HONSCHOOL ON TRACK 2015

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S 2015 REPORT ON CALIFORNIA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRUANCY & ABSENTEEISM CRISIS



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The recommendations expressed in this report are based on research and input from the staff of the Attorney General's Special Project Team and office. These recommendations should not be considered as representing the views of any agency or organization that contributed to the report.

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Below is a list of the over 250 schools, school districts, and county offices of education throughout California, as well as non-profit organizations and others, who have contributed to this report.

Key Partners

- · The Ad Council
- · Attendance Works
- California Association of African American
 Superintendents and Administrators
- · California Department of Education
- · The California Endowment
- · California Health and Human Services Agency

- · California School-Based Health Alliance
- · Children Now
- · The Education Trust-West
- · Eagle Software
- · Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
- · Judicial Council of California
- · Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

Contributors from the Education Community

Alameda Unified School District	Albany Unified School District	McSwain Union Elementary School District	Merced River School District
Alexander Valley Union School District	Alvord Unified School District	Merced City School District	Montague Elementary School District
Anaheim City School District	Antelope Elementary School District	Monrovia Unified School District	Montebello Unified School District
Antioch Unified School District	Apple Valley Unified School District	Monte Rio Union School District	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Arvin Union School District	Auburn Union School District	Mountain Empire Unified School District	Murrieta Valley Unified School District
Azusa Unified School District	Baldwin Park Unified School District	Mt. Diablo Unified School District	New Hope Elementary School District
Ballard School District	Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District	Natomas Unified School District	Newman Crows-Landing Unified School District
Bassett Unified School District	Beaumont Unified School District	Newhall School District	North County Joint Union School District
Bellflower Unified School District	Bennett Valley School District	Newport Mesa Unified School District	Oak Grove School District
Big Creek School District	Big Oak Flatt/Groveland Unified School District	North Monterey County Unified School District	Oak Valley Union Elementary School District
Big Valley Joint Unified School District	Biggs Unified School District	Oak Park Unified School District	Orange Unified School District
Black Butte Union Elementary School District	Bonny Doon Union Elementary School District	Oakley Union Elementary School District	Pacifica School District
Bonsall Unified School District	Brisbane School District	Outside Creek School District	Parlier Unified School District
Burlingame School District	Butte Valley Unified School District	Palmdale School District	Paso Robles Public Schools
Buttonwillow Union School District	Cajon Valley Unified School District	Pasadena Unified School District	Perris Elementary School District
Calaveras Unified School District	Caliente Union School District	Penn Valley Union Elementary School District	Pierce Joint Unified School District
Calipatria Unified School District	Canyon Elementary School District	Petaluma City Schools	Pittsburg Unified School District
Capistrano Unified School District	Carpinteria Unified School District	Piner-Olivet Union School District	Placer Hills Union School District
Cascade Union Elementary School District	Centralia Elementary School District	Placentia Yorba Linda Unified School District	Pollock Pines Elementary School District
Ceres Unified School District	Charter Oak Unified School District	Placerville Elementary School District	Pope Valley Union Elementary School District
Chatom Union School District	Chico Unified School District	Pond Union School District	Red Bluff Union Elementary School District
Chula Vista Elementary School District	Clovis Unified School District	Ravenswood City School District	Reed Union School District
Coachella Valley Unified School District	Coast Unified School District	Redlands Unified School District	Rincon Valley Union School District
Coffee Creek Elementary School District	Colton Joint Unified School District	Rialto Unified School District	Rio School District
Columbine Elementary School District	Compton Unified School District	Rio Dell School District	Romoland School District

Contra Costa County Office of Education	Corcoran Unified School District	Riverbank Unified School District	Round Valley Joint Elementary School District
Corona-Norco Unified School District	Covina-Valley Unified School District	Rosemead School District	Salida Union School District
Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District	Del Mar Union School District	Sacramento City Unified School District	San Bernardino City Schools
Dehesa School District	Denair Unified School District	Salinas City Elementary School District	San Jacinto Unified School District
Downey Unified School District	Dinuba Unified School District	San Diego Unified School District	San Leandro Unified School District
Durham Unified School District	East Side Union High School District	San Juan Unified School District	San Luis Coastal Unified School District
El Segundo Unified School District	Edison Elementary School District	San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District	Sanger Unified School District
Escondido Union School District	Elk Grove Unified School District	San Ramon Valley Unified School District	Santa Clara Unified School District
Exeter Unified School District	Evergreen School District	Santa Clara Elementary School District	Santa Maria-Bonita School District
Fallbrook Union Elementary School District	Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District	Santa Cruz City High School and Elementary School Districts	Santa Rita Union School District
Feather Falls Union Elementary School District	Fillmore Unified School District	Santa Paula Unified School District	Saugus Union School District
Fontana Unified School District	Foresthill Union School District	Santee School District	Semitropic Elementary School District
Forestville Union School District	Fort Bragg Unified School District	Scotts Valley Unified School District	San Francisco Unified School District
Fountain Valley School District	Fowler Unified School District	Sequoia Union Elementary School District	Solano County Office of Education
Fremont Unified School District	Fullerton School District	Sierra Sands Unified School District	Sonora School District
Garden Grove Unified School District	Glendora Unified School District	Soledad Unified School District	Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District
Glendale Unified School District	Guerneville School District	Southside Elementary School District	St. Helena Unified School District
Goleta Union School District	Hawthorne School District	Standard School District	Stockton Unified School District
Hamilton Unified School District	Hope School District	Stony Creek Joint Unified School District	Sunnyvale School District
Hayward Unified School District	Imperial Unified School District	Susanville School District	Sylvan Union School District
Hueneme Elementary School District	Jacoby Creek School District	Tehachapi Unified School District	Temecula Valley Unified School District
Indian Springs School District	Jamul-Dulzura Union School District	Templeton Unified School District	Thermalito Union Elementary School District
Jamestown School District	Kelseyville Unified School District	Three Rivers School District	Torrance Unified School District
Julian Union School District	Kerman Unified School District	Tres Pinos Union Elementary School District	Tulare City School District
Kirkwood Elementary School District	Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District	Tulelake Basin Joint Unified School District	Turlock Unified School District
Kings County Office of Education	Lancaster School District	Vacaville Unified School District	Val Verde Unified School District
Lake Tahoe Unified School District	Los Angeles Unified School District	Vaile Lindo School District	Vallejo City Unified School District
Latrobe School District	Lindsay Unified School District	Victor Elementary School District	Visalia Unified School District
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Linden Unified School District	Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District	Vista Del Mar Union School District	Vista Unified School District
Little Lake City School District	Long Beach Unified School District	Washington Unified School District – Fresno	Washington Union School District
Loma Prieta Joint Union School District	Lost Hills Union School District	Waterford Unified School District	Weaver Union School District
Los Alamitos Unified School District	Mammoth Unified School District	West Park Elementary School District	Westminster Elementary School District
Luther Burbank School District	Marysville Joint School District	Wheatland School District	Whittier City School District
Maple Elementary School District	Maxwell Unified School District	Wilmar Union Elementary School District	Wilsona School District
Mattole Unified School District	Menifee Union School District	Wiseburn Unified School District	Woodlake Unified School District
Moraga School District	Mount Shasta Union School District	Woodland Joint Unified School District	Yreka Union School District
Morongo Unified School District	Mt. Valley Unified School District	Yuba City Unified School District	Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District

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In School + On Track 2015

The Elementary School Attendance Imperative

California is starting to take notice that improving elementary school attendance is a critical piece of a smart, cost-effectiveⁱ approach to economic development, public health and public safety. The facts are clear: when students are chronically absent from elementary school, they fall behind academically, they are less likely to graduate from high school, and they are more likely to be unemployed, on public assistance, or victims or perpetrators of crime.

This trajectory is far from inevitable; it is a solvable problem. Putting our kids on a path to success requires attention to student attendance, particularly in the early years. Research shows that early school attendance is a critical building block to a child's

of Students Chronically
Absent in Kindergarten & 1st
Grade Are Unable to Read
On-Level by 3rd Grade

Absences Lead to
Dropouts

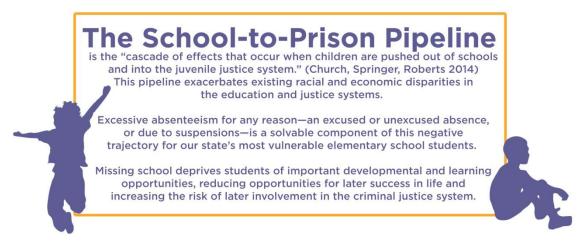
Students Who Cannot Read
On-Level in 3rd Grade Are

4 X

More Likely to Drop Out
Than Kids Who Can

success. Yet, many elementary students miss valuable learning time. These patterns of missing school start young—as early as preschool—and can have lasting, cumulative effects on students' academic achievement and social development.

