

WEBINAR SERIES

2025 Legislative Prep Session: Education Challenges and Solutions

ELIMINATING CHRONIC ABSENCE

@LPI_Learning



Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Opening Remarks



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Learning Policy Institute

@LPI_Learning

2025 Legislative Prep Session: Education Challenges Solutions



Building and Retaining the Teacher Workforce

Tuesday, December 3, 3 – 4 PM ET

Long-Term Solutions to Teacher Shortages

Thursday, December 5, 1 – 2 PM ET

Eliminating Chronic Absence

Tuesday, December 10, 1 – 2 PM ET

Emerging Topics in Education Finance

Thursday, December 12, 3 – 4 PM ET

Research Presentation



Hedy Chang

Executive Director,
Attendance Works



Emily Germain, PhD

Researcher, Learning
Policy Institute

Addressing Our Attendance Crisis



Defining Terms

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

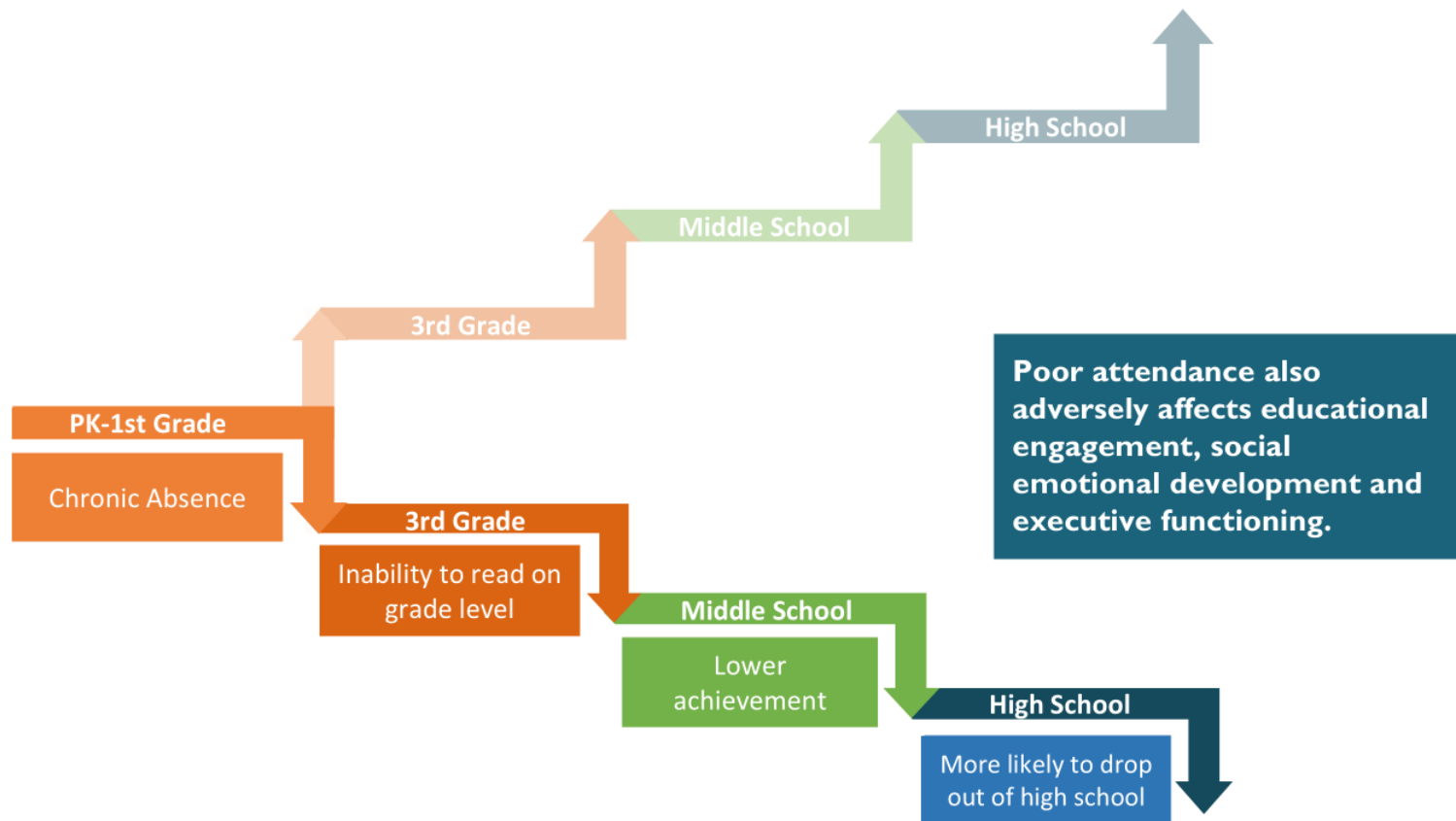
Truancy

- ▲ Counts **ONLY** unexcused absences
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Uses legal, typically more blaming and punitive, solutions

