

# Together for Tomorrow

Service Partnerships to Boost Attendance



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



**TOGETHER FOR  
TOMORROW**

# TFT.challenge.gov

- The Together for Tomorrow School Improvement Challenge invites schools, national service programs, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations to work together to propel improvement of our lowest-performing schools.



# School & Student Needs

|                           | Targeted needs  | Whole school needs  |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Attendance</b>         | <i>ex: Need special assistance to improve attendance of chronically absent students (absent 10% or more of days of school.)</i> | <i>ex: Need to make coming to school more welcoming for all of our students.</i>  |
| <b>Behavior</b>           | <i>ex: Need assistance for students that are in in-school suspension.</i>   | <i>ex: Need incentives to provide to students for the positive behavior intervention system.</i>  |
| <b>Course performance</b> | <i>ex: Need personalized academic assistance for the students that are 2 or more grade levels behind in reading.</i>            | <i>ex: Need project-based learning opportunities in math and science that connect the classroom to real-world challenges.</i>           |
| <b>College access</b>     | <i>ex: Need help filling out the FAFSA for high school seniors and their families that have not yet completed it.</i>           | <i>ex: Need all students to better understand the options for post-secondary education that are available in their own communities.</i> |

# Service Activities & Community Resources

|                           | Targeted services/resources   | Whole school services/resources   | Existing or planned? |
|---------------------------|---|---|----------------------|
| <b>Attendance</b>         | <i>ex: Home visits for chronically absent students (absent &gt; 10% days) to help families resolve issues that are impeding attendance.</i> | <i>ex: Greeting students as they arrive at school so the first thing they see is a friendly face with a positive welcome.</i> |                      |
| <b>Behavior</b>           | <i>ex: Classroom coaches to assist teachers with conducting in-school suspension.</i>   | <i>ex: Hosting an social event for all students that meet behavior goals during the month.</i>                                |                      |
| <b>Course performance</b> | <i>ex: Assisting with volunteers for afterschool and summer tutoring programs.</i>  | <i>ex: Leading service projects that link water testing in community streams to the core science curriculum.</i>              |                      |
| <b>College access</b>     | <i>ex: Helping low-income families complete tax returns so they can apply for student financial aid.</i>                                    | <i>ex: Organizing a college fair at the school.</i>   |                      |



Hedy Chang



Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence





# Unpacking Attendance Terms

## Average Daily Attendance

- **Definition:** The % of enrolled students who attend school each day
- **Answers:** What resources are needed to serve typical number of students who show up to school?

## Truancy

- **Definition:** Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state and sometimes locality.
- **Answers:** How many/which students are skipping school and breaking compulsory attendance laws?

## Chronic Absence

- **Definition:** Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excuse, unexcused, etc.
- **Answers:** How many and which students are missing so much school they are academically at risk? Do we need to improve attendance in order to raise achievement?



