



New Hampshire Educators: An Essential Attendance Strategy



NH Statewide Family Engagement Center and Partners for Rural Impact

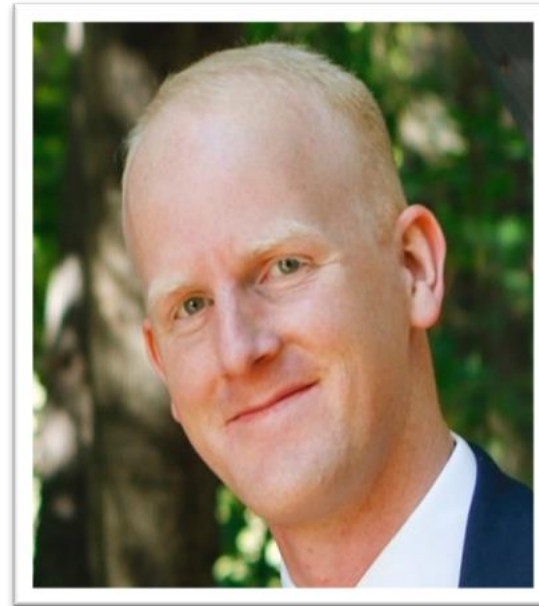
October 9, 2024



Welcome!



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Learning Goals

Participants will:

- Draw on whole school strategies to create
 - positive conditions for learning and
 - strong relationships with students and families that prevent absenteeism
- Understand the difference between chronic absence and truancy and why it matters
- Be introduced to the framework of multi-tiered attendance strategies that moves schools towards prevention and early intervention
- Learn effective strategies to communicate with families about attendance



Welcome & Introductions

Use the Chat and share:

- ✓ Your name and role
- ✓ Your school and district or organization
- ✓ ***Who or what*** motivated you to attend school every day when it wasn't easy?

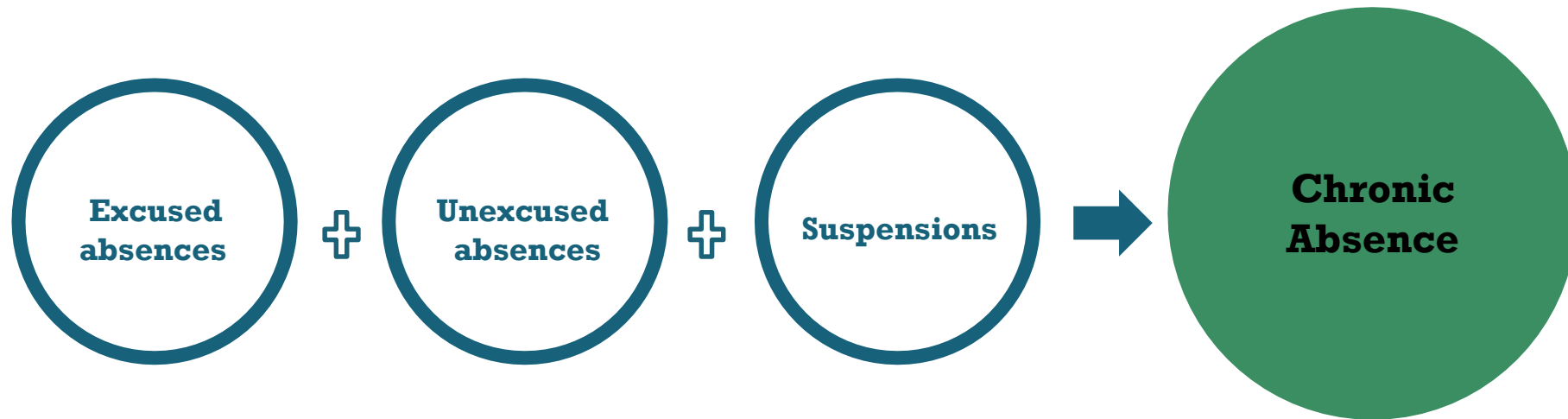
Overview of Chronic Absence



What is chronic absence?

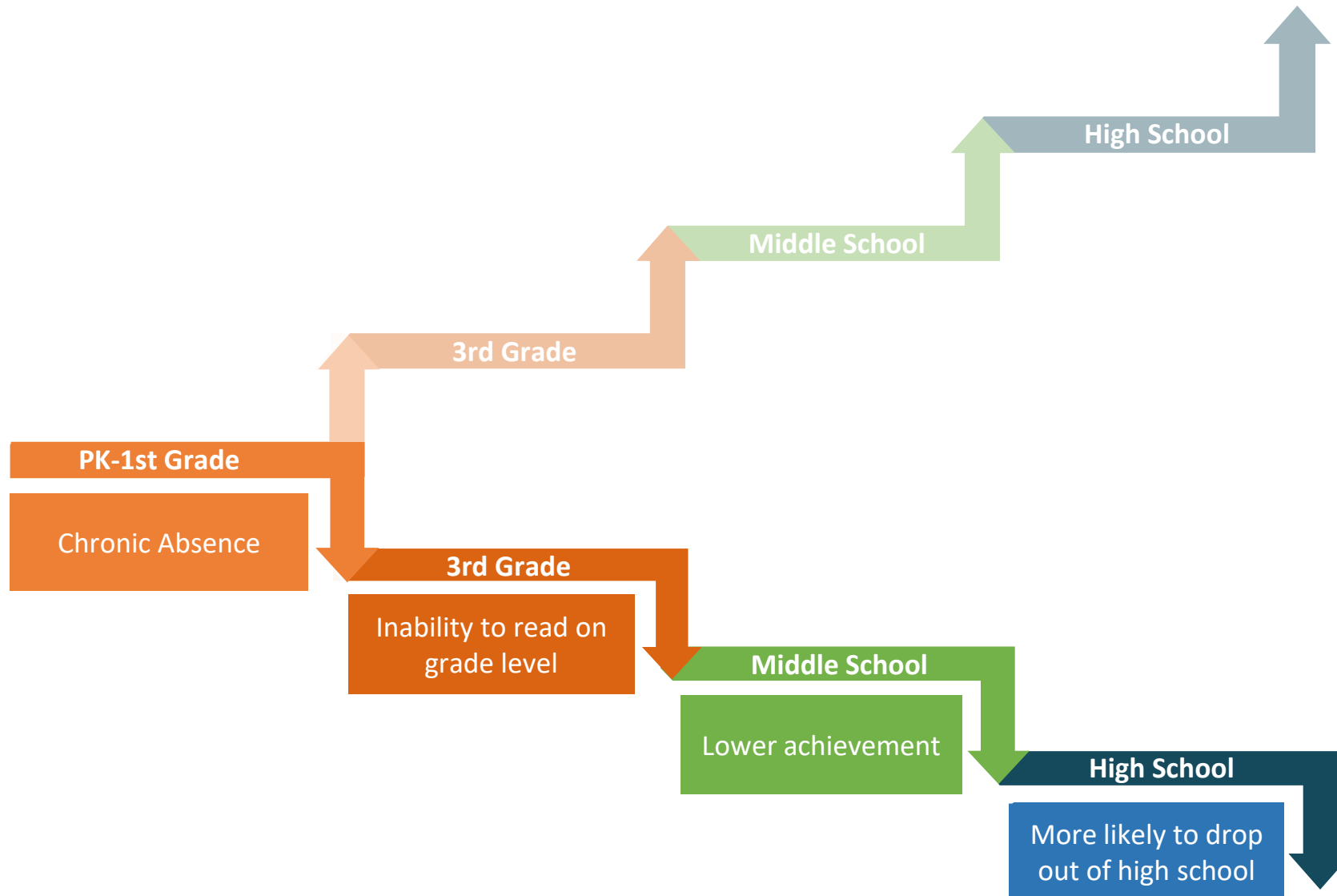
Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk.

Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



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

Improving Attendance Matters



What's the difference between ADA, truancy & chronic absence?

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

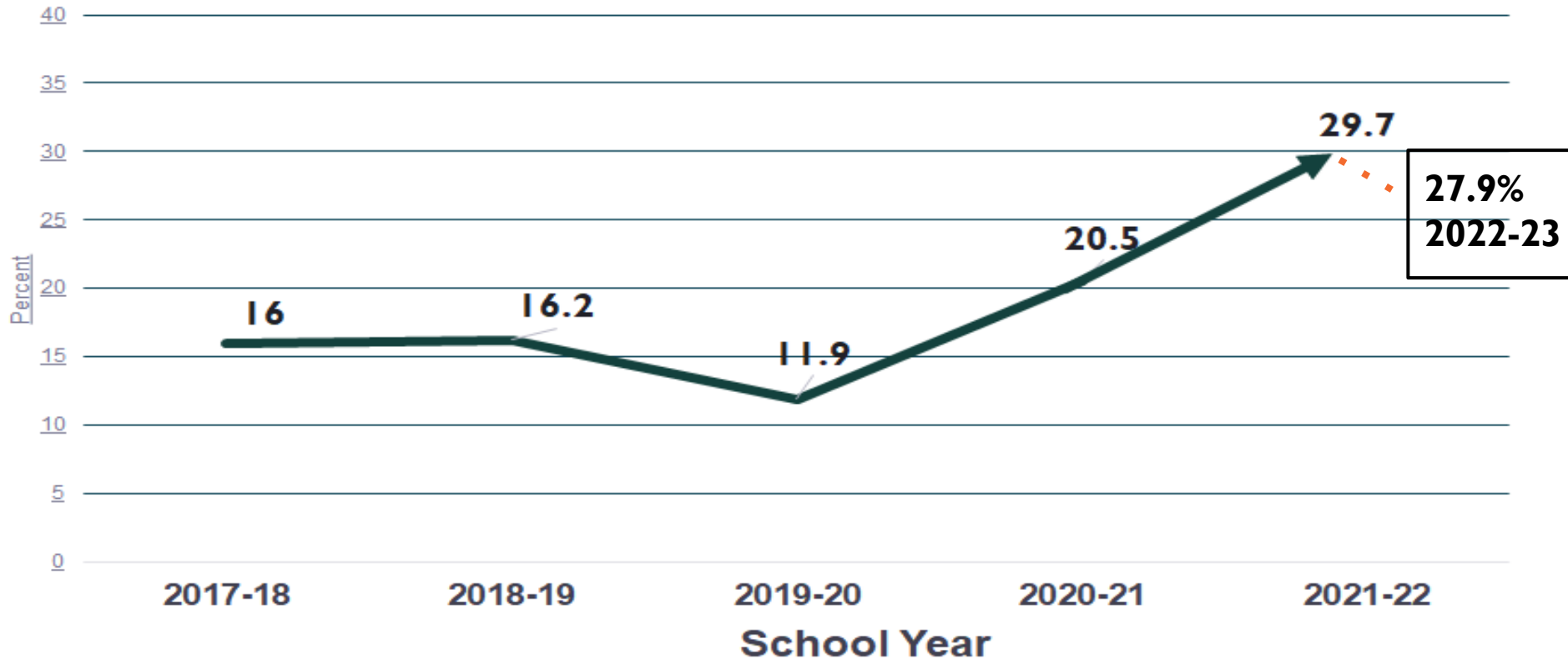
- ▲ Counts **ONLY** unexcused absences
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Uses legal, typically more blaming and punitive, solutions

Chronic Absence

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

National Chronic Absence Crisis

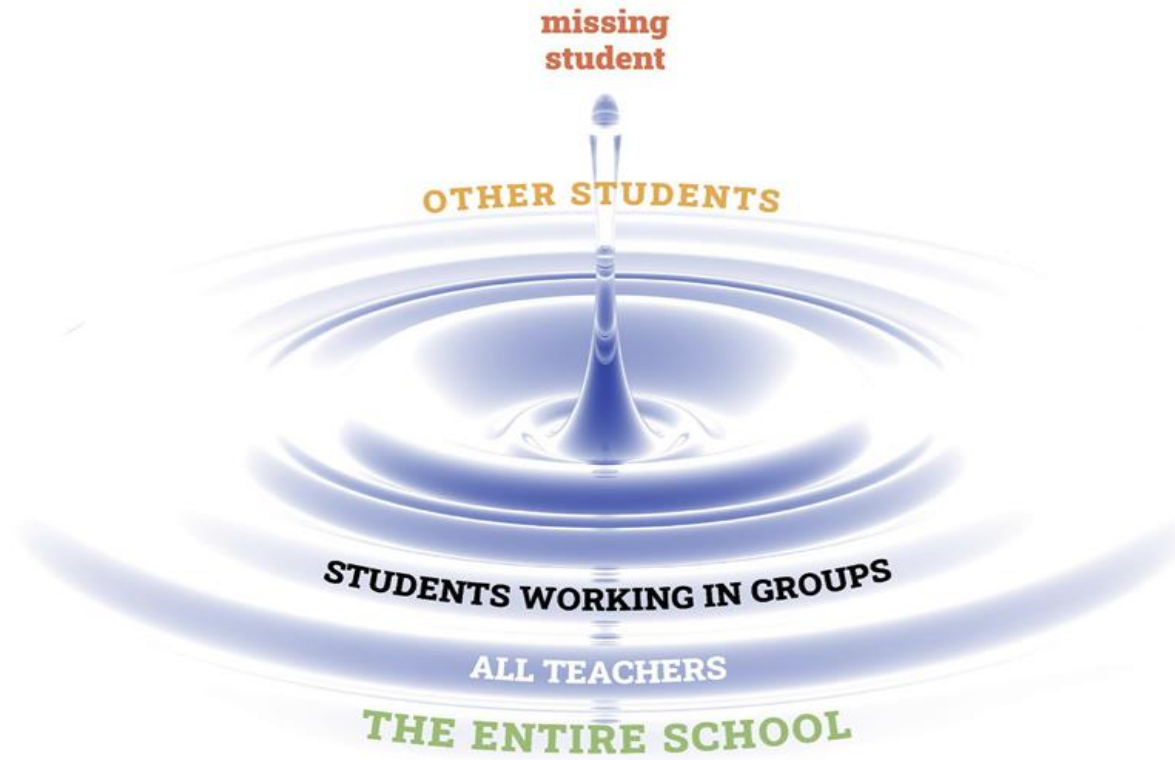
Percentage of Students Chronically Absent Nearly Doubled Nationwide Between SY 2017-18 to SY 2021-22



- ✓ The number of chronically absent students grew from 8,095,132 to 14,660,261.
- ✓ State data from 2022–23 indicate rates remain high.



