



WestEd 
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Data to Identify Patterns of Inequity

February 17, 2023



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Welcome!



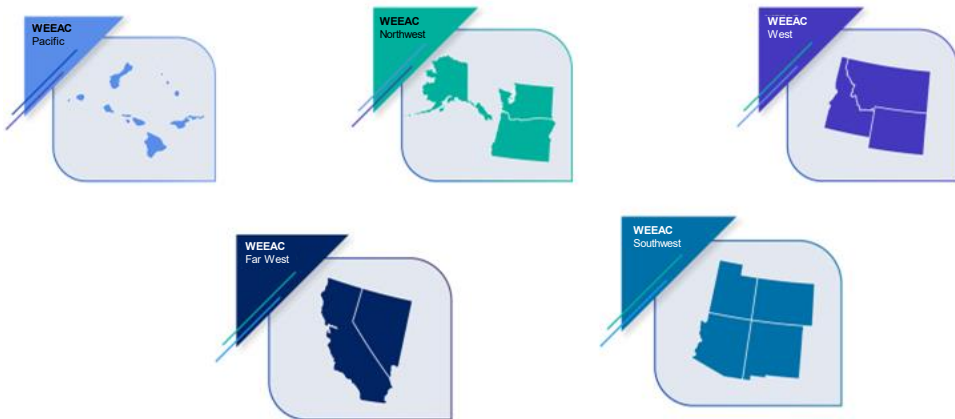


Technical Assistance

Professional Learning

- By request—school boards, governmental agencies
- Through equity-centered capacity-building to better serve students who have experienced ongoing inequities in our educational system because of their race, national origin, sex, or religion

WEEAC Sub-Regions



Pacific

American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i

Northwest

Alaska, Oregon, and Washington

West

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming

Far West

California and Nevada

Southwest

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah



Cecelia Leong
VP of Programs
Attendance Works



Helen Duffy
Senior Fellow
Attendance Works



Gisela Ariza
Associate Director of Programs
Attendance Works



Six Webinar Series

- Session 1 — Data to Identify Patterns of Inequity, **Friday, February 17**
- Session 2 — Organizing a District Team to Address Chronic Absenteeism, **Monday, February 27**
- Session 3 — Data-Driven School Attendance Teams, **Tuesday, March 14**
- Session 4 — Increasing Attendance and Engagement for American Indian/Native American Students, **Monday, April 3**
- Session 5 — Increasing Attendance and Engagement for Black/African American Students, **Monday, June 5**
- Session 6 — Increasing Attendance and Engagement for English Learners, **Tuesday, September 12**



Learning Goals for Session 1

Participants will:

- Learn how to access and disaggregate chronic absence data
- Understand how to identify patterns of inequity
- Expand toolkit for collecting qualitative data to identify the drivers of inequity



Audience Poll: Getting to Know You

What type of organization do you represent?

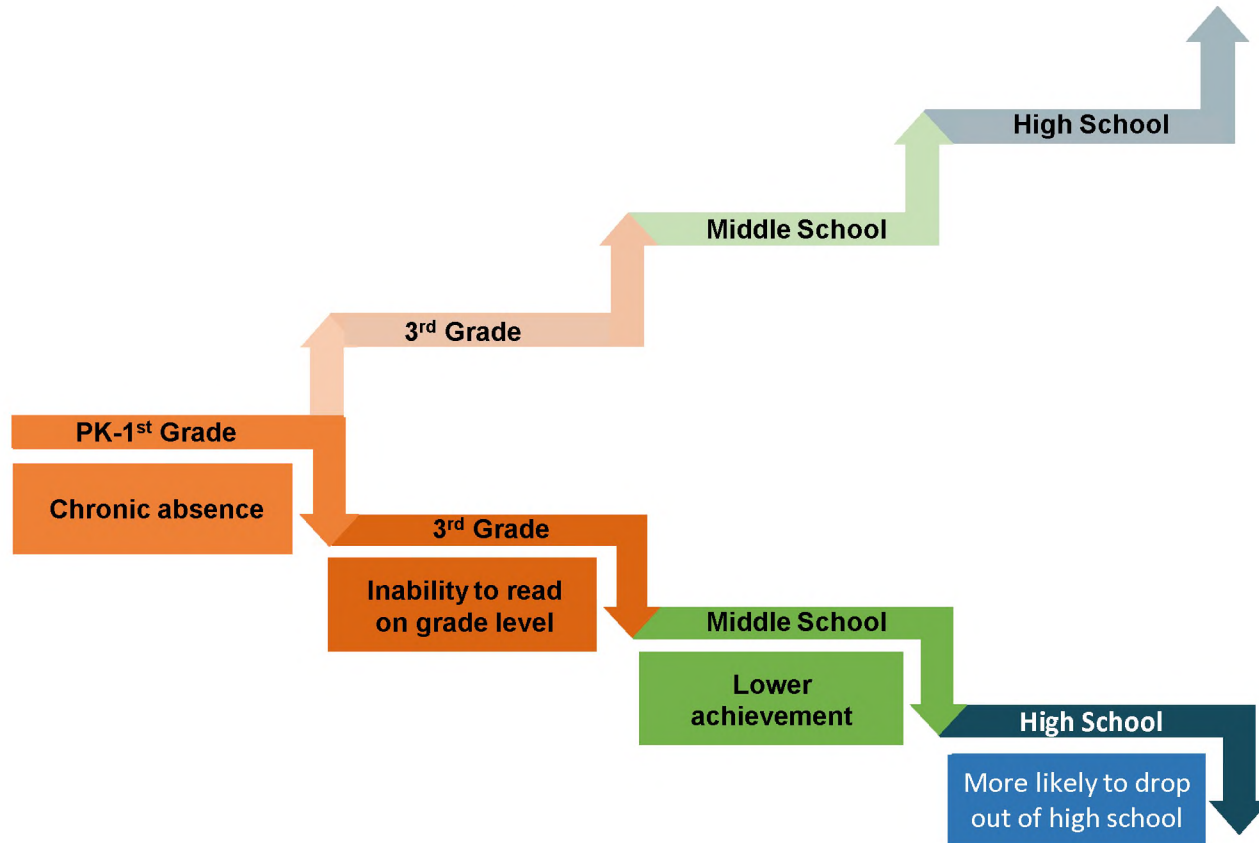
- State Education Agency
- Tribal government
- District
- School
- Community organization
- Other, please describe in chat box



