

THURSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Every Student, Every Day

Our continuous improvement journey





Improving chronic absenteeism rates

A multi-year focus, from the 2021–22 pandemic peak to today

The pandemic left a mark

In 2021–22, 1 in 7 Thurston students was chronically absent.

Attendance predicts the future

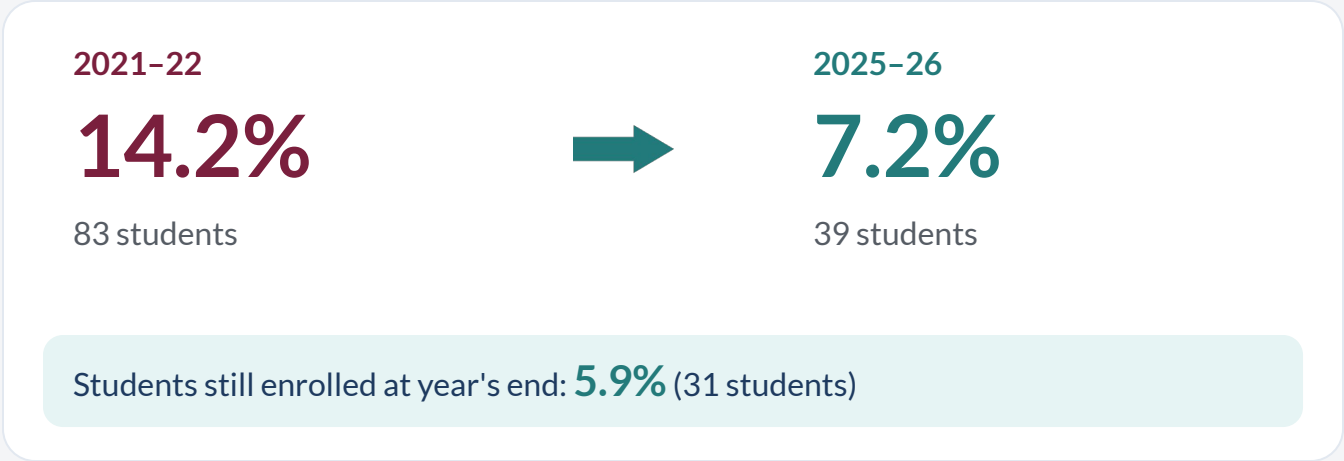
Along with grades, it's the best predictor of high school success, graduation and college readiness.

Belonging starts with being here

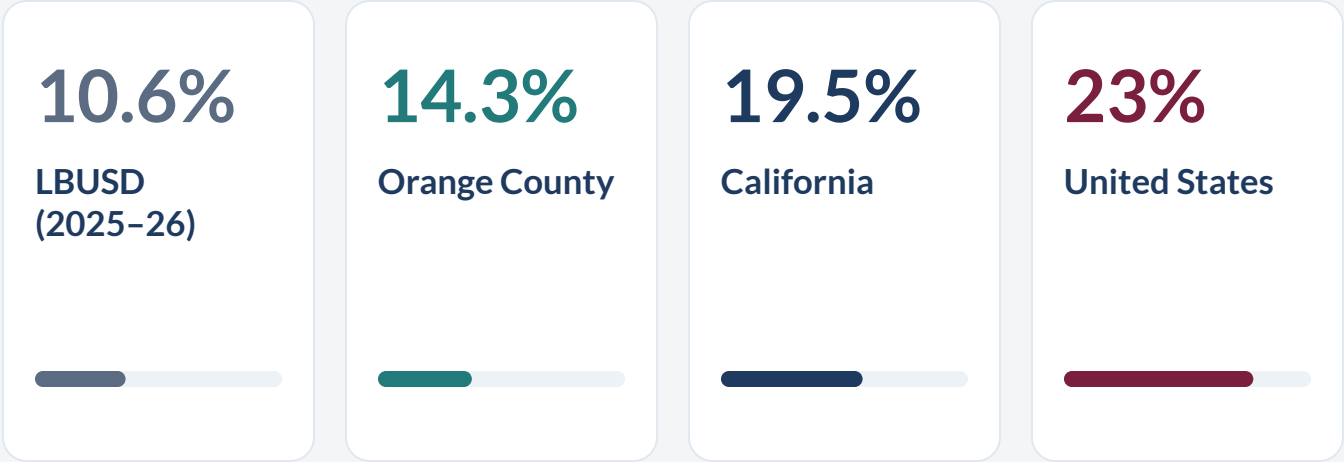
Missed days mean missed instruction, opportunities to strengthen peer relationships and time with trusted adults.

