Student Attendance Subcommittee

Report and Recommendations

Revised July 2025

**Student Attendance Subcommittee
Report and Recommendations**

Executive Summary

The Student Attendance Subcommittee report highlights the significant increase in absenteeism, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, and explores the various causes and impacts of student absences. It emphasizes that regular school attendance is crucial for academic success, student well-being, and workforce development, while chronic absenteeism contributes to lower educational attainment, reduced earning potential, and higher social costs. The report addresses the key causes of absenteeism, including physical and mental health issues, socio-economic challenges, and the learning environment. It focuses on specific topics such as acute illnesses and chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes, which are leading causes of absences, and mental health issues like anxiety and depression that are significant contributors to absenteeism. The cumulative effect of school-related and health-related absences negatively impacts academic performance, increasing the risk of grade retention and dropping out of school. Issues like homelessness, food insecurity, transportation challenges, and family responsibilities (e.g., caregiving or working to support the household) also drive absenteeism. Students from low-income families are more likely to face these barriers, leading to frequent absences.

In addition to addressing the key causes of absenteeism, the report offers a comprehensive examination of strategies to mitigate these factors. Research shows that access to quality childcare (pre-school) can establish early school attendance rituals that carry over into the early school grades.[1] Schools can use early warning systems to identify at-risk students and intervene with personalized outreach, counseling, and support. Schools can partner with health services to offer on-site and telehealth options for managing chronic conditions and provide mental health support for students facing emotional challenges. Increasing parent communication, offering attendance-related workshops, and working with local agencies and nonprofits to provide essential resources are vital to reducing absenteeism. Also, schools and communities can implement attendance incentive programs for regular or improved attendance. Promoting a positive and inclusive school climate through anti-bullying programs, social-emotional learning, and fostering a sense of belonging are critical to keeping students engaged and attending school regularly.

It is critically important for schools, families, communities, and policymakers to work together to address the multi-faceted causes of absenteeism. By addressing the root causes of absenteeism and implementing comprehensive strategies, schools and

---

[1] Wu, J.HC., Akaeze, H. & Van Egeren, L.A. Effects of a State Pre-kindergarten Program on the Kindergarten Readiness and Attendance of At-Risk Four-Year-Olds. *Early Childhood Educ J* (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-024-01736-3.

communities can improve student attendance and ensure better academic outcomes. The Subcommittee report emphasizes that an integrated approach, involving health, education, and community support is essential to tackling the complex issue of student absenteeism.

Table of Contents **Page**

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

Student Attendance Subcommittee
Report and Recommendations

Subcommittee Members:

Debbie Alexander (Executive Director – Central Savannah River Area Regional Education Service Agency)
Irene Barton (Executive Director – Cobb Collaborative)
Cayanna Good (Assistant Commissioner – Technical College System of Georgia)
Akia Lewis (Director of Strategy, Innovation and Engagement – Georgia Family Connection Partnership)
Helen Rice (Member - State Board of Education), Dana Rickman (President – Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education)
Sarah Torian (Consultant – Get Georgia Reading Campaign)
Arianne Weldon (Strategic Innovation Manager and Get Georgia Reading Campaign Director – Georgia Family Connection Partnership)
Fred Williams (Superintendent – Dublin City Schools)
Garry McGiboney (Subcommittee Facilitator)

Preamble - Addressing the Growing Challenge of Student Absences

In recent years, especially since the pandemic, student absences have become a growing concern for educators, parents, and policymakers alike, with a spike in absenteeism occurring during the time when students are trying to recover learning loss. Whether due to illness, family responsibilities, mental health and/or physical health challenges, or other factors, chronic absenteeism is an issue that directly impacts a student's academic success, social development, and overall well-being. Also, regular school attendance is closely linked to higher academic achievement, graduation rates, and the development of a skilled workforce, which are critical factors for economic growth and stability. Conversely, chronic absenteeism can lead to lower educational attainment, reduced earning potential, and increased social costs, thereby affecting the state's economic well-being.[2] With schools struggling to address learning loss from the disruptions caused by the pandemic,

---

[2] The Cost of Undereducation in Texas (2012). Children at Risk Study.

ensuring consistent attendance is more critical than ever. Additionally, research indicates a strong link between student attendance and teacher job satisfaction—teachers tend to experience lower job satisfaction when a significant number of their students are frequently absent.[3] The Subcommittee explored the reasons behind student absences, their far-reaching effects, and potential solutions to improve student attendance and engagement in schools.[4]

The Importance of Physical and Mental Health

Student absences can result from a variety of factors, many of which are interconnected. Research shows that both physical health and mental health issues are major causes of student absences. These health-related absences can have long-term negative effects on academic performance and school engagement. Acute conditions such as the flu, colds, and respiratory infections are common for short-term absences, but many students experience reoccurring acute conditions that while not considered chronic, they nevertheless can result in numerous absences. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that influenza alone leads to millions of missed school days each year in the United States.[5] The CDC emphasizes that improved vaccination rates and hygiene practices in schools can help reduce these absences.

Health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and epilepsy can cause persistent absenteeism. The American Lung Association reports that asthma is the leading chronic illness causing school absenteeism, accounting for 8.3 million missed school days annually in the United States. Students with asthma are twice as likely to miss school compared to their peers.[6] Similarly, students with diabetes miss an average of 5 more days per year than their non-diabetic counterparts, according to the American Diabetes Association.[7] The CDC also reports high school absenteeism rates related to diabetes; noting that children with diabetes are more likely to miss school days than their peers without the condition due to the lack of adequate diabetes management.[8]

Mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression are among the most significant contributors to chronic absenteeism. Research shows that students with untreated anxiety and depression have higher absenteeism rates, which are often due to avoidance of

---

[3] Gottfried, M.A., Arya Ansari, and S. Colby Woods (2024). Do Teachers With Absent Students Feel Less Job Satisfaction? Educational Researchers, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4396-0576.
[4] The Subcommittee's full list of barriers to student attendance is in the Appendix.
[5] Student Absences and Health Conditions (2020). Centers for Disease Control.
[6] Asthma and Children Fact Sheet (2024). The report highlights that asthma is the most common chronic illness among children and leads to millions of missed school days each year.
[7] Education and Student Diabetes Management (2024). American Diabetes Association.
[8] Diabetes and School Absenteeism (2024). Centers for Disease Control.

stressful school situations, social withdrawal, or a lack of motivation.[9,10] According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), approximately 1 in 6 youth aged 6–17 experience a mental health disorder each year, which directly contributes to school absenteeism. Untreated mental health issues can lead to absenteeism, academic failure, and even dropping out of school.[11] A report from the CDC discussed how the pandemic worsened youth mental health, with increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts among adolescents. It noted that these mental health challenges contributed to disengagement from school, with a rise in absenteeism and reduced academic performance due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic and the lack of adequate mental health support.[12] A study found that the pandemic had a profound effect on the mental health of children and adolescents, with significant increases in depression and anxiety symptoms. These mental health issues were linked to academic disengagement, learning loss, and higher dropout rates.[13]

Cumulative Effects of Health-Related Absenteeism

Research published in the American Educational Research Journal highlights the cumulative impact of health-related absences on academic achievement. Missing school due to physical or mental health issues negatively impacts reading and math proficiency, especially in early grades.[14] Students who miss significant portions of school are more likely to fall behind academically, increasing their risk of grade retention and dropping out of school altogether.[15] Research found that chronic health-related absenteeism can have long-term consequences, including poorer academic outcomes, lower graduation rates, and decreased likelihood of attending post-secondary education.[16,17,18] Students who struggle with chronic health issues, such as mental health disorders or chronic physical

[9] Egger, H. L., Costello, E. J., & Angold, A. (2003). School Refusal and Psychiatric Disorders: A Community Study. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

[10] Finning, K., Ford, T., Moore, D. A., Ukoumunne, O. C., & Danielsson-Waters, E. (2020). The association between child and adolescent depression and absenteeism from school: A systematic review and meta-analysis. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 29(2), 187–198.
https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-019-01327-3

[11] National Alliance on Mental Illness (2024).

[12] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), 69(32), 1049-1057.

[13] Racine, N., McArthur, B. A., Cooke, J. E., Eirich, R., Zhu, J., & Madigan, S. (2021). Global Prevalence of Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms in Children and Adolescents During COVID-19: A Meta-analysis. JAMA Pediatrics, 175(11), 1142-1150.

[14] Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship Between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research Journal, 47(2), 434-465.https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209350494

[15] Ibid.

[16] Taras, H., & Potts-Datema, W. (2005). Chronic health conditions and student performance at school. Journal of School Health, 75(7), 255–266.

[17] Eaton, D. K., Brener, N., & Kann, L. (2008). Associations of health risk behaviors with school absenteeism among U.S. high school students. Journal of School Health, 78(4), 223–229.

[18] Allensworth, D., & Lewallen, T. (2009). Addressing the needs of the whole child: What public health can do to answer the education sector's call for a stronger partnership. Preventing Chronic Disease, 6(2), A44.

conditions are at higher risk for lower educational attainment.[19,20]According to another study, adolescent girls were more than three times as likely to experience abnormal levels of emotional symptoms than adolescent boys.[21] The study also found that students who were absent from school were three times more likely to be experiencing mental health issues before and during their absences from school.

Other Causes for Student Absences

Student absenteeism can be driven by several non-health-related causes, which effect students' ability and motivation to attend school regularly. Homelessness or housing instability can also contribute to frequent absences. The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) highlights that children living in poverty are at higher risk of absenteeism due to the combination of unstable living conditions, unmet basic needs, and the lack of resources to address physical and mental health needs.[22] Also, students from low-income families are more likely to miss school due to a lack of access to necessities such as food, proper clothing, or reliable transportation. Transportation issues are prevalent in rural districts where students live far from school and have no alternative way to school if they miss their bus in the morning.[23] The lack of an alternative way to get to school after missing the bus is an issue in urban schools and a growing concern in suburban schools, as well, due to parents working and/or the lack of a private vehicle.[24,25] Additionally, there are concerns about safe walking routes to school. Research and reports indicate that safety concerns related to walking to school—such as high traffic, poor infrastructure, crime, and long distances—often discourage students from attending regularly, particularly in communities with inadequate transportation alternatives.[26,27]

Social conditions of schools, including school and classroom climate can contribute to absenteeism. Students who are bullied or feel unsafe at school are more likely to avoid

[19]National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2018). Chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools: A hidden educational crisis. This study highlights how chronic absenteeism, particularly when linked to health-related issues, is associated with lower academic performance, increased risk of dropping out, and reduced likelihood of attending higher education institutions.

[20] Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and social-emotional outcomes. Journal of Educational Psychology, which discusses how chronic absenteeism leads to reduced educational engagement and poorer academic performance over time.

[21] Ingul, J. M., Klöckner, C. A., Silverman, W. K., & Nordahl, H. M. (2012). Adolescent school absenteeism: Modeling social and individual risk factors. Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 17(2), 93–100.

[22] National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). (2015). Chronic Absenteeism: A Key Indicator of Student Success. This report discusses how children from low-income families face increased risks of absenteeism due to barriers like food insecurity, inadequate housing, and lack of reliable transportation. These issues contribute to their inability to attend school regularly, affecting their academic outcomes.

[23] Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center (2017).Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence.

[24] Johns Hopkins University School of Education (2015).The Challenge of Transportation in Urban and Suburban School Districts.

[25] National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009).Student Transportation and Educational Access.

[26] National Center for Safe Routes to School. (2013). Trends in Walking and Bicycling to School from 2007 to 2012. Safe Routes Partnership.

[27] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2012). Safe Routes to School: Helping Communities Save Lives and Dollars.

attending school. Negative school climates, such as a lack of inclusivity, connectedness or a perception of unsafe environments, discourage students from regular attendance, because students who experience bullying or who feel socially isolated or unsafe are more likely to develop school avoidance behaviors.[28,29] A CDC report found that the a positive school climate is essential in reducing absenteeism and bullying.[30] Students who feel connected and safe at school are more likely to attend regularly, while those who are bullied are at higher risk for chronic absenteeism.[31] Additionally, when students feel disconnected from the academic content or believe that school is not relevant to their future goals, they are more likely to skip school on a regular basis. This often occurs in middle and high school where disengagement increases. Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center found that students who are disengaged from school due to their perception of uninteresting or irrelevant curricula are at high risk for absenteeism.[32]

Another factor related to the causes of absenteeism is when students are responsible for taking care of younger siblings or other family members, which can lead to absences. Additionally, adolescents from low-income families may need to work to support their households, resulting in frequent absences. The Brookings Institution notes that family obligations, such as caregiving or the need to work, are significant contributors to absenteeism, particularly among high school students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.[33] Economically disadvantaged students are also more likely to be suspended from school.[34] Students who face repeated disciplinary actions, such as suspensions or expulsions, are often at a higher risk of becoming absent.[35] Schools with punitive disciplinary policies tend to have higher absentee rates.[36]

Teacher Absenteeism

Another factor that is seldom addressed is the impact teacher absences have on student absences. A study found that teacher absenteeism can indirectly contribute to student

[28] Attendance Works (2014). Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absenteeism.
[29] U.S. Department of Education (2016). Student Reports of Bullying and Absenteeism in a National Sample: The Impact of Bullying on Attendance.
[30] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
[31] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2019). School Connectedness and Bullying Prevention.
[32] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University; Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University.
[33] Jordan, P. W., & Miller, R. (2017). Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under Every Student Succeeds Act. The Brookings Institution.
[34]U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2016). Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look. This report shows that low-income students, particularly students of color from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are suspended at disproportionately higher rates compared to their more affluent peers.
[35] Skiba, R. J., Arredondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More Than a Metaphor: The Contribution of Exclusionary Discipline to a School-to-Prison Pipeline. Center for Equity & Excellence in Education.
[36] Ibid.

absenteeism.[37] The report states that in schools where teacher absenteeism was high, student absenteeism tended to be higher as well. Disengagement due to the lack of consistent instruction was cited as a key factor. Another study examined how teacher absenteeism led to a rise in student absenteeism. The study found that when teachers missed more than 10 days in a school year, student absenteeism rates increased, particularly in lower-income schools.[38] The study found that 28–29 percent of teachers were chronically absent (missing 10+ days) pre-pandemic and in some school districts has surged even higher after the pandemic. Additionally, the study found that high teacher absenteeism is associated with lower student attendance and engagement, especially in high-poverty schools. The study also found that unlike student absenteeism, which disproportionately affects economically disadvantaged schools, post-pandemic teacher absenteeism has risen across both high- and low-poverty schools at similar rates. Another study found that every additional 10 days of teacher absence leads to a 3.3 percent drop in student math achievement.[39] The same study found that high teacher absenteeism is associated with lower student attendance and engagement, especially in high-poverty schools. Studies from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Education Commission of the States have found that schools with strong leadership and positive culture have significantly lower teacher absenteeism, and teacher wellness programs reduce discretionary absences by 10–20 percent.[40]

Student and staff absenteeism is often caused by a combination of factors, many of which are rooted in external socioeconomic and environmental challenges. Addressing absenteeism requires an integrated approach that focuses on providing support, improving school and classroom climate, creating engaging, accessible learning environments, addressing physical and mental health issues, basic needs, and transportation. The combination of factors that impact student attendance makes it clear that schools cannot effectively address the student attendance challenges alone; parents and communities are vital to crafting solutions.

Absenteeism Post-COVID

Attendance issues have become a major barrier to other school initiatives. While the problem isn't new, it's worsened significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted above even with teacher attendance. Student absenteeism has more than doubled in some school districts compared to pre-pandemic levels. Schools and school districts are faced with this unprecedented percentages of students missing school, and, consequently, educators have tried to respond to the crisis. However, according to a survey by Rand, one-

---

[37] Miller, R. (2012). Teacher Absence as a Leading Indicator of Student Achievement: New National Data Offer Opportunity to Examine Cost of Teacher Absence Relative to Learning Loss. Center for American Progress.
[38] Hansen, Michael, Purnima Aggarwai, and Rebecca Wagner (2025). State Data on Teacher Absences Post-Pandemic. Brookings Institute, May 19, 2025.
[39] Miller, R.T., Richard Murname, and John B. Willett ((2007). Do Teacher Absences Impact Student Achievement? National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.
[40] Boren, Megan (2024). What Makes Teachers Come to Class? *Principal Magazine*, September 2024.

fourth of district leaders say none of their strategies to reduce absenteeism are working.[41] Nearly all districts (93%) have tried at least one method to combat absenteeism, such as notifying parents of missed days, conducting home visits, using early warning systems, and running mentoring programs. The most common approach is implementing early warning systems to identify at-risk students, but many school districts report that the issues are so complex that using one strategy will not address the problems. In a national survey of educational leaders, they expressed concern that remote learning and pandemic-related disruptions led some students and families to deprioritize school attendance and participation.[42] A survey by the EdWeek Research Center found that 70 percent of district leaders believed student engagement had declined compared to pre-pandemic levels.[43] Many attributed this decline to a shift in attitudes, leading students and families to view school as less important and optional. They suggest that addressing chronic absenteeism will require new approaches to make school more engaging.[44]

The Importance of Regular School Attendance

Attending class regularly plays a crucial role in having a successful academic career. Research confirms that students who show up consistently are able to learn more effectively and experience fewer academic setbacks.[45] Regular attendance not only improves academic performance but also helps students develop good habits and work ethics needed for future success.[46,47] Students who are absent in preschool through first grade are far less likely to read at grade level by third grade.[48,49] Children who miss school often in kindergarten tend to struggle with reading and math.[50] Early absenteeism negatively impacts foundational skills critical for reading development, leading to long-term academic challenges. Those who aren't proficient in reading by the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.[51,52] Research in Georgia shows that

[41] Districts Try with Limited Success to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: Selected Findings from the Spring 2024 American School District Panel Survey and Interviews, RAND Corporation Research.
[42] National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Survey of Principals (2021).
[43] EdWeek Research Center Survey of District Leaders (2021).
[44] U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2021). Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students.
[45] Chen, J. J., & Lin, T. F. (2008). Class attendance and exam performance: A randomized experiment. Journal of Economic Education, 39(3), 213–227.
[46] Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Student Engagement (pp. 97–131). Springer.
[47] Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 19(2), 53–75.
[48] Attendance Works & Child & Family Policy Center (2014).Attendance in the Early Grades: Why It Matters for Reading.
[49] Applied Survey Research (2011). Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness, and Third Grade Outcomes.
[50] Jing Liu, Monica Lee, Seth Gershenson (2021) The short- and long-run impacts of secondary school absences, Journal of Public Economics, Volume 199,104441,
[51] Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation.
[52] Fiester, L. (2013). Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

missing more than five days of school significantly harms learning.[53] By sixth grade, chronic absences increase the risk of dropping out of school exponentially.[54]

Research shows that irregular attendance is a stronger indicator of whether students will drop out of high school than their test scores.[55] Students who are frequently absent are more likely to face negative outcomes later in life, including poverty, health issues, and involvement in the criminal justice system. A longitudinal study found that student who frequently miss school are less likely to graduate, limiting their employment opportunities and increasing the likelihood of poverty and reliance on social assistance programs.[56] Another study found that absenteeism can lead to long-term health issues and increased susceptibility to negative influences, including criminal activities.[57,58]

Student absenteeism creates many negative "ripple effects." It makes it harder for teachers to teach, establish classroom norms, and build relationships with students.[59] It also affects how students interact with one another and how well they learn. Absenteeism affects not only the absent students but also the entire classroom.[60] Teachers must adjust their instructional plans to accommodate students who miss classes, which often disrupts lesson plans and is distracting for all students in class.[61] Additionally, this can result in a slower pace for the rest of the class, reducing overall instructional time and limiting the engagement of other students. Studies show that the cumulative effect of absenteeism can negatively affect the academic performance of the entire class.[62]

The Importance of Belonging in Schools

When students feel a sense of belonging at school – feeling connected, accepted, valued, included, respected, and supported[63] - the benefits are both immediate and long-lasting. In the short term, it leads to better attendance, higher grades, and increased graduation rates. Research consistently shows that students who feel connected to their school are more engaged academically and socially, which positively impacts their educational

---

[53] Dennis Kramer and Garry McGiboney (2016). Present and Accounting For, American School Board Journal, 2016, v188, n3, 43-45.
[54] Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters: What the Research Says, United States Department of Education, 2024.
[55] The Declining Labor Market Prospects of Less Educated Men (2019). National Bureau of Economic Research.
[56] Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. Sociology of Education, 70(2), 87–107.
[57] Gottfried, M. A. (2014).Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 19(2), 53–75.
[58] Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and Correctional Populations. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report.
[59] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Gottfried, M. A. (2015). Chronic Absenteeism in the Classroom Context: Effects on Achievement. Urban Education, 54(1), 3–34.
[62] Goodman, Joshua. Flaking Out: Student Absences and Snow Days as Disruptions of Instructional Time. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, no. 20221, June 2014. doi:10.3386/w20221.
[63] Alink, K., Denessen, E., Veerman, G. J., & Severiens, S. (2024). Exploring the concept of school belonging: A study with expert ratings. Cogent Education, 10(2). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2235979.

outcomes.[64,65,66] Over the long term, the effects can last for up to 20 years, including lower rates of drug abuse, mental health issues, and involvement in violence as either victims or perpetrators.[67] In 2024, 55 percent of high school students felt close to people at their school, a concept known as school connectedness.[68] Despite the strong link between belonging and positive outcomes, this aspect has been largely ignored in education reforms over the past 40 years and is rarely included in measures of school quality or as a school improvement strategy. The exception being schools that deliberately focus on improving and maintaining a positive school climate. Georgia is a national leader in school climate work, both at the policy/legislative level and with local implementation. In Georgia, school climate is included in state law, which requires schools to develop a school climate improvement plan.[69] Additionally, Georgia statute requires the calculation of a School Climate Star Rating for each public school.[70]

Research shows that a positive school climate focuses on relationships and interactions. Having at least one caring adult, access to clubs and sports, and culturally inclusive curricula are important for fostering a sense of belonging.[71] Involving parents in school activities can also enhance student belonging, yet, according to a recent survey of parents[72] conducted by the Technical College System of Georgia, fewer than 50 percent of parents report feeling a sense of belonging or feeling welcome in their child's school, which is consistent with other similar surveys.[73,74]

The Importance of Parental Voice

Research demonstrates the important role parent and family engagement play in student success, including in school attendance. In fact, a recent analysis of data from Illinois found that schools with the highest level of family engagement experienced six percentage

[64] Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. Psychology in the Schools, 30(1), 79–90.

[65] Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. Review of Educational Research, 70(3), 323–367.

[66] Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 30(1), 1–34.

[67] Youth Risk Behavior Survey – Data Summary and Trends Report, 2013-2024, CDC 2024.

[68] Ibid.

[69] O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740 – Student Code of Conduct and School Climate, This statute requires schools to implement a Student Code of Conduct and to take steps to address school climate by fostering a positive learning environment that encourages academic success and reduces disciplinary issues. Schools must adopt comprehensive plans that address: Discipline and student behavior in schools; Positive school climate practices that promote safety, respect, and engagement; Interventions for students with behavior issues, rather than just relying on punitive measures.

[70] O.C.G.A § 20-14-33 Single Statewide Accountability System: The school climate rating assesses the quality and character of school life. It encompasses norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

[71] Scales, P. C., & Benson, P. L. (2006). "The Role of Caring Adults in the Positive Development of Youth." Search Institute. This study found that students with a caring adult at school—whether a teacher, counselor, or coach—report greater connectedness to school, improved academic motivation, and better mental health outcomes.

[72] School Attendance Survey for Parents of School-Aged Children (2024), Technical College System of Georgia.

[73] National PTA (2018). Building Successful Family-School Partnerships: A Parent Engagement Survey.

[74] National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2019.

points less absenteeism post-pandemic than schools with the least family engagement.[75] This speaks to the role that authentic family and parent engagement – where parents and families play diverse roles in education including as co-creators - plays in both preventing chronic absenteeism and offering a solution. With this understanding, the Subcommittee sought to incorporate parent voice into its process.

The Subcommittee reviewed research related to parental insight and opinions about student attendance problems. The Technical College System of Georgia, led by Assistant Commissioner for Adult Education, Dr. Cayanna Good, offered to survey Georgia parents. The survey included over 100 parents of school-aged children (K-12) under the age of 18. Parent were given ten questions, which were based on similar surveys conducted by *Attendance Works* and were answered anonymously.

