GLR WEEK 2026

A Tale of Two States

Reducing Chronic Absence

Thursday, July 30, 12:30 pm ET

Attendance Awareness Campaign 2026 Webinar!

Create Community in the Fall

Wednesday, August 5

12pm-1:30pm PT / 3pm-4:30 pm ET

Moderator
Hedy Chang
CEO and President
Attendance Works

Panelist
Justin D. Hill, Ed.S.
Deputy Superintendent, Office of Whole Child Supports
Georgia Department of Education

Panelist
Kari Sullivan Custer
Attendance Lead
Connecticut State Department of Education

Panelist
Sandra Faioes
Interim Superintendent
Norwalk Public Schools, Connecticut

Panelist
Charlene Russell-Tucker
Commissioner
Connecticut State Department of Education

Panelist
Charity W. Trowbridge, MSW, M.A.
Director of Attendance Improvement
Fulton County Schools, Georgia

Panelist
Claire Voorhees
Senior Program Lead
Walton Family Foundation

Panelist
Arianne Weldon
Strategic Innovation Manager and Get Georgia Reading Campaign Director
Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Attendance Works: Our Chronic Absence Journey with CGLR

2006

Identify Challenge

- AECF commissioned research: *Present, Engaged & Accounted For*
- Findings informed Early Warning and the design of CGLR

2010

Generate Momentum

- Attendance Works initially established to support CGLR
- Website, webinars and data tools created to respond to demand
- CGLR sites showed success is possible
- CGLR helped launch national Attendance Awareness Campaign; recruiting local superintendents to sign on

2016

Establish National Metric

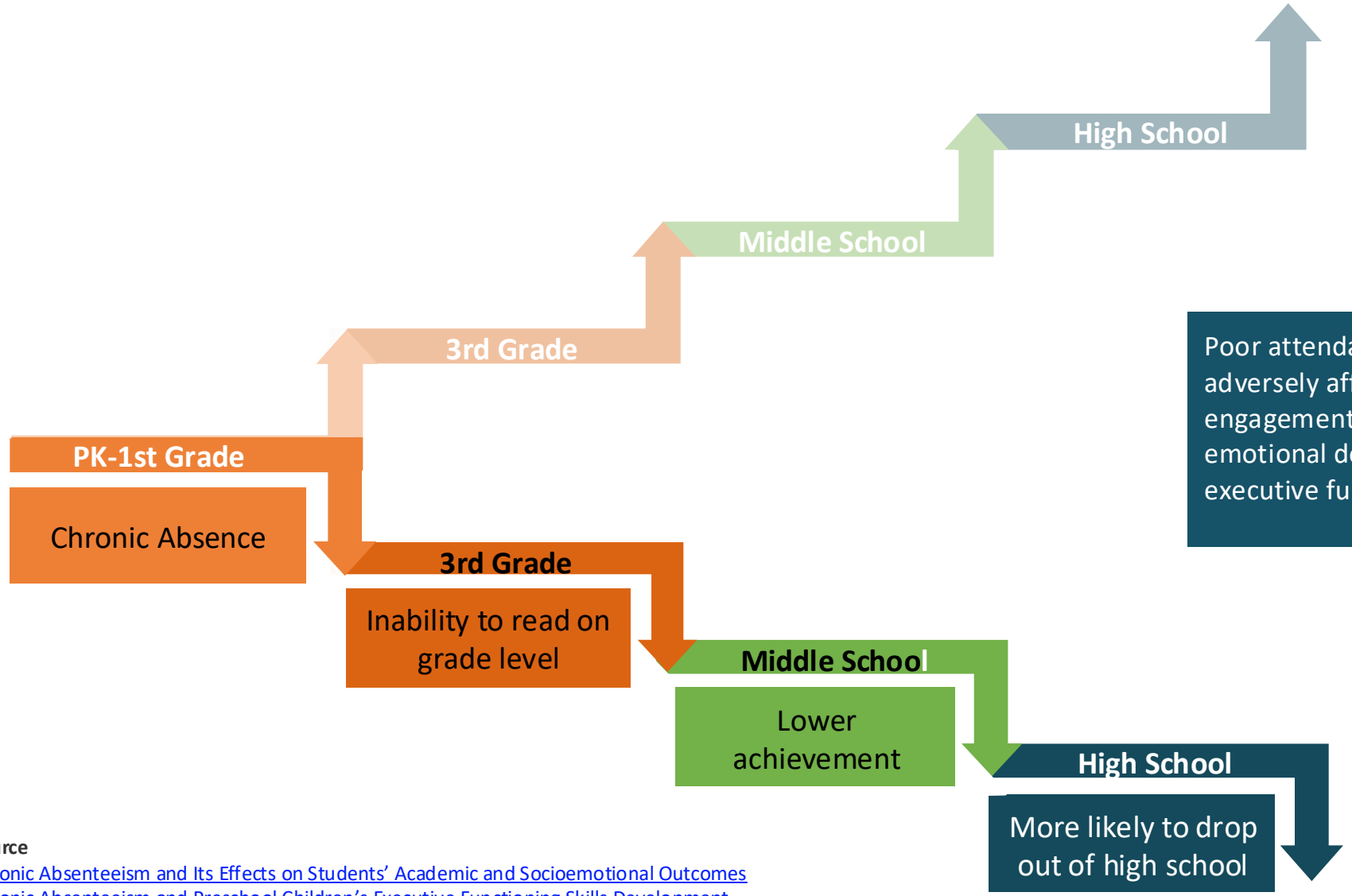
- National data finally available
- CGLR helps make case for why early chronic absence matters
- ESSA passed in December 2015
- 36 states + Washington, D.C. adopt chronic absence as metric for school accountability

2020 - present

Sustain Bipartisan Approach

- Chronic absence doubled during pandemic
- 50% Challenge engages 17 states + D.C. (overlaps with CGLR)
- Emerging research and bright spots show success is still possible
- LEO – an essential dissemination strategy

Improving Attendance Matters in K-12



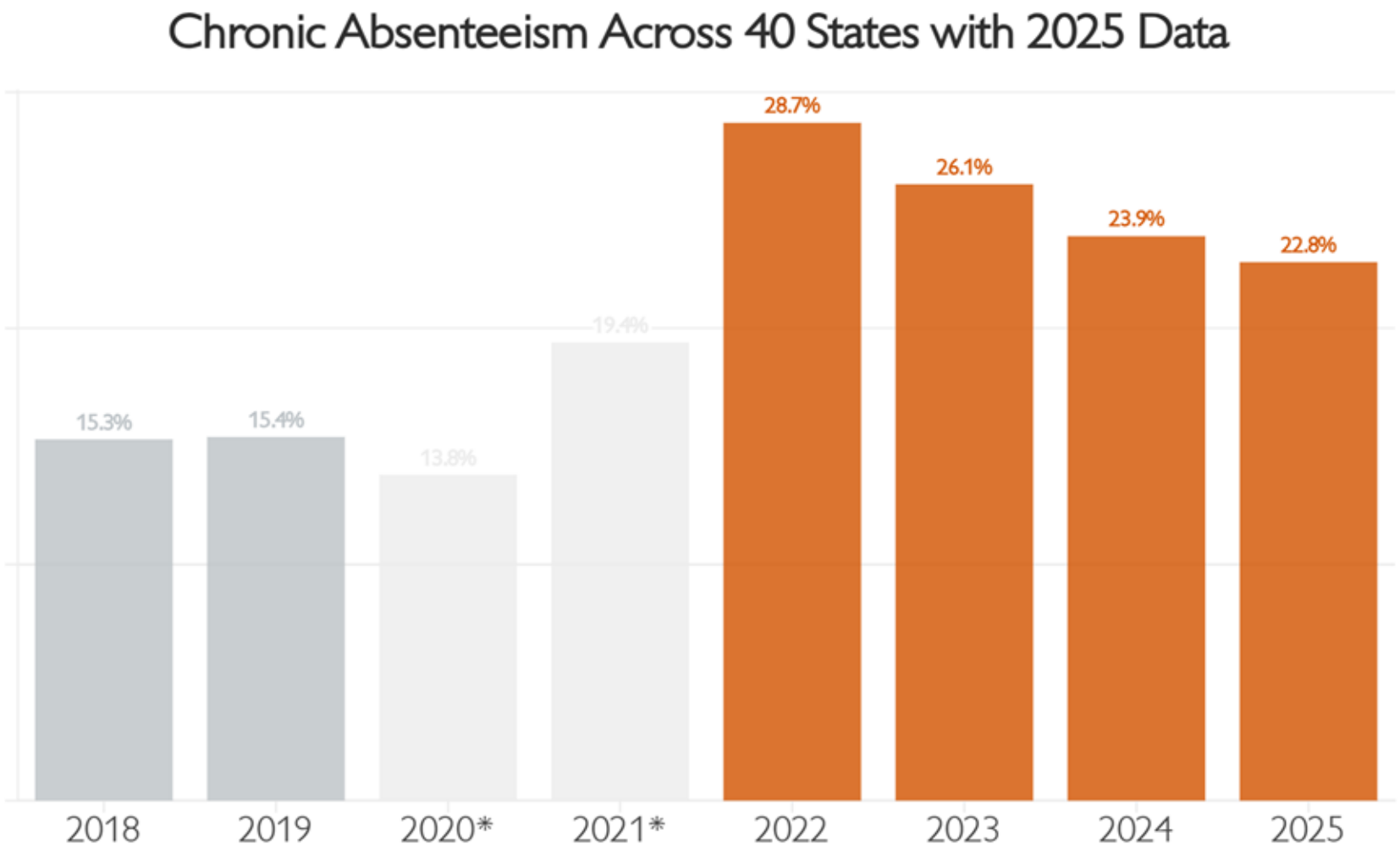
Poor attendance also adversely affects educational engagement, social emotional development and executive functioning.

Source

Chronic Absenteeism and Its Effects on Students' Academic and Socioemotional Outcomes

Chronic Absenteeism and Preschool Children's Executive Functioning Skills Development

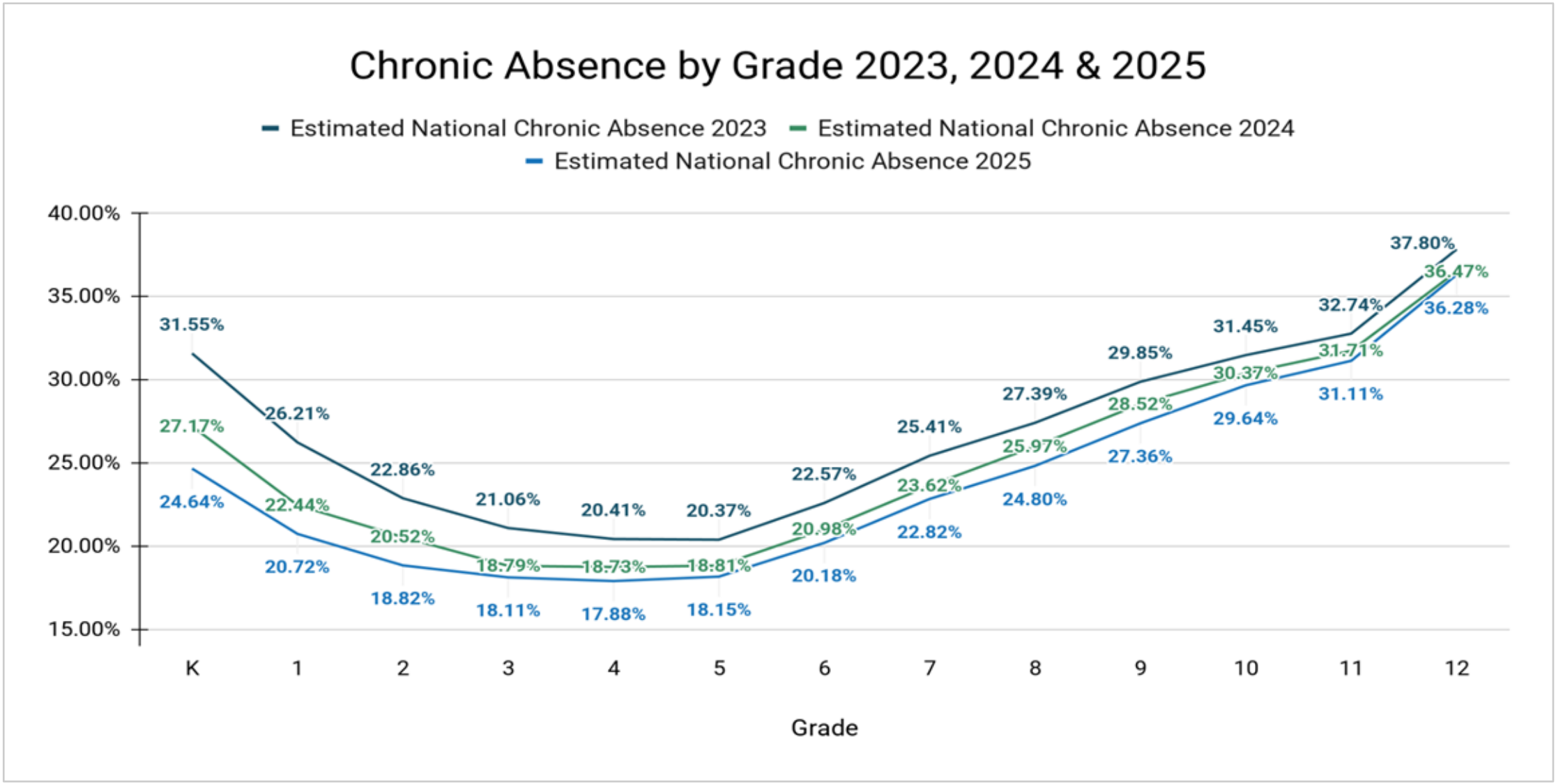
Chronic Absence Nearly Doubled and Remains Too High



RETURN 2 LEARN TRACKER

AEI

Reducing chronic absence must begin in kindergarten (ideally preschool)



