



2025 COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR WELLNESS & LEARNING

Wednesday, July 23 | 2:00-3:15 p.m.

Presenters:

Caitlin Kinnane, Iroquois Community School Director

Shanna Potter, Harding Community School Director

Courtney Tirak, Pfeiffer-Burleigh Community School Director





Caitlin Kinnane

**Community School Director
Iroquois Elementary**



Shanna Potter

**Community School Director
Harding Elementary**



Courtney Tirak

**Community School Director
Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary**

Pillar 1:

Positive Environment for Wellness and Learning

- Improved school attendance
- Increased access to health and wellness supports
- Improved school culture



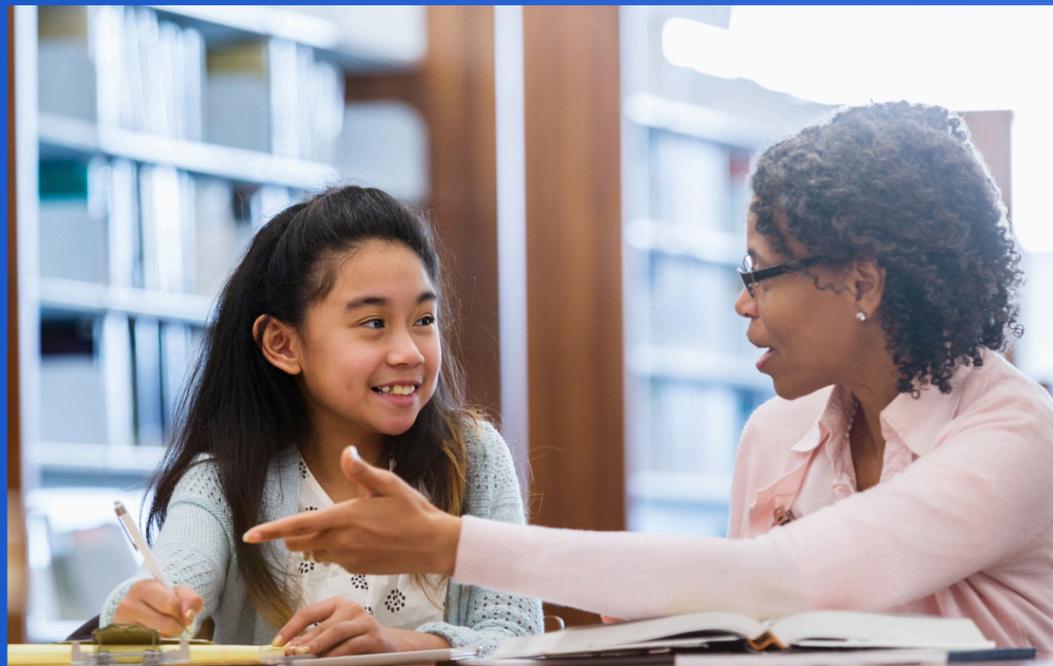
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A positive school climate improves academic achievement and reduces the negative effects of poverty on achievement.

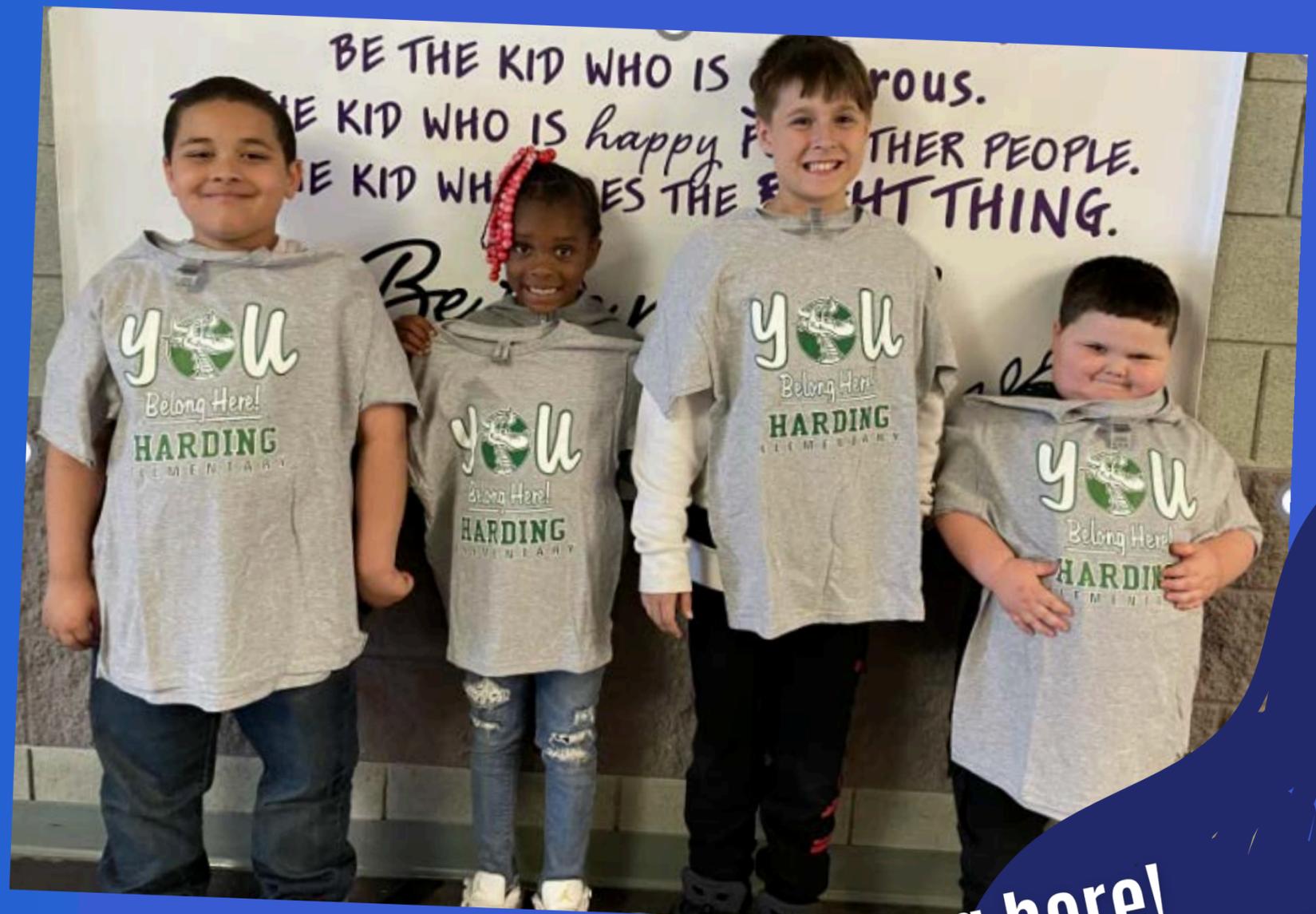
• - Learning Policy Institute

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Celebrating Attendance Wins!



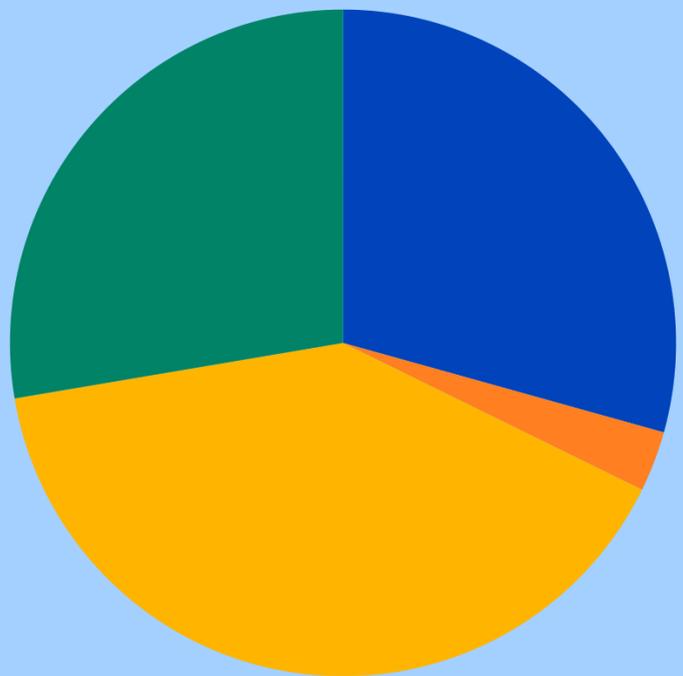
You belong here!
On time, all day, every day



