



Attendance  
Works



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School Policy, Action,  
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California Collaborative  
for Educational Excellence

# Finding Bright Spots in California's Chronic Absenteeism Landscape

*California Educational Research Association Conference 2024*

# Agenda

- **Introductions & Background**
- **Overview of the Chronic Absenteeism Bright Spots Project**
  - What did we find, and what does it mean?
- **Learning From Our Bright Spot Districts:**
  - Livingston Union: Focus on deep connections to increase engagement
  - Kings Canyon: How engagement connects to academics
- **Scanning the National Horizon**
  - The 50% Challenge with Attendance Works, Ed Trust, & AEI
- **Q&A and Closing**



# Welcome



**Cecelia Leong**

Vice President of Programs,  
AttendanceWorks



**Helen Duffy**

Senior Fellow,  
AttendanceWorks



**Sujie Shin**

Deputy Executive Director,  
CCEE



**Sharon Matsuzaki**

Data Systems & Accountability Coordinator  
Kings Canyon Joint USD



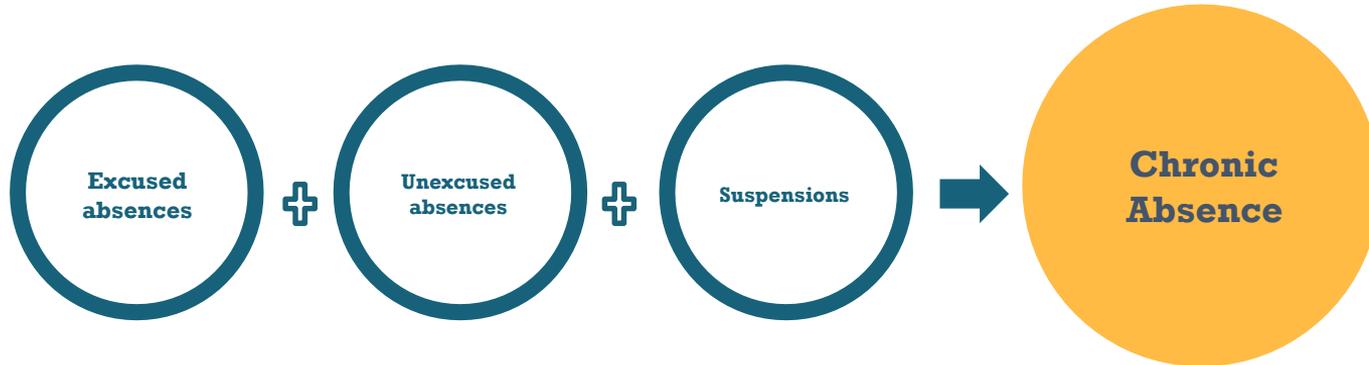
**Mayte Ramirez**

Principal, Campus Park Elementary  
Livingston Union SD

# What is Chronic Absence?

## And why does it matter?

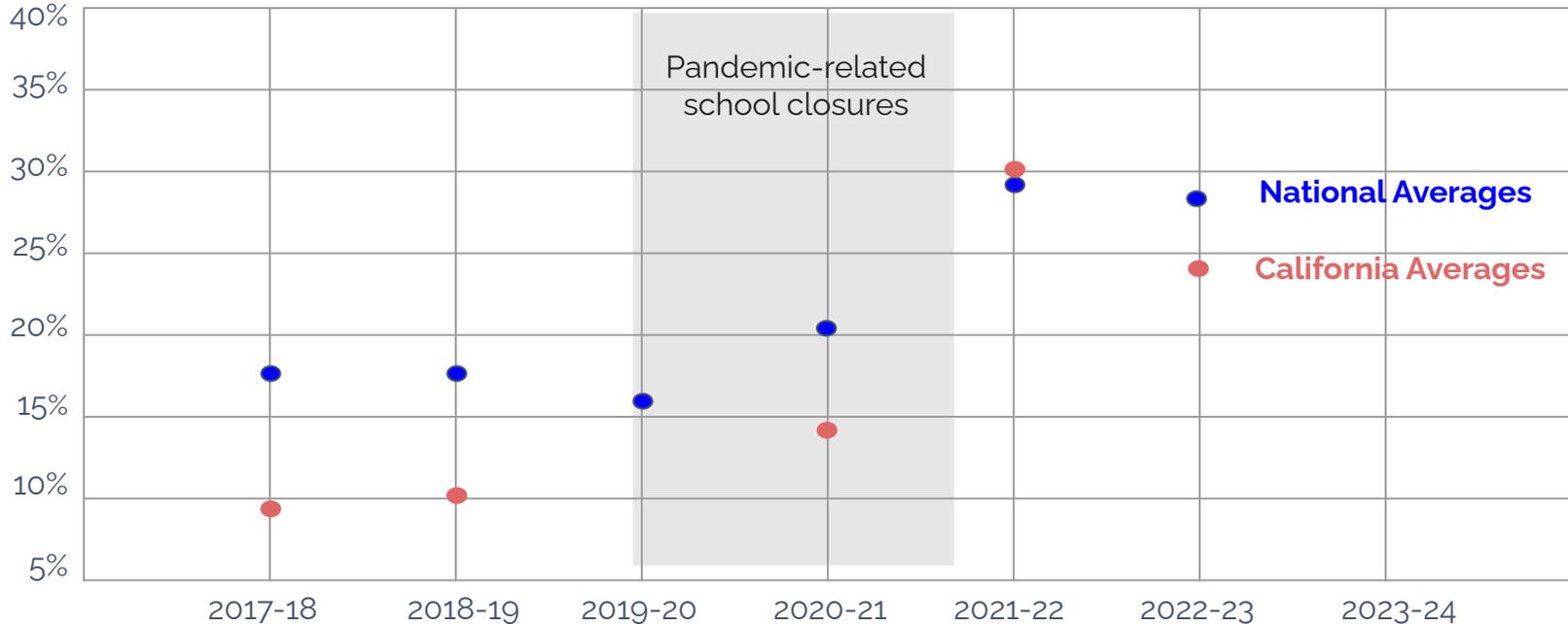
Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason**. Chronic absence can put student academically at risk as well as hurt their socioemotional well-being. .



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

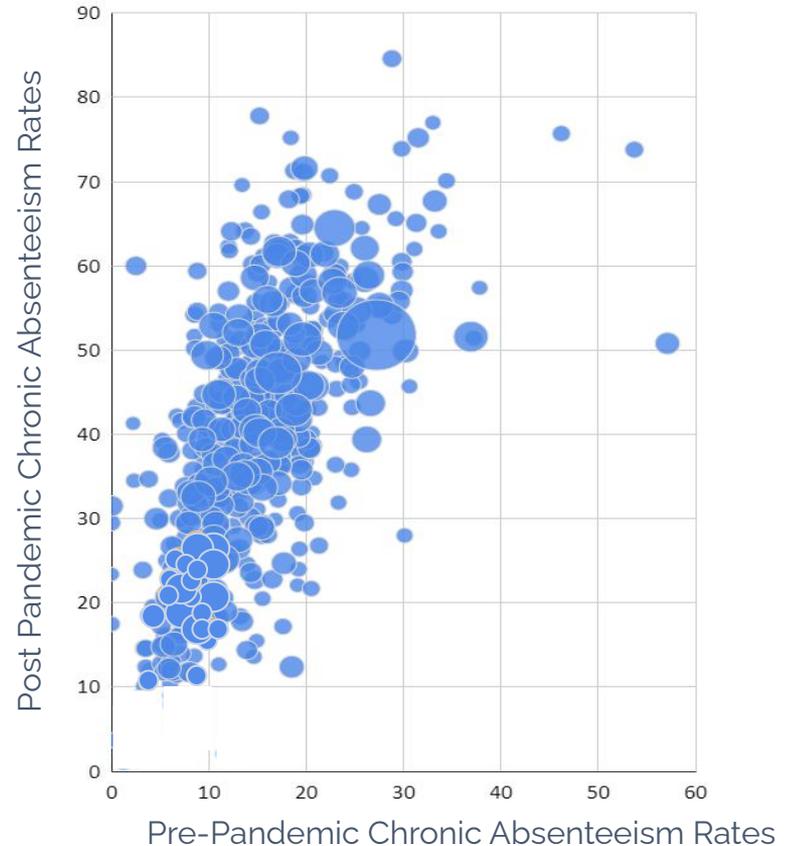
# What does the data show?

