



# Teaching Attendance

2016 National Family and Community Engagement  
Conference ~ Pittsburgh, PA





## About Us

**Attendance Works** is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success starting with school entry. We are an implementation partner for attendance with the Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

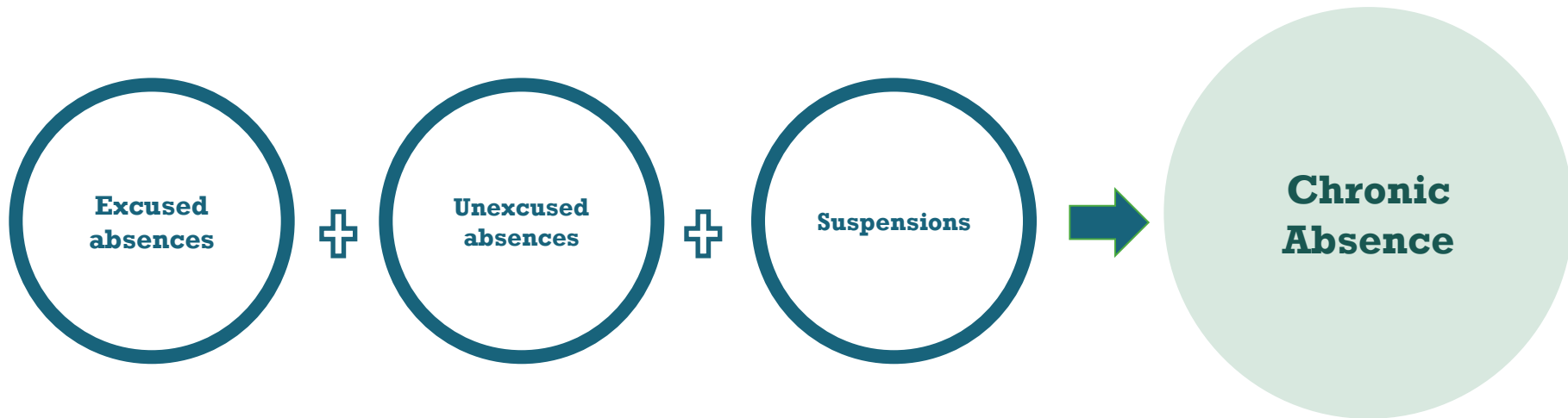
### **Our three focus areas to improve student attendance are:**

- ✓ Build public awareness and political will
- ✓ Foster state campaigns
- ✓ Encourage local practice



