

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENCE- WHY IT MATTERS, WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED, AND HOW TO GET STARTED

SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION POLICY
FORUM-TAKING ATTENDANCE SERIOUSLY

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Why We Must Meet the Nation's Graduation Challenge

- There is no work in the 21st century without a high school diploma and little work to support a family without some post-secondary schooling or training
- This cuts off access to the American Dream, fractures communities, and weakens the nation

How Big is the Nation's Graduation Challenge?

- 4 Million HS Students in Class of 2010
- 3 Million will receive Diplomas
- 75% Overall Graduation Rate
- 60% Graduation Rate for Low Income- Minority Students
- Grad Gap = 1 million students without HS Diplomas
- Nation has gone from 1st to 12th in 25-34 year olds with College Degree

Chronic Absenteeism is a Major Driver of the Achievement and Graduation Gaps

- It is linked to lower reading abilities in the early elementary grades
- It pushes middle grade students off the path to high school graduation and turns achievement gaps into chasms
- It lessens the odds that high school graduates will enroll and succeed in college

Until Very Recently -High, Even Extreme Rates of Chronic Absence often went unnoticed

- In NYC 200,000 students miss a month of more of school
- In Maryland its 83,000 and nearly 1 in 5 High School students
- In Baltimore-40% of students in a 6th grade cohort missed a year or more of schooling over a Five year period

What Drives Chronic Absence?

- **Pre-K to Elementary Grades**-Parents can't or don't get students to school on regular basis, resistance from students
- **Middle Grades**-disengagement, opportunity, school/neighborhood safety, family care responsibilities, school discipline policies
- **High School**-see middle grades plus learn to modulate effort to minimum needed to pass, perceive that not much is going on at school- ok to miss, increased work responsibilities, teenage pregnancy, involvement with juvenile justice

When it Reaches a Critical Mass-Chronic Absence Impacts the Whole School

- Teachers teach a shifting set of students everyday-slows down instruction
- Chronically absent students come to be viewed in negative lights-undercuts the relationship building needed to improve their attendance

Combating Chronic Absence Requires a Systematic Approach

- At the Elementary level need to integrate with parent engagement and support strategies
- At the Middle grades level needs to be part of comprehensive effort to keep students on the graduation path
- At the High School need to connect to clear pathways to college and career training

At Each Transition Point Also need to Consider Both the Academic and Social Needs of Students

- **Pre-K and Elementary Grades**-Core academic competencies and socialized into the norms of schooling in a joyful manner
- **Middle Grades**-Intermediate Academic Skills (reading comprehension and fluency, transition from arithmetic to mathematics) and a need for adventure and camaraderie
- **High School**-Transition to Adult Behaviors and Mind Set and the right extra help for students with below grade level skills

