



WestEd 
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Increasing Attendance and Engagement for Multilingual Learners

December 6, 2023



Technical Assistance Professional Learning

- By request: school boards, governmental agencies, etc.
- 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

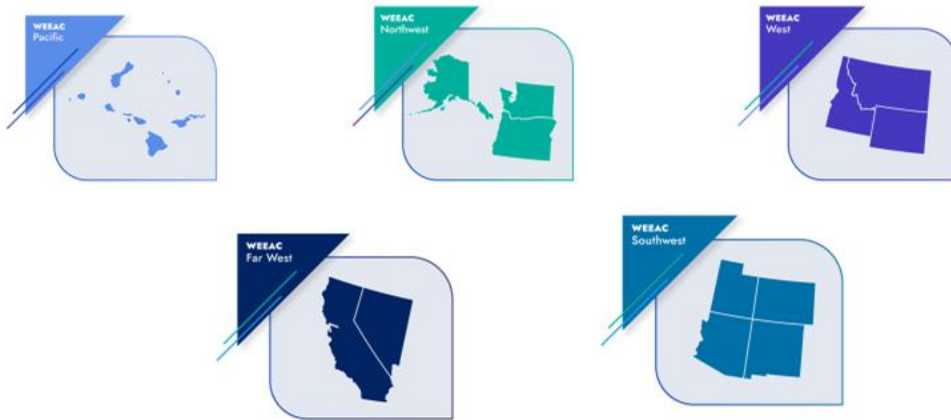


Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) Objectives

- Reduce chronic absence.
- Reduce bullying and harassment.
- Improve high school graduation rates.
- Strengthen high school course enrollment.
- Improve discipline equity.
- Address disproportionality of students served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Address discrimination cases and desegregation orders.



WEEAC Subregions



Pacific

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

Northwest

Alaska, Oregon, and Washington

West

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming

Far West

California and Nevada

Southwest

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico,
and Utah



Six-Part 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 Monday, April 3
- [Session 4](#)—Increasing Attendance and Engagement for American Indian and Alaska Native Students Tuesday, September 12
- [Session 5](#)—Increasing Attendance and Engagement for Black/African American Students Wednesday, October 11
- **[Session 6](#)—Increasing Attendance and Engagement for English Learners Wednesday, December 6**

Learning Goals for Session 6



Participants will learn about:

- Connecting with multilingual students and families to find out what is contributing to the heightened levels of chronic absence
- Culturally responsive strategies that increase attendance and engagement among multilingual learners
- Actions that schools, districts, or communities take to improve attendance

Audience Poll: Getting to Know You



What type of organization do you represent?

- State education agency (SEA)
- Tribal government
- District
- School
- Community organization
- Other

Please describe in the chat box.

Welcome!



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center



Hedy Chang
Executive Director
Attendance Works



Gisela Ariza
Associate Director of Programs
Attendance Works



Multilingual Learners in Your Community

- 1. Who are English Learners in your community?**
- 2. What languages do they speak?**

Please describe in the chat box.

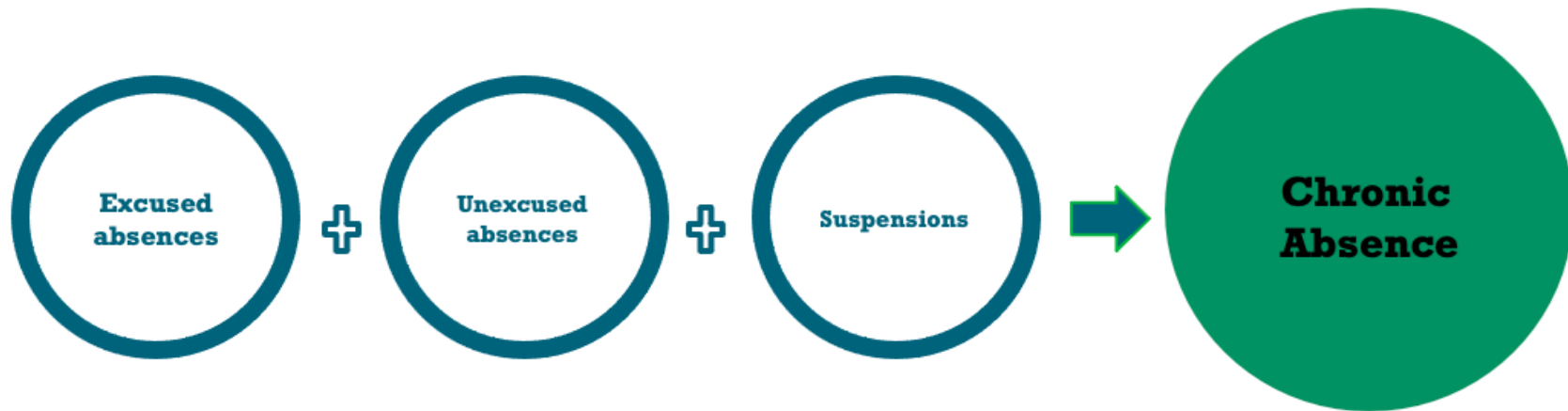
Review of Chronic Absence





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 days of school for any reason.