## 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.



## 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**

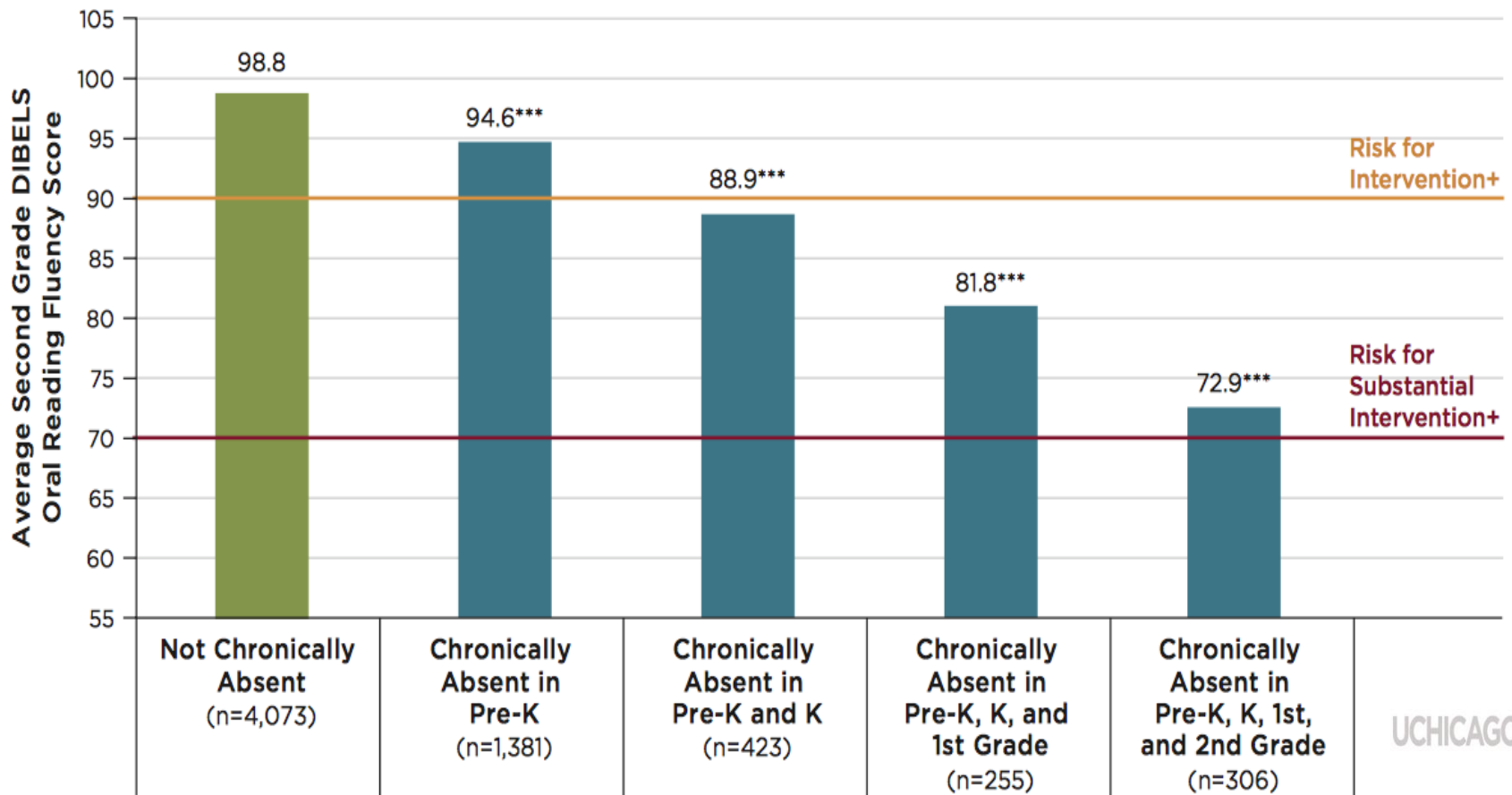
**Attendance Every Day**

**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>



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