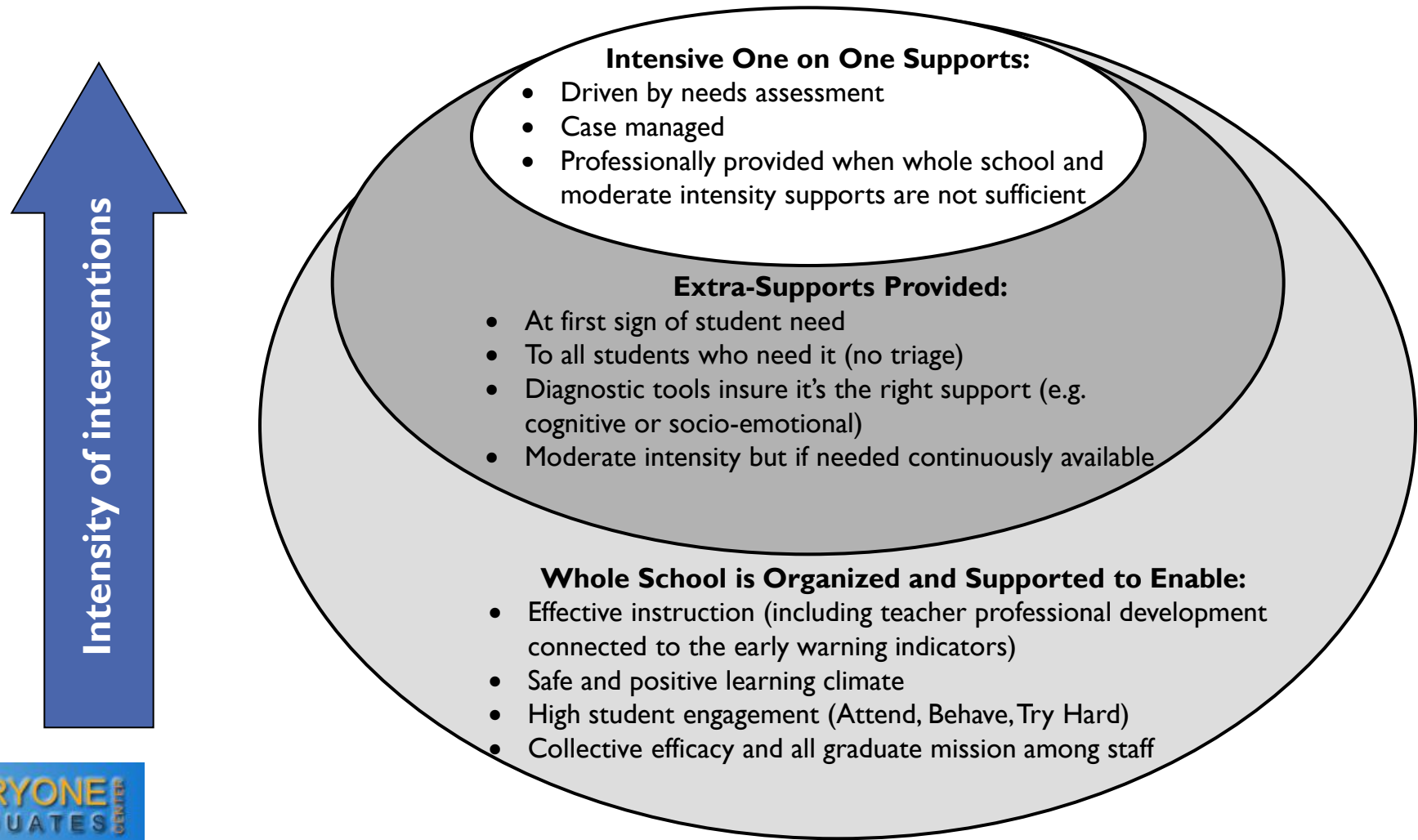
THIS MEANS WE NEED BOTH A
TIERED RESPONSE AND
INTERVENTIONS TAILORED TO EACH
LEVEL OF SCHOOLING

We need to combine School Transformation with Early Warning and Enhanced Student/Parent Support and Recovery Systems

- Highest needs students are over-concentrated in sub-set of schools
- Can be hundreds of students who need additional supports beyond a good teacher in every classroom
- Currently not enough adults mobilized to meet these needs leads to triage, burnout, disengagement, and high mobility rates among students and adults
- Students signal early and often that they need help; we need to recognize and respond to this with the right intervention at the right time at the scale and intensity required
- To do this we need to be able to mobilize and organize a
 - “second shift” of adults into the school and school day
- Even best prevention and intervention systems will not catch all kids, so need effective back on track and recovery strategies/opportunities

