



# Improving Student Attendance

Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders (FOIL)

May 17, 2017

Student Support Services

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*In Collaboration with...*



# Goals for Session



- Equip educators with knowledge and resources to understand the importance of good attendance throughout the school year
- Provide examples of how educators can work together to reduce chronic absence through data-driven approaches and tiered interventions

# Remembering Why



# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

**Positive Engagement:**

Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

Community

District

**Actionable Data:**

Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

Positive Engagement

Actionable Data

Schools

Students & Families

Shared Accountability

Capacity Building

**Shared Accountability:**

Ensures chronic absence is monitored & reinforced by policy

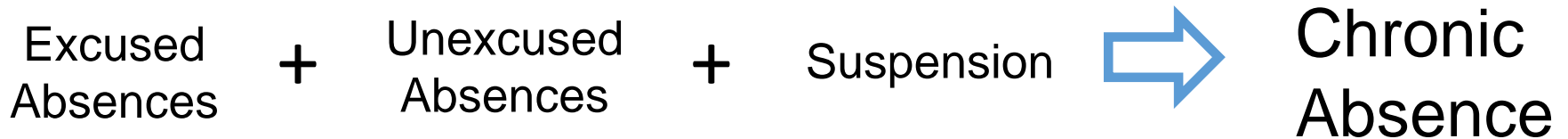
**Capacity Building**

Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

**Strategic partnerships**

between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients

## Actionable Data: Chronic Absence



*Truancy is different than **Chronic Absence**  
and **Average Daily Attendance**.*

- **Truancy** = unexcused absences (s. 1003.26(b), F.S.)
- **Average Daily Attendance** = how many students show up each day
- **Chronic Absence** = missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at-risk

## Being in school on a regular basis ... ... drives student success

- ✓ **Exposure to Language:** Starting in pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments
- ✓ **Time on Task in Class:** Student only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class
- ✓ **On track for Success:** Chronic absence is a proven early warning signal that a student is behind in reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, failing course in middle and high school , and likely to drop out
- ✓ **College and Career Ready:** Cultivating the habit of regular attendance help students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.
- ✓ **Engagement:** Attendance reflects engagement in learning
- ✓ **Effective Practice:** Schools, communities, and families can improve attendance when they work together.

| MYTHS   | BARRIERS   | AVERSION   | DISENGAGEMENT   |
|---|--|--|---|
| Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused             | Chronic illness (asthma) or lack of health/dental care           | Child struggling academically or socially, bullying                      | Lack of engaging, relevant, culturally responsive instruction |
| OK to miss a day here and there                               | Caring for siblings or other family members                      | Ineffective and exclusionary school discipline                           | No meaningful relationships with adults in school             |
| Attendance only matters in later grades                       | Basic needs not met: transportation, housing food, clothes, etc. | Poor school climate, disproportionate school discipline or unsafe school | More exciting to be with peers out of school vs. in school    |
| Missing only 2 days per month can't affect learning that much | Trauma<br>No safe path to school<br>High suspension rates        | Parents had negative school experience<br>Undiagnosed disability         | Poor school climate   |

## Does Kindergarten Really Count?



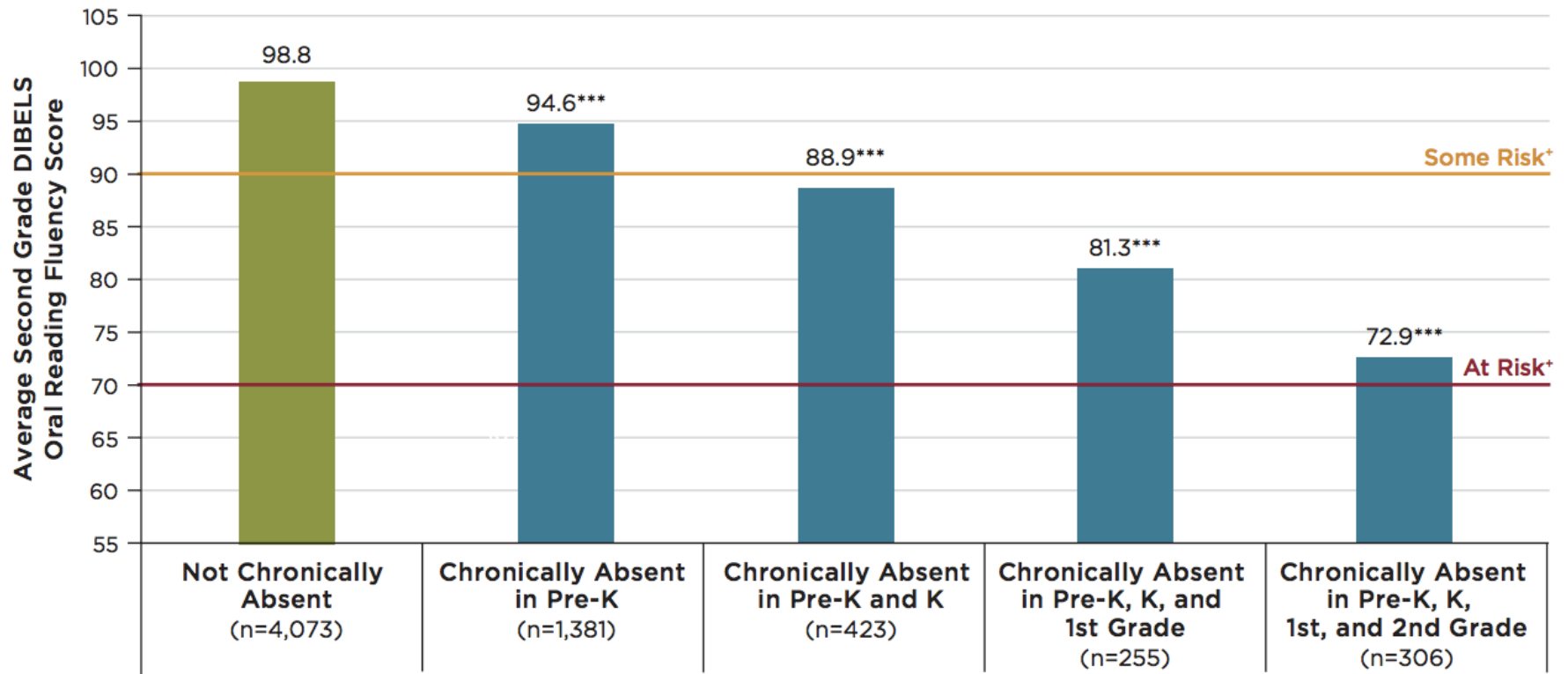
Students who experience chronic absence in Kindergarten have:

- Lower academic performance in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade
- Lower reading and math proficiency in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- Weak social and academic skills to help the student engage in learning



# Impact of Chronic Absence During Early Years

The more years students are chronically absent in the early years, the more at-risk they are for needing reading interventions by the end of second grade.



