



# Attendance Matters:

*How Out-of-School Time Can Make a  
Difference By Reducing Chronic  
Absence*

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.
- Signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

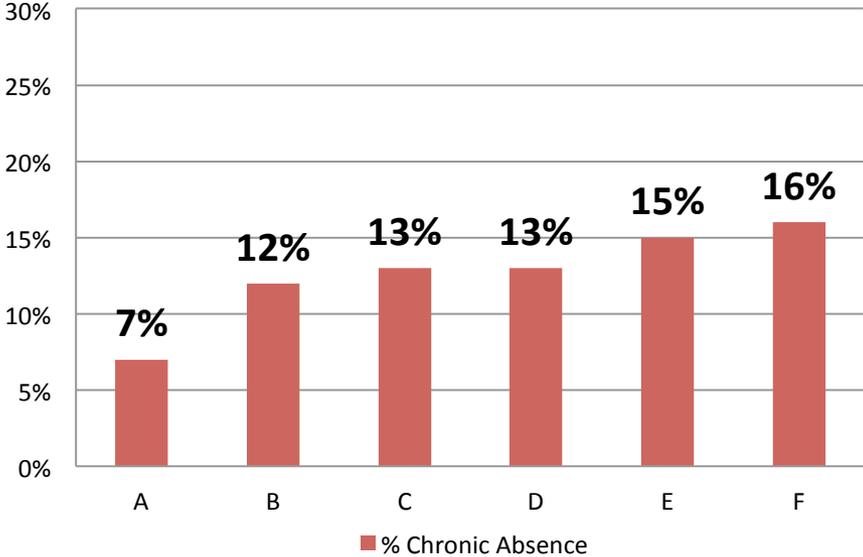
## Chronic Absence

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

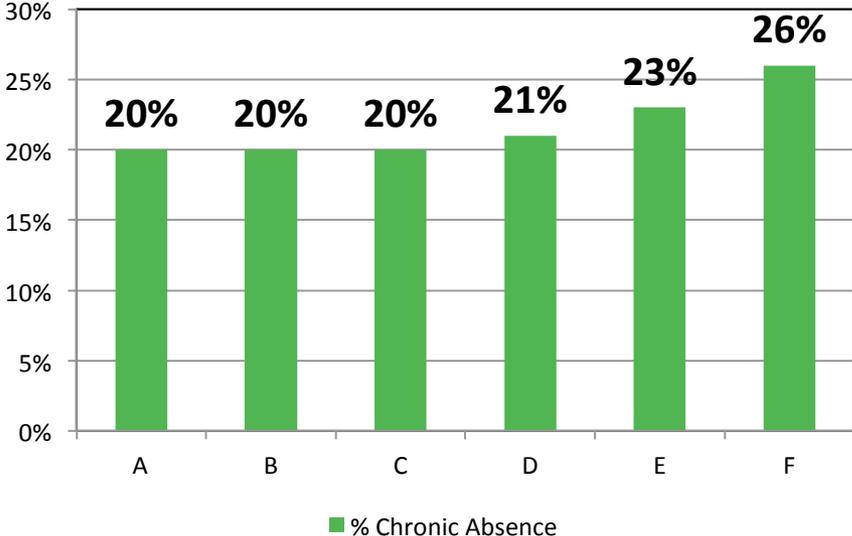
# High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

**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

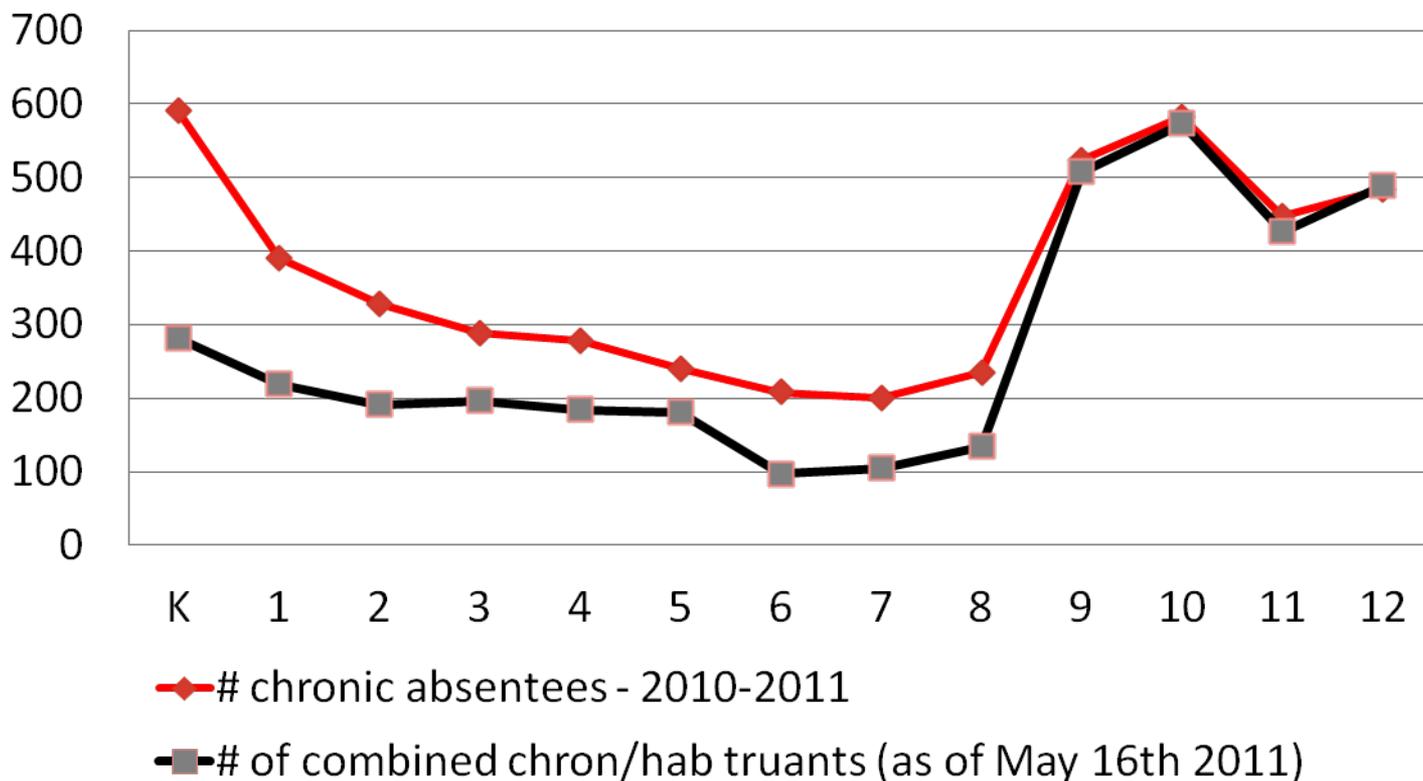


**98% ADA = little chronic absence**  
**95% ADA = don't know**  
**93% ADA = significant chronic absence**



# Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence

Number of Chronically Absent  
Versus Chronically Truant Students  
San Francisco Unified School District