Prevention, Intervention, Recovery

Providing the Right Support to the Right Student at the Right Time



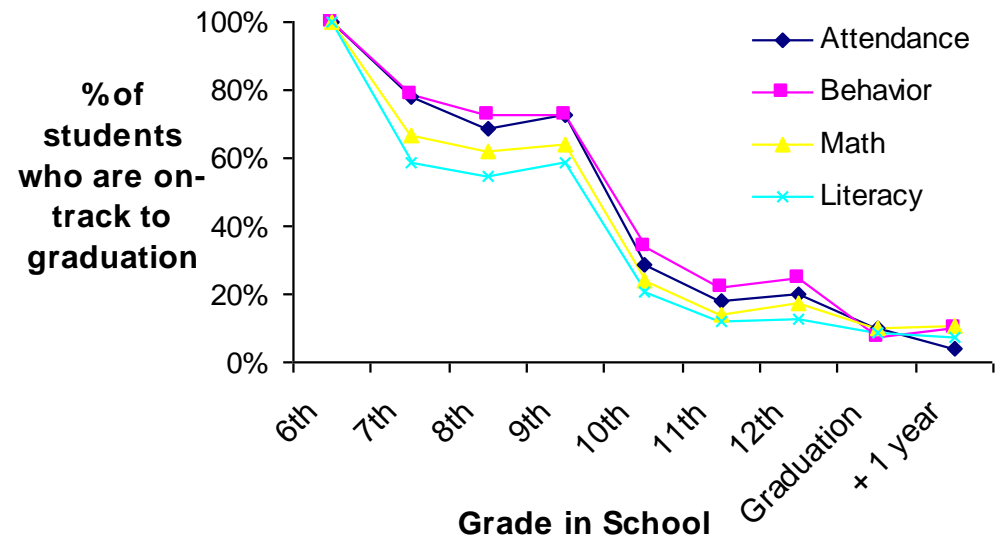
CASE STUDY OF EARLY SECONDARY GRADES

A Large Percentage of Future Dropouts can be identified in as early as 6th grade

The Primary Off-Track Indicators for Potential Dropouts:

- **A**ttendance - <85-90% school attendance
- **B**ehavior - “unsatisfactory” behavior mark in at least one class
- **C**ourse Performance – A final grade of “F” in Math and/or English or Credit-Bearing HS Course

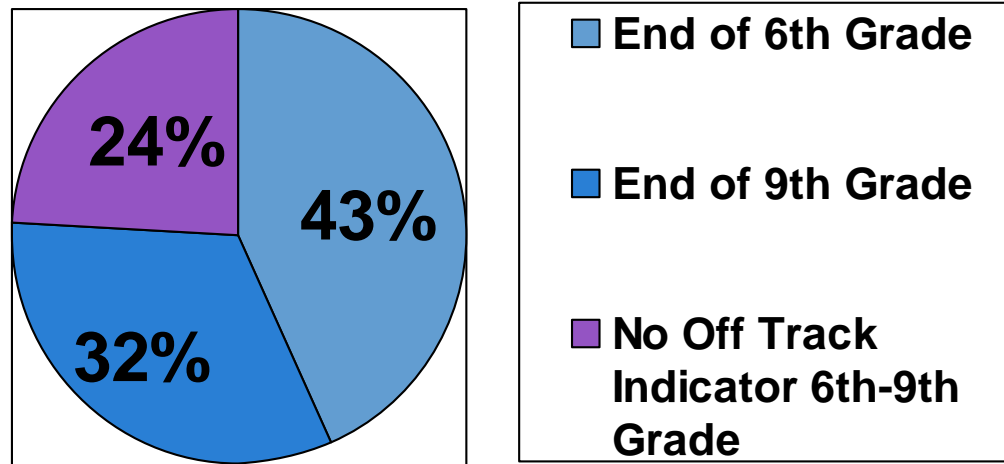
Sixth Graders (1996-97) with an Early Warning Indicator



Sixth-grade students with one or more of the indicators may have only a **15% to 25% chance of graduating** from high school on time or within one year of expected graduation

In High Poverty School Districts, 75% or More of Eventual Dropouts Can be Identified between the 6th and 9th Grade

Percent of Dropouts That Can Be Identified between the 6th and 9th grade-Boston Class of 2003



Early Warning Indicator Data Tool

- Without additional support to provide interventions at the scale and intensity required to meet each student's individual needs, teachers can easily feel overwhelmed.
- Research has shown that when teachers feel overwhelmed by the level of challenge in high needs schools, they will often lower expectations for students.

Student	Attendance				Behavior Comments		Math Grades		Literacy Grades		Assessments		
	07-08: Days Absent	08-09: Days Absent	07-08: Att.%	08-09: Att.%	Dec	Mar	Dec	Mar	Dec	Mar	Reading Grade Level	Math PSSA 2008	Literacy PSSA 2008
A	9	19	95%	84%	5	6	C	D	D	C	8	Proficient	Basic
B	12	13	93%	89%	7	8	D	C	F	D	6.5	Below Basic	Basic
C	48	69	73%	43%	10	10	F	F	F	D	5.5	Below Basic	Below Basic

Link Early Warning Systems to Tiered Interventions

- Focus on effective intervention, not just identification
- Need to be able to respond to the first signs that a student is falling off track
- Systematically apply school-wide preventative, targeted and the intensive interventions until students is on-track
- Recognize and build on student strengths
- Provide time, training, and support to teachers
- Match resources to student needs but practice intervention discipline
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Remember you can get started with the data in your school

EXAMPLES OF SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES



EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY.

Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism and School Engagement

CITY OF NEW YORK
MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
MAYOR

JOHN FEINBLATT
MAYOR'S CHIEF ADVISOR FOR POLICY
& STRATEGIC PLANNING & CJC

LESLIE A. CORNFELD
CHAIR, MAYOR'S INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON
TRUANCY, ABSENTEEISM AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Coordinated Multi-Sector Response

- New Electronic Data Dashboard
- New Interagency Data Sharing
- Outreach Campaign “Operation Start Strong” – first 8 weeks
- New Partnership Model for Community-Based Organizations & Schools
- New Culture of School Attendance & Success at Homeless Shelters
- New Student & Parent Incentive Programs
- Next Generation Multi-Sector Truancy Centers
- NYC Success Mentor Corps



Student (Parent) Engagement: NYC Success Mentor Corps



**150 Success Mentors reaching
2,250 chronically absent students**

- ✓ Full year, 3-5 days per week, 15 hour minimum
- ✓ 15 students per mentor
- ✓ Trainings
- ✓ Confidentiality agreements
- ✓ Student engagement
- ✓ Parent engagement
- ✓ Schoolwide climate
- ✓ Connection to services

Systemic Stakeholder Engagement:

Principal's Weekly Student Success Summits

PRINCIPAL



PRINCIPAL'S
LEADERSHIP
TEAM



SUCCESS
MENTORS



CBO
LEADERS



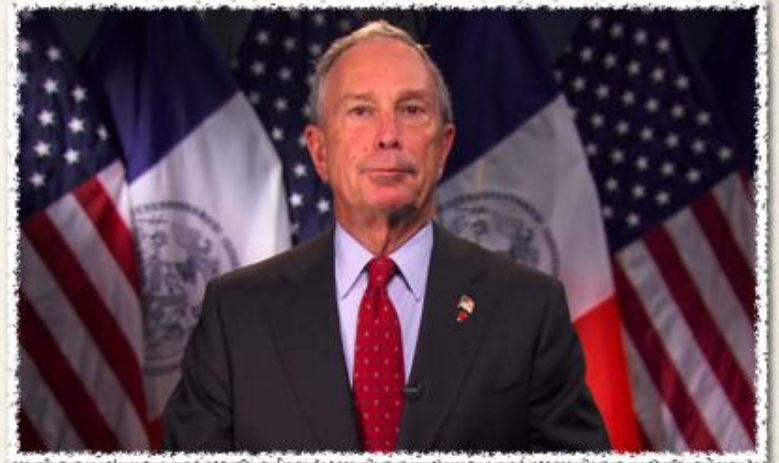
Identify At-Risk & Chronically
Absent Students -- Develop &
Track Interventions

GOAL = STRATEGIC COLLABORATION
FOR IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Multimedia Outreach Campaign:

Building Awareness that *Every Student, Every Day* Matters

- Mayor & Celebrity Video Messages
- Multimedia Partners (Viacom / MTV, Radio, TV, Social Media)
- Faith-Based and Community Outreach / Call-to-Action Toolkits Distributed
- Parent School *Success Summits* and Resource Fairs
- E-mail, Text Messages, Letters, and Phone Call Outreach



DIPLOMAS NOW

Keeping Every Student on the Path to High School Graduation, College Readiness and Adult Success

FOUNDING INVESTOR






Investing in Innovation (i3) winner

The Diplomas Now partners harness and combine their unique assets to keep students on track college and career ready

On-Track Indicator and Intervention System:

- Research-based and validated interventions of increasing intensity are employed until student is back on track to graduation. Interventions are constantly evaluated for their effectiveness.

