



Supporting Attendance Through a Statewide System

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Ten Minnesota Commitments to Equity

1. **Prioritize equity.**
2. Start from within.
3. **Measure what matters.**
4. **Go local.**
5. Follow the money.
6. Start early.
7. Monitor implementation of standards.
8. Value people.
9. **Improve conditions for learning.**
10. Give students options.



MDE's Definition of Educational Equity

Educational equity is the condition of **justice, fairness, and inclusion** in our systems of education so that **all students have access** to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

The pursuit of educational equity **recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success** in learning for students based on their races, incomes, and other social conditions.

Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunities **requires systemic change** that allows for the distribution of resources, information, and other support depending on the student's situation to **ensure an equitable outcome**.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- Passed in 2015 by the Federal Government and implemented in the 2018-2019 school year
- ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind and changed many portions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- ESSA requires each state to develop and implement a system for holding all districts and schools accountable for the education of students.
- Minnesota uses the North Star system to identify schools and districts for comprehensive and targeted support.

Key Terms and Legislation

- **Daily attendance:** Defined and documented at the local level.
- **Consistent attendance:** Consistent attendance is the opposite of chronic absenteeism. Students will be consistently attending school if they attend *more than* 90 percent of school days (>90% of school days).
- **Chronic absenteeism:** students who miss at least 10% of school days ($\geq 10\%$ of school days).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

North Star system school and district identification process:

Stage 1

Math Achievement

Reading Achievement

Progress Toward English
Language Proficiency

Stage 2

(Elementary/Middle)

Math Progress

Reading Progress

Stage 2

(High)

Four-Year Graduation

Seven-Year Graduation

Stage 3

Consistent Attendance

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The 5th Indicator: Consistent attendance

- State-wide community engagement and input (2015-2017).
- Collected via Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARRS), the school finance data system, to reduce the burden on Local Education Agencies (LEAs).
- Calculated by percentage, not days to account for the different formats of attendance tracking by LEAs.
- Students must be enrolled at a school for ½ year to be included in the calculation.
- Could be used as a beginning point for schools to explore attendance more with local data.

Consistent Attendance Timeline

- Final Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) data to determine compensatory revenue is due the December and January of the following school year.
 - For example, school year 2023-24 MARSS data is due from LEAs early January 2025 to MDE.
- From February to July, MNIT then does the analysis and 3rd party vendor verification on accountability data including graduation, attendance, and test scores.
- MDE supports with technical specifications, manages timelines, quality checks reports, and provides technical assistance to the 3rd party vendor.

Key Terms and Legislation

Average Daily Membership (ADM):

- ADM represents the portion of the school year during which a student is enrolled in the school, district or charter school over a specific time period.
- It is the sum of each student's membership days divided by the student's total school days across all students in a school or district over a specific time period.

Minnesota Statutes, section 126C.05, subdivision 9 defines **habitual truant** as:

(a) Membership for pupils in grades kindergarten through 12 and for prekindergarten pupils with disabilities shall mean the number of pupils on the current roll of the school, counted from the date of entry until withdrawal. The date of withdrawal shall mean the day the pupil permanently leaves the school or the date it is officially known that the pupil has left or has been legally excused. **However, a pupil, regardless of age, who has been absent from school for 15 consecutive school days during the regular school year or for five consecutive school days during summer school or intersession classes of flexible school year programs without receiving instruction in the home or hospital shall be dropped from the roll and classified as withdrawn.**

15 Day Withdrawal Provision:

- Withdrawal after 15 consecutive days of absence, without the provision of homebound instruction, triggers the close of the enrollment status record.
- When the student re-enrolls a new enrollment status record is created.

34 available codes within the MARRS system indicate **why a student is withdrawing**.

- Families do not consistently indicate that they are withdrawing or where they are going.
- Some changes in enrollment happen in the summer without communication to schools.
- We can find students if they re-enroll in another public LEA, but not in real-time.

Key Terms and Legislation

Habitually truant:

- Collected in the Disciplinary Incident Reporting System
- Collected as a count for each student who meets the definition, only once
- Includes any student who met the definition of habitual truancy prior to transferring away or withdrawing from school

Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.007, subdivision 19 defines **habitual truant** as:

a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on **seven school days per school year** if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school under section 120A.22, subdivision 8

Data Support and Sharing

Data-sharing agreements and requests with researchers, media, policymakers

Published analytics on the MDE Minnesota Report Card and Data Center

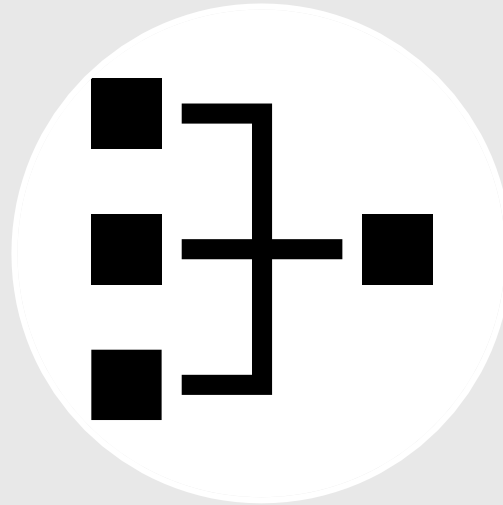
Quarterly data sharing with the Tribal Nations Education Committee

Partnerships with non-profits, collective impact groups, and community

Future data opportunities



Local attendance
definitions and
policies



Student
Information
System data
standards



Usable data
analysis to inform
practice and policy

History of attendance research

“School attendance and school absenteeism were one of the first areas of study for emerging disciplines such as education, psychology, and criminal justice in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With the advent of the labor rights movement, new employment laws, and the needs for an educated workforce and greater social order, children were increasingly moved from industrial and agricultural settings to more formalized school settings.”

