Evie Blad
Staff writer, Education Week

Follow Evie on Twitter: @EvieBlad

Related Special Report:
Nurturing Students’ Climb to Success: Why Engagement and Motivation Matter

Related Story: “Schools Mount Fight Against Chronic Absenteeism”
School Accountability, School Quality & Absenteeism Under ESSA

Expert Presenters:

Hedy Chang
Director,
Attendance Works, a research and policy organization that works on improving policy and practice around school attendance.

Charlene Russell-Tucker
Chief Operating Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education
An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24 hrs.
Reducing Chronic Absence: An Opportunity for State and Local Action
What is Chronic Absence?

**Chronic absence** is missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Attendance Works recommends defining it as **missing 10% or more of school for any reason**.

Chronic absence is different from **truancy** (unexcused absences only) or **average daily attendance** (how many students show up to school each day).
# Chronic Absence Checks

**All of the Boxes as a Measure of School Quality and Student Success**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSA: States must establish a measure of school quality or student success</th>
<th>Chronic Absence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculated the same for all schools and school districts across the state</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be disaggregated by student sub-population</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a proven indicator of school quality</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a proven indicator of student success</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Validity** - the degree to which an indicator actually measures what you are trying to measure.

**Reliability** - the degree to which you will get the same answer when you ask a question/compute a measure multiple times.

Additional benefit, chronic absence can serve as a proxy for school climate and student engagement.
Research Validates the Common Sense Connection Between Attendance and Achievement.

- **Exposure to language:** Starting in Pre-K, attendance equals exposure to language-rich environments especially for low-income children.

- **Time on Task in Class:** Students only benefit from classroom instruction if they are in class.

- **On Track for Success:** Chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student is behind in reading by 3rd grade, failing courses middle and high school, and likely to drop-out.

- **College and Career Ready:** Cultivating the habit of regular attendance helps students develop the persistence needed to show up every day for college and work.

- **Engagement:** Attendance reflects engagement in learning.

- **Effective Practice:** Schools, communities and families can improve attendance when they work together.

*(For research, see: [http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/](http://www.attendanceworks.org/research/))*
This Is a Watershed Moment For Advancing The Work

No Child Left Behind

- Success determined by academic standards.
- Federal targets and interventions for schools; punitive system of responses.
- Accountability and data for student sub-groups.
- Each state defines and addresses truancy which typically emphasizes court based, punitive, interventions.

Every Student Succeeds Act

- Success determined by academic & nonacademic standards.
- States set goals; supportive framework.
- Accountability and data for student sub-groups.
- Chronic absence is a required reporting & optional school quality metric. It emphasizes prevention and early intervention.

As a result, all states are now required to monitor chronic absence and had the option to include it as a metric for school accountability.
72% of states (36 + DC) adopted chronic absence as a metric in their ESSA plan.

Who's In: Chronic Absenteeism Under the Every Student Succeeds Act
Future Ed, Georgetown University, September 2017.
Take a Data Driven Systemic Approach

**Positive Engagement:**
Uses caring relationships, effective messaging and a positive school climate to motivate daily attendance.

**Actionable Data:**
Is accurate, accessible, and regularly reported in an understandable format.

**Capacity Building**
Expands ability to work together to interpret data, engage in problem solving, and adopt best practices to improve attendance.

**Shared Accountability**
Ensures chronic absence is monitoring & reinforced by policy.

**Strategic partnerships**
between district and community partners address specific attendance barriers and mobilize support for all ingredients.
### Tailor Response to Scale & Intensity of the Challenge (Portraits of Change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Students Chronically Absent</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percent of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+)</td>
<td>9,921</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Chronic Absence (20-29%)</td>
<td>10,330</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%)</td>
<td>28,320</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%)</td>
<td>21,190</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Chronic Absence (0-4%)</td>
<td>22,572</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>92,333</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Invest in Prevention and Early Intervention

**TIER 1: Universal Prevention**
- Engaging school climate
- Positive relationships with students and families
- Impact of absences on achievement widely understood
- Chronic absence data monitored
- Good and improved attendance recognized
- Common barriers identified and addressed

**TIER 2: Early Intervention**
- Personalized early outreach
- Action plan addresses barriers and increases engagement
- Caring mentors

**TIER 3: Specialized Reports**
- Coordinated school and interagency response
- Legal intervention (last resort)

- Students missing less than 5% (satisfactory)
  - Students missing 5-9% (at risk)
  - Students missing 10-19% (moderate chronic absence)
  - Students missing 20% or more of school (severe chronic absence)
Partners for Change

The greater the size of the challenge, the more partners are needed. Many different types of partners can be enlisted but local government and public agencies are especially important.

