

Reducing Drop-Out:

The Imperative for California To Address Chronic Absence Starting in the Early Grades

Presentation to California State Board of Education

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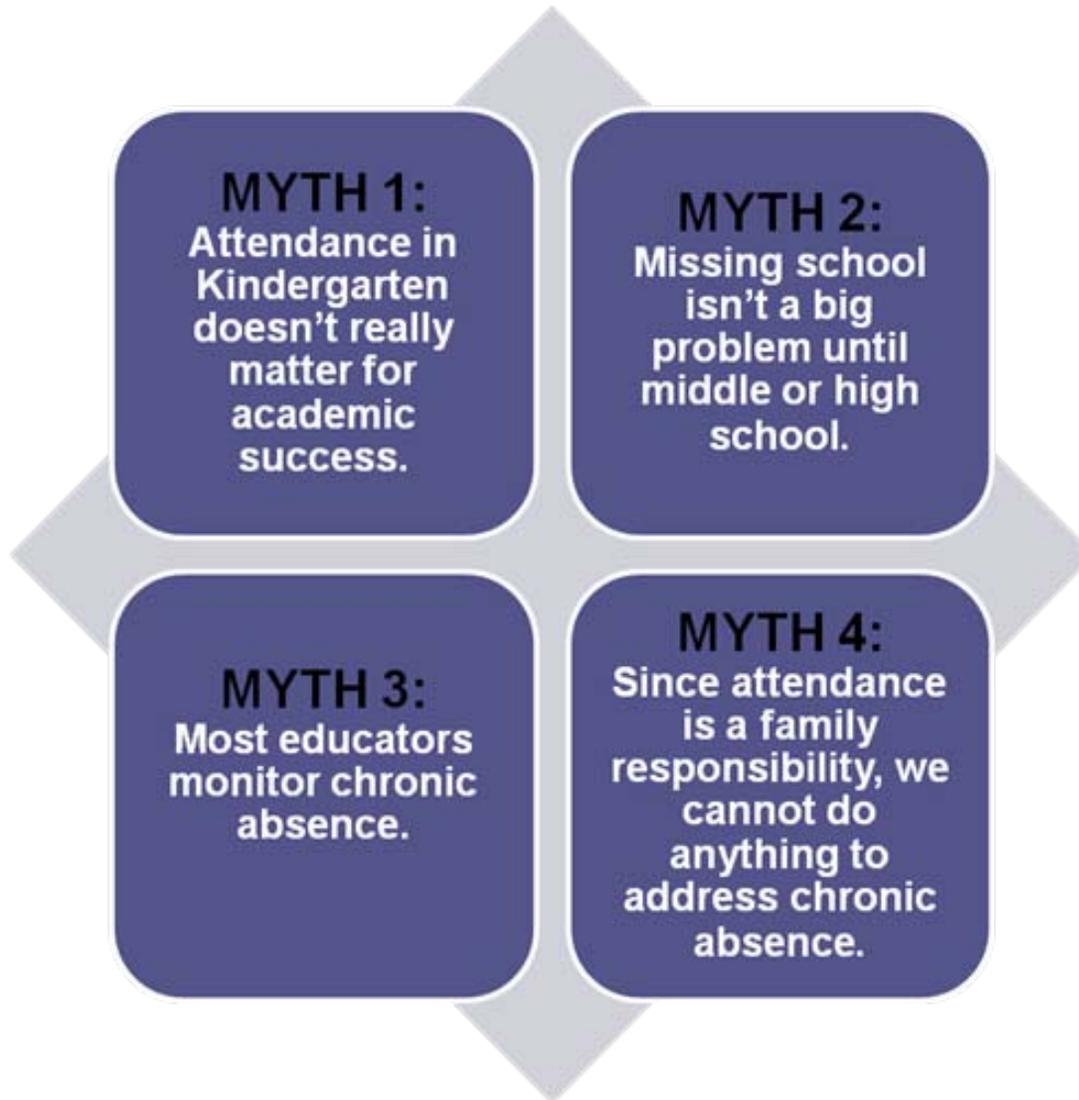


