

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.¹ Lower attendance rates are linked to lower reading scores and are an important factor in variation in states' mathematics scores.^{2,3} Additionally, students who think of dropping out have already begun skipping school.⁴ Truancy among teens is a powerful predictor of juvenile delinquency and may be connected with substance abuse.^{5,6} Nationally, the tendency to miss school increases notably by grade level. Over the past two decades, twelfth graders have reported a declining interest in school.⁷

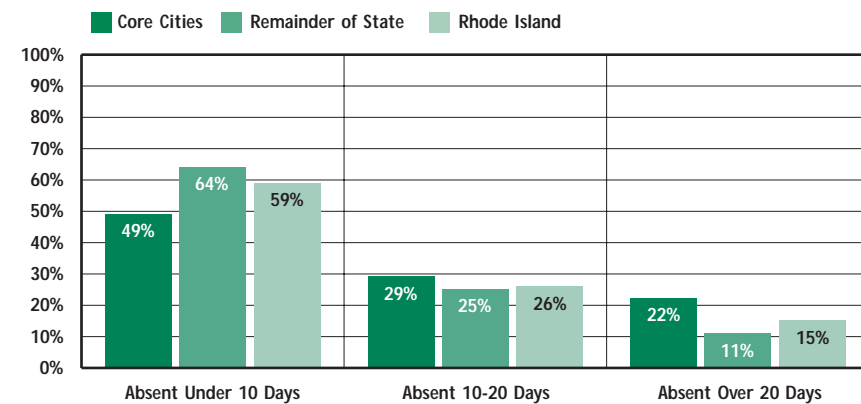
Student absenteeism places individual children at risk for school failure. Truancy is rarely a reflection of the child alone and is often an early

indication that the family needs help.⁸ Teens who live in more affluent families and those who live with both parents 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 well-off families and those in single-parent families.⁹

Problems with student attendance create a climate of instability in schools. In schools where truancy rates are low, there is less disruption and violence. Teachers are more committed to students and are more likely to interact and engage with the entire class. Students are less likely to miss school when they are engaged and have a sense of belonging due to established relationships with both their teachers and classmates.¹⁰

Students are very aware of whether their teachers have high or low expectations for them and often their achievement levels are strongly linked to those expectations. The relationships between students and their teachers are critical in shaping the climate of the school. All students, regardless of age, will do better when relationships are respectful, behavior is not disruptive and teachers are invested in the student's success.¹¹

School Attendance, Core Cities and Rhode Island, by the Number of School Days Missed, 2003-2004



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2003-2004 school year.

◆ More than one out of five (22%) students in the core cities missed over 20 days of school, compared to more than one out of ten (11%) students in the remainder of Rhode Island and nearly one out of seven (15%) students statewide.¹²

◆ With 14,756 high school students in the core cities, improving the core cities' attendance rate from 85% to 92% would mean that 1,033 more students would be attending high school in the core cities each day of the school year.¹³

Programs to Increase School Attendance

◆ Research shows that youth who participate in mentoring programs have fewer unexcused absences and better attitudes toward school than youth who do not participate.¹⁴

◆ Effective truancy reduction strategies include clear, consistently enforced school policies; school reorganization to support students' engagement in learning and attachment to school; effective communication between the school and the parent; family counseling programs; and collaboration between the school and community partners.¹⁵

Table 38.