- Businesses
- Community Schools Initiatives
- Family Support Organizations
- Early Childhood Providers
- Faith Based Organizations
- Health Providers
- Housing Agencies
- Hunger Relief Organizations
- Institutes of Higher Education
- Local Government

- National Service/Volunteers/Mentors
- Out of School Time providers
- Social Emotional Learning Providers
- Social Services
- Population-Specific Service or Civic Organizations
- Philanthropy (including foundations and United Ways)

We also encourage folks to tap into existing initiatives and coalitions as resources for engaging/convening potential partners.
Schools with More Students in Poverty Have Higher Chronic Absence Levels

- Extreme Chronic Absence (30%+): 31%
- High Chronic Absence (20-29%): 35%
- Significant Chronic Absence (10-19%): 33%
- Modest Chronic Absence (5-9%): 23%
- Low Chronic Absence (0-4%): 19%
Demonstrate that chronic absence has been reduced in a whole range of settings. The size of the problem shapes the response.

**Cleveland, Ohio** – An urban district tackles extreme chronic absence through a combination of strong district leadership, staff training and community partners.

**Grand Rapids, Michigan** – Persistence, partnership and clear messaging help reduce chronic absence districtwide in an urban district.

**New Britain, Connecticut** – Using data to target resources to reduce chronic absence among young students in a diverse district.

**Long Beach, California** – Enlisting the community to focus on schools with the highest chronic absence as part of a district-wide campaign.

**Contra Costa County, California** – An alternative school improves attendance by leveraging the power of a learning network and county education office.

**Oregon Tribal Attendance Pilot Project** – Schools, Native American families and tribes partner to reduce chronic absence in rural communities.
Demonstrate that chronic absence has been reduced in a whole range of settings. Size of the problem shapes the response.

**Trenton, New Jersey** – A “full court press” makes a difference in improving attendance in an urban middle school.

**Springdale Arkansas** – An elementary school tailors strategies to the culture and needs of families.

**West Newfield, Maine** – A small rural school benefits from a larger prevention-oriented attendance effort.

**Phoenix, Arizona** – A K-8 school improves attendance by creating a positive and safe school climate.

**Baltimore, Maryland** – A K-12 Charter school network lays a foundation for excellent attendance through relationship building and engaging educational experiences.
We create the conditions for this pathway for change that cultivates peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice

**Advance practice through peer learning**

We create the conditions for this pathway for change that cultivates peer learning to inform broader policy change and practice

**Inform actions w/ insights from local practice**

- Policymakers
- Education Leaders & Assoc. (K-12 & ECE)
- Associations of public health agencies (housing, health, social services, transportation)
- Unions
- Parent Organizations
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropy
- Others

**Spread work through TA and policy**

Ongoing peer learning, technical assistance, administrative guidance, regulations, legislation, etc. promote best practices & systemic change

**Peer opportunities to:**

- Compare data
- Share, demonstrate & learn about best practices
- Identify & problem-solve common challenges
Step 1: Review Data and Ensure Quality.
Use current data to calculate levels of chronic absence. Look for trends and assess if steps are needed to improve data consistency and accuracy.

Step 2: Form a State Leadership Team.
Include a cross-sector team that will take responsibility for organizing action.

Step 3: Develop a Data-Informed Comprehensive System of T.A.
Offer universal supports, group professional development and intensive T.A.