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Overview of Chronic Absence

Improving Attendance Matters





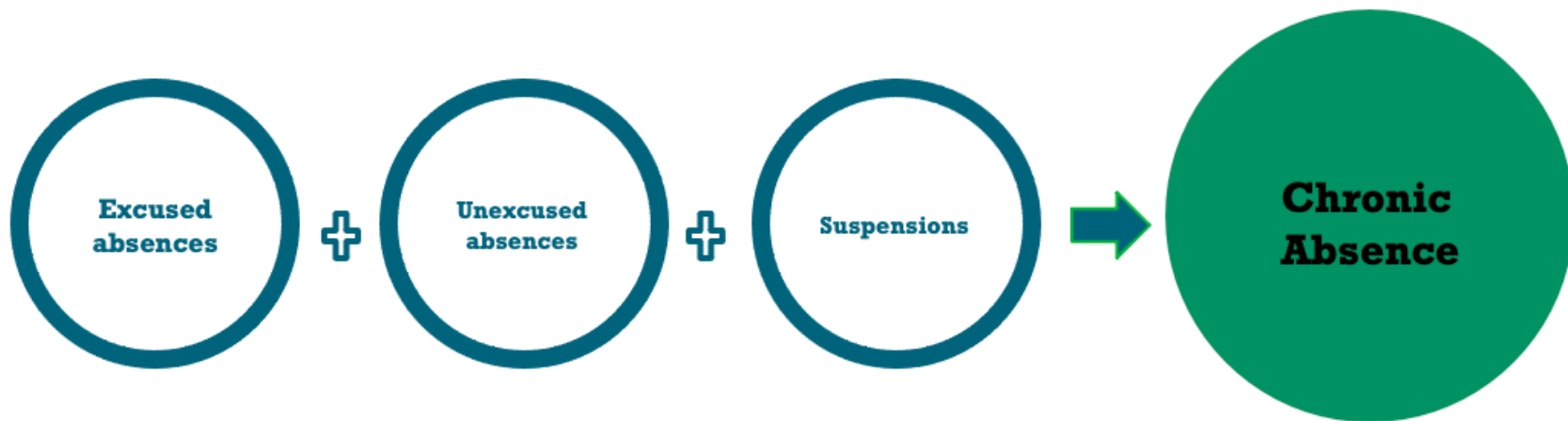
Chronic Absence & Equity

Chronic absence reflects and exacerbates existing inequities.



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).

What's the Difference between Chronic Absence vs. Truancy?

Truancy

- ▲ Counts ONLY unexcused absences
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Uses legal, typically more blaming and punitive, solutions



Chronic Absence

- Counts ALL absences (*excused, unexcused, and suspensions*)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days and benefits of being present
- Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies
- Cultivates family and student engagement



Audience Poll

In your school system, which student is excused?

- **Student A** has a stomach flu and misses five days of school. Parents submit a doctor's note.
- **Student B** has a stomach flu and misses five days of school. Parents do not submit a note. (They do not have health insurance or money to see a doctor.)
- **Varies by school**

How Unexcused Label Can Affect Response

Response to Excused

- ✓ Help with homework
- ✓ Make-up exams
- ✓ Home tutoring provided

Response to Unexcused

- X Denial of help or no credit for homework
- X No make-up exams
- X Denial of class credit
- X Removal from extracurricular activities
- X Send notices of truancy

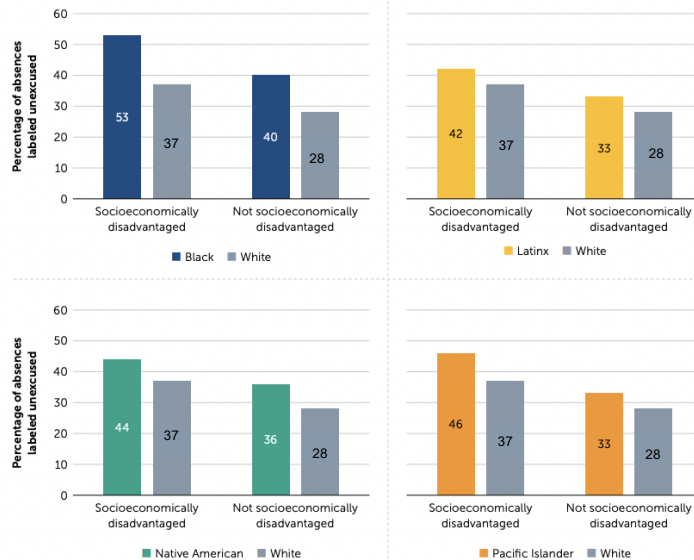
*If unexcused absences accumulate despite earlier outreach from schools and districts, courts can:

- Fine students and parents
- Require a community service program or parenting program
- Charge parents with a misdemeanor



Unexcused absences are much higher among socioeconomically disadvantaged students and from communities of color.

Figure 6. Racial and ethnic disparities in the percentage of absences labeled unexcused among students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and those who are not, 2021–22