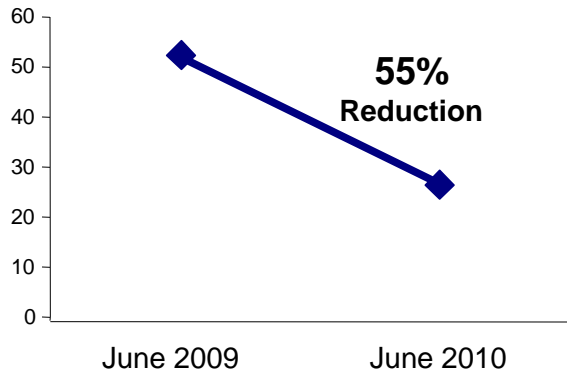
	Core Function	Means and Methods	Additional Roles
	Whole School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research based instructional, organizational and teacher support • On-track indicator data system • On-site implementation and mission building support • Scheduling, Staffing, and Budget supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra Academic Supports • Extra Behavior Supports • National Training and Tech Assistance Partner (Phil. Ed. Fund)
	Targeted Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-School, Whole-Child program • 8-15 full-time, full-day corps members serving as near-peer role models to mentor, tutor, provide behavior and attendance coaching and extended day learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive School Climate • Service Learning • After School
	Intensive Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based professional Site Coordinator • Highly specialized and intensive interventions via case managed student supports and referral to outside agencies • Brokered services through CIS partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Episodic Whole School Prevention Supports

Diplomas Now Sample Results: Philadelphia Middle Schools

Diplomas Now partnered with three Philadelphia high poverty middle schools in 2009-2010. These schools average 615 students, 84% of whom are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch. Below are the aggregate results for all three schools from the 2009-10 School year.

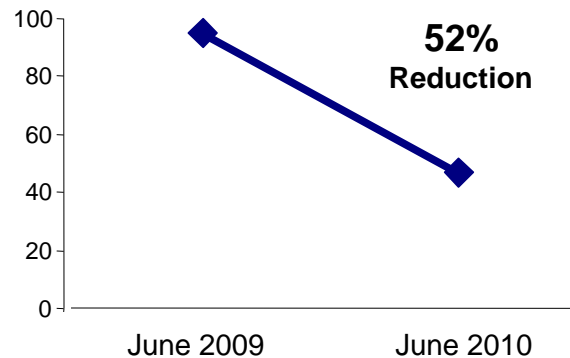
Attendance

of Students with less than 80% Attendance



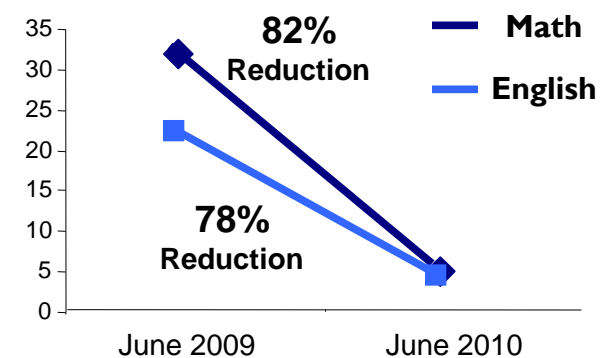
Behavior

of Students with 3 or more negative behavior marks



Course Performance

of Students receiving an F in Math or English



Chicago Talent Development High School Results

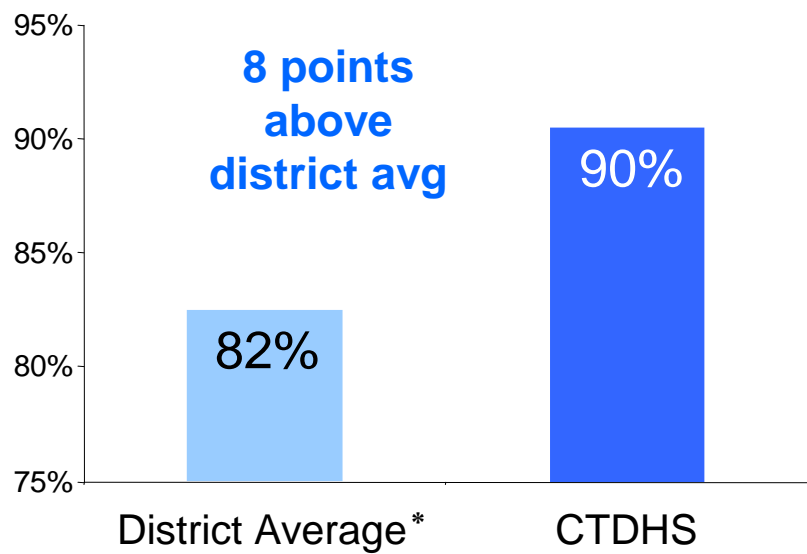
In Chicago, Diplomas Now is part of a new school start-up at the Chicago Talent Development High School (CTDHS). This new school start was founded in 2009 with the backing from the teachers and service workers unions. Last year, Diplomas Now served the class of 2013 which had 94 students, 99% of which were on free or reduced price lunch.

