



# NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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## **State Department of Education Announces Decrease in Chronic Absenteeism Rate**

(HARTFORD, CT)—Chronic absenteeism is down across the state, according to new data released by the State Department of Education on Wednesday, a sign that collaborative efforts to keep students across Connecticut in school and engaged are having a positive impact.

The number of chronically absent students in Connecticut dropped to 9.6 percent in 2015-16, down from 10.6 percent the year before and down from a high of 11.5 percent in 2012-13. The decline in Connecticut's chronic absenteeism rate means that over 10,000 more students are attending school on a daily basis than four years ago.

The data also shows that while minority students have disproportionately high rates of chronic absenteeism when compared with their white peers, rates of chronic absenteeism are decreasing for black and Hispanic students in Connecticut. In 2015-16, the chronic absenteeism rate for Hispanic students was 15.7 percent, down from 19.1 percent in 2012-13. For black students, the rate was 14.5 percent in 2015-16, down from 16 percent in 2012-13. The new data is available on the CSDE's data portal, [EdSight](#). The data was released as part of a [Chronic Absenteeism presentation](#) delivered to the State Board of Education on Wednesday.

“Our students are the future entrepreneurs, leaders, and problem-solvers who will drive Connecticut's economy and ensure the state continues to thrive. The decrease in chronic absenteeism means more students will graduate high school, go to college, and become our future leaders,” said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. “I commend the teachers, leaders, and community partners that are working together to keep students engaged and on a path to future success.”

“We have identified several areas where we are shifting our focus to fulfill our promise of an excellent public education for every Connecticut child. One of those focus areas is chronic absence,” said Commissioner of Education Dianna R. Wentzell. “We want every public school student in our state to be in school and engaged. That means we have to work with families, educators, and community stakeholders to decrease the number of days that students are out of school.”

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more days of school for any reason, including excused absences, unexcused absences, suspensions, and other disciplinary actions. Research shows that chronic absenteeism is inextricably linked with student performance, and students who are chronically absent are less likely to read on grade level, are less likely to perform well academically, and are at a greater risk for dropping out of high school. Risk factors for chronic absence include poverty, homelessness, chronic health conditions, frequent moves, and disabilities.

The CSDE has recently taken concrete steps to address chronic absence, including working with key partners such as the Governor’s Prevention Partnership, Attendance Works, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and the Legislature’s Committee on Children. Chronic absenteeism is addressed in the annual Alliance District grant application for participating districts. The state is also expanding restorative justice programs, such as the Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative, and positive behavioral interventions and supports. Additionally, districts are increasing utilization of the Department of Children and Families’ Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services to respond to mental health crises.

Earlier this year, the State Board of Education adopted its Next Generation Accountability System, which uses multiple academic and non-traditional indicators to assess how well a school is performing toward the goal of preparing all students for success in college, career, and life. Chronic absenteeism is one of the new indicators included in the system, which means school districts will have to pay close attention to the problem of chronic absenteeism and take steps to ensure more students attend school on a daily basis.

“It is critical that we all understand the importance of daily school attendance. Even in the early grades, lost time in school can put students at risk of becoming disengaged or dropping out of school down the road,” said Commissioner Wentzell. “Our five-year comprehensive plan makes combatting chronic absenteeism a priority as we seek to ensure equity and excellence for all Connecticut students. We know that if we maintain high expectations for every student and create engaging, diverse, and welcoming learning environments, our students show up and perform well academically.”

The comprehensive plan provides a roadmap for the State Department of Education to achieve its equity goals by maintaining high expectations for every child, training and supporting great teachers and leaders, and ensuring every public school is diverse and welcoming.

For more information and resources, visit the CSDE’s [Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in Connecticut Schools webpage](#).

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