



# Reducing Chronic Absence: Framing the Discussion





## About Us

**Attendance Works** advances student success and closes equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Operating at the local, state, and national level, Attendance Works:

- ✓ Advances better **policy**
- ✓ Nurtures proven and promising **practice**
- ✓ Promotes meaningful and effective **communication**
- ✓ Catalyzing needed **research**

Since our launch in 2010, we have become the nation's "go-to" resource for improving student attendance.

For Inquiries for consultation and ta, contact Cecelia Leong, Associate Director for Programs, at [cecelia@attendanceworks.org](mailto:cecelia@attendanceworks.org)



# Illustrating the Gap

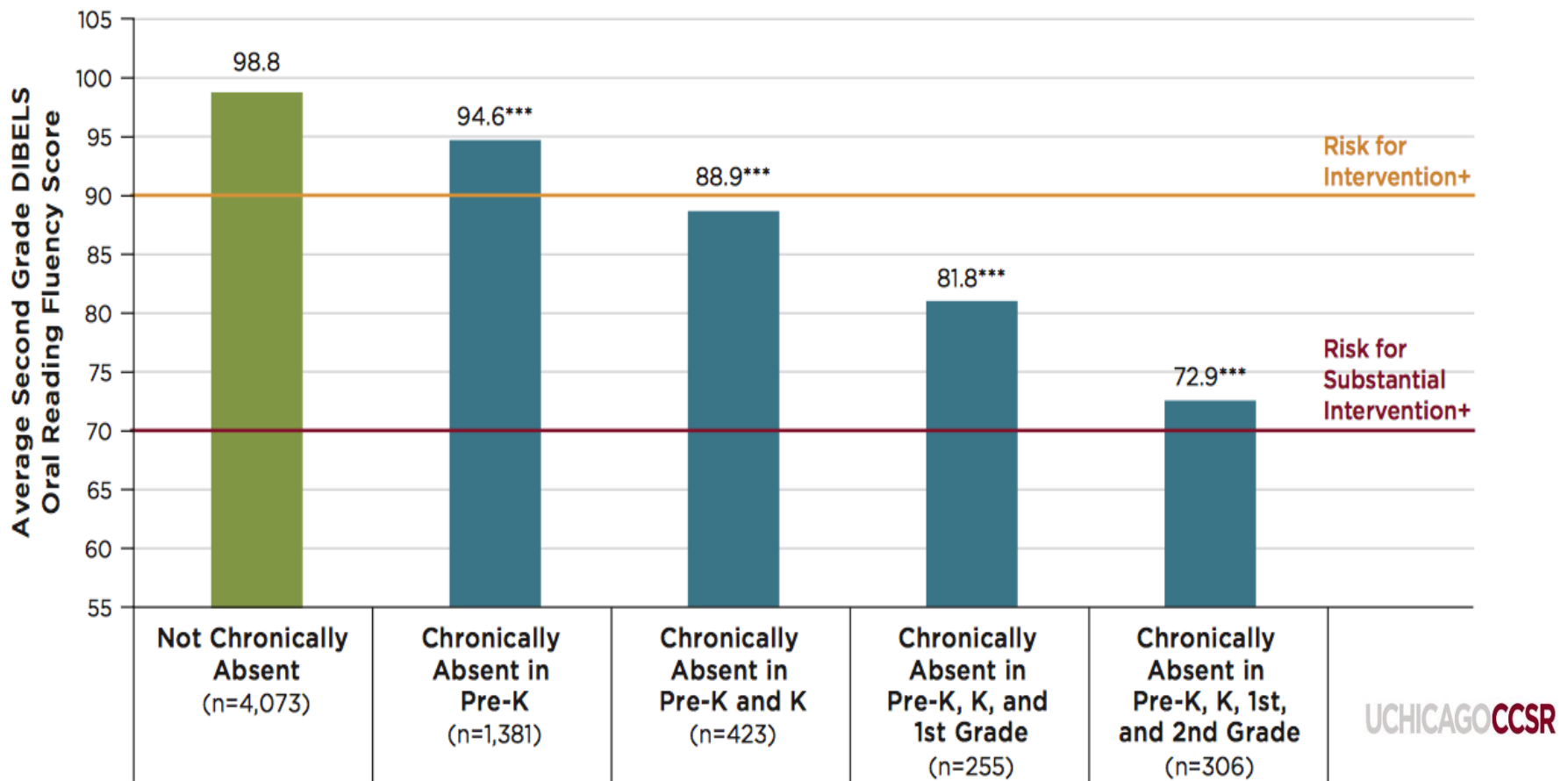


**Instructions found on Bringing Attendance Home Toolkit**

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/for-parents/bringing-attendance-home-toolkit/>



## Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for Low 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

Chronic absence in  
kindergarten

Lower levels of  
literacy in first  
grade

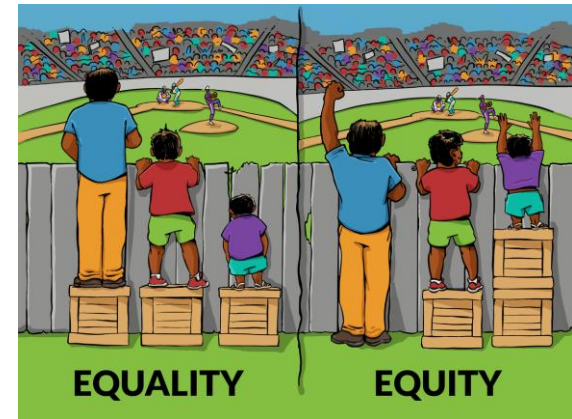
Lower  
achievement as  
far out as fifth  
grade

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 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent.



## Reducing Chronic Absence Can Help Close Equity Gaps



- Vulnerable children, especially those living in poverty, are 2-3 times more likely to experience chronic absence at earlier ages.
- Vulnerable children are much less likely to have the resources to make up for lost learning time in the classroom.
- Vulnerable children are more likely to experience multiple years of chronic absence



## **Requires New Paradigm on Attendance**

### **Truancy**

- Counts unexcused absences
- Emphasizes compliance with school rules
- Uses legal, typically more punitive solutions

### **Chronic Absence**

- Counts all absences
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days.
- Uses preventive strategies, positive messaging

# This Is a Watershed Moment For Advancing The Work

## 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.

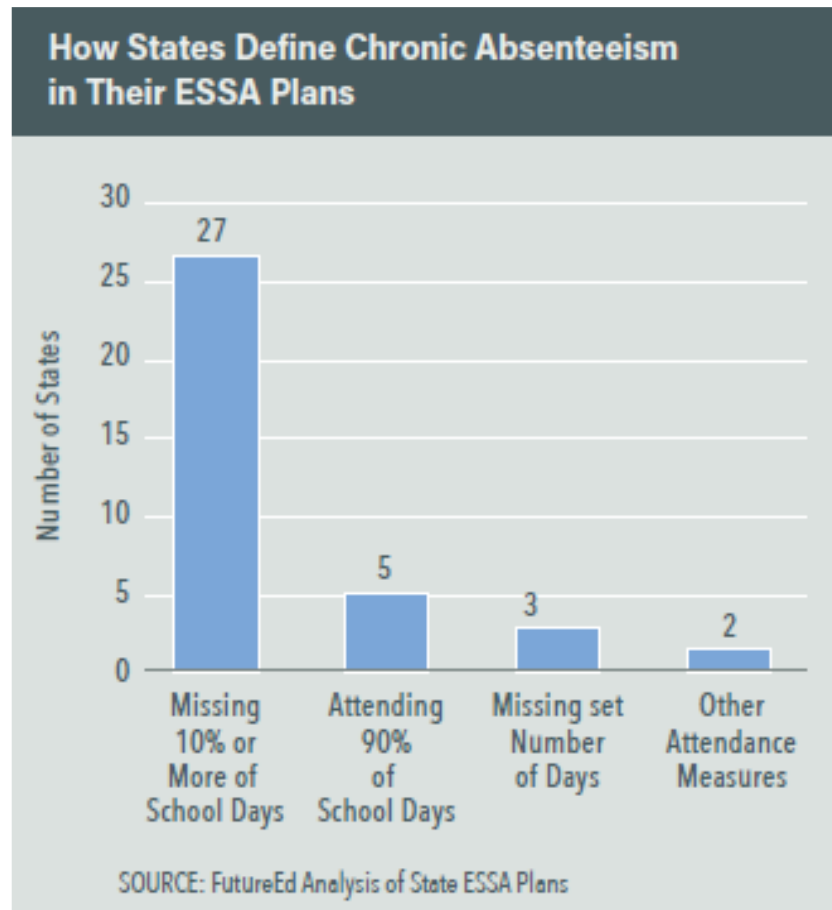
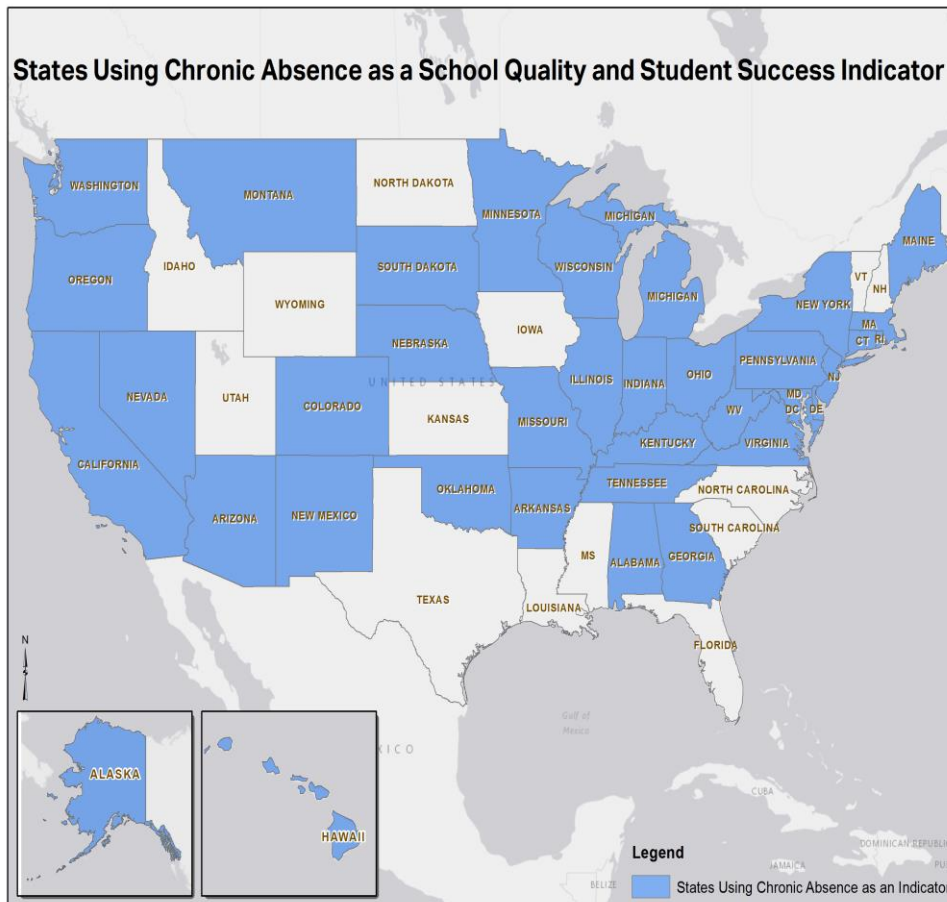
Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