Chronic Absence

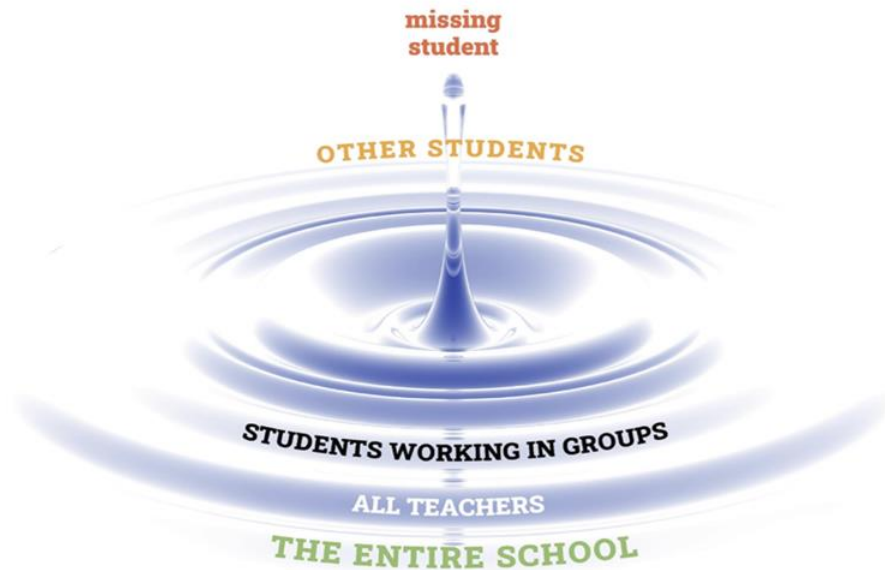
- Missing 10% counts **ALL** absences (*excused, unexcused, & suspensions*)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days and the benefits of being present
- Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies
- Cultivates family and student engagement