(Kearney et al., 2022, p. 1-2)

Attendance Literature

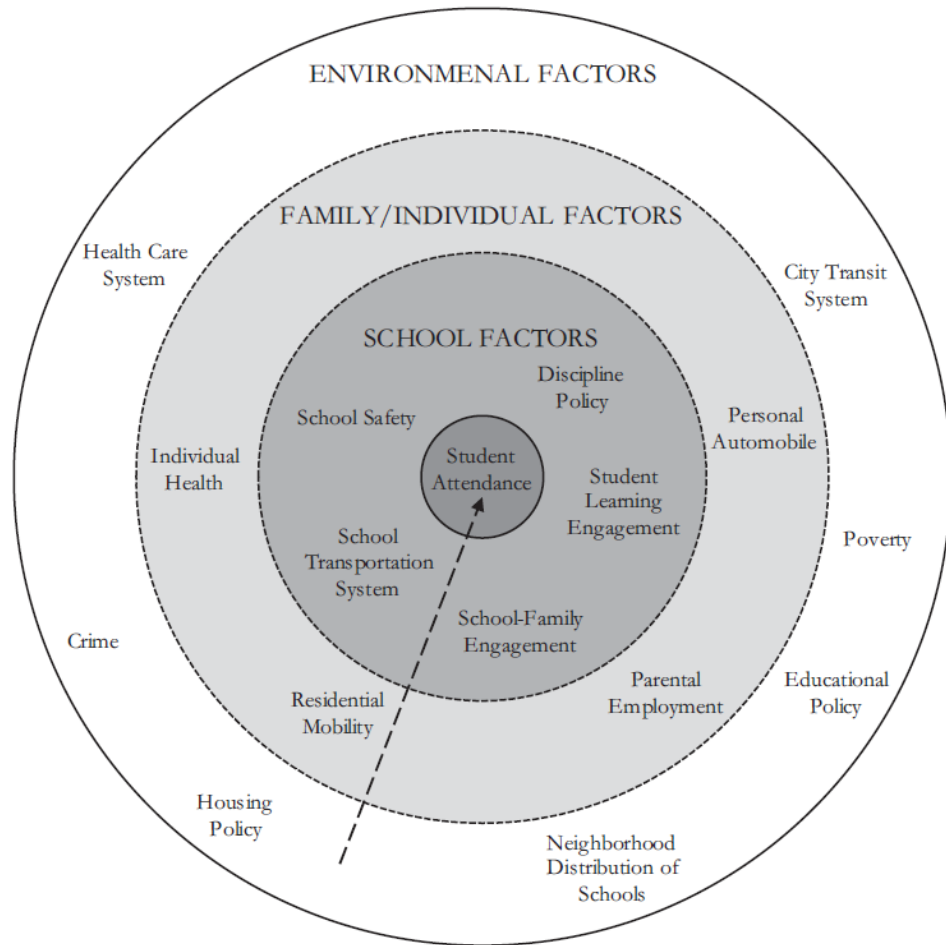


Image from Winchell Lenhoff & Pogodzinski, 2018, p. 155

Root causes of school attendance issues

- Student well-being
- School environment
- Family dynamics
- Neighborhood conditions
- Poverty

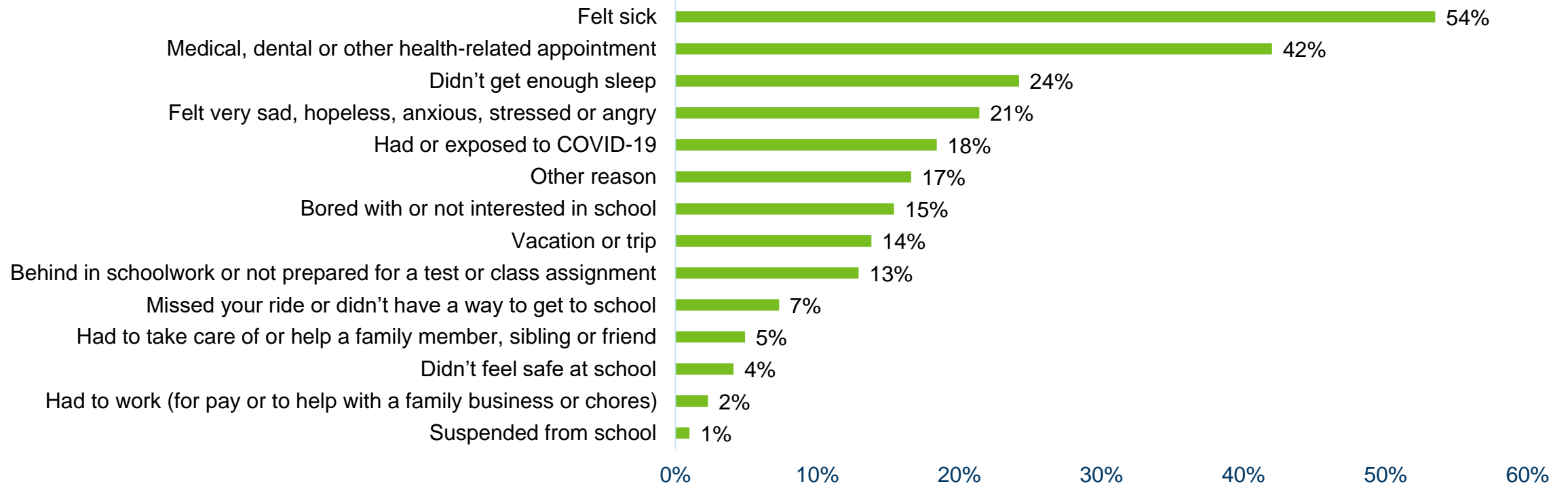
(Childs & Lofton, 2021)

Reasons for absence

- The complicated nature of the root causes of non-attendance and the data collected by LEAs makes studying the reason(s) for non-attendance difficult
- Most research around reasons for absence focuses on excused and unexcused absences.
- One study found that at 15% non-attendance, students experienced more unique problems and supports required more individualization (Kearney & Childs, 2023).
- However, unexcused does not necessarily mean the student chose to miss school.

What do the Students Say?

2022 Minnesota Student Survey 11st Grade State-Wide Results: What are the reasons you missed a full or part day of school in the last 30 days?



Note, question was only administered to students who indicated they had missed a full or part of a day of school in the last 30 days.

Minnesota Study Survey

- A triennial survey that reports on students' experiences and well-being that is psychometrically evaluated, validity evidence for its continued interpretation, and used widely.
- Interagency coordination with Minnesota's Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Safety, and Department of Education.
- Administered every three years to students in 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th grades at participating districts.

