



Working Together to Reduce the Spring Attendance Slide

April 1, 2025 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Please introduce yourself in the chat, your name, role, and LEA. Rename yourself on Zoom so your LEA name appears

PRESENTED BY

Maryland State Department of Education and
Attendance Works

Chronic Absence

Rate of Chronic Absence in All Schools

Baseline (2022-23)

30%

Target (2025-26)

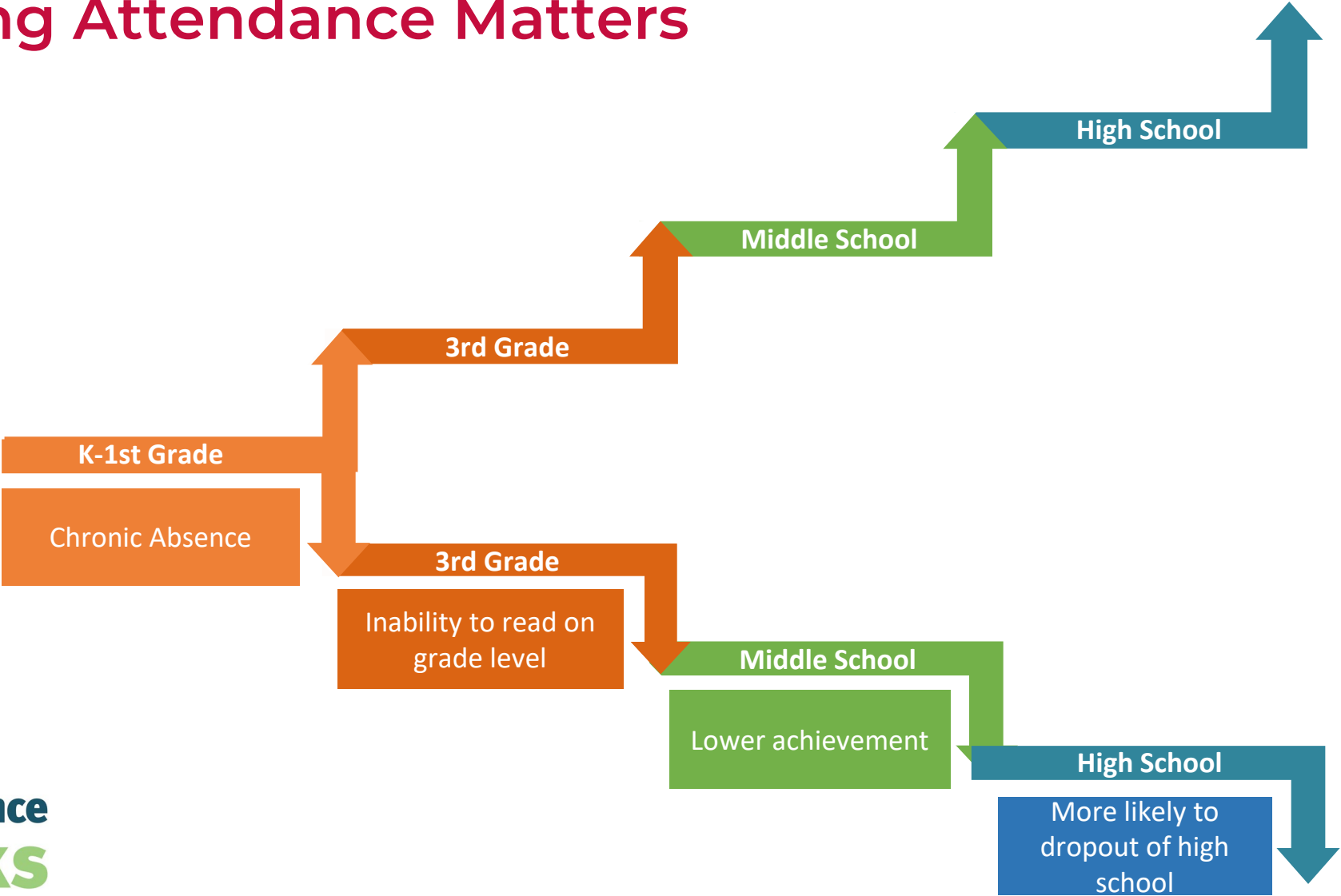
15%

-15 percentage Points (pp)

Attendance Definitions

Chronic Absence	A student who has been in membership in a school for at least 10 days and is absent 10% or more of the school days while enrolled at that school.
Truant	A student unlawfully absent from school for more than 8 days in any quarter, 15 days in any semester, or 20 days in a school year (Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art., §7-302.2).
Habitual Truant	A student who has been in membership in a school for 91 or more days in a school year and is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 20% of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year. (Md. Ann. Code, Ed. Art., §7-302.2).
Average Daily Attendance	The average number of students who attend daily.
Not Chronically Absent (ESSA Accountability Rubric)	A student who ends the school year having missed 17 or fewer days of school.

