



# INSIGHTS ON ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

FROM YOUR DIVISION DIRECTORS AND COUNSELORS



## HELLO!

The 2024-2025 school year is almost over! As the year winds down, attendance has become a major topic of discussion. Regular school attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic success, yet many students struggle with tardiness, chronic absenteeism, and disengagement from schoolwork. Rates of chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10% or more of school days for any reason) have soared in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While missing just a few days may not seem like a big deal, but the long-term impact can be significant.

In this month's newsletter, we will take time to consider reasons for increased absences, the impact of chronic absenteeism, and how to combat it.

*Danielle Wattleton-Anderson,  
Lia Gerety, Lauren Garrett,  
and Kate Smith*



## HIGHLIGHTED ARTICLES ON ABSENTEEISM

Our college counselors, Dr. Fitch and Ms. Hardie, reinforce that attendance in middle and high school has a strong impact on readiness and success in college. Here are some articles on the topic that they suggest:

[Depth, Breadth, and Persistence of Post-Pandemic Absenteeism](#)

[Action is Imperative](#)

[Why is attendance so important?](#)

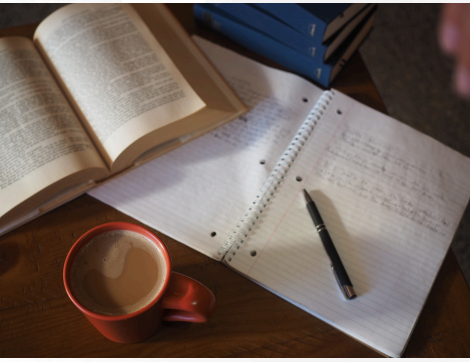
[Does the Timing of the Absence Matter?](#)

## AT A GLANCE

- 1) HIGHLIGHTED ARTICLES
- 2) FACTS TO CONSIDER
- 3) WHAT IS THE IMPACT?
- 4) WHAT IS MY ROLE AS A PARENT?
- 5) EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND ABSENTEEISM

## Looking at the facts...

- Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year (about 18 days in a typical year).
- By 6th grade, chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of dropping out of high school.
- Students who are chronically absent in early grades are less likely to read on grade level by 3rd grade.
- Even missing 2-3 days per month can lead to significant academic setbacks, particularly in math and reading.
- Students who are frequently absent in middle and high school are more likely to struggle with college and career readiness.**



## What is the impact? Is it really so bad to miss school?

- ◆ **Lost Learning Time:** Every missed day means missing out on discussions, activities, and hands-on learning that cannot be replicated through homework. Students are also impacted by teachers needing to take time to catch those that have been out back up. Additionally, students miss time to build executive functioning skills that are crucial for later success in college and beyond.
- ◆ **Increased Anxiety & Stress:** The more students miss, the harder it is to catch up, creating a cycle of frustration and avoidance. When students return, it can be very challenging to balance current work and make up work.
- ◆ **Weakened Social Connections:** Absences can lead to missed opportunities to form friendships, engage in teamwork, and build confidence in social settings.
- ◆ **Disrupted Routines:** Consistent attendance builds strong habits that help students stay organized, responsible, and prepared for the future.



### Student Attendance is Strongly Associated with Academic Success



**K-1<sup>st</sup> Grade:** Students who attend regularly in the early grades perform better on measures of academic and social and emotional capacities.

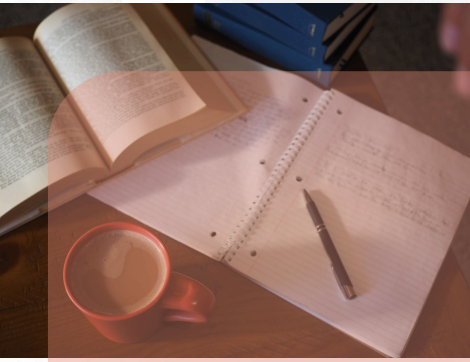
**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to be able to read proficiently by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

**Middle School Success:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have passing grades in middle school

**High School Completion:** Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate from high school

**College Completion:** Students who attend school regularly in high school are more likely to persist in college and graduate

*This graphic, from the nonprofit group Attendance Works, details the effect of frequent absences at each stage of academic development.*



## Improving attendance will take dedication from both schools and parents. So, what is the parents' role?



### ✓ Set Clear Expectations About Attendance

- Let your child know that you think learning is important. Show them you are interested in their school activities and tell them that you want them to do well in school.

- Reinforce the message that going to school is not optional.
- Encourage a "We go to school unless you're truly sick" mindset.
- Do not provide inappropriate excuses for your child to miss school. Do not let them stay home from school for minor ailments – particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work.

### ✓ Create a Structured Routine

- Establish a bedtime and wake-up schedule to make mornings smoother.
- Prep school bags, lunches, and clothes the night before to avoid morning chaos.

### ✓ Track Absences & Address Patterns

- Keep track of missed days and have conversations with your child about why they were absent.
- If your child frequently resists going to school, explore the root cause—academic struggles, social issues, or anxiety.
- Frequent illness can be a sign of an underlying issue. Visit your doctor or speak to a counselor if you notice your child is frequently sick.

### ✓ Teach the Real-World Impact of Attendance

- Connect attendance to real-life responsibilities—jobs require punctuality and reliability.
- Help students understand that consistent attendance improves their future opportunities.

### ✓ Reinforce Effort & Accountability

- Praise progress and school engagement, not just grades
- Remind students that showing up, participating, and trying their best is what leads to long-term success.
- Get involved! Data shows that students of parents who are engaged at school have stronger attendance records.

## Executive Functioning Tips

Executive functioning skills are the skills that we use on a daily basis to make decisions, problem solve, manage our emotions and impulses, and organize our thoughts and tasks. These skills are crucial for success.

Here are some executive functioning skills that are important in maintaining consistent attendance:

- **Task Initiation** – This is the ability to start tasks without procrastination. For school attendance, this means being able to get out of bed, get ready, and leave the house on time—especially when you're feeling unmotivated.
- **Organization** – This helps keep track of what you need for school (like homework, clothes, or a lunch), which can reduce stress in the mornings and make getting to school feel smoother and more manageable.
- **Emotional Control** – Being able to manage emotions like anxiety, frustration, or dread can make it easier to face school, even when things are hard socially or academically.

If you feel like your student is struggling with any of these specific skills and it is affecting their attendance, reach out for help!

