

LINC Commission Meeting

October 19, 2015



LINC Coordinators Darryl Bush and Heidi Andre help load boxes of books to be delivered to local students. (Below) Jennifer Stone Manuleleua, LINC Coordinator at Fairmount, Mallinson, and Sugar Creek Elementary in the Independence School District, picks up hundreds of free books to take back to students.



LINC
Local Investment Commission

Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, Oct. 19, 2015 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Announcements**
- II. Approvals**
 - a. September minutes (motion)**
- III. Superintendents' Reports**
- IV. Kansas City Student Mobility**
 - a. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight**
- V. LINC Data System Update**
 - a. Oscar Tshibanda**
- VI. Updates**
 - a. First Book Kansas City Distribution**
 - b. Choice Neighborhood federal grant**
 - c. Lights on After School events**
- VII. Adjournment**



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – SEPT. 21, 2015

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Co-chair **Bailus Tate** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Sharon Cheers
Jack Craft
Steve Dunn
Herb Freeman
SuEllen Fried

Tom Gerke
Rosemary Lowe
Richard Morris
Landon Rowland
David Ross

Superintendents' Report

- **Sharon Nibbelink** (Supt., Center School District) reported the school year is off to a good start with an increase in student enrollment. The district is building partnerships with other groups to provide professional development for teachers.
- **Jason Snodgrass** (Supt., Fort Osage School District) introduced himself as the new district superintendent. He reported that 238 families and 68 vendors attended Fort Family Fun Day, which LINC helped to organize; 289 students attended LINC summer camp.
- **Ralph Teran** (Supt. Grandview School District) reported the district is partnering with Longview Community College and Grandview Police Department to enhance student relationships with the police department.
- **Carl Skinner** (Deputy Supt., Hickman Mills School District) reported that the new STEAM initiative at Symington Elementary is underway. Next week the district will hold Parent University with the support of LINC.
- **John Tramel** (Director of Family Services, Independence School District) reported the high school learning academy initiative is providing teachers externships with businesses to enhance student learning. Truman High School will hold its first homecoming game since 1965 on the newly renovated football field.
- **Al Tunis** (Interim Supt., Kansas City Public Schools) reported district enrollment is up 2%, and 4% when pre-K is included. The district is working on a three-year academic plan. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently visited Woodland Early Learning Community School to speak about the importance of investing in early childhood education; a LINC produced video on the visit was shown.
- **Kevin Foster** (Executive Director, Genesis Promise Academy) reported the school is working to increase the student return-to-school rate to 90% by communicating to families the importance of sticking to the program. Genesis will participate in an Oct. 3 community-wide anti-bullying campaign with U.S. Wrestling League.
- **Gayden Carruth** (Executive Director, Cooperating School Districts of Greater Kansas City) reported the 2015-2016 cohort of Education Policy Fellowship Program met for a reception last week at Drumm Farm Center for Children and for a discussion of the “myth of a culture of poverty” and leadership.

A motion to approve the July 20, 2015, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Jo Nemeth, Director of Elementary Education, Kansas City Public Schools, gave a presentation on the KCPS 2015 Summer School program. LINC was one of several community partners who offered an all-day summer school program at district elementary schools. The report included student participation, attendance monitoring, learning growth data, comparison to the previous year summer program, and proposed enhancements to next year's program. Discussion followed.

A video was shown on the Missouri Budget Project, which provides an independent nonpartisan voice on public policy. **Amy Blouin**, Executive Director, Missouri Budget Project, gave a presentation on financing of Missouri subsidized child care. Topics included numbers of children receiving subsidized care, eligibility levels, subsidy vs. market rate, provider wage income, and decreasing state revenue. Policy Director **Mike Sutherland** presented a proposal to earmark for childcare the revenues raised by streamlining Missouri's sales tax and use tax.

Oscar Tshibanda, Tshibanda and Associates, gave a progress report on the new Apricot data system including implementation by various LINC initiatives, the Independence School District, Office of Early Childhood, and FACT, and its connections to external data systems such as Independence's PowerSchool system. Jeff Phillips, Senior Manager, gave a demonstration of the system. Discussion followed.

Carl Skinner, Deputy Superintendent, introduced a video of the Hickman Mills School District's "It's on Me" customer service initiative and reported on the effort to recognize staff who go beyond expectations in providing service.

LINC Deputy Director-Community Engagement **Brent Schondelmeyer** and Turn the Page KC Executive **Mike English** reported that volunteers are currently helping to distribute 570,000 books to organizations who requested them from First Book. A video on the initiative was shown.

Scott Lakin of Lakin Consulting reported on a Healthy KC initiative to change area city ordinances so that the age of legal access to tobacco products will be raised from 18 to 21. The report included the effect of such a change on the rate of initiation to tobacco youth among young people.

The meeting was adjourned.

- **Patterns of Mobility by Area**
 - By Schools, rather than just as a district dynamic
 - Central City and Tier 2 Districts have proportionally higher numbers of mobile students

- **Patterns of Mobility Timing**
 - September, October and even November have high numbers of transfers, in addition to the high numbers that are expected in the months of August and January at semester changes
 - 1.25 transfers during year to every 1 transfer in the summer

- What is the **likelihood of a student having one or more transfers** during academic year? (With demographic factors of ethnicity, ELL, homelessness and poverty level considered simultaneously.)
 - Asian students 33% less likely to transfer than white students
 - Black students 17% more likely to transfer than white students
 - Hispanic students 11% less likely to transfer than white students
 - Other students of color 40% more likely to transfer than white students
 - Homeless students 200% more likely to transfer than non-homeless
 - English language learners 5% more likely to transfer than non-ELL
 - Students in a zip code with 10% higher poverty 14% more likely to transfer

- **Attendance**
 - 4.5% lower attendance rate
 - Average missing 4 days between each transfer with 10% missing 12 or more days each move

- **Indications of Chronic Mobility** – What are cumulative effects?
 - Students who changed schools in 2013 were 3 times more likely to have changed schools in 2015

- **Achievement**
 - Only 60% as likely to be proficient in Communication Arts
 - Only 62% as likely to be proficient in Math

The Kansas City Area Education Research Consortium thanks the following for making this research project possible:

- Local Missouri School Districts (especially their Leaders, Boards of Education and Staff who agreed to share data and collaborated on this work): **Center, Grandview, Hickman Mills, Independence, Kansas City, Kearney, Liberty, North Kansas City, Park Hill, and Raytown.**
- **The Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education**
- **Mayor Sly James and Julie Holland**
- **The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation**

Student Mobility in the Kansas City Area

Results of Research Presented by
Dr. Leigh Anne Taylor Knight
Pat Oslund & KC-AERC Staff
with guidance of Dr. Donna Ginther & Dr. Mark Ehlert

Kansas City GradNation Summit:
*Building a Citywide plan to improve school
attendance for students from highly mobile families*
September 1, 2015

1



Outline of Today

- Definition of Mobility
- Data Sources
- Analyses
 - School Level Measures of Student Mobility
 - Geographic and Temporal Mobility Patterns
 - Individual Student Measures of Mobility
 - Mobility and Student Demographics
 - Relationship of Mobility to Attendance and Achievement

2



Where are we today?

- Research & Findings = Preliminary
- Data
 - Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)
 - Partnering Local School Districts

*Student Mobility is a complex issue –
Baseline to Benchmark*

3



Definition of Mobility

- Mobility: non-routine movements of students between schools, either intra- or inter-district, that are not due to grade promotion or changed school boundaries.
 - “Transfers In” or “Transfers Out” in MO DESE Core Data
 - Others, such as suspensions and drop outs, not included

4



Data Sources



- Missouri DESE
 - Summary Transfer Data for Public Schools in Jackson County
 - De-identified Enrollment & Attendance Records
 - All public school students, which includes charter students
 - 3 counties: Clay, Jackson, and Platte
 - Includes Exit Codes, which help determine reason for/type of transfer
- Local districts
 - De-identified student level enrollment, attendance, and performance, including some demographic
 - Sample size was more than 161,000 students

5



How does one use the data?



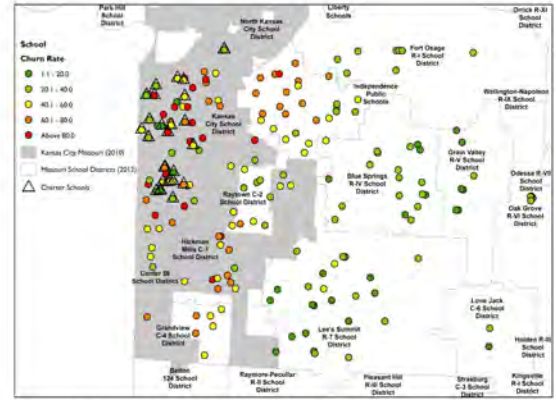
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What do the DESE aggregate data tell us about school-level mobility?

- Definition of School-Level Mobility:
 - $(\text{TRANSFERS IN} + \text{TRANSFERS OUT})$
(SEPT. Enrollment)
- Also called “churn rate.”
- Most common mobility measure found in the literature.

Data Source: MO Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

7



8

What can we learn from individual level data?

- Pattern of mobility FROM schools and TO schools
 - Including exit codes for reason for/type of transfer
- Distinguish WHEN transfers occur
 - during the school year (by month)
 - over the summer
- Calculate how many students have 0, 1, 2, 3+ transfers during a year
- Identify the districts (and schools) where highly mobile students are enrolled

In theory, we could examine the effect of mobility over several years, although not done for this project.

9



Kansas City Area Student Mobility

Summer Transfers 2015

FROM:	TO:				Total
	Charter	Another Metro District	Same Metro District	Other	
Charter	507	537	0	118	1,162
Metro District	881	4,373	2,484	4,924	12,662
Other	343	5,525	0	N/A	5,868
Total # transfers	1,731	10,435	2,484	5,042	19,692

During School Year Transfers 2015

FROM:	TO:				Total
	Charter	Another Metro District	Same Metro District	Other	
Charter	77	440	0	471	988
Metro District	252	4516	3343	6734	14,845
Other	490	8274	0	N/A	8,764
Total # transfers	819	13,230	3,343	7,205	24,597

Data Source: MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

10

Kansas City Area Student Mobility

Summer Transfers 2015

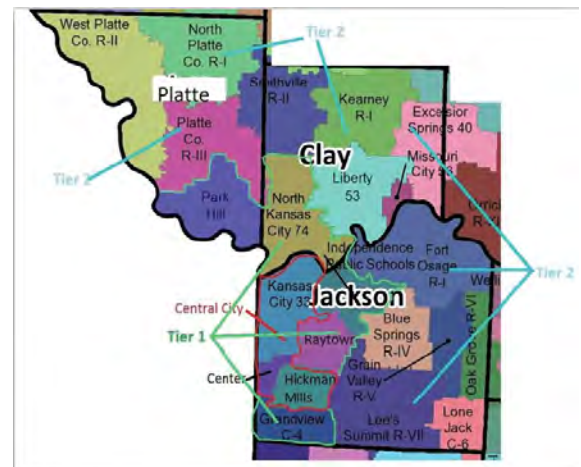
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FROM:	TO:				Total
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Charter	8,628	77	440	0	471
Metro District	252	4516	3343	6734	14,845
Other	490	8274	0	N/A	8,764
Total # transfers	819	13,230	3,343	7,205	24,597

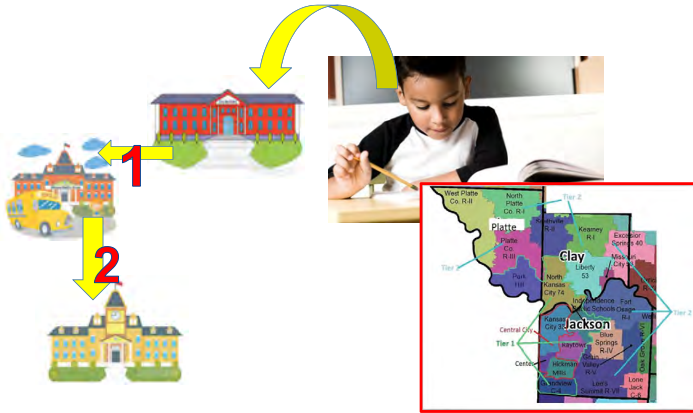
Data Source: MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

11



12

Individual Student Mobility



13

Individual Student Mobility

- More than 1 in 5 students (22.7%) – 36,799 students in 2015
- More than 6,350 students changed schools 2 or more times



14

Individual Mobility by Area

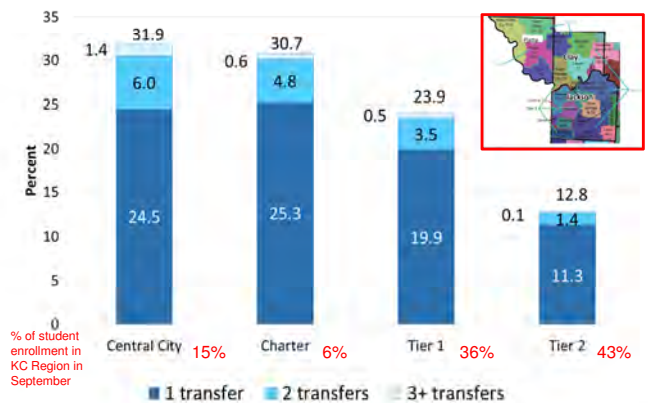
Number and % of Students with 0, 1, 2, 3+ Transfers 2015

KC Area	0	1	2	3+	# students "served"	Sep 2015 enroll (for in districts reference)
Central City	19,300	6,932	1,698	389	28,319	24,089
Charter	7,599	2,772	530	69	10,970	10,118
Tier 1	48,075	12,600	2,241	342	63,258	57,940
Tier 2	63,071	8,136	988	102	72,297	69,463
Total	138,045	30,440	5,457	902	174,844	161,610

Students in area as % of all students in category	0	1	2	3+	Total %
Central City	14.0%	22.8%	31.1%	43.1%	14.9%
Charter	5.5%	9.1%	9.7%	7.6%	6.3%
Tier 1	34.8%	41.4%	41.1%	37.9%	35.9%
Tier 2	45.7%	26.7%	18.1%	11.3%	43.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Data Source: MO DESE

Students with 1, 2, and 3+ Transfers in Year As % of Students with Last Enrollment in District



16

Mobility and Attendance

Data Source: Local KC School Districts During School Year 2014



- 4.5% lower attendance rate
- Instructional Days Missed between schools
 - Average = 4 days
 - 1 of 2 students miss 0, 1 or 2 days
 - 25% miss 6 or more days with 10% missing 12 or more days and 5% missing 16 or more

17

Mobility and Attendance

Data Source: MO DESE



Changed schools in 2013 = 3 times more likely to have changed schools in 2015

What are the cumulative effects of such mobility for individual students?
What is the impact of mobility across grade levels?

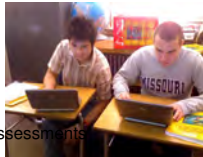
18

Mobility and Achievement

Data Source: Local KC School Districts

Controlling for ethnicity, homelessness, neighborhood poverty and English Language Learner status ...

A student who has a transfer (1 or more) is only 60% as likely to be proficient in Communication Arts as a student who does not have a transfer.



Missouri Standardized Assessments
Grades 3-8 in 2015

A student who has a transfer (1 or more) is _____ as a student who does not have a transfer.