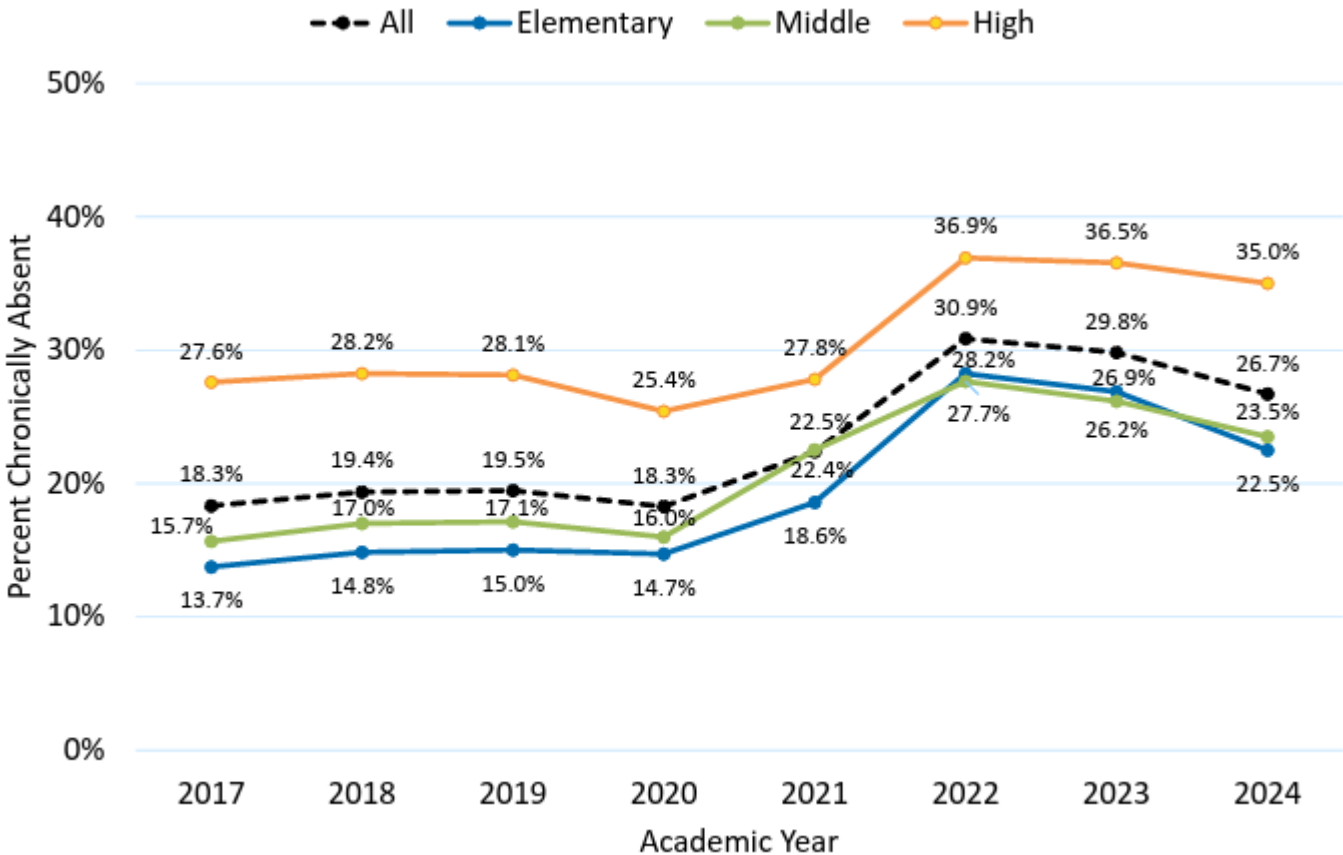
Improving Attendance Matters



State Trends in Chronic Absences

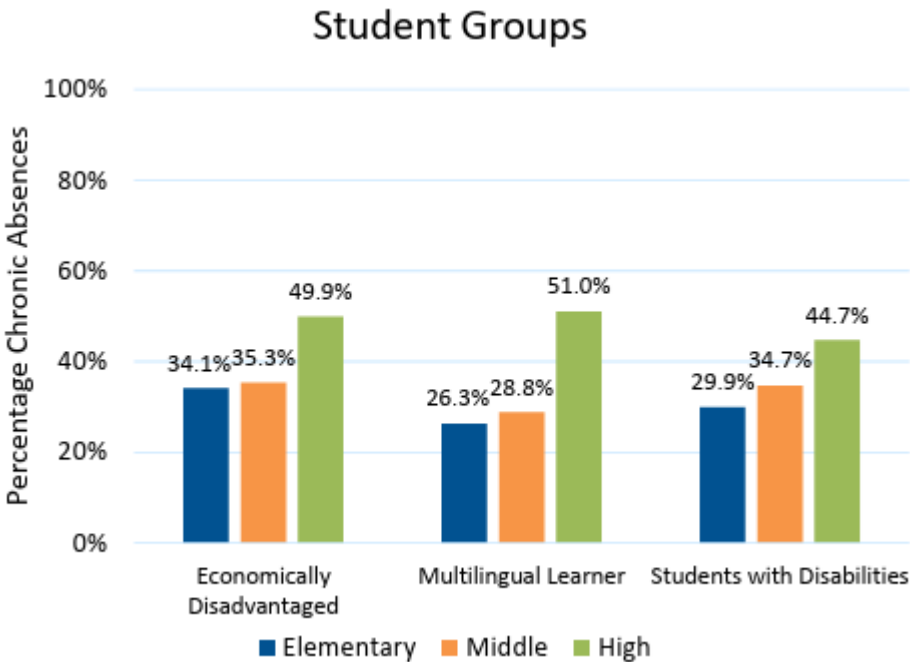
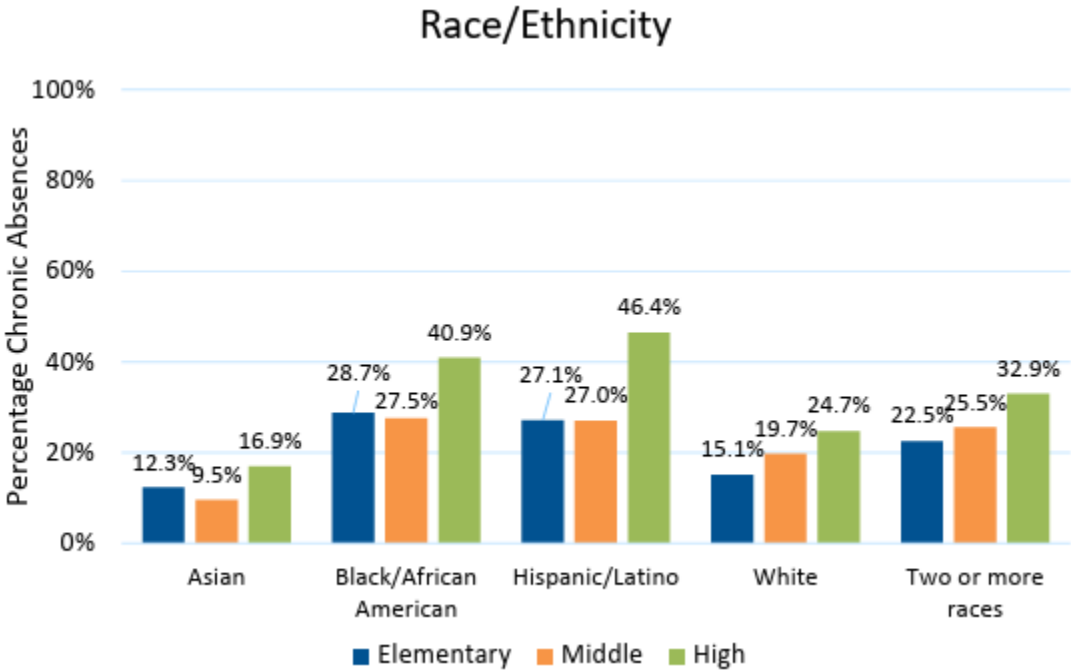
Chronic absences have gradually declined since 2022 but have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Chronic absences at the high school level have seen