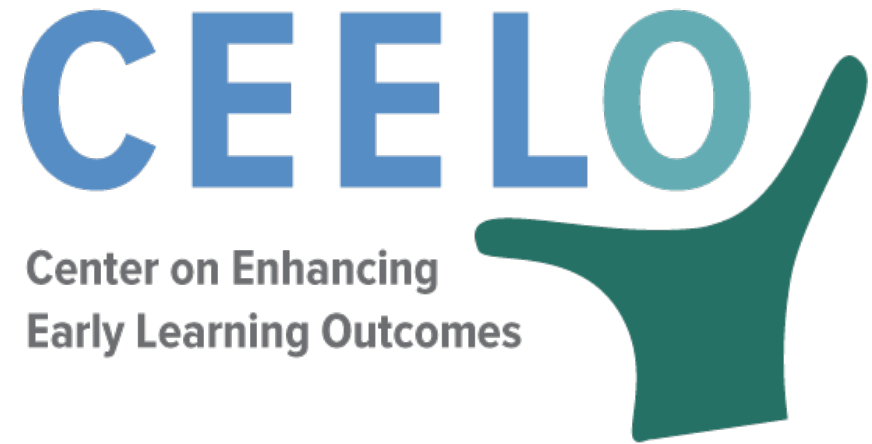


Pre-K: The Starting Line for Positive Attendance Patterns

Every Student, Every Day National Conference
June 10, 2016

Goals

- Understand how early childhood programs set attendance patterns for subsequent grades.
- Learn about promising approaches for early childhood programs from state and local examples
- Learn and discuss strategies to identify root causes of absenteeism and how to use this data to inform solutions.



PRE-K ATTENDANCE: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT & HOW TO SUPPORT IT

Melissa Dahlin
Research Associate, CEELo



Why Does It Matter?

Lost hours of learning

Association with lowered proficiency in reading and math, and increased retention

Sets a pattern of absenteeism that continues into later grades



Roots



Roots

- Beliefs
- Values
- Illness
- Language
- Schedule conflicts
- Transportation
- Unstable living conditions



Strategies

- Family engagement
- Proactive conversations
- Linguistic and culturally awareness
- Community-wide approach
- Data (collection and acting on it)



