



School Conditions that Impact Attendance

Sue Fothergill, Associate Director of Policy, Attendance Works

Annie Reed, Special Projects Director, Attendance Works

Rodney Wallace, Special Educator, City Neighbors High School

Kache McCray, Student, City Neighbors High School





About Us

Attendance Works is a nonprofit initiative that advances student success by reducing chronic absence. Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation's "go-to" resource for student attendance with more than a quarter million annual users of our website (www.attendanceworks.org)

We work at the local, state, and national levels, with each level of practice informing and influencing the other. Our cross-cutting objectives are to:

- a. Nurture proven and promising practice
- b. Promote meaningful and effective communications
- c. Advance better policy
- d. Catalyze needed research



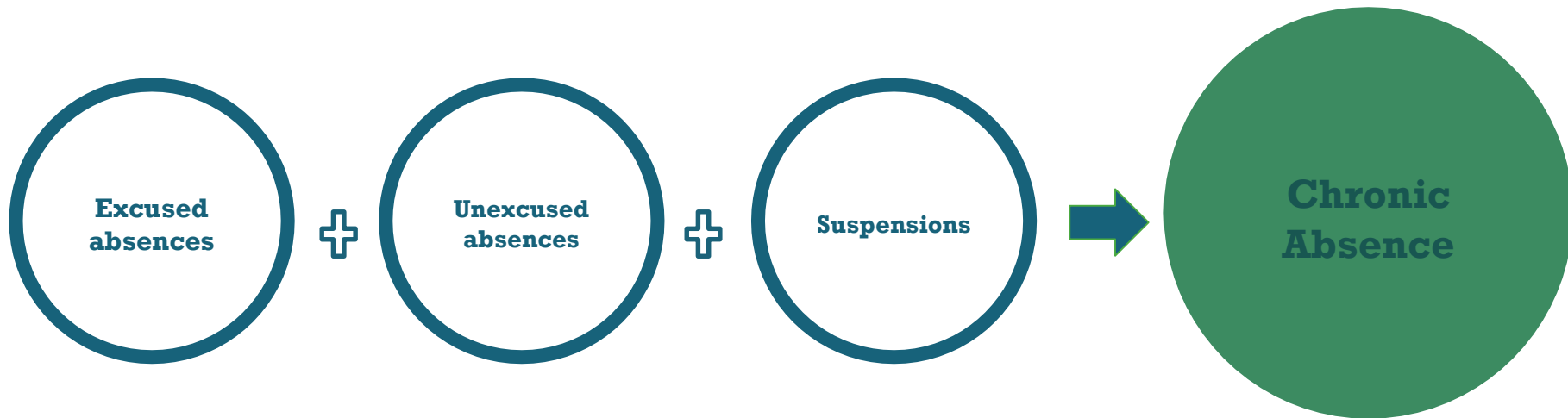
Session Purpose

This session is designed to help participants understand the relationship between school climate and student attendance and introduce schools to Attendance Works' free tool, Scan of the Environment for Attendance Tool (SEAT), which can equip schools with information about building-level practices that influence attendance and actionable steps they can take to improve school climate and lay the foundation for improved attendance.



What is chronic absence?

