



**NCSE**

National Center for School Engagement

**Data to Drive Decisions:  
School Attendance, Truancy  
and Juvenile Crime in Denver**

**April 28, 2006**

# Creative Options Planning Process

**I Exploration:** To document the history and context using existing data, input from each stakeholder group and current policy/legislative opportunities or limitations.

**II Mapping of Resources and Gaps:** To present findings from the exploratory phase as a catalyst for long term planning.



# Creative Options Planning Process, Con't.

**III Summit:** To expand the stakeholder group and to learn about promising programs and practices in order to focus efforts in Denver across systems.

**IV Resource Development:** To raise funds to support implementation of the strategic plan.



# Exploratory Methods

- Interviews with key stakeholders (school, court, human services, city, community)
- Focus groups with students, parents and teachers
- Secondary data collection and analysis from DPS, DDHS, Judicial and law enforcement

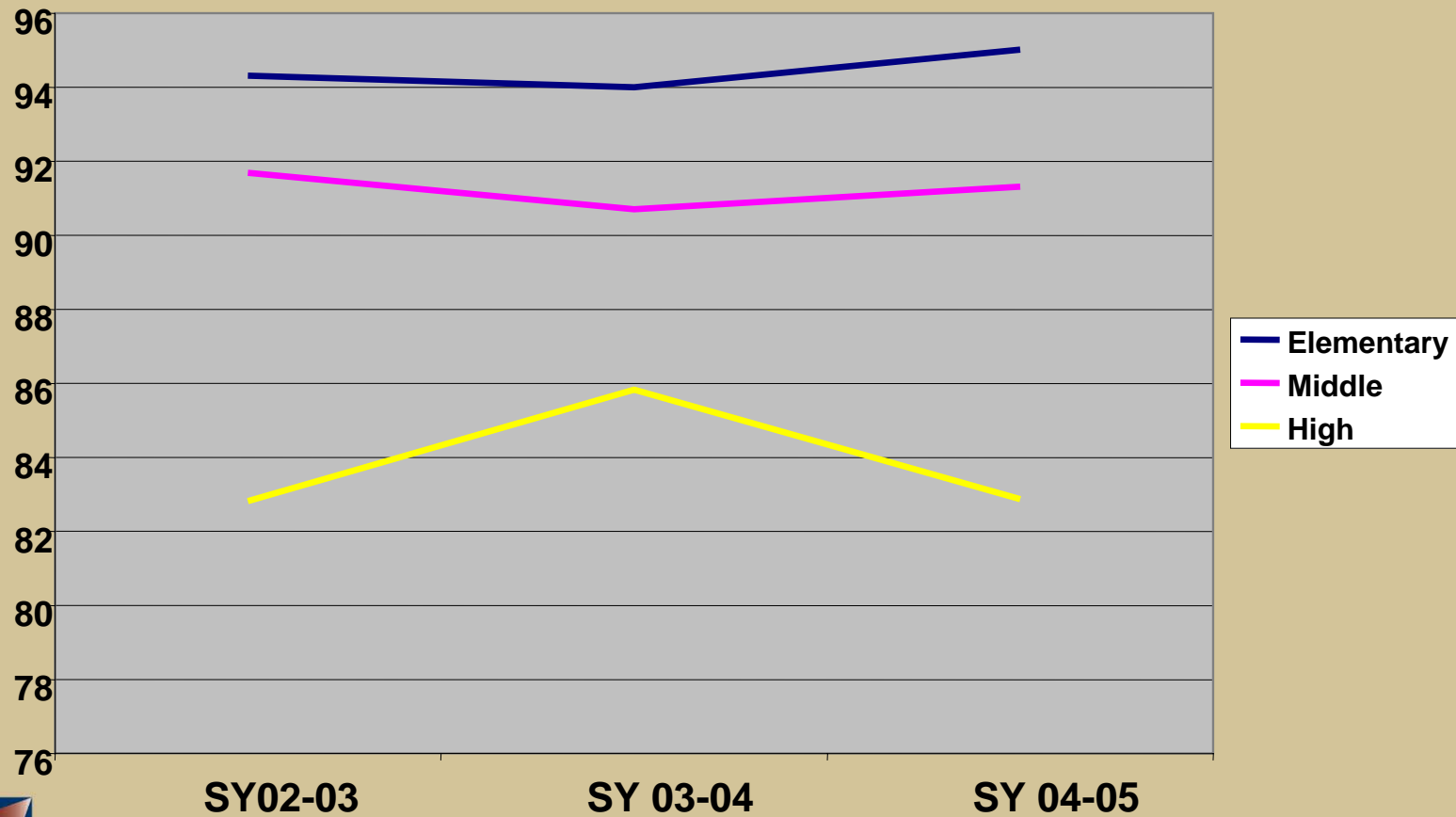


# Prevalence of Truancy in Denver



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# Mean of Student Average Daily Attendance by School Level



