

Chronic Absenteeism - National School Health Perspective

Illinois Attendance Commission

November 14, 2019

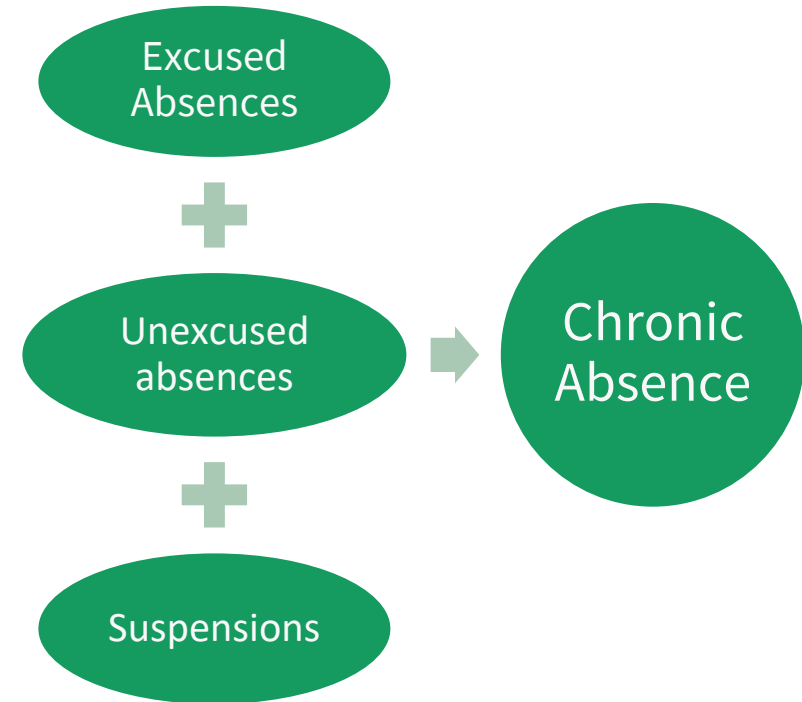
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HEALTHY SCHOOLS
CAMPAIGN

What is chronic absenteeism?

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

Attendance Works defines it as missing 10% or more of school to promote early identification and better comparisons.



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. Many researchers and growing number of states define it as missing 10% of school. OCR currently defines it as missing 15 days. Chronic absence is a required reporting metric and an optional measure for school improvement in ESSA.

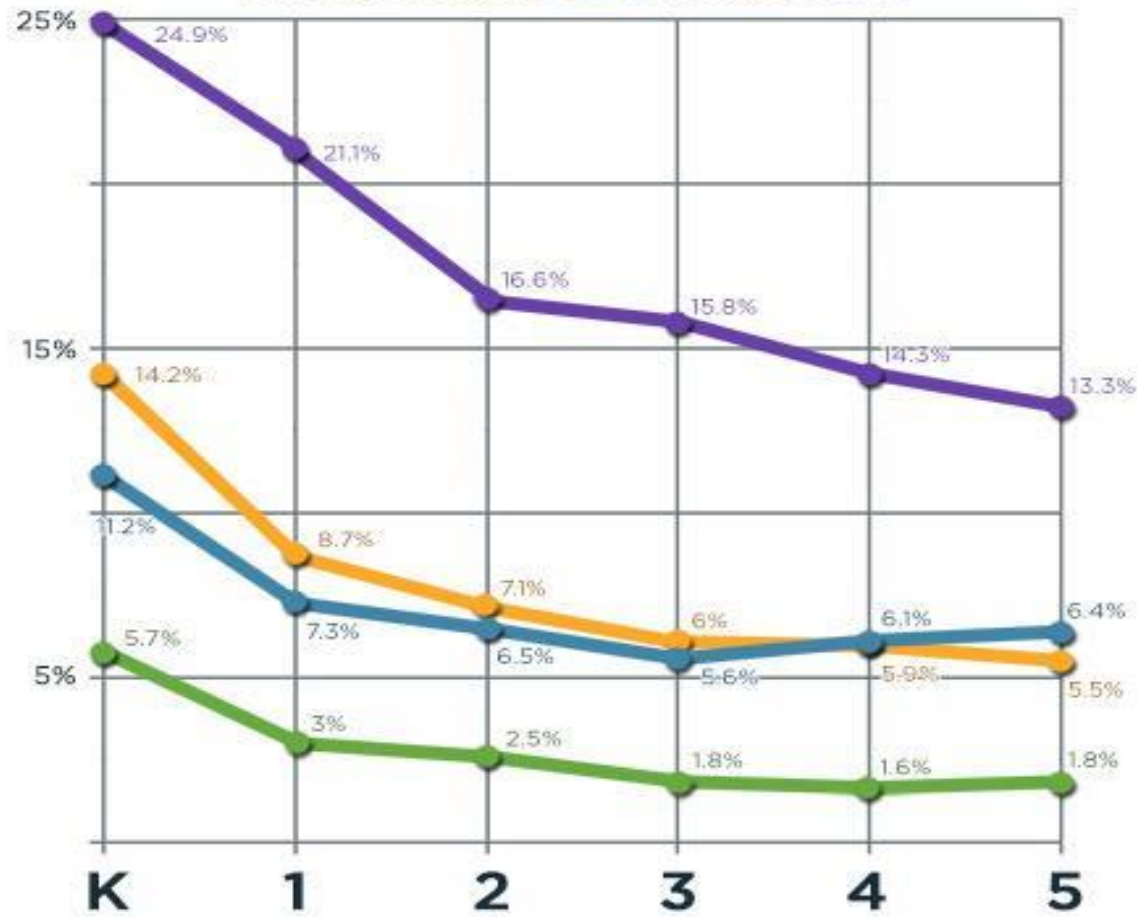
Who is most affected?