Connection to attendance literature:

Family and relationships

Mental and physical health

Risk factors

Perception of schools

Experiences in-and-out of school

Attendance Literature

5-9%

At-risk attendance

10-20%

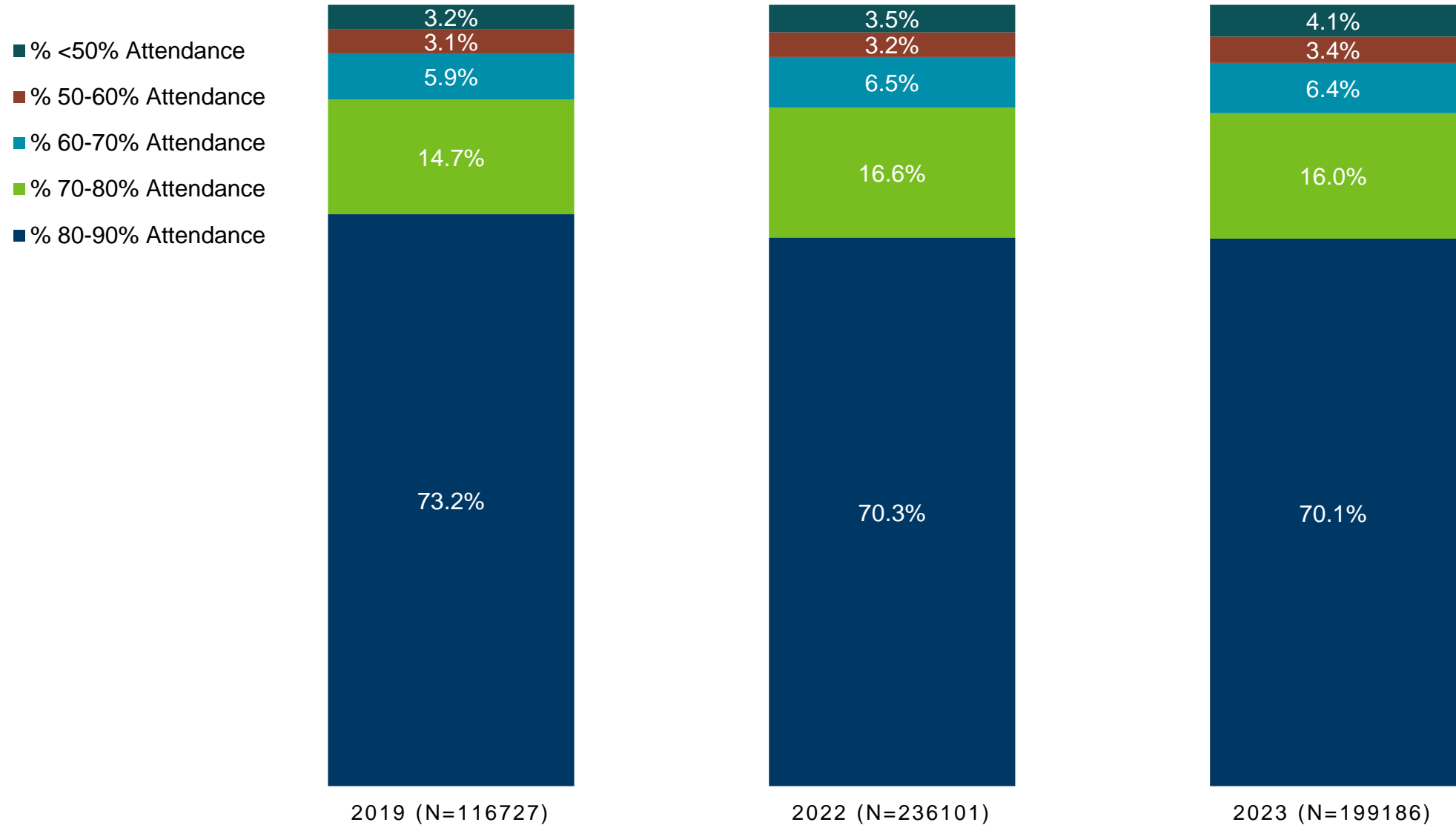
Chronically absent

>20%

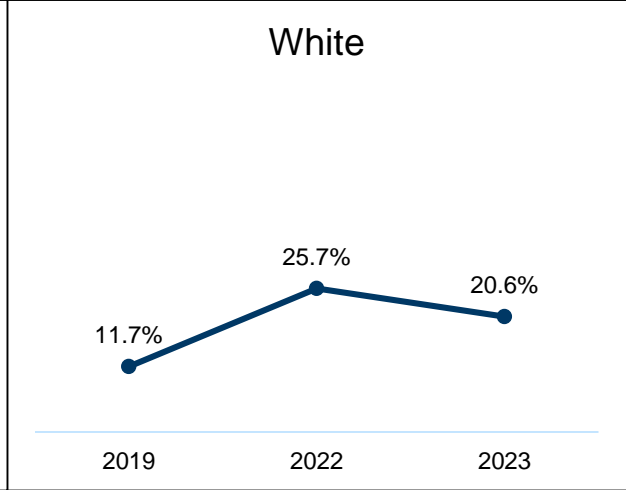