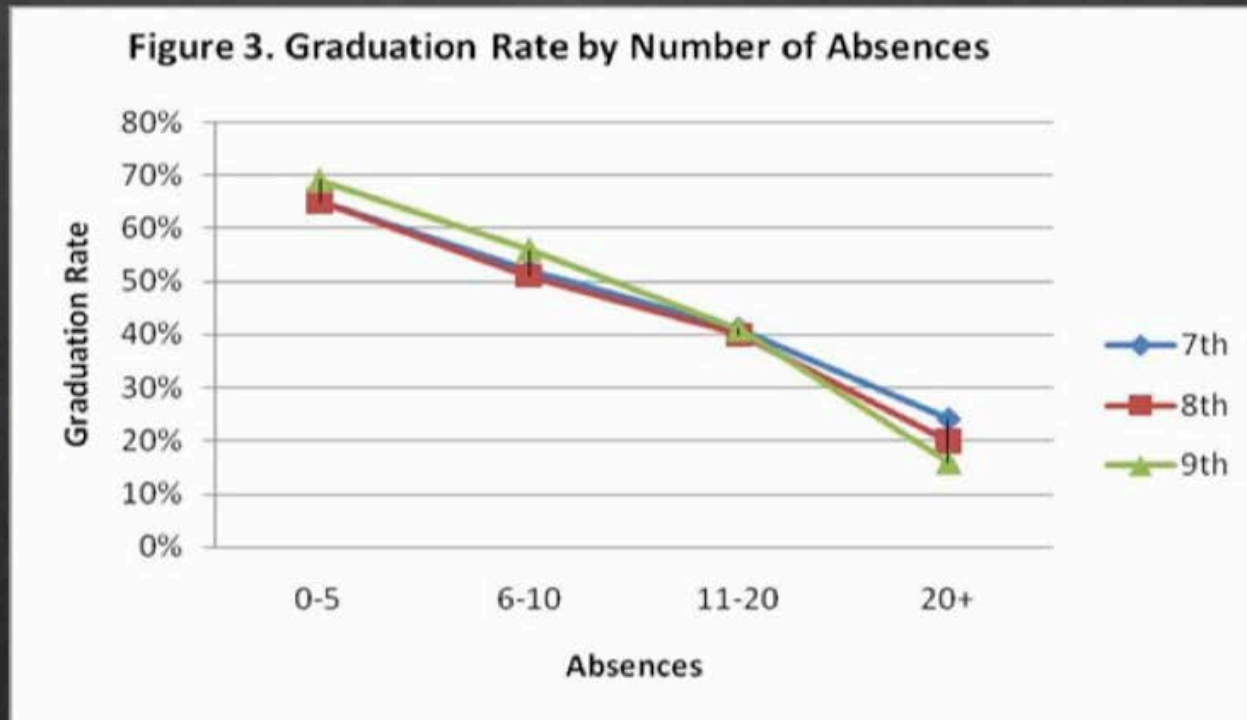
# Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long-term Academic Outcomes



A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attended regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored **20% lower in reading and math** in later grades and gap grows
- **2X** as likely to be **retained** in grade
- **2X** likely to be **suspended** by the end of 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- Likely to continue being chronically absent

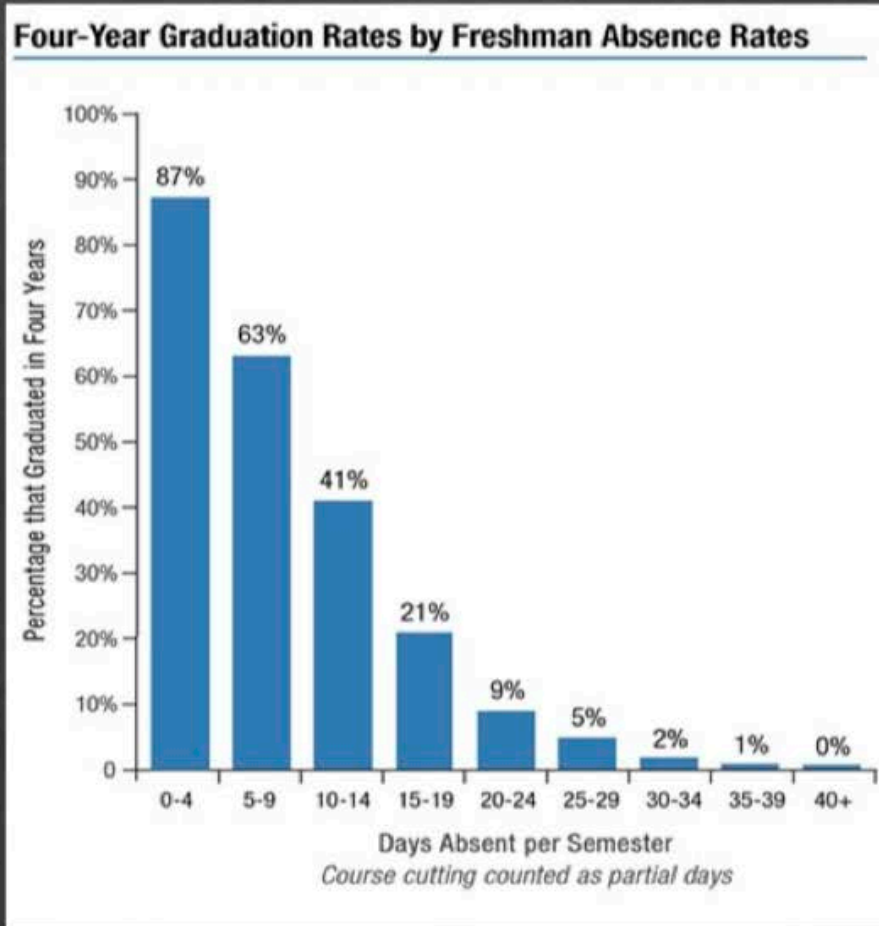
# Attendance Matters in the Middle Grades



