

Reducing Chronic Absence: What Will It Take?



*An overview of why it matters and
key ingredients for improving
student attendance*



Hedy Chang, Director

Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

- The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

Chronic Absence

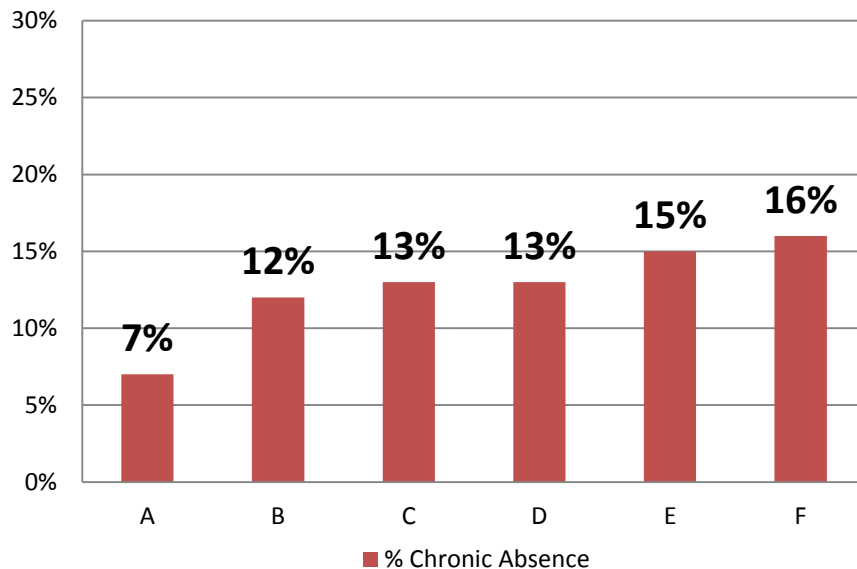
- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school starting in Kindergarten.



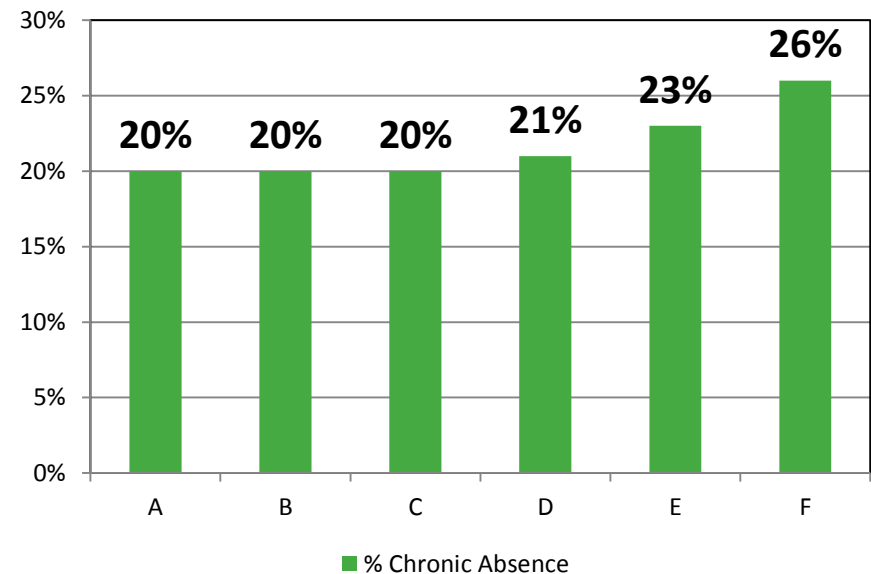
High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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



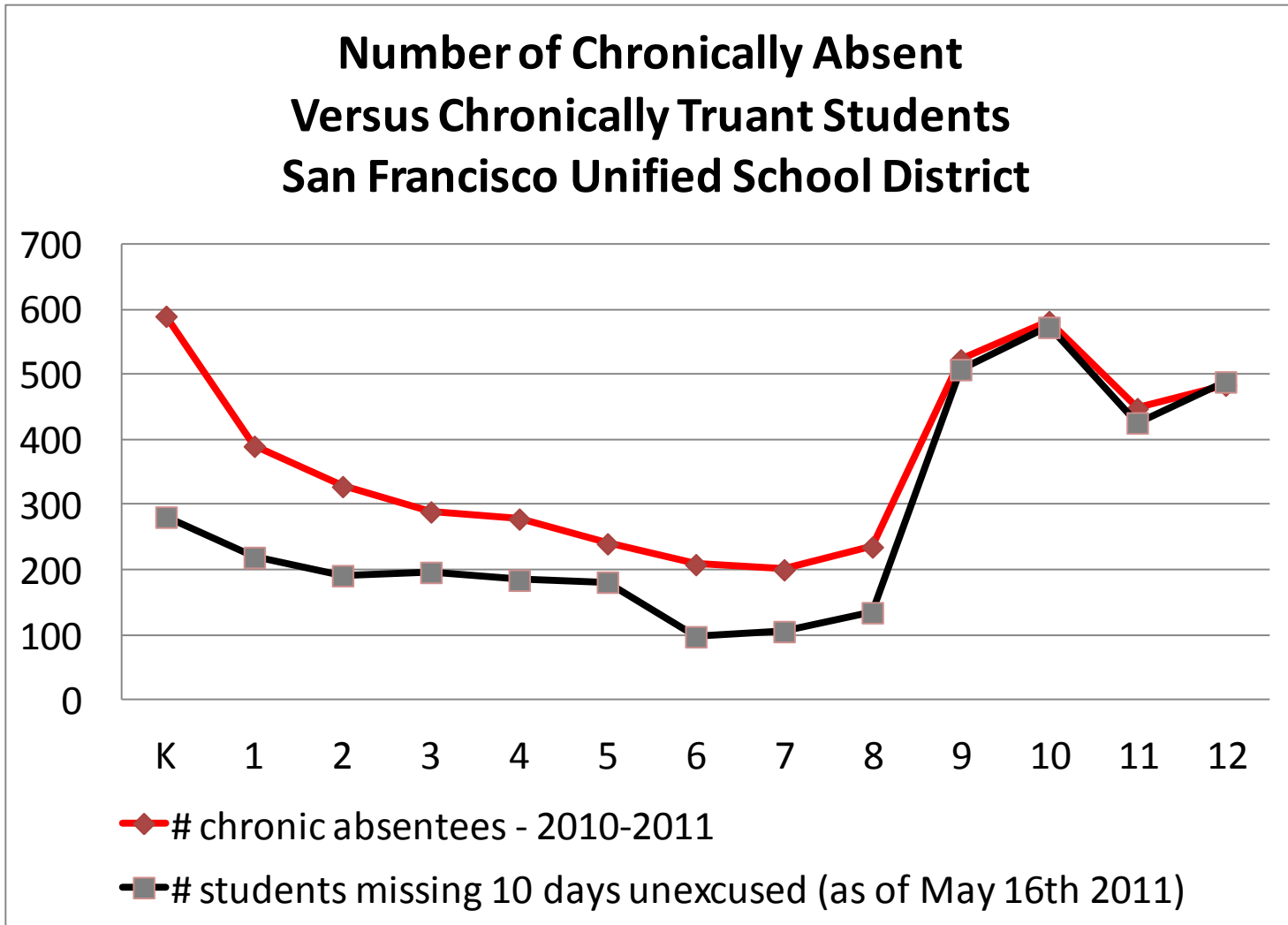
Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



98% ADA = little chronic absence
95% ADA = don't know
93% ADA = significant chronic absence

