



**CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

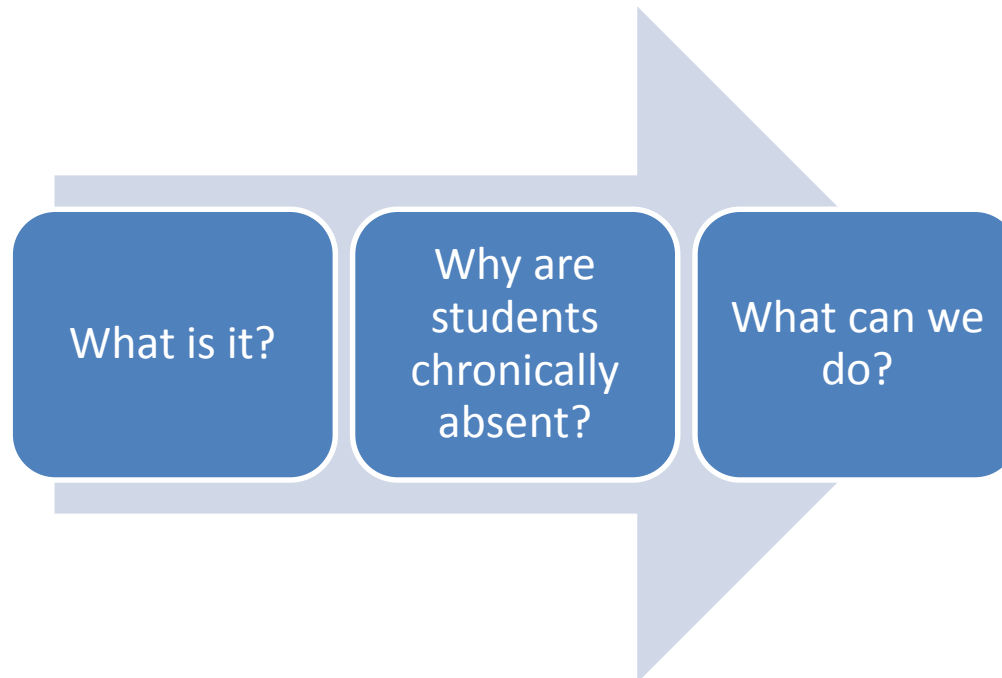
# Every Student in School & Engaged!

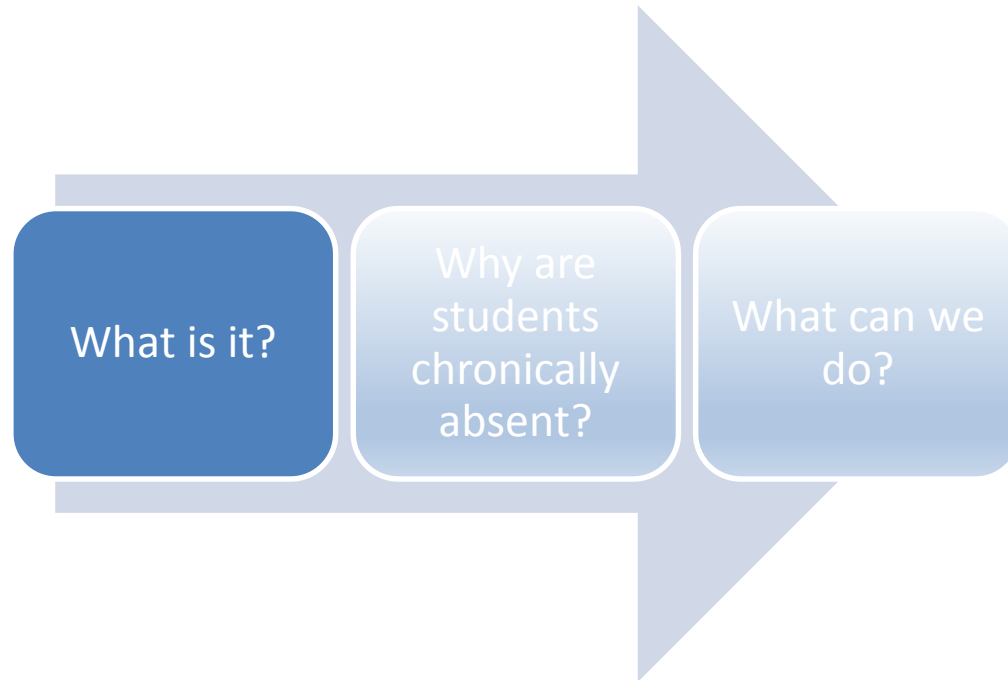
Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

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Chronic Absenteeism & Wraparound Services

# Understanding & Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

- What is chronic absenteeism?
- Why are students chronically absent?
- What can we do?





# How is “in attendance” defined?

- The Connecticut State Board of Education policy states that *“A student is considered to be ‘in attendance’ if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.”*
- A student not meeting the definition of ‘in attendance’ is considered absent.
- Districts may have other ways in which they count absences for local purposes this definition must be used for state reporting (e.g., three tardy days do not make an absence).

# Defining Chronic Absenteeism

## Definition

- Chronically absent - *a child enrolled in a school under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education whose total number of absences, at any time during a school year, is equal to or greater than 10 percent of the total numbers of days a student is enrolled during such school year.*
- It includes both excused, unexcused as well as out of school suspensions.
- It serves as an early warning approach that monitors when students miss 10% or more of school and use those data to trigger intervention throughout the year, starting in the first month of school.

