



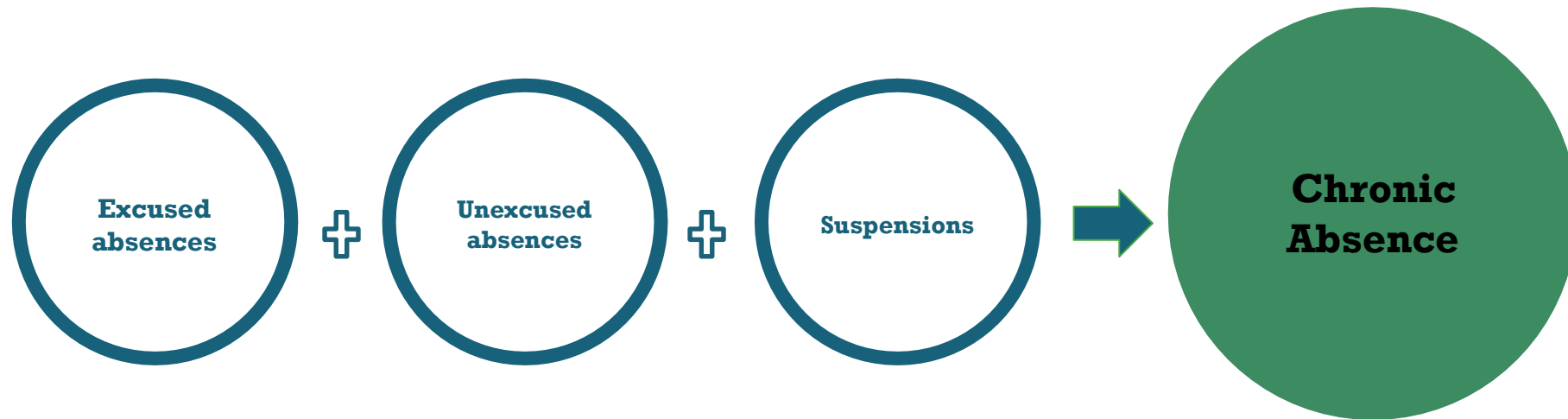
Why Addressing Chronic Absence Matters More Than Ever





