



PRESS RELEASE

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Continued High Levels of Chronic Absence, With Some Improvements, Require Action

January 16, 2025 – Newly released data from the U.S. Department of Education shows that chronic absence slightly declined in the 2022-23 school year but remains at historically high levels. The persistence of absenteeism is an urgent call for educators at every level to address an issue that continues to erode academic achievement and put students everywhere at greater risk of dropping out.

The national data released by the U.S. Department of Education’s *EDFacts* in late November found that 13.4 million students (27.7%) missed 10% of school (or nearly a month) during the 2022-23 academic year.

The nonprofit initiative Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University joined together to analyze this national data and note changes over time. Find the [short data analysis here](#), along with seven key takeaways and links to data charts.

Equally troubling in 2022-23, two years following the chaotic reopening of schools for in-person learning, the majority of schools still had a chronic absence rate of 20% or higher. Research shows that such elevated levels of chronic absence can easily overwhelm school staff and negatively affect teaching and learning for all students, not just for those who aren’t in school.

“The vast majority of kids aren’t missing school because they don’t care. They’re missing school because of a wide array of reasons and barriers that can range from bullying, to not getting the support they need to understand the curriculum, to a lack of access to health care or reliable transportation,” said Robert Balfanz, director of the Everyone Graduates Center. “Like efforts underway to address learning loss and low test scores, the size and scale of the absenteeism challenge isn’t going to improve without ongoing attention and action.”

“Everyone shares the belief that all kids should have opportunities to learn and thrive, and that being in school is critical to the health and well-being of our country,” said Hedy Chang, founder and executive director of Attendance Works. “My hope is that educators at every level — state, regional, district and school — develop relationships to understand why students are missing school, and then use this understanding to forge the partnerships we need to develop and offer solutions.”

The good news is that chronic absence can be improved. In the past two years we have seen substantially improved student engagement and attendance in states such as [Colorado](#), [Connecticut](#), [Virginia](#), [Rhode Island](#) and [New Mexico](#), as well as in school districts across the United States. All of these efforts took a comprehensive, data-driven, prevention-oriented approach.

Our analysis resulted in seven key takeaways and offers a brief description of solutions for states, districts and schools. Among the findings:

Chronic absence slightly decreased from its high of 30% of students in the 2021-22 school year to 28% in 2022-23. This means that chronic absence remained highly elevated during the second year of in-person schooling.

While chronic absence was decreasing for all student groups, sizable gaps remained. While historically marginalized groups (Native American, Pacific Islander, Black and Hispanic students, students with disabilities and English language learners) continued to experience much higher rates, it is encouraging to see that some were experiencing slightly larger decreases. [Click here to see demographic data.](#)

Most states were seeing reductions, but progress among states was uneven. Student chronic absence declined in most states, although a few experienced increases. Click here to view a [state comparison data chart.](#)

High levels of school chronic absence remained a substantial challenge. In 2022-23, 61% of schools had high or extreme levels of chronic absence, compared with 65% in 2021-22 and only 28% before the Covid-19 pandemic. When chronic absence levels are greater than 20% in a school, the experience can impact the social and academic development of all students. A new [study](#) of elementary schools in Delaware shows that high overall levels of absence in kindergarten through third grade had an even more adverse impact on student learning than did individual absences.

The majority of schools serving the highest proportion of students experiencing poverty continue to experience extreme levels of chronic absence. In 2022-23, 58% of schools with 75% or more of their students receiving free or reduced-price meals had extreme levels of chronic absence. These extreme levels of chronic absence occurring in schools with fewer resources make it much harder for schools to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to thrive and learn. Learn more in [this spreadsheet.](#)

Chronic absence is a vital tool for assessing the health and academic well-being of individual students, student groups and even school communities. High levels of chronic absence, which we see in every state, reflect systemic challenges that require programmatic and policy solutions.



Attendance Works (attendanceworks.org) is a national and state nonprofit initiative that promotes equal opportunities to learn and advances student success by inspiring and catalyzing policies and practices that prevent and reduce chronic absence. Our website offers an array of strategies and downloadable tools to help schools, districts and states address chronic absenteeism.



The Everyone Graduates Center (new.every1graduates.org) at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education engages in analysis, as well as supports the development of tools and models designed to help all students graduate high school on a pathway to adult success.