19

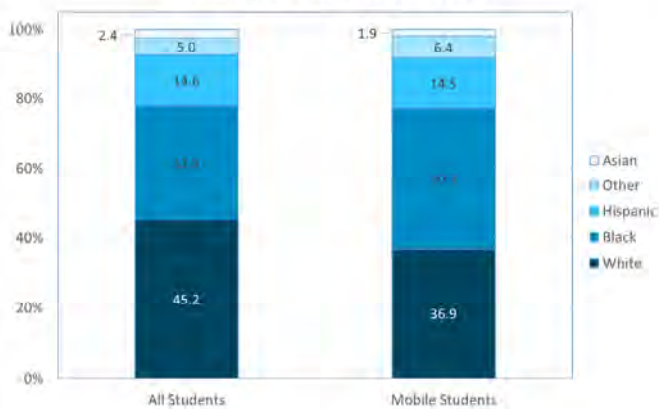
Demographics and Mobility: Ethnicity

Data Source: Local KC School Districts

Demographics and Mobility for 8 Selected Districts			
2014			
	Base # of Students	# Mobil Students (School Year)	% Mobile
Total	91,352	13,884	15.2
Ethnicity			
Asian	2,195	262	11.9
Black/African American	30,026	5,595	18.6
Hispanic	13,350	2,014	15.1
American Indian/Native American	415	77	18.6
Multi-racial	3,684	733	19.9
Pacific islander/Native Hawaiian	423	79	18.7
White	41,259	5,124	12.4

20

Demographics of All Students Compared with Mobile Students



21

Demographics and Mobility: Other Factors

Data Source: Local KC School Districts

	Base # of Students	# Mobil Students (Schl Year)	% Mobile
Other Demographics			
Homeless	3,365	1,273	37.8
English Language Learner	8,840	1,482	16.8
Poverty			
Total students with poverty information	69,021	11,090	16.1
(based on zip code--not available for all students)			
Living in neighborhood with < 15% poverty	19,812	2,322	11.7
15.1% - 25%			14.0
poverty	18,362	2,572	
25.1% - 45%			19.1
poverty	15,452	2,949	
45.1% +			21.1
poverty	15,395	3,247	

Combined Effects of Demographics on Transfers

Data Source: Local KC School Districts

What is the likelihood of a student having one or more transfers during academic year? (All demographic factors and poverty level considered simultaneously.)

- Asian students 33% less likely to transfer than white students
- Black students 17% more likely to transfer than white students
- Hispanic students 11% less likely to transfer than white students
- Other students of color 40% more likely to transfer than white students
- Homeless students 200% more likely to transfer than non-homeless
- English language learners 5% more likely to transfer than non-ELL
- Students in a zip code with 10% higher poverty 14% more likely to transfer

23



Transfers TO KCPS - During 2015 School Year by Month

FROM:	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Total
Central City (inc. KCPS)	197	234	189	136	86	208	132	124	76	25	1,407
Charters	6	20	33	40	22	35	20	23	17	3	219
Tier 1	5	47	48	35	24	62	45	32	23	5	326
Tier 2	0	5	16	8	4	21	15	5	8	2	84
Another Public in state	137	94	65	39	29	90	49	54	39	16	612
Home school	5	9	14	6	12	5	9	14	13	2	89
Private school in state	11	4	8	1	0	7	3	5	0	2	41
Out of state	166	115	92	106	44	137	69	106	72	9	916
Drop out	8	15	22	18	10	22	15	12	11	6	139
Another country	26	33	30	28	16	40	16	20	22	8	239
Total	561	576	517	417	247	627	373	395	281	78	4,072
% of transfers	13.8	14.8	12.7	10.2	6.1	15.4	9.2	9.7	6.9	1.9	100

Note: August after first 3 days of school. May before last two days of school.
Data Source: MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

24

More Questions to Answer

- Are aggregate in-migration and aggregate out-migration similar in the schools in the different types of districts?
- How are percent of students transferring into a school related to aggregate performance on state assessments?
- How does omitting mobile students affect state accreditation measures?
- How are number of school changes related to performance at the individual student level?
- How are number of school changes related to student background characteristics?

25



KC Connections to Literature & National Context

- “Existing research suggests that student mobility, in general, leads to negative impacts on student test scores and dropout rates, with the most pronounced effects from frequent (3 or more) moves” (Rumberger)
 - All of this could be examined for the schools here in the metropolitan area given the cooperation for sharing of student-level data, local research expertise and funding.
- Let’s LEARN from our LOCAL CONTEXT
- Are there schools who are “out-performing” peer schools with students who are mobile? If so, who are they and what are the strategies they are using to do so? How can these be replicated and supported in other schools?

26



KC Mobility Summary

- Patterns of Mobility by Area
 - By Schools, rather than just as a district dynamic
 - Central City and Tier 1 Districts have proportionally higher numbers of mobile students
- Patterns of Mobility Timing
 - September, October and even November have high numbers of transfers (August & January)
 - 1.25 transfers during year to every 1 transfer in the summer

27



KC Mobility Summary

- Combined Effects of Demographics on Transfers
 - Asian students 33% less likely to transfer than white students
 - Black students **17% more likely** to transfer than white students
 - Hispanic students _____ to transfer than white students
 - Other students of color _____ to transfer than white students

28



KC Mobility Summary

- Homeless students 200% more likely to transfer than non-homeless
- English language learners 5% more likely to transfer than non-ELL
- Students in a zip code with 10% higher poverty 14% more likely to transfer
- Indications of Chronic Mobility
 - Changed schools in 2013 = 3 times more likely to have changed schools in 2015

29



KC Mobility Summary

- Attendance
 - 4.5% lower attendance rate
 - Average missing 4 days between each transfer with 10% missing 12 or more days each move
- Achievement
 - only 60% as likely to be proficient in Communication Arts
 - only 62% as likely to be proficient in Math

30



How many students are mobile in the metro?

- More than 1 in 5 students (22.7%)
 - 36,799 students in 2015
 - From Local Selected Districts in 2014, 1 in 7 students were mobile
- More than 6,350 students changed schools 2 or more times in 2015

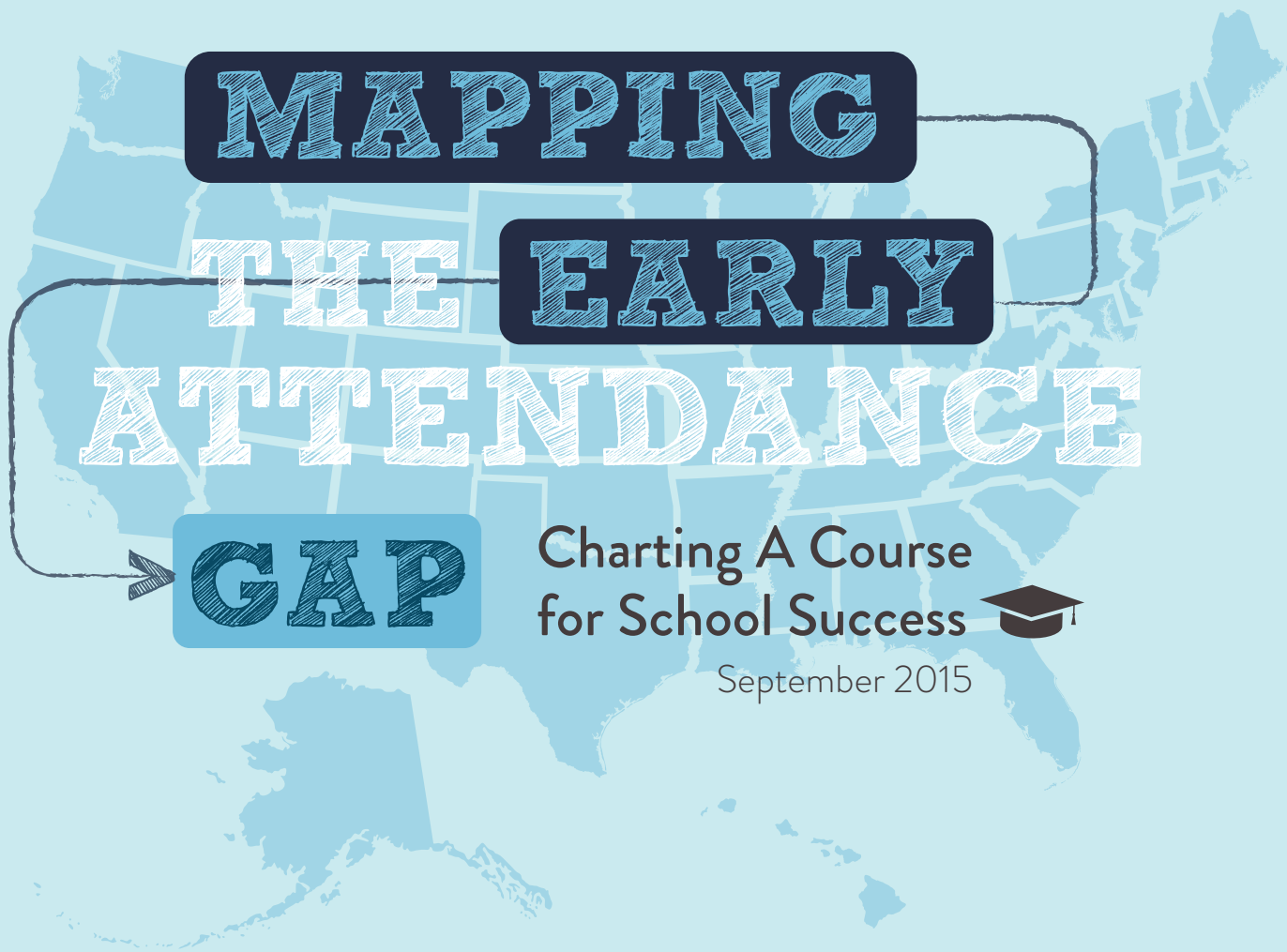
31



What will we do as a community?



32



MAPPING

EARLY

THE ATTENDANCE

GAP

Charting A Course
for School Success



September 2015



Introduction

As we work to close achievement gaps and reduce dropout rates, educators and policymakers often overlook another pernicious problem that is undermining success for our most vulnerable young students: the attendance gap. Across the country, an estimated 5 million to 7.5 million students are missing nearly a month of school and suffering academically for it. The problem starts early: At least 10 percent of kindergartners and first graders miss that



much school, absences that can stall their progress in reading and deny them an equal opportunity to learn. Chronic absence flares again in middle and high school, when it becomes an early warning sign that students will drop out. Children from low-income families and communities of color and those with disabilities are disproportionately affected.

This isn't simply a matter of truancy or skipping school. In fact, many of these absences, especially among our youngest students, are excused and tied directly to health factors: asthma and dental problems, learning disabilities, and mental health issues related to trauma and community violence. In many cases, these attendance patterns go unnoticed because schools are counting how many students show up every day rather than looking at how many miss so much school that they are falling behind. While much of our nation's attendance policy focuses on finding and punishing students who miss school without an excuse, not enough attention is paid to preventing excused absences due to health concerns or other family and community issues.

Regardless of the reason for missing school, absenteeism in the early years can set a pattern of academic trouble and poor attendance in later grades. Chronic absence in preschool and kindergarten – defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year – is tied to reading difficulties and weaker development of the social skills needed to persist in school. In fourth and eighth grades, national assessments reveal consistently lower scores for those who miss too much school, with alarming gaps among some student populations. By ninth grade, absenteeism is a better indicator that a student will dropout than eighth grade test scores. The student populations most affected by chronic absence – those from low-income families or communities of color and those with disabilities – are the same groups that lag behind in graduation rates.

Essentially, these early attendance gaps turn into achievement gaps that create graduation gaps. Poor attendance is among our first and best warning signs that a student has missed the on-ramp to school success and is headed off track for graduation. We must address attendance and its connection to public health early in a child's life.

To do that effectively, we need to map our attendance gaps, starting with our youngest students. States are uniquely positioned to analyze the data they collect and determine who is missing too much school and why, when students are most likely to be absent and where the problem is most severe. State leaders can shift the focus – and the accountability metrics – from truancy to chronic absenteeism, a measure of how many students miss 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason.

And they can identify and learn from the positive outliers – the schools, districts and communities that improve or maintain high levels of attendance despite challenging conditions. These include places such as New Britain, Connecticut, where school officials cut the kindergarten absenteeism rate nearly in half after realizing that 30 percent of their youngsters were chronically absent. They include Baltimore, where new school-based health clinics are helping students with asthma avoid missing class. And they include rural Del Norte County, California, where school officials are partnering with local tribal leadership to reduce the high rate of absenteeism among American Indian students.

This brief maps the national attendance gap – the who, what, when, where and why of absenteeism – using research drawn from national sources as well as attendance data gathered across states from students taking the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Health emerges again and again, both as a challenge and as a solution to improving attendance. Our appendices list NAEP attendance data for every state – broken down by income, race and ethnicity, and disability status – revealing large gaps in some places.

The brief documents how states can use their data to help schools and communities unpack when and why chronic absence becomes a problem in the early grades so that they can put in place solutions that work. States are especially well positioned to advance innovative practice at scale, to create accountability for reducing chronic absence and to promote learning across school districts. This brief recommends five key steps:

Step 1: Make the Case That Chronic Early Absence Matters

Step 2: Map Chronic Early Absence

Step 3: Engage Partners in Unpacking Why Early Absences Occur

Step 4: Learn from Positive Outliers

Step 5: Embed Action into Existing Initiatives

This brief concludes with a discussion about how various stakeholders across sectors can help strengthen state-level capacity to map and address the attendance gap.

Public health officials are fond of saying that disease does not occur at random or by chance, that there are always patterns. The same is true of absenteeism. The national data can point toward those patterns, but local and state leaders must diagnose what is happening in their communities before they can improve school attendance and, with it, achievement.



WHAT: Chronic Absence Is a Hidden National Crisis

With digital records stretching from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, school districts and states have the ability to see attendance patterns across student groups, schools and communities. Many states and school districts, though, fail to leverage the information in ways that can improve student achievement. Most schools use the information that teachers collect to calculate average daily attendance, a measure of how many students show up each day. But this daily average can hide the fact that many students are chronically absent – missing 18 or more days, enough lost time to pull down academic performance. Even schools with 95 percent daily attendance rates can have dozens of chronically absent students.ⁱ Likewise, most schools track truancy, or unexcused absences. But truancy does not capture days lost to excused absences or suspensions. And this leads schools and districts to treat absenteeism as a matter of compliance with rules rather than seeing it as the vital early warning sign it can be.

Defining Terms

Average Daily Attendance: The percentage of a school's student body that attends on a typical day. The definition is the same nationwide, but does not provide student-level data.

Truancy: A measure of how many students miss school without an excuse. The definition varies from state to state.

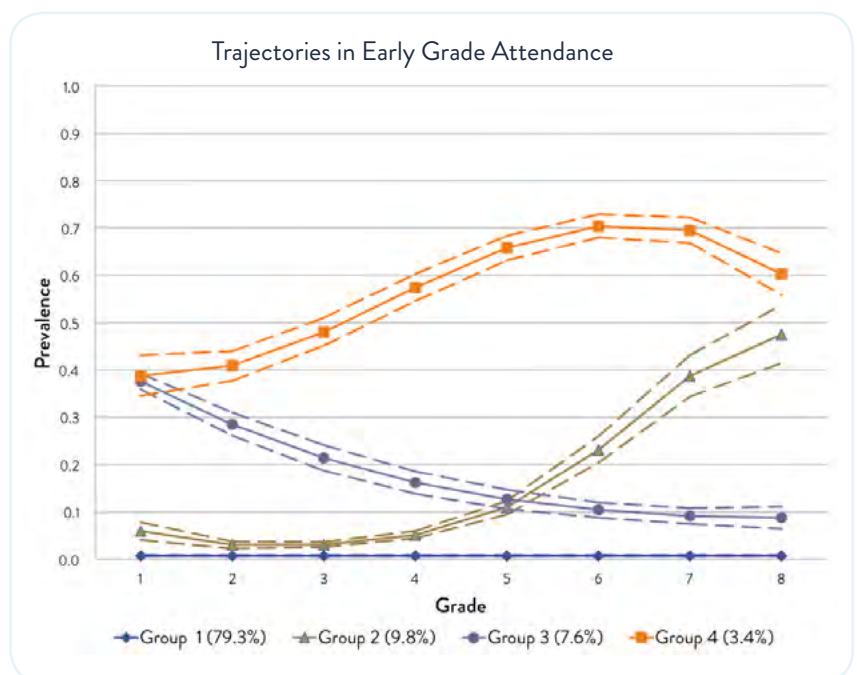
Chronic absence: A measure of how many students miss a certain percentage or number of days, including excused and unexcused absences and suspensions. Researchers often track 10 percent of the school year, but there is no common definition among states.