Source: Accountability Reports - CDE Website

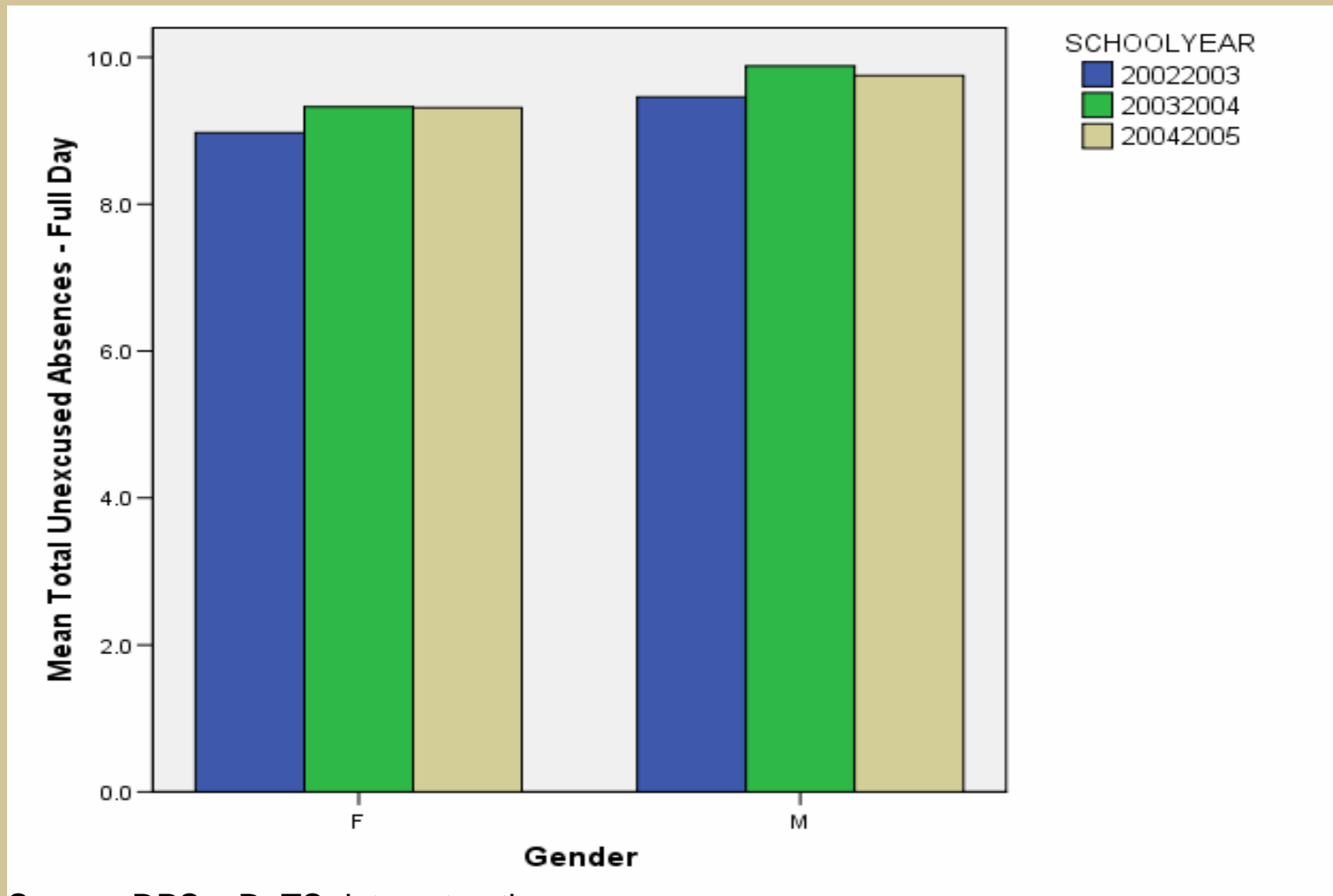
# Average Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

School Year	Absence Type	School Level		
		Elementary	Middle	High
02-03	Excused	6	8.3	8.9
	Unexcused	5.7	8.5	16.5
	Total	11.7	16.8	25.4
03-04	Excused	6.3	8.8	8.6
	Unexcused	5.6	7.9	17.7
	Total	12	16.6	26.4
04-05	Excused	6.3	8.6	8.5
	Unexcused	5.7	8.7	16.8
	Total	12	17.3	25.3