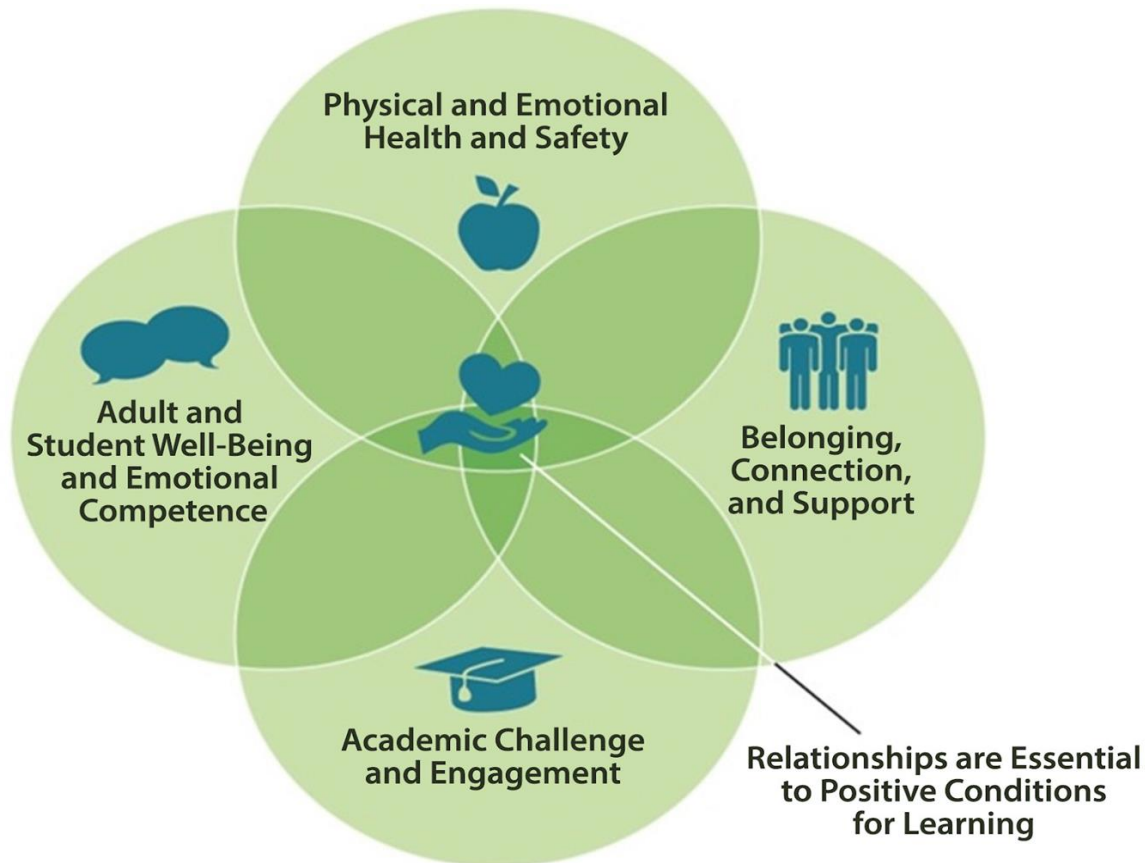
Percent of all student unexcused absences in regular K–12 California schools, by year and student socioeconomic disadvantage.

Large disparities in unexcused absenteeism persisted within each socioeconomic stratum in SY 2021–22 for Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic students compared to White students.

The Current Context

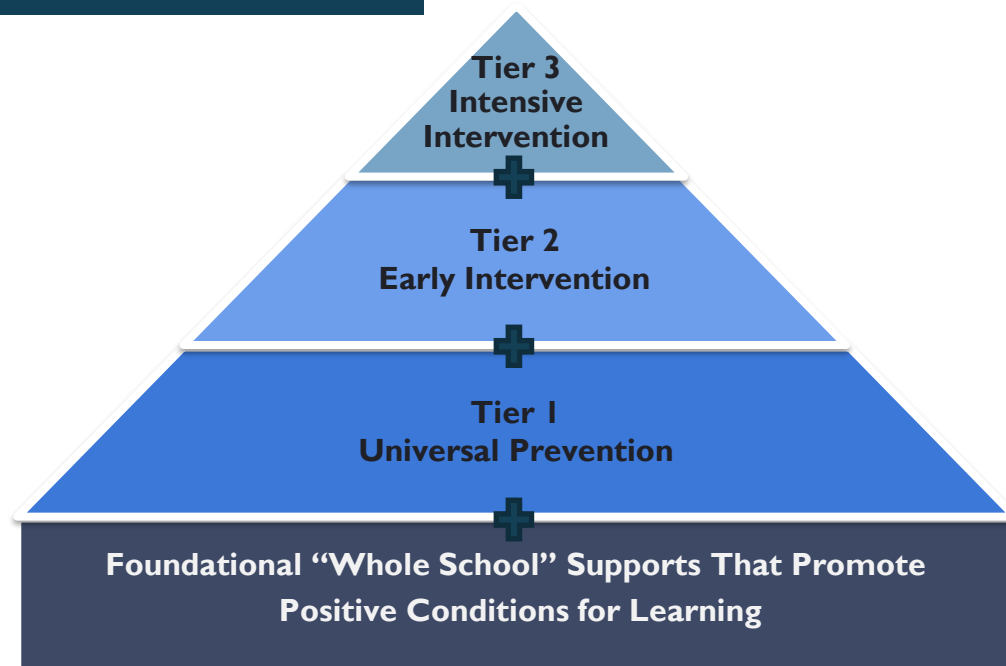
- ✓ **Pre-pandemic: 8 million students chronically absent**
(missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason)
- ✓ **SY 2021–22: Chronic absence has doubled, given data from multiple states.**
- ✓ **Early data from 2022–23 show rates remain high.**
- ✓ **Higher than ever, especially in early elementary and high school**
- ✓ **Adverse impact of chronic absence is much greater for economically challenged students than for their more affluent peers.**

High Levels of Chronic Absence Reflect a Deep Erosion in Positive Conditions for Learning





Solution: A Tiered Approach to Engagement and Attendance





The Challenge and Opportunity

Students who suffered most in the pandemic need:

- experiences that nurture the joy of learning,
- support over time, and
- expanded time in enriching environments that support socialization and learning.

And, we need to use data to notice where our efforts are succeeding or need improvement and to identify which students and families would benefit from extra support.



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Disaggregating data: Who is chronically absent?



Use Data to Identify and Address Inequities

- Analyze data overall, broken down by school, grade, race/ethnicity, home language, disability, and zip code.
- Use qualitative information, especially drawing upon the perspectives of students and families, to deepen an understanding of the contributing factors.
- Determine how to address unequal access to resources.

