

# 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.<sup>1</sup> Lower attendance rates are linked to lower reading scores and are an important factor in variation in states' mathematics scores.<sup>2,3</sup> Additionally, students who think of dropping out begin by skipping school.<sup>4</sup> Truancy among teens is a powerful predictor of juvenile delinquency and may be connected with substance abuse.<sup>5,6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

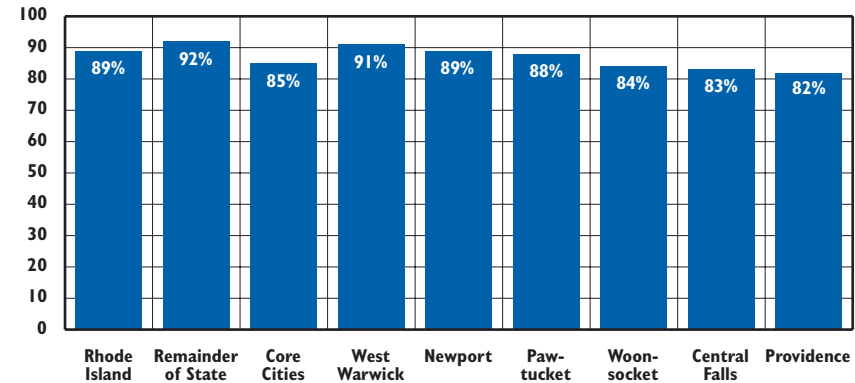
Student absenteeism places individual children at risk for school failure. Truancy is rarely a reflection of the child alone and is often an early

indication that the family needs help.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>

Students are very aware of whether their teachers have high or low expectations for them and often their achievement levels are strongly linked to what those expectations are. The relationships between students and their teachers are critical in shaping the school 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.<sup>11</sup>

High School Attendance in the Core Cities and Rhode Island, 2002-2003



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

- ◆ Attendance rates in the core cities overall are lower than in the remainder of Rhode Island at each school level. The largest difference is in high school, when the attendance rate is 85% in the core cities and 92% in the remainder of the state.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ With 11,894 high school students in the core cities, improving the core cities' attendance rate from 85% to 92% would mean that 832 more students would be attending high school in the core cities each day of the school year.<sup>13</sup>

## 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.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ 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.<sup>15</sup>

Table 33.

## School Attendance Rates, Rhode Island, 2002-2003

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	1,259	1,311	96%	772	807	96%	970	1,015	96%
Bristol-Warren	1,310	1,387	94%	861	923	93%	1,061	1,194	89%
Burrillville	879	926	95%	616	652	94%	797	842	95%
Central Falls	1,428	1,518	94%	788	868	91%	739	886	83%
Chariho	1,337	1,406	95%	863	914	94%	1,105	1,174	94%
Coventry	2,090	2,186	96%	1,339	1,415	95%	1,639	1,861	88%
Cranston	4,141	4,342	95%	2,613	2,766	94%	2,984	3,305	90%
Cumberland	2,053	2,134	96%	1,262	1,319	96%	1,383	1,516	91%
East Greenwich	946	984	96%	623	635	98%	636	671	95%
East Providence	2,253	2,361	95%	1,495	1,599	93%	1,718	1,993	86%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	754	786	96%	540	564	96%	641	685	94%
Foster	321	339	95%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	NA	NA	NA	714	758	94%	851	929	92%
Glocester	638	667	96%	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Jamestown	286	299	96%	184	193	95%	NA	NA	NA
Johnston	1,262	1,330	95%	817	886	92%	755	851	89%
Lincoln	1,312	1,366	96%	921	969	95%	1,007	1,088	93%
Little Compton	162	171	95%	129	138	93%	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	1,091	1,142	96%	591	622	95%	711	778	91%
Narragansett	611	640	95%	405	425	95%	480	513	94%
New Shoreham	51	55	93%	30	33	91%	28	30	93%
Newport	1,074	1,148	94%	576	631	91%	719	811	89%
North Kingstown	1,732	1,802	96%	1,034	1,080	96%	1,311	1,398	94%
North Providence	1,184	1,255	94%	877	933	94%	980	1,058	93%
North Smithfield	672	701	96%	427	444	96%	497	526	94%
Pawtucket	3,848	4,054	95%	2,481	2,651	94%	2,054	2,339	88%
Portsmouth	1,115	1,167	96%	673	708	95%	881	929	95%
Providence	10,486	11,334	93%	6,137	6,926	89%	5,819	7,060	82%
Scituate	664	698	95%	438	460	95%	458	494	93%
Smithfield	993	1,033	96%	671	704	95%	769	833	92%
South Kingstown	1,467	1,531	96%	1,063	1,118	95%	1,224	1,306	94%
Tiverton	765	804	95%	555	598	93%	636	695	92%
Warwick	4,215	4,418	95%	2,818	2,978	95%	3,513	3,834	92%
West Warwick	1,492	1,574	95%	831	887	94%	977	1,078	91%
Westerly	1,311	1,374	95%	870	916	95%	1,024	1,094	94%
Woonsocket	2,548	2,723	94%	1,399	1,522	92%	1,586	1,884	84%
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>20,876</i>	<i>22,351</i>	<i>93%</i>	<i>12,212</i>	<i>13,485</i>	<i>91%</i>	<i>11,894</i>	<i>14,058</i>	<i>85%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>36,874</i>	<i>38,615</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>24,201</i>	<i>25,557</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>28,059</i>	<i>30,612</i>	<i>92%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>57,750</i>	<i>60,966</i>	<i>95%</i>	<i>36,413</i>	<i>39,042</i>	<i>93%</i>	<i>39,953</i>	<i>44,670</i>	<i>89%</i>

### Note to Table

Because of a change in methodology, School Attendance Rates cannot be compared with previous Factbooks. This year's attendance rates were based on the "average daily attendance" divided by the "average daily membership," as of June 2003. Past attendance rates were based on the "average daily attendance" divided by total enrollment as of October of the given year. This calculation did not account for the mobility of students throughout the course of the academic year. Using "average daily membership" in the denominator is a more accurate reflection of this mobility.

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002-2003 school year.

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

The denominator (number of students) is the "average daily membership" by school district, as calculated by the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### References for Indicator

- <sup>1,15</sup> Student Truancy, *ERIC Digest*, Number 125 (1999). Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
- <sup>2</sup> Indicator 42: Student Absenteeism and Tardiness (1996). *The Condition of Education*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- <sup>3</sup> *A Report from the Kids Mobility Project*. (March 1998). Minneapolis: The Kids Mobility Project.
- <sup>4</sup> Student Life: School, Home and Community. *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*. (2002). New York, NY: MetLife, Inc.
- <sup>5</sup> *Manual to Combat Truancy: The Problem of Truancy in America's Communities*. (July 1996). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice.
- <sup>6,8</sup> *Truancy, Literacy and the Courts, A User's Manual for Setting Up a Truancy Intervention Program*. (2001). Washington, DC: The American Bar Association.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Condition of Education*. (2002). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>9</sup> *Educating America's Youth: What Makes a Difference*. Research Brief. (2002). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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