



# Addressing Our Attendance Crisis

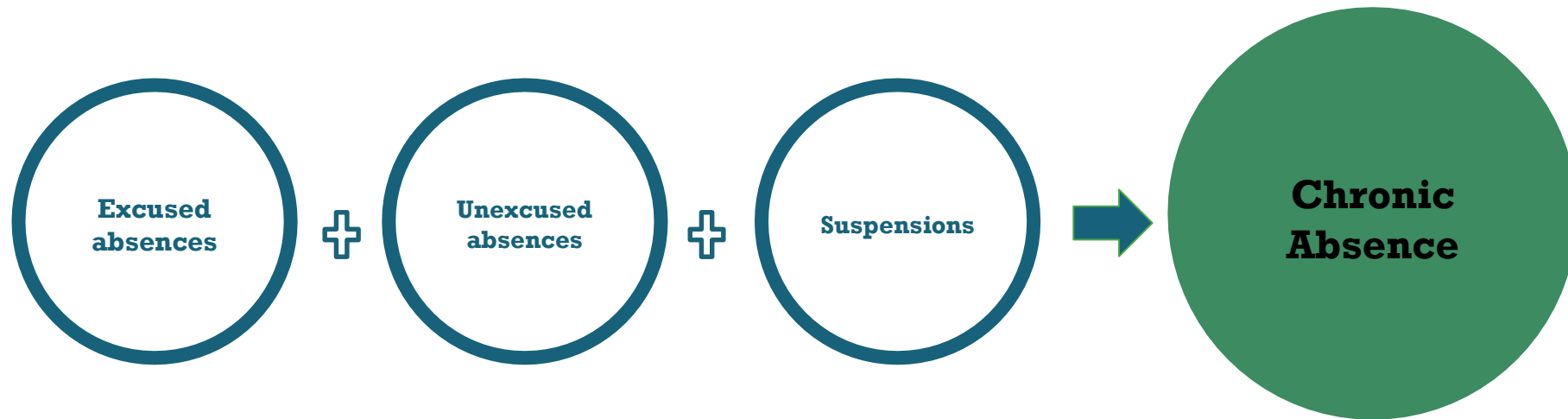




## What is chronic absence?

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.**



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

# Chronic Absence vs. Truancy

## Truancy

- ▲ Counts **ONLY** unexcused absences
- ▲ Emphasizes individual compliance with school rules
- ▲ Uses legal, typically more blaming and punitive, solutions

