



WestEd
Western Educational
Equity Assistance Center

Organizing a District Team to Address Chronic Absence

February 27, 2023



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Equity Assistance Center

Welcome!



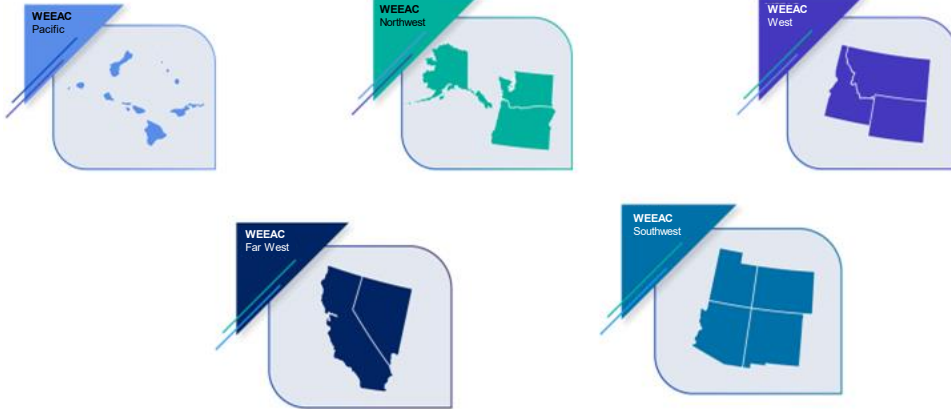
Technical Assistance

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

Overview of the Student Engagement and Attendance Center

February 27, 2023



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Topics for Today



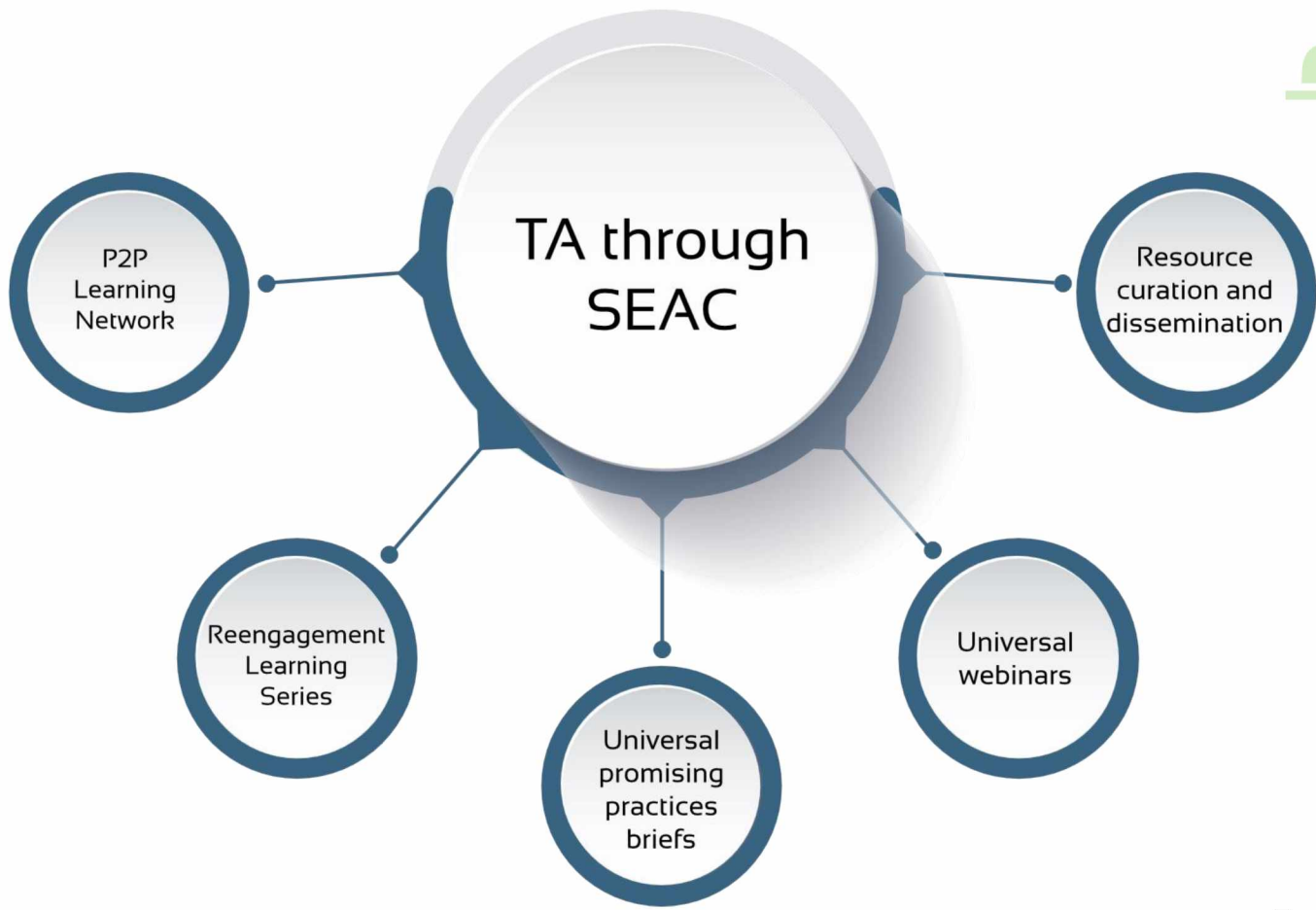
SEAC Objectives and Approach



Technical Assistance Offerings



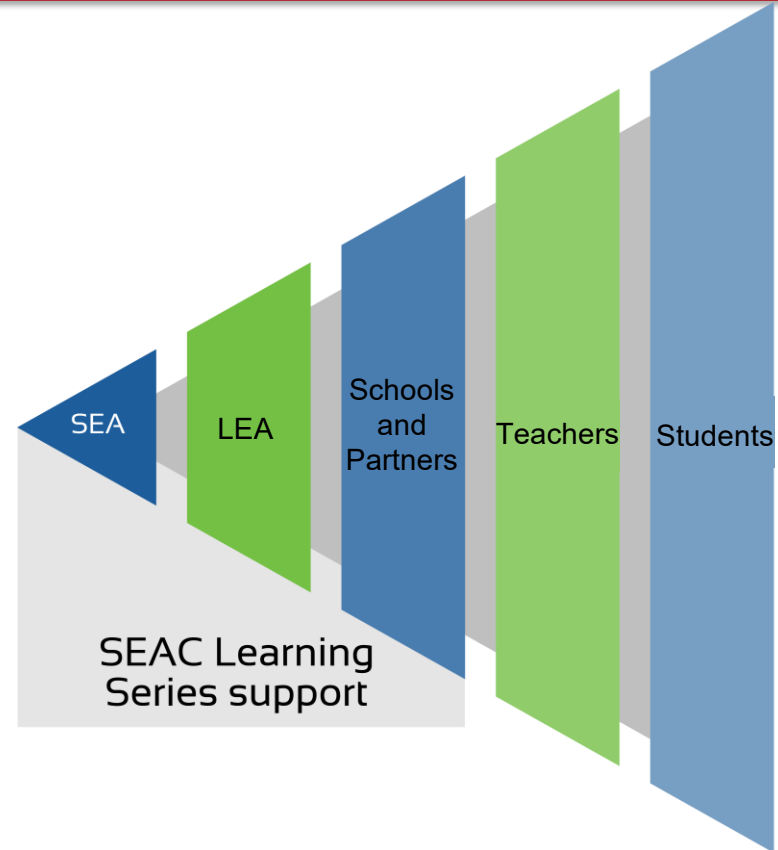
SEAC Resources



SEAC Learning Series

Purpose: Provide best practices drawn from experts and the field to assist SEAs in supporting LEAs and partners in reengaging students and families in schooling during the 2022–23 school year

Note: LEA = local education agency;
SEA = state education agency;
SEAC = Special Education Advisory Committee



Learning Series Topics in FY 2022-23

Finding Missing Students

State Accountability Measures for Chronic Absenteeism (cohorts 1 and 2)

Special Populations: Practices to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Data Collection and Analysis

Topic TBD

Upcoming SEAC TA Resources



- ▶ Using Mental Health Days to Address Student Mental Health and Chronic Absenteeism (TA Brief)
- ▶ Planning Tools for Student and Family Engagement (TA Brief)
- ▶ Equity and Attendance Discussion Guide (TA Brief)
- ▶ Integrating Attendance into Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (TA Brief)
- ▶ Identifying Disproportionality in Unexcused Absences (TA Brief)

SEAC Website and Resources

SEAC resources are available on our website posted here:



<https://oese.ed.gov/student-engagement-and-attendance-technical-assistance-sea-center/>



SEA and LEA
Attendance
Reflection Tools



Promise Practices
Brief: Improving
Student
Engagement



First Semester
Attendance Data
webinar



Blog
series

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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 Tuesday, September 12
- Session 6 – Increasing Attendance and Engagement for English Learners Friday, October 13



Learning Goals for Session 2

Participants will

- learn about the six ingredients for taking a systemic approach to reducing chronic absence;
- understand best practices that promote a positive culture of attendance and early intervention; and
- gain insight into specific ways districts have designed equitable systems 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)