# Excused vs. Unexcused Absence

## The Two-level Approach to Excused Absences

The State Board of Education definitions establish two levels of criteria for an absence to be considered an excused absence (see table below).

Level	Total # of Days Absent*	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to Be Considered Excused	Documentation Required within 10 Days
1	One through nine	Any reason that the student's parent or guardian approves.	Parent or guardian note only.
2	10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student illness (<i>Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absences, regardless of the absence's length.</i>)</li> <li>Student's observance of a religious holiday.</li> <li>Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family.</li> <li>Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required).</li> <li>The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (parental documentation is not required for this reason).</li> <li>Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators. (Opportunities must meet certain criteria. See below for details).</li> </ul>	Parent or guardian note and in some cases additional documentation (see details of specific reason).

\* Note: The total number of days absent includes both excused and unexcused absences.

# Documentation

## Documentation

Parent or guardian notes and other documentation are central to determining whether a student's absence is excused or unexcused. While a note from a parent or guardian will likely be the most common form of documentation, other methods of reporting a student's absence are acceptable. For example, a parent or guardian can report the student's absence in person to an authorized school official, such as an attendance clerk. The table below details the different types of acceptable absence documentation and the required elements for each type.

<b>Parent or Guardian Note</b>	<b>In-Person Explanation from Parent or Guardian to an Authorized School Staff Member</b>	<b>School Nurse Evaluation (either in person or telephone consultation)</b>
Dates of absence	Dates of absence	Dates of absence
Reason for absence	Reason for absence parent or guardian reports	Reason for absence
Signature of parent or guardian	Name of parent or guardian reporting the absence	Date and location of the consultation
	Date and location of the report by parent or guardian	Type of the consultation (i.e., did they see the student themselves or speak to a parent about the student)
	Signature of staff member receiving report	Signature of school nurse

# Truancy vs. Chronic Absenteeism

Truancy (*missing too much school without permission*):

- refers **only to unexcused absences** and is defined as four unexcused absences in one month or 10 unexcused absences in a school year
- alerts schools of the need to hold a meeting with a parent and, if necessary, connect to community supports and services (or referral to juvenile court)

Chronic absenteeism:

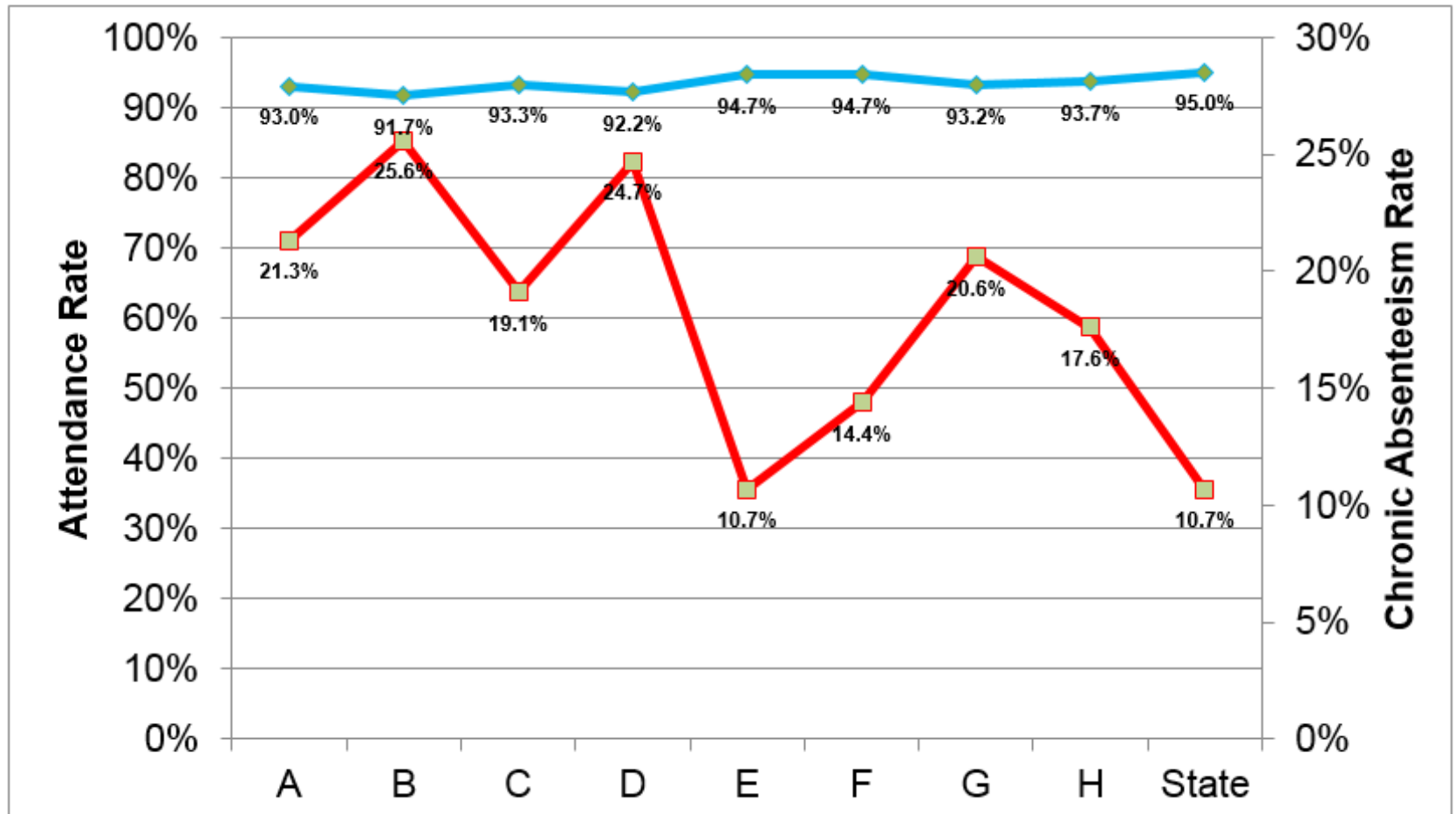
- incorporates all absences – excused, unexcused and suspensions
- focuses on the academic consequences of lost instructional time and on preventing absences before students fall behind in school
- recognizes that students miss school for many understandable issues such as asthma or homelessness or unreliable transportation, for which supports or interventions are needed



