows them the ability to make up the work they have missed. Unexcused absences may not be given the same consideration. I have attached the [REDACTED] Board Policy regarding attendance for your reference.

If you would like to review your student's attendance records, please visit the [parent portal](#) or [download the app](#). If you feel there is an error in the attendance record or need help accessing it, please contact the school attendance clerk at [REDACTED]

This letter is merely for your information and no action is needed at this time. However, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your student's absences, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to assist you in any way possible.

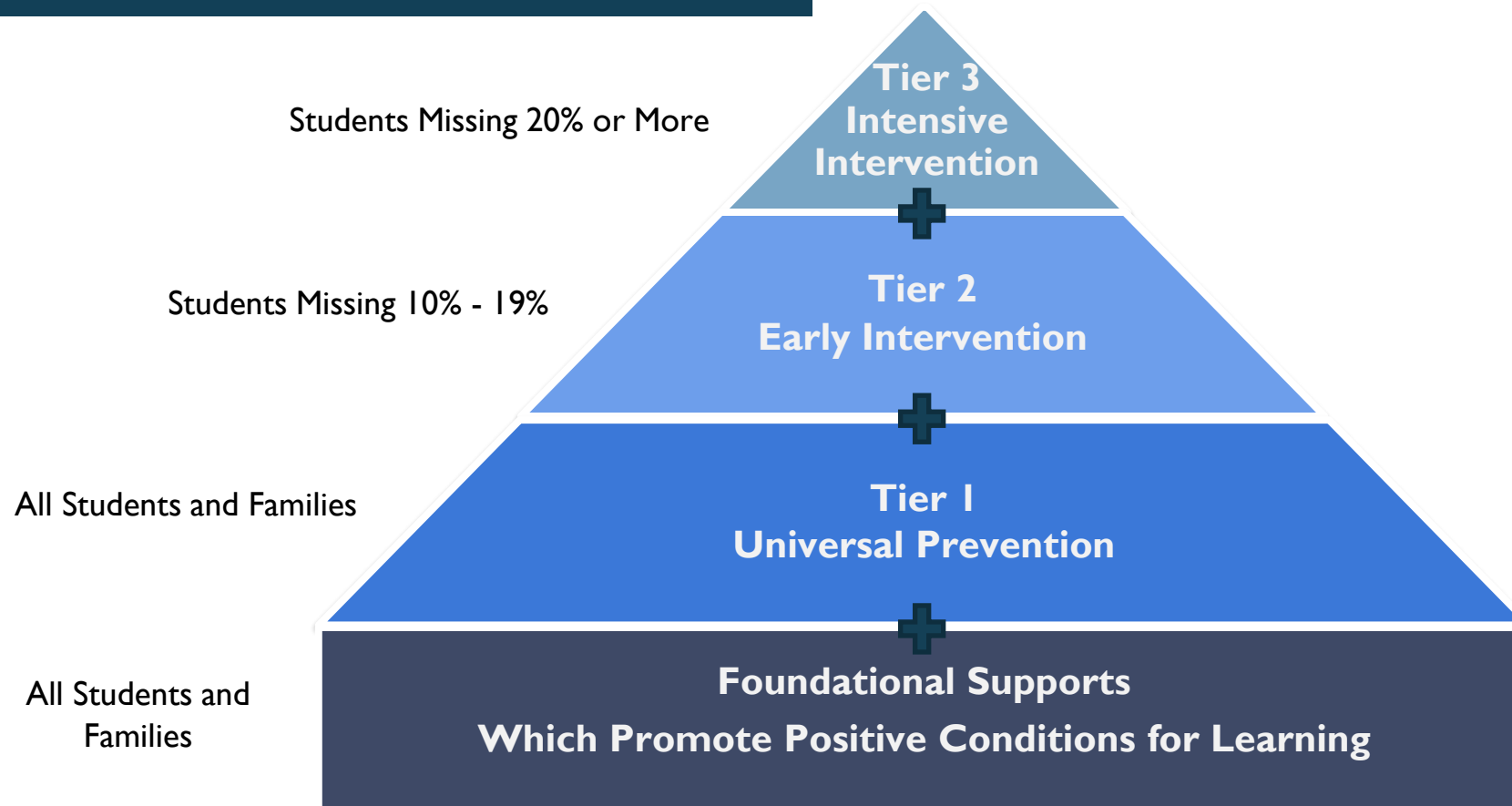
Respectfully,

Let's Practice!

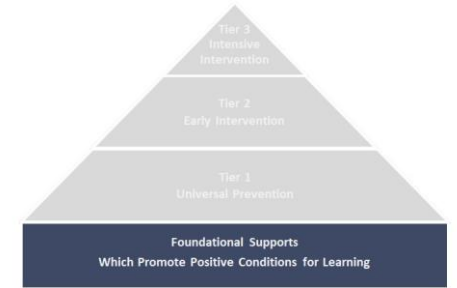
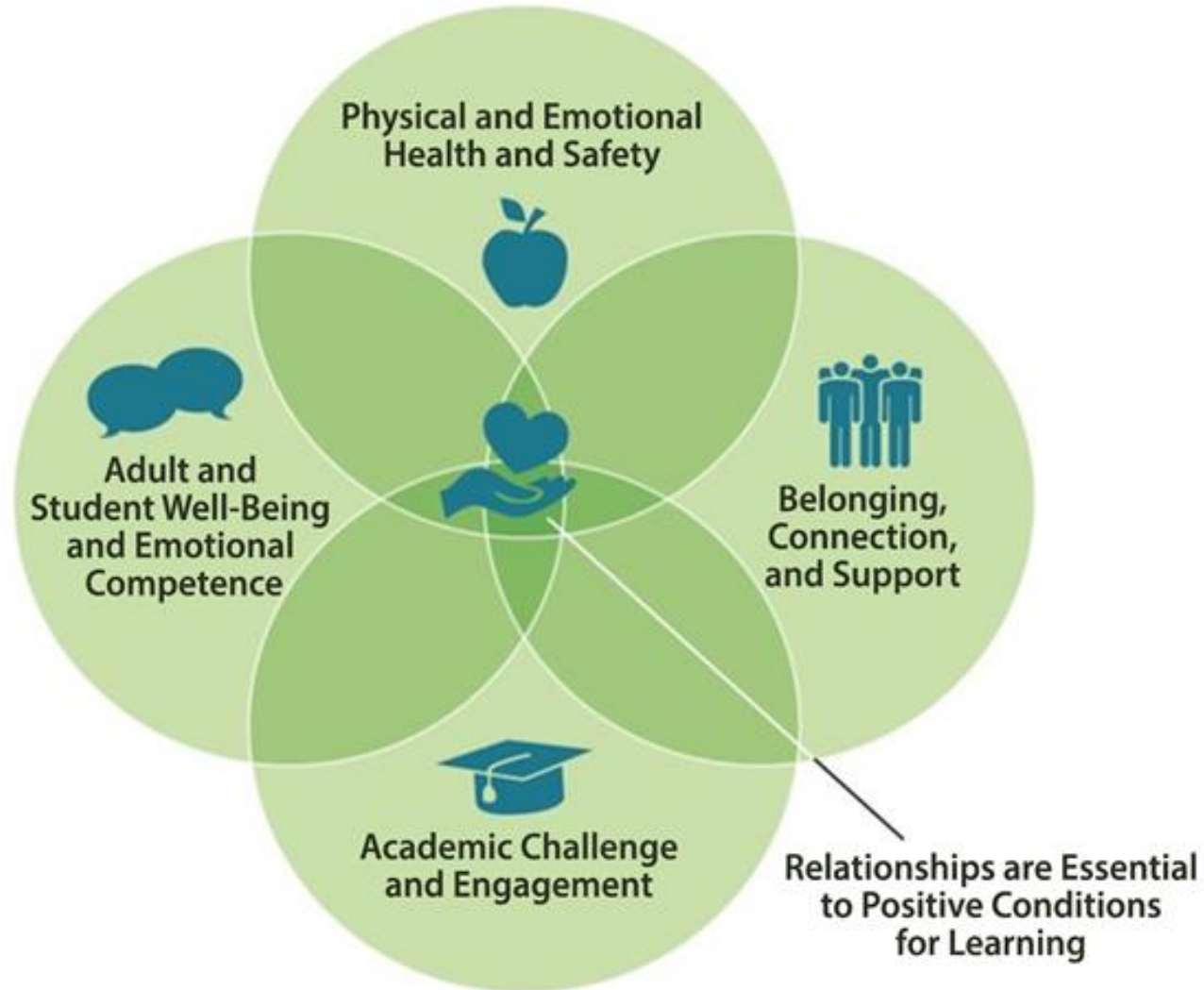
1. What do you like about the letter?
1. What would you add/change that could help forge a deeper partnership with families?