Improving Attendance Matters K-12

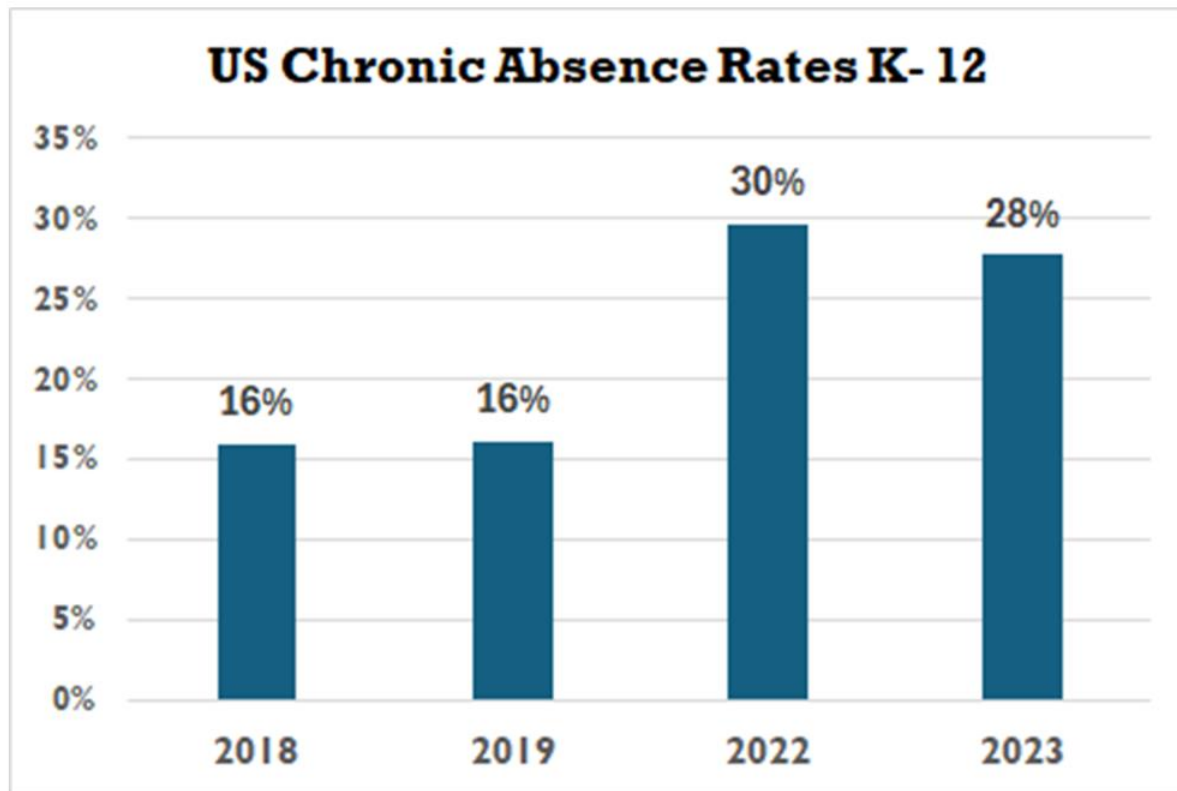




A High Level of Chronic Absence Affects Everyone



National Chronic Absence Crisis

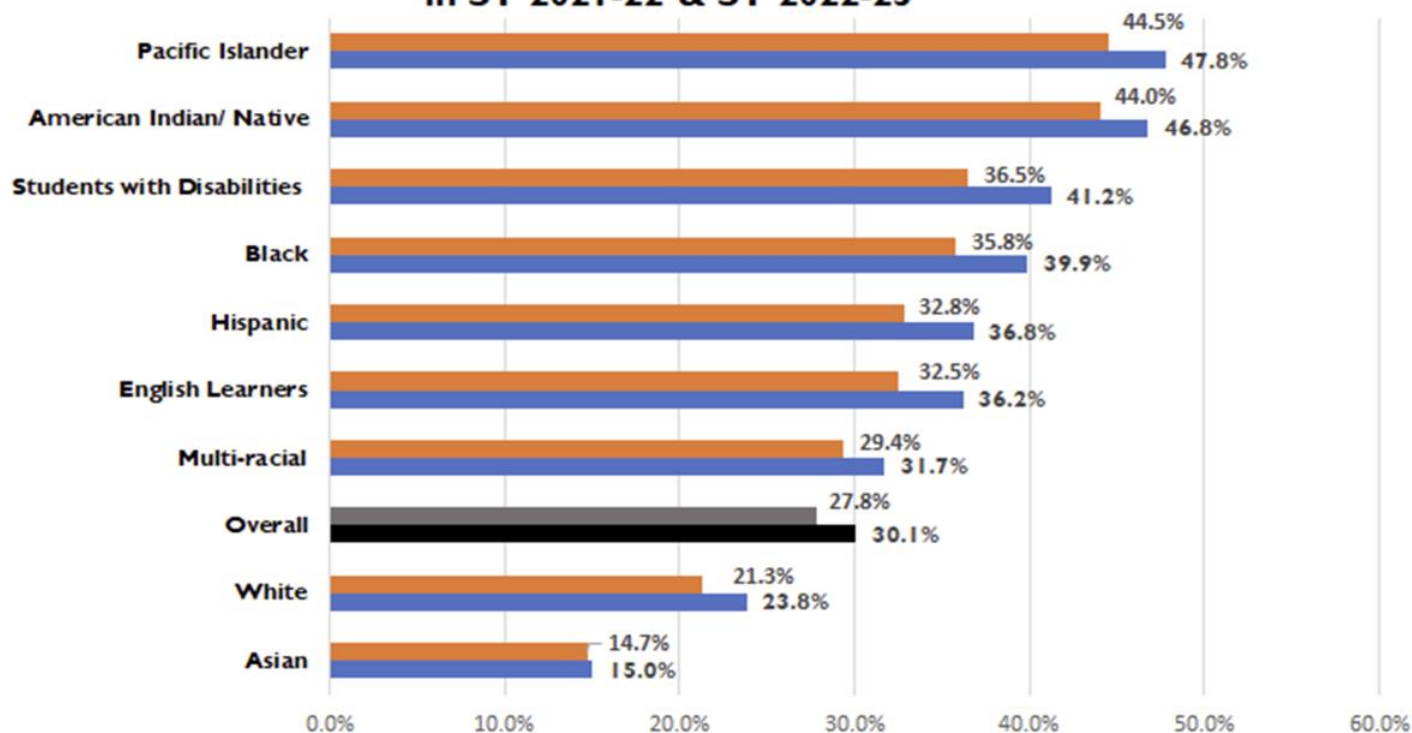


Source: US Department of Education, Ed Facts

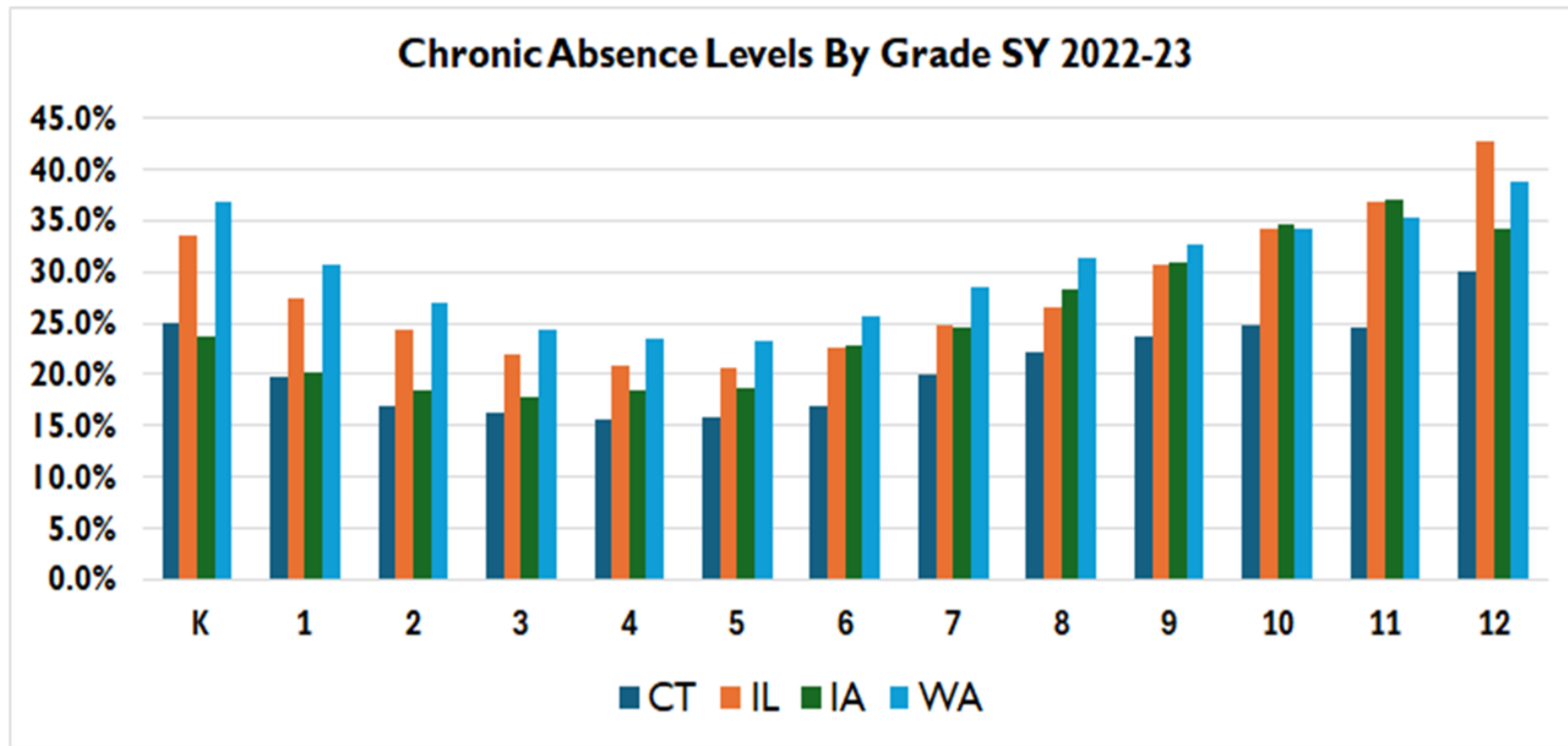
- ✓ The number of chronically absent students grew from 8.1 to 14.7 million in 2022. It still affected 13.4 million in 2023.
- ✓ Emerging 2024 data shows some decrease but still elevated.

Chronically absent students are from all backgrounds. But some groups are more affected.

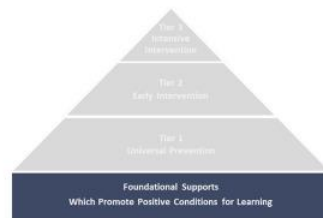
**Chart I. Chronic Absence Rates By Student Population
in SY 2021-22 & SY 2022-23**



