The Canary in the Coalmine:
Focusing on Attendance to Strengthen Your MTSS

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

Agenda

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks
2. Why Attendance Matters
3. A Data-Driven, Tiered Approach to Improve Attendance

Learning Intentions

As the result of this session, participants will:

- Invest in prevention and early intervention strategies to improve attendance
- Use chronic absence as an indicator to activate supports at the individual, group and school levels
- Implement evidence-based attendance improvement strategies

Getting Started: Introductions

Use the Chat and share:

- ✓ Your name and role

- ✓ Your school or organization

- ✓ The name of one person who inspired you to attend and learn, and a short sentence about how they motivated you
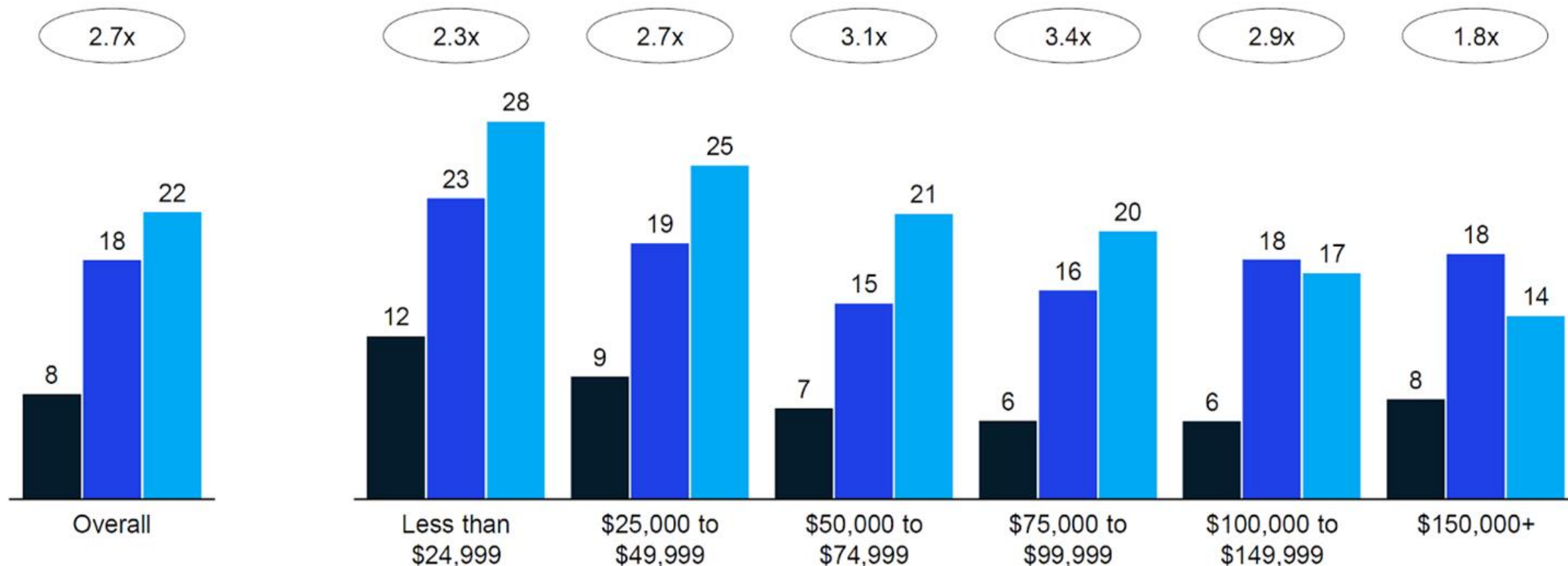
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Why Attendance Matters
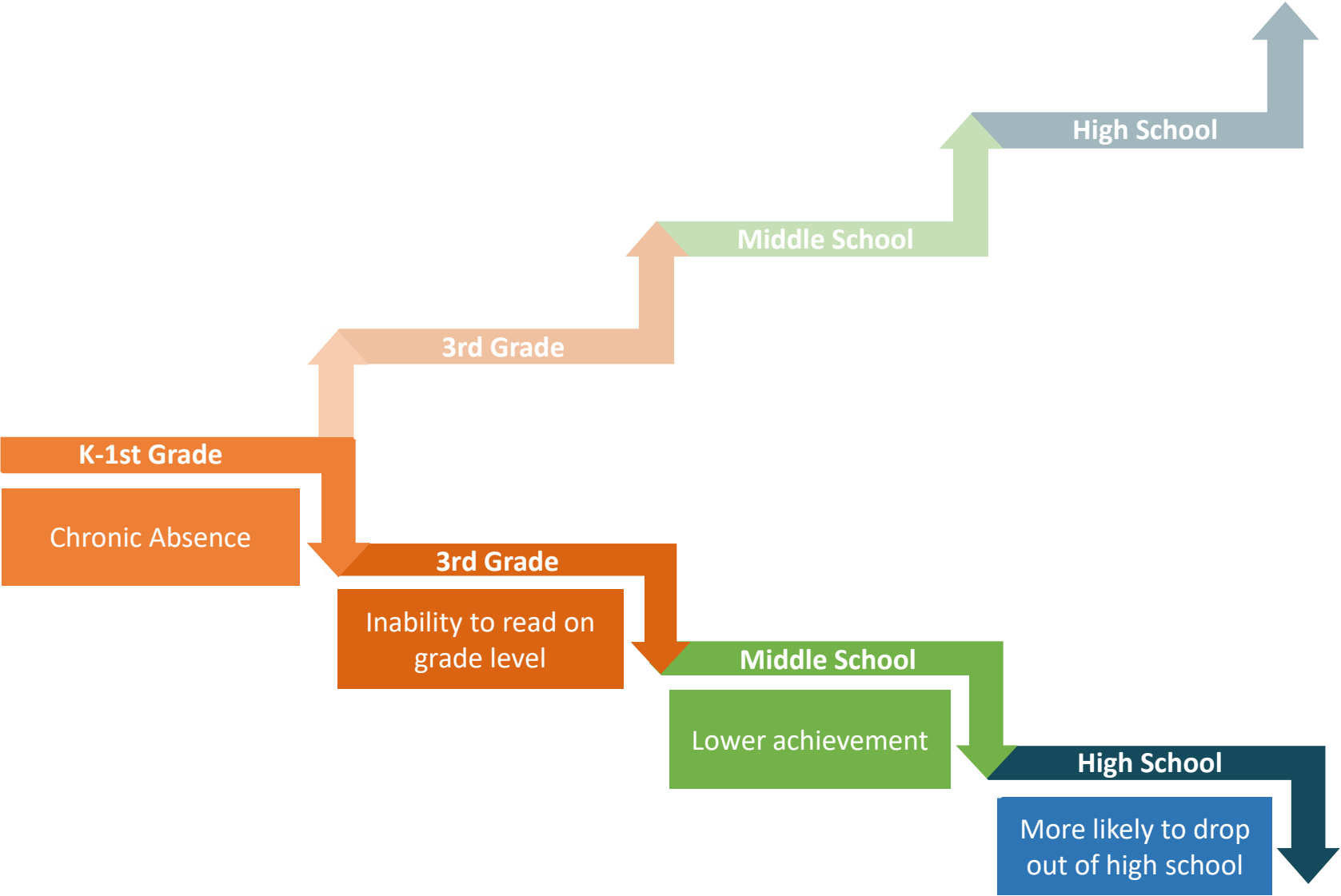
Attendance by income

% 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

Overall: 2.7x — 8, 18, 22

Less than $24,999: 2.3x — 12, 23, 28
$25,000 to $49,999: 2.7x — 9, 19, 25
$50,000 to $74,999: 3.1x — 7, 15, 21
$75,000 to $99,999: 3.4x — 6, 16, 20
$100,000 to $149,999: 2.9x — 6, 18, 17
$150,000+: 1.8x — 8, 18, 14

Source: McKinsey Parent Survey June 2021 (n = 16,370) and November 2021 (n = 14,498)

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Improving Attendance Matters