The Chronic Absence and
Attendance Partnership

Defining Key Terms

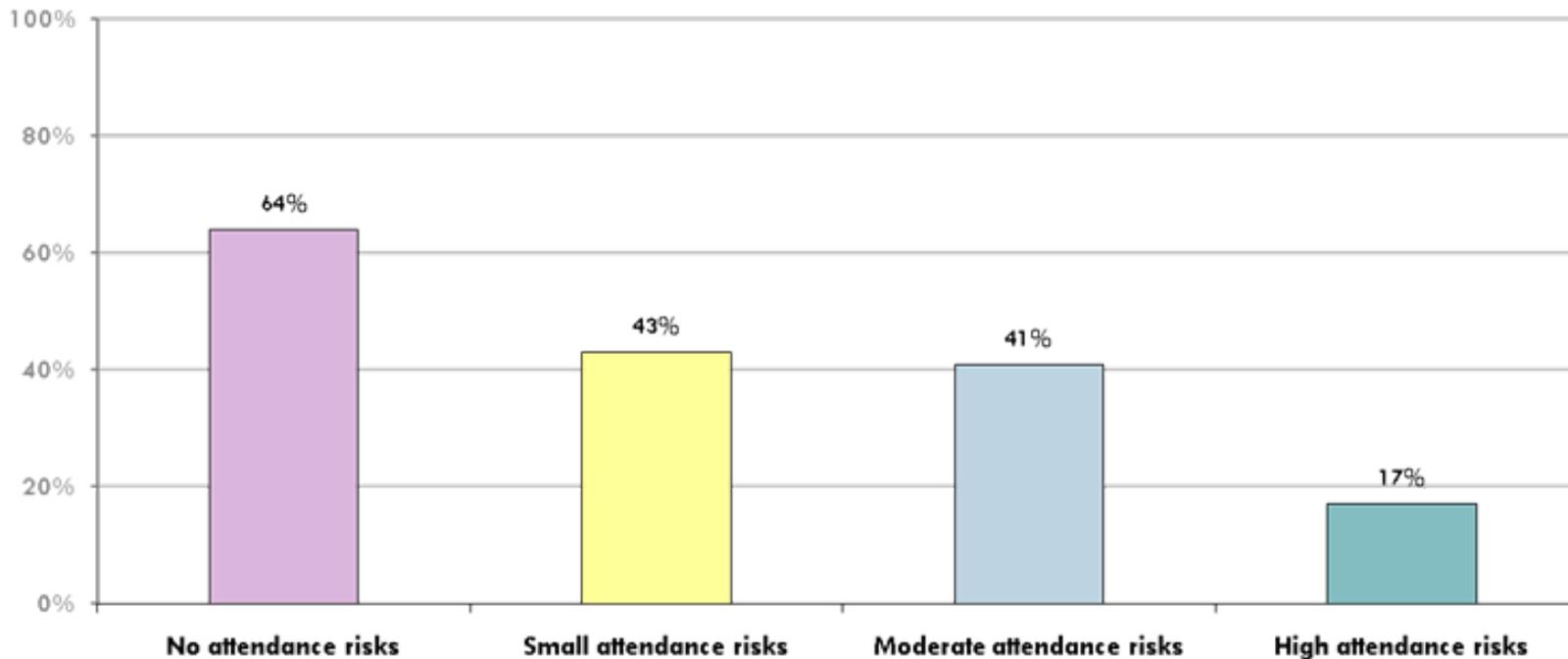
- ❑ **Average Daily Attendance:** The percentage of enrolled students who attend school each day.
- ❑ **Satisfactory Attendance:** Missing 5% or less of school in an academic year.
- ❑ **Chronic Absence:** Missing 10% or more of school in an academic year for any reason—excused or unexcused.
- ❑ **Severe Chronic Absence:** Missing 20% or more days of school per year – approximately two months of school.
- ❑ **Truancy:** Typically refers *only* to unexcused absences and is defined by each state. In CA, it is missing 3 days of school without a valid excuse, or being late to class 3 times without a valid excuse.
- ❑ **Chronic Truancy:** As of last year, chronic truancy is defined as missing 10% or more of school due to **only** unexcused absences.

Myths to Dispel



Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1st Grade Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3rd Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and 1st Grade

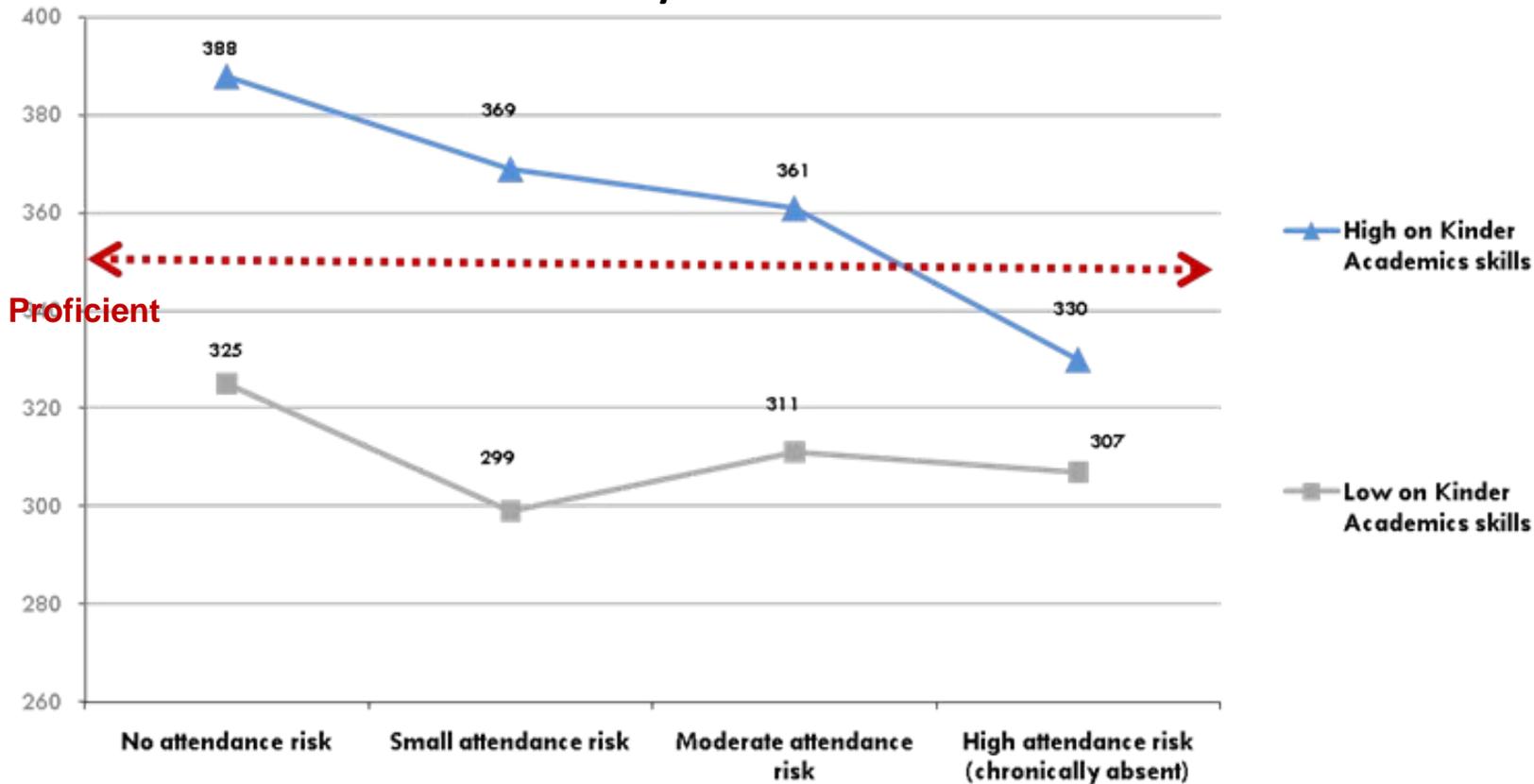


| | |
|----------------------|--|
| No risk | Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1st t |
| Small risk | Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1st |
| Moderate risk | 5-9% of days absent in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year |
| High risk | Missed 10% or more in K & 1st |

