

# Lay a Foundation for Success:

*Engage Families to Address  
Chronic Absence in the Early Years*





# Welcome



## **Ayeola Fortune**

*Senior Director,  
Impact and Global Results*

**United Way Worldwide**



# Convening Partners

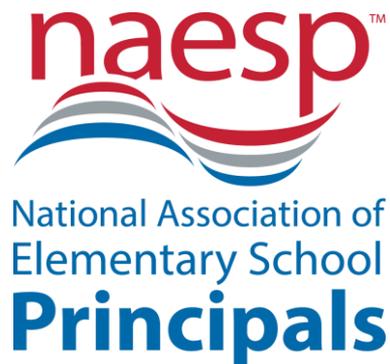




**Welcome to  
New Partners!**

# *FutureEd*

**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**



**USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.**  
*Families at the Center of Results*



## United Way's Focus on Attendance

- 73 United Ways registered for today's webinar, 88 individuals
- Attendance a core strategy for our work in child and youth success
- Sometimes stand alone, but often part of broader, multi-faceted efforts to improve educational outcomes
- UW spans families, schools, and communities – so are well positioned to lead and connect efforts



## Welcome to State Partners!

- ❖ Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
- ❖ Count ME In!
- ❖ Florida Children's Council
- ❖ Florida Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
- ❖ Rhode Island Kid's Count
- ❖ Office of Early & Elementary Learning,  
West Virginia Department of Education



**Thank You to Our  
Corporate Sponsors!**

## ***2019 Attendance Awareness Campaign Sponsors***

- ❖ In Class Today – Partner (\$10,000)
- ❖ French Toast – Partner (\$10,000)
- ❖ Safe and Civil – Partner (\$10,000)



## 2018 by the Numbers

- **673** Superintendents signed the **Call to Action**
- **5,500+** news stories
- **7,110** tweets using **#schooleveryday** creating **19.6 million** impressions
- **6,306** people registered for one of our webinars



## Announcing 2019 Theme

# We Belong in School!





# 2019 Theme: We Belong in School!

## Key Messages:

1. Good attendance helps students do well in school and eventually in the workplace.
2. Students are at risk academically if they are chronically absent (missing 2 days per month or 10 percent of the school year)
3. Prevent absences whenever possible
4. Students are more likely to attend school if they feel safe (emotionally + physically), connected, supported, and believe they can learn and achieve.
5. Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.



# 2019 Theme: We Belong in School!

## Key Messages:

6. Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community collaborates with families and schools.
7. The key to success is avoiding laying blame and taking a proactive, positive, data driven, problem-solving approach.
8. Families, educators and community partners need to monitor how many days a student misses school.
9. Reducing chronic absence helps create more equitable academic outcomes, especially for children who live in poverty, experience discrimination and have disabilities.
10. States can lead the way and encourage districts and schools to take action to improve student attendance.



Welcome



**Hedy Chang**

Executive Director  
*Attendance Works*

**& Members of the  
Attendance Works Team**



## Poll Question

**What is your  
field of work?**



# Agenda

## I. Welcome and Overview

## II. Presenters

- **Ericka Guynes**, Earl Boyles Elementary School
- **Sandra Diodonet**, Paterson Public Schools
- **Yolie Flores**, The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

## III. Questions from the Audience

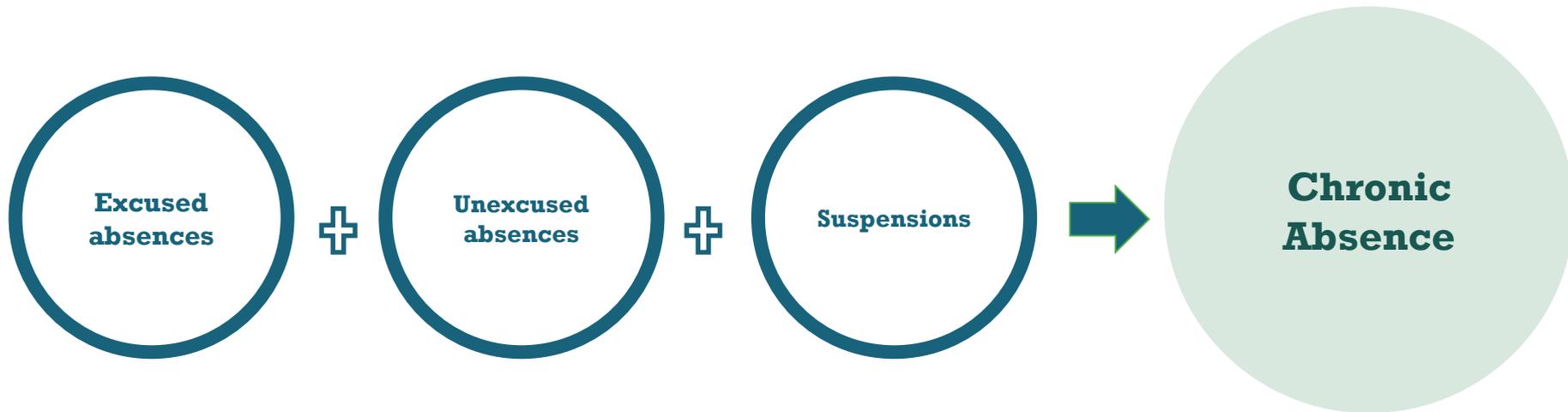
## IV. Early Matters Toolkit

## V. Announcements



## Defining Chronic Absence to Support Preventing and Early Intervention

**Chronic absence** is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. To ensure it acts as an early warning sign, 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).



