



# Messaging Good Attendance All Year Long





Welcome



**Marci Young**

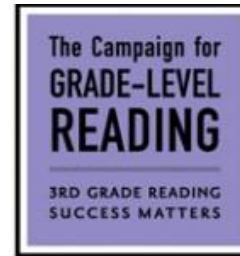
Vice President, Impact

**United Way Worldwide**





## 2016 Convening Partners





## **2016 New Collaborating Partners**

**American Federation of Teachers**

**National Association of School Nurses**

**National Education Association**

**National Family Support Network**



## 2015 By the Numbers

- **More than 400 communities in 45 states pinned on the Attendance Action Map**
- **182,300 website page views in September**
- **4,400 listserv subscribers**
- **1,351 media hits**
- **8,800 tweets using #schooleveryday creating 15.7 million impressions**
- **212 superintendents signed Call to Action appearing in EdWeek**



## 2016 Campaign Goals

1. **Expand the public's awareness** of the importance of attendance particularly for our most vulnerable children with special attention to addressing barriers related physical and behavioral health;
2. **Use data** to drive and take action; and
3. **Activate a wide array of stakeholders** -- educators and likely and unlikely public agencies and community allies



## What's New in 2016

- **Greater emphasis on strategic messaging throughout the year** with September as a launch activity.
- **Leveraging Every Student, Every Day Initiative** (including national success mentor initiative, June Summit, OCR data release)
- New momentum created by inclusion of chronic absence in **ESSA**
- Even greater emphasis on the chronic absence as a **barrier to equal opportunity to learn**, especially for our most vulnerable students.



**Welcome**



**Hedy Chang**

Executive Director  
*Attendance Works*

**& Members of the  
Attendance Works Team**





## **Poll Questions**

- 1. Did your community participate in Attendance Awareness Month last year?**
- 2. Is your community planning to participate in Attendance Awareness Month in 2016?**



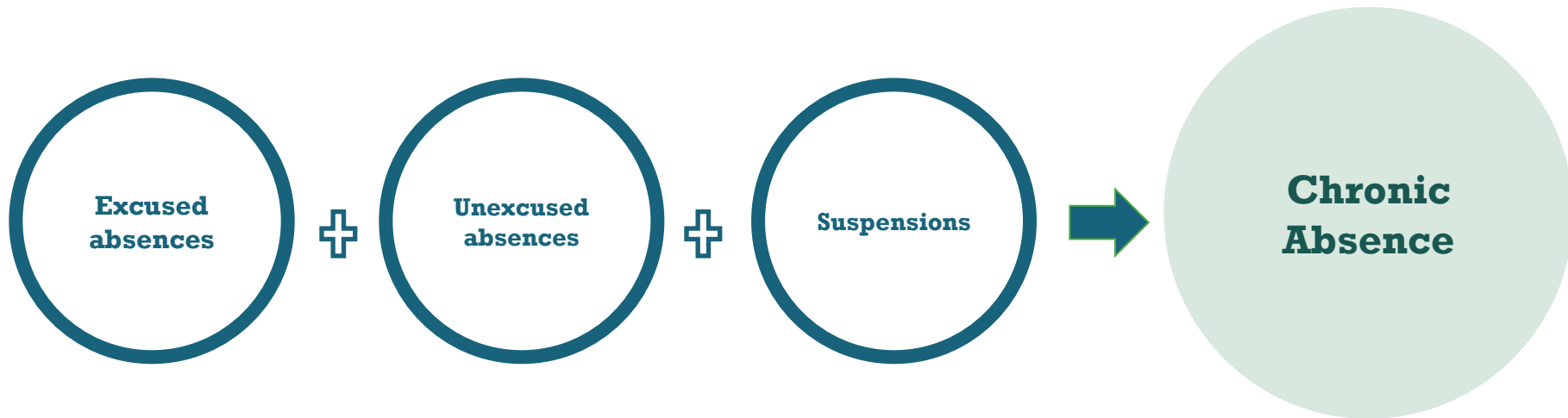
## Agenda

1. **Review of Key Concepts**
2. **Messaging Attendance – What Works and What Doesn't**
  - ★ **Lysette Lemay** and **Yesenia Gonzalez**  
*Parent Teacher Home Visit Project*
  - ★ **Todd Rogers**  
*Harvard University*
  - ★ **Jill Habig**  
*Office of Attorney General Kamala Harris*
  - ★ **Josh Skolnick**  
*U.S. Department of Education*
3. **Announcements and Resources**



## 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).



## Multiple Measures of Attendance

### Average Daily Attendance

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.

### Truancy

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.

### Chronic Absence

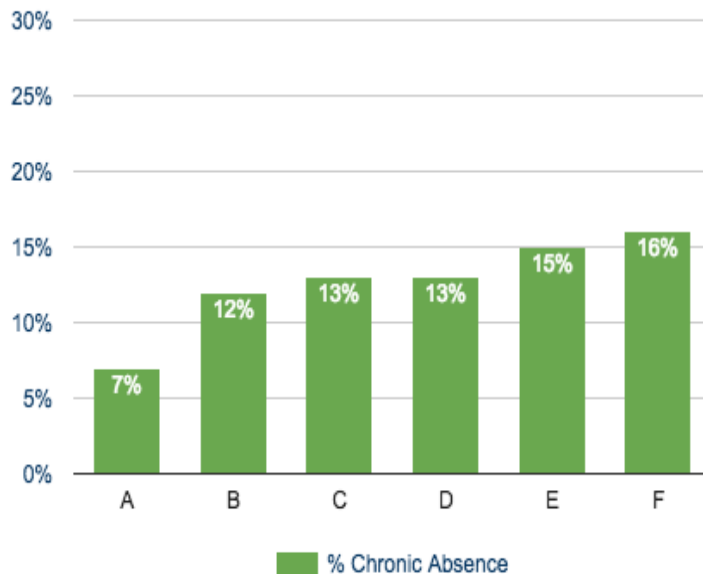
Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days and will be releasing a report in Spring 2016. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric in ESSA.