**What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District?**  
Silver, D., Saunders, M. (University of California, Los Angeles), Zarate, E. (University of California, Irvine)

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center (NSAESC) Virtual National Convening,

# Attendance Matters in High School

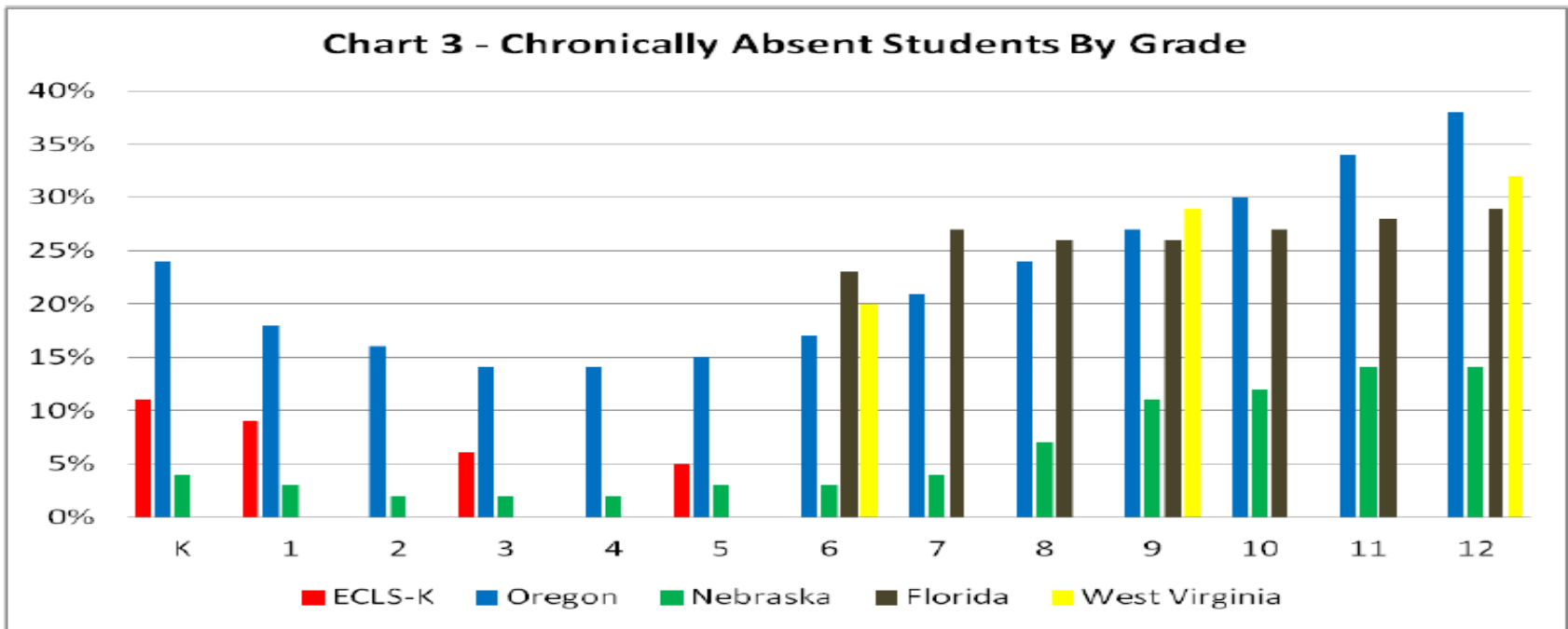


*What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools, Allensworth and Easton, Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007*

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center (NSAESC) Virtual National Convening, 2017



# Patterns in Chronic Absence Across the Grade Levels



- Rates typically drop after Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup>
- Rise significantly in middle and high school

