WHO'S IN

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM UNDER THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

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About FutureEd

FutureEd is an independent, solution-oriented think tank at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, committed to bringing fresh energy to the causes of excellence, equity, and efficiency in K-12 and higher education. Follow us on Twitter: @FutureEdGU

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When Congress rewrote federal education law in 2015, lawmakers sought to scale back the emphasis on standardized test scores in school accountability. The result was the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which requires states to include five indicators measuring school performance, four focused on academic achievement, and a fifth "non-academic" measure of school quality or school success. In response, a majority of state leaders have adopted chronic student absenteeism as their "fifth indicator."

With good reason. More than 7 million students nationwide miss three weeks or more of school, a level of absenteeism linked to significantly diminished academic performance. A fifth of the nation's schools report that 20 percent or more of their students are chronically absent. No state is untouched by the problem.

Done right, holding schools accountable for these absences can encourage educators and community leaders to address the root causes of excused and unexcused absences, whether chronic illness, unsafe communities or a challenging school climate. It can encourage schools to tamp down on unduly harsh discipline policies that are pushing students out of school. And it can help close the achievement gaps for disadvantaged students, who experience higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their peers.

Done wrong—without consistent definitions, realistic goals or adequate support for schools and families—the focus on chronic absenteeism could set up states for a backlash, much as the heavy emphasis on test scores in the previous education law led to resistance among some educators and parents and, in some cases, gaming the system.

To help policymakers navigate the challenges of including chronic absenteeism in their school measurement systems, FutureEd has done a comprehensive review of the research on student absenteeism, analyzed the absenteeism provisions in all 51 state ESSA plans submitted to or drafted for the U.S. Department of Education as of the department's Sept. 18 deadline, and conducted a fresh analysis of federal chronic absenteeism data. Drawing on this research, this report provides a roadmap for leveraging ESSA to keep more students in school and on a path to academic success. Among our findings:

- 36 states and the District of Columbia are using some form of chronic student absenteeism in their accountability formulas. Rhode Island includes teacher absenteeism.
- At least 27 of the states that have included chronic absenteeism use the same definition: missing 10 percent or more of

enrolled days. Five more will measure the inverse, attending 90 percent or more of days. Two states set tougher standards, and three define the metric as missing a set number of days.

- While states have defined what constitutes a chronically absent student, few have set expectations for how few chronically absent students a school should have. Some of those who have are setting ambitious and perhaps unrealistically high goals that represent far better results than they are currently seeing. In several places, no more than a quarter of the schools would meet the standards, according to our analysis of chronic absenteeism data.

- States are giving relatively modest weight to chronic absenteeism in their accountability formulas and, in some cases, combining it with other indicators.

- The biggest differences in chronic absenteeism rates come not among districts or states, but between schools within the same district. This makes it critically important that superintendents and principals are equipped to deal with excessive absences—whether excused, unexcused or for disciplinary reasons.

The Case for Tracking Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is in many ways the ideal metric for states trying to assess school quality and school success. The problem is widespread. The data are readily available and easily understood. The metric meets the technical requirements of the federal law. It captures students' connectedness to their schools and other aspects of school culture further "upstream" that affect student success. And research shows it has the potential to make a difference for disadvantaged children, a key ESSA focus.

Taking attendance is certainly nothing new for schools, and attendance rates have factored in federal accountability before. Under No Child Left Behind, the predecessor to ESSA, many states used average daily attendance, or the average number of students showing up each day, as a metric for elementary and middle schools. States were also required to report truancy rates for high schools. Seven

Five Tiers of Chronic Absenteeism

% Students Chronically Absent	# Schools	% Schools
Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)	9,924	11%
High Chronic Absence (20-29%)	10,327	11%
Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)	28,319	31%
Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)	21,190	23%
Low Chronic Absence (0-5%)	22,573	24%
Grand Total	**92,333**	

SOURCE: Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection;
Adapted courtesy of Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates Center

states use average daily attendance rates to determine funding for school districts, while most other states use an attendance count once or twice a school year.[1] In such cases, schools have little monetary incentive to pay attention to attendance thereafter.

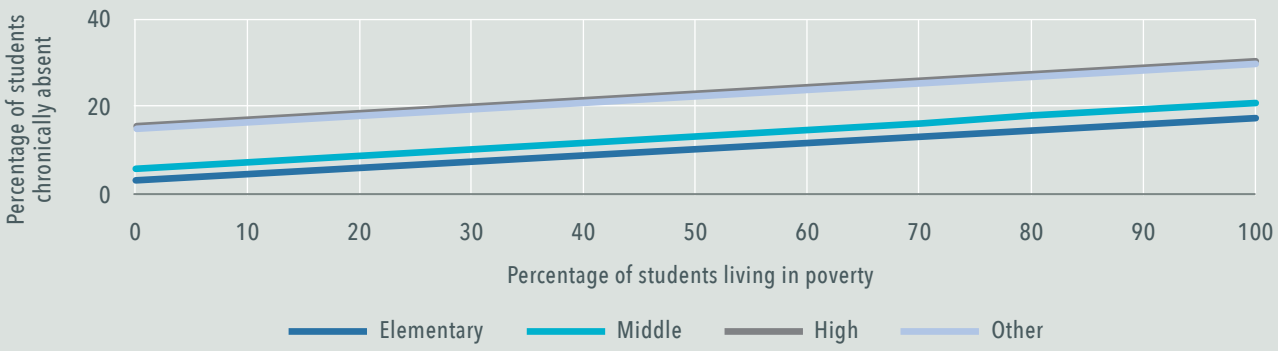
Chronic absenteeism measures attendance in a different way, combining excused, unexcused and disciplinary absences to get a complete picture of how much instructional time students are missing. In June 2016, The U.S. Education Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released the first full national picture of chronic absenteeism. Asking the nation's schools to provide a count of how many students missed 15 or more days in a school year, the report estimated that about 13 percent of students were chronically absent.[2]

Researchers suspect the true numbers are even higher, given that many districts were reporting the information for the first time. A total of 1,747 of the nation's roughly 13,300 school districts reported that no one was chronically absent.[3] Others reported far higher rates. In nearly 10,000 of the nation's approximately 100,000 public schools, 30 percent or more of students hit the chronic absenteeism mark. Fully half of U.S. schools had at least 10 percent of their student body missing that much school, analyses of the data shows.