- **Low-income students** have higher rates of absenteeism in every state
- **American Indians** have the highest rates of all racial/ethnic groups
- **African-American children** have higher rates than white students, particularly in some states
- **Hispanic students** have higher rates than white students, particularly in some states
- **Students with disabilities** have significantly higher rates than others

Chronic Absence Rates

Broken Down by Race and Grade

African-American | Latino | White | Asian

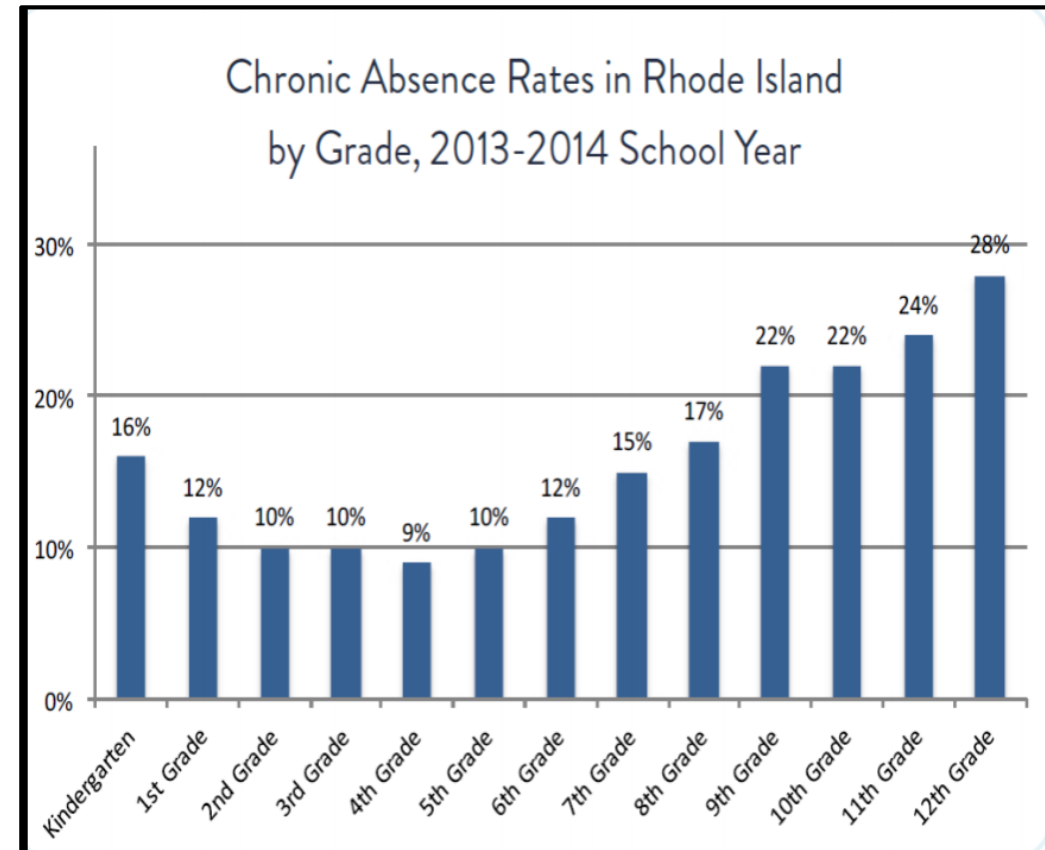


*National Assessment of Educational Progress data

Chronic absence starts early

Our youngest students are nearly as likely to be absent as teenagers.

Chronic absence is a challenge as early as K and even preschool.



*Rhode Island Data Hub

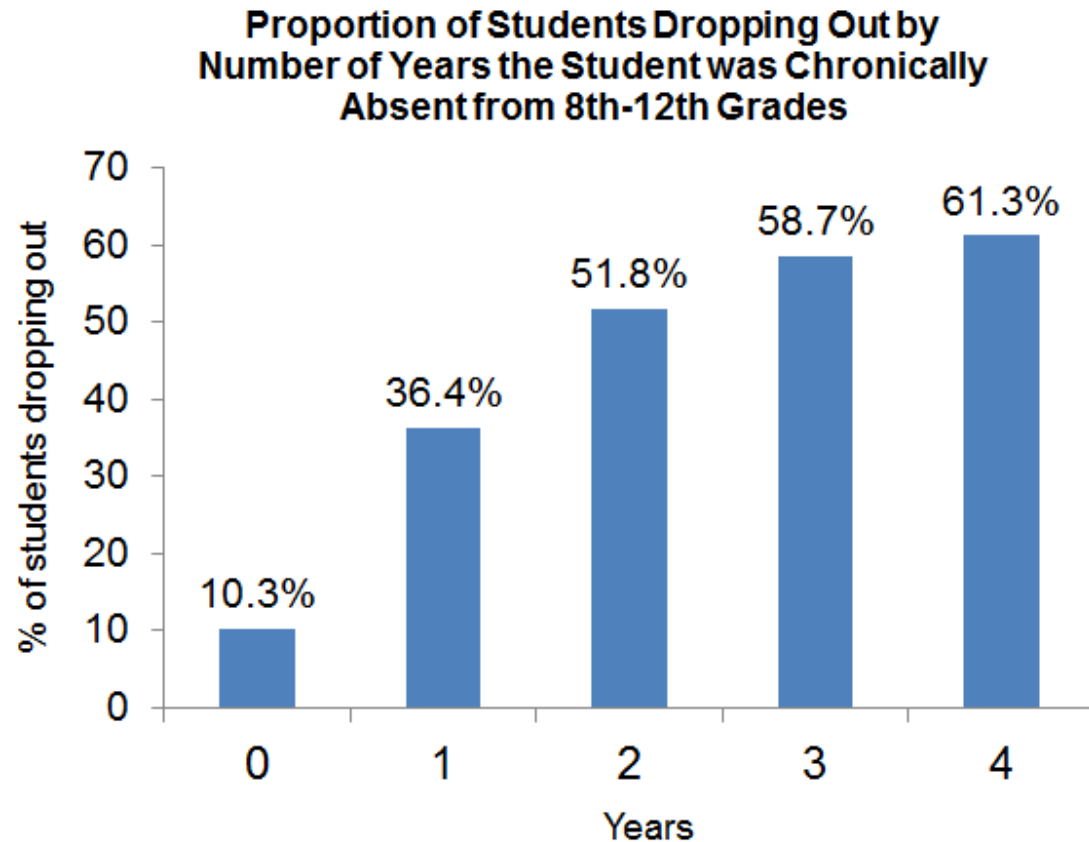
Why does chronic absenteeism matter in early grades?

