

NATIONAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE,
ENGAGEMENT, AND SUCCESS CENTER



2018 National Convening

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Baltimore, Maryland



NSAESC

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center



Plenary Panel: Successful Strategies for Taking a Systemic Approach to Reducing Chronic Absence

Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works

Panelists:

- Lorri Hobson, Director, Cleveland Public Schools
- Angelo Gonzales, Executive Director, Mission Graduate at the United Way of Central New Mexico
- Walter Sallee, Director, Student Services and Strategic Planning Branch, Maryland State Department of Education





About Us

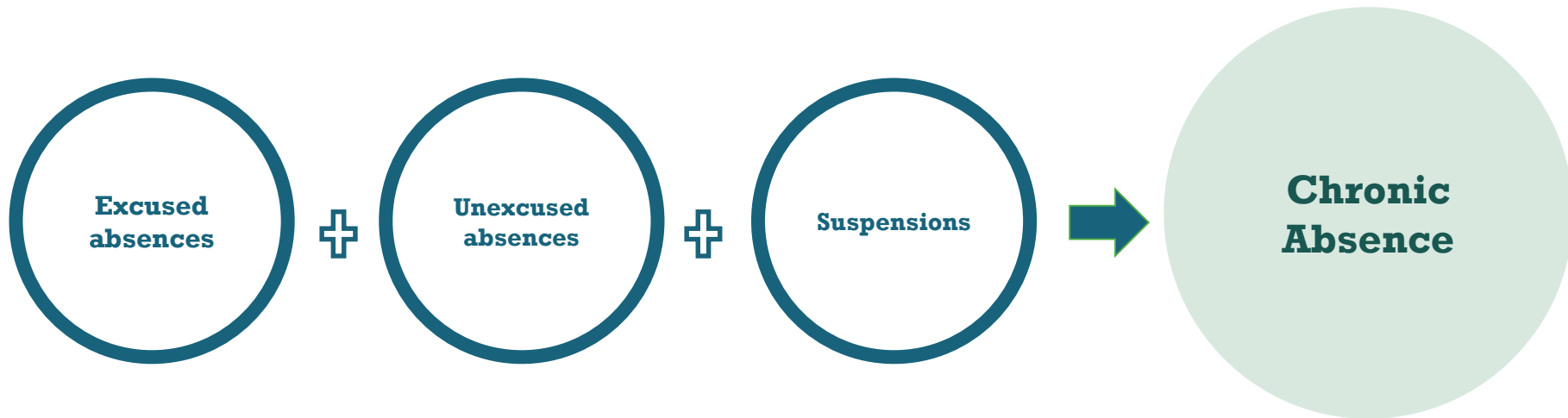
Attendance Works advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state, and national levels, Attendance Works:

- ✓ Advances better **policy**
- ✓ Nurtures proven and promising **practice**
- ✓ Promotes meaningful and effective **communication**
- ✓ Catalyzes needed **research**



What is chronic absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it 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).

How does **EDFacts** define *chronic absence*?

The unduplicated number of students absent for 10 percent or more school days during the school year

- ✓ Include all students (K–12) who meet the definition of *chronic absenteeism*
- ✓ Include students who were enrolled for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year and who missed 10 percent of the school days in which they were enrolled in the school
- ✓ Students should be counted once at each school they attended
- ✓ Students are considered tardy if they are absent for less than 50 percent of the school day

Definition of Absenteeism: Students are absent if they are not physically on school grounds and are not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-ground location for the school day. Chronically absent students include students who are absent for any reason (e.g., illness, suspension, the need to care for a family member), regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.

Source: EDFacts Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications SY 2016-17:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/sy-16-17-nonxml.html>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/eden/non-xml/c195-13-4.doc>



Reflects New Paradigm on Attendance

Truancy

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

Chronic Absence

- **Counts all absences**
- **Emphasizes academic impact of missed days**
- **Uses preventive problem-solving strategies**

This Is a Watershed Moment

No Child Left Behind

Success determined by academic standards

Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses

Accountability and data for student sub-groups

Each state defines and addresses truancy, which typically emphasizes court-based, punitive interventions