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris has made reducing elementary school truancy and chronic absence a priority since her time as San Francisco's District Attorney. She is joined in this work by many key partners, including State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Secretary of Health and Human Services Diana Dooley, and respected education and civil rights leaders across the state. As part of this effort, the Attorney General releases an annual report, *In School + On Track*, to disseminate effective practices for reducing student absences, to track changes in statewide attendance rates, to raise awareness about the critical importance of elementary school attendance and to call others to action. Vi Vii



KEY TERMS

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE (ADA)²

ADA is the number of days of school a student attends divided by the total number of days of instruction. A student attending every day would equal one ADA.

ADA is typically calculated at the school, rather than student, level.

TRUANCY

In California, a student is truant if he/she is absent or tardy by more than 30 minutes without a valid excuse on 3 days in a school year.

HABITUAL TRUANCY³

A student is habitually truant if he/she is absent without a valid excuse for 5 days during a school year.

CHRONIC TRUANCY⁴

A student is chronically truant if he/she is absent without a valid excuse for at least 10% of the school year.

CHRONIC ABSENCE⁵

In California, chronic absence is defined as being absent for any reason (excused or unexcused) for at least 10% of the school year. Thus, in a 175- or 180-day school year, a student who misses 18 days of school or more is chronically absent.

EXCUSED ABSENCE⁶

Valid excuses may include illness, doctor or dentist appointments, personal reasons justified by a parent or guardian and other reasons within the discretion of school administrators.

In the 2015 report, we release new and updated data on the still alarming rates of elementary school truancy and chronic absence across the state. More than 1 in 5 elementary school students in California are truant based on data from the California Department of Education. Furthermore, we estimate that 8% of elementary school students in California are chronically absent. That means *over 230,000 of our youngest students are already at risk of falling behind in school*.

Our new data also show which of our students are missing the most school, with disproportionately high rates of absenteeism and suspensions for students of color, low-income, homeless, foster youth and special education students.

We have also begun to see a positive trend across California: increased attention and more concerted efforts to improve elementary school attendance. This report highlights some of the districts and counties engaged in this important work. These districts and counties serve as examples of progress in many locales across the state.

Momentum to Improve Attendance

Despite persistently high rates of elementary school absenteeism in California, there is momentum building among California school districts to improve elementary student attendance. Our 2015 data demonstrate that public awareness of the importance of school attendance has increased. Moreover, school districts are taking action to reduce truancy and chronic absence and to rethink discipline policies that remove elementary students from the classroom.

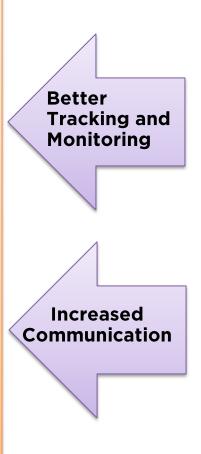
"There is momentum building among California school districts to improve elementary student attendance."

While some of the changes school districts are making are innovative and new, many of the changes are more fundamental. For example, districts are improving their basic infrastructure for tracking,

monitoring and addressing elementary school attendance problems. These common-sense changes include more systematic tracking and scheduled reviews of data, as well as data-sharing to collaboratively address attendance issues.^{ix}

The movement to more systematically track and monitor attendance data allows districts to make crucial improvements in their daily work. Evidence from our survey^x suggests these changes are occurring in many districts statewide.

- In 2014, 72% of districts reported that they collect and monitor data on student absences and tardies longitudinally, or year over year. In 2015, 82% of districts reported that they collect and monitor student absences and tardies longitudinally.
- The number of districts who communicate with schools in their district at least once a month about their rates of truancy and chronic absence has steadily increased over the past three years, from 54% of districts in 2013 to 60% of districts in 2015.
- 60% of school districts also report that they now have a system in place to alert a new school about a student's attendance history when a student transfers into their district from another district in California. While still inadequate to ensure students with poor attendance patterns receive the assistance they need when they transfer to a new school, this represents an improvement from 2014 when less than 50% of school districts reported this capability.



Local education leaders also report a shift in the culture of school attendance from a focus on punishment to greater emphasis on prevention. As part of this movement, district and county leaders report extensive efforts to engage parents in attendance improvement initiatives. Districts report that parent outreach is most effective when it includes:

- Discussions about student attendance data;
- Information about the clear, negative impact of missed school on students' academic success;
 and
- Explanation of the critical role that parents play in ensuring their child attends school every single day.

For example, read more about what Long Beach Unified School District is doing to engage parents in attendance improvement efforts at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/lb-usd

To aid this outreach effort, Attorney General Harris has partnered with the Ad Council, a non-profit organization with expertise in public messaging, to combat California's elementary school chronic absence and truancy crisis. Throughout early 2015, with support from The California Endowment, the Ad

Council went straight to the source to learn more: it interviewed school administrators, teachers, and parents of chronically absent elementary students throughout California. The research found that although parents want what is best for their children, they do not always connect early absences to long-term consequences.

In fact, despite overwhelming evidence from research on the importance of consistently attending school in the early grades and the negative impact of high-rates of absenteeism in elementary school, the study found the following misconceptions among parents.

Absenteeism in Elementary School: Common Misconceptions

Early grade attendance is not as important as high school
Students will catch up before they get to high school
Only absences on consecutive days have a negative impact
Absences are okay as long as the parent signs off

The study also discovered what changes parents' minds: explaining the negative effects of absences, rather than the positive effects of attendance; focusing on the number of absences per month, rather than the number of absences per year; and using statistics to connect early absences to later consequences, rather than relying on abstract statements.^{xii} A full toolkit with the results of this research and tips for educators and community-based organizations will be released in Fall 2015.

Widespread Improvements to Attendance Practices

California school districts' efforts to improve elementary school attendance are widespread. Over 95% of surveyed school districts reported they have made changes to their policies and programs to improve elementary school attendance or that they are planning to make changes for the 2015-2016 school year.

"Over 95% of school districts surveyed reported they have made changes to their policies and programs to improve elementary school attendance or that they are planning to make changes for the 2015-2016 school year."

More than 60% of school districts surveved cited increased awareness of attendance issues in their district as a reason for changes in their attendance programs. Almost 60% of school districts also attributed their changing practices to their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

Districts cited a number of improvements to their attendance policies and programs over the past two years, including:

- **22%** of districts began to **contact parents** when a student approaches or reaches the chronic absenteeism threshold in the 2013-2014 school year.
- **25%** of districts began to **review attendance data more frequently** in the 2013-2014 school year.
- 23% of districts began to collect and analyze data on the number of students who are chronically absent in the 2014-2015 school year.
- More than 25% of districts changed their discipline policies in the 2013-2014 school year so that students do not miss as much school for suspensions. More than 25% of districts reported making this change for the 2014-2015 school year.
- 25% of districts plan to allocate additional financial resources to prevention and intervention strategies in the 2015-2016 school year.

Our analysis of 200 LCAPs also demonstrates an increased and widespread focus on attendance in 2015. Almost 90% of district LCAPs in our study state goals for chronic absence—a significant improvement from 2014 when just over half of LCAPs reviewed stated chronic absence goals. XiV

Furthermore, 75% of all school districts provided specific, annual, measureable chronic absence goals in their 2015 LCAPs while only 30% did in 2014.

Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)⁷

Every school district, charter school, and county office of education must adopt a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), which specifies annual goals and action plans that address all eight state priorities.

One of the state's 8 priorities is "pupil engagement," which is to be measured by school attendance rates, chronic absenteeism rates, middle school and high school dropout rates, and high school graduation rates.

LCAPs must address all 8 state priorities for the entire student body, as well as for numerically significant pupil subgroups, which include racial/ethnic groups, lowincome students, English Learners, students with disabilities, and foster youth.

"Almost 90% of district LCAPs in our study state goals for chronic absence — a significant improvement from 2014 when just over half of LCAPs reviewed stated chronic absence goals."

