

WARNS

The **W**ashington **A**ssessment of the **R**isks and **N**eeds of **S**tudents



Strategies to Support School Attendance and Engagement

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We would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral homelands of **The Nimiipuu (Nez Perce)** and the **Palus People** who have lived in the Pacific Northwest, from time immemorial.





Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions ✓
- Current Trends on School Attendance and Engagement
- Overview of the WARNS
- WARNS as a Universal Screener to Support Attendance and Engagement
- Activity & Discussion
- Conclusion, Contact Information, and References and Resources



Current Trends on School Attendance and Engagement

Why is School Attendance and Engagement Important?

- Students face numerous challenges that can affect their school engagement and attendance, such as health issues, community violence, and difficult family circumstances (U.S. Department of Education, 2019)
- Each instance of student absence represents a missed opportunity to engage in instructional activities
- **Regular attendance:** Attending 90% or more of school days
- **Chronic absenteeism:** Missing 10% or more of school days for any reason
- **Truancy:** Unexcused absences from school, defined as 7 or more per month or 15 or more per year

Why is School Attendance and Engagement Important?

- Academic performance:
 - Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten are less likely to achieve reading proficiency by third grade (Ehrlich et al., 2018)
 - Students with frequent absences have lower end-of-year math and ELA test scores (Liu et al., 2021)
 - Chronic absenteeism decreases the likelihood of high school graduation and college enrollment (Liu et al., 2021)
- Socioemotional development:
 - Frequent absences negatively impact executive function and socioemotional development (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021)
 - Missing school can lead to increased feelings of disengagement and limit students' opportunities to refine and apply skills within high-quality, structured settings (Goble & Pianta, 2017; Pianta et al., 2020)

Why is School Attendance and Engagement Important?

- If school absenteeism is unaddressed, students are at higher risk for adverse outcomes later in life, including:
 - Substance abuse (Gakh et al., 2019)
 - School dropout (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Archambault et al., 2009)
 - Poorer long-term health (Allison et al., 2019)
 - Fewer employment opportunities (Binder & Bound, 2019)

National Trends on School Attendance and Engagement

- In 2021-2022, **29.7%** of students nationwide were chronically absent
- Disparities in attendance:
 - Students with disabilities: 41% were chronically absent
 - English learners: 36% were chronically absent
 - Students who are Pacific Islander (48%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (47%), Black (40%), and Hispanic (37%) were chronically absent more often than their peers who are White (24%)

State Trends on School Attendance and Engagement

- In 2022-2023, **30.3%** of students in Washington were chronically absent
 - Slight improvement from 2021-2022 (32.8%), but higher than pre-COVID-19 (9.5% in 2019-2020)
- Disparities in attendance:
 - Students experiencing homelessness: 54% were chronically absent
 - Students in foster care: 41% were chronically absent
 - Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds: 39% were chronically absent
 - Students who are Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaskan Native were nearly two times more likely than their peers who are White to be chronically absent (1.9 and 1.8 times, respectively)
 - Students who are Hispanic or Black were 1.3 and 1.2 times more likely than their peers who are White to be chronically absent, respectively
- The connection between chronic absenteeism and truancy raises significant concerns about the impact on today's most vulnerable youth (Kearney, 2008)

(OSPI Report Card, 2023)

What are some of the trends you're seeing in your own communities?

