PROJECT 10 TOPICAL BRIEFS
are published on a bi-monthly basis. Each issue focuses on a specific topic or theme, highlighting current and upcoming information and events related to secondary transition. This month the Topical Brief is focused on Student Attendance and Engagement: Recovering from the Coronavirus Pandemic
Plus - A New Toolkit from Attendance Works!

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The Impact of School Attendance on Learning

Monitoring student attendance is important under all circumstances. When students are absent from school, they are missing an opportunity to be taught and to learn. Effects of school absenteeism are significant and are likely magnified as a result of school disruption during the Coronavirus pandemic. Consider the following effects of absenteeism:

1. Attendance patterns for an entire school year can be seen as early as September. In one study, half of the students (49.5%) who miss two to four days in September experience ongoing issues with absenteeism. A majority of students (87.8%) who miss more than four days in September experience chronic absenteeism for the entire school year (Attendance Works, n.d.).
2. Absences of an average of two days a month or 18 days for the school year negatively affect the academic outcomes for students (Attendance Works, n.d.).
3. Chronic absenteeism as early as 6th grade (20 or more school days) is an indicator of dropping out of school (Attendance Works, n.d.).
4. Ninth grade students who miss more than 10% of school are at an increased risk of not graduating (The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, 2007).
5. Social-emotional learning (SEL) contributes to improvements in test scores and student behavior. The following SEL skills may be negatively impacted by absenteeism at all grade levels: social-emotional skills: social awareness, self-efficacy, self-management and growth mindset (Sañtibanez & Guarino, 2020).
6. Lower student test scores correspond to higher days of being absent (Santibañez & Guarino, 2020).
7. Student test scores for certain subgroups are more highly affected by absences than other subgroups. Students with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable subgroups.

In contrast, the effects of attending school at all grade levels improves students' reading and math skills, increases social emotional learning and improves student graduation rates. Students in the ninth grade in Chicago Public Schools who missed less than five days per semester (87%) graduated from high school (The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, 2007).

National Trends in School Attendance During the Coronavirus Pandemic

The recent national data on attendance statistics is still being gathered and analyzed, but the early projections indicate that chronic absence has increased from one-sixth to one-third of the student population. Additional observations from early attendance data by Attendance Works show the following:

- In addition to student attendance decline, student enrollment across most school districts has also declined.
- Student populations experiencing significant absenteeism include students with disabilities, English language learners and students living in poverty.
- Regarding racial/ethnic student groups, Black, Latinx and Native American students have been disproportionately absent from school.
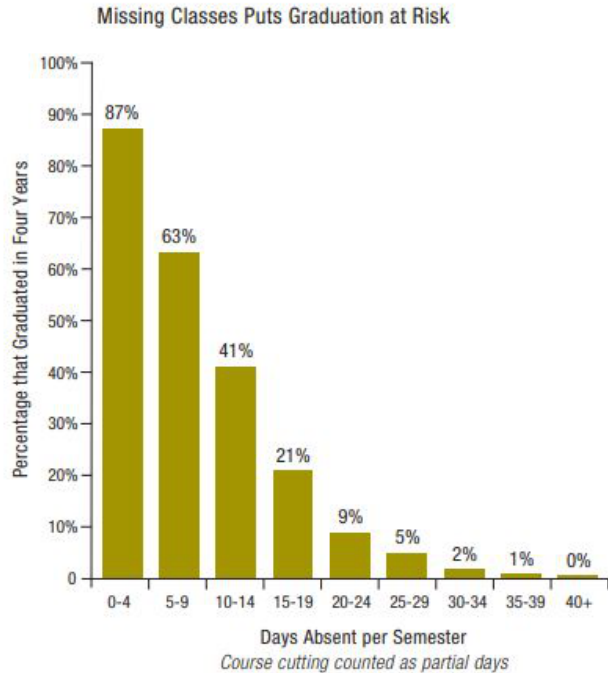
Research studies from previous years (2014-15 to 2017-18) show that student test scores drop in coordination with the number of days a student is absent. Math scores tend to drop more significantly than English Language Arts scores and middle school student scores drop more significantly than elementary student scores (Santibañez & Guarino, 2020).

