

ATTENDANCE SNAPSHOT

Attendance in DC Public Schools: 2012-2013

If children are not in school, they are not learning the skills they need to graduate ready for college and a career. Absenteeism is extremely high in DC public and charter schools: 1 in 5 DC students had more than ten unexcused absences last year. Chronic absenteeism increases achievement gaps because students from disadvantaged backgrounds with high absenteeism are more likely to fall behind academically.



Indicator Definitions:

- ISA: Average In-Seat Attendance. Total # of days present / total # days enrolled
- Truancy Rate: Percentage of students with more than 10 unexcused absences over the course of the year.
- High Truancy Rate: Percentage of students with more than 20 unexcused absences over the course of the year.

Fast Facts on Attendance in DCPS:

- Average ISA at a DCPS school: 92%
- Percent of students truant in DCPS: 19%
- Percent of students highly truant in DCPS: 10%
- Total number of truant students: 9,152
- Total students referred to student support teams for attendance issues: 289

1 IN 10 STUDENTS MISSED AT LEAST 20 UNEXCUSED DAYS OF SCHOOL.

This level of absenteeism puts students at risk of falling severely behind academically due to missed school time. These students are less likely to read at grade level and more likely to repeat a grade or drop out.

Truancy by Grade Level:

- PK-K: 17%
- 1-5: 7%
- 6-8: 8%
- 9-12: 42%

1 IN 6 3-5 YEAR OLDS WITH AT LEAST 10 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.

Absenteeism among young children drastically reduces the likelihood of achieving reading and math proficiency by third grade. If DC acts to improve early attendance at both DCPS and public charter schools, the city could see long-term educational and economic benefits in the form of increased graduation rates and lifetime earnings potential.

30% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAD MORE THAN 20 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.

These students are more likely to drop out of school. The on-time graduation rate in DCPS was less than 60% in the 2012-2013 school year.

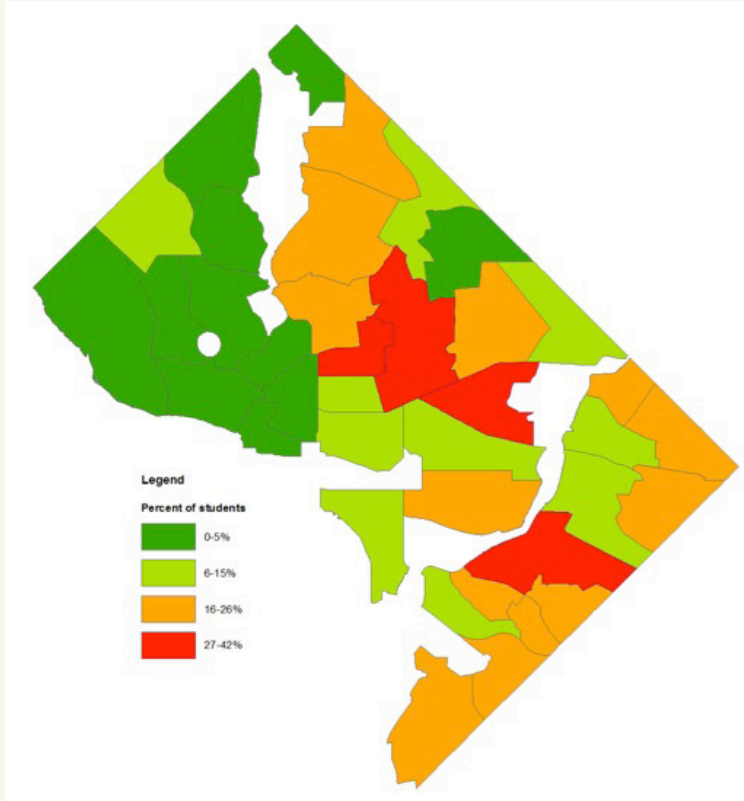
Data Note: What's Missing?

The Chronic Absentee Rate: Percentage of children who miss more than 10% of school days for any reason. Research suggests this measure is the best for assessing how many students are at academic risk due to absenteeism and targeting students for intervention. All DCPS schools track chronic absenteeism internally, but they are not required to report it, and only charter schools have released chronic absentee data publicly.

This data snapshot was written by Bonnie O'Keefe, Gabriela Arredondo-Santisteban and Jyothis Sreekumar. This data snapshot was supported by the funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, please contact info@dckids.org.

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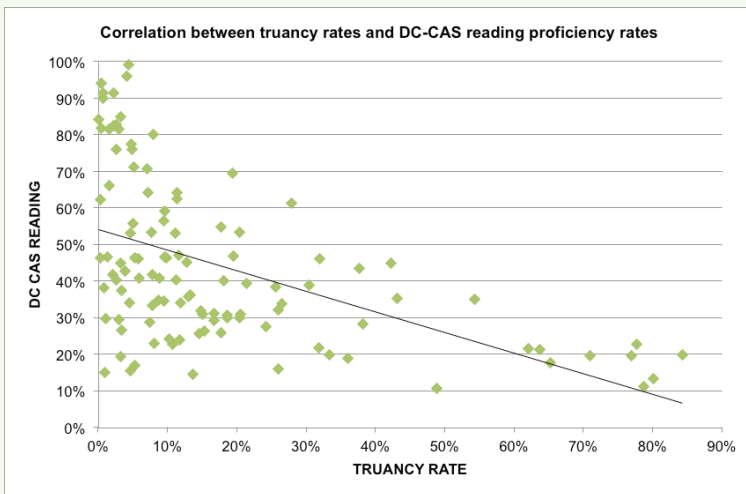
Percent of DCPS students with more than 10 unexcused absences, by neighborhood cluster



The map at left shows the percent of DCPS students enrolled in schools in each neighborhood cluster with more than 10 unexcused absences in the 2012-2013 school year, also known as the truancy rate. This map shows that truancy problems are especially severe in a few neighborhoods, shown in red, all of which have a high school. However, truancy is higher than we would like to see it in most DC neighborhoods, including many that only have elementary schools.

This map underestimates the percent of children who are at academic risk due to absenteeism because it does not include excused absences. However, with currently available DCPS data, the truancy rate is the most reliable to map at the neighborhood level.

Reading proficiency and absenteeism



Research from other jurisdictions consistently shows a link between low rates of absenteeism and higher academic success. The figure at left shows this correlation is strong in DC as well, especially as the percent of students with more than 10 unexcused absences increases. In 2012-13, no DCPS school with more than 40% of students truant saw the majority of its students reading at grade level.

The relationship between proficiency and truancy can work in both directions: chronically absent students are more likely to fall behind their peers, conversely academically struggling students may become discouraged and start skipping school.