
HB 4002:

Chronic Absenteeism Statewide Plan

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STATEWIDE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM PLAN

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STATEWIDE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 Oregon Legislature enacted House Bill 4002 which directed the Department of Education (ODE) and the Chief Education Office (CEdO) to jointly develop a statewide education plan to address chronic absences of students in the public schools of this state. HB 4002 also specified elements of the plan and directed the two agencies to collaborate with representatives of the Department of Human Services, the Oregon Health Authority, the Early Learning Division and community and education stakeholders.

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

In the 2015-16 school year, nearly 102,000 students in Oregon or more than one in six children were chronically absent from school. Nationally, Oregon consistently ranks within the bottom 20 percent of states for chronic absenteeism rates.

Chronic absenteeism in Oregon has a disproportionate impact on specific populations: Oregon's Indian Tribes; students with disabilities; students of color; students experiencing economic disadvantage and; students who have received at least one out- of- school suspension. Chronic absenteeism is a concern for students in every grade, with higher rates in kindergarten and 1st grade and then again across all high school grades. These high absenteeism rates lead to devastating outcomes such as, students dropping-out, low graduation rates, and even juvenile justice contacts.

Chronic absenteeism is a complex issue that requires a thoughtful and complex response. Schools and students cannot fix this problem alone. Cross-sector partnerships with local and state health agencies, community based organizations, community and business members, with families must be leveraged to provide essential wrap around support to address the root causes of chronic absenteeism for all students. Creating these partnerships and welcoming school environments can impact absenteeism rates, as well as high school graduation, school discipline, and academic performance [2] [3] [4] [5]. Best and promising practices are most successful when they are systematically applied with knowledge of the local context.

Recommendations

- 1. State level support for local action to decrease chronic absenteeism and improve high school graduation**
 - Adopt statewide definition of chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of schools days in an academic calendar year for any reason including excused, unexcused and disciplinary exclusion.
 - Increase access to data, resources and technical assistance to address chronic absenteeism.

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- Develop and execute an awareness campaign that focuses positively on attendance and Attendance Awareness Month.
 - Support the development of regional consortiums to plan for addressing chronic absenteeism through their local context.
- 2. Schools and Districts will effectively use data with key partners to engage in collaborative decision making to decrease chronic absenteeism and improve high school graduation**
- Create, purchase or enhance existing data systems to track, monitor and address chronic absenteeism.
 - Create or leverage existing teams to analyze and respond to real time chronic absenteeism data.
 - Review and develop implementation plans for state and district/school policies related to attendance.
 - Increase the number of meaningful partnerships between schools/districts, local state agencies, community organizations, especially culturally specific organizations.
- 3. Schools and Districts will provide inclusive, welcoming, and engaging learning environments that support every student**
- Adopt a Multi-tiered System of Support as a mechanism for providing preventative universal and targeted support to decrease chronic absenteeism and maintain good attendance for all students.
 - Offer relevant content and course offerings aligned to college and career readiness paths that are culturally responsive and engaging.
 - Review and develop procedures based on best practices to eliminate discipline disparities.
- 4. Statewide Development and support for educators to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve high school graduation**
- Increase educator professional development for culturally responsive practices, engaging and career relevant curriculum, and multi-tiered systems of support.
 - Increase diversity in the educator workforce.
- 5. Provide learning environments that address health related barriers and opportunities to decrease chronic absenteeism and improve high school graduation.**
- Assure that school environments are healthy and conducive to learning with implementation of school health mandates and use of health norms that support and protect student mental and physical health
 - Utilize school health services and develop partnerships with coordinated care organizations and community health providers, to address barriers to attendance and achievement
-

Plan Framework

The Chronic Absenteeism Plan is organized around the five elements specified in H.B. 4002. Specific actions and recommendations to address chronic absenteeism are included for each element of H.B. 4002. The recommendations in this executive summary are both explicitly and implicitly presented across the five elements of H.B. 4002 within the plan.

INTRODUCTION

While great effort is put into improving teaching methods and materials, the simple truth is that none of it matters if students are not in the classroom to receive it. Too many Oregon students are missing too many days of schools for a wide variety of reasons.

House Bill 4002

Recent research that found a significant number of students missing school prompted legislators to act. House Bill 4002 (2016) directed the Department of Education and the Chief Education Office to collaborate with representatives of the Department of Human Services, the Oregon Health Authority, the Early Learning Division and community and education stakeholders to develop a statewide education plan to address chronic absences of students in Oregon schools.

From HB 4002:

The plan shall include:

- *A process for publicly disclosing annual information on chronic absence rates for each school.*
- *Guidance and best practices for all schools and school districts to use to track, monitor and address chronic absences and improve attendance.*
- *A process for identifying schools in need of support to reduce chronic absences and improve attendance.*
- *A description of technical assistance available to schools identified as being in need of support, including technical assistance that will be provided by the department or the office.*
- *The estimated costs associated with implementing the plan.*

HB 4002 was signed into law by Governor Brown March 29, 2016 and requires the plan to be submitted to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2016.

Oregon has a tremendous opportunity to impact attendance at the student, community, and state level with the passage of House Bill 4002. House Bill 4002 charges the Department of Education and the Chief Education Office along with partners in the Department of Human Services, Oregon Health Authority, Early Learning Division, and other community and educational stakeholders to write a statewide plan to address chronic absenteeism in public schools (House Bill 4002). Since June of 2016 stakeholders and experts have been meeting to devise a systematic plan to address the issue of absenteeism across our state.

Stakeholders that participated in the development of the plan include Confederation Oregon School Administrators; Stand for Children; Oregon Business Association; Children's Institute; the Oregon

Education Association; and attendance specialists from Oregon school districts. Critical to the development and subsequent success of the Chronic Absenteeism State Plan were the voices of school administrators, teachers, classified school staff, parents, Oregon community members, community-based organization and most importantly, students themselves. Capturing perspectives across groups and individuals was done via survey, interactive presentations, and one-to-one and small group interviews. What has resulted is a comprehensive plan that includes detailed recommendations for reducing chronic absenteeism in the state of Oregon while simultaneously providing flexibility for response to the local context and future research.

In addition to stakeholder workgroup meetings, a three-part strategy was employed to receive further feedback and contributions from a broader range of stakeholders: the leadership team (comprised of ODE, The Chief Education Office and state contractor) met with agencies outside of the workgroup (i.e., non-profits, school district personnel, researchers, community-based organizations, etc); deployed a survey released across the state for educators, community members, and families to complete; and attended other targeted coalitions, workgroups, and conferences (e.g., Healthy Kids Learn Better, Safe and Civil Schools) all to gain perspective about current needs and to understand key practices and systems that are most likely to impact attendance across the state. The leadership team also completed a literature review and worked with national experts and researchers across the country to understand implementation efforts in other states and determine evidence-based and promising practices. As a result of these varied feedback methodologies, the state plan reflects an in-depth concentration of ideas outlined in a systemic framework to address absenteeism. The primary goal of the state plan is to set-up effective systems (i.e., coaching, teaming, leadership, professional development, visibility and awareness-building, data analysis, policy enabled practice, budget, and cross-sector collaboration) to enable the implementation of best practices in our local contexts across the state.

Why Attendance is Important

Chronic absenteeism is linked to a host of poor outcomes for students including low reading performance (Attendance Works, 2014), future discipline issues, low graduation rates (Belfanz & Byrnes, 2012), and drop-out (Belfanz at al., 2014; Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2010). In fact, chronic absenteeism rates are often our best predictors of on-time graduation rates and drop-out in Oregon and nationally; second only to grade point average. [8]; Belfanz ; Burke, 2015).