Poor Attendance in NAEP: Missing 3 or more days in the month before the assessment.



WHEN: Chronic Absence Starts Early

Much has been written about the direct correlation between high school chronic absence and dropout rates. Recent research, though, suggests that attendance trends starting in first grade can predict graduation rates.ⁱⁱ Jason Schoeneberger's 2012 study, *Longitudinal Attendance Patterns: Developing High School Dropouts*, shows four distinct patterns of absenteeism in a large urban school district and how they influence whether a student will drop out.ⁱⁱⁱ On the chart to the right, the blue line along the bottom represents students with satisfactory attendance



throughout elementary and middle school. Fewer than 5 percent of these students go on to drop out of high school. The green line shows those who start out with good attendance but begin to disengage and become chronically absent as they grow older. Nearly a quarter of them will eventually drop out, the highest level among the groups.



The orange and purple lines represent trajectories for students who start out with poor attendance. The purple line shows those who improve their rates significantly

by eighth grade, while the orange line indicates children for whom attendance becomes increasingly worse: 20 percent of those chronically absent students will drop out, compared with 10 percent of the students who turned around their attendance. Essentially, these students doubled their chance of graduating by improving their attendance. This study shows the importance of building good attendance habits in the early grades and continuing to attend regularly through middle school. It also shows that early chronic absence is not destiny: Children improve their chances for graduation when they improve attendance.

This is no small problem. The youngest students – those in preschool and kindergarten – have absenteeism rates nearly as high as teenagers. National estimates suggest that one in 10 kindergarten and first grade students misses 18 or more days of the school year, or nearly a month.^{iv} Children who never attended preschool are more likely to be chronically absent in kindergarten, a new national study shows.^v So are those who were chronically absent in preschool.^{vi} Most state studies of chronic absenteeism show a similar pattern: high rates in the early years dipping down in the elementary years before rising sometime in middle school and then accelerating in high school.

These missed days in the early years can add up to weaker reading skills, higher rates of retention and lower attendance rates in later grades.^{vii} This is especially true for children from low-income families, who depend on school for literacy development. Absences as early as kindergarten can also affect the development of the social skills needed to succeed in school, such as persistence.^{viii} Essentially, many of these children fail to make the critical transition from learning to read to reading to learn by fourth grade. That increases the chances that they will fall behind in all their classes by middle school and ultimately drop out in high school. Research shows that children who aren't reading proficiently in third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma.^{ix}

Another critical juncture for absenteeism is the transition to high school. A study in Chicago that followed students through the transition found that the same students missed three times as many days in ninth

grade as they did in eighth grade. Among this age group, more absences are unexcused.^x Similarly, analyses of attendance data from multiple states show big increases in absenteeism when students reach high school. At the same time, school districts have found that a concerted effort to reduce these absences can increase the likelihood that students will graduate on time.^{xi xii}



WHY: Health Plays a Key Role in Absenteeism

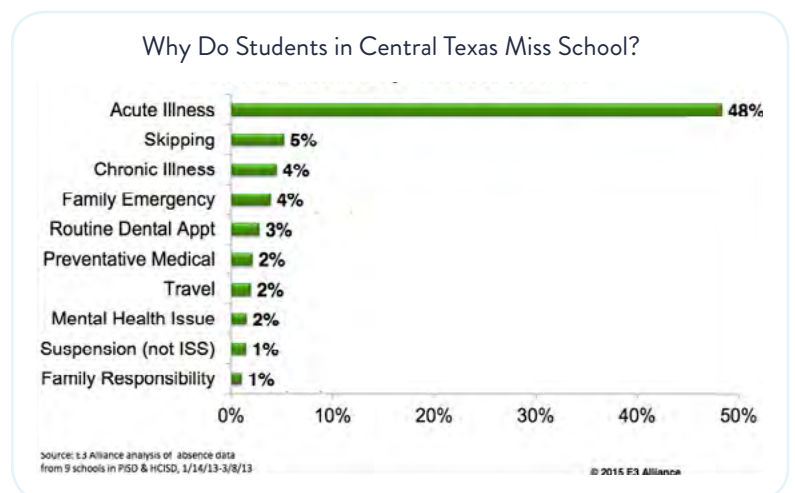
Any school attendance clerk can share the countless reasons that students and parents give for missing school. But research and practice suggest three chief causes for chronic absenteeism: misconceptions about the importance of regular attendance, aversion to showing up for class, and barriers to reaching school every day. Health considerations – whether physical or mental – play a part in all three.

The misconceptions or myths often come into play in the early grades when families don't realize how important it is for children to attend school every day possible. They may pull children out of school for family vacations or simply for convenience sake. In addition, some parents don't always know when a child is too sick for school and don't have the guidance they need from school or health providers. What's more, some children complain of a stomachache when they are actually nervous about going to school, a sign of aversion that can be hard to recognize. Other families don't believe absences are a problem unless they are unexcused or all in a row. They don't realize that sporadic absences, for any reason, can add up to academic trouble. Older students, likewise, don't always recognize the connection between good attendance and graduation. Half of the middle and high school students surveyed believe they could miss school one day a week and not suffer any academic consequences.^{xiii}

Absences due to aversion can result from bullying situations at school or on the way to school. They can occur when students experience undiagnosed learning disabilities and feel that they cannot succeed. Anxiety and depression can also prompt students to stay home. Maternal depression can contribute to absences in the early grades, since these children depend on the adults in their lives to get to school.^{xiv}

Families will sometimes report these sorts of absences as sick days. Older students may simply skip school.

That said, health remains a significant barrier to school for many students. Young children with unmanaged chronic health conditions are more likely to miss class because of the symptoms of their illness or because they are receiving medical treatment during the school day.



A detailed study of more than 23,000 missed days in several central Texas school districts found that 48 percent of absences were caused by acute illness, 4 percent by chronic illness and 3 percent by routine dental appointments. Only 5 percent were attributable to skipping school, though researchers acknowledged that could be an undercount. Absences spiked during flu seasons across several districts.^{xv}

Among the leading causes nationwide are:

- **Asthma.** Nearly one in 10 children (9.9 percent) ages 4 to 14 are diagnosed with asthma.^{xvi} Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism, accounting for about 14 million absences each school year, or one-third of all days of missed instruction. Children with persistent asthma are more than three times as likely to have 10 or more absences than their peers.^{xvii} Asthma can be exacerbated by factors in the school environment, particularly mold and harsh cleaning chemicals that impact indoor air quality. Yet it doesn't have to be this way: Research show that creating healthy indoor environments and providing adequate levels of school nursing can all but eliminate the disparity in attendance between students with asthma and their peers.
- **Oral health.** A full 20 percent of children ages 5 to 11 have at least one untreated decayed tooth.^{xviii}

Among school-age children, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease, five times more prevalent than asthma. Children between 5 and 17 years miss nearly 2 million school days each year nationwide due to dental health problems.^{xix}

Children with poor oral health are nearly three times more likely than their counterparts to miss school as a result of dental pain. Tooth decay and dental pain are easily treatable

if students have access to dental care; the consequences of leaving such pain untreated are significant not only for the children's lifetime health but also for their education. In California, a cost-effective model called tele-dentistry is delivering X-rays, check ups and fluoride treatments to children at school.



Of course, the problem of health-related chronic absence goes far beyond these two issues. Research indicates that other common health conditions resulting in missed school include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), influenza, diabetes, obesity, seizure disorders, mental health and anxiety, and vision problems.^{xx} Health-related factors such as food insecurity, unhealthy housing and violence in the community also play a significant role. Some children miss school simply because they don't have the immunizations required for enrollment.

Compounding the problem is the fact that many students do not have access to healthy school environments. For example, less than half of the nation's students have access to a full-time school nurse or school counselor, and fewer than 5 percent have access to a school-based health center.^{xxi xxii} In addition, one in five schools in the United States reports unsatisfactory indoor air quality, a known trigger of asthma attacks.^{xxiii}

Despite the scale of this problem, we must remember that chronic absence related to illness is not an inevitable fact of childhood. There is much that can be done – by the education community, by the public health community and by the medical community – to relieve the lifelong burden it places on young children. Health providers are especially well positioned to help unpack and identify what is contributing to chronic absence because they see young children regularly, consult with parents about illness and can talk to families in a non-confrontational way about other challenges they face.

For instance, some students miss school when their families move frequently or become homeless.^{xxiv xxv} Transportation also presents a problem, especially among rural students reliant on school buses and among urban children dependent on public transportation. Challenging work schedules for parents can also make getting to school more difficult, particularly for young children. These challenges fall particularly hard on certain student populations, leading to persistent attendance gaps across the country.



WHO: Student Populations Most Affected

Chronic absence does not affect all students equally. In many cases, those who need school the most are attending school the least. The impact becomes clear in the gaps that appear on national testing. Although nationwide data on school absenteeism does not yet exist for schools and districts, a snapshot of attendance data from fourth and eighth graders taking the NAEP suggests that poor attendance is a significant problem affecting all states and dragging down achievement for the students least likely to graduate.

Students taking the NAEP are asked how many days they missed in the month prior to the test, typically taken from January to March. While the information is self-reported and limited to a single month, the results nonetheless reflect many of the achievement and demographic trends found in research involving data from the entire year. An analysis of two years of testing data shows that students who said they missed three or more days in that month scored 12 to 18 points lower on the NAEP than students with good attendance. Researchers estimate that 10 points on the NAEP achievement scale translate to one equivalent grade in student performance between grades 4 and 8. This achievement gap occurred in every state and city where the test was administered in 2011 and 2013. The brief notes the states with the widest gaps among student populations to signal that they should examine their attendance data for a fuller picture of what is happening. Several of these states are already tracking their data and working hard to reduce absences. See Appendix A for NAEP data charts. The data reveal:

Low-income students face an attendance gap in all states.

The 2015 *Building a Grad Nation* report makes a simple assertion: “Graduating on time is the norm for middle- and high-income students, but not for their low-income peers.” The NAEP data show corresponding gaps in

attendance and achievement years before graduation, using eligibility for federal lunch subsidies as a marker for poverty. An analysis of 2011 and 2013 NAEP data shows that 23 percent of low-income fourth graders missed three or more school days in the month prior to the test, compared with 17 percent of their peers.^{xxvi} In some states the gaps were wider than in others. In eighth grade, the gap widened to 8 points: 24 percent for low-income students and 16 percent for others. This attendance gap starts as soon as children begin school. A national study found that low-income kindergartners were four times more likely to be chronically absent than their more affluent peers.^{xxvii}

For all students, rich or poor, higher absenteeism correlates with lower scores on the NAEP. Low-income fourth graders with poor attendance scored 9 percentage points lower than those with perfect attendance. For fourth graders from more affluent families, the difference was 8 points.

Absenteeism rates among low-income students often reflect the challenges that accompany poverty, such as unstable housing, unreliable transportation and little access to quality health care. For instance, students in schools with high concentrations of poverty are less likely than other students to have recess and high-quality physical education.^{xxviii} In addition, high-poverty schools are less likely than higher-income schools to have a school nurse and a more likely to have a higher student-to-nurse ratio.^{xxix} Low-income students are twice as likely as their peers to suffer from untreated tooth decay,^{xxx} and a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found that low-income children are more likely than other students to miss school because they fear for their safety, a symptom of what some consider the toxic stress of living in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty.^{xxxi}

Often, more than one risk factor is at play. A 2014 study of New York City schools identified 18 indicators of “deep poverty” that affect student achievement and correlated with chronic absence. These included adult education levels, the percentage of students living in public housing or homeless shelters, and teacher turnover, among others.^{xxxii} It is not always clear whether these risk factors cause absenteeism or merely correlate with it. But in each case they predict that chronic absence could become a problem.

The problem is particularly acute for children in the early grades. Missing critical literacy instruction in kindergarten and first grade has more dire consequences for children from low-income families than for their more affluent peers, one study found.^{xxxiii} Tapping a national database, researcher Douglas P. Ready found that chronically absent children gained 14 percent fewer literacy skills in kindergarten than those who attended more regularly. The negative impact, though, was 75 percent greater for a low-income student in kindergarten than for more affluent peers. A study of 25,000 preschool students in Chicago found effects on kindergarten readiness scores, including letter recognition and pre-literacy scores. The effects were particularly pronounced for the children who arrived at preschool with the weakest skills.^{xxxiv}

Where Are the Widest Gaps?

NAEP data show that some states have wider gaps in high absenteeism rates between low-income students and others. (See Appendix A)

4TH GRADE

Connecticut	Michigan
Hawaii	Rhode Island

8TH GRADE

Connecticut	Ohio
Michigan	Rhode Island
Wisconsin	

American Indian students have the highest rates nationally.

The NAEP figures show the highest rates of absenteeism nationally are among American Indian students, with 29 percent of fourth graders and 30 percent of eighth graders missing too much school, 10 percentage points higher than for white students. This gap starts early: American Indian kindergartners miss twice as many days as their white peers, a national analysis shows. The absenteeism rates reflect other troubling indicators. In the seven states with the highest concentrations of American Indian students, graduation rates are below 50 percent for this population, a figure that remains intractably low. The population has seen little improvement on NAEP scores for fourth and eighth graders in the past decade, even as other racial and ethnic groups improved their scores.^{xxxvi}

Where are the gaps?

Only eight states had enough American Indian students taking the NAEP to break out student attendance. (See Appendix A)

Arizona	North Dakota
Montana	Oklahoma
New Mexico	South Dakota
North Carolina*	Wyoming*

* 4th grade only

Experts and educators cite two key reasons for poor attendance among American Indians. First, many of these students live in poverty and face the challenges that all low-income children experience in getting to school. Second, the American Indian population shares a deep distrust for public schools, given efforts in the past century to pull children off reservations and send them to boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak their tribal languages or practice their customs. Abuse, illness and even some deaths accompanied this failed attempt at assimilation.

“To this day, there is still a great deal of distrust,” Danielle Grant, Executive Director of Education and Cultural Services and Indian Education for Minneapolis Public Schools and a member of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe tribe, said in an interview with Attendance Works.^{xxxvii} “The education system is still seen by many American Indians as trying to make us less Native, and more like the mainstream, and that makes for a complicated relationship.”

Grant launched an initiative called Dream Big Minneapolis to engage Indian students, families and community organizations in reducing absenteeism. In the past three years, the percentage of Indian students attending school 95 percent of the time increased from 36 to 54 percent; the graduation rate rose from 17 to 32 percent.

Black students are more likely to have poor attendance rates than white students.

An analysis of NAEP data from 2011 and 2013 shows that 22 percent of black fourth graders and 23 percent of black eighth graders missed too much school, compared with 19 percent of whites. The gaps were wider in some states. Nationwide, the gap started as early as kindergarten, where black students missed more days than their white peers did.

Again, the gap in part reflects the fact that a higher percentage of black students live in poverty and face challenges in getting to school every day. But other issues are at play. Black children are more prone to some

health conditions. For instance, they are 1.6 times more likely than white students to suffer from asthma. Rates for emergency room visits and hospitalization for asthma are also higher among black children.^{xxxviii}

Where Are the Widest Gaps?