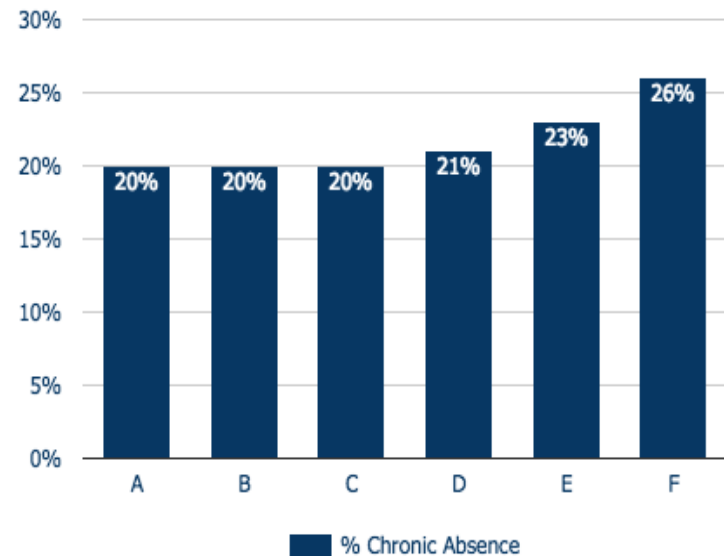
## Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95%  $\neq$  A

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



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



98% ADA = little chronic absence

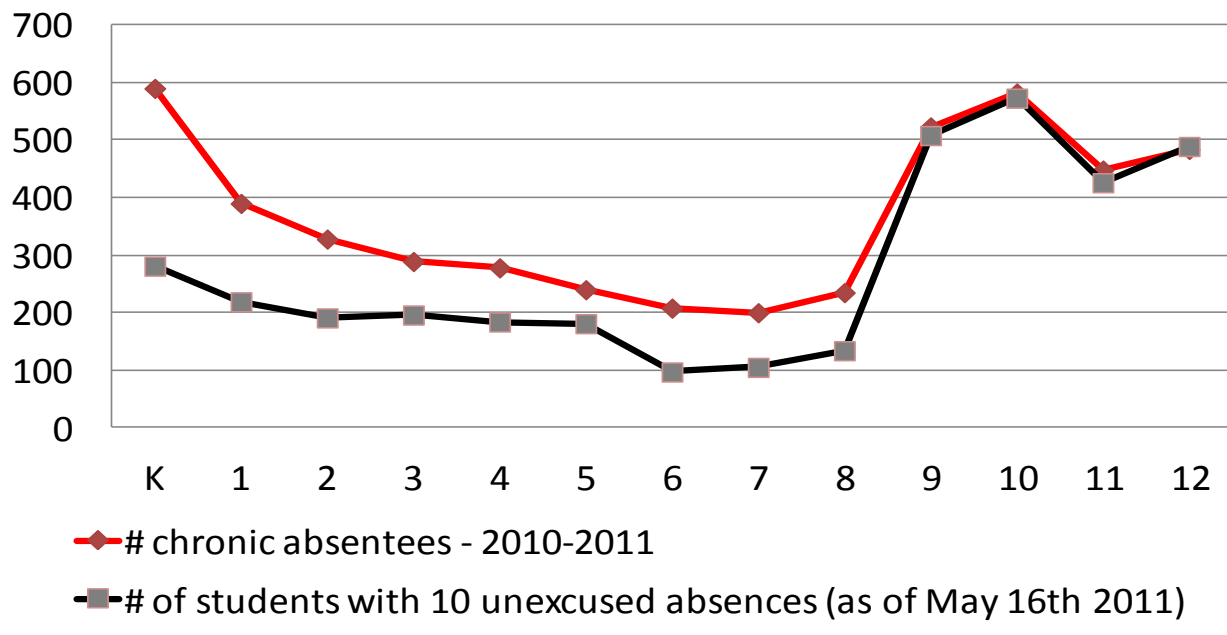
95% ADA = don't know

93% ADA = significant chronic absence



## Chronic Absence Vs. Truancy

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





## Chronic Absence Is Easily Masked If We Only Monitor Missing Consecutive days

September					October					November					December					January					
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	
													X				X								
							X				X														
		X	X					X				X			X	X					X	X	X		

February					March					April					May					June					
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	
				X						X															
X	X													X		X						X	X		
								X					X												

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*







## Why Does Attendance Matter?

**4 A School Success Framework**

**Attainment Over Time**

**Achievement Every Year**

**Attendance Every Day**

**Advocacy For All**

Developed by Annie E. Casey Foundation & America's Promise Alliance  
For more info go to <http://www.americaspromise.org/parent-engagement-toolkit>



## 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

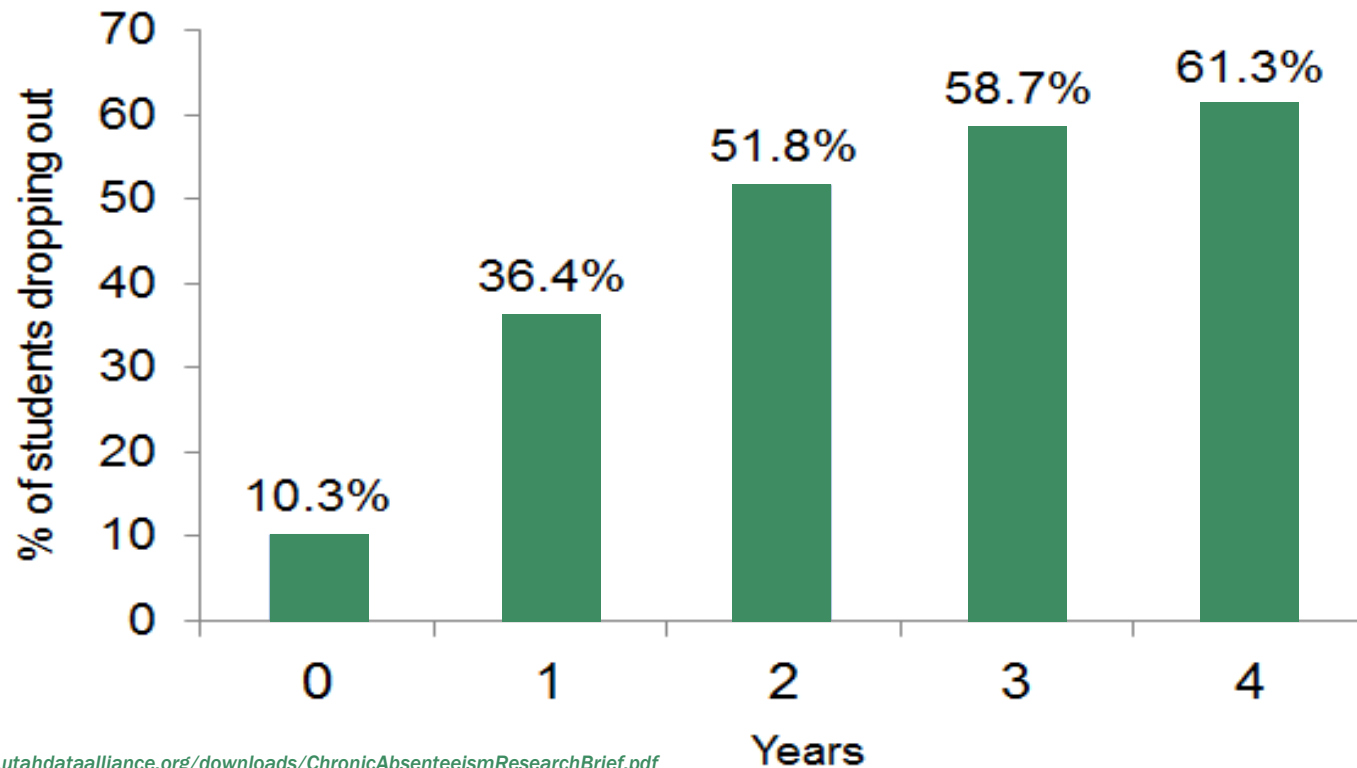
A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- 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