Examples of LCAP's With Specific, Annual, Measurable Goals

Loleta Union School District shows a detailed understanding of its students' needs in its LCAP. In order to meet its goal of reducing chronic absence by 5% annually, the district identifies a wide range of strategies ranging from school climate-related actions (putting soccer goals on school fields to increase Hispanic families' presence on school grounds) to administrative actions (buying an automated phone announcement system and providing postcards for teachers to send to families) to healthrelated actions (reducing lice absences by providing lice kits for families).

Oroville City Elementary School District set modest attendance goals in its LCAP, such as decreasing chronic absence by 1% annually. However, the strategies to achieve those goals were specific and promising. For example, the district will provide Hmong and Spanish-speaking Parent Liaisons to communicate with and help increase participation among parents that speak those languages. Likewise, the district has committed to increasing the number of school functions for parents. This shows a specific philosophy that parent participation is important to attendance in that district.

Yet there is still work to be done. Almost 85% of LCAPs still fail to disaggregate their chronic absence goals by subgroup and 66% of district LCAPs do not include current chronic absence data.

California School Districts Are Adopting Effective Elements of Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

Elements of an Effective LCAP	2014 Review of 80 District LCAPs	2015 Review of 200 District LCAPs
Includes chronic absence data	18%	33.9%
States chronic absence goals	52%	88.5%
Includes specific chronic absence goals	30%	74.3%
Lists chronic absence goals by subgroup	5%	15.9%

The Need for State Attendance Data

The lack of chronic absence data in district LCAPs points to a larger problem in California: the continued need to improve the state's attendance data.*

California remains one of only a handful of states^{xvi} that does not track student attendance in its statewide longitudinal student information system, the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS). As a result of the paucity of statewide data, many school districts are unable to access data on attendance for students' previous academic years, especially for students that transfer into their district.^{xvii} A key problem with districts' lack of access to transfer



students' records is that it disproportionally disadvantages foster youth whose school placements change frequently. **viii* Accordingly, 54% of districts report that having access to attendance histories for new students entering the district would help them improve their efforts to track, monitor, and address truancy and chronic absences. **ix

California's student information system also does not track information on the number of students who are chronically absent.** This puts the onus on districts to develop their own systems for tracking such data, as they are required to use them to set measurable goals for reducing chronic absence in their LCAPs. Indeed, 1 in 10 districts told us they do not currently have access to chronic absence rates for all schools in their districts and for all subgroups of students.**

The Extent of the Elementary Attendance Crisis

Because California lacks important statewide attendance data, since 2013 the Attorney General's Office has commissioned research to estimate the extent of elementary school absenteeism in California. We use multiple sources of data for this purpose, including:

- 1. Data from Aeries client school districts representing over 350,000 K-5 California students
- 2. Data from over 250 California school districts^{xxii} in on our 2015 district leadership survey
- 3. Statewide data on truancy and average daily attendance from the California Department of Education (CDE)^{xxiii}

Through a partnership with Eagle Software and the participation of their Aeries client districts, we have access to a unique dataset that provides detailed information about elementary school absenteeism in California. Data from over 350,000 K-5 students in the state indicate that high levels of elementary school absenteeism continue to be a serious problem in California.

230,000 students in California missed 18 or more days of school in the 2014 - 2015 school year.

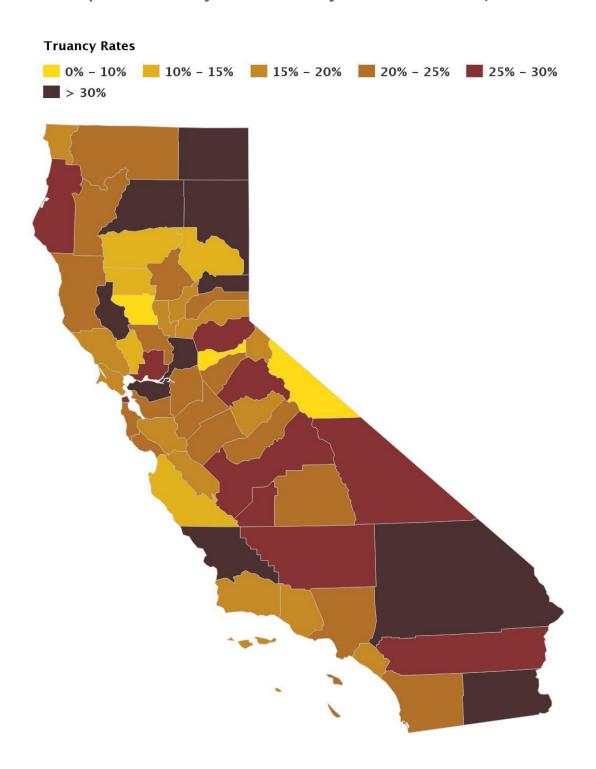
Chronic absence rates^{xxiv} remain just over 8% for K-5 students, meaning that an estimated 230,000 students in California missed 18 or more days of school in the 2014-2015 school year.^{xxv} Furthermore, as many as 31,000 students in California are estimated to have missed more than 36 days of school, or 20% of the 2014-2015 school year.

Truancy rates also remain high. Data from the California Department of Education indicate that elementary truancy rates have increased slightly in the state from 21.3% in 2012-2013 to 23.2% in 2013-2014. Data from Aeries similarly suggest that the elementary school truancy rate is 23.8% for the 2014-2015 school year. However, the slight increase in truancy rates over the last three years must be interpreted with caution. Interviews with school district officials and a specialist in attendance information systems suggest that school districts have developed improved systems for tracking and

monitoring truancy and chronic absence. Therefore, these increased rates may actually be an indication of better reporting rather than an increase in the number of unexcused absences in the state. Similar to previous years, elementary school truancy represents 40% of all truancy in the state. xxvi



Map of Elementary School Truancy Rates in California, 2015



To view an interactive map of 2015 truancy rates by county, please visit https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015

Elementary School Truancy Rates & Loss of Funding by County

	2012-2013	2013-2014	Change	2014-2015 Loss of	20	14-2015
Country	Elementary School	Elementary School Truancy	from 2012-	Funding	P	Per pupil Losses
County	Truancy	Rate	2012- 2013 to			LUSSES
	Rate	Nate	2013-			
			2014			
Alameda	20.72%	20.83%	0.11%	\$ 41,553,506.00	\$	204.56
Alpine	5.36%	17.24%	11.88%	\$ -	\$	-
Amador	15.16%	7.33%	-7.82%	\$ 913,916.27	\$	228.82
Butte	21.43%	20.57%	-0.87%	\$ 6,032,538.80	\$	224.88
Calaveras	27.18%	24.88%	-2.30%	\$ 716,007.82	\$	136.85
Colusa	6.32%	5.31%	-1.01%	\$ 1,089,674.00	\$	237.45
Contra Costa	21.90%	30.40%	8.50%	\$ 36,029,637.00	\$	213.49
Del Norte	21.43%	17.24%	-4.19%	\$ 762,342.47	\$	217.69
El Dorado	21.51%	27.52%	6.00%	\$ 4,736,444.80	\$	189.44
Fresno	21.78%	26.74%	4.96%	\$ 51,370,136.00	\$	270.16
Glenn	17.56%	14.45%	-3.12%	\$ 1,236,926.10	\$	233.82
Humboldt	23.49%	25.27%	1.78%	\$ 4,765,200.10	\$	304.74
Imperial	24.40%	30.56%	6.16%	\$ 8,537,466.30	\$	237.33
Inyo	14.74%	27.74%	13.00%	\$ 584,624.44	\$	211.97
Kern	25.15%	26.29%	1.14%	\$ 46,638,610.00	\$	271.73
Kings	23.37%	25.89%	2.52%	\$ 6,711,518.20	\$	249.62
Lake	32.82%	31.78%	-1.04%	\$ 3,355,343.30	\$	374.19
Lassen	23.69%	38.66%	14.97%	\$ 546,611.71	\$	159.78
Los Angeles	22.05%	23.21%	1.16%	\$ 232,400,000.00	\$	172.37
Madera	15.50%	24.00%	8.49%	\$ 7,452,382.80	\$	256.48
Marin	10.04%	15.01%	4.97%	\$ 3,780,848.80	\$	116.24
Mariposa	13.03%	17.80%	4.76%	\$ 526,554.43	\$	305.25
Mendocino	14.37%	23.14%	8.77%	\$ 3,672,574.10	\$	313.36
Merced	21.89%	22.58%	0.69%	\$ 15,321,175.00	\$	272.22
Modoc	26.36%	31.25%	4.89%	\$ 384,331.77	\$	271.80
Mono	41.15%	4.97%	-36.18%	\$ -	\$	-
Monterey	18.35%	14.70%	-3.66%	\$ 19,352,636.00	\$	263.76
Napa	8.55%	10.24%	1.69%	\$ 4,480,698.40	\$	229.39
Nevada	16.20%	22.16%	5.95%	\$ 529,671.45	\$	71.41
Orange	15.12%	15.76%	0.64%	\$ 48,654,327.00	\$	100.92
Placer	15.47%	16.31%	0.83%	\$ 7,806,293.20	\$	126.97
Plumas	15.54%	12.30%	-3.24%	\$ -	\$	-
Riverside	25.06%	28.19%	3.14%	\$ 96,833,125.00	\$	238.24