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.

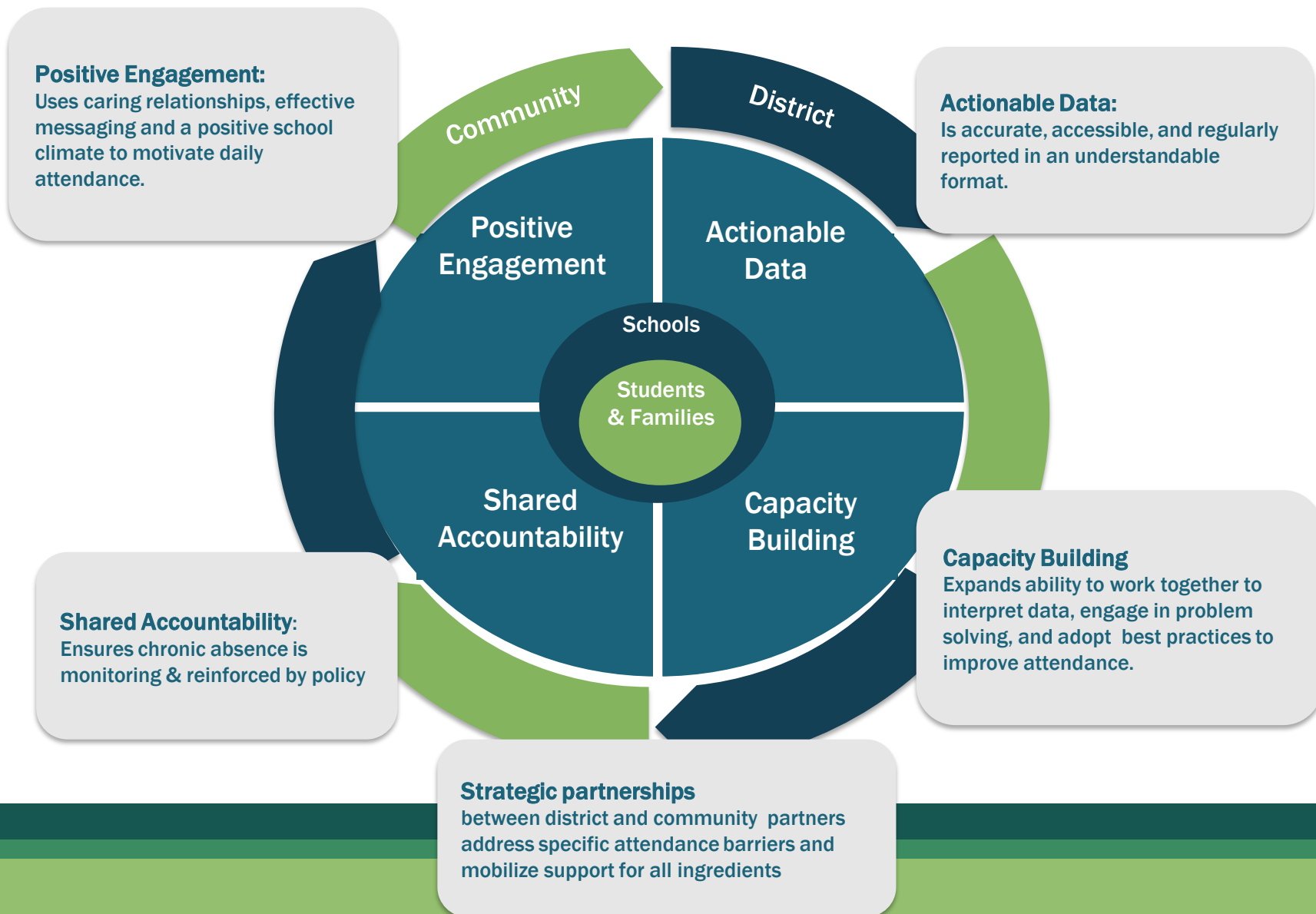


**72% of states (36 + DC) adopted chronic absence as a metric in their ESSA plan.**



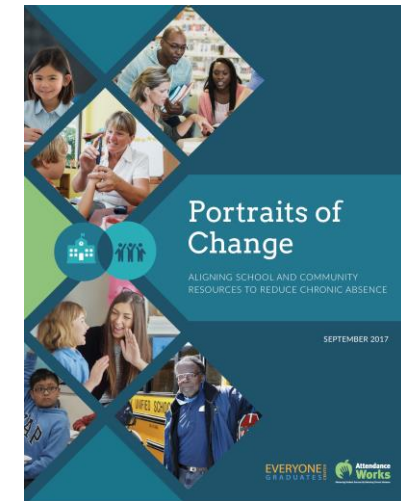
**Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under the Every Student Succeeds Act**  
**Future Ed, Georgetown University, September 2017.**






# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach





## Tailor Response to Scale & Intensity of the Challenge (Portraits of Change)



Percent of Students Chronically Absent	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools	
<b>Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)</b>	9,921		11%
<b>High Chronic Absence (20-29%)</b>	10,330		11%
<b>Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)</b>	28,320		31%
<b>Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)</b>	21,190		23%
<b>Low Chronic Absence (0-4%)</b>	22,572		24%
<b>Grand Total</b>	92,333		



## Partners for Change

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.



## Understanding Contributing Factors to Chronic Absence

### Faulty Beliefs

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Don't realize just missing 2 days per month can affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

### Barriers

- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Chronic illness
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Poor Transportation
- Housing instability
- High mobility
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice system

### Negative School Experience

- Struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective / exclusionary school discipline
- Parents had prior harmful school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### Lack of Engagement

- Lack of culturally relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school
- Poor school climate
- Discouraged due to lack of credits



## Health Interventions

### Asthma

- Asthma friendly schools
- Environmental assessments
- Asthma friendly homes

### Oral Health

- Community-based oral health programs
- School-based sealant programs
- Mobile clinics

### Nutrition

- Community eligibility
- Universal breakfast
- Food backpack programs
- Farm-to-school programs

### Bullying

- Safe Routes to Schools
- Bullying education programs
- Support groups

### Mental Health

- School-based mental health programs
- Universal interventions
- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