The Importance of Attending School

Q2 Regular attendance is important for a child's success in school.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
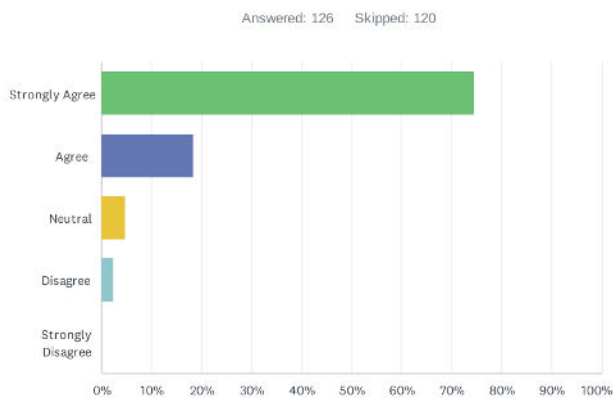
Question #1 verified that they had a child in a K-12 school.

Regarding the question of how important regular attendance is for students (Question #2 or Q2), 93 percent of the parents strongly agree or agree that regular school attendance is important. This is higher than other similar surveys of parents. A national survey found that 85 percent of parents agreed that regular school attendance is important for their child's academic success.[76]

---

[75] Attendance Works. (2024). Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L.: 2024 Attendance Awareness Campaign Toolkit. Attendance Works.
[76] Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (2019). National Center for Education Statistics.

Q3 My child(ren) is/are interested in going to school every day.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
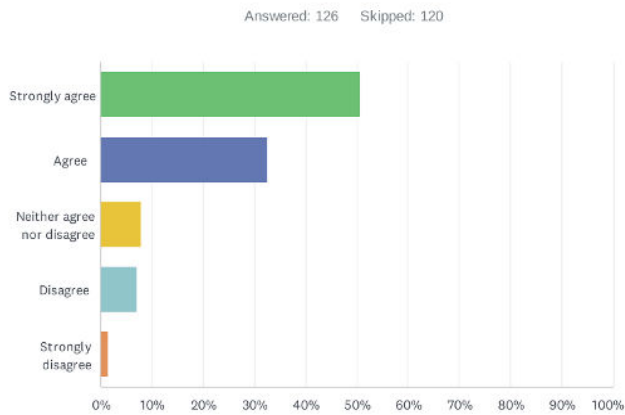
83 percent of parents strongly agree or agree that their children are interested in going to school every day, with almost 9 percent who disagree or strongly disagree. This percentage is higher than national averages, which range from 65 percent[77] to 77 percent.[78]

Q4 Missing 6-10 days of school a year is a lot.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
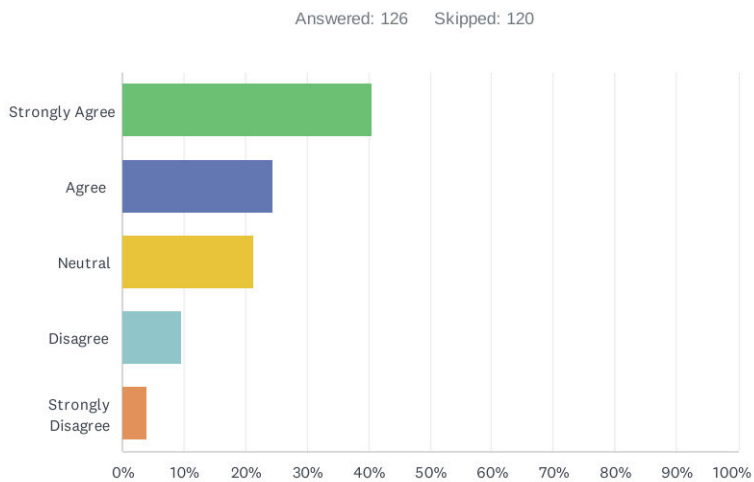
65 percent of parents strongly agree or agree that missing 6 to 10 days of school a year is a lot, which is higher than what was found in other surveys of parents. A survey by Attendance Works found that only 40 percent of parents believed missing 6 to 10 days was a lot of absences despite the research showing it can affect academic progress.

Q5 Missing more than 10 days of school affects learning.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
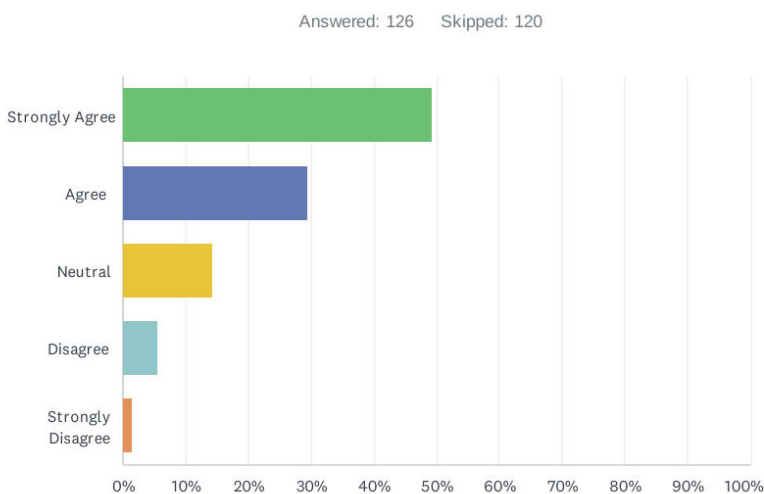
Almost 80 percent of parents strongly agree or agree that missing more than 10 days of school affects learning. In national surveys of parents, the percentages on this question ranges from 49

---

[77] EdSource Parent Survey (2019).
[78] Learning Heroes Survey (2020).

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

percent[79] to 78 percent.[80] One survey revealed that 67 percent of parents believed missing more than 10 days of school could harm their child's learning, but the parents believed their children could still keep up with their academic work despite frequent absences.[81] Economic challenges can affect parents' attitudes toward attendance, as immediate financial or familial concerns may take precedence over schooling. A study found that parents facing economic hardships might be less able to enforce strict attendance due to competing demands and consequently may not understand the importance of attendance.[82]

Q6 The school tells parents why regular attendance is important.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
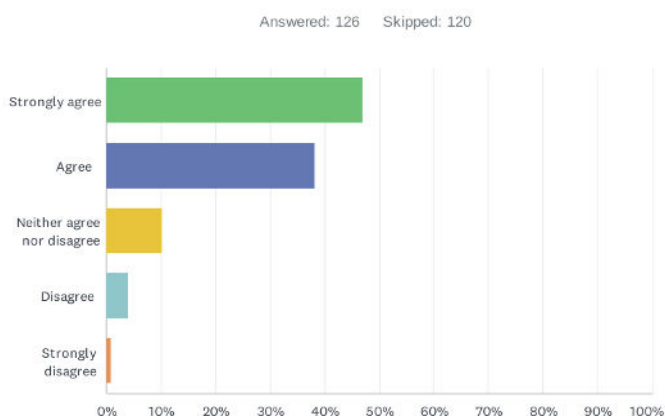
85 percent of the parents indicated that schools do a good job of telling parents about the importance of their children attending school regularly. This is a higher percentage than found in other surveys of parents. Another similar survey found that 63 percent of parents believed schools do a good job of communicating the importance of regular attendance and indicated that that a significant portion of parents felt schools could improve communication about how many days a child can miss before it affects learning.[83] The National PTA found that around 60 percent of parents believe their school does a good job informing them about the importance of attendance, but 30 percent of parents expressed the need for better communication on how absences directly impact academic achievement,[84] because many parents believed that missing one or two days each month of school was not a serious issue. They simply did not know the implications of student absences.

[79] Attendance Works (2014).
[80] EdSource and UC Berkely's PACE Survey (2021).
[81] Learning Heroes Parent Survey (2020).
[82] Kearney, C. A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. Clinical Psychology Review, 28(3), 451–471.
[83] Attendance Works (2014).
[84] National PTA Parent Survey (2019).

Q7 Sometimes parents can't make sure their children attend school regularly.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
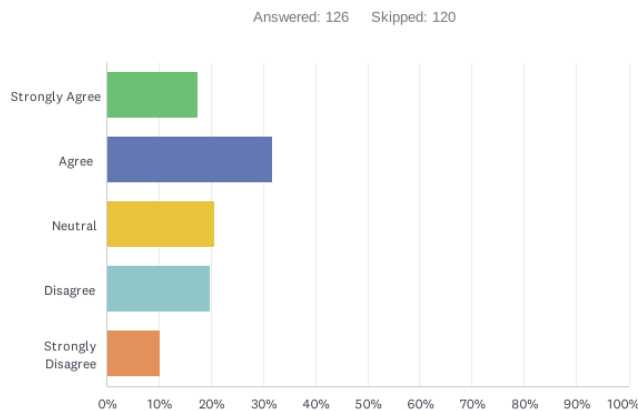
Regarding the responsibilities of parents getting their children to school, 49 percent of parents strongly agree or agree that sometimes parents cannot make sure their children attend school regularly. The percentage is higher than national surveys that show 20 percent to 25 percent sometimes feel they cannot make sure their children attend school.[85] These surveys highlight that while most parents understand the importance of regular attendance, some face difficulties in enforcing it due to external and internal barriers that affect their child's willingness or ability to attend school regularly.

Q8 I think that sometimes kids need a break from school.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
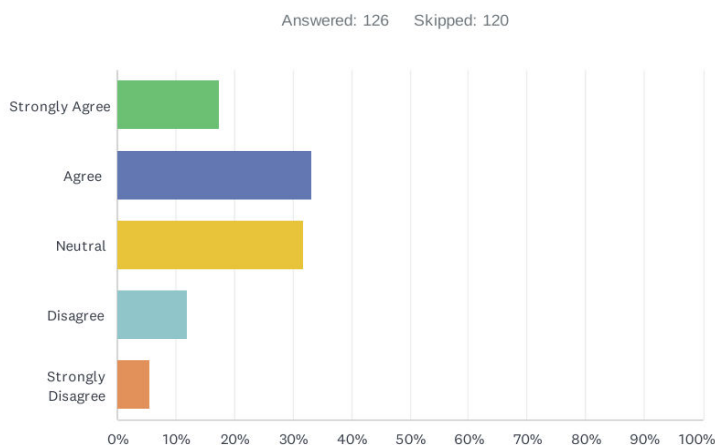
51percent of parents believe that their children sometimes need a break from school, which is much lower than national surveys. For example, the American Psychological Association found that 75 percent of parents believe their children need more mental health days from school.[86] While specific percentages may differ depending on the source, surveys suggest that many parents think children need breaks from school. The percentage is often well over 60 percent.[87] The significant

---

[85] A national survey by Attendance Works found that 20-25% of parents reported struggling to get their children to attend school. Many parents cited challenges like their child's reluctance to go to school, emotional issues, or logistical problems as reasons why attendance was difficult. In a survey by the National PTA, parents reported that up to 25% struggle to ensure their children attend school every day, with reasons including behavioral defiance, mental health issues, or external challenges like work schedules and family obligations.

[86] 2020 Stress in America (2021), Harris Poll commissioned by the American Psychological Association.

[87]Parenting in America: Outlook, Worries, Aspirations Are Strongly Linked to Financial Situation (2015). Pew Research Center.

percentage of parents taking the TCSG survey were neutral (32%), which may suggest that many parents are struggling with the issue.

Q9 My child's mental health affects whether I make them go to school.

Answered: 126   Skipped: 120
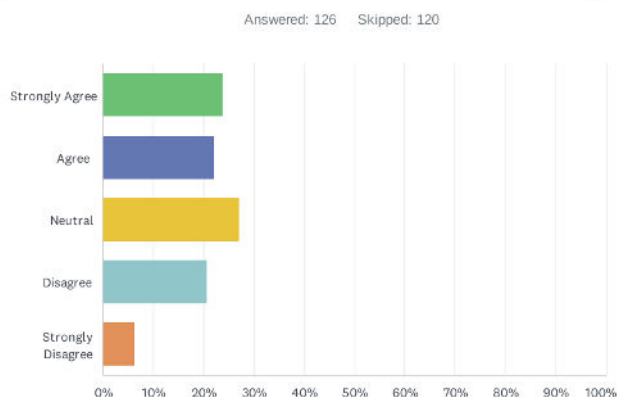
48 percent of parents feel that their child's mental health affects whether they make them go to school, with a large percentage (27 percent) being neutral. Other surveys have shown that a significant number of parents believe their children's mental health directly affects their decision on whether to send them to school. For example, a study conducted by the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago found that 71 percent of parents acknowledged that the pandemic had negatively impacted their child's mental health and thus influenced their school attendance decisions.[88] Additionally, chronic absenteeism, often linked to mental health struggles such as anxiety and depression, has been identified as a growing issue among students that parents are aware of and or sensitive to.[89] However, many parents are not sure what to do when their children show signs of anxiety or stress, which then impacts the decision to go to school on those days. A Child Mind Institute study found that a significant number of parents lack awareness about mental health issues in children.[90] Many parents struggle to recognize the signs of anxiety or stress and are uncertain about how to respond effectively. The Child Mind Institute report emphasizes the need for better education and resources to help parents support their children's mental health.[91]

---

[88] The survey conducted by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago took place between March 19 and April 2, 2021. It was part of their "Voices of Child Health in Chicago Parent Panel Survey" and included responses from 1,000 parents across the U.S.

[89] Linking Mental Health to Chronic Absenteeism (2024). Mental Health America and Attendance Works, November 2024 as part of the Orah Attend Well Commission.

[90] Child Mind Institute. (2016). Children's Mental Health Report: Understanding Anxiety in Children and Teens. Child Mind Institute.

[91] Ibid.

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

Q10 My child's physical health affects whether I make them go to school.

Answered: 126 Skipped: 120
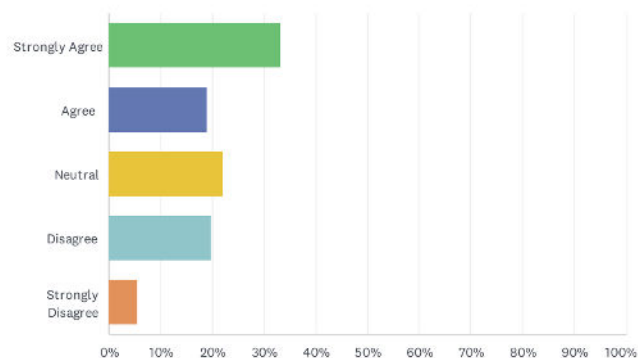
Over 52 percent of parents felt like their child's physical health affects whether they make them go to school. A survey conducted by C.S. Mott Children's Hospital found that 53 percent of parents would keep their child home from school if they felt their child's physical health was at risk, even if the illness was not severe. In making decisions about school attendance, parents consider factors such as their child's ability to get through the day, the potential risk to others, and the child's behavior. Additionally, 25 percent of parents in the Mott survey believe school attendance policies make it difficult for children with medical conditions to stay home.[92]

Survey Summary

The TCSG Survey[93] indicates that parents generally weigh several factors when deciding if their child should attend school. Key considerations include the child's ability to manage the day, whether their physical health poses a risk to others, child's overall behavior and attitude toward school, how welcome parents feel at school, plus many other factors. Parents seem to prefer keeping a child home when unsure about their child's health, while others feel pressured by school policies to make their child attend school. However, when schools provide information to parents about the importance of good attendance, define good attendance, and give parents resources to help them understand when they should keep their child at home, parents are better informed to make the decision about school attendance.

Academic concerns also play a role in student attendance, according to parents. Chronic conditions and mental health days are increasingly part of the decision-making process.

Parents feel like they can improve student attendance by establishing consistent routines, such as regular bedtime and morning schedules, to ensure children are prepared for school each day.[94,95] Encouraging a positive attitude toward school, emphasizing the importance of education, and addressing any anxiety or fears children might also help.[96]

---

[92] National Poll on Children's Health (2024). C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.
[93] TCSG plans to further analyze these data by area, race, course of study, and other factors.
[94] Attendance Works and Healthy Schools Campaign (2015). Mapping the Early Attendance Gap: Charting a Course for School Success.
[95] Kreider, H., Caspe, M., Kennedy, S., & Weiss, H. (2007).Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education. Harvard Family Research Project.
[96] Moore, K. A., & Emig, C. (2014). Integrated Student Supports, Child Trends.

Regular communication with teachers about any concerns, supporting children during health challenges, and monitoring their academic and social progress are key factors in student attendance.[97]

Why Study Student Attendance in Georgia?[98]
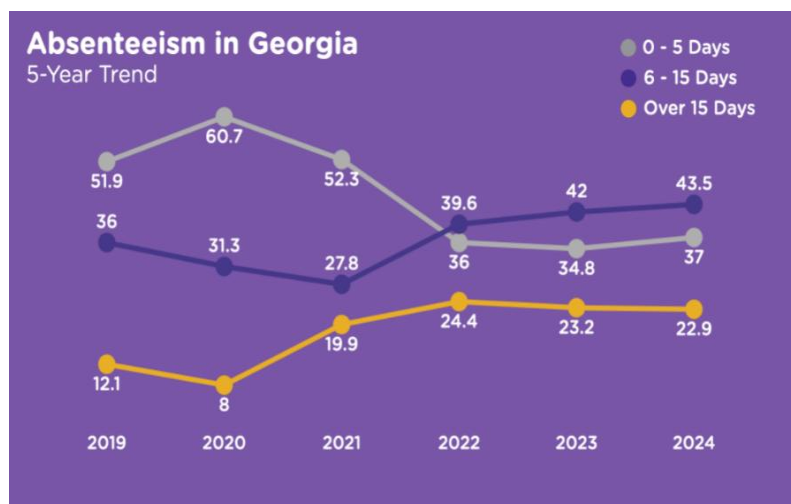
This graph represents statewide data. Almost 23 percent of students in Pre-K through the 12th grade were absent in 2024 compared to 12 percent in 2019. Also troubling is the data showing that over 66 percent of students were absent from 6-15 days (from one week to three weeks of lost instruction time). The percentage of students who missed five days are less dropped from 61 percent in 2020 to only 37 percent in 2024. These percentages for Georgia students are not dissimilar to data from several other states. However, it is worth noting that some states have significantly *lower* percentages of absent students: Iowa – 14 percent; Kansas – 20 percent; Texas – 20 percent.

Students Absent From School More Than 15 Days
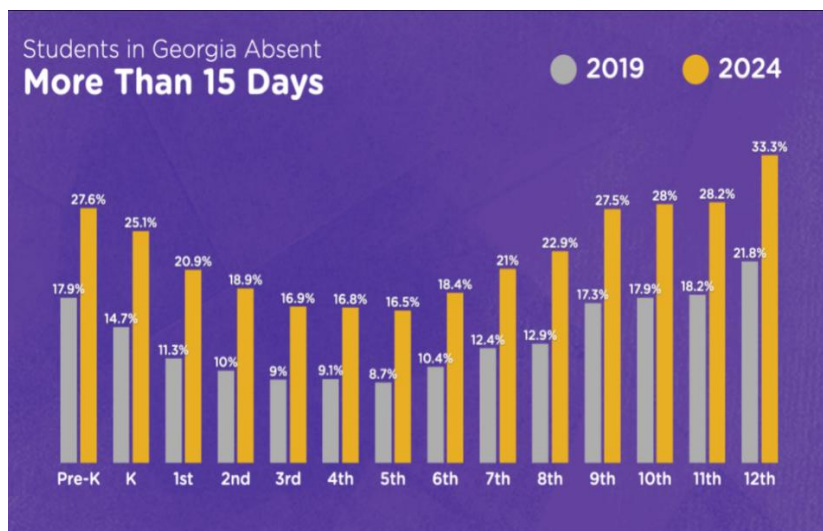
The data in this graph show a dramatic increase in the percentage of students absent post-pandemic by grade level. In Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels, the increased significantly pre- to post-pandemic. In 2024, almost 30 percent of Pre-K, Kindergarten, 9th grade, 10th grade, and 11th grade were absent. Over 33 percent of 12th grade students were absent.

---

[97] Kraft, M. A., & Rogers, T. (2015). The Underutilized Potential of Teacher-to-Parent Communication: Evidence from a Field Experiment. Economics of Education Review, 47, 49–63.

[98] The charts in this section come from local school system data uploaded to the Georgia Department of Education.

Students in Georgia Absent
More Than 15 Days
● 2019 ● 2024

Subgroup	2019	2024
Black	13.9%	26.2%
Hispanic	12.5%	24.3%
White	12.7%	20.3%
SWD	17.7%	27.7%
Non-SWD	12.1%	22.1%
ED	15.5%	27%
Non-ED	8%	13.1%
EL	9.3%	20.2%
Non-EL	13.2%	23.3%
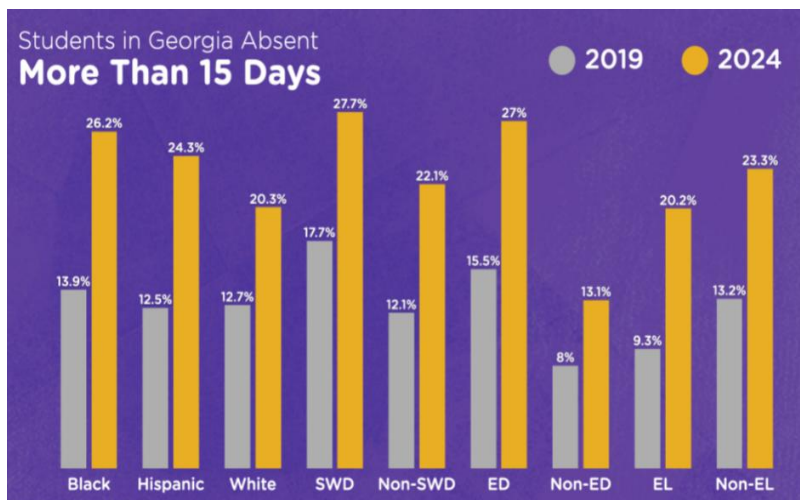
This chart clearly shows that the pre- and post-pandemic percentages are significantly higher post pandemic in every subgroup. Black, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, and Economically Disadvantaged students have the highest increases in absenteeism. These increases are similar to survey results from a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).[99] A report from the Brookings Institute highlighted how absenteeism surged following the pandemic for students in low-income families and students with disabilities.[100]

Students in Georgia Absent
More Than 15 Days (2024)
● Economically Disadvantaged
● Non-Economically Disadvantaged

Grade	Economically Disadvantaged	Non-Economically Disadvantaged
Pre-K	31.3%	14.6%
K	29.4%	12.5%
1st	24.7%	10.1%
2nd	22.5%	9%
3rd	20.2%	8.1%
4th	20.1%	8.1%
5th	19.7%	8.5%
6th	22%	9.2%
7th	24.8%	11.2%
8th	27%	12.7%
9th	33.3%	14.1%
10th	33.6%	16.5%
11th	34.1%	17.9%
12th	39.2%	24.3%

Source: GaDOE
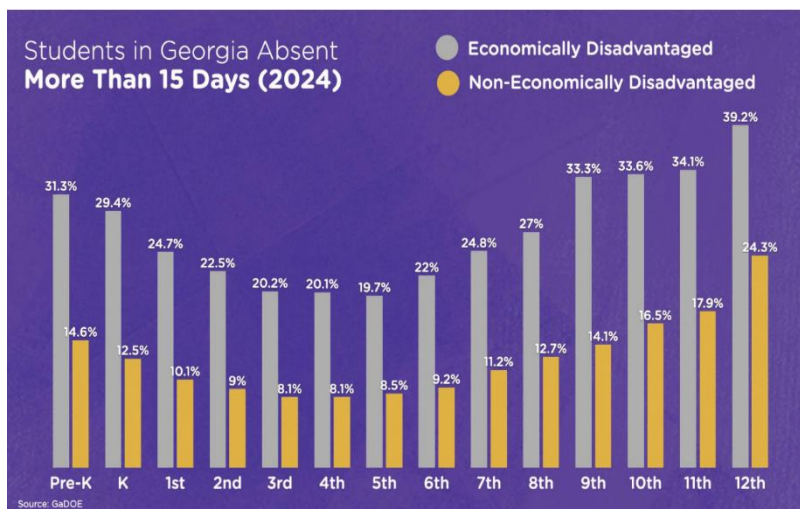
The absenteeism rate among children from low-income families has significantly risen post-pandemic. For instance, in some states, the rate for economically disadvantaged students climbed from around 25 percent pre-pandemic to over 38 percent by 2024 school year. By comparison, students from higher-income families saw a lower increase, with absenteeism rates rising from roughly 10 percent to about 20 percent during the same period.[101] This chart shows a similar pattern in Georgia, with absenteeism differences between economically disadvantaged students double the rate of non-economically disadvantaged students in 2024. These elevated rates underscore the ongoing challenges in high-poverty communities, where barriers such as transportation, housing instability, and lack of family engagement contribute to absenteeism

---

[99] Survey of Student Attendance Patterns (2022). National Center for Education Statistics.