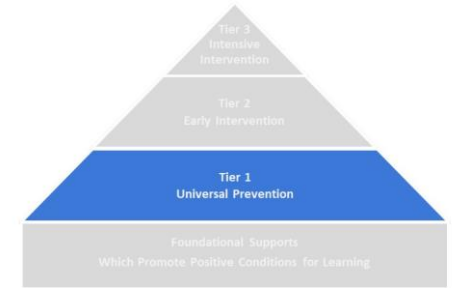
Multi-tiered System of Support for Attendance



Positive Conditions for Learning Lead to Students Being Engaged and Attending Regularly



Tier 1: Universal Attendance Supports



- ❖ **Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedule and expectations**
- ❖ Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement
- ❖ Personalized, positive communication to families when students are absent
- ❖ Recognition of good and improved attendance
- ❖ Impact of attendance on whole child widely understood
- ❖ **Connection to a caring adult in the school**
- ❖ Every child and their family encouraged to develop a success plan that includes attention to attendance

Tier 1 Example: Universal Attendance Supports

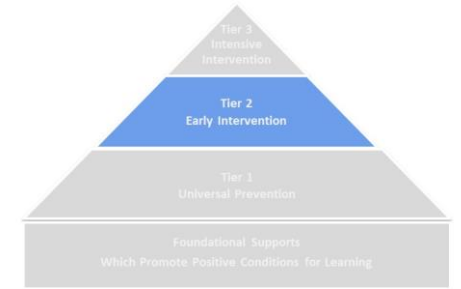


Relationships **Bright Spot**



DEF Unified School District requires that all teachers make and log a connection with each student's family to share positive experiences with them. This strategy is tied to teacher incentive pay.

Tier 2: Early Interventions Layer in Support and Remove Barriers to Attendance



- ❖ Common community and school barriers identified and addressed
- ❖ Individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance
- ❖ Attendance strategies added to IEP
- ❖ **Family visit**
- ❖ Mentors (e.g., Success Mentors, Peer Group Connections)
- ❖ Intensive tutoring
- ❖ Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)
- ❖ Expanded learning opportunities
- ❖ Small group interventions and supports for students
- ❖ **Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension**

- **Watch:** [Webinar](#) from the National Center on PBIS & Attendance Works
- **Read:** [Family Engagement Impact Study](#) from Learning Heroes

Tier 2 Example: Early Interventions Layer in Support and Remove Barriers to Attendance

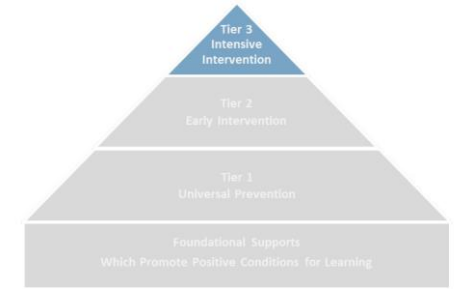


Relationships **Bright Spot**



A school district in southern AZ leverages afterschool programs and extracurricular activities to support improved attendance. School counselors are working to identify those students not involved in after school programs.

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions



- ❖ Educational support champions / advocates
- ❖ **Interagency case management**
- ❖ Housing stability supports
- ❖ Student attendance review board
- ❖ **Community-based, non-criminal truancy court**
- ❖ Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation
- ❖ Legal Intervention (*as a last resort*)

Tier 3 Example: Intensive Interventions

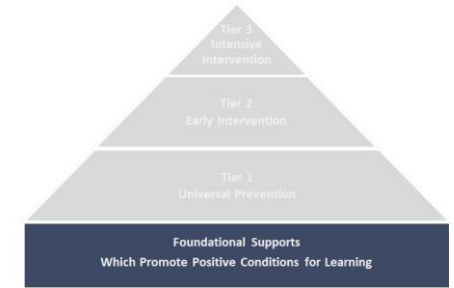


MTSS **Bright Spot**

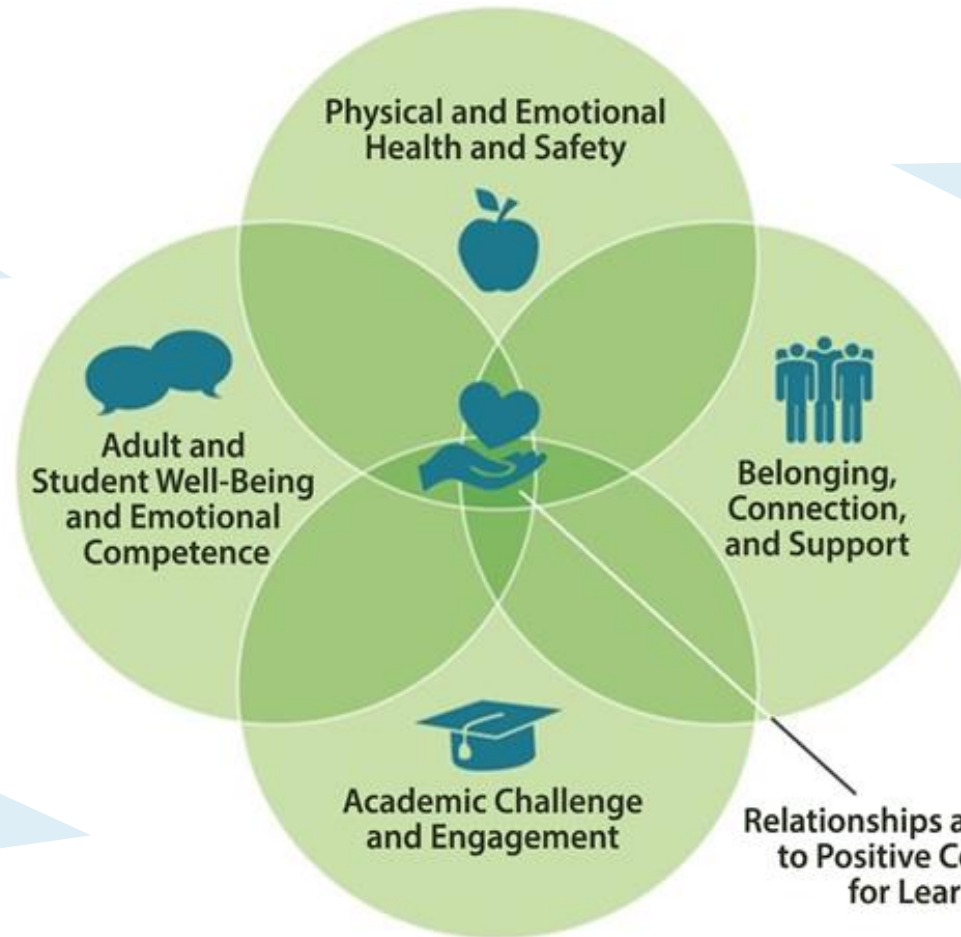


An AZ Head Start uses their attendance data to reach out to families whose children are chronically absent. This outreach led to family support with hotel vouchers, via the local housing agency, when it was discovered that a particular family was experiencing homelessness.

Positive Conditions for Learning Lead to Students Being Engaged and Attending Regularly



- Restorative check-ins
- Access to health care & mental health supports
- Trauma-informed practice
- Staff self-care



- Healthy learning environments
- Welcoming, safe school climate
- Access to food & other basic needs
- Restorative circles

- Access to tech & internet
- Learning supports
- Project-based learning
- Credit recovery opportunities
- Internships/community service
- Alternative scheduling options

- Active student & family engagement
- Advisories/meetings to build community
- Enrichment & clubs
- Positive peer connections

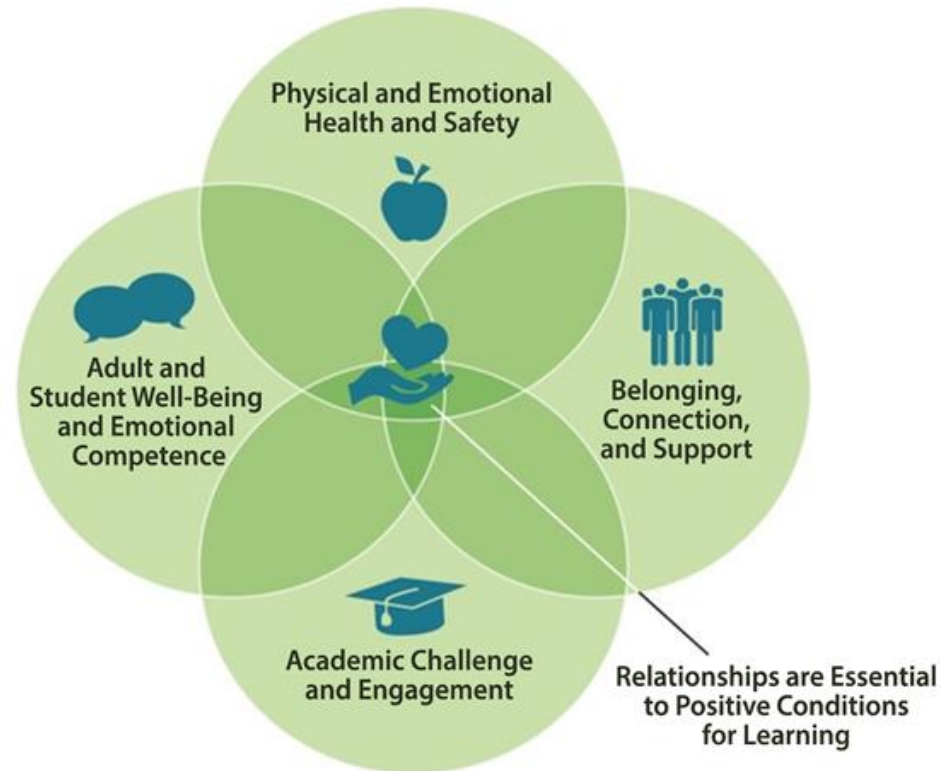
What promotes positive conditions for learning?