Sacramento	26.43%	31.18%	4.75%	\$ 52,502,371.00	\$ 247.53
San Benito	17.61%	17.22%	-0.39%	\$ 2,063,673.30	\$ 190.24
San Bernardino	27.38%	30.22%	2.84%	\$ 80,935,508.00	\$ 210.57
San Diego	21.03%	21.13%	0.10%	\$ 74,218,304.00	\$ 168.99
San Francisco	25.81%	29.26%	3.44%	\$ 12,731,155.00	\$ 238.86
San Joaquin	23.14%	23.84%	0.69%	\$ 33,288,666.00	\$ 263.28
San Luis Obispo	27.45%	32.25%	4.80%	\$ 5,850,325.20	\$ 172.47
San Mateo	18.04%	21.15%	3.11%	\$ 7,162,094.70	\$ 80.39
Santa Barbara	14.37%	17.18%	2.81%	\$ 14,695,498.00	\$ 227.51
Santa Clara	15.48%	15.83%	0.36%	\$ 23,878,693.00	\$ 96.47
Santa Cruz	26.25%	23.43%	-2.82%	\$ 11,843,468.00	\$ 341.49
Shasta	35.35%	36.28%	0.93%	\$ 5,128,247.20	\$ 222.24
Sierra	29.72%	40.91%	11.19%	\$ -	\$ -
Siskiyou	9.74%	20.16%	10.43%	\$ 1,212,213.20	\$ 226.16
Solano	22.01%	26.72%	4.71%	\$ 13,922,919.00	\$ 230.80
Sonoma	14.94%	17.70%	2.76%	\$ 11,558,660.00	\$ 217.34
Stanislaus	21.72%	22.96%	1.23%	\$ 21,618,960.00	\$ 218.16
Sutter	13.58%	19.68%	6.10%	\$ 4,522,436.80	\$ 255.25
Tehama	11.25%	11.19%	-0.06%	\$ 2,997,739.70	\$ 288.91
Trinity	18.20%	20.56%	2.36%	\$ 131,483.06	\$ 87.36
Tulare	18.62%	20.61%	1.99%	\$ 22,804,243.00	\$ 237.98
Tuolumne	25.19%	29.26%	4.06%	\$ 1,266,844.60	\$ 236.35
Ventura	15.43%	16.05%	0.62%	\$ 24,885,693.00	\$ 182.67
Yolo	20.63%	24.15%	3.52%	\$ 7,078,898.40	\$ 252.34
Yuba	16.26%	16.72%	0.46%	\$ 3,109,696.60	\$ 248.36
State Totals	21.32%	23.21%	1.88%	\$ 1,096,182,912.02	\$ 204.25

Attendance Gaps for the State's Most Vulnerable Children

Certain elementary school students are particularly susceptible to high rates of absenteeism. The Attorney General's 2014 Report** revealed that low-income students and students of color are much more likely to be absent from elementary school and to miss a greater number of days due to suspensions. **xxviii** Specifically, the Attorney General's 2014 report revealed disproportionately high rates of absenteeism for African American and Native American students in California when compared to their White and Asian peers.

Today's attendance gaps become tomorrow's achievement gaps.

New data for the 2015 report confirm these high rates of truancy and chronic absence for low-income students and students of color.

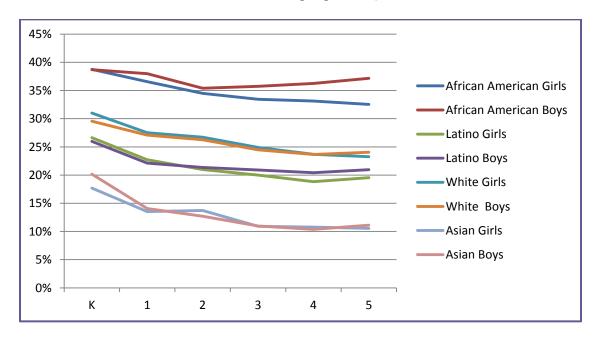
For example, over 75% of students with chronic attendance problems are low-income. In addition, nearly 20% of African American and Native American elementary school students were chronically absent in the 2014-2015 school year, while only 8.0% of Whites and 3.7% of Asians were chronically absent. Moreover, chronic absence rates for Native American and African American students were *almost 30%* in kindergarten.

Aeries data for the 2014-2015 school year do not reveal higher chronic absence rates for Latinos and English Learners compared to other student populations. However, as noted in the 2014 report, studies conducted in other districts indicate considerably higher rates of chronic absence for these groups. According to one study, more than one in five Latino students is chronically absent. A case study of students in California also found that English learners were more likely to be chronically absent than other students.

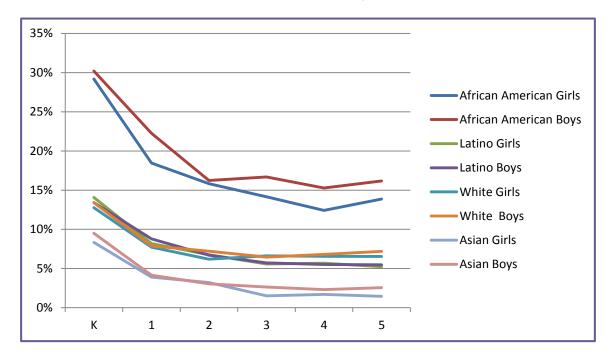
Chronic absence and truancy rates were slightly higher for boys than for girls in every grade—kindergarten through fifth. Yet, absence rates tend to vary more by race than by gender. For example, African American girls have higher rates of truancy and chronic absence in all grades when compared to Asian, White and Latino boys. The gap in absence rates^{xxxi} between African American students and their White, Asian and Latino peers is particularly large in kindergarten. These racial disparities in absences, particularly in the earliest years, must be a call to action to school districts and state policymakers.

Racial disparities in absences, particularly in the earliest years, must be a call to action to school districts and state policymakers.

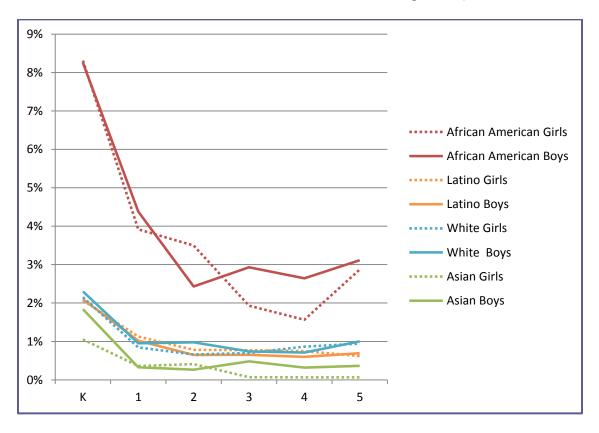
2014-2015 Truancy by Race/Gender



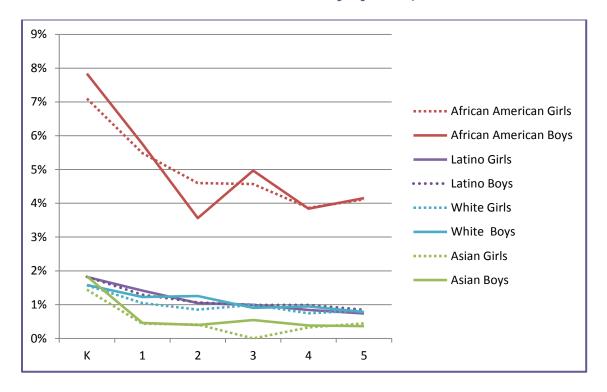
2014-2015 Chronic Absence by Race/Gender