Chronically absent preschool and kindergarten students are more likely to have lower school readiness scores [1], lower reading performance scores [2] [3] lower math performance scores, [4] and are more likely to be retained in school [5]; broadening already existing achievement gaps further. These gaps in achievement and performance are widened as students with early chronic absenteeism issues often continue a pattern of absenteeism into subsequent grades [6]. Many researchers and educators now consider chronic absenteeism as the biggest and yet most widely ignored “red flag” impacting achievement and graduation [7] [8].

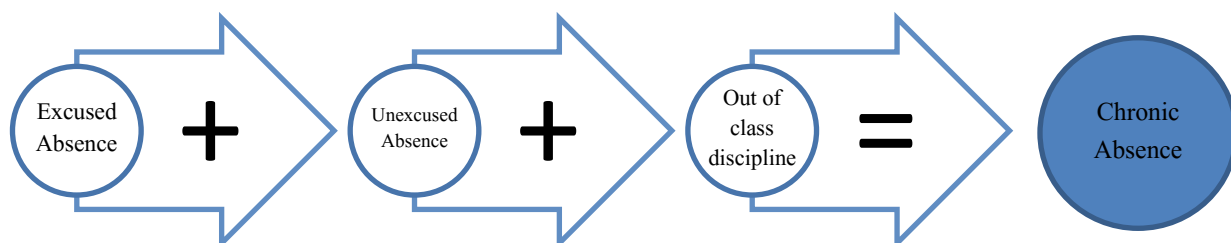
Oregon’s landmark education “40-40-20 Goal” was passed by the Oregon legislature in 2011 through SB 253. The goal stipulates that by 2025 all adult Oregonians will hold a high school diploma or equivalent, 40% will have an associate’s degree or a meaningful postsecondary certificate, and 40% will hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Although Oregon educators and policymakers are working hard to improve graduation rates and to reach the 40-40-20 goal, attaining the goal cannot be achieved without understanding and addressing the negative and pervasive impacts of chronic absenteeism. Absenteeism can particularly affect low income communities, students with disabilities, and students of color. Indeed, many of Oregon’s students facing the most extensive challenges in terms of graduating on-time are also chronically absent. Despite state, district, and school-wide reformations to use evidence-based practices, effective service delivery models, and systematic interventions, it is all for naught if the very students that need the most supports to be successful in school are not there.

The causes and functions of absenteeism are varied and complex. Absenteeism is typically symptomatic of larger issues for students such as difficulty with transportation; housing; bullying or other negative school experiences; or behavioral, mental, or physical health challenges. The root causes for absenteeism need to be addressed to support a child to get to school regularly, but a state-wide effort cannot focus on intervention alone. Prevention and universal support are essential so that all students feel safe, welcomed, healthy, and encouraged to attend school consistently.

What is “chronic absenteeism?”

Experts in the field define chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of school days and severe chronic absenteeism as missing 20 percent or more of school days, including excused, unexcused, and discipline-related absences [2] [5] [7] (see Figure 3). This definition is used at the National Technical Assistance Center to support attendance intervention, the state and national initiative, Attendance Works, and will be used with subsequent national data collection through the Office of Civil Rights [9]. For years, the issue of chronic absenteeism was not widely understood as most states, districts, and schools were not measuring it. Instead, many schools use the metric of “Average Daily Attendance” which can greatly mask the number of students who are chronically absent. For example, a school may have a daily attendance rate of 92 percent or higher while one in four students at the school are chronically absent).

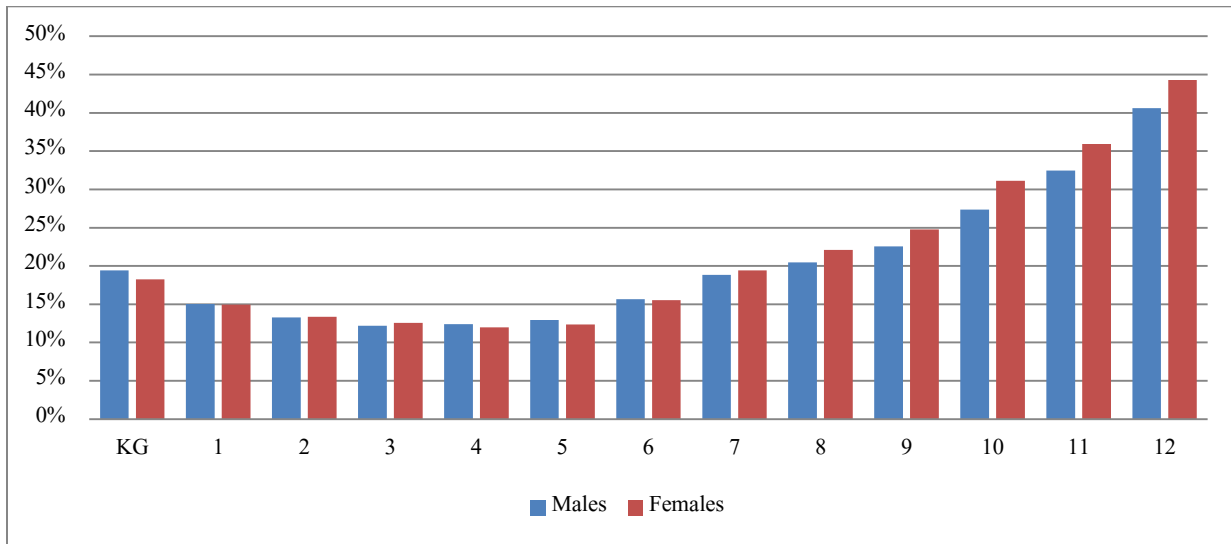
Figure 1: Chronic absenteeism is a measure of excused, unexcused and out-of-class discipline.



CHRONIC SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM IN OREGON

In the 2015-16 school year, nearly 102,000 students in Oregon or more than 1 in 6 children were chronically absent from school [10] (see Figure 1). Nationally, Oregon consistently ranks within the bottom 20% of states for chronic absenteeism rates [7] [11] [12]

Figure 2: Percent of Oregon students chronically absent in 2014-15 and 2015-16 [1].



Athena¹ is a 7th grade student attending an urban middle school in Oregon. Two years ago, in 5th grade, Athena's attendance rate was 72 percent. Athena rarely spoke. Although many people had tried to help her speak more and improve her attendance, it wasn't until I, the district attendance supervisor, intervened and began working with Athena and her family (that things improved). Athena's mom eventually revealed a traumatic experience from years earlier that was still viscerally affecting her perspective, and, hence, her life. We helped mom to better understand her trauma and we helped her to heal from these old wounds. At the same time, we began to intervene more strongly with Athena herself.

We made an incentive plan for her based upon daily attendance. We kept a notebook in her hand always, Although Athena still did not speak much, she could communicate well in writing. We listened to Athena and her needs and symptoms began to diminish.

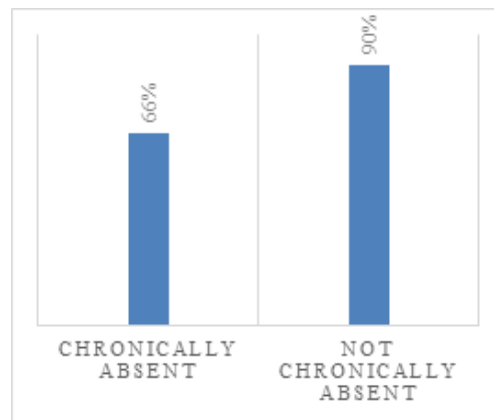
This year, we moved Athena to a new school, a new building and a new start. We have taken Athena and her mom shopping for new clothing and have provided them with basic needs including an alarm clock and a fan (to help dampen noises for Athena). At the time of this writing, Athena currently has an attendance rate of 92 percent and has not missed a day of school in almost a month! She is a happy and productive member of her school community.

