Connecting Over Food: Breakfast After the Bell & Other Tools for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

December 14, 2023 2:30 EST

NO KID HUNGRY | by SHARE OUR STRENGTH

Housekeeping

- Webinar is being recorded

- Recording + Slides

  - Located on Center for Best Practices website

  - Follow-up email

- Put questions in Q&A box

Overview

Who is No Kid Hungry

What is Breakfast After the Bell?And how can Breakfast After the Bell help improve chronic absenteeism?

Introduce and hear from panelists

Q & A

Resources

No Kid Hungry

BREAKFAST

AFTERSCHOOL

SUMMER MEALS

NUTRITION EDUCATION

NUTRITION PROGRAMS ALREADY EXIST TO FEED KIDS.

No Kid Hungry collaborates with partners to make sure these programs reach more children with healthy meals every day.

Common Barriers to Breakfast Participation

There are common barriers that prevent students from accessing school breakfast when it's served in the cafeteria before the start of the school day:

- Students don't arrive with enough time to eat before class starts.
- Stigma that school breakfast is for students from families with low-incomes.
- Middle and high school students may not be hungry first thing in the morning.
- The cafeteria location or set up is not convenient for or appealing to students.
- Students would rather socialize with their friends

Making breakfast part of the school day:

- Addresses the common barriers of traditional cafeteria breakfast.
- Ensures more students are able to start the day with a healthy meal.

Breakfast After the Bell: alternative service models that shift the time breakfast is served so that it's part of the school day and moves breakfast from the cafeteria to where students are, like classrooms and common areas:

- Breakfast in the Classroom
- Grab and Go
- Second Chance Breakfast

Breakfast in the Classroom
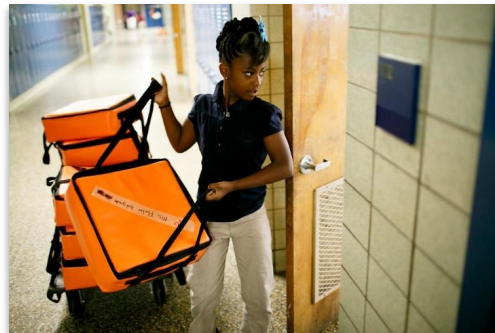
Grab and Go

Second Chance Breakfast

Grab and Go

or

Traditional Cafeteria

THREE INNOVATIVE MODELS*

These BAB models have proven to be the most effective at meeting the needs of students, and therefore result in higher breakfast participation rates.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM

Breakfast is served in the classroom and eaten in the classroom. The process usually takes 10-15 minutes.

69%
PARTICIPATION

GRAB AND GO

Breakfast is served from one or more central locations and consumed in the classroom or a common area.

44%
PARTICIPATION

SECOND CHANCE BREAKFAST

Breakfast is served between 1st and 2nd periods, usually via Grab and Go to the classroom or common area, or by reopening the cafeteria and allowing students time to eat before they return to class.

43%
PARTICIPATION

* This analysis, conducted in 2018, includes 2,201 schools from 14 states: CA, FL, IL, MA, MD, MI, MT, NC, NE, NV, PA, TX, VA, and WA. The percentages indicate the average breakfast participation among students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Breakfast After the Bell

- **Sets an equitable playing field** by ensuring every student can access a nutritious breakfast – no matter how a student arrives at school, what a student had available at home, or when that student faces hunger in the morning hours.

- **Meets the unique needs of the school building and culture** by adapting to each school.

- **Brings breakfast into the school day,** so that like lunch, it can be an integral part of school culture and the daily schedule.

Serving Breakfast After the Bell

The difficulties of getting children to school early are especially daunting for low-income parents, who are more likely to have limited transportation options and less flexible schedules. Those challenges are compounded by the stigma children face by being "one of the poor kids" eating in the cafeteria before the bell.

> "There's a stigma attached to being hungry. Rather than ask for help or ask for food, students just don't come to school. Our students' reading levels are two grades below because they've missed so much school. But by serving breakfast in the classroom we've seen chronic absenteeism drop."
>
> **CAMILA BARBOUR | Community Schools Manager**

Making breakfast part of the school day, frequently called "Breakfast After the Bell," directly addresses these problems. When schools change the way they serve the morning meal, participation increases – especially important for kids from low-income families.

Our   research shows that, in addition to feeding more hungry kids, Breakfast After the Bell programs can significantly reduce chronic absenteeism.

Hedy N. Chang

Executive Director, Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org)

