



## Attendance in DC Public Charter 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 charter and public schools: 1 in 5 DC students had more than 10 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:

- Chronic Absenteeism Rate: Percent of students who miss more than 10% of school days for any reason.
- ISA: Average In-Seat Attendance. Total # of days present / total # days enrolled
- Truancy Rate: Percent of students with more than 10 unexcused absences over the course of the year.
- High Truancy Rate: Percent of students with more than 20 unexcused absences over the course of the year.

### Fast Facts on Attendance in DC Public Charter Schools:

- Average ISA at a charter school: 91%
- Percent of students (K-12) truant in charter schools: 24%
- Percent of students highly truant in charters: 8%
- Total number of truant students: 6,064

**1 IN 13** 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: 8%
- 1-5: 23%
- 6-8: 20%
- 9-12: 34%

**1 IN 13** 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.

**14%** OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAD MORE THAN 20 UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.

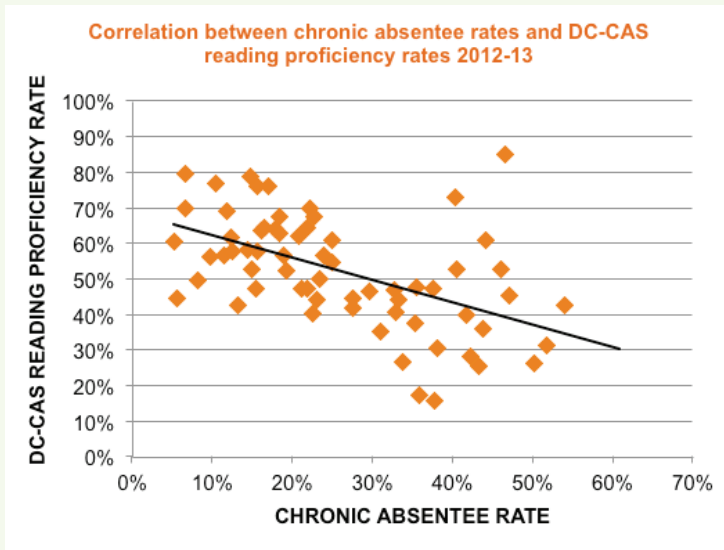
These students are more likely to drop out of school. The on-time graduation rate in charter schools was less than 80% in the 2012-2013 school year.

### Data Note: What's Different from DCPS?

Unlike DC Public Schools (DCPS), DC Public Charter Schools have released chronic absenteeism data. Because we think this is an important measure, we highlight it on page two, but comparable data are not available for DCPS. There are over 50 charter school districts in DC, each of which has flexibility in their attendance policies. The DC Public Charter School Board oversees charter schools, and uses attendance as one of many school accountability measures.

*This data snapshot was written by Bonnie O'Keefe and Jyothis Sreekumar and supported by funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information, please contact [info@dckids.org](mailto:info@dckids.org).*

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The figure above shows a strong correlation between chronic absenteeism and reading proficiency in DC charter schools. In 2012-13, 28 charter schools with chronic absenteeism rates greater than 30% had DC-CAS reading scores available. Of these 28, 23 had reading proficiency rates below 50%.

### Snapshot of Chronic Absenteeism in DC Public Charter Schools:

In addition to reporting average in-seat attendance (ISA), unexcused absences and truancy, the Public Charter School Board has made data available on chronic absenteeism: the number of students in each school and each grade who miss 10% of more school days for any reason (excused or unexcused).

This is an important data point because unlike truancy rates, it accounts for all missed school time, and unlike ISA, it gives us a concrete idea of how many students are at academic risk due to missed school time - ISA at any school rarely falls below 85%, which can be misleading.

**30%** OF STUDENTS MISSED MORE THAN 10% OF SCHOOL DAYS FOR ANY REASON.

That adds up to over 9,300 DC charter school students potentially at risk of falling behind in school due to absenteeism.

Rates of chronic absenteeism, like truancy rates, vary substantially by grade level. Chronic absentee rates are highest in early childhood and high school.

### Chronic Absenteeism by Grade Level\*:

- PK-K: 31%
- 1-5: 15%
- 6-8: 20%
- 9-12: 38%

\*Excludes schools where number of chronically absent students <10

The map at left shows the percent of chronically absent students in each charter school. This map shows that absenteeism challenges and bright spots exist across the city, but schools with the lowest rates of absenteeism tended to be in the north and central parts of DC. But, all charter schools are open to enroll children from across DC.

### Chronic absentee rate at charter schools, 2012-13

