

Chronic Absenteeism

Original version presented by Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley
to the Massachusetts' Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on October 24, 2023

Updated with Monomoy Regional data and presented by Superintendent Scott Carpenter
to the Monomoy Regional School Committee on November 9, 2023



What is Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspension.

Students missing 18 days or more (regardless of reason) in a 180 day school year are considered chronically absent.

Why should we be concerned about Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism rates have doubled since COVID. This isn't just a Monomoy issue – it's doubled across Massachusetts and the country. But, this is an issue that needs to be addressed HERE and NOW!

- Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Nationwide, half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.
- Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.
- Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school year negatively affects a student's academic performance. When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

EducationWeek®

Student Attendance Rates Show Signs of Rebounding



By [Evie Blad](#) — October 18, 2023 ⌚ 2 min read

Of the 11 states that track chronic absenteeism, MA has had the most significant drop in absenteeism post-COVID.



THE WHITE HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

Chronic Absenteeism and Disrupted Learning Require an All-Hands-on-Deck Approach

desè

MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education



The New York Times

SUBSCRIBER-ONLY NEWSLETTER

Jessica Grose

OPINION

Lenient Grading Won't Help Struggling Students. Addressing Chronic Absenteeism Will.

Oct. 18, 2023, 8:00 a.m. ET

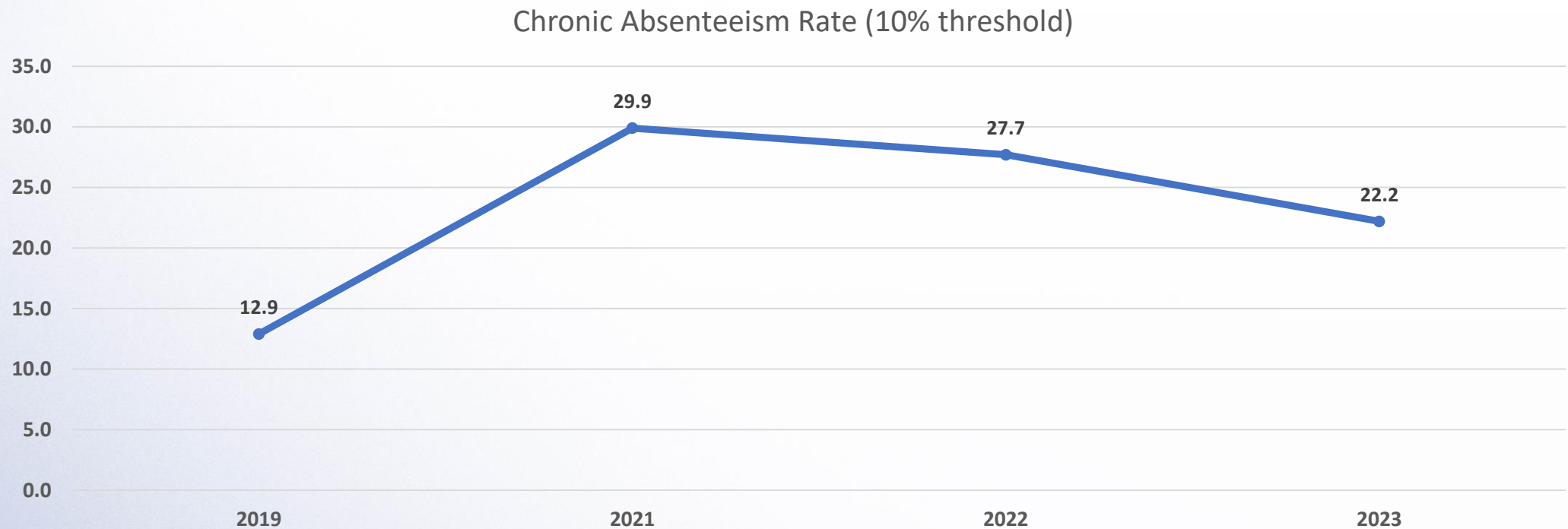
EducationWeek®

3 Steps to Drive Down Chronic Absenteeism



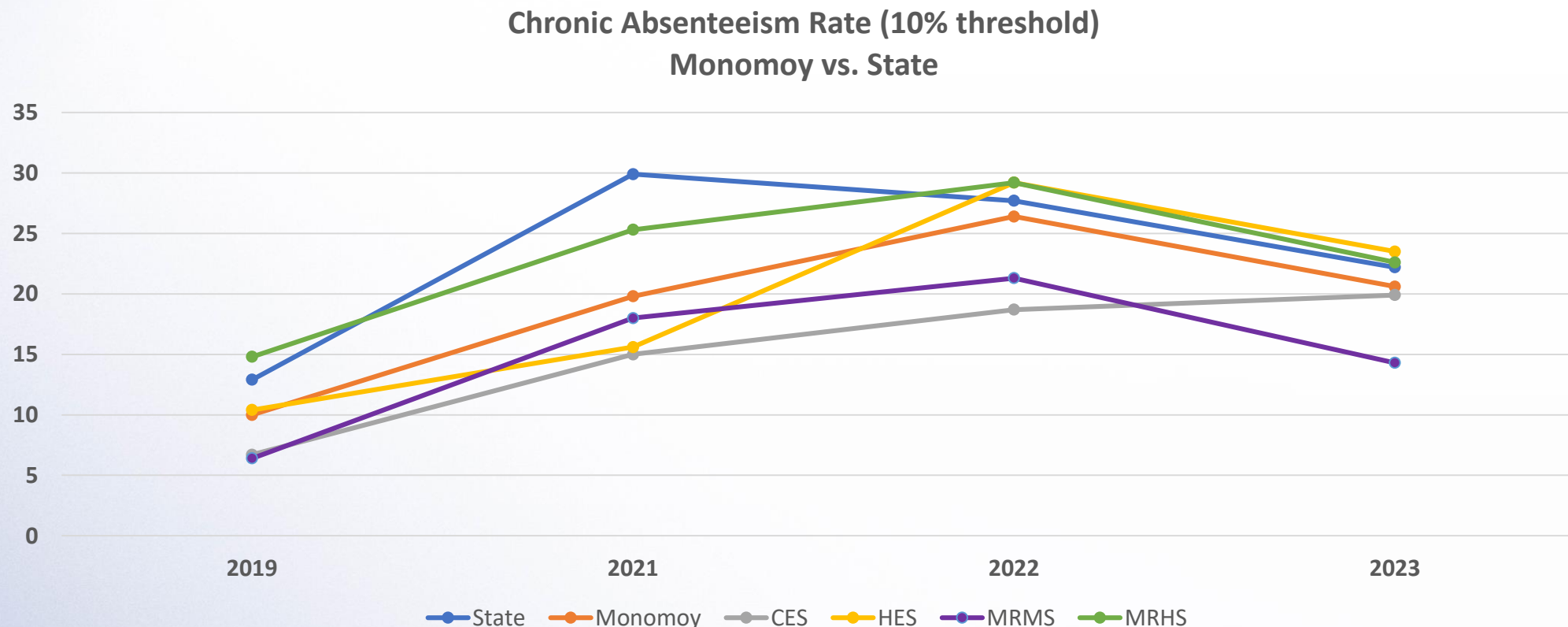
By [Caitlynn Peetz](#) — October 16, 2023 ⌚ 8 min read

Chronic absenteeism rate - 2019 to 2023



