Future Ed
Independent Analysis, Innovative Ideas
Increasing Rates of Chronic Absenteeism

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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<td>VIRGINIA</td>
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Demographic Trends of Absenteeism

Rates are consistently highest among:
- Homeless and foster students
- Students from low-income families
- Students with disabilities
- Students of color

Rates are highest in:
- High school
- Preschool and kindergarten
- Transition years
Lessons from the Pandemic

- Chronic absenteeism rates **doubled** and remain high.
- Turning these trends around is **central** to addressing learning loss and student mental health.
- **Barriers**, like transportation, health and housing, persist and in some places are worse.
- School needs to be a **safe, welcoming place** for students and families.
- **Connection**—to teachers, peers, classrooms, and activities—is key to improving attendance.
- Student and families want a **voice** in the classrooms and decision-making process.
INTERVENTIONS THAT WORK
Attendance Barriers: Housing Instability

- Homeless students have high rates of chronic absenteeism, likely double that of other students
- Nationally rates are higher among students in shelters vs. those doubled up with families

Solutions:
- Coordinators at schools/shelters
- Wrap-around services/Connected Schools
- Transportation options
Attendance Barriers: Transportation

- Missing the school bus can mean missing school for students with unreliable transportation
- Heavy traffic and community violence can keep students from getting to school
- Transit passes work if bus and trains run on reliable schedules

Solutions
- Targeted transportation
- Safe Passage
- Walking School Bus
- Public transit passes
Attendance Barriers: Health

• Nationwide, illness is the No.1 cause of absenteeism, especially asthma, which accounts for 14 million missed days annually
• Unhealthy buildings—with mold, mildew or poor ventilation—can contribute to illness
• Mental health concerns can contribute to misconduct and school refusal—leading to more absenteeism

Solutions
• Attention to asthma
• Immunization clinics
• Handwashing protocols
• Telehealth
Communicating With Families

Direct, personalized outreach to families—through letters or texts—can reduce absenteeism. These should:

• Research shows families don’t know how much school their children have missed
• A combination of letters and texts seem to work best
• Focus on empathy, how the school can help families, rather than punitive messages
• Send repeated communications notices throughout the year
Targeted Home Visits

During the pandemic, some districts began targeting home visits to families of students with high rates of absenteeism.

Connecticut’s $10.7 million LEAP program:
- Reached 8,700 students in 15 districts
- Led to a 15 percentage-point increase in attendance after 6 months
Connecting with Teachers, Mentors

Numerous studies show that connections to teachers, tutors and mentors can influence attendance—and, with it, academic success.

What Matters:

• Knowing the teacher from past years
• Working in small groups or advisories
• Fair discipline practices
• A diverse workforce
Instruction That Matters

Students become more engaged when they believe what they’re learning matters.

This works best when interventions:

• Help students see the relevance of lessons
• Connect to a students’ culture
• Offer a viable career track
• Offer students a voice
Community Schools

• Community Schools model in New York City led to improved attendance over 3 years

• Wrap-around services provided by Communities in Schools led to improved attendance for elementary students
What Doesn’t Work: Punitive Approaches

- Suspending for Truancy: More absences
- Fines and Jail Time: Lower attendance, higher dropout
- Court diversion: No impact
Attendance Touches Everything

- Mentors and Tutors
- Family Engagement
- School Climate
- Community Schools
Attendance Playbook 3.0

• A joint project by FutureEd and Attendance Works
• Offers interventions for reducing chronic absence
• Provides:
  ✓ ESSA research level
  ✓ MTTS tier of support
  ✓ Research and resources

LINK: https://www.future-ed.org/attendance-playbook/
Research and Resources

RESEARCH
- School-located influenza vaccination and absenteeism among elementary school students in a Hispanic community: PROMISING
- Impact of school flu vaccine program on student absences: EMERGING
- Burden of asthma in inner-city elementary schoolchildren: PROMISING
- The Relationship Between School-Based Health Centers, Rates of Early Dismissal from School, and Loss of Seat Time: PROMISING

RESOURCES
- The Cost Benefit of Comprehensive Primary and Preventive School-Based Health Care
- School-Based Health Care Support Toolkit

RESEARCH
- Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? MODERATE
- The Promise of Restorative Practices to Transform Teacher-Student Relationships and Achieve Equity in School Discipline: EMERGING
- A Cluster-Randomized Trial of Restorative Practices: EMERGING
Levels of Evidence

- **Strong**
  - Random sampling
  - Multiple sites, 350+ students

- **Moderate**
  - Similar groups, but not random
  - Multiple sites, large sample

- **Promising**
  - A representative sample
  - A matched sample, smaller size

- **Emerging**
  - A rationale or logic model suggesting it could yield positive results
Tiers of Support

Three Tiers of Attendance Support

Tier 3
Intensive Intervention
Students Missing 20% of School Days or More

Tier 2
Early Intervention
Students Missing 10% - 19%

Tier 1
Universal Prevention
All Students and Families

Foundational Supports That Promote Positive Conditions for Learning
All Students and Families
Three Rounds of ESSER

Covid-Relief Spending

ESSER I: $13.2
ESSER II: $54.3
ESSER III: $122

- Billions allotted
- Billions spent as of 9/30
Three Rounds of ESSER

Covid-Relief Spending

ESSER I
- Billions allotted: $13.2
- Billions spent as of 5/31: $13.2

ESSER II
- Billions allotted: $42.6
- Billions spent as of 5/31: $54.3

ESSER III
- Billions allotted: $47
- Billions spent as of 5/31: $122
Planned ESSER Spending

Where Attendance Fits In

- Attendance
- Mentoring
- Community/parent engagement
- Tutoring
- SEL
- Mental health professionals

Number of Districts
ESSER Examples

• **Connecticut** is spending $10.7 million on home visiting.
• **Fort Worth** spent $3.2 million last year on “family engagement specialists.”
• **Syracuse, NY**, earmarked $2.3 million for attendance aides, family outreach & mentoring
• **Fulton County, Ga**, is using $1 million to engage high school students at risk of dropping out.
ESSA Title Funding

- **Title I**: Support for high-poverty schools and students
- **Title II**: Funding for teacher training
- **Title IVa**: Safe and healthy school grants for data and school climate
- **Title IVe**: Family engagement grants
- **Title IVf**: Community Schools grants
Other Federal Sources

- **Stronger Connections** grants in gun violence law
- **IDEA dollars** to support attendance for special education students
- **McKinney-Vento** money for homeless students
- **Medicaid billing** to pay for school clinics and staffing
Local & State Assets

• Make the case for spending **state & local dollars** on successful interventions
• Reach out to **state service commissions** for support from AmeriCorps workers/NPSS
• Tap local university **work study programs** for tutors and mentors
The Power of Partners

- **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** has partners in 350+ communities
- **Local foundations** are paying for attendance staff, community schools coordinators
QUESTIONS?