Harding Elementary

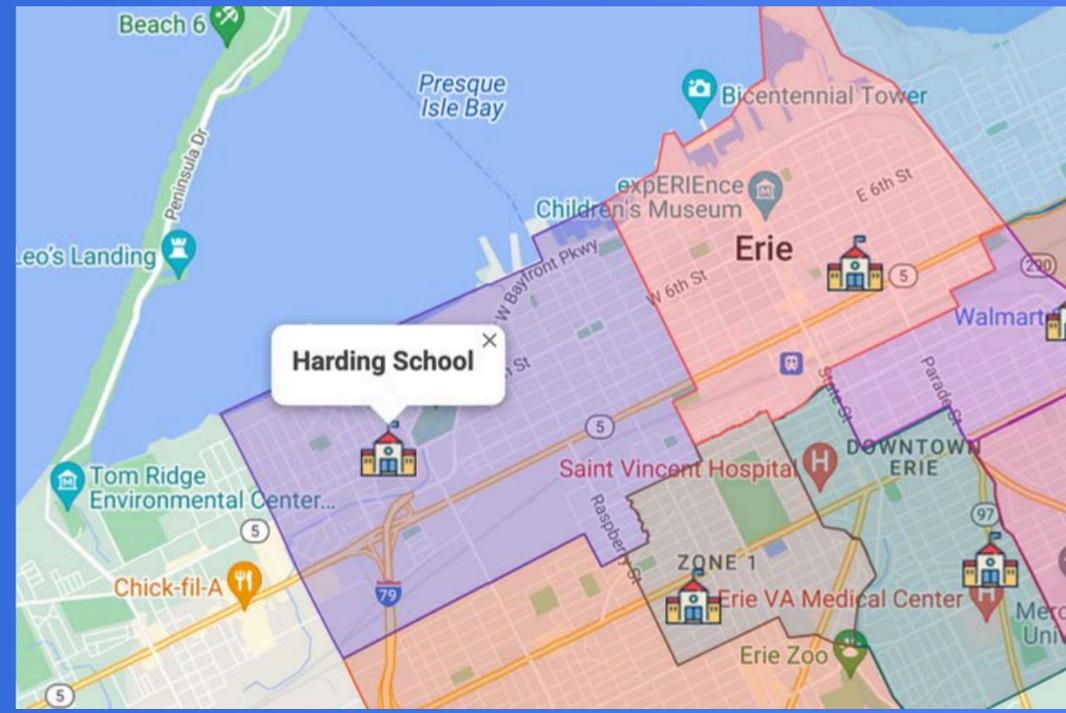
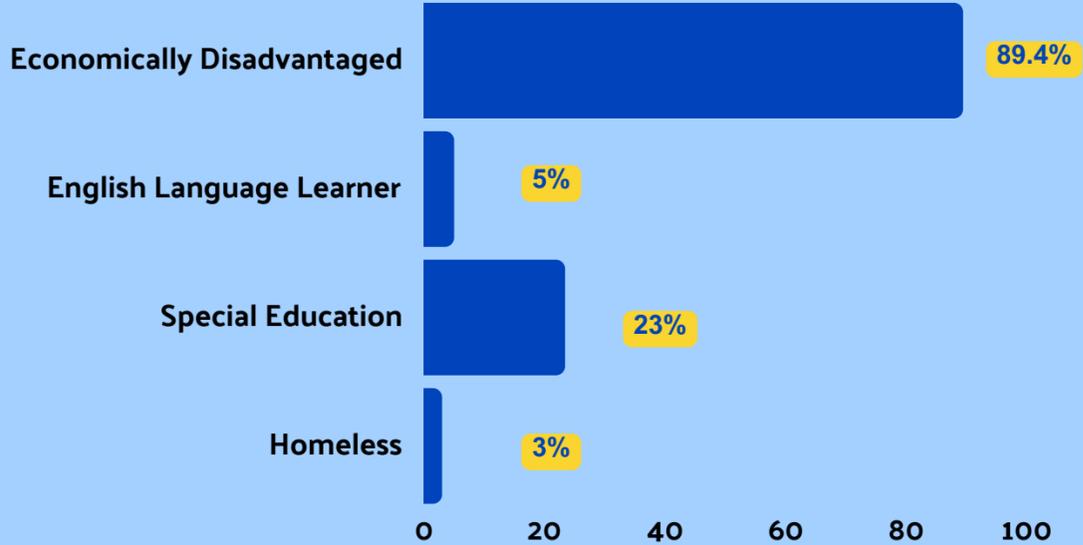
- Harding became a United Way community school during the 2019-2020 school year.
- Pre-K through 5th Grade
- 680 students from Erie's Frontier, West Bayfront, and Little Italy neighborhoods.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Black 24%
Hispanic 3%
White 41%
2 or More Races 30%

Percent Enrollment by Student Groups



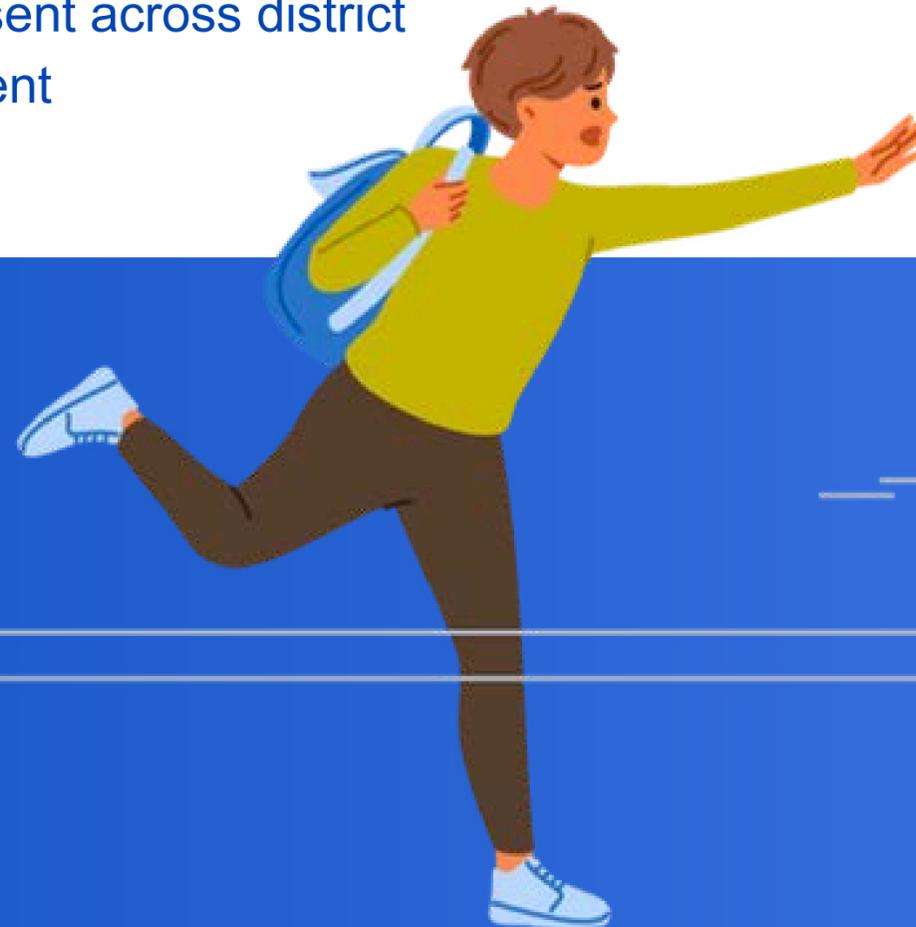
Chronic Absenteeism:

A National Crisis

Chronic absenteeism rates doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic and schools across the country are working to rebuild strong attendance habits.

- Chronic Absence = Missing 10% of the school year
- Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent.

- Erie's Public Schools = 37.5% chronically absent across district
- Harding Elementary = 24.7% chronically absent



What **impacts** attendance?

- Transportation
- Student and/or Family Illness
- Student Responsibility
- Weather
- Mental Health
- Family Schedules
- Transiency and Housing Insecurities



An Attendance Team was born ...

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Harding developed an Attendance Team to divide and conquer our top attendance concerns.
- The team consists of building administrators, community school director, guidance counselor, secretary, truancy monitor and case manager.
- Staff members reached out to families any way possible, including home visits, to connect with families.
- The team began offering incentives to encourage and promote school attendance.
- The team now focuses on 3 main areas: attendance awareness and education, attendance outreach and attendance recognition.



Awareness & Education

- Awareness of school attendance policies and the truancy process
- Attendance Magnets and Videos
- Attendance Messaging
 - Social Media, Communication Apps, Mailings
- Educating incoming Kindergarten families
- Requesting excuses for absences directly from families
 - Making it easier for parents to submit excuses
 - Paper notes, app messages, email, text, online form
- Harding's number of illegal absences decreased from 5,626 to 4,620 from the 22-23 to the 23-24 school year.



HARDING ELEMENTARY
A Community School


Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow!

Your child, _____,
was absent from school and did not turn in an excuse.
Please turn in this excuse to school tomorrow or email
an excuse to **hardingattendance@eriesd.org**.
Excuses can also be texted to 814-440-9734.

