Session 1:

Whole School Engagement Strategies for Reducing Student Absenteeism

Welcome & Meet the Team

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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 high leverage, whole school strategies to create
  - o positive conditions for learning and
  - o strong relationships with students and families that prevent absenteeism

- Be introduced to the framework of multi-tiered attendance strategies that moves schools towards prevention and early intervention

- Learn a restorative approach to communicate with families about attendance
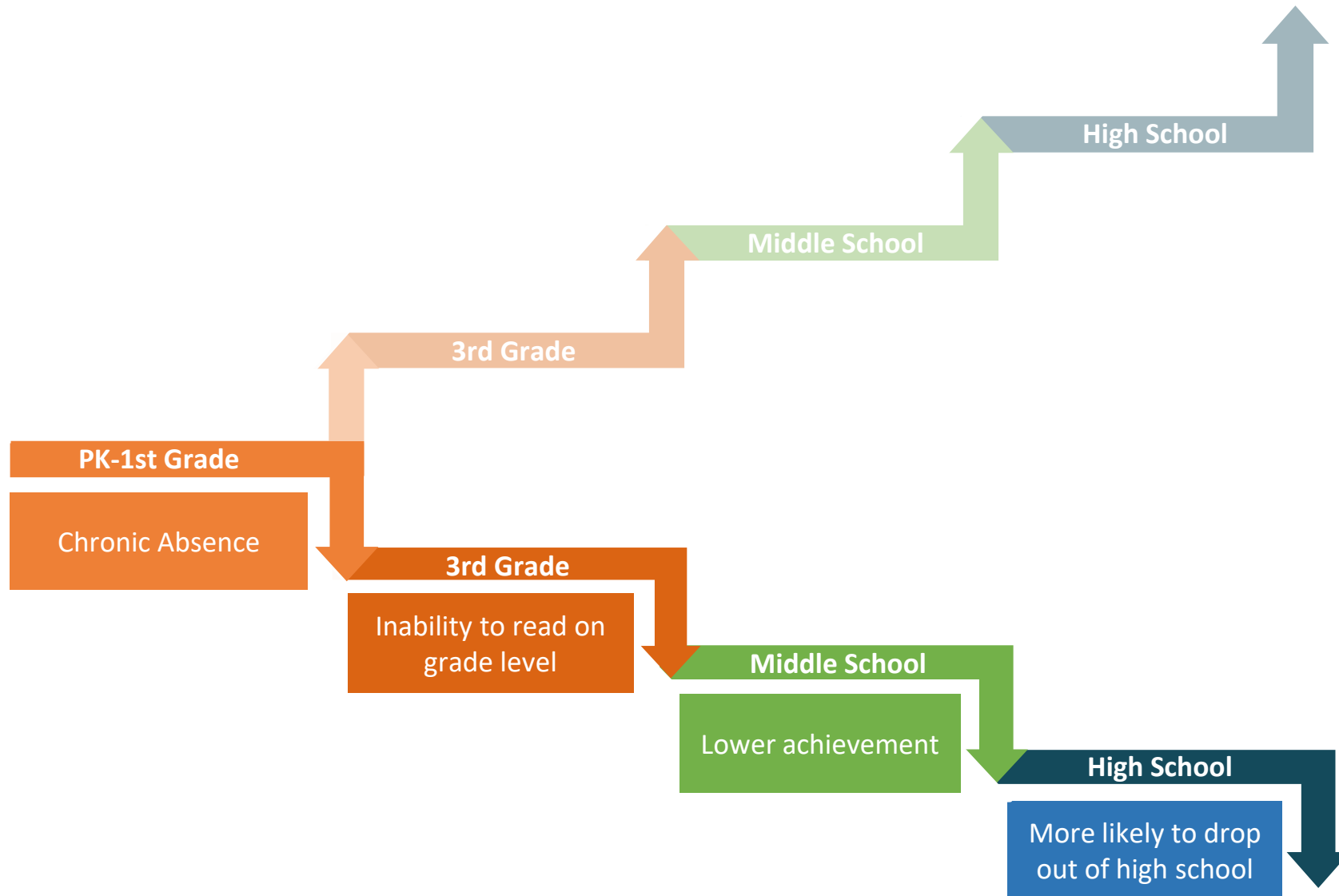
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Welcome & Introductions

Use the Chat and share:

