

Key Research: Why Attendance Matters for Achievement and How Interventions Can Help

A growing body of research is revealing the prevalence of chronic absence and its critical role in student achievement. Fortunately, research is also showing that chronic absence can be addressed when school districts, communities, and policymakers work together to monitor the problem and implement solutions that address the underlying causes. Below is a list of key research related to attendance. Click [here](#) to find a full list of research.

Key Research

- Chang, Hedy and Romero, Mariajose,** *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, September 2008. This report documents the consequences, prevalence, potential causes and possible solutions to children missing extended periods of school in grades K-3rd. Although students must be present and engaged to learn, thousands of this country's youngest students are academically at-risk because of extended absences when they first embark upon their school careers. Nationally, an estimated one in 10 kindergarten and first-grade students are chronically absent. The report recommends that schools, communities and families monitor and promote attendance, as well as to identify and address barriers to good attendance.
- Balfanz, Robert, Lisa Herzog and Douglas J. Maclver,** *Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions*, *Educational Psychologist*, 42(4), 223–235, 2007. This study examines the application of an early identification and intervention system for students in the middle grades to prevent student disengagement and increase graduation rates. The authors follow a cohort of students to demonstrate how indicators reflecting poor attendance, misbehavior and course failure in sixth grade can be used to identify 60% of the students who will not graduate from high school. The authors find that by combining effective whole-school reforms with attendance, behavioral, and extra-help interventions, graduation rates can be substantially increased.
- Allensworth, E. M., and Easton, J. Q.,** *What Matters for Staying On-track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Attendance in the Freshman Year*, University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago, IL, 2007. In this study of the freshman year of high school, researchers found that attendance in this pivotal transition year was a key indicator of whether students would finish high school. The study also found attendance and studying more predictive of dropout than test scores or other student characteristics. In fact, 9th grade attendance was a better predictor of dropout than 8th grade test score
- Ready, Douglas D.,** *Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development, The Differential Effects of School Exposure*, *Sociology of Education*, October 2010. Despite the substantial body of research documenting strong relationships between social class and children's cognitive abilities, researchers have generally neglected the extent to which school absenteeism exacerbates social class differences in academic development among young children. This study suggests that missing school in the early grades has a more powerful influence on literacy development for low-income students than it does for their more affluent peers. Put another way, school matters more to children from low-income families.
- Balfanz, R., and Byrnes, V.,** *The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools*. Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools, Baltimore, Md., 2012. This report analyzes data on chronic absenteeism at the state level to begin the process of mapping its extent and characteristics. Although currently only a handful of states collect data on chronic absenteeism, results from a sample of states suggest that an estimated 10-15% of students in the U.S. are chronically absent each year. The report also highlights some promising practices among cities, school districts and nonprofits to combat chronic absenteeism. The authors offer policy recommendations on tracking and reporting chronic absence data and evidence-based interventions.
- Hart Buehler, M., and Topanga, J., and Chang, H.,** *Why Being in School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Public Schools*, Attendance Works, June 2012. Although many states collect data on attendance in their longitudinal student data bases, the majority fail to make effective use of this data to analyze how many and which students are chronically absent. Demonstrating the value of such an analysis, ECONorthwest used data from the state's Department of Education to determine that 23 percent of students K-12 in Oregon were chronically absent in 2009-10, with low-income students at the highest risk of missing significant amounts of school. Attendance problems in the early years predicted absenteeism in later grades, and students with the highest absenteeism typically scored lower on state assessments. This research also showed that poor attendance is a solvable problem by identifying schools that beat the odds by maintaining lower than expected chronic absence rates despite serving high risk populations.
- Bruner, Charles, Anne Discher and Hedy Chang,** *Chronic Elementary Absenteeism: A Problem Hidden in Plain Sight*, Child and Family Policy Center and Attendance Works, November 2011. This study confirms the premise that districts and schools may fail to detect high levels of chronic absence because the problem is easily masked by average daily attendance, one of the most commonly calculated attendance measures. While many educators assume a 95% ADA rate is an indicator of good attendance, the authors find that this is often not the case.