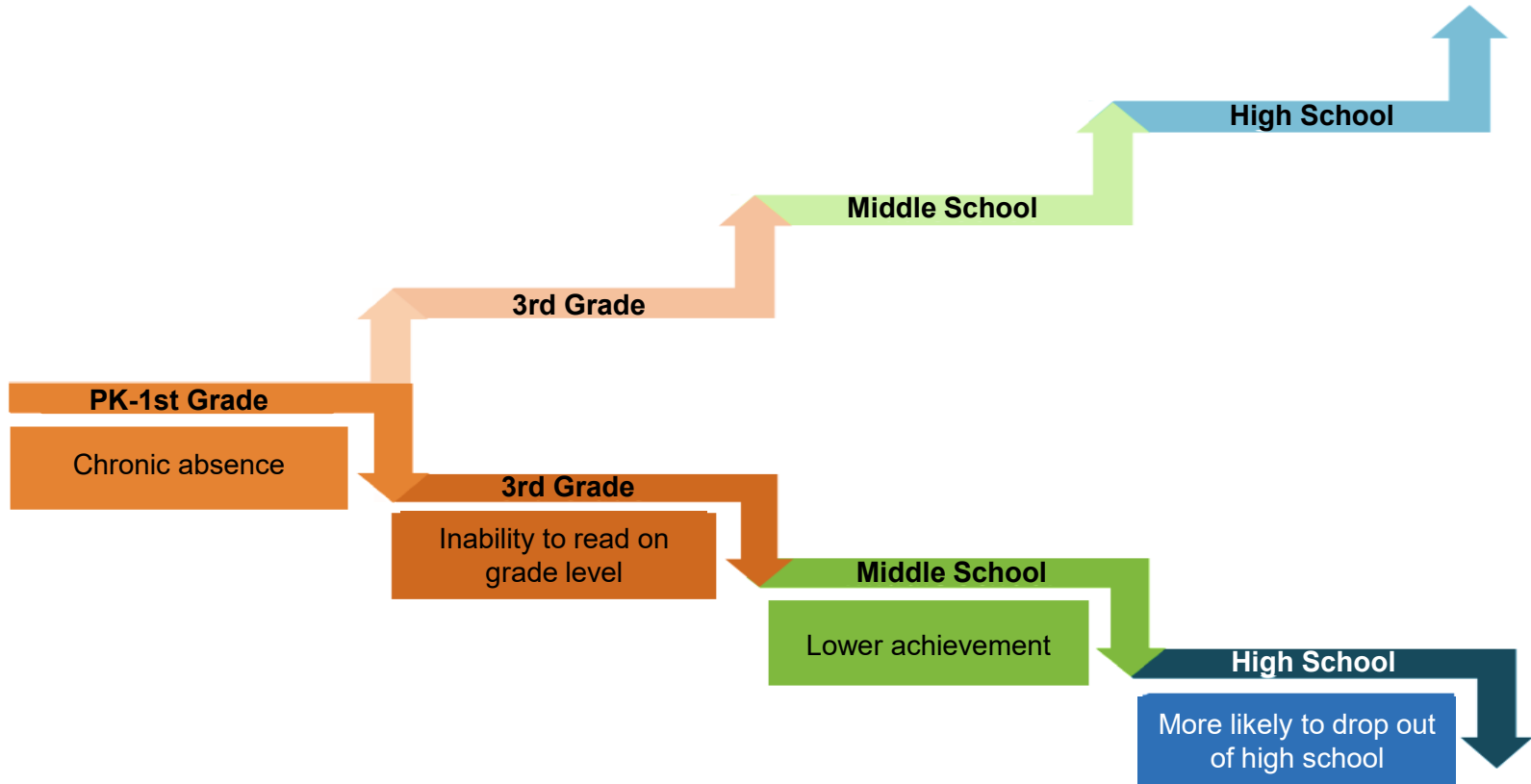
Chronic absence is different from truancy (unexcused absences only) or average daily attendance (how many students show up to school each day).



Chronic Absence and Equity

Chronic absence reflects and exacerbates existing inequities.

Improving Attendance Matters



Our Nation Faces an Attendance Crisis

- **Prepandemic: 8 million (16%) students were chronically absent** (*missing 10% or more of school for any reason: excused, unexcused, or suspension*).
- **Chronic absence nearly doubled.** By the end of school year (SY) 2021–22, chronic absence affected 14.7 million (nearly 30%) students. Data from districts and states show rates remained high in SY 2022–23.
- **English language learners, economically disadvantaged students and families**—as well as **Native American, Black, Latine/Hispanic, and Pacific Islander** students—are **disproportionately affected**.
- **Chronic absenteeism is higher than ever, especially in early elementary and all throughout high school.**