Kenan Ginsberg
Attendance Specialist for the David Douglas School District

¹ Athena's name and photo have been changed to protect her identity. Her story is shared with permission.

In fact, chronic absenteeism rates are often our best predictors of on-time graduation rates (see *Figure 3*) and drop-out in Oregon and nationally; second only to grade point average [1].

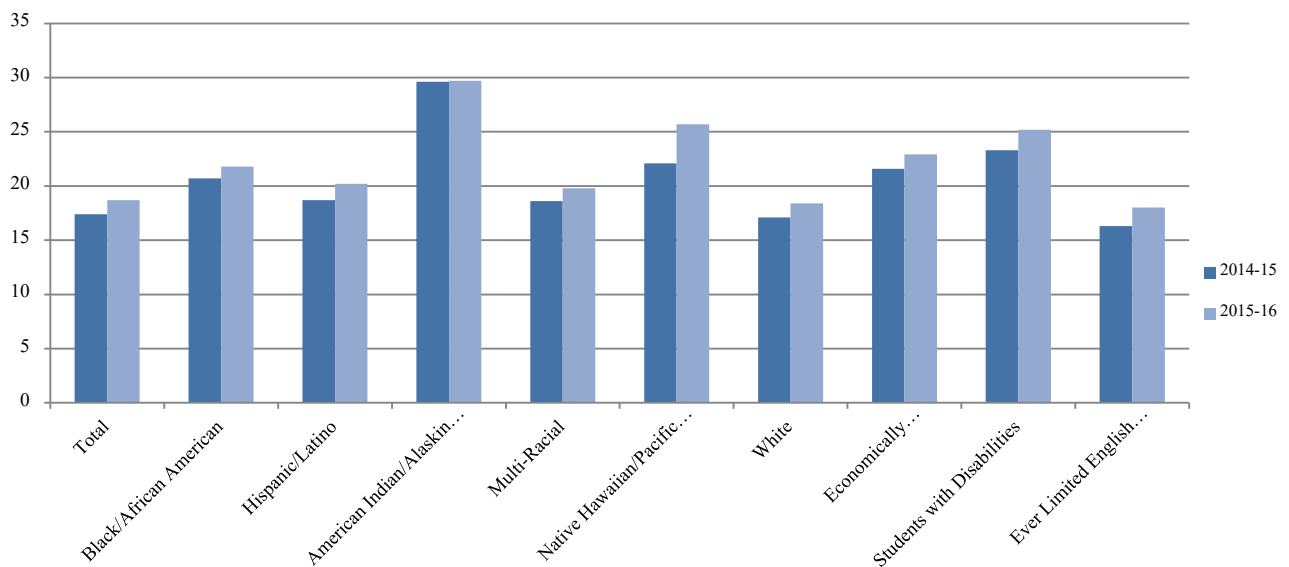
Figure 3: On-time Graduation rate by 12th grade attendance [1].



Populations Affected

Although high concentrations of students were found to be chronically absent in rural parts of the state, chronic absenteeism was also found in town, suburban and urban communities across the state. Oregon research indicates that certain populations are impacted disproportionately by chronic absenteeism. These populations include Oregon's Indian Tribes; students with disabilities; students of color, and students who are economically disadvantaged. There is also evidence that students who have experienced at least one incident of out-of-school suspension are more likely to be chronically absent. When schools do not intentionally address school climate, Oregon's Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, and Queer (LBGTQ) youth often experience bullying and harassment which leads to, chronic absenteeism for these individuals [13][17].

Figure 4: Oregon percent of students chronically absent across population groups, 2014-15 to 2015-16



In the Oregon Healthy Teen Survey (2010) LGBTQ youth were more likely to miss school in the last 30 days due to feeling unsafe at or on their way to school [14]. In terms of health factors, one in ten children in Oregon have asthma and Oregon's rate of asthma is in the top five states nationally [17]. Further, for children with absences related to illness, approximately 50% of those absences are due to asthma and related respiratory illness [17].

Why is Chronic Absenteeism a Problem?

Chronic absenteeism is linked to a host of poor outcomes for students including:

- low reading performance [3]
- discipline issues [15]
- dropping out of school [16] and;
- low graduation rates [15]

Chronically absent preschool and kindergarten students are more likely to have lower school readiness scores [1], lower reading performance scores [2] [3] lower math performance scores [4] and are more likely to be retained in school [5]; broadening already existing achievement gaps further. These gaps in achievement and performance are widened as students with early chronic absenteeism issues often continue a pattern of absenteeism into subsequent grades [6]. Many researchers and educators now consider chronic absenteeism as the biggest and yet most widely ignored “red flag” impacting achievement and graduation [7] [8]. Although chronic absenteeism rates are highest among 9th-12th grade students in Oregon, kindergarten absenteeism rates are the next highest [10]. Absenteeism in kindergarten can establish patterns that persist in later years.

State Law

The Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) and the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) codify the legal requirements for Oregon's school aged children and provide schools with the requirements for student attendance in Oregon.²

While school enrollment is not required before a child turns six (by September 1 of current school year), once a student has been enrolled they are required to attend regularly. Parents and guardians are required to send children between the ages of six and 18 who have not completed the 12th grade to school and maintain the child's regular attendance during the entire school year. To support this, Oregon has statutes that require districts to:

- Assign an Attendance Supervisor (ORS 339.040-.055)

² Oregon Revised Statutes: https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/Pages/ORS.aspx
Oregon Administrative Rules: http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/oregon_administrative_rules.aspx.

- Adopt attendance notification policies (ORS 339.071-.090)
- Adopt policies on discipline, suspension and expulsion related to attendance (ORS 329.250)

Oregon laws support regular school attendance and can be paired with best practices outlined in this report to improve student outcomes. Reviewing laws and policies and implementing existing requirements with fidelity, schools and districts can have a significant impact on reducing chronic absenteeism.

Funding Opportunities

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA (2015) calls for all states to adopt an indicator(s) for school accountability, other than academic achievement in math and language arts. This measure must assess school quality or student success and should allow the detection of meaningful differences between the performance of schools while also being reliable and scientifically valid. The factor of chronic absenteeism does meet or exceed ESSA's rigorous measurement selection criteria and can detect differences between high- and low- performing schools, is reliable and valid, and is comparable across schools statewide [17]. Chronic absenteeism is also a powerful early warning predictor and importantly is a measure that is already required by U.S. Department of Education reporting [9].

Oregon MTSS. In 2016, the Oregon Department of Education received notification of a federal grant award, known as Oregon MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support). This State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) provides funding for five years to support implementation of MTSS across several regions of the state. This funding will be used towards supporting regional and district level coaches as well as teams from districts and schools. In addition to literacy and behavior and school climate, building attendance support systems is an anticipated area of focus for schools and districts selected to participate in the grant.

Statewide Attendance Plan Connected to Initiatives for Improving High School Graduation Outcomes

A focus on student engagement and graduation is key to addressing Oregon's graduation rate. We know that student engagement can play a pivotal role in encouraging regular school attendance. Students that attend school regularly are **172% more** likely to graduate than those who do not [ODE, 2014]. Attendance is therefore critical towards the improvement of graduation rates.

Taking steps to meaningfully engage communities, families, students and our schools in developing culturally specific and responsive initiatives to address chronic absenteeism will have a great impact on Oregon's graduation outcomes. Successfully changing the trajectory of Oregon's bottom 20% national ranking on chronic absenteeism is an essential component of a comprehensive approach to improving Oregon's graduation rates.

