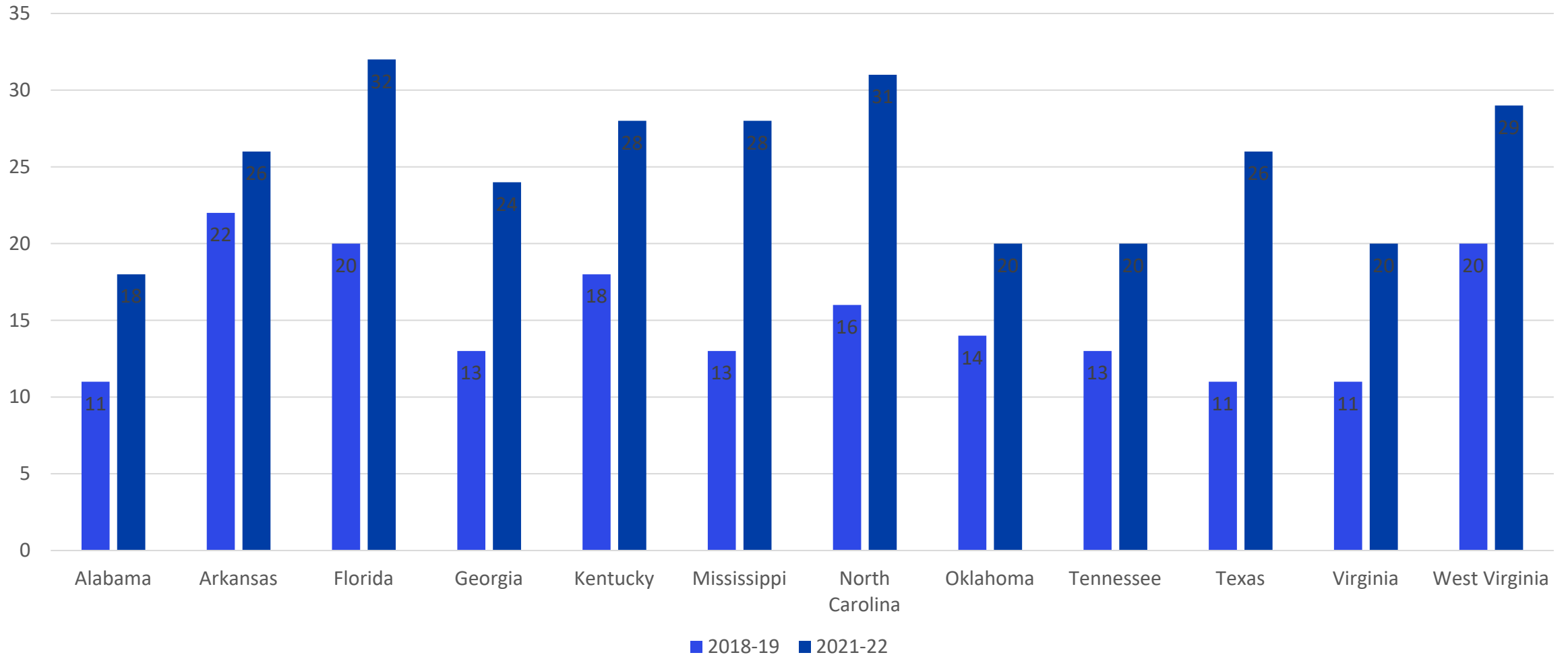


State Policy and Student Absenteeism

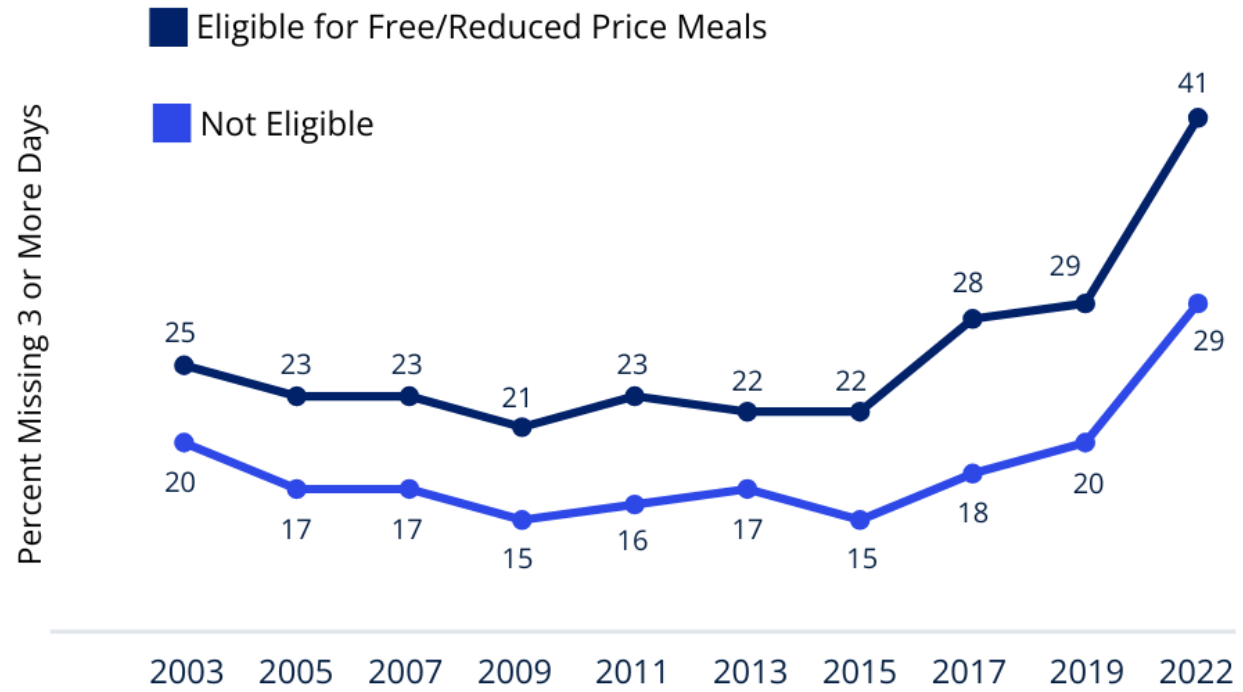


Rising Rates of Chronic Absenteeism