# Average Daily Attendance vs. Chronic Absenteeism

- Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rates can easily mask chronic absence.
- It is a school-level measure not a student-level indicator that tells you how many students showed up not which students are at risk due to poor attendance.
- It is problematic in the same way that an average 3rd grade reading score does not shed light on which students need reading intervention.

## Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism, 2013-14 (Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)



# Special Circumstances/Scenarios

- Kindergarten students where physical is delayed at entry;
- Student with anxiety, mental health issues, concussions, or other chronic illness who are missing school and in some cases are impacted by early dismissals for treatment;
- Absences from school while students are participating in activities that could be deemed relevant to their studies (e.g., military training); and
- Students who travel abroad.

Not all scenarios mean there's a "data" issue; sometimes a student is simply missing too much instruction and is chronically absent.

Note that ultimate target for the chronic absenteeism rate is not 0 percent but less than or equal to 5 percent.

# State Legislation

House Bill 5642, an Act Concerning Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee:  
HB 5642 makes various changes affecting schools, such as:

- Requiring schools to offer an alternative educational opportunity to a larger category of expelled students;
- Eliminating a child's truancy or defiant school behavior as permissible grounds for a family with service needs complaint;
- Requiring schools with a disproportionately high truancy rate to implement an approved intervention model; and
- Requiring the State Department of Education (SDE), in collaboration with other agencies, to develop plans on certain matters, such as school-based diversion initiatives and addressing educational deficiencies among children in the juvenile justice system.

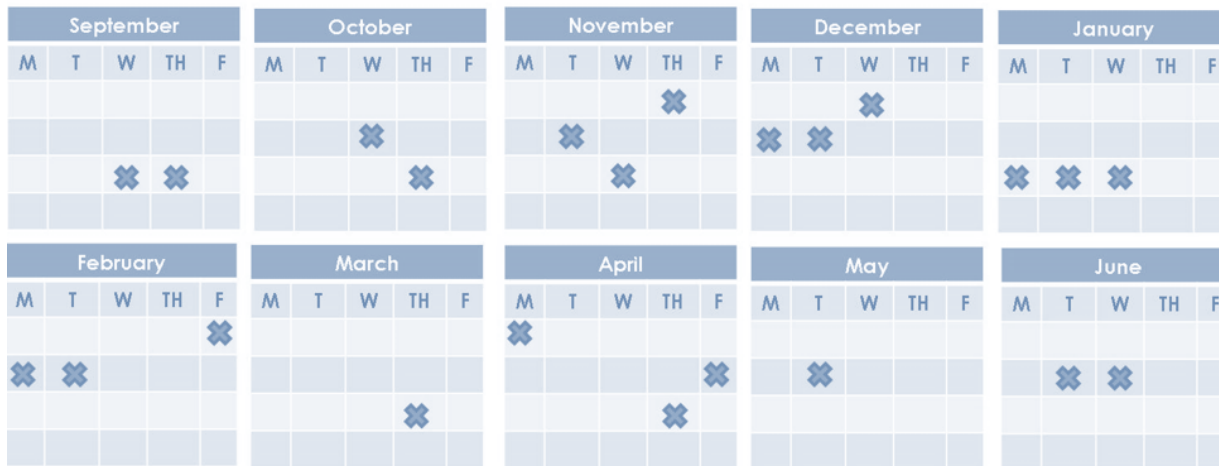
# State Legislation (continued)

Public Act 15-225 requires:

- Local and regional boards of education to monitor and address absenteeism rates in schools;
  - Establish attendance review teams (districts >10%, schools >15%) that meet at least monthly, review cases, discuss interventions and community referrals and any additional recommendations for children;
- CSDE/Interagency Council to develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan and
  - Expand the definition of an absence to include in-school suspensions that are at least half a school day

