

# Chronic Absenteeism: What are We Missing?

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# What is Chronic Absence?



## **Chronic Absence is One Of Multiple Measures of Attendance**

### **Average Daily Attendance**

**How many students show up to school every day?** The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

### **Truancy**

**Who is missing school without permission?** Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention.

### **Chronic Absence**

**Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk?** Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, suspensions, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. The Office for Civil Rights currently defines it as missing 15 days.

# Why Does Chronic Absence Matter?

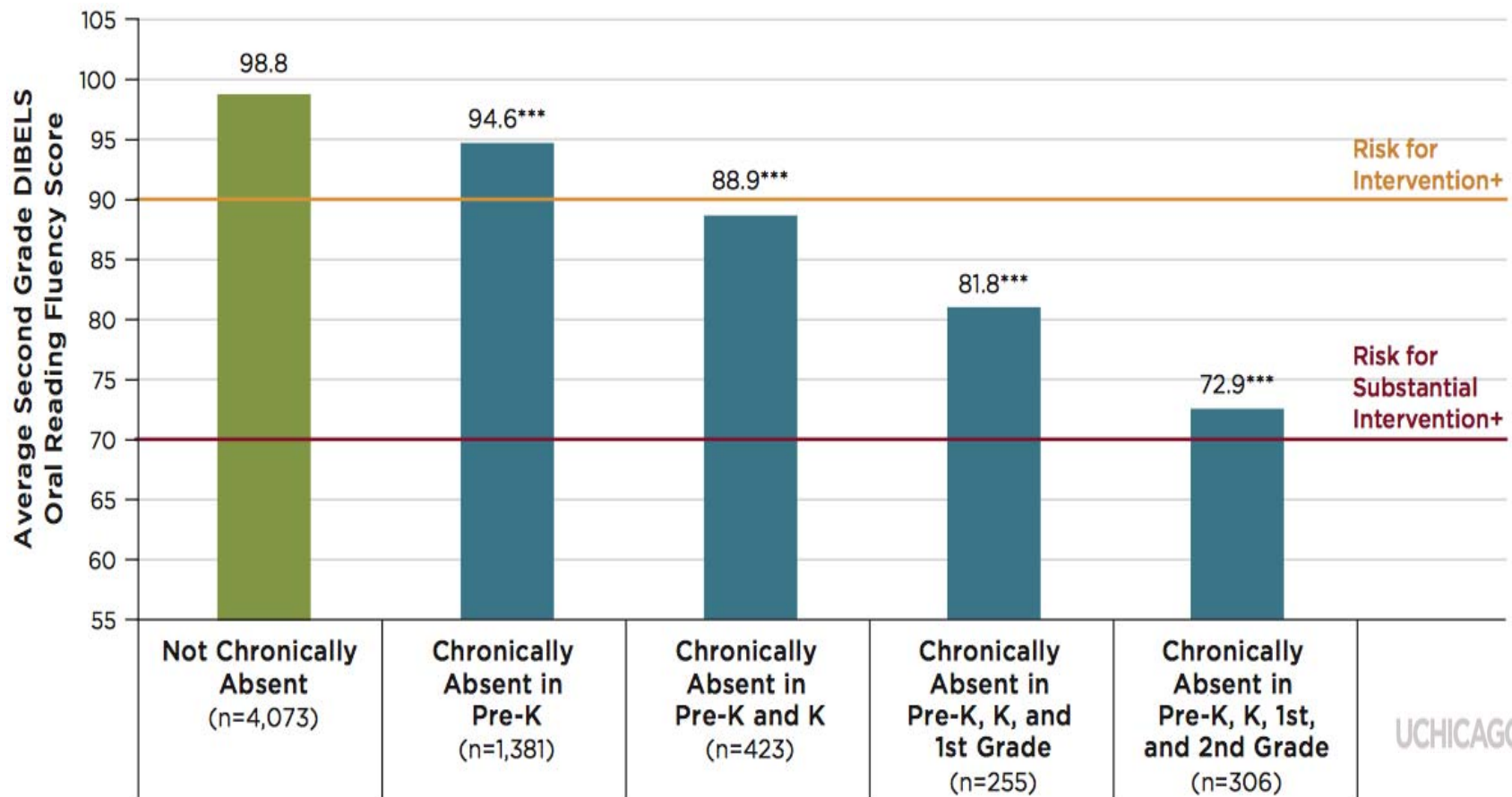


## What does Attendance Matter: From a health perspective

- ✓ **Poor health and undiagnosed conditions can cause too many absences:** Even when absences are excused, missing too much school can lead children to fall behind. Challenges related to poor physical, dental and mental health are leading reasons students miss too much school.
- ✓ **Successful learners are healthier adults:** Showing up to school is essential to higher levels of academic achievement, which are associated with lower incidence of disease and longer lives for adults.
- ✓ **Health providers are uniquely positioned to address chronic absence:** They are especially crucial allies for conveying the importance of avoiding unnecessary absences. They can use their knowledge to identify and develop solutions when health-related barriers are causing significant absences.



## Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Skills



**Note:** \*\*\*Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as "Some Risk," indicating the need for additional intervention and "At Risk," indicating the need for substantial interventions.



## Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long- Term Academic Outcomes

Chronic absence in  
kindergarten

Lower levels of  
literacy in first grade

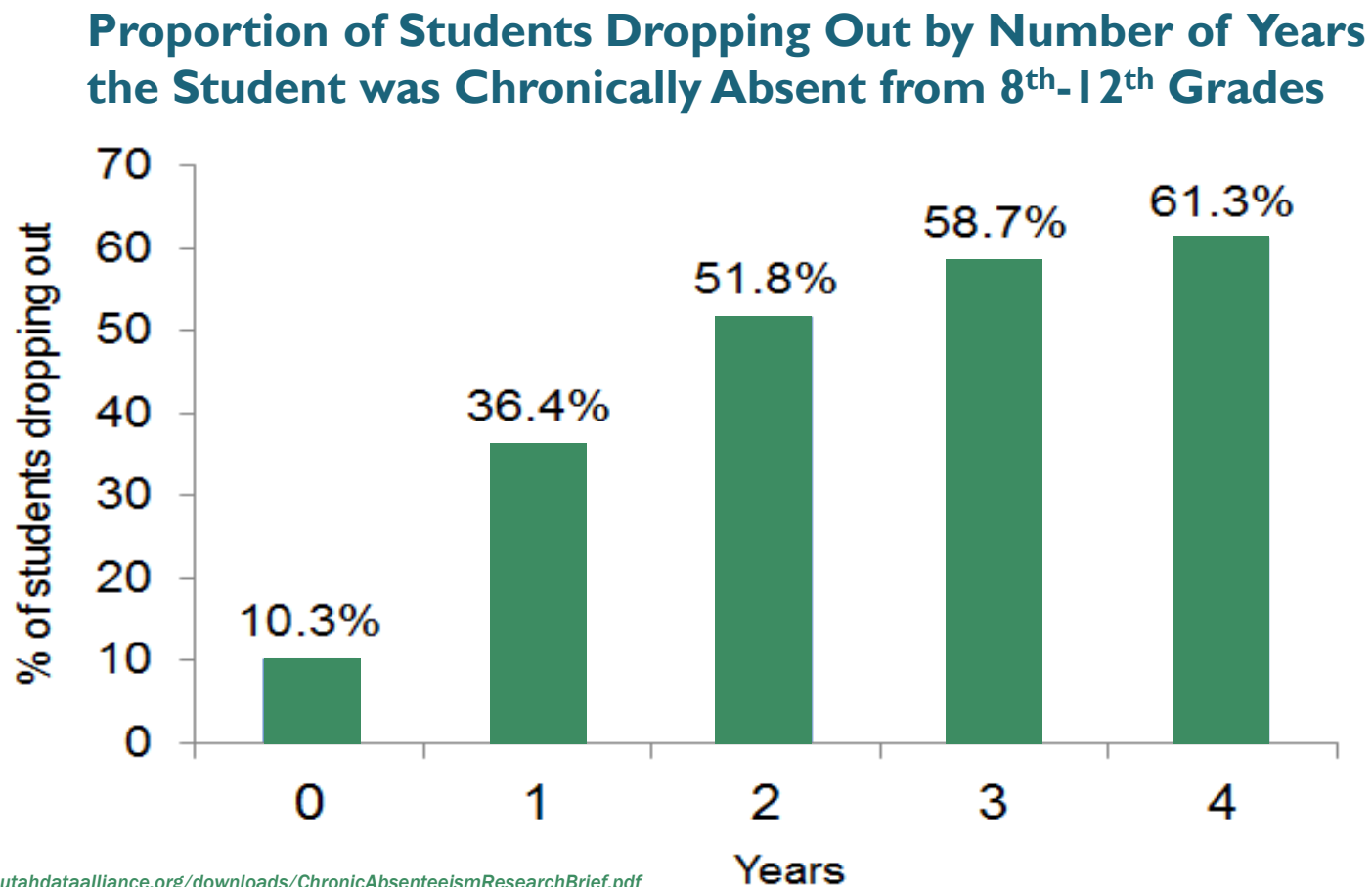
Lower achievement as  
far out as fifth grade