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

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Overview of Chronic Absence

Improving Attendance Matters

High School

Middle School

3rd Grade

PK-1st Grade

Chronic Absence

3rd Grade

Inability to read on grade level

Middle School

Lower achievement

High School

More likely to drop out of high school

www.attendanceworks.org

In Baltimore City, 9th Graders who Attended School Regularly Were Significantly More Likely to Pass Core Courses
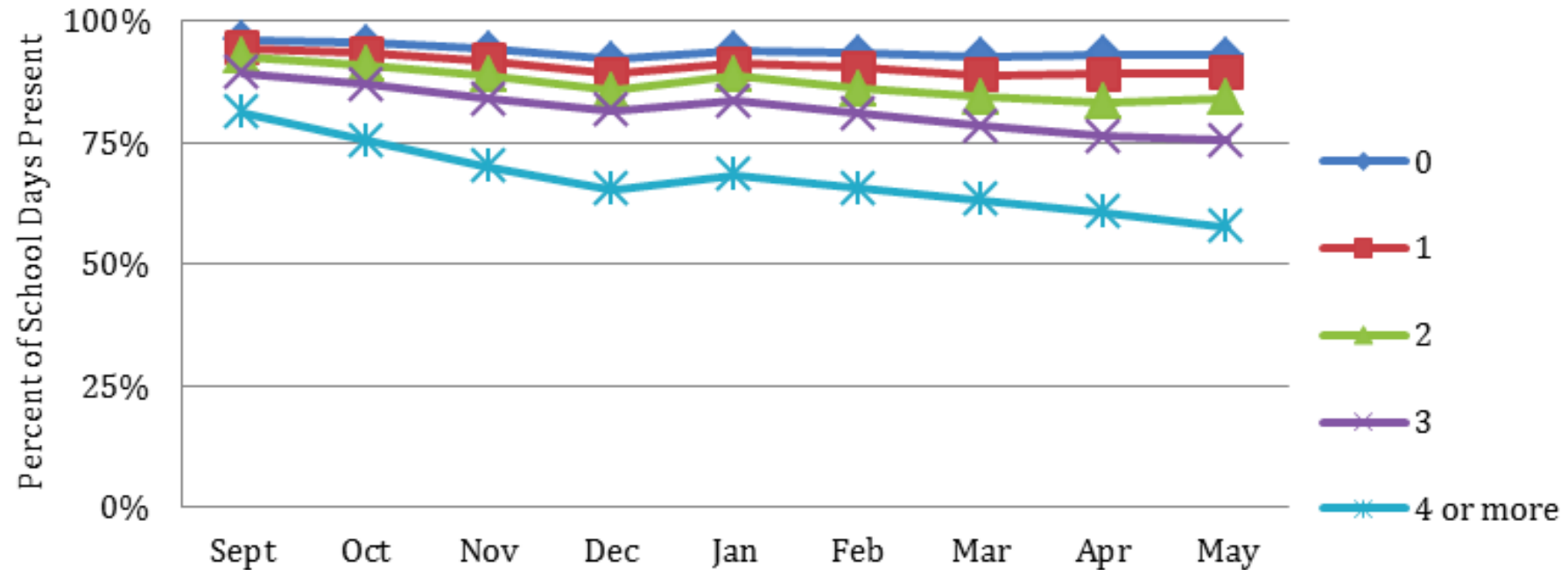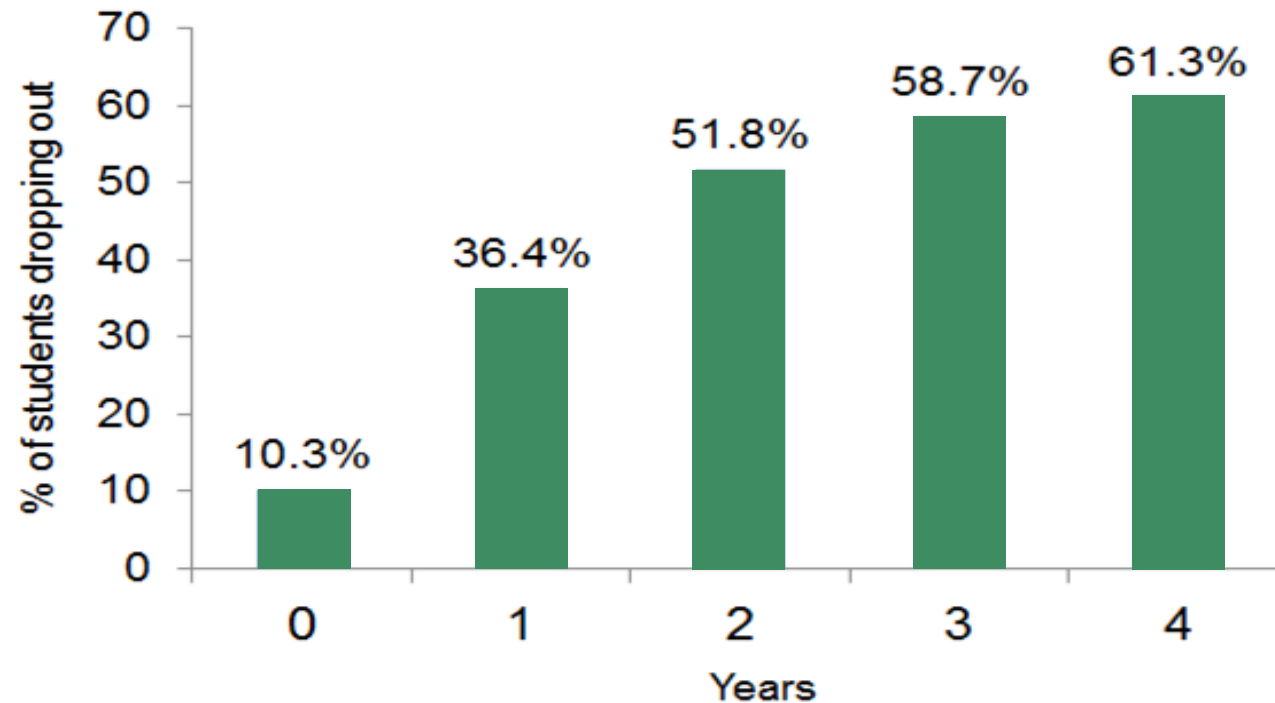

Attendance & Core Courses Pass Rates Based on Attendance

The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ Grades

Absenteeism is a *leading* indicator and a *cause* of educational inequity

Attendance by income

% of parents with children in grades K-12 indicating their child could be chronically absent

■ Pre-pandemic (% of parents reporting their student used to miss 15+ days in a full year)
■ Spring 21 (% of parents reporting their student has missed 15+ days in 20-21 school year)
■ Fall 21 (% of parents reporting their student has missed 4+ days in 21-22 school year so far)

(#) Increase from pre-pandemic to Fall 21
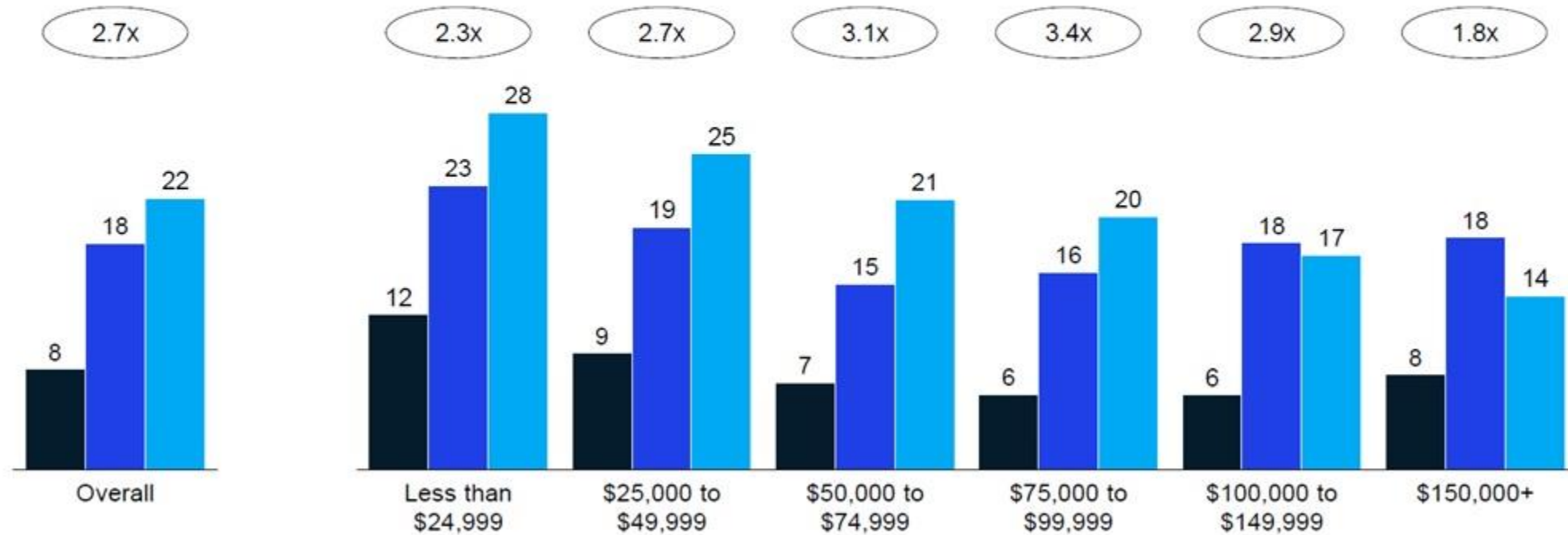
Source: McKinsey Parent Survey June 2021 (n = 16,370) and November 2021 (n = 14,498)