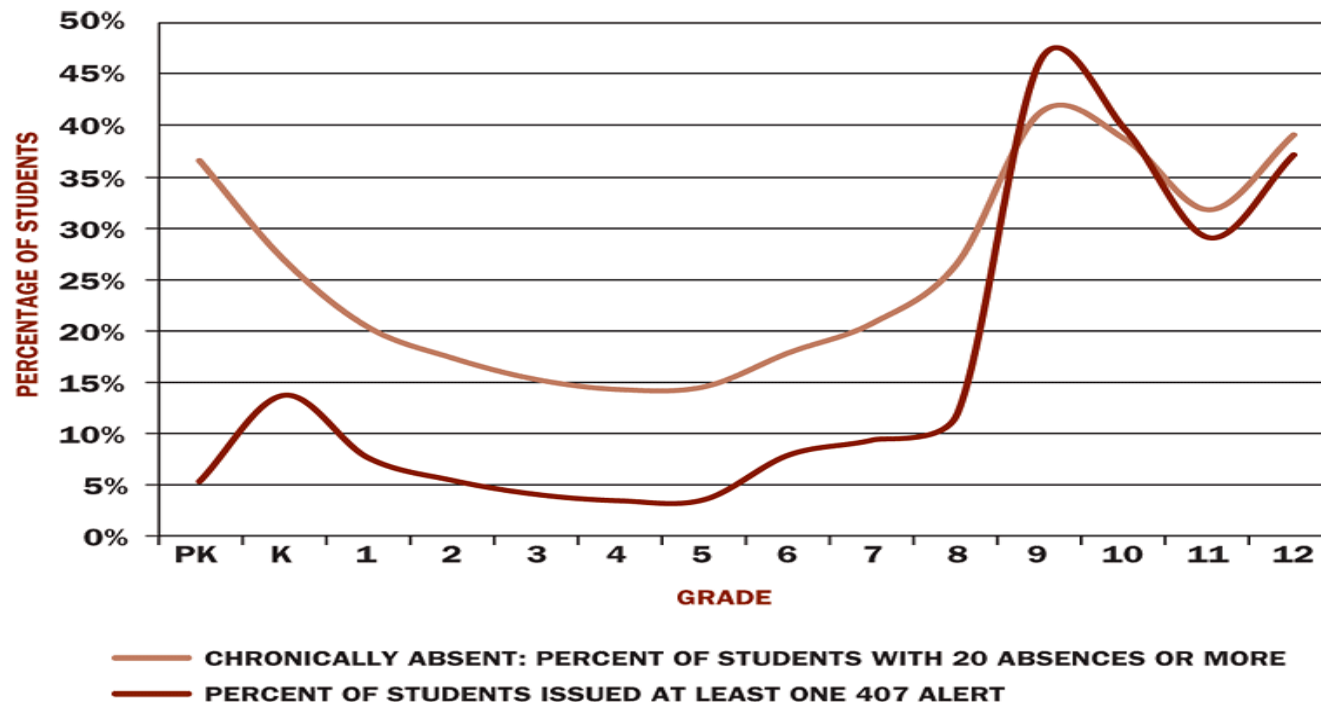


Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence



Sporadic – Not Just Consecutive – Absences Matter

New York City Schools (2008)



- A 407 alert is issued when a student misses 10 consecutive days or 20 days over a 40 day period. It misses more sporadic absence.
- 1 out of 5 elementary school children were chronically absent.

Source: Nauer, K. et al, *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, Center for New York City Affairs New School, Oct 2008

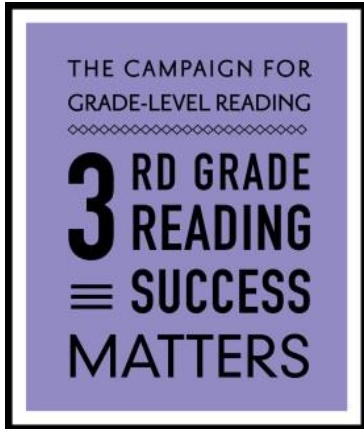


Chronic Absence: A Hidden National Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as 10-15% of students (7.5 million) miss nearly a month of school every year. That's 135 million days of lost time in the classroom.
- ❑ In some cities, as many as one in four students are missing that much school.
- ❑ Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.
- ❑ Poor attendance isn't just a problem in high school. It can start as early as kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

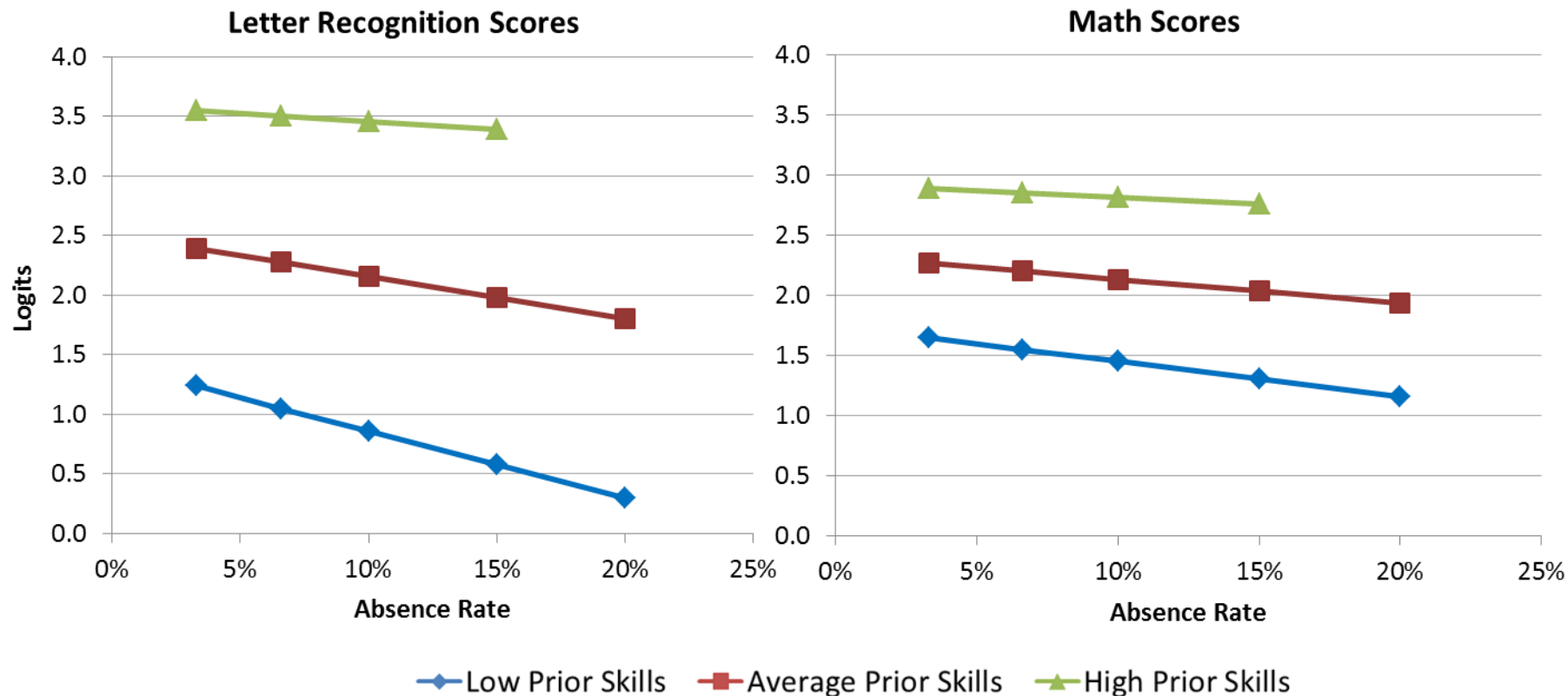


The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is focusing on three challenges to reading success that are amenable to community solutions:

- **The Readiness Gap:** Too many children from low-income families begin school already far behind.
- **The Attendance Gap (Chronic Absence):** Too many children from low-income families miss too many days of school.
- **The Summer Slide (Summer Learning Loss):** Too many children lose ground over the summer months.

