

Learning Series 3

Promoting Attendance Early: Absenteeism in Kindergarten and the Early Grades

Session 2: Root Cause Analysis

May 1, 2024



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Introductions



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Learning Series Objectives

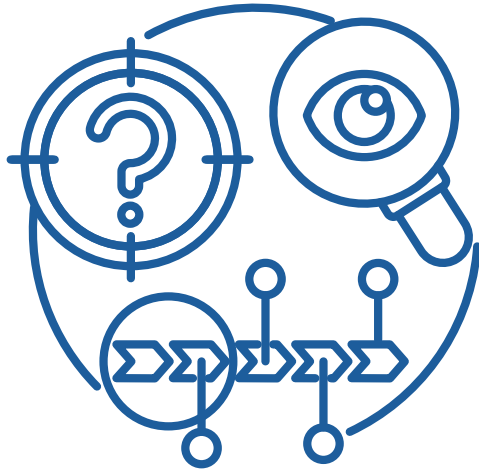
- ▶ Discuss the current landscape of chronic absenteeism at the kindergarten level
- ▶ Demonstrate the impacts of chronic absenteeism in kindergarten
- ▶ Improve awareness of root causes of chronic absenteeism and disparities in kindergarten attendance
- ▶ Examine promising practices used by peer states to strengthen kindergarten attendance
- ▶ Develop next steps to apply systems-level strategies to strengthen kindergarten attendance

Learning Series Overview

- ▶ **Session 1:** Why Kindergarten?
- ▶ **Session 2:** Root Cause Analysis for Kindergarten Chronic Absenteeism
[Today]
- ▶ **Session 3:** Panel Discussion: Putting Strategies in Conversation
[May 8, 1:00-2:00pm ET]

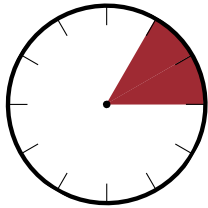
Session 2 Objectives

Root Cause Analysis

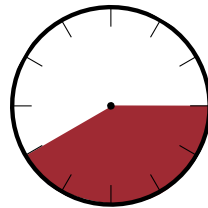


- ▶ Improve awareness of root causes of chronic absenteeism and disparities in kindergarten attendance

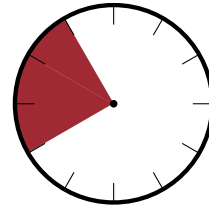
Agenda



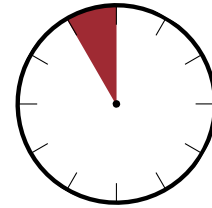
- ▶ Unpacking Why Kindergartners Miss School (10 min)



- ▶ Breakout Groups and Group Share out (25 min)



- ▶ A Focus on Engaging Special Populations (15 min)



- ▶ Wrap-Up and Next Steps (5 min)



Unpacking Why Kindergartners Miss School

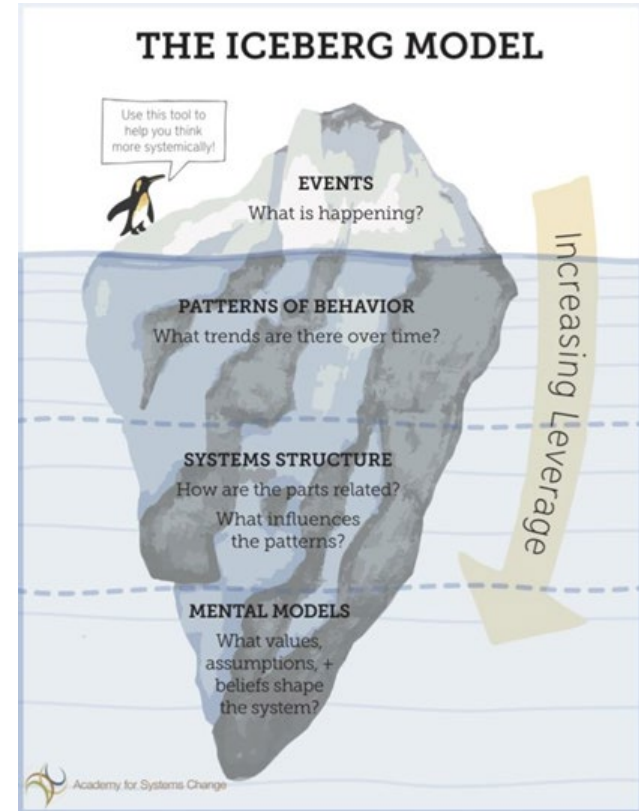


What is a root cause analysis?