[100] DeBruin, S. (2022). Chronic absenteeism in K-12 schools: The critical need for action to support students post-pandemic. The Brookings Institution.

[101] Germain, E, Laura Hernandez, Sarah Klevan, Rebecca Levine, and Anna Maier. (2024). Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: Lessons from Community Schools, Learning Policy Institute.

Students Absent From School 6 to15 Days

Students in Georgia Absent **6 to 15 Days** — 2019, 2024

Grade	2019	2024
Pre-K	38.2%	39.6%
K	46%	49.8%
1st	43.7%	50.1%
2nd	41%	49.3%
3rd	39.2%	48.3%
4th	38.3%	47%
5th	37.3%	45.9%
6th	35.5%	43.9%
7th	36.4%	43.5%
8th	35.8%	42.7%
9th	31.6%	37.9%
10th	32.6%	38.1%
11th	32.7%	37.5%
12th	32.9%	34.7%
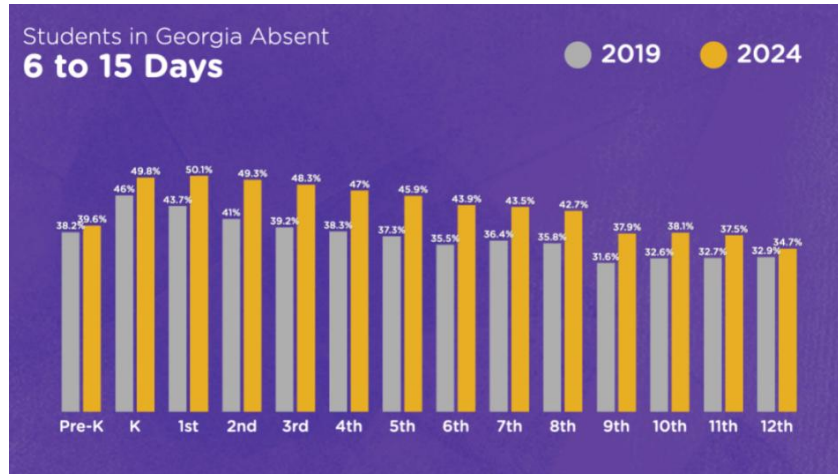
It's also important to look at the percentage of students absent between 6-15 days, because as stated earlier, a significant learning loss begins after the fifth day of absences. Additional research shows that kindergarteners who were absent more than 5 days scored over 20 percent lower in reading and over 25% lower in math than their peers who were absent fewer than 5 days.[102] Another study conducted by Ohio State University of over 800 U.S. elementary schools found that from kindergarten to fifth grade, just one day absence from school equals 2.5 days of lost math learning and 1.5 days of lost language and literacy learning,[103] so five days absent means almost 13 days of lost math learning and over 7 days of lost language and literacy learning. Knowing that, look again at the blue line. Over 40 percent of our students are missing 6-15 days of school. Over 40 percent. And when we add the blue line and the yellow line, together, lost learning is happening to over 60 percent of our students. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why only 38% of our third graders read proficiently. Almost 50 percent of Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade students missed at least a week and in some cases, as much as three weeks of school in 2024. The percentage increased in 2024 compared to 2019 in every grade level. An *Attendance Works* national study found that chronic absenteeism doubled nationwide in the early grades, with students missing substantial amounts of school at percentages similar to Georgia's.[104]

---

[102] Attendance Works – Baltimore Study (2014).
[103]Ansari, A., & Gottfried, M. (2022). Absenteeism in Elementary School Has Wide-Ranging Consequences, Especially for Minoritized Children. Crane Center for Early Childhood Research & Policy, Ohio State University.
[104] Chronic Absence Amid the Pandemic: A Status Report of the 2021-22 School Year (2022). Attendance Works for Everyone

Students in Georgia Absent 6 to 15 Days

○ 2019 ● 2024

Subgroup	2019	2024
Black	36.3%	41.9%
Hispanic	37.7%	43.9%
White	40.4%	45.8%
SWD	38.9%	41.9%
Non-SWD	37.6%	43.8%
ED	39.2%	43.6%
Non-ED	34.8%	42.2%
EL	35.3%	42.5%
Non-EL	38.1%	43.6%
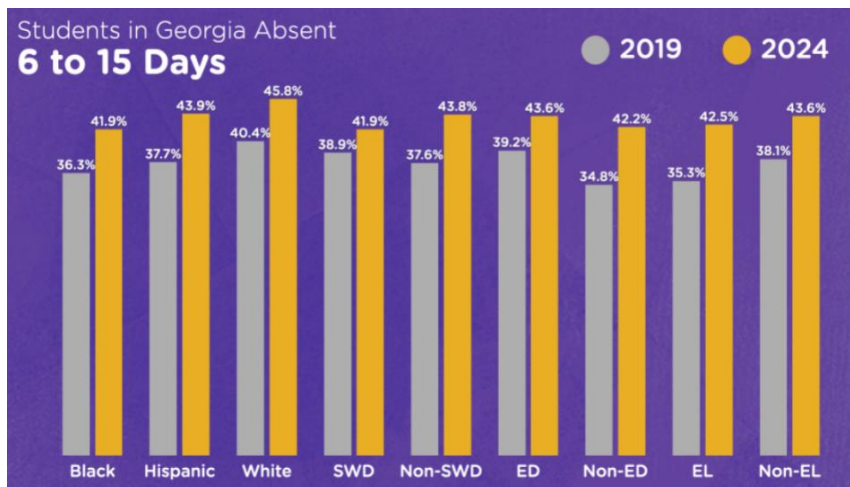
This chart of subgroups also shows the higher percentages of absences of 6-15 days post-pandemic but what is striking about this data is that the increases are consistent across all groups of students, with over 40 percent missing over a week and up to three weeks of school.

Absenteeism in this range of 6-15 days needs to be closely watched because it can be an early indicator of future absenteeism. Research shows that early absenteeism, defined as absences between 5-15 days, is linked to a higher likelihood of future absenteeism and poor academic outcomes.[105]

Students Absent From School 5 or Fewer Days

Students in Georgia Absent 5 or Fewer Days

○ 2019 ● 2024

Grade	2019	2024
Pre-K	43.9%	34.1%
K	39.2%	29.5%
1st	45%	33.1%
2nd	49%	35.6%
3rd	51.8%	38.5%
4th	52.6%	39.8%
5th	54%	40.9%
6th	54.1%	41.3%
7th	51.2%	39.1%
8th	51.3%	38%
9th	51.1%	38.2%
10th	49.5%	36.8%
11th	49.1%	36.5%
12th	45.3%	33.3%
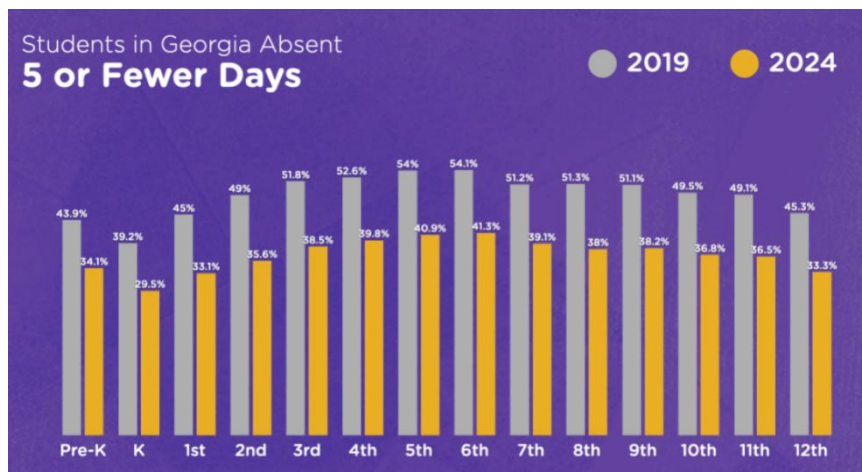
This graph provides a closer look at the percentage of 5 or fewer days absent by grade level. The data shows that pre-pandemic the percentage of students with 5 or fewer days dropped significantly after the pandemic.

However, it should be noted that the percentages of students missing fewer than 5 days *before* the pandemic were problematic, especially in Pre-K-3rd grades, but worsened after the pandemic.

---

[105] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2018). Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absence. Johns Hopkins University School of Education.

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report
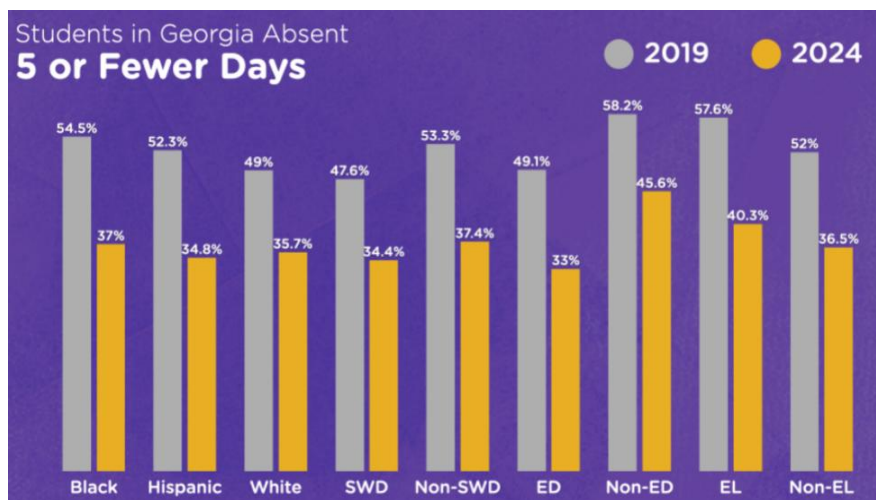
The subgroup data illustrates a significant decrease in the percentage of students in subgroups who miss 5 or fewer days of school post-pandemic, but also the percentages were low even before the pandemic.

Where Would Georgia be If Attendance Improved?

After reviewing the statewide student attendance data, the Subcommittee asked the question, "What would be the impact on 3rd grade ELA assessment outcomes if student attendance *improved* by 5 percent?" In Georgia, 124,167 students took the 3rd-grade English Language Arts (ELA) test in 2024. Of those, 38.4 percent (47,680 students) scored proficient or above, while 61.6 percent (76,487 students) did not. According to a research model developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission at the request of the Student Committee, it was found that a five percent *decrease* in absenteeism (defined as missing 15 or more days) would lead to a **6.6 percent increase in 3rd grade ELA proficiency** in Georgia.
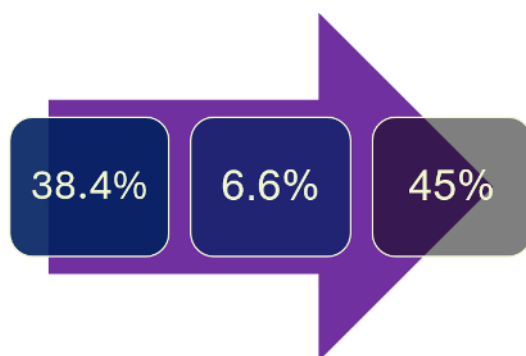
Applying this model with the 6.6 percent increase means an **additional 5,048 students** could reach proficiency or above by improving student attendance alone. Additionally, the percentage of Georgia students scoring proficient or above on the **3rd grade ELA test would increase from 38.4 percent to 45 percent,** which would put Georgia in rank as one of the highest in the country – by improving attendance along with other initiatives.

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

Recommendations to Address Student Absences Issues

It must first be stated that the State of Georgia and its leaders should strive to put a nurse, certified medical assistant, and/or a certified nursing assistant in every Georgia public school.

As mentioned earlier in this report, a recent national survey found that 25 percent of school district leaders believe absenteeism has become so severe that none of their strategies are effective.[106] School leaders agree that to improve attendance, it's essential to address the root causes of absenteeism, collaborate with many partners, and develop a wide range of strategies rather than focusing on one or two.[107] Various districts across the country have implemented programs to address student absenteeism but to be effective they must be tailored specifically to factors not previously considered in typical responses to student attendance. It is clear that addressing the attendance problems effectively requires more than one strategy. By combining several strategies tailored to address the local factors that are contributing to absenteeism based on data analysis, schools can address both the underlying causes of absenteeism while creating conditions that may improve student attendance. A constellation of strategies that form a network of support, resources, and expectations will be necessary to address what to some seems to be a intractable problem.

Attendance Works, a national consortium of research and resources for schools, school districts, and state departments of education suggests strategies to combat absenteeism:

1. **Mindset Shift:** Encourage parents and communities to prioritize attendance across all grade levels and get local and state leaders involved.

2. **Gather Actionable Data:** Break down the data to uncover trends and ask the right questions to understand what's driving absenteeism.

3. **Creating Conditions:** Foster positive school environments that students want to be part of, making school an attractive place to attend.

4. **Build Capacity:** Focus on successful local strategies that are already making a difference in schools and communities.

Recommendations

Improving student attendance is crucial for their academic success and personal development. The Student Attendance Subcommittee identified barriers and then strategies pertinent to those barriers that schools, educators, families, communities,

---

[106] Are School District Impacting Student Attendance: Survey, (2024) by District Administration Publication.
[107] Pareja, A. Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools-bv-Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences, University Consortium on School Research, 2013.

policymakers, and others could consider that include a mindset shift, using data, creating positive conditions for students, teachers, and parents, and that build capacity.

The following recommendations are not all-inclusive; no list of recommendations could possibly address and include all possible solutions. The recommendations are not intended to endorse any person, product, or enterprise.

The Subcommittee fully recognizes that student absenteeism is a complex issue that combined with the daily challenges facing teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and others that support schools are difficult and at times unrelenting. Knowing that, the recommendations are intended as a resource list of effective practices for schools and school districts to consider as they grapple with student absenteeism.

The recommendations are based on academic research, applied research, quantitative research, qualitative research, case studies, surveys, and reviews of practices and strategies that are working to improve student attendance (a list of case studies of effective practices is included in this study).

1. Early Identification and Intervention

- **Monitor Attendance Data**: Schools can track daily attendance to identify patterns of absenteeism early at the individual student level as well as schoolwide. Implement early warning systems that alert staff when students are at risk of becoming absent. Early detection helps schools intervene before a student's absenteeism becomes habitual.[108] By addressing absenteeism early, students are more likely to stay engaged in their education, leading to better academic performance, increased graduation rates, and long-term success.[109] Utilizing a comprehensive student information system (SIS), schools can analyze absences and identify students who on track of missing 10 percent or more of the school year, a common threshold for absenteeism. These early warning systems flag at-risk students by automatically generating alerts when attendance falls below a predetermined threshold. Staff can act immediately, ensuring no prolonged absenteeism without interventions. Early warning systems allow schools to focus resources on students who need them most, such as counseling, tutoring, or family outreach, improving the effectiveness of interventions. Data-driven early warning

---

[108] Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University. This report discusses how early warning systems that track attendance, behavior, and course performance can reduce absenteeism and improve student outcomes.

[109] Chang, H. N., & Romero, M. (2008). Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades. Attendance Works. This study emphasizes the impact of early intervention on absenteeism, showing that schools using early warning systems and data to track attendance early in the year can reduce chronic absenteeism by 20% or more.

systems are crucial, leading to up to 20 percent fewer absences when schools intervene early in the year.[110,]

- **Personalized Outreach**: Contact families of at-risk students to discuss barriers to attendance. This might include phone calls, text messages, home visits, and meetings with school counselors to offer support and resources.
    - o **Direct Parent Communication**: Contact families via phone calls, letters, or texts to inform parents of student absences and discuss reasons for absences. Outreach should be respectful, encouraging and focused on understanding and addressing barriers (e.g., health issues, family circumstances). Research suggests these communications should be personalized.[111]
    - o **Home Visits and Meetings**: Schools can organize home visits or invite parents to meetings with counselors or social workers to explore deeper issues like transportation problems, mental health challenges, or family stress. Face-to-face meetings can build trust and facilitate open dialogue.
    - o **Community and School Support Resources**: Provide families with resources such as counseling services, access to school-based health services, basic needs, and academic support if needed, aiming to remove obstacles preventing regular attendance.
    - o **Home-School Liaison Programs**: Hire staff who regularly visit families of absent students to provide personal support and identify barriers. Connect with the Peer Support network to link a Certified Peer Support Specialist[112] with parents.

2. Engagement and Connections

- **Build Positive Relationships**: Foster a welcoming and supportive school environment. Teachers and staff from bus drivers to front office staff and other staff members should build strong relationships with students, showing that they care about their well-being and academic success. Students who have strong, positive relationships with their teachers tend to be more engaged in learning and motivated to attend school. When students feel that their teachers are invested in their success, they are more likely to view school as a place where they are valued and supported.[113]

---

[110] Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & MacIver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University. This report discusses how early warning systems that track attendance, behavior, and course performance can reduce absenteeism and improve student outcomes.

[111] https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/ed-magazine/24/05/um-where-everybody

[112] Georgia Parent Support Network: https://www.gpsn.org/

[113] Sava, F.A. (2020). Fostering Students' Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Teacher Interpersonal Behavior and Student-Teacher Relationships, Frontiers in Psychology, DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00782.

- **Teacher-Student Connections**: Teachers should regularly check in with students, showing care for their emotional and academic well-being. Simple actions like greeting students by name, acknowledging their successes, or offering support when they face challenges build trust. Review the results of the Georgia Student Health Survey to find what percentage of students feel like they have a trusted adult at school. Share the results with the teachers to generate ideas on how to improve and maintain relationships between students and teachers.

- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**: Schools can implement SEL programs that teach students how to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and build strong relationships with peers and staff, creating a more inclusive and supportive school climate. SEL is multifaceted, with various types and approaches tailored to different educational settings and student needs. Whether through structured curricula, integrated teaching practices, or school-wide initiatives, SEL can equip students with essential skills for success in school and life. By understanding the different types of SEL, educators and stakeholders can make informed decisions to foster supportive and nurturing learning environments.

- **Student Transition Supports**: Many students experience difficulties navigating and emotionally coping with transitions to another grade level, a new teacher, a new school, and/or returning to school from another facility or program (e.g., hospital/homebound).
  - **Transitioning to a New School**
    - ✓ Orientation Programs – Host school tours, meet-the-teacher events, and buddy programs for new students.
    - ✓ Peer Mentoring – Pair new students with an older or more experienced student to help them adjust.
    - ✓ Welcome Packets – Provide materials with maps, schedules, key contacts, and tips for navigating school life.
    - ✓ Teacher and Counselor Check-ins – Schedule one-on-one meetings to assess how new students are adjusting.
    - ✓ Parental Engagement – Offer sessions for parents on how to support their child's transition
  - **Moving to a New Grade Level**
    - ✓ Step-Up Days – Allow students to visit the next grade level, meet teachers, and learn about expectations.
    - ✓ Vertical Teaming – Encourage collaboration between teachers across grade levels to ensure curriculum continuity.
    - ✓ Advisory Groups – Assign students to a consistent teacher or mentor who supports them throughout transitions.
    - ✓ Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Support – Provide activities focused on coping with change and building resilience.

       ✓ Clear Communication – Share upcoming changes with students and parents to reduce anxiety.
- **Returning After a Long Illness**
  - ✓ Personalized Reintegration Plan – Develop a tailored schedule for the student's return, including flexibility for breaks.
  - ✓ Teacher and Staff Coordination – Ensure all teachers are aware of the student's needs and any necessary accommodations.
  - ✓ Academic Support – Offer tutoring, modified assignments, or online learning options to help the student catch up.
  - ✓ Social Support – Assign a peer buddy and provide counseling to address any emotional challenges.
  - ✓ Health Considerations – Work with the school nurse and family to accommodate medical needs and any required modifications.

3. Parent-School Partnership

- **Improve Parent Engagement**: Ensure that parents understand the importance of attendance and know school policies. Regularly communicate with parents about their child's attendance, whether through progress reports, text alerts, or newsletters. Frequent and encouraging communication between schools and parents can significantly improve student attendance.[114]

  - **Clear Policies**: Regularly inform parents about attendance policies and emphasize the critical role attendance plays in academic success. Use clear, accessible, and student-focused language to explain school expectations.

  - **Frequent Updates**: Utilize multiple communication methods—text alerts, emails, phone calls, newsletters, and progress reports—to keep parents informed about their child's attendance and any concerns. Automated systems can send alerts when a child misses school.

  - **Language and Cultural Sensitivity**: Ensure communication is accessible to non-English speaking families by offering translated materials and culturally relevant messaging.

- **Parent Workshops**: Offer workshops or seminars for parents that focus on the importance of school attendance, how to support their child's academic journey, and how to manage any attendance issues. For example, some schools in Georgia use the Attendance Works Toolkit[115] to conduct workshops that focus on building a culture of attendance. These workshops emphasize routines, family engagement,

---

[114] Robinson, C. D., Lee, M., Dearing, E., & Rogers, T. (2018). Reducing Student Absenteeism in the Early Grades by Targeting Parental Beliefs. Harvard Kennedy School.

[115] Attendance Works Toolkit is a comprehensive resource designed to help schools, districts, and communities improve student attendance by promoting family and community engagement. The toolkit includes materials to engage families in conversations about the importance of attendance. It emphasizes the crucial role that parents play in ensuring their children attend school regularly and includes exercises that help families address attendance challenges.

and the importance of showing up to school regularly. Schools have seen success by involving parents early, helping them identify barriers to attendance, and providing support and resources like transportation assistance or mental health services.

- o **Attendance Awareness Seminars**: Host workshops that explain the academic and social-emotional importance of regular school attendance. These sessions can help parents understand how absenteeism affects learning outcomes and long-term success.

- o **Supportive Strategies**: Offer practical advice on how parents can ensure their children attend school regularly, such as establishing morning routines, addressing transportation barriers, and supporting their child's mental and physical health.

- o **Engaging Parents as Partners**: Encourage parents to share their concerns and work collaboratively with the school to address any challenges, such as medical conditions or anxiety, that may be contributing to absenteeism. Oftentimes, parents don't feel like schools understand their challenges, so engaging with parents as a partner to establish trust can lead to solutions, such Gwinnett County School System's **Engage, Equip, Empower Series - Gwinnett County Public Schools**.

4. Attendance Incentive Programs

- **Positive Reinforcement**: Implement programs that reward good or improved attendance.[116] Rewards can range from public recognition (certificates, announcements) to tangible incentives (prizes, field trips), but schools need to be cautious about Perfect Attendance Award programs because they can become negative.[117] It is important to remember that like the other categories of recommendations, combining attendance incentives with supportive measures— like mentoring, counseling, and family engagement—can be more effective in improving attendance sustainably but will have limited or short-term effects if incentives are used in isolation. It is also important to note that the most effective type of incentive is a positive acknowledgement by an adult.

- o **Public or Individual Recognition:** Celebrate students with excellent or improved attendance through certificates, shout-outs during assemblies, or bulletin boards highlighting "Attendance Stars." Acknowledging their efforts

---

[116] National Center for Education Statistics. Using Incentives to Increase Attendance: A Study on the Effectiveness of Attendance Programs in Public Schools. This report analyzes the impact of incentive-based programs on short-term attendance improvements, showing a typical boost of 5-8% in attendance rates.

[117] Perfect attendance awards have been a traditional method used by schools to encourage regular attendance. However, there is growing debate about whether these awards are ultimately beneficial or harmful to students. The effects of perfect attendance awards on student attendance can be seen as both positive and negative, depending on the context and how the awards are implemented. Robinson, J. P., & Rogers, T. (2017). The Demotivating Effect (and Unintended Message) of Awards for Perfect Attendance. Harvard Kennedy School; Attendance Works. (2018). Why Perfect Attendance Awards May Do More Harm Than Good.

publicly motivates students to maintain consistency. With middle and high school students, classes can be acknowledged for attendance or individual students can be acknowledged in subtle ways. The main point is acknowledgement.

