Transforming Secondary Schools Using an Early Warning System

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Early Warning and Student Support Systems as the Foundation for School Improvement

- School transformation, improvement, or innovation all require sustained investments of time, energy, focus, and enthusiasm from school staff and leadership

- In high needs schools, these are all in short supply

- Addressing student needs, and their ramifications, typically consumes most adult energy and time in high needs schools and often these efforts are not successful, leading to frustration

- Early warning and student support systems are ways to meet student needs more efficiently and effectively, leaving adult energy and time to engage in school improvement and innovation
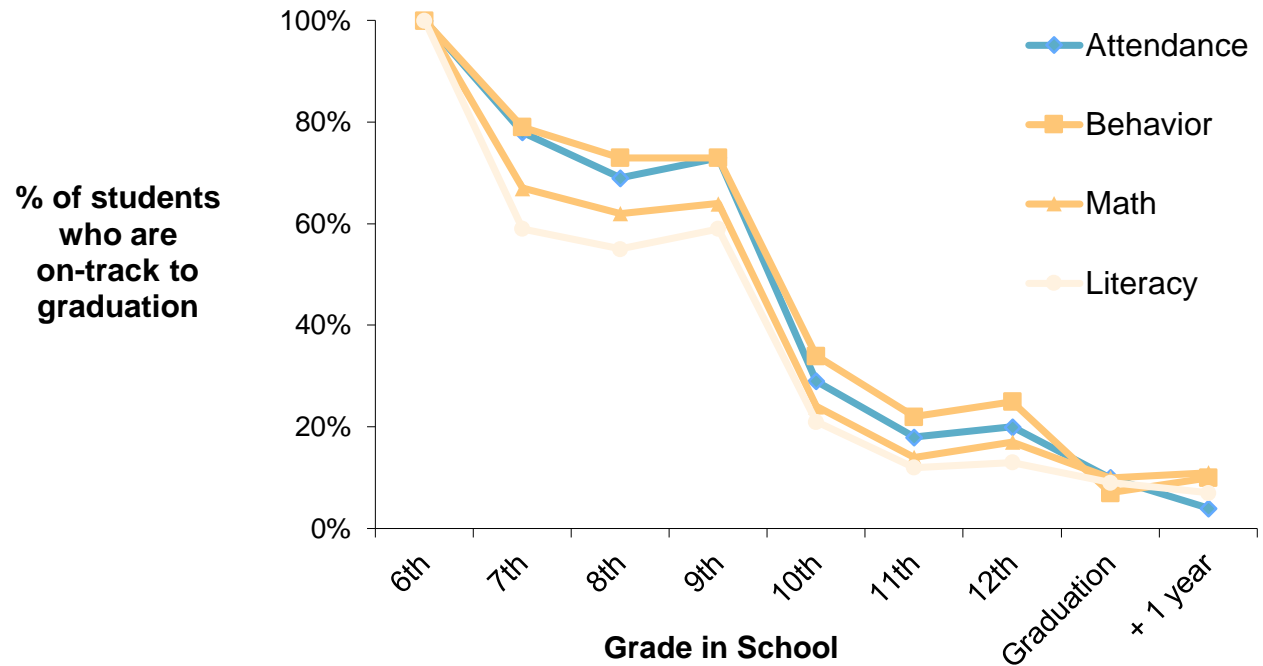
Core Ideas of Early Warning Systems

- To graduate college- and career-ready, students need to navigate several key transitions successfully and acquire a set of academic behaviors – they need to learn how to succeed at school.

- Students signal that they are on- or off-track toward these outcomes through their behaviors

