



Network to Advance State Attendance Policy and Practice



INTRODUCTIONS

SHARE in the CHAT

- **Your name**
- **Agency/State**
- **What's "THE BUZZ"?**
What are some emerging policy decisions or current events that have potential to change the landscape of education in your state?

AGENDA

I. Welcome, Introductions & Survey Results (5 min)

II. Examining Disparities in Unexcused Absences Across Schools in California (25 min including Q&A)

- ❖ **Clea McNeely**, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

- ❖ **Kevin Gee**, University of California, Davis, School of Education

III. Policy Scan (10 min)

- ❖ Hear about the key elements in Attendance Works' third scan of state policy and practice and how to review the information for your state.

IV. Attendance Awareness Campaign (15 min, including Q&A)

- ❖ Learn about the plans for the 2023 Attendance Awareness Campaign and opportunities for state agencies to participate.

V. Evaluation (5 min)

***Highest Priority Items of Interest Listed
in the NASAPP Survey***

Top Three Selections on the Survey

Cross collaboration within an education state agency to address chronic absenteeism

19%

Alternative methods to truancy

15%

Statewide communication strategies and resources used to support districts

11%

Disparities in Unexcused Absences in California

Feb/March 2023

(Do not distribute without permission. Forthcoming from PACE)

By Clea McNeely, Hedy N. Chang, and Kevin Gee with Joshua Childs,
Cecelia Leong, and Janet Rosenbaum

Consider This

Two students are sick. Both miss 5 days of school.

One student has a family physician and parents familiar with school policies. This student returns to school with a doctor's note, and their five absences are excused.

The other student's family cannot afford to see a doctor. This second student returns to school without a doctor's note, and their five absences are unexcused. The family receives a letter that their child is truant and that they may be taken to court if the absenteeism continues.

Does This Scenario Happen in Your State?

- If so, how does that affect how your schools partner with students and families to identify and address absenteeism and support engagement in school?
- Which student populations are most affected?

The Context

- ❑ Chronic absence doubled during the pandemic, while achievement significantly declined
- ❑ Chronic absence increased most for populations already experiencing large educational inequities
- ❑ Although California has passed laws support a more problem-solving approach to truancy (e.g., cannot suspend students for truancy), unexcused absences still result in more punitive responses.

How Unexcused Label Affects School 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 extra-curricular activities
	Send notices of truancy
	If unexcused absences accumulate despite earlier outreach from schools and districts, courts can:
	Fine student and parents
	Require community service program or parenting program
	Charge parents with misdemeanor

How Unexcused Label Affects Families

If families perceive an unexcused label is unfairly applied, it can undermine trust and make it more difficult to partner with students and families to understand and address underlying attendance barriers.

This can undermine other student and family engagement strategies.

Report purpose

Call to action to leverage data to advance a more preventive, problem-solving, and equitable response to attendance.