Reflection

How did the video illustrate positive conditions for learning?



Conditions for Learning: Belonging, Connection and Support

What challenging and positive conditions exist in your school?

Challenging Condition

- ☐ Limited support provided
- ☐ Weak relationships between students and staff
- ☐ Negative peer relationships

Positive Condition

- ☐ Meaningful connection to adults in the school
- ☐ Adults emotionally attuned to students
- ☐ Care and inclusivity
- ☐ Cultural respect and responsiveness
- ☐ Positive peer relationships
- ☐ Equitable, effective and available support

Small Group Discussion

About your school:

- In your experience, what creates a sense of belonging, connection and support in your school?
- How do you reach students and families who've been disconnected?



Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Create space for everyone to speak *(and use the chat to express ideas)*
- The person whose first name is closest to the letter "A" should facilitate

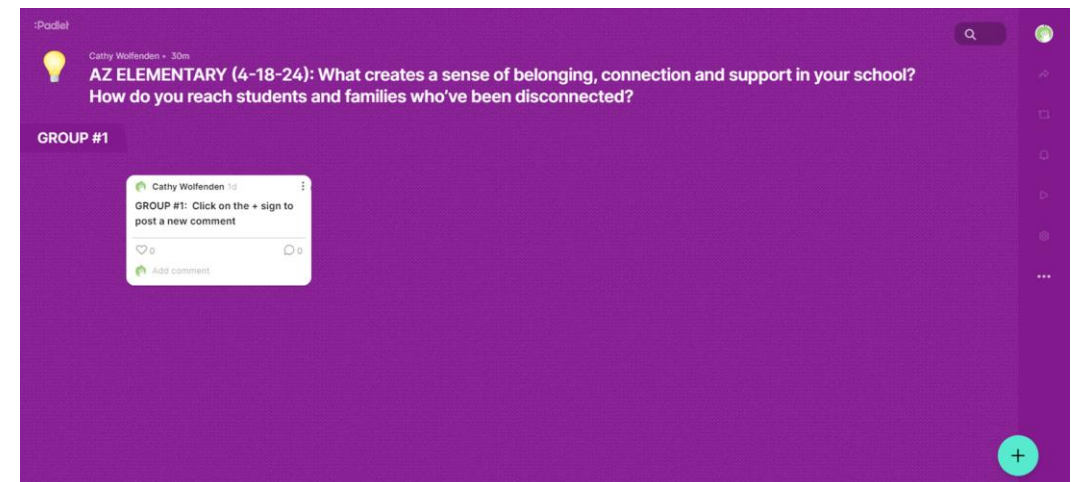
Small Group Discussion: Padlet

How to post on a Padlet bulletin board

1. Once Zoom breakout rooms are created, locate your group #
2. Open this Google doc and click on the link for your group #
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rpcbLg0VWadCqucULh_mequDpa40NmuF0m-xg70x116s/edit?usp=sharing
3. Create a new post by clicking on the plus sign + on the bottom right corner
4. You can also comment on & react to someone else's post

About your school:

- In your experience, what creates a sense of belonging, connection and support in your school?
- How do you reach students and families who've been disconnected?





Report Out

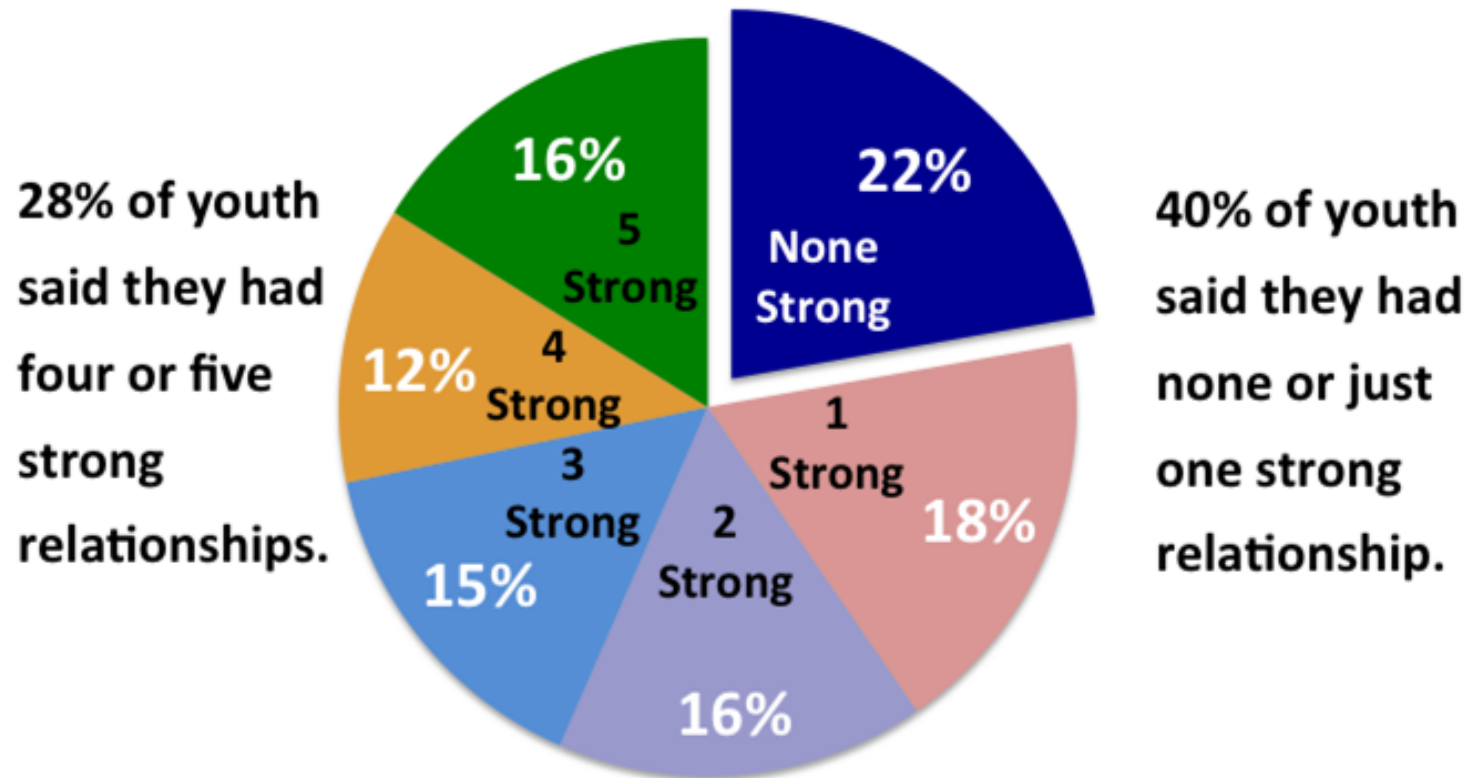
Share in Chat:

What is a strategy you've heard about today that you'd like to strengthen or adopt?

**Relationships are Essential at
Every Level of Intervention**

1 in 5 Youth Report No Strong Relationships

Young people were asked about what five different people do that would support their growth and thriving (suggesting a “strong”* relationship).



What do students say about their relationships with adults?