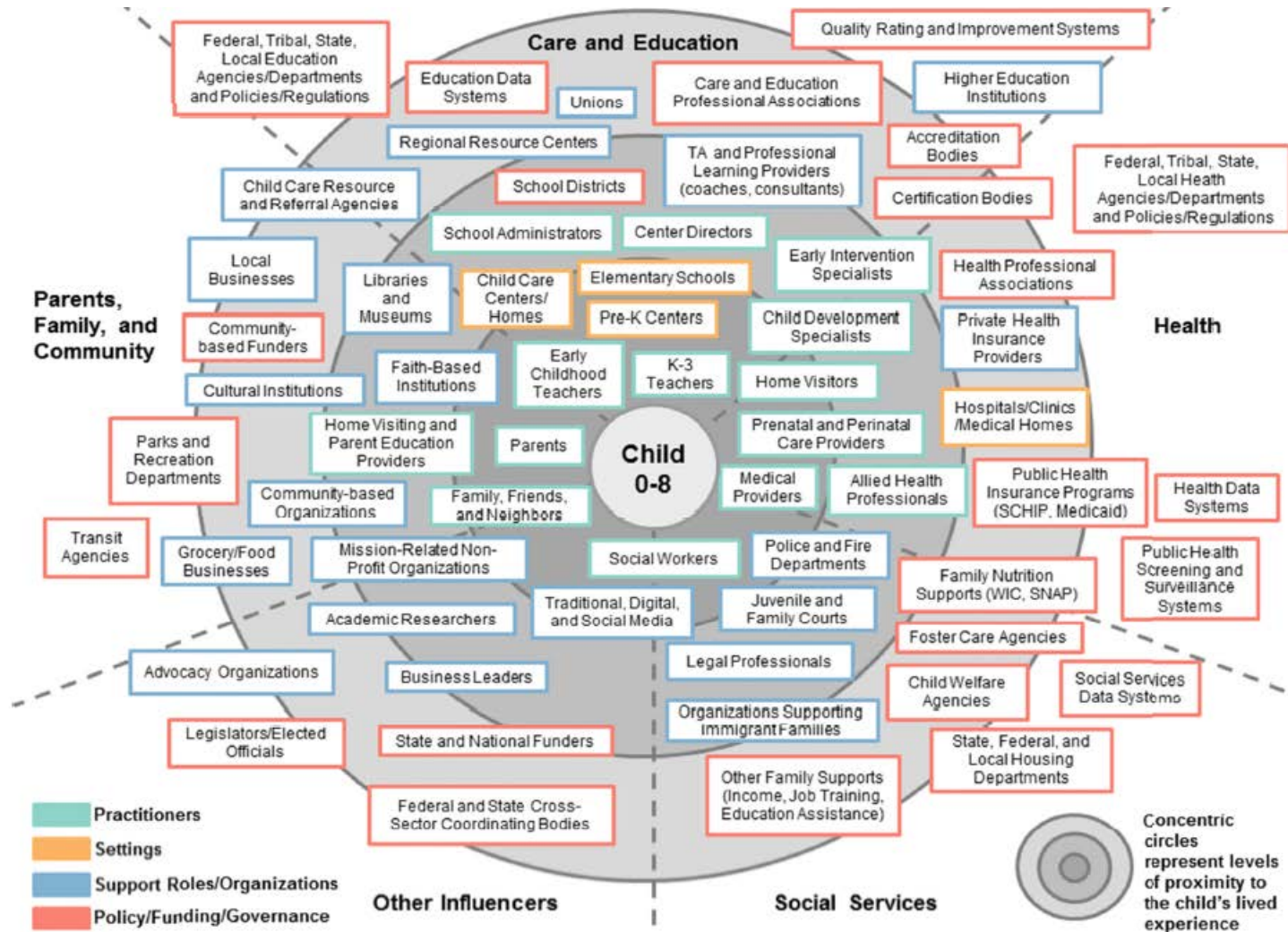


FIGURE 1-1 The complex landscape that affects children ages 0-8.

Source: [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation](#)



Discussion

- What data would you want to collect to understand chronic absenteeism patterns in your community?
- Who are potential partners that can help collect, interpret, and act on that data?



Resources

- Lots of resources in the CEELO Fast Fact Pre-K Attendance: Why It's Important and How to Support It

CEELO Fast Fact – February 2016

Pre-K Attendance



Pre-K Attendance – Why It's Important and How to Support It

Melissa Dahlin, MA, and Jim Squires, PhD

February 2016

State education agencies are increasingly prioritizing the issue of school attendance. Many are interested in the causes of chronic absenteeism and developing approaches to reduce and prevent it through policy and practice. In the early grades (pre-K – 3rd), children with inconsistent or unstable school attendance miss out on adult support and guidance to help them master foundational skills that are essential for success in later grades.¹

Absenteeism is a concern for all ages and grades, but different factors impact absenteeism in the early years. Pre-K (and Kindergarten) in some states is not mandatory and parents play a strong role in ensuring attendance in the early years, therefore strategies to reduce absenteeism must consider the role of the family. Several states and cities offer promising practices to decrease chronic absenteeism. Across these settings and approaches, partnership with families is a critical factor for success. This *FastFact* provides information on potential causes of absenteeism, examples from cities and states to address it, and available resources.

Why is this question important?

When absenteeism at school or in another formal learning environment becomes chronic (missing 10 percent or more of days in a school year),² children can lose many hours of potential learning. There is strong evidence that more time (e.g., higher dosage³) in quality early care and education is associated with positive outcomes for children, especially for disadvantaged children.⁴ Research also finds that chronic absence in the early grades is associated with lowered proficiency in reading and math, and increased retention.⁵ Chronic absences in the early years of schooling often set a pattern of absenteeism that continues into later grades.