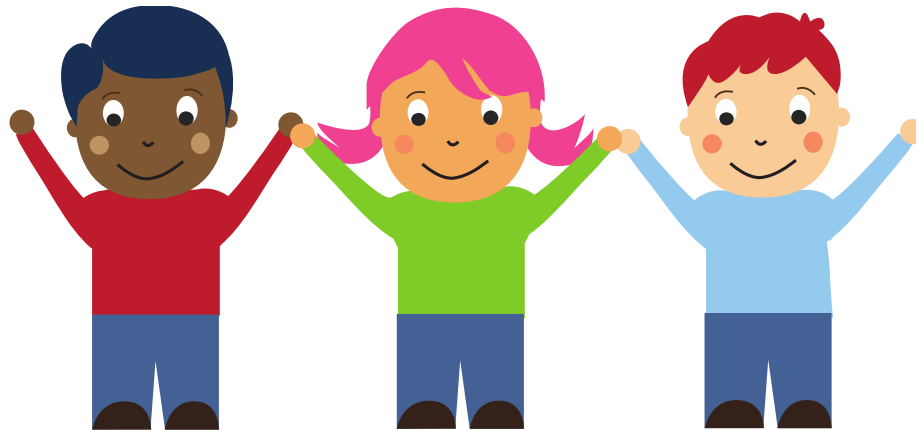


## The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades



# How Can We Address Chronic Absence?





## 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

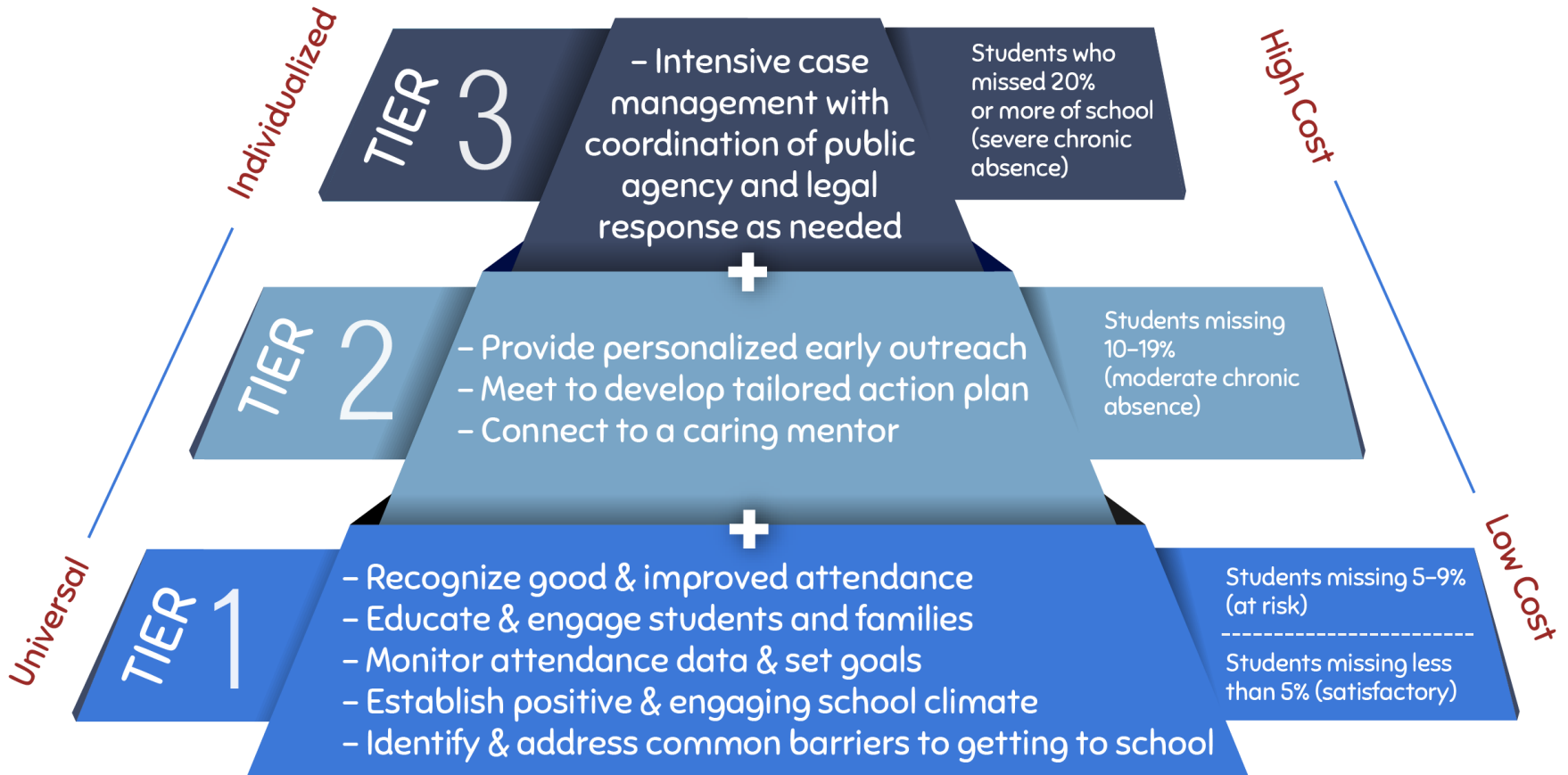
- Child struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### 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



## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





## Key Messages

1. **Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the workplace.**
2. **Excused and unexcused absences quickly add up to too much time lost in the classroom, starting in kindergarten and even pre-k, especially for the most vulnerable populations.**
3. **Students are at risk academically if they miss 10 percent of the school year, or about 18 days.**



## Key Messages

- 4. Chronic absence, or missing 10 percent or more of the school year, does not just affect the students who miss school.**
- 5. Educators and families need to monitor how many days each student misses school for any reason – excused, unexcused or suspensions – so we can intervene early.**
- 6. Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community works with families and schools to create a tiered system of supports that starts with prevention.**

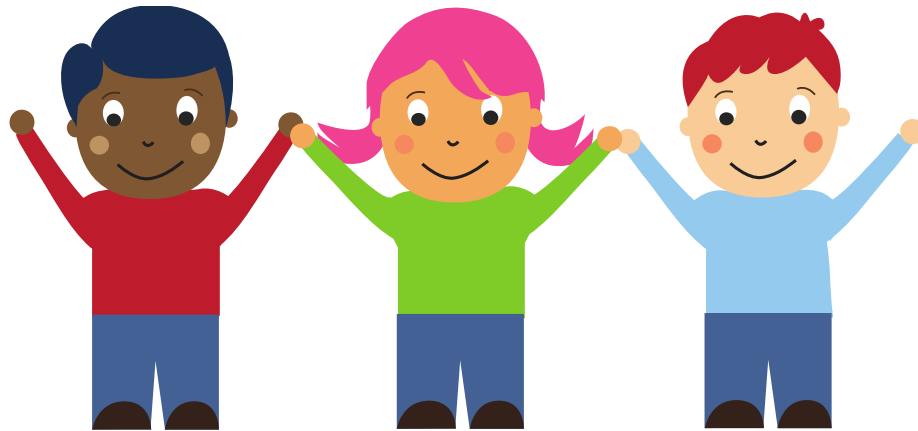




## Key Messages

- 7. Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.**
- 8. Reducing chronic absence can help close the achievement gap.**
- 9. Map and address the attendance gap.**