### Vision

- School-based vision screening programs



## Recognize that Going to School Reflects When Families Have...

### Hope

for a better future



### Faith

that school will help you or your child succeed

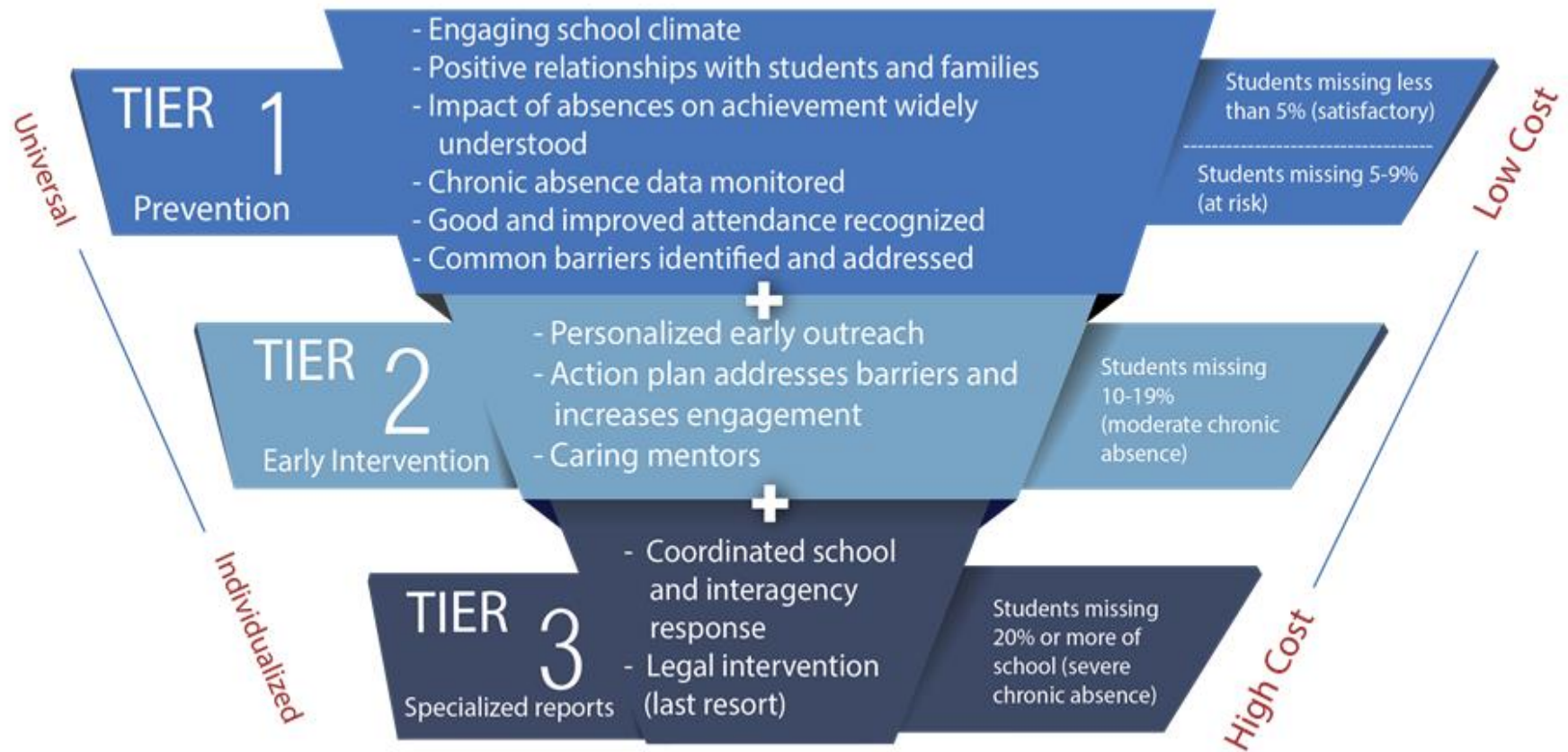


### Capacity

Resources, skills, and knowledge needed to get to school



## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





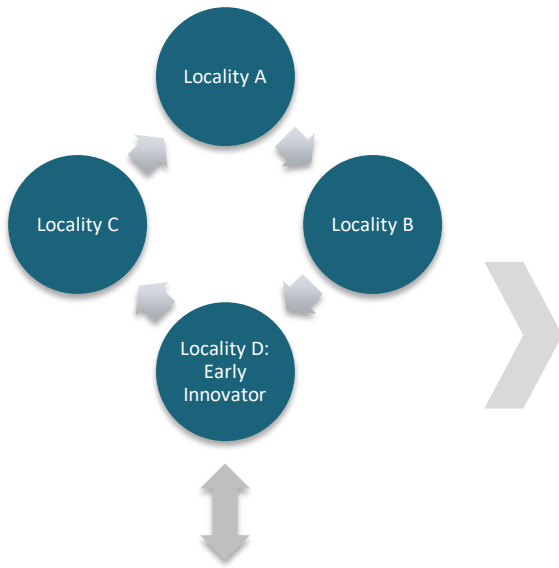


## Recommendations for State Action

- ✓ **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.