Absenteeism Rates Among NAEP Test Takers

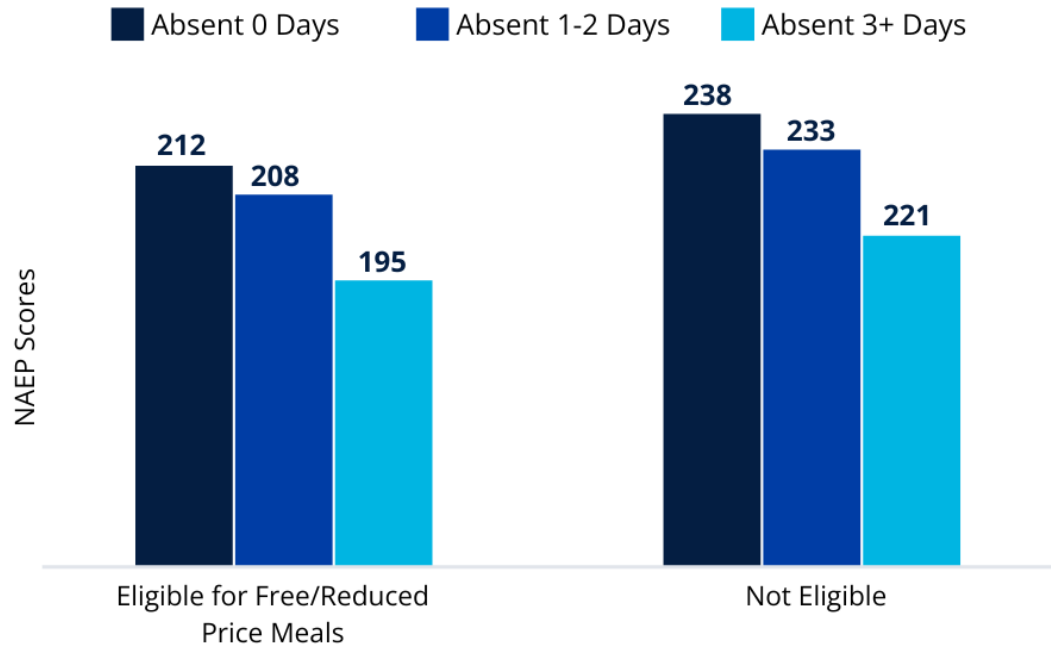
Percent of 4th Grade Test-takers Absent 3 or More Days in the Month Prior to NAEP, 2003-22