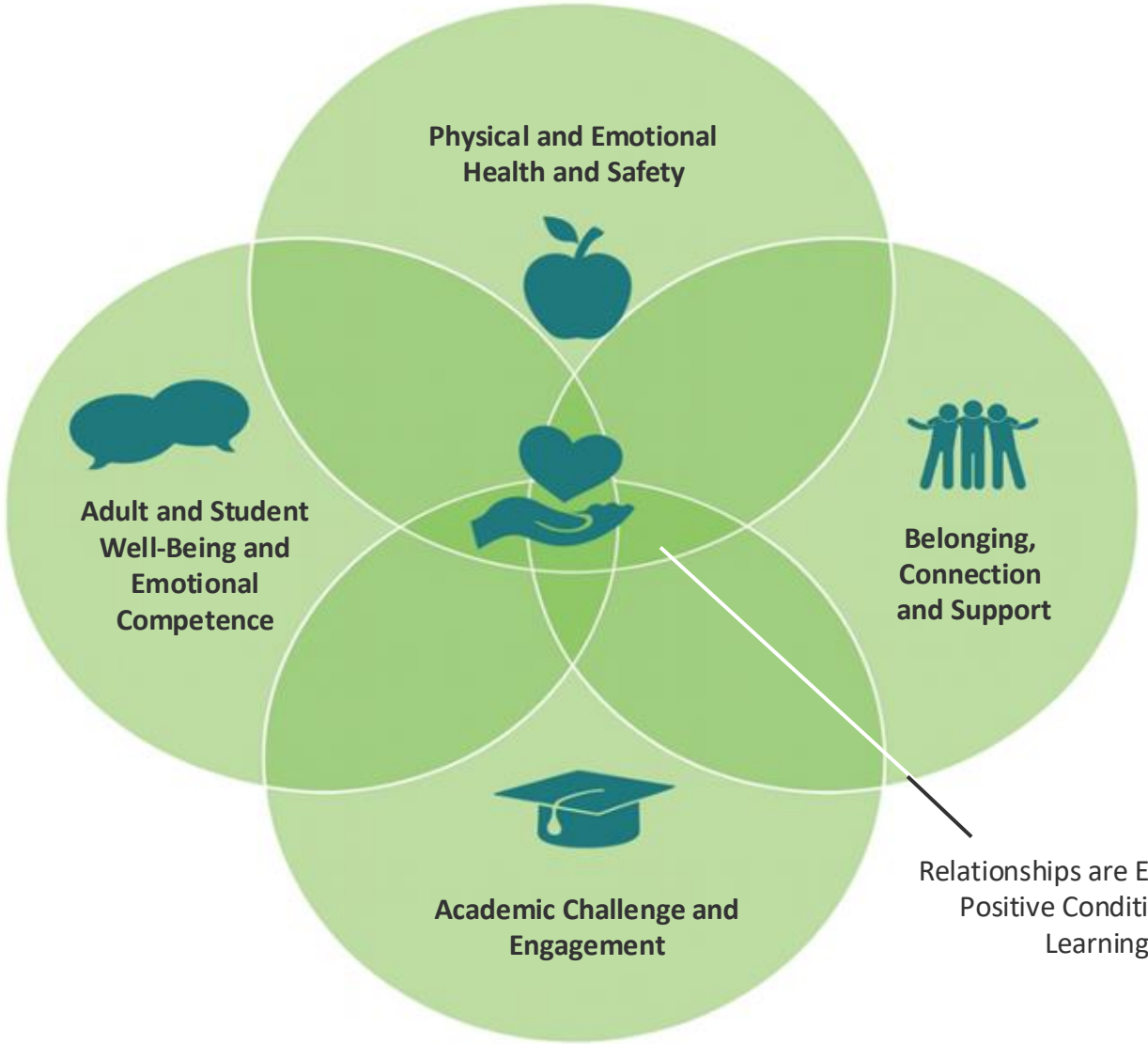
Note: These estimates are based upon data from 11 states (CO, CT, DE, GA, HI, IL, IN, MI, NE, OR, WA).

Solutions must address underlying causes of chronic absence

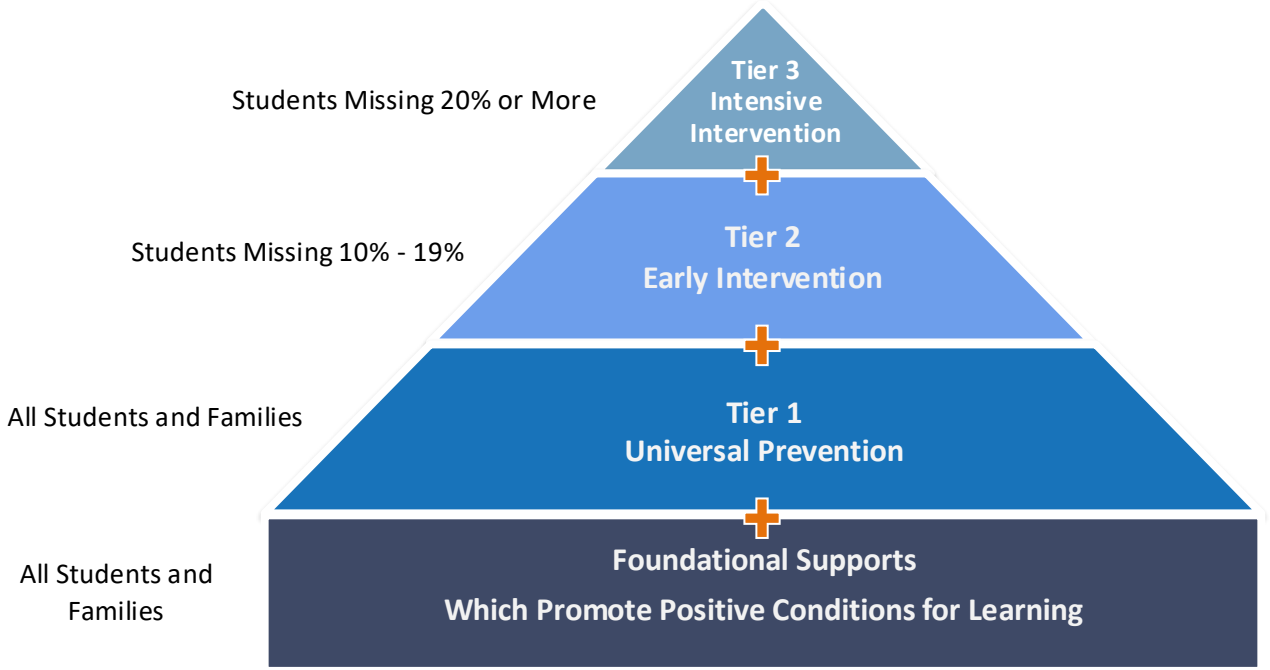
Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
• Chronic and acute illness • Family responsibilities or home situation • Poor transportation • Housing and food insecurity • Lack of access to needed services • System involvement • Unpredictable schedules for learning • Lack of access to tech • Impact of trauma • Violence in the community	• Struggling academically and/or behaviorally • Unwelcoming school climate • Social and peer challenges • Anxiety • Unfair disciplinary and suspension practices • Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations • Caregivers had negative educational experiences	• Lack of challenging, engaging instruction • Bored • No meaningful relationships to adults or peers in school • Lack of enrichment opportunities • Lack of academic and behavioral support • Failure to earn credits • Need to work conflicts with being in high school	• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning • Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences • Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness • Attendance only matters in the older grades • Suspensions don't count as absence

https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/

Positive Conditions for Learning Lead to Students Being Engaged and Attending



Multi-tiered System of Support for Attendance

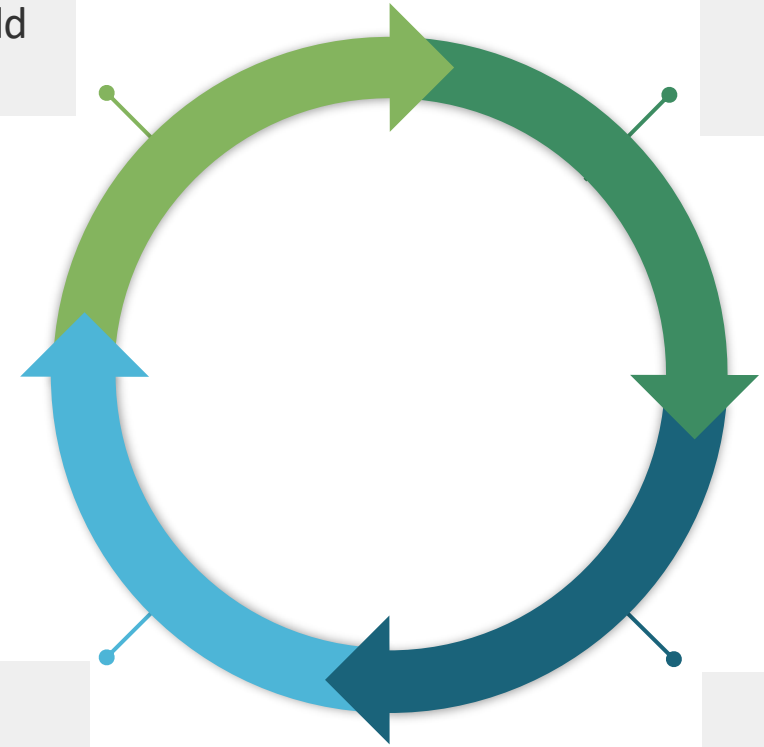


Visit: 3 Tiers of Intervention

Taking A Year-Long Approach

Summer
Engage & Build Bridges

Fall
Create Community

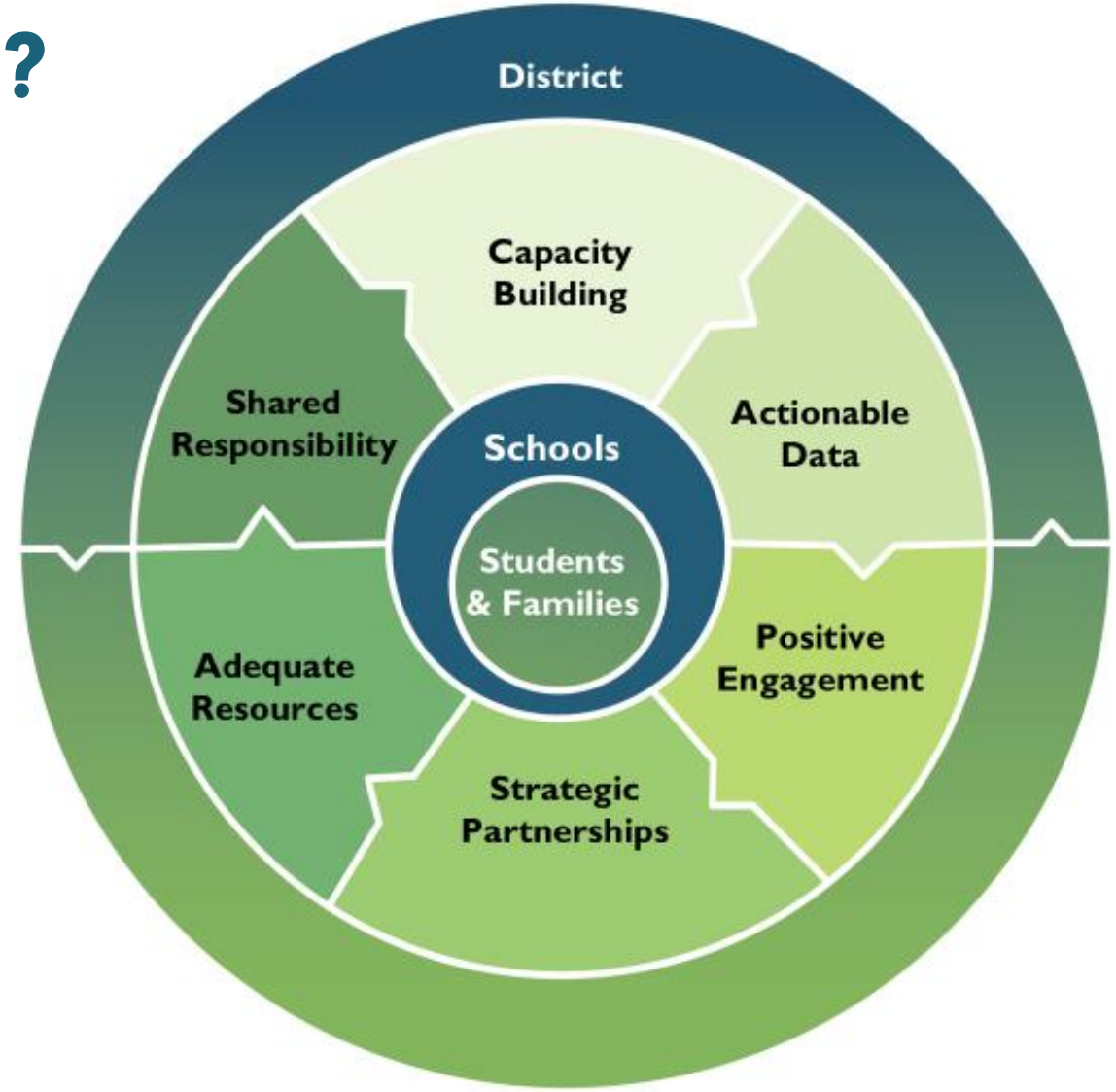


Spring
Nurture Belonging

Winter
Ensure Support

What does it take to improve attendance?

