A Tiered Approach to Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

Brooke Gebers, NeMTSS Region 3 Support Lead

Shirley Vargas, Administrator, School & District Support
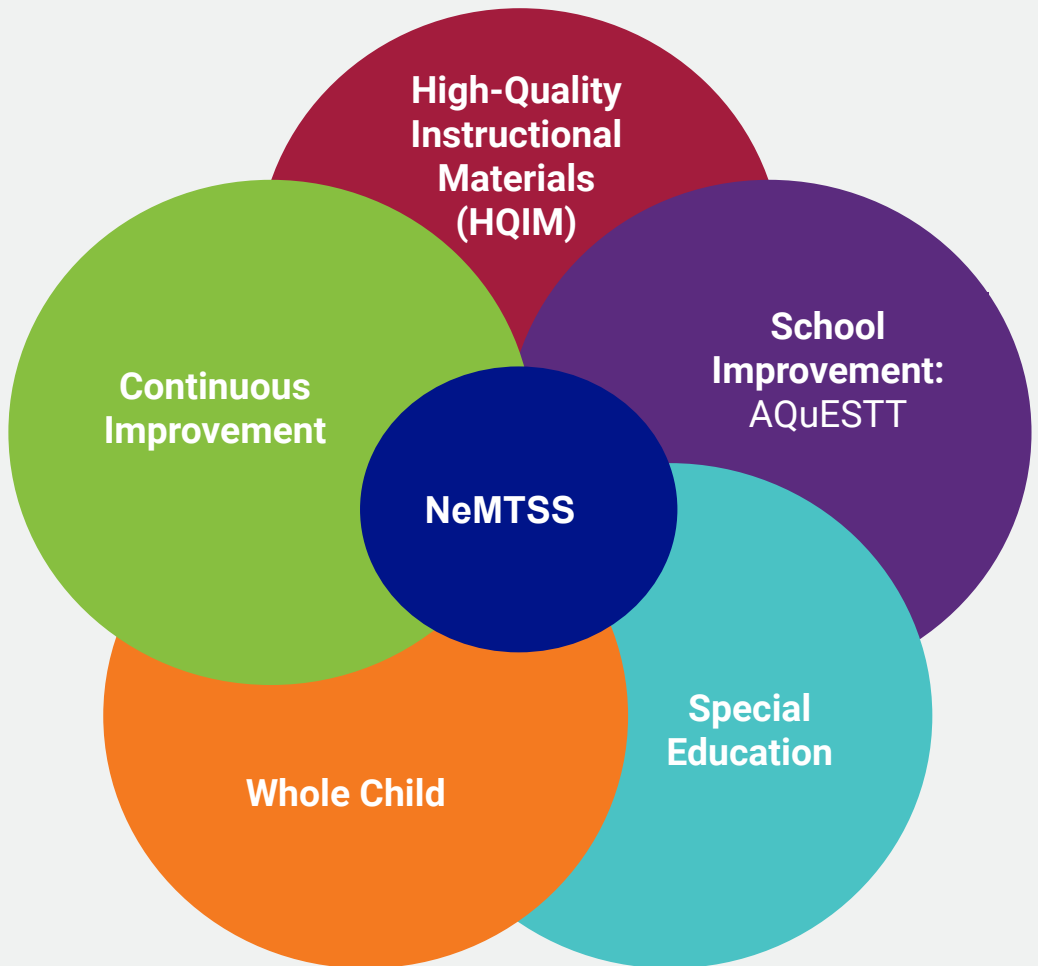
2023 NDE Administrator Day

NDE Mission

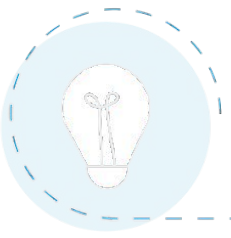To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.

Coherence

Strengthen coherence across NDE Offices to improve the communication and services in the name of supporting student achievement and enhancing their educational outcomes - grounded in NeMTSS

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

School Improvement: AQuESTT

Continuous Improvement

NeMTSS

Special Education

Whole Child

Objectives

- Acknowledge the state of chronic absenteeism and identify what's in a school's control to address it.

- Recognize the role the NeMTSS essential elements play in prevention, identification, and intervention of chronic absence by:

  - Analyzing data

  - Drawing connections between chronic absence and Tier 1 Core instruction

  - Understanding the importance of family and community engagement

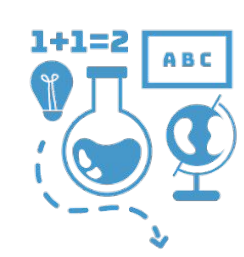# What do you see as the biggest barrier to addressing chronic absence in your district?

Waiting for responses ...

GO TO
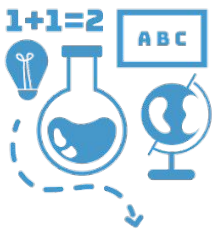**menti.com**

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Context

- A student is chronically absent when they miss 10% of their time in membership
- Counts all absences - excused, unexcused, suspensions
- Emphasizes academic impact of missed days
- Fundamentally different from truancy

NEBRASKA EVERY DAY COUNTS!
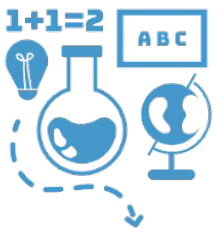
Context

Truancy vs. Chronic Absence

Truancy

- Counts only unexcused absences

- Emphasizes compliance with school rules

- Relies on legal & administrative solutions

Vs.

Chronic Absence

- Counts all absences: excused, unexcused, and suspensions

- Emphasizes academic impact on missed days

- Uses community-based, positive strategies

Context

Blake is enrolled in his school 50 days, and misses 5.

He is **chronically absent**.

Mona misses 18 days out of her district's 175 day school year.

