

Senate Study Committee on Chronic Absenteeism

Justin Hill, Deputy Superintendent
Office of Whole Child Supports

Chronic Absenteeism

* **Chronically absent** students are those who miss 10% or more of their total enrolled days at the school.

In contrast, students who are **regularly present** are those who are absent for less than 10% of their enrolled days at the school.

SB123



Attendance Matters

Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much, but absences add up.

When a student misses

2 days

a month, they miss



20 days a year



30 hours of math

60 hours of reading and writing



over 1 year of school by graduation

When a student misses

4 days

a month, they miss



40 days a year



60 hours of math

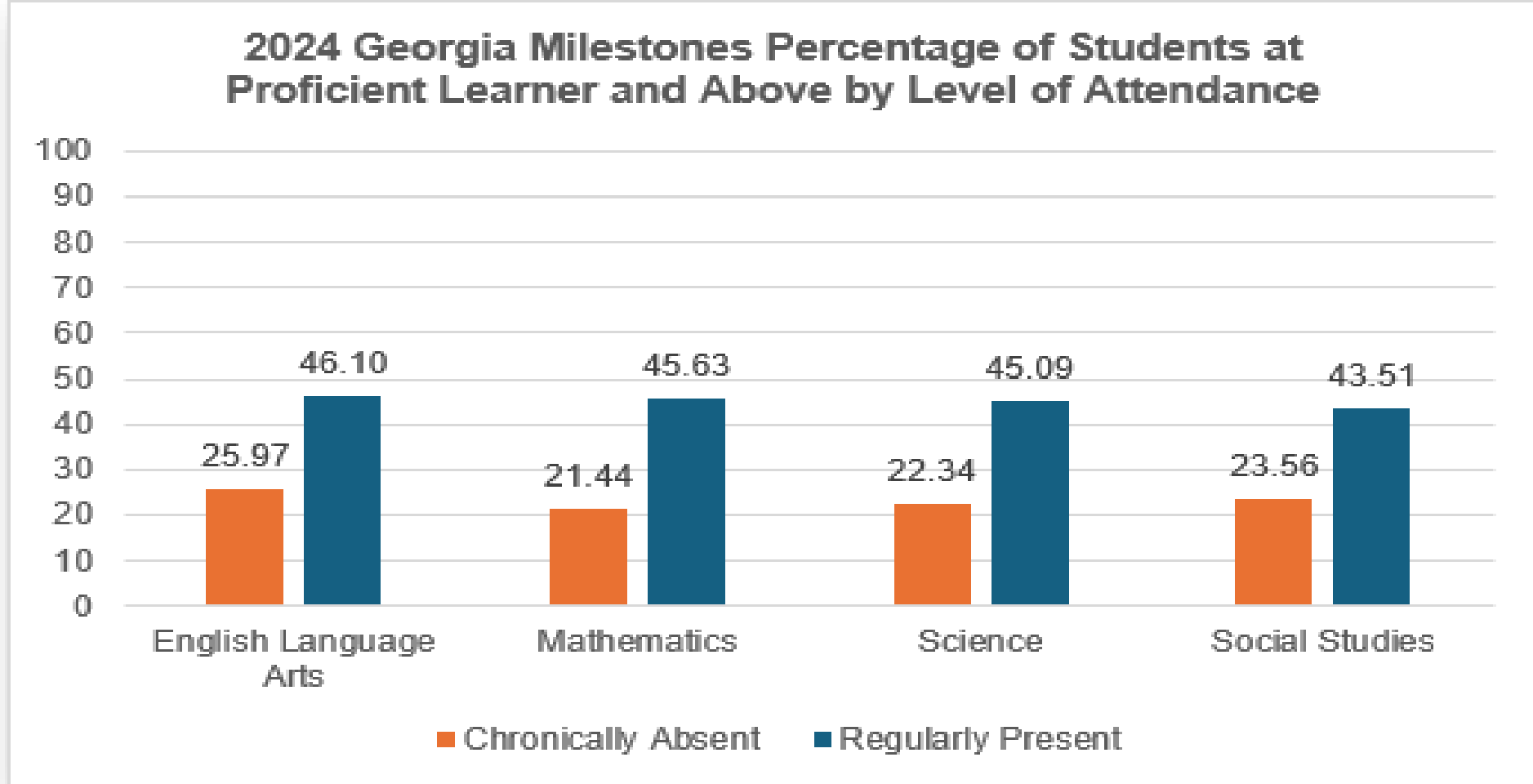


120 hours of reading and writing



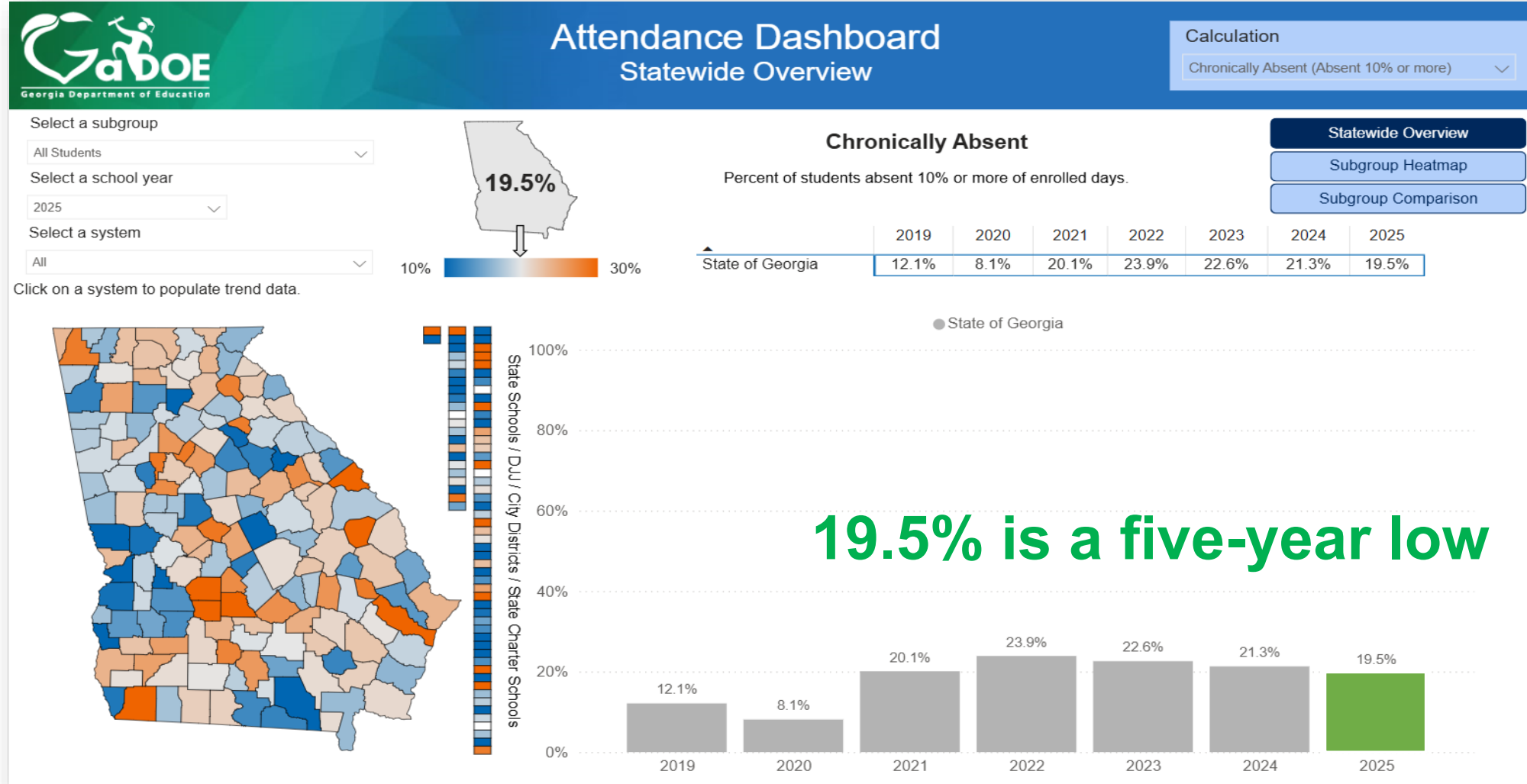
over 2 years of school by graduation

Attendance Matters



