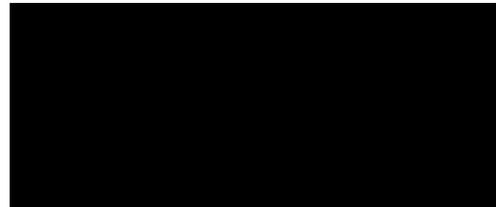


Reducing the Achievement Gap in California: The Imperative for Reducing Chronic Absence Starting with School Entry

Presentation to Los Angeles Truancy Task Force
August 9, 2011

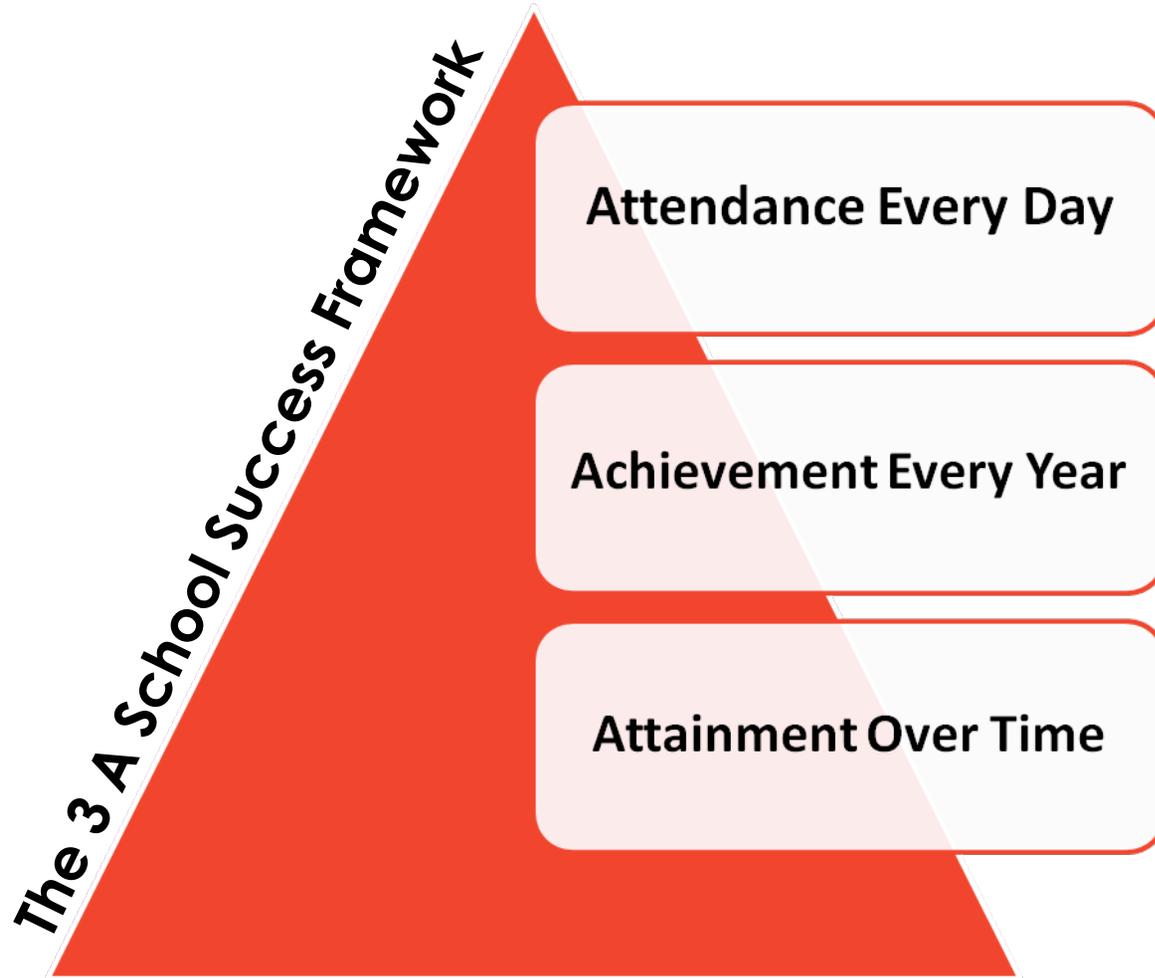
Hedy Chang
Director, Attendance Works
Co-Chair, Chronic Absence & Attendance Partnership



