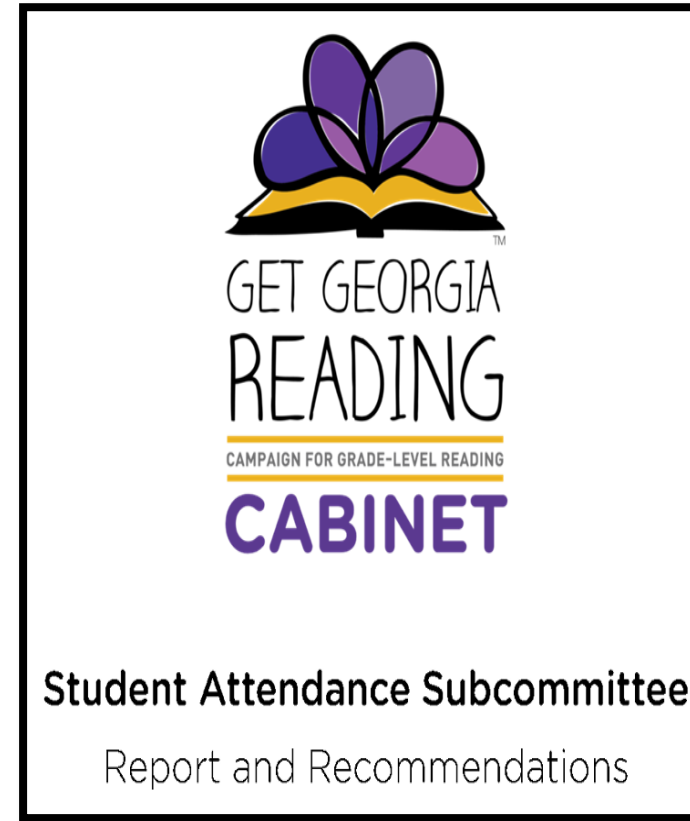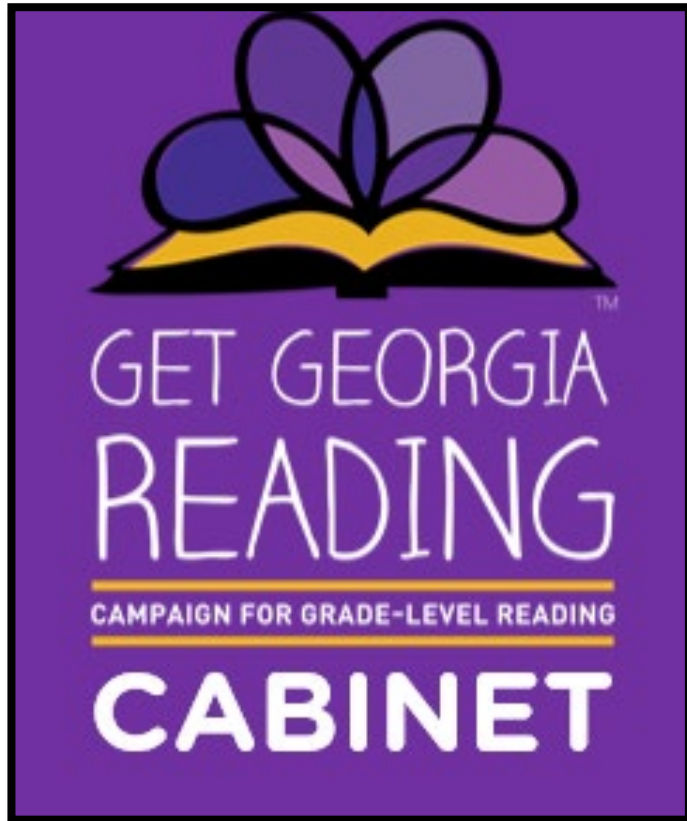# Student Attendance:
Data, Research, and Recommendations

Garry McGiboney, Ph.D.