School Attendance Rates, Rhode Island, 2003-2004

SCHOOL DISTRICT	GRADES 1-5			GRADES 6-8			GRADES 9-12		
	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	1,239	1,287	96%	769	804	96%	1,031	1,081	95%
Bristol-Warren	1,237	1,303	95%	850	909	94%	1,061	1,184	90%
Burrillville	821	860	95%	624	662	94%	815	864	94%
Central Falls	1,425	1,516	94%	815	889	92%	796	937	85%
Chariho	1,332	1,395	95%	861	910	95%	1,141	1,231	93%
Coventry	2,090	2,178	96%	1,364	1,434	95%	1,710	1,882	91%
Cranston	4,023	4,207	96%	2,631	2,778	95%	3,184	3,506	91%
Cumberland	1,999	2,071	97%	1,225	1,277	96%	1,364	1,491	91%
East Greenwich	944	976	97%	654	677	97%	630	669	94%
East Providence	2,078	2,174	96%	1,479	1,567	94%	1,677	1,952	86%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	744	792	94%	509	538	95%	650	692	94%
Foster	310	324	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	NA	718	753	95%	858	932	92%
Glocester	653	683	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jamestown	255	266	96%	200	209	96%	NA	NA	NA
Johnston	1,228	1,282	96%	785	856	92%	786	864	91%
Lincoln	1,277	1,328	96%	884	924	96%	972	1,045	93%
Little Compton	162	171	95%	118	126	94%	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	1,054	1,091	97%	582	608	96%	695	746	93%
Narragansett	625	652	96%	378	394	96%	482	508	95%
New Shoreham	53	57	93%	38	41	93%	28	31	90%
Newport	1,019	1,095	93%	574	621	92%	698	799	87%
North Kingstown	1,703	1,766	96%	1,041	1,089	96%	1,397	1,493	94%
North Providence	1,127	1,182	95%	877	926	95%	1,067	1,156	92%
North Smithfield	688	715	96%	448	468	96%	501	528	95%
Pawtucket	3,807	3,989	95%	2,436	2,589	94%	2,176	2,476	88%
Portsmouth	1,112	1,157	96%	683	715	96%	928	983	94%
Providence	10,222	11,010	93%	5,930	6,634	89%	6,290	7,528	84%
Scituate	659	688	96%	437	466	94%	468	498	94%
Smithfield	933	968	96%	690	725	95%	805	866	93%
South Kingstown	1,408	1,472	96%	1,009	1,059	95%	1,177	1,322	89%
Tiverton	708	745	95%	555	594	93%	655	713	92%
Warwick	4,182	4,372	96%	2,793	2,941	95%	3,525	3,845	92%
West Warwick	1,468	1,551	95%	885	952	93%	1,005	1,114	90%
Westerly	1,316	1,378	96%	851	895	95%	1,040	1,111	94%
Woonsocket	2,567	2,731	94%	1,456	1,587	92%	1,616	1,902	85%
Charter Schools	497	521	95%	80	86	93%	157	184	85%
State Operated	34	36	94%	22	24	92%	1,103	1,199	92%
UCAP	NA	NA	NA	118	128	92%	8	9	89%
Core Cities	20,508	21,892	94%	12,096	13,272	91%	12,581	14,756	85%
Remainder of State	35,960	37,540	96%	24,053	25,345	95%	28,647	32,583	88%
Rhode Island	56,999	59,989	95%	36,369	38,855	94%	42,496	47,341	90%

Note to Table

Attendance rates are calculated by dividing "the average daily attendance" by the "average daily membership," as of June 2004. Both measures are provided by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Pre-Kindergarten and kindergarten are not included in average daily attendance or average daily membership.

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2003-2004 school year.

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

References for Indicator

- ^{1,15} *Student truancy*. ERIC Digest, number 125. (1999). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
- ² Livingston, A., MPR, Inc. & Wirt, J. (1996). *The condition of education*. (NCES Number: 2004077). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- ³ *A report from the kids mobility project*. (1998). Minneapolis: The Kids Mobility Project.
- ⁴ Markow, D. & Sheer, M. (2002). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Student life: School, home and community*. New York, NY: MetLife, Inc.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. (1996). *Manual to combat truancy: The problem of truancy in America's communities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ^{6,8} *Truancy, literacy and the courts. A user's manual for setting up a truancy intervention program*. (2001). Washington, DC: The American Bar Association.
- ⁷ Livingston, A., MPR, Inc. & Wirt, J. (2002). *The condition of education*. (NCES Number: 2002025). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- ⁹ Redd, Z., Brooks, J., & McCarvey, A. (2002). Educating America's youth: What makes a difference. *Child Trends Research Brief American Teens*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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