# 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
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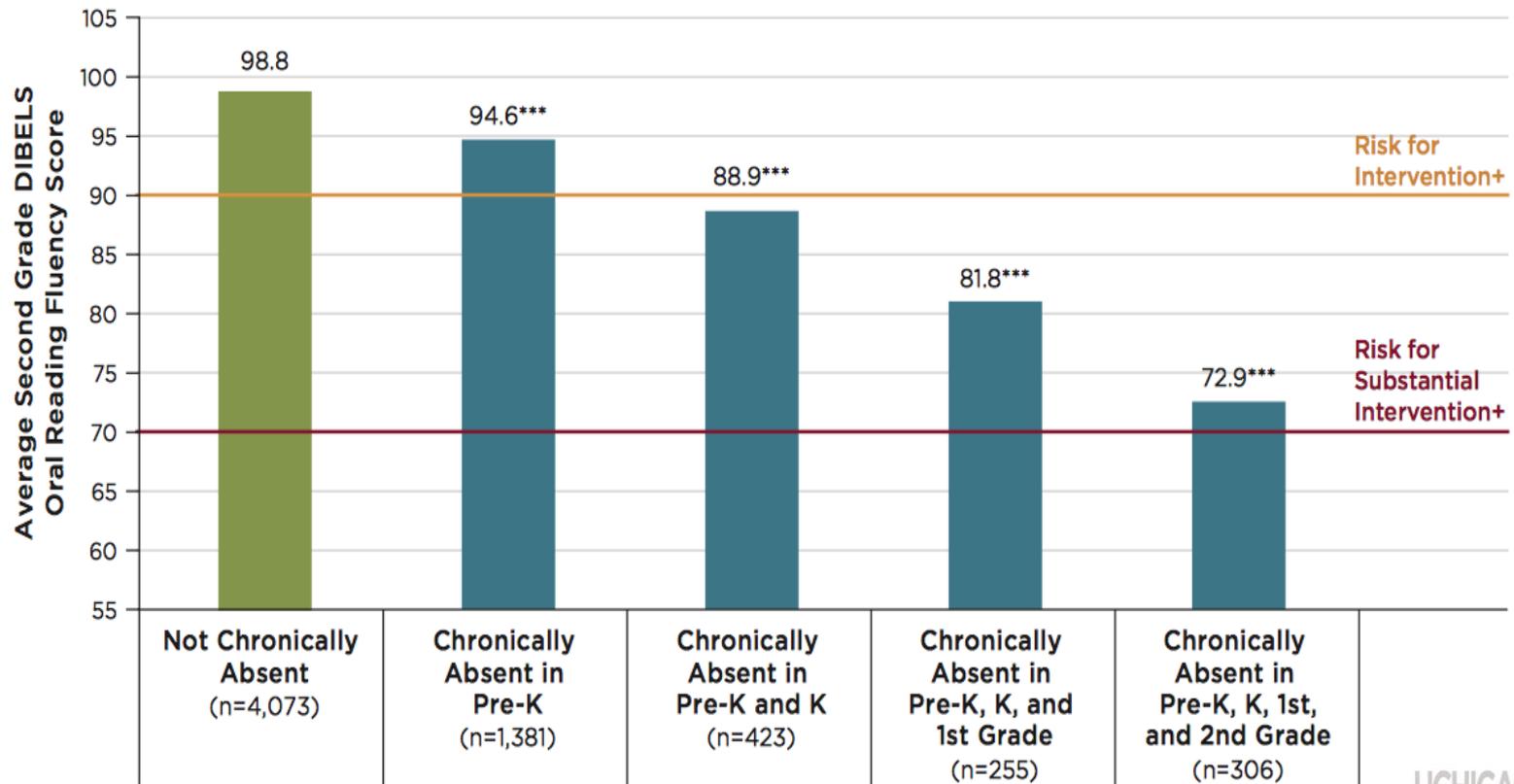
  

February					March					April					May					June				
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Chronic Absence = 18+ days of absence = **As few as 2 days a month**