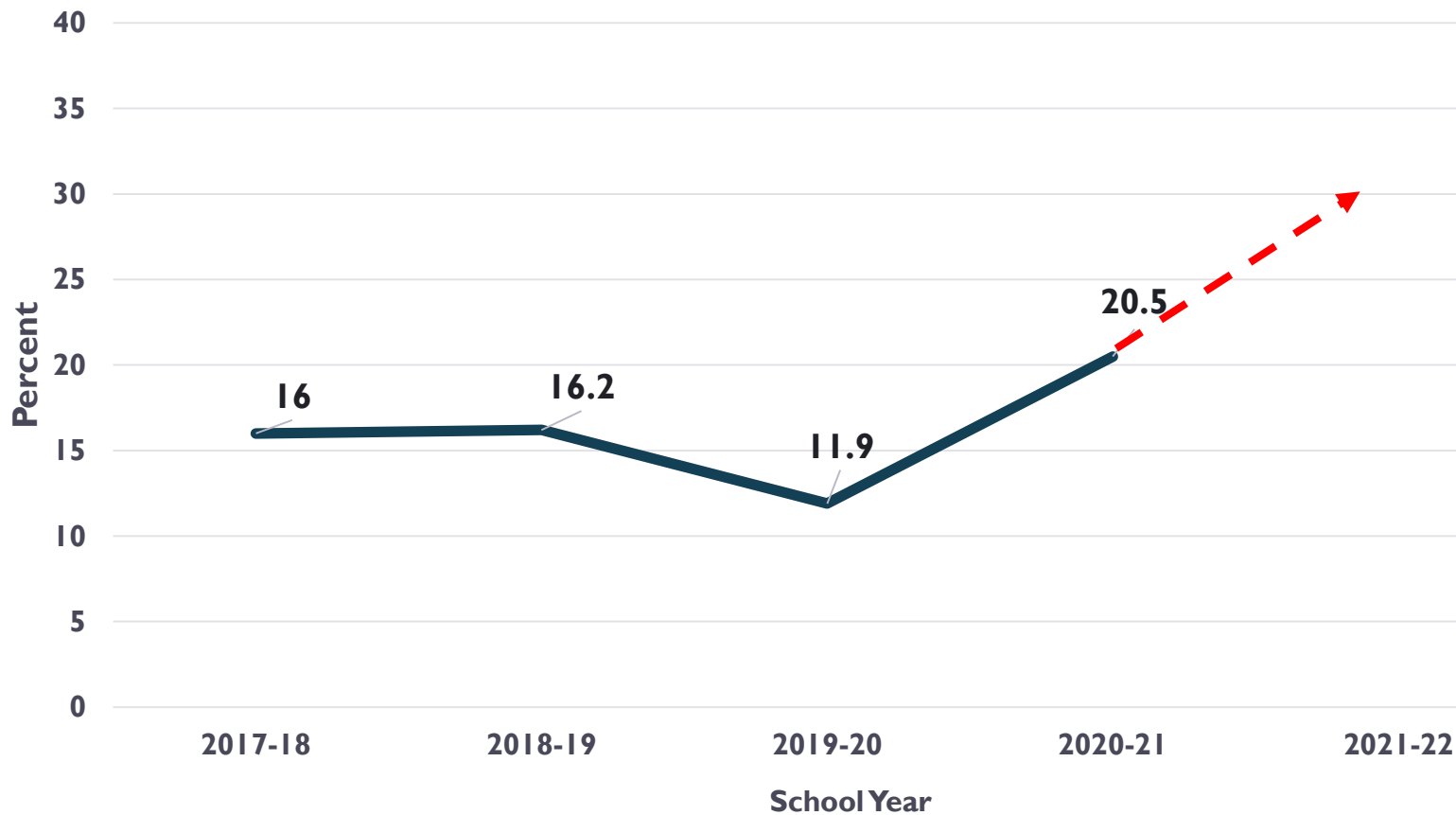


## Chronic Absence

- Counts **ALL** absences (*excused, unexcused & suspensions*)
- Emphasizes impact of missed days and benefits of being present
- Uses preventative, problem-solving, trauma-sensitive strategies
- Cultivates family & student engagement

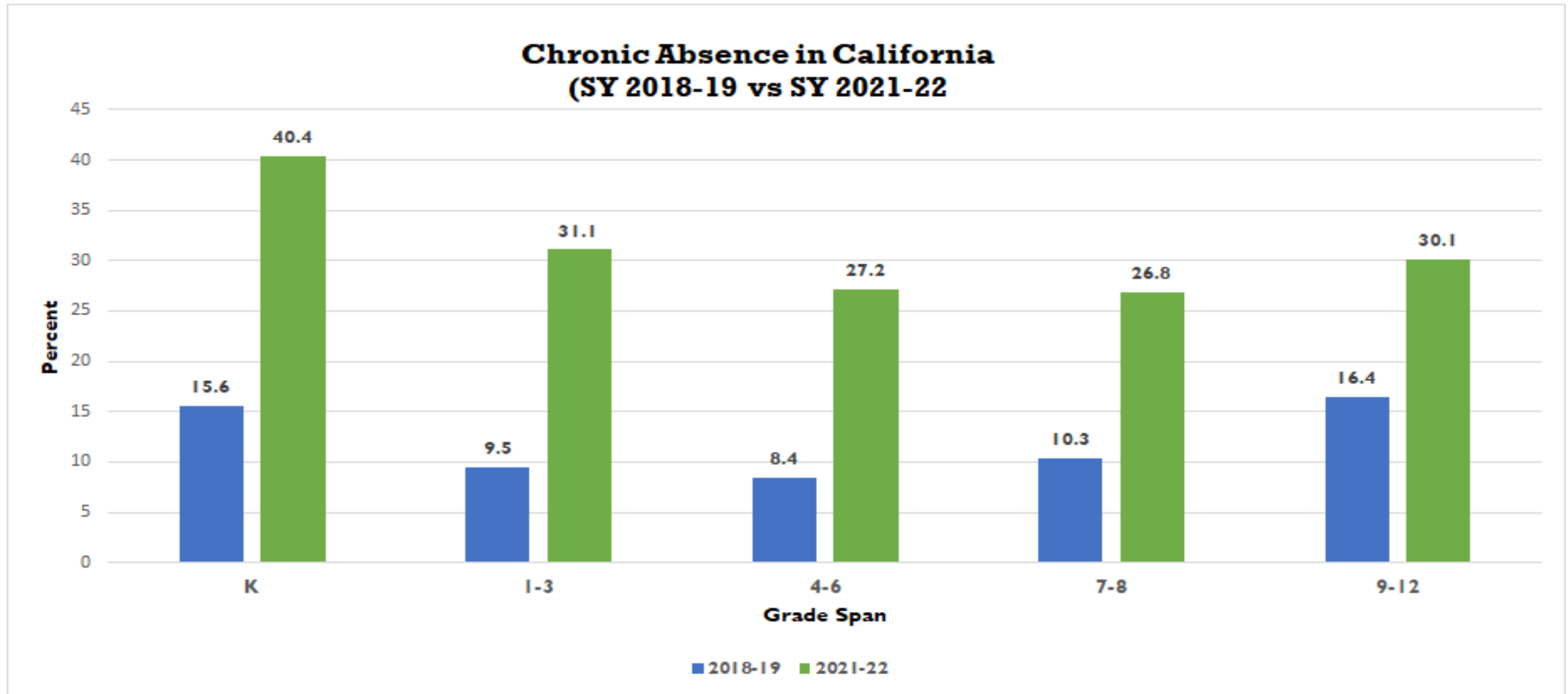
# Chronic Absence Trends For The United States