The Chronic Absence and
Attendance Partnership



An Antidote to Drop-Out



Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America's Promise Alliance
For more info go to www.americaspromise.org/parentengagement



Defining Key Terms

- * **Average Daily Attendance:** The percentage of enrolled students who attend school each day.
- * **Satisfactory Attendance:** Missing 5% or less of school in an academic year.
- * **Chronic Absence:** Missing 10% or more of school in an academic year for any reason—excused or unexcused.
- * **Severe Chronic Absence:** Missing 20% or more days of school per year – approximately two months of school.
- * **Truancy:** Typically refers *only* to unexcused absences and is defined by each state. In CA, it is missing 3 days of school without a valid excuse, or being late to class 3 times without a valid excuse. In MD, it is unlawfully absent 20% of days if enrolled 90 days.



When 90% Doesn't Earn an "A"

Students Who Miss More Than 10% Of School Are At Grave Risk



Chronic Absence
(=>10% absence)

Warning Signs
(<10% but >5% absence)

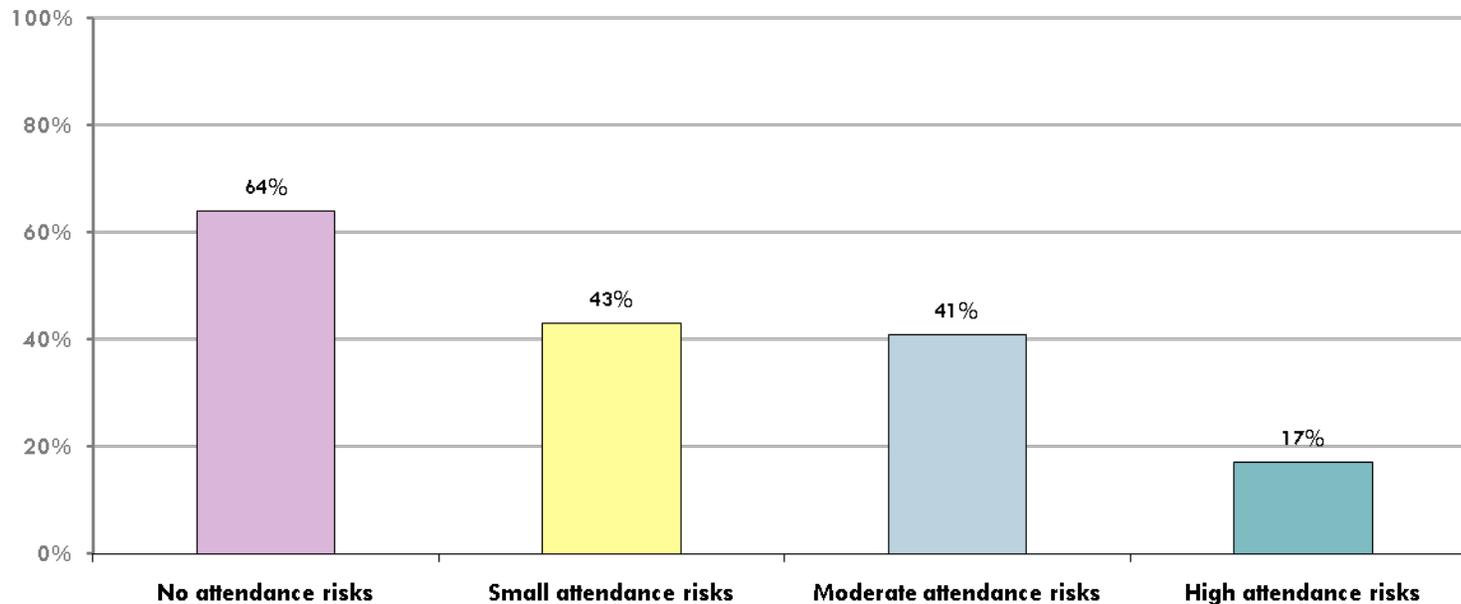
Satisfactory Attendance
(=<5% absence)

Emergency: =>20% absence



Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1st Grade 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 1st Grade



