PRELIMINARY CHRONIC ABSENCE PATTERNS & TRENDS ANALYSIS

School closures and distance learning have created a set of never-encountered challenges for K-12 school district leaders. We're seeing the digital divide—which translates into a huge number of missing students—and facing real concerns over lost learning time and lack of student engagement. A study from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) projects that "students who lack steady instruction during the coronavirus school shutdown might retain only 70 percent of their annual reading gains as compared to a normal year." Projections for the so-called "COVID Slide" in math look even bleaker. Depending on grade level, researchers say, "students could lose between half and all of the achievement growth one would expect in a normal academic year." This same study said, "These setbacks would be particularly disastrous for fifth graders, who need to be tooling up for the more complex tasks that will come their way in the upper grades. In addition, this grim scenario will surely yield worse outcomes for students whose families are grappling with hunger, unemployment or homelessness." At-risk and marginalized students are most impacted at this time, heavily affected by the digital divide.

School Innovations & Achievement (SI&A), is driving critical positive change in student outcomes through our award-winning software and service solutions for K-12 school districts. Our flagship product, The Achievement Initiative, featuring Attention2Attendance (A2A), increases learning time, decreases dropouts and all of but eliminates the achievement gap in graduation rates. Our many innovative programs utilize our core competencies of data analytics, software development, organizational effectiveness, communication/messaging, along with attendance and compliance expertise.

SI&A was asked by the California Department of Education (CDE) to analyze preliminary chronic absence patterns and trends year to date for a sample of SI&A's California A2A district partners.

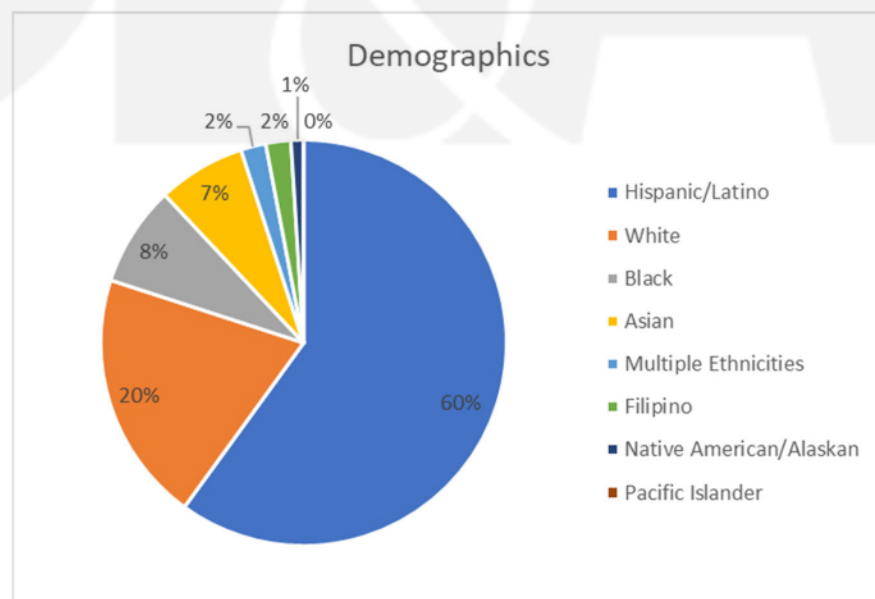**Question: What school districts are included in the SIA data collection?**

Answer: The following data presented in this report represents 33 California school districts:

- 11 Elementary School Districts
- 6 High School Districts
- 16 Unified School Districts

Question: To what extent do these districts represent rural, urban, small, medium, and large student group populations of color and diversity?

Answer: These districts represent 18 CA Counties: Fresno, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Merced, Monterey, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Sutter, Tulare, Ventura, and Yuba

Demographics are as follows:

Demographics pie chart:
- Hispanic/Latino: 60%
- White: 20%
- Black: 8%
- Asian: 7%
- Multiple Ethnicities: 2%
- Filipino: 2%
- Native American/Alaskan: 1%
- Pacific Islander: 0%

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Question: What does attendance/chronic absenteeism look like now that we are in DL again?

