



PRESS RELEASE

Contact:

Catherine Cooney
Attendance Works
catherine@attendancesworks.org
202-487-0048

Robert Balfanz
Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University
rbalfanz@jhu.edu
410-279-8399

Rising Tide of Chronic Absence Challenges Schools

SAN FRANCISCO, October 12, 2023 – New data from the U.S. Department of Education show that an unprecedented wave of chronic absence has spread across the country, according to an analysis by [Attendance Works](#) and the [Everyone Graduates Center](#) at Johns Hopkins University.

Our [analysis of chronic absence data](#) for the 2021-22 school year reveals that two-thirds (66%) of enrolled students attended a school with high or extreme levels of chronic absence. This means at least one of five students in their school was missing almost four weeks throughout the school year.

This analysis includes a brief discussion of early data from the 2022-23 school year.

Not only is teaching and learning more challenging when large numbers of students are frequently missing class, such elevated levels of chronic absence can easily overwhelm a school's capacity to respond.

This data is a call to action for all of us– at state, district, school and community levels– to work together, avoid blame and instead partner with students and families to address the issues that keep them from showing up every day.

Fortunately, work on developing solutions has been underway for more than a decade, resulting in many evidence-based interventions that can be tailored at the local level.

“Turning back this surge in chronic absence must be a national, state, district, school and community priority, because it is affecting the success of efforts to help students recover and thrive as the pandemic recedes,” said **Hedy Chang, Executive Director, Attendance Works.**



“This is an all-hands-on-deck moment. Working together, we must avoid blame and instead partner with students and families to address the issues that keep them from showing up every day,” Chang said.

“Our analysis shows that a wave of high levels of chronic absence has spread to many more schools and districts across the U.S.,” said **Robert Balfanz, Director, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University.**

“Such high numbers of chronically absent students are beyond the capacity of a single school social worker or counselor to address. The good news is that we don’t have to start from scratch, we can build upon what has been learned about effective responses to chronic absence over the past decade or more,” Balfanz said.

This analysis is the first 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.