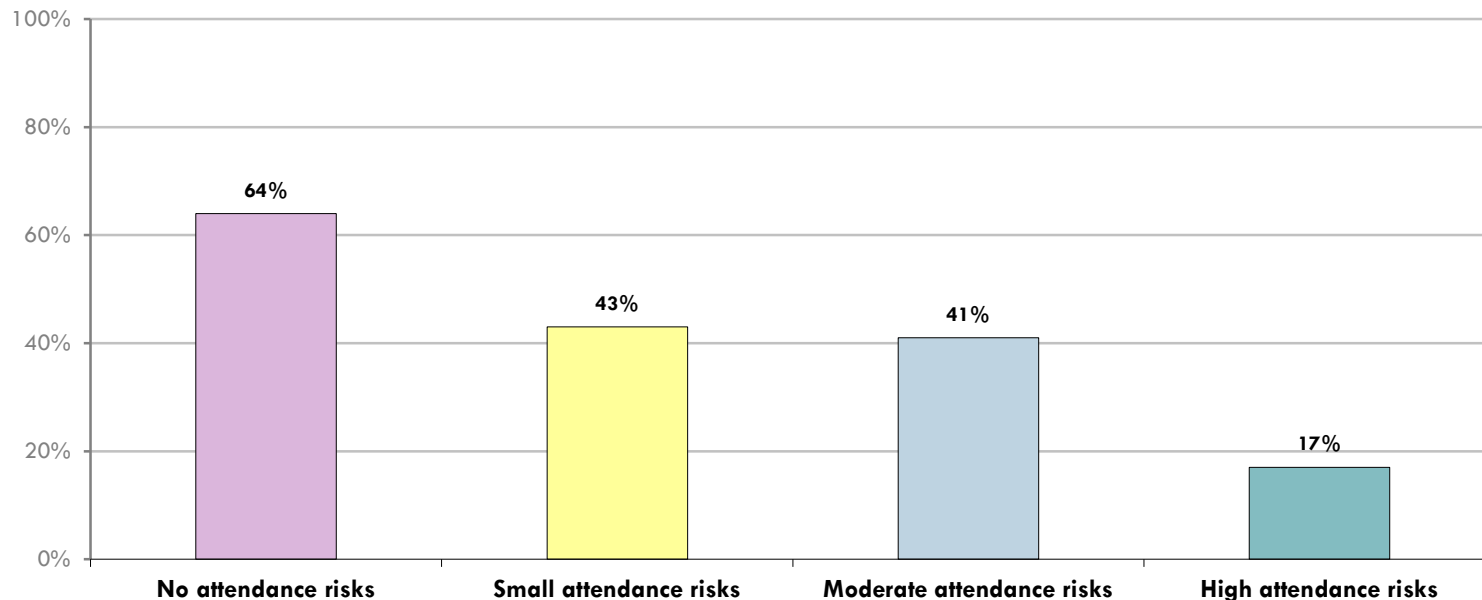
## Chronic Absence is a National Crisis

- ❑ Nationwide, as many as 7.5 million students miss nearly a month of school every year. That's 135 million days of lost time in the classroom.
- ❑ In some cities, as many as one in four students are missing that much school.
- ❑ Chronic absenteeism is a red alert that students are headed for academic trouble and eventually for dropping out of high school.
- ❑ Poor attendance isn't just a problem in high school. It can start as early as kindergarten.



# Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Percent Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced on 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade ELA Based on Attendance in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Attendance



|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| No risk       | Missed less than 5% of school in K & 1 <sup>st</sup> t |
| Small risk    | Missed 5-9% of days in both K & 1 <sup>st</sup>        |
| Moderate risk | 5-9% of days absent in 1 year & 10 % in 1 year         |
| High risk     | Missed 10% or more in K & 1 <sup>st</sup>              |

Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)

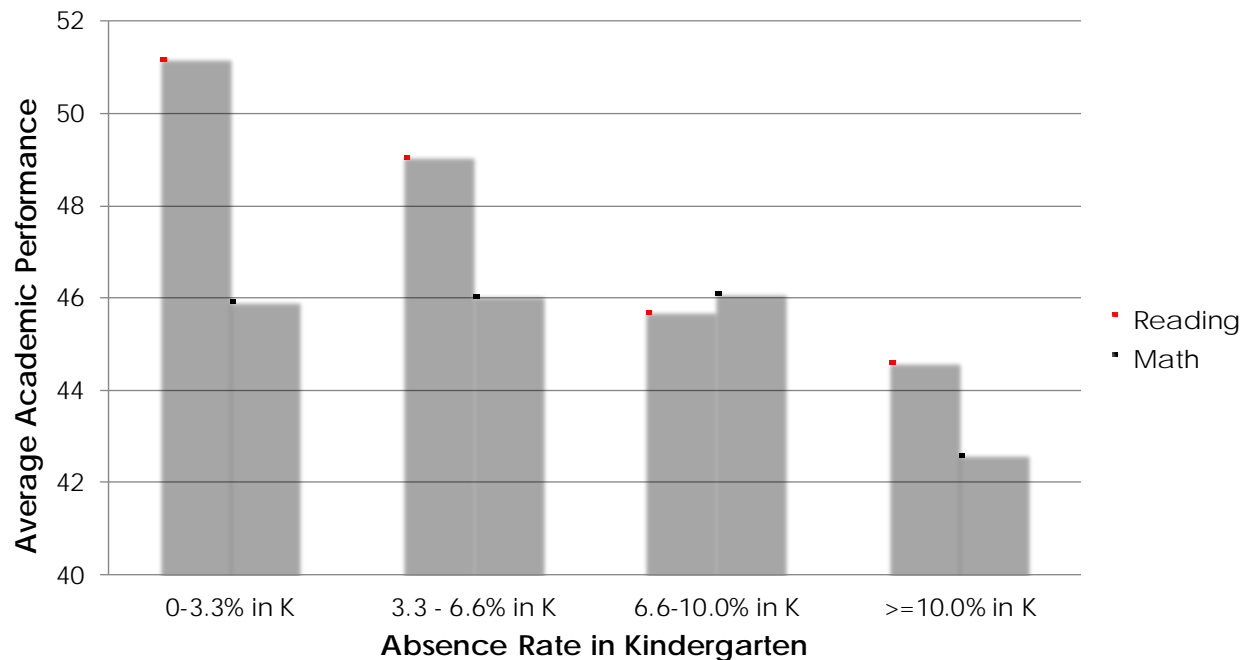




# The Chronic Early Absence Is Most Troubling for Poor Children

*Chronic K Absence predicted lower 5<sup>th</sup> grade performance even for if attendance had improved in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.*

