



*Washoe County
School District*

Chronic Absenteeism: A Community Issue Requiring a Community-School Approach

Paul M. LaMarca, Ph.D., Chief Student Services Officer

October 23, 2025

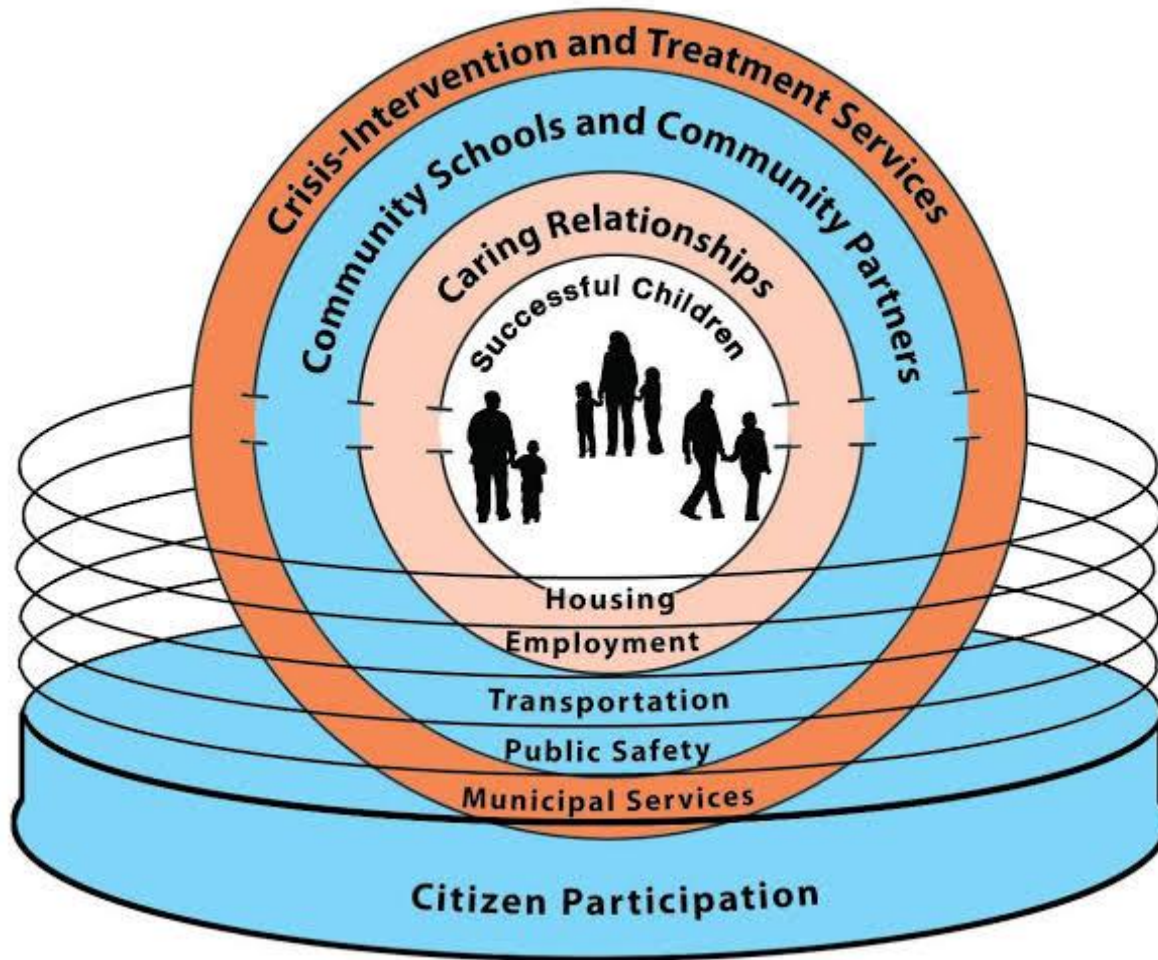
plamarca@washoeschools.net

Today's Discussion

Session Objectives:

- Underscore school↔community interdependence
- Frame the problem of practice
- Discuss community↔school approach
- Review preliminary outcomes

Community – School Interdependence



What we are really talking about is an ecological model of education in which students learn in classrooms nested within schools, schools nested within a community, and a community nested within a broader context.

