



# Reducing Chronic Absence: Why Does It Matter for Reducing the Achievement Gap?

**Director: Hedy Chang**

# Unpacking Attendance Terms

## Average Daily Attendance

- Nationally, ADA is generally understood as the % of enrolled students who attend school each day. In California, for funding purposes, it is also defined as total days of student attendance divided by total days of student instruction.

## Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws. In CA, truancy = absent 3 days without a valid excuse or late 3 times to class by at least 30 minutes without a valid excuse. In MD, truancy = missing 20% of the school year without an excuse.

## Chronic Absence

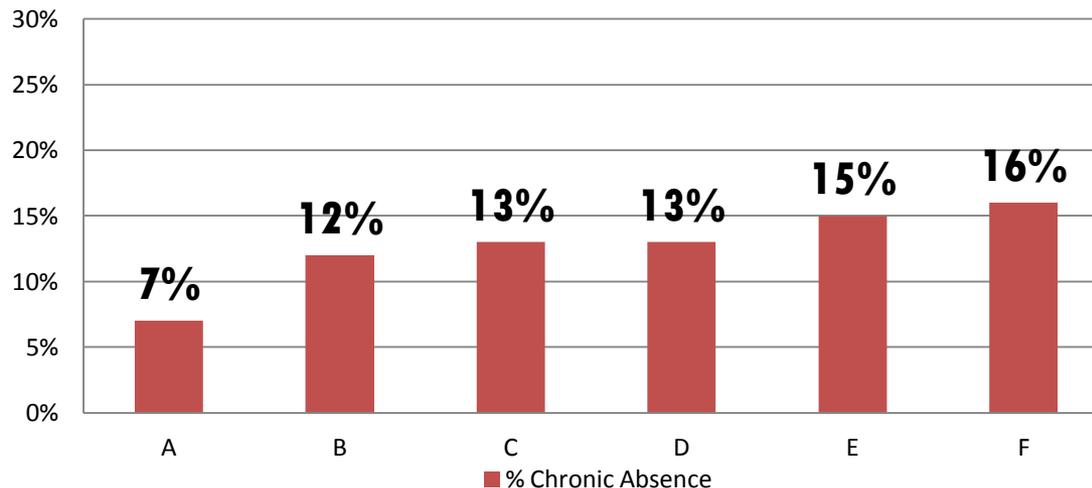
- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school. Chronic absence is now a measure of student engagement in the Local Control Funding Formula.



# 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.*

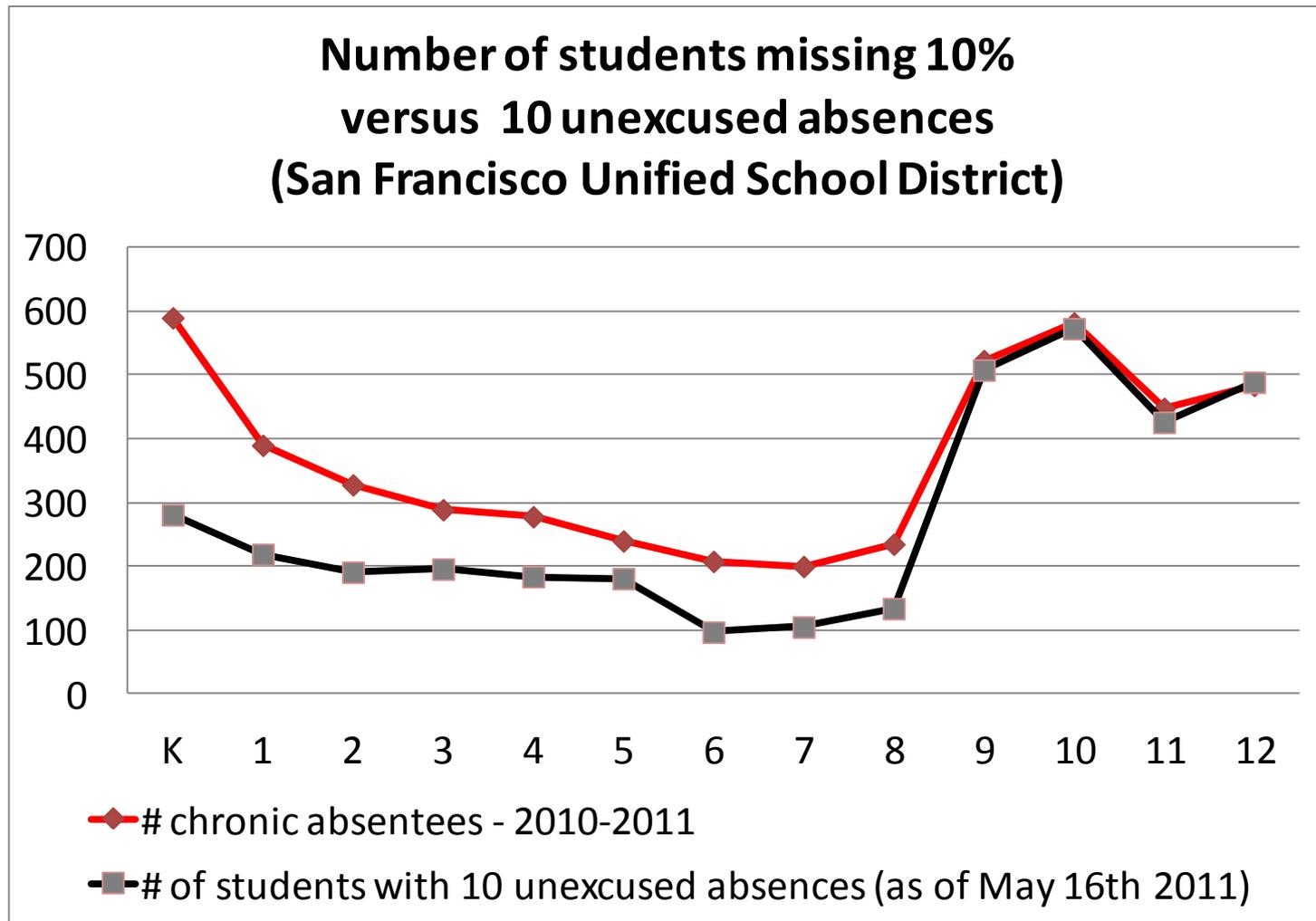
**Chronic Absence For 6 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with @ 95% ADA in 2012**