High School

Middle School

3rd Grade

K-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

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

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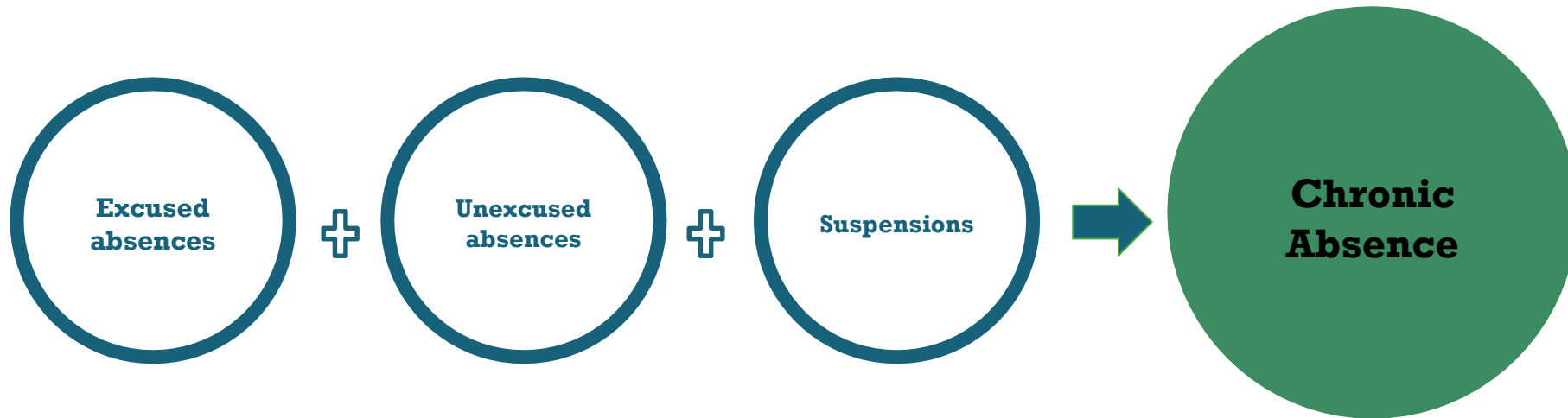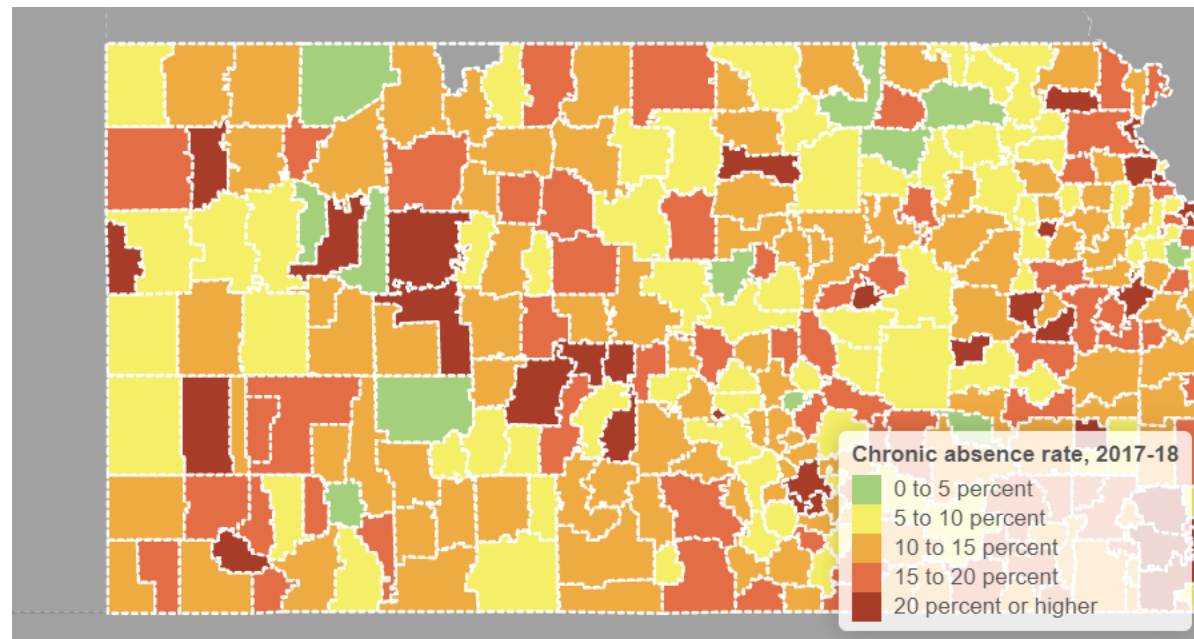
Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

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Chronic Absence increasing in Kansas

2017-18 Chronic absence rate – 15%
2020-21 Chronic absence rate – 17.4%

Chronic absence rate, 2017-18
- 0 to 5 percent
- 5 to 10 percent
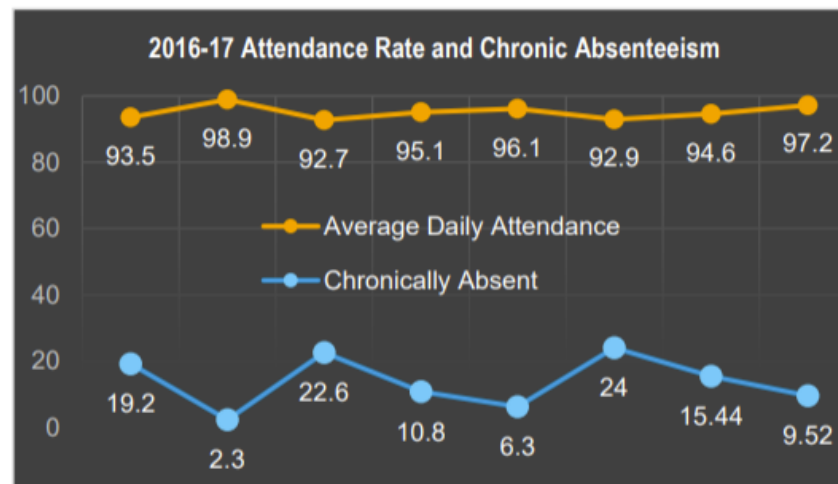- 10 to 15 percent
- 15 to 20 percent
- 20 percent or higher

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

How are the Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism related?

The attendance rate is the Average Daily Attendance/Average Daily Membership of a school or district. The Chronic Absenteeism rate, which now must be reported, is the percentage of students in a school that miss more than 10 percent of the instructional time for any reason, excused or unexcused.
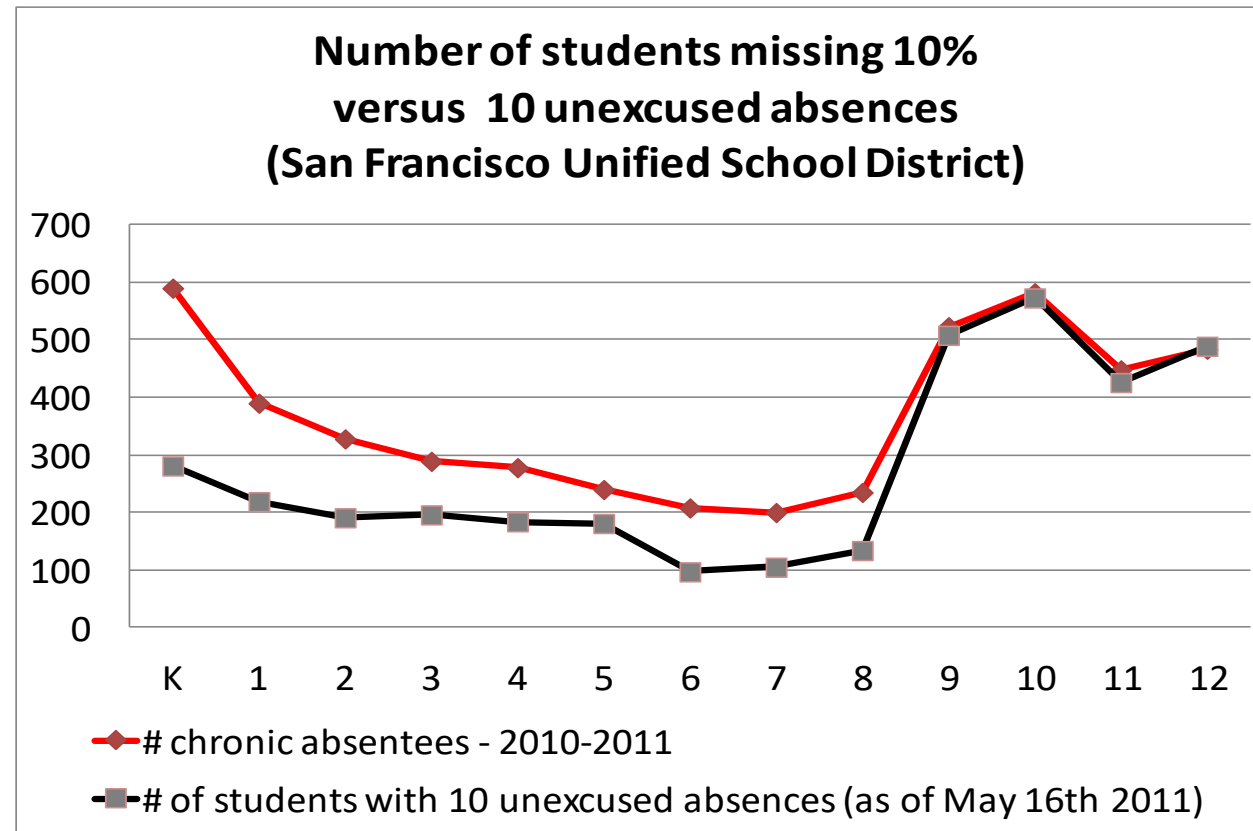
2016-17 Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism

- Average Daily Attendance: 93.5, 98.9, 92.7, 95.1, 96.1, 92.9, 94.6, 97.2
- Chronically Absent: 19.2, 2.3, 22.6, 10.8, 6.3, 24, 15.44, 9.52

Attendance Rate and *Chronic Absenteeism* are not inversely related. Attendance Rates tell "how many" students show up each day. Chronic Absentee rates show "which" students do not show up each day. Comparison of eight Kansas districts in terms of Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism.

https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/CSAS/CSAS%20Home/Graduation%20and%20Schools%20of%20Choice/2017-18%20Chronic%20Absenteeism%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-131623-847

Chronic Absence vs. Truancy

Number of students missing 10% versus 10 unexcused absences (San Francisco Unified School District)

◆ # chronic absentees - 2010-2011

■ # of students with 10 unexcused absences (as of May 16th 2011)

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

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Reflection

Reflect on your practice:

What approach does your school or school system take to improving attendance?