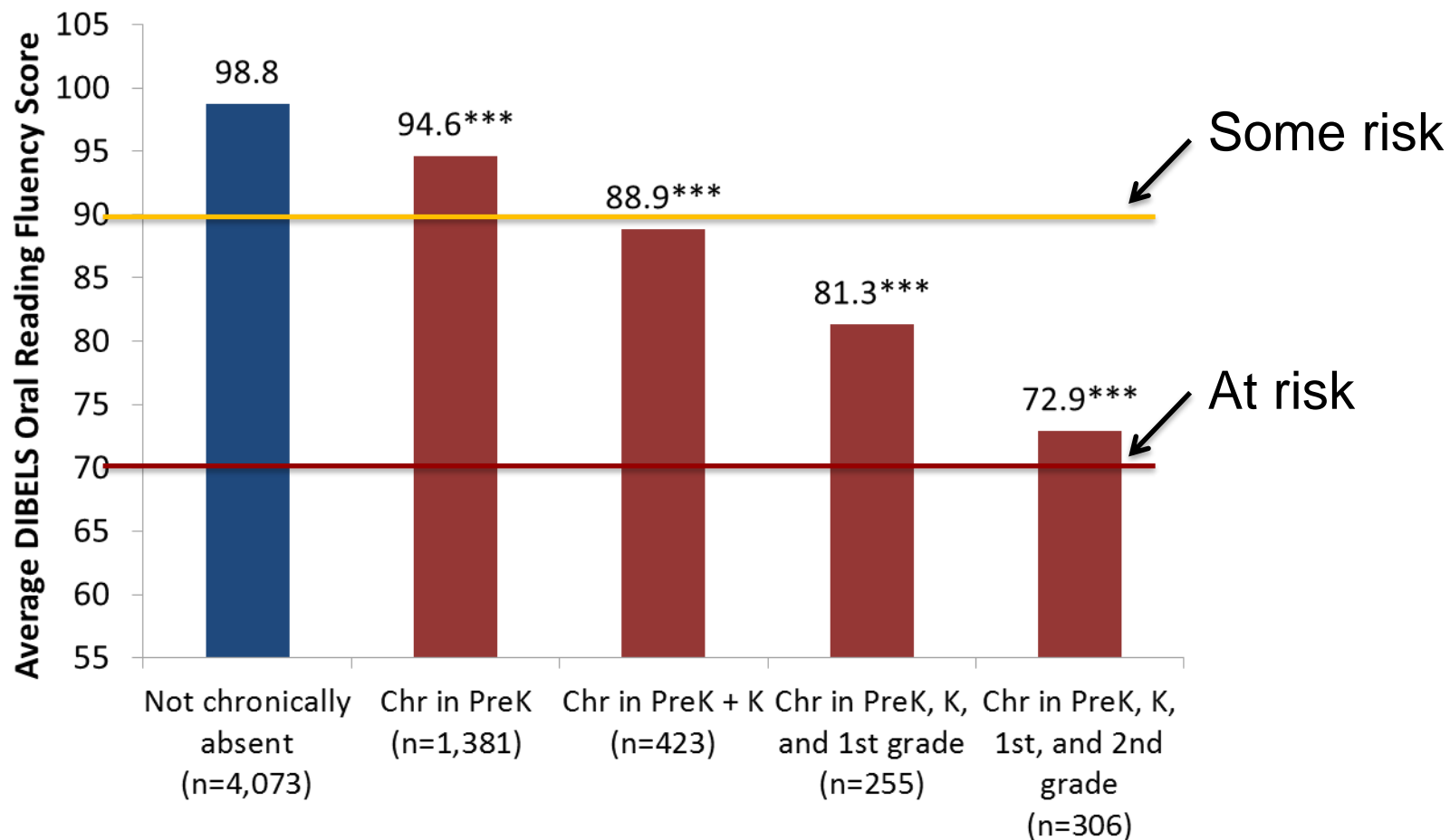


Starting in preK, chronic absence affects learning and school readiness. Attendance matters most for the children who enter the farthest behind.



Analyses control for prior preschool experience, race, gender, neighborhood poverty and social status, special education status, ELL status, and program type. Missing data points represent values with fewer than 30 students.

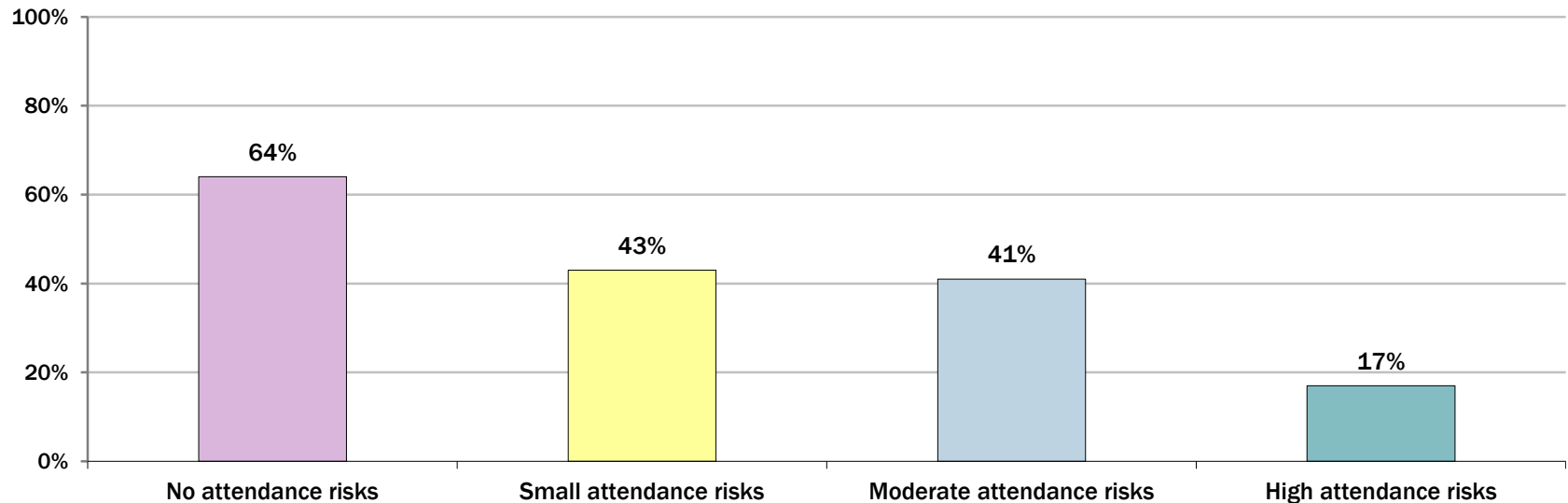
Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2nd grade scores



* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at $p < .05$ level; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1st Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1st Grade