## Percentage of Students Chronically Absent Likely Doubled Nationwide Since 2017-2018



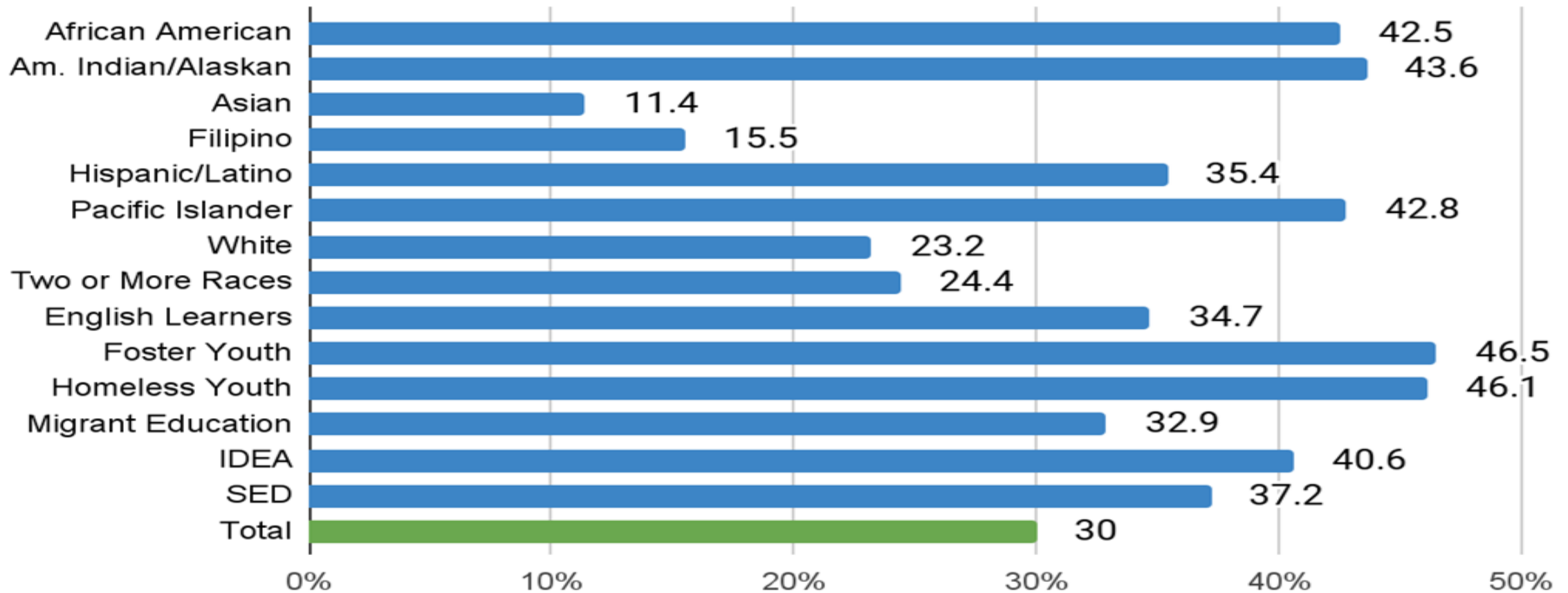
- ✓ Increases are occurring in tandem with significant drops in achievement
- ✓ Chronic absence is higher than ever, especially in early elementary and high school
- ✓ Early data from 2022-23 (not shown in figure) indicate rates remain high