Search Institute: [What We're Learning about Developmental Relationships](https://www.attendanceworks.org/research/what-we-re-learning-about-developmental-relationships/)

how-to guide to relationship mapping



MAKING
CARING
COMMON
PROJECT



GRADES
K–12

IMPLEMENTED BY
School Administrators

CAPACITIES PROMOTED

Relationship-building; Student confidence; Shifting school norms

KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ See all students at-a-glance
- ✓ See who is well supported and who need supports by adults.
- ✓ Connect all students to at least one school adult

<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy>



Re-establish Routines & Rituals

1. **Daily Wellness Check**
(e.g. Zones of Regulation,
Mood Meter)
2. **Whole Group Greeting**
(e.g. Go-around Questions,
Circle Games)
3. **Mindfulness/Grounding Exercises** (e.g. Collective
Breath)
4. **Greetings at the Door**
(e.g. Smile, Call person by
name)



Starting Each Class With a Warm Welcome: <https://www.edutopia.org/video/starting-each-class-warm-welcome>
Making Connections With Greetings at the Door: <https://www.edutopia.org/video/making-connections-greetings-door>



Evidence-Based Programs

Relational Home Visits

- ✓ Goal is to create positive relationship between educators and parents *before* any issues arise
- ✓ Example of model programs: Parent Teacher Home Visits
<http://www.pthvp.org/what-we-do/pthv-model/>
- ✓ Learning Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) Home Visit
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/LEAP/The-LEAP-Effect.pdf>

Mentoring

- ✓ Goal is to create positive connection between mentor and student(s) to support student success in school
- ✓ Example of programs: MENTOR, Peer Group Connections, Success Mentor
- ✓ Virtual options for different age groups, <https://www.mentoring.org/virtual-mentoring-portals/>

Resources for Intentional Relationship-Building

- How to Guide Relationship Mapping guide
<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy>
- 2x10 Relationship Strategy Bank
https://www.scoe.net/media/e4olyjr/sesion_2_relationship_strategy_bank.pdf
- Edutopia – Relationship Building from Day 1
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/relationship-building-day-1>
- Search Institute - Relationships Framework <https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Strategies and Tools to Communicate About Attendance



Forging Partnerships with Families to Support Engagement and Attendance

- ✓ Engage in two-way, supportive communications about attendance and engagement throughout the school year
- ✓ Provide tailored, personalized and caring messages to students and families who are chronically absent
- ✓ Offer actionable steps to improve attendance
- ✓ Make sure families receive updated health guidance, resources to meet basic needs as well as support for learning at home



Utilize Research about Effective Attendance Messaging to Improve Your Communications

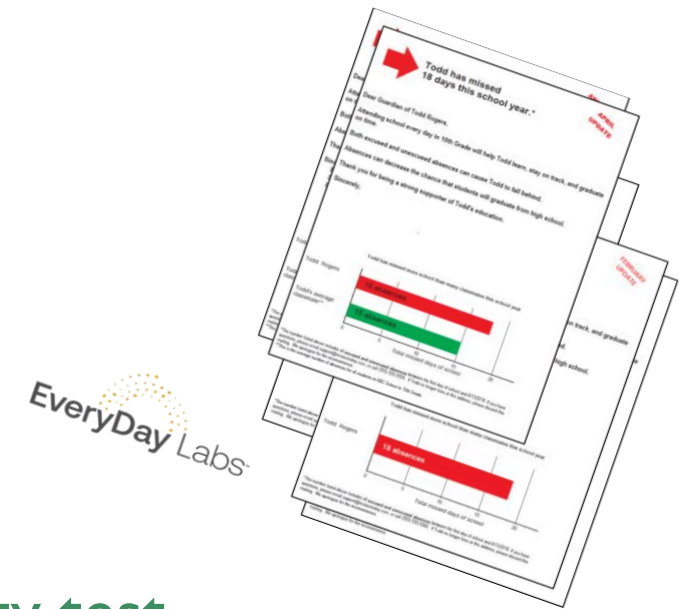
1. Readable

- Fewer words
- Accessibility: Flesch-Kincaid readability test
- Skimmability: bullets, format reinforces message

2. Programmatic

- Planned (*personalized to audience*)
- Timely
- Routinized

3. Easy to locate and multiple modes





Treasure Hunt!

Go to the Attendance Works website, www.attendanceworks.org and find:

- ☐ Handouts for Families (hint: there more than one!)
- ☐ Back-to-School Letter
- ☐ Student Attendance Success Plans and Help Bank
- ☐ Early Matters toolkit
- ☐ Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L. toolkit
- ☐ Health Handouts
- ☐ Messaging resources for Holidays, Winter, Spring
- ☐ Attendance Awareness Campaign sign-up form





Developing a Communications Plan

Identify Your Audience:

- Students
- Families/caregivers
- Teachers
- Community partners

- ✓ What does each group need to know?
- ✓ What do you want them to do?
- ✓ How will you communicate it?

Communications Tips: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/transition-guide/communication-tips-for-your-transition-attendance-plan/>


Strategies for Connecting with Students & Families: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategies-for-Connecting-with-Students-and-Families-rev-8-27-20.pdf>

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

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES for K-12: rev. 3-28-23



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 post-it notes to add activities as a group exercise. See the 3 Tiers of Intervention (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>)

Timing	Summer (July/August)	Welcome Back (August/September)	Ongoing (Weekly)	Fall Semester (October – November)	Winter Semester (December – February)	Spring Semester (March-April)	End-of-Year (May/June)
School Team	Establish school team to address attendance. Develop a yearly attendance plan and goals. Agree on metrics to monitor for in-person and distance learning. Utilize start of school year PD days for teachers and school staff to discuss yearly plan and whole school strategies.	Conduct team meeting by the second week of school.	Hold team meetings.	Review early warning data . Ensure staff are prepared to discuss attendance in a caring manner in parent-teacher conferences, attendance improvement meetings, outreach calls and home visits.	Revisit data to measure progress and revise school-wide strategies as needed. Expand team as needed to address reasons for absence.	Ensure staff are prepared to discuss attendance in parent-teacher conferences. Assess strategies and write school improvement plan.	Review data. Share data with student's next teacher for smooth transitions and trouble shooting.
Foundational Whole School Supports	Plan welcoming traditions for incoming early grades, transition grades and new students and their families. Ensure there is attention paid to students with disabilities and other student groups with historically high levels of absenteeism.	Disseminate in-person health and safety protocols. Promote immunization activities. Establish good and improved attendance recognition schedule/process. Conduct welcoming traditions for students and families.	Coordinate with other school leaders to promote and maintain a positive school climate.	Provide a warm welcome for students who start later in the school year. Offer afterschool programs with engaging and culturally responsive curricula.	Create opportunities for students, families and staff to recharge physically and emotionally. Increase the sense of belonging for specific student groups through clubs, history months and celebrations.	Boost excitement in learning – celebrate and event such as Earth Day.	Plan end-of-year traditions including opportunities for service, e.g. students in upper grades lead tours for students entering the school next fall.
Tier I (Universal)	Promote attendance messaging during registration/enrollment. Have home visits/phone calls to build relationship and remind families about the first day of school.	Share back-to-school messaging about the importance of attendance for in-person and distance learning.	Ask staff to establish daily, weekly and monthly routines to build relationships in the classroom and welcome students back after absences. Hold weekly/monthly recognition. Ensure positive, regular communication with	During parent-teacher conference , recognize good attendance and express concerns in a supportive manner if needed. Anticipate and plan activities/supports to minimize dips in attendance during holidays. Conduct a resource fair for students and their families.	Share messaging and engaging activities around winter holidays . Use data to identify attendance dips and align events to mitigate low attendance days. Schedule mid-year activities to remind school community about attendance.	Hold parent-teacher conference student attendance check-in. Plan engaging activities and messaging to avoid the spring slump.	Communicate the importance of student attendance in last weeks of school. Acknowledge attendance successes.

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



Attendance Awareness Campaign 2024 Webinar Series

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



Webinar 1 On the Front Line of Attendance and Engagement: The Crucial Role of Teachers, Wednesday, April 3: 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 2 Essential Partnerships for Showing Up to School: Families, Youth and Community Wednesday, May 15, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 3 Creating a Culture of Belonging and Engagement: Principals in Action Wednesday, August 7, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Webinar 4 Leadership for Sustainability: Superintendents Making a Difference Wednesday, September 25, 12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET



Key Resource: Attendance Awareness Website



- ✓ Download our free social media materials and share with local districts
- ✓ Proclaim September Attendance Awareness Month building off our sample proclamation
- ✓ Join our listserv: 44,000+ members

Sign-up for updates:

www.awareness.attendanceworks.org



SEAC Kindergarten Webinar

The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and the Student Engagement and Attendance Center (SEAC) are pleased to invite you to join *Promoting Attendance Early: Absenteeism in Kindergarten and the Early Grades*, a virtual learning series for State education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs) and partners involved in early grade and kindergarten attendance.

- ❖ [Learn more and read the letter from the Office of Elementary & Secondary Education](#)
- ❖ [Register by Friday, April 19, 2024](#)

Session Dates:

- Apr 24, 2024
- May 1, 2024
- May 8, 2024

For questions and more information, contact the SEAC at seacenter@westat.com



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 8, 2024

Dear Chief State School Officer:

The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and the [Student Engagement and Attendance Center](#) (SEAC) are pleased to invite you to join *Promoting Attendance Early: Absenteeism in Kindergarten and the Early Grades*, a virtual learning series for State education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs) and partners involved in early grade and kindergarten attendance.