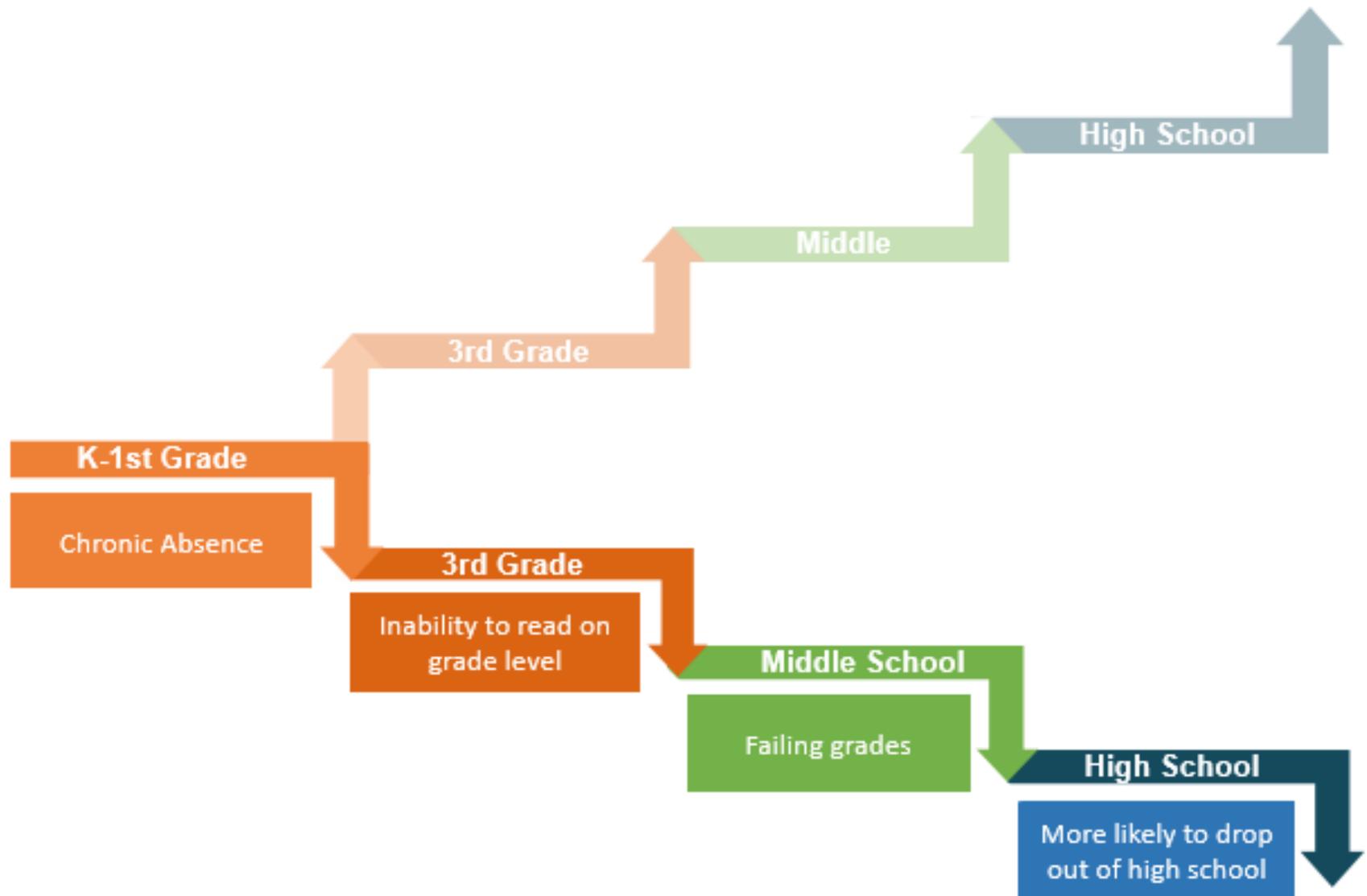


## Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Skills



**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.

# Improving Attendance Matters



# This Is a Watershed Moment

## 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.

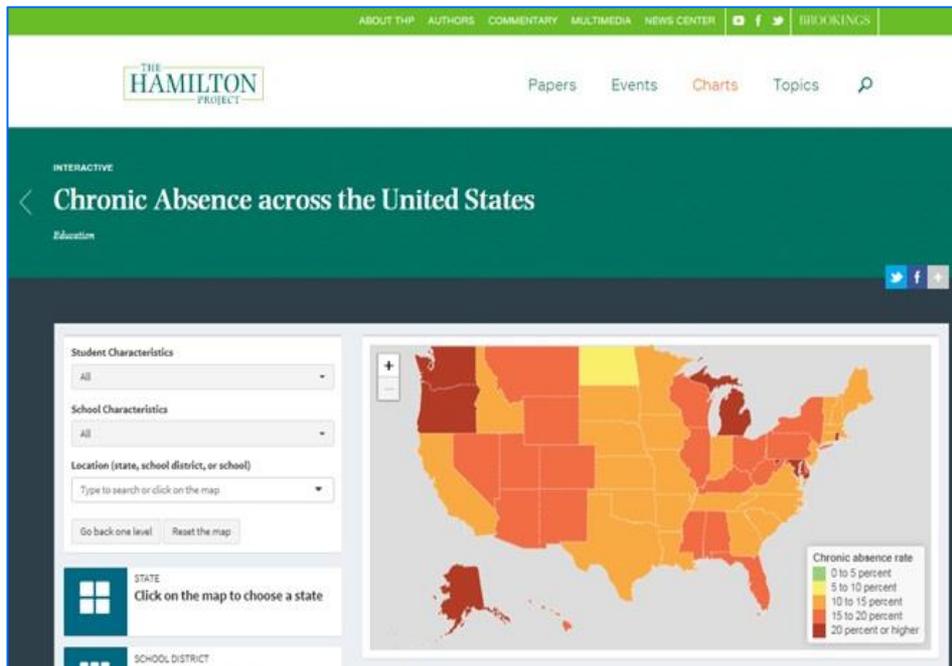
States set goals; supportive framework.

Accountability and data for student sub-groups.

Chronic absence is a required reporting. 36 states plus DC included it as a school accountability metric.