## National and State Data



# About Our Bright Spots

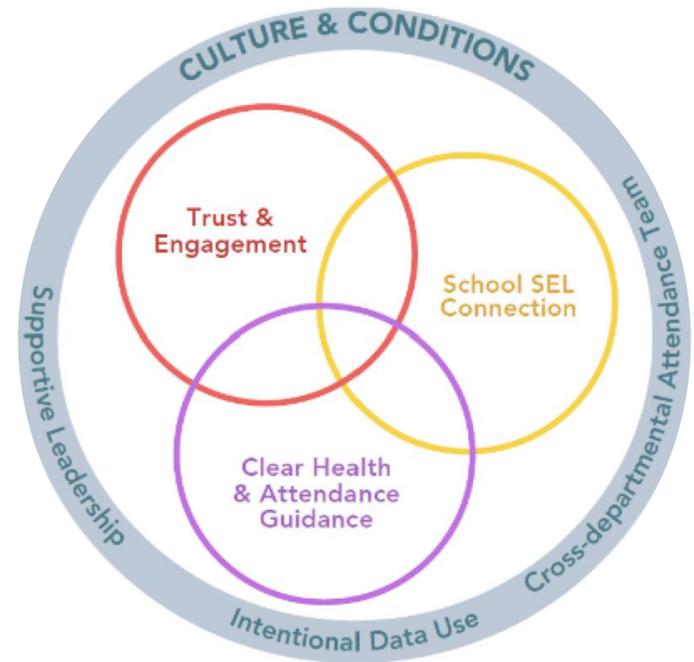
- Focused on **Kinder**—with implications for foundational learning, socioemotional well-being, and community-building
- Ran analyses to identify districts who had chronic absenteeism rates that were below State average and further narrowed to:
  - Include districts who reflect State's diversity
  - Exclude “super-smalls”
  - Ensure identified districts did not have wide variations in chronic absenteeism rates across grade levels or schools



# 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



# Chronic Absenteeism Resource Hub



The Chronic Absenteeism Resource Hub serves as a collection of **best practices, exemplars, resources, tools, and webinars** to support local education agencies (LEAs) in promoting a culture of attendance.



Bright Spot Districts



Strategies and Tools



Additional Resources



Link:  
[https://bit.ly/ccee\\_carh](https://bit.ly/ccee_carh)

# 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.

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

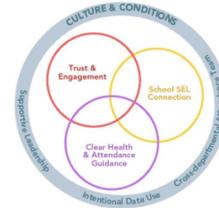
Our Bright Spots research aimed to discover why rates were lower in three such districts: Livingston Union, Cypress School District and Kings Canyon Unified. Through in-depth site visits, we documented approaches and conditions that collectively help inform ways to get more kindergartners back into the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

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.

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 kindergartners 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.

