Chronic Absenteeism: What are We Missing?

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What is Chronic Absence?
Chronic Absence is One Of Multiple Measures of Attendance

**Average Daily Attendance**

How many students show up to school every day? The percent of enrolled students who attend school each day. It is used in some states for allocating funding.

**Truancy**

Who is missing school without permission? Typically refers only to unexcused absences. Each state has the authority to define truancy and when it triggers legal intervention.

**Chronic Absence**

Who is missing so much school they are academically at risk? Broadly means missing too much school for any reason -- excused, unexcused, suspensions, etc. Researchers commonly define it as missing 10% of school. The Office for Civil Rights currently defines it as missing 15 days.
Why Does Chronic Absence Matter?
What does Attendance Matter: From a health perspective

- **Poor health and undiagnosed conditions can cause too many absences:** Even when absences are excused, missing too much school can lead children to fall behind. Challenges related to poor physical, dental and mental health are leading reasons students miss too much school.

- **Successful learners are healthier adults:** Showing up to school is essential to higher levels of academic achievement, which are associated with lower incidence of disease and longer lives for adults.

- **Health providers are uniquely positioned to address chronic absence:** They are especially crucial allies for conveying the importance of avoiding unnecessary absences. They can use their knowledge to identify and develop solutions when health-related barriers are causing significant absences.
Multiple Years of Chronic Absenteeism = High Risk for low 3rd Grade Reading Skills

Note: ***Indicates that scores are significantly different from scores of students who are never chronically absent, at p<.001 level. + In the DIBELS 6th Edition Assessment and Scoring Guide (Good & Kaminski, 2002), these are labeled as “Some Risk,” indicating the need for additional intervention and “At Risk,” indicating the need for substantial interventions.
Chronic Early Absence Connected to Poor Long-Term Academic Outcomes

A Rhode Island Data Hub analysis found that compared to kindergartners who attend regularly, those chronically absent:

- Scored **20% lower in reading and math** in later grades and gap grows
- **2X** as likely to be retained in grade.
- **2X** likely to be suspended by the end of 7th grade.
- Likely to continue being chronically absent
The Effects of Chronic Absence on Dropout Rates Are Cumulative

Proportion of Students Dropping Out by Number of Years the Student was Chronically Absent from 8th-12th Grades

Missing School Matters

1. “Triple Bottom Line” benefit
   - Students can’t learn if not in school
   - Teachers can’t teach
   - Schools funded based on average daily attendance

2. Unlike teacher quality, communities can directly and positively impact
Chronically absent 9th grade students are 10 times more likely to not graduate on time compared to students who miss five or fewer days.
What do we know about the scope and scale of chronic absence?
Chronic Absenteeism is a Major National Problem

OVER 6 MILLION

students missed 15 or more days of school in 2013-14.

That's 13 percent of the student population—or 1 in 8 students.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection
Additional analysis found chronic absence is both widespread and highly concentrated.

Table 1. Where are the Nation’s CA Students found, By Quarter and By District? 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Total Number of Students Chronically Absent (CA)</th>
<th>Number of Districts</th>
<th>Average Number of Students CA</th>
<th>Min Number Students CA</th>
<th>Max number of Students CA</th>
<th>Percent of All Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>6,472,466</td>
<td>16,240</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72,376</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Quarter</td>
<td>1,618,012</td>
<td>13,943 *</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Quarter</td>
<td>1,617,319</td>
<td>1,642</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Quarter</td>
<td>1,618,036</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>3,053</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>5,729</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Quarter</td>
<td>1,619,079</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>13,057</td>
<td>5,817</td>
<td>72,376</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes 1,798 districts reporting 0 chronically absent students
Over 50% of chronically absent students were found in 4% of districts and 12% of schools.

These included 2 types of districts: relative affluent, large which still have a large number of students in poverty and high poverty, racially segregated urban districts with high rates of chronic absence.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at [http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ](http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ)
What about rural communities?

Many small, poor rural school districts have few students but face high rates of chronic absenteeism.