- o **Gamification:** Incorporate game elements into attendance, such as earning points or badges for regular attendance, fostering competition, and making it fun for students.

- **Competitions and Challenges**: Encourage healthy competition between classes or grade levels to see which group can achieve the best attendance rates, with incentives for the winners. Attendance competitions and challenges provide a form of positive reinforcement. When students receive rewards for attending school, it strengthens the association between attendance and positive outcomes. Research shows that schools using reward-based attendance strategies saw reductions in absenteeism particularly for the early grades students.[118]

  - o **Class vs. Class Competitions:** Organize attendance challenges between classes or grade levels, tracking who has the best attendance over a certain period. Offer group incentives like special events or fun days for the winning group, making it fun and encouraging peer accountability.

  - o **Attendance Milestones**: Celebrate milestones like perfect attendance for a month or marked improvement in attendance, creating healthy competition among students to reach these benchmarks.

5. Mental and Physical Health Support

- **Many absences are due to health issues**. Schools can partner with health services to provide on-site clinics[119] and/or telehealth access[120] and other resources for students with health conditions. It is important for schools to establish and maintain contact with the student's health provider through the parents or directly with the provider (with parent's permission). Too often, the schools and the medical provider do not interact, which is detrimental to the students' health.

  - o **Physical Condition Management**: Work to reduce one of the physical conditions that causes the most absences, asthma, by engaging Regional Education Service Agencies and school districts together with Georgia Department of Public Health Asthma representatives to increase number of

---

[118] Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. The School Community Journal, 14(2), 39-56.

[119] National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (2005). School-Based Health Centers: Improving Access to Health Care, Preventing Absenteeism. This report shows that students who have access to on-site health services through school-based health centers (SBHCs) experience significant reductions in absenteeism, with reductions in health-related absences as high as 29% in some cases.

[120] Koonin, L. M., Hoots, B., Tsang, C. A., et al. (2020). Telemental Health in Schools: An Innovative Solution to Improve Access to Care. School Mental Health Journal.

schools participating in the *Asthma Friendly Schools* program.[121] With the assistance of parents, school nurses and other resources, ensure that students with medical conditions are receiving the support they need.

- o **Screenings:** Many of the high-risks students have health issues that have not been addressed or have not been addressed sufficiently, for example, vision, hearing, dental, and nutrition. To illustrate, research found that a disproportionate number of high-risk students need glasses, primarily because of the 85 percent increase in the number of teens with myopia.[122]

  - Schedule vision, hearing, dental, and nutrition screenings at different grade levels. Contact the Georgia Department of Public Health, Vision to Learn, Georgia Department of Education for assistance.
  - Review Form 3300 (DPH) to ensure that students who were recommended for additional evaluations are referred for diagnostic assessments.

- **On-Site Health Services**: Provide access to school-based health clinics or nurses who can help manage health conditions (asthma, diabetes, etc.) that might prevent students from attending. By bringing health services directly to the educational environment, it ensures timely care, reduces absenteeism, and supports overall student well-being. This integration of health and education fosters a more conducive learning atmosphere and promotes long-term positive outcomes for students and communities.

  - o **School-Based Health Clinics[123] and/or School-Based Telehealth**: Provide immediate access to medical care for acute and chronic conditions. School nurses or other health professionals can manage medications, treatments, and routine checkups, minimizing absences due to health-related issues. While school-based clinics cannot be supported in some schools, school-based telehealth may be more accessible and provide fewer implementation challenges.

  - o **Preventative Care**: Schools, by working with the local department of public health could offer vaccinations, dental care, and routine health screenings, helping to keep students healthy and ready to attend school regularly. Offering health fairs at schools for parents and staff can provide opportunities to enhance health literacy and preventative care.[124]

---

[121] Asthma is the leading cause of chronic illness-related absences in children. According to the American Lung Association, children with asthma miss approximately 8.3 million school days annually. Asthma-related absenteeism is higher in low-income communities and among students of color due to disparities in healthcare access. A study published in the Journal of School Health found that children with asthma were twice as likely to miss school as their non-asthmatic peers. Effective asthma management programs in schools have been shown to reduce absences by up to 50%.

[122] Vision to Learn (2024).

[123] Georgia School-Based Health Alliance: https://gasbha.org

[124] Several schools in Georgia, including those in counties such as Lowndes, Berrien, and Tift, host school-based flu vaccination clinics through partnerships with local health departments. For example, the South Health District organizes annual flu vaccination programs in collaboration with local schools.

- o Community health fairs can improve student attendance by addressing health-related barriers that often keep students out of school. Families can learn about local clinics, insurance options, mental health support, and nutrition services. When parents have better access to care, they're more likely to ensure their child's health needs are met—reducing missed days.

- o Health fairs promote understanding of how physical and mental health affect school success. When families and students recognize the link between well-being and attendance, they're more engaged in staying healthy and showing up.

- o Hosting these events in school settings helps schools build stronger relationships with families, creating a sense of support and shared responsibility that encourages regular attendance.

- **Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health Program**: Offering counseling and social-emotional learning programs to address anxiety, depression, or other emotional issues that could lead to absenteeism can be a valuable and effective strategy.[125] Early intervention through school-based mental health services is effective in reducing absenteeism, particularly for students with mental health challenges.[126,127]

  - o **Counseling Services**: Offer individual or group counseling for students struggling with anxiety, depression, or stress. This proactive approach helps address emotional or psychological issues that might cause absenteeism.

  - o **School-Based Therapists and School-Based Teletherapy**: Partner with mental health professionals to offer therapy and interventions on-site and/or on-site remotely, reducing considerable and consistent barriers to accessing outside mental health services. Work with the Apex[128] program from the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (BHDD) to place an Apex therapist in schools or utilize the growing provider network of school-based teletherapy that connects a therapist with a student online while at school. The school-based teletherapy should include the feature that allows the student's parents to join sessions online and allows the teletherapy to be portable so if a student moves to another school

[125] Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Stormont, M. (2011). Classroom-level positive behavior supports in schools implementing SW-PBIS: Identifying areas for enhancement. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 13(1), 39-50.
[126] Weist, M. D., Sander, M. A., Walrath, C. M., Link, B., Nabors, L. A., Adelsheim, S., & Bryant, T. (2005). Developing principles for best practice in expanded school mental health. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34(1), 25-31.
[127] Kutash, K., Duchnowski, A. J., & Lynn, N. (2006). School-based mental health: An empirical guide for decision-makers. University of South Florida.
[128] The Apex Program places licensed mental health clinicians directly in schools, allowing students to receive support without having to leave the school environment. These services include individual counseling, family therapy, and group therapy, as well as crisis intervention services for students who may be experiencing acute emotional distress. Apex works in partnership with local school districts to integrate mental health services into the educational system. The goal is to make mental health services easily accessible and to create a seamless referral process for students who need help.

the therapy can continue. Many of the teletherapy providers are accessible after school hours and during the summer months.

- o Telehealth availability at schools expands access to care by allowing students to receive timely medical and mental health support without leaving campus, reducing absenteeism and supporting overall well-being.

6. Flexible Attendance Policies

- **Individualized Support Plans**: For students with health conditions and/or other special needs, create individualized attendance plans that offer flexibility and accommodations while ensuring academic progress.
  - o **Tailored Attendance Plans**[129]: For students with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or special needs, create Individualized Attendance Plans (IAPs). Involve healthcare providers, parents, school nurses, teachers, and the student (when appropriate) in developing the plan. These plans offer flexibility, allowing for adjusted attendance requirements while ensuring academic progress.[130] Schools can incorporate medical needs into these plans, such as offering breaks, rest periods, or modified class schedules. Review and update the IHP regularly or when there are changes in the student's health status. Also, communicate with parents on regular basis about the student's school work and attendance.
  - o **Academic Accommodations**: Schools can provide makeup work, extended deadlines, or tutoring to keep students with medical or mental health conditions on track despite absences.
- **Remote Learning Options**: For students unable to attend in person due to temporary health conditions or for students who with high rates of absences, consider implementing remote learning or hybrid models to maintain engagement and reduce absences.[131]
  - o **Virtual Attendance-Remote or Hybrid Learning Models**: Allow students to check in for virtual learning when absent due to health reasons, preventing academic disengagement. For students unable to attend in person due to health or mental health conditions, offer virtual learning options, with hybrid being the preferred model. This ensures continuous engagement in coursework without falling behind academically.

---

[129] Attendance Works. (2018). How to Develop a Tailored Attendance Plan. Attendance Works.
[130] Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. The School Community Journal, 14(2), 39-56.
[131]Garbe, A., Ogurlu, U., Logan, N., & Cook, P. (2020). Parents' experiences with remote education during COVID-19 school closures. American Journal of Qualitative Research.

- o **Technology Access**: Provide necessary tools, such as laptops and internet access, so students can participate in virtual classes from home during illness or recovery.

7. Community and Social Supports

- **Community Partnerships**: Collaborate with local community organizations to offer additional supports to students and families, such as food programs, housing assistance, or mental health services.

  - o **Collaboration with Local Organizations**: Schools can work with community organizations, charities, and government agencies to provide students and families with support services like food programs, housing assistance, healthcare access, and mental health services. This can alleviate external barriers to attendance, such as financial struggles, food insecurity, and mental health and other health issues. Schools cannot do this alone, which means partnerships need to be developed. Linking the school district with Georgia Family Connection Partnership[132] could lead to a network of community contacts to help families. Literacy for Georgia (L4GA) encourages districts to partner with housing providers and the local Housing Authority to host afterschool and summer programming, like Troup and Laurens Counties and Dublin City did. As appropriate, schools may consider creating a partnership or community engagement position to assist with identifying needs and creating and managing partners.

  - o **Wraparound Services**: Partnering with agencies that provide social workers or family counselors can address underlying social issues affecting attendance. By leveraging community partnerships and personalized support, schools can address both academic and non-academic barriers that contribute to absenteeism.

- **Academic Support**: Provide academic support programs to help student with attendance problems or potential attendance problems stay on track academically.[133]

---

[132] The Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) is a statewide network aimed at improving outcomes for children, families, and communities in Georgia. It operates as a public-private partnership and provides support to 159 county collaboratives across the state. These local collaboratives bring together community leaders, organizations, and stakeholders to identify and address issues that affect families, such as poverty, education, health, and child well-being.
[133] Mentorship programs and family engagement strategies can reduce absenteeism by 10-20 percent, with mentorship providing a personal connection and accountability. Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center (2014). Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absenteeism. Attendance Works.

- o **Mentoring Programs:** Create programs where older students, alumni, or community volunteer can mentor students with attendance problems.[134] The mentors can provide emotional and academic support, fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging regular attendance. The most effective practice is to develop a mentoring program that has an overall strategy to improve attendance and includes training for volunteers as well as a method for recruiting and screening volunteer mentors. Collaborate with the student to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. Also, discuss confidentiality, communication preferences, and the scope of support. Where applicable, consider student and mentor preference and cultural competence in matching mentors and mentees.

- o **Tutoring**: Offer academic tutoring after or before school, online, or during free periods to help students who are falling behind.[135] Addressing academic struggles can prevent and reduce absenteeism driven by fear of failure or lack of engagement.[136] Student attendance problems often begin when students fall behind with school work, which leads to further frustration when they cannot then catch up on the work. Tutoring should begin by assessing the student's academic status and strengths and weaknesses. Then the tutor can collaborate with the student to set clear, achievable learning goals based on their needs and academic requirements.

- o **Tax Incentives**: Schools can work with community resources to provide tutoring, for example, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) used tax incentives to encourage developers to leverage new housing developments to support education outcomes. As the result of the DCA's tax incentives, Zimmerman Properties collaborated with Star-C, a non-profit organization, to offer complimentary after-school enrichment programs for elementary-aged students of its apartment tenants in Houston, Catoosa, and Clayton counties. This initiative comes at no expense to participating families. This innovative partnership directly benefits the students of Mt. Zion Primary and Mt. Zion Elementary Schools. This was possible because of the support of the Housing Authority of Clayton County and the Clayton County Board of Education.

---

[134] Mentorship and family engagement can reduce absenteeism by addressing both academic and non-academic barriers. Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. John Hopkins University.
[135] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. John Hopkins University.
[136] Harvard Family Research Project (2013). The Family Engagement Partnership: Student Outcomes and Attendance Improvement, Harvard Family Research Center.

- **Technical College Initiatives:** Troup County School System and West Georgia Technical College launched the TC3 collaboration to benefit students at-risk of dropping out and connecting them with technical college, which addresses absenteeism in the higher grades. TCSS now offers classes at West Georgia Technical College so students can get basic/fundamental skills to earn a diploma with a technical skill that enables them to enter the workforce.

- **Homework Help Centers**: Establish centers where students can get assistance with homework or projects, offering a supportive academic environment. Many schools have established their own after-school homework help centers where students can receive extra academic support. These programs are often run by teachers or volunteers and provide students with a quiet space to work and access tutoring services and the center could be offered remotely using volunteer staff member, graduate students, and/or community volunteers. Some of the schools are partnering with other organizations to develop and operate the centers, for example, in Cobb County, the Cobb County Public Library System offers free homework help for students.[137]

- **Adopt Engaging Curriculum**: Make school a more engaging and meaningful place for students is essential. At all grade levels, offer diverse learning activities, hands-on projects, and opportunities for creativity to encourage learning from each modality, which will heighten interest and lead to consistent attendance.

- **Diversify Learning Activities**: Incorporate various teaching methods like hands-on projects, group work, and creative problem-solving tasks. This keeps students excited and invested in their education.

- **Personalized Learning**: Tailor instruction to individual student needs by using technology or flexible lesson plans. This can improve engagement for different types of learners (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

- **Real-World Applications**: Connect lessons to real-world issues and careers. For example, integrating field trips, guest speakers, or career-related projects helps students see the value of their education beyond the classroom.

- **Credit Recovery Programs**: Provide flexible learning options such as online courses or weekend classes for students who have fallen behind in credits. Flexible Learning Options: Implement online credit recovery courses or weekend and evening classes to help students make up for missed credits. This flexibility allows students to catch up without having to repeat entire

---

[137] Cobb County Public Library in Georgia offers free homework help services for students in grades K-12. The program includes after-school tutoring in various subjects such as math, reading, and science. Students can drop by for help or schedule one-on-one sessions. More Info: Cobb County Public Library Homework Help: https://www.cobbcat.org/.

classes.[138] Self-Paced Learning: Offer students the ability to complete credits at their own pace, whether through online platforms or teacher-guided instruction. This approach keeps students engaged and motivated to complete their education. These academic interventions help students stay on track, improve their academic performance, and reduce absenteeism caused by academic frustration or the fear of falling behind.

8. Addressing Socioeconomic Barriers

- **Community School Model:** Schools can work with communities to provide comprehensive support services such as health care, mental health counseling, and social services directly on site. These services help meet the physical, emotional, and social needs of students and families, removing barriers to learning. Research shows that schools using the Community School model had improvements in student attendance.[139]

  - **Shared Opportunities**: Community schools offer additional learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day, including after-school programs, summer enrichment, and academic support services. These extended programs promote continuous learning and engagement for students. Family involvement is a cornerstone of the community school model. Schools actively engage parents through programs like adult education classes, parenting workshops, and leadership opportunities within the school community. But the Community School Model is not just aimed at after-school opportunities. Schools also foster strong partnerships with local businesses, non-profits, and government agencies to provide additional resources and services for students during the school day.

  - **Shared Governance**: Community schools emphasize shared governance, where educators, parents, community partners, and local leaders collaborate in decision-making processes to meet the specific needs of the school and its community. Schools serve as hubs that offer wraparound services to address the non-academic needs of students and families. These services might include health care, housing support, food security programs, and legal assistance. The goal is to provide students and families with a support network that extends beyond the classroom.

- **Community Health and Education Centers (CHEC**). Schools open after school for parents and students.

  - **Adult Education**: Parents can take technical college-sponsored courses; learn how to use a computer, etc. while their children receive tutoring

---

[138] Heppen, J. B., Allensworth, E., Sorensen, N., Rickles, J., Walters, K., & Kurki, A. (2016). Getting Back on Track: The Role of In-Person Instructional Support for Students Taking Online Credit Recovery. American Institutes for Research.
[139] RAND Corporation. (2020). Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools. RAND Report.

and/or participate in activities such as sports, chess, art, etc. for the purpose of engaging families in the school, which can greatly influence students. Programs like this can be critical to families because it can also give them the opportunity to use computers with assistance, if necessary to enroll in essential services. Research shows that there is a link between a parent's health and the school attendance of their children. When parents have access to healthcare, their children are more likely to have consistent healthcare themselves, reducing the number of days missed due to illness. A study found that children of parents with access healthcare had better health outcomes, including more regular well-child visits, which directly contributes to improved school attendance.[140] Parental mental health also plays a significant role in student attendance. A study by Health Affairs showed that when parents experience less psychological distress—often linked to better access to healthcare—there is a positive impact on the children's overall well-being, including more stable school attendance.[141]

- o **Basic Services**: The CHEC can offer basic health screenings for students and their families. Additionally, the CHEC model can also include therapists from the local Community Service Board (CSB) or Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers[142] and nurses from local public health.

- **Community In Schools (CIS)**[143]**:** CIS is a non-profit organization focused on improving student outcomes by addressing barriers to education both inside and outside of school. Its primary mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school .

- **Transportation Assistance**: Ensure that reliable transportation is available for students who have difficulty getting to school.[144]

- o **Transportation Alternatives**: Schools should consider transportation options for students who miss the bus and have no alternative ways to get to

---

140 The Link Between Medicaid Expansion and School Absenteeism: Evidence From the Southern United States. Journal of School Health, vol. 91, no. 6, 2021, pp. 451-460. doi:10.1111/josh.13059.

141 Benjamin D. Sommers, Bethany Maylone, Robert J. Blendon, E. John Orav, and Arnold M. Epstein. "Medicaid Expansion Increased Coverage, Improved Affordability, and Reduced Psychological Distress For Low-Income Parents." Health Affairs, vol. 36, no. 5, 2017, pp. 808-818. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2017.0296

142 Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are designed to ensure access to coordinated comprehensive behavioral health care. CCBHCs are required to serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age. This includes developmentally appropriate care for children and youth. At present, 12 CSBs are converted to the CCBHC Model, which will open up more opportunities for schools to work with behavioral health providers.

143 During the 2022-2024 school year, 99 percent of students enrolled in Communities In Schools programs remained in school through the end of the school year; 97 percent of K-11 students were promoted to the next grade; and 96 percent of seniors graduated or received a GED.

144 The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act states that schools must ensure that homeless students have access to a stable education environment, which includes providing transportation.

school. With Georgia's new law[145] giving school districts authority to use vans and other types of vehicles to transport students, perhaps school districts could consider using a back-up van to pick up students who missed their bus or who do not meet the local school district requirement of living more than one or two miles away from school to qualify for a school bus route pickup.

- o **Safe Walking Routes to School**: Improving safe walking routes to school requires a multifaceted approach involving infrastructure upgrades, community collaboration, and education efforts. Schools, local governments, and parents all play a critical role in ensuring that children can walk to school safely and confidently. When done effectively, these improvements can boost attendance, promote physical activity, and foster stronger community ties. Resources include Safe Routes to School Program[146] and the National Center for Safe Routes to School.[147]

- **Address Basic Needs**: Partner with local organizations to provide resources such as clothing, food, or school supplies to families facing financial difficulties, ensuring that these barriers do not keep students out of school.

    - o **Partnerships with Local Organizations**: Collaborate with local nonprofits or charities to provide students with essential resources like food, clothing, and school supplies. Ensuring that students have these basics can remove obstacles that prevent attendance.

    - o **School-Based Programs** *(See Community School Model):* Implement programs like food pantries, clothing drives, or backpack supply programs directly within the school to make access to these resources easier for families in need. Schools can partner with local food banks or community organizations to create weekend or holiday food programs. Students are given bags filled with food to take home, ensuring that they have access to meals even outside of school. This can ensure students feel equipped and ready to attend school regularly. With the help of community partners, schools can set up food pantries that provide discreet access to food for students and their families who need it. This addresses food insecurity within the school community. Other basic needs include laundry capacity for clothes and/or a clothing closet to provide adequate clothing.

- **Financial Assistance:** Schools can collaborate with local non-profits, faith-based organizations, and government agencies to provide financial assistance for families in need. These partnerships can offer access to programs that provide financial

---

[145] Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) § 20-2-1076: This section permits local boards of education to use vehicles other than standard school buses for student transportation, provided they meet certain safety requirements. School districts may use multifunction school activity buses (MFSABs), passenger vans, or other vehicles for transporting students to and from school-related activities.

[146] Safe Routes to School Program: https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/

[147] National Center for Safe Routes to School: https://www.saferoutesinfo.org/

literacy, job training, and emergency funds for rent or utility assistance, which can improve student attendance.[148]

- o **Community Financial Assistance**: Schools can work with organizations, businesses, and foundations can provide scholarships to help cover school fees or extracurricular activities costs to encourage more students to be engaged in school activities and events. Schools can improve student attendance and family stability by connecting families to community resources and creating partnerships with local nonprofits and businesses. These strategies not only alleviate immediate financial burdens but also help create long-term support systems that foster a better educational experience for students.[149]

- o **Non-profit providers**: Schools can contact organizations such as Vision to Learn,[150] Lions Lighthouse Foundation,[151] and others to provide free glasses and hearing aids for students.

- o **Share Information with Parents**: Schools can share information with parents about free financial planning advice, such as through the National Foundation for Credit Counseling[152] and the Financial Counseling Association of America.[153]

- o **Housing Assistance**: Families facing financial difficulties may experience housing instability, which contributes to student absenteeism.[154] Financial assistance for housing (e.g., rent assistance) can help families stay in stable environments, leading to more consistent school attendance. Many schools, especially those with Community Schools models, provide family resource coordinators who help connect families with housing services. Schools can develop partnerships with local housing authorities and landlords to host events to address housing and financial resources.

---

[148] Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research 47(2), 434-465.
[149] Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research Journal, 47(2), 434-465.
[150] Vision to Learn is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing free eye exams and free eyeglasses to children in underserved communities: www.visiontolearn.org.
[151] The Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation is a nonprofit organization in Georgia that provides free or low-cost hearing aids to children in need: info@lionslighthouse.org.
[152] The NFCC is the largest and longest-serving nonprofit financial counseling organization in the U.S. Services: Budgeting assistance, debt management plans, credit counseling, and financial education: www.nfcc.org.
[153] A network of nonprofit agencies providing financial counseling and education. Services: Credit counseling, debt management plans, housing counseling, and bankruptcy counseling: www.fcaa.org.
[154] Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research Journal, 47(2), 434-465.

9. Improving School Climate and Safety

- **Safe and Welcoming School Environment**: Prioritize student safety by addressing bullying, harassment, and threatening behavior. Implement anti-bullying programs and ensure that students feel safe coming to school and in concert with strategies to improve school climate.

  - **Anti-Bullying Programs**: Bullying continues to be a problem for some students, to the point it can impact their school attendance. Implement programs that address bullying and harassment to make students feel safe and protected. Create a school-wide culture that fosters inclusivity, respect, and empathy where bullying and harassment is reported by all who witness it but it is imperative for schools to establish a reporting protocol that protects students and staff who report bullying and harassment that also includes a prompt response to such reports. Schools can use tools like anonymous reporting systems, conflict resolution workshops, and student peer groups to reduce bullying and harassment. Comprehensive anti-bullying programs contribute to a more positive school climate. Research shows that a positive school climate, where students feel respected and included, is closely linked to better attendance. Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, one of the most widely studied anti-bullying interventions, has demonstrated that reducing bullying also improves the overall school climate, which in turn boosts student attendance.[155]

  - **Staff Training**: Ensure that teachers and staff are trained to identify and intervene when they observe bullying or harassment promptly, effectively, and safely, including bullying and harassing behavior by adults in schools. This should include clear guidelines and alternative methods for staff members who are fearful of intervening. Additionally, staff should be trained on what to do if they receive reports of bullying or harassment. Training should be modern, as the various generations, races, and cultures within the setting may have different attitudes, preferences, expectations, and definitions of "safety," and an important but often overlooked aspect of anti-bullying work is assisting adults in regulating their own emotions.