# California Mirrors National Trends

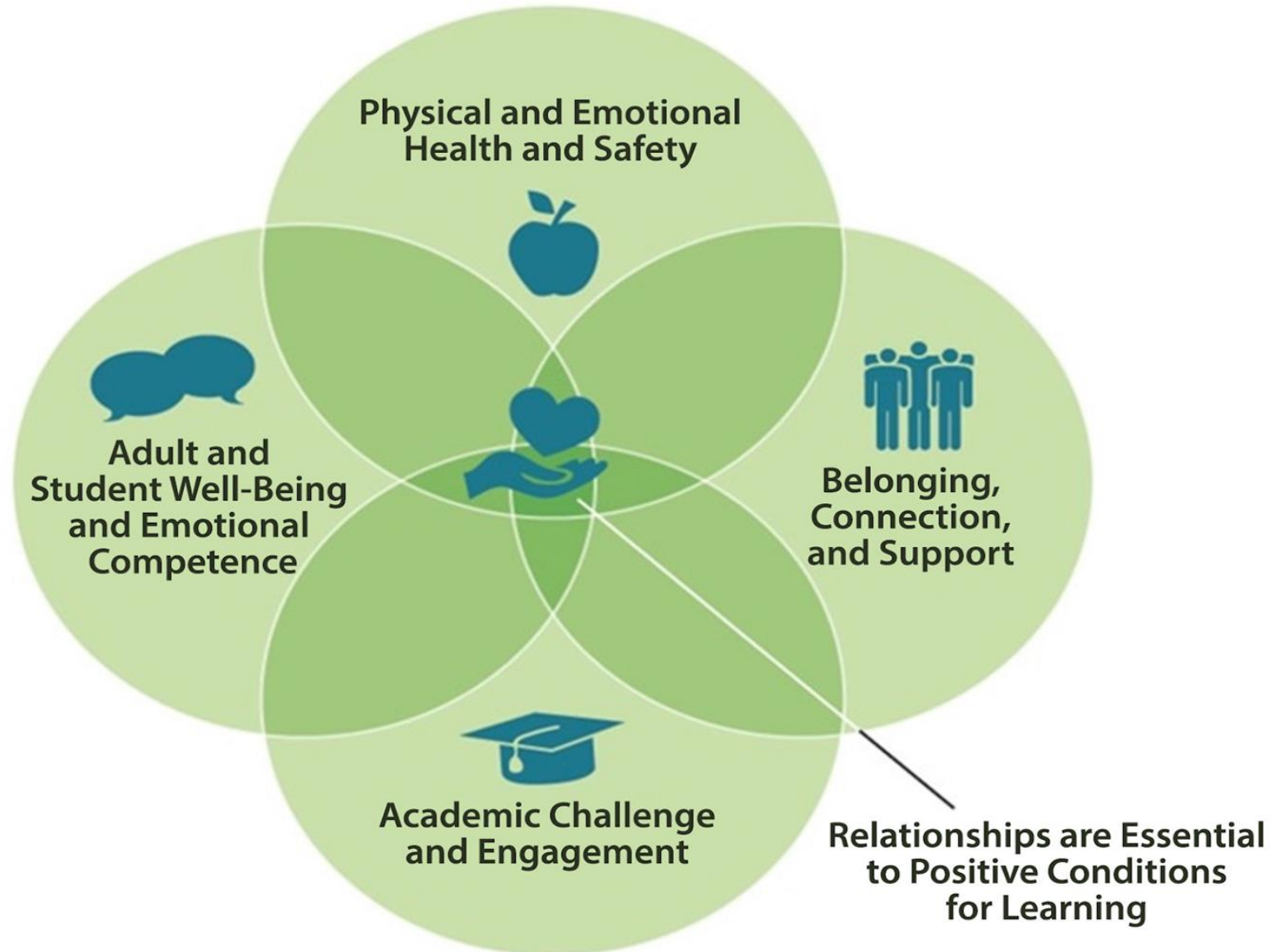


# Chronic Absence Reflects and Exacerbates Existing Educational Inequities

## California Chronic Absence Rates by Student Subgroup 2021-22



# High Levels Reflect a Deep Erosion in Positive Conditions for Learning





## Reducing chronic absence requires addressing the challenges that keep students from getting to school

*Challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic for the hardest hit communities. Experiences are different for younger vs older students.*

### Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- Challenges navigating schools esp for ELL families.
- System involvement
- Lack of predictable schedules & routine
- Lack of access to tech
- Community violence
- And others!

