



Date: April 23, 2026

Durham Public Schools Board of Education Monthly Meeting PRECIS

Agenda Item: Attendance: A Strategic Plan Priority 2 Update

Building Our Future Strategic Plan Priority: 1 2 3 4 5

Staff Liaison Present: Dr. Laverne Mattocks Perry
Dr. Albert Royster

Main Points:

- This presentation provides a high-level overview of student attendance trends from the 2018–2019 school year to the present, with a focused analysis of chronic absenteeism, including breakdowns by year, gender, race, and ethnicity. It also highlights schools meeting district attendance goals and outlines current district strategies to improve attendance.
- This presentation is provided for information/discussion

Fiscal Implications: N/A

Purpose

Information/Discussion Action Consent

Reviewed by: Finance _____ Attorney _____



Attendance: A Strategic Plan Update Priority 2

April 23, 2026



Dr. Nicholas King, Deputy Superintendent, Academic Services
Chanel Sidbury, Assistant Superintendent,
Continuous Improvement & School Support
Dr. L. Mattocks-Perry, Sr. Executive Director, Student Support
Services

Attendance Focused Strategic Plan - Priority 2 Agenda

Opening and Purpose

What the Data Tells Us

What We're Doing & Responses to the Data

What We Will Do Differently (Starting Now)

Questions and Discussion



Compulsory Attendance-NC



General Statute 115c-378. Children Required to Attend.

- North Carolina's compulsory attendance law (G.S. 115C-378) requires children aged 7 to 16 to attend school, with parents responsible for ensuring attendance. Schools must notify parents after 3, 6, and 10 unexcused absences.
- No person shall encourage, entice or counsel any child of compulsory school age to be unlawfully absent from school. The parent, guardian, or custodian of a child shall notify the school of the reason for each known absence of the child, in accordance with local school board policy.
- Parents are responsible for making a “good faith effort” to ensure daily attendance and comply with the law.

Chronically Absent-NC



- Term used when a student misses 10% or more of the school year, whether the absences are excused or unexcused (as long as the student has been in membership at least 10 school days).
- If a school year has about 180 days, then: Missing 18 days or more = chronically absent
- Includes all absences (excused, unexcused, and suspensions that remove the student from instruction)It's about total time missed, not the reason



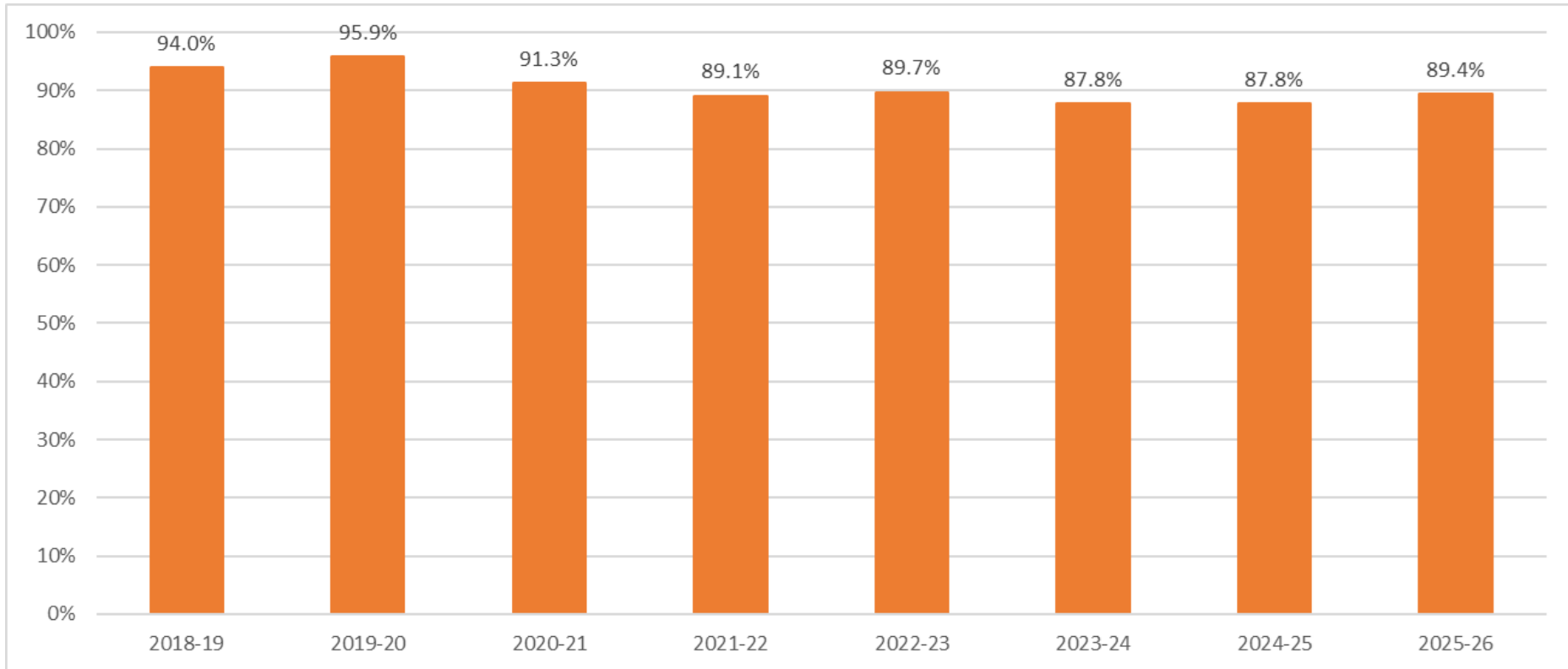
Attendance Data Review

Attendance is not yet improving at the desired rate.

We are advancing our work by deepening a prevention-focused approach to drive stronger attendance outcomes.