Email: hedy@attendanceworks.org

Pronouns: She, Her, Hers

Website: www.attendanceworks.org
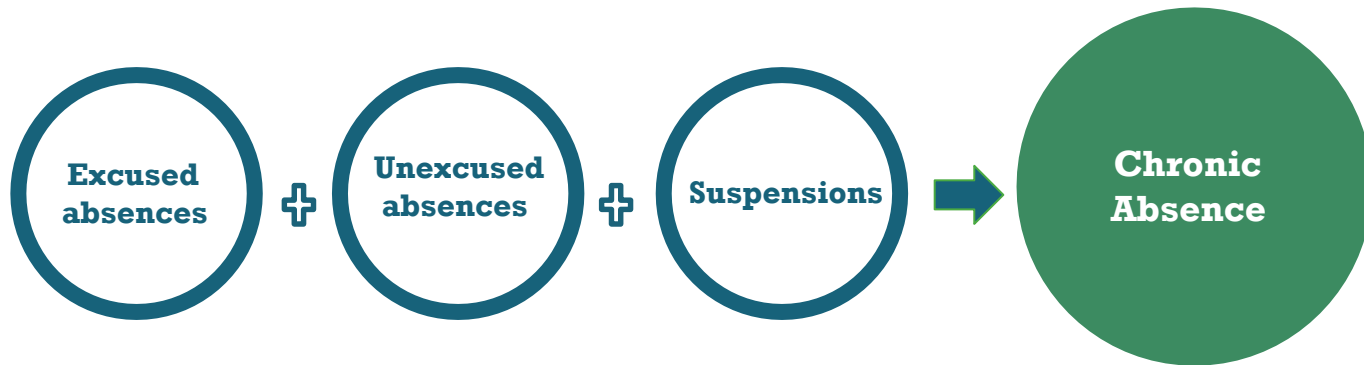
Today's Chronic Absence Challenge
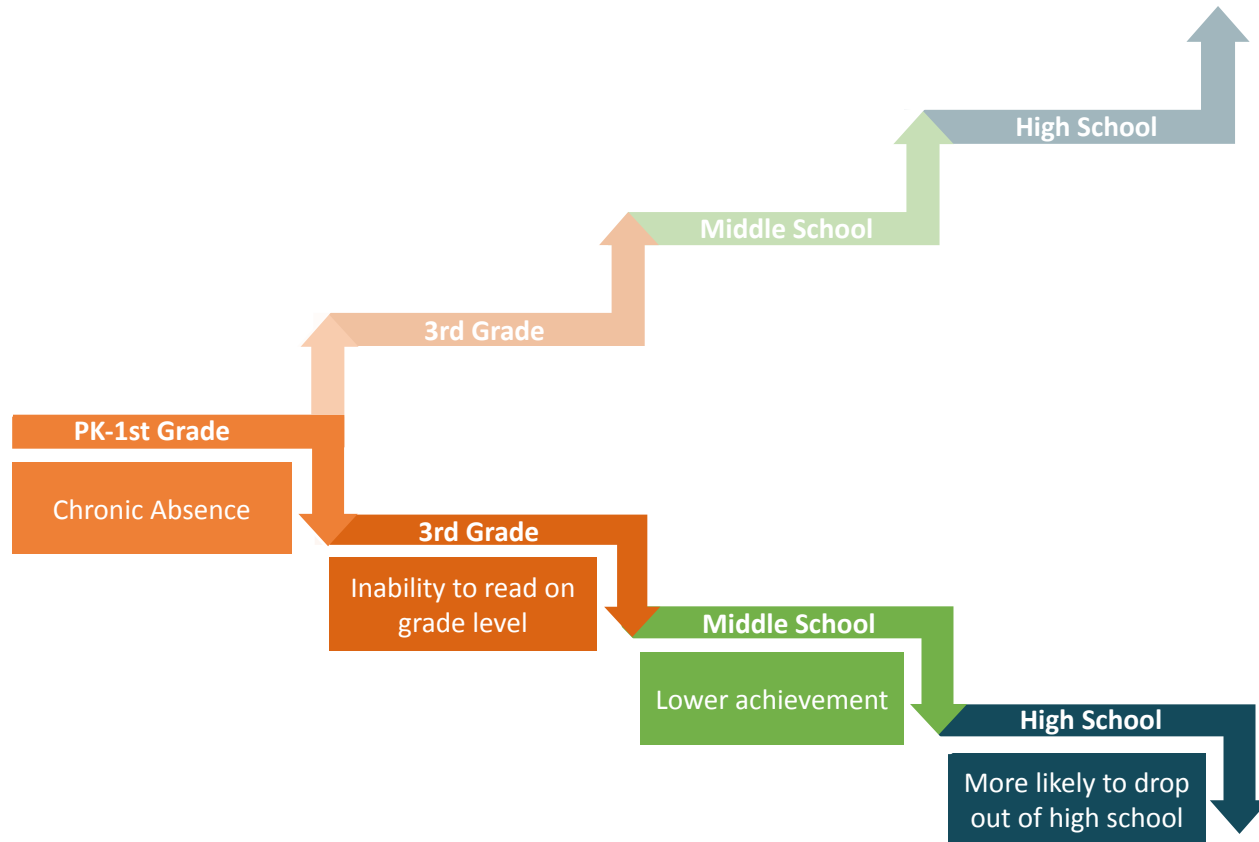
What is chronic absence?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk.

Chronic absence is defined as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**

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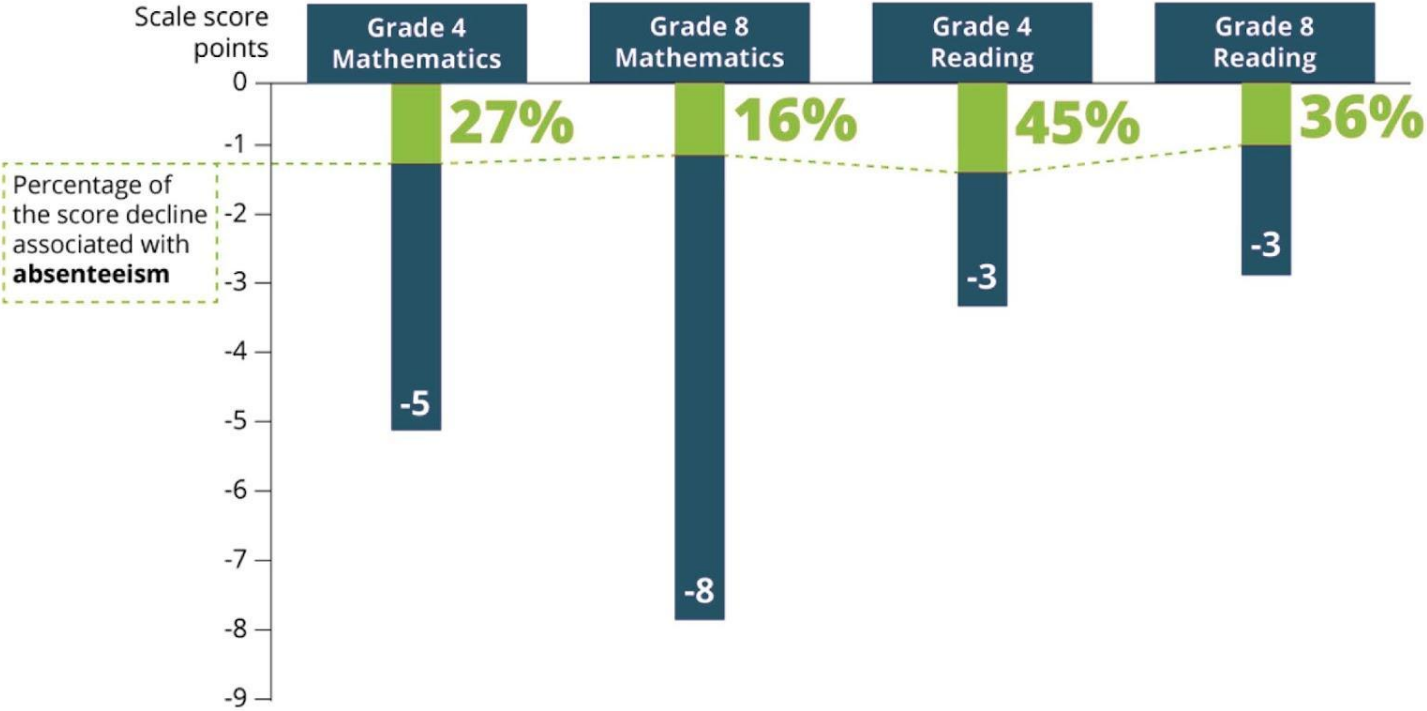
Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