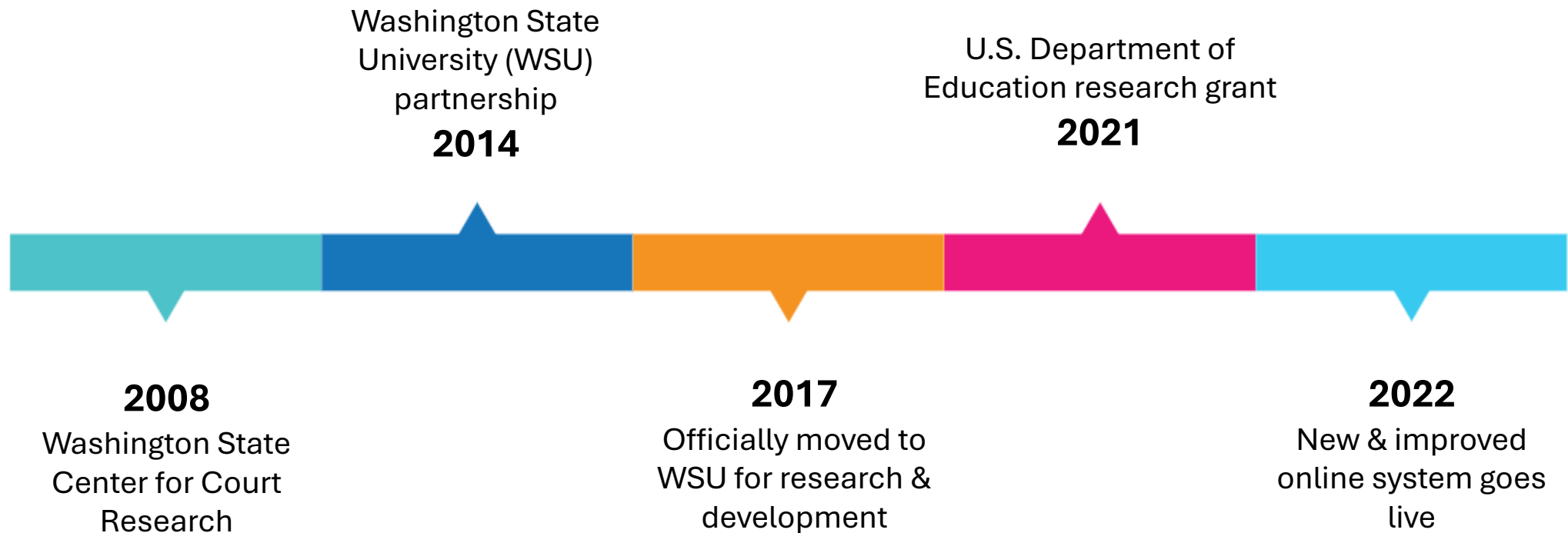


What are a few strategies you're using to help support school engagement and attendance?

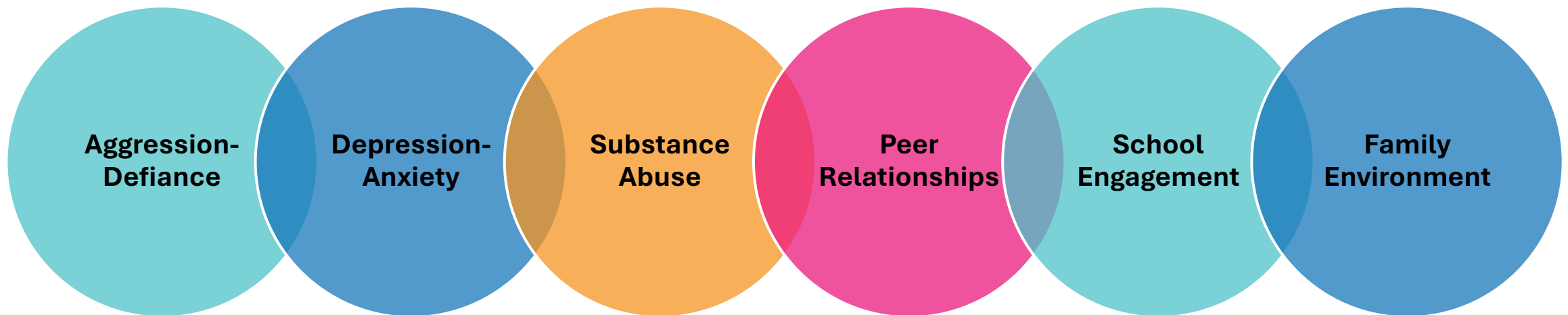


Overview of the **W**ashington **A**ssessment of **R**isks and **N**eeds of **S**tudents (WARNS)

A brief history of the WARNS



Key Factors linked to Chronic Absenteeism



(Maynard, et al. 2017; Rocque, et al. 2017; Strand, et al. 2014)

Overview of WARNS

- Brief self-report measure for ages 13-18
- Designed to support schools, courts, and youth service providers assess individual risks and needs that may lead to truancy and/or school failure
- Informs individualized services and supports to promote school attendance and engagement
- Completion time: 10-30 minutes
- Utilizes a subscription-based model, with technical assistance and support provided by the Learning and Performance Research Center at WSU
- Supported by a grant from the *Institute of Educational Sciences* (IES)

Overview of WARNS

- Six **needs scales**—key factors linked to chronic absenteeism:
 - Aggression-Defiance
 - Substance Abuse
 - Family Environment
 - Depression-Anxiety
 - Peer Deviance
 - School Engagement
- Results identify a low, moderate, or high need for intervention in each area and overall
- Can be used as an individual progress monitoring tool
- Intended to be one of several sources of information in treatment planning
- May only be used in the best interest of the student

~~punitive
sanctions~~

~~restrictive
settings~~



Assessment report

Student Information

Student ID: **123456789**
Administration date: **9/18/2022**
Gender: **Male**
Age: **17**
Grade: **11**
Race/Ethnicity: **White/Caucasian**
Special education: **No**
Plan 504: **No**

Risk scales

Aggression-Defiance: **HIGH**
Depression-Anxiety: **MODERATE**
Substance Abuse: **HIGH**
Peer Deviance: **MODERATE**
Family Environment: **MODERATE**
School Engagement: **MODERATE**

TOTAL RISK SCORE: 56 (HIGH)

(At risk if score is greater than 20 for female, 17 for male)

Assessment notes

Test assessment comments.....



