

# Measuring and Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

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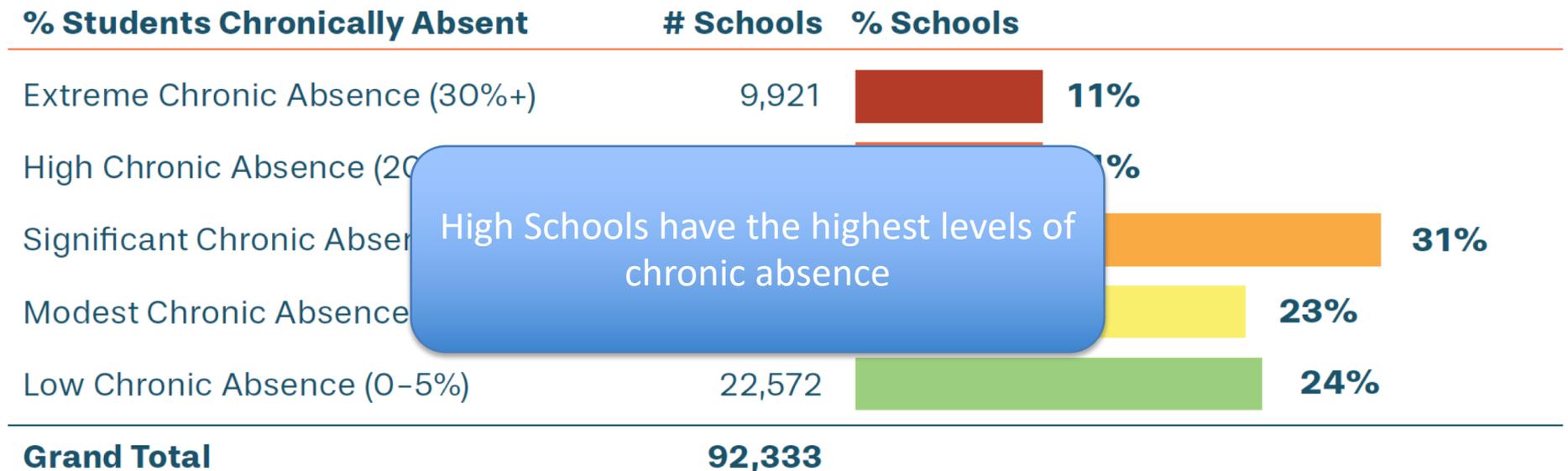
Thank you to Steve Goodman, George Sugai, and Brigid Flannery for contributions to content



# Chronic Absenteeism

- Students who are repeatedly absent during the school year, for both excused and unexcused absences
  - Attendance Works: 10% of school, 2 days per month, or 18 days over 180-day school year
- Truancy: typically refers to only unexcused absences

TABLE 1



# Measure More Than Average Daily Attendance

- Average daily attendance masks problems.
  - It's possible to have 90% average daily attendance and still have 20%-30% of students chronically absent.
- Instead monitor the number and percent of students who are:
  - Regular attenders: miss 5 or fewer days a year (less than 1 day per month)
  - At risk: miss 6-10 days per month
  - Chronically absent: miss 11 or more days per month
  - Severely chronically absent: miss 20% or more days of school (about 36 days a year; more than 4 days per month)

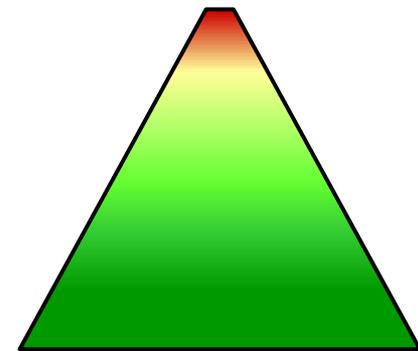
Then, just as you do with other data sources drill down to look at different student groups, patterns across time etc.

