

## Charting a Different Course:

*Addressing Chronic Absence as Part of a Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Truancy*

Hedy Chang, Director

Spring 2013 www.attendanceworks.org

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## Unpacking Attendance Terms

Average Daily Attendance

- The % of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

Truancy

- Typically refers only to unexcused absences and is defined by each state under No Child Left Behind. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws.

Chronic Absence

- Missing 10% or more of school for any reason – excused, unexcused, etc. It is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school starting in Kindergarten.

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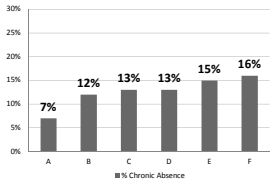
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## High Levels of ADA Can Mask Chronic Absence

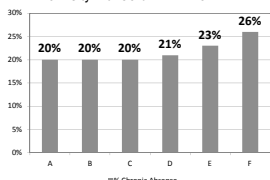
**90% and even 95% ≠ A**

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



School	% Chronic Absence
A	7%
B	12%
C	13%
D	13%
E	15%
F	16%

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



School	% Chronic Absence
A	20%
B	20%
C	20%
D	21%
E	23%
F	26%

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

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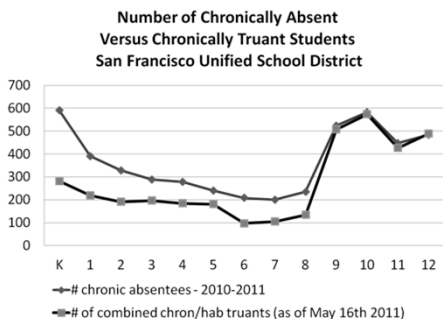
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## Truancy (unexcused absences) Can Also Mask Chronic Absence




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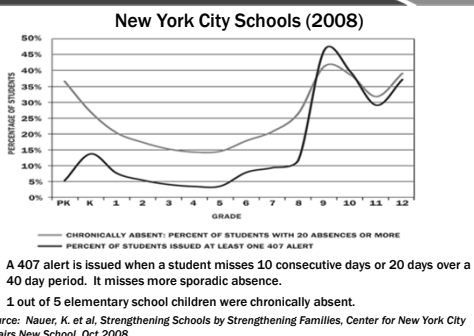
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## Sporadic – Not Just Consecutive – Absences Matter




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## Chronic Absence: A Hidden National Crisis

- Nationwide, as many as 10-15% of students (7.5 million) 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 and pre-kindergarten.

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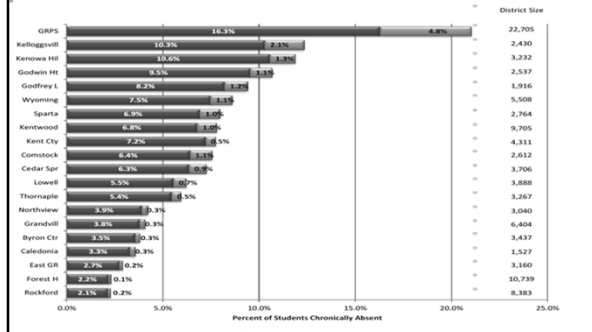
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## Kent County Data Shows Chronic Early Absence in a problem in MI

Community Research Institute 2011 Report - Grades 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>

Figure 2: Percent of Chronically Absent Students by District




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## The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading



The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is focusing on three challenges to reading success that are amenable to community solutions:

- The Readiness Gap: Too many children from low-income families begin school already far behind.
- The Attendance Gap (Chronic Absence): Too many children from low-income families miss too many days of school.
- The Summer Slide (Summer Learning Loss): Too many children lose ground over the summer months.




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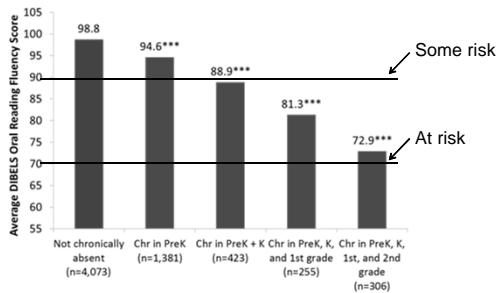
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## Students with more years of chronic absenteeism, starting in preK have lower 2<sup>nd</sup> grade scores



\* Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.05 level; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