To evaluate federal absenteeism data, FutureEd partnered with Attendance Works, a nonprofit focused on improving school attendance, and the Everyone Graduates Center, a Johns Hopkins University research center. For their recent report, "Portraits of Change," these organizations created their own database merging the Education Department's OCR results on chronic absenteeism with the Department's Common Core of Data, which provides richer information on school characteristics. They graciously shared their database with us for our own analysis.[4]

We confirmed that elementary and middle schools tend to have notably lower average rates of chronic absenteeism than high schools.[5] (Pre-K and kindergarten classes often have high rates of absenteeism, but these are generally not reflected in the federal data collection.[6]) Second, and perhaps not surprisingly, schools with higher percentages

Chronic Absenteeism and Poverty, By Grade-Level



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data

of disadvantaged students, as measured by eligibility for subsidized school lunches, have more chronic absenteeism than schools with students from more affluent backgrounds.[7] Research has shown that students living in poverty often have more risk factors for absenteeism, including unstable housing and lack of access to health care. They also are more likely to lose ground because of these absences.[8]

Under ESSA, the fifth indicator of school quality or student success must have several features. This indicator must provide a valid and reliable comparison of schools throughout a state, and they must provide "meaningful differentiation" between schools.

Further regulation requires that the fifth indicator have a research basis connecting it to student academic achievement; that it can be calculated in the same way in all schools; that it is different from other indicators; and that it can be amended over time.

Chronic absenteeism checks these boxes. States are already required to report chronic absenteeism rates under another part of ESSA. And most states have data systems in place for collecting attendance records.

The FutureEd analysis of federal absenteeism data found that two thirds of the variance in schools' rates of chronic absenteeism falls within districts, suggesting that this metric does in fact make meaningful distinctions between school performance.

What's more, other non-academic approaches—such as student surveys

ESSA Requirements and Chronic Absenteeism

Be applicable to every student	All enrolled students are included in attendance counts; no students are excluded.
Provide summary and disaggregated data	Chronic absence rates can be reported separately for all subgroups of students in a school, district, and state.
Be comparable across a state's school districts	States already have protocols that standardize attendance taking and reporting. The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has recently required states to track and report a standard measure of chronic absence. As a result, chronic absence rates will be comparable within states and, unlike many indicators, across the nation.
Be able to distinguish differences in performance among schools	Chronic absence levels vary substantially among students and schools within any district or state. These variations are not random; they represent meaningful differences in student engagement, achievement, and success.
Be valid	Test scores are measures of test success, which can be strongly or weakly related to subject matter mastery. Chronic absence, on the other hand, measures how much school has been missed.
Be reliable	Counting errors aside, taking attendance and computing chronic absence repeatedly will yield a consistent result.
Have a proven impact on achievement	An abundance of studies link chronic absence to academic achievement.

SOURCE: Attendance Works

measuring school climate or efforts to assess the growth of social-emotional skills—are generally less developed and more subjective. That leaves them more open to manipulation or gaming and less likely to have the research base proving a connection to academic results.[9]

Understanding the Research

By contrast, there is ample research demonstrating a correlation between attendance and achievement. Starting as early as pre-K and kindergarten, too many absences are associated with weaker reading skills,[10] higher retention rates[11] and lagging development of the social skills needed to persist in school.[12] By middle school, chronic absenteeism becomes a warning sign that students will drop out of high school.[13] A study in Utah found that students are 7.4 times more likely to drop out if they are chronically absent in any year between 8th and 12th grades.[14]

Several studies show a correlation between high rates of absenteeism and lower standardized test scores. A 2014 study by Attendance Works found that students who missed three or more days in the month before taking the National Assessment of Educational Progress scored an average 12 to 18 points lower than their peers.[15] Some states have used their own test results to show the same. Even the students who show up for class regularly can suffer academically if too many of their classmates are chronically absent.[16] The churn makes it harder for teachers to teach and students to learn.