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Review of Chronic Absence

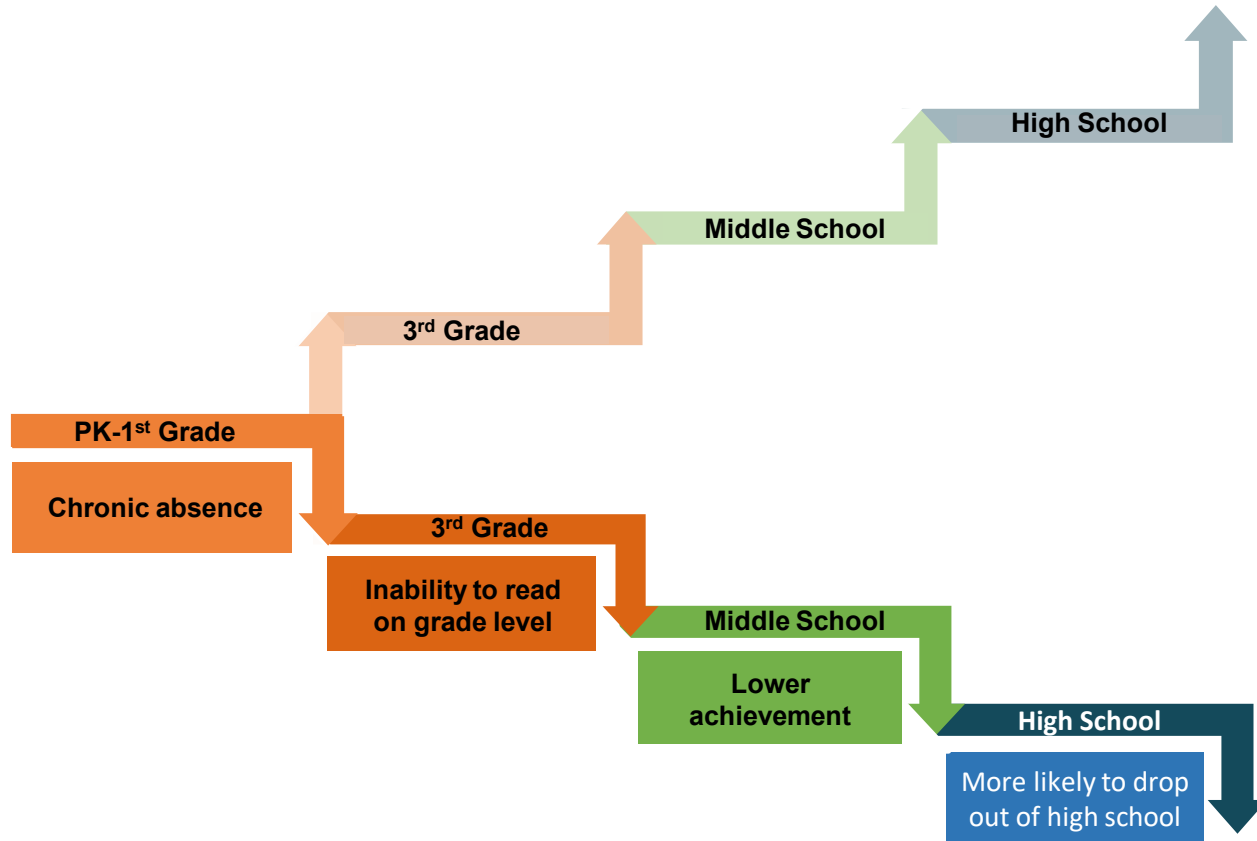


Audience Poll

How familiar are you with
chronic absence?

- Very familiar
- Familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not very familiar
- Not at all familiar

Improving Attendance Matters





Chronic Absence and Equity

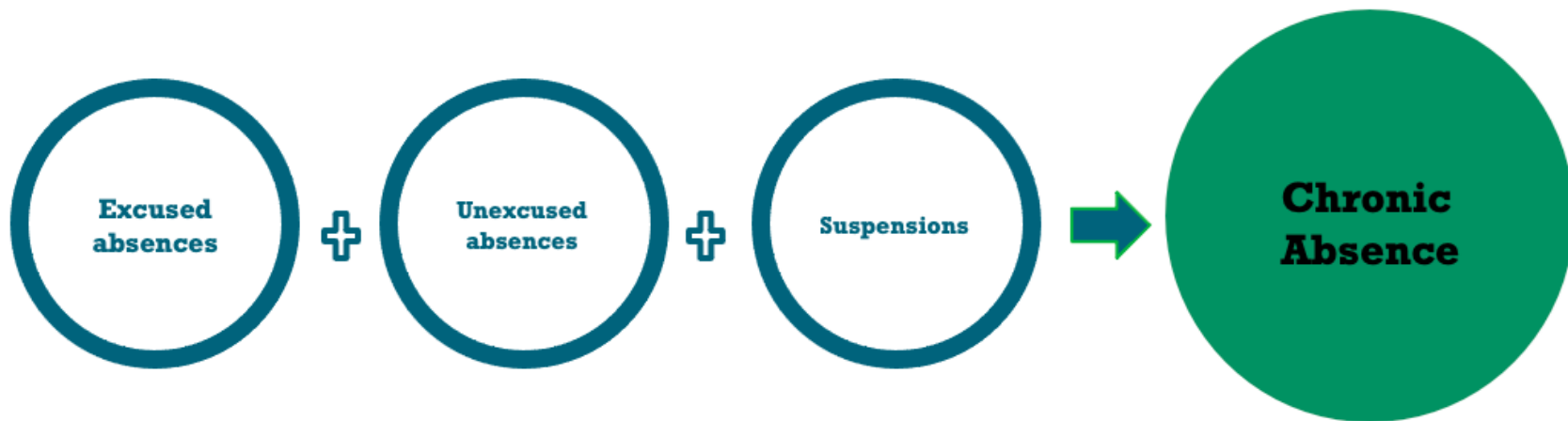
**Chronic absence
reflects and exacerbates
existing inequities.**



What is chronic absence?

Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**

Chronic absence is missing so much school (for any reason) that a student is academically at risk.



Chronic absence differs from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students attend school each day).

The Role of District Teams in Reducing Chronic Absence





Who Owns Attendance?

- Addressing chronic absence is not a solo sport.
- Everyone in the central office (communications, academics, data, student support) and within schools (principals, teachers, support staff, cafeteria workers, coaches) have a role play to ensure students show up every day and are engaged.
- When schools and communities work together to provide a tiered system of supports to students and families—that address the reasons for student absences—they can turn chronic absence around.

Audience Poll



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Do you currently have a district team that addresses ...

- attendance
- behavior (e.g., PBIS)
- academics
- family engagement
- student support services
- health
- behavioral health
- communications
- technology/data management
- transportation
- early learning
- special education
- extended learning (including after-school, and summer programs)
- other (type in the chat)



District Team Functions

- Review chronic absence data at least every two weeks
- Identify trends in chronic absence by sub-groups (race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, schools, and grades)
- Ensure chronic absence data is accessible to site-based and district support staff
- Oversee the implementation of a tiered-support system
- Build the capacity of principals and school staff to address chronic absence

District and School Teams Have Distinct Functions



District Team

- Organize a systemic, districtwide response for policy and practice improvements
- Routinely unpack data, analyze, and utilize data to inform districtwide actions
- Equip site leaders to support the implementation of effective school attendance teams
- Promote shared accountability and continuous improvements

School Team

- Coordinate the whole school's multi-tiered strategy to reduce chronic absence by implementing evidence-informed prevention and early interventions
- Match strategies with root causes that address the needs of individuals and groups of chronically absent students using qualitative and quantitative data
- Ensure students receive the needed supports