# Parent Teacher Home Visit Project





## Questions

1. **Describe the PTHVP and why attendance has become an important topic for teachers to address with families?**
2. **How does PTHVP address attendance?**
3. **What have you learned about how teachers view absenteeism?**
4. **What have you learned about how parents understand or misunderstand the impact of absences on their hopes and dreams for their children?**
5. **What do you do to correct those misunderstandings?**

# Increasing Student Success One Visit At A Time



# Parent/Teacher Home Visits



The concept behind the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project non-profit is simple.

Teachers and families come together, in a unique setting, as equal partners, to build trust and form a relationship.

This strategy creates space for key partners to share dreams, expectations, experiences, and, eventually, tools to boost academic and social success.

## IN THE PAST YEAR:

\* PTHVP trained **5,000** teachers.

\* We expanded to **400** participating schools in **19** states.

\* Together, we conducted **31,000** relational home visits.

# Our Home Visit “Absolutes”



**Home  
Visits**

**Voluntary for All**

**Staff Trained and Compensated**

**Visit in Teams of Two**

**Across the Board (Not Targeted)**

**Relational (Hopes and Dreams)**

# Teacher's View of Absenteeism (From a Parent's Perspective)



- It's the parent's responsibility
- If the student is not in their seat, the assumption is that the parents "don't care"
- I'm doing my part, why aren't they doing their part?



# Impact of Absences on Hopes and Dreams



- In the first visit under our model, the family and the teachers discuss their hopes and dreams for the student
- Families don't often make the connection between their kids missing school and the impact it has on their hopes/dreams for their child

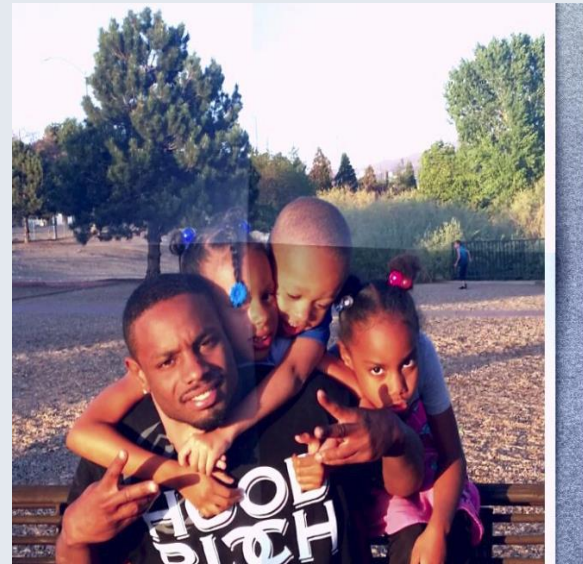


# Home Visits used to Address Misunderstandings



## Visit 1

- Relationship Building
- Focus is on building trust and opening new lines of communication



# Home Visits used to Address Misunderstandings



## Visit 2

- Informational
- Focus is on academics and capacity building



# Parent/Teacher Home Visit Outcomes:



- For Staff and Families:
  - Increased Trust and Empathy for Co-Educator
  - Increased Capacity To Better Engage Student in Academics
- For Students:
  - Increased student attendance rates
  - Increased academic success for students
  - Decreased suspension and expulsion rates
  - Decreased vandalism at school site

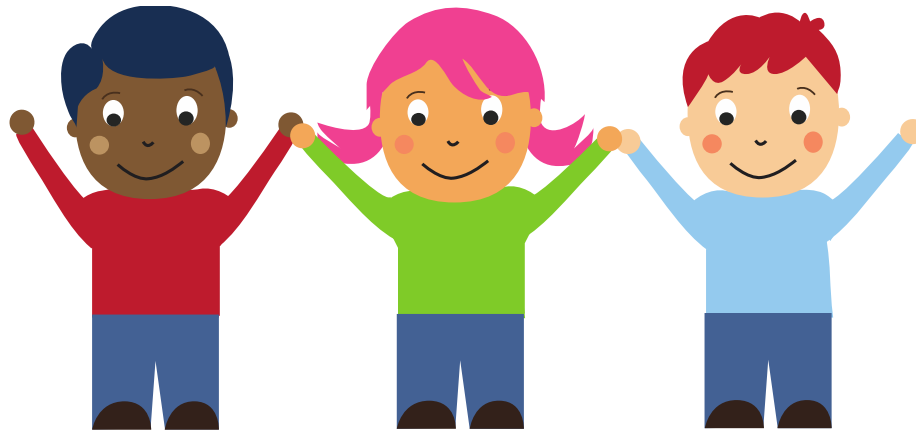
# Contact Information



Lysette Lemay: [lysette@pthvp.org](mailto:lysette@pthvp.org)

Yesenia Gonzalez: [yesenia@pthvp.org](mailto:yesenia@pthvp.org)

# Harvard University





## Questions

- 1. Tell us a bit about the Student Social Support R&D Lab and why it began to focus on attendance?**
- 2. What have you learned from your research about how parent beliefs about attendance affect attendance?**
- 3. What are some examples of low-cost, easy-to-implement ways schools and communities can reduce absenteeism?**
- 4. How can school districts implement what you've learned, or even participate in research?**

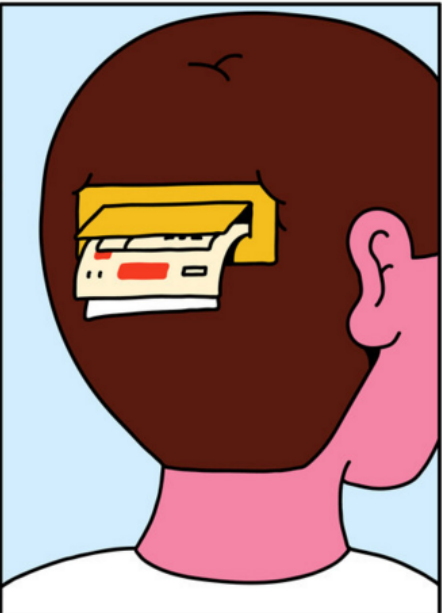


SECTIONS Q **The New York Times**

Campaign Stops | CAMPAIGN STOPS

## In Iowa, Voting Science at Work

**Gray Matter**  
By TODD ROGERS and ADAN ACEVEDO FEB. 5, 2016



OF the two winners of the Iowa caucuses, who's the better behavioral scientist, Ted Cruz or Hillary Clinton? To judge from their campaigns' respective "get out the vote" efforts, both politicians seem to have studied up on recent research in the field.