Is it more punitive or prevention oriented?

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Reducing Chronic Absence Requires a Team Approach

What makes a team effective?

Type in Chat:

Describe one principle or value that is essential to an effective team.

Organize and facilitate a schoolwide attendance strategy and ensure it is an integral component of the school's plan to improve outcomes for all students.

1. **Organize a multi-tiered attendance strategy that begins with prevention and early intervention.**

2. **Examine attendance and absenteeism data to assess which groups of students have higher or lower levels of absence.**

3. **Identify factors and strategies that affect attendance.**

4. **Mobilize everyone in the school community to address attendance.**

5. **Determine if you are making a difference.**

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

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

* Nurse
* Counselor
* Social Worker
* Administrative support staff
* Special education staff
* Teachers
* Early education staff
* Community School Directors and Coordinators
* Expanded Learning program staff
* Family Resource Center Directors and Coordinators
* Pupil Personnel Workers
* Child Welfare and Attendance Officers

Members should be able to bring the perspectives of the student demographics. Teams should incorporate input from families and students along with the community.

Determine which team(s) will assume the attendance MTSS functions

- Map all the teams that currently operate in your school by purpose, membership and meeting schedule.

- Identify areas of overlap, redundancy and/or gaps.

- Consider if attendance responsibilities can be integrated into an existing team (e.g., MTSS, PBIS, RTI, grade-level, etc.).

- Consider if different teams can assume responsibility for each Tier and how efforts will be coordinated across teams.

- Determine if a new team needs to be established.

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Map-of-School-Teams.pdf

What teams can address attendance? *(check all that apply)*

- ❑ Stand-alone attendance team
- ❑ Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports or PBIS team (attendance and behavior)
- ❑ Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) team
- ❑ Response to Intervention (RTI) team
- ❑ Case Management Team
- ❑ Other (type in chat)

Avoid
Common Pitfalls

✖ Establish a team that operates in isolation

✖ Fail to rally whole school to support prevention & early intervention

✖ Focus only on students with most absences

✖ Case management as the sole strategy

✖ Jumping to solutions without sufficient understanding of factors behind absences

✖ Team composition does not reflect the demographics, perspectives or cultural realities of the student population

Team Self-Assessment

How well does your team...

- Lead a Whole School Approach to Attendance

- Organize a Multi-Tiered Strategy

- Examine Attendance Data

- Identify Barriers & Inequities

- Mobilize the School Community

- Monitor Progress

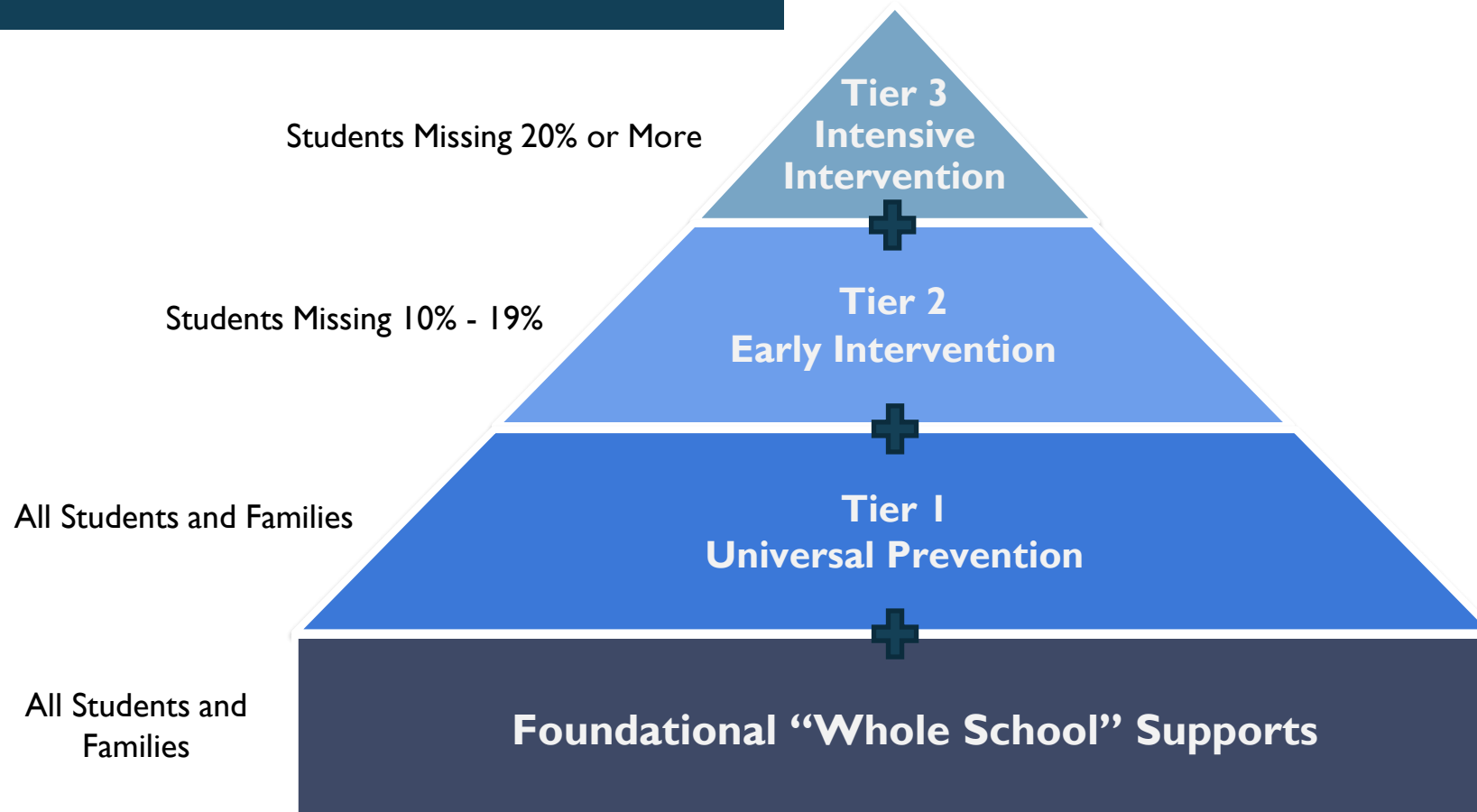*https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/School-Team-Self-Assessment-rev-1-31-21.pdf*

School Team Self-Assessment

Lead A Whole School Approach to Attendance	Solidly in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Evidence
1. The principal makes attendance a top priority for the entire school.					
2. The group responsible for organizing the school's attendance strategy is aligned with other school teams to ensure attendance is an integral component of the school's plan to improve outcomes for all children.					
3. Our team members reflect the demographics of our school community and/or are able to bring the perspectives of the student demographics.					
4. Collectively, team members have the authority, will and skill to remove barriers and address inequities.					

Organize A Multi-Tiered Strategy	Solidly in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Evidence
1. Our regular team agenda is aligned to a multi-tiered system of support.					
2. We proactively promote an engaging school climate.					
3. We have defined when Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports should be offered.					
4. We have a protocol for early personalized outreach to families.					
5. We connect students who are missing too much learning time to one adult in the school (e.g., Mentor or Family Ambassador).					
6. We have a coordinated interagency response to ensure students receive the additional support they need.					

