Leading with Clarity: How Health and Attendance Guidance Drives School Success

Session Three of the Chronic Absenteeism Bright Spots Series

November 19, 2024

Welcome

Sujie Shin

Deputy Executive Director,
CCEE

- Recording & slides will be posted on CCEE's website
- Slides will be linked in the chat
- Chat comments are only visible to presenters
- **Questions/Comments**: Please use the Q&A feature

Agenda

- **Introduction & Background**
  - What is chronic absence and why does it matter?
- **The Link Between Health and Attendance**
  - How does health guidance matter for attendance?
- **Panel Discussion with Livingston Union School District**
  - Panelists/LEAs
  - Practical Tools
- **Q&A**
- **Closing**

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Zoom Poll

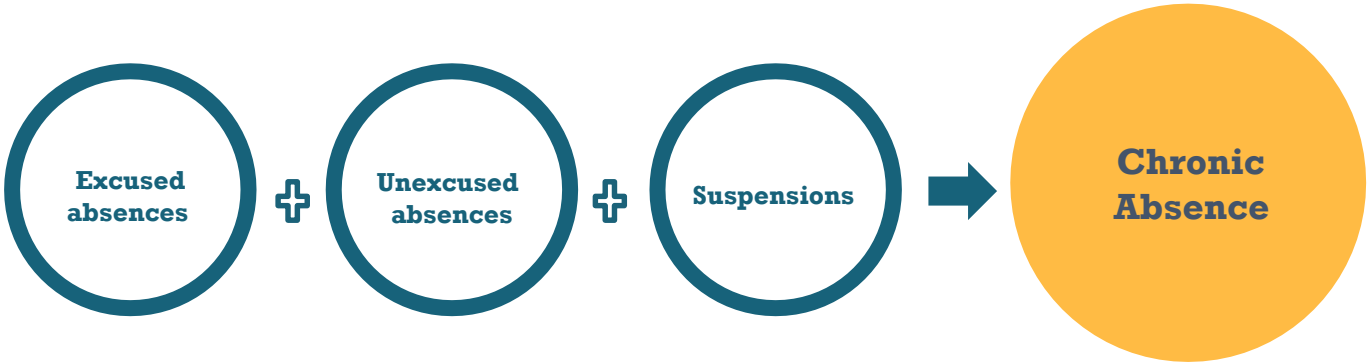
What is your role?

- District Administrator
- School Principal
- Teacher
- Counselor
- Social Worker
- Parent
- Psychologist
- Nurse
- Attendance Clerk
- School Office Manager
- Other

What is Chronic Absence?

And why does it matter?

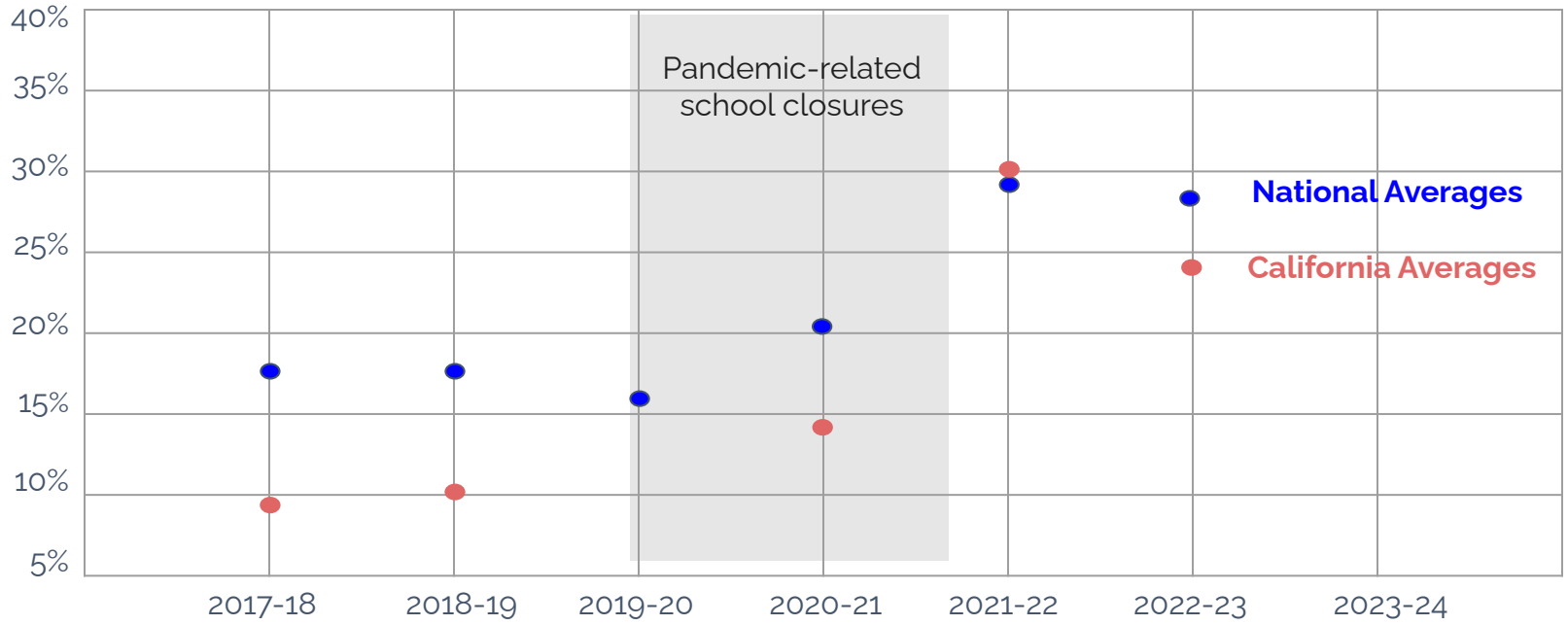
Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason**. Chronic absence can put students academically at risk as well as hurt their socioemotional well-being.



Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

What Does the Data Show?

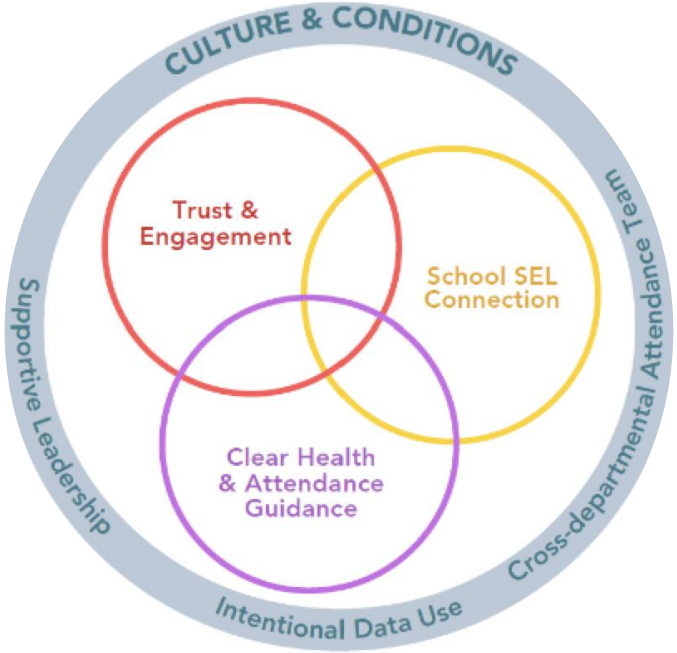
National and State Data



What We Learned From Our Bright Spots

3 Key Approaches

- Intentional focus on **building trust and engagement between schools and families** that everybody "owns"
- **Embedded** strategies to help **students connect emotionally** to their schools and peers
- **Clear guidance** for parents, children, and staff on policies for absences while supporting health & well-being



Bright Spots Factsheet

Attendance Achievers: Effective Strategies that Set Bright Spot Districts Apart

Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten continues to be a pressing challenge across California. Chronic absenteeism rates (missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason) in kindergarten increased dramatically from 15.6% in 2020-21 to over 40% in 2021-22.

Missing too much school during a child's formative years is particularly worrisome given the longer term consequences it can have on their educational development.

Despite these alarming increases, we identified 20 districts with significantly lower chronic absenteeism rates.

Our Bright Spots research aimed to discover why rates were lower in three such districts: Livingston Union, Cypress School District and Kings Canyon Unified. Through in-depth site visits, we documented approaches and conditions that collectively help inform ways to get more kindergarteners back into the classroom and ready to learn.

Kindergarten Chronic Absenteeism Rates in Bright Spots Districts Compared to the State

	State	Livingston	Cypress	Kings Canyon
2019	15.6%	6%	5.9%	9.6%
2023	36.3%	28.1%	22.8%	26.7%

Across all three districts, we found a set of common conditions that supported successful approaches to reducing absenteeism:

Approaches

An intentional focus on building trust and engagement between schools and families: Creating a culture of trust and engagement is a mutual endeavor that everyone at the school supports.

Establishing a school climate where children connect emotionally to their schools and peers: Schools help kindergarteners develop kindness and empathy which motivates their peers to show up to school.

Clear guidance on supporting children's health and wellbeing: Parents and school staff understand ways to reduce health-related absences, including when to keep students home versus sending them to school.

Culture & Conditions

A cross-departmental attendance team led by a principal who is an accountable leader who takes full responsibility for results and actions, irrespective of the outcome: Each district and school employs an attendance team model that has "synergy" and open lines of communication about which students and families are in need of support to overcome barriers to attendance. School leaders set the tone, advocating for and enacting conditions for success.

Intentional and strategic use of data in real time to drive decision making: Attendance data is shared openly and used in real-time to proactively diagnose and target outreach to students and families needing additional support.

Link: bit.ly/3Zvu6Rx

NPR Podcast

npr WAMU 88.5 AMERICAN UNIVERSITY RADIO

NEWSLETTERS SIGN IN NPR SHOP

NEWS CULTURE MUSIC PODCASTS & SHOWS SEARCH

EDUCATION

The kids missing the most amount of school may surprise you: kindergarteners

JUNE 5, 2024 · 3:49 AM ET

HEARD ON MORNING EDITION

Cory Turner

6-Minute Listen + PLAYLIST

A California school district fights chronic absenteeism in kindergarten by helping parents decide whether their kid is too sick to go to school.