Step 4: Publicize the Challenge and Available Resources.
Highlight the scope of the challenge, bright spots and plan for reducing chronic absence.
Tips for Effective Use of Data

a) Promote consistent definitions of a day of attendance or absence
b) Ensure as many students are possible are included in the count and are identified to receive outreach and support
c) Use data to promote problem solving and resource allocation, not blame for students, families or schools
d) Keep the relative weight of the chronic absence metric modest
e) Reward for improvements from baseline
f) Examine patterns over time to identify challenges to data accuracy, barriers to attendance and promising solutions
Empowering educators with knowledge and insights to help improve student outcomes.
Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow!

Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut

Charlene Russell-Tucker
Education Week Webinar
November 14, 2017
Using Data to Initiate Change
Attendance in 9th Grade and Graduation in Four Years by Meal Eligibility 2014-15 Cohort
Unmasking Chronic Absence

2013-14 Attendance Rate and Chronic Absenteeism
(Eight Alliance Districts with Network Schools)

Average Daily Attendance Rate

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
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Chronic Absenteeism

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
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CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Evolution of Attendance as an Accountability Indicator

2012
ESEA Flexibility Request - Place holder for well-rounded student indicators

2014
Feedback from Diverse Stakeholder Group

2015
ESEA Flexibility Request - Next Generation Accountability (included chronic absenteeism)

2016
First Results

2017
Second Results

2017
ESSA Plan

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Connecticut's Six High-impact Strategies
High-impact Strategies

Strategy #1: Build Awareness

Strategy #2: Use Data to Promote Action

Strategy #3: Cultivate Champions to Build a State-Level Infrastructure

Strategy #4: Build Capacity

Strategy #5: Identify and Leverage Bright Spots

Strategy #6: Foster Accountability

Kappan Magazine Article: *Chronic early absence: What states can do*
Data and Accountability

Next Generation Accountability System and EdSight Data Portal
Transformative Impact and Results
Transformative Impact

- State statute to address chronic absence:
  - Development of a Prevention and Intervention Guide
  - District and school-level attendance teams where chronic absence rates are high
  - Adoption of official definition for chronic absence
- State Board of Education actions:
  - Five-year Comprehensive Plan includes reduction of chronic absence
  - Resolution requires plans to address chronic absence in applications for state funding (selected districts)
- Next Generation Accountability System/Guidance and EdSight Data Portal
Results: Five-year Trend of Student Absence

2012-13: 60,581, 11.5%
2013-14: 56,171, 10.8%
2014-15: 55,956, 10.6%
2015-16: 50,376, 9.6%
2016-17: 51,400, 9.9%

Note: 2016-17 reflects a change in definition.
Results: Trend Across Connecticut Schools

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Challenges and Opportunities
Turn Challenges Into Opportunities

• ESSA Accountability
  – Move beyond compliance to improving well-being of students and communities

• Various Tiered Approaches in Districts/Schools
  – Combine/integrate tiered approaches

• Data Quality
  – Align SEA internal processes and external collaboration with key partners
Connecticut’s Continued Efforts to Support Districts/Schools
Support and Leverage Cross-Sector Partnerships

• Provide Strong State Agency Leadership
• Statewide, Year-long Attendance Awareness Campaign
• Upcoming Release of Promising Practices & Intervention Models
• Education Agency Cross-divisional Teams
• Early Indicator Tool (EIT)
• ESSA Evidence-based Spending Guide
Hoonuit Early Warning & Intervention

Hoonuit empowers educators to utilize analytics and intelligence to predict, track, and improve individual student performance and future success.

Enabling Action

Efficient Access to Data

Teacher- & Student-Centered Tools
An on-demand archive of this webinar will be available at www.edweek.org/go/webinar in less than 24 hrs.
Cultivating the conditions and relationships that allow all students to thrive requires hard, deliberate work. Schools are trying a range of strategies to get students vested in their learning.

Pressure to cut the rates of student absences will ramp up as most states use attendance in some form in new accountability plans.

In this essential guide to the Every Student Succeeds Act, Education Week explains what the law will mean for: accountability and testing, teacher quality, early-childhood education, special education, academic standards including the Common Core, English-Language Learners, and teacher evaluation.