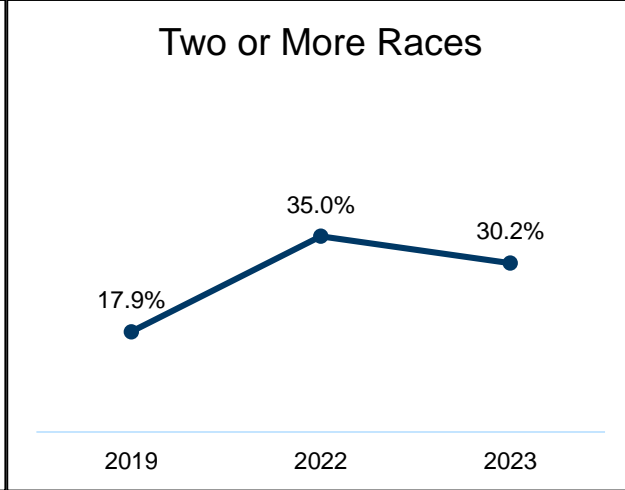
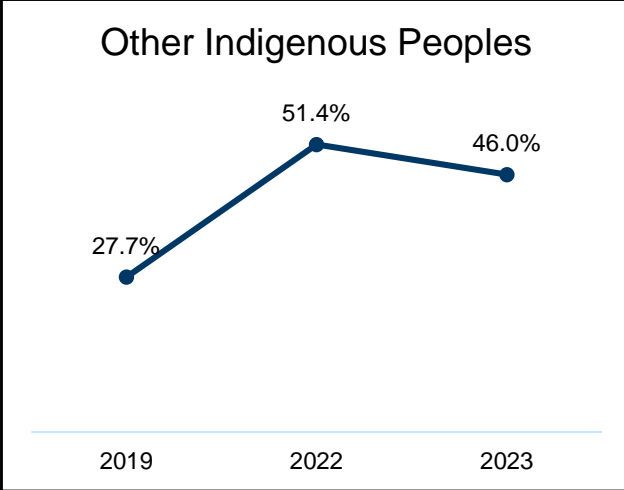
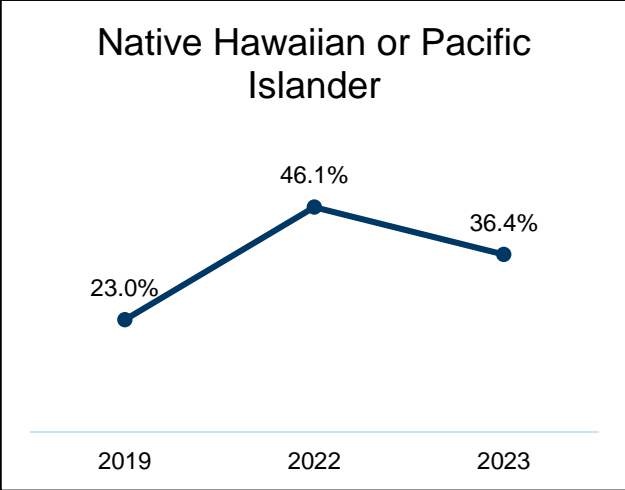
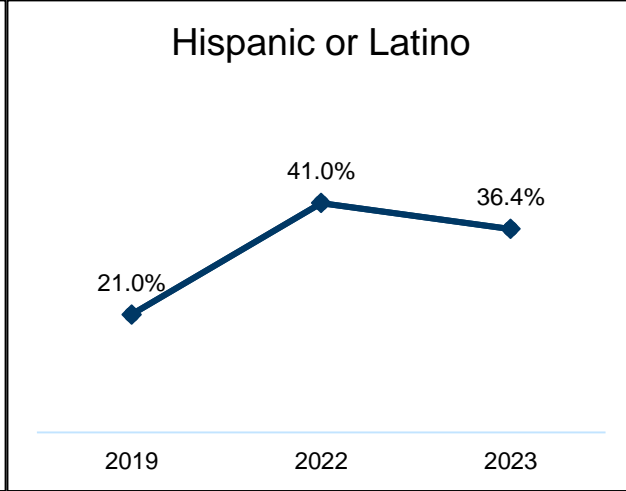
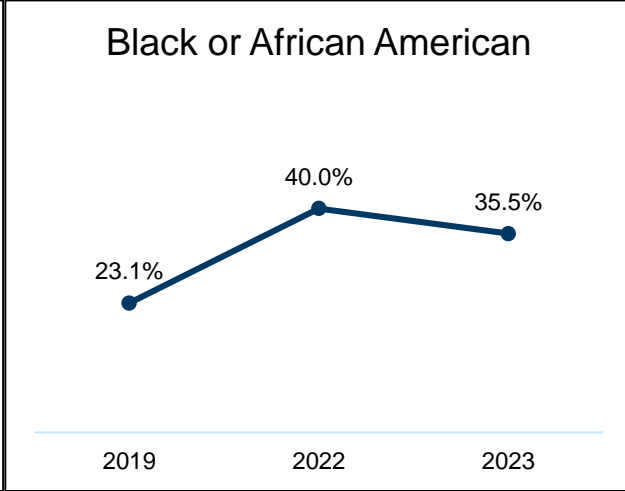
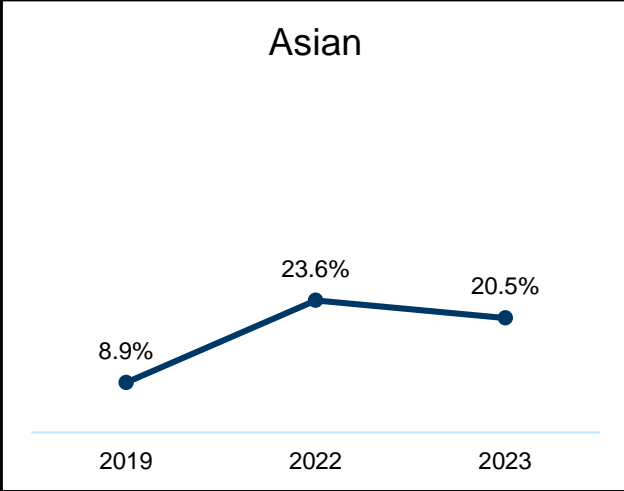
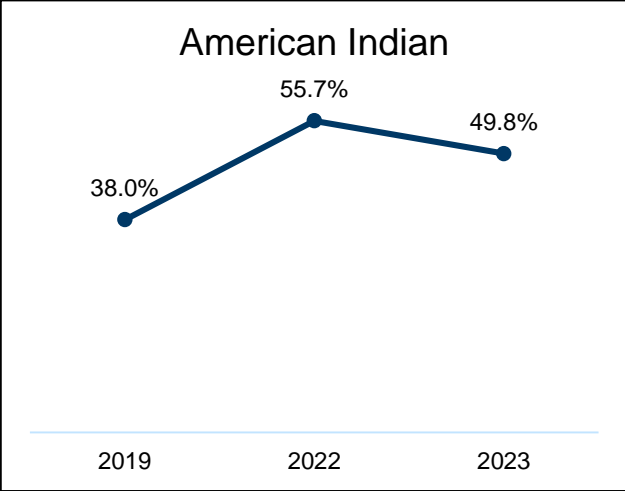
Severe chronic
absence

(Kearney & Childs, 2022)