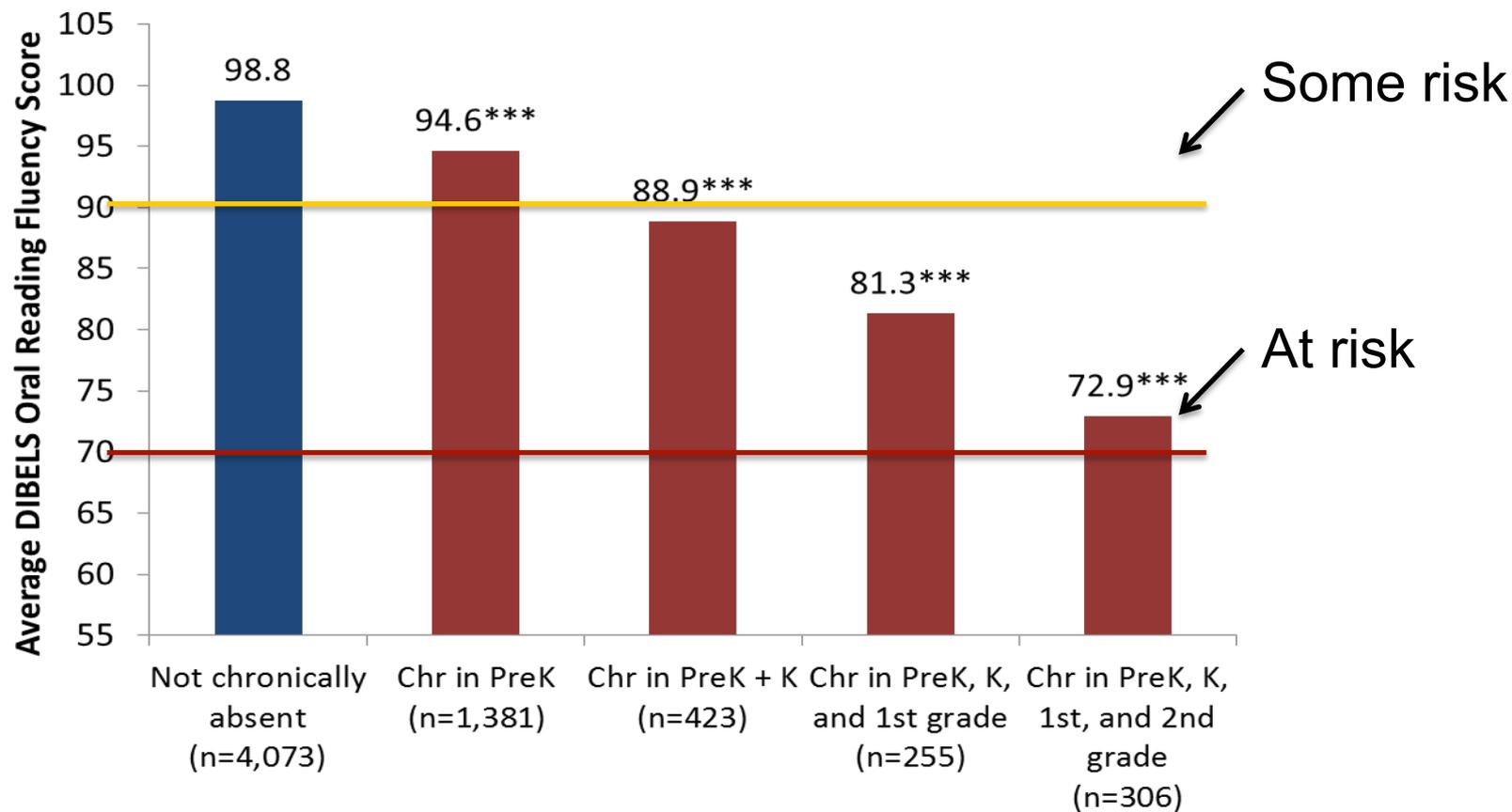


# Chronic Absence: A Hidden National Crisis

- ❑ 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.



# Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2<sup>nd</sup> grade scores

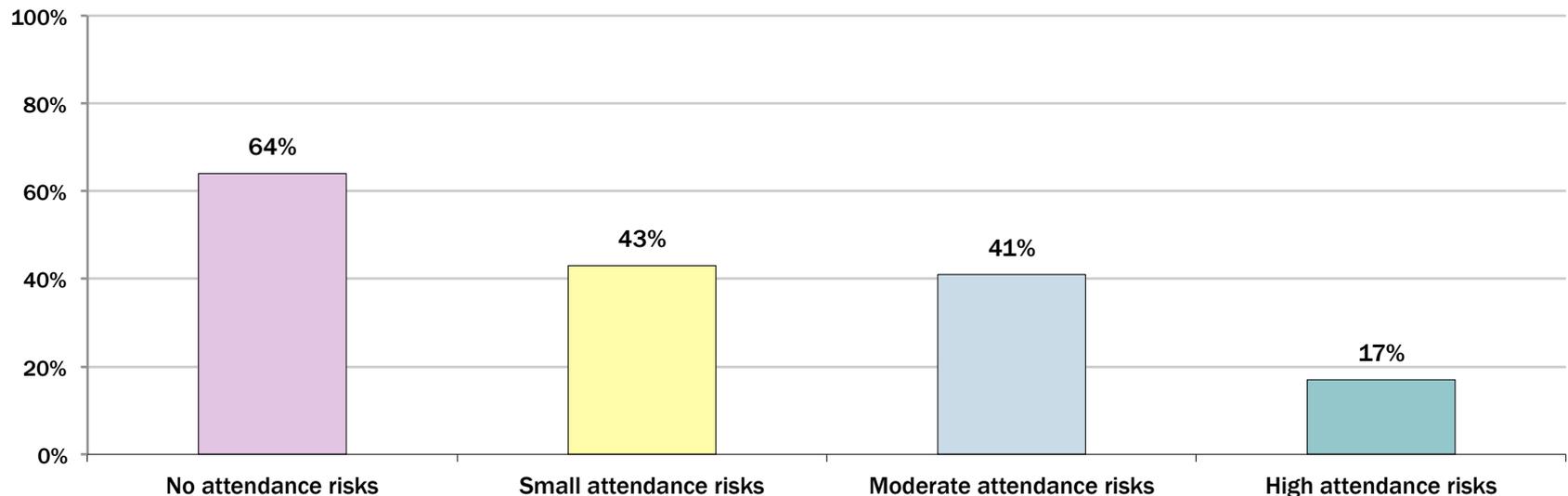


\* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at  $p < .05$  level; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$



# Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

*Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and in 1<sup>st</sup> Grade*