There is a clear relationship between attendance and achievement.

Promising Progress



State of Georgia

5%  27%

Chronically Absent - Percent of students absent 10% or more of enrolled days.

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	12.1%	8.1%	20.1%	23.9%	22.6%	21.3%	19.5%
Kindergarten	13.0%	7.6%	18.0%	25.5%	26.2%	23.6%	20.3%
Grade 1	9.8%	5.4%	15.8%	21.0%	21.6%	19.3%	16.6%
Grade 2	8.7%	4.6%	15.2%	19.0%	18.4%	17.4%	14.6%
Grade 3	7.8%	4.2%	14.7%	17.5%	16.2%	15.4%	13.7%
Grade 4	7.8%	4.2%	15.5%	17.6%	15.9%	15.2%	13.4%
Grade 5	7.5%	4.2%	16.0%	17.4%	15.6%	14.9%	13.3%
Grade 6	9.1%	5.4%	18.1%	20.3%	18.0%	16.9%	15.6%
Grade 7	10.9%	6.7%	19.8%	22.9%	20.9%	19.6%	18.2%
Grade 8	11.5%	7.7%	21.2%	23.8%	22.0%	21.2%	19.2%
Grade 9	16.9%	12.9%	26.0%	29.7%	27.8%	27.0%	25.1%
Grade 10	17.5%	12.6%	26.5%	29.8%	28.1%	27.1%	25.7%
Grade 11	17.4%	12.7%	25.9%	30.2%	28.1%	26.8%	25.8%
Grade 12	20.5%	17.0%	27.8%	34.8%	33.4%	31.5%	30.4%