Student Attendance Subcommittee

Report and Recommendations

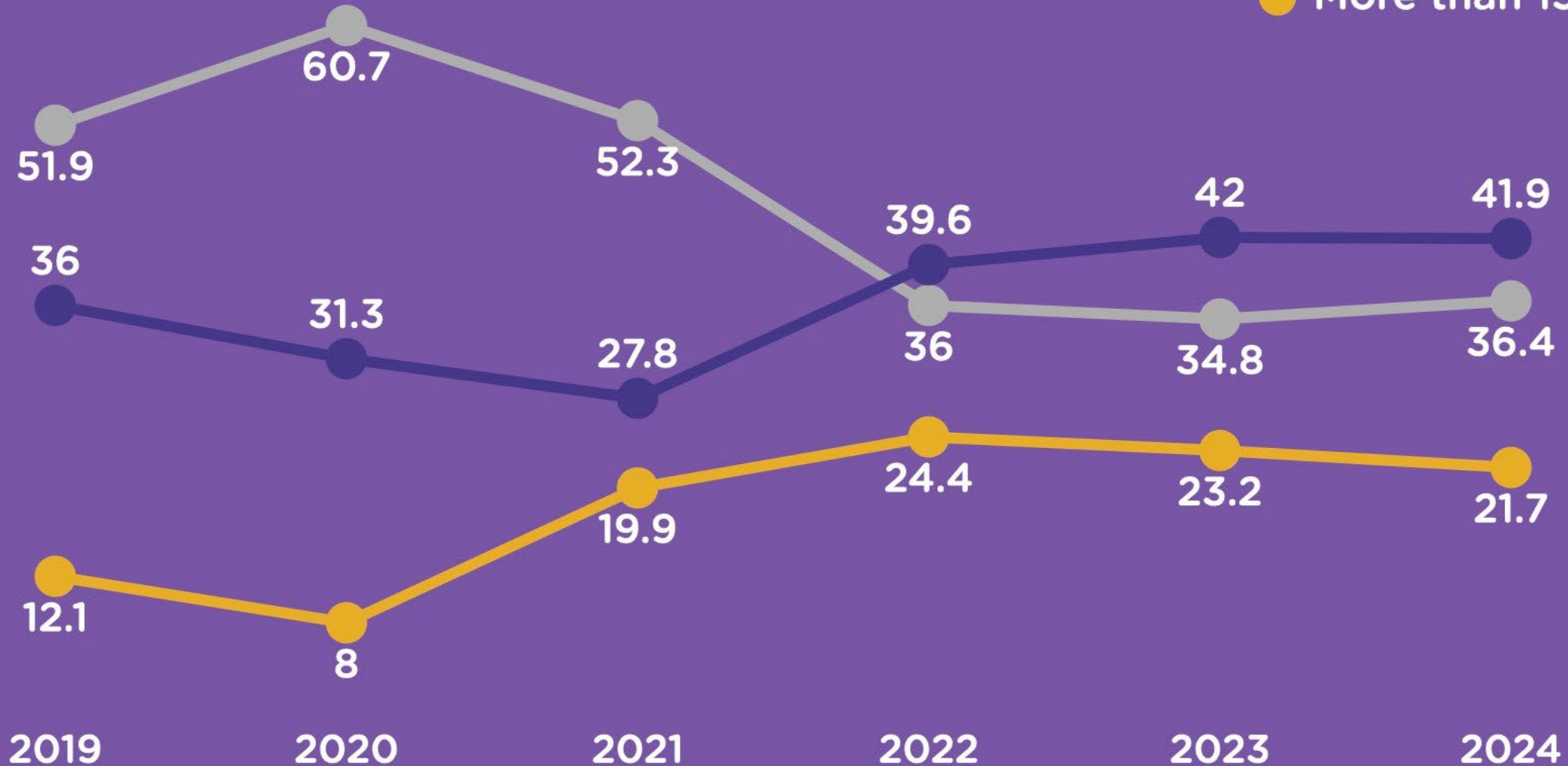**Student Attendance Subcommittee**

Why Study Student Absenteeism?

In recent years, especially since the pandemic, student absences have become a growing concern.

Regular school attendance is closely linked to higher academic achievement, graduation rates, and the development of a skilled workforce—all of which are critical factors for economic growth and quality of life.