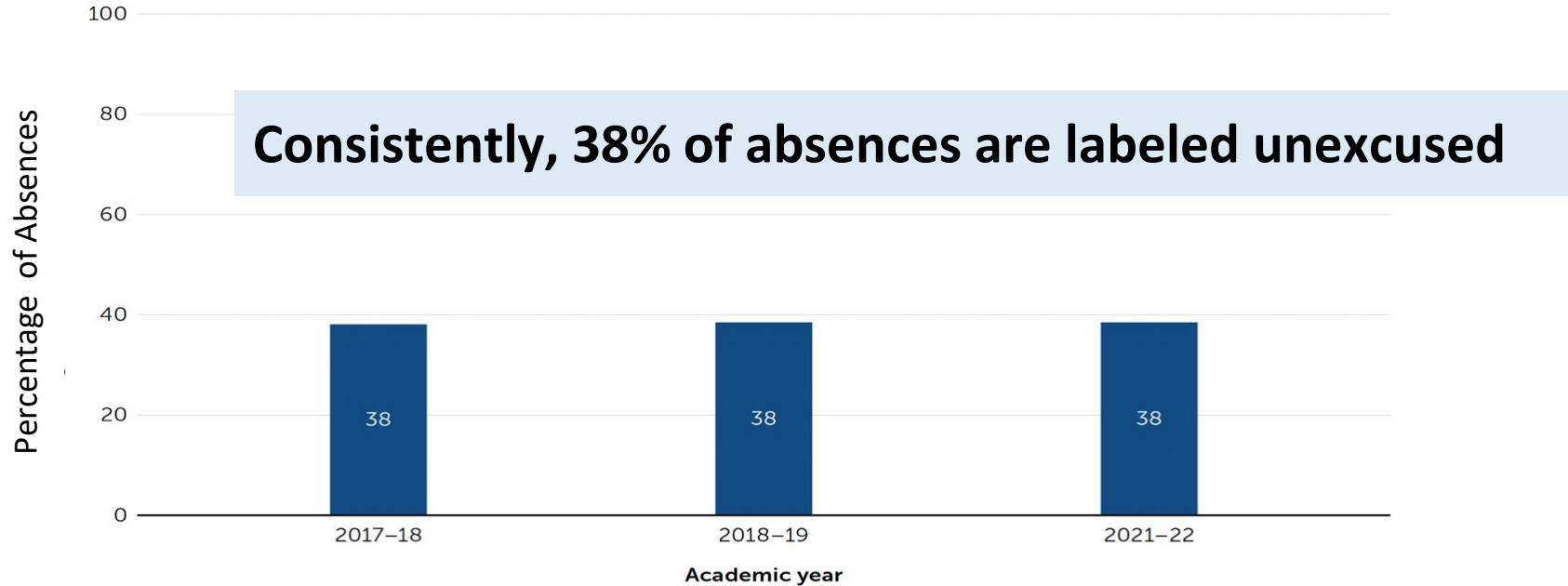
Report overview

- ❑ Reviews current truancy policies and practices
- ❑ Examines disparities in unexcused absences in California
- ❑ Offers recommendations for using data to detect and address disparate responses to truancy to advance equitable opportunities to learn.