Root Cause Analyses helps ensure that we design interventions that address the *root* of an issue and not the *symptoms*

Focusing exclusively on symptoms provides a temporary fix and will not eliminate or reduce the force that drives its existence (the root cause)

Source: Conducting a Root Cause Analysis Transforming Community Initiatives (Trinity Health)



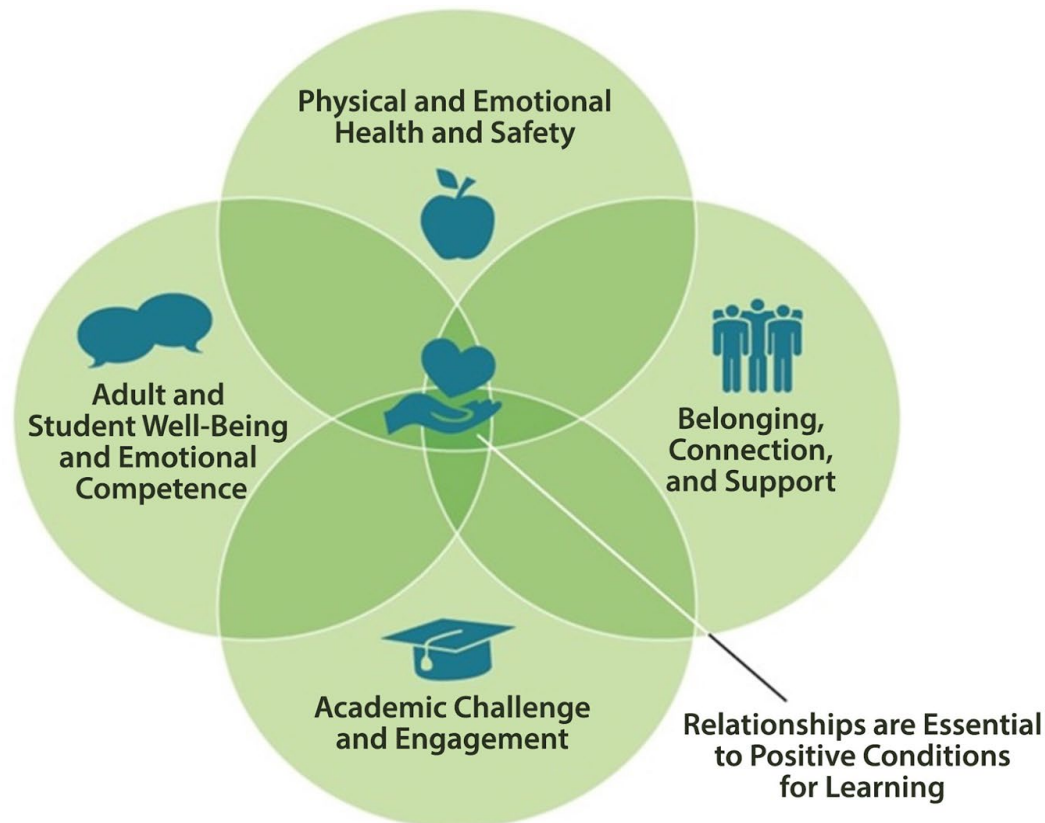
Reducing Chronic Absence Requires Understanding What Causes Kindergartners to Miss Too Much School

(Recognizing Experiences Can Vary By Student Group)

Barriers	Aversion	Disengagement	Misconceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chronic and acute illness• Trauma• Poor transportation• Housing and food insecurity• Inequitable access to needed services (including health)• System involvement• Lack of predictable schedules for learning• Lack of access to technology for parents• Community violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Struggling academically and/or behaviorally• Unwelcoming school climate• Social and peer challenges• Anxiety• Biased disciplinary and suspension practices• Undiagnosed disability and/or lack of disability accommodations• Caregivers had negative educational experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of challenging, culturally responsive instruction• Bored• No meaningful relationships to adults in the school (especially given staff shortages)• Lack of enrichment opportunities• Lack of academic and behavioral support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused• Missing 2 days per month doesn't affect learning• Lose track and underestimate TOTAL absences• Assume students must stay home for any symptom of illness• Attendance only matters in the older grades• Suspensions don't count as absence

Source: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/>

Do the high levels of absence reflect an erosion in positive conditions for learning for kindergartners and their families?