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math and Reading Performance By K Attendance

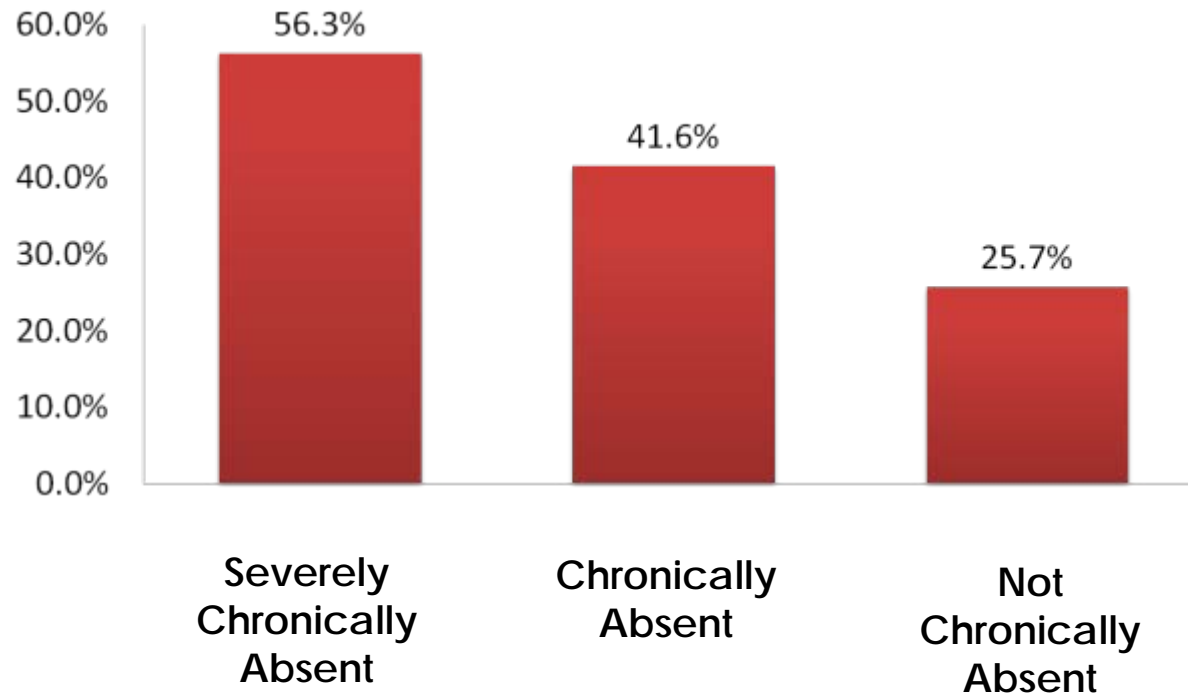


Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)  
Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.



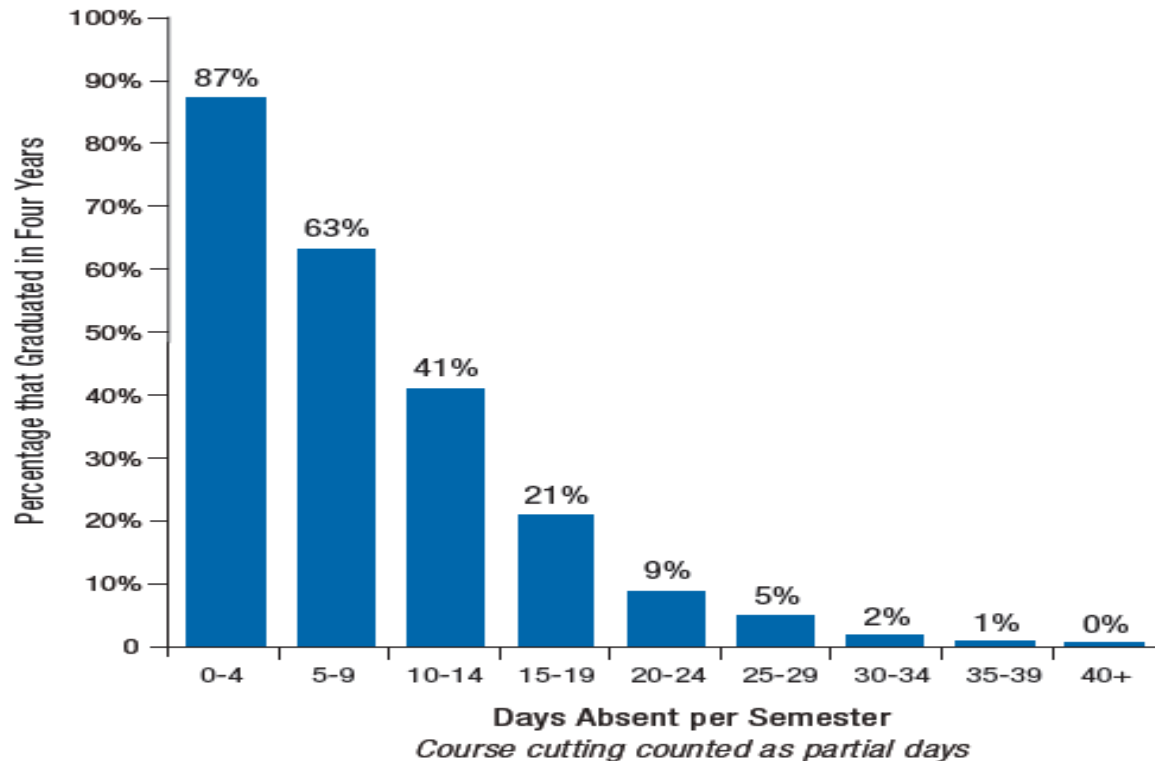
# Chronically Absent 6th Graders Have Lower Graduation Rates

