AGENDA REPORT

—CITY OF OAKLAND—————————————————————————

TO: The Honorable City Council

FROM: Sabrina B. Landreth   DATE: July 15, 2015
City Administrator

COUNCIL DISTRICT: <u>City-Wide</u>

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Public Safety Committee:

Receive an informational report from the Oakland Police Department and Human Services Department on Truancy in the City of Oakland; its Impact on Public Safety; and the Status of any Existing Partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District and/or Alameda County to Address Truancy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attached reports from the Human Services Department (HSD) and the Oakland Police Department (OPD), as well as **Attachment A, (Attendance Strategies in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD))** and **Attachment B, (Oakland Achieves: 2014 Attendance Report)** will help inform discussion between HSD, OPD, and the Public Safety Committee regarding efforts to address chronic absenteeism among at-risk students in OUSD schools. Chronic Absenteeism is a complex issue that requires efforts from OUSD as well as multiple City Departments. The City partnerships with OUSD vary from a Human Services perspective than those partnerships forged between OPD and the OUSD Police Department. In the interest of assessing the school attendance challenge from a broad perspective, these two separate reports have been prepared for Public Safety Committee review.

For questions regarding this report, please contact, Bruce Stoffmacher, Legislation Manager, Research and Planning, Office of the Chief, Oakland Police Department, at 510-238-6976.

Respectfully submitted,

Sabrina B. Landreth

Item: _____
Public Safety Committee
July 28, 2015

TO: Sabrina B. Landreth
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FROM: Sean Whent

SUBJECT: Chronic School Absenteeism

DATE: July 10, 2015

City Administrator Approval		Date	7/15/15

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Public Safety Committee accept:

An Informational Report on Truancy in the City of Oakland; its Impact on Public Safety; and the Status of any Existing Partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District and/or Alameda County to Address Truancy.

OUTCOME

This report will help inform discussion among the Oakland Police Department (OPD), the Human Services Department (HSD), and the Public Safety Committee regarding efforts to address chronic absenteeism among at-risk students in Oakland schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OPD provides a number of programs for Oakland school-age youth including the Police Activities League (PAL) program and the Our Kids (OK) program. OPD welcomes any opportunity to partner with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and Alameda County to address truancy. OPD does not collect, maintain, or analyze data regarding truancy in the City of Oakland. OPD has not performed a comprehensive analysis of the impact of truancy on public safety in the City of Oakland.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

At the June 4, 2015 Rules and Legislation Committee, the Committee approved for scheduling a Request to Schedule from Council Member Desley Brooks an informational report on the truancy in the city of Oakland; its impact on public safety; and the status of any existing partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District and/or Alameda County to address truancy.

The California Attorney General defines truancy by stating that "a student is truant if he/she is absent or tardy by more than 30 minutes without a valid excuse on 3 occasions in a school year."[1] This report also states "[t]ruancy is against the law. California's Compulsory Education Law requires every child form the age of 6 to 18 to be in school – on time, every day."

In 2001, OPD began partnering with OUSD known as the Truancy Reduction and Intervention Program (TRIP) to address the then-escalating truancy problems around Fremont High School, in part through grants from the State of California Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention program. This collaboration involved having OPD conduct truancy sweeps, perimeter surveillance and gang prevention efforts particularly around Fremont High School. Resolution 78098 C.M.S. passed by the City Council in September 2003 authorized the City to accept $50,000 from OUSD for this program.

In later years, based on recognition that 25 percent of Oakland's school age children are truant during each school year, OPD collaborated with OUSD, the Alameda County of Office of Education, other City and County agencies and the Alameda County District Attorney's Office to create Oakland's Truancy Program. The Truancy Program included truancy centers in West Oakland and East Oakland. Officers conducted truancy sweeps near schools. When truants youth were observed in public near schools and with no reasonable explanation as to why they were not in school, OPD officers brought them to the truancy centers. OUSD provided these centers at actual school sites. OUSD and Truancy Program partners provided educational and intervention services.

In October 2014, OUSD and OPD entered into an agreement that provides guidelines and provisions for the 25 OPD officers assigned to OUSD Middle Schools (school safety officers) as part of the 2013 U.S. Department of Justice COPS Grant interact with students. This agreement is provided as *Attachment A* and was authorized by Resolution No. 85178 C.M.S. The agreement was developed in recognition that efforts to improve educational and life outcomes for Oakland youth are diminished when these youth develop detrimental relationships with the police and schools. The agreement provides that placing OPD officers in a position where they demand that youth not attending schools during school hours submit to their authority ultimately detracts from the greater goal of encouraging truant youth to stay in school. The 2014 agreement

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[1] In School + On Track: Attorney General's 2013 Report on California's Elementary School Truancy & Absenteeism Crisis; https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2013

states that the OPD school safety officers will not solicit truancy information from schools and provides a number of transparency requirements for OPD's and OUSD's ongoing school safety program.

ANALYSIS

OUSD does not currently have a truancy center for OPD officers to take truants. OPD does not conduct truancy sweeps or any chronic absenteeism enforcement efforts. However, school safety officers do participate in collaboration with their assigned school sites in locating truants or chronically absent students. On occasion, school staff will call the parent or guardian of an absent or truant student and request that a school safety officer pick up the student from home and bring him/her to school. As per OPD's current agreement with OUSD, if an officer locates a truant student, the officer will transport the student back to the school and drop him/her off with school administration.

OPD currently does not collect data on truants or chronically absent students; OPD only collects data relevant to school safety officer truancy abatement efforts associated with their designated schools (six schools total).

OPD does not have any existing partnerships with Alameda County to address truancy.

Current OPD Youth Programs

OPD provides several opportunities for youth in Oakland. Each of these programs attempts to instill the value of education in Oakland youth. Programs include:

Police Activities League (PAL) is a non-profit, public benefit corporation with exempt status in accordance with Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The mission of PAL is:

- To offer educational and recreational programs that provide a common platform for positive interaction between Oakland's youth and Police Officers, thereby fostering a mutual bond of respect, understanding, and trust;
- To guide youth toward responsible, mature, and informed citizenship;
- To encourage the principles of good will, friendship, and sportsmanship.

Specific programs within PAL include:

- **After School Program:** PAL offers a comprehensive after school program to youth 5-18 years old. Members can receive assistance with their homework, have access to computer, participate in arts & crafts, play various sports, and a number of other activities that are safe alternatives to crime, violence and drugs.

- **Building Strong Minds Mentorship (BSM) Program:** The Building Strong Minds (BSM) Program partners Oakland Police Officers with young people who can benefit from a mentor. The goal of BSM is to provide youth with positive interaction with an adult who can serve as a role model and to give them healthy alternatives to destructive behaviors. This program provides services to youth regardless of age, sex, race, or socioeconomic status. Youth may maintain the relationship for as long as they desire.

- **Gang Resistance Education and Training Program (GREAT):** GREAT is administered through PAL. This program focuses on students in middle and elementary school year-round. GREAT certified officers instruct kids on how to resist the dangers of gangs, drugs, violence and crime. GREAT has been taught at elementary and middle schools in OUSD as well as charter and private schools throughout Oakland.

- **Police Explorer Program:** The Explorer Program is a worksite-based program for young men and women between 14 and 21 years of age. The program offers experiential learning in law enforcement with activities that promote growth and development of adolescent youth. PAL also offers the Junior Explorer Program for 11 to 13 year-olds and the Senior Explorer Program for 21 to 24 year-olds.

Our Kids (OK) Program is a national mentoring model for African American men and boys. The program brings together Police and Pastors around the country to recruit, train and organize African American men to mentor African American boys 12 to18 years old. The primary goal of the program is to help our young men develop leadership and critical thinking skills, promote academic excellence and reduce the high rates of incarceration and homicide of young African American males.

Under the guidance of an African American police officer (coordinator), African American men serve as positive role models and mentors for their younger counterparts. The men in the program are called teammates, because the OK Program is based on a team-mentoring concept. Each teammate is important to the team's success. This concept provides the organizational structure necessary to allow African American men an opportunity to take responsibility to lead the way in helping change the course of young African American males.

School administrators and teachers play a critical role in the OK Program. Together, administrators and teachers provide a level of support to the Program that is necessary for the program to be successful. This support encourages OK Students to excel and achieve a high level of academic excellence. Students in the program receive awards for their efforts, achievements and successes.

Impact of Truancy on Public Safety

A 2011 research study conducted by the Indio (California) Police Department and Robert Nash Parker, Ph.D. of the University of California, Riverside attempted to determine the impact of truancy on public safety. The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance – Smart Policing Initiative. The research found connections between student truancy and residential burglaries. Specifically, the study found that truancy increases precede increases in residential burglaries one to two years later.[2] The Indio Police Department later found that increases in truancy arrests were associated with decreases in related crimes.[3]

Although a formal analysis has not been conducted, in OPD's review of cases where victims provided an estimate of the suspect's age, it is very difficult to identify the true impact of truancy on public safety. It is not possible to provide any age data for suspects in the majority of burglaries since victims (and witnesses) are not usually present when the crime occurs. Based on an unaudited statistical report generated for this agenda report,[4] in the 13 percent of reported burglaries between January 1, 2014 and July 31, 2015 where the victim saw the suspect, the suspect was believed to be an adult 85 percent of the time and a juvenile 15 percent of the time. Of those burglaries in this sample where the suspect was believed to be a juvenile, the majority (nearly 54 percent) of such burglaries were committed during school hours (between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm).

For robberies reported to OPD during this same time period, the suspect was believed to be an adult 67 percent of the time, a juvenile 17 percent of the time, and was not estimated for the remaining 16 percent. The majority of reported robberies (nearly 72 percent) committed by juveniles were outside of school hours (between 3:00 pm and 8:00 am). An internal analysis conducted by OPD earlier this year revealed that between 2012 and 2015, there was a tremendous increase in the number of robberies committed by suspects with an average age of 14 to 22 years. An analysis of 25 recent robberies (where the suspects were arrested) showed that 19 were committed by suspects 19 years or younger. None of the suspects in this age group were attending school on a regular basis and most had missed an extended amount of school.

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[2] http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/SPIsites/indio-california
[3] http://www.sia-us.com/news-and-events/newsroom/indio-police-study-links-truancy-burglary
[4] The data are drawn from the OPD database, and they are unaudited. The numbers will not match the official monthly totals of either crimes or arrests reported to the FBI through the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. Crime statistics can be affected by late reporting, the reclassification or unfounding of crimes, or the geocoding process. This report is run by the date the crimes occurred. Because both reporting of crimes and data entry can run behind, not all crimes have been recorded yet. Exact counts of crimes by beat are not possible. Actual counts will usually range from 2 to 10 percent higher. The only certified statistics are those contained in the UCR.

Addressing Truancy

In short, OPD, HSD, OUSD, and the City of Oakland as a whole are invested in Oakland youth and will continue to seek ways that promote school attendance that do not detract from the goal of promoting positive community-police relationships. OPD understands that there is a nexus among chronic absenteeism, lost educational opportunities, lost school funding, poverty and crime. OPD will continue to collaborate with OUSD and related partner agencies and organizations on best practices to promote school attendance. OPD welcomes any additional opportunities to partner with OUSD and the Alameda County Office of Education including the reinstatement of truancy centers.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

This report contains information of public interest as it directly relates to the education of Oakland youth and public safety within the City of Oakland.

COORDINATION

The Oakland Police consulted with Human Services Department to produce this report. The Office of the City Attorney was sent the report for general review only.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

There are no costs associated with this report.
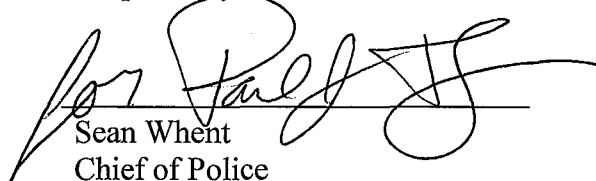
SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There are no economic opportunities identified in this report.

Environmental: No environmental opportunities have been identified.

Social Equity: This report provides valuable information to the Oakland community regarding efforts to ensure equal educational outcomes for all Oakland youth.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Bruce Stoffmacher, Legislation Manager, Research and Planning, Office of the Chief, at (510) 238-6976.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Whent
Chief of Police
Oakland Police Department

Reviewed by:
Kirk Coleman, Captain
OPD, Crime Investigations Division

Prepared by:
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OPD, Youth and School Services Section

Bruce Stoffmacher, Legislative Manager
OPD, Office of the Chief of Police, Research & Planning

Item: _____
Public Safety Committee
July 28, 2015

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
AND
THE CITY OF OAKLAND
IN REGARDS TO THE SCHOOL SAFETY OFFICER PROGRAM

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered by and between the City of Oakland ("City") and the Oakland Unified School District ("OUSD").

RECITALS

In September 2011, the Oakland Police Department ("OPD") was awarded U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services grant money, specifically a COPS, Hiring Program grant ("COPS grant money") in the amount of $10,739,575 to fund 25 OPD officers over a three year period. Due to the time required to hire officers, OPD was not able to commence the program until August of 2012. As a result, OPD will be applying for an extension of the COPS grant money award period until September 2014 and anticipates that such an extension will be awarded.

This MOU shall establish and define the relationship between the City and OUSD with respect to the implementation of OPD's School Safety Officer Program, created pursuant to the COPS grant money. Specifically, this MOU sets forth the agreed-upon working relationship between the City and OUSD seeking to achieve four specific goals in furtherance of OPD's School Safety Officer Program in respect to six specific OUSD schools. These goals are: (1) to reduce and/or eliminate child trafficking; (2) to reduce and/or eliminate student truancy; (3) to provide students safe passage to and from school; and (4) to provide mentoring services to students.

OUSD has entered into an Agreement to Resolve with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (*see* OCR Case No. 09125001 and OUSD-OCR Agreement to Resolve related thereto), which requires OUSD to, among other things, reduce disproportionate minority suspensions and expulsions for school-related offenses. OUSD is committed to reducing student contact with the criminal justice system and actively supports restorative justice and community policing models.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Calls for service" refers to calls made to OPD dispatch concerning criminal incidents or other public safety matters.
2. "Designated school" refers to any of the six enumerated OUSD schools where OPD has implemented its School Safety Officer Program. These schools are: (1) Roosevelt Middle School, (2) Coliseum College Prep Academy and Roots International Academy (located on the former Havenscourt Middle School campus), (3) Elmhurst Community Preparatory School, (4) Frick Middle School, (5) Parker Elementary and (6) Bunche Academy.

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3. The phrases "designated school site" or "school site" are defined as the property upon which the school is located.

4. The phrase "school-related offenses" is defined as an offense occurring or originating on an OUSD school site during school hours.

5. "School hours" refers to the hours of 8 a.m. through 4 p.m. during the school year and, where applicable, the summer school session.

6. "Directory information" is defined as information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed (*e.g.,* name, address, telephone number, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, dates of attendance, most recent previous school attended, and the other information defined as directory information in OUSD Administrative Regulation 5125.1).

7. Unless specifically provided otherwise, "students" refers to students enrolled in OUSD who are attending the six designated schools where OPD has implemented its School Safety Officer Program.

8. "Mentor Officer" means a City of Oakland peace officer ("COPS Grant Officer") who has entered into a formal mentor-mentee relationship with a student after receiving written permission from the student's parent(s) or guardian(s), as more fully described below in Section 5.

AGREEMENT

1. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE AGREEMENT

This MOU shall become effective when it is approved and executed by the Oakland City Administrator, Oakland Chief of Police and the OUSD's Board of Education.

2. TERM OF THE AGREEMENT

This MOU shall remain in effect for 3 years from the date of full execution. However, the MOU shall terminate if and when the COPS grant money funding source for OPD's School Safety Officer Program ceases. The terms of MOU may be modified or amended at any time by written agreement of all signatories to the MOU. The City or OUSD may terminate this agreement, with or without cause, upon 45 days written notice to the other.

If the MOU is terminated, OPD shall no longer assign police officers to the "designated schools" as provided under this MOU. The termination of this MOU does not affect OPD's statutory law enforcement authority, nor OPD's ability to police everywhere within the City.

3. PROGRAM AND PROGRAM COORDINATION

OPD will coordinate the School Safety Officer Program with the OUSD (hereinafter "COPS Grant Officers Program"). This program currently consists of 25 COPS Grant Officers who are assigned to the designated schools to provide mentoring to students; to establish "safety zones" around each of the designated schools where COPS Grant Officers will focus on crimes

involving human trafficking and violence associated with gangs, narcotics, and guns; and to address student truancy ("COPS Grant Officers Program Goals").