Key Steps for States

Step 1: Identify kindergarten groups of concern for your state.

Groups of concern are those who make up a large proportion of the chronically absent kindergartners and/or are disproportionately chronically absent.

Step 2: Review data for groups of concern.

Examine if data has changed over time. Notice if it is affected by factors like geography or size of district.

Step 3: Help districts learn about populations of concern.

Provide tools and resources to partner with students, families, staff community partners to unpack causes & identify possible solutions. Use insights to examine additional data (e.g. health, census, economic data) to expand understanding of challenges.

Step 4: Learn about what works from positive outliers.

These are districts or schools with comparatively lower K chronic absence.

Race / Ethnicity	Chronic Absenteeism Eligible Enrollment	Chronic Absenteeism Count	Chronic Absenteeism Rate
African American	24,096	11,569	48.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2,080	961	46.2%
Asian	50,075	11,790	23.5%
Filipino	9,759	3,059	31.3%
Hispanic or Latino	289,323	120,967	41.8%
Pacific Islander	1,899	1,004	52.9%
White	102,809	26,935	26.2%
Two or More Races	27,101	8,126	30.0%
Not Reported	9,539	3,308	34.7%

Report Totals

Name	Chronic Absenteeism Eligible Enrollment	Chronic Absenteeism Count	Chronic Absenteeism Rate
Statewide	516,681	187,719	36.3%

These data, made publicly available by the California Department of Education, demonstrate the value of looking at kindergarten chronic absence by ethnicity.

It shows that African American, American/Indian, Latino/Hispanic and Pacific Islander kindergartners are disproportionately affected.

At the same time, 120,967 (64%) of chronically absent kindergartners are Latino.

Kindergarten Chronic Absence by Student Group in California SY 2022-23

Filters Enabled:

Grade Span: Kindergarten

[Reset Filters](#)

Subgroup	Chronic Absenteeism Eligible Enrollment	Chronic Absenteeism Count	Chronic Absenteeism Rate
English Learners	144,465	53,655	37.1%
Foster Youth	4,368	1,783	40.8%
Homeless Youth	21,182	10,423	49.2%
Migrant Education	3,547	1,059	29.9%
Students With Disabilities	69,663	32,063	46.0%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	323,292	139,956	43.3%