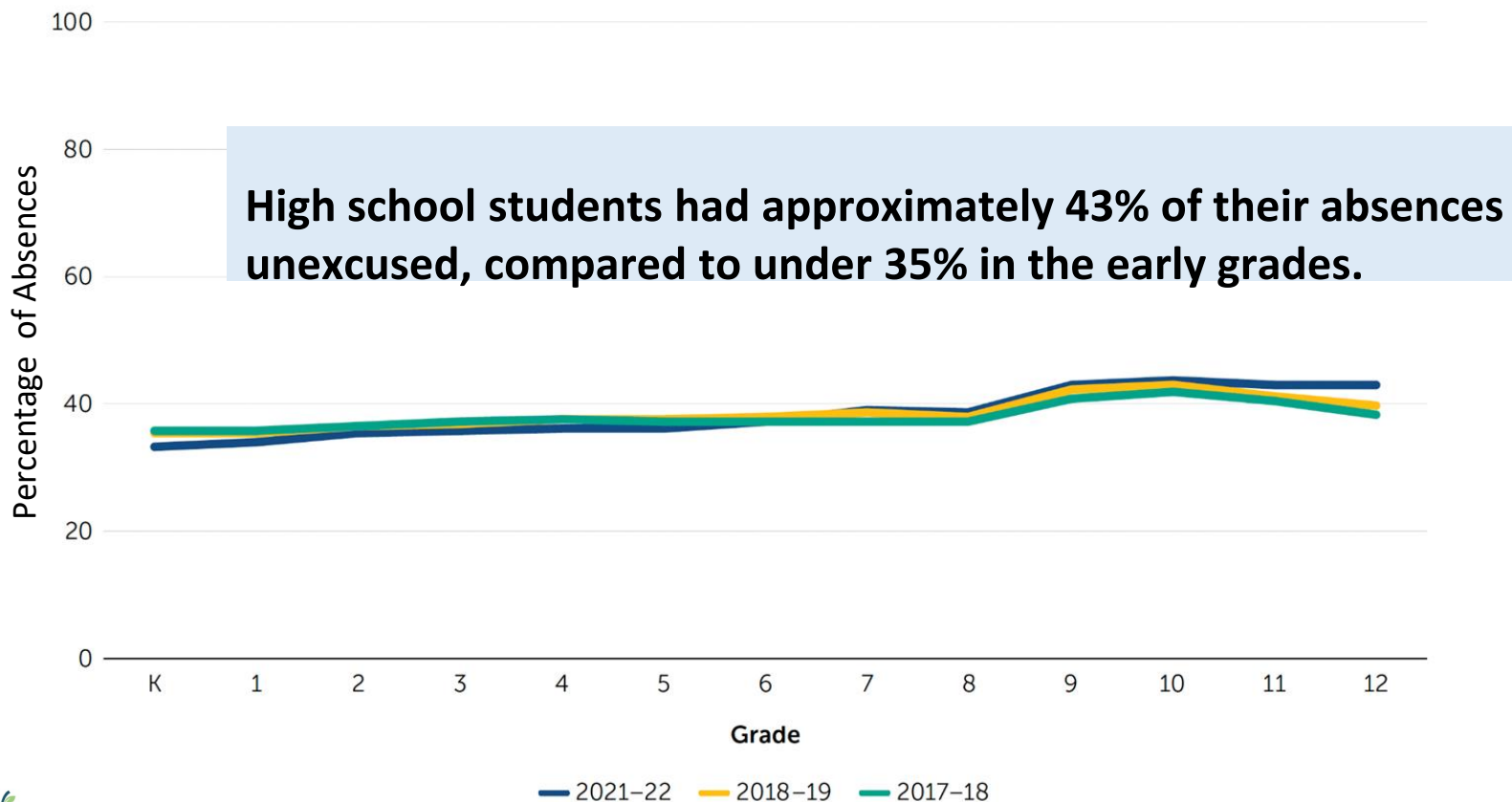
Data Sources

- California Department of Education's interactive [DataQuest](#) database and publicly available data files for SY 2017-18, SY 2018-19 and SY 2021-22.
- A scan of district and school attendance policies for a random sample of 40 middle and high schools:
 - 20 schools > 90 percent socioeconomically disadvantaged
 - 20 schools < 50% socioeconomically disadvantaged

1. What portion of absences are unexcused?



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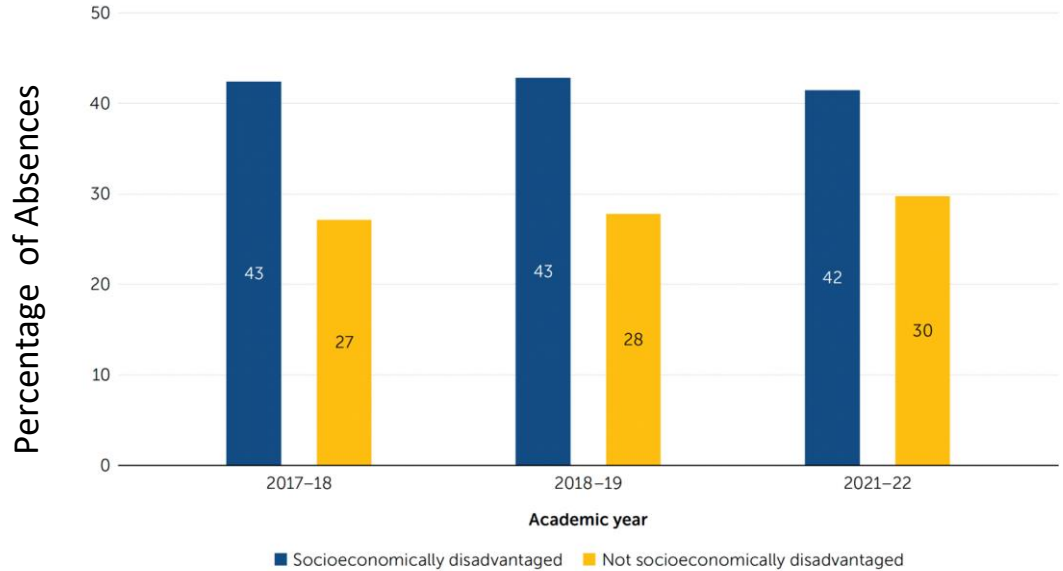


2. Do schools that apply the unexcused label more have better attendance?

Chronic absence was higher in schools that used the unexcused label more (37.5% vs. 27.7% in SY 2021-22)