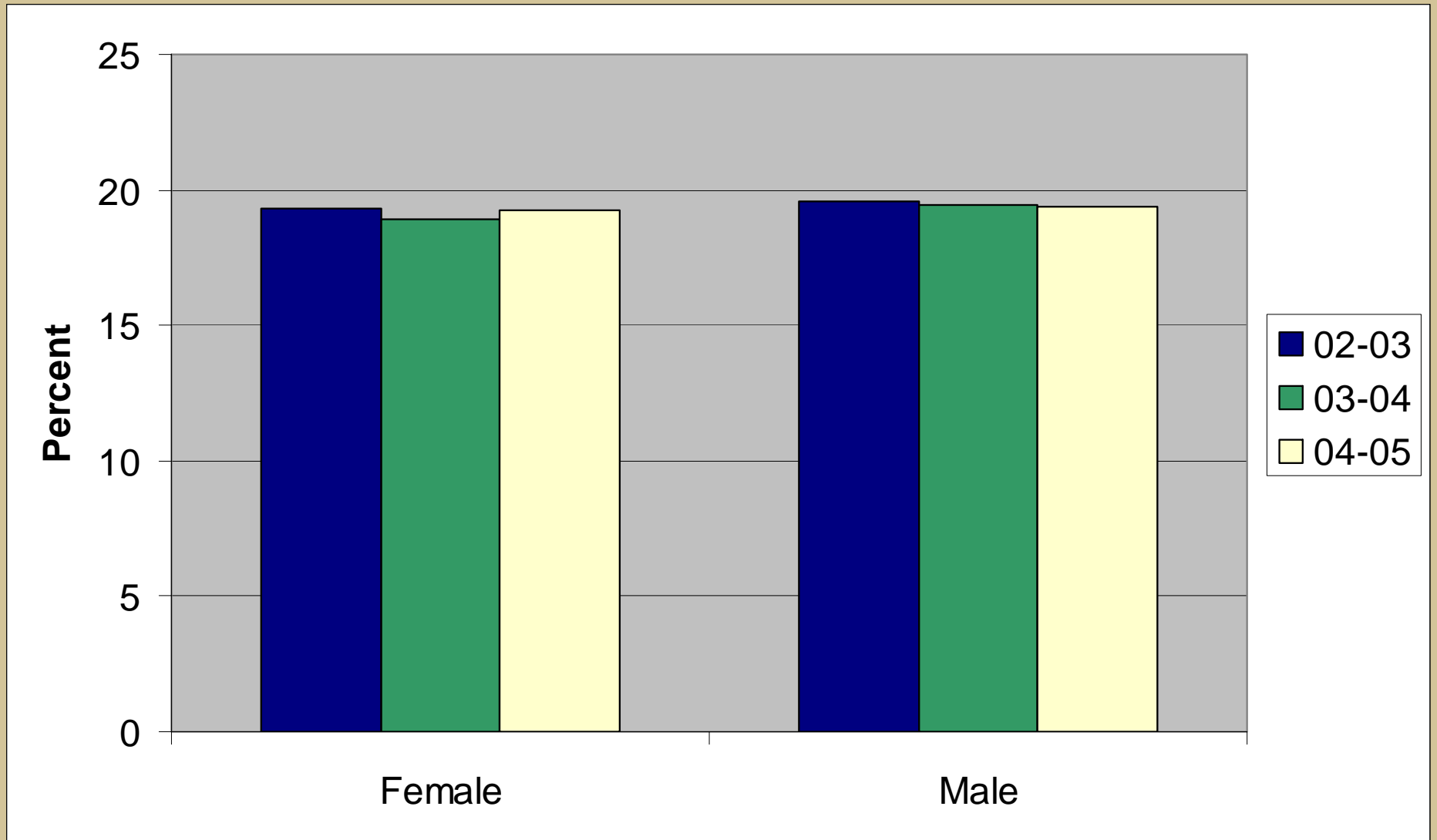
Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Average Unexcused Absences by Gender



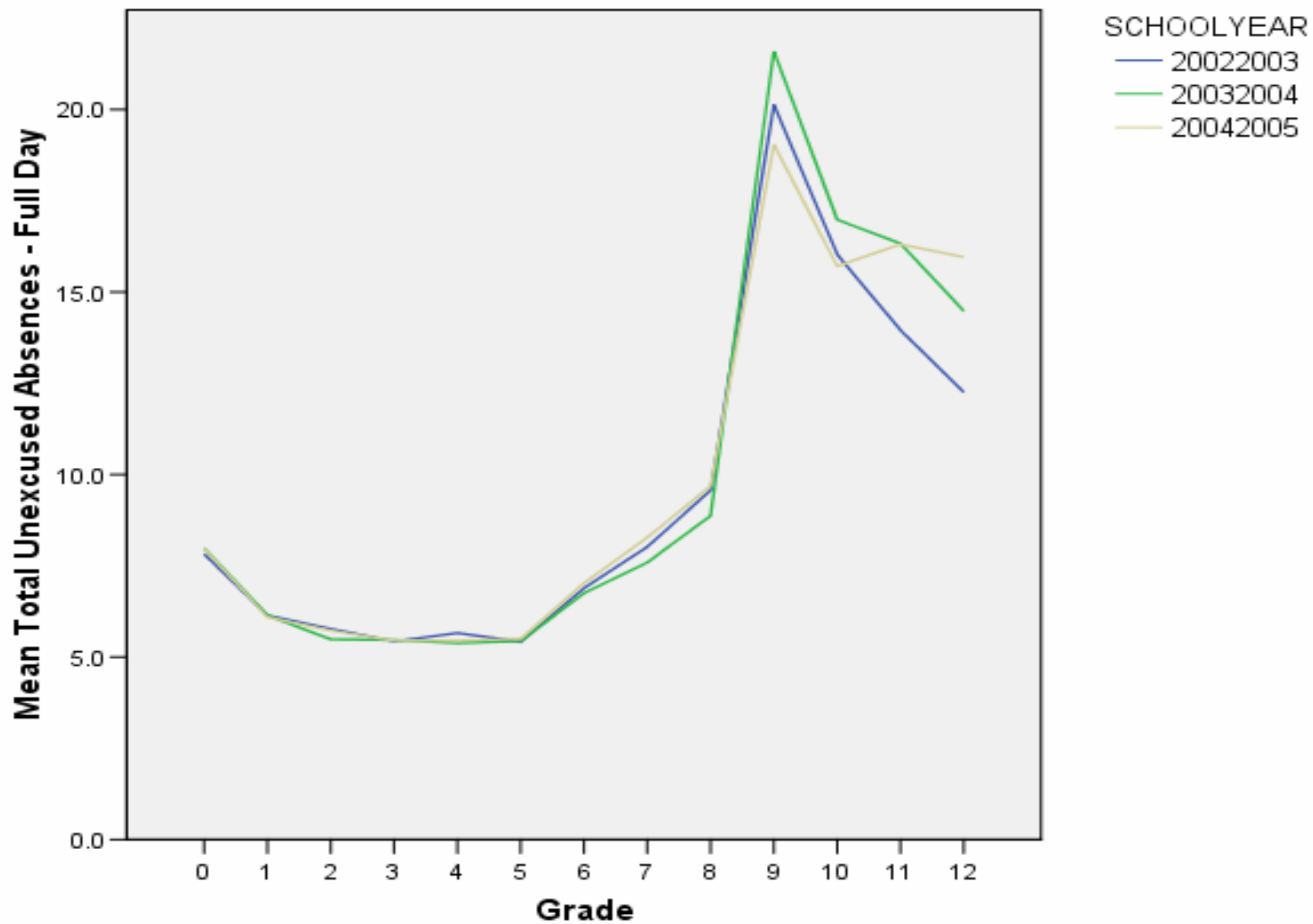
Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Percent of Chronic Truants by Gender