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored **20% lower in reading and math** in later grades and gap grows
- **2X** as likely to be **retained** in grade.
- **2X** likely to be **suspended** by the end of 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent



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





# Missing School Matters

## 1. “Triple Bottom Line” benefit

- Students can’t learn if not in school
- Teachers can’t teach
- Schools funded based on average daily attendance

## 2. Unlike teacher quality, communities can directly and positively impact

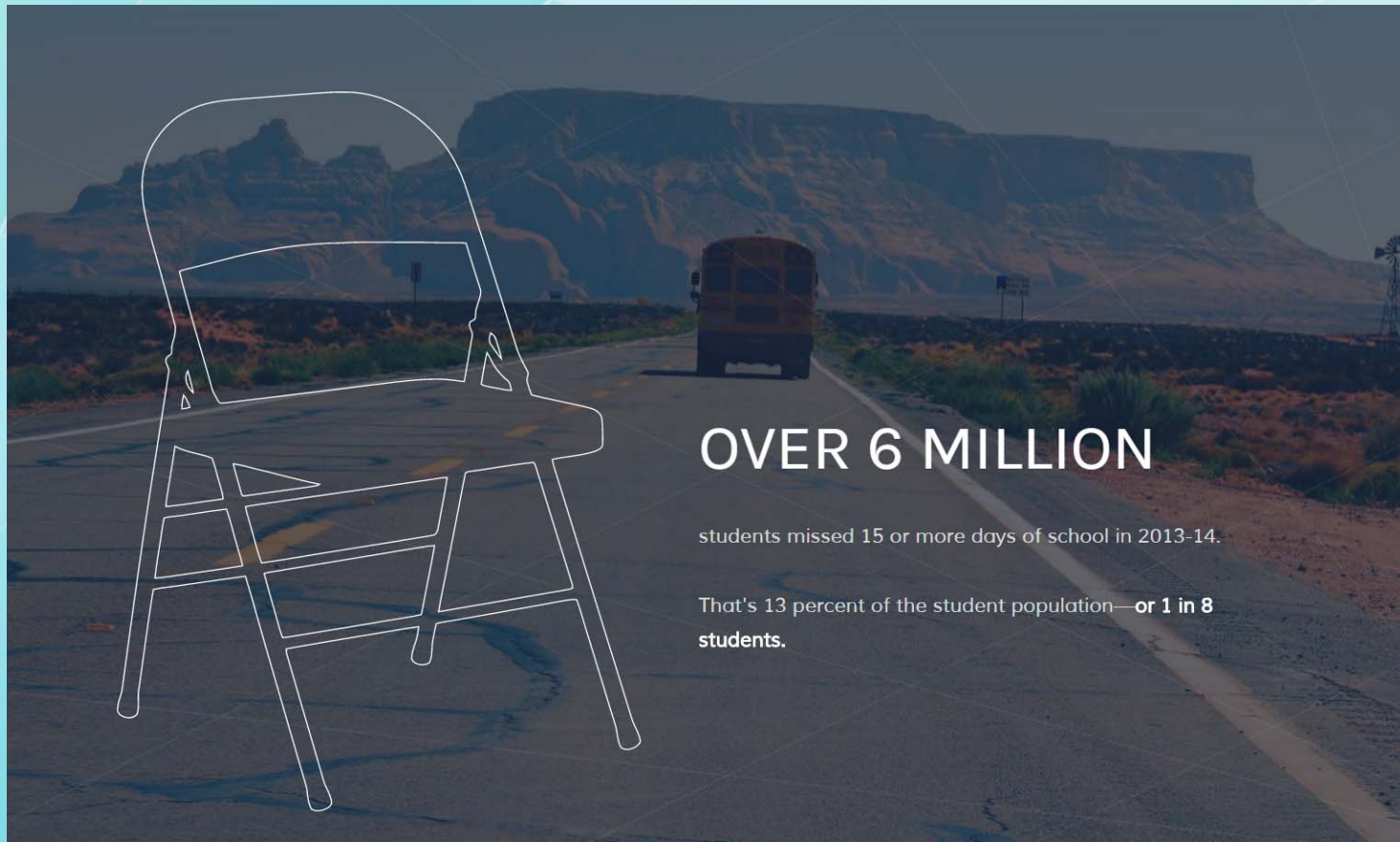
**Chronically absent 9th grade students are**

