



**What is Chronic
Absence?
Why Does it
Matter?**



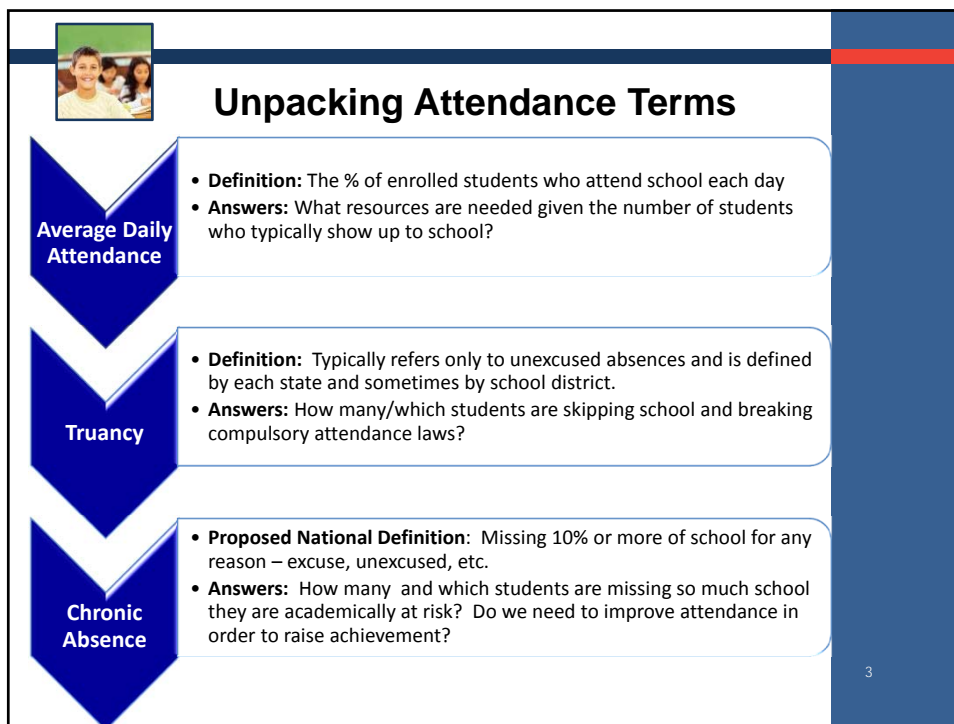
Chronic Absence Is A Critical Tool for Community Schools

It can serve as:

A unifying, common goal

Effective tool for resource allocation

*Easy to understand measure of progress
and success*



Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

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

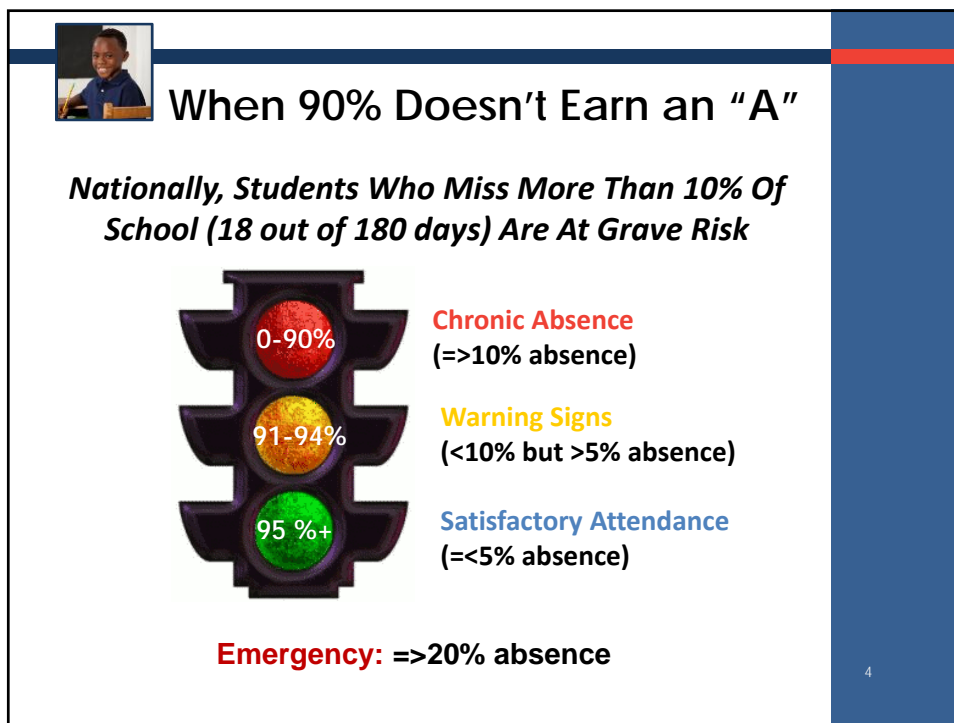
Truancy

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

Chronic Absence


- **Proposed National 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?

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When 90% Doesn't Earn an "A"

Nationally, Students Who Miss More Than 10% Of School (18 out of 180 days) Are At Grave Risk



- Chronic Absence**
(=>10% absence)
- Warning Signs**
(<10% but >5% absence)
- Satisfactory Attendance**
(=<5% absence)

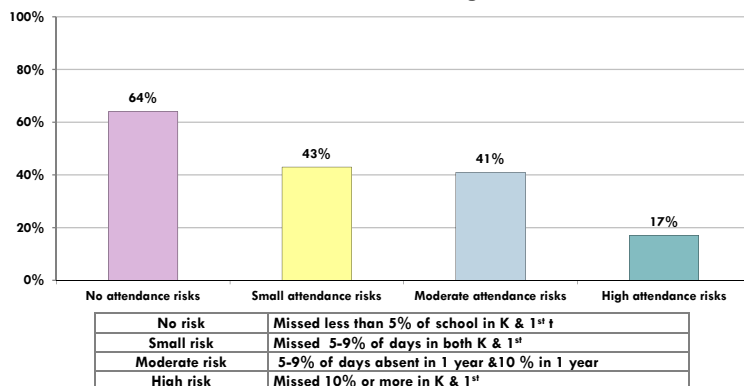
Emergency: =>20% absence

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Students Chronically Absent in Kindergarten & 1st Grade Much Less Likely to Read Proficiently in 3rd Grade

