



# State of Attendance

**2015-16 School Year**

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Changes to the National Legal Landscape .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Every Student, Every Day .....	3
<b>Changes to the Local Legal Landscape.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Work of the Truancy Taskforce .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Promising Improvements.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Findings .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism for the 2015-16 School Year.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism: Examination of Student Subgroups .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Grade .....	14
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Sex .....	16
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Race.....	17
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Special Education Level .....	18
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Economic Disadvantage .....	20
Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by School Mobility.....	22
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Data Methodology.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Definitions.....	24
Business Rules.....	24
Data Source.....	25
Data Cleaning and Limitations.....	26
Population Summary.....	27

## Introduction

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is committed to improving educational opportunities for all students throughout the District. Chronic absenteeism and truancy in the District of Columbia are perennial problems that limit the potential of far too many of the District's children. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing more than 10% of school days including both excused and unexcused absences, puts student at increased risk of falling behind academically and dropping out of school.

In October 2015, the Obama Administration launched *Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*. The initiative is a joint effort led by the White House, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice. The District of Columbia joined this call to action and sent an interagency team to the *Every Student, Every Day National Conference* in June. Representatives from OSSE, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB), the DC State Board of Education (SBOE), the Child and Family to address and eliminated chronic absenteeism among the District's most vulnerable Service Agency (CFSA), Department of Human Services (DHS), the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) spent two days learning together about concrete, evidence-based way to improve the attendance of students, particularly those we know to be most at risk. This cross-agency collaboration was a natural and important outgrowth of the District's Truancy Taskforce.

School year 2015-16 also marked the first year of implementation for the expanded Kids Ride Free program that allowed students to ride Metrorail, in addition to Metro buses, for free. Over the last year District agencies and schools have worked to develop new policies, improve attendance reporting, and form partnerships across agencies and with external organizations to promote more coordinated truancy interventions.

This report responds to the recent School Attendance Clarification Amendment Act of 2016, which requires OSSE, by October 1 of each year, to publicly report on the state of absenteeism in the District based on data from the preceding school year.

## Changes to the National Legal Landscape

### Every Student, Every Day

In October 2015, the Obama Administration launched *Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*. The initiative is a joint effort led by the

While House, the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice.

The *Every Student, Every Day* effort asks states and local agencies, in partnership with the community, “to join forces and commit to creating or enhancing coordinated, cross-sector systems for identifying and supporting students who are, or are at risk of becoming, chronically absent, with the goal of reducing chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year.”<sup>1</sup> State and local leaders are asked to:

1. Generate and act on absenteeism data
2. Create and deploy positive messages and measures
3. Focus communities on addressing chronic absenteeism
4. Ensure responsibility across sectors<sup>2</sup>

The District of Columbia responded to this call to action and sent an interagency team to the *Every Student, Every Day National Conference* in June. Representatives from OSSE, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB), the DC State Board of Education (SBOE), the Child and Family to address and eliminated chronic absenteeism among the District’s most vulnerable Service Agency (CFSA), Department of Human Services (DHS), the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) spent two days learning together to inform a citywide plan to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism. This cross-agency collaboration was a natural and important outgrowth of the District’s Truancy Taskforce.

## Changes to the Local Legal Landscape

On June 1, 2016, Mayor Bowser signed the School Attendance Clarification Emergency Amendment Act of 2016 (DC Act 21-410; 63 DCR 8202) (Emergency Attendance Clarification Act) and the School Attendance Clarification Amendment Act of 2016, DC Act 21-411 (Attendance Clarification Act). The Attendance Clarification Act, which made the changes of the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act permanent, became law on July 26, 2016, and amended the following laws and regulations:

1. Title 38, Subtitle I, Chapter 2, Subchapter I of the D.C. Code, “School Attendance” (D.C. Code §§ 38-201 *et seq.*);
2. Title 38, Subtitle IV, Chapter 18 of the D.C. Code, “District of Columbia School Reform (Public Charter Schools)” (D.C. Code §§ 38-1801.01 *et seq.*); and

<sup>1</sup> ED, HHS, HUD and DOJ Dear Colleague Letter on Chronic Absenteeism, *available at* <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/151007.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

3. Chapter 21 of Title 5-A of the DCMR, “Compulsory Education and School Attendance” (5-A DCMR § 2100 *et seq.*).

The key **new** provisions are:

1. A valid excuse for absence excuse must be provided within five school days  
All absences must be recorded as unexcused unless the parent, guardian, or other person who has custody or control of a minor student provides the school with a valid excuse for the minor’s absence within 5 school days of returning to school. *See Section 2(c)(3)(B) of the Attendance Clarification Act; to be codified at D.C. Code § 38-203(c)(2).*
2. No student may be expelled or receive an out-of- school suspension due to attendance  
Beginning in school year 2016-17, no student of compulsory school age may be expelled or receive an out-of-school suspension due to an unexcused absence or due to a late arrival to school. *See Section 2(c)(4) of the Attendance Clarification Act; to be codified at D.C. Code § 38-203(f-1). See Section 3 of the Attendance Clarification Act; to be codified at D.C. Code § 38-1802.06(g)(1).*<sup>3</sup>
3. No student may be unenrolled from an LEA due to attendance unless 20 consecutive full school day unexcused absences are accumulated. Beginning in school year 2016-17, no student of compulsory school age may be unenrolled due to an unexcused absence or due to a late arrival to school unless the minor has accumulated 20 or more full school day consecutive unexcused absence or the minor is enrolled in an adult education program. *See Section 2(c)(4) of the Attendance Clarification Act; to be codified at D.C. Code § 38-203(f-2).*
4. Establishment of a local definition for “chronic absenteeism”  
Chronic absenteeism, previously undefined in local law, is now defined as “the incidence of students missing more than 10% of school days, including excused and unexcused absences.”

*See Sections 2(a)(1) and 4(c)(1) of the Attendance Clarification Act; to be codified at D.C. Code § 38-201(1A) and amends 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.*

The key **changes** to existing requirements are:

1. How days are counted for the purpose of child welfare and juvenile justice referrals  
*Old:* Educational institutions were required to refer students 5 years of age through 13 years of age to the DC Child and Family Services Agency no later than two business days

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that Section 3 of the Attendance Clarification Act also amends D.C. Code § 38-1802.06 to prohibit charter schools from expelling students of pre-k age or suspending of students of pre-k age unless certain circumstances apply.

after the accrual of **10 unexcused absences** in a school year; students 14 years of age through 17 years of age were to be referred to the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and to the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile after the accrual of **15 unexcused absences** in a school year. Local regulations required a student to attend at least eighty percent (80%) of the instructional day to be considered present for the full day.

*New:* Only the accrual of 10 (ages 5-13) or 15 (ages 14-17) unexcused **full school day** absences are required to be counted for the purposes of meeting this requirement. A full school day is defined as the entirety of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day. Educational institutions also now have discretion regarding making a referral if the 10<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> unexcused full day absence is accrued during the final 10 school days of the school year. *See* Sections 2(a)(2) and 2(f)(2)(B)-(C) of the Attendance Clarification Act; *to be codified at* D.C. Code § 38-201(2B) and § 38-208(c)(1).

2. Required reporting to and interactions with the Metropolitan Police Department around truancy

*Old:* Educational institutions were required to notify to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) within two business days if a student accumulated 10 unexcused absences during a school year. MPD was required to take into custody minor students suspected of being truant and take them to the nearest truancy center.

*New:* Educational institutions are no longer required to notify MPD regarding the accumulation of unexcused absences. MPD is now required to take into custody minor students suspected of being truant during school hours and deliver them to the public, independent, private, or parochial school in which they are enrolled. If the student is enrolled, the school is required to receive the minor from the MPD officer. For minors not currently enrolled in school, MPD is required to take the minor to the District of Columbia Public Schools placement office. *See* Sections 2(e) and 2(f)(1) of the Attendance Clarification Act; *to be codified at* D.C. Code § 38-207 and § 38-208.

3. To whom and how enrollment and enrollment changes during the school year are reported

*Old:* The head of each educational institution was required to report to the Board of Education the name, address, sex, and date of birth of each minor who resides permanently or temporarily in the District who transfers between schools or who enrolls in or withdraws from his or her school.

*New:* Each educational institution is required to report to OSSE the same information (name, address, sex and date of birth) of all DC minors by October 5 of each year and to report to OSSE by the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month any enrollment changes (new enrollments and

withdrawals). LEAs will fulfill this ongoing obligation through existing data feeds.<sup>4</sup> See Section 2(d) of the Attendance Clarification Act; *to be codified at* D.C. Code § 38-205.

#### 4. The definition of “truancy rate”

*Old:* Truancy rate was defined as: “The incidence of students who are absent without valid excuse as defined by 5 DCMR A § 2102 on ten (10) or more occasions within a single school year, divided by the total number of students enrolled for a single school year, as determined by the final enrollment audit conducted by OSSE, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 38-203. Truancy rate may be calculated and reported at the school, LEA, and state levels.”