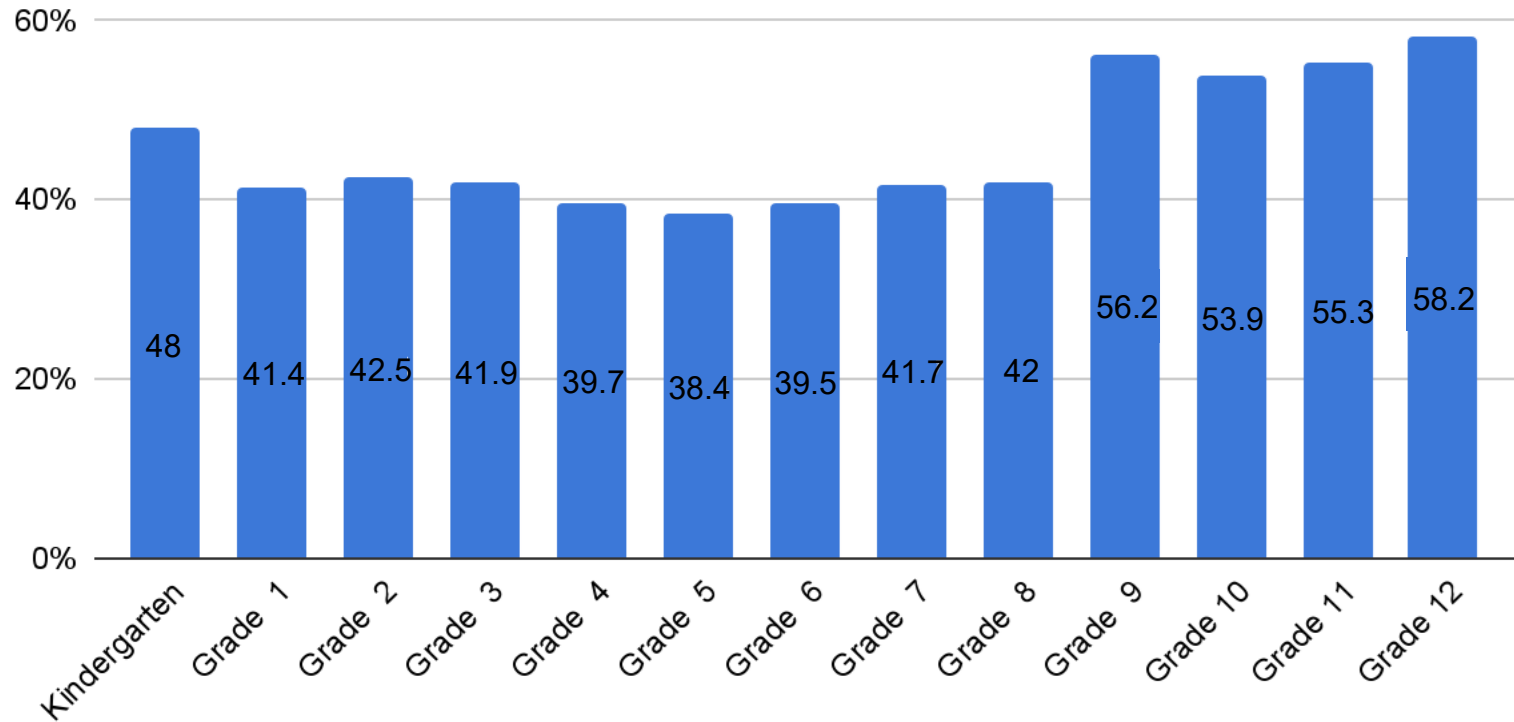


Disaggregating Data to Understand Who Is Chronically Absent

Break attendance data down into smaller categories. For example, by:

- Grade level
- Subgroup, such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, migrant, foster, homeless
- Language and/or English Learner status
- Disability
- Geographic area or zip code

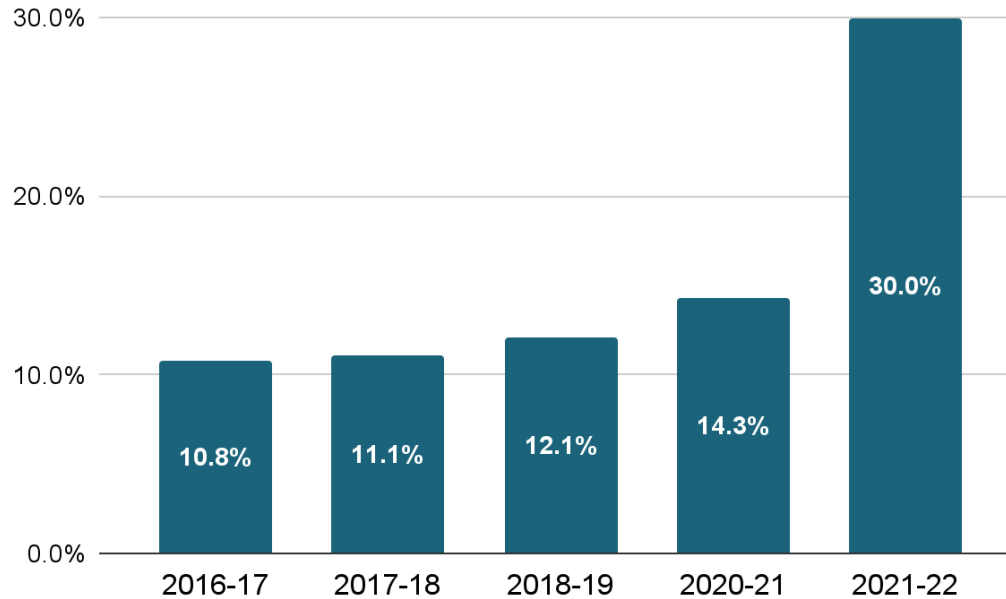
What percentage of students in each grade are chronically absent?



