Bridging Attendance & Special Needs: One Trusted Adult

One Trusted Adult
Pilot Implementation
2025-26

Stamford Public Schools
Corine Matarasso

TOQUAM
Believe • Achieve • Succeed

Goal: To create a **culturally responsive and inclusive** environment for **all students** to i**ncrease their attendance and improve academic success**

Vision: **All** students and families will feel **supported** by school staff and **increase the desire to attend school and succeed.**

Mission: to assure **every child receives the appropriate culturally responsive supports** which will result in an **increased desire to attend school**

Attendance & Academic Impact

Attendance **directly impacts learning**, through **missed instruction** which results in **increased deficit of academic skills**

Students with special needs can experience a **disproportionate impact** due to missed specialized instruction.

Potential reasons for chronic absenteeism among students with special needs:

- Health issues
- Anxiety/Sensory Overload
- Lack of specialized transportation
- Difficulty with transitions
- Bullying
- Lack of engaging instruction
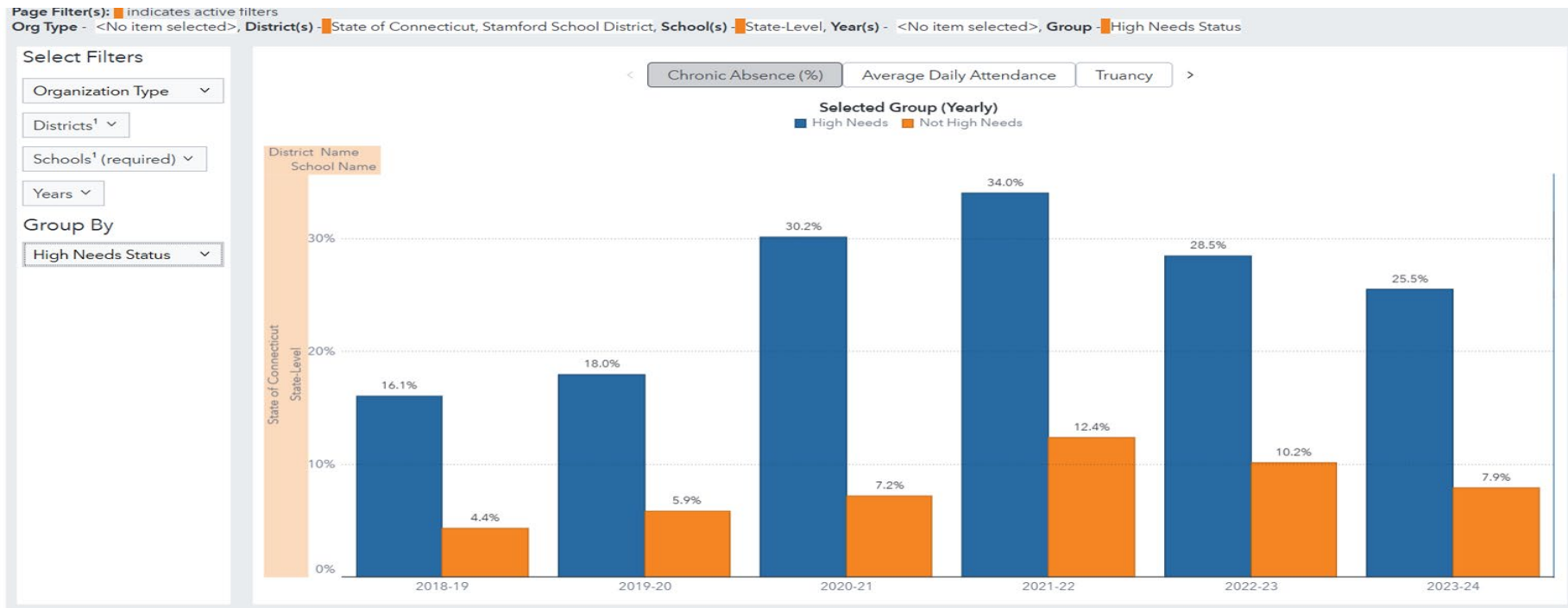
Attendance & Our Students

District concerned about numbers that increased:
High needs student population increased over 10% from 2020 - 02024 almost double the state growth.

| District | High Needs (F/R, EL or SWD) | Chronically Absent | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 2019-20 | | 2020-21 | | 2021-22 | | 2022-23 | | 2023-24 | |
		Student Count	%	Student Count	%	Student Count	%	Student Count	%	Student Count	%
Stamford School District	High Needs	1,815	16.9	2,622	26.4	3,110	30.3	2,876	28.2	2,979	27.7
	Non-High Needs	461	8.2	418	7.1	786	13.8	708	12.3	669	12.1