### Aversion

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

### Disengagement

- 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
- Drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school

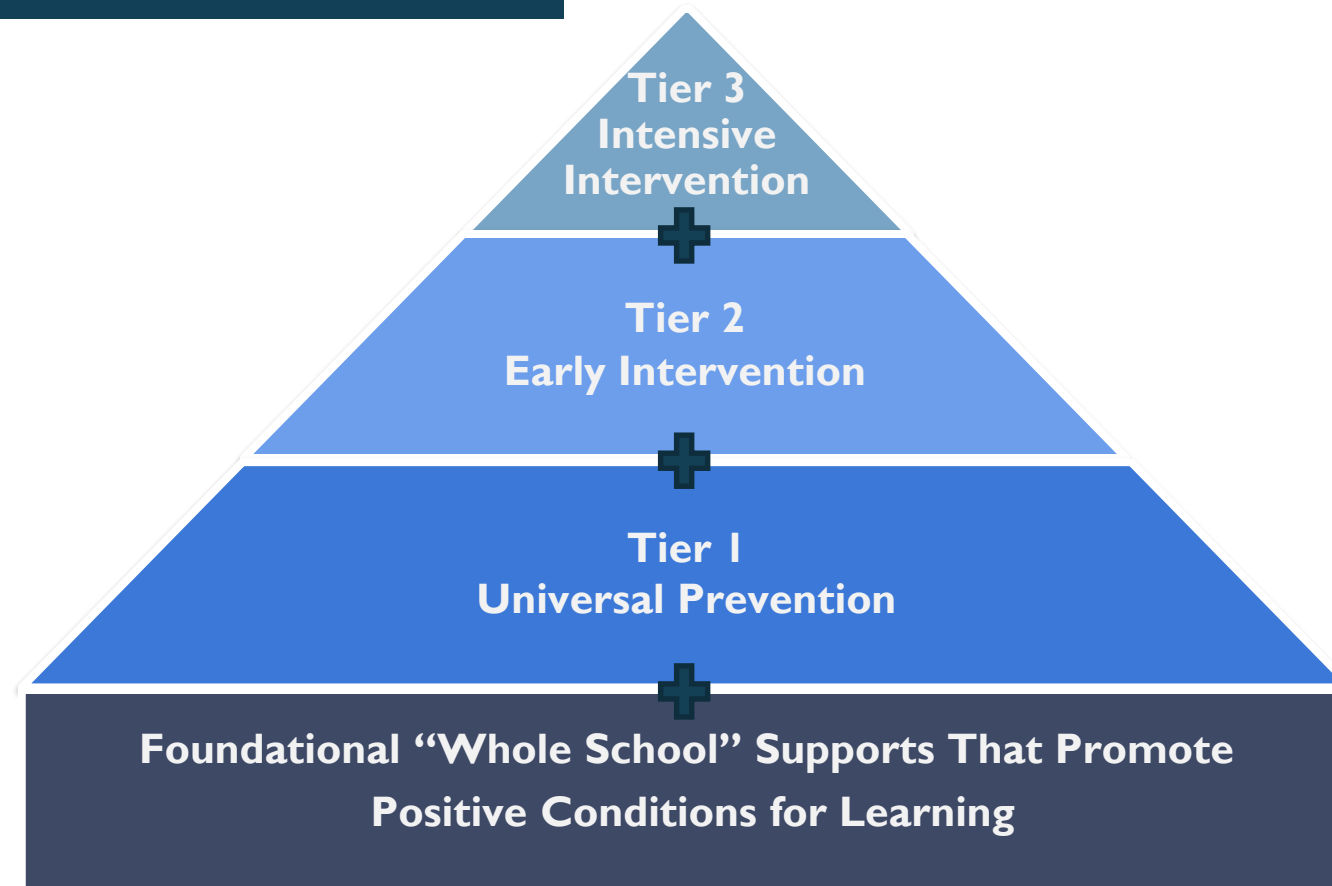
### Misconceptions

- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

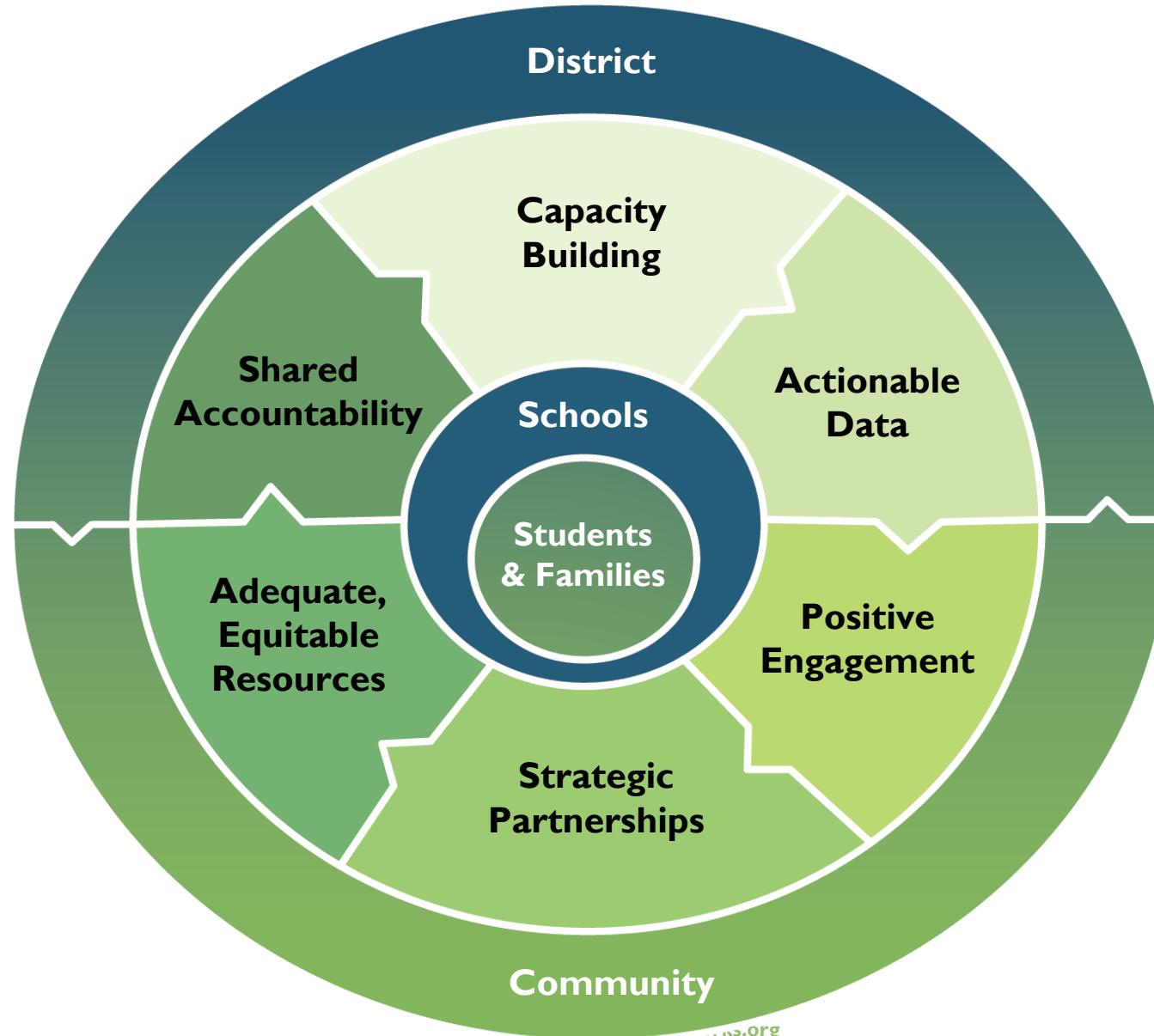




## Solution: A Tiered Approach to Engagement and Attendance



# Key Ingredients of Systemic Change to Reducing Absenteeism





## Key Action Steps

1. Promote a data informed team approach to attendance and engagement (at district and school level).
2. Find out from students and families about why they miss school and what motivates them to show up.
3. Do not create a new initiative but integrate greater attention to chronic absence in existing programs.
4. Forge community, interagency partnerships.