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Integrating Chronic Absenteeism into Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

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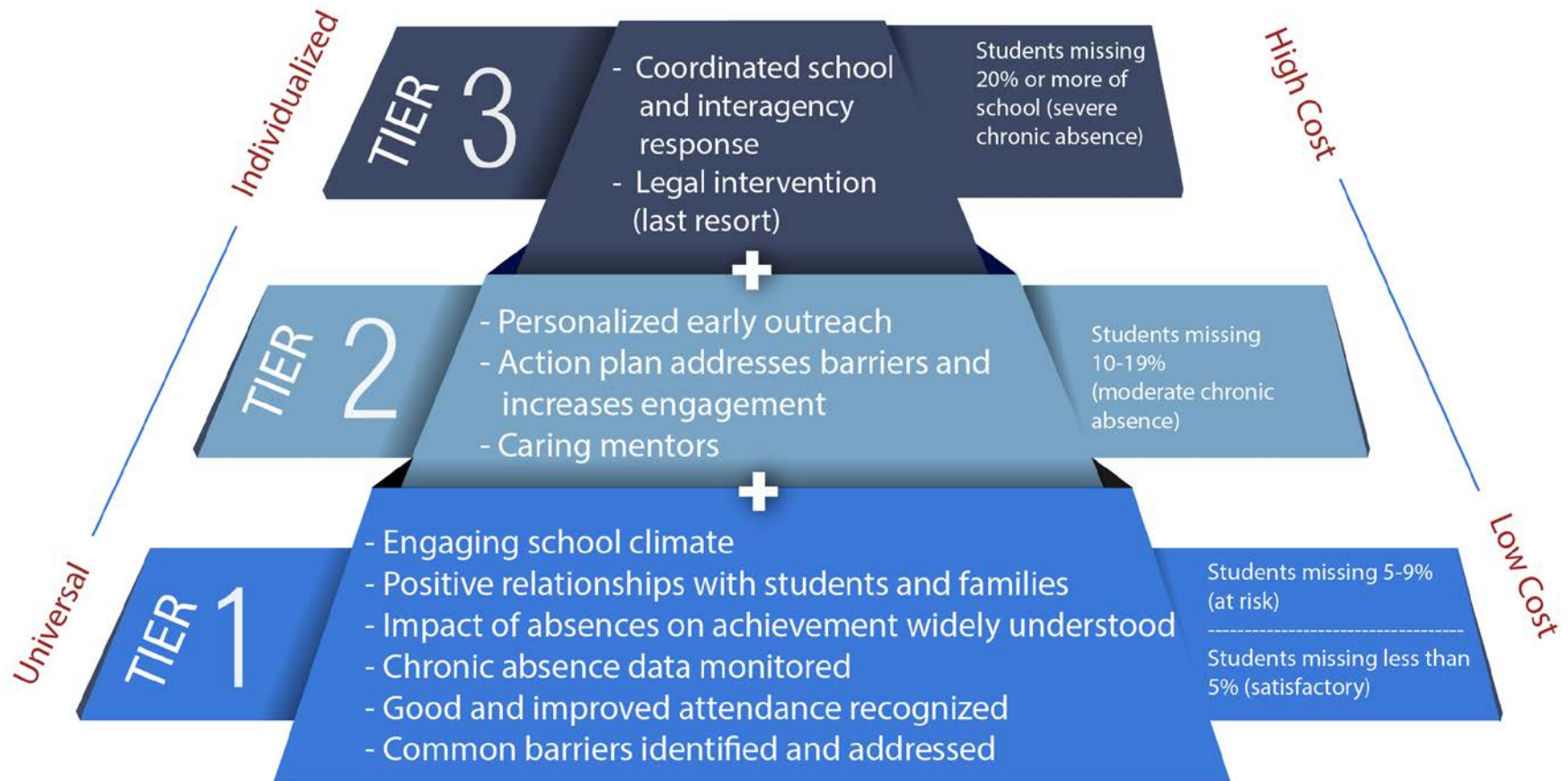
Introductions