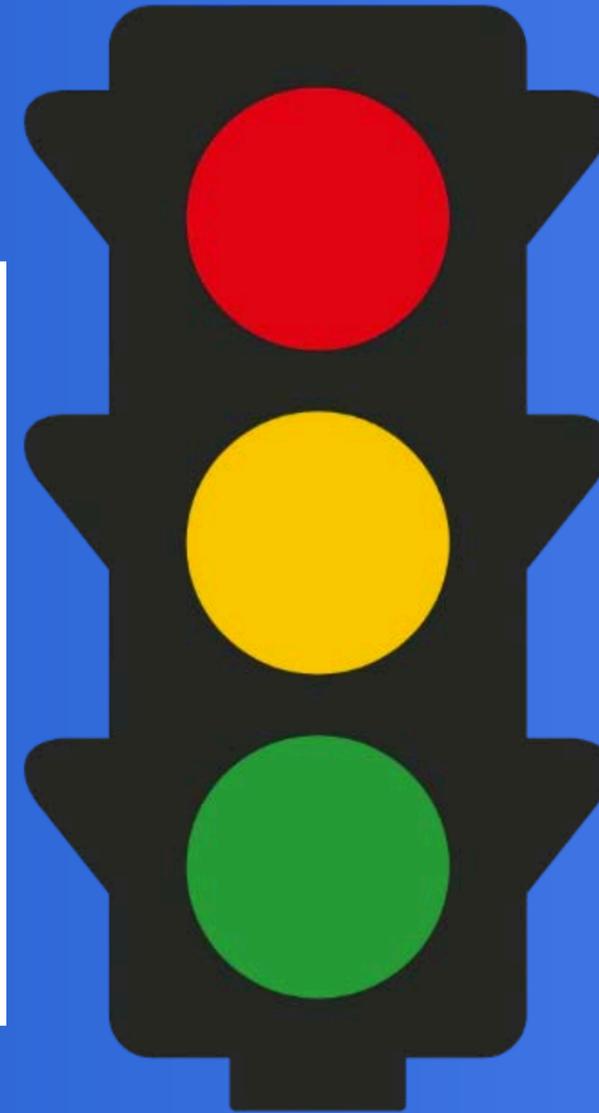
Date(s) of absence(s):	Reason for absence(s):

Parent Signature: _____



Attendance Outreach

- Identifying students at-risk of becoming chronically absent
- CSD, case manager, guidance counselor and truancy monitor reach out to parents for excuses and to keep lines of communication open
- Identifying barriers and connecting with appropriate supports
- Helping families avoid truancy consequences



Chronic Absence
10% of the school year
or 17+ days

At-Risk
9-16 days

**Satisfactory
Attendance**
9 or less days

Based on a 170-day school year



Attendance Recognition

- Focus on the positive and celebrate students and families with good and improved attendance
 - Strive for Five
 - Monthly Class Competitions – “Travelling Trophy”
 - Monthly Challenges
 - Based on lowest average attendance percentages from previous school year.
 - October, December, January, March, May
- Quarterly Perfect Attendance Family Breakfasts



Attendance Recognition

- Attendance All-Star Award
- Improved Attendance Family Recognition

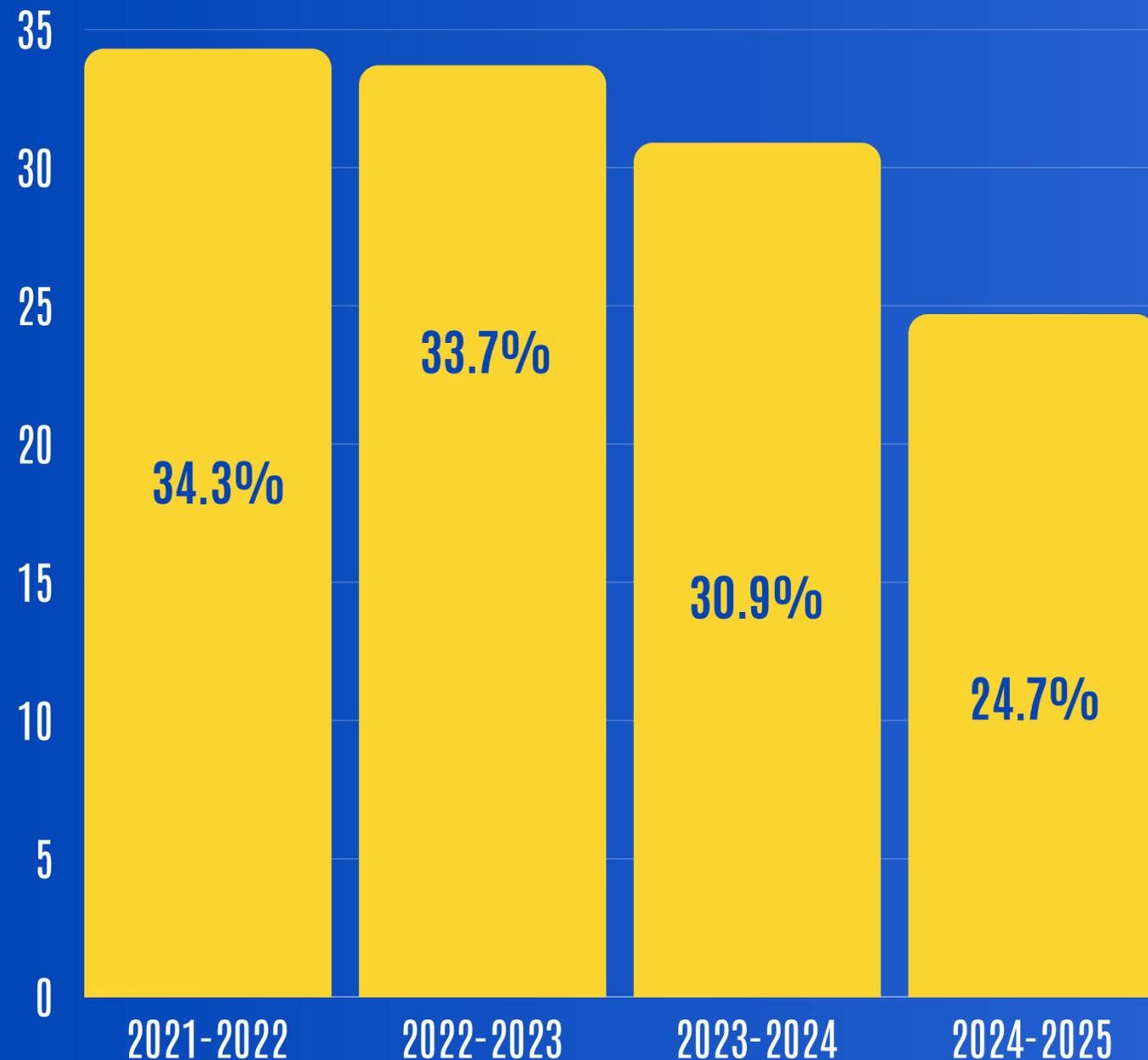


Celebrating small victories!

- Quarterly attendance breakfasts have grown from an average of 87 students per quarter during the 2022-2023 school year to an average of 108 students per quarter during the 2023-2024 school year.
- This increased to an average of 141 students per quarter during the 2024-2025 school year.



The Data is slowly moving in the **right** direction...



Chronically absent vs. Truant

- Chronically absent = Missing 17 days of school
- Truant = 6 or more unexcused absences

66% of our chronically absent students in 23-24 were truant, but 34% of them were not truant.



Attendance work across Community Schools



- Work is happening in **all schools** and United Way impact investment funds are allocated to support attendance strategies.
- Strategies and interventions are data-driven based on the needs of each individual school.
- Once we have students attending school regularly, we can ensure they feel welcome and supported so that they are ready to learn each day.