## Chronic Absence Data is now available nationwide



## Chronic Absence is Widespread and Concentrated:

- ❖ In SY 2015-16, **nearly 8 million students were chronically absent**, an increase of more than 800,000 students since SY 2013-14.
- ❖ More than half of the chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts.
- ❖ In 8 states and the District of Columbia, more than 20 percent of students were chronically absent.

<http://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/chronic-absence-across-the-united-states>

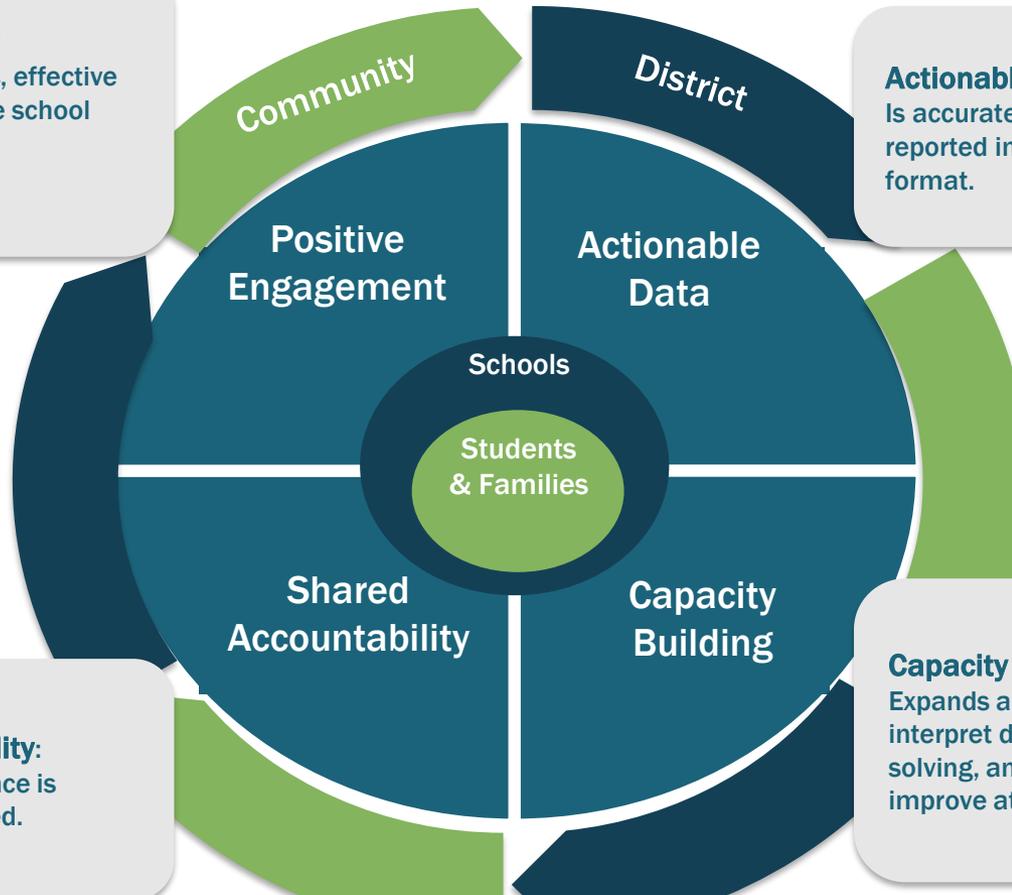
# Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

## 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.



## Shared Accountability:

Ensures chronic absence is monitored & addressed.

## Strategic partnerships

between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.

## Capacity Building

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



## Improving Outcomes Requires Helping Districts Support School-Level Change



- School sites are crucial units of change
- The field of education is increasingly recognizing that focusing on instruction is not enough. What is needed is a whole child approach supported by schools, families, community and public agency partners.
- Building the capacity of school leaders and school staff to leverage chronic absence for improving outcomes is essential.
- Districts are key to equipping schools.



## Solutions Require Understanding What Factors Contribute to Chronic Absence

**High and extreme levels of chronic absence are an alert that additional investment is needed to unpack and address common causes of missing school.**

### Barriers

- Illness, both chronic and acute
- Lack of health, mental health, vision, or dental care
- Family responsibilities
- Trauma
- Unsafe path to/from school
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Frequent school changes
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems
- Inequitable access to resources due to bias & discrimination

### Negative School Experiences

- Struggling academically and behaviorally
- Ineffective or harmful interventions
- Bored
- Social challenges
- Bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions
- Harsh, biased disciplinary practices especially for students of color
- Negative attitudes of parents due to their own school experience
- Undiagnosed disability
- Lack of appropriate accommodations for disability