The chronic absenteeism rate had been running a little over 10% prior to the COVID pandemic, and it more than doubled statewide following the pandemic. While the pandemic has subsided, last year in Massachusetts over 1 in 5 students missed 10% or more of their school days.

Chronic absenteeism rate - 2019 to 2023



Like the rest of the state, Monomoy's chronic absenteeism rate more than doubled since the "end" of the COVID pandemic. While the rates of chronic absenteeism have begun to show signs of rebounding (statewide and in much of Monomoy), Chatham Elementary's rate continues to increase.

Chronic absenteeism by grade span 2019-2023

Variance across grade spans, but all well behind pre-pandemic levels

| All MA Schools | 2019 CA % | 2022 CA% | 2023 CA% | % Change 19-23 |
|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------------|
| Elementary | 10.0 | 25.5 | 20.3 | +103% |
| Elem/MS | 12.1 | 30.0 | 24.8 | +105% |
| Middle | 11.3 | 25.0 | 20.0 | +77% |
| MS/HS | 22.0 | 37.0 | 32.2 | +46% |
| High School | 23.0 | 35.1 | 29.9 | +30% |

Pre-COVID pandemic, chronic absenteeism rates in Massachusetts generally increased as students got older, going from a 10% rate in elementary school to 23% by high school. Post-pandemic, chronic absenteeism remains elevated across ages but more so at the elementary level.

Chronic absenteeism by grade span 2019-2023

Variance across grade spans, but all well behind pre-pandemic levels

| Monomoy Schools Compared to State Schools | 2019 CA % | 2022 CA% | 2023 CA% | % Change 19-23 |
|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| MA Elementary | 10 | 25.5 | 20.3 | 103% |
| Chatham Elementary | 6.7 | 18.7 | 19.9 | 197% |
| Harwich Elementary | 10.4 | 29.2 | 23.5 | 126% |
| MA Middle School | 11.3 | 25 | 20 | 77% |
| MRMS | 6.4 | 21.3 | 14.3 | 123% |
| MA High School | 23 | 35.1 | 29.9 | 30% |
| MRHS | 14.8 | 29.2 | 22.6 | 53% |

Monomoy Regional Middle School has had the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism in our district, both pre- and post-COVID. Unlike the state trend where younger students often have lower rates of chronic absenteeism, Harwich Elementary has the highest post-pandemic rate of chronic absenteeism (slightly higher than Monomoy Regional High School).