Chronic Absence Is Higher in K and Secondary Grades



High levels of absence reflect an erosion in positive conditions for learning



The key to reducing chronic absence is addressing what causes students to miss too much school

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services (including health)
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to technology
- Community violence

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or lack of disability accommodations
- Caregivers had negative educational experiences

Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Need to work conflicts with being in high school

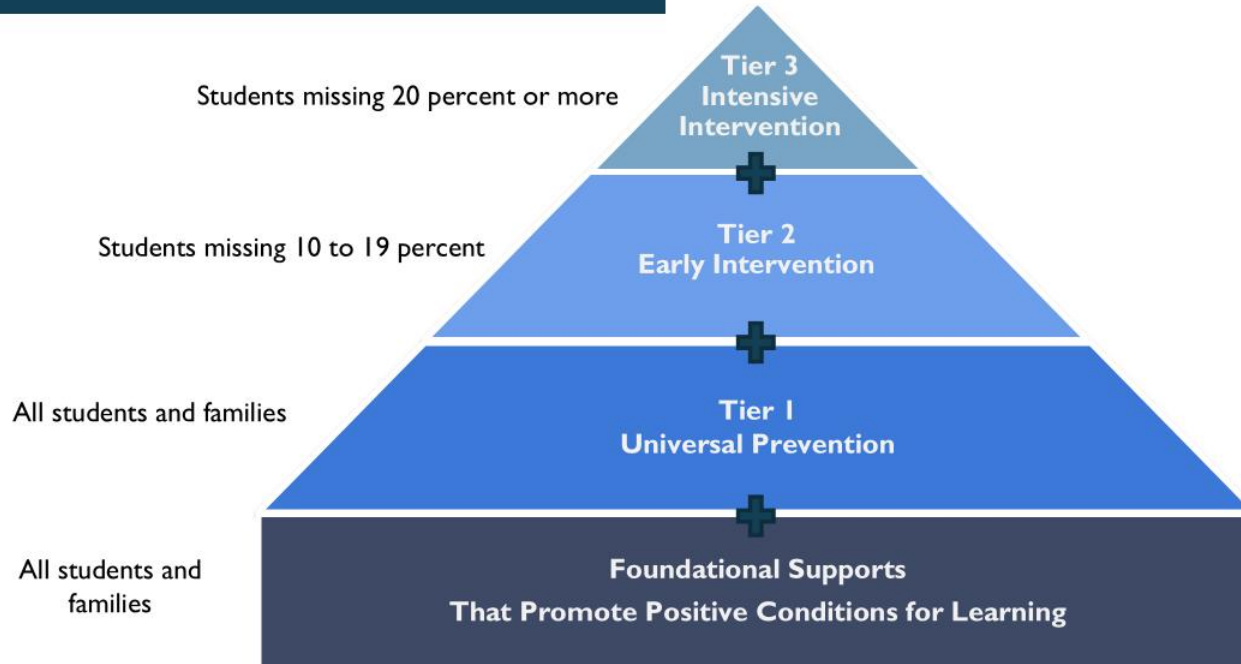
Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