NAEP data show that some states have wider gaps in high absenteeism rates between black and white students. (See Appendix A)

4TH GRADE

Colorado	Michigan
District of Columbia	Wisconsin

8TH GRADE

District of Columbia	New York
Michigan	Pennsylvania
	Wisconsin

At Tench Tilghman Elementary School in Baltimore, Stephanie Godbolt described how her grandson’s asthma kept him out of school for nearly a week every month. After the school put in place a full-service health clinic, the nurse helped bring the boy’s asthma under control, and his attendance improved. Children at the K-8 school also receive free dental services on campus. “Students can go to school and not worry about having an asthma attack,” said Brittany Beth, a U.S. Department of Education official who toured the facility. “When mom can’t take them to the doctor, they are covered, and the dental services they receive twice each year might be the only dental services they get.”^{xxxix}

Beyond health concerns, black children are more likely to be suspended from school, losing valuable instructional time because of disciplinary infractions. Federal data show that black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than that for white students. On average, 5 percent of white students are suspended, compared with 16 percent of black students. This is true even in preschool: black children represent 18 percent of preschool enrollment but 48 percent of the preschoolers receiving more than one out-of-school suspension.^{xl}

Hispanic students are more likely to have poor attendance rates than white students.

The attendance patterns among Hispanic students are similar to those of blacks, although these children face some unique challenges. The NAEP analysis shows that 21 percent of Hispanic fourth graders and 22 percent of eighth graders missed too much school, compared with 19 percent of white students. Likewise, a national study shows Hispanic kindergartners missing more days than their white classmates. What’s more, the study suggests that the impact of these kindergarten absences was greater for Hispanic children: Those who missed too much time in kindergarten had significantly lower reading scores than their peers, even when compared with other chronically absent students.^{xli}

Like black students, Hispanic children are more more likely to be exposed to certain health issues and more likely to be suspended from school than other students. But this population has unique challenges that affect attendance, especially among recent immigrants. These include:

- **Language difficulties:** Some English language learners attend school regularly when they are younger but become disengaged from school if the instruction does not meet their educational needs, and they don’t master higher level academic skills. If this occurs, ineffective instruction in the early grades can lead to poor attendance and eventually failure to graduate.^{xlii}

- **Visits to home countries:** Some Hispanic families have a tradition of returning to their home countries for weeks at a time to ensure that their children remain connected to family and culture. These extended trips take a toll on attendance and achievement.
- **High mobility:** Children whose parents are migrant farmworkers move frequently, disrupting their education several times a year. Other immigrant families who are in the country without proper documentation may move or keep children out of school to avoid detection.

Advocates who work with Hispanic communities say educating families about the consequences of chronic absenteeism is critical to turning around attendance. “When parents get the information about chronic absence and someone actually communicates to them and helps them understand the consequences, they’ll be the first champions to see that their child is in school,” said Oscar E. Cruz, president and CEO of Families in Schools. The nonprofit builds information on attendance into its parent training sessions.

Where Are the Widest Gaps?

NAEP data show that some states have wider gaps in high absenteeism rates between Hispanic and white students.

4TH GRADE

Connecticut	Rhode Island
New York	

8TH GRADE

Connecticut	New Hampshire
Massachusetts	New York
	Rhode Island

Students with disabilities are more likely to miss too much school than others.

Where Are the Widest Gaps?

NAEP scores show that some states have wider attendance gaps between students with disabilities and others.

4TH GRADE

Connecticut	New Jersey
Hawaii	

8TH GRADE

Alabama	Delaware
Hawaii	North Carolina
Michigan	

Students with disabilities have among the lowest graduation rates, with about 62 percent graduating in 2012-13, nearly 20 points below the national average. Attendance gaps show up in the fourth- and eighth-grade NAEP data, which reflect that 25 percent of fourth graders and 27 percent of eighth graders identified as needing special education miss too much school, compared with 19 percent of other students in both grades. A national study comparing elementary school absenteeism in 10 districts across the country found consistently higher rates for this population.^{xliii}

Some of these absences can be attributed to the health concerns of physically disabled students, but others occur because of the lack of appropriate educational placements, bullying or school aversion

that can affect learning-disabled children, particularly those with emotional issues. In addition, students with disabilities are more than twice as likely as other students to receive an out-of-school suspension.^{xliiv}

There is surprisingly little research about absenteeism among disabled students or the best practices for turning around attendance in this population. Pat Halle, an advocate in the Maryland Disability Law Center, supports using attendance as an element in the individualized education programs required for special education students and making afterschool programs more inclusive for these children. “Attendance is a piece of the difficulty in getting access to quality instructional programs for students with disabilities,” she said.



HOW: A Five-Step Approach for Closing Attendance Gaps

Taken together, the NAEP survey data and other research reveal significant attendance gaps that are eroding achievement for many of our most vulnerable students. While absenteeism is clearly an issue in the later grades, the problem has its roots in a student's early years and is inextricably linked both to the health of the student and the health of the community. Until we address these gaps we will not succeed in breaking the cycle of poverty that traps so many low-income children. And we will not offer all of our children an equal opportunity to learn.

The remainder of this brief focuses on steps that states can take to reduce chronic absence and narrow these gaps. The steps focus on state policy and practice, because they are essential to ensuring that chronic early absence is addressed at scale, not just in isolated pockets of innovation. State-level action can ensure that local schools, districts and communities are aware of what chronic absence is and why it matters, use their data to identify who is most affected, and have access to the most effective tools and strategies. States can take the following steps to make a difference:

Step 1: Make the Case That Chronic Early Absence Matters

Step 2: Map Chronic Early Absence

Step 3: Engage Partners in Unpacking Why Early Absences Occur

Step 4: Learn from Positive Outliers

Step 5: Embed Action into Existing Initiatives

The section below provides an overview of what we mean by each of these steps and offers concrete examples of what these concepts look like in practice. We especially draw upon insights from colleagues in states participating in Attendance Works' [Network for Advancing State Attendance Policy and Practice](#) and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's (GLR) Advisory Committee for Ending Chronic Absence. Representing a demographically, geographically and politically diverse mix, the states involved in the Advisory Committee – California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island and Utah – have departments of education committed to working with the GLR campaign and Attendance Works to test and demonstrate how state action can make a difference.

To gain a deeper understanding of how these concepts can be applied, see these [state profiles](#) depicting the attendance journey of different states. Profiles will be added and updated over time.

Finally, the brief concludes with recommendations describing how stakeholders across different disciplines and sectors can strengthen state capacity to map and address the early attendance gap.

Step 1: Make the Case That Chronic Early Absence Matters

Inspiring action starts with being able to make the case to key stakeholders that chronic early absence is a matter of concern. That requires securing the data to show impact and scale, and engaging key champions to spread the word.

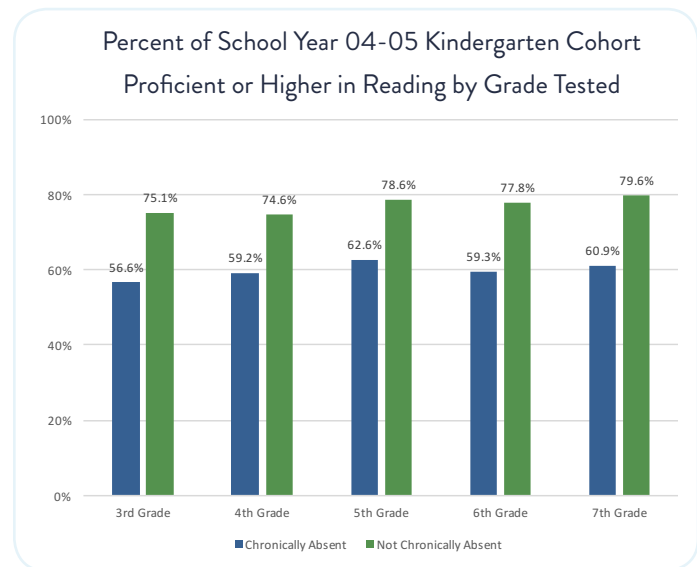
Using data to show why chronic absence matters

General Resources: The [Attendance Works website](#) provides easy access to research documenting what chronic absence is, how it is masked by truancy and average daily attendance figures, and what the consequences are from preschool through high school graduation. The resources draw from research conducted with national data sets as well as from studies carried out in various states and communities throughout the country.

State data: While this research is helpful, it is not as powerful as having state and local data to demonstrate the effects of chronic early absence. A growing number of states have completed longitudinal research showing that early chronic absence predicts lower academic performance in later grades.

The Rhode Island Data Hub, for example, [produced this online brief](#) with state-specific findings showing that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten lagged behind in later grades compared with children who attended kindergarten regularly. The chronically absent cohort:

- Were 20% less likely to score proficient or higher in reading.
- Were 25% less likely to score proficient or higher in reading
- Were twice as likely to be retained in grade.
- Were twice as likely to be suspended by the end of seventh grade.
- Were more likely to continue being chronically absent.



The brief also made clear that high levels of chronic absence were being hidden when schools and districts paid attention only to average daily attendance and truancy.

Most states now have data in their longitudinal student data systems that would allow for similar analysis.^{xlv} Even in the handful of states that aren't collecting attendance data, similar studies can be done in local districts.

Different groups are positioned to analyze and publish such research. For example, in [Georgia](#), [Hawaii](#) and [Connecticut](#), the state departments of education produced their own analyses of the impact of poor attendance on achievement. In [Indiana](#) and [Utah](#), universities headed up the effort. In [Rhode Island](#), the work was carried out by the Rhode Island Data Hub coalition, which includes the state Department of Education, other state agencies and The Providence Plan, a joint effort of the City of Providence and the state to promote better collaboration among government, the private sector and academic institutions. In Oregon, [a data analysis](#) was initially released by a consortium of advocacy groups. The Oregonian newspaper then significantly promoted public awareness with a second analysis and [series of articles](#). In many states, organizations funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT initiative are well positioned to conduct analysis and make the case since their core mission is to provide data to inform policymakers and advocates.

NAEP attendance data: Every two years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress draws state representative samples of about 2,500 students in grades 4 and 8 and asks the students about the number of days they were absent the prior month. Appendix A contains state-specific data showing the prevalence in certain student populations as well as the connection to lower test scores. It is not, however, a substitute for a state examining its own data. This NAEP attendance data are drawn from a representative sample, not a universal sample, of two years of data of fourth and eighth grade students from participating states. In addition, the NAEP survey takes place in the winter and early spring when the flu season is at its height, so absences may be especially high. It does provide a means of comparing rates among states. In Spring 2016 the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights will produce full-year data showing how many students missed 15 days a year in districts across the country.

Engaging key champions

Since data alone is not sufficient to make the case, a critical early step is identifying key champions who can engage other critical stakeholders. Often champions need to be secured before or at the same time that local data is being generated. Typically the work is strongest when champions exist in multiple sectors and at multiple levels. Below is an initial list of possible champions along with the role they can play in generating attention and action.

- **State Departments of Education:** The support and leadership of the chief state school officer and his or her staff is essential in ensuring that educators and the broader community realize that reducing chronic absence is essential to improving educational outcomes, especially for the students at highest risk.
- **Elected Leaders:** Governors and other elected officials, especially legislators, can play a key role in raising awareness of chronic absence, using their office as a bully pulpit, promoting relevant legislation and calling for a variety of stakeholders to work together to find solutions.
- **Local School Districts:** Local districts can impact state policy, especially if they can demonstrate what works to reduce chronic absence and then use their experience to inform state policy and demonstrate that this issue already has traction at the community level.

- **Advocacy Organizations and Coalitions:** Children’s advocacy organizations, individually and organized into strong statewide coalitions, can educate policymakers and use tools such as state KIDS COUNT report cards and special briefs on chronic absence to generate attention from state policy makers as well as the media.
- **Parent Organizations:** Parent-teacher associations and other organizations can advocate for better policy and practice in school districts. They can also encourage families to support each other in getting children to school, as well as partner with schools to identify and address common attendance barriers.
- **Juvenile and Criminal Justice System:** Historically, attendance has been seen as the purview of the legal system since truancy (unexcused) absences are treated as a legal matter that eventually can lead to a child and the family being taken to court. Leaders from the legal system, including the state Attorney General and influential judges, can call for paying attention to chronic absence as a key tool in preventing the need for more expensive court intervention and reducing crime in the community.
- **Health Agencies:** Health agencies can expand awareness that chronic absence is an indicator of the need for school-linked health services and a problem that can affect the well-being of an individual and the entire community. They can shed light on how health challenges can lower the chances of academic success and how lower levels of educational attainment in turn lead to worse long-term health outcomes.
- **Philanthropy:** Philanthropy, whether family or corporate foundations or organizations such as United Way, can commission research or convene stakeholders and cultivate interest through their grant-making efforts.
- **Business:** Businesses can help the public and other key stakeholders understand how improving attendance is essential to a healthy, thriving economy. When students are absent, parents are less likely to be at work. Cultivation of students with good attendance is essential to having a future workforce with the needed hard and soft skills.
- **Universities:** Universities can use their credibility and capacity to produce well-designed longitudinal research demonstrating why chronic absence matters.

[As the state profiles illustrate](#), the work can start with one or two champions who then reach out to other key partners. Often the work moves in concentric circles, expanding to new partners as the work evolves. Multiple champions become increasingly essential to ensure sustainability beyond the inevitable shifts that occur in key leadership positions.

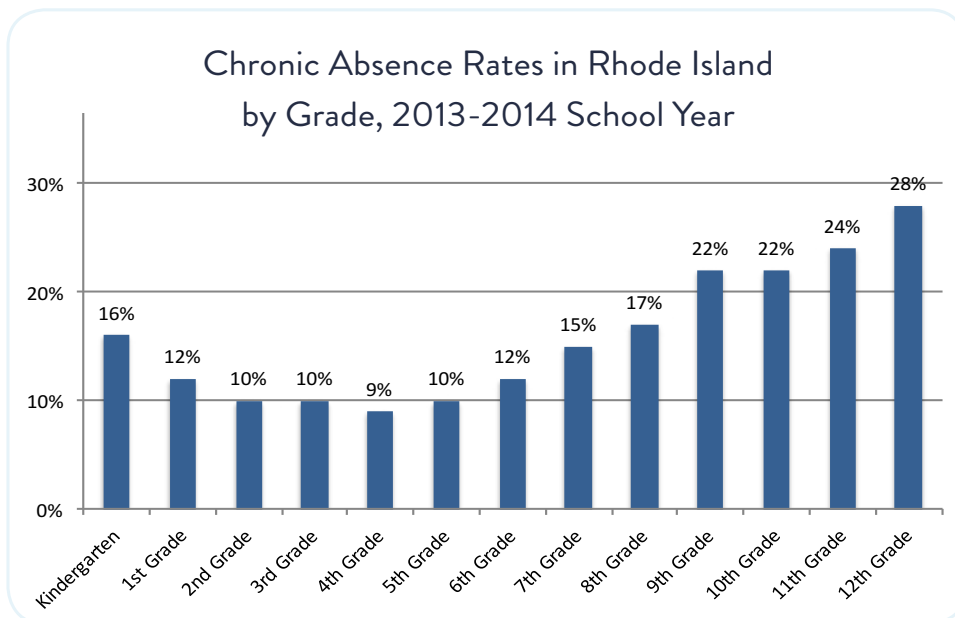
Step 2: Map Chronic Early Absence

Understanding where, when and for whom chronic absence is a problem is essential. Knowing who is affected allows educators and community partners to target interventions to those most in need. States can promote more effective and efficient allocation of resources by monitoring which districts, schools, grades and subpopulations are experiencing the highest levels of absenteeism.