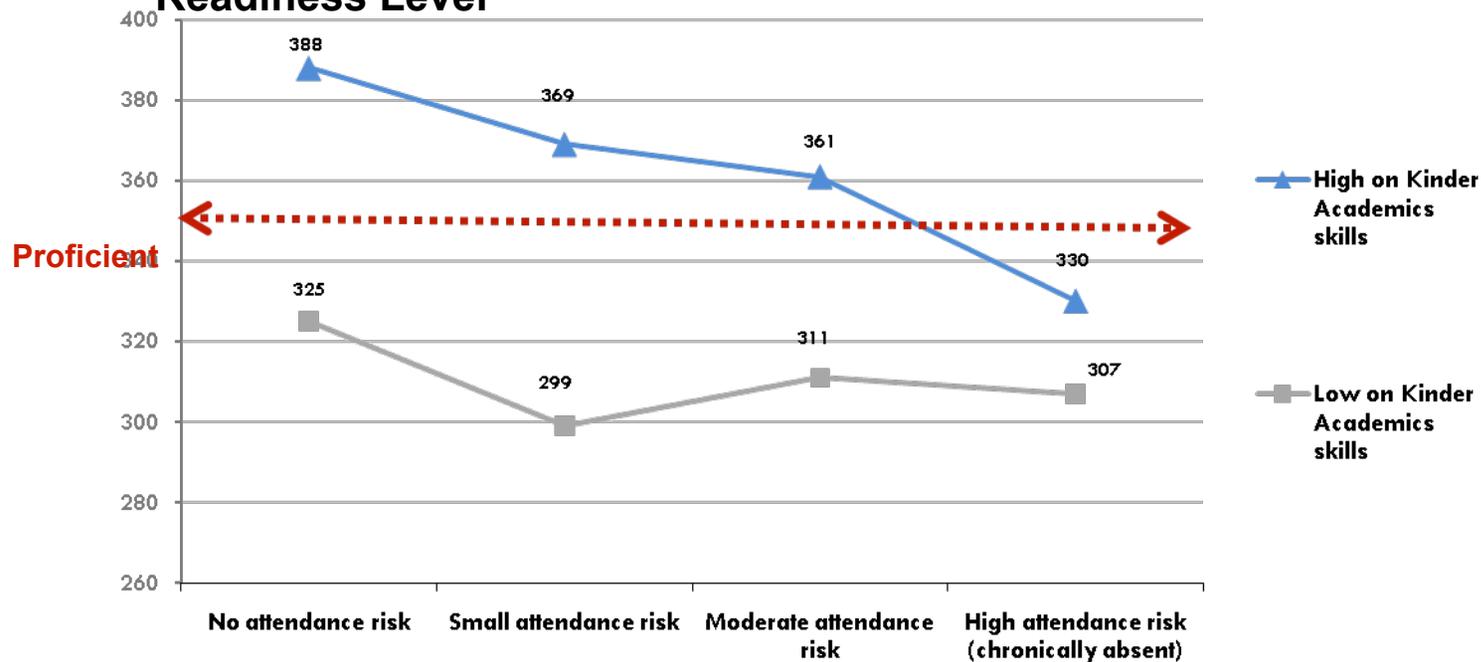
No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1st t
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1st
Moderate risk	5-9% of days absent in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year
High risk	Missed 10% or more in K & 1st

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



School Readiness & Early Attendance Are Critical to Early School Success

3rd Grade ELA Test Scores By Attendance and School Readiness Level



No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1st t
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1st
Moderate risk	5-9% of days absent in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year
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Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)



Chronic Absence is Especially Challenging for Low-Income Children

- * Kindergarten and 1st grade can reduce the achievement gap for low-income vs. middle class students, but only if they attend school regularly. (Ready 2010)
- * The negative impact of absences on literacy is **75% larger** for low-income children whose families often lack resources to make up lost time on task. (Ready 2010)
- * Only **17% of low-income children** in the United States read proficiently by 4th grade. (NAEP 2009)



Chronic Absence is Especially Challenging for Low-Income Children

- * Poor children are **4x** more likely to be chronically absent in K than their highest income peers. Chronic absence in K predicts poor 5th grade outcomes for poor children.