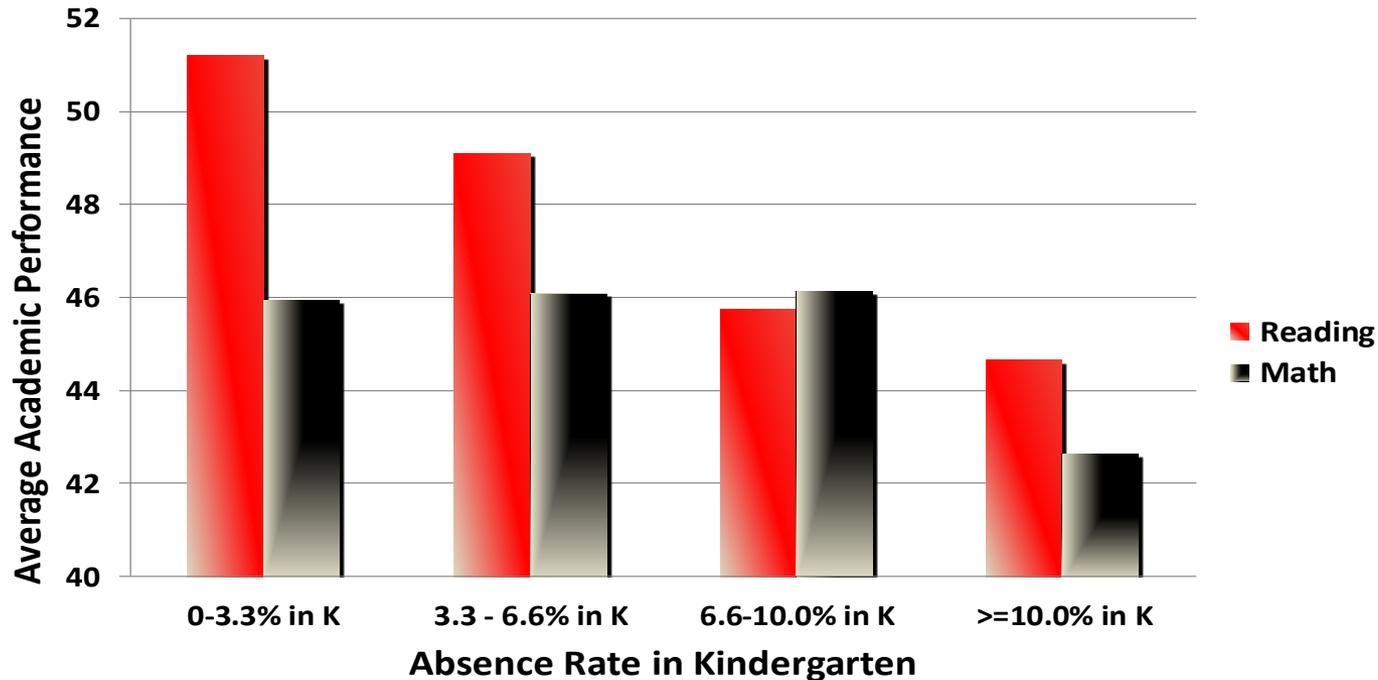
<b>No risk</b>	<b>Missed less than 5% of school in K &amp; 1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Small risk</b>	<b>Missed 5-9% of days in both K &amp; 1<sup>st</sup></b>
<b>Moderate risk</b>	<b>Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year &amp; 10% or more in 1 year</b>
<b>High risk</b>	<b>Missed 10% or more in K &amp; 1<sup>st</sup></b>

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



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

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



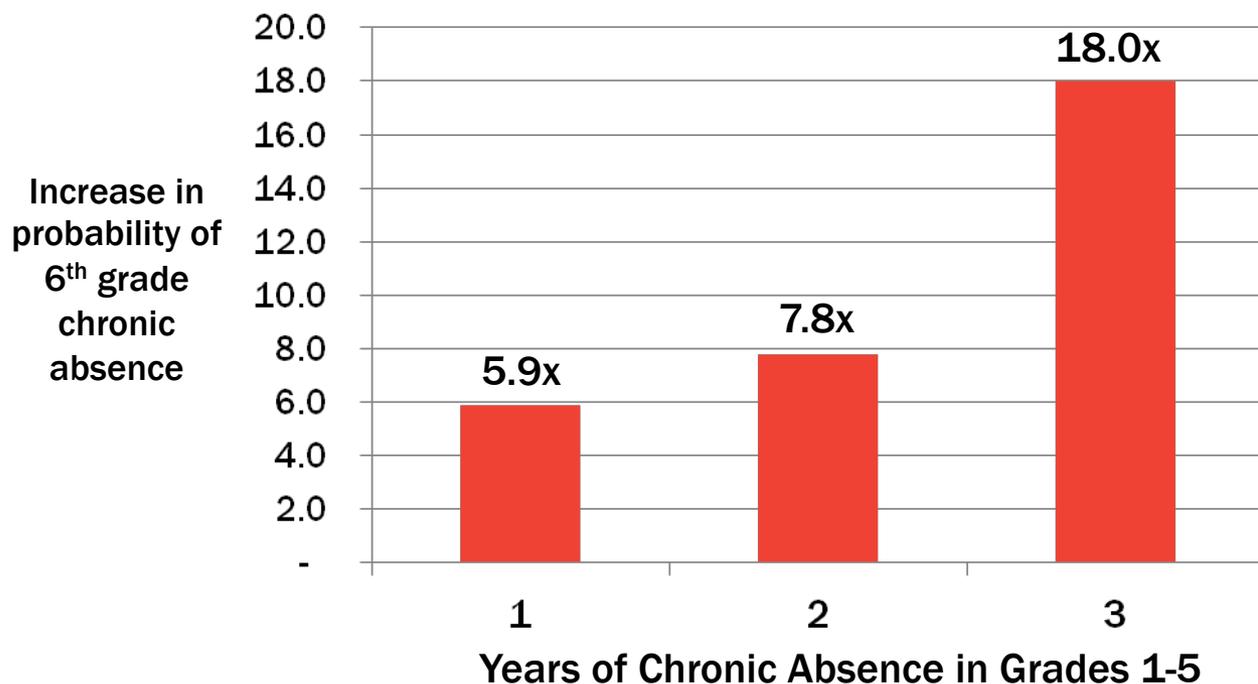
Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