She is **chronically absent**.
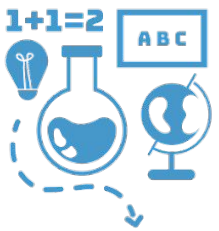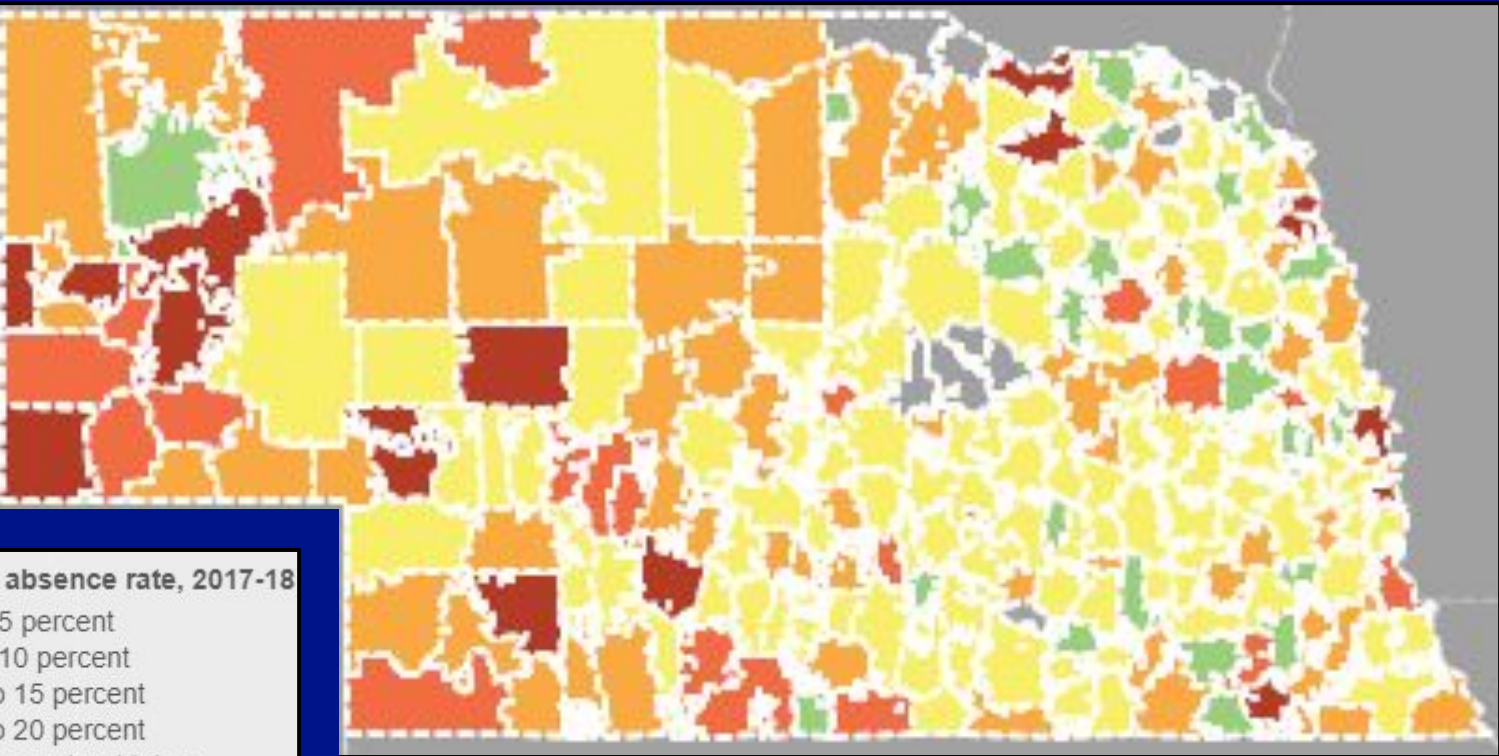
Cora misses 3 days of her 130 enrolled days.

She is **NOT chronically absent**.

Statewide Chronic Absence Data

Chronic absence rate, 2017-18
- 0 to 5 percent
- 5 to 10 percent
- 10 to 15 percent
- 15 to 20 percent
- 20 percent or higher
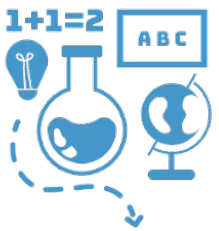
In 2021-22 school year, **77,000 students or 23%** were chronically absent.

The map represents chronic absence data from the 2017-18 school year.

Statewide Chronic Absence Data

Percentage of Students Chronically Absent by Race - 2021-2022

	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	TWO OR MORE RACES	WHITE	TOTAL
■ % STUDENTS CHRONICALLY ABSENT	59.38%	15.21%	46.16%	33.09%	38.16%	32.61%	17.78%	23.92%

Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
- chronic and acute illness - family responsibilities or home situation - trauma - poor transportation - housing and food insecurity - inequitable access to needed services - system involvement - lack of predictable schedules for learning - lack of access to tech	- struggling academically and/or behaviorally - unwelcoming school climate - social and peer challenges - anxiety - biased disciplinary and suspension practices - undiagnosed disability and/or disability accommodations - parents had negative educational experiences	- lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction - bored - no meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages) - lack of enrichment opportunities - lack of academic and behavioral support - failure to earn credits - drawn to low-wage job vs. being in high school	- absences are only a problem if they are unexcused - missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning - lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences - sporadic absences aren't a problem - attendance only matters in the older grades - suspensions don't count as absence

Source: Attendance Works

TIER 3
—
Intensified

Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

TIER 2
—
Targeted

Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

TIER 1
—
Core

Students missing 5-9% (at-risk)
—------------------------------
Students missing less 5% (satisfactory)

- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impacts of absence on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

Adapted from: Attendance Works
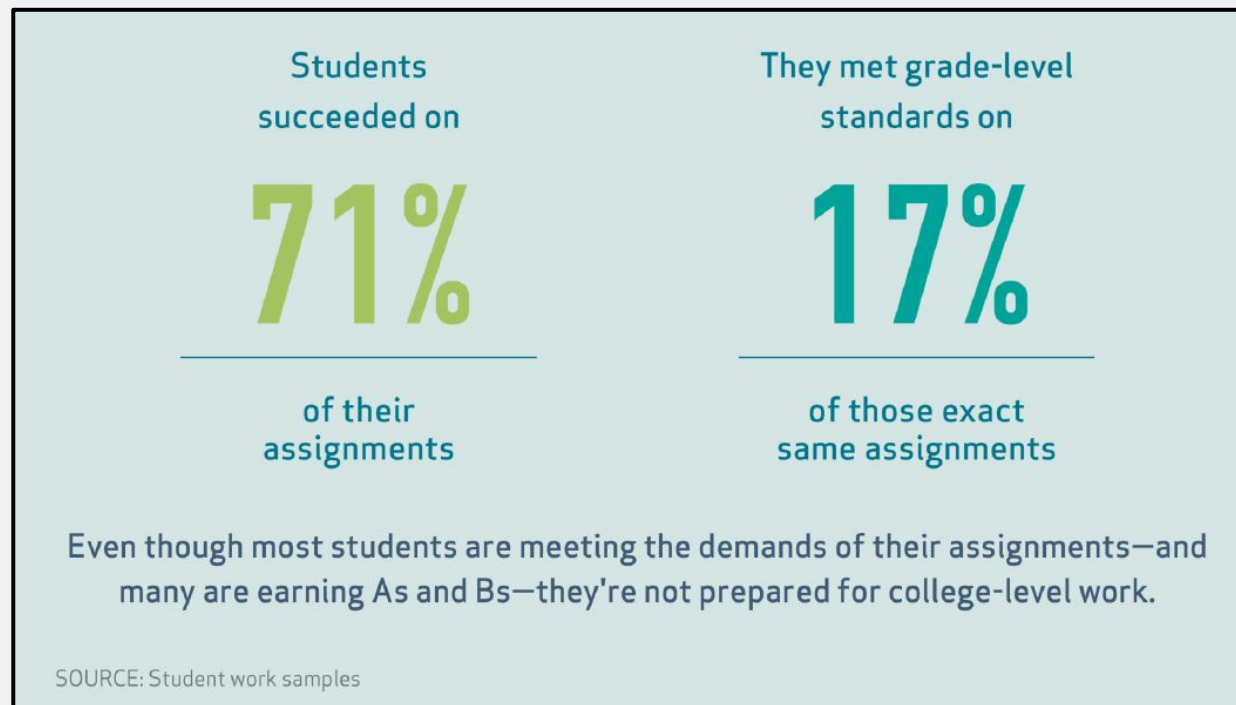
NeMTSS FRAMEWORK | NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Opportunity Myth

TNTP's report, *The Opportunity Myth*, examines the quality of students' academic experiences in school—and its effects on their long-term success.