Attendance Works ©

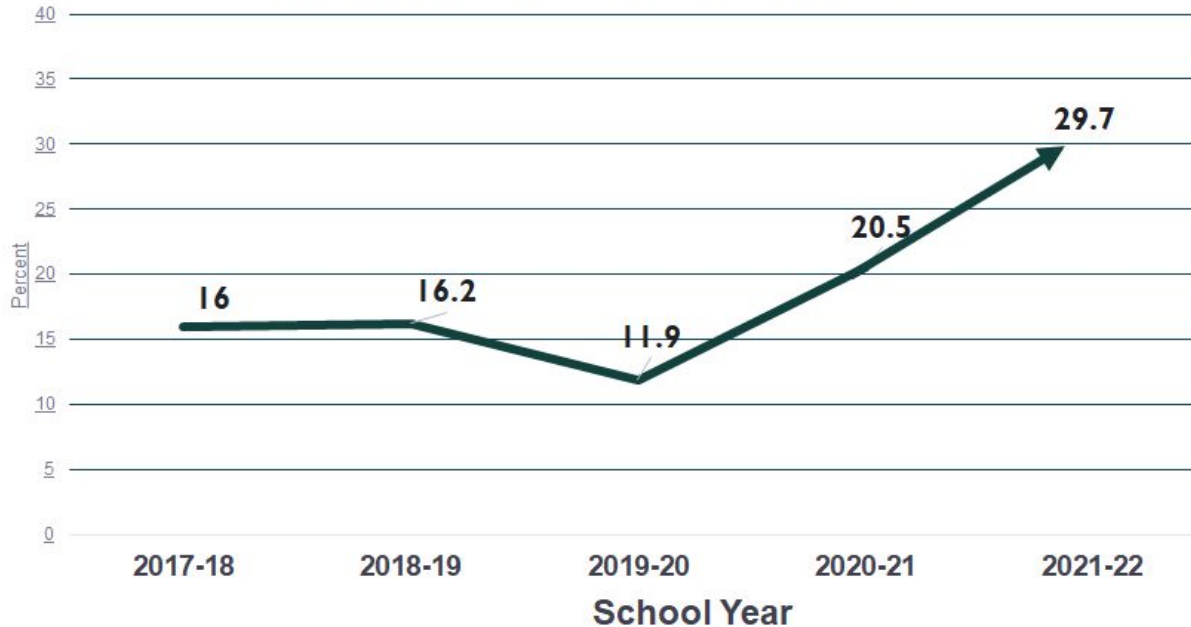# Improving attendance matters

Reported NAEP average score declines in 2022 from 2019 and percentage of declines associated with the rising rates of absenteeism, by subject and grade

Scale score points

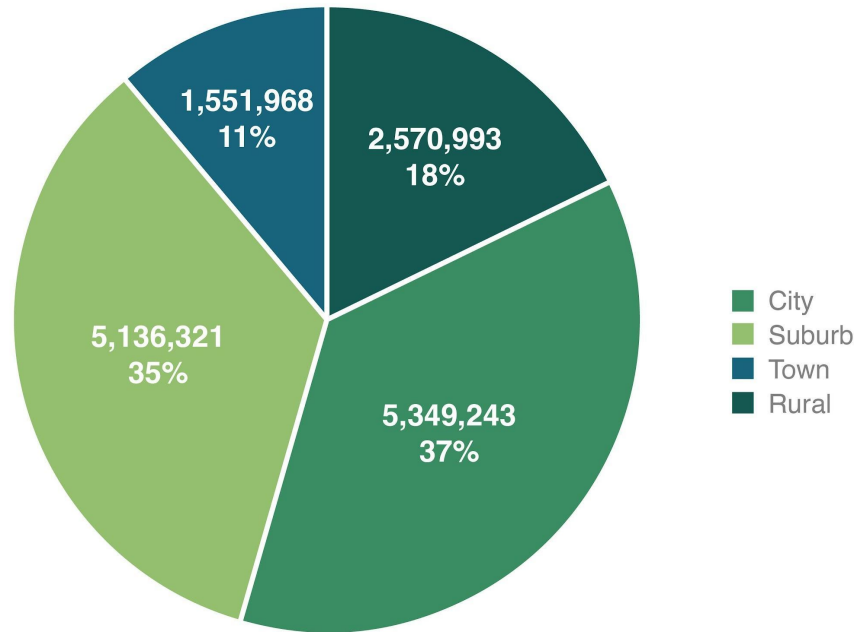Grade 4 Mathematics — **27%** — -5

Grade 8 Mathematics — **16%** — -8

Grade 4 Reading — **45%** — -3

Grade 8 Reading — **36%** — -3

Percentage of the score decline associated with **absenteeism**

Chronic absence has nearly doubled

Percentage of Students Chronically Absent Nearly Doubled Nationwide Between SY 2017-18 to SY 2021-22

Line chart showing Percent on the vertical axis (0 to 40) and School Year on the horizontal axis:
- 2017-18: 16
- 2018-19: 16.2
- 2019-20: 11.9
- 2020-21: 20.5
- 2021-22: 29.7

✔ **The number of chronically absent students grew from over 8 million to 14.7 million**

✔ **Increases are occurring in tandem with significant drops in achievement**

✔ **Early data from 2022–23 indicate rates remain high**

✔ **Chronic absence is higher in early elementary, especially kindergarten and high school**
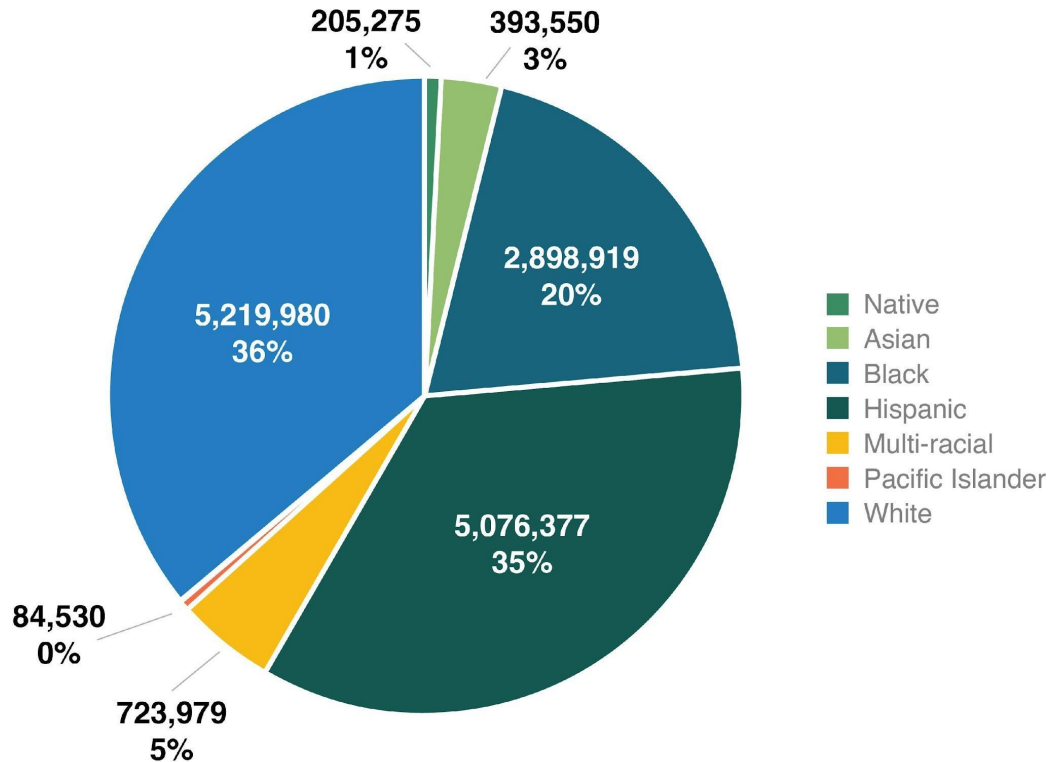
Chronically absent students are found in every locality – with about a third in cities and a third in suburbs