Positive change builds up from local champions, with **districts as the units of change** and **states as the vehicles for scale.**



FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

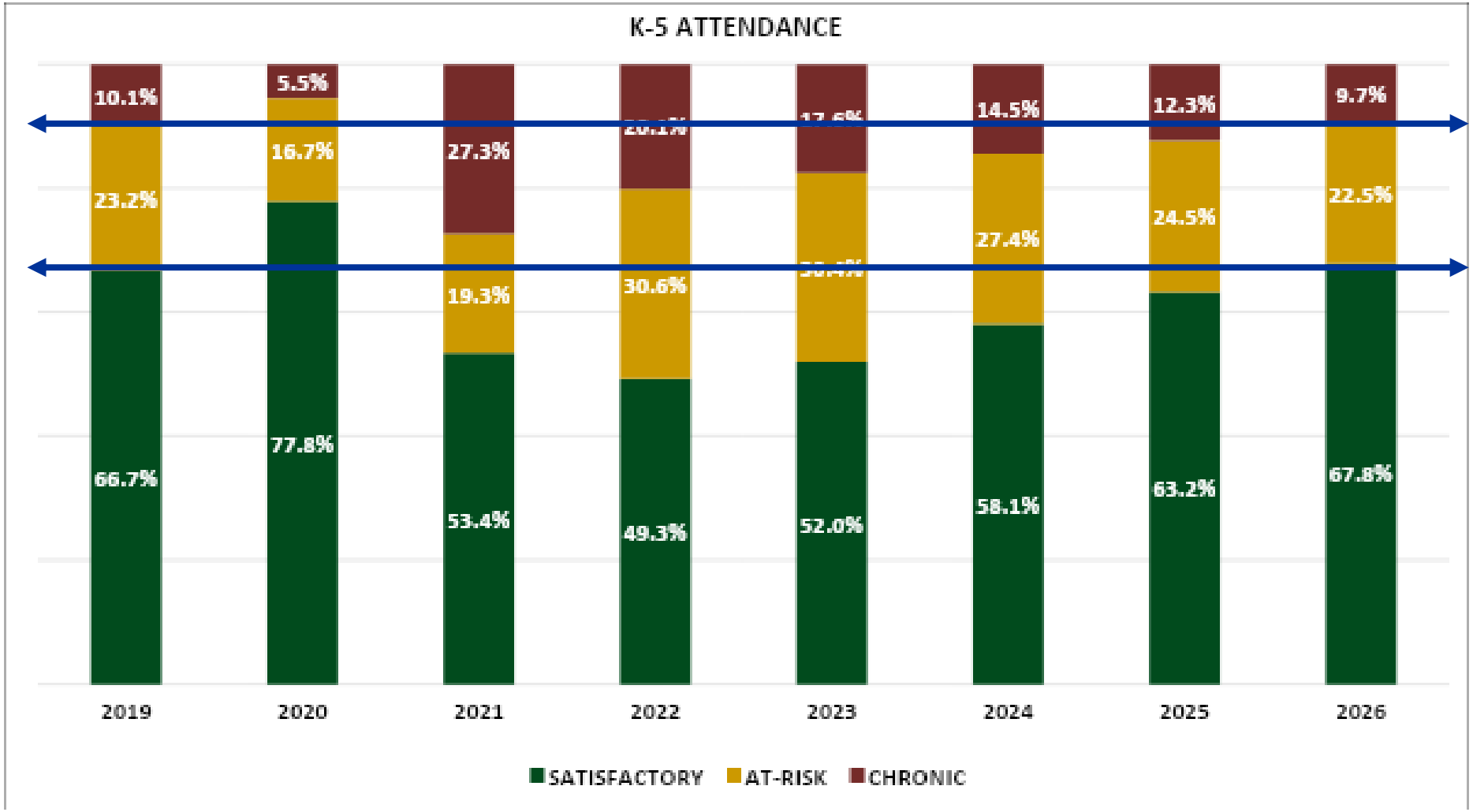
K-5 ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES

2019 - 2026

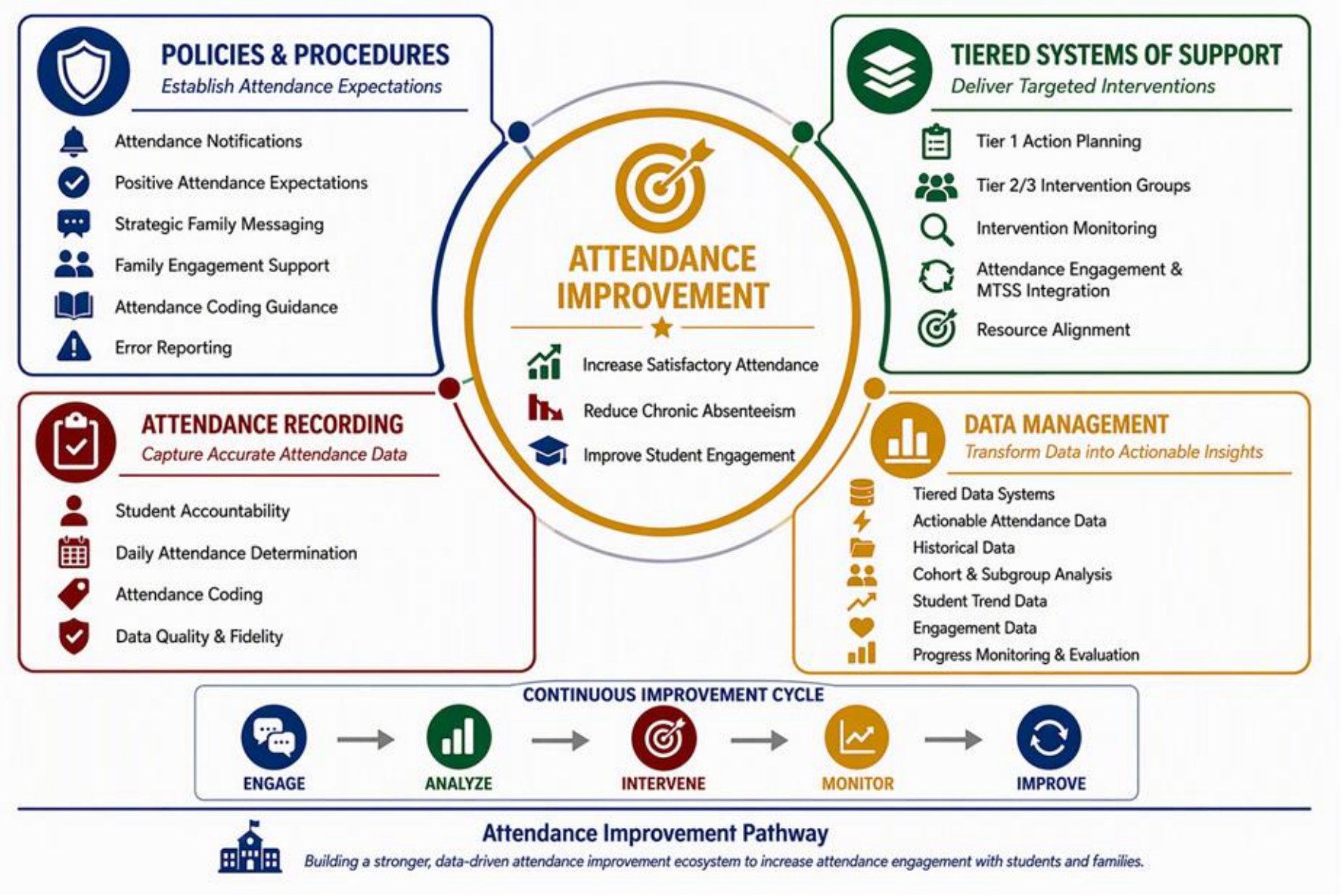
Charity Trowbridge
Director of Attendance Improvement

July 2026
A Tale of Two States: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES



ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PATHWAY



HIGH IMPACT STRATEGIES

Attendance Department

- Develop, implement, and monitor a district-wide attendance improvement plan
- Provide oversight, guidance, and support to schools

Strategic Communication

- Increase awareness of attendance expectations and requirements
- Address attendance misconceptions through targeted messaging

Community Partnerships

- Connect students and families to resources that address attendance barriers
- Leverage community partnerships to support school communities

Student & Family Engagement Plans

- Strengthen relationships between students, families, and schools
- Re-engage students and families through proactive outreach and support

GET GEORGIA READING

CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

THE SHARED FRAMEWORK

The Four Pillars

The conditions that must be in place for literacy to take hold

LANGUAGE NUTRITION

Engagement through language-rich social interactions, from birth through high school and beyond

ACCESS

Reachable, affordable, trusted supports

POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATE

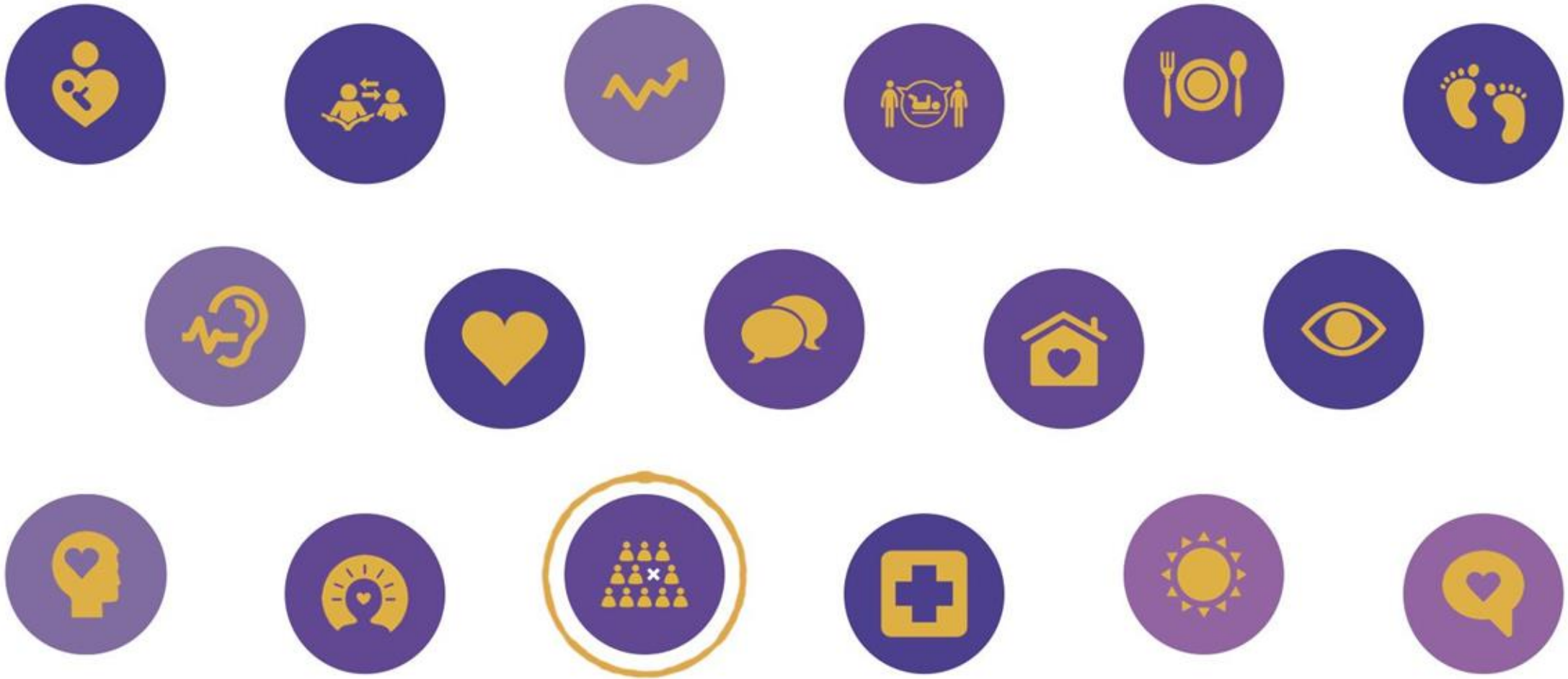
Safe and nurtured, in every setting where learning happens

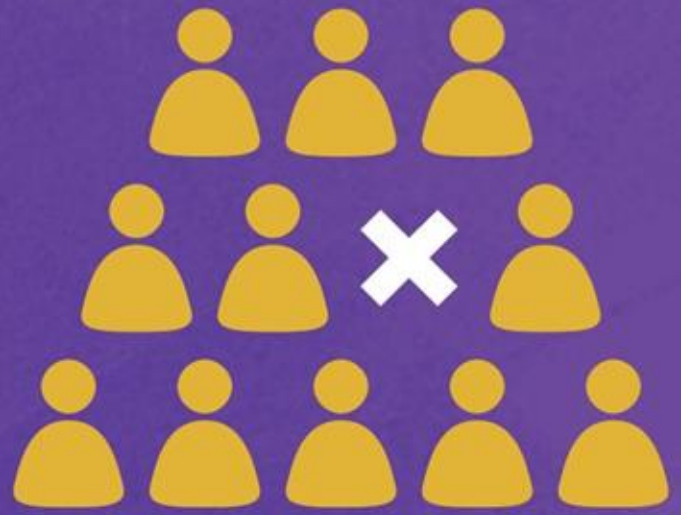
TEACHER PREPARATION & EFFECTIVENESS

Adults equipped for developmentally responsive practice

Underlying factors shape early literacy

ILLUSTRATIVE, NOT EXHAUSTIVE.





JUST 5 DAYS

OF ABSENCE BEGINS TO IMPACT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

whether **excused, unexcused,** or **suspension.**

Kramer & McGiboney, 2016

ATTENDANCE RESOURCE TOOLKIT

GET GEORGIA READING

CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

ATTENDANCE RESOURCE TOOLKIT

A community resource to support student attendance across Georgia

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE FAMILIES
through consistent outreach and clear communication

CREATE POSITIVE LEARNING CLIMATES
that foster a sense of belonging and connection

PROVIDE PERSONALIZED SUPPORT
for students with healthcare needs

REMOVE BARRIERS
to attendance (e.g., transportation, housing, food access)

TOOLS FOR EVERYONE

ATTENDANCE WORKS TOOLKITS

LEARN MORE

ALL IN FOR ATTENDANCE: CHRONIC ABSENCE REPORT

LEARN MORE

For Parents + Caregivers

Key Actions:

- Set consistent routines and bedtime schedules
- Communicate often with teachers
- Know your school's attendance policies
- Ask for help if you're facing barriers
- Keep track of days missed and talk with your child about why attendance matters

For more tools and resources, scan this code →

Resource Highlights

PARENT TOOLKIT ATTENDANCE WORKS

LEARN MORE

GEORGIA PARENT MENTOR PARTNERSHIP

LEARN MORE

For Educators + School Leaders

Key Actions:

- Examine attendance data early and often to prevent absenteeism
- Foster student engagement through developmentally responsive teaching practices
- Pair students facing attendance challenges with a caring adult
- Build strong school-family relationships

For more tools and resources, scan this code →

Resource Highlights

LEAP HOME VISIT MODEL

LEARN MORE

4 EVIDENCE-BASED ATTENDANCE INTERVENTIONS

LEARN MORE

For Community Partners

Key Actions:

- Offer mentoring and afterschool programs
- Host health fairs and parent workshops
- Help families navigate food, housing, and mental health resources
- Promote attendance through local media
- Build trusted relationships through wraparound staff and mentors

For more tools and resources, scan this code →

Resource Highlights

ATTENDANCE PLAYBOOK

LEARN MORE

SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION

LEARN MORE

For Healthcare Providers

Key Actions:

- Provide early detection and care for vision, hearing, nutrition, and chronic conditions
- Coordinate with schools to address health barriers to learning and attendance
- Educate families on the link between health and learning
- Expand access to address health and mental health needs

For more tools and resources, scan this code →

Resource Highlights

CARE PLAYBOOK

LEARN MORE

ESE TELEHEALTH

LEARN MORE

For Elected Officials

Key Actions:

- Convene Student Attendance and School Climate Committees
- Champion policies that support school attendance
- Support funding for wraparound and housing services

For more tools and resources, scan this code →

Resource Highlights

NLC MAYORS GUIDE TO ATTENDANCE

LEARN MORE

SCHOOL CLIMATE COMMITTEE RESOURCES

LEARN MORE

POLICY SPOTLIGHT

SB123 (2025)
STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Requires creation of Student Attendance and School Climate Committees for each county
- Creates a framework for courts, schools, law enforcement, public health, and others to develop partnerships to address student attendance and school climate

LEARN MORE

HB740 (2018)
REDUCES PUBLIC PRESCHOOL - 3RD GRADE SUSPENSIONS

- Requires providing a multi-tiered system of supports for public preschool – 3rd grade students prior to or in place of suspension
- Promotes early detection of risk factors to provide necessary supports

LEARN MORE

GEORGIA INSIGHTS ATTENDANCE DASHBOARD

This interactive dashboard from the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) provides publicly available data on student attendance across the state.