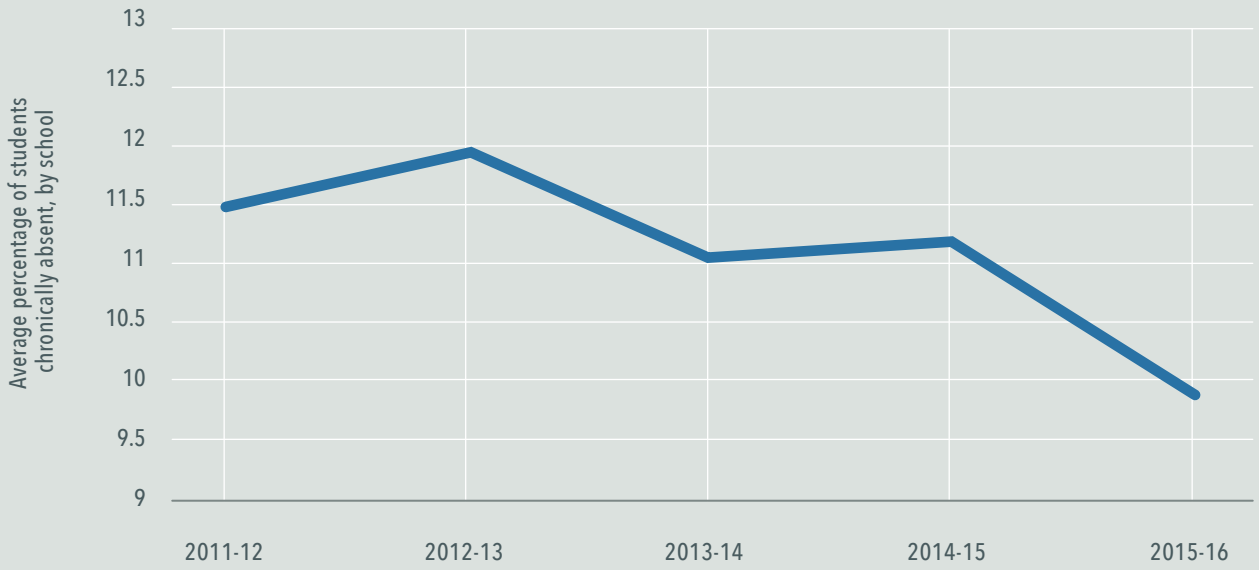
Holding schools accountable for absenteeism can also address another educational priority: reducing the rate of school suspensions. Because chronic absenteeism encompasses all missed days—whether for excused, unexcused or disciplinary reasons—schools have an incentive to keep students in school as much as possible. Tracking absenteeism can also alert schools to community health or safety issues that are keeping students from getting to school regularly. And it can speak to whether the school is providing the right climate for learning. Students who feel welcome and safe at school are more likely to attend than those facing bullies or a chaotic environment.[17]

In addition, research shows that attention to attendance can lower absenteeism rates. In Chicago, a focus on improving attendance among 9th grade students led to higher graduation rates.[18] In New York City, a mentoring program for chronically absent students contributed to better attendance.[19] Since Connecticut began tracking the metric in 2011-12, its schools' average rate of chronic absenteeism has dropped from about 12 percent to below 10 percent. The downward trend suggests that deliberate attention to the issue, coupled with state support for district efforts, can help ameliorate chronic absenteeism rates.

Of course, many factors influence chronic absenteeism, some of them beyond educators' control. Bad weather, be it a hurricane or the 108 inches of snow dumped on Boston in the winter of 2014-15, can disrupt attendance. So can a flu epidemic or even an outbreak of head lice.[20] Politics, too, can play a role; recent crackdowns on undocumented immigrants have prompted some families to keep their children home from school.[21]

As a result, there is a temptation to say that with so many factors related to attendance beyond a school's control, schools shouldn't be held accountable for student absenteeism.

Average Chronic Absenteeism Rate in Connecticut Schools



SOURCE: Original analysis of data from Connecticut State Department of Education

North Dakota education leaders chose not to include chronic absenteeism in their accountability rubric because they felt it was "not in the control of the school or district."[22] But the experiences of Connecticut and other states demonstrate that paying attention to attendance can make a difference for students.

We know that a high level of chronic absenteeism is a powerful indicator that something is amiss with a student or a school. The challenge going forward is to deliver that accountability in a way that is consistent, fair and likely to encourage improvement, rather than provoke resistance or encourage educators to game attendance results.

Smart Strategies for Holding Schools Accountable

Given the importance of tracking chronic absenteeism, there are many steps states can take to help schools and districts use the metric effectively.

Using the Right Definition

Standardizing the definition of chronic absenteeism statewide allows comparisons across districts, illuminating which schools and school districts are struggling with the problem.

States should define the metric as a percentage of a school year that students miss, rather than a set number of days that students are not in schools. This allows states and districts to make comparisons regardless of the length of jurisdictions' school years. Given that research shows absences in the first month of school can predict chronic absenteeism for the rest of the year, the use of a percentage allows education leaders to identify attendance problems earlier in the school year, rather than

waiting for students to hit a final number in June.[23] With proper tracking, schools can alert families when a student has missed 10 percent of the first two months or the first semester, and try to change that trajectory.

In this sense, the metric can function as a leading indicator, tipping off administrators to problems long before they are reflected in test scores or other negative outcomes.

Fortunately, many states have used a percentage of all days absent as their ESSA metric. Arizona, Virginia, and Wisconsin are among those that have defined chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the enrolled days in the school year, the definition most researchers say is the threshold for severe academic problems. The District of Columbia, Georgia, Missouri, Minnesota and West Virginia have expressed the threshold in reverse, measuring the percentage of students who are present for at least 90 percent of enrolled days.

Two states—Indiana and Montana—have set more ambitious metrics. Montana is flagging schools where students miss 5 percent or less of the school year, in an indicator called "satisfactory attendance." Indiana will measure a combination of "persistent attendance," described as attending 97 percent of enrolled days, and "improved attendance" for those below that mark.

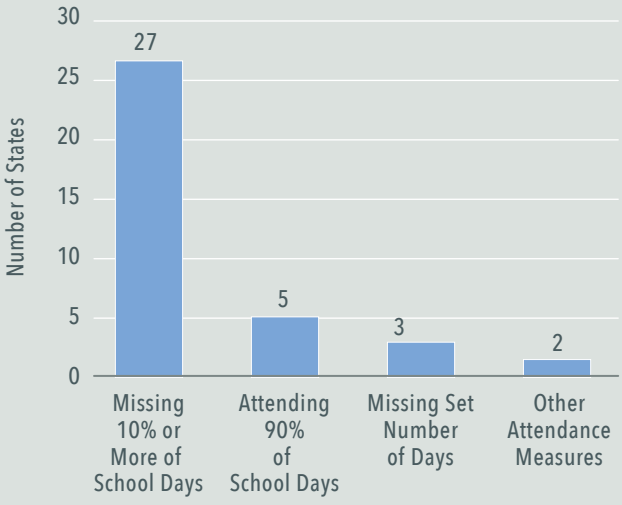
Only three states are using the less desirable strategy of basing chronic absenteeism on the number of days students aren't in school. Alabama and Hawaii have adopted the 15-day measure used in the federal OCR analysis. Nevada is using 18 days, which equals 10 percent of the school year.