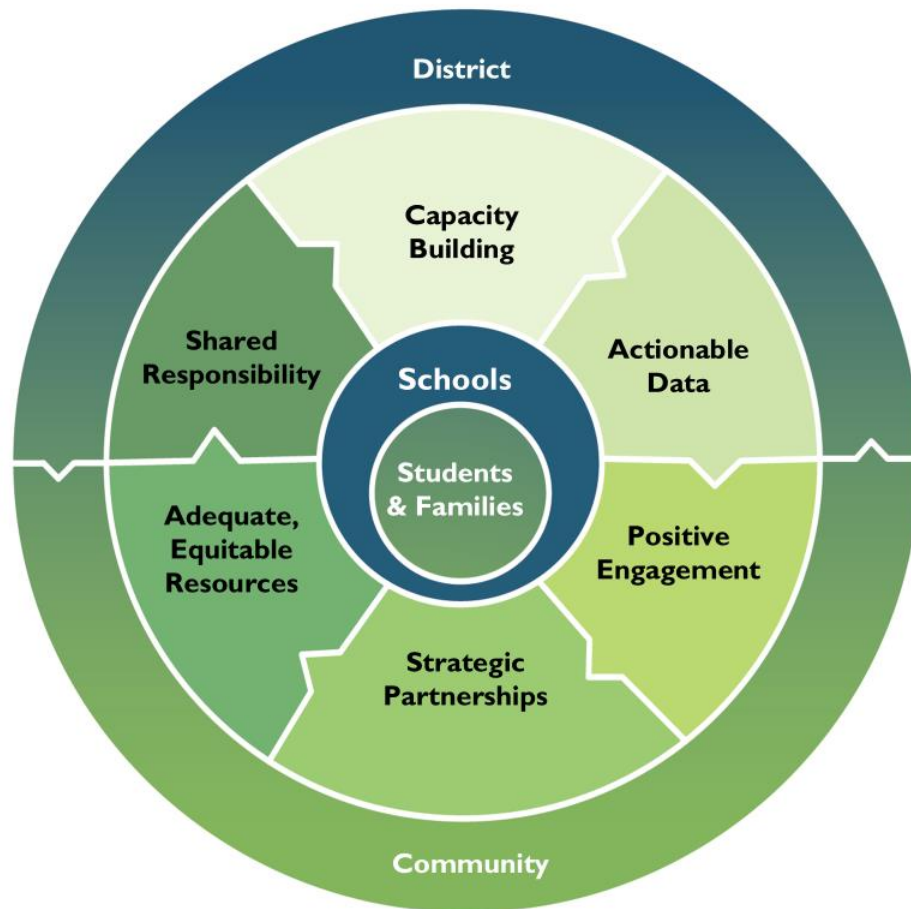
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/>