  School Climate: Use programs with well-defined frameworks to promote a culture of respect, responsibility, and positive behavior because a positive school climate can lead to improved attendance. When students feel safe, supported, and connected to their peers and teachers, they are more likely to attend school. A positive school climate reduces absenteeism by fostering a sense of belonging,

---

[155] Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (2010). Bullying in school: Evaluation and dissemination of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 80(1), 124-134.

which is particularly important for students who may feel marginalized or disengaged.[156,157]

- o **Promote Positive Behavior**: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) helps schools develop a clear framework for expectations, such as respect, responsibility, and safety. Students are taught expected behaviors, and staff reinforce these through positive feedback and rewards. PBIS provides varying levels of intervention, with universal strategies for all students, targeted support for at-risk students, and intensive support for students with ongoing behavioral challenges. PBIS can be an effective strategy for improving student attendance, particularly when it is used to foster a positive school environment, incentivize good attendance, and address behavioral and emotional challenges.[158,159,160] By focusing on proactive, positive interventions, schools can create conditions that encourage students to attend school more regularly. Creating a safe and supportive school climate reduces absenteeism by helping students feel secure, valued, and engaged in their learning environment.

- o **Social Engagement**: Engagement is the fuel for learning.[161] Students who feel connected and motivated, understand what to do or expect, and can share what they know in their learning environment are more likely to engage with the material and their peers. Engagement training involves equipping educators with practical strategies to universally enhance engagement. These strategies focus on enhancing opportunities for engagement within (not separate from) existing classroom lessons, which fosters students' social development, emotional regulation, collaboration, and communication in both academic and social contexts. Some schools are using the Social Emotional Engagement-Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS)[162] approach for staff training because it leverages student engagement as a gauge for learning success. SEE-KS focuses on three observable elements of student engagement: investment (e.g., persistence in completing tasks), independence (e.g., collaboration with peers), and initiation (e.g., active

[156] Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2013). A review of school climate research. Review of Educational Research, 83(3), 357-385.

[157] McGiboney, Garry. (2022). The Psychology of School Climate 2nd Edition. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

[158] Gage, N. A., Sugai, G., Lunde, K., & DeLoreto, L. (2020). The impact of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports on school climate, student behavior, and academic outcomes: A meta-analysis and review of the literature. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 22(3), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300719900608.

[159] Freeman, J., Sugai, G., Goodman, S., Flannery, B., & Sears, S. (2020). Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon.

[160] Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2012). Examining the association between implementation and outcomes: State-wide scale-up of school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports. Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 39(4), 417–433.

[161] Morgan, L., Close, S., Siller, M., Kushner, E., & Brasher, S. (2022). Teachers' experiences: Social emotional engagement—knowledge and skills. *Educational Research, 64*(1), 41–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2021.1988865

[162] https://commxroads.com/see-ks/

participation in class discussions). By enhancing opportunities for engagement, educators can positively influence students' learning and sense of belonging.

- o **Programs for Well-Being Support**: Programs that address students' emotional well-being and coping skills help reduce anxiety and mental health barriers to attendance. Some schools have struggled finding and keeping therapists in schools, so many are shifting to telemental health which has proven to be effective. As a companion to the school climate strategies are the use of periodic "school climate" surveys - not the end-of-the-year in-depth school climate surveys, but short surveys of no more than five questions that are given periodically to student focus groups. Patterns in response might emerge that can be addressed quickly so the climate of the school is monitored. A relatively new intervention at the Tier 2 level is Single-Session Interventions (SSI). is a therapeutic approach designed to provide meaningful support or treatment in just one session. Unlike traditional multi-session therapies, SSIs focus on delivering immediate, targeted interventions to address specific issues or concerns in a brief period. These interventions are often used in contexts where longer-term therapy may not be feasible or necessary. SSIs have proven to be effective.[163]

- o **Homework Help Centers**: Establish centers within the school where students can get assistance with homework or projects, offering a supportive academic environment.

10. School Attendance Teams

- **Dedicated Attendance Teams**: Create teams who regularly review attendance data and intervene when students are at risk of absenteeism.

  [NOTE: SB 123 (2025) mandates Attendance Review Teams: School systems with a chronic absenteeism rate of at least 10 percent, or individual schools with rates at or above 15 percent, are required to establish Attendance Review Teams. These teams, comprising administrators, counselors, teachers, social workers, parents, and other staff, are tasked with creating intervention plans for absent students.]

  - o **Team Structure**: Schools can create dedicated attendance teams composed of administrators, school nurses, teachers, counselors, and social workers. This team regularly monitors attendance data, identifying students at risk of absenteeism. The team collaborates to develop intervention strategies, meeting regularly to discuss attendance trends and

---

[163] Schleider, J. L., & Weisz, J. R. (2017). Single-Session Interventions for Youth Mental Health: A Scoping Review and Meta-Analysis. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 56(10), 876–890. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.07.780

individual student cases. This team could be linked to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), serving as a subset (See the section on MTSS). Schools with dedicated attendance teams can be successful in reducing absenteeism because the teams can rapidly deploy support measures and monitor the effectiveness of interventions over time.[164]

- o **Proactive Interventions**: Teams use early-warning systems to identify students before absenteeism becomes severe and develop strategies to engage with families to address barriers and providing support.

- **Attendance Contracts**: For students with severe absenteeism, implement attendance contracts that outline specific goals and consequences.

  - o **Individualized Contracts**: For students with significant absenteeism, create formal attendance contracts outlining clear goals and expectations for improving attendance. This can be done in conjunction with a referral to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) and/or juvenile court. Parents and students should be involved in the development of these contracts to ensure parties are committed to the action plan. Attendance contracts are often successful in increasing student accountability and making expectations clear. By having students and their families formally agree to specific attendance goals, the contract sets a visible standard that students are more likely to follow.[165]

  - o **Defined Consequences and Support**: Contracts include consequences for failing to meet attendance goals but also outline support measures, such as counseling or academic tutoring, to help students succeed. These contracts reinforce accountability while offering help. Attendance teams and contracts promote accountability, early intervention, and personalized support, fostering better student engagement and reducing absenteeism. While student attendance contracts can be successful, their effectiveness is often limited unless they are part of a broader strategy that includes family involvement, support services, and targeted interventions for students facing complex challenges. Schools that combine attendance contracts with multi-tiered interventions and follow-up support tend to see positive results.[166],[167]

---

[164] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University.

[165] Railsback, J. (2004). Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

[166] Citation: Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. A. (2014). A multi-tiered systems of support model for addressing chronic absenteeism and truancy. Psychology in the Schools, 51(4), 395-409. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21790.

[167] Baker, M. L., Sigmon, J. N., & Nugent, M. E. (2001). Truancy reduction: Keeping students in school. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

11. Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

- **Culturally Responsive Practices**: Acknowledge and incorporate the cultural backgrounds of students in the curriculum and school activities. This inclusivity can make students from diverse backgrounds feel more connected to school and less likely to be absent.[168]

    o **Curriculum Integration**: Incorporate diverse cultures, traditions, and histories into the school curriculum to reflect the backgrounds of all students. Lessons that include examples, figures, and stories from different cultures can make students feel seen and valued.

    o **Cultural Celebrations**: Host school-wide cultural events, heritage months, and language days to honor various cultures, making students from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging.[169]

    o **Language Support**: Offer multilingual communication for parents and students, ensuring they understand school policies and feel included. By embedding culturally responsive practices into school activities, students from diverse backgrounds will feel more connected, appreciated, and likely to attend regularly.

12. School and District-Level Campaigns

- **Public Awareness Campaigns**: Run school-wide campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of regular attendance, targeting both students and parents. These campaigns create a shared understanding of the importance of attendance and can dismantle misconceptions, such as the belief that missing a few days of school is not significant. By promoting these points through multiple mediums, schools can reach different stakeholders and promote consistent attendance.

    o **Community Initiatives:** Engage communication strategies with city and/or county leaders in promoting student attendance. Community leaders play a critical role in addressing the underlying causes of absenteeism and fostering environments that encourage regular attendance. Research and practical examples have shown that when schools collaborate with local leaders—such as government officials, religious figures, business owners, and non-profit organizations—student attendance often improves.[170]

    o **School-Wide Initiatives**: Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of attendance using posters, assemblies, and school-wide

---

[168] Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491.
[169] Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. Teachers College Press.
[170] National League of Cities. (2019). Mayoral Leadership to Improve Student Outcomes: https://www.nlc.org/article/2024/09/01/how-to-support-national-attendance-awareness-month/

announcements. Incorporate social media platforms to engage students and parents in a modern, accessible way. Research shows that texting parents and students about attendance can be a simple, cost-effective intervention to reduce absenteeism, particularly in schools with attendance issues.[171]

- o **Student-Led Initiatives**: Involve students in planning and executing the campaigns. Peer-to-peer influence can be powerful, with students encouraging one another to attend school regularly. Peer influence is particularly effective because students are often more motivated to align their behaviors with their social group, and they respond positively to encouragement from friends and classmates.[172] And programs that utilize peer leaders or role models to encourage attendance have been shown to be effective.[173]

- **Collaborate with Media**: Use local media to promote the importance of regular school attendance.

  - o **Partnerships:** Partner with local news outlets, radio stations, and community websites to spotlight the significance of school attendance and highlight successful programs or strategies being used within the district. Share success stories, programs, and strategies that are effectively improving attendance in the district.

  - o **Media Outreach**. This outreach can promote awareness of the critical role attendance plays in academic success, influencing both families and the broader community to prioritize consistent attendance. Schools often partner with local media outlets to run public service announcements (PSAs) that emphasize the importance of school attendance. These campaigns use television, radio, newspapers, and online media to reach both parents and students, highlighting the negative consequences of absenteeism. For example, campaigns run by organizations like Attendance Works often utilize local media partnerships to broadcast PSAs that significantly raise awareness.[174]

13. Use of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

- **MTSS tiered approach:** MTSS can be effectively used to address attendance issues. MTSS is a framework that provides multiple levels of intervention to support students academically, behaviorally, and socially, including strategies to improve

---

[171] Bergman, P., & Chan, E. W. (2018). Leveraging Parents: The Impact of High-Frequency Information on Student Achievement. Harvard University R&D Lab.

[172] Barry, C. M., & Wentzel, K. R. (2006). Friend influence on prosocial behavior: The role of motivational factors and friendship characteristics. Developmental Psychology, 42(1), 153-163.

[173] Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2013). Social contagion theory: Examining dynamic social networks and human behavior. Science, 341(6145), 123-135.

[174] Robinson, C. D., Lee, M., Dearing, E., & Rogers, T. (2018). Reducing Student Absenteeism in the Early Grades by Targeting Parental Beliefs. Harvard Kennedy School.

attendance. By offering differentiated levels of support depending on the severity of the problem, MTSS helps schools identify and address the root causes of absenteeism, prevent absenteeism, and improve overall attendance.

- **Tier 1** (Universal Support): Promote regular attendance through school-wide campaigns, positive reinforcements, and clear attendance expectations for all students. Focus on preventative measures and creating a welcoming school climate.
- **Tier 2** (Targeted Support): Identify at-risk students and provide early interventions such as personalized outreach, attendance plans, or check-ins with counselors to understand and address barriers.
- **Tier 3** (Intensive Support): For students with severe absenteeism, offer individualized interventions, such as mentoring, intensive counseling, family outreach, and social services, ensuring these students receive focused support to address complex barriers. MTSS's data-driven approach allows schools to continually assess and adjust strategies at each tier.

MTSS is a powerful framework that can address attendance issues through a tiered approach, ranging from school-wide initiatives to individualized interventions for students with absenteeism. By using data to guide decision-making and offering increasing levels of support, schools can improve attendance rates and reduce the negative impacts of absenteeism.

14. Implementation of Georgia Code on the Establishment of Student Attendance and School Climate Committee (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.2)

- **O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.2**: The Georgia Code specifies the establishment and responsibilities of a Student Attendance and School Climate Committee in each Superior Court district. The primary purpose of this committee is to coordinate efforts among various officials, agencies, and programs involved in addressing compulsory school attendance issues.[175]

  - **Establishment of the Committee**: The chief judge of the superior court of each county must form a committee to focus on reducing unexcused absences, increasing attendance during state-mandated tests, and improving the overall school climate.

  - **Membership**: The committee includes a range of officials, such as judges, district attorneys, school superintendents, law enforcement

---

[175] Some of the courts successfully implementing the law are Troup County with Judge Michael Key; Fulton County with Judge Renata Turner; and Richmond County with Judge Amanda Heath.

representatives, mental health professionals, and child services representatives.

- o **Student Attendance Protocol**: The committee must adopt a written protocol for identifying, reporting, and investigating violations of Georgia's compulsory attendance laws. This protocol must address tardiness as well. Additionally, the committee will consider the school climate ratings of schools.

- o **Summary of Actions**: The committee must outline the consequences and penalties for failing to comply with attendance laws. These penalties may include sanctions such as the denial of a driver's license for students.

- o **Regular Meetings and Review**: The committee is required to meet at least twice a year to evaluate the effectiveness of the attendance protocol and to make recommendations for improving student attendance, school climate, and studying suspension rates, dropout rates, and discipline issues.

- o **Reporting Requirements**: Each local board of education must report attendance rates and discipline data to the committee and the State Board of Education annually.

- o **Multi-Agency Intervention**: The law promotes a multi-agency response to address absenteeism and improve student attendance across the state.[176] This is a holistic strategy because it includes various stakeholders (judges, school personnel, law enforcement, mental health professionals). The law ensures that multiple perspectives are integrated to address the underlying causes of absenteeism. This interdisciplinary collaboration can lead to more comprehensive solutions that address both academic and non-academic barriers to attendance. With the committee being tasked with not only focusing on attendance but also improving the overall school environment, it can address layers of issues from both a school and community perspective. This includes addressing factors such as student suspensions and dropouts, but also teacher morale, which all can contribute to a more positive, productive school atmosphere. The law also emphasizes early intervention, using protocols to detect attendance issues before they escalate into absenteeism. This allows schools to act quickly and offer support to students and families, preventing truancy from becoming a larger issue, but with community support the schools don't feel like all of the attendance

---

[176] Examples of effective implementation include Chatham County, Fulton County, Richmond County, and Troup County.

issues are on the schools. While the law mandates the establishment of attendance protocols, it allows for customization based on local needs. This flexibility enables each county or district to create strategies that are most effective for their specific student population and community.

- **Senate Bill 123 (signed into law in April 2025) made several changes to OCGA 20-20690.2:**
    o Key Provisions of SB 123:
        - Prohibition of Expulsion for Absenteeism: Public schools are prohibited from expelling students solely due to absenteeism, promoting a more supportive approach to attendance issues.
        - Definition of Chronic Absenteeism: A student is considered "absent" if they miss 10 percent or more of the school year.
        - Mandatory Attendance Review Teams: School systems with a chronic absenteeism rate of at least 10 percent, or individual schools with rates at or above 15 percent are required to establish attendance review teams. These teams, comprising administrators, counselors, teachers, social workers, parents, and other staff, are tasked with creating intervention plans for absent students.
        - School Climate Committees: Each county's Student Attendance and School Climate Committee shall meet by November 1, 2025, and at least twice annually thereafter. By June 1, 2026, these committees shall adopt written student attendance protocols detailing procedures for identifying, reporting, and addressing attendance issues, including chronic absenteeism and tardiness.
        - Reporting Requirements: Starting in 2026, the Georgia Department of Education is mandated to submit biennial reports to legislative committees, detailing county-level compliance, attendance rates, and discipline data.
        - Military-Related Absences: The bill updates language to ensure that students taking military service tests are credited as present and not counted as absent.

15. Addressing Language as a Missing Link for Attendance

- **Support the Development of Children's Expressive, receptive, and pragmatic language**: Research shows that these elements of language are crucial for school-age children as they impact learning, communication, and social interactions, which makes it essential for schools to include methods to engage students in learning. This is an important factor in keeping students interested in school and thus improving attendance. Therefore, teachers at all grade levels, as well as school

counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses should receive training.

- o **Expressive Language:** This involves how children communicate their thoughts, needs, and ideas using words, sentences, or gestures. It's vital for writing, speaking, and academic performance.

- o **Receptive Language**: This refers to understanding and processing language, which is necessary for following instructions and comprehending lessons.

- o **Pragmatic Language**: This includes the social use of language, like understanding context, conversational rules, and non-verbal cues, crucial for peer interactions and social development. These skills are essential for overall academic success and social functioning in school settings.

- **Language as a Missing Link Toolkit**[177] is a resource designed to help educators, practitioners, and policymakers understand the critical role of language development as a well-being indicator for children. It emphasizes the importance of expressive, receptive, and pragmatic language in supporting children's overall development, including social, emotional, and academic success. The toolkit provides practical steps to address language development in children from birth through high school, offering tools such as the Social Engagement Ladder to measure children's engagement in everyday social interactions. This engagement is essential for fueling and gauging language development. By considering language as essential as other well-being indicators like vision or hearing, the toolkit encourages proactive approaches to enhance communication skills. For schools, this toolkit offers strategies for: Noticing and monitoring language development in various settings; training educators and caregivers to enhance language-rich interactions; an integrating multimodal instruction to support all students, especially those struggling with language development. This toolkit can be especially useful in bridging gaps that contribute to challenges in mental health, behavior, and academic performance.

16. Addressing Teacher Attendance: Improving teacher attendance in K–12 schools is a complex challenge because absences are influenced by health, morale, workload, and organizational culture. Research and practice suggest a combination of preventive, supportive, and accountability-based strategies.

---

[177] Language as a Missing Link: Sandra Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia State College and University.

- **Strengthening School Climate and Morale:**
  - Creating a positive school climate through the use of evidence-based frameworks like Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Social Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS)
  - can create work conditions that make teachers feel appreciated, welcomed, supported, engaged, and supported.
  - Address environmental factors like building maintenance and classroom resources.
  - When teachers have sufficient time to prepare, stress and burnout-related absences decrease.
  - Coaching and mentoring can reduce burnout from frequent behavioral disruptions.

- **Supportive Leadership:**
  - Principals who foster trust, recognition, and professional respect see fewer discretionary absences.

- **Staff Recognition:**
  - Programs that highlight teachers' contributions build a sense of belonging and reduce burnout.

- **Collaborative Culture:**
  - Team-based planning reduces feelings of isolation and makes teachers less likely to disengage.

- **Address Health and Well-Being:**
  - Provide on-site or virtual counseling, stress management resources, and wellness incentives.
  - School-based health clinics, telehealth (like OnMed CareStations), and preventive screenings.
  - When teachers have sufficient time to prepare, stress and burnout-related absences decrease.

- **Data Monitoring and Early Intervention:**
  - Use HR dashboards to detect trends and intervene early.
  - After a series of absences, meet with the teacher to understand barriers and support needs rather than immediately using a punitive approach.

- **Policy and Incentives:**
  - Bonuses for excellent attendance.

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

- o "Personal day" rewards for consistent presence.
- o Transparent policies on sick leave, personal days, and professional responsibilities.
- o Having reliable substitutes reduces stress for teachers who may worry about what happens when they're absent.

- **Build a Pipeline and Flexibility:**
  - o Increase staffing depth so individual absences don't create cascading burdens.
  - o Cross-training and Team-Teaching: Enables coverage flexibility and reduces the impact of short absences.

17. **Quality Pre-Kindergarten Attendance**
- **Universal access to pre-Kindergarten programs**:
  - o Define "universal pre-K" by granting **eligibility to all 4-year-olds**, regardless of income or background.
  - o Aim for **enrollment rates of 70% or higher** among that age group to meet universal benchmarks[178]

- **Use Mixed-Delivery Models:**
  - o Allow both public schools and community-based or private providers to offer pre-K provided they meet consistent quality standards.[179]

- **Secure Mixed Funding Sources:**
  - o Combine funding streams—from state general funds, education funding formulas, block grants, and federal support (e.g., Head Start).
  - o Some states integrate pre-K funding into regular K–12 funding formulas for stability.[180]

- **Build Legislative and Community Support:**
  - o Adopt legislation crafted to avoid displacement of existing providers—for example, Oklahoma's model allows public schools to contract with private, qualified providers.
  - o Maintain quality standards in staffing, class size, curriculum, and training.

- **Ensure Quality and Accountability:**

---

[178] District of Columbia, Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, and Wisconsin are examples of states that meet this level of access
[179] States like New Mexico, California, and West Virginia support diverse delivery while maintaining program integrity
[180] Reference: Commission of the States.

- o Require evidence-based curricula, certified teachers, and manageable class sizes (e.g., 10:1 ratios).
  - o Tie funding to quality benchmarks developed by regulatory bodies like the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)

- **Phase Implementation Strategically:**
  - o Start with universal access to 4-year-olds, then gradually expand to include 3-year-olds, as Hawaii and others have planned.

- **Expand program hours (full day vs part-day) and Provide Family Support:**
  - o Provide wraparound services to support working families and child development needs.
  - o Family engagement component:
    - Staff conduct home visits and family conferences, show families how to engage in learning activities at home, and involve caregivers in children's activities in the classroom.

Parental Involvement Activities

Consistent school attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic success. Yet, millions of students miss school each year for reasons that can be prevented with the right support. While schools play a vital role, families are the first line of support when it comes to ensuring that students show up ready to learn. Here are some of the most effective ways parents and caregivers can help improve student attendance.

Establishing daily routines is essential.[181] A consistent bedtime and morning routine helps students get the rest they need and start their day without chaos or stress. Preparing clothes, lunches, and school supplies the night before can go a long way toward making mornings smoother and less rushed. Limiting screen time at night and ensuring that students get 9–11 hours of sleep can dramatically improve their mood, focus, and readiness to attend school.

Just as important is talking with students about the value of showing up every day. When parents express that school is important—not just for learning, but for building friendships and developing responsibility—students are more likely to take attendance seriously. Celebrating strong attendance and encouraging persistence can reinforce these messages.

---

[181]https://childcarenetwork.com/the-importance-of-routine-for-children-creating-a-consistent-schedule/

Building a positive attitude toward school starts at home. Children tend to adopt the attitudes and beliefs they hear from the adults around them. Speaking positively about school sends a message that learning is valuable and school is important.

Getting students engaged in school life is another powerful role parents can play. Children are more likely to attend school when they feel like they belong. Parents can support this by encouraging their children to join clubs, sports, or other extracurricular activities that match their interests. Attending school events — even virtually — sends the message that school matters and that the family is part of the learning community too. If parents have difficulty meeting some of the financial obligations that come with a few school activities, parents need to discuss this with the school sponsors. Many times, arrangements can be made.

Parents seeking early and open communication with teachers and school staff is essential. Parents do not need to wait for problems to arise. If a child expresses fear, stress, or boredom related to school, it may be a sign of deeper issues. Addressing these early — especially concerns about bullying or social anxiety — can prevent long-term attendance problems.

Parents also serve as important role models. Demonstrating punctuality and reliability in in daily life — whether through work, community involvement, or family commitments — helps children understand the importance of showing up, even when it's not easy.

Taking time to understand the school's attendance policies is also important activity of parents. Parents should learn about the difference policies and terminology like the difference between excused and unexcused absences. It is also important for parents to track their child's attendance. It can be easy to lose count of absences that are not contiguous. Monitoring a child's attendance regularly can help caregivers spot early warning signs. Missing just two days per month adds up to severe absenteeism, which can have long-term consequences. If a child begins missing school—even for reasons that seem valid—it's important to look for patterns and intervene early.

Parents can celebrate improvements, such as being on time more consistently or making it through a week without missing a day. Recognition and encouragement can go a long way toward building habits.

Families facing barriers such as food insecurity, housing instability, or mental health challenges should not hesitate to reach out. Most schools have support staff — including social workers, counselors, and family engagement specialists — who can help connect families to community resources. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a smart step toward building a stable environment where attendance becomes the norm.

Staying connected to the school also makes a big difference. When possible, parents can attend school events, participating in parent-teacher conferences, and communicating

with teachers shows children that their education is a shared priority. Parents who feel engaged are more likely to spot problems early and work with the school to resolve them.

Fostering a sense of belonging can have a powerful impact on attendance. When children feel safe, valued, and included at school, they are more likely to be motivated to attend. Parents can support this by encouraging their children to attend school regularly. Improving student attendance isn't about perfection—it's about consistency, communication, and teamwork. When parents and schools work together, students are far more likely to stay on track and thrive both academically and emotionally.