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	12.1%	8.1%	20.1%	23.9%	22.6%	21.3%	19.5%
Female	11.9%	7.9%	19.4%	24.1%	22.9%	21.4%	19.6%
Male	12.3%	8.2%	20.8%	23.8%	22.3%	21.2%	19.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	16.1%	9.9%	21.6%	28.4%	27.7%	25.9%	23.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.9%	2.9%	6.4%	10.1%	11.3%	9.3%	8.0%
Black	13.7%	9.3%	25.3%	27.5%	25.8%	25.1%	23.2%
Hispanic	11.8%	8.0%	20.1%	24.6%	24.2%	23.0%	20.9%
Multi-Racial	13.1%	8.5%	19.5%	24.9%	23.7%	22.3%	20.2%
White	11.5%	7.5%	16.8%	21.6%	19.7%	18.0%	16.5%
Economically Disadvantaged	14.8%	9.8%	23.8%	29.6%	27.1%	25.6%	22.8%
Students with Disabilities	17.1%	11.8%	23.9%	29.0%	27.2%	26.5%	24.4%
Students without Disabilities	11.4%	7.5%	19.5%	23.1%	21.8%	20.5%	18.7%
English Learners	8.9%	5.7%	17.2%	20.3%	20.6%	19.8%	18.3%
Migrant	12.7%	9.0%	21.7%	25.3%	21.6%	20.7%	18.6%
Homeless	33.7%	24.1%	45.6%	50.2%	47.5%	46.2%	44.3%