Every Student Succeeds Act

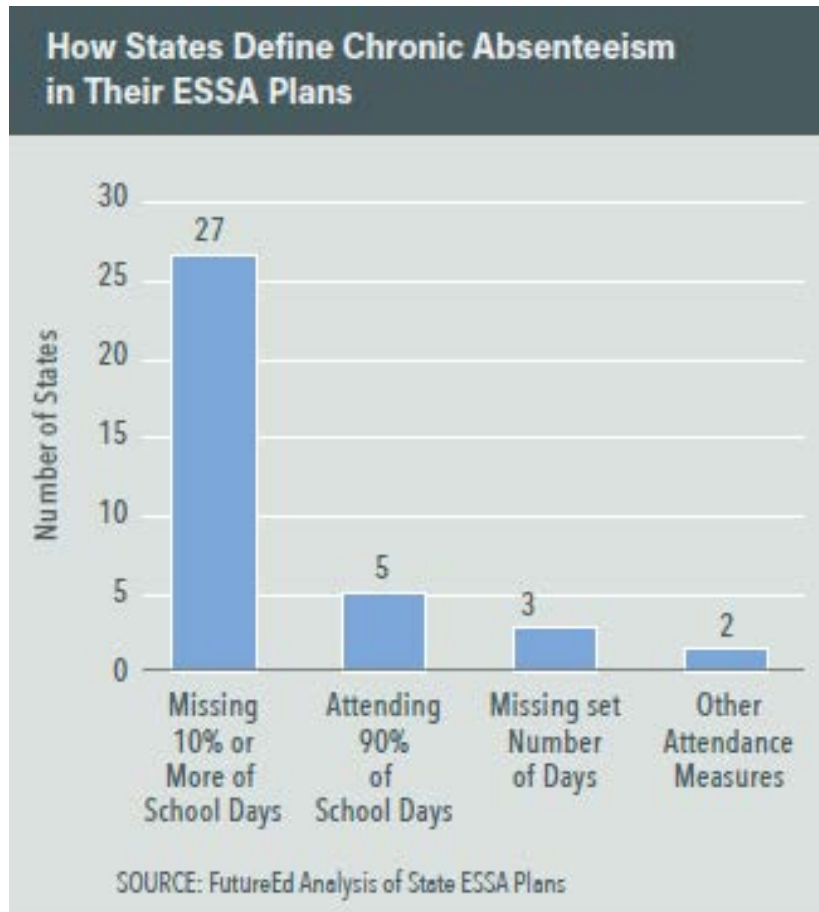
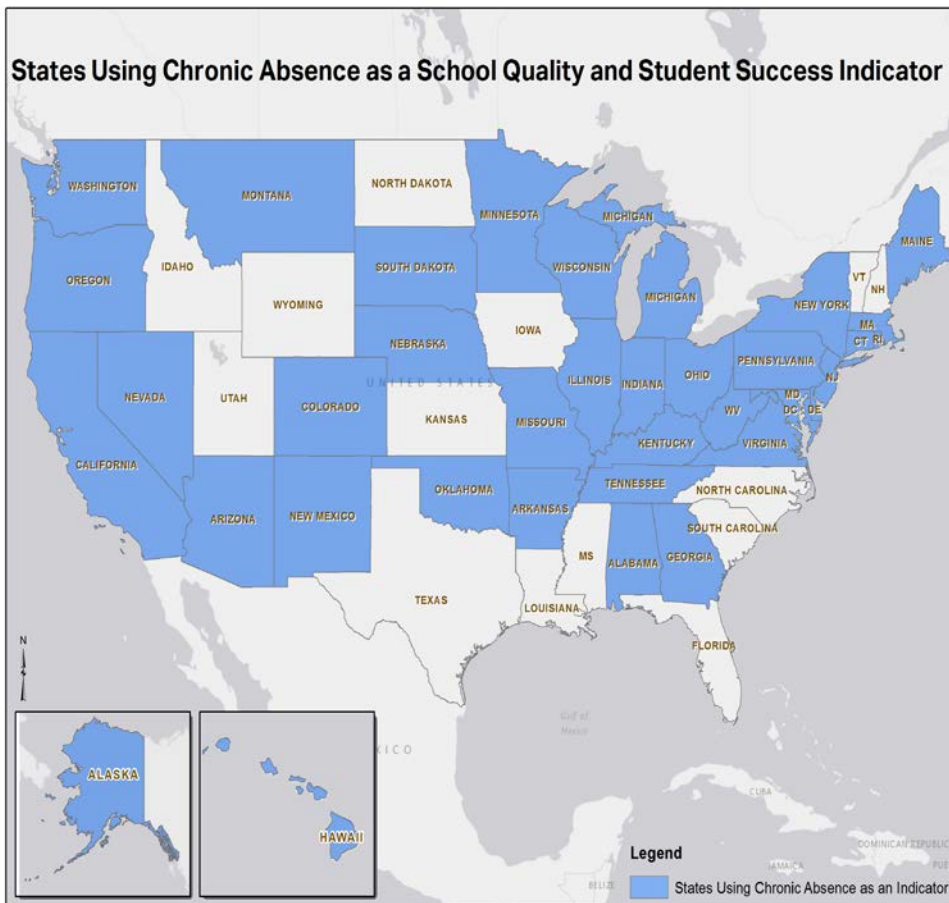
Success determined by academic and nonacademic standards