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)

School Readiness & Early Attendance Are Critical to Early School Success

3rd Grade ELA Test Scores By Attendance and School Readiness Level

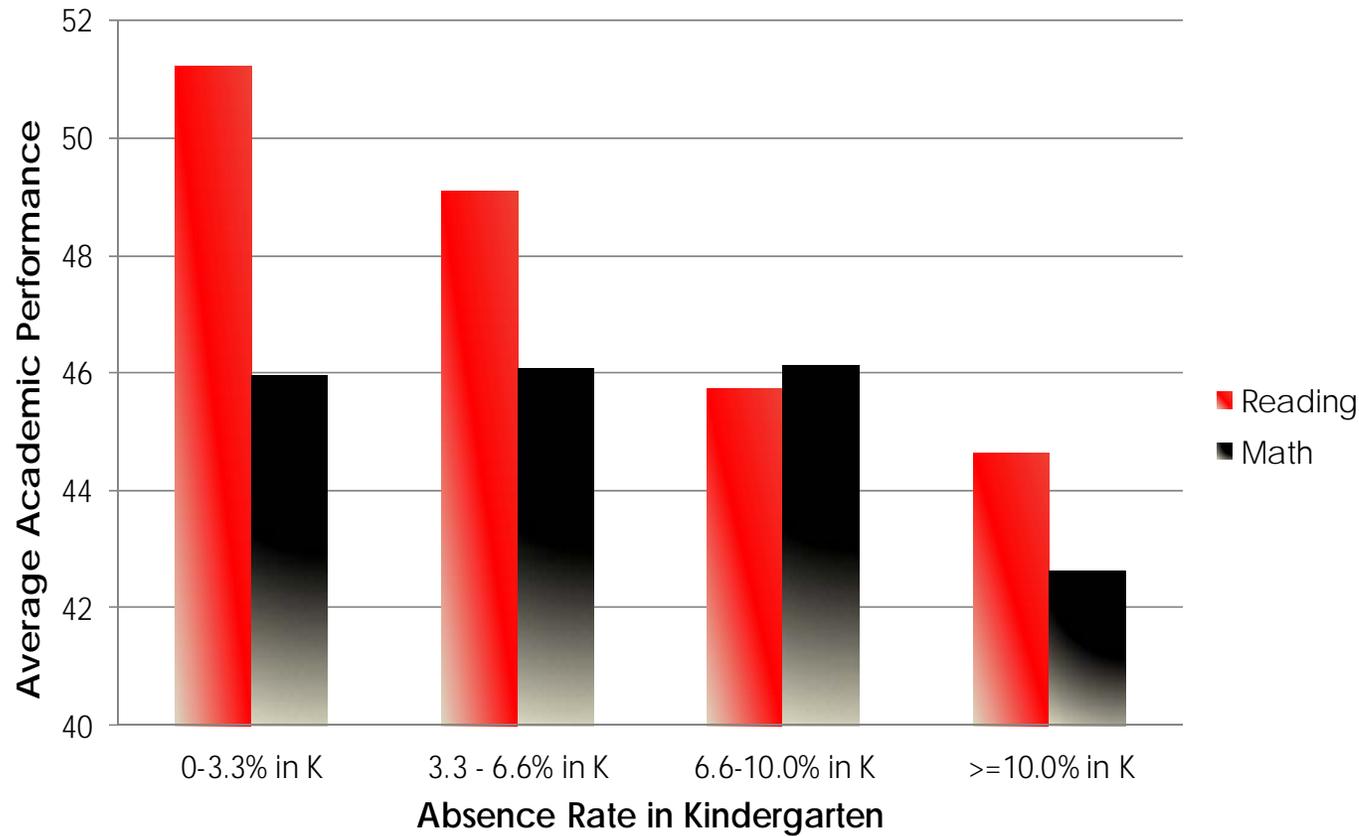


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The Long-term impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence Is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading Performance By K Attendance



Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)
Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.

