

Engaging Families for Everyday Attendance

January 23, 2024



Panelists



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Chronic Absence, Attendance
and LEAP Home Visits
CT State Dept. Of Education



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Panelists



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Moderator



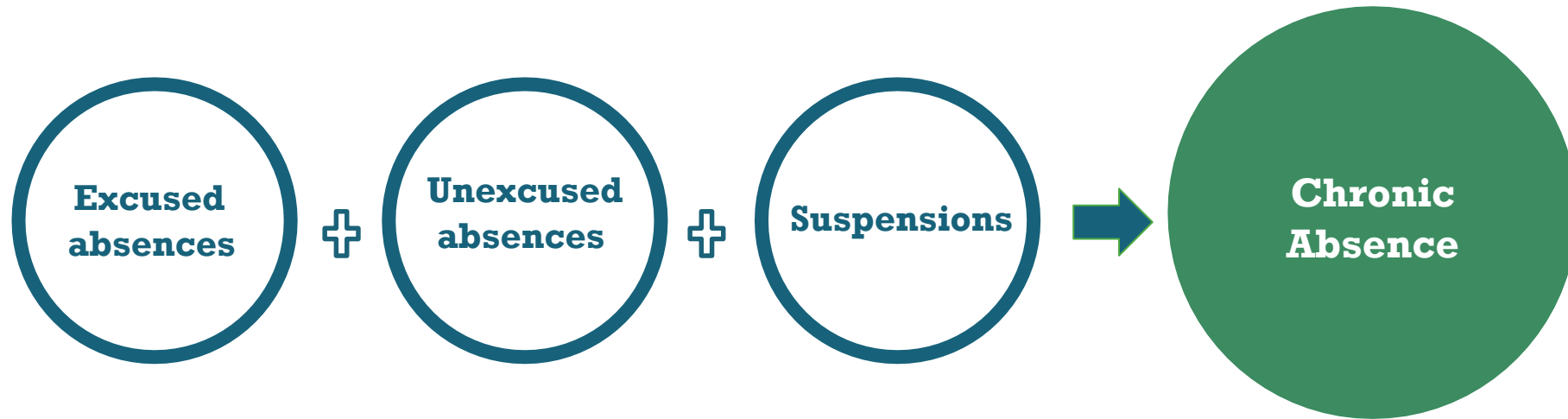
Hedy Chang
Executive Director
Attendance Works



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 **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