Overview of the District of Columbia Public Schools Early Childhood Program

Danielle Ewen
Senior Policy Analyst
EducationCounsel

June 10, 2016

DCPS Early Childhood Overview

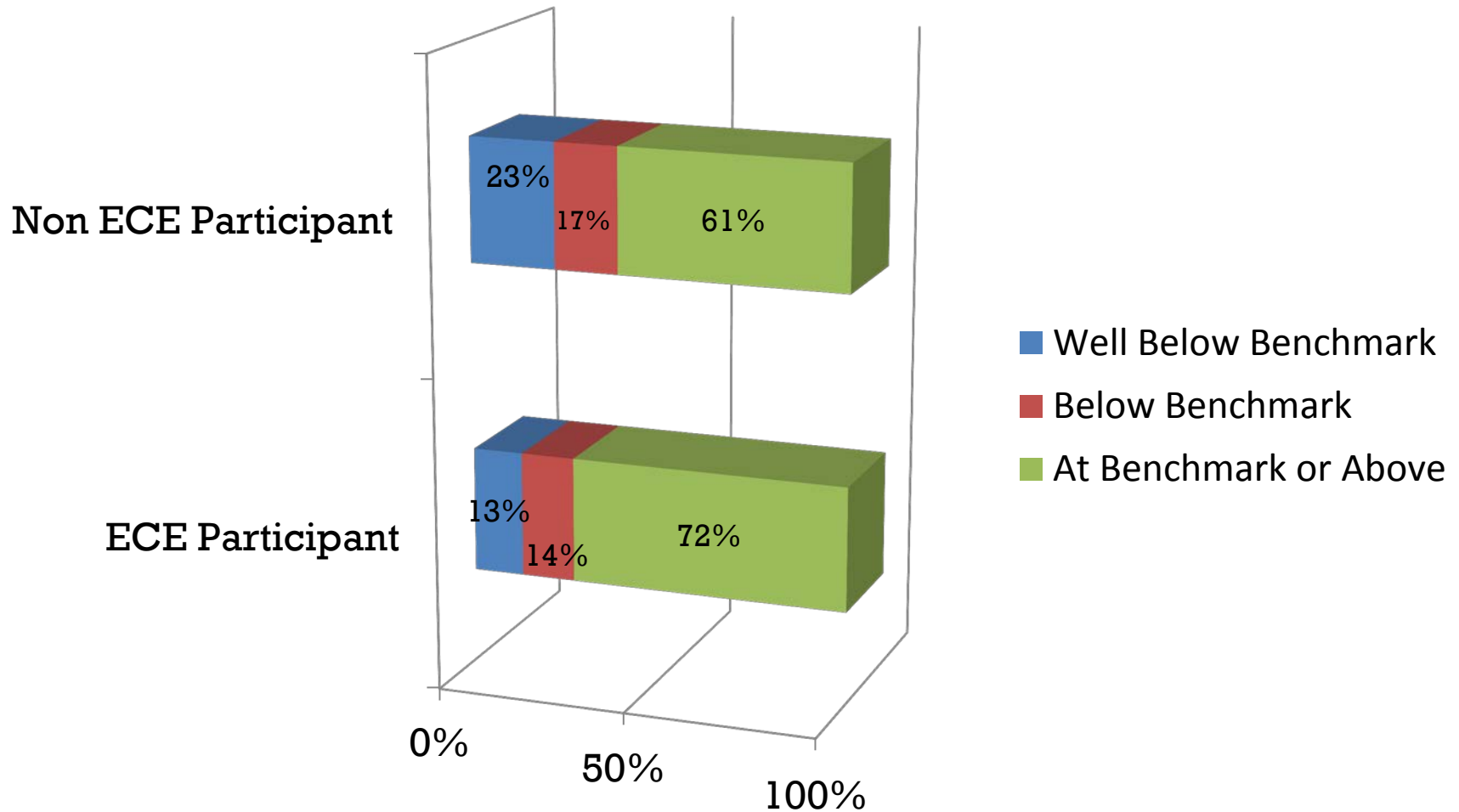
- The District of Columbia Public Schools offers pre-kindergarten classes to all three- and four year-old children in the District.
- DCPS serves more than 6,000 three- and four-year old students in approximately 57 elementary schools across the city.
- PK3 and PK4 are full school-day and –year programs.
- Each classroom has at least two staff members, including a teacher and teacher’s aide.
- Every teacher has at least a Bachelor’s Degree and is paid on the DCPS salary scale. All early childhood staff receive regular professional development and training throughout the year.
- All classrooms in Title I schools meet all Head Start standards.

Meeting Head Start Standards

- In 2010, DCPS created the Head Start Schoolwide Model (HSSWM) for all Title I schools.
- All children in Title I early childhood classrooms are eligible for all services.
- All children in those classrooms receive:
 - Comprehensive services and supports
 - Vision, hearing and dental screenings
- Every school receives:
 - Case Manager/Family Service worker
 - Coaches for all ECE teachers
 - Materials and curricular supports

DCPS ECE Program Prepares Students for Reading

Pre-Literacy and Fluency Scores for Kindergarten Students, Fall 2013



Family Supports in DCPS Early Childhood Programs

- Family support workers are assigned by school.
- Each school has a case management specialist and a parent/community outreach worker.
- Responsibilities:
 - Recruit and retain families
 - Support families in transition to school, including information about child development, school policies and practices and classroom expectations
 - Encourage and support attendance
 - Identify families in need of case management
 - Make referrals for additional support services or early intervention
 - Support teachers in parent engagement activities
 - Empower parents to become school leaders

