



CONNECTICUT STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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***All Students in School & Engaged!***  
**Reducing Chronic Absenteeism**

Connecticut State Board of Education Presentation  
Hartford, Connecticut  
November 2, 2016

# Alignment with Comprehensive Plan

## Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students

The Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21



At the Connecticut State Department of Education, **students are at the core** of everything we do.

### OUR PROMISE TO OUR STUDENTS

- Ensuring their non-academic needs are met so they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn. (Mental health, nutrition, after-school programs)
- Supporting their school and district in staying on target with learning goals. (Education Cost Sharing - ECS, Alliance Districts, Commissioner's Network, School Choice)
- Giving them access to great teachers and school leaders.
- Making sure they learn what they need to know to succeed in college, career, and life.



[The Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21](#)



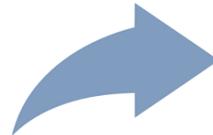
# Attendance Awareness Month September 2016 - Activities

## SUPERINTENDENTS CALL TO ACTION

### Prior to CSDE Outreach

#### Connecticut

Susan Bell, Windsor Locks Public Schools  
Mark Benigni, Meriden Public Schools  
Abby Dolliver, Norwich Public Schools  
Beth Narvaez, Hartford Public Schools  
Kathleen Ouellette, Waterbury Public Schools  
Nathan Quesnel, East Hartford Public Schools  
Nancy Sarra, The Consolidated School District of New Britain  
Nivea Torres, Connecticut Technical High School System



### Final List

#### Connecticut

Susan Bell, Windsor Locks Public Schools  
Mark Benigni, Meriden Public Schools  
Portia Bonner, East Haven Public Schools  
Neil Cavallaro, West Haven Public Schools  
Patricia Charles, Middletown Public Schools  
Francine Coss, Thomaston Public Schools  
Dina Crowl, Capitol Region Education Council  
Abby Dolliver, Norwich Public Schools  
Thomas Giard, Waterford Public Schools  
Michael Graner, Groton Public Schools  
Garth Harries, New Haven Public Schools  
Jason Hartling, Ledyard Public Schools  
Theresa Kane, East Windsor Public Schools  
Christopher Leone, Unified School District #2  
Joseph Macary, Vernon Public Schools  
Beth Narvaez, Hartford Public Schools  
Maryann O'Donnell, Clinton Public Schools  
Kathleen Ouellette, Waterbury Public Schools  
Sal Pascarella, Danbury Public Schools  
Nathan Quesnel, East Hartford Public Schools  
Fran Rabinowitz, Bridgeport Public Schools  
Van Riley, Stonington Public Schools  
Janet Robinson, Stratford Public Schools  
Nancy Sarra, The Consolidated School District of New Britain  
Ellen Solek, Bristol Public Schools  
James Thompson, Jr., Bloomfield Public Schools  
Nivea Torres, Connecticut Technical High School System



# Presentation Focus

- What is chronic absence?
- Why is addressing chronic absence important?
- What is the chronic absence landscape in Connecticut?
- How has Connecticut addressed the issue?
- What are the outcomes?
- Where do we go from here?





## ABSENTEEISM

is a red alert that students will  
dropout of high school

# What is Chronic Absence?

# Chronic Absence Definition

- Chronic absence is missing too much school for any reason, excused or unexcused and including suspensions.
- Connecticut and many other states define it as missing 10 percent or more of school or about 18 days a year or two days a month.

**Student Attendance Rate =**

$$\frac{\text{Student's Total Days of Attendance}}{\text{Student's Total Days of Membership}}$$





# Why is Addressing Chronic Absence Important?

# Attendance Matters

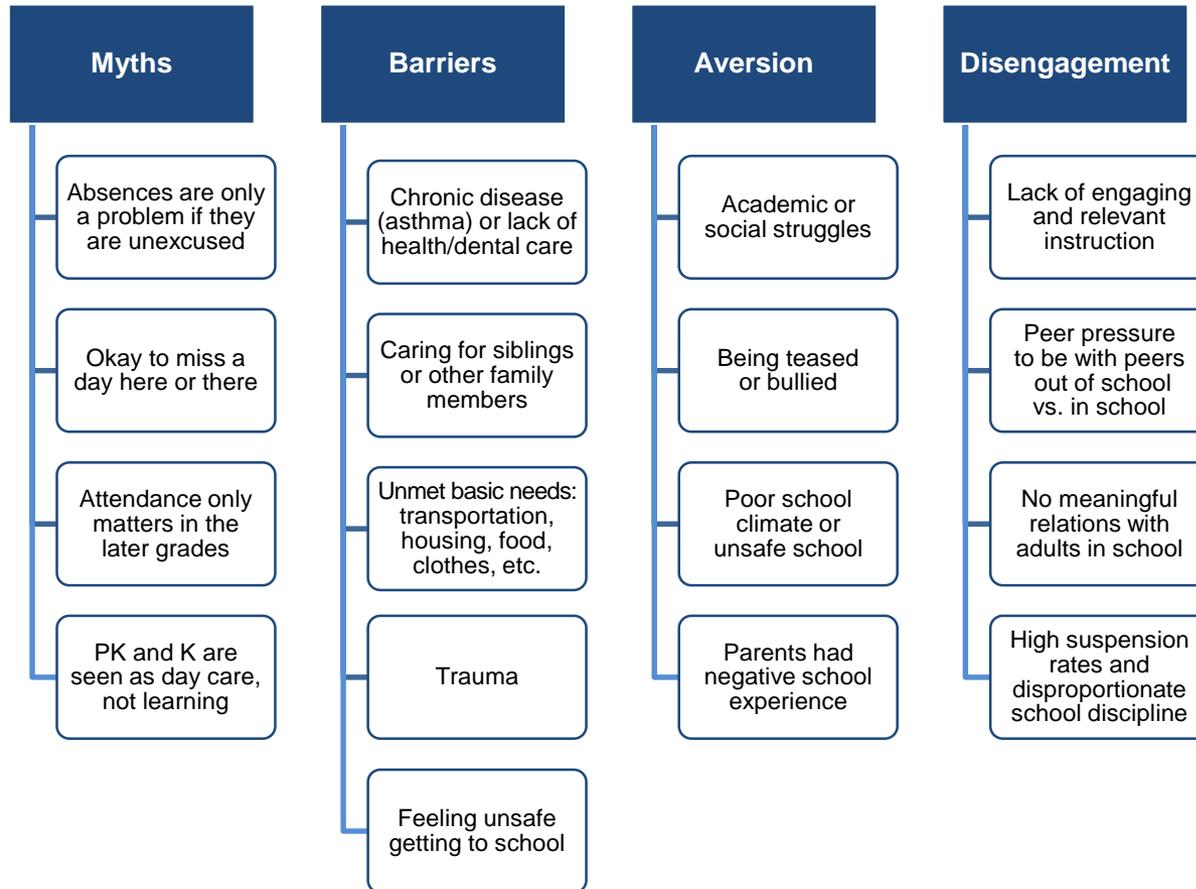
## National research documents the following negative impact:

- At every age and every stage, chronic absence 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.
- 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.

Chang, H. (2015, September). *Mapping the Early Attendance Gap, Charting a Course for School Success*. Retrieved from Attendance Works: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Mapping-the-Early-Attendance-Gap-Final-4.pdf>