Example from K–12 Combination Tool

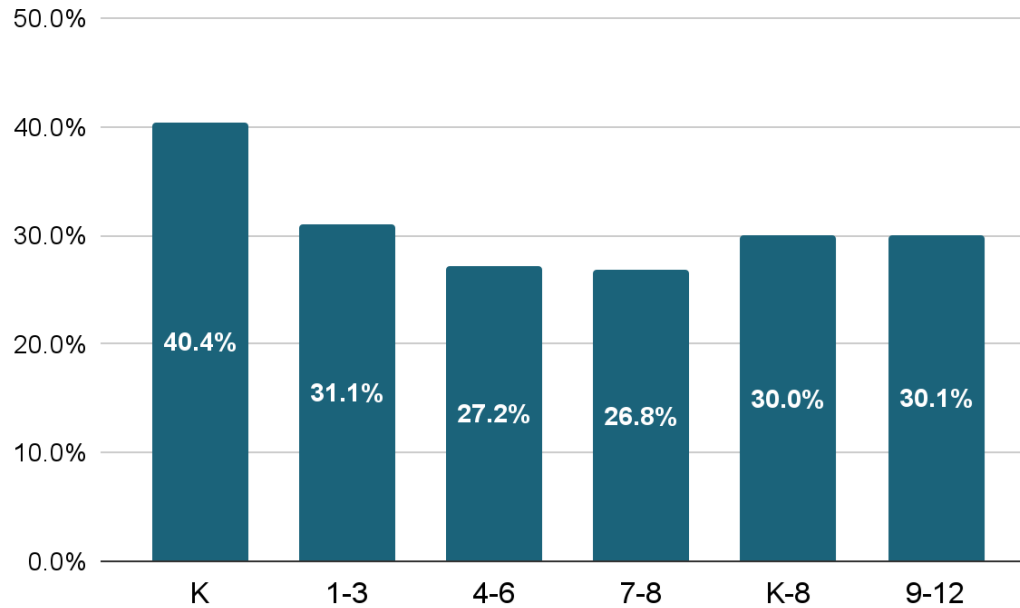


California Chronic Absence Rates 2018–2022





Chronic Absence by Grade Span 2021-22



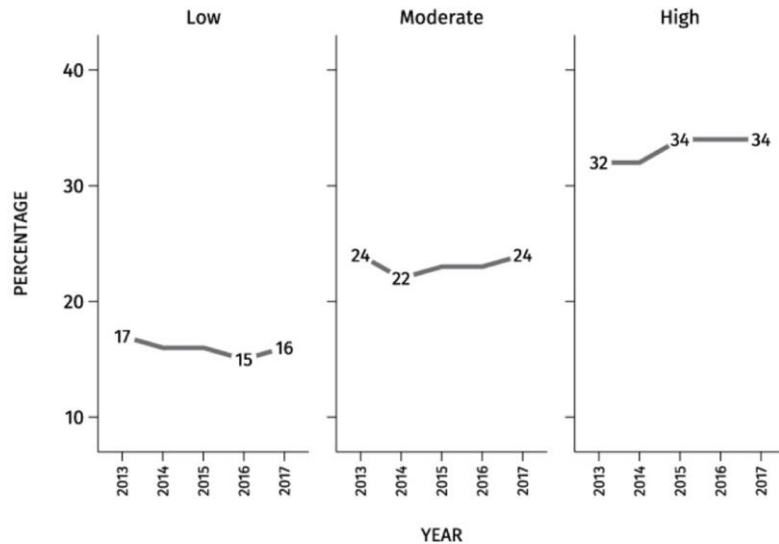


Kindergarten Chronic Absence California 2021–22 (statewide rate of 40.4 percent)

Race/Ethnicity	Chronic Absenteeism Eligible Enrollment	Chronic Absenteeism Count	Chronic Absenteeism Rate
African American	22,748	11,912	52.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2,054	1,039	50.6%
Asian	46,522	10,683	23.0%
Filipino	9,333	3,000	32.1%
Hispanic or Latino	274,298	131,532	48.0%
Pacific Islander	1,738	1,039	59.8%
White	99,722	27,921	28.0%
Two or More Races	24,911	7,842	31.5%
Not Reported	10,635	3,898	36.7%



