

# Leveraging the Power of Data and Relationships: Reducing Chronic Absence in Rural Settings

August 11, 2020

The logo for 'The Campaign for GRADE-LEVEL READING' is a square with a black border. Inside the square, the text 'The Campaign for' is in a small, dark font at the top. Below it, 'GRADE-LEVEL' is written in a larger, bold, dark font, and 'READING' is written in the largest, bold, dark font at the bottom.

# Welcome to this Rural-Focused Webinar!

- Why a rural focus?
  - Community solutions reflect the circumstances, conditions, challenges and opportunities their place offers.
  - Rural places have unique challenges and opportunities and rich cross-community learning opportunities.
- What do we mean by “rural”?
  - Nonmetropolitan places, open country to small towns, frontier to regional gateways.
  - “When you’ve seen one rural place, you’ve seen one rural place.”
  - Four Rural Americas (Mil Duncan)
    - Amenity-rich
    - Declining resource-dependent
    - Chronically poor
    - Amenity/decline

## Moderator

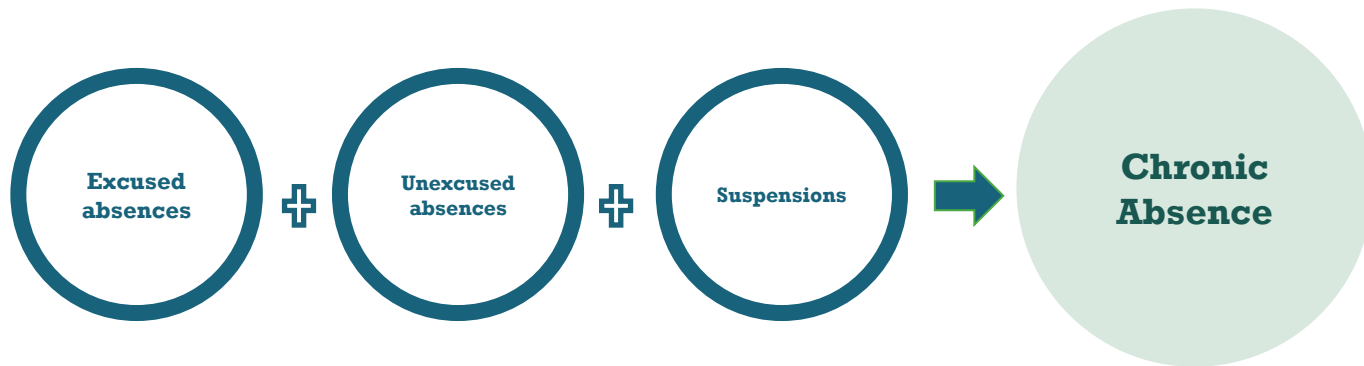


**Hedy Chang**  
Executive Director and President  
Attendance Works



## What is Chronic Absence? (It is defined to support prevention and early intervention)

**Chronic absence** is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. To ensure it acts as an early warning sign, Attendance Works recommends defining it as **missing 10% 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).

## The Challenge:

*Kindergarten and first-grade students who miss 10% or more of school are less likely to read proficiently in third grade.*

- Many parents do not realize that early absences can add up to academic risk.
- Chronic absence is even higher for low income children whose academic performance is especially hard hit when they miss school.
- Health related challenges such as asthma and dental disease are major causes of absences in the early grades.
- Higher school-wide absenteeism is associated with lower achievement for all students.