# Reasons Students are Absent



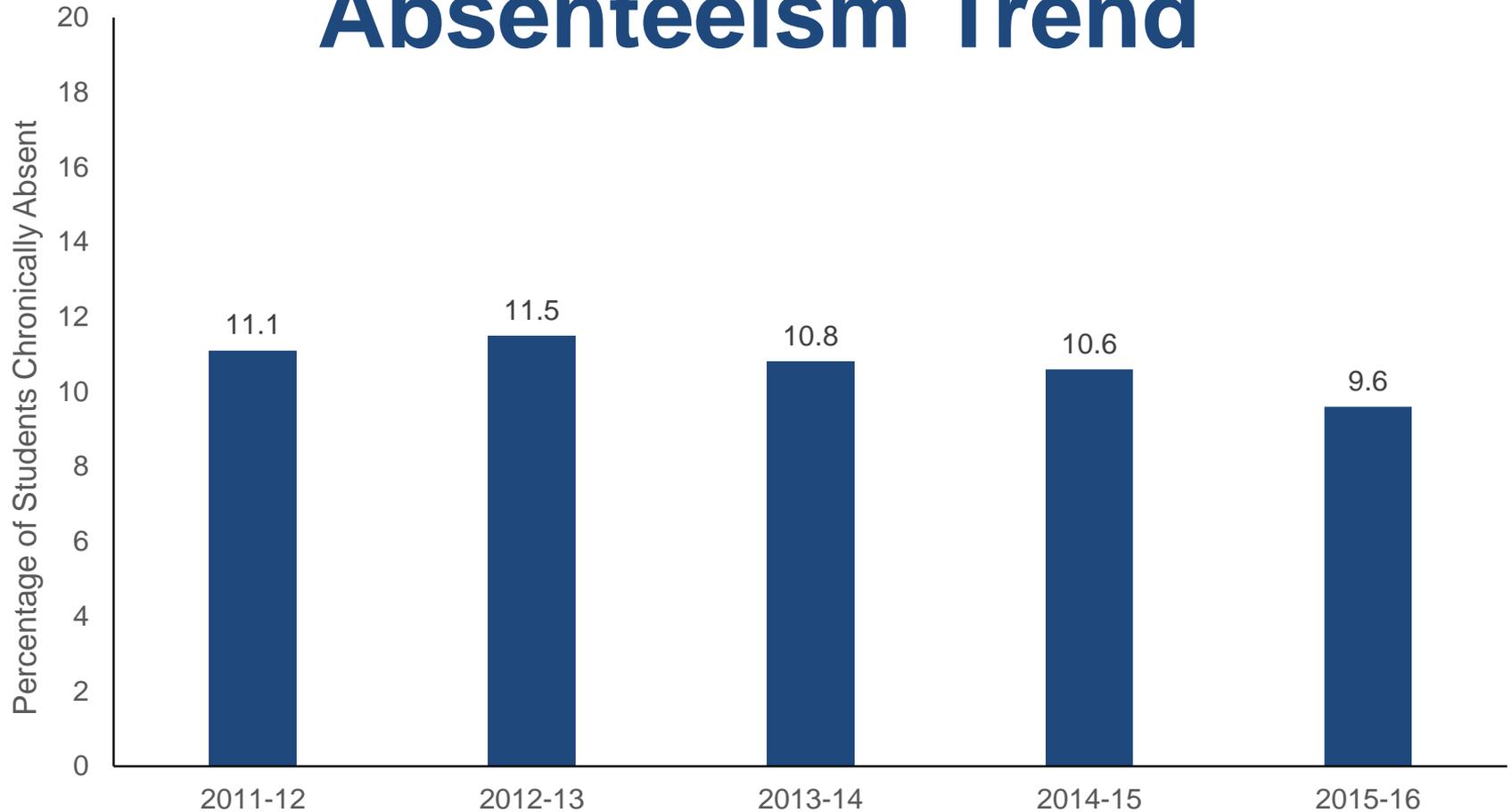


[Watch a PSA developed by Center for Children's Advocacy with Tow Foundation Funding](#) that is targeted to Kindergarten parents regarding the importance of regular attendance.

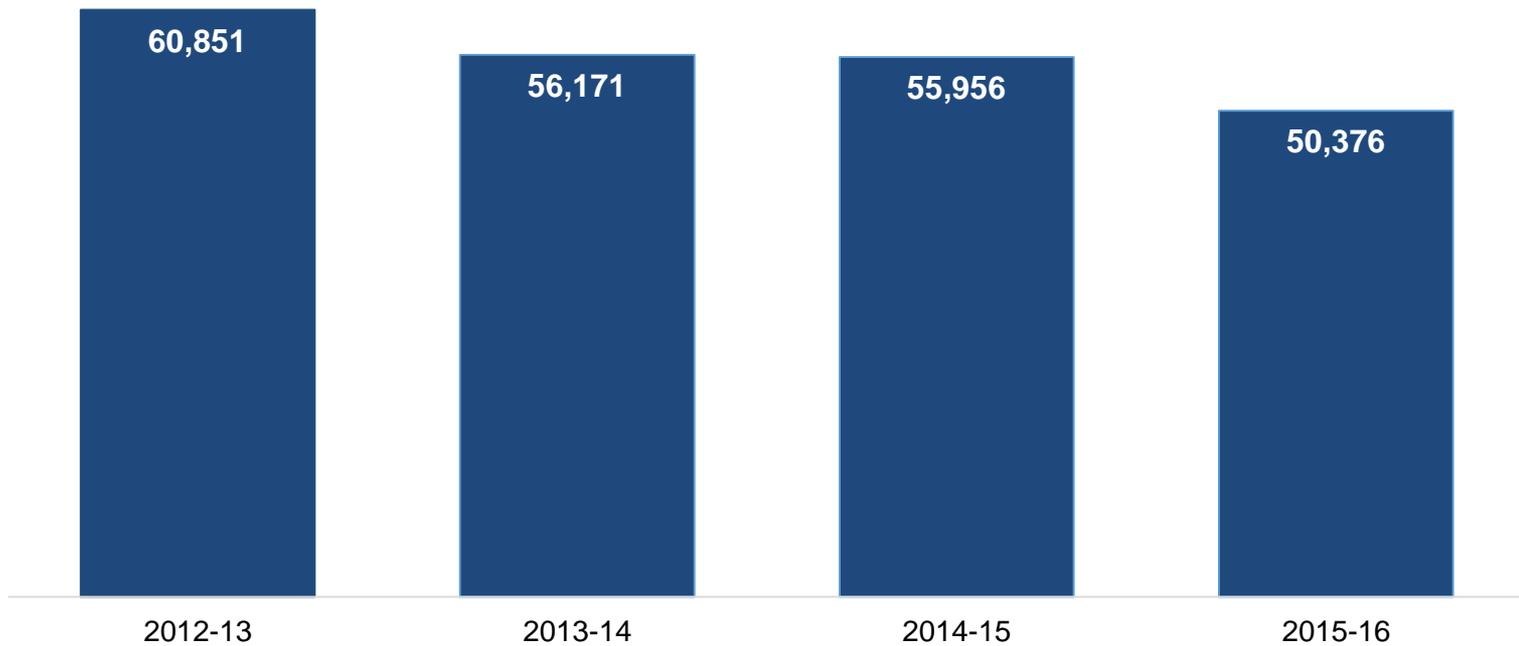
# What is the Chronic Absence Landscape in Connecticut?