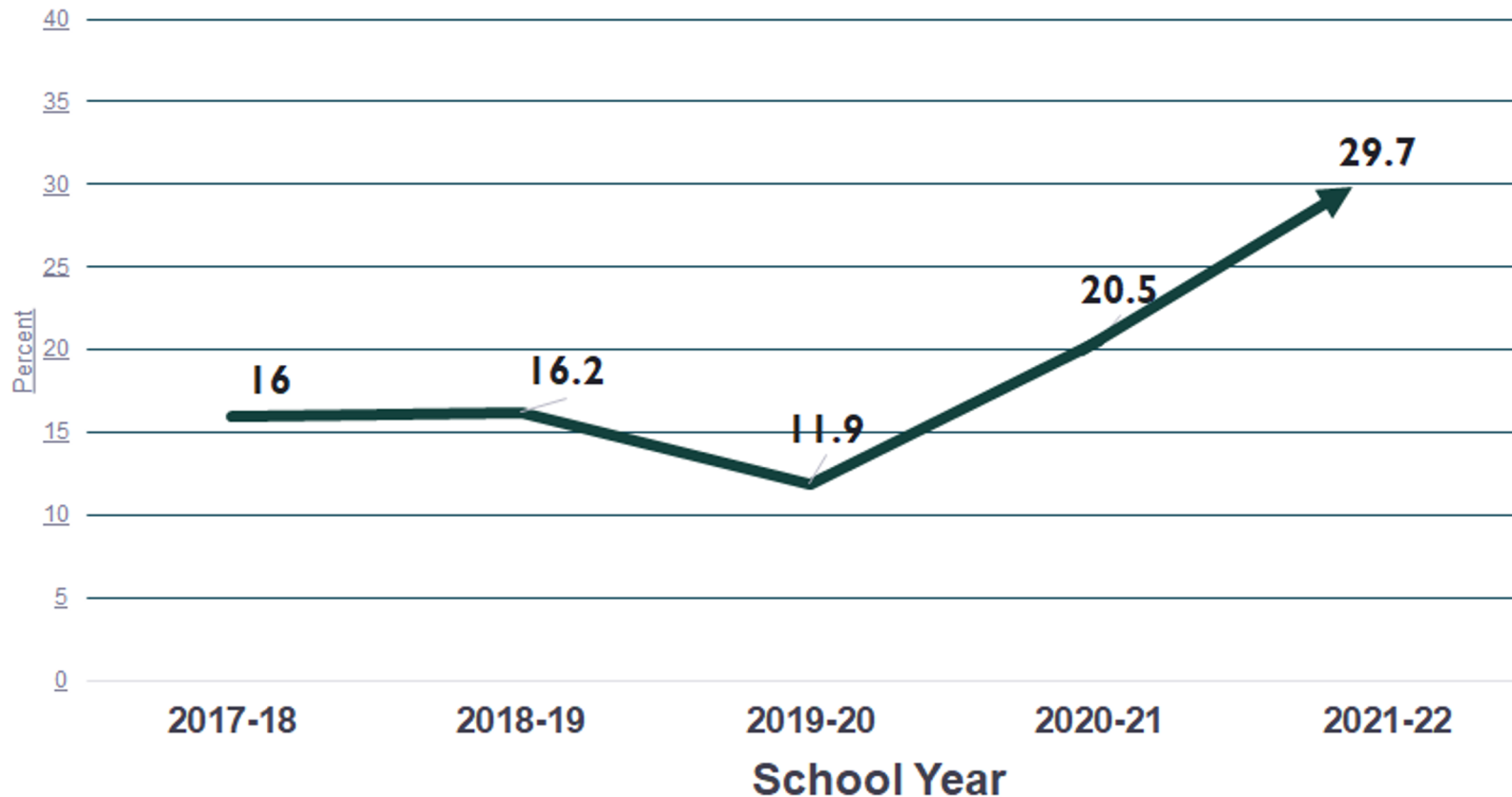


Why Does Attendance Every Day Matter for Young Learners

- Students chronically absent in prek/K are more likely to be chronically absent in later grades and less likely to read and count proficiently by the end of third grade.
- Chronic early absence is associated with declines in educational engagement, social-emotional development and executive functioning.
- Economically challenged students are especially affected as they have less access to resources to make up for the lost opportunities to learn.
- A regular routine of attendance helps young children and their families become less anxious about school, connect to peers as well as teachers, access resources and engage in learning.

Our unprecedented attendance crisis now affects nearly 1 out of 3 students

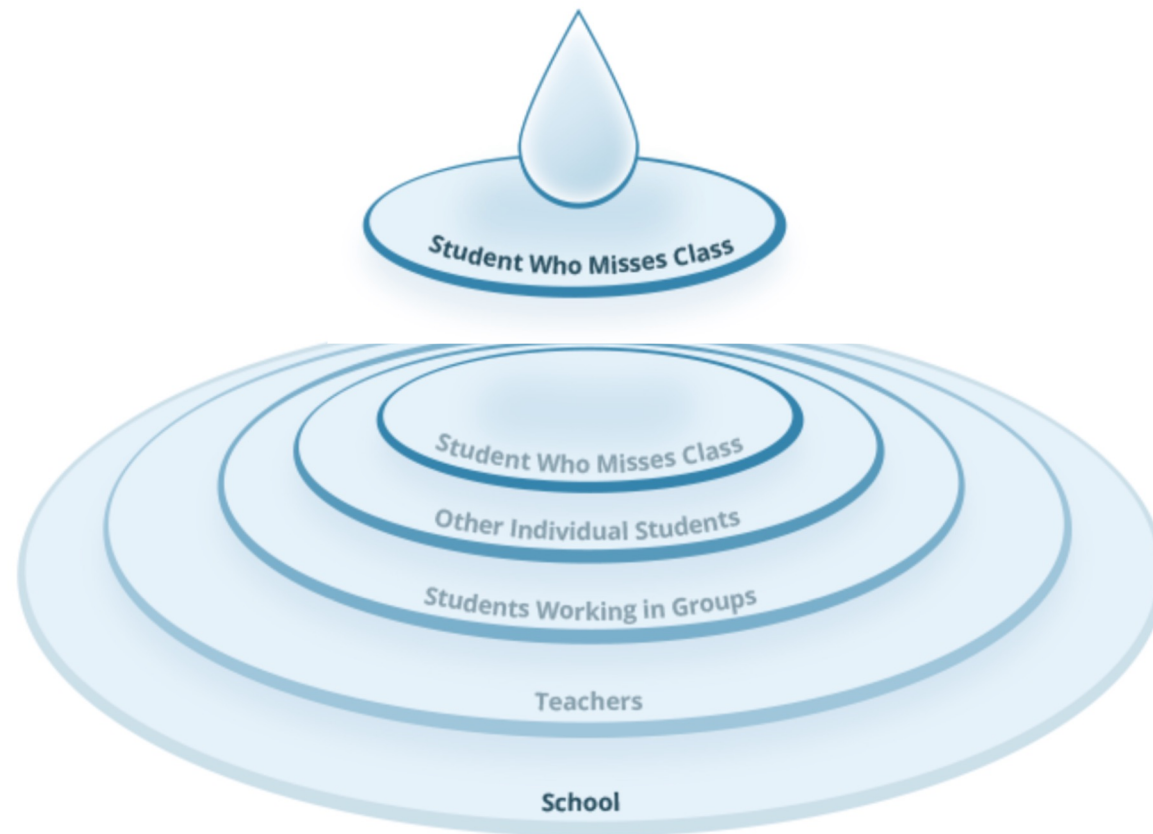
Percentage of Students Chronically Absent Nearly Doubled Nationwide Between SY 2017-18 to SY 2021-22



The number of chronically absent students grew from 8,095,132 to 14,660,261. State data from 2022–23 indicate rates remained high, with only a slight decline.



When a Student Misses School the Impact Ripples



2 out of 3
students attend a
school with 20%
or more
absenteeism
(SY 2021-22)