Source: NAEP Data Explorer via Alan Ginsburg

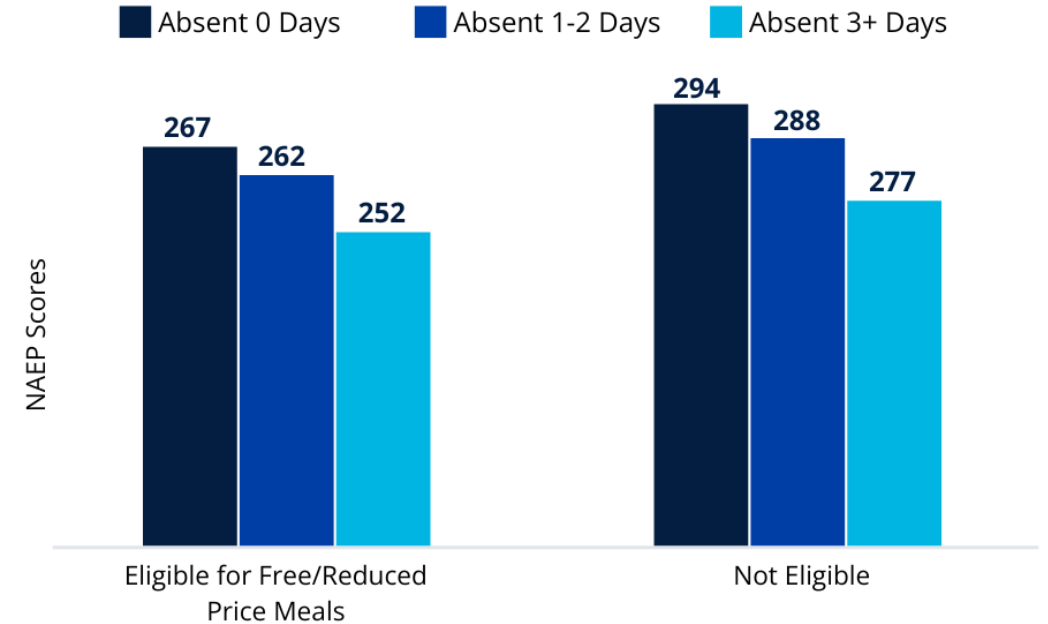
Absenteeism Linked to Lower Scores

NAEP 4th Grade Reading Scores by Test-takers' Days Absent in the Prior Month, 2022