See Chronic Absence Story Map at [http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ](http://arcg.is/29jPgaZ)
Central Texas Has More Absences Than Texas on Average at Every Grade

Average Number of Absences, By Grade, 2010-11

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center

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One Fifth of All Students Miss More Than 2 Weeks of School

Percent of K-12 Students by Number of Absences, Central Texas, 2012-13

- Zero: 9%
- 1 to 5: 46%
- 6 to 10: 24%
- More than 10: 20%

Source: E³ Alliance analysis of PEIMS data at the UT Austin Education Research Center
How Can We Address Chronic Absence?
## Unpack contributing factors to chronic absence

### Myths
- Absences are only a problem if they are unexcused
- Sporadic versus consecutive absences aren’t a problem
- Attendance only matters in the older grades

### Barriers
- Lack of access to health or dental care
- Poor Transportation
- Trauma
- No safe path to school
- Homelessness

### Aversion
- Child struggling academically or socially
- Bullying
- Ineffective school discipline
- Parents had negative school experience
- Undiagnosed disability

### Disengagement
- Lack of engaging and relevant instruction
- No meaningful relationships with adults in school
- Vulnerable to being with peers out of school vs. in school
- Poor school climate
Nearly one in ten children age 4-14 are diagnosed with asthma accounting for one-third of all days of missed instruction.

Children miss nearly two million school days due to oral health issues every year.
## Health Interventions

### Asthma
- Asthma friendly schools
- Environmental assessments
- Asthma friendly homes

### Oral Health
- Community-based oral health programs
- School-based sealant programs
- Mobile clinics

### Nutrition
- Community eligibility
- Universal breakfast
- Food backpack programs
- Farm to school programs

### Mental Health
- School-based mental health programs
- Universal interventions
- Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

### Bullying
- Safe Routes to Schools
- Bullying education programs
- Support groups

### Vision
- School-based vision screening programs
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

**Tier 1**
- Recognize good & improved attendance
- Educate & engage students and families
- Monitor attendance data & set goals
- Establish positive & engaging school climate
- Identify & address common barriers to getting to school

**Tier 2**
- Provide personalized early outreach
- Meet to develop tailored action plan
- Connect to a caring mentor

**Tier 3**
- Intensive case management with coordination of public agency and legal response as needed

- Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
- Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
- Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
A regional public awareness campaign
Our goal: increase student attendance by 2 percentage points (average 3 days/student)

MORE STUDENTS ACHIEVE

$34 MILLION
Yellow Cab helping to Curb Absences in CTX

Texas high school students who miss 10 school days a year are three times more likely to drop out than those who miss 5 days.

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Holiday Flyer, pushed to parents

In this Season of Giving...

1. Give students the chance to learn
   Only miss school on scheduled school holidays.

2. Give teachers the chance to teach
   Teachers can’t teach effectively when they are “catching up” students who miss extra days.

3. Give school districts needed dollars
   Every day missed costs schools money that could support more teachers, sports programs and electives.

Plan family vacations only during school holidays.
- Students in Central Texas miss MORE days of school than their peers in Texas in ALL grades.
- The problem is worse in high school.
- Over half of the absences in Central Texas are potentially preventable (including routine medical, dental check-ups, travelling or just skipping school).

Central Texas school districts save millions of dollars when students are in school.
- Each day a student misses costs the school about $38.
- Absences add up quickly: a typical high school in Central Texas can lose $20,000 a week due to student absences.
- Our schools are losing over $91 million a year due to student absences.

Wrap up the year right!
- Let’s give our students the gift of education and keep them in class during school days in November and December.
- Over the past two years Central Texas has saved $12 million in revenue for schools by reducing absences.
- Let’s do our part to continue this positive trend this season of giving!

En esta época de bondad...

1. Dé a los estudiantes la oportunidad de aprender
   Solo falte a clases los días festivos escolares programados.

2. Dé a los maestros la oportunidad de enseñar
   Los maestros no pueden enseñar debidamente cuando tienen que poner al corriente a los estudiantes que faltaron en días regulares.

3. Dé a los distritos escolares los dólares que tanto necesitan
   Cada día de ausencia, la escuela pierde dinero que podría usar para proporcionar más maestros, programas deportivos y clases optativas.

Planee las vacaciones familiares solamente durante los días festivos escolares.
- Los estudiantes en el Centro de Texas faltan a clases MÁS días que sus compañeros en el resto del estado en TODOS los grados.
- El problema es peor en la preparatoria.
- Más de la mitad de las faltas en el Centro de Texas se pueden evitar, reduciendo las faltas debido a exámenes de rutina médicos y dentales, viajes, o simplemente las faltas sin justificación.