- Everyone Graduates Center
- Attendance Works
- University of Illinois

Chronic Absence + MTSS

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center

Four Key Elements

- Actionable data
- Strong, functioning school attendance teams
- Understanding root causes of absences
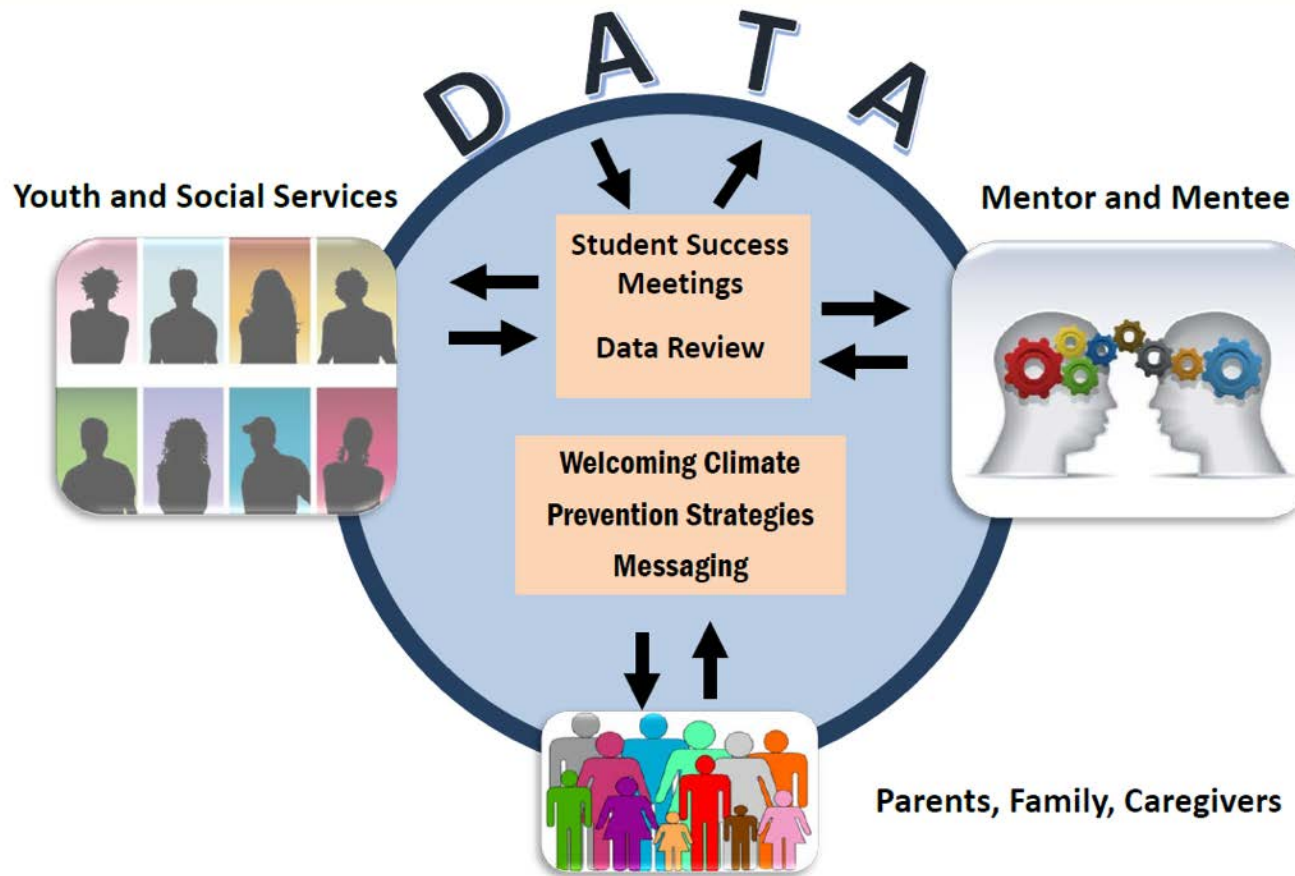- Evidence-based interventions

Actionable Data

- Accessible
- Accurate
- Regularly reported
- Simple-to-read formats

"When schools create a collaborative culture around data use—when they use data not to point fingers but to inform collective decisions—something powerful can happen."