This learning series will provide participants with an opportunity to:

- Learn about the impacts of chronic absenteeism in kindergarten;
- Explore the current landscape, including the availability of data and root causes, of chronic absenteeism in kindergarten and early grades;
- Discuss how disparities in kindergarten attendance are impacting special populations such as students without Pre-K experience, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Each of the three virtual meetings is designed to help SEA teams to learn from their peers, hear from subject matter experts, develop next steps to apply what they learn, and provide ample opportunities for small group discussions. This learning series is part of a year-long focus on [Building Systemic Supports for Better Attendance](#), which will include future series on other topics related to addressing chronic absenteeism.

Content and Logistics

Content: The *Promoting Attendance Early: Absenteeism in Kindergarten and the Early Grades* learning series is comprised of three sixty-minute virtual meetings. The first session will feature presentations by the Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning, Swati Adarkar, and [Attendance Works](#) and explore national trends in kindergarten absenteeism and the impact of kindergarten absence on long-term student success. The second session will explore root causes and how to strengthen kindergarten attendance supports for special populations such as students without Pre-K experience, English learners, and students with disabilities. The third session will showcase a panel of federal, SEA, and LEA partners to identify priorities and effective strategies that promote Kindergarten attendance.

Who should attend? SEAs can select three to five staff to participate as a team. Additionally, each SEA can invite up to five additional participants from LEAs, technical assistance intermediaries, or other organizations involved in early grade/ kindergarten attendance who will benefit from the series. It is strongly encouraged that a lead from each state coordinate team

Arizona Resources



- [The 74](#)
- [Education Forward Power Hour](#)
- [KTAR News Report](#)
- [Flagstaff Unified School District](#)



Learning Goals for Session 1

Participants will:

- Draw on whole school strategies to create
 - positive conditions for learning and
 - strong relationships with students and families that prevent absenteeism
- Understand what chronic absence is and why it matters
- Be introduced to the framework of multi-tiered attendance strategies that moves schools towards prevention and early intervention
- Learn effective strategies to communicate with families about attendance



Evaluation Survey

Please let us know how we can improve:

https://app.upmetrics.com/data_collector/ckf2oltbqlt8k0759tfdbfybj

Thank you!



Questions from the Audience





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About Us

Attendance Works advances student success and closes equity gaps 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

Resources

Toolkit: Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L.

It is an opportunity to...

✓ Build **Routines**

Daily attendance routines can reduce stress and create a sense of safety and security especially after chaotic transitions.

✓ Increase **Engagement**

Being in school helps build relationships with peers and school staff that nurture engagement.

✓ Provide **Access to resources**

Schools provide access to meals, health and mental health services, tutoring, mentoring, technology, extracurriculars (sports, clubs, music, etc.), afterschool and summer programs.

✓ Support **Learning**

Showing up to school regularly helps students become proficient in reading and math and graduate from high school.

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/showing-up-matters-for-real/>

Better Truancy Notifications

- ✓ Started with positive language and moved punitive language to the end
- ✓ Fewer words
- ✓ Written at 5th grade reading level
- ✓ Formatted to help readers skim
- ✓ Makes connection between absences and achievement

We need your help. [STUDENT NAME]'s absences from school are concerning, and your partnership is critical. Students who miss just one or two days of school each month can fall seriously behind.

[STUDENT NAME] is now "truant" because [SHE/HE] missed school (or was more than 30 minutes late) without a valid excuse on:

Thursday, September 12, 2015

Thursday, September 19, 2015

Thursday, September 27, 2015

Being absent can lead to doing poorly in school. Students who miss many days of school are more likely to:

- Fail their classes
- Drop out from high school
- Have poor relationships with parents and teachers

We are required by [STATE] law to send you this letter and to warn you of the consequences of additional unexcused absences (see sidebar).

Please remember that every absence matters and just a couple days each month adds up. **You are key** to improving [STUDENT NAME]'s attendance.

Sincerely,
Principal X

Help Kids Stay Healthy!

Keep Your Child Healthy and in School!

A regular attendance routine is important for your child's well-being, learning and long-term success. Below are tips to keep your child healthy and avoid unnecessary absences from school.

Nutrition, Sleep and Exercise

- Ensure your child eats a good breakfast every morning or check if your school serves breakfast.
- Maintain a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Keep screens out of the bedroom and limit use prior to bedtime.
- Encourage your child to stay active for at least 60 minutes a day.



Hygiene

- Stress hand washing, particularly before eating, and after using the restroom.
- Remind your child to brush their teeth twice a day.
- Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick. Don't share cups, utensils, hair brushes or combs.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough/sneeze into an elbow.



Safety

- Make sure your child wears a seatbelt and/or appropriate car seats during car rides, and a helmet when using a bike, skateboard or scooter.
- If your child walks to school, help them find a safe route to school and to travel with at least one friend. Have a backup plan in case of bad weather.



Keep Your Child Healthy and in School!

Wellness

- Ensure your child visits their health care provider for:
 - A physical once a year.
 - All recommended Immunizations, including Flu and COVID-19.
 - Chronic health issues such as asthma or diabetes.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Try to schedule non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours.
- If your child doesn't have health or dental insurance, reach out to your school's nurse or social worker or other staff member to help connect you with resources.
- Complete your school's annual health form.
- Agree to allow your child to participate in health and vision screenings offered at school.
- If your child has a chronic health issue such as asthma, make sure that your child's health care provider completes appropriate school forms that allow your child to keep/carry any necessary medications at school.
- If your child has a disability, work closely with the school and your child's health care provider to ensure appropriate supports and services.
- If you are concerned that your child may have a contagious illness (including COVID-19), call your child's health care provider or school nurse for advice.
- If your child needs to stay home for a prolonged period due to illness, talk to your child's teacher to find out about resources they can use at home to keep learning once they feel well enough.



Engagement

- Make sure your child feels safe and connected at school. Involve them in afterschool activities.
- If you are worried that your child may be suffering from anxiety, talk with your teacher, the school nurse, social worker or other school staff to discuss the challenge and identify what can help your child. If your child is missing class because of challenges with behavioral issues, contact the school and/or your child's health care provider for support and resources.
- Ask the school about health-related policies including about COVID-19.
- Monitor your child's attendance and academic progress and seek support when needed.



Health Guidance for Going to School



Health Guidance for Going to School

Showing up to school every day is critical for children's well-being, engagement and learning.

Make sure to send children to school if they are:

- Generally healthy and well.
- Participating in usual day-to-day activities.
- Children can even go to school if they:
 - Have a mild cold, which may include a runny nose and/or cough.
 - Have eye drainage without fever, eye pain or eyelid redness.
 - Have a mild stomachache.
 - Have a mild rash with no other symptoms.
 - Have head lice. Though they are annoying and should be treated, lice are not a reason to exclude a child from school.
 - Haven't had a fever overnight and they have not taken fever-reducing medicine during that time.

Avoid keeping children at home unless they are too sick to participate. Please see the back of this handout for details. Note that in most situations, a health-care provider's note is not needed to return.

Children may also avoid school due to anxiety (symptoms may include decreased appetite, feeling tired, stomachache, headache etc). If you are worried that your child may be suffering from anxiety, talk with your teacher, the school nurse, social worker or other school staff to discuss the challenge and identify what can help your child stay in school.

If your child has a compromised immune system or is at high risk for complications from common illnesses, please talk to your school (school nurse if available) about developing a plan with you and your child's health-care provider to keep your child healthy and safe while attending school.

Please note: This document is not meant to take the place of local health department/school district guidance including about contagious illnesses such as Covid-19 and the flu.



Reasons to keep me home from school and what needs to happen before I can return

What is my symptom?	When should I stay home and when to seek medical care?	When can I return to school?
Fever	I have a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. Seek medical care if I have fever and any of the following: ear pain, sore throat, rash, stomachache, headache or tooth pain.	If I have not had a fever overnight without the use of fever-reducing medication and I am feeling better.
Vomiting and/or diarrhea	If I have vomited 2 or more times in the last 24 hours. If my stool is watery and I may not make it to the toilet in time. Seek medical care if I have stomach cramping and fever, I have bloody or black stool, or I am showing signs of dehydration (tired and sleepy, dry mouth and not urinating at least once in the last 8 hours).	If I did not vomit overnight and I am able to drink liquids without throwing up. If my diarrhea has improved.
Persistent cough or trouble breathing	Seek medical care if I have a persistent cough, difficulty breathing or trouble catching my breath or if I develop a fever with the cough. These symptoms may be signs of Covid-19 or flu and should be evaluated by a health-care provider.	Once I am feeling better and I have been cleared for return by my health-care provider. If my symptoms were due to asthma, please make sure that I have permission to use breathing medication at school.
Rash	Seek medical care if the rash has blisters, is draining, is painful, looks like bruises and/or if I develop a fever.	Rash has healed or I have been cleared for return by my health-care provider.
Eye irritation	Seek medical care if I have eye swelling, eye pain, trouble seeing or an eye injury.	Once I am feeling better.
Sore throat	Seek medical care if I have drooling, trouble swallowing or a fever and/or rash.	Once I am feeling better. If I was prescribed an antibiotic by my health-care provider, then I can return 12 hours after the first dose, if I am without fever and I am feeling better.

