Reducing Chronic Absence: Framing the Discussion
**Attendance Works** is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with school entry. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

**Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:**

✓ Build public awareness and political will  
✓ Foster state campaigns  
✓ Encourage local practice

www.attendanceworks.org
✓ Share your name and position

✓ What is one hope you have about what you will learn while you are here today?
What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. 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).

In Michigan, **15.6% or 233,582 students were chronically absent in SY 16-17.**
## Multiple Measures of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Daily Attendance</strong></td>
<td>How many students show up to school every day? The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Truancy</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing school without permission? Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic Absence</strong></td>
<td>Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. Chronic absence is a required reporting and optional accountability metric in ESSA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No Child Left Behind

Success determined by academic standards.

Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Each state defines and addresses truancy which typically emphasizes court based, punitive, interventions.

Every Student Succeeds Act

Success determined by academic & nonacademic standards.

States set goals; supportive framework.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Chronic absence is a required reporting & optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.

As a result, all states are now required to monitor chronic absence and had the option to include it as a metric for school accountability.
72% of states (36 + DC) adopted chronic absence as a metric in their ESSA plan.
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

90% and even 95% ≠ A

Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12

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<tr>
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<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
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<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Chronic Absence</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

% Chronic Absence
Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy

Number of students missing 10% versus 10 unexcused absences (San Francisco Unified School District)

- # chronic absentees - 2010-2011
- # of students with 10 unexcused absences (as of May 16th 2011)
Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
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<tr>
<td>M T W TH F</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = **As Few As 2 days a month**
Why Does Attendance Matter for Achievement?

What we know from research around the country
Improving Attendance Matters Because it Reflects:

✓ Exposure to language: Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

✓ Time on Task in Class: Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

✓ On Track for Success: Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

✓ College Readiness: Attendance patterns predicts college enrollment and persistence.

✓ Engagement: Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

✓ Effective Practice: Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

(For research, see: http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/)
Illustrating the Gap

Instructions found on Bringing Attendance Home Toolkit
Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3rd Grade Reading Skills

**Note:** ***Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as “Some Risk,” indicating the need for additional intervention and “At Risk,” indicating the need for substantial interventions.
Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long-Term Academic Outcomes

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored **20% lower in reading and math** in later grades and gap grows
- **2X** as likely to be retained in grade.
- **2X** likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent
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.

✓ Children in poverty are more likely to lack basic health and safety supports (health care, transportation, stable housing, food, clothes, etc.) that ensure a child is more likely to get to school.

✓ The adverse impact of absenteeism on literacy development is 75% greater for these children than for their middle class peers.

* (Romero & Lee 2007)
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} Grades

How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
## Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Myths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Barriers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Aversion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disengagement</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused | • Lack of access to health or dental care  
• Poor Transportation  
• Trauma  
• No safe path to school  
• Homelessness | • Child struggling academically or socially  
• Bullying  
• Ineffective school discipline  
• Parents had negative school experience  
• Undiagnosed disability | • Lack of engaging and relevant instruction  
• No meaningful relationships with adults in school  
• Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school  
• Poor school climate |
Recognize that Going to School Reflects When Families Have

**Hope**
for a better future

**Faith**
that school will help you or your child succeed

**Capacity**
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school
A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

B. Engage Students and Parents

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

Recommended Site-Level Strategies
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

TIER 1
- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

TIER 2
- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

TIER 3
- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
Positive Engagement: Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

Actionable Data: Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

Capacity Building: Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
## Tailor Response to Scale & Intensity of the Challenge
*(Portraits of Change)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Students Chronically Absent</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percent of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)</td>
<td>9,921</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Chronic Absence (20-29%)</td>
<td>10,330</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)</td>
<td>28,320</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)</td>
<td>21,190</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Chronic Absence (0-4%)</td>
<td>22,572</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>92,333</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The greater the size of the challenge, the more partners are needed. Many different types of partners can be enlisted but local government and public agencies are especially important.

- Businesses
- Community Schools Initiatives
- Family Support Organizations
- Early Childhood Providers
- Faith Based Organizations.
- Health Providers
- Housing Agencies
- Hunger Relief Organizations
- Institutes of Higher Education
- Local Government
- National Service/ Volunteers/Mentors
- Out of School Time providers
- Social Emotional Learning Providers
- Social Services
- Population-Specific Service or Civic Organizations
- Philanthropy (including foundations and United Ways)

We also encourage folks to tap into existing initiatives and coalitions as resources for engaging/convening potential partners.
Policy and Legislation

• State Board of Education resolution for low-performing districts
  – *chronic absence addressed in annual application for state funding*