Study of Rhode Island kindergarteners

- 16% of RI kindergarten students were chronically absent
 - 20% less likely to score proficient or higher in reading.
 - 25% less likely to score proficient or higher in math.
 - Twice as likely to be retained in grade.
 - Twice as likely to be suspended by the end of seventh grade.
 - More likely to continue being chronically absent.

*Rhode Island Data Hub

Chronic absenteeism and school dropout



Case Study: Utah

With every year of chronic absenteeism, a higher percentage of students dropped out of school.

*National Assessment of Educational Progress data

Why are students chronically absent?

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

Chronic disease

Lack of access to health or dental care

Poor transportation

Trauma

No safe path to school

Aversion

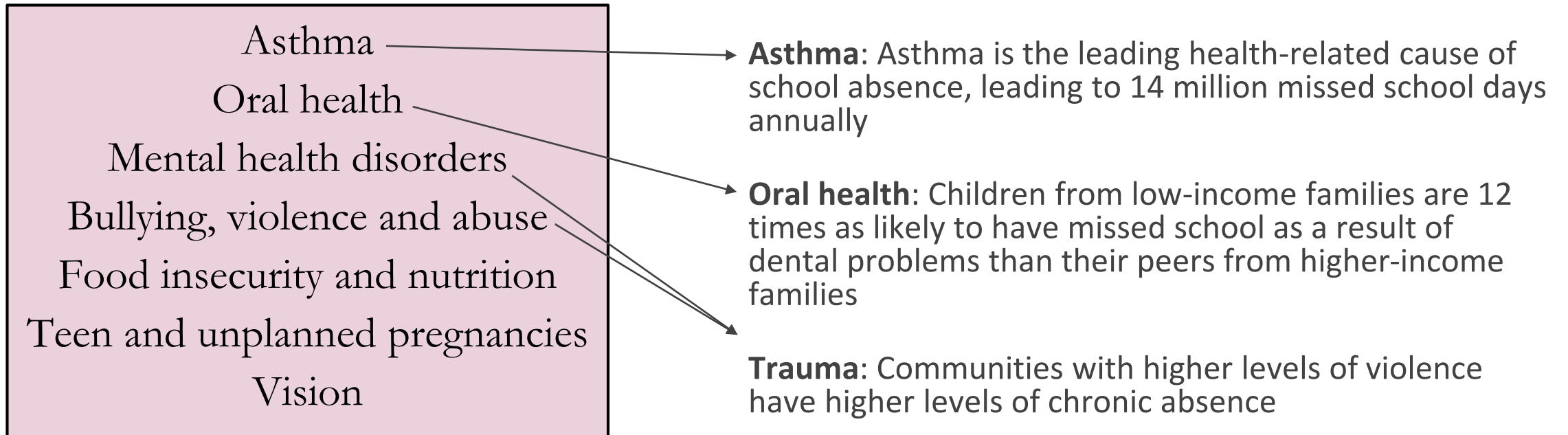
Child struggling academically

Lack of engaging instruction

Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline

Parents had negative school experience

Health barriers are significant, especially in low-income communities



Leading Health Barriers

Asthma

- 8.3% of children are currently diagnosed with asthma
- Children with persistent asthma are 3.2 times more likely to be chronically absent
- Asthma prevalence is higher in children who are Puerto Rican (2.4 times), African American (1.6 times), and American Indian/Alaska Native (1.3 times) vs. Caucasian children