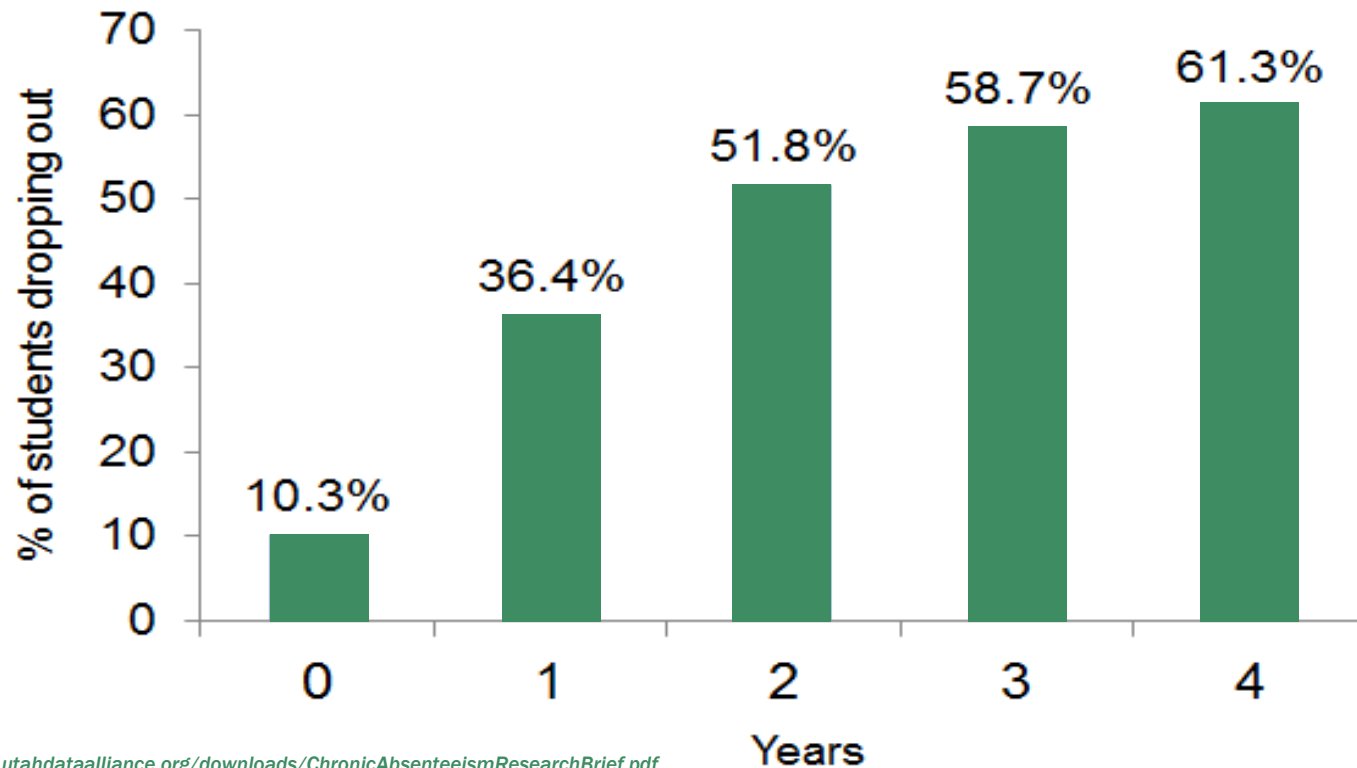
**Note:** \*\*\*Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as "Some Risk," indicating the need for additional intervention and "At Risk," indicating the need for substantial interventions.