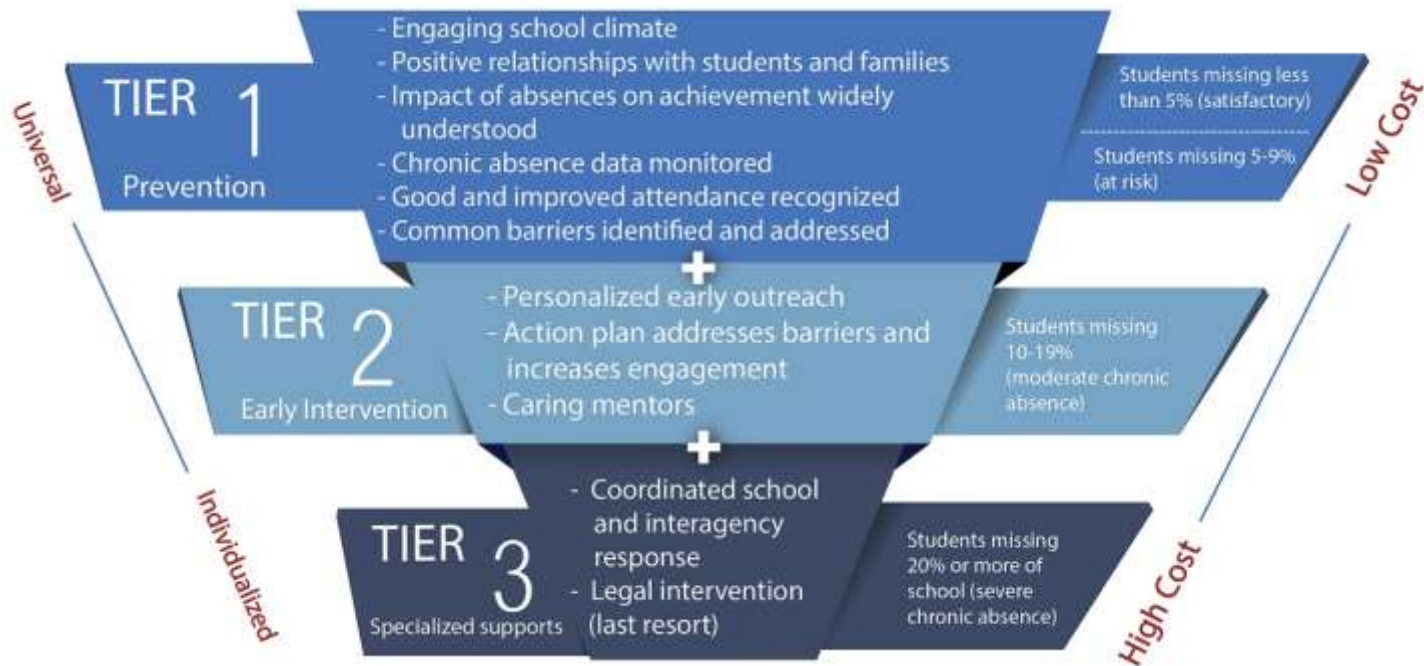
- **1 out of 10** kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> graders miss 10% or more of school. In some communities, this figure is **1 out of 4**.



# Absenteeism is a Sign that Positive Conditions for Learning are Missing, Whether Classes are In Person, Distance or Blended



# Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention



# Key Ingredients of A Systemic Approach To Reducing Absenteeism







## School Attendance Story Submissions

- **33** submissions for the GLR WWCC School Attendance from **28** Communities
- **21** provided data showing measurable progress in reducing chronic absence and/or improving attendance
- **12** used evidence-based practices; of those 12 communities, 10 showed measurable progress in reducing chronic absence and/or improving attendance
- **21** of 28 involve a United Way as a key partner
- **6** of 28 were rural communities



## Types of Activities

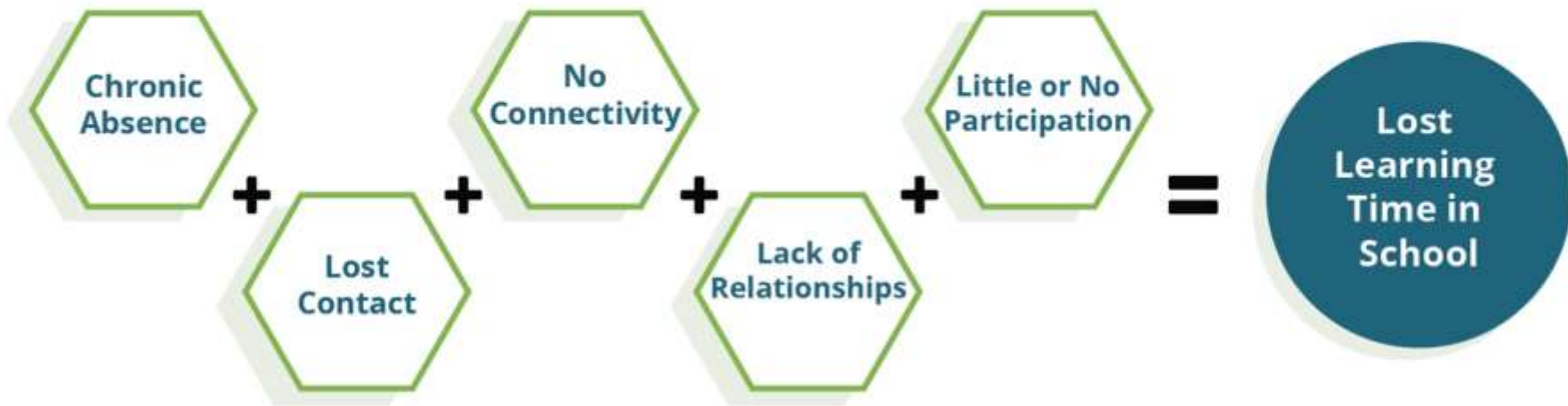
- Communities were most apt to fund and engage in **Positive Engagement (21)**
- Communities focused on **Actionable Data (12)**
- Communities focused on **Capacity Building (13)**
- Communities focused on **Strategic Partnerships (13)**
- Communities focused on **Shared Accountability (5)**