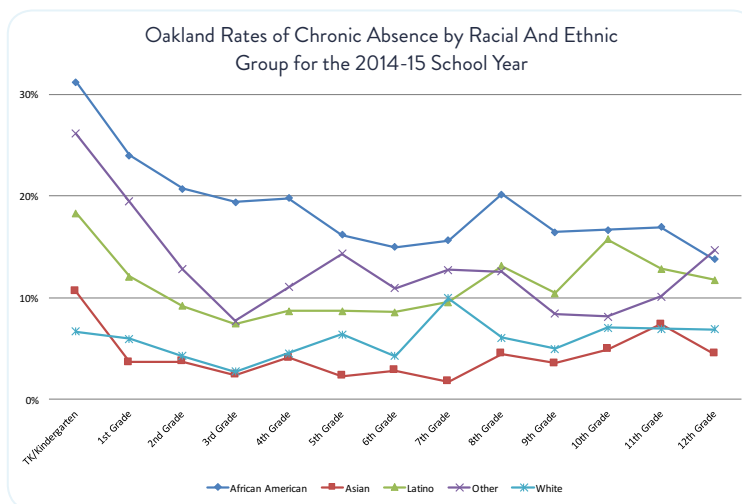


Tracking chronic absence by grade level and student population

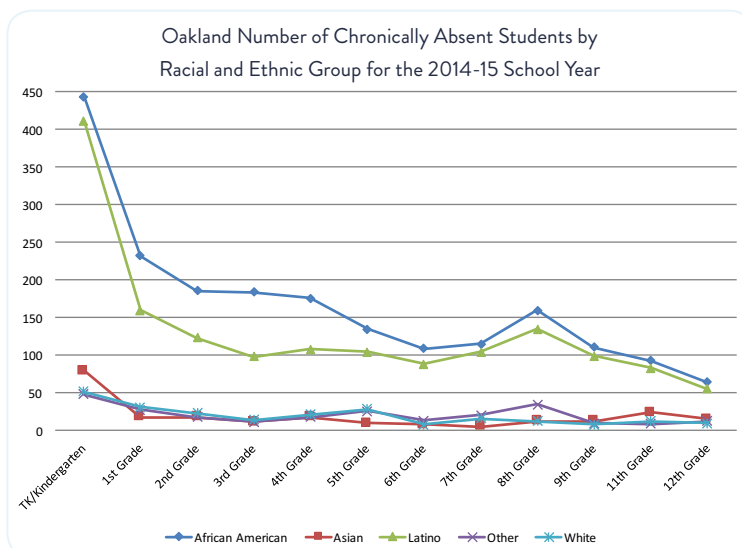
Special care should be taken to ensure monitoring of chronic absence by grade starting in kindergarten or even preschool, even if going to school is not mandatory for these children. Keep in mind that overall school or district chronic absence rates can easily mask high levels of chronic absence in particular grades. For example, in elementary schools, chronic absence is typically highest in preschool, kindergarten and first grade, while the best attendance rates generally occur in third through fifth grade. The low levels of chronic absence in those upper elementary grades often hide the problem facing the youngest students. Consider, for example, the trends revealed by the data in the [2015 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook](#).



In addition, it is critical to examine patterns of chronic absence by grade for each key student population. An analysis of Oakland, California, data reveals especially high rates of chronic absence in kindergarten, particularly for black students. They also demonstrate the importance of looking at both the percentage and the number of chronically absent students. Any response would need to take into account the large number of Hispanic kindergartners missing too much school even though their rate of chronic absence was not as high as that of some other ethnic groups.



By contrast, in Rhode Island, data found that the overall rate or percentage of children chronically absent was generally highest for Hispanic (26 percent) and American Indian (28 percent) students. These two groups also had the highest percentage of chronic absence in kindergarten, first and second grades, with black students having the third-highest level in the early grades. But just looking at percentages is not sufficient, given the varying ethnic populations represented. In fact, the largest number of students who are chronically absent are white students, who still make up the majority of Rhode Island's students. In the 2014-2015 school year, 10,736 white students were chronically absent, compared with 8,629 Hispanic, 2,248 black and 256 American Indian students.



Rhode Island's information also suggest that absences reflect the challenges faced by children living in poverty: Low-income students had a level of chronic absence three times greater than that of their more affluent peers, starting in kindergarten.

Sharing the data collected

Ideally, information about overall levels of chronic absence is easy to access, preferably online so that community partners can identify which schools and students might benefit from their support. Chronic absence data are a key indicator for parents, offering clues about what is happening in their children's schools. As long as the identity of individual students remains anonymous, such aggregate data reports can be shared without concern for violating confidentiality protections.

A growing number of state departments of education have begun to calculate and share data on chronic absence. Individual school and district rates are available online in a number of states, including Hawaii, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey and Rhode Island. The state with the longest history of providing this information is Maryland, which has published the number and proportion of students who miss 20 or more days for students in first through 12th grade. This data, along with information about average attendance and how many students miss fewer than five days of school, has been collected since 1993 and made available online for every school and district since 2004.

California is one of six states that does not collect attendance data in its longitudinal student data base. But the state now requires school districts to include chronic absence rates in [Local Control Accountability Plans](#), which are available online and must be submitted to county offices of education in order for districts to receive funding under the state's relatively new Local Control Funding Formula.

Within California, the extent to which districts use and publicize this data varies widely. Oakland Unified School District has among the most developed set of practices. Any interested stakeholder can now go online [here](#) to see chronic absence levels district-wide, by grade and student population, including ethnicity and gender. In addition, users can review the same data for any school as part of a comprehensive data report that also covers other metrics for achievement, school climate and discipline. School staff members have access to weekly reports showing levels of chronic absence and offering a list of students who need extra support.

The Connecticut State Department of Education has begun producing chronic absence reports for 30 school districts targeted for school improvement. These reports offer a picture of chronic absence by school and grade and how it has changed over time. The state also produces a comprehensive chart of chronic absence levels by grade across all 30 districts. This comparison allows the state, as well as local districts, to see which districts appear to be struggling most or improving relative to their peers.

In Utah, Voices for Children, the KIDS COUNT grantee, released data documenting the variations in chronic absence across counties. This information was first released through its report [Attendance and Early Grades: A Two-Generation Issue](#), which also offered important background information about why chronic absence mattered, what were the causes and an overview of how it can be addressed by taking a two-generation approach. The group then released [updated chronic absence figures](#) this past year through its annual KIDS COUNT data report.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has included indicators on early chronic absence and for middle and high school chronic absence in its annual *Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* since 2010. The *Factbook* indicators use data from the state Department of Education (RIDE) which is presented for Rhode Island as a whole, for the four core city school districts, and for each of the state's 36 school districts. KIDS COUNT and RIDE work in close partnership on the issue of reducing chronic absence by collaborating on data analysis and presentation and by convening key stakeholders to address the issue.

These examples illustrate the varied roles that state departments of education can play. Ideally, the department would calculate and publish data on chronic absence at least annually. Such a statewide approach would ensure that the metric is being calculated in a consistent manner for purposes of comparison, and allow for tracking attendance rates for highly mobile students who are moving across school districts. If a statewide approach is not possible, states can require school districts to calculate and report chronic absence levels and provide technical assistance. For example, the California Department of Education, the Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation, the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association and Attendance Works are working together to help county offices of education gain the skills and expertise needed to help their districts address chronic absence.

In all states, it is also important to build the capacity of districts and schools to develop early warning systems. These systems, which also monitor behavior and coursework indicators, trigger alerts as soon as a student shows signs of chronic absence. This allows school staff and, ideally, community partners to work together to get students back in school before they have missed so much instruction that they need academic remediation. The New Mexico Public Education Department, for example, is launching an Early Warning System Dashboard for grades K-12. The dashboard will flag when students attend school less than 90 percent of the time, along with other key data points related to behavior, course performance, student demographics, state assessment scores and special education services. The state is phasing in implementation, with a set of pilot districts and schools starting in Fall 2015 and statewide implementation anticipated in 2016.

Step 3: Engage Partners in Unpacking Why Early Absences Occur

To develop effective solutions, states should support schools, districts and communities in unpacking why students miss school in the first place. Determining the unique barriers faced by a particular family, school and community is critical. Interventions are most effective when they respond directly to the issues that are preventing students from getting to class. A variety of partners, especially parents and the students themselves, can help unearth the reasons for absenteeism.

This brief pays particular attention to the value of focusing on health-related causes of absence and leveraging the power of health partners to understand why students miss school. For young children especially, many absences are excused with parents reporting that their child was sick.^{xlvi} It is also true that children miss school as a result of health challenges often related to asthma, oral health, trauma, poor nutrition or lack of access to needed medical care. Yet young children often miss school unnecessarily because parents don't realize that their children are not too sick for school. Or parents may not realize that a stomachache is a sign of anxiety that could and should be addressed by helping their child become accustomed to the school environment.

The health issues impacting student attendance vary greatly among communities and even within subpopulations of a community. For example, while the overall rate of childhood asthma in California is 15.4 percent, levels range from 5.8 percent in San Benito County to 32.5 percent in Merced County.^{xlvii} While the overall childhood asthma rate in Chicago is about 13 percent, rates by neighborhood vary from near zero to 44 percent.^{xlviii} To better understand the primary health issues impacting student attendance, it's key to unpack the data at a local level.

States can play an important role in making sure that schools, districts and communities understand the connection between student health and attendance and have the resources necessary to access health data for their community and address the health-related causes of chronic absenteeism. Education departments can partner with state health departments to engage public health leaders on the local level.

The size and scale of the problem can offer clues about the nature of the attendance challenges. If only a small number of students are chronically absent, then issues are more likely to be individual in nature. When chronic absence affects large numbers of students in a particular school or neighborhood, it is often an indication of systemic challenges.

States can support schools, districts and communities in understanding the health-related causes of chronic absenteeism through the following strategies:

Offer guidance to help schools and districts partner with community stakeholders, especially health professionals.

States can identify key stakeholders in the community whom schools can work with to understand and address the health-related causes. While a variety of community partners can assist in this regard, health professionals are uniquely positioned to help because they know when children should stay home due to illness. In addition, families may be more open with a health provider about the challenges they face because they perceive the provider as a support, not a threat. States can ensure that schools know how to identify the health professionals and other partners in their community and provide them with guidance on how to engage in reducing chronic absenteeism.



Local health providers can also play a key role in communicating the importance of attendance and flagging any health factors keeping children from school. For example, during annual checkups, pediatricians can ask children and their families about absenteeism and discuss the importance of good attendance, especially in the early grades. States can share best practices for how local medical communities can communicate the importance of attendance and access student attendance data for the communities they serve.

Ensure that schools, districts and communities understand how to use education and health data to identify reasons for absenteeism.

States can ensure that districts know where to obtain data and the tools necessary to analyze it. For example, many local public health departments have data organized by ZIP code on key health issues, including asthma,

obesity, community violence and behavioral health. In addition, nonprofit hospitals are now required to conduct community health needs assessments every three years to identify and address the needs of their communities.

[The Educational Costs of Unhealthy Housing](#), written by the Rhode Island Data Hub, offers an excellent example of how health and education data can be combined to shed light on the impact of a health concern: in this case, how unhealthy housing contributes to higher absenteeism, lower academic performance and higher levels of grade retention. An Oregon nonprofit advocacy group, Upstream Public Health, produced [The Connection Between Missing School and Health](#) report to support state and local educators.

States can also encourage districts to examine the connection between chronic absence and data they maintain on student health conditions in their own databases. For example, they can evaluate if students with asthma are more likely to be chronically absent. Or if a lack of immunizations is causing students to miss so much school that they are chronically absent. Consider this example from California revealing how the smart use of data helped ensure that a recent change in immunization policies did not adversely affect attendance: Under a state law requiring that all students be vaccinated for whooping cough, every child entering seventh grade in the fall of 2105 has to submit proof of vaccination to start school. The Los Angeles Unified School District pored over shot records during the summer and focused on middle schools that had more than 100 students with no proof of the immunization. Teams of nurses, counselors and social workers made phone calls, visited homes and updated records. The district also set up clinics at schools to see that every child who needed an immunization received one.

Encourage schools to offer school-based and linked health resources.

The services delivered by school nurses and in on-site health centers are key for ensuring that students have access to the care they need to manage their health conditions. For example, Dallas School District in Texas, where 90 percent of school campuses have their own full-time nurses, has successfully shown no difference in attendance between asthmatic and nonasthmatic students. The district requires nurses to provide asthma management plans for every diagnosed child and to provide urgent care during school hours. In addition, if health providers are based on school campuses, they can serve as a critical support for reaching out to families.

Baltimore Tackling Asthma Through a School Clinic

Asthma kept Stephanie Godbolt's grandson home from school again and again. He missed nearly a week of school every month for six months. And he was losing ground academically. Then his school, Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School, opened a full-service health clinic. The nurse there worked with Godbolt on an asthma plan and helped ensure that her grandson John had the support he needed at school. His attendance improved.

With 425 students in K-8, the health clinic deals with asthma, lead exposure and other urban health challenges. Using the Community School and Elev8 models, Tench Tilghman brings health services to the campus and connects families to resources in the community. Equipped with a list of students missing required immunizations, the school clinic was able to deliver the shots on campus. Family advocate Stephanie Mack connected families with asthmatic children to the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, which offers free home inspections to eliminate asthma triggers. Children also receive free dental services on campus.

Since the clinic opened in 2012, the chronic absence rate at Tench Tilghman has dropped from 17 percent to 11 percent.

Consider the example set by North Carolina family nurse practitioner Jill Kerr. She was able to significantly improve the attendance rates at two elementary schools by contacting families whose children had missed more than 10 percent of school starting at the end of the first month of the school year. Kerr’s intervention included sharing information about the importance of attendance and, if the family agreed, paying a home visit together with a social worker or seeing the child in the nurse’s office. In several cases, Kerr was able to connect the family with needed medical support. She also found, however, that about 40 percent of the absences reported as illnesses were actually due to issues such as transportation, travel or illness on the part of another family member.^{xlvix}

Insights can also be gained when school-based health or linked providers, including the staff of school health clinics or mobile vans, also take care to ask about attendance when students seek their medical help. By asking about how much school a student has missed due to a health challenge, providers can begin collecting information about how illness is affecting attendance. They can also prevent unnecessary absences by clarifying when students with a mild health condition should continue going to school.

States can make sure that there are policies and resources in place that support the delivery of school-based health care and help ensure that students have access to providers during the school day.

Help schools understand where to access resources to assist with absences due to physical and mental health problems.

The health and public health sectors can also equip educators to understand and unpack causes of absenteeism. Mental health professionals can train educators to recognize early warning signs and to understand the impact of violence and trauma on student behaviors and learning. Health and public health partners can share data with schools about the mental health and trauma-related risk factors in the community surrounding a school, and they can work with schools to ensure that students have adequate support to navigate those factors.

Given the high levels of health-related challenges, as well chronic absence among students in special education, it makes sense for health personnel to be available as school teams develop IEPs for students. This way the plan can include health supports that might help the child miss less school.

Step 4: Learn from Positive Outliers

States can analyze their attendance data to identify districts and schools that are positive outliers. These are schools with a high level of students at risk for chronic absence (e.g., large numbers of low-income students, children from communities of color and students with disabilities), but maintain good attendance rates. State officials can find out what is happening in these schools and districts that are achieving better-than-average results.

Searching Data for Bright Spots

For example, when the analysis of chronic absence for Oregon was first conducted in 2011-12, researchers at ECONorthwest used state data to predict, based on demographics, anticipated levels of chronic absence for schools. Then, the firm used actual data to identify schools that “beat the odds” because they had lower-than-predicted levels of chronic absence. The firm also identified underperforming schools (those with higher-than-expected levels of chronic absence). The findings demonstrate that demographics do not equal destiny, and that school-level practices matter.

Several years later, The Children’s Institute in Oregon drew upon this idea to identify and document best practices for reducing chronic early absence in particular districts and schools. The resulting report, [Showing Up, Staying In](#), shares inspiring stories and guidance about what works, as well as uses insights gained to make recommendations for state policy and practice.

The Connecticut State Department of Education provides data on levels of chronic absence on [its state website](#). One report offers three-year trends for all of the state’s school districts, allowing readers to identify those districts with consistent reductions. One notable example, is New Britain, which is engaged in a concerted effort to reduce chronic absence by producing actionable data, offering professional development to principals, creating student attendance teams at each school and expanding outreach and engagement to families.

New Britain, Conn. Tackling Early Absenteeism

When the Consolidated School District of New Britain crunched the numbers on chronic absenteeism, the big surprise came in kindergarten: An alarming 30 percent of kindergartners were considered chronically absent – missing 10 percent or more of the school year.