Trends in Chronic Absenteeism, by Native Hawaiian School Concentration

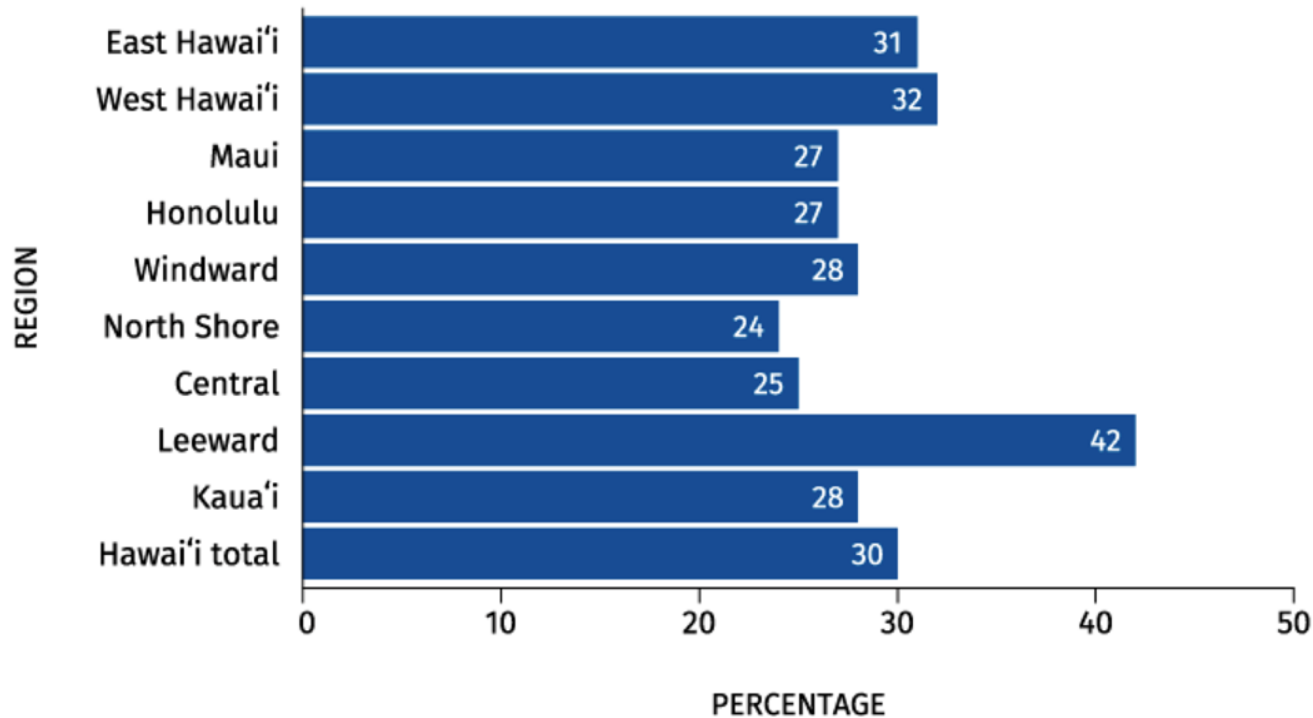


As a percentage of public-school students, by school concentration of Native Hawaiian students, Hawai'i, 2013 to 2017.

Data source: Hawai'i Department of Education, Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership, DXP469 cross-section prepared at the request of Kamehameha Schools

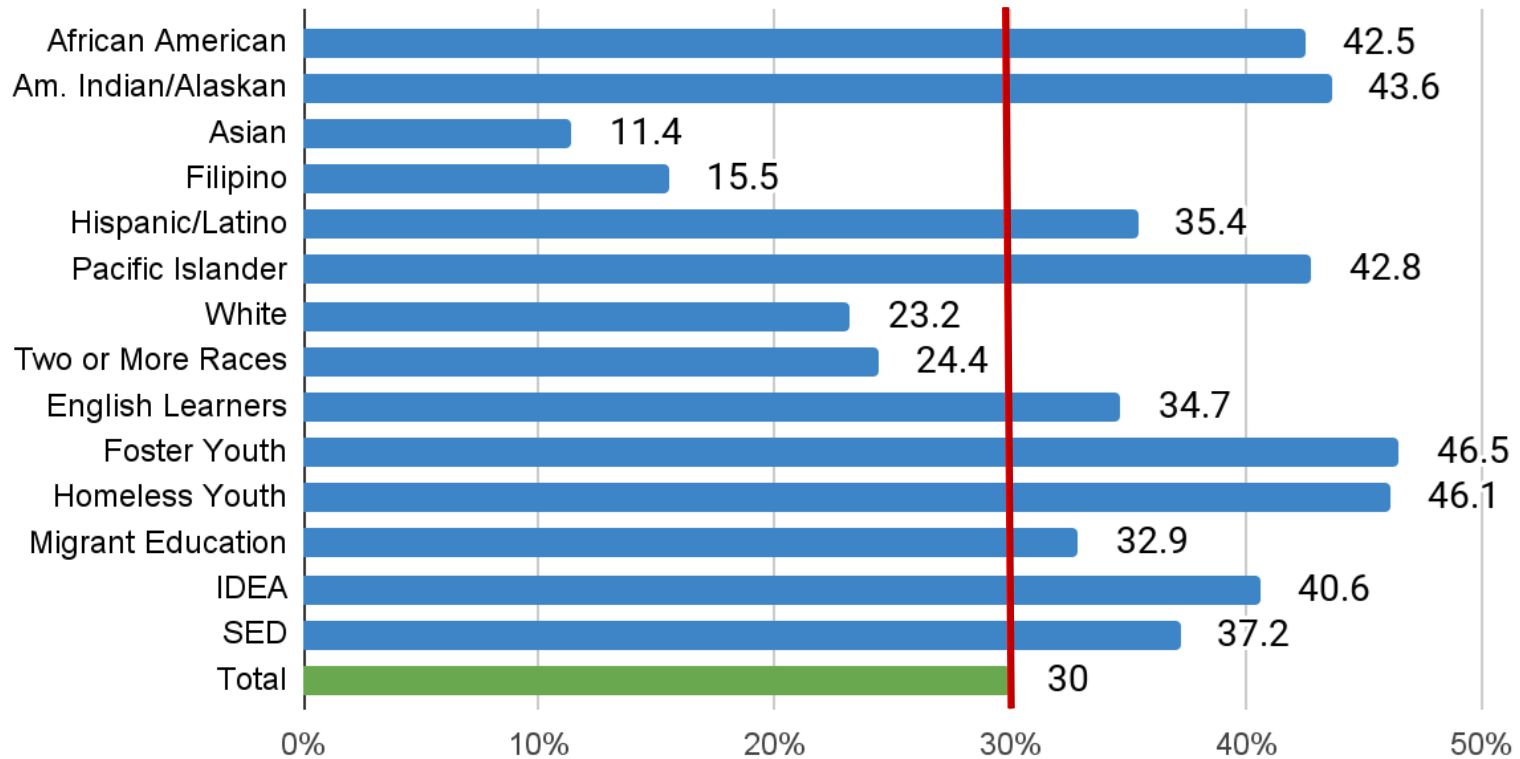
Trends in chronic absenteeism among Native Hawaiian students in public schools – regional comparison

[as a percentage of public school students, by region, Hawai'i, 2017]



Data source: Hawai'i Department of Education, Hawai'i Data eXchange Partnership, DXP469 cross-section; prepared at the request of Kamehameha Schools

California Chronic Absence Rates by Student Subgroup 2021-22



Small Group Discussion

Unpack the Data:

- Share *individual* observations about the data:
 - I notice . . .
 - I wonder . . .
 - This could be because . . .
 - What questions do the data raise for you?
 - What patterns/themes are we noticing?
- *One* thing we could do next . . .



Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Raise your hand to speak
- Ask clarifying questions
- Explore differences of opinion
- Create space for everyone to speak (*and use the chat to express ideas*)
- One person volunteer to facilitate



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

What is driving high levels of chronic absenteeism?



Reducing chronic absence requires addressing the challenges that keep students from getting to school.

Challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic for the hardest-hit communities. Experiences are different for younger vs. older students.

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- Challenges navigating schools, especially for ELL families
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules and routines
- Lack of access to tech
- Community violence

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- 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 (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing two days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absences

Iceberg



Chronic absence is at the surface.

