



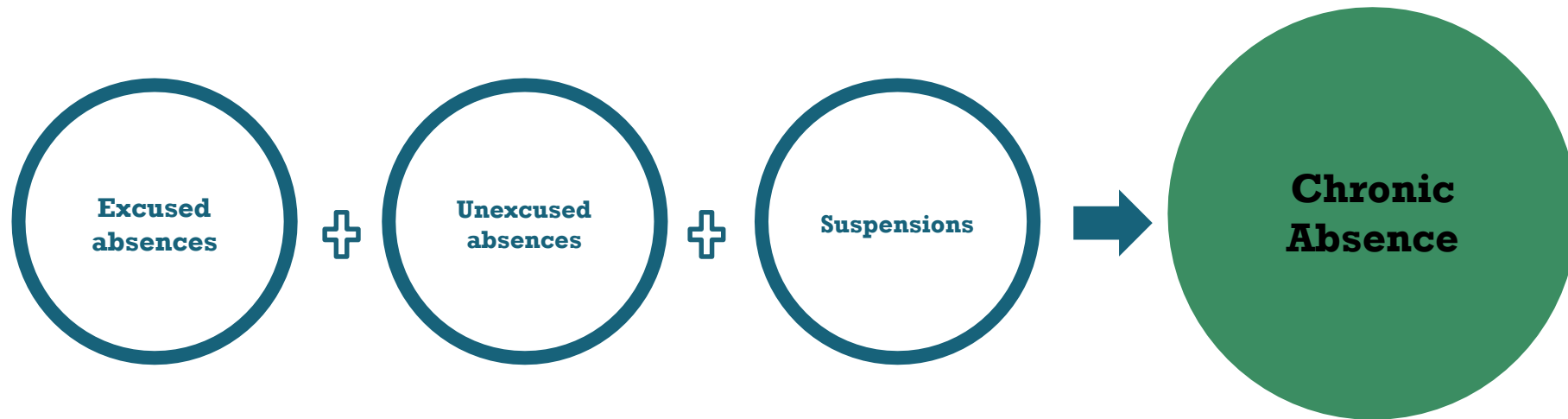
Why Addressing Chronic Absence Matters More than Ever For Educational Equity





What is chronic absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



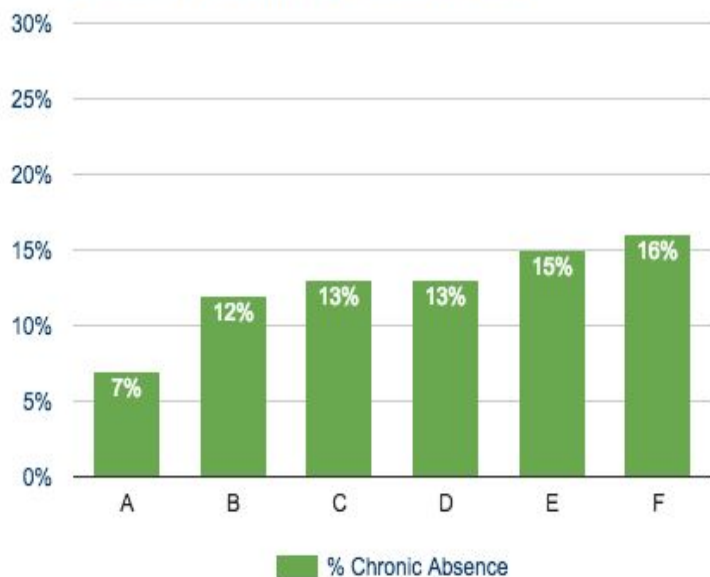
Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).



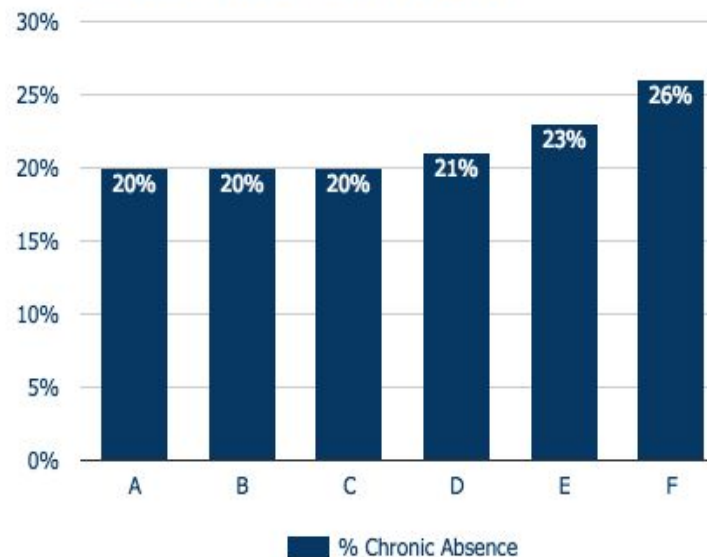
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Can Mask Chronic Absence