Students expect that school will set them up to meet their goals if they do what's asked of them - and they generally do just that. But even when they do what school asks, they're not set up for success to reach their long-term goals.

Students succeeded on

71%

of their assignments

They met grade-level standards on

17%

of those exact same assignments

Even though most students are meeting the demands of their assignments—and many are earning As and Bs—they're not prepared for college-level work.

SOURCE: Student work samples

Opportunity to Access Grade-Appropriate Assignments

11th Grade ELA Assignments from Nebraska Schools

Grade Appropriate

Not Grade Appropriate

Assignment Prompt

In "My True South: Why I Decided to Return Home," Jesmyn Ward uses narrative nonfiction and employs figurative language to strengthen her argument that while she is critical of the South, it is her home and is worth fighting for. Identify **three** instances where Ward uses figurative language to show her home is worth fighting for then...

1. Write down each example of figurative language.

2. Tell what paragraph you found that example in.

3. Tell what type of figurative language it is.

4. Explain how that example strengthens her argument that her home is worth fighting for.

Summary & Reflection

Write a paragraph summarizing what happens in this section. Include multiple sentences to help you explain your thinking and ultimately fill this space. **(20 points)**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Write a paragraph reflecting on your thoughts while reading this section (any connections, questions, reactions, inferences or predictions you have). Include multiple sentences to help you explain your thinking and ultimately fill this space. **(20 points)**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Opportunity to Access Grade-Appropriate Assignments

11th Grade ELA Assignments from Nebraska Schools

Not Grade Appropriate

Sentence Check 1

Using the answer line provided, complete each item below with the correct word from the box. Use each word once.

A. analogy	B. annihilate	C. criterion	D. emanate	E. holistic
F. placebo	G. proficient	H. staunch	I. subversive	J. vindicate

1. Although I'm quite a good cook, I'm not very ___ at baking. My pies tend to be runny, and my bread won't rise.

2. One ___ used to judge the children's artwork was their use of vivid colors.

3. I'm a ___ fan of the writer J.K. Rowling. I have all her books.

4. Passenger pigeons no longer exist. They were ___(e)d by hunters.

5. During the Vietnam War, some protesters poured blood over draft records. Supporters of the war considered this a ___ act.

6. To test a new painkiller, researchers gave it to one group of volunteers, while a second group got a(n) ___, identical in appearance to the new medicine but with no built-in power to relieve pain.

7. Accused of shoplifting, the customer insisted that she had already paid for the items. She was ___(e)d when she pulled the receipt out of her purse.

8. Explaining the importance of using a search engine to find information on the internet, the instructor used a(n) ___. "The internet is a huge ocean. The search engine is a guide showing you the best places to fish."

9. As the garbage-collectors' strike went into its third week, a dreadful odor began to ___ from all the garbage bags piled up in the city streets.

10. A ___ view of business would take into account not just profits but also such things as the work environment and employees' job satisfaction.

NOTE: Now check your answers to these items by turning to page 130. Going over the answers carefully will help you prepare for the next two practices, for which answers are not given.
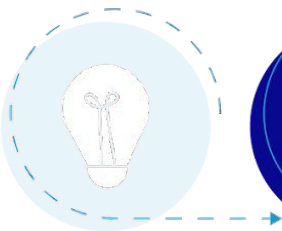
Four Key Resources

We found four key resources that influence a student's school experience and outcomes.

1 Consistent opportunities to work on GRADE-APPROPRIATE ASSIGNMENTS

2 STRONG INSTRUCTION, where students do most of the thinking in a lesson

3 DEEP ENGAGEMENT in what they're learning

4 Teachers who hold HIGH EXPECTATIONS for students and believe they can meet grade-level standards
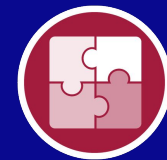
Greater access = greater outcomes

In our sample, students who started the year performing substantially below average made:

7.3 months more months of academic progress when they had access to BETTER ASSIGNMENTS.

6.1 months more months of academic progress when they had access to STRONGER INSTRUCTION.

0.9 months more months of academic progress when they reported being MORE ENGAGED IN CLASS.

7.9 months more months of academic progress when their teachers had HIGHER EXPECTATIONS.

Family & Community Engagement

STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS:		PRACTICES Source: National PTA
Welcome All Families		• Who's Who In Your School Activity • Provide time for relationship building • Track family engagement data
Communicate Effectively		• Survey parents to determine their preferred mode of communication • Provide translation services and communication accommodations
Support Student Success		• Share current student progress in understandable formats • Promote learning and enrichment outside of school
Speak Up for Every Child		• Share understandable, disaggregated data with stakeholders • Connect families to resources
Share Power		• Elevate student and family voice • Include students, families, and community members on appropriate teams
Collaborate with Community		• Map community needs and assets • Engaging Families in Out-of-School Time Programs Toolkit

Nudging
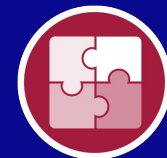
Nudges are "interventions that are carefully tuned to individual psychology to promote desired behavior."

-Todd Rogers, Harvard University

Most caregivers don't realize:

- absenteeism is having an adverse effect on their child's academic success

- when their child is missing more school than their peers

Personalized letters, postcards, or texts:

- Focus on empathy, how the school can help families, and what specific things families can do.

- Avoid focusing on punitive messages that leave parents feeling blamed

- Include printed personalized postcards or letters, rather than just texts

- Provide precise, personalized information rather than generic messages

- Send repeated communications throughout the year
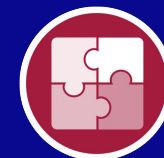
Source: Attendance Playbook

"Nudge letters get the personalized message out to parents about the importance of attendance. The research tells us it works. The math tells us it's cheap. Technology tells us it's automated."
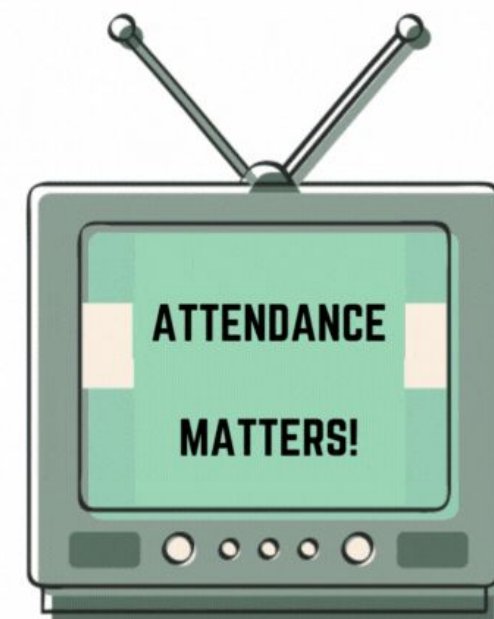
-Erin Werra

Attendance Campaigns

- General messaging campaigns
  - promoted on billboards
  - endorsed in public service announcements

[Click Here](#) for Additional Posters, Banners, and Infographics

Showing Up Together!

2023 Attendance Awareness Campaign
Attendance Works

ATTENDANCE MATTERS!

NEBRASKA EVERY DAY COUNTS!