# We create the conditions for change that cultivates peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice

## Advance practice through peer learning



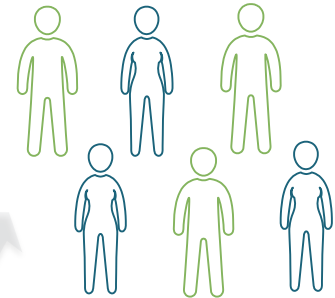
### Peer opportunities to:

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

## 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

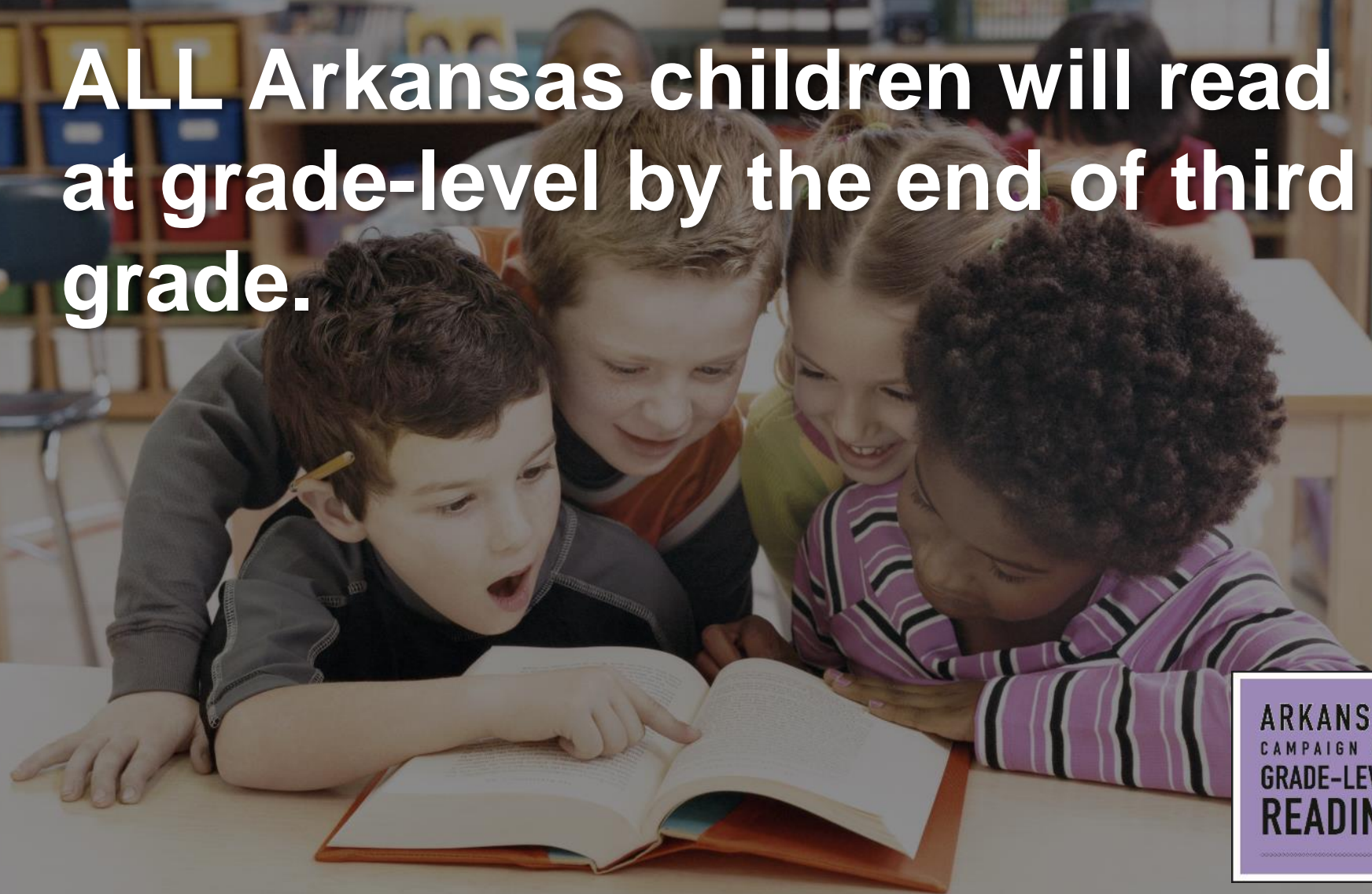
## Spread work through TA and policy



Ongoing peer learning, technical assistance, administrative guidance, regulations, legislation, etc. promote best practices & systemic change

# *Our Goal*

**ALL Arkansas children will read  
at grade-level by the end of third  
grade.**



**ARKANSAS  
CAMPAIGN FOR  
GRADE-LEVEL  
READING**

# Local Strategy First

Started with a learning community of a few GLR communities and school districts recruited through superintendents' association (2013-2015)