## Covid-19 Reinforces the Critical Importance of These Approaches:

- **A whole child/family approach** to education that pays attention to social and emotional well-being and school climate along with academics and recognizes families as the first teachers of their children.
- **Integrated virtual and in-person learning** that supports different learning styles and making up for classwork when students face challenges (e.g. health or transportation) getting to school.
- **Addressing inequitable access** to resources and supports with significant attention to monitoring **absenteeism** (missing too much school) to promote prevention and early intervention vs. punitive action.
- **Promote integrated strategies** by working across departments and organizations, including supporting an investment in community schools and leveraging the assets of community partners and health providers.

# Identifying Students At Risk Due to Absenteeism





## Considerations for Rural Settings

- Leverage the strong sense of community
- Recognize the challenge of pre-existing relationships and perceptions about families
- Address barriers related to health and transportation
- Explore the use of technological solutions
- Support regional collaboration

# Presenters



## Allison Crain

Northern District Supervisor  
Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement  
Mississippi Department of Education

## Ramona Halcomb

Indian Education Specialist  
Oregon Department of Education



## Erin Helgren

Early Works Site Liaison, Yoncalla (Oregon)  
Children's Institute

## Presenters



**Susan Lieberman**  
Director  
Count ME In (Maine)



**Angela Madigan**  
Principal  
Waterboro Elementary School (Maine)

# The Maine Overview



- ❖ Positive Engagement and Conversations about attendance, learning and working as a community throughout the year
- ❖ Positive Teacher Outreach and Monitoring Student Data
- ❖ Establish Review Structure
- ❖ Implement Data-Driven Interventions
- ❖ Incorporate Partners and Continuous Quality Improvement



# “Mainely” Shifted Our Approach

**Work in Isolation**



**Schoolwide Effort  
with Teams**



**Rely on Existing Beliefs**



**Listen and Form Positive  
Relationships with Families**



**Punitive Approach**



**Positive Partnerships  
that Overcome Barriers**





## Waterboro Elementary School

East Waterboro, North Waterboro, &  
Waterboro, Maine

- Population ~ 8,000
- Square Miles: 57.16
- Unique Considerations
- Transiency
- Close to 50% Free or Reduced Lunch Beneficiaries

# Attendance Success at W. E. S.!



STUDENT A	STUDENT B
Grade 1	Grade 2
Days missed last year as of 4/1/2018 14	Days missed last year as of 4/1/2018 14
Days missed this year as of 4/1/2019 0	Days missed this year as of 4/1/2019 0
Additional hours of instruction 37.5	Additional hours of instruction 0
<b>Progress</b> +27 points on NWEA Math +21 points on NWEA Reading +3 Levels in Reading (DRA-F&P) Successful on reading plan	<b>Progress</b> +12 points on NWEA Math +10 points on NWEA Reading +3 Levels in Reading (DRA-F&P)

### Communication to Build Relationships

Our contact with families about our care and our interest in their (and all) children are reaching out that we cherish, remember and just want a positive connection, more so every day.