# Absences Add Up!

## Why We May Not Notice Chronic Absence



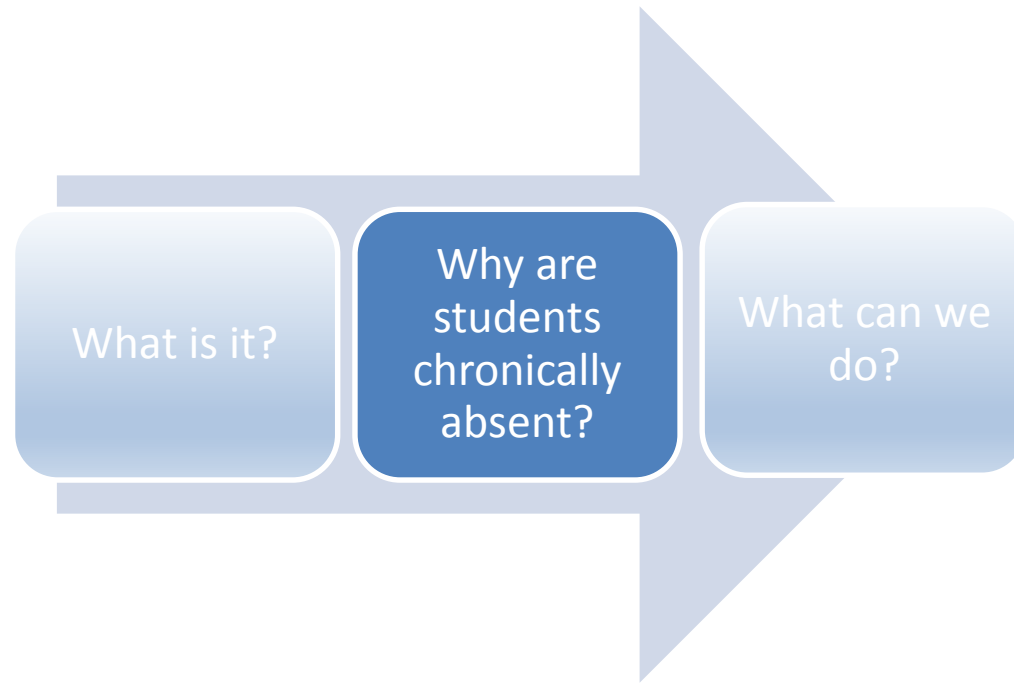
### DID YOU KNOW?

*Just two days/month can lead to chronic absence.*

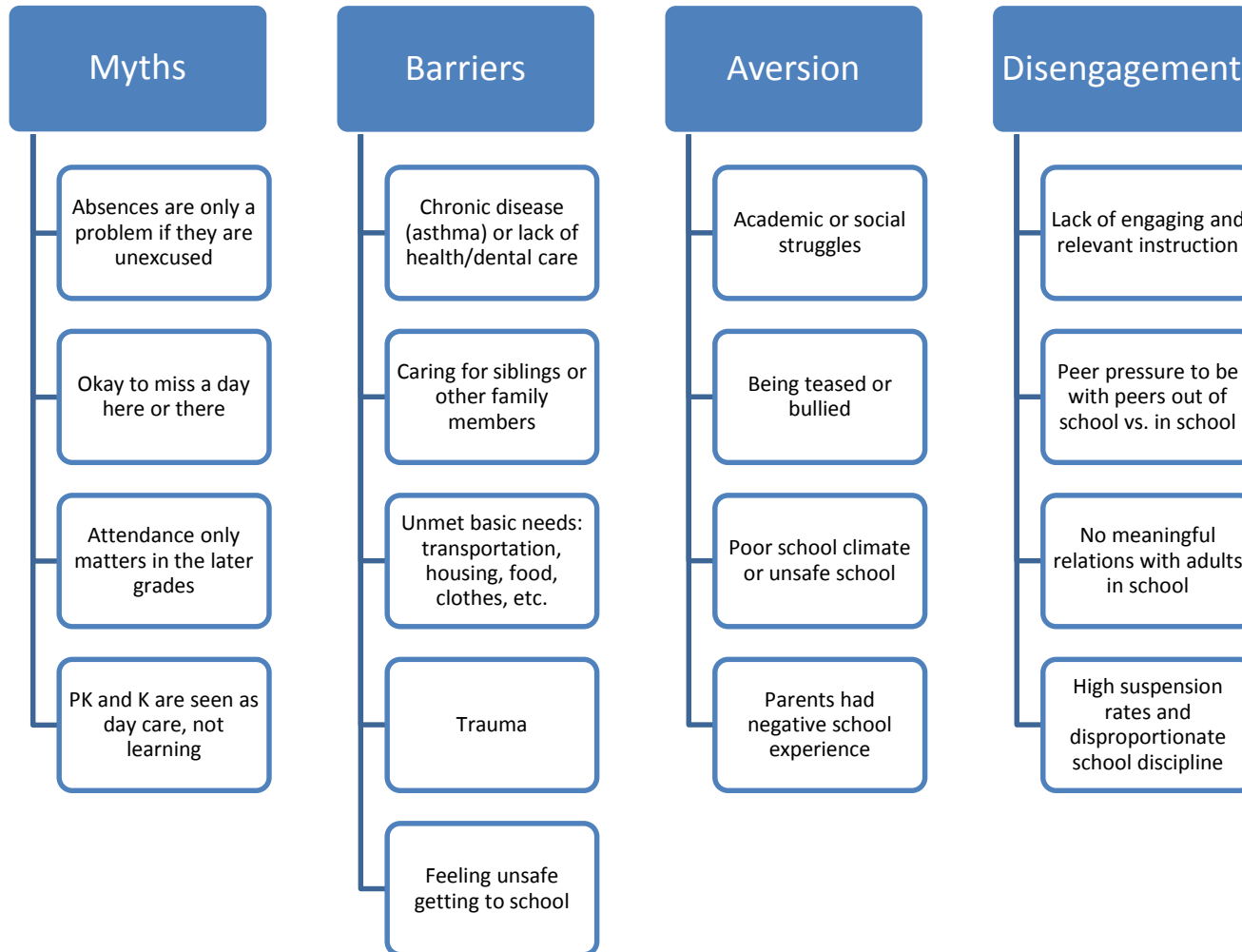
10% of a school year =  
18 days of absence =  
two days a month.