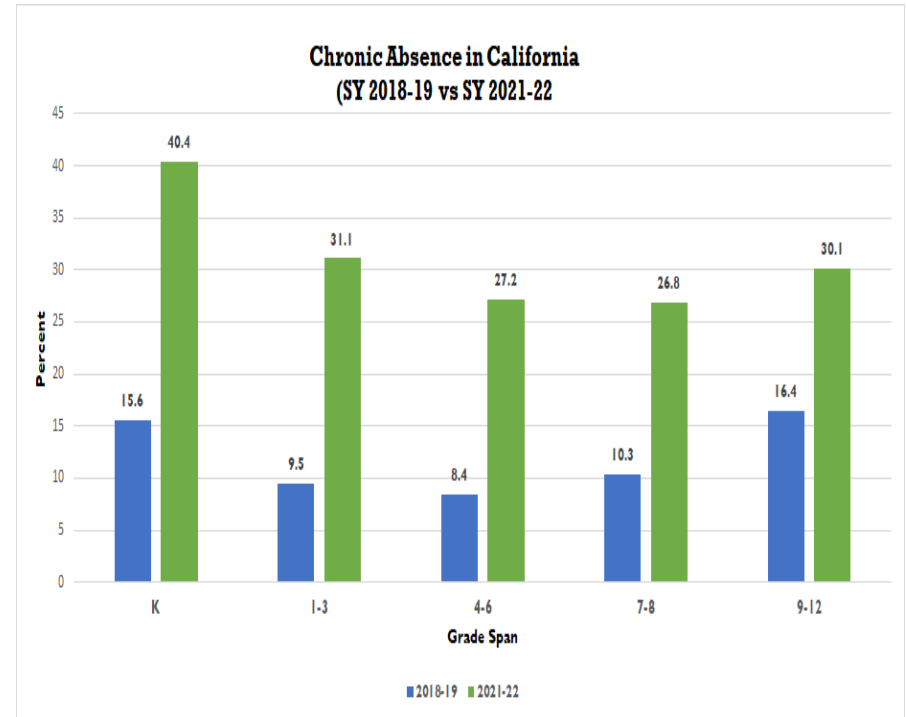


Alarming Increases Seen in Kindergarten Chronic Absence

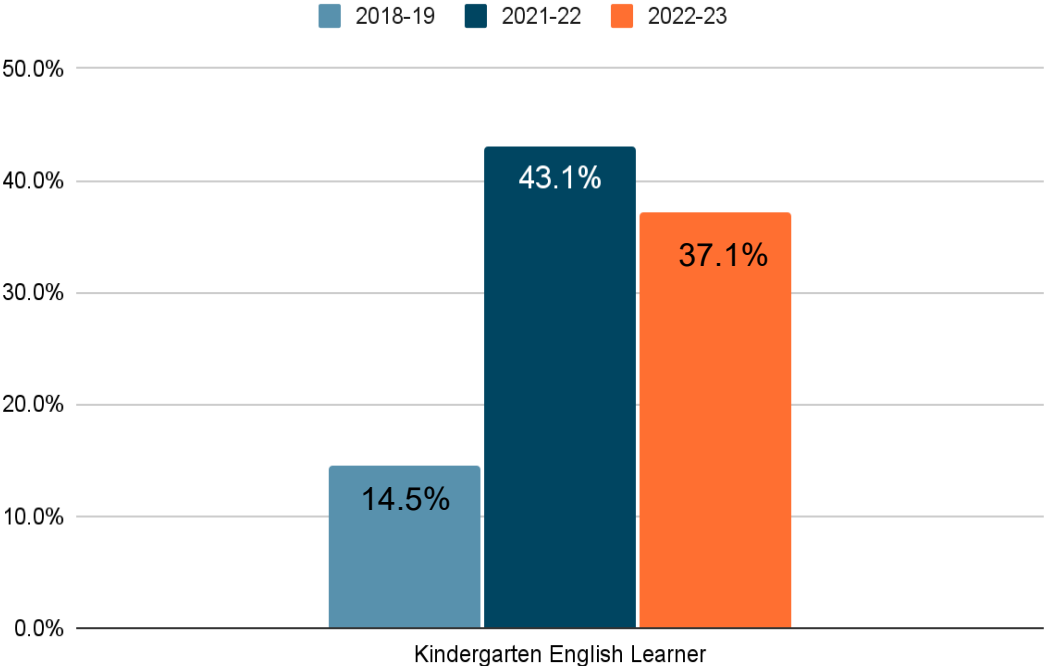


In California chronic absence rates increased from 2018-19 to 2021-22:

- Kindergarten, increased from 15.6% to 40.4%
- Grades 1-3, increased from 9.5% to 31.1%
- Grades 4-6, increased from 8.4% to 27.2%
- Grades 7-8, increased from 10.3% to 26.8%
- Grades 9-12, increased from 16.4% to 30.1%