Absenteeism in Georgia
2019 - 2024

Legend:
- ⬤ 0 - 5 Days (gray)
- ⬤ 6 - 15 Days (purple)
- ⬤ More than 15 Days (yellow)

0 - 5 Days:
- 2019: 51.9
- 2020: 60.7
- 2021: 52.3
- 2022: 36
- 2023: 34.8
- 2024: 36.4

6 - 15 Days:
- 2019: 36
- 2020: 31.3
- 2021: 27.8
- 2022: 39.6
- 2023: 42
- 2024: 41.9

More than 15 Days:
- 2019: 12.1
- 2020: 8
- 2021: 19.9
- 2022: 24.4
- 2023: 23.2
- 2024: 21.7

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Students Absent by Grade Level More Than 15 Days

● 2019   ● 2024

Grade	2019	2024
Pre-K	17.7%	27.6%
K	13.8%	25.1%
1st	10.5%	20.9%
2nd	9.2%	18.9%
3rd	8.3%	16.9%
4th	8.4%	16.8%
5th	8.2%	16.5%
6th	9.8%	18.4%
7th	11.8%	21%
8th	12.3%	22.9%
9th	16.7%	27.5%
10th	17.5%	28%
11th	17.8%	28.2%
12th	21.5%	33.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Education
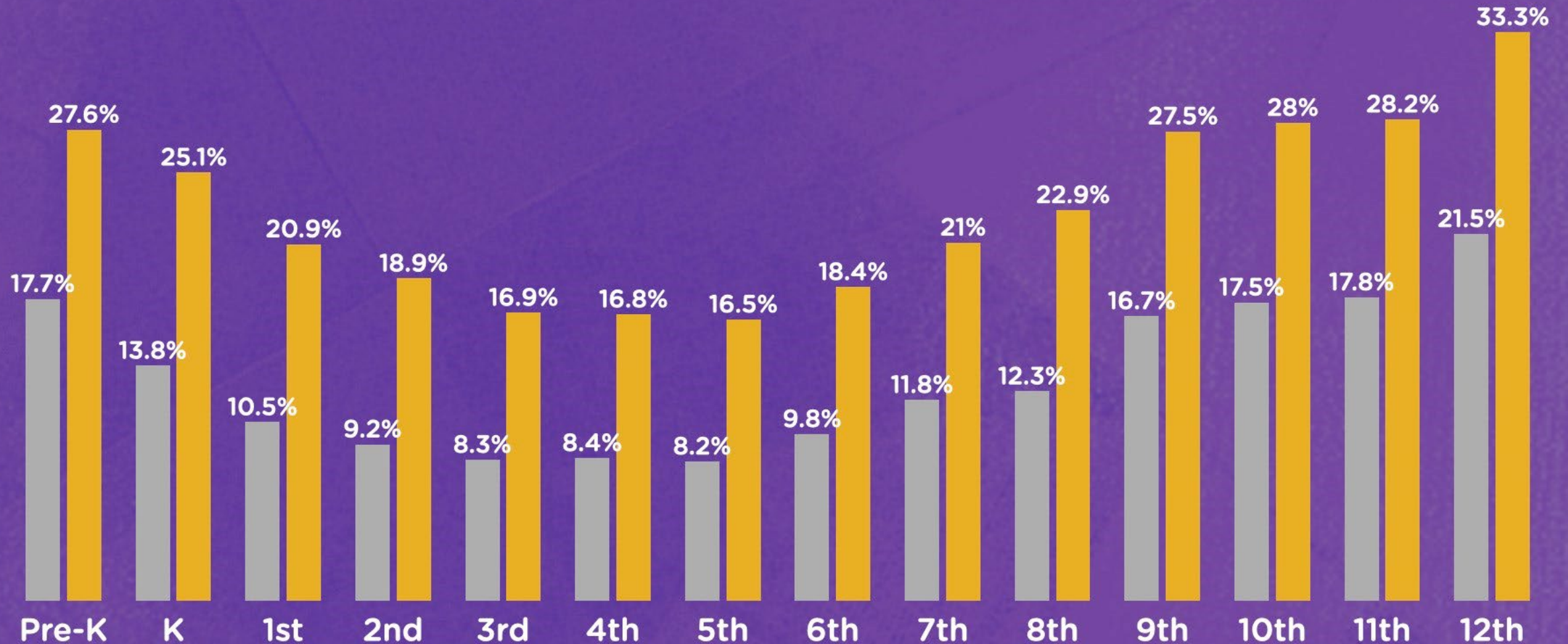
Students Absent by Groups More Than 15 Days