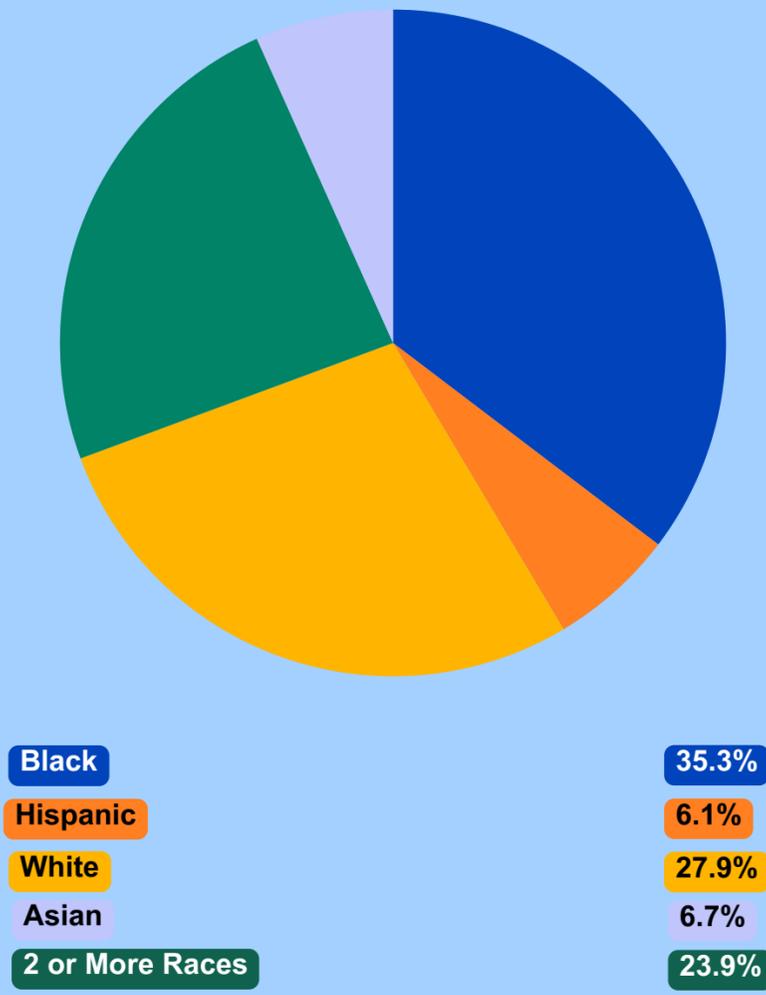
Planning to Engage Diverse Families



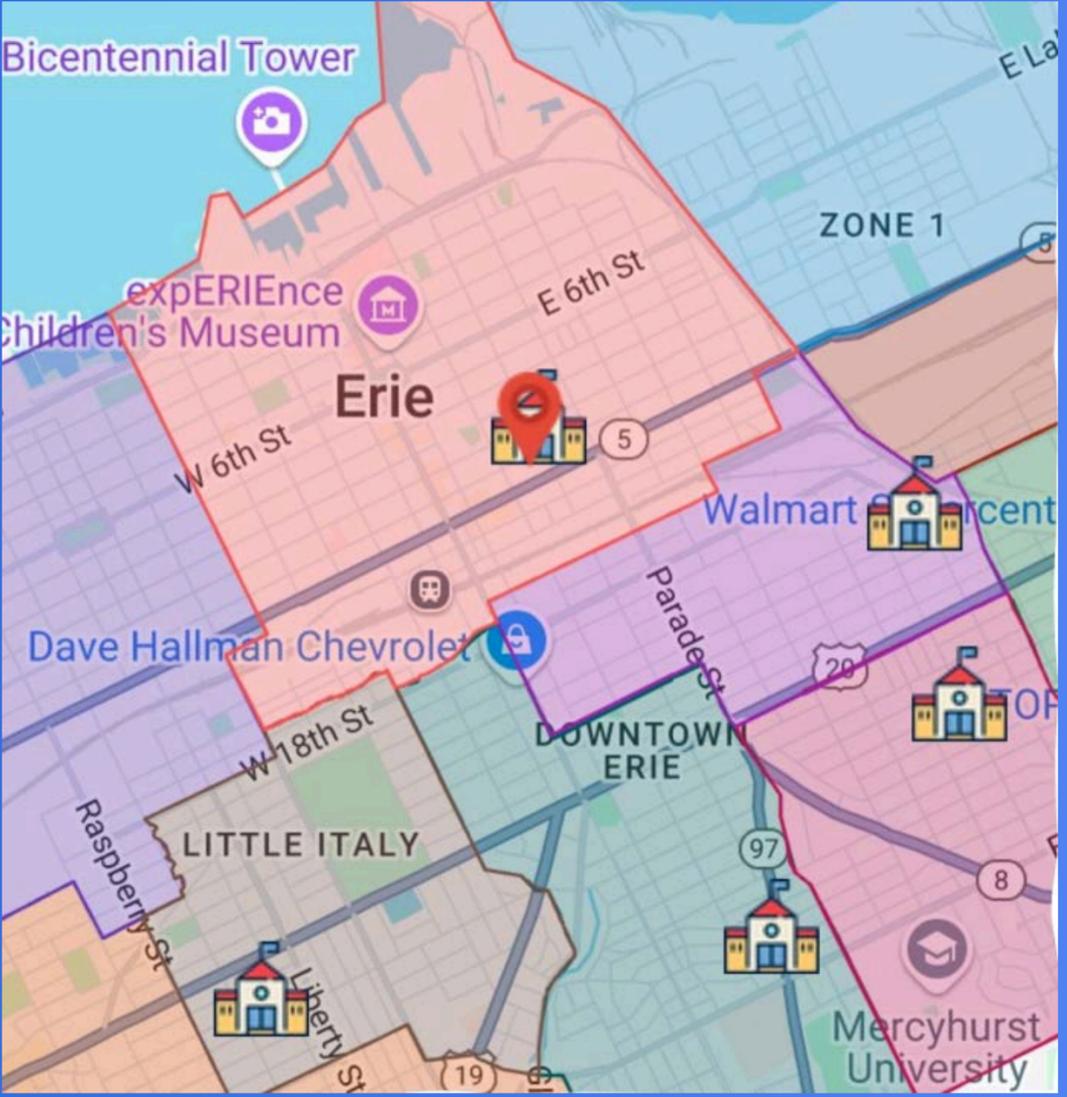
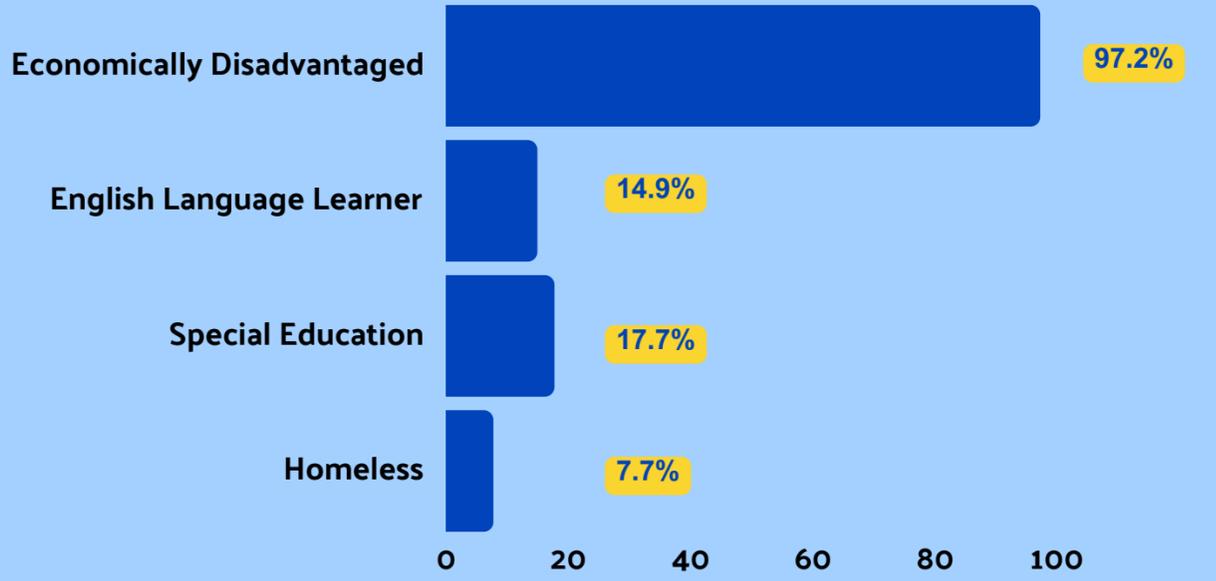
Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary

- Pfeiffer-Burleigh became one of the 5 original United Way community schools in the 2016-2017 school year.
- Pre-K through 5th Grade
- 647 students from Erie's Downtown, East Bayfront, and Little Italy neighborhoods.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Percent Enrollment by Student Groups



Erie City School District

Percent Enrollment by Student Groups

Economically Disadvantaged 88.7%



English Language Learner 10.8%



Special Education 23.3%



Foster Care NA



Homeless 2.6%



Military Connected 0.0%



Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary

Percent Enrollment by Student Groups

Economically Disadvantaged 97.2%



English Language Learner 14.9%



Special Education 17.7%



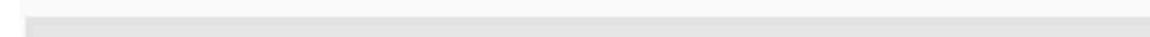
Foster Care NA



Homeless 7.7%



Military Connected 0.0%





Welcoming & Engaging Diverse Families



Choose your target groups:

- Economically Diverse
- Culturally Diverse
- Diverse Abilities



Intentionally Plan for Each Group:

- Communication
- Participation
- Partnerships



Economic Diversity

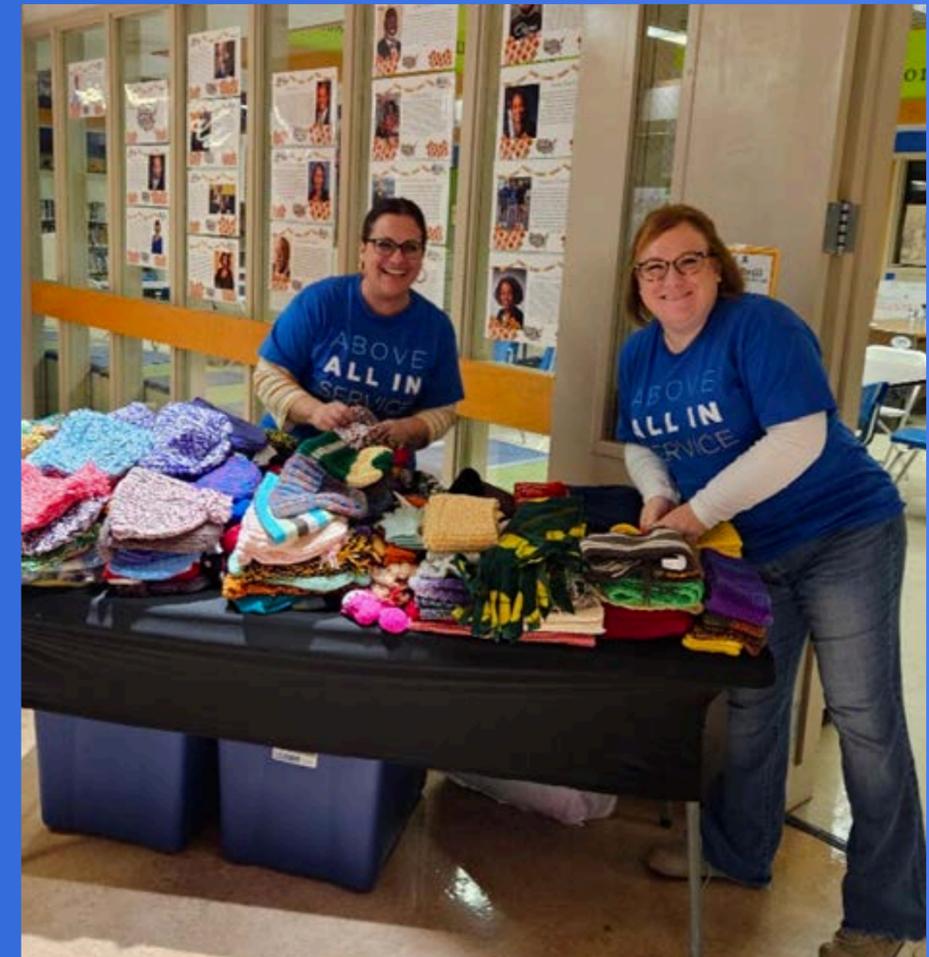
Address Unique Barriers

- Building trusting relationships
- Single parents/kinship care
- Negative experiences in school
- Non-working parents, shift workers
- Neighborhood safety - challenges and opportunities
- No cost events



Economic Diversity

- **Communication:** Multiple Formats, Personalize
- **Participation:** Incentives, Swag, Social Media Follow Up
- **Partnerships:** Ex. Family Ambassadors



Cultural Diversity

From June 2013 to March 2023, the City of Erie has welcomed 3,337 newly sworn United States Citizens from 110 countries of origin.

2024-2025 School Year

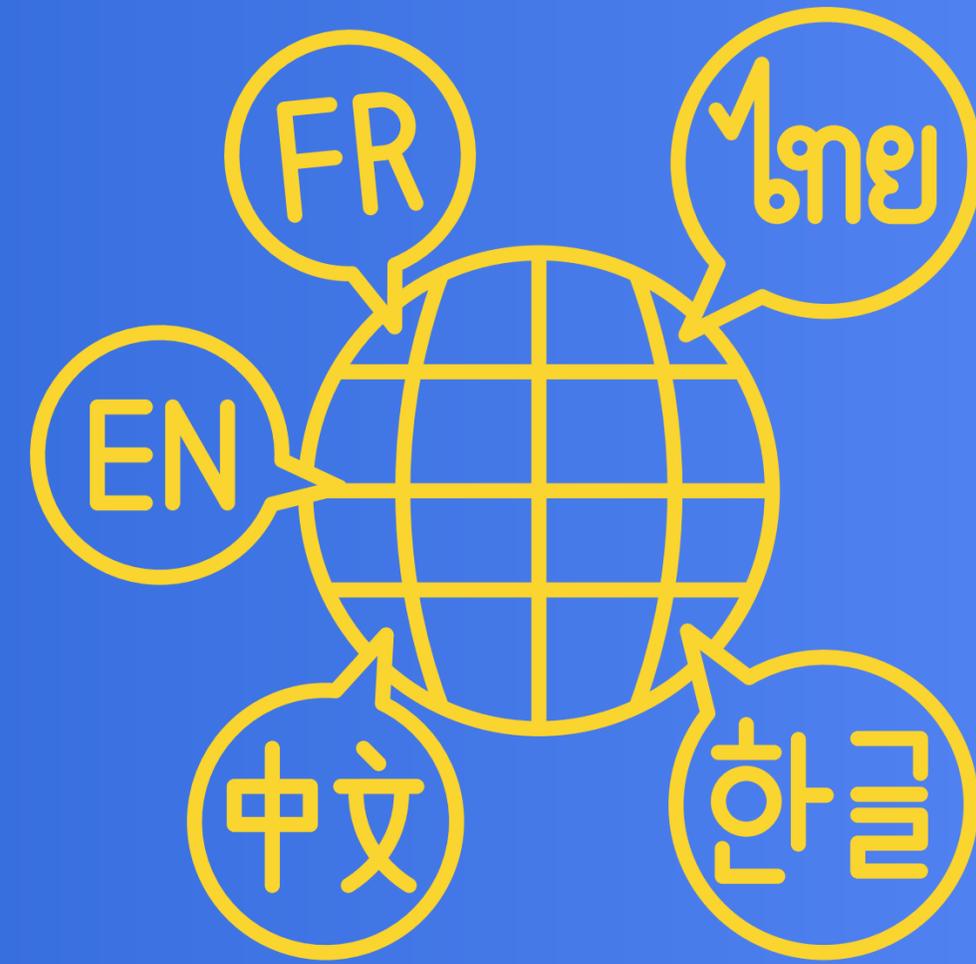
A total of 1,248 refugee students enrolled in EPS schools. The total number of ELL students enrolled in EPS community schools is about 1,770.



Cultural Diversity

Biggest Barrier >> Communication

- Pfeiffer Burleigh's 100+ ELL students speak 19 different languages.
- Flyers in home languages
- Cultural Navigators
- Language Apps



Cultural Diversity

Plan Participation & Partnerships

- Anti-Biased Schoolwide Celebrations
- Culturally sensitive practices at events
- Mentors, interpreters at events
- Multicultural stations / community partners at events
- Partnerships - Refugee owned businesses, multicultural afterschool clubs and events, adult programs (ex. Afghan program at McKinley)



Diverse Abilities

- 114 Special Ed
- 43 Autistic Support (6 Self-Contained Classrooms)
- 50% Chronically Absent (vs. 39.1% total)
- Communication:
 - Advertise sensory friendly stations
 - Personal outreach/invites
- Participation:
 - Intentionally plan activities and areas for all
- Partnerships:
 - Classroom teachers
 - Community partners/vendors



Diverse Abilities

"King's school put together the most memorable Silent Parade to celebrate King as he leads the Walk for Autism tomorrow. I was blown away when we turned the corner and saw the whole school lined up. They did a wonderful job!! Students lined the hall with streamers, bubbles, and the most beautiful handmade signs. It was just an all-around breathtaking experience. This is what a Community School is all about. Thank you @Pfeiffer-BurleighElementary for sending our babies off the right way! "



Thank you Pfeiffer-
Burleigh Elementary



You are invited to
WINTER-FEST
Thursday February 27

4-5:30pm



*Artwork by Ms.Hirsch's 2nd grade art class.

ENTER TO WIN
A FAMILY
PACK OF
ERIE
OTTERS
TICKETS



Stations include:

Black History Month

Photo Booth and Craft

The Great Indoor Obstacle Challenge

Marshmallow STEM Challenge

Visit from Therapy Dogs United

SENSORY FRIENDLY AREAS

Please return to school by Friday, Feb 21

Yes! Our family will attend

Name _____

Number of people attending _____

You are invited to
WINTER-FEST



*Artwork by Ms.Hirsch's 2nd grade art class.

أنت مدعو إلى حفلة شتوية في المدرسة.
يرجى الحضور والانضمام إلينا للأنشطة
الترفيهية مثل القراءة واللعب والحرف
اليدوية والمزيد.

الخميس 27 فبراير

4-5:30 مساء

Estás invitado a una fiesta de invierno en
la escuela. Venga y únase a nosotros para
actividades divertidas como leer, jugar,
hacer manualidades y más.