Multi-tiered support systems that begin with prevention are essential



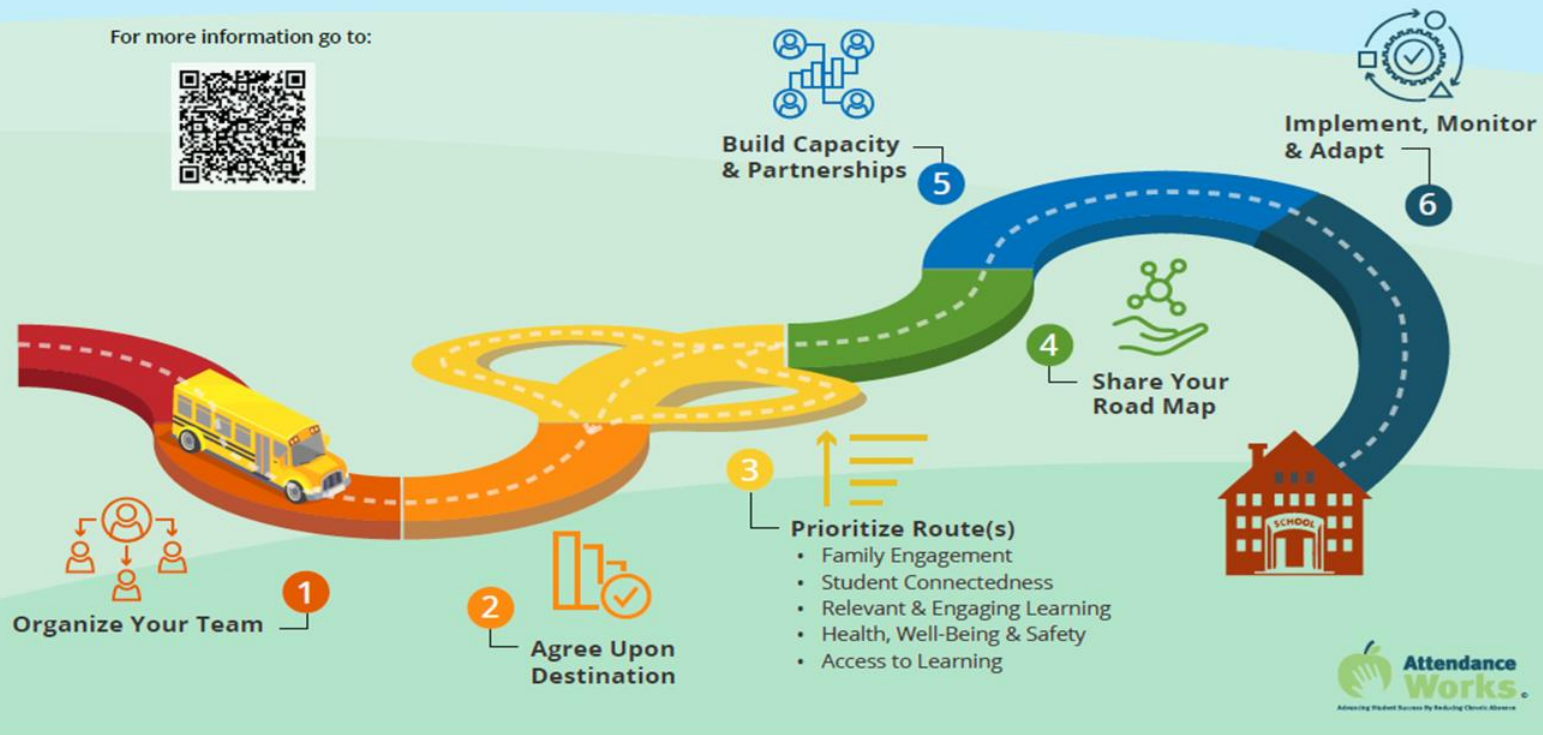
Key Ingredients for Improving Attendance



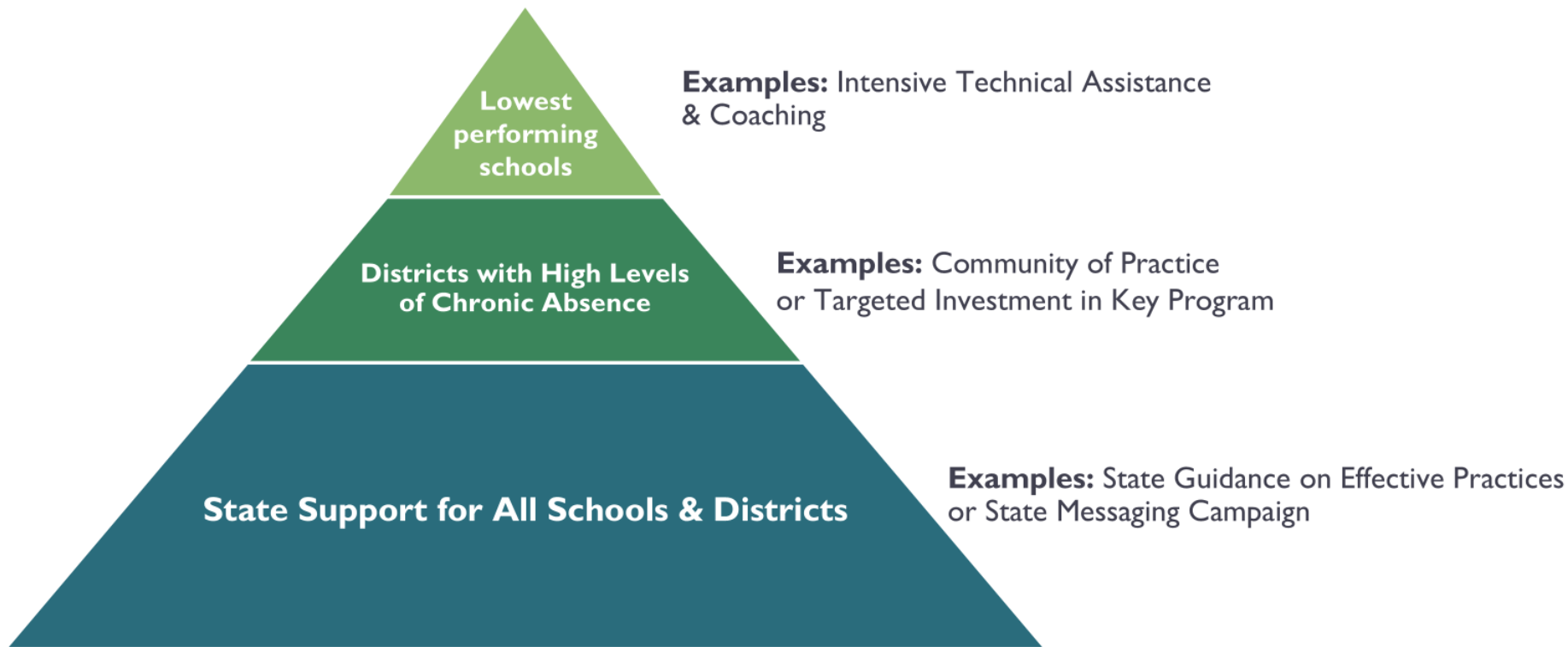
Cut Chronic Absenteeism by 50% Over 5 Years

