



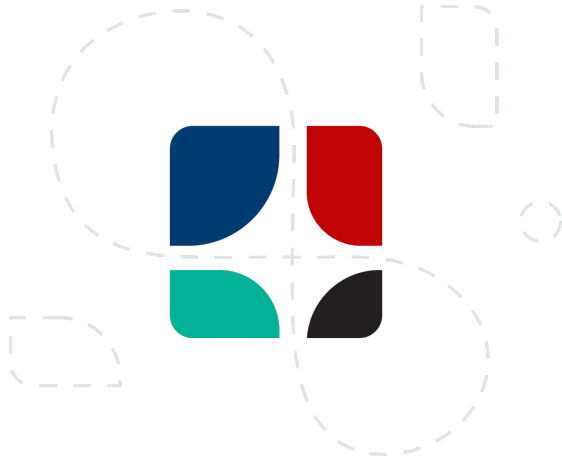
Improving Attendance in the ICE Era

Welcome! As people are joining, please write in the chat:

1. Where do you work?
2. What's one thing that's giving you hope? (broad or personal)

Our Mission

A thriving “town square” for evidence creation and use



The **Annenberg EdExchange** aims to create a collaborative ecosystem for school improvement where researchers, policymakers, and education leaders work together to better define needs, generate evidence, and make meaning across a common body of knowledge.

EdExchange **Initiatives**



A curated, searchable library of validated **educational measurement tools** — designed to help **researchers, evaluators, and practitioners** find instruments they can trust and use in their work.



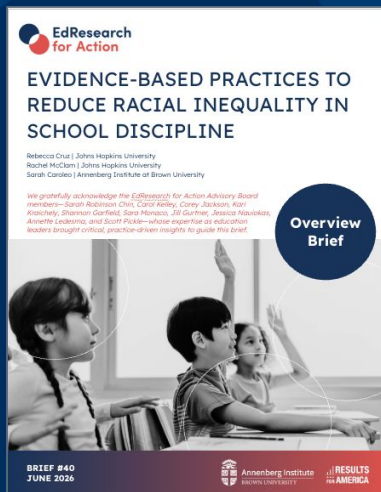
A collection of **briefs that synthesize the research** on important education decisions and translate it into clear guidance for **school and district leaders**.



A platform that gives **policy makers and researchers early, open access to high-quality education research** across disciplines and institutions — with a focus on studies with strong policy implications.

Resources Coming Soon

Tomorrow, June 18:
School Discipline Brief



Early July: Elementary Science
Assessment Collection



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<https://tinyurl.com/7tjx9nbz>



Policy & Practice Briefs



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EdWorkingPapers Policy and Practice Series

Lifting Up Attendance in Rural Districts: A Multi-Site Trial of a Personalized Messaging Campaign

Elise Swanson, Sattiva Thompson, Jennifer Ash, Hayley Dufresne, Thomas J. Kane, Douglas O. Staiger, and Lisa Sambonmiti

As rural districts continue to struggle with high rates of chronic absenteeism, this study finds that personalized caregiver messages can be a low-cost and effective tool to improve attendance.


In a large randomized trial across K-12 students in 47 rural districts in 16 states, sending regular, personalized messages to caregivers about their child's attendance reduced student absences by 4.5% when delivered as intended, equivalent to roughly half a day of school over the year. The intervention cost about \$4 per student and was more effective when messages were sent frequently.

THE INTERVENTION

The "LIFT Up Attendance" program was designed based on evidence that personalized, goal-oriented nudges can influence behavior, especially when caregivers may not be aware of attendance issues. Core features of the intervention included:

- **Personalization:** Each message included the student's name, the number of absences in the past 4-6 weeks, and a concrete attendance goal for the next month.
- **Positive Tone:** Messages were framed to be supportive and encouraging, aiming to prompt caregiver engagement without assigning blame.
- **Repetition:** Messages were sent every 4 to 6 weeks, resulting in up to six messages per year during the 2022-23 school year (fewer in the pilot year, 2022-23).
- **Delivery Method:** Schools used existing communication systems to send messages directly to caregivers, reducing the need for new infrastructure or staffing.

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Puzzling Over Declining Academic Achievement

James Wyckoff

Student Achievement Has Been Declining for More Than a Decade, and COVID Isn't the Only Culprit

For years, educators and policymakers have pointed to the pandemic as the primary driver of falling test scores and widening achievement gaps. But a new national analysis reveals a more troubling reality: America's academic decline began long before COVID-19.


Between 2009 and 2019, well before remote learning and school closures, student achievement in both reading and math had already started slipping after two decades of steady progress. These declines were widespread, affecting students across grades, subjects, and income levels. While pandemic disruptions deepened the losses, they were not the root cause.

Drawing on more than thirty years of national and state data, this new study offers one of the most comprehensive looks yet at when, where, and why U.S. achievement began to falter. It finds that slowing gains in the late 2000s coincided with major shifts in education policy, school funding, and student well-being. The findings challenge the idea that recovery efforts alone will fix the problem. Instead, they suggest that addressing America's learning crisis requires rethinking the systems and policies that have quietly eroded academic progress for more than a decade.

STUDY AND METHODS

This study analyzes national and state-level trends in 4th- and 8th-grade math and reading performance over more than three decades, with a focus on identifying when and how academic progress began to slow before the pandemic. The study takes a descriptive and comparative approach, examining how declines align with changes in education policies, economic conditions, and student demographics. The researcher reviews evidence on five major potential contributors: reduced school accountability, post-Great Recession funding cuts, Common Core implementation, rising smartphone

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School Enrollment Shifts Five Years After the Pandemic

Abigail Francis and Joshua Goodman

Five years after the pandemic began, families aren't just bouncing back, they're making different choices. In Massachusetts and across the country, enrollment in public schools remains below pre-pandemic trends, with many families opting for private and homeschooling instead. While some communities have returned to public schools, others, especially higher-income and White and Asian families, have continued to leave. The biggest shift is a surprising and persistent drop in enrollment in middle school grades.

These patterns suggest the pandemic didn't just disrupt schooling; it may have reshaped what families want and expect from public education.

STUDY AND METHODS

This study examines how K-12 enrollment in Massachusetts evolved in the five years following the onset of COVID-19. To assess whether observed changes in enrollment patterns reflect temporary disruptions or long-term shifts, the authors used data from before the pandemic (2016-2019) to create a model that estimated expected enrollment through fall 2024. They then compared these predictions to the actual enrollment numbers, which enabled them to isolate the impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath on enrollment in public, private, and homeschool settings, as well as the effects on different student groups and grade levels.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 **There has been a sustained shift away from public schools and towards private schools and homeschooling.** By Fall 2024, local public school enrollment was down 2% (16,600 students) compared to pre-pandemic trends, while private school enrollment rose 14% and homeschooling increased by 45%. These shifts suggest lasting changes in parental

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Vanderbilt University*

Today's
Panelists

Immigration Enforcement Actions and Empty Desks: Persistent and Acute Attendance Effects

Andrew Camp, Jonathon Acosta,
Janelle Haire, Edom Tesfa

April 2026

What are schools doing to improve attendance? Evidence from Michigan and Georgia

Jeremy Singer, Sarah Winchell
Lenhoff, Jerome Graham, Richard
O. Welsh

Jan 2026

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EdWorkingPapers Webinar Series

Immigration Enforcement & Student Attendance

Andrew M. Camp
Brown University

Jonathan Acosta
Brown University

Edom Tesfa
Brown University

Janelle Haire
Independent Researcher

Existing research documents the negative effects of immigration policy on students