*New:* Truancy rate is now defined as: “The incidence of students of compulsory attendance age, as defined by D.C. Official Code § 38-202(a), enrolled at a school at any point in a given school year who are absent without valid excuse, as defined by 5-A DCMR § 2102.2, on ten (10) or more occasions within a single school year, divided by the total number of students of compulsory attendance age ever enrolled during the corresponding school year.” See Section 4(c)(2) of the Attendance Clarification Act; *amends* 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

Other changes include:

- Adding and defining two new terms: “chronic absenteeism” and “full school day”
- Making a number of edits to clarify that SEA responsibilities in this area belong to OSSE, not DCPS or the former Board of Education.
- Making a number edits to clarify that the authority to grant flexible school hours to individual 17 year old students is with the head of each educational institution.
- Removing the requirement to report monthly attendance to the former Board of Education.
- Designating OSSE as the recipient of the end-of-school year attendance report required to be submitted within 60 days after the end of a school year.

### The Work of the Truancy Taskforce

The Truancy Taskforce is an interagency collaboration that is co-chaired by Deputy Mayor for Education Jennie Niles and Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Brenda Donald. With active participation from District agencies, councilmembers, and community organizations, the Taskforce worked throughout school year 2015-16 to strategically assess and address truancy in the District through the work of four committees: 1) a steering committee, 2) a policy committee, 3) and data committee, and 4) a program committee.

The specific activities undertaken by the Taskforce, through the subcommittees, included:

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<sup>4</sup> Private schools will submit monthly enrollment information to OSSE.

- Mapping interrelated truancy policy challenges
- Researching truancy practices in other jurisdictions
- Adopting a citywide plan by agency role for addressing absenteeism
- Inventorying current investments addressing truancy
- Coordinating Attendance Awareness Month activities
- Drafting the Truancy Taskforce Strategic Plan
- Developing the Truancy Taskforce Data Plan
- Adopting common methodology for calculating truancy across sectors
- Reporting quarterly on Attendance Accountability Act outcomes
- Informing the School Attendance Clarification Amendment Act of 2016,
- Hosting a Design Challenge that engaged youth, educators and agencies in developing intervention strategies
- Reporting truancy and chronic absenteeism citywide of the first time

## Promising Improvements

The District of Columbia Public Schools reported modest but continued improvement in student attendance rates during school year (SY) 2015-16.<sup>5</sup> The DCPS *Annual Truancy Report* for SY 2015-16 highlighted the following relevant areas of improvement:

- A truancy rate reduction to 16.8%, a decrease over each of the prior school years. DCPS reported truancy rates of 26.9% in SY 2012-13, 18.2% in SY 2013-14, and 17.2% in SY 2014-15. *Note:* Using the uniform chronic truancy rate methodology<sup>6</sup>, DCPS reported a truancy rate of 20.9% for the 2015-16 school year.
- A 4.8 point (10 %) reduction in the truancy rate for 9<sup>th</sup> graders (from 48.3% to 43.5%), including a significant reduction of almost 14 points (21% reduction) in the truancy rate for 9<sup>th</sup> grade repeaters (from 65.5% to 51.8%).

The DC Public Charter School Board, on behalf of the District's public charter schools reported similar attendance rates during the 2015-16 school as in the 2014-15 school year.<sup>7</sup>

- A truancy rate of 14.5% compared to 14.7% in the 2014-15 school year. *Note:* Using the uniform chronic truancy rate methodology, public charter schools reported a truancy rate of 19.8% for the 2015-16 school year.
- Compared to the 2014-15 school year, public charter schools reported lower truancy rates for grades 9 through 12, and higher truancy rates for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual Truancy Report* (DCPS, August 2016). See Appendix B

<sup>6</sup> The uniform chronic truancy rate methodology identifies all students accumulating ten or more unexcused absences in any school within each sector across the entire school year

<sup>7</sup> *Truancy Taskforce Data Committee SY 2015-2016 Year End Report* (CJCC, September 2016). See Appendix C



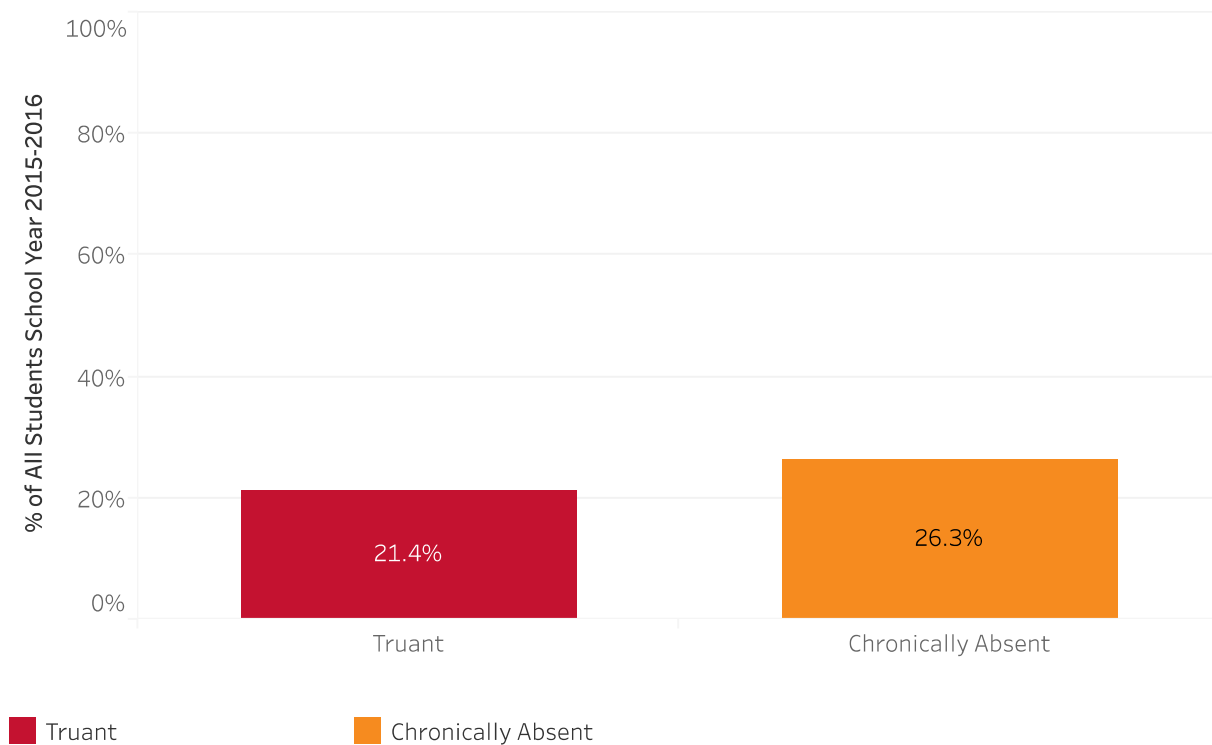
## Findings

### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism for the 2015-16 School Year

In DC, truancy is defined as the accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences across all school and sectors in a given school year. Chronic absence is defined as being absent – either excused or unexcused – for more than 10% of enrollment days across all schools and sectors in a given school year. Chronic absence is a measure of how many school days a student misses for any reason. It is a broader measure of attendance than truancy, which only tracks unexcused absences.<sup>8</sup>

Examination of the daily attendance data reported by LEAs and PCSB to OSSE reveals that **26.3%** students were chronically absent during the 2015-16 school year, and **21.4%** were truant. Appendix A provides detail on the data methodology used in this report. Appendices B and C provides detail on the chronic absenteeism and truancy rates reported to OSSE by DCPS and PCSB at the LEA- and school-level.