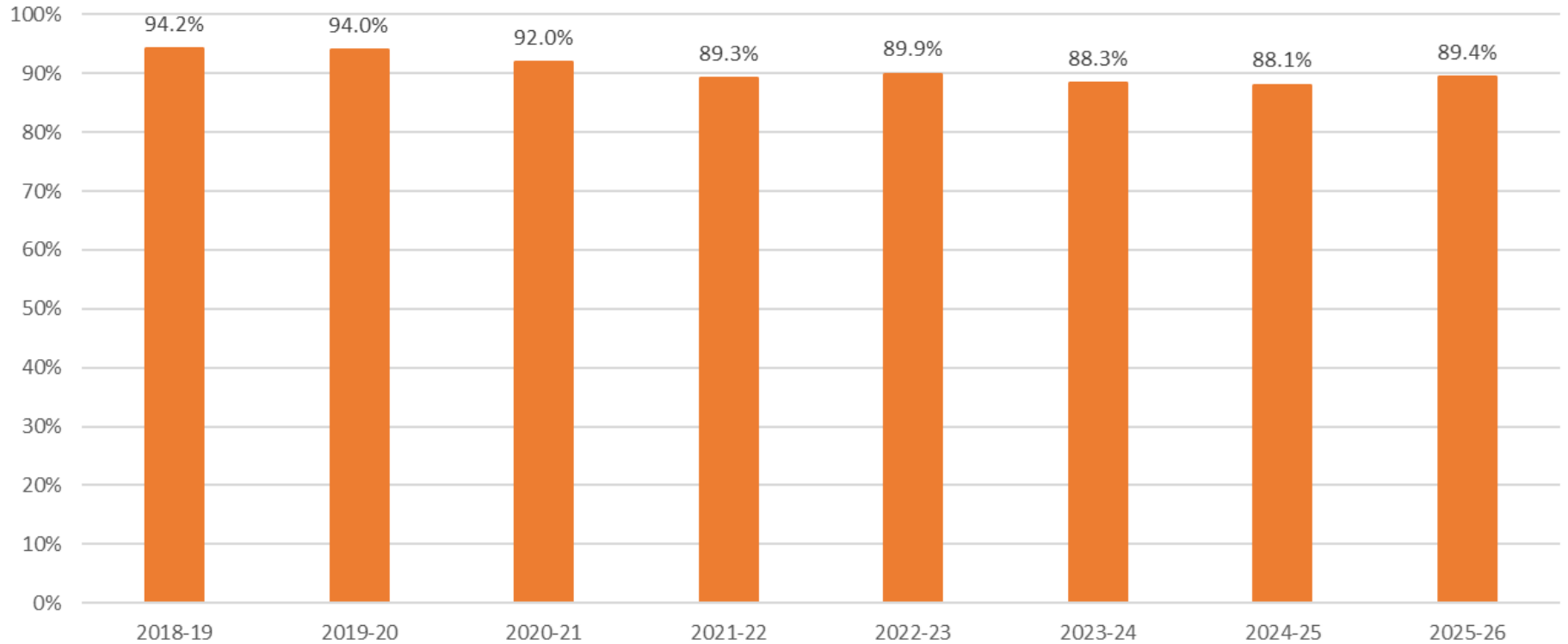
Attendance Rates by School Year

Attendance has declined ~4–5 points since 2018–19 and has not recovered
(Note: all students were counted present during 4th quarter in 2019-20 due to COVID-19)



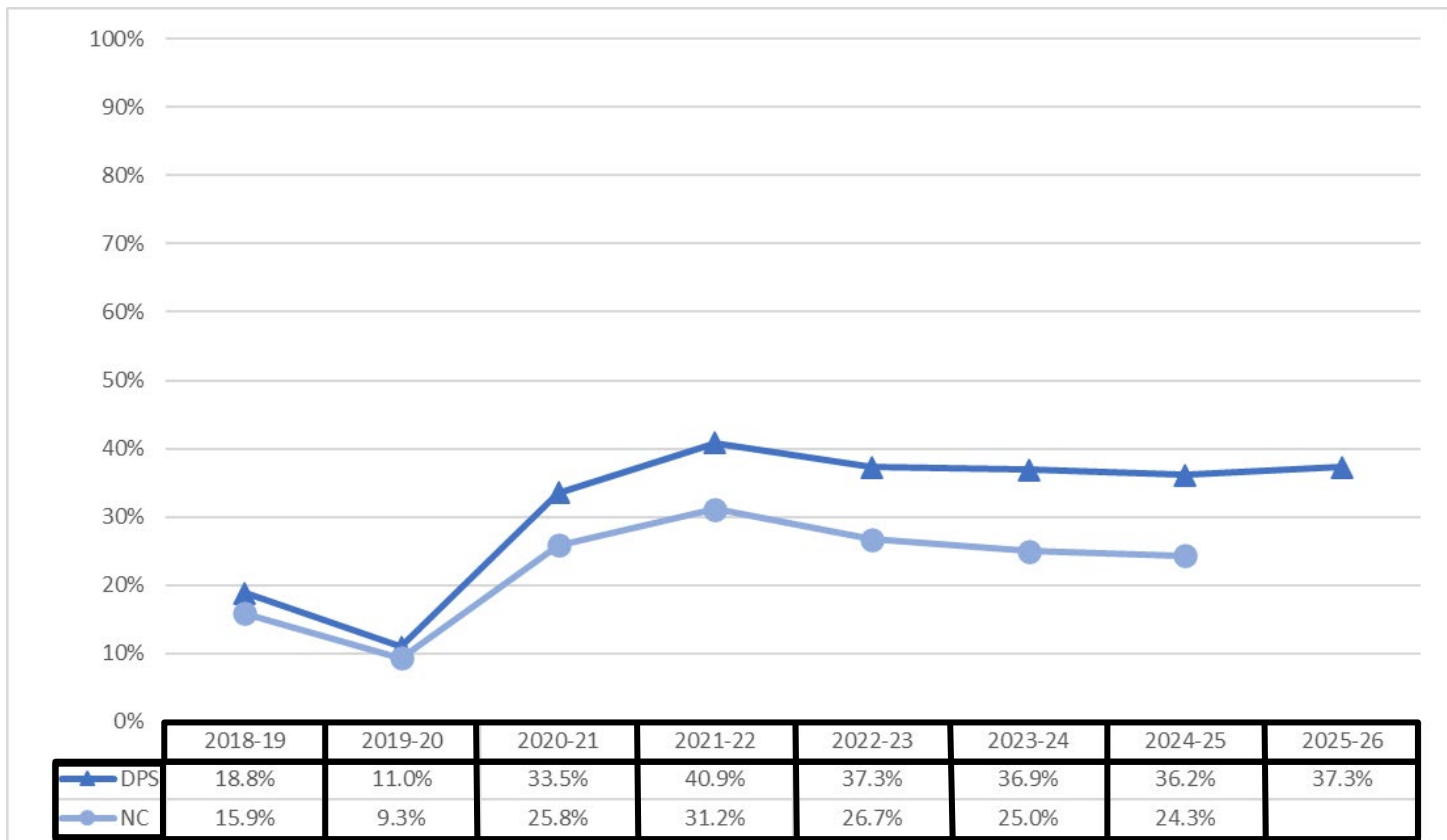
Attendance Rates by School Year Months 1-6 Only