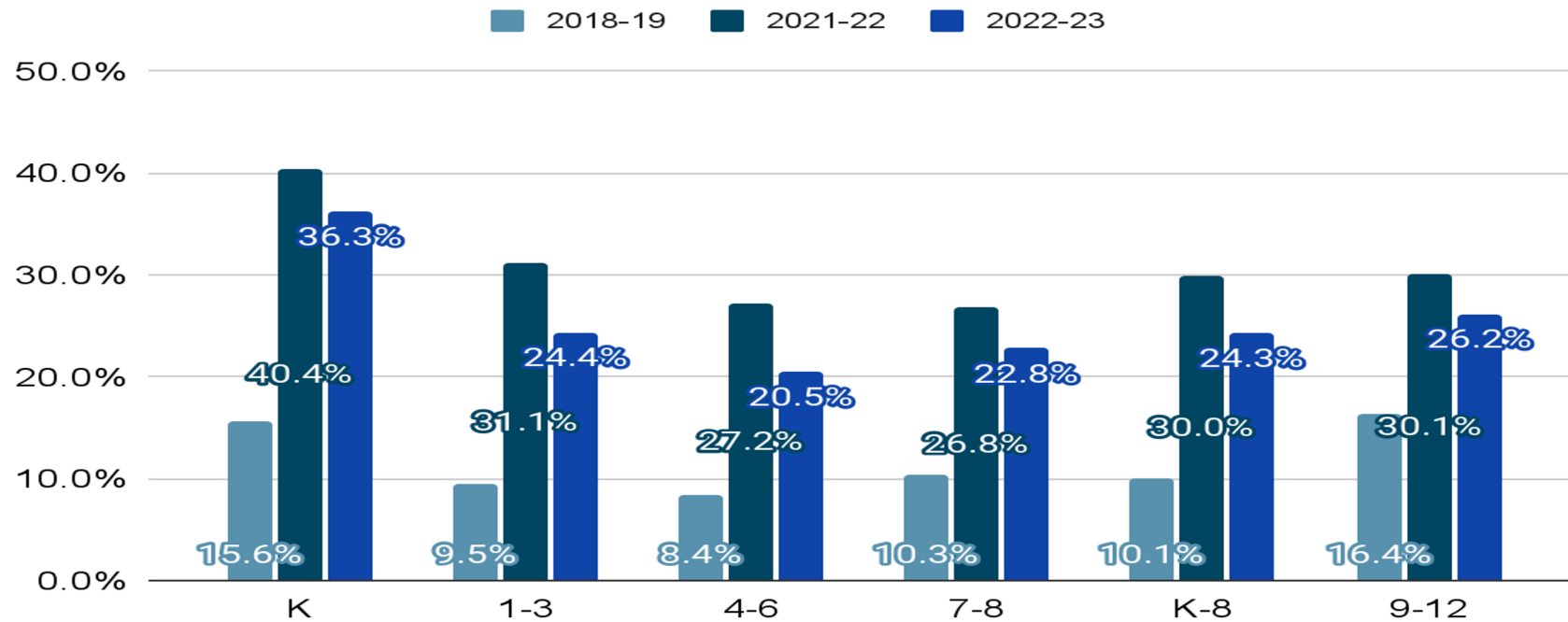
The majority of elementary schools now face high and extreme levels of chronic absence

	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools		All Schools	
	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22
Percent of Schools with 30%+ or more chronically Absent	7%	38%	8%	40%	31%	56%	14%	43%
Percent of Schools with 20% or more Chronically Absent	18%	60%	22%	66%	50%	77%	28%	65%
	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools		All Schools	
	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22
Number of Schools with 30% or more Chronically Absent	3,550	19,828	1,353	6,430	6,433	11,778	12,493	39,890
Number of Schools with 20% or more Chronically Absent	9,233	31,362	3,640	10,541	10,474	16,126	24,912	60,379



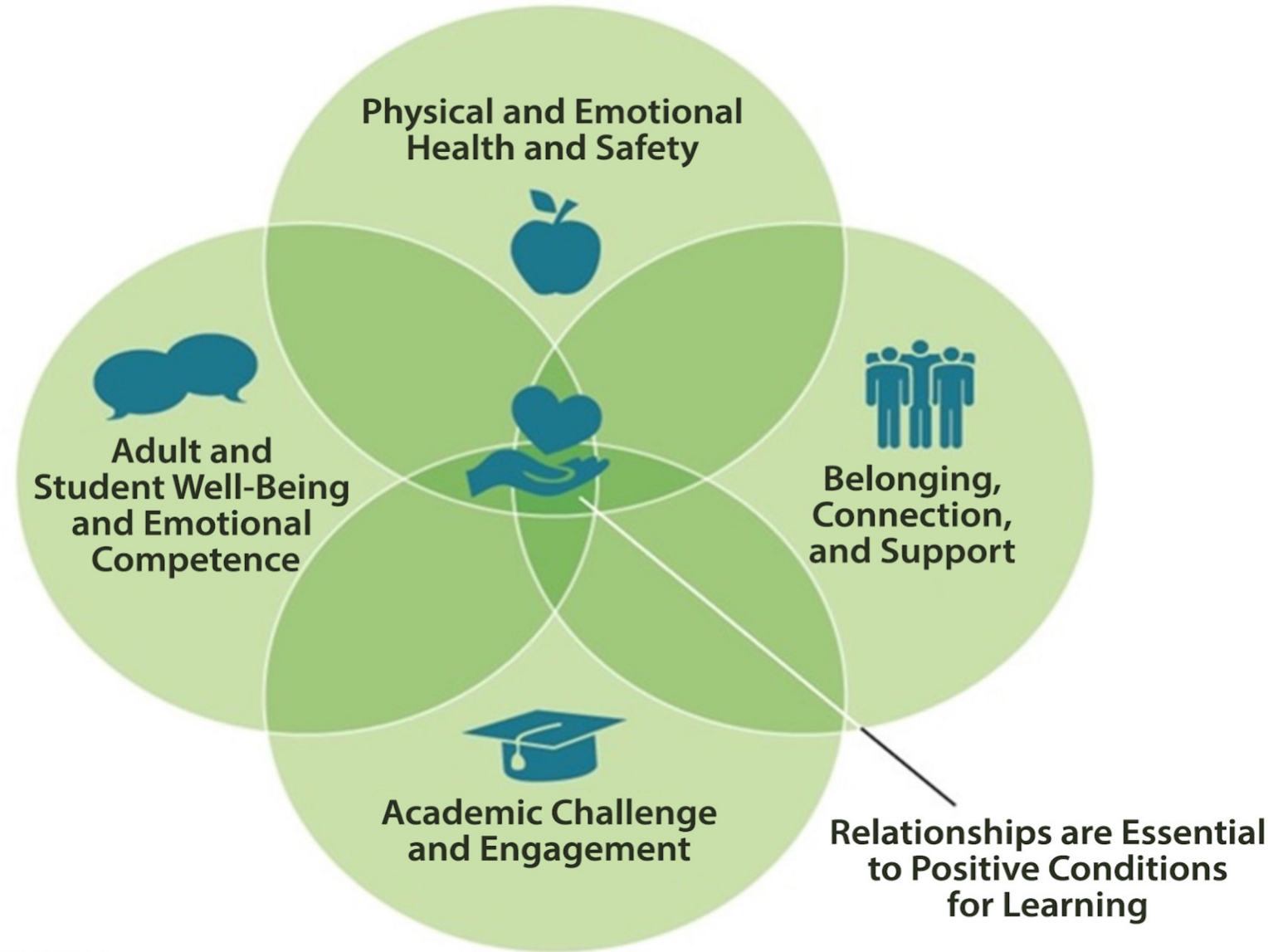
**Stemming this wave
must start in K (or prek)**