## 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



## **Recommended Site-Level Strategies**

**A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance**

**B. Engage Students and Parents**

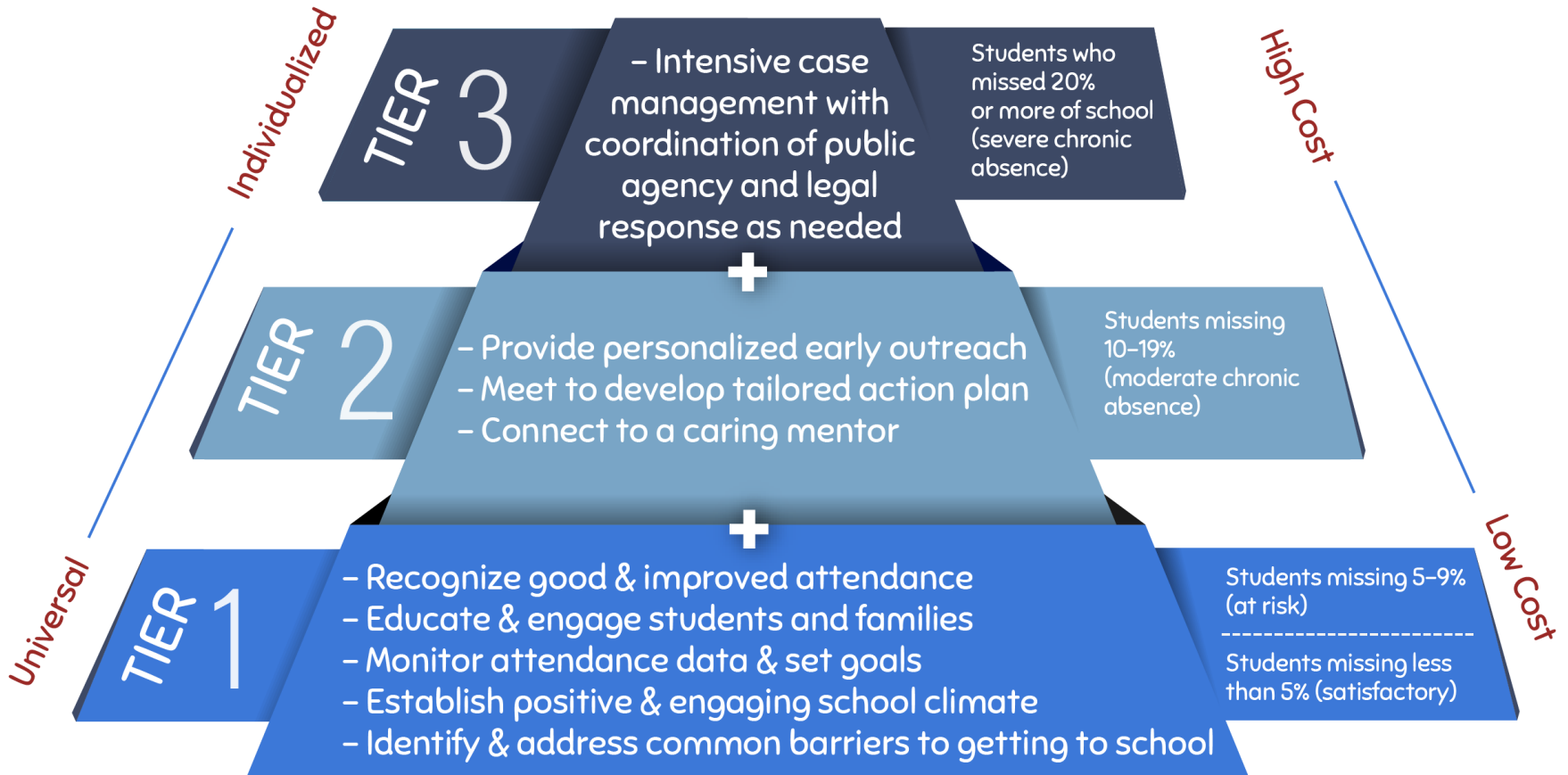
**E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers**

**D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach**

**C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice**



## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





## What Can Teachers Do?

# Teaching Attendance

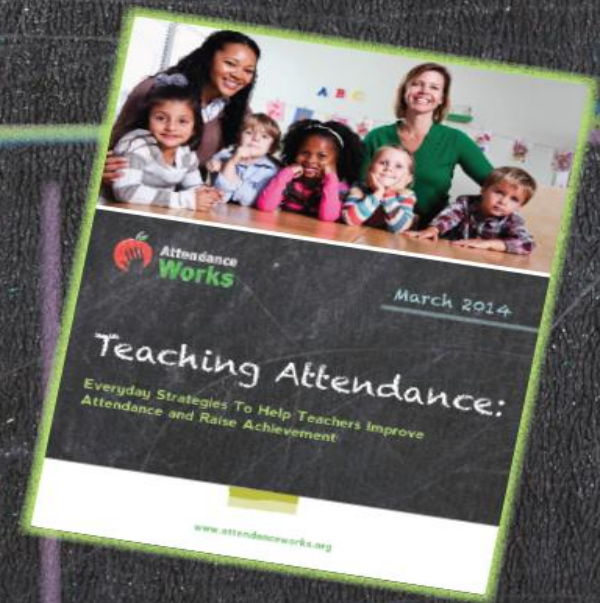
### A toolkit to help teachers

Classroom teachers already know how missing too much school can put a child's academic future at risk. Chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school in excused or unexcused absences) can be a significant challenge, starting as early as preschool.