# Statewide Chronic Absenteeism Trend

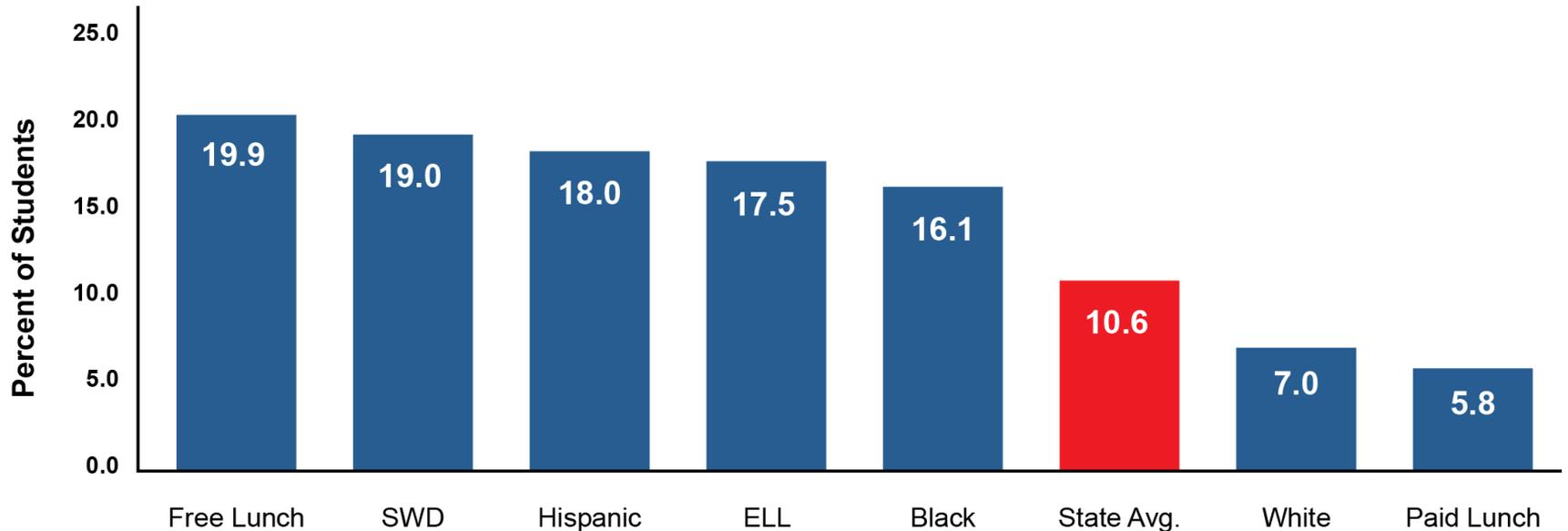


# Number of Students Chronically Absent



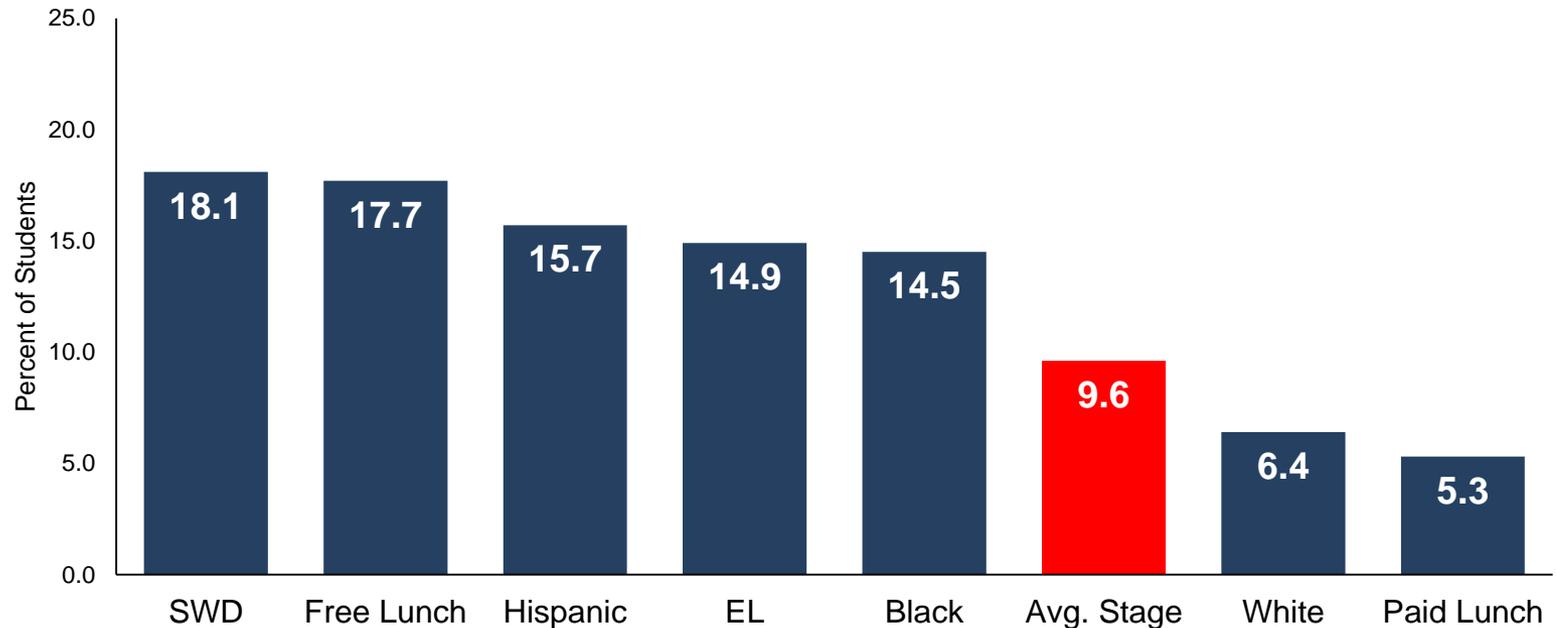
# Who is Chronically Absent?