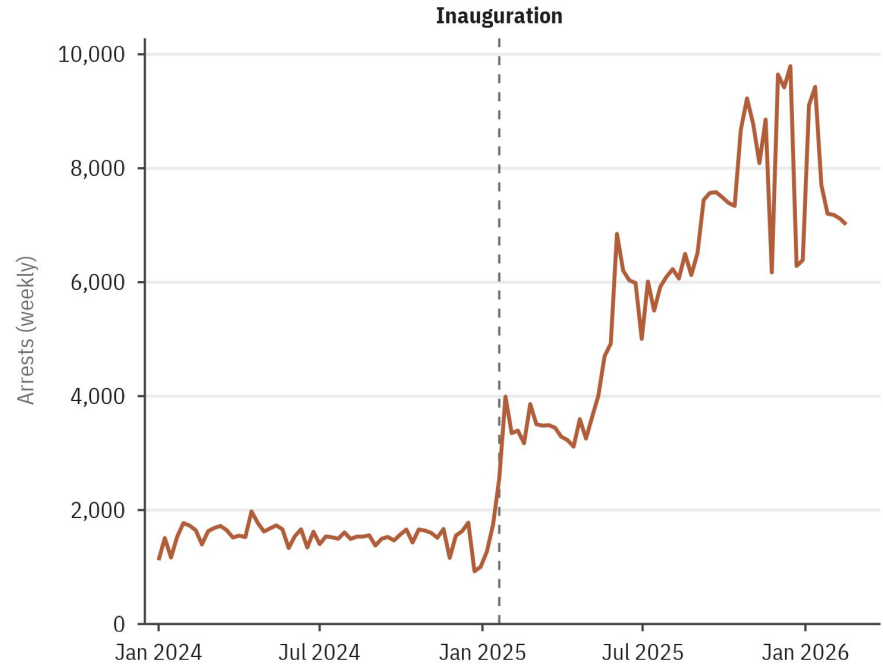
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 - e.g., Heinrich et al., (2022) compares communities with/without raids
 - ↑ absences, ↑ exclusionary discipline, and ↑ in mental health issues

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- Studies of enforcement document long-term effects
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 - ↑ absences, ↑ exclusionary discipline, and ↑ in mental health issues
- Recent research has focused largely on attendance
 - Dee finds a 22% increase in absences in five CA districts
 - Slungaard Mumma finds 0.5-2pp increase in absences for CT and RI
 - Filgio & Özek find moderate negative effects on achievement

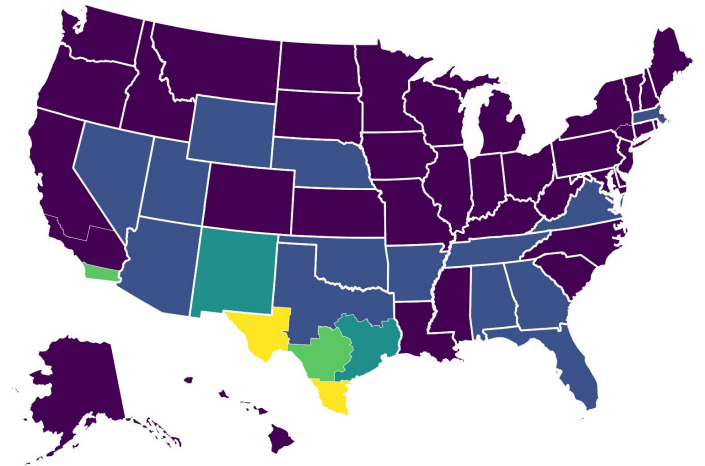
There were large changes to federal immigration policy in January 2025

- Day-one executive orders largely matched campaign promises
- Significant increases in funding
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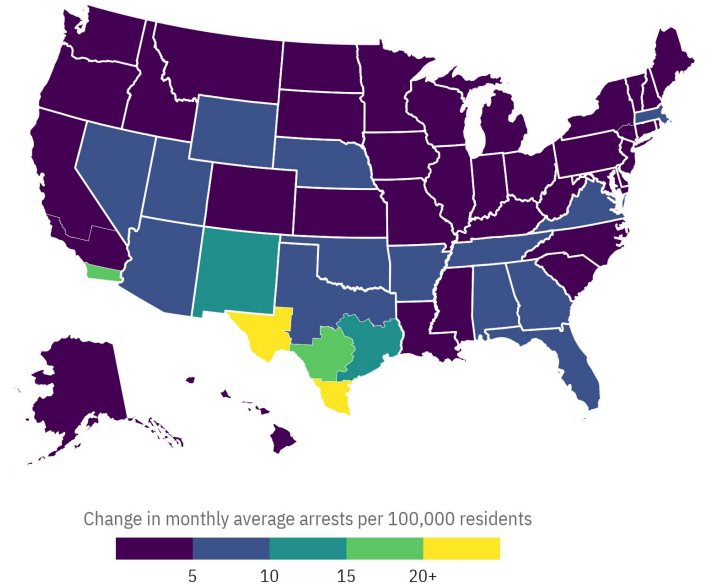


Change in monthly average arrests per 100,000 residents



There were large changes to federal immigration policy in January 2025

- Day-one executive orders largely matched campaign promises
- Significant increases in funding
- Large increase in arrests
- 4.4x more arrests in first year
- ↑ deportations of individuals with no criminal record



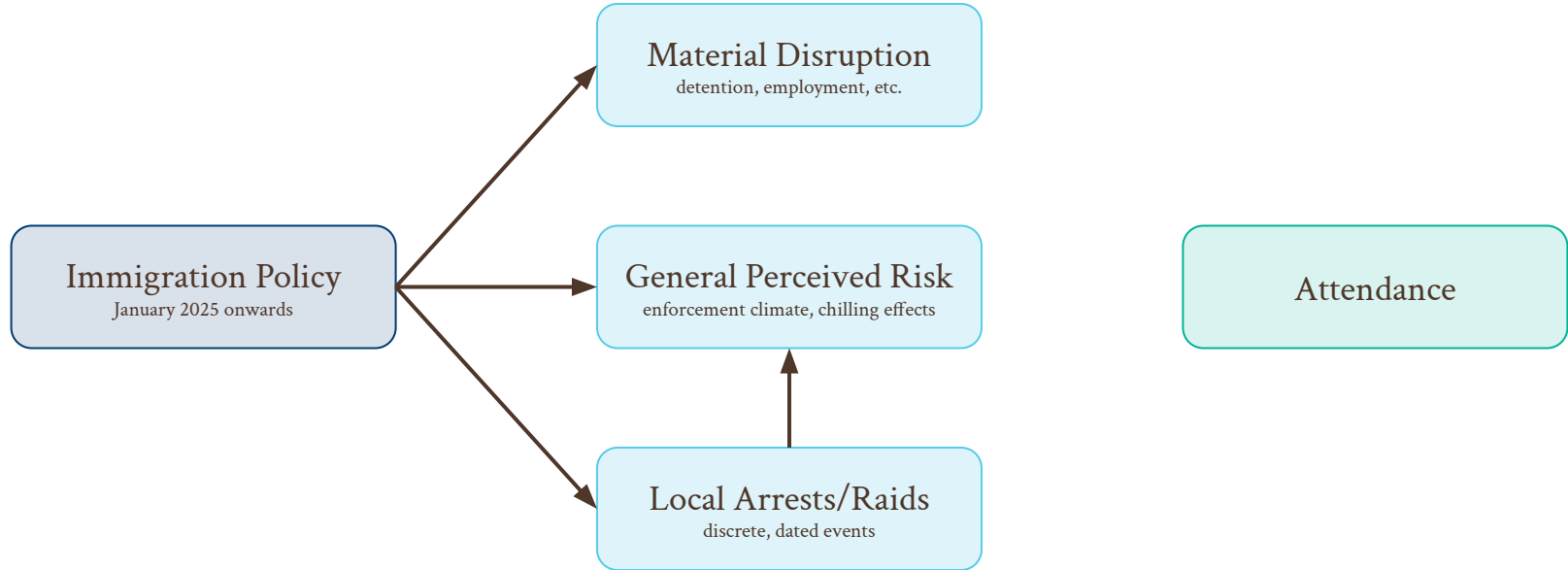
Immigration policy may affect student attendance through several pathways