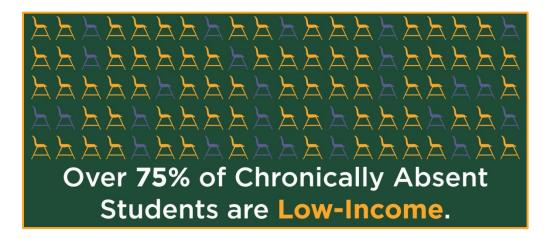
2014-2015 Severe Chronic Absence by Race/Gender



2014-2015 Chronic Truancy by Race/Gender

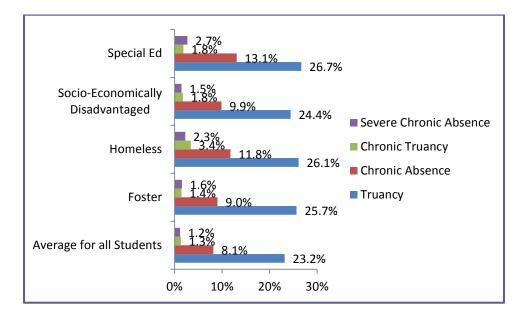


In February 2015, the Attorney General's Office announced the creation of the Bureau of Children's Justice. Among the Bureau's top priorities is improving conditions for children in foster care, along with other vulnerable student populations, which includes improving school attendance. xxxiii



Data from our sample of Aeries client school districts confirm the need for greater attention to improving attendance for foster^{xxxiii} and homeless students, low-income students, and special education students. K-5 chronic absence rates among these groups range from 9.0% to 13.1%. High chronic absence and severe chronic absence rates for special education students and high chronic truancy rates for homeless students warrant additional attention from school personnel and policymakers.

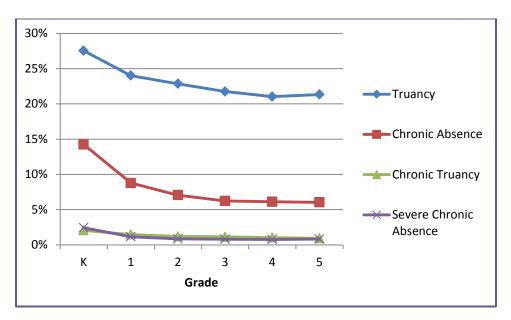
High Rates of Absence Among California's Most Vulnerable Student Populations



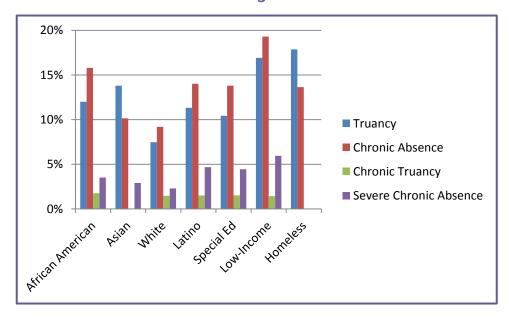
Disproportionate Absences in the Early Grades

California's attendance crisis is particularly serious for students in the earliest grades. Chronic absence rates for kindergarten students are nearly 15%, while kindergarten truancy rates are almost 30%. Although there is some improvement in attendance as students move through the grades in elementary school, almost 9% of all students are chronically absent in first grade and over 6% of all students are chronically absent in third grade.

Rates of Elementary Chronic Absence, Truancy, Chronic Truancy & Severe Chronic Absence, 2014-2015



2014-2015 Pre-Kindergarten Absence Rates



These high rates of absenteeism in the early grades have been shown to have a clear negative impact on students' early academic achievement. One study found that 4 out of 5 students who were absent more than 10% of the school year in kindergarten and 1st grade were unable to read on grade-level by 3rd grade. Moreover, kids who can't read on grade-level by 3rd grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of school.**

Efforts to reduce high rates of absenteeism in the early grades must be a part of tailored policies and programs to improve attendance across the state. **xxxvi*

Tailored Programs to Meet At-Risk Students' and Families' Needs

Some districts and key stakeholders have already started to target their attendance improvement efforts to meet the specific needs of students with the highest absence rates and the greatest barriers to attendance. These districts can serve as a model for others in the state.

Learn more about how Oakland's Office of African American Male Achievement is working to reduce suspensions and improve attendance for African American boys at https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/oak-usd

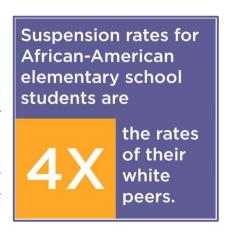
Learn more about how the Yurok Tribe is partnering with their local school district to improve attendance for elementary school students at https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/yurok

However, district survey results indicate the need for greater attention in this area. Only half of all survey respondents indicated that they currently have a program to serve *all* at-risk students, while less than one-third of school districts have programs that focus on *individual groups* of at-risk students (*e.g.*, a program specifically designed to meet the needs of foster youth).

California School Districts with Programs Designed to Improve Attendance for At-Risk Elementary School Students					
	Yes	No	Starting a program in 2015-2016		
Foster Youth	33.7%	55.2%	11.1%		
Students Eligible For Free And Reduced Price Meals	27.0%	63.1%	9.9%		
English Learners	27.0%	62.3%	10.7%		
Homeless Youth	35.3%	55.2%	9.5%		
Students With Disabilities	32.5%	59.9%	7.5%		
Students With Mental Health Issues	31.7%	61.9%	6.3%		
All At-Risk Students	50.0%	36.5%	13.5%		

Discipline to Teach, Not to Punish

Our data on suspension rates statewide indicate the continued need to rethink discipline policies that remove students from the classroom. Many of the students most affected by these policies are the same students most in need of greater support for academic and social development. Information on discipline rates for elementary students presented in this report corroborate efforts in California and nationally to reduce the number of school days students miss due to suspensions, and to reduce disproportionality in the high rates of suspension among students of color, particularly boys. XXXXVIII



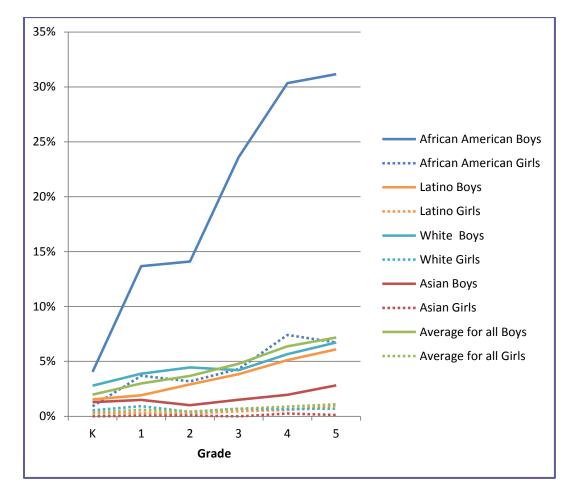
Indeed, school discipline data from Aeries client districts indicate extreme disproportionality in suspension rates by both race and gender, as well as for other subgroups.

For example, the suspension rate for African American elementary school students is four times the rate of their White peers. **xxix** Native American, foster and special education students also have significantly higher suspension rates than the averages for all students.

Further, boys had significantly higher suspension rates than girls in 2014-2015. African American boys in particular had the highest elementary school suspension rates, over four times that of African American girls in the 2014-2015 school year. This stark racial and gender gap in suspensions begins in first grade.

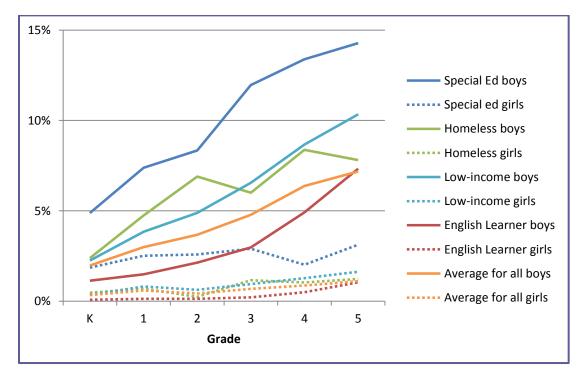
Yet, African American elementary school girls also have high suspension rates. By fourth grade, suspension rates for African American girls were higher than the rates for boys of all other races.

Suspension rates also increase substantially between kindergarten and fifth grade for White, Latino and African American boys, while rates for girls, with the exception of African American girls, remain relatively steady.