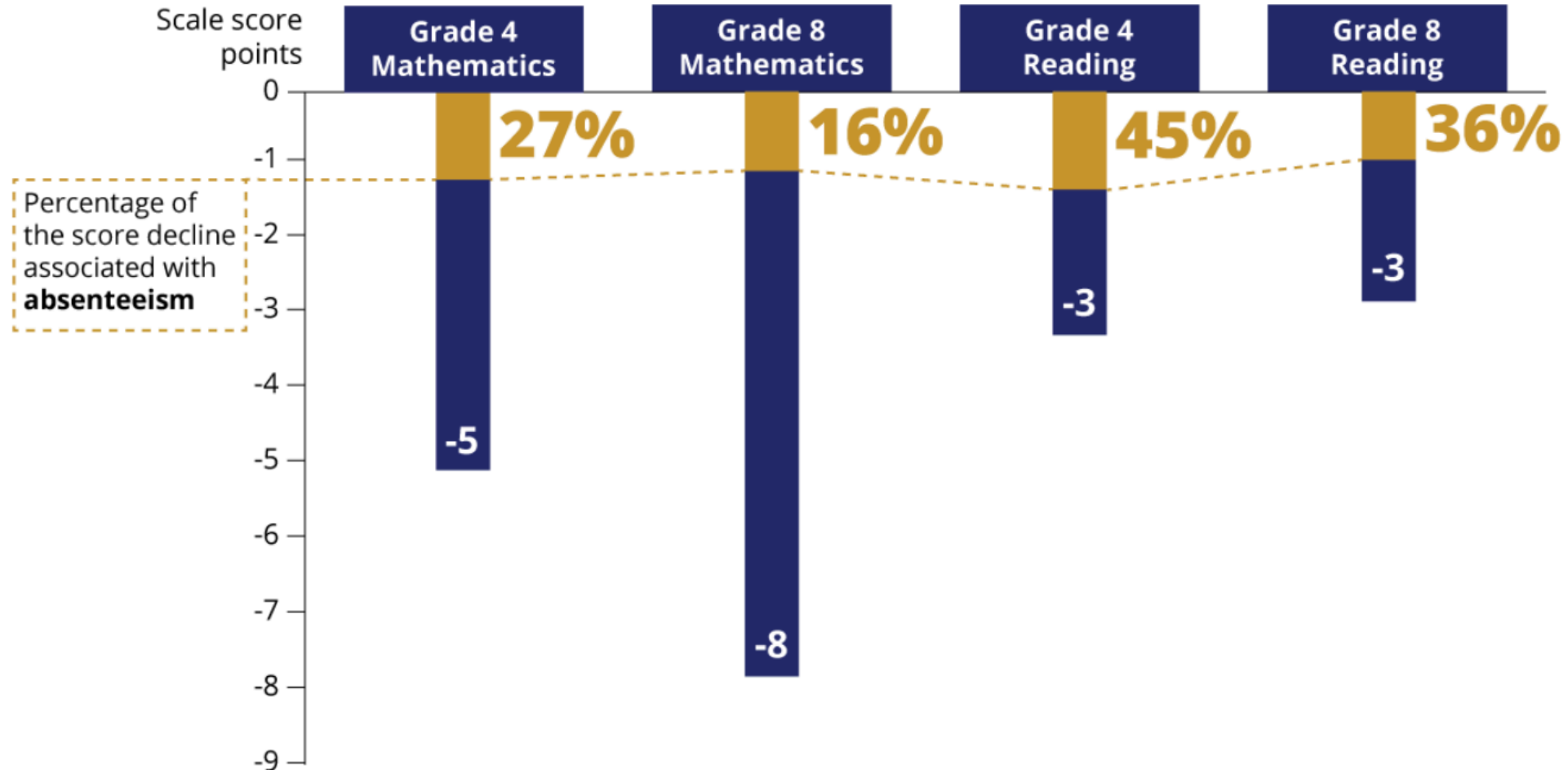
Source: NAEP Data Explorer via Alan Ginsburg
 NAEP is reported on a scale of 0-500. Researchers consider 10-12 points equal to a year of learning.

NAEP 8th Grade Math Scores by Test-takers' Days Absent in the Prior Month, 2022



Source: NAEP Data Explorer via Alan Ginsburg
 NAEP is reported on a scale of 0-500. Researchers consider 10-12 points equal to a year of learning.