States set goals; supportive framework

Accountability and data for student sub-groups

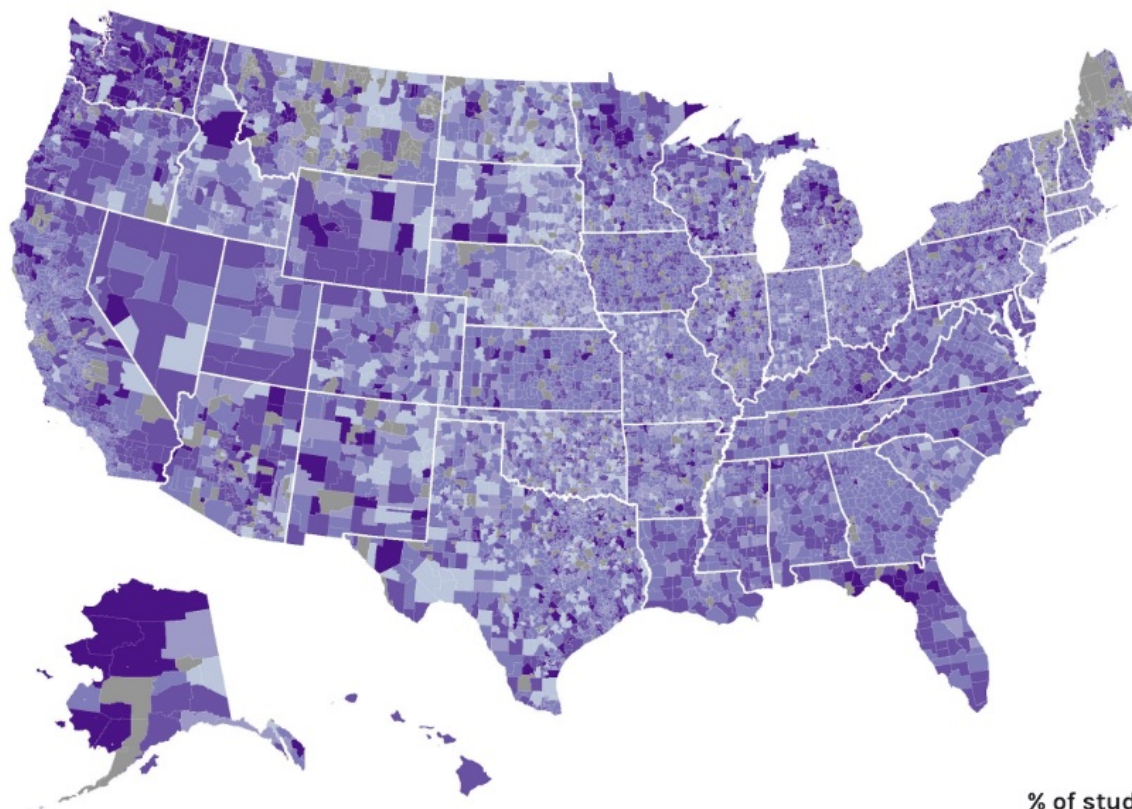
Chronic absence is a required reporting and optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.