McKinsey & Company   20

https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-an-emerging-k-shaped-recovery

Chronic Absence Measures Lost Opportunity to Learn

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.**

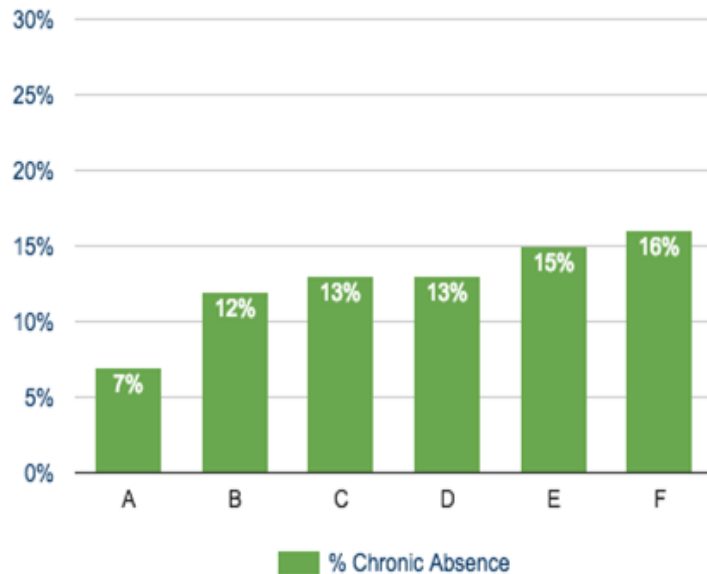Excused absences + Unexcused absences + Suspensions → **Chronic Absence**
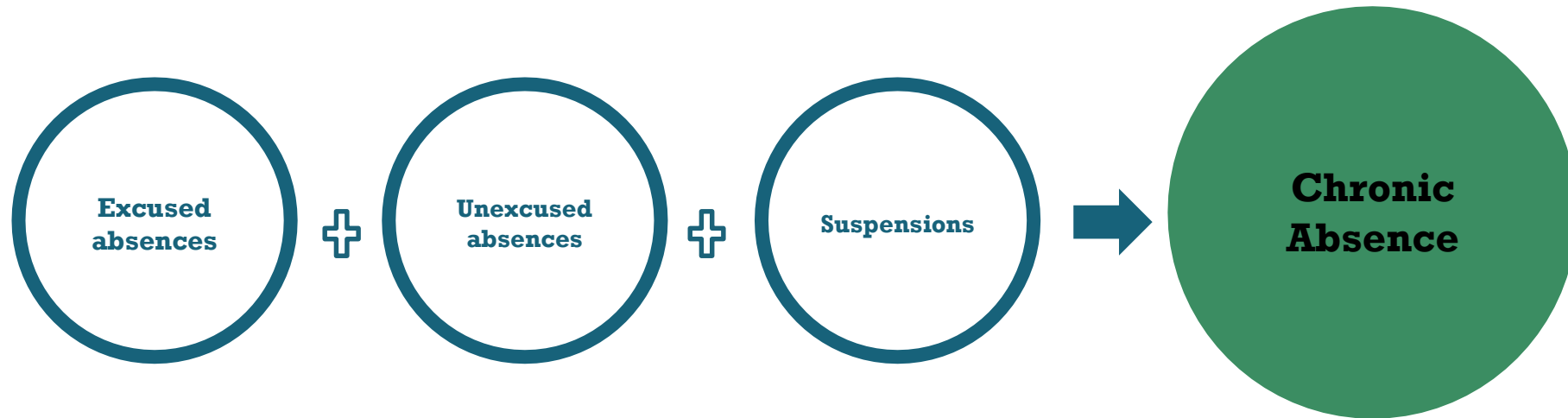
Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
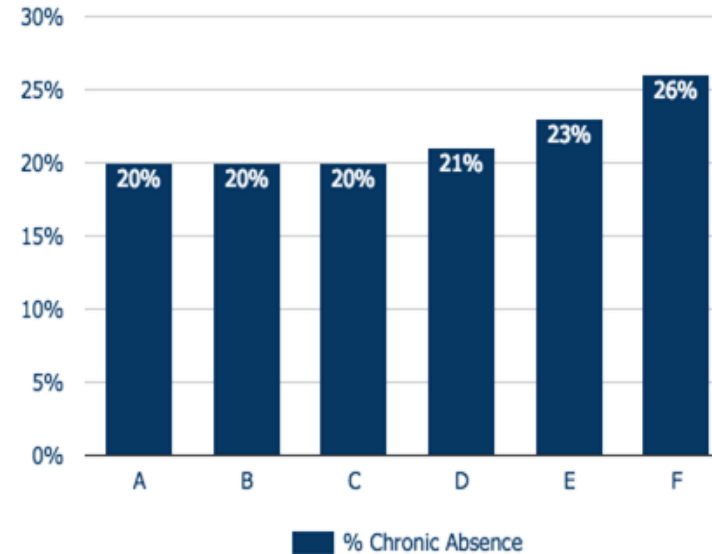
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Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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