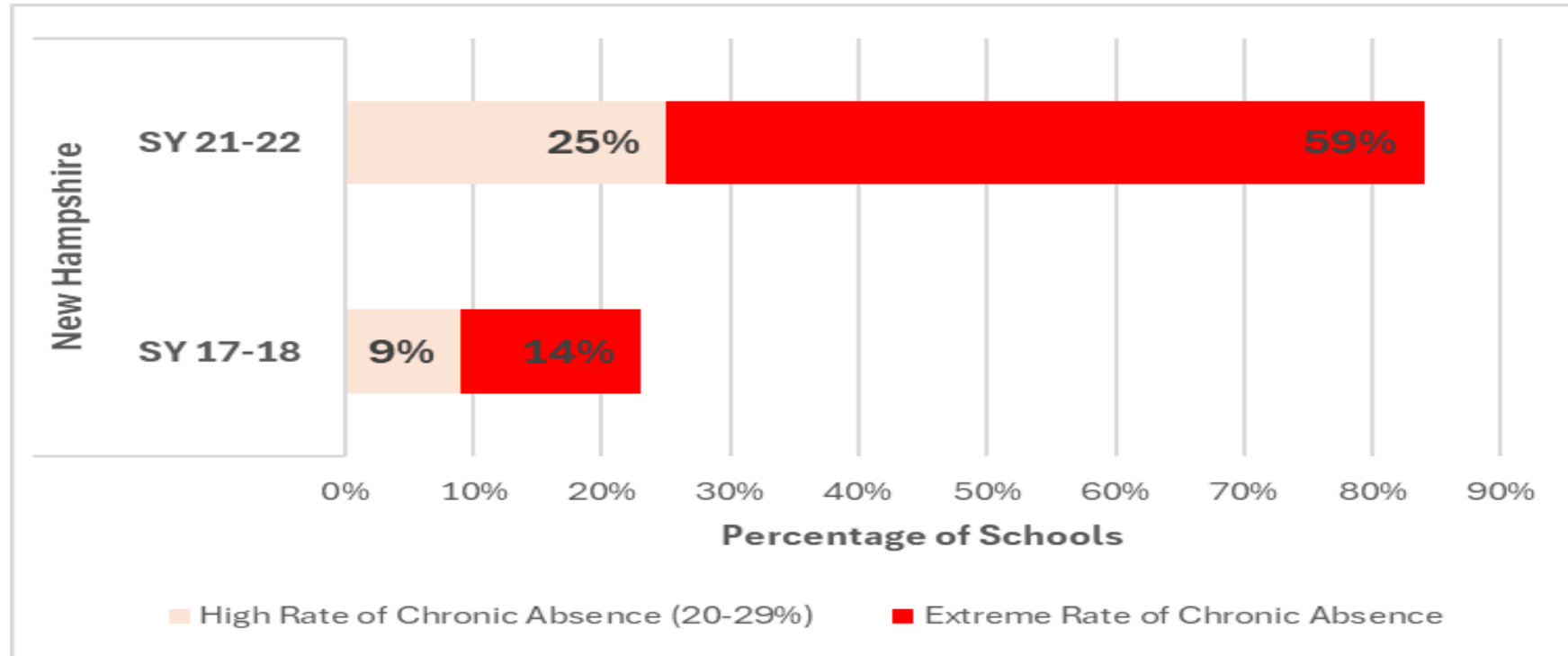
When a Student Misses School, the Impact Ripples



66% of students attend a school with 20% or more chronic absenteeism (*SY 2021-22*) versus **25%** prior to the pandemic

Percentage of Schools with High and Extreme Chronic Absences

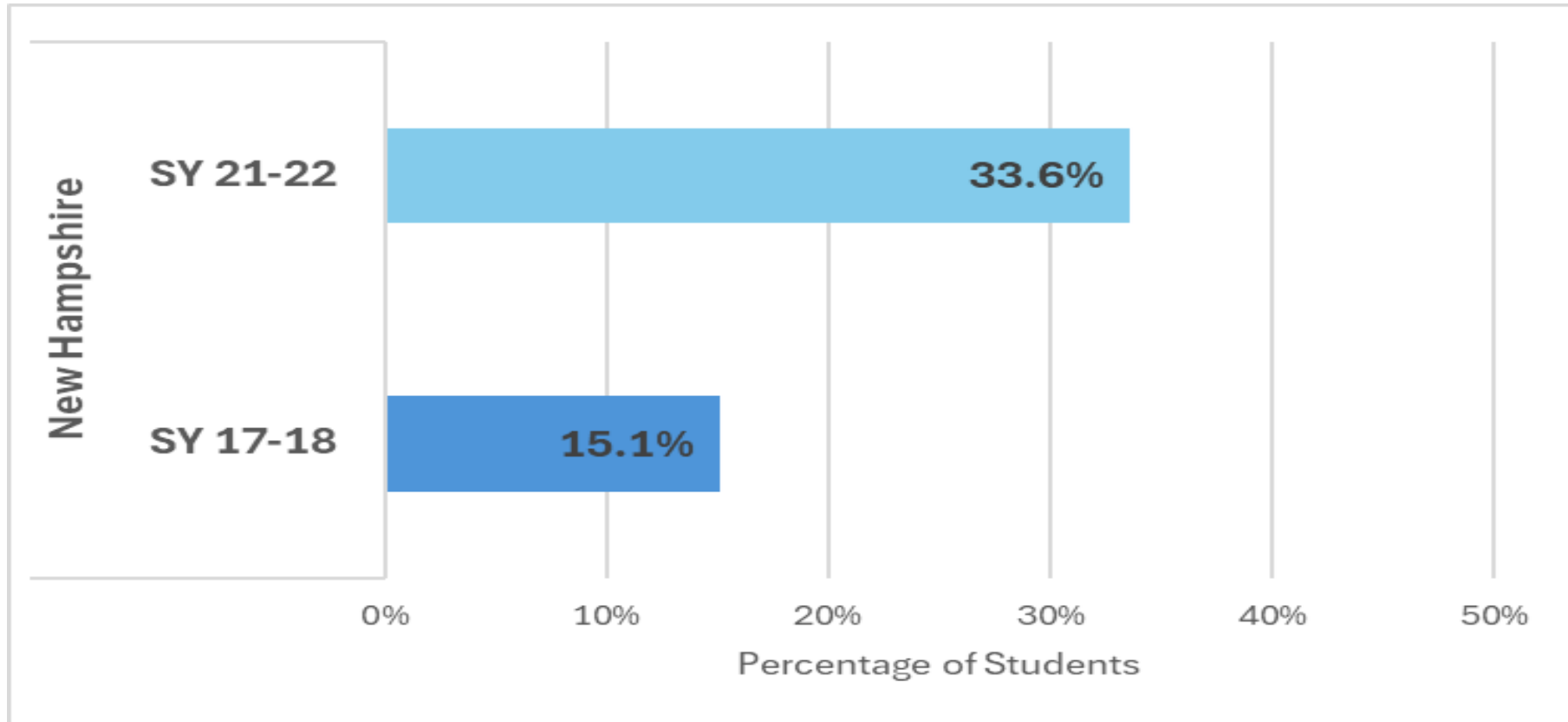
Comparing 17-18 SY to 21-22 SY



<https://www.attendanceworks.org/state-data-charts-for-2021-22/>

Percentage of Students with Chronic Absence

Comparing 17-18 SY to 21-22 SY



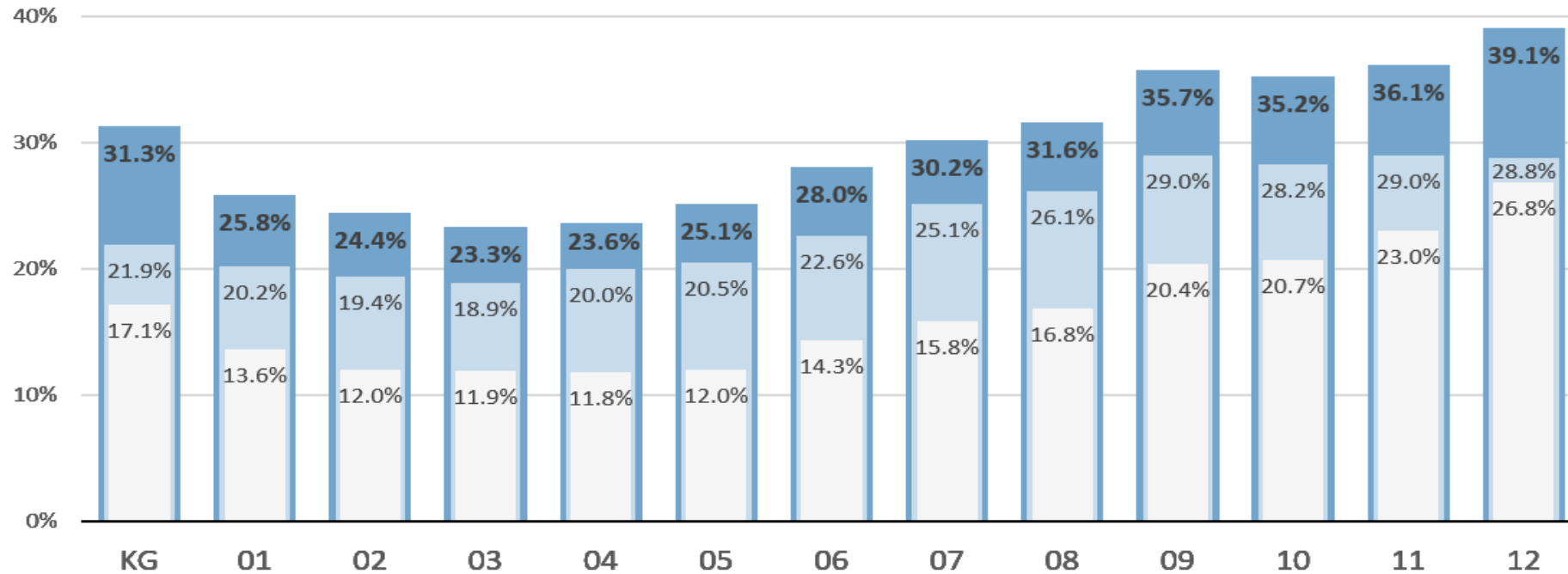
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/state-data-charts-for-2021-22/>