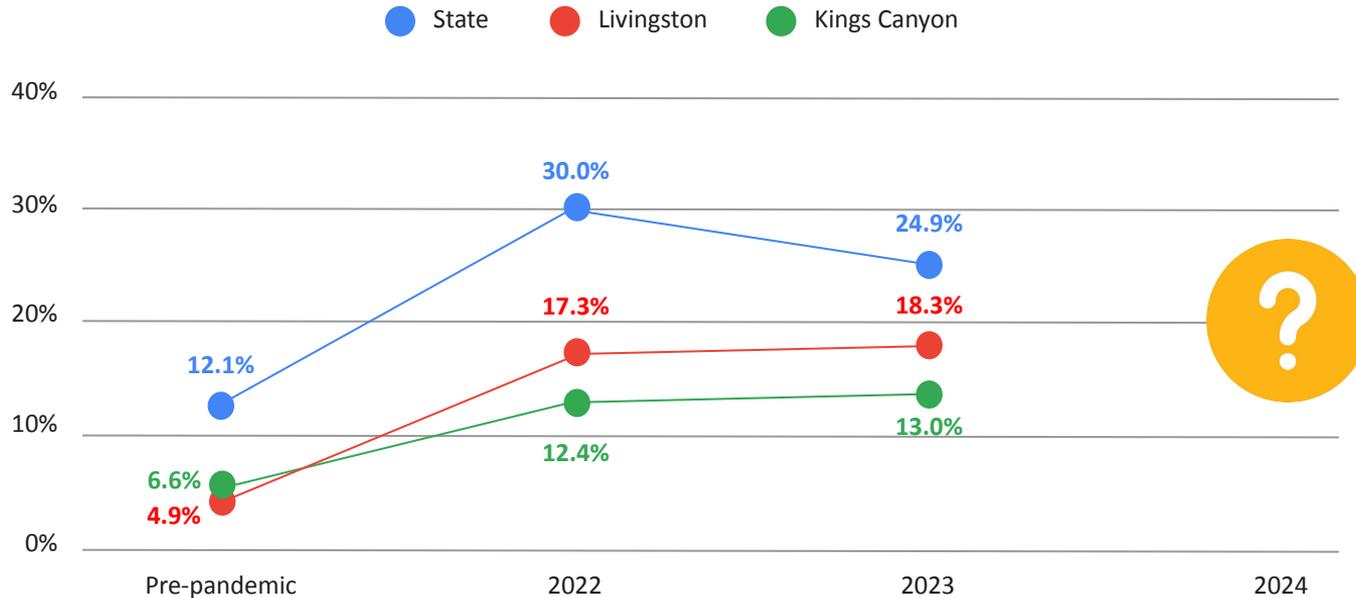
**Intentional and strategic use of data in real time to drive decision making:** Attendance data is shared openly and used in real-time to proactively diagnose and target outreach to students and families needing additional support.



Link: [bit.ly/3Zvu6Rx](https://bit.ly/3Zvu6Rx)