## Absences Add Up

Chronic Absence = 18 days of absence = 2 days a month



# Why are students chronically absent?





# Snapshot

According to CSDE data, **55,956** students were chronically absent from school during the 2014-15 school year. This is over **1 out of 10** of all students in Connecticut public schools.

- Chronic absence rates are significantly higher in the **urban** districts.
- Chronic absence rate for students eligible for **free meals** is *more than three times* that of those who ineligible for lunch subsidies
- Chronic absence rates for **Black/African American** and **Hispanic or Latino** students are both *more than two times* that of **White** students
- **English Language Learners** and **Students with Disabilities\*** continue to evidence substantially higher chronic absenteeism rates when compared to their general education peers.

\* For the purposes of reporting, CSDE defines students with disabilities (SWD) as any student receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This sub-group does not include students receiving services under Section 504.

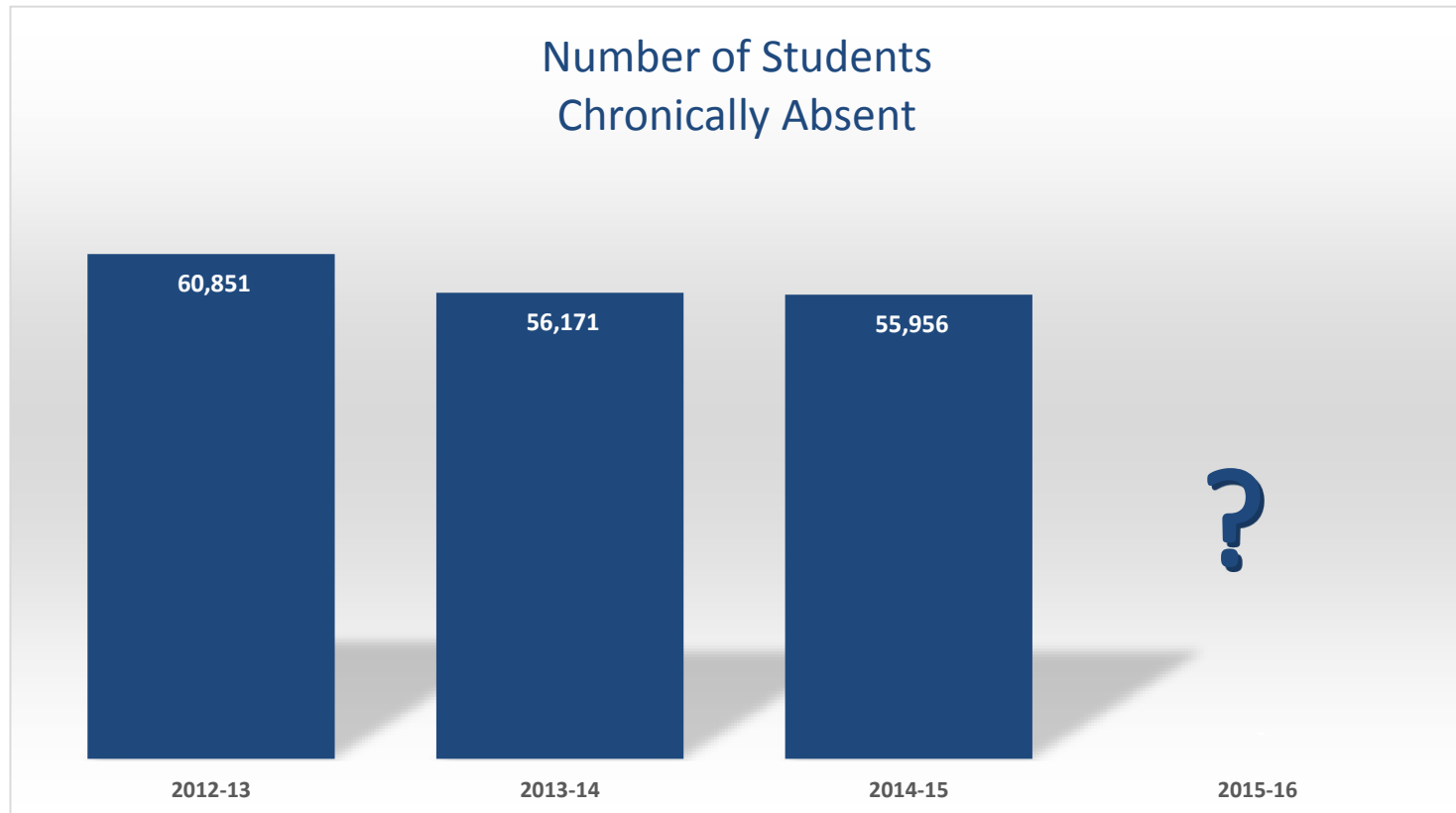
# Every Student, Every Day!