- A: 7%
- B: 12%
- C: 13%
- D: 13%
- E: 15%
- F: 16%

% Chronic Absence

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

- A: 20%
- B: 20%
- C: 20%
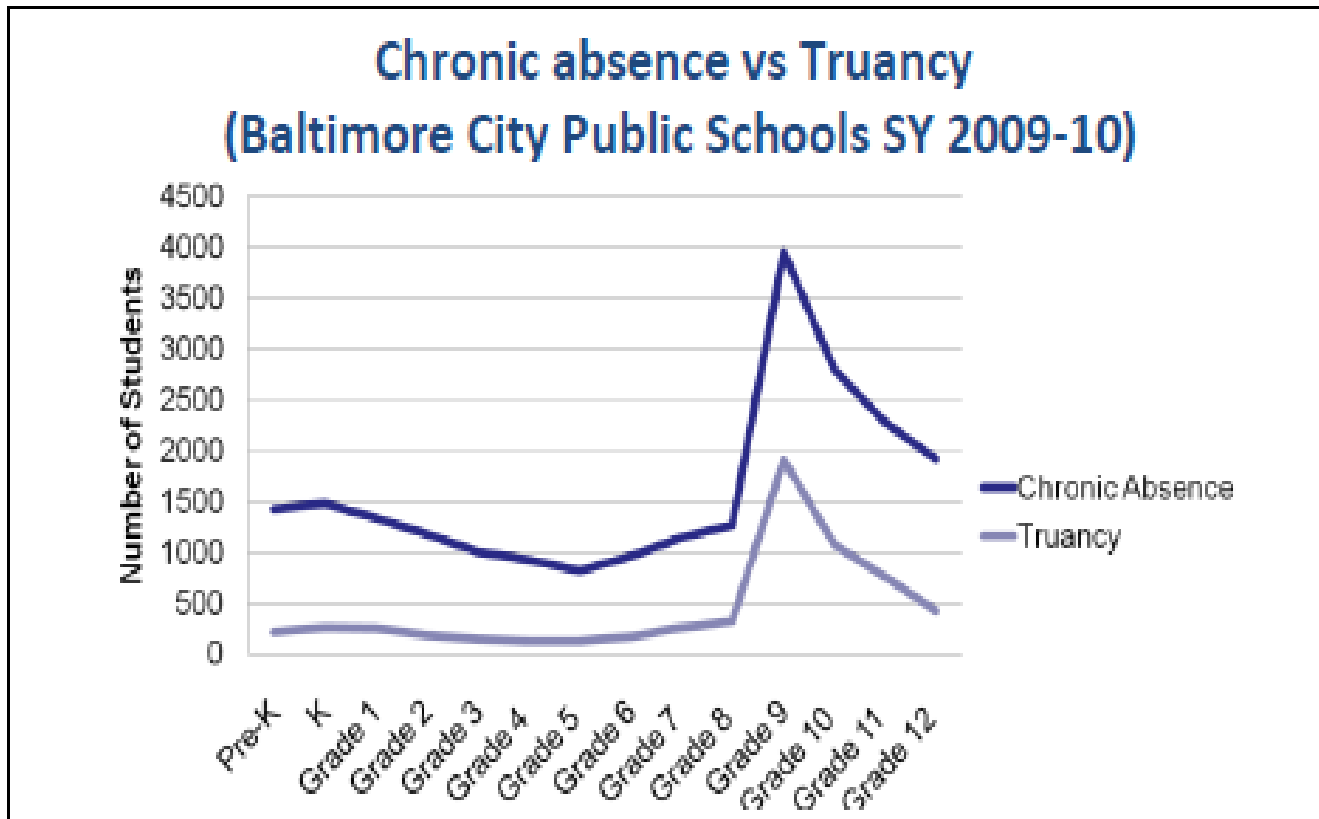- D: 21%
- E: 23%
- F: 26%

% Chronic Absence

98% ADA = little chronic absence

95% ADA = don't know

93% ADA = significant chronic absence

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Truancy *(unexcused absences)* Can Underestimate Chronic Absence

Re-Engagement &
Targeted Support

Chronic absence vs Truancy
(Baltimore City Public Schools SY 2009-10)

Note: MD defines truancy as missing 20% of the school year.

What's the Difference Between Chronic Absence vs. Truancy?

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 & suspensions)*

▪ Emphasizes impact of missed days

▪ Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies

▪ Cultivates family & student engagement

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

Effective Practice Pathway

Mindset → Actionable Data → Capacity → Strategies

www.attendanceworks.org

Chat Reflection

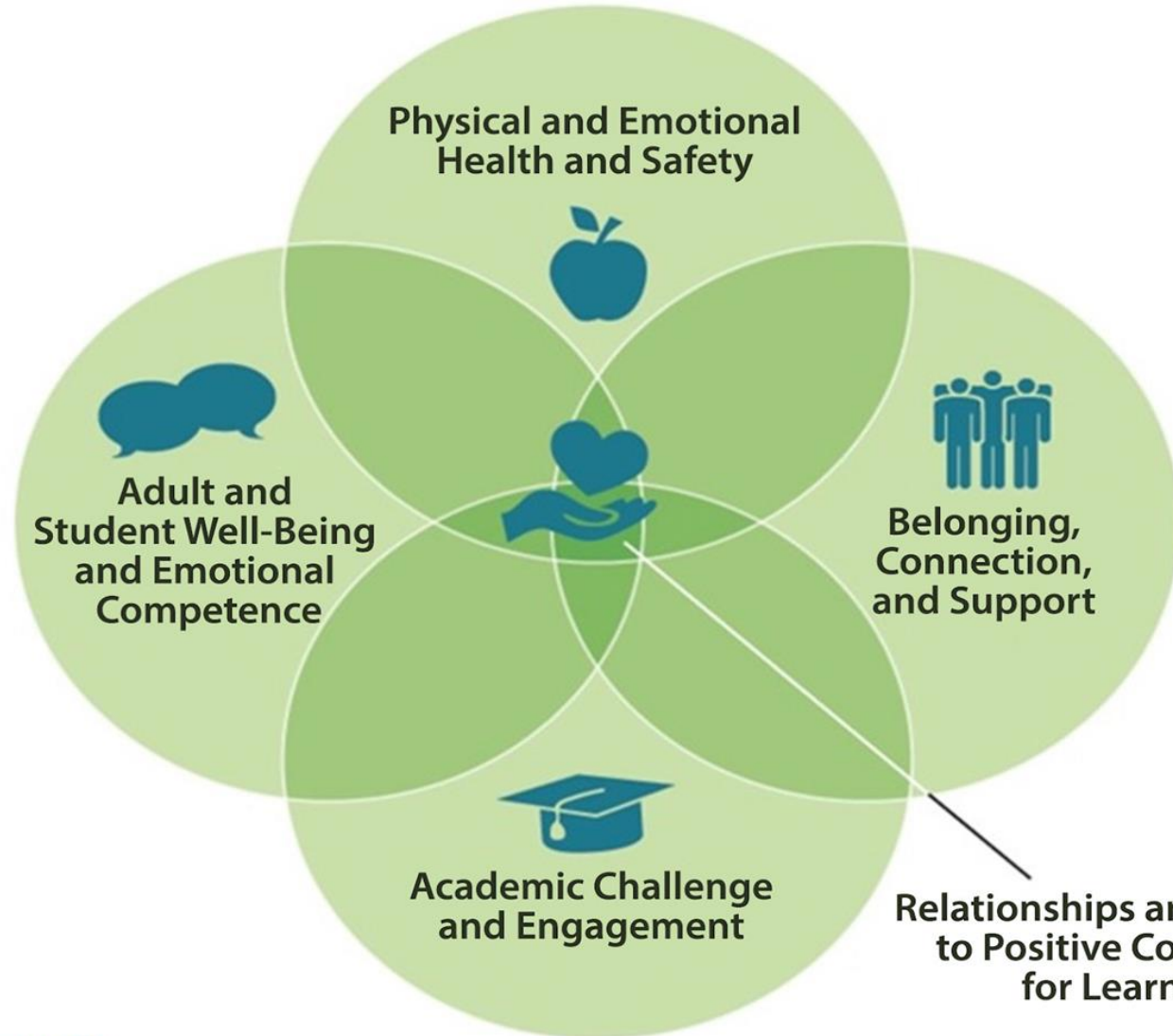*Where is your school or district
on the pathway to effective practices?*

- o Mindset

- o Actionable Data

- o Capacity

- o Strategies

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Positive Relationships with Students & Families