—KATHRYN PARKER BOUDETT AND JENNIFER L. STEELE, DATA WISE IN ACTION

Harvard Education Press

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Actionable

Actionable

Paul Verstraete, EWS Data Specialist, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University

Actionable

Interventions

Paul Verstraete, EWS Data Specialist, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University

Actionable Data
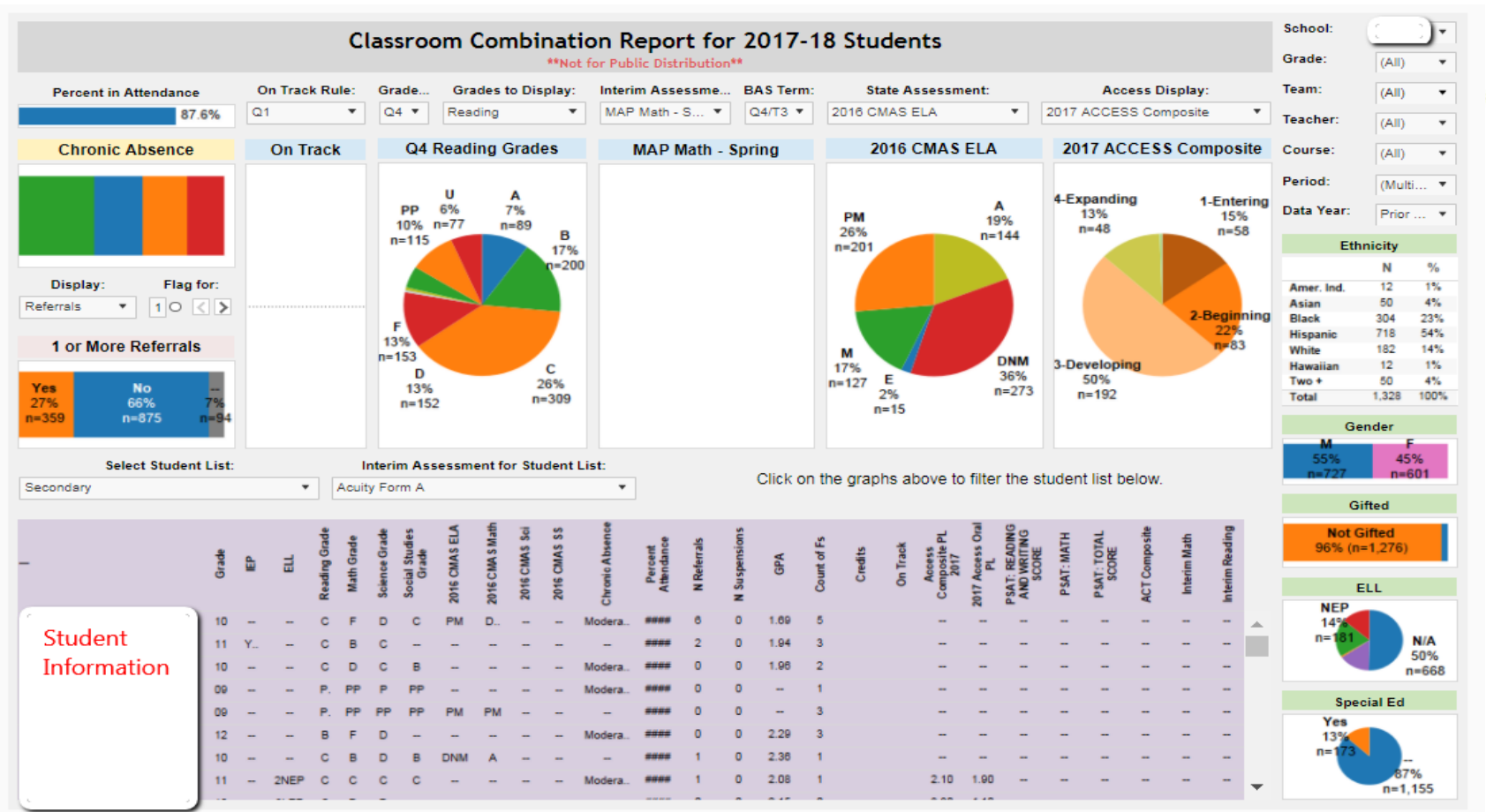
Christina Ethier, Analyst, Aurora Public Schools, Colorado

