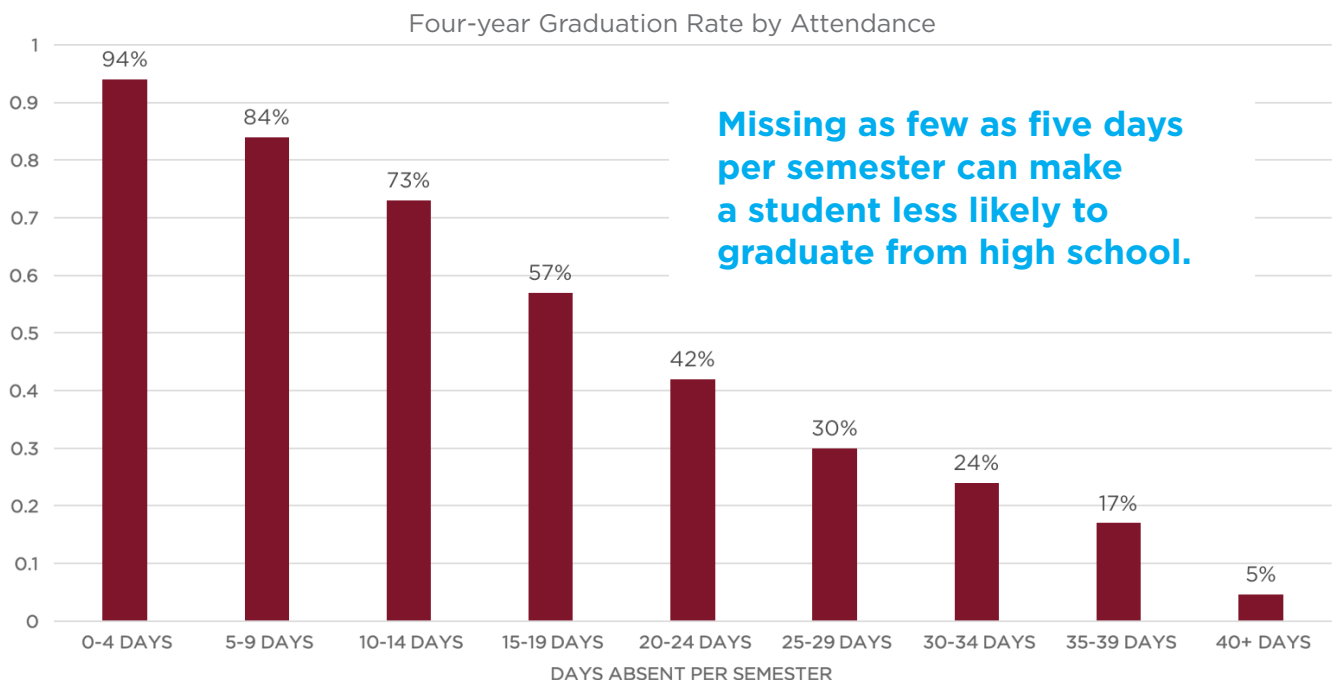


What does UChicago Consortium research say about why attendance matters?

Research from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research (UChicago Consortium) shows that attendance is important for all students. A student's attendance strongly influences his or her grades, which is why almost all freshmen with strong attendance pass their classes. In fact, research demonstrates that attendance is far more significant in determining whether students pass their classes than student background characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and poverty level) or test scores.

This trend begins in the middle grades, where a student who misses fewer than two days per school year in middle school has a 93 percent chance of being on-track freshman year, while a student who misses about two weeks a year of middle school has just a 66 percent chance of being on-track. Following the transition to high school, students miss almost three times as many days of school in ninth grade as they did in eighth grade. As a result, many students who were high-achieving in middle school and did not appear to be in danger of failing may struggle with attendance and become at risk of getting off track in ninth grade.

In high school, students who have the best chance of enrolling and persisting in college have average attendance rates of 98 percent, meaning they miss less than a week over the course of the entire school year. Yet, in Chicago Public Schools (CPS), 30 percent of ninth-graders are chronically absent, attending school less than 90 percent of the time, and each week of absence per semester in ninth grade is associated with a more than 20 percent decline in the probability of graduating from high school.



What strategies have some high schools used to improve attendance?

Maintaining accurate and accessible attendance records

Although taking attendance may seem like a tedious task, ensuring accurate attendance records for student absences and tardies enables school leaders and teachers to trust the data they see. Moreover, when weekly reports present attendance data in accessible formats, teams of educators are able to carefully monitor attendance data and quickly identify both groups and individual students in need of intervention.

Building stronger, more supportive relationships between adults and students in the school building

Students desire individualized attention, feedback on performance, and clear instructions, all of which can lead to greater engagement and lower rates of absenteeism. Schools can support attendance through a culture where teachers monitor student attendance, engage with students regarding why absences are occurring, phone home after absences and tardies, and convey to students how important attendance is. The relationships that are essential to school engagement cannot be built if students are not present; therefore, early intervention is particularly important.

Ensuring instruction is engaging and relevant to students

Students are motivated to come to school when they feel the adults in the building care about them, and when the instruction captures their interest. Research suggests that teachers who attend to students' engagement in class material and coursework performance can help those students connect with school and persevere.

Creating a team approach of collective responsibility for student attendance

Attendance improves when teachers take collective responsibility for the success of the whole school, not just their individual students. A culture that stresses collective responsibility for absences and academic success might include team meetings around real-time attendance reports or shared team outreach when students do not show up to class. Some schools celebrate classes with exceptional attendance, create charts and graphs of attendance for hallways, and mention attendance at assemblies and morning announcements.

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