**98% ADA = little chronic absence**  
**95% ADA = don't know**  
**93% ADA = significant chronic absence**



# Chronic Absence Versus Truancy

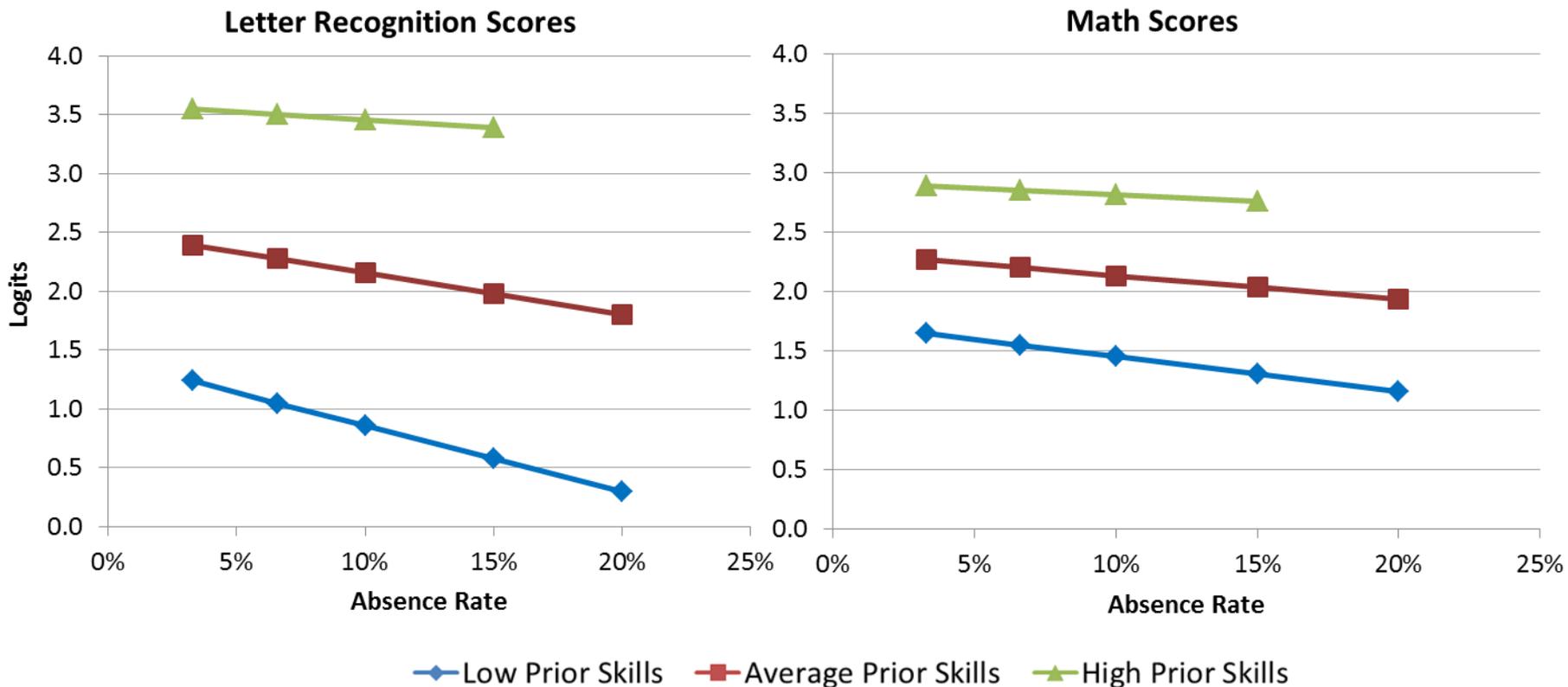


# Chronic Absence: A Hidden Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as 10-15% of students (7.5 million) miss nearly a month of school every year.
- ❑ In California, the lack of attendance data in CALPADS means we have not known how many students are chronically absent.. AG Harris report estimates chronic absence affects 250,000 elementary students (7.6%). Levels are significantly higher in some districts and schools. ***Districts must report on chronic absence for the first time as part of LCFF***
- ❑ Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school. It can start as early as kindergarten and pre-kindergarten.

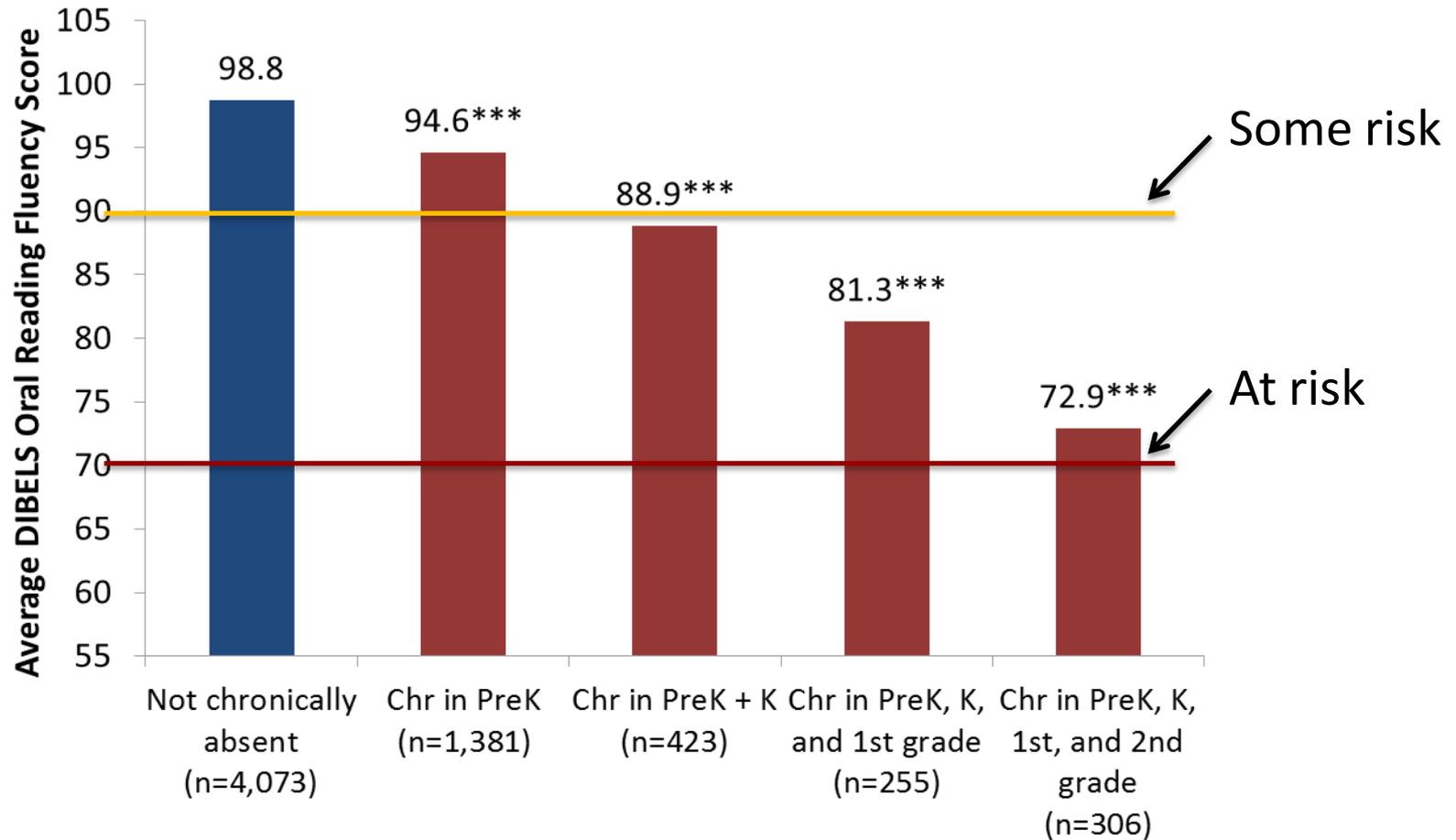


# Starting in preK, chronic absence affects learning and school readiness. Attendance matters most for the children who enter the farthest behind.



*Analyses control for prior preschool experience, race, gender, neighborhood poverty and social status, special education status, ELL status, and program type. Missing data points represent values with fewer than 30 students.*

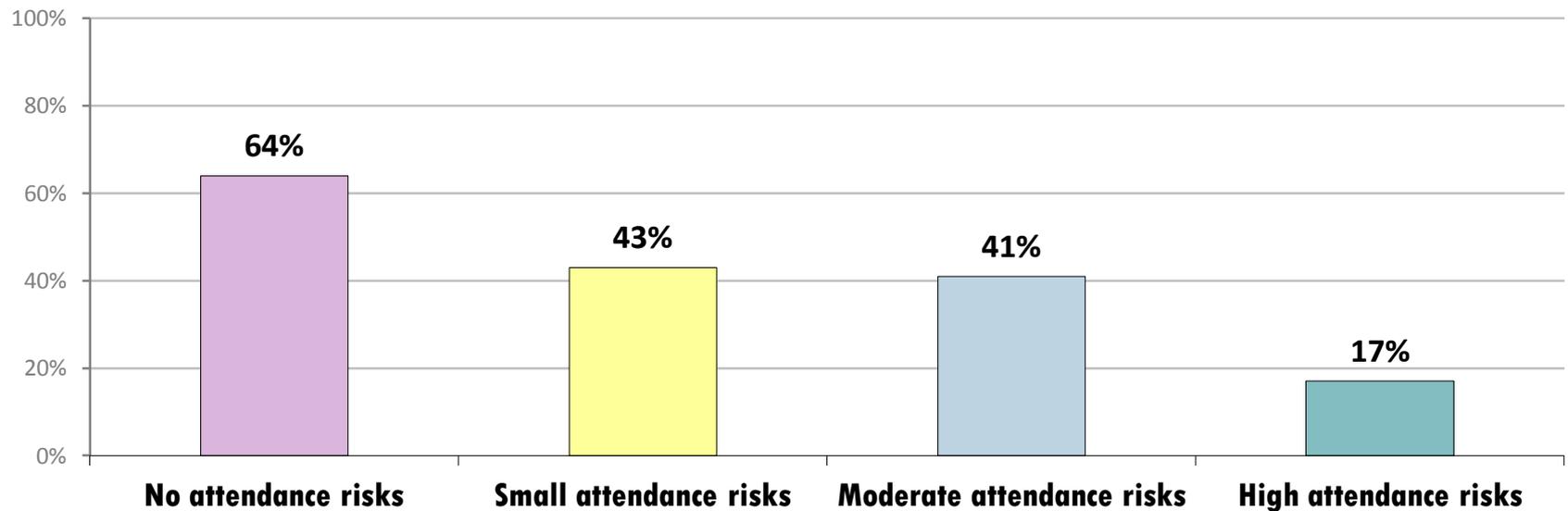
# Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2<sup>nd</sup> grade scores



\* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at  $p < .05$  level; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

# Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade are Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

## Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade ELA



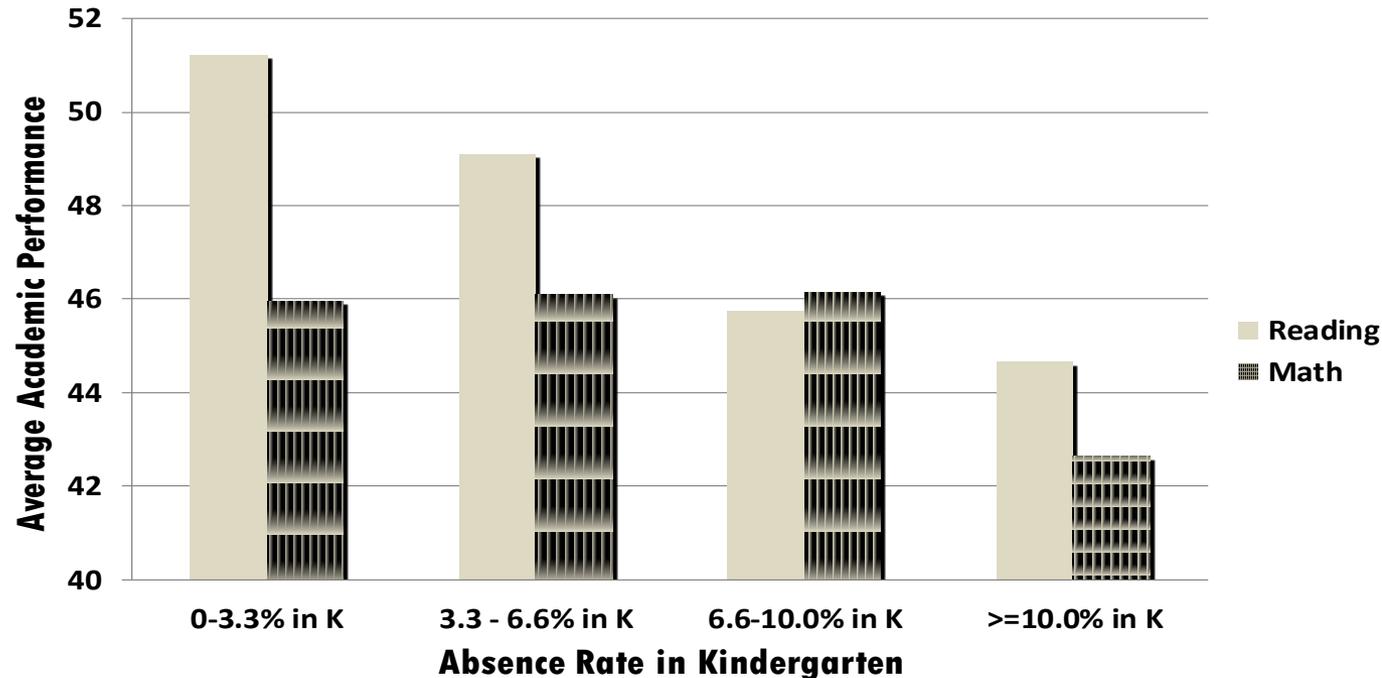
No risk	Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1 <sup>st</sup>
Small risk	Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1 <sup>st</sup>
Moderate risk	Missed 5-9% of days in 1 year & 10% in 1 year
High risk	Missed 10% or more in K & 1 <sup>st</sup>

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



# The Long-Term Impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math and Reading Performance By K Attendance for Children Living In Poverty.  
Academic performance was lower even if attendance had improved in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.



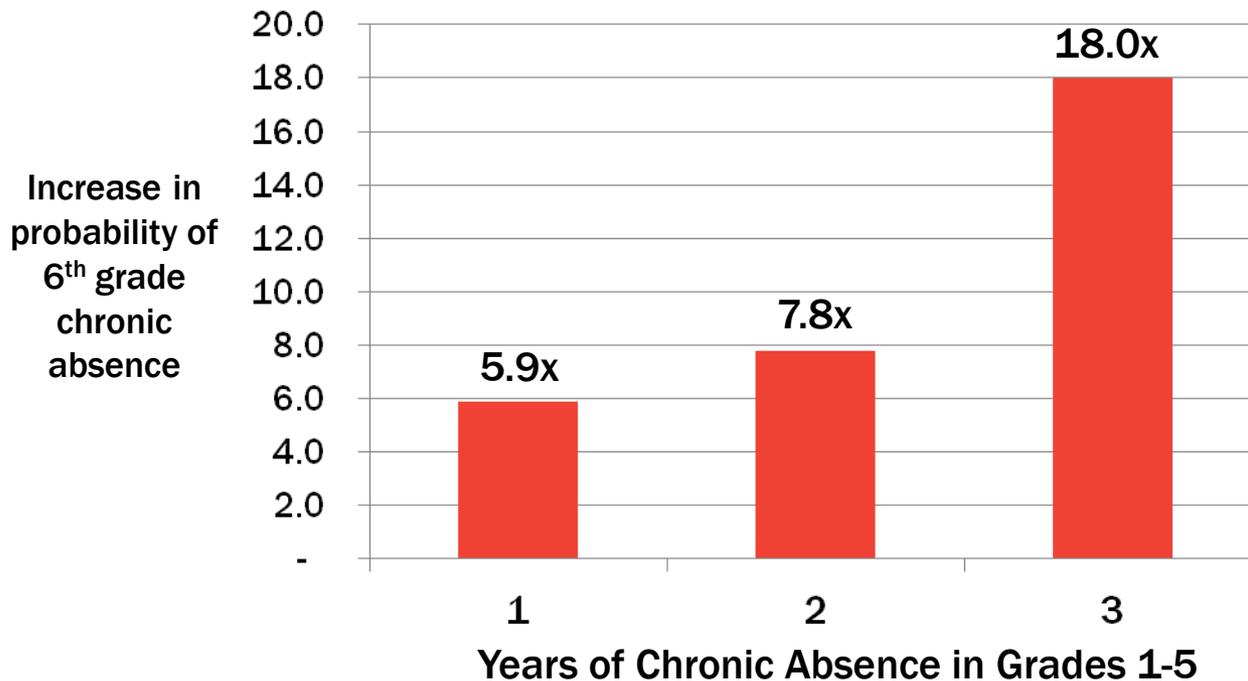
Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)

Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.



# Why Interrupting Chronic Early Absence Matters

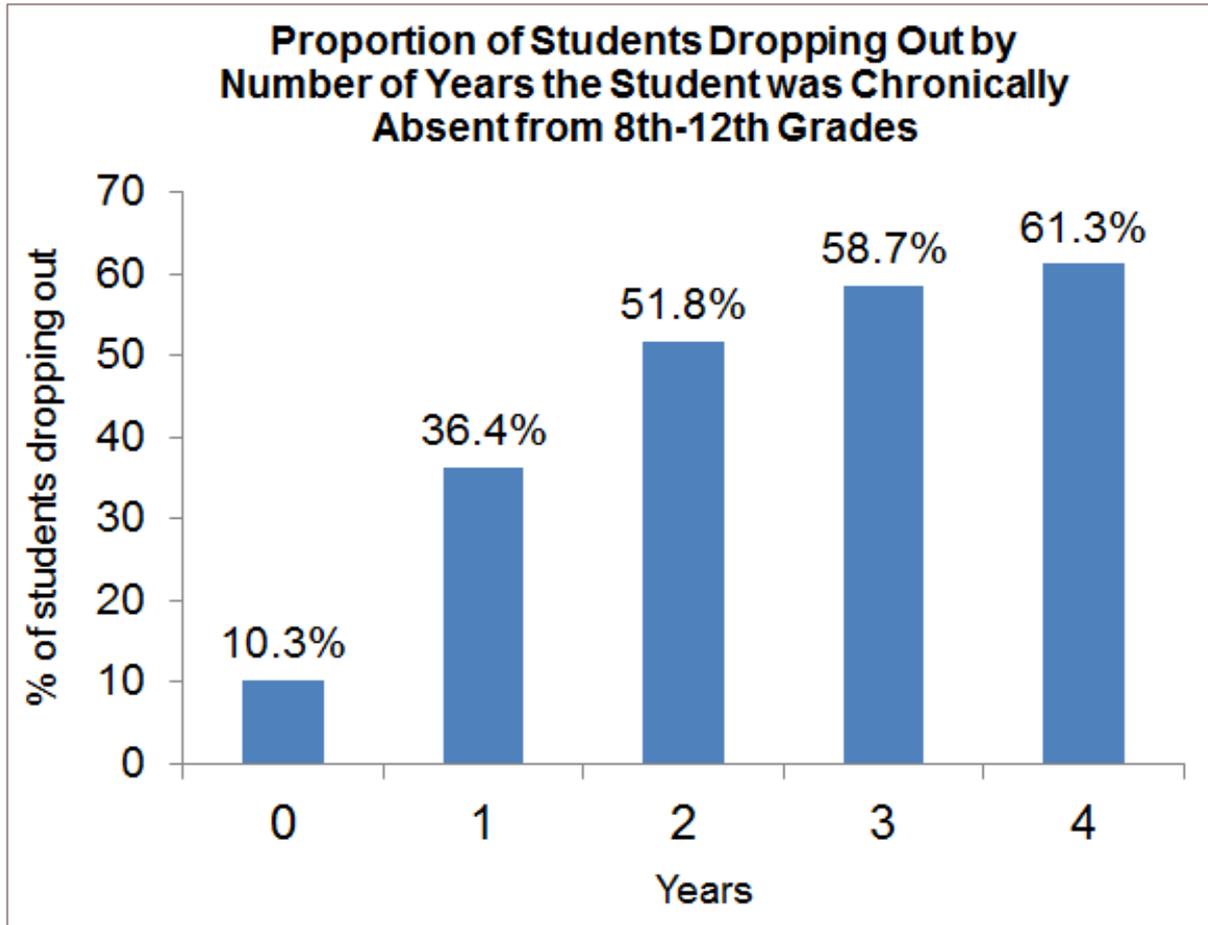
Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6<sup>th</sup> grade