Statewide Overview

Subgroup Heatmap

Subgroup Comparison

System

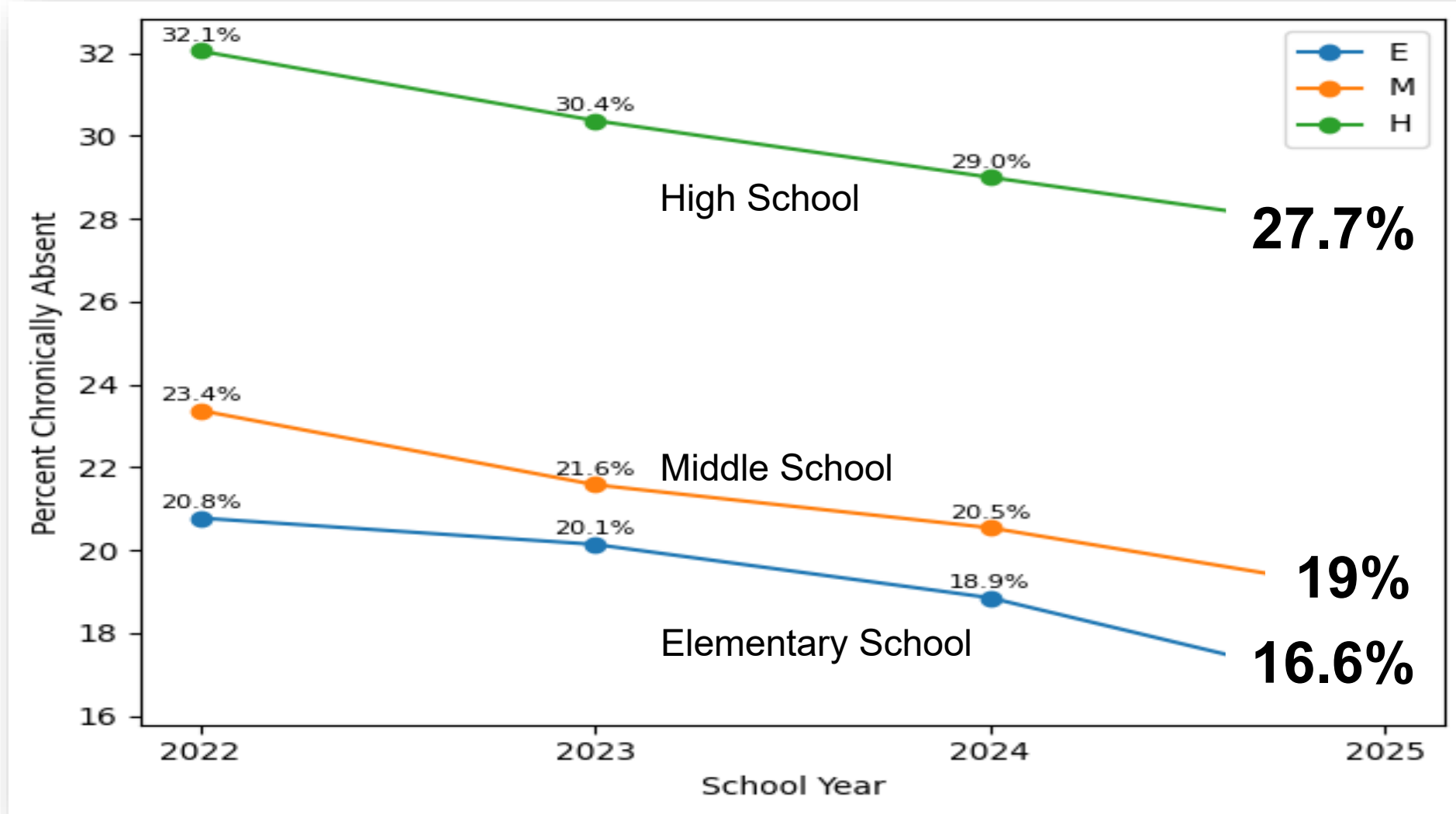
State of Georgia ▾

School

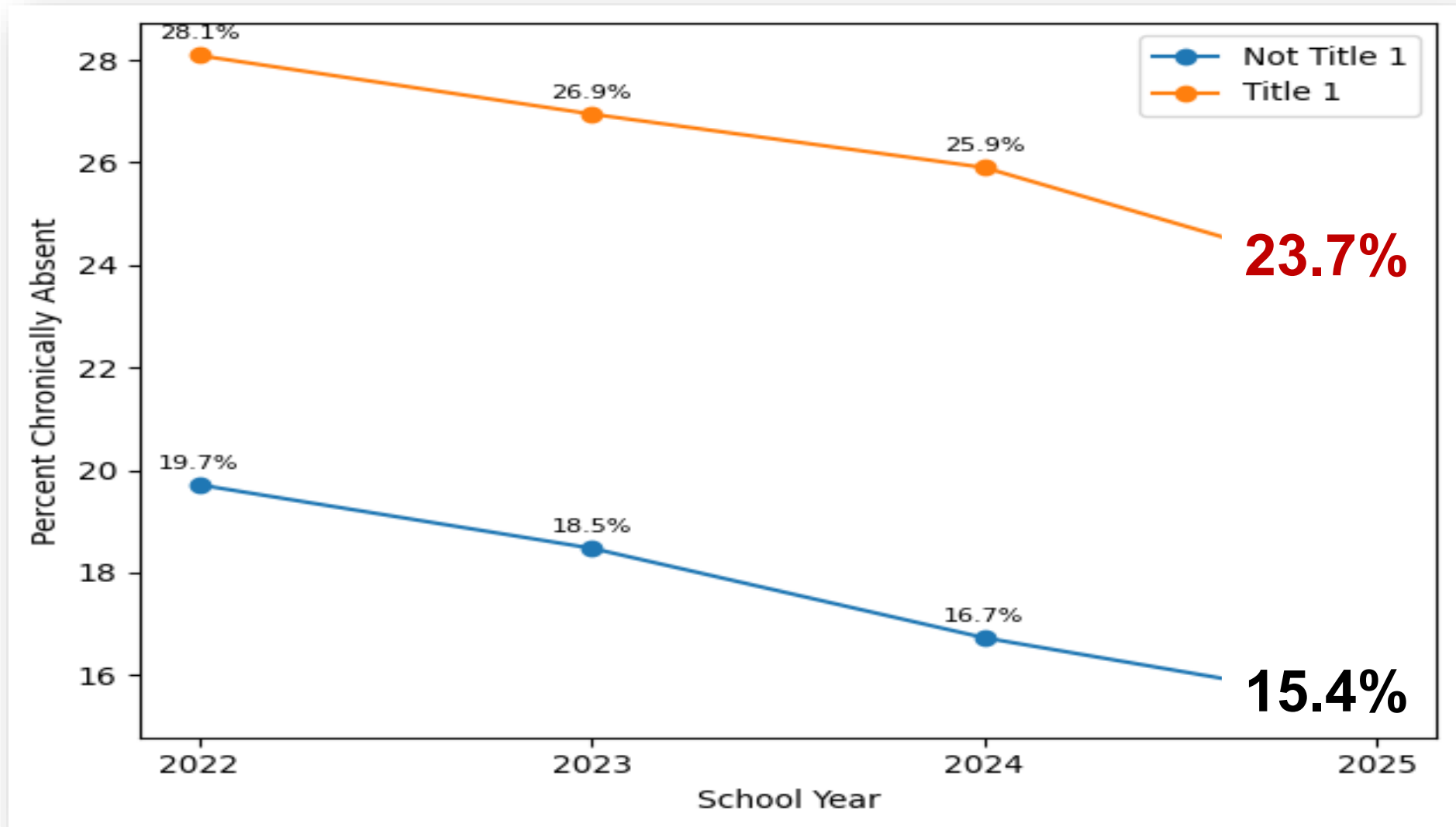