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



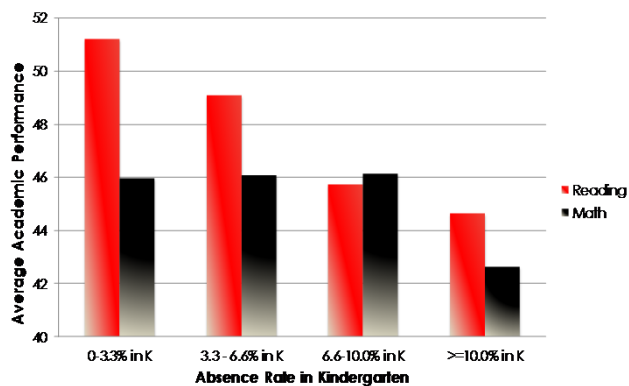
Source: Applied Survey Research & Attendance Works (April 2011)

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The Long-term impact of Chronic Kindergarten Absence Is Most Troubling for Poor Children

5th Grade Math and Reading Performance By K Attendance

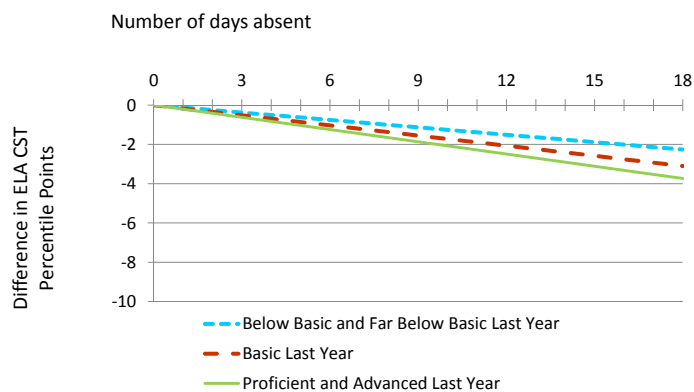


Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)
 Note: Average academic performance reflects results of direct cognitive assessments conducted for ECLS-K.

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Absenteeism Is A Problem Even For Higher Achieving Students



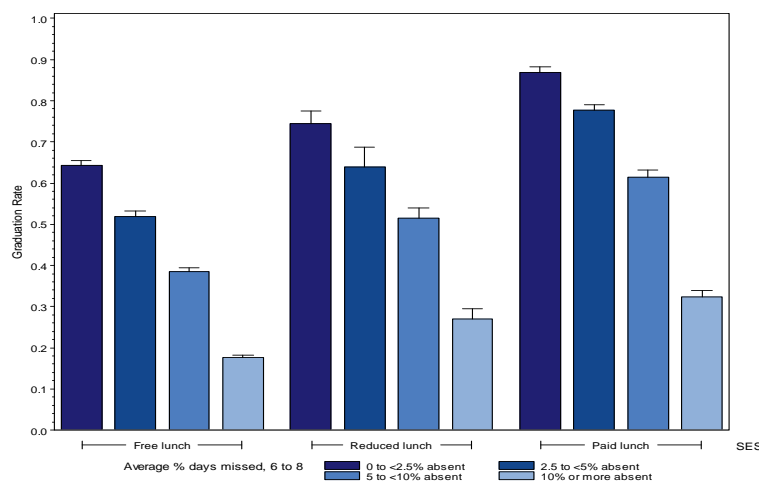
Number of days absent had a significant negative effect on CST percentiles in English Language Arts for elementary students in Redwood City CA

Source: John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University, 2012

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Chronically Absent 6th Graders Have Lower Graduation Rates

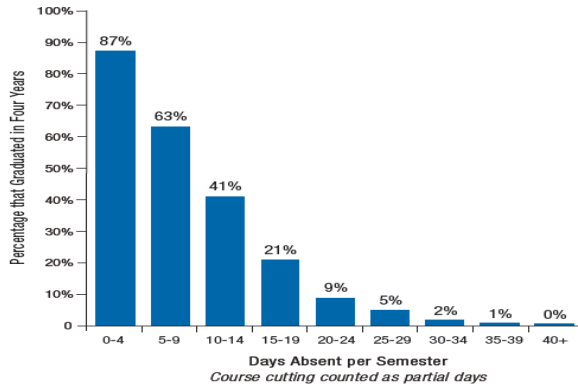


Spradlin, et al. (2012). *Examining the prevalence, scale, and impact of chronic absence in Indiana student-level data analysis*. CEEP, University of Indiana.

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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.

Source: Allensworth & Easton, *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools*, Consortium on Chicago School Research at U of C, July 2007

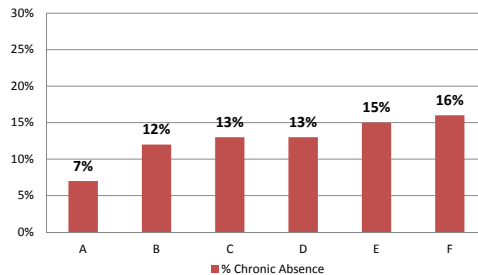
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Moving into Action Requires Knowing If Chronic Absence is a Problem

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

Chronic Absence For 7 Elementary Schools in Oakland, CA with @ 95% ADA in 2012



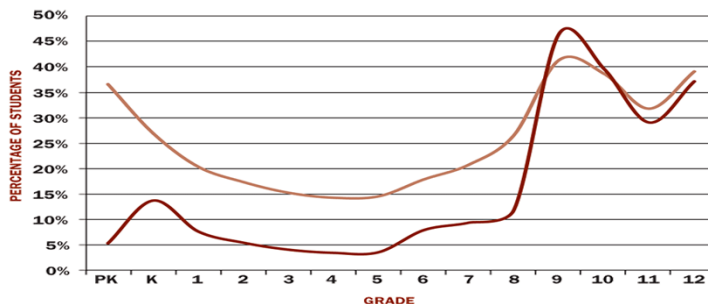
98% ADA = little chronic absence, 95% ADA = don't know; 93% ADA = significant chronic absence

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Sporadic — Not Just Consecutive — Absences Matter

New York City Schools



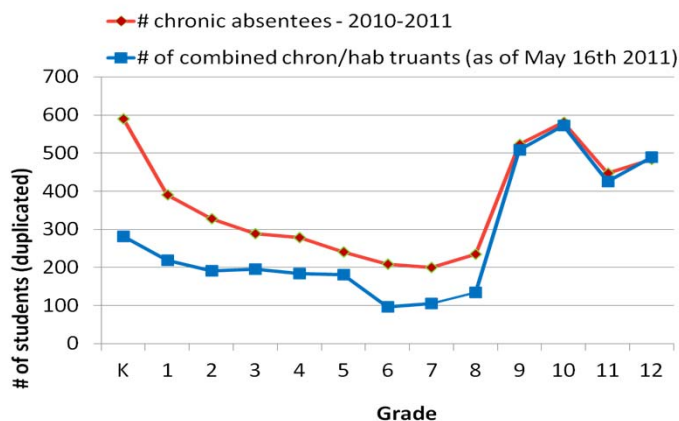
— CHRONICALLY ABSENT: PERCENT OF STUDENTS WITH 20 ABSENCES OR MORE
 — PERCENT OF STUDENTS ISSUED AT LEAST ONE 407 ALERT

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.