Chronic absence in 1<sup>st</sup> grade is also associated with:

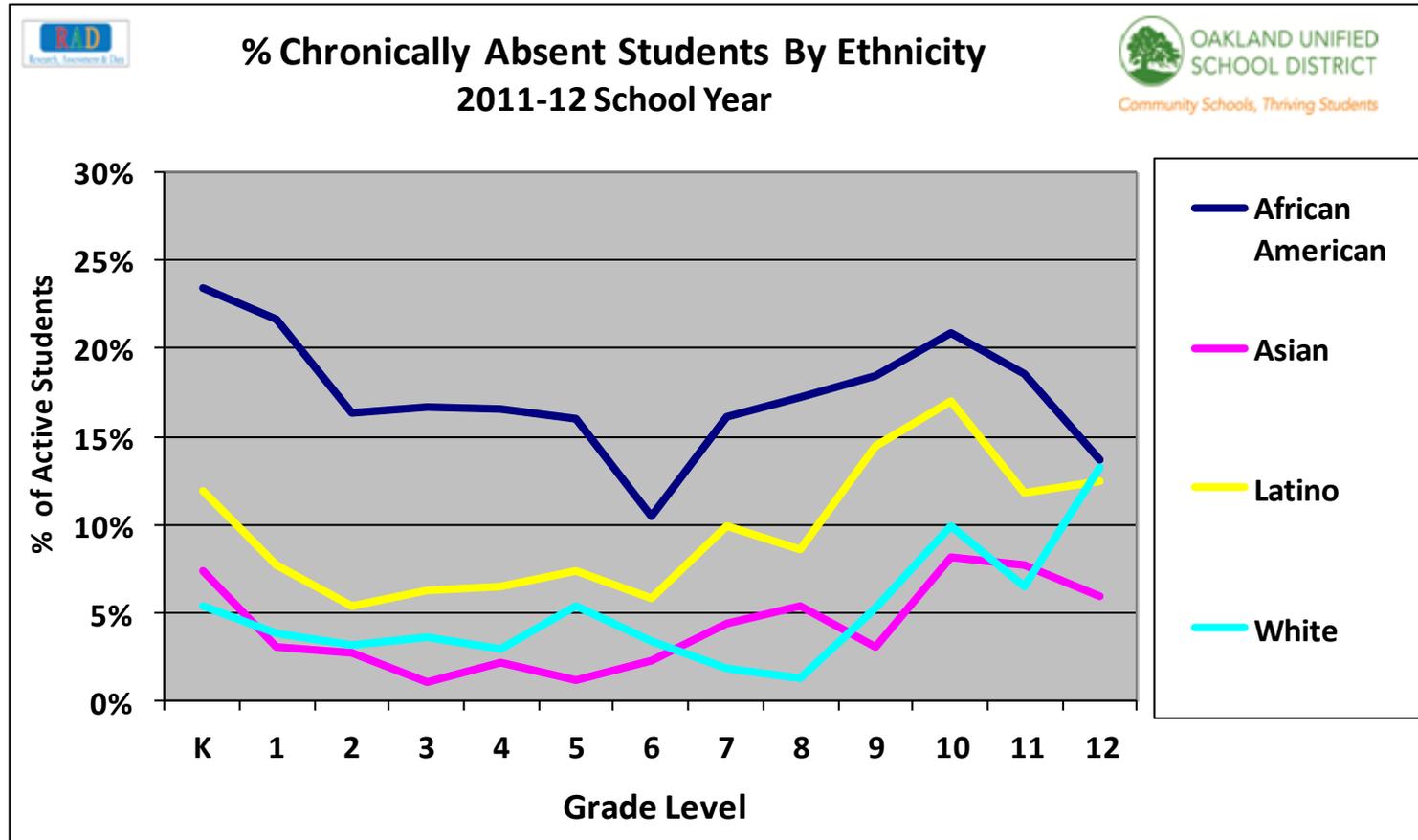
- Lower 6<sup>th</sup> grade test scores
- Higher levels of suspension

# The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates are Cumulative



With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students drop out of school.

# Chronic absence is even higher among students of color



# Solutions Only Work if Grounded in Understanding of What Leads to Chronic Absence

## Myths

Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused

Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem

Attendance only matters in the older grades

## Barriers

Lack of access to health care

Poor transportation

No safe path to school

## Aversion

Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

# Going to School Every Day Reflects

**Hope**

for a better future

+

**Faith**

that school will help you or your child succeed

+

**Capacity**

Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



# Universal Strategies

**A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance**

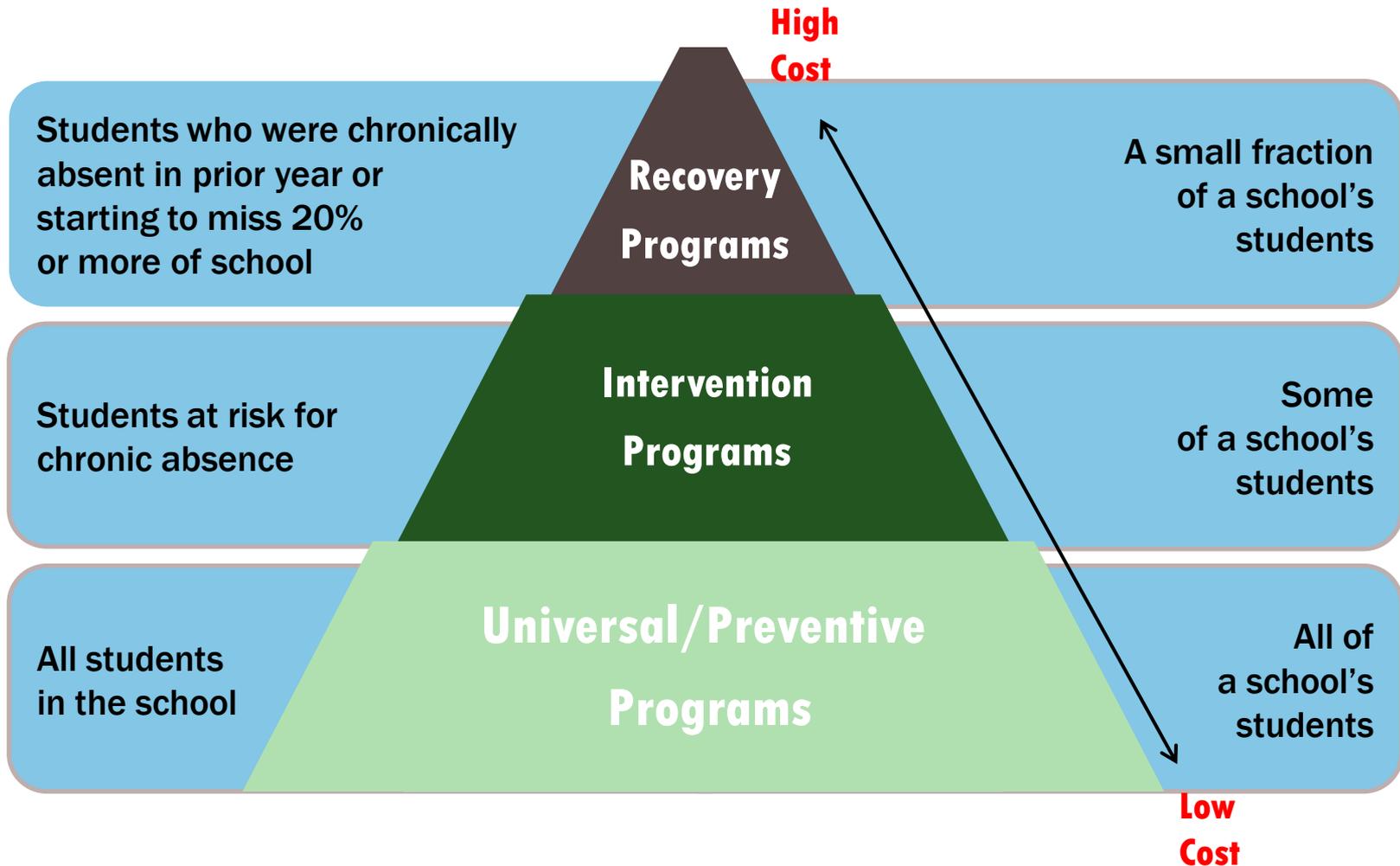
**B. Engage Students and Parents**

**E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)**

**D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach**

**C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice**

# A Comprehensive Approach is More Cost Effective



# Los Angeles

## Attendance Improvement Program

- **Data-driven action:** Data are used identifying where to place counselors, which students to target & to evaluate success.
- **Attendance Improvement Counselors:** Attendance Improvement Counselors, along with Vista national service members helped the schools track data, adopt universal and targeted interventions, create incentives for good attendance, reach out to students and parents, and ensure a timely response to poor attendance.
- **Capacity-building:** The Attendance Improvement Counselors also charged with building the capacity of the school staff, parents and community partners to understand attendance laws, use data, and develop a comprehensive approach that includes prevention and early intervention.