Kindergarten **English Learner** Chronic Absence Rate 2018–2023



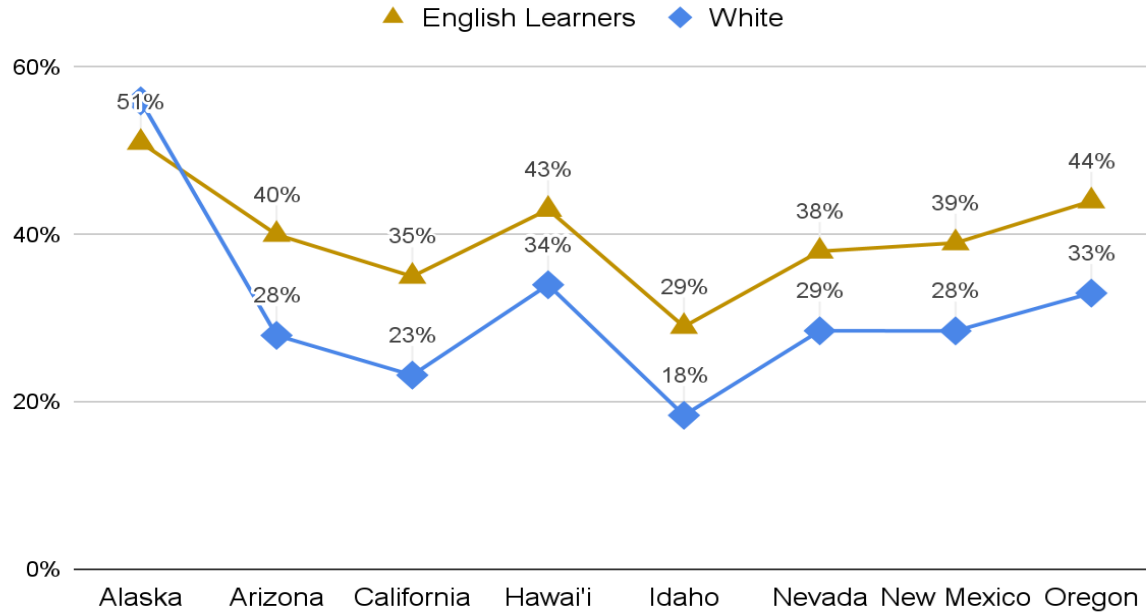
- 14.5% in 2018–19
- 43.1% in 2021–22
- **37.1% in 2022–23**

California English Learner Chronic Absence Rate by Grade Span in 2018–2023

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23
Kindergarten	14.5%	43.1%	37.1%
1–3	8.7%	32.9%	24.8%
4–6	8.2%	30.7%	22%
7–8	12.1%	32.5%	27.6%
K–8	9.9%	33.6%	26.3%
9–12	24.4%	38.8%	34.6%

Source: California Department of Education

Western States Chronic Absence 2021–22 Disproportionate Outcomes



English Learner Chronic Absence Rates

- Alaska 51%
- Arizona 40%
- California 35%
- Hawai'i 43%
- Idaho 29%
- Nevada 38%
- New Mexico 39%
- Oregon 44%

Source: Department of Education for AL, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, NM, and OR (2021–22)

Truancy Versus Chronic Absence

Truancy

- ▲ Counts **only** unexcused absences
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Uses legal—typically more blaming and punitive—solutions

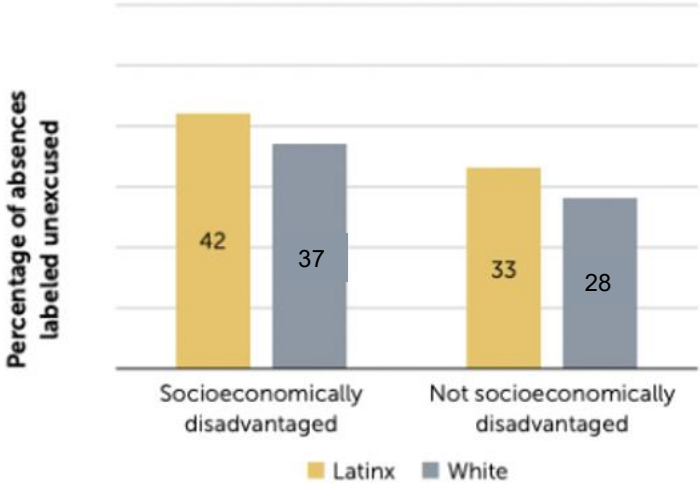


Chronic Absence

- 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

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/whats-the-difference-between-chronic-absence-and-truancy/>