Examining Student Data Across Grade Levels

Sample data dive:
what patterns do
you notice?

**Chronic Absence
SY 18-19 to SY 21-22**



2018-2019 2020-2021 2021-2022



Sporadic Absences are More Likely to go Unnoticed

September					October					November					December					January				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
													X				X							
							X				X													
		X	X					X				X			X	X					X	X	X	
February					March					April					May					June				
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F
				X						X														
X	X													X		X					X	X		
							X					X												

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few As 2 days a month**



Reflection

- 1. Do you know the chronic absence rate in your state and community?**
- 2. Do you know the chronic absence rate for the students you serve?**
- 3. How do you access the data?**



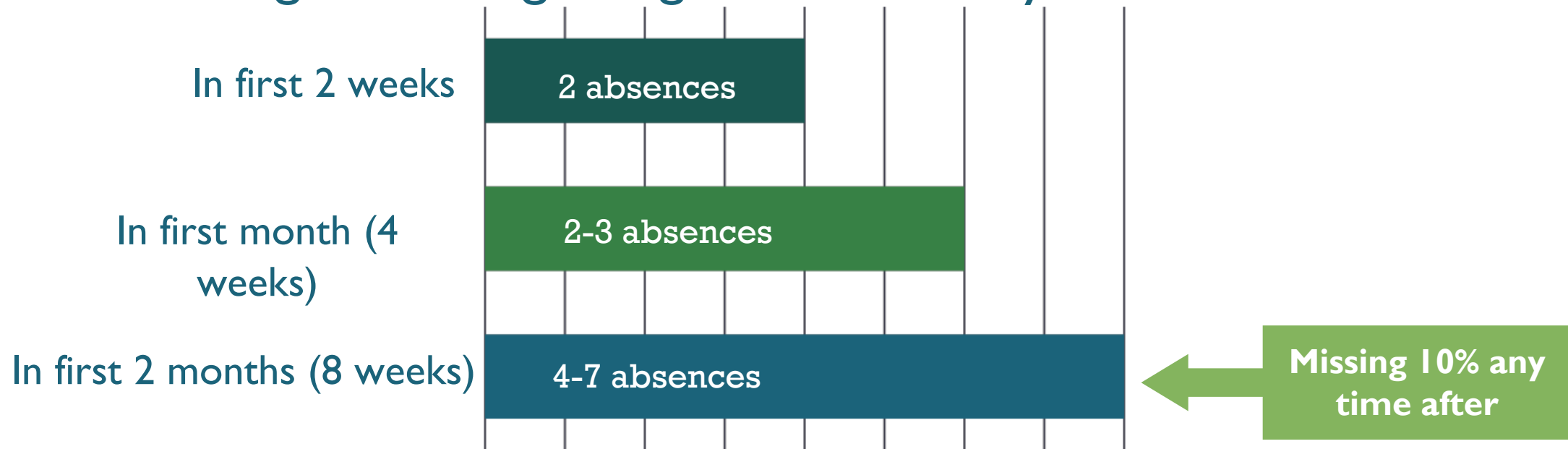
Reflection

What attendance data are you tracking in your district or school?

- a) Average daily attendance
- b) Chronic absence (*all absences*)
- c) Truancy (*unexcused absences*)
- d) Don't Know

Identifying Students Early Can Make A Difference

✓ Starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:



Pathway for Change





Pathway for Change

Mindset





Actionable
Data

Capacity

Strategies

Outcomes

Shifting to a Positive Problem-Solving Approach

Typical	To	Problem-Solving Approach
Blame Parents		Focus on building asset-based relationships with students and families
Use letters and robo calls to communicate about poor attendance		Promote early positive outreach to students and families to understand and address attendance barriers
Concentrate on students who are Tier III		Promote a prevention and early intervention multi-tiered approach using data
Assign one person in each school to address attendance		Create a districtwide approach that acknowledges everyone has a role to play

Problem Solving Approach

Some common phrases we hear:

- *The parents don't care.*
- *It's someone else's job at school.*
- *The student is only absent a few days each month.*
- *The school can't do anything, the police or court should do something.*

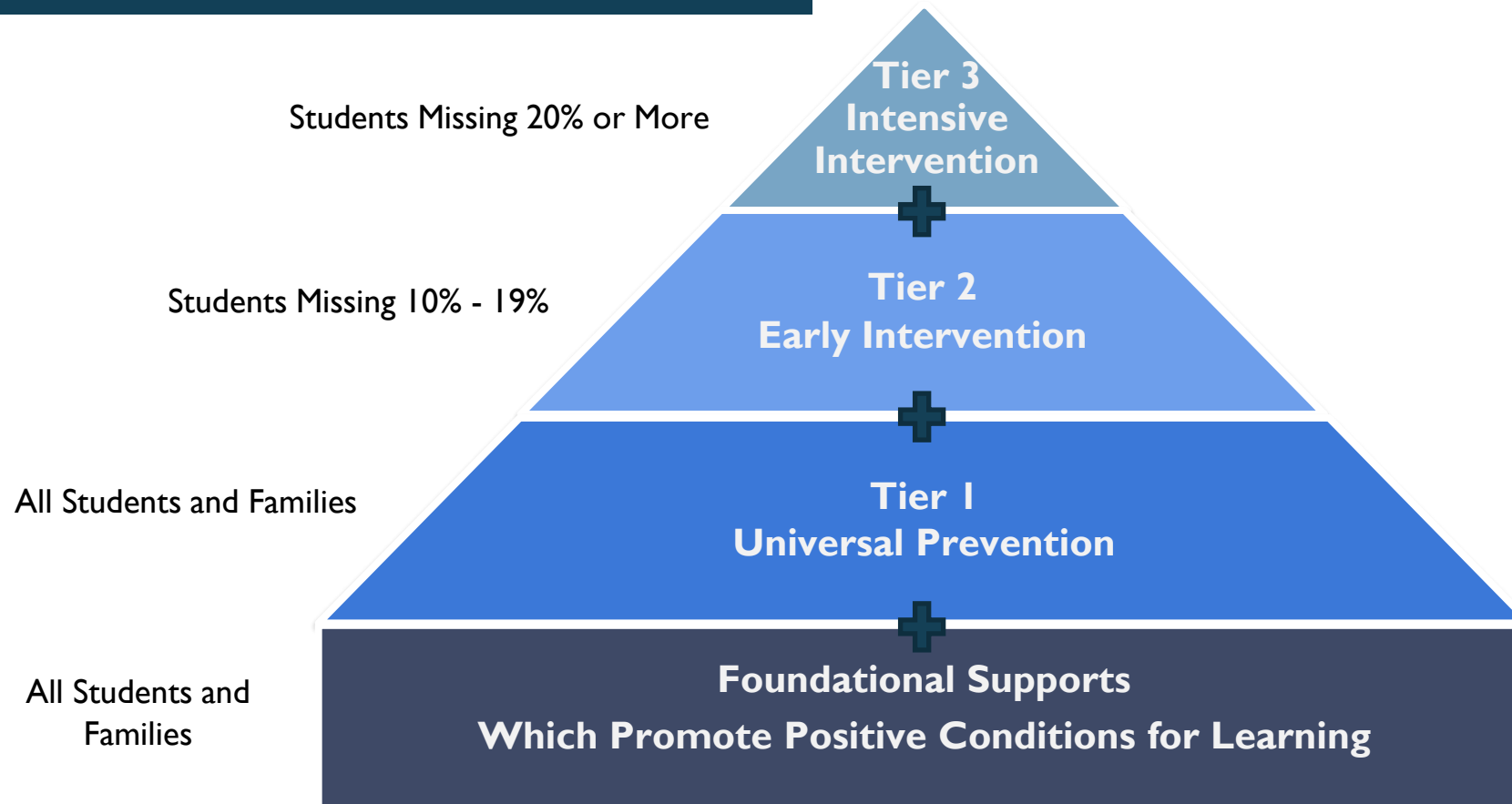
These are comments you may hear from colleagues.