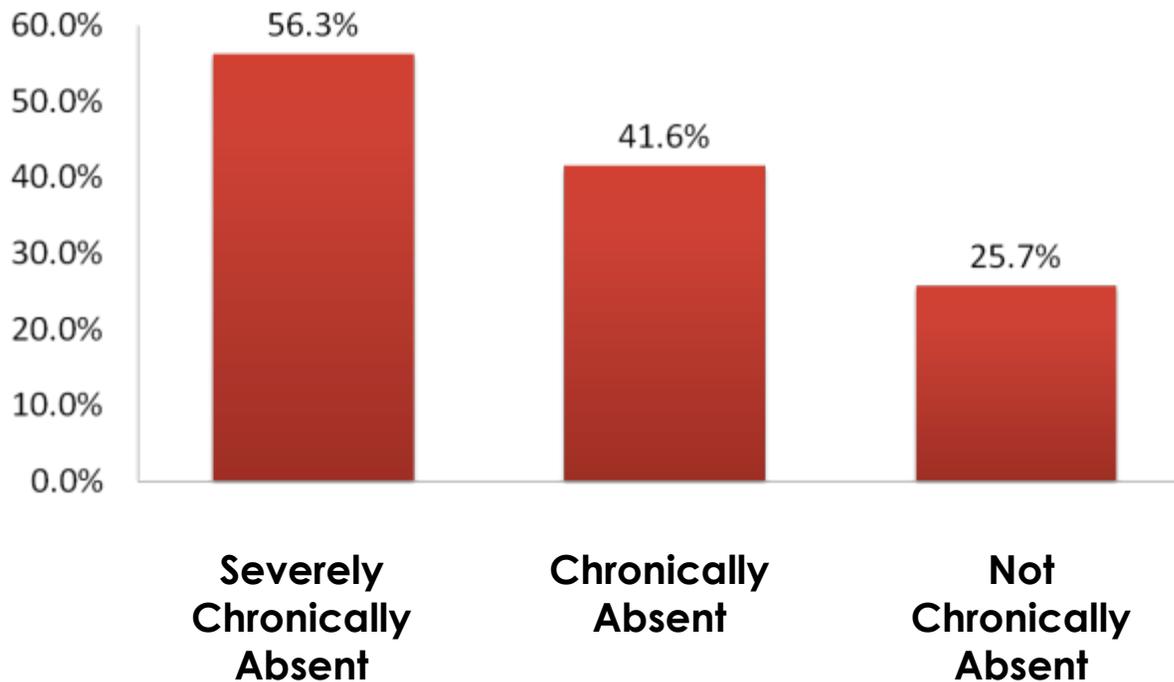
- * Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports that ensure a child is more likely to get to school. They often face:
 - ⊗ **Unstable Housing**
 - ⊗ **Limited Access to Health Care**
 - ⊗ **Poor Transportation**
 - ⊗ **Inadequate Food and Clothing**
 - ⊗ **Lack of Safe Paths to School Due to Neighborhood Violence**
 - ⊗ **Chaotic Schools with Poor Quality Programs, etc.**

* (Romero & Lee 2007)