- National research documents that at every age and every stage, chronic absenteeism erodes the academic and social skills needed to succeed in school.
- Being chronically absent has a significant impact on a student's ability to perform at grade level, do well on standardized tests, and graduate on time.

# 55,956

Chronically absent students in Connecticut, 2014-15 (10.6 percent)

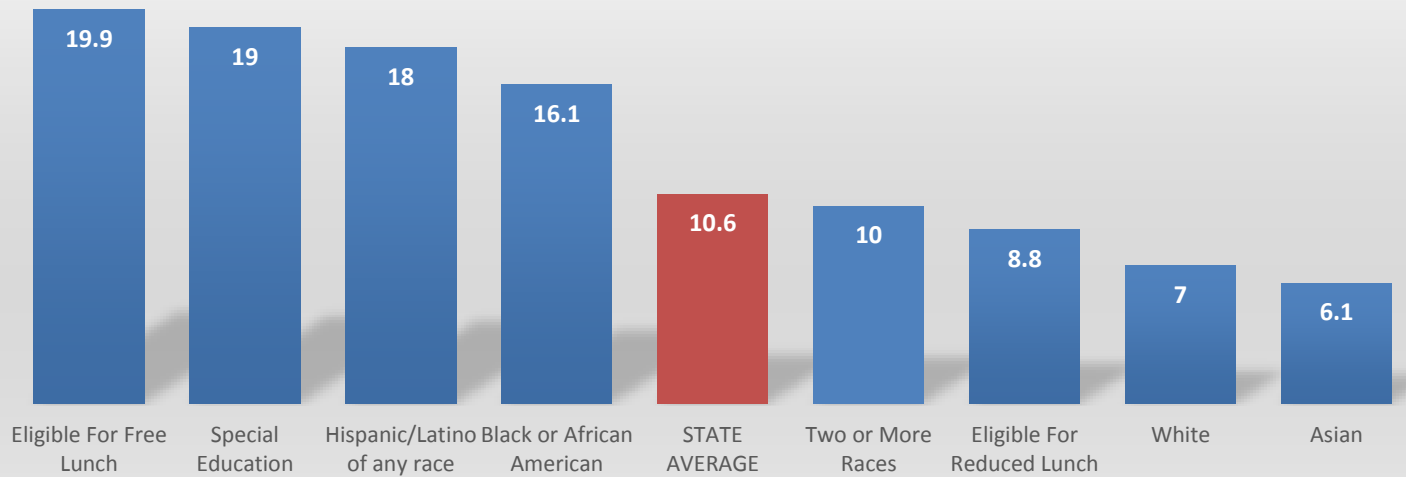
# Why is chronic absence an important issue in Connecticut?



# Academic Impact

- Children who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade.
- By sixth grade, chronic absence is a key early indicator of dropout from high school.
- By ninth grade, attendance may be a better indicator of dropout than eighth-grade test scores.

## State of Connecticut Percentage of Students Chronically Absent 2014-15

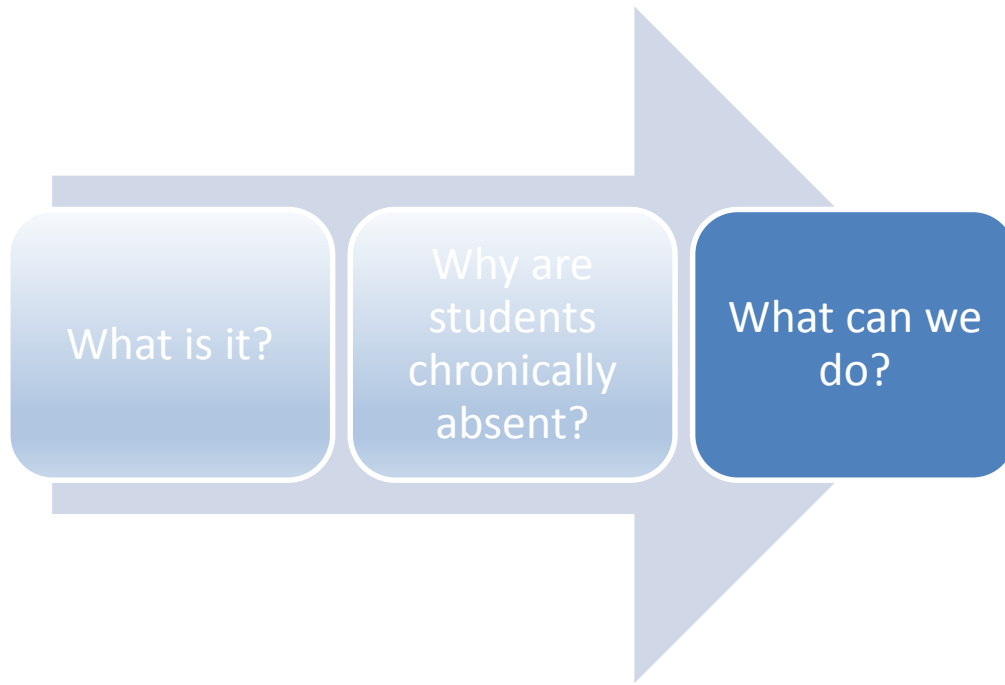


# Find Chronic Absence Data

The screenshot shows the EdSight website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the EdSight logo and the text 'INSIGHT INTO EDUCATION'. To the right of the logo, it says 'Connecticut State Department of Education' and features the CSDE logo. Below the navigation bar, there is a secondary navigation bar with links for 'Home', 'Overview', 'Students', 'Educators', and 'Instruction'. The main content area is titled 'Connecticut Education at a Glance' and contains a grid of six data cards. A left sidebar contains 'Home', 'Related Links' (with sub-links like '+/- Condition of Education', 'Data Dictionary', 'Data Suppression Guidelines', and 'Related Links Crosswalk'), and a footer with a disclaimer and a 'Need Help? CONTACT US' link.