Jueves 27 de febrero

4-5:30pm



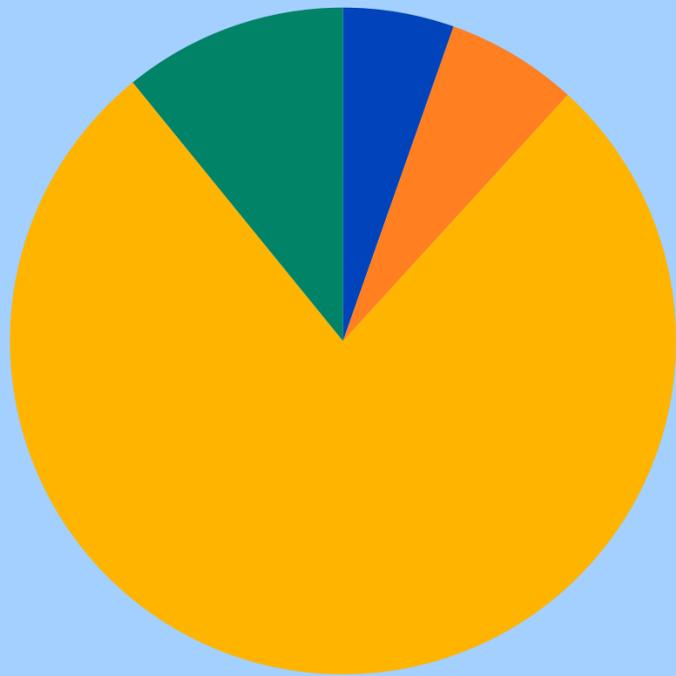
Student Leadership



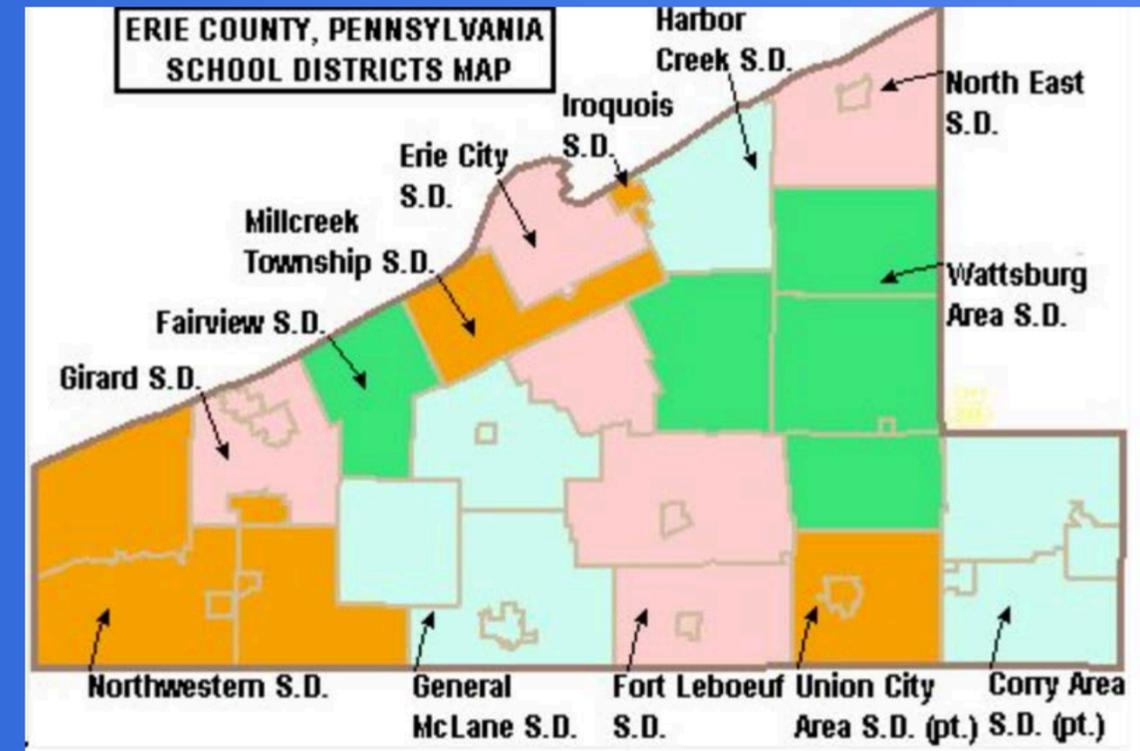
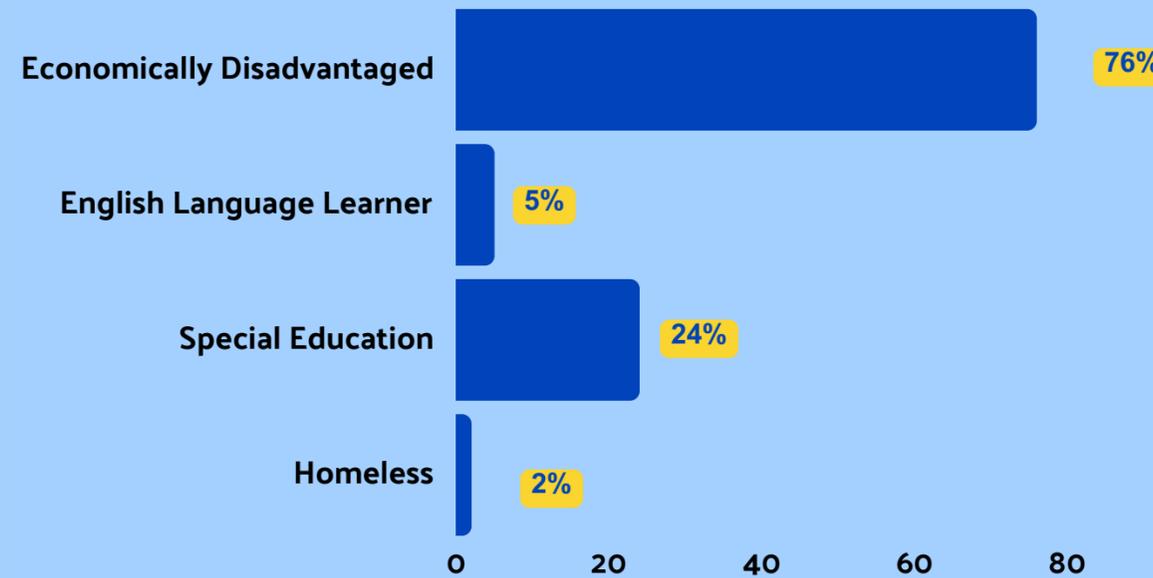
Iroquois Elementary

- Iroquois became a United Way community school during the 2019-2020 school year.
 - 2nd smallest school district in Pennsylvania
- 2.3 square miles

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Percent Enrollment by Student Groups



Building School Champions through *a Strategic Leadership Opportunity*

- **Principal's Cabinet**

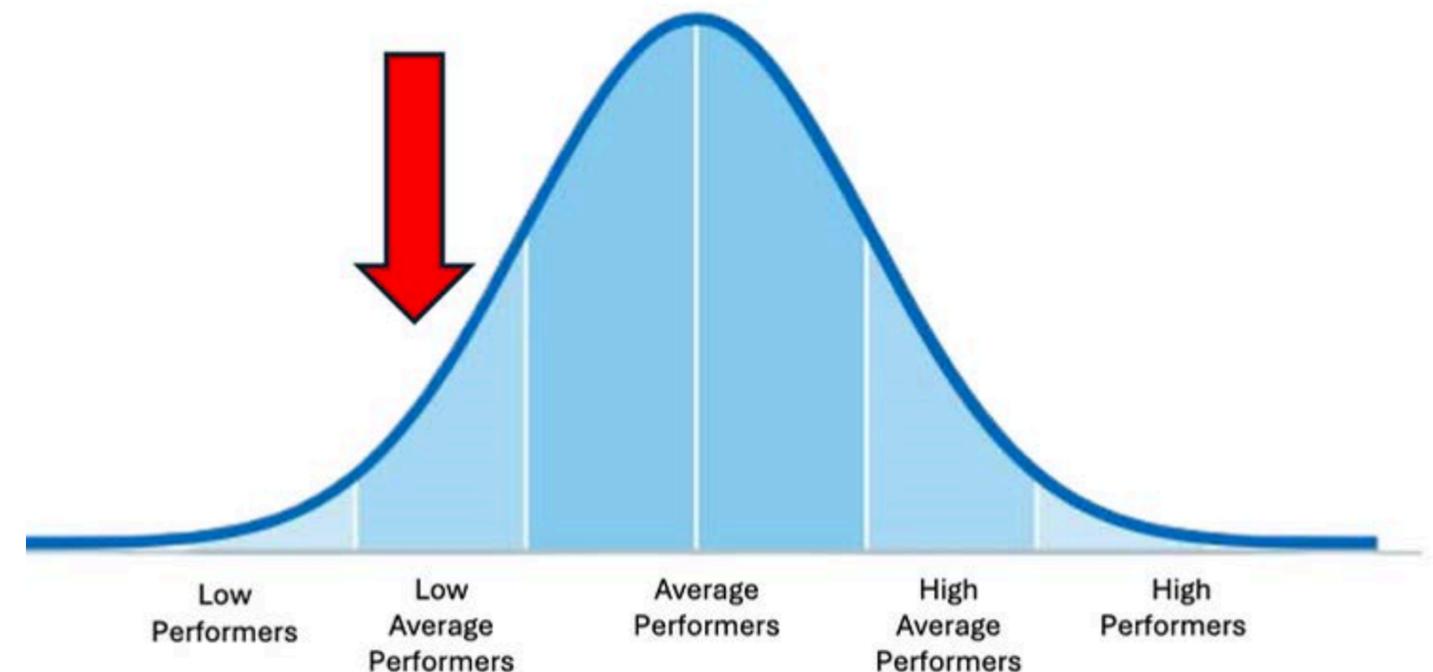
- 6th Grade Student Leadership Group

- **Selection:**

- 2 students from each homeroom
- Focus on students with low average performance

- **Club Activities:**

- Monthly meetings
- Focus groups
- Service projects
- Run school store
- Annual student leader retreat



Benefits of Student Leadership

- **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills**
 - Teamwork
 - Interaction with peers and adults
 - Confidence
 - Responsible decision making
 - Managing stress
 - Regulating emotions
- **Leadership Skills**
 - Communication/public speaking
 - Problem solving
- **Student Feedback**
 - Let their voices be heard...and seen
 - Encourages buy in



Leadership in Action

Morning Announcements

Work in pairs and follow a schedule to cover the task of reading morning announcements

Leadership skills practiced:

- Accountable
- Responsible
- Communication
- Confidence
- Emotional Regulation
- Adaptability

What students learned:

- It is OK to make mistakes!
- They can learn new things!
- They are responsible!