Chronic Absence is Especially Challenging for Low-Income Children

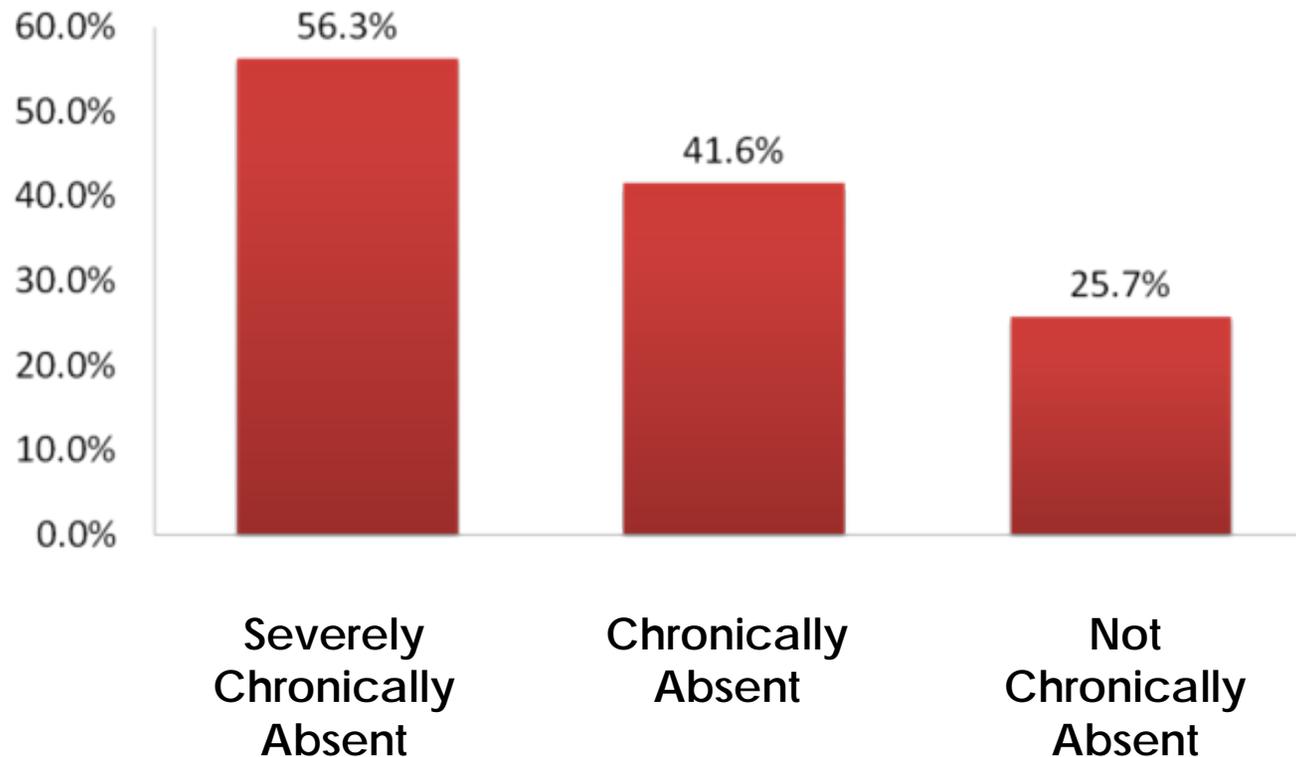
- ❑ Kindergarten and 1st grade can reduce the achievement gap for low-income vs. middle class students, but only if they attend school regularly. (Ready 2010)
- ❑ The negative impact of absences on literacy is **75% larger** for low-income children whose families often lack resources to make up lost time on task. (Ready 2010)
- ❑ Only **17% of low-income children** in the United States read proficiently by 4th grade. (NAEP 2009)

Chronic Absence is Especially Challenging for Low-Income Children

- ❑ Poor children are **4x** more likely to be chronically absent in K than their highest income peers. (Romero & Lee 2007)
- ❑ Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports that ensure a child is more likely to get to school. They often face:
 - **Unstable Housing**
 - **Limited Access to Health Care**
 - **Poor Transportation**
 - **Inadequate Food and Clothing**
 - **Lack of Safe Paths to School Due to Neighborhood Violence**
 - **Chaotic Schools with Poor Quality Programs, etc.**

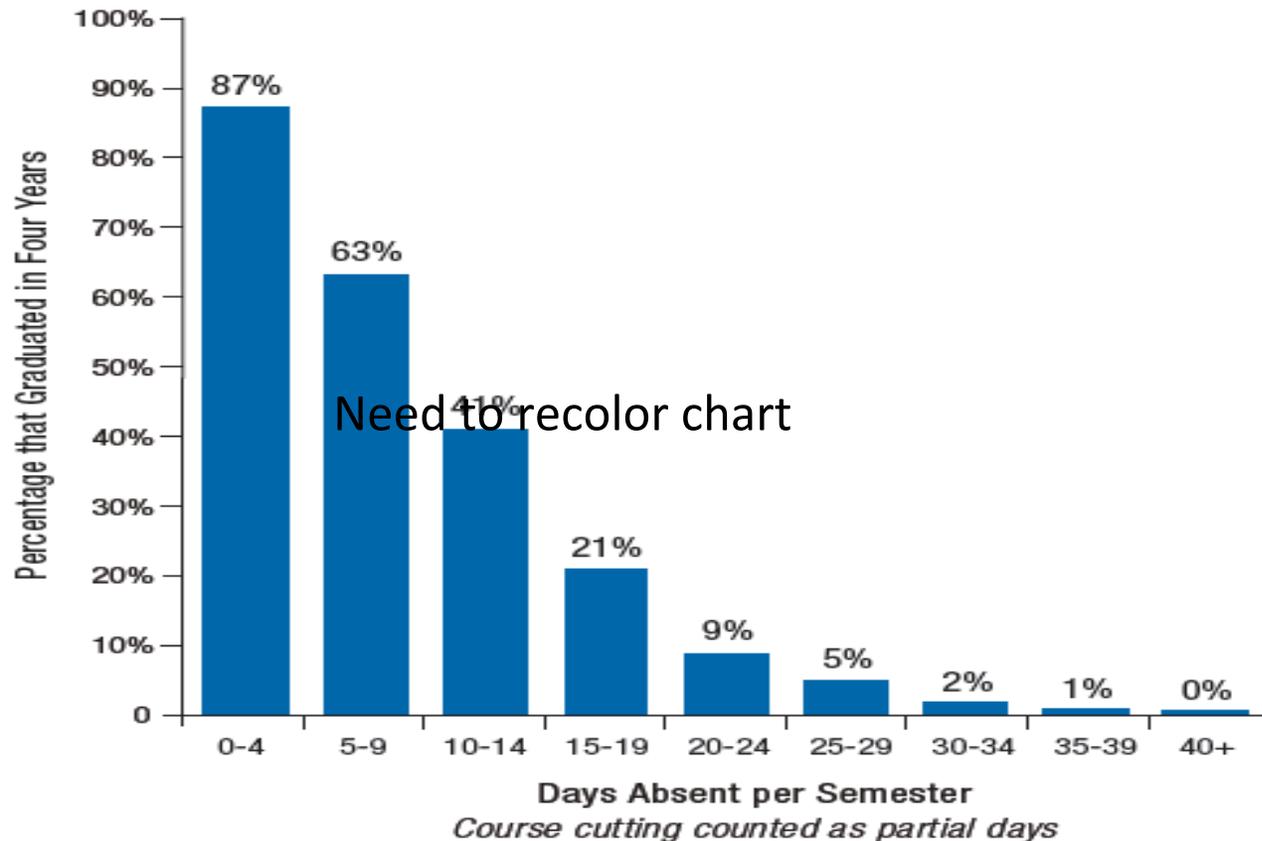
Chronically Absent 6th Graders Have Lower Graduation Rates