Immigration Policy

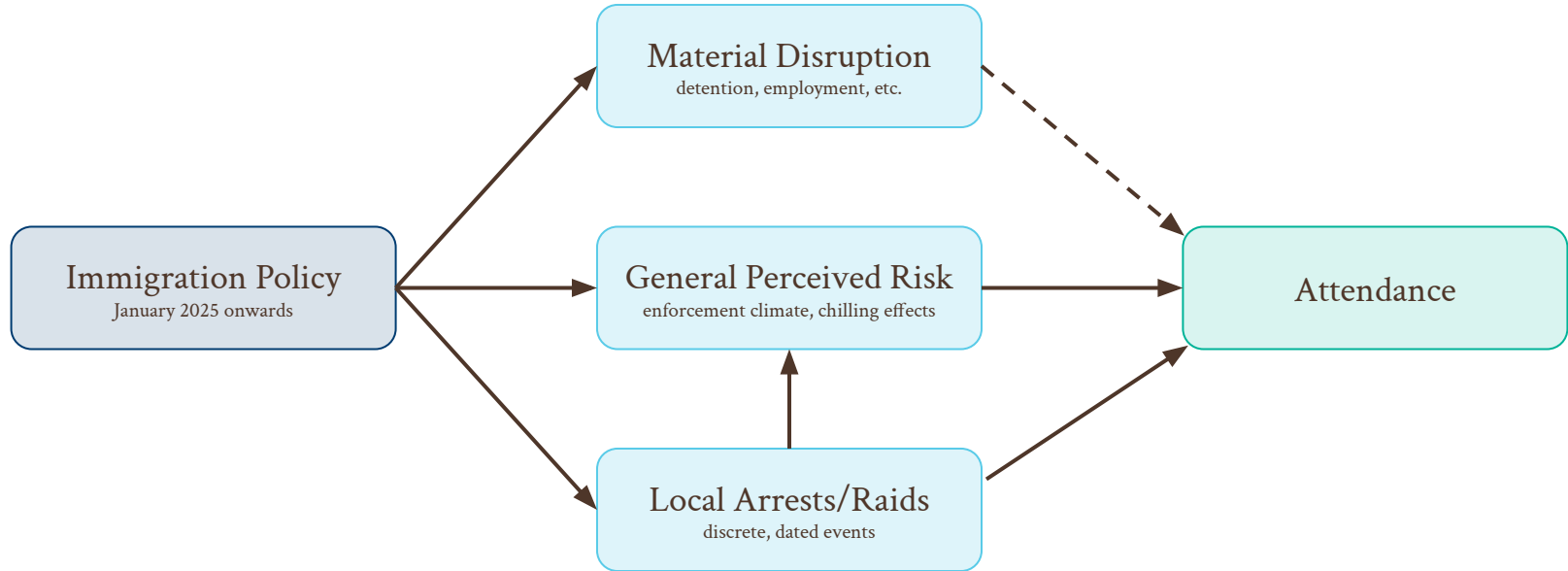
January 2025 onwards

Attendance

Immigration policy may affect student attendance through several pathways



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We use student-by-day attendance data from a post-industrial Northeastern city

- Liberty City*
 - Large foreign-born population
 - Majority Hispanic/Latino
 - Welcoming context of reception

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- Community sourced incidents
- Arrest records obtained via FOIA

Quantifying the causal effect of immigration policy is challenging

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- Citizenship status is not directly observed in the data

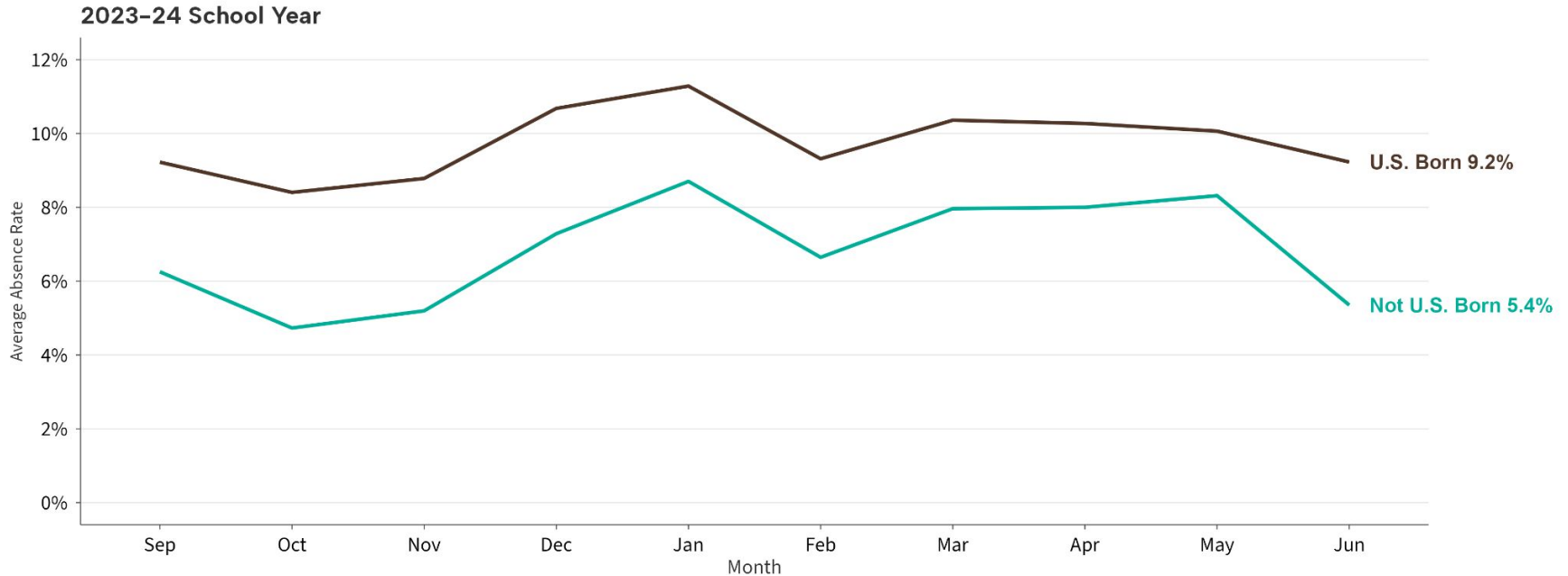
We consider multiple proxies for potentially vulnerable students

- Multilingual learner status
- Home language
- Recent immigrant

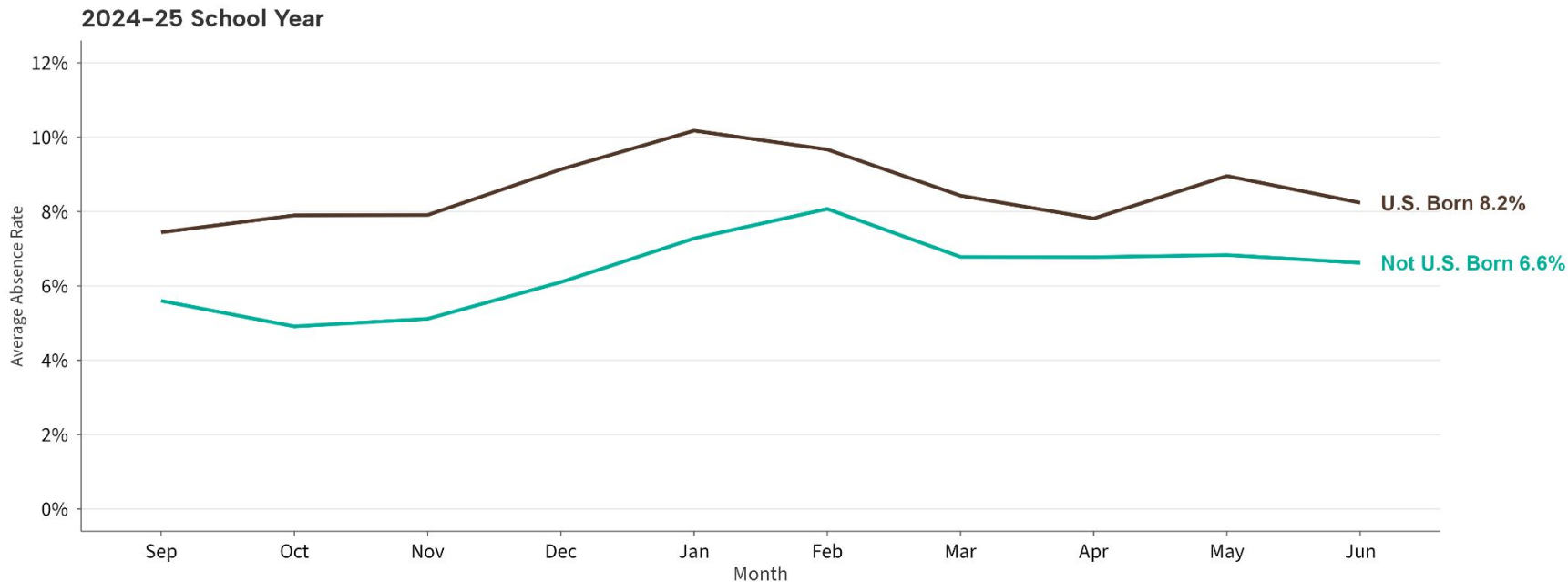
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- Multilingual learner status
- Home language
- Recent immigrant
- **Birth location**