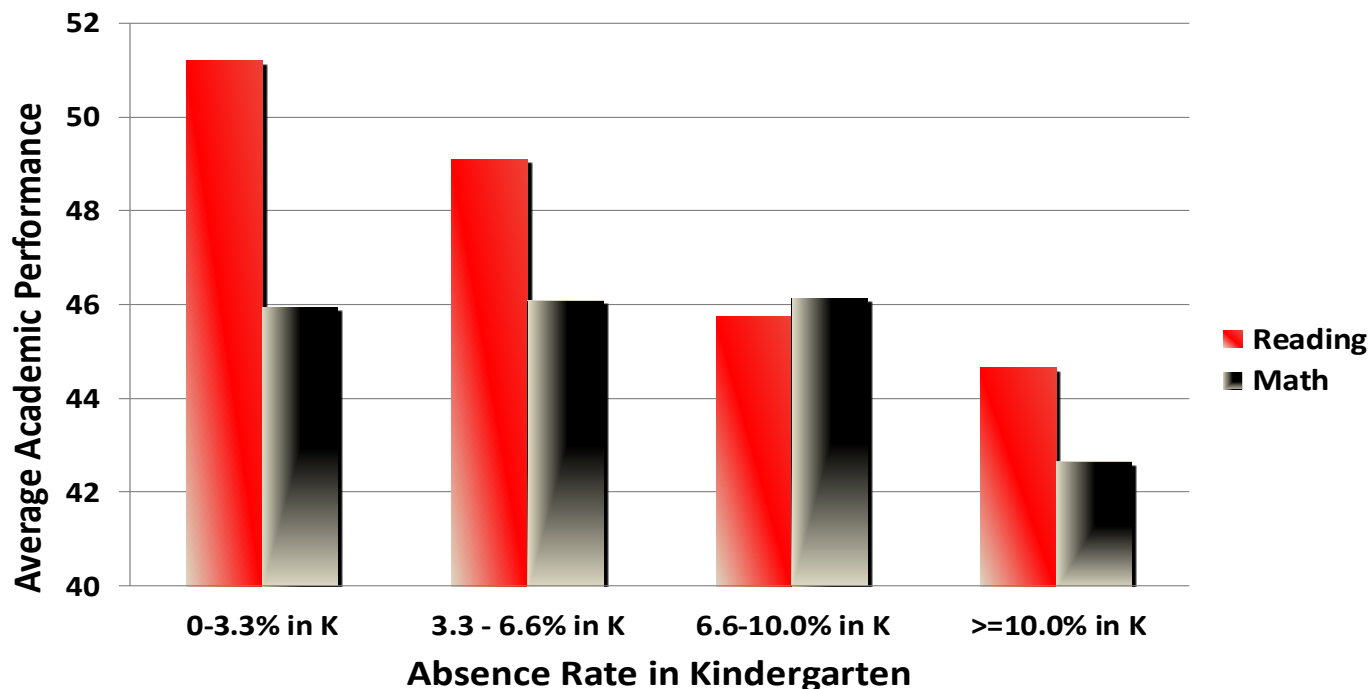
No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1 st
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1 st
Moderate risk	Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year
High risk	Missed 10% or more in K & 1 st

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)



The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading performance by K attendance for children living in poverty. Academic performance was lower even if attendance had improved in 3rd grade.



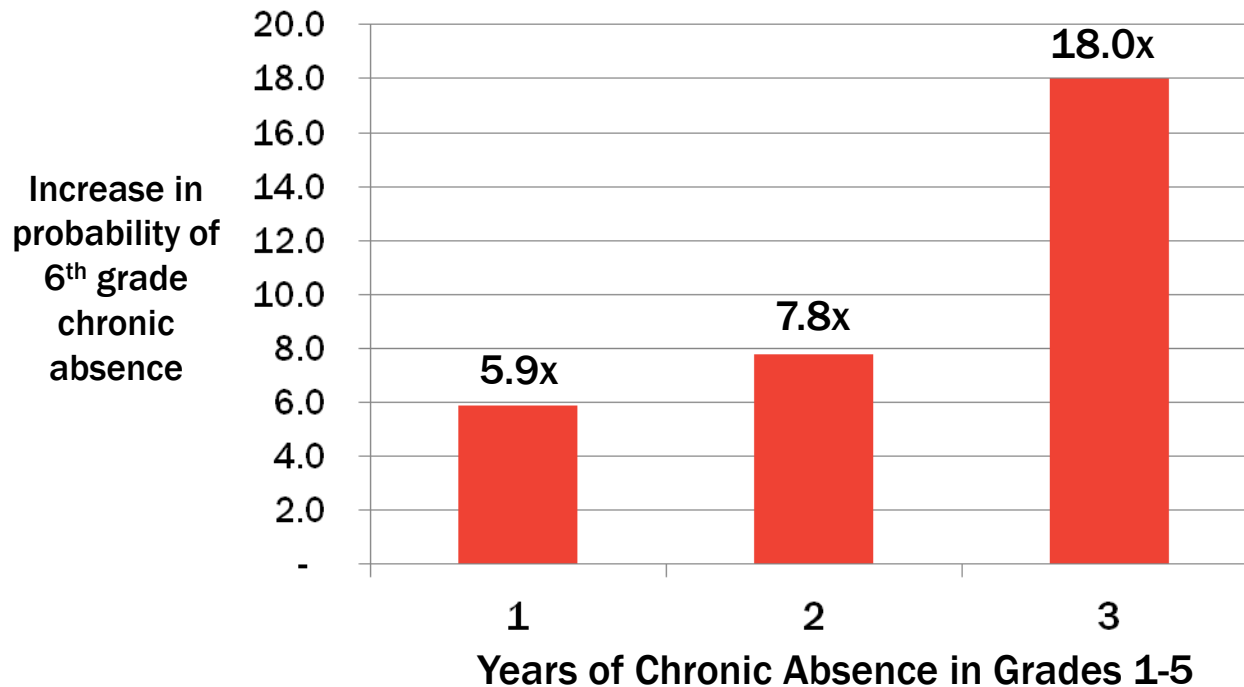
Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.



Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

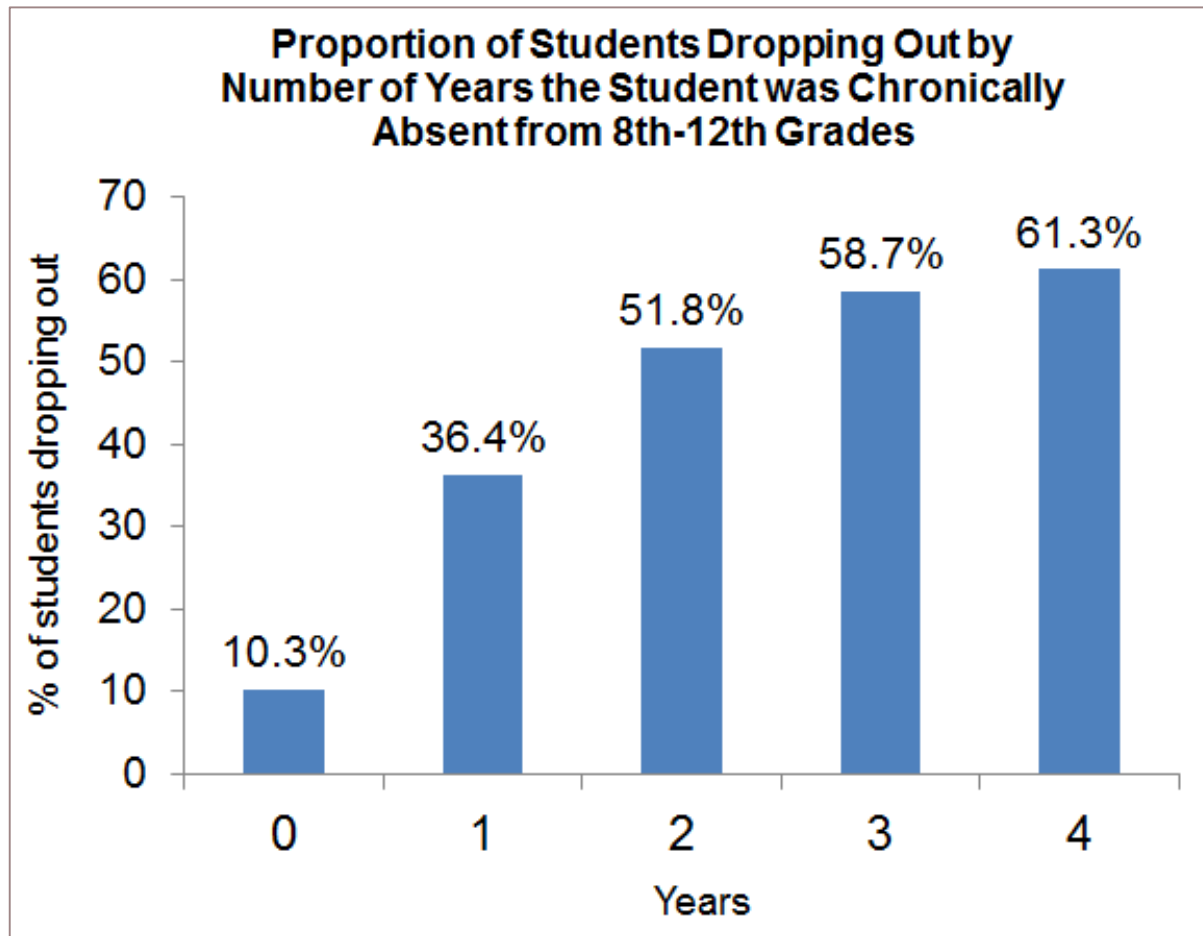
Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6th grade