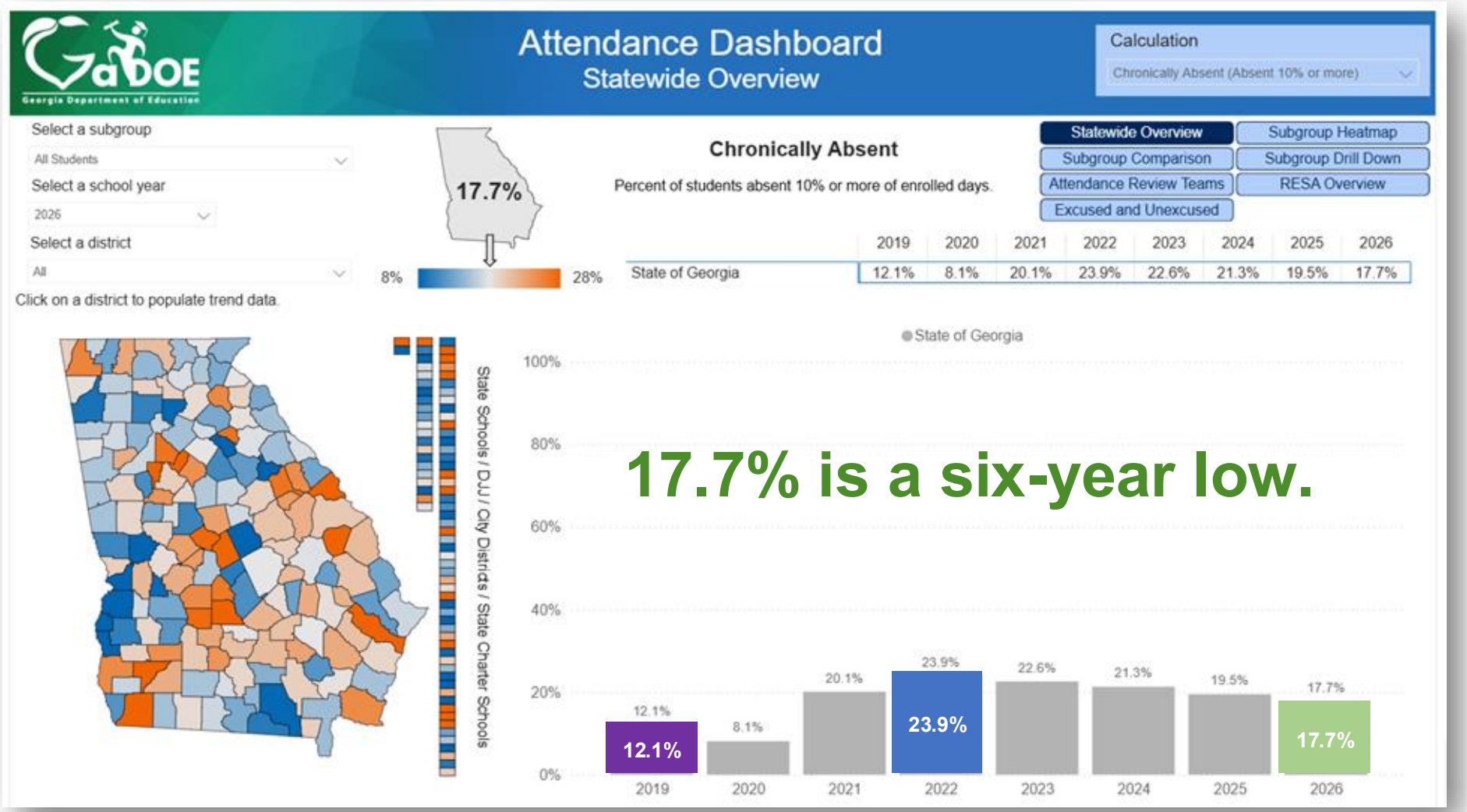
Key Features:

- View attendance trends by district, school, grade, and student subgroup
- Compare local data to state averages
- Identify disparities and track progress over time
- Support data-informed decisions for outreach, mentoring, and statewide wraparound services

Attendance Update: July 30, 2026

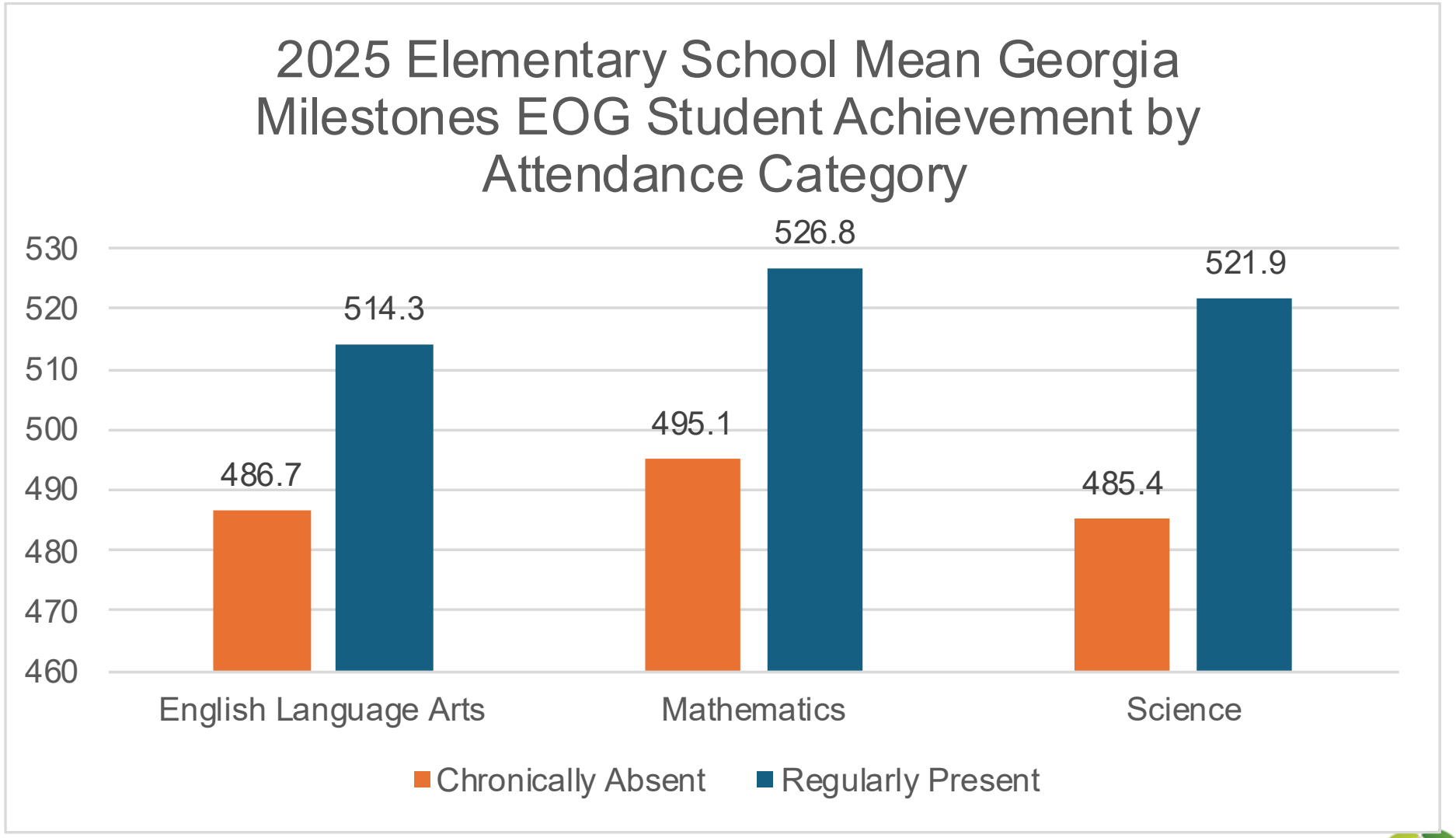
Justin D. Hill, Ed.S.
Deputy Superintendent
Office of Whole Child Supports
Georgia Department of Education

Attendance: Promising Progress

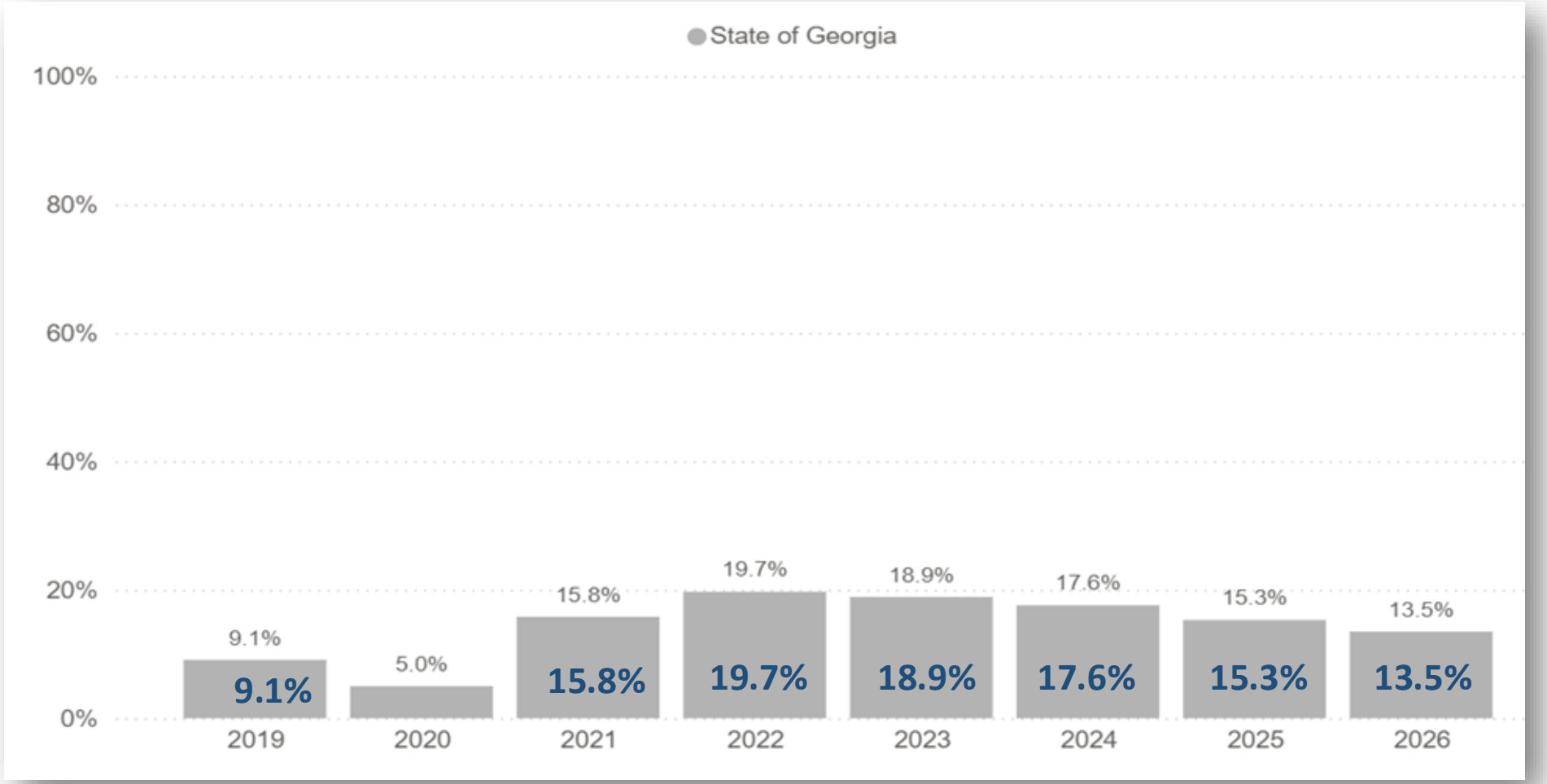


17.7% is a six-year low.

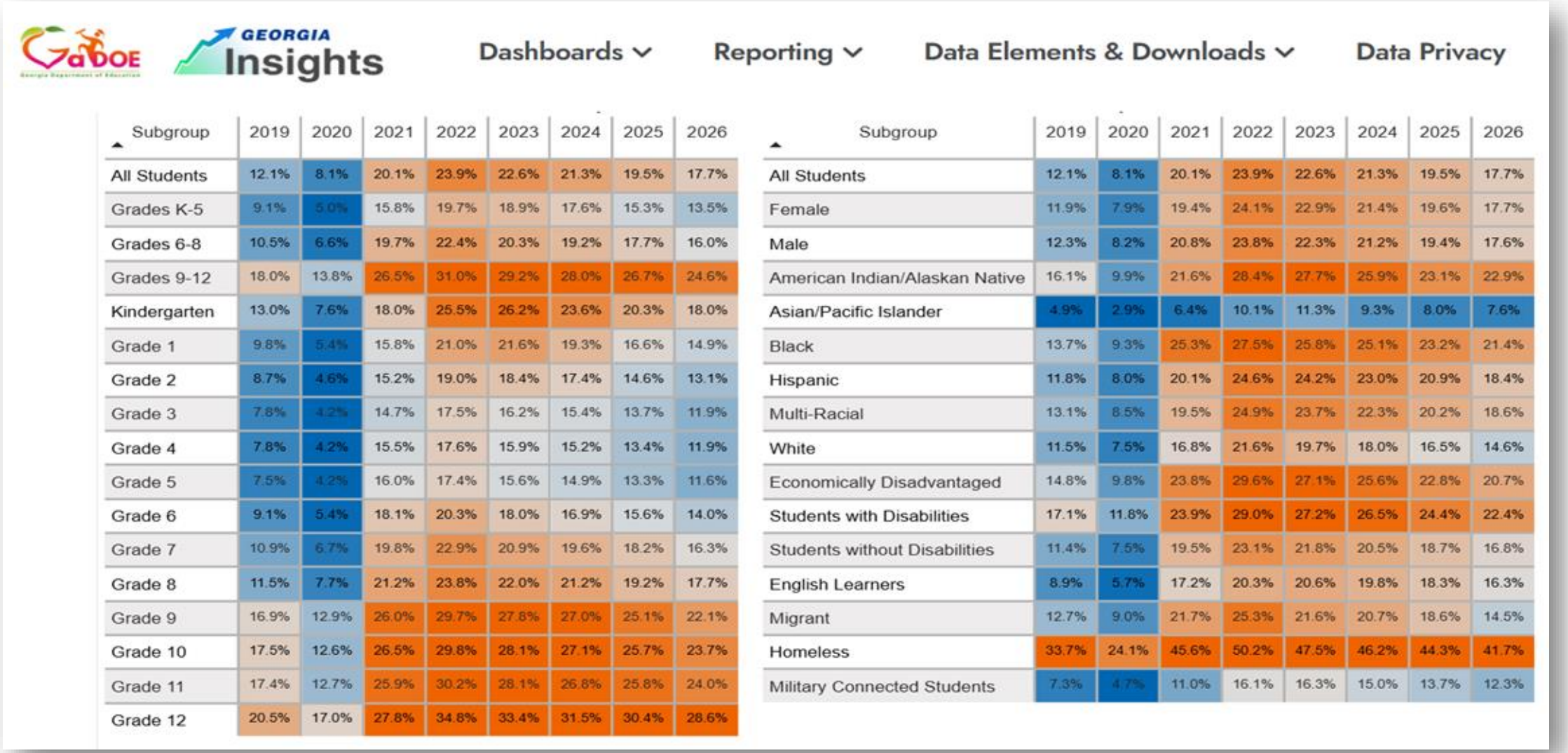
Georgia Milestones and Chronically Absent: K5