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 6<sup>th</sup> grade

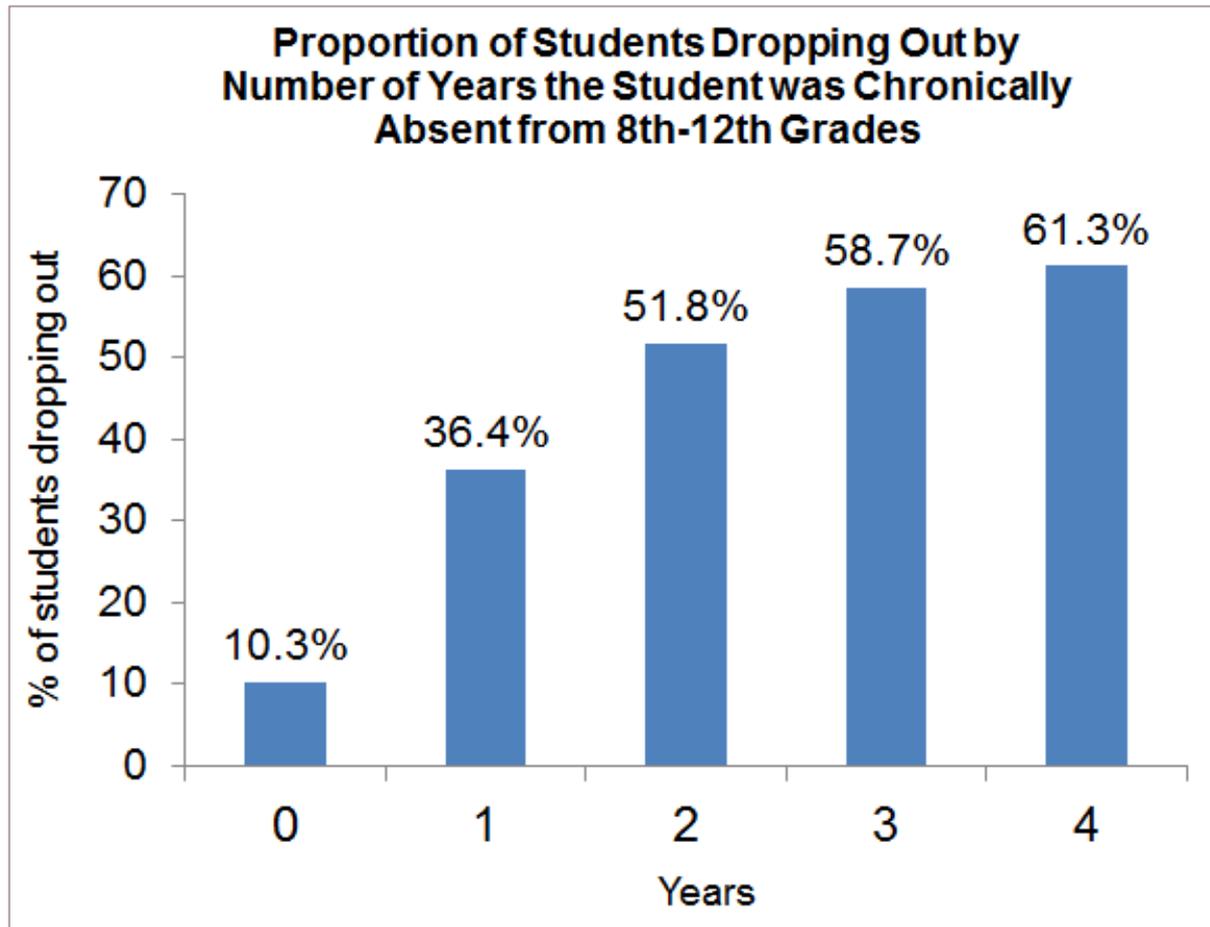


Chronic absence in 1<sup>st</sup> grade is also associated with:

- Lower 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

# 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

+

**Capacity**

Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



# Universal Strategies for Building a Culture of Attendance & Identifying Barriers

**A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance**

**B. Engage Students and Parents**

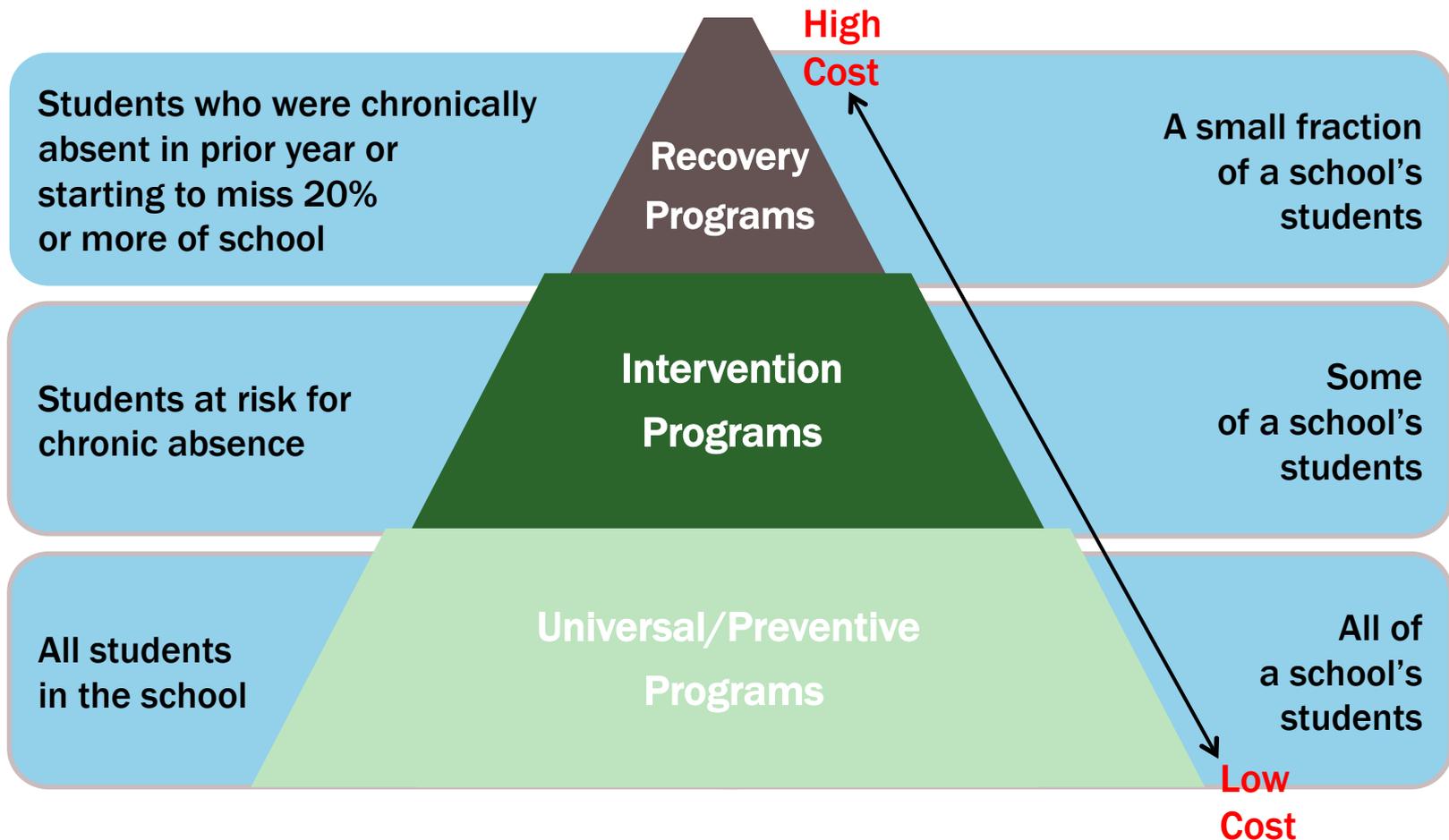
**E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)**

