

Oregon Education Investment Board

775 Court St. NE, Salem, Oregon, 97301



Oregon Education Investment Board

Chief Education Officer:
Dr. Nancy Golden

Board of Directors:
Julia Brim-Edwards
Dr. Yvonne Curtis
Matthew W. Donegan
Dr. Samuel Henry
Nichole Maher
Dr. Mark Mulvihill
David Rives
Ron Saxton
Dr. Mary Spilde
Kay Toran
Hanna Vaandering

Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Schools

Issue Brief

INTRODUCTION

To reach Oregon's education goal of 40-40-20, which seeks to ensure every Oregon student is college and career ready by 2025, a multitude of factors must simultaneously be addressed. One such factor is ensuring that those enrolled in school—attend school^{1,2,3,4,5,10}.

Students must be at school regularly to take advantage of the learning opportunities offered at school. Common methods for tracking attendance can mask real student attendance crises, which work to quietly undermine reform efforts. Oregon is one of a handful of U.S. states actively tracking student Chronic Absenteeism (CA), which is defined in Oregon as those enrolled students missing 10% or more of school, *excused or not*⁷. **During the 2013-14 school year approximately 81,000 (15%) of Oregon students in standard enrollment whose attendance was tracked on a daily basis were chronically absent from school^{8,9}.**

Overview

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is the most common measure of student attendance at school. ADA reports the average % of students who show up to school each day. Truancy reporting, required by federal law, reports only those student absences that are deemed not excused by state definition. Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon, reports students missing 10% or more of school, excused or not, based on the number of students enrolled for at least 75 days in a standard program on May 1st^{1,4,5}.

In Oregon, chronic absenteeism disproportionately impacts students from economically disadvantaged families and students with disabilities by a large margin.

Of the approximately 535,000 Oregon students counted in 2013-14: 30,000 Elementary School children were chronically absent with the highest rates in the early years^{8,9}

- **ADA 94% | CA 16% or 6,300 Kindergartners**
- **ADA 95% | CA 14% or 6,000 First Graders**
- ADA 95% | CA 12% or 5,000 Second Graders
- ADA 95% | CA 11% or 4,300 Third Graders
- ADA 95% | CA 11% or 4,400 Fourth Graders
- ADA 95% | CA 11% or 4,600 Fifth Graders

18,000 Middle Grades students were chronically absent with number increasing through the middle grades

- ADA 95% | CA 12% or 4,600 Sixth Graders
- **ADA 95% | CA 14% or 5,900 Seventh Graders**
- **ADA 94% | CA 16% or 6,800 Eighth Graders**

33,000 High School students were chronically absent, topping out with 10,000 Oregonians missing 10% or more of school in Senior year.

- **ADA 94% | CA 17% or 6,900 Freshman**
- **ADA 93% | CA 19% or 7,900 Sophomores**
- **ADA 93% | CA 21% or 8,000 Juniors**
- **ADA 91% | CA 26% or 10,000 Seniors**

Prevalence of Chronic Absence within Groups and as a Proportion of Population 2013-14^{8,9}

	Chronic Absence within sub-group	% Student Population % All Chronic Absence
Students with Disabilities	21% 15,000	13% 19%
Economically Disadvantaged	20% 56,000	52% 68%
English Learners	14% 7,000	10% 9%

Prevalence of Chronic Absence within Groups and as a Proportion of Population 2013-14^{8,9}

	Chronic Absence within group	Student Population % All Chronic Absence %
American Indian/ Alaska Native	27% 2,200	2% 3%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	21% 1,000	1% 1%
Hispanic/Latino	17% 20,000	22% 24%
Black/African American	16% 2,000	2% 3%
Multiracial	16% 4,000	5 5%
White	15% 51,000	65% 63%
Asian	5% 1,000	4% 1%

Impact

Chronic absence appears to have a negative cumulative effect through successive years. Research into the impact of chronic absenteeism has shown an association with^{2,3,5,7:}

- delayed achievement in the early years
- widening gaps between student achievement
- higher suspension rates
- increased dropout rates
- decreased high school graduation rates
- lower college enrollment
- decreased college persistence

Addressing the Issue

The more students that attend school on a regular basis, the more opportunity there is for those students to learn, and the more likely it is that they will succeed. Reducing chronic absenteeism is a critical piece of the student success puzzle^{7,3,9.}

Research has shown that an intentional focus on reducing chronic absenteeism does, in fact, work. Proven and promising strategies generally^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10,:}

Measure

- **Student absence data collection** that can be disaggregated and analyzed. Often chronic absence is more pronounced among subsets of schools and/or groups of students.

Monitor

- **Early warning systems** that alert potential issues. For example, poor attendance the first month of school often predicts chronic absence throughout the year.

Act

- **Public awareness** through positive messaging. Educate families and communities about the importance of attendance for student success.
- **Attendance programs** that are personal, relevant, culturally specific, and avoid punitive approaches. Tiered strategies including a pyramid of progressive supports.
- **Wrap around strategies** that reduce reasons for absence – Schools can't do it alone. Interagency collaboration for collective impact to address barriers including, but not limited to transportation, school culture and community health.

Selected References and Resources

1. Attendance Works: Research Site, <http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>
2. Balfanz R. & Byrnes, V. *The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nations Public Schools*, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education; GetSchooled, 2012
3. Balfanz, R. & Byrnes, V. *Meeting the Challenge of Combating Chronic Absenteeism: Impact of NYC Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance and Its Implications for Other Cities*, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education, 2013
4. Buehler, M., Topogna, J. & Chang, H. *Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Public Schools*, Attendance Works, 2012
5. Chang, H. *Addressing Chronic Absence*, Presentation Slides, Attendance Works; All Hands Raised Communities Supporting Youth Collaborative, n.d.
6. Chang, H., Gomperts J. & Boissiere L. *Chronic Absenteeism Can Devastate K-12 Learning*, Education Week, October 7, 2014
7. Ginsburg, A., Jordan P. & Chang, H. *Absences Add up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success*, 2014.
8. Oregon Department of Education, *State Level Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Rates*, 2013-14
9. Oregon Department of Education, *Statewide Report Card: An Annual Report to the Legislature on Oregon Public Schools*, 2013-14
10. Romero, M. Lee, Y.S., *A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007

Oregon Education Investment Board www.oregon.gov/Gov/Pages/oeib/OregonEducationInvestmentBoard.aspx

Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office www.oregon.gov/OAC/Pages/index.aspx

Portland State University Graduate School of Education www.pdx.edu/education/home

May 2015

Underlying Factors: Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism^{1,2,3}

CAN'T Barriers preventing attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness (chronic illness; lack of access to healthcare) • Transportation (unreliable) • Family Crisis (foreclosure; death)
WON'T Aversion to something at or on the way to/from school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging community conditions (gang violence; no safe route) • Poor school climate (bullying, racism, ineffective school discipline) • Academic struggle, lack of engaging instruction • Negative school experience of parent
DON'T Would rather be somewhere else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disengagement (feeling school won't help lead to a better future; lack of connection to adults and peers at school) • Belief in myths (sporadic absence doesn't matter; attendance only matters in older grades because kindergarten is not compulsory)

"The extent of chronic absenteeism and its impacts, particularly in communities that educate large numbers of low-income students, are so great that educators and policy makers cannot truly understand achievement and graduation gaps or evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to close them without factoring in the role of chronic absenteeism."

— Balfanz & Byrnes, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins School of Education³

Prepared through a public policy internship in collaboration with:

- Oregon Education Investment Board / Equity and Partnership Subcommittee
- Oregon Advocacy Commission Office / Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Portland State University / Graduate School of Education