Research has shown that children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read well by the end of third grade, and absences throughout elementary school are associated with poor attendance and lower academic performance in later grades. By middle and high school, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is at risk of dropping out.

Attendance Works is pleased to offer a free Teacher Toolkit offering tips for how teachers can:

- Emphasize the importance of attendance starting on Day 1
- Leverage parent-teacher conferences to deal with absenteeism
- Build a culture of attendance in classrooms



Visit:  
[www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)  
to download



## Contents

**A. Emphasize attendance from day one**

**B. Use parent-teacher conferences to talk about attendance**

**C. Promote a culture of attendance all year long**

The toolkit can be downloaded here:

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/tools/assessments/teaching-attendance-toolkit/>

# A. Emphasize Attendance from Day One

What research says about what parents know –  
or don't know – about attendance







## Education is Important

- I want a better life for my child and education is the key
- I want my child to go to college



Ad Council. See <http://www.attendanceworks.org/what-parents-really-think-about-school-attendance/>



## Parents underestimate the number of year-end absences

The Ad Council asked each parent about his or her child'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**





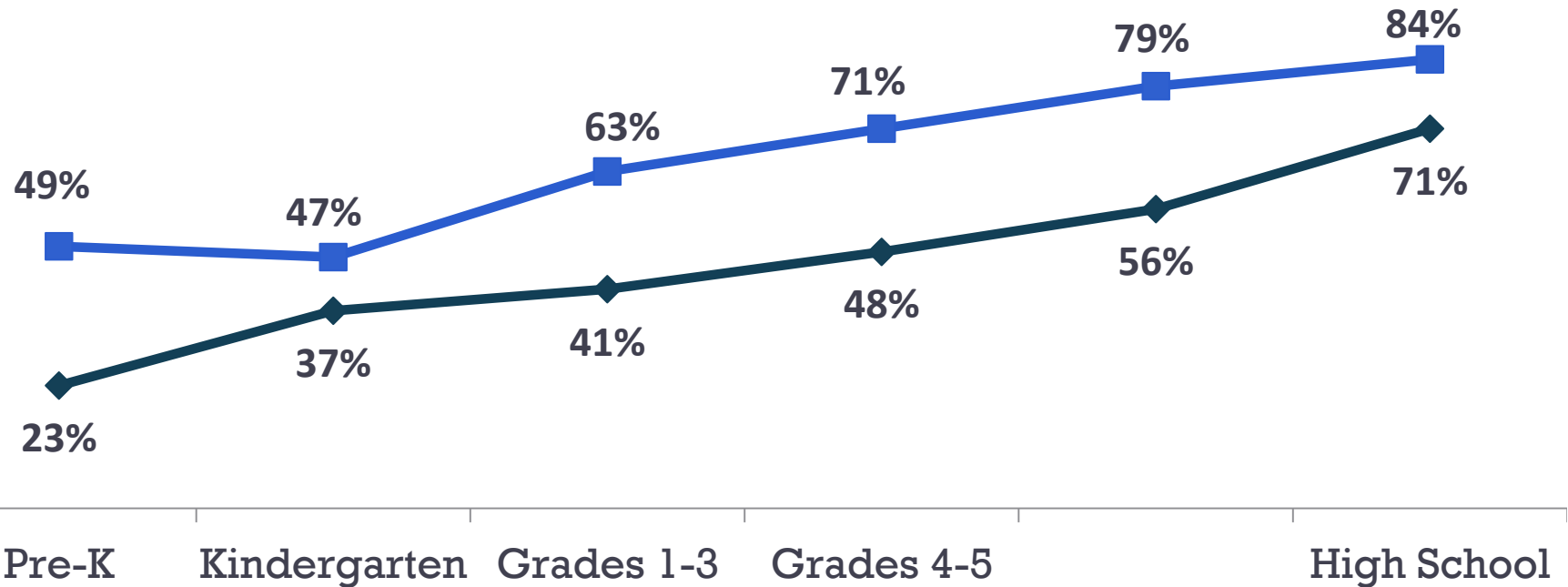
## Attendance doesn't really matter until high school