Source: [Attendance Playbook](#)

Family & Community Engagement

NDE Perceptual Survey

NDE School, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

Data-Based Decision-Making

English Language Arts					
Indicator: % proficient on the NSCAS assessment	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
District	**53%**	**-**	**45%**	**42%**	
State Average	**52%**	**-**	**48%**	**47%**	
Special Education	24%	-	25%	11%	
High Ability Learners	*	-	*	*	
Free and Reduced Lunch	42%	-	34%	29%	
White	76%	-	63%	62%	
English Learners	21%	-	23%	11%	
Hispanic or Latino	36%	-	32%	27%	
American Indian/Alaska Native	-	-	-	-	
Male	52%	-	45%	42%	
Female	55%	-	44%	43%	
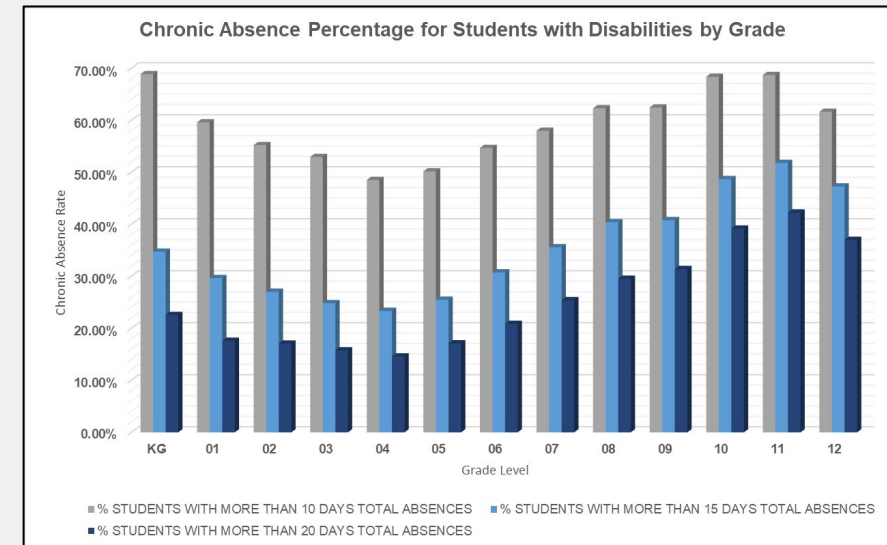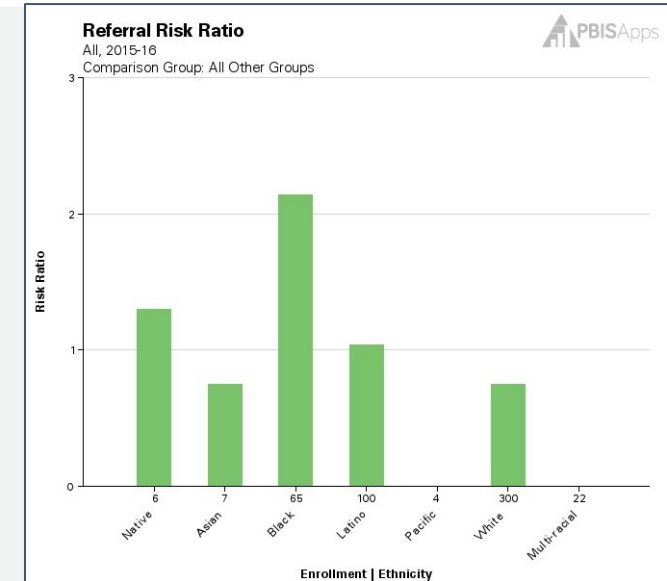
Referral Risk Ratio
All, 2015-16
Comparison Group: All Other Groups

Chronic Absence Percentage for Students with Disabilities by Grade

Data-Based Decision-Making

- Monitor attendance weekly or biweekly with Early Warning Systems (EWS)
  - Look for students who are missing ~2 days/month
- Utilize additional data sources to make decisions
- Use a team approach to address absenteeism

Middle School EWS Indicators							
On - Track Indicators	Course Performance	Attendance	GPA	Office Discipline Referrals	Out of School Suspensions	In School Suspensions	Assessments
On-Track	C's or better in all classes	0-2 absences in a quarter / 4% or less absences in a year	2.5 or higher	O ODR's in a quarter / 2 or fewer ODR's in a year	O OSS's in a quarter / O OSS's in a year	O ISS's in a quarter / O ISS's in a year	Level 3 - 5
At-Risk	1 or more D's in any class	3 to 4 absences in a quarter / 5% - 9% absences in a year	2.0 – 2.49	1 ODR In a quarter / 3 ODR's in a year	N/A	N/A	Level 2
Off-Track	Failing 1 or more classes (F's)	5 or more absences in a quarter / 10% or more absences in a year	Less than 2.0	2 or more ODR's in a quarter / 4 ODR's in a year or 2 ODR's in a semester	1 or more OSS's for the year	1 or more ISS's for the year	Level 1

Source: Attendance Playbook
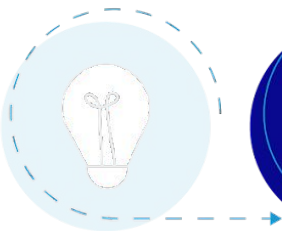
Tier 2 Targeted Supports

- Check In, Check Out (CICO)

- 2x10

- Student Success Plan

- Success Mentors (peer/staff/community)