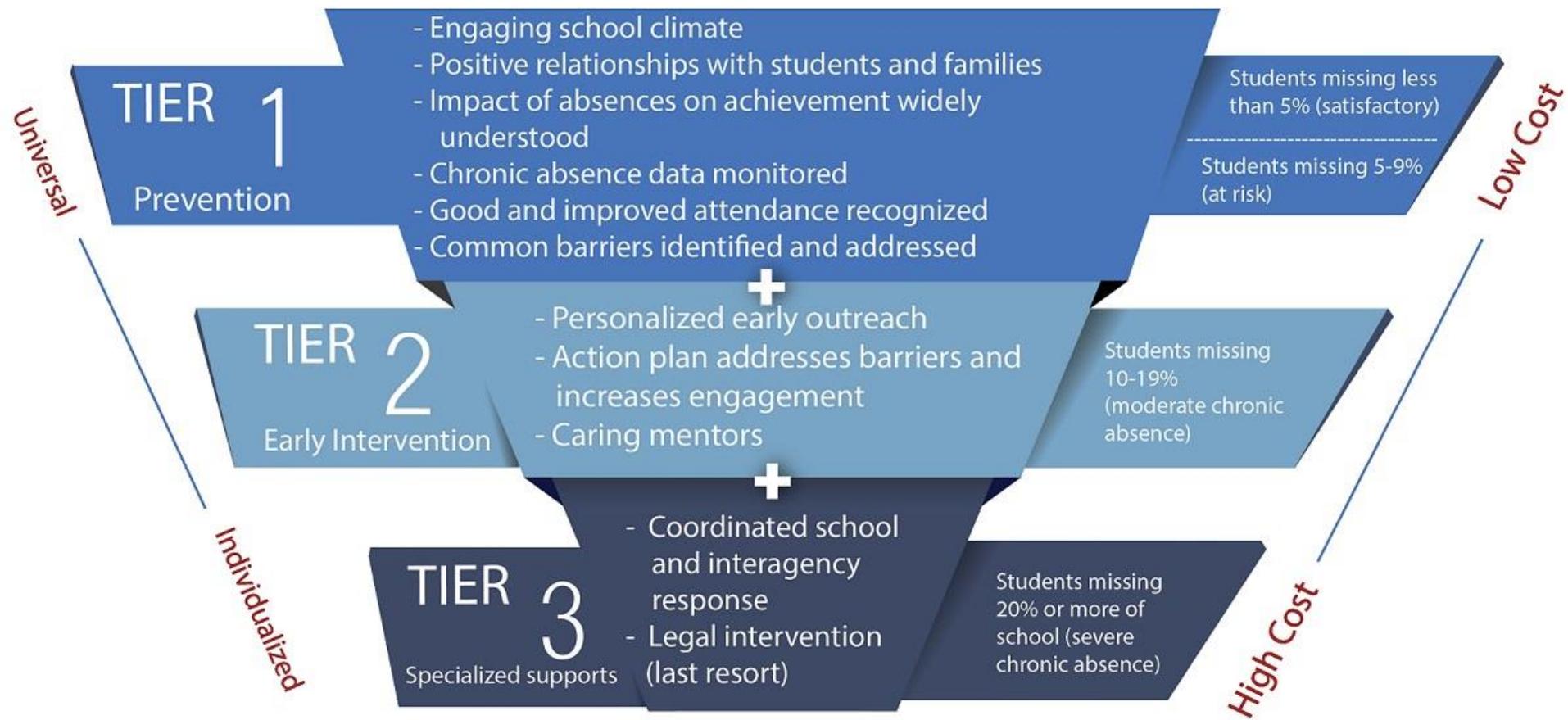
### Lack of Engagement

- Lack of or inequitable access to challenging, culturally responsive, engaging instruction & enrichment
- Lack of academic, emotional and behavioral support
- No meaningful or negative relationships to adults in the school
- Stronger ties with peers out of school than in school
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Failure to earn credits/ no future plans
- Many teacher absences or long-term substitutes

### Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions are not relevant

# Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention



**High and extreme levels of chronic absence are an alert that additional support is needed to address chronic absence.**



## Changing outcomes requires adoption a **NEW** attendance paradigm

### From: Truancy

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



### To: Chronic Absence

- Counts all absences
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- Uses preventive problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies



# Earl Boyles Elementary School



## **Ericka Guynes**

Principal

*Earl Boyles Elementary School  
David Douglas School District*

*Portland, OR*

# Attendance Matters at Earl Boyles Elementary David Douglas School District



# Earl Boyles Elementary Demographics

- 530 students from Preschool to grade 5
- 30 different languages representing 28 different countries
- 72% of our students qualify for Free lunches
- Our current students identify as: 14% Asian, 0.9% American Indian/Alaskan, 2.5% Hawaiian Pacific Isl., 9.6% Black/African American, 26.8% Hispanic, 36.6% White, Two or More 9.6%

# Attendance

- Since 2008-2009
  - Average Daily Attendance has ranged from 94.2% to 95.2%
  - Chronic Attendance rate has ranged from 10.5% to 15%
- As of January 2019
  - Current Average Daily Attendance is 95.3%
  - Chronic rate is 13.6%

# Strategies

- ❑ Relationships + Trust = Partnership
- ❑ Responsive to needs
- ❑ Open communication
- ❑ Personal phone calls home
- ❑ Home visits
- ❑ Linking resources for supports
- ❑ Community Partnerships
- ❑ Community Ambassadors

# Proactive Prevention

- 0-3 program and Preschool is our first opportunity to build a strong partnership with our families
- Importance of attendance -- build a strong foundation of learning with families and students
- Home visits
- Transitions from PK to Kindergarten
  - Classroom visits, Connect to Kindergarten, Early Kindergarten Transition Summer program, Play Dates
  - Collaboration between staff and shared PD

# Addressing Attendance

- ❖ Bi-weekly attendance meetings for PK-grade 5
- ❖ Meeting protocols and data (File Maker, Data Warehouse, Synergy)
- ❖ Interventions: Check In Check Out, Good Morning Club
- ❖ Early intervention with recognizing positive attendance patterns (good news postcards and photos posted)
- ❖ Nudge letters to families
- ❖ Attendance Contracts with families and students
- ❖ Lunch time recognitions with Attendance Olympics
- ❖ District support
- ❖ Communicating with staff around attendance

# Why focus on attendance?

“The best thing about this school is how close the teachers have a bond with the students.

