

# School Attendance

## DEFINITION

*School attendance* is the average daily attendance of public school students in each school district in Rhode Island for elementary school (grades 1-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school (grades 9-12). Public school students in pre-school, kindergarten, and un-graded classrooms are not included.

## SIGNIFICANCE

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school they forgo opportunities to learn. Student absenteeism places individual children at risk for school failure.<sup>1</sup> Gradual alienation and disengagement from school are symptoms of poor attendance, which may lead to students dropping out permanently.<sup>2</sup> Truancy (unexcused absences from school) also is a risk factor for delinquent behavior, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, criminal activity and incarceration in adult life.<sup>3</sup>

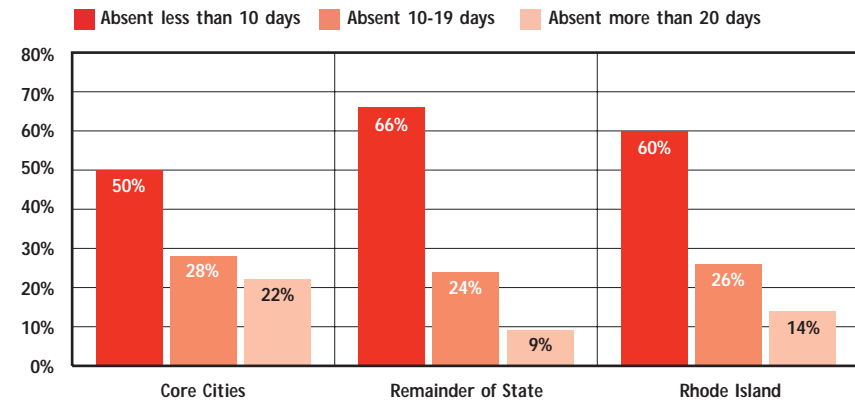
Truancy increases with each grade level, starting with the 8th grade.<sup>4</sup> Attendance problems worsen as the school year progresses and usually begin early in high school.<sup>5</sup> Students' reasons for not attending school include

repeated suspensions, poor achievement, concerns for safety, non-positive relationships with peers and teachers, conflicts between school and work, and negative perceptions of school.<sup>6</sup>

Truancy is rarely a reflection of the child alone and is often an early indication that the family needs help.<sup>7</sup> Teens who live in more affluent families and whose parents are more engaged in their education tend to have higher education aspirations and expectations, are more engaged in school, do better academically and are more likely to continue their schooling than their peers in less-advantaged families.<sup>8</sup>

A positive school climate, high teacher expectations, and caring adults can address many of the reasons students give for being truant.<sup>9</sup> Truancy prevention efforts must work to increase students' sense of connection with their schools and to strengthen their relationships with their teachers, because students are less likely to miss school when they are engaged and have a sense of belonging. Successful efforts also help students overcome personal and family barriers to school attendance.<sup>10</sup>

## School Attendance in Rhode Island by Number of School Days Missed, 2006-2007



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2006-2007. *Charter and state-operated schools are only included in the state as a whole.*

- ◆ During the 2006-2007 school year, 22% of students in the core cities in Rhode Island were absent 20 or more days, compared with 9% of students in the remainder of the state, and 14% in Rhode Island as a whole.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ Improving the core cities' high school attendance rate from the current rate of 86% to 92% (the rate in the remainder of the state) would mean that on average 920 more students would be attending high school in the core cities each day of the school year.<sup>12</sup>

## Programs to Increase School Attendance

- ◆ Research shows that youth who participate in mentoring programs are more likely to report improved mental health, graduate from high school and attend college. Mentoring works best when it is a long-term relationship supplemented with academic supports.<sup>13,14</sup>
- ◆ Effective truancy reduction programs include clear, consistently enforced school policies; school reorganization to support student engagement; effective communication between the school and the parents; family support programs; and collaboration between the school and community partners.<sup>15</sup>

Table 43.