Chicago Public Schools data from 2007 showed that the graduation rate was 90% for students who missed less than five days of school. See the graphic below for more details.

ABSENCES

- Nearly 90 percent of freshmen who miss less than a week of school per semester graduate, regardless of their 8th grade test scores.

- Freshmen who miss more than two weeks of school flunk, on average, at least two classes—no matter whether they arrive at high school with top test scores or below-average scores. In fact, freshmen who arrive with high test scores but miss two weeks of school per semester are more likely to fail a course than freshmen with low test scores who miss just one week.

Missing Classes Puts Graduation at Risk

Y-axis: Percentage that Graduated in Four Years

Days Absent per Semester	Percentage
0-4	87%
5-9	63%
10-14	41%
15-19	21%
20-24	9%
25-29	5%
30-34	2%
35-39	1%
40+	0%

Days Absent per Semester
Course cutting counted as partial days

Schools and districts who are developing plans to address the enrollment and attendance declines brought on by the Coronavirus pandemic will want to find meaningful ways to reignite engagement with families and students. Attendance Works recommends that local attendance data should be used as "clear indicators of where to invest outreach and support" (n.d.).
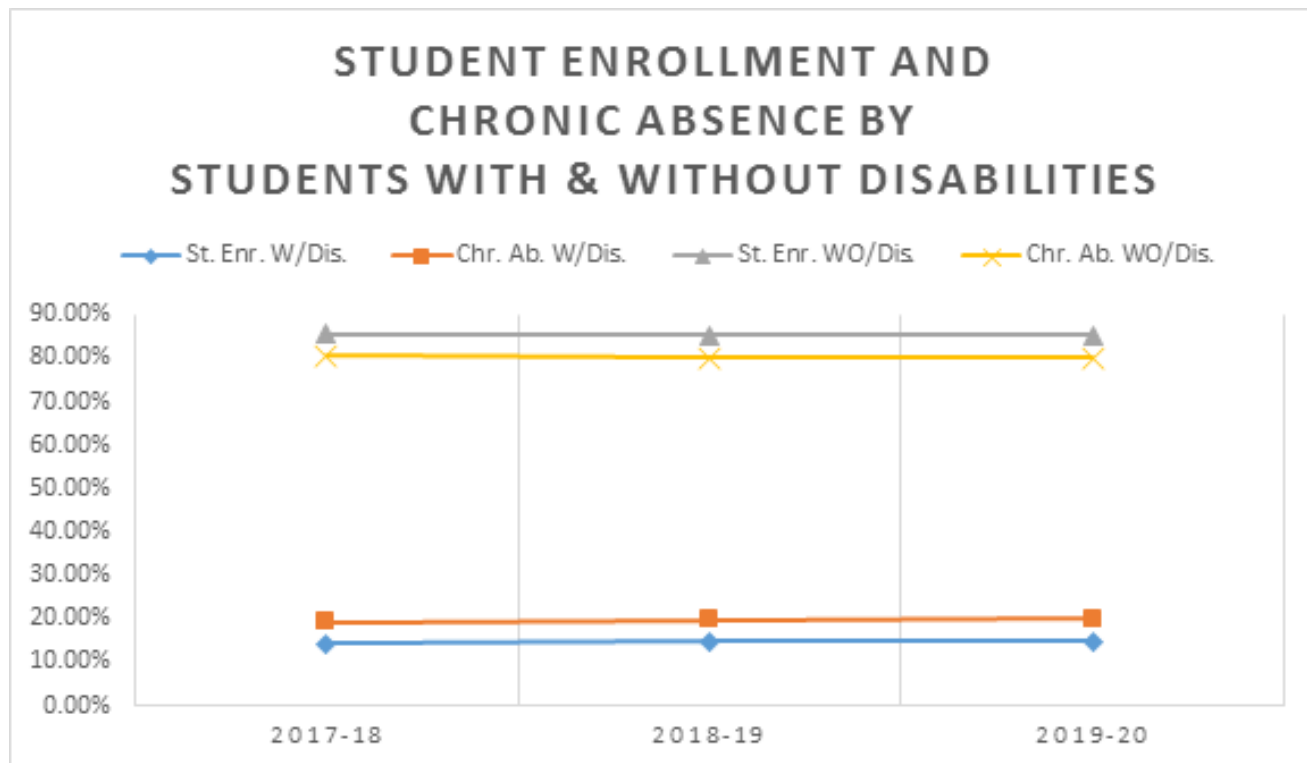
What Story Does Florida's Attendance Data Tell?