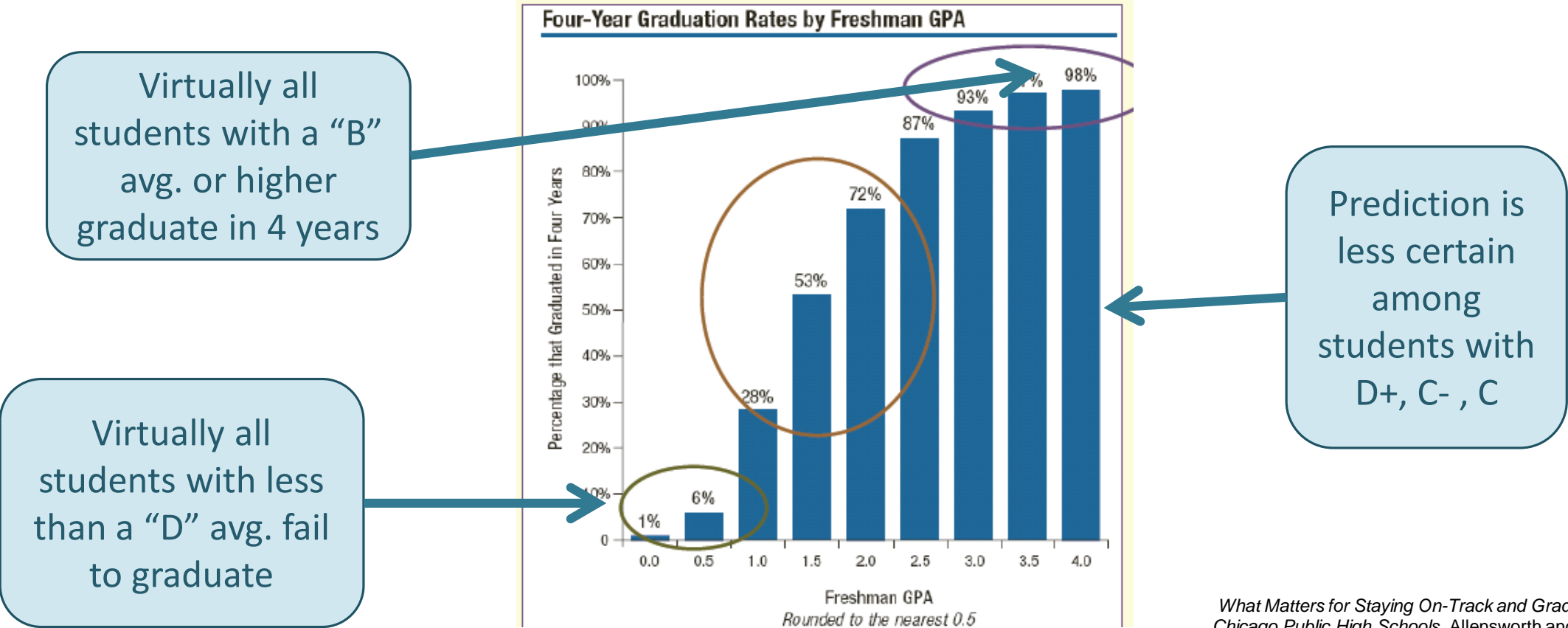# The Potential for Dropout Can Be Identified as Early as Sixth Grade

Sixth grade students with one or more of the indicators have only a 10% - 20% chance of graduating from high school on time or within one year of expected graduation

Sixth Graders (1996-97) with an Early Warning Indicator

% of students who are on-track to graduation

- Attendance
- Behavior
- Math
- Literacy

Grade in School: 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, Graduation, + 1 year

Note: Early Warning Indicator graph from research which has been replicated in 10 cities. Robert Balfanz and Liza Herzog, Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University; Philadelphia Education Fund