Source: Nauer K et al, *Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families*, Center for New York City Affairs New School, Oct 2008



Chronic Absence Versus Truancy (San Francisco Unified School District)



(Note: SFUSD identified chron/hab truants as = 10 unexcused absences)



Data is Needed for Identifying 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.

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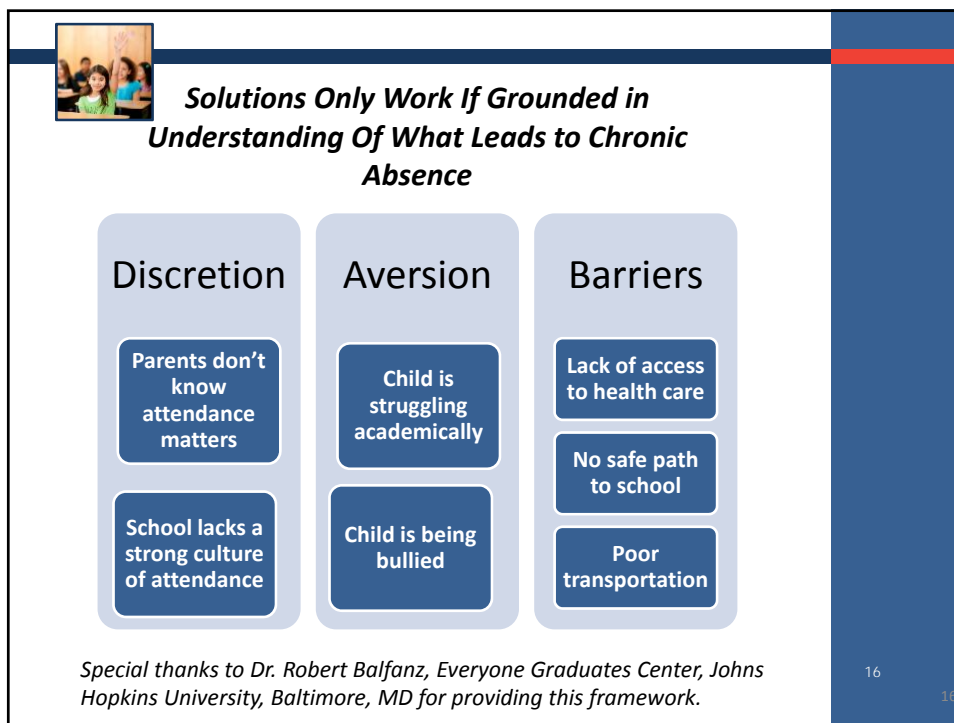
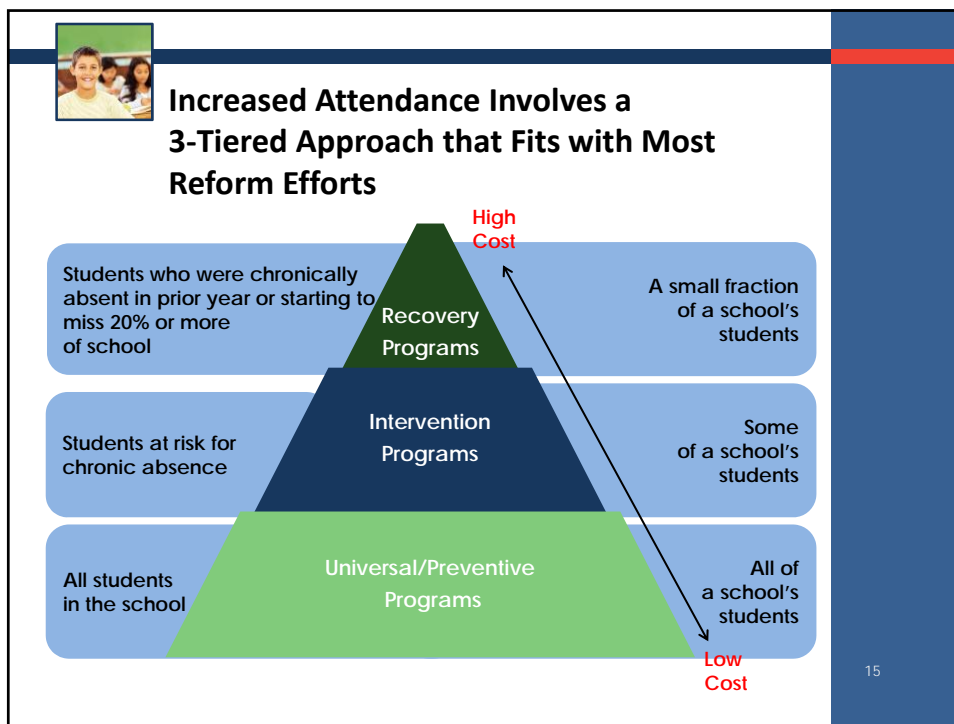



Schools + Communities CAN Make a Difference

Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- ❑ Partner with community agencies to help families carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- ❑ Make attendance a priority, set targets and monitor progress over time.
- ❑ Engage parents and students in identifying and addressing school, family, and community issues that contribute to chronic absence.
- ❑ Clearly communicate expectations for attendance to students and families.
- ❑ Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- ❑ Combine targeted interventions with universal strategies that nurture an engaged learning environment, build a culture of attendance and ensure physical health and safety at school.
- ❑ Offer positive supports before punitive action.