90% and even 95% \neq A

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



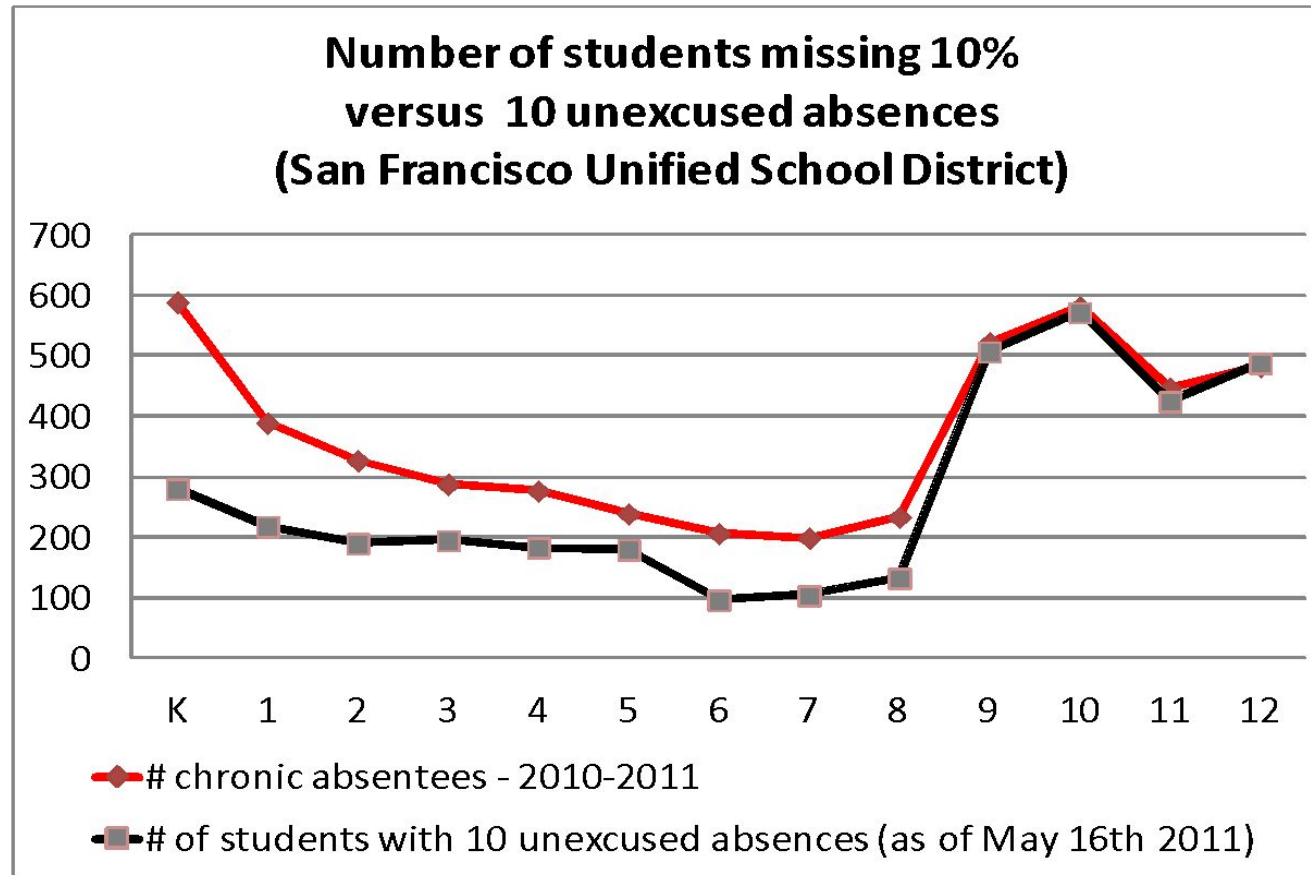
Chronic Absence for 6 Schools in New York City with 90% ADA in 2011-12