Chronic absence in 1st grade is also associated with:

- Lower 6th grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

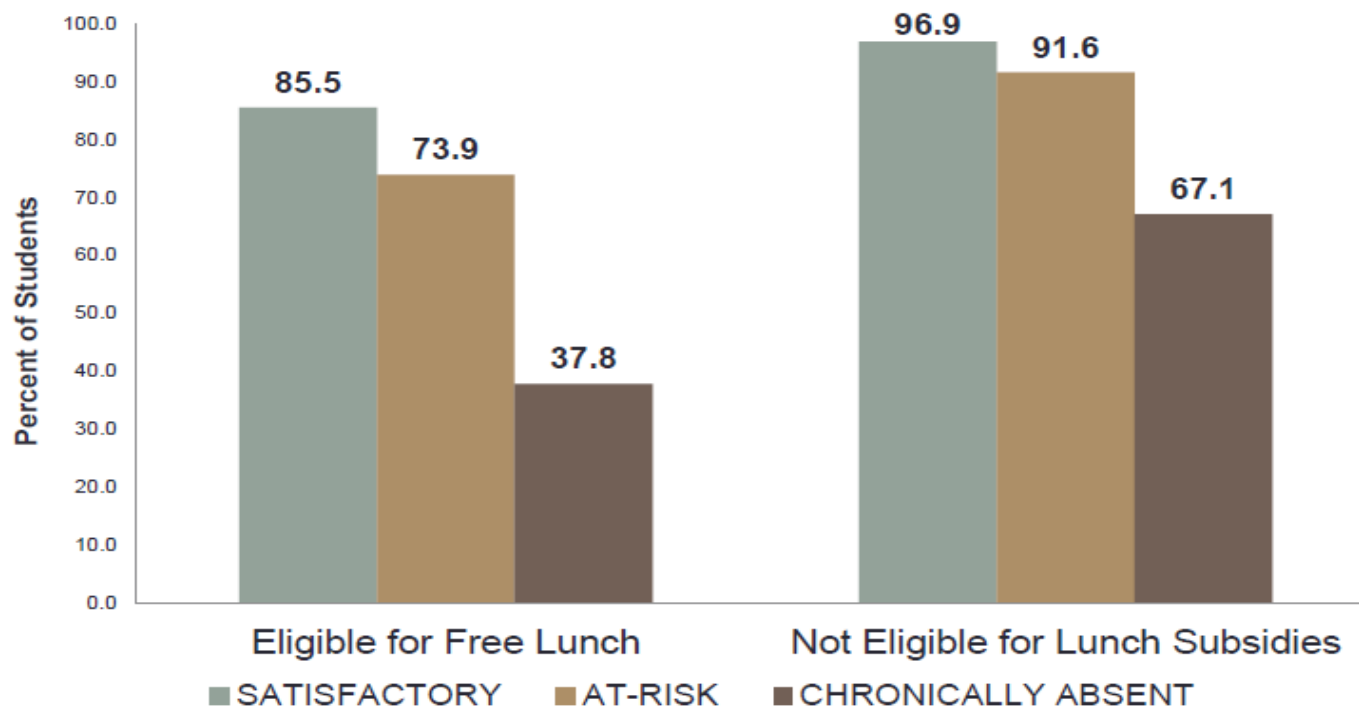
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

Poor Attendance Is A Problem Across Income; But Even More Important For Students In Poverty

Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in 4 Years by Lunch Eligibility



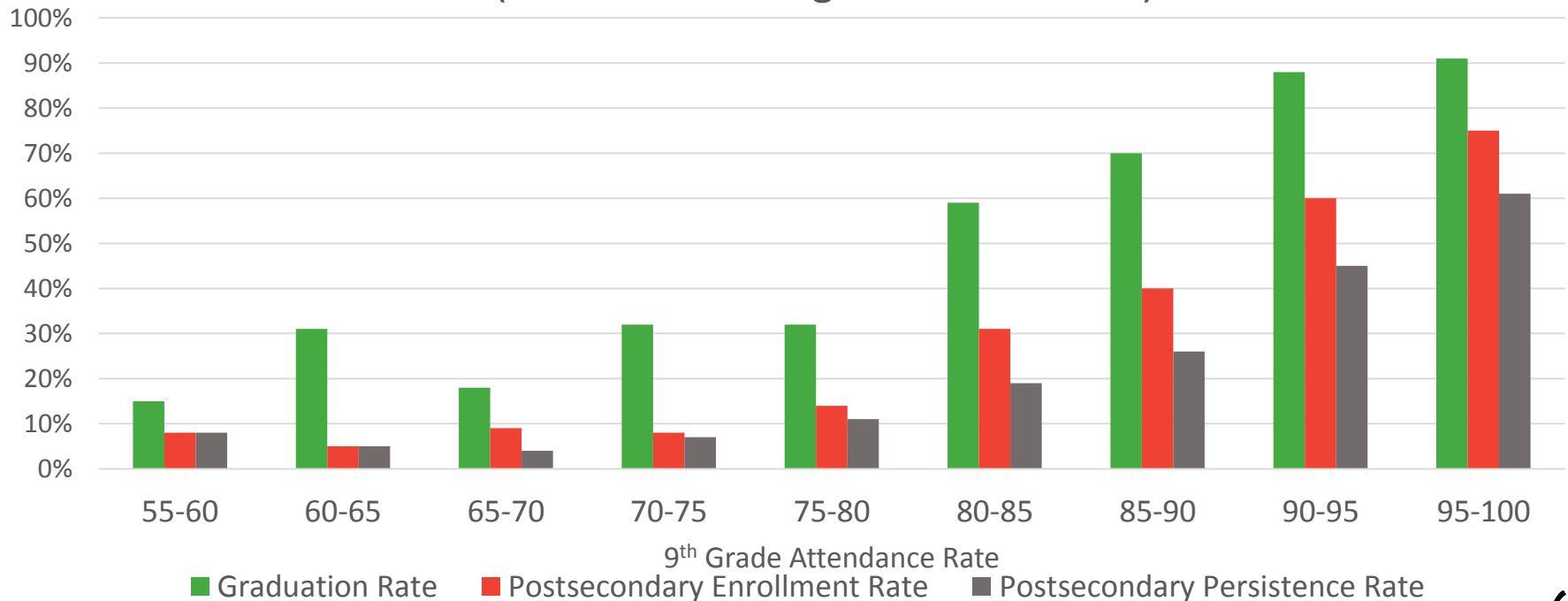
Presentation to: The Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap November 7, 2013, CT State Dept of Education.



Emerging data suggests good attendance = more success in college

Student Attendance and Postsecondary Success in Pittsburgh Public Schools

(Source: Pittsburgh Public Schools)



Why Are Students Chronically Absent?

Myths

Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused

Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem

Attendance only matters in the older grades

Barriers

Lack of access to health care

Poor transportation

No safe path to school

Aversion

Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Going to School Every Day Reflects...