- Family visit in a community location

- Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension

  - 10 Questions for Ensuring Equity in School Discipline

SOME students

TIER 3
—
Intensified

TIER 2
—
Targeted

TIER 1
—
Core
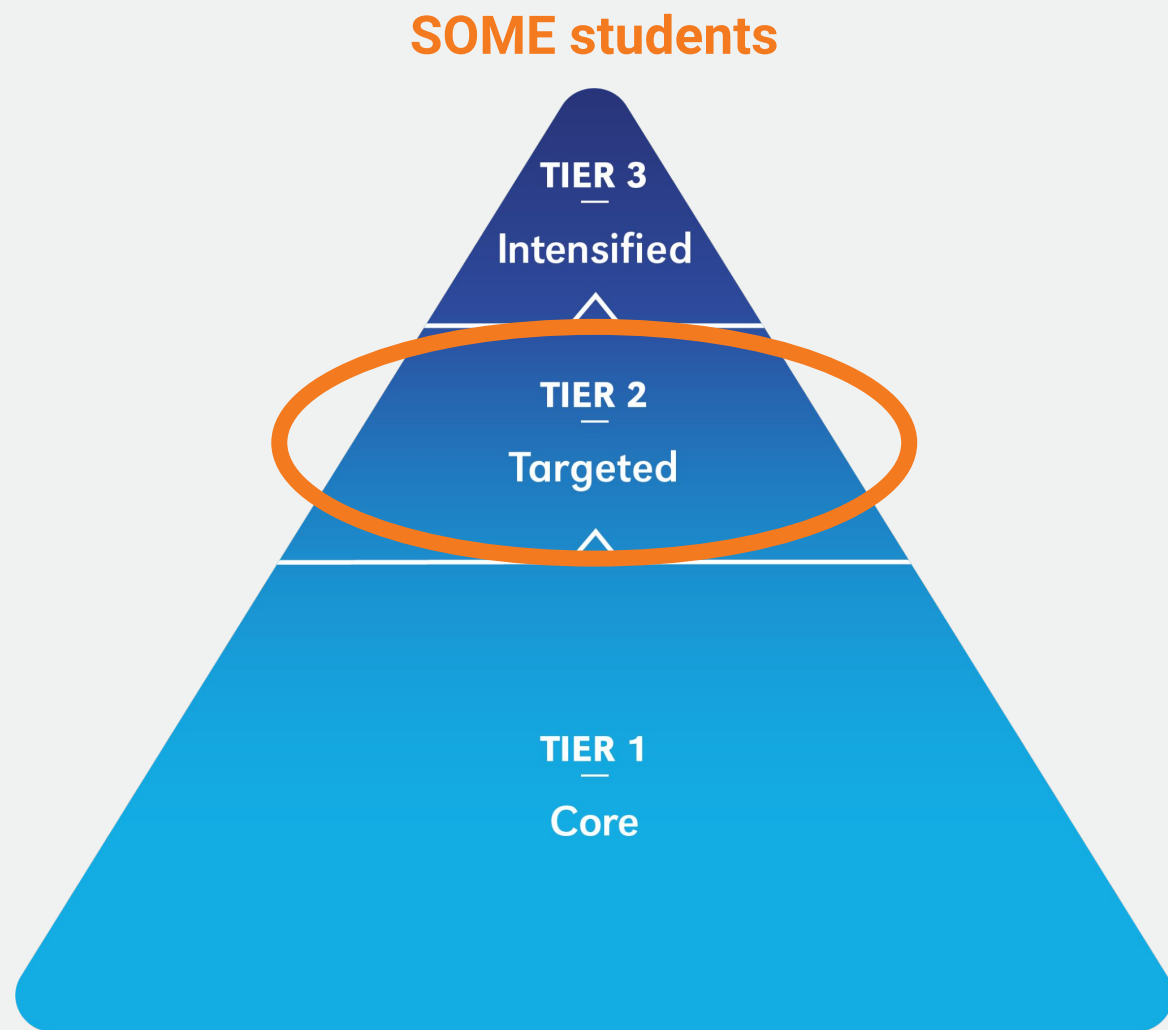
Family Engagement
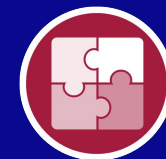
- Increased communication

- Engage caregivers as partners in developing the support plan

- Gather input and ideas through meaningful conversations with family members

Intervention

How can we provide timely and appropriate support that is personalized and/or intensified when needed?

Data-Based Decision-Making
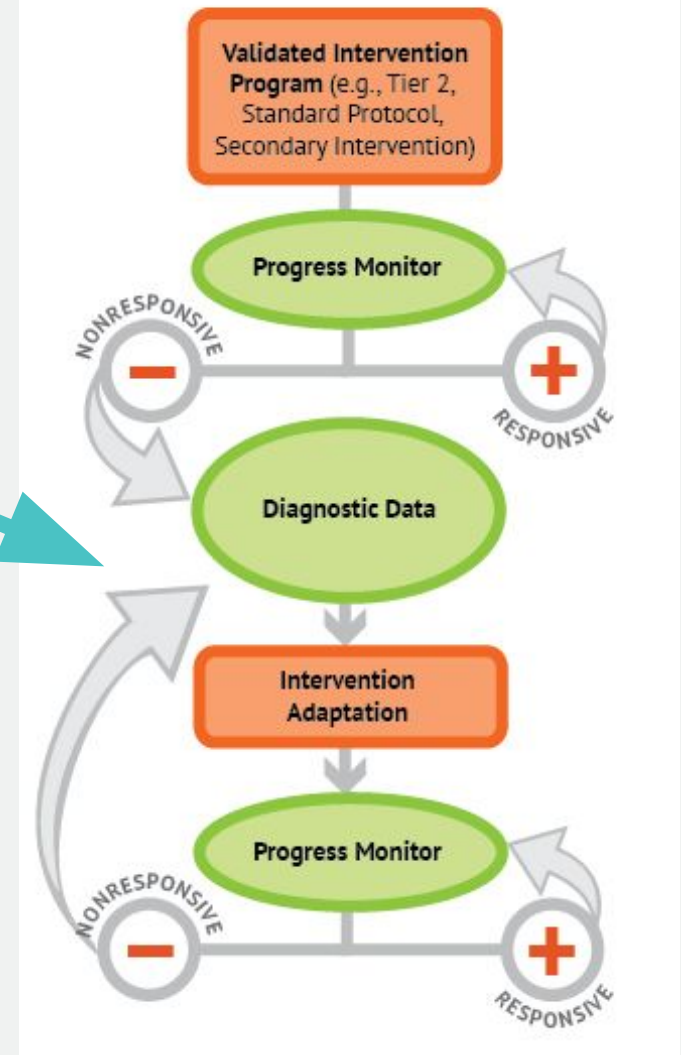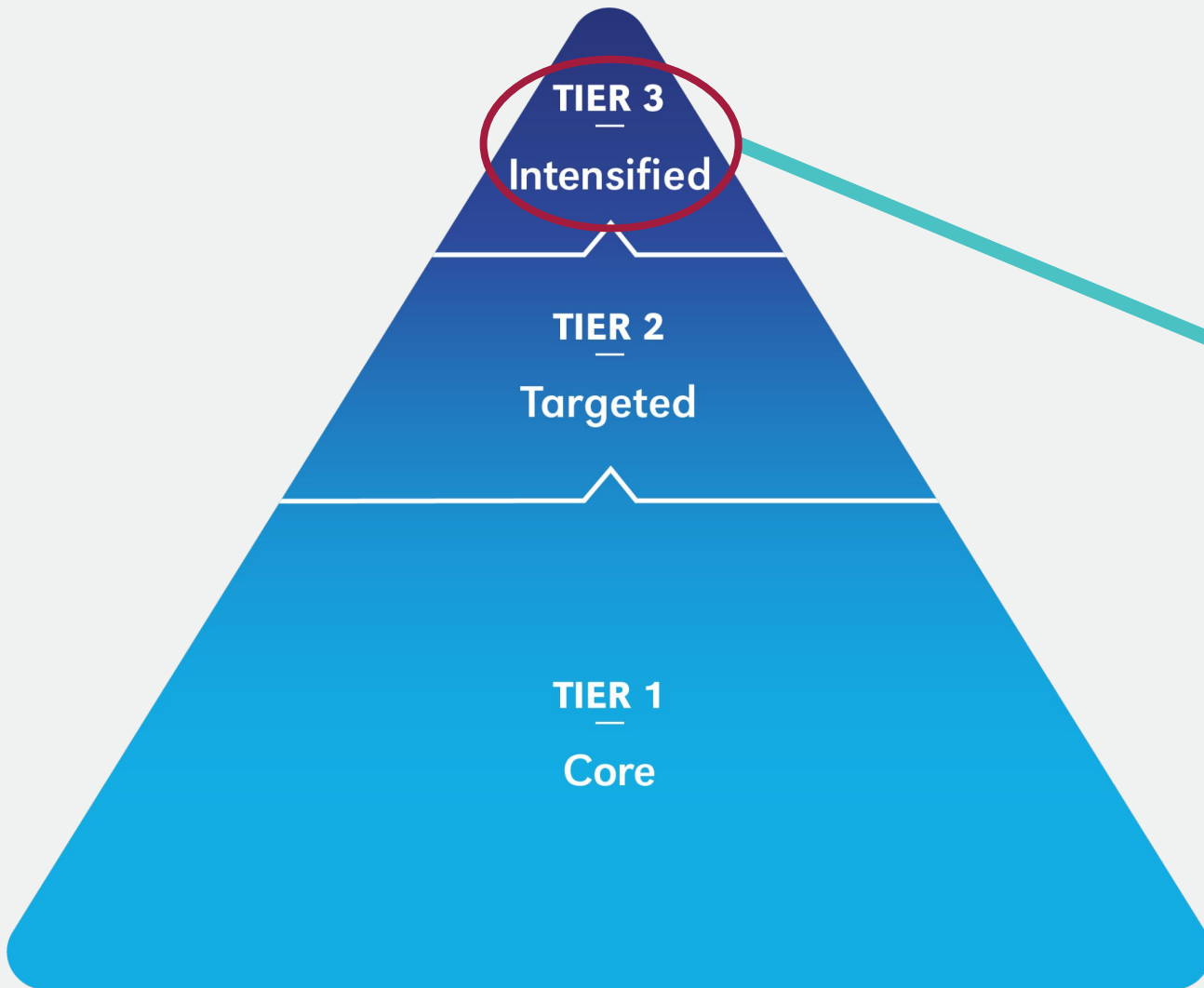
TIER 3
Intensified