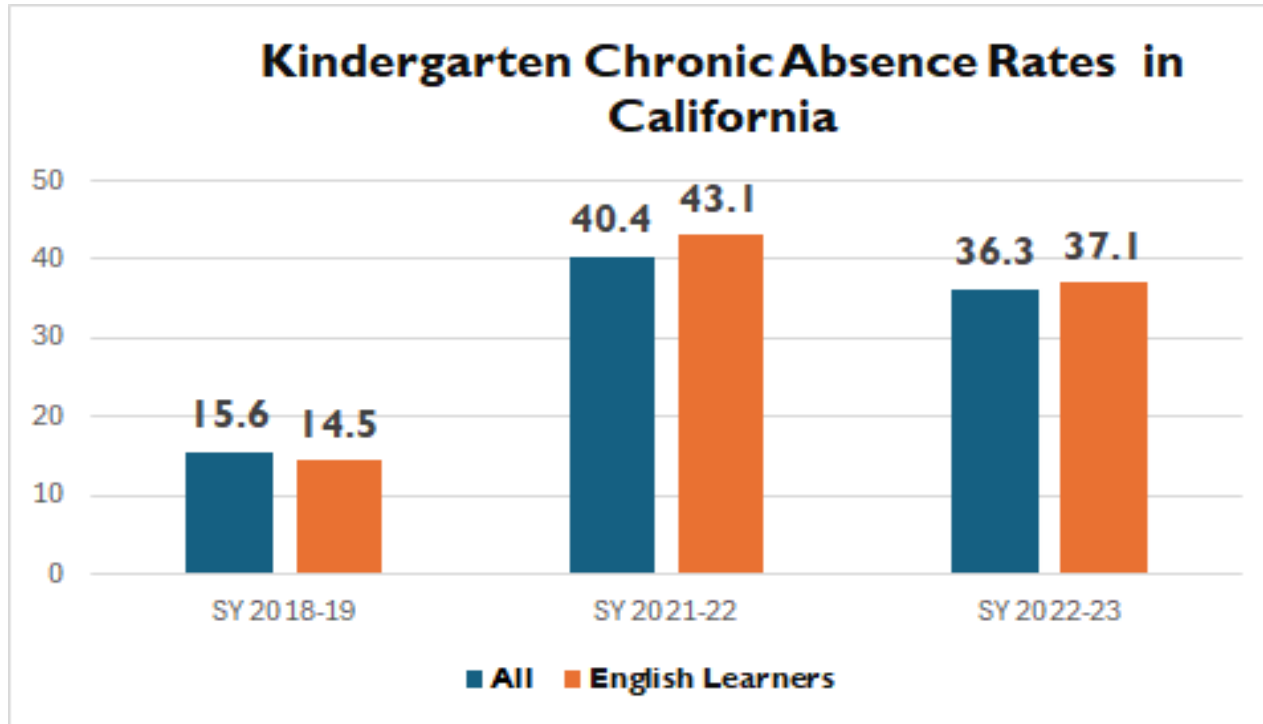
Report Totals

Name	Chronic Absenteeism Eligible Enrollment	Chronic Absenteeism Count	Chronic Absenteeism Rate
Statewide	516,681	187,719	36.3%

Source: California Department of Education, Dataquest SY 2022-23

- English Language Learners comprise 29% of all chronically absent kindergartners
- Students with Disabilities comprise 17% of chronically absent kindergartners
- Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students comprise the majority (75%) of chronically absent kindergartners.

Kindergarten Chronic Absence: Before and After Pandemic For EL vs All



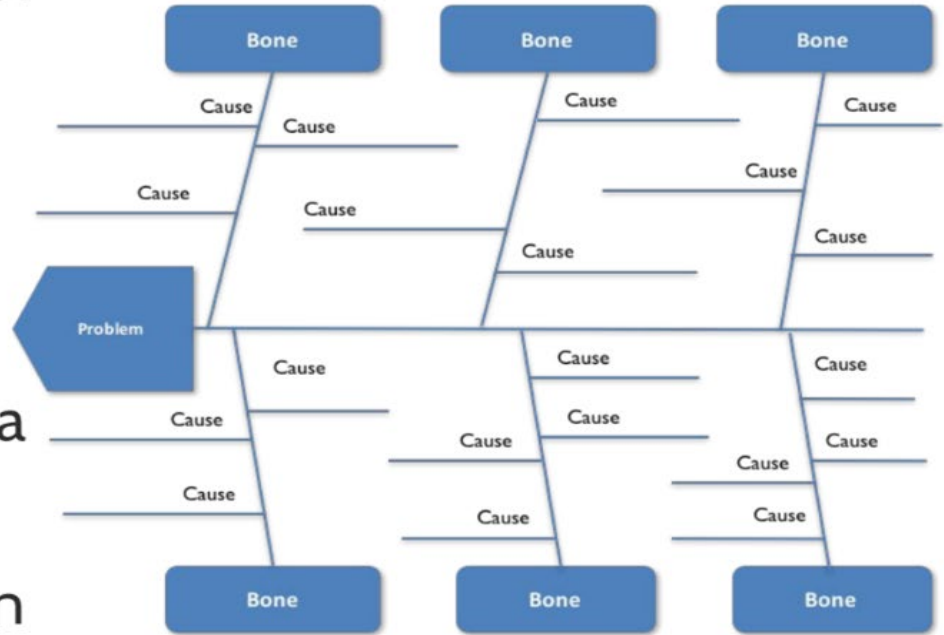
Source: California Department of Education, Dataquest

Fishbone Diagram

What is it? A summary of a group's understanding about the causes of the current problem

Why is it useful?

Visualizes the causes of a problem at a high level; helps with scoping and identifying areas to dig in deeper.



Sample Fishbone

43% of English Learner Kindergarten students are chronically absent.

Communication

Forms in various languages

Language barriers

Accurate Student Information System Info.