**10 times**

**more likely to not graduate on time compared to students who miss five or fewer days.**

**What do we know about  
the scope and scale of  
chronic absence?**

# Chronic Absenteeism is a Major National Problem



**OVER 6 MILLION**

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

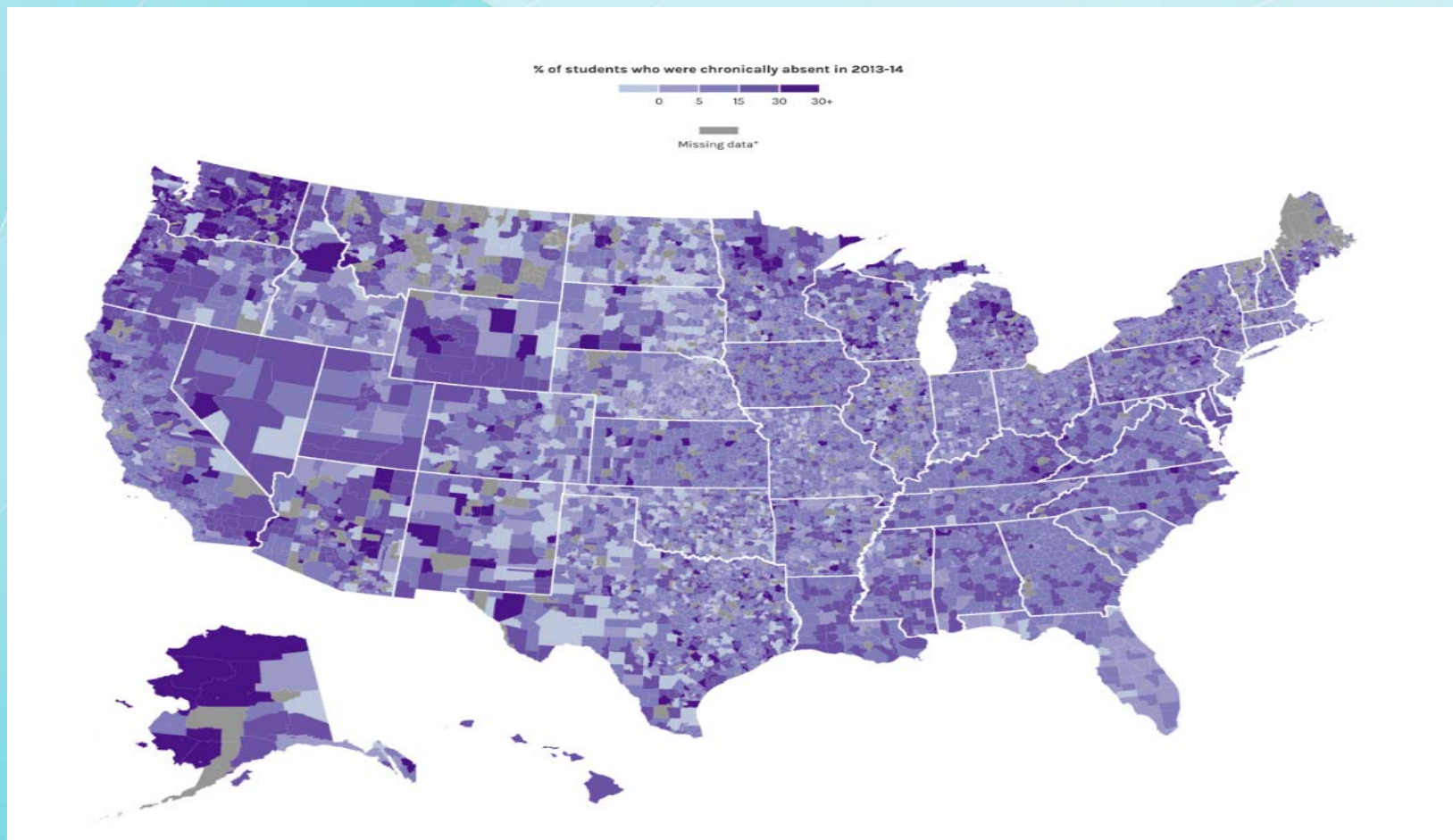
That's 13 percent of the student population—or **1 in 8** students.



**EVERY STUDENT  
EVERY DAY**

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection

<http://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>



EVERY STUDENT  
EVERY DAY



**Additional analysis found chronic absence is both widespread and highly concentrated.**



**Table 1. Where are the Nation's CA Students found, By Quarter and By District? 2013-14**

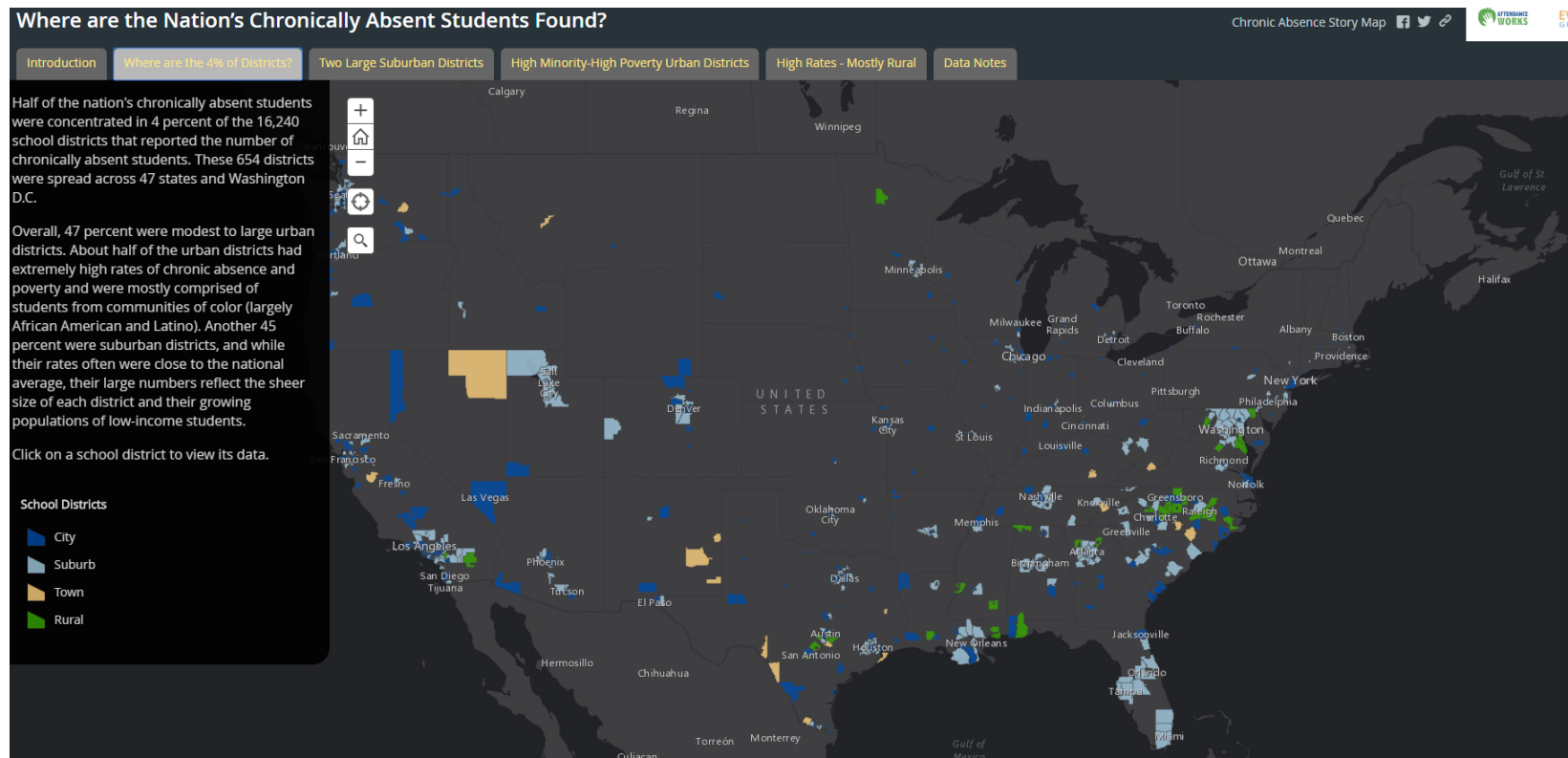
	Total Number of Students Chronically Absent (CA)	Number of Districts	Average Number of Students CA	Min Number Students CA	Max number of Students CA	Percent of All Districts
ALL	6,472,466	16,240	399	0	72,376	100
1st Quarter	1,618,012	13,943 *	116	0	587	86
2nd Quarter	1,617,319	1,642	985	587	1,805	10
3rd Quarter	1,618,036	530	3,053	1,806	5,729	3
4th Quarter	1,619,079	124	13,057	5,817	72,376	1

*\* Includes 1, 798 districts reporting 0 chronically absent students*



**Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.**

**These included 2 types of districts: relative affluent, large which still have a large number of students in poverty and high poverty, racially segregated urban districts with high rates of chronic absence**