# Self Assessment: Actionable Data



## Does Our Local Education Agency (LEA) Have a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence?

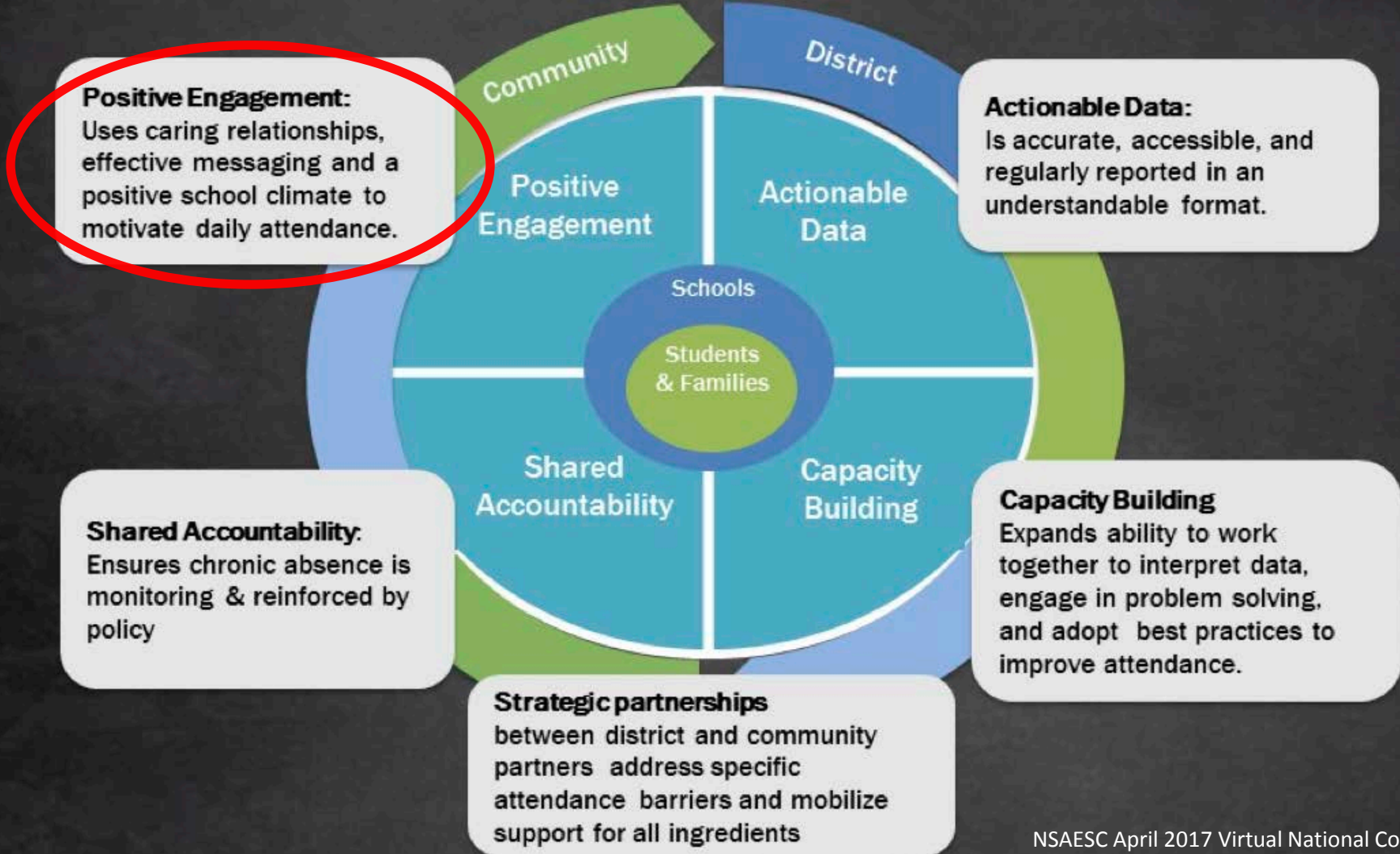
### A Tool for Self-Assessment

(Revised May 1, 2016)

Actionable data, positive engagement, capacity building, shared accountability, and strategic partnership all play an integral role in reducing chronic absence in your district. While assessing yourself across all five ingredients, think about the actions your district takes on its own, as well as whether you are making strategic use of **community partnerships** to advance your strategies.

| ACTIONABLE DATA   | Strength | OK for Now | Could Be Better | Urgent Gap | Don't Know | How Do You Know? |
|---|----------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| 1. Attendance data is entered accurately on a daily basis for each student into an electronic database.   |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| 2. Data on levels of chronic absence are calculated (ideally at least monthly) for our district as a whole as well as by grade, school, student sub-population and, if possible, by zip code.   |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| 3. At least once a month, school site teams and a district team receive and use data on the current level of chronic absence overall, by school, and by grade. School teams also receive a list of the students by grade who have missed 10% or more of school.                 |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| 4. Students and parents can access their own attendance data in a format that is easy to understand and shows them if the student is at risk due to chronic absence (ideally they can also track problematic academic performance or behavior that may be related to absences). |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |

# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach



NSAESC April 2017 Virtual National Convening



# Positive Attendance Trends in 8 Florida School Districts

A study was conducted in 8 Florida districts (2015-2016)

## Purpose:

- To determine common trends (practices, policies) that may be related to low or declining rates of chronic absenteeism

## Process:

- Chronic absenteeism data (missing 10% or more of school days) from eight school districts were analyzed
- Eight districts were identified based on consistently low rates of chronic absenteeism or declining rates (greater than 5%) of chronic absenteeism

## Ranked Most Frequently Used (Top) to Least

Florida Districts with **Consistently Low** Rates of Chronic Absenteeism

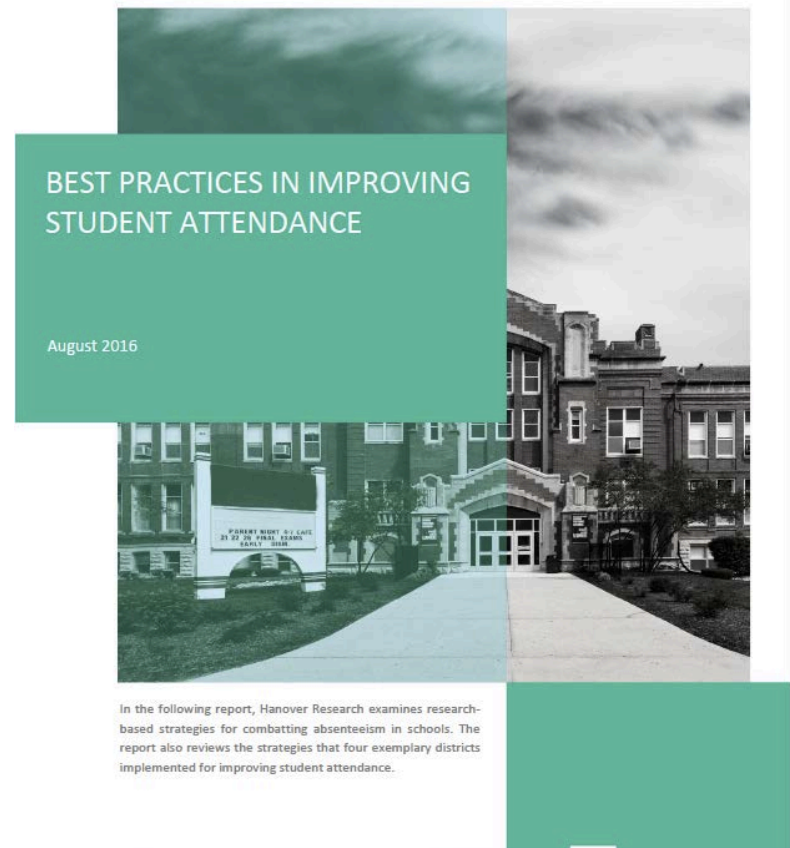
Florida Districts with **Declining Rates** of Chronic Absenteeism