Chronic Absence by Grade Span in California (2021-22 vs. 2022-23)



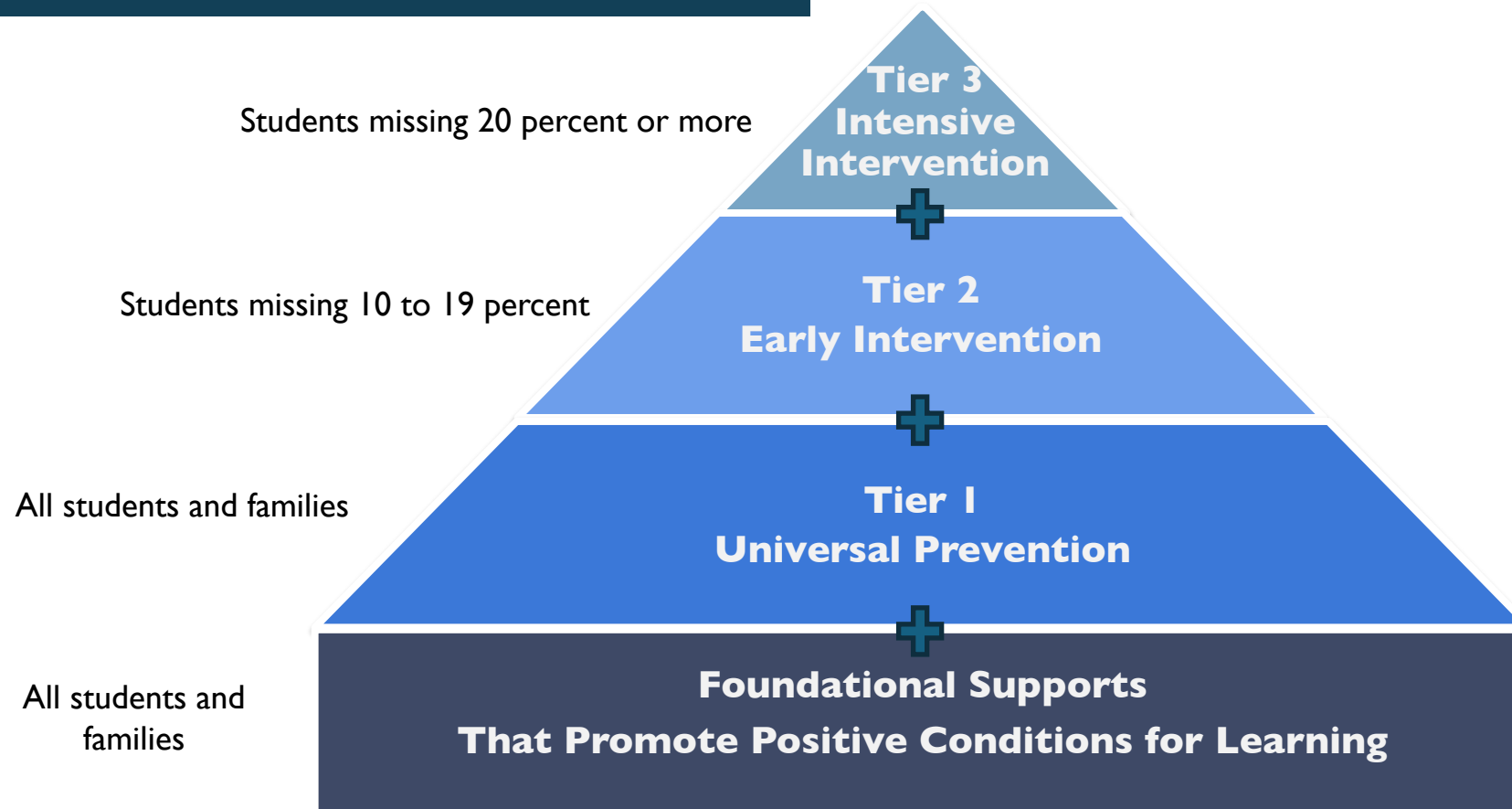
Source: CA Department of Education

We Must Partner with Families to Ensure and Restore Positive Conditions for Learning





All Hands On Deck Needed to Ensure A Tiered Approach



<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>



Early Matters Toolkit: Cultivating Engagement and Attendance in K

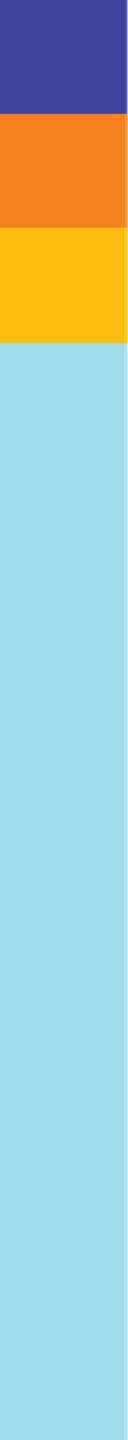
Find it here: [Early Matters](#)

Schools and Districts

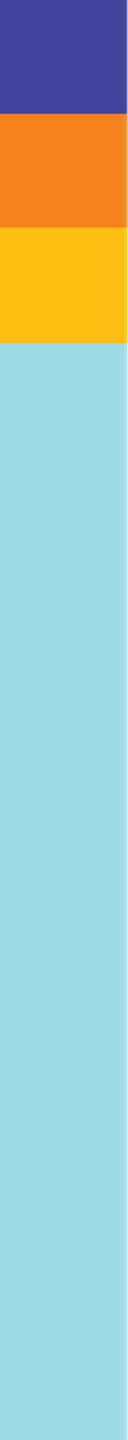
- a. Reach Out Before Kindergarten
- b. Start with a Warm Welcome & Engagement
- c. Partner with Families All Year Long
- d. Offer Supports to Reduce Health Related Absence
- e. Establish Data-Informed Teams

Communities:

- a. Engage Community Partners
- b. Organize Attendance Campaigns That Reach Families with Young Children



Why does family engagement
have such an essential role in
improving attendance?