OPD will maintain a dedicated position for a Coordinator of the COPS Grant Officers who shall hold a rank of Lieutenant or higher. The COPS Grant Officers Coordinator shall be responsible for the planning, budgeting, management and agency leadership for the COPS Grant Officers Program; provide program monitoring and assistance with problem solving; and will handle coordination between the OPD, Oakland Schools Police Department ("OSPD"), OUSD, designated school site administrators and COPS Grant Officers. The COPS Grant Officers Coordinator will act as the liaison with OSPD and OUSD to meet the COPS Grant Officers Program Goals and to help maintain a line of communication between the designated schools and OPD. The COPS Grant Officers Coordinator will maintain a list of the COPS Grant Officers, including their telephone numbers, badge numbers, their assignments by school, and their work schedule, and provide that list, as well as any updates, to OPD's Chief of Police on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if assignments of COPS Grant Officers change.

OUSD will designate a space at each of the designated schools where COPS Grant Officers may use their laptops and mobile phones and may meet with students, staff, and parents of a designated school. Each COPS Grant Officer shall maintain a log of his/her meetings with any student and/or parent, which log shall set forth the COPS Grant Officer's name; designated school's name; date and time of the meeting; the name(s) of the student(s) and/or parent(s) with whom he/she met; and the purpose and outcome of the meeting (unless this specific disclosure is otherwise prohibited by law) ("COPS Grant Officers Log").

4. COPS GRANT MENTOR OFFICERS – LIMITED ARRESTS OR CITATIONS OF STUDENTS

The primary role of COPS grant officers is to maintain safe passages for students going to and coming from school. To the greatest extent possible and absent exigent circumstances, COPS grant Mentor Officers will refer the arrest or citation of students to other COPS Grant Officers, OPD officers or OSPD officers. Primary responsibility for addressing student discipline remains with the school as further discussed in paragraphs 14 and 15 herein.

5. PARTICIPATION BY STUDENTS IN COPS GRANT-RELATED MENTORING

For any formal on-campus or off-campus mentor-mentee relationships between students and Mentor Officers, no student shall be selected to participate as a mentee in the COPS program without the express written permission of the student's parent/guardian. The parent/guardian shall be provided written notice of the request to participate in the program, which notice shall note that the COPS Grant Mentor Officer is a sworn OPD police officer with a duty to uphold the law.

Attachment A

6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The principal of each designated school site shall make a determination as to if and when to seek a COPS Grant Officers assistance in addressing a truant student situation. If the designated school does seek a COPS Grant Officer's assistance, the COPS Grant Officer shall only be provided the student's home contact information and that the student is truant, as consistent with state law, under OUSD policy. The COPS Grant Officer shall retain in written form in the COPS Grant Officers Log a record of the name and contact information of the referred student, as well as the name and position of the OUSD employee(s) that referred a particular student to the COPS Grant Officer because of truancy issues.

The OPD and OPD's COPS Grant Officers, agents, personnel, employee(s), and/or subcontractor(s) shall maintain the confidentiality of the information received in the course of performing the services pursuant to this MOU, which information is limited to a student's directory information (including a student's home contact information) and that the student is truant if necessary to support truancy abatement (as provided in the preceding paragraph). OPD and OPD's COPS Grant Officers, agents, personnel, employee(s), and/or subcontractor(s) shall maintain such information and records in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and agree that information and records relating to individual pupils provided by the OUSD are subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). Such information and records shall be confidential to the extent required by FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99; and California Education Code §§ 49060, et seq.; and other state and federal law. Each party hereby provides satisfactory assurances to the other party that confidential education information will be appropriately safeguarded through the execution of this MOU. This requirement to maintain confidentiality shall extend beyond the termination of this Agreement. OPD and COPS Grant Officers will be permitted access to student data only where permissible under state and federal law and as set forth in this MOU.

7. REPORTS

OPD will provide the OSPD Chief of Police and the OUSD Board of Education (or its designee) with a written report twice a year (on July 1 and December 31 of each year) regarding the:

(A)   Designated school site crime incidents reported to, or observed by, COPS Grant Officers /OPD, disaggregated by school site, offense, age, race, ethnicity, gender, and whether the encounter was the result of a call-for service, a consensual contact, an on-viewed crime or other.

(B)   Number of arrests of students made by COPS Grant Officers /OPD at a designated school site:

        i.   By COPS Grant Officers /OPD on OUSD designated school sites for school related offenses.

        ii.   By COPS Grant Officers /OPD on OUSD designated school sites for non-school related offenses.

Such data shall be disaggregated by designated school site, offense, age, race, ethnicity, and gender, with information about the disposition of the matter. Note:

Attachment A

When making arrests of students on OUSD school sites, COPS Grant Officers shall consider those factors set forth in Section 14 of this MOU.

(C)   Truancy: (1) The number of home visits conducted by COPS Grant Officers; (2) a general description of the police action taken regarding the home visits; and (3) other relevant information concerning COPS Grant Officer's action in "truancy abatement" efforts, including the number of students cited or referred to the Truancy Court, or other Juvenile Court that adjudicates truancy cases, if the Truancy Court is abolished, rather than being returned to school or referred to another diversion or support program.

(D)   Complaints/Grievances: The number of complaints/grievances against COPS Grant Officers. All complaints against COPS Grant Officers shall be handled according to OPD policy and procedure, and as dictated by the Court's orders in *Delphine Allen v. City of Oakland*, USDC Action No. C00-4599 TEH. All said complaints received by OUSD shall be forwarded to the individual COPS Grant Officers supervisor and/or directly to OPD Internal Affairs.

(E)   Referrals: Number of referrals of students from school sites to wellness centers, medical facilities, tutors, mentors or other resources in lieu of arrest or citation.

(F)   Child Protective Services: Number of referrals of students on school sites made to Child Protective Services.

(G)   Full and complete copies of the COPS Grant Officers Logs.

The OSPD Chief of Police or designee, will in turn provide the OUSD Board of Education with a written report twice a year (in January and July, or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter) regarding (1) the disabilities, if any, of each student referred to in OPD's written report as contemplated above once OPD's report is received by the OSPD Chief of Police and (2) the impact of the COPS Grant program, whether adverse or positive, according to the statistical information received, on OUSD's efforts to reduce disproportionate minority contact with police and the juvenile justice system, as well as to reduce the rate of school-based arrests and citations while maintaining a safe school climate. To the extent that the OSPD report relies upon OPD's written report, the OSPD report shall take into consideration whether the police contact was initiated as a call-for-service, a consensual encounter or an on-viewed crime.

8.   HIRING AND ASSIGNMENT

The authority for selection, training, equipping, assignment, supervision, duties and permanent or temporary reassignment of COPS Grant Officers will remain solely with the City of Oakland's Chief of Police.

9.   COPS GRANT OFFICERS SELECTION

OPD will continue to use its transfer list practice for the COPS Grant Officers testing process. OPD is open to having OUSD participate in this process however the ultimate selection and assignment of COPS Grant Officer remains within the sole discretion of OPD's Chief of Police or his designee.

Attachment A

In the event OUSD's Superintendent determines that a specific COPS Grant Officer assigned to a designated school is not able to fulfill the requirements of this MOU, the Parties agree to meet to discuss the reassignment of such officer, however ultimate selection and assignment or reassignment remains within the sole discretion of OPD's Chief of Police or his designee.

10. COORDINATION BETWEEN COPS GRANT OFFICERS COORDINATOR, COPS GRANT OFFICERS AND SCHOOLS

(A) COPS Grant Officers Coordinator

OUSD will coordinate a meeting with OUSD staff where OPD will provide a briefing on the program goals and expectations. OUSD will be responsible for designating which OUSD staff must attend these briefings. The COPS Grant Officers Coordinator will meet with each designated school site principal on an as-needed basis when any issue arises that needs to be addressed.

The COPS Grant Officers Coordinator and designated school site principal(s) should schedule a meeting, if possible, prior to the start of each school year to review school and OUSD expectations, requirements and operational procedures.

During the second semester of each school year, a meeting should be held between the COPS Grant Officers Coordinator and each of the designated school site principals to address the COPS Grant Officers Program, including (1) an evaluation of COPS Grant Officers' performance at the site and (2) identification and possible resolution of any developing COPS Grant Officers-related concerns.

(B) COPS Grant Officers

With a goal of improving school security and student safety, COPS Grant Officers shall meet at least one time per month with their designated school site principal to exchange information about current crime trends, problem areas, emerging youth gangs or other issues of concern which have potential for disruption in the school or within the community, and to strategize on how to improve school safety. At such time, if COPS Grant Officers have engaged in proactive and preventative strategies with youth, such as providing and/or connecting them with community-based resources, mentors, or tutors, this should also be discussed.

11. COOPERATION WITH OUSD STAFF

A COPS Grant Officer, like all other OPD police officers, is a sworn member of the OPD assigned to provide the law enforcement expertise and resources to assist designated school site staff in maintaining safety within and around their designated school(s). Although the COPS Grant Officer and other police officers are supervised by OPD, and not the OUSD, the COPS Grant Officers and any other police officers working with or interacting with a school in OUSD shall take reasonable steps to work cooperatively with OSPD and designated school site administration and staff consistent with his/her responsibilities and performance of the duties

Attachment A

outlined in this MOU in accordance with the policies, rules and regulations of and applicable to OUSD. In performing these duties, the COPS Grant Officers and any other police officers working with or interacting with a school in OUSD shall comply with all applicable local, state and federal laws. The COPS Grant Officers and any other police officers working with or interacting with any school in OUSD will maintain familiarity with the OUSD Parent Guide of rules and regulations.

12.   COMMUNITY OUTREACH

To the extent feasible, COPS Grant Officers will participate in positive student activities in the school community in order to build trusting and respectful relationships with students, families and staff. The COPS Grant Officers will collaborate with school-based community organizations, parent-teacher organizations, student government and OUSD staff to develop opportunities for positive activities, such as panel discussions, mentoring programs, community coalitions or task forces. ~

Based on the availability of resources, members of the COPS Grant Officers Program may coordinate trainings depending upon the individual qualifications and experience of the COPS Grant Officers.

13.   CAMPUS SECURITY

COPS Grant Officers will augment designated school site administrators, faculty, and security staff to keep schools safe from intruders. As reasonably practicable, the COPS Grant Officers will work with school security staff to identify security issues and to take reasonable steps to create a safer environment for students. However, the COPS Grant Officer is neither a member of the security staff; a supervisor of OUSD security officers; nor a supervisor or subordinate of any OSPD officer.

14.   REQUESTING POLICE ASSISTANCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PURPOSES

Designated school site administrators and staff shall only request COPS Grant Officers' assistance regarding the provision of actual law enforcement when (1) necessary to protect the safety of students and/or staff; (2) required by law; or (3) appropriate to address or prevent actual criminal conduct. COPS Grant Officers' (as well as OSPD) involvement should not be requested in a situation that can be safely and appropriately handled by OUSD's internal disciplinary procedures. (*See, e.g.,* OUSD Board Policy 5144, 5144.1; Administrative Regulation 5144, 5144.1.) COPS Grant Officers should not be requested to interview students or collect evidence for OUSD disciplinary purposes, including for expulsion matters.

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Attachment A

15. STUDENT DISCIPLINE

OUSD administrators have primary responsibility to ensure consistent enforcement of school rules and policies. Neither the COPS Grant Officers nor any other OPD police officer shall act as a school disciplinarian. Disciplining students is an OUSD school responsibility.

As such, disciplinary issues relating to students to be handled by school administrators in partnership with the community and parents (and thus for which OUSD school administrators and staff shall not notify or request COPS Grant Officers or OPD assistance) include but are not limited to:

(A)   trespassing;

(B)   loitering;

(C)   profanity;

(D)   insubordination/defiance;

(E)   verbal abuse and/or harassment;

(F)   failure to wear or correctly wear school uniform or follow policies regarding clothing;

(G)   possession of a prohibited item that does not violate the penal law (i.e. cell phones);

(H)   lateness, cutting class, absenteeism or truancy; and

(I)   Alleged or witnessed promoting or claiming of a neighborhood or crew (including verbally, through graffiti, through clothing or hand signs).

OUSD administrators shall prioritize alternatives to police involvement, such as the use of restorative justice practices. (*See, e.g.,* OUSD's Restorative Justice Webpages located at the following Internet address: http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/Page/1048.)

16. ARRESTS OF STUDENTS ON DESIGNATED SCHOOL SITES DURING SCHOOL HOURS

COPS Grant Officers, to the extent practical, should coordinate any arrests with the designated school on site principal. A private location out of sight and hearing of other students should be arranged for the arrest, where practicable, that will help avoid invasion of the student's privacy, jeopardizing the safety and welfare of other students, and further disruption of the school campus.

17. NOTIFICATION OF PARENT/GUARDIAN OF STUDENT'S ARREST

COPS Grant Officers and OUSD shall abide by Education Code Section 48906, which requires that a school official must make immediate parental/guardian notification upon police arrest of a student, excepting when a student is taken into custody as a suspected victim of child abuse or pursuant to Section 305 of the Welfare & Institutions Code. OUSD policy requires that a school official must immediately attempt to inform a parent/guardian of that student's arrest. (*See* OUSD Board Policy 5145.6, 5145.11; Administrative Regulation 5145.11.)

A school official must take immediate steps to contact a parent/guardian to get oral consent to permit any police interrogation of the minor, unless the child is a suspected victim of child abuse. If the parent or guardian requests that the pupil not be questioned until he or she can be present, the pupil may not be made available to the peace officer for questioning until the parent or guardian is present.

Efforts to contact parents by OUSD officials must include calling all numbers listed on an emergency contact card, including work numbers, pager numbers, and any numbers supplied by the student, as well as email addresses.

COPS Grant Officers shall make every effort to handle law enforcement related issues that are not school-related outside of school. Absent extenuating circumstances, COPS Grant Officers will avoid interviewing and apprehending students at a school for non-school-related issues. Extenuating circumstances shall include, but not be limited to, officers entering school premises in "hot pursuit" of a suspect, or ongoing investigation of a serious nature or felony, or for child abuse investigation, or in response to an emergency, or crime being committed on school property.

Immediately prior to questioning a student who is in custody, COPS Grant Officers shall advise the student of the Miranda admonishment. COPS Grant Officers shall make every effort to ensure that the student fully understands the Miranda admonishment, including by checking for understanding and explaining any terms that may or may not make sense to the student and invoking Miranda in the student's primary language if not English. If the student decides to proceed with answering questions after the Miranda admonishment, the Cops Grant Officer shall tell the student that he or she may have a parent/guardian present before and during an interrogation and that he or she may decide to wait for the parent before questioning begins.

Any COPS Grant Officer questioning of a student who is in custody shall be conducted in the language appropriate to the age and to ensure that the student understands the COPS Grant Officer, if the student decides to answer questions or provide information.

This Section shall apply only to arrests and questioning by COPS Grant Officers of students at OUSD schools.

18.   TRAINING REGARDING AND DISTRIBUTION OF MOU

OPD shall ensure that this MOU is distributed to all of its police officers who are COPS Grant Officers and that appropriate and adequate training regarding the provisions of this MOU and their responsibilities under the MOU is provided.

OUSD shall ensure that this MOU is distributed to all of its designated school sites and that appropriate training regarding the provisions of this MOU and staff responsibilities under the MOU is provided to school site administration.

Attachment A

OUSD shall invite and encourage COPS Grant Officers' participation in professional development and training opportunities in the areas of restorative justice, teaching methodology and practice, child development, implicit bias, and other educational reform initiatives to facilitate their understanding of the school culture. OUSD will involve community-based organizations to provide training for COPS Grant Officers.

19. COPS GRANT OFFICERS UNIFORM

COPS Grant Officers shall wear clothing and/or accessories that readily identifies them as police officers. Although COPS Grant Officers may at times wear plain clothes, they shall have displayed prominently on their clothing (at the very least) their OPD badge.

20. COMPLAINTS RELATED TO COPS GRANT OFFICERS PROGRAM

OUSD's Uniform Complaint Procedures shall apply to all complaints against any and all non-OPD personnel regarding compliance with this MOU. (*See, e.g.,* OUSD Board Policy 1312.3; Administrative Regulation 1312.3.) Complaints related to any COPS Grant Officers shall be processed according to OPD's complaint procedures as outlined in OPD's Departmental General Orders, Manual of Rules and the applicable *Allen* provisions, as noted in Section 7 above.

21. MUTUAL DEFENSE AND INDEMNIFICATION

The City of Oakland and OPD shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend OUSD, OSPD and each of its officers, officials, employees, volunteers and agents from any loss, liability, fines, penalties, forfeitures, costs, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, and damages (whether in contract, tort or strict liability, including but not limited to personal injury, death at any time and property damage) incurred by OUSD, OSPD, the City of Oakland, OPD, or any other person and from any claims, demands and actions in law or equity (including attorney's fees and litigation expenses), arising or alleged to have arisen directly or indirectly out of any negligent or willful act of COPS Grant Officers, except where caused by the active negligence, sole negligence or willful misconduct of OUSD.

