

Long-Term Impact of Lower Elementary Chronic Absenteeism in New York State

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INTRODUCTION

Chronic absenteeism is a critical barrier to student achievement: Research consistently demonstrating a strong relationship between missed school days and poor academic performance.

Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic: Contributing to significant learning loss and widening academic achievement and school experience gaps.



This brief explores the longitudinal trend of the chronic absenteeism rate and its correlation with student English Language Arts (ELA) and math test proficiency rates in the same school year and the following school years at the school district grade level.

METHODS



DEFINITION

Chronic absenteeism rate is defined as the percentage of students absent (excused or unexcused) for at least 10% of enrolled instructional days.



DATA

New York State Education Department (NYSED) data on chronic absenteeism (grades 1-12) and students' state proficiency tests (grades 3-8) from 2018–2024 school years (excluding 2020). The dataset consisted of over 700 school districts' records.

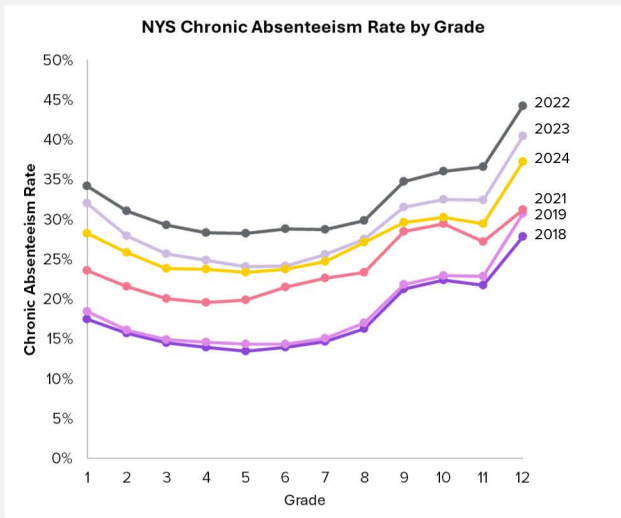


ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

ELA and math proficiency rates were tracked in both the current grade and the subsequent grades for the same cohort at the school district level.

RESULTS

Longitudinal analyses identify shifts in attendance patterns associated with cohorts exposed to the pandemic. Cross-grade and cross-year correlations of chronic absenteeism were examined.



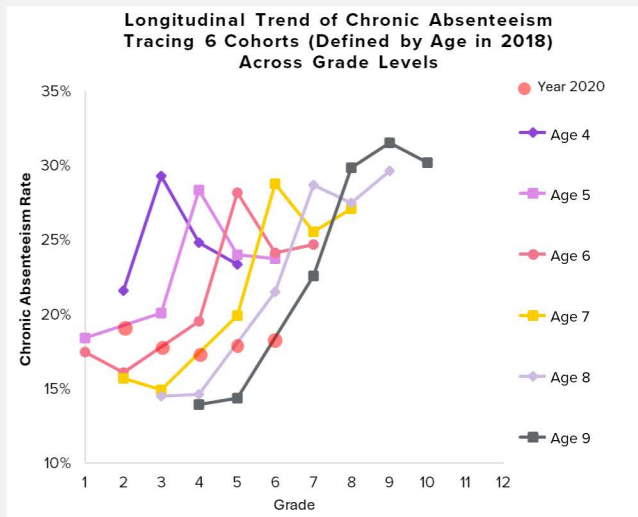
From 2018-2024, statewide yearly trends remain a relatively consistent pattern and rarely intersect.

Chronic absenteeism declines through early grades, reaching lowest point around fourth or fifth grade and then rising again through high school.



RESULTS

When tracking the same cohort's longitudinal data, the early grade trend continues with rising absenteeism following the COVID-19 pandemic



Chronic absenteeism rate is negatively correlated with students' academic performance in the same grade and the following grade.

Chronic absenteeism rates are correlated across grades and years at the school district level.

Correlation Coefficient		English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency Rate			
		Grade 4 in 2021	Grade 5 in 2022	Grade 6 in 2023	Grade 7 in 2024
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	Grade 1 in 2018	-0.40	-0.34	-0.36	-0.34
	Grade 2 in 2019	-0.35	-0.33	-0.34	-0.27
	Grade 3 in 2019	Grade 5 in 2021	Grade 6 in 2022	Grade 7 in 2023	
	Grade 2 in 2018	-0.38	-0.33	-0.46	-0.40
	Grade 3 in 2019	-0.31	-0.30	-0.44	-0.35
	Grade 3 in 2021	Grade 4 in 2022	Grade 5 in 2023	Grade 6 in 2024	
	Grade 1 in 2019	-0.46	-0.40	-0.33	-0.38
	Grade 2 in 2021	-0.39	-0.31	-0.26	-0.24
	Grade 3 in 2018	Grade 4 in 2019	Grade 6 in 2021	Grade 7 in 2022	
Grade 3 in 2018	-0.38	-0.37	-0.44	-0.38	

Correlation Coefficient		Math Proficiency Rate			
		Grade 4 in 2021	Grade 5 in 2022	Grade 6 in 2023	Grade 7 in 2024
Chronic Absenteeism Rate	Grade 1 in 2018	-0.35	-0.38	-0.43	-0.43
	Grade 2 in 2019	-0.39	-0.39	-0.37	-0.39
		Grade 3 in 2019	Grade 5 in 2021	Grade 6 in 2022	Grade 7 in 2023
	Grade 2 in 2018	-0.45	-0.33	-0.47	-0.46
	Grade 3 in 2019	-0.36	-0.33	-0.45	-0.44
		Grade 3 in 2021	Grade 4 in 2022	Grade 5 in 2023	Grade 6 in 2024
	Grade 1 in 2019	-0.45	-0.46	-0.46	-0.43
	Grade 2 in 2021	-0.33	-0.34	-0.33	-0.29
		Grade 3 in 2018	Grade 4 in 2019	Grade 6 in 2021	Grade 7 in 2022
	Grade 3 in 2018	-0.42	-0.44	-0.36	-0.44

DISCUSSION

High rates of chronic absenteeism are a complex problem.

Chronic absenteeism rate follows grade-level patterns compounded by disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likely all students would experience the similar impact on absenteeism from other factors.

It's important to study both yearly snapshots and longitudinal trends of absenteeism.

Early-grade chronic absenteeism has lasting negative academic effects, emphasizing the need for earlier intervention.[1]

At the school district level, the correlations across grades and years of chronic absenteeism rates imply underlying factors, which warrant systemic strategies that address root causes in communities.

LIMITATION & REFERENCE

Limitation: The analysis is limited to available aggregated data at school district level, not at the individual level or any data other than education to adjust correlations.

Reference: [1] Prekindergarten Attendance, Every Day Counts!

<https://www.nysed.gov/early-learning/prekindergarten-attendance-every-day-counts>.

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