Let's start with Mr. Cruz. His campaign sent a [mailer](#) to the homes of Iowans pressuring them to show up to their caucus locations. The mailer noted "low expected voter turnout" in their area, gave them a grade for their past voting participation and disclosed the grades that the

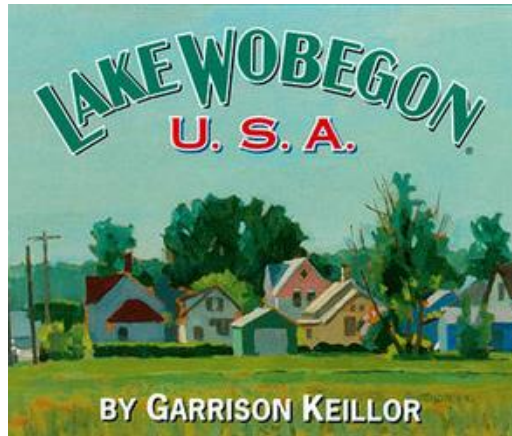
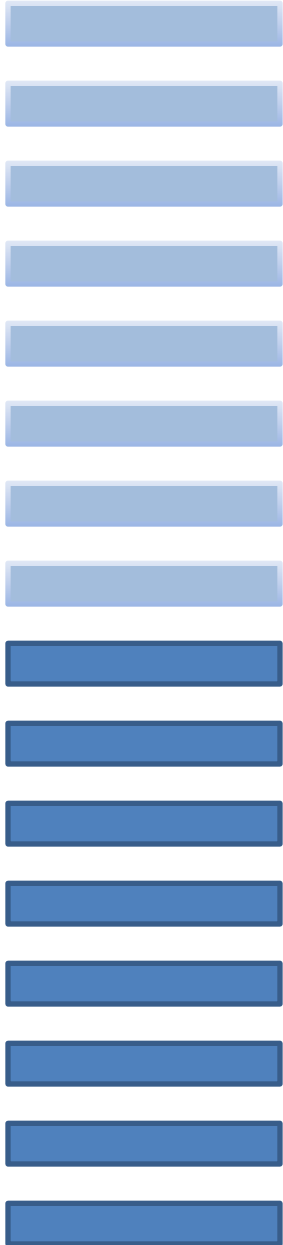
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@Todd\_Rogers\_



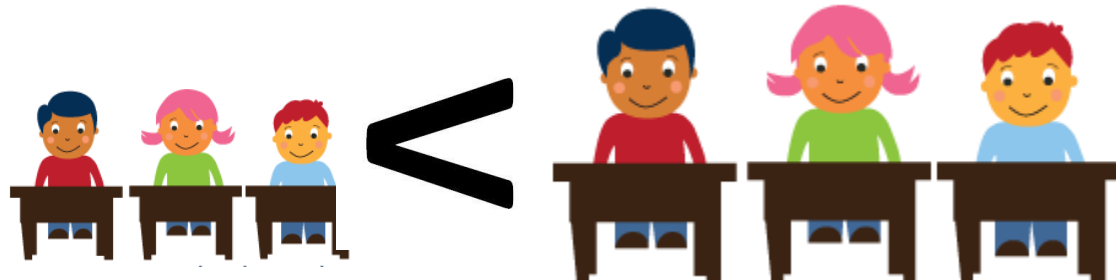
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@Todd\_Rogers\_



2. What have you learned from your research about how parent beliefs about attendance affect attendance?



...where all the women  
are strong, all the men  
are good-looking, and  
all the children are  
above average.



3. What are some examples of low-cost, easy-to-implement ways schools and communities can reduce absenteeism?



June Update

## ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP

Dear Parent/Guardian of Todd Rogers,

Todd has missed more school than his classmates.\*

Todd has been absent 6 days this school year.

There are just a few weeks of school left.

Excused and unexcused absences affect Todd's learning.

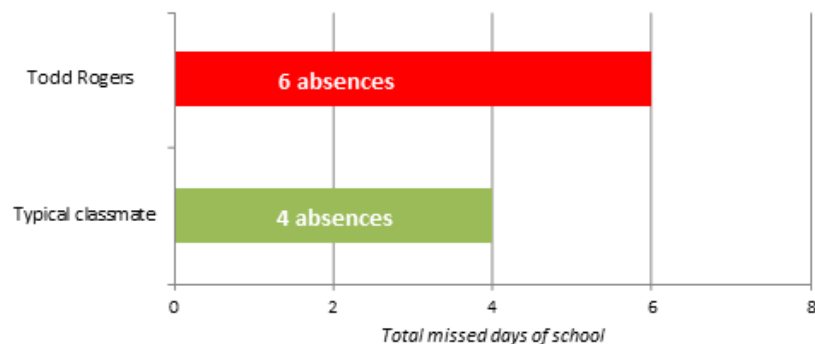
Thank you for continuing to help Todd attend school as much as possible.

Sincerely,

Doug Elmendorf  
Dean  
Harvard Kennedy School

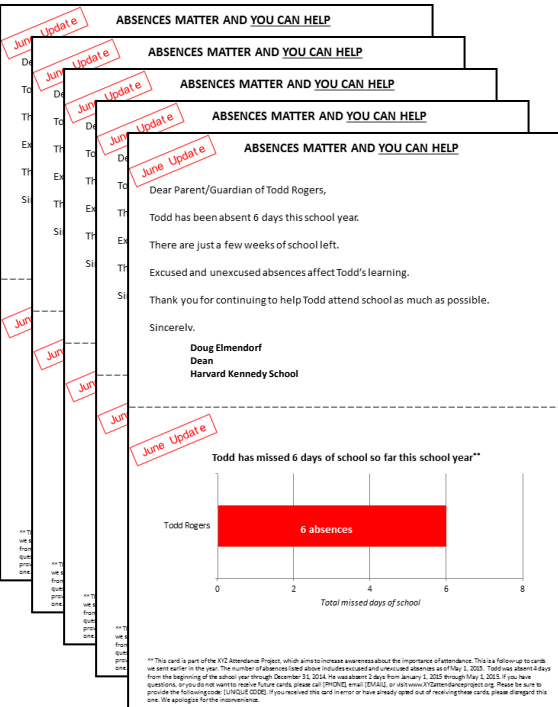
June Update

Todd has missed 50% more school than his classmates this school year\*\*



\* Todd's absences are compared to the typical number of absences among his classmates in 12 at JFK School.

\*\* This card is part of the XYZ Attendance Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance. This is a follow-up to cards we sent earlier in the year. The number of absences listed above includes excused and unexcused absences as of May 1, 2015. Todd was absent 4 days from the beginning of the school year through December 31, 2014. He was absent 2 days from January 1, 2015 through May 1, 2015. If you have questions, or you do not want to receive future cards, please call [PHONE], email [EMAIL], or visit [www.XYZattendanceproject.org](http://www.XYZattendanceproject.org). Please be sure to provide the following code: [UNIQUE CODE]. If you received this card in error or have already opted out of receiving these cards, please disregard this one. We apologize for the inconvenience.