Cumulative attendance rates through Month 6 only for each school year, show a 1.3% improvement.



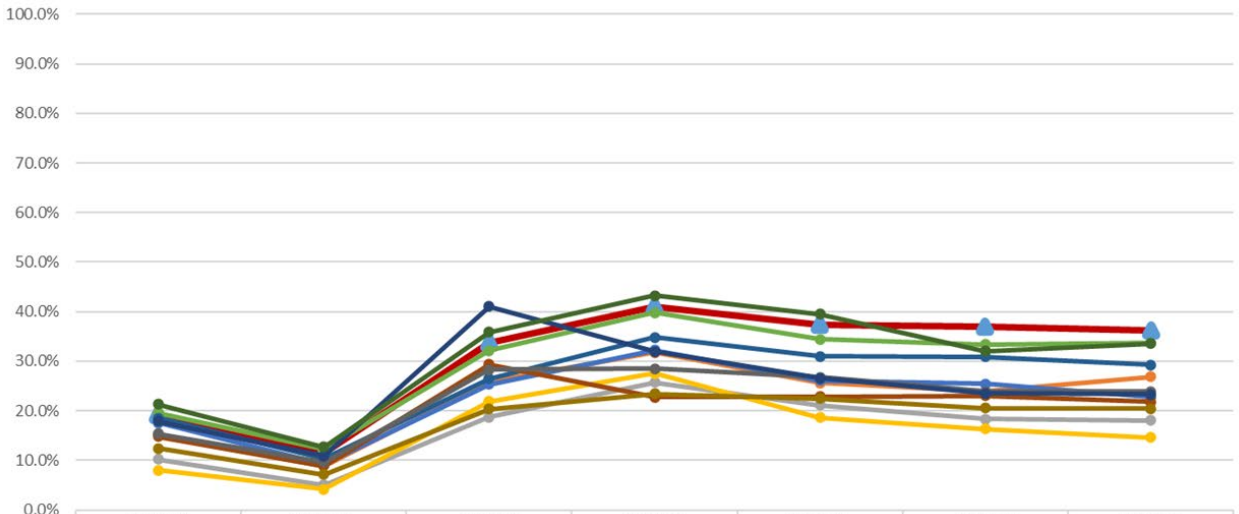
Chronic Absenteeism by School Year

Chronic absenteeism has remained steady at elevated levels since 2021–22



Source: NC School Report Cards, Infinite Campus

Chronic Absenteeism A Comparison: DPS & Big 12 Districts

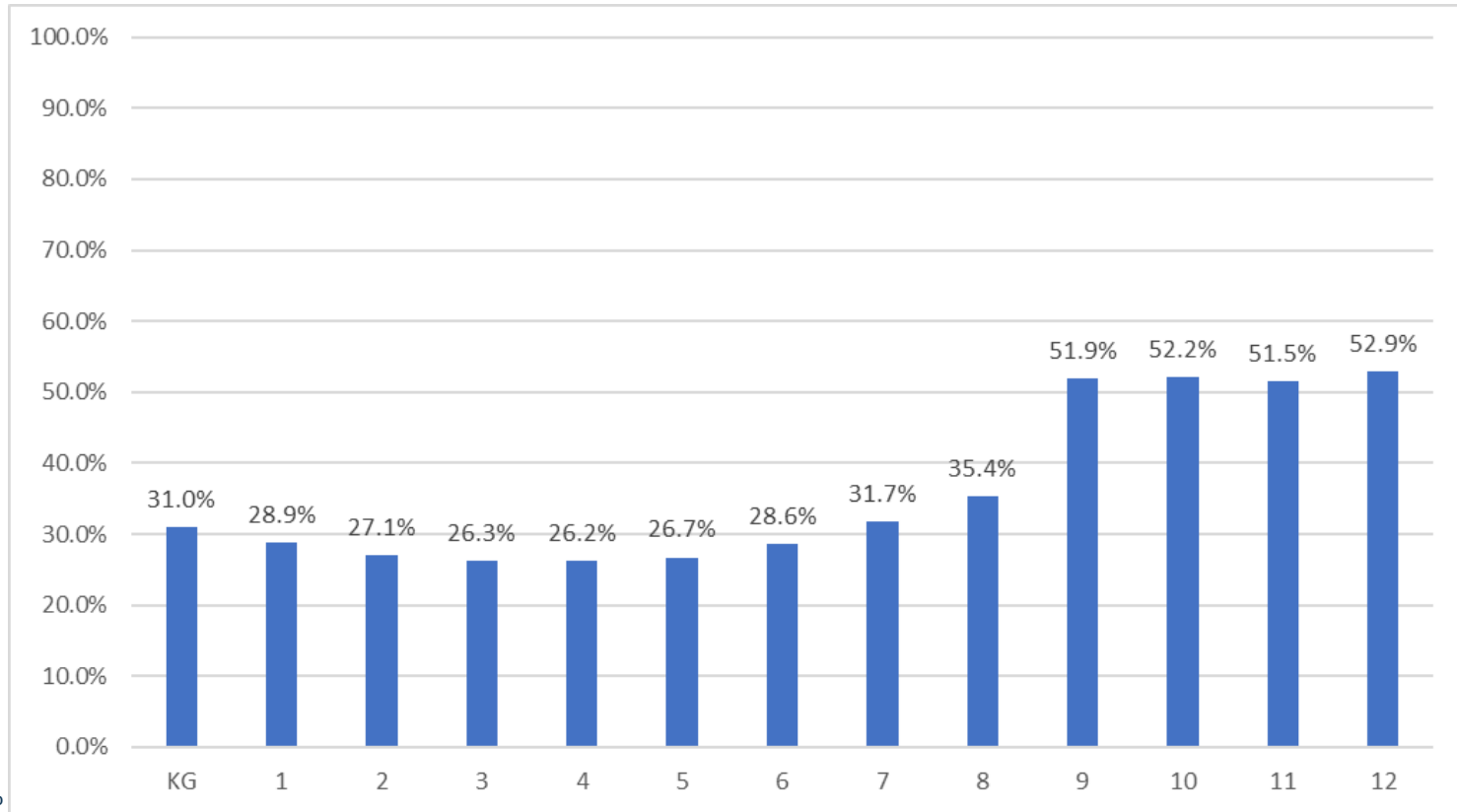


	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Durham Public Schools	19.1%	11.5%	33.8%	41.0%	37.3%	37.0%	36.2%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	15.2%	8.9%	25.9%	31.7%	25.6%	23.9%	26.9%
Cabarrus County Schools	10.2%	5.1%	18.7%	25.7%	21.1%	18.3%	18.1%
Union County Public Schools	8.0%	4.2%	21.9%	27.5%	18.7%	16.3%	14.6%
Onslow County Schools	17.6%	9.1%	25.3%	32.2%	26.1%	25.4%	22.8%
Cumberland County Schools	19.6%	12.3%	32.1%	39.8%	34.4%	33.4%	33.7%
Guilford County Schools	18.5%	10.4%	26.5%	34.8%	31.0%	30.9%	29.3%
Johnston County Public Schools	14.8%	8.8%	29.3%	22.8%	22.8%	23.1%	21.8%
New Hanover County Schools	15.4%	9.6%	28.3%	28.5%	26.8%	23.9%	23.9%
Wake County Schools	12.4%	7.1%	20.3%	23.5%	22.5%	20.5%	20.5%
Gaston County Schools	17.9%	10.9%	41.0%	31.9%	26.6%	23.5%	23.3%
Winston-Salem / Forsyth County Schools	21.3%	12.7%	35.9%	43.2%	39.5%	32.1%	33.6%