What have been your most effective strategies to engage families in improving attendance? How have they made a difference?

Mindset Shifts

From...

- Punitive
- Compliance
- What happens when you *don't* come to school

To...

- Positive
- Opportunity to learn
- What happens when you *do* come to school



**This creates an
environment that
strengthens family/school
partnerships**

Social media posts

Posters in schools and community locations

Parent communication resources

- Academic calendar magnet

- Flyers

- Caring Conversations Training

Monitoring and sharing of data

Celebrating improvement

Activities to promote belonging (K-5 Friday morning greeters)

Note cards with personalized messages

 **SEP 2023-2024** 
SHOWING UP TOGETHER
 #GladYouAreHere

Why School Attendance Matters

Build connections
with friends,
teachers, and
coaches

Develop positive
habits for school
and future
careers


Access resources,
enrichment, and
fun

Learn important
skills and stay on
track for
graduation

Absences add up quickly!

Missing just **2** days each
month = missing a whole
month of learning





SHOWING UP TOGETHER

SEP 2023-2024

August							September							October						
MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3				1				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5 (6):	7	8	9	10	2	3 (4):	5	6	7	8		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12 (13):	14	15	16	17	9	10	11:	12	13	14	15	
21	22	23:	24	25	26	27	18	19 (20):	21	22	23	24	16	17 (18):	19	20	21	22		
28	29 (30):	31	25	26 (27):	28	29	30	23	24 (25):	26	27	28	29	30	31					

November							December							January						
MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
	(1):	2	3	4	5				1	2	3	1	2 (3):	4	5	6	7			
6	7 (8):	9	10	11	12	4	5 (6):	7	8	9	10	8	9 (10):	11	12	13	14			
13	14 (15):	16	17	18	19	11	12 (13):	14	15	16	17	15	16 (17):	18	19	20	21			
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19 (20):	21	22	23	24	22	23 (24):	25	26	27	28		
27	28 (29):	30	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30 (31):									

February							March						
MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
			1	2	3	4				1	2	3	
5	6 (7):	8	9	10	11	4	5	6:	7	8	9	10	
12	13 (14):	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
19	20 (21):	22	23	24	25	18	19 (20):	21	22	23	24		
26	27 (28):	29	25	26 (27):	28	29	30	31					


April							May						
MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
1	2 (3):	4	5	6	7				(1):	2	3	4	5
8	9 (10):	11	12	13	14	6	7 (8):	9	10	11	12		
15	16 (17):	18	19	20	21	13	14 (15):	16	17	18	19		
22	23 (24):	25	26	27	28	20	21 (22):	23	24	25	26		
29	30	27	28	29	30	31							

DID YOU KNOW?

MISSING JUST TWO DAYS EACH MONTH
ADDS UP TO 10% OF THE SCHOOL YEAR
AND CAN IMPACT ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

USE THIS MAGNET TO KEEP TRACK OF
MISSED DAYS WITH A DRY ERASE MARKER

Scan to get
SEP's Google
calendar for up
to date schedule
and changes



Key to Calendar: () = Secondary 2 Hour Late Start
 ■ = No School : = Elementary 2 Hour Early Dismissal

tinyurl.com/3pyd9k4a

- Early Literacy District Data

- **73%** of Southeast Polk K-1 students were at or above benchmark on the measure of early literacy.
- **21%** of K-1 students were chronically absent in the 2022-2023 school year
- Of those on track for attendance, the percent at or above benchmark...

86%

- Of those chronically absent, the percent at or above benchmark...

60%

Attendance Data - Cornelius Elementary

Sept 2019-March 12, 2020	93.57%
2020-2021 (online/April '24 hybrid)	92.29%
2021-2022	90.56%
2022-2023	90.03%
2023-2024 (to date)	92.11%

Effective Strategies to Engage Families: Prevention

Focus on Attendance in Principal's Summer Family Letter - Students get 15 sick days and no vacation days - use your Thanksgiving break, winter break, spring break, and summer break as vacation days.



ILLNESS Protocol: Please do **NOT** send your child to school sick (temp above 100, vomiting in the last 24 hrs, coughing).

Attendance is critical! Students get 15 sick days per year! Students should take vacations during school vacations (Thanksgiving, winter break, spring break, and summer vacation); there are no vacation days for students.

If a student misses more than 10% of the days in a school year (18 days) - they are considered Chronically Absent - it does not matter if it is excused or unexcused. Last year, 36% of our students were chronically absent. Statistically they will be at the bottom of their class in achievement and most likely will not graduate from high school. Compared to children with average attendance, chronically absent students gained **14% fewer literacy skills** in Kindergarten, and **15% fewer literacy and 12% fewer math skills** in 1st grade. Help us get your children to school, unless they are truly sick. Students who chronically tardy end up missing many days of school when you add up their tardies. **Make sure your student is here every morning by 9:00 am (10:00 on Wednesdays).**

Effective Strategies to Engage Families: Prevention

Preventative Letter sent out in September - for families who struggled with attendance last year...compassionate, empathetic, and informative about the benefits of good attendance.