Guidance for Teams

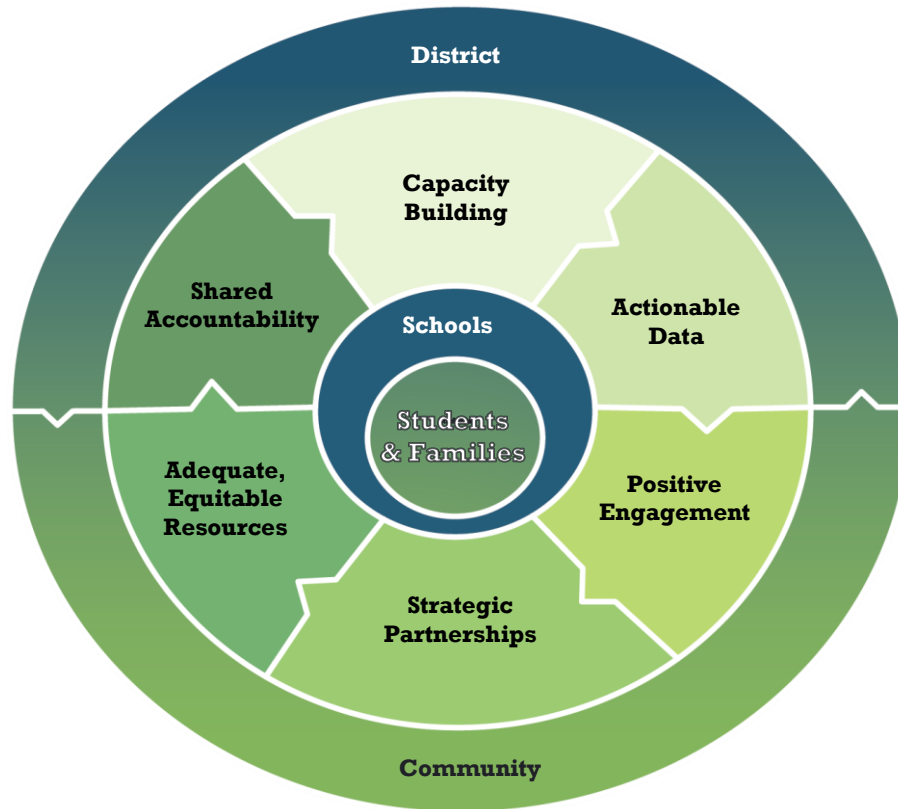
- Create a year-round districtwide attendance plan

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/District-Attendance-Team-Planning-Calendar-BLANK-FORM-rev-5-19-21.pdf>

- Create a tracking and monitoring system

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Attendance-Works-Guidance-for-District-Teams-1.14.2023.pdf>

Key Ingredients of Systemic Change to Reduce Absenteeism



Capacity Building

Provides professional development to the district- and school-based staff as well as community partners so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to take a data-driven, tiered approach to support student attendance, participation, and engagement.

Actionable Data

Ensures access to quantitative and qualitative data that is accurate, accessible, timely, comprehensive, and understandable so it informs the development of strategies and allocation of resources.

Positive Engagement

Promotes a culture of belonging and engagement that helps everyone understand why showing up for school and learning matters while helping families and students overcome barriers.

Strategic Partnerships

Strengthens and expands partnerships between the school and community that nurture relationships with students and families and engage them in identifying and addressing attendance barriers.

Adequate, Equitable Resources

Resources and funding are sufficient to ensure that all students—from all backgrounds and circumstances—receive a quality education and opportunities to thrive and achieve in school, career, and college.

Shared Accountability

Provides clear guidance and support to shareholders—students, families, educators, agencies, and community partners—about their roles and responsibilities for helping to reduce chronic absence. Creates systems to hold everyone accountable for doing their part.



Avoid Common Pitfalls

- ✗ district leaders are silent on why attendance is essential for student achievement
- ✗ fragmented approach with departments and initiatives operating in isolation
- ✗ focus on Tier 3 without investment in prevention and early intervention
- ✗ not seeing disparities through an equity lens
- ✗ lack of accountability or support to school leaders on effective attendance practices
- ✗ only tracking ADA or truancy rather than who is missing too much school for any reason (chronic absence)
- ✗ not drawing upon the experience or knowledge of school teams in designing systems or solutions
- ✗ team composition does not reflect the demographics, perspectives, or cultural realities of the student population

Chronic Absenteeism

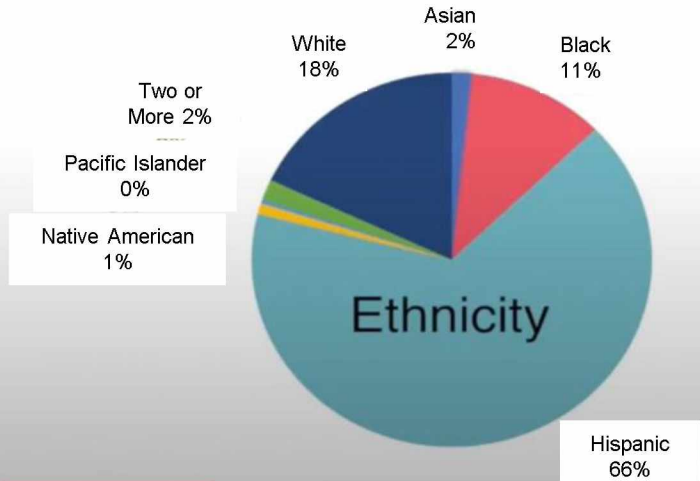
A  **ONDALE**
Elementary School District

AESD Demographics

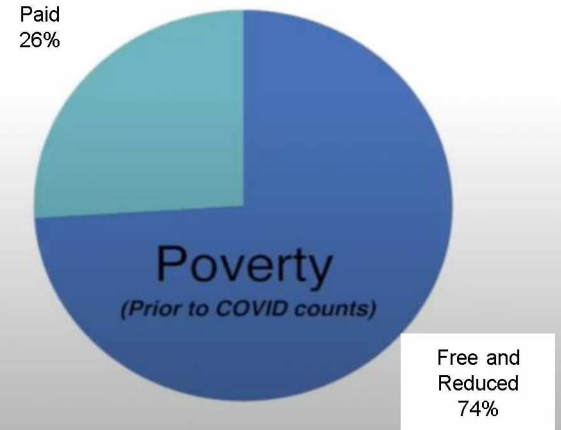
9
Schools

1
Alternative Program

1
Online Academy



6,000
Pre-K to 8
Students



AESD Journey

- 2014–15 Chronic Absenteeism Peer Network
- 2015–16 Plan for incentives and family involvement
- 2017–19 All APs attended
Plans developed at all sites
Data reduction impact:
 - High of 18% down to 10.9% in 2019
- 2020–22 Pandemic Impact
Tripled overall chronic absenteeism
- 2022–23 Refocus
Retooled data collection—monthly
Site and district dialogue and data reviews
Re-engaging parents and onsite activities
Data impact: current year-to-year comparison
 - Reduction between 20–60% across sites