With the help of the state and a local foundation, the district hired two outreach workers who coordinate with families, social workers, teachers and community agencies to engage and support the parents of kindergartners. Data reports are sent to principals every 10 days, and school teams track students with at-risk attendance.

These efforts have yielded powerful and convincing results. Kindergarten absenteeism has dropped by nearly half. And as absenteeism rates went down, early literacy scores went up. The past year’s historic snow wreaked havoc with attendance, but New Britain remains committed to reducing chronic absence rates. Connecticut is now asking districts to track chronic absences as part of the school improvement process.

“Our children in kindergarten – and even in preschool –are covering a lot, academically and socially,” said Joe Vaverchak, the district’s attendance director. “Now everyone is aware, and everyone is working together.”

Unpacking What Works

In Los Angeles Unified School District, Debra Duardo, now the executive director of Health and Human Services, conducted research to examine why some schools in the district’s Attendance Improvement Program were more effective than others. She examined practices in six schools, three of which had better outcomes than their peers. Through a comprehensive set of interviews with staff at all levels, she discovered that in schools with better outcomes, the site leaders made attendance a high priority. Those interviewed shared the belief that everyone plays a role in improving attendance. Parent engagement was higher. Staff focused on student strengths, had more positive perceptions of parents and expressed a deeper level of commitment to implementing programs and delving into the causes of absence.¹

By investigating what is working, states can spot effective practices that other schools and districts can replicate, as well as identify innovative site and district leaders who can inspire others to make needed reforms. These local leaders can also offer insights on what the state might do to encourage more schools and districts to adopt effective attendance practice. Finally, positive outliers serving students with similar demographics provide concrete proof that schools and communities working together can improve attendance, even for student populations that others may perceive as beyond reach. Attendance Works offers this [Positive Outliers Toolkit](#) to help with documenting what works at particular school sites.

Step 5: Embed Action into Existing Initiatives

Embedding action within existing initiatives is critical, given the tremendous number of responsibilities and new initiatives already being thrust upon schools. Too often, something that requires new organization or infrastructure simply does not get acted on, while action related strategically to work already underway is seen as much more doable. Attention to chronic early absence is increasingly gaining traction because states are finding ways to integrate attention into existing reform efforts such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI), school improvement planning and community partnership efforts.

School Climate and Tiered Systems of Support

In Maryland, for example, the work on chronic absence is being integrated into the state's efforts to improve school climate through the adoption of multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS). The state is integrating attention to attendance into its materials and technical assistance, including equipping the coaches responsible for helping schools adopt MTSS to understand what chronic absence is and how it can be reduced.

Attendance is also an explicit component of Georgia's School Climate Star Rating system, part of the state's College and Career Ready Performance Index. A diagnostic tool for determining if a school is on the right path to student achievement, the school climate rating is calculated using data from surveys of students, parents and school staff as well as student discipline data and attendance records for students, teachers, staff and administrators.

School Improvement

In Connecticut, the work on chronic absence is embedded into its targeted investment in the state's 30 lowest-performing districts. To receive additional resources to improve their schools, districts must submit plans to the state Department of Education on an annual basis. The state then reviews the plans to ensure they are aligned to the goals of the program. Annual plan approval is predicated upon district implementation and performance during the prior year. All districts with higher than 10 percent levels of chronic absence must address how they will improve attendance in their plans.

Third Grade Reading

Reducing chronic absence is among the three priority solutions emphasized by the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which has nurtured the development of more than 200 community campaigns in 42 states to increase the number of low-income children reading proficiently by the end of third grade. The other priorities include improving school readiness and preventing summer learning loss. Although schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve and for providing effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day, the GLR campaign asserts that schools cannot succeed alone. They also need engaged communities mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities and assist parents to serve as full partners in the success of their children.

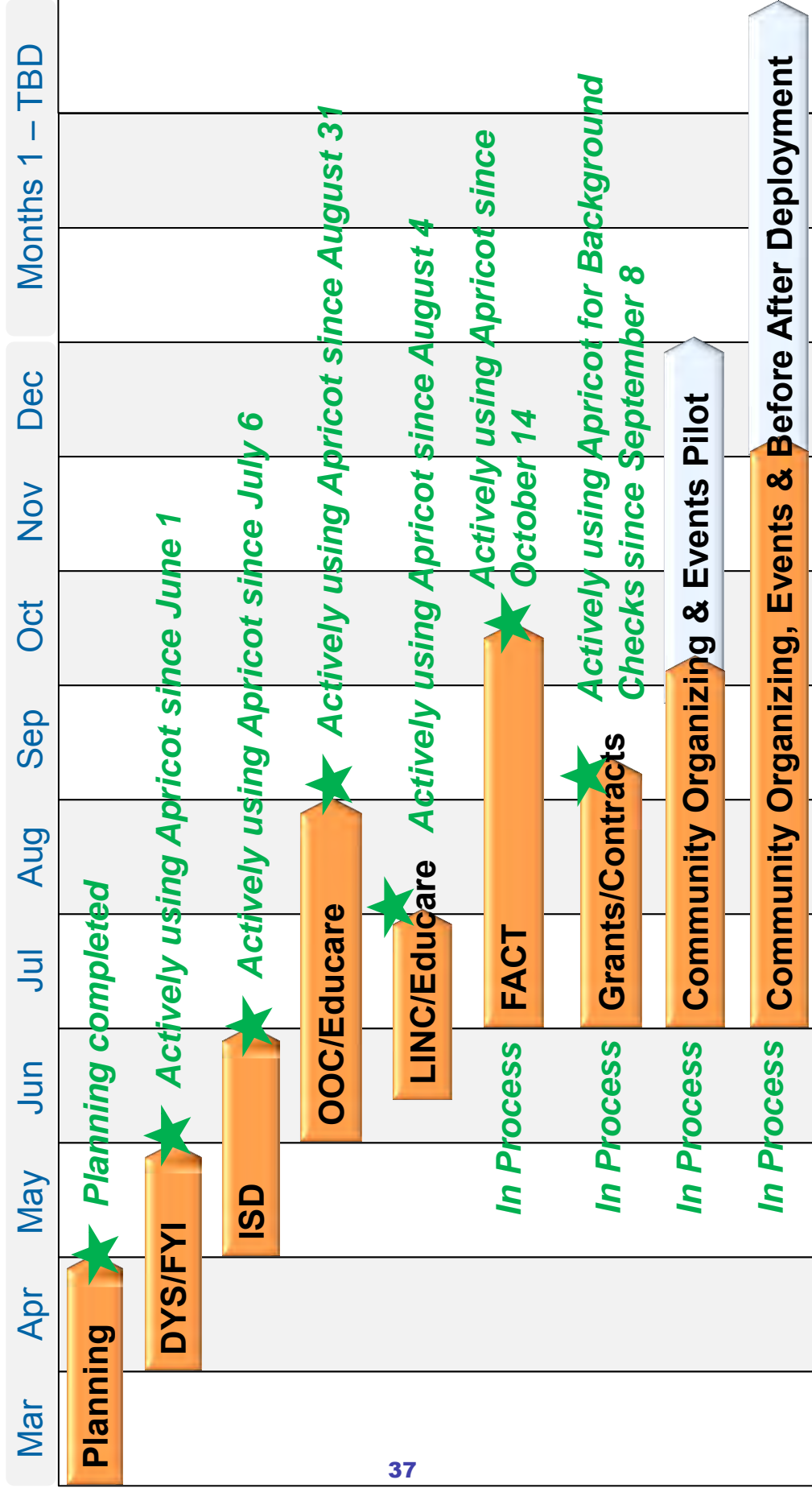
[ReadySetSoar](#), a component of a broader cradle to career initiative in the Montgomery County Dayton, Ohio, region, first heard about chronic absence when participating in a GLR Campaign convening. Inspired, ReadySetSoar convinced seven districts with high poverty rates to find out how many students in grades K-3 were chronically absent and what impact it had on reading proficiency. The results, showing one out of five students were chronically absent and its correlation with lower reading and math scores are depicted in [this infographic](#). The data quickly made it clear that addressing chronic absence was an integral part of their local campaign. It gained greater urgency when the state legislature passed its Third Grade Reading Guarantee, which calls for holding back any third grader who is not reading proficiently. It also seeks to ensure struggling readers are identified in kindergarten and provided with needed supports.

Cleveland, another GLR Campaign community, has also launched a comprehensive effort to reduce chronic absence starting with a focus on community awareness. Eric Gordon, the CEO of Cleveland Metropolitan School District, has issued a call to action to fight chronic absenteeism through a citywide campaign: [Get To School – You Can Make it!](#) #GET2SchoolCLE. In the meantime, the Ohio Department of Education expanded its efforts to monitor chronic absence by adding it to publicly available school report cards in Spring 2015.

Community Schools and Afterschool

A focus on chronic absence is also a common feature of the Community Schools initiatives in many states and localities. The schools, which focus on engaging the entire community often on the school site, can use chronic absence as a concrete, achievable measure of collective impact. At the same time, such initiatives can offer an opportunity for schools to identify and partner with other agencies whose resources are so crucial to removing barriers to getting to school. In Utah, for example, the work on chronic absence initially began because of strong interest among the state's afterschool community in identifying an indicator that they could use to strengthen their ability to collaborate with schools.

Apricot Implementation Plan Update

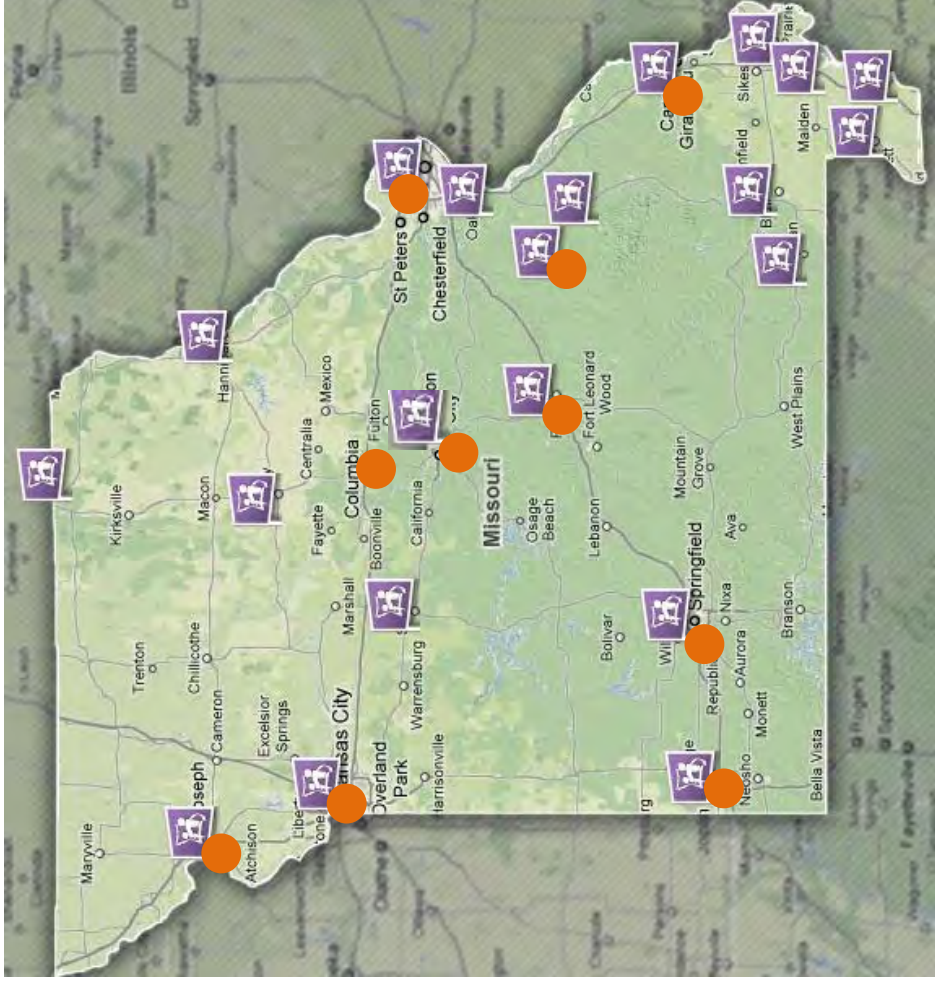


As of 10/9/2015, 108 Active Users

OOC Educare & FACT Update

OOC Educare

- Live on 8/31 with OOC and 9 Educare Partners
- OOC received partner monthly reports for July, August and September
- Partners completing Q1 reports



FACT

- Live on 10/14 with FACT and 20 Community Partnerships
- Adding two additional Missouri Mentoring in partners in the near future

Where It All Comes Together

How Partnerships Connect Communities and Schools



BY MARTIN J. BLANK AND LISA VILLARREAL

The modern-day community schools movement reached a new plateau in 2008 when Randi Weingarten made community schools a central element of her platform as the new president of the American Federation of Teachers. The AFT's action was a milestone on a journey that began a decade earlier, when advocates for community schools determined that it was necessary to renew a core American value—that our public schools should be centers of flourishing communities where everyone belongs and works together to help our young people thrive.

The AFT's leadership understood then, and continues to understand now, that students need the organized support of

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their communities to succeed, and that schools alone cannot provide all the educational and developmental experiences young people need to graduate and succeed in life.

Leaders in local government, local United Ways, community foundations, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, and beyond are coming to the same conclusion. Across the country, they see a public school student population that is more than 51 percent poor¹ and increasingly diverse. And they see young people who are more isolated and distrustful,² and who face deep and pervasive inequities.

Community schools purposefully partner with youth organizations, health clinics, social service agencies, food banks, higher education institutions, businesses, and others to meet students' and families' academic and nonacademic needs, so teachers are free to teach and students are ready to learn. Community schools are becoming the chosen strategy for action among these leaders. Such schools represent a comprehensive—and transformative—school reform strategy that views young people holistically and expects everyone to step up to support them.

The Coalition for Community Schools, which was organized in 1997, has become a driving force in the community schools movement. With 214 partners in education, health and mental

health, youth development, civil rights, local government, child and youth advocacy, philanthropy, and local community school initiatives, the coalition has helped raise the visibility of community schools and has led many partners to pursue the development of community schools as part of their own agendas.

In this article, we outline how far the community schools movement has come since the AFT made community schools a priority in 2008. We explain why the movement has grown, clarify what exactly makes a community school different from other schools, lay out how community schools work, and show the positive results that community schools are attaining. We conclude with a brief discussion of the challenges that lie ahead.

The Rise of the Community Schools Movement

Approximately 5,000 schools in more than 150 communities across the country currently employ the community school strategy, serving around 2 million students. Exact numbers are hard to determine because community schools come in so many shapes and sizes and often don't follow a formal model. Large school districts (such as Baltimore; Chicago; New York City; and Oakland, California), medium-size districts (such as Cincinnati; Evansville, Indiana; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Salt Lake City), and smaller districts (such as Vallejo, California; Evanston, Illinois; and Allentown, Pennsylvania) are embracing community schools. University-assisted community schools, where higher education institutions partner with schools, are also growing, as is Communities In Schools, a national nonprofit focused on eliminating the barriers that contribute to students dropping out of school. These places and approaches cut across political perspectives, reflecting the fact that gathering the community at the schoolhouse in order to better support young people and the community is a traditional American idea.

Significantly, these school districts and communities are not just organizing individual community schools; they are working to transform every school into a community school, where both the school district and the community share responsibility for ensuring better outcomes for young people.

Multiple factors have led to the continuing adoption of community schools. First, the test-based accountability movement simply has not achieved what its architects set out to do: dramatically improve student achievement, especially for poor children and children of color. While that movement has illuminated the achievement gap, it has not addressed the inequities in young people's lives, the toxic stress,³ and the sense of isolation that come from growing up in racially and economically segregated neighborhoods. Nor has it addressed health disparities, chronic absence, school discipline, the lack of social capital, and other challenges receiving growing attention today.