What are responses you can use to shift to a positive problem-solving approach?

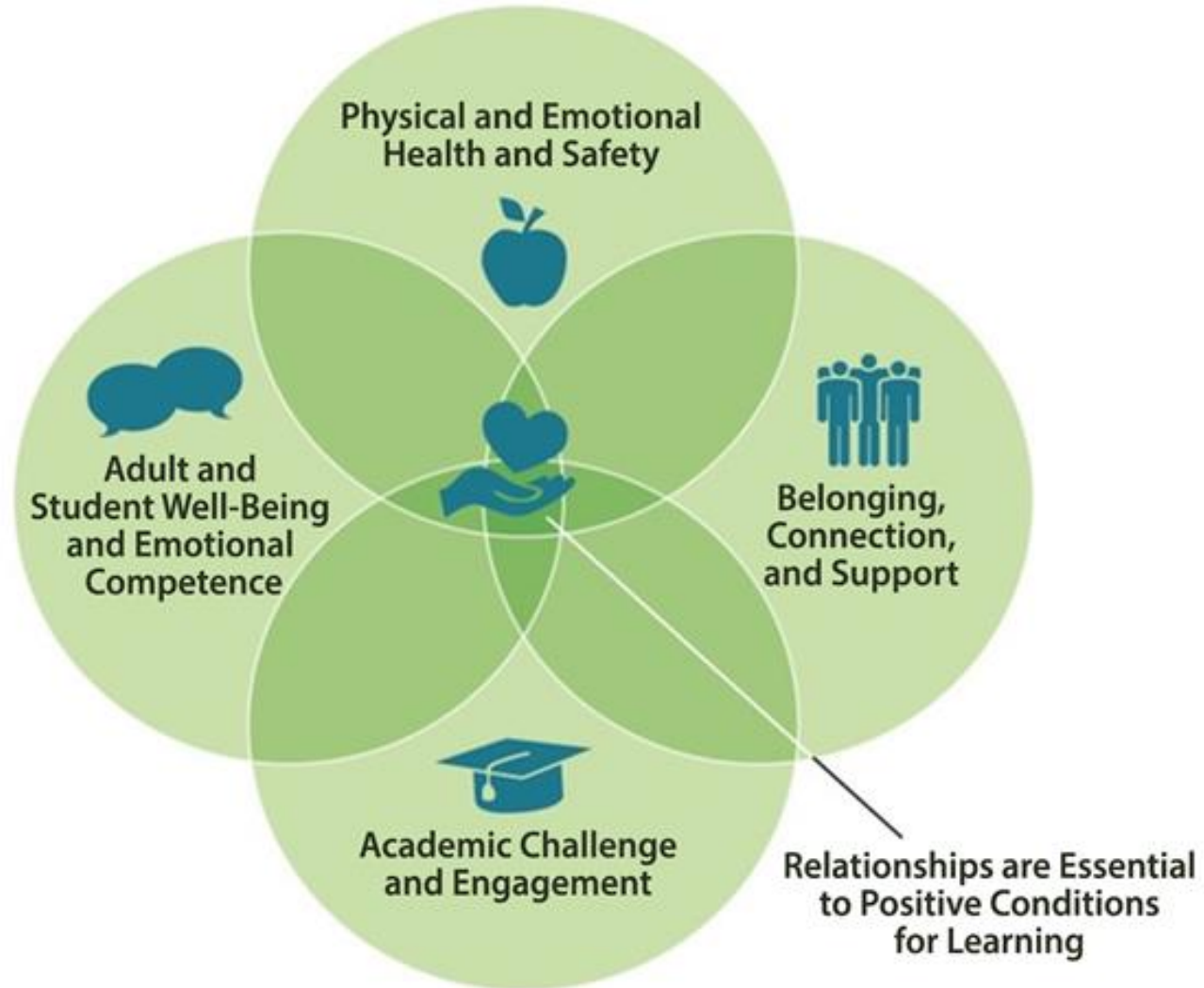
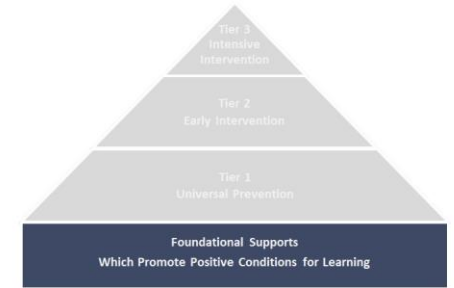
**The Key to Improving
Attendance is a Tiered Approach**



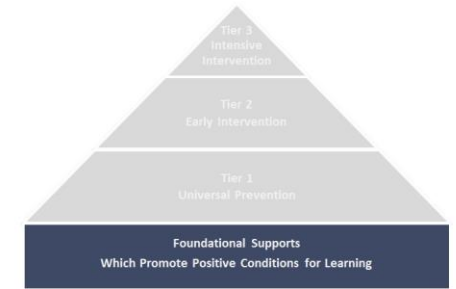
Multi-tiered System of Support for Attendance



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



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



Barriers

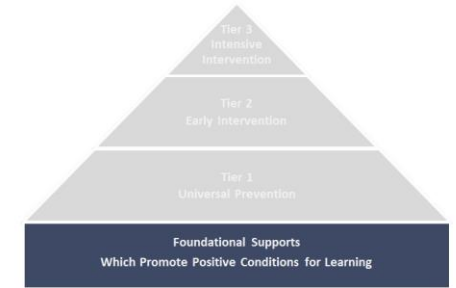
- **Housing and food insecurity**
- **Chronic and acute illness**
- **Family responsibilities or home situation**