OUR ATTENDANCE STORY BY THE NUMBERS

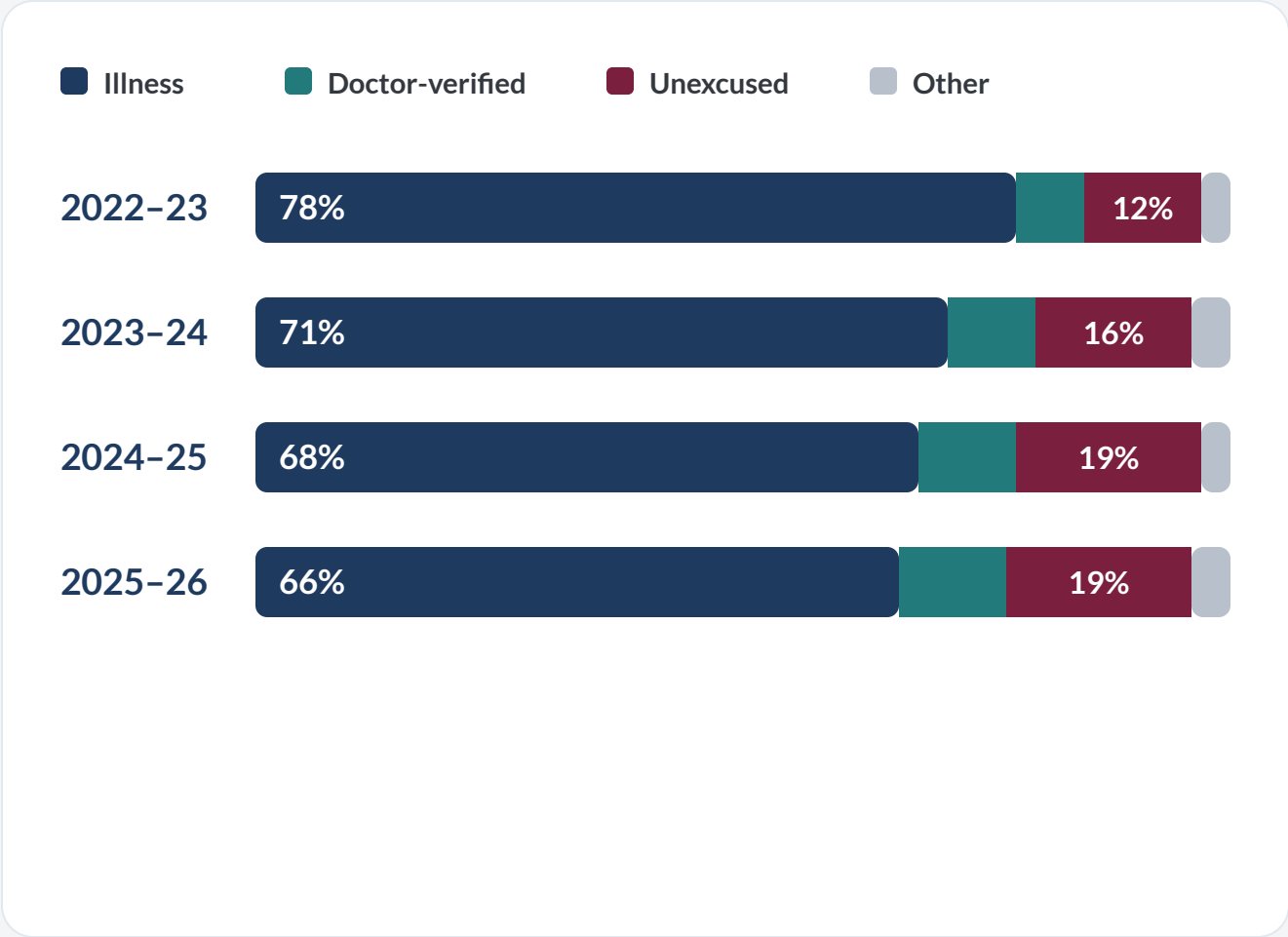
Chronic absenteeism at Thurston nearly cut in half