Graduation Equity Fund. Governor Kate Brown has put forward a vision that *every Oregon student graduates with a plan for their future*. The Governor's Recommended Budget for 2017-19 proposes the

establishment of a Graduation Equity Fund to provide targeted resources for communities and schools to replicate and scale up effective strategies and programs to improve graduation outcomes for historically underserved students. In order to improve student attendance outcomes statewide from prekindergarten through grade 12, the Graduation Equity Fund would designate funding through the Chief Education Office and the Oregon Department of Education to regional partnerships to implement attendance strategies across communities consistent with this statewide plan. The Graduation Equity Fund provides an investment to support school and community collaborations and promising practices highlighted in this plan as well as the development of a statewide Early Warning System.

Measure 98 – High School Graduation and College and Career Readiness Act. In November 2016, Oregon voters passed Measure 98, which aims to designate funding to improve high school graduation and college and career readiness in Oregon. These funds are designated to establish and expand career technical education (CTE) programs, college-level educational opportunities and dropout-prevention strategies in all high schools. According to the measure, *Dropout-prevention strategies must include implementing activities designed to reduce chronic absenteeism.* As Measure 98 is implemented in Oregon, school districts will have the opportunity to apply resources to implement promising practices outlined in this plan to address chronic absenteeism and the high school level and, at the same time, positively impact graduation outcomes.

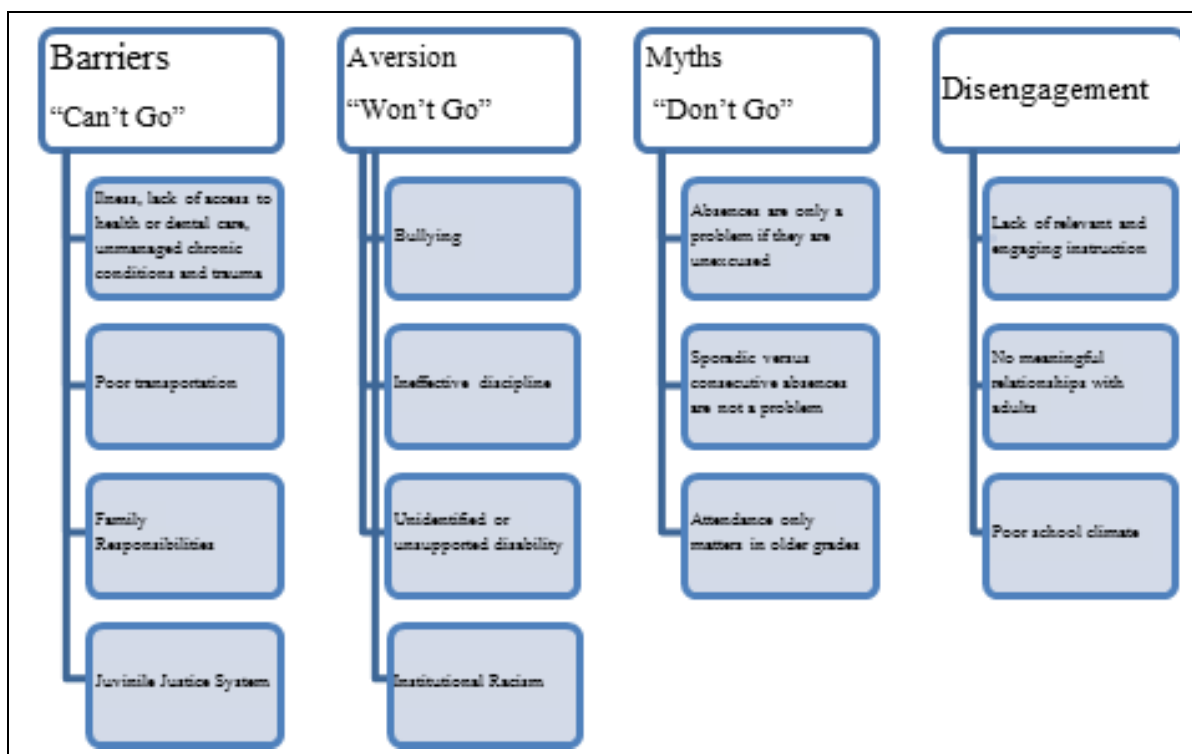
By bolstering these strategies to support students, it is anticipated that students in high school will remain more engaged in coursework and are more likely to graduate rather than drop out [17]. Engaging students through relevant career-focused courses and student support can make a meaningful difference in getting students to show-up daily and stay-in school [17] [13] [15]. Student support programs that may be supported by Measure 98 include the addition of tutors, guidance counselors, and mentors at the high school level along with the use of a data tracking system designed to identify students at risk of not graduating. These types of support are also linked to significant improvements in attendance in other regions across the country [7] [13]. In addition to addressing root causes for absenteeism (e.g., health and housing) it is clear our efforts across the state also need to address the importance of relevant curricula and coursework, mentoring and key student support relationships, and creating school environments that welcome and excite all students about being at school.

ROOT CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

The causes of absenteeism are varied and complex. Absenteeism is typically symptomatic of a larger issue for students such as difficulty with transportation; housing; or behavioral, mental, or physical health challenges. Students can also encounter many negative experiences at school that make regular attendance much less likely. Disproportionate discipline for students of color (including absences due to suspensions ; bullying, harassment, discrimination, lack of academic success in school, and lack of positive school climate and culture all can contribute to absenteeism . These issues are only further compounded for students who also experience difficulties outside of school (e.g., unstable or unsafe housing or chronic health conditions).

Researchers Robert Belfanz and Vaughn Byrnes (2012) divide the reasons students miss school into four broad categories (see Figure 4):

Figure 4: Reasons students do not attend school: barriers or “Can’t Go”; aversions or “Won’t Go”; myths or “Don’t Go” and disengagement [7].



- 1) **Barriers** - Students who cannot attend school due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, lack of medical or dental care, poor transportation, trauma, the need to work, or involvement with the juvenile justice system are absent because they are experiencing barriers or “Can’t Go” to school.
- 2) **Aversion** - Students who will not attend school to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment and embarrassment, at times due to a lack of culturally responsive teaching, an unidentified disability, and ineffective discipline. These students are experiencing aversion or “Won’t Go” to school.
- 3) **Myths** - Students who do not attend school because they, or their parents, do not see the value in being there, whose parents do not understand the importance of attendance in the early grades, have something else they would rather do, or no one stops them from skipping school accrue absences that are supported by myths and they “Don’t Go” to school.
- 4) **Disengagement** - Students who are disengaged from the school community, do not have a meaningful relationship with at least one adult in their school building, do not see relevance to their lives in the curriculum, and do not go to school because it has failed to engage them.

This framework offers a visual and practical way for districts and schools to map the root causes of chronic absenteeism at the local level and assist them in selecting preventative and targeted interventions. Schools and students need help to address this complex problem. Providing a representation of the barriers, aversion, myths and disengagement students experience may assist educators, parents, community members, cross sector and community-based organizations align their work to help reduce chronic absenteeism and improving graduation rates.

OREGON CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM STUDIES

Absenteeism can particularly affect low income communities, students with disabilities, and students of color. Indeed, many of Oregon's students facing the most extensive challenges in terms of graduating on-time are also chronically absent. Despite state and district efforts to use evidence-based practices, effective service delivery models, and systematic interventions, it is all for naught if the very students that need the most supports to be successful in school are not there. A number of Oregon-based studies on chronic absenteeism have been produced.

[Being in School Matters: A new report on chronic absenteeism in Oregon \(May 2016\)](#)

A report released by ECO Northwest in partnership with Attendance Works, The Chalkboard Project, and the Children's Institute analyzed absenteeism data during the 2009-10 school year in Oregon. Their analysis found that 23 percent of students were chronically absent. As with national data, the report showed that chronically absent students perform lower on reading measures across all grade levels. Students that were economically disadvantaged had significantly higher rates of absenteeism and by high school, 40 percent of students with economic disadvantages were chronically absent.