**D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach**

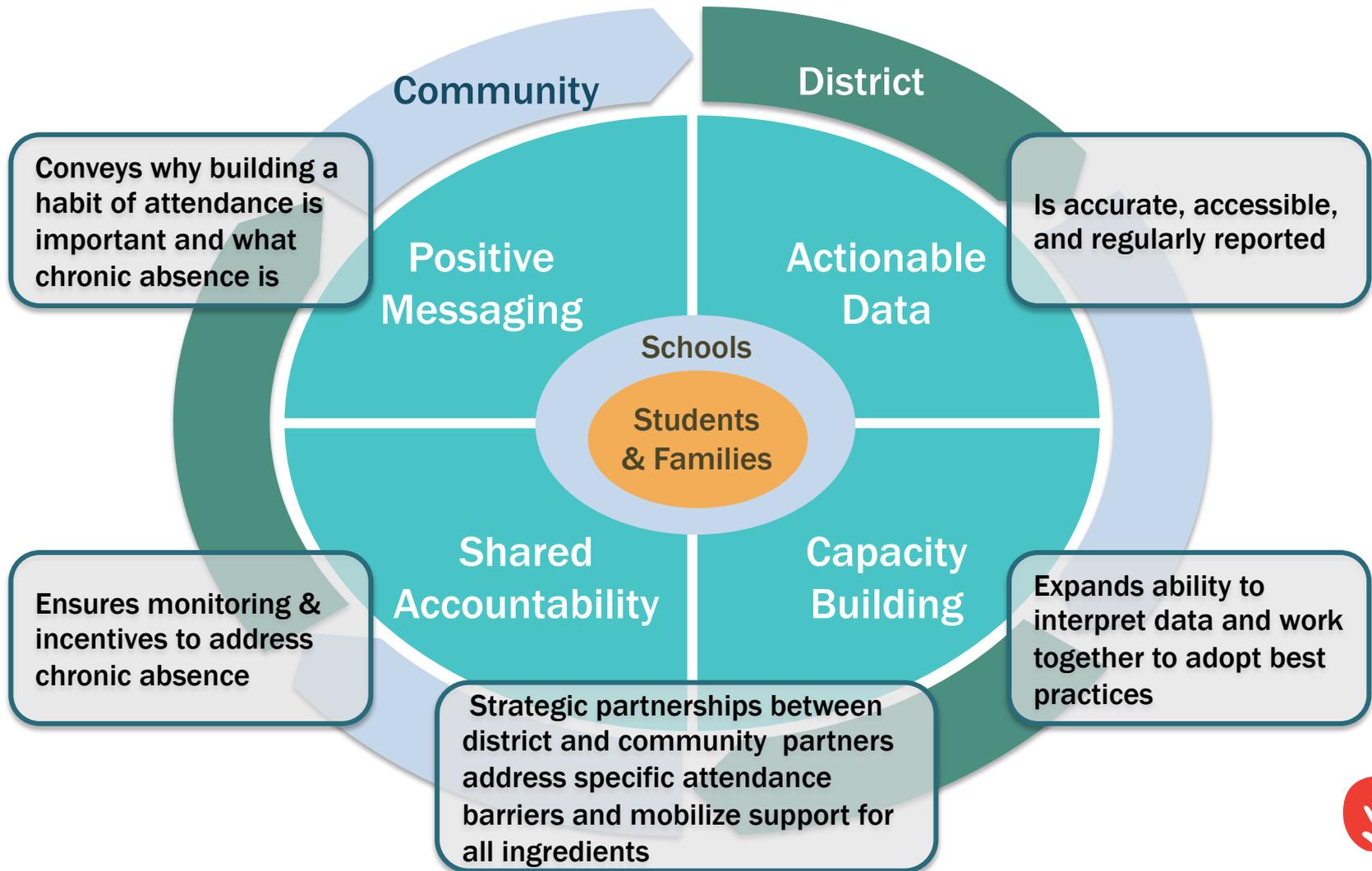
**C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice**



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



# Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability



# Welcome to New York!



Department of  
Education



EVERYONE  
GRADUATES  
CENTER



.....

Every Student, Every Day Initiative

2010-2013

.....

# The Response: Interagency Task Force

**Established in 2010 by Mayor Bloomberg and comprised of the Mayor's Office, Department of Education, and various other city agencies**

- **Key Aspects:**
  - Using **Data** to Measure, Monitor, and Act
  - Success **Mentors**
  - Principal **Leadership**
  - New Models for **Connecting Community Resources** to Schools
  - Promoting **Awareness**
  - Incentives, **Recognition**, and Response
  - **Accountability** Strategies to Sustain Efforts

# Success Mentor Models

- **Three Models: Developed with Nationally Recognized Leaders**
  - **External: Community-based Organizations**
    - E.g. City Year, Social Work Students, Retired Professionals
  - **Internal: School Staff**
    - E.g. Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, Classroom Teachers, Administrators
  - **Peer-to-Peer: Students**
    - E.g. High school seniors/juniors mentoring freshman

# Success Mentors' Responsibilities

- **Target Students**
  - Success mentor assigned “target” students who were chronically absent the year prior, and is matched with these students early in year, for full year.
- **School-Wide Strategies**
  - Promote a positive school-wide culture that encourages all students to attend and achieve.
- **Principal's Weekly Student Success Meeting**
  - Attend the weekly meeting and collaborate with school partners to support mentees.
- **Parental Engagement**
  - Work with families to share importance of attendance, and call home for every absence.
  - Interact with parents to celebrate students' success whether big or small.

# **Key Finding: Task Force Schools Significantly Reduced Chronic Absenteeism**

- All three cohorts of task force schools **consistently outperformed** comparison schools.
- **Positive impacts were consistent** across elementary, middle, high schools, and alternative schools.
- **Impacts greatest for students who benefit most from being in school:** high poverty students & students in temporary housing.

## **Key Finding: Success Mentors & Supporting Infrastructure Substantially Improved Student Attendance**

- **Students with prior histories of chronic absenteeism with a Success Mentor gained nearly two additional weeks of school (9 days), which is educationally significant.**
- **In the top 25% of schools, students with Success Mentors gained one additional month of school.**
- **High School students with Success Mentors (including those overage for their grade) were 52% more likely to remain in school the following year.**
- **Mentees reported they liked having a mentor and the mentor helped improve their attendance, schoolwork, motivation, and confidence.**

# Afterschool: An Untapped Opportunity

- Research and field experience show OST can help improve attendance in school.
- Focusing on attendance can improve collaboration with schools.
- By increasing school day attendance, OST can improve the academic success and reduce drop-out.



# Research Shows Impact of Quality Out-of-School Time

- 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders attending Boys & Girls Club afterschool programs skipped school fewer times, increased school effort and gained academic confidence. (2009)
- Afterschool participants attending Pathways to Progress in Minneapolis and St. Paul came to school an average 18.4 more days than their peers. (2004)
- School-day attendance improved for students in California's Afterschool Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program. Students absent 10 % of the year came an additional 11 days. (2002).



# What Can Afterschool Programs Do?

## Step 1: Create Culture of Attendance

- a. Take roll every day in a caring manner
- b. Partner with schools to educate families and students about the importance of attendance
- c. Reach out to students/families with poor attendance
- d. Offer incentives for attendance
- e. Use engaging program activities to motivate students to come to school.
- f. Analyze program attendance data to identify areas in need of improvement.
- g. Engage students in helping develop messages for other students about what is good attendance.

*What would you add?*



# What Can Afterschool Programs Do?

## Step 2: Get/Share Attendance Data on Program Participants

- a. Seek parent waiver allowing A/S to see attendance and grades, ideally as standard part of enrollment.
- b. Regularly get data on in-school attendance for program participants.
- c. Find out if you are serving any students with problematic attendance.
- d. Use poor attendance in afterschool to identify students who might begin to have trouble showing up to school day program.
- e. Partner with school staff to find out what are the challenges facing students with poor attendance and what would help get them to school.



# What Can Afterschool Programs Do?

## Step 3: Find Out About Attendance In Schools Served

- a. Find out what the school is doing to reduce chronic absence and improve attendance. Identify if there is a role for the afterschool program.
- b. Learn if your school has a team that monitors attendance data; Seek membership on the team or at least access to review school day attendance
- c. Use the afterschool program as an opportunity to solicit insights from students and if possible parents about what are the barriers to attendance in the school day and what could help overcome them.



# What Does Attendance Practice Look Like in Illinois Quality Afterschool 21<sup>st</sup> CCLCs?

We sent out a survey and heard from **98 afterschool staff** -- representing **59 of the 81 CCLC grantees (73%)** and ranging from Agency Directors to Site & Resource Coordinators -- to better understand attendance practice in your programs. The majority felt strengthening afterschool attendance (**81%**) and school day attendance (**82%**) was important.