They almost treat them like family, and it's comfortable to know that you're safe. When kids are away from home they might feel unsettled because they're not with their family.”

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade student

“I like how Earl Boyles cares about each and every student in the school, no matter what they look, sound, or act like. I think everyone is unique and special no matter who they are. I gave this answer because like I said it honestly does not matter who they are, everyone deserves respect and care.”

-4<sup>th</sup> grade student

“Teachers and staff know my children's names and acknowledge them in the hallways. It has a family feel, a togetherness, like what a community should feel like. My children love their teachers and from what I see, the feeling is mutual.

It is easy to talk to teachers and staff and I like that hugs are freely given. That tells me that my children are genuinely cared for. Thank you for giving this to my children. It is deeply appreciated. Makes my heart glad that they are loved and cared for. As a result, my children look forward to school and are always happy to go.”

–Earl Boyles Family

“As a low-income single mother of 3, the programs at this school has helped my family tremendously and changed our lives by providing assistance for holidays, assistance for resources that we may need, and a complete understanding without bias based on my family’s poverty level.”

–Earl Boyles Family



# Paterson Public Schools



## **Sandra Diodonet**

Assistant Superintendent

*Paterson Public Schools  
Paterson, NJ*

# Together We Can...

## Improve Attendance and Decrease Chronic Absenteeism



*Together We Can*

**PATERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**   
Preparing All Children for College and Career  
Together We Can

**Attendance Matters!**  
**#PPShowUP**

Missing 5 school days =  
Missing 28 Instructional Hours

# Paterson Public Schools

- The student population in the Paterson district mirrors the trend of urban communities across the nation and in New Jersey.
  - 67.7 percent of its students are of Hispanic origin
  - 21.8 percent are African-American
  - 4.9 percent are Caucasian
  - 5.7 percent are of Asian descent

Nearly 57 percent of all students in Paterson speak a primary language other than English, with more than 40 languages spoken in district schools.



# Our Results!

- Approximately 25% of our students are Chronically Absent.
- In 2018, Chronic Absenteeism at PPS Elementary Schools were as low as 3.06% and as high as 45.08%.
- At the Secondary Level, Chronic Absenteeism ranged from 20.95% to as high as 99.35%

# Celebrate the Numbers!

## 2015-16 vs. 2016-17

- 30% 12 out of 40 elementary schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates
- 25% 4 out of 16 high schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates
- 28.57% 16 out of 56 PPS District schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates!

## 2016-17 vs. 2017-18

- 50% 21 out of 42 elementary schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates **-20%**
- 33.33% 5 out of 15 high schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates **-8.33%**
- 45.61% 26 out of 57 PPS District schools improved their chronic absenteeism rates! **-17.04%**

We Still have MORE WORK TO DO! Everyone needs to #ShowUp!

Attendance Matters!

# Strategies Used at PS# 5

- Letters to Parents in the Summer
- Success Mentors for Students and Homerooms
- Homeroom School Competitions
- The Use of PBIS
- Free Homework Passes
- Meeting with Parents to discuss Chronic Absenteeism
- Biweekly Meetings to discuss Data and Students
- Back to School Night/PTO Meetings/Report Card Night
- Surprise Incentives for Perfect Attendance & Improved Attendance
- Lunch with the Principal
- Random Raffles
- Teachers shopping in the Supply Closet for Homeroom Attendance
- Consistently talking to Parents & STUDENTS about the dangers of Chronic Absenteeism

# PPS Strategies



- District Wide Day to Day Attendance Process
- City Wide Attendance Awareness Banners in all Wards
- Continuous Discussions and Conversations regarding Attendance
- Most School Improvement Plans have a goal around Chronic Absenteeism
- Continuous Monitoring of the Data by the Schools and Central Office
- Monthly Reports produced by M.I.S.
- District-Wide Promotion of Events(No Uniform Pass/Free H/W & 100% Days)
- All principals and school staff are reminded of the proper attendance codes
- The Paterson Public Schools **#PSShowUp Attendance Matters!** Task Force
- Success Mentors

# What's the Game Changer?



- Start a School-Wide Campaign “Attendance Matters!”
- Provide information about Chronic Absenteeism often.
- Discuss the importance of education, study skills and the impact of chronic absenteeism **every opportunity** you get to Parents/Guardians, Students, Community and Teachers.
- Make Chronic Absenteeism part of your meeting agendas.
- Communicate this message at every meeting, be repetitive! In the morning, at dismissal, at conferences, at Back to School Night, Report Card Night, Report Card Night and time.... !
- **Motivate** Parents to be partners with your school!
- Talking to Parents/Guardian and the Community about the importance of attending school is the **GAME CHANGER!!!**

We need your help! **Together We Can!**



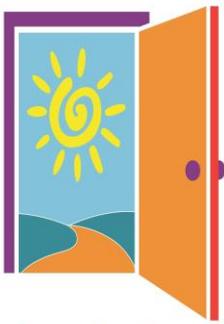
## Abriendo Puertas / Opening Doors



### **Yolie Flores**

Chief Program Officer

*The Campaign for Grade-  
Level Reading*



## **Abriendo Puertas** **Opening Doors**

**Desarrollando un Futuro Mejor  
a través del Liderazgo de los Padres**  
**Building a Better Future  
Through Parent Leadership**