If you don't know whether to send your child to school or have specific concerns regarding your child's health, contact your child's health-care provider, a local urgent care or the school nurse.



Handout about Anxiety

Is your child missing school due to anxiety?



Definition of anxiety: feeling of fear and uneasiness about everyday situations.

If your child is suffering from anxiety, you are not alone. The good news is that in most situations, anxiety is normal and temporary. Anxiety becomes a concern if it persists — it can affect relationships with family, peers and teachers, contribute to academic challenges, and lead to school avoidance/refusal. Addressing anxiety is important for a child's overall well-being, not just attendance.

In addition, if your child starts to complain of symptoms like a headache or stomachache, it is important to **quickly determine** whether this is related to anxiety or a physical illness that might require missing school. If the challenge is anxiety, staying home may worsen the situation.



What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Persistent anxiety can present in many ways, making it difficult to recognize.

Symptoms may vary depending on the age of the child, and some children may keep worries to themselves or have difficulty explaining their feelings making it hard to identify symptoms.

Anxiety symptoms can include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Feeling tired, irritable or easily tearful
- Having trouble separating from parents
- Experiencing difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Having trouble getting out of bed or dressed for school
- Lacking appetite
- Having trouble concentrating, which may lead to difficulty starting tasks, problems with homework and falling behind in school
- Experiencing physical symptoms, including stomachaches and headaches
- Avoiding activities they previously enjoyed
- Having negative or continuous thoughts that something bad is going to happen

What can families do?

Here are some tips that you can use to help your child get through these challenges, by intervening as quickly as possible, and return to school:

- Do not punish your child for refusing to go to school, as this can worsen things.
- If possible, avoid letting your child stay home. Though staying home from school may provide short-term relief for your child, continued absence from school will lead to the feeling of being disconnected from classmates and teachers, cause your child to fall behind academically and only make it harder to return.
- Speak with your child. Try to understand what's bothering them and why they are avoiding school. If you are feeling a similar anxiety, it may help to share this with your child and to explain what you are doing to get through it.
- Make it clear that you are there to help your child and that you believe they can face their fears and get through this problem.



Take advantage of school resources.

Working through your child's anxiety issues can be difficult and scary, and you shouldn't have to do it alone. Take advantage of the resources at your child's school:

- Talk with the school nurse, counselor, social worker and/or psychologist to discuss the student's challenges, identify what can help your child and develop a return-to-school plan.
- For some students, this may need to happen gradually (one or two classes initially and eventually a full day).
- In certain situations, a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program may be needed to ensure your child receives appropriate support and resources.

If symptoms persist or are very severe, your child's anxiety may be due to an underlying behavioral health disorder (i.e., anxiety disorder, panic disorder), an undiagnosed learning disability or the result of a physical or chronic health condition and should be evaluated by your child's medical provider.

Finally, remember to take care of your own physical and emotional well-being!

Resources where you can find more information on anxiety and school avoidance

[Separation Anxiety in Babies, Toddlers and School-Aged Children: Causes, Signs and What to Do](#)
[Anxiety and Depression CDC](#)
[Understanding Anxiety in Children](#)

[School Avoidance Alliance: School Avoidance 101](#)
[School Refusal: When a Child Won't Go to School](#)
[Parent Anxiety Handout - EPIC](#)
[The Ultimate Guide to Working With Your School](#)

www.attendanceworks.org

Kindergarten Transition Toolkit



Schools and Districts

- ♪ Reach out before kindergarten
- ♪ Start with a warm welcome & engagement
- ♪ Partner with families all year long
- ♪ Offer supports to reduce health-related absences
- ♪ Establish data-informed teams

Communities

- ★ Engage community partners
- ★ Organize attendance campaigns that reach families with young children

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/integrating-attendance-into-kindergarten-transition-2/>





Additional Resources from Attendance Works

Handouts for Families

- ✓ Preschool, Elementary & Secondary Grades
- ✓ Available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Creole

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families/>



Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early

DID YOU KNOW?




- Starting in preschool and kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10%, or about 2 days each month over the course of a school year, can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just one or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences and tardiness can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Eventually good attendance will be a skill that will help them succeed in high school and college.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your children to their teachers and classmates before school starts.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Keep in mind that complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home. If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors and other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- If your child must stay home due to illness, ask the teacher for resources and ideas to continue learning at home

When Do Absences Become a Problem?

	CHRONIC ABSENCE 18 or more days
	WARNING SIGNS 10 to 17 days
	SATISFACTORY 9 or fewer absences

Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

Visit Attendance Works at www.attendanceworks.org for free downloadable resources and tools!

Encourage All Students and Families to Create a Success Plan

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK

- 1. My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- 2. Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- 3. Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- 4. Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help if you ask.

1. My Family:

2. Everyday Helpers:

3. Occasional Helpers:

4. Potential Helpers:

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____

- ✓ Set attendance goals
- ✓ Make backup plans
- ✓ Track absences
- ✓ Recognize success!

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

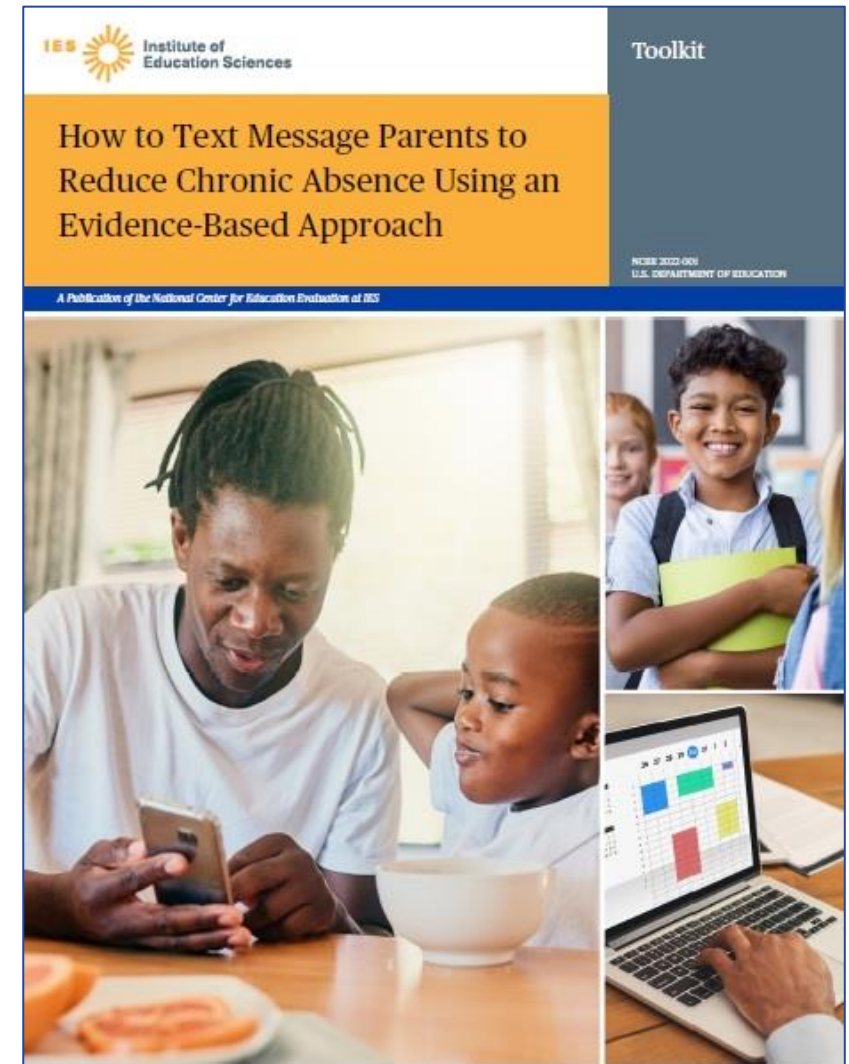
- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____.
- (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a hand-drawn drawing, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by _____ a.m. and the alarm clock is set for _____ a.m.
- If my child complains of a headache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will make him/her go to school anyway and not _____.
- so that he/she can check in with my child during the day.