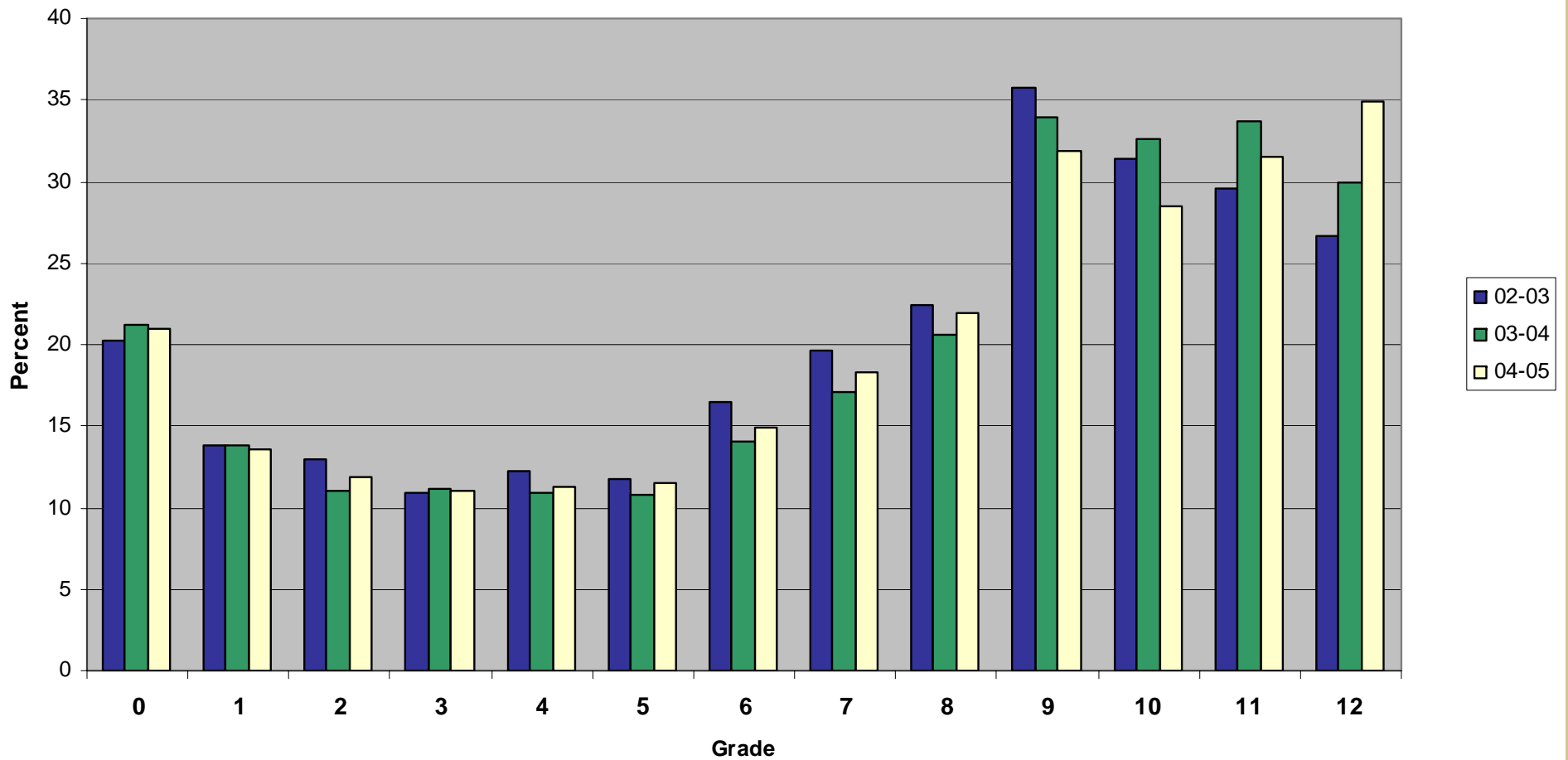


Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Average Unexcused Absences by Grade