BENCHMARK COMPARISON (2024-25)



What keeps students home



Illness is still #1

Physical and mental health remain the top reason, though the share fell from 78% to 66%.

TREND: 12% drop over 4 years

Unexcused days rose

Mostly family travel: 510 days in 2022-23, 682 in 2025-26.

SOLUTION: Independent Study is our answer

Source: LBUUSD Aeries absence reason codes, Thurston, 2022-23 through 2025-26

We ask “why?” before anything else



Can't come

Illness, mental health, transportation, family needs



Won't come

Stress, anxiety, conflict, a hard class



Don't see why

Feeling disconnected, or not realizing the days add up



OUR ACTION

Then we build a **personal plan** with the family, with one step each and a date to check back.



OUR APPROACH · KNOWING EVERY STUDENT

Students who feel known show up

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Connectedness is #1. Feeling connected to school is the strongest school-climate predictor of attendance.

A caring adult makes the difference. When an adult at school regularly checks in, chronically absent students attend about two more weeks a year.

Small moments count. A personal greeting at the start of school, or at the classroom door, boosts engagement in class.

93%

named a trusted adult
at school

57%

want a fist bump or high
five

54%

want to be greeted by
name



Sources: Counseling and Copying Lessons and Student Survey, Fall 2026 (398 students); Thurston Student Stories, fall 2026 (484 students);

OUR APPROACH • FOSTERING INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Kids come to school when they belong



90%

have supportive
adult relationships

88%

have at least one
trusted adult

91%

say help is there
when they need it

How Thurston builds belonging

130+

Mindful Moments
in Advisement

~80

visits a month
to The Cove

6,300+

counseling contacts
last year

86

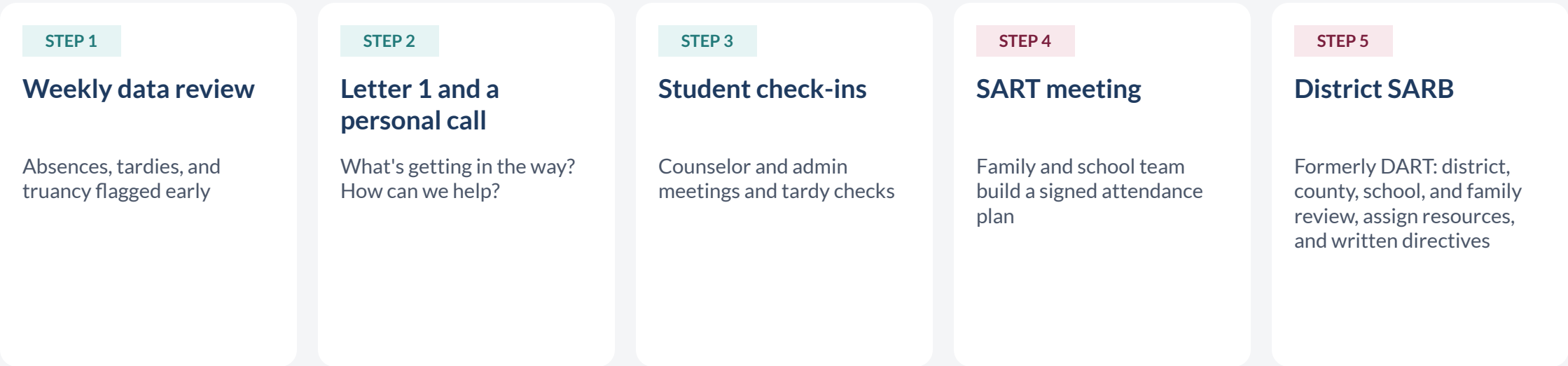
restorative
circles

Plus: Empathy in Action • Unity Week • PAL Mentoring • Cove Crew leaders

Source: Thurston SPSA 2026 (Thurston student survey results and site data, 2025–26)