2019 (gray) — 2024 (orange)

Group	2019	2024
Black	13.9%	26.2%
Hispanic	12.5%	24.3%
White	12.7%	20.3%
SWD	17.7%	27.7%
Non-SWD	12.1%	22.1%
ED	15.5%	27%
Non-ED	8%	13.1%
EL	9.3%	20.2%
Non-EL	13.2%	23.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Education
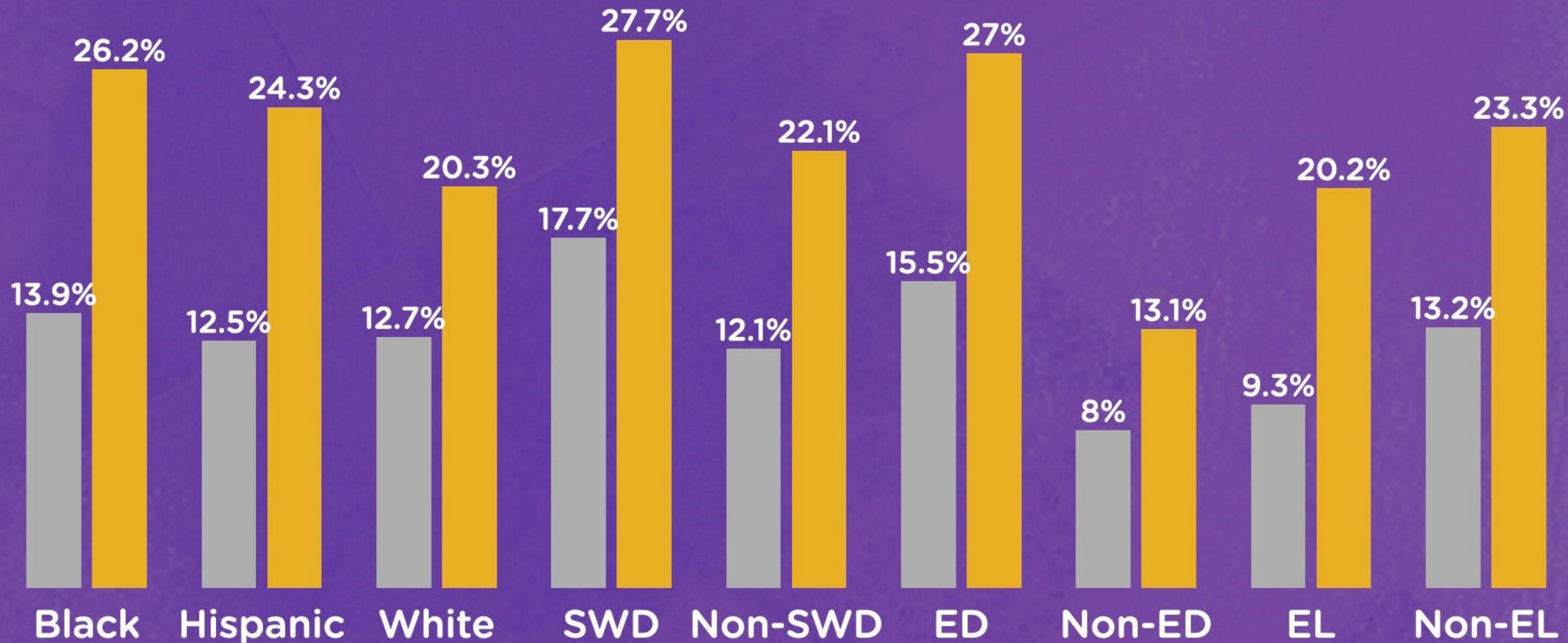
Students in Georgia Absent
6 to 15 Days