OUSD and OSPD shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend OPD, the City of Oakland and each of its officers, officials, employees, volunteers and agents from any loss, liability, fines, penalties, forfeitures, costs, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, and damages (whether in contract, tort or strict liability, including but not limited to personal injury, death at any time and property damage) incurred by OUSD, OSPD, the City of Oakland, OPD, or any other person and from any claims, demands and actions in law or equity (including attorney's fees and litigation expenses), arising or alleged to have arisen directly or indirectly out of the willful misconduct or any negligent act or omission of OUSD, except where caused by the active negligence, sole negligence or willful misconduct of OPD.

///

Attachment A

22. AGREEMENT MAY BE EXECUTED IN COUNTER PARTS

This MOU may be executed in any number of counterparts, each of which when so executed and delivered shall be an original hereof, and it shall not be necessary in making proof of this MOU to produce or account for more than one counterpart hereof.

CITY OF OAKLAND

By: _____   Dated: _____

     Henry Gardner
     Acting City Administrator

OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

By: _____   Dated: _____

     Sean Whent
     Chief of Police

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

By: _____   Dated: _____

     David Kakishiba
     President, Board of Education

By: _____   Dated: _____

     Gary Yee
     Superintendent and Board Secretary

OAKLAND SCHOOLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

By: _____   Dated: _____

     James Williams
     Chief of Police

Attachment A
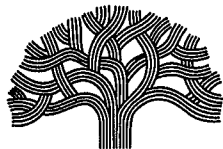
AGENDA REPORT

CITY OF OAKLAND

TO: Sabrina B. Landreth CITY ADMINISTRATOR	**FROM:** Sara Bedford
SUBJECT: Attendance and Absenteeism Report	**DATE:** July 15, 2015

City Administrator Approval _____   Date ___7/15/15___

COUNCIL DISTRICT: City-Wide

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Public Safety Committee:

Receive An Informational Report On The Truancy In The City Of Oakland; Its Impact On Public Safety; And The Status Of Any Existing Partnerships With The Oakland Unified School District And / Or Alameda County To Address Truancy

OUTCOME

This report will help inform discussion between the Oakland Police Department (OPD), the Human Services Department (HSD) and the Public Safety Committee regarding efforts to address chronic absenteeism among at-risk students in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) schools that help increase attendance and reduce truancy.

BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Oakland City Councilmember Desley Brooks submitted a scheduling request on June 4, 2015 Rules and Legislation Committee asking staff to provide an informational report detailing efforts within the HSD and OPD to work with OUSD in addressing truancy and chronic absenteeism.

ANALYSIS

See *Attachment A, Attendance Strategies in OUSD* for a summary of OUSD's attendance efforts. A comprehensive report on school attendance in OUSD and recent efforts by the district to reduce chronic absenteeism is included in *Attachment B, Oakland Achieves: 2014 Attendance Report* which can also be found at http://oaklandachieves.org/2014-attendance-report/.

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Two divisions within the HSD fund efforts to address truancy and chronic absenteeism: The Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) and Oakland Unite (OU). A summary of those funding investments follows.

Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) funding strategies under the *Student Success in School* goal area align with OUSD goals. The grantees funded in these strategies are OUSD's community partners and those partners participate in the effort to reduce chronic absenteeism and to boost school attendance. The funding strategies are:

1) **School-Based After School Programs**

2) **Transition Programs for Youth into Middle and High School**

3) **Youth Leadership in Community Schools**

1) School-Based After School programs provide enrichment, academic, and family support programming through programs at elementary and middle schools. Community partners directly contribute to the efforts of their schools to reduce chronic absenteeism by promoting positive messaging about attendance, directly promoting a safe and healthy school climate, providing engaging learning opportunities for students, and helping to reduce attendance barriers by providing a safe environment after school.

OFCY's School Based After School Evaluation report for the Program Year (PY) 2013-2014 year compared participants in these programs to non-participants with statistically significant findings:

- School-Based After School Program participants had better school attendance rates (96%, versus 95% for non-OFCY youth);
- School-Based After School Program participants were better at meeting District attendance goals (75% of participants met the District's 95% attendance threshold, versus 68% of non-OFCY students); and
- School-Based After School Program participants had a lower proportion of chronic absences than other youth (8% versus 12%, respectively).

Many students reported increased engagement with school and family as a result of their School-Based After School program. A high percentage of third to fifth graders (85%) and those in sixth grades and above (74%) reported that their program helped them to feel like a part of their school.

2) Transition Programs for Youth into Middle and High School Programs in this group help youth successfully transition from their prior school setting (elementary or middle) and integrate into a new school environment (middle or high), as well as to involve youth in creating a positive school climate. Helping youth acclimate helps them be able to focus on academics and success as students and school citizens. Youth reported that their school and family engagement increased as a result of the program. Eighty-nine percent (89%) reported that their Transitions program

makes them more confident about graduating high school and seventy nine percent (79%) of respondents reported they are more comfortable with their new school as a result of their Transitions program. Transitions youth had better attendance results than non-participants in several ways:

- Better school day attendance rates (95%) than non-participants (94%);
- A higher proportion of Transitions youth met the District's 95% attendance threshold (74%, versus 71% of non-participants) and had fewer chronic absences (at 11%, versus 13% of other youth); and
- Youth in high school-based Transitions programs had higher tenth grade California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) English (76%, versus 73%) and Math pass rates (79%, versus 76%) than other youth.

3) Youth Leadership in Community Schools (YLC Schools) grantees engage youth as peer leaders in schools to promote a range of positive behaviors, such as healthy decision making, conflict resolution, inclusiveness, and positive school culture.

Most Youth Leadership in Community Schools participants reported that they learned positive academic behaviors while in their program. Eighty nine percent (89%) reported that they learned how to organize their time to finish their schoolwork. Ninety-three percent (93%) of Youth Leadership in Community Schools participants reported that the program helped them feel more confident about going to college, while about 84% reported that the program helped them learn about the kinds of jobs they'd like to have in the future.

YLC Schools participants had better attendance results than non-participants:

- Participants had a higher school day attendance rate (95% versus 94% of non-participants);
- Participants were more likely to meet District attendance goals (74%, compared with 72% of non-participants); and
- Fewer participants (12%, versus 13% of non-participants) had chronic absences.

Oakland Unite (OU) funds violence prevention programs aimed at reaching youth and young adults who are at highest risk of being involved in violence. Young people who have spent time in detention tend to have challenges with staying in school, attending school regularly and making appropriate academic progress. The barriers to getting youth offenders re-engaged in school are significant. A strategy designed to address this issue is funded by OU in the *Focused Youth Services* strategy area - the Juvenile Justice Center Wraparound Strategy.

The Juvenile Justice Center Wraparound Strategy provides case management and support services for youth leaving the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) and reconnecting with OUSD or other appropriate educational institutions. The JJC model offers an effective solution to school disengagement among the juvenile reentry population in Oakland through the placement of an OUSD enrollment specialist at Juvenile Hall's Center. That person is responsible for finding appropriate school placement for young people returning to Oakland. Prior to the JJC Strategy, there was no mechanism to ensure that youth re-enrolled in school

upon their release, which meant that young people either missed days or weeks of school before re-enrolling, or dropped out of school altogether. The JJC Strategy also funds Case Managers work with a multidisciplinary team to promote school attendance and academic progress, family support, and employment as appropriate for youth, starting from the time a youth arrives at the JJC through their return home. Services are coordinated with Alameda County Probation to support the successful completion of Court Orders and disengagement from the Juvenile Justice System. Youth missed less school after being served in this program:

- Juvenile probationers who reside in Oakland were re-enrolled within one to three days of release. The JJC strategy eliminates barriers to enrollment by co-locating educational placement services at Juvenile Hall.
- From a 2012 analysis covering two years of JJC youth participation:
  - There was a 64% reduction in students with chronic truancy. For this analysis, a student is deemed chronically truant when he/she has ten or more unexcused absences in a given school year; chronic truancy was calculated by counting the number of unexcused or unverified absences each student had during the school years prior to and following program enrollment.
  - Participants had a 77% reduction in suspensions. Suspension reduction is based on the number of students who were suspended at least once before and after enrollment, over the two year period.

New Programming as part of the City's Fiscal Year 2015-2017 budget, a new initiative to address attendance was funded in partnership with OUSD. The City will hire two social workers who will partner with two OUSD social workers to address attendance issues in specific schools with a focus on family support services. The specifics of the intervention and schools are currently under development. This initiative will be designed to address the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

This report contains information of public interest as it directly relates to the education of Oakland youth and public safety within the City of Oakland.

COORDINATION

The HSD's Children and Youth Services Division coordinated with OU in development of this report. The HSD also worked with the OPD and OUSD for information contained within this report.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

There is no cost implication associated with this report. The City invests approximately $5 million in the OFCY school based programming described in this report and $1 million in the Juvenile Justice Strategy funded through OU.

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FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

Citywide efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve school attendance are strongly aligned with the goals provided for Kids First! (Oakland Municipal Charter Article XIII) to promote student success in school, to prevent violence and youth involvement in gangs, and to ensure a healthy transition to adulthood for Oakland's youth.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There are no economic opportunities identified in this report.

Environmental: No environmental opportunities have been identified.

Social Equity: This report provides valuable information to the Oakland community regarding efforts to ensure equal educational outcomes for all Oakland youth.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Sara Bedford, HSD Director, at 238-6794.

Respectfully submitted,

SARA BEDFORD, Director
Human Services Department

Reviewed by: Sandy Taylor, Manager
Prepared by: Mike Wetzel, Planner
                   Priya Jagannathan, Planner

ATTACHMENTS:
A   Attendance Strategies in OUSD
B   Oakland Achieves – 2014 Attendance Report

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July 28, 2015

ATTACHMENT A

Attendance Strategies in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)

Attendance Strategies in OUSD

Background Information

Approximately 5 years ago OUSD engaged its stakeholders and developed a Strategic Plan. One of the priorities outlined in the plan was a reduction in chronic absenteeism. Our Local Control Accountability Plan identifies attendance as a measure of student achievement. A review of our data shows that students who are chronically absent have lower test scores.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. However, we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Research shows that:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absences are a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9th grade good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

According to data provided by Attendance Works, chronic absenteeism is highest among students in kindergarten and first grade.

During 2014-2015, there were 6587 OUSD students who had 3 or more unverified absences. Students in Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and 1st grade had the highest rates of absence in this category.

It has been suggested that there is a correlation between truancy and crime rates. Initial Oakland data does not support this allegation. According to data received from the Alameda County Probation Department, a total of 190 Oakland Youth have been referred to probation, this year, for robbery, theft, and burglary. This represents a very small percentage of the students who have 3 or more unverified absences.

It is important to understand that truancy classification includes students who are absence with and without an excuse and also includes students who are tardy.

Before outlining the strategies that have been implemented in OUSD to address chronic absenteeism, we'd like to provide definitions for the terms used when discussing attendance.

Definition of Key Terms

Chronic Absence - missing 10% or more of school days

Excused Absences – absences that meet State guidelines. (Ex: illness or medical appointment). Refer to Education Code 48205 for a complete list.

Unexcused absences – absences that are verified by a parent/guardian, however, the absence does not meet State guidelines. (Ex. travelling out of town to care for a sick relative).

Unverified absence – absences that have not been verified by an adult.

Truant –a student with 3 unexcused/unverified absences or 3 tardies of more than 30 minutes, or any combination thereof. (Education Code 48260)

Opportunity Youth-disconnected youth 16-24 years of age who have dropped out of school.

Students can have good attendance and still be classified as truant

1. Students can be classified as truant and still attend school 95% of school days.

2. Many students labeled as truant have unexcused absences. This means that a parent/guardian sent a note to the school to explain the reason for the absence.

Example: student missed 6 days of school this year. 4 days to travel out of town because grandmother had surgery and 2 days due to illness. Attendance rate is 96% of school days.

Even though this student is not chronically absent, he is considered truant because of the 4 days he traveled to visit his grandmother. These 4 days are considered unexcused absences which are also known as truant absences.

3. High school students referred to Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) are sometimes present at school 95% of school days but are considered truant because they cut class.

Example: Student attends 1st-3rd periods and 5th-6th periods every day. He cut 4th period 10 times during the year. This student is considered truant

4. Students who are tardy more than 30 minutes, 3 or more times during the school year are classified as truant regardless of the number of days attended during the school year.

Example: School starts at 8:30 am. Student arrives each day at 9:10 am for a variety of reasons. Although student only missed 4 days of school during the school year, she is considered truant because of her tardies.

How is Oakland Unified addressing attendance?

A. We established district wide targets
   1. Reduce chronic absence to 5% of students at every school.
   2. Ensure that 85% of students attend school 95% of days annually.
   3. Reach an average daily attendance (ADA) rate of 98% at every school.

B. Strategies were implemented to reduce chronic absence/truancy
   1. Produced bi-weekly attendance reports
   2. Created a chronic absence intervention protocol that provided a timeline and action steps that schools should take to monitor chronic absence and truancy.
   3. Accountability measures included reporting the number of Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meetings and efforts to promote positive attendance (early outreach efforts, incentive programs, establishing attendance teams)

4. Professional development/training provided to district administrators and clerical staff at the beginning of the school year (required) and optional trainings are available during the year.
5. Produced an Attendance Manual to promote positive attendance. Intentionally not designed as a compliance manual that would be put on a shelf to gather dust. It provided practical strategies for creating a positive attendance culture at school sites.
6. In collaboration with the Oakland Education Cabinet and other community partners, we produced a toolkit for k-5 schools that provide tools that school can use to promote positive attendance (flyers for parents, self assessment, talking points for school staff, after school providers and community partners to use to engage parents in conversations about attendance).
7. In an effort to educate parents about the importance of attendance, we created a chronic absence letter. Since absences for any reason compromise academic performance, we wanted to produce an informational letter. This "did you know" letter is sent to parents on the 8th day of absence regardless of the reason for the absence.
8. Targeted support provided to schools with high rates of chronic absence to help build site capacity to manage attendance.
9. Produced an attendance video featuring OUSD students.
10. Engaged families and the community around the importance of attendance.
11. Established partnerships with Oakland Housing Authority and Attendance Works.
12. Recognized sites for good and improved attendance/celebrated success.
13. Engaged site leadership through data, PD, CSSSP.
14. Hiring of 4 Case managers (MSWs), during the 2015-2016 school year, to support 10 elementary schools with high rates of chronic absenteeism. 2 positions funded by the City of Oakland and 2 positions funded by OUSD.

What is our progress to date?

Chronic absence rates in OUSD dropped from 16% to 11% over the last 5 years.

Next Steps

We look forward to continued opportunities to collaborate on how best to reduce chronic absenteeism.

ATTACHMENT

B

Oakland Achieves

2014 Attendance Report

ATTENDING SCHOOL EVERY DAY:
MAKING PROGRESS, TAKING ACTION IN OAKLAND SCHOOLS

A Project of the Oakland Achieves Partnership

MAKING PROGRESS, TAKING ACTION
IN OAKLAND SCHOOLS

WRITTEN BY:
Rebecca Brown, Ph.D.
Urban Strategies Council

Joe Jackson
Urban Strategies Council

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:
Kathleen Harris,
Great Oakland Public Schools
Leadership Center

Benj Vardigan
Oakland Public Education Fund
and
The Attendance Works Team

for the
OAKLAND ACHIEVES PARTNERSHIP

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We believe that it is through our collective effort - our engagement with the entire community - that we can fulfill the promise for all children in Oakland to graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, career, and their community.
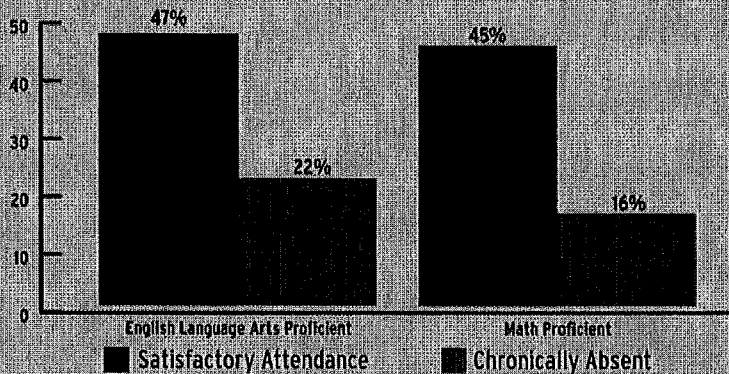
KEY TERMS:

Chronic Absence: Missing 10% or more of school days. 18 days out of the entire school year. Includes any absence, excused or unexcused.