Weekly data review drives every step

- Attendance clerk
- Principal & AP
- Counselors
- Social worker
- Teacher TOSA
- Teachers
- District & community partners



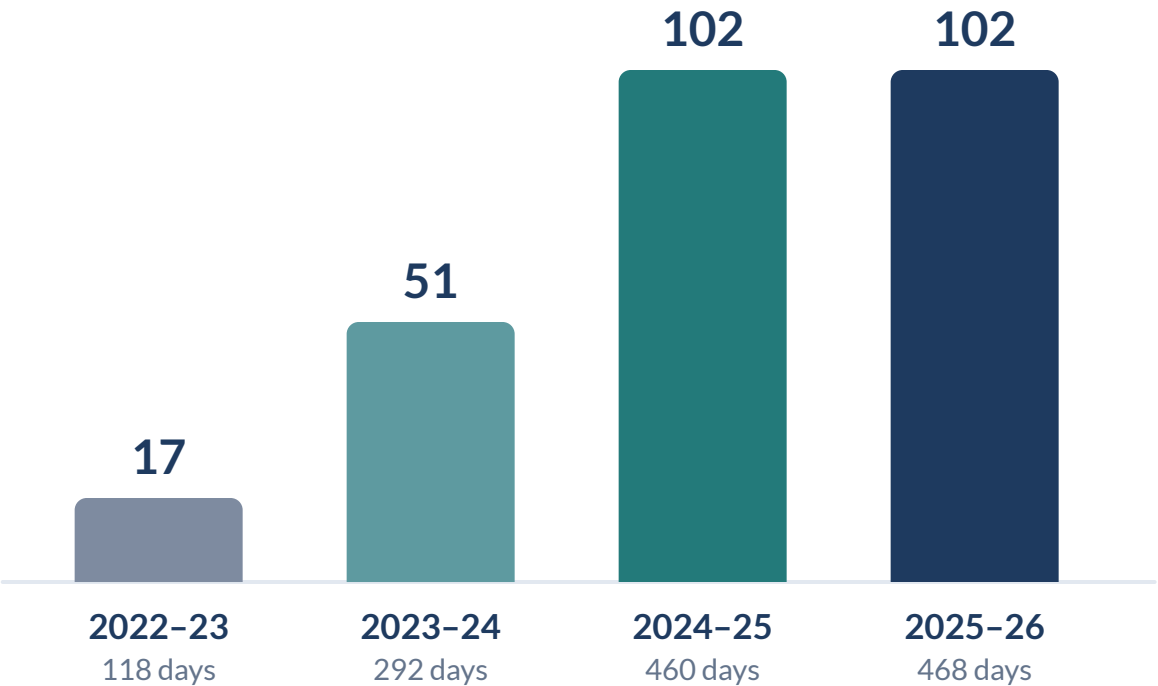
OUTREACH IMPACT BY YEAR

2023–24 141 letters 12 SARTs 2 DARTs	2024–25 318 letters 14 SARTs	2025–26 275+ family contacts 45+ meetings & contracts 4 DARTs
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Sources: Thurston attendance records; LBUUSD School Attendance Handbook 2026–27