fewer reductions since 2022 than at the elementary and middle school levels.



Chronic Absences by Student Group

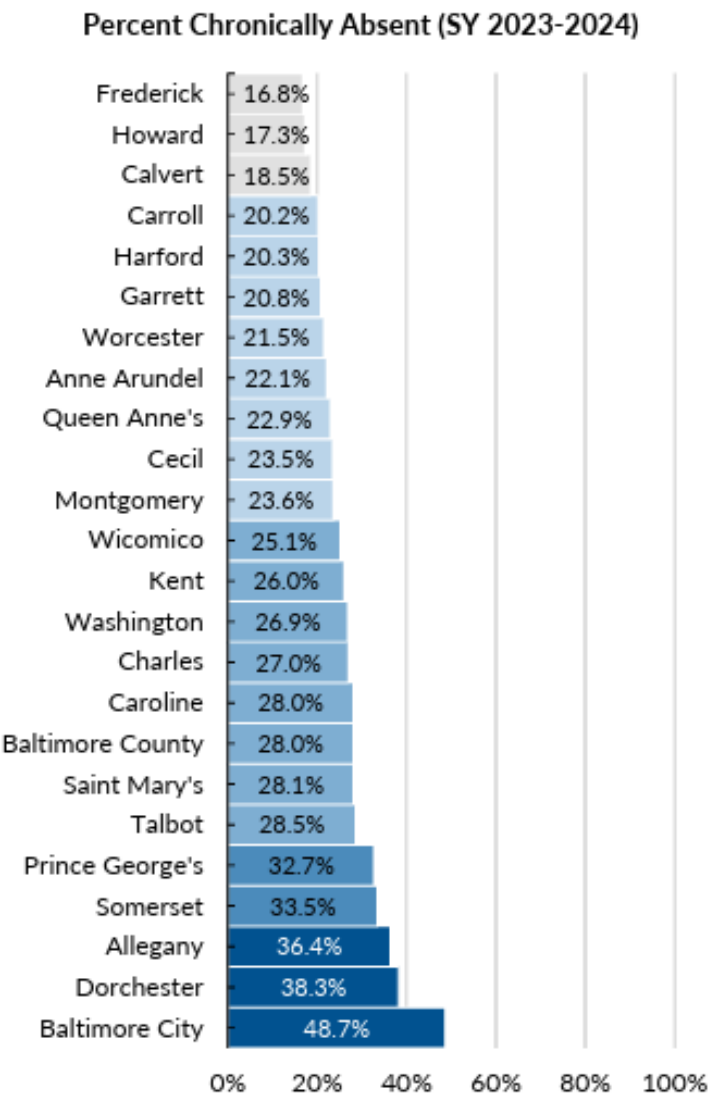
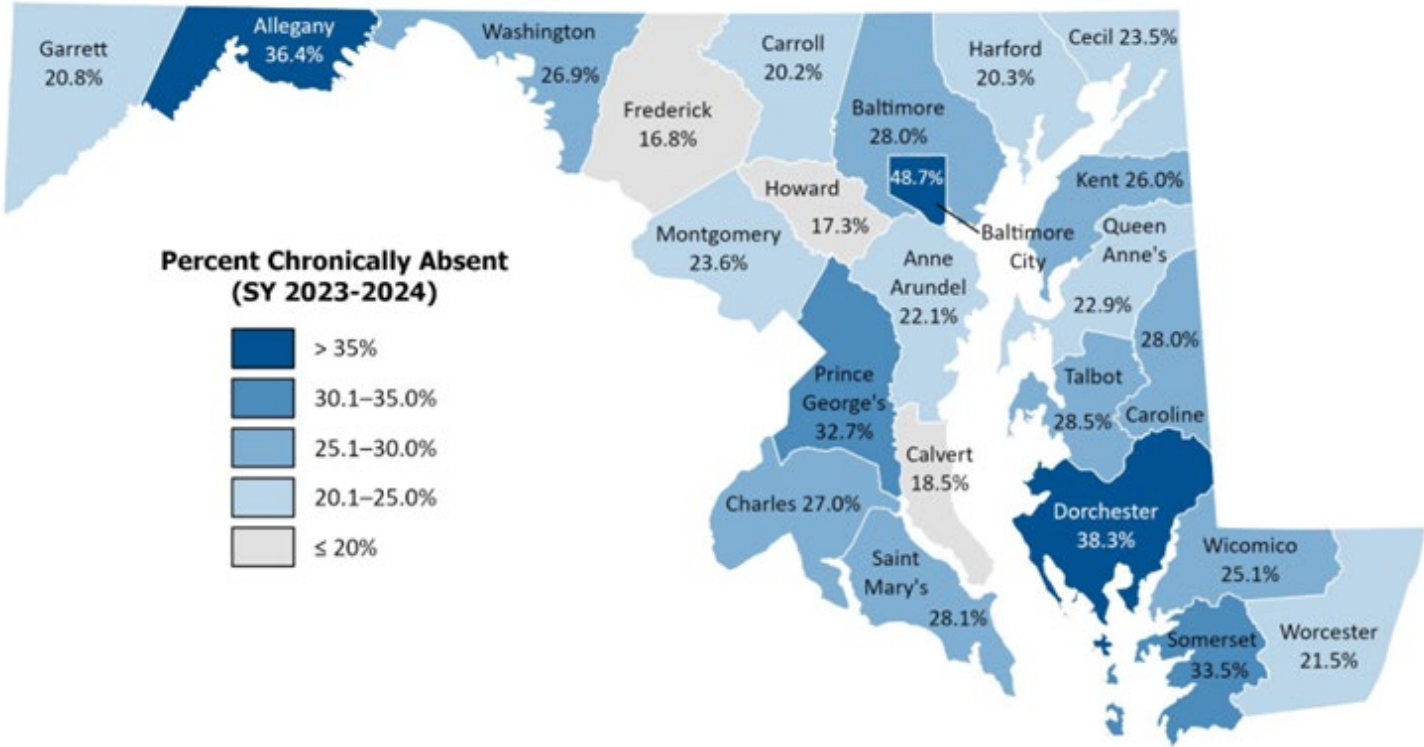
Chronic absence rates in 2023-2024 were highest for Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students and students in special service groups.