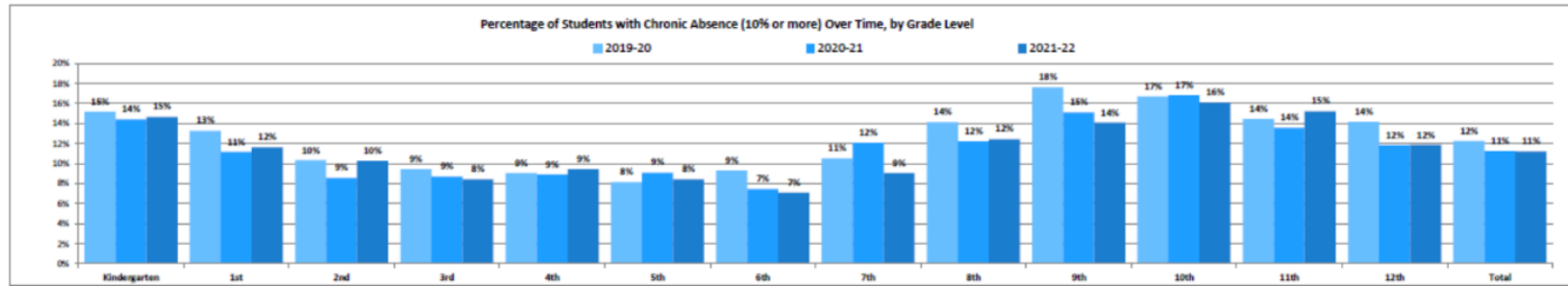
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans/>

Communicating with Families

Use these resources to help your communications with families be clear and supportive.

- ★ Letters for Families
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/>
- ★ Spring Attendance Dips
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/spring-attendance-slump/>
- ★ Strengthen Summer Learning
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/showing-up-matters-for-real/using-r-e-a-l-to-strengthen-summer-learning/>
- ★ Stay the Course: Winter Messaging
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/stay-the-course-a-winter-messaging-toolkit/>
- ★ Holiday Messaging
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/holiday-messaging/>
- ★ How to Text Message Parents to Reduce Chronic Absence Using an Evidence-Based Approach
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf>





Data Tracking Tools

What? Attendance Works District and School Attendance Tracking tools

Why? These tools will help you analyze your local data.

When? Before the new school year begins is an excellent time to examine who was chronically absent last year.

Find it here: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/data-tools/calculating-chronic-absence/>

Strategies to Address School & Community Safety

- Developmental relationships with adults, near peers, and peers through mentoring and youth programs, including civic action and service
- Partner with community-based dispute resolution organizations to create peer resolution program on campus

Positive Conditions	
Physical Safety	Emotional Safety
Psychological Safety	Identity Safety
Cultural Respect and Responsiveness	
Low-risk Learning Environment	

Resources to Address School & Community Safety

Safe transit to and from school

- [The Walking School Bus: Combining Safety, Fun and the Walk to School](#)

Implementing a trauma-informed, tiered approach

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

Focus on School Safety

- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)

Additional resources

- [Making caring common project: Relationship Mapping Strategy](#)
- [Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [The SEARCH Institute](#)
- [Building Assets, Reducing Risk \(BARR\)](#)
- [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)
- [ROCA](#)

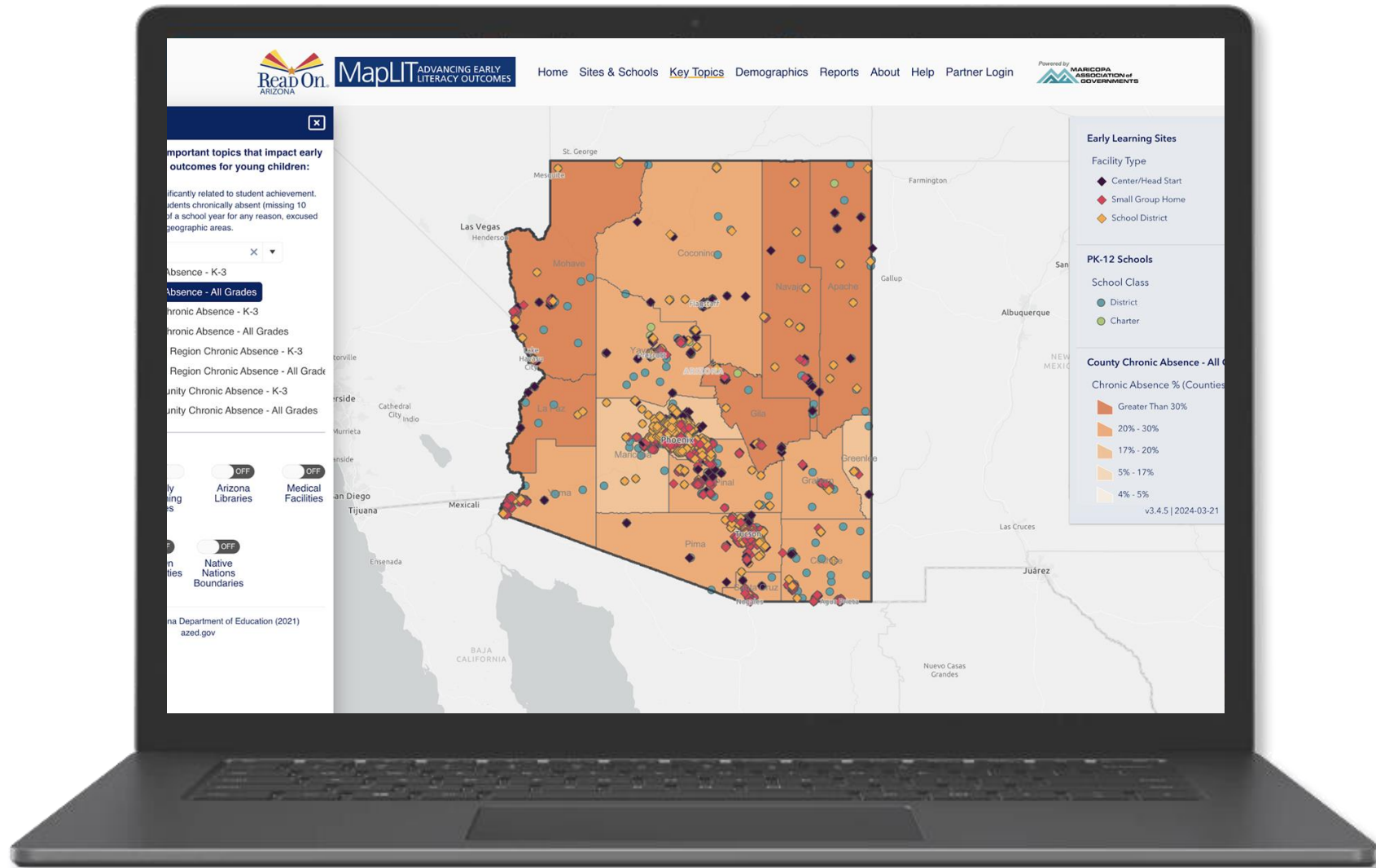
MapLIT



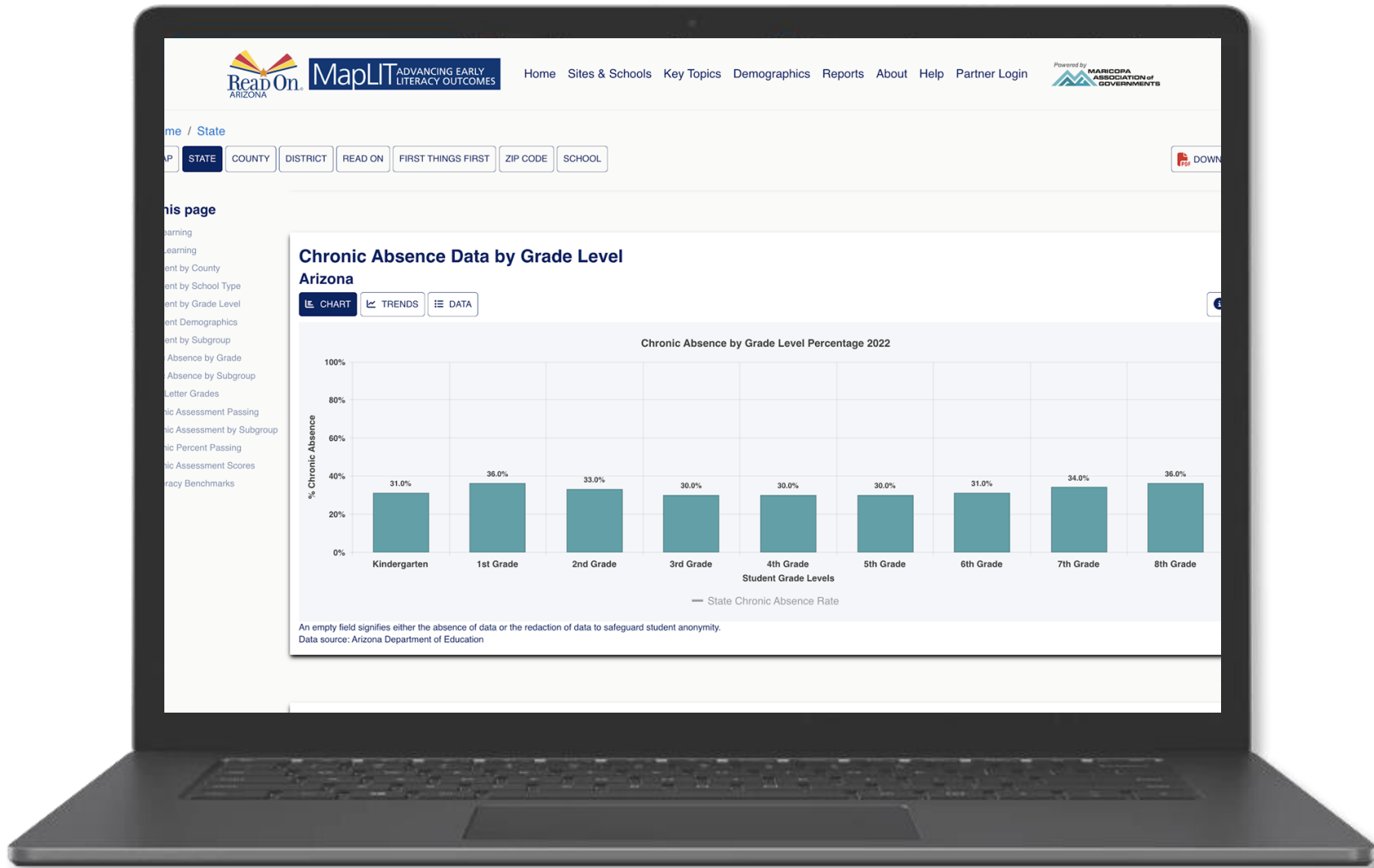
[Home](#) / [Data Tools](#) / [MapLIT](#)