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>School Level</b> Interventions   | Utilization of <b>Student Services Personnel</b>                              |
| <b>Parental Involvement</b>   | Frequently examination of attendance data at <b>school and district level</b> |
| Utilization of <b>Student Services Personnel</b>                              | <b>Parental Involvement</b>   |
| Frequently examination of attendance data at <b>school and district level</b> | Identified attendance policy procedures                                       |
| Identified attendance policy procedures                                       | <b>School Level</b> Interventions   |
| Interventions involving the legal system                                      | Usage of attendance data with problem solving                                 |
| Identified existence of an attendance policy                                  | Interventions involving the legal system                                      |
| Administrative team involvement   | Identified existence of an attendance policy                                  |
| Professional Development  | Identified data system - ensure accuracy of data                              |
| Recognition of good or improved attendance                                    |   |
| District level interventions  |   |

# Best Practices in Improving Student Attendance

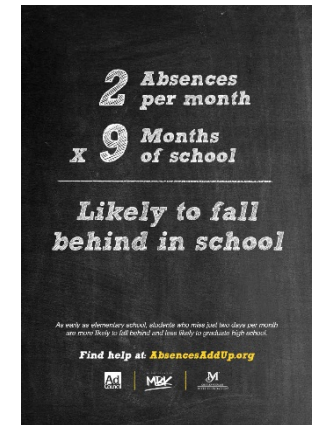
- Community Engagement
- District
- School

<http://blogs.svvsd.org/counselor/wpcontent/uploads/sites/1486/2016/11/BestPracticesinImprovingStudentAttendance-1.pdf>



## Best Practices: Community Engagement

- Community outreach and messaging on the importance of attendance
- Absences Add Up!
  - <http://absencesaddup.org/the-campaign>
- Engage community partners in problem solving to assist in developing and implementing interventions to break down barriers to school attendance



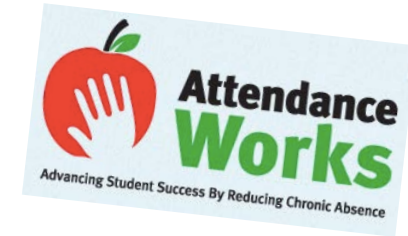
## Best Practices: Community Engagement

- Baltimore City Schools and a local non-profit organization, Eleve8, provided funding for an Asthma Clinic in 3 schools.  
Attendance improved by 30%!
- The New York transit authority provided free bus passes to parents with school-aged children



# Best Practices: District Engagement

## Superintendents **Call to Action!**



- Prioritize Attendance
  - Clear vision, senior leadership oversee implementation
- Mobilize the Community
  - Engage community, parents, civic leaders, local businesses, clergy, libraries, museums
- Drive with Data
  - Use data to raise public awareness, establish targets, goals, track progress, assure accountability

## Best Practices: District Engagement

### Maine:

- Superintendent has monthly data chats with principals

### Baltimore:

- Most improved attendance recognized during school board meetings

### Providence Rhode Island:

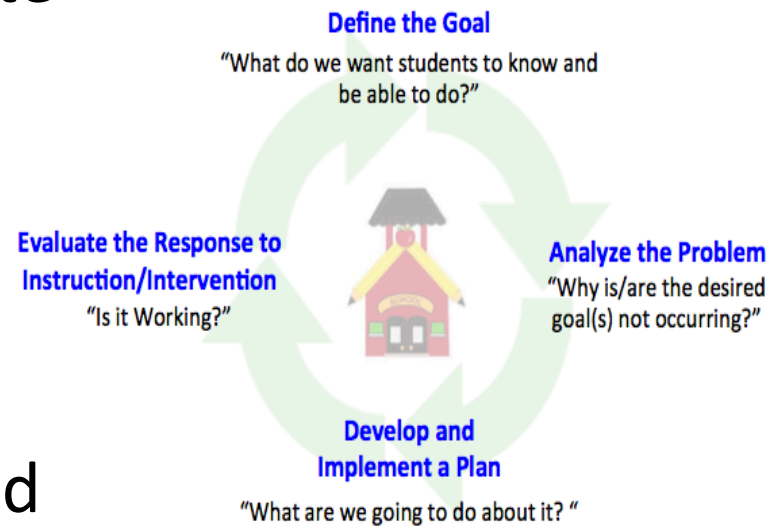
- Attendance Mapping - collecting data in regions, neighborhoods to determine any trends of non-attendance

## Best Practices: School Level

Building a ***positive*** school climate

School based teams engage in:

- Problem solving
- Analyze and interpret data
- Determine the appropriate and effective interventions





## Best Practices: School Level

### Pittsburgh Public Schools

- School wide attendance initiatives
- Be There Campaign



### Oakland Unified Schools

- 'I'm In' Project
  - Send a letter emphasizing what the child is missing in school
  - Offer assistance to parents to ensure the child is in school.



# Harvard research study found comparison reduced absence by 5-10% for all students, regardless of severity of absenteeism

## ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP

[DATE]

Dear Parent/Guardian of [Todd Rogers],

[Todd] has missed more school than [his] classmates.

[Todd] was absent [6] day(s) so far this school year.

Students fall behind when they miss school - whether students are absent for excused or unexcused reasons.

You can have a big effect on [Todd]'s absences this semester - and we appreciate your help.

Sincerely,  
Superintendent  
School District

Parental Efficacy ✓

Social Comparison ✓

Re-calibrate parental under-estimate ✓

Correct mistaken belief about excused > unexcused ✓

Parental efficacy ✓

On the same team, gratitude ✓

<50 words for low literacy individuals ✓

## TODD HAS MISSED MORE SCHOOL THAN HIS CLASSMATES



Social comparison in writing for low numeracy individuals ✓

Red bar signifies "needs improvement" ✓

Horizontal graphs with vertical gray axis lines tested as clearest to low numeracy individuals ✓

[Todd]'s absences are compared to the typical number of absences among [his] classmates in [5th grade] at [Partner MS].