**100%** Typically take attendance for their program every day

**96%** Take attendance by individual student (vs. total headcount)

**57%** Use a software program to track information about program participants, including attendance

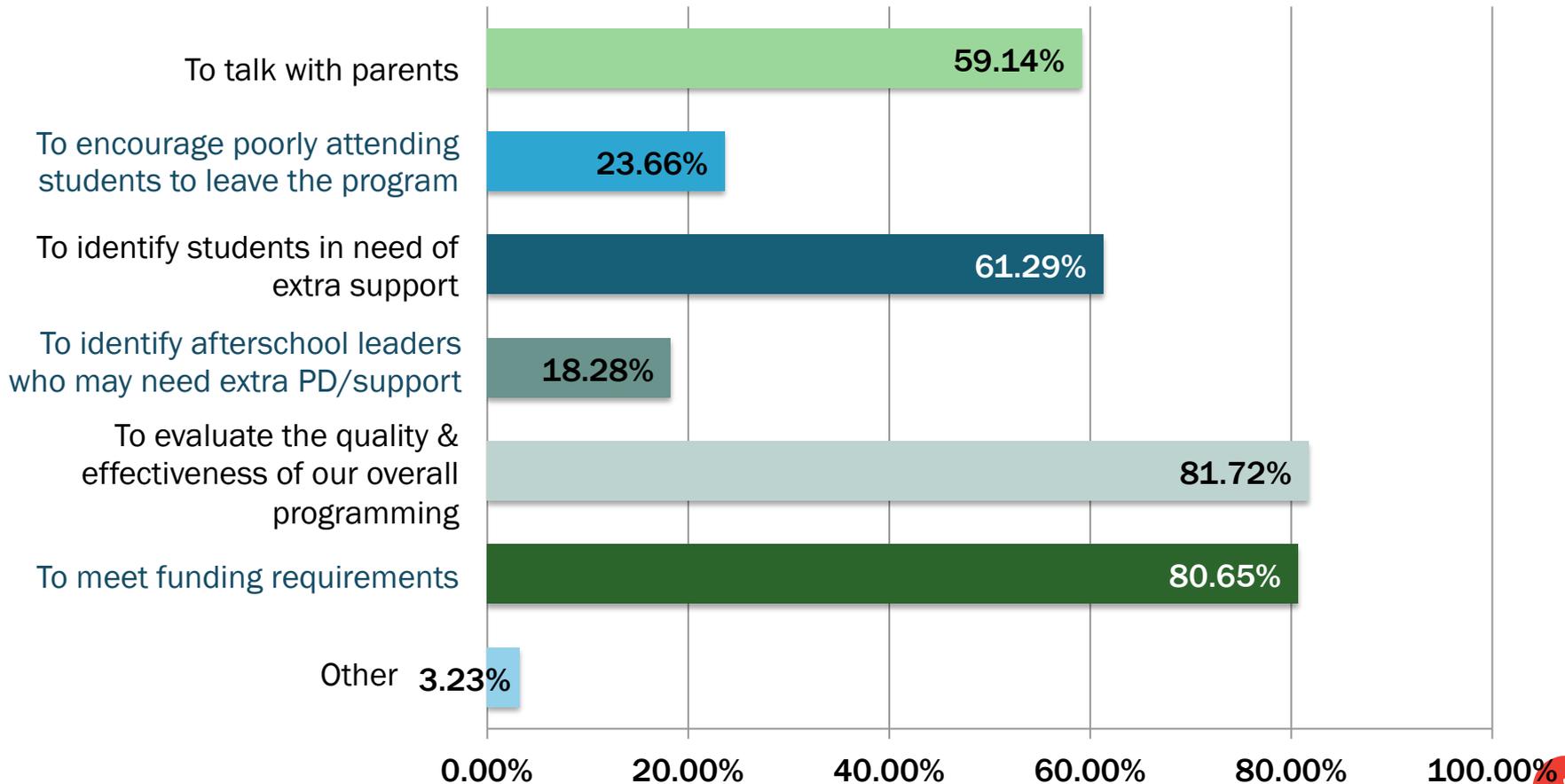
**60%** Have an agreement in place with the school(s) served by the program to share attendance data on individual students

**38%** Have evidence that their program affects school day attendance.



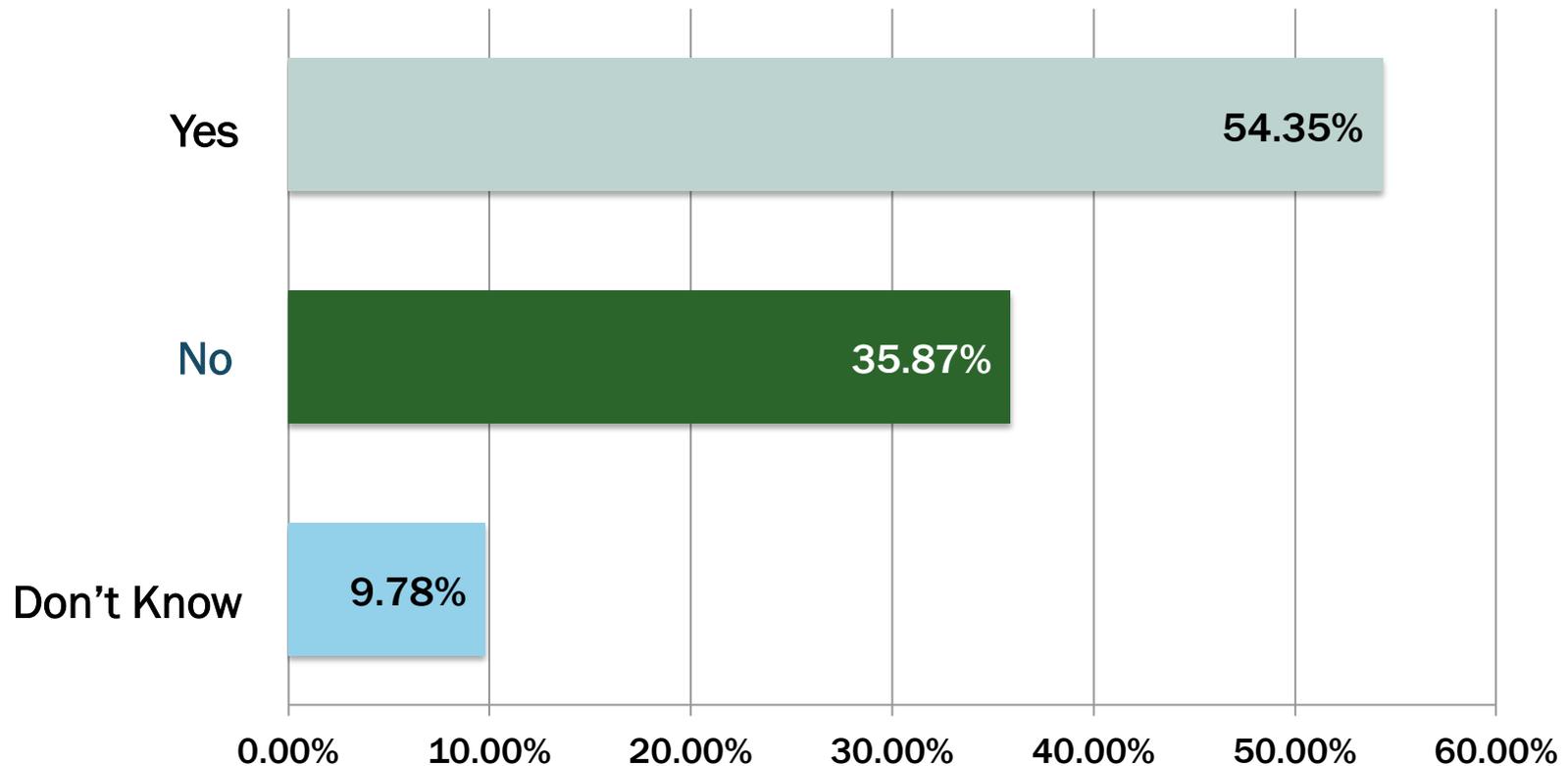
# What Does Attendance Practice Look Like in Illinois Quality Afterschool 21<sup>st</sup> CCLCs?