Satisfactory Attendance: Missing less than 5% of school days, 9 days in the full school year.

OUSD is making progress on improving attendance.

Oakland Unified is a leader in tracking and addressing chronic absence. The District has reduced chronic absence steadily, from 16 percent in 2005-06 to 11 percent in 2012-13.

English Language Arts Proficient: Satisfactory Attendance 47%, Chronically Absent 22%
Math Proficient: Satisfactory Attendance 45%, Chronically Absent 16%

■ Satisfactory Attendance ■ Chronically Absent

Chronic absence has a strong negative effect on reading and math scores.

Students who are chronically absent are less than half as likely to score proficient or advanced on the state reading and mathematics assessments than other students.

Chronic absence is a greater problem in the early school years and in high school.

15% of kindergarteners and 16% of tenth and eleventh graders were chronically absent, compared to sixth graders, the grade with the lowest chronic absence rate of 7%.

Chronic Absence by Ethnicity
African American 18%, Asian 5%, Latino 10%, White 5%
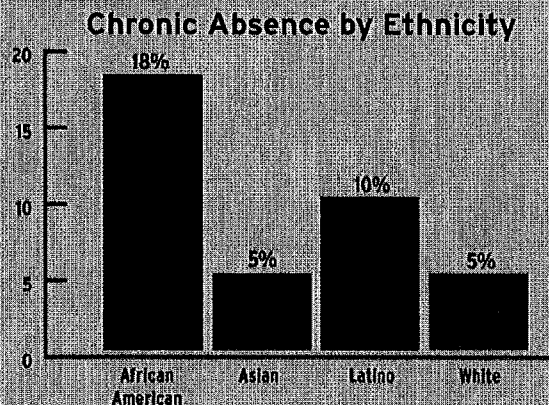
Disparities are pronounced.

- Different ethnic groups within OUSD have widely different rates of chronic absence (see left).
- Students in foster care had a 19% rate of chronic absence.
- Students with disabilities had a rate of 18% chronic absence.

- Put together an attendance team.
- At the beginning of the year, identify chronically absent students from the previous year and the first few weeks of the school year.
- Develop strategies that address the unique challenges of different student groups.
- Work with community partners to support attendance strategies.

- Give your child the message that attendance matters.
- Avoid extended vacations during school time.
- Set bedtime and morning routines.
- Don't ask older students to help with daycare and household errands during school time.
- Turn to the school for help.
- Hold schools accountable for providing chronic absence data.

Who can deliver the message about attendance?

- Educators
- Policymakers
- Business Leaders
- Health Professionals
- Faith and Community Leaders
- Parents
- Students

- Stop blaming parents and help them get their children to school.
- Use community resources – mental and medical health providers, social workers and others – to address the problems contributing to chronic absence.
- Provide the right incentives and an engaging curriculum that will bring students to school.
- Train mentors to recognize the warning signs of poor attendance and make them aware of the available community resources to support children and families struggling with attendance.
- Increase attention to the role that unhealthy or unsafe school climates contribute to children missing school.
- Expand student access to health care, particularly when medical conditions create barriers to school attendance.
- Address health needs. Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.
- Address transportation barriers. The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.

WHY FOCUS ON ATTENDANCE?

CHRONIC ABSENCE IS DEFINED AS MISSING 10% OR MORE OF SCHOOL DAYS. THAT IS 18 DAYS FOR A CHILD ENROLLED FOR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR. CHRONIC ABSENCE IS A STRONG PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC CHALLENGES.

While attendance alone cannot solve all of our educational challenges, it is an essential ingredient for ensuring more children succeed academically and graduate from high school. Clearly, unless students are present in the classroom, they cannot benefit from what is being taught in the classroom.

However, the attendance picture is much more nuanced than this simple fact implies. Available research expands our understanding of the consequences of absenteeism and how it affects different student populations. Specifically:

- Being chronically absent – missing 10% of schools days or 18 days per year – is a powerful predictor of later academic achievement and even predicts eventual dropout[1].

- Some groups are much more likely to be chronically absent than others, contributing to disparities between groups.

- Some grade levels tend to have more chronically absent students.

- When schools and districts understand their chronic absence patterns, it allows them to develop comprehensive strategies that target students specific needs and focus on all students rather than just those with severe challenges.
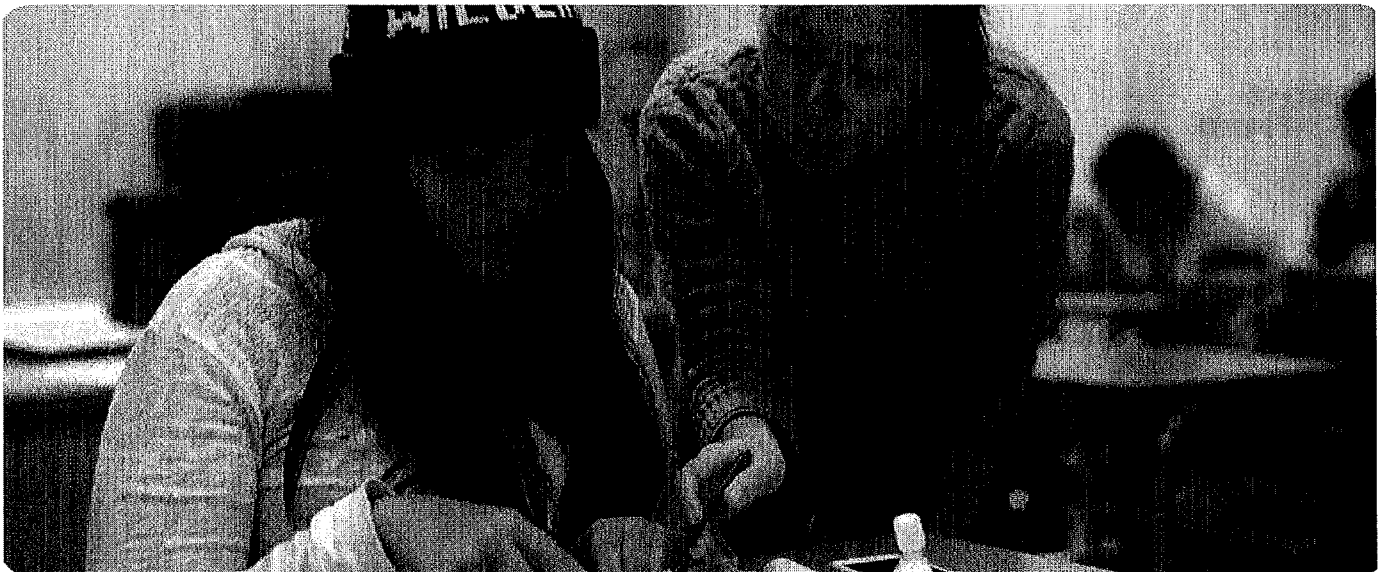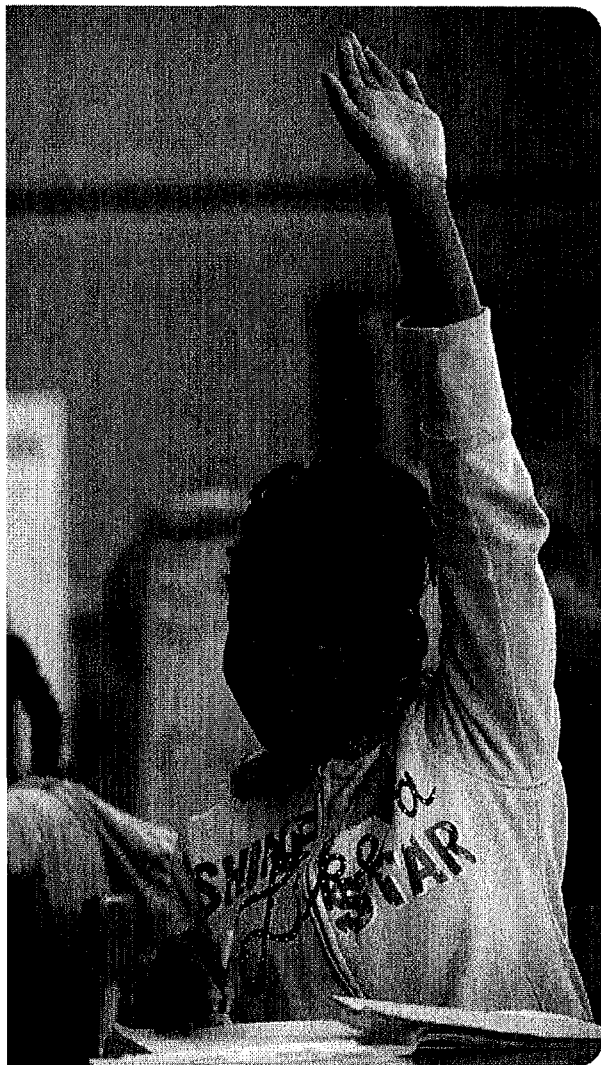
What does the national research tell us?[2]

1. Chronic absence is a better measure of whether a school has an absenteeism problem than Average Daily Attendance (ADA), since the latter may mask the underlying patterns of different groups within the school.[3]

2. A study of more than 60,000 students in New York City found that chronically absent students had lower grades and were more likely to drop out than students with better attendance.[4] This research also found that some strategies were effective in reversing these patterns, especially attendance mentoring, data dashboards, incentive programs and awareness campaigns.

3. Children's ability to read at grade level in third grade is strongly impacted by attendance in kindergarten and first grade:[5]

   a. 64% of those with satisfactory attendance in kindergarten AND first grade were likely to read at grade level.

   b. 41% of those chronically absent in either kindergarten OR first grade were likely to read at grade level.

   c. 17% of those chronically absent in both kindergarten AND first grade were likely to read at grade level.

4. Kindergarteners who are chronically absent are more likely to be retained in third grade.[6]

5. Attendance in a student's freshman year is strongly predictive of whether they will finish high school – a better predictor than 8th grade test scores or other student characteristics.[7]

> ONLY 17% OF CHRONICALLY ABSENT KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADE STUDENTS READ AT GRADE LEVEL COMPARED TO 64% OF STUDENTS WITH SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE.

6. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be chronically absent.[8] While this is a complex issue, some factors that may challenge families in getting their kids to school include: a lack of reliable transportation, long work hours in poorly paid jobs with little flexibility, unstable and unaffordable housing, inadequate health care and community violence. National studies have found that 20% of low-income children, 25% of homeless children, and 40% of transient children were chronically absent.[9]

7. Missing school has a more powerful influence on literacy development for low-income students than for their more affluent peers because disadvantaged students are less likely to experience cognitively rich home and neighborhood environments.[10] In other words, formally educated parents are able to share the results of their education with their children in their general interactions as well as in helping with homework when students miss school.

This report provides an in-depth look into the local attendance patterns of students in Oakland. We examine where we stand on attendance overall, where groups and grade levels differ in attendance patterns, and how attendance is impacting outcomes.

After seeing where we are on attendance overall, we examine strategies that are being employed at the district level to impact attendance and those that experts have developed from research and practice. We also look to strategies being used with success at some Oakland schools. We chose "bright spot" schools who had been struggling with chronic absenteeism but have shown strong improvement in attendance. We then conducted interviews with school leaders to capture details of the strategies that are proving effective. Finally, we provide concrete ideas from the Attendance Collaborative for how we all can take action.

While we passionately feel that all children in Oakland are "our children," we often come across barriers to data access that make it impossible to include all students in the same analyses and comparisons. This is true for the data for this report; like the large majority of schools nationally, charter schools currently do not collect data that can be used to assess the chronic absence of individual students. However, this year will be different. California's new resource allocation plan, or Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), now requires all schools to monitor and publicly report the number of chronically absent students[11]. Future reports will include this data. For now, this report is primarily a review of chronic absence in schools managed by Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) schools; however, we have included a section that gives us some limited information on attendance in charter schools, using their existing measure of Average Daily Attendance, and have included examples from among all our public schools in the "bright spots" section.

1. We look at the data on attendance in Oakland.
2. We look to experts for strategies and what's already being done. This includes:

    a. A strategy framework by national experts on attendance (Attendance Works).

    b. District-level strategies currently in place.

    c. School-level strategies that are improving attendance in five Bright Spot schools.

    d. Community-wide strategies for making attendance all of our priority.

OUSD is seeing a gradual decline in chronic absence and increase in satisfactory attendance. The chronic absence rate in OUSD in 2005-06 was 16% and has steadily declined to 11% in 2012-13. At the same time, satisfactory attendance rose from 63% in 2005-06 to 69% in 2012-13.

Attendance rates among Oakland's students are lowest at both ends of the K - 12 continuum. 528 kindergarteners (15%) were chronically absent. Tenth and eleventh graders have the highest absenteeism rates, with about 16% of students chronically absent.

Sixth graders have the highest attendance rates. 78% of 6th grade students have satisfactory attendance. The sixth grade chronic absence rate is about half that of kindergarten and 10th and 11th grades. A Baltimore study found a strong relationship between sixth-grade attendance and the percentage of students graduating on time or within a year of their expected graduation rate[3].

Disparities are pronounced.

- Chronic absence among White and Asian students was 5%, while African American and Latino students had chronic absence rates of 18% and 10%, respectively.

- Students in foster care had a 19% rate of chronic absence.

- Students with disabilities had an 18% rate of chronic absence.

The chronic absence rate of English Learners (EL) increases as they move through grade levels. EL students have chronic absence rates that are lower than the OUSD average in elementary schools but higher in high school.

Missing school makes it difficult for students to reach academic benchmarks. Students who are chronically absent are less than half as likely to score proficient or advanced on the state reading and mathematics assessments than students who attend school regularly.

Preliminary data suggests charter schools have similar problems with attendance. Charter schools have not kept comparable data on chronic absence but schools with Average Daily Attendance at the extremes of high and low have similarly predictive achievement outcomes.

What does attendance look like overall in OUSD?

Over the past eight years, attendance rates across the district have shown signs of improvement. In 2012-13, 69% of students – approximately 24,000 students – had satisfactory attendance, up from 63% in 2005-06. Satisfactory attendance reached a high point in 2011-12, with 74% of students missing less than 9 days of school each year.

> OUSD'S CHRONIC ABSENCE RATE IS CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL TRENDS.

During this same period, Oakland made steady progress on reducing chronic absence, which dropped from 16% in 2005-06 to 11% in 2012-13. While this downward trend is encouraging, this still means that 3,857 students were chronically absent in 2012-13. However, this rate is consistent with a national sample which estimated a 10-15% chronic absence rate across several states.

Figure 2: OUSD Student Attendance 2005-06 to 2012-13
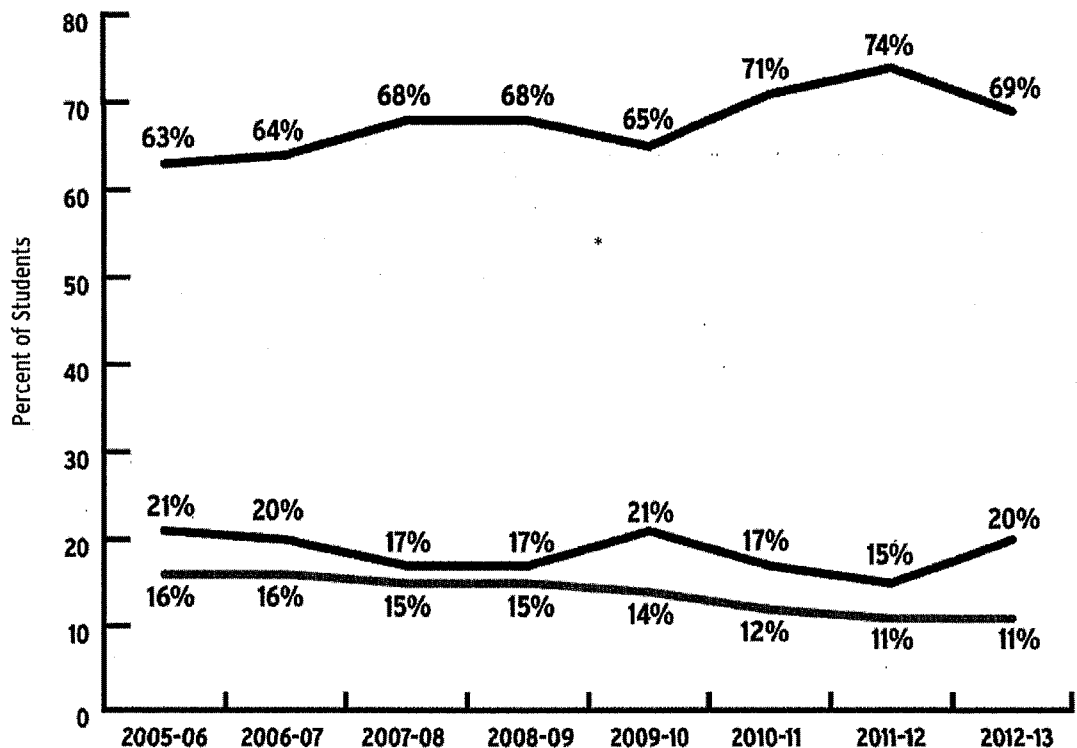
> Chronic absence in OUSD has declined from 16% in 2005-06 to 11% in 2012-13, while satisfactory attendance has increased.