The decision by several states to adopt "consistent attendance," or showing up 90 percent of the time, as their ESSA metric is potentially problematic; schools, students, and parents may interpret the standards as permission for students to miss up to 18 days of school (10 percent) without risking adverse effects on achievement. If states decide to express their goal in this way, Attendance Works recommends dual metrics: one measuring chronic absenteeism at 90 percent attendance and one assessing satisfactory attendance at 95 percent.[24]

Some communities have improved attendance by assigning more aggressive goals. In the Grand Rapids, Mich., school district, for instance, a "Strive for Less Than 5" initiative lowered chronic absenteeism rates from 36 percent to 28 percent in the program's first three years.[25]

Rhode Island's decision to include teacher absenteeism in its fifth indicator makes sense

How States Define Chronic Absenteeism in Their ESSA Plans



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis of State ESSA Plans

given recent research into the negative impact of teacher absences on student achievement. Using data from different states, research teams from Columbia, Duke and Harvard showed that student achievement dropped as teacher absenteeism rose. Such findings are hardly surprising given that teachers represent the most potent school-based factor contributing to students' academic achievement.[26]

Counts should also include days missed due to suspensions or other disciplinary action. Some states mention suspensions explicitly in their plans, while others are silent on the issue. West Virginia includes suspensions, except those for students accused of violent crimes or posing a danger to other students.

Some states provide exemptions—Illinois' plan, for instance, will exempt absences due to a death in the family, while West Virginia won't count those due to "failure of the bus to run/ hazardous conditions." But these should be used sparingly and applied across all schools and districts.

Absenteeism, Not Just Truancy

Another aspect of the definition is counting all absences, not just the unexcused ones. Traditionally, state and local attendance laws and regulations have focused on truancy or willfully skipping school, an offense that comes with a punitive response.

This is a problem for several reasons, and state policymakers should take a wider view of student absenteeism in their ESSA initiatives.

For one thing, punitive interventions have proven to be largely ineffective, even counterproductive. A Los Angeles County effort to hold students criminally responsible for unexcused absences or even tardiness was abandoned after it led to a congested court docket and more missed days of school.[27] A New York State plan to turn parents of truant students over to social service agencies met a similar fate.[28]

Indeed, school systems have begun moving away from prosecuting truancy, in part because of concerns that criminalizing such nonviolent offenses contributes to the so-called school-to-prison pipeline. In fact, the reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, now under consideration in Congress, could bar states that receive federal formula grants, such as Title I of ESSA, from incarcerating truant students.[29]

Nor does focusing on unexcused absences exclusively capture the full impact of lost instructional time and related challenges created by students' absences, such as the need for re-teaching and make-up assignments. Especially in the early grades, many students miss school for reasons sanctioned by parents and school administrators. Illness remains the leading cause of absenteeism,[30] with asthma alone accounting for 14 million missed days.[31] These sorts of absences demand a different response than the punitive approach to truancy, and state law should reflect that.

Setting the Right Goal

Defining chronic absenteeism is just the first step in the process. A state must then determine what percentage of chronically students is too high for a school. While most states submitting ESSA plans have established definitions for chronic absenteeism, many have yet to set expectations for their schools.

There's no clear research on what rate of chronic absenteeism is too high for a school. So far, several states have selected standards that few of their schools can currently meet. In Connecticut, for instance, our analysis found that only 16 percent of schools meet the state's expectation that fewer than 5 percent of students will be labeled chronically absent. In D.C., about a quarter of public schools, traditional and charter, would meet its 90 percent attendance target. Hawaii estimates that only 49 of its 260 schools would meet its 15-day, or 9 percent, absenteeism goal.[32] Schools in Virginia and West Virginia are hitting closer to the mark.

State Chronic Absenteeism Targets

State	Target rate for schools	% of schools meeting target
Arizona	0%*	14.8
Arkansas	No higher than 5%*	35.4
Connecticut	No higher than 5%	15.9
District of Columbia	Less than 10%	24.1
Hawaii	No higher than 9%	8.0
Nevada	No higher than 5%*	9.2
Ohio	No higher than 5%	20.0
Virginia	Less than 10%	59.9
West Virginia	Less than 10%	49.5

*Targets implied by point system whereby schools receive substantially fewer points for chronic absenteeism rates outside of target range

SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis of State ESSA Plans and U.S. Department of Education Data

While it's important to establish an ambitious goal, setting the bar too high could backfire for states trying to build a culture of good attendance. No Child Left Behind's unrealistic expectation that every child would reach academic proficiency led to discontent among educators and state leaders and ultimately contributed to near-mutiny against standardized testing in some communities.

Several states include a measure of improvement in their goals for chronic absenteeism. This is a smart move, given that many of the schools struggling with weak test scores will also be challenged by high rates of chronic absenteeism. Indiana offers these schools a way to achieve their goal by counting the number of students who have increased their attendance 3 percentage points, or approximately six days a year. D.C., Arizona and Massachusetts also give points for improved attendance.

Assigning the Right Weight

In addition to setting the right goals, states need to give an appropriate weight to chronic absenteeism in their accountability formulas. So what is the right weight? Again, we have no research to shed light on that question. Clearly, the emphasis put on attendance shouldn't outweigh that given to academic achievement. In fact, ESSA doesn't allow for that. At the same time, the weight shouldn't be so low that educators don't give chronic absenteeism any attention.

