



Getting to School Matters for 3 & 4 Year Olds: How Public Schools Can Help

Study after study confirms the value of high-quality early childhood education for developing the cognitive, social and emotional skills that children need to succeed in kindergarten. But unless children attend these programs on a regular basis, they are not likely to benefit fully. And unless we pay attention to attendance even among young children, we are missing the opportunity to use early educational experiences to build an essential skill: showing up on time, every day to school. A growing body of research and practitioner experience shows that paying attention to attendance for our youngest children is essential.¹

Why is attendance important for our youngest learners?

Early attendance can help children become readers and improve student outcomes.

Regular attendance in preschool provides children with the foundation to develop the critical literacy skills they will need in later grades. From preschool through high school, regular attendance can increase test scores as well as increase the likelihood of being on-track and graduating high school.²

Chronic Absenteeism starts early.

Studies have found that children who are chronically absent in preschool are five times more likely to miss more days of kindergarten. For the 2014-15 school year 12% of CT's kindergarteners were chronically absent, that is almost 550 kindergarteners who were regularly not in school.³ Additionally, children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are likely to have poor attendance 5 years later.⁴

Children from low-income families are more likely to be chronically absent.

Regular attendance may be especially challenging for low-income families to achieve given some of the barriers they face, such as transportation and bad weather which are more likely to be obstacles in getting to and from school. And yet, children from low-income families, who have good attendance at high-quality preschool programs, are more likely to experience long-term benefits of preschool.⁵

What can public schools do?

✓ **Figure Out What Works!**

- Collect and analyze attendance data for preschool students and their siblings in higher grades.
- Use the Attendance Works Early Education Toolkit materials available at www.attendanceworks.org.

✓ **Inform and Collaborate!**

- Engage families to develop and deliver positive and culturally relevant messages about the importance of attendance in preschool.
- Partner with community-based preschool programs to implement a messaging and education campaign about the importance of attendance for our youngest learners.

✓ **Build and Expand!**

- Include preschool representation on school and district attendance teams and in preschool district attendance plans. This should include parents!
- Partner with community-based providers to gather attendance data when possible.
- Work with local Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to incorporate preschool in your community plans. Or, if a Campaign doesn't exist, start one! www.gradelevelreading.net

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¹Attendance Works, 2016

²Attendance Institute and the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. PowerPoint. November 18, 2014. Elaine Allensworth, PhD, and the Lewis-Sebring. Absenteeism and GPA: Exploring the top indicators of career and college readiness.

³Connecticut Department of Education, 2016

⁴Ehrlich, S. B., Gwynne, J. A., Pareja, A. S., and Allensworth, E. M. (2014, May). Preschool attendance in Chicago Public Schools. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. uchicago.edu/publications/preschool-attendance-chicago-public-schools

⁵EcoNorthwest, Chronic Absence in Oregon. PowerPoint. February 2, 2012. Minervino, J., and Pianta, R., (2013). Early Learning: The New Fact Base and Cost Sustainability. White Paper for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.