## Snapshot Percent Chronically Absent, 2014–15

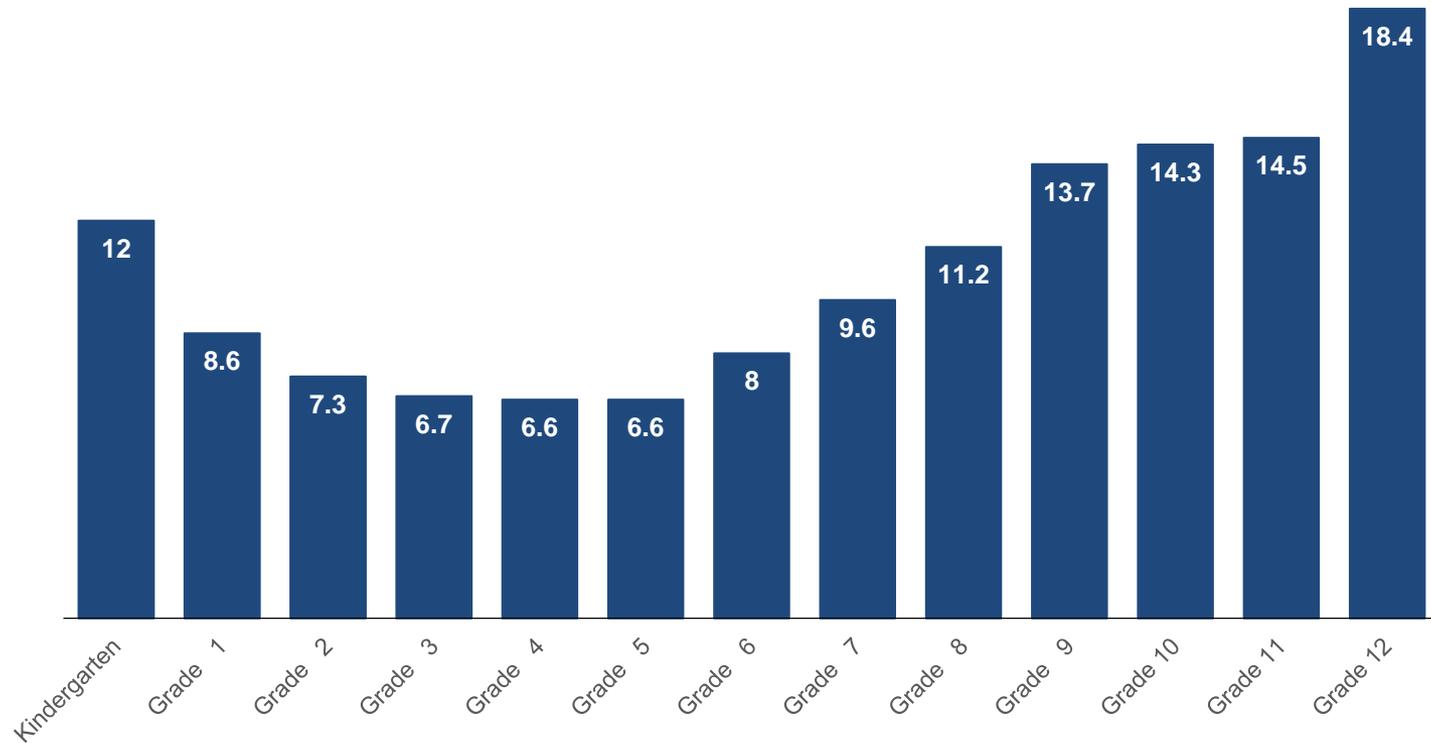


# Who is Chronically Absent?

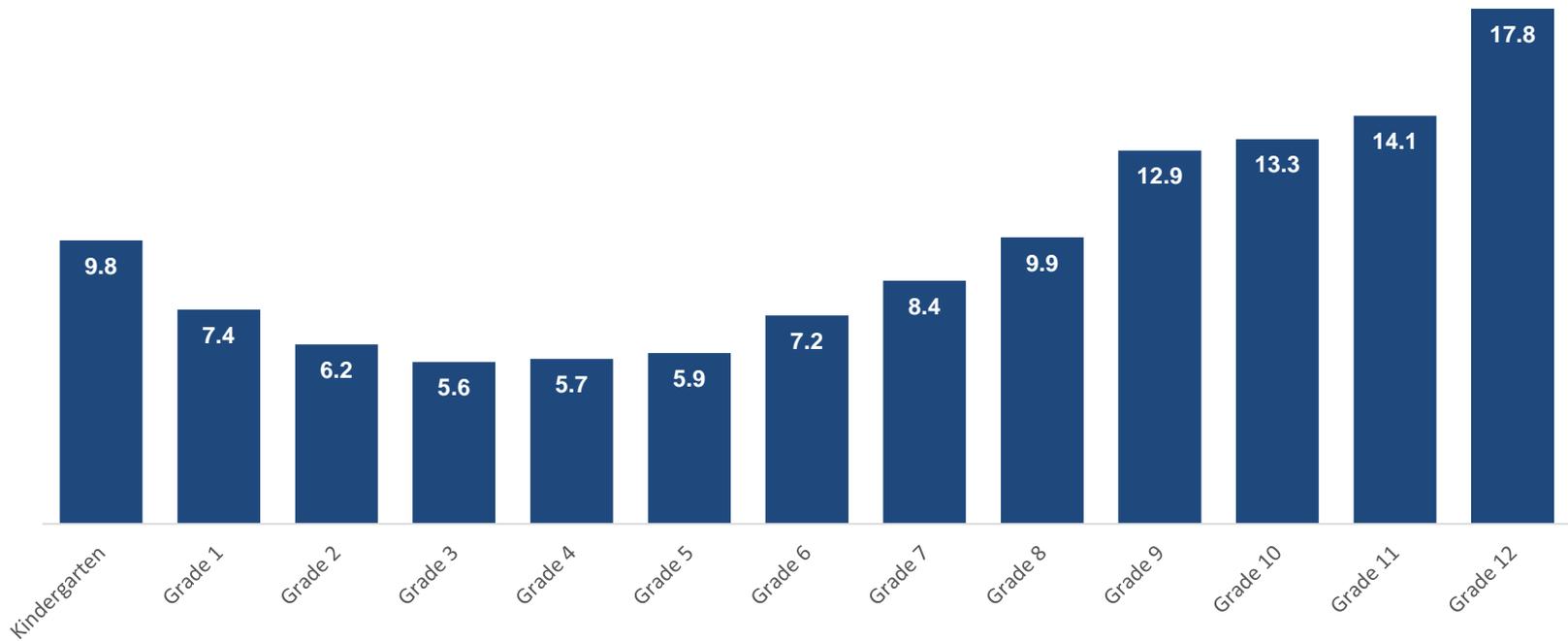
Snapshot  
Percent Chronically Absent, 2015-16



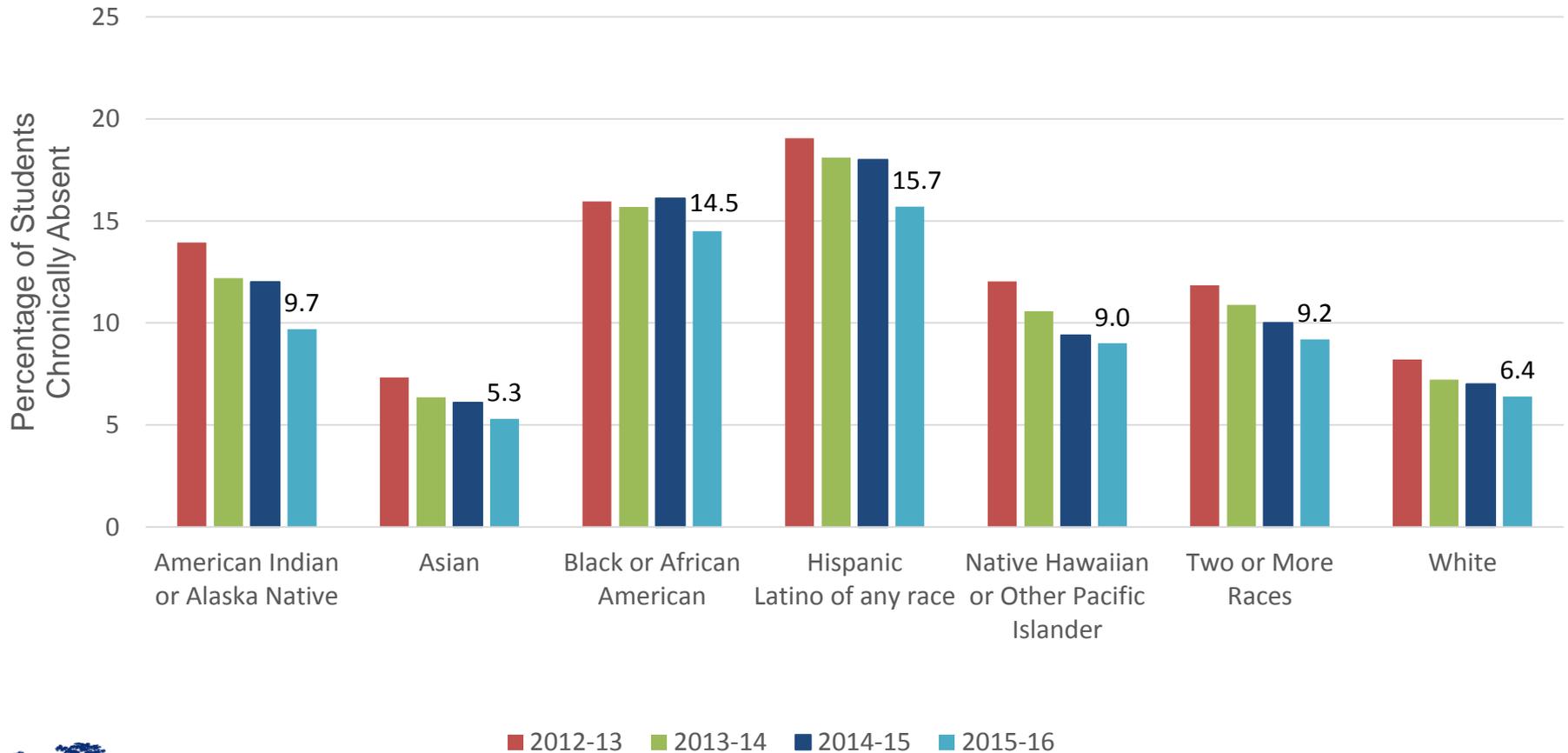
# Chronic Absence by Grade Level 2014-15



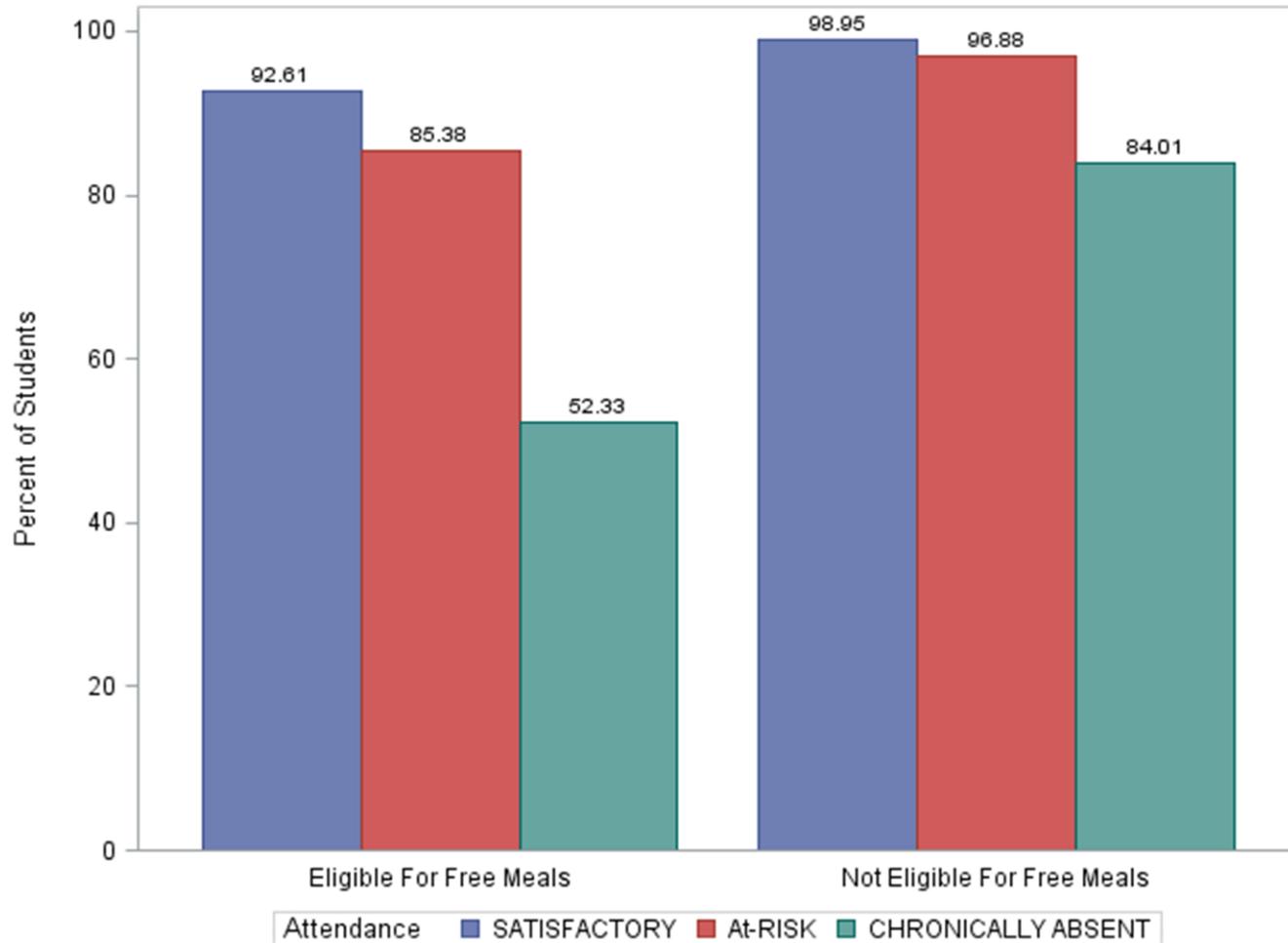
# Chronic Absence by Grade Level 2015-16