"I am calling to let you know how much we love to see you for tomorrow!"  
"We missed your child here at school!"  
"We care about your child!"  
"Breaks about the child's health." "It's also for looking ahead!"  
"Some of the activities need your child's input!"  
"What is the best way for us to keep in touch?" (Email) - a preferred method of communication!

Your efforts make a difference!



## STUDENT C

Grade 3

Days TARDY last year as of 4/1/2018  
100

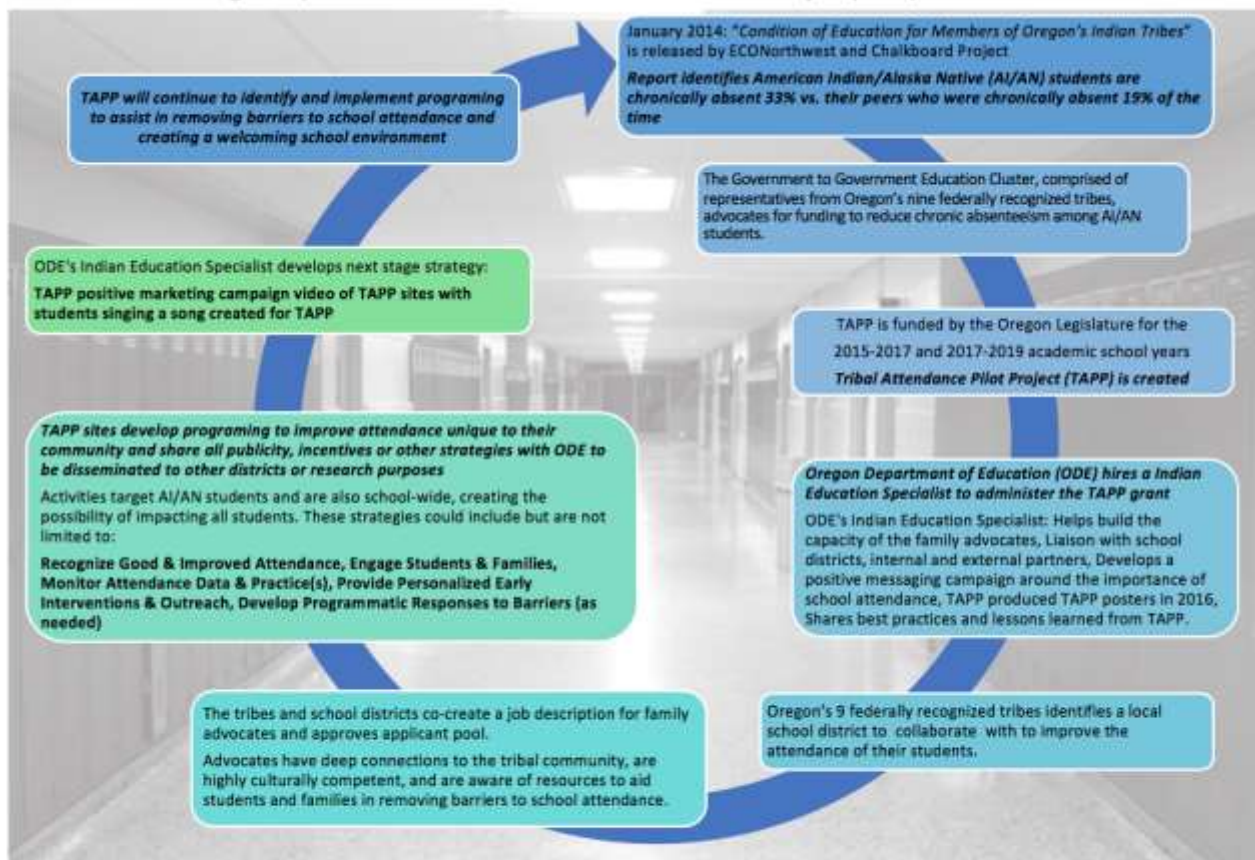
Days TARDY this year as of 4/1/2019  
37 (Only 1 since December!)

Additional hours of instruction  
16 (using an average of 15 mins)

### Progress

+12 points on NWEA Math  
+16 points on NWEA Reading  
+ 4 Levels in Reading (DRA-F&P)

## Oregon Department of Education Tribal Attendance Pilot Project (TAPP): Jan 2014-Present







Pendleton's Washington Elementary School used TAPP Funds to collaborate with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to include Language at their building.