Chronic absenteeism by Student Group 2023

Our most vulnerable students are also our most chronically absent.

| Monomoy Schools | All Students | Students with IEPs | English Language Learners | Low Income | High Needs (IEP, EL, and/or Low Income) |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Chatham Elementary | 19.9 | 33.3 | 16.7 | 25.3 | 24.1 |
| Harwich Elementary | 23.5 | 31.0 | 37.9 | 32.3 | 29.9 |
| MRMS | 14.3 | 12.4 | 13.3 | 15.8 | 14.6 |
| MRHS | 22.6 | 35.1 | 34.8 | 30.1 | 29.2 |
| District | 20.6 | 26.7 | 29.1 | 26.5 | 25.0 |
| % increase compared to All Students | --- | 30% | 41% | 29% | 21% |

Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and receiving special education services, immigrants learning the English language, and those coming from low income household who may lack enrichment opportunities are on average between 21% and 41% more likely to be chronically absent than their peers in our district.



Why should we be concerned about Chronic Absenteeism?

Diving into the state's and Monomoy's data to understand the impact of attendance on learning and graduating from high school.

MCAS achievement results for chronically absent students

| ELA | 2023 Average Scaled Score | | | 2023 % Meeting or Exceeding | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference |
| MA Grades 3-8 | 496 | 483 | -13 | 46% | 25% | -21% |
| MA Grade 10 | 508 | 490 | -18 | 65% | 37% | -28% |

| Math | 2023 Average Scaled Score | | | 2023 % Meeting or Exceeding | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference |
| MA Grades 3-8 | 497 | 482 | -15 | 45% | 20% | -25% |
| MA Grade 10 | 504 | 487 | -17 | 57% | 23% | -24% |

Across the state of Massachusetts, the learning loss for chronically absent students can be seen in how they fair on state assessments of student learning, where chronically absent students are about half as likely to meet or exceed grade-level proficiency on MCAS exams.

MCAS achievement results for chronically absent students

| ELA | 2023 Average Scaled Score | | | 2023 % Meeting or Exceeding | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference |
| MA Grades 3-8 | 496 | 483 | -13 | 46% | 25% | -21% |
| Monomoy Grade 3-8 | 501 | 496 | -5 | 52% | 44% | -8% |
| MA Grade 10 | 508 | 490 | -18 | 65% | 37% | -28% |
| Monomoy Grade 10 | 507 | 504 | -3 | 52% | 65% | 13% |

| Math | 2023 Average Scaled Score | | | 2023 % Meeting or Exceeding | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference | Not Chronically Absent | Chronically Absent | Difference |
| MA Grades 3-8 | 497 | 482 | -15 | 45% | 20% | -25% |
| Monomoy Grade 3-8 | 499 | 492 | -7 | 49% | 41% | -8% |
| MA Grade 10 | 504 | 487 | -17 | 57% | 23% | -24% |
| Monomoy Grade 10 | 504 | 501 | -3 | 63% | 50% | -13% |

The learning loss for chronically absent students at Monomoy is less than what is seen across Massachusetts, which could mean that our teachers do a better job of catching students up who miss class. However, the same statewide trend holds where students who are chronically absent generally do worse on state assessments of student learning.

Why should we be concerned about Chronic Absenteeism?

- **Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Nationwide, half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.**
 - *During the 2022-2023 school year, 40% of Monomoy's students who missed at least 2 days of school in September went on to become chronically absent for the year and cumulatively missed nearly a month of school or more.*
- **Poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade.**
 - *Students ability to read is measured on a Lexile scale. In 2023, Monomoy's chronically absent elementary students had lower end-of-year Lexile scores (averaging 662) than their non-chronically absent classmates (who averaged 728). Our chronically absent third graders had end-of-year Lexile scores that were on average closer to what would be seen in children as they enter third grade rather and not the level of reading proficiency that you'd expect to see in children at the end of third grade.*
- **By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.**
 - *Compared to their non-chronically absent peers, Monomoy students who were chronically absent in middle school while in Grade 6 have been over 16 times more likely to drop out of high school a few years later than their peers.*
- **Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school year negatively affects a student's academic performance.**
 - *During the 2022-2023 school year, Monomoy's chronically absent high school students had an average GPA of 2.8 (in the low B range) vs. their non-chronically absent classmates who had an average GPA of 3.5 (in the B+/A- range) – this can impact which colleges students get admitted to, their eligibility for merit-based scholarships, and how prepared they are for life beyond graduation.*

Attendance Matters