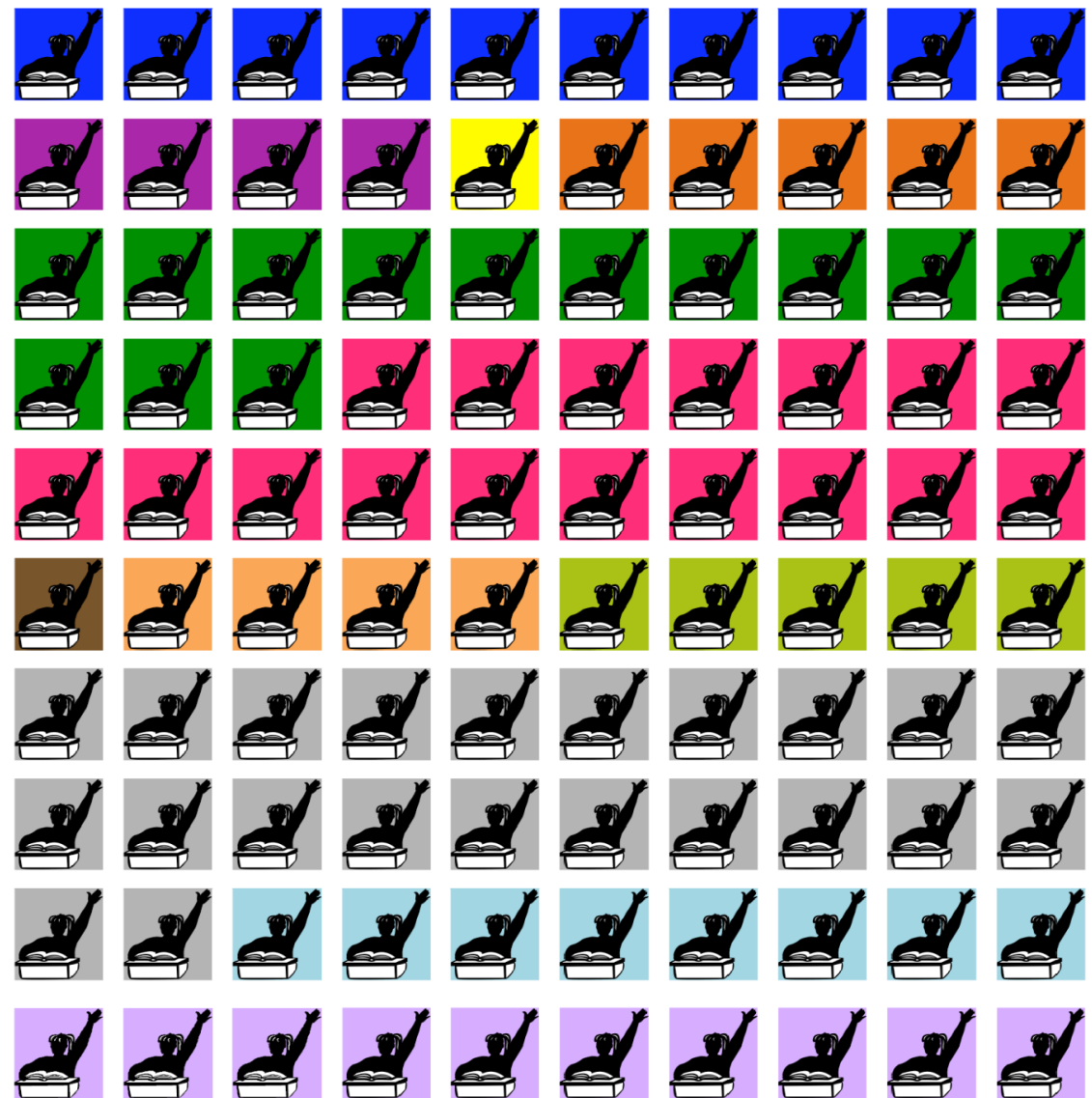
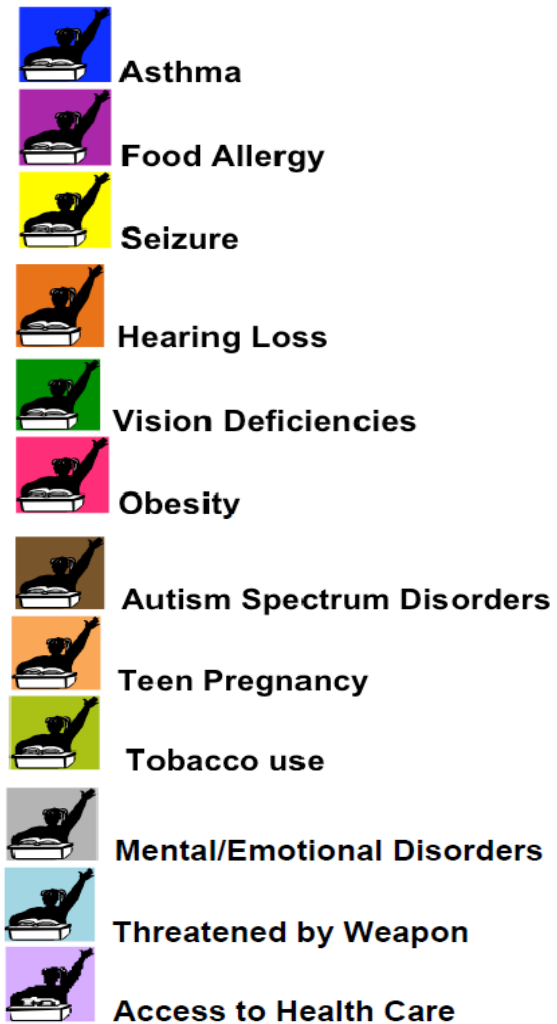
Oral Health