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



Lessons from the Pandemic

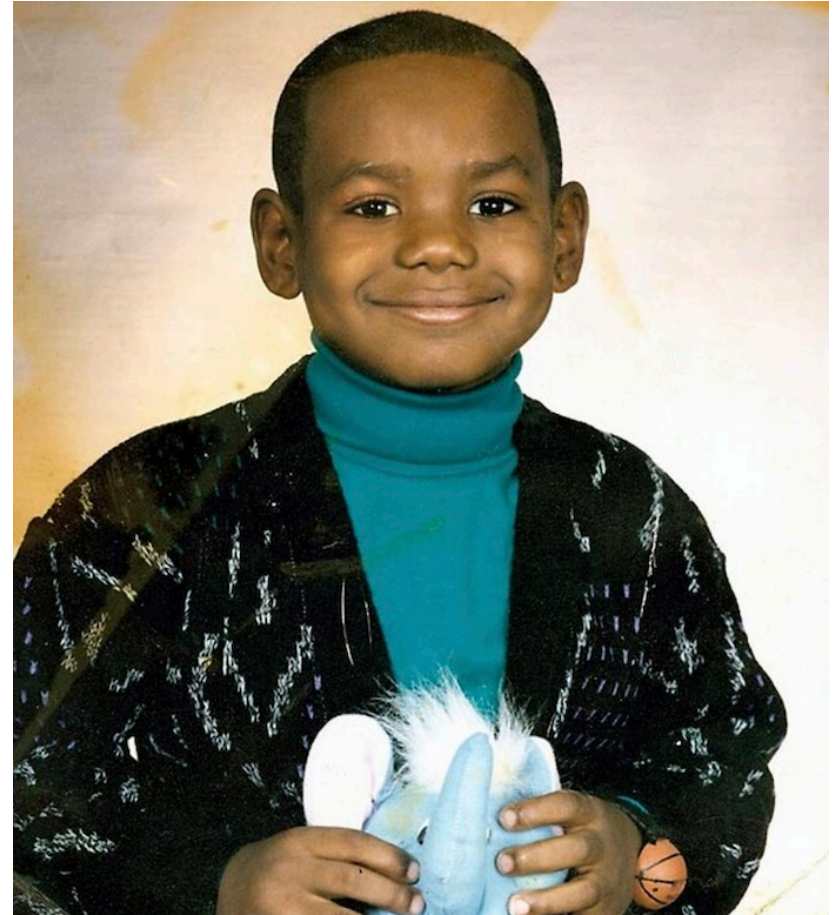
- Chronic absenteeism rates **doubled** and remain high
- Turning these trends around is **central** to addressing learning loss and student mental health
- **Barriers**, like transportation, health and housing, persist and in some places are worse
- School needs to be a **safe, welcoming place** for students and families.
- **Connection**—to teachers, peers, classrooms, and activities—is key to improving attendance
- Student and families want a **voice** in the classrooms and decision-making process

Attendance Barriers: Housing Instability

- Homeless students have chronic absenteeism, double that of other students
- Nationally rates are higher among students in shelters vs. those doubled up with families

Solutions:

- Coordinators at schools/shelters
- Wrap-around services/ Community Schools
- Transportation options



Attendance Barriers: Transportation

- Missing the school bus can mean missing school for students with unreliable transportation
- Heavy traffic and community violence can keep students from getting to school
- Transit passes work if bus and trains run on schedules



Solutions

- Targeted transportation
- Safe Passage
- Walking School Bus
- Public transit passes

Attendance Barriers: Student Health

- Nationwide, illness is the No.1 cause of absenteeism, especially asthma, which accounts for 14 million missed days annually
- Unhealthy buildings—with mold, mildew or poor ventilation—can contribute to illness
- Mental health concerns can lead to misconduct and school refusal—causing more absenteeism



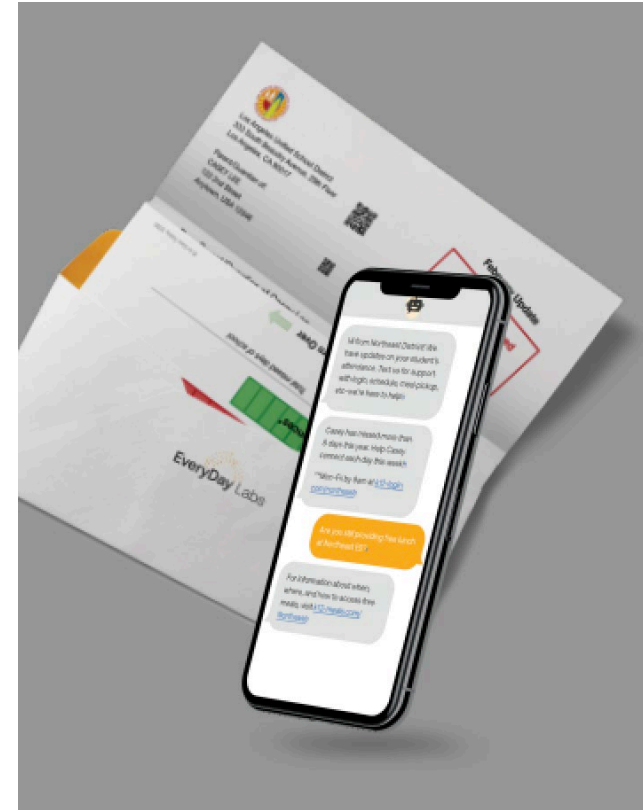
Solutions

- Attention to asthma
- Immunization clinics
- Handwashing protocols
- Telehealth

Communicating With Families

Direct, personalized outreach to families—through letters or texts—can reduce absenteeism.