Dropout Rates by Sixth Grade Attendance
(Baltimore City Public Schools, 1990-2000 Sixth Grade Cohort)



Source: Baltimore Education Research Consortium SY 2009-2010

9th Grade Attendance Predicts Graduation for Students of All Economic Backgrounds

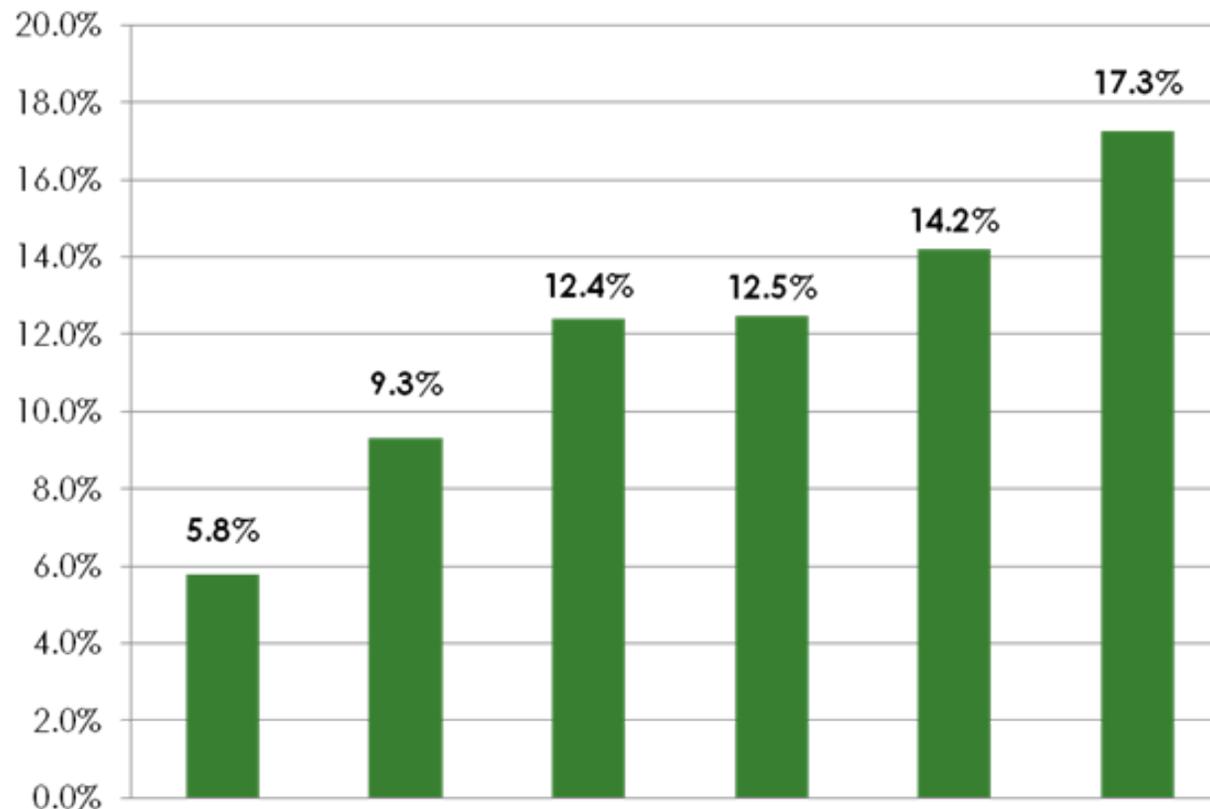


Note: This Chicago study found attendance was a stronger graduation predictor than 8th grade test scores.