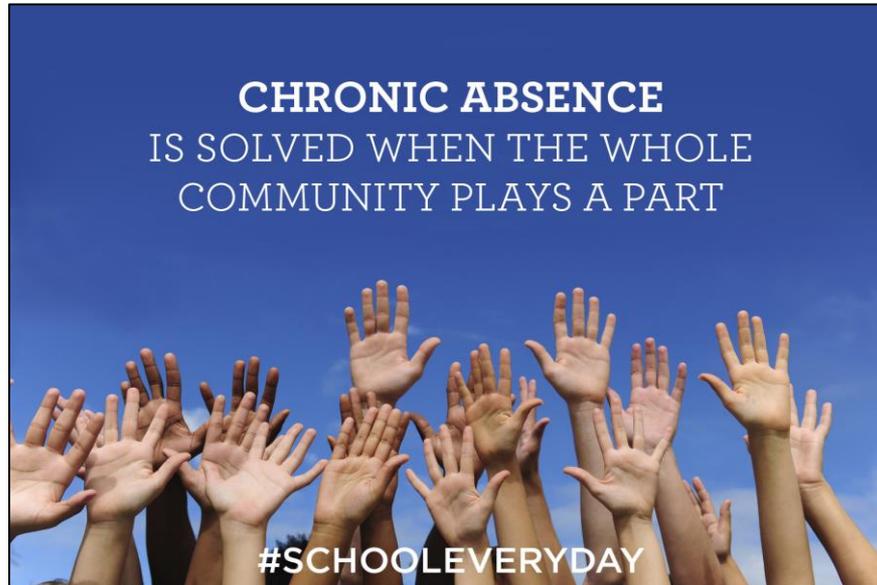


# Chronic Absence Rates by Race/Ethnicity



# Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in Four Years by Meal Eligibility 2014-15 Cohort



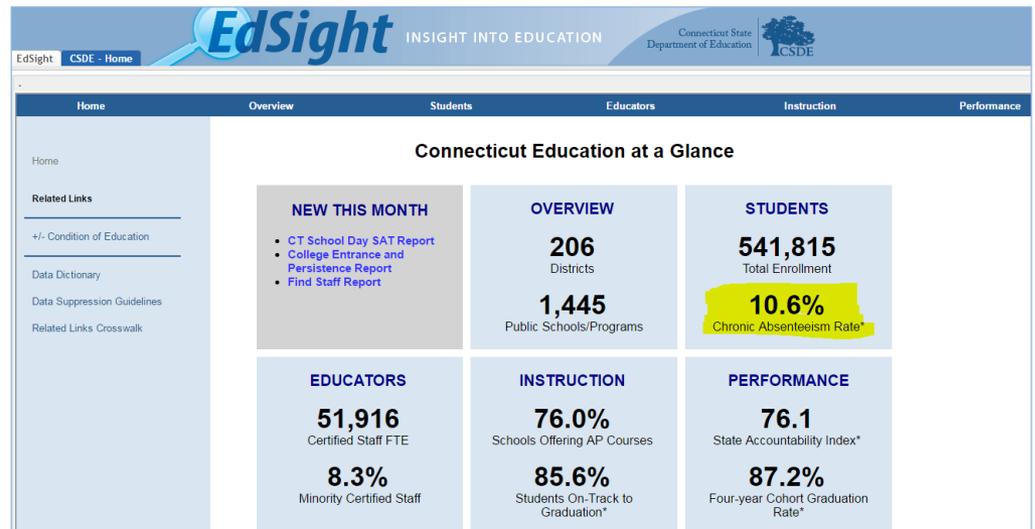


# How has Connecticut Addressed the Issue?

- *Data and Accountability*
- *Policy and Legislation*
- *Statewide Infrastructure*

# Data and Accountability

- State longitudinal student data system includes chronic absence data
- Data used to identify high levels of chronic absence
- [EdSight](#) and Next Generation Accountability System includes chronic absence indicator



# Policy and Legislation

- State Board of Education resolution for Alliance Districts
  - *chronic absence addressed in annual application for Alliance District funding*
- State Board of Education Five-year Comprehensive Plan
  - *includes reducing chronic absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions and school-based arrests*
- State legislation impacting state agency, districts and schools
  - *official definition of chronic absence, consistent with the research-based definition (10 percent)*
  - *requirement for district and school-level attendance teams in areas where chronic absence rates are high*
  - *development of a Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Guide*



# Statewide Infrastructure

- CT Kid's Report Card Results Based Accountability (RBA) results statement:  
*All Connecticut children grow up in a stable living environment, safe, healthy, and prepared to lead successful lives.*
- RBA Report Card included chronic absence as a headline indicator.
- Chronic Absence Strategic Action Group, January 2014  
*Serves as a centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new practices to address chronic absenteeism, promote communication and collaboration among critical state agency and community-based partners.*



# RBA Report Card Project



The screenshot shows the Connecticut General Assembly website. At the top left is the state seal. The header includes the text "CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY" and "State Capitol | Hartford, Connecticut | 06106". On the right, there are links for "Quick Bill Search" and "Translate Website", along with a search bar containing "SITE SEARCH" and a magnifying glass icon. A navigation menu below the header lists "Representation", "Committees", "Offices", "Commissions", "Session Items", "Statutes", "Bill Info", and "Associated". A breadcrumb trail reads "C G A / COMMITTEES / CHILDREN'S / COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S RBA REPORT CARD PROJECT". The main heading is "Committee on Children's RBA Report Card Project". Below it is the text: "All Connecticut children grow up in a stable living environment, safe, healthy, and prepared to lead successful lives." A photograph of seven diverse children is centered on the page. Below the photo is a link: "Click Here to See the CT Kids Report Card! Results Scorecard for Beginners".



# Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group

*Centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising  
new practices to address chronic absenteeism*

Four Goals:

1. Data Issues/Data Development
2. Best Practices – Building Capacity
3. Engage Strategic Partners
4. Report Card – *Turning the Curve*



