



# Wisconsin Center for Education Research

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## Attendance, Achievement, and Educational Equity

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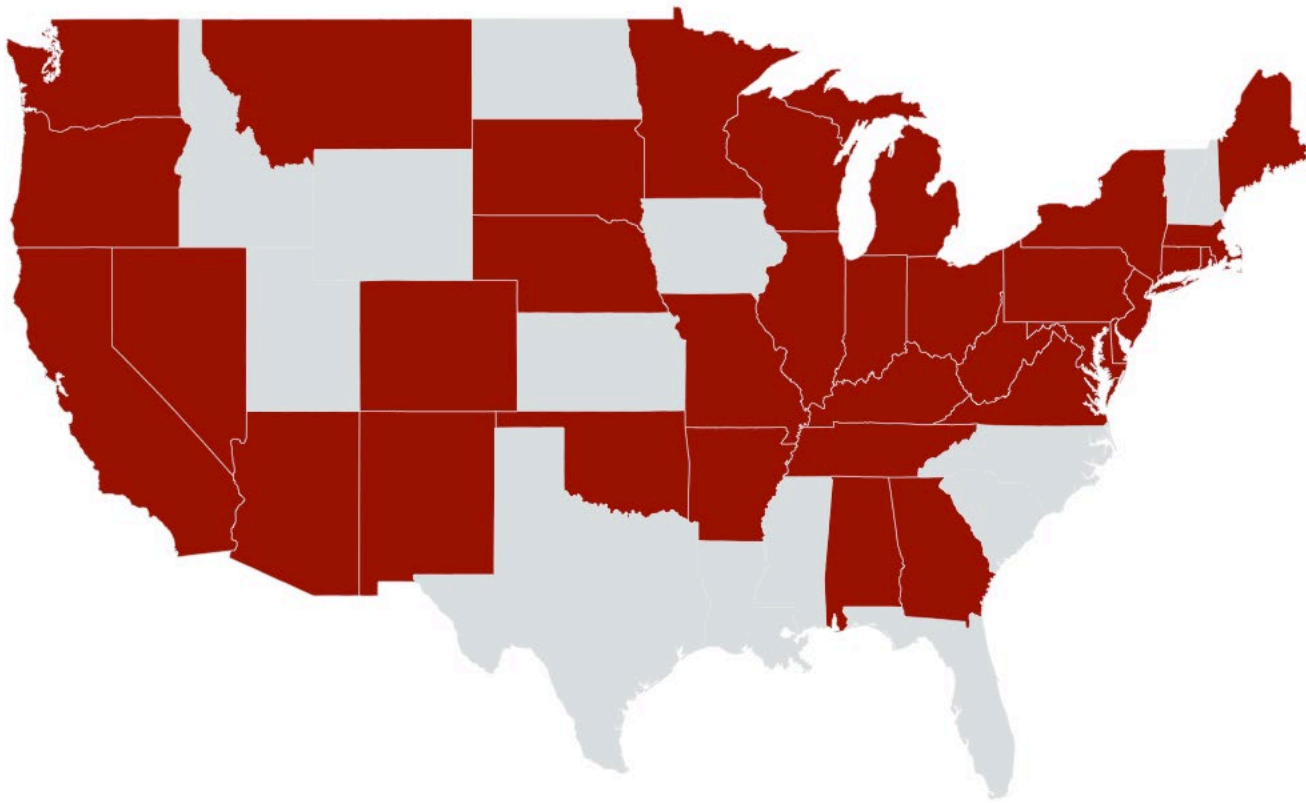
# Aims

- What is the impact of missing school?
- Do absences contribute meaning fully to achievement/opportunity gaps?



# Background

36 States have chosen absences as their ESSA indicator of school quality and student success



# Background

"Educators and policymakers cannot truly understand achievement gaps or efforts to close them without considering chronic absenteeism."

Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012

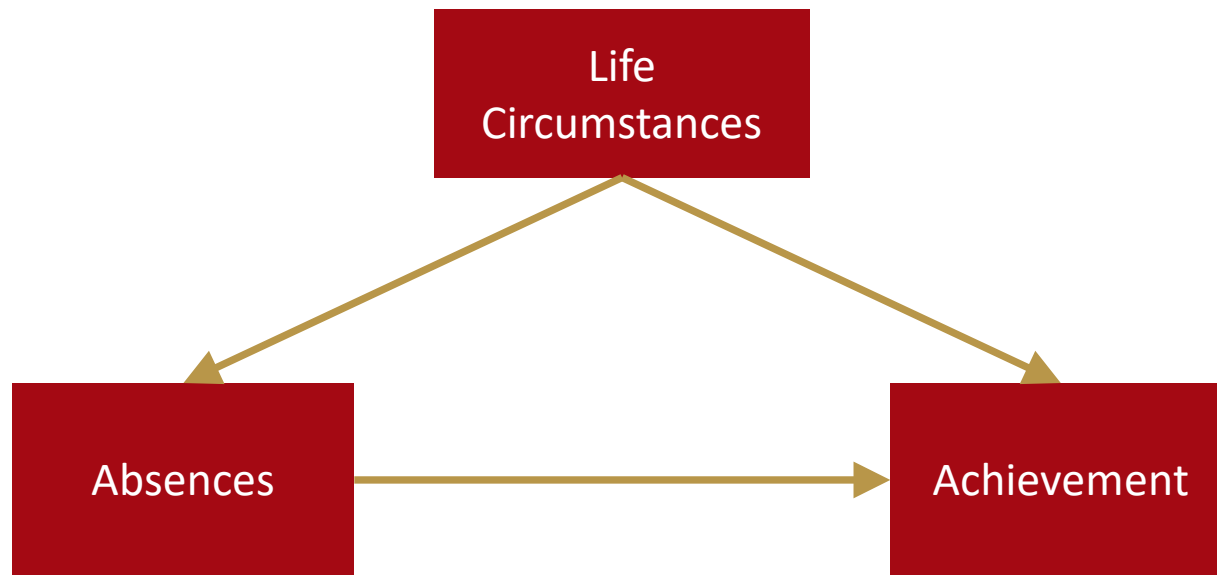


# Raw Associations Between Absences and Achievement

- 17% of 6th graders who missed more than 20% of the school year graduated high school within 5 years. (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007).
- In Oregon, chronically absent 5<sup>th</sup> graders are 25%-35% less likely to meet state standards. (Oregon Department of Education, 2016).
- For K-3 students in Madison, a single unexcused absence is associated with a 15-20 percentile-point drop in state test scores (Pyne et al., 2018).



# Omitted Variables



Rather than looking at raw correlations, we should adjust for potential omitted variables to the extent possible.

# Literature Review

Three studies that control for meaningful, potentially omitted variables, including performance:

- Gottfried, 2009
- Gershenson, Jacknowitz, and Brannegan, 2017
- Pyne, Grodsky, Vaade, Camburn, and Bradley, 2018

# Adjusted Effects of an Absence

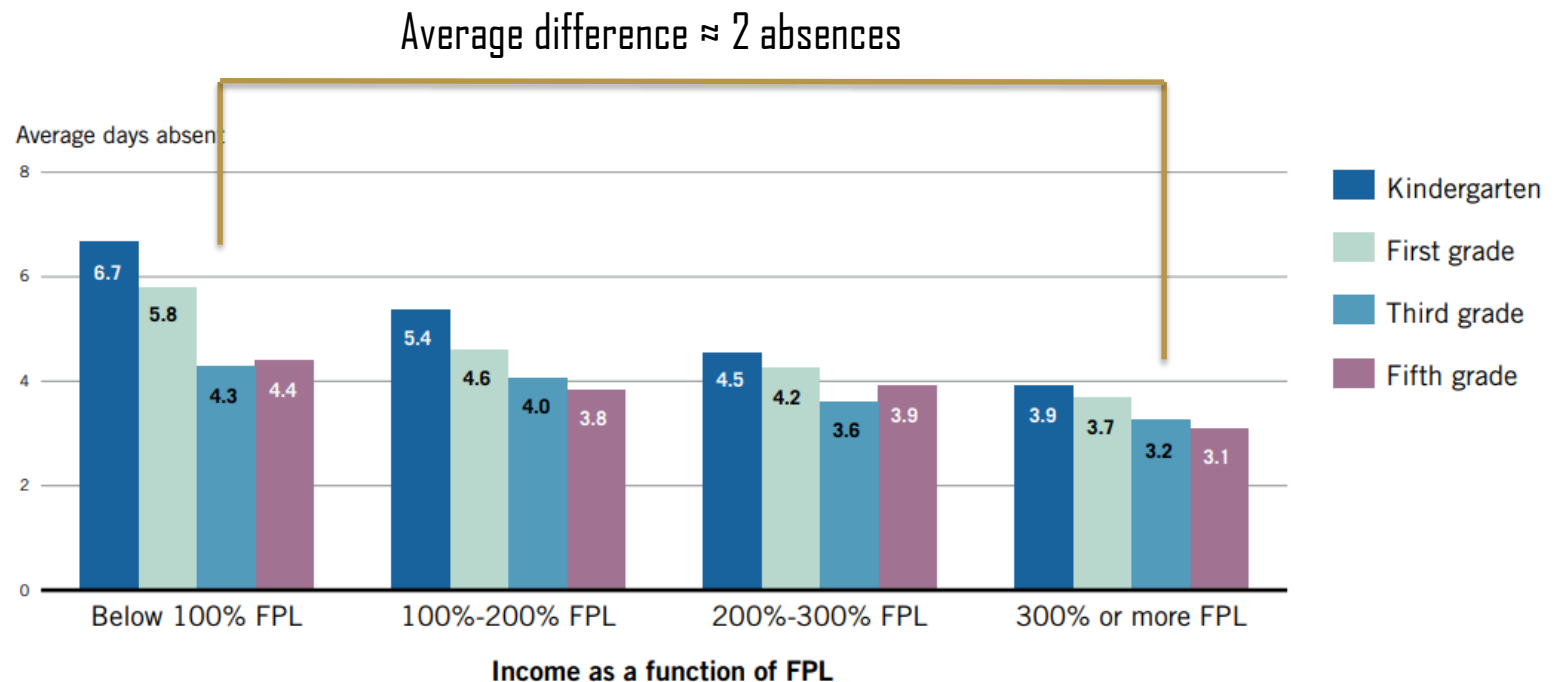
After adjusting for measures of students' socioeconomic status, race, gender, prior performance...