- Research shows families don't know how much school their children have missed
- A combination of letters and texts seem to work best
- Focus on empathy, how the school can help families, rather than punitive messages
- Send repeated communications notices throughout the year



Targeted Home Visits

During the pandemic, some districts began targeting home visits to families of students with high rates of absenteeism.

Connecticut's \$10.7 million LEAP program:

- Reached 8,700 students in 15 districts
- Led to a 15 percentage-point increase in attendance after 6 months



Connecting with Teachers, Mentors

Connections to teachers, tutors and mentors can influence attendance—and, with it, academic success

What Matters:

- Knowing the teacher from past years
- Working in small groups or advisories
- Fair discipline practices
- A diverse workforce



Instruction That Matters

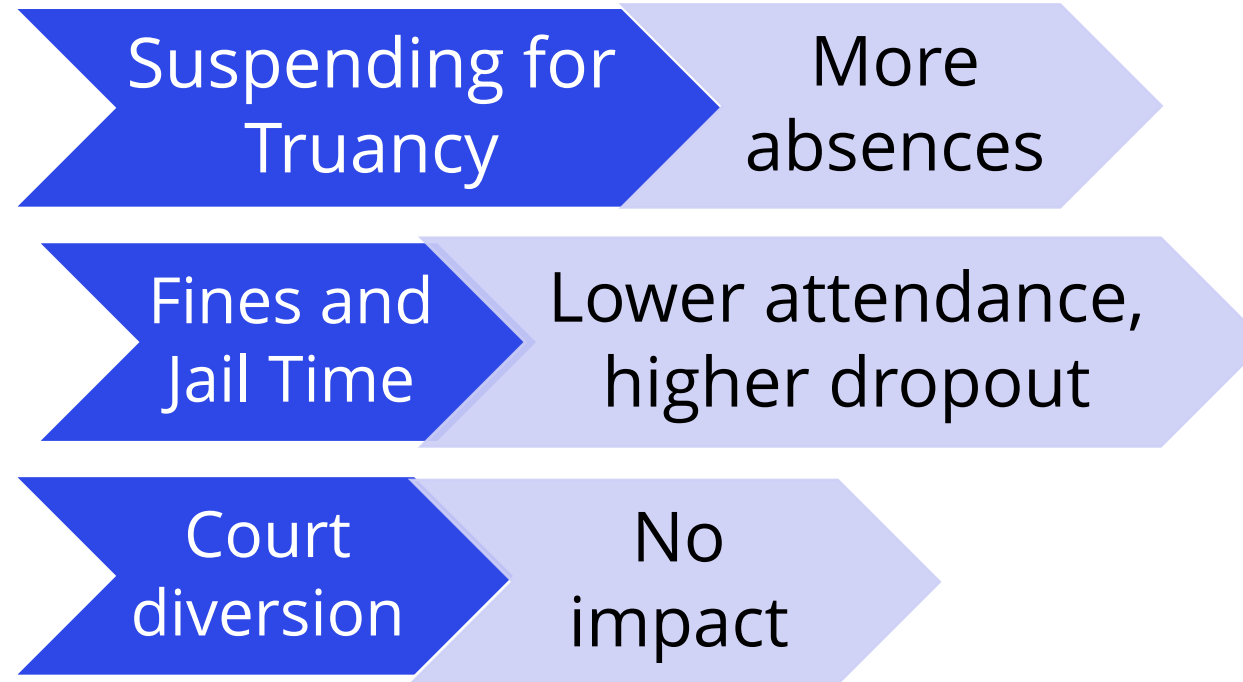
Students become more engaged when they believe what they're learning matters.