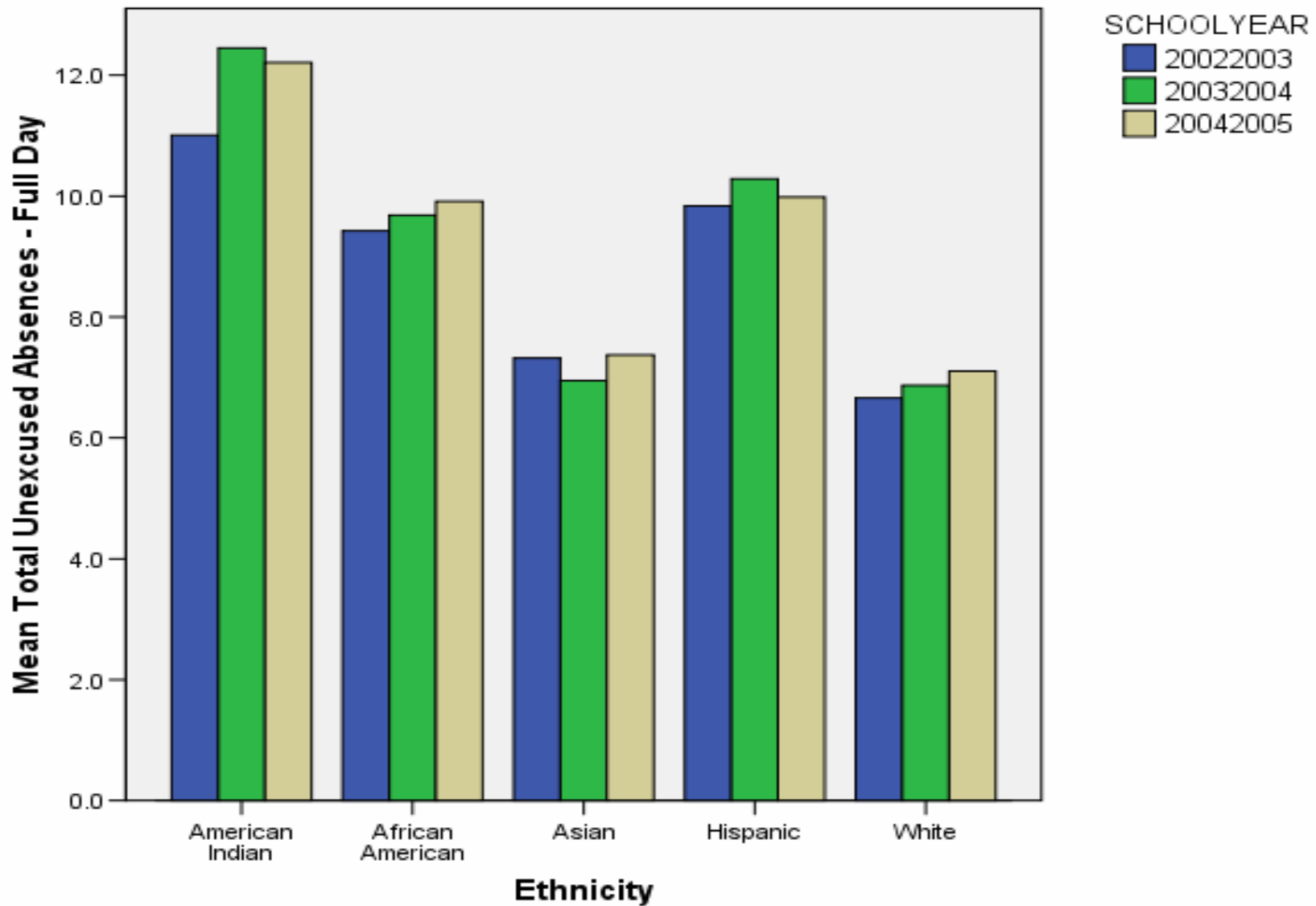


# Percent of Chronic Truants by Grade



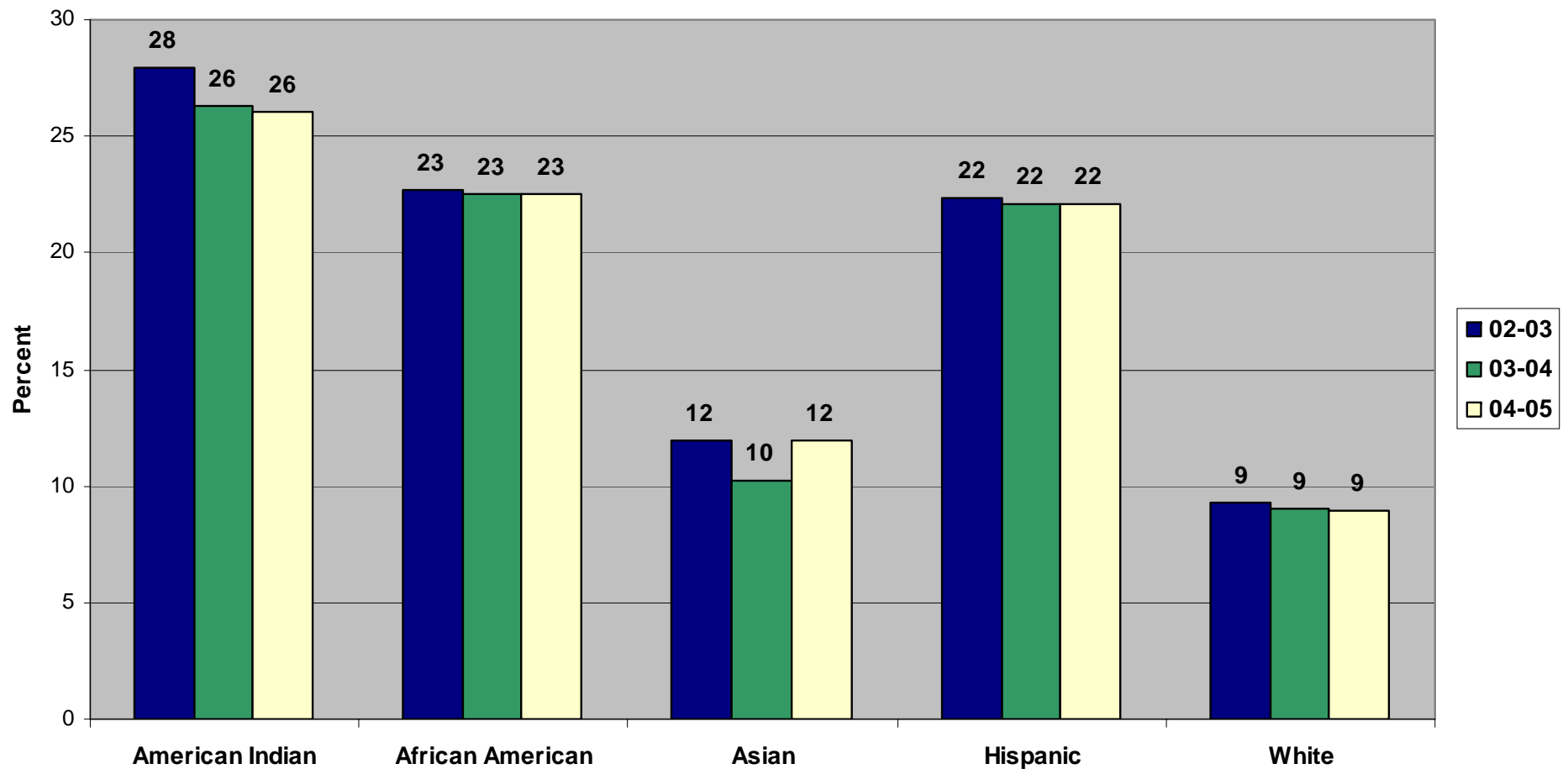
Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Average Unexcused Absence by Ethnicity



Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Percent of Chronic Truants by Ethnicity



Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

## Percent of Chronic Truants and their Exit Status

- Approximately 60 % of students who left DPS for juvenile incarceration were chronically truant.
- Approximately 60% of students who were expelled from DPS were chronically truant.
- Approximately 20% of students who left to be home schooled were chronically truant.
- Approximately 16 % of students who attended more than one school in a school year are chronically truant.



Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

## Percent of Chronic Truants who Drop Out

- Approximately 13% of student whose exit code was “mutual consent (under the age 16)”, “runaway or other causes”, or “no trace of enrollment in another school” were chronically truant.
- Approximately 50 % of students whose exit code was “dropout” were chronically truant.



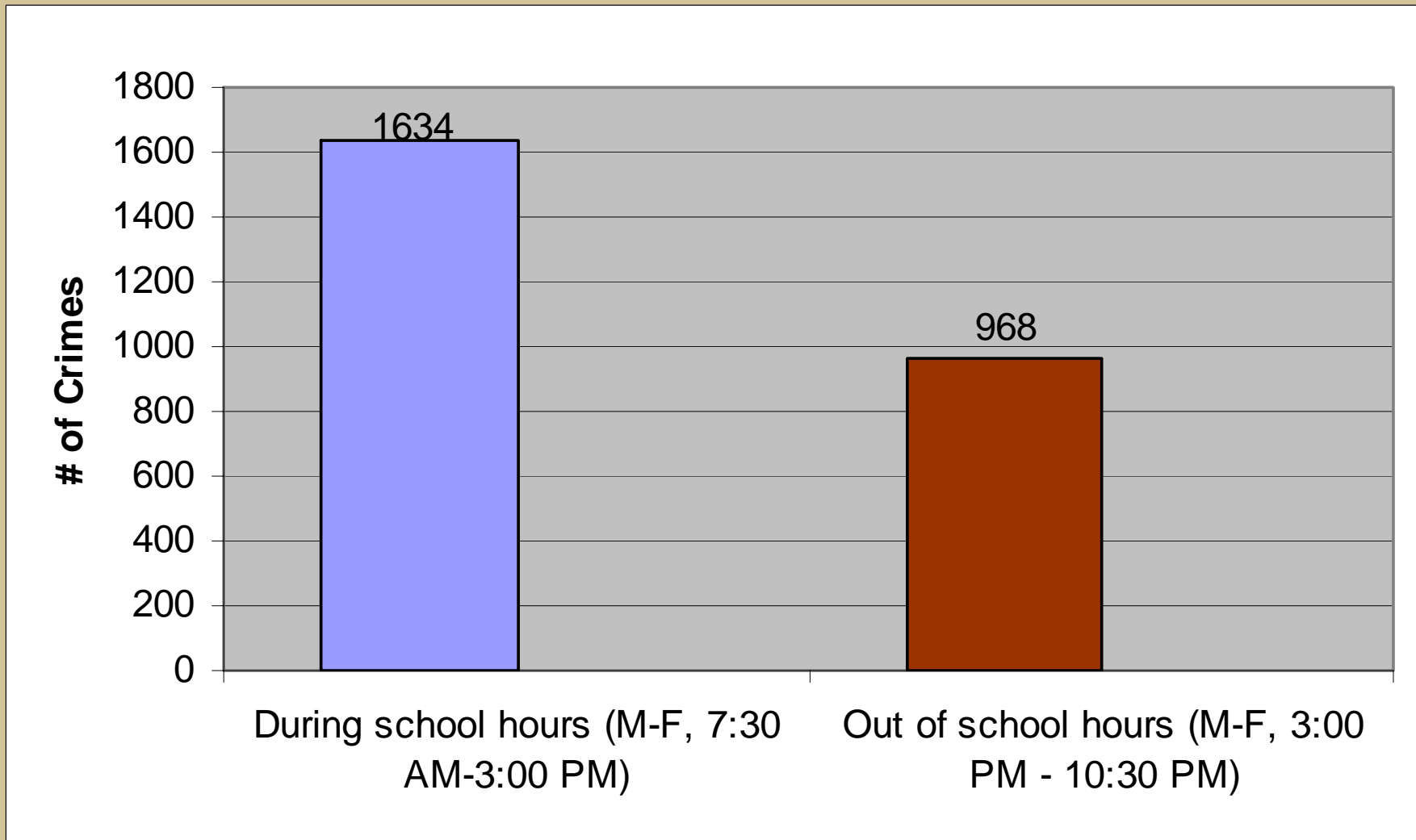
Source: DPS – DoTS data extraction

# Community Effects of Truancy



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## Incidents of Crime by Youth (10-17) School Year 04-05



Source: National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

# Quotes from Focus Groups

“Because the last time he left school he brought a friend and that friend, another day, came to my house to rob us with three other children.”

~Parent

“Basically, I can’t say what I do when I am not in school.”