Multi-tiered Approach

Classroom connections

Site support staff

District systems

Community embeddedness



Site Level Attendance Plan

- Monitoring attendance data.
- Individual Student conferences on how can we support student attendance
- Teachers individually goal setting with students as part of the leader in me and having students take ownership.
- Involve Social worker and counselor for check in and check out with students for additional support.
- Parent phone calls
- Home visits for families we can not reach by phone.
- Utilize Mentorship Program with Avondale PD to support their students who may struggle with attendance difficulties
- Parent meeting in office.
- Attendance assemblies at the beginning of each quarter for perfect attendance and improved attendance students who miss only two days in a quarter are also recognized.
- Parents are recognized and invited to all attendance assemblies where we play music and make it a celebratory party atmosphere for parents and students K through 8th grade. Letting parents know that they are very important in their child's attendance which leads to academic success. Thank you for your partnership with us!
- Bulletin boards in the building displaying attendance percentages by the month for each grade level from August to current so students can see the trends. Our goal is listed on the bulletin board of 95%.
- School Marquee says "Be Proactive with Attendance" which is one of our Leader In Me attributes / highly effective habits.



District Level Data

Date	1st-8th Chronic Absence Percent	Total Students (1st-8th)	Total K	1st-8th absent 1-17 days	1st-8th graders absent 18+ days	Kinder			Grade 1			Grade 2			Grade 3			Grade 4			Grade 5			Grade 6			Grade 7			Grade 8					
						1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+			
12/7/22	7.56%	463	0	365	35																														
12/7/22	4.51%	599	65	536	27	46	12	2	55	8	2	45	8	4	71	6	3	58	4	1	60	10	1	61	6	5	65	8	5	54	17	6			
12/7/22	1.87%	963	81	869	18	63	12	2	81	10	4	93	7	0	82	8	0	89	9	2	98	3	1	111	9	4	129	8	3	118	14	4			
12/7/22	2.54%	631	68	544	16	50	12	2	56	3	1	55	5	1	56	8	2	51	3	2	47	6	3	70	13	1	86	7	4	60	18	2			
12/7/22	2.50%	839	120	759	21	88	24	2	87	24	5	79	11	4	82	13	2	82	13	3	84	8	0	93	9	4	77	6	1	74	17	2			
12/7/22	5.76%	590	0	509	34							110	28	9	113	27	10	101	24	6	93	13	9												
12/7/22	4.05%	173	146	157	7	101	21	12	128	29	7																								
12/7/22	2.52%	714	86	648	18	71	10	3	58	6	1	71	11	2	58	11	4	76	16	2	73	10	2	65	9	2	67	22	1	84	11	4			
12/7/22	1.57%	637	98	560	10	801	8	1	69	8	2	76	5	1	78	6	1	67	5	0	70	2	1	49	4	1	51	6	0	59	5	4			
12/7/22	3.32%	5609			186																														

Site Level Data

Kinder			Grade 1			Grade 2			Grade 3			
1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days	11-17	18+	1-10 Days
67	0	0	73	3	1	78	0	0	70	1	0	78
73	0	0	81	1	2	85	0	0	76	1	0	84
69	6	0	86	3	3	88	5	0	84	3	0	94
63	12	2	81	10	4	93	7	0	82	8	0	89
56	18	4	76	16	5	90	12	1	78	14	1	84

Three examples of interventions:

District Level—Sweeping change

Site Level—Specific family impact

Community Level—Collective action at an apartment complex



Awareness + Acceptance = Action

Shared practices/feedback Consultancy protocols

Notes

Ryan will present the data tracking tool to the Absenteeism subgroup. This tracker lists the number of chronic students from last year at each grade level, as well as the students that were close. Tyler will then outline the steps and procedures for incentivizing and tracking chronic absenteeism. Probing Question: How can we decrease chronic absenteeism while also increasing our student motivation to be at school?

What does the tiered incentive look like?

- The group embraced our ideas about tiered absenteeism and red flagging for early intervention in CT's
- Also discussed the layout of our DS STAR Attendance Incentive Plan and how we track that in our classrooms for student use

Desert Star Star Attendance	
When a class has perfect attendance for the allotted amount of days below, they will earn a star for display in their classroom window. Once enough stars are earned, they can earn the following incentives.	
10 Stars	15 minute Friday Recess
20 Stars	Hot Day
30 Stars	Free Dress Day
40 Stars	Popcorn Party
50 Stars	Ice Cream Party

SCHOOLS + PARENTS + COMMUNITIES

= THRIVING STUDENTS
WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU!

Here are some tips and common steps to follow for a successful school year

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

"2 out of 3 students with good attendance read well!"

Learn your school's attendance protocol

Connect with your school for support

Wi-Fi Resources

Dial "211" for help finding resources or "988" for mental health emergencies

Contact your child's doctor and seek care if they become severely ill

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Local Libraries

After School Activities

Community Based Programs

Parent / Child Activities

Culture Passes

Sports

"Parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills."

Parent Engagement in Schools | Adolescent and School Health | CDC

SUPPORTING OUR SCHOOLS

"When teachers are absent for 10 days, there is a significant decrease in student outcomes" - US News

Support your teachers, check your parent portal frequently, join a parent group, engage in school activities

JOIN US HERE!