Under the surface:

- Systemic racism
- Poverty
- Truancy system
- Homelessness
- Mental models
- Food insecurity
- Health challenges
- Unsafe neighborhood
- Unequal access to quality education

About Your Community:

- What are the drivers for chronic absence in your community?



Ground Rules

- Turn on your video camera
- Briefly introduce yourself
- Raise your hand to speak
- Ask clarifying questions
- Explore differences of opinion
- Create space for everyone to speak
(and use the chat to express ideas)
- One person volunteer to facilitate



Reflection

Type in the Chat:

What additional information do you need to understand the drivers of chronic absence in your community?



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

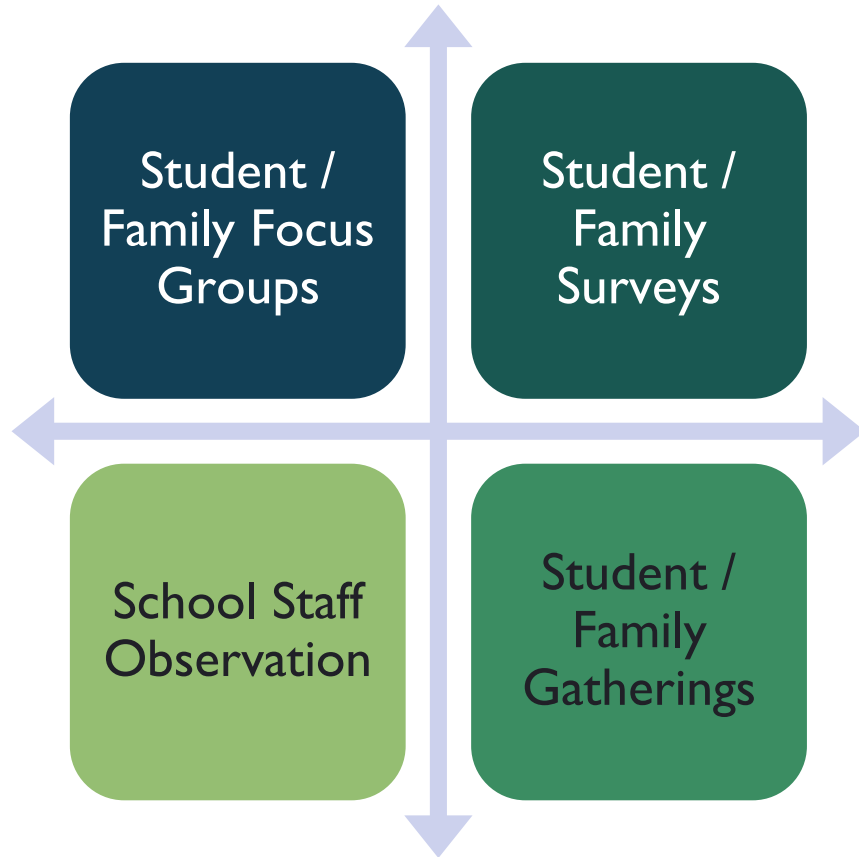
Tools for Collecting Qualitative Data



Why Understanding the Perspectives of Students and Families Matters

- ❖ Students have untapped expertise and knowledge that can bring renewed relevance and authenticity to classrooms and school reform efforts.
- ❖ Addressing the challenges students experience requires considering their specific realities. The goal is to hear student opinions and experiences while attending school.
- ❖ Understanding when many students and families experience similar challenges allows you to create scalable solutions.
- ❖ It ensures that the engagement strategies you create are inclusive of students and families' cultural norms.

Gather Information about Why Students Do and Do Not Attend School



Common barriers students shared:

Stress **Tired** **Family issues**

unstable housing **NEED TO WORK**

End the Silence **YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS** All Butte County Focus

Biggest Weight?

Parents Yelling/Fighting, Comparing to Siblings, sick, injured parent, **unpleasant work**

Home **less** **Social Media**

School **Grades** **DRAMA** **Anxiety** **Over-thinking** **SPRINK** **No motivation** **Poor self talk** **Have to be PERFECT** **HIDING my true self**

Stressor? **FEAR of Rejection** **Isolation** **Loneliness** **Empty Gas Tank**

COVID diagnosed everything

Keeping Up! times more than normal **Stressors**

add schedules **Grades** **Too much homework!** Not learning / teaching ourselves

College **College** **College** **College**

How many Know Someone? who is Struggling?

76% struggle

Range: 14-100%
9 of 13 groups over 80%

Used with permission from Butte County Office of Education



Gather Information

1. Focus groups or empathy interviews
2. Surveys (for example, [Reasons for Chronic Absence](#))



Chronic Absence Survey

Survey to Help Track Reasons for Chronic Absence

- For in-person, blended or virtual school
- Designed for parents and secondary students (6th–12th grade)
- Developed by Florida's Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project, University of South Florida



Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism (RCA)

Chronic absenteeism, commonly defined as missing 10% or more of instructional days per school year, has significant impact on student outcomes. It is associated with decreased reading levels, overall academic performance, on-time graduation rates, and post-secondary enrollment as well as increased dropout rates.^{1,2} Fortunately, chronic absenteeism rates are alterable at the student and system level when interventions are appropriately targeted and matched to student needs.

In order to efficiently and effectively match interventions to student needs, there is a need for reliable and valid data that provide sufficient information to understand the various challenges students experience. The Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism (RCA) Survey was developed and underwent extensive validation processes including an expert panel review, student reviewers, and a national validation study to ensure the technical adequacy of the items and instrument.

The RCA is designed for secondary students (6th–12th grade) who have missed 10% or more instructional days. The survey is comprised of 14 demographics and perception of absences questions; 28 items measuring multifaceted reasons for absences; and three open-ended questions asking about other reasons for missing school, the reasons they do come to school, and what would help them come to school more often. Students respond to each of the items that ask why they missed school using a 0-3 scale with response options of Never, Rarely, Sometimes, or Usually. Students may take the survey via an online survey platform (e.g. SurveyMonkey®, Qualtrics®, etc.) or hardcopy. Survey administration takes approximately 10 minutes and multiple students may take the survey at one time. Students may be provided the explanation that they are taking the survey so school staff better understand why students miss school. Please allow students privacy to independently answer questions.