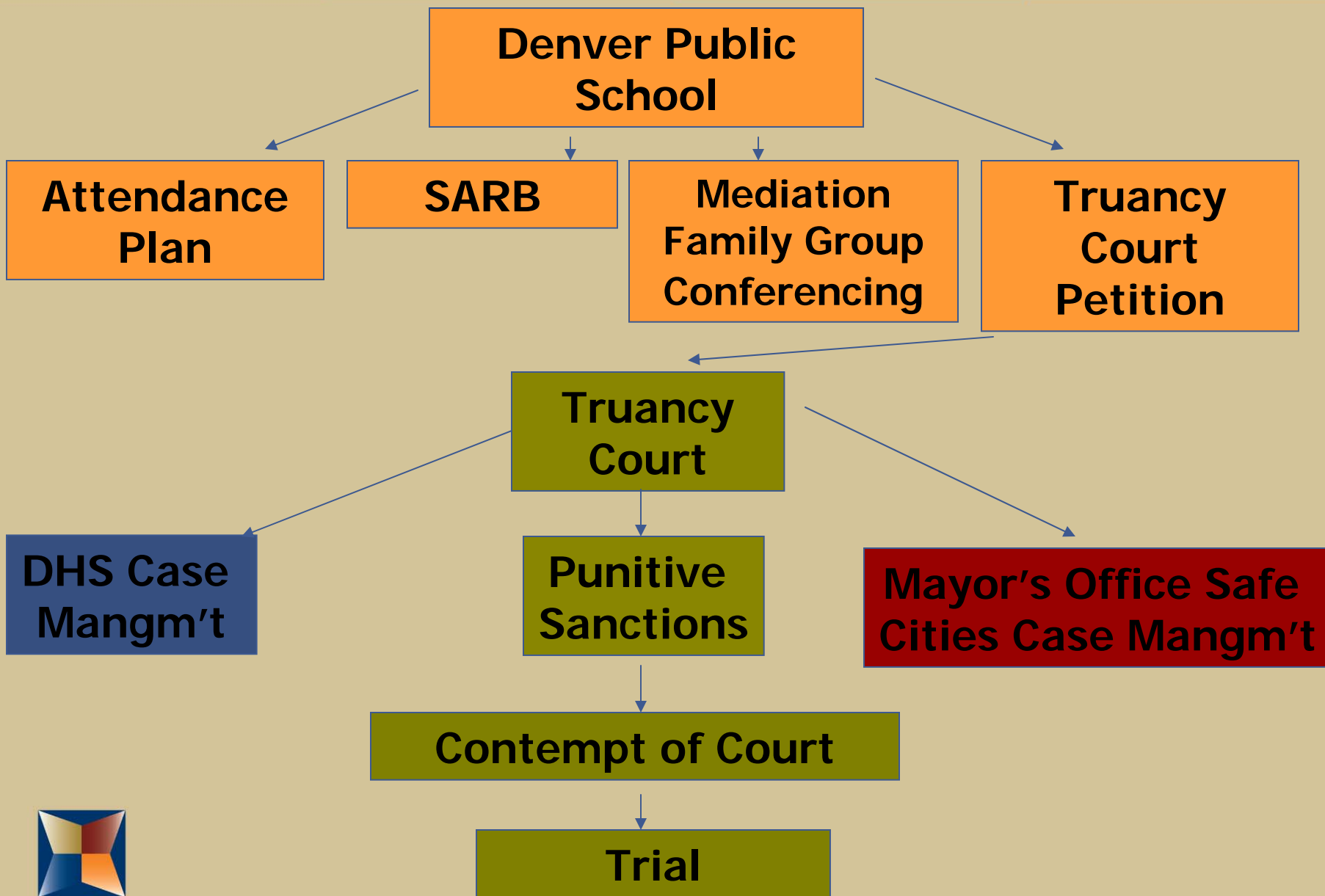
~ Student



# Truancy Interventions in Denver



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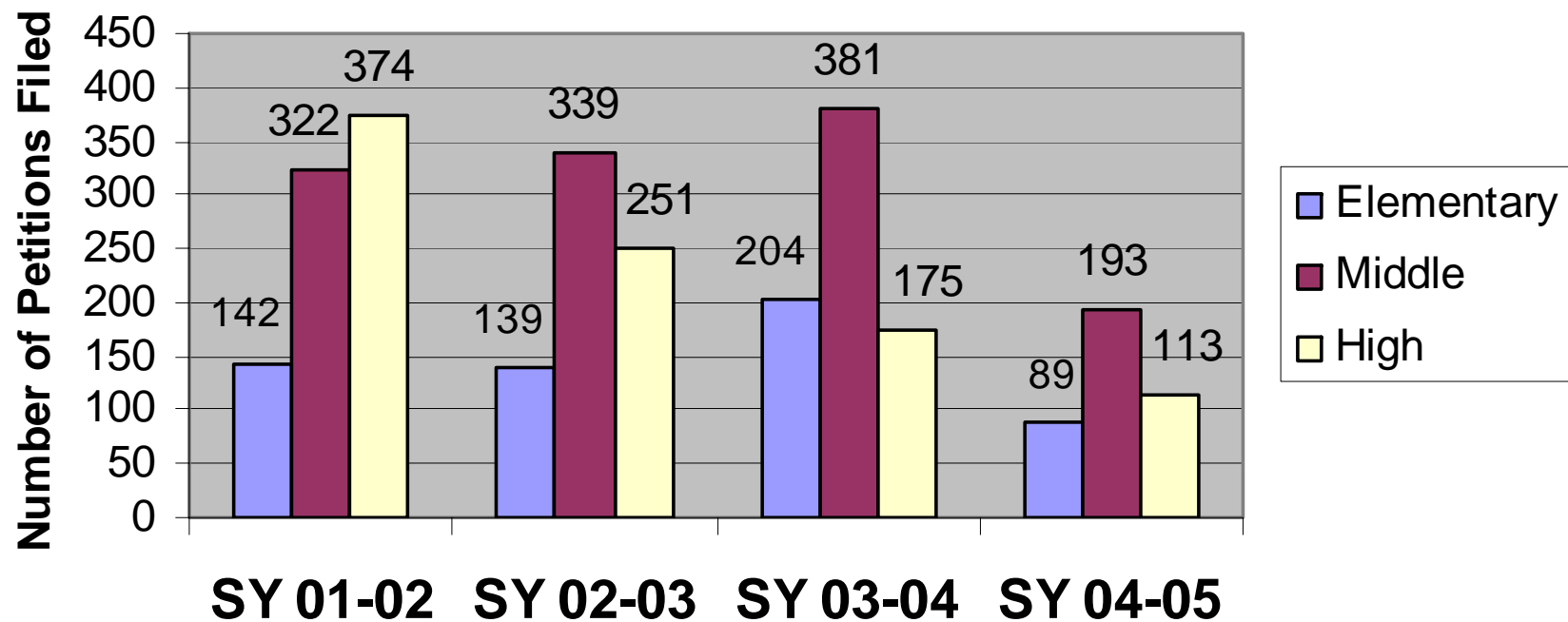
**Approximate % of Chronically Truant  
Students who get an intervention beyond a  
phone call or letter\***

	<b>School Level</b>		
<b>School Year</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>
02-03	5%	12%	9%
03-04	6%	17%	7%
04-05	4%	16%	8%



Source: DPS - Social Work Services and Legal

## Total Petitions by School Level



Source: DPS – Social Work Services and Legal

## DDHS - 1997-2005 School Year Statistics

School Year	Cases Heard	Open to DDHS	Cases		
			Cases referred to DDHS	Referred to Communtiy Resources	D&N Order
1997-98	1395	259	116	53	17
98-99	1641	350	100	129	39
99-00	1796	360	83	165	29
2000-01	1365	193	62	194	14
01-02 (Fall)	583	114	48	119	1
02-03	Missing information due to administrative changes				
03-04	Missing information due to administrative changes				
04-05	855	149	82	176	9



Source: DDHS – Susan Radaelli, MSW

# No Consequences



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# What youth say about consequences:

*“I don’t do my [attendance] contract, I just throw it away. They don’t work.”*

*“They will put you on contract, but they don’t really do nothing if you don’t go to class.”*

*“They don’t enforce it [the contract]. They never ask you about it, so why do it?”*

*“They catch you outside and they just say ‘go back to class’, but it’s not like you will.”*

*“They try to scare you by saying you will go to juvenile detention, but it doesn’t scare me.”*