● 2019   ● 2024

	2019	2024
Pre-K	38.2%	39.6%
K	46%	49.8%
1st	43.7%	50.1%
2nd	41%	49.3%
3rd	39.2%	48.3%
4th	38.3%	47%
5th	37.3%	45.9%
6th	35.5%	43.9%
7th	36.4%	43.5%
8th	35.8%	42.7%
9th	31.6%	37.9%
10th	32.6%	38.1%
11th	32.7%	37.5%
12th	32.9%	34.7%
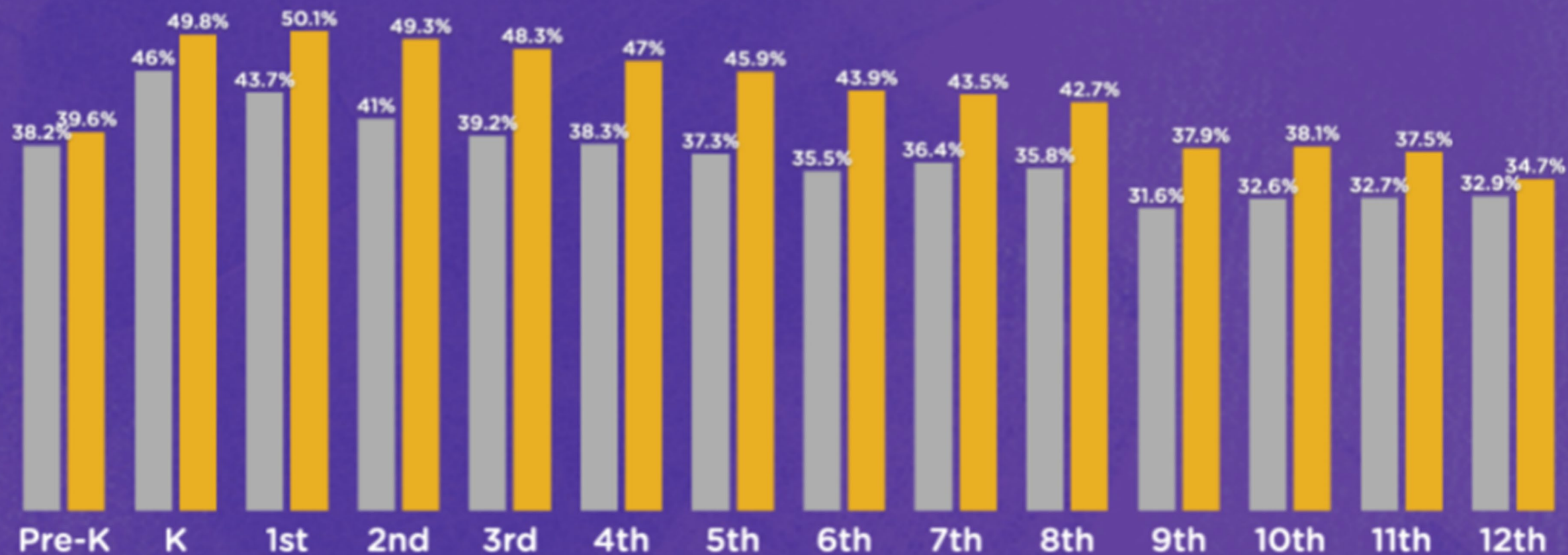
Students Absent by Groups 6 - 15 Days