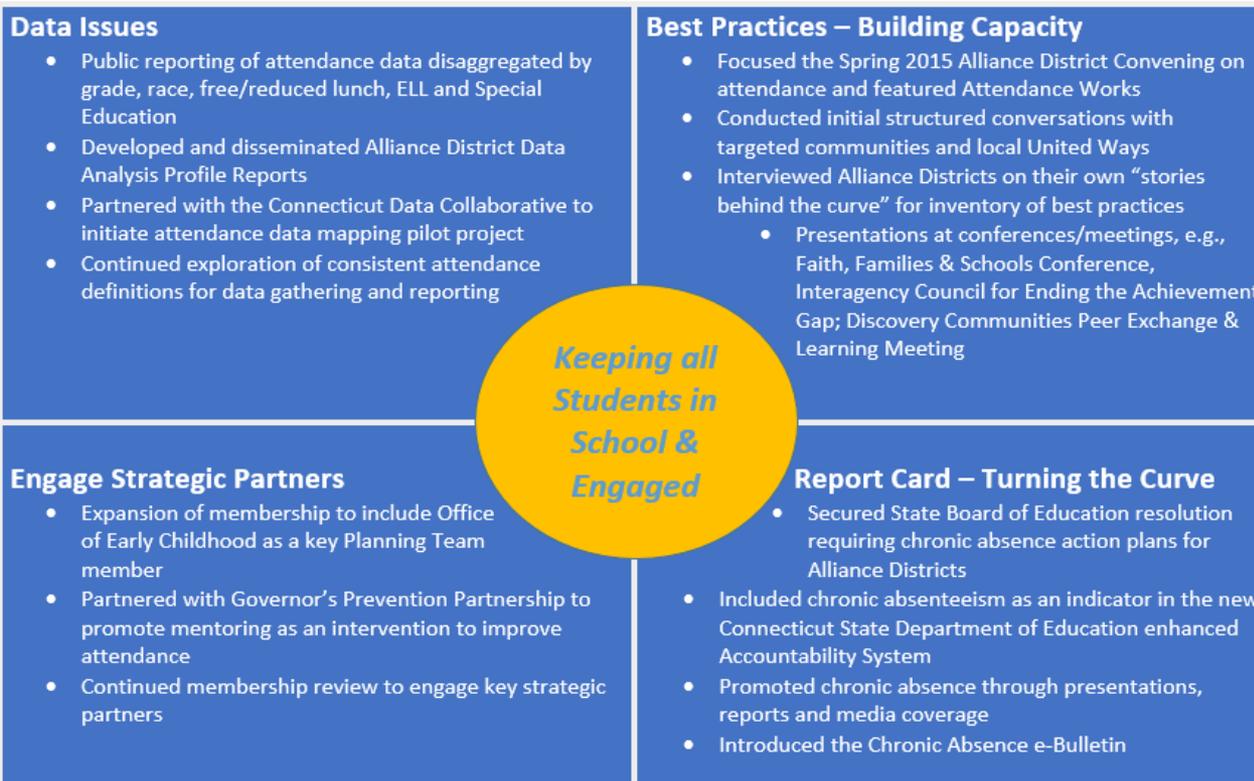
# A “Snapshot” of Progress

Connecticut Kids Report Card

Stable, Safe, Healthy and Successful Children

## Chronic Absenteeism Strategic Action Group Snapshot of Accomplishments 2014-15

Purpose: To improve attendance in Connecticut schools by: (1) serving as the centralizing force for existing initiatives and promising new approaches to achieve measurable better result; and (2) promoting statewide coordination and communication among critical partners involved in “turning the curve.”



# Early Work: Educate & Inform

Events	Strategic Partners
<p>“Here to Learn: Chronic Absence and the Achievement Gap,” public forum featuring Hedy Chang, Attendance Works (November 12, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legislators</li> <li>• government entities</li> <li>• state and local partners</li> </ul>
<p>“Using a School-Linked Services Approach to Solve Chronic Absenteeism,” Connecticut State Department of Education (May 15, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local school districts</li> <li>• municipalities</li> <li>• faith-based organizations</li> <li>• community providers</li> </ul>
<p>The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (13 Connecticut districts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local school districts</li> <li>• civic leaders</li> <li>• policymakers</li> <li>• advocates</li> <li>• community organizations</li> </ul>
<p>Committee on Children’s Results-Based Accountability (RBA) Report Card Project Leadership Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor</li> <li>• legislators</li> <li>• government entities</li> <li>• advocates</li> <li>• state and local partners</li> </ul>
<p>Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap and the Achievement Gap Task Force</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chaired by Lieutenant Governor</li> <li>• executive branch leadership</li> </ul>



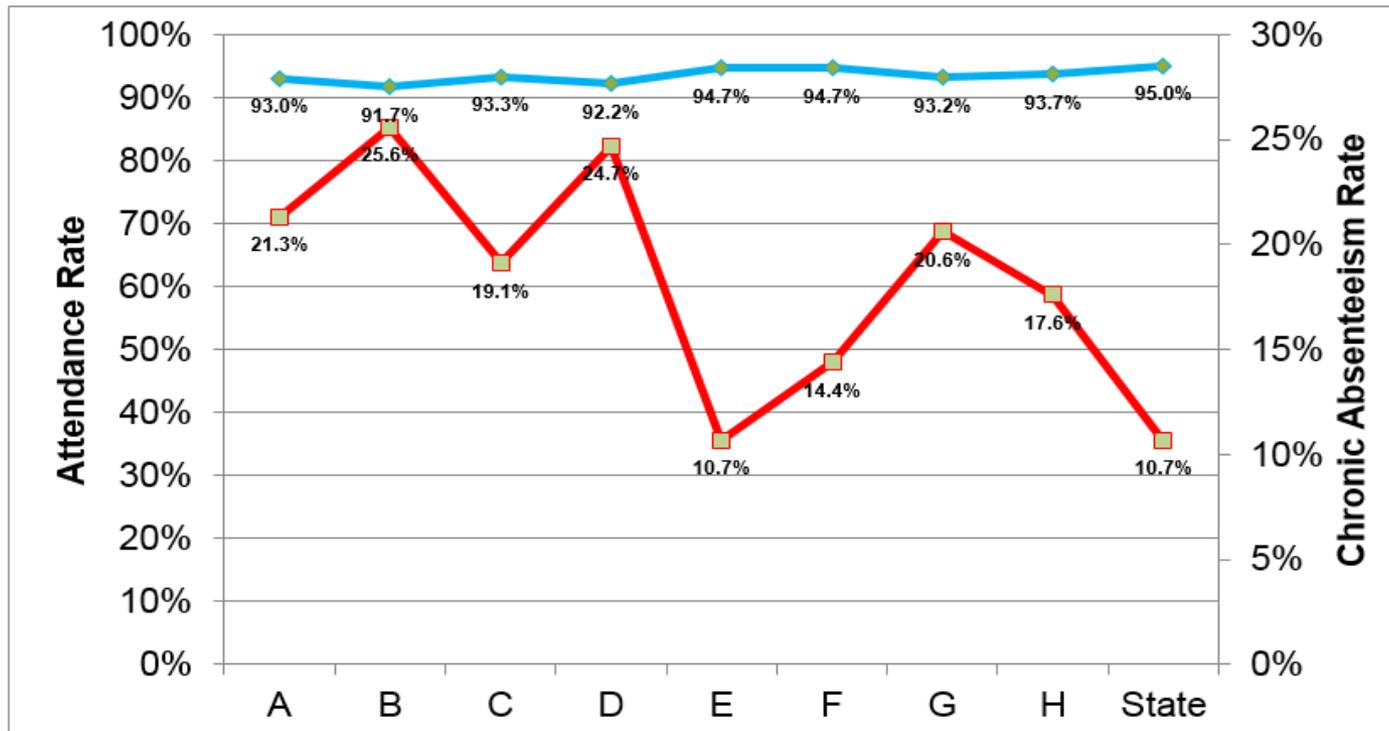
# Leverage Existing Networks

- Policies and practices that are research and evidence-based are embedded into all meetings and professional development opportunities
- Examples of networks in place that are positioned to include chronic absenteeism into their education reform efforts:
  - Alliance School Districts (30 districts)
  - Commissioner's Network Schools
  - Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap
  - The Campaign for Grade Level Reading (13 districts)
  - The Governor's Prevention Partnership's School-Based Mentoring Roundtable
  - Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs), organized by juvenile court regions
  - Community conversations with local United Way chapters
  - Community providers invited as partners at Alliance District Convenings