Freshman Grades Matter

Four-Year Graduation Rates by Freshman GPA

Virtually all students with a "B" avg. or higher graduate in 4 years

Virtually all students with less than a "D" avg. fail to graduate

Prediction is less certain among students with D+, C- , C

Percentage that Graduated in Four Years

100% 90% 80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0

1% 6% 28% 53% 72% 87% 93% % 98%

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0

Freshman GPA
Rounded to the nearest 0.5

What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools, Allensworth and Easton, Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2007
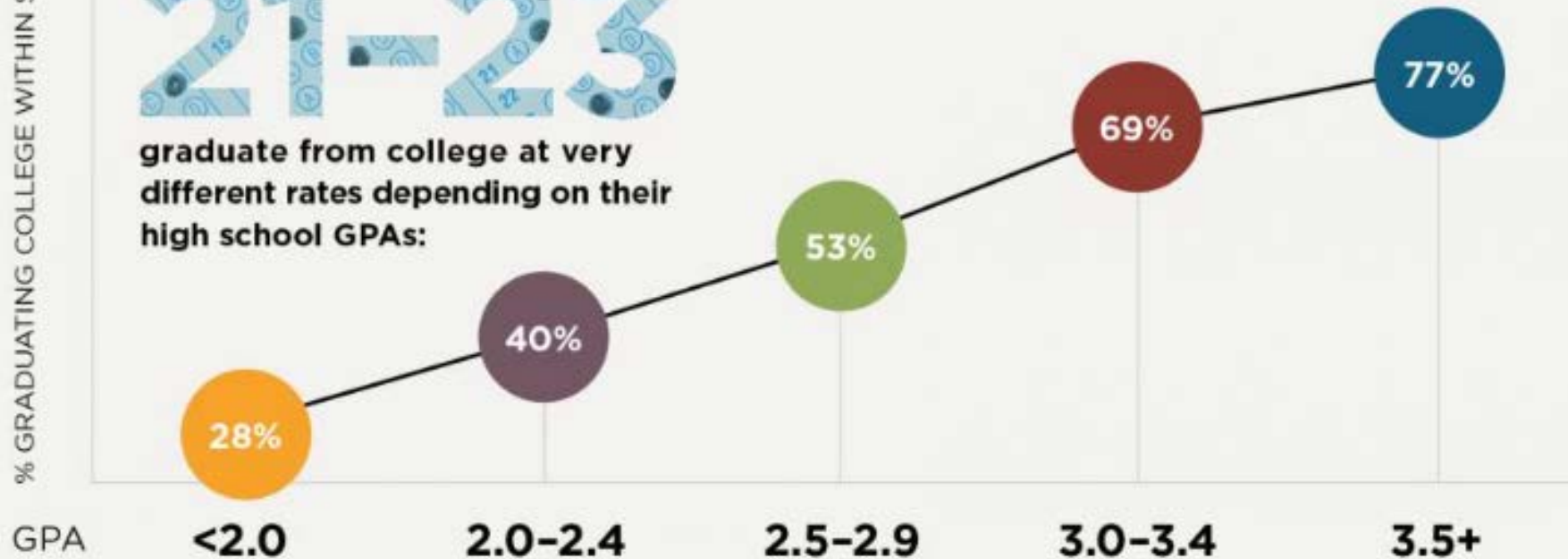
The Key Success and Risk Indicators are the ABC's : Attendance, Behavior, Course Performance

|	Attendance	Behavior	Course Performance
Off-Track	Less than 90%	1+ suspension and/or mild sustained misbehavior	Failing ELA and/or Math
On-Track	Greater than 90%	No suspensions or sustained misbehavior	Passing ELA and/or Math
College Ready	Greater than 95%	Agency and Hope	B or Better

Research Takeaways

- **ABC success factors and risk factors**

- **Good news:** students are resilient and usually signal before dropping out

- Students usually start with one indicator and develop more indicators over time

- A variety of reasons inside and outside school contribute to students exhibiting indicators

| Monitoring |
| College Ready |
| On-Track |
| Sliding |
| Off-Track |
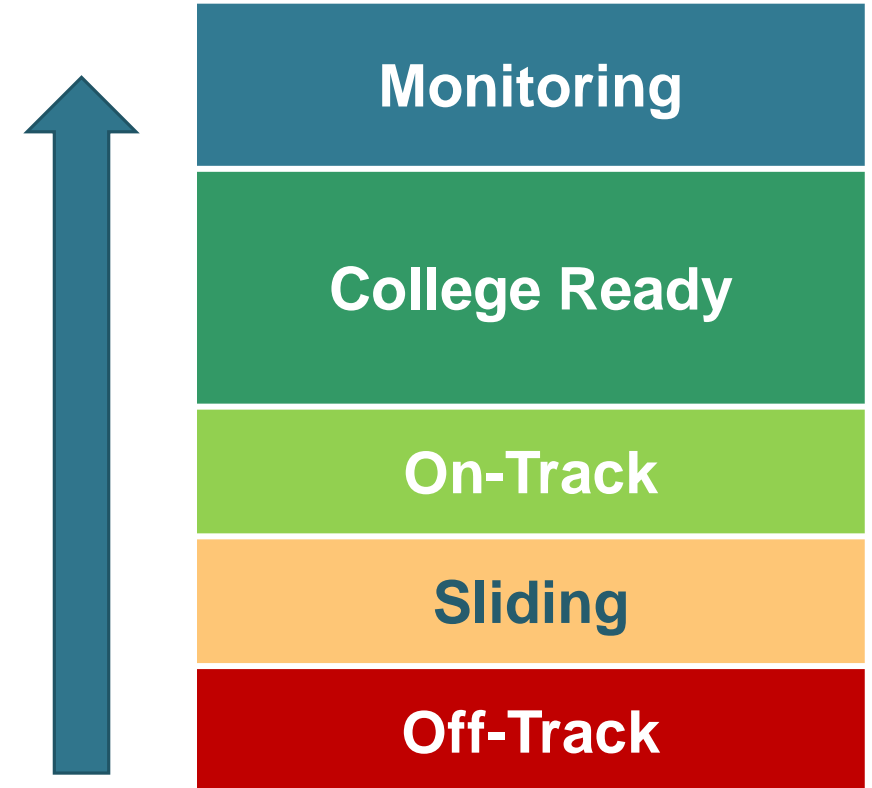
Core Ideas of Early Warning Systems