TIER 2
Targeted

TIER 1
Core

Validated Intervention Program (e.g., Tier 2, Standard Protocol, Secondary Intervention)

Progress Monitor

NONRESPONSIVE − + RESPONSIVE

Diagnostic Data

Intervention Adaptation

Progress Monitor

NONRESPONSIVE − + RESPONSIVE

National Center on Intensive Intervention
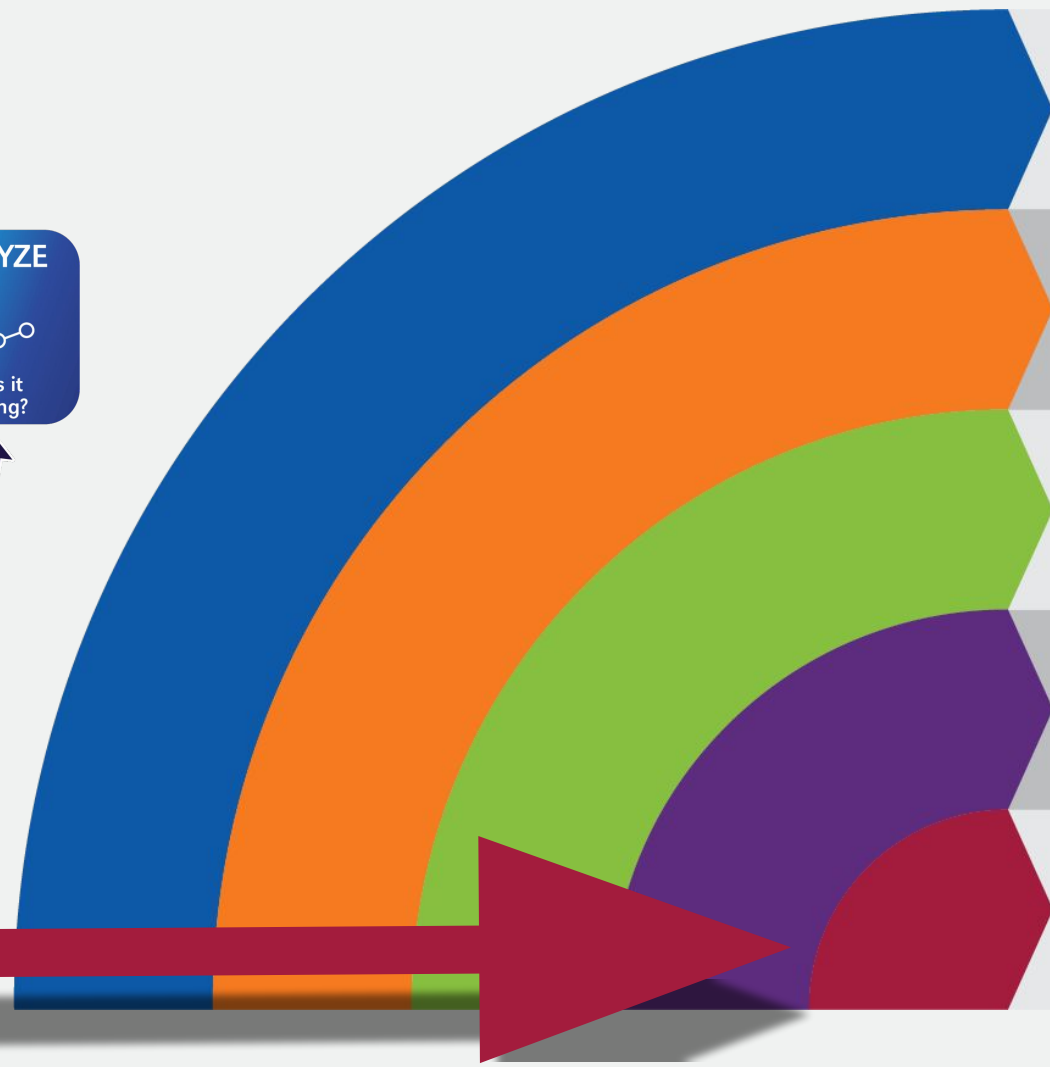
Data-Based Decision-Making

Worksheet: Understanding the root causes for student absenteeism

Use these questions to help identify the likely causes of absenteeism for a student who is chronically absent in your class. Understanding the root causes for missing too much school can help determine the best course of action. Is this something that you can help your student and his/her family overcome? Or is there an underlying issue that requires additional support, perhaps from the school social worker or guidance counselor?