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Actionable Data

Schools and districts need actionable data in order to effectively implement an MTSS to reduce chronic absence.

To what extent does your school or district have actionable data?

Walk to the corner of the room (marked A, B, or C) that best describes where your school or district practice is at this time.

Peer Sharing

- **A**: This area is a strength. We have data to look at trends and patterns. We also have the ability to flag and monitor individual groups of students who need support.

- **B**: This is mostly a strength. We have most of the data we need but would like to do a bit more.

- **C**: This is an area where we struggle.

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Strong, Functioning Attendance Teams

- The primary purpose of an attendance team is to organize the schools' attendance strategy and foster improved attendance for all students.

- Attendance teams use chronic absence data to identify patterns and individual, chronically absent, students.

Specific Functions of an Attendance Team

1. **Coordinate** the whole school's multi-tiered strategy to reduce chronic absence by implementing evidence-informed prevention and early intervention.

2. **Match strategies with root causes:** Adopt strategies that address the needs of chronically absent students (individually and in groups) using qualitative and quantitative data

3. **Triage:** Provide triage to ensure students receive needed supports from both the school and the community.

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Principal Leadership Is Key

1. Cultivate a schoolwide culture of attendance

2. Take a team approach to addressing chronic absence and truancy

3. Develop staff capacity to adopt effective practices

4. Use data in communications and decision-making

http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/schools/principals/

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Peer Sharing

- **A**: This area is a strength. We have one team that integrates chronic absence and MTSS that meets regularly to create, implement, and assess strategies.

- **B**: This is mostly a strength. We have a team but occasionally struggle.

- **C**: This is an area where we struggle. We do not yet have a functioning team.

Understanding Root Causes of Absences

Contributing factors to chronic absence

BARRIERS

*Lack of access to health or dental care

*Chronic illness

*Poor transportation

*Trauma

*No safe path to school

*Immigration status

*Homelessness
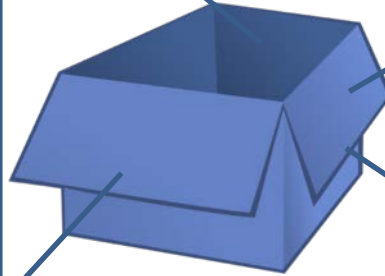
MYTHS

*Absences are only a problem if they're unexcused

*Missing two days a month would not affect learning

*Attendance only matters in the upper grades

DISENGAGEMENT

*Lack of engaging, relevant, culturally responsive instruction

*No meaningful relationships with adults in school

*Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school

*Poor school climate

AVERSION

*Students' academic or social struggle

*Bullying

*Ineffective and exclusionary school discipline

*Parents' negative school experience

*Undiagnosed disability

Source: Adapted with permission from Attendance Works

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Understanding Root Causes of Absences