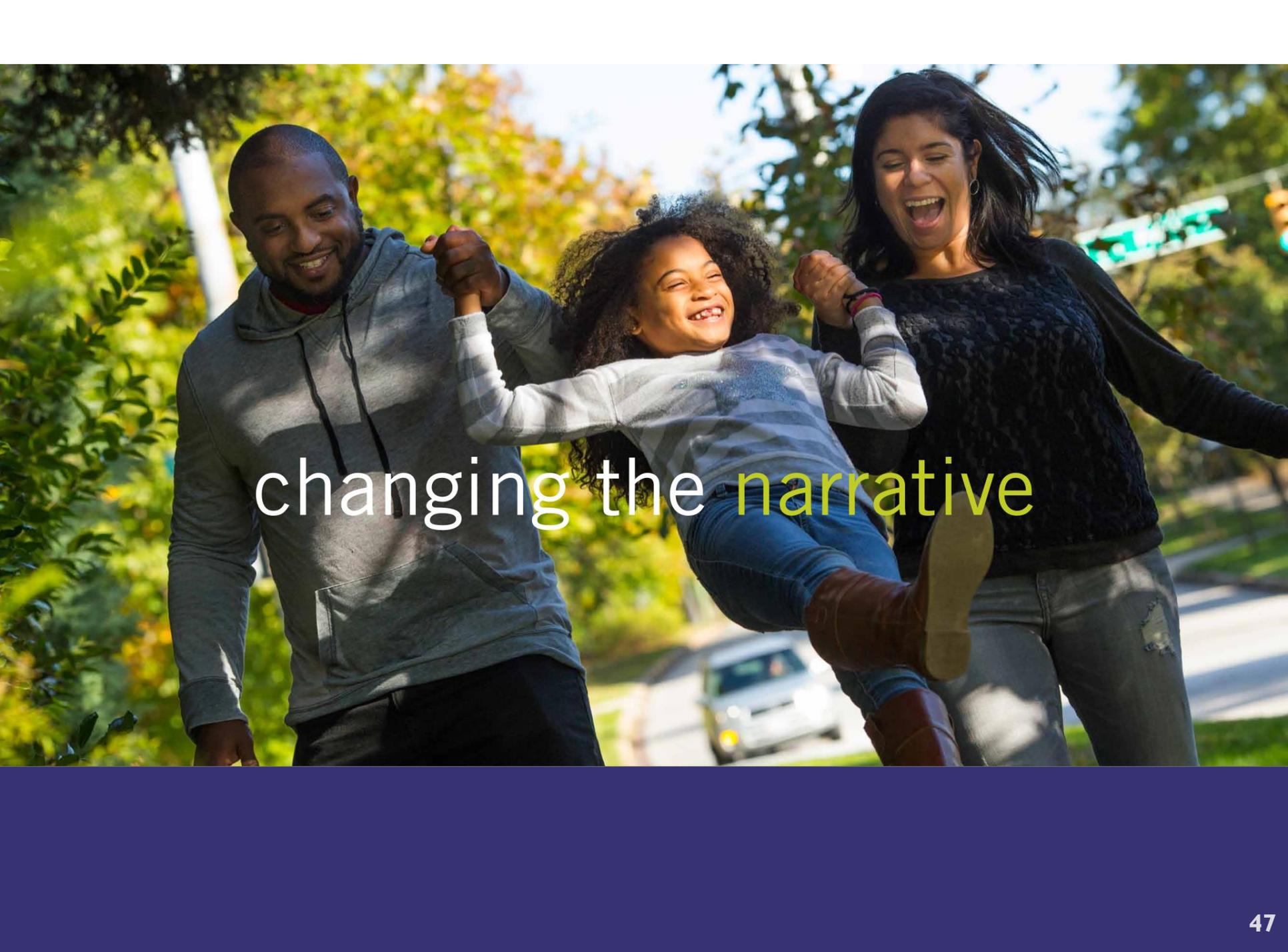
**10 Years of  
Impact**

**Honoring and  
Supporting the  
Power of  
Parents**



## **Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors**

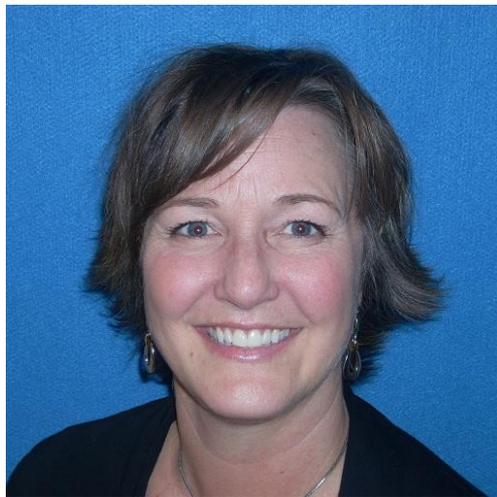
**The nation's first evidence-based, comprehensive  
training program created by and for Latino parents  
with children ages 0-5.**