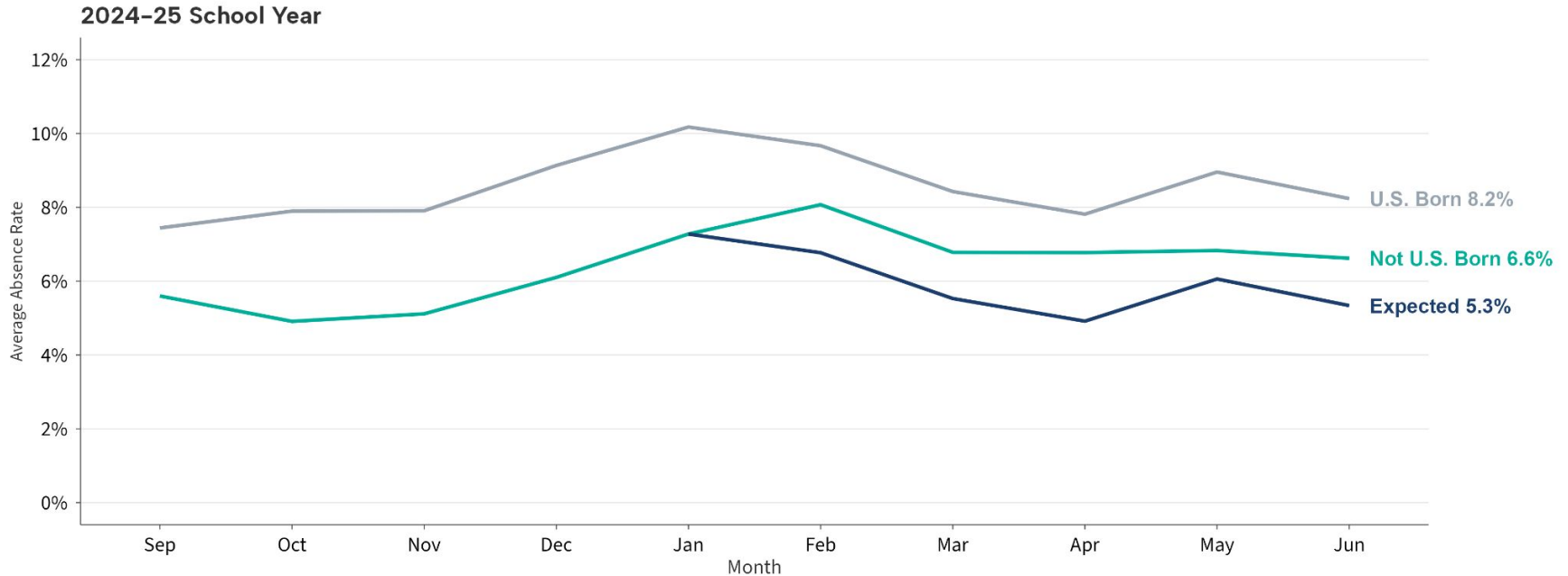
Our identification strategy uses persistent differences between student groups



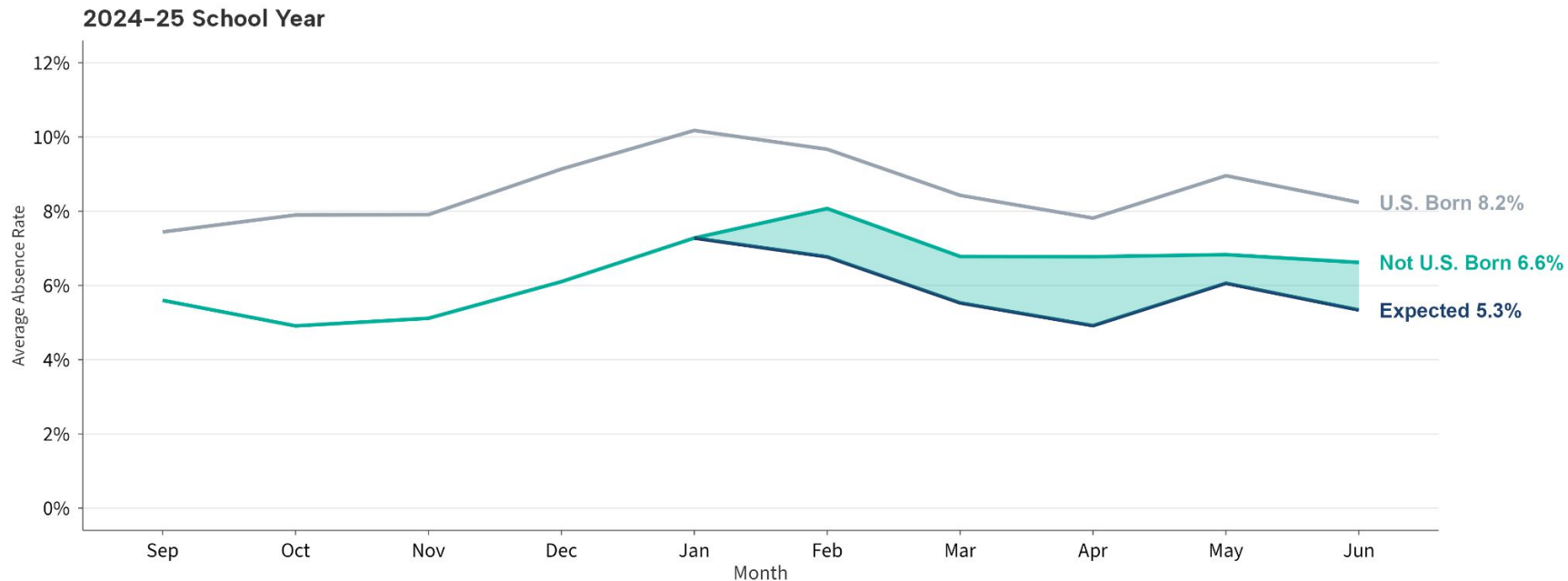
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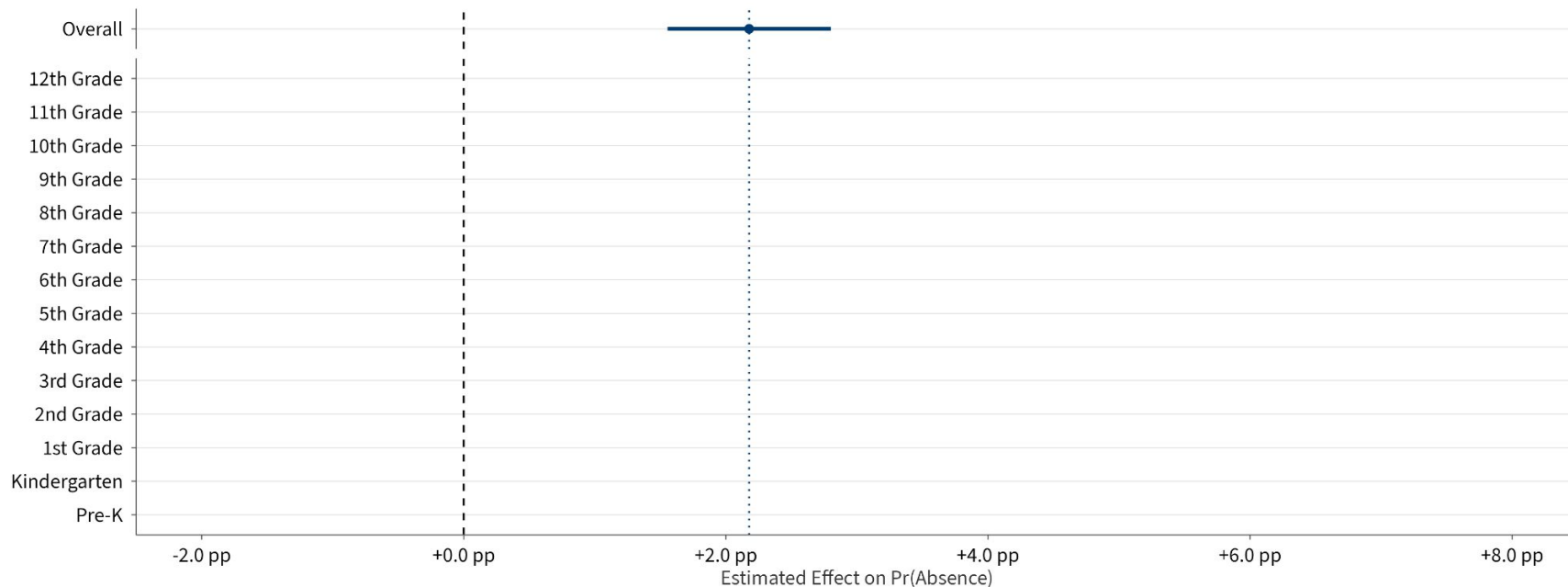
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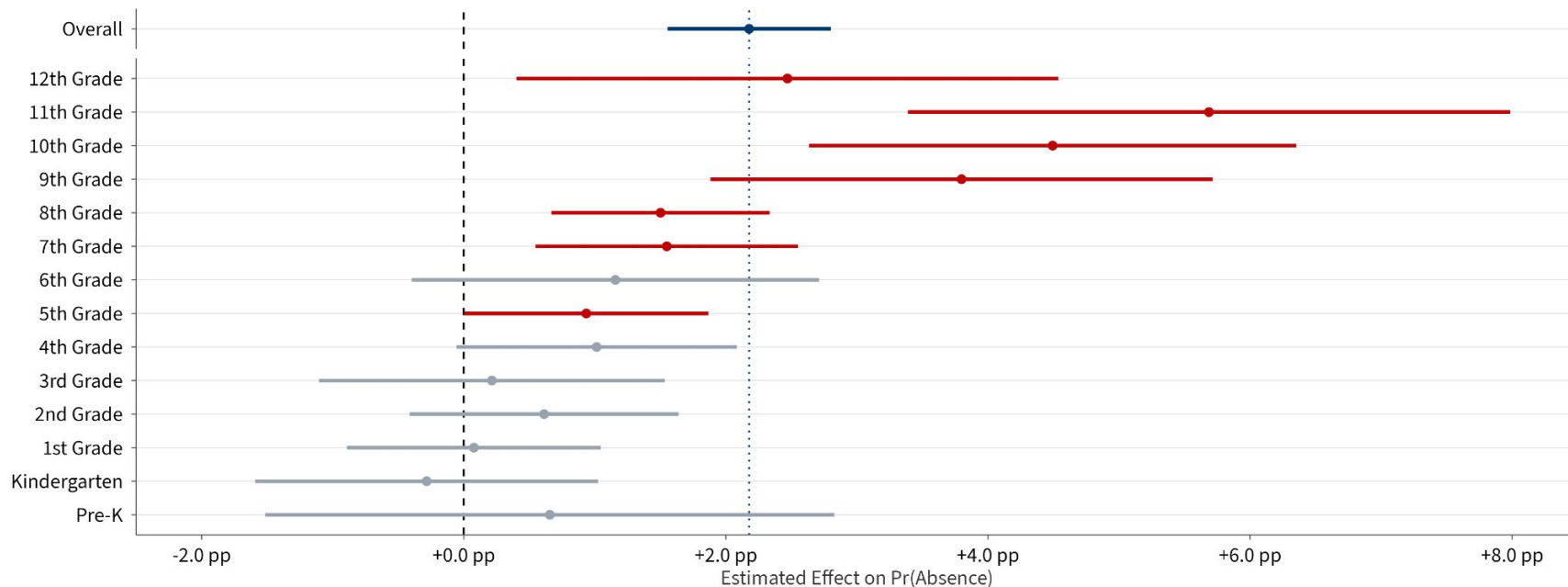
Our identification strategy uses persistent differences between student groups