# LAUSD Attendance Improvement Program Outcomes

## Program Impact in Year 1 (2011-2012)

	Missing 7 days or less (96%+)			Missing 15 or more days (<91%)		
AIP Schools	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Kindergarten	37.24%	57.56%	+20.32%	31.32%	17.87%	-13.45%
Grade 9	51.45%	58.82%	+7.37%	27.65%	22.30%	-5.35%
School-Wide	2010-11	2011-12	Increase	2010-11	2011-12	Reduction
Elementary	55.56%	63.03%	+7.47%	18.64%	13.71%	-4.93%
Secondary	54.29%	58.65%	+4.36%	23.59%	20.36%	-3.23%

*Note: Program operated in 77 schools including 52 elementary and 25 high schools with poor K and 9<sup>th</sup> grade attendance*

# Characteristics of More Successful AIP programs

- Strength-based approach with more positive perceptions of parents, higher expectations of their students and parents
- Greater levels of parent engagement
- A shared belief that everyone had a role in improving attendance and should work together
- Deeper levels of commitment to program implementation and delving into the causes of absence
- School leadership made improving attendance a high priority



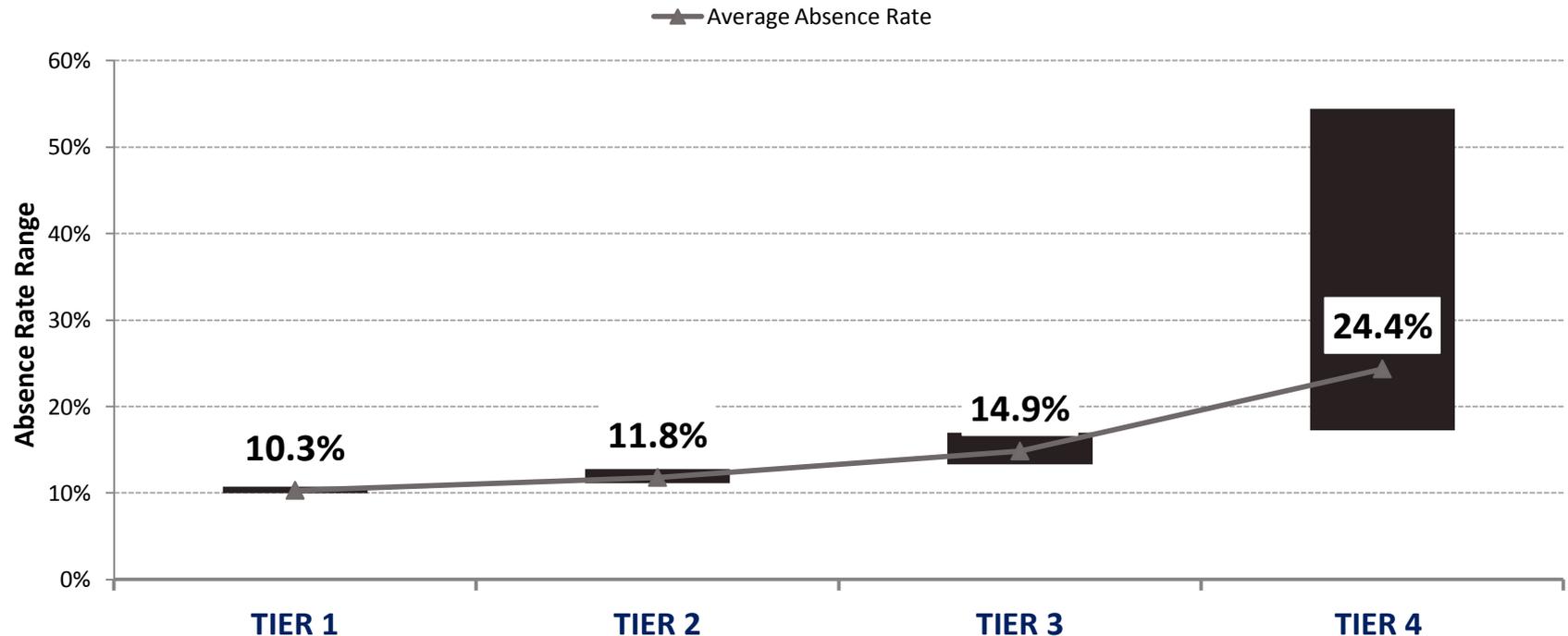
# Chronic absence efforts can leverage and build off existing truancy infrastructure. (OUSD example)

When A Student is Absent For...	School Staff Will...
Any day of instruction (Excused or unexcused absences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Make a personal phone call to parent/guardian</li> <li>✓ Document reason for absence</li> <li>✓ Enter appropriate absence code in Aeries</li> <li>✓ Verify accuracy of all contact numbers and update student information in Aeries</li> <li>✓ Refer family to appropriate school-based resources or support agencies.</li> </ul>
3 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See prior section for foundational interventions</li> <li>✓ Encourage classroom teacher to call home to inquire about student's absence</li> <li>✓ <b>Flag students on the 1<sup>st</sup> Notice of Truancy (NOT) letter log</b> (for unexcused absences only)</li> <li>✓ Refer family to school-based resources and/or support agencies</li> </ul>
6 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See prior sections for foundational interventions</li> <li>✓ Consult with school counselor (if available)</li> <li>✓ Implement strategies outlined in site attendance support plan</li> <li>✓ <b>Send 2nd Notice of Truancy (NOT) letter (unexcused absences)</b></li> <li>✓ Hold a SART/COST/SST meeting (for unexcused absences only)</li> <li>✓ Notify school Nurse if absences are health related</li> <li>✓ Schedule parent conference</li> </ul>
8 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Generate and mail chronic absence letter</b> (excused/unexcused absences) if this occurs within a single semester.</li> </ul>
10 days (Excused or unexcused absences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See prior sections for foundational interventions</li> <li>✓ Review prior absence data to determine if a pattern exists</li> <li>✓ Monitor students with excessive absences. Refer student to case manager or other site support person</li> <li>✓ Conduct a home visit</li> </ul>
14 days or more (Excused or unexcused absences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ See prior sections for foundational interventions</li> <li>✓ Hold another SART/COST/SST Meeting to discuss student's attendance</li> <li>✓ Refer student to School Attendance Review Board (SARB) after 17 or more unexcused absences and SART meeting(s).</li> </ul>

