

# Reconnecting & Reengaging: Effective Strategies for Bringing Students Back to the Classroom



## MODERATOR

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## RESOURCE EXPERTS

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- An estimated [16 million students](#), equivalent to roughly one-in-three, were chronically absent in 2022. Starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, every week a student misses school reduced that student's chance of graduating by about [20 percentage points](#).
- Schools and districts are facing a data transparency problem, necessitating stronger data collection and communication processes. Public data improves shared accountability for chronic absenteeism and assists leaders across agencies and the community with developing targeted plans based on data analysis. [Forty-eight states](#) and Washington D.C. now publish data on chronic absenteeism, up from [nine in 2019](#) according to a 2023 Attendance Works [report](#).
- Data transparency is also necessary for addressing inequities related to student attendance. State agencies should look to disaggregate data by student group, including race, socioeconomic status, grade level, disability status, and English proficiency. Leaders should examine raw numbers, showing which groups make up a large portion of the chronically absent students, in addition to percentiles, which indicate disproportionate affect on groups, to determine target demographics for intervention and support.
- While state systems should work to support and implement policies that reduce chronic absenteeism, schools, districts, and community partners play a significant role in returning students to the classroom. Several local strategies are outlined in the Attendance Playbook:
  - **Home Visits:** Home visits offer an opportunity to build connections with students and families. Connecticut's LEAP program provides a successful model for home visits, with program participants experiencing an increase in school attendance by [15 percentage points](#).
  - **School Health Supports:** [Asthma](#) is the number one cause of disease-related chronic absenteeism. Implementing handwashing regulations and other health-related supports such as school-based nurses and mental health professionals can help keep students healthy and in the classroom.
    - A Danish study found a [66 percent drop](#) in four-day absences amongst elementary school students who washed their hands at least three times throughout the school day.
  - **Advisory Groups:** Advisory groups pair students with campus or community-based mentors to promote a sense of connectedness and belonging for students. Districts can include school administrators and other staff as part of these groups to help address capacity related to nationwide educator shortages.
  - **Decriminalizing Truancy:** Punishing students for missing school, rather than addressing the root causes of chronic absenteeism such as transportation barriers or family obligations, can lead to further disengagement.
  - **Clear Definitions of Attendance:** As families readjust to in-person learning, identifying clear requirements for attendance supports school leaders in setting and communicating expectations.
    - Connecticut released [standards for attendance](#) for 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade students.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Across the Aisle Report on What Voters and Parents Want in Education](#) | The Hunt Institute

[The Attendance Playbook](#) | Future Ed & Attendance Works

[Attendance Activities School Year Plan \(K-12\)](#) | Attendance Works

[Addressing Chronic Absence: Strategies for School Sites](#) | Attendance Works

[Pandemic Causes Alarming Increase in Chronic Absence and Reveals Need for Better Data](#) | Attendance Works

[Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L. Toolkit](#) | Attendance Works

[The Power of Positive Connections](#) | Attendance Works

[An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Home Visits for Re-Engaging Students Who Were Chronically Absent in the Era of COVID-19](#) |

Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration

[Tapping Federal Dollars to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism](#) | Future Ed

[Child Equity Index](#) | Impact Tulsa