Students born outside the U.S. were **~2 pp more likely to be absent following Jan. 2025**



Effects on student absences were **larger** in **higher grades** than lower grades



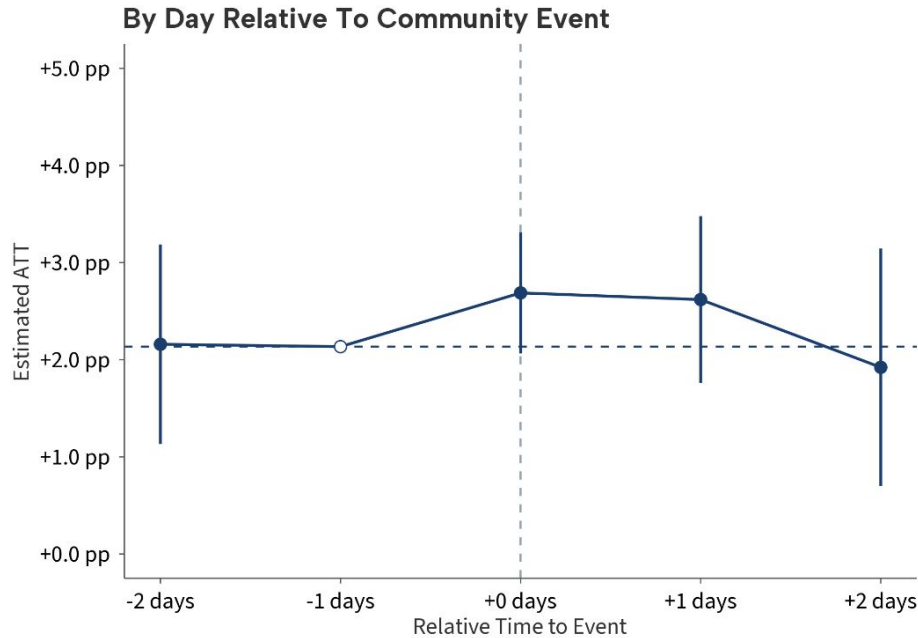
The overall estimate tells us little about how students respond to local events

- Consider a scenario with 100 treated days:
- A effect of +5pp may be explained by:
 - An additional 5% of vulnerable students absent each day
 - Half of vulnerable students absent on 10 days

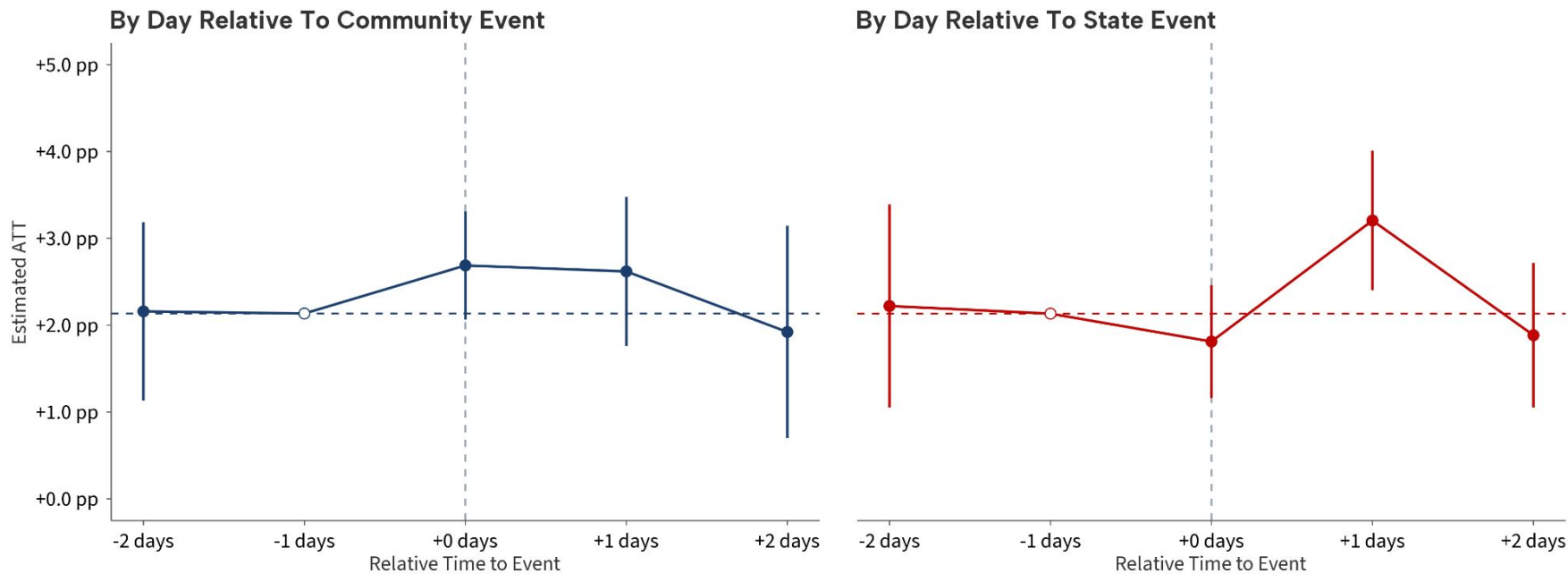
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- Consider a scenario with 100 treated days:
- A effect of +5pp may be explained by:
 - An additional 5% of vulnerable students absent each day
 - Half of vulnerable students absent on 10 days
- We allow effects to vary around ICE actions

Student absences increase in response to local immigration enforcement actions



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There is still a lot we do not know about how immigration policy affects students

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- We need more studies looking at enrollment and downstream outcomes
- Effects on student enrollments may be large

Immigration enforcement increased absences for students born outside the U.S.