Reduce absences 1.1 days/student  
*(Net 15k-20k incremental days in district)*

~\$5/incr. day

*(Complement to mentors/social workers \$120/incr. day)*

11% reduction in chronic  
 absenteeism

Easy to implement, scale

Some false beliefs matter,  
 Some do not

Todd\_Rogers@hks.harvard.edu  
 @Todd\_Rogers\_

4. How can school districts implement what you've learned, or even participate in research?

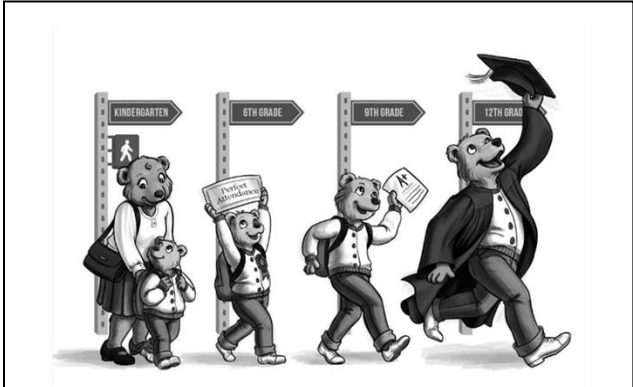


[www.S3rd.org/research](http://www.S3rd.org/research)

*Todd\_Rogers@hks.harvard.edu*

*@Todd\_Rogers\_*





**Attendance Matters**

XYZ School District  
 123 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
 City, State, 12345

**ABSENCES MATTER AND YOU CAN HELP**

February 2015

Dear Parent/Guardian of Todd Rogers,

Todd has missed more school than his classmates\*.

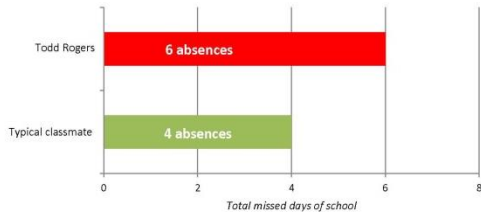
Todd was absent 6 days so far this school year.

Students fall behind when they miss school – whether students are absent for excused or unexcused reasons.

You can have a big effect on Todd's absences going forward – and we appreciate your help.

Sincerely,  
 John Smith  
 Superintendent

Todd has **missed more school days than his classmates** so far this school year\*



\*Todd's absences are compared to the typical number of absences among his classmates in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Harvard Middle School.  
 \*\* This card is part of the Attendance Project, which aims to increase awareness about the importance of attendance. This is a follow-up to cards we sent earlier in the year. The number of absences listed above includes excused and unexcused absences as of 2/4/15.

**In  
 Class  
 Today**



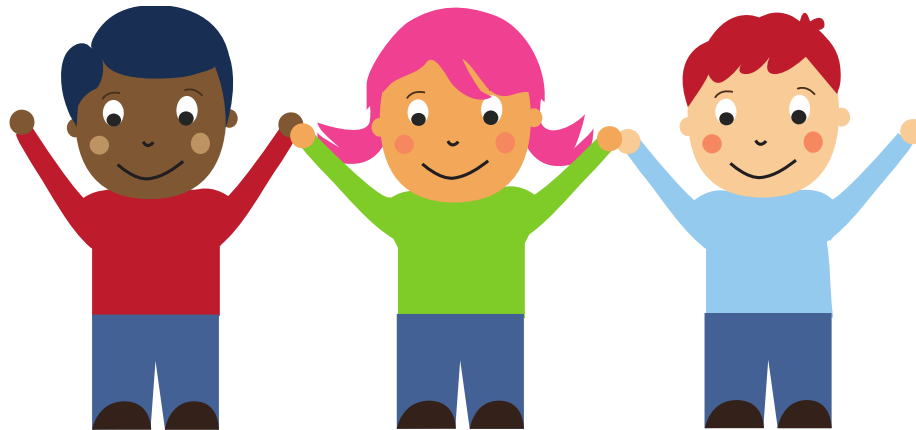
[www.InClassToday.com](http://www.InClassToday.com)  
[info@inclasstoday.com](mailto:info@inclasstoday.com)

Or email me:

[Todd\\_Rogers@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:Todd_Rogers@hks.harvard.edu)



# Office of the Attorney General





## Questions

1. **Why is the AG's office so concerned about attendance?**
2. **What have you learned from the Ad Council's research about parent attitudes and beliefs about attendance?**
3. **What makes a message about attendance effective?**
4. **What resources are available in the AG's parent toolkit?**



# BCJ

**Bureau of Children's Justice**

*Jill E. Habig, Special Counsel to the Attorney General  
Office of Attorney General Kamala D. Harris  
California Department of Justice*

[oag.ca.gov/bcj](https://oag.ca.gov/bcj)

# + IN SCHOOL ON TRACK 2015

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S 2015 REPORT ON  
CALIFORNIA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
TRUANCY & ABSENTEEISM CRISIS

**#EveryKidCounts**



[www.oag.ca.gov/truancy](http://www.oag.ca.gov/truancy)

**83%**

of Students Chronically  
Absent in Kindergarten & 1st  
Grade Are Unable to Read  
On-Level by 3rd Grade

Absences Lead  
to Dropouts

Students Who Cannot Read  
On-Level in 3rd Grade Are

**4X**

More Likely to Drop Out  
Than Kids Who Can

# Positive Parent Messaging Toolkit ([www.oag.ca.gov/truancy/toolkit](http://www.oag.ca.gov/truancy/toolkit))



With support and feedback from over 3 dozen agencies and organizations, we released a toolkit on how best to talk to parents about elementary school absences.

# The Toolkit Is Based on Research Conducted in Partnership with the Ad Council

## We sent communications experts to:

- Interview researchers, principals, teachers, district officials, etc.
- Conduct ethnographies in the homes of 24 families of chronically absent elementary school students.
- Survey over 850 parents whose children missed 10+ days in the previous year.



We wanted to learn about the **causes** of elementary school chronic absenteeism and the most effective **messaging strategies** for supporting parents.



# There Are Many Reasons Why Kids Are Chronically Absent. One Is Parental Misunderstandings.

## Reasons:

- Parent stressors
- Transportation issues
- School/neighborhood safety (e.g. bullying)
- Chronic illness (e.g. asthma)
- Sibling effect
- **Parental misunderstandings**

## Examples of Misunderstandings:

- Early grades are not as important
- Students will catch up
- Only consecutive absences have a negative impact
- Absences are fine as long as the parents sign off
- Attendance is more about legal compliance

These **misunderstandings** have **consequences**.