3. Are there disparities?

Socioeconomic disadvantage

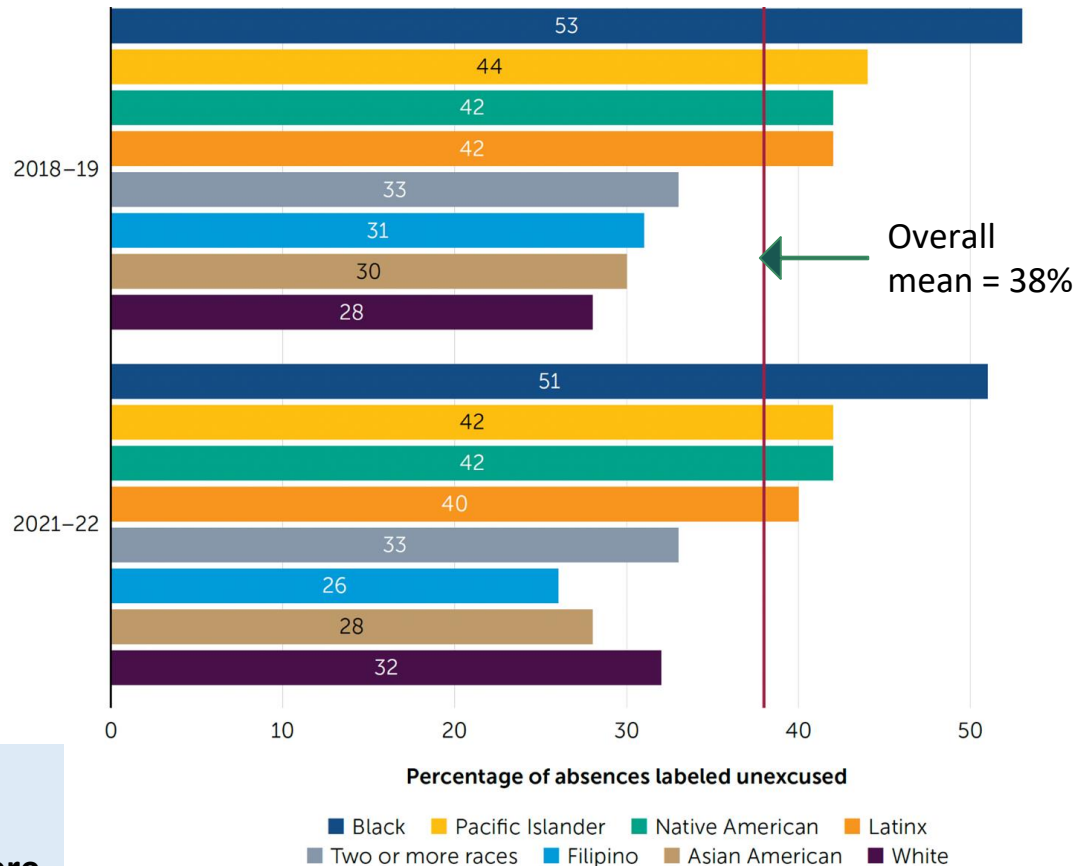


The socioeconomic disparity shrunk slightly in SY 2021-22.