Satisfactory Attendance (Missed <5% days)
At Risk (Missed 5% – 10% days)
Chronically Absent (Missed 10%+ days)

How are OUSD school's doing on attendance?

We did an analysis of OUSD schools' chronic absence levels to see what proportion of schools are at or near OUSD's goal to reduce chronic absence to 5%, and what proportion are farther from it. We found that:

- 19% of schools (15 schools) reduced chronic absence to 5% or less.

- 23% of schools (18 schools) are nearing this goal with levels between 5% and 10%.

- 29% of schools (23 schools) are struggling with chronic absence rates of between 10% and 15%.

- 28% of schools (22 schools) have more than 20% of students chronically absent.

1. INCREASE SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE. OUSD STRIVES TO HAVE 85% OF STUDENTS WITH "SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE" – MEANING THEY MISS LESS THAN 5%, OR 9 SCHOOL DAYS, OUT OF THE ENTIRE YEAR.

2. REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENCE. OUSD'S GOAL IS TO HAVE 5% OR FEWER STUDENTS CHRONICALLY ABSENT.

Figure 1: Percentage of schools by extent of chronic absence.
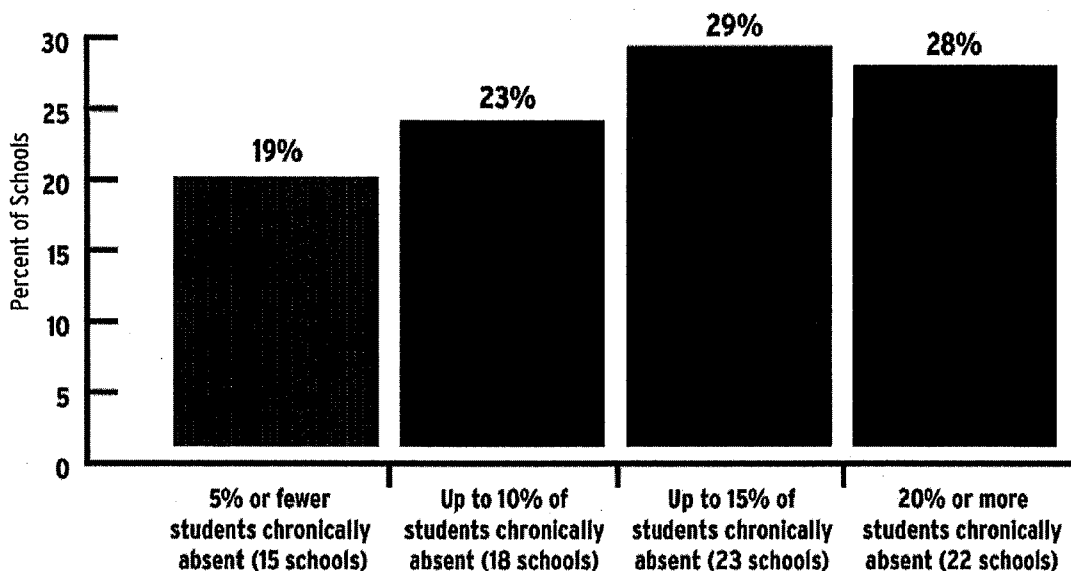
About 1 in 5 schools met OUSD's attendance goal criterion of 5% or fewer students chronically absent.
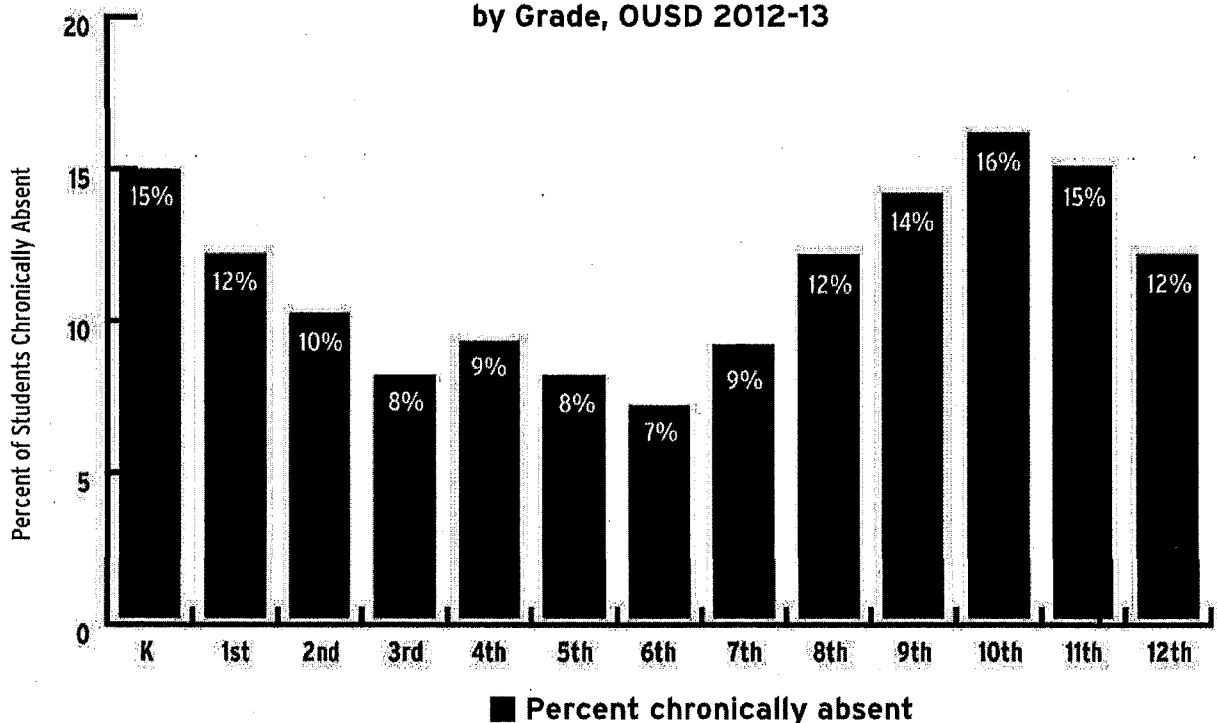

Percent of Schools

| 5% or fewer students chronically absent (15 schools) | Up to 10% of students chronically absent (18 schools) | Up to 15% of students chronically absent (23 schools) | 20% or more students chronically absent (22 schools) |
| 19% | 23% | 29% | 28% |

How do attendance patterns differ for different groups?

Grade Level

As is the trend nationally[14], OUSD's chronic absence rate for kindergarteners is particularly high. While the cause for this is complex, in part it may be because in California, as in 34 other states, kindergarten is not mandatory,[14a] and regular attendance for young children may be seen as less important than for school in higher grades. Students and families also may be adjusting to the school routine and structures, and after school care is a challenge for parents whose children are in half-day programs. Whatever the reason, the research is clear that chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with poorer student outcomes for several years ahead.

Chronic absence then spikes again in high school. Some compelling research out of Chicago shows that chronic absence in 9th grade is a better predictor of dropping out of school than 8th-grade test scores[15].

Figure 3: Percentage of Students Chronically Absent, by Grade, OUSD 2012-13

Percent of Students Chronically Absent

| Grade	Percent
K	15%
1st	12%
2nd	10%
3rd	8%
4th	9%
5th	8%
6th	7%
7th	9%
8th	12%
9th	14%
10th	16%
11th	15%
12th	12%

■ Percent chronically absent

In OUSD in 2012-13, chronic absence peaked among 10th graders at 16%[16].

Race/Ethnicity

Clear differences in the chronic absence rate are observable between racial/ethnic student groups[17]. African Americans had the highest rate by far - almost twice that of Latinos and over three times that of White and Asian students. Given that disparities in achievement outcomes by race/ethnicity follow a similar pattern, addressing the underlying causes of attendance issues may be an important component of strategies for supporting vulnerable racial/ethnic groups to be successful in school.

Figure 4: Percentage of Students Chronically Absent by Ethnicity, OUSD 2012-13

Percent of students chronically absent

| African American	Asian	Latino	White	All OUSD Students
18%	5%	10%	5%	11%
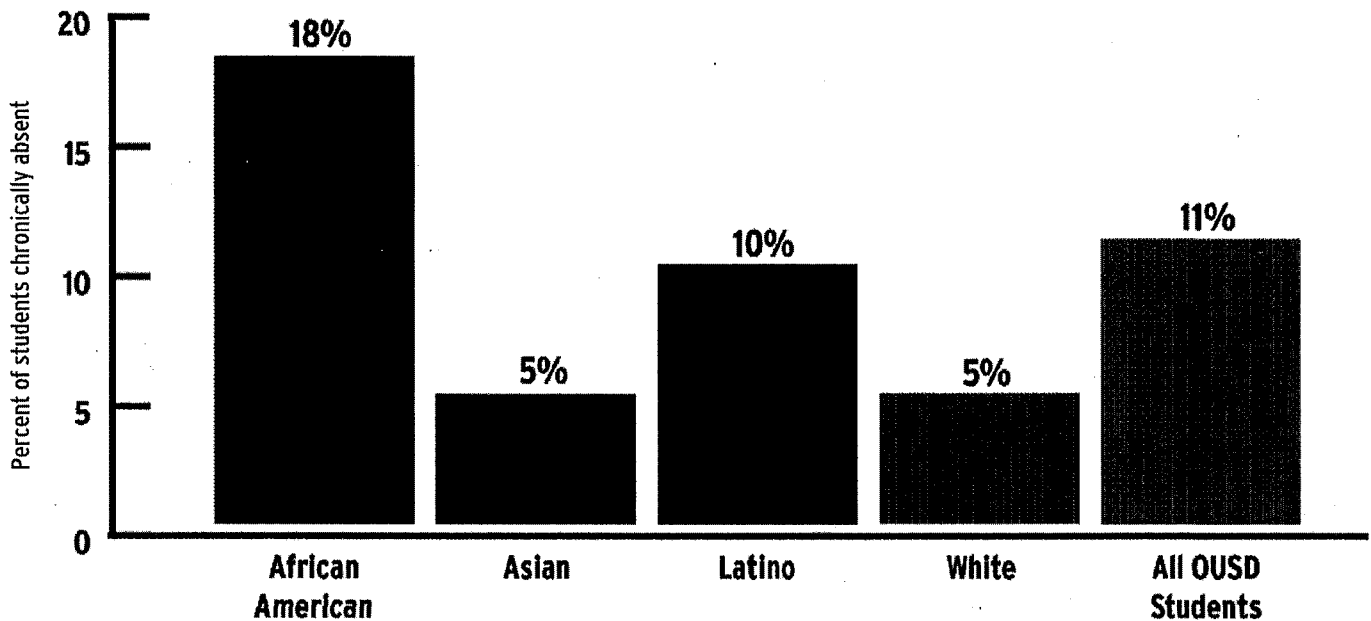
African American students had by far the highest rate of chronic absence, followed by Latino students.

English Learners

OUSD has a large population of diverse English Learners; 10,553 OUSD students (30%) are English Learners. Forty-nine percent of students enrolled in OUSD speak a language other than English at home. In this report, we found that English Learners are less likely than the average student in OUSD to be chronically absent in elementary school and more likely than average in high school. Exploration of the underlying causes may help to target English Learners who are more at risk.

Figure 5: Percentage of English Learners Chronically Absent Compared to All Students by School Level, OUSD 2012-13
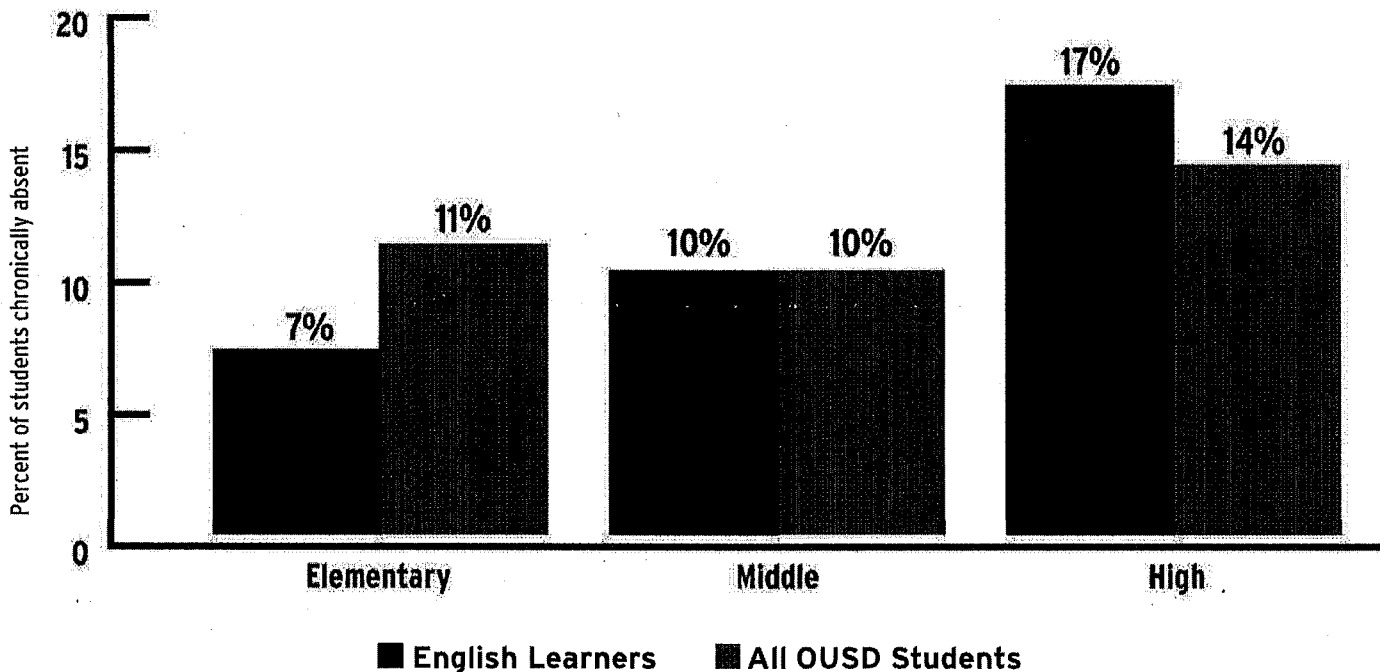

English Learners' chronic absence levels are lower than average in elementary and higher than average in high school.

Students in Foster Care

Students identified as being in foster care (256 students) were the most likely of all of the groupings to be chronically absent, with a rate of 19%. This includes youth that are in the child welfare system, but excludes those in kin care.