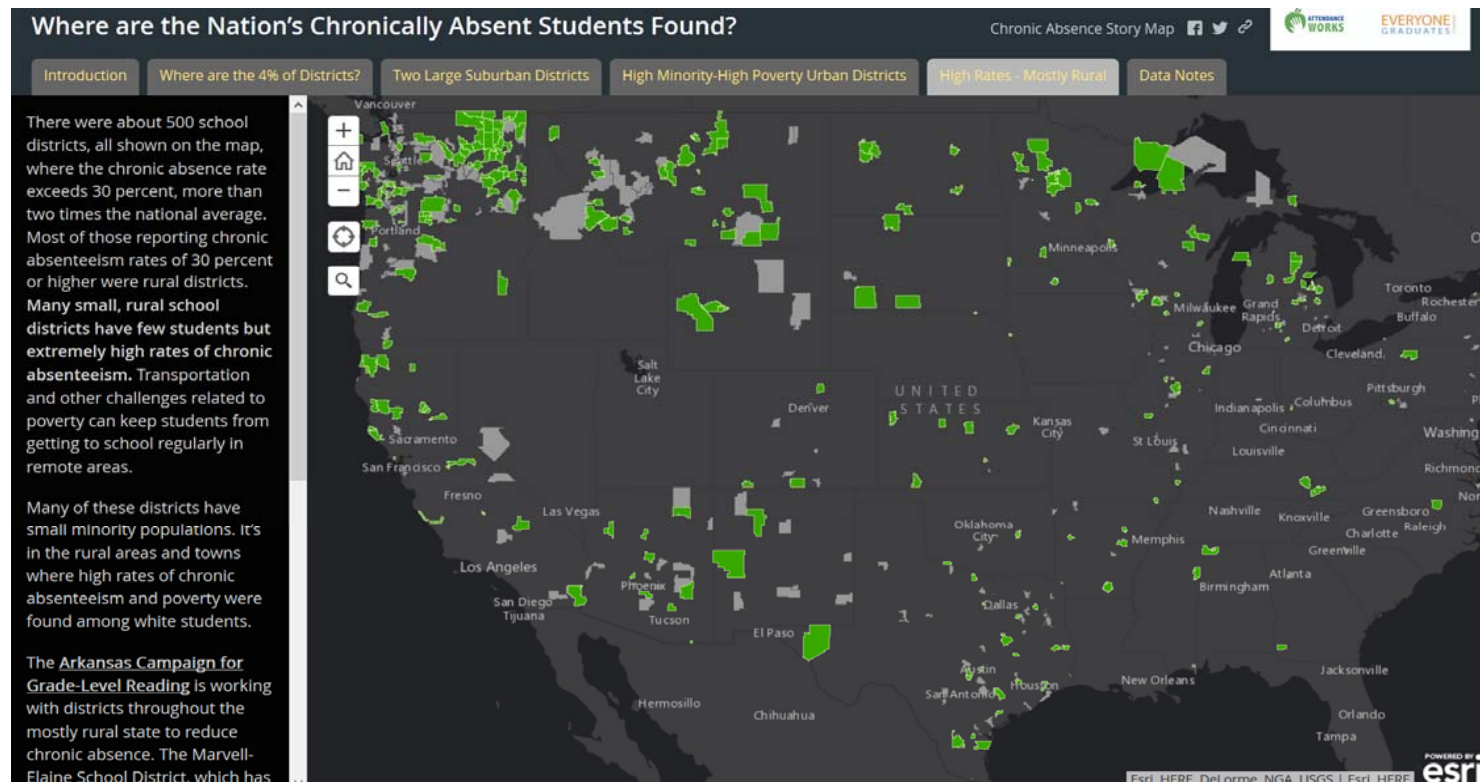


See Chronic Absence Story Map at <http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ>



## What about rural communities?

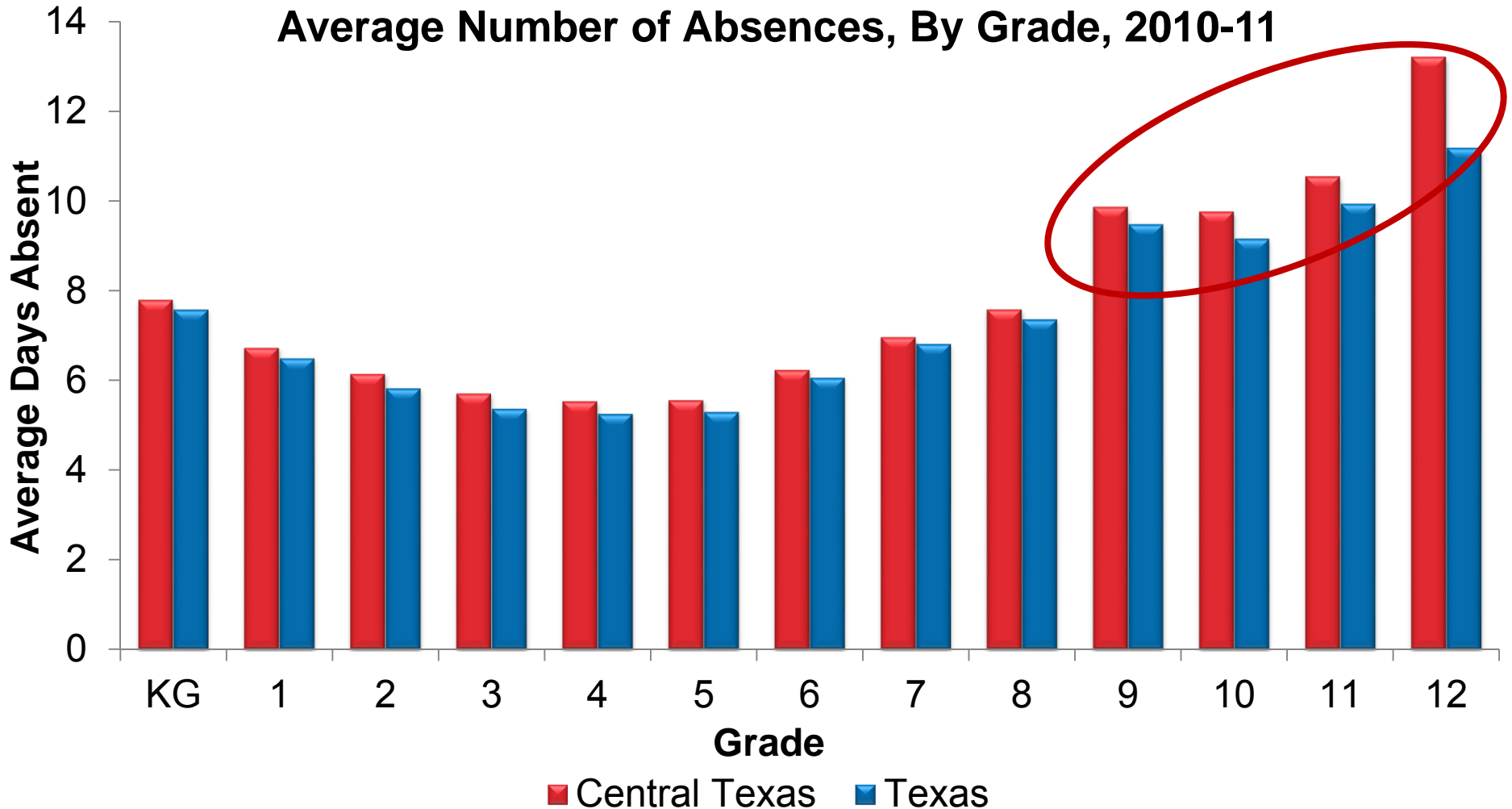
Many small, poor rural school districts have few students but face high rates of chronic absenteeism.



