

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 miss opportunities to learn. Chronic absenteeism places individual children at risk for school failure.¹ Poor attendance may indicate an increased alienation and disengagement from school, which may eventually lead to students dropping out permanently.² Truancy (unexcused absences from school) among teens is also a risk factor for delinquent behavior. Youth who are truant are at risk for substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, criminal activity and incarceration.³

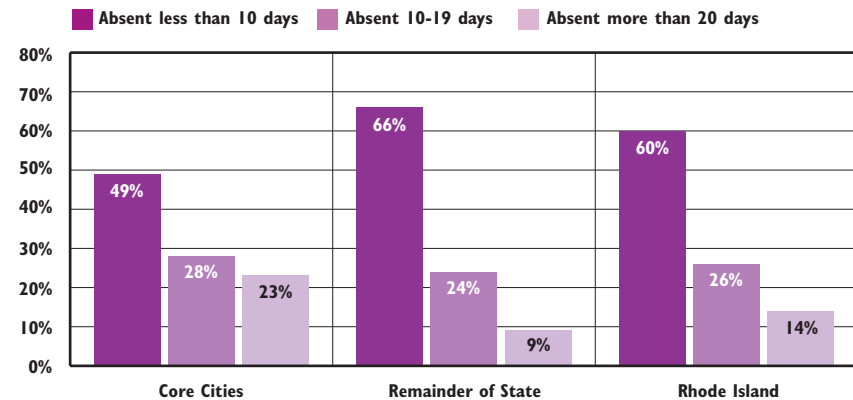
Chronic absenteeism and truancy are rarely a reflection of the child alone and are often an indication that the family needs help.⁴ Poor children are more likely to be chronically absent than

students in high-income families. The more exposure to maternal and family risks a child has the greater the absenteeism in early schooling.⁵

Truancy increases with each grade level, starting with the 8th grade and problems often begin with the transition to high school. Attendance problems usually worsen as the school year progresses.^{6,7} Students' reasons for not attending school include repeated suspensions, poor achievement, concerns for safety, difficulty with peer and adult relationships, conflicts between school and work, and negative perceptions of school.⁸

A supportive, safe, and engaging school environment and caring adults can address many of the causes of student absenteeism and truancy. Chronic absenteeism can result from poor quality education, student and family disengagement from school, and bullying, as well as family and community factors. By engaging families and communities in strategies to improve attendance, offering incentives to families and children, and helping families access medical, economic and academic services, chronic absenteeism and truancy rates can be reduced.^{9,10,11}

School Attendance in Rhode Island by Number of School Days Missed, 2007-2008 School Year



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2007-2008. Data for charter and state-operated schools are only included in Rhode Island rates.

◆ During the 2007-2008 school year, nearly a quarter (23%) of students in the core cities in Rhode Island were absent for more than 20 days, compared with 9% of students in the remainder of the state, and 14% in Rhode Island as a whole.¹²

◆ Improving the core cities' high school attendance rate from the current rate of 86% to 93% (the rate in the remainder of the state) would mean that on average 1,024 more students would be attending high school in the core cities each day of the school year.¹³

School Attendance in the Early Grades

◆ Elementary school children are more likely than their peers to be absent from school if they live in low-income households, live in single-parent households, were born to a teenage mother, have a mother with poor health, experience food insecurity, or have mothers with low education levels.¹⁴

◆ Research shows that low-income children who are chronically absent in elementary school are less proficient than their peers in reading and in math.¹⁵ In Rhode Island in the 2007-2008 school year, almost one-third (32%) of elementary students missed at least two weeks of school.¹⁶

Table 43.

School Attendance Rates, Rhode Island, 2007-2008 School Year

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	1,425	1,479	96%	805	835	96%	1,079	1,130	96%
Bristol-Warren	1,379	1,447	95%	774	814	95%	1,049	1,159	91%
Burrillville	1,047	1,099	95%	549	572	96%	811	863	94%
Central Falls	1,408	1,507	93%	772	828	93%	807	944	85%
Chariho	1,222	1,279	96%	1,087	1,134	96%	1,130	1,248	91%
Coventry	2,171	2,266	96%	1,282	1,342	96%	1,706	1,773	96%
Cranston	4,365	4,570	96%	2,471	2,619	94%	3,173	3,470	91%
Cumberland	2,056	2,136	96%	1,183	1,235	96%	1,391	1,502	93%
East Greenwich	1,142	1,189	96%	404	419	96%	725	764	95%
East Providence	2,292	2,418	95%	1,253	1,340	94%	1,782	1,999	89%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	911	948	96%	322	332	97%	637	667	95%
Foster	261	274	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	NA	587	613	96%	839	910	92%
Glocester	575	598	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jamestown	230	242	95%	202	210	96%	7	7	97%
Johnston	1,321	1,390	95%	819	877	93%	832	930	89%
Lincoln	1,387	1,445	96%	832	868	96%	1,002	1,111	90%
Little Compton	212	221	96%	96	100	96%	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	881	920	96%	733	762	96%	645	682	95%
Narragansett	422	441	96%	500	519	96%	450	473	95%
New Shoreham	67	72	93%	27	30	93%	36	40	88%
Newport	957	1,014	94%	476	515	92%	552	629	88%
North Kingstown	1,732	1,804	96%	1,024	1,067	96%	1,512	1,619	93%
North Providence	1,225	1,286	95%	743	785	95%	1,040	1,124	93%
North Smithfield	903	942	96%	294	310	95%	537	570	94%
Pawtucket	4,487	4,742	95%	1,416	1,524	93%	2,166	2,460	88%
Portsmouth	1,094	1,136	96%	692	722	96%	1,005	1,048	96%
Providence	10,484	11,337	92%	4,406	4,889	90%	6,364	7,513	85%
Scituate	733	761	96%	425	441	96%	538	567	95%
Smithfield	1,012	1,051	96%	635	659	96%	796	847	94%
South Kingstown	1,426	1,487	96%	843	889	95%	1,110	1,191	93%
Tiverton	681	715	95%	588	617	95%	651	696	93%
Warwick	5,272	5,524	95%	1,731	1,830	95%	3,310	3,611	92%
West Warwick	1,546	1,627	95%	807	859	94%	1,009	1,125	90%
Westerly	1,339	1,402	96%	772	809	95%	1,033	1,096	94%
Woonsocket	2,695	2,913	93%	1,225	1,349	91%	1,574	1,843	85%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,251</i>	<i>1,309</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>284</i>	<i>312</i>	<i>91%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>1,120</i>	<i>1,207</i>	<i>93%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>21,577</i>	<i>23,141</i>	<i>93%</i>	<i>9,102</i>	<i>9,965</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>12,473</i>	<i>14,513</i>	<i>86%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>38,783</i>	<i>40,541</i>	<i>96%</i>	<i>21,675</i>	<i>22,753</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>28,825</i>	<i>31,098</i>	<i>93%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>61,644</i>	<i>65,026</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>31,151</i>	<i>33,105</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>42,758</i>	<i>47,187</i>	<i>91%</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 2007. Both measures are provided by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the 2007-2008 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

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- ^{12,13,16} Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 school year.