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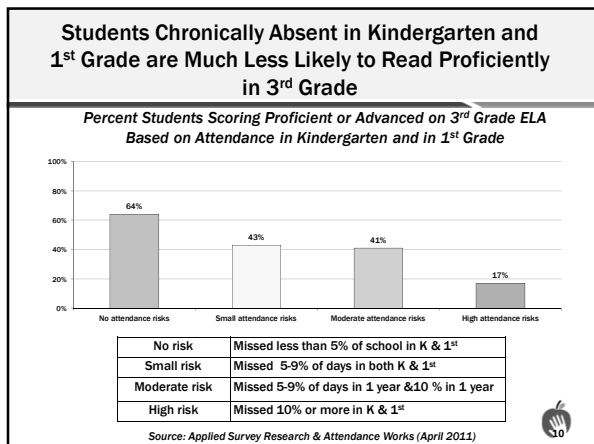
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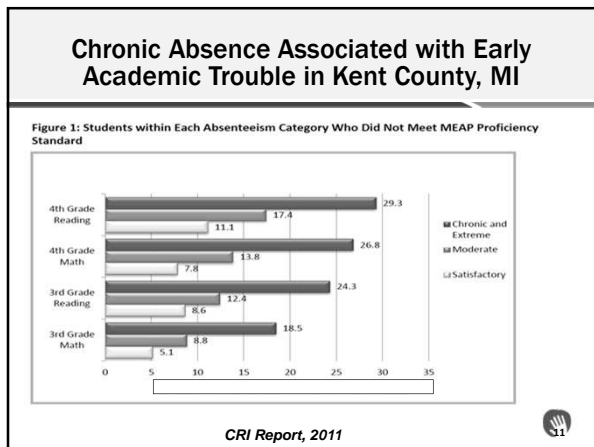
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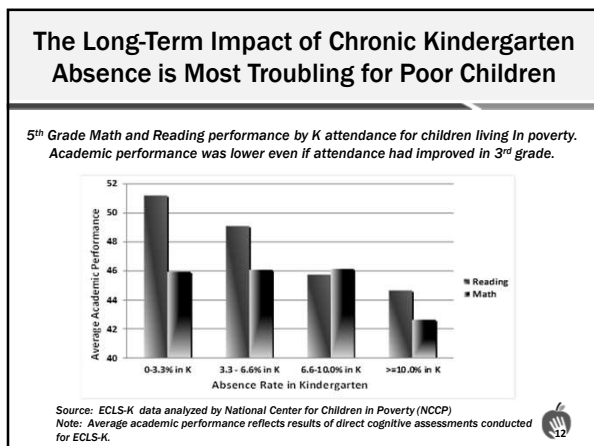
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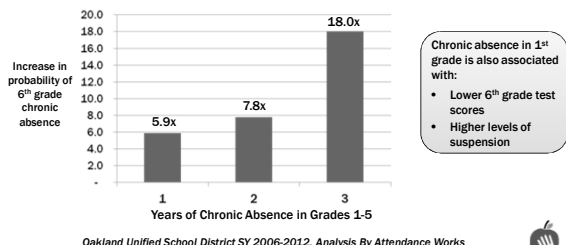
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### Multiple Years of Elementary Chronic Absence = Worse Middle School Outcomes

Each year of chronic absence in elementary school is associated with a substantially higher probability of chronic absence in 6<sup>th</sup> grade



Oakland Unified School District SY 2006-2012, Analysis By Attendance Works




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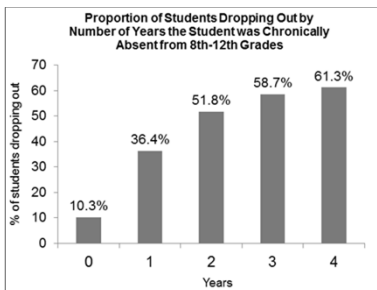
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### The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative



<http://www.utahdataalliance.org/downloads/ChronicAbsenteeismResearchBrief.pdf>




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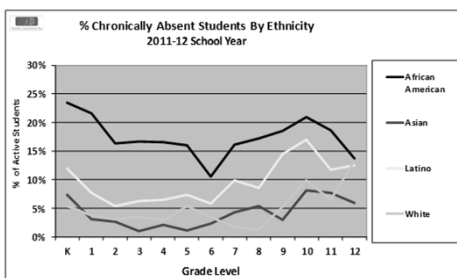
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### Reducing Chronic Absence is Key to Reducing the Achievement Gap




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### Why Are Students Chronically Absent?

Myths	Barriers	Aversion
Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused	Lack of access to health care	Child struggling academically
Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem	Poor transportation	Lack of engaging instruction
Attendance only matters in the older grades	No safe path to school	Poor school climate and ineffective school discipline
		Parents had negative school experience



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### Going to School Every Day Reflects...


**Hope**  
for a better future

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**Faith**  
that school will help you or your child succeed

+

**Capacity**  
Resources, skills, knowledge needed to get to school



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### Universal Strategies for Building a Culture of Attendance & Identifying Barriers

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance	B. Engage Students and Parents
E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)	
D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach	C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice



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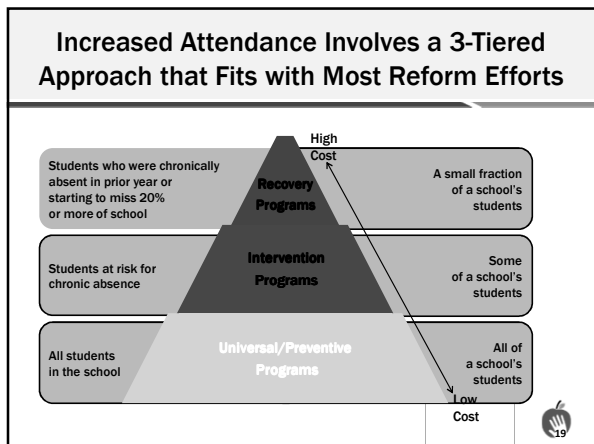
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### Variation Across Schools Helps Identify Good Practice and Need for Intervention