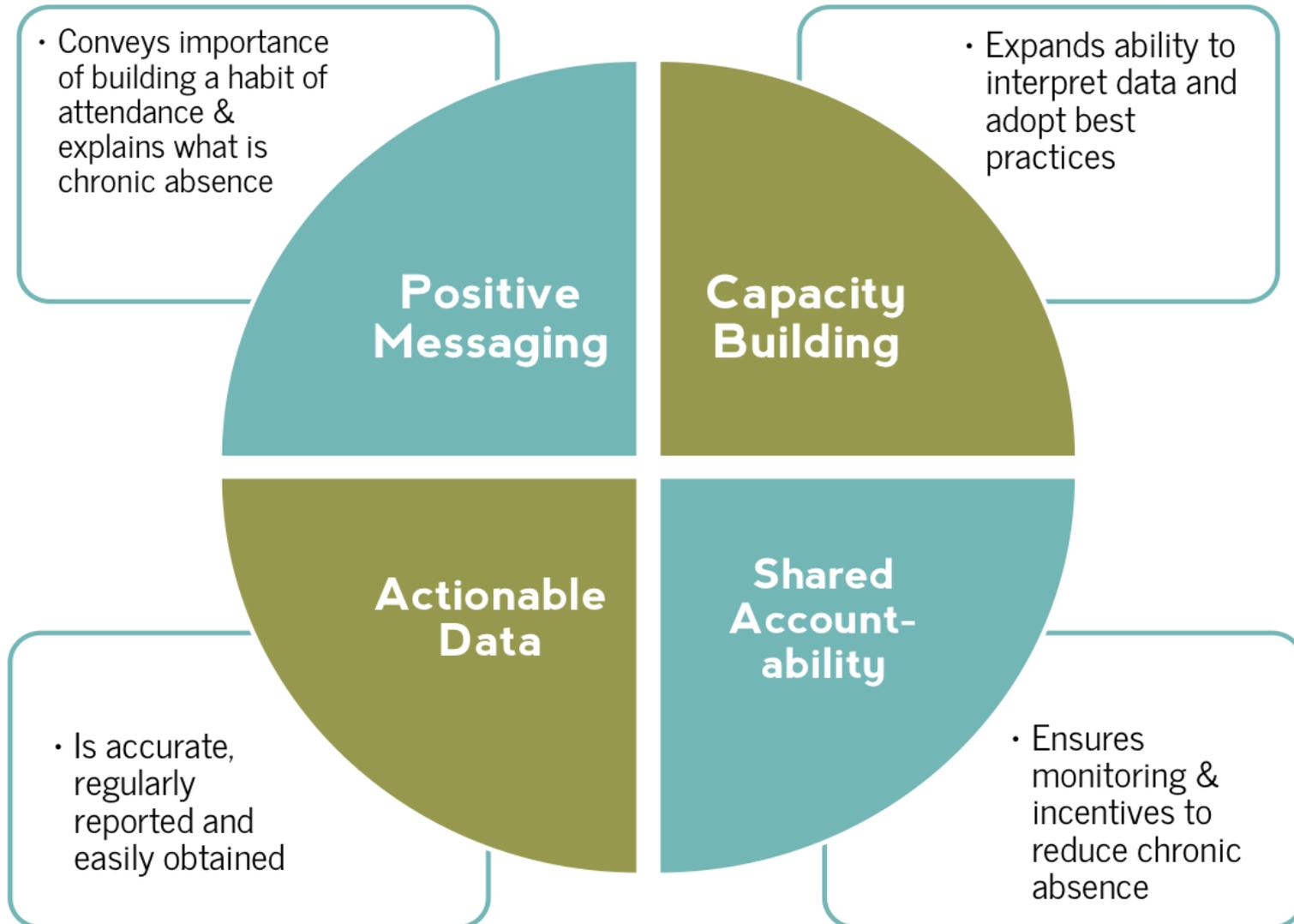


# Students with more severe absence likely face bigger barriers

*This analysis divides all chronically absent 1<sup>st</sup> graders in OUSD district into 4 tiers (almost quartiles) based upon their level of absence*



# Ingredients for Success & Sustainability in a District and Community





# **Tackling Chronic Absence in Baltimore City**

**December 3, 2013**

**Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court**

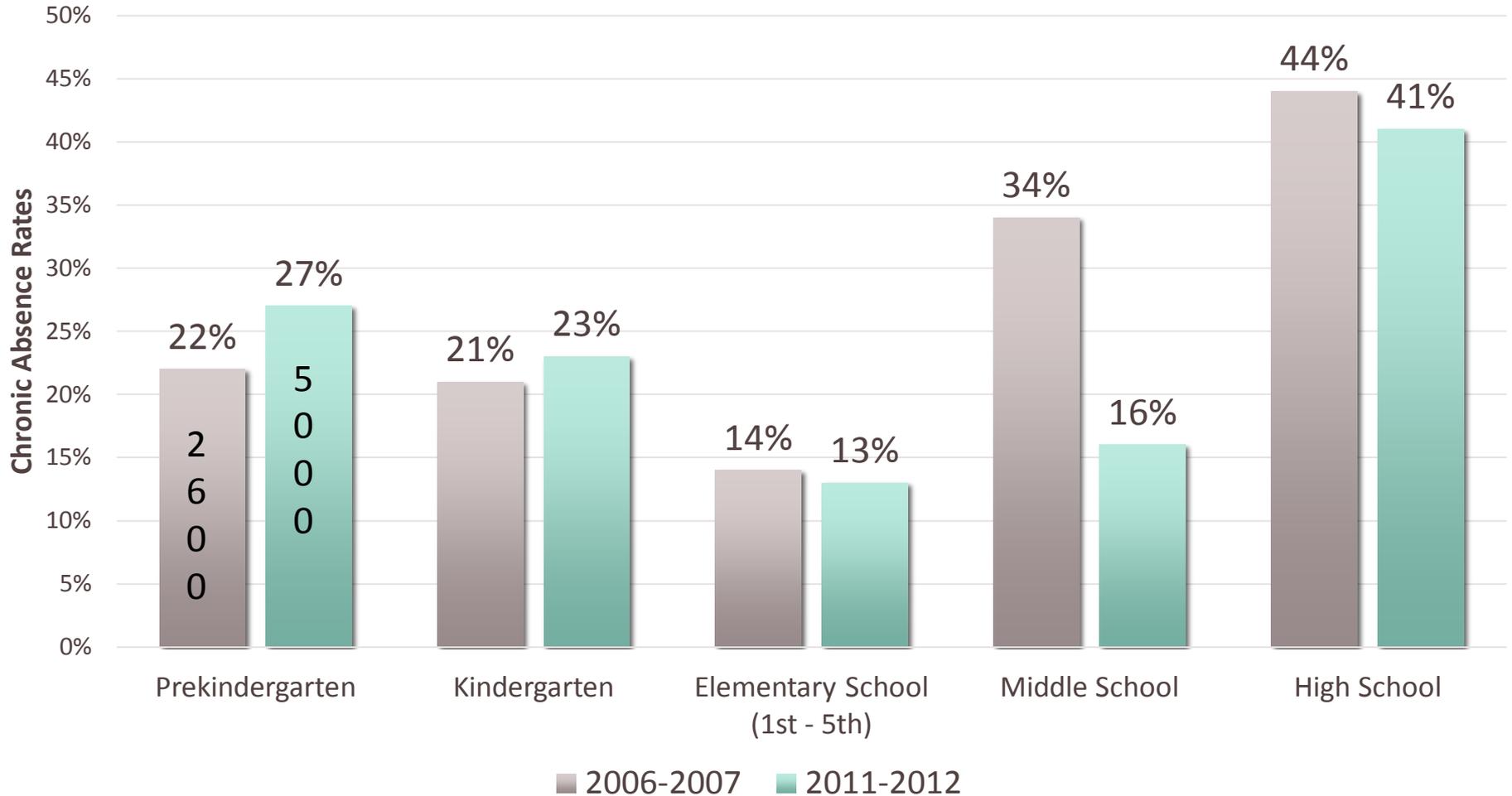
# Baltimore City Public Schools

## By the Numbers

- 85,000 public school students prekindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- 1 in 4 students are chronically Absent
- 195 schools and programs
- 83% Free and Reduced Meals
- 90% Average Daily Attendance
- 30% Student Mobility
- 88% African-American
- 9% White
- 3% Latino



# Baltimore Schools' Chronic Absence SY2006-07 - SY2011-12

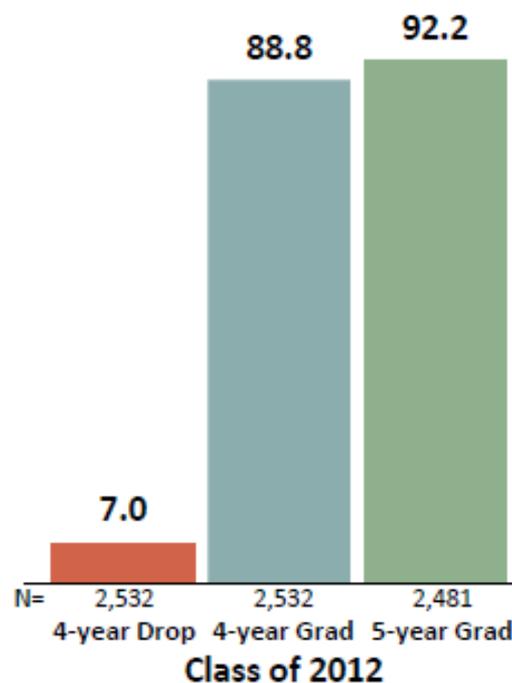


Sources: Prekindergarten and Kindergarten – BERC Prekindergarten and Kindergarten attendance analysis  
Grades 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> MSDE Official Files

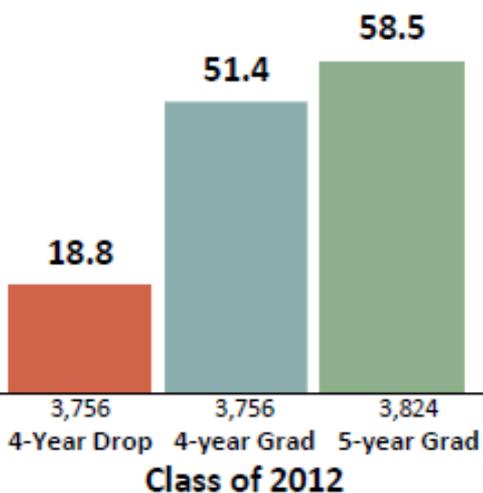
# Class of 2012: Students with Strong Attendance Are Much More Likely to Graduate

15

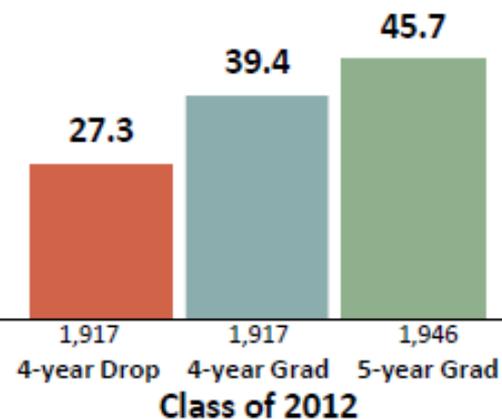
## Never Chronically Absent in High School



## Chronically Absent at Least Once in High School



## Chronically Absent in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade



Note: 4- and 5-year graduation rates are based on entering cohorts of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. The graduation rates are referred to by the spring of the cohort's 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school. For example, the class of 2012 entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2008-09 school year and graduated 4-years later by August 2012. The 5-year outcome for that cohort was completed by June 2013. The 4-year graduation rate includes summer graduates; the 5-year graduation rate does not. Chronic absence is defined as missing 20 or more days in a school year (among students who had been enrolled for at least 90 days).