Assessment report

WARNS NEEDS SCALES

Aggression-Defiance

I got into physical fights: **Sometimes**
I lost my temper and hit or yelled at someone: **Sometimes**
I threatened to hurt someone: **Often**
I lied, disobeyed, or talked back to adults: **Never or hardly ever**
I picked on or bullied other kids: **Sometimes**
I got so angry I hit or broke something: **Sometimes**
I lied, scammed, or conned someone to get what I wanted: **Sometimes**
I damaged or stole something on purpose: **Sometimes**

Aggression-Defiance score: (HIGH)

Depression-Anxiety

I felt like nothing could cheer me up: **Sometimes**
I felt down, sad, or unhappy: **Sometimes**
I was so worried or bothered by things it was hard to concentrate: **Often**
I had trouble sleeping or eating because I couldn't get something off my mind: **Often**
I felt hopeless about the future: **Never or hardly ever**
I felt more tense, irritated, or worried than usual: **Often**
I got so nervous I felt sick, had trouble breathing, or felt shaky: **Sometimes**
I didn't care about anything or anyone: **Sometimes**

Depression-Anxiety score: (MODERATE)

Substance Abuse

I got sick, passed out, or couldn't remember what happened because of alcohol or drugs: **Sometimes**
I drank two or more alcoholic beverages in a day (beer, wine, liquor): **Often**
I used drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy, meth, or pills: **Always or almost always**
I missed or skipped school in order to use or recover from alcohol or drugs: **Sometimes**
I smoked, vaped, or used marijuana (pot, weed): **Sometimes**

Substance Abuse score: (HIGH)

Peer Deviance

My friends got drunk or high from alcohol, marijuana (pot, weed), or other drugs: **Sometimes**
My friends did things that could have got them arrested: **Often**
My friends got into trouble at school: **Sometimes**
My friends skipped or cut class: **Often**
My friends got into physical fights: **Sometimes**

Peer Deviance score: (MODERATE)