DATE

To the Parents/Guardians of:
STUDENT NAME
ADDRESS
CITY,STATE,ZIP

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I hope you and your family are doing well and settling into the school year. We are reaching out with this letter because we know how important it is to you and for us to make sure **STUDENT** does well socially, emotionally, and academically this year. In years past, regularly attending school has been inconsistent for your child and I want to make sure I am here to support you in any way that is truly helpful.

If classes are too hard or too easy, that is important for us to know so we can plan together to support your student. If they are struggling socially or feeling anxious about attending school, our school counselor is ready to help. If there are resources you need within your household I will be sure to find you the right people to speak with to meet your needs.

Attending school is not just about learning the content within the classroom. Being present regularly allows for students to:

- Keep up with instruction that builds on each lesson
- Grow positive relationships with peers and teachers
- Build stamina, routine, and structure that is helpful for a growing mind
- Celebrate small successes that lead to higher self-esteem and self-worth
- ...and so much more!

As always, please reach out to us with any questions, concerns, or celebrations. We are honored to continue to serve and be a part of your child's education.

Sincerely,
Angella Graves
Principal
Cornelius Elementary

Cornelius Elementary

Effective Strategies: Making Connections

For students with less than 80% attendance rate:

-Phone call home from the case manager - what's going on and how can we help?

-Phone call home from the principal - what's going on and how can we help?

-Parent conference - print out attendance data for parents & discuss what's going on and how can we help.

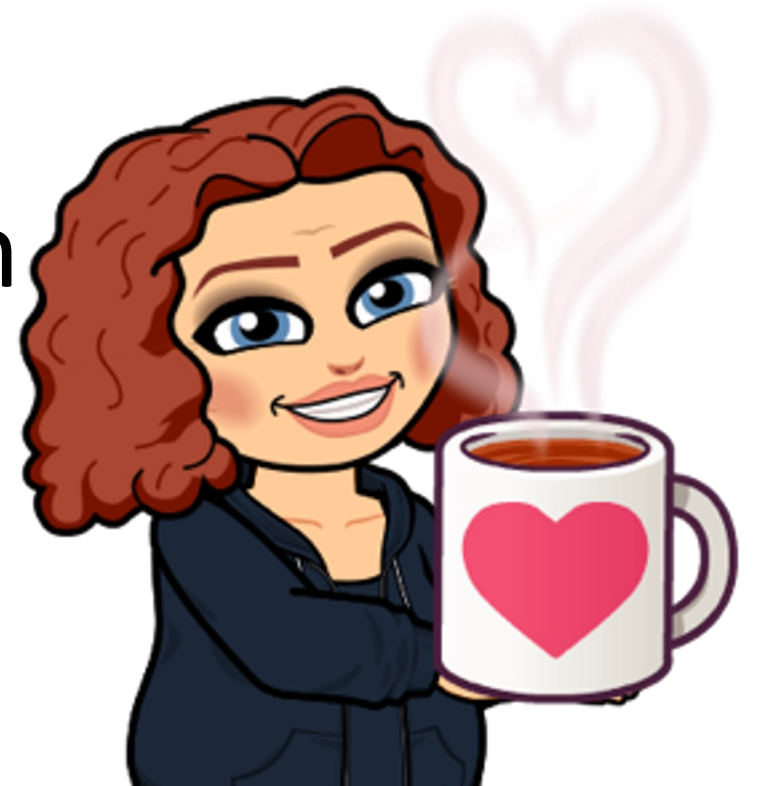


Effective Strategies: Letters, Home Visits, Meetings

-Formal attendance letter with attendance data sent home

-Home Visit by attendance team

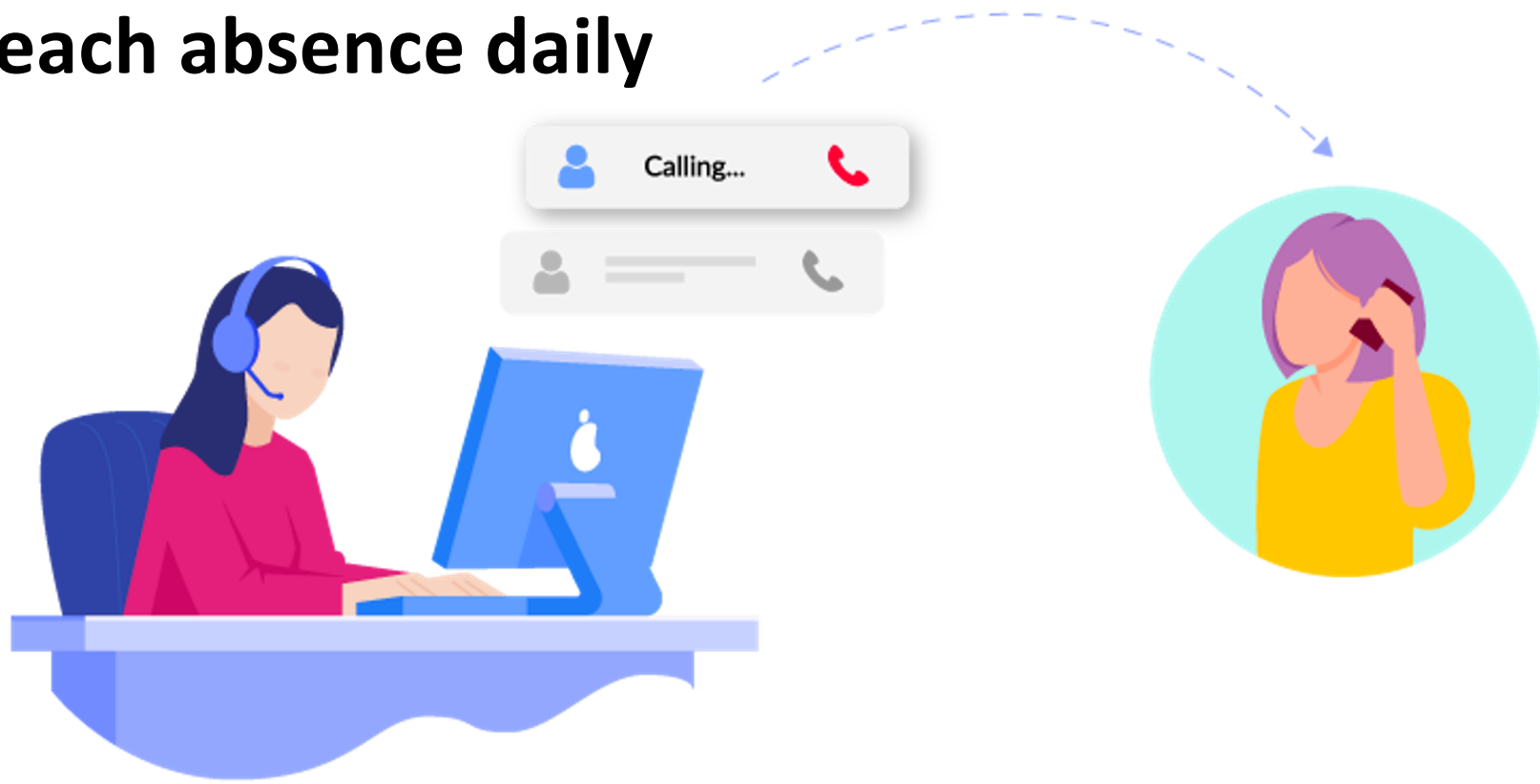
-Family Meeting with the principal to strategize