● 2019   ● 2024

Group	2019	2024
Black	36.3%	41.9%
Hispanic	37.7%	43.9%
White	40.4%	45.8%
SWD	38.9%	41.9%
Non-SWD	37.6%	43.8%
ED	39.2%	43.6%
Non-ED	34.8%	42.2%
EL	35.3%	42.5%
Non-EL	38.1%	43.6%
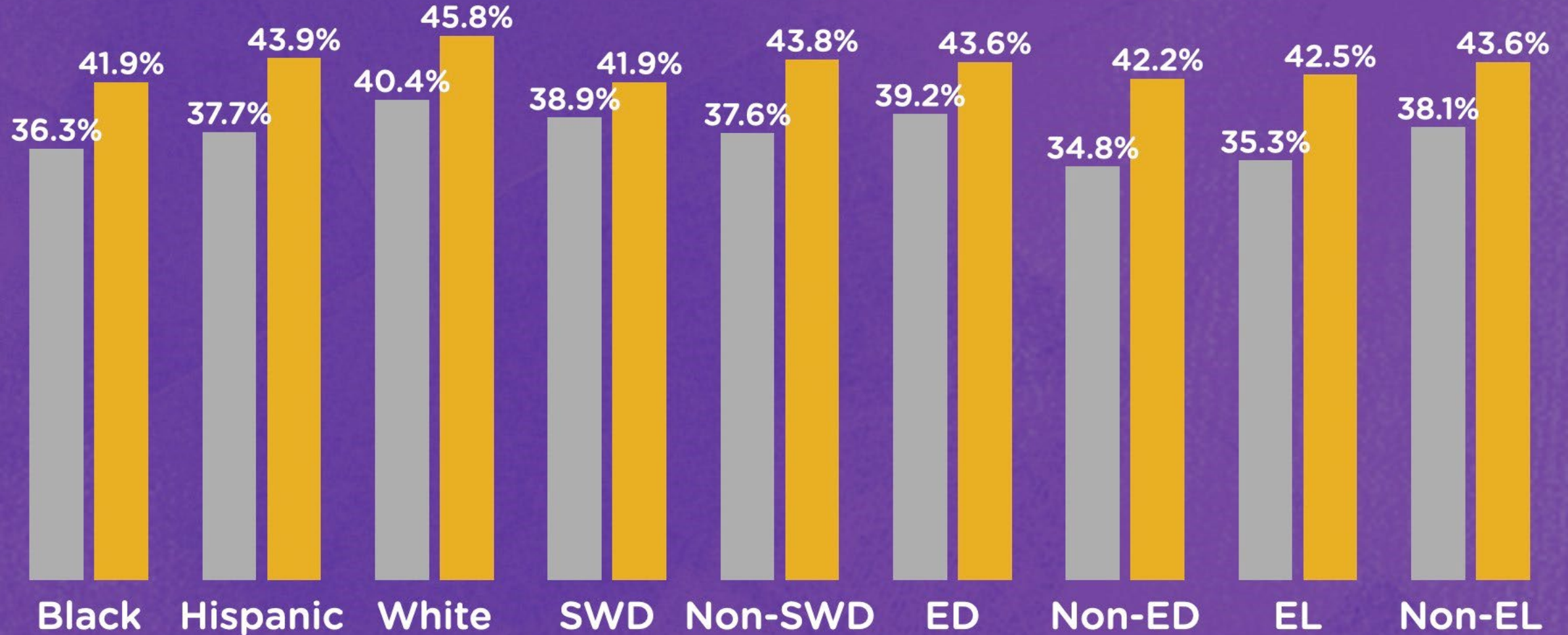
"What would be the impact on 3rd grade ELA assessment outcomes if student attendance _improved_ by 5 percent?"
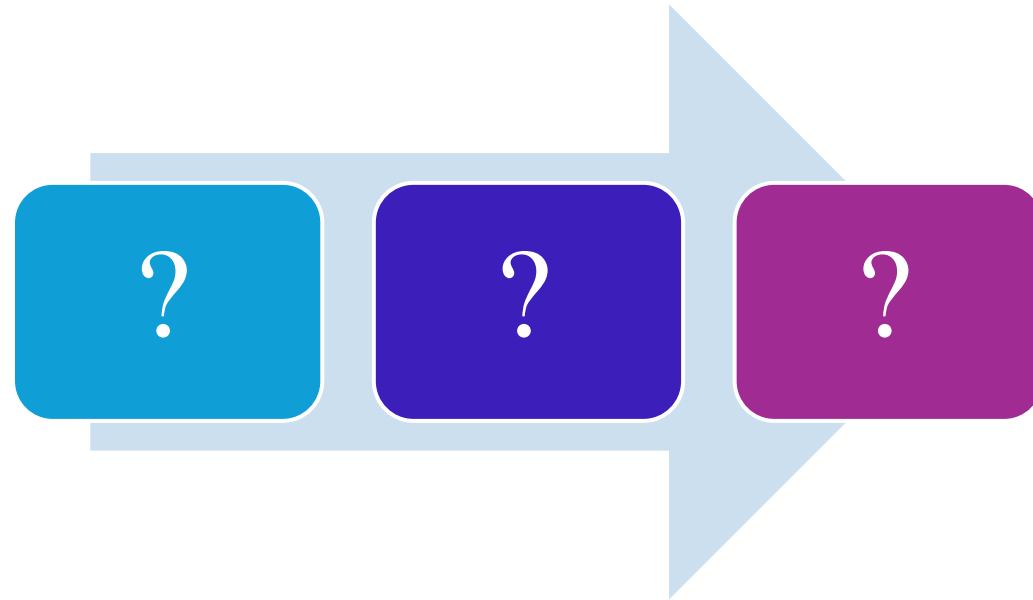
According to a research model developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission at the request of the Subcommittee, it was found that a five percent *decrease in absences* would lead to a **6.6 percent increase in 3rd grade ELA proficiency in Georgia**.