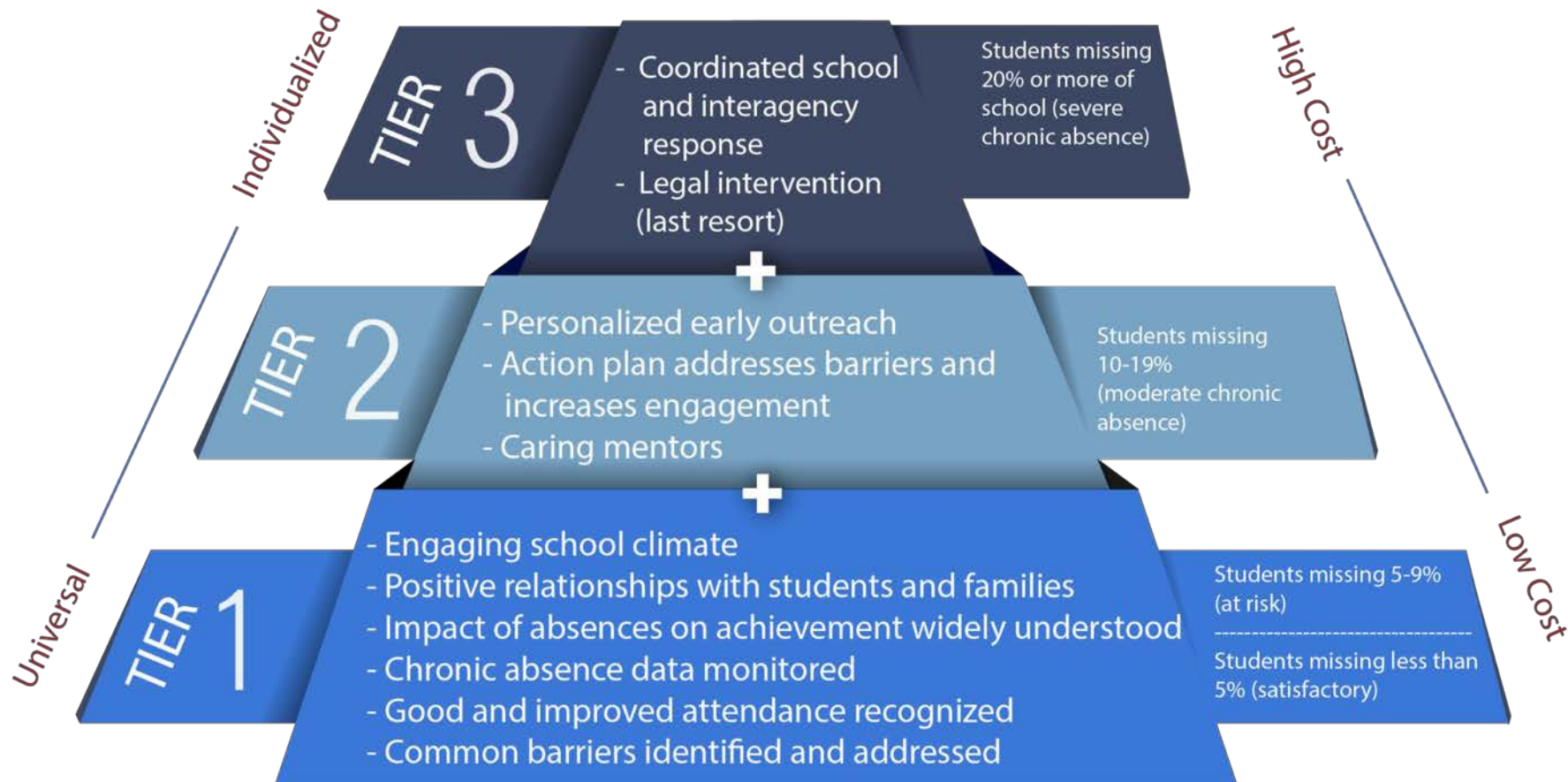
Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



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



A Positive School Climate Is the Foundation of an Attendance Improvement Strategy





Scan of Environment and Attendance Tool (SEAT)

- ✓ Elementary and Secondary versions available
- ✓ Designed to help schools identify opportunities to strengthen school climate
- ✓ Recommend adaptation to the needs of the school and usage at different times of the day and year
- ✓ Adapted from Baltimore City School's Climate Walk Tool





How do we define school climate?

The quality and character of school life that is based on patterns of students, parents, and school personnel's social norms, values, expectations, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures

Essential question:

What kind of school do we want *ours* to be?



Climate Video

Let's watch a video that highlights the importance of school climate: <https://vimeo.com/243704317>

Reflection: What is one aspect of school climate that you think impacts attendance at your school or district?

How do we create a strong school climate?

1. We start by seeing every child as unique, creative, and worthy of the deepest respect.
2. Then, we ask a strong question that, by design, will lead us where we want to go.