Using the "[Know Your Schools Online Tool](#)" on the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) website, statewide student attendance data from 2017-18 to 2019-20 was reviewed to identify trends.

The chart displaying enrollment and chronic absence by students with and without disabilities shows the following:

- During all three years, chronic absence for students **with** disabilities (orange line) represented a higher percentage of the students that are chronically absent than their enrollment percentage (blue line).
- During all three years, chronic absence for students **without** disabilities (yellow line) represented a lower percentage of the students that are chronically absent

than their enrollment percentage (gray line).

STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND CHRONIC ABSENCE BY STUDENTS WITH & WITHOUT DISABILITIES

Legend: —◆— St. Enr. W/Dis.　—■— Chr. Ab. W/Dis.　—▲— St. Enr. WO/Dis.　—✕— Chr. Ab. WO/Dis.

Chart showing data for 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20 with y-axis from 0.00% to 90.00%. St. Enr. WO/Dis. (gray) near 85%, Chr. Ab. WO/Dis. (yellow) near 80%, Chr. Ab. W/Dis. (orange) near 18-20%, St. Enr. W/Dis. (blue) near 13-14%.

The statewide data indicates some attendance trends between various student populations.

- Males are more likely to have lower attendance than females.
- Black and Hispanic students are more likely to have lower attendance than White students and Asian students.
- English Language Learners (ELL) are more likely to have lower attendance than students who have learned English as their first language.
- Students with disabilities are more likely to have lower attendance than students without disabilities.

Consider using the "Know Your Schools Online Tool" to study the attendance data in your district or in your school. Find the portal home on the FDOE website at https://edudata.fldoe.org/index.html. Use your data to craft interventions that promote and encourage attendance in the areas of need identified in your school and/or district. To guide you in your analysis of the data, use the "Questions to Ask When Looking at Your Data" handout in step two of the "Pathways to Engagement: A Toolkit for Covid-19 Recovery Through Attendance."