# What parents say about consequences:

*“They suspend kids who ditch school, which I thought was really dumb because now they are out of school WITH permission.”*

*“The actions taken by the school did not match what was written in the school handbook.”*

*“Truancy court is an inconvenience for me, but it is more of a convenience for the school.”*

*“My daughter would think the ankle bracelet was cool; she would show it off. It would get her to school, but she wouldn’t do the work.”*



# What teachers say about consequences:

*“We have no consequences.”*

*“It is not only a matter of consequences, it is also the enforcement of them.”*

*“The court process is overwhelmed. It is literally a one year process from the time they get referred to when they actually appear before a judge. It takes too long.”*

*”There needs to be an immediate, significant consequence.”*

*“Sometimes they ditch and get suspended. What is up with that? THAT is exactly what they want.”*

*“After the 5 day letter is sent, the district may request a court hearing. That doesn’t always happen consistently.”*



# Key Points

- Trends over the last 3 years are consistent.
- Approx. 30% of high schoolers, 20 % of middle schoolers and 14% of elementary students are chronically truant. Unexcused absences increase with grade level.
- Average unexcused absences peak in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Very few students who are chronically truant get an intervention beyond a phone call or letter.
- Students, parents, teachers, and professionals agree that there are few consequences.



# Visit NCSE's Truancy Website

[www.schoolengagement.org](http://www.schoolengagement.org)

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