Effective Strategies to Engage Families: Automatic

All students' families receive:

An autodialer call and an auto email - goes out automatically with each absence daily



Effective Strategies to Engage Families: Personal Touch

The Pre-K teachers send a **short video of the whole class saying, “We miss you!”** to the family of the student who is absent. That motivates students to come back to see their friends.

Texting parents works wonders - everyone can check texts, even if they don't answer their phone or check their voicemails or emails. Texts have 100% open rate.





LEAP: A Tier II Intervention



14 districts

in Connecticut receive LEAP funding.

LEAP is a Connecticut State Department of Education **research-based, relational home visit model** proven to increase student attendance and family engagement.





How Would you Describe the LEAP Model?



Cornerstones to LEAP Approach

Trusting Relationships

Flexible

Collaborative

Culturally Responsive

Voluntary for All

Data Driven



Operational Components

Tier II Intervention

Multiple Visits Focused on Relationships

Data Informed

Professional Development Hub

Home Visitors from the School or Community

Delivery System & Structures



Data from CCERC Study



- Visits that were made **in-person had more impact** than virtual visits or phone calls
 - 1 month after the initial home visit = **4 %** point increase in attendance
 - 6 months after the initial home visit = **10 %** point increase PK to Gr. 5
 - 6 months after the initial home visit = **20 %** point increase for Gr. 6-12
- **Results did not differ** based on:
 - Title of personnel conducting the home visit (certified/non-certified)
 - Whether the home visitor was from the school/district or from a community-based organization





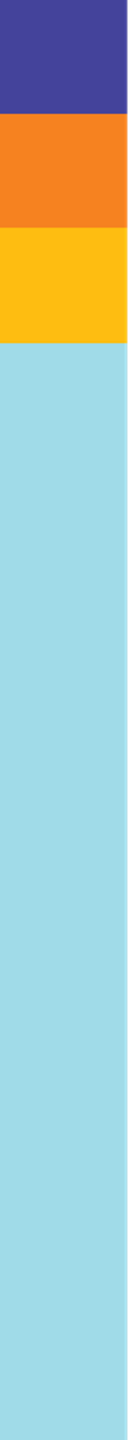
Did The Evaluation Uncover Unexpected Benefits...yes!



- Family-School Relationships
- Engagement
- Achievement
- Belonging
- Gratitude
- Attendance*



*Full CCERC Report:
[An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Home Visits for Re-Engaging Stu\]](#)*



What does it take to equip schools & staff to adopt those strategies?

Delaware Elementary

- **About Delaware:**

- 426 Students PK-5
- 48%(203 students)Free and Reduced
- 17% (66 students) of students with an IEP
- 11% (45 Students) served in the ESOL program



The Impact of Attendance

Delaware Elementary	<i>Chronic Absenteeism 21- 22</i>	<i>Chronic Absenteeism 22- 23</i>	<i>ISASP Results</i>
<i>K</i>	28%		
<i>1</i>	21%		
<i>2</i>	30%		
<i>3</i>	27%		
<i>4</i>	23%		
<i>5</i>	28%		

The Impact of Attendance

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The Impact of Attendance

Delaware Elementary	<i>Chronic Absenteeism 21-22</i>	<i>Chronic Absenteeism 22-23</i>	<i>ISASP Results</i>
<i>K</i>	28%	16%	<i>(Increases in proficiency)</i>
<i>1</i>	21%	12%	
<i>2</i>	30%	15%	
<i>3</i>	27%	24%	ELA -5% Math +10%
<i>4</i>	23%	23%	ELA +4% Math +3%
<i>5</i>	28%	23%	ELA +3% Math +18% Science 9%

Equip Schools & Staff to Adopt Strategies: Team Approach

Attendance Team meets **weekly** to look at attendance data for students who attend school at less than 90%.

Assign a case manager - each member of the attendance team becomes a case manager for a grade level. Team consists of the school counselors, migrant liaison, student supervisor, the principal, and our district attendance liaison.



Equip Schools & Staff to Adopt Strategies: Process/Policy

Attendance Process or Policy - Create and agree upon an attendance policy or process to apply consistently across your school system.