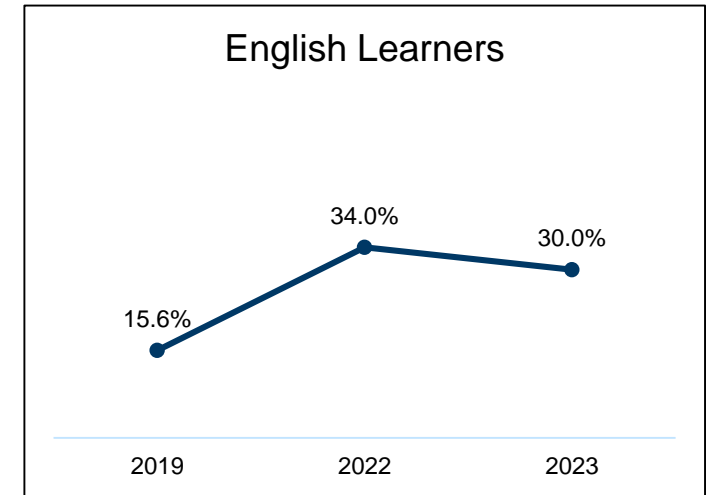
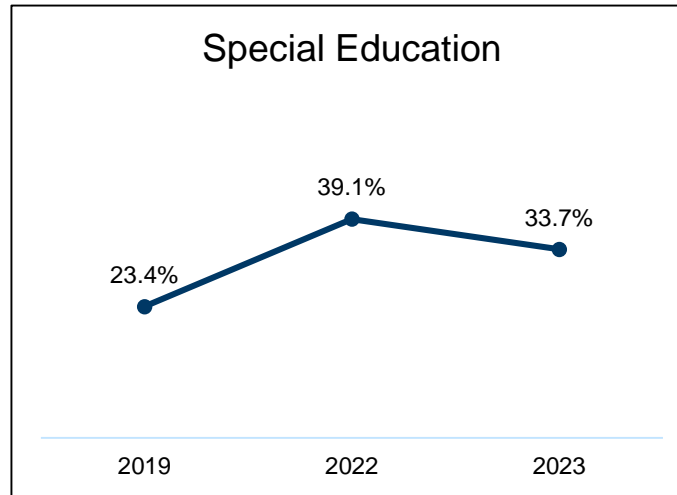
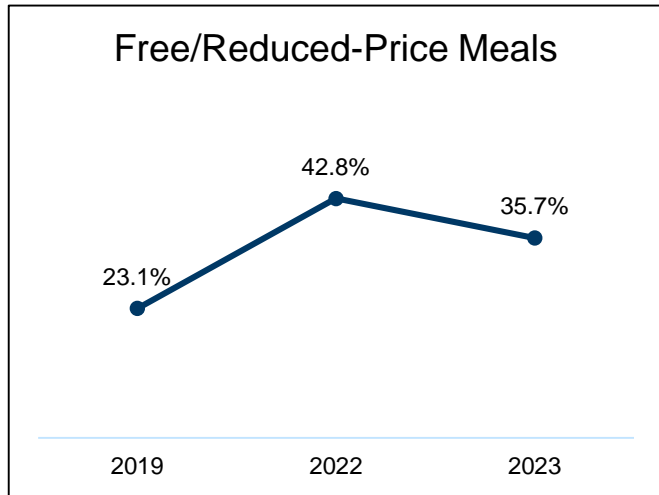
Minnesota Attendance Percentages for Students that Attend School \leq 90% (2019, 2022, 2023)



ATTENDANCE PERCENTAGES FOR MINNESOTA STUDENTS THAT ATTEND SCHOOL ≤ 90% DISAGGREGATED BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



ATTENDANCE PERCENTAGES FOR MINNESOTA STUDENTS THAT ATTEND SCHOOL ≤ 90% DISAGGREGATED BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES, AND RECEIVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES



Complexities of studying student attendance:

- Despite the breadth of attendance research, most positive interventions only show small to moderate effects (Eklund et al., 2022; Kearney et al., 2022).
- Critiques of data include the quality, utility, and generalizability (Kearney & Childs, 2023).
- MDE and DCYF recently applied for federal research mixed-methods grants to study attendance through systemic and contextual analytics.

Punitive measures:

- Literature overwhelmingly indicates that punitive measures are ineffective in increasing attendance.
 - Examples include arrests, expulsion, suspension, tickets
- Punitive attendance interventions paradoxically exacerbate school attendance problems.
- Punitive attendance measures are disproportionately applied toward students who are American Indian, Hispanic, Black and African American, low-income, and English language learners.

(Kearney et al., 2022; Kearney & Childs, 2023; & Kearney et al., 2023)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):

- MTSS has been a cornerstone recommendation within attendance literature for the last decade because:
 - It provides both preventative (tier 1) and specialized supports (tier 2+) for students.
 - It is a proactive model that emphasizes data-based decision-making.
 - “The comprehensive, empirical, sustainable, and efficient nature of MTSS is designed to optimize limited resources” (Kearney et al., 2019, p. 8).
 - Provides research-based structure with localized design based on the context of the school- including partnerships with non-profits, agencies, and the community.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:

- Provides better data that can be disaggregated by students and applied intervention.
- A recent study found that schools that received MTSS training saw a statistically significant increase in student attendance and a decrease in student behavioral issues (Gage et al., 2024).

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COMPASS

Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success



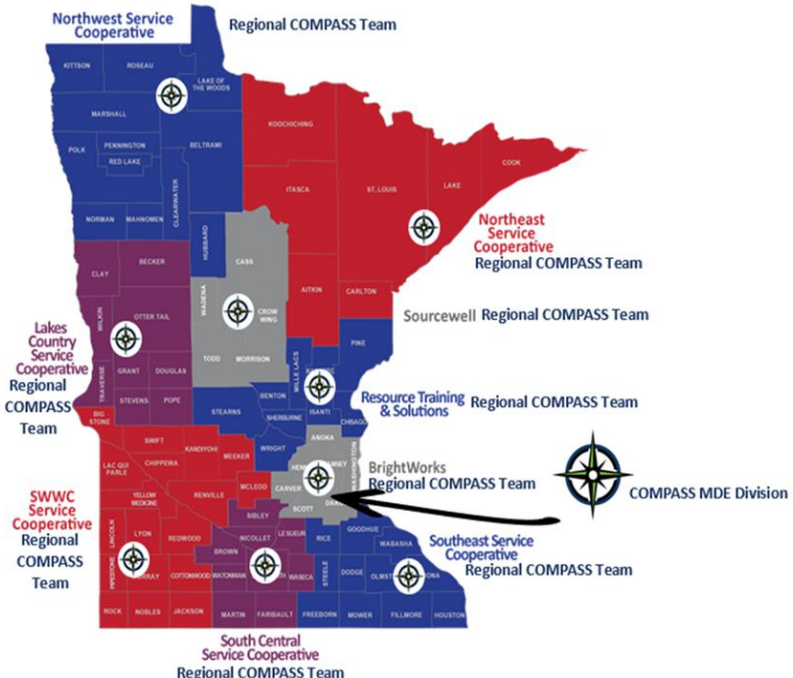
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Statewide System for Continuous Improvement

Statewide Framework for Continuous Improvement

COMPASS is a Partnership



Statewide System of Support

Our purpose is to design a **collaborative, supportive system** in Minnesota to ensure **rigorous and equitable outcomes for each student**, without exception. Through integrating COMPASS (Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success), the state continuous improvement system, into each service cooperative, all public, charter, and tribal schools will have regional access to:

- cohesive guidance,
- aligned, evidence-based professional learning,
- flexible, layered, and differentiated support that intensifies as needed.
- expanded continuous improvement support to all districts, charter schools, and tribal schools in Minnesota,
- local regional access to research-based guidance within the local context
- free guidance, professional learning, and flexible support in all areas of continuous improvement

COMPASS Layers of Support

Educational equity is the condition of **justice, fairness, and inclusion** in our systems of education so that **all students have access** to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

MnMTSS Continuous Improvement Framework: Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to educational opportunities **requires systemic change** that allows for the distribution of resources, information, and other support depending on the student's situation to **ensure an equitable outcome**.