[The Connection between Missing School & Health: A Review of Chronic Absenteeism & Student Health in Oregon \(October 2014\)](#)

Understanding the various factors that may affect a student's attendance is crucial to creating statewide change. Upstream Public Health released a report that investigated the chronic physical, mental, and behavioral health conditions that lead students in Oregon to be absent from school and the impacts of absenteeism across the state. The report also provided some key recommendations that can be used to combat absenteeism including the following:

- (a) Ensuring the state uses a standard definition of "chronic absenteeism," and that data are publicly available;
- (b) Using a "pyramid of interventions" from least to most intensive to support students;
- (c) Using chronic absenteeism as a factor in allocating health and social service supports;
- (d) Developing cross-sector interagency team support to address absenteeism; and
- (e) Implementing strategies to address challenges faced by students of color and creating more positive school climates.

[The Condition of Education for Members of Oregon's Indian Tribes \(Feb. 2014\)](#)

ECO Northwest, in collaboration with the Chalkboard Project, released a report outlining the state of education for members of Oregon's Indian Tribes. Within the report they outline disturbing data trends for tribe-enrolled students:

- (a) Nearly a third of students attend underperforming focus and priority schools;

- (b) Gaps in achievement compared to all other students are apparent as early as third grade in math and reading and continue to widen on state measures;
- (c) Graduation rates are lower as compared to all other students in the state; and
- (d) A third of all students are chronically absent as compared to the 19 percent rate of all other students.

Because of this key report, the legislature and ODE created the Tribal Attendance Pilot Project (2015) or TAPP. Currently, TAPP is supporting nine schools across the state to reduce chronic absenteeism, increase graduation rates, and other key metrics.

[Rural Education in Oregon: Overcoming the Challenges of Income and Distance](#) (Jan. 2016)

The Chalkboard Project, ECO Northwest, and the Children’s Institute recently released an additional report describing the impact and educational outcomes for students living in rural parts of Oregon. Among the important findings in the report are the consistently high rates of chronic absenteeism for students in rural parts of the state. More than one in five students are chronically absent in rural parts of Oregon. Although more research is needed, early recommendations include increasing healthcare and transportation options and availability.

[Chronic Absenteeism Report \(May 2016\)](#)

The Chief Education Office released a report in May of 2016 reflecting their summation of 44 focus groups related to absenteeism across the state with students, parents, educators, and community members. Some of the key recommendations from the report include the following:

- (a) Addressing systemic barriers (e.g., transportation and workplace diversity);
- (b) Creating culturally responsive classrooms and systems (e.g., addressing implicit bias and utilizing evidence-based classroom management strategies); and
- (c) Building positive and meaningful relationships between schools, community-based organizations, students, families, and teachers.

[Showing Up, Staying in: How Oregon Schools Partner with Students, Families, and Communities to Beat Chronic Absenteeism \(Winter 2014-15\)](#)

The Children’s Institute issued this report that noted while rates of chronic absenteeism across our state in urban, rural, and suburban communities are troubling, many communities are making systemic changes to address the issue. The report highlighted three geographically unique communities across the state and the systems they employed to increase attendance. The intervention efforts across the three communities were markedly similar and included the following:

- (a) A data system that can be used on a daily basis to identify students in need of attendance support;

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- (b) A team to triage support and identify interventions for students in need, and monitor student progress;
 - (c) A system of “tiered interventions” to support all students, those at-risk for attendance concerns, and those with intensive attendance needs (all three communities referenced the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, a tiered intervention system);
 - (d) A family worker(s), specialist(s), or coach with dedicated time specifically devoted to supporting students with attendance needs by making home visits, arranging transportation to school, making mental health referrals, etc.; and
 - (e) Working with staff and families to create a culture which values attendance through regular acknowledgement of student attendance success, data-sharing, education, and effective outreach with partners (i.e., All Hands Raised, Upstream Public Health).

THE STATEWIDE ABSENTEEISM PLAN

The statewide plan consists of five key elements:

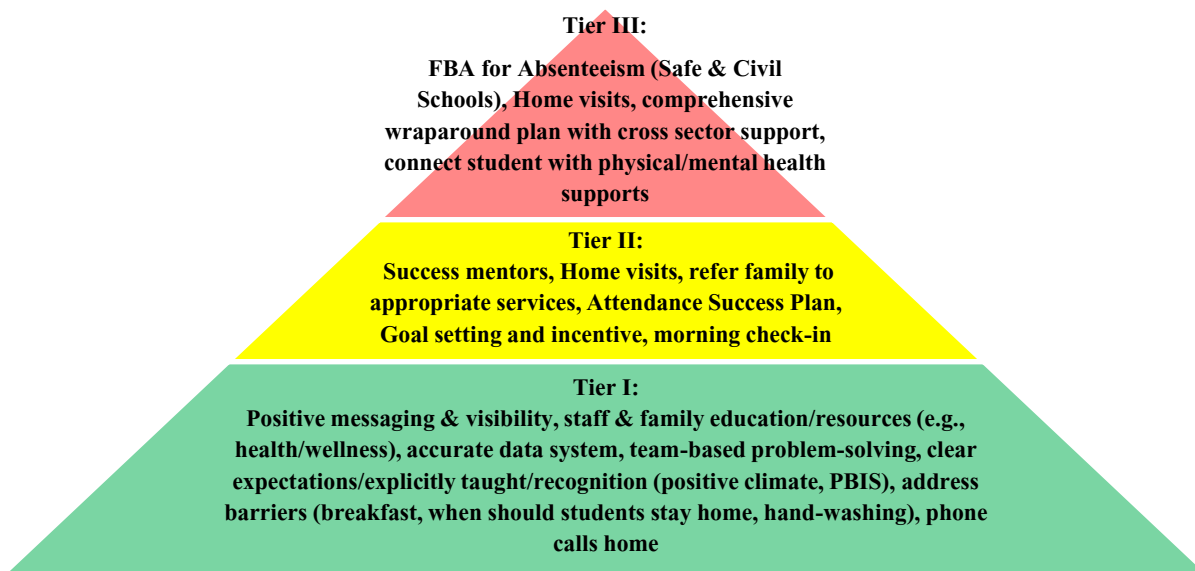
- (a) A process for publicly disclosing annual information on chronic absence rates for each school;
- (b) Guidance and best practices for all schools and school districts to use to track, monitor and address chronic absences and improve attendance;
- (c) A process for identifying schools in need of support to reduce chronic absences and improve attendance;
- (d) A description of technical assistance available to schools identified as being in need of support, including technical assistance that will be provided by the department or the office; and
- (e) The estimated costs associated with implementing the plan (H.B. 4002).

The state plan is organized around the five elements including specific actions and metrics, but there is an important underlying framework to the plan that cuts across all of the elements.