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



Chronic Absence vs. Truancy

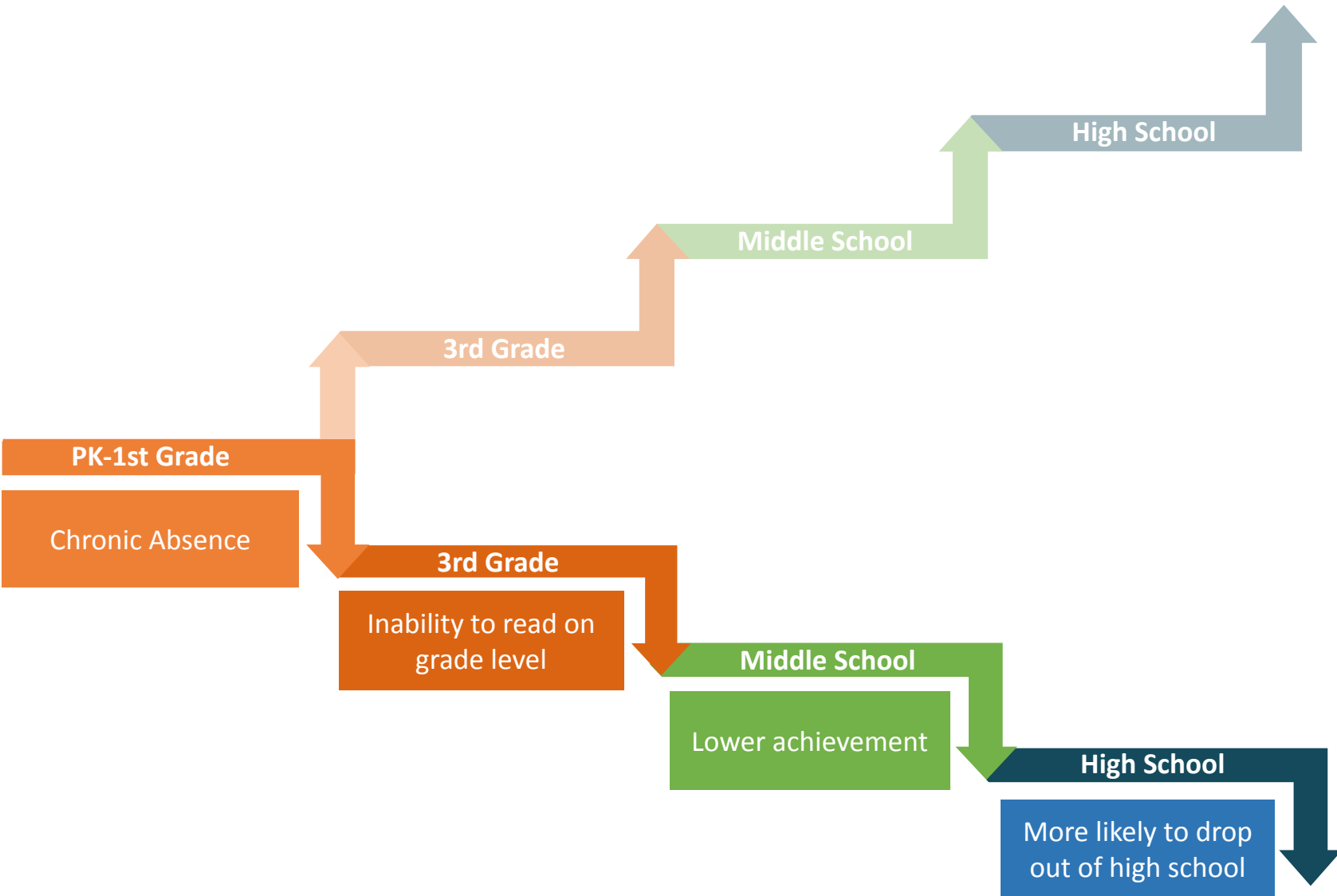




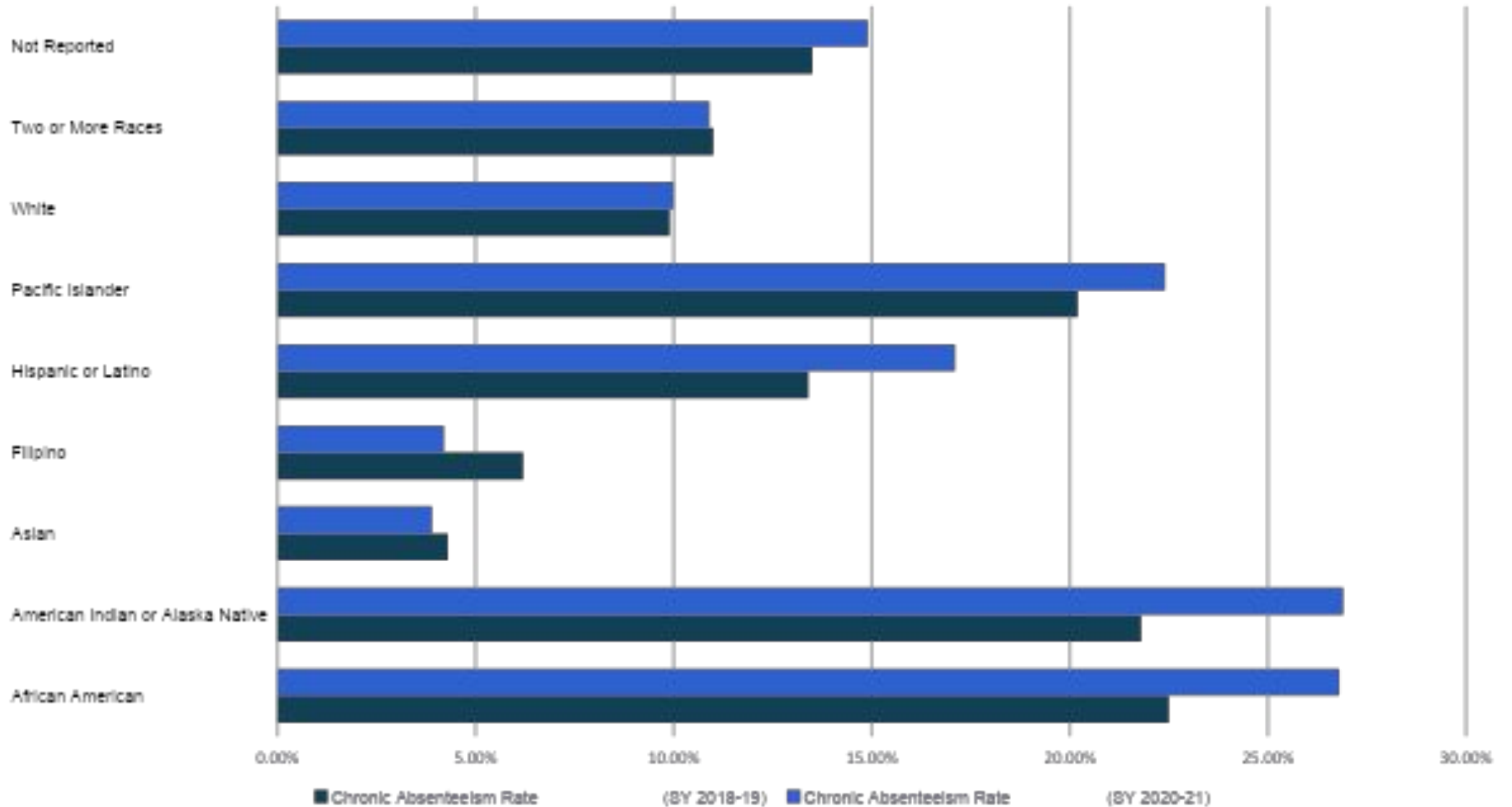
**What is the relationship
between absences and equity?**