Community-Led Strategies to Improve Student Attendance

Community-led initiatives play an important role in improving student attendance by offering resources and activities that can address absenteeism and support students and families.

Create Attendance Awareness Campaigns

Communities can raise awareness about the importance of attendance through campaigns that engage local media, businesses, and community organizations. Public service announcements, posters, and events can spread the message that regular attendance is key to academic success. These campaigns use a combination of media engagement, business partnerships, and community outreach to raise awareness about the importance of attendance and encourage students and families to prioritize school.

Attendance Works, a national initiative, partners with local communities to launch attendance awareness campaigns. These campaigns include social media outreach, public service announcements, posters in schools and local businesses, and engagement with local media to highlight the importance of attendance. Events such as "Attendance Awareness Month" in September bring attention to the issue with coordinated efforts from schools and community partners.

- **Example:** In Baltimore, schools partnered with local media and community leaders to promote a month-long campaign that included radio ads, billboards, and community events focused on improving school attendance.

"Get Schooled" Attendance Challenges: "Get Schooled," a nonprofit organization, works with businesses and community groups to sponsor school attendance challenges. Through multimedia campaigns, schools receive posters, materials, and social media content that encourage students to show up for school. They also engage students with rewards and competitions that highlight the importance of attendance.

- **Example:** Get Schooled's "Boost Your Attendance" campaign involved national companies such as Taco Bell and MTV, along with local radio stations, to promote

attendance challenges where students won prizes for perfect or improved attendance.

Seattle's "Be Here, Get There" Campaign: In Seattle, the "Be Here, Get There" initiative targeted middle school students, with support from local businesses, media outlets, and community organizations. The campaign included posters, TV spots, and incentives like free movie tickets and gift cards for students with excellent attendance. Community centers and local organizations reinforced the message through workshops for parents and outreach events.

- **Example:** The city partnered with local organizations and media to display posters, host parent workshops, and run PSAs on TV and radio to highlight the importance of attendance.

Detroit's Attendance Challenge: The city of Detroit launched a city-wide campaign to address absenteeism by partnering with local businesses, sports teams,[182] and media outlets. They used billboards, radio ads, and community events to spread the message about school attendance. Businesses contributed by offering incentives such as discounts and free tickets to sporting events for students who met attendance goals.

- **Example:** Detroit Pistons and other businesses helped sponsor attendance drives, providing rewards for schools and students with improved attendance. In Dayton, Ohio the local schools and colleges engaged popular players on the men's and women's college basketball teams to be spokespeople for attendance in local schools.

Host School-Community Events

Community organizations can collaborate with schools to host events that build stronger school-family relationships. Events like "back-to-school nights" or community resource fairs can provide families with the support they need to ensure their children attend school regularly.

United Way of Greater Atlanta collaborates with schools to host events that focus on reducing absenteeism by addressing barriers families face, such as transportation and healthcare access. They partner with local businesses and community organizations to provide resources during events like resource fairs and family engagement workshops.

- **Example**: United Way organizes community meetings and resource fairs where families receive information on improving attendance, transportation support, and connections to health services.

---

[182] Dayton, Ohio: https://dayton6th.com/everyday

Athens-Clarke County community organizations host *Family Engagement Nights* aimed at improving student attendance. These events provide resources such as tutoring programs, mental health services, and healthcare referrals, all designed to support regular attendance.

- **Example**: Local nonprofits and community centers contribute by offering free resources like backpacks, school supplies, and even transportation solutions to help families ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Parent Centers are operated by community organizations and the school system. These centers offer workshops and resources to support family engagement in students' education. Events like "Back-to-School Parent Nights" help families connect with teachers and learn about attendance policies, creating a support network between schools and the community.

- **Example**: Community organizations such as local health clinics and nonprofits provide on-site services during these events, ensuring that families have access to essential services like health screenings and school supplies.

Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, in partnership with local organizations, host Family Engagement Nights that offer workshops on a variety of topics, including improving attendance, supporting student success, and accessing community resources like health services and after-school programs.

- **Example:** These events often include collaborations with local nonprofits and community centers that provide childcare, transportation solutions, and healthcare to ensure parents have the resources they need to support their children's regular attendance.

Atlanta community organizations and businesses have an annual *Back-to-School Bash*. This event helps families prepare for the school year by providing free school supplies, health screenings, and information about local resources. The event emphasizes the importance of regular attendance by ensuring families are equipped with the tools they need for a successful school year.

- **Example**: Local partners like health organizations and businesses provide services like vaccinations, dental check-ups, and supplies, while workshops inform families about attendance expectations.

Transportation Solutions

Lack of transportation is a common reason for absenteeism. Communities can collaborate with local transit authorities, ride-share programs, or provide volunteer-based carpools to help students who face transportation barriers.

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

Local public transit systems provide students with free or reduced-cost bus passes. This helps students who rely on public transportation to get to school consistently.

- **Example**: In Atlanta, the *MARTA Youth Pass Program* provides discounted bus and train fares for students, allowing them to travel to and from school without a financial burden. MARTA partners with schools and the city to ensure students can access public transportation routes that align with school schedules.

Ride-share companies such as Uber or Lyft have partnered with school districts to provide free or discounted rides for students facing transportation challenges. These programs often focus on students in underserved areas or those with irregular transportation needs, ensuring they get to school on time.

- **Example**: In 2019, *Lyft* partnered with several school districts in Miami and Atlanta to offer discounted rides for students who had no reliable way to school. The program targets students who live in areas not serviced by school buses or public transit.

In rural or underserved areas where public transit is limited, community-led carpool programs have emerged to transport students to school. Volunteer drivers from the community organize carpools for students, ensuring they have a reliable ride every day.

- **Example**: In *Jackson County, Georgia*, a local nonprofit started a volunteer carpool program to help students who live in remote areas. Community members signed up to drive students to school, particularly during bad weather or when bus routes were unavailable.

Some school districts in partnership with local businesses or government agencies provide additional bus routes or alternative transportation methods to cover areas where school buses cannot reach. In some cases, districts operate special shuttles or partner with private transportation providers.

- **Example**: In *Fulton County*, Georgia, local businesses fund a special shuttle service for students living in areas with no school bus routes. This reduced absenteeism caused by transportation issues.

Nonprofits also play a significant role in helping students get to school. Organizations like *Communities in Schools* often provide transportation assistance, either through direct funding of bus passes or coordinating volunteer drivers for students in need.

- **Example**: *Communities in Schools of Atlanta* has partnered with local foundations to provide transportation vouchers and support services for families struggling with consistent school attendance due to transportation barriers.

Provide Wraparound Services

Wraparound services are a comprehensive approach to supporting students, particularly those facing complex challenges, by addressing not just their academic needs but also their social, emotional, and physical well-being. These services are typically provided by schools in collaboration with community organizations, healthcare providers, and social services, offering a "whole child" approach to education.

Communities can offer wraparound services like mental health counseling, healthcare, and after-school programs that support students' physical and emotional well-being, reducing absenteeism caused by health issues or other challenges. Whitefoord, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia

- **Example:** Whitefoord, Inc., a nonprofit organization, provides wraparound health services to students and families in the Edgewood neighborhood. This includes mental health counseling, dental care, and vision screenings, as well as access to a family medical center. Whitefoord also offers early childhood education and after-school programs. These services help ensure that students and their families have access to the healthcare and support they need, reducing absenteeism caused by unmet health needs. Whitefoord's school-based and community-based health centers provide medical care for students, which reduces health-related absences.

Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS), which is based in Georgia, provides a wide range of services to support students and families, including mental health counseling, healthcare referrals, and after-school tutoring programs for underserved Asian and immigrant communities. CPACS's comprehensive services help address emotional and physical well-being, ensuring that students remain engaged and attend school regularly.

- **Example:** In DeKalb County and Gwinnett County schools, CPACS offers health screenings, counseling, and academic support to immigrant families, addressing health and language barriers that may prevent regular school attendance.

A community mental health provider offers mental health counseling and case management services directly in homes and communities. They partner with local organizations to provide therapy for children and families who face emotional or psychological challenges that impact school attendance.

- **Example**: Through community-based outreach, Georgia HOPE delivers mental health counseling and support services to reduce absenteeism caused by mental

health struggles. Georgia HOPE's services are designed to intervene early, helping students stay emotionally healthy and attend school regularly.

Families First is a nonprofit that provides holistic services to support family stability, including mental health counseling, parenting classes, healthcare, and after-school programs. Their focus on addressing the emotional and financial challenges families face helps keep students in school by providing wraparound support to both the children and their caregivers.

- **Example:** Families First is working with Georgia schools, particularly in the metro Atlanta area, to provide mental health services and family support programs. Their efforts focus on improving student attendance and overall well-being by addressing underlying issues such as mental health challenges, family instability, and access to essential services. Through collaborations with schools, Families First offers counseling, behavioral health support, parenting education, and other resources designed to meet the needs of students and their families

Boys & Girls Clubs provide tutoring and emotional support programs that help students stay on track academically and reduce absenteeism. The clubs also offer access to mental health counselors and health screenings, addressing physical and emotional needs that could lead to absenteeism.

- **Example:** The Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta offer after-school programs that focus on academics, health, and emotional well-being. Through tutoring, mentorship, and wellness programs, they provide a supportive environment that keeps students engaged in school. The clubs also offer access to mental health counselors and health screenings, addressing physical and emotional needs that could lead to absenteeism.

Non-profits address the preparation of young children to attend childcare and later public school on regular basis by focusing on birth-to-five programs.

- **Example**: Calloway Foundation is working with children ages birth to 5 with a community effort to get families with children connected with appropriate age language development to prepare them for pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. They are strengthening private/church owned early learning programs by connecting them with DECAL to train staff.

Mentorship Programs

Mentorship programs, where community members volunteer to mentor students, can create positive relationships that encourage students to attend school regularly. These mentors can offer guidance, support, and encouragement to students, particularly those at risk of absenteeism.

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is one of the largest and most well-known community-led mentorship programs in the U.S.

- **Example:** In Metro Atlanta, BBBS pairs volunteer "Bigs" with students ("Littles") who may be struggling with attendance, academic performance, or personal challenges. Through regular mentorship, students receive emotional support and guidance, which helps keep them motivated to attend school. BBBS also organizes enrichment activities and career exploration opportunities, further engaging students in their education. "Bigs" mentor students for at least one year, meeting regularly to build relationships that encourage attendance and school success.

While Community in Schools (CIS) works with schools, their mentorship program often extends beyond the classroom with the help of community volunteers. Mentors from the community work directly with students, particularly those at risk of severe absenteeism. They provide personalized support, helping students navigate challenges like family instability, health issues, or academic difficulties, with the goal of improving school attendance and academic engagement.

- **Example**: CIS mentors offer weekly check-ins, tutoring, and life-skills coaching to students in several Georgia school districts that at risk of dropping out.

100 Black Men of Atlanta operates community-led mentorship programs focused on mentoring African American youth in underserved communities.

- **Example:** 100 Black Men of Atlanta's Project Success program pairs volunteer mentors with middle and high school students to provide academic support, life skills coaching, and career mentoring. The program is aimed at keeping students in school, helping them graduate, and encouraging them to pursue post-secondary education.

Next Generation Men & Women (NGM)NGM is a community-based organization in Atlanta that provides mentorship to underserved high school students.

- **Example:** NGM organizes mentorship-focused workshops and connects students with professionals in various industries to inspire regular school attendance and goal-setting. The program connects students with volunteer mentors from the community who offer career guidance, academic support, and encouragement. Through group mentoring and one-on-one relationships, NGM helps students build the skills and confidence they need to succeed in school and beyond. Mentors play a key role in helping students stay motivated and attend school regularly.

The Boys & Girls Clubs offer community-based mentorship programs in which volunteer mentors work with students who attend after-school programs. These mentors provide

guidance, encouragement, and emotional support, helping students develop positive habits that encourage regular school attendance. The mentorship program also offers academic support, career readiness programs, and leadership opportunities.

- **Examples:** Many clubs in rural areas, like those in Tifton and Vidalia, provide after-school tutoring and homework assistance to ensure students stay on track academically. These programs often include reading support, math tutoring, and test preparation sessions. In Dublin and Waycross, the Boys & Girls Clubs host recreational sports leagues including basketball, soccer, and flag football. These activities promote physical fitness, teamwork, and healthy competition. Boys & Girls Clubs in rural areas like Blakely and Cordele offer creative arts programs where members can participate in painting, drawing, and music production activities. These programs foster self-expression and build confidence.

Early Intervention Initiatives

Schools can develop early warning systems with community partners to identify students at risk of severe absenteeism. Once identified, these students and their families can be connected with community services that provide tutoring, counseling, or other needed resources.

United Way of Greater Atlanta partners with local businesses to support their Attendance Matters initiative, which focuses on reducing absenteeism in schools. Local businesses contribute by offering rewards such as gift cards, free meals, or tickets to events for students who meet attendance goals. This initiative helps keep students motivated to attend school regularly by providing tangible incentives.

- **Examples:** Local restaurants and retail stores offer discounts or free items to students who achieve perfect or improved attendance. In Savannah, through the *Get to School, Get Rewarded* initiative, businesses offer students discounts, free meals, and entertainment vouchers (like movie tickets) for improving their attendance. This program has helped reduce absenteeism by giving students and families concrete rewards for their efforts. Local movie theaters and restaurants provide coupons and free tickets to students with perfect attendance, helping to foster excitement about coming to school. In Athens, students receive gift cards to local eateries or entertainment centers as part of community-driven initiatives to reduce absenteeism. Local restaurants and retail stores offer discounts or free services, and community organizations contribute by organizing celebratory events for students who maintain high attendance levels.

Family Engagement and Education Programs

Communities can run workshops or outreach programs to educate families on the importance of regular attendance and how to support their children's academic success.

This could include parenting workshops, resources for homework support, or seminars on health and nutrition.

Georgia Parent Support Network (GPSN) conducts parenting workshops designed to improve school attendance by addressing family challenges that impact children's academic engagement. These workshops teach families how to manage behavioral issues, provide emotional support, and establish consistent routines that foster regular attendance.

- **Example**: GPSN offers workshops on creating positive behavioral support systems at home, emphasizing the link between emotional stability and consistent school attendance.

The Urban League of Greater Atlanta provides community-driven workshops that educate families on the importance of school attendance and equip them with resources to support academic success. These workshops cover a wide range of topics, from academic enrichment and financial literacy to health and wellness, aiming to remove obstacles that lead to absenteeism.

- **Example**: The Urban League partners with healthcare providers and academic organizations to offer seminars on the impact of absenteeism on academic outcomes and strategies for improving attendance.

Summary

By implementing these community-driven strategies, local organizations, businesses, and families can work alongside schools to create a strong support network that encourages regular attendance and addresses the underlying issues that often cause absenteeism. This approach builds trust, strengthens relationships, and promotes shared responsibility, all of which are crucial for long-term improvements in attendance and student success. Engaged communities are better positioned to offer resources and support that resonate with families.

Effective Practices and Case Studies: Improving Attendance and Reducing Absences

The Subcommittee wanted to explore more than research and hear from experts across many sectors on the complexities of student attendance and how schools may address the issues with multiple partners. That journey led to the discovery of several school districts who are working to address the issues. This section highlights some of those effective practices that are proving to improve student attendance from many backgrounds, beginning with school districts in Georgia and including school districts and schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas around the United States. Another factor in the selection of the case studies and effective practices was reported results.

Schools that successfully improve student attendance typically share several key practices and features:

Strong Family Engagement: Schools that actively involve families in the education process tend to see higher attendance rates. Engaging parents and caregivers in understanding the importance of attendance and keeping them informed about their child's attendance patterns leads to more consistent attendance. Research supports this, showing that family and community partnerships can significantly reduce absenteeism.[183]

Positive School Climate: Schools that foster a welcoming and supportive environment help students feel more connected, which increases their desire to attend. A positive school climate includes strong relationships between teachers and students, clear expectations for attendance, and a supportive disciplinary system. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), schools with a positive climate and clear behavioral expectations have fewer absenteeism issues.[184]

Interventions for At-Risk Students: Schools that identify and support students at-risk of becoming absent early through personalized interventions, such as mentoring programs, counseling, and attendance monitoring, tend to improve attendance rates. Early intervention helps address barriers that may prevent regular attendance, including transportation issues, family responsibilities, or health problems.[185] .

Effective Communication and Attendance Policies: Schools with clear, consistently enforced attendance policies and regular communication with students and families about expectations tend to have higher attendance rates. This includes regular notices about absences, automated calls, and meetings to address concerns with absenteeism.[186]

Attendance Incentives and Recognition: Schools that use positive reinforcement, such as rewards or public recognition for good attendance, can motivate students to attend regularly. Programs that offer incentives for perfect or improved attendance have been shown to increase engagement and reduce absenteeism.[187,188]

By focusing on these areas, schools create a supportive framework that encourages regular attendance and addresses the root causes of absenteeism.

---

[183] Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting Students to School: Using Family and Community Involvement to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism. The School Community Journal, 14(2), 39-56.
[184] National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (2024). School Climate Improvement. NCSSLE, Safe Supportive Learning.
[185] Attendance Works. (2018). Attendance interventions and best practices to reduce absenteeism. Retrieved from Attendance Works: Early intervention.
[186] U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools: An Unprecedented Look at a Hidden Educational Crisis.
[187] Ibid.
[188] RAND Corporation. (2018). Do Attendance Incentives Work?

Dublin City School System
Location: Dublin City School System, Georgia
Challenge: Absenteeism across the city's public schools, especially in low-income neighborhoods.
Approach:

- **Attendance Monitoring:** The district implemented a robust data-tracking system that allowed school administrators to monitor attendance patterns in real time. Teachers and staff were trained to identify students who were at risk of becoming absent.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Using this data, the district created an early warning system that flagged students with frequent absences. School staff, including teachers, administrators, and counselors, were alerted to follow up with these students before absenteeism became chronic.
- **Targeted Interventions:** Once students were flagged, schools initiated targeted interventions. These included phone calls to families, home visits by social workers, and meetings with students and parents to discuss the importance of attendance and address any barriers they were facing.
- **Success Mentors:** One of the most impactful initiatives in Dublin City Schools was the creation of a mentorship program. Students identified as being at risk for severe absenteeism were paired with Success Mentors—trusted adults in the school community (teachers, staff, or volunteers) who would check in regularly with the students. Mentorship programs and family engagement strategies can reduce absenteeism by 10-20 percent, with mentorship providing a personal connection and accountability.[190,191]
- **Regular Check-Ins:** Mentors met with students weekly to discuss attendance and any challenges the students were facing. These meetings were designed to build relationships with students and provide support both academically and emotionally.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Mentors also focused on celebrating attendance improvements with students, using positive reinforcement to motivate students to come to school more regularly.

---

[189] This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, only examples of effective practices.
[190] Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. John Hopkins University.
[191] Harvard Family Research Project (2013). The Family Engagement Partnership: Student Outcomes and Attendance Improvement, Harvard Family Research Center.

- **Parent Outreach:** The district recognized that many absenteeism issues stemmed from challenges at home. To address this, Dublin City Schools engaged in extensive parent outreach, including:
    - Regular phone calls to parents to discuss attendance
    - Parent workshops on the importance of attendance and how parents could support their children
    - Offering transportation assistance and connecting families with social services when needed
- **Home Visits:** School staff conducted home visits to meet with families of absent students. These visits provided an opportunity to understand and address the specific challenges each family was facing, such as health issues, housing instability, or transportation problems.
- **Local Business and Non-Profit Engagement:** Dublin City Schools partnered with local businesses and non-profit organizations to provide resources that addressed the underlying causes of absenteeism. This included:
    - **Transportation Assistance:** Local transportation companies helped provide bus passes and gas vouchers for families struggling to get their children to school.
    - **Health Services:** The district partnered with local health clinics to offer on-site health services, reducing the number of absences due to illness.
    - **After-School Programs:** Local non-profits supported the development of after-school programs that kept students engaged in school activities and provided a safe space for students whose parents worked late.
- **Attendance Awards:** Dublin City Schools created an incentive program to encourage better attendance, offering students and classes rewards for perfect or improved attendance. Rewards included:
    - **Certificates and Public Recognition**: Students with perfect or near-perfect attendance were recognized at school assemblies and awarded certificates of achievement.
    - **Tangible Rewards:** Schools offered tangible incentives such as gift cards, special privileges (e.g., extra recess time), and participation in special events or field trips for students who consistently attended school.
- **Class Competitions:** The district also initiated competitions between classes to see which class could achieve the best attendance rates, with the winning classes receiving prizes such as pizza parties or additional school activities.
- **Positive School Culture:** Dublin City Schools focused on improving the overall school climate by making school a more welcoming and engaging place for students. This included:
    - Encouraging stronger relationships between students and teachers
    - Fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where students felt safe and motivated to attend regularly

- o Implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) programs to help students cope with stress, anxiety, and other issues that might affect attendance
- **Restorative Practices:** Instead of punitive measures like suspensions for absenteeism, the district introduced restorative practices that focused on helping students reflect on their actions and re-engage with their education.
- **Results:** By implementing a tiered intervention system focused on building relationships, providing individualized support, and addressing both emotional and practical barriers to attendance, Dublin City Schools dramatically reduced chronic absenteeism (including excused and unexcused absences) from 45% in 2020 to 16% for the 2024-2025 school year.

Clayton County School System
Location: Clayton County School System, Georgia
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism especially in low-income neighborhoods.
Approach:

- **Focusing on improving safety, infrastructure, and engagement** with the community. A key priority is ensuring that students not only perform academically but also feel safe and supported in their school and community environments.
- **Modernizing** school facilities, creating new STEM elementary schools, and expanding early learning centers.
- **Adopted a "tough love" approach** to student discipline, aimed at reducing disruptions and creating a positive school environment. Safety measures such as a clear bag policy and weapons detection systems have been put in place to ensure students feel secure, but this is accompanied by ensuring that students know they have access to support services at any time during the school day, and student have opportunities to express their concerns to teachers and school administrators in the form of recommendations for improving school climate.
- **Expanding wraparound services** that address student and family needs beyond academics. The district's comprehensive strategy, supported by funding from a penny sales tax, includes efforts to connect with the community, engage parents, and improve overall student well-being. The school system offers intensive interventions for students with significant absences, often involving counselors, social workers, and community agencies to address underlying causes of absenteeism.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)** framework to create a positive school climate, further encouraging regular attendance by addressing behavioral issues and fostering better student-teacher relationships. Through these efforts, they aim to create a more supportive school environment that encourages consistent attendance and improved academic performance.

- **Personalized attendance improvement plans** are developed for each student with attendance problems. The plans address the issues that are causing the student to miss school. The plan includes expectations of the students as well as the parents.
- **Results:** The school district has reduced absences since 2021.

Richmond County School System
Location: Richmond County School System, Georgia
Challenge: Absenteeism across the schools, especially in the low-income neighborhoods.
Approach:

- **Communicating with Parents:** One of the key strategies is a system of letters sent home to parents based on the number of unexcused absences, categorized as C-3, C-5, and C-10 letters. These letters serve as early interventions to alert parents when their child's absences are becoming a concern.
- **Unique Activities:** School hold a "surprise attendance event," where the principal and assistant principal participate in fun activities like getting pied in the face, as a reward for students showing up to school. This kind of engagement creates excitement and motivates students to attend school regularly.
- **Social media**: The school district uses social media to spread awareness, posting videos from guidance counselors and social workers that emphasize the importance of regular attendance. These community-driven efforts, combined with consistent communication and outreach are aimed at improving attendance.
- **Mental Health Access:** Teletherapy is available for the schools with the most challenging attendance problems because many of the student that have attendance problems are also dealing with multiple social and emotional stressors.
- **Data Dashboard:** The school district has developed an attendance data dashboard to track attendance and to look for patterns.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:** PBIS is a foundational strategy in schools to improve school climate, so student want to come to school. After some initial implementation challenges, more schools are implementing PBIS with fidelity.
- **Community Partnerships:** The school district has developed numerous partnerships with several community resources, both public and private, including a local foundation that supports strategies to assist students and families
- **Results:** In the 2024-2024 school year, Richmond County saw a decrease in the number of unexcused absences compared to the previous year

New York City Community Schools Initiative
Location: New York City, New York
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism across the city's public schools.
Approach:
- **Community Schools Model**: In 2014, New York City implemented a "Community Schools" approach, which transformed some schools into community hubs that provided a wide range of services for students and their families. This included health clinics, counseling, food assistance, and even legal aid.
- **Engagement and Support**: Schools involved social workers and attendance specialists to reach out to families and offer personalized support to address attendance issues.
- **School Climate and Culture**: Schools are implementing strategies to improve school climate. The school district focuses on creating supportive environments for students by addressing their academic, social, and emotional needs through integrated support. This includes collaborative leadership, family and community engagement, wellness services, and expanded learning time, all of which are consistent with the tiered support structure found in PBIS.
- **Data Tracking**: Schools used data to monitor absenteeism trends and launched targeted interventions for students at risk of chronic absenteeism. They would follow up with home visits if necessary.
- **Results**: The initiative saw significant improvements in student attendance. Schools that participated in the program saw a 10 percent decrease in chronic absenteeism within the first three years before and after the pandemic.