Craft Your Engagement & Attendance State Road Map

For more information go to:



States must be prepared to address chronic absence that is both widespread and concentrated



Reducing Chronic Absence

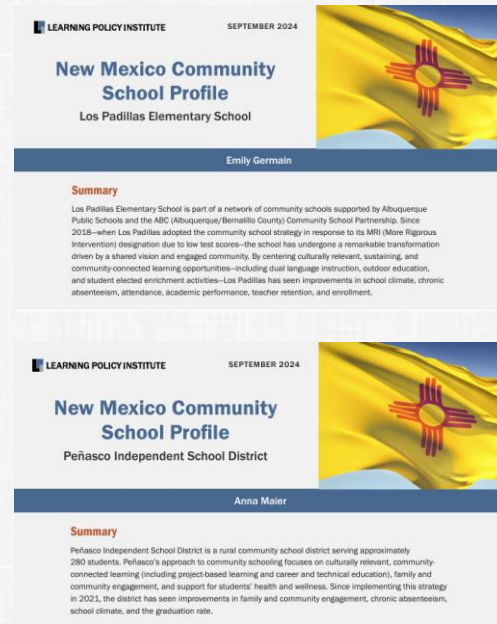
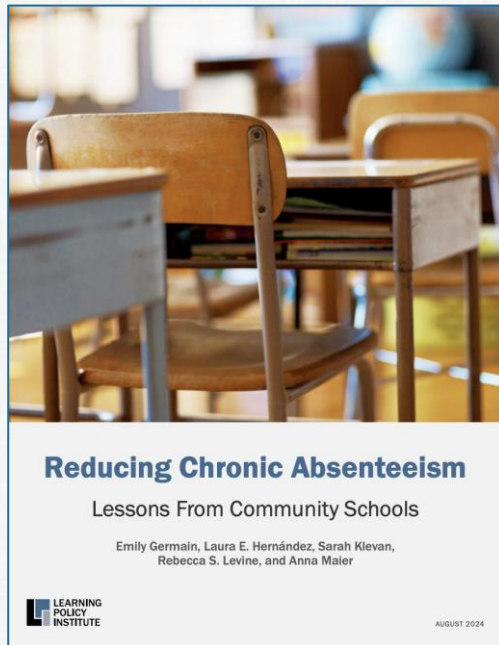


Lessons from Community Schools

Community Schools Seeing Drop in Absenteeism

LPI research shows that community schools are:

- Focused on chronic absence
- Using similar strategies across different sites and geographies
- Embracing whole child, tiered approaches to absence intervention
- Seeing results



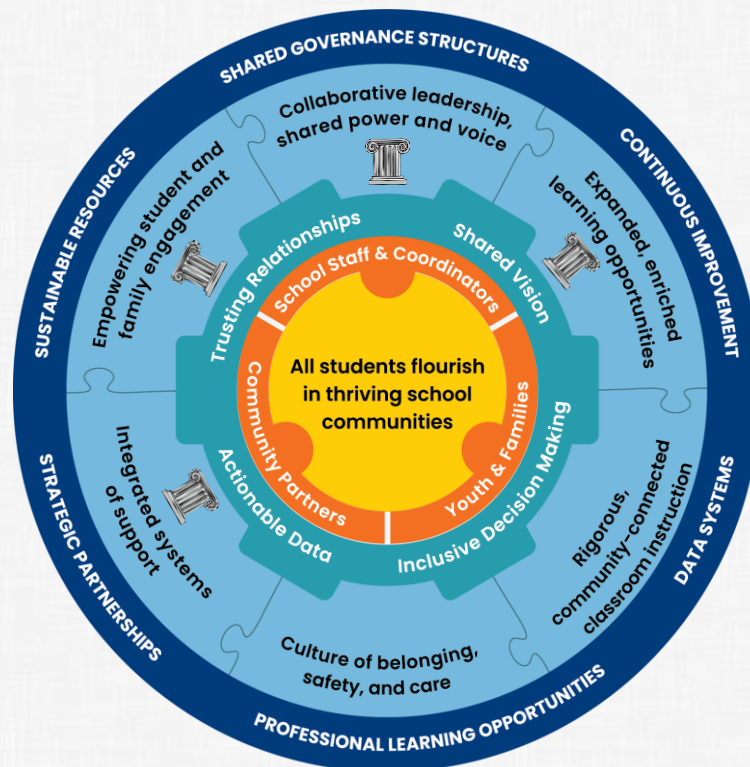


Community Schools Approaches to Addressing Chronic Absence



*Community Schools are a strategy
for organizing the resources of the
school and community around
student success.*

Essentials for Community School Transformation



LEGEND

- Why we do this work
- Who drives this work
- Enabling conditions
- Key school practices
- Supportive infrastructure

Because community schools are designed to eliminate in-school and out-of-school barriers to student success and well-being, they are well positioned to address chronic absence.