Source: NC School Report Cards

Chronic Absenteeism by Grade Level for 2025-26

Compulsory attendance begins at age 7

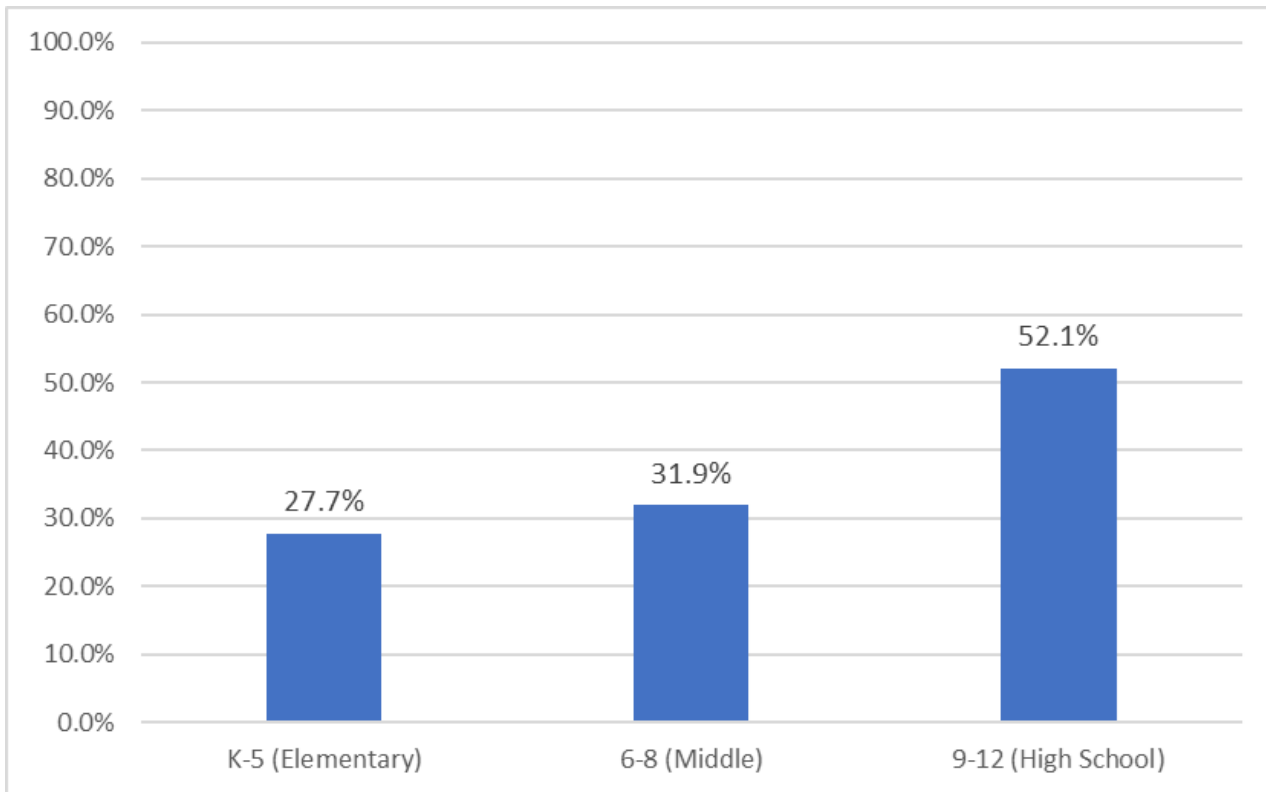


*as of 4/9/2026
Overall = 37.3%

Source: Infinite Campus

Chronic Absenteeism by Grade Span 2025-26

Compulsory attendance begins at age 7