Culturally responsive and high-quality core instruction and foundational school climate so that **all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential**.

Equitable access for historically and persistently marginalized student groups. Identifying and **eliminating barriers** caused by the **system** and building bridges based on the unique strengths of students and communities.

Additional layer of focused continuous improvement support for schools identified for targeted or comprehensive improvement.

COMPASS Areas of Support

- Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Support (MnMTSS)
 - Local implementation support
 - Family and Community Engagement
 - Data and Assessment Literacy
 - Attendance Support
- Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership
- High quality evidence-based Literacy instruction
- High quality evidence-based Math instruction
- Climate and Culture
- Equitable Access for All Students and Student Groups
 - American Indian/Indigenous Students
 - Multi-Lingual Learners
 - Students receiving special education services
- Additional support for districts and schools identified for support through the state accountability system

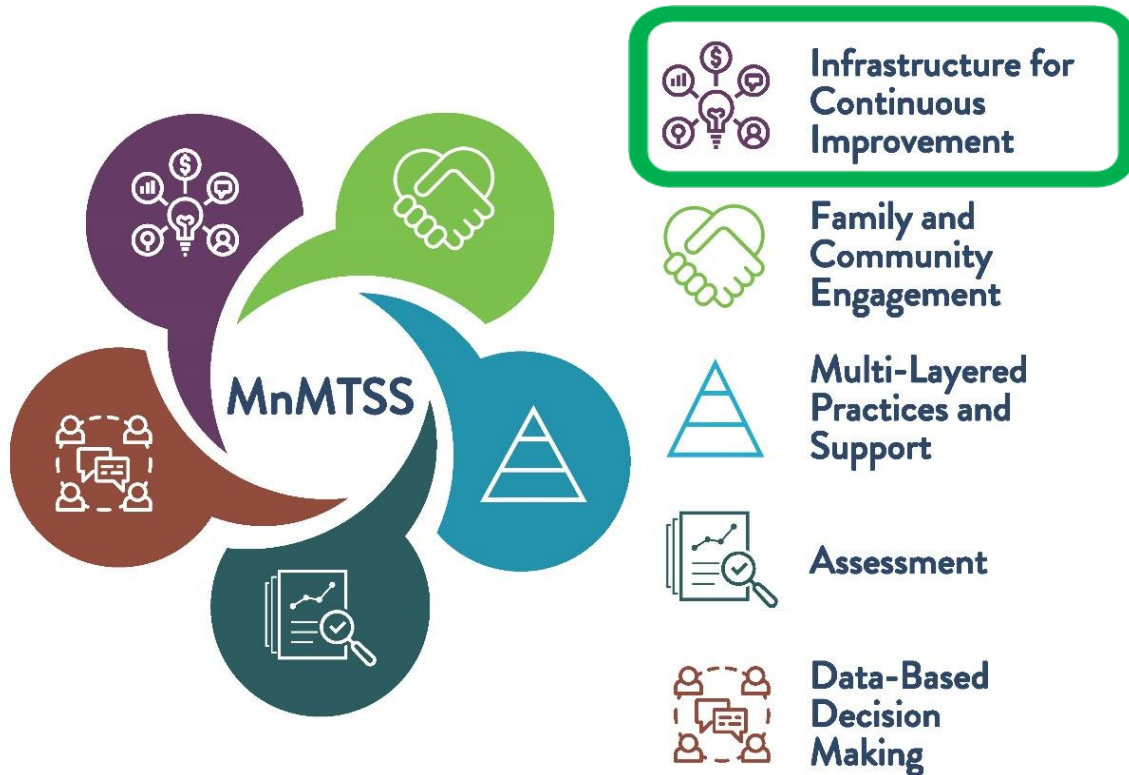
Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Support (MnMTSS)

- Framework for continuous improvement and benchmark for evaluating systems and measuring progress
- Five components
 - Infrastructure for continuous improvement
 - Family and community engagement
 - Multi-layered practices and supports
 - Assessment
 - Data-based decision making
- Multi-layered practices and supports is one component



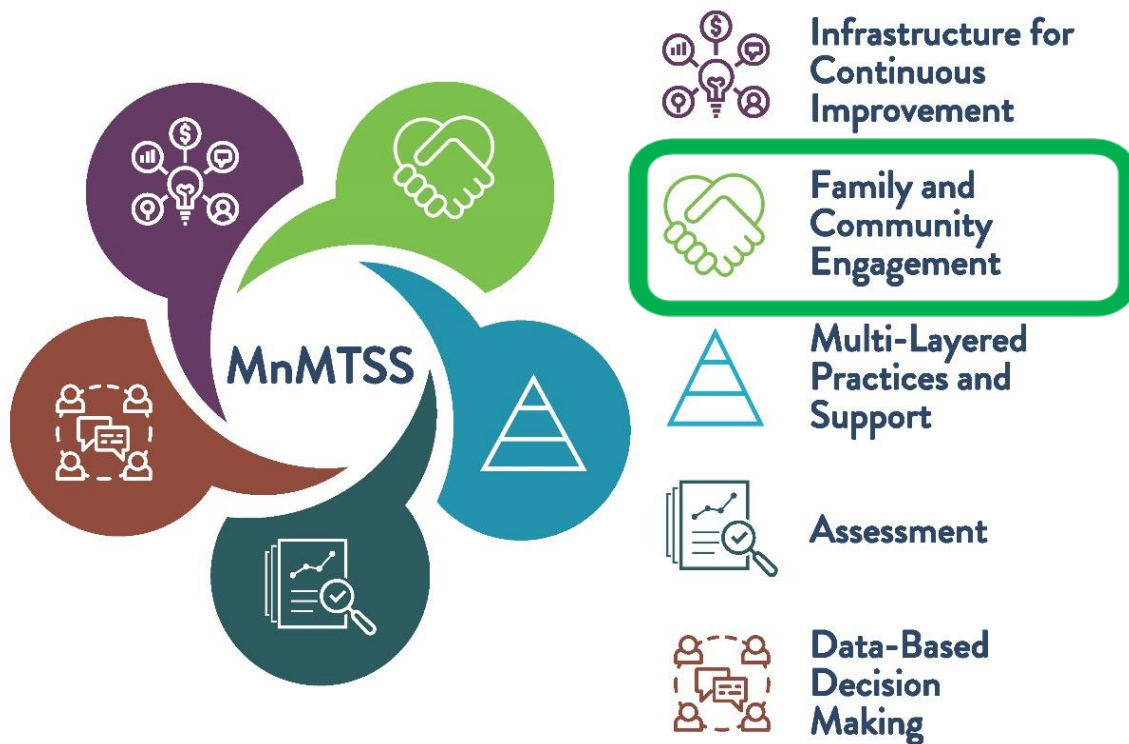
District engagement to date: 160 districts have participated in the 6-session introduction course, 33 are newly engaged this fall and 30 are engaged in ongoing professional development.