• State Board of Education Five-year Comprehensive Plan
  – *includes reducing chronic absenteeism*

• State legislation impacting state agency, districts and schools
  – *official definition of chronic absence, consistent with the research-based definition (10 percent)*
  – *requirement for district and school-level attendance teams in areas where chronic absence rates are high*
  – *development of a Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Guide*
Data and Accountability

- State longitudinal student data system includes chronic absence data
- Data used to identify high levels of chronic absence
- EdSight and Next Generation Accountability System includes chronic absence indicator

**Individual District Profile Reports**

**District: Nutmeg Public Schools**

**Calculating Chronic Absenteeism**

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing ten percent or greater of the total number of days enrolled in the school year for any reason. It includes both excused and unexcused absences. The formula below is used to calculate individual student chronic and chronic absenteeism rates.

\[
\text{Chronic Absenteeism Rate} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of Absences}}{\text{Total Days Available}} \right) \times 100
\]

**State Summary Charts**

Charts A and B below provide the percent of chronically absent students at the state and by school district for the following school years: 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14.

**2013-14 Chronic Absenteeism by School**

Provided in the section below is chronic student absenteeism data for 2013-14. For each school year, we provide the percentage of chronically absent students for each school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th># Chronically Absent Students</th>
<th>% Chronically Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutmeg Center School</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Middle School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington School</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton School</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutmeg High School</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt School</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center for Academic Excellence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubman School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutmeg Middle School</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates cell suppression where the cell count is less than or equal to 20 students.
Chronic Absence Landscape in Connecticut

2012-13: 60,851 (11.5%)
2013-14: 56,171 (10.8%)
2014-15: 55,956 (10.6%)
2015-16: 50,376 (9.6%)
Impact of Work on Levels of Chronic Absence in Schools

Chronic Absence Level Across Connecticut Schools

Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)
High Chronic Absence (20-29%)
Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)
Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)
Low Chronic Absence (0-5%)

2013-14 OCR
2013-14
2015-16
What is the situation in Michigan?

(Source: OCR date SY 13-14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronic Absence Level Concentrations in Michigan Schools</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Chronic Absence (20-29.9%)</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Chronic Absence (10-19.9%)</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest Chronic Absence (5-9.9%)</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Chronic Absence (0-4.9%)</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total (n)</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distribution of Chronic Absence Levels Across Schools in Michigan:

- Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+): 660
- High Chronic Absence (20-29.9%): 413
- Significant Chronic Absence (10-19.9%): 1,015
- Modest Chronic Absence (5-9.9%): 632
- Low Chronic Absence (0-4.9%): 719

National Distribution of States:

- Minimum: 2%
- 25th Percentile: 6%
- Median: 8%
- 75th Percentile: 12%
- Maximum: 29%

Michigan (MI) is at 19% for the 75th Percentile.
While nationally chronic absence levels are higher in urban areas, this was not always true across states.
Schools with More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels

Across the United States, Schools Serving More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels

Michigan Schools Serving More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels
We create the conditions for this pathway for change that cultivates peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice.

**Advance practice through peer learning**

- Locality A
- Locality B
- Locality C
- Locality D: Early Innovator

**Inform actions w/ insights from local practice**

- Policymakers
- Education Leaders & Assoc. (K-12 & ECE)
- Associations of public health agencies (housing, health, social services, transportation)
- Unions
- Parent Organizations
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropy
- Others

**Spread work through TA and policy**

- Policymakers
- Education Leaders & Assoc. (K-12 & ECE)
- Associations of public health agencies (housing, health, social services, transportation)
- Unions
- Parent Organizations
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropy
- Others

**Peer opportunities to:**

- Compare data
- Share, demonstrate & learn about best practices
- Identify & problem-solve common challenges

Ongoing peer learning, technical assistance, administrative guidance, regulations, legislation, etc. promote best practices & systemic change.
✓ **Step 1: Review Data and Ensure Quality.**
Use current data to calculate levels of chronic absence. Look for trends and assess if steps are needed to improve data consistency and accuracy.

✓ **Step 2: Form a State Leadership Team.**
Include a cross-sector team that will take responsibility for organizing action.

✓ **Step 3: Develop a Data-Informed Comprehensive System of T.A.**
Offer universal supports, group professional development and intensive T.A.

✓ **Step 4: Publicize the Challenge and Available Resources.**
Highlight the scope of the challenge, bright spots and plan for reducing chronic absence.
Chronic absence is like a warning light on your car dashboard

The Parallels:

✓ Ignore it at your personal peril!
✓ Address early or potentially pay more (lots more) later.
✓ The key is to ask why is this blinking? What could this mean?