3. Are there disparities?

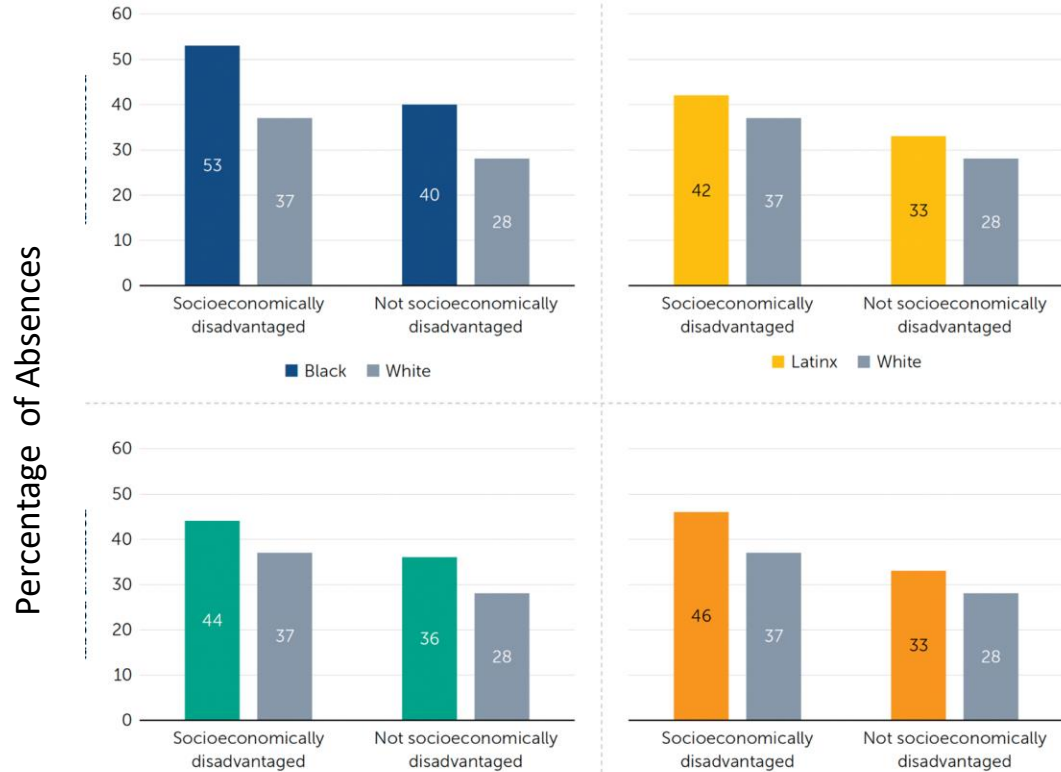
Race and ethnicity

Black, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Latinx students were most likely to have any given absence labeled unexcused.



3. Are there disparities?

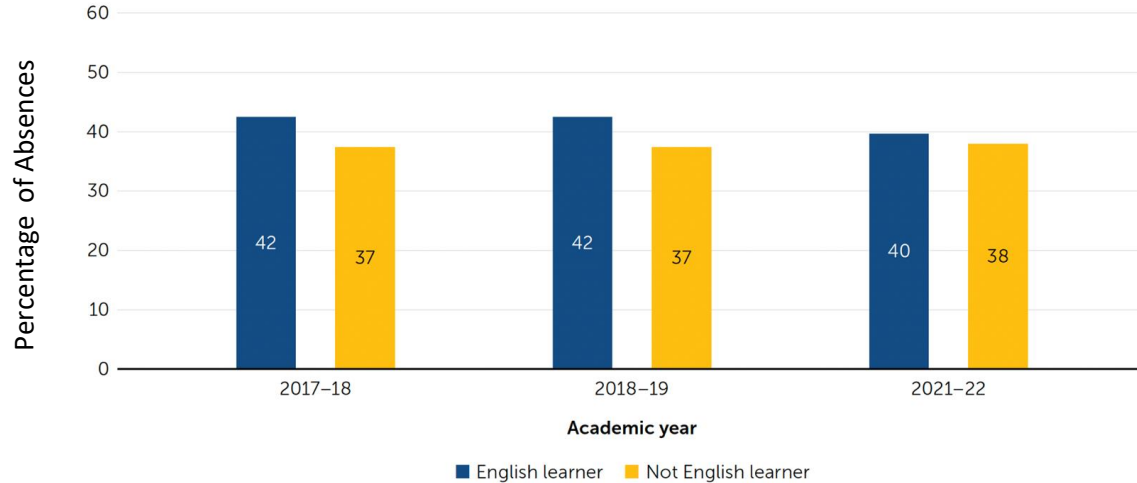
Racial and ethnic disparities were only partially due to SES



Large disparities in unexcused absenteeism persisted within each socioeconomic strata in SY 2021-22 for Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic students compared to White students.

3. Are there disparities?

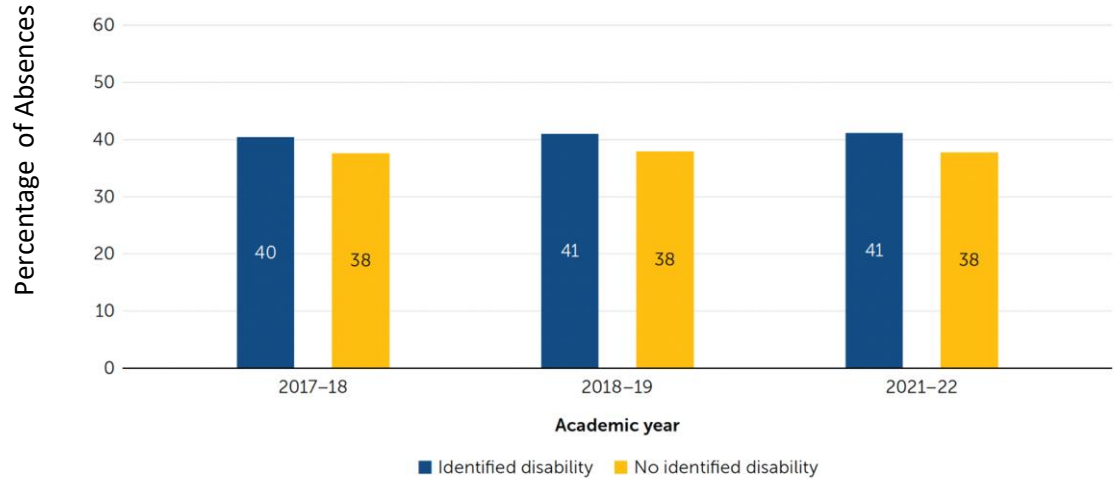
English learners



Disparities in labeling absences unexcused were relatively small for English learners compared to their peers.