Figure 1. State-level Rates of Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy (N=71,257)



Attendance Works, a national initiative to promote awareness around the importance of attendance to students' academic success, identifies four tiers of risk with respect to attendance<sup>9</sup>:

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/What-is-Chronic-Absence.pdf>

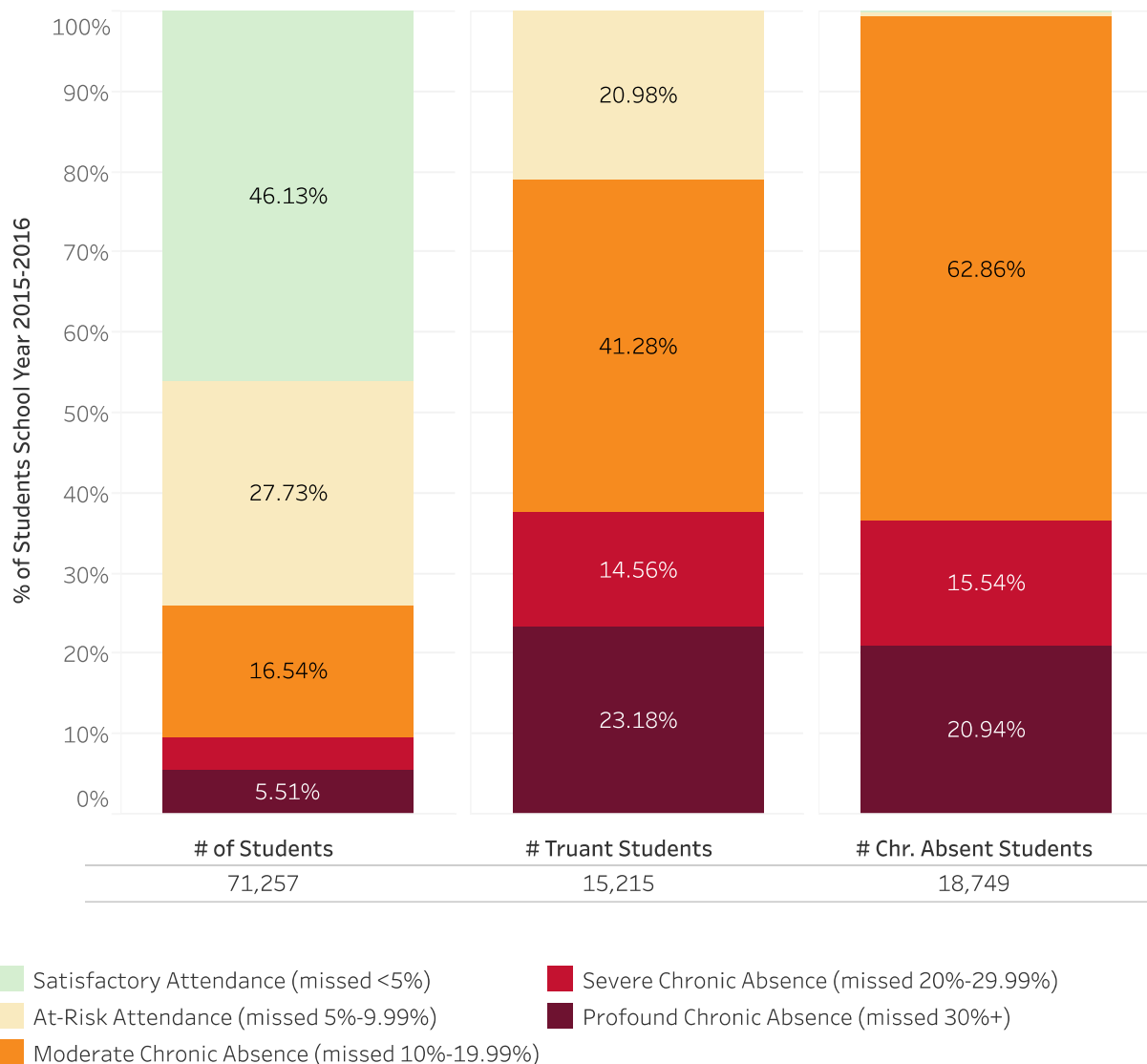
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Attendance-Works-PPT-v-4.pdf>

# STATE OF ATTENDANCE: 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR

- 1) Satisfactory Attendance: Students who missed 0%-4.99% of school days
- 2) At-Risk Attendance: Students who missed 5%-9.99% of school days
- 3) Moderate Chronic Absence: Students who missed 10%-19.99% of school days
- 4) Severe Chronic Absence: Student who missed 20% or more of school days

For this report, an additional fifth category, “Profound Chronic Absence” was created to signify those students missing 30% or more of school days. In this report, “Severe Chronic Absence” refers to students missing 20%-29.99% of school days.

Figure 2. Absenteeism Risk Tiers among All Students, Truant Students and Chronically Absent Students



In DC, among both chronically absent and truant students, more than one-third demonstrate either severe or profound chronic absence totaling 6,839 students. Aside from the 26.3% of students who were identified as chronically absent in the 2015-16 school year, an additional

27.7% (n=19,761) students show warning signs for chronic absenteeism and may be at-risk for future attendance challenges.

It is important to note that 3,145 students identified as truant are not chronically absent, accounting for 10.4% (n=787) of the population of students currently identified as truant over the age of 14 and 30.7% (n=2,358) of the population of students currently identified as truant under the age of 14. Because the majority of students are enrolled for the full academic year, it is possible to be identified as truant and not meet the threshold for chronic absenteeism; students identified as truant but not chronically absent are identified as having “at-risk attendance” (i.e., missing 5%-9.99% of school days).

During the 2015-16 school year, the vast majority (90.2%) of DC students were enrolled for more than 170 days, signaling that chronic absenteeism is a challenge shared by the entire student population and is not isolated to the population of students who are disengaged from school. For example, among high school students, the overall rate of chronic absenteeism is 50.2%; among students enrolled for more than 170 days, rates of chronic absenteeism remain high at 48.8% of high school students, indicating that chronic absenteeism is not isolated to those students who are either disengaged from school or enrolled for shorter time periods during the school year. Instead, chronic absenteeism is a challenged faced by among even those students who are enrolled for the majority of the academic year.

## Who is Chronically Absent?

Figure 3. Map of DC students colored-coded by chronic absenteeism rate

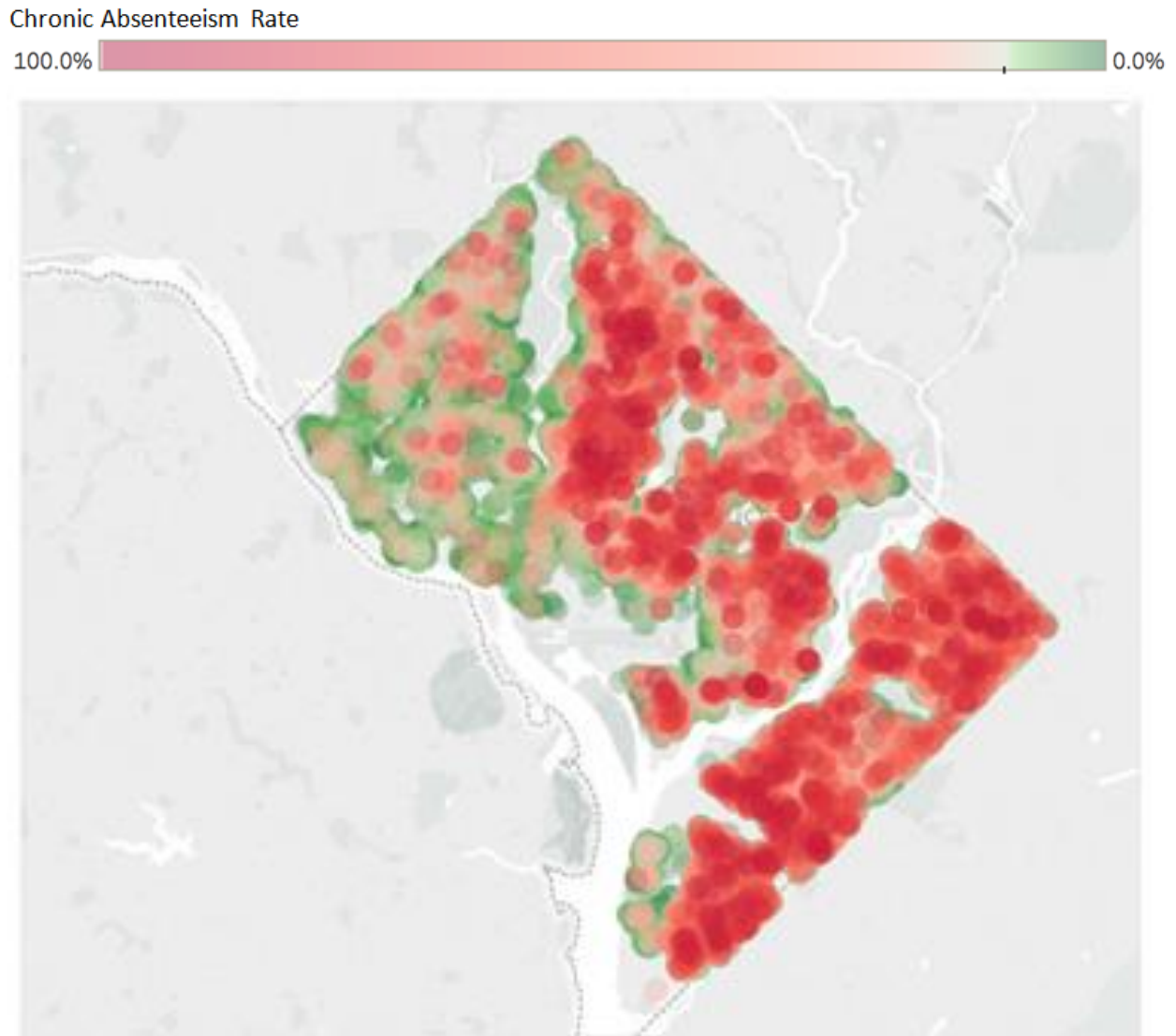


Figure 3 provides a map of DC students color-coded according to their levels of absenteeism, with darker shades of red indicating more severe chronic absence. High levels of chronic absence are observed throughout Wards 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8 with Wards 7 and 8 home to both the greatest number of students who are chronically absent and students with the greatest severity in chronic absence level.

## Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism: Examination of Student Subgroups

The following section outlines the data trends resulting from logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression is a type of regression analysis that is used when the outcome variable is binary (i.e., student *was* chronically absent versus student *was not* chronically absent). Logistic regression measures how likely the outcome (i.e., chronic absence) is to occur based on a variety of other factors (e.g., grade, gender, race).

Because all data is analyzed together in one model, the graphs represent the independent effect of each factor. This means, for example, that homeless youth are 2.0 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to youth who are not homeless irrespective of the students' grade in school, race, whether or not they have an Individualized Educational Program (IEP), their English Language Learner status, their Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) status, whether they are directly certified to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, whether they are receiving services from the Child and Family Services Agency, how many schools they have attended or how many different residences they have had during the school year. All likelihoods noted in text are statistically significant at the 99.9% confidence level.

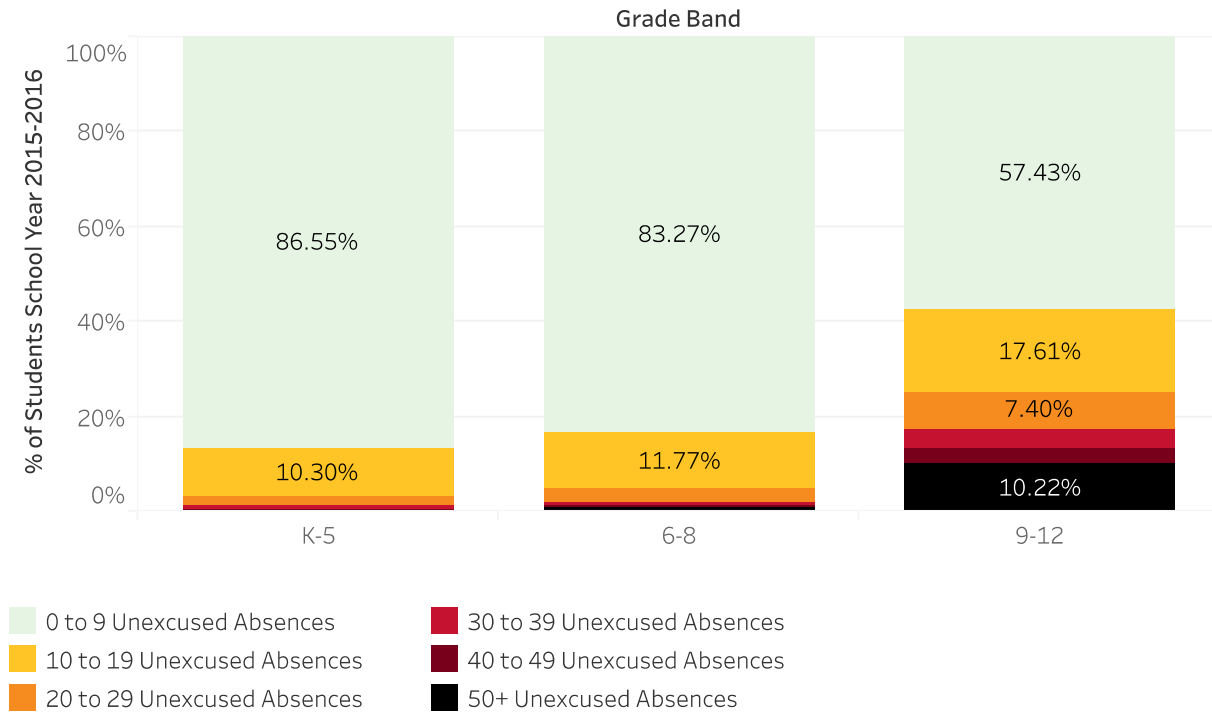
Appendix D includes graphs detailing the number and percentage of students who are were truant or chronically absent during the 2015-16 school year by students' grade, gender, race, disability status, English language learner status, economic disadvantage status, at-risk status, school mobility and residential mobility.

Examination of student characteristics associated with both chronic absenteeism and truancy revealed several factors which are strongly associated with students' absenteeism. Being in high school, economically disadvantaged, homeless, overage for grade, receiving "Level 3" special education services, receiving TANF or SNAP benefits, enrolling in three or more schools, and living at three or more residences were the factors most strongly associated with chronic absenteeism. Similar student characteristics were associated with truancy with the addition that race was also strongly associated with being truant.

### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Grade

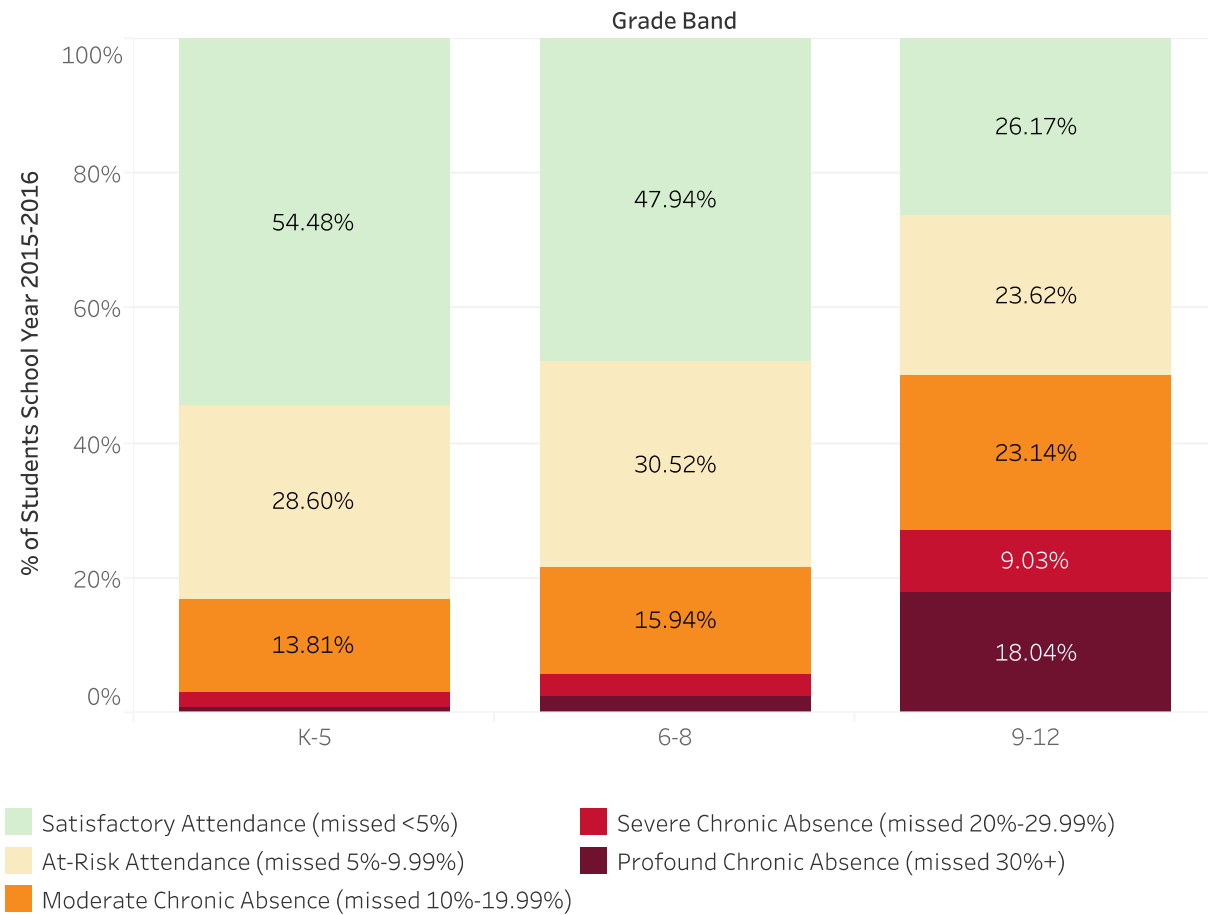
The factor most strongly associated with both truancy and chronic absenteeism was students' grade in school. Students in high school were 5.0 times more likely to be chronically absent and 4.7 times more likely to be truant than students in grades K through 5.