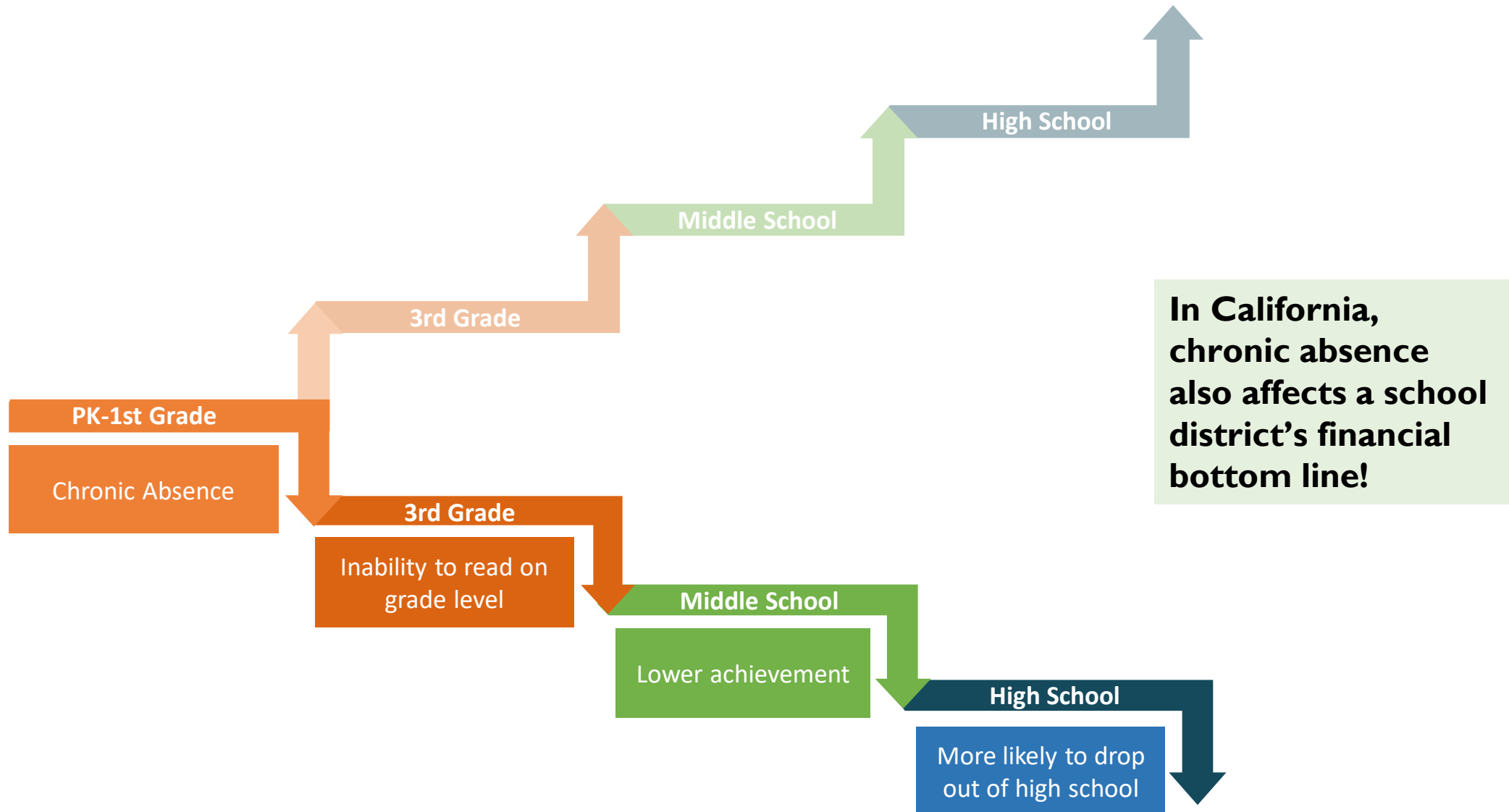
What is Chronic Absence ?

Chronic absence is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. California defines chronic absence as **missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason.**