Our analysis of ESSA plans shows that in many cases, states are giving modest weight to chronic absenteeism or combining it with other non-academic indicators, such as student surveys or college and career readiness indices. These are appropriate steps given that this is a new metric in many places, and educators need time to learn how it works with other measures.

For instance, Connecticut sets an ambitious goal, but tempers it by giving partial credit to schools with chronic absenteeism rates as high as 29 percent of the student body. Schools with 30 percent or more chronically absent students get no points in the accountability rubric.

In Colorado, state leaders set a low weight for chronic absenteeism—5 percent of what factors into a school's—but acknowledge that could change in future years. According to the state's ESSA plan, "once more current data are available to analyze how the new measure of chronic absenteeism interacts with the other accountability measures and input from stakeholders has been gathered, the [State Board of Education] will discuss and direct the weights among the indicators to be used for 2018 accountability determinations."

In contrast to states like Colorado, Delaware assigns a 35 percent weight for chronic absenteeism along with a mix of other indicators for high schools. Indeed, several states use chronic absenteeism in combination with other factors. Nevada includes it in the 10 percent weight given to student engagement, which also measures school climate. Illinois includes it among "school quality indicators," which account for 10 percent of the scoring in elementary and middle school and 7.5 percent in high school. Massachusetts consider several factors—chronic absenteeism, success in grade 9 coursework, and successful completion of broad and challenging coursework—together for a 7.5 percent weight.

New Mexico combines chronic absenteeism with student surveys of school climate for 15 percent of its accountability rubric. While bundling chronic absenteeism with related indicators may yield an appropriate weight, states may need to take steps to shine separate spotlights on the different issues.

New Jersey, which adopted chronic absenteeism as an accountability metric in its waiver to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), features absenteeism rates on its report cards for schools and district, and uses them to compare schools with similar demographics. Connecticut, which also added the metric in its NCLB waiver, displays data on chronic absenteeism as one of 12 indicators in its Next Generation Accountability System report.[33]

Setting the Right Rules

Beyond the need for accurate information, states should take steps to create inclusive but fair chronic absenteeism models that discourage schools or districts from gaming the attendance system. As the stakes rise on attendance, administrators could be tempted to massage the data for better results. In 2012, as many as 64 Columbus, Ohio, school administrators were implicated in a scheme to alter student attendance records. Columbus officials sought to remove weaker students from the rolls so that their annual test score results wouldn't count against the district.[34] But schools could just as easily push out or dis-enroll students whose poor attendance was dragging down averages. They could also focus on raising attendance rates of students near the chronic absenteeism threshold, while ignoring students well past the threshold. To discourage such steps, states could do spot checks of actual attendance on a given day and otherwise audit attendance data for anomalies.

Another important step is setting a consistent policy for counting partial days, when a student shows up for the first two or three classes and then leaves school. A recent study by researchers at Mindful Schools and Stanford University showed that the chronic absenteeism rate among secondary school students would climb from 9 to 24 percent if partial absences were counted.[35]

A more technical consideration is the default setting used in the school or district attendance collection system. Some systems automatically record students as present unless they are reported absent, while others require teacher input before a student is considered present. If the default is set to "present," attendance rates could appear artificially high when teachers fail to submit regular reports. Anecdotal reports suggest this has happened in some school districts where daily attendance averages factor into school funding.

Supporting Teachers and Administrators

Research shows that parents consider teachers the most trusted source of information about their children's learning and comportment, yet they rarely hear from them about student attendance.[36] States and school districts could help teachers and principals take full advantage of information on student attendance available under ESSA, help that takes the form of early warning systems alerting them to students headed off track.

States could use professional development spending allowed under Title I of ESSA to give teachers credit for attending seminars or webinars about the deleterious consequences of chronic absenteeism and how to address them. That could include encouraging teachers to incorporate attendance data fully into teacher-parent conversations. The state of Virginia worked with Attendance Works to create a set of online modules to help teachers and administrators include attendance into their communications to students and parents.[37]

Such strategies start with universal approaches aimed at every family: posters, promotions and other messaging to emphasize the importance of good attendance to all students. For students who start to head off track, mentoring programs and close monitoring of data have proven successful.

The most challenging cases of chronic absenteeism often involve students who are already connected to other state and local agencies. These include homeless students, foster children, and those suffering from chronic illnesses. By allowing agencies to share attendance data, states can enable schools and districts to get students the help they need more quickly.

In Baltimore, the city school district developed a data-sharing agreement with the city's Department of Social Services. Social workers visited the homes of every kindergarten to second-grade child who had missed 40 days in the past year. They found that a third of those children had asthma but no plan for controlling it.[38]

At the same time, states and school districts need to set clear rules in addressing absences so that they can deal appropriately with situations where students' absences are justified. Avery Gagliano, a 13-year-old piano prodigy from Washington, D.C., missed weeks of middle school to rehearse and perform in concerts across Europe. The school district refused to consider the missed days as excused absences, and her parents received repeated computer-generated truancy notices. Frustrated, they withdrew Avery from public school.[39]

One can reasonably argue that a special piano tour was a legitimate reason to miss school. But what about the parents who want to take their children on a two-week trip to

Europe to learn about the Renaissance? Or the immigrant family who chooses to spend an extra two weeks in their homeland at Christmas so that their children connect with their culture? Or the parents evicted from their apartment who keep their children out of school while they find a new place to live?

In every case, states district and schools would benefit from conveying clear messages and consistent rules about the importance of attendance, using the research on the connection between chronic absenteeism and weaker academic performance to make their case.