- Results are robust to choice of treatment start date
- Effects not explained by increase dis-enrollments
- Estimates using birthplace are 30-50% larger than other proxies
- Potential spillovers on U.S.-born students

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**Even in a welcoming community,
immigration policy kept students out of school.**



EdWorkingPapers Webinar Series

What are schools doing to improve attendance?

Evidence from Michigan and Georgia

Jeremy Singer

University of Michigan–Flint

**Sarah Winchell
Lenhoff**

Wayne State University

Jerome Graham

Michigan State University

Richard O. Welsh

Vanderbilt University

Absenteeism is a top concern — yet what schools actually do about it is unclear.

~40%

of district leaders now rank attendance among their top challenges.

The trend

Since the pandemic, chronic absenteeism — missing 10% or more of school days — has surged and stayed stubbornly high.

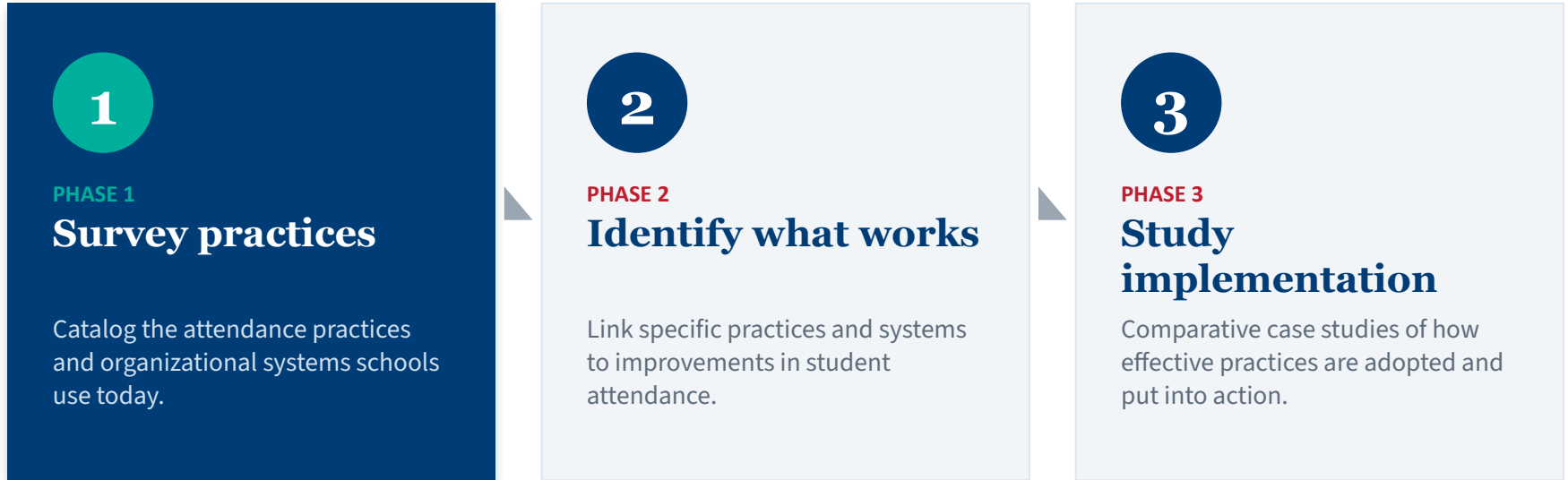
The stakes

Students who miss too much school are less likely to read on grade level, graduate, or enroll in college.

The gap

Most research evaluates one program in one district. We've lacked a systematic look at what schools have actually adopted — and whether the most-used strategies are the ones research supports.

Our study moves from cataloging practices to testing what actually improves attendance.



This talk: first results from the Phase 1 survey of school leaders.

A 2024–25 survey lets us compare attendance practices across and within two states.

1,524

K-12 principals surveyed at the end of 2024-25

1,143 Michigan · 376 Georgia

29

attendance practices each principal could report

plus 6 organizational systems

2

states chosen as a deliberate contrast

similar size, different policy context

Why this pair?

Michigan and Georgia are similar in population size but differ in geography, demographics, system structure, and policy. Georgia's Senate Bill 123 (2025) requires attendance review teams; Michigan has invested heavily in student mental health.

Principals' practices sort into three categories:



Changing behavior

Letters home, phone & automated calls, text reminders, attendance incentives, court referrals.

Research impact: modest



Removing barriers to attendance

Transportation, housing & social-service referrals, mental-health support, family engagement, home visits.

Research impact: high, but resource-intensive

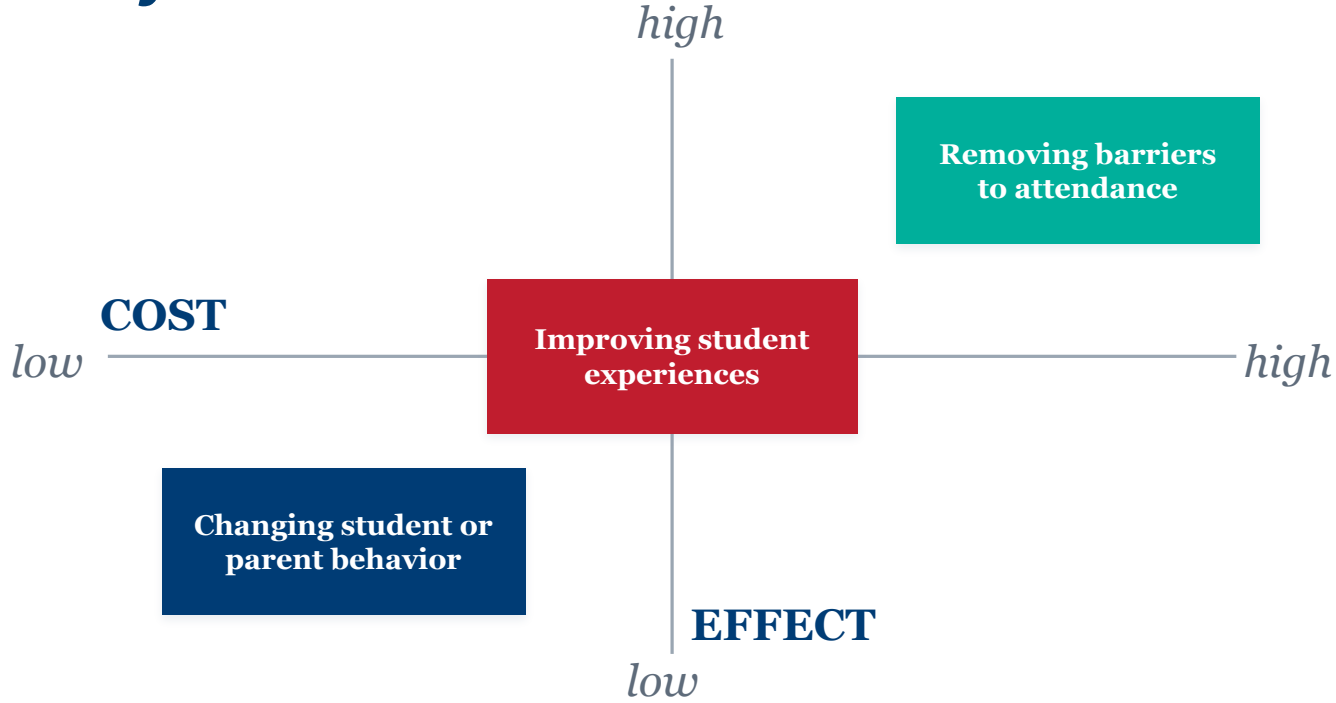


Improving student experience

Belonging & climate, student-teacher relationships, social-emotional learning, mentoring, restorative practices.

Research impact: well-supported, hard to measure

We group attendance practices by their cost and their likely effect:



A note on the framework
Positions reflect a close review of existing research on attendance interventions — weighing cost, effectiveness, and implementation realities. It is not a formal cost–benefit analysis.

Schools in both states use similar practices, with a few differences tied to state policy.

Similar overall

Michigan and Georgia schools rely on a broadly similar mix and amount of attendance practices.