# Why do Students Miss School?

- They can not come (e.g., illness, other circumstances or obligations)
- They will not come (e.g., avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment)
- They do not come (e.g., don't see the value in school, have something else they would rather do)

These are different types of problems and require different interventions

As the intensity of the problem increases the match between function the intervention becomes increasingly important



Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012)

# Recruit support from families and community collaborators

Factors contributing to Absenteeism	Possible Influencing contexts		
	School	Family	Community
Avoid uninteresting or engaging instruction	X		
Deficit academic skills leads to avoiding instruction	X		
Avoid fear regarding lack of security (e.g., not feeling safe)	X		
Avoid bullying behavior	X		X
Obtain peer rewards for truancy	X		X
Lack of communication regarding absenteeism	X	X	
Lack of Transportation	X	X	X

**Primarily school focus**

**Requires coordination and collaboration with partners outside of school**

# Benefits of MTBF to Address Chronic Absenteeism

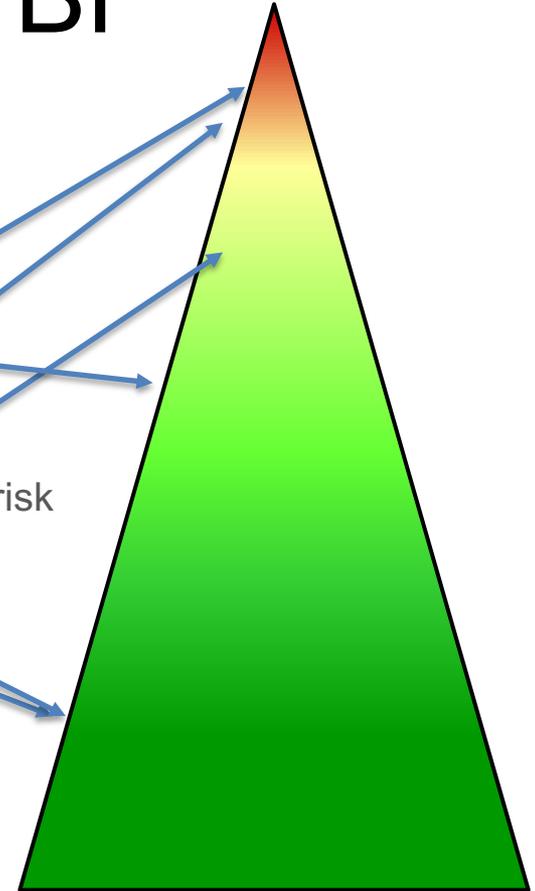
- Multi-tier framework used to effectively and efficiently provide supports
- Problem solving based on data (for intervention planning and continuous improvement)
- Many contributing factors of chronic absenteeism are directly addressed by MTBF
- Focus on systems to ensure fidelity and sustainable implementation

# Possible Contributing Factors to Chronic Absenteeism

<b>Direct Focus of MTBF</b>	<b>Additional Interventions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not feeling connected (caring adults/friends)</li><li>• Not feeling safe at school (bullying behavior)</li><li>• Behavior issues (suspensions for problem behavior)</li><li>• Not feeling academically successful in school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical health issues (asthma)</li><li>• Mental health issues (anxiety)</li><li>• Lack of, or inconsistent transportation</li><li>• Family issues (need to watch siblings)</li><li>• Not feeling safe traveling to school/home</li></ul>