The decision by many states to include chronic absenteeism as an ESSA accountability metric is a potentially valuable step toward improving attendance. But implementation will make the difference. In addition to clear expectations, consistent definitions and reasonable goals, it is important to support teachers and administrators in making good use of the newly available data. Ultimately, students will benefit most if policymakers and practitioners use the new ESSA absenteeism data to learn why students are not attending school and what will bring them back.

APPENDIX I

Chronic Absenteeism for Students and Schools, By State

STATE	STUDENTS	SCHOOLS					
	Number of chronically absent students	30%+ chronically absent	20-29% chronically absent	10-19% chronically absent	5-9% chronically absent	0-5% chronically absent	Number of schools
		Extreme	High	Significant	Modest	Low	Total
AK	92,274	141	122	101	30	97	491
AL	29,743	65	182	498	263	340	1,348
AR	180,386	55	109	313	193	367	1,037
AZ	55,412	251	396	563	180	467	1,857
CA	741,536	852	728	3,363	2,778	2,016	9,737
CO	141,825	209	242	565	315	458	1,789
CT	79,002	106	122	368	316	172	1,084
DC	19,947	68	31	49	24	23	195
DE	22,897	21	32	79	49	24	205
FL	464,574	564	647	1,565	621	556	3,953
GA	190,037	77	122	725	886	470	2,280
HI	36,867	47	73	135	25	7	287
IA	29,946	58	147	489	456	205	1,355
ID	265,264	41	54	156	146	282	679
IL	100,192	329	379	1,085	791	1,378	3,962
IN	63,619	52	95	419	573	694	1,833
KS	69,060	77	141	463	428	233	1,342
KY	99,385	136	204	458	385	197	1,380
LA	91,653	68	167	520	319	205	1,279
MA	25,500	137	187	554	535	363	1,776
MD	133,762	178	189	537	250	252	1,406
ME	119,331	34	76	213	88	152	563
MI	283,786	659	413	1,015	632	720	3,439
MN	106,072	258	144	497	445	592	1,936
MO	78,041	132	141	597	689	630	2,189
MS	106,365	88	132	342	145	241	948
MT	25,237	97	100	140	78	373	788
NC	31,519	176	286	1,094	576	436	2,568
ND	82,106	18	29	83	95	221	446
NE	24,124	30	45	159	259	466	959
NH	160,111	27	45	160	120	118	470
NJ	37,013	133	215	759	684	578	2,369
NM	571,061	78	81	164	96	413	832
NV	210,308	77	135	310	61	59	642
NY	10,204	1,308	763	1,373	759	552	4,755
OH	264,485	406	474	1,121	813	697	3,511
OK	77,798	84	165	524	333	627	1,733
OR	127,836	260	340	391	119	131	1,241
PA	263,245	358	354	787	640	813	2,952
RI	27,159	47	41	90	52	56	286
SC	62,508	31	50	293	314	493	1,181
SD	15,415	42	33	110	101	383	669
TN	123,352	168	150	475	336	625	1,754
TX	606,152	710	482	1,941	2,523	2,700	8,356
UT	98,644	79	128	422	145	175	949
VA	9,596	84	147	673	691	245	1,840
VT	164,000	7	29	108	62	90	296
WA	264,302	623	599	548	101	315	2,186
WI	39,731	281	224	612	478	534	2,129
WV	138,999	55	94	210	142	211	712
WY	13,754	42	43	103	50	121	359
Total	**7,075,135**	**9,924**	**10,327**	**28,319**	**21,190**	**22,573**	**92,333**

SOURCE: FutureEd table based on information from Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection for School Year 2013-14

APPENDIX II

Chronic Absenteeism and the Fifth Indicator in State ESSA Plans

State	Plan Status	School Quality/ Student Success Indicator	Definition of Chronic Absenteeism	Weight	Goal
Alabama	Draft	Chronic absenteeism, with college and career readiness in high schools	Absent 15 or more days	15% in K-8 and 10% in high school.	Decrease chronic absence to 5% by 2030
Alaska	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	K-8 4 points out of 100. High School 5 points out of 100.	
Arizona	Approved	An Acceleration Menu that includes chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	10% as part of broader "Acceleration Menu"	Since schools are penalized for any chronic absenteeism, 0% is implied target
Arkansas	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism along with science achievement, reading at grade level and other indicators	Absent 10% or more of school year (Metric used in state analysis)	1 point for less than 5%; 0.5 points for between 5%-10%	Decrease chronic absence to 5% or lower
California	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism is a K-8 academic indicator. The non-academic indicator reflects suspension rates	Absent 10% or more of school year	A charting system reflects both status and growth	Goals set by local school districts
Colorado	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	5% of overall score	Will be determined Spring 2018
Connecticut	Approved	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	10.5% (elementary); 15% (middle); 9.7 (high school); full points if rate is lower than 5%; no points awarded if 30% or higher	Decrease chronic absence to 5%
Delaware	Approved	Chronic absenteeism, along with science and social studies test scores, and college and career readiness in high school	Absent 10% or more of school year	20% (K-8); 35% within fifth indicator (high school)	
District of Columbia	Approved	Chronic absenteeism as part of school environment	Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)	5.775% of overall score	10% is implicit target
Florida	Submitted	Science achievement in all schools, social studies achievement & acceleration indicators in middle and high schools			
Georgia	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism in combination with literacy, college and career readiness, success in enrichment classes and science and social studies achievement.	Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)	6.7% of overall score (K-8); 3% (high school)	