Grade spans are as follows: Elementary – grades K-5; Middle – grades 6-8; High – grades 9-12

Chronic Absences by LEA

Chronic absence rates varied from 17% to 49% in SY 2023-2024.



Chronic Absences Support for LEAs

The Maryland State Department of Education is working to provide chronic absences support to improve student outcomes through:



Researching trends in statewide and local data and reviewing school data

Identifying how **school climate** may impact attendance

Developing a **statewide guidance attendance document**

Utilizing the **Maryland School Mental Health Response Team**

Identifying strategies that **Community Schools** are using to reduce chronic absences

A virtual **student support services conference** held in August 2024

Collaborating with **Attendance Works**

State Response to the Chronic Absence Crisis

- Set a goal to reduce chronic absence to 15% by 2027
- Established a state attendance task force
- Developing spring attendance and beginning of the school year toolkits
- Exploring updates to policy, guidance, and regulations to modernize Maryland's approach to attendance and absenteeism
- Community of Practice

Workshop and Toolkit Overview

The toolkit will cover 4 steps for tackling chronic absence Spring 2025

1. Strengthen your LEA Attendance Team
2. Engage in messaging and Activities to Reduce the Spring Attendance Slide.
3. Reach out to students at the cusp of chronic absence
4. Identify and address common barriers to attendance

Workshop 1: *Working Together to Reduce the Spring Attendance Slide*

- Topics will include strengthening LEA teams, springtime messaging, and activities.

Workshop 2: *Identifying Students at the Cusp*

- Topics will include identifying students at the cusp of chronic absence and tackling systemic barriers to student attendance.