No clean clothes

ICE raids

Toothache

No transportation

Caring for siblings

Asthma attack

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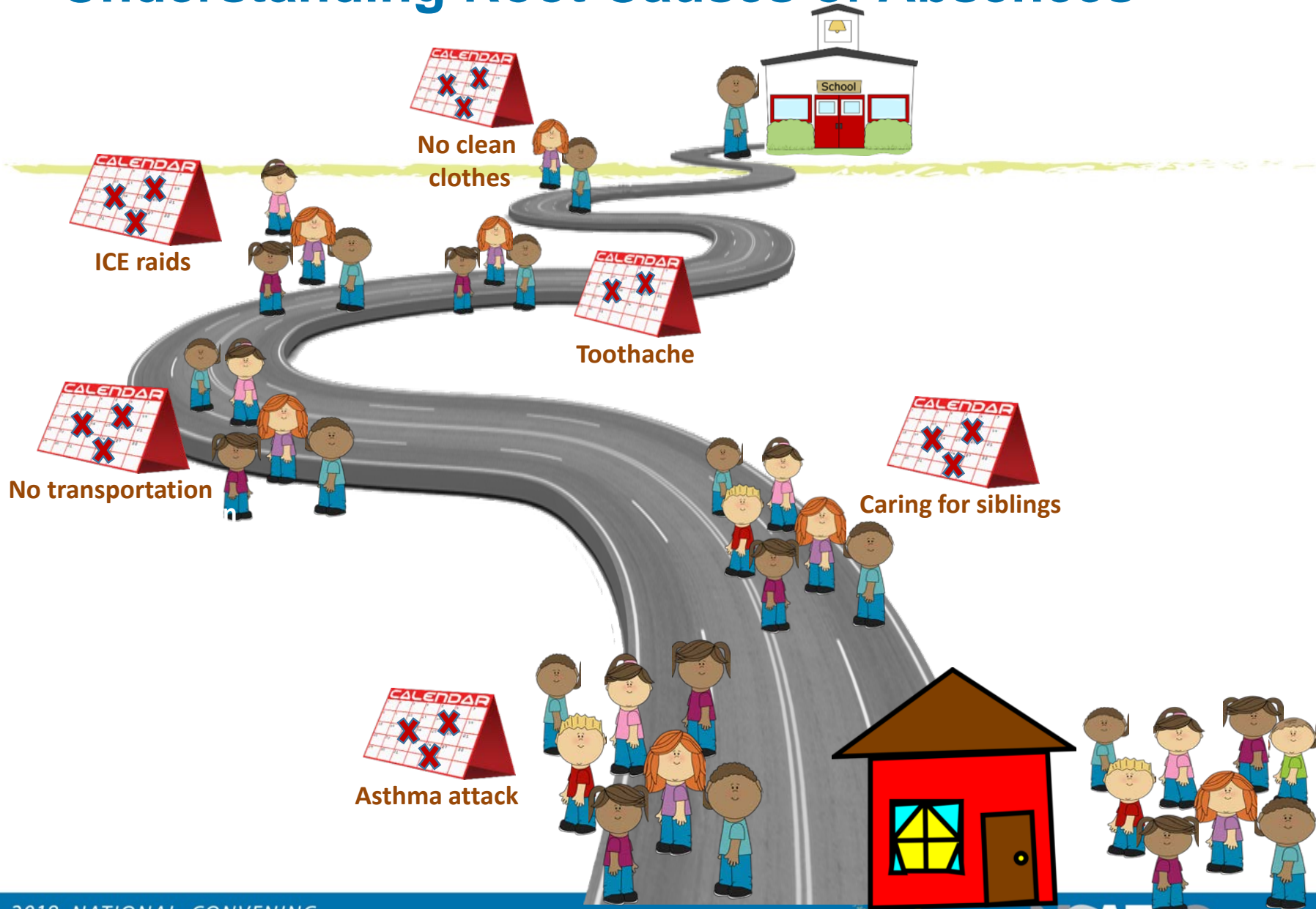
How Many People and Children Experience Economic Hardship in the USA?

Economic Hardship Status (Percent of Poverty Level)	Total # of People Experiencing Economic Hardship in U.S.	Income Range for Family of Four	Total Number and Percent of All Children Experiencing Economic Hardship in U.S.
Low Income (100–199%)	60 million	$24,251–$48,500	16 million (22%)
Poverty (50–99%)	25.6 million	$12,125–$24,250	8.6 million (12%)
Extreme Poverty (< 50%)	20.4 million	$0–$12,125	7.2 million (10%)
Total All Economic Hardship Status	106 million		31.8 million (44%)

Low-Income or Poor in a High-Poverty Neighborhood Creates a Double Burden

- Living in communities with a large concentration of poverty causes additional burdens on residents
  - Beyond their own family circumstances
    - Must confront the poverty of those around them
  - Additional burdens associated with poverty
    - Higher crime rates, poor housing conditions, fewer job opportunities, and more limited access to healthy food

The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America, 2008
http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2008/10/24-concentrated-poverty

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In NYC's lowest-income elementary schools, chronic absenteeism and risk load reveal the following:

- More than one-third of the children were chronically absent for five years in a row in 130 elementary schools.