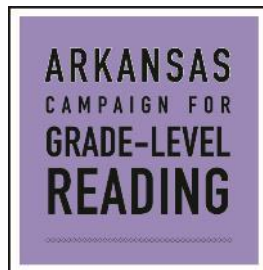
1. Formed local teams
2. Analyzed data
3. Learned about strategies
4. Set goals
5. Developed action plans
6. Monitored progress



# Regional Educational Coops

Early success led to invitation to work with coops  
(January 2016 – Present)

1. Presentations to administrators and teaser workshops
2. Replicated learning community process in eight coops, working with 45+ districts





# State Level Strategy



LEADING  
ATTENDANCE  
IN ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS  
CAMPAIGN FOR  
GRADE-LEVEL  
READING

CULTIVATE

ANALYZE

COLLABORATE

ADVOCATE

LEVERAGE

AR-GLR

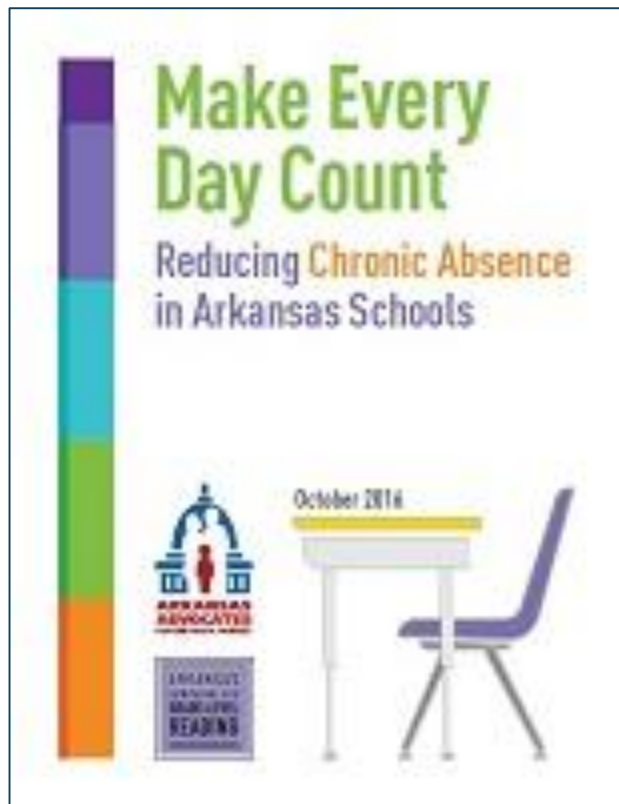
# Leading Attendance in Arkansas

How principals can help students succeed by reducing chronic

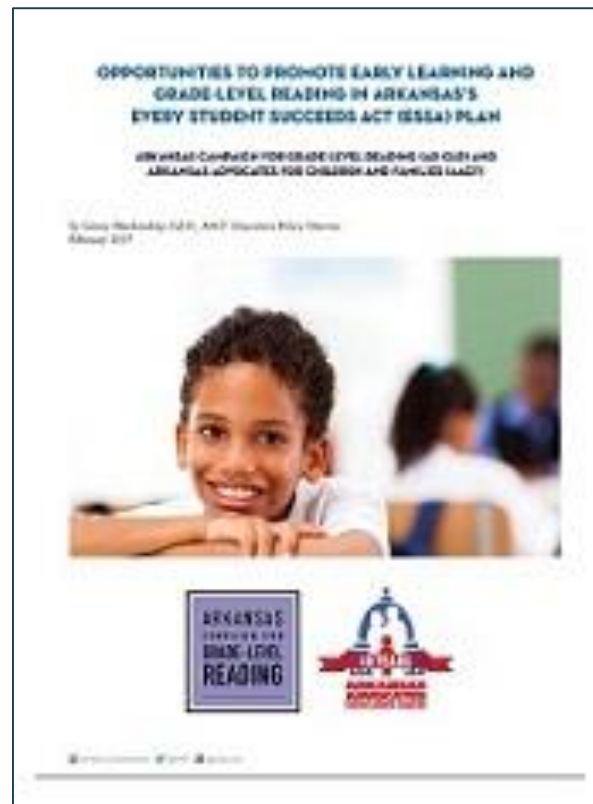
2016

ARKANSAS  
CAMPAIGN FOR  
GRADE-LEVEL  
READING

# State Level Strategy



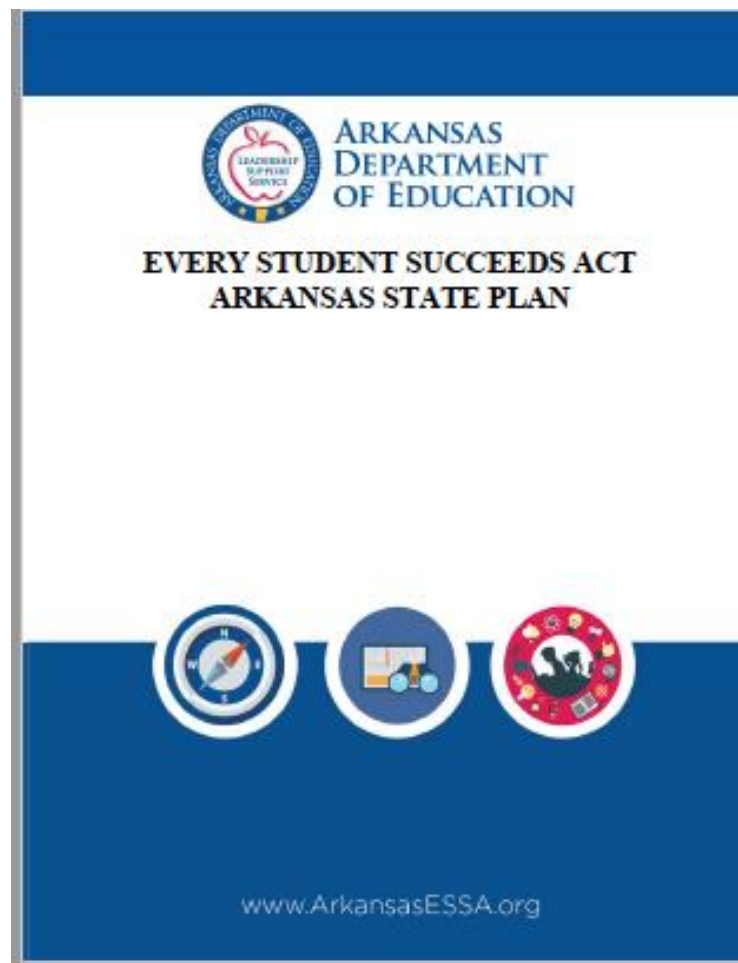
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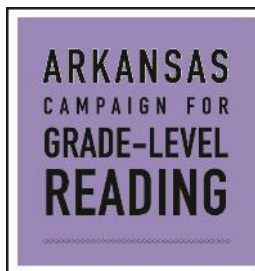
2017



# State Level Strategy



2017





# State Level Strategy

**Table 15. School Quality and Student Success Indicators Available for Inclusion**

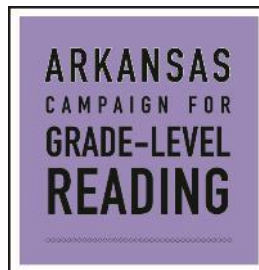
Indicator	Grade Level or Cohort for Points Available	Points for Student
Student Engagement	Grades K -11	Point based on Chronic Absence (CA) risk level: $CA < 5\%$ = 1.0 Point $5 \leq CA < 10\%$ = 0.5 Point $CA \geq 10\%$ = 0.0 Point