# Example of Creating Visual Awareness

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

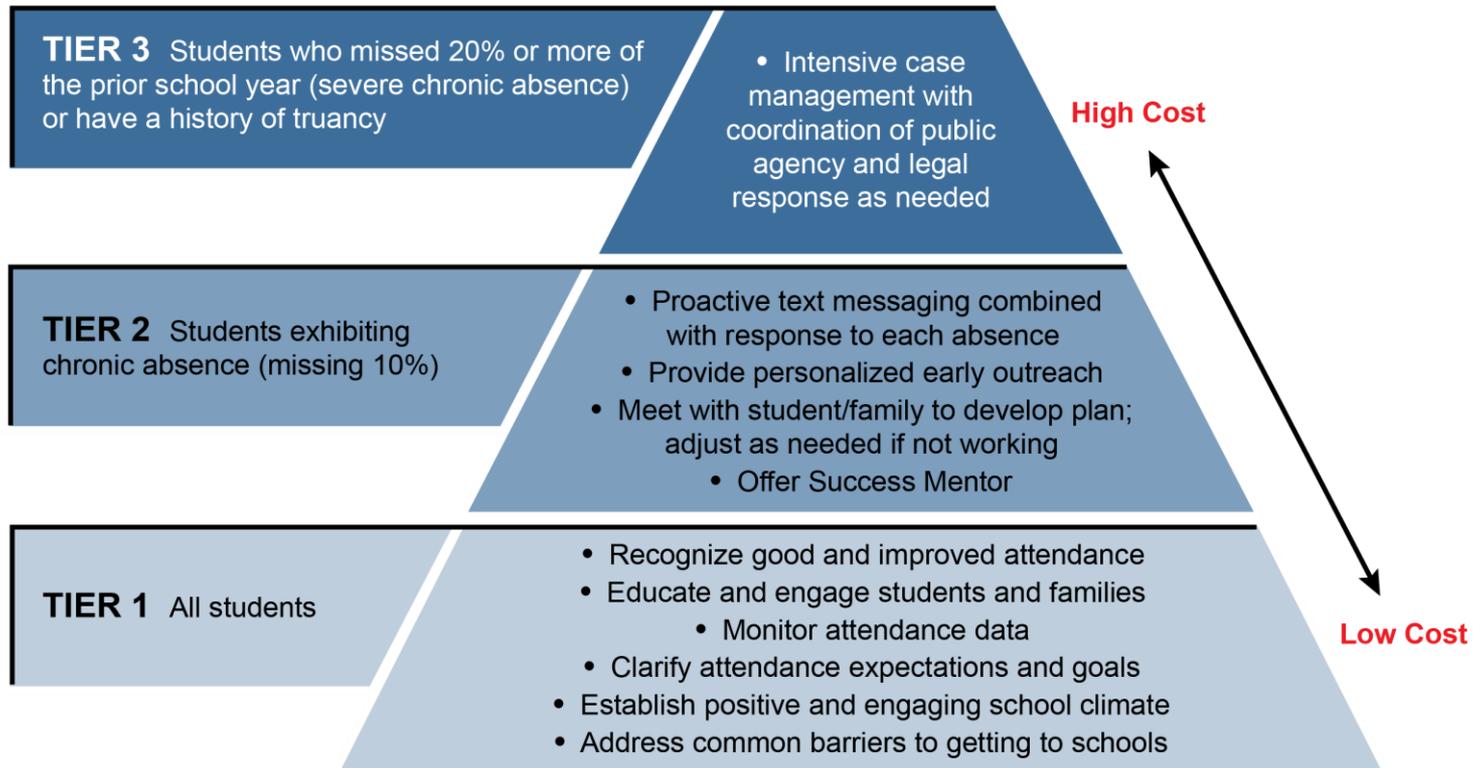


# Demonstrating Success

- “Bright spots” demonstrate that reducing chronic absence ***can be done.***
  - Middletown Public Schools
  - Consolidated School District of New Britain
  - Vernon Public Schools
- Promotion of successes can start a ***ripple effect.***
- ***Momentum builds*** and more districts unpack their data, find the trends and implement a strategic plan.



# Improving Attendance: A Tiered Approach that Begins with Prevention



# Six High-Impact Strategies

- Strategy #1: Build Awareness
- Strategy #2: Use Data to Promote Action
- Strategy #3: Cultivate Champions to Build a State-Level Infrastructure
- Strategy #4: Build Capacity
- Strategy #5: Identify and Leverage Bright Spots
- Strategy #6: Foster Accountability



# What are the Outcomes?



# Selected Alliance Districts

Change over two years  
2012-13 to 2014-15

- Killingly 16.2 to 9.7 percent (-6.5)
- Bridgeport 25.1 to 19.0 percent (-6.1)
- East Haven 16.1 to 11.2 percent (-4.9)
- New Britain 24.6 to 20.7 percent (-3.9)
- Danbury 11.0 to 7.1 percent (-3.9)