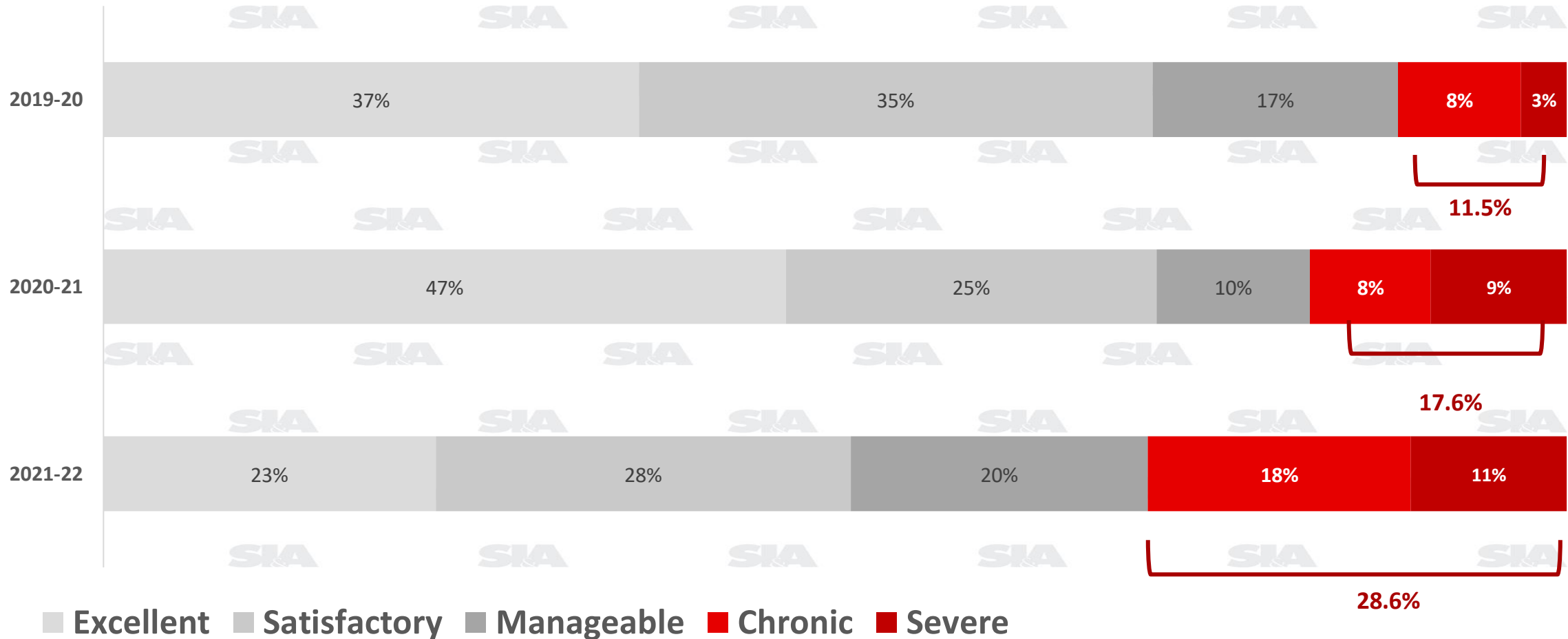
Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).

Why Addressing Chronic Absence Matters



