Impact of student absenteeism on student outcomes
What does Attendance Matter: From a health perspective

- Poor health and undiagnosed conditions can cause too many absences: Even when absences are excused, missing too much school can lead children to fall behind. Challenges related to poor physical, dental and mental health are leading reasons students miss too much school.

- Successful learners are healthier adults: Showing up to school is essential to higher levels of academic achievement, which are associated with lower incidence of disease and longer lives for adults.

- Health providers are uniquely positioned to address chronic absence: They are especially crucial allies for conveying the importance of avoiding unnecessary absences. They can use their knowledge to identify and develop solutions when health-related barriers are causing significant absences.
What is Chronic Absence?

Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
## Multiple Measures of Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</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. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric in ESSA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% ≠ A

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

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
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 in kindergarten → Lower levels of literacy in first grade → Lower achievement as far out as fifth grade
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 8th-12th Grades

Chronic Absence a Huge National Problem

OVER 6 MILLION

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

That’s 13 percent of the student population—or 1 in 8 students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
Preventing Missed Opportunity

Now available!

http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/preventing-missed-opportunity/
What data sources were used?

- **Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Civil Rights Data Collection (SY 2013–14):** Data is available at the school level and was aggregated up where reported at the district and state levels.

- **National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data:** % minority students or % eligible for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program

- **American Community Survey (US Census):** Children ages 5-7 living in poverty using 5-year average 2009–2014
What insights were gained about where chronic absence is found?

Chronic absence is both widespread (found across 89% of districts) and highly concentrated.

**Table 1. Where are the Nation’s CA Students found, By Quarter and By District? 2013-14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Total Number of Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Number of Districts</th>
<th>Average Number of Students CA</th>
<th>Min Number Students CA</th>
<th>Max Number of Students CA</th>
<th>Percent of All Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>6,472,466</td>
<td>16,240</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72,376</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Quarter</td>
<td>1,618,012</td>
<td>13,943 *</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quarter</td>
<td>1,617,319</td>
<td>1,642</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quarter</td>
<td>1,618,036</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>3,053</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>5,729</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quarter</td>
<td>1,619,079</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>13,057</td>
<td>5,817</td>
<td>72,376</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes 1,798 districts reporting 0 chronically absent students*
Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at [http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ](http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ)
What districts make up the 4%?

We found two types:

- Some of the places with the largest numbers of chronically absent students are affluent, suburban districts known for academic achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Number of Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Percent of All Students CA</th>
<th>Percent FRL</th>
<th>Percent Minority</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Locale</th>
<th>CA Rate in Elementary Schools</th>
<th>CA Rate in Middle Schools</th>
<th>CA Rate in High Schools</th>
<th>Percent of Children 5-17 living in poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>MONTGOMERY COUNTY</td>
<td>24,149</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>152,013</td>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>FAIRFAX</td>
<td>21,565</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>183,640</td>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Districts serving disadvantaged urban neighborhoods with high rates of poverty typically have both high rates and large numbers of chronically absent students.
Trend of large numbers of students in a handful of districts holds true across states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Total Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Percent of Students CA</th>
<th>Total Districts</th>
<th>Number of Districts that Account for...</th>
<th>Percent of Districts that Account for...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25% of CA Students</td>
<td>50% of CA Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>104,730</td>
<td>10,226</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>1,764,066</td>
<td>265,086</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>685,574</td>
<td>78,916</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What about rural communities?

Many small, poor rural school districts have few students but face high rates of chronic absenteeism.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at [http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ](http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ)
Reflection

What surprised or struck you?
How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
What are implications for action?

1. Invest in consistent and accurate data collection
2. Use data to understand need and disproportionate impact in order to target resources
3. Leverage data to identify places getting results
4. Share data with key stakeholders
5. Equip stakeholders to unpack barriers and take action
6. Create shared accountability, leveraging ESSA.

All states and districts should use current data to determine how much chronic absence is a challenge for students.
Adopt a multi-tiered support system for students, schools and districts.

Everyone should help make schools warm, welcoming engaging places that motivate students to show up & encourage students and families to monitor when absences are adding up.
Tier 1: Creating a positive, engaging school climate that supports attendance

Attendance is higher when schools:

- Promote a sense of belonging and connection including noticing when students show up
- Make learning engaging so students don’t want to miss class
- Engage in restorative practice not punishment
- Meet the basic needs of our most economically challenged families so all have the opportunity to get to school
- Build awareness about how absences can easily add up to too much time lost in the classroom
Parents underestimate the number of year-end absences

Ad Council research commissioned by AG Harris asked parents with students with a history of absence about their children’s absences in two ways:

1. Was your child absent an average of 2 or more days a month?
2. Was your child absent more than 10 days over the year?

60% of parents said their child was absent an average of 2+ days a month, but not 10+ days a year.