Team Function #1:
Organize a multi-tiered attendance strategy that begins with prevention and early intervention

When Tackling Absenteeism, Begin with Whole School and Prevention Strategies

Students Missing 20% or More

**Tier 3
Intensive
Intervention**

Students Missing 10% - 19%

**Tier 2
Early Intervention**

All Students and Families

**Tier 1
Universal Prevention**

All Students and
Families

Foundational "Whole School" Supports

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

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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

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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
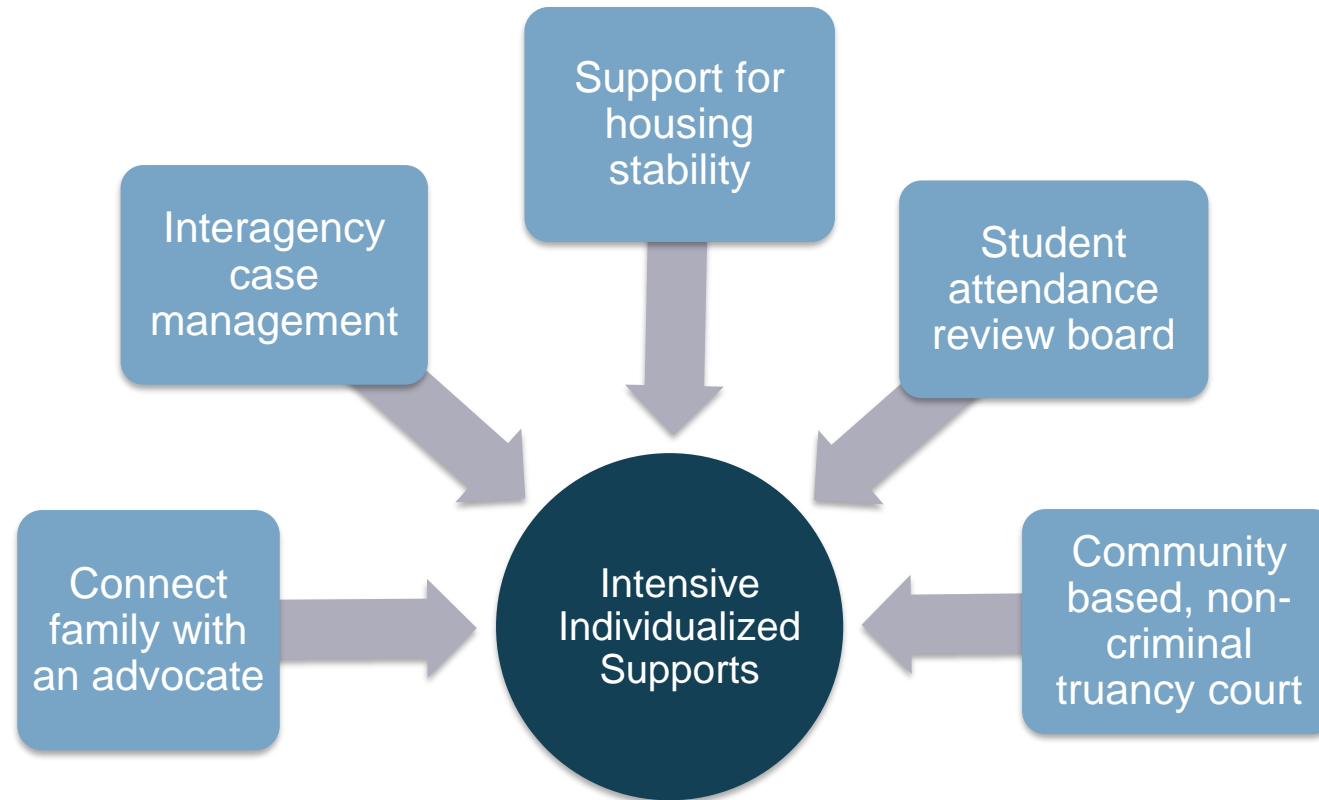
❖ Regular monitoring of attendance data

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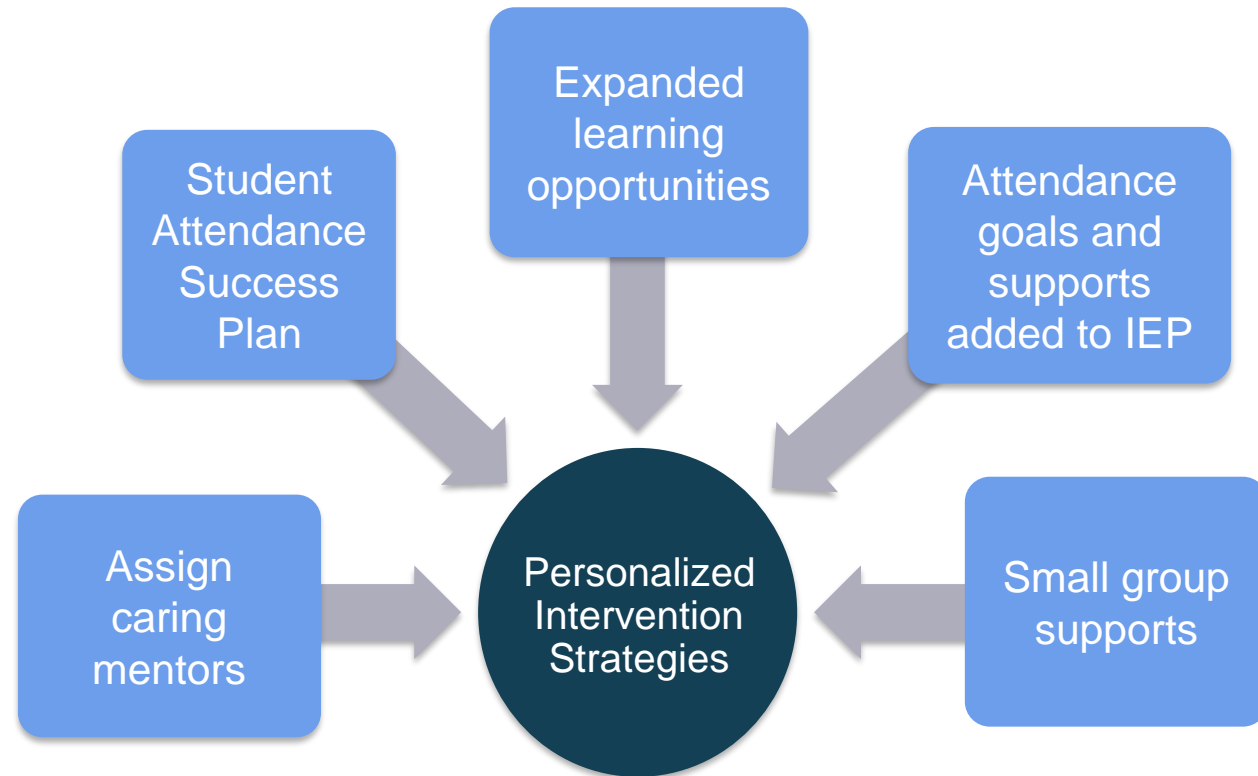
Tier 3: Strategies involve public and community partners and integrated case management

Support for housing stability

Interagency case management

Student attendance review board

Connect family with an advocate

Intensive Individualized Supports

Community based, non-criminal truancy court

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Reflection

In working to improve attendance, where does your school put most of its efforts?

❑ Foundational Whole School Supports

❑ Tier 1 Absenteeism Prevention

❑ Tier 2 Absenteeism Early Intervention

❑ Tier 3 Absenteeism Intensive Supports

Family and Student Engagement	Social and Emotional Learning Relationships	Behavioral and Mental Health	Data Monitoring	Physical Health	Academic Support	Basic Needs
			Tier 3 Intensive Intervention			
			Tier 2 Early Intervention			
			Tier 1 Universal Prevention			
			Foundational Supports			

Family and Student Engagement	Social and Emotional Learning Relationships	Behavioral and Mental health	Data Monitoring	Physical Health	Academic Support	Basic Needs
Connect family with community supports	Conduct empathy interview	Individual Plan based on Identified Needs	Intensive outreach to locate student and family and assess situation	Individual Plan based on Identified Needs	Connect with a tutor or other individualized academic support	Provision of targeted resources
Virtual/physically distanced family meeting or home visit when absences add-up	Institute Success Mentor or Family Ambassador Program	Small group counseling to provide support for students dealing with anxiety	Using absenteeism data to activate targeted supports	Assist a family with identifying a medical home / family health practitioner	Additional tech support and training for families and students	Assisting a family with signing up for public programs e.g. Medicaid, SNAP etc.
Community building to create belonging and connection	Invite families to design the school's drop-off and pick-up protocols	Individual wellness check and connectivity assessments	Personalized outreach and communication to families when students are absent	Immunization Clinic	Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations	School Community Food and Household Goods Pantry

(Pyramid overlay labels: Tier 3 Intensive Intervention, Tier 2 Early Intervention, Tier 1 Universal Prevention)

Physically healthy learning environment	Welcoming, socially-emotionally safe, trauma-informed school climate	A culture of continuous improvement	Home rooms and/or Advisory	Active engagement of parents and students in planning and problem solving		A leadership team that monitors attendance data
Access to tech equipment and connectivity	Access to Learning Supports	Enrichment activities and clubs	Routines, rituals and celebrations	A schedule of classes and where/how they are held		Support for all families to facilitate learning at home