MnMTSS for Attendance



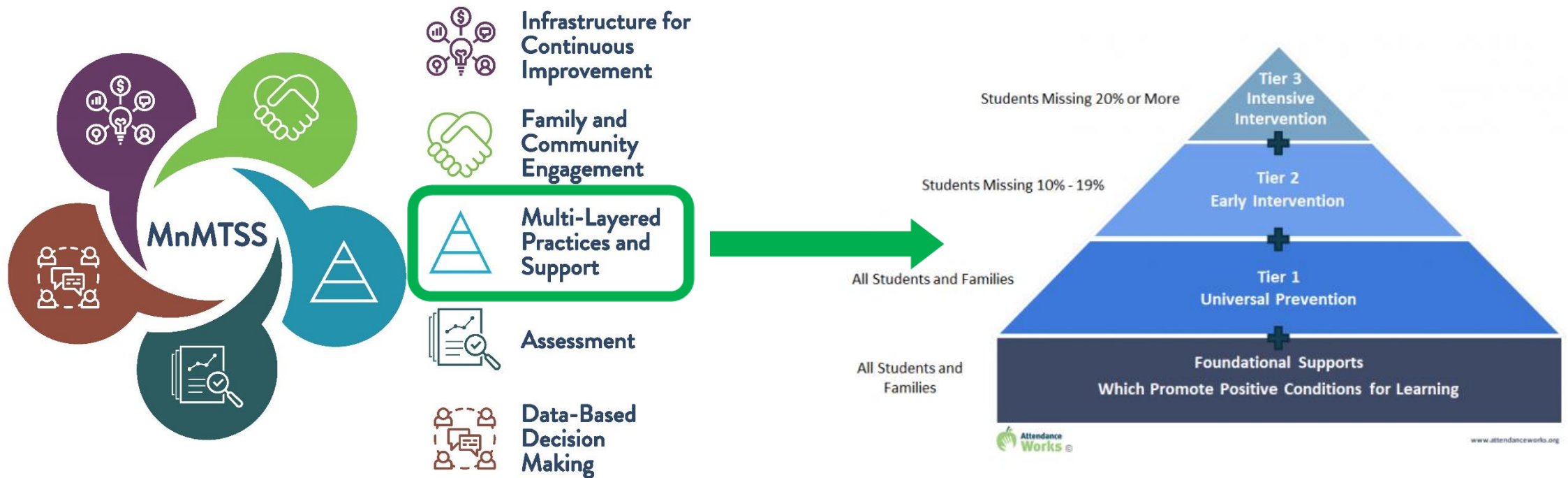
- MnMTSS addresses school factors as causes of root cause of school attendance issues
- Training and self-analysis tool provides opportunity for district/charter school teams to examine and plan for improvement of:
 - Policies and practices (discipline policies)
 - School Climate & Safety
 - Student engagement

MnMTSS for Attendance



- [The Minnesota Family and Community Engagement model](#) to support schools is designed to help schools look at the systems and educator capacities they need to grow to effectively engage every family and learn together what the assets and needs are in the school community to co-design solutions that will address prioritized needs.
- [Full-Service Community Schools](#) – Minnesota invested in this growing community school movement and is seen as a National Leader in building neighborhood to National nested civic infrastructure intended to address non-academic barriers to attending and engaging in school consistently.

MnMTSS for Attendance



Multi-layered Practices Examples

Foundational Supports

- Physical and Emotional Health and Safety
- Belonging, Connection and Support
- Academic Challenge and Engagement
- Adult and Student Well-Being and Emotional Competence

Tier 1 Universal Supports

- Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations
- Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement
- Personalized positive communication to families when students are absent
- Recognition of good and improved attendance
- Impact of attendance on whole child widely understood
- Connection to a caring adult in the school