The math: If a child is absent an average of 2+ days a month, then he/she is absent far more than 10+ days a year.
Parent Video & Discussion Guide

Bringing Attendance Home Video (6 minutes)

- Facilitated conversation
- The consequences of chronic absence
- How to improve absenteeism
- Family practice
- Increase social capital
- Identify how school can help
- Community services

Help families make back-up plans

MY CHILD’S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD’S ATTENDANCE GOALS

1. I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
2. I will keep an attendance chart at home. By the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day.
3. I will make sure my child is in bed by _pm and the alarm clock is set for _am.
4. I will prepare meals that my child will enjoy, and I will go shopping with my child during the weekend.
5. If my child has a cold but feels fine, I will send him/her to school anyway.
6. If I don’t have a substitute, I will prepare substitute lessons for the school.
7. I will find a reliable friend or neighbor who can take my child to school if I can’t make it.
8. If my child is absent, I will contact the school to find out when he/she returned.
9. I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekends after school.

To improve my child’s attendance, I commit to the following:

1. ____________
2. ____________
3. ____________

If we make progress toward this goal in two months,

Family Signature: ____________ Date: ____________

Teacher Signature: ____________ Date: ____________

MY FAMILY’S HELP BANK

EVERYDAY HELPERS

1. My Family: ____________ 
2. Everyday Helpers: ____________

OCCASIONAL HELPERS

3. Occasional Helpers: ____________

POTENTIAL HELPERS

4. Potential Helpers: ____________

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: ____________ Phone Number: ____________

Name: ____________ Phone Number: ____________

Name: ____________ Phone Number: ____________

For more help, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

Adapted with permission from the Ourgirl Family Foundation, and these materials created by Holly Works with East Ridge Elementary School in Portland, Oregon.
## Tier 2 Interventions

### Tier 2

- Targeted interventions that remove identified barriers and increase positive connections that motivate improved attendance.

### Who are the families in Tier 2?

- Missing 10% or more of the prior or current school year for any reason.
- Families experiencing some challenge e.g. chronic disease, job loss, divorce, etc.

### For which families is Tier 2 sufficient?

- Families with barriers to school attendance who may not understand how to access support.
- Families who see school as “the deliverer of bad news.”
- Families who are more successful when there is a positive relationship with someone at the school.
Criteria for Identifying Priority Students for Tier 2 Supports

✓ Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.
✓ And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:

- In first 2 weeks: 2 absences
- In first month (4 weeks): 2-3 absences
- In first 2 months (8 weeks): 4 absences

Missing 10% any time after
Possible Tier 2 Interventions

- Assign caring mentors
- Partner with families/students to develop Student Attendance Success Plan
- Recruit for engaging before-or-after-school activities
- Connect to Walk-to-School Companion
- Offer plan or contacts for health support

Positive Linkages and Engagement for Students and Families

The Power of Positive Connections
Reducing Chronic Absence through PEOPLE: Priority Early Outreach for Positive Linkages and Engagement
www.attendanceworks.org
Tailor Response to Scale And Intensity of the Challenge

• **At the District Level**: is there a need for a community-wide response or targeted efforts in a sub-set of schools?
• **At the School Level**: how many students are chronically absent?
• **If it’s 30 or less**, a student support team can lead the effort.
• **If it’s closer to 50 or more**, teachers will need to play a critical role.
• **If it’s over 100**, community partners will likely be needed to provide additional person power

_Source: Everyone Graduates Center_
### Unpack contributing factors 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 or dental care
- Poor Transportation
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Homelessness

#### Aversion
- Child struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

#### Disengagement
- 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
Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

**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.

**Shared Accountability:**
Ensures chronic absence is monitoring & reinforced by policy.

**Strategic partnerships**
between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
Take advantage of ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) to create greater accountability.

ESSA already requires State Education Agencies receiving Title I to produce a state report card including chronic absence.

Chronic Absence could also be added as an indicator of school quality or student engagement. It meets all requirements.

- Applicable to every student
- Can be Disaggregated
- Can be used to distinguish performance across school
- Valid
- Reliable
- Proven impact on achievement
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?