Figure 6: Percentage of Foster Students Chronically Absent Compared to All Students, OUSD 2012-13
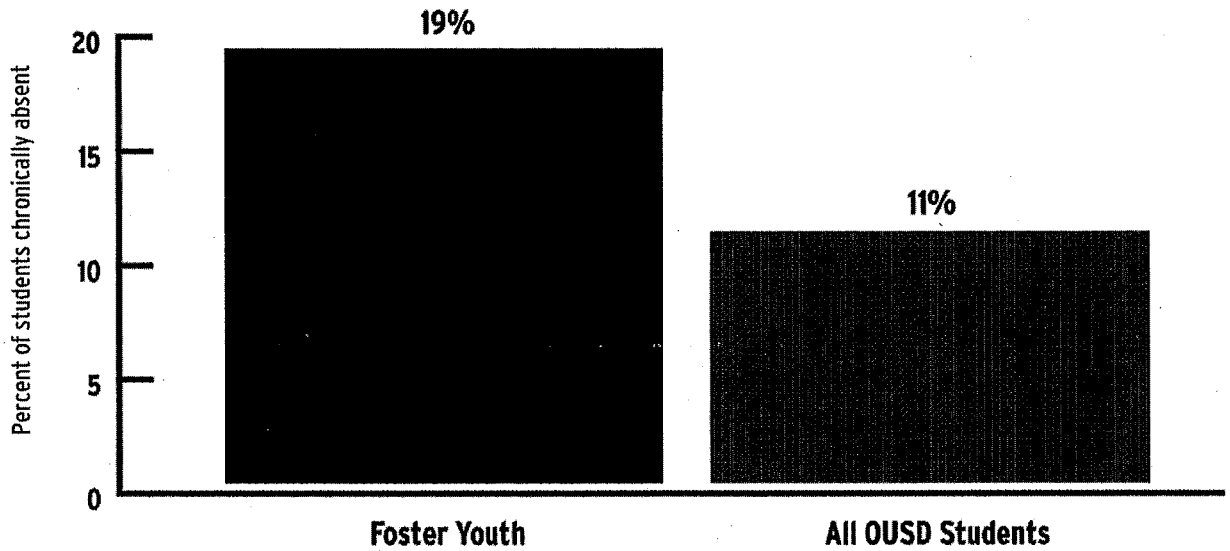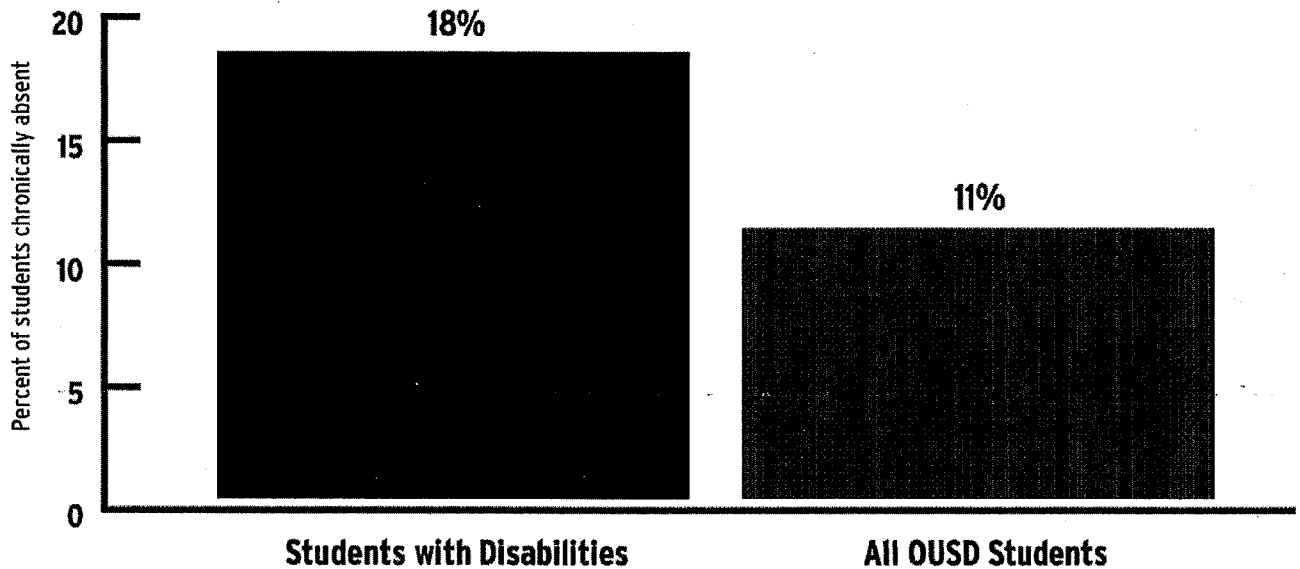
Foster youth are almost twice as likely to be chronically absent than the overall OUSD population.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities make up 11% of the population in OUSD (4,031 students). The chronic absence rate for this population is significantly higher than the OUSD average chronic absence rate.

Figure 7: Percentage of Students with Disabilities Chronically Absent Compared to All OUSD Students, OUSD 2012-13


Students with a disability are almost twice as likely to be chronically absent as the average OUSD student.

What impact are attendance patterns having on achievement?

California Standards Test (CST)

Consistent with national research, chronic absence in OUSD had a strong impact on performance on standardized testing. Most studies have focused on the impact of chronic absence on students' reading level (using English and Language Arts proficiency on the CST as a proxy). We find here that chronic absence also has a strong negative impact on math proficiency.

Figure 8: Percentage of Students Proficient or Higher in English Language Arts and Math by Attendance Status, OUSD 2012-13


■ Satisfactory Attendance ■ Chronically Absent
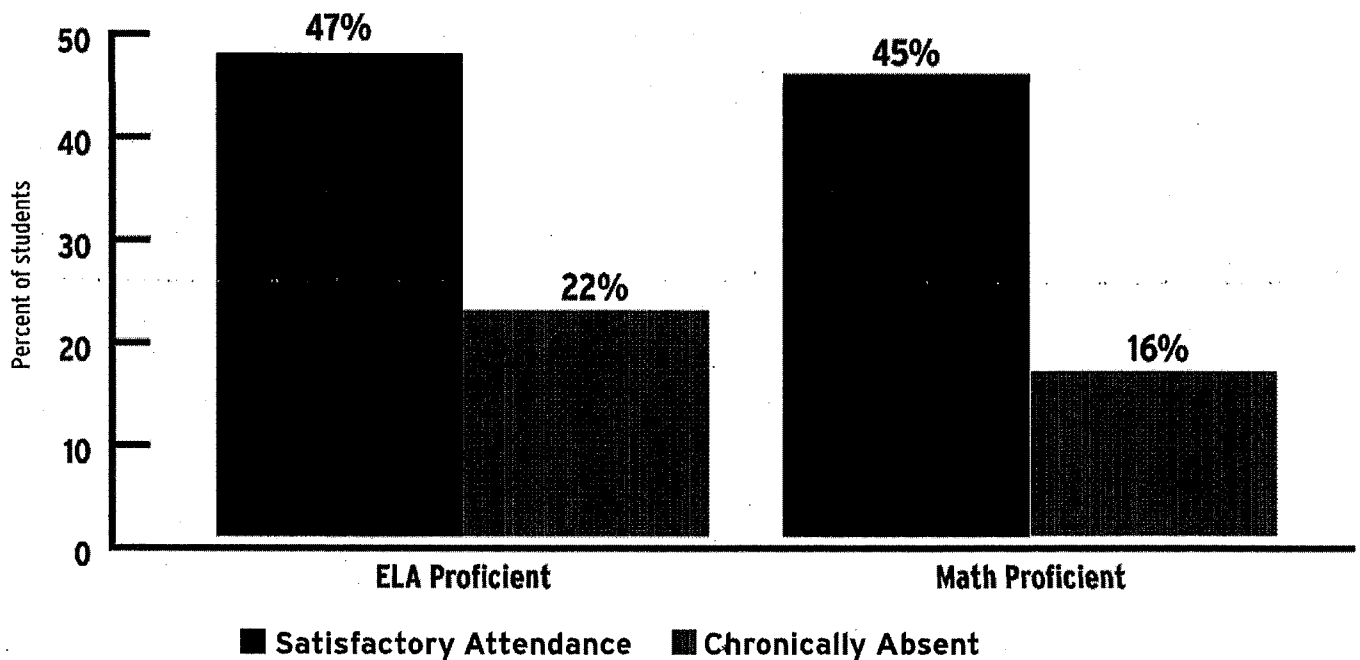
Nearly half of students with satisfactory attendance tested proficient or above in English and Math, while only 1 in 5 chronically absent students tested proficient.

How are Oakland's charter schools doing on attendance?

As mentioned earlier, we are not able to do a direct comparison between those students in District schools and in charter schools because charters have been using a different way of measuring attendance (until this school year when all schools are required to collect chronic absence data). For now, what is available is the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of charter schools, a flawed statistic for uncovering attendance problems because this school level measure masks underlying group differences. A recent study[18] suggests, however, that, at the extremes, ADA is suggestive of a high or low risk of chronic absence in the school.

Figure 9: The Proportion of Charter Schools with Low, High and Uncertain in Risk for Chronic Absence Problem, California Charter School Association 2012-13

10% of charter schools have an Average Daily Attendance level that suggests a high risk for a chronic absence problem, closely mirroring OUSD's 11% chronic absence rate.

High Risk
10%

Low Risk
31%

Uncertain
59%
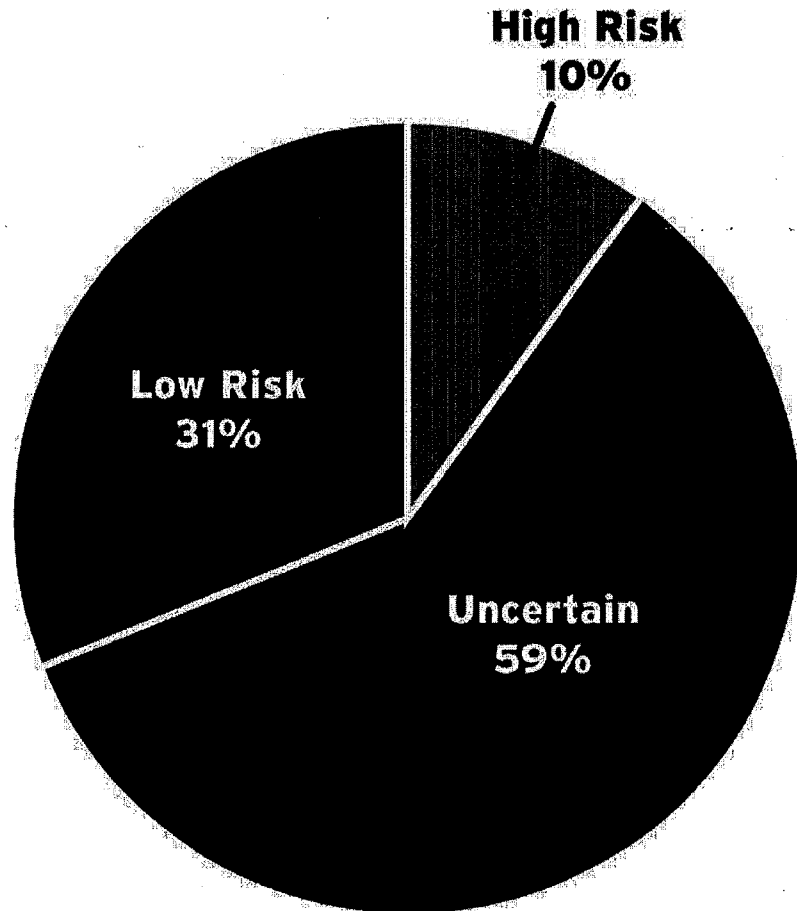
Like chronic absence in OUSD, the high risk and low risk categories of ADA are strongly predictive of academic outcomes. Schools with very high ADA had twice the rates of proficiency or above on the CST ELA test and more than three times the rates of proficiency or above in math.

Figure 10: Oakland Charter School English Language Arts and Math Proficiency by High and Low Risk for Chronic Absence, 2012-13
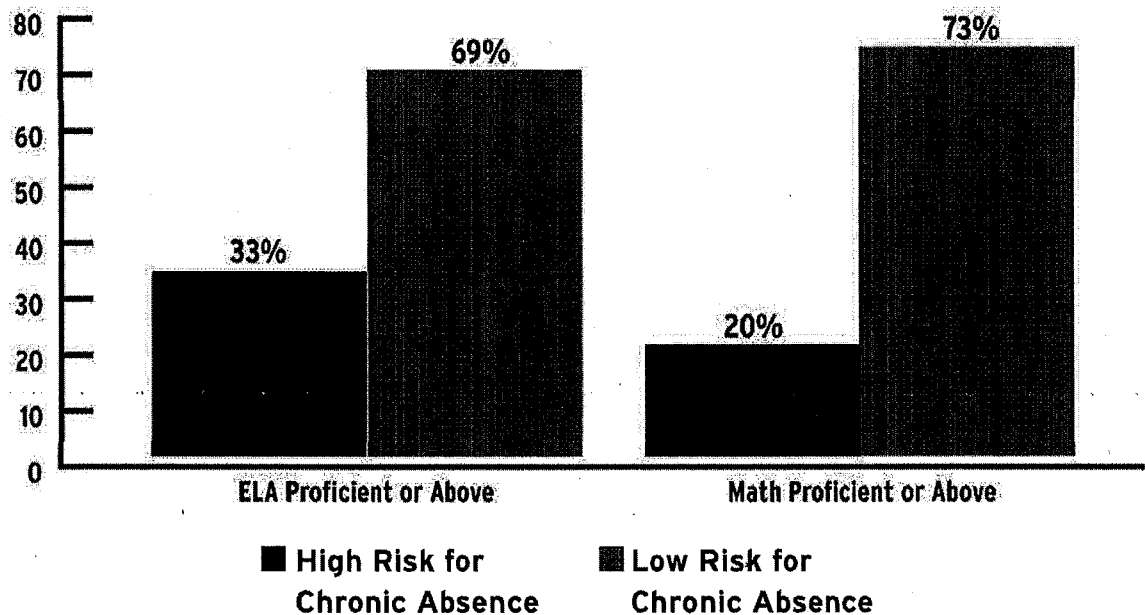
Students in schools with extremely high ADA scores were much more likely, on average, to be proficient in English and Math than students in schools with extremely low ADA.

To really make an impact on the attendance of all of our students in Oakland, we need a city-wide effort, from the school district and the schools themselves, as well as from families and members of the community. This strategy section explores the many efforts underway, as well as ideas for all of us to help improve attendance.

We include:

1. **Expert Strategies.** We examine the intervention model used by Attendance Works, an organization that has done extensive national and local research, consulting, and advocacy around attendance. This framework provides a model for developing a comprehensive strategy to address attendance problems, from the school level and the system level.

2. **OUSD Strategies.** We explore on-going district-level strategies employed by OUSD.

3. **School Strategies.** We profile Oakland public schools who have struggled with student attendance in the past, but have shown notable progress (termed "Bright Spots").

4. **A Call to Action.** We share the ideas generated by the Attendance Collaborative of the Oakland Education Cabinet, including strategies for families, community members, educators, policymakers, business leaders and students.

Attendance Works Strategy Framework[20]

Attendance Works is an organization that has done extensive national research on attendance, consulting with schools and districts around strategies for reducing chronic absence, and advocacy around developing programs, practices, and policies that will have a significant impact on attendance problems. They provide guidance for both school level and systems change. You'll see that many of these strategies mirror those that are being employed by the district and individual schools in Oakland.

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

B. Engage Students and Parents

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers (as needed)

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

What Works in Schools?

A. Recognize Good and Improved Attendance

Regular recognition and rewards to students and families for improved attendance can go a long way toward sending a clear message that attending school every day is a priority. Importantly, the goal is not perfect attendance, which would exclude struggling students, but rather improvement. This can be especially effective since students often respond better to rewards than to lectures from parents and teachers.

B. Engage Students and Parents

Engagement works on two levels. First, if the school environment is warm and welcoming and offers enriching learning opportunities, students want to attend. Secondly, it is critical to engage parents in the discussion so that they really understand the implications of attendance on the hopes and dreams that they have for their child. By building awareness of the importance of attendance, even and especially in the early years of pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade, parents can make positive choices for their child.

C. Monitor Attendance Data and Practice

In order to identify where a problem exists and to track progress, schools need to make it a regular practice to track student level data and develop early warning systems to catch problems and intervene.

D. Provide Personalized Early Outreach

When problems are identified, outreach to families and students who are missing school can be essential for identifying barriers to attendance – hunger, illness, shelter, transportation or other challenges – and the supports or resources that would help improve attendance. This type of outreach is best carried out by someone who has or develops a strong relationship with the family, such as a peer or mentor, and the approach will need to consider local context.

E. Develop Programmatic Response to Barriers

If large numbers of students are affected by chronic absence, that suggests some type of systemic barrier or barriers are at play. Identifying the barriers to attendance can indicate the appropriate solutions, whether that involves improving access to healthcare, providing tutoring, offering mentoring, developing morning or after school care or other approaches.

What works at the system level?

While some roots causes of attendance problems have their sources in families or school, some change often needs to occur within higher level institutions, including the school district. These can include:

A. Positive Messaging

The key to positive messaging is to bring awareness of families and students to the connection between attendance and the student's future success. Rather than using the threat of fines or court action to compel attendance, this approach works to engage the family so that they want their child to attend.

B. Actionable Data

We discussed above the critical importance of data in identifying problems and tracking progress, and the ability of schools and other organizations to track this data relies on the district to have accurate, easily accessible, up-to-date data, which should be available and reviewed monthly.

C. Capacity Building

Building the knowledge of school staff and community partners around what chronic absence is, how to track the data, and how to intervene is critical to the success of a community's effort to improve attendance.

D. Shared Accountability

Identifying chronic absence, using it in decision-making, and then evaluating progress, must be built into a formal system of accountability. For example, schools should be required to incorporate this important work into their school improvement plans.

What district-level strategies has OUSD implemented?

- Publicly acknowledging improvements in schools and encouraging peer sharing among schools with effective strategies in place. Last year during professional development, OUSD celebrated schools with:

  - The lowest chronic absence rate
  - The most improved chronic absence rate
  - Meeting or bettering District goal of 5% chronic absence rate
  - Eliminating or reducing kindergarten chronic absence

- Providing actionable, up-to-date data to schools for tracking progress.