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



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

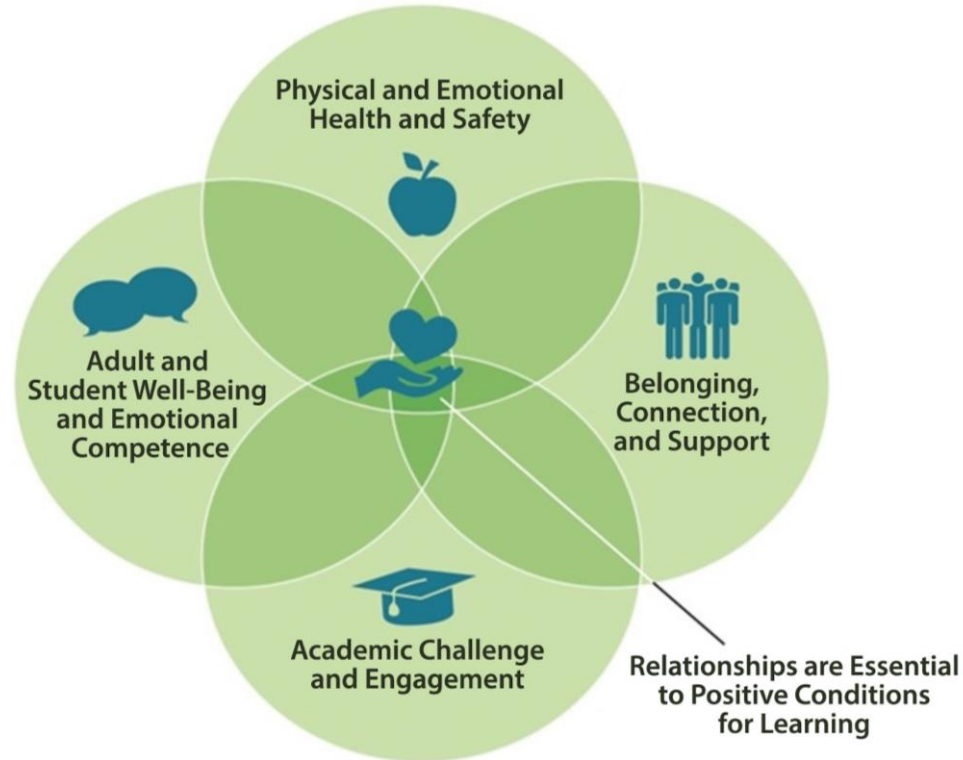
Large disparities in unexcused absenteeism persisted within each socioeconomic stratum in SY 2021–22 for Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian, and Hispanic students compared to White students.

McNeely, C., Chang, H., & Gee, K. (2023). *Disparities in Unexcused Absences Across California Schools*. Policy Analysis for California Education

How the “Unexcused” Label Can Affect the Response

Response to “Excused”	Response to “Unexcused”
✓ Help with homework	✗ Denial of help or no credit for homework
✓ Makeup exams	✗ No makeup exams
✓ Home tutoring provided	✗ Denial of class credit
	✗ Removal from extracurricular activities
	✗ Send notices of truancy
	<i>If unexcused absences accumulate despite earlier outreach from schools and districts, courts can do the following:</i>
	✗ Fine students and caregivers
	✗ Require a community service program or parenting program
	✗ Charge caregivers with a misdemeanor

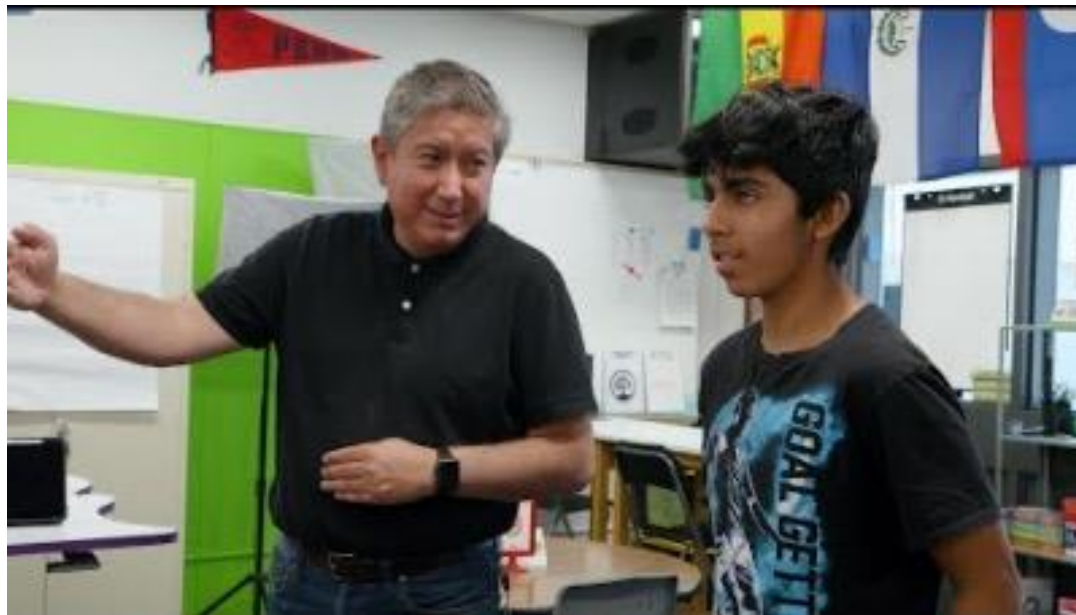
Rather than taking a punitive approach, we must understand that continued high levels of chronic absence reflect the missing opportunities of positive learning conditions for too many students.