Los distritos escolares del Centro de Texas ahorraran millones de dólares cuando los estudiantes asisten a clases.
- Cada día que su hijo falta, le cuesta a la escuela $38.
- Las ausencias se acumulan rápidamente. Una preparatoria típica del Centro de Texas puede perder $20,000 a la semana debido a las faltas de los estudiantes.
- Nuestras escuelas están perdiendo más de $91 millones al año debido a las faltas de los estudiantes.

¡Termine bien el año!
- Démoxles el regalo de la educación a nuestros estudiantes procurando que asistan a clases durante los días escolares en noviembre y diciembre.
- En los últimos dos años, el Centro de Texas ha ahorrado $12 millones en ingresos para las escuelas al reducir las ausencias. Hágamos nuestra parte para que continuemos la tendencia positiva esta época de bondad.

www.missingschoolmatters.org

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Student and Absence Counts, Central Texas

$24.5M regional savings since campaign started!

Source: E3 analysis of PEIMS data at UT Austin Education Research Center for 2002-2013; TEA ad hoc request for 2014
Absence Reasons Study

- **Which** students miss school, **where** and **why**?
  - First of its kind study in Texas (maybe US?)
  - Data to drive regional decision-making
    - How community systems interact with student attendance and achievement
  - Collected, analyzed and mapped **detailed** student attendance data representative sample schools
What Did We Find?

% of Absences by Absence Reason

- Acute Illness: 48%
- Skipping: 5%
- Chronic Illness: 4%
- Family Emergency: 4%
- Routine Dental Appt: 3%
- Preventative Medical: 2%
- Travel: 2%
- Mental Health Issue: 2%
- Suspension (not ISS): 1%
- Family Responsibility: 1%

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD, 1/14/13-3/8/13
Secondary ‘Flu’ Peak Matches Acute Illness Absences

Absences By Week August – March for 2012-13

Source: E3 Alliance analysis of Absence data from 9 schools in PISD & HCISD August 2012 through March 2013
Influenza-Like Illness doctor visit data from Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services
Flu Immunization Campaign

• Fall 2014: Over 6500 vaccines provided at no cost to districts or families in 56 elementary schools – largest in-school immunization campaign in state history!

• Fall 2015: Almost 20,000 vaccines in 136 schools, 9 districts

• Gearing up for 2016: 14 districts, 350+ schools
  - Expanding to Houston area
  - Planning 75,000 vaccines!
  - Moving to fully sustainable model
Reducing Chronic Absence Requires A Multi-Sector Responses

Promising examples include:

• Every Student, Every Day “Dear Colleague” letter from four Cabinet Secretaries sent to Chief State School Officers.

• Schools and health providers work together to address chronic illness and un-met health needs that keep kids from attending schools through data sharing, co-location, school based health clinics, mobile health and dentistry vans etc. (Models throughout the USA)

• Courts adopt a prevention/problem solving vs punitive approach to reducing truancy (i.e. San Antonio, TX and Alameda County, CA)

• Homeless shelters (NYC) and housing authorities (Sarasota, FL and San Francisco, CA) share attendance data and work together to offer supports for getting to school.
Ingredients for System-wide Success & Sustainability

- Community
  - Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

- District
  - Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported
  - Set performance standards and publicly report data
  - Expands ability to interpret data and promote tiered response

- Schools
  - Students & Families
  - Shared Accountability
    - Strategic partnerships between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients

- Positive Engagement

- Actionable Data

- Capacity Building

Every student, every day.
Reducing Chronic Absence Requires Strategic Data Analysis to Tailor Response to Identified Need

• **At the District Level**: is there a need for a community-wide response or targeted efforts in a sub-set of schools?

• **At the School Level**: how many students are chronically absent?

• **If it’s 30 or less**, a student support team can lead the effort.

• **If it’s closer to 50**, teachers will need to play a critical role.

• **If it’s over 70**, community partners will likely be needed to provide additional person power
What’s the role of funders in addressing chronic absence?
Direct Service Provider

- 9 Mobile Dental Vans, 50+ FT Staff

Regional Funder

- $60 M in five counties
- Avg. grant size = $400 K
- 60+ grant partners

HYBRID ORGANIZATION

- Serving 6 school districts
- 65 schools annually
- Focus on Title I Schools

- Grant funding (including school-based health services)
Potential Funder Roles

- **Lead**: School-Based Health Services
- **Leverage**: Research & Data
- **Partner**: Convene Health & Education
Questions?
• More webinars on this topic?
• New topics you want to tackle or learn more about?
• Innovative work that you want to share?
• A question you want to pose to your colleagues?

Contact us at childrenfamilies@gih.org