If we kept an average student out of school for 18 days, we'd expect their state test scores to drop no lower than the 43rd percentile.

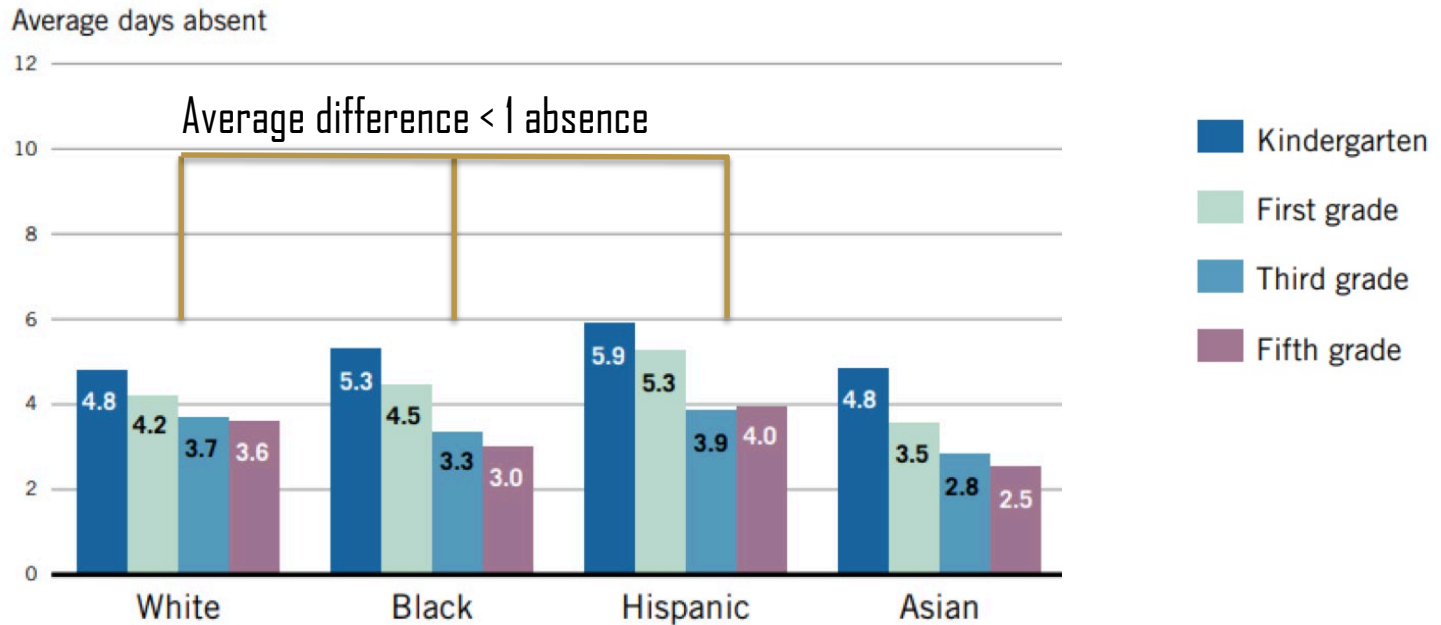


# Implications for Educational Equity



Predicted effect of reducing absences to zero for all students:  $2 \times .01 = .02$  SD

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# Conclusions

- Absences are largely a symptom of other problems in a students' life.
- Although absences do have an important impact on achievement, reducing absences will have a relatively small impact on the size of achievement gaps.
- It would be valuable to learn more about why students miss school. These questions may lead us to powerful levers of change!