www.attendanceworks.org



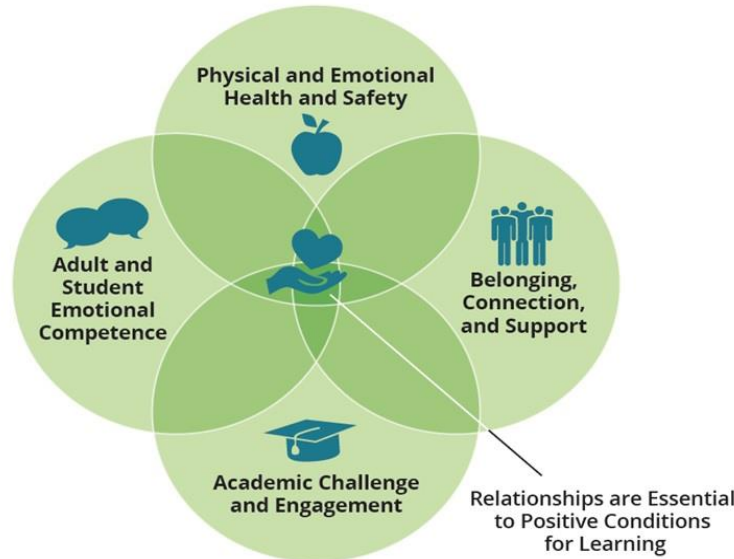
Positive Conditions for Learning In Action





Reflection

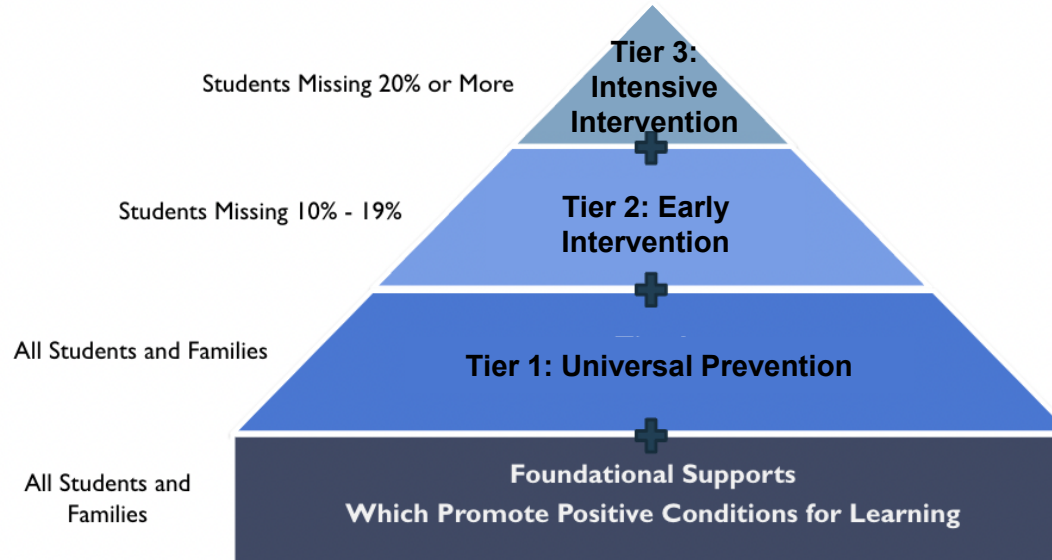
How did the video illustrate positive conditions for learning?





We Must Redouble Our Investments in a Multitiered System-of-Supports Approach

Working across silos is essential!



<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/>

www.attendanceworks.org

We must tailor our approaches to address underlying challenges

Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Community violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling academically and/or behaviorally • Unwelcoming school climate • Social and peer challenges • Anxiety • Biased disciplinary and suspension practices • Undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations • Caregivers had negative educational experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction • Bored • No meaningful relationships to the adults in the school (especially given staff shortages) • Lack of enrichment opportunities • Lack of academic and behavioral support • Failure to earn credits • Student needs to work; earning money conflicts with being in high school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning • School loses track and underestimates total absences • Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness • Attendance only matters in the older grades • Suspensions don't count as an absence

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/>



We Must Tap Into the Expertise of Students and Families

- ❖ Students have **untapped** expertise and knowledge that can bring renewed relevance and authenticity.
- ❖ Addressing the challenges students experience requires considering their **specific** realities.
- ❖ Understanding **when** many students and families experience similar challenges allows for scalable solutions.
- ❖ Ensure that the engagement strategies you create are **inclusive** of students' and families' cultural norms.

Welcome!



Lucy Bollinger
Program Specialist, Family and
Community Engagement, Elk
Grove Unified School District



Gloria Corral
President and CEO
Parent Institute for
Quality Education



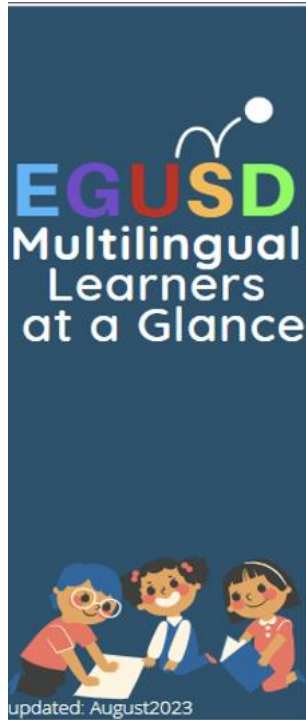
Hortensia Hernandez
Client Engagement Associate
National Center for Community Schools

Tell us about your community.