Baltimore Student  
Attendance Campaign

- ✓ Works with partners to increase student attendance
- ✓ Initiates attendance and back-to-school awareness campaigns
- ✓ Provides technical assistance and professional development
- ✓ Links twenty-six non-profits and public agencies located in more than 100 schools
- ✓ Supports data and research
- ✓ Advocates for the implementation of attendance policies and practices

# Baltimore Student Attendance Campaign Timeline

2008-  
2010

- \*Student Attendance Work Group
- \*Involved over 100 stakeholders
- \*Studied attendance; Laws and Regulations, Policy and Practice, Barriers; and Issued Recommendations
- \*Recommended making chronic absence as a must respond to indicator.

2010-  
2012

- \*Established the Baltimore Student Attendance Campaign
- \*Over twenty non-profits and public agencies partner on strategies to improve attendance.
- \*Worked toward implementation of work group recommendations.

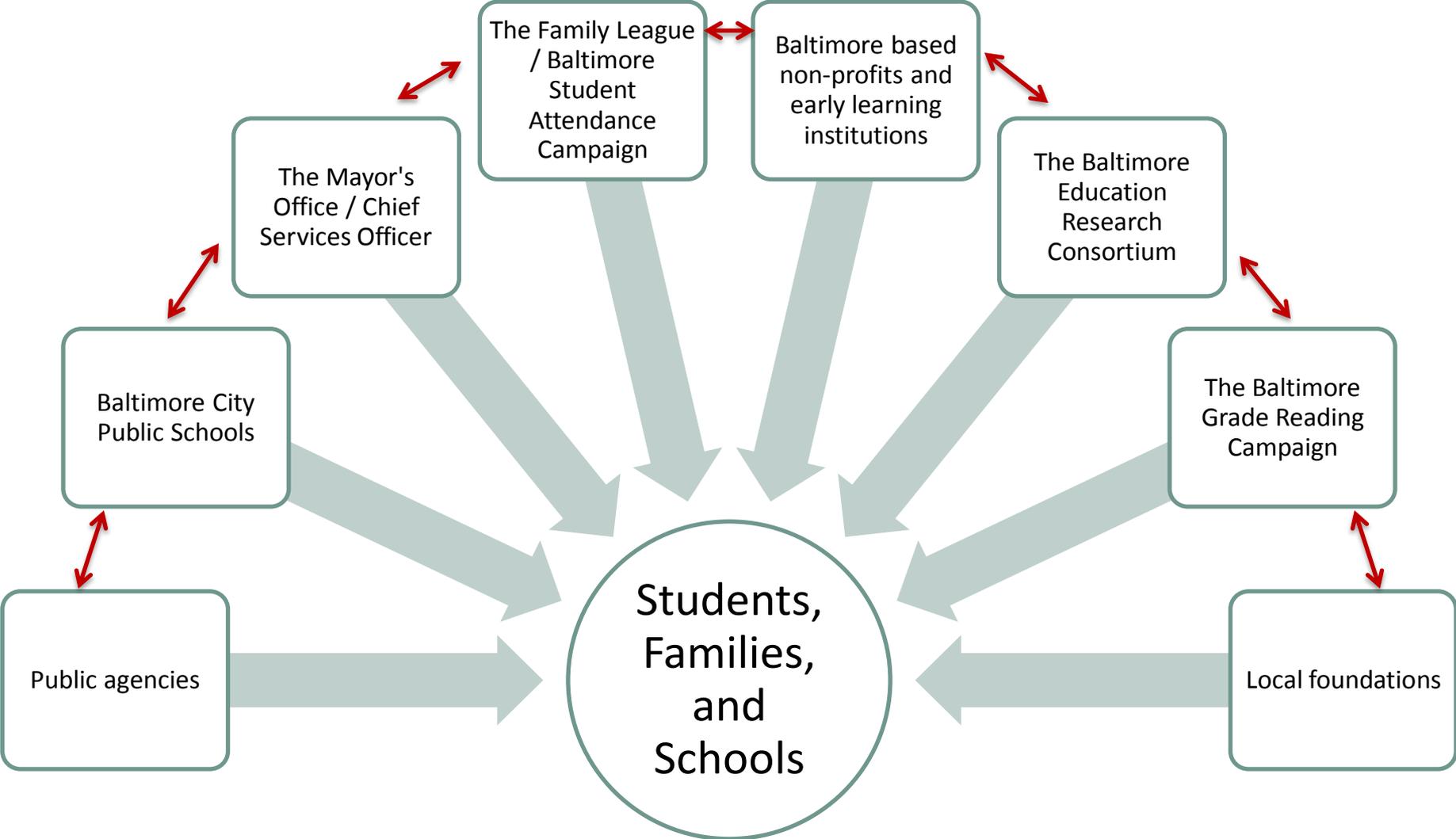
2012-  
2013

- \*The Baltimore Attendance Collaborative works to tackle barriers to student attendance.
- \* Advocacy results in the establishment of school uniform guidance.
- \* Advocacy results in the establishment of a transportation texting campaign.

2013 –  
2014

- Members of the Baltimore Student Attendance Collaborative working to initiate school based partnership efforts in over 100 schools to improve attendance including establishing direct outreach, mentorship, and mediation programs.

# Student Attendance is a Community Priority in Baltimore





# STRATEGIES

# Structural Strategies to Improve Attendance

Provided support for schools to improve attendance:

- Developed the role of the attendance monitor
- Updated attendance best practices and absentee protocols
- Provided intensive annual training for attendance monitors and school based staff
- Attendance, chronic absence, and suspension data incorporated into District planning and reporting

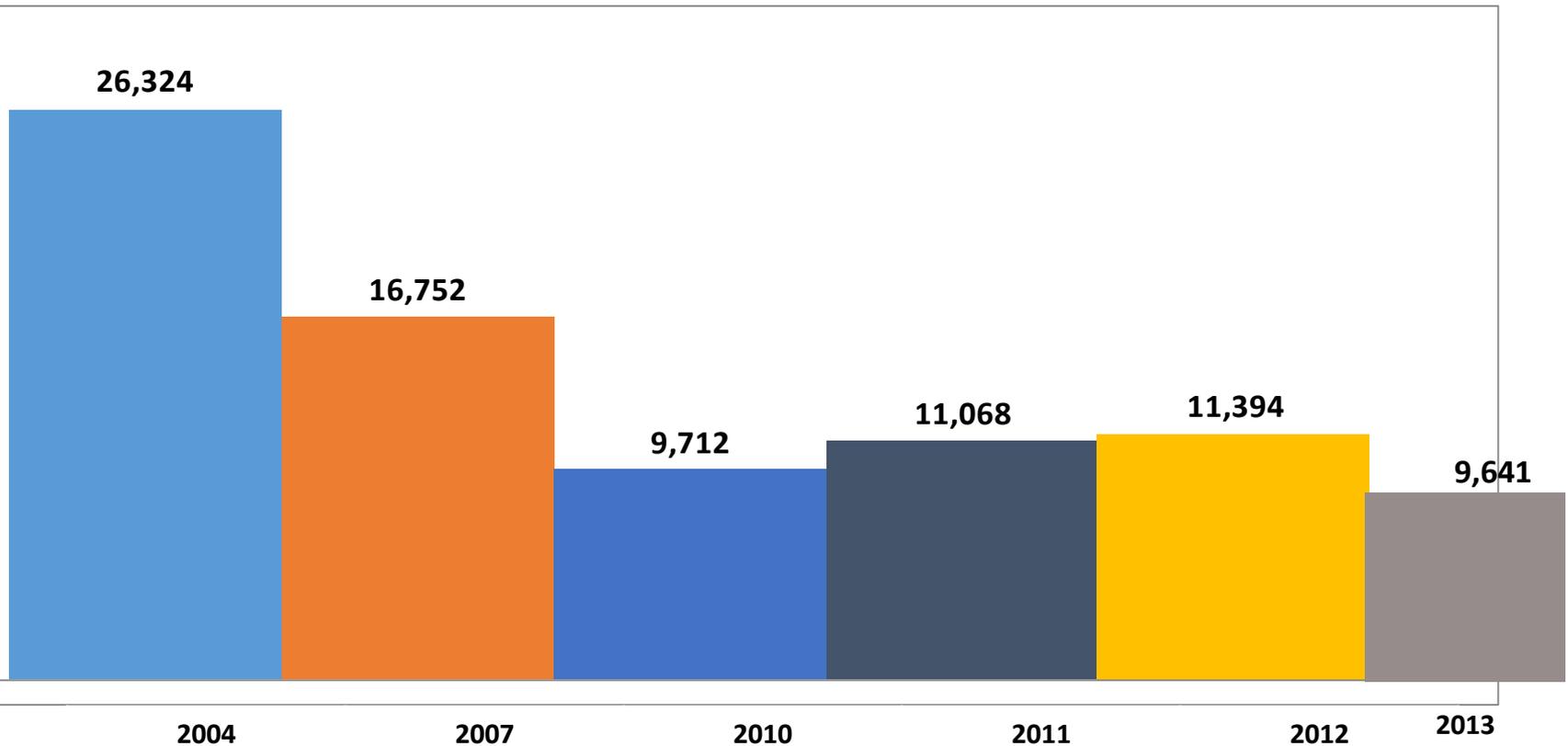
# Structural Strategies to Improve Attendance