**Chronic Absence is a *leading*
indicator and a *cause* of
educational inequity**

Chronic Absence Matters For Success in School



Chronic Absence Rate by Ethnicity in California Last Year and Before the Pandemic



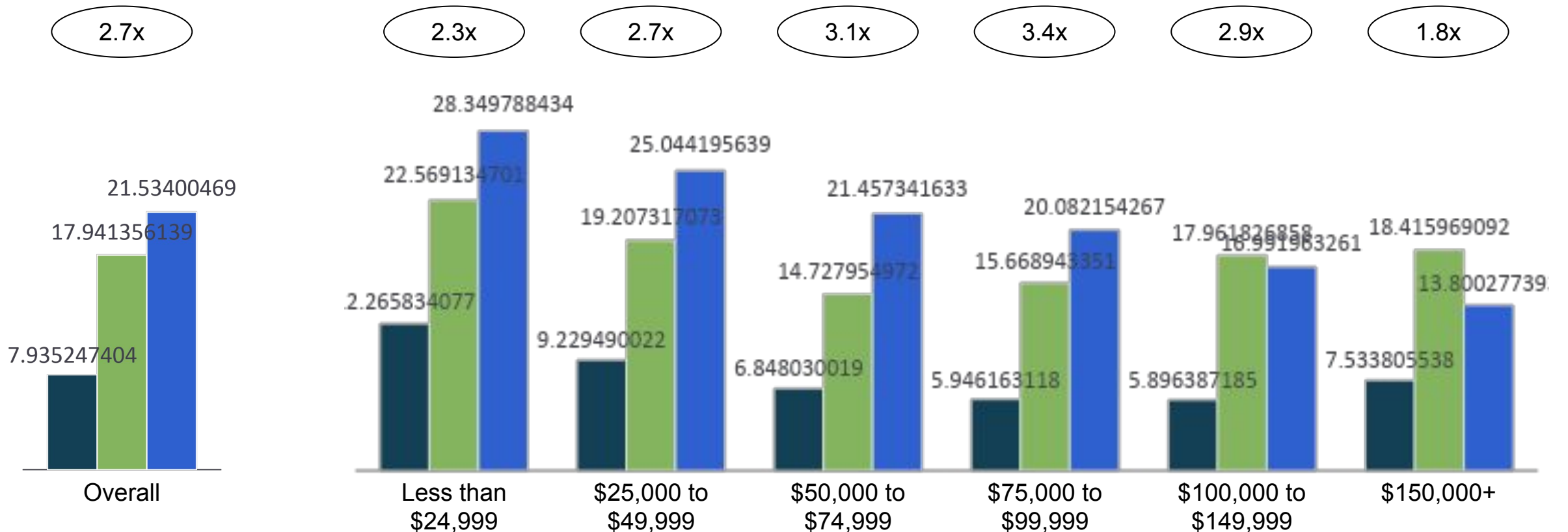
Source: Dataquest, California Department of Education

Attendance by income

% of parents with children in grades K-12 indicating their child could be chronically absent

- Pre-pandemic (% of parents reporting their student used to miss 15+ days in a full year)
- Spring 21 (% of parents reporting their student has missed 15+ days in 20-21 school year)
- Fall 21 (% of parents reporting their student has missed 4+ days in 21-22 school year so far)

Increase from pre-pandemic to Fall 21



Attendance is Even More Challenging in Fall 2021-22

- ✓ **The surge in Covid-19 cases is increasing the number of students who are absent.**
- ✓ **Returning to in-person school is difficult after so many months of remote learning.**
- ✓ **Many older students are struggling to balance school with family and work responsibilities especially in communities hard hit by the pandemic.**
- ✓ **High levels of chronic absence starting in the first half of the school is especially problematic for learning, relationships and routines.**

Turn to someone from another district.

Share with each other:

- What are the levels of chronic absence in your own districts?
- Who is most affected?

What Can We Do?

We can build and expand upon what we know works using lessons learned from the pandemic!



Ground solutions in an understanding of the factors (old and new) that contribute to chronic absence

Reflect or talk to a partner:

How has the pandemic changed or reinforced factors causing absenteeism in your district?