2021-22 Chronically Absent Students by School Locale

2,570,993 — 18%	Rural
5,349,243 — 37%	City
5,136,321 — 35%	Suburb
1,551,968 — 11%	Town

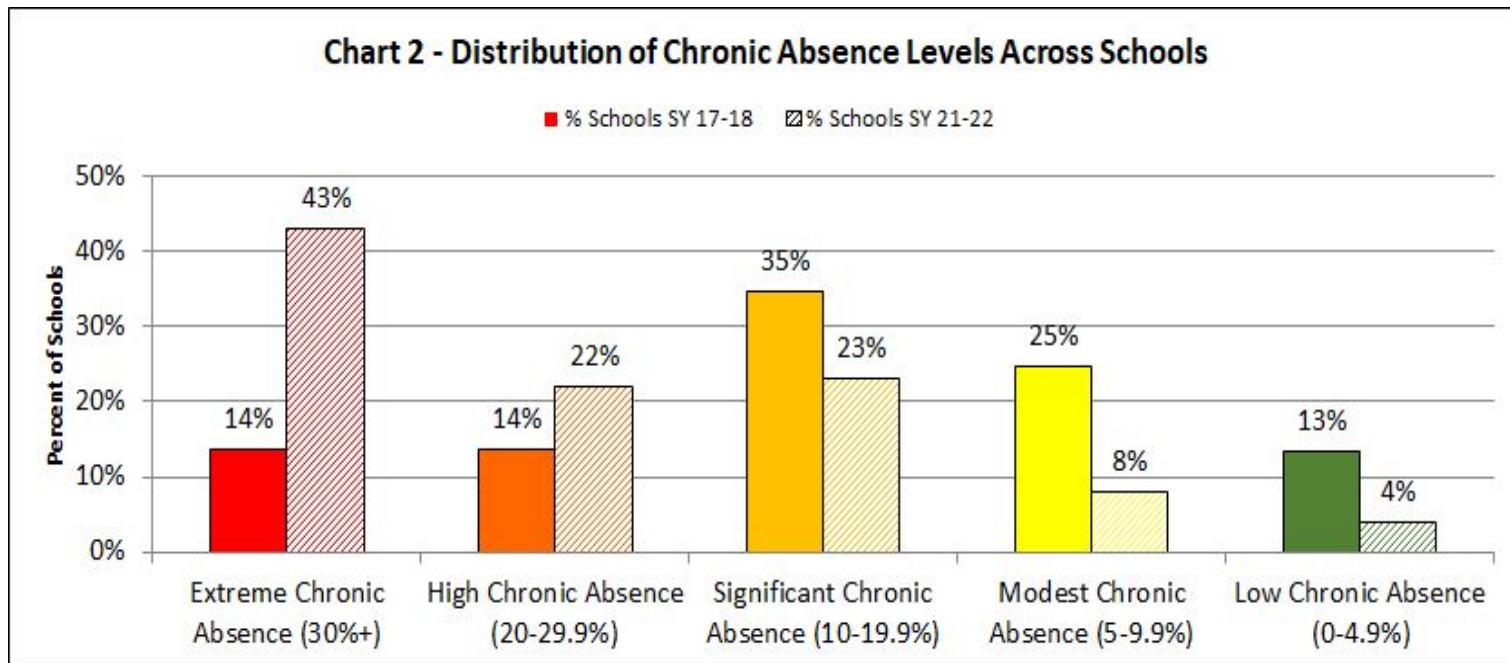Legend:
- City
- Suburb
- Town
- Rural

Chronically absent students are of every ethnicity with White, Hispanic/Latino and Black students making up the largest numbers

2021-22 Chronically Absent Students by Demographic Background

- 205,275 — 1%
- 393,550 — 3%
- 2,898,919 — 20%
- 5,219,980 — 36%
- 5,076,377 — 35%
- 84,530 — 0%
- 723,979 — 5%

Legend:
- Native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Multi-racial
- Pacific Islander
- White

Attendance Works ©

The number of schools with high or extreme levels of chronic absence has increased dramatically!

Most students (66.5% vs 25% pre pandemic) now attend schools with high levels of chronic absence.

Chart 2 - Distribution of Chronic Absence Levels Across Schools

For more information, see: https://www.attendanceworks.org/rising-tide-of-chronic-absence-challenges-schools/

Ripple effects of chronic absenteeism

Student Who Misses Class

Student Who Misses Class

Other Individual Students

Students Working in Groups

Teachers
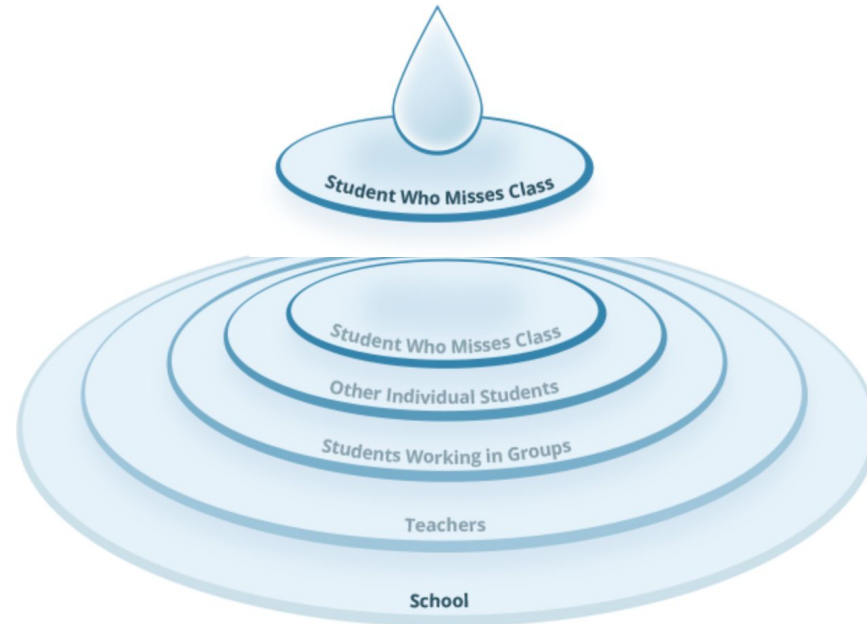
School

The vast majority of schools experience high chronic absence. The largest increase has occurred among elementary schools. Nearly 20,000 have extreme chronic absence.