Dropout Rates by Sixth Grade Attendance  
(Baltimore City Public Schools, 1990-00 Sixth Grade Cohort)





# 9th Grade Attendance Predicts Graduation for Students of All Economic Backgrounds

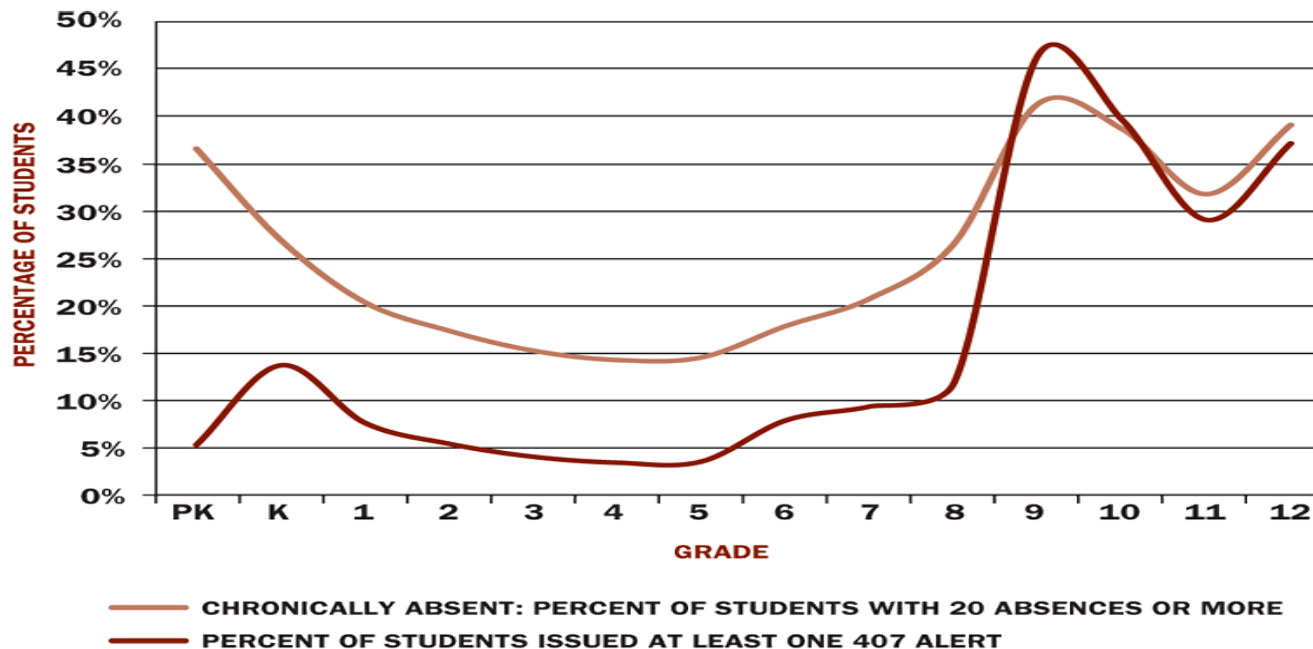


Note: This Chicago study found attendance was a stronger graduation predictor than 8th grade test scores.



# Sporadic — Not Just Consecutive – Absences Matter

New York City Schools



A 407 alert is issued when student misses 10 consecutive days or 20 days over a 40 day period. It misses more sporadic absence.

1 out of 5 elementary school children were chronically absent.