Scoring



Reporting

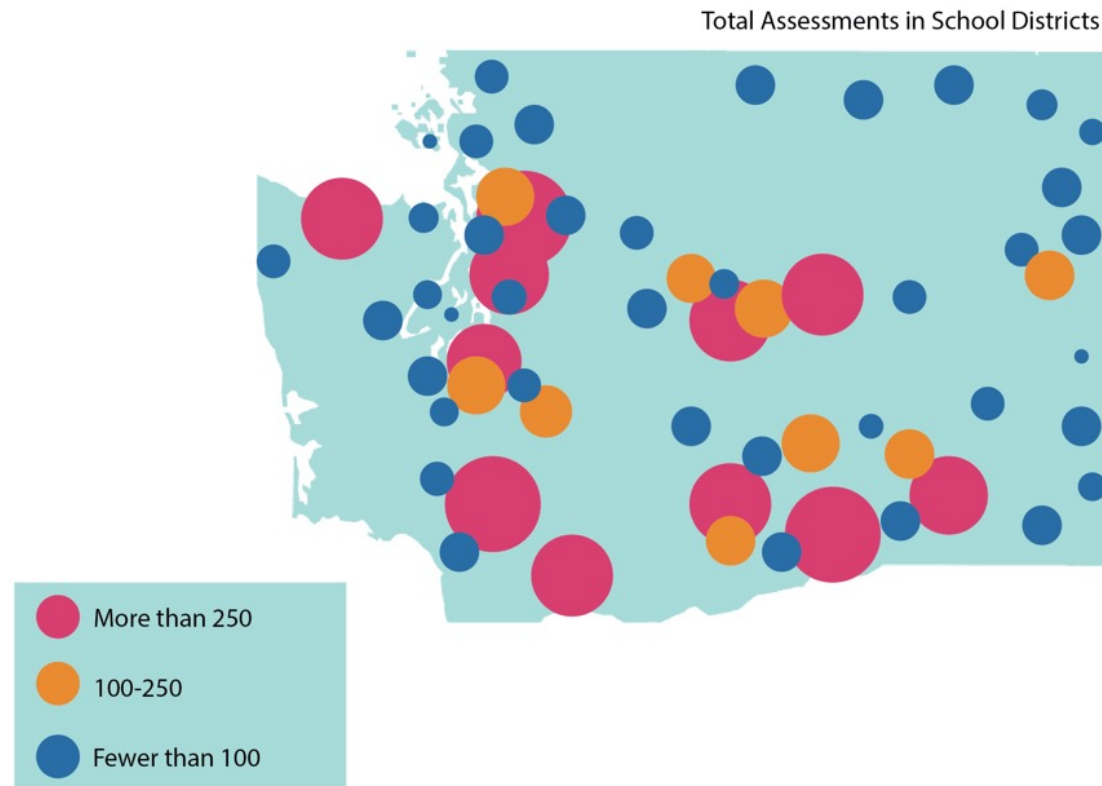


Profiles



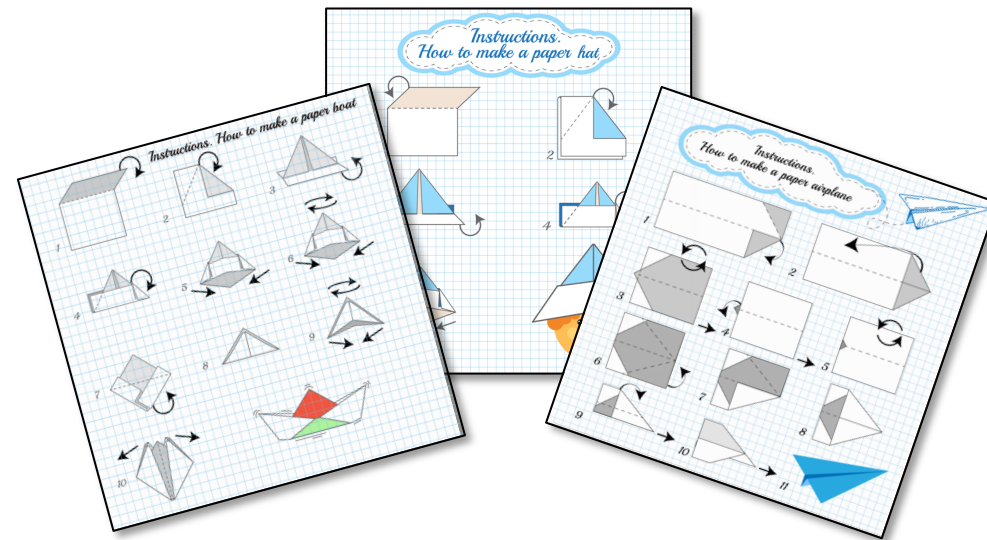
Development

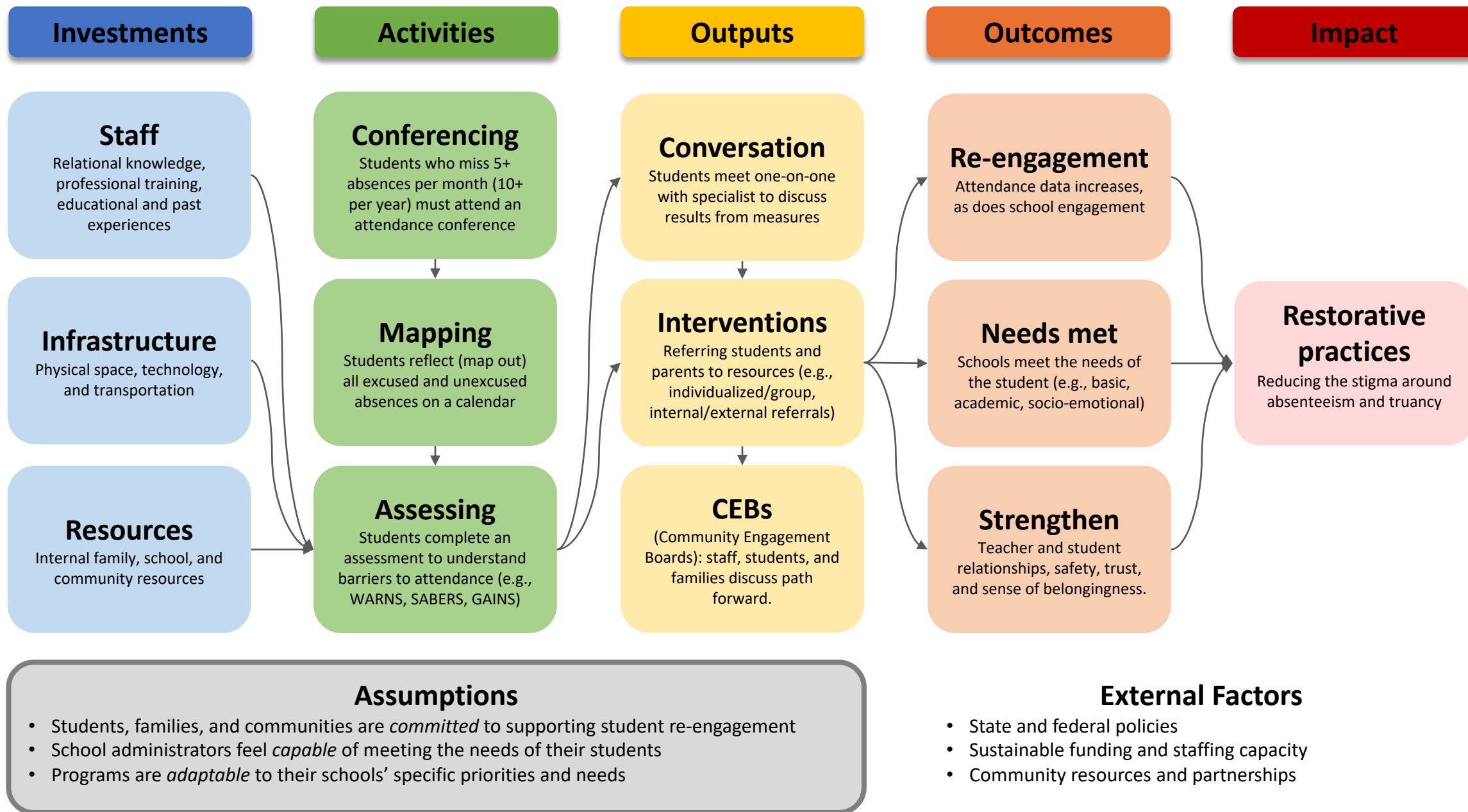
WARNS Current Implementation and Use in Washington