Turning trips into learning days for attendance recovery

Students completing short-term Independent Study each year



6x

more students than in 2022-23

468 days

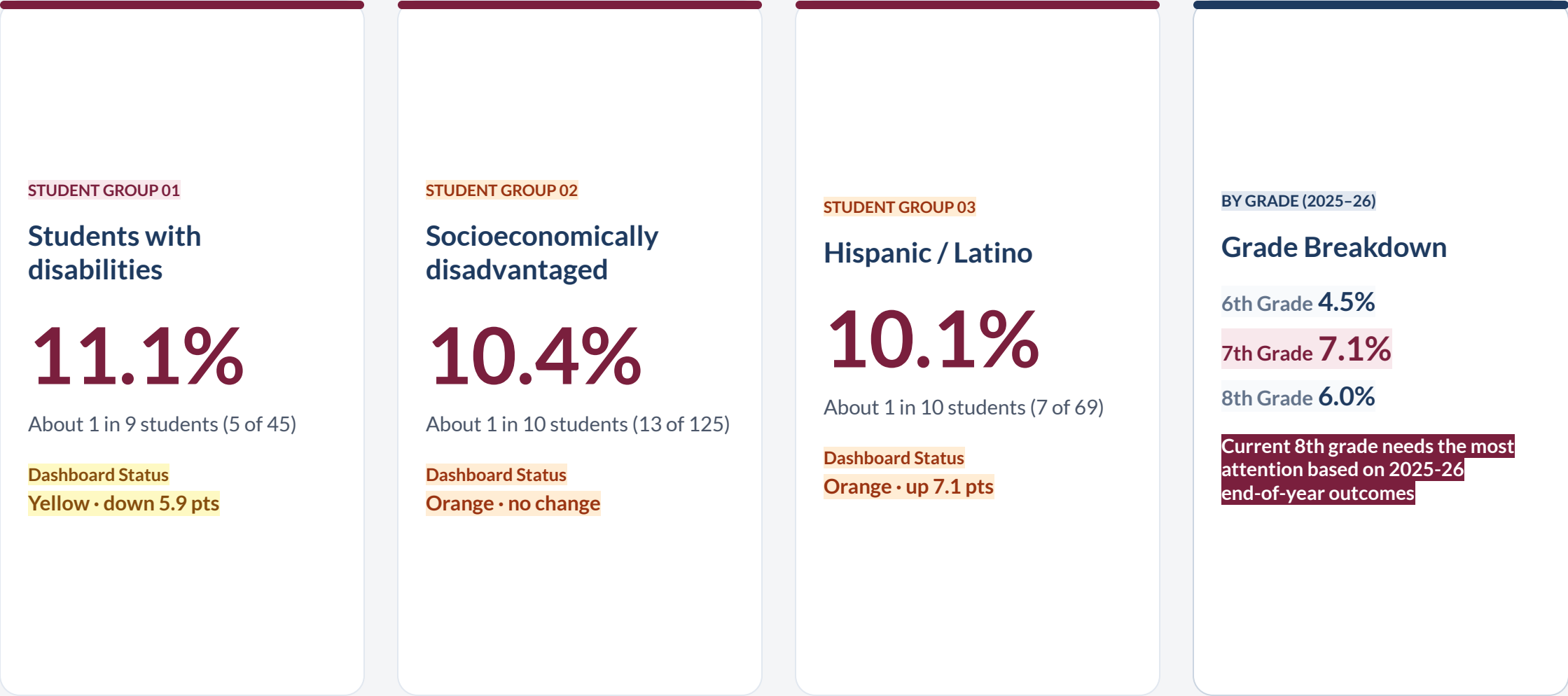
of planned absence became learning

13

students kept under 18 absences (2024-25)

Source: Thurston Independent Study records (students completing teacher-certified work)

Three student groups aren't there yet



What's next for Thurston

2026-27 GOAL

Below 5%

ACTION 01

Close the gaps

Case management for students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students and 7th graders

ACTION 02

A trusted adult for every student

Starting with students who couldn't name one in their Student Story

ACTION 03

Welcome students in transition

A connection plan for every new enrollee, and fast outreach when a family moves

ACTION 04

Reach out earlier

Outreach before 3 and 6 absences, Independent Study for planned trips, District SARB when needed

Thank you

to the Thurston Attendance Team

Attendance clerk • Administrators • Counselors • Social worker • Teacher TOSA
Teachers • Families • District & Orange County partners



Every student, every day.