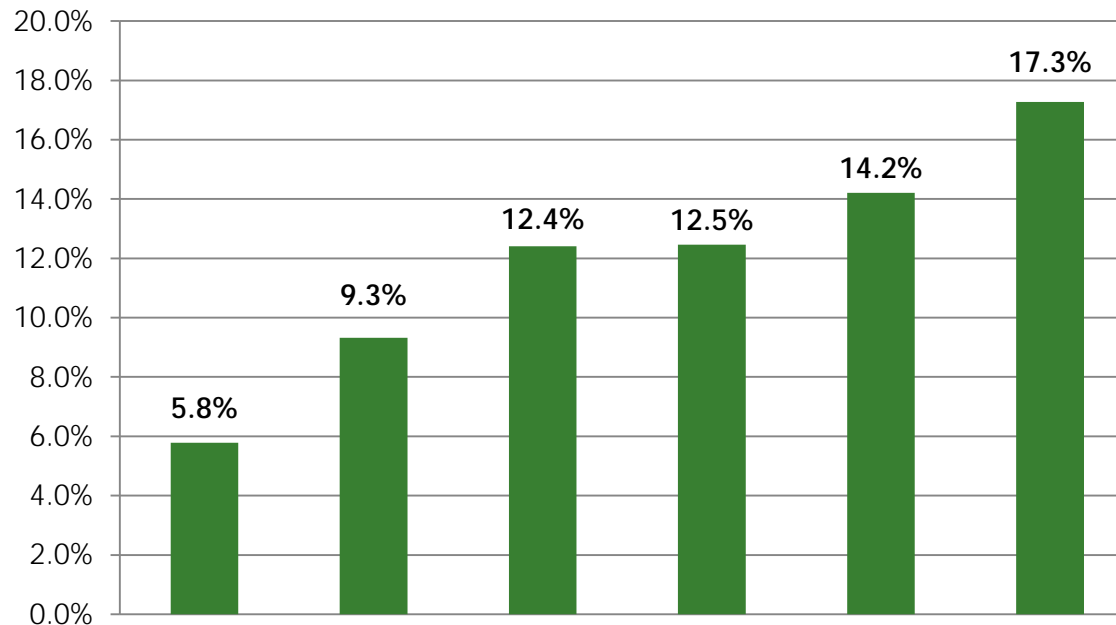




## Moving into Action Requires Knowing If Chronic Absence is a Problem

***Most Schools Only Track Average Daily Attendance and Truancy. Both Can Mask Chronic Absence.***

**Variation in Chronic Absence for Schools with 95% ADA in Oakland, CA**

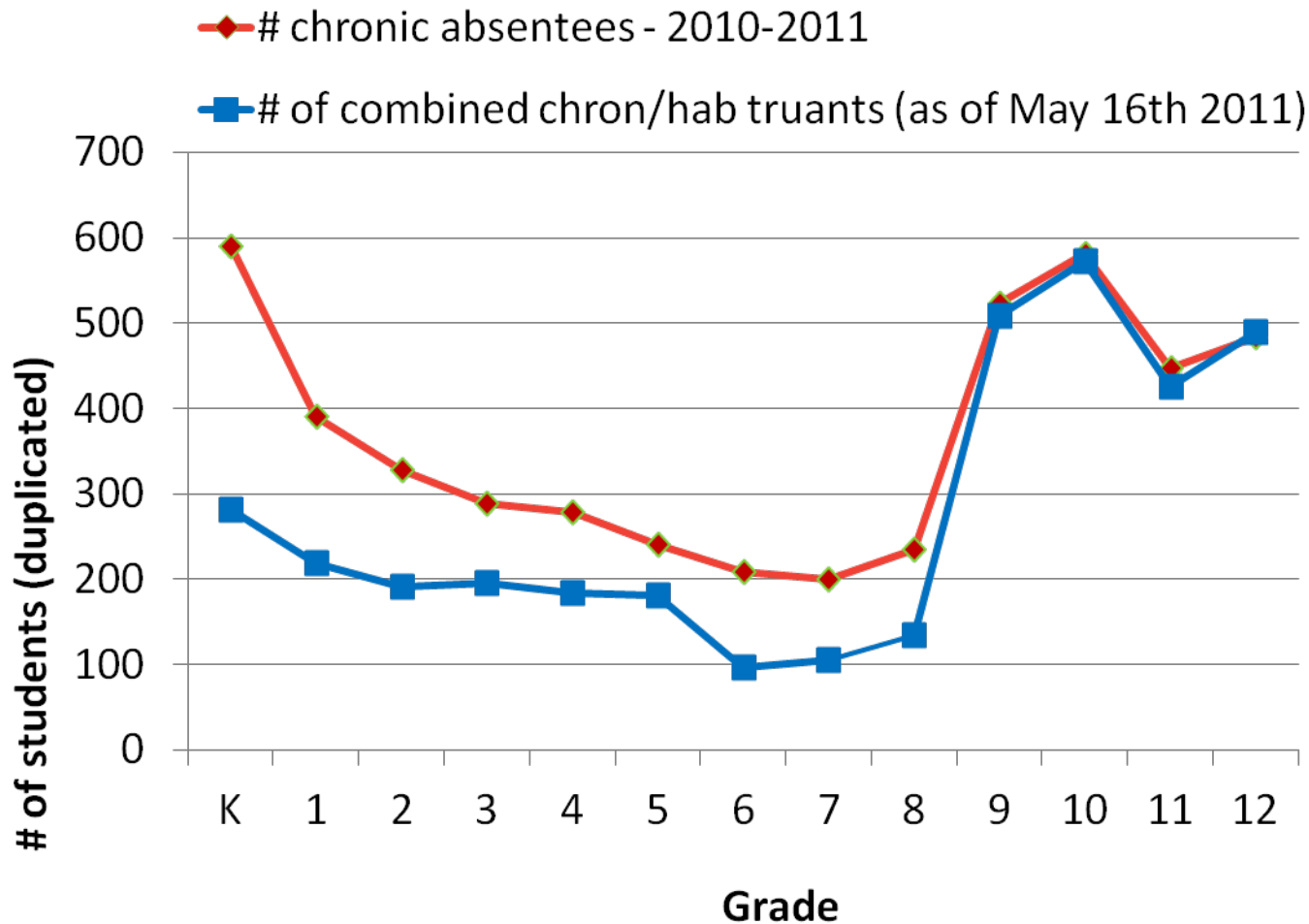


**98% ADA = little chronic absence, 95%ADA = don't know;  
93% ADA = significant chronic absence**



# Chronic Absence Versus Truancy

## (San Francisco Unified School District)





## Data is Needed for Accountability, Intervention & Programmatic Solutions

- ☐ Chronic absence data (as well as other attendance measures) should be examined by classroom, grade, school, neighborhood or sub-population.
- ☐ If chronic absence is unusually high for a particular group of students, explore what might be common issues (unreliable transportation, community violence, asthma and other chronic diseases, poor access to health care, unnecessary suspension for non-violent offenses, lack of engaging curriculum, child care or afterschool programming, foreclosures, etc.)