# Schools Inadvertently Reinforce Some Negative Behaviors

## School Behaviors that...

### Reinforce Attendance

Class rewards for good attendance (e.g. popcorn or ice cream parties)

Individual recognition for students with good attendance

Big motivators for kids, but not parents

### Reinforce Absenteeism

- Impersonal letters
- Teachers send work home in response to absences
- Teachers do not address absenteeism issue with the parent
- Parents do not feel their child is safe in school
- High levels of absenteeism in the class

Reinforces parents' existing attitudes and behaviors toward absences

### Impersonal Letters:

- Easy to disregard
- Many parents felt the school miscounted—but parents couldn't verify because they weren't tracking absences
- Many parents felt that the school didn't understand them

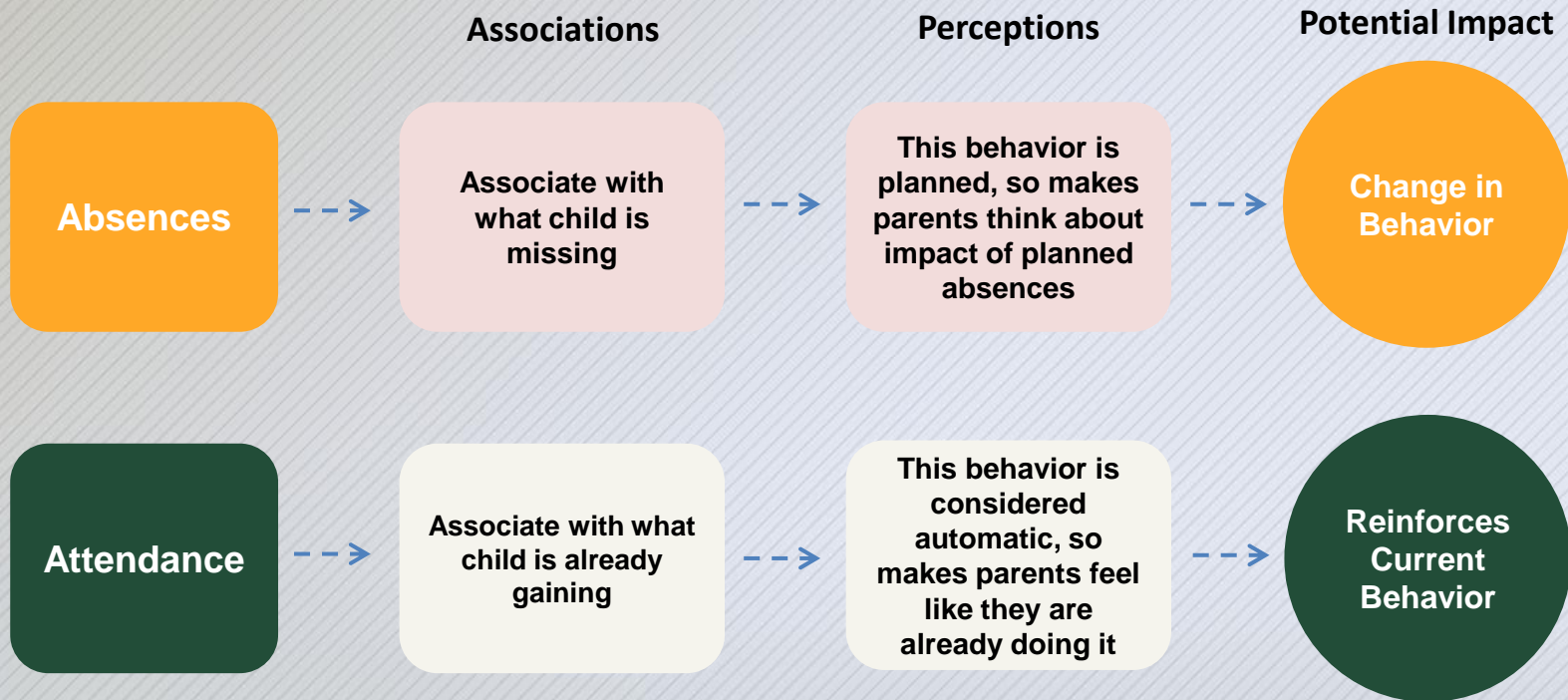
### Sending Work Home:

- Parents thought that completing a makeup packet caught their child up for the missed day's work

### Teachers Not Addressing Absenteeism:

- Most parents reported that they regularly communicate with their children's teacher, but never about absences

# Messages About Absences Work Better than Messages About Attendance



When you say ‘attendance,’ parents think: my child attends school **most of the time**, so it’s OK.

# We Need to Address Misunderstandings and Reset Baselines

## Example of a Misunderstanding

“My child can easily make up for a missed day by completing a homework packet or makeup assignment.”



## How We Can Address

“There are some things learned in school that can’t be made up at home.”

## Current Baseline

“Most of my child’s classmates are absent at least as much as my child (10+ days).”



## How We Can Address

“Missing just 2 days per month puts your child on track to having far more absences than average.”

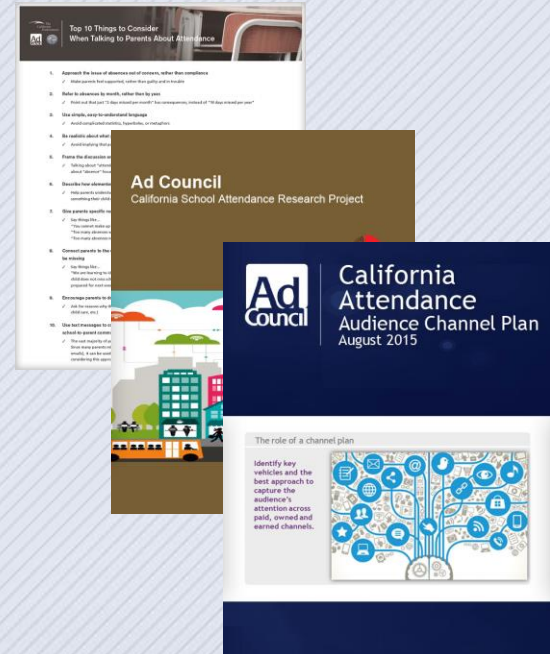
**Get specific & connect the dots.**

# What's in the Toolkit

([www.oag.ca.gov/truancy/toolkit](http://www.oag.ca.gov/truancy/toolkit))

## What's in the Toolkit:

- All of our **research findings** from both the qualitative and quantitative phases.
- **1-page tip sheets** and other tools summarizing some of the most actionable findings.
- **Strategy recommendations** for districts and communities to develop their own communications strategies.



We now have professional messaging and communications research to inform our parent outreach and communications!