A Framework to Address Absenteeism: Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Experts and stakeholders agree that creating a separate service delivery system to support absenteeism is duplicative and inefficient, but also understand that the support needed to address chronic absenteeism effectively must be comprehensive and multi-faceted. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provide a framework through which the issue of chronic absenteeism may be viewed and addressed. Additionally and importantly, many Oregon schools already implement MTSS models such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) across the state focusing on literacy, math and behavior. For example, over 50 percent of Oregon schools entered PBIS fidelity of implementation data last year. An MTSS framework can encompass many of the important interventions and practices that can impact absenteeism (e.g., mentoring or home visits). Key elements of an MTSS framework include: a **data system** to allow daily access to attendance and related data sources; **universal screening** to determine which students need support; **cross-sector team-based problem-solving**; **continuous progress monitoring** for students needing additional support; school-wide and individualized **data-based decision-making**; **fidelity monitoring**; **coaching/specialist** support; ongoing targeted **professional development**; and **intensifying levels of intervention support**. The three typical tiers of support within an MTSS are outlined below as they may apply to attendance support:

Figure 5 Continuum of Support for all Students and Families [18]



Tier I Best Practices. Within an MTSS framework, the systems, practices, and policies that are enabled for all students in a school and community are considered “universal” or “Tier I” supports (see Figure 1). Tier I best practices include greeting each student by name when they arrive at school, positive messaging in the community around attendance created with cross-sector collaboration (e.g., community organizations, health organizations); staff and community-wide education on preventative mental and physical health measures; routine positive phone calls home when students miss school; culturally responsive, relevant, and engaging curriculum, clear and explicitly taught social/behavioral and attendance expectations at school (e.g., PBIS); strong school nutrition programs and education; acknowledgement and recognition of attendance improvements; focusing on building meaningful relationships for and with each child at school; and routine review of school-wide absenteeism, equity, and discipline data by key specialists with at least monthly review by a representative team.

Tier II Best Practices. Those students who are already missing more than 10 percent of school days (but less than 20 percent) are considered at-risk for lower educational outcomes. These students may benefit from Tier II support within the MTSS Framework. Tier II supports are easily implemented, require minimal start-up time, and reinforce Tier I expectations with greater specificity and intensity. Tier II best practices include mentoring from a trusted adult or peer (i.e., Success Mentors), Check-in and Check-out, personalized early outreach to the student and family, home visits, brief assessments and intervention plans to understand and address attendance barriers (e.g., health, transportation, housing), basic intervention plan development to address barriers, close monitor of ongoing attendance by Tier II/III team, and goal-setting and incentive/recognition for attendance improvements. At Tier II cross-sector partners provide assistance with access to resources and guidance related to the local context.

Tier III Best Practices. Students with significant absenteeism rates (e.g., missing 20 percent or more of school days) might need intensive and individualized support. At the Tier III level, a comprehensive wraparound plan is developed to support the student’s needs. The plan would be based on a more in-depth assessment than at Tier II (e.g., Functional Assessment of Absenteeism) including home visits. Cross-sector partners would also be participants in plan development. The plan may include a variety of interventions including trauma-informed strategies, mentoring, or access to community/agency resources (health, transportation, etc.) which are individualized and specified by the student’s needs.

Tiers of support taken together with team and data-based problem-solving, routine progress-monitoring, and *resource* coaching, allow schools to take advantage of what we know about “how” to implement evidenced-based practices. With multi-tiered systems of supports in place, schools and districts can focus on selecting those practices that are most meaningful and rigorous to their local context.

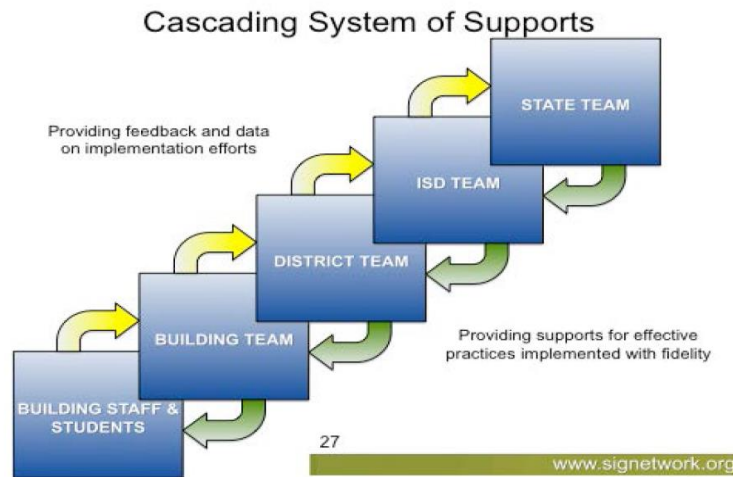
Tiers of support taken together with team and data-based problem-solving, routine progress-monitoring, and onsite coaching, allow schools to take advantage of what we know about ‘how’ to implement evidenced-based practices. With multi-tiered systems of supports in place, schools and districts can focus on selecting those practices that are most meaningful and rigorous to their local context.

A Network of Support Across the State

A framework to support the use of best practices in schools is essential, but the school alone cannot bear the entire burden of implementation. For long-term sustainability, a network of agencies surrounding the school and district should be identified to support its work. This network is often referred to as a “Transformation Zone,” and includes a “vertical slice” of supporting organizations to the school (; see Figure 1). Three levels of support have been identified:

- (a) Cross-sector agencies including culturally specific organizations, coordinated care organizations, Department of Health and Human Services, non-profits, and volunteer organizations;
- (b) Regional education support including education service districts, regional achievement collaboratives, social service systems of care, and early learning hubs; and
- (c) State level support and organization. Across these levels of support cross-sector teams or consortiums would be identified. Some of these may already exist within a system or may be added to support attendance work. At each level, a consortium would come together to function and focus on *strategic leadership at a grassroots level for:* visibility, political support, policy enabled practice, and budget/resource allocation and/or *implementation:* coaching/specialist support, professional development, messaging and outreach, and systematic data review. Leadership and implementation support would exist across district, regional, and state levels to support attendance and related MTSS efforts (i.e., academic and behavior systems; see Figure 2 and Appendix 1).

Figure 6. *The Vertical Slice: Network of Support for Schools across the State [19]*



Although the MTSS framework at the school and district level provides an important structure for service delivery of attendance supports, it is impractical at best to assume that the school will need no further outreach or structure of support. Instituting a “peer network” of overarching support across the region and state is critical to ensure schools have accurate and effective resources to support their work. The state plan follows with the key elements of House Bill 4002 and includes that network to support attendance efforts across the state.

Proposed State Plan to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Part A: A Process for Publicly Disclosing Annual Information on Chronic Absenteeism Rates for Each School

Increasing Transparency, Visibility, and Awareness for Chronic Absenteeism Data and the Resources to Address it. Publicly disclosing data on chronic absenteeism and related measures provides essential awareness for key educational outcomes and as a way to track data changes as a result of statewide attendance efforts. Absenteeism and related data disclosed to the public should be easily accessible, include explanations for metrics, and link to a resource site(s) to access further information. The data should be released across a variety of formats to ensure greater visibility across a broad range of stakeholders and the general public. These formats include a statewide data portal, district and community reports and meetings, multi-media methodologies (e.g., social media) and included within state leaders’ speaking platforms.

Statewide Data Portal. Oregon Department of Education, with partners, will develop a statewide publicly available data portal to access chronic absenteeism across schools, population groups and grade levels. The portal shall also provide annual information on graduation rates, achievement, and other important metrics and will be built in collaboration with the Statewide Longitudinal Data System efforts and alignment with ESSA data dashboard requirements. The portal will be a summative source

of data for yearly review by the public of regional, district and school trends. The data will be updated at least annually and will be available in multiple languages. (e.g., Connecticut State Department of Education, 2014). Key data sources from other agencies such as the Department of Early Learning and Oregon Health Authority will be included or linked explicitly within the portal site. ODE shall work with other agencies to share data across agencies and create data sharing agreements.

Statewide Resource Website: Oregon Department of Education and partners will develop a statewide publicly available website with attendance tools, articles, intervention reviews, webinars, and website links (e.g., links to Attendance Works and the 211 system). The site would also house resources for districts selected to receive more intensive attendance support. The statewide site would include links to the statewide portal, district reports, templates for messaging, and intervention resources. The site will be available in multiple languages and will be developed with family and community stakeholder input (e.g., Arkansas Campaign for Grade Level Reading).