Connecticut Education at a Glance						
<p>Home</p> <p><b>Related Links</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+/- Condition of Education</li> <li>Data Dictionary</li> <li>Data Suppression Guidelines</li> <li>Related Links Crosswalk</li> </ul>	<p><b>NEW THIS MONTH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2015-16 Enrollment</li> <li>• Enrollment by Grade</li> <li>• Discipline by School</li> <li>• Graduation by Free/Reduced Price Meal Eligibility</li> <li>• New Find School/District Reports</li> </ul>	<p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p> <p><b>206</b> Districts</p> <p><b>1,445</b> Public Schools/Programs</p>	<p><b>STUDENTS</b></p> <p><b>541,815</b> Total Enrollment</p> <p><b>10.6%</b> Chronic Absenteeism Rate*</p>	<p><b>EDUCATORS</b></p> <p><b>51,916</b> Certified Staff FTE</p> <p><b>8.3%</b> Minority Certified Staff</p>	<p><b>INSTRUCTION</b></p> <p><b>76.0%</b> Schools Offering AP Courses</p> <p><b>85.6%</b> Students On-Track to Graduation*</p>	
	<p><b>PERFORMANCE</b></p> <p><b>76.1</b> State Accountability Index*</p> <p><b>87.0%</b> Four-year Cohort Graduation Rate*</p>					
	<p>2014-15 Next Generation Accountability Results</p>					
	<p>2013-14 Profile and Performance Reports</p>					
	<p>*Metric from 2014-15 Next Generation Accountability</p>					
	<p><b>Need Help? CONTACT US</b></p>					

[www.EdSight.ct.gov](http://www.EdSight.ct.gov)



# Strategies to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

- Improving and sustaining good attendance requires the *active engagement of district and school-based leaders and administrators* and
- Clear articulation of roles and responsibilities.
- Successful strategies include
  - forming district and school attendance teams,
  - analyzing data,
  - identifying trends and factors contributing to chronic absence, and
  - implementing a multi-tiered approach to reducing chronic absence.



# District Attendance Teams

- Routinely Unpack and Utilize Data
  - Produce accurate school-specific data reports, bi-weekly, disaggregated by subgroups;
- Organize a Systemic, Districtwide Response
  - Conduct a district self-assessment (Attendance Works)
  - Positive engagement (outreach campaign); Build capacity; and Strategic Partnerships
- Promote Shared Accountability & Continuous Improvement
  - Ensure that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the goals and how will they determine if they are making progress. (DIPs, SIPs, accountability plans with performance matrixes that drill down to SLOs)

# District Attendance Teams

Key district individuals responsible for:

- Academic instruction;
- Health (director of school nursing or medical advisor);
- Student supports (school counselors, social workers, parent liaisons, attendance officers);
- Longitudinal student data;
- School administrators; and
- Community partners (YSBs/FRCs, early childhood collaboratives, mental health or family service agencies).

# School Attendance Teams

- The School Attendance Team charge is to ensure that the school adopts a comprehensive, actionable, tiered approach to improving attendance.
- These teams could be a new team or part of an existing site based team (e.g., PBIS, school climate).

## Organizing a School Attendance Team

1. Conduct a [school self-assessment](#).
2. Establish a weekly meeting schedule.
3. Define roles and responsibilities.
4. Establish group norms.
5. Develop a standard meeting agenda.
6. Fill-in a tiered pyramid of students and resources.

# School Attendance Teams

Key school staff including:

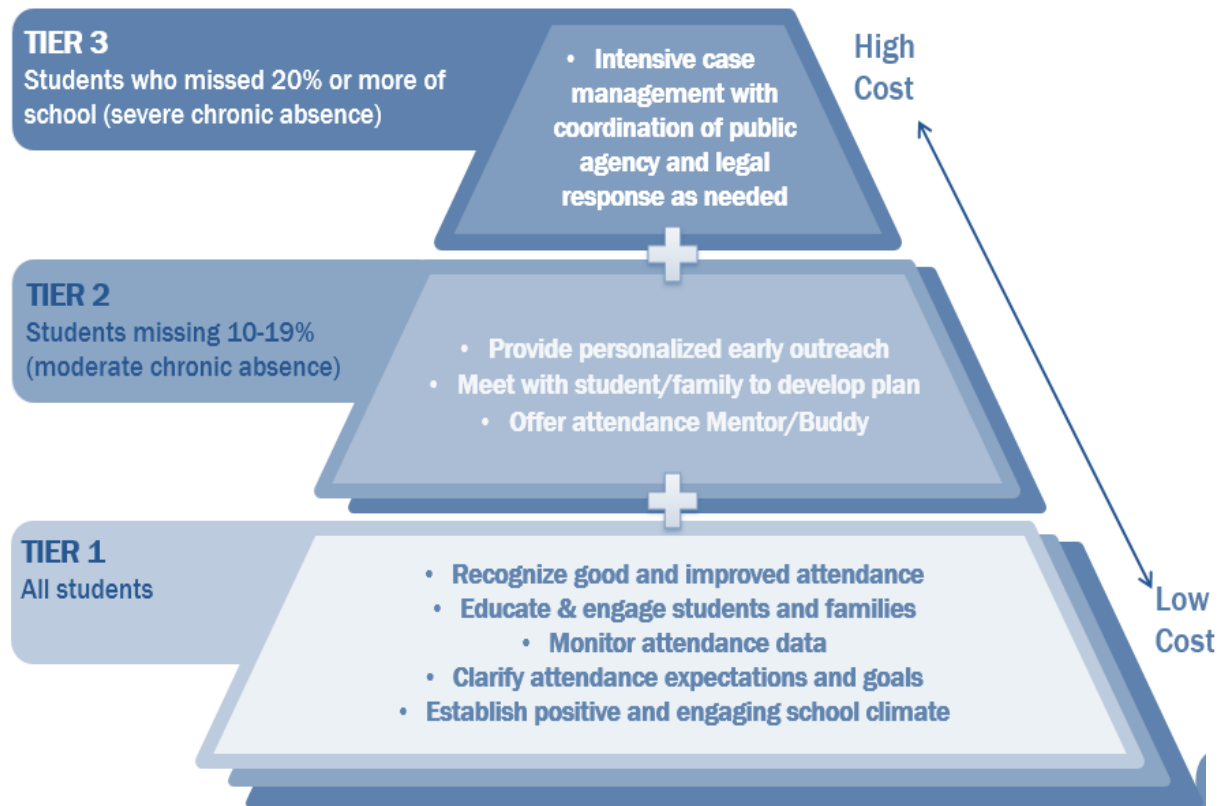
- Principal or assistant principal;
- Guidance counselor, social worker;
- School nurse;
- Family engagement liaison;
- Family Resource Center; and
- Attendance officer.

# School Attendance Teams

- Understand and Monitor Attendance Trends
  - Secure the data for their school from central office and ensure that the School Attendance Team reviews the attendance data on a regular basis
  - Uncover the causes of absenteeism for individual students as well as common causes for groups of students
- Organize the Schoolwide Attendance Strategy
  - Engage students and parents – create warm and welcoming school community
  - Address attendance barriers
  - Set Goals and develop an attendance plan
- Implement a System of Tiered Supports
  - Implement a multi-tiered approach to reducing chronic absence that begins with prevention and early intervention and only turns to interventions that are more intensive as a last resort.

# System of Tiered Supports

Improving attendance requires a tiered approach that begins with prevention



# Tier 1 - universal school-wide strategies that encourage good attendance for all students.

## Engage Students and Parents

Create a school climate that encourages students to come to school everyday

- provide engaging curriculum that draws students to school;
- conduct a school climate and attendance walk - Connecticut Welcoming Schools program;

## Recognize good and improved attendance

- create friendly competition among classrooms offering raffles, parties, and other incentives;
- celebrate individual progress through periodic public recognition;

## Remove Barriers to Attendance

- provide a school breakfast program and/or food pantry to address hunger issues;
- organize health interventions such as flu and dental clinics.

# Tier 2 - individualized strategies responsive to the needs of frequently absent students.

## Engage Students and Parents

- emphasize attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences; (insert link)
- conduct a home visit or parent conference in partnership with the Family Resource Center;
- engage the school nurse or school-based health clinic in outreach to families around health issues;

## Recognize good and improved attendance

- create friendly competition among classrooms offering raffles, parties, and other incentives;
- celebrate individual progress through periodic public recognition;

## Remove Barriers to Attendance

- provide parents with family-friendly information and assistance in accessing community resources and services; (insert link)
- develop a Student Attendance success plan to help develop family strategies to support improved attendance
- identify health, transportation or housing barriers to attendance and partner with community providers such as public housing authorities, departments of transportation, and community health clinics



# Tier 3 - intense and individualized strategies for students who miss the most school.

- Interagency collaboration and coordination is essential to helping students in Tier 3 overcome the serious challenges they face so they can be in school.
- Tier 3 interventions are often coordinated with other community-based service providers such as
  - Youth Service Bureaus,
  - Juvenile Review Boards,
  - mental health clinics and
  - state agencies such as child welfare (DCF) or juvenile justice (Juvenile Court or CSSD).

# Learning from each other...

*What's working – success stories!*

# Resources

CSDE Chronic Absence Webpage

[www.ct.gov/sde/chronicabsence](http://www.ct.gov/sde/chronicabsence)

Attendance Works

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

EdSight Portal

[www.EdSight.ct.gov](http://www.EdSight.ct.gov)

# Who can I contact at CSDE?

Topic Area	Contact Information
Resources, Strategies, and Best Practices	Kari Sullivan Phone: 860-807-2041 Email: <a href="mailto:kari.sullivan@ct.gov">kari.sullivan@ct.gov</a>
Data Collection and Reporting	Marquelle Middleton Phone: 860-713-6877 Email: <a href="mailto:marquelle.middleton@ct.gov">marquelle.middleton@ct.gov</a>
Next Generation Accountability System	Renee Savoie Phone: 860-713-6858 Email: <a href="mailto:renee.savoie@ct.gov">renee.savoie@ct.gov</a>