- By tracking early warning indicators, it is possible to identify when students are beginning to fall off-track, providing time to intervene and alter their trajectory through school and beyond

- Using early warning systems, schools can be organized to apply school-wide preventative, targeted, and intensive interventions until students are on-track
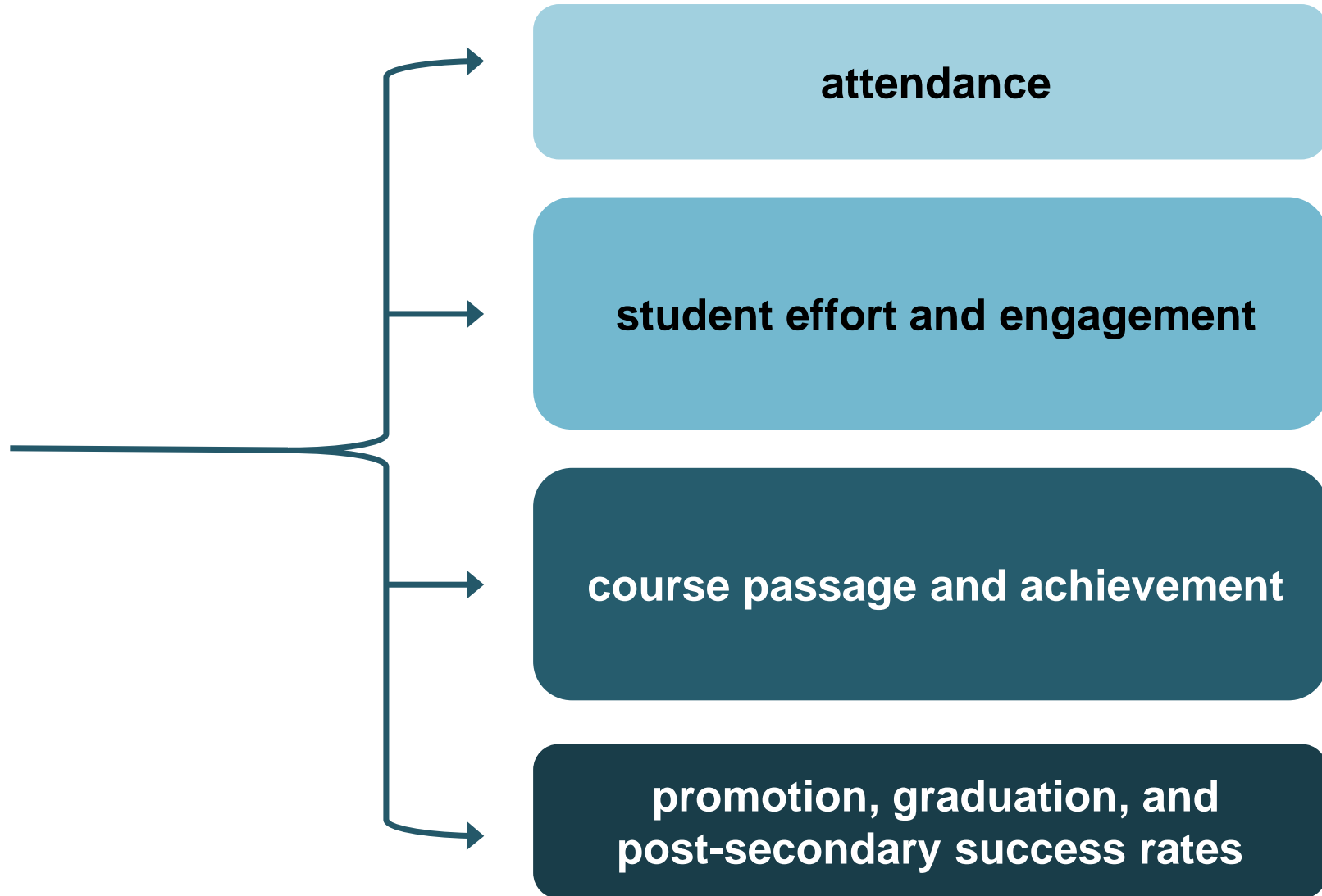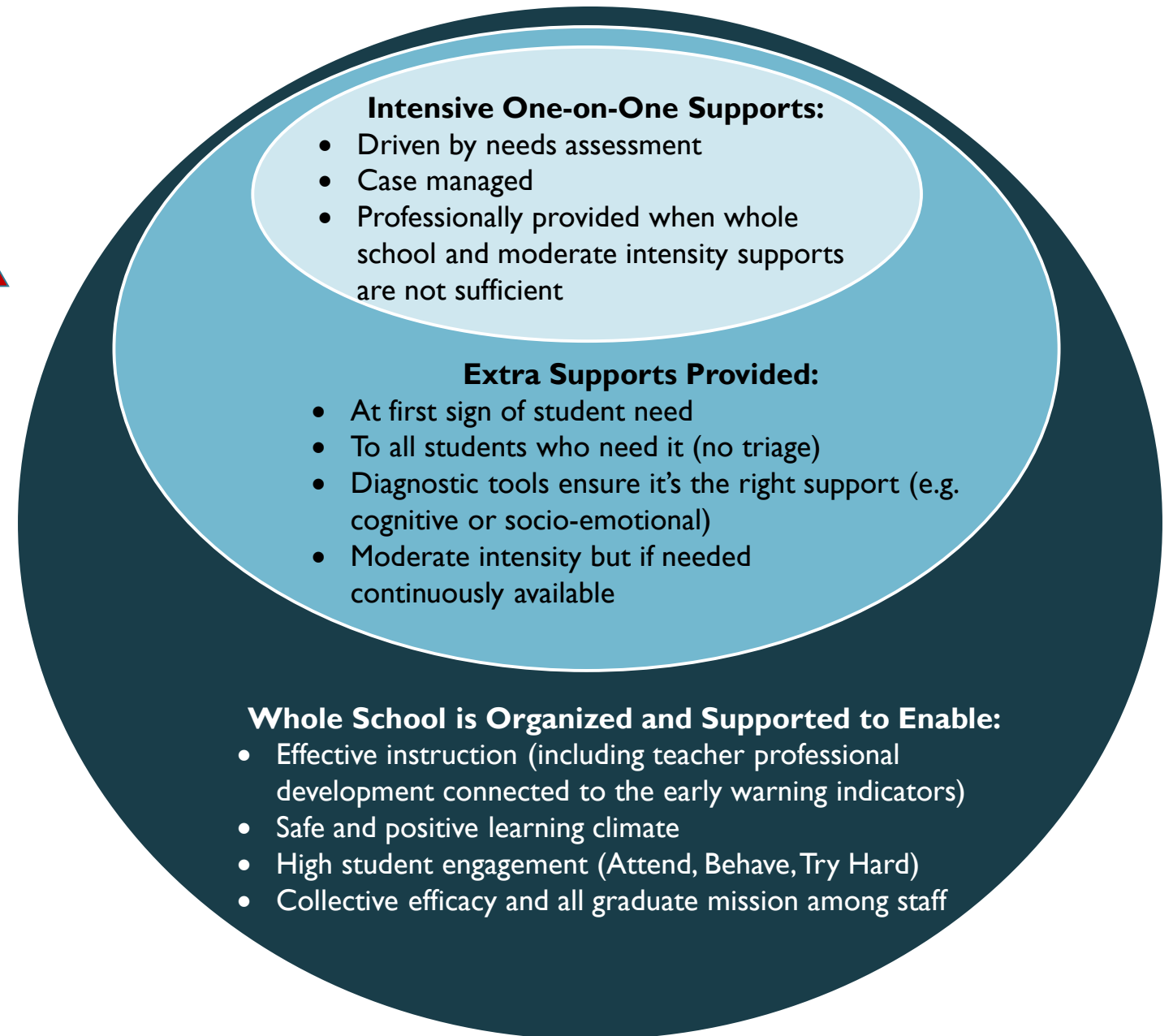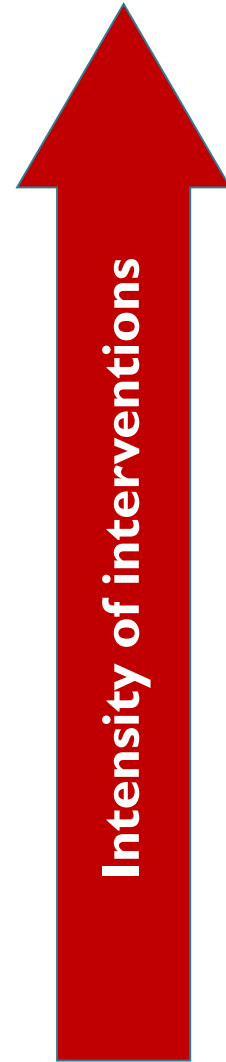
Let's See an Example of EWS at Work