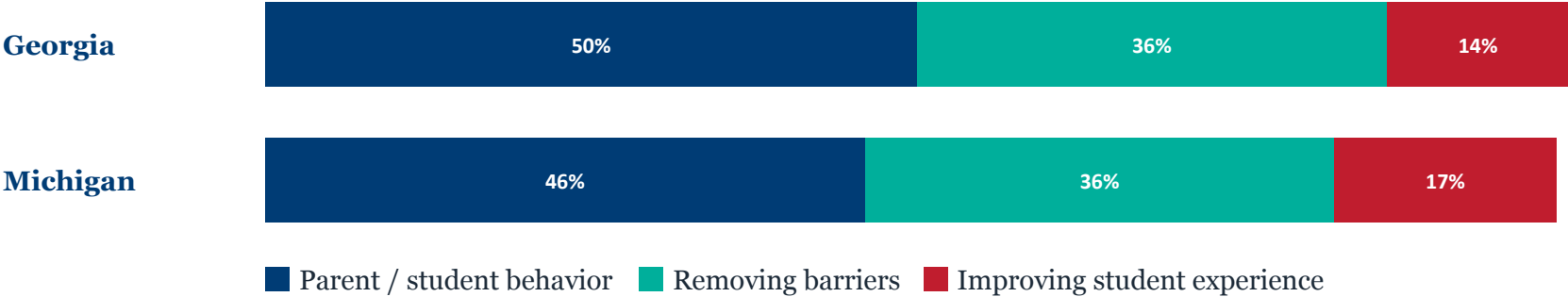
A few key differences between states

The differences that do appear line up with each state's distinct attendance policy context.

Little local variation

Within each state, practices look much the same across different school and community contexts.

Schools use about a dozen practices — and in nearly the same mix in both states.

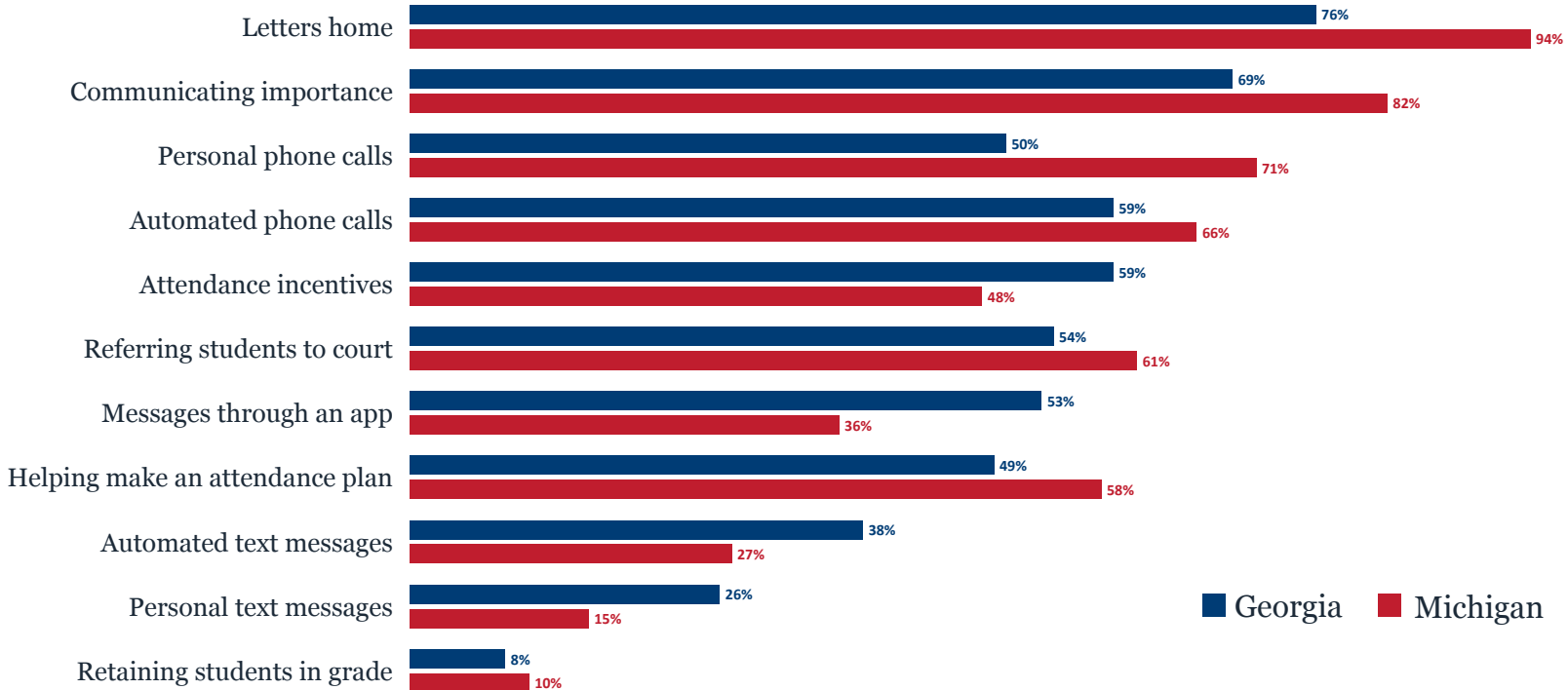


11.5 Georgia practices used, on average

12.6 Michigan practices used, on average

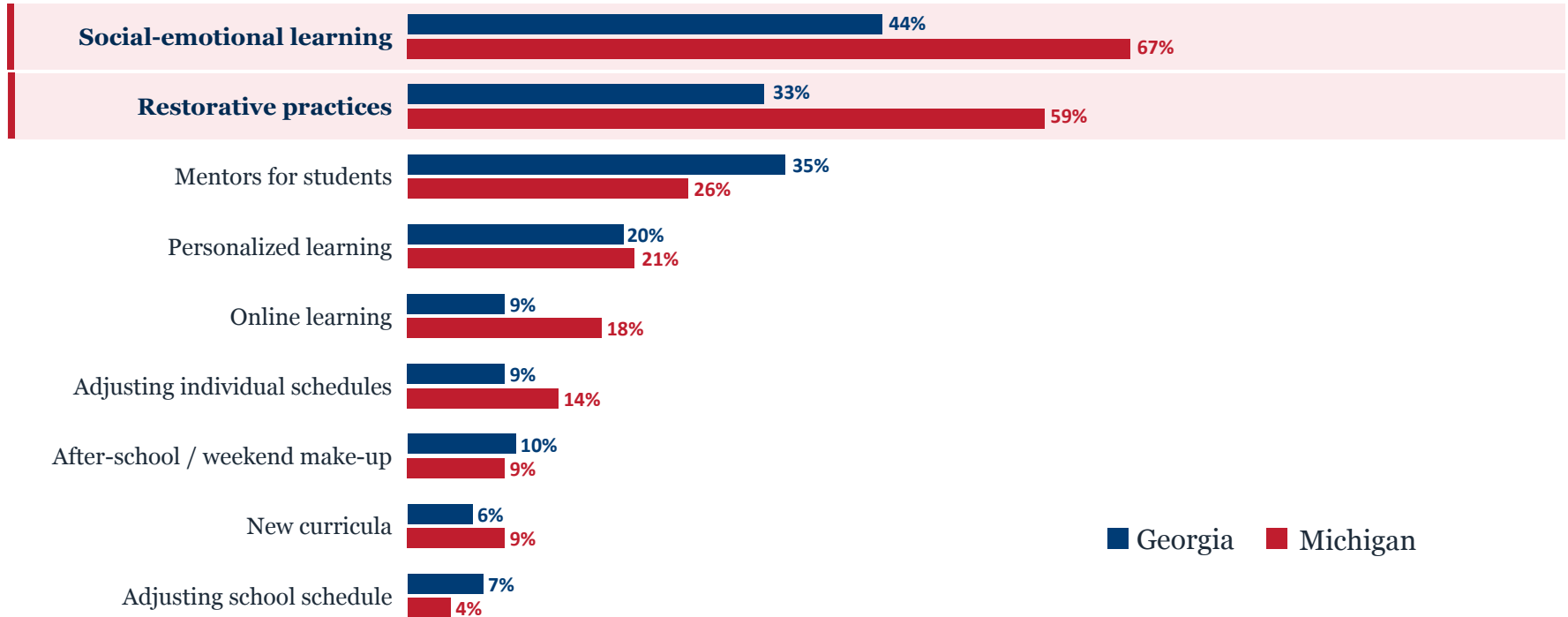
Nearly every school uses at least one practice in each category — the composition barely shifts across the two states.