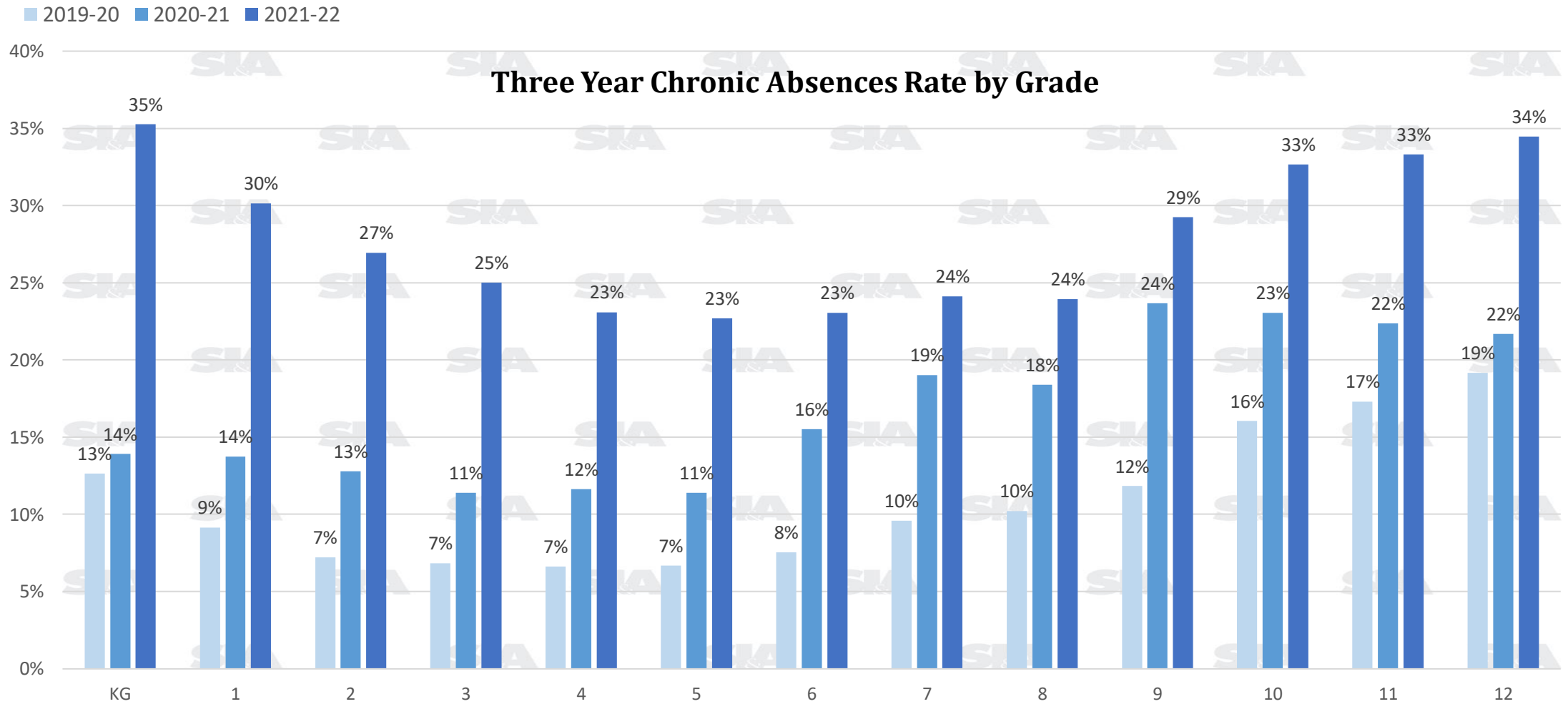
In California, chronic absence also affects a school district's financial bottom line!