Every Day Matters Program
Location: Launched by the Oregon Department of Education
Challenge: In 2021, Oregon's chronic absenteeism rate was among the highest nationally.
Approach:
- **Statewide Campaign**: Oregon launched a statewide initiative called "Every Day Matters" to raise awareness about the importance of attendance. This campaign targeted schools, parents, and communities, educating them on the long-term impact of absenteeism on academic success.
- **Partnerships**: The program partnered with local organizations and agencies to address systemic issues like transportation, health care, and housing instability that contributed to absenteeism.

---

[192] This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, only examples of effective practices.

- **Data-Driven Approaches:** The initiative encourages the use of attendance data to identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism and provide targeted interventions.
- **Family Engagement**: Schools were encouraged to develop personalized outreach to families, including attendance incentives, celebrations for improved attendance, and frequent communication about absences.
- **School Climate**: The program uses a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework, within which PBIS plays a role in promoting positive school climates and behaviors that support regular attendance.
- **Results**: The program has seen gradual success, with schools reporting a decrease in chronic absenteeism rates across the state of approximately three percent. In particular, schools that actively involved parents and the community experienced the most significant improvements in attendance of five percent.

School-Based Health Centers
Location: Hartford, Connecticut
Challenge: A significant portion of absences in Hartford schools was related to health issues. Many students had limited access to healthcare, leading to frequent sick days.
Approach:
- **Health Centers in Schools**: Hartford partnered with local healthcare providers to establish health clinics directly on school campuses. These clinics provided medical services, mental health counseling, and preventive care, all free of charge to students.
- **Parental Involvement**: The program also included parent education on health-related issues and how to prevent common childhood illnesses that could keep children out of school.
- **School Nurse Collaboration**: School nurses collaborated with teachers and administrators to ensure students who were treated returned to class quickly whenever possible.
- **Results**: After implementing the school-based health centers in 2018, absenteeism due to health reasons dropped by 25 percent. Students were able to receive immediate care for illnesses and return to class more quickly, leading to fewer overall absences.

New Visions for Public Schools – New York
Location: New York City, New York
Challenge: Several high schools in the New Visions network struggled with high absenteeism rates, especially among at-risk students. New Visions works with a network of over 71 district schools and manages nine charter schools.
Approach:

- **Early Warning System**: New Visions developed an early warning system that used student data to flag potential absenteeism risks. This system included tracking factors like grades, behavior, and attendance in real-time.
- **Personalized Support Plans**: When students were identified as at-risk, the school developed individualized support plans, which could include mentoring, academic tutoring, and family outreach.
- **Student Attendance Contracts**: Schools introduced attendance contracts that students and parents signed, committing to improved attendance. These contracts included clear goals and check-ins to monitor progress.
- **School Climate:** Schools provide a continuous improvement frameworks, social-emotional learning, and comprehensive student support systems. Also, schools focus on data-driven decision-making, and positive school environments and culture.
- **Results**: The results of the New Visions for Public Schools initiatives in New York show, which were initiated in 2020, show promising outcomes in addressing chronic absenteeism. In particular, a pilot program involving eight partner schools that implemented weekly 1:1 check-in to promote consistent attendance saw significant improvements. Schools with absenteeism rates above 40 percent saw notable reductions by the end of the school year, despite chronic absenteeism typically worsening as the year progressed. An interesting finding was the success with "butterfly" students—those who generally want to attend school but miss a day or two each week. Of these students, 81 percent experienced improvements in their attendance after receiving personalized attention and check-ins during the spring term. This approach highlighted the importance of consistency in weekly attendance rather than abstract attendance goals, helping students better connect school presence with academic success.

Baltimore City Public Schools
Location: Baltimore, Maryland
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism was widespread in Baltimore, with nearly 40 percent of students missing 20 or more days each school year.
Approach:
- **Success Mentors Initiative**: Baltimore adopted the "Success Mentors" model in 2020, where at-risk students were paired with school staff or community volunteers who provided mentorship and encouragement.
- **Data-Driven Interventions**: The program used real-time attendance data to identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism and launched early interventions. Mentors reached out to students and their families to address specific barriers to attendance.
- **Family Engagement**: Schools worked closely with families to understand the root causes of absences and to provide support, including referrals to social services.

- **Mentoring Programs**: At-risk students were paired with mentors who provided guidance and helped address any challenges the students faced in getting to school.
- **Community Partnerships**: Partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and health agencies were created to address socioeconomic barriers and provide additional resources.
- **Incentives and Rewards**: Schools celebrated improved attendance through incentives like recognition ceremonies and rewards for students with good or improved attendance.
- **Positive School Climate:** PBIS has been implemented in partnership with organizations like Sheppard Pratt and the Maryland State Department of Education, with a focus on reducing behavioral infractions and improving student engagement and attendance.
- **Results**: The program led to a reduction in chronic absenteeism rates, especially in middle and high schools. Schools that fully implemented the all of the strategies saw absenteeism drop by nearly 20 percent.

Pasadena Unified School District
Location: Pasadena Unified School District, California
Challenge: Pasadena had a chronic absenteeism rate of over 25 percent in 2021.
Approach:
- **Parent Engagement**: Schools worked closely with parents, providing them with information about the importance of attendance and offering workshops on topics such as parenting strategies and time management.
- **Restorative Practices**: Pasadena moved away from punitive disciplinary practices, such as suspensions for truancy, and instead adopted restorative practices that encouraged students to reflect on their actions and engage in solutions.
- **In-School Support**: Schools implemented early warning systems that flagged students who were at risk of becoming absent. These students were then provided with counseling and support to address underlying issues.
- **Positive School Climate:** PBIS is integrated with other frameworks like Restorative Practices (RP) and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) to address behavioral, disciplinary, and attendance issues while promoting a positive school culture. The district has implemented PBIS at all tiers (Tier 1 for universal supports, Tier 2 for targeted interventions, and Tier 3 for intensive interventions), ensuring that students receive appropriate support based on their needs.
- **Flexible Schedules**: The district introduced more flexible scheduling options for high school students, allowing them to attend part-time or take online courses to accommodate work or family responsibilities.

- **Results**: Pasadena experienced a 7 percent drop in chronic absenteeism within the first two years of implementing these strategies, with particularly strong improvements among middle and high school students.

Grand Rapids Public Schools
Location: Grand Rapids Public Schools, Michigan
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism in Grand Rapids affected about 40 percent of its student population after the pandemic with many students living in poverty and facing transportation and health-related issues.
Approach:
- **Public Campaign**: A district-wide public awareness campaign was launched, promoting the importance of attendance and encouraging community involvement.
- **Student Recognition**: Students were rewarded for good attendance through incentives like school-wide celebrations, certificates, and small prizes.
- **Community Engagement**: Grand Rapids partnered with local businesses, health services, and transportation agencies to provide families with the resources needed to ensure students could get to school.
- **Positive School Climate:** The district's approach promotes a school-wide culture of respect, responsibility, and safety. The district's commitment to PBIS reflects its broader focus on creating equitable learning conditions, with data-driven methods that reduce behavioral issues and support academic success.
- **Home Visits and Wraparound Services**: Social workers conducted home visits to families of students with chronic absences, helping to address any underlying issues such as housing instability, lack of transportation, or health problems.
- **Results**: After the implementation of the Challenge 5 program in 2020, the district saw a 10 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism in just one year, with the most significant improvements occurring in elementary schools.

Springfield Public Schools
Location: Springfield Public Schools, Massachusetts
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism was particularly high after the pandemic among elementary school students, with nearly 30 percent missing 10 percent or more of school days.
Approach:
- **Personalized Outreach**: Schools sent letters and made phone calls to families to discuss the importance of attendance and to work collaboratively on solutions to attendance barriers.
- **School Climate:** The district has integrated PBIS into its Braided Behavior Support Systems (BBSS), which also includes Restorative Practices (RP) and Social-

Emotional Learning (SEL). This multi-tiered and multi-faceted approach helps students by providing varying levels of intervention based on their behavioral needs.

- **Community Support**: The district worked with local community organizations to provide transportation assistance, mental health support, and after-school programs to help families.
- **Peer Influence**: High-achieving older students were enlisted to mentor younger students, encouraging them to attend school regularly and helping them with academic challenges.
- **School-Wide Celebrations**: Schools began holding monthly attendance celebrations, where students with strong attendance records were publicly recognized and rewarded.
- **Results**: The program resulted in a 6 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism from 2020 to 2024, with improvements particularly noticeable in the early grades.

San Francisco Unified School District
Location: San Francisco Unified School District, California
Challenge: Chronic absenteeism rates were particularly high among homeless and foster youth, who faced significant challenges outside of school even before the pandemic and were worse after the pandemic.
Approach:

- **Data-Driven Approach**: The school district leverages real-time attendance data to help principals and school leaders proactively address absenteeism. Using advanced data visualizations, schools can identify patterns of absenteeism early, allowing staff to intervene before students fall too far behind. This data-driven method provides insights at both the individual and group levels, making it easier to target students who need additional support to improve their attendance.
- **Tier 1 – Public Campaign**: The district launched a city-wide public campaign highlighting the importance of attendance and emphasizing community-wide support for students.
- **Tier 2 – Mentorship and Wraparound Supports**: At-risk students were provided with mentorships and supports for access to resources like transportation and after-school programs. Schools also conducted home visits and connected families with social services.
- **Tier 3 – Personalized Case Management**: For students facing severe challenges, including homelessness, the district provided personalized case management, involving social workers, mental health professionals, and legal services.
- **Community Collaboration**: The school district partners with initiatives like HOPE SF, which focuses on improving attendance in San Francisco's public housing communities. The initiative has seen significant success, reducing chronic

absenteeism by fostering stronger relationships between families, schools, and community-based education

- **Results**: The district saw a 9 percent decrease in chronic absenteeism from 2018-2020 with the largest gains among homeless and foster youth, who were given the tailored support needed to overcome significant barriers.

Cleveland Metropolitan School District
Location: Cleveland, Ohio
Challenge: Cleveland had one of the highest rates of chronic absenteeism in the country, with over 40 percent of students missing more than 10 percent of the school year before and after the pandemic
Approach:

- **Parent and Family Engagement**: The district worked closely with families to understand the barriers preventing students from attending school, offering resources and support such as transportation assistance, access to health care, and school-based social services.
- **School Climate and Culture:** The schools integrate PBIS with other supportive strategies, like family engagement, to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing student behavior and fostering academic success. Schools implement these interventions by setting clear behavioral expectations, using data to monitor progress, including attendance, and providing consistent positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.
- **Community Partnerships**: Cleveland schools partnered with local organizations to provide mentorship programs, health services, and after-school activities that kept students engaged.
- **Positive Reinforcement**: Schools implemented reward systems to recognize students for good attendance, including certificates, school-wide celebrations, and prize drawings.
- **Data-Driven Interventions**: Cleveland used data to track attendance patterns and identified students at risk for chronic absenteeism early in the school year, intervening before problems escalated.
- **Results**: Within two years, Cleveland saw a 12 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism. The district attributed its success to the combination of data-driven interventions, strong community partnerships, and a focus on creating a culture of attendance.

Redwood Falls School District
Location: Redwood Falls, Minnesota
Challenge: The Redwood Falls School District, serving a rural area in Minnesota, struggled with high absenteeism rates for several years due to harsh winter weather, long distances between students' homes and the school, and family economic issues.

Approach:
- **Weather-Related Attendance Solutions**: The district worked with local governments to ensure roads were cleared during the winter and to create bus routes that could navigate safely even in poor weather conditions. Additionally, the district allowed flexible start times during severe weather, giving students more time to safely commute to school.
- **Community Partnerships**: Redwood Falls partnered with local businesses and organizations to provide essential services, such as free or low-cost childcare for younger siblings, health services, and food support programs. This helped families overcome some of the barriers that were keeping children from attending school regularly.
- **Academic Alternatives**: For some students with attendance problems, an alternative classroom schedule has been developed with an Individual Student Plan developed to address specific attendance issues and challenges.
- **Attendance Awareness Campaign**: The district launched an attendance awareness campaign that included presentations to students and parents about the importance of regular attendance. Schools used newsletters, social media, and community events to highlight the link between attendance and academic success.
- **Incentive Programs**: The district introduced rewards for students who achieved perfect or improved attendance, such as recognition at school assemblies, gift cards, or special privileges like extra recess or participation in field trips.
- **Results**: The district's efforts resulted in a 14 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism over two years. The weather-related strategies and partnerships with local organizations were key in helping families and students overcome barriers to attendance.

Powder River County District High School
Location: Powder River County, Montana
Challenge: Powder River County High School, in a rural area of Montana, had a high rate of absenteeism. Students frequently missed school due to the long distances they had to travel, family obligations such as farm work, and a lack of engagement with traditional academic programs.
Approach:
- **Agriculture and Vocational Programs**: To better engage students and align with the needs of the local community, the school introduced vocational and agricultural education programs. These programs gave students hands-on experience and skills they could apply directly to local industries, making school more relevant and engaging.
- **Flexible Attendance Policies**: Understanding that many students had family or farm responsibilities, the school implemented more flexible attendance policies, allowing students to attend classes part-time or take courses online.
- **Outreach to Families**: The school engaged in frequent communication with parents and families, emphasizing the importance of balancing family

responsibilities with education. They also provided support, such as transportation and academic counseling, to help students stay on track despite their outside commitments.

- **Mentorship Programs**: The school implemented a peer mentorship program, where older students who had improved their attendance mentored younger students, offering them guidance and encouragement to attend regularly.
- **Results**: After introducing these initiatives, Powder River County High School saw a 9 percent increase in attendance. The combination of vocational programming and flexibility made it easier for students to balance their education with family and work responsibilities.

School-Level Case Studies[193]

Everett Middle School
Location: San Francisco, California
Challenge: Everett Middle School had a high rate of chronic absenteeism, with over 30 percent of students missing more than 10 percent of the school year. Many of these students came from low-income families and faced challenges like homelessness, family instability, and transportation issues.
Approach:
- **Mentorship Programs**: Everett introduced a mentorship program where each student with chronic absenteeism was paired with a caring adult mentor from the school community. Mentors met regularly with students to offer support and encouragement.
- **Attendance Incentives**: The school implemented an attendance incentive program, offering rewards such as movie passes, gift cards, and school supplies for students with perfect attendance or improved attendance over a period.
- **Family Outreach**: The school increased communication with families through regular phone calls, home visits, and letters to parents when students were absent. They also partnered with local organizations to offer resources like transportation assistance and mental health services.
- **Restorative Justice Practices and Positive School Climate:** The school adopted restorative justice practices to address conflicts and behavioral issues that were contributing to absenteeism. Instead of using punitive measures like suspensions, students participated in restorative circles to resolve issues and reflect on their actions. Additionally, it was determined that the climate of the school was an issue with students, so PBIS was implemented with success.
- **Results**: Within a year, Everett Middle School reduced chronic absenteeism by 15 percent. The mentorship program was particularly effective, helping students build stronger connections with the school and motivating them to attend regularly.

---

[193] This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, only examples of effective practices.

Chavez High School
Location: Houston, Texas
Challenge: Chavez High School struggled with high levels of absenteeism, especially among its Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students. Many students had work and family responsibilities that interfered with their ability to attend school regularly.
Approach:

- **Flexible Scheduling**: The school introduced a flexible scheduling option for students who needed to balance work or family obligations. Students were allowed to complete some coursework online or attend night school.
- **Community Partnerships**: Chavez High School partnered with local organizations to provide support services, including transportation vouchers, health services, and after-school programs to help families overcome barriers to attendance.
- **Attendance Tracking and Early Intervention**: The school used data to track attendance in real-time and identify students who were at risk of becoming absent. Staff conducted home visits and phone calls to follow up on absences early and offer support to students and families.
- **Peer Mentoring**: A peer mentorship program was established, where older students mentored younger students, encouraging them to attend school regularly and helping them navigate academic and social challenges.
- **Climate and Culture:** The school developed a framework to improve the climate of the school, so students felt more engaged and were part of the culture of the school. Student participated in the development of ideas to improve the climate and culture of the school.
- **Results**: Chavez High School saw a 12 percent increase in overall attendance after implementing these initiatives. The combination of flexible scheduling and personalized support was particularly effective in keeping at-risk students engaged and motivated to stay in school.

Public School 123
Location: Harlem, New York
Challenge: P.S. 123 Mahalia Jackson, an elementary school in Harlem, faced high absenteeism rates, especially among students living in poverty. Many students missed school due to health issues, lack of transportation, and unstable housing.
Approach:

- **School-Based Health Clinic**: The school partnered with a local health clinic to provide on-site medical and mental health services, allowing students to receive treatment without missing school. This helped address the frequent absences related to health issues.
- **Attendance Teams**: The school formed an attendance team consisting of teachers, counselors, and administrators who monitored attendance and followed up with students and families on the first day of an absence. The team worked with families to address barriers to regular attendance.

- **Climate of Support:** The school is focused on fostering a supportive environment that engages students academically and socially through its community school model. This model often includes strategies similar to PBIS, such as promoting positive behaviors and providing social-emotional learning opportunities.
- **Parental Engagement**: The school increased its efforts to engage parents by hosting workshops on the importance of attendance, offering parenting support groups, and maintaining regular communication with families. Parents were also encouraged to visit the school and participate in their children's education.
- **Incentives and Recognition**: Students with good or improved attendance were publicly recognized during school assemblies, and the school held special events, such as pizza parties and movie afternoons, to celebrate strong attendance records.
- **Results**: P.S. 123 Mahalia Jackson reduced its chronic absenteeism rate by 20 percent within two years. The on-site health clinic played a significant role in reducing health-related absences, while the attendance team and parental engagement efforts helped create a more supportive environment for students and families.

John Barry Elementary School
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Challenge: John Barry Elementary, located in a low-income neighborhood, experienced a high rate of absenteeism. Many students missed school due to unsafe neighborhoods, family challenges, and a lack of engagement with the school community.
Approach:
- **Safe Corridors Program**: To address safety concerns, the school partnered with local law enforcement and community volunteers to create "safe corridors" for students walking to and from school. This reduced fears of violence or harassment that kept some students at home.
- **School Climate**: The school implemented a PBIS program that rewarded students for good behavior and attendance. Students earned points for attending school regularly and following school rules, which they could redeem for prizes or privileges.
- **Attendance Challenges and Competitions**: The school ran attendance competitions between classes, with prizes such as extra recess, pizza parties, or school-wide celebrations for the classes with the highest attendance rates.
- **Parent Engagement**: The school held regular meetings with parents to discuss the importance of attendance, offered parenting workshops, and collaborated with social services to address issues like housing instability and family conflict that contributed to absenteeism.
- **Results**: John Barry Elementary improved overall attendance by 8 percent in one year. The safe corridors program helped alleviate safety concerns, while the PBIS and attendance challenges fostered a sense of competition and excitement around attending school.

Clyde C. Miller Career Academy
Location: St. Louis, Missouri
Challenge: Clyde C. Miller Career Academy, a high school focused on vocational education, struggled with chronic absenteeism, particularly among students balancing school with part-time jobs or family caregiving responsibilities.
Approach:
- **Career and Academic Counseling**: The school introduced personalized career and academic counseling to help students understand how regular attendance impacted their career goals. Counselors worked with students to create individualized plans for balancing school, work, and other responsibilities.
- **Flexible Learning Options**: For students with jobs or family responsibilities, the school allowed more flexible schedules, including the option to complete certain coursework online or attend night school.
- **Work-Study Programs**: The school partnered with local businesses to provide students with work-study opportunities that aligned with their vocational interests. Students who participated in work-study programs were held accountable for maintaining good attendance in order to continue their participation.
- **Incentives and Recognition**: The school introduced an incentive program that rewarded students with perfect attendance through recognition at school assemblies, certificates, and tangible rewards like gift cards and school merchandise.
- **Results**: After implementing these strategies, Clyde C. Miller Career Academy reduced its chronic absenteeism rate by 10 percent. The combination of career counseling and flexible scheduling helped students see the direct connection between attendance and their future careers, motivating them to attend more regularly.

Wendell Philips Academy
Location: Chicago, Illinois
Challenge: Wendell Phillips Academy, located in a high-poverty area of Chicago, had one of the highest absenteeism rates in the district. Many students faced barriers like unsafe neighborhoods, housing instability, and family responsibilities.
Approach:
- **Wraparound Services**: The school partnered with local organizations to provide students with comprehensive wraparound services, including mental health counseling, housing assistance, and access to basic needs like clothing and food.
- **Check & Connect Program**: The school implemented the "Check & Connect" program, where students were paired with adult mentors who monitored their attendance, academic progress, and well-being. Mentors met with students regularly to address challenges and offer support.
- **School Culture and Climate**: The school worked to improve its overall climate by fostering stronger relationships between students and staff. This included

organizing school-wide events and activities to build a sense of community and belonging.

- **Data-Driven Approach**: The school used real-time data to track attendance and intervene early when students began to show signs of absenteeism. Staff conducted home visits and worked with families to address any challenges preventing regular attendance.
- **Results**: Wendell Phillips Academy saw a 15 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism within two years. The combination of mentorship, wraparound services, and improved school climate helped create a supportive environment that encouraged students to attend school regularly.

Greenwood Elementary School
Location: Greenwood, Mississippi
Challenge: Greenwood Elementary, a small rural school in Mississippi, faced high absenteeism rates, particularly among students from low-income families. Many students faced transportation issues, and a lack of access to healthcare contributed to frequent absences due to illness.
Approach:

- **Community Bus System**: Recognizing transportation as a key barrier, the school worked with the local government and community organizations to establish a free bus system. This ensured that all students, even those in remote areas, had reliable transportation to and from school.
- **Health Clinics**: Greenwood partnered with a local health clinic to provide routine medical checkups and vaccinations at the school, reducing health-related absences.
- **Family Engagement**: The school launched a family outreach program, where staff made regular home visits and held community meetings to educate parents about the importance of attendance. They also worked to address family challenges that contributed to absenteeism, such as housing instability and food insecurity.
- **Attendance Incentives**: Greenwood implemented an incentive program that rewarded students for good or improved attendance with certificates, public recognition, and small rewards such as school supplies or gift cards.
- **School Climate:** PBIS is used district-wide as a tiered framework to support students' behavioral, academic, social, and emotional well-being. The program focuses on improving school environments by promoting positive behavior, setting clear expectations, and using consistent reinforcement strategies to reduce disciplinary issues and enhance overall student success .
- **Results**: Within two years, Greenwood Elementary reduced its chronic absenteeism rate by 12 percent. The transportation program and health clinic partnership were particularly effective in addressing key barriers to attendance.

Monroe County High School
Location: Kentucky, USA

Challenge: Monroe County High School, located in a rural area of Kentucky, had significant absenteeism rates due to a combination of transportation issues, family economic struggles, and low student engagement.