SCAN ME

You are not alone, and Our Community is here to support You and Your Family.

ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN



Student Name: _____

- My child was present _____ days.
- My child was absent _____ days.
- My child was tardy _____ days.
- My goal is to improve my child's attendance.

Possible Strategies to Improve Attendance:

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____ (i.e. a visit to the park, a new book, a break from doing chores, a special treat)
- I will make sure my child is in bed by _____ p.m. and the alarm clock is set for _____ a.m.
- If my child complains of a stomach ache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will send him/her to school anyway and call _____ so that he/she can check in with my child during the day.
- If my child has a cold but no fever (less than 100 degrees), I will send him/her to school anyway. If I don't have a thermometer, I will purchase or borrow one.
- I will find a relative, friend or neighbor who can take my child to school if I can't make it.
- If my child is absent, I will contact his/her teacher to find out what he/she missed.
- I will set up medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school.

To improve my child's attendance, I commit to the following:

- _____
- _____
- _____

*****We will review progress as needed.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Assistant Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____





Capacity Building

- Cabinet-led team with responsibility for attendance that aligns with existing strategies to improve outcomes
- Team has the professional and/or personal experience to identify, discuss, and address inequities that impact attendance and equips all staff with the skills and knowledge to do the same
- Develops and communicates comprehensive attendance policies and practices that outline regulations, roles, and responsibilities for building a positive culture of attendance and promoting early intervention
- Builds school-level capacity to work as a team that takes a multi-tiered approach to address chronic absence through guidance, resources, professional development, and coaching

Audience Poll



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Our district team has the professional and/or personal experience to identify, discuss, and address educational inequities that impact attendance based on race, culture, gender, income, and special needs.

- Strongly equipped
- Most of us are equipped
- A few of us are equipped
- An area of work for us



Actionable Data

- Review chronic absence data at least every two weeks to identify trends in chronic absence by sub-groups (race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, schools, and grades)
- Ensure chronic absence data is accessible to site-based and district support staff and is reviewed every two weeks to identify trends by sub-groups
- Ensure that schools collect qualitative data about the reasons students miss school
- Implement protocols that require contact information for families to be updated each semester and that schools have the capacity to update information as needed



The “Action” of Actionable Data

- Provide schools with tools and resources that can target the root causes of absence
- Partner with schools to identify appropriate interventions that can address the root causes of chronic absence
- Provide schools with adequate support to implement and monitor interventions



Free Attendance Data Tools

The District Attendance Tracking Tools (DATT) and School Attendance Tracking Tools (SATT) are available in three modules:

- ✓ Grades K–5 or preK–5
- ✓ Grades 6–8 and
- ✓ Grades 9–12

We also offer a tool to combine the modules for preK–12 reports

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/data-tools/>



Positive Engagement

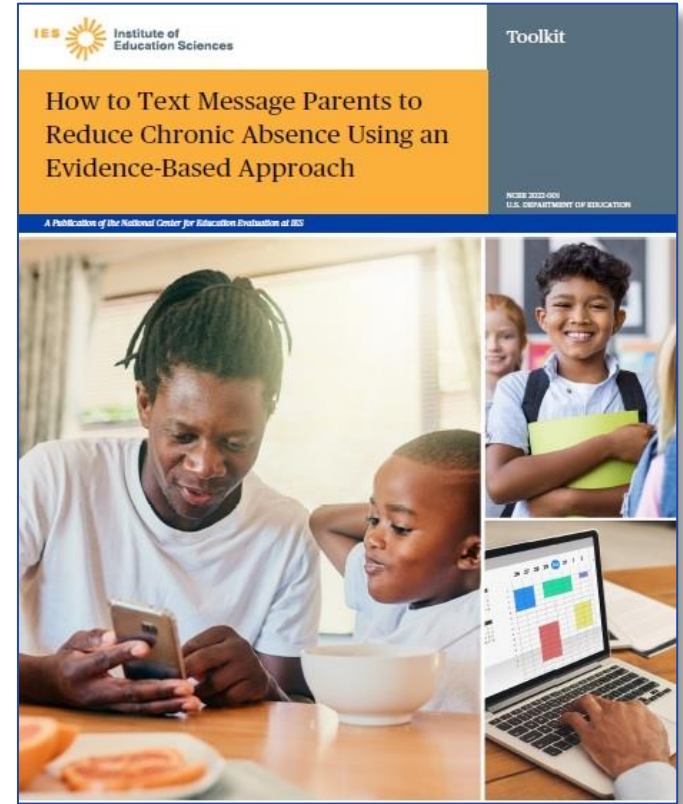
- ✓ Communicate supportive messages (*Stay Connected and Keep Learning*) throughout the school year using modes that families access regularly
- ✓ Provide tailored, personalized, and caring messages to students and families who are chronically absent
- ✓ Offer actionable steps to improve attendance
- ✓ Make sure ALL families know what resources are available for basic needs and learning at home



Communicating with Families

Use these resources to help your communications with families be clear and supportive:

- ❖ Chronic absence letter updated for COVID-19
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/welcome-students-to-school/>
- ❖ How to text message parents to reduce chronic absence using an evidence-based approach
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/pubs/2022001/pdf/2022001.pdf>
- ❖ Parent handouts in multiple languages
<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/handouts-for-families/>





Strategic Partnerships

- Leverage community partnerships to align services and supports to fit the needs, languages, and cultures of historically marginalized groups of students and families
- Use partnerships to make enrichment opportunities and resources accessible and available to all schools and all students
- Ensure that all expanded learning providers—including afterschool programming—understand and align their work with multi-tiered attendance and engagement strategies
- Leverage the resources of businesses, government agencies, and foundations to improve attendance and engagement