Hope

for a better future

+

Faith

that school will help you or your child succeed

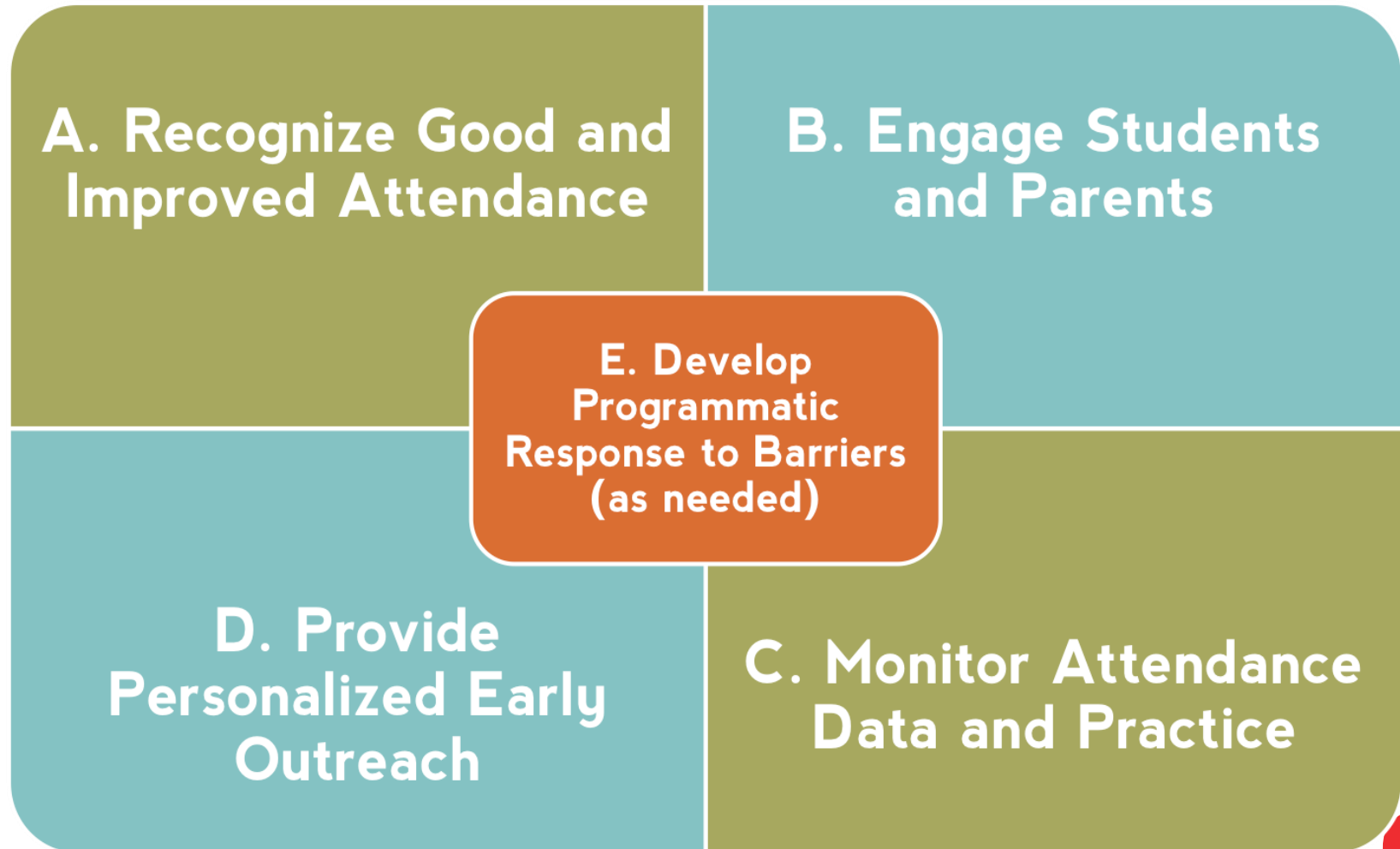
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Capacity

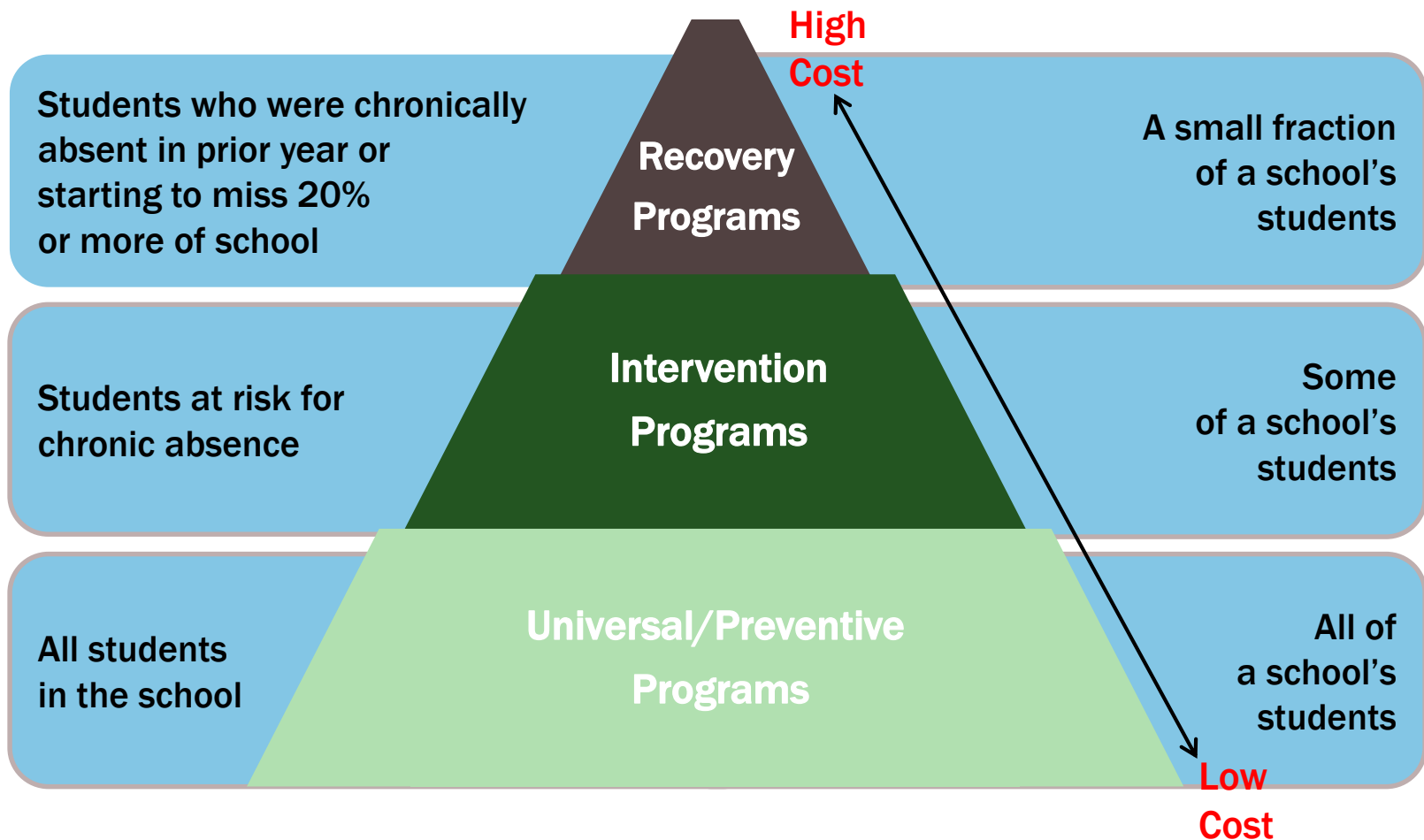
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