Multi-layered Practices Examples

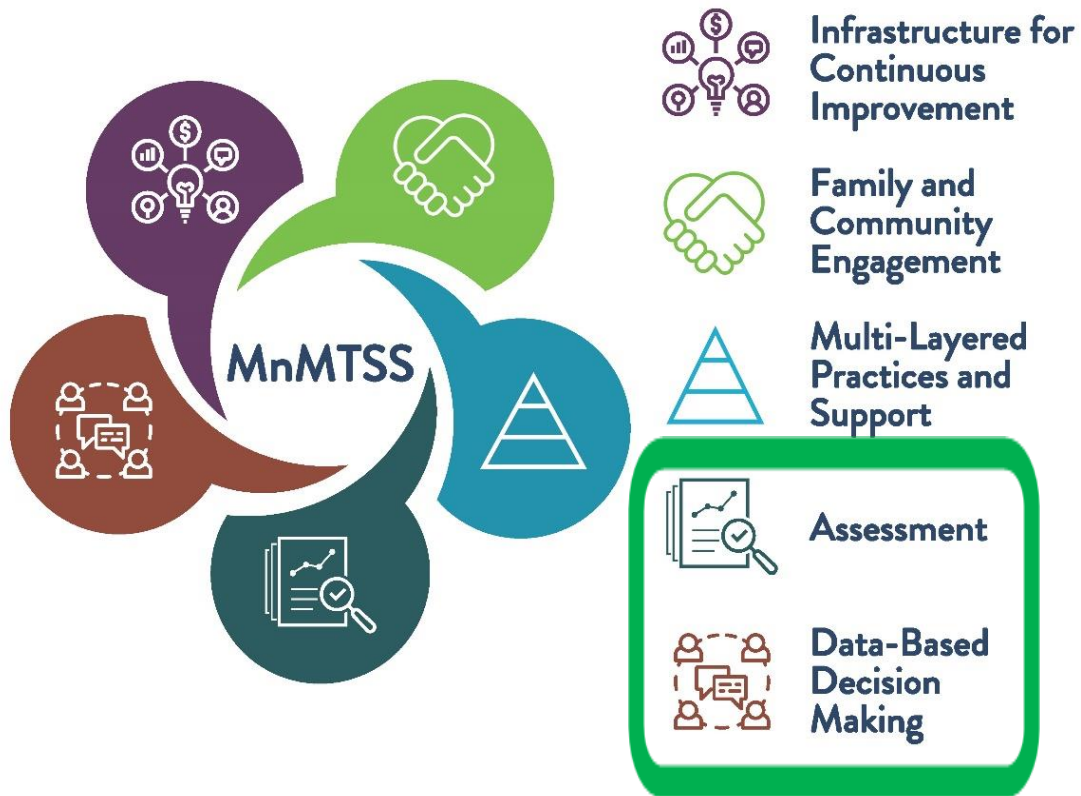
Tier 2 Early Intervention

- Common community and school barriers identified and addressed
- Individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance
- Family visit
- Mentors
- [Check-In/Check-Out \(CICO\)](#)
- Small group interventions and supports for students
- Restorative alternatives to discipline and suspension

Tier 3 Intensive Intervention

- Educational support champions / advocates
- Interagency case management
- Housing stability supports
- Student attendance review board
- Community-based, non-criminal truancy court
- Individualized learning and success plan leading to graduation

MnMTSS for Attendance



- [The Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System 2.0 \(MEIRS 2.0\)](#) is an evidence based Early Warning and Intervention Monitoring System. MEIRS 2.0 can be used as a universal screener to identify students at the High School level in need of additional supports and interventions to ensure students are on track to graduate. MDE provides training to districts regularly.

Statewide System of Support-Attendance

- **Statewide System of Support Attendance Positions:**
 - Temporary Data Practices and Analytics Attendance Data Specialist: provide guidance and support to districts and schools on the use of local and state data. This position will support the work of the pilot districts in the implementation and monitoring of selected interventions. Advanced analytics of attendance data at the state and local level. Develop literature reviews and conduct scans of how SEAs are utilizing and sharing attendance data.
 - Temporary COMPASS Attendance Specialist: support the pilot districts to implement and measure the impact of attendance interventions. Use information from pilot program to inform state attendance framework, guidance, and support, lead the programmatic work of the regional COMPASS attendance positions and align regional and COMPASS attendance work to attendance work across the state and across the agency.
 - Four Temporary Regional Attendance Specialists: work with the MDE COMPASS attendance position to provide research-based guidance within MnMTSS and support implementation at the local level, informed by local data, and selected to meet the unique strengths and barriers for students and families at the local level.

Minnesota Attendance Support Guide

COMPASS is developing a statewide attendance guide. This guide will focus on continuous improvement of systems and the implementation of evidence-based practices to remove barriers faced by students, families and communities.

- **Phase 1: Initial Report and Guidance Development:**
 - Provide a report on the current state of student attendance and/or chronic absenteeism in Minnesota, including current attendance reporting and recording practices across the state
 - Develop guidance designed to leverage MnMTSS as a framework to improve student attendance and address absenteeism, and
 - Authentically engage a diverse group of partners to provide input, feedback, and to gain insight into the systemic issues impacting student attendance and chronic absenteeism in Minnesota.
- **Phase 2: Minnesota Student Attendance Task Force and Attendance Guide Development:**
 - Convene and facilitate monthly meetings of a “Minnesota Student Attendance Task Force” to develop key recommendations for improving student attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism, and
 - Develop “Minnesota’s Attendance Guide,” to provide statewide guidance related to improving attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism.
- **Phase 3: Professional Learning & Support**
 - Develop the capacity of regional COMPASS attendance leads to assist districts address chronic absence and increase student attendance, provide peer support and coaching to districts to modify their attendance policies and practices, and support districts and schools to adopt and implement evidence-based attendance practices within the MnMTSS framework.

Support for Pilot Districts and the Legislative Study Group

- **Attendance Pilot Program:** COMPASS and Data Practices and Analytics are working in partnership with the pilot districts to provide focused access to the statewide system of support, including supporting the use of data in decision making, professional learning as requested, and additional flexible support as needed. MDE will learn from implementation at the pilot districts to better understand promising practices, and how to support districts across the state to increase consistent attendance.
 - Survey of current attendance recording and reporting
 - Individual support to each district to identify and describe evidence-based interventions
 - Support to develop program evaluation

Attendance Support for Schools Identified through ESEA

- **ESSA Federal identification for school improvement:**
 - Attendance is the final filter for identification.
 - No schools are identified for attendance alone.
 - Identification attendance data is based on the percent of students consistently attending, those who miss less than 10% of school days in a year.
- **Identified schools receive additional targeted support through COMPASS, our statewide system of support:**
 - School Advocates work alongside school and district leaders to support their capacity to lead through continuous improvement.
 - The school engages in a comprehensive needs assessment.
 - The school team selects an evidence-based practice (EBP).
 - The school is supported to implement the EBP.
 - Number of schools that selected an attendance specific EBP in current round: 4
- **New round of identification: This is the final year of support for the currently identified schools. In the upcoming round of identification MDE COMPASS will utilize current research and results from the Minnesota Attendance Guidance development process to inform our expectations and supports for identified schools, including around improving student attendance.**

What Are We Hearing?

- MDE currently has the data needed to identify schools for additional support through the state accountability system, identify CACR (Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (previously WBWF)) districts with the highest percent of identified schools, and to identify other tiers of districts and schools for support through the COMPASS statewide system of regional support.
- Districts and partners are also sharing that would be beneficial for MDE to build the capacity of and support district and school leaders to use their local data to track attendance data in real time to identify early warning signs, identify barriers, improve systems, and support the unique strengths of students and families in their communities.

Promising Practices and Interventions

- Research to Practice
 - Research based guidance from the state agency with aligned professional development, flexible support and capacity building.
 - Support and guidance for districts to use local data in decision making
 - Solutions based on local strengths, context, and needs.
 - Systemic solutions that increase school connectedness and belonging and identify and remove student or student group barriers to attendance.
 - Multi-tiered systems of support such as MnMTSS with multi-layered practices and supports.

Thank You!

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