2021-22 School Year	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools		All Schools	
	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22	2017-18	2021-22
Number of Schools with 30% or more students Chronically Absent	3,550	19,828	1,353	6,430	6,433	11,778	12,493	39,890
Number of Schools with 20% or more students Chronically Absent	9,233	31,362	3,640	10,541	10,474	16,126	24,912	60,379

For more information, see: https://www.attendanceworks.org/rising-tide-of-chronic-absence-challenges-schools/

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Inequities are widening

The % of schools with extreme chronic absence increased dramatically in schools with higher levels of poverty; this pattern is similar for schools with 75% non-white students

Chart 5 - SY 21-22 School Chronic Absence Levels by Concentration of Poverty*
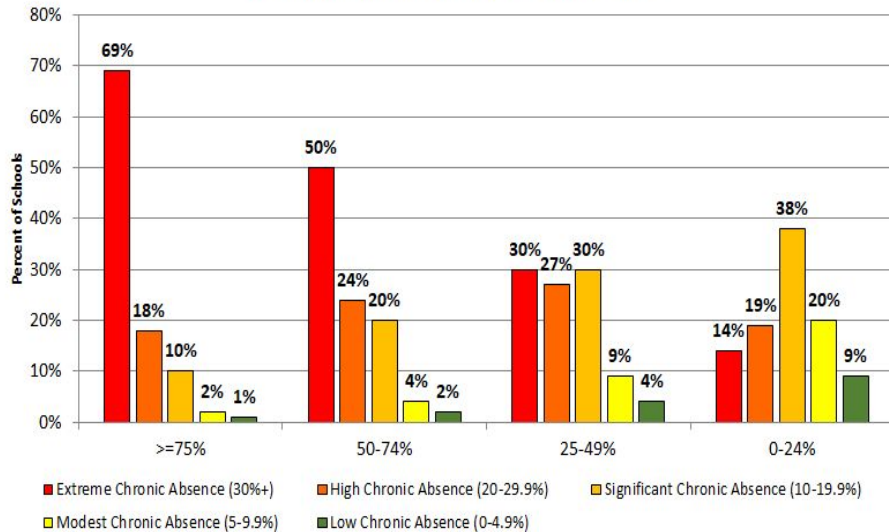*Defined as percent of students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals
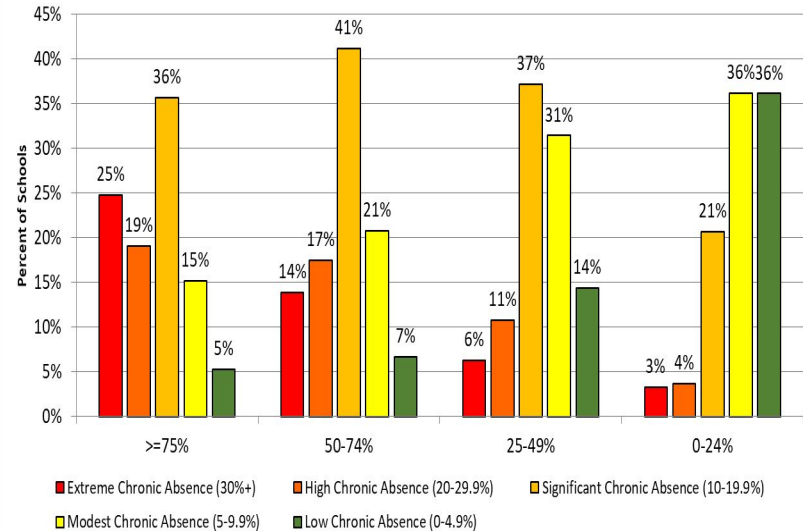

Chart 5 - SY 17-18 School Chronic Absence Levels by Concentration of Poverty*
*Defined as percent of students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals

Extreme chronic absence concentrated in districts with higher poverty

Districts with >=75% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch program & 3 or more schools

% of Schools with Extreme Chronic Absence	# of Districts	% of Districts
0%	167	15%
0-25%	115	10%
26-50%	200	17%
51-75%	197	17%
76-100%	472	41%
	1151	

Districts with >=25% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch program & 3 or more schools

% of Schools with Extreme Chronic Absence	# of Districts	% of Districts
0%	960	65%
0-25%	222	15%
26-50%	153	10%
51-75%	73	5%
76-100%	68	5%
	1476	

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What's the difference between ADA, truancy & chronic absence?

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

- ▲ School level measure *(not student level)*

- ▲ Notice aggregate attendance at certain points in time (e.g., half-days, holidays, bad weather)

- ▲ Masks individual student chronic absences

Truancy

- ▲ Counts ONLY unexcused absences

- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules

- ▲ Uses legal, typically more blaming and punitive solutions

Chronic Absence

- ▪ Counts ALL absences *(excused, unexcused & suspensions)*

- ▪ Emphasizes impact of missed days

- ▪ Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies

- ▪ Cultivates family & student engagement

How "unexcused" label can affect response

Response to "Excused"	Response to "Unexcused"
✔ Help with homework	X Denial of help or no credit for homework
✔ Make-up exams	X No make-up exams
✔ Home tutoring provided	X Denial of class credit
	X Removal from extracurricular activities
	X Send notices of truancy
	If unexcused absences accumulate despite earlier outreach from schools and districts, courts can:
	> Fine students and parents
	> Require a community service program or parenting program
	> Charge parents with a misdemeanor

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The key to reducing chronic absence is addressing what causes students to miss too much school

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services (including health)
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules for learning
- Lack of access to technology
- Community violence