The Attendance Crisis Has Gotten Worse

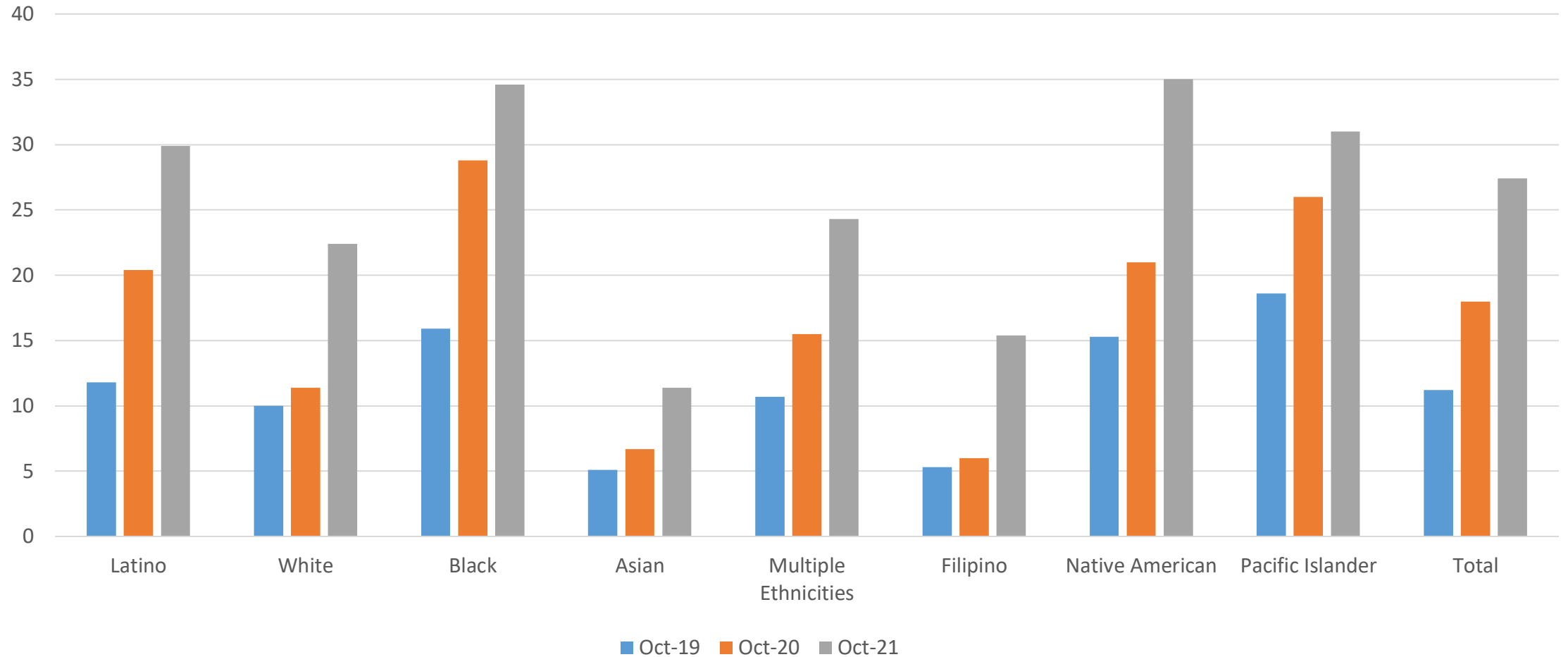


Source: School Innovations and Achievement (SI&A) California Chronic Absenteeism Analysis, October 31, 2021
 Shared with Permission. <https://www.sia-us.com/resources>

Chronic Absences Are Far Worse in Every Grade