All Schools ▾

★ High school rates have been consistently above 25% since 2021

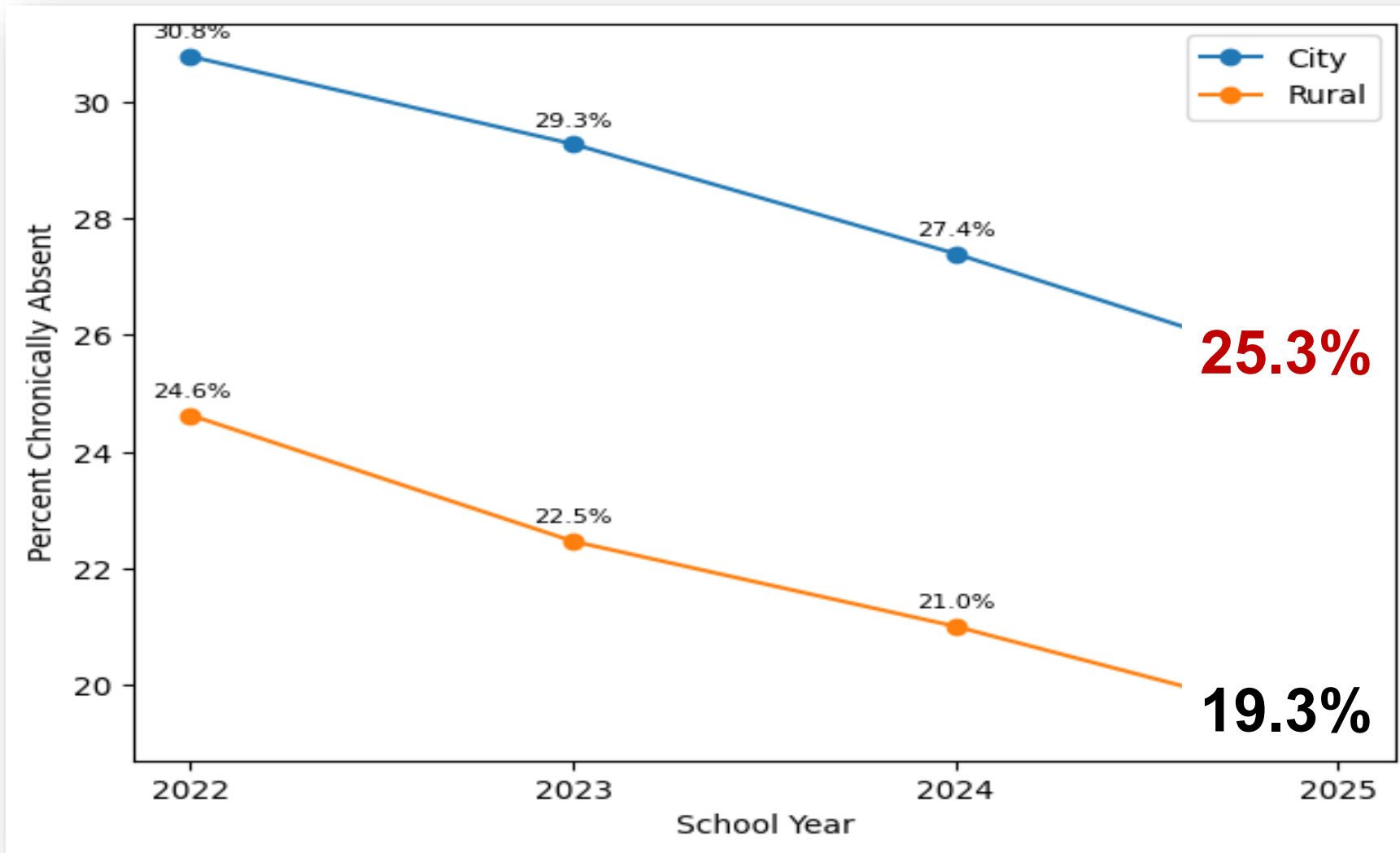
Chronic Absenteeism: Elementary, Middle, & High Schools