The percentage of Georgia students scoring proficient or above on the 3rd grade ELA test would increase from **38.4 percent to 45 percent**.

38.4% 6.6% 45%

Research demonstrates the **important role parent and family engagement play in student success**, including in school attendance.

A recent analysis of data from Illinois found that schools with the highest level of family engagement experienced **six percentage points less absenteeism** post-pandemic than schools with the least family engagement.

Importance of Parent and Family Engagement

The Technical College System of Georgia, led by Assistant Commissioner for Adult Education, Dr. Cayanna Good, offered to survey Georgia parents.

The survey included **over 100 parents** of school-aged children (K-12) under the age of 18.

Parent were given ten questions, which were based on similar surveys conducted by *Attendance Works* and were answered anonymously.

The **TCSG Survey indicates that parents w**eigh several factors when deciding if their child should attend school.

- ✓ **Key considerations** include the child's ability to manage the day, whether their physical health poses a risk to others, child's overall behavior and attitude toward school.

- ✓ **Parents prefer keeping their child home when unsure about their child's health.** When schools provide information to parents about the importance of good attendance, define good attendance, and give parents resources to help them understand when they should keep their child at home or send them to school, parents are better informed to make the decision about school attendance.

A national survey conducted by the RAND Corporation and the Center on Reinventing Public Education in 2024 revealed that approximately **23%** of school leaders reported that **none of the strategies** they implemented to combat absenteeism were effective.

School leaders agree that to improve attendance:

- ✓ It is essential to identify and address the **root causes** of chronic absenteeism
- ✓ Collaborate with **many partners**
- ✓ Develop a **wide range of strategies** rather than focusing on only one or two
- ✓ Schools **cannot do this alone**

GET GEORGIA
READING

CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

CABINET

Student Attendance Subcommittee

Report and Recommendations

Student Attendance Subcommittee
Findings, Observations, and Recommendations

Early Identification and Intervention

➤ *Monitor Attendance Data*

  • Schools track daily attendance

➤ Early warning systems

➤ Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

  • MTSS can be effectively used to address attendance issues

Recommendation: (1) The School Attendance Teams required in SB 123 should be linked to the MTSS process and to Student Attendance and School Climate Committees; (2) Encourage schools to use the MTSS process to address student attendance.

Parent-School Partnership and Problem Solving

➢ *Improve Parent Engagement* :
- Regularly communicate with parents so they understand the importance of attendance and know school attendance policies and procedures
- Frequent Updates: Automated systems can send alerts when a child misses school

➢ *School Social Workers:*
- Meet with parents/guardians to identify issues at home or in the community that are impacting attendance
- Identify school and community resources that address the student barriers to attendance

Recommendation: Increase the number of school social workers by phasing in state funding to move toward the nationally recommended school social worker-to-student ratio of **1:250**.