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

Physical and Emotional Health and Safety

Adult and Student Well-Being and Emotional Competence

Belonging, Connection, and Support

Academic Challenge and Engagement

Relationships are Essential to Positive Conditions for Learning

The Push and Pull of Conditions for Learning

Examples of Push-Out Factors

Feeling:
 Ignored
 Unsafe
 That you do not belong

Experiencing:
 Bullying
 Boredom
 Harsh and Exclusionary Discipline

Examples of Pull Factors

Feeling:
 Cared for
 Safe
 That you belong

Experiencing:
 Engagement
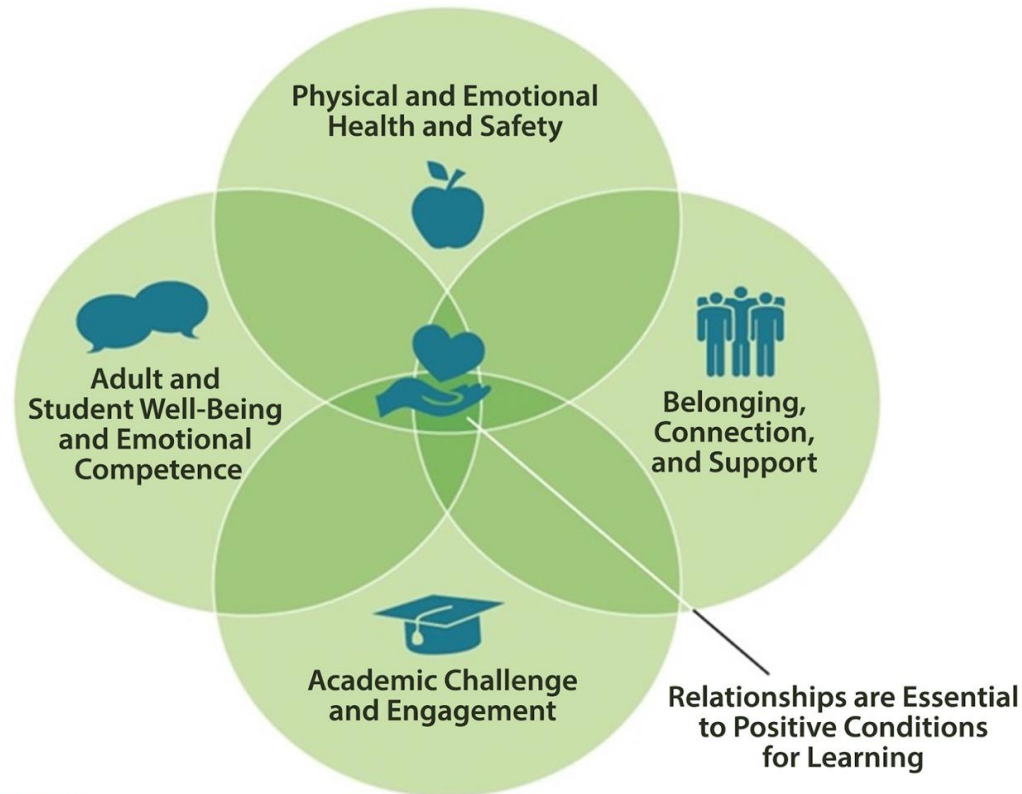 Support for students and their families

Relationships are Essential

https://vimeo.com/260252509

Reflection

How did the video illustrate positive conditions for learning?

About Your School:

- In your experience, what strategies work to forge positive relationships with students and families?

- Share how you reach students & families who aren't connected to school because of a history of disconnection, who are experiencing poverty or racial bias, or language barriers.

12 minutes

Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Raise your hand to speak
- Ask clarifying questions
- Explore differences of opinion
- 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.

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Popcorn Share:
Raise Your Virtual Hand

Please share how you reach students & families who aren't connected to school.

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Encourage Focus on High Leverage Relationship Activities

What is a high leverage activity? A high leverage activity:

❑ Lays a foundation for caring and positive relationships

❑ Can be used with staff and with students and families

❑ Offered universally with extra attention and tailoring to ensure it reaches chronically absent students

(Examples: Greeting By the Door, Giving Thanks, Individual Learning Plans, Restorative Circles, etc.)

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Hold on to what we know works. Example: Greetings by the Door

1. Positive Greeting by Name
2. Smile, offer an affirming comment
3. Give students a choice,
   low / no contact options:
   - Wave
   - Thumbs up
   - Bow
   - Elbow bump

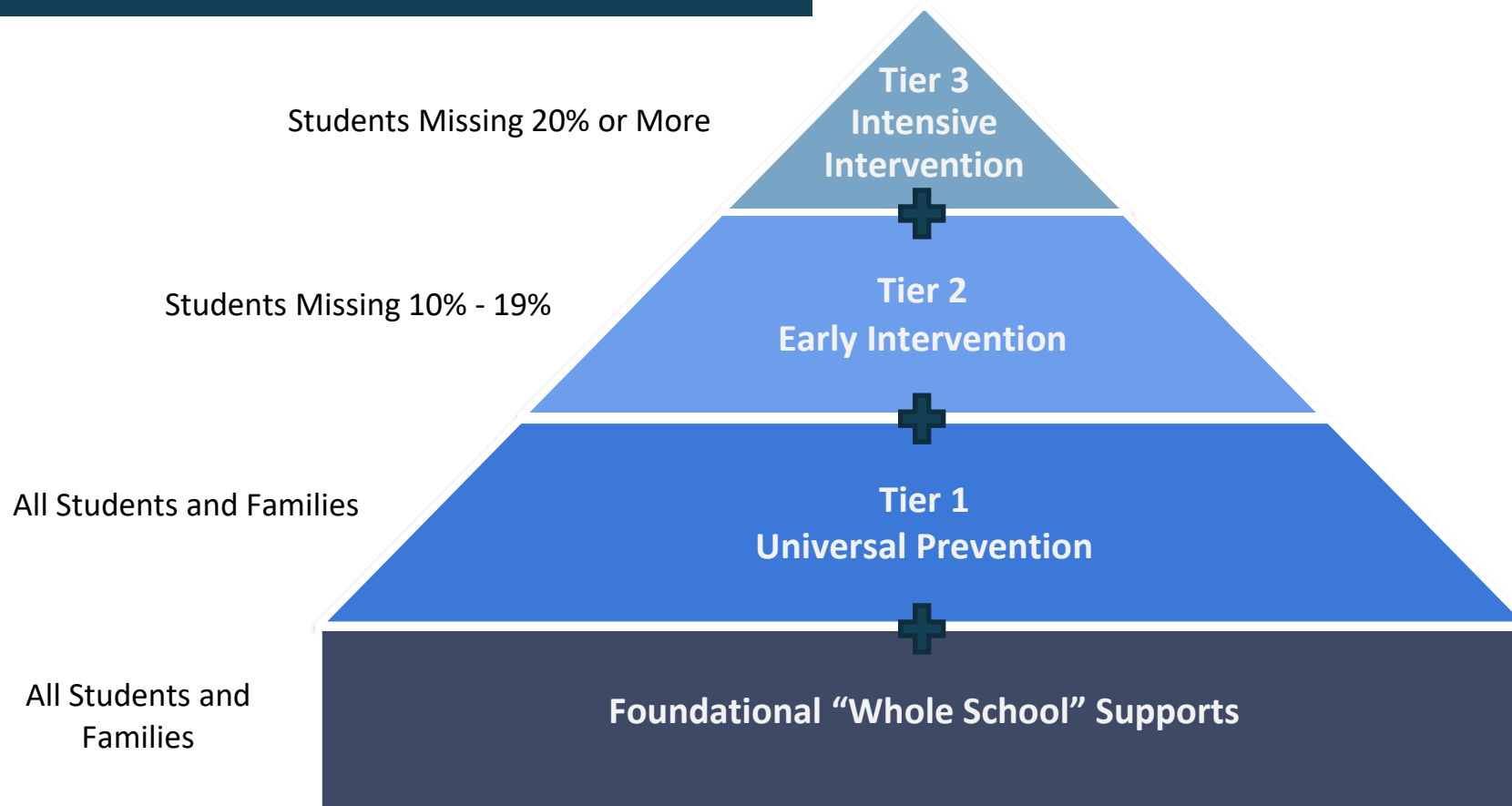https://www.edutopia.org/video/making-connections-greetings-door