Leadership in Action

Bee Ticket Disparity

Bee Tickets and Bee Store are part of our School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) program

Leadership skills practiced:

- Verbal Expression
- Emotional Regulation
- Focus and Problem Solving
- Collaboration
- Confidence

What students learned:

- Their voice matters!
- Working together to identify a problem and reasonable solutions can lead to positive change!



Iroquois Elementary BEE TICKET
Safe, Kind, and Responsible

Student Name: _____

Student Grade: Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6

Safe: _____

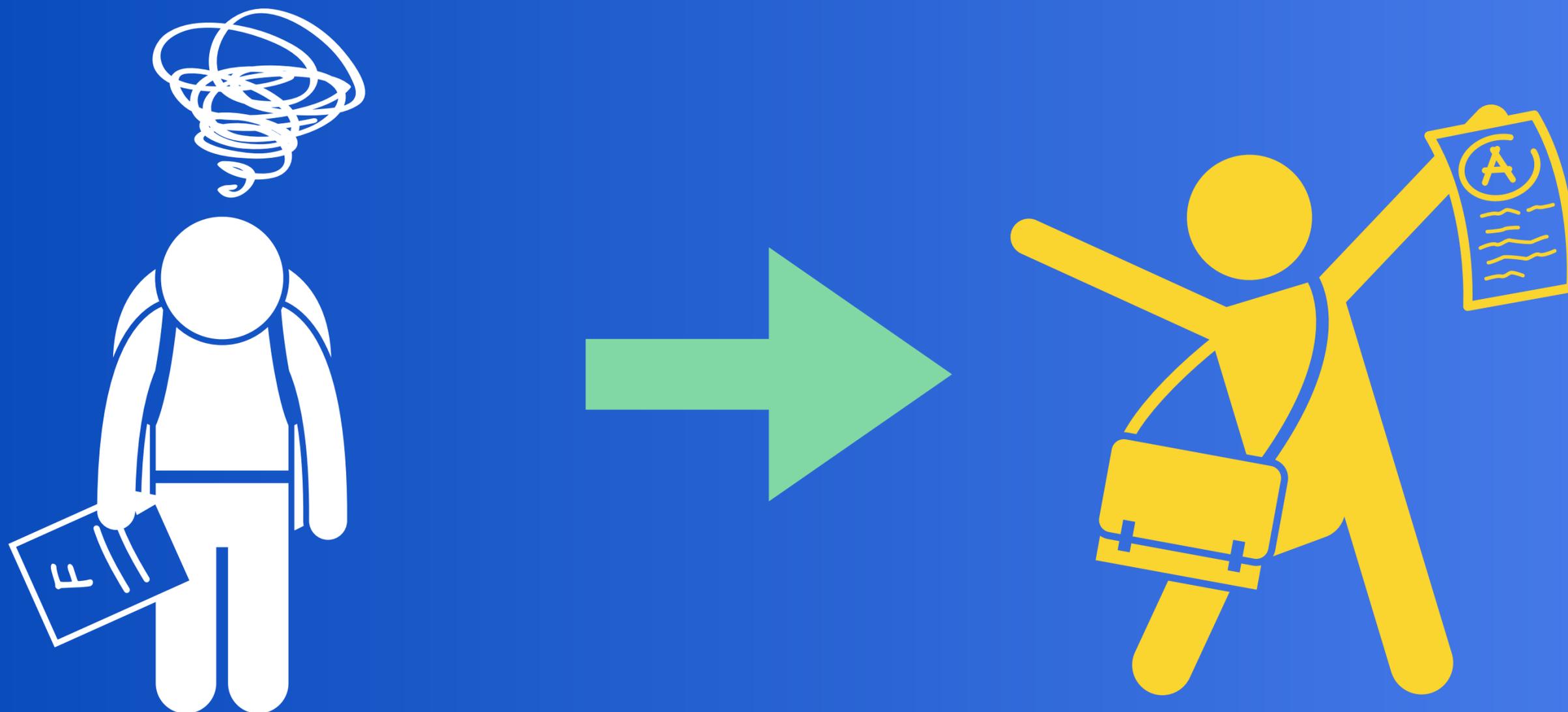
Kind: _____

Responsible: _____

Given By: _____ HR _____



*Teaching leadership at a young age helps students understand that they have **ownership over their own environment.***



Addresses a Need:

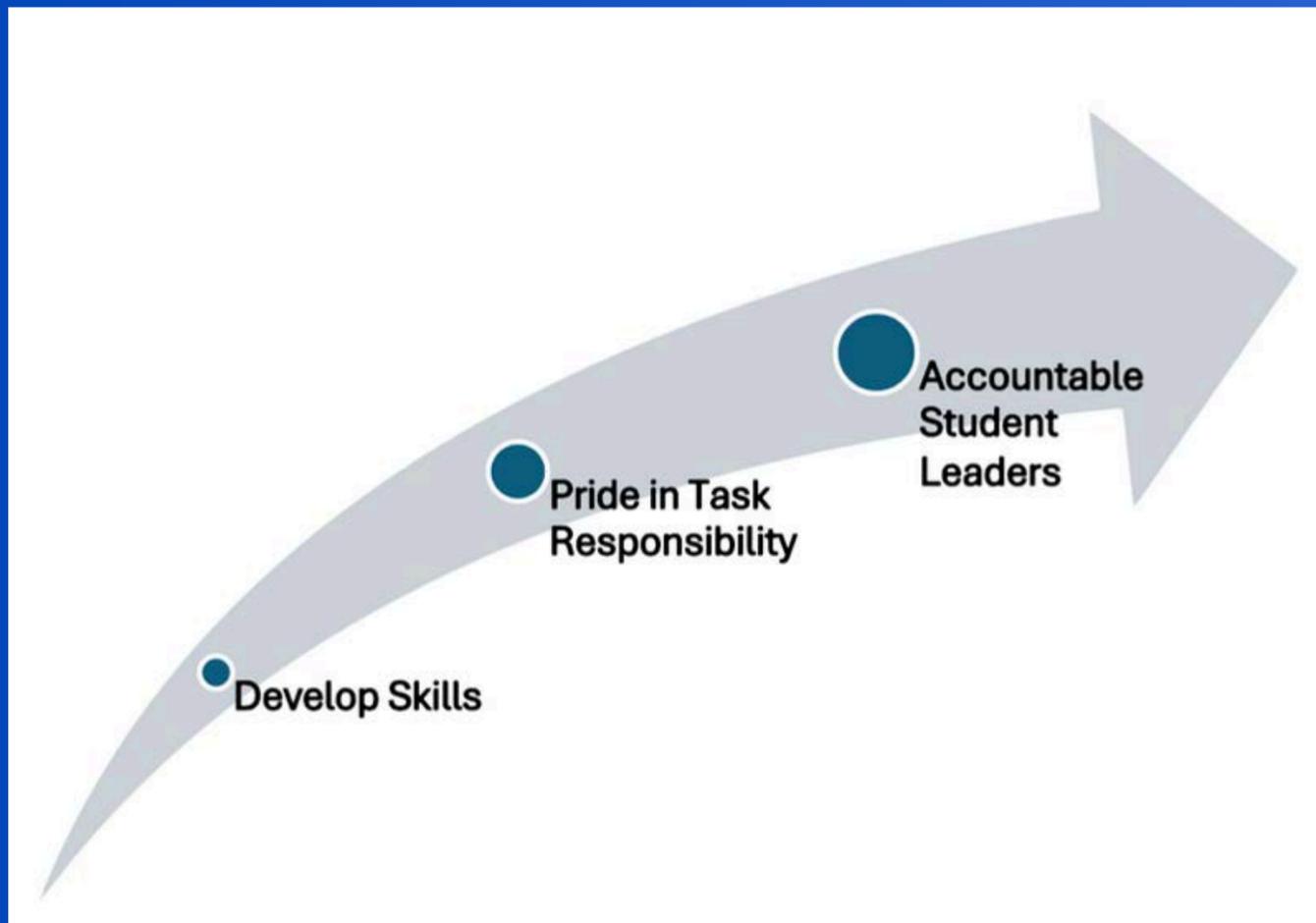
Support for School Transitions

“It’s okay to be uncomfortable.”