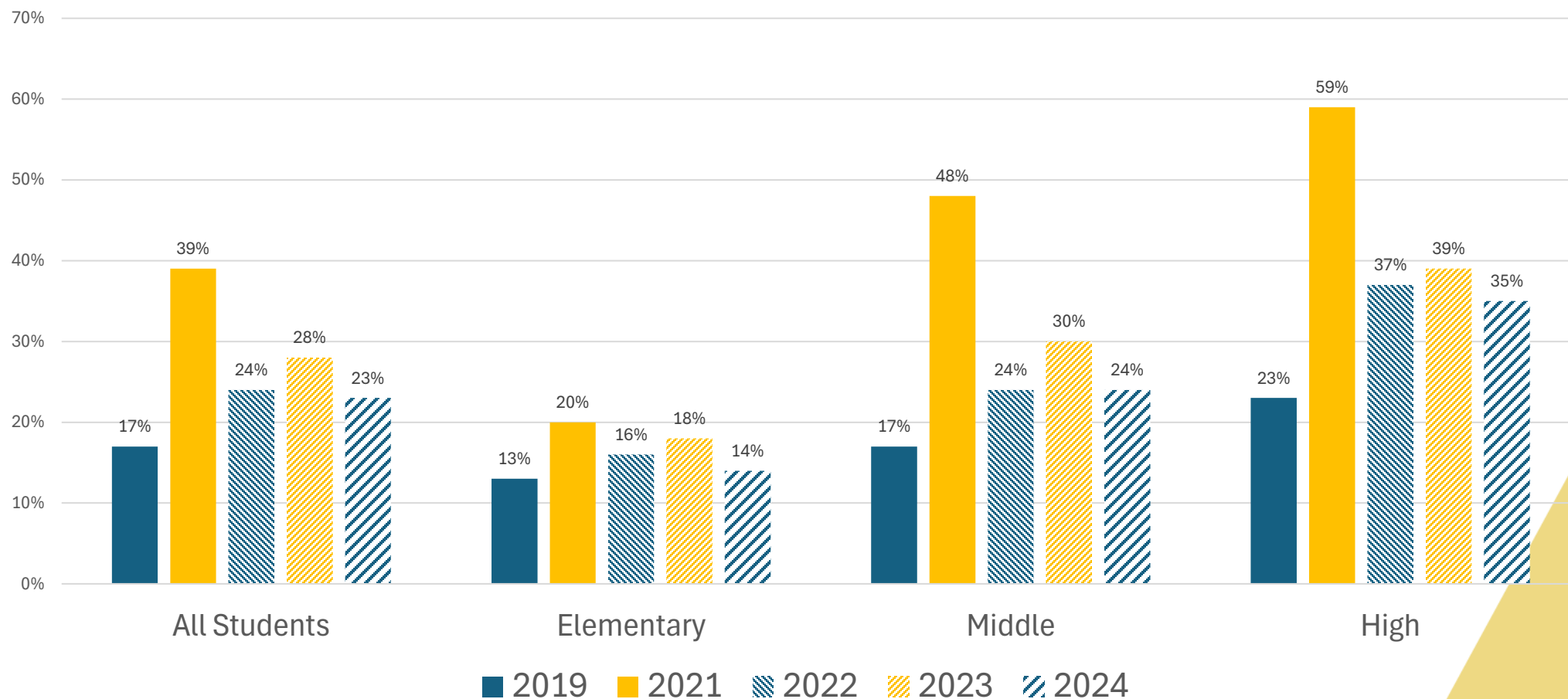
What happens nationally affects the child in the classroom.

Community – School Interdependence: The Impact of Chronic Absenteeism

- Employers and Economic Development: Results in workforce shortages and talent scarcity, making it difficult to meet future workforce needs
- Our Tax Dollars:
 - Increases the need and cost of Social Services
 - Increases in crime and the utilization of the justice system
 - Perpetuates the cycle of poverty And homelessness
- Schools/Students: Teachers can't move through the curriculum as planned, which impacts the quality of instruction for All students
- Community: Increases in poverty and crime impact the “Quality Of Life”, safety for all, and the community's ability to attract new opportunities

Our (shared) Problem

Trends in Chronic Absenteeism



Lost Instructional Time

- 180 school days per year and approximately 280 minutes of instruction per day
- In 2023, on average non-chronically absent students missed 6.8 school days (1,900 minutes of instruction) during the year
- By contrast, chronically absent students missed 32.5 school days (9,000 minutes of instruction) during the year
- For every student we move off the chronically absent list, we regain approximately 7,000 minutes or 25 days of instruction
- Districtwide, for every 1% drop in chronic absenteeism, (e.g. 610 students), we are reclaiming approximately 15,250 days of instruction!!!