State	Plan Status	School Quality/ Student Success Indicator	Definition of Chronic Absenteeism	Weight	Goal
Hawaii	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 15 or more days	10% of overall score	Reduce average chronic absence to 9% by 2020
Idaho	Submitted	K-8 satisfaction survey. High school college & career readiness			
Illinois	Approved	Chronic absenteeism and student surveys	Absent 10% or more of school year under consideration	10% of overall score (K-8); 7.5% of overall score (high school)	95% attendance in junior and senior years indicated under college or career ready indicator
Indiana	Submitted	K-8 chronic absenteeism. high school college & career readiness	Absent 10% or more of school year	Persistent attendees + improving attendees x 80% of students enrolled	
Iowa	Submitted	Conditions for Learning Index, which is a climate survey, and post-secondary readiness			
Kansas	Submitted	Academic progress			
Kentucky	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; behavior events; restraint and seclusion (each measure is strongly tied to equity)	Absent 10% or more of days, more granular focus on all school time, including tardies	10-20 points	
Louisiana	Approved	Science and social studies assessments, plus graduation credit accumulation for middle school and strength of graduation credentials for high school			
Maine	Approved	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	10% of overall score (for now)	Points TBD; based on 1-5% chronically absent, 5-9%, and above 10%
Maryland	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; school climate; well-rounded curriculum	Absent 10% or more of school year	15% of overall score	Achieve a "five star" school rating (measures TBD)
Massachusetts	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; success in grade 9 courses; successful completion of broad and challenging coursework	Absent 10% or more of school year	2.5% of overall score; one of three parts for 7.5% total for SQSS	"Improvement in chronic absenteeism" no measure of improvement specified
Michigan	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism, arts/physical education, access to librarian/ media specialist; AP/ IB/dual enrollment/CTE programs in grades 11-12	Absent 10% or more of school year	4% of overall score; one of four parts for 29% total for SQSS	Use 2016-17 statewide chronic absenteeism rate to set long-term goal at the 75th percentile
Minnesota		Chronic absenteeism; well-rounded education, college-career readiness will be introduced in 2019-20	Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)	No numeric weight. Will use academic indicators, then attendance to identify low-performing schools.	95% consistent attendance, with no student group below 90%, by 2020

State	Plan Status	School Quality/ Student Success Indicator	Definition of Chronic Absenteeism	Weight	Goal
Mississippi	Submitted	Growth in English and math test scores			
Missouri	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)	10% of overall score; 12.5% for schools with fewer than 30 English Learner students	"90/90 Principle" (90% of students must be present 90% of the time)
Montana	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism along science assessments, school climate, behavior and engagement in K-8; college and career readiness in high school.	Absent 5% or more of school year	20% of overall score (20 out of 100 possible points)(K-8); 15% in high school	Weight tied to indicator for satisfactory attendance.
Nebraska	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	No numeric weighting; Schools will be rated: Needs Improvement, Good, Great, Excellent	Reduction in share of chronically absent students from 27.56% to 15% by 2026.
Nevada	Approved	Chronic absenteeism; science proficiency, academic learning plans in middle and high school, high school readiness in middle school, ACT and exam scores in high school	Absent 10% or more of school year	10% of overall score elementary; 5% middle; 8% high schools	Maximum points for chronic absence rates of 5% or less
New Hampshire	Draft	Growth in Test Scores (K-8); College-Career Readiness (high school)			
New Jersey	Approved	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	10%	
New Mexico	Approved	Chronic absenteeism and student surveys	Absent 10% or more of school year, starting in 2018-19	15% along with surveys	
New York	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; College-and-Career and Civic Readiness Index in high school	Absent 10% or more of school year	Does not explicitly weight indicators; greatest weight to academic indicators	Goals based on starting point for subgroups; statewide 2017-18 target of 95%
North Carolina	Submitted	Growth in test scores			
North Dakota	Approved	Student engagement			
Ohio	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; "Prepared for Success" (fifth indicator used for high school, comprised of six indicators)	Absent 10% or more of school year	Part of the "Indicators Met" index, which is 20% of overall score; part of "Prepared for Success" index, weighted at 15% of overall score	No higher than 5%; meets the "Improvement Standard" of reducing chronic absenteeism by 3 percentage points a year
Oklahoma	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	11% of overall score; 10 points on the 90-point, A-F report card scale	
Oregon	Approved	Chronic absenteeism; 9th grade course completion in high school	Absent 10% or more of school year	1/9 of the total weight at each level of schooling; 11.1% (K-8); 22.2% (high school)	
Pennsylvania	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism; College-and-Career Readiness	Absent 10% or more of school year	No numerical weight given	Reduce rate for all students and subgroups annually

State	Plan Status	School Quality/ Student Success Indicator	Definition of Chronic Absenteeism	Weight	Goal
Rhode Island	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism for teachers and students, plus student suspensions, add high school metrics and science proficiency in later years.	Absent 10% or more of school year. Includes students and teachers.	Up to 12 points combined with exceeding expectations on test scores, and suspensions	
South Carolina	Draft	Positive and effective learning environment			
South Dakota	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism in elementary and middle, with other indicators being developed. High school completion	Absent 10% or more of school year	Up to 10 points	
Tennessee	Approved	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	10% of overall score	Absolute achievement (relative to other schools) or reduction in percent of chronically absent students
Texas	Submitted	Achievement outcomes on STAAR tests (3-8), college, career, and military readiness for high schools.			
Utah	Submitted	Equitable educational opportunities, science achievement & growth, postsecondary readiness			
Vermont	Approved	Science assessments; physical fitness; college and career readiness; post-secondary outcomes			
Virginia	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year		No more than 10% rate of chronic absenteeism for all students and subgroups
Washington	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism for K-8; for high school, combined with 9th graders on track and advanced courses	Absent 10% or more of school year	1-10 points in a rating system broken into deciles	
West Virginia	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism and suspensions	Present less than 90% of school year (inverse)	29% (K-8) 22% high school, combined with suspensions	Chronic absence rates lower than 10%
Wisconsin	Submitted	Chronic absenteeism	Absent 10% or more of school year	No numeric weight	
Wyoming	Submitted	Science and social studies assessments; Graduation Credit Accumulation Index for middle school, strength of graduation credentials for high school			

SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis of State ESSA Plans

APPENDIX III | Methodology

For our analysis of chronic absenteeism data, FutureEd drew on work done by the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University for its "Portraits of Change" report, produced in collaboration with Attendance Works.