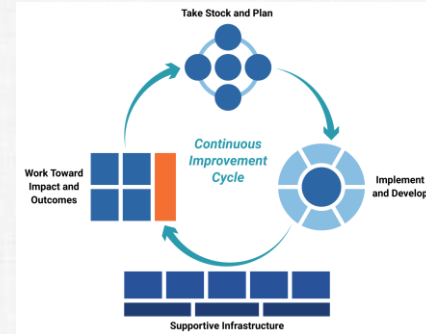
Central Features of the Community Schools Strategy



Trusting Relationships



Community Schools
Coordinators &
Local Partnerships



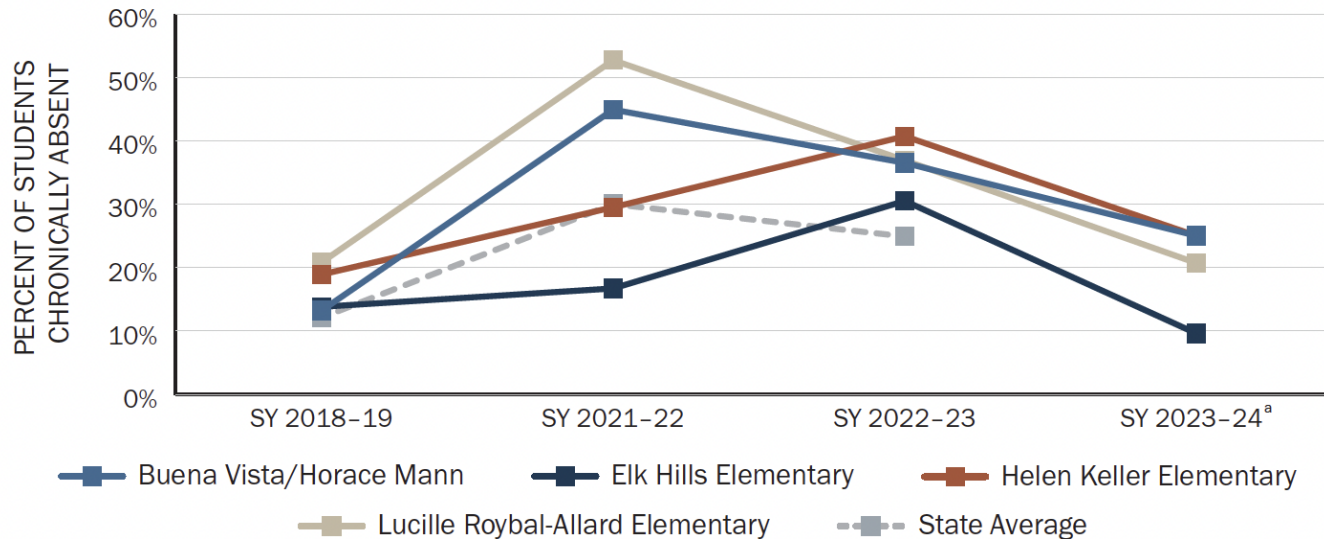
Actionable Data, Root
Cause Analysis, and
Continuous Improvement



Our Findings

These California Community Schools Are Reducing Chronic Absence

Figure 1. Chronic Absenteeism in California and Profiled Community Schools



New Mexico Community Schools Seeing Improvement

- ▶ Los Padillas Elementary: Chronic absence decreased by more than half, from 65.5% to 31.3%, over two years.
- ▶ Peñasco: Chronic absence rate went from 45.18% to 31.63%, a larger reduction than at the state level over the same period.



Community Schools Are Addressing Chronic Absence by...

- ▷ Improving **family engagement**
- ▷ Increasing **student connectedness & relationship-building**
- ▷ Systematically **tracking & monitoring data**
- ▷ Utilizing **tiered systems of support** to increase attendance
- ▷ **Leveraging partnerships** to support youth and families
- ▷ Engaging the **community school coordinator** as a key leader

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Effective approaches are not just reactive but also proactive and preventive.
- ▶ Trusting relationships with students and families—rather than punitive approaches—are foundational.
- ▶ Collaboration among varied school actors can support efforts to stem chronic absence.

Panel Discussion



Roby Chatterji
Senior Policy Advisor,
Learning Policy Institute



Michele L. Blatt
State Superintendent,
West Virginia
Department of
Education



John Sena
Director of Legislative
Education Study
Committee, New Mexico
Legislature

2025 Legislative Prep Session: Education Challenges Solutions



Emerging Topics in Education Finance
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Thank You!