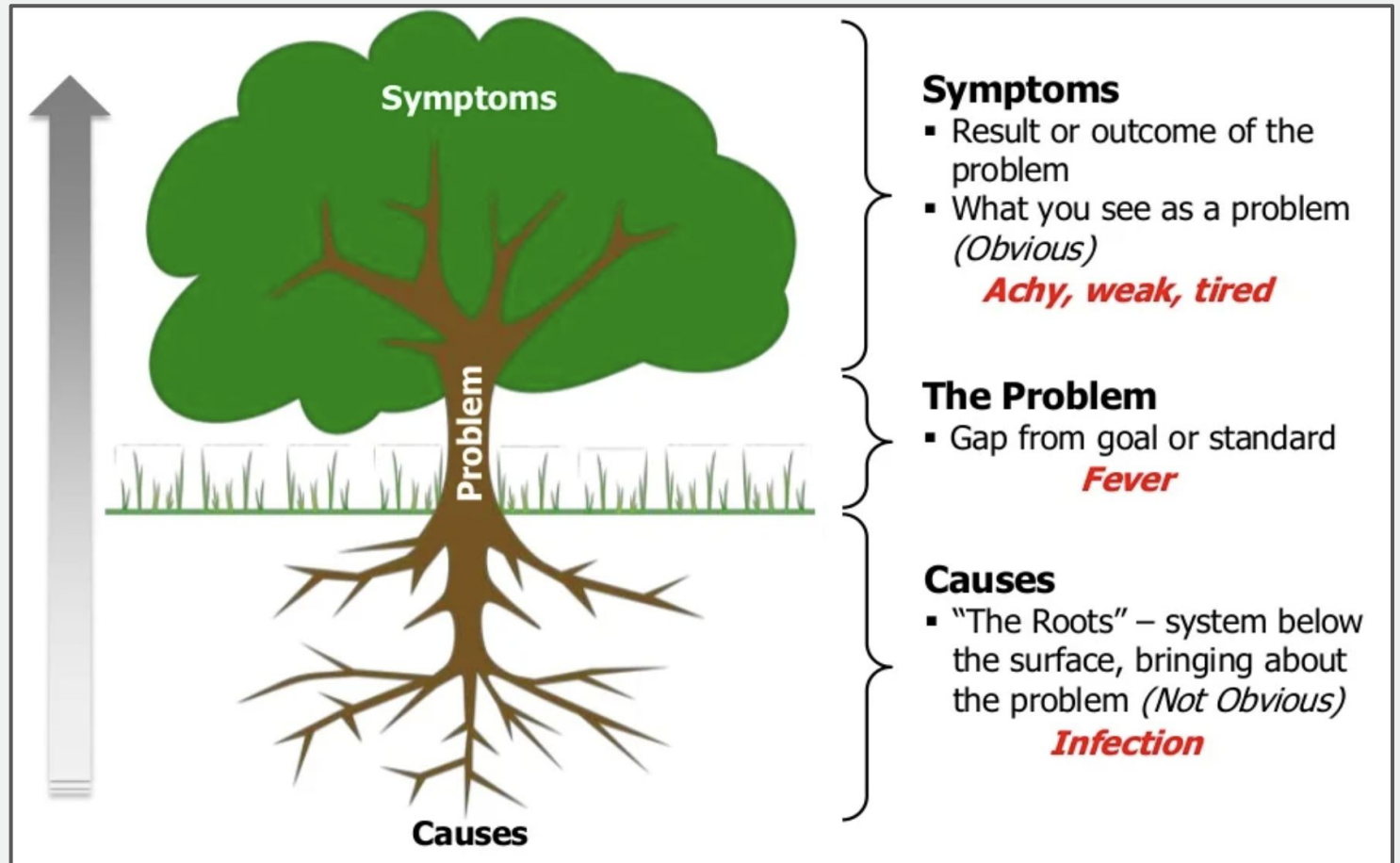|	
Academic Conditions	
Is the student struggling academically? Consider what skills and content the student has missed as a result of his or her absences as well as other instructional needs.	Y / N
Does the student need accommodations to benefit from classroom instructions? (e.g. peer support, access to computer, breaks, material presented in different ways)	Y / N
Does the student have language or communication challenges?	Y / N
Does the student struggle with organizational tasks?	Y / N
Are there barriers to homework completion?	Y / N
Do you suspect that the student has an unidentified disability?	Y / N
Safety Concerns	
Have there been any reports of bullying?	Y / N
Is the student exposed to race, disability, cultural or LGBTQ biases?	Y / N
Social Dynamics	
Does the student get to avoid difficult social or academic situations by staying away from school?	Y / N
Are transitions difficult for the student? (e.g. entering the school building, moving from class to class)	Y / N
Home Situation	
Do the parents/guardians recognize the importance of and support regular school attendance?	Y / N
Are there problems in the home that contribute to frequent absences? (e.g., parental illness, homelessness, joblessness, child care, needed health or mental health services for parent/caregiver)	Y / N
Health Status	
Are there conditions in the classroom, cafeteria or other school areas that affect the student's health or safety? (e.g. mold or other asthma triggers, animal dander, food allergens)	Y / N
Does the student exhibit anxiety due to separation from parent / caregiver?	Y / N
Does the student require health or mental health-related treatment that interferes with attendance?	Y / N
School Culture	
Are there any clubs, programs or resources during the school day and after school that might help engage the student?	Y / N
Is there a caring adult at the school that could mentor the student?	Y / N
Student Voice	
Has the student identified the reasons for missing school?	Y / N
Parent Voice	
Have you met with the parent/caregiver to discuss attendance concerns?	Y / N
Has the parent/caregiver identified specific barriers to attendance?	Y / N
Are there cultural, language, or other types of barriers that require extra effort on the part of the school to work with the parent/caregiver?	Y / N
Attendance Barriers for Students with Identified Disabilities	
Has the IEP/504 team met recently to review and revise the student's educational plan?	Y / N
Are the instructional and behavioral supports the rights ones?	Y / N

Attendance Works©

rev. 10/16/19
www.attendanceworks.org

Symptoms
- Result or outcome of the problem
- What you see as a problem (Obvious)

Achy, weak, tired

The Problem
- Gap from goal or standard

Fever

Causes
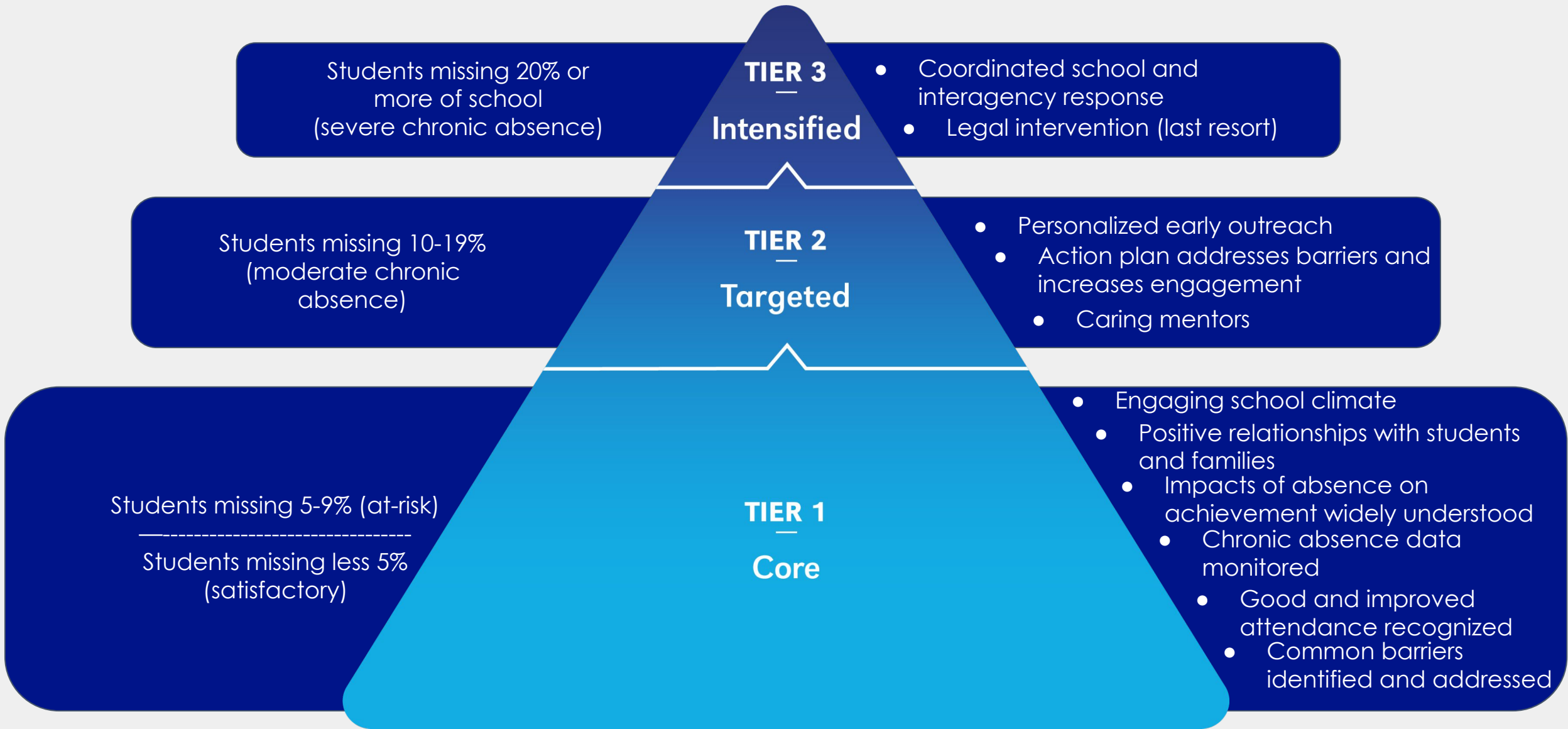- "The Roots" – system below the surface, bringing about the problem (Not Obvious)