Answer: A2A Chronic Absentee Rates – Although the early data shows an increase in chronic rates for 30 out of the 33 districts, we know that A2A districts have better results than other districts. In fact, A2A district partners outperformed the state in chronic rates when looking at the dashboard chronic absenteeism rate change from 2017/18 to 2018/19.

It's also important to note that SI&A calculates chronic differently than the state: A2A includes all active

INCREASED

THE STATE
The state-wide chronic numbers
INCREASED by 8.11%
for K-12 students and
INCREASED by 11.96%
for K-8 students.

DECREASED

A2A PARTNERS
Our district partners' chronic numbers
DECREASED by 0.29%
for K-12 students and
DECREASED by 0.16%
for K-8 students.

students (the state includes active and inactive); A2A does not include suspensions (the state does); A2A includes all students regardless of how many days enrolled (the state only includes students that have been enrolled more than 30 days); A2A calculates on a day equivalent basis, adding partial days missed (the State calculates using only full day absences); A2A includes all students including PK/TK (the State includes TK and up); A2A calculates all grades (the state currently excludes high school grades and only calculates based on TK-8). Based on these differences, A2A chronic rates will typically calculate at a higher rate than the State.

Currently, Elementary School Districts appear to have the largest increase in chronic rates. We see an increase of 89.3% in their chronic absenteeism.
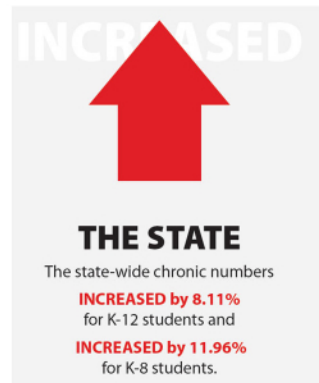
District Type	# of Districts	# of Students 2019	# of Students 2020	2019 Chronic Rate	2020 Chronic Rate	A2A Rate of Increase	*Est. Non-A2A Rate of Increase
ESD	11	70,750	76,488	9.3%	17.5%	89.3%	220.1%
HSD	6	75,308	73,987	15.8%	22.5%	42.5%	95.7%
USD	16	210,378	193,351	10.0%	15.8%	57.8%	141.9%

*Est. Non-A2A Rate of increase is based on historical trends of A2A districts out-performed non-A2A client districts (K-8 & K-12)

When breaking down the data by enrollment size, the largest increase in chronic rates is seen in districts with less than 3,500 enrollment followed by districts with 10,000 – 20,000 enrollment.

District Size	# of Districts	# of Students 2019	# of Students 2020	2019 Chronic Rate	2020 Chronic Rate	A2A Rate of Increase	*Est. Non-A2A Rate of Increase
< 3500	6	17,499	16,953	8.3%	14.5%	74.7%	175.7%
3500 - 5000	3	11,024	10,499	9.1%	13.3%	46.9%	139.6%
5000 - 10000	8	53,212	49,623	8.8%	14.5%	65.6%	161.5%
10000 - 20000	11	125,223	128,538	11.4%	19.1%	67.3%	140.8%
> 20000	5	149,478	138,213	12.1%	18.0%	49.4%	118.9%

*Est. Non-A2A Rate of increase is based on historical trends of A2A districts out-performed non-A2A client districts (K-8 & K-12)

Grade level analysis reveals the greatest increase in chronic absences in what we dub, the "transition years" grades 6-9 and 2nd – 4th grade where reading proficiency is critical.

