Nashville Public Education Foundation

What you need to know about

Chronic Absenteeism

NPEF Need to Know Series
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Chronic Absenteeism

Students are considered **chronically absent** when they miss **10% of school days** (just 2 days per month on average) or more **for any reason**, including excused absences, unexcused absences, and suspensions. Improving attendance can improve students' academic performance and decrease the likelihood of dropping out.

What can cause chronic absenteeism?

- **Unreliable transportation**
- **Health issues**
- **Sibling care**
- **Need to work**
- **Housing/food insecurity**
- **Repeated suspension**
- **Lack of support/engagement**
- **Academic struggle**
- **Attendance misconceptions**

Chronic absenteeism is tracked as an informative data point, not a disciplinary measure, and is **not the same as truancy**, which only counts **unexcused** absences.

Even if an absence is excused, students still miss **valuable instructional time.**

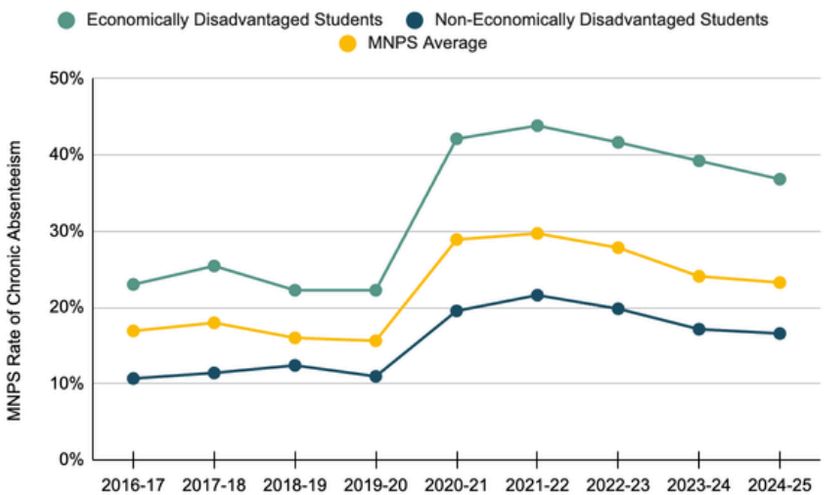
23% *of MNPS students were chronically absent in the 2024-25 school year.* ***This number has steadily decreased in recent years.***

Chronic absenteeism has *compounding effects*.

By 3rd grade... Chronically absent students are more likely to **lack reading proficiency** and be **held back**.

By 6th grade... Chronic absence becomes a **leading indicator** of the likelihood a student will **drop out of high school**.

Economically disadvantaged (ED) students are **more than 2x as likely as non-ED students** to be chronically absent in MNPS.



Improving a student's attendance can lead to higher academic achievement and an increased likelihood of graduation.

What can help reduce chronic absenteeism?

- Programs such as MNPS' Community Achieves and Communities in Schools that place family engagement specialists in schools to connect families to resources and remove barriers to attendance
- School-based efforts to monitor attendance data and communicate effectively with students and families
- Educational experiences and partnerships that increase student engagement and build real-world connections such as CTE courses, externships)
- Out-of-school supports for students and families for healthcare, housing, food security, childcare, etc.

Sources: Tennessee Department of Education; Nashville PEER, MNPS Student-Parent Handbook, Attendance Works