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to tech
- Etc. and many more!

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations
- Parents had negative educational experiences

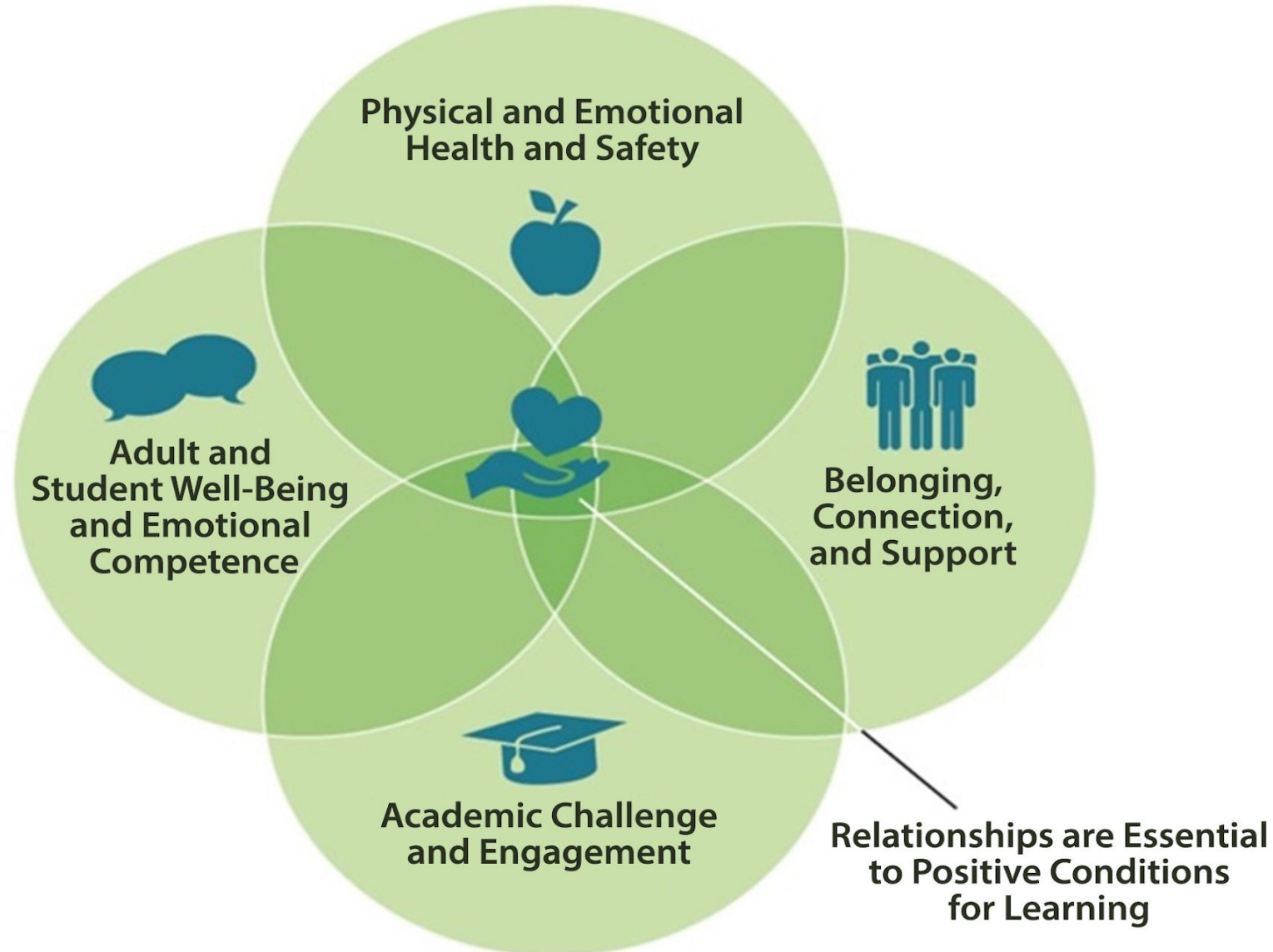
Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Easier to get positive reinforcement working in a low-wage job than high school.