*Chronic Absence Levels Among Oakland Public Schools (2009-10)*

	Elementary	Middle	High School
# Schools with 0%-5% Chronic Absence	9	0	0
# Schools with 5.1%-10% Chronic Absence	17	4	1
# Schools with 10.1%-20% Chronic Absence	25	8	6
# Schools with >20.1% Chronic Absence	9	4	9
Total No. Schools	60	16	16
Highest % of Chronic Absence	31.5%	32.8%	42.1%
Lowest % of Chronic Absence	0.3%	6.9%	7.9%
Median	12.7%	14.9%	21.0%
Mean	11.9%	15.6%	22.4%

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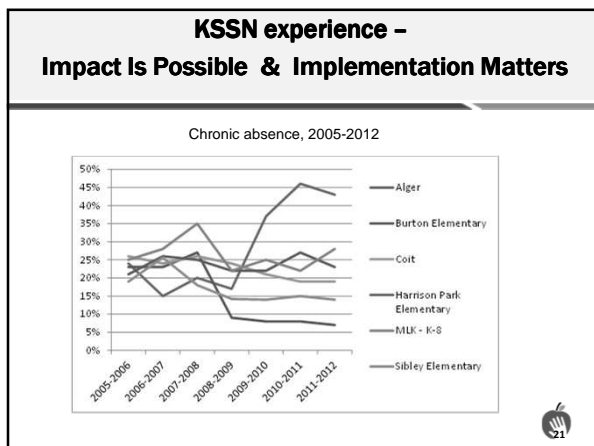
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## KSSN Insights into Elements of Success

- 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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## Ingredients for Success & Sustainability in a District and Community




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## Examples of Successful Efforts



**New York City:** Citywide interagency task force led by Mayor; "NYC Success Mentor Corp.", largest school-based mentoring effort in nation reaching about 9,000 at-risk students; interagency data sharing; community impact strategies; celebrity WakeUp! NYC calls; incentives & public-private partnerships. Pilot reduced chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle and high schools, outperforming comparison schools. Students with Success Mentors gained more than 11,800 days of school.



**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. Baltimore is now turning its attention to preschool and elementary school and to public messaging.




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### 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](http://www.attendanceworks.org/superintendents-call-to-action)

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### Why September Counts

- The beginning of school is when expectations and norms are set for the year.
- The more days of instruction a student misses, the larger the negative impact on achievement.
- Chronic absence is missing 10% of days which would be 2 days by the end of the first month of school. Schools could use this as a trigger to intervene before students fall so far behind they need more intensive remediation.

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### Join us in September for Attendance Awareness Month

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/attendancemonth/>

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### Key Messages

**Key Message #1:** Good attendance helps children do well in school and eventually in the work place.



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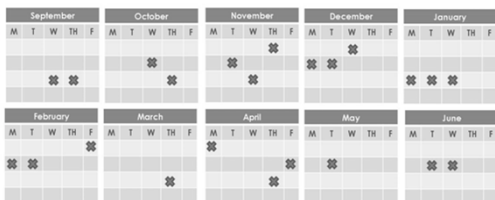
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### Key Messages

**Key Message #2:** Absences add up. Excused and unexcused absences result in too much time lost in the classroom.



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### Key Messages

**Key Message #3:** Chronic absence, missing 10 percent of the school year or more, affects the whole classroom, not just the students who miss school.



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## Key Messages

**Key Message #4:** We need to monitor how many days each student misses school for *any* reason — excused, unexcused or suspensions — so we can intervene early.

**Which students at this school are at risk?**  
 List of All Grade K-5 Students with Chronic or Severe Chronic Absence  
 Elementary School  
 2010-2011

First Name	Middle Name/Initial	Last Name	Absence Type
STUDENT		A	satisfactory
STUDENT		B	satisfactory
STUDENT		C	chronic
STUDENT		D	at risk
STUDENT		E	satisfactory
STUDENT		F	satisfactory
STUDENT		G	at risk
STUDENT		H	satisfactory
STUDENT		I	satisfactory
STUDENT		J	satisfactory
STUDENT		K	satisfactory
STUDENT		L	at risk
STUDENT		M	at risk




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## Key Messages

**Key Message #5:** Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community, including parents and schools, gets involved.




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## Key Messages

**Key Message #6:** Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance.




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### Key Messages

**Key Message #7: Reducing chronic absence can help close achievement gaps.**

Year	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Year 1	70%	60%	50%	30%
Year 2	72%	62%	55%	50%
Year 3	73%	64%	58%	55%
Year 4	75%	70%	65%	60%



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### Discussion

- Turn to the person next to you – discuss the following:
  - A) What surprises you?
  - B) What resonates?
  - C) What is one action you could take to help students develop a habit of regular attendance right from the start?



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### Attendance Works


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