3. Are there disparities?

Disability status



Disparities by disability status were also relatively small.

4. Do schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities communicate more punitive attendance policies?

Many schools' handbooks and websites did not reflect current state attendance laws. This did not vary by school socioeconomic status.

- Several schools told parents their child could be suspended for truancy.
- Only one school told parents that school staff had discretion regarding whether to label an absence unexcused.
- No schools had added mental health as a reason for excused absence (but law had just passed when review was conducted).

4. Do schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities communicate more punitive attendance policies?

The handbooks and websites of schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities were more likely to warn that these punitive actions would be taken for truancy:

- Suspend driver's license
- Take away school privileges like extracurricular activities
- Require in-school detention (or Saturday school)
- Take students and families to court

Attendance Policy

In accordance with state law, all children between 6 – 18 years of age must attend school full time until the end of the term, quarter, or semester in which they become 18 years of age, or have graduated from high school.

- Students should be on campus no later than 8:00 a.m.
- Students must attend school 85% of the school year.
- Three absences excused or unexcused will cause parents to receive a truancy letter.
- Three tardies equal one absence.
- Students with excessive absences will be referred to the School Attendance and Review Team (SART).

School Attendance is **MANDATORY**. [REDACTED] is a place where students not only learn the academic skills to prepare them for college or the world of work but the life skills needed to survive and attain success in our society. We believe that setting high goals (in the area of attendance and promptness) is very important to our student's as good habits. These skills will serve the students well on the road to self-mastery. **Every student is expected to come to school and be on time for all classes – ESPECIALLY FIRST PERIOD.**

Links

School Information Sheet

Attendance Policy

Bell Schedule

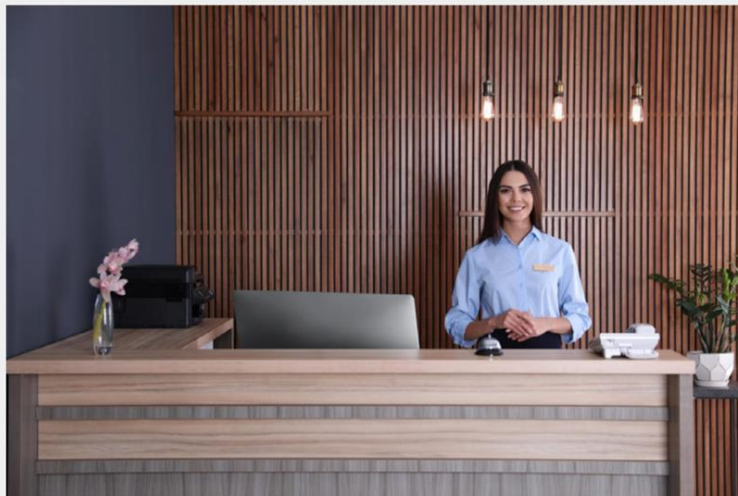
Conduct and Behavior

School-Parent Compact

Hi! How might we help you today?

Forms

- ✓ AERIES Student Information Base
- ✓ Elective Preferences (Incoming Grade 6)
- ✓ Elective Preferences (Rising Grade 7)
- ✓ Elective Preferences (Rising Grade 8)
- ✓ Yearbook Order (school code 6690)
- ✓ Aim High Summer Program Application



Call Us

Attendance Line:



Main Office Line:



Fax:



February 2023

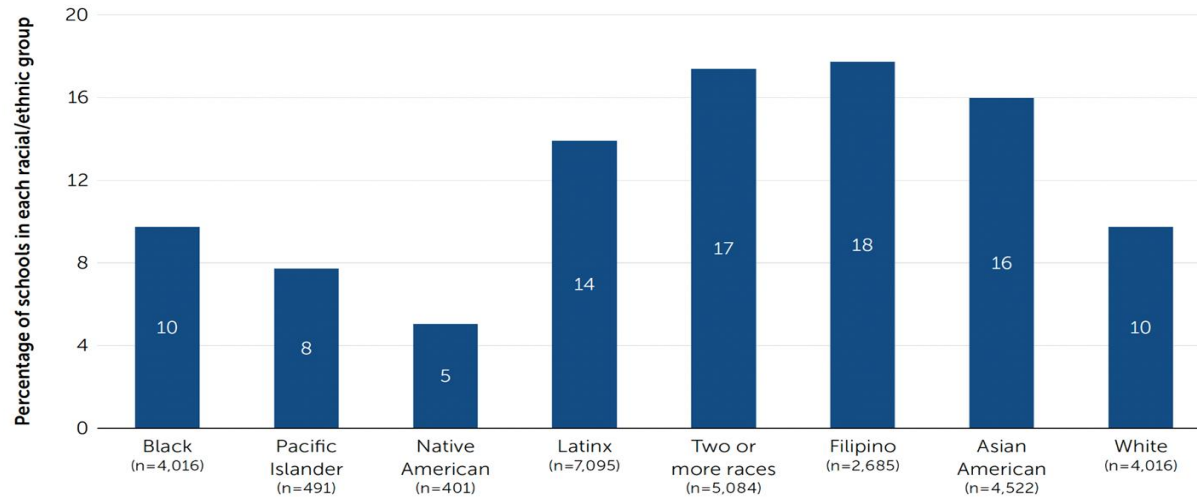
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[« Sep](#)

Notes

What would you like to see here? Let us know.

5. Are there bright spot schools with fewer disparities and higher attendance?



Criteria: (a) above-average levels of attendance (defined as fewer than 11.7 days absent); (b) below-average levels of unexcused absenteeism (below 33.8 percent); and (c) a disparity between the racial or ethnic comparison group and White students that is smaller than two-tenths of a standard deviation.

Recommendations for Action

- 1. Use data to learn about disparities and identify bright spots.**
- 2. Invest in better practices and data systems for monitoring and understanding reasons for both excused and unexcused absences.**

Recommendations for Action

- 3. Review and update local and state policies related to unexcused absences.**
- 4. Assess and improve how attendance practices and policies are communicated to students and families.**
- 5. Invest in professional development to improve attendance and truancy practices.**

Discussion

1. Questions? Reactions?

1. Are there opportunities to conduct similar research in your state?

2023 Policy Scan



GOALS OF THE 2023 POLICY BRIEF

1. Examine the extent to which states ensure data on attendance and chronic absence is consistently collected and made available to the public.
2. Find out the extent to which truancy is defined by states vs. localities and whether states collect data that would allow them to examine disparities in excused vs. unexcused absence.

POLICY BRIEF QUESTIONS

ATTENDANCE

1. Does state policy offer a definition of a day of attendance?
2. Does state policy allow for some days to be excluded?
3. Is chronic absence data published by the state online?

TRUANCY

1. Does your state define excused vs. unexcused absences and truancy at the state level?
2. Does your state collect data on how many absences are excused vs. unexcused?



We Need YOUR Help!

Timeline:

1. Chart will be e-mailed to states on March 6.
2. Please review each cell for accuracy.
3. Return via e-mail by **March 20**.

State	1. State requires taking daily attendance for in-person learning	2. State requires taking daily attendance for distance learning	3. State requires districts to submit attendance coded by learning mode	4a. Does state policy offer a definition of a day of attendance for in person learning? (No/Yes, if Yes, definition)	4b. Does state policy offer a definition of a day of attendance for distance learning? (No/Yes, if Yes, definition)
STATE OF ____	Yes	Yes	Yes	Must show up for half of the school day, or class period	Student is either present or absent

**SPECIAL
ATTENTION
NEEDED HERE**



Attendance Awareness Campaign 2023

Working Towards Collective Action



©Attendance Works



2023 AAC Theme!

Theme:
Showing Up Together!

Topics:

- Inclusivity, Belonging
- Working Together
- School is for Everyone



Convening Partners AAC 2023!