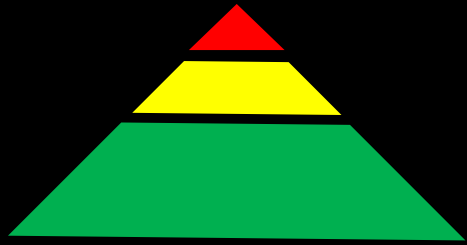


Model of Use

- We have been interested in learning more about the specific ways WARNS is used as a tool/artifact within a system of data-driven decision-making
- Recent doctoral student, Thao Vo, engaged deeply with 3 school districts to provide insights







WARNS as a Universal Screener and Progress Monitoring Tool in MTSS

What is MTSS?

- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is a framework for enhancing the implementation of evidence-based practices to achieve important outcomes for every student
- Essential Components of MTSS Include:
 - Team Driven and Shared Leadership
 - Data-Based Decision-Making
 - Family, Student and Community Engagement
 - Continuum of Supports
 - Evidence-Based Practices
- We're all here because of MTSS!

WARNS and MTSS

- We have seen an increase in the number of WARNS sites that are using the assessment as a universal screener to support school attendance and engagement
- Models of Use
 - School teams prioritizing school engagement and attendance
 - School wide screening/assessment during the fall to identify students who have a low, moderate, or high need for intervention in each assessment area and overall
 - School teams are using WARNS data to inform the implementation of Universal, Targeted and Individual supports to address student support needs
 - WARNS is being used as an individualized assessment and progress monitoring tool as needed throughout the school year
- We think this is neat and wanted to share it with you!

Example Continuums of Support to Promote School Attendance and Engagement

- Tier 1: Universal
 - *Focus on School Climate and Connectedness*
 - *Celebrating and Incentivizing Good Attendance*
 - *Collect and Monitor Data Frequently*
- Tier 2: Targeted
 - *Nudge Letters and Early Intervention*
 - *Check & Connect*
 - *Attendance Advisory Groups*
- Tier 3: Individual
 - *Community Engagement Boards (CEBs)*

(OSPI, n.d.)