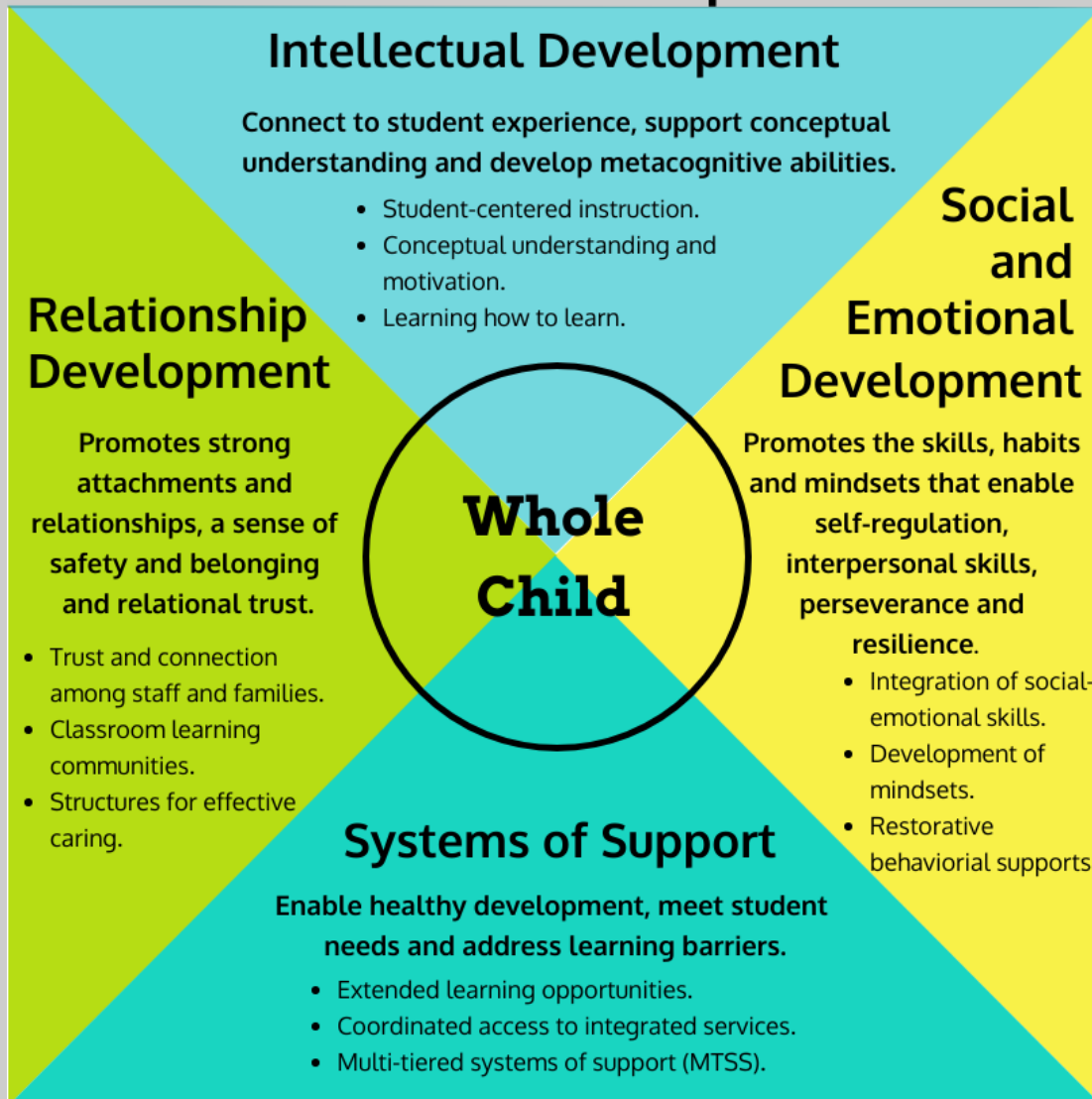## Does School Attendance Affect Student Development?

Linda Darling-Hammond and her research partners highlight the connections between the healthy development of the whole child to school and classroom practices. This relational developmental framework "makes it clear how children's development and learning are shaped by interactions among the environmental factors, relationships, and learning opportunities they experience, both in and out of school" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020, p. 97).

In simple terms, this framework recognizes the importance of recognizing that the whole student is being educated in school. Education is not purely academic, because children are not purely academic, and life is not purely academic. To further explain, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) wrote,

> What happens in one domain influences what happens in others. For example, emotions can trigger or block learning. Emotions and social contexts shape neural connections which contribute to attention, concentration, and memory, to knowledge transfer and application. Understanding how developmental processes unfold over time and interact in different contexts can contribute to more supportive designs for learning environments. (2020, p. 98)

The graphic below shows three developmental categories and the systems of support that nurture student growth. These concepts are reflected in the science of learning and development framework.

School Attendance Is the Opportunity for Student Development

Intellectual Development

Connect to student experience, support conceptual understanding and develop metacognitive abilities.