- ☐ If chronic absence is unusually low for a high risk population, find out what they are doing that works.



# Schools + Communities CAN Make a Difference

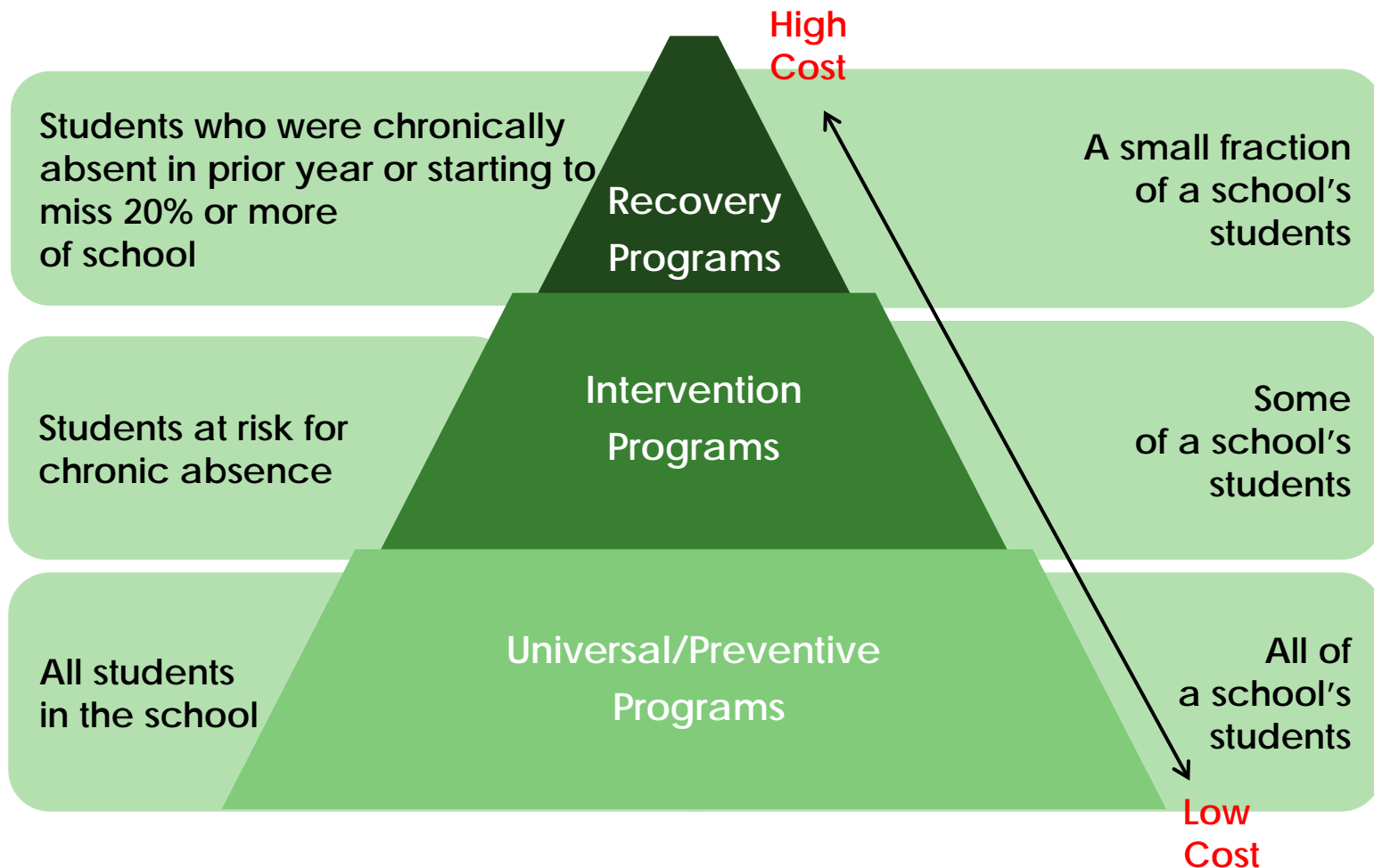
## Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- ❑ Partner with community agencies to help parents carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- ❑ Make attendance a priority, set targets and monitor progress over time.
- ❑ Examine factors contributing to chronic absence, especially from parent and student perspectives.
- ❑ Clearly communicate expectations to parents.
- ❑ Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- ❑ Combine universal strategies that create and engaged learning environment & build a culture of attendance with targeted interventions.
- ❑ Offer positive supports before punitive action.





## Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts





# What Causes Chronic Absence?

*Solutions Only Work If Grounded in Understanding Of  
What Leads to Chronic Absence*

## Discretion

Parents don't  
know  
attendance  
matters

School lacks a  
strong culture  
of attendance

## Aversion

Child is  
struggling  
academically

Child is being  
bullied

## Barriers

Lack of access  
to health care

No safe path  
to school

Poor  
transportation

*Special thanks to Dr. Robert Balfanz, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD for providing this framework.*



# Key Components of Effective Practice

*Proposed Universal Strategies For Influencing Discretion and Identifying Causes of Absence*

**Recognize Good  
& Improved  
Attendance**

**Parent  
Engagement**

**Personalized  
Early Outreach**

**Attendance  
Data Team**



# Strategies for 3 Tiered Approach

## Recovery Programs

- Case management and wrap-around services
- Referral as last resort for court -based intervention

## Intervention Programs

- Early outreach, support, mentoring for student with poor attendance.
- Identify and remove barriers
- Attendance contracts

## Universal/Preventive Programs

- Safe & supportive school environment
- Engaging classroom environments
- Parent education about why attendance matters and how to help each other get students to school.
- On-going attention to attendance data
- Recognition for good and improved attendance
- Collaboration with afterschool & early childhood
- School-based health supports





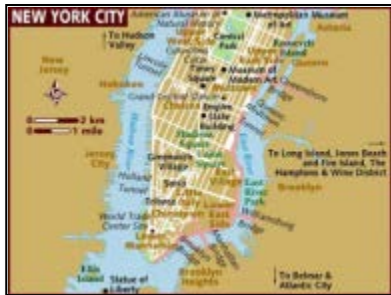
# Examples of Successful Efforts



**Baltimore:** Fewer unnecessary suspensions, reduced middle school transitions, expanded monitoring of attendance data, and a citywide campaign have **helped cut middle school chronic absence in half.**



**Grand Rapids:** A community schools approach including outreach and case management for students with poor attendance **has helped bring chronic absence down and student achievement up.**



**New York City:** Schoolwide incentives, celebrity wakeup calls and mentoring for at-risk students **have reduced elementary and middle school chronic absence in pilot schools.**

# NYC Success Mentor Corps

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**300+ Success Mentors**

*reaching*

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**Over 3,000 At-Risk  
Students**

- ✓ Full year, 3-5 days/week, 15 hour min.
- ✓ Trainings & check-ins
- ✓ Confidentiality agreements
- ✓ Weekly Principal Meetings
- ✓ Connections to services
- ✓ Data Dashboard

# What is a Success Mentor?



- ◆ Success mentors are caring adults who work with chronically absent students to address the barriers keeping them from coming to school each day.