Multi-Tiered System of Support

The Attendance Strategy and MTSS should be led by the school principal and the leadership team.

Teams working on improving student attendance could include the school's:

The Team is Responsible for the School's Multi-Tiered System of Support

Students Missing 20% or More

Students Missing 10% - 19%

All Students and Families

All Students and Families

Tier 3
Intensive
Intervention

Tier 2
Early Intervention

Tier 1
Universal Prevention

Foundational "Whole School" Supports

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

Foundational Supports are Building Blocks of Schools that Promote Engagement

Share in Chat: In your experience which foundational supports have been most essential at your school or in your district

Healthy learning environments	Enrichment activities and clubs	Positive relationships	Active family and student engagement
Access to tech equipment and connectivity	Challenging and Engaging Curriculum	Traditions and celebrations	Support for families to facilitate learning at home
Welcoming, safe school climate	Advisories or Morning Meetings to Build Community	Learning Supports	Access to Food and Other Basic Needs

Foundational "Whole School" Supports

Tier 1: Universal Attendance Supports

❖ Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations

❖ Predictable daily/weekly routines related to attendance

❖ Take daily attendance accurately with care

❖ Personalized communication to families when students are absent

❖ Recognition of good and improved attendance

❖ Access to wellness checks and connectivity assessments
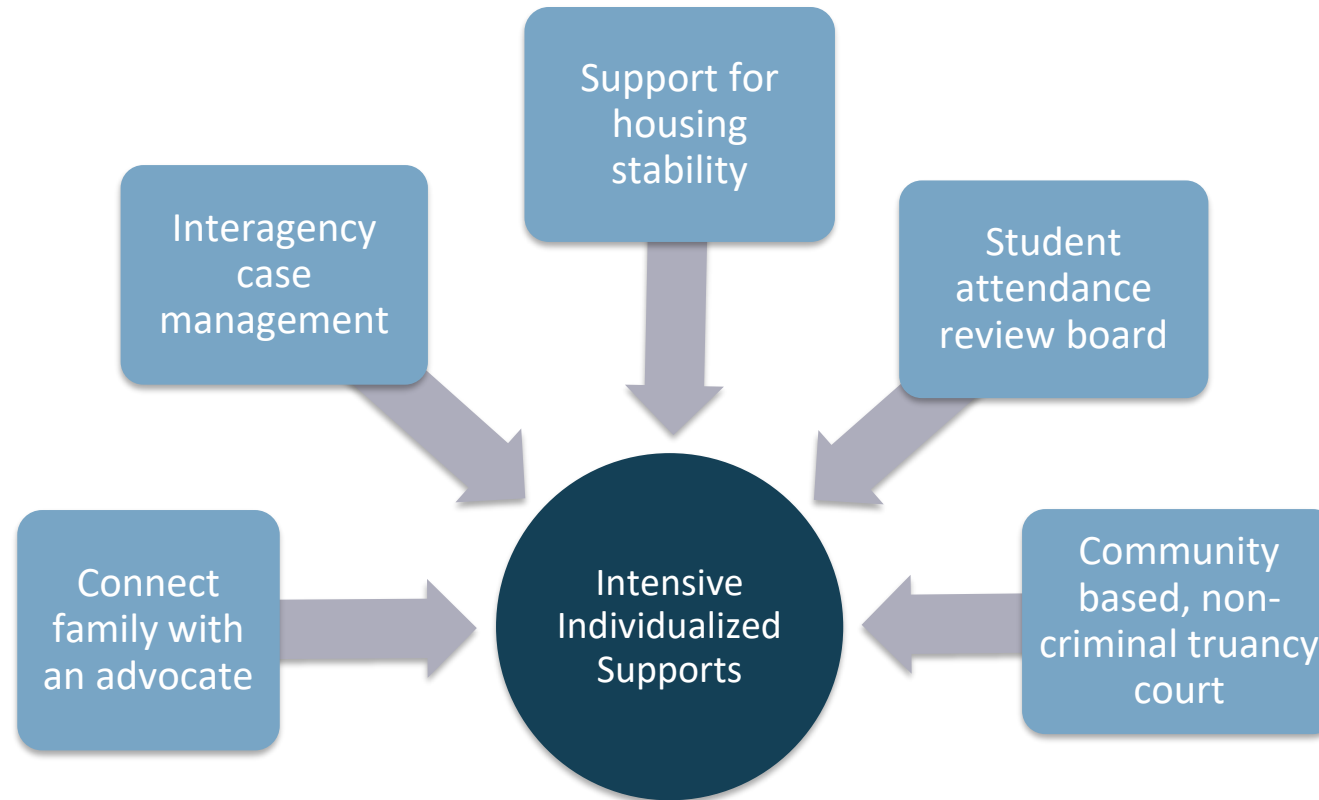
❖ Regular monitoring of attendance data

Tier 2: Strategies layer in support, strengthen relationships, and take a problem-solving approach