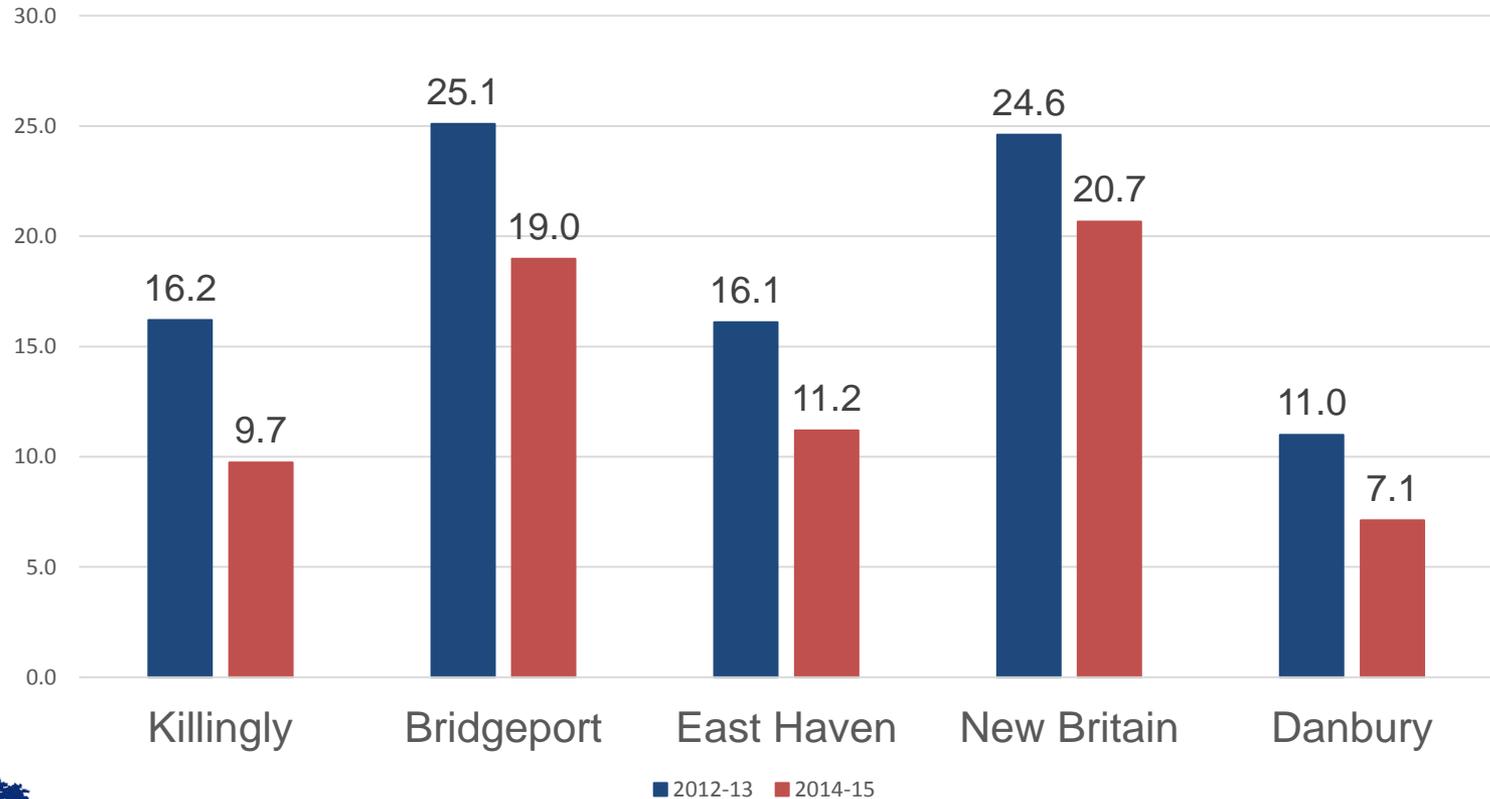
Source: EdSight



# Selected Alliance Districts

Change over two years  
2012-13 to 2014-15

Source: EdSight



# A Collective Approach

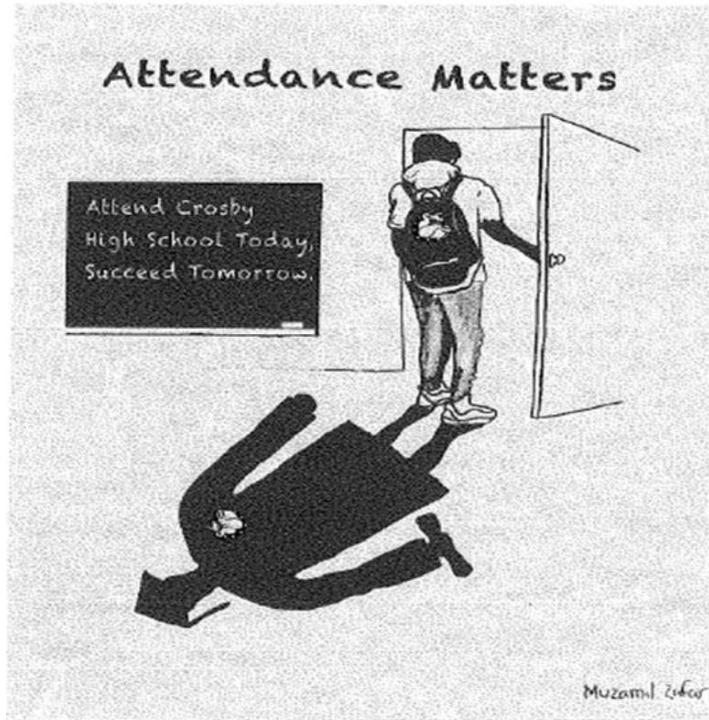
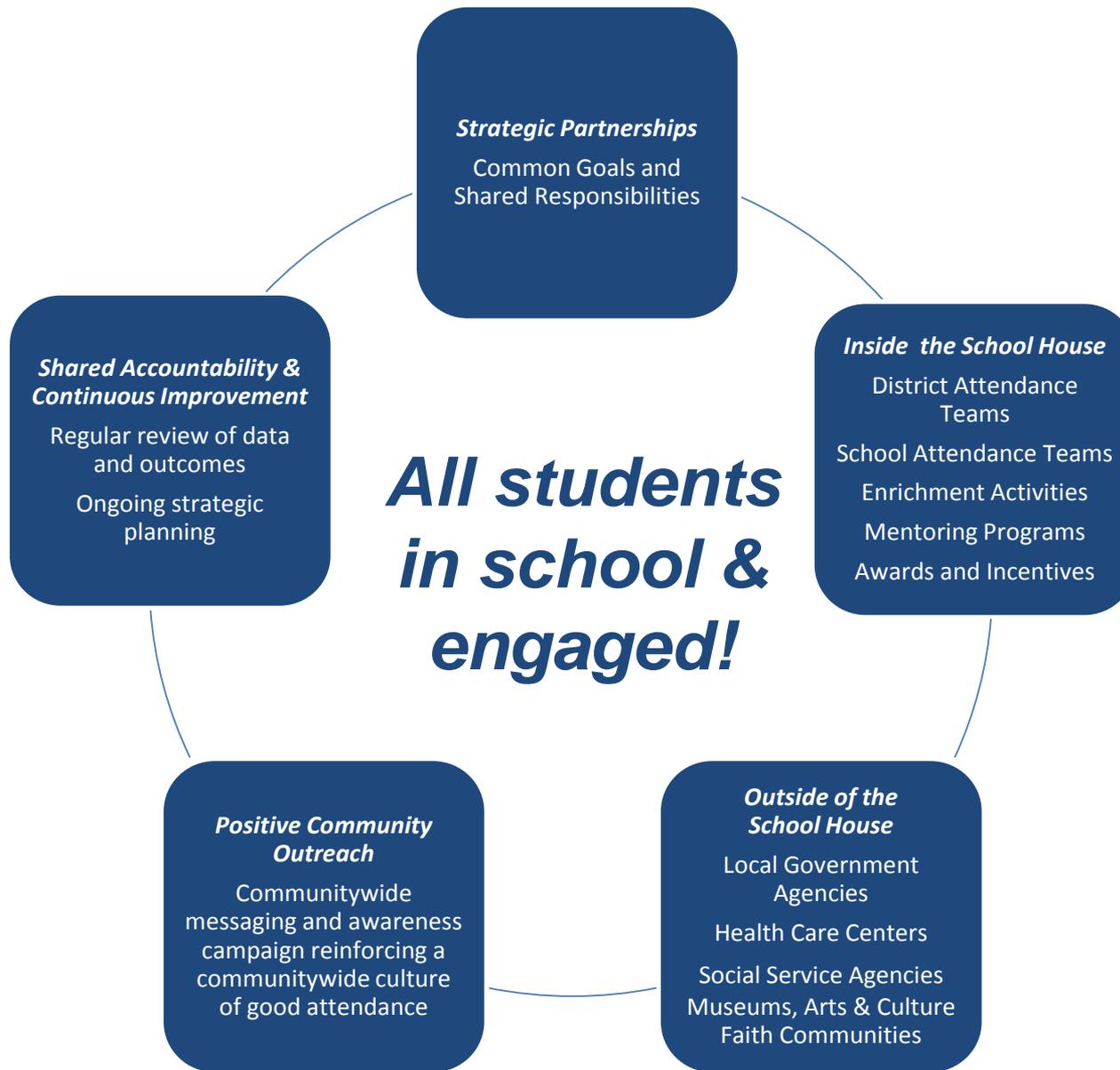


Illustration courtesy of Muzamil Zafar, Crosby High School Student

*“The good news is chronic absence can be significantly reduced when **schools, families and community partners work together** to monitor data, promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school every day...”*

**Attendance Works  
Advancing Student Success  
by Reducing Chronic Absence**





# Link to Federal Effort to Combat Chronic Absenteeism

*Every Student, Every Day: Community Toolkit to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*

## United States Departments of:

- Justice
- Health and Human Services
- Housing and Urban Development
- Education

## Action Steps:

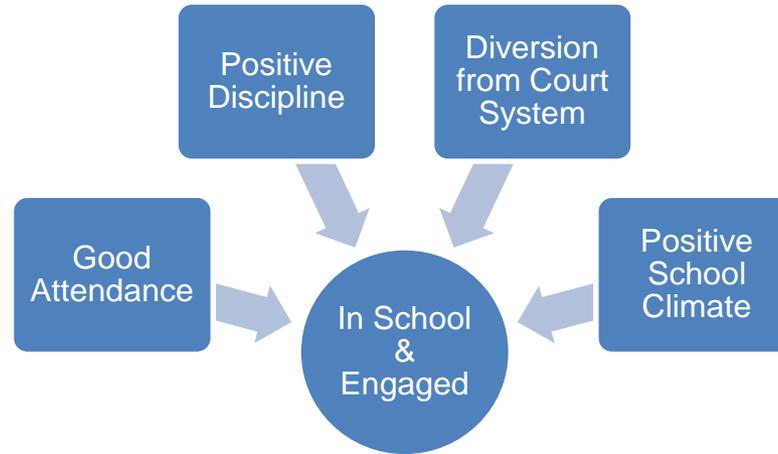
1. Generate and act on absenteeism data
2. Create and deploy positive messages and measures
3. Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism
4. Ensure responsibility across sectors



# Where Do We Go from Here?



# Convergence of Efforts



## Next Steps

Release prevention and intervention chronic absence guide

Develop state-level tiered intervention model

Build internal and external capacity to support districts

Expand Connecticut's partnership with national experts, e.g., Attendance Works, The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading



# Impact of Connecticut's Infrastructure and Systems Approach

*National Recognition  
for State Leadership*



# Systems Impact

## Alignment of efforts has had a transformative impact including:

- Reduction in chronic absence at both the state and local levels
- Implementation of Public Act, 15-225, An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism that included:
  - development of a Prevention and Intervention Guide
  - district and school-level attendance teams where chronic absenteeism rates are high
  - adoption of official definitions for chronic absence
- State Board of Education resolution (February 2015) requiring plans to address chronic absence in Alliance District applications for state funding
- Capacity building professional development events and peer-to-peer learning opportunities
- Next Generation Accountability System/[Guidance](#) and EdSight



# National Recognition for State Leadership

## Spotlight on Connecticut including:

- U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and Justice – *Every Student Every Day* [National Conference](#), Washington, DC, June 8-10, 2016, “Leadership Matters” opening panel and “Every Student In School & Engaged!” workshop
- The Council of State Governments’ article, September/October 2016 issue, “[States Attend to Chronic Absenteeism](#)”
- Attendance Works brief, September 6, 2016, [Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absence](#)
- Attendance Works webinar, September 8, 2016, “*Ensuring an Equal Opportunity to Learn: Leveraging Chronic Absence Data for Strategic Action*,” included Charlene Russell-Tucker, CSDE Chief Operating Officer, [slide presentation](#), [webinar recording](#)
- Kappan magazine, October 2016, [Chronic early absence: What states can do](#), co-authored by Hedy Chang, Charlene Russell-Tucker, and Kari Sullivan
- Attendance Works launched a “[Connecticut Highlights](#)” webpage, September 6, 2016, outlining Connecticut’s policy and legislative work



# Hedy Chang

## Executive Director Attendance Works

[Watch Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works](#), a national and state level initiative aimed at advancing student success by addressing chronic absence. Attendance Works is a national partner that supports Connecticut's attendance initiatives.

# Strategic Messaging

*...we can dramatically improve the academic and life outcomes of millions of young people who have been disengaged from a daily, supportive school experience.*

*The health and well-being of our nation demands that we do no less.*

Source: October 7, 2015, Letter on Federal Effort  
to Combat Chronic Absenteeism at Schools



# Message Customized for Connecticut

*...we can dramatically improve  
the academic and life outcomes  
of **55,596** young people who  
have been disengaged from a  
daily, supportive school  
experience.*

*The health and well-being of  
**Connecticut** demands that  
we do no less.*





## THE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

[Watch Ralph Smith, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading – Annie E Casey Foundation.](#) The Campaign facilitates the Grade Level Reading Campaign's Advisory Committee on Ending Chronic Absence. Connecticut is one of seven states represented on this committee.