**36 states + DC adopted chronic absence as a metric in their ESSA plans.
The vast majority adopted the definition recommended by Attendance Works.**



Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under the Every Student Succeeds Act
Future Ed, Georgetown University, September 2017

1 in 7 students misses 15 days or more



- **Highly concentrated:** Half of all chronically absent students in 4 percent of districts
- **Rural districts:** Many have high rates of chronic absence
- **Schools with high levels:** In 1 out of 5 schools, 20 percent or more of students are chronically absent

% of students who were chronically absent in 2013-14



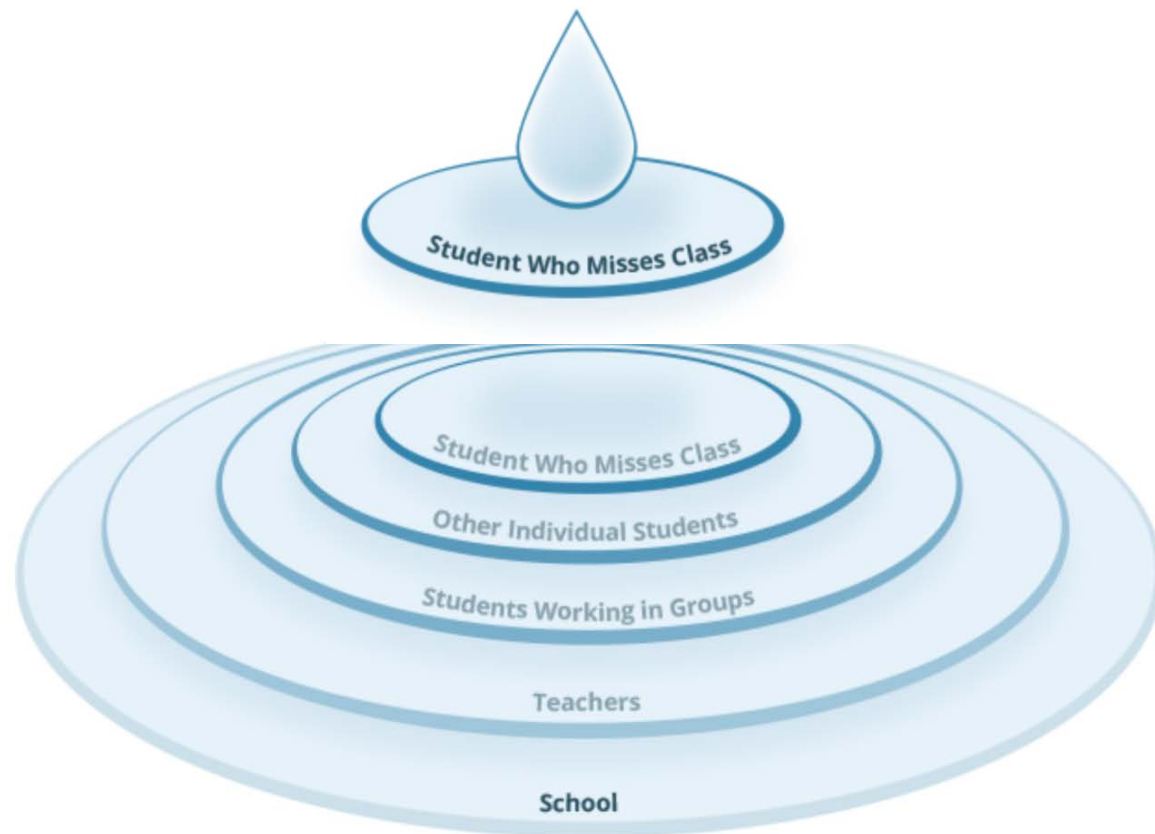
Missing data*

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection SY 2013-14

<https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>

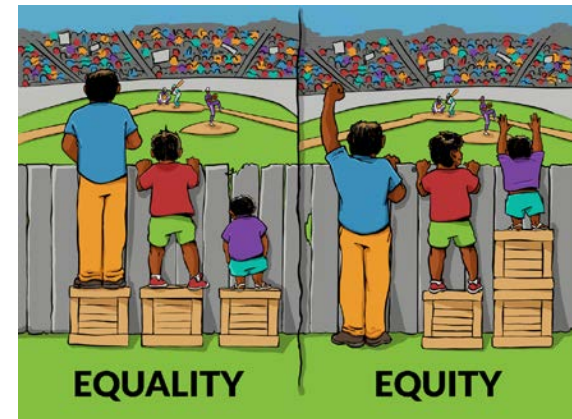


When a Student Misses School, the Impact Ripples





Reducing Chronic Absence Can Help Close Equity Gaps



- Vulnerable children, especially those living in poverty, are 2–3 times more likely to experience chronic absence at earlier ages.
- Vulnerable children are much less likely to have the resources to make up for lost learning time in the classroom.
- Vulnerable children are more likely to experience multiple years of chronic absence.