\*\* This card is part of the XYZ Attendance Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance. This is a follow-up to cards we sent earlier in the year. The number of absences listed above includes excused and unexcused absences as of [DATE]. If you have questions, or you do not want to receive future cards, please call [PHONE], email [EMAIL], or visit [www.attendancemattersproject.org](http://www.attendancemattersproject.org). Please do not fail to provide the classmate code [UNIQUE CODE]. If you received this card in error or have already opted out of receiving these cards, please disregard this one. We apologize for the inconvenience.

Public website for more information and to opt-out of further mail ✓

## Best Practices: School Level

- Mentoring Programs
  - My Brother's Keeper
  - Check and Connect
- Positive messaging to parents
- Signage at drop-off and pick up
- Personal phone call home or text message regarding students attendance

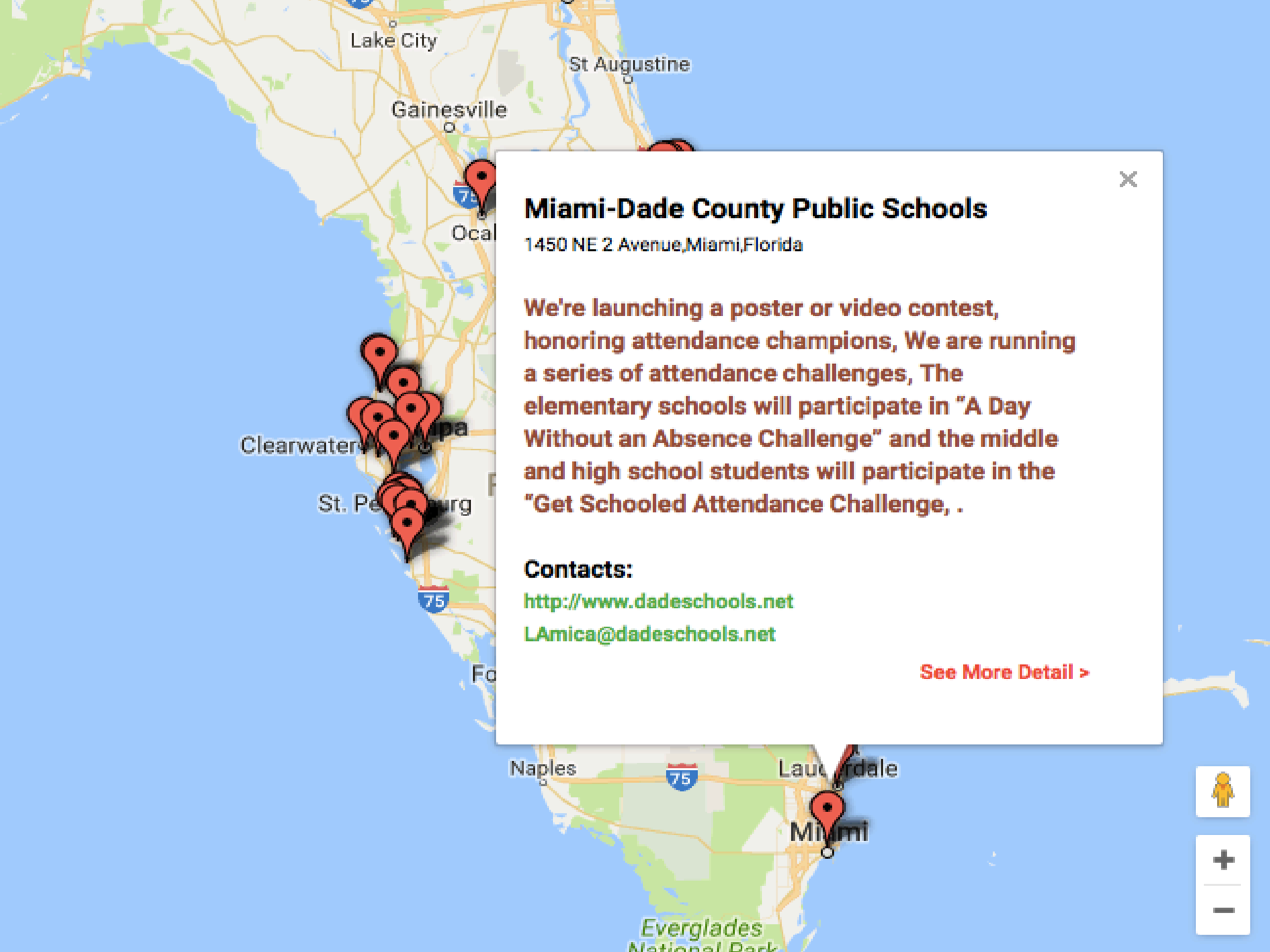


**Check & Connect**

A comprehensive student engagement intervention

## Attendance Action Map: Florida





## Miami-Dade County Public Schools

1450 NE 2 Avenue, Miami, Florida

We're launching a poster or video contest, honoring attendance champions, We are running a series of attendance challenges, The elementary schools will participate in "A Day Without an Absence Challenge" and the middle and high school students will participate in the "Get Schooled Attendance Challenge, .

### Contacts:

<http://www.dadeschools.net>

[LAmica@dadeschools.net](mailto:LAmica@dadeschools.net)

[See More Detail >](#)

Map

Satellite

## Marion County Public Schools

512 SE 3rd Street,Ocala,FL

**We're integrating attendance messaging into back-to-school events, displaying an attendance exhibit, running PSAs, honoring attendance champions, establishing or expanding programmatic interventions (for example, a local success mentor initiative) Incentives for 100% attendance.**

### Contacts:

<http://www.marionschools.net/>

[Kevin.Christian@marion.k12.fl.us](mailto:Kevin.Christian@marion.k12.fl.us)

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# Self Assessment: Positive Engagement

| POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT   | Strength | OK for Now | Could Be Better | Urgent Gap | Don't Know | How Do You Know? |
|---|----------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| <p>1. Our district, from the Superintendent to our materials (flyers, handbook, back to school letters, etc.), clearly and consistently conveys messages about the importance of daily attendance and reducing absences in communications with parents and the general public, as well as other key stakeholders.</p>   |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| <p>2. High quality trainings and workshops are available throughout the year and in the home languages of families to help parents understand how to help their children succeed in school. These include explaining why attendance matters, how to access data on their children’s attendance and performance, and what parents can do to ensure daily attendance.</p> |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| <p>3. As soon as signs of chronic absence are detected, someone (from the school, district, community partner, health providers, volunteers, etc.) reaches out to the student and family in a positive way to let them know they were missed, to encourage improved attendance, and to identify needed supports. Follow-up is pursued until contact is made.</p>        |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |
| <p>4. We recognize positive examples of students, families, teachers, schools, and community partners improving attendance and use these examples to inspire action and identify best practices.</p>  |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |

# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach



NSAESC April 2017 Virtual National Convening





# The Good News!

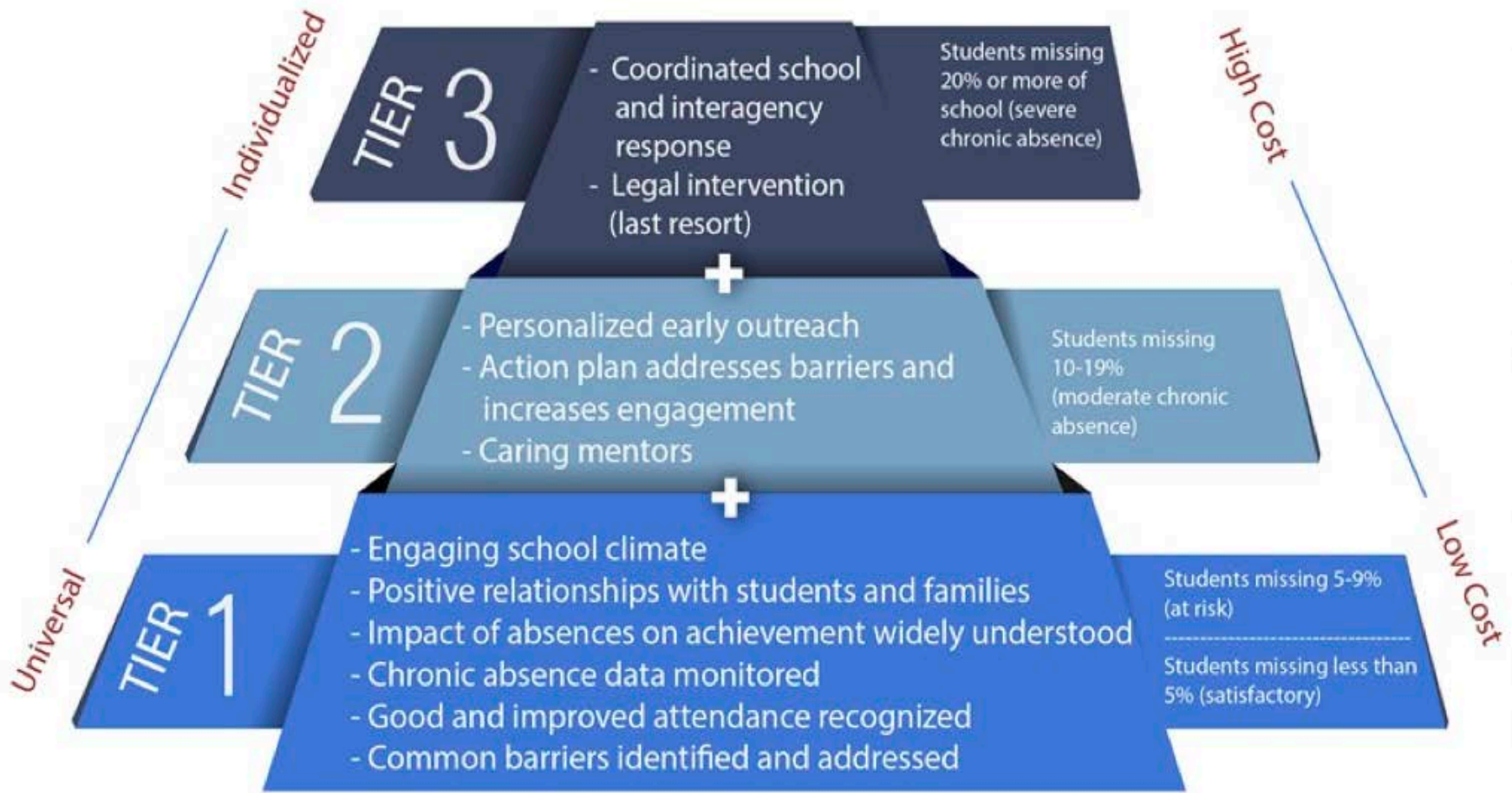
Chronic Absence is reducible and its impact reversible

- Modest interventions can bring about large returns

Responding to Chronic Absence using problem-solving

- Use data to understand scope and magnitude of Chronic Absence within districts, schools, grade-levels, subgroups
- Engage in data-based problem-solving to understand root causes or contributors to Chronic Absence and match intervention to need