Chronically Absent 6th Graders Have Lower Graduation Rates

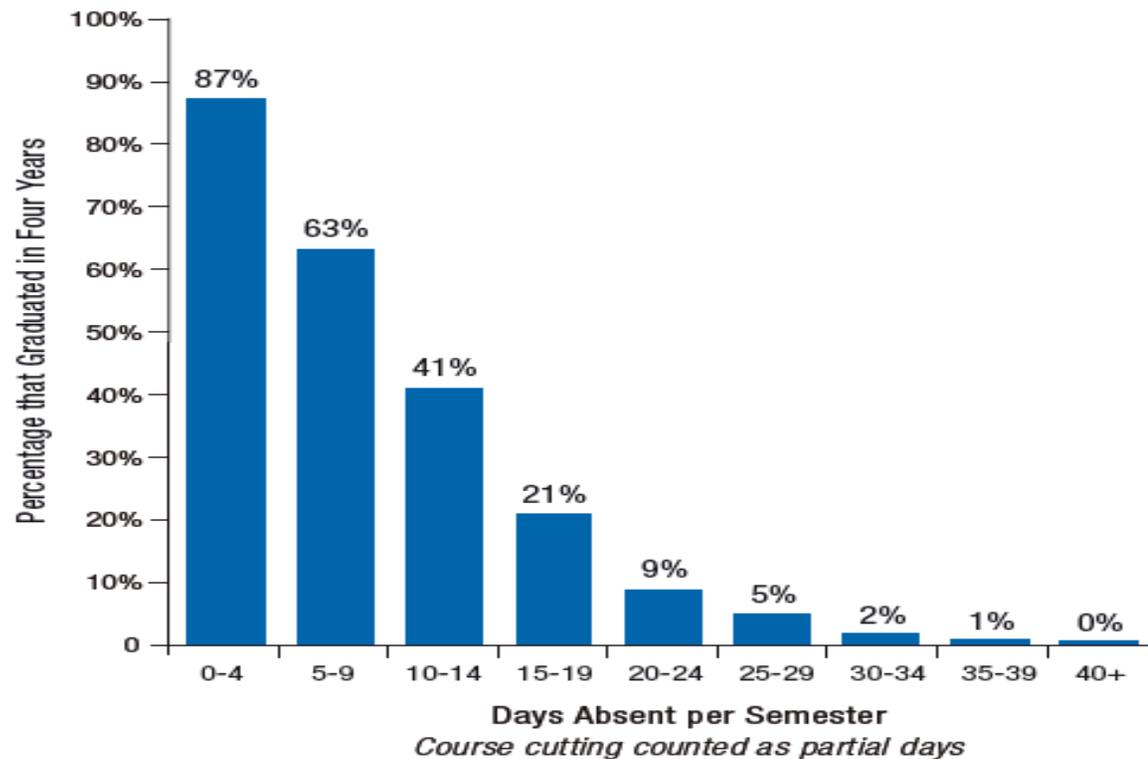
Dropout Rates by Sixth Grade Attendance
(Baltimore City Public Schools, 1990-2000 Sixth Grade Cohort)



Source: Baltimore Education Research Consortium SY 2009-2010



9th Grade Attendance Predicts Graduation for Students of All Economic Backgrounds



Note: This Chicago study found attendance was a stronger graduation predictor than 8th grade test scores.

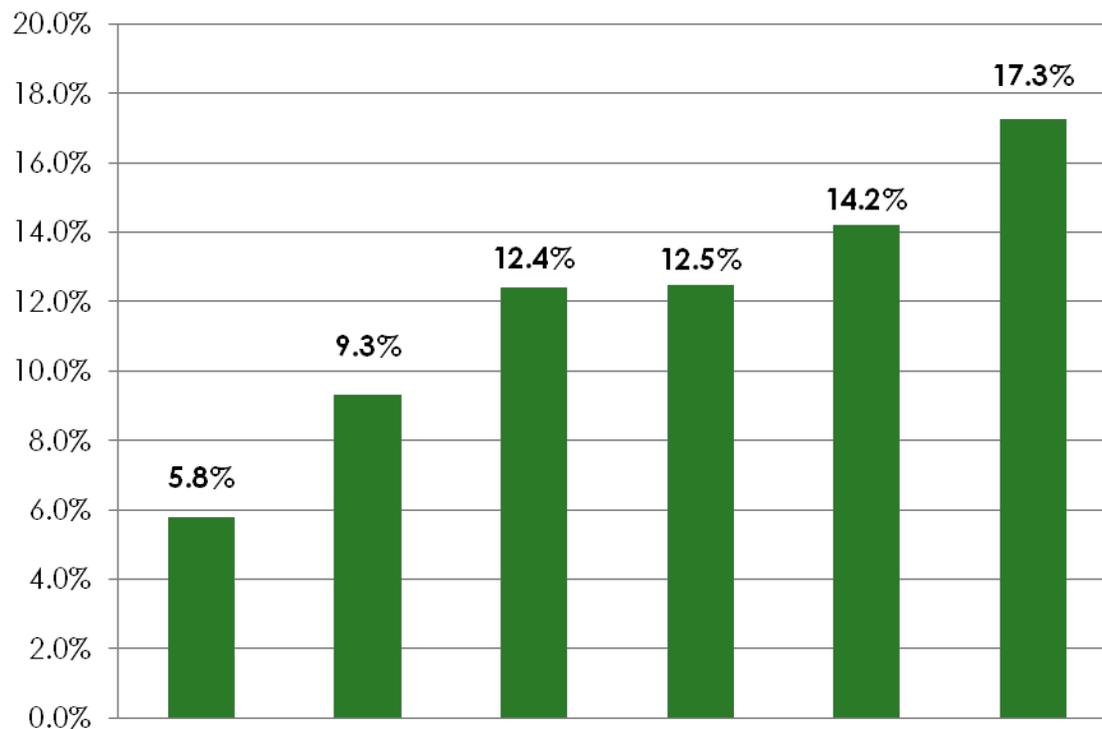
Source: Allensworth & Easton, *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools*, Consortium on Chicago School Research at U of C, July 2007