Everyone Graduates drew upon two primary sources of data: 1) the Office for Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) survey to obtain how many students missed 15 or more days of school, by school, for SY 2013-14, and 2) the Common Core of Data (CCD) provided by the National Center for Education Statistics, which offers background information on each school from SY 2013-14.

Currently, CRDC is the only available source of national data on chronic absenteeism. The CCD includes a school's type (regular, special education, vocational, alternative), level (elementary, middle, high, other), and locale (urban, suburban, town, rural), as well as the percent of enrolled students who were eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program (a proxy for low income level). In addition, the New York Department of Education provided accurate counts of the number of students who were chronically absent at its schools during the 2013-14 school year. This last file was used to replace the data originally submitted to CRDC, which was reported as erroneous by the New York City Department of Education.

Combining the CRDC and CCD data sources provided an analytic sample of 92,333 schools for the 2013-14 school year. This sample included only schools based in the 50 states and the District of Columbia (therefore excluding schools in any U.S. territories or possessions). The sample further excluded any schools that were missing either chronic absenteeism data from the CRDC or school level information from the CCD.

Lastly, for the 244 schools for which the numbers of chronically absent students were higher than the reported total enrollment (less than 1 percent of the total sample), their chronic absenteeism rates were capped at a maximum of 100 percent. The analysis conducted by Everyone Graduates was tested by an independent third party (University of California Santa Barbara researchers Michael Gottfried and J. Jacob Kirksey) to confirm its accuracy.

APPENDIX IV | Testing the Chronic Absenteeism Data

To check the accuracy of the federal data, FutureEd compared the data that one state, Connecticut, submitted to Office for Civil Rights with its 15-day absenteeism standard, to the state's own data on how many students missed 10 percent of the school year, or about 18 days. In all but a few cases, the Connecticut schools with low or moderate rates of chronic absenteeism under the federal standard also met the state definition.

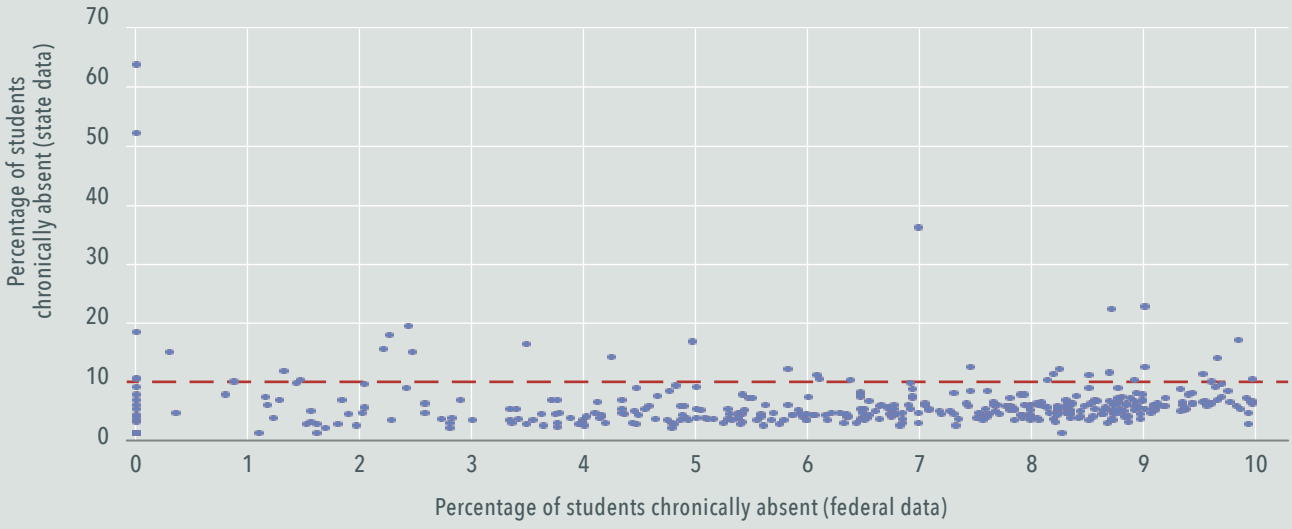
We matched the rates of chronic absenteeism in Connecticut schools for 2011-12 through 2015-16 to the records for the 1,084 Connecticut public schools included in the new Everyone Graduates report.

We explored how well the rates retrieved from the state match up with those reported to OCR, especially for schools with extremely low rates on the later measure.

The graph below displays the 2013-14 state rate of chronic absenteeism for schools that reported low (below 5 percent) or modest (at least five but less than 10 percent) rates to OCR. Dots below the red line, the overwhelming majority, correspond to schools where the OCR data and state information generally line up. The 25 dots on or above the line represent schools reporting qualitatively dissimilar rates.

There might be reasonable explanations for this relatively small number of outliers, including data entry errors, the minor differences in definition of chronic absenteeism, or inconsistent treatment of transfer students.

Comparing Federal and State Data on Chronic Absenteeism in Connecticut



SOURCE: Office for Civil Rights and Connecticut State Department of Education

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[1] The seven states that use average daily attendance counts to determine school funding are California, Illinois, Missouri, Mississippi, Kentucky, Texas and New York.

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The conclusions in the report are the authors' alone, as are any errors of fact or interpretation.

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