Chronic Absence Disproportionately Affects Students of Color



Source: School Innovations and Achievement (SI&A) California Chronic Absenteeism Analysis, October 7, 2021
Shared with Permission, <https://www.sia-us.com/resources>

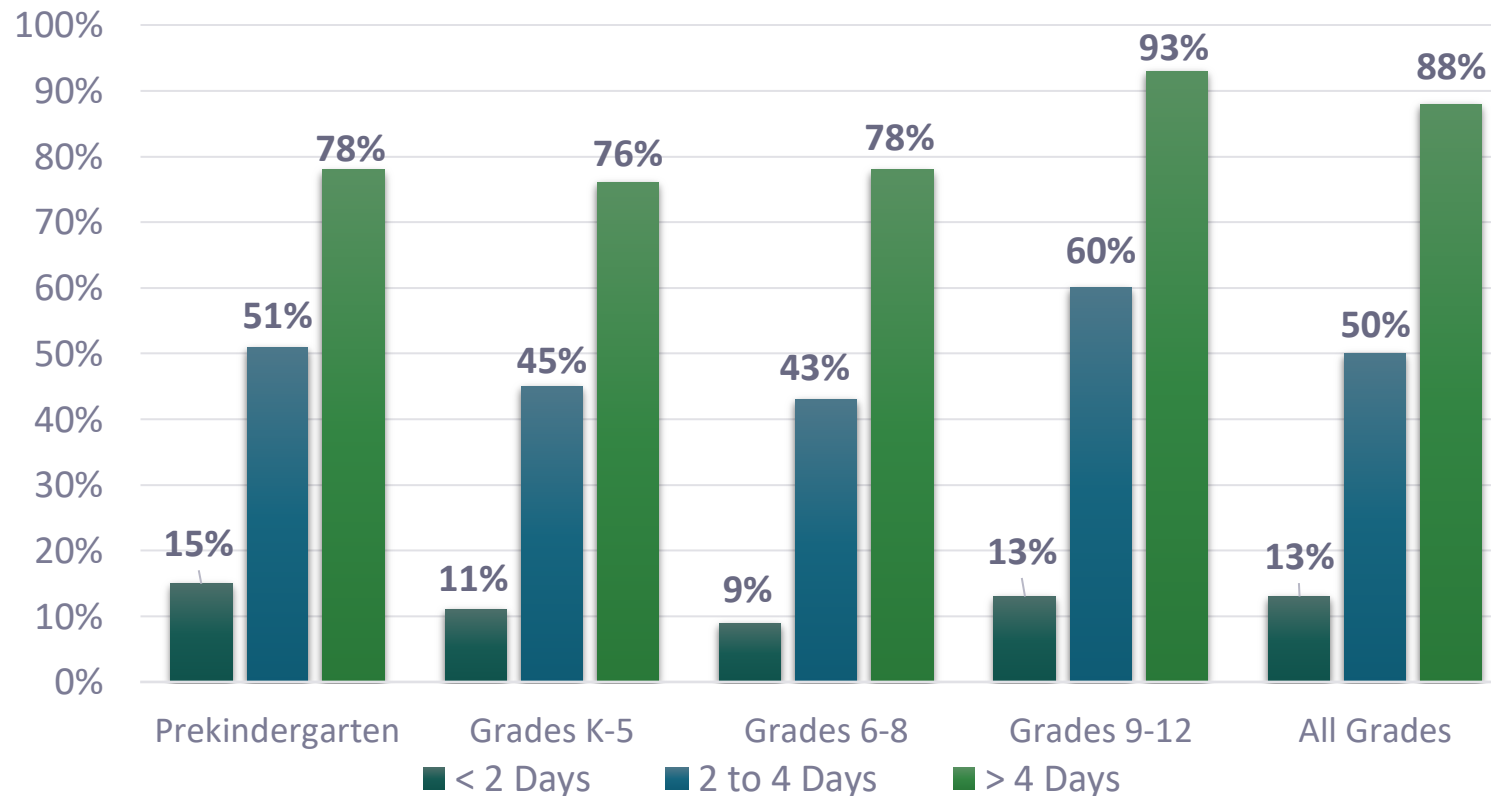
Attendance is Even More Challenging in Fall 2021-22