See Chronic Absence Story Map at <http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ>

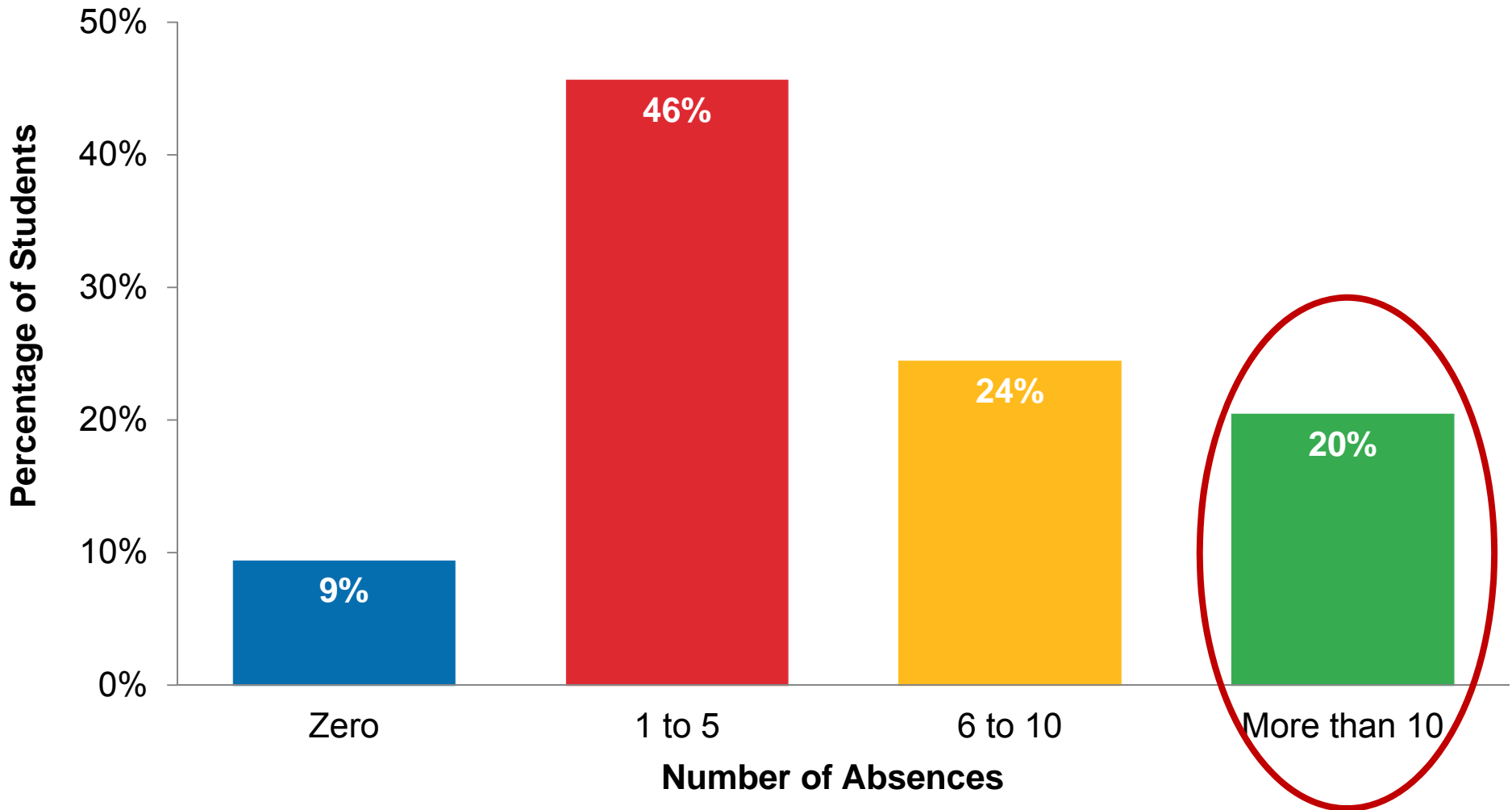


# Central Texas Has More Absences Than Texas on Average at Every Grade



# One Fifth of All Students Miss More Than 2 Weeks of School

Percent of K-12 Students by Number of Absences,  
Central Texas, 2012-13



# How Can We Address Chronic Absence?





## Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

### Myths

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

### Barriers

- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor Transportation
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Homelessness

### Aversion

- Child struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### Disengagement

- Lack of engaging and relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school
- Poor school climate



## Leading Health Related Causes

### Asthma

Nearly one in ten children age 4-14 are diagnosed with asthma accounting for one-third of all days of missed instruction.

### Oral Health

Children miss nearly two million school days due to oral health issues every year.



## Health Interventions

### Asthma

- Asthma friendly schools
- Environmental assessments
- Asthma friendly homes

### Oral Health

- Community-based oral health programs
- School-based sealant programs
- Mobile clinics

### Nutrition

- Community eligibility
- Universal breakfast
- Food backpack programs
- Farm to school programs

### Bullying

- Safe Routes to Schools
- Bullying education programs
- Support groups

### Mental Health

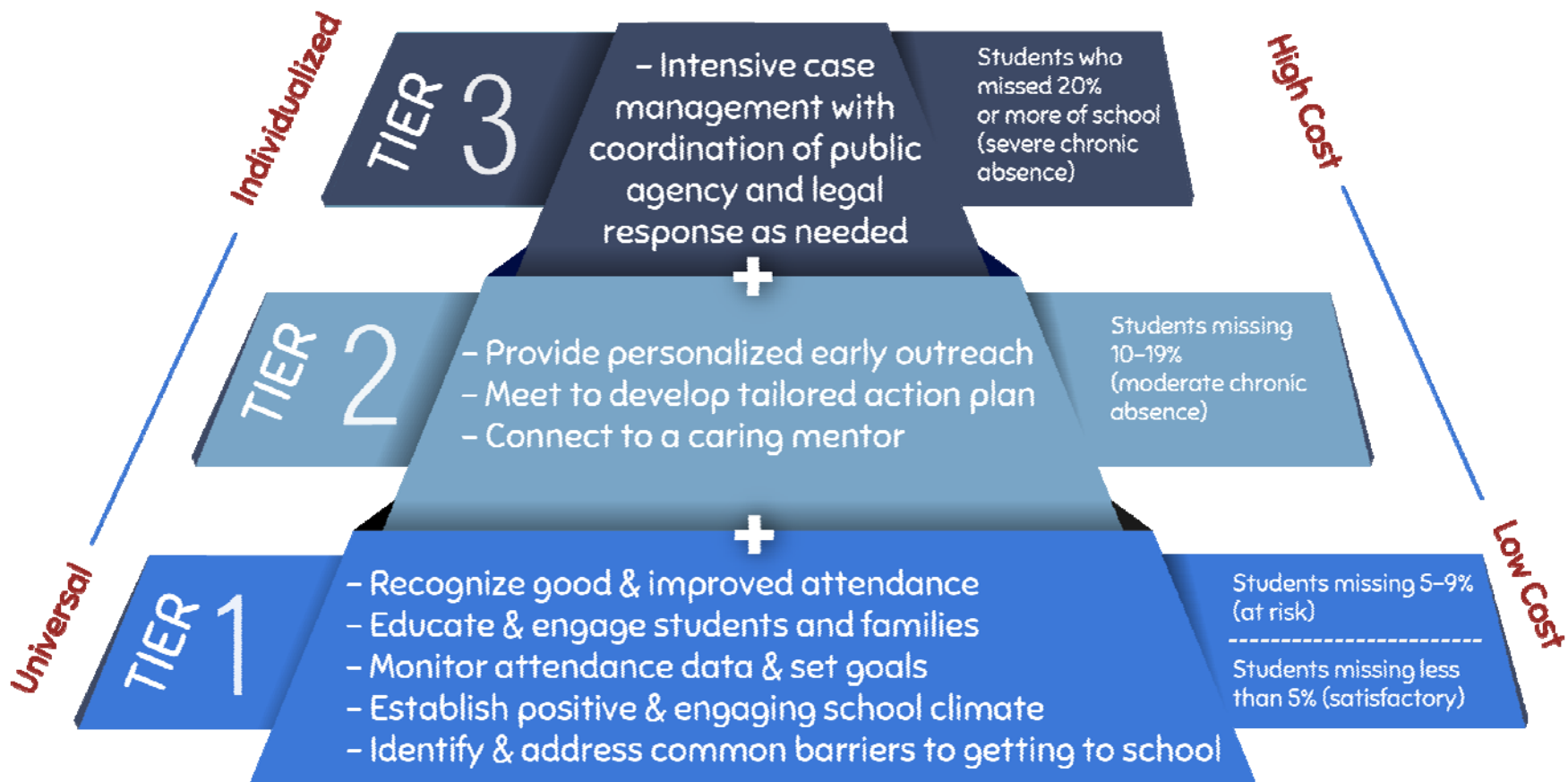
- School-based mental health programs
- Universal interventions
- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