Moving into Action Requires Knowing If Chronic Absence is a Problem

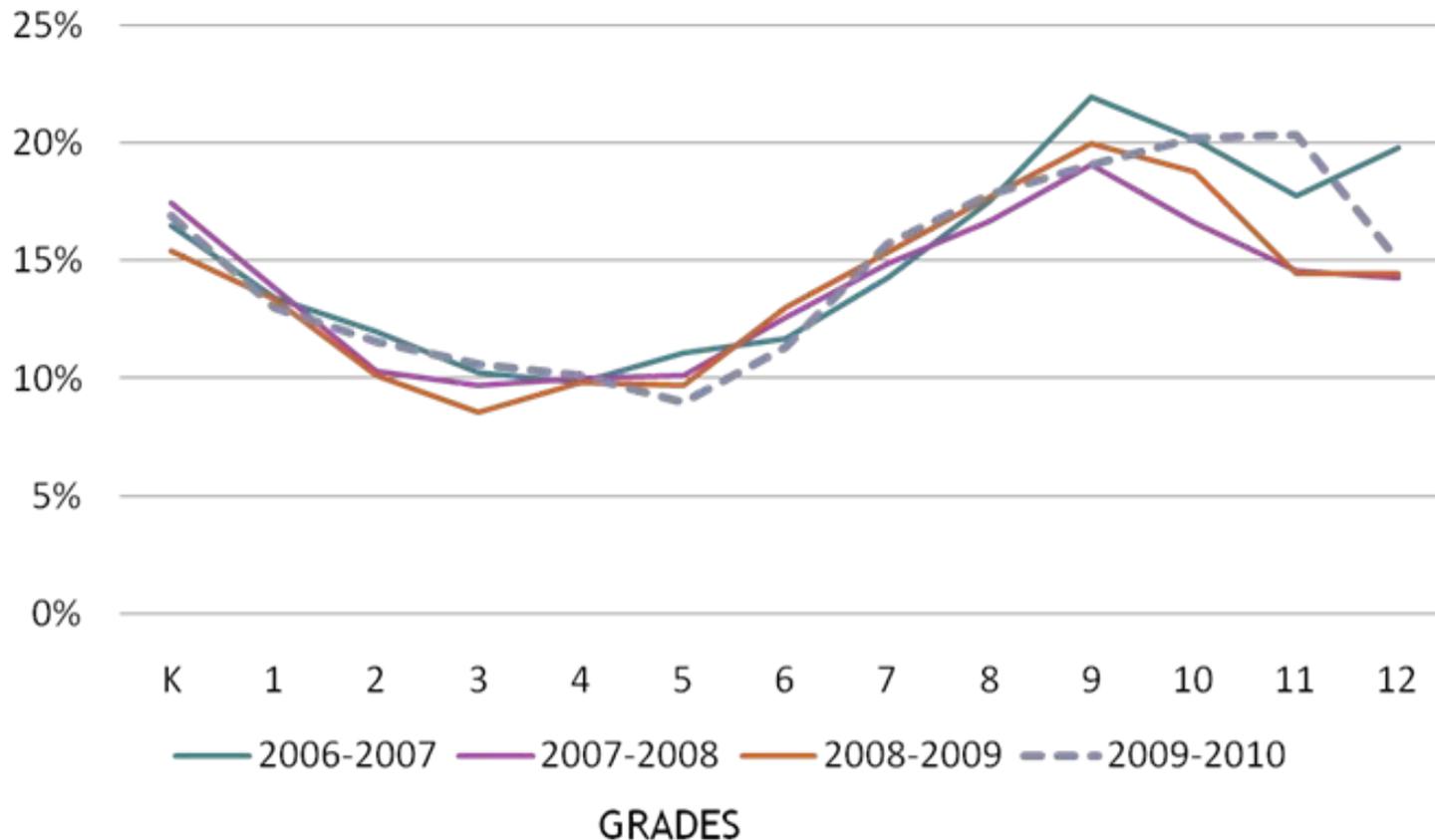
Most Schools Only Track Average Daily Attendance and Truancy. Both Can Mask Chronic Absence.

Variation in Chronic Absence for Six Schools with 95% ADA in Oakland, CA



Emerging Data Shows High Levels

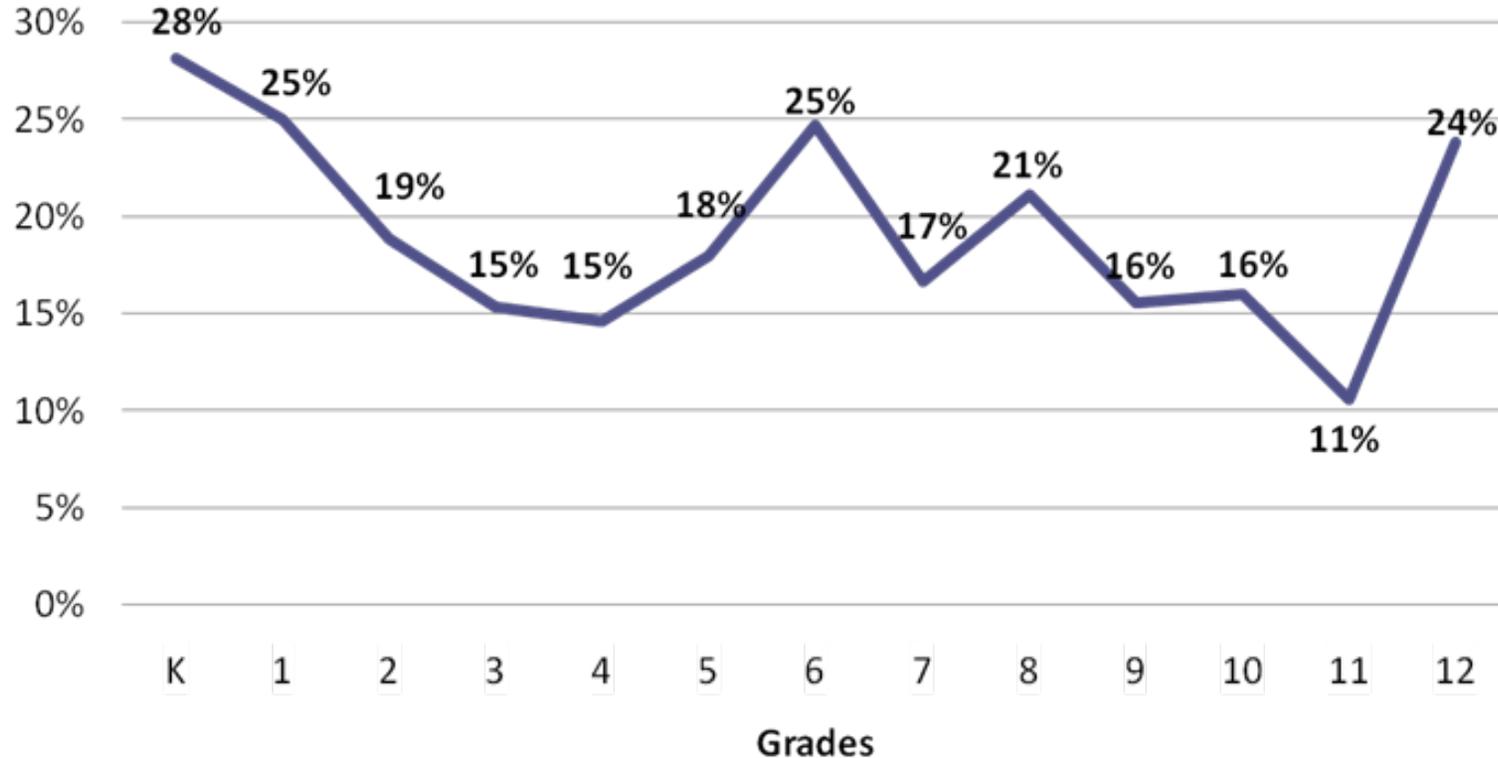
Over 14% (nearly 1 out of 7) are chronically absent
in Oakland Unified School District



If the 5,421 students chronically absent in 09/10 had each attended 6 more days, OUSD would have received more than \$1,147,000 in additional ADA.