Moving into Action Requires Knowing If Chronic Absence is a Problem

Most Schools Only Track Average Daily Attendance and Truancy. Both Can Mask Chronic Absence.

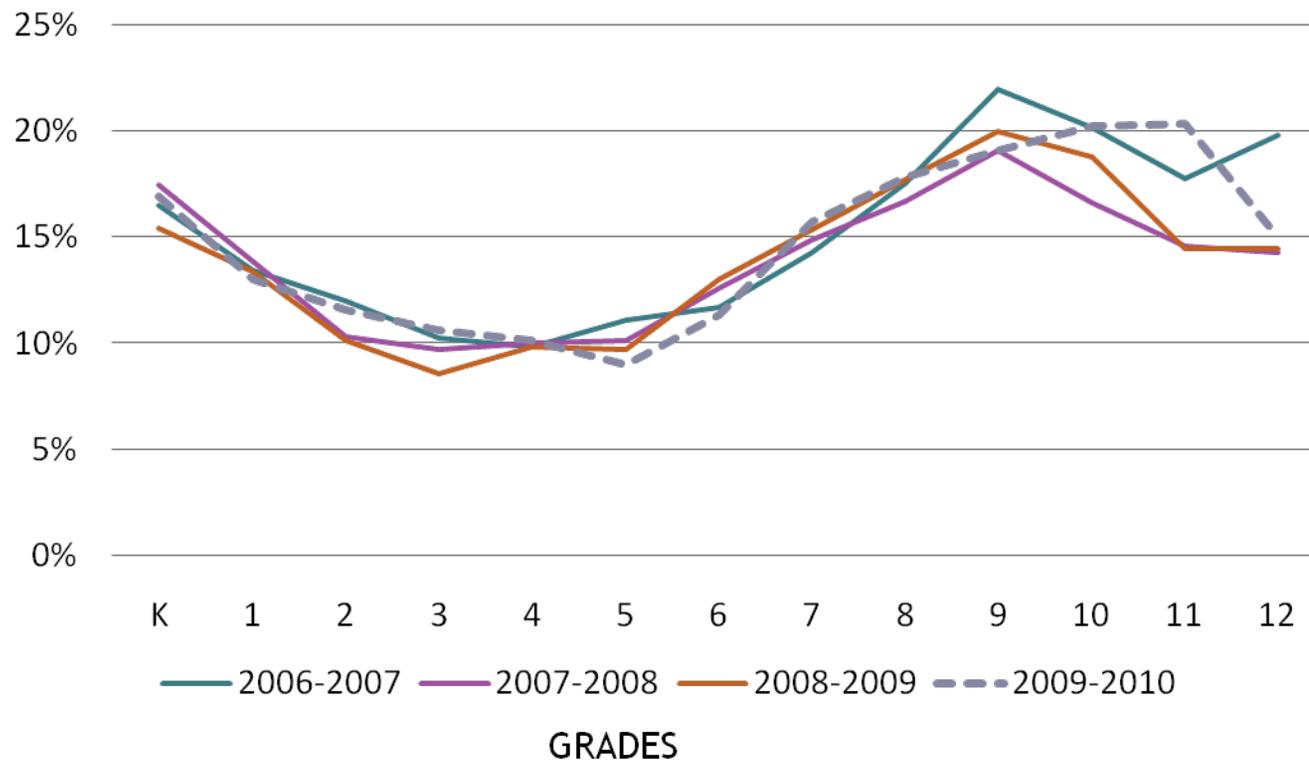
Variation in Chronic Absence for Schools with 95% ADA in Oakland, CA





Emerging Data Shows High Levels

Over 14% (nearly 1 out of 7) are chronically absent
in Oakland Unified School District



If the 5,421 students chronically absent in 09/10 had each attended 6 more days, OUSD would have received more than \$1,147,000 in additional ADA.