Chronic Absenteeism: Title I v. Non-Title I



Chronic Absenteeism: Urban v. Rural

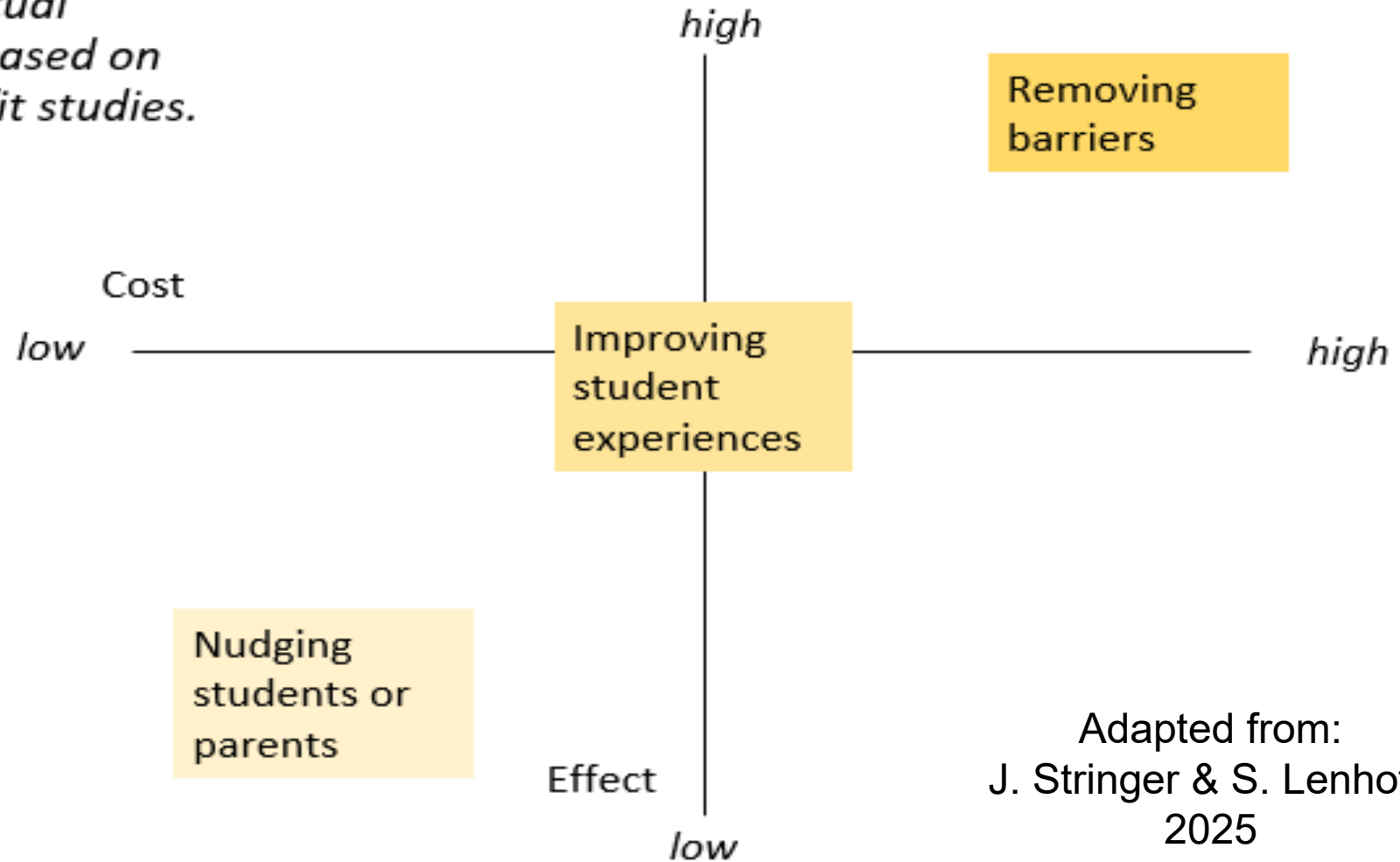


Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: Strategies that Work

- **Removing/reducing barriers (high cost, high impact)**
 - Transportation, health, housing, basic needs, etc.
 - Maximizing school, family, community partnerships
- **Improving student experiences in school (School Climate)**
 - Positive school climate, student engagement & belonging, school-family relationships continue to be effective
 - *Note: Incentives are not always effective*
- **Tiered approach: Focus on prevention & early intervention**
 - Driven by timely & accurate data collection & analysis
 - Understanding **WHY** students are absent
 - Clear policies & procedures & common understanding by all

Three Approaches to Chronic Absenteeism

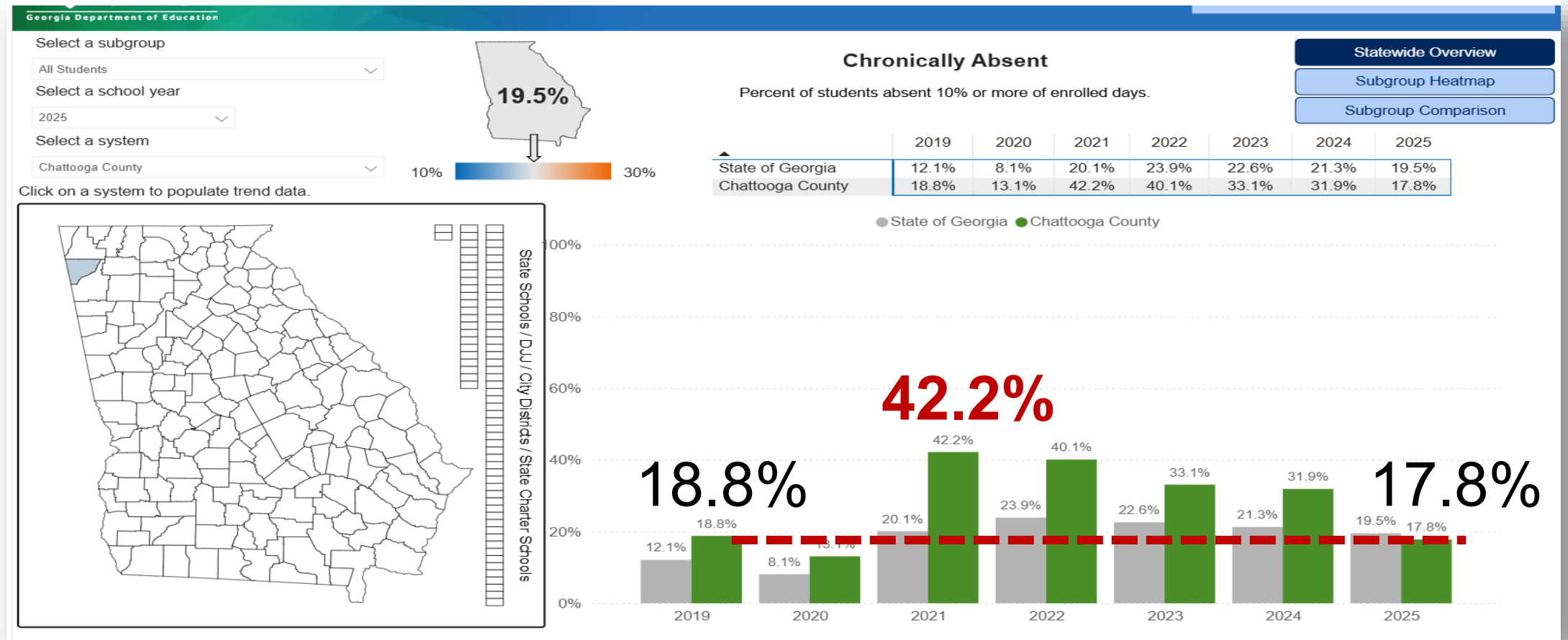
**This is a conceptual framework, not based on actual cost-benefit studies.*



Adapted from:
J. Stringer & S. Lenhoff,
2025

Beating the Odds Spotlight: Chattooga Co.

Chronic Absenteeism Rate Cut in Half



*All 5 schools decreased Chronic Absenteeism.

What Is Working: District-wide

- **Hired part-time retired principal from General Funds at 49%**
 - Focused on home visits
 - Proactive calls
 - Assigned point person at each of the 5 schools
- **Data**
 - **Used *GaDOE Attendance Dashboard* for district-wide data digs during school administrator leadership retreat in 2024-25**
 - **Improved data collection and data input at each school**
- **Monday make-up.** School in session Tues-Friday, Mondays used for in-person make up for absences
- **Flexible Transportation**
- **Renewed focus on safety**

Georgia Schools

Focusing on Improving Student Attendance

What is Working?