Chronic Absence Found In Rural Not Just Urban Communities

Percent of Students Who Are Chronically Absent
Del Norte County Unified School District
(SY 09-10)



1 out of 6 (16%) students were chronically absent.

Data is Needed for Identifying Programmatic Solutions

- ❑ Chronic absence data (as well as other attendance measures) should be examined by classroom, grade, school, neighborhood or sub-population.
- ❑ If chronic absence is unusually high for a particular group of students, explore what might be common issues (unreliable transportation, community violence, asthma and other chronic diseases, poor access to health care, unnecessary suspension for non-violent offenses, lack of engaging curriculum, child care or afterschool programming, foreclosures, etc.)
- ❑ If chronic absence is unusually low for a high risk population, find out what they are doing that works.

Variation Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools

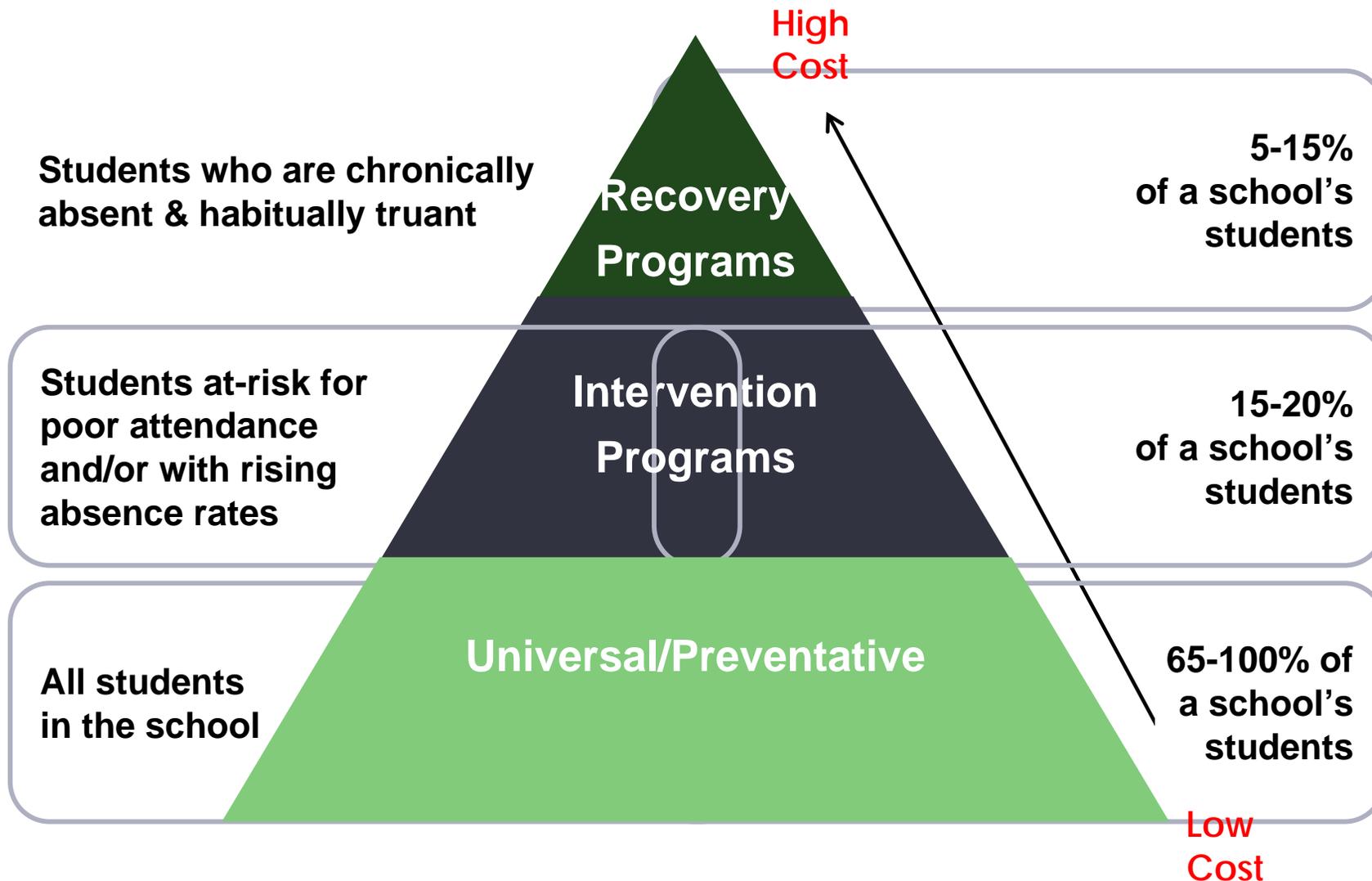
| | Elementary | Middle | High School |
|--|------------|--------|-------------|
| # Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| # Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence | 17 | 4 | 1 |
| # Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence | 25 | 8 | 6 |
| # Schools with >20.1% Chronic Absence | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| Total No. Schools | 60 | 16 | 16 |
| | | | |
| Highest % of Chronic Absence | 31.5% | 32.8% | 42.1% |
| Lowest % of Chronic Absence | 0.3% | 6.9% | 7.9% |
| Median | 12.7% | 14.9% | 21.0% |
| Mean | 11.9% | 15.6% | 22.4% |

Schools + Communities CAN Make a Difference

Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- ❑ Partner with community agencies to help families carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- ❑ Make attendance a priority, set targets & monitor progress over time.
- ❑ Engage parents and students in identifying and addressing school, family, and community issues that contribute to chronic absence.
- ❑ Clearly communicate expectations for attendance to students and families.
- ❑ Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- ❑ Combine targeted interventions with universal strategies that nurture an engaged learning environment, build a culture of attendance and ensure physical health and safety at school.
- ❑ Offer positive supports before punitive action.

Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



Districts Can Provide:

1. **Leadership.** Set attendance goals and district policy. (Note: CSBA has sample attendance policy.)
2. **Data.** Ensure attendance data is accurately entered and reports on attendance including chronic absence are widely available & regularly reviewed.
3. **Attendance Incentives.** Promote effective school wide approaches to recognizing good and improved attendance.
4. **Parent Education & Mutual Support.** Invest in educating parents about the importance of attendance.
5. **Individual and Programmatic Intervention.** Ensure individual intervention & outreach combined with systemic problem solving.
6. **Community Partnerships.** Help schools identify & forge partnerships with community agencies that can help address barriers to attendance.
7. **Peer Learning & Professional Development:** Create opportunities for school staff to learn about the importance of attendance and share effective strategies for improving student attendance.

CDE Can Assist Through:

- 1. Data Collection.** Add attendance to the state longitudinal student data base. CA is one of only 5 state without attendance in its longitudinal student database.
- 2. Technical Support.** Strengthen capacity of districts to track and calculate chronic absence and use poor attendance , combined with other early warning signs to trigger individual and programmatic intervention.
- 3. Peer Learning & Recognition:** Identify and create opportunities to share promising and effective strategies across districts.
- 4. Accountability.** Encourage county offices of education and districts to include chronic absence in data reports and help schools address chronic absence in their annual improvement plans
- 5. Reporting.** Publish reports that feature multiple attendance measures and show rates by district, school, grade and student sub-populations.

Why Attendance, Starting Early Matters

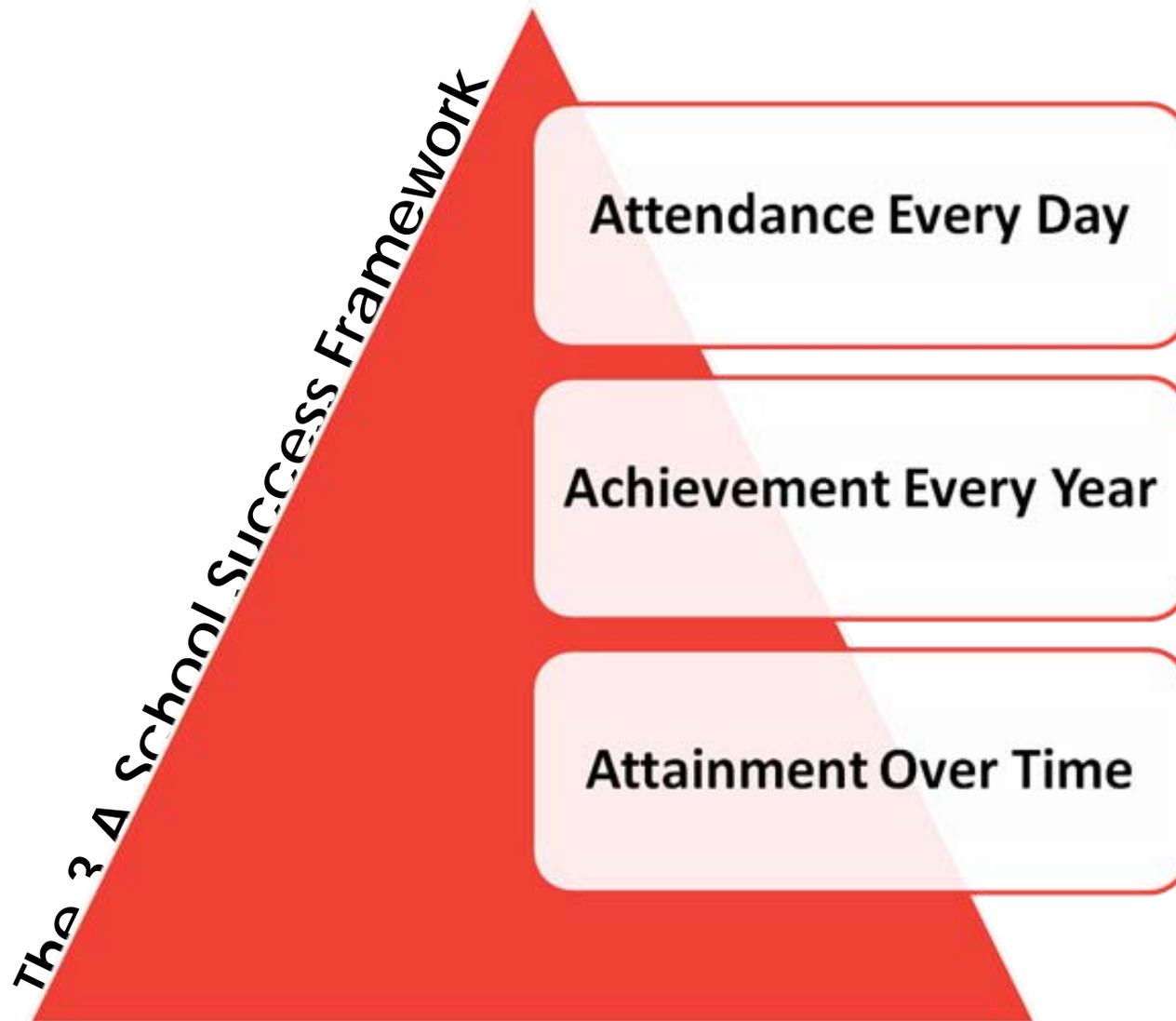
Increased Student Absences are:

- An early warning sign of potential drop-outs
- Predictive of academic failure
- A flag for student disengagement and struggling schools
- Costly for each school, district and surrounding community

Measures of Attendance are:

- Available
- Easily understood
- Predictors of failure in school
- Indicators of effective engagement strategies by educators
- Shared outcomes that facilitate collaboration

An Antidote to Drop-Out



Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America's Promise Alliance
For more info go to www.americaspromise.org/parentengagement