Data Usually Exists But Is Not Being Used Effectively

- * In most schools, teachers take roll every day.
- * In most districts, attendance for each student is recorded electronically.
- * Chronic absence is, however, typically not calculated and monitored even though the data exists.
- * CA is one of only 5 states that does not already have attendance in its longitudinal student database. SB 1357, which would add attendance to CALPADS and encourage voluntary submission of attendance data, has yet to be implemented.



Data is Needed for Identifying Programmatic Solutions

- * Chronic absence data (as well as other attendance measures) should be examined by classroom, grade, school, neighborhood or sub-population.
- * If chronic absence is unusually high for a particular group of students, explore what might be common issues (unreliable transportation, community violence, asthma and other chronic diseases, poor access to health care, unnecessary suspension for non-violent offenses, lack of engaging curriculum, child care or afterschool programming, foreclosures, etc.)
- * If chronic absence is unusually low for a high risk population, find out what they are doing that works.



Variation Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools

	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%



Schools + Communities CAN Make a Difference

Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- * Partner with community agencies to help families carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- * Make attendance a priority, set targets and monitor progress over time.
- * Engage parents and students in identifying and addressing school, family, and community issues that contribute to chronic absence.
- * Clearly communicate expectations for attendance to students and families.
- * Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- * Combine targeted interventions with universal strategies that nurture an engaged learning environment, build a culture of attendance and ensure physical health and safety at school.
- * Offer positive supports before punitive action.



Examples of Successful Efforts



Baltimore: Fewer unnecessary suspensions, reduced middle school transitions, expanded monitoring of attendance data, and a citywide campaign have **helped cut middle school chronic absence in half.**



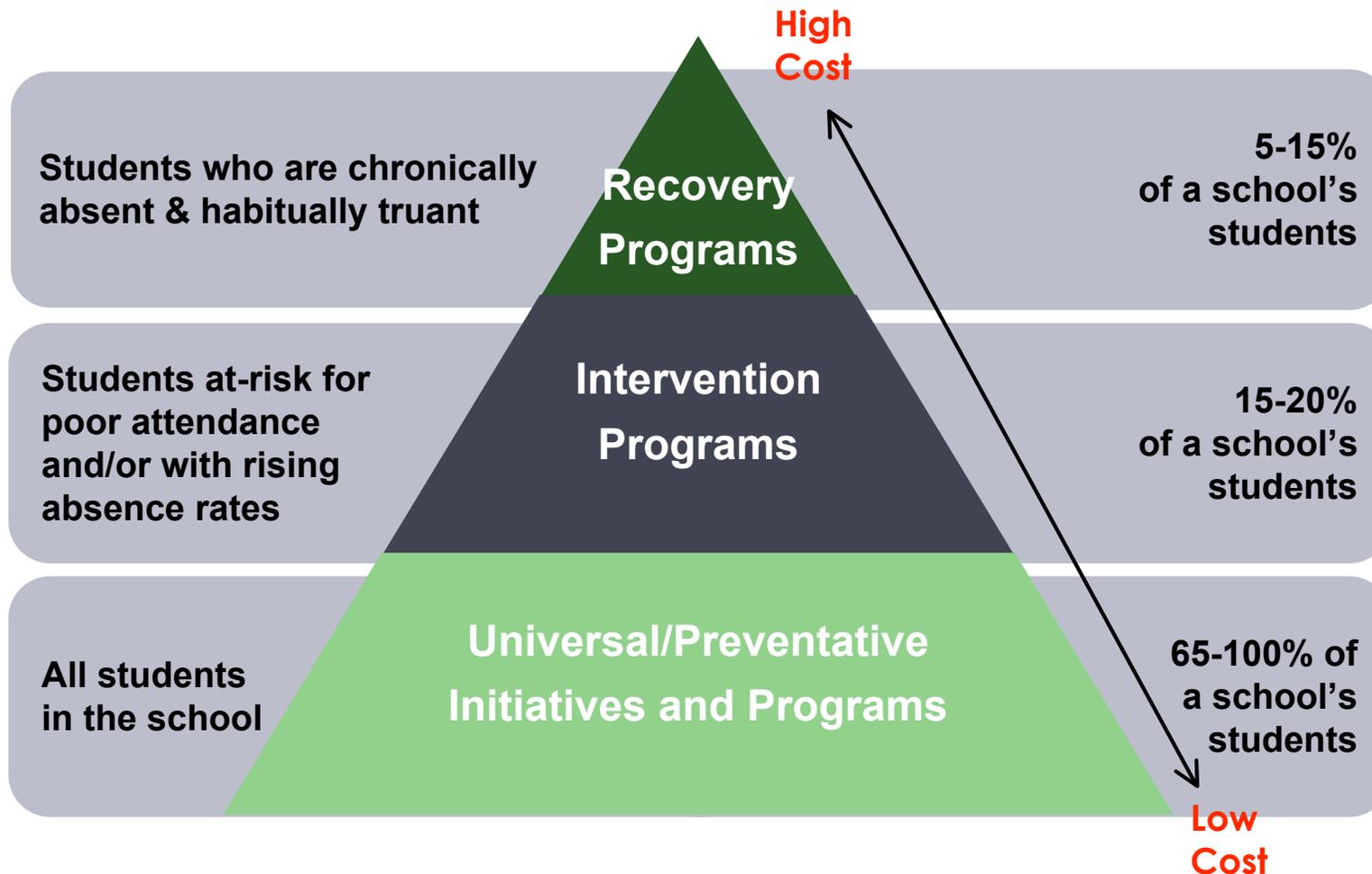
Grand Rapids: A community schools approach including outreach and case management for students with poor attendance **has helped bring chronic absence down and student achievement up.**