Below are results from the 2009-10 school year.

92% of students promoted to 10th grade on time

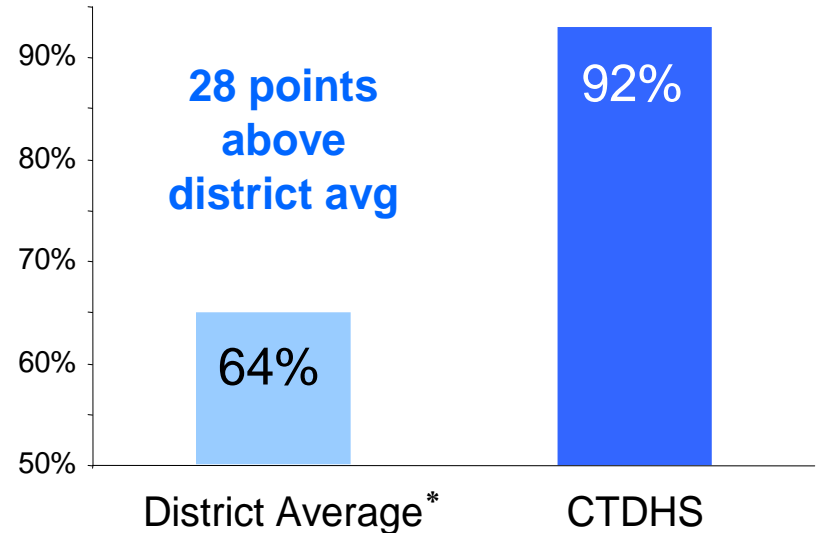
Attendance

Average Daily Attendance



On-track Students

% of 9th graders on-track to high school graduation



* District averages shown for 9th grade students as published by Chicago Public Schools , Office of Performance for the 2009 school year

Accelerating Progress is Possible

Beyond the progress in over the last decade, recent developments make accelerated progress possible:

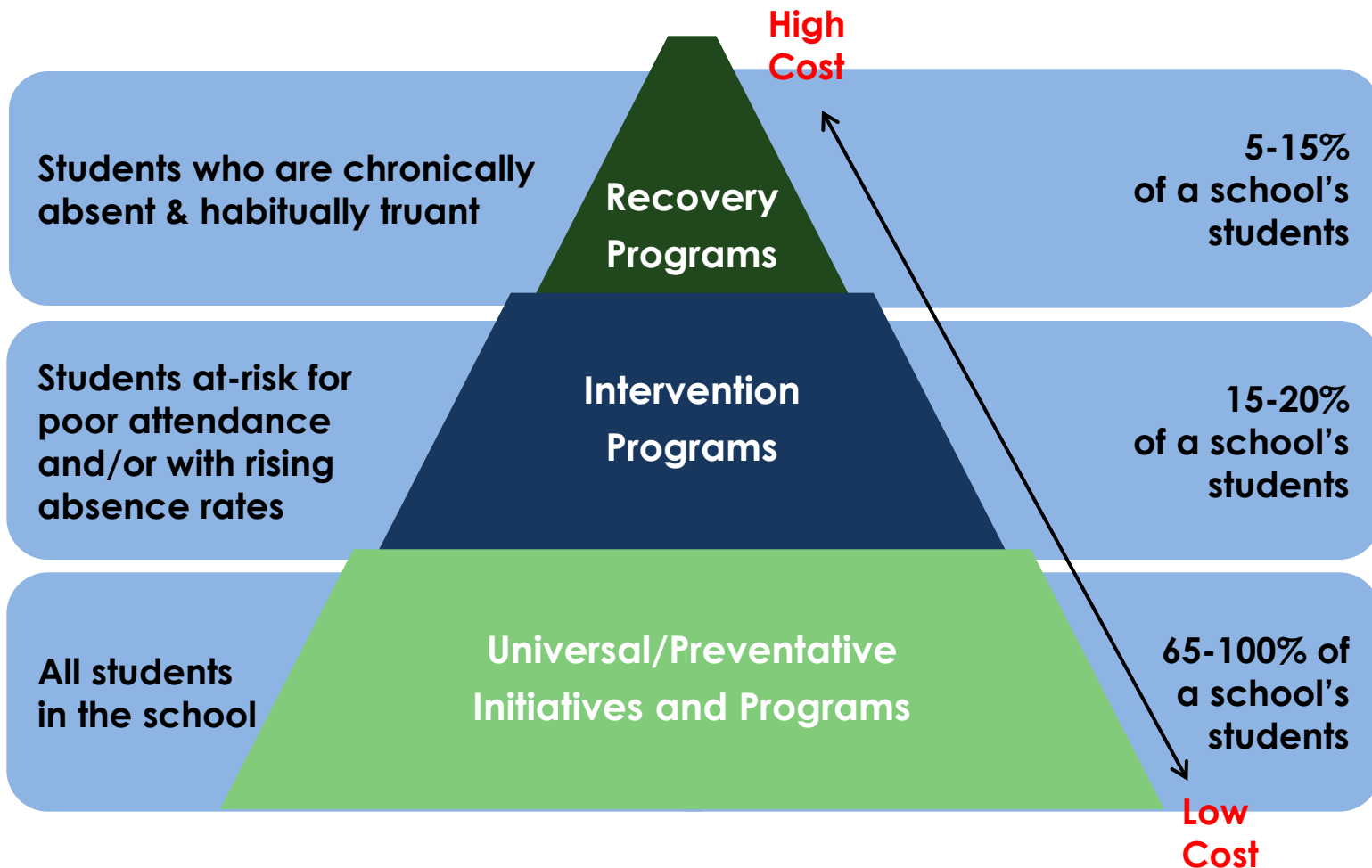
- ✓ **Common graduation rates** across schools, districts, and states for the first time
- ✓ Spread of **early warning systems**
- ✓ Enhanced **state and city leadership**
- ✓ **National non-profits & businesses** focused on increasing high school graduation rates
- ✓ Unprecedented federal **support to transform dropout factories & feeder schools**
- ✓ Public understanding of crisis and consequences, including the **economic and societal costs**

Schools + Communities CAN Make a Difference

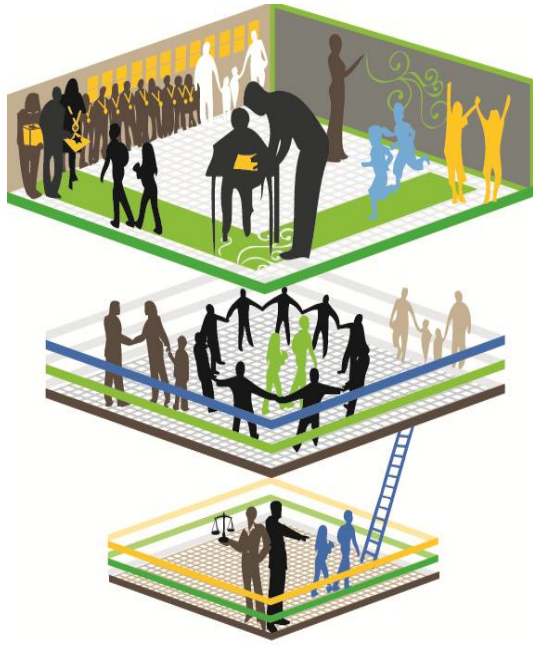
Characteristics of Successful Attendance Initiatives

- ❑ Partner with community agencies to help families carry out their responsibility to get children to school.
- ❑ Make attendance a priority, set targets and monitor progress over time.
- ❑ Engage parents and students in identifying and addressing school, family, and community issues that contribute to chronic absence.
- ❑ Clearly communicate expectations for attendance to students and families.
- ❑ Begin early, ideally in Pre-K.
- ❑ Combine targeted interventions with universal strategies that nurture an engaged learning environment, build a culture of attendance and ensure physical health and safety at school.
- ❑ Offer positive supports before punitive action.