MapLIT is Arizona's comprehensive data tool for interactive mapping and summary reports on key data sets that impact school readiness and early literacy outcomes in Arizona

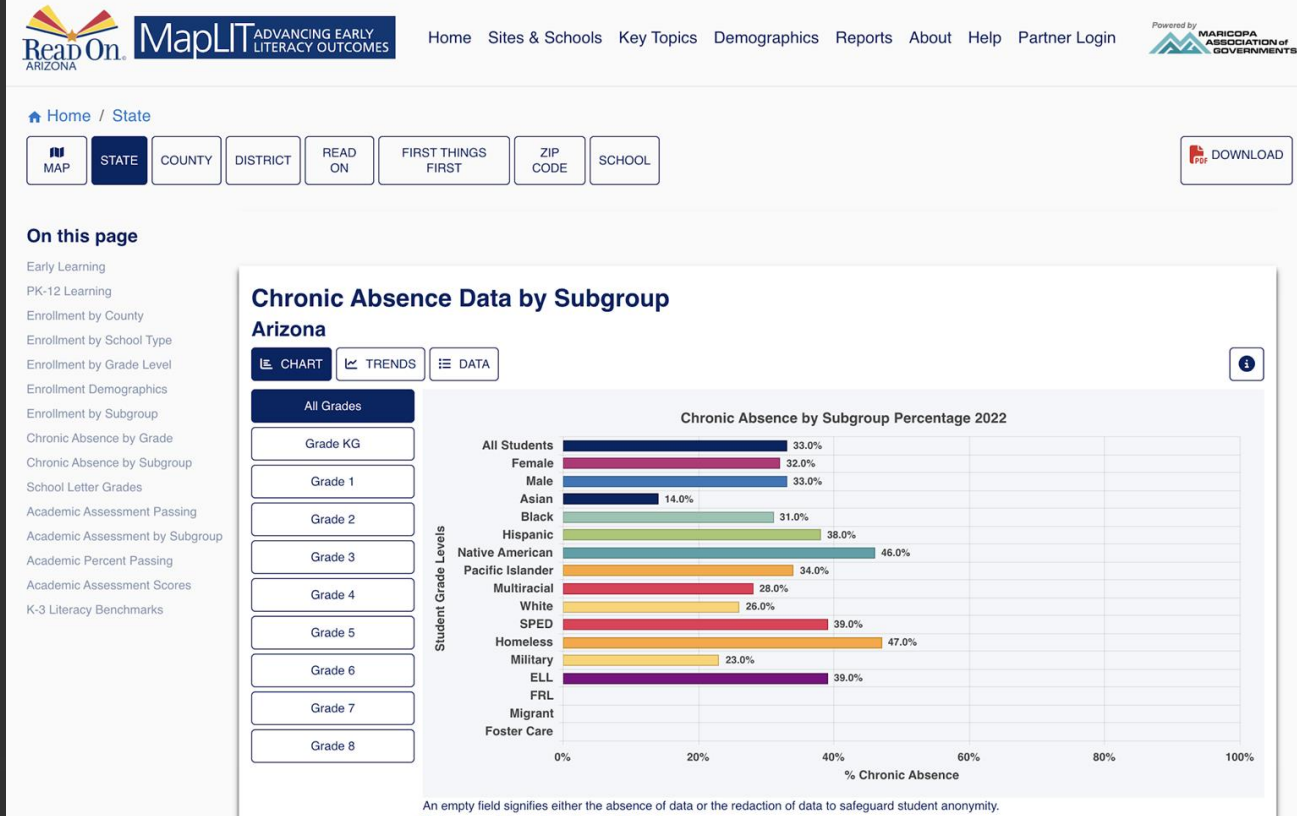
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5 Day Absence Notice

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We strive to improve the attendance of our students. Each minute of the school day provides opportunities for learning and when students miss, it is easy to fall behind academically. We must work together collectively to assure your student does not miss any more days of school.

Board policy requires us to notify parents when students reach 5 absences and then again when they reach 9 absences. **Since the start of the school year, your student has missed at least 5 days in one or more of their classes.** We are concerned that if your student continues to miss school, he/she will struggle to keep up in the classroom. Each minute of the school day provides opportunities for learning and when students miss, it is easy to fall behind academically. Also, if your student is an open enrollment student, excessive absences can put them at risk of being non-renewed for the following school year.

We do appreciate when parents call in and excuse absences for their student. However, it is important to note, that when calculating total absences in a semester, the district and state policies do not make a distinction between the types of absence; It is simply an absence, whether excused or unexcused. It is also important for your student to have all of their absences excused, as it allows them the ability to make up the work they have missed. Unexcused absences may not be given the same consideration. I have attached the [redacted] Board Policy regarding attendance for your reference.

If you would like to review your student's attendance records, please visit the [parent portal](#) or [download the app](#). If you feel there is an error in the attendance record or need help accessing it, please contact the school attendance clerk at [redacted].

This letter is merely for your information and no action is needed at this time. However, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your student's absences, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to assist you in any way possible.

Respectfully,

How would you make this letter more partnership focused?

Governing Board Policy

E-RB

REGULATION

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The right and privilege of attending public school carries with it certain responsibilities on the part of parents and students. High school attendance is ultimately the responsibility of the student and his family. It is important that parents and students recognize the direct relationships that exists between academic success and regular school attendance. Students should remain out of school only when absolutely necessary. Much classroom activity cannot be replicated; class discussion and participation is lost forever to those who are absent.

Definitions:

- **Tardy.** A student is tardy when he reports to after the late bell, but prior to one-third (1/3) of the class period expiring.
- **Absence.** A student who arrives after missing one-third (1/3) plus one (1) minute of the class is considered absent.
- **Excused absence.** An absence is excused if a parent or guardian notifies the school. The reason for the absence must be given.

Some examples of excused absences are:

- Personal illness.
- Doctor or dentist appointment that cannot be made before or after school.
- Serious family illness.
- Death in family or of a close friend.
- Important family business.
- Religious holiday.

- Checking out of school through the nurse or attendance office.

- **Unexcused absence.** Any absence that is not excused by a parent or guardian.
- **School-related absence.** If a student misses class due to a preapproved school-related activity, it will not count as an absence.
- **Suspension.** The days of suspension do not count as absences for attendance policy.

District Procedures:

- All schools will follow the same policy.
- Parents will be notified of accumulated absences, excused and unexcused, in a timely manner by the school.
- Notification of accumulated absences will occur by one of the following methods, phone call, e-mail, or written letter. The school's automated phone call will be made daily on all unexcused absences. Letters will be mailed home after the fifth (5th) and ninth (9th) total absence.
- In order for an absence to be excused, the parents must call the attendance office by the time and day specified by the school.
- Unexcused absences will be distinguished from excused absences. A list will be available daily.
- Tardies will be considered a discipline problem and handled accordingly.
- The eleventh (11th) total absence will result in loss of credit for the class, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances could include, but are not limited to, hospitalization, personal/health issues, family issues, college visits, runaways, substance abuse rehabilitation, or parental decision. An exemption to this regulation will be for students at Compadre High School, who have extenuating situations.
- The sixteenth (16th) total absence, excused or unexcused, will result in a loss of credit for the class, unless the student is on a chronic health plan.



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Recordings of the e-learning series are made available for your personal use only. Please do not share access with any other person.