- **What challenges make it difficult for multilingual learners to attend school?**
- **How do challenges vary for younger and older students?**



Elk Grove Unified School District Multilingual Learners



Demographics

- 62,667 total students enrolled
- 10,290 English Learners
- 5,434 At-risk/LTEL
- 1,417 Newcomers

Top Birth Countries of Newcomers

- Afghanistan
- Mexico
- Philippines
- Central America
- Vietnam
- China
- India

Top Languages

1. Spanish
2. Vietnamese
3. Cantonese
4. Hmong
5. Punjabi
6. Farsi
7. Mandarin
8. Hindi
9. Filipino
10. Pasto
11. Arabic
12. Urdu
13. Russian
14. Mien

Challenges

- Transportation
- Housing
- Building Relationships
- Additional Basic Needs
- Typologies (newcomer versus long-term)
- Role Reversal

Barriers to Attendance in Caldwell, Idaho



- 21% of students are learning English in the district
- 30% of students learning English are chronically absent
- Unclear expectations
- Survival mode
- Mental health

PARENT INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION (PIQE)

FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

SPRING 2023



www.PIQE.org | [@PIQEUSA](https://twitter.com/PIQEUSA)



LANGUAGE

OF THE 980 PHONE INTERVIEWS, 90% WERE CONDUCTED IN SPANISH

REGIONS

PARTICIPANTS FROM NORTHERN, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

GRADE LEVEL

FAMILIES OF CHILDREN TK-12

Method



Interviewed 980 families by phone in their home language to assess community needs.



RESPONSE AREAS

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

AREAS OF CONCERN

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

AREAS OF SUPPORT

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION





DEMOGRAPHICS



99% IDENTIFY AS LATINA/O/X



86% HAVE AN EDUCATION LEVEL OF HIGH SCHOOL OR BELOW



65% HAVE AN ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME BELOW \$39,000



71% HAVE STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS



95% HAVE STUDENTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

KEY RESULTS



60% OF FAMILIES ARE CONCERNED ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE



52% OF FAMILIES DO NOT KNOW HOW TO ACCESS HEALTH SERVICES ONLINE



52% DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS



54% OF FAMILIES DO NOT OWN TECHNOLOGY THAT DOES NOT BELONG TO THE SCHOOL



34% DO NOT HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS



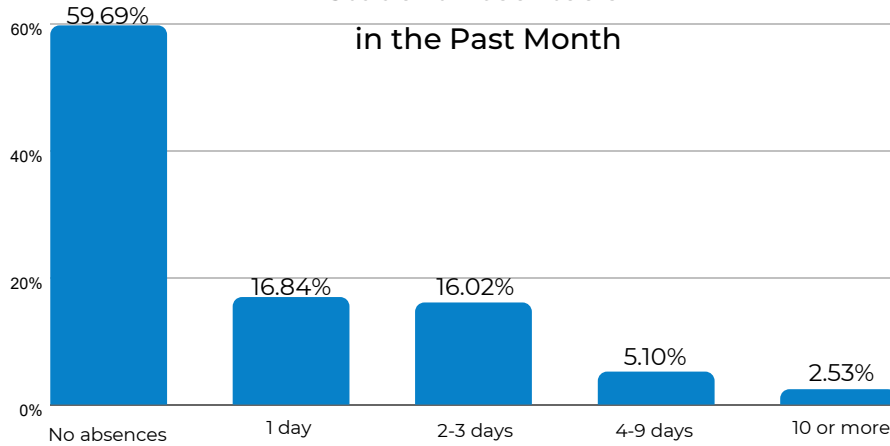
20% DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH SPEED INTERNET



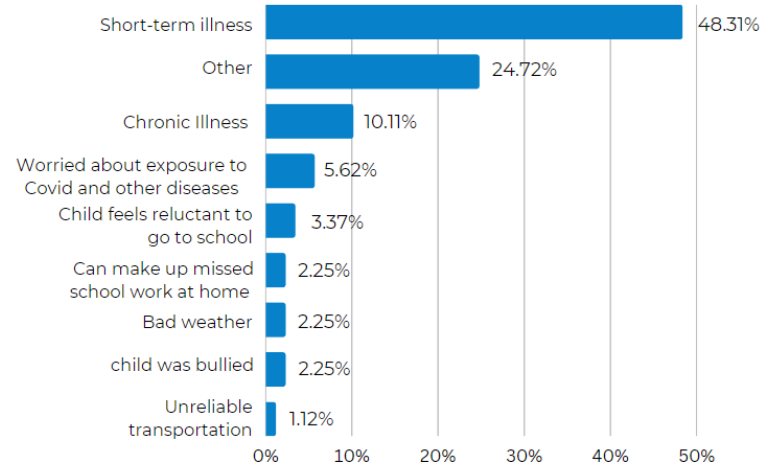
78% IDENTIFIED TUTORING RESOURCES AS A PRIORITY