New York City: Schoolwide incentives, celebrity wakeup calls and mentoring for at-risk students **have reduced elementary and middle school chronic absence in pilot schools.**



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





Improving Attendance Takes an Cross-Disciplinary Approach

Universal Attendance Supports

- * Safe and supportive school environment
- * Inviting and engaging classroom environment
- * Intentional family involvement and participation
- * On-going attention to attendance data
- * Rapid parent contact for unexplained absences
- * Recognition for good and improved attendance
- * Collaboration with afterschool programs and early childhood programs to build a culture of attendance
- * Increased access to school based health supports
- * A school plan and budget that reflects high attendance priorities

Individual Assessments and Intervention

- * Refer chronically absent/ truant students for intervention including **SART & SARB**
- * Identify and remove barriers
- * Provide on-going support

Recovery Strategies

- * Interagency Staffing
- * Case management and wrap-around services
- * Referral as last resort for court -based intervention

Baltimore Student Attendance Work Group adapted from Scott Perry, Attendance Audit, Oregon



Districts Can Provide:

1. **Leadership.** Set attendance goals and district policy. (Note: CSBA has sample attendance policy)
4. **Data.** Ensure attendance data is accurately entered and reports on attendance including chronic absence are widely available & regularly reviewed. (Note: State SARB now encourages addition of chronic absence in reports)
5. **Attendance Incentives.** Promote effective school wide approaches to recognizing good and improved attendance.
6. **Parent Education & Mutual Support.** Invest in educating parents about the importance of attendance
7. **Individual and Programmatic Intervention.** Ensure individual intervention & outreach combined with systemic problem solving.
8. **Community Partnerships.** Help schools identify & forge partnerships with community agencies that can help address barriers to attendance.
9. **Peer Learning & Professional Development:** Create opportunities for school staff to learn about the importance of attendance and share effective strategies for improving student attendance.



Potential Implications for LA Truancy Task Force

- a) Identify and promote sharing of best practices for student attendance and engagement
- b) Examine and increase understanding of the different support needed for younger vs. older students
- c) Promote common standards for reporting and accountability around attendance data
- d) Increase utilization of data across districts to track trends and inform decision-making
- e) Identify gaps in services or policies that could be creating barriers to attendance such as transportation, inadequate health care (mental & physical), problematic discipline policy & practice, need for improved instruction and youth engagement, lack of coordination for students involved in multiple public agencies, etc.