- 20% of children aged 5 to 11 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth (13% of adolescents)
- Hispanic and African-American children are twice as likely to have untreated caries
- Children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely to miss school

Mental Health

- 13%-20% of children experience a mental health disorder in a given year
- Disorders, such as ADHD, disproportionately impact low-income, minority youth

Health Conditions per 100 U.S. Students



*National Association of School Nurses

Chronic Absence Under ESSA

- Signed into law December 2015 with bipartisan support, reauthorizing the 50-year old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's education law that governs K-12 public education
- States have more authority and flexibility in establishing their plans and strategies than under No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- Provides new opportunities for states to support student health and wellness
- **Last year was the first year schools were required to track chronic absenteeism on their report cards, with many opting to choose chronic absence as a school quality indicator**

Health and Wellness School Quality Indicators

Chronic Absenteeism

- 36 states and DC

Access to PE

- KY, MD, GA, MI, LA

Physical Fitness

- CT, VT, ND

School Climate

- IA, ID, IL, MD, NM, NV



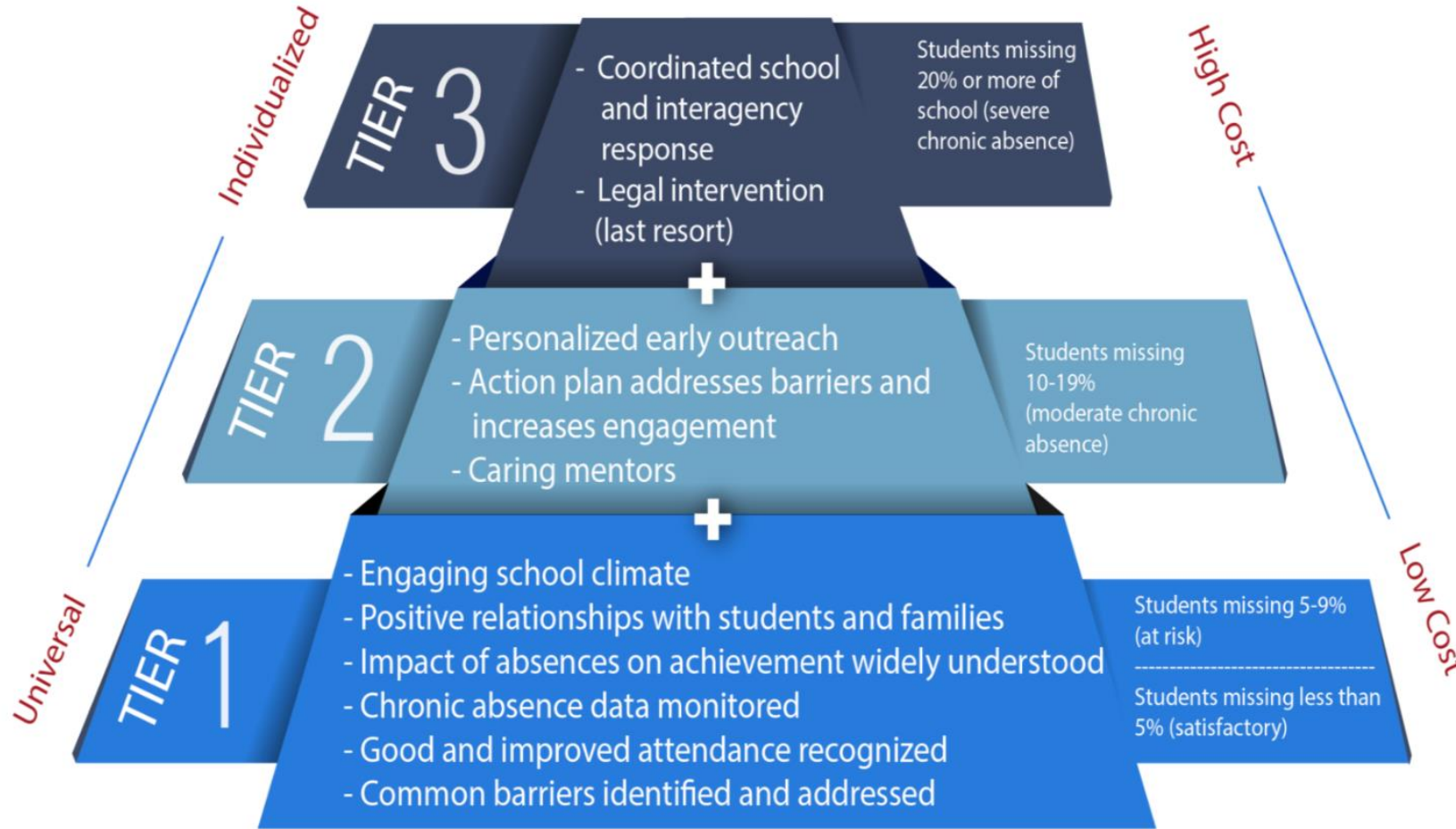
ESSA: School Quality Indicator Criteria

ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success	Chronic Absence
Meaningfully differentiates school performance	✓
Valid	✓
Reliable	✓
Statewide (with the same indicator or indicators used for each grade span)	✓
Can be calculated separately for each student subgroup (i.e., can be disaggregated)	✓

Validity - The degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.

Reliability - The degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.

Tiered Systems of Support for Addressing CA



Best Practices and Proven 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

CA Case Study: Connecticut

Focus on family engagement - a Full, Equal and Equitable partnership among families, educators and community partners to promote children's learning and development, from birth through college and career.

<u>Full:</u>	Collaborating closely and consistently
<u>Equal:</u>	Partners with different roles but equal status