O.C.G.A. § 20-14-33

School Climate Star Ratings

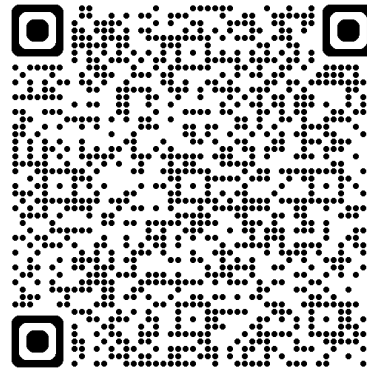
"5-star"	schools ranked excellent according to the state determined school climate index, as appropriate;
"4-star"	schools ranked above average according to the state determined school climate index, as appropriate;
"3-star"	schools ranked average according to the state determined school climate index, as appropriate;
"2-star"	schools ranked below satisfactory according to the state determined school climate index, as appropriate; or
"1-star"	schools ranked unsatisfactory according to the state determined school climate index, as appropriate.

PBIS Recognition Levels

Emerging

Operational

Distinguished



From the GaMTSS Recognition Manual for PBIS Schools (2024-25)

Glynn County: Glynn Academy High School

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	21.1%	13.5%	22.2%	32.0%	18.9%	18.3%	13.8%



- 1,838 students in FY25
- Poverty Rate: 39%
- Demographics: 19% Hispanic, 20% Black, 55% White
- School Star Climate Rating FY24: **4 Stars**
- School Climate Surveys % of Positive Responses: **79.6% (3,4,or 5)**
- MTSS/PBIS Recognition Level
 - FY24 – **Operational**
 - FY25 – **Operational**

What Is Working

- Allowed **final exam exemptions** for students who are “in good standing” each semester by:
 - Having 5 or fewer absences
 - Having no behavioral referrals
 - Passing classes (80%)
- Hired a **bilingual paraprofessional** to contact students and parents of non-English speakers after 3 absences **(Rate dropped from 20% to 14.9%)**
- **Utilized teachers** who have an interest in becoming administrators as interns
 - Teachers teach 2 blocks and serve as administrators for 2 blocks
 - Their focus was only on referrals related to attendance
 - Provided with a stipend for their additional duties
 - Freed up Assistant Principals to focus on instruction and more serious behavioral issues
 - **FY26 school year: district approved to have a teacher serve in this role full time**
- **Academic Impact: CCRPI scores from 2023 to 2024 increased in all areas**

Dodge County Middle School

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	10.2%	6.1%	10.2%	20.1%	15.4%	11.8%	8.7%



- Served 593 students in FY25
- Poverty Rate (Directly Certified Students) – 75.8%
- Demographics: 6% Hispanic, 35% Black, 53% White
- School Star Climate Rating FY24 – **5 Stars**
- Climate Surveys % of Positive Responses **73.3% (3,4,or 5)**
- MTSS/PBIS Recognition Level
 - FY24 – Operational
 - FY25 – Operational

What is Working

- **Engaging Classrooms:** Staff are encouraged to create dynamic, welcoming learning environments that make students excited to attend.
- **Grade-Level Competitions:** Friendly competitions across grades – factoring in attendance, academics, and behavior – culminate in a highly anticipated “Grade Level Champion” celebration.
- **Proactive Outreach:** Teachers and counselors regularly check in with students showing early signs of absenteeism, fostering strong connections with families.
- **Saturday School:** Monthly sessions from January to May offer students a chance to recover missed seat time and complete assignments.
- **PBIS Integration:** Attendance is now part of the school’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) recognition system, reinforcing positive habits.

Fulton County: Palmetto Elementary School

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	16.7%	8.6%	45.1%	32.7%	23.6%	19.1%	7.6%

- Served 469 students in FY25
- Poverty Rate: **77.2%**
- Demographics: 17.5% Hispanic, 69.7% Black, 7.5% White
- School Star Climate Rating FY24: **4 Stars**
- Climate Surveys % of Positive Responses **87% (3,4,or 5)**
- MTSS/PBIS Recognition Level
 - FY24 – **Distinguished**
 - FY25 – **Distinguished**



What is Working

- Teachers offer “Attendance Incentives” in their classrooms
- Teachers call home if there are 3 consecutive absences
- Guidance Counselor and team track attendance
 - Makes phone calls daily when students are absent
- Students can earn an “Attendance Award” if they miss 3 or less days of school per year
- For “necessary circumstances” students can participate in up to 5 remote days per semester when unable to attend in-person

Pierce County: Midway Elementary School

Subgroup	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Students	9.7%	2.9%	13.5%	15.5%	12.7%	11.0%	2.8%

- Served 470 students in FY25
- Poverty Rate: **56.1%**
- Demographics: 13.2% Hispanic, 80.6% White
- School Star Climate Rating FY24: **5 Stars**
- Climate Surveys % of Positive Responses **95% (3,4,or 5)**
- MTSS/PBIS Recognition Level
 - FY24 – **Operational**
 - FY25 – **Operational**



2024 National Title I
Distinguished School

What Is Working

- **Focusing on relationships**

- Consistently message to parents the importance of their child being at school so they can learn.
- Personally call every morning to check on students that are absent.