*Elementary and Middle school is for playing and socializing*



# Parents More Likely to Consider Attendance a “Big Deal” in High School

% who say “it’s a big deal to miss at this grade level”



Ad Council – CA Attorney General – Parent Ethnographies 2015



## Absences are okay if I say so

It is not okay if a child ditches  
But if I give permission it's okay:

- ✓ Sickness
- ✓ Bullying
- ✓ Vacation
- ✓ Rest
- ✓ Reward for good grades
- ✓ Appointments
- ✓ Help around the house
- ✓ Family time

**EXCUSE NOTE**

TO: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXCUSER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 PARENT  DOCTOR  SPOUSE  JUDGE  SELF  OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**EXCUSEE'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 STUDENT  EMPLOYEE  SERVANT  SELF  OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE(S) REQUIRING EXCUSE:** \_\_\_\_\_  FUTURE  
 PAST

**TRANSGRESSION:**  
 TARDINESS  BUSINESS  FLAKINESS  LOUDY ATTITUDE  
 ABSENCE  PREOCCUPATION  POOR BEHAVIOR  OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ILLNESS  CRABBINESS  BAD JUDGMENT \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPLANATION:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ALLOW EXCUSEE TO MAKE UP FOR ANY LOST:**  
 SCHOOL  TIME  GOOD WILL  TRUST  OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 WORK  MONEY  LOVE  FAITH \_\_\_\_\_

FOR QUESTIONS, CALL THIS NUMBER:  H  
 W  
 M

SIGNATURE OF EXCUSER: \_\_\_\_\_

WWW.KIDCRANKS.COM • © 2006 WHO'S THERE, INC. [perpetualkid.com](http://perpetualkid.com)



## Schools inadvertently reinforce some absence-causing beliefs

### 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 for 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

Reinforces parents' existing attitudes & behaviors

### 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



## Insights

- ✓ **Parents** do not connect early absences with long-term negative consequences.
- ✓ **Teachers** communicate with parents, but not about absences.
- ✓ **Absence letters** alone are ineffective, generating fear, denial, or misunderstanding—especially for Hispanic parents.



## Parents as Partners in Academic Success

Parents have the bottom line responsibility for setting attendance expectations and making sure their child gets to school everyday.

Schools can support parents in several ways:

1. Parents need the right information and access to resources
2. Schools need to respect and honor families' knowledge and customs
3. Schools and communities must build systems of trust that support family engagement

Attendance Works' Toolkits:

Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence  
Early and Often: Showing Up Matters in Preschool





## **Teachers are the First Line of Intervention and Prevention**

Teachers can make a difference by highlighting the importance of attendance in interactions with students and families.

The core roles of teachers include:

1. Emphasize attendance from day one
2. Use Parent-Teacher Conferences to talk about attendance
3. Promote a culture of attendance all year long
4. Maintain communication with School Attendance Team

Attendance Works' Teaching Attendance Toolkit



## **4 Ways to Emphasize Attendance from Day One**

1. Talk with parents to share the value of good attendance and let them know you are there to help
2. Send home handouts with information and tips
3. Make time at a parent event to demonstrate the importance of attendance or to create a plan to avoid unnecessary absences
4. Celebrate Attendance Awareness Month



