

# Attendance Works Celebrates the Success of VA's "ALL IN" Campaign

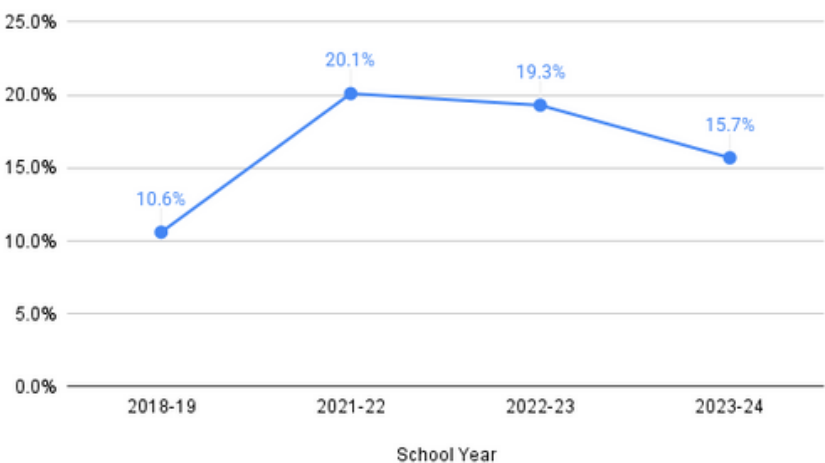


*By Attendance Works, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education*

## At A Glance

Attendance Works and Virginia share a rich history rooted in a shared commitment to best practices that ensure every child is present and engaged in school. Committed to [reducing chronic absences by 50%](#), Virginia illustrates the value of a strategic, data-informed, and sustained approach to improving attendance. Under the leadership of Governor Youngkin, Virginia is in its second year of the "ALL In VA" campaign. Like many states across the country, chronic absenteeism in Virginia ballooned during the pandemic, with rates doubling from 10.6% in 2018-19 to 20.1% in 2021-22. What has made Virginia different is its willingness to put real action against its commitment. The Virginia Board of Education's new school accountability system, the School Performance and Support Framework, includes chronic absenteeism as one of its key readiness indicators to better identify and support schools struggling with absenteeism. For schools that are identified as needing more support, divisions must have not only have a plan but also measure results. Embedded in this framework, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) issued clear guidance to all educators about [5 Key Strategies](#) to ensure students attend school daily. VDOE partnered with Attendance Works to offer professional development aimed at equipping schools and divisions with the highest levels of chronic absenteeism with the knowledge and skills they need to improve student attendance.

**Chronic Absence Rate in Virginia**



Source: [Virginia Department of Education](#)

In September 2023, Governor Glenn Youngkin announced the initiative, a comprehensive plan investing \$418 million for high-intensity tutoring, the expansion of the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), and for efforts to combat chronic absenteeism. Soon after, Governor Youngkin announced the [Chronic Absenteeism Task Force](#), dedicated to developing and sharing resources and action plans for schools to increase student attendance. VDOE recommended that divisions use 10% of funding to improve attendance, and those with higher absenteeism are encouraged to use more.

These investments have led to a [decrease in chronic absenteeism](#) from 20.1% in 2021-2022 to 15.7% in 2023-2024. Put another way, all K-12 students had 1,276,522 fewer absent days, which led to an additional 8,935,654 hours of instruction for Virginia students.



"I am so proud of the work Virginia educators have done to accomplish the significant reduction in chronic absenteeism. Your efforts last year resulted in a 16% reduction in absences, which accounted for nearly nine million more instructional hours. The Department stands ready to continue to support your great work and to increase the number of students attending school each day."

**Emily Anne Gullickson**, Superintendent of Public Instruction

## Key Strategies to Combat Chronic Absence

- **Deep Capacity Building:** Leverage local insights and national knowledge to strengthen resources at multiple levels, from individual schools to school divisions. This included everything from creating the **Chronic Absenteeism Task Force** to working with bus drivers, attendance counters, principals, and teachers to identify and address signs of chronic absenteeism effectively. For example, bus drivers were trained to better align their routes with student lists, helping to pinpoint and resolve attendance issues potentially related to transportation. Virginia developed the **superintendent action kit** as part of the "ALL In VA" initiative to make actionable support readily available.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Using data to tailor action, Virginia distinguished itself by analyzing chronic absenteeism data by grade and, as a result, identified the need to address high levels in kindergarten and first grade by helping children cultivate a habit of attendance starting in preschool and early learning options. Additionally, VDOE uses data to understand which schools need more technical assistance, ensuring resources and support are allocated toward the schools with the greatest needs.
- **Cross-Departmental Partnership:** Collaborating across disciplines and departments, including strategies like better transportation solutions, **Cell Phone-Free learning environments**, engaging pediatricians, and integrating attendance-focused materials in medical offices. It helps parents better understand when it is essential to send their children to school and when it's appropriate to keep them home.
- **Leadership Commitment:** Starting with the Governor, having sustained attention and investment in combating chronic absenteeism as a continuous priority, rather than isolated problems.

### Louisa County

- Investing in Attendance Support Specialists.
- LCPS also offers opportunities for students to make up missed instructional time after school and eases some potential barriers by providing meals and transportation.
- The division created an Attendance Responsibility Chart to ensure that teachers and administrative staff understand their part in encouraging and tracking attendance rates.

## Alexandria City

- Setting specific targets for schools, such as their goal of a 10% or more reduction in chronic absenteeism for each school in the 2024-2025 school year.
- Implemented a tiered intervention approach with Tier 1 focusing on family communication, school-wide attendance events, Attendance Team meetings, and data-driven decisions. Tiers 2 and 3 concentrated on school-based mentorship and positive family engagement strategies.

## Norton City

- ALL In VA funding supported hiring an Attendance Specialist to liaise with parents, collaborate with the school community, and coordinate truancy efforts, and a Curriculum and Instruction Director to foster strong relationships with educators, focus on instructional strategies, and oversee attendance policies.
- Build a culture of attendance through positive messaging and awareness, recognition and incentives, family and community engagement, staff and leadership accountability, and addressing barriers.
- Norton High School had a significant reduction in chronic absenteeism from 36.9% to 2.3% in one school year.

## Henrico County

- Formed a dedicated team encompassing social workers and analysts to manage and improve student attendance, especially focusing on vulnerable groups such as homeless students.
- Utilized real-time data tracking to monitor attendance patterns and implement targeted interventions based on emerging trends and individual needs.
- Addressed transportation barriers and enhanced community engagement through partnerships, providing resources like mentorship and family support to encourage consistent school attendance.

The Virginia Department of Education is dedicated to enhancing school attendance through the development of a real-time data dashboard. This innovative tool will provide critical insights across all levels, from General Assembly members to individual schools, helping to pinpoint the most effective resources and bolster support for school divisions. Inspired by the success of Rhode Island's attendance dashboard, Virginia is committed to ensuring that every student is actively engaged in the classroom.