



Student Attendance is an Early and Leading Indicator for the Priority Outcomes Proposed for the GRPS Strategic Plan.

Data on attendance and chronic absenteeism are critical tools for benchmarking success with priority outcomes, measuring effectiveness of initiatives, and ensuring that all students are able to fully access opportunities to learn and thrive in school.

Children who attend regularly, starting as early as preschool, are more likely to increase their literacy and math proficiency by the end of third grade than those who are chronically absent.¹ By ninth grade, attendance is a better indicator of whether a student will graduate than eighth grade test scores.² Students who attend regularly in high school are more likely to transition successfully to college.³

Chronic absence is missing 10 percent or more of school. Data on chronic absence are well-documented and serve as a warning sign that a student may be off-track academically. The effects of chronic absence, particularly on academic achievement, are pronounced among children in low-income communities who need more time in the classroom to master reading and are less likely to have access to resources outside of school to help them catch up.⁴ Unfortunately, economically disadvantaged children are four times more likely to be chronically absent and experience multiple years of chronic absence.⁵

Chronic absence is not the result of a once-in-a-century event, but largely the continual grind of poverty and inequitable access to learning opportunities. It disproportionately affects Latino and Black students and contributes to academic disparities.⁶ Chronic absence is both a cause and a result of harsh disciplinary action. For example, chronic absence in kindergarten predicts suspension in middle school.⁷ At the same time, severe disciplinary measures appear to contribute to worse outcomes in subsequent years for middle and high school students, including greater absenteeism.⁸

Successful efforts to improve student engagement and attendance rely on building strong, trusting relationships that promote a feeling of student belonging and empowerment. Re-engaging students and families, and enabling children to attend on a consistent basis, helps to address immediate impacts of the pandemic as well as the challenges to regular attendance that preceded it.

Priority Outcomes

1. Increase literacy proficiency
2. Increase math proficiency
3. Reduce academic disparities for Black and Latino students
4. Reduce Black students exclusionary discipline
5. Increase student empowerment, belonging, and agency
6. Increase successful transitions from high school to college or career

¹ Chang, Hedy and Romero, Mariajose. [Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades](#), National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, September 2008; [Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes](#), Applied Survey Research, May 2011; Ehrlich, Stacy B. et al. [Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences: Research Summary](#), September 2013; Connolly, Faith and Olson, Linda S. [Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten](#), Baltimore Education Research Consortium, Baltimore, Md., March 2012.

² Allensworth, Elaine and John Easton, [What Matters for Staying on Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools](#), University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, July 2007. Balfanz, Robert, Lisa Herzog and Douglas J. Mac Iver, [Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions](#), Educational Psychologist, 42(4), 223–235, 2007; [Chronic Absence in Utah Public Schools](#), Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, July 2012.

³ Rhode Island Data Hub <http://i656-103.members.linode.com/datastories/high-school-absenteeism-college-persistence/1/>

⁴ Ready, Douglas D. [Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development, The Differential Effects of School Exposure](#), Sociology of Education, October 2010.

⁵ Romero, Mariajose and Lee, Young-Sim. [A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades](#), National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, June 2010.

⁶ [Using Chronic Absence to Map Interrupted Schooling, Instructional Loss and Educational Inequity: Insights from School Year 2017-18 Data](#), by Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center, February 2021.

⁷ See <https://www.attendanceworks.org/policy/state-education-policy/rhode-island/>

⁸ LiCasli, Christina, David Osher and Paul Bailey [An Empirical Examination of the Effects of Suspension on Behavioral and Academic Outcomes](#), American Institute for Research, August 2021.

Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absence is Relevant to Each GRPS Strategic Planning Theme.