Increased Attendance Involves a 3-Tiered Approach that Fits with Most Reform Efforts



Improving Attendance Takes an Cross-Disciplinary Approach



Universal Attendance Supports

- ❑ Safe and supportive school environment
- ❑ Inviting and engaging classroom environment
- ❑ Intentional family involvement and participation
- ❑ On-going attention to attendance data
- ❑ Rapid parent contact for unexplained absences
- ❑ Recognition for good and improved attendance
- ❑ Collaboration with afterschool programs and early childhood programs to build a culture of attendance
- ❑ Increased access to school based health supports
- ❑ A school plan and budget that reflects high attendance priorities

Individual Assessments and Intervention

- ❑ Refer chronically absent/ truant students for intervention including **SART & SARB**
- ❑ Identify and remove barriers
- ❑ Provide on-going support

Recovery Strategies

- ❑ Interagency Staffing
- ❑ Case management and wrap-around services
- ❑ Referral as last resort for court -based intervention

Considerations for Younger Children

- ❑ Many parents may not be aware that attendance in pre-K & K matters.
- ❑ Young children's attendance is affected by what happens to parents. Multiple maternal and family risk factors increase chronic absence.
- ❑ Participation in formal child care is associated with lower chronic absence in kindergarten.
- ❑ Developing good on-time attendance habits begin in pre-K.
- ❑ Poor health was associated with higher chronic absence for in K-3 for children from 200-300% of poverty.
- ❑ While attendance is more affected by family conditions, children's attitudes are a factor too.

Considerations for Older Youth

- ❑ Attendance is more heavily influenced by the youth although family still matters.
- ❑ Older youth may miss school due to family responsibilities (e.g. caring for siblings or ill parent, holding a job).
- ❑ Mental health, teen pregnancy, chronic conditions, and dental disease are top health concerns that affect attendance
- ❑ Safety issues (In-school and community) play even greater role.
- ❑ Students miss school due to suspensions for non-violent behaviors.
- ❑ Students become discouraged as they fall behind in credits and graduation feels increasingly unattainable.
- ❑ Direct and meaningful engagement of youth in the classroom and activities on campus even more essential.

Districts Should Provide:

1. **Leadership.** Hold schools accountable for nurturing a school culture that supports good student attendance and intervening when students begin to show poor attendance.
2. **Reporting.** Publish regular reports for each school with lists of students who have been or are now chronically absent by grade. Provide regular reports on current chronic absence levels as well as ADA, truancy, and satisfactory attendance by grade and sub-population to site administrators.
3. **Data.** Ensure attendance data is regularly (ideally monthly) reviewed and discussed at the site and district level by key administrators and staff. Invest the resources necessary to maintain high quality attendance data.

And Districts Should Also Provide:

4. **Attendance Incentives** Ensure all schools develop and adopt effective school wide approaches to recognizing good and improved student attendance and notice when students are missing school.
5. **Parent Education & Mutual Support.** Support schools in educating parents about the importance of attendance starting with pre-K and encourage families to help each other get to school.
6. **Individual and Programmatic Intervention.** Ensure early outreach to chronically absent students combined, as needed, with case management or follow up with courts. Identify and address systemic barriers to attendance, including a lack of engaging instruction or challenges such as poor transportation, lack of health care, etc.

Districts and Communities Should Work Together

❑ **Community Partnerships**

Helps schools identify and forge partnerships with community and public agencies that can help provide resources to address barriers to attendance and ensure that each school site is a safe and engaging learning environment.

Consider using levels of chronic absence to identify which schools are top priority for collaborative relationships with community partners.

For more information

- visit the Everyone Graduates Center website at www.every1graduates.org
- Or contact Robert Balfanz at rbalfanz@csos.jhu.edu

(Note: Special Thanks to Attendance Works for Contributing Slides 29-36)