Chronic Absenteeism in Grades K-5: 13.5%



All Subgroups Experienced Reductions



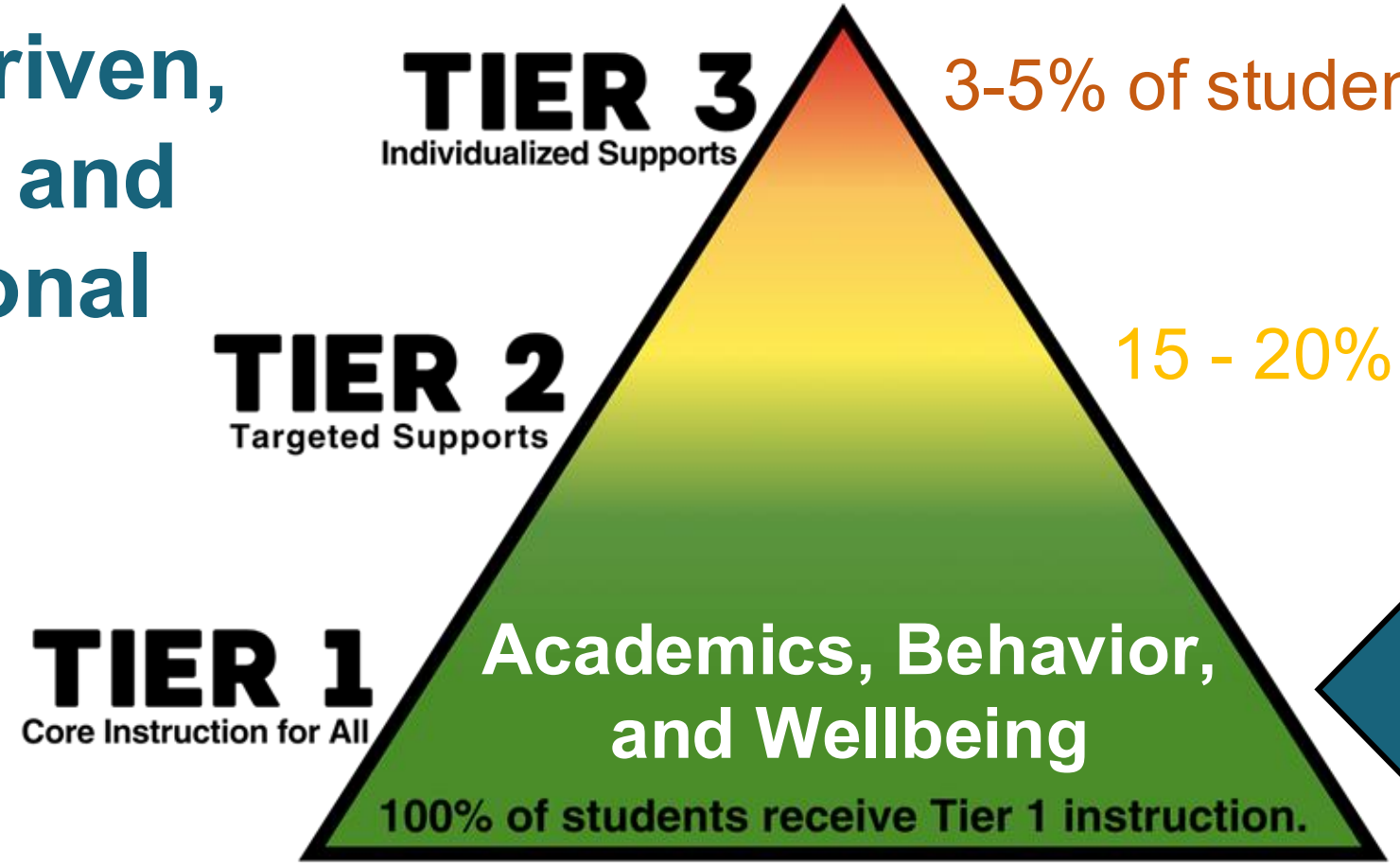
Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
All Students	12.1%	8.1%	20.1%	23.9%	22.6%	21.3%	19.5%	17.7%
Grades K-5	9.1%	5.0%	15.8%	19.7%	18.9%	17.6%	15.3%	13.5%
Grades 6-8	10.5%	6.6%	19.7%	22.4%	20.3%	19.2%	17.7%	16.0%
Grades 9-12	18.0%	13.8%	26.5%	31.0%	29.2%	28.0%	26.7%	24.6%
Kindergarten	13.0%	7.6%	18.0%	25.5%	26.2%	23.6%	20.3%	18.0%
Grade 1	9.8%	5.4%	15.8%	21.0%	21.6%	19.3%	16.6%	14.9%
Grade 2	8.7%	4.6%	15.2%	19.0%	18.4%	17.4%	14.6%	13.1%
Grade 3	7.8%	4.2%	14.7%	17.5%	16.2%	15.4%	13.7%	11.9%
Grade 4	7.8%	4.2%	15.5%	17.6%	15.9%	15.2%	13.4%	11.9%
Grade 5	7.5%	4.2%	16.0%	17.4%	15.6%	14.9%	13.3%	11.6%
Grade 6	9.1%	5.4%	18.1%	20.3%	18.0%	16.9%	15.6%	14.0%
Grade 7	10.9%	6.7%	19.8%	22.9%	20.9%	19.6%	18.2%	16.3%
Grade 8	11.5%	7.7%	21.2%	23.8%	22.0%	21.2%	19.2%	17.7%
Grade 9	16.9%	12.9%	26.0%	29.7%	27.8%	27.0%	25.1%	22.1%
Grade 10	17.5%	12.6%	26.5%	29.8%	28.1%	27.1%	25.7%	23.7%
Grade 11	17.4%	12.7%	25.9%	30.2%	28.1%	26.8%	25.8%	24.0%
Grade 12	20.5%	17.0%	27.8%	34.8%	33.4%	31.5%	30.4%	28.6%

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
All Students	12.1%	8.1%	20.1%	23.9%	22.6%	21.3%	19.5%	17.7%
Female	11.9%	7.9%	19.4%	24.1%	22.9%	21.4%	19.6%	17.7%
Male	12.3%	8.2%	20.8%	23.8%	22.3%	21.2%	19.4%	17.6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	16.1%	9.9%	21.6%	28.4%	27.7%	25.9%	23.1%	22.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.9%	2.9%	6.4%	10.1%	11.3%	9.3%	8.0%	7.6%
Black	13.7%	9.3%	25.3%	27.5%	25.8%	25.1%	23.2%	21.4%
Hispanic	11.8%	8.0%	20.1%	24.6%	24.2%	23.0%	20.9%	18.4%
Multi-Racial	13.1%	8.5%	19.5%	24.9%	23.7%	22.3%	20.2%	18.6%
White	11.5%	7.5%	16.8%	21.6%	19.7%	18.0%	16.5%	14.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	14.8%	9.8%	23.8%	29.6%	27.1%	25.6%	22.8%	20.7%
Students with Disabilities	17.1%	11.8%	23.9%	29.0%	27.2%	26.5%	24.4%	22.4%
Students without Disabilities	11.4%	7.5%	19.5%	23.1%	21.8%	20.5%	18.7%	16.8%
English Learners	8.9%	5.7%	17.2%	20.3%	20.6%	19.8%	18.3%	16.3%
Migrant	12.7%	9.0%	21.7%	25.3%	21.6%	20.7%	18.6%	14.5%
Homeless	33.7%	24.1%	45.6%	50.2%	47.5%	46.2%	44.3%	41.7%
Military Connected Students	7.3%	4.7%	11.0%	16.1%	16.3%	15.0%	13.7%	12.3%

Moving A Few Big Rocks

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

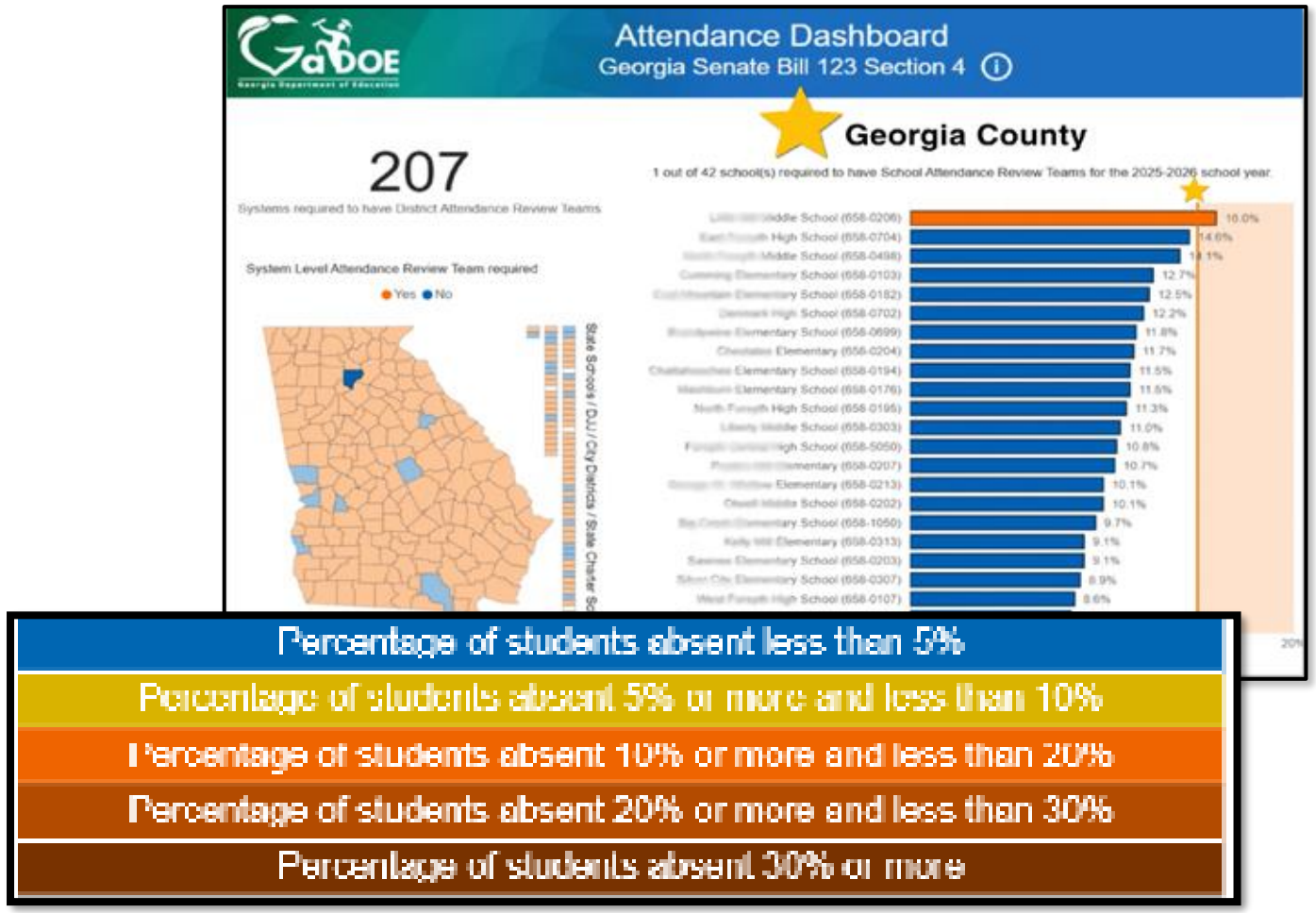
Data-Driven, Tiered, and Intentional



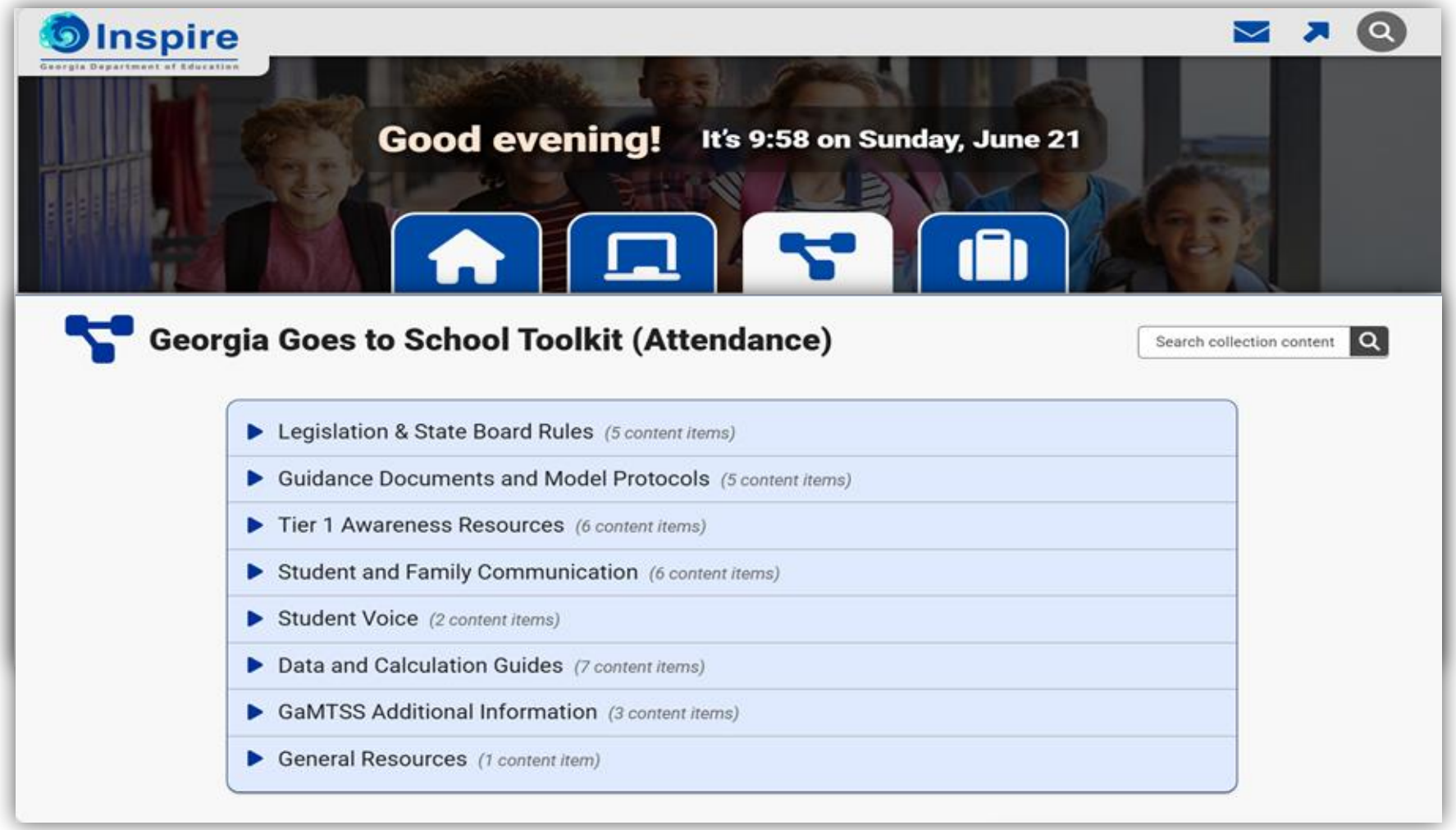
Launched a Public Dashboard in 2024

Enhancements Made in 2026

- Dashboard
  - Subgroup – 3 and 5 tiers
  - Subgroup drill down
  - District-level Attendance Review Team
  - Regional Overview
  - Excused vs Unexcused
  - Attendance Teams (SB123)