Figure 4. Truancy by Number of Unexcused Absences and Grade Band/Grade Level



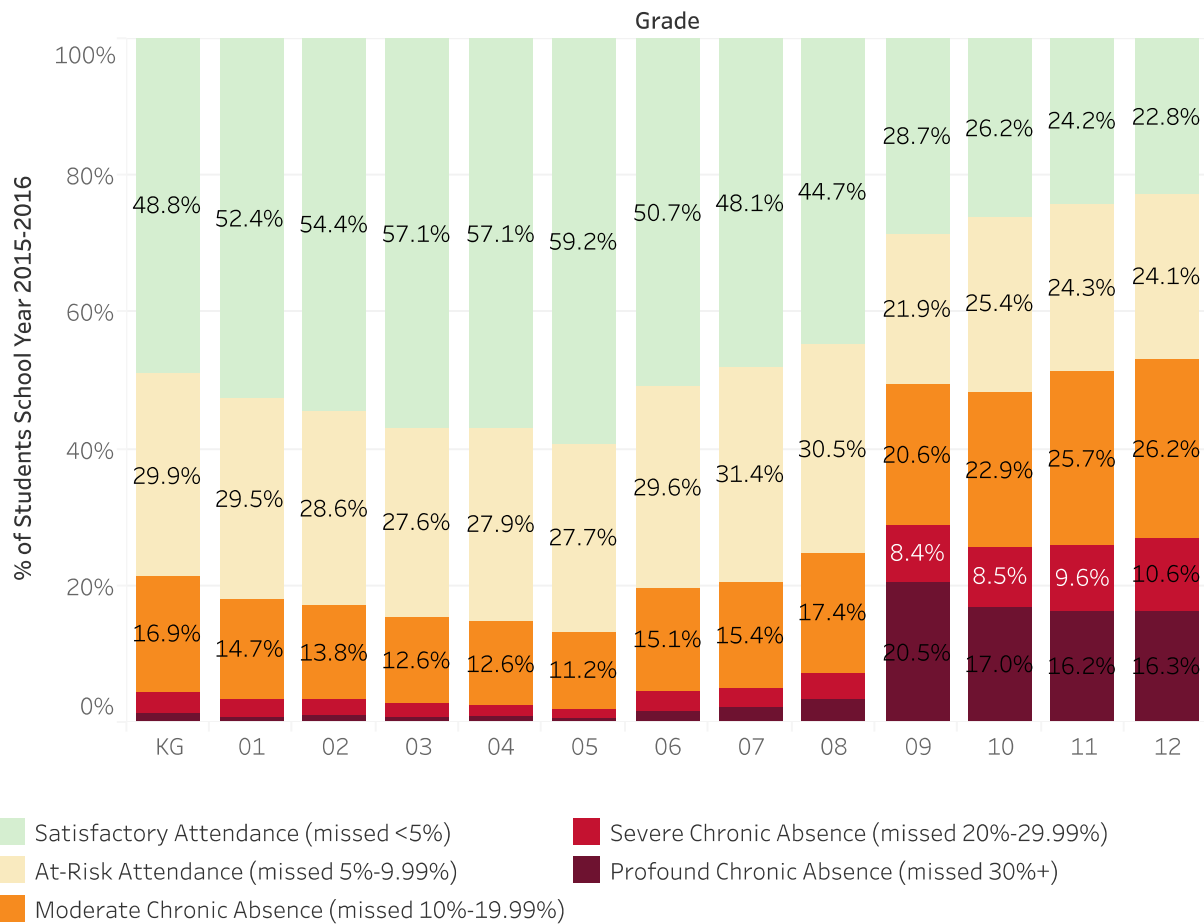
As Figure 4 indicates, 42.6% of students in high school were truant during the 2015-16 school year. Of those, a full 10.2% had more than fifty unexcused absences. By contrast, students in grades K through 8 demonstrated lower rates of truancy with 16.7% of middle school students and 13.4% of elementary school students accumulating ten or more unexcused absences across all schools throughout the 2015-16 school year.

Figure 5. Chronic Absenteeism by Absence Risk Tier and Grade Band



Similar trends were observed for chronic absenteeism (Figure 5) with higher rates of chronic absenteeism observed among high school students compared to both middle and elementary school students. Approximately 50.2% of high school students were chronically absent compared to 21.5% of middle school students and 16.9% of elementary school students. Among high school students, 27.1% demonstrate either “Severe Chronic Absence” or “Profound Chronic Absence”.

Figure 6. Chronic Absenteeism by Absence Risk Tier and Grade Level



Observing trends in chronic absenteeism by individual grade level indicates a decrease in rates of chronic absenteeism and risk for chronic absenteeism in the elementary school years and a slight increase in rates of chronic absenteeism and risk for chronic absenteeism across the middle school years. However, rates of chronic absenteeism jump sharply between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

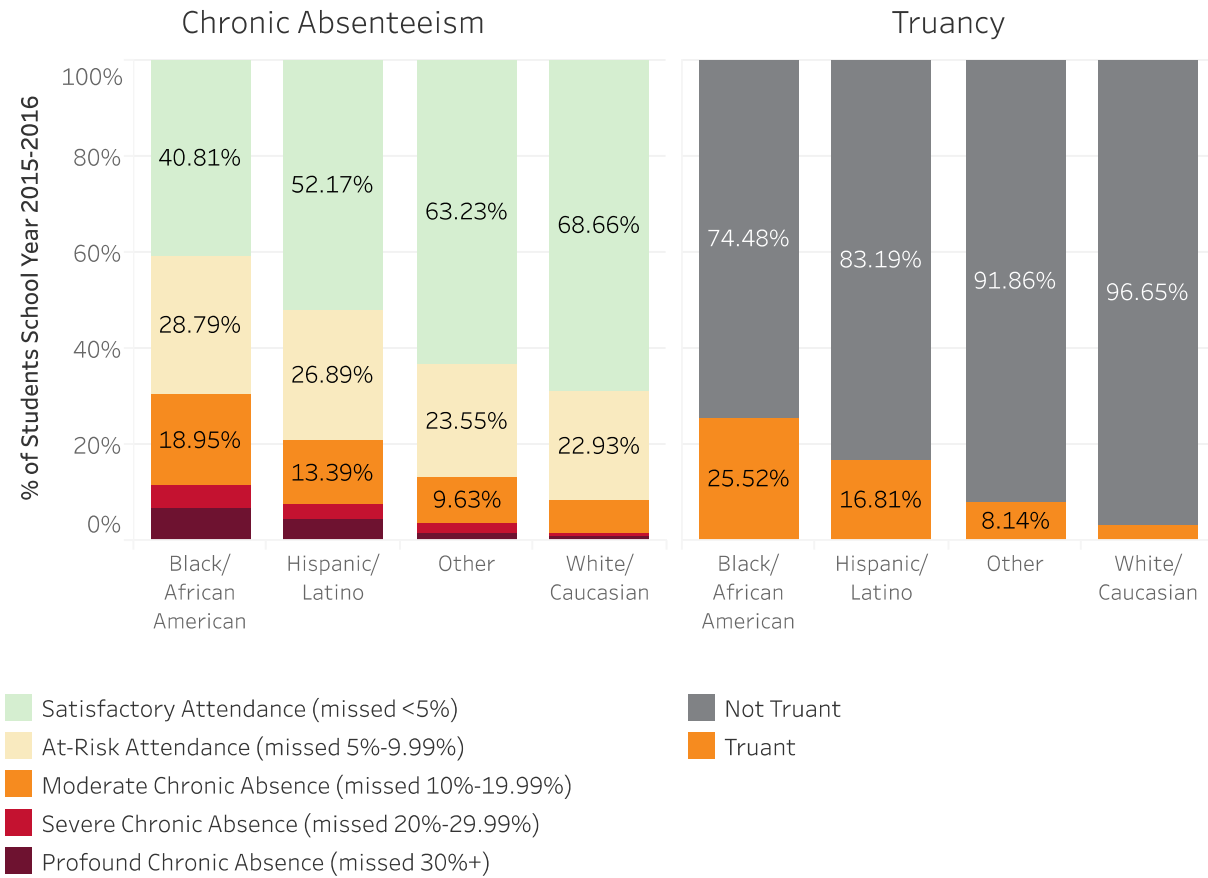
### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Sex

Male students were equally likely to be both truant and chronically absent compared to female students with 21.7% of males and 21.0% of females identified as truant, and 26.5% of males and 26.1% of females identified as chronically absent. Controlling for other demographic variables, males and females were statistically equally likely to be both truant and chronically absent.



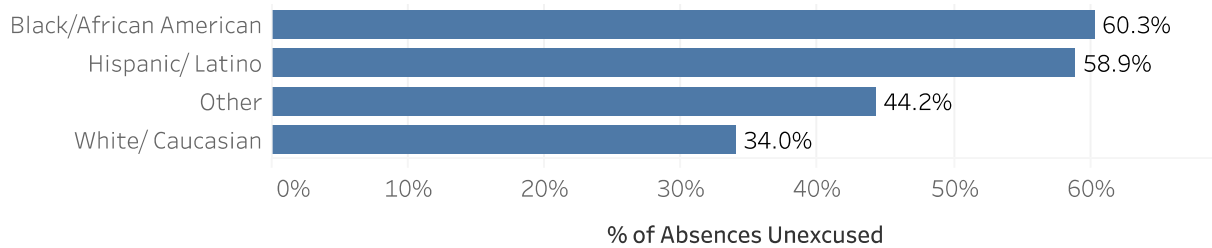
## Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Race

Figure 7. Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy by Race



African American students are 2.9 times more likely to be truant compared to White students, but only 1.6 times more likely to be chronically absent. Similar trends are seen among Hispanic or Latino students with Hispanic or Latino students 2.4 times more likely to be truant but only 1.3 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to White students.