- **Created more Grades PK-8**
  - Consequently reducing the number of school transitions and keeping students where they and their families are known
- **Changed the middle school (i.e. Grades 6-8 schools) model to reflect District education priorities by implementing:**
  - Smaller learning environments, often with thematic learning opportunities
  - A focus on literacy
- **Increased student and family options by creating limited middle school and district-wide high school choice**
- **Created alternative options programs for high school students**
- **Initiated the Great Kids Come Back to School Campaign, a district-wide recovery strategy**

# Revised the Baltimore City Code of Conduct – suspensions contribute to chronic absence!

- Created a multi-disciplinary work group to revise the Baltimore City Public Schools Code of Conduct
- Prohibited suspensions for class cutting, lateness, absenteeism and truancy
- Reduced discretionary suspensions from 10 days to 5 days
- Clearly messaged suspension as an alternative of last resort
- Leveraging the Student Support Team process
- Provided additional mental health supports to targeted schools
- Trained school leaders in the theory and practice school climate

# Suspension dramatically decline as a result of the changes to the policy and efforts to provide schools with direction about alternatives to suspensions



NOTE: Counts show total # of suspensions in the District

SOURCE: Official MSDE files

every day counts...



"Every day, I like learning  
big new words in school."

*Aiyanna*

*George Washington Elementary*

**BALTIMORE CITY**  
**PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# ARE YOU TOUGH ENOUGH?

Attending school regularly is a challenge that makes you stronger.



**fact:** ATTENDING SCHOOL REGULARLY MAKES YOU MORE LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE.

This concept was developed by young people in a Wide Angle Youth Media workshop ([www.wideanglemedia.org](http://www.wideanglemedia.org)) in collaboration with Ladderback Design ([www.ladderbackdesign.com](http://www.ladderbackdesign.com)), the Open Society Institute-Baltimore, the Baltimore Student Attendance Work Group and the ACLU of Maryland. For more information on attendance, call City Schools at (443) 984-1714.



# GRADUATION

## Graduation Rate: 5-Year Adjusted Cohort | All Students Sorted by Class

The 5-Year Adjusted Graduation Rate is calculated by dividing total Diplomas Earned by the 5-Year Adjusted Cohort. Students who dropout of high school remain in the adjusted cohort—that is, the denominator of the graduation rate calculation.

### All Students

► Show Cohort Calculation

Class of 2012 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '08	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '10-'11)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '11-'12)	5 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '12-'13)	5-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)						<b>71.74</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	4064	342	<b>4523</b>
5-Yr Adjusted Cohort						<b>6305</b>
Class of 2011 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '07	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '07-'08)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '10-'11)	5 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '11-'12)	5-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)						<b>70.62</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	3964	339	<b>4369</b>
5-Yr Adjusted Cohort						<b>6187</b>
Class of 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '06	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '06-'07)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '07-'08)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	5 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '10-'11)	5-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)						<b>66.65</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	3870	343	<b>4295</b>
5-Yr Adjusted Cohort						<b>6444</b>

'\*' indicates no students or fewer than 10 students in category, or '\*' indicates the percentage for the category is either  $\leq 5$  or  $\geq 95$  and the corresponding counts have been suppressed.

## Graduation Rate: 4-Year Adjusted Cohort | All Students Sorted by Class

The 4-Year Adjusted Graduation Rate is calculated by dividing total Diplomas Earned by the 4-Year Adjusted Cohort. Students who dropout of high school remain in the adjusted cohort—that is, the denominator of the graduation rate calculation.

### All Students

[▶ Show Cohort Calculation](#)

Class of 2012 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '08	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '10-'11)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '11-'12)	4-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)					<b>66.49</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	4064	<b>4181</b>
4-Yr Adjusted Cohort					<b>6288</b>
Class of 2011 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '07	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '07-'08)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '10-'11)	4-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)					<b>65.80</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	3966	<b>4032</b>
4-Yr Adjusted Cohort					<b>6128</b>
Class of 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> time freshmen, Fall '06	1 <sup>st</sup> Year ( '06-'07)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ( '07-'08)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year ( '08-'09)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year ( '09-'10)	4-Year Totals
Graduation Rate (%)					<b>61.46</b>
Diplomas Earned	*	*	*	3871	<b>3953</b>
4-Yr Adjusted Cohort					<b>6432</b>

[View this cohort's Dropout Rate](#)

\*\* indicates no students or fewer than 10 students in category, or \*% indicates the percentage for the category is either  $\leq 5$  or  $\geq 95$  and the corresponding counts have been suppressed.

# Baltimore Early Grades Attendance Strategy

**Studied the prevalence of and reasons for early grades absence**

Qualitative and Quantitative

**Parent and Teacher Focus Groups**

**Teacher training**

**New Family Orientations**

**Targeted messaging and materials**

Prekindergarten/Kindergarten guide, Take Home Folders and Activities, Messaging in the School Menu, Every Day Counts

- **Mayoral sponsored competition targeted at increasing attendance in prekindergarten and kindergarten**

# Questions for Public Agency Partners

- 1. Why do you and your agency made improving attendance a priority?**
- 2. What strategies have you used?**
- 3. How do you know you are making a difference?**



# Attendance and Child Welfare





# Priorities in Child Welfare

- Child Welfare is responsible for the well being of children in foster care and for the prevention of abuse and neglect.
- Success is dependant on partnerships with organizations that are already in children's lives – such as the public school system.
- Attendance is a powerful data point for well-being and prevention.
- Simple data sharing techniques help both social services and schools better care for vulnerable children.

# Well-being: Attendance for children in foster care

- The school district provides the attendance rate of every child in foster care last month.
- Social Services ensures a case worker intervenes with any child who's attendance rate is below 85%



Attendance rate of children ages 3 to 12 in foster care in Baltimore City for the past two years:



# Well-being: School stability for children in foster care

- Upon request, the schools release the information on a child's Emergency Contact Card.
- Social Services asks those named on the card to be the foster care placement for the child.



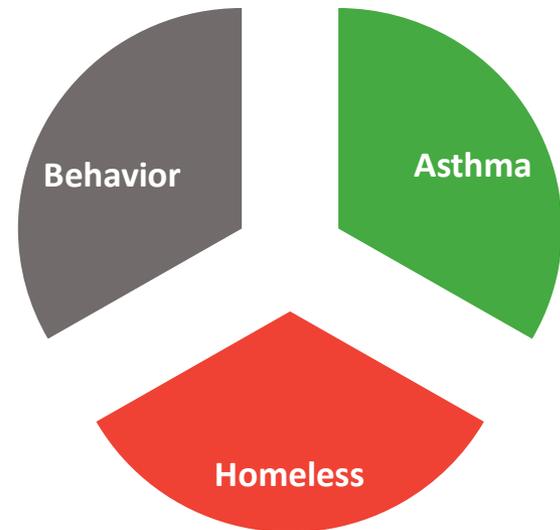
- Reduces trauma for children coming into foster care by placing them in a home with someone they already know, and
- Helps ensure that coming into foster care does not mean you also change schools.
- In Baltimore City = ~25% of placements.

# Prevention: Attendance of young children in Baltimore

- Chronic absence in young children is a early warning sign of stress at home.
- Schools provide data on children in Pre-k who are chronically absent from school.
- Social Services visits and intervenes with prevention services.



## Cause of Absenteeism



Month over month comparison shows young children do not re-appear in data after DSS Intervention

Add in slides for juvenile court

# Questions?