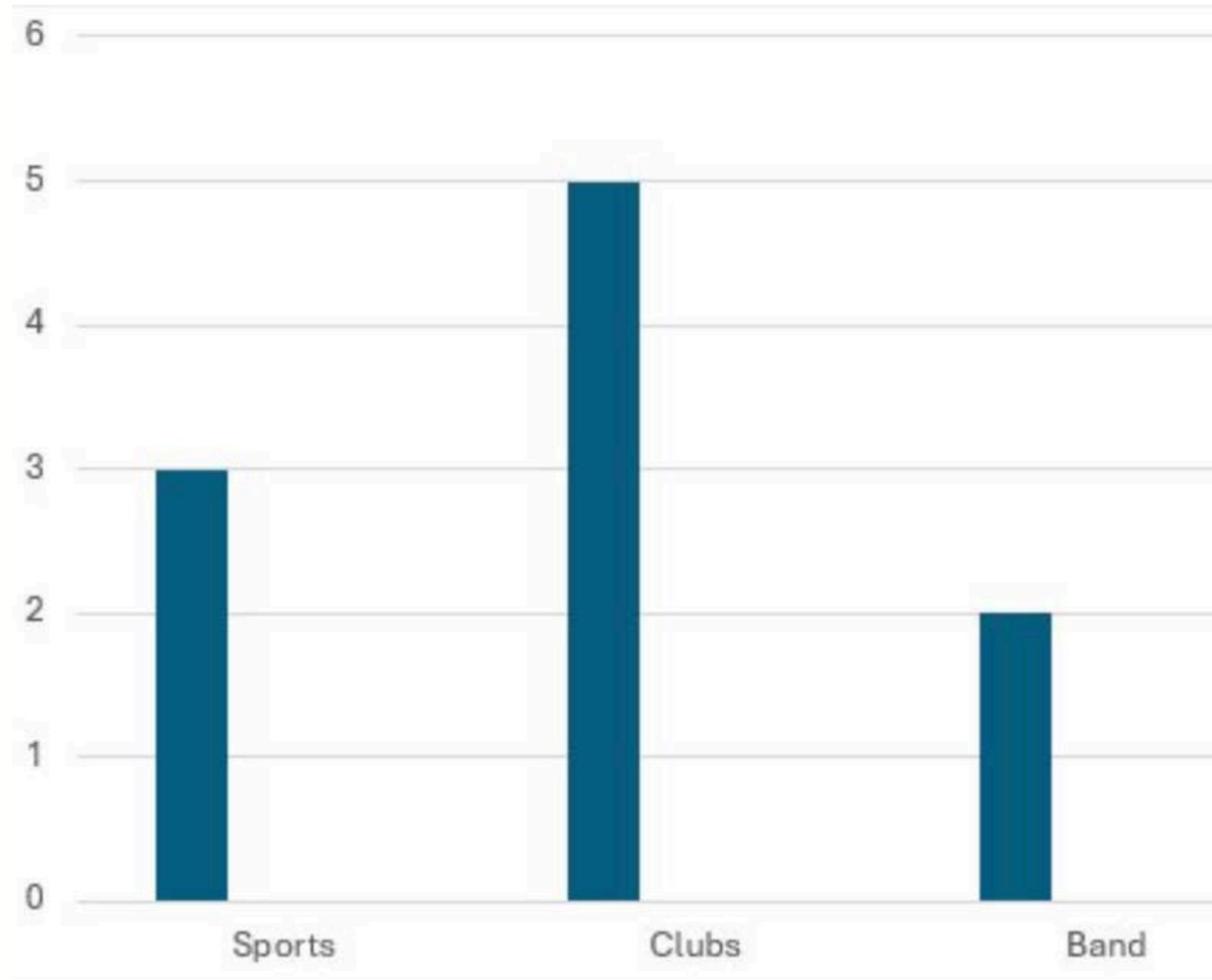
- **Ability to cope with frustrations**
- **School day transitions without adult supervision**
- **Time management**
- **Adapting to new environments and people**
- **Openness to learn new skills**



Exposure to leadership at a young age increases capacity to be involved in the future



7 out of 8 members are currently participating in school-sponsored activities in 7th grade



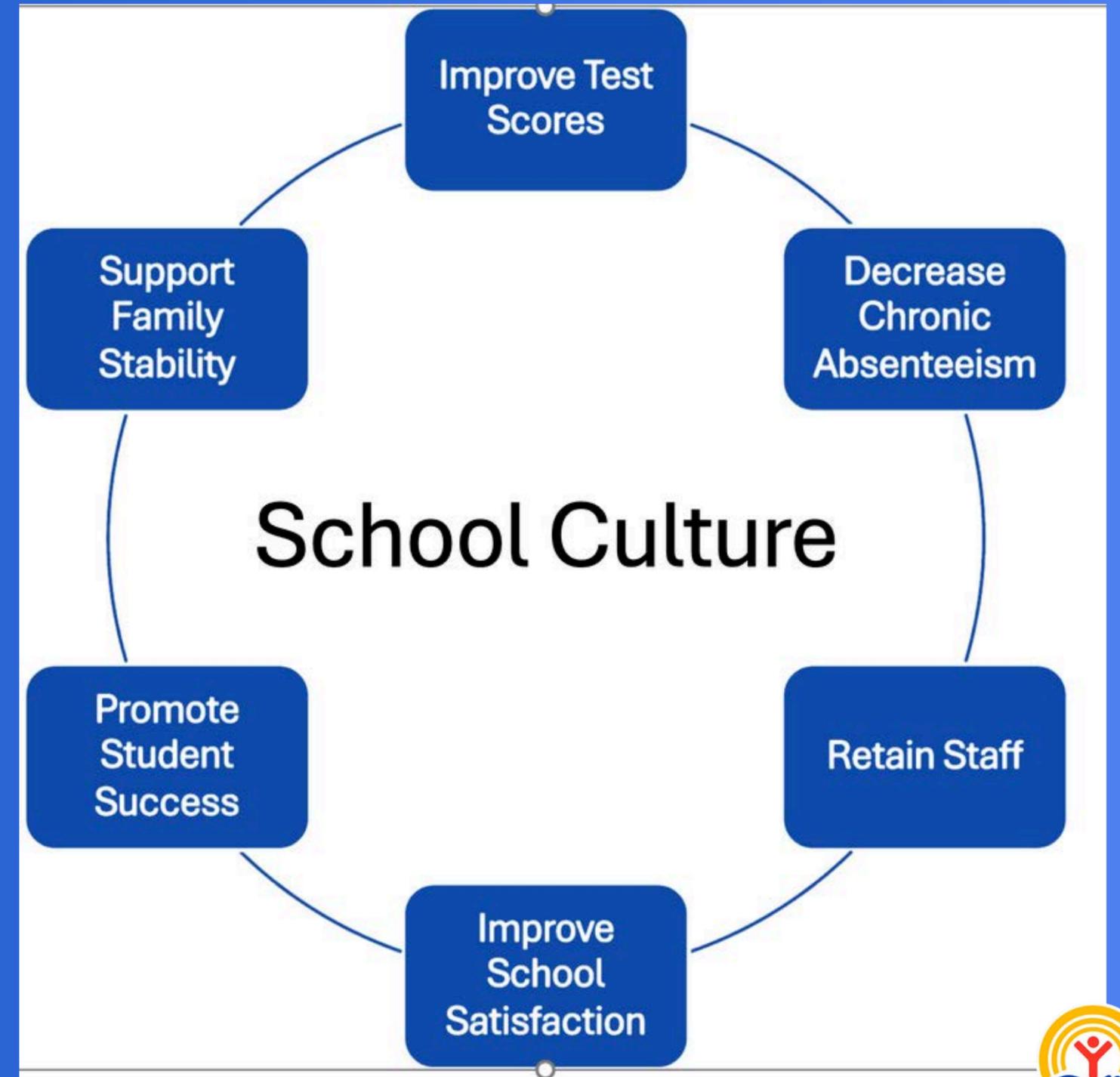
Collaboration Across Community Schools:

Student Leadership Retreat

- An opportunity to celebrate school leaders
- Goals of event:
 - Build relationships with other student leaders
 - Enhance the leadership qualities and characteristics they are learning through school leader groups
 - Encourage continued leadership participation in middle/high school



*A positive school climate is critically related to **school success.***





2025 COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

Q&A

SCAN FOR RESOURCES



THANK YOU!

#CommunitySchoolsInAction



follow & tag us on social media!



@unitedwayerie