Annual Community Data Report: Annual companion reports will be issued to families, stakeholders, and community agencies regarding chronic absenteeism and related metrics available in multiple languages. Data can be presented with explanations and rationale for addressing chronic absenteeism. The report would include possible recommendations to address chronic absenteeism related to the local context.

Building Awareness and Visibility from State Leadership. State education leaders including the Governor’s Office, Deputy Superintendent, Chief Education Officer, and Education Innovation Officer will use public opportunities to address the public and constituents via presentations, speeches, newsletters, and emails, to increase awareness for the importance of attendance and absenteeism-related issues for students, families, and schools. The state will participate in “Attendance Awareness month” and related activities, promoted by state leaders.

Building Awareness Locally. Oregon Department of Education and supporting partners will supply messaging templates for districts, schools, and communities to use and personalize aimed at awareness-building for absenteeism and relationship-building (handouts, banners, slogans, special topics; e.g., Attendance Works, 2016; Multnomah County, 2016). Additionally, the state will work with the Ad Council to collaborate on current outreach and visibility efforts. The state can highlight these outreach efforts and assist with messaging and location placement.

Part B: Guidance and Best Practices for all Schools and School Districts to use to Track, Monitor, and Address Chronic Absences and Improve Attendance

Specify Systems and Protocols to Effectively Monitor Chronic Absenteeism Data. Without access to accurate and timely absenteeism and related data and systems to act upon, progress towards improved attendance is unlikely. This section outlines statewide definitions for chronic absenteeism, a review of data systems to track chronic absenteeism, school team and district protocols to monitor

data, cross-training and collaboration across statewide efforts and initiatives, and evaluation of statewide efforts to address absenteeism.

Statewide Definition of Chronic Absenteeism. The national metric for defining chronic absenteeism is missing **10% or more** of school days. Currently, Oregon collects data based on students missing **more than 10%** of school days. Severe chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 20% of school days or more. These definitions include excused, unexcused, and discipline-related absences (e.g., out of school suspension). By changing the threshold to include students who attend exactly 90% of their enrolled days, based on prior years, the data would identify between 800 and 1,200 additional students to be considered chronically absent. This raises the current rate approximately 0.2% statewide. By following the national standard and providing resources to address the increased impact on the statewide system, Oregon has the opportunity to have a greater influence on student success outcomes and increasing graduation rate.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Indicator. Chronic absenteeism will be selected in isolation or as an index measure of school quality and student success in Oregon.

Notification by School of Absences. Included in the statewide definition will be an expansion of minimum absence notifications. Absence notification letters will be sent home to families after four missed school days, seven missed school days, and ten missed school days including family conferencing. Phone calls will also be added to notification protocols (see further recommendations for content from Rogers & Feller, n.d.).

Formative and Summative Data Systems. The statewide leadership team to support multi-tiered systems of support (outlined in State Teaming) and the state implementation team will work with leveraged resources to identify or develop an Early Warning System to improve graduation. The team will review current and possible early warning data systems to provide specifications for a data system schools can use to track formative (daily, bi-weekly, monthly) and summative (quarterly, yearly) chronic absenteeism and related data (e.g., behavior, coursework). The system will disaggregate data by population groups and provide a combined view of absenteeism by excused, unexcused, and/or discipline related absence. The leadership team may develop a state system and leverage some funding for an Early Warning System pending legislative support.

Protocol for Teaming and Data-based Decision-making. Oregon Department of Education and the state implementation team (outlined in State Teaming and Appendix A) can provide guidance and protocols for schools and districts to use when reviewing chronic absenteeism data on a routine basis (e.g., daily, quarterly) with their representative cross-sector teams (see School Teaming and District Teaming). At least one team in a school would focus on review of school-wide or Tier I support and data trends for attendance and/or other systemic efforts (e.g., behavior/PBIS, and literacy). A team would also focus on progress monitoring and individual student support (Tier II and III). This team may monitor individual support across domains (e.g., behavior, academics) and will include representation

from cross-sectors and specializations to support the complexity of individual student needs (see Appendix A; Communities Supporting Youth, n.d.).

Daily Problem-Solving. A subgroup of the Tier II/III support team will triage *daily* problem-solving (phone calls home, home visits, transportation, etc.). This subgroup may include administrators, secretary or attendance secretary, counselor, attendance specialist, or community support personnel

Equity Lens. Data across school, district, and regional levels will be disaggregated and examined to assess disproportionality and disparity across population groups using the Equity Lens Framework (ODE, n.d.). Data review functions may be added to an existing school or district team, a sub-group of a current team, or a new team depending upon the ability to prioritize the review of chronic absenteeism data.

Cross-training at ODE Initiative and Project Events. State coordinators and initiative leaders will include professional development on chronic absenteeism and interventions to address it across all statewide project and initiative events (e.g., Oregon MTSS, Or RTI, TAPP). All State of Oregon project and initiatives sites will link to the statewide chronic absenteeism website. Representatives from statewide initiative efforts will meet at least biannually to discuss complimentary messaging and cross-training related to chronic absenteeism and related systems.

Part C: A Process for Identifying Schools in Need of Support to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism and Improve Attendance

School Identification: Schools will initially be identified through their chronic absenteeism data to determine the level of support they may require within an MTSS framework. Schools with less than 10 percent or less Chronic Absenteeism rates will be listed as “Tier I” and may not require additional ODE support. However, if highly affected population groups have chronic absenteeism data at or above 10 percent, these schools may also be identified for support. Schools with 10 percent or more but less than 20 percent chronic absenteeism rates will be identified as Tier II. Schools with 20 percent or higher chronic absenteeism rates would be considered Tier III and determined to have the highest need for support.

Identified Tier II and III schools will receive a report with their current absenteeism data. The report will also include resources and intervention ideas to address chronic absenteeism as well as the inclusion of area agencies (e.g., community and health-based organizations) that can support their attendance improvement efforts.

Creation of Regional Consortiums. Regional entities or a consortium of entities will come together to provide data driven decisions and guidance to support area schools and districts. A consortium of community agencies and organizations (e.g., education, health, culturally specific, community, and local businesses) will work with ODE state team attendance specialists to review regional attendance data, determine regional priorities, and create criteria for prioritizing identified school support. ODE state attendance specialists will then work with the regional consortiums to provide support with funding to

implement regional support. Consortia will meet on at least a quarterly basis; will include representation across school, community, and business organizations; create a charter or purpose agreements; and establish roles within the group. Regional consortium support may include onsite technical assistance to schools and district coaches and collection of district survey and attendance data from parents, students, and staff to understand barriers and gaps to attendance support (e.g., Systematic Attendance Improvement Process; Perry, 2016)

Priority for regional support will be based on chronic absenteeism data need across the region (as outlined in School Identification), district and school commitment and capacity to address absenteeism, and regional consortium organization and readiness to support implementation of a regional attendance plan.

Part D: A Description of Technical Assistance Available to Schools Identified as Needing Support, Including Technical Assistance that will be provided by the Department or the Office

State and Regional Level Technical Assistance

State level Personnel. The Oregon Department of Education will identify three positions (state attendance specialist, state attendance research and data specialist and state administrative support specialist) to provide coordination for statewide chronic absenteeism efforts (e.g., website, data portal, data analysis), technical assistance and coordination to regional and district MTSS coaches/specialists (e.g., Trainer of Trainer for coaches), and support to districts and schools (e.g., support with data systems and data analysis and training on evidence-based systems to address chronic absenteeism). Statewide attendance specialists will coordinate the support for professional development with attendance experts, cross sector partners, MTSS coaches and other regional/high need coaches.