Universal Strategies for Building a Culture of Attendance & Identifying Barriers



Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



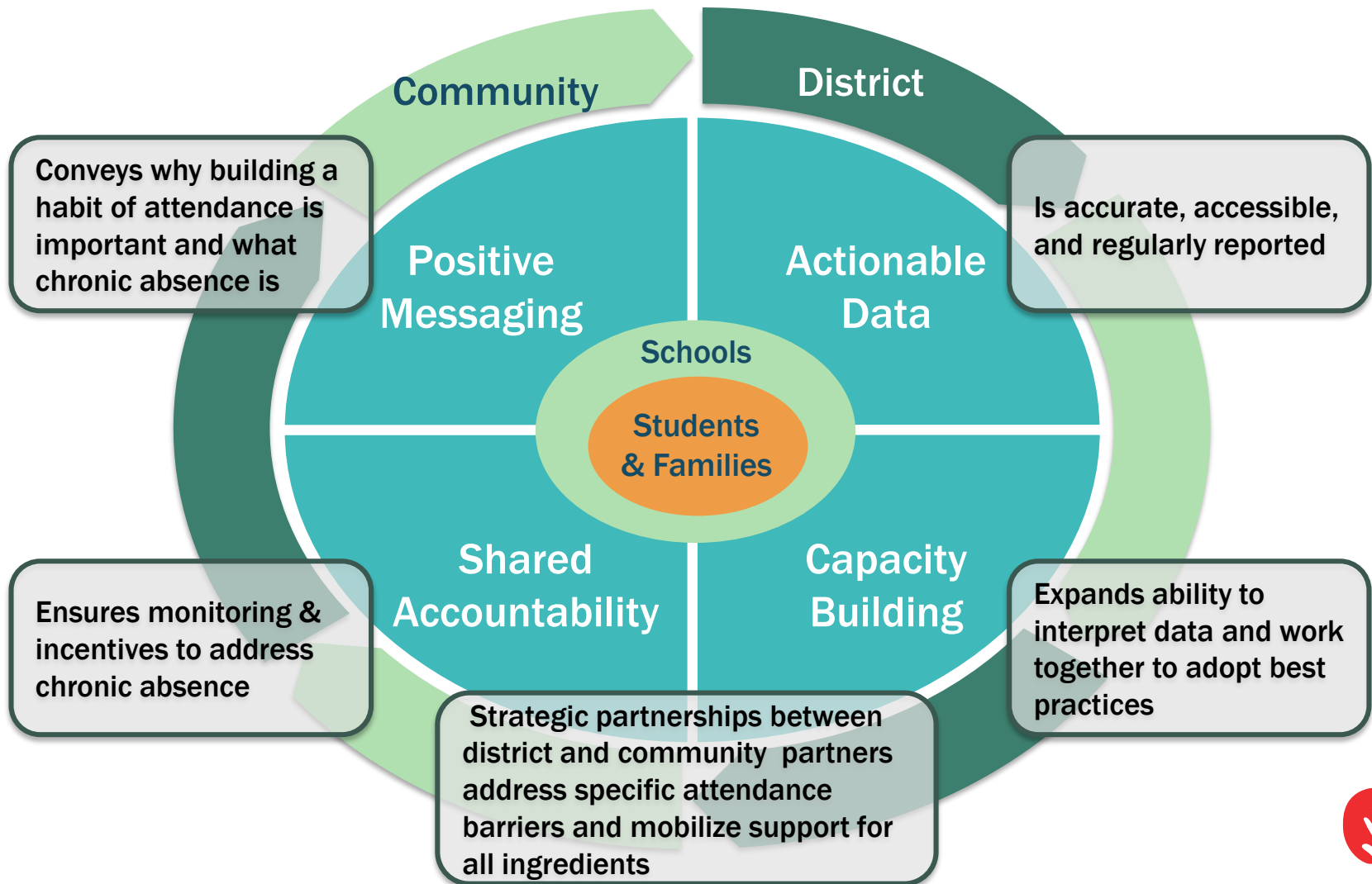
Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools (2009-10)

	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%



Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability



The Superintendents Call to Action

**Own the
Issue**

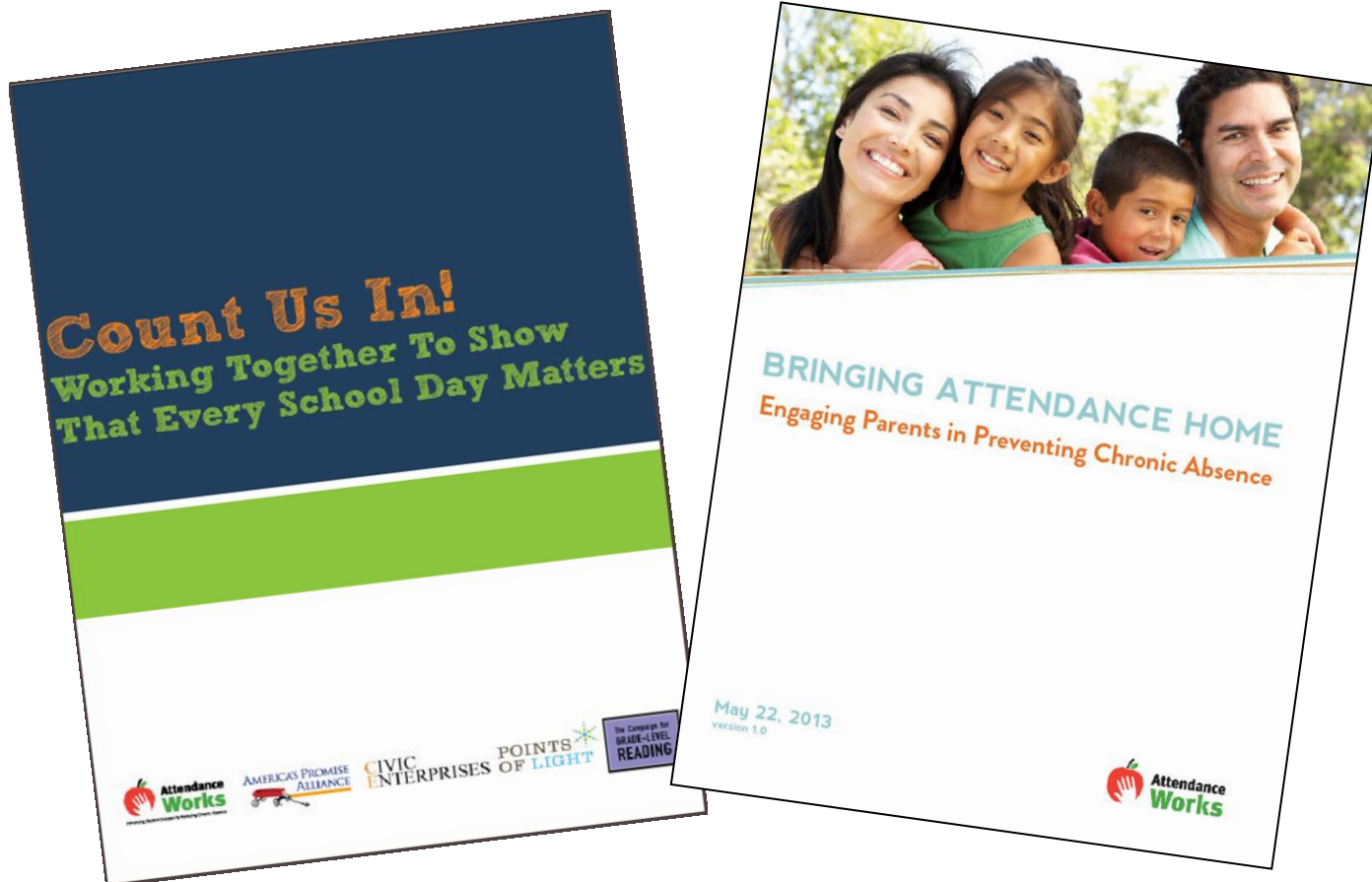
**Mobilize
the
Community**

**Drive With
Data**

*To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit:
www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action*