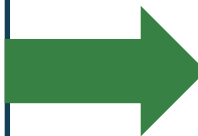


Cross-Departmental Attendance Teams

Transformative Change Requires a Team to Lead the Charge

Truancy

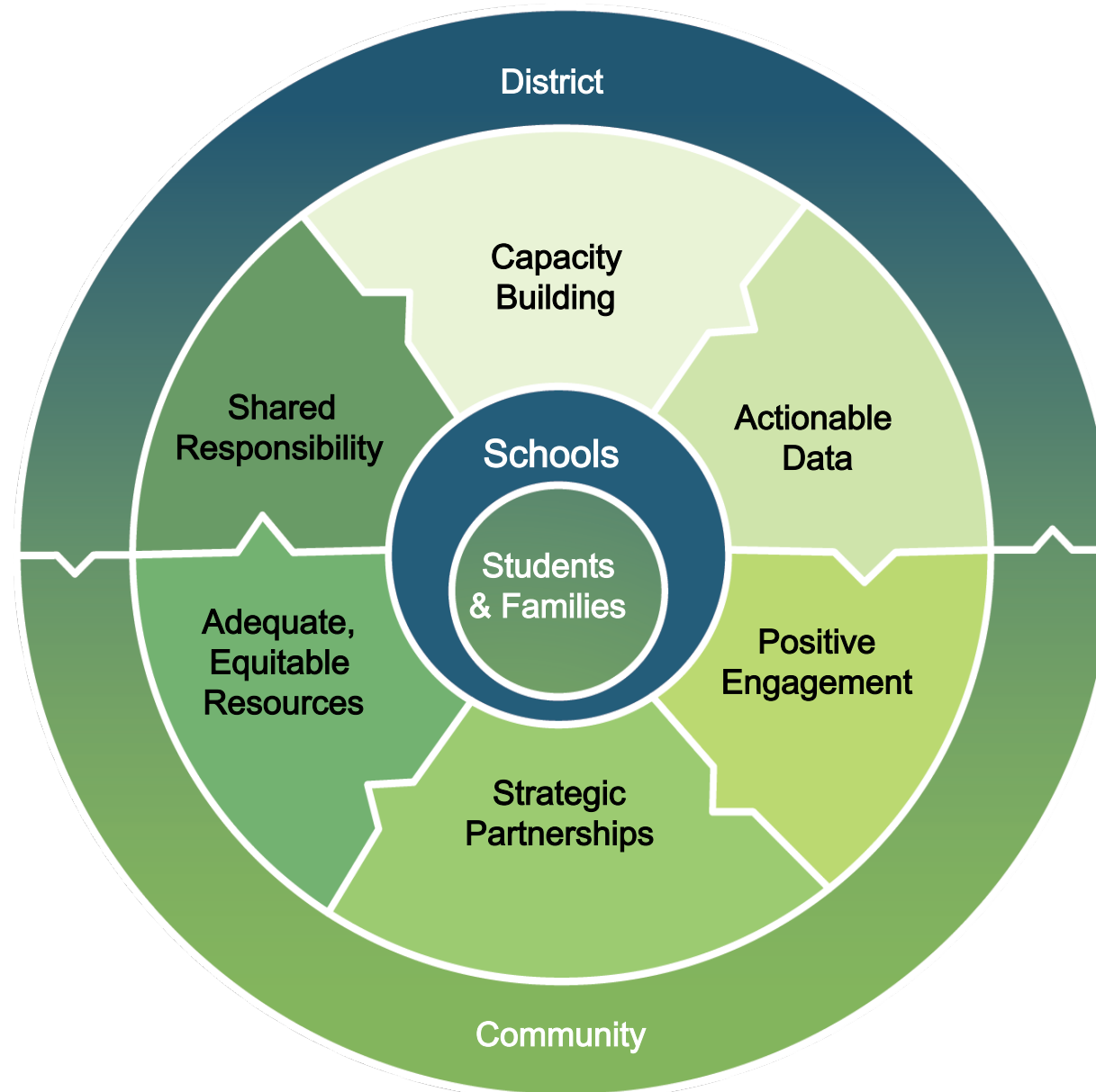
- ▲ Counts ONLY unexcused absences, variability across states, (MD 20 days; CA 3 days)
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Typically, more blaming and punitive, solutions
- ▲ Can result in court referral



Chronic Absence

- Research Based: Missing 10% of absences including all absences (*excused, unexcused & suspensions*)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days
- Uses preventative, problem solving strategies
- Focuses on family & student engagement

Key Ingredients for Improving Attendance



Solving Chronic Absence Requires a Multidisciplinary Team



The Attendance Strategy should be led by a Cross Departmental LEA Leadership Team

Teams working on improving student attendance could include the following disciplines/departments:

- Physical, Behavioral and Mental Health
- Social Worker and Pupil Personnel Worker
- Academic Support
- Transportation
- Nutrition
- Data and Accountability
- Blueprint Coordination
- Community School Strategy Coordinator
- Special Education
- Early Education
- Expanded Learning
- Family and Student Engagement



Poll

1. Does your LEA have a cross -departmental team responsible for organizing a systemwide approach to attendance improvement?
2. Does the LEA team regularly meet and review attendance data to examine trends across the district by school, student group, grade, geography, time of week?
3. Could the LEA team be strengthened with the addition of other district staff who can offer different perspectives and resources?
4. Could your LEA team engage community partners in improving attendance?

Baltimore City Public Schools
Dr. Tanya Crawford-Williams
Coordinator, Office of Student Conduct and Attendance
“A STRONG START FOR A STRONG FINISH”



1. What is the 60-day attendance challenge?
2. Why did City Schools choose to create the 60-day attendance challenge?
3. What support do you provide to schools to participate including data?
4. What have schools done that is most successful?
5. How do you know it worked?



Keep as many students as you can in Tier 1B.

Tier 1A

$\Rightarrow 95\%$

48.6%

Tier 1B

$> 90 \ \& \ < 95\%$

14.1%

Tier 2

$\geq 80\% \text{ and } \leq 90\%$

24.1%

Tier 3

$< 80\%$

13.3%



Move as many students as you can to Tier 1 ($>90\%$).