Strategies

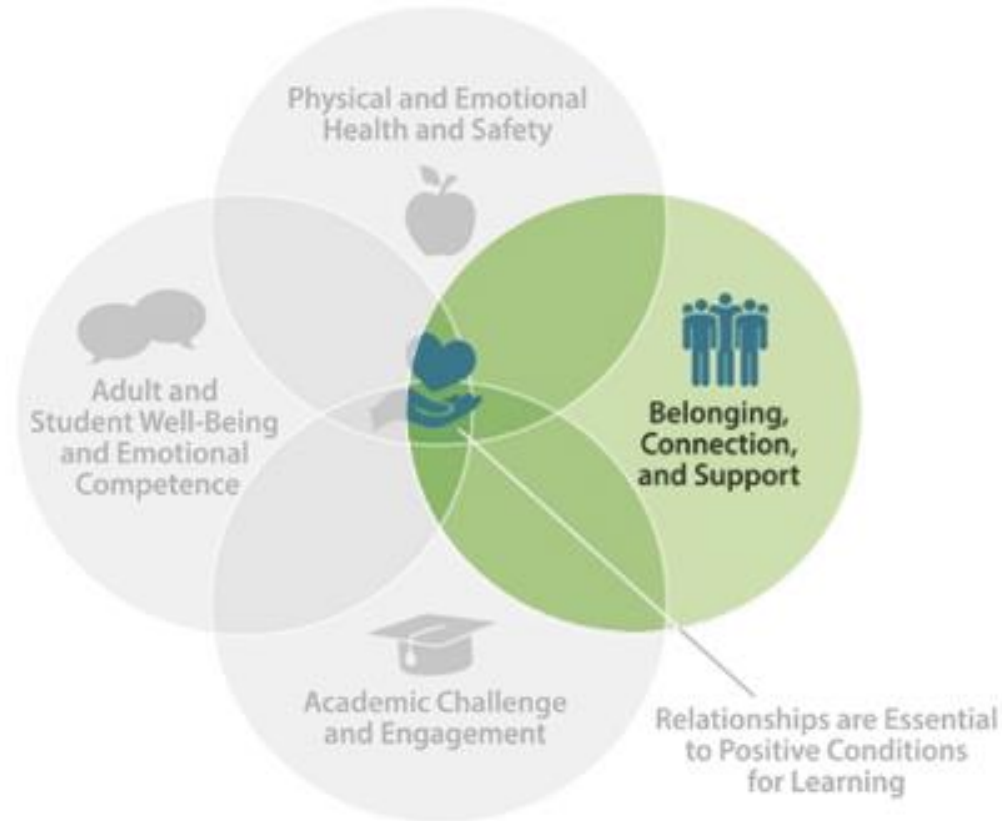
- ***Restorative circles***
- ***Access to food, other basic needs***
- ***District-wide health guidance about going to school***
- ***Connections to a caring adult***

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



Barriers

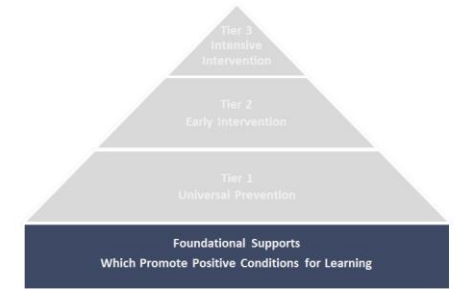
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Lack of enrichment/after-school opportunities



Strategies

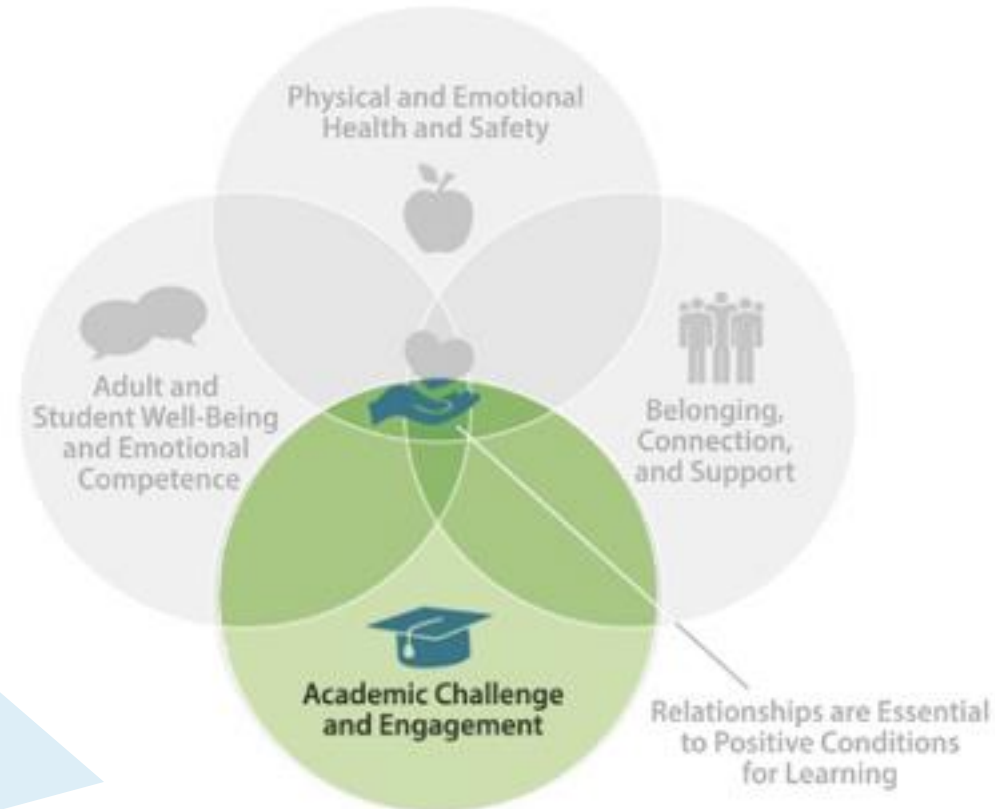
- *Promote positive school-community relations*
- *Advisories/meetings to build community*
- *Enrichment, clubs & after-school programs*
- *Positive peer connections*

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



Strategies

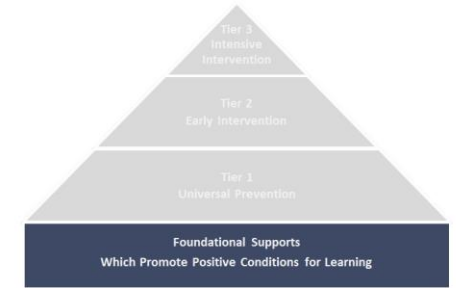
- *Project-based learning*
- *Credit recovery opportunities*
- *Alternative scheduling options*
- *Community-based or outdoor learning*



Barriers

- **Bored**
- **Lack of enrichment opportunities**
- **Lack of academic and behavioral support**
- **Failure to map credit/academic recovery**

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



Strategies

- *Staff self-care opportunities*
- *Restorative check-ins*
- *Access to health care & mental health supports*
- *Trauma-informed practice*



Barriers

- **Trauma**
- **Lack of access to mental health supports for students and staff**

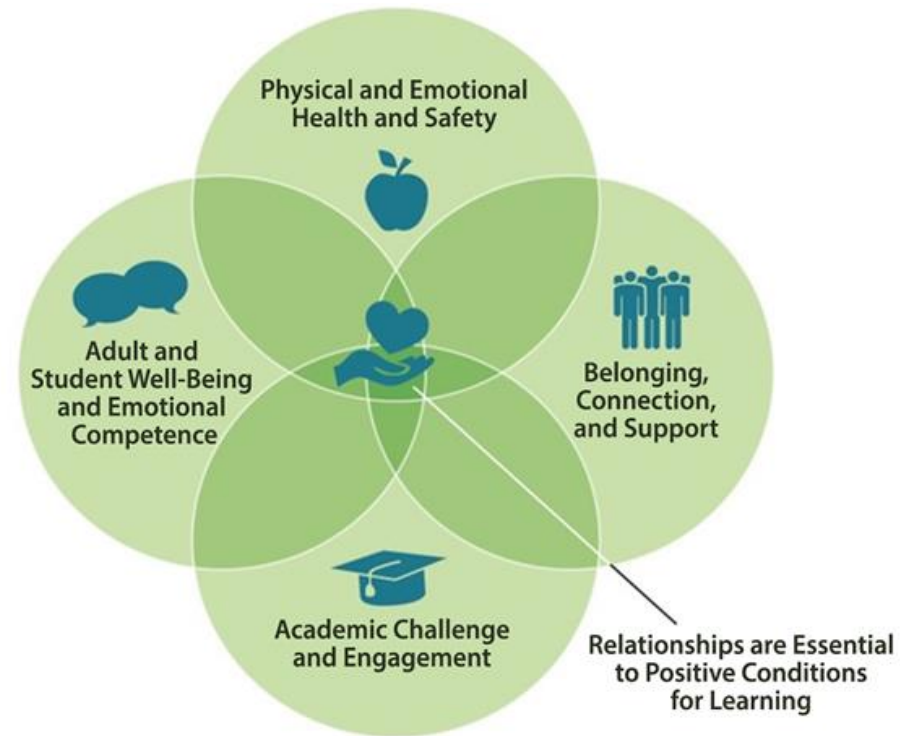
What promotes positive conditions for learning?