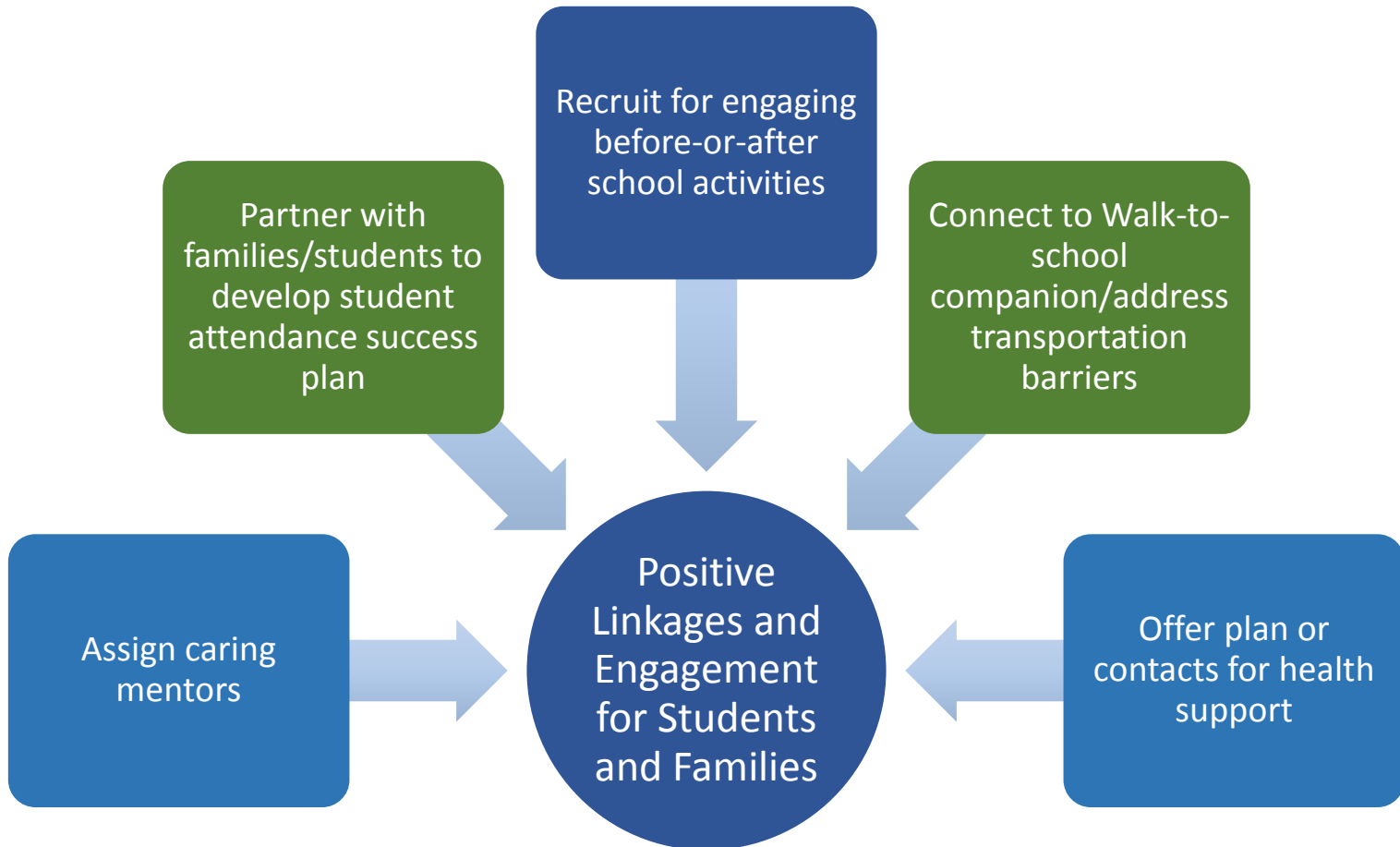
# Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention



# How to Leverage Florida's MTSS Model to Improve Student Attendance

- Effective interventions are essential, but we cannot intervene our way to a stronger system
- Once a student has an off-track indicator (chronic absence, behavior, failing courses), you either need to solve a problem or change a behavior. This requires a strong relationship between an adult and the student
- If there are more students than adults to form strong relationships, community partnerships are a must

# Possible Interventions for Students Who Need More than Prevention



# In Florida, Early Warning System Indicators

| Indicator                         | Elementary   | Middle School  | High School   |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Attendance</b>                 | Missed 10% or of instructional time  | Missed 10% or more of instructional time                                       | Missed 10% of instructional time<br>One absence within the first 20 days in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade |
| <b>Referrals &amp; Suspension</b> | Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR<br>One or more referrals with suspension | Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR<br>One or more referrals with suspension | Two or more behavior referrals AND/OR<br>One or more referrals with suspension                    |
| <b>Course Failures</b>            | Not proficient in reading by third grade                                       | Failed mathematics or ELA course.<br>Failed two courses in any subject.        | In 9th grade: two failed courses or failed to progress on time to 10th.                           |
| <b>Credits/GPAs</b>               |  |  | GPA < 2.0   |

## Core Ideas of an Early Warning System ... ..... including promoting positive attendance

- ✓ To graduate high school ready for career and college, students need to successfully navigate several key transitions and *acquire a set of academic behaviors* – they need to learn how to succeed in school.
- ✓ Students *signal* that they are on or off track toward these outcomes through their behaviors (attendance, school behavior, course performance)

## Core Ideas of an Early Warning System ... ..... including promoting positive attendance

- ✓ By tracking early warning indicators, it is possible to identify when students are beginning to fall off track, *providing time to intervene or change supports*, and alter their trajectory through school and beyond.
- ✓ Using EWS, schools can capture the data that will drive decisions about how best to apply school-wide preventions, targeted supports, and intensive interventions *until* students are back on track.

# Building Blocks of Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

- On at least bi-weekly basis, examine chronic absenteeism *trends and patterns* at district, school, and grade level
- On annual basis, conduct *surveys to understand key drivers* of chronic absenteeism at district and school level
- Build *prevention* and *intervention* systems appropriate for the *scale* and *intensity* of chronic absenteeism found



# Building Blocks of Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

- *Build relationships* with students and families with prior history of chronic absenteeism and those trending toward it. Seek to understand root causes.
- Take multi-sector approach to solving *underlying issues* which cause significant amounts of chronic absenteeism in your area
- Make *school a welcoming* place for students and parents

## Remember ...

- It is not just a school or parent issue
- Health, safety, housing, transportation issues all contribute to chronic absenteeism
- Within each of these sectors, there are exemplary efforts to work with schools and communities to reduce chronic absenteeism

# Table Discussion: Self-Assessment, Planning



## Does Our District Have a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence?

*A Tool for Self-Assessment*

*(Revised March 27, 2014)*

Actionable data, positive messaging, capacity building, and shared accountability all play an integral role in reducing chronic absence in your district. While conducting the assessment across all four ingredients, think about the actions your district takes on its own, as well as whether you are making strategic use of [community partnerships](#) to advance your strategies.

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| 5. Data on chronic absence (and ideally other attendance measures) are publicly reported annually (if not more often) and available to families and <a href="#">community partners</a> .   |          |            |                 |            |            |                  |

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- Actionable Data
- Positive Engagement
- Capacity Building
- Shared Accountability
- Strategic Partnerships

Next Steps ....



# Thank You!



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