


5 Takeaways: 2022 School Attendance Data

In a typical year, about 13% of Massachusetts students are chronically absent, missing 10% or more of school days. **But the 2021-22 school year was anything but typical.** Even though in-person learning resumed across the state, the ongoing pandemic and the fallout from two years of COVID-19-related disruptions continued to impact students' lives and school experiences. Students missed so much school that for the first time, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reported an additional chronic absenteeism rate – the percent of students missing not 10, but 20% of school days.

5 takeaways from the newly released data:

- 1 Many students missed a lot of school.** As of March 2022, 29% of students had missed at least 10% of school days. 8% of students missed 1 in 5 school days or more – the equivalent of at least one day every week.
- 2 Absenteeism rates were higher among some student populations.** More than 40% of students from low-income families, Latinx students, and English learners missed at least 1/10th of school days and 14-16% missed 1 in 5 school days or more.
- 3 High school students were more likely than their younger peers to miss 1 in 5 (or more) school days.** About 12% of high school students missed at least a fifth of school days, compared to just 7% of students in other schools.¹
- 4 Absenteeism rates for similar student populations differed a lot from district to district.** For example, in one urban district, nearly 24% of students from low-income families missed a fifth of school days or more, while in another, only 12% missed that many days. Understanding the reasons for these differences – e.g., are they due to COVID rates, transportation issues, student engagement efforts, or something else – may help districts improve attendance this coming school year.
- 5 Ensuring students get the academic and mental health support they need next school year will be critical.** With so many students missing lots of school, it is clear that 2022 was not the catch-up and reconnection school year many had hoped for. As we approach the start of the 2023 school year, education leaders need to ensure that they have plans in place for gauging where students are academically and social-emotionally, and providing them with the support they need to thrive.



School attendance matters. Research shows over and over again that students who are chronically absent are less likely to reach important academic milestones, like learning to read by 3rd grade, and are more likely to drop out of school entirely.

1. This takeaway is based on Ed Trust analysis of DESE [attendance and enrollment-by-grade](#) data.