Expanded learning opportunities

Student Attendance Success Plan

Attendance goals and supports added to IEP

Assign caring mentors

Personalized Intervention Strategies

Small group supports

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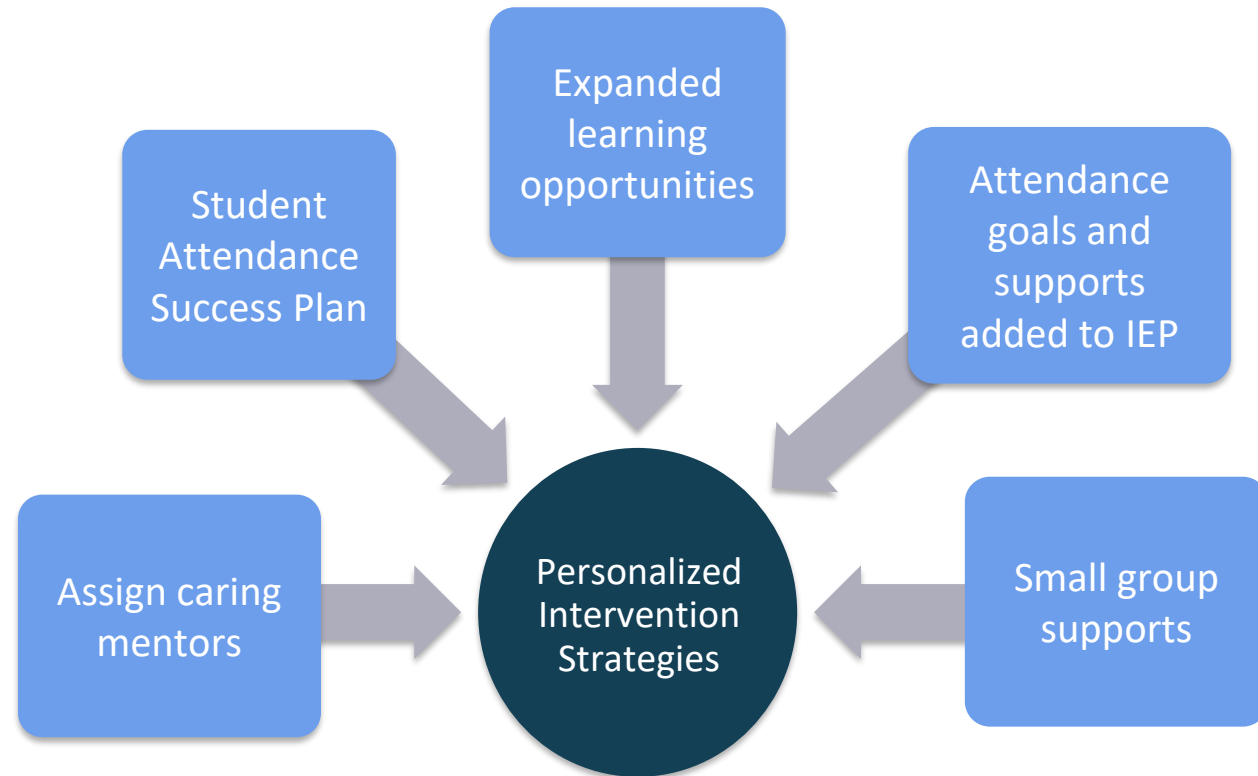
Tier 3: Strategies involve public and community partners and integrated case management

Interagency case management

Support for housing stability

Student attendance review board

Connect family with an advocate

Intensive Individualized Supports

Community based, non-criminal truancy court

Taking a Restorative Approach to Communication & Engagement

Center Communication with Students in Restorative Practices

Engagement — involving individuals in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account

Explanation — explaining the reasoning behind a decision to everyone who has been involved or who is affected by it

Expectation clarity — making sure that everyone clearly understands a decision and what is expected of them in the future

(Kim & Mauborgne, 1997)
https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/

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Impersonal Letters Break a Restorative Approach

Impersonal Letters, Auto-generated, Negative Truancy Letters:
- Easy to disregard
- Many parents felt many of the absence were legitimate and didn't understand why they received a letter.
- Many parents felt that the school didn't understand their attendance challenges
- Aren't as effective as clearly written, supportive letters

Teachers Not Addressing Absenteeism:
- Most parents reported that they regularly communicate with their children's teacher, but never about absences

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Misconceptions about the Importance of Attendance in the Early Grades can Lead to Increased Absenteeism

Percent who say "It's a big deal to miss at this grade level"

Spanish-speaking parents: 49%, 47%, 63%, 71%, 79%, 84%

English-speaking parents: 23%, 37%, 41%, 48%, 56%, 71%

Pre-K | Kindergarten | Grades 1-3 | Grades 4-5 | Middle School | High School
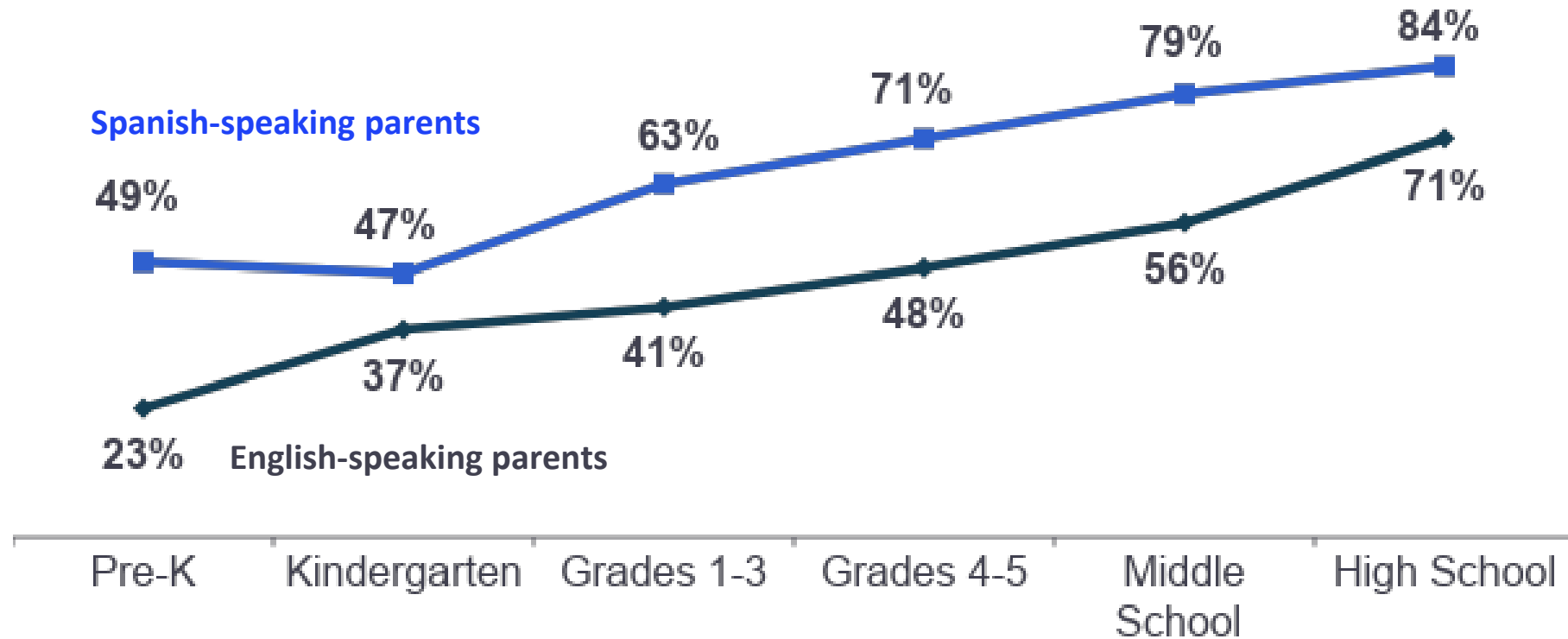
Source: Ad Council & Calif. Attorney General – Parent Ethnographies 2015
https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/toolkit
https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/tr/toolkit/QuantitativeResearchReport.pdf

Are students engaged?