# U.S. Department of Education





## Questions

1. **Why is the White House and the U.S. Department of Education so concerned about chronic absence? Why is it part of My Brother's Keeper?**
2. **How can communities leverage the attention that the White House brings to this issue as they plan for Attendance Awareness month?**
3. **What resources are available from the US DOE for messaging about attendance?**

# Helping Our Highest Needs Students By Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: The Role of National and Local Partnerships





# The White House My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative > Targets Chronic Absenteeism



- President Obama launched MBK to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color – and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.
- Chronic Absenteeism fuels the nation's opportunity gaps
- 5 to 7.5 million students are chronically absent each year
- Leads to devastating impact on academic performance, drop out rates, and college and career readiness – particularly in our highest need communities



# The Landscape: Leveraging Resources

- U.S. Department of Education – **Civil Rights Data Collection**: first-ever release of national chronic absenteeism data, May/June 2016
- Launched ***Every Student, Every Day*** cross-agency campaign
- **National Chronic Absenteeism Conference**: Strengthening Cross-Sector Systems of Support for All Students  
*(Washington, D.C. June 8-10)*
- National **Ad Council awareness campaign** – Absences Add Up
- Toolkit for Communities – cross-sector guidance on best practices – Education, Health, Justice, Housing
- MBK Success Mentors – leveraging existing resources and data, public-private partnership



# Next Steps

- Cross-sector collaboration at a local level
- Use data and early warning systems to identify, act and monitor
- Public awareness – this is about achievement and success
- Leverage existing resources – Success Mentors, school partners, community resources
- Attend the National Conference on Chronic Absenteeism – and utilize the free resources available



# Discussion

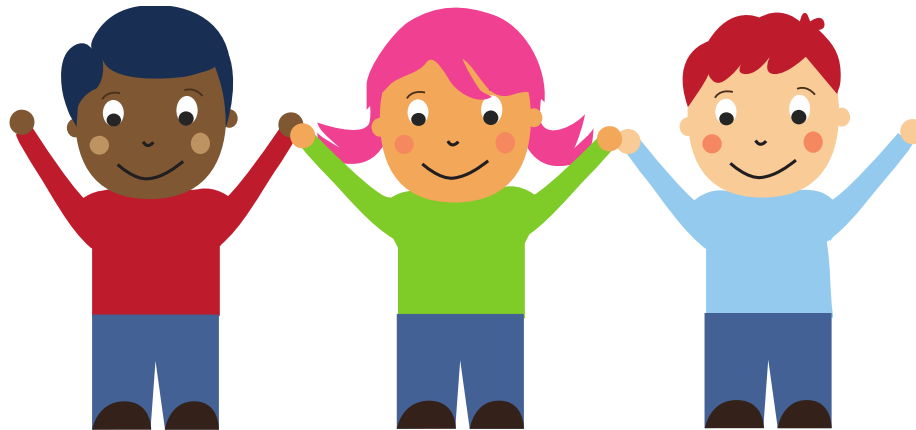




## Questions

- 1. We often hear parents blamed for not getting their children to school. How do we avoid the blame game?**
- 2. What advice would you give communities about starting an effective messaging campaign?**
- 3. What else should communities consider in addition to messaging to reduce chronic absence?**

# Announcements and Resources





## **Cecelia Leong**

*Associate Director of Programs*  
Attendance Works



## Resources Available

- ★ **Attendance Campaign Webinar Series**
- ★ **Regular Email Blasts to Campaign Supporters**
- ★ **Updating the Count Us In! Toolkit**
- ★ **Attendance Awareness Month Website**
- ★ **Research Brief**





## Save the Date! 2016 Webinar Series

- ★ **April 12:** Motivating Good Attendance All Year Long
- ★ **May 17:** Using Data to Drive Action; Portraits of Chronic Absence
- ★ **August 16:** Collective Action: Taking a Cross-Sector Approach
- ★ **September 8:** Understanding and Addressing the Attendance Gap: A National Study
- ★ **November 1:** Attendance Awareness All Year Long: Reviewing and Sustaining Progress

## Support AAC 2016



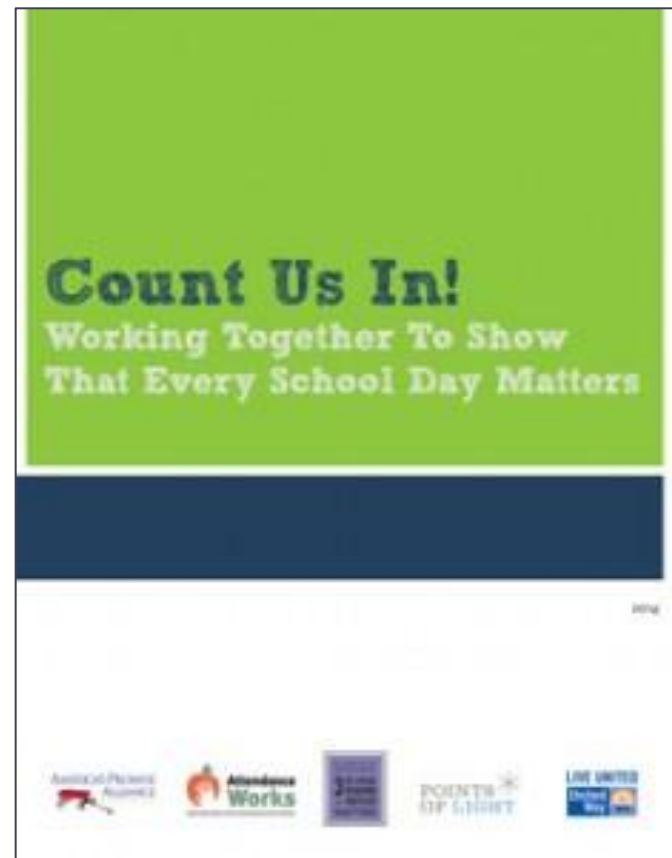
<http://www.attendanceworks.org/donate-to-attendance-works/>



## Call to Action: Role of Collaborating Partners

- Download our free materials and toolkit and share with local districts.
- Encourage schools and community partners to join our listserv: 4,400+ members.

# PROMOTE LOCALLY



# What to Do When: At a Glance



## Let's get started!

- Convene coalition
- Recruit partners
- Meet with district
- Enlist health care providers
- Launch poster contests and other marketing campaigns

## Early Summer

### Getting into specifics

- Distribute talking points
- Enlist elected officials & celebs
- Line up incentives
- Analyze data



## Late Summer

### It's Go Time

- Tape PSAs
- Begin media outreach
- Print banners & posters
- Plan assemblies and Back-to-School events
- Launch door-knocking campaigns

## Back to School!

- Release proclamations
- Host Back-to-School events
- Host press conferences
- Share data
- Spread the word!





## Pin on the 2016 Action Map

- Post your community's plans for Attendance Awareness Month 2016 on our map
- Special Prizes for first 10 to Pin After Today's Webinar!



<http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/aam-map-form-2016/>



## **Superintendent's Call to Action**

**Own the issue**

**Mobilize the  
Community**

**Drive with  
Data**

**To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit:  
[www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action](http://www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action)**



## Webinar recording

**We will post a recording of this webinar within 72 hours at:**

**<http://www.attendanceworks.org/peer-learning-resources/>**



## Feedback

**Please let us know how we can improve:**

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MessagingAttendance>**



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