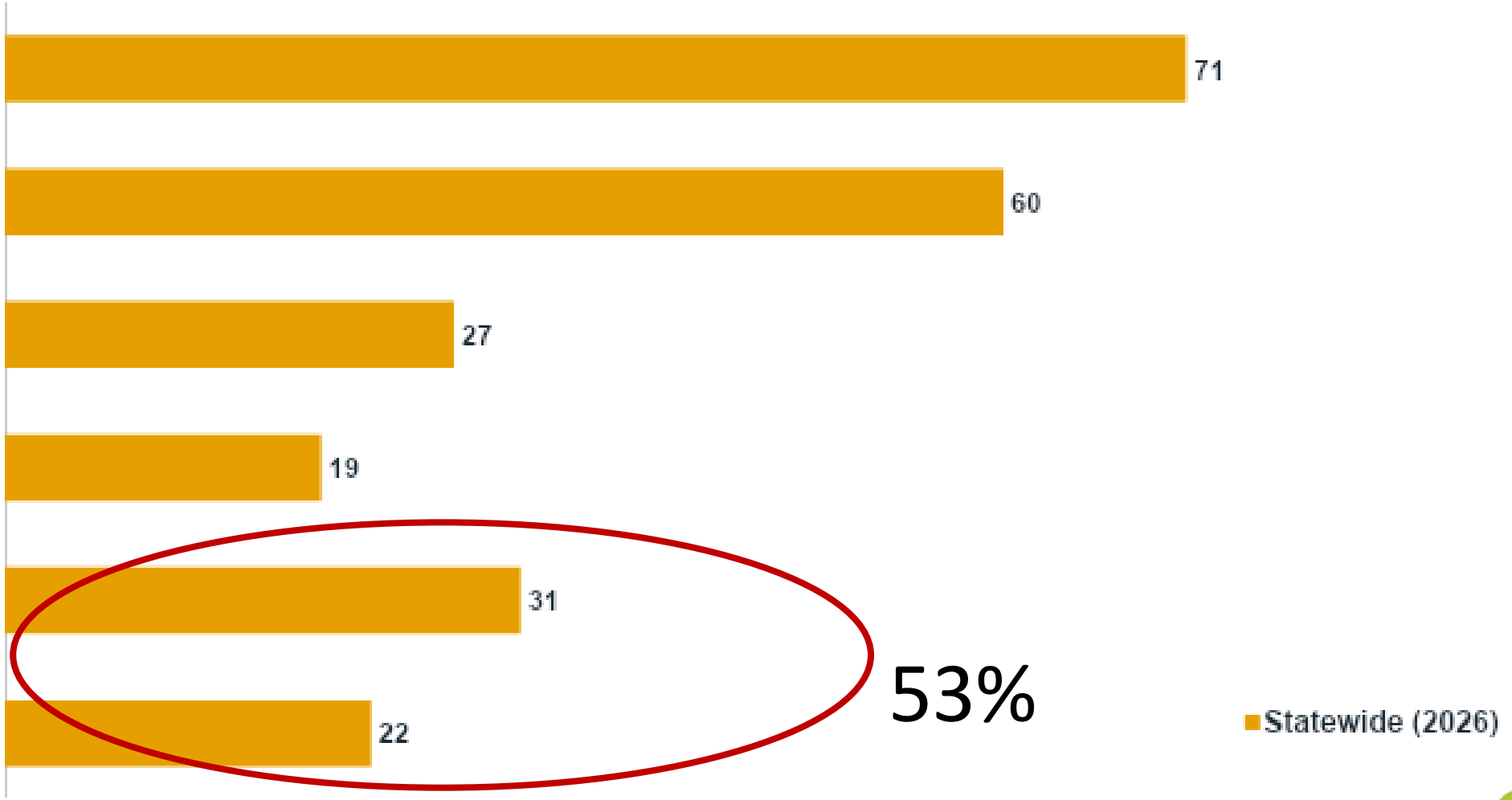


Attendance Resources: GaDOE - Inspire



STUDENT ATTENDANCE — ELEMENTARY (Self-Reported)

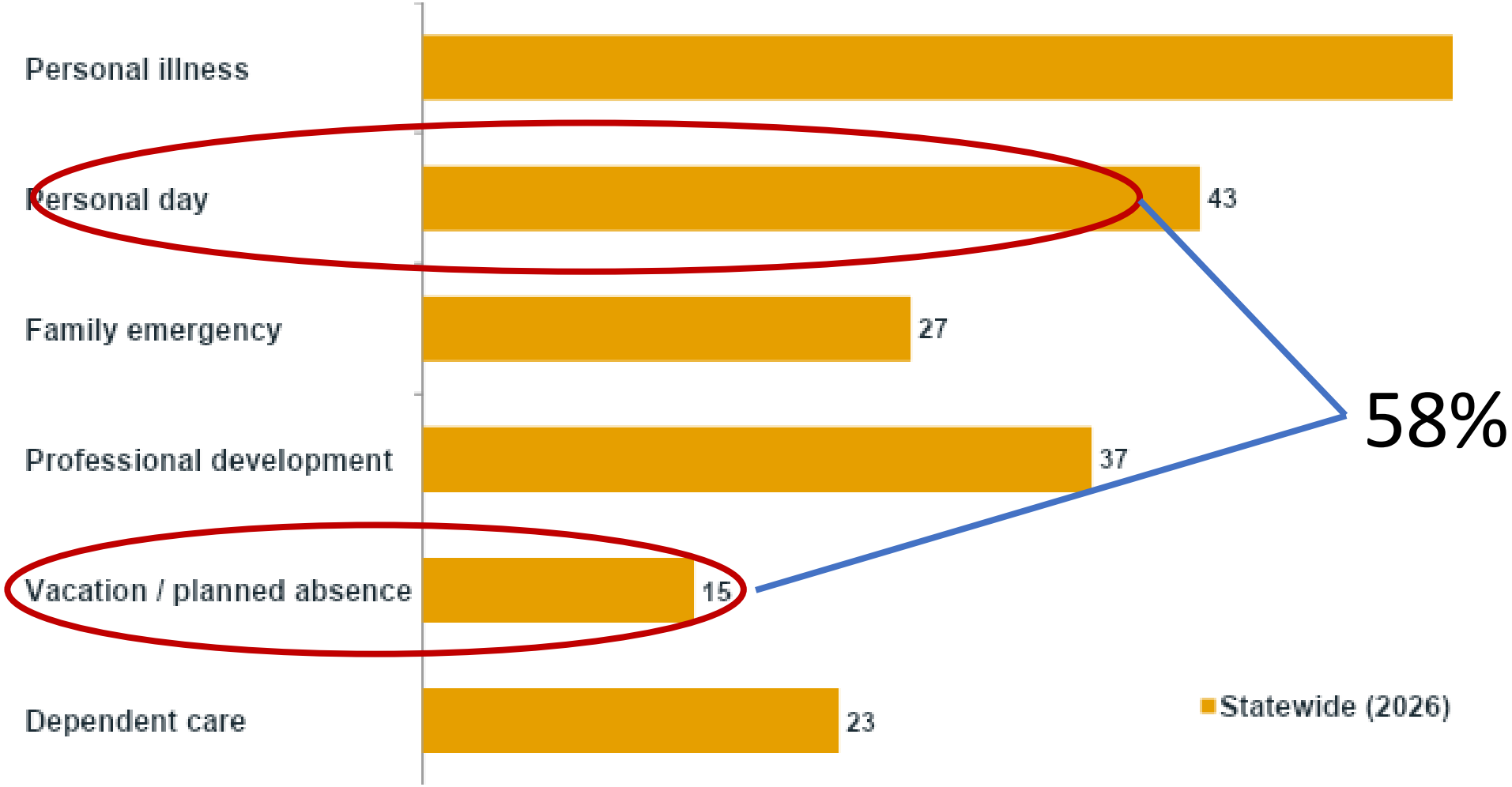
Example: Top Reasons K5 Students Missed School (2026)



School Climate Survey 2025–2026

TEACHER ATTENDANCE — ELEMENTARY (Self-Reported)

Example: Top Reasons K5 Teachers Took Time Off (2026)



School Climate Survey 2025–2026

Overview of SB123

Effective Date: July 1, 2025

Purpose

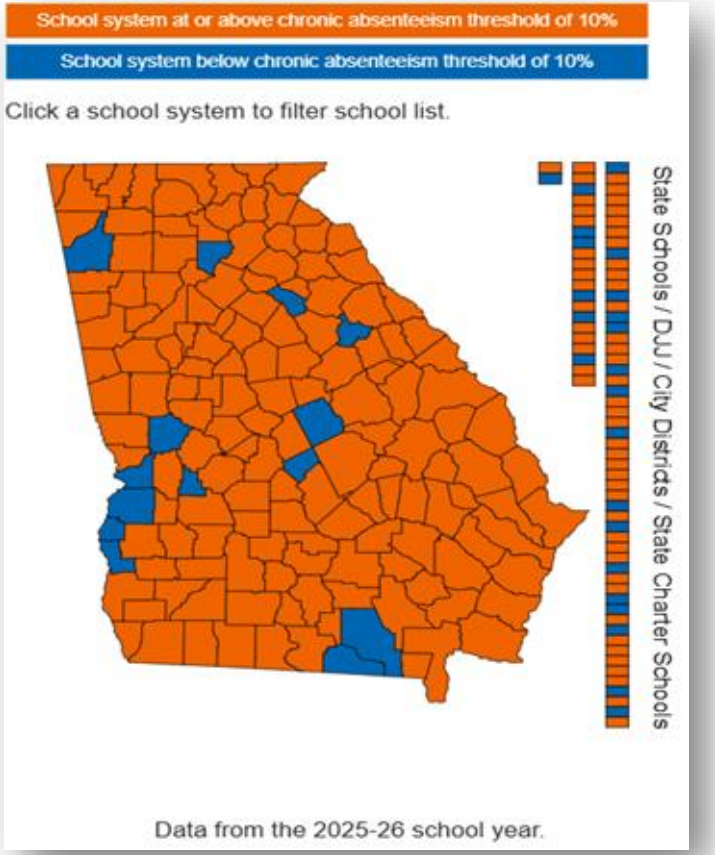
- Updates compulsory attendance laws
- Addresses ways to reduce chronic absenteeism
- Strengthens support for students and families

Key Changes

- Defines *chronically absent* as missing ≥10% of enrolled school days (excused or unexcused)
- Requires updated policies and protocols across districts
- Prohibits expulsion *solely* due to absenteeism

Districts

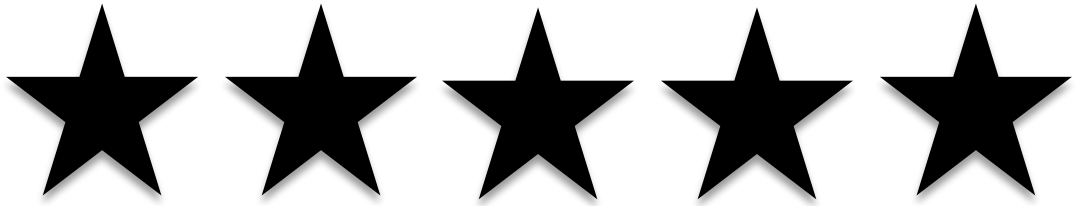
- Must form Attendance Committee if the CA rate is above 10% system wide. (**14 LEAs).**