At City Neighbors, we asked ourselves: How do we ensure that every student is known, loved, and inspired?

City Neighbors High School
Baltimore





Questions for City Neighbors

1. Relationships: What is your perspective on the importance of relationships to school climate and reducing absenteeism?
2. Teaching and Learning: What would you say that City Neighbors does with teaching and learning that enhances school climate and supports student attendance?



Questions for City Neighbors, continued

3. Environment: Can you talk about how the physical environment contributes to good attendance?
4. Safety: How has the climate at City Neighbors contributed to the overall sense of safety of students?



Questions for City Neighbors, continued

5. **Replicability:** Based on your experience at City Neighbors, what advice would you give other schools to improve their climate and culture?









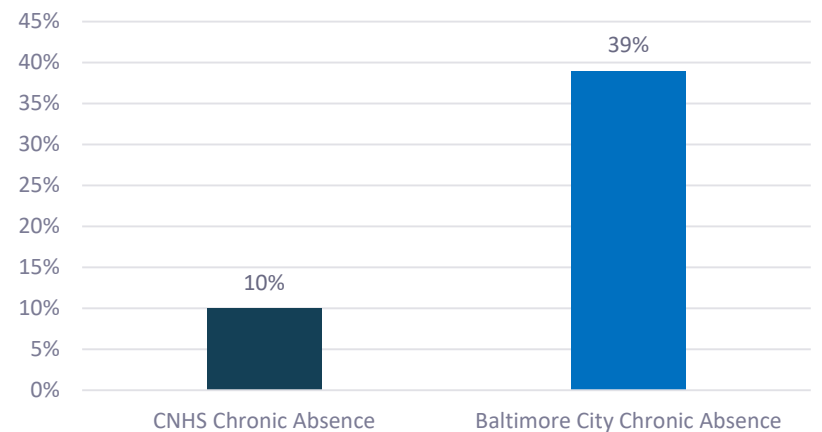
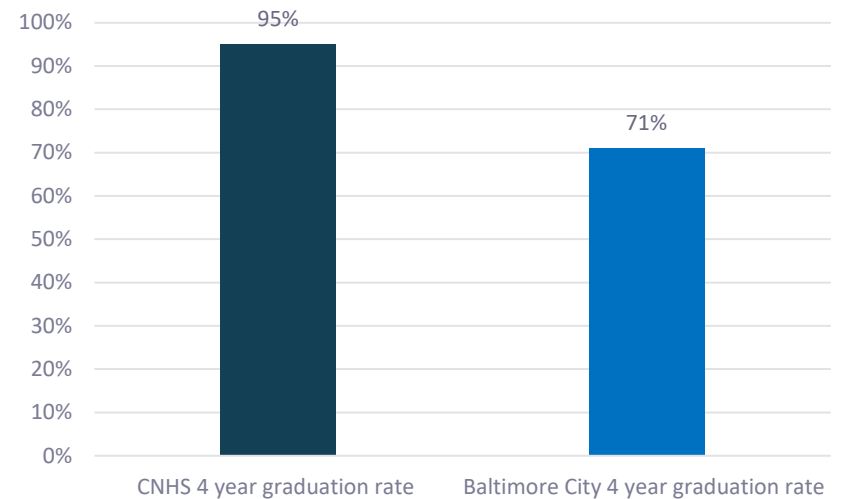
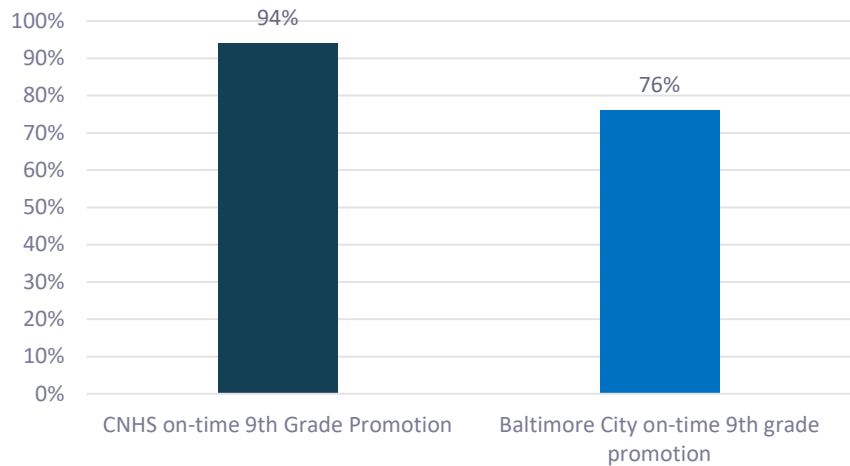
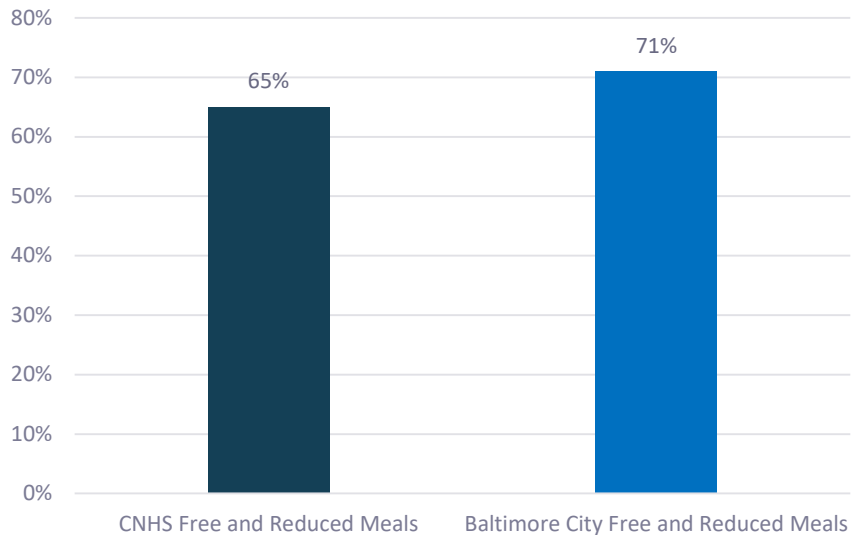