Communicating with families is the most common approach in both states.

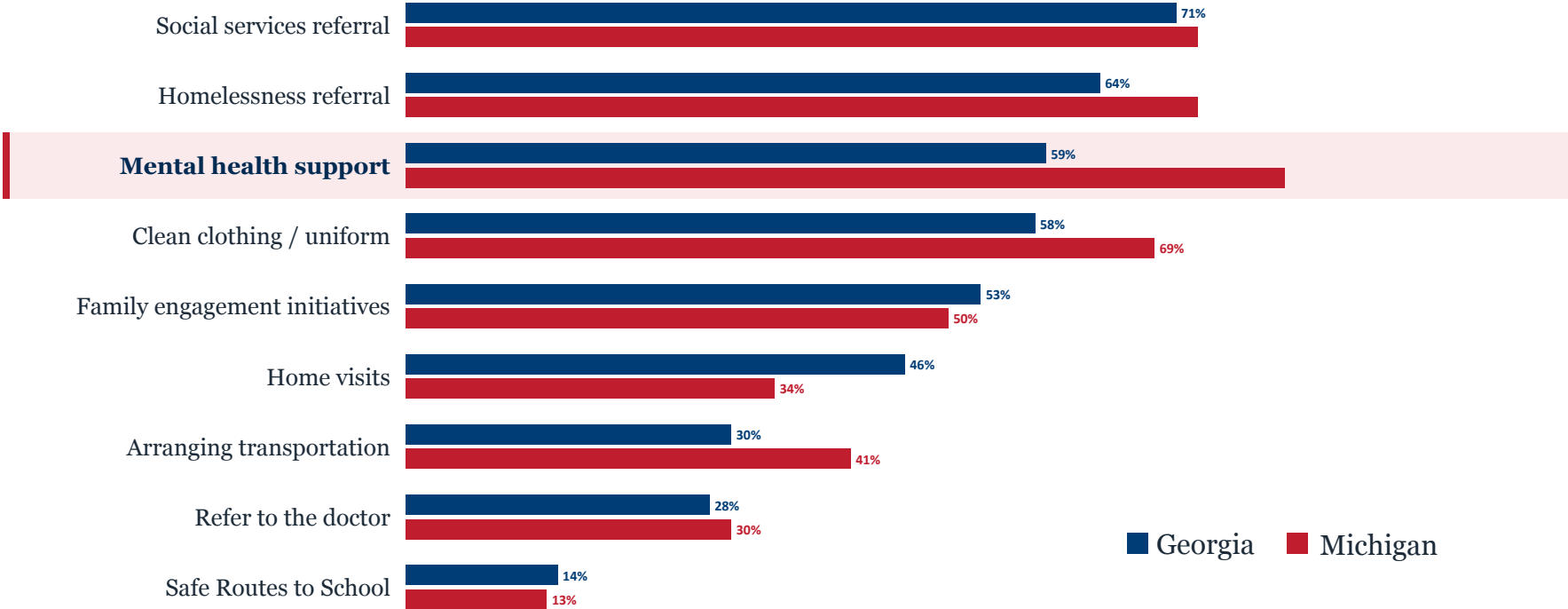


■ Georgia ■ Michigan

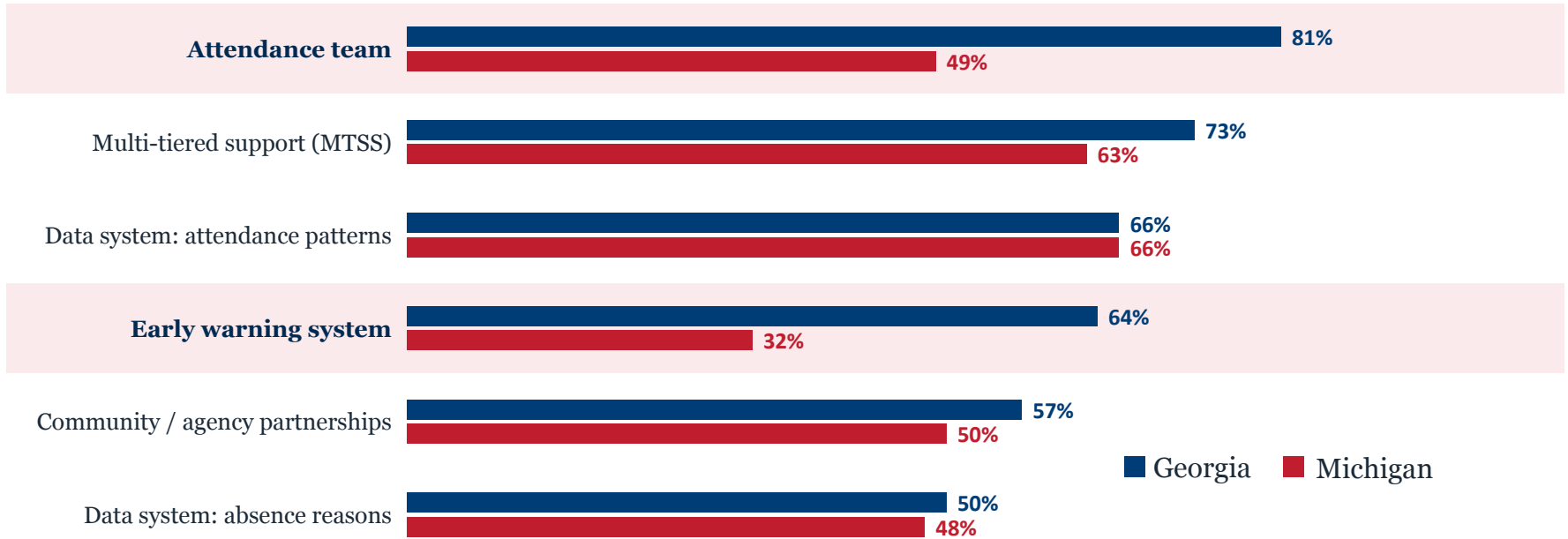
Michigan leans more on social-emotional learning and restorative practices.



Michigan schools are far more likely to offer mental health support.

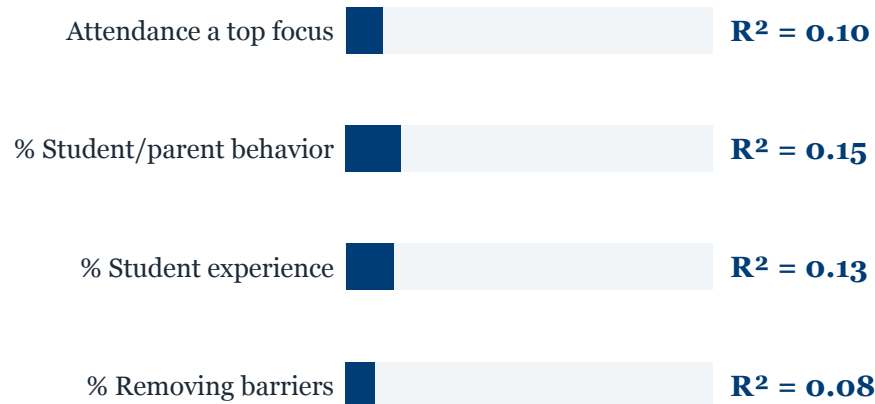


Georgia schools more often build formal systems to manage attendance.



School and community characteristics barely predict which practices schools adopt.

How much of the variation is explained?



Models explain only 8–15% of why schools differ — most variation has nothing to do with measured school traits.

The few signals that do matter

- 1 Prior chronic absenteeism**
Higher prior absenteeism → attendance more likely to be a top focus.
- 2 High schools**
More likely to prioritize attendance and use student-experience practices.
- 3 State context**
Michigan and Georgia differ systematically — state matters more than local traits.

State policy nudges practice, but within a state schools look remarkably alike.

Communication leads

Practices that target parent and student behavior — especially communication — are by far the most common.

Policy shapes practice

Differences between Michigan and Georgia track state policy, so policymakers can shift practice to some degree.

Striking uniformity

Little within-state variation suggests isomorphism — schools responding to shared pressure around absenteeism.

Stay tuned — Phases 2 and 3 will test which of these practices actually move attendance.

Discussion

Questions from
Thomas S. Dee,
Stanford University



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Audience Q&A

Moderated by
Thomas S. Dee,
Stanford University



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