Kerman Unified





Let's Chat

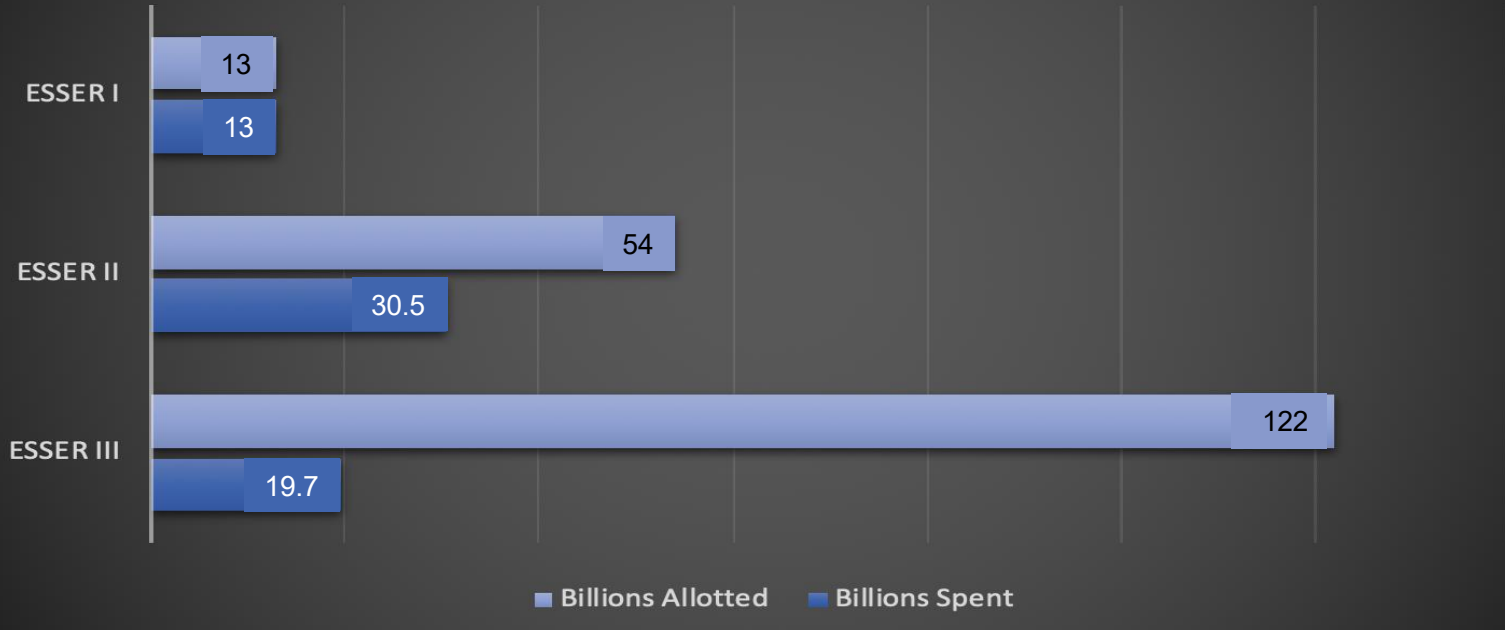
Are you working with similar partners or are there other partners in your community helping to make a difference?



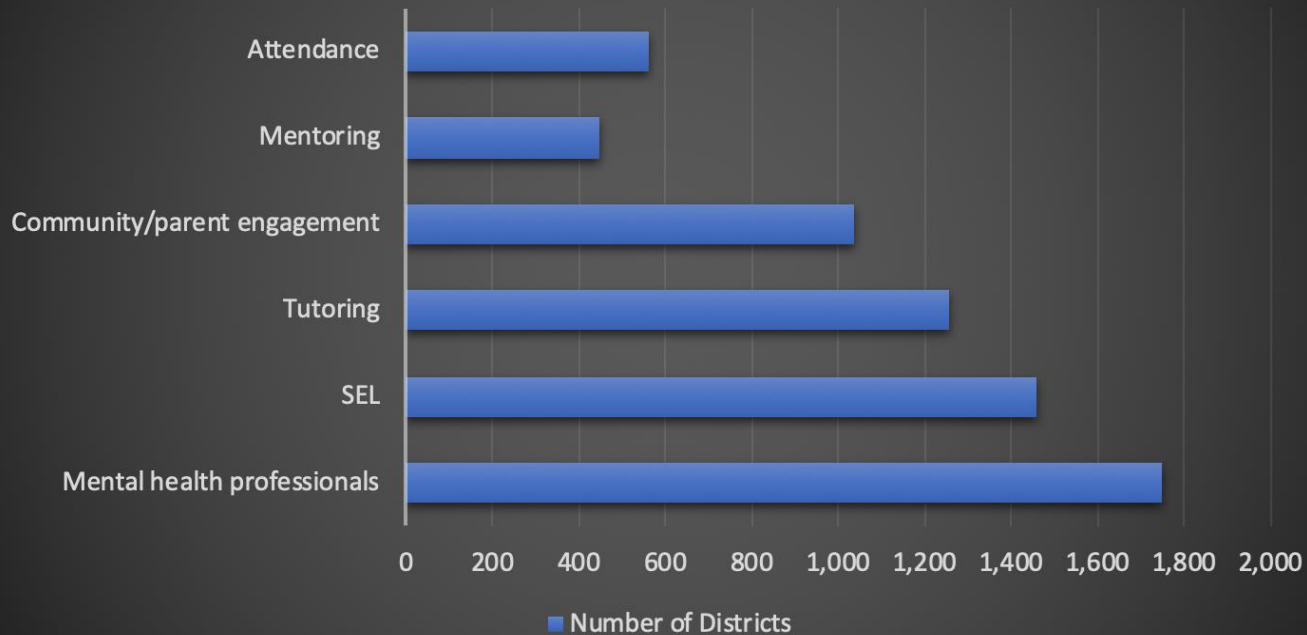
Adequate, Equitable Resources

- Map school-, district-, and community-based resources and funding that promote attendance and engagement to identify assets and gaps
- Have a system in place to hear from and respond to school attendance teams about their needs, service gaps for underserved student groups, and resource implications
- Prioritize the distribution of financial, staffing, and community resources to schools with higher rates of chronic absence and larger numbers of vulnerable students
- Promote equity by hiring staff and procuring services from community-based partners that reflect the diversity of the student and family population