The EWI Meeting

- https://youtu.be/iD9JRVFVcX8

To maximize their potential, early warning systems should drive an integrated school improvement and student support effort

Intensity of interventions

Intensive One-on-One Supports:
- Driven by needs assessment
- Case managed
- Professionally provided when whole school and moderate intensity supports are not sufficient

Extra Supports Provided:
- At first sign of student need
- To all students who need it (no triage)
- Diagnostic tools ensure it's the right support (e.g. cognitive or socio-emotional)
- Moderate intensity but if needed continuously available

Whole School is Organized and Supported to Enable:
- Effective instruction (including teacher professional development connected to the early warning indicators)
- Safe and positive learning climate
- High student engagement (Attend, Behave, Try Hard)
- Collective efficacy and all graduate mission among staff

Whole School is Organized and Supported to Enable

- Effective instruction

- Teacher professional development connected to the needs of student who live in poverty

- Safe and positive learning climate

- High student engagement – students who feel connected to school – attend, behave, and try

- Collective efficacy and all graduate mission among staff

- An early warning and response system

Extra Supports are Provided

- At first sign of student need

- To all students who need it (no triage)

- Diagnostic tools ensure it's the right support
  - e.g. cognitive or socio-emotional

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Intensive One-on-One Supports

- Driven by needs assessment

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Effective Student Support Systems Have:

- Ready access, at the classroom level, to on- and off-track indicators (the ABCs);

- Regular and consistent time to analyze the data, pool adult knowledge about students, and leverage existing adult-teacher relationships; and

- An organized response system that can act upon early warning data in both a systematic and tailored manner.

Which Student is Most Concerning?

					Talent Development								Success Highways							
Gender	Grade		Absent	Tardy	Present	Suspensions		ELA	Math	Science	Soc Stud		Education	Confidence	Connections	Stress	Well-Being	Motivation		Academic Risk Index
F	6		10	0	74%		0		B	C	C	C		3	3	1	1	1	3	
M	6		1	0	98%		1		B	C	F	C		1	3	3	3	3	3	

Effective Multi-Tiered Student Supports Require More Advanced Data Work

- Have diagnostic tools to deduce if student behavior is driven by academic, socio-emotional needs, or both

- Look for and act upon patterns that emerge from the data – what is the most effective and strategic level of intervention – student, classroom, or school?

- Use additional data to identify root cause and tailor interventions

  - Are most students failing overage? ELL? From just one or two classrooms?

What Do We Know About Effective Student Supports for the ABC's

Attendance

- Schools and communities need to measure and act on chronic absenteeism – the number of students who miss 10% or more of school (i.e. a month or more of school). They also need to measure those who miss a week or less.

- Organize information campaigns based on fact that both parents and students underestimate how many days they miss, often by as much as 50%.

That is because it is easier to become chronically absent than you might think.