A Community Approach

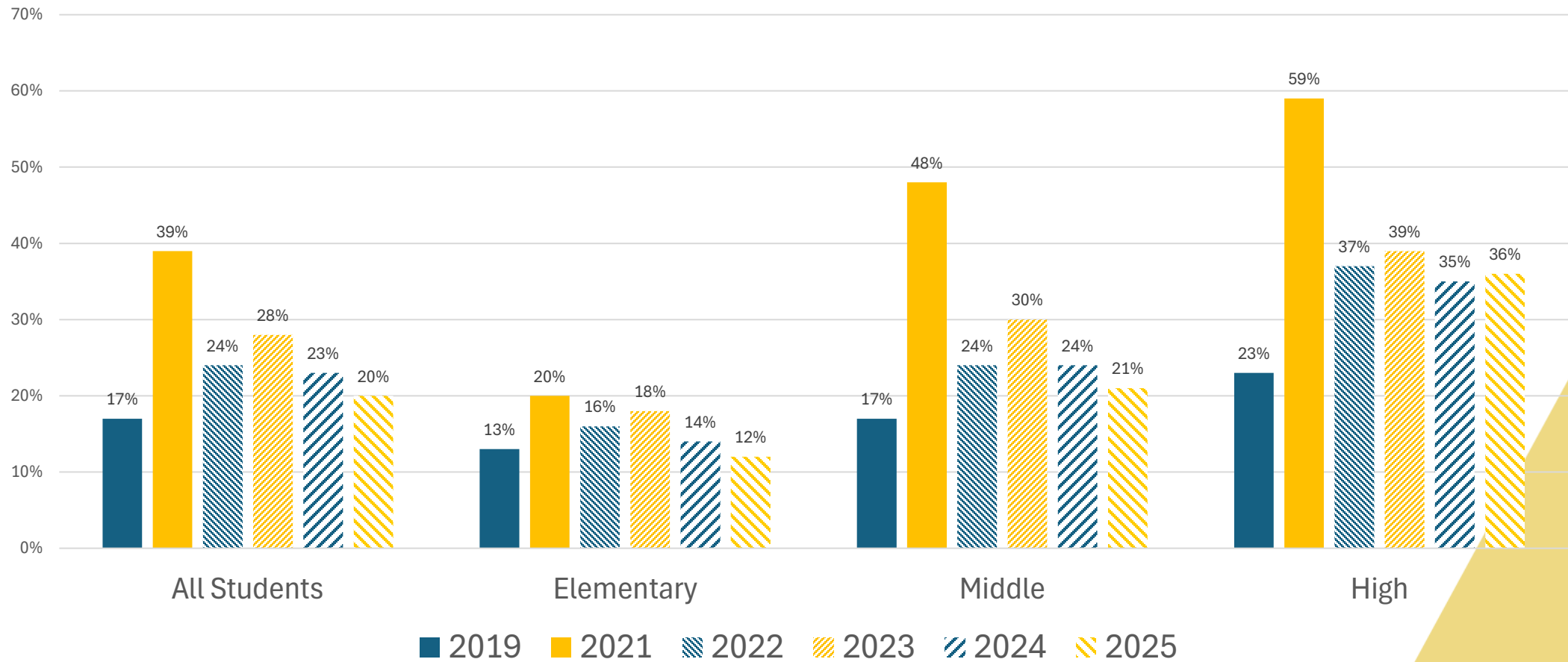
- Strengthen Our Community (non-profit LLC)→ With district administration, SOC began facilitating meetings with several Not-For-Profit agencies and key governmental agencies.
 - The task force collected information and then created 15 priorities. They defined above the line (5 priorities) and below the line priorities
 - Stabilization and expansion of Middle School support
 - Stabilization and expansion of Family Resource Centers
 - Innovative transportation solutions
 - Chronic Absenteeism Awareness Campaign (community & family focused)
 - Expansion of early childhood programming
-
- Partnerships to expand access to mental and physical health care
 - Prevent students from falling behind academically
 - Teacher appreciation

A Community Approach

- Became very clear right away that this was no small task
 - After tackling low hanging fruit for 2024-25, work turned to the 2025-26 school year
 - Secured known and willing donations
 - Canvassed public officials and open meetings
 - Developed a legislative strategy
 - Hired a firm to assist with fund raising
 - Developed a 3-year “ask”
 - Had to break funding goals down by priority
 - Have secured all explicit funding goals for 2025-26 and about half-way there for 2026-27.
 - May secure funding for lower priorities based on donor interest (2026-27)

Success in 2024-25

Trends in Chronic Absenteeism



Continuing the Effort

- Working toward every child having a Trusted Adult in the school setting
- Strengthening and Expanding Community Partnerships (Community Health Alliance)
- Establishing a process of transition into Kindergarten, from ES to MS, from MS to HS
- Seeking some possible legislative and policy change affecting grades 11 and 12

Thank You

Paul M. LaMarca, Ph.D.
Chief Student Services Officer
Washoe County School District
plamarca@washoeschools.net
775-789-4604