How do you use attendance reports? (Check all that apply)

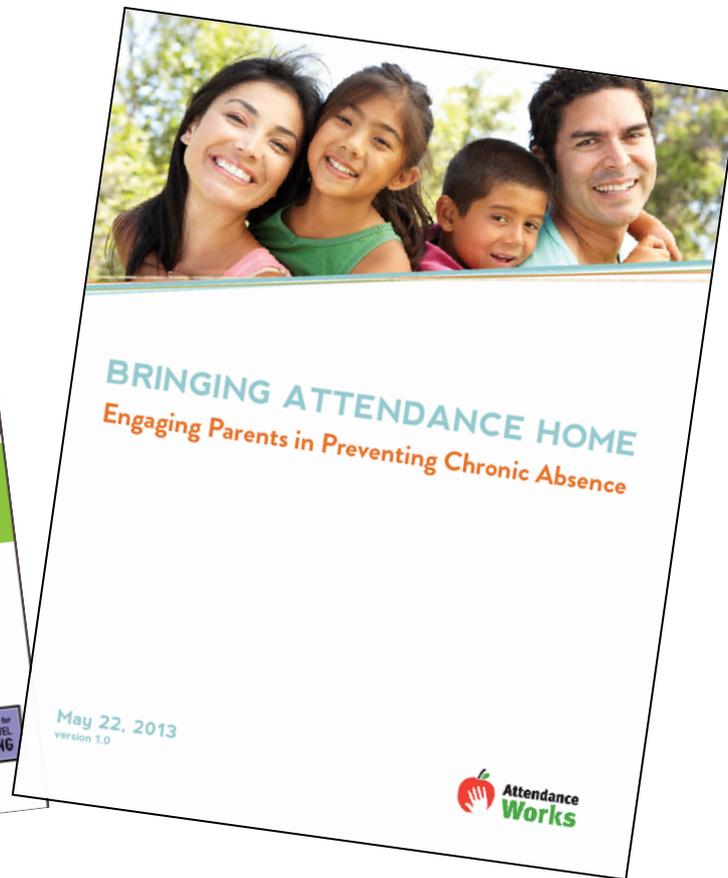
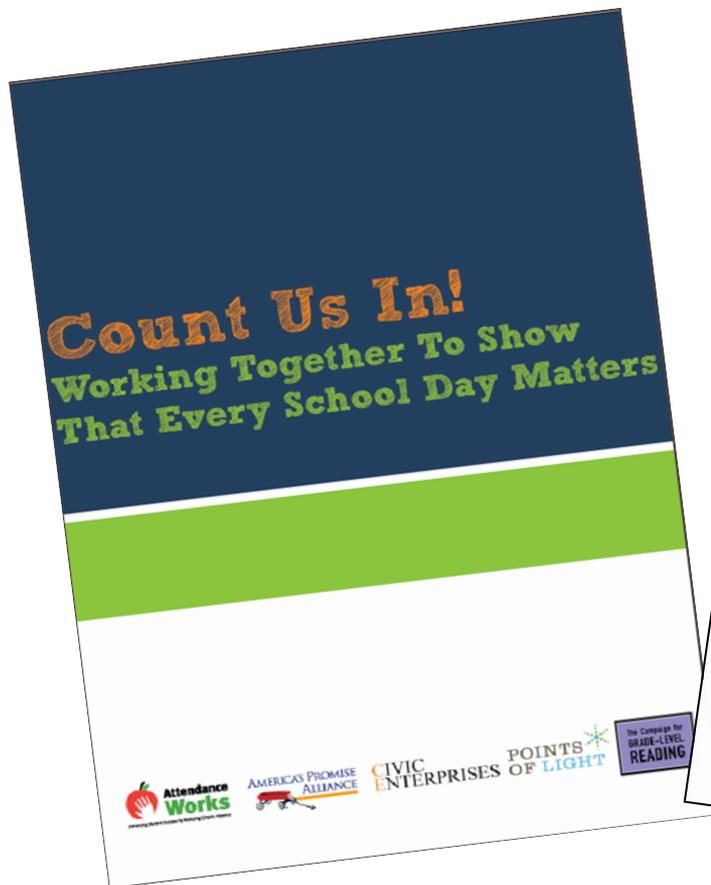


# What Does Attendance Practice Look Like in Illinois Quality Afterschool 21<sup>st</sup> CCLCs?

Are afterschool staff expected to help school staff reach out to frequently absent students and their families?



# Join us in September for Attendance Awareness Month



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

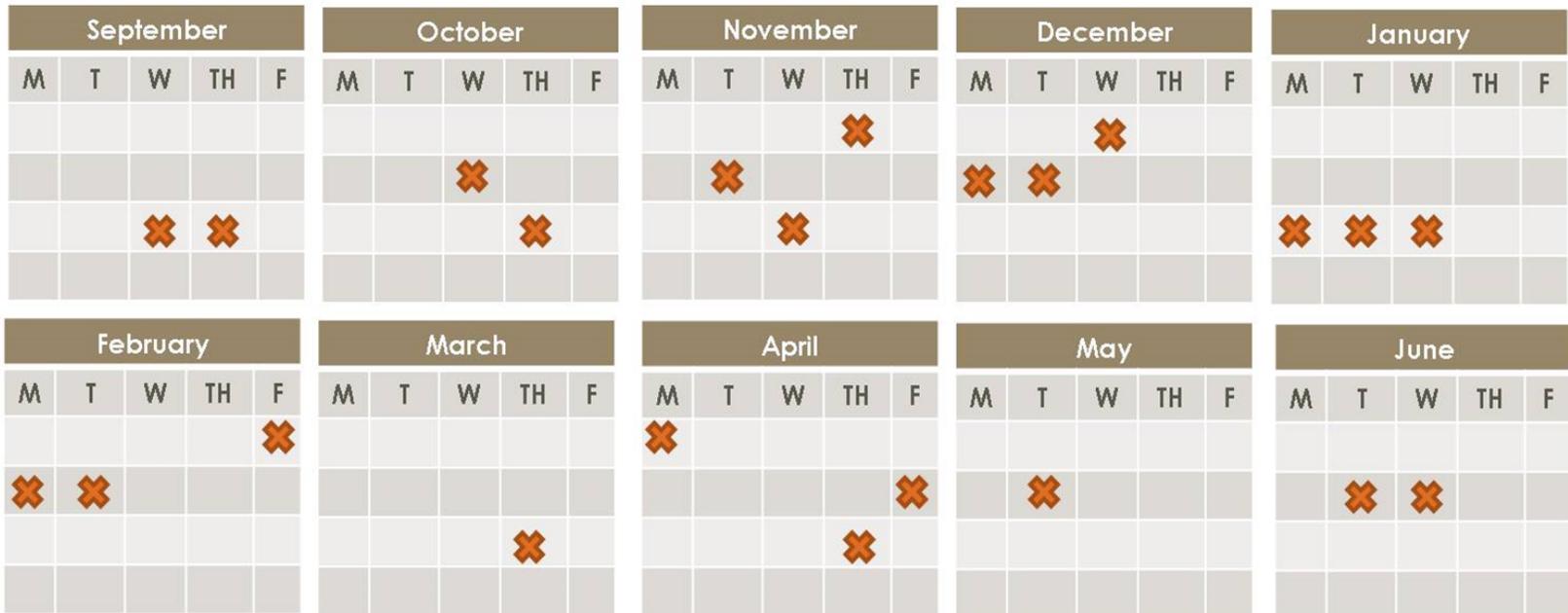
# Key Messages

**Key Message #1:** Good attendance, starting in kindergarten or even preschool, helps children do well in school and eventually in the work place.



