



Attendance Works

Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence



✓ Director's Note

There's plenty schools can do to improve attendance, but to get to the core of the chronic absence problem, you really need good data. Specifically, you need individual attendance data for each student entered electronically and available online.

This month's newsletter looks at a state that's been doing it right for years—Maryland—and an analysis Attendance Works conducted with the state's data. It also offers the latest news from the Data Quality Campaign, which found most states are collecting the right information.

In Maryland, [Baltimore is showing](#) what can be done when a district uses the data to guide school improvement and bring kids back to school. It's time more schools districts put the data to work for them.

- *Hedy Chang*

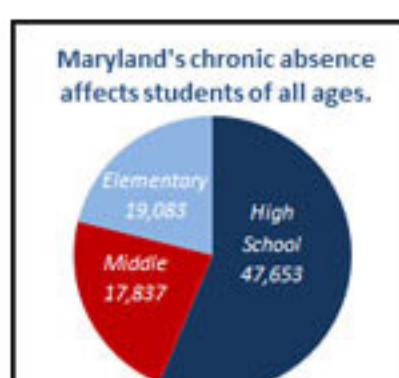
✓ Policy Spotlight

Maryland Shows Good Data Can Drive Policy

Last year, more than [80,000 Maryland students](#) missed a month or more of school—in excused and unexcused absences. That adds up to nearly 2 million days of lost instruction across the state, affecting kindergarteners and high school students, urban school districts and rural communities alike.

Test scores for the students missing too much school, especially among low-income children, show that chronic absence correlates with poor performance. Special education and minority students experience higher absentee rates.

We know all this because Maryland, unlike many other states, requires its schools and district to report how many students miss 20 days of school in an academic year. The [state Department of Education](#) then makes this information public on its website.



Maryland's efforts reveal the critical importance of monitoring chronic absence data, along with other attendance measures.

Average daily attendance (the percentage of students who show up each day) and truancy (unexcused absences) are more commonly tracked throughout the country, but they can easily mask high levels of chronic absence.

Truancy figures are especially misleading in the early grades, because young children typically stay home with an adult's permission. Truancy also doesn't capture days missed to suspensions, which are considered excused absences. Average daily attendance data can also be misleading because it does not reveal whether absences are spread evenly, with all students missing a few days, or whether they are concentrated, with a few students experiencing excessive absences. It also doesn't show patterns of absences: whether certain neighborhoods, schools or student populations are more prone to absenteeism.

Continue reading [here](#).

✓ Practice Spotlight

Attendance Data Included in Most State Longitudinal Student Data Systems

All but five states collect enough attendance data to conduct thorough chronic absence analyses of their students and school districts, according to a 50-state survey released Feb. 16 by the Data Quality Campaign. In [Data for Action 2010](#), the DQC reported that 45 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, track attendance for individual students on their state longitudinal student data systems.

Some of our most populous states—California, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey and New York - do not yet have this information. Of those that do collect the data, 12 (Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee and West Virginia) track attendance daily in real time using their state data systems.

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Questions? For more information contact: info@attendanceworks.org or Attendance Works Director Hedy Chang at hedy@attendanceworks.org.

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About Attendance Works

Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success. It aims to ensure that every school in every state not only tracks chronic absence data for its individual students but also partners with families and community agencies to help those children.

Research & Reports

New research on Baltimore sixth graders finds chronic absence is the most common warning sign that middle school students are headed off track for graduation. The report, [Destination Graduation: Sixth Grade Early Warning Indicators for Baltimore City Schools](#) by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium, follows the class of 2007 and finds a higher likelihood of dropping out among sixth graders who were chronically absent, overage for grade, failing English and/or math or suspended from school for three or more days.

In the News

The [New America Foundation](#) featured Attendance Works Director [Hedy Chang](#) on a [podcast](#) about the perils of missing too much school in the early grades. Chang stressed her research that showed one in 10 kindergarten and 1st grade students miss a month of school every year and that those absences can correlate with poor achievement through elementary school, especially for low-income children.

Attendance Works would like to express its deep appreciation to the Annie E. Casey Foundation for investing our development and launch as a national initiative. In addition, we thank The Stuart Foundation, San Francisco Foundation and The California Endowment for supporting our campaign in California.