- Developed an Attendance Manual with a Chronic Absence Intervention Protocol to guide all staff involved in attendance management when they have a students with an attendance problem.

- Offering regional and district-wide professional development to train staff about attendance strategies, including using data.

- Developed an Attendance Toolkit in collaboration with community partners (http://atschool. alcoda.org/attendance_initiatives) that includes:

  - Parent flyers in multiple languages
  - Talking points about attendance for multiple audiences
  - School self-assessments
  - Guidelines for establishing school-wide attendance incentives
  - Attendance certificates to incentivize and reward good attendance
 - Tips for getting in touch with hard to reach parents

- Produced and distributed an Attendance Video to communicate the importance of attending school every day. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcH6kBNH2FQ)

- Providing targeted district support to struggling schools.

- Nurturing strong partnerships with public and community agencies to address student attendance.

What is working in schools to increase attendance?

While the system-wide changes at the district level are critical for effecting change in attendance patterns, schools face challenges that reflect the unique characteristics of their student population and context. To get a sense of what specific schools are doing to address their attendance problems, we interviewed the principals of some schools that have been successful in addressing their attendance challenges and provide their profiles here..

BRIGHT SPOT SCHOOLS:

- **PLACE @ PRESCOTT:**
  Adamant about Attendance

- **GARFIELD ELEMENTARY:**
  Creating a Culture of Good Attendance

- **ROOSEVELT MIDDLE SCHOOL:**
  Using Data to Drive Change

- **WEST OAKLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL:**
  Walking a Little Taller

- **OAKLAND UNITY HIGH SCHOOL:**
  Taking Attendance Seriously
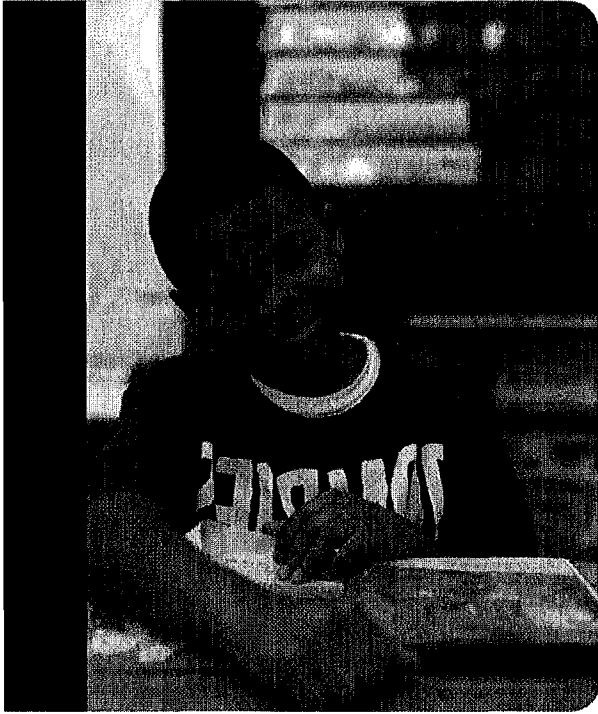
Adamant about attendance

For an under-resourced school struggling with low attendance rates, the challenges can be great. But when you're a tight-knit campus that is "adamant" about attendance, you go to equally great lengths to turn things around.

"Adamant" is how Principal Enomwoyi Booker describes the commitment to improving attendance at PLACE @ Prescott Elementary in West Oakland. Over the past four years, this focus has created a remarkable shift; since 2009-10, chronic absence at PLACE has dropped from 31% to 16%. Among the school's predominantly African American students, progress has been even more dramatic, with rates down from 32% to 13%.

Booker believes improved attendance has had an impact on academic achievement. In 2012, PLACE's California Standards Test (CST) scores in Science showed some of the greatest improvement in Oakland, with an 11 percentage-point increase in the number of students scoring proficient or advanced.

How did PLACE @ Prescott make these strides?

Personalized outreach

Booker and the school's teachers and support staff have gone the extra mile to connect with families of frequently absent students. Home visits show families how important the school considers attendance and often lead to solutions that make a big difference. In one case, the school wound up buying an alarm clock for a tardy student's older sibling so he could help his brother get to school on time. "We have these conversations on the porch, or through the car window at the curbside if a child's dropped off late to school," explains Booker. "We break it down, figure out how we can help, then do whatever it takes."

"ATTENDANCE IS BIGGER THAN JUST THE SCHOOL," SAYS BOOKER. "IT'S THE COMMUNITY. IT'S A CITY-WIDE CONCERN."

Family to family

Booker says other parents have also been essential partners in the attendance cause. "We have great parent leaders and liaisons who've been able to explain to other parents how important regular attendance is," says Booker. On a campus like PLACE with several long-time staff and so many families that know each other, "teachers and parent leaders have gained trust in the community, and families will connect with each other to make sure kids are at school on time. There's always somebody who can help somebody else out."

Sharing data

Just as all parts of the school community share the job of doing outreach around attendance, they also share the data. Truancy and chronic absence lists are used school wide, for coordination of services, individualized student plans, and after-school participants. In this way, PLACE @ Prescott has integrated attendance work across the school.

On-site health services

As in many Oakland schools, health factors – especially asthma – are a major barrier to attendance at PLACE. To address this, Booker says, "We try to offer as many support services here as we can." The campus hosts a monthly Breath Mobile for students with asthma, plus a dental clinic and vision screening. If students are missing chunks of the day due to doctor appointments, teachers encourage parents to schedule appointments at the very beginning or end of the day whenever possible.

The long road to school

Twenty percent of PLACE @ Prescott students live outside the immediate neighborhood, making transportation an issue both daily and during registration time. To spare families a trip to the District offices, PLACE arranges for on-site enrollment during the summer so that kids are squared away before the first day of school.

Excitement as incentive

While PLACE honors students with perfect attendance in a hallway photo display and with certificates, Booker says the real key is the school's culture and curriculum. "It's a calm, warm, inviting place," she says. "Kids are excited about learning, and we offer as many opportunities as we can for kids to have different experiences. That's also a draw. We're a STEM school, with hands-on science, and kids are excited about that. They don't want to miss school because they might miss out on science or our arts program. They want to be here."

PLACE @ PRESCOTT, A K-5 SCHOOL IN WEST OAKLAND, HAS BEEN A FIXTURE IN THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1869. THE SCHOOL'S RICH HISTORY INCLUDES THE HIRING OF OAKLAND'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN TEACHER, IDA LOUISE JACKSON, IN 1925.

Creating a Culture of Good Attendance[19]

"Every single day, every single minute counts." Principal Nima Tahai constantly stresses the importance of attendance for staying on track in school to students, parents and staff at Garfield Elementary School, and he knew that to make change he needed it to be a team effort. Tahai stressed that his best work was to allow his attendance team to dream big and get the support they needed to make changes for the school.

By reinforcing positive messages about attendance, contacting families when student absences first start adding up and providing intensive case management services to families facing serious health and economic challenges, the attendance team at Garfield has cut chronic absence rates in half. By the end of the 2013-14 school year, the chronic absence rate at Garfield was 7%. Over time, Garfield has developed a three-tiered approach that has aligned data, systems and programs to promote good attendance for all students. But very little of this was in place eight years ago. "When we began the work," recalls Jamie Lopez, Managing Director of East Bay Asian Youth Center, "it was all case management."

When the district began providing more regular data reports to schools on chronic absence that showed the different levels of absenteeism for students, Lopez says they were able to understand the challenges in a more comprehensive way instead of solely focusing on the students and families with the most severe needs. With advice from Attendance Works director, Hedy Chang, Lopez and the two family liaisons who staff Garfield's Family Resource Center were able to craft different levels of responses to students based on how many school days they had missed. They began working with the school's attendance clerk to reach out to students at risk for chronic absence but not yet missing 10% of the school year. This opened up a second tier of interventions.

When Nima Tahai took over as principal in 2010-11, Lopez and the family liaisons had built positive relationships with many of the teachers, and Tahai was able to leverage these relationships in driving change in the school.

The team then built on that foundation and worked to shift the culture, which was one that blamed parents and students for absences. They looked for an early win that did not require the entire staff to cooperate. The team decided to recognize students every trimester for perfect attendance rather than once a year. He suggested, "Why don't we put up all the pictures of kids with perfect attendance every trimester?" And while it was nice for the kids and parents, it also began to change staff attitudes.

Tahai also talked about attendance at every staff meeting. "My role is messaging constantly. But talking isn't enough." The attendance team also made strategic use of data, with support from the district office, which provided chronic absence data by classroom. "When teachers could see the list of students by name and hear what the attendance team has done in each case, it shifted their attitudes," Tahai says. He told his staff "Let's look at kindergarten. That's ridiculous how high chronic absence is – 15%. Let's do something." The teachers and attendance team began to focus on kindergarten attendance and encouraged families through special events and weekly recognition for perfect attendance. By the end of 2012-13, the intensive focus paid off. Garfield's kindergarten chronic absence rate was cut in half to 7%.

With parents, the team worked closely with the attendance clerk to emphasize the importance of attendance. "We weren't as firm as we needed to be," he noted. "Now we say, 'We don't do things like take extra days off for the holidays here. Your child needs to be here. There may be a million reasons why you can't be here, but we're not even going to go there. We can help.'" The blend of support, caring and clear messaging about attendance as a key to students' long-term success is paying off. "Our attendance has improved every time we've had one of those conversations," says Tahai.

Using Data to Drive Change

Principal Cliff Hong knew that too many students missed class at his middle school, but it was not until he analyzed the data that he saw the picture clearly. Every day, 50 to 60 Roosevelt Middle School students were absent and as many as 15% of students were missing nearly a month of school every year. Within a year, however, Hong cut his absentee rate in half and saw his school's standardized test scores climb by 30 scale points.
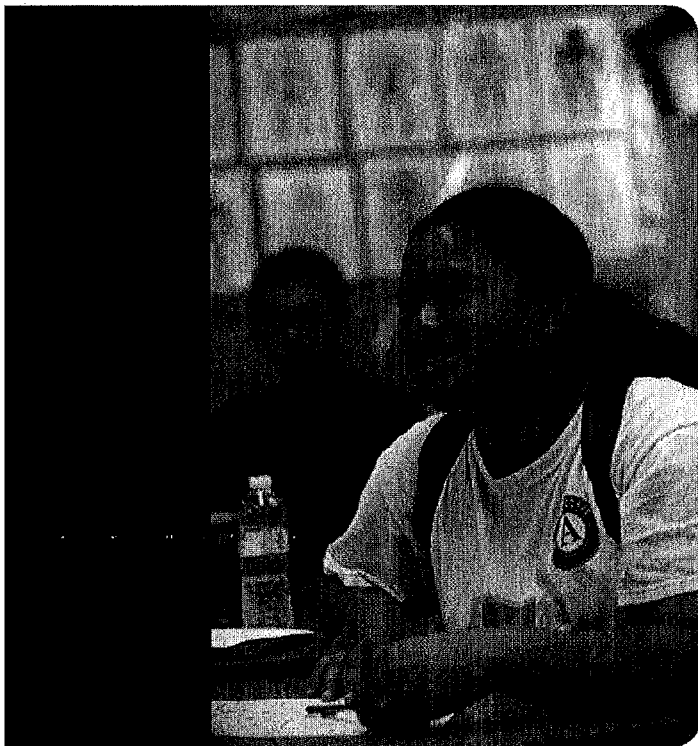
How did he do it?

A data-driven focus on attendance, engagement from the full community, and support from school district leadership were the keys to his success. His story is part of a growing national narrative of schools that are improving student achievement by reducing chronic absenteeism.

Hong managed to work with the community, his feeder schools, and the school district as he turned around chronic absence rates at Roosevelt Middle School from 15% in 2010–11 to 8% in 2011-12.

There have been several positive outcomes because of this work. Most importantly, students are learning more because of the increased time in school. Academic achievement, as measured by state standardized tests, rose 30 points last year, the highest API they had had in 14 years, and the most improved of any Oakland Unified School District middle school.

"WE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT OUR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES AS WE UNCOVERED REASONS FOR ABSENCES AND DEVELOPED SOLUTIONS. THE PROGRESS ALSO BECAME A REASON FOR CELEBRATIONS AND A POINT OF TEAM UNITY, WHICH MOTIVATED STAFF."

Some of the tools Roosevelt used include:

- Giving certificates to students with good attendance and improved attendance and recognizing them in assemblies.

- Organizing an "attendance team" with various staff members. Theirs included an attendance clerk, a family liaison, a school nurse, a graduate student intern, and the school principal.

- Setting goals. Roosevelt's goal was to have an average of 95% attendance overall and no chronic absence and to have similar rates of attendance among their three largest ethnic groups (African-American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Latino).

- Meeting every two weeks to look at the cases of chronically absent students and identifying the reasons for the absences as well as beginning to develop a picture of individuals and groups. For example, at Roosevelt, some students had transportation issues, others had illnesses they previously did not know about, etc.

- Strategically assigning one team member to follow up on students and their families. For example, Roosevelt's nurse took on students whose absences were primarily health related. Team members would speak with students and call families.

- Having family conferences. For students whose attendance rates did not improve, the attendance clerk and principal met face to face with students and a parent/guardian to lay out expectations and sign an improvement plan.

Walking a Little Taller

West Oakland Middle School (WOMS) has recently changed leadership, welcoming Clara Roberts as the new principal. Former principal Ron Smith spent three years at WOMS and was an example of how to boost attendance for youth in this older age range. During his tenure, chronic absence at WOMS dropped from 33% to 18%.

How did Smith and his team make this happen? "It comes down to having systems in place that really focus on the kids," he says. "You create an environment where the kids want to be, where it's clean and safe. We call it our 'new shoes theory': [You have] something new, you feel good, and you walk a little taller and feel better about yourself."

Beyond the basics

The key to building that environment, Smith says, is offering engaging electives that appeal to the entire student body. "The biggest thing we've done is to offer various programs that diversify from the traditional classes," he says. "We've built in programs from art to dance to music to STEM – things they can get excited about." In the case of the popular Boys Group, staff intentionally scheduled it for 7th period, when absence rates tend to be higher.

"These things give kids something to think about that's not just English or math class," says Smith. "When we do those things, kids become more engaged. You have to get out of the trap of believing that traditional education is the only way. Culture and climate, basic academic foundation, and extracurricular activities: when we do all things at a high level, you start seeing the outcomes with kids coming to school every day."

"Let's get rid of every excuse."

When trying to turn around chronic absence, the WOMS staff aims to meet students and families where they are, with a personalized approach that gets at the root causes. "It's usually not as simple as a kid just missing a bus," explains Smith. "There are family issues, issues of custody, health issues. When we understand these things, we can figure out the best way to address the situation."

The next step, Smith says, is finding on-site solutions to kids' attendance obstacles. "A student with asthma? Let's refer him to our health professional on campus. If they need counseling support, let's loop into that cycle so [one of our counselors] can help them here on site. It's the full-service community schools
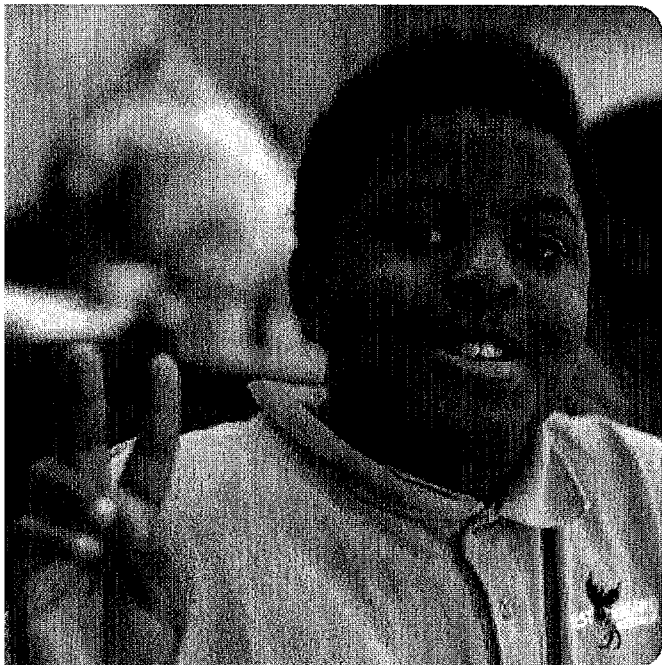
model, but, even bigger than that, it's just reading into what the kids need. We're able to reach past them not coming to school and look at other things that are affected. Let's get rid of every excuse. If we can do that, then 95% of kids will be at school every day. We're trying to build a culture where a kid says, 'I can go to school to be safe. I want to be there.'"