Student Attendance Is Strongly Associated with Academic Success

K–1st Grade: Students who attend regularly in the early grades perform better on measures of academic and social and emotional capacities.

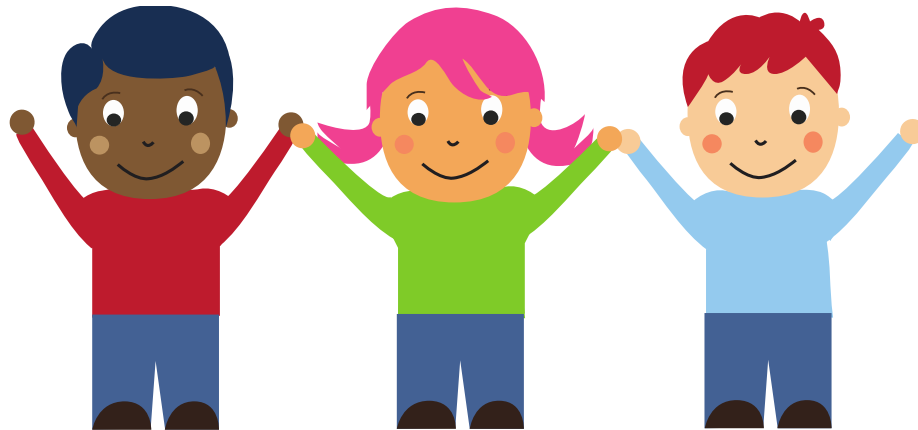
3rd Grade: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to be able to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.

Middle School Success: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have passing grades in middle school.

High School Completion: Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate from high school.

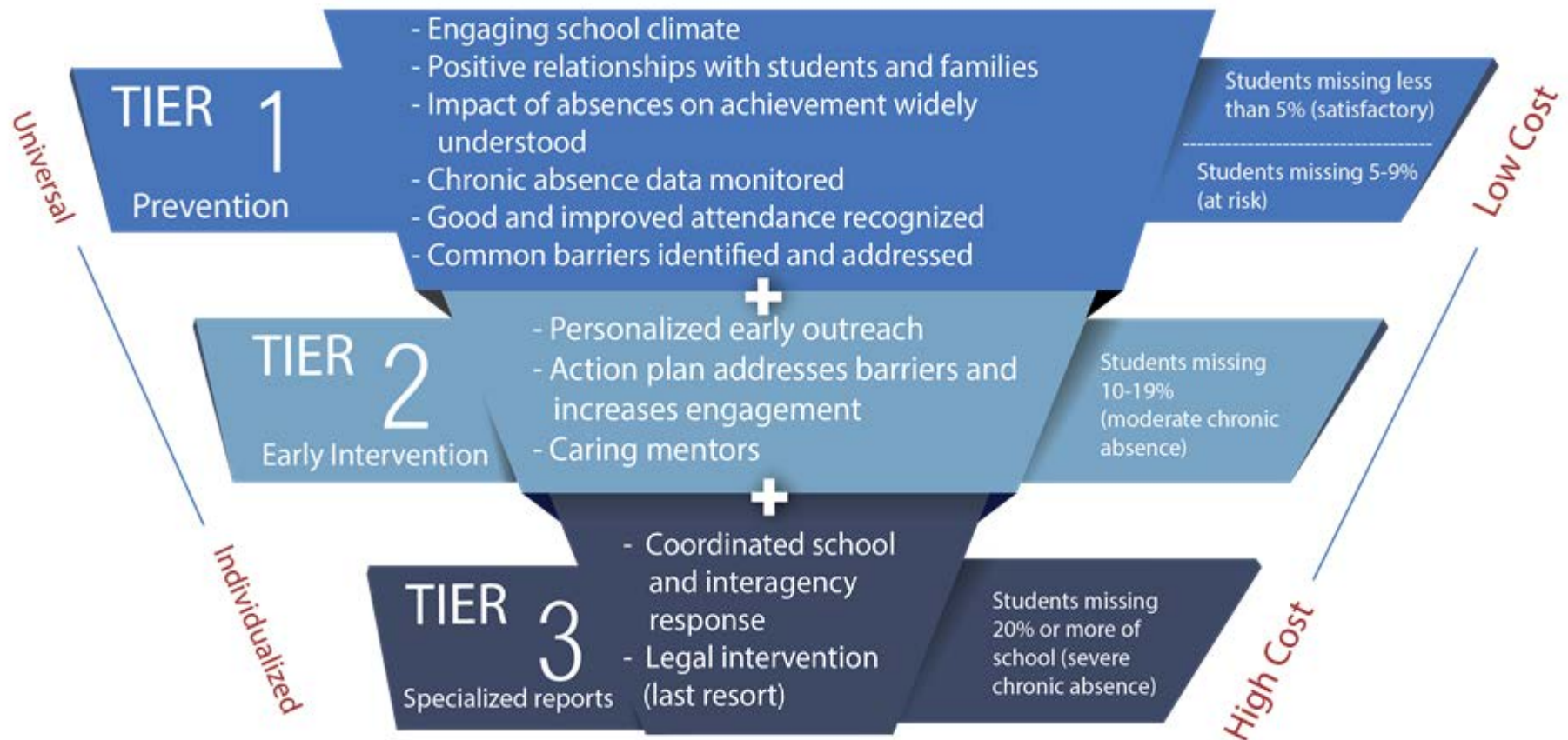
College Completion: Students who attend school regularly in high school are more likely to persist in college and graduate.