Georgia Law & School Climate

O.C.G.A. § 20-14-33 requires a

School Climate Star Rating



Four Domains of the School Climate Star Rating

Attendance	Safe & Substance-Free	Discipline	Surveys
25%	25%	25%	25%

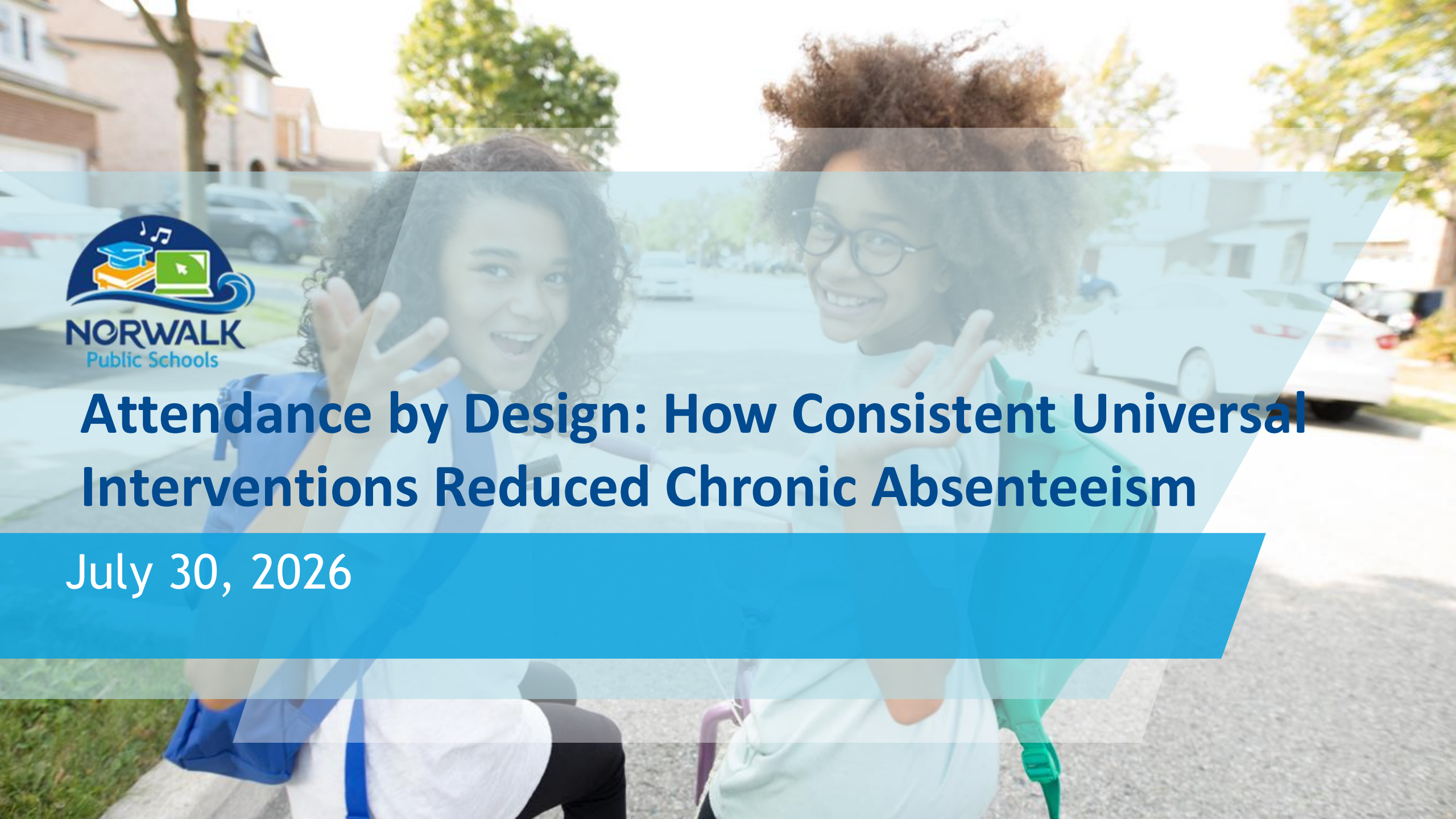
www.gadoe.org

@georgiadeptofed

youtube.com/user/GaDOEmedia

Georgia Department of Education

PREPARING ALL STUDENTS FOR LIFE



NORWALK
Public Schools

Attendance by Design: How Consistent Universal Interventions Reduced Chronic Absenteeism

July 30, 2026

Norwalk Public Schools At-A-Glance

11,321 NPS Students in 21 Schools

2,052 NPS Employees
80 New Employees

1,299 New K-12 Students

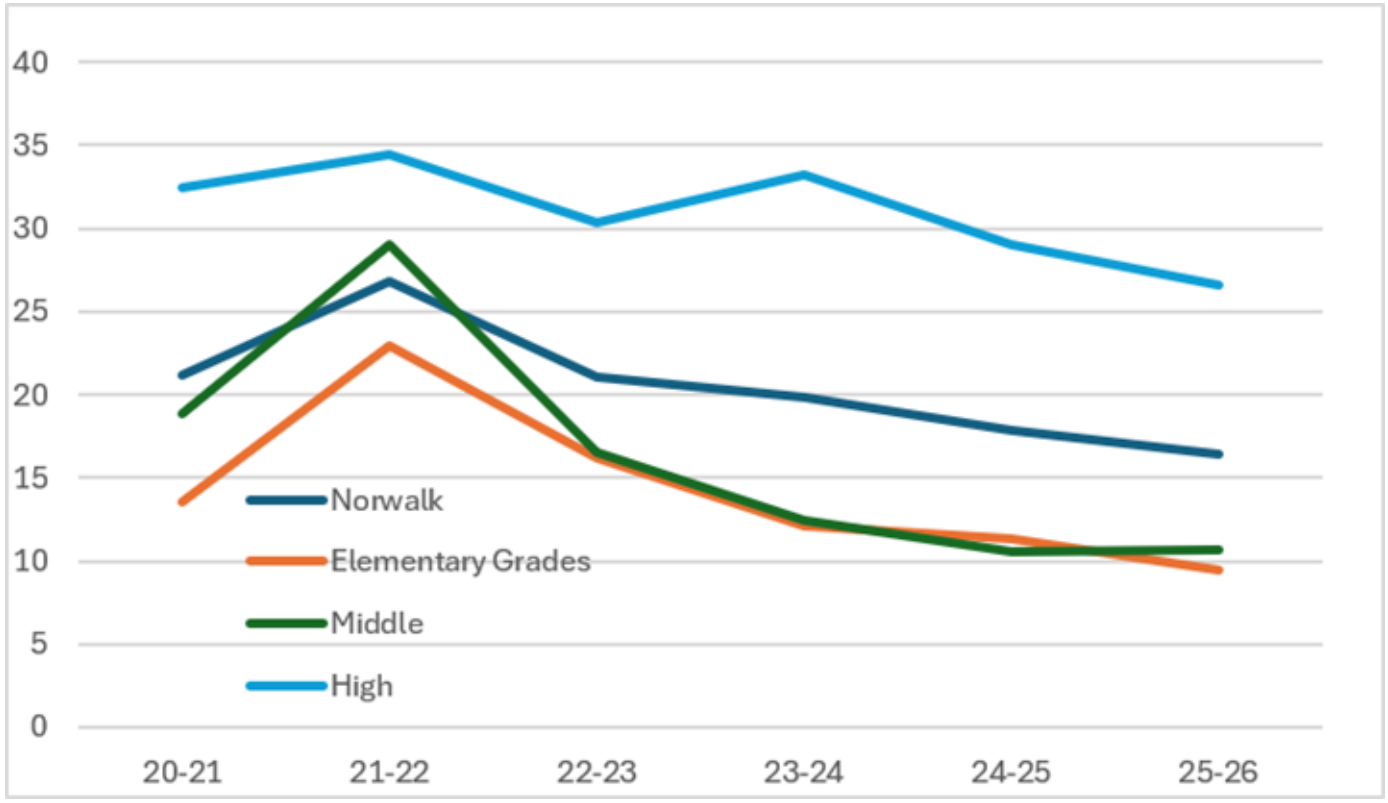
26 Students
who graduated HS with Associates Degrees

NPS Students
speak 51 languages

4 High Schools
4 Middle Schools
12 Elementary Schools
1 K-8 School

NORWALK
Public Schools

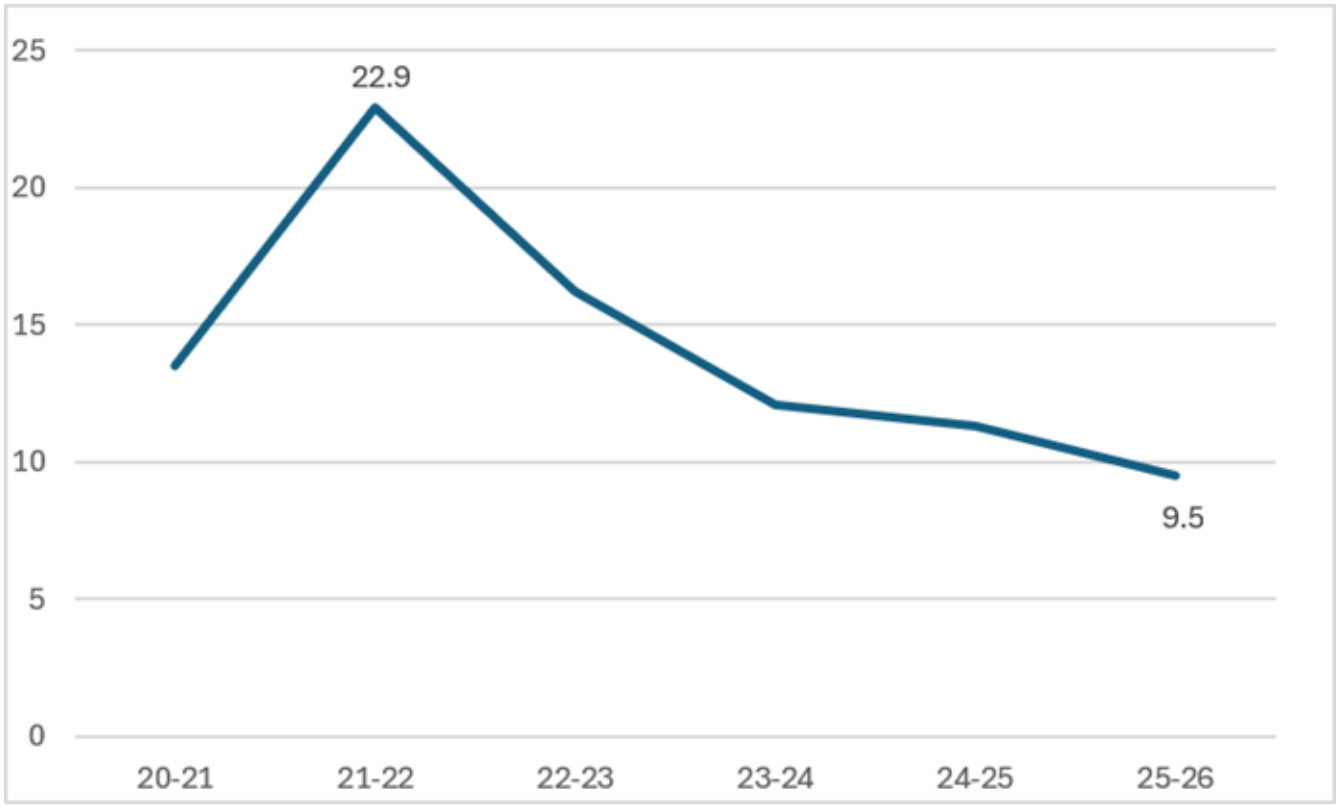
Year-over-Year Data: Norwalk Public Schools



NPS has reduced chronic absenteeism by 10 points from SY 2021–22 to SY 2025–26, a reduction of nearly 40%.

These gains were driven by the elementary and middle school grades, where rates are nearly back to pre-pandemic levels.

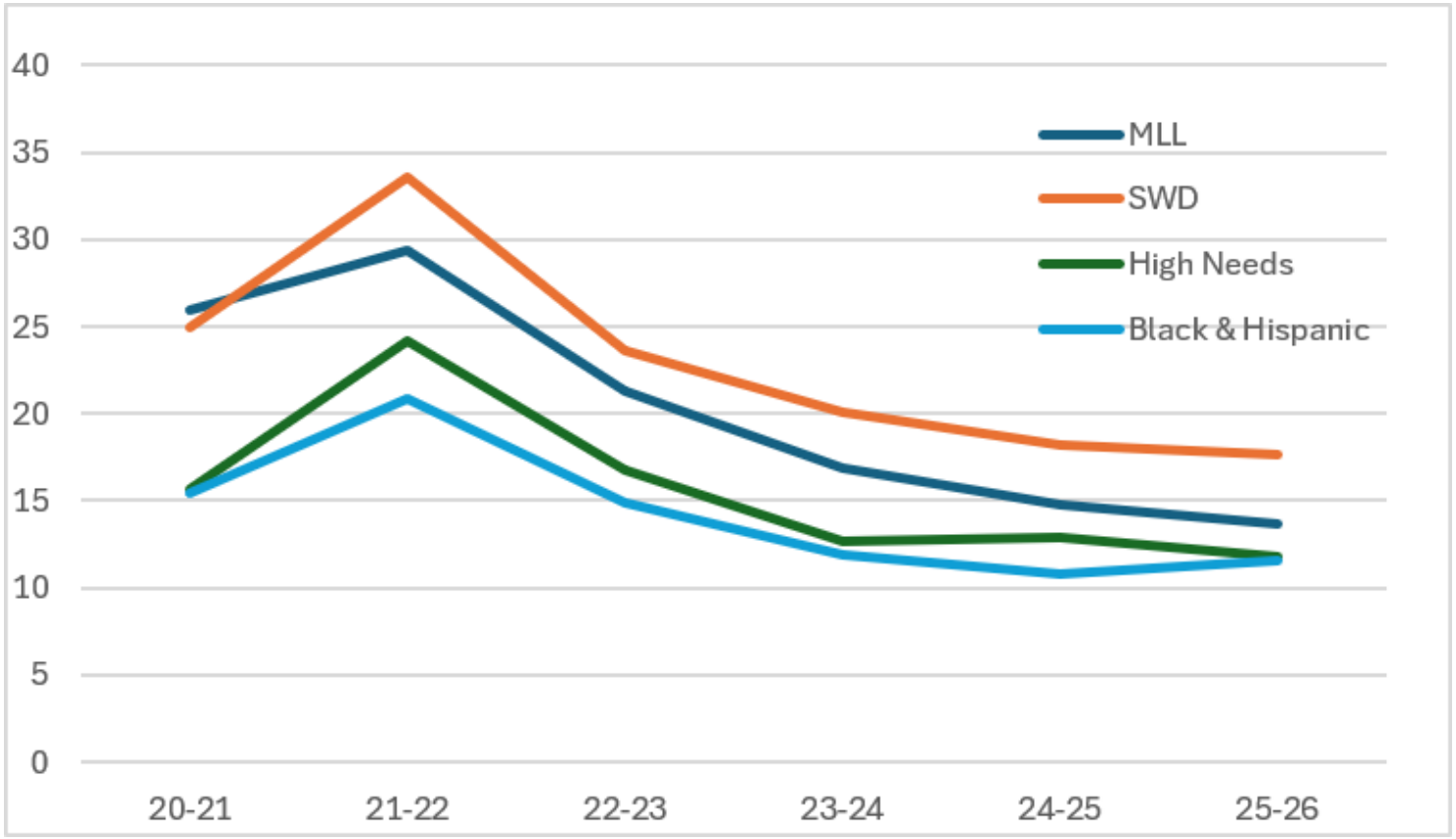
Year-over-Year Data: Elementary Grades



In the elementary grades, NPS has achieved consistent year-over-year reductions in chronic absenteeism from SY 2021–22 to SY 2025–26.

Chronic absenteeism rates are now below 10%, a reduction of more than 13 points since the high.