Students with less than 18 days of absence



Strong Finish to the School
Year With

An Ice Cream,
Snow-cone, or
Food Truck

Unofficial Data

Top Decreases in Chronic Absenteeism Rates (3/7-3/21)

CLN	School	Enrollment 3/21	3/7 to 3/21 CA Rate Change (ppt)
1	Dickey Hill EMS	28	-4.09% ~10 students
4	Sharp-Leadenhall	45	-3.57% ~10 students
2	Yorkwood Elementary	189	-3.53% ~10 students
4	William Paca Elementary	1028	-3.30% ~13 students
4	Belmont Elementary	178	-2.92% ~5 students
6	Lakewood Elementary	827	-2.83% ~3 students
5	Westport Academy	811	-2.64% ~4 students
3	Woodhome EMS	303	-2.52% ~12 students
10	The Crossroads School	477	-2.47% ~4 students

Addressing the Spring Slide

Average Daily Attendance by Month

– 2022-23 & 2023-24 - Anne Arundel

Attendance Trends By Month

Snapshot of attendance rates comparing the same month's data across prior years. Not a YTD summation (for a YTD calculation go to the Trends tab).





Absences Increase in the Spring

Reasons include:

- Shift to warmer temperatures
- Increase in asthma, allergies or other health problems
- Testing often takes place weeks before the end of the school year
- Culminating events happen before the end of the school year
- Wind-down of schoolbased activities and partnerships
- Half-days



Target Your Strategies

- **Universal (all students):** Launch an end-of-the-year attendance campaign that begins right after Spring Break
- **Ramp-up support for target groups:** Disaggregate data and select targeted groups for additional support (e.g., mentors, attendance recognition)
- **Engage staff:** Partner with staff to provide support and special events for staff



Ideas for Special Events

- ❑ Outdoor activities— Field days, Fitness Fridays
- ❑ Spring events— Earth Day, Pi Day, Read Across America
- ❑ School spirit days
- ❑ Teacher appreciation days
- ❑ Pantry pickup— Invite families to pick up groceries the day before spring break
- ❑ Showcase student work (closer to the end of the school year)
- ❑ Positive targeted check-in with those students and their families prior to vacation and first day back
- ❑ Implement a spring slide messaging campaign
- ❑ Implement incentives program and activities to address end of the year attendance dip
- ❑ Increase mentor/mentee contacts

Develop a Sprinting Through Spring Calendar

Sprinting Through Spring – 25 Days of Learning & Earning!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
			April 1 Crazy Hat Day Prizes: _____ & _____	2 Selfie Day Picture of you with goofy face OR in a mask Prizes: _____ & _____	
3 Caring Day Write letters to be sent/emailed home when students or family members are ill. Prizes: _____ & _____	4 Share your favorite item/toy Prizes: _____ & _____	5 Team Spirit Wear your favorite sports team gear. Prizes: _____ & _____	6 Dance or Movement Day Prizes: _____ & _____	7 Picture of you with your furry study buddy – real or stuffed Prizes: _____ & _____	Weekly Prize Friday Family Feast?
8 Mismatch Day Prizes: _____ & _____	9 Crazy Hair Day Prizes: _____ & _____	10 Dance or Movement Day Prizes: _____ & _____	11 College/ Career/Future Day Younger students: Draw a picture of your future! Prizes: _____ & _____	12 Twin Day Prizes: _____ & _____	Weekly Prize
13 No School	14 No School	15 No School	16 No School	17 No School	Weekly Prize

Sprinting Through Spring – 25 Days of Learning & Earning!

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
18 Class Color Day 12th & PreK - Black 11th & K - Blue 10th & 2nd - Red 9th & 5th - Pink 8th & 4th - Green 7th & 3rd - Orange 6th & 1st - Yellow Prizes: _____ & _____	19 Build a Story Day Start with "Once upon a time..." and have each student take a turn to add to the story Prizes: _____ & _____	20 Flower Day Prizes: _____ & _____	21 Tourist Day Prizes: _____ & _____	22 Family Day Picture of you with a family member Prizes: _____ & _____	Weekly Prize
23 Reading Day Read a book to pet, stuffed animal or share the title of favorite book Prizes: _____ & _____	24 Mystery Celebrity Day Staff person dresses up as the celebrity Prizes: _____ & _____	25 Inside Out Day Wear a piece of your clothes inside out Prizes: _____ & _____	26 Wacky Shoe Day Prizes: _____ & _____	27 Super Hero/ Villain Day Prizes: _____ & _____	Weekly Prize
28 Make a Collage Day Prizes: _____ & _____	29 Crazy - or Mismatched - Sock Day Prizes: _____ & _____	30 Virtual Field Trip Day	May 1	May 2 Final Drawing	

Adapted from "Dashing Through December – 17 Days of Learning & Earning," created by Edwards-Knox Central School District. <https://www.ekcsk12.org/> |

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/sprintattendanceclump/>

Insights From “*Back to the Classroom*” (9/10/2024)

Ad Council Research Institute

Attendance messaging that most resonated with 5,000 parents:

- Is positive in tone.
- Communicates the opportunities associated with in-person learning, not just the consequences of missing school.
- Focuses on how school develops children holistically, beyond academic performance.
- Includes realistic goals for parents to work toward not being chronically absent such as to attend as much as possible vs. citing a specific number of days or saying “every day.”
- Acknowledges their hesitations and avoids chastising or shaming parents by telling them what’s acceptable or not.