# Success Mentor Responsibilities



1. Work with 15-20 Target Students
2. School-Wide Strategies to promote good attendance
3. Parental Engagement
4. Principals' Weekly Student Success Summits





# Who are the NYC Success Mentors?



- ◆ City Year
- ◆ Retired professionals
- ◆ Social Work students supervised by CBOs
- ◆ School of Education students
- ◆ High school seniors
- ◆ School staff

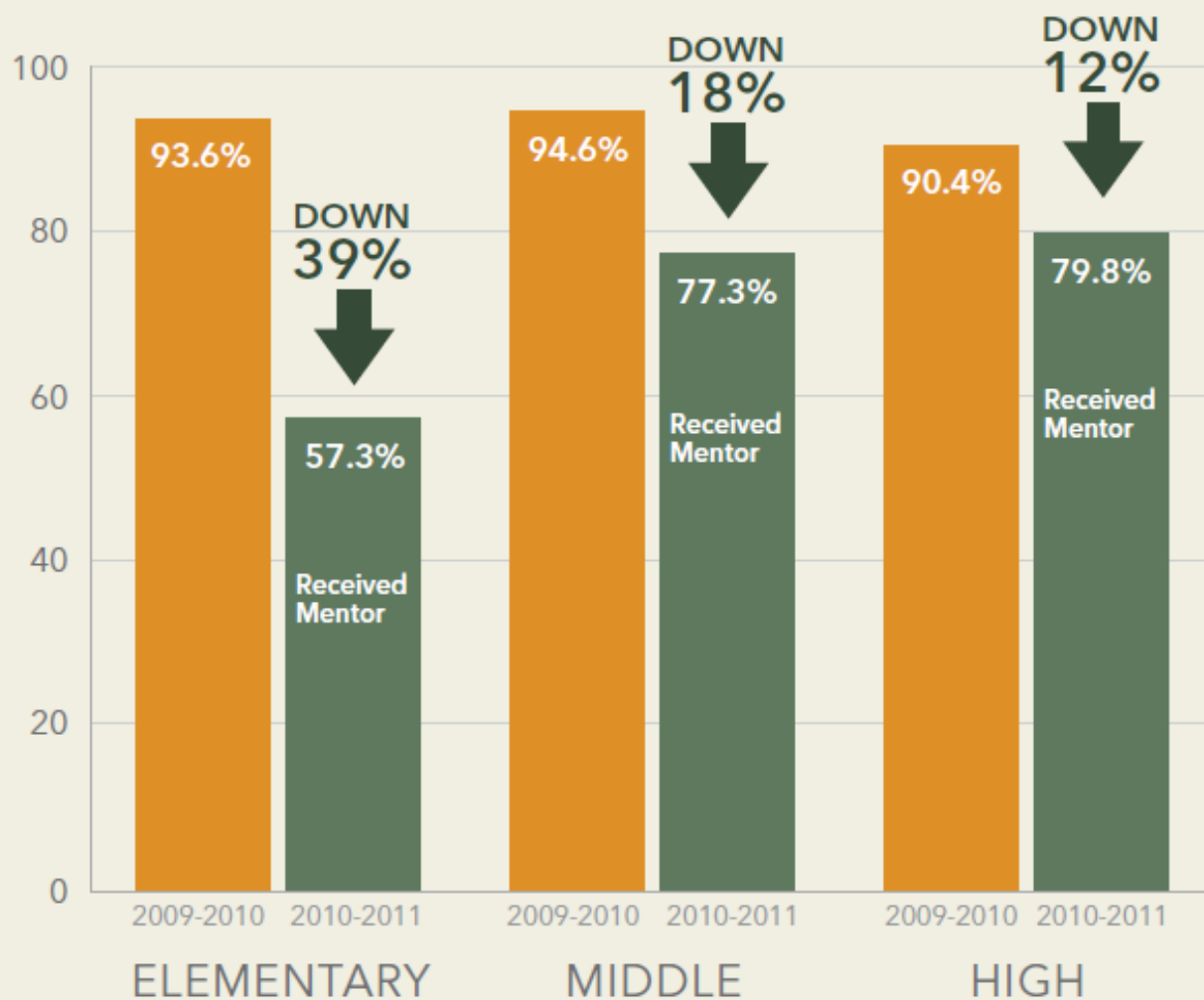


# NYC SUCCESS MENTOR CORPS

Change in Chronic Absenteeism for Students with Mentors in 2010-11

*Annual Change in  
Chronic Absenteeism  
After Students Received  
Full-Year Mentors  
in 2010-11*

*(1,400 Students with Mentors)*





## In Summary

### Focus on Attendance Because:

#### Increased Student Absences are:

- An early warning sign of potential drop-outs
- Predictive of academic failure
- A flag for student disengagement and struggling schools
- Costly for each school and surrounding community

#### Measures of Attendance are:

- Available
- Easily understood
- Predictor of failure in school
- Indicator of effective engagement strategies by educators
- A potentially powerful shared outcome that facilitates collaboration

# Discussion