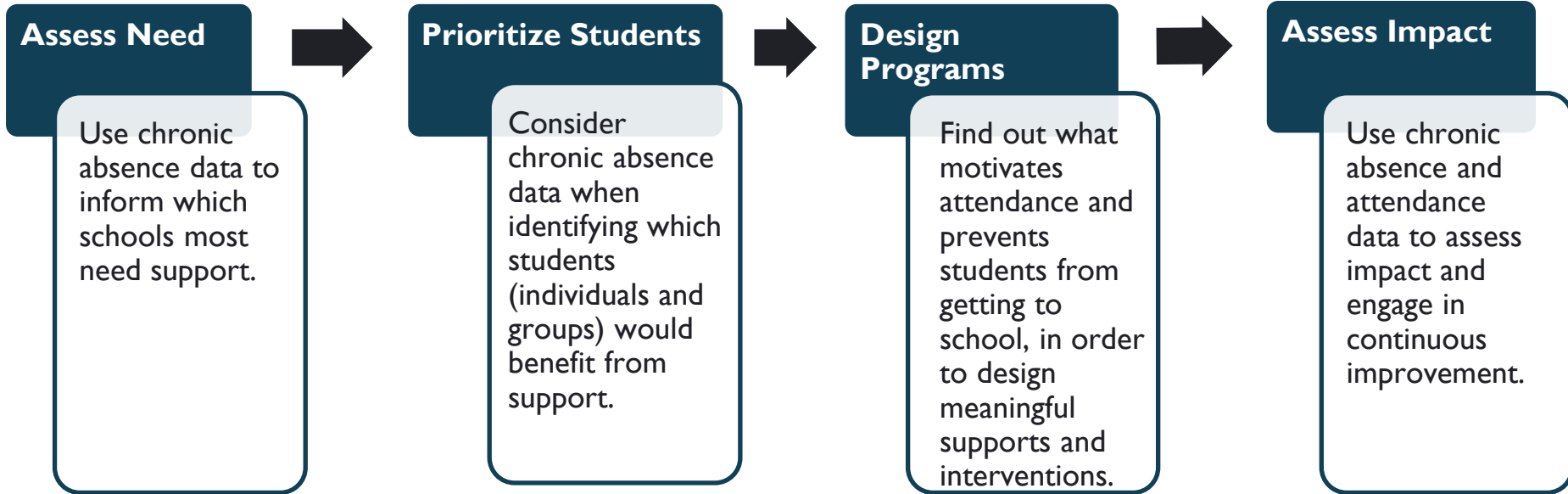
Demographic Items
What is the name of your school?
How old are you? (10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21)
What is your gender? (male, female, other (for example: transitioning, transgendered, etc.))
What grade are you in? (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)
Do you get free or reduced price lunch? (yes/no)
What is your mother's level of education? some high school high school diploma

¹ Ballarín, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing what we know from nationally available data*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

² Chang, H., & Romero, M. (2008). *Present, engaged and accounted for: The critical importance of addressing chronic absence in the early grades*. National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP); The Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

Example of a Data-Driven, Yearlong Approach

Using Data to Drive Action



Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

- ***Urgent need*** for capacity to reach out personally to the large number of students who were chronically absent in the past school year and who are disengaged from school due to COVID-19
- ***Expand people power*** beyond teachers who may not currently have bandwidth, at this time, to engage in outreach given other responsibilities on their plate
- ***Leverage assets of community-based organizations*** who successfully connect to families
- ***Need common approach*** to conducting assessment of assets and challenges, and analyzing collective results



Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

- LEAP home visits are voluntary, scheduled opportunities for a school district member or partner to go to the home (or another location) of a student with prior chronic absence to meet with a parent or guardian for the purpose of strengthening the school-family relationship in a positive and relational manner.
- The conversation is focused on families' strengths and capabilities, as well as their aspirations for their child. The visitors are there to learn from families, not to enforce attendance policies or sanctions.
- Ideally, families receive multiple home visits that support building relationships over time.



Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP)

- **Relationships first**—before talking about grades, behavior, or attendance.
- LEAP was designed in partnership with the local CT RESC Alliance, Attendance Works, and the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project to ensure that the visits were relational and focused on building trusting relationships with families.
- Home visitors are administrators, teachers, student support staff, family liaisons, and community partners, and are trained beginning with LEAP 101 and other supportive opportunities. Trainings are aligned with Connecticut’s Definition and Framework for Family Engagement.
- Students at risk of or who are already chronically absent and disengaged from school are identified for home visits by the school. All visits are voluntary and scheduled ahead of time.
- Interventions are monitored by school attendance teams and classroom teachers.
- Home visitor log information is aggregated to identify common barriers and needs in the community.
- Evaluation has already been released. The link is: https://portal.ct.gov/ccerc/-/media/CCERC/Reports/CCERC-Report-LEAP_01_24_2023_FINAL.pdf





Cecelia Leong, Vice President of Programs

cecelia@attendanceworks.org

Helen Duffy, Senior Fellow

hmduffy77@gmail.com

Gisela Ariza, Associate Director of Programs

gisela@attendanceworks.org





WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Questions?

Please type your questions into
the chat.



Learning Goals for Session 1

Participants will:

- Learn how to access and disaggregate chronic absence data
- Understand how to identify patterns of inequity
- Expand toolkit for collecting qualitative data to identify the drivers of inequity



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Connect with us.

Scan the QR Code below to
register for the WEEAC
Newsletter.



[WEEAC Newsletter Sign-Up Page](#)



@WEEAC_WestEd



WEEAC@WestEd.org



WestEd 
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Thank you.

Please complete the evaluation form
on our [WEEAC Survey Page](#).

A Project of
WestEd 

WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit agency that conducts and applies research, develops evidence-based solutions, and provides services and resources in the realms of education, human development, and related fields, with the end goal of improving outcomes and ensuring equity for individuals from infancy through adulthood. For more information, visit [WestEd.org](#).

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government.