The increase in poverty among our nation's students cannot be overemphasized as well. The majority of public school students now come from low-income families, and that number seems likely to grow as the squeeze on the middle class continues. Our country's population is also more diverse than ever,^{*} with the percentage of English language learners continuing to increase,⁴ and the number of languages spoken and cultures present in public schools continuing to challenge a predominantly white teacher workforce.

^{*}For more about the increasing diversity of language and culture in the United States, see the article by Claude Goldenberg and Kirstin Wagner on page 28 of this issue of *American Educator*.

Also, a growing recognition that children learn and develop across multiple domains has bolstered the community schools movement. The success of young people depends not just on their academic achievement but on their cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and ethical growth, as well as their civic participation. This realization harkens back to the work of Abraham Maslow, Urie Bronfenbrenner, and James Comer,¹ who have argued for the importance of these multiple domains and for addressing the needs of the whole child.⁵

Moreover, as Robert Putnam demonstrates in his new book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*,⁶ too many of our young people lack access to opportunities to find their talent for art, music, athletics, and other abilities—opportunities that help them

Our public schools should be centers of flourishing communities where everyone belongs and works together to help young people thrive.

develop vital skills and build connections and relationships to adults. The contrast in access to opportunity is stark for low-income children compared with their upper-middle-class peers.

The rise of community organizing efforts calling for community schools is another significant development. Family and community engagement have always been key components of the community school strategy. Now, families, young people, and community residents are coming together in deeper ways, demanding that their public schools not be closed. Community members are calling on state and district officials to give their schools the option to become community schools.⁷ They want the stable institutions their communities deserve—places where their children can get the education they need.

¹For more on the work of James Comer, see "School Ties" in the Spring 2013 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/spring2013/dubin.

For more on the history of community schools and how coordinated partnerships meet students' academic, health, and social service needs—and also free teachers to teach—see the Summer 2009 issue of *American Educator*, available at www.aft.org/ae/summer2009.



These community organizers have come together under the banner of the national Journey for Justice Alliance, a coalition of grassroots organizations. They also belong to the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, a broader union-community organizing coalition that has helped introduce community schools legislation in 10 states.*

Finally, teachers know firsthand the impact that a changing student population and difficult family circumstances have on a child's education. In a recent survey by the Council of Chief State School Officers of 46 state teachers of the year, 76 percent



named family stress and 63 percent named poverty as significant barriers to student achievement.⁸ And in a Communities In Schools survey, 88 percent of teachers said poverty is a major barrier to learning.⁹ Additionally, a survey conducted by the AFT in spring 2015 highlighted the workplace stress that teachers face—stress that many educators believe impedes instruction and demeans the profession.[†]

*For more on the Journey for Justice Alliance and the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, visit www.j4jalliance.com and www.reclaimourschools.org.

†For more on the AFT survey, visit <http://go.aft.org/AFT-Workplace-Survey>.

Conditions for Learning

- Early childhood development is fostered through high-quality, comprehensive programs that nurture learning and development.
- The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.
- Students are motivated and engaged in learning—both in school and in community settings, during and after school.
- The basic physical, social, emotional, and economic needs of young people and their families are met.
- There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents and school staff.
- The community is engaged in the school and promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful, and that offers students access to a broader set of learning opportunities.

SOURCE: COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, *COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS; A RATIONALE AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK* (WASHINGTON, DC: COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, 2010), 10.

We can no longer afford to ignore the voices of teachers, who know our children best, or the data on the conditions in young people's lives that influence their learning and development. And more and more school and community leaders agree. That is why they are partnering to establish community schools.

Elements of a Community School

To be clear, academic achievement is central in community schools. After all, we all want young people to be ready for college, career, and citizenship.

But if we focus on academics alone, we fail to understand that young people develop, as we previously discussed, across multiple domains, and we fail to see that it is the responsibility of the school, family, and community, working in concert, to fulfill the necessary conditions for learning (for more on these conditions, see the box to the left).

From a community school perspective, fulfilling these conditions requires deep, respectful, and purposeful relationships among educators, families, and community partners. These partnerships ultimately help build and integrate the common elements of a community school: (1) health and social supports for students and families, often called wraparound services; (2) authentic family and community engagement; and (3) expanded learning opportunities inside and outside the school building that support the core curriculum and enrich students' learning experiences. For school and community leaders, community schools are not a "silver bullet" but a strategy for developing collective trust, collective action, and collective impact.

By establishing partnerships with child and family services organizations, community health centers, mental health agencies, and hospitals, community schools can respond to the fear, hunger, physical pain, and psychological distress that many students experience. Such partners place mental health counselors in schools and sometimes work with schools to operate and house health, dental, and vision clinics inside the actual school building. If such clinics are not located within community schools themselves, the schools link students and families to clinics located in the community.

Family resource centers that connect students and families to the services they need are also common in community schools. And it is not unusual for staff members from community partner organizations to sit and participate on student support teams.

Restorative justice programs have increasingly become a feature of community schools, as well. The term "restorative justice" describes approaches to discipline that help students "proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing."¹⁰ Such programs can improve student behavior and help students avoid the pipeline to prison. By coordinating these services, community schools can reduce chronic absences due to poor health, decrease disciplinary issues and truancy rates, and help create a more stable living situation for children at home.

Authentic family and community engagement is the second dimension of a community school. Research clearly shows the important role that families play in their children's learning and development.¹¹ To that end, community schools seek to build mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families, and school staff. Community schools don't happen *to* families but *with* their active involvement.

Working with community-based partners, educators at many community schools interact with families beyond traditional parent-teacher conferences. Often, community schools embrace parent-teacher home visits,[†] participate on academic teams of parents and teachers, work with parents in leadership development, and engage in the work of community organizing groups. At community schools, families are seen as valuable resources for the education of their children. Such collaboration between teachers and parents helps create a more welcoming, respectful, and supportive culture and climate across the entire school. As teachers know all too well, the better the school climate, the more teaching and learning occur.

Finally, the enriching learning experiences that community schools offer can take place before, during, and after school, and may even extend into the summer. These experiences engage young people in real-world problem solving around issues of critical concern to students, families, and their neighborhoods. Issues such as decreasing violence, improving the



environment, increasing access to healthcare and good nutrition, and others enable the community to become a focal point for learning, with service learning as a common strategy. In community schools, partnerships with businesses, higher education institutions, and healthcare systems and hospitals offer students career-focused learning experiences, apprenticeships, and internships.

How Community Schools Operate

Strong leadership across multiple institutions, a focus on results, and the presence of a community schools coordinator are among the key ingredients for bringing community schools to life. School and community leaders have learned about these and other key ingredients for organizing effective community schools over the past two decades (see the box on page 8), and they are learning how to grow systems of community schools where partners and educators develop relationships with multiple community schools that coordinate resources, share best practices, and get results.

[†]For an example of how parent-teacher home visits can work, see the article on the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project on page 24 of this issue.

Focusing at the systems level is essential if community schools are to become a permanent part of the education and community landscape, and if they are to avoid the pitfalls of leadership transitions, policy shifts, and other forces. There are more than 150 places scaling up community schools, among the most recent being New York City, where Mayor Bill de Blasio has overseen the development of 128 community schools and has set a goal of establishing 200 by 2017.

Growing systems of community schools has become a key priority for the Coalition for Community Schools. Our experience shows that establishing interactions among a community-wide leadership group and site leadership teams from community schools within the same school district, with the support of a strong intermediary organization, is the key to building a successful system of community schools. In the coalition's guide *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy*, we outline the structural elements that experience tells us are necessary for the most sustainable system.¹²

Community schools can reduce chronic absences due to poor health, decrease disciplinary issues and truancy rates, and help create a more stable living situation for children at home.

The community-wide leadership group, made up of members from the school district, local government, United Ways, businesses, teacher unions, and community- and faith-based organizations, is responsible for setting the overall vision, developing policy, aligning resources, and outlining accountability plans to build and sustain a system of community schools. A school-site leadership team, consisting of parents, residents, principals, teachers, school staff, community partners and usually a community coordinator, and students, is responsible for school-based decision making, which includes planning and implementation, and satisfying local needs that align with the school's academic mission. An intermediary entity (an organization or a working group composed of key managers from one or more partner agencies) provides planning, coordination, and management. Intermediary staff ensure communication among community-wide and school-site leaders. With these leadership structures in place, educators and partners can increase the number and effectiveness of community schools across a school district.

It's important to note that community schools are well-suited to engage with related efforts to help young people, families, and communities. For instance, the Becoming a Man program,¹³ a prototype for President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative,

was designed by Youth Guidance, the lead partner in a number of Chicago community schools. (For more on the Becoming a Man program, see page 11.) Other community school initiatives also have taken up the call of My Brother's Keeper—to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color so all young people can reach their full potential.

Similarly, in addition to major organizational partners (e.g., the Afterschool Alliance, the School-Based Health Alliance, the National League of Cities, the School Superintendents Association, and United Way Worldwide), the coalition works with broad national initiatives that are related to community schools, including Attendance Works, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, the Promise Neighborhoods Institute, Partners for Each and Every Child, and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign. Community schools welcome such efforts because each one requires the active engagement of the school and community to succeed. This makes community schools a powerful vehicle in collective impact and place-based strategies.¹⁴

Community Schools Are Effective

Multiple research studies show that community schools work, including a recent Child Trends meta-analysis that found that community schools support young people's needs, reduce grade retention and dropout rates, and increase attendance, math achievement, and grade-point averages.¹⁵

Key Ingredients of an Effective Community School

- A principal who knows his or her community, sees achieving equity as fundamental to his or her work, and makes the school building a place where educators, partners, and the public feel comfortable working together.
- Skilled teachers who have high expectations for their students, enjoy collaborative relationships with families and community partners, and offer students robust learning experiences that draw on community resources and expertise.
- Community partners with the expertise to help achieve the goals of the community school, and who are well integrated into the life of the school.
- A community schools coordinator who serves as a bridge between the school and community, aligns the work of educators and community partners toward a common set of results, and supports a site leadership team.
- A site leadership team that gives families, students, and residents a voice and involves them, along with educators and community partners, in the planning, implementation, and oversight of the community school.
- A community assessment that identifies the needs of the school, students, families, and community, as well as the assets of individuals, formal institutions and agencies, and informal organizations in the community that can be mobilized to meet these needs.
- A focus on results and accountability that uses data to define specific indicators that the community school seeks to improve, and the capacity to collect and analyze data to measure progress.

SOURCE: COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, "FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS," WWW.BIT.LY/1NBfNFR.

In Chicago, which has been subject to a variety of reforms over the years, research by Carnegie Foundation president Anthony Bryk and his colleagues found that schools with community school characteristics were more successful in terms of academic achievement in reading and math scores, and in reducing chronic absenteeism, along with other key indicators of student success.¹⁶ Spanning many years, the research concluded that successful schools had robust parent-community ties, a student-centered learning climate, and instructional guidance. Trust among school leaders, teachers, families, and community members was also an important predictor of school success.

Similar findings appear in studies of community schools across the nation. For example, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, students in community schools that successfully implemented student and family supports had math scores that were 32 points higher and reading scores that were 19 points higher than their counterparts in other Tulsa schools.¹⁷

Students involved with City Connects in Boston community schools showed higher reading, writing, and mathematics report-card performance in grades 3–5, and higher third-grade math scores on the state standardized test. In middle school, students earned higher overall course grades in grades 6–7, and performed better on math and English language arts state tests in grades 6–8.¹⁸

Evaluators of Baltimore's community school initiative found that schools that had been implementing community school practices for five or more years had significantly better attendance rates and lower chronic absence rates than noncommunity schools. From the 2009–2010 to 2013–2014 school years, these community schools increased average attendance by 1.6 percent, compared with a 1.8 percent decrease for noncommunity schools, and decreased chronic absence rates by 4.1 percent, compared with a 3.6 percent increase for noncommunity schools.¹⁹ (For more on Baltimore's community school initiative, see page 11.)

Finally, a study by the Finance Project shows that community schools return \$10 to \$14 in social benefits for each dollar invested.²⁰

The Policy Environment for Community Schools

At the federal level, we continue to impress upon policymakers the importance of addressing the challenges that community schools take on. Progress is incremental but promising. As Congress debates the renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the coalition has been promoting the authorization and funding of the Full-Service Community Schools Act²¹ as a specific program, while also advocating for a set of principles that reflect the operational elements of community schools.

Key principles include a broader accountability framework, with elements such as health, wellness, and discipline; language undergirding the role of community school coordinators; professional development that enables principals, teachers, instructional support personnel, and community partners to work more effectively with families, communities, and each other; and capacity building that supports community school partnerships and better aligns and coordinates programs. In our discussions with members of Congress, these principles have received a positive reception.

At the state level, we have seen a marked increase in interest in community schools. New York and the District of Columbia have appropriated funds for community schools. Legislation supporting community schools has been enacted in Connecticut, Maine, and New Mexico. And in July 2014, the West Virginia Board of Education approved a policy framework endorsing community schools for statewide implementation.

A number of other states, often at the behest of community organizers, have already introduced or plan to introduce legislation this year to support community schools, including California, Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin. (For more on legislative efforts in Texas, see the article on page 12.) Passing bills will not be easy, but in the short term, introducing legislation raises the visibility of the community school strategy and strengthens the foundation for future growth. To support state efforts, the coalition is convening state-level community school advocates in order to promote supportive policies, provide technical assistance, and create a statewide peer learning group.



The Way Forward

Across the country, the widespread adoption of community schools shows great promise. The way forward is hopeful, but challenges as well as opportunities lie ahead.

Viewing Our Young People Differently: A fundamental transformation in the way our society sees young people is necessary. Our society must view our youth as assets to be developed, not problems to be addressed.²² We must rebuild their trust in the people around them and help them to develop the agency—the sense of control over their own lives—so important to success.

Engaging Teachers and School Staff: Teachers and school staff members, who all play an enormous role in helping to create a safe school climate and culture, are becoming more deeply involved in the planning and implementation of community schools. And they are making clear the importance of addressing poverty, family stress, and other issues for success.

But there is more work to do to engage teachers in school-based decision making and in the nuts and bolts of community schools. With both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association strongly committed to community schools, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen local ties between teachers and community partners.

Changing Mindsets, Enhancing Leadership, and Strengthening Professional Development: Leadership and professional development programs in education, social work, community development, and other fields need to offer a sharper picture of the inequities that influence public education. Principals and teachers not only need to be able to lead and deliver instruction, they must be prepared to work more effectively with families, community residents, and community partners. So too must the mindset of community partners change. They need to understand the culture of public schools, and as education allies, they must find effective ways to share their expertise.

Preparing Coordinators for Community Schools: Community school coordinators require interdisciplinary expertise in youth and community development, social work, and student learning, as well as data-driven decision making and strategic planning. To date, much of the preparation of these individuals has been handled at the local level, with limited resources. Only the University of Chicago offers a comprehensive master's-level

Across the country, the widespread adoption of community schools shows great promise.

program.²³ Much greater attention must be given to how coordinators are prepared and to professionalizing their role as the field grows.

Providing More Extensive Support for Capacity Building: There is a paucity of funding for capacity building of community schools, with minimal federal and state investment. While the National Center for Community Schools at the Children's Aid Society provides assistance, as do other local and regional groups, the support of public and private funders is essential.

Becoming a Community School District: As more school districts and communities work to bring community schools to scale, districts and community partners must consider ways to build and sustain their relationships. All partners must ask how they must change as an organization.

Districts will need to answer questions such as: How must data systems, leadership, professional development programs, facilities planning, and other practices change? How does the district integrate the assets of community partners into its school improvement planning so that the work of educators and community partners is aligned toward common results? How does it support principals and teachers in that endeavor?

(Continued on page 43)

Where Community Schools Are Strong

Across the country, in places that have expanded and sustained community schools, leadership—at both the school-building and school-district level—has played a major role.