Attendance Process

Students who have 4 or more absences in a 4 week period will be considered for an attendance intervention. If student attendance does not improve the team will move the student through the following interventions listed below. If student attendance does improve, the team will send positive reinforcement. Data will be determined through Cornelius' Attendance Tracker from information uploaded from Synergy. This information can also be viewed through Panorama by looking specifically at students who are at risk (yellow) or critical (red) or by number of absences.

**If the child's absence is due to a medical appointment, it is recommended that parents provide documentation from their child's healthcare provider to excuse the absences, which will be given to the District Attendance Advisor.*

At the beginning of the school year, review students who had previous critical or at-risk attendance and make contact through an initial letter to remind families of the importance of school attendance.

We also want to acknowledge students who have positive attendance. Once a month the attendance team should take time to review students who have Tier I and II attendance and celebrate that through some form of reinforcement.

Equip Schools & Staff to Adopt Strategies: Share it!

Share the Attendance Process or Policy - with your staff! At a staff meeting, in your handbook, in your newsletter, in an email.





Systems and Structures that Support LEAP Implementation



- Attendance Teams
- District & School Coordinators
- Data Collection/Monitoring
- Home Visit Log
- Community Partners
- Family & Student Voices






Just Published!



September 2023

LEAP







Learner Engagement & Attendance Program

The LEAP Effect

Taking A Systemic Approach to Improving Attendance & Engagement

Lessons Learned from Connecticut's Learner Engagement & Attendance Program (LEAP)

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) with contributions from Attendance Works, CREC, and EdAdvance

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The LEAP Effect



What is the role of community partners
in carrying out this work?



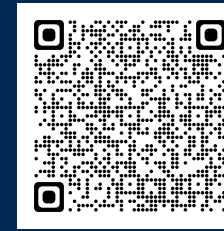
State-level Commitment



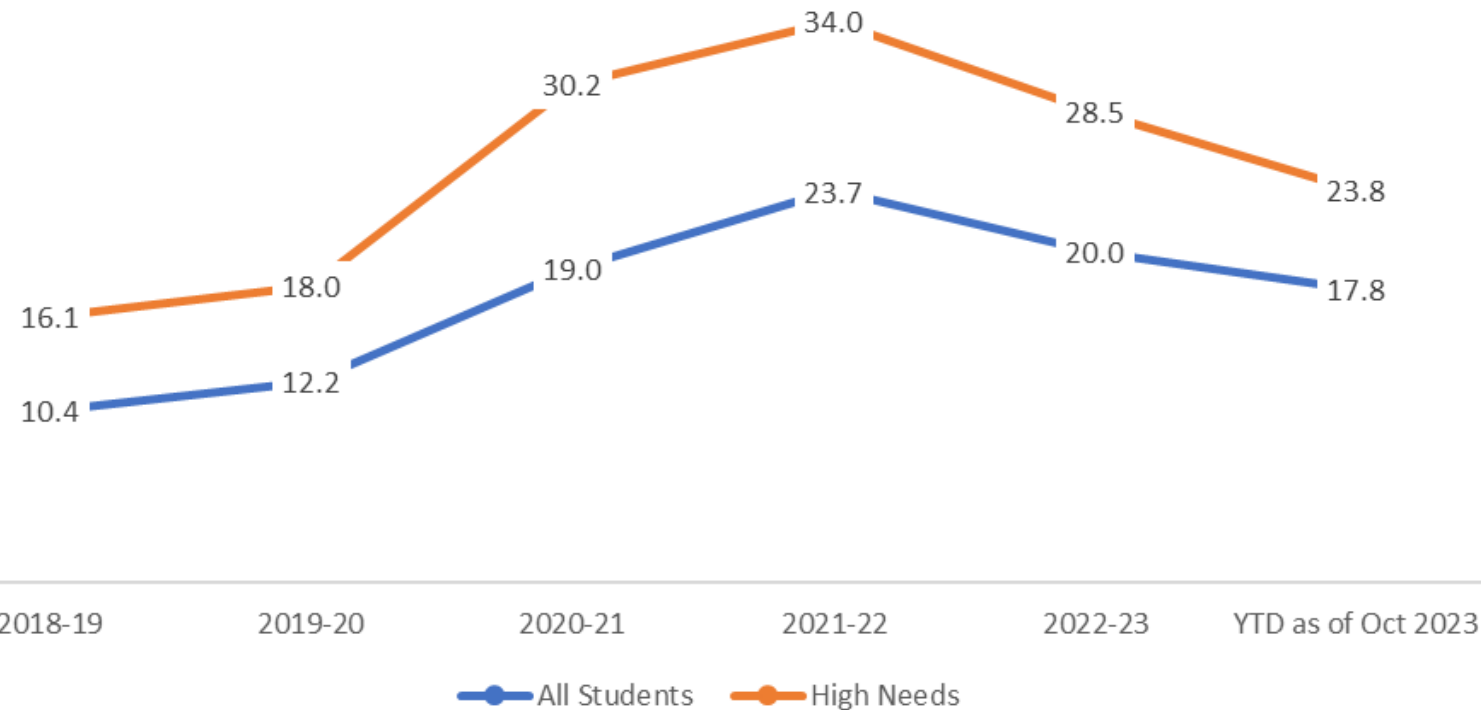
- Long-standing **state commitment** to family engagement and improved student attendance.
- **Integration and commitment to work across departments** – cross-departmental teams at the state level.
- **Use of data** to inform state-level investments and actions.



Attendance Results



Chronic Absenteeism Trend
Percentage of Students Chronically Absent



- A student is “in attendance” if present for at least half of the instructional school day
- Chronic absenteeism is missing at least 10 percent of school days (e.g., 18 of 180 days)
- From 2021-22 to 2022-23, chronic absenteeism declined by 3.7 percent for all students and 5.5 percent among students with high needs
- Approximately 18,000 more students attended school regularly in 2022-23 as compared to in 2021-22
- Around 100,000 students were chronically absent in 2022-23
- For 2023-24, YTD rates as of October 2023 are heading in the right direction