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Proposed Universal Strategies For Influencing Discretion and Identifying Causes of Absence

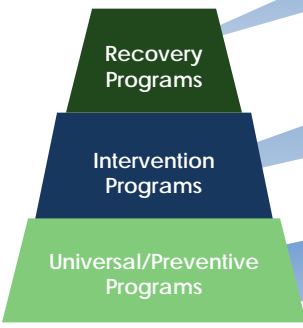
Recognize Good & Improved Attendance	Parent and Student Engagement
Personalized Early Outreach	School Team Monitoring Attendance Data & Practice

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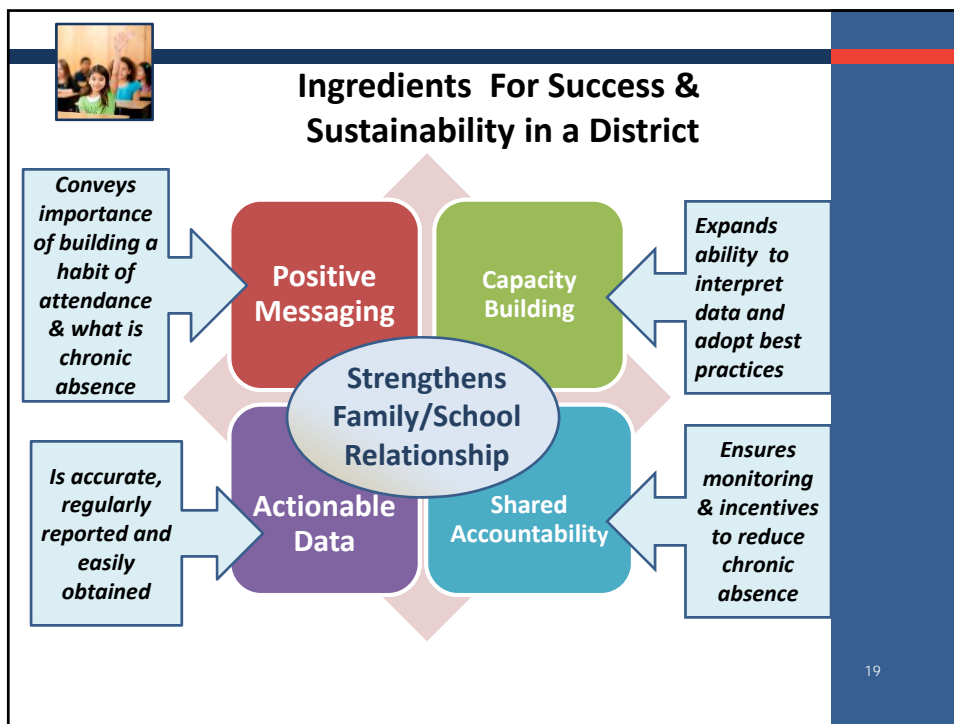
Strategies for 3 Tiered Approach

Universal strategies are part of tiered interventions



- Case management and wrap-around services
- Referral as last resort for court-based intervention
- **Early outreach, support, mentoring for students with poor attendance**
- Identify and remove barriers
- Attendance contracts
- Safe and 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 and early childhood
- School-based health support

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Taking a Bottom Up Approach to Policy Change

The Superintendents Call to Action

Own the Issue

Mobilize the Community

Drive With Data

To sign-up for the Call to Action, or to learn more, please visit: www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action

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**Absenteeism in the Chicago Public Schools:
Exploring the Earlier Years**

Stacy Ehrlich and Elizabeth Sorice
University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research

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What CPS wanted to know

- 1. What is the extent of absenteeism among CPS students in the early grades (preschool – grade 3)?**
- 2. Who exhibits chronic absenteeism?**
- 3. Why are students absent from preschool?**
4. How is attendance in preschool related to learning outcomes in preschool?
5. How is attendance in preschool related to outcomes in later grades?

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Preschool programs and children in CPS, 2011-12

Program	Total Slots	% Total Preschool Slots	Classrooms	Schools
Preschool for All (State-funded)	14,900	47.9%	393	240
Community Partnerships (CPP)*	7,178	23.1%	481	229
Head Start	7,300	23.5%	246	129
Child-Parent Centers (CPC)	1,200	3.9%	30	10
Tuition-based Preschool	540	1.7%	27	17

* Not included in our analyses

- 88% qualify for free and reduced lunch
- 29.4% qualify for English Language Learners (ELL) services

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Data retrieved from Office of Early Childhood Education, CPS (updated June, 2012): <http://www.ecechicago.org/about/glance.html> ccsr.uchicago.edu

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Preschool students miss much more school than students in K-3rd grade

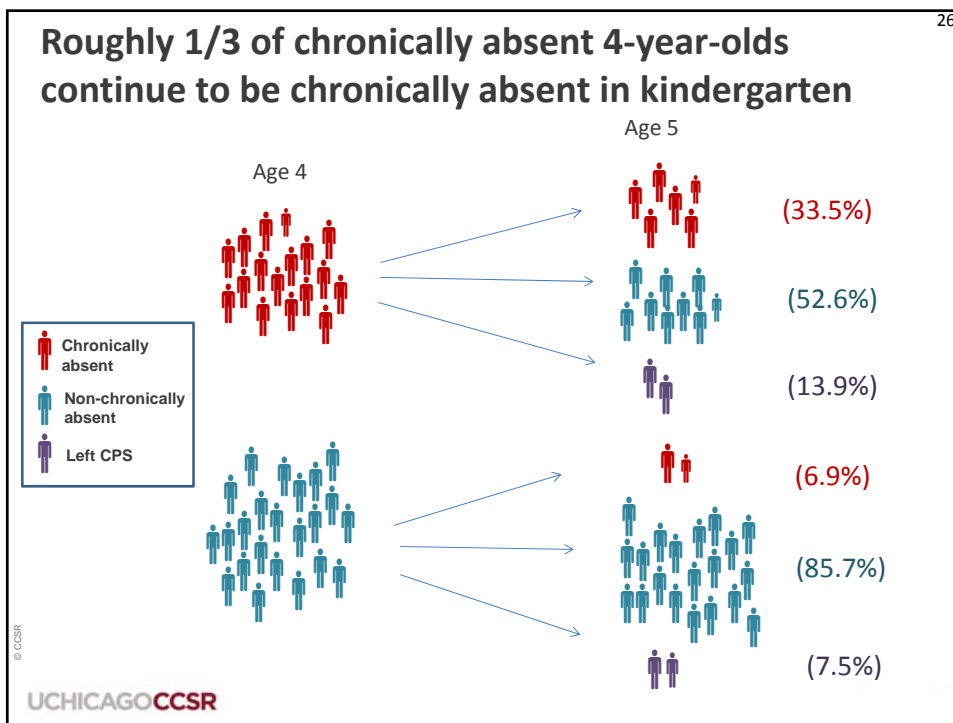
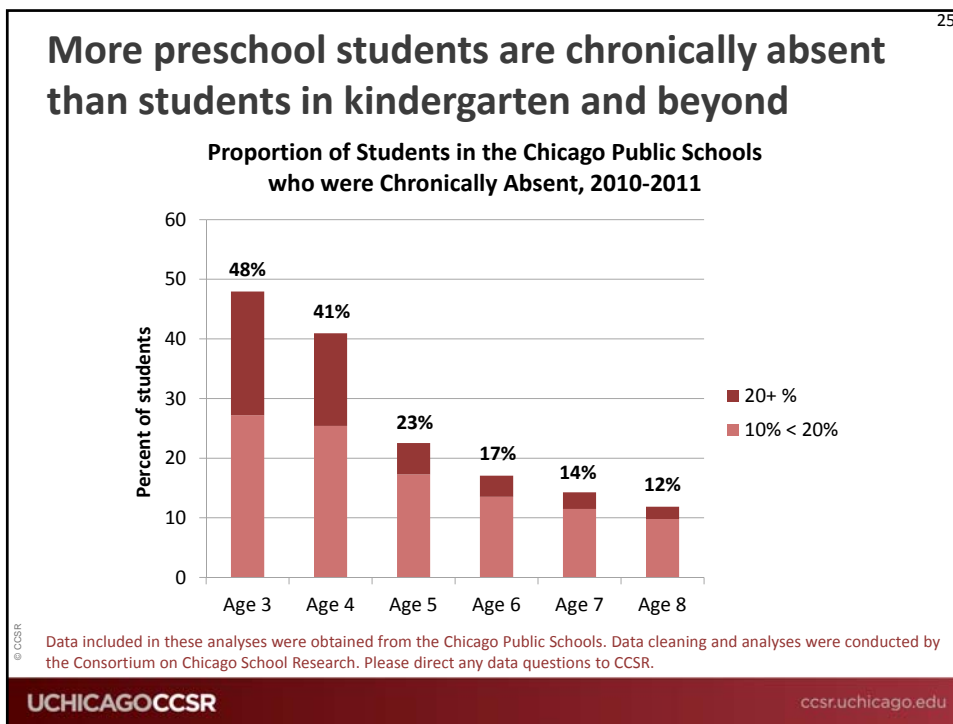
Average Absence Rates by Age in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11