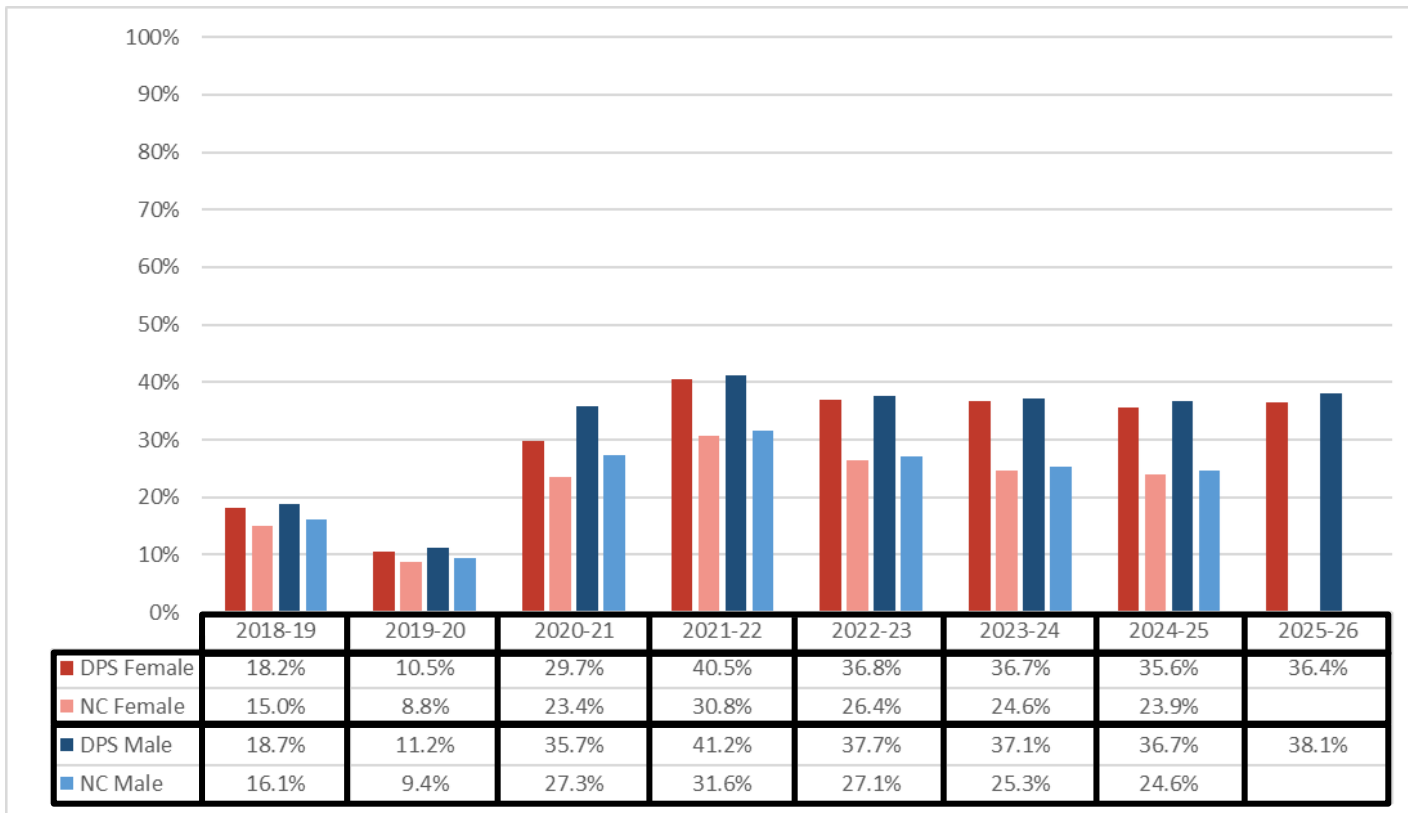
*as of 4/9/2026
Overall = 37.3%

Source: Infinite Campus



Chronic Absenteeism by Gender

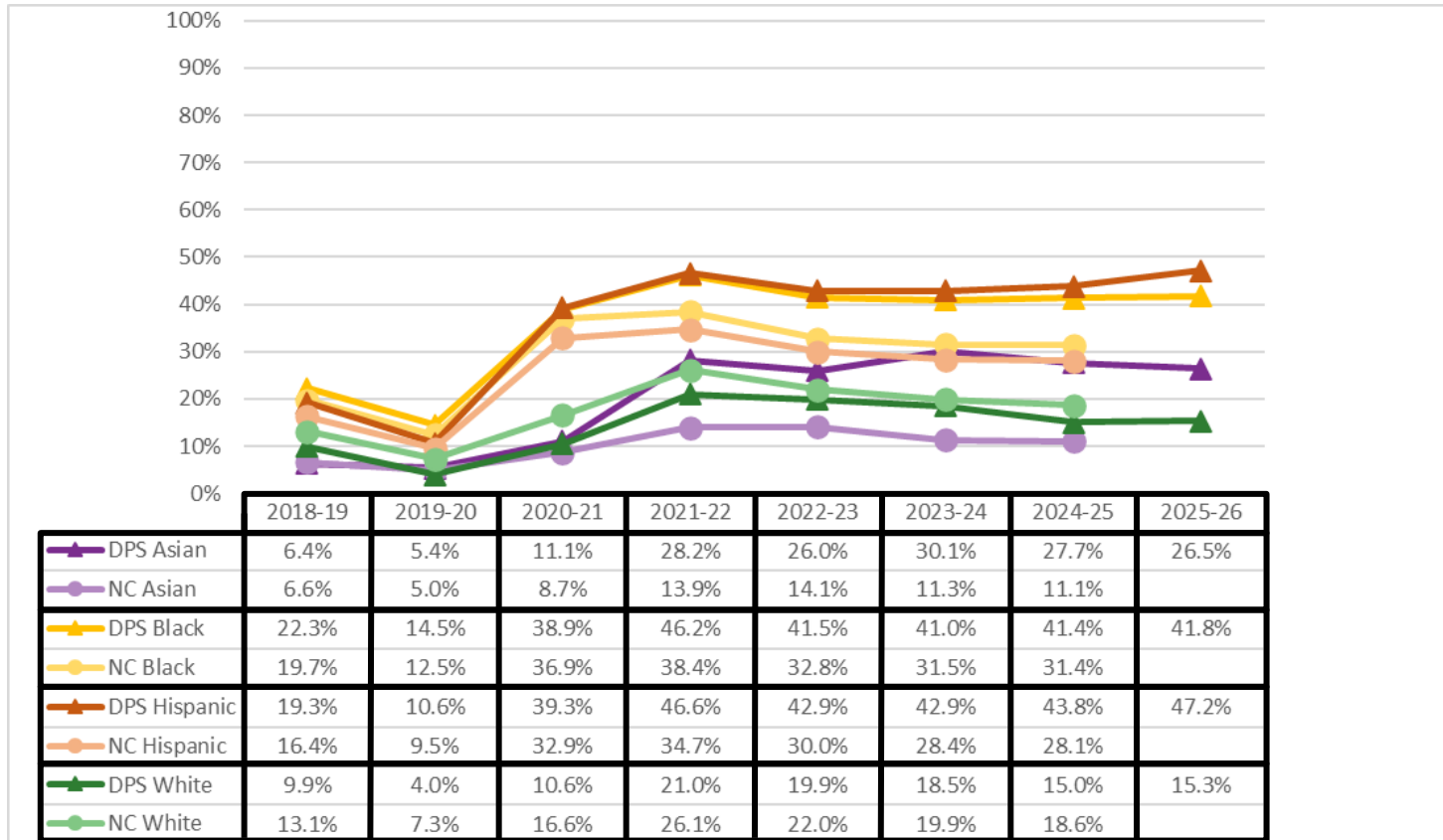
When disaggregated by gender, we see minimal gap, apart from the 2020-21 year, which was a gradual return to in-person due to COVID-19.