Aversion

- Struggling academically and/or behaviorally
- Unwelcoming school climate
- Social and peer challenges
- Anxiety
- Biased disciplinary and suspension practices
- Undiagnosed disability and/or lack of disability accommodations
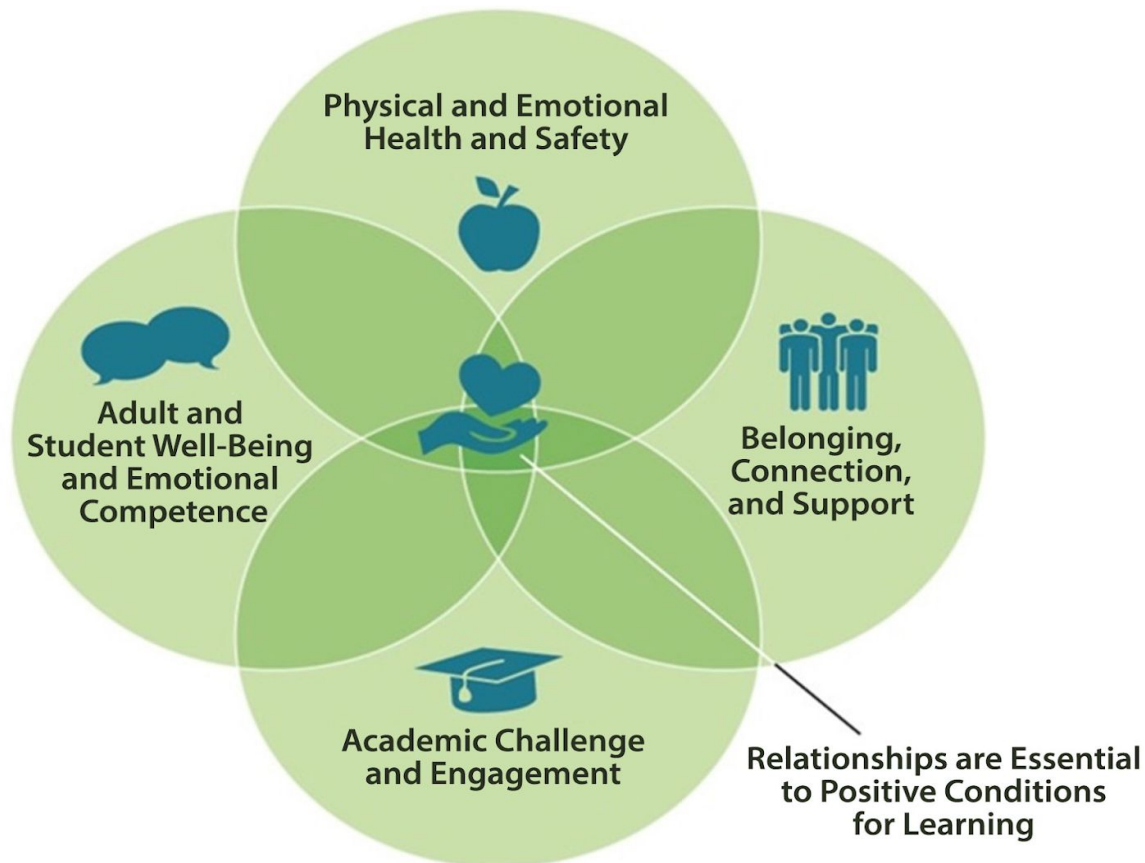- Caregivers had negative educational experiences

Disengagements

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits
- Need to work conflicts with being in high school

Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
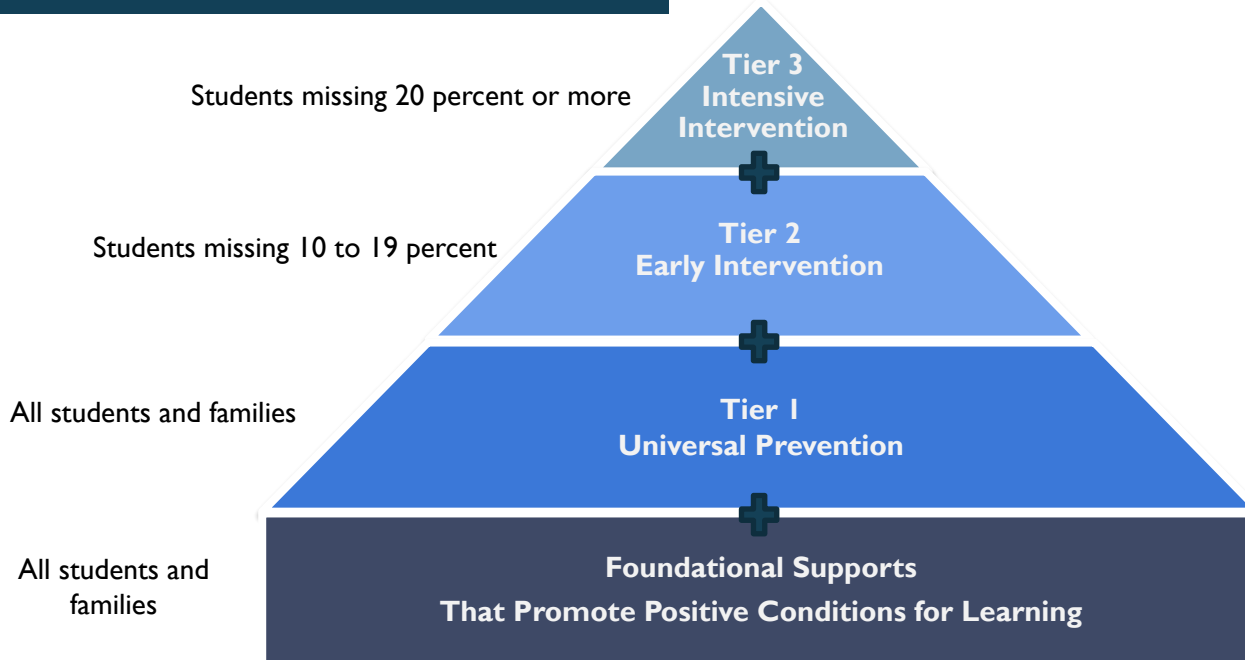- Suspensions don't count as absence

https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/

High levels of absence reflect an erosion in positive conditions for learning

Physical and Emotional Health and Safety

Adult and Student Well-Being and Emotional Competence

Belonging, Connection, and Support

Academic Challenge and Engagement

Relationships are Essential to Positive Conditions for Learning

Multi-tiered support systems that begin with prevention are essential

Students missing 20 percent or more

Students missing 10 to 19 percent

All students and families

All students and families

Tier 3 Intensive Intervention

Tier 2 Early Intervention

Tier 1 Universal Prevention

Foundational Supports That Promote Positive Conditions for Learning

https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/

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Woven together into a systemic, tiered approach informed by data / student success systems.

Family Engagement

Student Connectedness

Health & Safety

Community Partnerships/Schools

Karen Wong

Senior Manager, Research and Evaluation
Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry Campaign

Research: Breakfast After the Bell and chronic
absenteeism

The Study: Is there a link between serving breakfast as part of the school day and chronic absenteeism?

- No Kid Hungry commissioned a study to answer the question, "**Can serving breakfast as a part of the school day (Breakfast After the Bell) reduce chronic absenteeism?**

- Education researchers at the University of California, Drs. Michael Gottfried and Jacob Kirksey, conducted the study in 2019.

  - An analysis of two states with Breakfast After the Bell legislation

  - A national analysis of young elementary students and Breakfast in the Classroom

The Study: State Analysis

- **Colorado and Nevada law** required certain schools (where **70% or more** of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals) to provide **Breakfast After the Bell.**

- Data: U.S. Department of Education school-level chronic absenteeism and state agency school breakfast data for School Year 2013-2014 and 2015-2016.
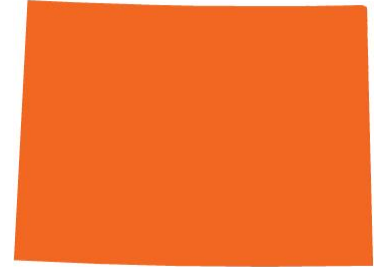
Analysis: Regression Discontinuity Design and Difference-in-Differences

The Study: National Analysis

- Survey sample of **elementary school students** and whether their school had **Breakfast in the Classroom** (a particular approach to Breakfast After the Bell).

