



Press Release

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New Analysis Calls on States to Lead and Sustain Actions to Improve Student Attendance, Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Interactive Map Shows Chronic Absence Rates for Every District in the Country

SAN FRANCISCO, January 31, 2024 – State education leaders are critical to addressing the unprecedented levels and intensity of the post-pandemic chronic absence seen in our nation’s schools.

[*Turning Back the Tide: The Critical Role of States In Reducing Chronic Absence*](#), from Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, offers state education agencies (SEAs), policymakers and their partners an opportunity to take a deep dive into their state’s chronic absence data as a tool to help shape and target interventions where they are most needed.

“Today’s dramatically high levels of absenteeism are a call to states and all education stakeholders to focus intently on advancing and sustaining district action to improve attendance that is grounded in an understanding of the root causes of chronic absence,” said Hedy Chang Executive Director, Attendance Works, a national nonprofit.

Using 2021-22 school year data, the most recent available from the U.S. Department of Education, the analysis offers [data charts for every state](#) and the District of Columbia. Each chart shows levels of high and extreme chronic absence for schools in each state, as well as their demographics. A short data highlights report for each state is included.

Comparing data over time within a state is an excellent approach to understanding if attendance is improving. Comparing data across states is tricky. States often use different definitions of what constitutes a day of attendance.

While national data for 2022-23 has not been released, available state data shows chronic absence is starting to decline from its pandemic-impacted peak, but it remains at unprecedented levels.

“We are pleased that attendance levels are moving in the right direction,” said Chang. “But the exceptionally high chronic absence levels we see in most schools make it clear that improving student engagement and attendance to pre-pandemic levels requires a sustained effort over time.”

Although the numbers are challenging, today’s widespread absenteeism can be reduced when states support districts as they help schools to take a comprehensive, data informed approach to improving attendance.

A new [interactive map](#), created by the Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins School of Education shows district level chronic absence rates in every state. Everyone can use the map to scrutinize which districts are struggling with high and extreme levels of chronic absence, as well as identify successful efforts to keep students and families showing up and engaged.

“States and SEAs are critical to ensuring districts are equipped to advance effective approaches to improving attendance in their schools, especially because today’s elevated levels of chronic absence can easily overwhelm a district’s capacity to respond,” said Robert Balfanz, Director, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

We recommend states adopt a tiered approach to reducing absenteeism. The analysis offers six action steps for states when implementing a three tiered approach – based on foundational supports – with examples of states that have put in place the strategies:

- Publish comparable, timely and accurate data.
- Create and promote messaging about the importance of attendance every day for student success and well-being.
- Build capacity to address chronic absence.
- Integrate attention to chronic absence into existing initiatives.
- Limit ineffective punitive responses.
- Create a tailored action plan based on current data and existing resources.

This analysis is the final in a three-part series of articles unpacking the recent chronic absence data collection released by the US Department of Education for the 2021-22 school year. Read the first two articles, [Rising Tide of Chronic Absence Challenges Schools](#) and [All Hands on Deck: Today’s Chronic Absence Requires A Comprehensive District Response and Strategy](#).

Attendance Works (www.attendanceworks.org) is non-profit, national and state initiative. Our mission is to advance student success and reduce equity gaps by addressing chronic absence.

The Everyone Graduates Center (www.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.

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