- ✓ **The surge in Covid-19 cases is increasing the number of students who are absent.**
- ✓ **Returning to in-person school is difficult after so many months of remote learning.**
- ✓ **Many older students are struggling to balance school with family and work responsibilities especially in communities hard hit by the pandemic.**
- ✓ **Chronic absence in the first months of school is especially problematic for learning, relationships and routines.**



The First Month of School Predicts Chronic Absence

- Baltimore students who missed 2-4 days of school in September were **5 times** as likely to be chronically absent.
- Students who missed 5 or more days of school in September were **16 times** as likely to be chronically absent.





Solutions Require Understanding What Factors Contribute to Chronic Absence

Barriers

- Chronic and acute illness
- Family responsibilities or home situation
- Trauma
- Poor transportation
- Housing and food insecurity
- Inequitable access to needed services
- System involvement
- Etc. and many more!

Aversion

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

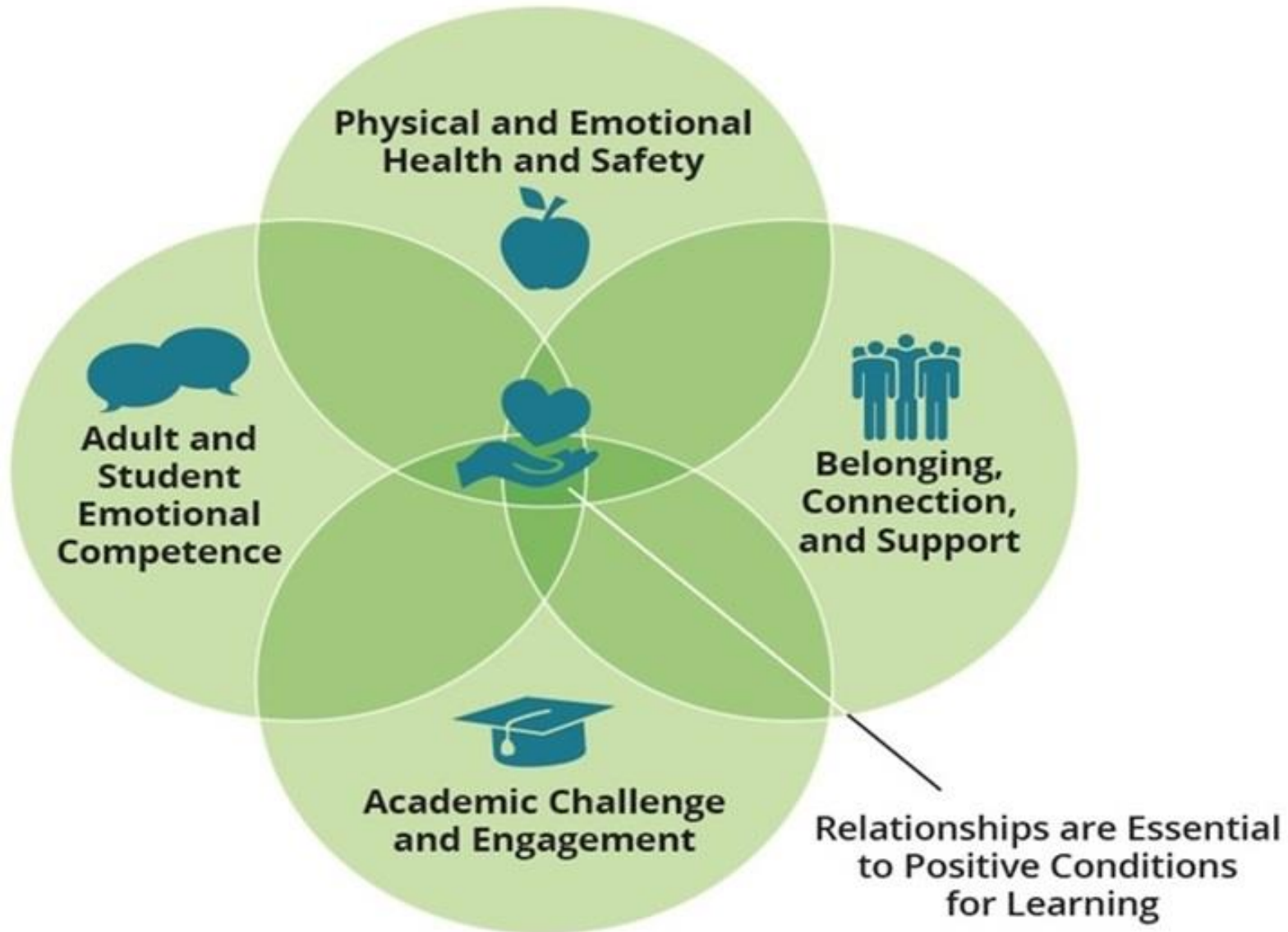
Disengagement

- Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction
- Bored
- No meaningful relationships to adults in the school
- Lack of enrichment opportunities
- Lack of academic and behavioral support
- Failure to earn credits