## Find Ideas for Celebrating Attendance Awareness Month on the Action Map

- Post your community's plans for Attendance Awareness Month 2016 on our map



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



## Save the Date! 2016 Webinar Series

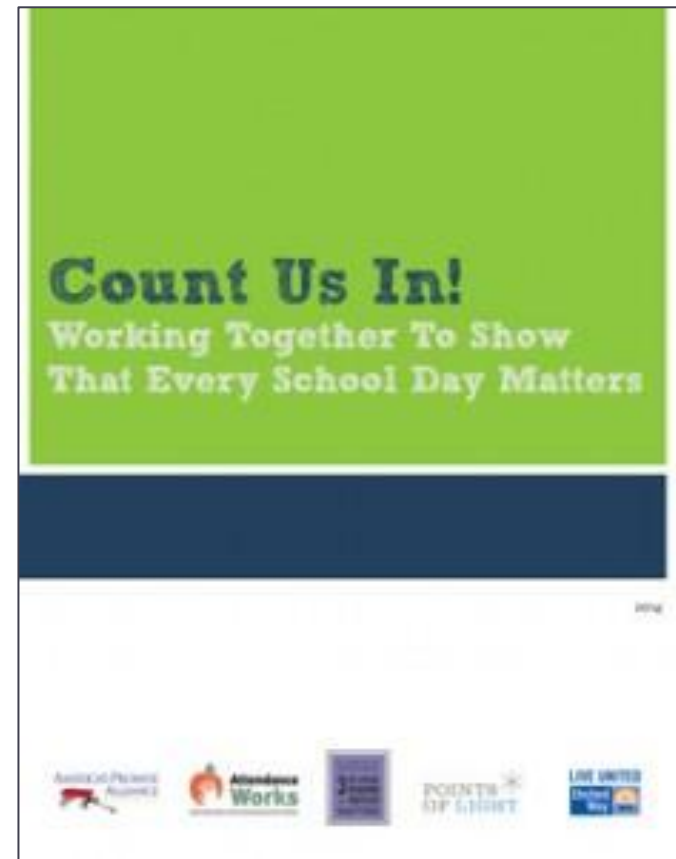
- ★ **April 12:** Motivating Good Attendance All Year Long
- ★ **May 17:** Using Data to Drive Action; Portraits of Chronic Absence
- ★ **August 16:** Collective Action: Taking a Cross-Sector Approach
- ★ **September 8:** Understanding and Addressing the Attendance Gap: A National Study
- ★ **November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



## 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: 9,300+ members.

# PROMOTE LOCALLY





## Help Spread the Word!



- Share the website:  
<http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/>
- Like us on Facebook 
- Tweet using #schooleveryday 
- Add a badge to your signature line or materials



## **B. Use Parent-Teacher Conferences to Talk About Attendance**





## Leveraging Parent-Teacher Conferences

How many of you work in a district or a school where parent teacher conferences are still held?

Do you discuss attendance during those conferences?





## Know Your Attendance Categories

**Satisfactory Attendance**

Missing less than 5% of school days

**At-Risk**

Missing between 5-10% of school days

**Chronic Absence**

Missing 10% or more of school days



## Your Turn

Satisfactory  
Attendance

At-Risk

Chronic  
Absence

**Q: It's time for parent-teacher conferences and 40 school days have gone by.**

**What does it mean for a student to be in the Satisfactory Attendance category?**

***A: Student has missed 2 or fewer school days***



## Your Turn

Satisfactory  
Attendance

At-Risk

Chronic  
Absence

**Q: It's time for parent-teacher conferences and 40 school days have gone by.**

**You meet with a parent whose child was absent 6 days. What category is she in?**

***A: Student is chronically absent. (40 divided by 10 is 4 days)***



## Attendance Categories Recapped

### Good Attendance

Student has missed **fewer than 5%** of school days (generally less than 4 or 5 days in a semester)

### At-Risk

Student has missed **between 5% and 10%** of school days (generally between 5-9 days in a semester)

### Chronic Absence

Student has missed **10% or more** of school days (generally 9 days or more in a semester)



## Tailoring the Conversation to Students' Situations

### Satisfactory Attendance

Congratulate parents on making attendance a priority and encourage them to keep it up. Ask them what they're doing that's enabling them to be so successful.

### At-Risk

Let parents know that you are concerned about attendance because their child is beginning to head off track, and it is easy for absences to add up.

### Chronic Absence

#### ***If student is right around 10% or a little above***

Let parents know their child may be academically at risk because they have missed so much school. Discuss underlying causes and how you can help.