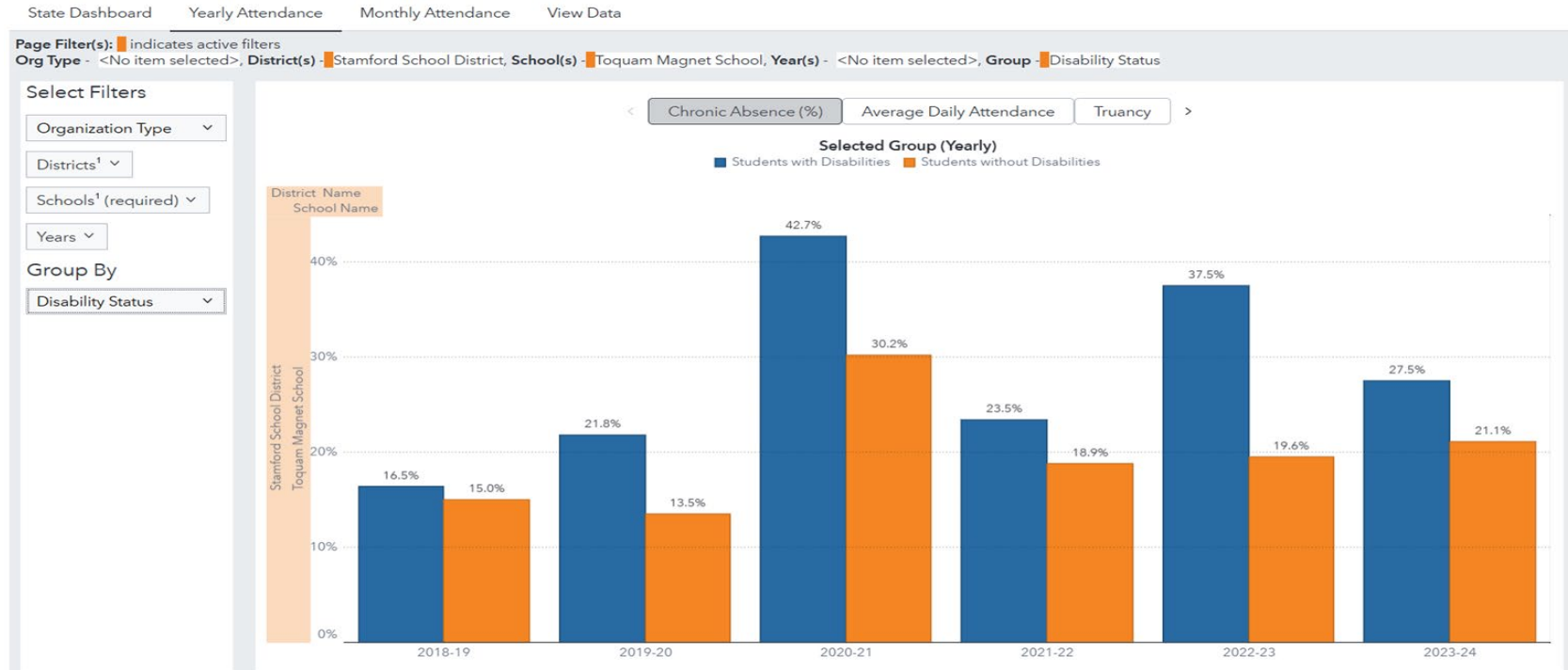# State of CT Chronic Absence High Needs /Not High Needs

Toquam Magnet School Chronic Absenteeism by Disability Status
Prior to COVID students with disabilities had a chronic absentee rate of 16.5. It is still elevated by over 10%

Toquam Magnet Chronic Absence High Needs/Not High Needs
Chronic absenteeism remains elevated for all students in Toquam

Trusted Adult Pilot - Grades 3-5

To ensure **every student** has at least **one trusted adult** in the school building—someone they feel safe with, supported by, and connected to.

🎯 **Goals**

- Build strong, consistent adult-student relationships.

- Create a school culture grounded in trust, empathy, and emotional safety.

- Equip staff with tools to be **intentional**, **available**, and **culturally sensitive** adults.

- Improve student sense of belonging and connection.

- Sustain social-emotional learning through daily practice.

Action Plan to Implement One Trusted Adult

August: Foundation Building
- Convocation: Kick Off Teachers tour community and Toquam District
- Toquam Monthly Parent Meeting - Community Resources/Parent Facilitator
- Set up Attendance Brag Tags - onboarding for new staff
- Schedule monthly Attendance Committee meetings and phone tree
- Analyze Data and Identify at risk students
- Send One pager to all Parents

September: Professional Development
- Culturally Responsive PD for Staff/One Trusted Adult PD for Staff
- SEL Mini-lesson in classrooms
- Open House for Parents- Explain OTA Initiative
- Plan dates for reminder letters and calls

October: Implementation of OTA
- One Trusted Adult Student Survey Administration - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1q-2cv8aqGfGiQ1TNCPQdgGmGWgVezmwrybHz7tDzBs8/edit
- Celebrate Attendance: All families

November: Community & Culture
- Trusted Adult Mapping
- Family Event to Celebrate Attendance: All families BRAG TAGS

December - February: Building Relationships
- Morning Greetings /Classroom Trust Rituals
- Monthly OTA Staff Activity
- Monthly Attendance Meetings to identify chronically absent students
- Family Meetings for students with 5 or more absences

March- April: Measuring Impact
- Analyze data for growth areas and celebrations
- Recognize Staff and Students

May-June: Celebrations and Sustainability
- Brag Tag - Bicycle Raffle
- Identify chronically absent students

Sustainability

The pilot lays the foundation for long-term cultural change—integrating OTA into daily practices, professional learning, and schoolwide SEL efforts.

Creating a strong sense of belonging and a genuine desire to attend school fosters emotional safety and connection, which in turn enhances student engagement and leads to greater academic success.