Grade	# of Districts	# of Students 2019	# of Students 2020	2019 Chronic Rate	2020 Chronic Rate	A2A Rate of Increase	*Est. Non-A2A Rate of Increase
PK	13	2,625	1,841	9.9%	8.2%	-17.5%	104.4%
TK	18	2,695	2,021	13.9%	14.3%	2.4%	89.5%
KG	27	23,440	20,707	12.0%	14.3%	18.4%	119.0%
1	27	22,519	22,077	9.2%	15.0%	62.7%	194.1%
2	27	22,852	21,997	7.7%	13.7%	78.9%	236.8%
3	27	23,617	22,553	7.1%	12.5%	78.0%	249.9%
4	27	23,159	23,223	6.9%	12.3%	78.8%	255.7%
5	27	22,909	22,912	7.1%	12.6%	77.7%	248.5%
6	27	24,913	22,494	7.6%	16.4%	116.1%	275.4%
7	27	24,894	23,927	9.8%	20.9%	112.5%	235.6%
8	28	26,686	24,317	10.1%	20.9%	107.0%	226.9%
9	22	35,676	36,009	10.9%	22.2%	103.9%	181.0%
10	22	34,714	34,261	15.1%	21.6%	43.1%	98.8%
11	22	33,425	33,314	16.0%	20.3%	27.2%	79.8%
12	22	32,312	32,173	18.0%	19.6%	9.3%	56.1%

*Est. Non-A2A Rate of increase is based on historical trends of A2A districts out-performed non-A2A client districts (K-8 & K-12)

A2A Chronic Absence Rates by Subgroup: When looking at chronic absenteeism by race/ethnicity, black and brown students are more likely to be chronically absent. The impact of COVID-19 on school opening has served to widen the chasm. The largest increase in chronic absences rates are seen in the Black/African American subgroup. Year over year comparison shows an increase in chronic absenteeism of 80% among Black/African American students.

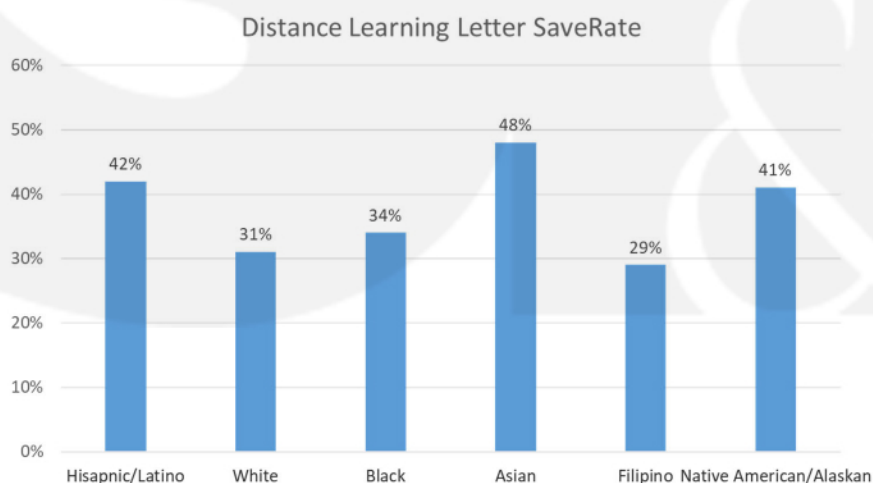| Race/Ethnicity	# of Districts	# of Students 2019	# of Students 2020	2019 Chronic Rate	2020 Chronic Rate	A2A Rate of Increase	*Est. Non-A2A Rate of Increase
Hispanic/Latino	32	207,894	197,076	11.5%	19.5%	69.0%	141.9%
White	32	74,159	67,070	9.9%	11.2%	13.3%	98.1%
Black	32	28,655	25,927	16.2%	29.2%	80.1%	131.9%
Asian	32	21,557	21,615	5.2%	6.9%	32.3%	192.7%
Multiple Ethnicities	27	7,983	7,427	11.0%	16.0%	45.2%	121.3%
Filipino	31	5,352	5,177	5.9%	6.1%	4.7%	147.9%
Native American/Alaskan	31	1,949	1,903	15.2%	24.3%	59.3%	114.4%
Pacific Islander	29	1,650	1,513	19%	26%	40.7%	85.4%

*Est. Non-A2A Rate of increase is based on historical trends of A2A districts out-performed non-A2A client districts (K-8 & K-12)

Question: What current attendance interventions are being tracked by these school districts?

Answer: To connect and communicate with families, A2A partners can track both attendance and participation. We use multiple interventions which include a series of positive and mail-based communications, translated in the home language, offering district and community services and resources to support families during distance learning and limited classroom-based instruction. In addition, our district partners can track and measure the effectiveness of their outreach efforts including meetings and home visits.