- Student-centered instruction.
- Conceptual understanding and motivation.
- Learning how to learn.

Social and Emotional Development

Promotes the skills, habits and mindsets that enable self-regulation, interpersonal skills, perseverance and resilience.

- Integration of social-emotional skills.
- Development of mindsets.
- Restorative behaviorial supports.

Relationship Development

Promotes strong attachments and relationships, a sense of safety and belonging and relational trust.

- Trust and connection among staff and families.
- Classroom learning communities.
- Structures for effective caring.

Whole Child

Systems of Support

Enable healthy development, meet student needs and address learning barriers.

- Extended learning opportunities.
- Coordinated access to integrated services.
- Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

Adapted from a figure based on the science of learning and development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020, p. 98).

When students are absent from school, they are not only missing instruction and the opportunity to develop academically, but they are missing so much more. You are educating more than a student's intellect. You are educating the whole student.

Pathways to Engagement: A Toolkit for COVID-19 Recovery Through Attendance

The Attendance Works website states:

> The alarming attendance challenge created by Covid-19 means that districts, schools and their partners will need to take a strategic, transformative and long-term approach to engaging students and families. This requires a team approach. It involves moving beyond individual student case management to taking actions at scale that broadly offer support or pathways to engagement to groups of students. (n.d., para. 5)

The Pathways to Engagement toolkit from Attendance Works is organized by four steps that connect the user with additional information through handouts, templates, assessments and activities. See the toolbox matrix below that will guide you through all of the steps and included resources.

Pathways to Engagement: A Toolkit for Covid-19 Recovery Through Attendance	
Guiding Matrix	
Steps	**Resources Included at Each Step**
Step 1: Establish Your Team. Convene a small group of leaders if you are just starting or integrate into the work of an existing team.	How to Organize an Effective School Team Handout How to Organize an Effective District Team Handout School and District Team Self-Assessments of Practice
Step 2: Review Data and Establish Priority Groups. Use data to identify which group(s) of students or schools most need additional engagement and to better understand their strengths and challenges.	Using Chronic Absence to Map Interrupted Schooling, Instructional Loss and Educational Inequity Emerging Attendance Data Reveals Troubling, Early Trends Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning Questions to Ask When Looking at Your Data Are Students Present and Accounted For? An Examination of State Attendance Policies During the Covid-19 Pandemic Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning Resources for Identifying Assets and Challenges for Attending School
Step 3: Craft Engagement Strategies. Take a multi-tiered approach to engagement, especially for priority student groups, that starts in the	Chronic Absence: 3 Tiers of Intervention Belonging to School: Phase I, Spring Belonging to School: Phase I, Spring (Blank) Bridges to School (Phase II Summer)

spring, continues in the summer and is amplified in the fall.	Bridges to School (Phase II Summer) (Blank) Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the Covid Era Guide to Using the Attendance Playbook: Smart Strategies for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the Covid Era
Step 4: Reflect, Learn and Improve. After each phase of work, invest in taking stock to assess what worked and what can be improved for the future	Possible issues to explore include: • Where have we seen the greatest improvements in attendance and engagement? • What were the short- and long-term unintended consequences, positive and negative, of past attendance interventions? • Which attendance improvement interventions do we want to continue? • Which interventions do we want to modify?

Resources

Attendance Works - Making the Case
This webpage provides multiple handouts that explain how to work with school partners to encourage student attendance.

Check & Connect - Online Mentoring Guide
This mentoring guide contains three focus areas: Creative Relationship Building; Structured Conversations; and Interactive Interventions.

Freshman Year: The Make-it or Break-it Year
This brief article demonstrates the connection between attendance, grades and high school graduation for students in the ninth grade.

Greater Good Magazine - Four Ways Schools Can Support the Whole Child
Based on the science of learning and development, Lisa Flook synthesizes these suggestions to explain how schools can promote child development and support student success.