changing the narrative



## Panel Discussion



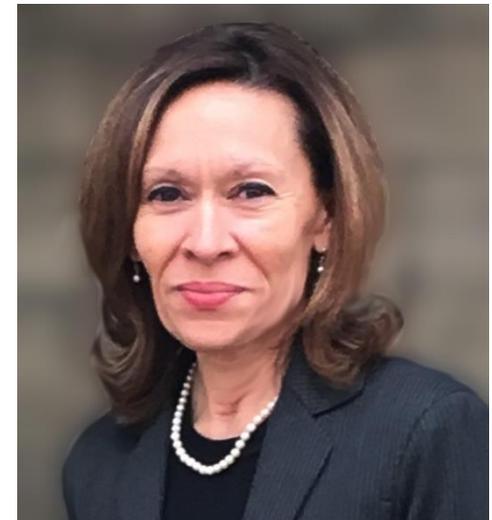
**Ericka Guynes**

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**Sandra Diodonet**

Assistant Superintendent  
*Paterson Public Schools  
Paterson, NJ*



**Yolie Flores**

Chief Program Officer  
*The Campaign for Grade-  
Level Reading*



## Panel Discussion

- ❖ How would you explain the high chronic absence rate in PK and K? What mindsets do you need to challenge?
- ❖ In your experience, what are the reasons behind high chronic absence rates for groups of students like immigrants or particular racial/ethnic groups?



## Questions from the Audience





## NEW Toolkit



### Why Does Addressing Chronic Absence In Kindergarten Transition Matter?

- Serves as an **early warning sign** that families don't have the supports they need
- Leverages **existing** activities to reduce chronic absence
- Could make a **measurable difference** in school-level chronic absence
- Lays foundation for future school success

### Who Can Make a Difference?

- **Principals and preschool directors** are the critical leaders at the site level
- **District administrators, public agency and non-profit leaders, policy makers, funders and other influential stakeholders** can support implementation at scale.



## Early Matters

Toolkit offers Ideas,  
Resources &  
Inspiring Stories

### Integrate Attendance Into Site-Level Practices:

1. Address Attendance During Transition Activities
2. Discuss Attendance When Welcoming Families
3. Equip Families to Connect Attendance and Educational Success
4. Use Attendance to Nurture A Strong School Community
5. Offer Supports to Reduce Health-Related Absences



## Early Matters

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/integrating-attendance-into-kindergarten-transition/>

### System Supports

1. Engage Community Stakeholders in Promoting Attendance
2. Organize Attendance Campaigns That Reach Families with Young Children
3. Monitor, Analyze and Disseminate Chronic Absence Data
4. Provide Joint Professional Development on Chronic Absence



## Announcements



**Cecelia Leong**

*Director for Programs*

*Attendance Works*

# American Academy of Pediatrics



New policy statement on chronic absence released January 28, 2019

## ***The Link Between Good Attendance and Health***

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2019/01/24/peds.2018-3648>

The statement includes:

- ❖ Summary of studies on health-related causes of absences
- ❖ Summary of evidence for physical and mental health interventions
- ❖ Recommendations to pediatricians on addressing school attendance



# Here and Healthy Initiative

## Here + Healthy

Raise your voice to increase awareness about the connection between health, attendance and learning by signing on to Here + Healthy.



Healthy Schools Campaign – Here and Healthy Campaign

<http://hereandhealthy.org/>

# Sneak Peak!

## Attendance Videos Series

[www.healthyandreadytolearn.org](http://www.healthyandreadytolearn.org)

# Linking Health and Attendance



Different health issues can impact a student's attendance in the classroom. Learn more about how Health Barriers to Learning can affect attendance and ways to start noticing patterns.

This video is presented by the Healthy and Ready to Learn initiative at Children's Health Fund and Attendance Works. For more information, **visit us at [www.healthyandreadytolearn.org](http://www.healthyandreadytolearn.org) and [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org).**

# Best Practices for Attendance Teams



Creating an attendance team is a great first step to decreasing chronic absenteeism in schools. Learn more about best practices an attendance team can implement in their school, including a three-tiered intervention model.

This video is presented by the Healthy and Ready to Learn initiative at Children's Health Fund and Attendance Works. For more information, **visit us at** [www.healthyandreadytolearn.org](http://www.healthyandreadytolearn.org) and [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org).





## Opportunities to Promote AAC 2019!

Share the Attendance Awareness website:

<http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/>

- ✓ Like us on Facebook 
- ✓ Tweet using #schooleveryday @attendanceworks 
- ✓ Add a badge to your signature line or materials 
- ✓ Write blog post on your website promoting regular attendance and the Attendance Awareness Campaign!



## 2019 Webinar Series

- ★ **March 21:** Lay a Foundation for Success: Engage Families to Address Early Chronic Absence
- ★ **May 16:** Nurture Dreams: Ensure Students Feel Safe, Supported, Connected and Engaged
- ★ **August 8:** Open Doors: Create a Healthy School Climate
- ★ **September 10:** A Place Where We Belong: Improving Conditions for Learning

<http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/resources/webinars/>

*And special appreciation to our philanthropic partners:*

**The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading  
The California Endowment  
The Jonathan Logan Family Foundation**





## Support AAC 2019



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/donate/>



## Webinar Recording

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

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/webinars/>



## Feedback

Please let us know how we can improve:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Lay-a-Foundation-2019>

*Thank you!*