Federal Covid Relief Aid



Where Attendance Fits In



Federal Funding: ESSA

- **Title I:** Support for high-poverty schools and students experiencing high poverty
- **Title II:** Funding for teacher training
- **Title IVa:** Safe and healthy school grants for data and school climate
- **Title IVe:** Family engagement grants
- **Title IVf:** Community schools grants



Federal Funding: Other Sources

- **Stronger Connections** grants in gun violence law
- **IDEA** dollars to support attendance for special education students
- **McKinney-Vento** money for students experiencing homelessness
- **Medicaid** billing to pay for school clinics and staffing



Local and State Assets

- Make the case for spending state and local dollars on successful interventions
- Reach out to state service commissions for support from AmeriCorps workers in partnership with National Effort to Support Student Success (NPSS)
- Tap local university work-study programs for tutors and mentors





Shared Accountability

- Set districtwide goals for improving attendance and reducing chronic absence by the student group that is embedded into district improvement plans
- Ensure school leaders have goals and a data-driven plan to improve attendance and reduce chronic absence that is embedded into their school improvement plans
- Ensure that data for each student (including attendance, behavior, and academic progress) is easy to understand, accessible to families, and received in a timely manner
- Ensure school leaders use their data to track and monitor progress

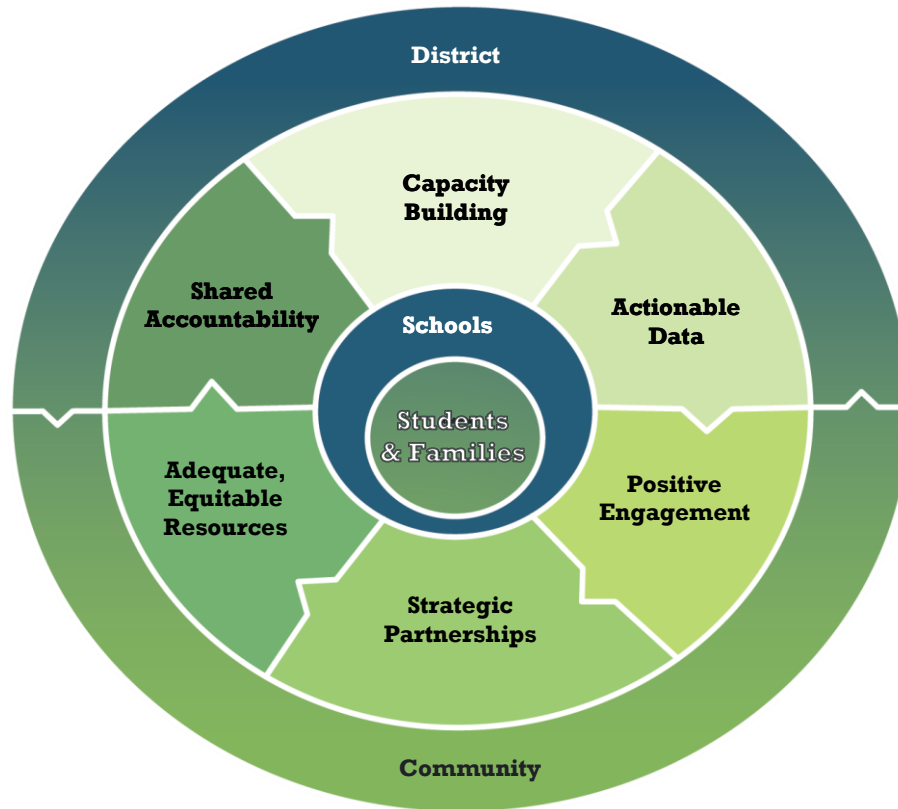


Audience Poll

To what extent is there shared accountability for attendance in your district? (scale 1–4)

- 1 – one **person's** responsibility
- 2 – one **department's** responsibility
- 3 – one **division's** responsibility
(e.g., Student Support Services)
- 4 – **everyone's** responsibility

Key Ingredients of Systemic Change to Reduce Absenteeism



District Self-Assessment Tool

Does our district team have a systemic approach to reducing chronic absence?

(pictured: 6 key ingredients)

Capacity Building		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
1.	Our district has a consistent team with responsibility and vision that aligns with existing efforts to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities, including e.g., academic advising					
Actionable Data		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
2.	1. Our district team has established protocols for taking attendance data and using it to inform and improve instruction					
Positive Engagement		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
3.	1. Our district ensures that schools are able to implement a relational, positive school climate with differentiated engagement strategies that mitigate absences, stress and trauma.					
Strategic Partnerships		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
4.	1. Our district leverages its community partnerships to align services and supports to the needs, languages and cultures of historically marginalized groups of students and families in a district.					
Adequate & Equitable Resources		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
5.	1. Our district has enough staff, direct and coverable-level support to reduce chronic absence.					
Shared Accountability		Satisfy in Place	Measurable Progress	Needs Improvement	Urgent Gap	Comments
6.	1. Our district has an explicit role for improving attendance and reducing chronic absence.					
	2. Our district ensures that school leaders have an explicit role in planning to improve attendance and reduce chronic absence.					
	3. Our district ensures that data for each student (on falling attendance, behavior and academic progress) is easy to understand and available to families in a timely manner.					



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Questions?

Please type your questions
into the chat or
raise your hand,
using the Zoom reaction feature.



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Connect with us.

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



[WEEAC Newsletter Sign-Up Page](#)



@WEEAC_WestEd



WEEAC@WestEd.org



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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](https://www.wested.org).

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