Messengers

- For students of all ages, teachers are especially trusted messengers.
- For younger students, enlist messengers (e.g., school nurse, pediatricians, other parent leaders, faith based leaders) who are well positioned to reach parents.
- LEA teams can identify who is well positioned to deliver the messages and then provide schools with resources to recruit and equip such messengers to spread the word about why showing up to school matters.
- For older youth, other trusted messengers can include after school program providers, sports coaches and peers.

Messaging Modes

Pre-recorded Messages:

Create engaging messages from local celebrities and community leaders emphasizing the importance of attendance through to the end of the school year. Schedule these messages to be played on key dates known for lower attendance (e.g., after holidays on Mondays).

Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

Film/tape PSAs featuring the value and importance of attending school regularly. Distribute PSAs on social media, public transportation, doctors' offices, barber shops, salons, local TV, public agencies and during school events.

Social Media:

Share infographics and short videos highlighting the impact of attendance on academic success.

Messaging Modes

Attendance Phone Banks: Organize a phone bank to call families of students with high levels of absences, leverage district personnel and document the areas of needs and resources that will be provided. (This can also serve as a ~~school~~ ^{level} activity.)

Community & Clergy Engagement: Create announcements for clergy and community partners to share with their networks.

Wake -up Calls & Encouragement: Organize wakeup calls or encouraging messages to motivate students to attend school, especially on days that students are less likely to attend, or to remind students and families that certain days are in session like the return after spring break, or the last day of school.

Morning Messages: Feature daily and weekly messages about attendance, including shout-outs to students with excellent or improved attendance.

Health Handout

Tip sheet to help families/caregivers decide when a child can go to school or should stay home.

When is sick too sick for school?

A regular attendance routine is important for your child's well-being and learning. These tips can help you decide when to keep your child home when they don't feel well.



SEND ME TO SCHOOL IF...

- I have a **runny nose** or just a **little cough**, but no other symptoms.
- I have **NOT** had a **fever overnight** and have **NOT** taken **fever reducing medicine** during that time.
- I have a **mild stomach ache**.
- I have **not thrown up** overnight and can drink liquids without throwing up.
- I have a **mild rash** and no other symptoms.
- I have **eye drainage WITHOUT** fever, eye pain or eyelid redness.



KEEP ME AT HOME IF...

- I have a **temperature higher than 100.4**
- I have **thrown up two or more times** in the past 24 hours.
- My **stool is watery** and I may not make it to the bathroom in time.



SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF...

- I have a **temperature higher than 100.4 AND any of the following**: ear pain, sore throat, rash, stomachache, headache or tooth pain.
- I have **stomach pain and fever**, I have **bloody or black stool**, or I am **dehydrated** (tired and sleepy, dry mouth) and/or I have **not urinated** in the last 8 hours.
- I have a **persistent cough** or **trouble breathing**, or have a fever with the cough.
- I have **eye swelling**, **eye pain** or an **eye injury**.
- I have a **rash that has blisters**, is draining, is painful, looks like bruises, and/or I have a fever with the rash.

If you don't know whether to send your child to school, have specific concerns regarding your child's physical or mental health, or are worried your child will spread illness, contact your child's health care provider, a local urgent care or the school nurse. These tips are not meant to take the place of local health department/school district health guidance including about contagious illnesses such as Covid-19 and the flu.



For more information visit [attendanceworks.org/resources](https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources)

Help Kids Stay Healthy!

Keep Your Child Healthy and in School!

A regular attendance routine is important for your child's well-being, learning and long-term success. Below are tips to keep your child healthy and avoid unnecessary absences from school.

Nutrition, Sleep and Exercise

- Ensure your child eats a good breakfast every morning or check if your school serves breakfast.
- Maintain a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Keep screens out of the bedroom and limit use prior to bedtime.
- Encourage your child to stay active for at least 60 minutes a day.



Hygiene

- Stress hand washing, particularly before eating, and after using the restroom.
- Remind your child to brush their teeth twice a day.
- Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick. Don't share cups, utensils, hair brushes or combs.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough/sneeze into an elbow.



Safety

- Make sure your child wears a seatbelt and/or appropriate car seats during car rides, and a helmet when using a bike, skateboard or scooter.
- If your child walks to school, help them find a safe route to school and to travel with at least one friend. Have a backup plan in case of bad weather.



Keep Your Child Healthy and in School!

Wellness

- Ensure your child visits their health care provider for:
 - A physical once a year.
 - All recommended Immunizations, including Flu and COVID-19.
 - Chronic health issues such as asthma or diabetes.
- Visit the dentist twice a year.
- Try to schedule non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours.
- If your child doesn't have health or dental insurance, reach out to your school's nurse or social worker or other staff member to help connect you with resources.
- Complete your school's annual health form.
- Agree to allow your child to participate in health and vision screenings offered at school.
- If your child has a chronic health issue such as asthma, make sure that your child's health care provider completes appropriate school forms that allow your child to keep/carry any necessary medications at school.
- If your child has a disability, work closely with the school and your child's health care provider to ensure appropriate supports and services.
- If you are concerned that your child may have a contagious illness (including COVID-19), call your child's health care provider or school nurse for advice.
- If your child needs to stay home for a prolonged period due to illness, talk to your child's teacher to find out about resources they can use at home to keep learning once they feel well enough.