GRPS Themes	Objectives	Connection to Chronic Absence/Attendance
1. Meet holistic student needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase student engagement and influence. 2. Empower families to support student needs. 3. Expand direct supports and services aligned to student academic and non-academic needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When students are engaged, they are more likely to show up and participate. 2. Alerting families when their child is missing so much school that they are academically at risk can empower them to take action and seek out needed support. 3. Chronic absence data can be used to identify which groups of students are in need of additional support.
2. Optimize and value all school options.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all GRPS schools are valued options for families. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High attendance is a sign that families value an educational option.
3. Ensure equitable access and outcomes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create equitable systems to distribute resources to schools based upon needs. 2. Incorporate anti-racist and inclusionary practices that advance student participation in programs and opportunities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chronic absence data can be used to determine which schools need additional resources and partnerships to connect, engage and support students. 2. Disproportionately high levels of chronic absence and truancy for particular groups of students can be a sign of inequitable and biased practices that need to be reformed.
4. Enhance curriculum and program opportunities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all students receive an aligned culturally responsive curriculum at or above grade level. 2. Ensure curriculum and academic program align with college and career readiness. 3. Expand hands-on opportunities that align with student interest. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When students feel connected and are affirmed by their learning experiences, they are more likely to attend school regularly. 2. When students recognize school as a value to them and their hopes for the future, they are more likely to attend school. 3. Meaningful hands-on learning improves student attendance. Ensuring that the learning environment is meeting the diverse range of students should result in improved / high levels of attendance
5. Cultivate and engaged, productive, more diverse workforce.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase effectiveness of hiring process with an emphasis on diversity. 2. Create a culture that demonstrates the value of all employees. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When students see teachers who look like them, they are more likely to attend and experience a sense of belonging in school.

Research

[Using Chronic Absence Data to Improve Conditions for Learning](#), by Hedy N. Chang, David Osher, Mara Schanfield, Jane Sundius and Lauren Bauer, September 2019.

[Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absence in the Covid Era](#), by Phyllis Jordan, FutureEd, and Attendance Works, June 2020. Accompanied by the Attendance Playbook [implementation guide](#) for schools and districts, by Attendance Works, June 2020.

[Exploring an Unexamined Source of Racial Disparities in Juvenile Court Involvement: Unexcused Absenteeism Policies in U.S. Schools](#), by Clea A. McNeely, Besufekad Alemu, Won Fy Lee and Isis West, April, 2021. Also see the podcast [Race, Absenteeism and Juvenile Court Involvement](#)

[Do High School Students with Same-Race Teacher Attend Class More Often](#), AREA Research Article, by Michael Gottfried, J. Jacob Kirskey and Tina L. Fletcher, August, 2021.

[Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative](#) by William R. Johnston, John Engberg, Isaac M. Opper, Lisa Sontag-Padilla, Lea Xenakis 2020.

Resources

[Michigan Blueprint for Comprehensive Recovery](#), Student Recovery Council, May 2021. See page 24 for strategies and resources for addressing student disengagement from school.

Attendance Works Webinar: [Welcomed: Embracing Students, Families and Educators in the New School Year](#) August 4, 2021. Schools need to pay attention to social and emotional wellness as well as assure families of the safety of in-person instruction. Building community at school will be especially important for students living in communities hard hit by Covid-19. Schools will need to cultivate a feeling of belonging and connection for students in transition grades during the prior and upcoming school year. Presenters: Rev, Larry Simmons, Executive Director, Brightmoor Alliance, Pastor, Baber Memorial AME Church; Eric Gordon, CEO, Cleveland Metropolitan School District; Abe Fernandez, Vice President of Collective Impact and Director of National Center for Community Schools at Children's Aid; Kwesi Rollins, Vice President for Leadership and Engagement, IEL; Hedy Chang, Executive Director and Founder, Attendance Works.



Attendance Works is a national and state initiative advance student success and help close equity gaps by reducing chronic absence. Learn more: <https://www.attendanceworks.org/>



The Kent County School-Justice Partnership is working to identify current trends regarding truancy, chronic absenteeism and disciplinary policies that impact a disproportionate representation of minorities and special education students.



Kent School Services Network (KSSN) is a community school initiative partnering with Grand Rapid Public Schools (GRPS) providing integrated student supports, authentic family and community engagement, collaborative leadership, and expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities in 13 GRPS schools. Learn more: <https://www.kentssn.org/>