Year-over-Year Data: Elementary Sub-Groups



From SY21-22 to SY25-26, chronic absenteeism in the elementary grades declined by at least:

- 9 points for black and Hispanic students
- 12 points for High Needs students
- 15 points for MLLs and Students with Disabilities

Attendance Starts with Belonging

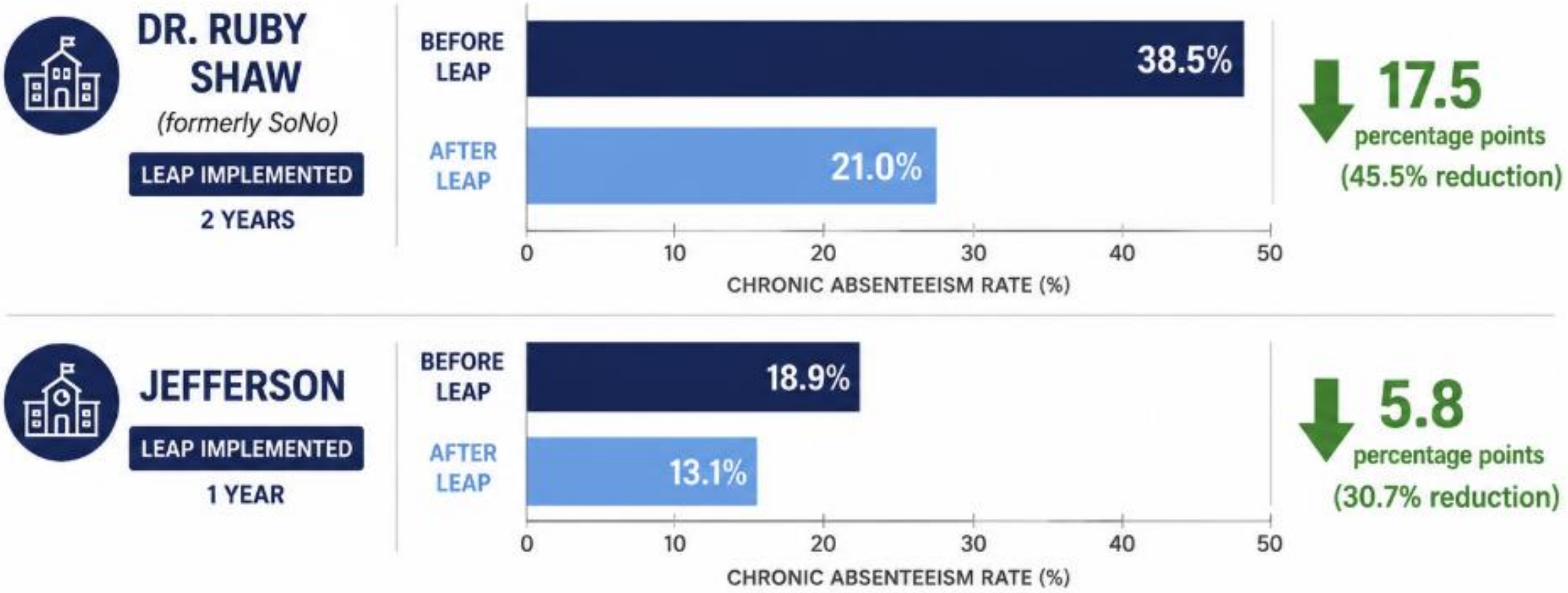
Research briefs and surveys indicate that *students who feel a strong sense of belonging, and engagement are more likely to attend school regularly* and less likely to be absent. Specifically, belonging and engagement are described as *foundational for regular attendance* and other educational outcomes.

The NPS Attendance Framework

Building a culture where every student wants to be in school

✔ Consistent Systems	📊 Monitoring	🤝 Family Partnership	❤️‍🩹 Belonging
Daily attendance routines	Weekly attendance reviews	Clear attendance messaging & education	Positive school culture
Same-day family contact	Early identification of concerns	Relationship-centered outreach	Classroom community
Celebrate improvement	School attendance teams	Connect families to supports	Student voice
Clear expectations	Data-informed decision making	Shared responsibility	Inclusive instruction

The Results: Elementary LEAP Program Impact



Attendance, Engagement, and Student Well-Being:
Building Systems of Support Before Crisis

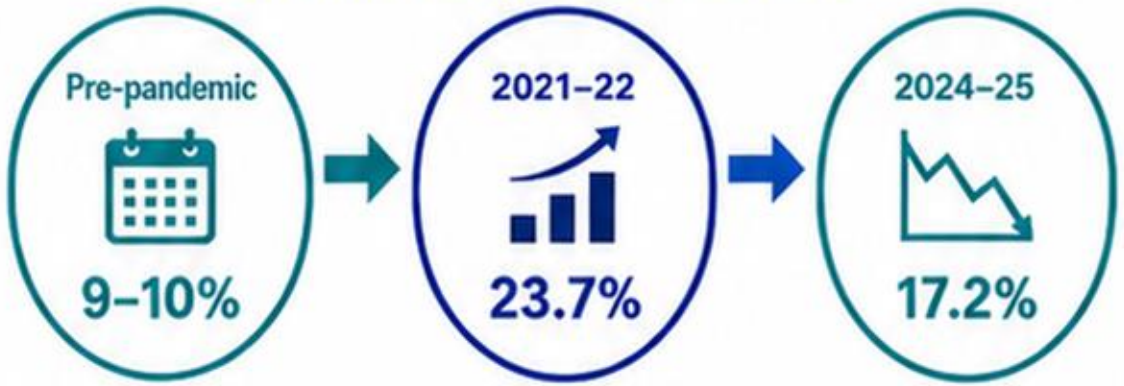
CSDE Attendance Story at a Glance

Policy, data, accountability, and support for improving attendance in Connecticut

1 Why Attendance Matters

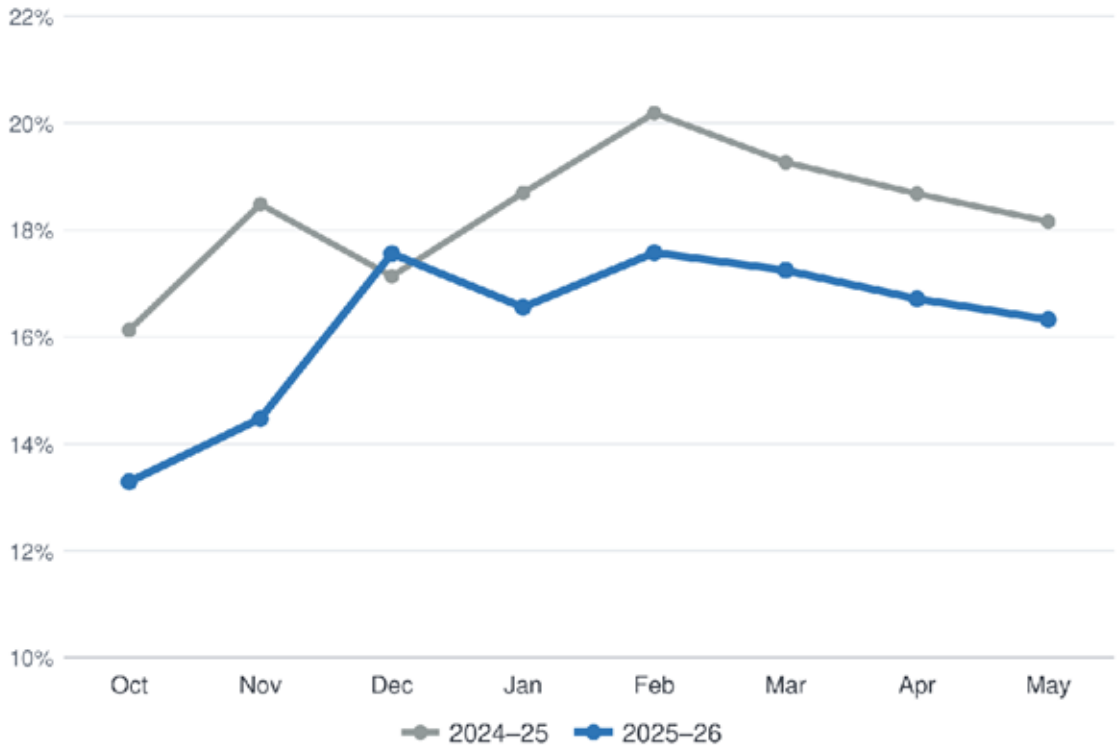
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut's chronic absence rate was generally 9–10%.
- Even those levels were considered very concerning because they represented thousands of students missing significant instructional time.
- Chronic absence rose sharply during the pandemic.
- The statewide rate improved from 23.7% in 2021–22 to 17.2% in 2024–25, but remains above pre-pandemic levels.

Chronic Absence Rate Trend



Chronic absence was lower in 7 of 8 comparable months

Connecticut statewide • All students • 2025–26 compared with 2024–25



The statewide rate improved across nearly the entire school year. December was the only month that did not improve.

4.0 pp

lower in November —the largest monthly improvement

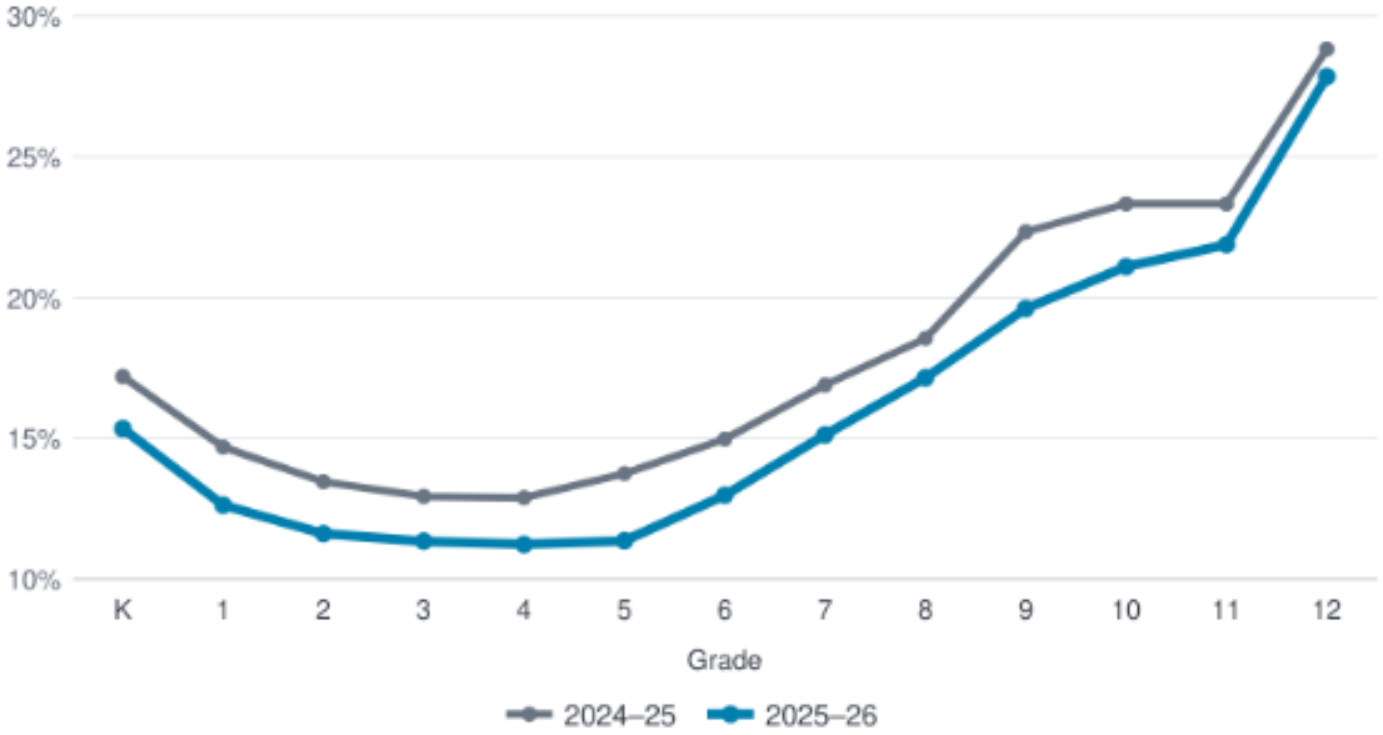
16.3%

May 2025–26 rate
1.8 pp below May 2024–25

Source: CSDE monthly chronic absence export, July 21, 2026. Comparison covers October–May; June 2025–26 was not included in the source file.

Chronic absence improved at every grade level

Connecticut statewide • May 2025–26 compared with May 2024–25



Rates declined in every grade, but chronic absence continues to rise sharply in high school.

2.7 pp

lower in grade 9 —the largest grade-level improvement

27.9%

grade 12 rate in May 2025–26 —the highest of all grades

Source: CSDE monthly chronic absence export, July 21, 2026. Rates shown are for May of each school year.

UNLOCKING *Lifelong* POTENTIAL

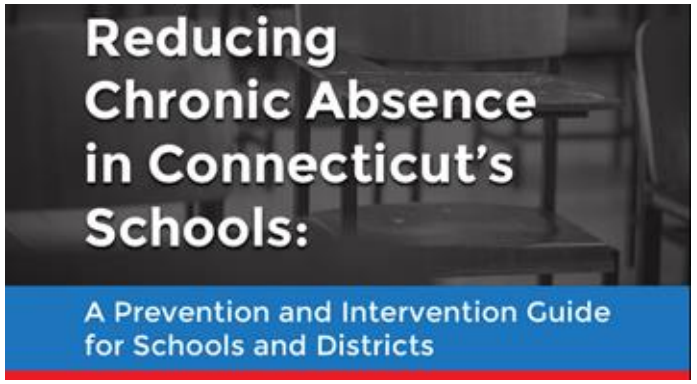
CONNECTICUT Education

3 Connecticut's Approach Today

- Consistent attendance definitions
- Public and secure data tools
- Accountability and transparent reporting
- Prevention, early intervention, and multi-tiered supports
- Family partnership and evidence-informed strategies such as LEAP

CSDE's attendance work has moved beyond compliance toward a data-informed, accountability-driven, and support-centered approach.

Connecticut State Department of Education



LEAP
Learner Engagement & Attendance Program

EdSight
INSIGHT INTO EDUCATION

TALK TUESDAY
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Connecticut Resources

CONNECTICUT Education

- Definition of Student Attendance
- EdSight Data Portal
- Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)
- PSIS Reference Guide
- Tracking Student Exit from Public Schools, Policies, Procedures, Documentation, and Data
- Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools
- BRIGHT SPOTS: Improving High School Student Attendance in Connecticut
- School is Better with You!
- Talk Tuesdays Community of Practice (2x/month)

Chronic Absence