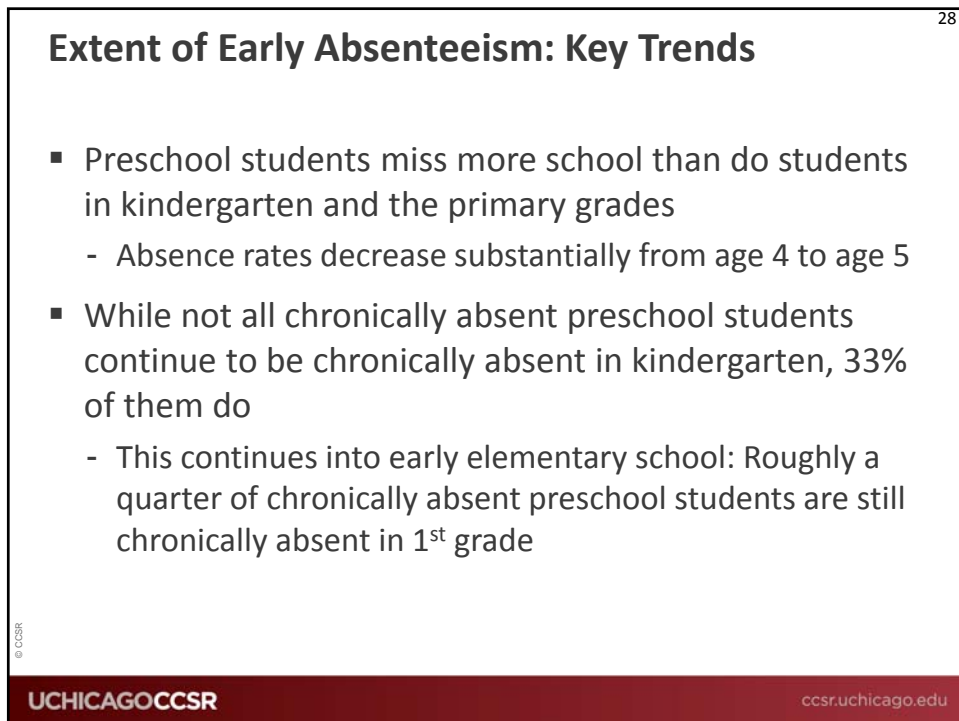
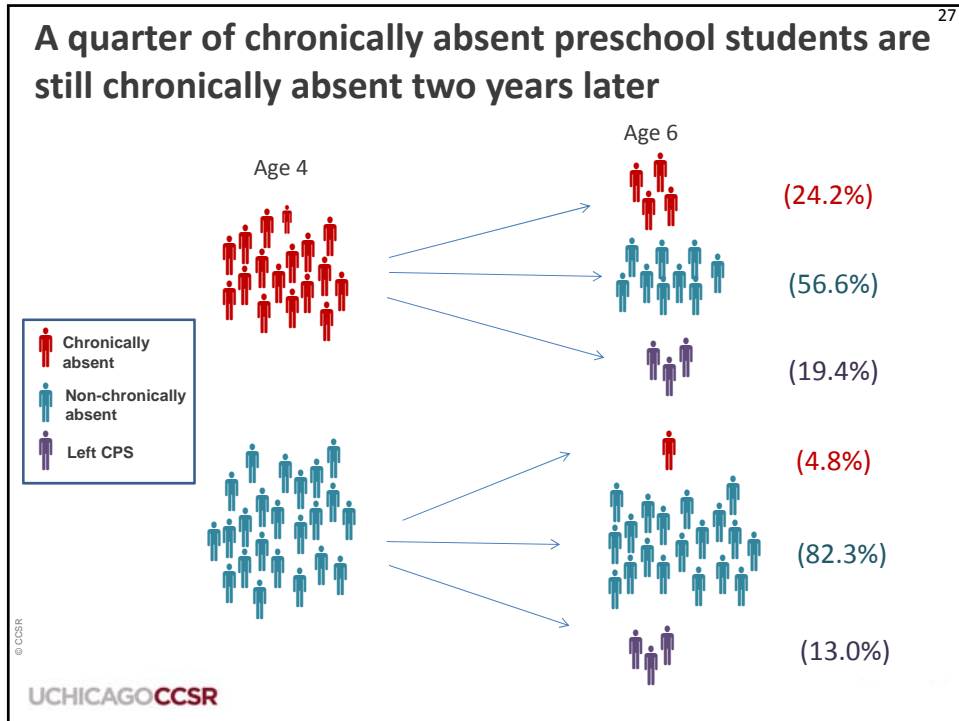
- Longitudinal analyses, following the same children over time, look similar. The largest increase in attendance is from age 4 to 5.