Source: NC School Report Cards, Infinite Campus

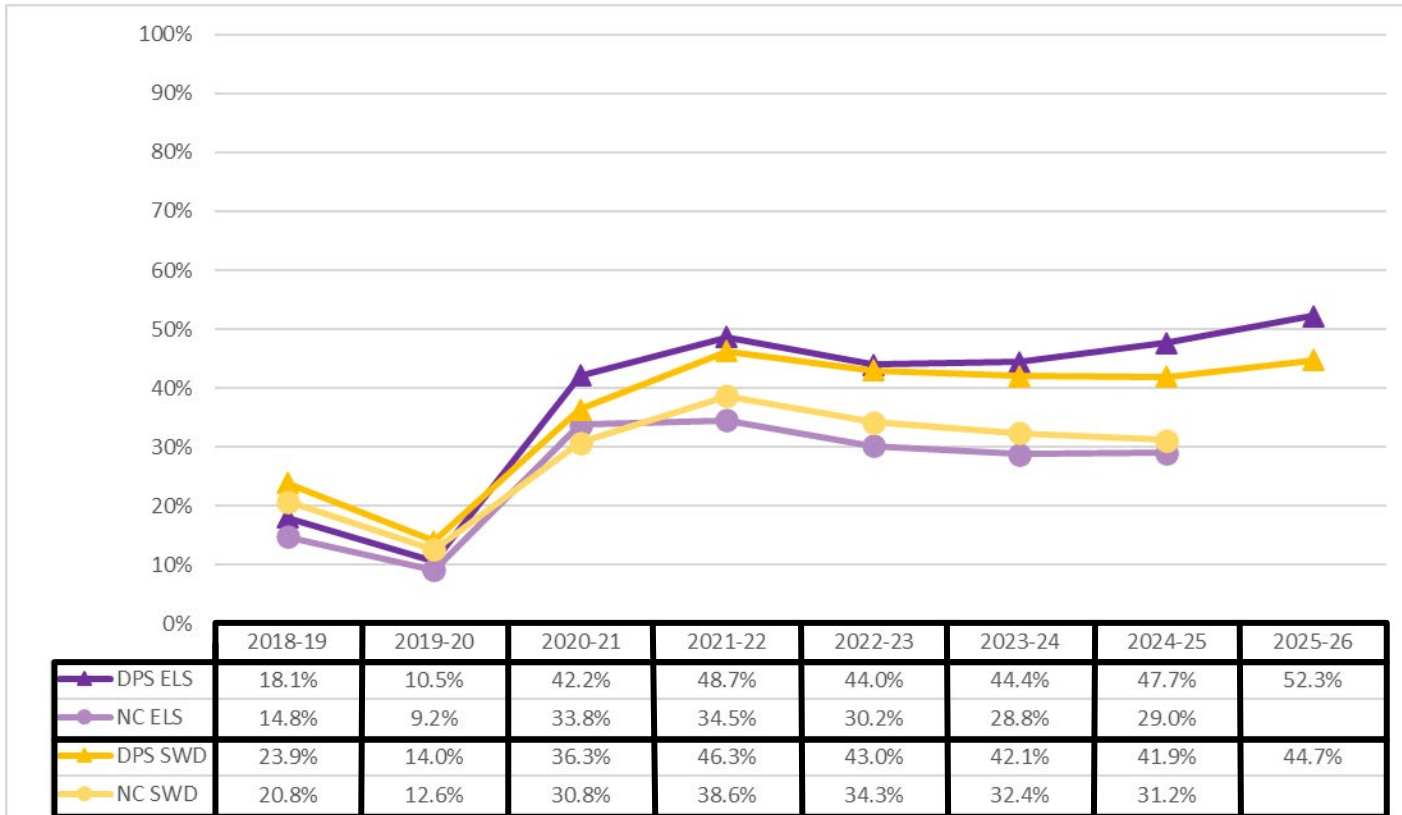
Chronic Absenteeism by Race / Ethnicity

Asian students are trending downward since 2023-24.



Source: NC School Report Cards, Infinite Campus


Chronic Absenteeism by Student Group




Source: NC School Report Cards, Infinite Campus

Priority 2: Student Well-Being, Belonging & Equity

2024–25 End-of-Year Progress Snapshot - Goal Status Dashboard

Goal	2024–25 Benchmark	2024–25 Actual	Status	Plain-Language Summary
2C – Attendance	90.6%	89.6%	 Not Met	<i>Attendance remains below benchmark and teams are receiving targeted support.</i>

Goal	2025–26 Benchmark	2025-26 In Progress	Status	Plain-Language Summary
2C – Attendance	92.1%	89.3%	 Needs Attention	<i>Even though teams are receiving targeted support, attendance remains below the benchmark.</i>

We have not met our attendance goal for consecutive years. Incremental adjustments are not sufficient.



Attendance Strategy Review

Priority Strategies

23- 24- 25- 26- 27-
24 25 26 27 28

Student Wellness | Integrate developmentally appropriate systems, structures, and processes that promote student health and wellness at the school and district level as aligned with board policy, including strengthening implementation of the ten components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model.

3

Attendance | Create a culture of attendance at schools by building staff capacity to support students with attendance challenges, implementing positive approaches to attendance interventions, identifying and removing barriers to attendance, and strengthening collaboration with families and local agencies to support students at greater risk of chronic absenteeism.

3

We have not yet reached full or consistent implementation across schools.



Level 1
Not Yet Started

Level 2
Planning / Exploring

Level 3
Initial Implementation

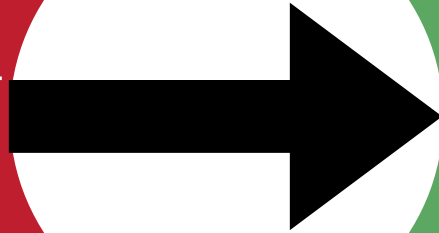
Level 4
Full / Routine Implementation

Level 5 Sustained & Impactful

Old Approach (Pre-COVID COVID)

Schools used to:

- Fixate on compliance and truancy
- Employ reactive interventions
- Narrowly focus on highest-need students



Current Reality (Post-)

Schools will now:

- Address health, mental health, SEL, and engagement together
- Strengthen Tier 1 (core experience), not just interventions
- Build student connection and belonging
- Partner with families to reset expectations
- Use early warning and proactive supports

Strategic Plan Goal 2C: Schools at or above 92.3% Benchmark 2025-2026



Student Wellness | Integrate developmentally appropriate systems, structures, and processes that promote student health and wellness at the school and district level as aligned with board policy, including strengthening implementation of the ten components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model.

What We're Doing	What's Working	Where We Need to Improve	Next Steps
<p>Wellness initiatives aligned to board policy;</p> <p>District and community partnerships supporting student health</p>	<p>Wellness structures exist in most schools;</p> <p>Increased attention to student health</p>	<p>Strengthening opportunities to more consistently integrate wellness efforts into SIPs and MTSS</p> <p>Embedding wellness more consistently into core instruction and MTSS work.</p>	<p>Schools will ensure wellness strategies are embedded in SIPs and reviewed quarterly;</p> <p>Enhance district-school coordination and continue strengthening implementation/monitoring of Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model components</p>

Attendance | Create a culture of attendance at schools by building staff capacity to support students with attendance challenges, implementing positive approaches to attendance interventions, identifying and removing barriers to attendance, and strengthening collaboration with families and local agencies to support students at greater risk of chronic absenteeism.