Science Achievement	Grades 3 – 10	Ready or Exceeds = 1.0 Point Close = 0.5 Point Not Ready = 0.0 Point
Science Growth	Grades 4 – 10	Using ACT Aspire SGPs for modeling purposes $SGP \geq 75$ = 1.0 Point $25 \leq SGP < 75$ = 0.5 Point $SGP \leq 25$ = 0.0 Point
Reading at Grade Level	Grades 3 – 10	Ready or Exceeds = 1.0 Point Close = 0.5 Point Not Ready = 0.0 Point

# State Action

1. Examine data and ensure quality
2. Form a state leadership team
3. Develop a data-informed comprehensive system of technical assistance

# State Level Strategy

1. Examine data and ensure quality
  - Local learning communities
  - Make Every Day Count report
  - Definitions
  - Systems
2. Form a state leadership team
  - Accountability
  - Communications
  - Data
  - Learning services
  - Professional development



# State Level Strategy

3. Develop a data-informed comprehensive system of technical assistance
  - Topics
    - Attendance teams
    - Data – easy to use, regular access, and how to analyze
    - Goal-setting
    - Three tiered approach and strategies in each tier
    - Action plans
    - Continuous improvement cycles

# State Level Strategy

3. Develop a data-informed comprehensive system of technical assistance
  - Platforms
    - Written guidance
    - Easily accessible resources
    - Online training modules – Teaching Attendance
    - Build coop capacity – train the trainer