# Professional Development







# TAPP Outcomes

- Collaboration between Tribes & School
- Increased Family Engagement
- Increased Indigenous Language in School
- Increased Indigenous Curriculum
- Increased Professional Development for School Staff
- Increased Cultural Sensitivity
- Increased AI/AN visibility
- Increased Attendance



Yoncalla Early Works  
Transforming Education Through  
Accountable Engagement and  
Relationships



**EARLY  
WORKS**

Transforming Education Together

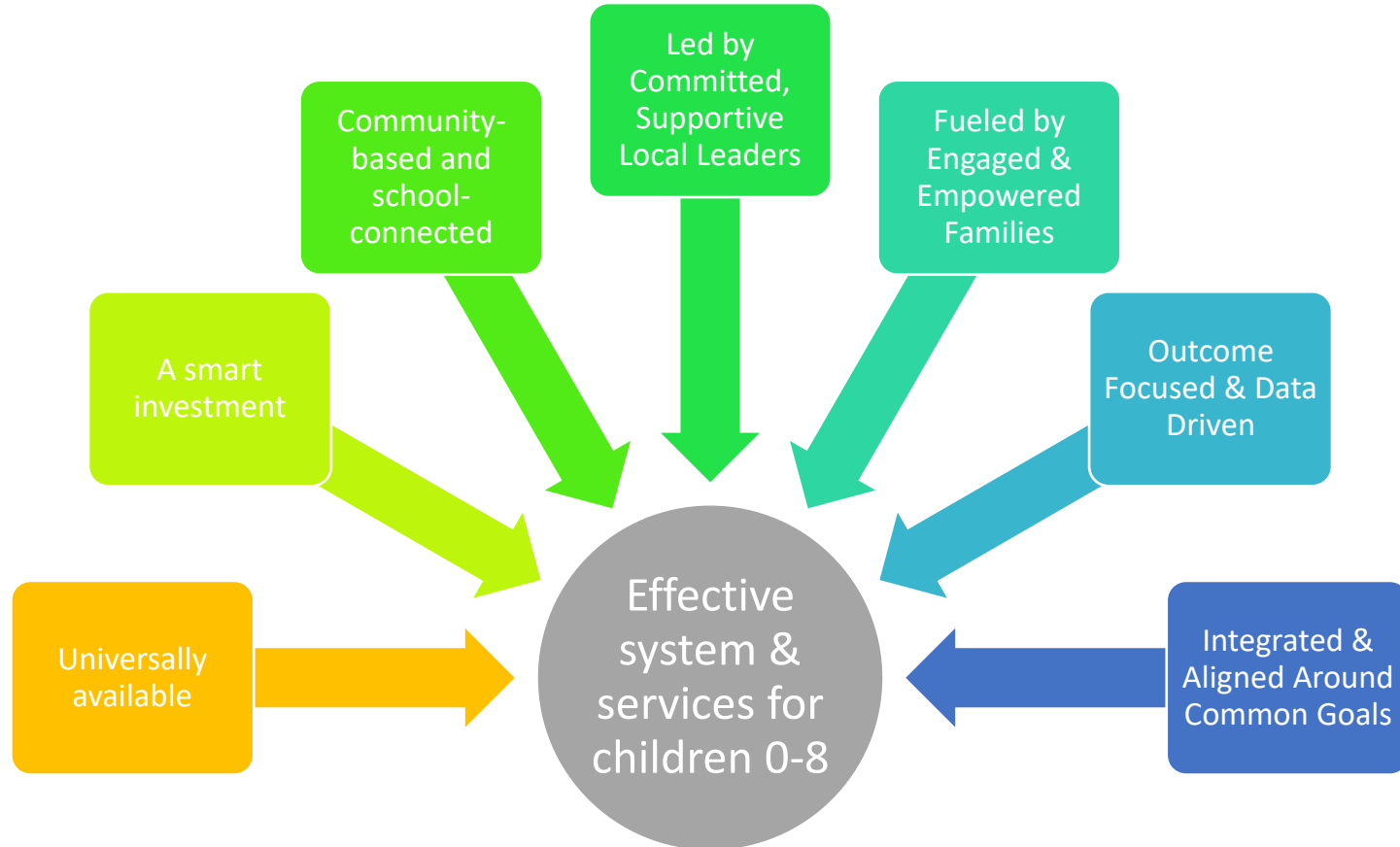
# Our Vision



A community of healthy, thriving kids who become successful adults.