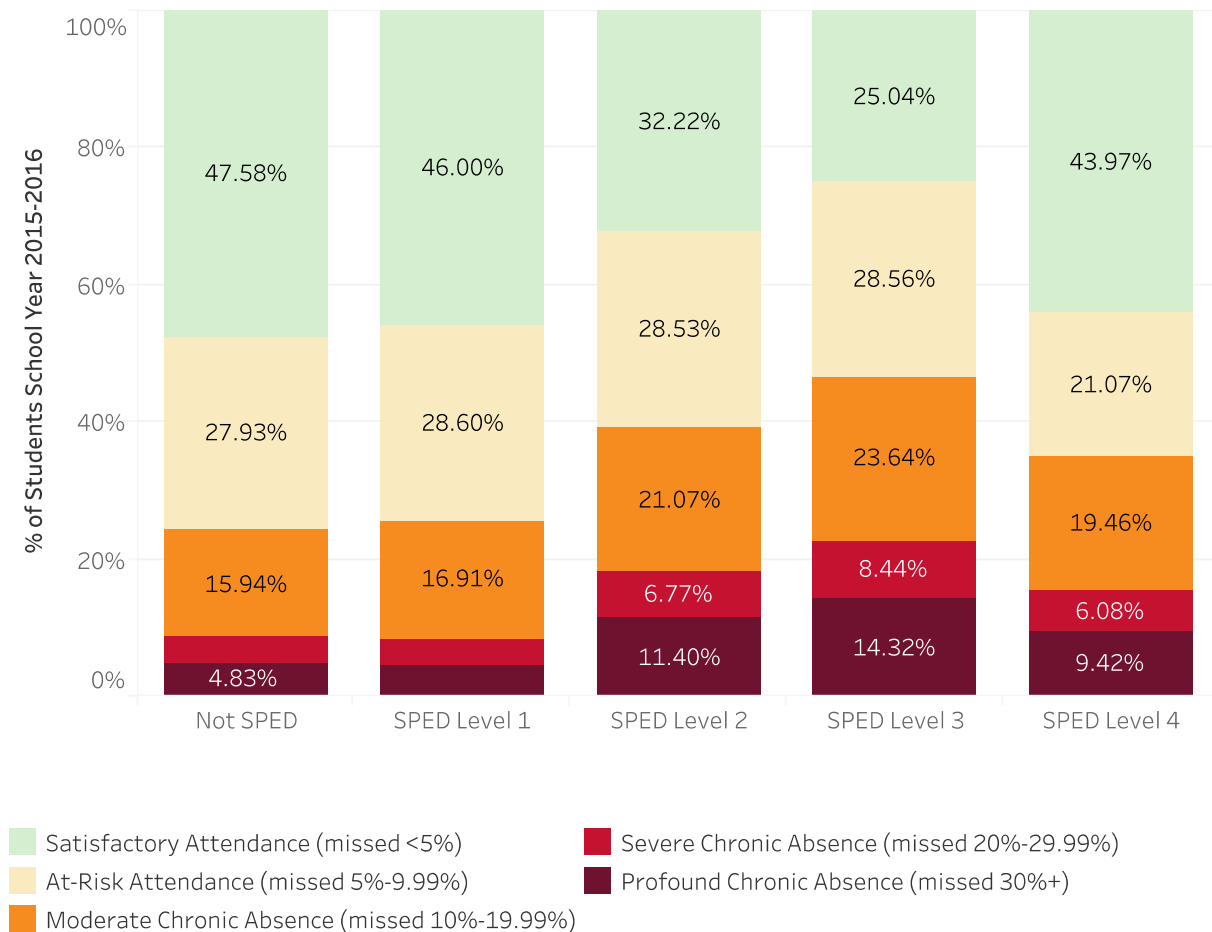
Figure 8. Percentage of Unexcused Absences out of Total Absences by Race



Examination of the proportion of absences which are excused versus unexcused by race reveals that African American and Hispanic or Latino students have a disproportionate number of unexcused versus excused absences compared to White students (Figure 8). This pattern persists even among students who are not identified as being chronically absent) indicating that White students are more likely to have an absence recorded as excused compared to African American and Hispanic or Latino students, even among students who are present on 90% or more of enrolled days.

### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Special Education Level

Figure 9. Chronic Absenteeism by Special Education Level

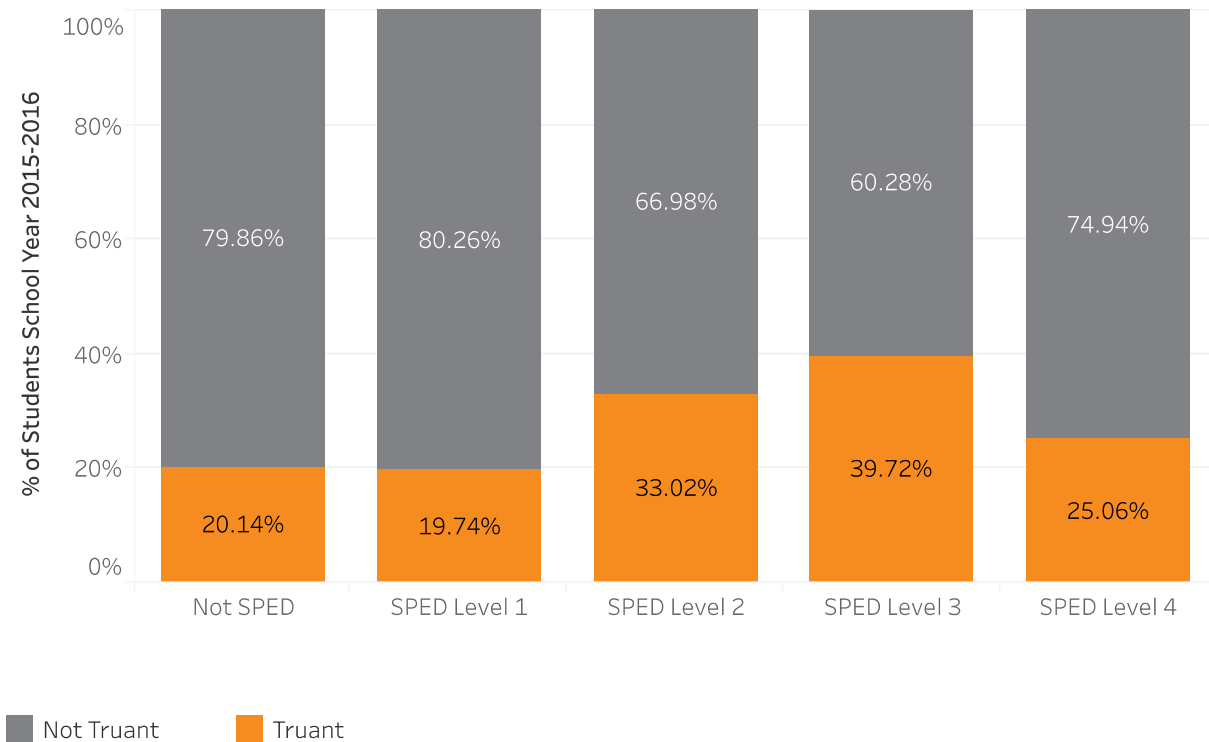


In the District of Columbia, students in special education receive various funding weights based on the total number of hours per week a student receives specialized instruction and related services regardless of the setting where received, and any dedicated aide hours. Levels are defined as follows:

- Level 1 – 0 to 8 hours
- Level 2 – 8.01 to 16 hours
- Level 3 – 16.01 to 24 hours
- Level 4 – more than 24 hours

Students with disabilities receiving “Level 2” and “Level 3” services experienced higher rates of chronic absenteeism and truancy than students with disabilities receiving “Level 1” and “Level 4” services and general education students. Students receiving “Level 2” services were 1.3 times more likely to be chronically absent and 1.2 times more likely to be truant compared to students who did not receive special education services; students receiving “Level 3” services were 1.6 times more likely to be chronically absent and 1.5 times more likely to be truant. Holding all other student characteristic constant, students receiving “Level 4” services were equally likely to be chronically absent and 1.3 times *less* likely to be truant than students who did not receive special education services.

Figure 10. Truancy by Special Education Level



### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Economic Disadvantage

To understand the potential relationship between family income and school attendance, OSSE examined several measures of student socioeconomic status, including whether a student qualifies for “at-risk” funding or is economically disadvantaged.