How can we address chronic absence?





Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





Factors that Contribute to Chronic Absence

Barriers

- Illness, both chronic and acute
- Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care
- Trauma
- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor transportation
- Frequent moves or school changes
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems

Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability

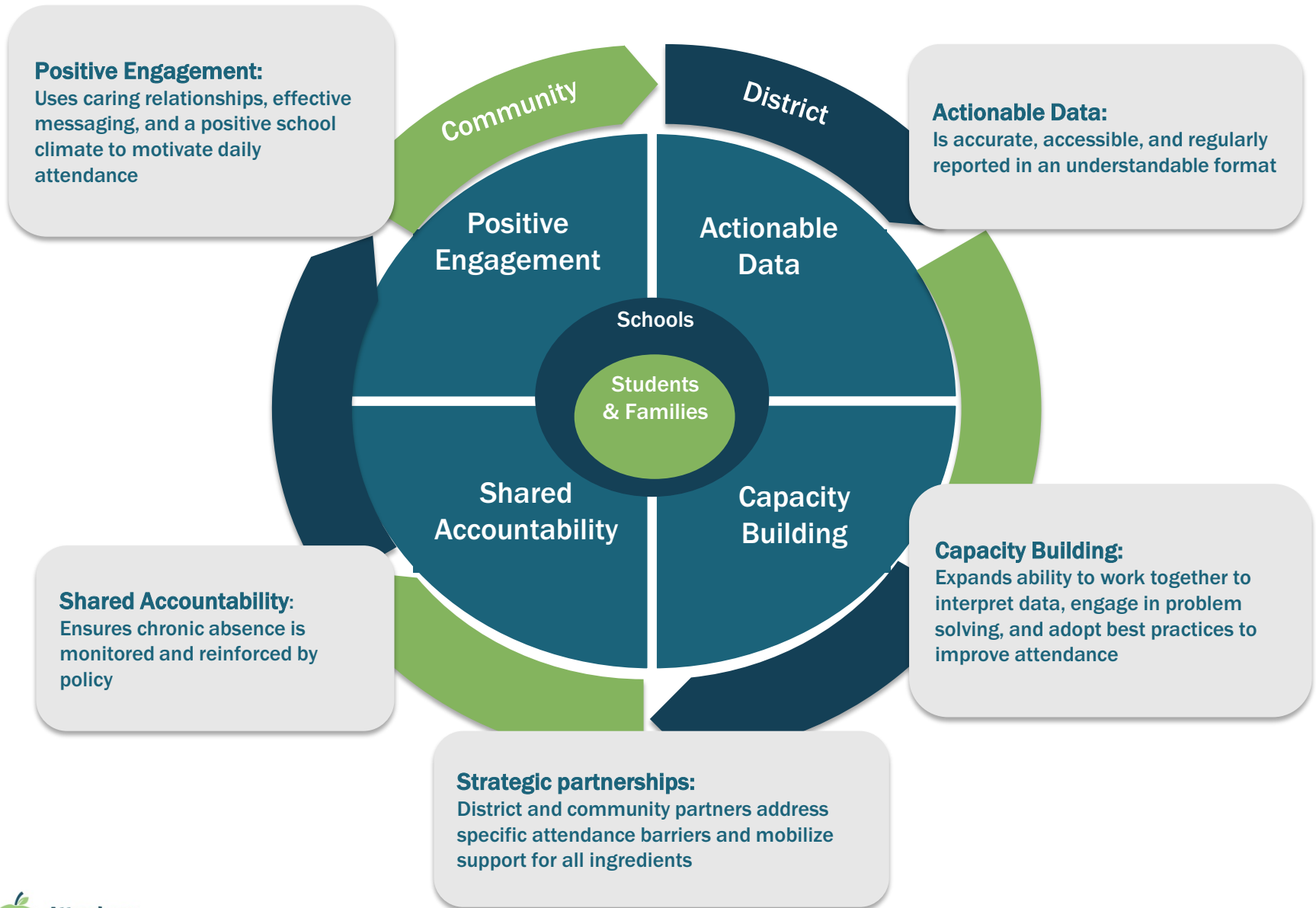
Lack of Engagement

- Lack of culturally relevant, engaging instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

Misconceptions

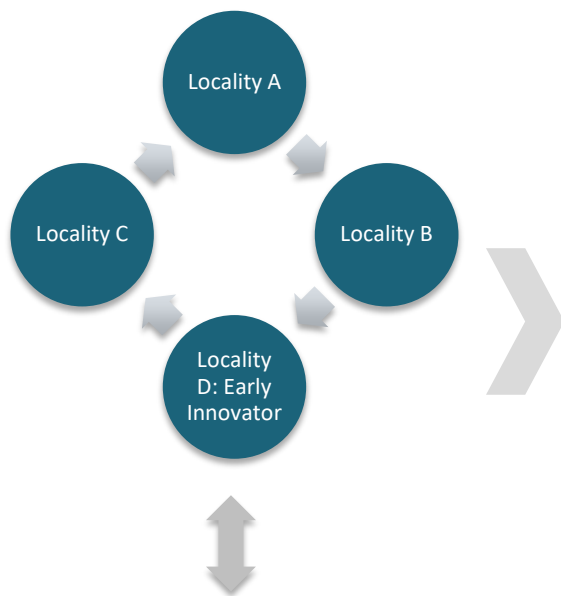
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

Take a Data-Driven Systemic Approach



Create the conditions for change by cultivating peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice

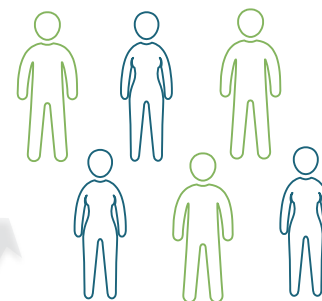
Advance practice through peer learning



Inform actions w/ insights from local practice

- Policymakers
- Education leaders & associations (K–12 & ECE)
- Associations of public health agencies (housing, health, social services, transportation)
- Unions
- Parent organizations
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropy
- Others

Spread work through TA and policy



Ongoing peer learning, technical assistance, administrative guidance, regulations, legislation, etc., promote best practices and systemic change

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Panel Discussion

- **Background:** Tell us about your district, community, or state and how you got involved in addressing chronic absence.
- **Local Innovation:** Tell us about the scale and scope of chronic absence in your school or community and where you've seen any reductions in chronic absence. Please share the top two or three most important strategies that you've used to build a local system for reducing chronic absence.
- **State Role:** What are the top strategies that Maryland has used to support local innovation?
- **ESSA Implementation:** How is your work influenced by ESSA implementation? What do you see as the greatest opportunities? What are the major challenges?
- **Local and State Collaboration:** What advice would you give to others about how to strengthen state/local collaboration to build systems that will dramatically reduce chronic absence?