# Early Works Guiding Principles



## Initial Data indicates:

- lack of trust/ connection to school
- Little interest in preschool
- no interest in home visiting
- families want more community based activities to do with their children.

Trust is foundational for success!!



## How do you build trust with families??

- Transparency with data
  - Community Cafe
  - Annual retreat
  - Monthly Early Works Leadership meetings
- School District engages and support existing programs
  - Yoncalla Library
  - Family Relief Nursery
  - OPEC funded parenting education



# Family Engagement and Leadership at the school

Activities & Interventions → Research-Based Indicators → Longer-Term Outcomes

- PreK & Kindergarten parent engagement events/activities
- Community-based family activities at library, school, etc.
- Parent-teacher home visits 2015-19
- Evidence based parenting education for 0-8
- Parent-led parenting and community events
- **Systems**
- School leadership & staff commitment to parents as partners
- Parents active on governance committees, community meetings
- Emerging parent driven leadership team collaborating with administrative leadership

## Support for Learning at Home

1. Increased % of parents read to young children daily
2. Increased % of homes have 26+ books
3. Increased level of developmental support at home
4. Increased % of parents report confidence in supporting children's learning at home
5. Increased % of parents report high expectations for children's academic attainment

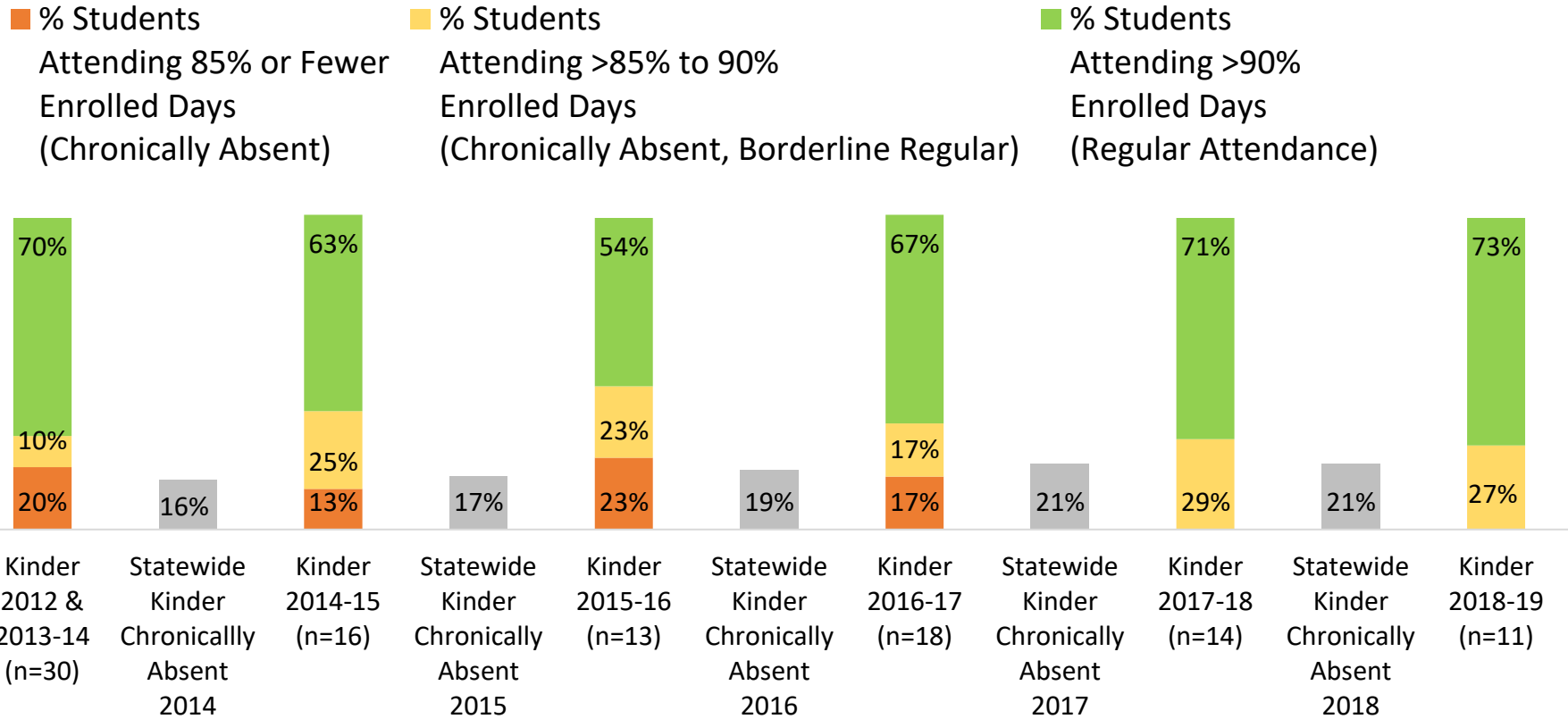
1. Increased % of children meet school readiness & development benchmarks in preschool, kindergarten