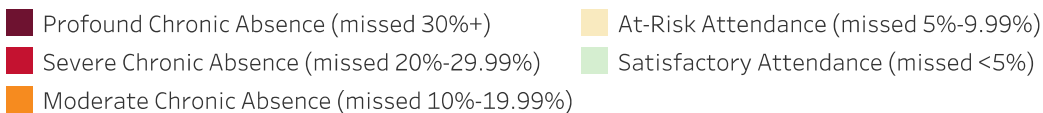
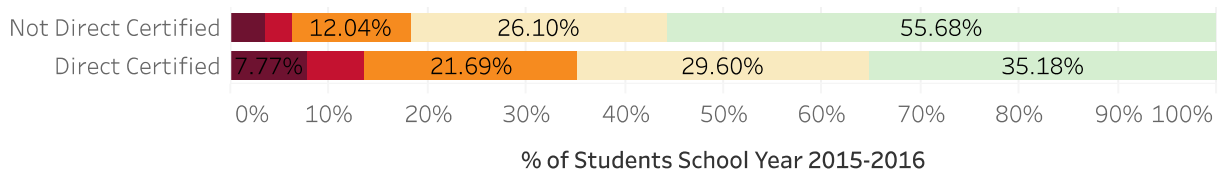
In the District of Columbia, an at-risk student refers to a student who possesses one of the following characteristics at any point during the 2015-16 school year:

- 1) Direct Certification: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollment
- 2) Homeless: Identification as homeless in the homeless data feeds and/or McKinney-Vento (MKV) QuickBase application
- 3) CFSA: Under the care of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)
- 4) Overage (high school only): A high school student is overage if her or she is at least one year older than the appropriate age for their grade

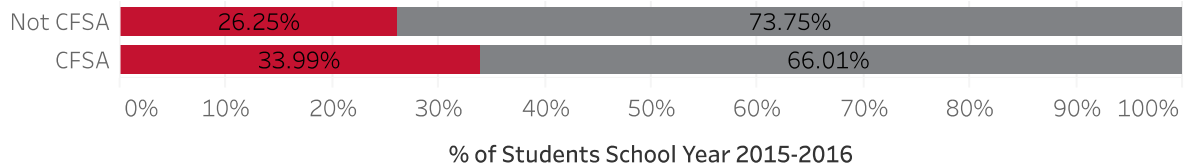
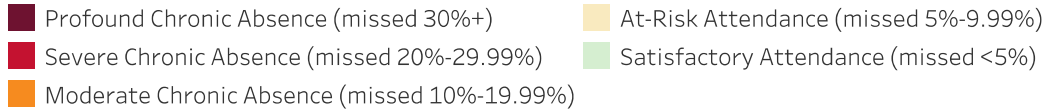
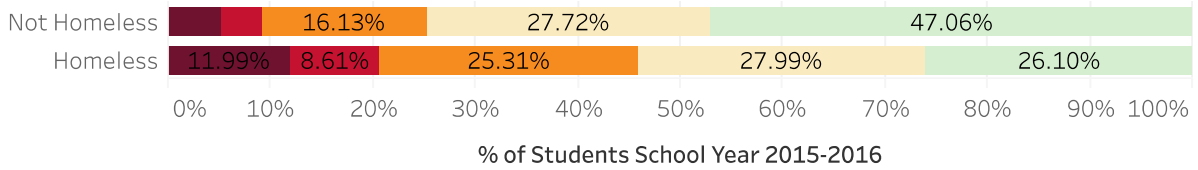
“Economically disadvantaged” refers to a student who possesses one of the following characteristics at any point during the 2015-16 school year:

1. FRL: Received Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL)
2. CEO/CEP: Received FRL through community eligibility (attending a school where the entire student population receives FRL)
3. Direct Certification: TANF or SNAP enrollment
4. Homeless: Identification as homeless in the homeless data feeds and/or MKV QuickBase application
5. CFSA: Under the care of CFSA

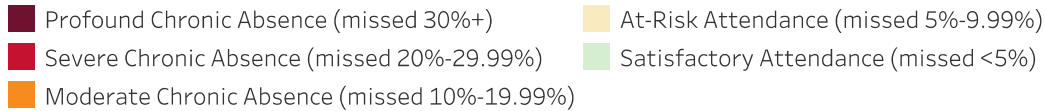
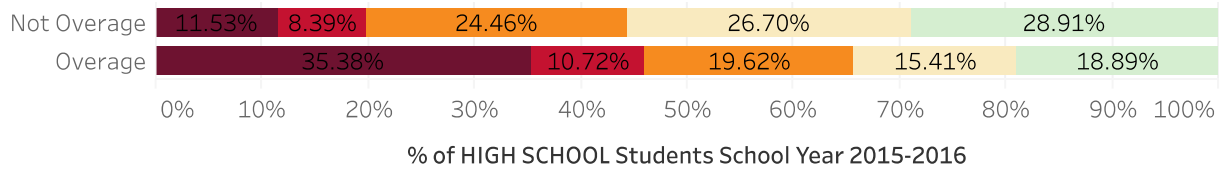
Figure 11. Chronic Absenteeism by “At-Risk” Criteria



## STATE OF ATTENDANCE: 2015-16 SCHOOL YEAR



Note: Attendance risk tiers were not provided for students under the care of CFSA due to small n-sizes



Examining the individual criterion which qualify students for at-risk funding individually, students who received TANF or SNAP benefits were 2.1 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to students who did not receive TANF or SNAP benefits. Students who were homeless at some point during the 2015-16 school year were 2.0 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to students who were not homeless. Finally, students who were overage for grade were 1.7 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to students who were not overage. Although the rate of chronic absence was higher among students under the care of CFSA compared to those students who were not under the care of CFSA, being under the care of CFSA was not significantly associated with chronic absence when taking other student characteristics into account.

Economically disadvantaged students were 1.8 times more likely to be chronically absent compared to students who were not economically disadvantaged. Economic disadvantage was associated with chronic absence above and beyond the association of FRL (which was not significantly associated with chronic absence), Direct Certification status, homeless and CFSA

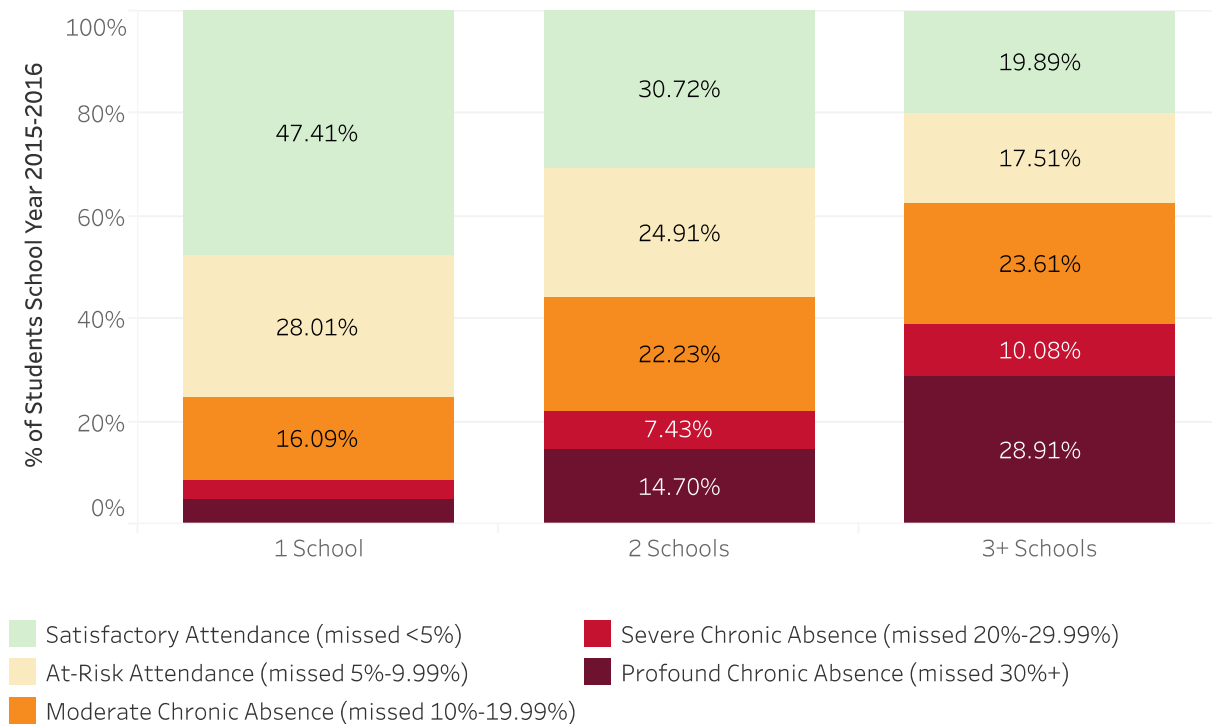
status on chronic absenteeism signaling that there are other unmeasured factors associated with economic disadvantage which confer risk for chronic absenteeism. Research shows that many different factors contribute to chronic absenteeism including housing stability, access to transportation and health. While, the current analysis is able to examine the association of many important student characteristics and chronic absenteeism, additional data on other factors known to impact student attendance is imperative to more fully understanding and addressing why DC students demonstrate such high levels of chronic absence.