Supporting Students

Lack of outreach

IEP needs

Homework club/safe space

Homelife

Type of K Program

Half day kindergarten

Lack of transportation

Distance is a factor

Weather

Parent unable to drop off student

COVID major impact on families

Don't want their kids to get sick (all viruses)

Social/emotional health factors

First time schoolers/ No Preschool

Morning /evening routine

Separation Anxiety

Transportation

Health/ Mental Health

Habits of Attendance

Examples of Qualitative Data Tools

Gather information about why students do or don't attend school

- ❑ **Scan of Environment and Attendance Tool (SEAT):** Identify strengths and opportunities to promote positive school culture and strong attendance
- ❑ **Empathy Interviews:** Targeted, one-on-one conversations with a small group of students
- ❑ **2x10:** Relationship and trust building strategy; spend two minutes per day for 10 days talking with a student
- ❑ **Student Focus Groups:** Moderated small group discussions to explore experiences and perspectives
- ❑ **Attendance Café:** Engage parents in discussions about attendance
- ❑ **Student and Parent Surveys:** Ask about reasons behind their absences



Source: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/qualitative-data/>

Further Reading on Root Cause Analysis

- ▶ Root cause analysis is one part of a broader continuous improvement process and a well-researched technical response for getting more information about key populations.

- ▶ Additional Resources:
 - [Purposes of Root Cause Analysis in School Improvement Planning](#)
 - [Root Cause Analysis: Using Data to Improve Students' Outcomes](#)
 - [The State and District Role in Root Cause Analysis](#)
 - [Needs Assessment Toolkit Including Root Cause Analysis](#)

Breakout Group Discussion



Breakout Discussion

- ▶ In your role, what processes or structures do you see in place to help districts and schools engage in root cause analysis?
 - Whose voices are reflected? Whose voices are missing?
 - Share any examples of promising practices.

- ▶ Discuss what other supports or resources could help districts connect to children, families, school staff, or community partners to deepen insights around root causes of chronic absenteeism.
 - What challenges exist and how might you overcome them?

Large Group Share-Out

- ▶ Share one key takeaway from your group discussion
- ▶ Please feel free to continue to like and interact with the Padlet!

A Focus on Engaging Special Populations



English Learners (ELs)

- ▶ ELs are one of the fastest growing populations
- ▶ In the fall of 2020, more than 5 million ELs were enrolled in public schools, representing 10 percent of total K-12 student enrollment
 - More than three-quarters of ELs were Spanish-speaking
 - 16.1% of the total EL enrollment were identified as students with disabilities
- ▶ In fall of 2020, 12.9% of kindergarteners in public schools were ELs

- ▶ Attendance rates for ELs have declined since 2020 for a variety of reasons, including:
 - Impact of COVID on families
 - Language/communication barrier
 - Lack of outreach

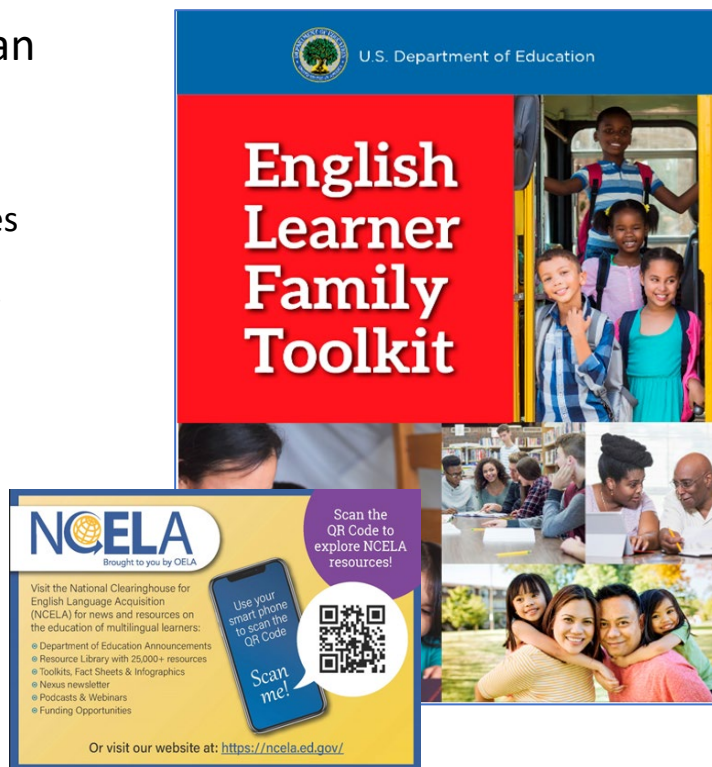
English Learners (ELs): Engagement Strategies