Engagement

- Make sure your child feels safe and connected at school. Involve them in afterschool activities.
- If you are worried that your child may be suffering from anxiety, talk with your teacher, the school nurse, social worker or other school staff to discuss the challenge and identify what can help your child. If your child is missing class because of challenges with behavioral issues, contact the school and/or your child's health care provider for support and resources.
- Ask the school about health-related policies including about COVID-19.
- Monitor your child's attendance and academic progress and seek support when needed.



<https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/health-handouts-for-families/>

Handout about Anxiety

Is your child missing school due to anxiety?



Definition of anxiety: feeling of fear and uneasiness about everyday situations.

If your child is suffering from anxiety, you are not alone. The good news is that in most situations, anxiety is normal and temporary. Anxiety becomes a concern if it persists — it can affect relationships with family, peers and teachers, contribute to academic challenges, and lead to school avoidance/refusal. Addressing anxiety is important for a child's overall well-being, not just attendance.

In addition, if your child starts to complain of symptoms like a headache or stomachache, it is important to **quickly determine** whether this is related to anxiety or a physical illness that might require missing school. If the challenge is anxiety, staying home may worsen the situation.

What are the symptoms of anxiety?



Persistent anxiety can present in many ways, making it difficult to recognize.

Symptoms may vary depending on the age of the child, and some children may keep worries to themselves or have difficulty explaining their feelings making it hard to identify symptoms.

Anxiety symptoms can include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Feeling tired, irritable or easily tearful
- Having trouble separating from parents
- Experiencing difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Having trouble getting out of bed or dressed for school
- Lacking appetite
- Having trouble concentrating, which may lead to difficulty starting tasks, problems with homework and falling behind in school
- Experiencing physical symptoms, including stomachaches and headaches
- Avoiding activities they previously enjoyed
- Having negative or continuous thoughts that something bad is going to happen

What can families do?

Here are some tips that you can use to help your child get through these challenges, by intervening as quickly as possible, and return to school:

- Do not punish your child for refusing to go to school, as this can worsen things.
- If possible, avoid letting your child stay home. Though staying home from school may provide short-term relief for your child, continued absence from school will lead to the feeling of being disconnected from classmates and teachers, cause your child to fall behind academically and only make it harder to return.
- Speak with your child. Try to understand what's bothering them and why they are avoiding school. If you are feeling a similar anxiety, it may help to share this with your child and to explain what you are doing to get through it.
- Make it clear that you are there to help your child and that you believe they can face their fears and get through this problem.



Take advantage of school resources.

Working through your child's anxiety issues can be difficult and scary, and you shouldn't have to do it alone. Take advantage of the resources at your child's school:

- Talk with the school nurse, counselor, social worker and/or psychologist to discuss the student's challenges, identify what can help your child and develop a return-to-school plan.
- For some students, this may need to happen gradually (one or two classes initially and eventually a full day).
- In certain situations, a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program may be needed to ensure your child receives appropriate support and resources.

If symptoms persist or are very severe, your child's anxiety may be due to an underlying behavioral health disorder (i.e., anxiety disorder, panic disorder), an undiagnosed learning disability or the result of a physical or chronic health condition and should be evaluated by your child's medical provider.

Finally, remember to take care of your own physical and emotional well-being!

Resources where you can find more information on anxiety and school avoidance

[Separation Anxiety in Babies, Toddlers and School-Aged Children: Causes, Signs and What to Do](#)
[Anxiety and Depression CDC](#)
[Understanding Anxiety in Children](#)

[School Avoidance Alliance: School Avoidance 101](#)
[School Refusal: When a Child Won't Go to School](#)
[Parent Anxiety Handout - EPIC](#)
[The Ultimate Guide to Working With Your School](#)

www.attendanceworks.org

Encourage All Students and Families to Create a Success Plan

MY FAMILY'S HELP BANK

- My Family:** List who lives in your house.
- Everyday Helpers:** Identify who you can call on to help drop your child off or who can pick him or her up when you cannot. These are people like friends, neighbors and relatives who can help regularly.
- Occasional Helpers:** Identify people who probably cannot help every day, but can help in a pinch. Maybe it's a godparent, a relative or a friend who lives outside your neighborhood but can be there for short stints.
- Potential Helpers:** Identify people who are part of your school community, church or neighborhood who are able to help if you ask.

1. My Family:
2. Everyday Helpers:
3. Occasional Helpers:
4. Potential Helpers:

If I need help getting my child to and from school, I will ask the following people to be our back-up:

Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____
Name: _____	Best Contact Number: _____

- ✓ Set attendance goals
- ✓ Make backup plans
- ✓ Track absences
- ✓ Recognize success!

MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE SUCCESS PLAN

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REACH MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE GOALS

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help them do well in school and achieve their hopes and dreams.
- I will keep an attendance chart at home. At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with _____.
- I will make sure my child is in bed by _____ and the alarm clock is set for _____.
- If my child complains of a stomachache or headache, and medical concerns have been ruled out, I will not take him to school anyway and will _____.
- I will let him/her check in with my child during the day.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/student-attendance-success-plans/>

LEA Breakout

1. Do you know at what points/days during the last quarter of the school year students were less likely to show up? (if you don't have that data, how could you get it?)
1. What resources can your LEA team offer to schools (messaging materials, resources for end of the year activities, connections to community partners)?



LEA Breakout Report Back

In the chat, please share:

- ✓ A key insight or next step for addressing the Spring Attendance Slide.

Next Steps

- Complete [the evaluation](#)
- Reminder about Workshop 2 on April 3rd, 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- Coming Soon:
 - Toolkit I & II
 - Statewide Attendance Guidance Document