- Data: Nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey (ECLS-K) with data for Kindergarteners and 1st Graders starting in School Year 2010-2011 compared to 2011-2012.
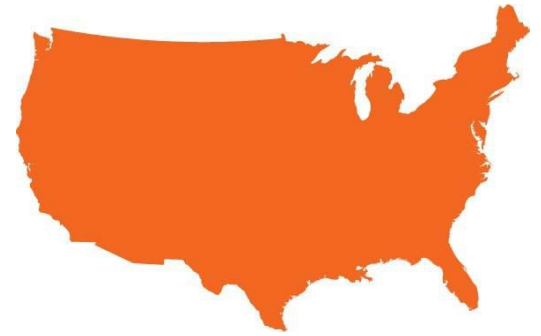
Analysis: Difference-in-Differences

The Findings: Breakfast After the Bell can significantly reduce chronic absenteeism rates.

The State Research:

- **Chronic absenteeism rates** were on average 6 percentage points lower for schools with Breakfast After the Bell.

The National Research:

- Exploratory analysis found Breakfast in the Classroom can improve **reading test scores.** Breakfast in the Classroom can also improve **internalizing behaviors (anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and sadness)**.

Serving breakfast after the bell can **reduce absenteeism by an average of**

6 percentage points

Maximizing Student Engagement for School Meals:

A Strategic Approach to CEP, Breakfast Models & Initiatives

Felipe Guerra, MDA, RD, LD
Director Nutrition Services
Fort Wayne Community Schools
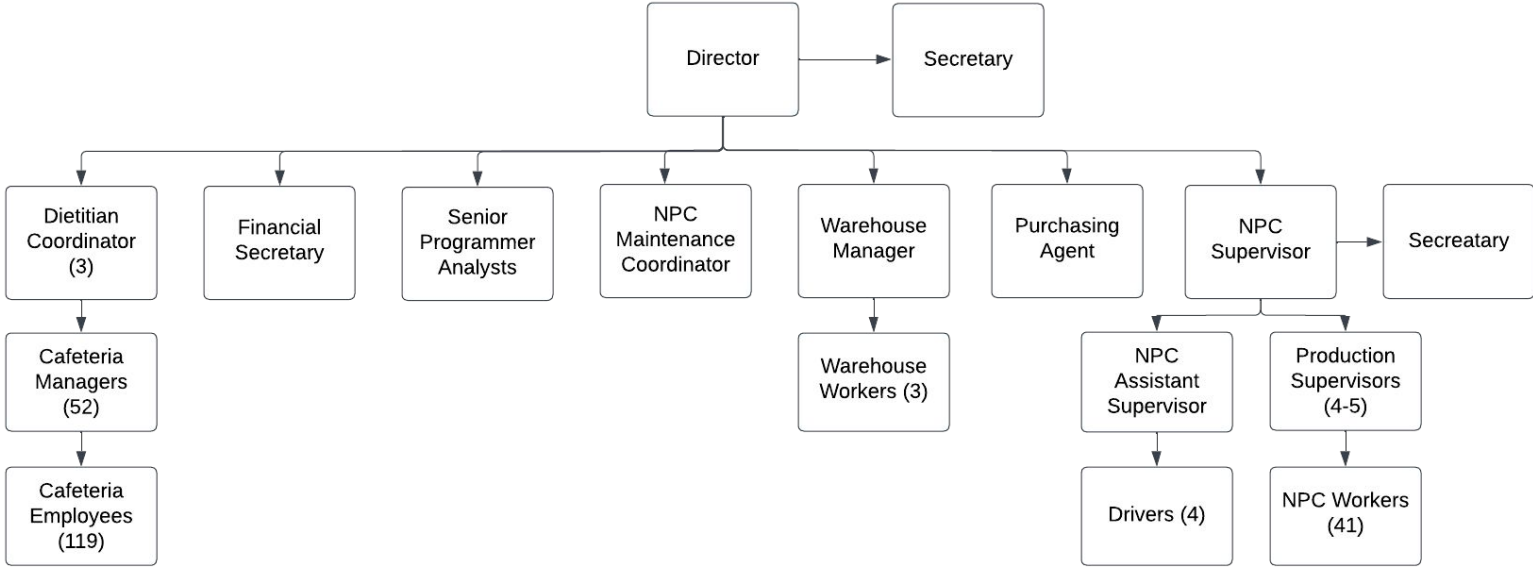
FWCS Commitment to Student Well-being

At the core of our district's mission is an unwavering commitment to student well-being. We prioritize a holistic approach, ensuring not only academic success but also the physical, emotional, and social health of each student. This commitment is reflected in our focus on nutritious meals, robust support systems, and inclusive initiatives, creating an environment where every student can thrive.
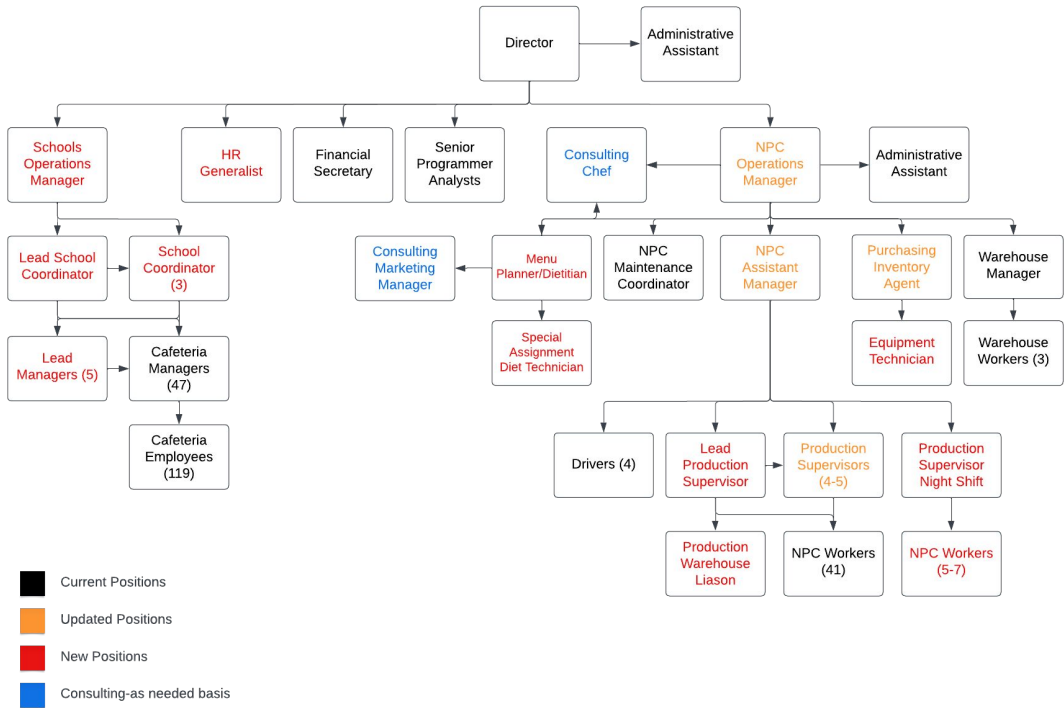
Central Role of Students in School Meal Programs