Infection

<u>Understanding the Root Causes of Student Absences</u> Worksheet

"There is a fluidity among the tiers, allowing flexibility in the supports that each student receives with the acknowledgment that these supports are not permanent, but rather a response to learning experiences and progress."

-NeMTSS Framework Document

Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)

TIER 3

Intensified

- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)

TIER 2

Targeted

- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

Students missing 5-9% (at-risk)
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Students missing less 5% (satisfactory)

TIER 1

Core

- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impacts of absence on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

NeMTSS FRAMEWORK | NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Tier 3 Intensified Supports

- Educational Support Champions
- Temporary flexible school day options
- Interagency case management
- Student attendance review board
- Community-based, non-criminal truancy court
- Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation
- Legal intervention (as a last resort)

A FEW students

TIER 3
Intensified

TIER 2
Targeted

TIER 1
Core
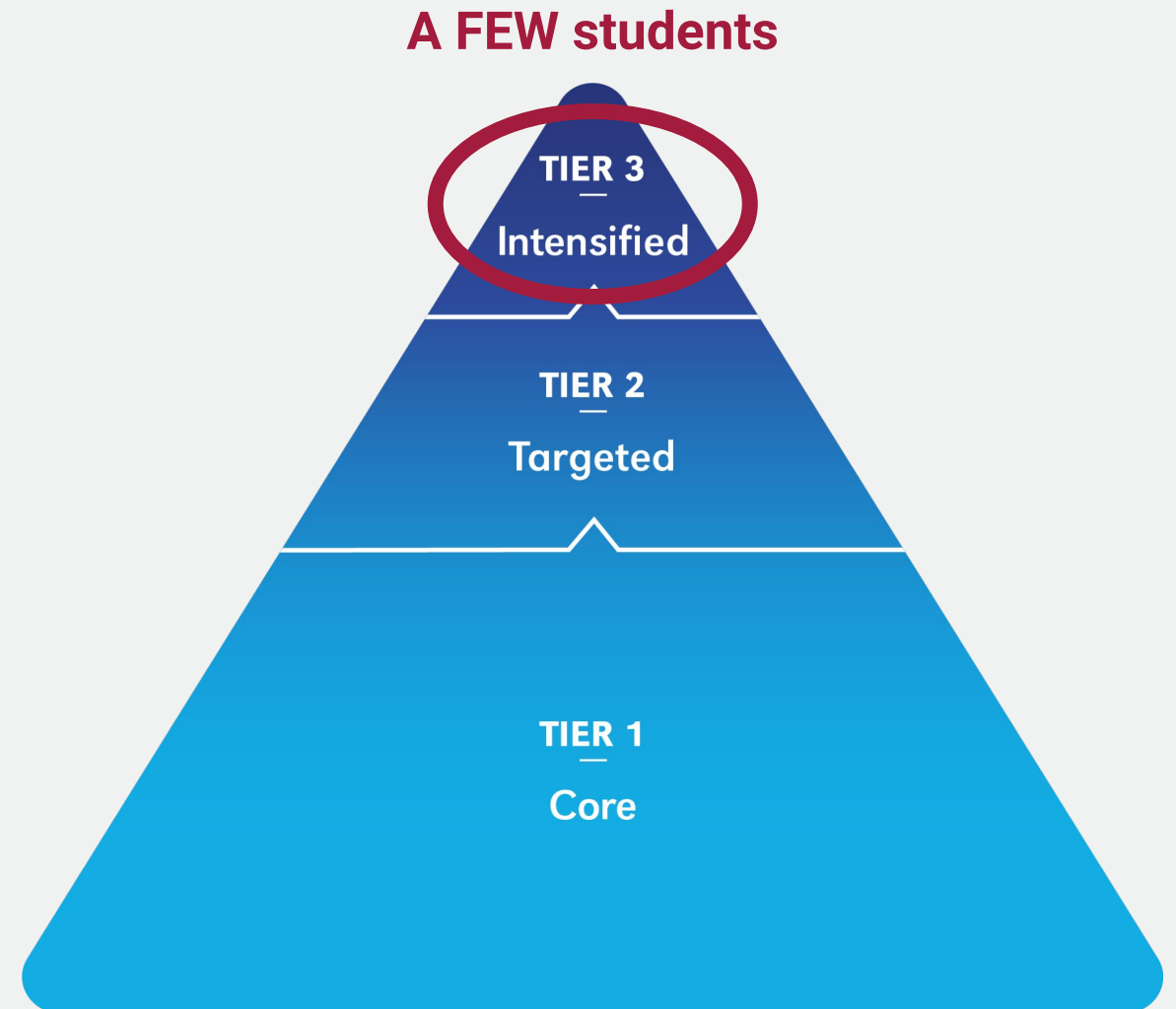
Family & Community Engagement
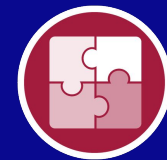
- **Connect families** to **housing stability supports**

- Facilitate **access** to **mental health services**

- Collaborate to **eliminate systemic**, **community barriers** that may exist

  - e.g. establishing uniform closets, improving access to health care, launching walking school buses, providing tutoring, offering mentoring, developing morning or afterschool care and other approaches.

Resources
- **Nebraska Network of Care**
- **211**
- **MyLink App**

Optimistic Closure

What's shifted in your thinking as a result of attending this session?

What is something that you see is in your control to address chronic absenteeism?

Contact Info

Shirley Vargas

Administrator, School & District Support

shirley.vargas@nebraska.gov

Brooke Gebers

NeMTSS Region 3 Support Lead

bgebers@esu1.org

Resources

- [NeMTSS Framework Document](#)
- [Everyday Counts! - Educational Leaders Handout](#)
- [Attendance Works](#)
- [NeMTSS SEBL: Supporting Student Attendance Webinar](#)
- [Rule 2 - Uniform System of Accounting - Attendance (pg. 8)](#)