#### ***If student is severely chronically absent (e.g. >20%)***

The type of challenges these families face may differ from those with more moderate absence problems. Be prepared to touch on difficult topics, be supportive, and be ready to connect to community resources.

Consider an additional family meeting on attendance



## Caring Conversations Exercise

### Small Group Activity:

Form a group of 3 people

Assign roles:

- one person is the staff person /teacher
- one is the parent or caregiver
- one observes

Role play for 5 minutes.



## What might educators and community partners say to families?

01

**Learn**

Learn about the student's family. Ask what their vision is for their child's future. What are their hopes and dreams for them?

02

**Share**

Share positive things you've observed about the student. Share your own vision for student learning & development, including helping put students on a pathway to success by encouraging a habit of good attendance.

03

**Inform**

Review attendance report with parents. Tailor conversation to student's level of absenteeism & inform parents of possible impacts of missing school. Connect attendance to parents' hopes and dreams for their child.

04

**Discuss**

Discuss the challenges parents face in getting their children to school, as well as strengths they can build upon. For chronically absent students, try to understand the barriers that are keeping their children from school.

05

**Arrive at a Plan**

Think through strategies with parents for addressing absences and help them develop an attendance improvement plan. Offer referrals to services as needed and ask if there are other ways you can help.



# Help families make back-up plans

[Insert your logo]

## MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

• My child was present \_\_\_\_\_ days.  
 • My child was absent \_\_\_\_\_ days.  
 • My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than \_\_\_\_\_ for the rest of the year.  
*(9 or fewer absences = satisfactory attendance)*

### POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- 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
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from doing chores, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for \_\_\_\_\_ a.m.
- If my child complains of a stomachache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to school anyway and call \_\_\_\_\_ so that he/she can check in with my child during the day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend or neighbor who can take my child to school if I can't make it.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out what he/she missed.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school.

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

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

We will review progress to meet this goal in two months.

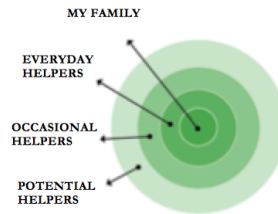
Family Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



To learn more, please visit [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)  
 Adapted with permission from the [Dove](http://www.dove.org) Family Foundation, and from materials created by [Early Works](http://www.earlyworks.org) at Earl Boyles Elementary School in Portland, Oregon.

## MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK



- My Family:
- Everyday Helpers:
- Occasional Helpers:
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

- My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help everyday, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help—if you ask.

### 2015-2016 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

August 2015							September 2015						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
30	31												

October 2015							November 2015						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
							29	30					

December 2015							January 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

February 2016							March 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29						27	28	29	30	31		

April 2016							May 2016						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
							29	30	31				



CHRONIC ABSENCE = 18 absences  
 (10% of school year)  
 Warning Signs = 10 to 17 absences  
 Satisfactory Attendance = 9 or fewer absences

• My child was present \_\_\_\_\_ days.  
 • My child was absent \_\_\_\_\_ days.  
 • My goal is to improve my child's attendance. I will ensure my child misses no more than \_\_\_\_\_ for the rest of the year.





## Caring Conversation Debrief

**For the person playing the parent or caregiver:** How did you feel at the beginning when the staff person approached you about your child's attendance? How did you feel at the end of the conversation? What was helpful?

**For the person playing the staff person:** What did you learn about effective conversations about attendance? How can you prepare more for the next conversation?

**For the Observer:** What did you see the staff person do that you would want to imitate? What alternative approaches can you suggest?

# C. Promote a Culture of Attendance All Year Long





## How Shall We Promote Good Attendance Among Students?

At your table:

- ✓ Share your rituals or routines that promote good attendance
- ✓ Review Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives
- ✓ Delve into the French Toast handout for more ideas
- ✓ Make a list of your ideas and be ready to report out



## Peer Share / Pair Share

Share one strategy you learned today that you want to incorporate in your school or classroom to encourage students to attend school every day.