Using September to Promote Attendance Awareness



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/>

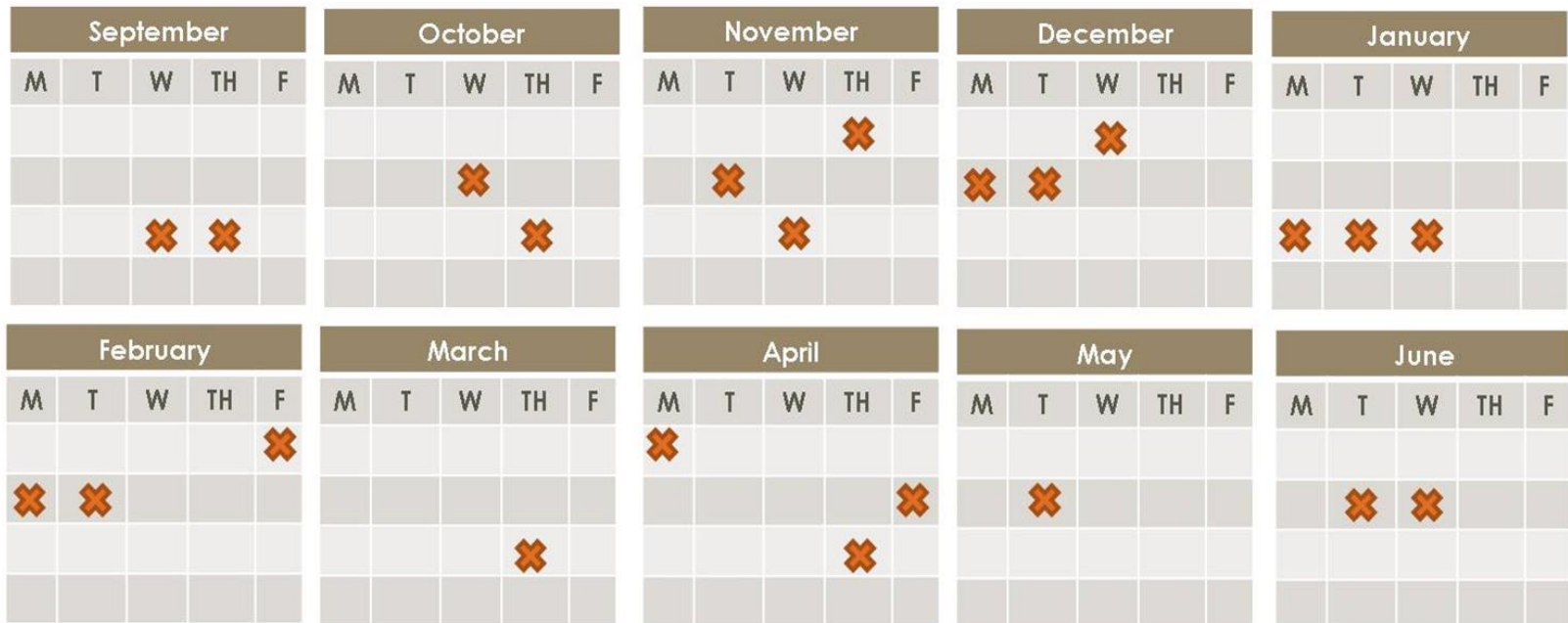
Key Messages

Key Message #1: Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the work place.



Key Messages

Key Message #2: Absences add up. Excused and unexcused absences result in too much time lost in the classroom.



Key Messages

Key Message #3: Chronic absence, missing 10 percent of the school year or more, affects the whole classroom, not just the students who miss school.



Key Messages

Key Message #4: We need to monitor how many days each student misses school for *any* reason — excused, unexcused or suspensions — so we can intervene early.

Which students at this school are at risk?			
List of All Grade K -5 Students with Chronic or Severe Chronic Absence			
Elementary School			
2010-2011			
First Name	Middle Name/Initial	Last Name	Absence Type
STUDENT		A	satisfactory
STUDENT		B	satisfactory
STUDENT		C	chronic
STUDENT		D	at risk
STUDENT		E	satisfactory
STUDENT		F	satisfactory
STUDENT		G	at risk
STUDENT		H	satisfactory
STUDENT		I	satisfactory
STUDENT		J	satisfactory
STUDENT		K	satisfactory
STUDENT		L	at risk
STUDENT		M	at risk



Key Messages

Key Message #5: Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community, including parents and schools, gets involved.



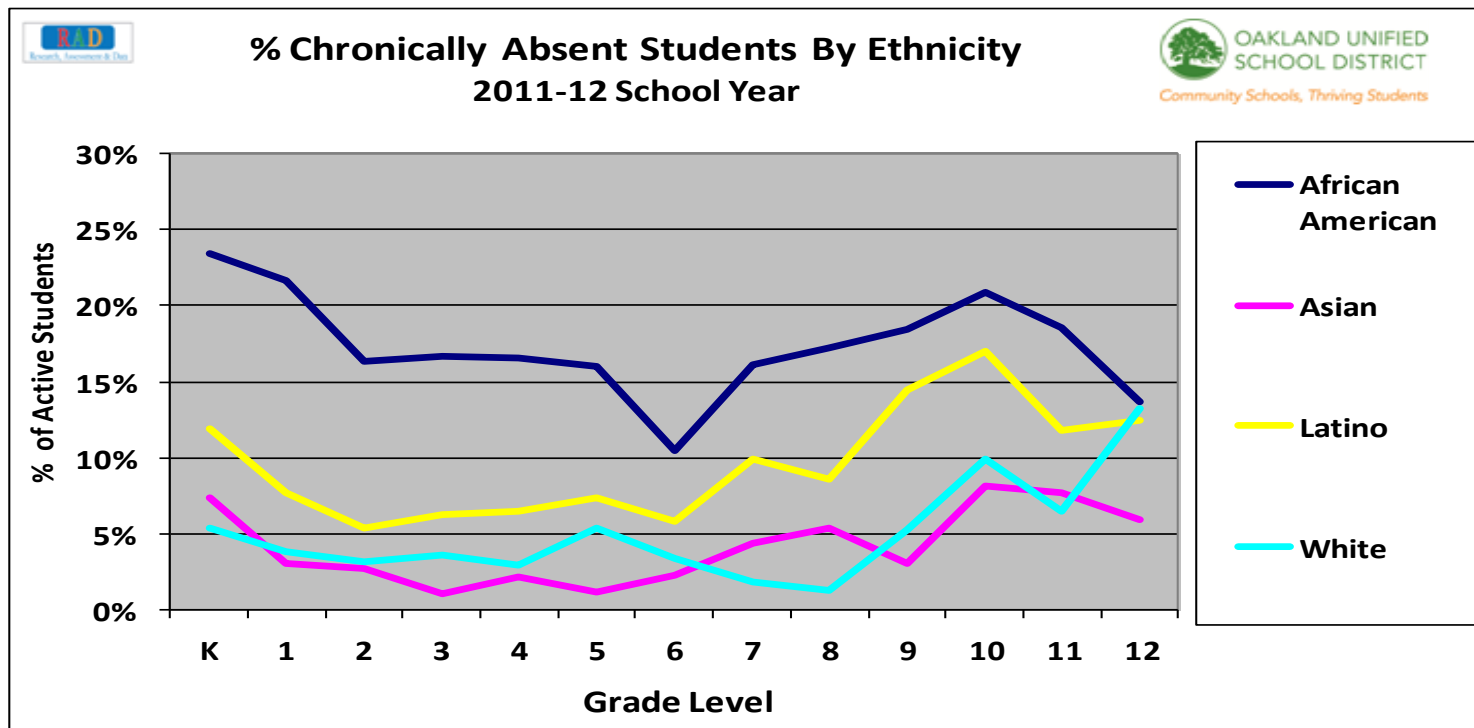
Key Messages

Key Message #6: Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.



Key Messages

Key Message #7: Reducing chronic absence can help close achievement gaps.



Chronic Absence =

The Warning Light On A Car Dashboard

The Parallels



- Ignore it at your personal peril!
- Address early or potentially pay more (lots more) later.
- The key is to ask why is this blinking? What could this mean?

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**Attendance
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