Using Vignettes to Promote School Attendance and Engagement

WARNS Vignettes

- Emerged out of an effort to increase the meaning and impact of presenting WARNS results
 - Conversation starters
- Series of meetings with WARNS users who work directly with students
 - What do the WARNS domains look like in everyday life?
- Brought notes from meetings to young, creative writers
 - Data → stories
- 2-4 short stories for each WARNS domain
 - Central character depicts the relevant domain
 - Challenges and assets

WARNS Vignettes

- Available to users within the WARNS platform, along with guidance for use
 - What are the vignettes?
 - Who should use the vignettes?
 - How do I transition from WARNS administration to a vignette?
 - How do I transition from a vignette to a conversation with the student?
 - What if the vignette does not support a conversation with the student?
 - What are my responsibilities as a vignette user?
- Benefits
 - Normalize difficult circumstances
 - Allow students to feel safer when discussing difficult topics
 - Provide an opportunity for discussion beyond WARNS questions
- Potential Use:
 - Appropriate for individual, small-, and large-group use

Vignette Activity

- Imagine you are an active member of a student's interdisciplinary support team
 - WARNS report suggests the student shows relative risk/need in one of the domains
 - You have selected a vignette for that domain
- Read the vignette
 - How does this story resonate? Are you familiar with this student?
- What supports are in place to help this student? What would you like to have?
 - Universal
 - Targeted
 - Individual
- Small-group discussions for 15-20 minutes, large-group debrief

Debrief and Discussion

- General Observations Discussions
- What are some school/community supports that you discussed at the various MTSS tiers (e.g., universal, targeted, individual)?
 - Briefly describe your vignette
- How could you envision these kinds of case studies being utilized in your school? Do they fit within an MTSS framework?
- Any other comments?



Conclusion and Summary

Conclusion/Summary

- School engagement and attendance is increasingly an important area of attention and focus for schools and communities.
- Since 2008, WARNS has been used to support courts and schools in identifying and addressing barriers to school attendance and engagement; and targets six key researched informed domains linked to chronic absenteeism.
- A recent grant from the U.S. Department of Education has informed further development and validation efforts of WARNS to enhance it's use and implementation; including, the creation of Vignettes that are intended to facilitate opportunities for students and school staff.
- Together, we are all invested in supporting school engagement and attendance, and doing so through an MTSS framework may lead to improved outcomes!

Thank you!
Questions?