Absences add up. Excused and unexcused absences result in too much time lost in the classroom.
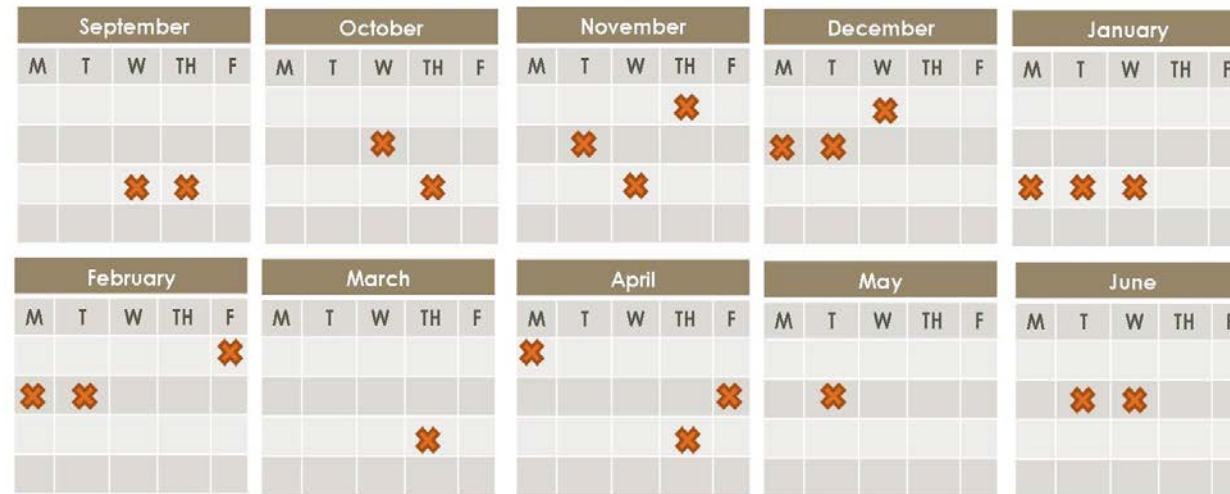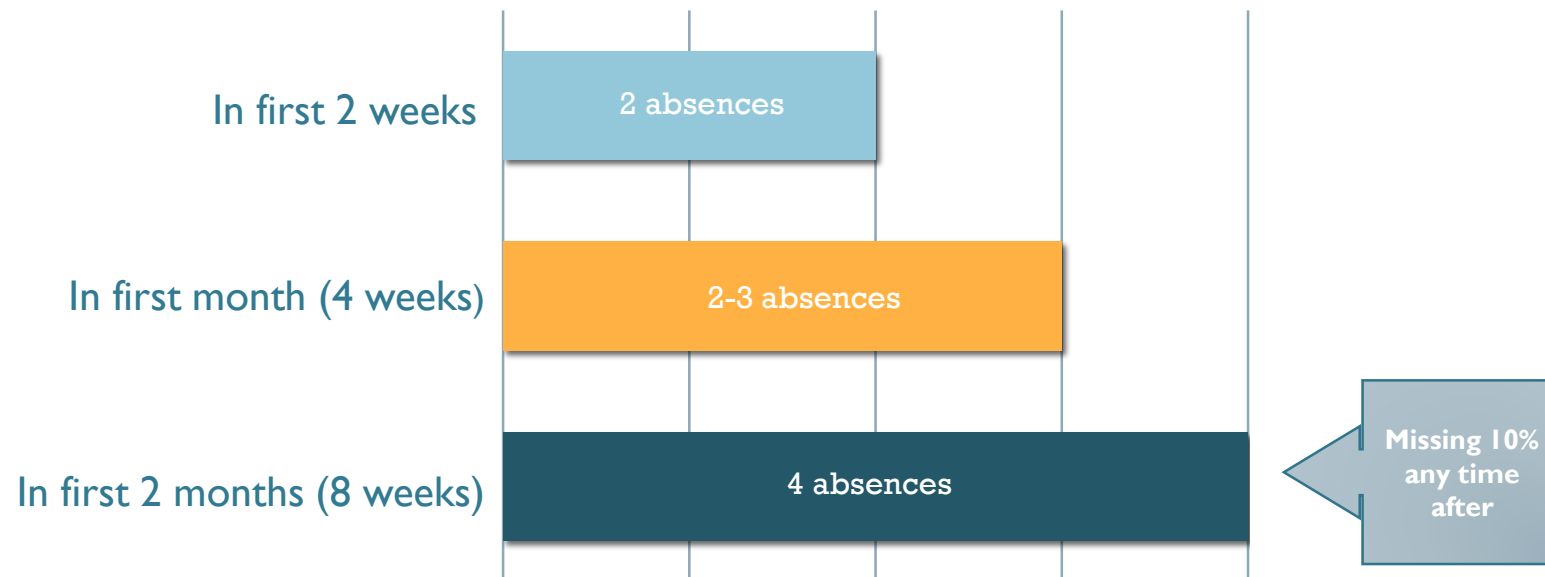

Slide from Attendanceworks presentation, 2016

23 days missed — 87% attendance

Use 10% Definition to Promote Early Warning and Trigger Early Outreach

✓ Chronic absence (missed 10% or more of school) in the prior year, assuming data is available.

✓ And/or starting in the beginning of the school year, student has:

In first 2 weeks — 2 absences

In first month (4 weeks) — 2-3 absences

In first 2 months (8 weeks) — 4 absences

Missing 10% any time after

Attendance **Works**
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

Focus on ABCs - Attendance

- Create programming that compels students to come to school, e.g., most-engaged secondary students often found in cognitively rich activities that combine teamwork with performance (robotics, debate, drama, chess etc.)

- Build an attendance problem-solving capacity into schools and districts

Have someone who has a good relationship with chronically absent students ask them why its hard to for them to be in school everyday. Use this to tailor the appropriate supports.

