More than 12% of California's K-12 public school students were chronically absent in 2018-19 (EdData). These numbers more than doubled since the pandemic.

Chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects youth of color and other vulnerable student groups.

Low attendance is an early warning system for dropping out risk.

Poor attendance is an indicator of low achievement in transitional grades.

Chronic absenteeism impacts reading proficiency, social and emotional development, academic confidence, test scores, early literacy and math development, and high school completion.
Selection of schools

Initial selection based on:
- Successfully reduced chronic absenteeism rates
- Enrollment of at least 1,500
- At least 60% unduplicated pupils

This yielded a list of 80 school districts

Final selection based on availability yielded 9 districts
- Located across the state
- Ranging in size from 4,000 - 23,000
- Variance of grade spans (4 unified, 2 high schools, 3 K-8)
- Representing a combined enrollment of 142,000 students.
9 districts lowered chronic absenteeism by 3% between 2017-2019
During the same time period California LEAs experienced a 1.3% increase in absenteeism rates
The true rate of improvement of 9 LEAs in the study was 4.8% (1.3% CA increase + 3% decrease)
Approx. 6,800 students were no longer chronically absent based on the efforts of the 9 LEAs
FINDINGS FOR 9 LEAs pre and post pandemic

- 9 districts lowered chronic absenteeism by 1.4% between 2017-2021
- During the same time period California LEAs experienced a 3.5% increase in absenteeism rates
- The true rate of improvement of 9 LEAs was 4.9% (3.5% CA increase + 1.45% decrease)
- Outlier: If you remove 1 LEA from the study that saw rates spike beyond the 25% mark during the pandemic, the collective rate of the remaining 8 LEAs improves from 1.4 to 3.0% – a 6.5% total (3.5% CA increase + 3.0% group decrease)
Improvement by Type of District (2017-2021)

Elementary Districts

High School District

Unified District

Study Group Comparison - Cumulative (ESD) 17-21

Study Group Comparison - Cumulative (HSD) 17-21

Study Group Comparison - Cumulative (USD) 17-21

Study Group Comparison - Cumulative (HSD) 17-21

Percentage Change

Percentage Change

Percentage Change

Percentage Change

Elementary SD  Study Group LEAs (9)

High SD  Study Group HS (2)  Study Group HS w/o Outlier (1)

Unified SD  Study Group Unified (4)

High SD  Study Group HS (2)
COMMON PRACTICES AMONG DISTRICTS

- Attendance work was systemic
- Relationship building and connection were essential
- Data was timely, informative, and led to action
- Resources and attention were committed over time
What has been your most successful strategy to address chronic absenteeism?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
Specific Strategies shared by LEAs

1. **Shift mindset and build understanding**: Understand impact, shift from fault to responsibility, and commit to school as a fun and joyful place

2. **Integrate practices across the district**: Part of PBIS, MTSS, and parent engagement

3. **Leverage strong data practices**: Compliance reviews and adjust calendar to trends

4. **Utilize early intervention**: Early warning system, relationship building beyond classroom

5. **Provide consistent, focused wraparound communication**: District-wide campaigns for communication, timely notification of absences, and public attendance goals

6. **Ensure strong support and staffing**: Dedicated staff, specialized PD and vendor support

7. **Maximize community partnerships**: Expand support network for referrals and support

8. **Develop flexible paths for students**: Extended school hours and independent study
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a consistent and clear statewide communication campaign.
2. Allow for flexibilities around how or when learning takes place.
3. Update SART and SARB requirements to align with latest research and initiatives.
4. Provide statewide training and tools to support attendance.
5. Forge a path for a more “connected system” and inter-agency collaboration.
6. Support the development of even more usable and implementable statewide data.
Next steps and ways to stay engaged

- Share the memo to continue the focus on reducing chronic absenteeism
- Share district updates in a follow-up interview in Spring 2023
- Work with a coach to dive deeper into data and reducing chronic absenteeism through SY 2022-23 as part of a Research Learning Network
- Contact: dkong@ccee-ca.org for more information
Thank You!