- These schools have very low levels of academic achievement as measured by standardized tests.

- Chronic absenteeism correlates with deep poverty—high rates of homelessness, child abuse reports, male unemployment, and low levels of parental education.

In fact, the report states, chronic absenteeism is a much better index of poverty than the traditional measure of the number of children eligible for free lunch.

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Understanding Root Causes of Absences

In order to intervene effectively to reduce absences, schools and districts need ways to understand what drives absences. Some common methods include surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

To what extent does your school or district have a grasp of what is driving absences?

Walk to the corner of the room (marked A, B, or C) that best describes where your school or district practice is at this time.

Peer Sharing

- **A**: This area is a strength. We use multiple methods to understand why our students are absent.

- **B**: This is mostly a strength. We could do more.

- **C**: This is an area where we struggle. We rely on anecdotal evidence.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Adoption of Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs)

Patricia A. Graczyk, PhD
University of Illinois at Chicago

ESSA's Definition of Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs) & Four Levels of Evidence

Evidence-based intervention: *Activity, strategy or intervention* that demonstrates a statistically *significant* effect on improving *student outcomes or other relevant outcomes* based on...

I. STRONG EVIDENCE

II. MODERATE EVIDENCE

III. PROMISING EVIDENCE

IV. STRONG RATIONALE

- At least one high-quality *experimental* study
- At least one high-quality *quasi-experimental* study
- At least one high-quality *correlational* study
- Based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that activity, strategy, or intervention is *likely to improve* student or other relevant outcomes

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Process to Identify Appropriate EBIs for Attendance

Examples of guiding questions...

1. What data do we need to identify our needs and root causes?

2. Were studies of this EBI done with a similar population to ours?

3. Do we have the resources we need to implement the EBI?

4. How will we monitor implementation quality?

5. Is it working?

U.S. Department of Education. (2016, September). *Non-regulatory guidance: Using evidence to strengthen education investments.* Washington, D.C.

Examples of EBIs for School Attendance by Tiers

- Tier 1 (Universal)
  - Mental Health and Social-Emotional Learning – e.g., *Positive Action* (Snyder et al., 2010)
  - Safety-Oriented Strategies – e.g., *Bully Free* (Beane et al., 2008)
- Tier 2 (Targeted)
  - Cognitive-behavioral interventions for school refusal (Pina et al., 2009)
  - Student Engagement – e.g., *Check & Connect* (Lehr et al, 2004)
- Tier 3 (Intensive)
  - School-community partnerships – e.g., *Systems of Care* (Manteuffel et al., 2008)
  - Alternative educational programs – e.g., *Career Academies* (Klima et al., 2009)

Adoption of Evidence-Based Interventions

Schools and districts can reduce chronic absence by using promising or proven practices.

To what extent does your school or district use promising or proven practices?

Walk to the corner of the room (marked A, B, or C) that best describes where your school or district practice is at this time.

Peer Sharing

- **A**: This area is a strength. We are disciplined in making sure our interventions are evidence based. When we try an intervention that is not a proven practice, we carefully evaluate its impact in order to see if it is worth repeating.

- **B**: This is mostly a strength. We could be more rigorous.

- **C**: This is an area where we need to grow.

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Questions?
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Maria G. Waltemeyer	mwaltemeyer@jhu.edu

List of resources available

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Organizations that we work with:

Attendance Works: http://www.attendanceworks.org

MENTOR: http://www.mentoring.org

My Brother's Keeper Alliance: https://www.mbkalliance.org