Similar to the trend observed with race, a larger proportion of absences are unexcused among economically disadvantaged students compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged. Students who are not economically disadvantaged are more likely to have an absence recorded as excused compared to economically disadvantaged students, even among students who are present on 90% or more of enrolled days. More research is needed to understand what factors may contribute to this disparity.

### Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by School Mobility

In this report, *school* mobility is defined as attending two or more schools in a given school year. Other reports examining *student* mobility have examined student movement in and out of the State public education system. *School* mobility measures movement between schools among students who remain enrolled in the State public education system during the school year. In the 2015-16 school year 7.4% of students (n= 5,251) enrolled in two or more schools.

Figure 12. Chronic Absenteeism by School Mobility



Students attending two schools were 1.7 times more likely to be chronically absent or truant compared to students who only enrolled in one school during the 2015-16 school year. Students who attended three or more schools were 2.9 times more likely to be truant and 2.6 times more likely to be chronically absent. Figure 12 depicts the rates of chronic absenteeism among students experiencing school mobility.

Roughly 35% of school mobility occurred prior to the enrollment audit with 4.8% (n=3,395) of students transferring to at least one additional school following the enrollment audit. Of students transferring to at least one additional school after count day, 56.5% (n=1,906) were chronically absent and 48.4% (n=1,643) were truant. Of students who only transferred prior to count day, 32.5% (n=704) were chronically absent and 26.9% (n=583) were truant. School mobility following the audit confers greater risk than school mobility prior to count day.

### *Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism by Address Mobility*

In DC, 7.7% of students reported a change in address at some point during the 2015-16 school year. Because this percentage only includes those students who formally changed their address with their school, this percentage likely underrepresents the number of address changes which took place during the 2015-16 school year.

Students living at two or more addresses during the 2015-16 school year were 1.2 times more likely to be chronically absent and truant while students attending three or more schools were 1.6 times more likely to be chronically absent and 1.8 times more likely to be truant compared to students who lived at only one address.

## Summary

Students in DC demonstrate high rates of both chronic absenteeism and truancy with high school students most at-risk for challenges concerning their attendance. Economic disadvantage – including being homeless and receiving TANF or SNAP benefits -- and being overage for grade are among the student characteristics most strongly associated with chronic absenteeism and truancy in DC. Disparities among students with respect to the proportion of excused versus unexcused absences were observed with African-American students and economically disadvantaged students having a higher proportion of unexcused absences compared to their White and non-economically disadvantaged peers. Importantly, chronic absenteeism is a challenge faced by all students, with high rates of chronic absenteeism and truancy observed even among students who are enrolled for the majority of the school year.

## Appendix A

### Data Methodology

#### Definitions

Truancy is defined as the accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences across all school and sectors in a given school year.

Chronic absence is defined as being absent – either excused or unexcused – for more than 10% of enrollment days across all schools and sectors in a given school year.

#### Business Rules

To calculate state-level truancy and chronic absenteeism rates, OSSE applied the following business rules which were developed in collaboration with DCPS and PCSB leaders:

##### I. State-level Truancy Rate:

- a. **Numerator:** Number of students who accumulate ten or more unexcused absences across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled during the school year
- b. **Denominator:** Number of students enrolled in the State at any point during the school year
- c. **Inclusion Criteria:**
  - i. Students will be considered to be enrolled in the State if they have a valid Stage 5 enrollment date and code at any LEA or school at any point on or after that LEA or school's first day of school
  - ii. Students must be of compulsory age (aged 5.00 to 17.99) as of 9/30 of the school year
  - iii. Any unexcused absences a student receives on or after turning 18.00 years old will not count toward the accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences in meeting the threshold for being designated as "truant" in the analysis
  - iv. Students must have been enrolled for a minimum of 10 days during the school year to be included in the analysis
  - v. For year-round schools which do not have a designated first or last day of school recorded in the ESchoolPLUS Enterprise calendar, the school year will be defined as 7/1 to 6/30
  - vi. Summer school enrollments and related attendance will not be included in the calculation

##### II. State-level Chronic Absenteeism Rate:



- a. **Numerator:** Number of students who are absent (either excused or unexcused) on 10% or more of the school days on which the student was enrolled across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student was enrolled
  - i. Calculation of percentage of absences
    - 1. Numerator: Total number of excused and unexcused absences accumulated by a student across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled
    - 2. Denominator: Total number of school days on which the student was enrolled across the entire school year and across all schools and LEAs in which the student enrolled
      - a. A student is considered to have an active enrollment at an LEA from the point at which a student has a valid Stage 5 entry code and entry date until the student is exited from the Student Information System with a valid exit code and exit date
- b. **Denominator:** Number of students with a valid Stage 5 enrollment in the State at any point during the school year
- c. **Inclusion Criteria:**
  - i. Students will be considered to be enrolled in the State if they have a valid Stage 5 enrollment date and code at any LEA or school at any point on or after that LEA or school's first day of school
  - ii. Students must be of compulsory age (aged 5.00 to 17.99) as of 9/30 of the school year
  - iii. Students must have been enrolled for a minimum of 10 days during the school year to be included in the analysis
  - iv. For year-round schools which do not have a designated first or last day of school recorded in the ESchoolPLUS Enterprise calendar, the school year will be defined as 7/1 to 6/30.
  - v. Summer school enrollments and related attendance will not be included in the calculation

#### Data Source

Data are based on daily attendance files provided by DC Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB). During the 2015-16 school year, charter LEAs provided attendance data to OSSE through a daily feed. The 2015-16 school year was the first year during which OSSE received daily attendance from LEAs

OSSE will engage LEAs over the next year to determine the data collection requirements and business rules necessary to report on truancy and chronic absenteeism rates at the school level for the 2016-17 school year and beyond, as required in the Emergency Attendance Clarification Act.

### Data Cleaning and Limitations

The daily attendance file received from LEAs and PCSB required extensive data cleaning due to non-logical as well as duplicative attendance values provided for a given student-date combination. The following logic was applied to the attendance files in processing them for analysis:

1. All attendance date should fall within the range of dates where LEAs provide educational services
  - a. OSSE created a template based on each school's unique school calendar containing the dates upon which attendance would be expected
  - b. Daily student attendance was mapped to this template
  - c. There were ~102,000 instances where attendance was provided on a weekend or day that school was closed according to the specific school's calendar; these attendance values were removed from the file
2. Attendance data should to be unique by student and date (except in instances of enrollment in adult LEAs where valid duplicative enrollments may take place)
  - a. A student should not have two attendance values at the same school on the same date.
    - i. There were ~800 instances where a student had a different attendance values in the same school on the same date; these attendance values were removed from the file
  - b. A student should not have overlapping attendance sent from two non-Adult LEAs.
    - i. We assigned an attendance period number to each period of attendance which did not contain a gap in attendance of more than 15 consecutive days
      1. Attendance periods were unique by usi, school id, period number
    - ii. We removed duplicative attendance values as follows:
      1. If an enrollment instance was fully contained within another enrollment instance, the enrollment instance and its corresponding attendance values were removed
        - a. Example: School A provided attendance data from 9/15/2015-12/1/2015 and school B provided attendance data from 10/15/2015-11/1/2015; attendance from school B was excluded from the analysis
      2. If an enrollment instance overlapped with another enrollment instance, the first enrollment instance was assumed to end when the second enrollment instance began
        - a. Example: School A provided attendance data from 9/15/2015-12/1/2015 and school B provided attendance

- data from 10/15/2015-4/1/2015; attendance from school A from 10/15/2015-12/1/2015 was excluded from analysis
3. If a student left and returned to the same school, attendance data for any enrollment occurring during the gap in enrollment at school A was preserved
    - a. Example: School A provided attendance data from 9/15/2015-12/1/2015 and again from 2/1/2015 to 6/15/2016 and school B provided attendance data from 10/15/2015-4/1/2015. Attendance was counted as follows:
      - i. School A 9/15/2015-10/14/2015
      - ii. School B 10/15/2015-1/31/2015
      - iii. School A 2/1/2015-6/15/2015
    - iii. There were ~50,000 instances where a student had overlapping attendance with another LEA.

Additionally, there were 77 students with 0 days marked present at their LEA who had attendance recorded on more than 10 days who are included in the calculations for truancy and chronic absenteeism.

In the 2015-16 school year, OSSE provided real-time error reporting to LEAs in Qlik concerning their attendance data. Unfortunately, there were still numerous data errors which remained unresolved at the close of the school year. OSSE will continue to work with LEAs to identify and resolve errors in attendance data throughout the upcoming and subsequent school years.

### Population Summary

The final, cleaned daily attendance file contained daily attendance for 94,791 students enrolled during the 2015-16 school year. Findings contained in this report are based on the 71,257 students out of the total 94,791 students in the comprehensive daily attendance file who were of compulsory age during the 2015-16 school year who had greater than 10 days of enrollment.