



WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS, STARTING IN THE EARLY GRADES

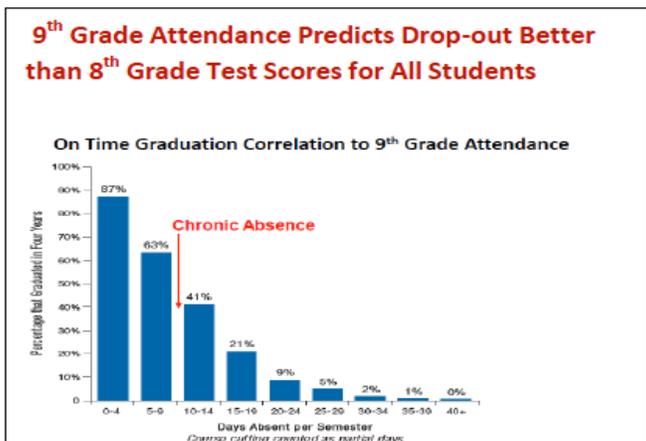
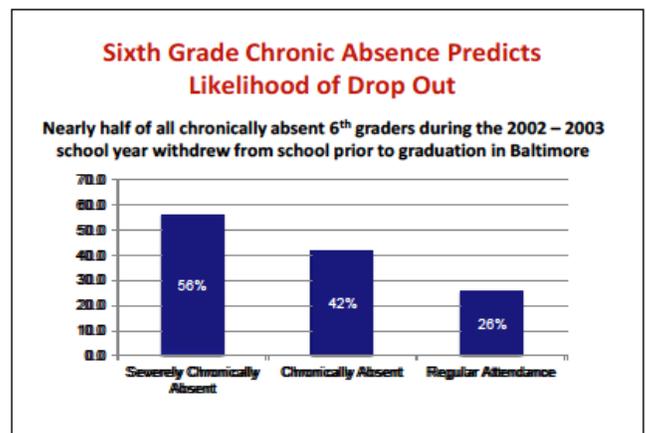
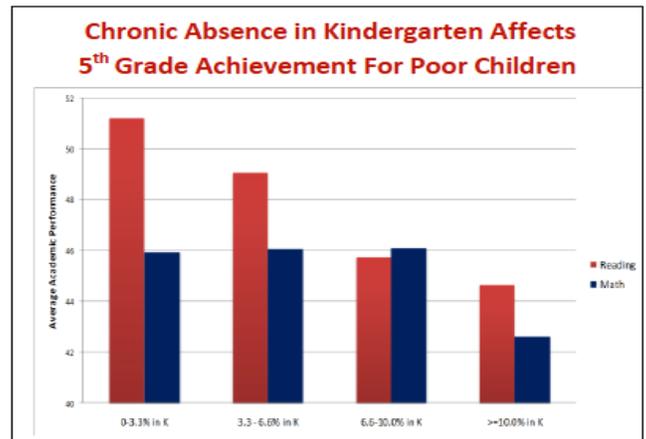
Succeeding in school requires developing good habits, and attendance is one of the most important. As early as kindergarten, too many absences can cause a child to start to fall behind academically, research shows. In the early grades, it is especially problematic for children of low income families who lack the resources to make up for time lost on task. For all children, learning to attend school regularly can help them develop the skills of persistence and perseverance which can help them succeed in school and, ultimately, in life.

Yet, research shows that one in 10 kindergarten and 1st grade students miss 10 percent of the school year, the point at which absences start to affect test scores. By middle school, chronic absenteeism can predict high school dropout rates. By 9th grade, it's a better predictor than past 8th grade test scores.

Sometimes it's hard for parents and teachers to recognize when a child is missing too much school. Absences don't always come in a row. Students can still get into trouble academically if they are miss a day or two every few weeks.

Absences are not just a problem for the children who aren't in class. Whole classrooms can be affected if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up. Schools can lose money when state funding depends partly on attendance.

Parents play a key role in getting their children to school on time every day. Even with teenagers, parents should not underestimate the impact they can have by monitoring attendance and helping youth understand why going to school matters. See below for some tips on getting your kids to school.

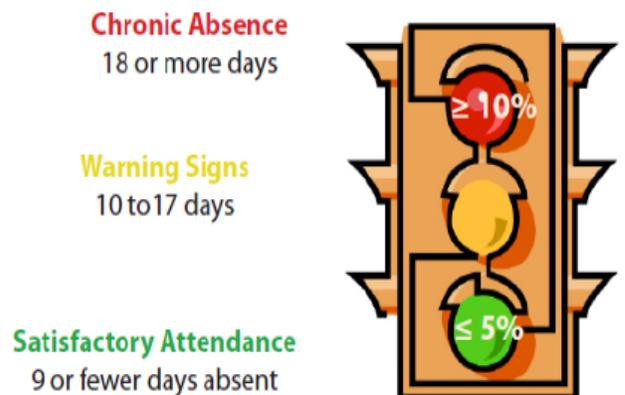




WHAT CAN PARENTS DO

- Send your children to school every day, starting in kindergarten, to teach your children that attendance counts. Continue to monitor their attendance through high school.
- Don't let your child miss school without a good reason. Try to avoid medical appointments during the school day or vacations when school is in session.
- Create routines and stick to them. Set a regular bed time and morning routine to get ready for school. For older students, be sure they get enough sleep.
- Keep an eye on what's happening with your children's education. Look for signs that they are bored, struggling with school work or having trouble with friends. Seek out tutoring, talk with teachers. Nurture interest in being in school by finding engaging afterschool activities and encourage involvement in sports.
- Learn about the school's policies. What incentives do teachers offer for good attendance? What counts as an excused or unexcused absence? What are the penalties?
- Find your own ways to reward good attendance. You know best what motivates your child.

When do absences become a problem?



Note: These numbers assume an 180 day school year

- Be open and honest with school officials. Make sure the school has your up-to-date contact information. Work with the teacher, counselor and principal on problems your children are experiencing.
- Seek medical help when absences pile up. Anything from asthma to a bad bout of head lice can keep kids out of school. Work with your doctor or school nurse.
- Turn to other families who can help you with dropping off or picking up children and with babysitting.
- Seek help when you have a problem. If absences result from family issue—a sudden illness, a lost job, foreclosure or a broken-down car—the school can connect you to other families or to social service providers.