- ▶ Prioritize making students and families feel welcome
 - Acknowledge that students who come to school with a language other than or in addition to English come with many assets; language, culture and knowledge
- ▶ Ensure students and families are aware of and can access all school programs especially those serving ELs
 - Provide space and time for families to build relationships with staff, community members and school partners
 - Hire staff that represent the community, can speak the language and relate to family and student cultures and experiences
 - Share information about attendance in preferred languages and communication methods
- ▶ Engage in discourse with families and community partners to identify and problem solve barriers they may be facing outside of school

Resources on Family Engagement

The EL Family Toolkit can help educators:

- Create a welcoming environment for EL families
- Build relationships with EL families
- Communicate effectively with EL families
- Overcome barriers to EL family engagement.
- Empower EL families



Toolkit Chapters:

1. Enrolling Your Child in School
2. Attending Schools in the United States
3. Other Educational Programs and Services for Your Child
4. Finding Extracurricular Activities for Your Child
5. The Health and Safety of Your Child at School
6. Helping Your Child to be Successful in School

Students with Disabilities

- ▶ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides services and supports to a child with a disability who is found eligible under the IDEA
 - This can include students with "specific learning disabilities" (which includes dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia), students with chronic or acute health problems or students with autism spectrum disorder
 - ▶ During school year 2022-2023, there were 7,630,445 children ages 3-21 served by IDEA
- ▶ Students with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to be chronically absent than students without disabilities, for a variety of reasons, including:
 - Chronic health conditions
 - Inappropriate or inadequate special education services
 - Mental health/anxiety

Students with Disabilities: Engagement Strategies

- ▶ Improve the collection, reporting, and analysis of data based on disability status to make programmatic improvements
- ▶ Strengthen connection networks between preschool and traditional networks to support the IEP transfer across schools
- ▶ Prioritize addressing special educator shortages
- ▶ Recommend that schools consider the need for an IEP meeting when absences are clearly connected to the student's disability
- ▶ Provide guidance, oversight, and professional development opportunities

Students New to Traditional Schooling

- ▶ Over 50% of preschool-age kids in the U.S. are not in school
 - High-quality early childhood education is inaccessible to many Americans, especially low-income students and children of color
 - Supporting access to high-quality preschool is one of the Department of Education's key strategies in early learning
- ▶ Students and families without preschool experience may be more likely to be chronically absent in kindergarten. Reasons for chronic absence include:
 - Health/safety concerns
 - Kindergarten registration requirements
 - Parents yet to establish strong relationship with school

Students New to Traditional Schooling: Engagement Strategies

- ▶ Conduct outreach early and in a variety of contexts regarding school registration, related requirements (i.e., vaccinations), and the importance of kindergarten attendance
- ▶ Coordinate summer bridge programs for students who did not participate in formal preschool programs
- ▶ Implement and maintain family-focused transition strategies including sending a welcome letter in appropriate languages and inviting families to visit classrooms and meet teachers prior to the first day of school

Wrap-Up and Next Steps



Upcoming Sessions

- ▶ **Learning Series 3.3:** Panel Discussion: Putting Strategies in Conversation
 - Wednesday, May 8, 1:00-2:00pm ET

We love to hear your feedback!

- ▶ Please fill out our end of session feedback form.



What's Next?

- ▶ Follow-up email will include session slides and resources
- ▶ Interested in working one-on-one with subject matter experts?
Let us know!



Questions?

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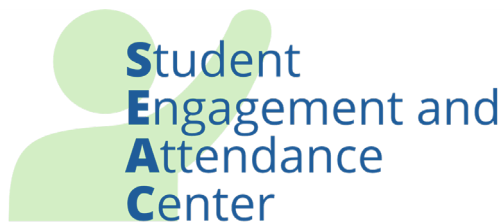
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