<u>Equitable:</u>	Families are empowered Removing systemic and structural barriers

Guiding Principles

How?

Trust and Respect	1. Build collaborative, trusting, respectful relationships focused on learning.
Two-way conversations	2. Listen to what families say about their children's interests and challenges.
Link family engagement to student learning	3. Model high-quality learning practices.
	4. Share information frequently with families about how their children are doing.
	5. Talk with students about how they want teachers and families to support their learning.
Cultural competence	6. Co-develop cultural competence among staff and families.
Parent leadership	7. Support parents to become effective leaders and advocates for children.

Moderate Impact

A letter is mailed before school starts to families of kindergarten and elementary students who had poor attendance in the previous year, letting them know attendance in early grades affects student learning.

Lower Impact

The importance of attendance is communicated through posters in school and flyers in backpacks at the beginning of the year.

Connecticut:

Successfully reduced chronic absence by ~10,000 students across all grades and sub-groups since 2015 as a result of linking chronic absence to their accountability system.

Higher Impact on Student Learning and Development

Summer Transition: Teachers and school staff meet with families in community spaces before the start of school to talk about what students will be learning, the connection between too many absences and poor achievement, and they co-construct solutions for regular attendance.

Additional ESSA Levers

- Professional development
 - Social and emotional learning
 - Capacity building
 - Engage school, community and parents/caregivers
 - Develop and implement an early warning system
 - Maintain healthy indoor environment
- Needs assessments
 - Information about the health status of students
 - School climate and safety, such as the U.S. Department of Education's [School Climate Survey](#)
 - School discipline policies
 - CDC [School Health Index](#)
 - EPA's [Model School Environmental Health Program](#) guidelines
 - School staff

Resources

- [Attendance Works](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [Healthy Schools Campaign](#)
 - [Mapping the Early Attendance Gap](#)
 - [Chronic Absenteeism and School Health Toolkit](#)
 - [ESSA and Chronic Absenteeism](#)
 - Additional state case studies