2014-2015 Suspension Rates by Race/Gender

Foster, homeless, English Learner, low-income, and special education elementary school students also show higher suspension rates for boys when compared to girls at every grade level. Furthermore, these rates increase year-after-year, with the highest suspension rates in fifth grade. The high rate of suspension among the state's most vulnerable elementary school boys, particularly later in elementary school, puts them at greater risk for academic failure.



2014-2015 Suspension Rates by Subgroup

These suspension rates represent a substantial number of missed days of school for California students. Based on our analysis, in the 2014-2015 school year elementary students in California missed an estimated 110,000 days of school due to suspensions.

In the 2014-2015 school year, elementary students in California missed an estimated 110,000 days of school due to suspensions.

District survey results indicate that while 94% of school districts surveyed reported that they track out-of-school suspensions, only 60% of respondents reported that they track these suspensions by subgroup and only two-thirds track out-of-school

suspensions by grade. These findings suggest more must be done to track and monitor exactly which students are missing school due to suspensions, and how much school they are missing. *I Furthermore, the most effective discipline policies are designed to teach students how to correct their behavior rather than simply punish them. *Ii Accordingly, many policymakers and practitioners are currently engaged in critical discussions about the purpose of suspensions, particularly out-of-school suspensions, and their impact on student learning and social development.

For example, learn more about the work to reduce suspensions in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District at https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/md-usd

The High Cost of Elementary School Absenteeism

High rates of absenteeism in elementary school have all too predictable outcomes. In 2013-2014, 1 in 4 low-income students failed to graduate from high school. African American and Native American students also had lower graduation rates than their White and Asian peers. *Iii

"California school districts have lost \$4.5 billion in 4 years due to absenteeism."

The high cost of student absences in elementary school extend to lost revenues for school districts in California, revenues that could be used to improve the quality of education and outcomes for students who need it most. In 2014-15 alone, school districts statewide lost over \$1 billion due to student absences. XIIII These losses top \$4.5 billion in four years. 8 9 10 11

2015 survey data also confirm, as in previous years, that many individual districts lose millions of dollars each year due to student absences. One district reported a loss of \$12 million dollars in the 2014-2015 school year alone.

Yet, even modest investments in programs to reduce student absences have significant payoffs. 2015 survey data confirm findings from the 2014 report. Most school districts report spending less than \$50,000 on truancy and chronic absence programs, while some districts recoup between \$500,000 and \$1 million dollars in ADA funding.

Learn more about Napa Valley Unified School District's Super Saturdays Program to improve academic achievement and recoup ADA funding:

https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/nv-usd

For example, Petaluma City Schools reported that they were able to recoup between \$300,000 and \$400,000 in ADA funds due to their prevention and intervention efforts. According to a representative from the district, "Our Student Services program, which includes truancy prevention, has been evolving for the last 10 years. We have taken our successful practices and matched them with LCAP initiatives, using supplemental dollars for alternative educational options and mental health support."



Covina-Valley Unified School District reported saving \$1.2 million in the past two to three years due to their truancy and chronic absence prevention and intervention efforts. Moreover, Covina-Valley Unified School District has mentored several other districts on how to develop effective prevention and intervention programs.

In the past 2-3 years, Covina-Valley Unified School District saved \$1.2 million due to truancy and chronic absence prevention and intervention efforts.

Similarly, Paso Robles Public Schools reported that they recoup approximately \$325,000 in funds each year. According to a representative from the district, "Every school site sets attendance goals, goals are monitored on a monthly basis. We have our own SARB board with over 6 outside agencies involved to assist parents as well as a district truancy officer who averages 100 home visits per month (we track visits). Our district LCAP committee supported attendance by allocating money for intervention specialists at all school sites to assist 'at-risk' students."

A Solvable Problem

Elementary school truancy and chronic absence is a solvable problem. Small, manageable changes in policies and practices can improve elementary school attendance. And when school attendance improves, academic achievement improves. XIV XIVI

Everything is solvable.

 Felicia Cruz Delgado, Corona-Norco Unified School District

While there is much more work to be done, we have begun to see examples of districts and organizations developing important strategies, policies, and procedures to address elementary school truancy and chronic absence. These strategies include:

1. Intervening early to stop patterns of absenteeism

Many California districts have already begun to implement systems for early intervention when attendance problems arise. For example, learn more about how San Ramon Valley Unified School District's (SRVUSD) focus on early intervention and a move towards a more centralized system for monitoring attendance improved the district's ability to serve students and their families: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/srv-usd

Evidence from other states that collect statewide attendance data and have statewide attendance accountability systems demonstrate the benefits of an improved statewide infrastructure for tracking and monitoring attendance data, including the ability to intervene early when attendance problem emerge. Learn more about statewide attendance systems in Hawaii and Connecticut: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/swas

2. Reaching out to parents and engaging them about the importance of elementary school attendance

In recognition of the central role that parents play in reducing truancy and chronic absence in elementary school, many school districts and county offices of education have focused their efforts on increasing parent engagement around the importance of regular school attendance.

Learn more about Long Beach Unified School District's efforts to improve attendance through extensive outreach to parents: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/lb-usd

Learn more about Solano County's and Contra Costa County's comprehensive Attendance Awareness campaigns: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/solano
https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/cccoe

The Ad Council, with funding from the California Endowment, conducted research to identify the clearest, most relevant, and motivating messaging to dispel parent misconceptions about school attendance that contribute to chronic absence and truancy. Learn more about new research from the Ad Council on why elementary school students miss school and how we can talk to parents about it. https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/ad-council

3. Enhancing district systems for tracking and monitoring student attendance

Robust systems for tracking and monitoring student attendance reveal which students are missing school, and how much school they are missing. These systems also illustrate patterns in attendance, critical to prevention and intervention efforts.

Corona-Norco Unified School District's customization of Attendance Works' free District Attendance Tracking Tool (DATT) is an example of the innovative ways districts have leveraged limited resources to create effective systems for tracking, monitoring and responding to attendance problems. Learn more at https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/cn-usd

The Attorney General's Office has partnered with the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) to enact the Truancy Reduction Pilot Projects. The project focuses on consistent tracking and monitoring of attendance and absence data, early intervention, and innovative truancy and chronic absence prevention programs. Learn more about the Pilot Projects: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/pilot

4. Using a tiered approach to reducing chronic absence

Model attendance programs are effective in all three tiers: Tier 1 Prevention, Tier 2 Early Intervention, and Tier 3 Intensive Intervention. Learn more about the 3 Tier approach to reducing chronic absence: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/pdf/3-tiers.pdf

5. Developing discipline policies that keep kids in school and reduce disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions

Many school districts across the state have made it a priority to reduce suspensions and keep kids at school. Some of the strategies developed include a focus on uniform responses to discipline issues, creating opportunities for students to be more engaged in learning, using data to look for disproportionality in suspension rates, and increasing engagement with parents and community partners.

For example, the Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement and the Mt. Diablo Unified School District have developed strategies for reducing suspension and chronic absence rates for students of color. Learn more: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/oak-usd; https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/md-usd

6. Using Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to set goals to reduce truancy and chronic absence and ensure that district budgets support these goals

The Attorney General's Office, along with our partners at Attendance Works, California Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Children Now, California School-Based Health Alliance, and the Education Trust-West, conducted an analysis of 200 district LCAPs to determine whether districts are fulfilling their LCAP requirements related to improving student attendance. Learn more about how the LCAP can be used to set truancy and chronic absence reduction goals: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/lcap-analysis

7. Creating new partnerships between the community, school districts, and social services to provide tailored support to best serve the needs of students and their families

Some students and their families face significant barriers to regular school attendance. In these instances, a range of resources may be necessary to get at the root cause of these barriers, resources that are difficult for a single agency to provide on its own. In other cases, opportunities for parents to learn more about how absences can negatively impact their child's future and the important role parents play in ensuring their child attends school every day can change negative attendance patterns. Learn more about how the Kings County Office of Education and the Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court collaborative in San Luis Obispo and San Diego Counties have made collaboration with other agencies centerpiece of their efforts to improve attendance county-wide: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/kings; https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/keep

Improving the long-term health of our state—from economic development to public health to public safety—requires creating conditions in California that allow residents to lead healthy and productive lives.

The purpose of this report is to highlight new efforts that are keeping elementary students in classrooms and learning, and to encourage other school districts to adopt these practices. Educators across the state are realizing that improving elementary school attendance is a cost-effective way to improve educational outcomes and in turn, improve the health and safety of our state. Making sure elementary school students are in the classroom is a prerequisite to ensuring they have the academic tools they need to develop the skills necessary for the 21st century.