# Organize Evidence-based Practices within MTBF

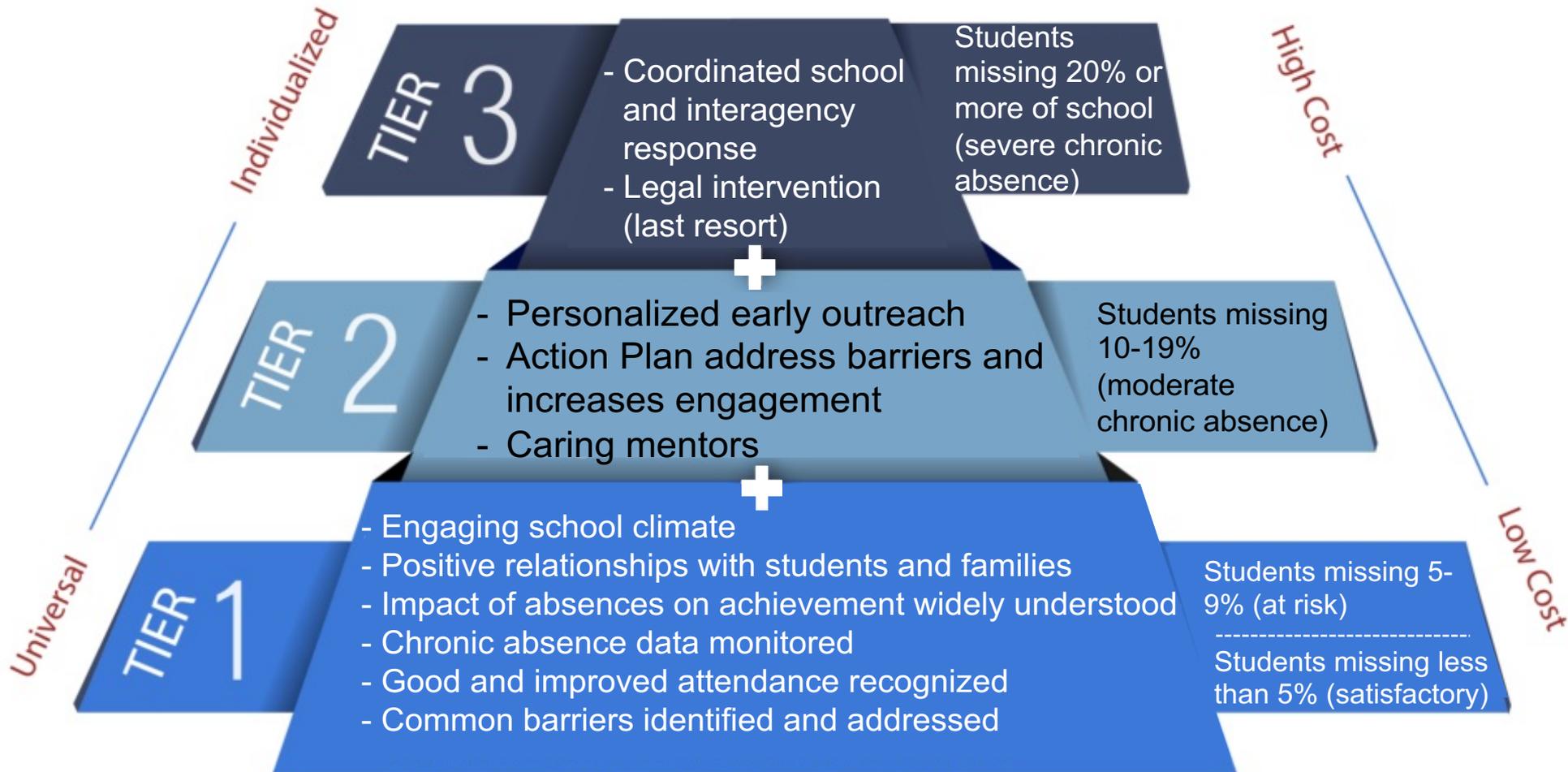
- **Direct skill based instruction**
  - Transportation systems
  - Job application process
  - Study skills
  - Self-management skills
  - Problem solving skills
- **Family Support**
  - Increased communication
  - Establishing positive relationships (regular positive calls for at risk students)
  - Case management support
- **Incentive based strategies**
  - Token economies
  - Monetary incentives
- **Mentoring**
  - Check and Connect
  - Success mentors



Freeman, Wilkinson, Kowitt, Kittelman, Flannery, under review)

# Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Works  
(attendanceworks.org)



# Differentiation for Younger vs. Older Students

- Younger- more emphasis on supporting families for child to attend school
- Older- increased emphasis on supporting student to attend school

# Bottom Line

It is our (the adults) responsibility to make classrooms and school a reinforcing and safe place, which includes effective instruction, contextually and culturally relevant relationships, and overt and regular positive reinforcement.

And to intensify the precision and intensity of our data, practices, and systems as student need increases

-George Sugai

# Table Discussions

- Each participant will have 3-5 minutes to describe how/what your site is doing related to the practices and systems for reducing Tardy and Absence. You can choose to
  - (a) describe what is going well,
  - (b) describe a barrier you have encountered related to attendance, or
  - (c) pass.

Assign a note-taker to capture the stories and someone to report out.

- 3:30-3:50 Table reporting out

# Resources

- Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing What We Know From Nationally Available Data*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. © 2012, The Johns Hopkins University, on behalf of the Center for Social Organization of Schools. All Rights Reserved.
- Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence, Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates Center, September 2017.
- [attendanceworks.org](http://attendanceworks.org)