Union leadership also matters, including representatives of both teachers and school support staff. When unions partner with community organizations and the school district, they can more effectively promote a common vision for public education. By their very nature, unions have the organizational infrastructure to organize educators and community members and do what they do best, which is to mobilize and engage around educational issues and student support.

In many cases, schools and communities must rebuild, strengthen, and/or create trusting relationships. Those who work in our schools and those who live in our communities have different assets and needs. The only way to provide access to opportunity for all children is for schools and communities to collectively come up with solutions that go beyond organizational self-interests. Effective community schools make decisions by consulting with school staff members, students, parents, and community partners.

National and local unions have supported such schools and see their potential. Organized labor and community organizations each bring their own kind of leverage and political power that can help schools and communities work toward a common vision of how to support children and families.

In moving the community school strategy forward, we need to be intentional about ensuring that labor groups, school officials, and community members are working together to drive school-based decision making and deepen the work of community schools nationwide.

A particular strength of the community school strategy is that it fosters local decision making, so that educators, parents, and community stakeholders can determine what's best for each child. The school-site leadership team—composed of a community school coordinator, parents, residents, principals, teachers, school staff, community partners, and students—makes school-based decisions that involve planning, implementation, and school improvement.

This team also focuses on making decisions that fulfill the needs of students, families, and the immediate community, all

the while aligning those needs with academic goals.

Examples of how unions are helping to grow community schools include:

- **Helping to create state and local coalitions that can push for policy changes to support and fund community schools.** This work is taking place in Baltimore, New York City (pictured to the right), Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. For example, in partnership with the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, local and state union affiliates have formed statewide coalitions to advocate for state community school legislation.
- **Ensuring that community schools are part of political platforms, including in mayoral races and school board elections.** The United Federation of Teachers collaborated with community organizations across New York City, including the Children's Aid Society, to make sure all 2013 mayoral candidates included the expansion of the community school strategy in their platforms. As a result, after his election, Mayor Bill de Blasio made a commitment to invest \$52 million to create more community schools.

Additionally, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers and the organization Great Public Schools Pittsburgh specifically endorse school board candidates based on their commitment to bring community schools to Pittsburgh Public Schools.

- **Building awareness around the community school strategy in their communities and with their members.** Education on what community schools are and how various stakeholders can get involved is crucial to ensuring that union members, community members, parents, students, and others are part of the conversation when it comes to creating community schools. For instance, the Baltimore Teachers Union created the Education Roundtable in partnership with a variety of stakeholders—the Family League of Baltimore, the American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland, Maryland Communities United, CASA de Maryland, and the Baltimore/Maryland Central Labor Council, among others. Together, they are building awareness around community schools by holding trainings at schools for their members as well as for community members and parents.



AFT PHOTOS

- **Using this strategy as common ground for labor-management relationships.** Conversations with school districts around the creation of community schools must take place, even in the instances where strong relationships don't yet exist. Ultimately, having labor groups, community members, and management working together on this strategy will be a key factor in its sustainability. For example, in Cincinnati, where community school work has been taking place for more than 10 years, the superintendent closely works with the Community Learning Center Institute (which leads the district's community school effort) and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers. Thanks to this partnership, the school board implemented a policy that codifies the community school strategy.

—AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT

Portions adapted with permission from "The Power of Community Schools" by Natasha Capers and Shital C. Shah, *Voices in Urban Education*, no. 40 (2015), available at www.bit.ly/1GqxMps.

AFT Resources

- Visit www.bit.ly/1fhB5on to watch AFT members discuss the importance of community schools.
- Visit www.bit.ly/1JbFkg8 to learn more about what makes a school a community school.

A Community Hub

As shown below, a community school functions as the hub of its community. Partners such as unions, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, businesses, and higher education institutions collaborate to ensure that both academic and nonacademic needs are met for students and families so that students can focus on learning and educators can focus on teaching.



DANIEL BAXTER, IMAGE ADAPTED WITH PERMISSION FROM FAMILY LEAGUE OF BALTIMORE INFOGRAPHIC

Building Character in Chicago

Male students at John Hancock College Preparatory High School, a community school in Chicago, are building character and learning how to solve conflicts in *Becoming a Man*, a dropout- and violence-prevention program that helped inspire President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* initiative. And *Working on Womanhood* is doing the same for young women.

A signature program of Youth Guidance, the lead agency at Hancock, *Becoming a Man* provides students with mentorship experiences and peer support. Group sessions, field trips, and afterschool sports focus on developing social-emotional skills in young men through stories, role playing, and group exercises. The lessons are intended to teach impulse control, emotional self-regulation, and how to read social cues and interpret others' intentions.

An evaluation by the University of Chicago Crime Lab found a 44 percent reduction in violent crime-related arrests for students in the program, and at Hancock, there has been a decline in school suspensions since *Becoming a Man* began. While school staff members refer students to the program, many students also "self-refer" because they want to be part of the enriching field trips and afterschool sports activities, says Kathryn Rice, Hancock's resource coordinator.

The creation of a care team, consisting of community partners and school staff members, has helped to increase the

attendance at the school from 78 percent in 2010 to a current all-time high of 88 percent. Every other week, the eight-member team pores over names of students considered at risk and plans strategies for improving outcomes for those students. Because of that structure, "We don't have students who just slip through the cracks," Rice says.

Family League of Baltimore

"Leading collaborations" is how the Family League of Baltimore describes its work to improve outcomes for Baltimore's students. This approach was apparent three years ago when the league made a strategic decision to require social service organizations and other community groups that wanted to work with afterschool providers to demonstrate a commitment to community schools in order to receive funding. The goal was to create a more integrated approach to improving outcomes for students through an array of enrichment, health, and social support programs for students and their families.

While some were skeptical about the new direction, says Julia Baez, the senior director of initiatives for the Family League, providers now see that "this relationship is mutually beneficial."

Participation rates in afterschool programs have increased, and because each of the city's 45 community schools has a full-time coordinator, Baez says there is "constant communication" involving teachers and providers around which

students would most benefit from additional learning and enrichment in extracurricular activities. Students who attend afterschool programs for at least two years have higher school attendance rates and are less likely to be chronically absent.

The Family League has also devoted considerable resources toward making sure new community school coordinators and community partners develop the skills that will help them be more effective in their roles. In 2014, 113 professional development opportunities were provided, reaching roughly 1,400 participants. Sessions for coordinators included topics such as the Common Core State Standards and youth development best practices.

The growing support of the community school model throughout the city is also being reflected in organizations such as the Y of Central Maryland, which has made community schools one of its priorities.

Community schools are a central piece of the city's plan to renovate or build new schools. Collaborative spaces will be included in the design of buildings, health services are being planned, and schools will be open extended hours to meet the needs of students, families, and community members.

—M.J.B. and L.V.

Adapted with permission from the Coalition for Community Schools' "2015 Community Schools Awards Profiles," available at www.bit.ly/1DCLZiQ.

Where It All Comes Together

(Continued from page 9)

A similar set of questions must be asked of community partners: How must their policies, practices, and professional development change to sustain a community school? The emerging experience of school districts and communities in taking community schools to scale provides the foundation for a set of standards that the coalition is currently developing.

Strengthening Leadership Networks: The coalition now coordinates networks of community school leaders, superintendents, community school coordinators, United Ways, higher education institutions, and funders. Expanding the reach of these networks to share lessons learned and broaden participation is crucial to achieving the coalition's goal of having 200 school systems and their communities adopt a community school strategy in the next five years.

Investing in Our Children: Inequities in school funding formulas in many states, and inadequate funding for critical opportunities and supports (e.g., early childhood education, afterschool programs, and mental health services), are obvious to many education observers. These funding gaps must be remedied at the federal, state, and local levels. A strong economy and equitable society require such investments.

Ultimately, community schools benefit students, families, and teachers in three important ways: They reduce the demand on educators and other school staff by addressing the academic and nonacademic challenges that students bring to school. They nurture students' social and emotional development. And they enable students and families to build social capital—the networks and relationships that support learning and development, and that enable young people to envision and enjoy a successful future.

In sum, the community school strategy is built on recognizing that the education and development of our children is a shared responsibility. Only together can schools and communities achieve positive outcomes for young people and our society. □

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Kansas City Star – Sept. 28, 2015

Huge federal grant means KC can improve much more than public housing

By LYNN HORSLEY

Kansas City will use a new, \$30 million federal grant to do much more than just move 500 people out of an antiquated public housing project.

As U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro announced the highly coveted grant Monday, he said the Kansas City Housing Authority and its partners won the award because of their comprehensive plan to lift people out of poverty.



“This is community revitalization the way it should be done,” Castro said of the Paseo Gateway plan, which will improve housing, public safety and transit, social and health services, educational offerings, job training and business development for

the Northeast neighborhood from Interstate 35 to Chestnut Trafficway and from Cliff Drive to Ninth Street.

Castro described the area as “the Ellis Island of Kansas City,” for its incredibly diverse population, including immigrants from all over the world.

He praised a key part of the plan — to move residents of the obsolete Chouteau Courts low-income housing project, just west of Independence Avenue and the Paseo, into new or revitalized mixed-income housing units over the next five years.

But those residents and other neighbors will also have case managers and other services to change their lives.

“The real work is just starting,” he said. “Let’s get the job done.”

The grant culminates more than four years of planning by the Kansas City Housing Authority and city government.

It involved numerous partners, including United Way; Brinshore Development of Chicago, one of the nation's top public housing master developers; the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences; Kansas City public schools; Greater Kansas City LISC, a community development organization; and Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, where the grant announcement was made.

"I couldn't be prouder of what's been accomplished here," Mayor Sly James said at the announcement ceremony. "This is a huge deal for Kansas City."

Out of 33 applicants for the grants, five communities were chosen. The others were Atlanta, Milwaukee, Memphis and Sacramento.

Housing Authority executive director Edwin Lowndes said this is the second-largest grant ever received by the Housing Authority, behind only the \$47 million grant in 1993 to redo Guinotte Manor. Lowndes said Chouteau Courts, built in 1958, is now the oldest development that the Housing Authority needs to transform.

Residents will be moved out over time from the 20 buildings that make up the Chouteau Courts development. Lowndes said the agency will work closely with residents and surrounding neighborhoods to make the transition smooth and to address concerns that may arise.

The first residents could be moved about a year from now, but the schedule is uncertain. Housing Authority officials said it depends on how quickly replacement units come on line.

Chouteau Courts tenant representative Sebra Scrogum was on hand for Monday's announcement and said the transition can't occur fast enough for the residents. She said they're eager to move, and the grant will be a huge help.

"It will mean a lot to everyone at Chouteau," she said.

Out of the \$30 million, about \$21 million is for new and refurbished housing units. That spending is intended to leverage more private investment in market-rate housing, to create a more mixed-income community.

The other \$9 million is split between community infrastructure improvements that the city will oversee and supportive services for Chouteau Court residents and other low-income families.

Jim MacDonald, senior vice president for community investment with United Way of Greater Kansas City, said his agency will help administer the supportive services. Case managers will help residents get job training and stabilize their finances, help families find the best educational opportunities for their children and assist with managing health care issues.

He said this builds on initiatives that United Way was already doing but will "focus this in a strategic way" to bolster a specific set of neighborhoods.

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\$30 million federal grant will boost Kansas City's urban core

Residents of Chouteau Courts deserve better than the isolation and stigma long associated with Kansas City public housing.

Fortunately, conditions are about to improve. Julián Castro, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, on Monday announced that Kansas City was selected for a much-sought \$30 million federal grant to move the 500 residents, raze Chouteau Courts and replace it with new housing, much of it in Northeast area neighborhoods. Kansas City is one of five cities picked for the five-year grant.

Chouteau Courts, built in 1958, is a Kansas City Housing Authority property northeast of Independence Avenue and the Paseo but cut off by Interstate 35 from the rest of the Northeast area.

Tearing down the three-story, red brick buildings, most beset by plumbing and foundation problems, will rid the city of a dysfunctional relic of earlier anti-poverty policies. Current Chouteau Court residents will get first pick once new housing is built.

Concentrating and cutting off low-income, mostly minority residents from other people and neighborhoods has long been a recipe for public housing failure. It has helped to lock children and families in generational cycles of poverty. The new plan, which includes housing for homeless people, has the potential to change lives in an older part of Kansas City, and it bodes well for the future of the Northeast area.

The grant includes improving education, business development, social services and health in the neighborhood. Castro's announcement took place outside Samuel U. Rodgers Community Health Center, which provides medical care for area residents.

The HUD grant is for the area being called the Paseo Gateway district. It covers a large part of the urban core from I-35 to Chestnut Trafficway and from Cliff Drive to Ninth Street. Castro praised the collaboration of many Kansas City organizations on the grant proposal, including the United Way of Greater Kansas City, Kansas City Public Schools, the Housing Authority, City Hall and Northeast area groups. "This is the way it should be done," he said.

The money will build on improvements already taking place in the Northeast, including the expansion of the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, ongoing renovation of housing and commercial construction, which are attracting new residents and businesses.

"This is a huge deal for Kansas City," Mayor Sly James said. It adds to his push to direct new attention and resources to the long-neglected area.

The East Side also will benefit from the Kansas City Urban Youth Academy, which was announced late last week.

It is to open about a year from now in Parade Park in the 18th and Vine District just north of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. Financing is coming from Major League Baseball, its players association and local and state governments.

The Kansas City Royals will put in \$500,000 to start to cover operating costs. Four fields will be added, at a cost of \$6.5 million, with the goal of generating new interest in baseball among area families and youths. Parade Park also will receive upgrades.

The planned \$7.5 million second phase would include construction of an indoor practice facility along with office space, classrooms and concession stands. The indoor facility is tentatively set to open in the spring of 2017.

That announcement came as the Royals celebrated winning the division championship for the first time in 30 years.

Many residents of the Northeast and East Side have been waiting at least that long to see progress in their neighborhoods. The dramatic announcements of the past week are a huge win for them and for Kansas City.

LINC Chess

2015-2016 season

Free competitive chess
play for students K-12



Sat. Dec. 5 - Winter Tournament, Fire Prairie Upper Elementary

24810 East US Highway 24 Circle, Independence, MO 64056

Sat. Mar. 5 - Girls Only, Boys Only Tournament, Bingham Middle School

1716 S. Speck Rd., Independence, MO 64057

Sat. Apr. 9 - K-12 Tournament, North Kansas City High School

620 E. 23rd Ave., North Kansas City, MO 64116

Sat. May 14- End of Year Tournament, Hickman Mills Freshman Center

9010 Old Santa Fe Road, Kansas City, MO 64138

Learn more about LINC Chess:
kclinc.org/chess

For details and tournament updates:
[Facebook.com/LINCchess](https://www.facebook.com/LINCchess)

LIGHTS ON

AFTERSCHOOL

at LINC Caring Communities

Center School District

Boone CHARACTER COUNTS!
Center Do the Whip Sock Hop

Fort Osage School District

Blue Hills Haunted Hallways

Grandview School District

Belvidere Spotighting the LINC B&A Program
Butcher-Greene Family Fun Festival
Conn-West Science is Fun!
Martin City Pizza & Pumpkins
Meadowmere Fire and Safety Night

Hickman Mills School District

Freda Markley Fire Safety Program
Santa Fe Science Night at Santa Fe
Symington Creative Minds in Action

Kansas City Public Schools

Border Star Fall Festival Family Fun
Faxon Family Health and Wellness Night
Foreign Language Academy Program Showcase
Garcia Night Out with the Lights Out
Garfield We Shine As One
Gladstone Heal the World
Hale Cook Fall Festival
James Smart Light Fall Fest

North Kansas City School District

Topping Celebrating After School Programs



King Harvest Party
Melcher Fall Festival
Paige Family Fun Night with LINC
Pitcher Bullying Prevention
Rogers Kids in Motion at Rogers
Phillips Fire Safety for Lights On!
Wheatley Halloween Adventure
Troost STEAM Museum

KC's Largest Distribution *Ever!*

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Special thanks to all LINC partners and volunteers who made this event possible!