Policy Recommendations

Some of the policy recommendations listed below are reflected in the district and county prevention and intervention strategies highlighted in **In School + On Track 2015**. These policy recommendations focus on ways to make effective practices more consistent across the state.

1. Modernize the state's student attendance records collection system.

First raised back in 2013, this recommendation remains critical to the state's long-term success for reducing absenteeism. California needs a statewide infrastructure to track and monitor attendance data that schools and districts can access in real-time.

Access to statewide attendance data will provide the following significant benefits to local educators:

- Efficient real-time and longitudinal monitoring: Statewide data will allow teachers, schools and districts to more efficiently monitor attendance throughout the school year and from year to year, to track chronic absence by subgroup and grade, and to monitor whether absence rates are improving statewide at the school- and district-level over time;
- LCAP coordination: Statewide data will help districts and counties more effectively utilize
 their LCAPs by ensuring that they have accurate student-level chronic absence data and are
 able to establish ambitious and obtainable LCAP goals, monitor progress and change course
 if necessary; and
- **Help for mobile students**: Statewide data will allow districts to more systematically support students with a history of attendance problems who transfer from one school district to another. In our 2014 report, less than half the districts reported having a system in place to alert receiving schools when a student transferred from district to district. This year, the number of districts with such a system has increased to 59% of those surveyed (149 districts, including those who rely on the student's cumulative file). **Iviii** Yet, 54% of districts still report that having access to attendance histories for new students entering the district would help them improve their efforts to track, monitor, and address truancy and chronic absences. **Iii** As noted in our 2014 report, high mobility students tend to be at greater risk for chronic absence and are therefore most disadvantaged by districts' difficulty in obtaining attendance histories. Longitudinal state attendance data would resolve this issue.

2. Track and monitor attendance goals through LCFF and District LCAPs.

LCAPs act as a local accountability system that ensures districts and schools are properly monitoring student attendance. This year's LCAPs showed marked improvement in attention to attendance when compared to 2014. Yet, many districts still failed to disaggregate chronic absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion data by subgroups. This may be due to a lack of necessary data collection and analysis that would enable districts to disaggregate data by subgroups.

School districts and counties should continue to improve their attendance goals in their LCAPs to ensure that at-risk students and families get the resources they need to reduce absences. You can find suggestions in the **Attorney General's Sample LCAP**. III

3. Include chronic absence as a metric in the state's multiple measures accountability system and in the LCAP Evaluation Rubric.

Research demonstrates that chronic absence is an important metric for California's school accountability system. There is a strong link between elementary school chronic absence and later academic performance:

- In California, 83% of students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first-grade are unable to read proficiently by third grade. |iii
- Compared to peers with average attendance, chronically absent first-graders scored 15% lower on literacy assessments and 12% lower on math assessments.
- Low-income kindergartners and first-graders suffered twice the negative academic impact of chronic absence compared to their chronically absent peers. Iv

Indeed, early elementary school absences lead to later absences. A longitudinal study in Baltimore found that nearly all chronically absent high school students were also chronically absent when they were in elementary school, in and a study in Chicago found that among low-income elementary school students who already missed 5 days of school, each additional absence decreased the student's chance of graduating by 7%. Ivii

Adopting elementary school absenteeism as a metric in the state's new multiple measures accountability system^{lviii} and in the LCAP Evaluation Rubric^{lix} would serve the State Board of Education's goal of encouraging local educational agencies to establish early warning systems.^{lx}

4. Use Prop 47 – the Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act – savings to fund effective attendance improvement efforts.

Prop 47 reduces the criminal penalties for several non-violent, non-serious drug and property crimes. It also requires that the funding saved as a result of the changes in these penalties be used to provide mental health and substance use services, *truancy and dropout prevention in the K-12 setting*, is and services for crime victims. To align with LCFF goals, the Legislative Analyst's Office recommends that the Legislature allocate the 25% of Prop 47 funds committed to truancy and dropout prevention to school districts with the largest number of English Learners and low-income students—students at a higher risk for truancy, dropout, and victimization. These funds should also be spent on the kind of prevention and early intervention efforts highlighted in this report as best practices to decrease chronic absence and reduce disparities in both attendance and student discipline practices.

5. Intervene early to help students and families resolve attendance issues before kids fall too far behind.

Many school districts and counties have improved their systems for tracking, monitoring, and addressing attendance problems to promote early intervention. These efforts must be expanded.

All California districts should implement systematic reviews of attendance data—early and often—so that students do not miss excessive days of school before anyone notices. Attendance problems are an early warning sign that families need greater support. Schools and districts should intervene early and connect families to services before resorting to prosecution or more punitive intervention methods.

6. Promote early elementary school attendance.

State policymakers should enact policies to foster improved attendance in the early years, where we observe the greatest rates of chronic absence and greatest disparities for vulnerable children. Policies such as universal pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, transitional kindergarten, and mandatory kindergarten show promise for improving attendance and decreasing achievement gaps. Learn more about these policy recommendations in our section on early attendance.

7. Invest in discipline policies that reduce time away from the classroom.

Discipline policies that unnecessarily and disproportionately remove students from the classroom cause students to lose valuable instructional time. Many of the students with the highest suspension rates are in need of the greatest academic support—support they are unable to access when they are removed from the classroom. We have seen signs of progress in this year's report—over 25% of districts reported changing their discipline policies in the 2013-2014 school year so that students did not miss as much school for suspensions. An additional 25% of districts reported making this change in the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, in September 2014 California became the first state in the nation to ban the use of the "willful defiance" charge to suspend or expel students in kindergarten through third grade. The "willful defiance" offense was disproportionately used to suspend and expel African American and Latino students, particularly boys. California must continue to invest in new strategies to reduce the number of school days students miss due to suspensions and to reduce disproportionality in the high rates of suspension among students of color, particularly boys.

8. Design and implement programs to communicate to parents and the community that elementary school attendance is important, and that absences can have long-term consequences.

This policy recommendation was mentioned in both the Attorney General's 2013 and the 2014 Report. Its importance bears repeating. Part of the truancy and chronic absence crisis is driven by misconceptions about the importance of elementary school attendance and the negative consequences that can, and oftentimes will, follow from early absenteeism. The Attorney General's Office, along with many partners across the state and nationally, has been working to raise awareness. Districts interested in learning more about how to communicate effectively about the importance of elementary school attendance should look at resources from our Ad Council partnership, Attendance Works, and the California Department of Education.

ⁱ See: "The High Cost of Elementary School Absenteeism."

The Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. *Taking Attendance Seriously: How School absences Undermine Student and School Performance in New York City* (May 2011), http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2010/04/CFE_Attendance_FINAL.pdf; Gottfried, 2010.

Read more about the barriers to attendance at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2013/ch5.

Faith Connolly and Linda S. Olson. *Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten* (March 2012), BALTIMORE EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM, http://www.baltimore-berc.org/pdfs/PreKKAttendanceFullReport.pdf; *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research* (May 2011).

^v A full list of partners is available in the acknowledgements section of this report.

In 2013, the Attorney General's Report sought to raise public awareness of the elementary school attendance crisis by publishing estimated rates of absenteeism in the state, as well as providing an overview of the systems in place for tracking, monitoring and responding to truancy and chronic absence. In addition, based on hours of interviews with district attorneys and with local and county school district officials, the 2013 report revealed many of the greatest barriers to attendance –from transportation to asthma to bullying—and some of the ways in which local school districts, community organizations and district attorneys were working to reduce these barriers. View the 2013 report at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2013.

vii The 2014 report included new data on the rates of truancy and chronic absence across the state and the attendance gaps beginning in elementary school for low-income students, students of color and other at-risk children such as foster youth. The report also focused on the weaknesses of the state's infrastructure for monitoring and addressing truancy and chronic absence among at-risk student populations, since California does not collect attendance information in its statewide data system. Finally, the 2014 report revealed data on disproportionality in student discipline practices—with some students of color missing far more school due to suspensions than their White and Asian peers. View the 2014 report at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

based on a sample of over 350,000 California K-5 elementary school students: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/adcm.

For example, to learn more about efforts by the Corona-Norco School District, visit: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/cn-usd.