Link: n.pr/4e7wH8V

Meet the Presenters

Attendance Works and UC Davis SPARC Teams

Helen Duffy
Senior Fellow,
AttendanceWorks

Kevin Gee
Professor & Faculty
Research Affiliate,
UC Davis

Clear Health Attendance Guidance and Its Link to Attendance

Students facing significant struggles with their physical, emotional, and mental health are more likely to miss school.

- A range of physical conditions can lead children to miss school with asthma being one of the leading drivers of health-related absences.
- Students who struggle with mental health issues, like anxiety and depression, are more likely to avoid going to school.

Clearer messaging about when to send children to schools when they are sick can help avoid confusion among parents.

County and District Overview

Chronic Absenteeism

	State	Merced County	Livingston Union
2019	16.2%	14.9%	6.0%
2023	37.8%	35.0%	28.1%

Kindergarten chronic absenteeism rates in Livingston Union School District compared to Merced County and the State.

Demographics

	Merced County	Livingston Union
Enrollment	58,839	2,545
SED	79.9%	79.1%
EL	23.6%	39.6%
SWD	12.4%	9.0%

Source: Data Quest (CDE), 2023/24 school year

Panel Discussion

Livingston Union School District

Stella Montanez

Principal,
Selma Herndon Elementary

Lori Morgan

Nurse,
Livingston Union School District

Maria Torres-Perez

Director of Categorical Programs & Special Projects,
Livingston Union School District

Question 1:

How does adult **health** and **well-being** impact the school culture and environment?

Question 2:

How do you promote consistent communication around **health** and **attendance**?

Question 3:

How do you use student attendance and health **data to inform** the way you approach **communications** with families?

Question 4:

What **advice** do you have for schools or districts that might not have **full-time nurses**?

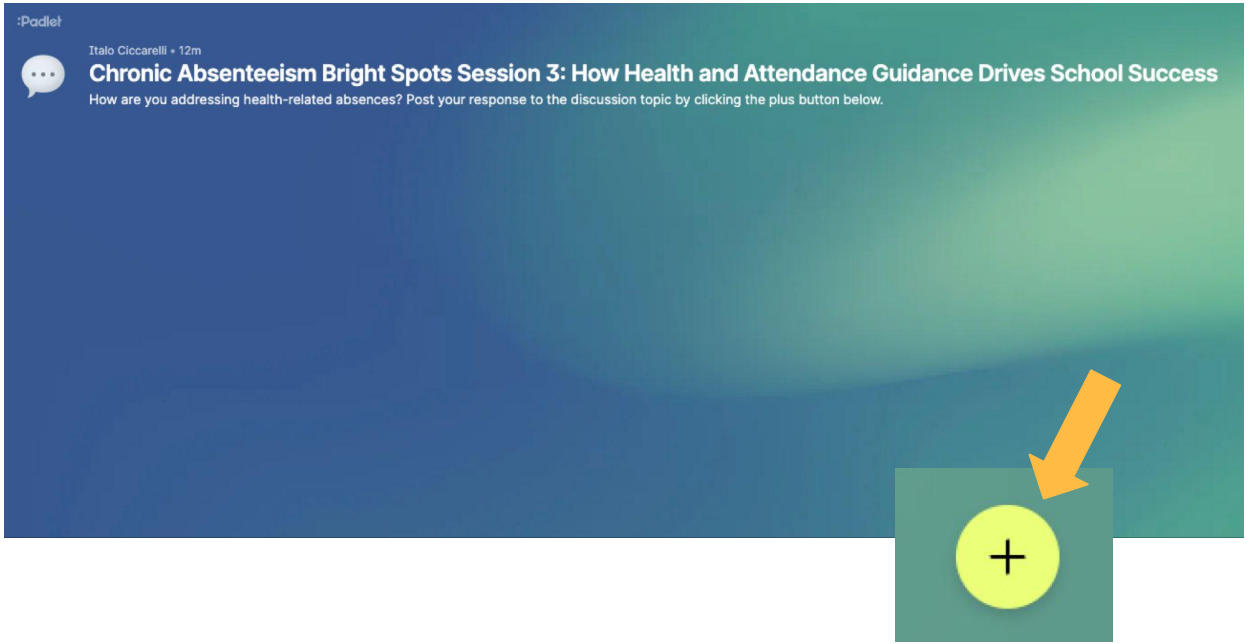
Questions?

Health and Attendance Tools

- Whole School, Whole Community Whole Child
- Health Handouts for Families
  - Health Guidance for Going to School
  - Tips for Staying Healthy
  - When is Too Sick for School?
  - Handout About Anxiety

How are you addressing health-related absences?

Share your ideas on the Padlet!



bit.ly/CAPadlet3

Thank You

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Please take a few minutes to **provide** some **feedback** about this session

Feedback Survey