This works best when interventions:

- Help students see the relevance of lessons
- Connect to a students' culture
- Offer a viable career track
- Offer students a voice



What Doesn't Work: Punitive Approaches

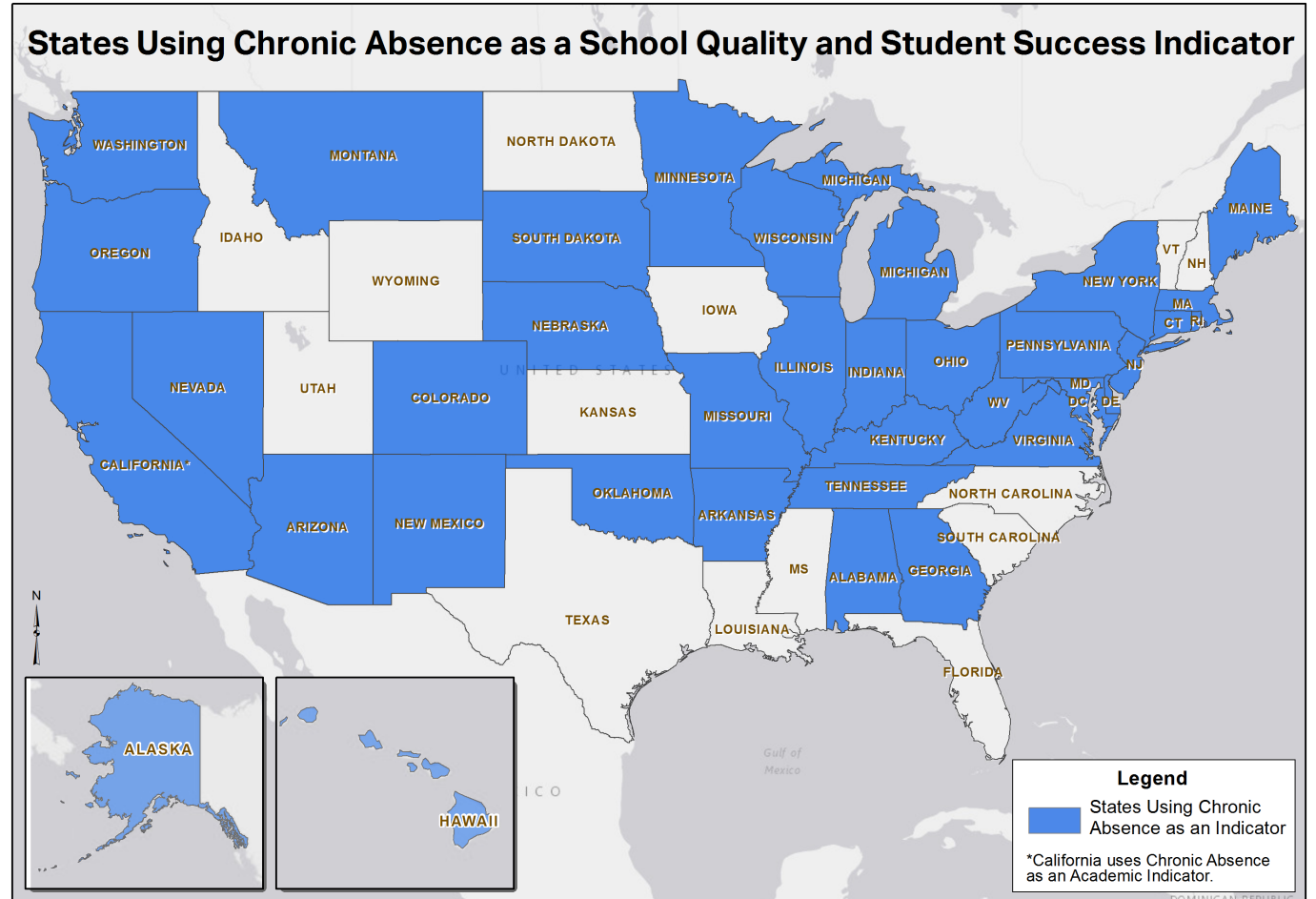


What States Can Do



Build absenteeism into accountability systems

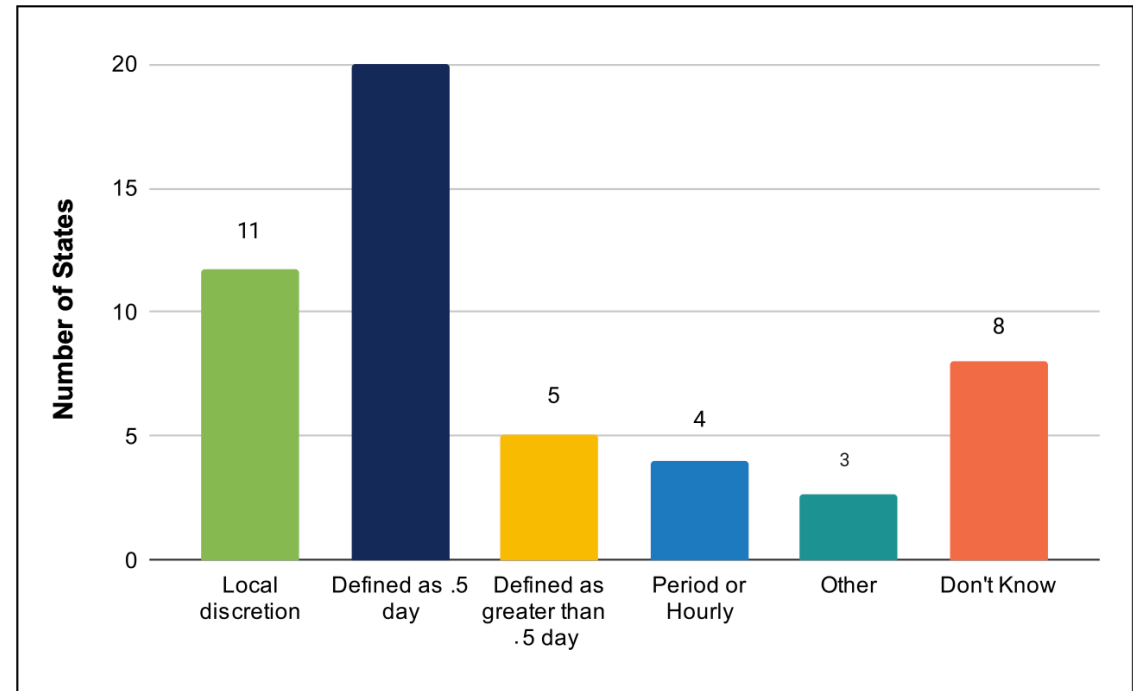
ESSA's requirement for a nonacademic indicator led 36 states and D.C. to include chronic absenteeism as a metric in state accountability rubrics



Define chronic absenteeism & its terms

- 42 states define chronic absenteeism as missing 10% of the school year.
- 20 states define an absence as missing at least 1/2 the school day, in line with the federal definition.

Figure 1: Definition of Day of Attendance for In-Person



Promote public reporting/analysis of data

- ESSA requires data to be publicly reported as part of state and local report cards, but states determine what disaggregated data to share
- Only **18 states** currently break down chronic absenteeism by grade level on their websites; **20** include homeless status.
- **California, Indiana, Illinois, New Mexico** and **Oklahoma**, among others, have legislation requiring districts to report data and make data available publicly

Require attendance teams & plans

- [Connecticut](#), [Maine](#), and [New Jersey](#) require schools with high rates of student absenteeism to set up attendance teams that analyze the data and brainstorm solutions for improving attendance
- [Nevada's](#) 2023 legislation requires an advisory board in each county to support districts on attendance.
- [Illinois](#) and [New Mexico](#) specify that districts use a multi-tiered system of supports for dealing with absenteeism.

Limit punitive approaches to truancy

- **Texas** decriminalized truancy in 2015 and required districts to provide behavior improvement plans, school-based community service, or counseling referrals.
- **Ohio** in 2016 required districts to provide truancy intervention plans.
- **California** in 2020 made it harder to send truant students to juvenile court.
- **Utah's** 2023 bill requires juvenile services to build in evidence-based practices to reducing absenteeism

Roles for state education agencies

- Provide information and technical assistance on evidence-based practices, especially districts with problematic attendance rates
- Look for bright spots and share their strategies with other districts
- Disaggregate data and share publicly on report cards
- Share actionable data with LEAs, giving comparisons to similar districts with similar demographics.

QUESTIONS?