New Federal Study Finds that Text Messages to Parents Can Reduce Chronic School Absences in Elementary School
This news brief summarizes a study by the American Institutes for Research on the use of text messaging strategies to reduce absenteeism.

Project 10 - Attendance Webpage
Find more information and resources here.

This news story from National Public Radio describes how a principal in Baltimore has taken a personal approach to addressing attendance issues in his school.

References

Attendance Works. (n.d.). *10 Facts about school attendance.* https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/the-problem/10-facts-about-school-attendance/

Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, c., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science, (24)*2, 97-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791

Santibañez L. & Guarino, C. (2020). The effects of absenteeism on academic and social-emotional outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19. *Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE).* https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/effects-absenteeism-academic-and-social-emotional-outcomes

The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. (2007). *Freshman year: The make-it or break-it year.* https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/8354whatmatters-parentfinal.pdf

Upcoming Events

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) Facilitated Course Offerings
The FDLRS Administration has announced the first-quarter offerings of facilitated Professional Development Alternatives courses for 2021-22. The start date for two of these courses is **July 14, 2021**. In addition to the offerings from the local FDLRS Associate Centers, six statewide courses are available to any educator and facilitated by experienced personnel. Ranging from 20 to 60 in-service credits, these offerings include several virtual meetings where participants engage in collegial conversations, share exemplary practices and complete competency-based activities.
For additional questions, email [](#) or call the FDLRS Administration Project Office at 386-312-2265.

The Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (RMTC-D/HH)-See the Sounds Visual Phonics
The RMTC-D/HH is offering a two-day training "See the Sounds Visual Phonics" **on July 22 and 23, 2021, virtually in real time**. Each training day will begin at 9:30 a.m. EDT, and participants

must attend both days. In this training, participants will learn the 52 sounds of the English language and how to represent them visually via hand movements and symbols. This training will provide methods for implementing the use of Visual Phonics in the classroom as well as progress monitoring tools for tracking student progress in learning phonemic awareness, phonics and sounding out words. Visual Phonics is not an additional curriculum, but is a strategy that can be integrated into existing phonics-based curricula or interventions.

For more information and to register click [here](#).

For questions, contact Jennifer Coburn at or Carmelina Hollingsworth at or by phone at 800-356-6731.

Upcoming Webinars

Seeing Beyond the Pandemic: Eye Health, Vision and Learning - American Optometric Center
This webinar will provide key information about the links between vision and learning and how the pandemic and distance learning may have impacted children's eye health. Expert eye health panelists will share information regarding digital eyestrain and other conditions brought on by the increased use of digital devices for online learning and what parents and teachers can do to help.
Date/Time: July 14, 2021 2:00 p.m.
Click [here](#) to register.

Reading and Vision Accessibility in Your Pocket (Zoom)
Smartphones and tablets have built-in features that can help with reading and seeing what is on the screen or in the environment. This presentation, offered by the PACER Center, will introduce a sampling of accessibility settings in Apple and Android mobile devices that assist with reading and seeing.
Date/Time: July 20, 2021 2:00 p.m.
Click [here](#) to register.

Planning for Transition: Promising Practices
This workshop offered by the PACER Center will include viewing short videos demonstrating effective transition practices and a discussion of how to incorporate similar strategies when planning for your youth's future.
Date/Time: August 17, 2021 6:30 p.m.
Click [here](#) to register.

Understanding Exceptional Student Education
Exceptional Student Education (ESE) language is often confusing and referred to by many as alphabet soup. This webinar, offered by Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS), will clearly explain the meanings of those pesky acronyms and help you to better understand such things as the ESE eligibility process, categories, and supports, including scholarships. There will also be time to ask clarifying questions.

Date/Time: August 20, 2021 11:30 a.m.
Click here to register.

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Project 10: Transition Education Network
Assists Florida school districts and relevant stakeholders in building capacity to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and post-school outcomes.

Project 10: Transition Education Network
University of South Florida St. Petersburg
Questions or comments?
Email us at .
www.project10.info