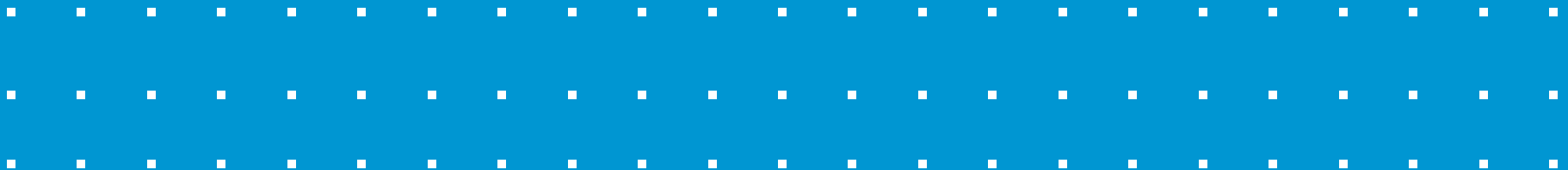


Examining Pre-K Absenteeism in DC Public Schools' Early Childhood Program

Presented by Michael Katz

Urban Institute

June 10, 2016



Overview of Presentation

- Background
- Phase I Results
- Phase 2 Results
- Discussion/Q&A

Background

Why Focus on Pre-K Absenteeism?

- Pre-K is student and family's introduction to school, when parent participation is highest
- Students learn skills for later success
- Students and families practice strong attendance habits early

Urban Institute and DCPS Partnership

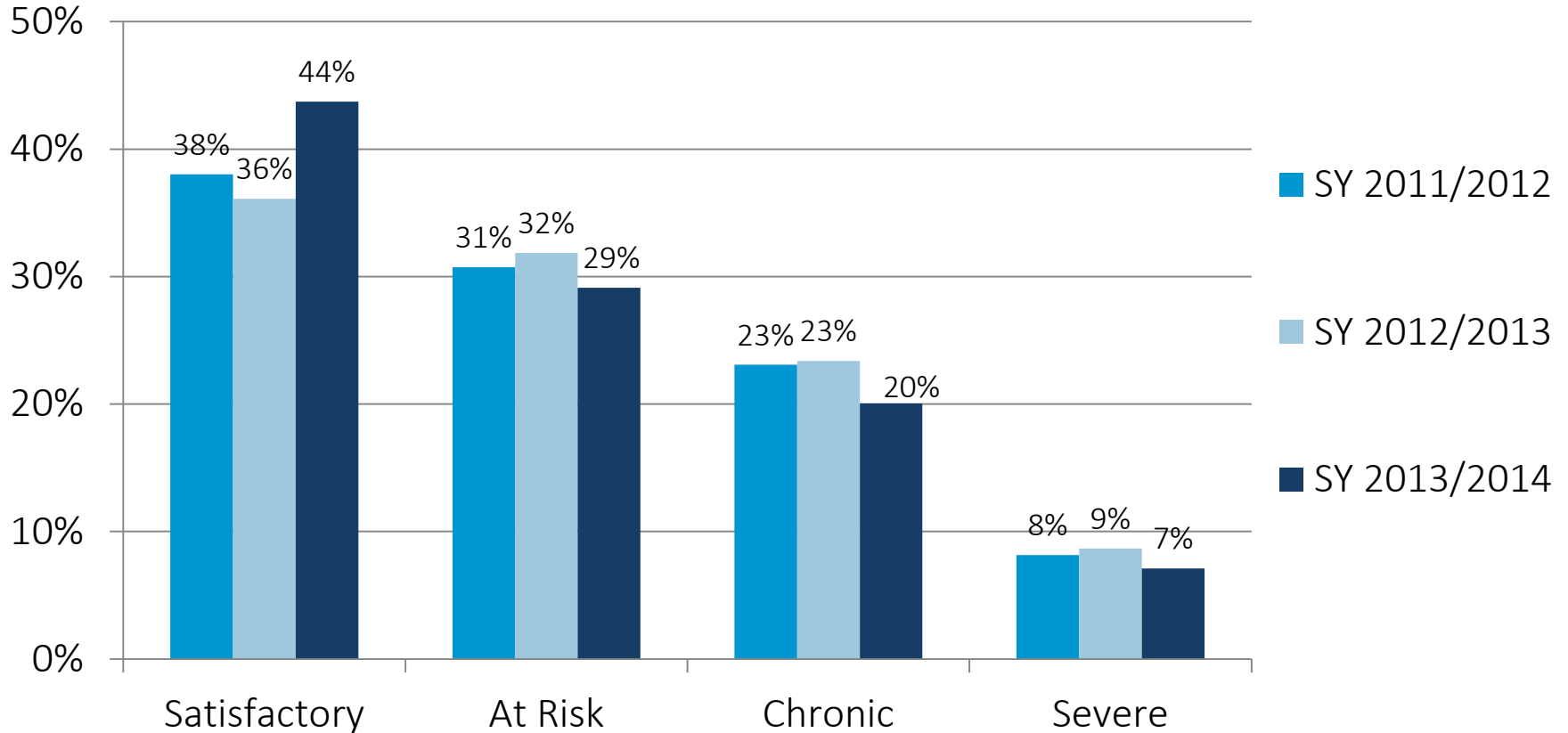
- Pre-K attendance a key goal of Head Start program
- 4 year partnership between DCPS Early Childhood Education Division and Urban Institute
- Multi-method approach
 - Analysis of administrative data
 - Qualitative data collection on problems, solutions, and strategies
- Collaborative partnership
- Advantages of working with Head Start team

