

What we know about

Absenteeism

What's the difference between truancy and chronic absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism is increasingly being defined as missing 10% or more of school days every year for any reason. For most students, that's about 18 days per school year. These days can be consecutive or not.

Another measure

U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights defines chronic absenteeism as missing 15 or more days of school and, in June, reported that 6 million public school students — 13% of all students — missed at least three weeks of school. That includes:

- 20% of all high school students
- 20% of black and Hispanic students
- 25% of students with disabilities

Analysis of the Office for Civil Rights data found around 500 school districts with chronic absenteeism rates of 30% or higher.

Truancy typically refers to the number of *unexcused* absences or late arrivals to school.

Between 5 million and 7.5 million students are considered **chronically absent** every year.

The U.S. has about 50 million preK-12 students.



Just the facts By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. **Read more:** *Destination graduation: Sixth grade early warning indicators for Baltimore City Schools* by Baltimore Education Research Consortium. February 2011.

www.baltimore-berc.org/pdfs/SixthGradeEWIFullReport.pdf



Why do children miss school?

• Cannot attend

Illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, need to work, involved with the juvenile justice system

• Won't attend

Want to avoid being bullied, unsafe conditions on the way to or from school, harassment, embarrassment

• Don't attend

Don't see the value of school, have something else they'd rather do, nobody stops them from skipping school

Why does it matter?

- Children who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and 1st grade are **much less likely to read** on grade level by 3rd grade.
- Students who can't read at grade level by 3rd grade are **four times more likely to drop out** of high school.
- By high school, regular attendance is a **better dropout indicator** than test scores.
- A student who is chronically absent in any year between 8th and 12th grade is **seven times more likely to drop out of school**.



Not just an urban problem

Nebraska has the **lowest** reported rate of chronic absenteeism: 6%

But that means **18,000 students are missing more than a month** of school each year.

In Oregon, 23% of students are considered chronically absent. **That's 129,190 students.**

Thinkstock



September matters

Students who missed fewer than two days in September continued to average fewer than two days absent each month.

— Baltimore Education Research Consortium

Want more information?



Attendance Works

Attendance Works is a national and state initiative that promotes better policy and practice around school attendance. It promotes tracking chronic absence data for each student beginning in kindergarten, or ideally earlier, and partnering with families and community agencies to intervene when poor attendance is a problem for students or schools.

attendanceworks.org

Every Child Present

Developed by the state of New York, this web site is packed with resources that other schools and districts could adapt for their locales.

everychildpresent.org