Approach:

- **School Climate:** PBIS is used to establish behavioral expectations, reinforce positive behaviors, and create a supportive school culture. The tiered approach helps the school address the behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students, with the aim to increase students' connectedness to the school.
- **Student Engagement Programs**: To increase engagement, the school introduced new extracurricular activities, including clubs, sports teams, and vocational programs that aligned with local job markets, such as agricultural training and automotive repair.
- **Flexible Learning Options**: Monroe County High School developed a flexible learning schedule to accommodate students who had to work or take care of family responsibilities. This included offering evening classes and online coursework.
- **Parent-School Collaboration**: The school created a parent engagement initiative, inviting parents to regular meetings and school events. This strengthened the relationship between families and the school, helping parents better understand the importance of attendance and how they could support their children.
- **Transportation Assistance**: The school worked with local community leaders to expand transportation options, including carpooling programs and providing fuel vouchers for families living in more remote areas.
- **Results**: After two years of implementing these strategies, Monroe County High School saw a 10 percent improvement in overall attendance. The introduction of vocational programs increased student engagement and gave students more motivation to attend regularly.

Appalachian Elementary School
Location: Wise County, West Virginia
Challenge: Appalachian Elementary, located in a remote rural area of West Virginia, had a chronic absenteeism problem due to poverty, transportation issues, and a lack of healthcare access. Many students missed school because they had to travel long distances or didn't have adequate healthcare.

Approach:

- **Mobile Health Clinic**: The school partnered with a local hospital to offer a mobile health clinic that regularly visited the school. Students were able to get checkups, vaccinations, and other essential health services without missing school.
- **Parent Education and Support**: Appalachian Elementary launched a parent education program, providing workshops on the importance of school attendance and offering assistance with things like budgeting, time management, and accessing social services.
- **School Climate and Student Support**: The school focused on improving the climate of the school so it would be more attractive to students and would make

them feel noticed when they are at school and missed when they are not at school. This includes meeting their emotional needs, because many of the students with attendance problems are suffering from depression and anxiety, so the school paired students with staff members.

- **Transportation Assistance**: The school worked with the local government to provide transportation vouchers and subsidies for families who lived far away from the school, ensuring that students had a reliable way to get to school.
- **Community Engagement**: The school strengthened its ties to the community by hosting events such as potluck dinners, parent-teacher meetings, and family fun days. This built trust between the school and families, making parents more likely to prioritize their children's attendance.
- **Results**: Appalachian Elementary saw a 16 percent reduction in absenteeism within two years. The mobile health clinic was especially effective in reducing health-related absences, and the transportation support allowed more students to attend consistently.

Pine Hill K-8 School
Location: Arizona
Challenge: Pine Hill K-8 School, located in a rural Native American community, faced significant absenteeism due to cultural practices, family responsibilities, and transportation challenges. Many students missed school during cultural events or to help with family matters.
Approach:

- **Culturally Responsive Curriculum**: The school developed a culturally relevant curriculum that incorporated Native American traditions, history, and practices. This helped students and families feel more connected to the school and reduced absenteeism related to cultural disengagement.
- **School-Community Partnerships**: Pine Hill partnered with local community leaders and organizations to address transportation issues and offer after-school tutoring and support. They also worked with families to find solutions to attendance barriers during cultural events.
- **Parent-Teacher Communication**: The school improved communication with parents by holding regular meetings and offering bilingual services to bridge language barriers. Parents were involved in developing strategies for improving their children's attendance.
- **Incentives for Attendance**: Pine Hill introduced incentives for good attendance, including recognition during school assemblies and rewards such as school supplies, books, and field trips.
- **Results**: Pine Hill K-8 saw a 13 percent improvement in attendance after implementing these strategies.

RESOURCES

- **Link to website with details – including the report and one-pager below: https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/all-in-for-attendance/**

- **Link to white paper - June 2025: https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Chronic-Absence-Report_FINAL-2.pdf**

- **Link to one-page summary: https://schoolhealth.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Guiding-Principles-One-Pager.pdf**

- **Link to recording of the webinar covering student attendance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKlx6WgA8Zg**

- **Chronic Absenteeism in Schools | Scholastic: https://education.scholastic.com/education/solutions/chronic-absenteeism.html**

- **Get Georgia Reading Campaign Newsletter: https://getgeorgiareading.org/2025/04/26/present-and-accounted-for-georgias-strategy-to-tackle-chronic-absenteeism/**

- **4 Evidence-Based Attendance Interventions: 4 Evidence Based Attendance Interventions.pdf**

- **The Rise of Attendance Mentors in Schools and How They Help: The Rise of Attendance Mentors in Schools and How They Help | Supporting Education Group**

- **Mentoring for Enhancing School Attendance: NMRC-Academic-Outcomes-Review-website.pdf**

- **Reducing Student Absenteeism: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED647452.pdf**

- **GADOE Attendance Dashboard: Attendance Dashboard**

- **Monitor Attendance Data - Early warning systems: https://www.nj.gov/education/earlychildhood/families/docs/attendancetoolkit.pdf**

- **Personalized Outreach - Home Visits and Meetings: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/chronic-absence/leap/the-leap-**

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

effect.pdf?rev=5ec05ace46fc4ffda8a3e26e5ade9b2a&hash=63994167BC2BEE14B1917023119603C1

- **Personalized Outreach - Home-School Liaison Programs:** https://www.gcpsk12.org/students/handbook-information-for-students-and-families/parentsquare

- **Build Positive Relationships - Welcoming and Supportive School Climate:** Scholastic Attendance Strategies; Whole Child Supports, Health, & Safety – Georgia Department of EducaWebsite:

- **Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice:** School-Based Behavioral Health – Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice; Training: Advocating for a Child in Foster Care – Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice; School Justice – Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice

- **Teacher-Student Connections:** Family Engagement Resources » Be A Learning Hero

- **Parent-School Partnership:** Title I, Part A – Family School Partnership – Georgia Department of Education; Parent Mentors | Georgia Parent Mentor PartnershipParent Mentors | Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership; Welcome Packets for Each School - Dublin City School District; Community Schools - Clayton County Public Schools

- **Attendance Incentive Programs:** BCSD Announces Efforts to Celebrate National Attendance Awareness Month

- **Recognition - Designed for appropriate reward and recognition:** Housing Authority of the Birmingham District: Pittsburg USD

- **Physical Condition Management - Chronic medical conditions are receiving the support they need:** School-Based Health Alliance

- **Physical Condition Management - Screenings: vision, hearing, dental, and nutrition:** Meriwether County Tackles Vision, Hearing, and Other Health Barriers to Support; Children's Literacy and Learning

- **Telemental Health:** ESE Telehealth; Tanner Medical Group | Telemedicine - Tanner Health; Hazel Health | Overview; Mental Health Resources - Hall County School Safety; Support Services / Mental Health

- **Preventative Care - Health fairs:** School health screens identify student health needs | Henry County Schools

- **Attendance Works:** [Attendance Works](#)

- **Tailored Attendance Plans - Individualized Attendance Plans for students with chronic physical conditions:** [Attendance Policies and Procedures - Gwinnett County Public Schools](#)

- **Remote Learning or Hybrid Learning Models - Physical health or mental health conditions:** [Harris County Virtual Program HCVP - Harris County School District](#)

- **Community Partnerships - Housing assistance, or mental health services:** [Adult Mental Health Housing Services | Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities](#)

- **Collaboration with Local Organizations - Georgia Family Connection Partnership:** [The Impact of Chronic Absenteeism: What Families Need to Know | GCPS Full News Article](#)

- **Wraparound Services - Social workers or family counselors and community-based supports:** DeKalb County: [Social Work Services – Division of Access and Opportunity](#); Green County: [Wraparound Program](#)

- **Collaboration with Local Organizations - Georgia Family Connection Partnership:** [Our Work](#); [The Impact of Chronic Absenteeism: What Families Need to Know | GCPS Full News Article](#)

- **Wraparound Services - Social workers or family counselors and community-based supports:** [Social Work Services – Division of Access and Opportunity](#); Green County: [Wraparound Program](#); [Care Counts™ laundry program by Whirlpool brand continues to provide critical access to clean clothes and combat post-pandemic absenteeism rates](#)

- **Academic Support - Mentoring Programs:** [www.avid.org](#); [Spotlight on Youth Mentoring - The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#); [Project Success : Programs & Services : What We Do : 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc](#); [UGA helps build mentoring opportunities across Georgia](#); [UGA summit builds mentoring efforts in Georgia - J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership](#)

- **Academic Support - Technical College Initiatives:** https://www.tcsg.edu/dualenrollment/

- **Community in Schools - Integrated student support programs:** [CIS Troup County | Communities In Schools of Georgia](#)

Get Georgia Reading Campaign Cabinet Student Attendance Subcommittee Report

- **Transportation Assistance - Support for students facing transportation challenges:** [Aurora Public Schools](#) in Colorado partners with Hop-Skip-Drive to provide transportation for students experiencing homelessness, in foster care, or with special needs.

- **Safe Walking Routes to School - Ensuring student safety on their way to school: Safe Routes to School Program:** https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/ **National Center for Safe Routes to School:** https://www.saferoutesinfo.org/

- **Safe and Welcoming School Environment:** [School Climate Practice - National School Climate Center](#); [Paulding County Schools](#) **implement evidence-based programs like PBIS to enhance school climate and reduce bullying behaviors. These programs focus on proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments.** [DeKalb County Schools](#) **launched the "Bullying Stops Here!"** [GAPBS - Center for Leadership in Disability](#); [How to Create a Positive School Climate](#); [EJ1257654.pdf](#) **Why School Climate Matters and What Can Be Done to Improve It;** [Engaging Students to Help Improve School Climate | National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)](#); **Northeast Ga RESA:** [School Climate Team](#); **First District RESA:** [Whole Child Supports | FDRESA](#)

- **Student Attendance Policies:** [Fulton County Adopts New Student Attendance Protocol](#); [Cobb County to Adopt New Student Attendance Protocol in Bid to Enhance](#); **Attendance Playbook:** https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Attendance-Playbook.5.23.pdf; **Implementation guide for using the attendance playbook:** https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Attendance-Works-Implementation-Guide-June-2024.pdf; [Toolkits - Attendance Works](#); [Engage, Equip, Empower Series - Gwinnett County Public Schools](#); [School health screens identify student health needs | Henry County Schools](#)

- **Language as a Missing Link:** [Language as a Missing Link — The Deal Cente](#)

APPENDIX

Categories of Student Attendance Barriers Identified by the Subcommittee

- **Mental Health & Wellbeing (Parent/Child):** Includes fear of contagions at school, anxiety, addiction, unmet mental health needs of children and parents, etc.

- **Physical health (Parent/Child):** includes chronic illnesses, diseases, allergies, lice, dental health, vision, hearing, asthma or diabetes management, etc.

- **School Climate and Performance:** includes most of the other barriers listed, reflecting reasons for both teachers and students being absent and discipline issues both related to the lack of a welcoming environment at school and lack of engagement at school.

- **Home/Community Climate:** includes oversleeping, parent abuse/neglect, financial issues, housing issues, and other factors, even environmental factors that aggravate existing medical conditions.

- **Parent/Family Engagement and Attitudes** reflects shifts in vacation/activity scheduling and ability to work from home, belief that missing 1-2 days per month is okay, immigrant/refugee perceptions, and lack of parental supports, etc.

- **Student Performance:** reflects the needs of the students and supports at the school; the link between behavioral and physical health and student academic achievement, and many of these factors are linked to school climate.

- **Access to Basic Needs:** access includes access to healthcare, mental health care, stable housing, clothes, utilities, nutritious food, etc.

References

Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Horsey, C. S. (1997). From first grade forward: Early foundations of high school dropout. Sociology of Education, 70(2), 87–107.

Alink, K., Denessen, E., Veerman, G. J., & Severiens, S. (2024). Exploring the concept of school belonging: A study with expert ratings. Cogent Education, 10(2).

Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. Educational Psychology Review, 30(1), 1–34.

Allensworth, D., & Lewallen, T. (2009). Addressing the needs of the whole child: What public health can do to answer the education sector's call for a stronger partnership. Preventing Chronic Disease, 6(2), A44.

Ansari, A., & Gottfried, M. (2022). Absenteeism in Elementary School Has Wide-Ranging Consequences, Especially for Minoritized Children. Crane Center for Early Childhood Research & Policy, Ohio State University.

Applied Survey Research (2011). Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness, and Third Grade Outcomes.

Are School District Impacting Student Attendance: Survey, (2024) by District Administration Publication.

Asthma and Children Fact Sheet (2024). The report highlights that asthma is the most common chronic illness among children and leads to millions of missed school days each year.

Attendance Works. (2024). Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L.: 2024 Attendance Awareness Campaign Toolkit. Attendance Works.

Attendance Works & Child & Family Policy Center (2014).Attendance in the Early Grades: Why It Matters for Reading.

Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center (2017).Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence.

Attendance Works (2014).

Attendance Works (2014). Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absenteeism.

Attendance Works and Healthy Schools Campaign (2015). Mapping the Early Attendance Gap: Charting a Course for School Success.

Attendance Works. (2018). How to Develop a Tailored Attendance Plan. Attendance Works.

Baker, M. L., Sigmon, J. N., & Nugent, M. E. (2001). Truancy reduction: Keeping students in school. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University

Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. John Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. Johns Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. John Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University.

Balfanz, R., Herzog, L., & Mac Iver, D. J. (2007). Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions. John Hopkins University.

Barry, C. M., & Wentzel, K. R. (2006). Friend influence on prosocial behavior: The role of motivational factors and friendship characteristics. Developmental Psychology, 42(1), 153-163.

Bergman, P., & Chan, E. W. (2018). Leveraging Parents: The Impact of High-Frequency Information on Student Achievement. Harvard University R&D Lab.

Boren, Megan (2024). What Makes Teachers Come to Class? Principal Magazine, September 2024.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2019). School Connectedness and Bullying Prevention.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Chang, H. N., & Romero, M. (2008). Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades. Attendance Works.

Chen, J. J., & Lin, T. F. (2008). Class attendance and exam performance: A randomized experiment. Journal of Economic Education, 39(3), 213–227.

Child Mind Institute. (2016). Children's Mental Health Report: Understanding Anxiety in Children and Teens. Child Mind Institute.

Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2013). Social contagion theory: Examining dynamic social networks and human behavior. Science, 341(6145), 123-135.

Chronic Absence Amid the Pandemic: A Status Report of the 2021-22 School Year (2022). Attendance Works & Everyone Graduates Center.

Citation: Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. A. (2014). A multi-tiered systems of support model for addressing chronic absenteeism and truancy. Psychology in the Schools, 51(4), 395-409. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21790.

Dennis Kramer and Garry McGiboney (2016). Present and Accounting For, American School Board Journal, 2016, v188, n3, 43-45.

Diabetes and School Absenteeism (2024). Centers for Disease Control.

Districts Try with Limited Success to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: Selected Findings from the Spring 2024 American School District Panel Survey and Interviews, RAND Corporation Research.

Eaton, D. K., Brener, N., & Kann, L. (2008). Associations of health risk behaviors with school absenteeism among U.S. high school students. Journal of School Health, 78(4), 223–229.

EdSource and UC Berkely's PACE Survey (2021).

EdSource Parent Survey (2019).

Education and Student Diabetes Management (2024). American Diabetes Association.

EdWeek Research Center Survey of District Leaders (2021).

Egger, H. L., Costello, E. J., & Angold, A. (2003). School Refusal and Psychiatric Disorders: A Community Study. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. Journal of Educational Research, 95(5), 308-318.

Fiester, L. (2013). Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Finn, J. D., & Zimmer, K. S. (2012). Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Student Engagement (pp. 97–131). Springer.

Finning, K., Ford, T., Moore, D. A., Ukoumunne, O. C., & Danielsson-Waters, E. (2020). The association between child and adolescent depression and absenteeism from school: A systematic review and meta-analysis. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 29(2), 187–198.

Freeman, J., Sugai, G., Goodman, S., Flannery, B., & Sears, S. (2020). Improving Attendance and Reducing Chronic Absenteeism. Eugene, OR: Center on PBIS, University of Oregon.

Gage, N. A., Sugai, G., Lunde, K., & DeLoreto, L. (2020). The impact of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports on school climate, student behavior, and academic outcomes: A meta-analysis and review of the literature. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 22(3), 162–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300719900608.

Garbe, A., Ogurlu, U., Logan, N., & Cook, P. (2020). Parents' experiences with remote education during COVID-19 school closures. American Journal of Qualitative Research.

Gay, G. (2000). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice. Teachers College Press.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. Psychology in the Schools, 30(1), 79–90.

Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship Between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research Journal, 47(2), 434-465.https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831209350494

 Gottfried, M. A. (2010). Evaluating the Relationship between Student Attendance and Achievement in Urban Elementary and Middle Schools: An Instrumental Variables Approach. American Educational Research Journal, 47(2), 434-465.

Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and social-emotional outcomes. Journal of Educational Psychology, which discusses how chronic absenteeism leads to reduced educational engagement and poorer academic performance over time.

Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 19(2), 53–75.

Gottfried, M. A. (2015). Chronic Absenteeism in the Classroom Context: Effects on Achievement.

Hansen, Michael, Purnima Aggarwai, and Rebecca Wagner (2025). State Data on Teacher Absences Post-Pandemic. Brookings Institute, May 19, 2025.

Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and Correctional Populations. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report.

Harvard Family Research Project (2013). The Family Engagement Partnership: Student Outcomes and Attendance Improvement, Harvard Family Research Center.

 Heppen, J. B., Allensworth, E., Sorensen, N., Rickles, J., Walters, K., & Kurki, A. (2016). Getting Back on Track: The Role of In-Person Instructional Support for Students Taking Online Credit Recovery. American Institutes for Research.

Hernandez, D. J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) emphasize that parental involvement, such as modeling school engagement and reinforcing attendance, leads to improved student attitudes and attendance.

Ingul, J. M., Klöckner, C. A., Silverman, W. K., & Nordahl, H. M. (2012). Adolescent school absenteeism: Modeling social and individual risk factors. Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 17(2), 93–100.

Jing Liu, Monica Lee, Seth Gershenson (2021) The short- and long-run impacts of secondary school absences, Journal of Public Economics, Volume 199,104441,

Johns Hopkins University School of Education (2015).The Challenge of Transportation in Urban and Suburban School Districts.

Jordan, P. W., & Miller, R. (2017). Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The Brookings Institution.

Kearney, C. A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. Clinical Psychology Review, 28(3), 451–471.

Koonin, L. M., Hoots, B., Tsang, C. A., et al. (2020). Telemental Health in Schools: An Innovative Solution to Improve Access to Care. School Mental Health Journal.

Kraft, M. A., & Rogers, T. (2015). The Underutilized Potential of Teacher-to-Parent Communication: Evidence from a Field Experiment. Economics of Education Review, 47, 49–63.

Kreider, H., Caspe, M., Kennedy, S., & Weiss, H. (2007).Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education. Harvard Family Research Project.

Kutash, K., Duchnowski, A. J., & Lynn, N. (2006). School-based mental health: An empirical guide for decision-makers. University of South Florida.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491.

Language as a Missing Link: Sandra Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia State College and University.

Learning Heroes Parent Survey (2020).

Learning Heroes Survey (2020).

Linking Mental Health to Chronic Absenteeism (2024). Mental Health America and Attendance Works, November 2024 as part of the Orah Attend Well Commission.

McGiboney, Garry. (2022). The Psychology of School Climate 2nd Edition. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Miller, R. (2012). Teacher Absence as a Leading Indicator of Student Achievement: New National Data Offer Opportunity to Examine Cost of Teacher Absence Relative to Learning Loss. Center for American Progress.

Miller, R.T., Richard Murname, and John B. Willett ((2007). Do Teacher Absences Impact Student Achievement? National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA

Moore, K. A., & Emig, C. (2014). Integrated Student Supports: A Summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers. Child Trends.

National Alliance on Mental Illness (2024).

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (2005). School-Based Health Centers: Improving Access to Health Care, Preventing Absenteeism.

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Survey of Principals (2021).

National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). (2015). Chronic Absenteeism: A Key Indicator of Student Success.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009).Student Transportation and Educational Access.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2019. National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2018). Chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools: A hidden educational crisis. National Poll on Children's Health (2024). C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

National PTA (2018). Building Successful Family-School Partnerships: A Parent Engagement Survey.

National PTA Parent Survey (2019).

O.C.G.A § 20-14-33 Single Statewide Accountability System: The school climate rating assesses the quality and character of school life. It encompasses norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740 – Student Code of Conduct and School Climate, This statute requires schools to implement a Student Code of Conduct and to take steps to address school climate by fostering a positive learning environment that encourages academic success and reduces disciplinary issues. Schools must adopt comprehensive plans that address: Discipline and student behavior in schools; Positive school climate practices that promote safety, respect, and engagement; Interventions for students with behavior issues, rather than just relying on punitive measures.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1076: This section permits local boards of education to use vehicles other than standard school buses for student transportation, provided they meet certain safety

requirements. School districts may use multifunction school activity buses (MFSABs), passenger vans, or other vehicles for transporting students to and from school-related activities.

Olweus, D., & Limber, S. (2010). Bullying in school: Evaluation and dissemination of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 80(1), 124-134.

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. Review of Educational Research, 70(3), 323–367.

Pareja, A. (2013) Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools-bv-Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences, University Consortium on School Research.

Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (2019). National Center for Education Statistics.

Parenting in America: Outlook, Worries, Aspirations Are Strongly Linked to Financial Situation (2015). Pew Research Center.

Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2012). Examining the association between implementation and outcomes: State-wide scale-up of school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports. Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 39(4), 417–433.

Racine, N., McArthur, B. A., Cooke, J. E., Eirich, R., Zhu, J., & Madigan, S. (2021). Global Prevalence of Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms in Children and Adolescents During COVID-19: A Meta-analysis. JAMA Pediatrics, 175(11), 1142-1150.

Railsback, J. (2004). Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

RAND Corporation. (2020). Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools. RAND Report.

Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Stormont, M. (2011). Classroom-level positive behavior supports in schools implementing SW-PBIS: Identifying areas for enhancement. Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 13(1), 39-50.

Robinson, C. D., Lee, M., Dearing, E., & Rogers, T. (2018). Reducing Student Absenteeism in the Early Grades by Targeting Parental Beliefs. Harvard Kennedy School.

Sava, F.A. (2020). Fostering Students' Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Teacher Interpersonal Behavior and Student-Teacher Relationships, Frontiers in Psychology, DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00782.

Scales, P. C., & Benson, P. L. (2006). "The Role of Caring Adults in the Positive Development of Youth." Search Institute.

Schleider, J. L., & Weisz, J. R. (2017). Single-Session Interventions for Youth Mental Health: A Scoping Review and Meta-Analysis. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 56(10), 876–890. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2017.07.780

School Attendance Survey for Parents of School-Aged Children (2024), Technical College System of Georgia.

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. The School Community Journal, 14(2), 39-56.

Skiba, R. J., Arredondo, M. I., & Williams, N. T. (2014). More Than a Metaphor: The Contribution of Exclusionary Discipline to a School-to-Prison Pipeline. Center for Equity & Excellence in Education.

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting Students to School: Using Family and Community Involvement to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism. The School Community Journal, 14(2), 39-56.

Stress in America (2021), Harris Poll commissioned by the American Psychological Association.

Student Absences and Health Conditions (2020). Centers for Disease Control.

Taras, H., & Potts-Datema, W. (2005). Chronic health conditions and student performance at school. Journal of School Health, 75(7), 255–266.

Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2013). A review of school climate research. Review of Educational Research, 83(3), 357-385.

The Cost of Undereducation in Texas (2012). Children at Risk Study.

The Declining Labor Market Prospects of Less Educated Men (2019). National Bureau of Economic Research.

U.S. Department of Education (2016). Student Reports of Bullying and Absenteeism in a National Sample: The Impact of Bullying on Attendance.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2021). Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students.

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools: An Unprecedented Look at a Hidden Educational Crisis.

Urban Education, 54(1), 3–34.

Vision to Learn (2024).

Weist, M. D., Sander, M. A., Walrath, C. M., Link, B., Nabors, L. A., Adelsheim, S., & Bryant, T. (2005). Developing principles for best practice in expanded school mental health. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34(1), 25-31.

Why Chronic Absenteeism Matters: What the Research Says, United States Department of Education, 2024.

Wu, J.HC., Akaeze, H. & Van Egeren, L.A. Effects of a State Pre-kindergarten Program on the Kindergarten Readiness and Attendance of At-Risk Four-Year-Olds. *Early Childhood Educ J* (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-024-01736-3.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey – Data Summary and Trends Report, 2013-2024, CDC 2024.