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM

Student Absenteeism
in the Past Month



Reasons Students Were Absent



SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

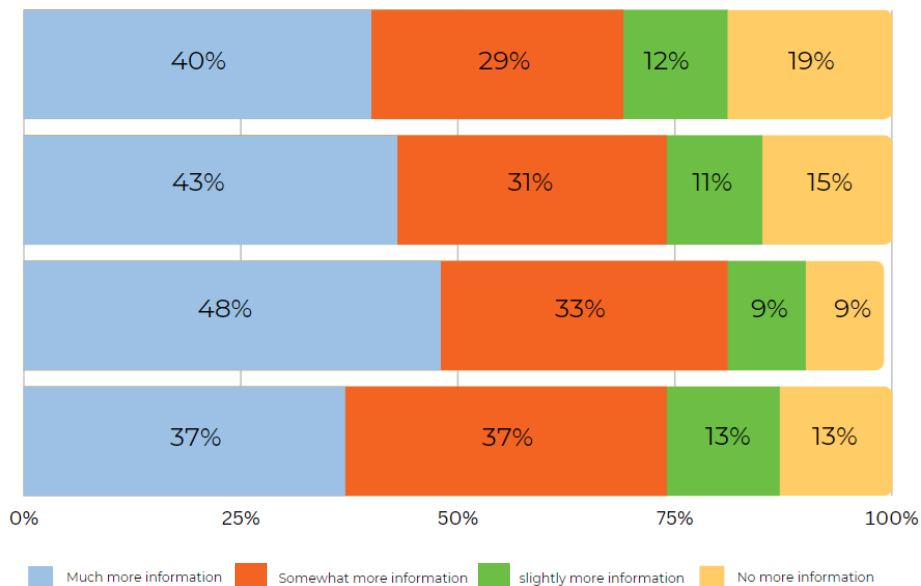
RESOURCES PARENTS FEEL WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL

The extended learning opportunities are available for my child (after school, Saturday school, summer school)

The social emotional supports available for my child

The academic supports available for my child at the school to strengthen learning opportunities

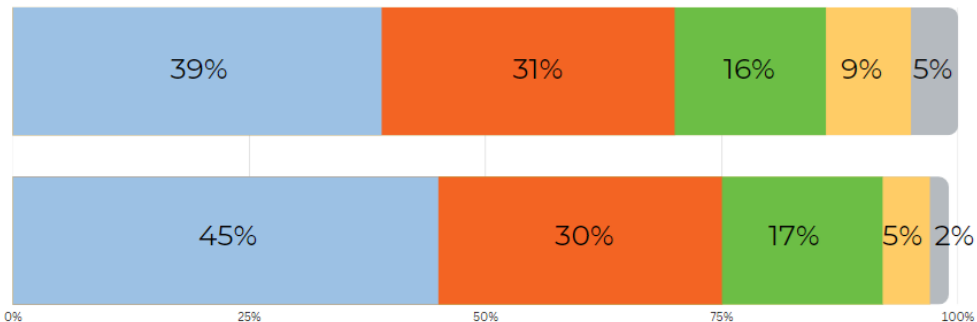
The health and safety processes in place at the school



SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

Parents that feel the school effectively communicates about their students academics



Parents that feel welcomed by school staff to ask questions at school

Effectively communicates moderately communicates somewhat communicates slightly communicates does not communicate



IN PARTNERSHIP



The Education Trust–West



Attendance
Works



Families
In Schools



Building Partnerships for Student Success



The Children's
Partnership

www.PIQE.org | @PIQEUSA



**What works to engage students and families and
increase attendance for multilingual learners?
How do strategies vary for younger and older students?**





Messaging



Every Day Matters 2022 - Attendance Campaign: In order for our students to benefit from our efforts, they need to be in school every day. Because #EveryDayMatters. As a District, we will be promoting good attendance and ensuring all of our students have every opportunity to succeed.

Relationships





Community Schools

Connecting **opportunities** for successful kids and families. When families thrive, schools thrive. These are Lincoln's current top priorities:



Fostering
Great
Attendance



Out of School
Time
Opportunities



Healthy
Families



Food
Accessibility

Newcomer Welcome Centers

It is **not** family circumstances that determine engagement, but rather **our response** to those circumstances that will make the difference.



Communication: Talking Points



Positive Home Visits





Strategies for Attendance

Share in the chat:

What strategies are you using in your community that are helping to increase attendance for multilingual learners?

How do you build the capacity of schools to do this work?



How do you build the capacity of schools to do this work?

- Collaboration across districts, departments, and county
- Collective ownership at school sites
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) professional learning for all staff
- Staff and family wellness workshops
- Prioritizing community-building



Questions?

Reflections?

Please type your questions
and reflections in the chat.



Gisela Ariza

gisela@attendanceworks.org





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WEEAC Newsletter



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Thank you!

Please complete our [evaluation form](#).

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