Interventions that Can be Found in the Attendance Playbook

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
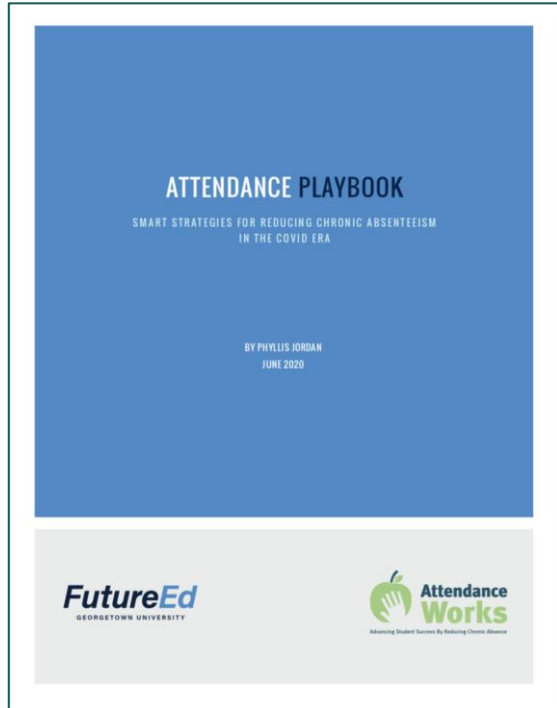
TIER I Interventions
- Nudging Parents and Students
- Home Visits
- Positive Messaging
- Incentives
- Healthy School Buildings
- School-based Health Services
- Telehealth
- School Buses and Public Transit
- A Safer Walk to School
- Breakfast for All
- Laundry at School
- Relevant—and Culturally Relevant—Curriculum
- Threshold Greetings
- Rethinking Recess
- Restorative Discipline Practices

TIER II Interventions
- Early Warning Systems
- Mentors
- Youth Engagement
- Addressing Asthma
- Targeted Transportation
- Students with Disabilities
- School Refusal
- Immigration Enforcement

TIER III Interventions
- Truancy Courts
- Interagency Case Management
- Housing Challenges

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

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

Focus on High Leverage Relationship Activities at Every Level

What is 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.)

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

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Evidence-Based Programs to Build Positive Relationships

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/

Let's Hear From You!

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

Please share your ideas in the Chat box.

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Additional Resources

- 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

- Attendance Playbook, https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/attendance-playbook/

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Additional Tools for Tier 1

Forging Partnerships with Families to Support Engagement and Attendance

- Communicate supportive messages (Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, Keep Connected and Keep Learning) 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 know what resources are available for basic needs as well as learning at home.

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Communicating with Families

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

❖ Chronic Absence letter Updated for Covid-19
   https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/

❖ Stay the Course: A Winter Messaging Toolkit
   https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/stay-the-course-a-winter-messaging-toolkit/

❖ How to Text Message Parents to Reduce Chronic Absence Using an Evidence-Based Approach
   https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf
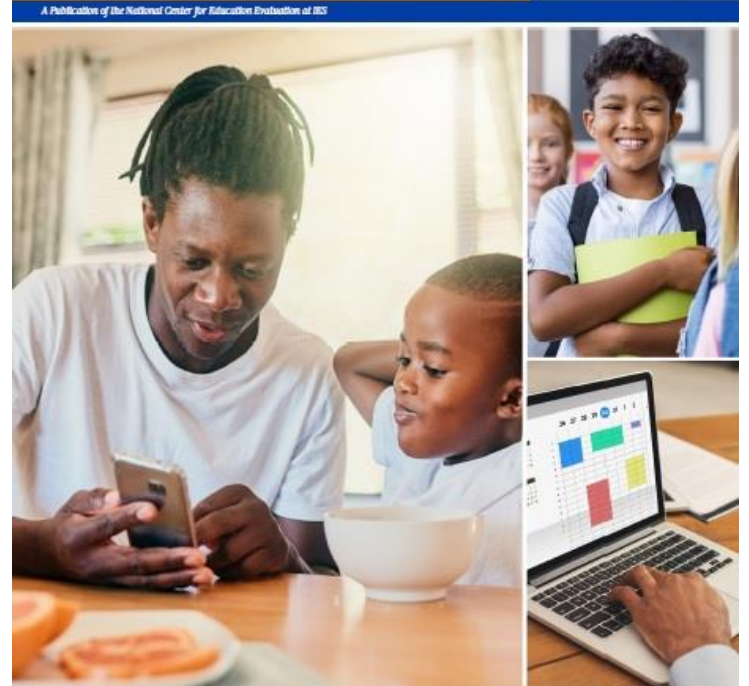
Additional Resources from Attendance Works

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

Handouts for Families
- ✓ Preschool, Elementary & Secondary Grades
- ✓ 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/

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

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

Team Function #2:

Examine attendance & absenteeism data to assess which groups of students have higher or lower levels of absence

Use Data to Determine Where to Intervene Which Grades Have Highest Levels?

What percentage of students in each grade level were MODERATELY or SEVERELY chronically absent?
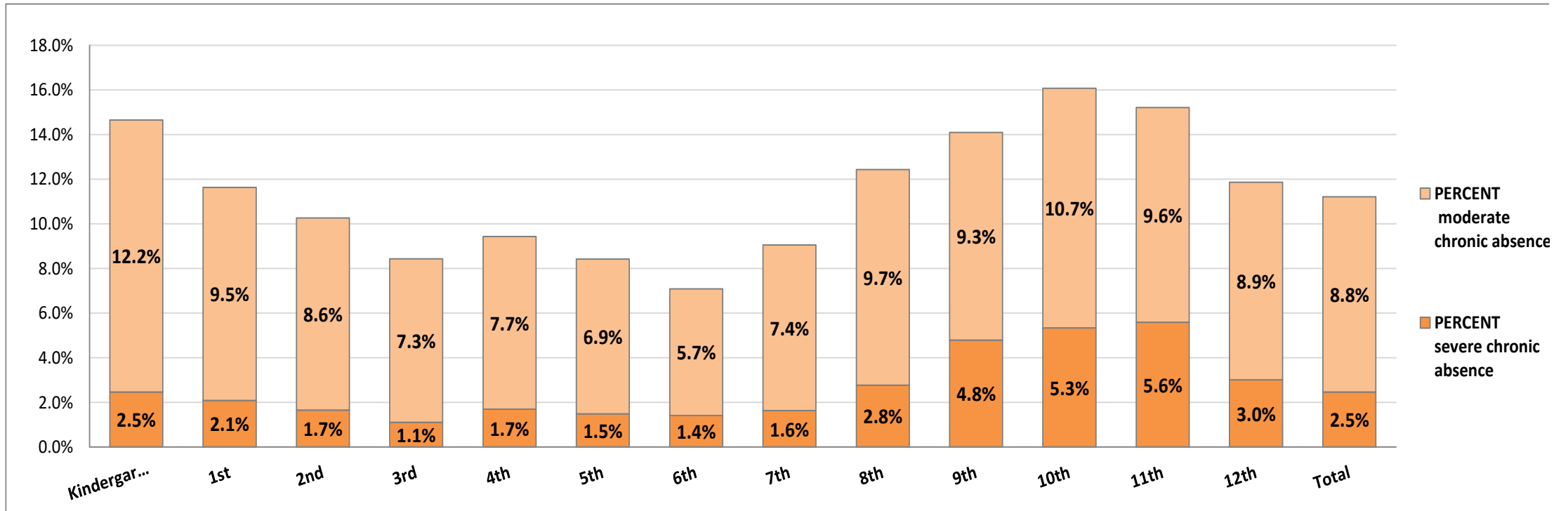
National Data Show that the Impact of Chronic Absence is Disproportionate

EVERYONE GRADUATES CENTER

Populations disproportionately affected by chronic absence are among those most affected by Covid-19

Estimated National Chronic Absence Rates by Demographic Sub-group - 2017-18

Demographic Sub-group	% Chronically Absent
LEP	16%
504	16%
IDEA	23%
White	13%
Pacific Islander	24%
Multi-Racial	18%
Hispanic	17%
Black	23%
Asian	7%
Native	29%
Total	16%