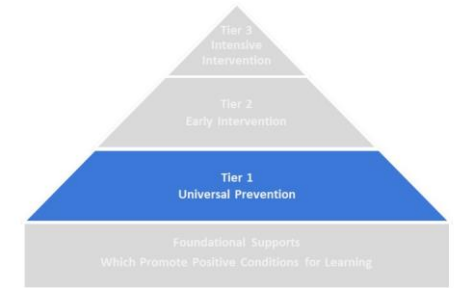


Reflection

How did the video illustrate positive conditions for learning?



Tier 1: Universal Attendance Supports



- ❖ Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations
- ❖ Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement
- ❖ Personalized, **positive** communication to families when students are absent
- ❖ Recognition of good and improved attendance
- ❖ Connection to a caring adult in the school



Key Messaging from the AdCouncil 2024 Report

1. Positive in tone
2. Communicate positive opportunities associated with in-person learning, not the consequences of missing school
3. Focus on the whole child (*personally, socially, academically, and emotionally*)
4. Acknowledge parent's hesitations and avoid chastising or shaming
5. Message is first delivered by child's teacher

<https://www.adcouncil.org/learn-with-us/ad-council-research-institute/chronic-student-absenteeism>



Research about Effective Attendance Messaging to Improve Your Communications

1. Readable

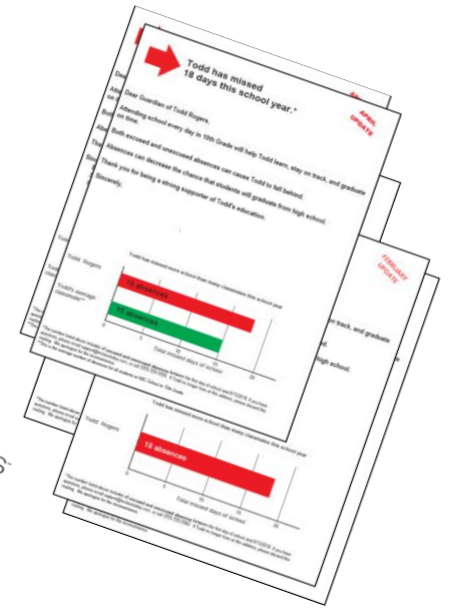
- Fewer words
- Accessibility: [Flesch-Kincaid readability test](#)
- Skimmability: bullets, format reinforces message

2. Programmatic

- Planned (*personalized to audience*)
- Timely
- Routinized

3. Available in family's native language

EveryDay Labs



Letters and Texts Can Help Build Connections

Insert School [logo](#)

Dear _____

I am writing to check in on **[NAME OF STUDENT]** and offer support.

[NAME OF STUDENT] has missed [Insert number of days absent] days of school this year.

Does this seem correct to you?

Getting back into the habit of daily attendance matters more than ever. Going to school is an opportunity for your student to:

- Build routines that help reduce stress.
- Connect to their friends and teachers.
- Engage in learning.

When students attend regularly, they are much more likely to read proficiently by third grade, do well in middle school and graduate.

We would like to partner with you to improve **[NAME OF STUDENT]**'s attendance.

Please call me at **[PHONE NUMBER]**.

Sincerely,

[PRINCIPAL'S OR OTHER STAFF PERSON'S NAME]

We missed (student) in school today. (Student) has missed (X) days of school this month/year. We love when (student) is here to join us, engage in learning and connect with friends and teachers.

Just Released!

Tip sheet to help families/caregivers decide when a child can go to school or should stay home.

When is sick too sick for school?



A regular attendance routine is important for your child's well-being and learning. These tips can help you decide when to keep your child home when they don't feel well.



SEND ME TO SCHOOL IF...

- I have a **runny nose** or just a **little cough**, but no other symptoms.
- I have **NOT had a fever overnight** and **have NOT taken fever reducing medicine** during that time.
- I have a **mild stomach ache**.
- I have **not thrown up** overnight and can drink liquids without throwing up.
- I have a **mild rash** and no other symptoms.
- I have **eye drainage WITHOUT fever**, eye pain or eyelid redness.



KEEP ME AT HOME IF...

- I have a **temperature higher than 100.4**
- I have **thrown up two or more times** in the past 24 hours.
- My **stool is watery** and I may not make it to the bathroom in time.



SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF...

- I have a **temperature higher than 100.4 AND any of the following:** ear pain, sore throat, rash, stomachache, headache or tooth pain.
- I have **stomach pain and fever**, I have **bloody or black stool**, or I am **dehydrated** (tired and sleepy, dry mouth) and/or I have **not urinated** in the last 8 hours.
- I have a **persistent cough** or **trouble breathing**, or have a fever with the cough.
- I have **eye swelling**, **eye pain** or an **eye injury**.
- I have a **rash that has blisters**, is draining, is painful, looks like bruises, and/or I have a fever with the rash.

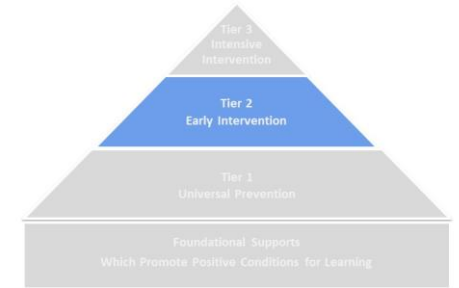
If you don't know whether to send your child to school, have specific concerns regarding your child's physical or mental health, or are worried your child will spread illness, contact your child's health care provider, a local urgent care or the school nurse. These tips are not meant to take the place of local health department/school district health guidance including about contagious illnesses such as Covid-19 and the flu.



For more information visit [attendanceworks.org/resources](https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources)

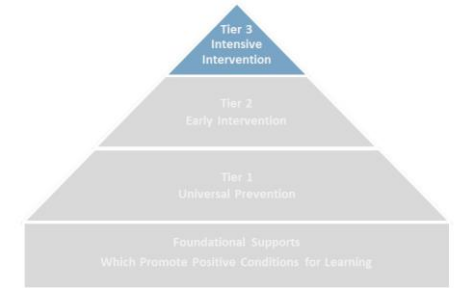
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/health-handouts-for-families/>

Tier 2: Early Interventions Layer in Support and Remove Barriers to Attendance



- ❖ Common community and school barriers identified and addressed
- ❖ Individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance
- ❖ Attendance strategies integrated in IEP
- ❖ Family visit
- ❖ Mentors (e.g., Success Mentors, Peer Group Connections)
- ❖ Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)
- ❖ Expanded learning opportunities
- ❖ Small group interventions and supports for students
- ❖ Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension

Tier 3: Intensive Interventions

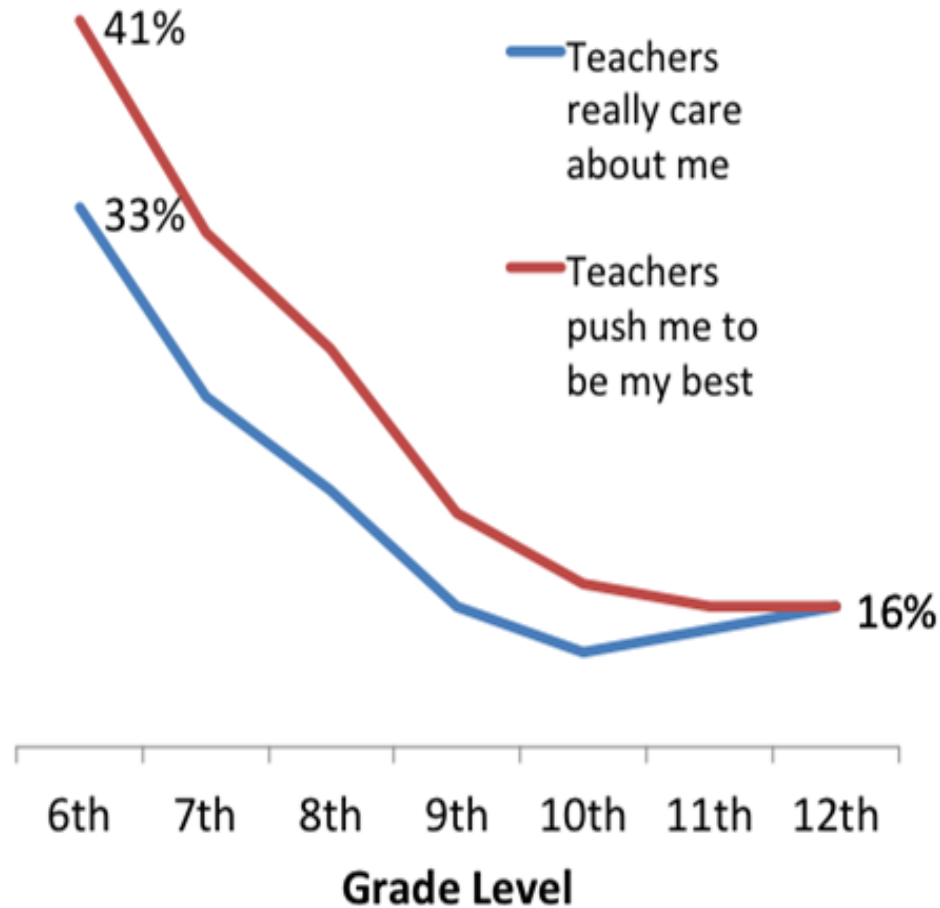


- ❖ Educational support champions / advocates
- ❖ Interagency case management
- ❖ Housing stability supports
- ❖ Student attendance review board
- ❖ Community-based, non-criminal truancy court
- ❖ Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation
- ❖ Legal Intervention (*as a last resort*)

**Relationships are Essential at
Every Level of Intervention**

Relationships with Teachers Decline

Younger students are more likely to report that their teachers care and challenge them compared to older students.



What do students say about their relationships with adults?

Search Institute: [What We're Learning about Developmental Relationships](#)

how-to guide to

relationship mapping

MAKING
CARING
COMMON
PROJECT



GRADES
K-12

IMPLEMENTED BY
School Administrators

CAPACITIES PROMOTED
Relationship-building; Student confidence; Shifting school

KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ See all students at-a-glance
- ✓ See who is well supported and who need supports by adults.
- ✓ Connect all students to at least one school adult

<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy>





Building Intentional Engagement

- Can you name three strengths and interests the student has?
- Can you name three things about the student's life outside of school?
- If the student has a problem, do you know if the student will share their concerns with you or another adult?
- In the past week, have you expressed gratitude or a positive message to the student?

Re-establish Routines & Rituals

- 1. Daily Wellness Check**
(e.g. Zones of Regulation,
Mood Meter)
- 2. Whole Group Greeting**
(e.g. Go-around Questions,
Circle Games)
- 3. Mindfulness/Grounding
Exercises** (e.g. Collective
Breath)
- 4. Greetings at the Door**
(e.g. Smile, Call person by
name)



Starting Each Class With a Warm Welcome: <https://www.edutopia.org/video/starting-each-class-warm-welcome>
Making Connections With Greetings at the Door: <https://www.edutopia.org/video/making-connections-greetings-door>

Resources for Intentional Relationship-Building

- Relationship Mapping Guide

<https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/relationship-mapping-strategy>

- 2x10 Relationship Strategy Bank

https://www.scoe.net/media/e40lyyjr/sesion_2_relationship_strategy_bank.pdf


- Edutopia – Relationship Building from Day 1

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/relationship-building-day-1>

- Search Institute - Relationships Framework <https://searchinstitute.org/resources-hub/developmental-relationships-framework>

Encourage All Students and Families to Create a Success Plan

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK



- 1. My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- 2. Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- 3. Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- 4. Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help if you ask.

1. My Family: _____

2. Everyday Helpers: _____

3. Occasional Helpers: _____

4. Potential Helpers: _____

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

Name: _____ Best Contact Number: _____

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

2017-2018 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August 2017							September 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5		3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
							17	18	19	20	21	22	23
							24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October 2017							November 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
							21	22	23	24	25	26	27
							28	29	30	31			

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____.
- I will make sure my child is in bed by _____ a.m. and the alarm clock is set for _____ a.m.
- If my child complains of a headache or headache, and medical resources have been ruled out, I will make sure to call the school nurse and not _____ to that he/she can check in with my child during the day.

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



Report Out

Share in Chat:

What is a strategy you've heard about today that you'd like to strengthen or adopt?



Evaluation Survey

Please let us know how we can improve:

https://app.upmetrics.com/data_collector/ckf2oltbqlt8k0759tfdbfybj

Thank you!



Questions from the Audience





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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



Parent Handout on Anxiety

This new, 2-page handout provides answers to key questions:

- ❖ What are the symptoms?
- ❖ When does anxiety become a problem?
- ❖ What can families do to support their child?
- ❖ How can schools and health providers help?
- ❖ [Where can I find additional information?](https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/community-and-agency-partners/health-care-providers/)



Is your child missing school due to anxiety?

Definition of anxiety: Feeling of fear and uneasiness about everyday situations.

If your child is suffering from anxiety, you are not alone. The good news is that in most situations, anxiety is normal and temporary. Anxiety becomes a concern if it persists - it can impact relationships with family, peers and teachers, contribute to academic challenges, and lead to school avoidance/refusal. Addressing anxiety is important for a child's overall well-being, not just attendance.

In addition, if your child starts to complain of symptoms like a headache or stomach ache, it is important to **quickly determine** if this is related to anxiety or a physical illness which might require missing school. If the challenge is anxiety, then staying home may worsen the situation.



What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Persistent anxiety can present in many ways, making it difficult to recognize.

Symptoms may vary depending on the age of the child, and some children may keep worries to themselves or have difficulty explaining their feelings making it hard to identify symptoms. Anxiety symptoms can include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Feeling tired, irritable or easily tearful
- Having trouble separating from parents
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Trouble getting out of bed or dressed for school
- Lack of appetite
- Trouble concentrating which may lead to difficulty starting tasks, problems with homework and falling behind in school
- Physical symptoms, including stomachaches and headaches
- Avoiding activities they previously enjoyed
- Negative or continuous thoughts that something bad is going to happen

Communicating with Families

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

- ★ Letters for Families
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/>
- ★ Spring Attendance Dips
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/spring-attendance-slump/>
- ★ Strengthen Summer Learning
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/showing-up-matters-for-real/using-r-e-a-l-to-strengthen-summer-learning/>
- ★ Stay the Course: Winter Messaging
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/stay-the-course-a-winter-messaging-toolkit/>
- ★ Holiday Messaging
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/holiday-messaging/>
- ★ How to Text Message Parents to Reduce Chronic Absence Using an Evidence-Based Approach
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf>