City Neighbors High School Comparison Data to Baltimore City Public Schools 2015-16





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



Accessing the SEAT

1. Register for the free tool at:
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/scan-environment-attendance/>
2. AW team will set up an account for them and send an invitation via Basecamp within 72 hours
3. Complete account set up and login to Basecamp
4. Once logged in, download the tools from Basecamp



Steps for using SEAT

1. Convene a team that includes students
2. Review the tool and instructions
3. Notify students and staff
4. Conduct the assessment
5. Debrief and set goals
6. Communicate the results

Climate Element	Observation	Location	Observed (Y/N)	Not Observed (Y/N)	Describe
Relationships	1. School staff greet <u>all</u> students warmly when they arrive at school.	Main entrance(s), classrooms			
	2. Students who arrive late are welcomed, kindly reminded about the importance of being on time and asked whether there are any barriers to timely attendance the school can address.	Main office			
	3. Students are respectful to one another.	Hallways, classrooms, play yard, cafeteria			
	4. Students are observed engaging in small group activities including project work, socializing, or in classroom discussions.	Hallways, classrooms, school grounds, cafeteria			
	5. Principals, teachers and support staff are present and engage positively with students.	Hallways, cafeteria, classrooms, etc.			
	6. The school visibly acknowledges and celebrates the diversity (cultural, ethnic, sexual, ability/disability, etc.) of the student population through displays, art, signage, etc.	Hallways, classrooms, etc.)			



Ensure that Students Have the Opportunity to Help Identify the Barriers





Pair Share

How can you imagine using the
SEAT in your school?

Next Steps

What is one concrete action step you will take to address school climate?



Organizations that we work with:

Everyone Graduates Center: <http://new.every1graduates.org>

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

MENTOR: <http://www.mentoring.org>

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

Jobs for the Future: <http://jff.org>

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