Half of teens felt disengaged from school

ITEM RESPONSES	STRONGLY AGREE
At this school, I get to do what I do best every day.	23%
My teachers make me feel my schoolwork is important.	44%
I feel safe in this school.	42%
I have fun at school.	28%
I have a best friend at school.	71%
In the last seven days, someone has told me I have done good work at school.	40%
In the last seven days, I have learned something interesting at school.	43%
The adults at my school care about me.	39%
I have at least one teacher who makes me excited about the future.	55%

Source: Gallup Fall 2015 Student Poll

Questions to Consider: Youth Engagement

➢ What structures exist to ensure that every student is connected to at least one caring adult?

➢ What engaging curricular and enrichment opportunities are available at our school? Do all students have access to those opportunities?

➢ How is student voice connected to the social and academic environment of the school? Do all students have equal opportunity to have voice?

➢ How does our school celebrate the cultural and racial diversity of all members of our student body? If it doesn't who is missing?

➢ What opportunities exist for students to engage meaningfully with their peers?

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Student Advisory

An **advisory** is a regularly scheduled period of time, typically during the school day, when school-based staff meet with small groups of students for the purpose of advising them on academic, social, or future-planning issues. Advisories may follow a curriculum and clear set of routines.

- ✓ Ensure that at least one adult in the school is getting to know each student well
- ✓ Ensure that each student's learning needs are being met
- ✓ Encourage students to make good academic and social choices
- ✓ Encourage students to plan for their future
- ✓ Foster stronger adult-student relationships
- ✓ Foster a stronger sense of belonging and community among students

Action Steps that You Can Do NOW!

- Communicate supportive messages (Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, Keep Connected and Keep Learning) throughout the school year.

- Provide personalized and caring messages to students who are chronically absent.

- Connect with students who are missing a lot of school and check in on them.

- Offer students actionable steps to improve attendance.

- Provide academic, social, engagement and mental health support as needed.

- Make sure students and families know what resources are available for basic needs as well as learning at home.

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Additional Resources from Attendance Works

Letters for Families

https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/

Handouts for Families

✓ Available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Creole
https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families/

Sign up for the 2022 Attendance Awareness Campaign

https://awareness.attendanceworks.org/contact/aam-updates/

- Pathways to Engagement: A Toolkit for Covid-19 Recovery Through Attendance https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/pathways-to-engagement-a-toolkit-for-covid-19-recovery-through-attendance/

- How to Guide Relationship Mapping: Download in-person and virtual versions of this guide at https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy

- 2x10 Relationship Strategy Bank https://www.scoe.net/media/e4olyyjr/sesion_2_relationship_strategy_bank.pdf

- America's Promise – resources to work with teens https://www.americaspromise.org/voices-of-young-people

Questions from the Audience

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Learning Goals for Session 1

Participants will:

- Draw on high leverage, whole school strategies to create
    - positive conditions for learning and
    - strong relationships with students and families that prevent absenteeism

- Be introduced to the framework of multi-tiered attendance strategies that moves schools towards prevention and early intervention

- Learn a restorative approach 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!

Sue Fothergill, Director of Strategic Programming
sue@attendanceworks.org

Adrienne Sesay, Senior Fellow

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

Appendix:
Additional Resources

Evidence-Based Programs
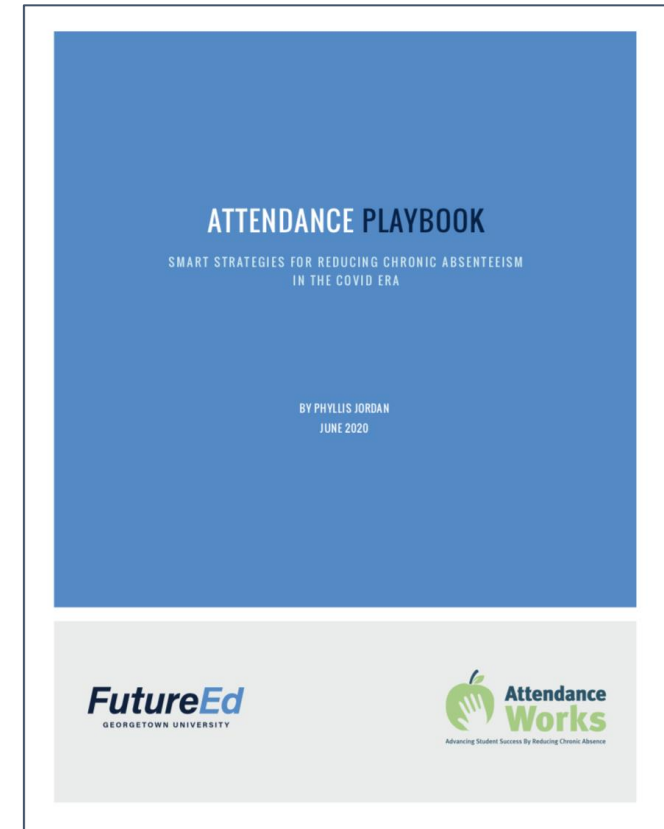
Relational Home Visits

- ✔ Goal is to create positive relationship between educators and parents *before* any issues arise.

- ✔ Example of model program: Parent Teacher Home Visits http://www.pthvp.org/what-we-do/pthv-model/

- ✔ Offers in-person and online training

- ✔ Offers in-person and online visiting options

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/

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Attendance Playbook: Covid Edition

- Evidence-based interventions to improve attendance
- Links to effective programs and resources
- Listed by tiers for use
- A section on monitoring attendance in distance learning
- Covid-19 modifications for interventions
- Added guidance on clean environment

ATTENDANCE PLAYBOOK

SMART STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN THE COVID ERA

BY PHYLLIS JORDAN
JUNE 2020

FutureEd
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

Attendance Playbook: https://www.future-ed.org/attendance-playbook/

Implementation Guide: https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/attendance-playbook/

FutureEd
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

How to Use the Attendance Playbook

The Guide to the Attendance Playbook offers practical tips for:

- ➤ Forming a team

- ➤ Using attendance data to determine the number of strategies

- ➤ Analyzing why students are absent and selecting strategies that address those reasons

- ➤ Realistically assessing your team's capacity to implement each strategy

- ➤ Selecting strategies that are likely to have the greatest impact for the lowest effort

- ➤ Making an implementation plan

- ➤ Assessing how well the strategies worked

https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/attendance-playbook/