State Support for Regional Coaches: Trainer of Trainers: Regional MTSS Coaches (through Oregon MTSS or other funding mechanism) will receive training to support selected schools and districts identified as Tier II and III via approximately nine days of professional development events. Coaches will meet routinely to receive ongoing professional development, peer-learning, and mentoring with professional development providers.

Regional Consortia. As outlined in part C, regional coalition of entities may create a consortium to support attendance and related MTSS systems to decrease chronic absenteeism (if not already established, see Appendix A). Regional consortia will work with State Attendance Specialists to review regional attendance data, identify key priorities, and create a data-driven implementation plan. The plan can be submitted for funding to implement and monitor attendance improvement plans matched to the local context of need for the schools and districts in the region. Consortium members must include representation from community organizations, school districts, regional leadership, family/advocates, culturally specific organizations, local businesses, and health and social service agencies. Plan activities may include a focus on professional development (i.e., webinars and peer

learning networks), outreach (e.g., community networks, website), onsite district and school-based problem-solving, and regional data analysis.

Regional Personnel for High Need Support. Twenty FTE will be provided to support selected high need schools and districts identified as needing Tier III interventions. Priority will be given to small and rural schools/districts. These coaches (separate from MTSS coaches providing Tier II/III support) will receive training on attendance improvement efforts, attendance data literacy and may partner with other area coaches to provide technical assistance to schools and districts.

Professional Development for School and District Teams. With community and health based partners, regional entities may provide organization and a venue for quarterly peer learning network opportunities for selected districts.

District & School Level Technical Assistance

Support for District Coaches: Regional consortiums and regional MTSS coaches will provide support and mentoring to schools and district MTSS coaches and/or attendance specialists. Regional MTSS coaches and cross sector partners within the regional consortium will support districts with onsite MTSS and related professional development and technical assistance.

High School Level Coaches and Mentors: Through funding from Measure 98, mentors and additional counselors are likely to be added to high schools across the state. State attendance specialists and regional consortiums will work to identify these new personnel to provide technical assistance related to attendance improvement, such as training on Success Mentors [7], data review and analysis, and home visit protocols.

Part E: The Estimated Costs Associated with Implementing the Plan

Estimated costs are outlined in the table below across key categories: Data systems, visibility and outreach, personnel, professional development, independent evaluation, and contractors. Costs are estimated for a biennium. Costs will change in subsequent years with the addition of increased attendance support at the district and school level.

<i>Data Systems</i>		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Development & Maintenance Costs</i>	<i>Total Costs</i>
1) Utilize a statewide Early Warning System (EWS) that includes attendance, behavior, and interventions	<i>Leverage requested EWS for Increasing Graduation</i>	\$0
<i>Visibility and Outreach</i>		
1) Website to store attendance resources, interventions, and links to examples and related systems integrated with ESSA	<i>Leverage ESSA, ODE and CEdO web presence, ODE internal communication channels and social media sites (e.g.</i>	\$0

web resources (link to Attendance Works and related resources).	<i>ODE Facebook page)</i>	
2) Development of awareness campaign materials to be used and modified in local communities to fit the context Link to Attendance Works resources and modify for Oregon	Development: \$50,000 Maintenance \$5,000	<i>Initial Cost</i> \$50,000 for one biennium <i>Ongoing Cost</i> \$5,000 annually
<i>Personnel</i>		
1) ODE State Attendance Specialist/Coordinators	3 FTE x \$110,000 = \$330,000	<i>Ongoing Cost</i> \$660,000 per biennium
<i>Professional Development</i>		
Cost for virtual and onsite training to provide technical assistance to consortiums, MTSS coaches, and Tier III/Highest Need districts/schools focused on reducing chronic absenteeism	\$200,000 Travel, sub reimbursement, consortium attendance expenses, space, materials, etc.	<i>Initial cost</i> \$200,000 per biennium <i>Ongoing cost</i> \$50,000 annually
<i>Consortiums Creation and Regional Support</i>		
Funding for regional consortiums to select, prioritize and create plan to support reducing chronic absenteeism in the region.	\$2,700,000	<i>Initial Cost</i> \$2,700,000 per biennium
General Consulting: including data literacy training, support to consortiums, delivery of training for coaches, establishing peer learning networks, and training on school attendance improvement processes		<i>Initial Cost</i> \$225,000 for 1 biennium <i>Ongoing Cost</i> \$75,000 annually
20 FTE for Tier III/highest need schools on site support	20 x \$75,000= 1,500,000	<i>Initial Cost</i> \$3,000,000 per biennium
<i>Initial Costs</i>	<i>\$6,835,000</i>	

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APPENDIX A

Sample Teaming to Support Attendance Efforts Across the State: A Vertical Slice

STATE

STATE MTSS LEADERSHIP TEAM	STATE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM
<i>Conducts annual capacity assessment, creates action plan; reviews statewide outcomes and fidelity of implementation including attendance improvement efforts, academic systems and behavior systems</i>	<i>Plans for professional development, district and school assessments, and data systems. Opportunities for peer learning, professional development, and organizing resources across the state.</i>
SAMPLE REPRESENTATION	
Statewide administrators Statewide coordinators Equity division Early learning Higher Education Community-based organizations Health and Social Services Business representation Education advocates	Statewide coordinators Regional coaches Culturally specific organizations Health and Social Services Higher education and professional development providers

REGIONAL

REGIONAL CONSORTIUM
<i>Disseminates regional attendance data; Conducts annual needs assessment regarding existing practices, creates action plan; reviews regional outcomes and fidelity of implementation including attendance improvement efforts, and meets quarterly. Provides opportunities for case management problem-solving across the region. Provides school/district consultation for data collection, self-assessment, action plan development, and implementation.</i>
SAMPLE REPRESENTATION
Regional administrators, Community-based Organization, Health and Social Service, Coordinated Care Organization, Local business representatives, District liaisons Regional MTSS Resource coaches, Behavior/Academic Specialists, Data coordination support ESD/Early Learning Hub/Regional Achievement Collaborative Representation

DISTRICT

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM	DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM
<i>Conducts annual district capacity assessment, creates action plan (1-3 year); reviews outcomes and fidelity of implementation including attendance improvement efforts, academic systems and behavior systems; and meets quarterly</i>	<i>Plans for professional development, school assessments, and data systems. Opportunity for peer learning and case management problem-solving. Provides coaching relative to school-level data collection, self-assessment, action plan development and implementation.</i>
SAMPLE REPRESENTATION	
District Administrators District Coaches & Specialist Building representation Family & Community representation Culturally Specific organizations	District Administrator that oversees coaches and specialists Districts Coaches & Specialists School Coaches & Specialists Health & Social Service Regional Support Community-based support

SCHOOL

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM TIER I	SCREENING & PROGRESS MONITORING TEAM TIER II & III	INDIVIDUAL STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM TIER II & III
<i>Conducts ongoing fidelity and self-assessments (e.g., climate); reviews school-wide data; may address school-wide interventions for academics, behavior, health, and attendance</i>	<i>Reviews screening and school-wide data to identify students in need of support; selects appropriate interventions for students in need; monitors impact and fidelity of outcomes for all students on Tier II/III Interventions</i>	<i>Team is convened when an individual is not responding to an intervention or has intensive needs. Team is personalized based on student needs (family, community, EL support, DHS, etc.)</i>
SAMPLE REPRESENTATION		
Principal Attendance Specialist/Coach Counselor Classified Representation Certified Representation Specialist Representation Family/Community Resource liaison	Principal Attendance Specialist/Coach Counselor School Psychologist Special Education Community-based Organization Support Health & Social Service	Convened for individual student. Team make-up is dependent of needs and intensity of concerns

APPENDIX B

Oregon Department of Education Statewide Chronic Absenteeism Plan Workgroup Members:

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