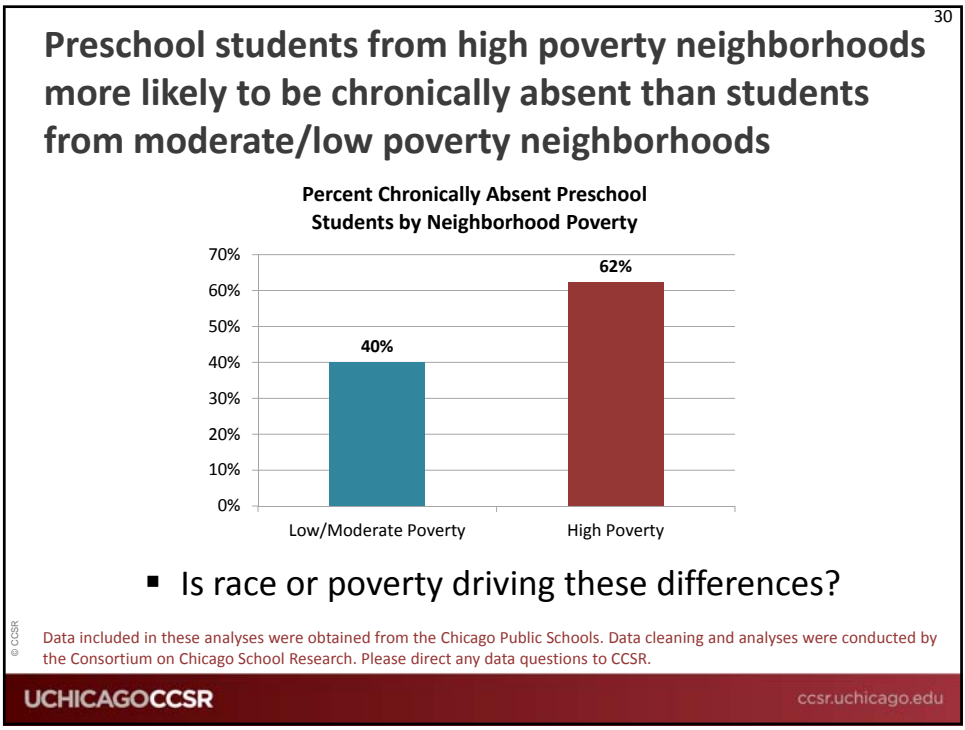
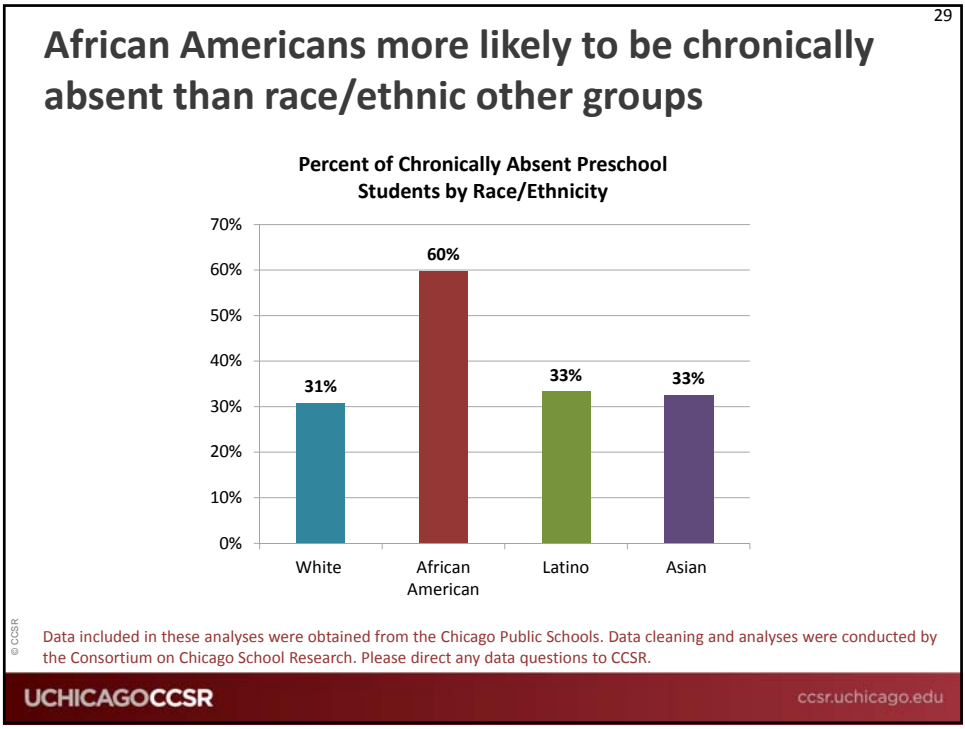
Data included in these analyses were obtained from the Chicago Public Schools. Data cleaning and analyses were conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Please direct any data questions to CCSR.