Misconceptions

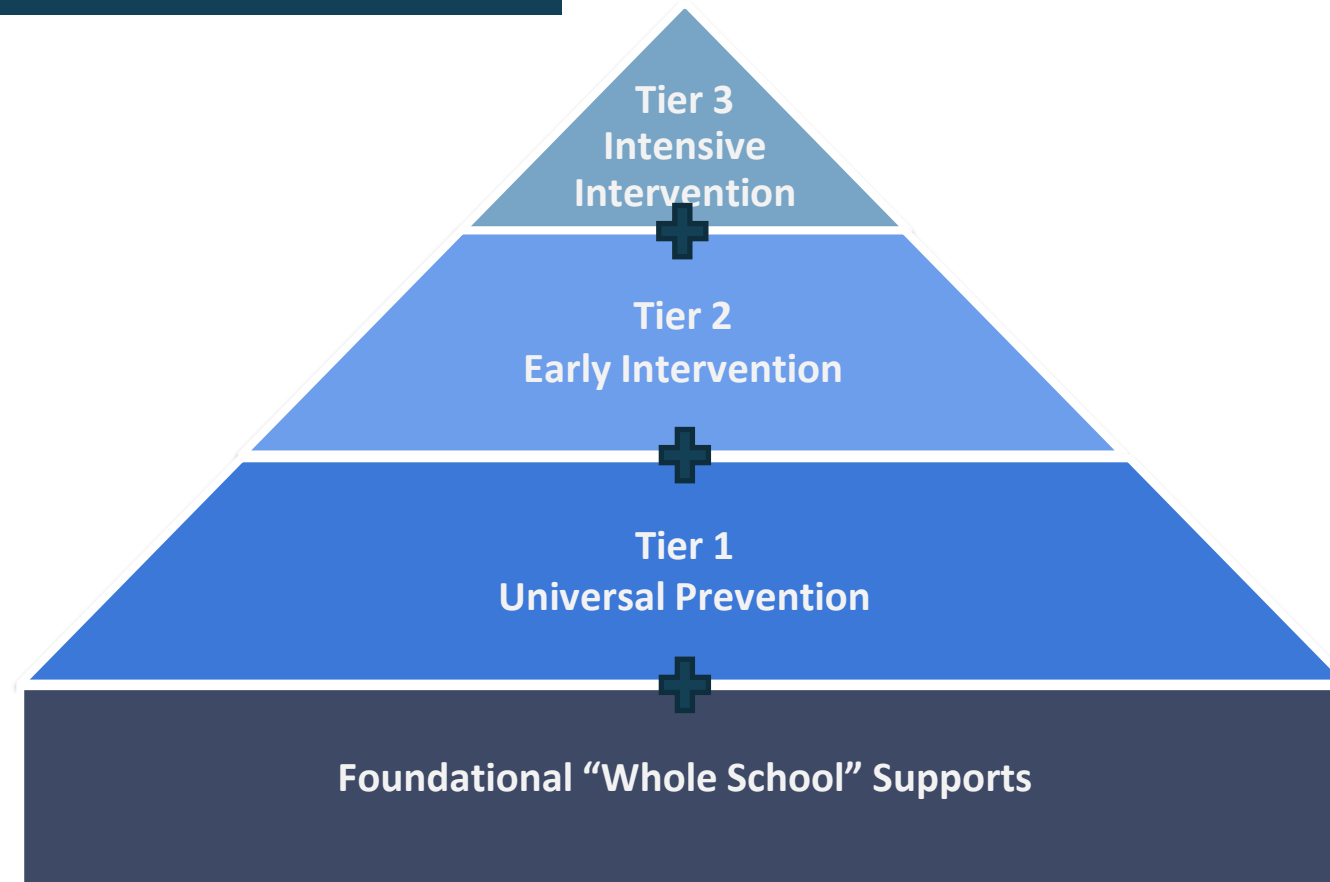
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning
- Sporadic absences aren't a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades
- Suspensions don't count as absence

High Levels of Chronic Absence Reflect A Lack of Positive Conditions for Learning





When Tackling Absenteeism, Take a Multi-Tiered Approach Beginning with Prevention



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



Foundational Supports are Building Blocks of Schools that Promote Engagement

| | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Healthy learning environments | Enrichment activities and clubs | Positive relationships | Active family and student engagement |
| Access to tech equipment and connectivity | Challenging and Engaging Curriculum | Traditions and celebrations | Support for families to facilitate learning at home |
| Welcoming, safe school climate | Advisories or Morning Meetings to Build Community | Learning Supports | Access to Food and Other Basic Needs |

Foundational “Whole School” Supports

Implications for Action

1. Left unchecked, chronic absence trends likely to lead to increases in the dropout rate and lower enrollment in public schools.
2. Attention to engagement and attendance (and ensuring learning opportunities during quarantine) during the second half of the 2021-22 school year are critical to slowing the rate of absenteeism.
3. Using chronic absence data to target resources to the student groups most affected is critical to reducing gaps in access to instruction and engagement.
4. Opportunity to use budget surplus to scale and sustain evidence-based strategies both in the short-term and the long-term.
5. We need to expand the people (youth, families, expanded learning providers, community partners, public agencies) who partner with educators to support chronically absent students and families.