- Students as Architects of Change
- Involvement in Decision-Making
- Promoting Initiatives
- Ownership and Pride

FWCS Nutrition Services Old Org Structure

FWCS Nutrition Services New Org Structure

Legend:
- Current Positions
- Updated Positions
- New Positions
- Consulting-as needed basis

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

- Alternative to collecting, approving, and verifying household eligibility applications for free and reduced-price eligible students in high poverty local educational agencies (LEAs) for schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

- For a LEA to be eligible to use CEP for school year 2023-2024, the LEA must have one or more schools having an identified student percentage of 40% or greater as determined on April 1, 2023.

- The LEA and school must agree to offer all students breakfasts and lunches at no cost (free) and cover any cost above the federal reimbursement received with non-Federal funds.
    - Reimbursement for schools participating in CEP is based on claiming percentages (Free and Paid only) derived from the percentages of identified students multiplied by a USDA established factor.

CEP Analysis

10 month ago, a study was conducted to ensure FWCS Nutrition Services was making the most of CEP.

The study found that the CEP groups were not optimized for increased reimbursement.
- Group 1 was reimbursed at 95.50%,
- Group 2 at 92.34%, and
- Group 3 at 68.86%.

The study suggested that by reorganizing the groups into one instead of three, all schools could receive 100% reimbursement.

CEP Strategies

- Used advanced data analytics and statistical analysis techniques, including K-means clustering and DBSCAN (Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise).
    - This data-driven methodology aimed to optimize the impact of CEP and ensure its strategic implementation.

- The method utilized each site ISP (identified student percent) to create groups where the average ISP was equal or exceeded 62.5 percent.

CEP Strategies

K-means clustering and DBSCAN steps:

1. Data Collection and Preprocessing
2. K-means Clustering
3. DBSCAN Analysis
4. Threshold Setting
5. Strategic Resource Allocation
6. Continuous Monitoring and Adjustment

Results?

Additional 2 million dollar in reimbursement per year x 4 years

Fort Wayne Community Schools District

Breakfast styles:

- Elementary: hybrid model between breakfast in the classroom and BAB.
- Middle: hybrid model between breakfast in the classroom and BAB.
- High: hot and cold breakfast ; hybrid model between breakfast in the classroom and BAB.
  - This year added Coffee Bar for high schools

Rationale for hybrid model?

Coffee bar impact

2022-2023 Month/Month Participation Comparison

Description ● August 23 vs. 22 ● November 23 vs. 22 ● October 23 vs. 22 ● September 23 vs. 22
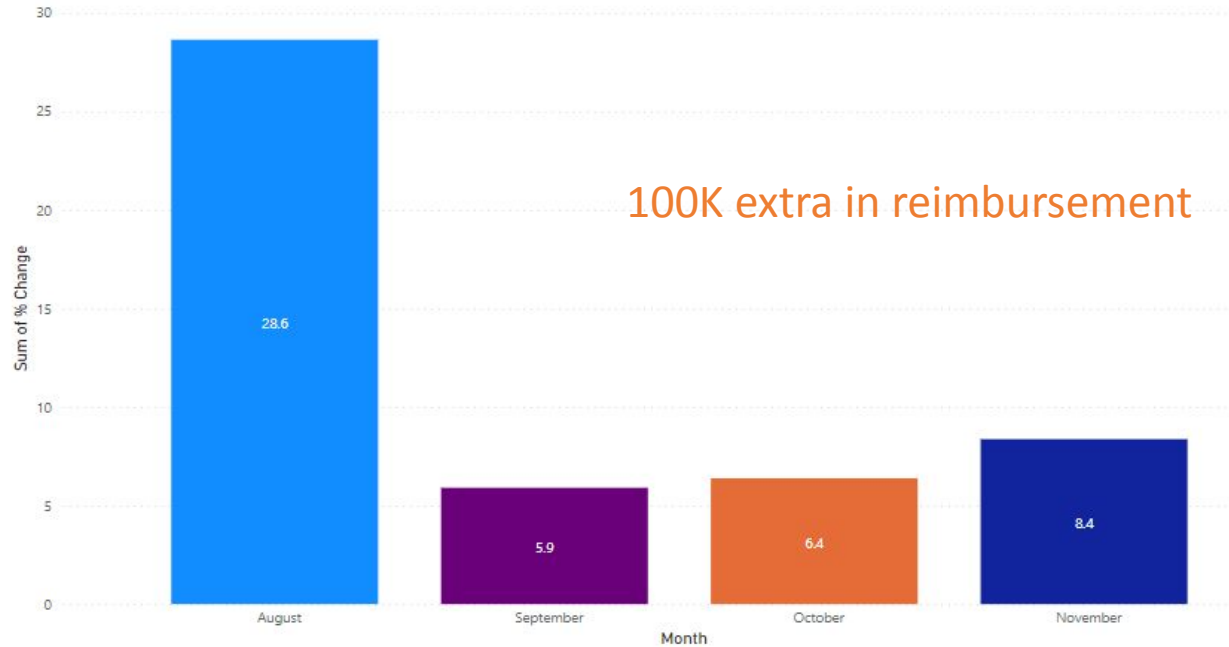
100K extra in reimbursement

	Sum of % Change
August	28.6
September	5.9
October	6.4
November	8.4

Future Initiatives

- Student Ambassadors
- Marketing efforts - Student Recruitment
  - Social Media Marketing
- Culinary arts
- Tailor Strategies to School Culture
- Involve Parents and Guardians
- Promote a Positive and Inclusive Environment
  - Department and District's Higher Purpose

Recap: The Bottom Line

School breakfast is often viewed as something separate from school performance, but this report reinforces that it is **intertwined with student success**.

Educators across the nation are experimenting with ways to improve student attendance. This study shows that **serving breakfast as part of the school day has an effect comparable to other evidence-based interventions** that are found to reduce absenteeism.

As you look for ways to ensure that students are nourished and successful in school, **serving breakfast after the bell stands out as an effective tool in your toolbox.**

Questions?

Resources

- [Study on Chronic Absenteeism and Breakfast After the Bell](#) (micro-report)
- [Breakfast After the Bell: Myths vs. Facts](#)
- [Innovative Breakfast Delivery Options](#)
- [School Breakfast Promotion Strategies](#)
- [Strategies for Increasing Breakfast Participation at Middle and High Schools](#)

THANK YOU

Jeannine Rios

Senior Program Manager

jrios@strength.org