Misconceptions

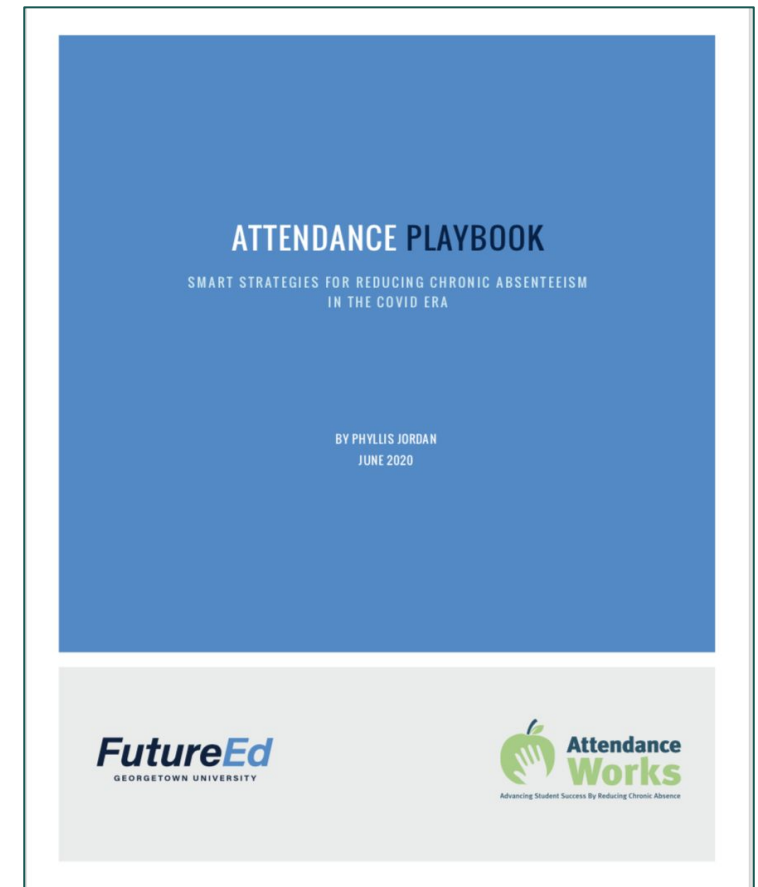
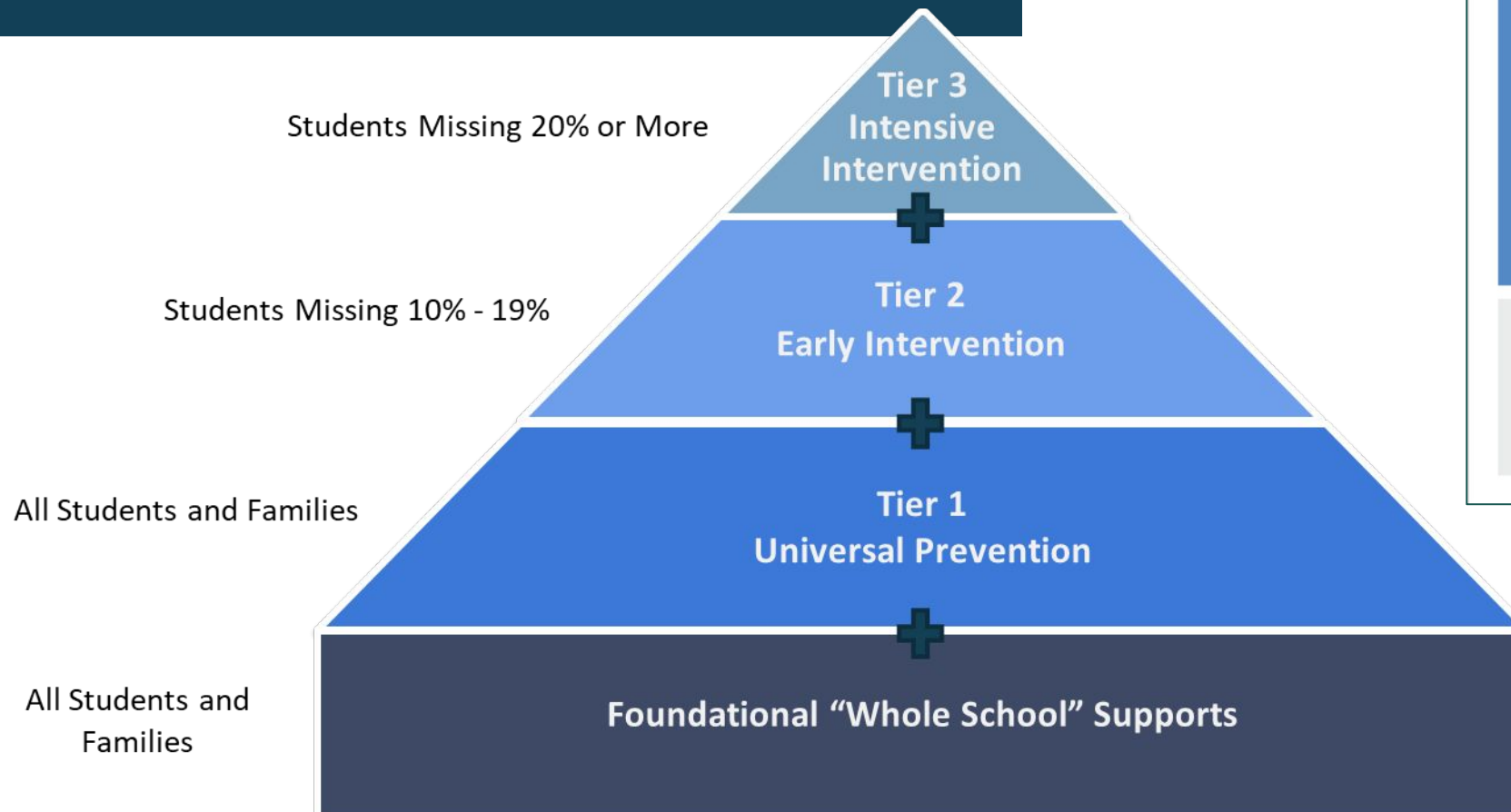
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

Take an all-hands-on-deck “team” approach to rebuilding positive conditions for learning in our schools





Solutions: a Multi-Tiered Approach That Begins with Prevention



Attendance Playbook:
<https://www.future-ed.org/attendance-playbook/>



Reinvest in the foundational building blocks of school that promote engagement.