% Chronically Absent

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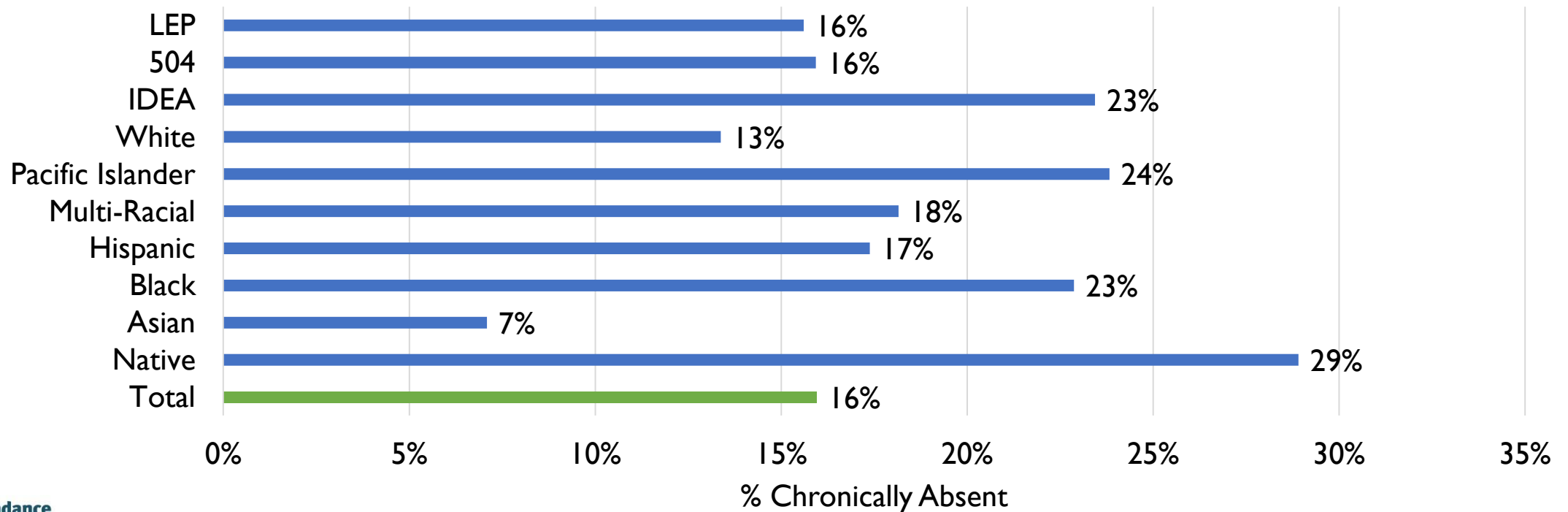
Identify Positive Outliers and Schools Needing Greater Support

	Elementary	Middle	High School
# Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence	9	0	0
# Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence	17	4	1
# Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence	25	8	6
# Schools with >20.1% Chronic Absence	9	4	9
Total No. Schools	60	16	16
Highest % of Chronic Absence	31.5%	32.8%	42.1%
Lowest % of Chronic Absence	0.3%	6.9%	7.9%
Median	12.7%	14.9%	21.0%
Mean	11.9%	15.6%	22.4%

Identifying Students At Risk Due to Lack of Opportunity to Learn

Lost Contact

\+

No or Poor Connectivity & Access

\+

Lack of Positive Relationships

\+

Prior Chronic Absence

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Missing 10% In Remote or In-Person Learning

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Lost Opportunities to Learn

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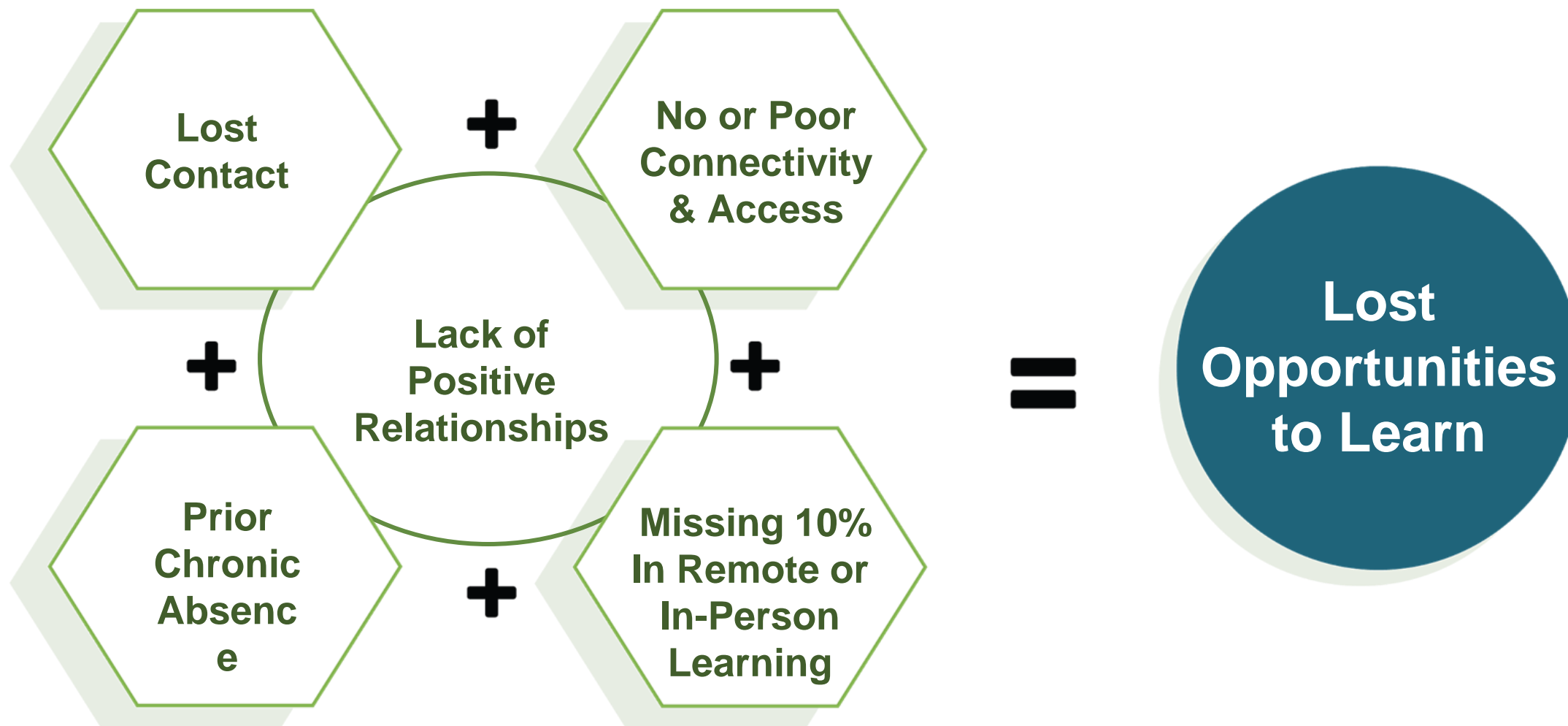
Use Data to Identify and Address Inequities

➢ Analyze absences, contact, connectivity, relationships and participation data overall, broken down by school, grade, race/ethnicity, home language, disability and zip code.

➢ Use qualitative information, especially drawing upon the perspectives of students and families, to deepen an understanding of the contributing factors

➢ Determine how to address unequal access to resources.

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Let's Chat

Which groups of students in your school have higher rates of absenteeism and require priority attention?

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Free Attendance Works Data Tools

✓ The District Attendance Tracking Tools (DATT) and School Attendance Tracking Tools (SATT) are available in three modules:

  ✓ Grades K-5

  ✓ Grades 6-8 and

  ✓ Grades 9-12

✓ We also offer a Tool to Combine the Modules for K-12 reports

https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/data-tools/

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When to Reach Out and Provide Support

Tier 2 Early Intervention	**Suggested Criteria for what activates early outreach:** • Missing 10-19% of school—*regardless of the mode of instruction*—in the prior school year • Missing 10% of learning opportunities during current year • Not checking in or completing work in distance learning • Lost contact with student/family — wellness check (immediate action required) **Consider who should respond:** Attendance staff? Counselors? Nurses? Community partners? Teachers? Teachers on special assignment? Social work interns? **Document:** Any attendance barriers staff identify, supports provided or follow up needed

When to Reach Out and Provide Support

Tier 3 **Intensive Intervention**	**Suggested Criteria for what activates intensive outreach:** • Missing 20% or more of school in prior school year (severely chronically absent) • Missing 20% or more of school during current year • Students who already qualify for McKinney Vento services, who are in foster care or involved in juvenile justice **Consider who should respond:** Social Workers? Staff of public agencies? **Document:** Any attendance barriers staff identify, supports provided or follow up needed

What should happen at our school for each level of absence?

sample form: https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/School-Summary-of-Actions-SAMPLE-FORM-rev-July-2021.pdf