- **Removing barriers**

- If transportation is an issue the SRO will pick them up.
- School nurse monitors a student's non-contagious symptoms at school when parents might typically keep a child home.
 - Reassures parents they will call if the student needs to go home.

GaDOE's Efforts to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Attendance Summit

EVERY CHILD. EVERY DAY.
ATTENDANCE SUMMIT



National attendance experts

New attendance tools for schools

14+ state agencies and orgs. participating

SAVE THE DATE
December 4, 2024 | 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. | Microsoft - Atlanta (200 17th Street NW)



Richard Woods,
State School
Superintendent



Dr. Curtis Jones, 2019
National Superintendent
of the Year

The Georgia Department of Education is partnering with state agencies, organizations, and school districts to address chronic absenteeism head on.

Join State Superintendent Richard Woods for the launch of new attendance tools and resources for schools, action planning with evidence-based solutions by Attendance Works, an attendance strategies panel with school leaders facilitated by Dr. Curtis Jones, and more.

Organized by:  Georgia Department of Education

Facilitated by:  Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence

Hosted by:  Microsoft

- Hosted by GaDOE & Attendance Works on December 4, 2024
- **31 agencies attended, including staff from Gov. Kemp and Sen. Kennedy's offices**
- Raised awareness on the impact of chronic absenteeism and highlighted successful attendance strategies, resources & tools

Actionable Data

The Georgia School Climate Survey 2024-2025

Student Questions (Grades 6-12)



GPB/GaDOE: PSA

Chronic Absenteeism

Let's End Chronic Absenteeism in Georgia

Fundraiser



GPB Education
42.5K subscribers

Subscribe

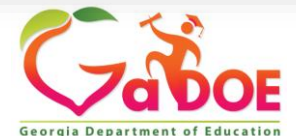
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USED's Stronger Connections Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Grant

Amount \$500,000 for 3 years Project goals:

- Strengthen GaDOE's capacity to address chronic absenteeism through a whole child, tiered system of support lens (GaMTSS/PBIS).
- Decrease chronic absenteeism in high-needs districts in Georgia by increasing their capacity to implement a tiered system of supports and reduce non-academic barriers to learning.

Primary components of the project:

- Data collection and analysis w/**Carl Vinson Institute**
- Resource development
- Professional development workshops for high-needs schools
- Extended partnership with **Attendance Works** for future training events



Attendance

FALL WEBINAR SERIES

The 2025 Attendance Webinar Series is intended for district leaders, building administrators, and teacher leaders interested in improving attendance in schools. Each session will provide realistic solutions to reduce absenteeism.

July 22 and October 15

Introduction to School Avoidance: Considerations for Chronic Absenteeism

Participants will learn facts and misconceptions about school avoidance and details about integrating successful strategies, including the two most important factors for success: parent-school collaboration and early intervention.

August 5 Georgia Goes to School: Attendance Updates

The first session of the Student Services Leadership Series will provide updates on GaDOE attendance initiatives, including legislative requirements, upcoming professional learning opportunities, and resources for school districts.

October 30

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Efficiently and Effectively

Three-person district teams will analyze data to determine a plan of action using expert guidance and research-based strategies.

November 5

Fueling Outcomes: Resources to Increase Attendance and Engagement

This collaborative webinar with Food Services provides an innovative approach to improving attendance and engagement through a whole-child lens.

December 2

Supporting Students with School Avoidance: Interventions for Success

Participants will dig deeper into the concept of school avoidance and learn how to develop and implement meaningful plans to address individual issues.



Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY



*Keynote message from Dr. Sara Lenhoff, author of **Rethinking Chronic Absenteeism: Why Schools Can't Solve it Alone.***

This hands-on session is for school and district leaders working to improve attendance. Three-person district teams will engage in peer-to-peer learning and work together to identify strategies matched to the needs of their schools and district.

Virtual and face-to-face options for participation.

High-needs districts given priority for face-to-face registration.

Registration information coming soon!

Save the Date

October 30, 2025

Middle Georgia State University



Follow-up Attendance Summit: Every Child. Every Day. December 8, 2025 @ Twin Towers

Georgia goes to school

2nd Annual ATTENDANCE SUMMIT

National attendance experts
New attendance tools for schools
14+ state agencies and orgs. participating

SAVE THE DATE
December 8, 2025 | 9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. | GaDOE Offices at Twin Towers

The Georgia Department of Education is partnering with state agencies, organizations, and school districts to address chronic absenteeism head on.

Join State Superintendent Richard Woods to continue the work of action planning and implementing evidence-based solutions across the state. Discuss current research and innovative approaches from across the nation with the experts at Attendance Works. Whether you participated in previous efforts or are joining the conversation now, come and be a part of the solution to Georgia's chronic absenteeism problem.

Richard Woods, State School Superintendent

Organized by: **GaDOE**
Georgia Department of Education

Facilitated by: **Attendance Works**
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence



How You Can Help

- Work with GaDOE to brainstorm innovative ways to use personnel and data to combat Chronic Absenteeism.
- Work with GaDOE to identify further funding streams that can meet district and statewide attendance needs.
- Collaborate with GaDOE to continue building resources and professional development for parents and LEAs to combat chronic absenteeism.