### Vision

- School-based vision screening programs



## Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention





## Missing School Matters

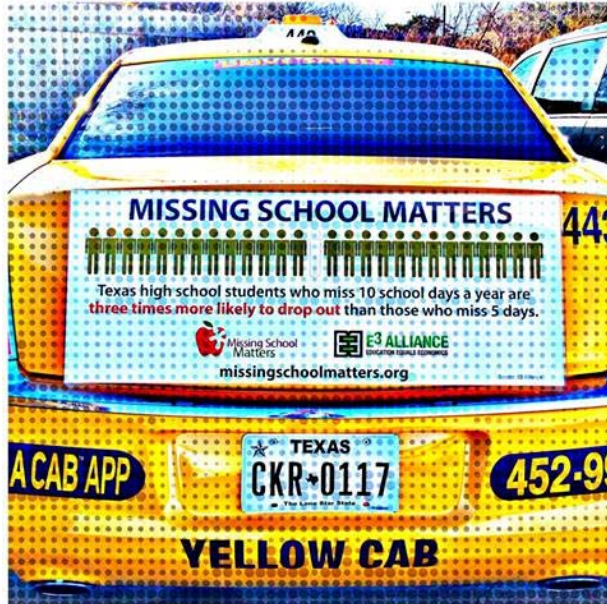
A regional public awareness campaign  
Our goal: increase student attendance by 2  
percentage points (average 3 days/student)

**MORE  
STUDENTS  
ACHIEVE**

**\$ 34  
MILLION**



# Yellow Cab helping to Curb Absences in CTX



## In this Season of Giving...

- ✓ **Give students the chance to learn**  
*Only miss school on scheduled school holidays.*
- ✓ **Give teachers the chance to teach**  
*Teachers can't teach effectively when they are "catching up" students who miss extra days.*
- ✓ **Give school districts needed dollars**  
*Every day missed costs schools money that could support more teachers, sports programs and electives.*

### Plan family vacations only during school holidays.

- Students in Central Texas miss MORE days of school than their peers in Texas in ALL grades.
- The problem is worse in high school!
- Over half of the absences in Central Texas are potentially preventable (including routine medical, dental check-ups, traveling or just skipping school).

### Central Texas school districts save millions of dollars when students are in school.

- Each day a student misses costs the school about \$38.
- Absences add up quickly: a typical high school in Central Texas can lose \$20,000 a week due to student absences.
- Our schools are losing over \$91 million a year due to student absences.

### Wrap up the year right!

- Let's give our students the gift of education and keep them in class during school days in November and December!
- Over the past two years Central Texas has saved \$12 million in revenue for schools by reducing absences. Let's do our part to continue this positive trend this season of giving!



[www.missingschoolmatters.org](http://www.missingschoolmatters.org)

## En esta época de bondad...

- ✓ **Dé a los estudiantes la oportunidad de aprender**  
*Solo falte a clases los días festivos escolares programados.*
- ✓ **Dé a los maestros la oportunidad de enseñar**  
*Los maestros no pueden enseñar debidamente cuando tienen que poner al corriente a los estudiantes que faltaron en días regulares.*
- ✓ **Dé a los distritos escolares los dólares que tanto necesitan**  
*Cada día de ausencia, la escuela pierde dinero que podría usar para proporcionar más maestros, programas deportivos y clases optativas.*

### Planee las vacaciones familiares solamente durante los días festivos escolares.

- Los estudiantes en el Centro de Texas faltan a clases MÁS días que sus compañeros en el resto del estado en TODOS los grados.
- El problema es peor en la preparatoria.
- Más de la mitad de las faltas en el Centro de Texas se pueden evitar, incluyendo las faltas debido a exámenes de rutina médicos y dentales, viajes, o simplemente las faltas sin justificación.

### Los distritos escolares del Centro de Texas ahorran millones de dólares cuando los estudiantes asisten a clases.

- Cada día que su hijo falta, le cuesta a la escuela \$38.
- Las ausencias se acumulan rápidamente. Una preparatoria típica del Centro de Texas puede perder \$20,000 a la semana debido a las faltas de los estudiantes.
- Nuestras escuelas están perdiendo más de \$91 millones al año debido a las faltas de los estudiantes.

### ¡Termine bien el año!

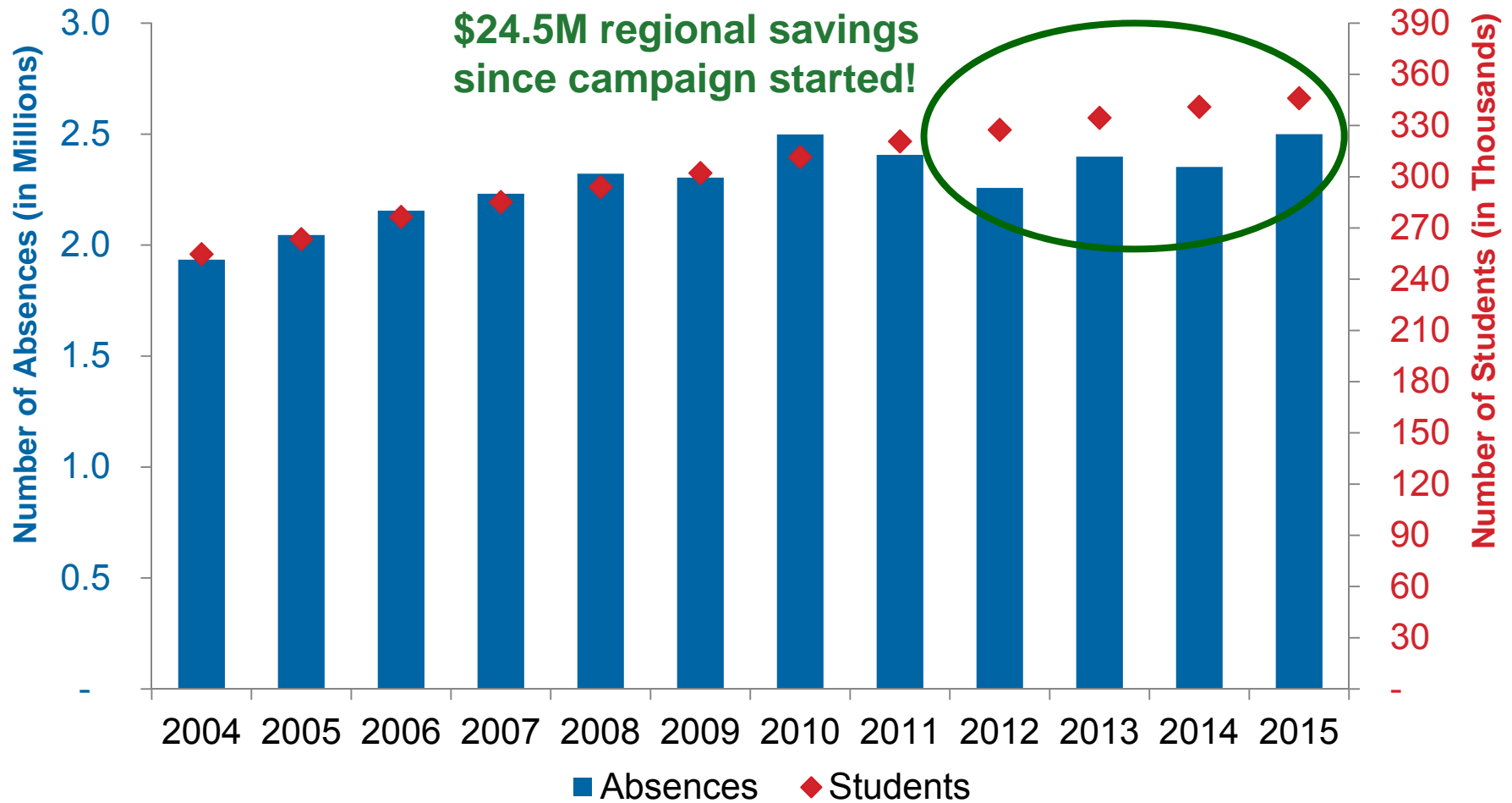
- Démosles el regalo de la educación a nuestros estudiantes procurando que asistan a clases durante los días escolares en noviembre y diciembre.
- En los últimos dos años, el Centro de Texas ha ahorrado \$12 millones en ingresos para las escuelas al reducir las ausencias. Hagamos nuestra parte para que continuemos la tendencia positiva esta época de bondad.