Number of Absences	Action(s)	People Responsible	Resources to Support Action(s)	Documentation *What was the reason for the absence, and what intervention or support was offered?*
0	Welcome Letter Welcome Video on website	School secretary Principal and person who updates the school website	• Link to resources, e.g. District letter that can be personalized by principal / school team • AW Flyers • AW Student Success Plan	• Add contacts from Student Success Plan to family contact information form.
1-2 Per month	Call Home	Teacher	• Call Script	• Log in Student Screen on SIS • Track and monitor in case management system
3-4 Per month	Call Home	School Counselor or Social Worker	• Call Script • Documentation of Reasons https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/teacher-attendance-strategy-worksheet-rev-10-16-19.pdf	• Log in Student Screen on SIS • Note reasons for absence and any supports or interventions needed. • Track and monitor in case management system
5 Per month	Family Meeting	Principal or other School Administrator	• Standard agenda for family meeting • Student Success Plan • List of resources • Form for taking notes and follow up	• Use district form for family meeting • Attach

Blank form: https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/School-Summary-of-Actions-BLANK-FORM-rev-July-2021.pdf

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Team Function #3:

Identify factors and strategies that affect attendance

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
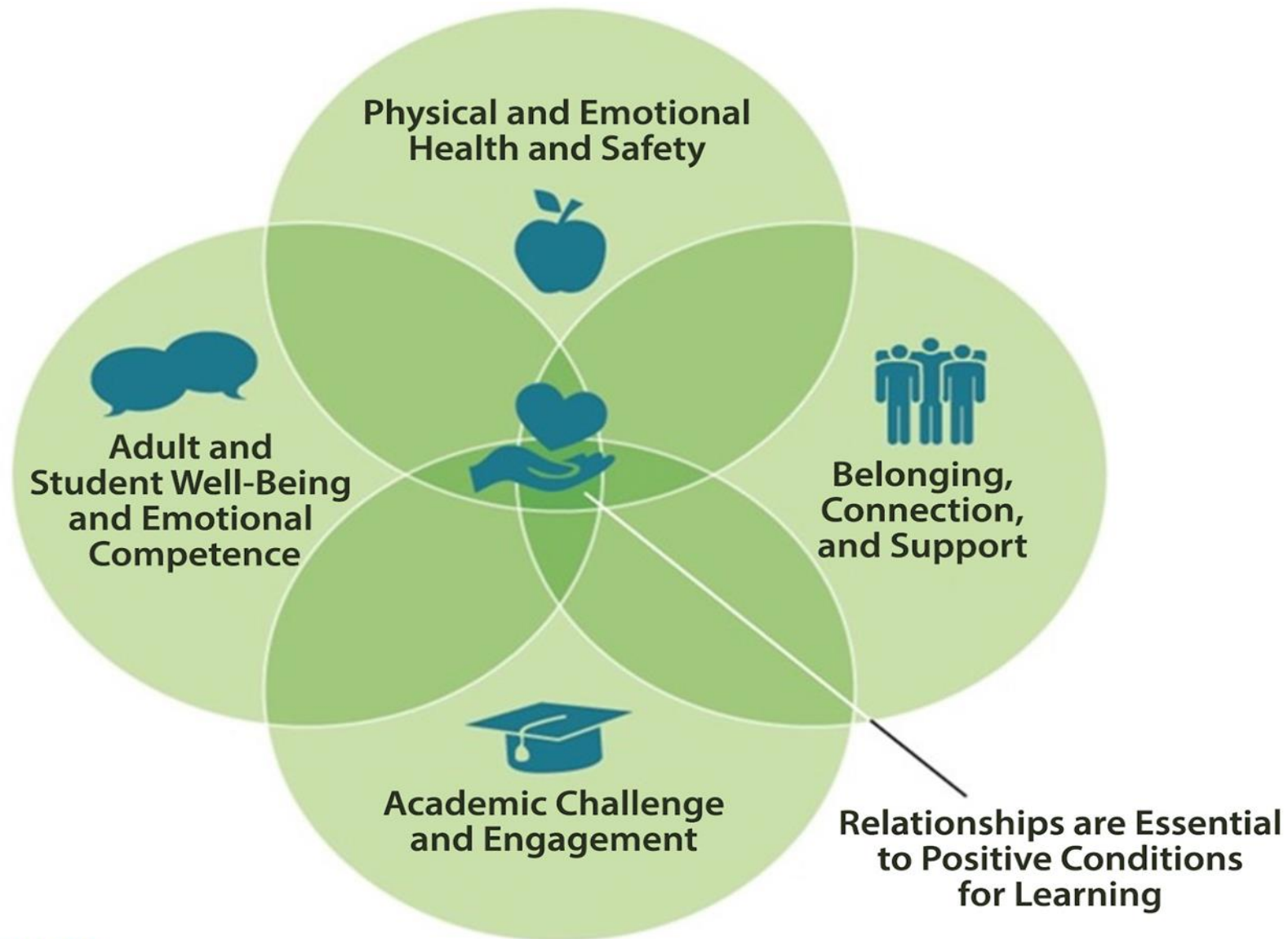
The Push and Pull of Conditions for Learning

Please Write in the Chat:
1. What is pushing students out of school?
2. What is pulling them in?

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

Asking Powerful Questions

5 Whys Worksheet

Identify a Positive Outlier:

High school students' period attendance improved during the month of October.

Why is this happening?

1. Teachers decided to implement doorway greetings. → Why is that?

2. The principal shared the idea during a staff meeting. → Why is that?

3. The principal selected this strategy as a high impact, medium effort, evidence-based strategy that could improve attendance, behavior and focus on learning. → Why is that?

4. Focus groups with students revealed that they felt "disconnected" and "invisible" in school. → Why is that?

5. Lack of daily routines that acknowledge and welcome their presence.

Blank worksheet:

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Five-Whys-Worksheet.pdf

Identified Root Cause:
Students needed a sense of connection, belonging and welcome in order to show up, engage and participate in learning.

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Solutions must be grounded in an understanding of reasons for absence

Barriers	Negative School Experiences	Lack of Engagement	Misconceptions
• Illness, both chronic and acute – physical and mental • Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care • Family responsibilities • Trauma • Depression or anxiety • Unsafe path to/from school • Poor transportation • Housing and food insecurity • Frequent school changes • Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems • Inequitable access to resources.	• Struggling academically and behaviorally • Ineffective or harmful interventions • Bored • Social challenges • Bullying • Suspensions and expulsions • Harsh, biased disciplinary practices especially for students of color • Parents affected by their own school experiences • Undiagnosed disability • Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability • Pressure for academic success	• Lack of or inequitable access to challenging, culturally responsive, engaging instruction & enrichment • Lack of or ineffective academic, emotional and behavioral support • No meaningful or negative relationships to adults in the school • Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school • Unwelcoming school climate • Failure to earn credits/ no future plans • Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes	• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning • Sporadic absences aren't a problem • Attendance only matters in the older grades • Suspensions are not relevant

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Asking Powerful Questions – Perception versus Reality

5 Whys Worksheet

Define the Problem:

Kindergartners have higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

Why is this happening?

1. Families are keeping their children home out of concern for their children's health and safety.

Why is that?

2. Families are worried that their children are more vulnerable to Covid-19 given high transmission rates.

Why is that?

3. Families do not feel confident about the school's Covid-19 mitigation measures (e.g. sanitation, physical distancing, cohorting, masking, vaccination, quarantine, etc.)

Why is that?

4. School leaders have not effectively communicated procedures to keep students safe and shared how they have kept Covid-19 transmission rates low.

Why is that?

5. Lack of a plan to personally keep families abreast of the latest information and respond to their concerns.

Blank worksheet:

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Five-Whys-Worksheet.pdf

Identified Root Cause: *Lack of an effectively implemented and communicated plan for reducing the spread of Covid-19.*

Validate Your Information about Why Students Attend or Miss School

- Student and Family Focus Groups
- Student and Family Survey Data
- Student and Family Centered Problem-Solving Conversations
- School Staff Insights
- School Staff Observations

Align Interventions to Reasons for Absences

Reason for Absence	Possible Interventions
Anxiety About In-Person School	•Enlist trusted messengers (e.g. doctors) to talk with families •Review health and safety protocols •Hold a virtual open house to answer questions and address concerns •Make school counselors available for consultation
Not understanding the impact of absences	•Create an education campaign that connects academic achievement with attendance •When working with individual families, explore their hopes for their child and help connect them to school and attendance
Schedules Out-of-Sync	• Offer before or after school programming • Organize a walking school bus • Provide a modified schedule that aligns school and family schedules
Transportation Barriers	• *Share ideas in the chat...*

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/

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Understanding Common Causes of Absences Worksheet

Academic Conditions

Safety Concerns

Social Dynamics

Home Situation

Health Status

School Culture

Student and Parent Voice

Worksheet: Understanding the root causes for student absenteeism

Use these questions to help identify the likely causes of absenteeism for a student who is chronically absent in your class. Understanding the root causes for missing too much school can help determine the best course of action. Is this something that you can help your student and his/her family overcome? Or is there an underlying issue that requires additional support, perhaps from the school social worker or guidance counselor?