Smith credits his in-house team for much of this deep work. WOMS's assistant principal, office assistant, health professionals, counselors, and Coordination of Services Team (COST) are in frequent contact with families. "Families are used to talking to us," says Smith, "[which helps us] move forward in terms of getting kids to school."

Leveraging partnerships and data

Smith stresses that WOMS would not be able to do this attendance work without a dynamic range of partners, with students' families atop that list. A core group of parents helps staff with outreach to families about the importance of attendance. "Parents here are focused on supporting us," he says, "and they allow us to make decisions that support their kids. Parents in our Family Resource Center are actively engaged in how to make the school better."

Smith also cites the YMCA, which leads the after-school program, and Safe Passages, which helps run the school's Coordination of Services Team. He says the District has been instrumental in connecting WOMS with partners like Safe Passages and Alameda County Health, which provides on-site counseling. He also appreciates the attendance data from the district. "I need to have a number," he explains. "Then I can say to a parent, your child came to school more last month than this month.

When asked about the overall impact of attendance on student success, Smith puts it this way: "The simple answer is you gotta be here to learn. But I think if a kid sees the value of being in school, what happens next is you can start working on other things besides the basic foundation of learning. We're at a place in education where it's more than just the basic academic stuff. We have to have them think about how this effort they're putting in applies to them ten years from now, in their job, in their life."

Taking Attendance Seriously

According to principal Sam Brewer, making a difference on attendance comes down to the simple but powerful decision to make attendance a real priority and to get administration and office staff buy-in. With this shared focus, the adults in the school are able to work together to monitor the attendance rates and intervene when a student is in trouble.

The main intervention that Principal Brewer speaks of is not a surprise - meeting with parents and trying to find a solution that will help the parent to either address barriers or take attendance more seriously. But there are critical elements built into the culture of Unity that encourage parents and students to take responsibility for making sure that the students get to school on time.

Signing on the Dotted Line

Unity emphasizes that each player in the school community has a responsibility for students' attendance. To emphasize this and gain commitments up front, Unity requires a three-way school-parent-student contract, part of which addresses the importance of attendance. The contract outlines the responsibilities for all three parties on the contract.

> UNITY KNOWS THAT TO GET KIDS TO SCHOOL, EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE ON BOARD. AND SOMETIMES, GETTING PEOPLE ON BOARD REQUIRES A CONTRACT AND A CONSEQUENCE.

- Parents responsibilities include:

  ° ensuring that the student arrives on time and has a reliable means of transportation home,
  ° informing the school as early in the morning as possible each day when the child will be absent,
  ° giving notice in writing for extended absences.

- Parents are given the message that "any student's absence from school harms the student and the school."

- Students responsibilities include:

  ° arriving to school on time and dressed in uniform, prepared for the day's work,
  ° attending all classes each day as scheduled,
  ° listening attentively,
  ° participating fully, but politely, in all class discussions.

- Faculty and administration responsibilities include:
  - ° dedicating themselves fully to the education of the students,
  - ° advising and informing parents when students have challenges,
  - ° making every reasonable effort to respond to parent inquiries.
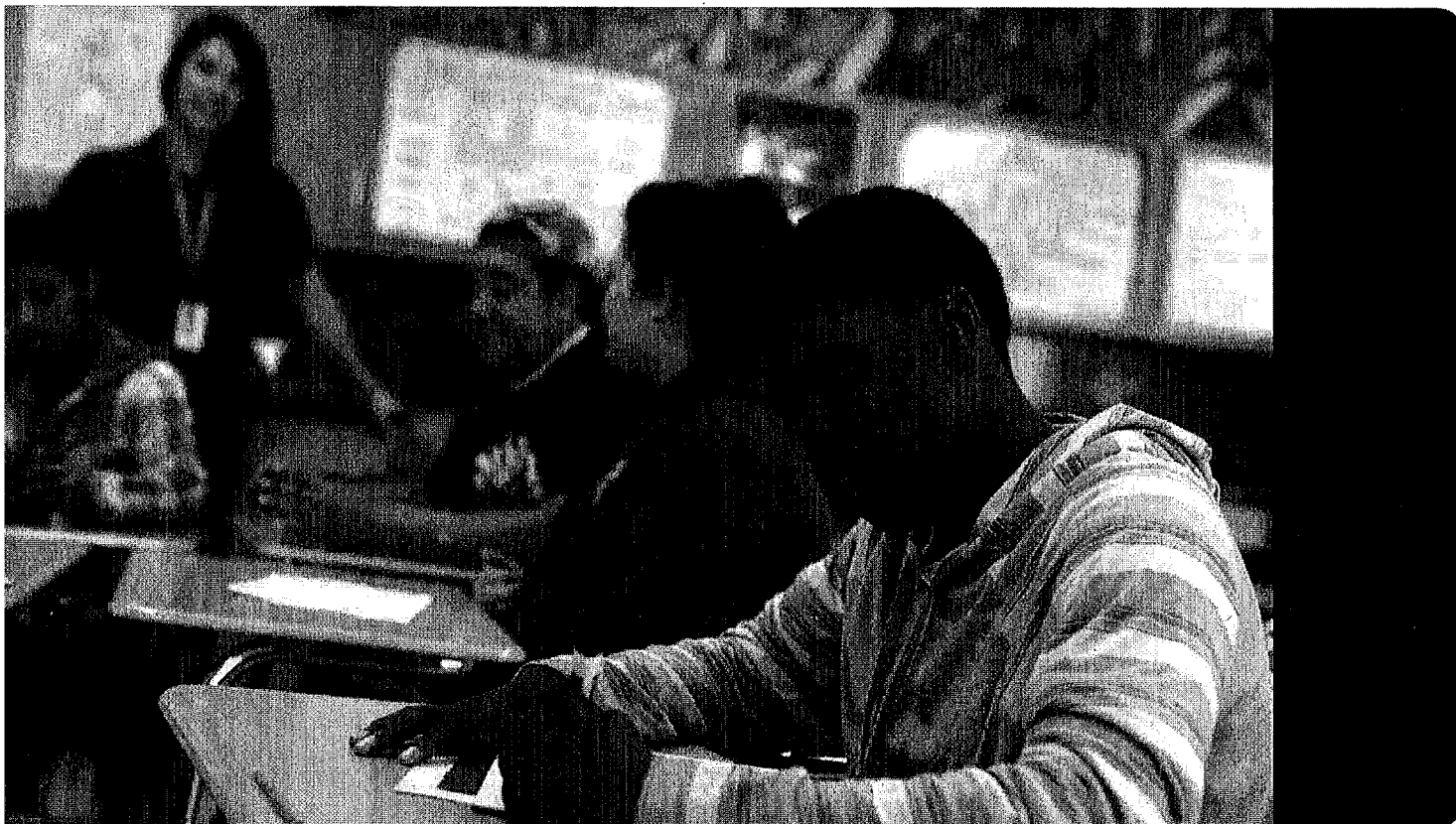

Taking a Hard Line

Attendance is among the considerations that can lead the school to refer the student for a behavioral intervention and support plan. Students who miss more than ten days per semester will be required to participate in this type of planning. If students don't then meet the requirements of the plan, they may receive restrictions of campus privileges such as extracurricular trips and off-campus study tours. Repeated incidents may then lead to processes leading to expulsion. Moreover, if the student has 15 consecutive unexcused absences with no parental contact, the student will be disenrolled.

While Unity's approach may seem a bit formal, the school takes attendance seriously because they take education seriously. They know that to get kids to school, everyone needs to be on board. And sometimes, getting people on board requires a contract and accountability.

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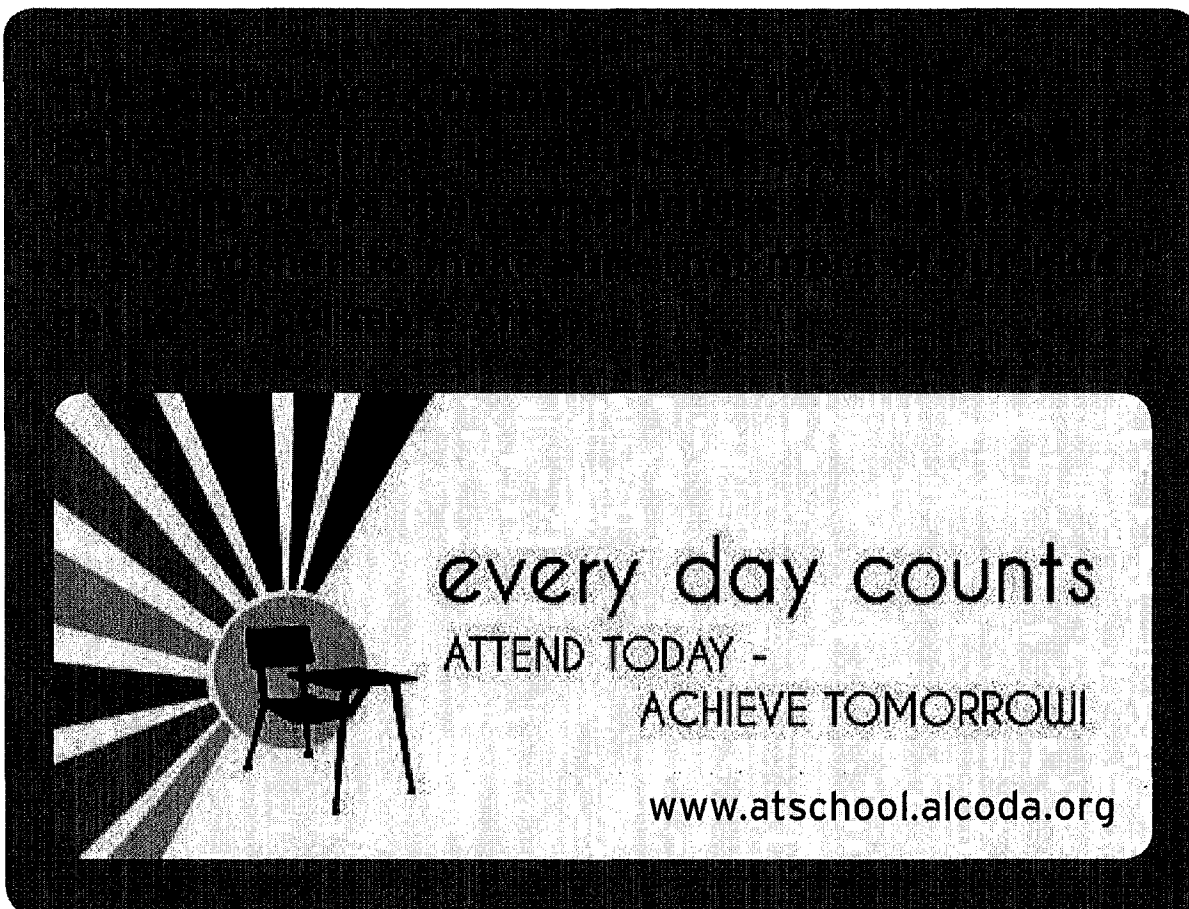
- Avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school. Try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. The same goes for doctor's appointments.

- For younger children, set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. You can lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.

- For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines that allow for $8\frac{1}{2}$ to $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers.

- Get to know the teachers and administrators. With younger children, make sure you introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.

- Show your child that attendance matters to you and that you won't allow an absence unless someone is truly sick.

- Don't ask older students to help with daycare and household errands during the school day.

- Turn to the school for help. Many schools offer services for the whole family.

- Ask your principal to calculate chronic absence rates for the whole school. Even if your child attends regularly, it's important to know how many students in your child's school are missing 10% or more of the school year.
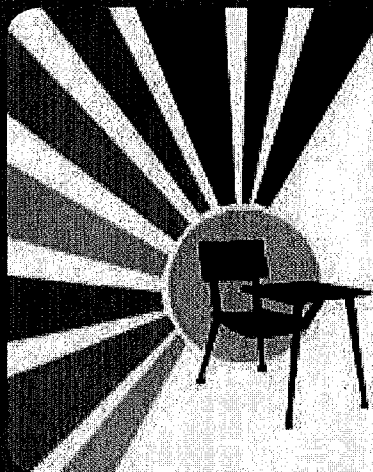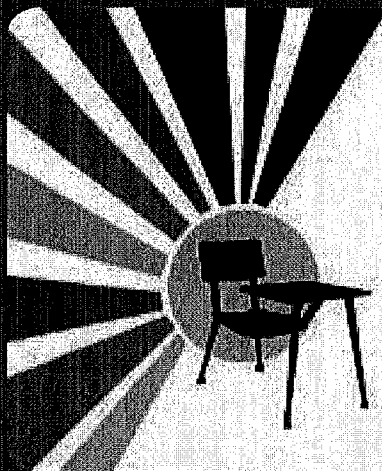

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WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO?

- Put together an attendance team.

- At the beginning of the year, identify chronically absent students from previous year and the first few weeks of this school year.

- Develop strategies that address the unique challenges of different student groups.

- Work with community partners to support attendance strategies.

- Use the Oakland Attendance Collaborative Toolkit to Reduce Early Chronic Absence http://atschool.alcoda.org/attendance_initiatives
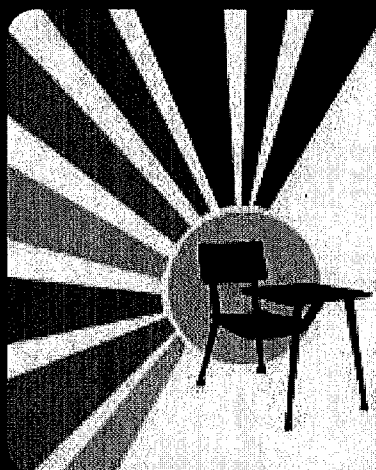

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- Get past blaming parents and instead help them get their children to school.

- Use community resources – mental and medical health providers, social workers and others – to address the problems contributing to chronic absence.

- Provide the right incentives to bring students to school.

- Train adult mentors of school age children to recognize the warning signs of poor attendance and ensure adult mentors are aware of the available community resources to support children and families struggling with attendance.

- Increase attention to the role that unhealthy or unsafe school climates play in children missing school.

- Expand student access to health care, particularly when medical conditions create barriers to school attendance.

- Address health needs. Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades[21]. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.

- Address transportation barriers[22]. The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.

- Distribute the Oakland Attendance Collaborative flyer on why attendance is important and what to do to improve it.
  http://atschool.alcoda.org/files/ousd_trib_10x21_advertorial_FINAL08_18_14.pdf

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- School is your first and most important job. You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how to show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.

- Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs. In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, a million dollars more than a dropout over a lifetime.

- School only gets harder when you stay home too much. Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.

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- **Educators:** From the superintendent to the classroom teacher, educators across the school district can bring the messages to students and families every day. Letters to parents, back-to-school nights, school assemblies, and classroom competitions can bring more kids to school.

- **Policymakers:** Mayors, council and school board members can use their positions as community leaders to elevate attention to attendance in the media, as well as bring together key stakeholders to identify and address barriers to getting to school. They can also shape policy to improve the collection of attendance data.

- **Business leaders:** Business leaders can play an important role in attendance campaigns by helping with public messaging, as well as providing resources for school-based attendance incentives. They are more likely to get involved if they understand how poor attendance can affect their interests in ensuring students have the skills to become good employees and whether parents who are current employees show up to work every day.

- **Faith and community leaders:** Religious leaders, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs and other community organizations can reach children and families outside the school setting. Health care providers, including pediatricians and visiting nurses, can also share the importance of good attendance.

- **Parents:** Parents fundamentally shape whether children develop a habit of attendance and have the resources they need to get to school every day. Parents can deliver the message to their children and to other parents that missing too much school can put students at academic risk. A good campaign will engage parents, not blame them.

- **Students:** When young children are excited about going to school and understand that their teachers expect them to be in class, their enthusiasm can help motivate other students. High school students can talk to younger children about the importance of attendance.

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Average Daily Attendance is defined as the total days of student attendance divided by the total days of instruction. The state uses a school district's ADA to determine its general purpose (revenue limit) and some other funding.

Charter schools are tuition-free publicly funded independent schools established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter (agreement) with a local or national authority.

Chronic absence means missing 10% or more of school days for any reason – excused, unexcused, or suspension.

District schools are tuition-free schools in the United States supported by taxes and controlled by a school board.

Satisfactory attendance is attending 95% or more of school days in an academic year.

Truancy typically refers only to unexcused absences. It signals the potential need for legal intervention under state compulsory education laws. In California, it refers to a child absent at least 3 days without a valid excuse or late 3 times to class by at least 30 minutes without a valid excuse.

School year refers to the part of the year when school is in session, usually from August to June. Typically, the Oakland Unified School District school year has 180 days. Charter schools are required to operate 175 days but have flexibility to extend the school year.

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[21] www.attendanceworks.org

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