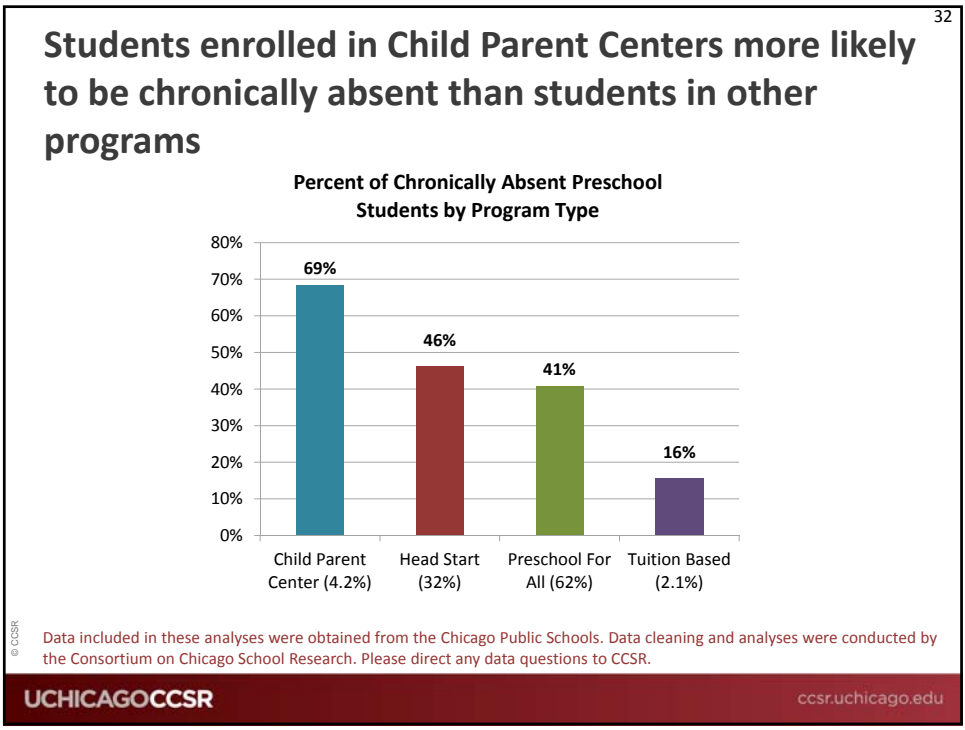
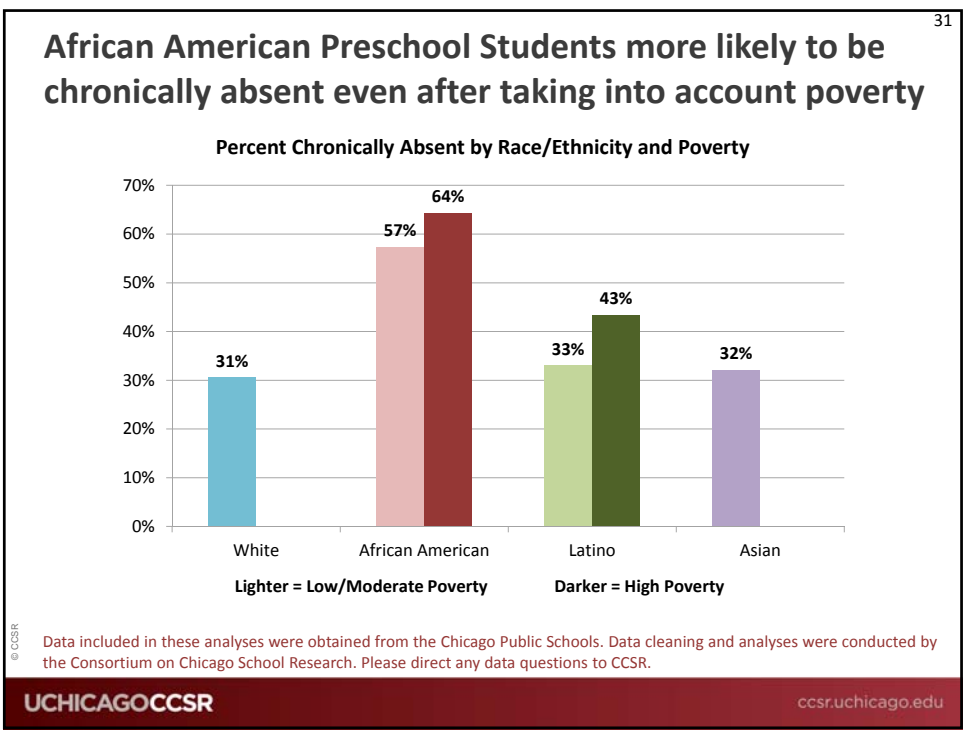
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Who misses school more?

- African-American and high-poverty children attend preschool less regularly
- Attendance also differs depending on the program
 - Child-Parent Centers have lower attendance than other programs
 - Partially due to who they serve; do not have information on programmatic activities that may influence attendance

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What are the reasons why students are absent from preschool?

- What the most common reasons why preschool students are absent?
 - Are reasons for absences different for students with different background characteristics or in different programs?

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Reasons for Absences: Data Source

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- Teacher logs, 3 times over school year (3-week periods)
 - 60 randomly selected, representative preschool classrooms
 - Time 1: October 31st – November 18th
 - Time 2: January 30th – February 17th
 - Time 3: April 23rd – May 11th

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Attendance over the course of nine weeks

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- Over these three timepoints (nine weeks), school was in session for an average of **32 days**
- The average student in our sample was absent **3.4 days** over that same time period, which is an absence rate of **11.7%**

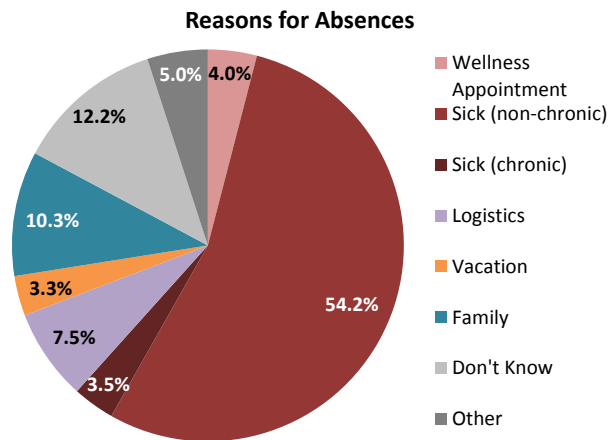
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Medical-related reasons account for more than half of preschool absences

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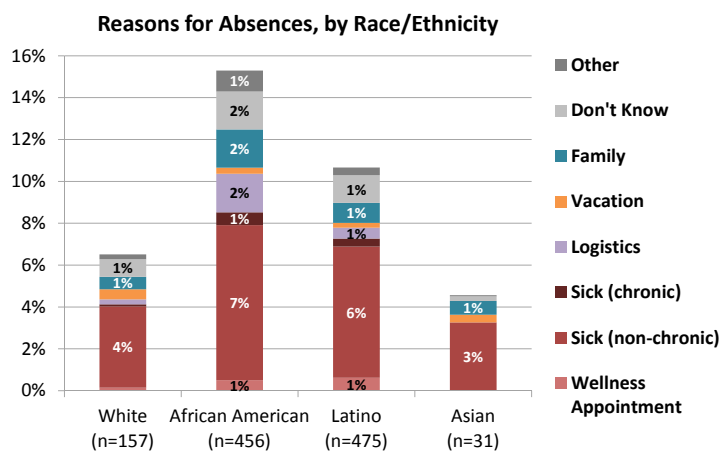


"Other" includes: school phobia, lack of sleep, religious observances, weather, safety issues, and a general other category.