Academic Conditions	
Is the student struggling academically? Consider what skills and content the student has missed as a result of his or her absences as well as other instructional needs.	Y / N
Does the student need accommodations to benefit from classroom instructions? (e.g. peer support, access to computer, breaks, material presented in different ways)	Y / N
Does the student have language or communication challenges?	Y / N
Does the student struggle with organizational tasks?	Y / N
Are there barriers to homework completion?	Y / N
Do you suspect that the student has an unidentified disability?	Y / N
Safety Concerns	
Have there been any reports of bullying?	Y / N
Is the student exposed to race, disability, cultural or LGBTQ biases?	Y / N
Social Dynamics	
Does the student get to avoid difficult social or academic situations by staying away from school?	Y / N
Are transitions difficult for the student? (e.g. entering the school building, moving from class to class)	Y / N
Home Situation	
Do the parents/guardians recognize the importance of and support regular school attendance?	Y / N
Are there problems in the home that contribute to frequent absences? (e.g., parental illness, homelessness, joblessness, child care, needed health or mental health services for parent/caregiver)	Y / N
Health Status	
Are there conditions in the classroom, cafeteria or other school areas that affect the student's health or safety? (e.g. mold or other asthma triggers, animal dander, food allergens)	Y / N
Does the student exhibit anxiety due to separation from parent / caregiver?	Y / N
Does the student require health or mental health-related treatment that interferes with attendance?	Y / N
School Culture	
Are there any clubs, programs or resources during the school day and after school that might help engage the student?	Y / N
Is there a caring adult at the school that could mentor the student?	Y / N
Student Voice	
Has the student identified the reasons for missing school?	Y / N
Parent Voice	
Have you met with the parent/caregiver to discuss attendance concerns?	Y / N
Has the parent/caregiver identified specific barriers to attendance?	Y / N
Are there cultural, language, or other types of barriers that require extra effort on the part of the school to work with the parent/caregiver?	Y / N
Attendance Barriers for Students with Identified Disabilities	
Has the IEP/504 team met recently to review and revise the student's educational plan?	Y / N
Are the instructional and behavioral supports the rights ones?	Y / N

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www.attendanceworks.org

Team Function #4:
Mobilize everyone in the school community to address attendance

We All Have a Role

https://vimeo.com/230451908

Partners for Change

The greater the size of the challenge, the more partners are needed. Many different types of partners can be enlisted, but local government and public agencies are especially important. Tap into existing initiatives and coalitions to engage potential partners.

- Businesses
- Community Schools Initiatives
- Family Support Organizations
- Early Childhood Providers
- Faith Based Organizations.
- Health Providers
- Housing Agencies
- Hunger Relief Organizations
- Institutes of Higher Education
- Local / Tribal Governments

- National Service/ Volunteers/Mentors
- Out of School Time providers
- Social Emotional Learning Providers
- Social Services
- Population-Specific Service or Civic Organizations
- Philanthropy (including foundations and United Ways)

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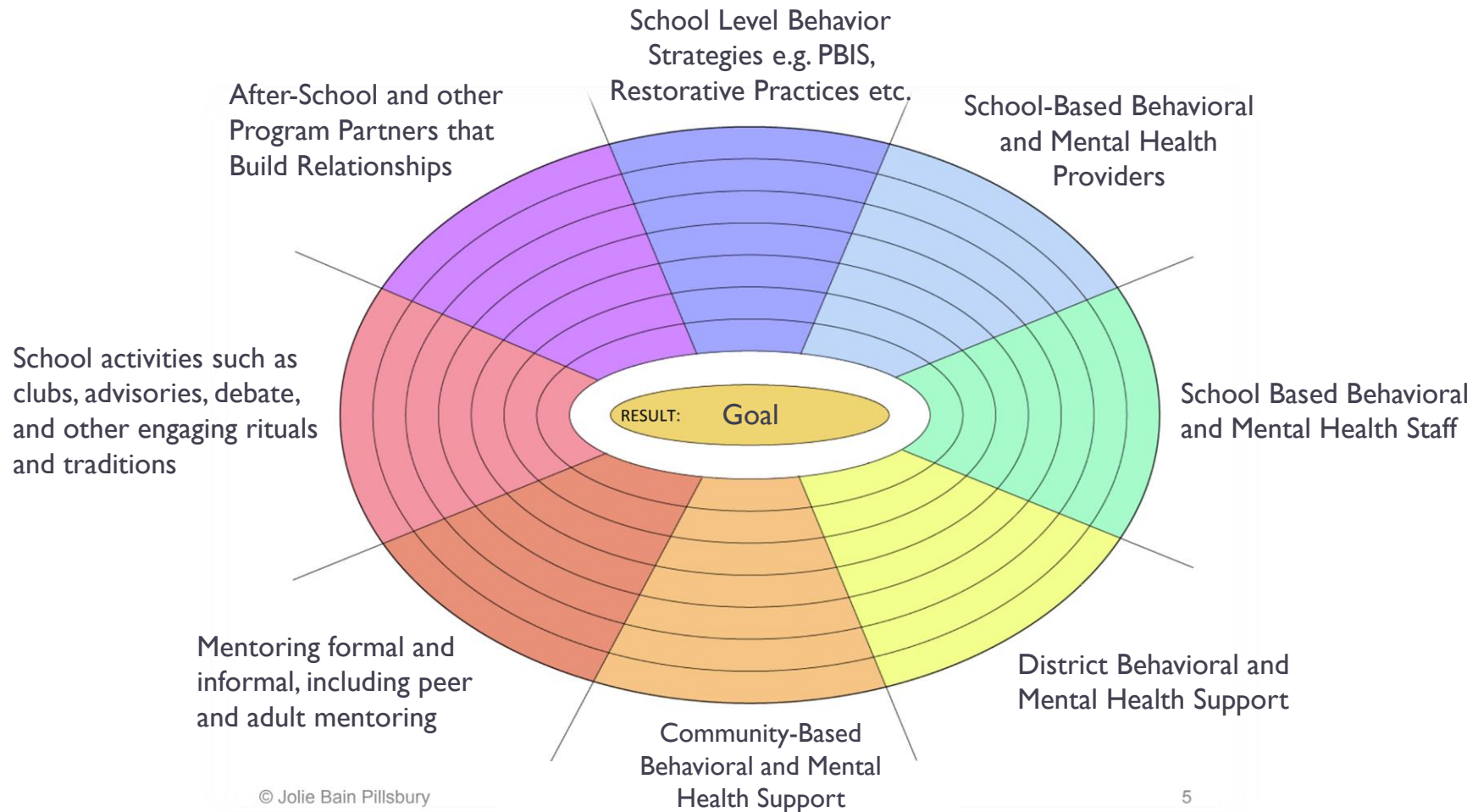
Align Interventions to Reasons for Absences

Reason for Absence	Possible Interventions	Potential Partner
Anxiety About In-Person School	• Enlist trusted messengers (e.g. doctors) to talk with families • Review health and safety protocols • Hold a virtual open house to answer questions and address concerns • Make school counselors available for consultation	Local pediatricians Promotoras *(community health workers)* Public health clinic
Not understanding the impact of absences	• Create an education campaign that connects academic achievement with attendance • When working with individual families, explore their hopes for their child and help connect them to school and attendance	Mayor's Office United Way Family Resource Center
Schedules Out-of-Sync	• Offer before or after school programming • Organize a walking school bus • Provide a modified schedule that aligns school and family schedules	Parks & Rec program Boys & Girls Club
Transportation Barriers	• *Share ideas in the chat…*	

Assess and Expand Mental, Behavior, Relational and Emotional Supports

Goal: Engage and support students socially and emotionally.

School Level Behavior Strategies e.g. PBIS, Restorative Practices etc.

After-School and other Program Partners that Build Relationships

School-Based Behavioral and Mental Health Providers

School activities such as clubs, advisories, debate, and other engaging rituals and traditions

School Based Behavioral and Mental Health Staff

RESULT: Goal

Mentoring formal and informal, including peer and adult mentoring

District Behavioral and Mental Health Support

Community-Based Behavioral and Mental Health Support

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List of External Partners

❖ Use this worksheet to help keep track of your external partners

❖ Be sure to update the list on a regular basis

https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/List-of-External-Partners.docx

External Partners

School _____   District _____

Primary School / District Contact

Name _____   Title/Position: _____

Email: _____   Phone _____

Name of Partner	Contact Info. (name, email, phone)	What is being provided?	Who is being served?	Time Period of Partnership	Who established this partnership? (name, email, phone)	Last updated on (mm/dd/yy)*
EXAMPLE: Springfield County Food Bank	name, email, phone#	food	all students	SY 2021-2022	name, email, phone#	8/1/21

Update the information for each partner at least annually.

Team Function #5:
Determine if you are making a difference

Measuring Progress

Answer these four key questions:

1. How much did we do? *(quantity)*

2. How well did we do it? *(quality)*

3. What difference did we make for the students who received support?

4. What was the impact on the school as a whole?

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Questions from the Audience

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