Reflect or find a partner:

Which building blocks have been eroded in your district? What are you doing to rebuild them?

Healthy learning environments	Enrichment activities and clubs	Positive relationships	Active family and student engagement
Access to tech equipment and connectivity	Challenging and Engaging Curriculum	Traditions and celebrations	Support for families to facilitate learning at home
Welcoming, safe school climate	Advisories or Morning Meetings to Build Community	Learning Supports	Access to Food and Other Basic Needs

Foundational “Whole School” Supports



Leverage technology to expand universal attendance supports

- ❖ Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations
- ❖ Predictable daily/weekly routines related to attendance
- ❖ Take daily attendance accurately with care
- ❖ Personalized communication to families when students are absent
- ❖ Recognition of good and improved attendance
- ❖ Access to wellness checks and connectivity assessments
- ❖ Regular monitoring of attendance data

The Pandemic highlights the need to make school connectedness central

According to Dr. Bob Balfanz, Johns Hopkin's University, Everyone Graduates Center.

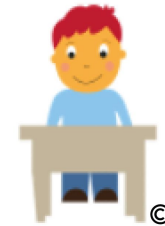
When students are connected to school, they

- do better in school,
 - have better mental and physical health,
 - recover better from trauma, and
 - engage in fewer risky behaviors.
-
- Students are connected to school when they
 - believe there is an adult(s) in school who knows and cares about them as person,
 - when they have a supportive peer group,
 - are engaged in pro-social activities, and
 - feel welcome in school for who they are (sense of belonging)

Proposed Framework for Making the Case that Showing Up to School Is Worthwhile

Showing up matters for **R.E.A.L.** because it is an opportunity to:

- ✓ Build **R**outines
- ✓ Increase **E**ngagement
- ✓ Provide **A**ccess to resources
- ✓ Support **L**earning



More on R.E.A.L.

Routines: Daily attendance routines can reduce stress and create a sense of safety and security especially after chaotic transitions.

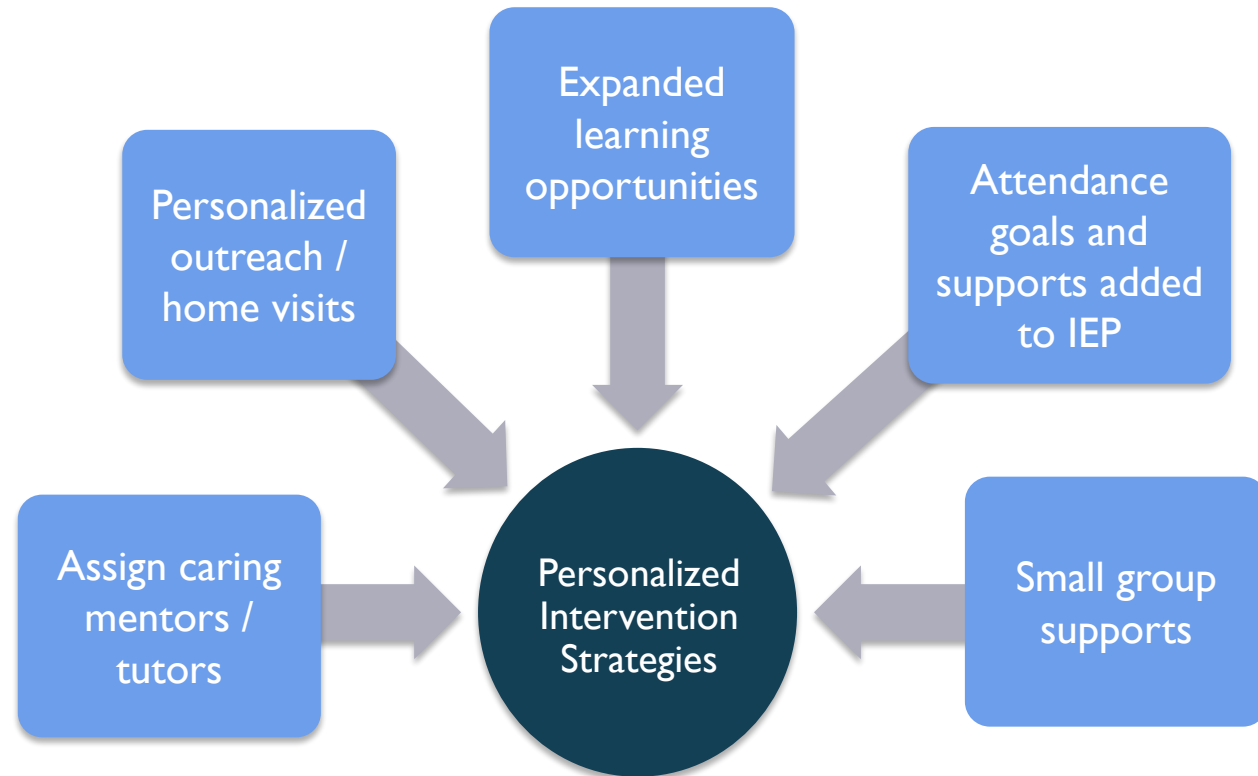
Engagement: Being in school helps build relationships with peers and school staff that nurture engagement.