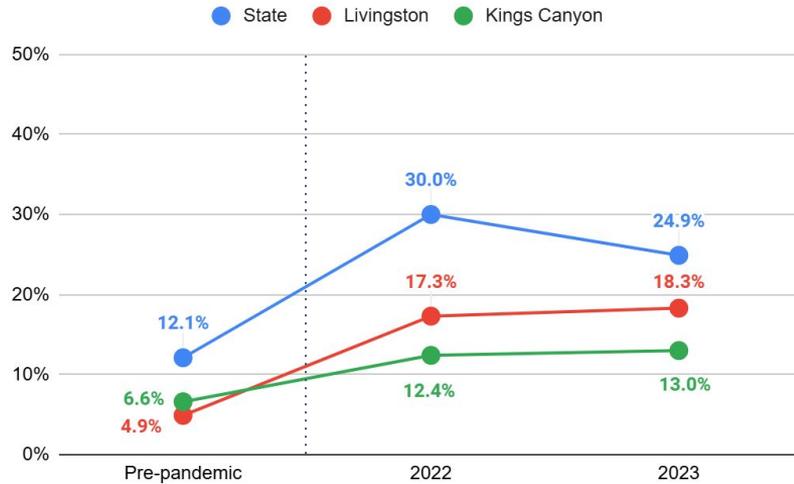
# Overall Chronic Absenteeism Rates

## State vs. Bright Spot Districts

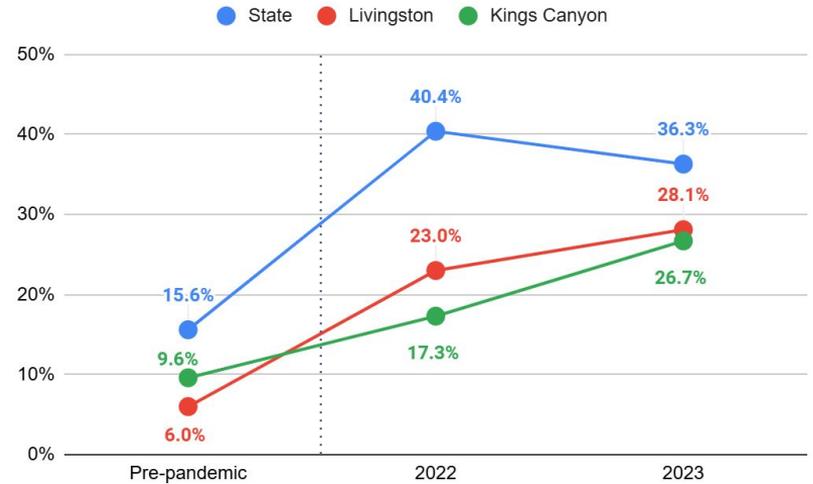


# What Do Our Bright Spot Districts Look Like?

Chronic Absenteeism Rates (Overall)



Chronic Absenteeism Rates (Kindergarten)



# Spotlight on Livingston Union



**Mayte Ramirez**

Principal, Campus Park  
Elementary  
*Livingston Union SD*



**Livingston Union  
School District**



**CAMPUS PARK  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

	Livingston	California
<b>Enrollment</b>	2,545	5,837,690
<b>SED</b>	79.1%	62.7%
<b>EL</b>	39.6%	18.4%
<b>SWD</b>	9.0%	13.7%

*\*2023-24 Enrollment Data, DataQuest*

# Spotlight on Kings Canyon Joint USD



**Sharon Matsuzaki**

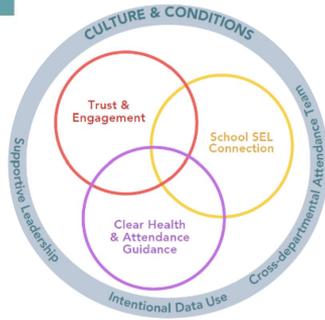
Data Systems &  
Accountability Coordinator  
*Kings Canyon Joint USD*



	Kings Canyon	California
<b>Enrollment</b>	9,658	5,837,690
<b>SED</b>	88.3%	62.7%
<b>EL</b>	26.7%	18.4%
<b>SWD</b>	8.7%	13.7%

*\*2023-24 Enrollment Data, DataQuest*

## Q&A



1. Can you tell us – from your perspectives as building and district leaders what you do to build trust and engage families and students in school?
2. Can you discuss specific activities that support students' social emotional learning? How do those efforts connect to student success?
3. How do you communicate the importance of attending school, particularly in the early grades?
4. We identified these three themes – did we miss anything about your efforts?

# Cut Chronic Absenteeism by 50% Over 5 Years

- Aspirational, yet Plausible
- A Clear Target
- Adapts to Different Contexts
- Trackable & Accountable
- Comprehensive Effort
- Commitment Over Time



