

# CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN TEXAS SCHOOLS



## INTRODUCTION

Chronic absenteeism occurs when a student misses more than 10 % of instructional time for any reason – excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism poses a serious threat to student success as it leads to lower academic achievement, graduation rates, and postsecondary outcomes. All regions and student groups in Texas have seen an alarming increase in chronic absenteeism since the pandemic. It is now more important than ever to reduce chronic absenteeism to improve student achievement.

## THE PROBLEM

Chronic absenteeism highly impacts student achievement. Numerous studies have shown that attendance matters and affects key academic outcomes at all grade levels, including 3rd grade reading,<sup>1</sup> high school graduation,<sup>2</sup> and postsecondary and workforce success.<sup>3</sup> In fact, chronic absenteeism is the strongest predictor of dropping out of high school, more accurate than suspensions and test scores.

- In Texas,
  - Chronic absenteeism has doubled since the pandemic, with 20% of all students missing at least 10% of instructional time.<sup>4</sup>
  - For economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, chronic absenteeism is even higher at 25%.
  - Policymakers, educators, and parents still don't have publicly-available data on chronic absenteeism from the 2023-24 school year.



1 in 5 students were chronically absent in TX during the 2022-2023 school year

7X

A student who is chronically absent between 8th and 12th grade is 7X more likely to drop out of school<sup>5</sup>

2X

Chronic absenteeism in TX has doubled since the pandemic<sup>6</sup>

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendance is a solvable problem with many evidence-based interventions, but it requires comprehensive and timely data. To address this issue, we urge you to consider the following policy recommendations:

- Define chronic absenteeism in the Texas Education Code as missing 10% or more of instructional time for any reason to enshrine this important indicator of student success.
- Classify chronically absent students as “at risk” to ensure they receive additional support and interventions, reducing their likelihood of dropping out
- Require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to collect attendance data more frequently and publicly report chronic absenteeism rates in a timely manner

**With more transparent and timely data, schools can better respond to students' needs, improve instructional engagement, and strengthen connections with students and families.**

1. Attendance Works (2014)  
2. Allensworth, E. & Easton J. (2007).  
3. Ginsberg, A, et al. (2014).  
4. Texas Education Agency (2023). Texas Academic Performance Reports  
5. Education Commission of the States (2017). Chronic Absenteeism: A key indicator of student success  
6. Texas Education Agency (2023). Texas Academic Performance Reports