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 **Missing School Matters** **is Working!**

**Student and Absence Counts, Central Texas**



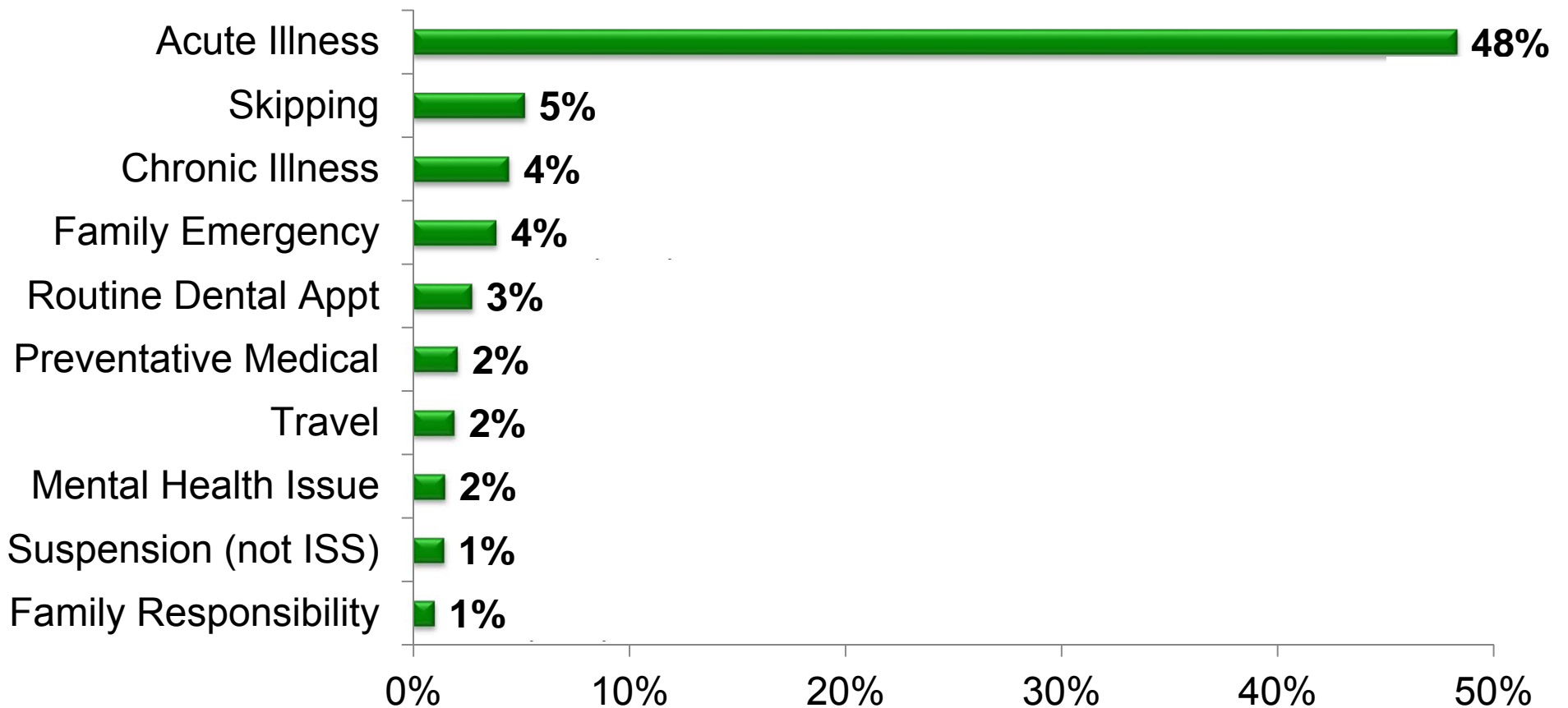
Source: E3 analysis of PEIMS data at UT Austin Education Research Center for 2002-2013; TEA ad hoc request for 2014

## Absence Reasons Study

- **Which** students miss school, **where** and **why**?
- ✓ First of its kind study in Texas (maybe US?)
- ✓ Data to drive regional decision-making
  - How community systems interact with student attendance and achievement
- ✓ Collected, analyzed and mapped **detailed** student attendance data representative sample schools

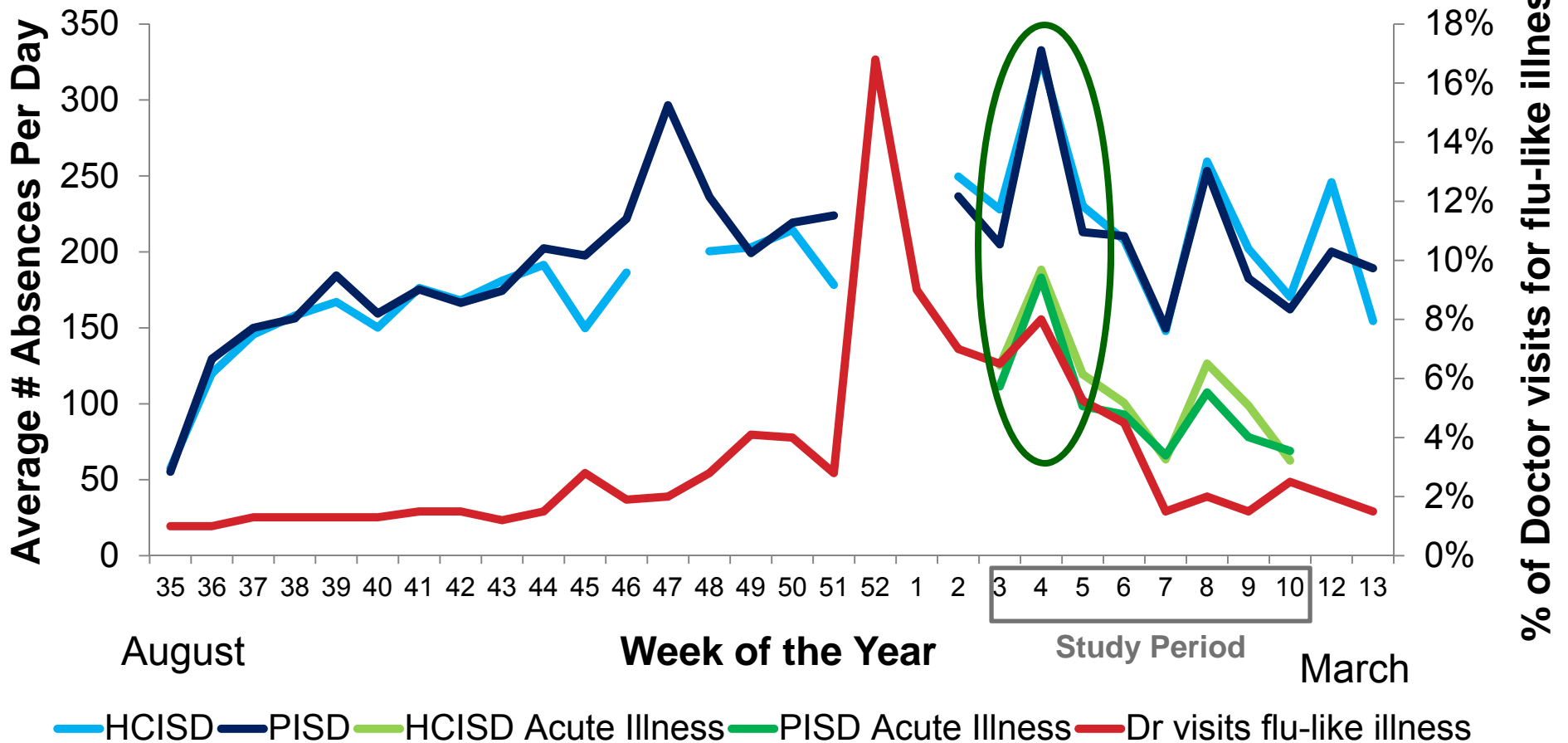
## What Did We Find?