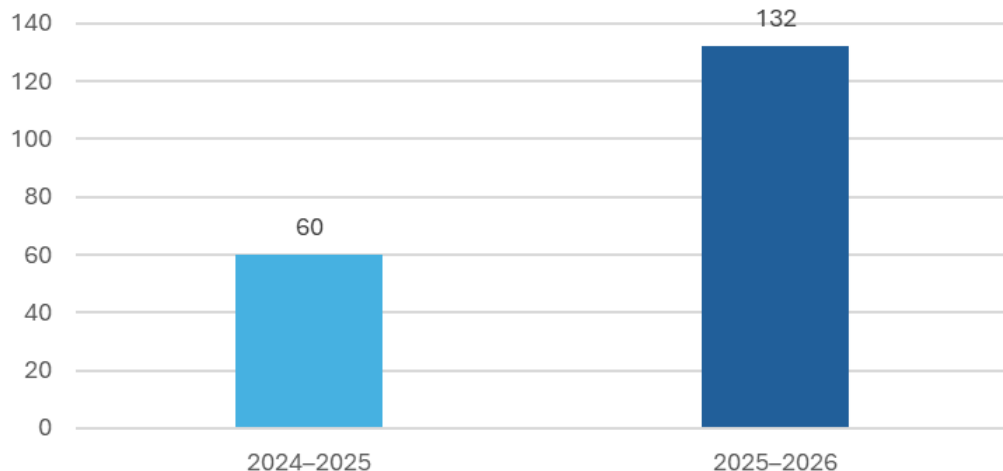
What We're Doing	What's Working	Where We Need to Improve	Next Steps
<p>Attendance team protocols and guidance in place</p> <p>Targeted supports for high-need students (e.g., McKinney-Vento, truancy mediation)</p> <p>School-based teams responding to attendance concerns</p>	<p>Attendance teams exist in most schools</p> <p>Tiered systems for intervention are established</p> <p>Strong supports for identified high-risk students</p>	<p>Building a more proactive and consistent approach to improving attendance across all schools</p> <p>Strengthening shared ownership of attendance as a Tier 1, schoolwide priority</p> <p>Expanding consistent early identification of attendance concerns</p> <p>Embedding preventative practices into daily routines and instruction to support all students</p>	<p>Early Warning Systems: Students identified at risk by Day 2 within a month</p> <p>Consistent Attendance Team Structures: Biweekly meetings with defined protocols and monitoring</p> <p>Tier 1 Attendance Practices in Every School: Clear expectations for daily attendance routines and consistent family communication</p> <p>Integration into Core Systems Attendance embedded in SIPs, MTSS, and PLC discussions</p> <p>Shared Ownership: School leaders monitor attendance data monthly and adjust strategies in real time</p>

Attendance Oversight | 2025-26

Levels of Monitoring	Contributing Factors	Targeted Support
<p>Classroom Teacher</p> <p>Data Manager</p> <p>School Social Worker</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Student Support Services team</p> <p>Goal 2C Team (cross-departmental & multidisciplinary)</p>	<p>Systemic Factors</p> <p>Residual: Covid-19 Virtual Schooling</p> <p>Societal & Community Issues (i.e., ICE presence, family and social issues, community violence)</p> <div data-bbox="687 707 1049 885"><p><i>While these factors are real, they do not fully explain the lack of improvement.</i></p></div>	<p>School Social Worker Attendance Intervention & Monitoring PL</p> <p>Conflict Resolution Center</p> <p>Truancy Mediation ↑</p> <p>February Check Ins</p> <p>Priority School Weekly Check Ins</p> <p>Impact Meeting Follow Ups</p>

Attendance | 2025–26

Truancy Mediation Referrals: Sept 2025–Apr 2026 Comparison



Distribution of Unexcused Absences at Referral

Absence Range	Number of Students
7-10 absences	9
11-20 absences	24
21-30 absences	41
31-40 absences	21
41+	37



Key Takeaways & Next Steps

We continue to shift from reactive intervention to proactive prevention.

C&I: ENGAGING LEARNING



ENGAGING LEARNING

- *COMMON EXPECTATIONS
- *WALKTHROUGH DATA
- *DAILY PRESENCE

LESS CLASS
AVOIDANCE

SUPPORT SERVICES: WELL-BEING



SUPPORT WELL-BEING

- *ADDRESS BARRIERS
- *MTSS & COUNSELING
- *DECREASE ANXIETY

STABILIZED
ATTENDANCE

TRANSPORTATION: RELIABLE ACCESS



TRANSPORTATION: RELIABLE

- *BUS ROUTE ALIGNMENT
- *FAMILY ALERTS
- *LESS TARDIES

FEWER
MISSED DAYS

OPERATIONS: SAFE & WELCOMING



OPERATIONS ACCISS

- *CAFETERIA EXPERIENCE
- *BREAKFAST ACCESS
- *CONSISTENT ARRIVAL

STUDENTS
ARRIVE EARLIER

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: TONE & SYSTEMS



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- *WEEKLY REVIEW CYCLES
- *STAFF FOLLOW-UP
- *VISIBLE PRIORITY

SYSTEMS MONITOR
PROGRESS

ACCOUNTABILITY (CISS): TRACKING & ACTION



ACCOUNTABILITY (CISS):

- *IMPACT MEETINGS
- *ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS
- *FOLLOW-UP CYCLES

PLANS LEAD TO
IMPROVEMENT

Systemwide Expectations (Non-Negotiables)

- All schools implement **early identification timelines**
- Required **biweekly attendance team meetings** with standard protocols
- Monthly **data monitoring and reporting on attendance interventions**
- Attendance embedded into **School Improvement Plans and MTSS cycles**

Targeted Support & Accountability

- Priority schools receive **weekly check-ins and direct support**
- Goal 2C team members **attend school-based attendance meetings**
- Ongoing **professional learning for school staff on attendance practices**
- Clear progress monitoring tied to **school-level outcomes**

Culture & Communication (Supporting, Not Leading)

- Districtwide **attendance campaigns and monthly focus areas**
- Family engagement strategies aligned to attendance expectations
- Sharing of **effective school practices and success stories**

System Coordination

- Greater Durham Attendance Summit (Summer 2026)
- Strengthened alignment across **schools, departments, and community partners**



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