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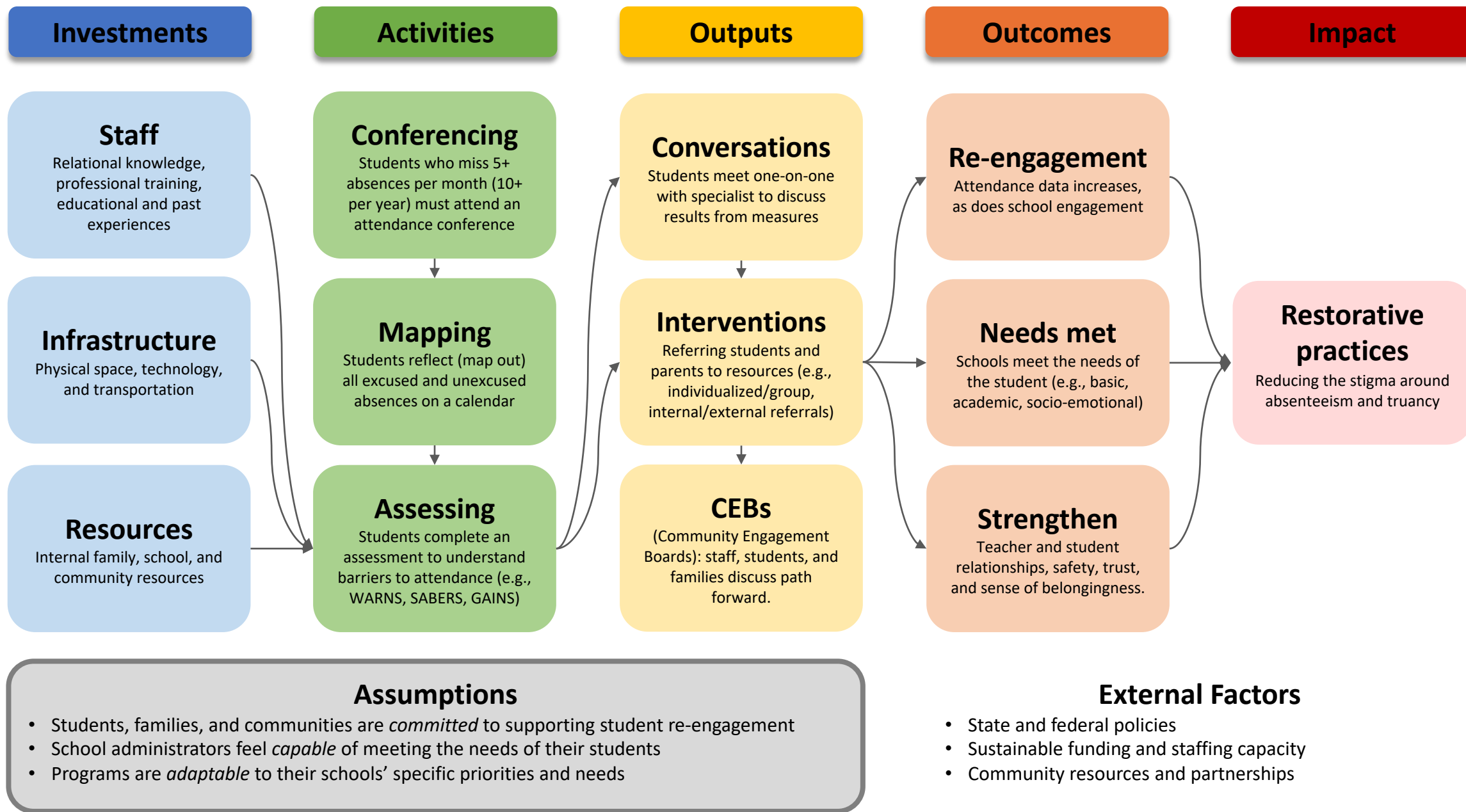
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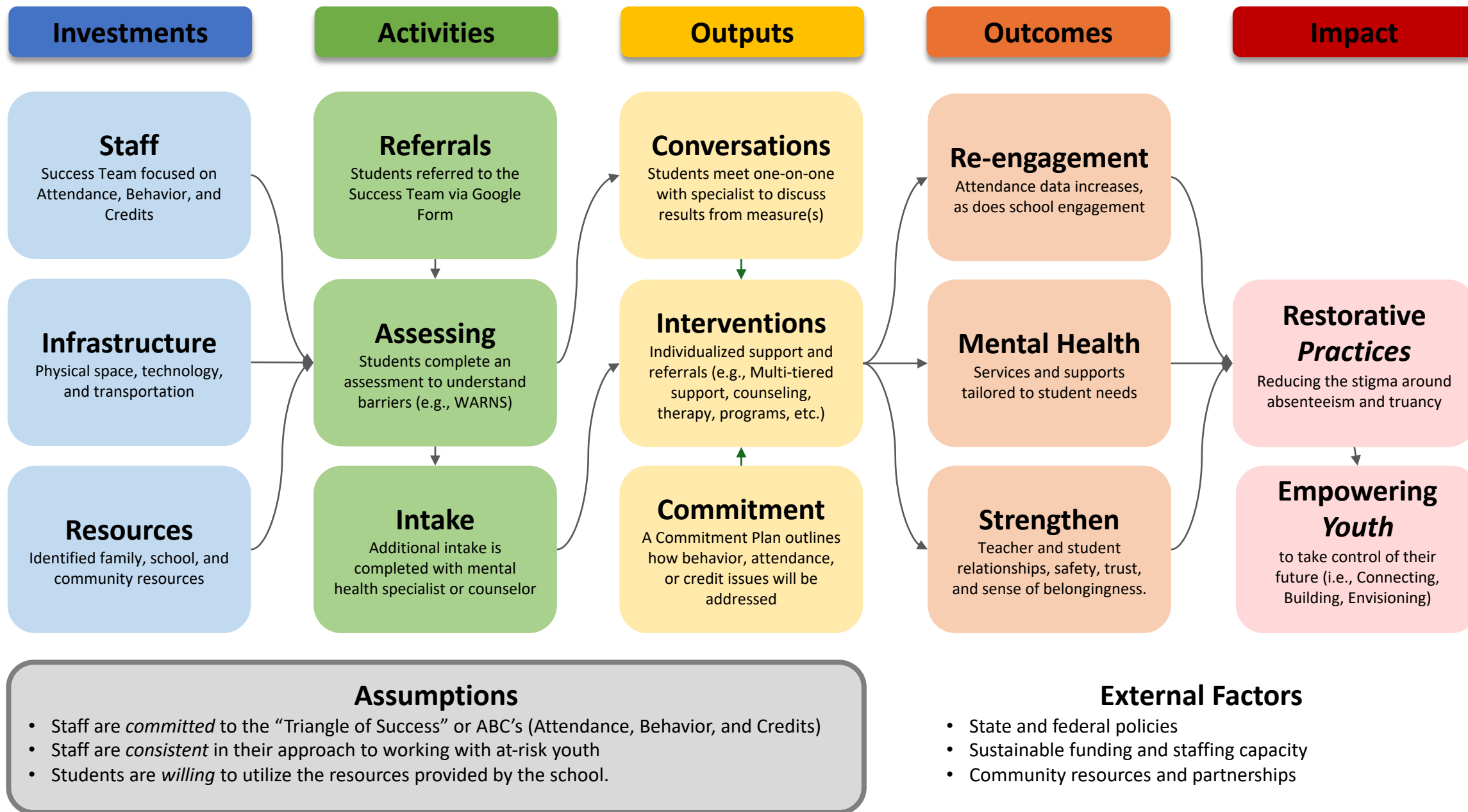
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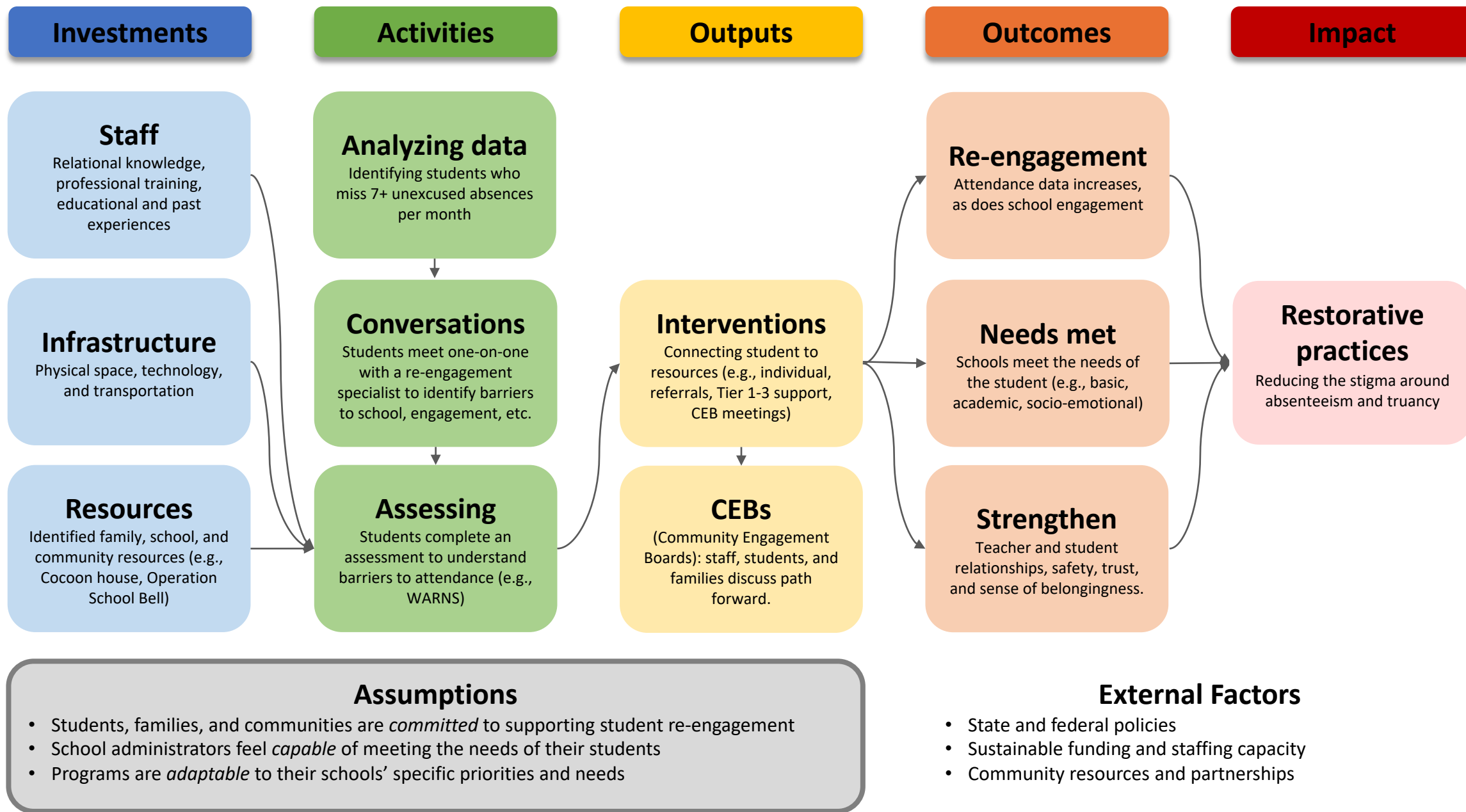
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Additional Resources







Why is School Attendance and Engagement Important?

- Factors associated with chronic absenteeism:
 - Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, students with chronic health conditions, students with disabilities, and students who are Black or Hispanic are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism (Chang & Romero, 2008; Dubay & Holla, 2015; Ehrlich et al., 2018; Gottfried, 2014)
 - Additional factors include school-related stress, low motivation, low school belonging, exposure to violence, and family responsibilities (Ad Council, 2015; Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Ramirez et al., 2012)