Question: What interventions are used for students who were lost back in March?

Answer: The unprecedented statewide closures created an immediate vacuum in school-to-home communication. Traditional attendance outreach tactics such as truancy letters and SARB meetings stopped. In April, *Missing Student* letters were offered to SI&A partner districts. For districts that opted-in, those communications were highly effective. Once a family received the intervention letter, 40% of them contacted their school. We call this metric our SaveRate.

Distance Learning Letter SaveRate

Race/Ethnicity	SaveRate
Hisapnic/Latino	42%
White	31%
Black	34%
Asian	48%
Filipino	29%
Native American/Alaskan	41%

We believe that our clients will improve on last year's 40% SaveRate. This year our partners can opt for us to send a series of letters which we expect will result in a SaveRate closer to our 2018-19 average of 56%.

Question: What interventions appear promising, if any, based on this early data?

Answer: Based on the early indicators, there are a number of strategies that appear to be working (and based on our SaveRate when schools closed in March, we know our best practices gets positive results).
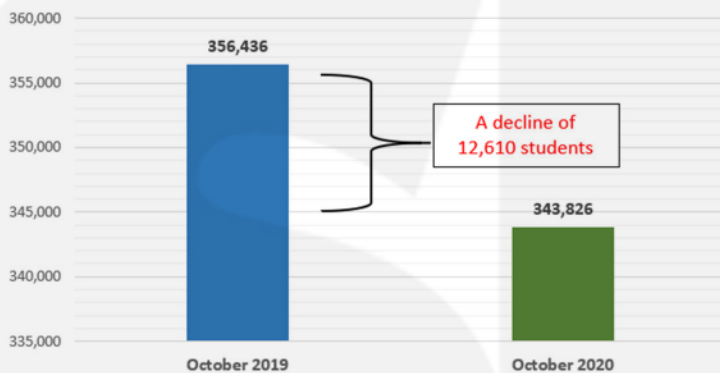
1. Districts need to have uniform and consistent processes for tracking participation, taking attendance daily and utilizing the data to determine the appropriate re-engagement strategies.
2. Home communications need to be sensitive to the challenges families are facing in the distance learning environment. If districts are not deploying attendance interventions, like mail-based communications and SART/SARB, they should resume.
3. Data informs action, so if districts have not created reason codes for distance learning absences, they should in order to understand why students are missing, how many students are affected by the issues, who is affected, and to match them to the appropriate resources and re-engagement strategies.

Additionally, for districts sending Distance Learning letters, our early A2A SaveRate results are encouraging. For unexcused absences in the distance learning environment we are seeing a 51.5% uptick in participation after a family receives a communication.

Other relevant data statistics:

Public School Enrollment: While not requested by the CDE, SI&A examined active student enrollment counts for the districts sampled year over year. For the 33 districts, total school enrollment is down nearly 3.5% or 12,610 students in October, 2020 compared to this time in 2019.

Promising Practices for All

Based on the early indicators, there are a number of strategies that appear to be working. First and foremost are for districts to have uniform and consistent processes for tracking participation and taking attendance daily. The second is to update school-to-home communications to be sensitive to the challenges families are facing in the distance learning environment. If districts are not deploying attendance interventions, like mail-based communications and SART/SARB to identify and overcome barriers, they should. If districts have not created reason codes for distance learning absences, they should do so in order to understand why students are missing, how many students are affected by the issue(s), who is affected, and to match them to the appropriate resources. Additionally, for A2A districts sending Distance Learning letters, the early SaveRate results are encouraging. For unexcused absences in the distance learning environment we are seeing a 51.5% uptick in participation after a family receives a Distance Learning letter.

Letter Type	At Risk	Saved	SaveRate
Unexcused Distance Learning Letter	21,823	11,234	51.5%
Excused Distance Learning Letter	845	795	94.1%

It is School Innovations & Achievement's pleasure to support SSPI Thurmond and the CDE in creating a culture of achievement starting with creating a culture of showing up. We are happy to answer questions or participate in any discussions that this brief generates.