^x View the methodology at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/sm.

xi Center for Court Innovation (2013), From Absent to Present: Reducing Teen Chronic Absenteeism in New York City, 23.

xii To learn more about this research and the most effective messages to use to talk to parents, visit https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/ad-council.

xiii View the methodology at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/lcap-review.

xiv 2014 research was based on a review of 80 LCAPs; http://www.attendanceworks.org/policy-advocacy/state-reports/california/california-funding-brief-accountable-for-attendance/.

^{xv} In School + On Track 2014, https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

Hedy Chang and Rochelle Davis. *Mapping the Early Attendance Gap: Charting A Course for School Success* (September 2015), ATTENDANCE WORKS, http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Mapping-the-Early-Attendance-Gap-Final-4.pdf.

xvii In School + On Track 2014, https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

^{xviii} For example, 26% of more than 1,100 foster youth in our sample of elementary school students were enrolled for fewer than 60 days in the districts from which their data was submitted. For more information on foster youth mobility and the challenges it poses for closing achievement gaps, see West Ed, *The Invisible Achievement Gap* (2013), www.stuartfoundation.org.

xix 2015 District Leadership Survey.

The Elementary School Attendance Imperative

- xxxiii Learn more about the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Children's Justice at https://oag.ca.gov/bcj.
- Data for foster students should be interpreted with caution. The number of absences are likely understated because school records for foster students are more likely to be incomplete due to student mobility.
- www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2011/06/What-is-Chronic-Absence.pdf.
- Note: Sample sizes for subgroups ranged from 28 to 1200 students.
- To learn more about how changes to kindergarten policies may help improve early attendance, visit: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/esa_
- xxxviii Analysis based on data from Aeries client districts.
- xxxviii For more information on national efforts: http://www.ed.gov/k-12reforms.
- xxxix Suspension rates included duplicated counts.
- xl Districts can find suggestions for setting goals related to discipline at:

http://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/tr/draft-sample-lcap.pdf.

EDUCATION, http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/cohortrates/GradRates.aspx?cds=00000000000000000&TheYear=2013-14&Agg=T&Topic=Graduates&RC=State&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial; State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Reports Record High Graduation Rate (April 28, 2015), CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF

EDUCATION, http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr15/yr15rel34.asp.

^{xx} To learn more, visit https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/swas and https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

xxi Based on survey responses from over 250 California school districts.

^{xxii} 25% of all California school districts.

xxiii View the methodology at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/learn/etrc_

xxiv Students who miss 18 or more days of school or 10% of the school year.

^{xxv} Chronic absence rates for the 2014-2015 school year are comparable to those for the 2013-2014 school year. 8.1% of k-6 students were chronically absent, according to our analysis of Aeries data for the 2013-2014 school year. These numbers were generated using a different sample of Aeries districts than the sample that was used in 2014-2015.

xxvi Elementary students represented 46% of all students enrolled in California schools in 2013-2014

xxvii To view the 2014 In School + On Track report, visit https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

The Campaign for Fiscal Equality, Inc. *Taking Attendance Seriously: How School Absences Undermine Student and School Performance in New York City* (May 2011), http://tinyurl.com/knebtlk.

xxix Id.

Monika Sanchez. *Truancy and Chronic Absence in Redwood City*, JOHN W. GARDNER CENTER FOR YOUTH AND THEIR COMMUNITIES, STANFORD SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (April, 2012).

xxxi With the exception of truancy rates.

xii Deanne A. Crone, Leanne S. Hawken, and Robert H. Homer. *Building Positive Behavior Support Systems in Schools, 2nd ed.* (2015), http://tinyurl.com/nbaqhfb.

xlii For 2013-2014, California's cohort graduation rate is 80.1 percent for all students and 75.4 percent for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. In the 2013-2014 school year, Native American students had a cohort graduation rate of 70.6 percent and African American students had a cohort graduation rate of 68.2 percent. For the same year, the cohort graduation rate for White students was 87.6, while the cohort graduation rate for Asian students was 92.4 percent. *Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2013-14: Statewide Results* (July 2015), CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF

xiiii View the appendix at: https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2015/Appendix.

xliv In School + On Track 2014, https://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014.

^{xlv} California School Board Association Annual Education Conference. *Student Achievement Starts with Attendance* (November 29, 2012), http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Student-Achievement-Starts-with-Attendance-CSBA-Nov-29-2012.pdf.

xivi Michael Gottfried. Can Center-Based Childcare Reduce the Odds of Early Chronic Absenteeism? (April 2015), EARLY RESEARCH CHILDHOOD QUARTERLY.

http://www.schoolnutrition.org/AboutSchoolMeals/SchoolMealTrendsStats/.

¹ Wesley T. Church, II, David W. Springer, Albert R. Roberts. *Juvenile Justice Sourcebook 2nd Ed.*, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS (2014), http://tinyurl.com/qb6yp93.

² ADA is a school-wide, not student-specific, metric and can therefore mask high rates of chronic absence. Definition taken from http://www.edsource.org/wp-content/publications/SchFinGlossary04.pdf.

³ A student may not be considered a habitual truant unless a conscientious effort has been made by a district officer or employee to hold at least one conference with the parent or guardian and the pupil. Ed Code § 48262. ⁴ A student may not be considered a chronic truant unless an appropriate district officer or employee has complied with all the parent truancy notification and meeting laws as well as referral to a SARB and proper legal authority for prosecution. It is also important to note that the absences of 10% or more school days are from the date of enrollment to the current date, so a full year of enrollment is not required to be deemed a chronic truant. Ed Code § 48263.6.

⁵ The 10% percent or more of school days missed is calculated by dividing the total number of days a pupil is absent by the total number of days the pupil is enrolled and school was actually taught. This means a student's identification as a chronic absentee can change throughout the school year if attendance improves. Ed Code § 60901.

⁶ School administrators now have discretion in excusing absences based on individual pupil's circumstances. Section 48205 includes the "standard" excuses such as doctor appointments and illness. Section 4825.5 applies to special situations for pupils with work permits. Section 48260 gives administrators discretion for all other possible reasons based on the particular circumstances of the pupil.

⁷ In School + On Track 2014, http://oag.ca.gov/truancy/2014

⁸ Stephen Ceasar. *New Database Details Pay Of California Public School Employees* (July 24, 2014), LA TIMES, http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-database-public-school-20140723-story.html.

⁹ School Nurse Salary (2015), EDUCATION CENTER, http://www.healthassistancepartnership.org/school-nurse-salary/.

¹⁰ School Meal Trends & Stats,

¹¹ California Department of Education. http://www.cdeci/cr/cf/cefschoollibraries.asp.

xlvii In School + On Track 2014.

xlviii 2015 District Leadership Survey.

xlix Id.

¹2015 LCAP Review

LCFF & LCAP Learn More Section

http://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/tr/draft-sample-lcap.pdf

Alan Ginsburg, Phyllis Jordan, & Hedy Chang. Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success (Sept. 2014), at 14.

Douglas Ready. Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The Differential Effects of School Exposure, Sociology of Education 83(4) (2011), at 271–286.

Hedy Chang and Mariajosé Romero . *Present, Engaged and Accounted For The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP): The Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University (2008), at 8.

See generally Faith Connolly and Linda Olson. Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, Baltimore Education Research Consortium (2012).

^{lvii} S. R. Ou, & A. J. Reynolds . *Predictors of Educational Attainment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study*, School Psychology Quarterly, 23(2) (2008), at 199.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (March 11, 2015), http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr15/yr15rel20.asp.

Lix Evaluation Rubrics Update, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (March 2015), http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr15/documents/mar15item06a3.pdf.

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^{ki} Cal. Gov. Code §§ 7599 *et seq.* (2015); Cal. Penal Code §§ 459.5, 473, 476a, 490.2, 496, 666, 1170.18 (2015); Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 11350, 11357, 11377 (2015). For the full text of Proposition 47, go to http://vig.cdn.sos.ca.gov/2014/general/pdf/text-of-proposed-laws1.**pdf** (Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act of 2014, Cal. Gov. Code §§ 7599-.2 (2014)).

lxii Cal. Gov. Code § 7599.2(a)(1).

Mac Taylor, Legislative Analyst. *The 2015-2016 Budget, Implementation of Proposition 47*, February 2015, http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/budget/prop47/implementation-prop47-021715.pdf.

^{lxiv} 2015 District Leadership Survey.

lxv Id.

AB 420, ch. 660, 2014 Cal. Stat. 92, 92 (codified as amended at Cal. Ed. Code § 48900), http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB420.

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