Access to Resources: Schools help students and families access valuable resources such as meals, health and mental health services, tutoring, mentoring, technology and enrichment activities (sports, clubs, music, afterschool and summer programs etc.).

Learning: Learning is most meaningful when it is active, social, and allows students to apply concepts to real life situations. Showing up to school regularly helps students become proficient in reading and math and graduate from high school.



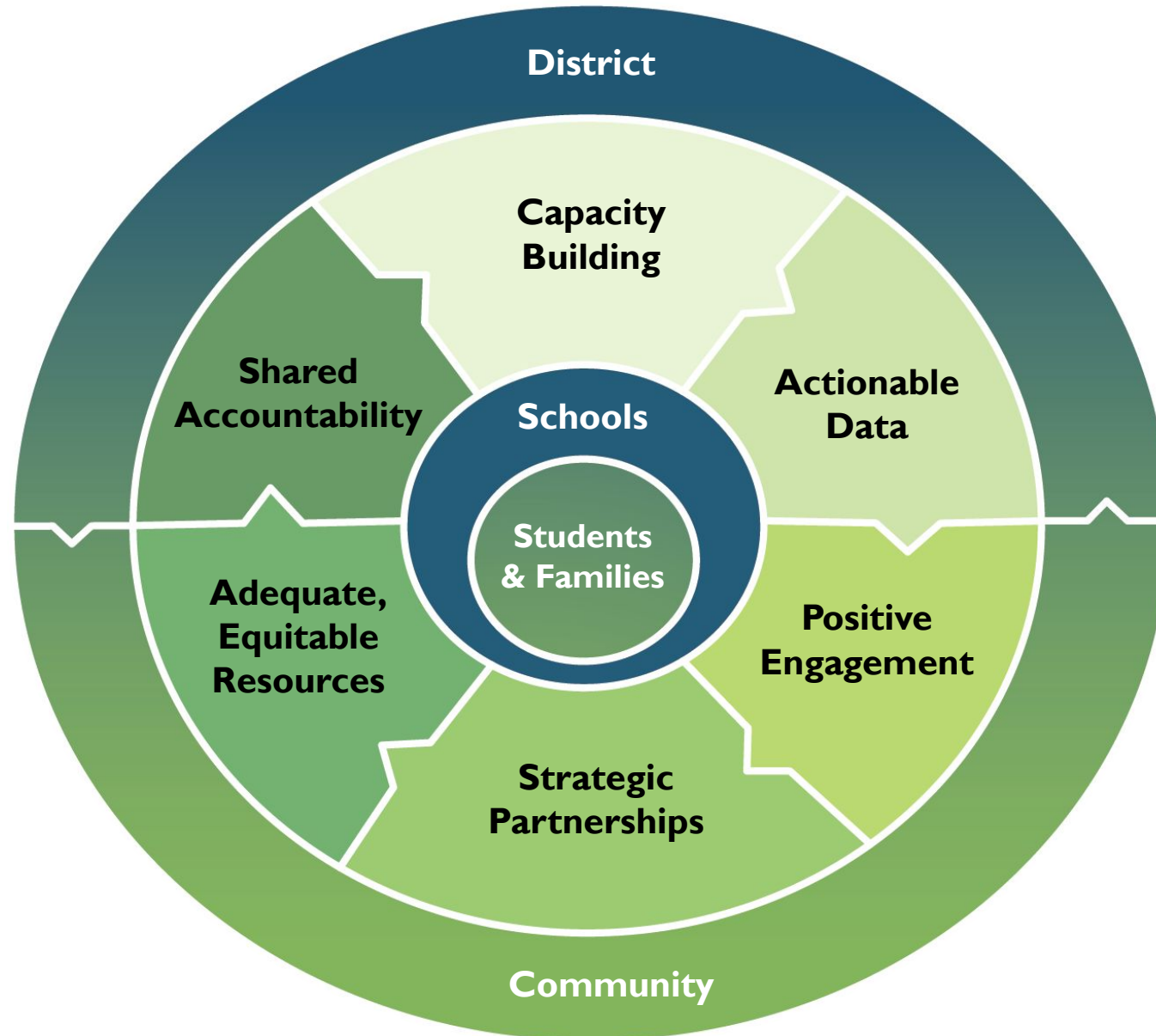
Expand Tier 2. Draw upon community partners and the power of peer support





Invest in evaluating what works and sharing the results.

Build upon assets to take and strengthen a systemic approach



Implications for Action

1. Left unchecked, chronic absence trends likely to lead to increases in the dropout rate and lower enrollment in public schools.
2. Attention to engagement and attendance (and ensuring learning opportunities during quarantine) during the second half of the 2021-22 school year are critical to slowing the rate of absenteeism.
3. Using chronic absence data to target resources to the student groups most affected is critical to reducing gaps in access to instruction and engagement.
4. Opportunity to use budget surplus to scale and sustain evidence-based strategies both in the short-term and the long-term.
5. We need to expand the people (youth, families, expanded learning providers, community partners, public agencies) who partner with educators to support chronically absent students and families.