Myths	Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement
• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused • Missing only 2 days per month can't affect learning • Attendance only matters in the older grades	• Lack of access to health or dental care • Chronic illness • Poor transportation • Trauma • No safe path to school • Homelessness	• Child struggling academically or socially • Bullying • Ineffective and exclusionary school discipline • Parents had negative school experience • Undiagnosed disability	• Lack of engaging, relevant, culturally responsive instruction • No meaningful relationships with adults in school • Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school • Poor school climate

Attendance-Some Simple Ideas That Have Worked

- **Write a Plan** - ask student to write with some detail what it would take to miss only 1 day of school next month

- **Keeping up with the Jones** - show students the attendance records of students who have recently graduated and succeeded in college

- **What a day here and there can add up to** - show students how many months/years of school they will miss if current attendance pattern continues

More Simple Ideas That Have Worked

- **Happy to see you today** - make sure that whenever a student returns from being absent someone says "happy to see you" (without judgment or tone in their voice)

- **Being in School Helps Others** - Consistent recognition for collective improvement and reaching attendance goals

- **Follow the Peer Leader** – organize students to measure, monitor, and act

An Important Mitigation Strategy

- **It's the assignments** - to mitigate the impact of chronic absenteeism you need a system that makes sure chronically absent students get their assignments done

Once a student is chronically absent you need to either **solve a problem** or **change a behavior** to address it.

This is hard to do without a positive relationship with the student and his/her family.

Using Success Mentors to Improve Attendance and School Success

- Success mentors are caring adults (or peers) who work with chronically absent students to address the barriers keeping them from coming to school each day

- Success mentors interact with their mentees during the school day, at least 3 times per week
  - Any caring adult can be a success mentor
  - Success mentors are: advocates, motivators, problem identifiers and solvers who encourage their mentees to attend school every day

7 Key Elements of Success Mentoring

1) Matched with students who have history of chronic absenteeism or who are showing signs of becoming chronically absent

2) Morning meet and greet

3) Phone call or text home every time student is absent and share a positive message

4) Meet one-on-one and/or in small groups to build strong relationship

5) Track students' attendance and improvement

6) Recognize and celebrate even small successes

7) Work with the school team to identify appropriate supports and interventions

Lets Begin by Learning by Doing

- Pick a partner, ideally someone you know

- Determine who is the chronically absent student and who is mentor/coach/advocate

Chronically Absent Students

- You are hesitant to reveal the real reasons you miss school

- Pick one of the following reasons and make the mentor/coach/advocate work to find it out:
  - a) Taking care of siblings
  - b) Being teased or bullied at school
  - c) Do not see the point of attending everyday, think you can miss a day here and there and be fine
  - d) Wild Card – make up your own reason

Mentor/Coach/Advocate

- Use your positive relationship with the student to make them feel welcome and wanted in school and missed when they are not there

- Leverage the relationship to unearth root causes of the student's absenteeism

- Once you have found the cause(s), co-create with the student a workable and realistic plan to increase their attendance

Focus on ABCs - Course Performance

• Provide course coaching, support, and, on occasion, even advocacy, which enables students to succeed in their courses. This should include monitoring assignment completion, preparation for tests and quizzes, and helping them catch up when absent.

• Make sure tutoring efforts are linked tightly with needs and expectations of student's courses (don't work on fractions during a tutoring session on Thursday if Friday's test is on probability)

• Need effective second chance and credit recovery programs that hold students accountable but provide a reason for them to keep trying

5 Diagnostic Questions About Students Who Are Failing Courses

- Are they regularly attending school? If not, why?

- Are they able to focus in class?

- Are they productively persistent, i.e. trying in an effective manner and able to complete their assignments?

- Do they show what they know on assessment?

- Do they connect school effort and achievement to life success?

Focus on ABCs - Behavior and Effort

- Model and teach resiliency and self-management and organization skills

- Learning is social and emotional. Yet students report a big drop from 5th to 9th grade in how frequently they are recognized for doing good schoolwork

- Most high school students also report they are stressed or bored. Involve them in the solution

- Implement school-wide positive behavior support or restorative practices programs and alternatives to suspensions

Behavior and Effort cont.

- Work to ensure that students experience consistent academic and behavioral norms as they travel from class to hall and class again

- Build success scripts in students' heads (effort leads to success), work to undermine failure scripts (success is capricious, withholding effort keeps you psychologically safe)

Our challenge is to develop early warning systems that build on student strengths and lets them recover when they stumble.

Illustrating Why We Do the Work

The Education of Omarina
A 3-part series highlighting one girl's journey from a public middle school in the Bronx to an elite New England private school and then on to college.

- Part 1: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/educationdropout-nationmiddle-school-moment/
- Part 2: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/omarinas-story/
- Part 3: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/the-education-of-omarina/

For more information:

Visit the Everyone Graduates Center website

at

www.every1graduates.org