School Attendance Rates, Rhode Island, 2006-2007

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL			MIDDLE SCHOOL			HIGH SCHOOL		
	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	ATTENDANCE RATE	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	ATTENDANCE RATE	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS	ATTENDANCE RATE
Barrington	1,423	1,477	96%	836	867	97%	1,074	1,130	95%
Bristol-Warren	1,410	1,482	95%	747	787	95%	1,058	1,173	90%
Burrillville	1,010	1,057	96%	571	594	96%	816	865	94%
Central Falls	1,436	1,538	93%	815	877	93%	843	1,024	82%
Chariho	1,234	1,291	96%	1,114	1,165	96%	1,176	1,256	94%
Coventry	2,231	2,329	96%	1,331	1,390	96%	1,731	1,817	95%
Cranston	4,366	4,573	95%	2,501	2,642	95%	3,257	3,640	89%
Cumberland	2,143	2,226	96%	1,259	1,314	96%	1,408	1,552	91%
East Greenwich	1,161	1,203	97%	408	422	97%	729	762	96%
East Providence	2,260	2,367	95%	1,296	1,379	94%	1,811	2,014	90%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	936	973	96%	343	354	97%	661	702	94%
Foster	291	304	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	NA	611	641	95%	846	925	91%
Glocester	682	696	98%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jamestown	224	235	95%	212	220	96%	5	5	99%
Johnston	1,320	1,386	95%	801	854	94%	817	918	89%
Lincoln	1,401	1,456	96%	819	859	95%	989	1,068	93%
Little Compton	205	216	95%	92	97	95%	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	902	941	96%	734	767	96%	642	683	94%
Narragansett	467	489	96%	492	512	96%	456	484	94%
New Shoreham	68	73	93%	25	27	94%	37	41	91%
Newport	978	1,035	94%	511	551	93%	561	652	86%
North Kingstown	1,747	1,816	96%	1,079	1,122	96%	1,472	1,573	94%
North Providence	1,219	1,283	95%	760	806	94%	1,091	1,176	93%
North Smithfield	921	956	96%	295	309	95%	532	561	95%
Pawtucket	4,458	4,712	95%	1,558	1,684	93%	2,177	2,465	88%
Portsmouth	911	978	93%	911	957	95%	1,040	1,101	94%
Providence	11,060	11,915	93%	4,747	5,281	90%	6,459	7,619	85%
Scituate	756	787	96%	434	452	96%	539	566	95%
Smithfield	1,030	1,068	96%	598	620	96%	825	879	94%
South Kingstown	1,424	1,484	96%	919	959	96%	1,204	1,287	94%
Tiverton	673	705	95%	606	639	95%	707	749	94%
Warwick	5,347	5,589	96%	1,716	1,814	95%	3,367	3,682	91%
West Warwick	1,569	1,652	95%	809	871	93%	1,036	1,157	89%
Westerly	1,384	1,454	95%	816	854	96%	1,062	1,134	94%
Woonsocket	2,705	2,909	93%	1,325	1,452	91%	1,645	1,890	87%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,152</i>	<i>1,208</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>261</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>244</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>87%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>89%</i>	<i>1,553</i>	<i>1,677</i>	<i>93%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>87%</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>22,206</i>	<i>23,762</i>	<i>93%</i>	<i>9,765</i>	<i>10,716</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>12,720</i>	<i>14,807</i>	<i>86%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>39,147</i>	<i>40,894</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>22,330</i>	<i>23,425</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>29,352</i>	<i>31,743</i>	<i>92%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>62,505</i>	<i>65,864</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>32,474</i>	<i>34,550</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>43,869</i>	<i>48,507</i>	<i>90%</i>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Attendance rates are calculated by dividing "the average daily attendance" by the "average daily membership," as of September 2006. Both measures are provided by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the 2006-2007 school year.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Charter schools include BEACON Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, The Compass School, CVS Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community Charter School, and Paul Cuffee Charter School. State-operated schools include The Rhode Island Training School operated by DCYF, Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center, and William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School.

### References

- <sup>1,13,15</sup> McCray, E. D. (2006). It's 10 a.m.: Do you know where your children are? The persisting issue of school truancy. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 42(1), 30-33.
- <sup>2,4,6</sup> Railsback, J. (2004). *Increasing student attendance: Strategies from research and practice*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- <sup>3</sup> Henry, K. (2007). Who's skipping school: Characteristics of truants in 8th and 10th grade. *Journal of School Health*, 77(1), 29-35.
- <sup>5</sup> Walls, C. (2003). New approaches to truancy prevention in urban schools. *ERIC Digest, number ED480916*. New York, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.
- <sup>7</sup> Romero, M. & Lee, Y. (2008). *The influence of maternal and family risk on chronic absenteeism in early schooling*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- <sup>8</sup> Redd, Z., Brooks, J. & McGarvey, A. M. (2002). Educating America's youth: What makes a difference. *Child Trends Research Brief American Teens*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>9</sup> *Learning support indicators: Technical assistance bulletin*. (2002). Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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