The Education Trust



Attendance  
Works

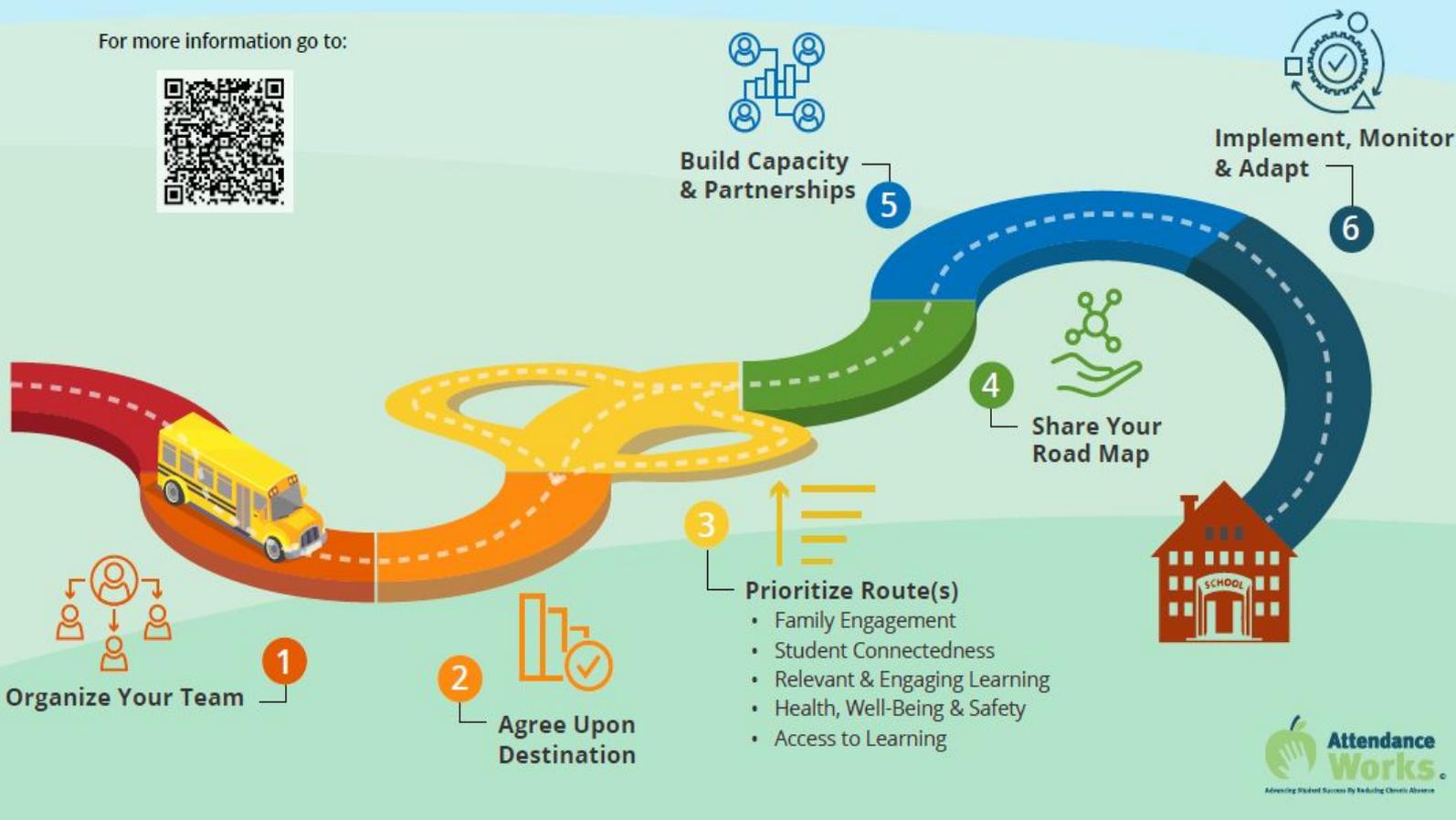
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence





# Craft Your Engagement & Attendance State Road Map

For more information go to:



# What Strategies Have LEAs Shared to...

Increase **trust & engagement**  
with students and families?



[bit.ly/CAPadlet](https://bit.ly/CAPadlet)

Support **socioemotional well-being** of students, families,  
and staff?



[bit.ly/CAPadlet2](https://bit.ly/CAPadlet2)

# Resources to Support Engagement & SEL

- [Caring conversations](#) - conversation frame for parent/teacher check-ins
- [Attendance Cafe](#) - Parent Cafe focus on attendance
- Kings Canyon USD - [SEL Website](#)
- Resource sheet for families with students struggling with anxiety- [Anxiety Handout](#)
- [Using chronic absence data to improve conditions for learning](#)
- Early Matters: Cultivating Engagement and Attendance in Kindergarten - [Toolkit](#)
- CCEE Microlearning Videos - [Supporting Social Emotional Well-Being](#)

A young girl with dark curly hair, wearing a blue and white striped tank top, is sitting at a desk in a classroom. She is smiling and has her right hand raised high in the air. In her left hand, she holds a blue pen over an open notebook. Other students are visible in the background, some with their hands raised. The image has a blue overlay and decorative yellow and teal bars at the top and bottom.

**Questions?**

# Thank You

## Contact



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**Mayte Ramirez**

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## Feedback Survey



**We would love your  
feedback!**