Mental and Physical Health Support

➢ Student with chronic medical conditions receive the support they need
➢ Screenings: vision, hearing, dental, and nutrition
➢ School-Based Health Clinics/Mental Health
➢ School-Based Telehealth/Telemental Health
➢ Preventative Care: Health Literacy

Recommendations: (1) Expand funding for school nursing services by adding a Medicaid and insurance billing FTE for school districts based on FTE count; (2) Provide vision and hearing screening at multiple grade levels; (3) Review and revise Georgia's therapist licensure requirements to reduce unnecessary administrative steps; (4) Provide grants earmarked for school-based telehealth and telemental health.

Community and Social Supports

➢ **Collaboration with Local Organizations**:

- Schools can work with community organizations such as Communities in Schools (CIS), charities, and government agencies to provide students and families with support services like food programs, housing assistance, healthcare access, and mental health services, tutoring, mentoring, homework help centers, and other supports.

Recommendations: (1) Offer state-level grants for districts that effectively engage local businesses and/or nonprofits in attendance initiatives; (2) Promote models like CIS through state-supported licensing, training, or matching grants, enabling schools to tap into community volunteer and support networks to reduce absenteeism.

Improving School Climate and Safety

➢ Safe and Welcoming School Environment: Prioritize student safety by addressing school climate.

- Research shows a strong link between school climate and student attendance, as well as to school safety.

➢ Promote Positive Behavior: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a research-based framework that helps schools develop and implement strategies that improve the climate of schools.

Recommendations: (1) Encourage more schools to implement PBIS; (2) Continue to provide PBIS training and retraining; (3) Increase funding for school climate specialists at the RESAs based on the number of school districts in the RESA catchment area.

Implementation of Georgia Code on the Establishment of Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2)

➢ **O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.2 (SB 123)**: The Georgia Code specifies the establishment and responsibilities of a Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (SASCS) in each Superior Court district. The primary purpose of this committee is to coordinate efforts among various officials, agencies, and programs involved in addressing school attendance and school climate issues.

Recommendations: (1) Ensure that the Code Section is being implemented; (2) Offer small implementation grants to established SASCS; (3) Establish technical assistance for implementation of the Code Section.
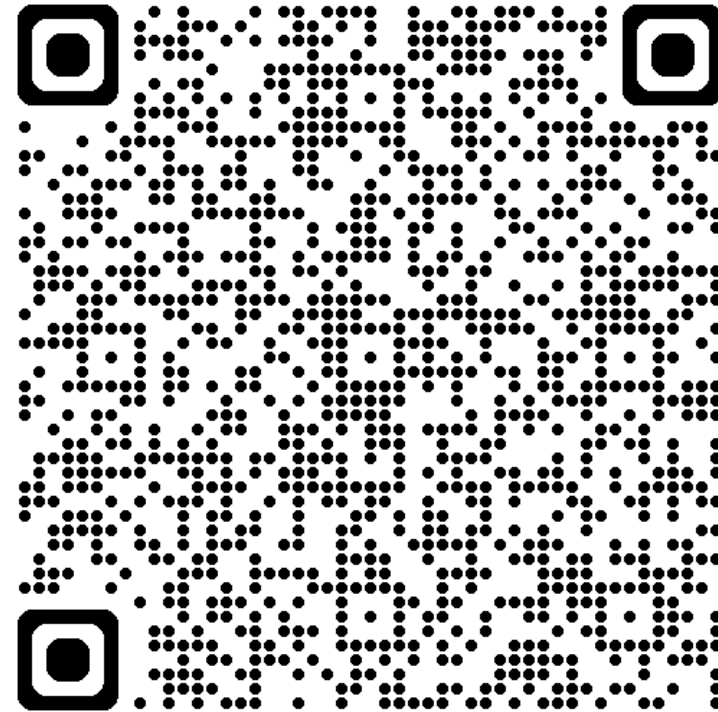
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