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



Attendance Awareness Campaign: *Key Strategies*

- I. **A strategic messaging and awareness-building campaign** that includes the designation of September as Attendance Awareness Month as the launch of year-long attendance campaigns

- II. **Community-level action and engagement**, especially in conjunction with Attendance Awareness Month; and

- III. **National and local-level public events**, to occur all year with an emphasis on the month of September, that garner media attention and raise public awareness

2023 WILL BE OUR 11th ANNUAL CAMPAIGN!!



AAC Goals

- a. **Expand awareness of the growing attendance crisis exacerbating achievement gaps** especially for students with few resources to make up for lost opportunities to thrive and learn in the classroom.
- b. **Promote use of chronic absence data** and other measures of engagement to to inform local and state action and allocation of resources.
- c. **Advance a whole child approach** to education and investing in positive conditions for learning that support wellness, belonging and connection for everyone in the school community.



AAC Goals

- d. **Move away from punitive and compliance-oriented approaches** to attendance because research shows it doesn't improve attendance, engagement, grades or graduation rates!
- e. **Expand the pool of people** (educators, volunteers, community allies and public agencies) working together to address student and family needs.
- f. **Increase attention to mental and physical health** challenges facing students, families, educators and staff, given how these challenges can impede learning, engagement and attendance, and emphasize opportunities for community partners and allies who can help provide support.



Key Resources

- ★ Download and share our Key Messages and free social media materials
- ★ Promote the Attendance Awareness Campaign Webinars
- ★ Proclaim September Attendance Awareness Month using our sample proclamation
- ★ Join our listserve! www.awareness.attendanceworks.org

Promote the Campaign!





2022 AAC Survey

(578 participant responses)

Resources found to be “very helpful” and “extremely helpful.”

- ✓ Webinars (74%)
- ✓ 3 Tiers of Intervention (79%)
- ✓ Translated Materials (77%)
- ✓ R.E.A.L. Toolkit (73%)
- ✓ Promo Materials (76%)
- ✓ Key Messages (77%)



2022 AAC Webinars #s from mid-October

	Web 1	Web 2	Web 3	Web 4	Total	Average
Registrations	2,552	2,878	3,896	4,562	13,888	3,472
Unique viewers	1,073	1,310	1,849	1,911	6,143	1,536
Viewed recording	1,567	874	1227	894	4,562	1,141



2023 AAC Webinars

March 30 – Belonging and Engagement: The Keys to Showing Up

May 10 – Relationships All Year Long: Nurturing Showing Up (working title)

Aug 9 – A Healthy Return to School: Ensuring Showing Up (working title)

Sept 27 – Bright Spots: Sustain Engagement and Attendance (working title)

Time: 12:00pm – 1:30pm PT / 3:00pm - 4:30 pm ET

Register: www.awareness.attendanceworks.org/resources/webinars



AAC Webinar 1



ATTENDANCE
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN
2023
Showing Up Together!

Belonging and Engagement: The Keys to Showing Up 3/30, 12-1:30 PT/ 3-4:30 ET

Join Attendance Works, the Institute for Educational Leadership and our campaign partners as we kick off the 2023 Attendance Awareness Campaign! Hear from practitioners about how we can increase attendance, engagement and a sense of belonging by drawing upon the assets that are now available in schools and communities. Speakers will share strategies for connecting students experiencing chronic absence to fun learning experiences that rekindle the joy of learning now and during the summer.

Confirmed Speakers:

- Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works
- Kwesi Rollins, Vice President, Institute for Educational Leadership
- Dr. Pam Cantor, Founder, Turnaround for Children
- Cherri Rowe, Chief Program Officer, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Dallas



Collaborating Partner Role

The 90+ collaborating partner organizations help expand participation to an even broader array of stakeholders.

Collaborating partners agree to:

1. Disseminate updates and materials
2. Generate Excitement about Attendance
3. Share success stories
4. Nurture media coverage

How many of you have promoted the Attendance Awareness Campaign?



Help Us Recruit AAC Collaborating Partners !

Questions?

Email Catherine Cooney

Catherine@attendanceworks.org

What are the benefits?

- ❖ Materials about the 4 AAC Webinar Series
- ❖ Regular AAC updates with news, research and materials.
- ❖ Easy access to resources on that can be posted on websites or including in outreach

What are the criteria?

- ❖ Statewide or national reach
- ❖ Mission related to education and reducing chronic absence
- ❖ Evidence of constituents, ability to reach out and share our information
- ❖ Non-profit or government agency



Collaborating Partners

- I. **What are your suggestions for collaborating partners in your state?**

- I. **How can we help you recruit?**
 - **Attendance Works sample recruitment letter**
 - **What else would help?**



Questions?





Evaluation

✓ Complete the Meeting Evaluation

https://app.upmetrics.com/data_collector/cklwj8q7lw9w707306xnps5vv