# Key Messages

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



# Key Messages

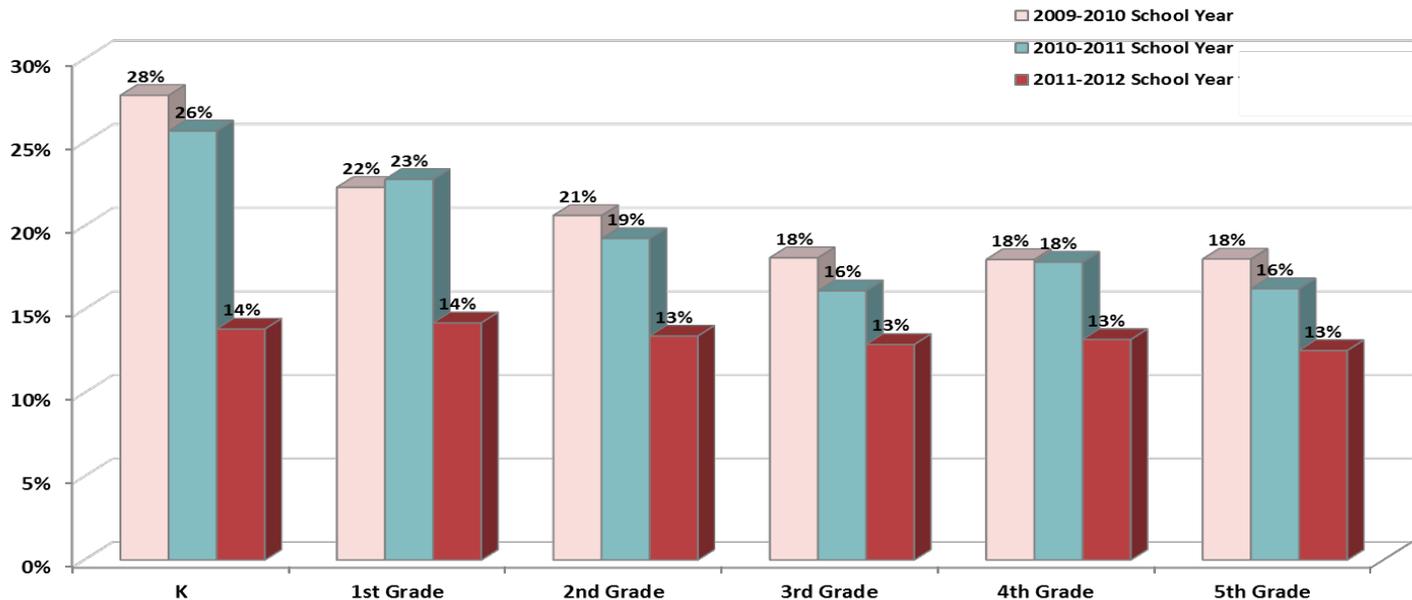
**Key Message #3: Chronic absence, missing 10 percent of the school year or more, affects the whole classroom, not just the students who miss school.**



# 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.

Percentage of Students with Chronic or Severe Chronic Absence Over Time, by Grade Level



# Key Messages

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



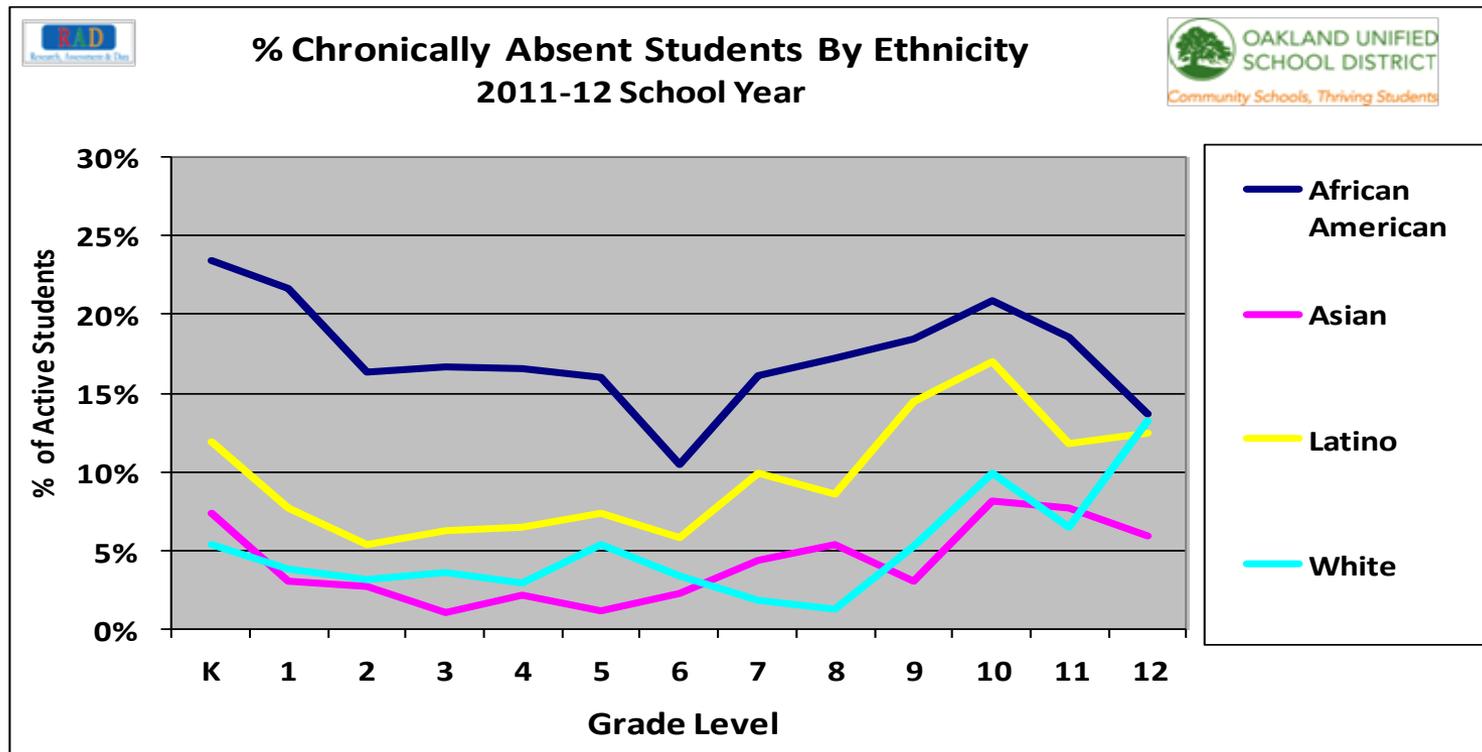
# Key Messages

**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.



# Attendance Works

**Hedy Chang**, Director  
hedy@attendanceworks.org

**Cecelia Leong**, Associate Director  
cecelia@attendanceworks.org

**Phyllis Jordan**, Communications Lead  
phyllis@attendanceworks.org  
301.656.0348

**Sue Fothergill**, Senior Policy Associate  
sue@attendanceworks.org

**Elise Dizon-Ross**, Manager, Research & Development  
elise@attendanceworks.org