## Family Engagement in School

1. Increased % of parents report school is welcoming
2. Increased % of parents report frequent communication with teachers and schools
3. Incremental shifts in attendance

- Increased % of children meet 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading & math benchmarks

*The percent of regular attenders was highest in 2018, slightly improved from last year.*



Source: School administrative data based on total number of student enrollment days – Spring – PreK/Kinder

Where are  
we now?







# Leveraging the Power of Data and Relationships: Reducing Chronic Absence in Rural Settings

August 11, 2020

Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement  
Allison Crain, Northern District Supervisor



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

## VISION

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To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

## MISSION

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To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community



1

**ALL**

Students  
Proficient  
and Showing  
Growth in  
All Assessed  
Areas



2

**EVERY**

Student  
Graduates  
from High  
School and  
is Ready for  
College and  
Career



3

**EVERY**

Child Has  
Access to  
a High-  
Quality Early  
Childhood  
Program



4

**EVERY**

School Has  
Effective  
Teachers and  
Leaders



5

**EVERY**

Community  
Effectively  
Uses a  
World-Class  
Data System  
to Improve  
Student  
Outcomes



6

**EVERY**

School and  
District is  
Rated "C"  
or Higher





# Goals for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

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- View chronic absence as an important early warning sign – health concerns, family needs
- Create a culture of understanding that attendance matters
- Overcome the myth that school attendance is solely a “school issue” or “parent issue” – engage the school attendance officer and other key personnel to help bridge the gap
- Utilize strategies that build relationships and engage stakeholders – requires dialogue and data!

# Call to Action

- Decrease the number of students identified as missing 10% or more of days from school during an academic school year.
- Acknowledge and address health-related challenges that impede positive academic outcomes for students.
- Provide parents with the needed resources that will aid them in fulfilling their critical role as brain builder, first teacher, tutor, strongest advocate, and best coach.



# “Breakfast at the Bus Stop” Initiative

- Provides students with a free breakfast three (3) times a year at the bus stop-two within an Oxford Housing Authority community and the other in an area of the city with a high chronic absenteeism rate.
- Provides an opportunity to motivate and encourage students to attend school every day.
- Provides an opportunity to build and/or enhance relationships with students, parents, and community.



# “Breakfast at the Bus Stop” Participants

- ✓ Law Enforcement
- ✓ School Personnel
- ✓ Community Leaders
- ✓ L.O.U. Reads Coalition

L.O.U. Reads members solicit breakfast donations from various business around Oxford.



# Prevention Picnic

- The picnic is provided for students and families that have been identified as being chronically absent for numerous years.
- The families are contacted by the School Attendance Officer serving the school districts in Lafayette County.
- The families meet for lunch with the School Attendance Officer and district personnel (teachers, interventionists, etc.) at the local park.
- The barriers that deter students from attending school are discussed during the picnic meeting.





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Allison Crain

[acrain@mdek12.org](mailto:acrain@mdek12.org)

Northern District Supervisor

Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement

**[mdek12.org](http://mdek12.org)**



# Questions & Discussion

# Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars

## LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE WEBINAR

Afterschool Opportunities: An Antidote to Learning Loss During COVID-19

Tuesday, August 18, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

## LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE WEBINAR

Elevating Parent Voices on Learning Loss

Tuesday, August 25, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