Phase I: Incidence and Contributing Factors

Phase I

- Review of Pre-K attendance data assessing key patterns and trends across student demographics, geography, and level of intervention
- Head Start staff interviews, case management note analysis, and national scan of contributing factors to absenteeism and potential solutions

Percent of Students by Attendance Category SY 2011/2012 – SY 2013/2014



Source: Urban Institute Analysis of DCPS STARS and ChildPlus data

Predictive Nature of Attendance Year to Year

Students Enrolled in Both SY 2012/2013 and SY 2013/2014

SY 2012/2013 versus SY 2013/2014

SY 2012/2013

Satisfactory

79%

16%

3%

1%

At Risk

42%

44%

13%

1%

Chronic

17%

35%

41%

7%

Severe

4%

16%

37%

43%

0%

20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

SY 2013/2014

■ Satisfactory

■ At Risk

■ Chronic

■ Severe

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of DCPS STARS and ChildPlus data

Patterns by Characteristics of Children and Schools

- Black children, children who speak English at home, and children with disabilities all had higher rates of absence than their peers.
- When considering eligibility requirements, homeless children had the highest share of missed school days followed by children from families enrolled in TANF.

Key Themes from Qualitative Study

1. Complexity of contributing factors at the family and child, school and district, and community level that are often interrelated
2. Value of working with schools and parents to better understand the contributing factors to absenteeism
3. Importance of monitoring attendance patterns, absenteeism rates and trends, and categorizing groups
4. Targeted interventions based on data and parent and school information information
5. Partnering with community agencies to help support families and improve attendance

Phase 2: Further exploration of
Pre-K attendance patterns and
promising practices

Phase II

- Analysis of how Pre-K attendance is associated with future attendance in kindergarten, first, and second grade
- A synthesis of information from school staff interviews and parent discussion groups focused on strategies to improve parent engagement and school attendance

Qualitative Study

- Selecting “counter-intuitive” schools
- 18 interviews with 40 school staff members
- 7 parent discussion groups with 40 parents
- Importance of DC attendance policy and local school context

Important Context about Pre-K and Absenteeism

- Socialization in pre-K
- Educational value
- Connections between valuing and understanding pre-K and attendance
- Contributing factors

Foundational elements of attendance work

- School vision and goals on attendance
- Parent messaging about importance of attendance
- Friendly school environment and tight knit community
- Home visits

Parent Communication

- Challenges to parent communication
- Strategies and key elements
- Impact of parent communication on attendance work

Practices and policies to prioritize attendance and curb absenteeism

- Attendance lead
- Standardized practices for daily attendance recording
- Attendance committee
- Monitoring data and reports
- Following up on absences

Supporting strategies and approaches to maintain strong attendance

- Partnerships
- Events, activities, or efforts tied to school environment
- Incentives or recognition strategies

Key themes

- Strong, warm, school environment
- Vision and goal for attendance as priority
- Positive parent relationships
- Effective and standardized processes and policies

Resources

- Insights into Absenteeism in DCPS Early Childhood Program: Contributing Factors and Promising Strategies

<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/insights-absenteeism-dcps-early-childhood-program>

- Absenteeism in DC Public Schools Early Education Program: An Update for School Year 2013-2014

<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/absenteeism-dc-public-schools-early-education-program>

Questions?

- What can state or district administrators do to empower schools to prioritize Pre-K attendance like K-12 attendance and convey this message to parents?
- What state or district level policies or practices can be established to support schools in their efforts to establish effective policies and practices for recording, tracking, and following up on attendance?