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African American students are they are more likely to be absent for reasons other than illness

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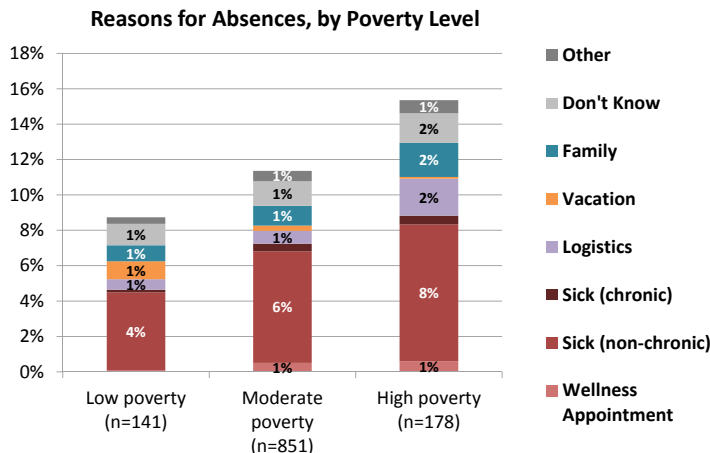


"Other" reasons include: school phobia, lack of sleep, religious observances, weather, safety issues, and a general other category.

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High-poverty students are absent more with more illness, family, and transportation-related reasons

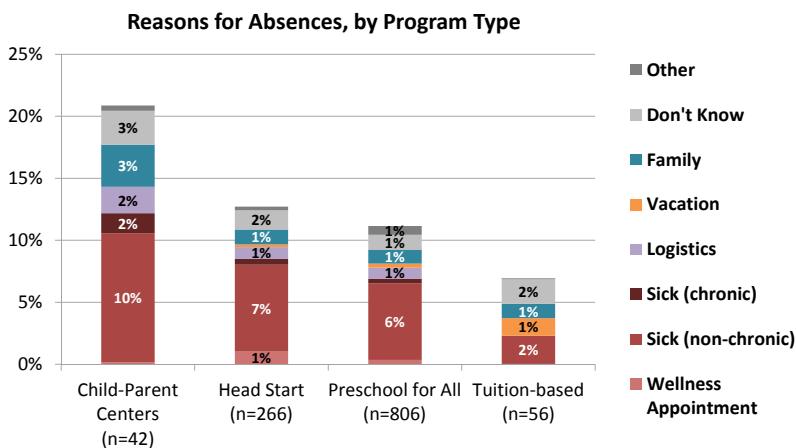
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"Other" reasons include: school phobia, lack of sleep, religious observances, weather, safety issues, and a general other category.

Child-Parent Centers have highest rates of sick- and family-related absences; tuition-based have higher rates of vacation

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"Other" reasons include: school phobia, lack of sleep, religious observances, weather, safety issues, and a general other category.

Early implications

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- While many students will have better attendance rates as they get older, there is reason to focus on chronic absenteeism in preschool
- Providing solutions around transportation may help improve attendance for those in most need (Full-day vs. half-day programs? Parent carpools?)
- Other reasons – particularly family-related reasons – need further research to understand whether there are social supports that can help reduce absences within these families

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Continuing work

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- Teacher responses to CPS survey
 - Teacher perspectives on: (a) how integrated preschool is with elementary grades, (b) the role of the teacher as an educator, (c) parent involvement, (d) attendance policies, and (e) importance of preschool
- Parent survey (n=633)
- Follow-up parent interviews (n=40)
 - To better understand: (a) experiences with preschool program, (b) importance of preschool, and (c) reasons for absences
- Links between absences and outcomes (in preschool *and* in early elementary years)

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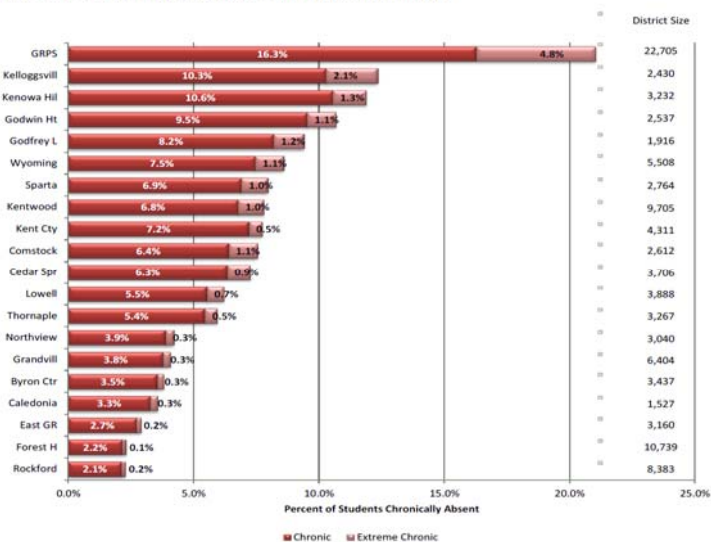
The Grand Rapids Story

- a) Scale and scope of the problem
- b) Grand Rapid's main strategies for addressing chronic absence
- c) Impact to date
- d) Implications for early childhood



Chronic Absence Ranged from @ 2% to over 20% across districts in Kent County.

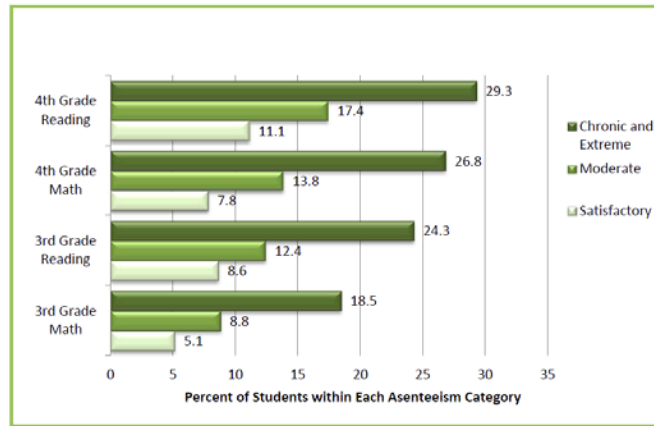
Figure 2: Percent of Chronically Absent Students by District





Chronic absence Associated with Significantly Worse Achievement in Grand Rapids

Figure 1: Students within Each Absenteeism Category Who Did Not Meet MEAP Proficiency Standard



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Critical Ingredients For Success in Grand Rapids

- Superintendent and Principal Leadership
- District and Building Attendance Policy
- Teacher/Staff Buy-in
- Regular Attendance Meetings
- Parent Outreach
- Attendance Incentives
- Interagency Casemanagement
- Year End Assessment

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Absenteeism Trends Overtime in KSSN Schools