### % of Absences by Absence Reason



# Secondary 'Flu' Peak Matches Acute Illness Absences

Absences By Week August – March for 2012-13



Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD August 2012 through March 2013  
Influenza-Like Illness doctor visit data from Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services

## Flu Immunization Campaign

- Fall 2014: Over 6500 vaccines provided at no cost to districts or families in 56 elementary schools – **largest in-school immunization campaign in state history!**
- Fall 2015: Almost 20,000 vaccines in 136 schools, 9 districts
- Gearing up for 2016: 14 districts, 350+ schools
  - **Expanding to Houston area**
  - **Planning 75,000 vaccines!**
  - **Moving to fully sustainable model**

# Reducing Chronic Absence Requires A Multi-Sector Responses

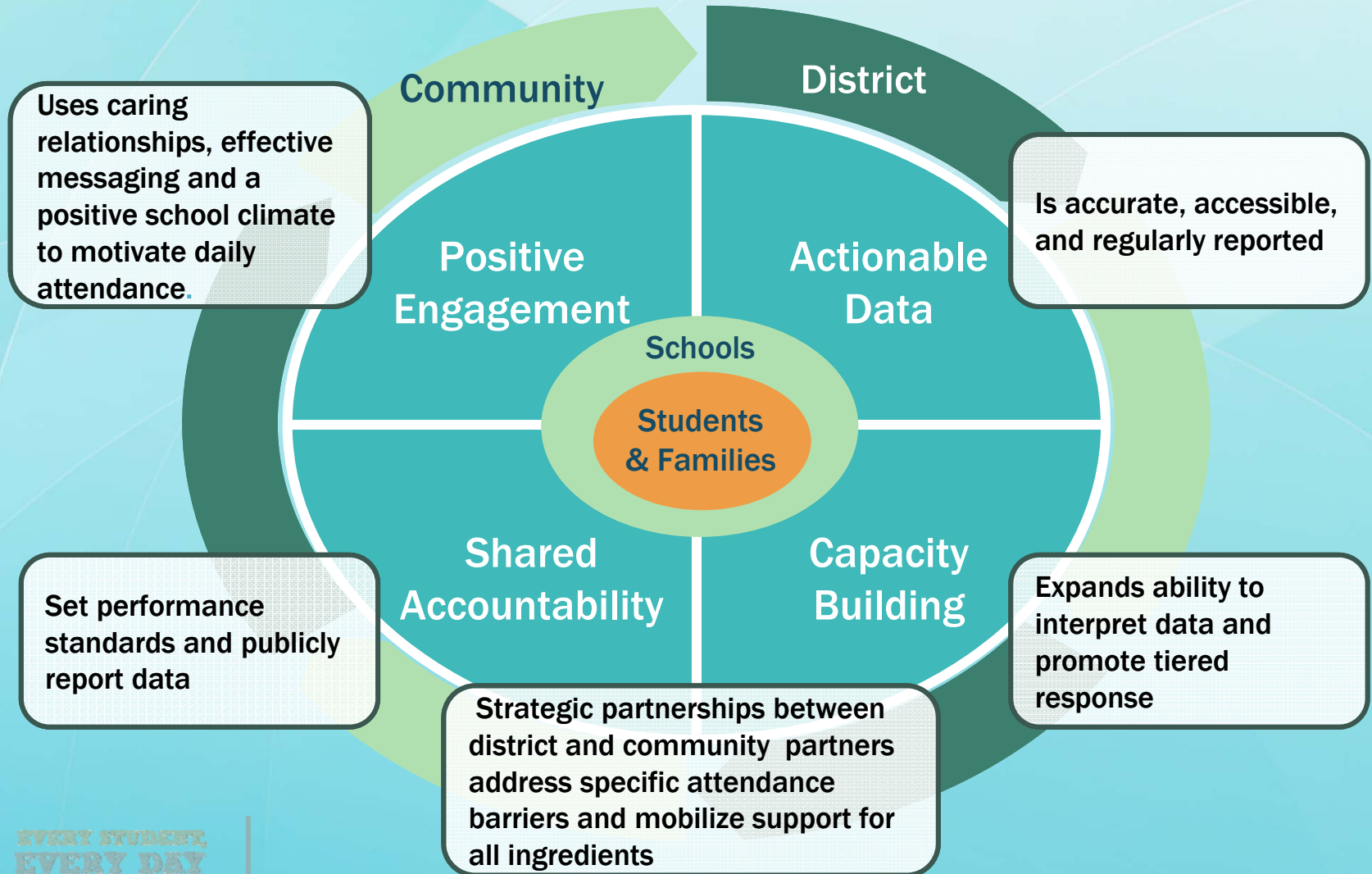
## Promising examples include:

- Every Student, Every Day “Dear Colleague” letter from four Cabinet Secretaries sent to Chief State School Officers.
- Schools and health providers work together to address chronic illness and un-met health needs that keep kids from attending schools through data sharing, co-location, school based health clinics, mobile health and dentistry vans etc. (Models throughout the USA)
- Courts adopt a prevention/problem solving vs punitive approach to reducing truancy (i.e. San Antonio, TX and Alameda County, CA)
- Homeless shelters (NYC) and housing authorities (Sarasota, FL and San Francisco, CA) share attendance data and work together to offer supports for getting to school.





# Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability



# Reducing Chronic Absence Requires Strategic Data Analysis to Tailor Response to Identified Need

- **At the District Level:** is there a need for a community-wide response or targeted efforts in a sub-set of schools?
- **At the School Level:** how many students are chronically absent?
- **If it's 30 or less,** a student support team can lead the effort.
- **If it's closer to 50 ,** teachers will need to play a critical role.
- **If it's over 70,** community partners will likely be needed to provide additional person power



# What's the role of funders in addressing chronic absence?

## Direct Service Provider



9 Mobile Dental Vans, 50+ FT Staff

## Regional Funder

\$60 M in five counties

Avg. grant size = \$400 K

60+ grant partners



## HYBRID ORGANIZATION

- Serving 6 school districts
- 65 schools annually
- Focus on Title I Schools

- Grant funding (including school-based health services)

# Potential Funder Roles

Lead

School-Based Health Services

Leverage

Research & Data

Partner

Convene Health & Education

# Questions?



- More webinars on this topic?
- New topics you want to tackle or learn more about?
- Innovative work that you want to share?
- A question you want to pose to your colleagues?

Contact us at [childrenfamilies@gih.org](mailto:childrenfamilies@gih.org)