



Be There!

Education Committee of the Board

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Making the Case: Why Chronic Absenteeism?

Historically, PPS and the community at large have considered attendance in two ways:

1) Truancy: students having an excessive number of “unlawful/unexcused” absences


2) Average Daily Attendance: aggregate percentage of all of the days attended by all of the students enrolled in the school

Additionally, eligibility for the Pittsburgh Promise is partially based on having no greater than a 10% absence rate in high school, but *only unexcused and absences due to suspension are considered when calculating that absence rate.*



Chronic Absenteeism- Definition and Purpose

- ***Chronic Absenteeism*** is a measure of how much seat time is lost for a student and is defined by missing 10% or more of school days regardless of any reason.
 - **10% of school days = 18 day/year = a student being defined as chronically absent**
 - One day every other week
 - Three days every month
 - ***An entire month of school***
- National research has shown that a focus on ***Chronic Absenteeism*** leads to better outcomes for students.
- Chronic Absenteeism is a more complete, more personal indicator of student attendance risk.



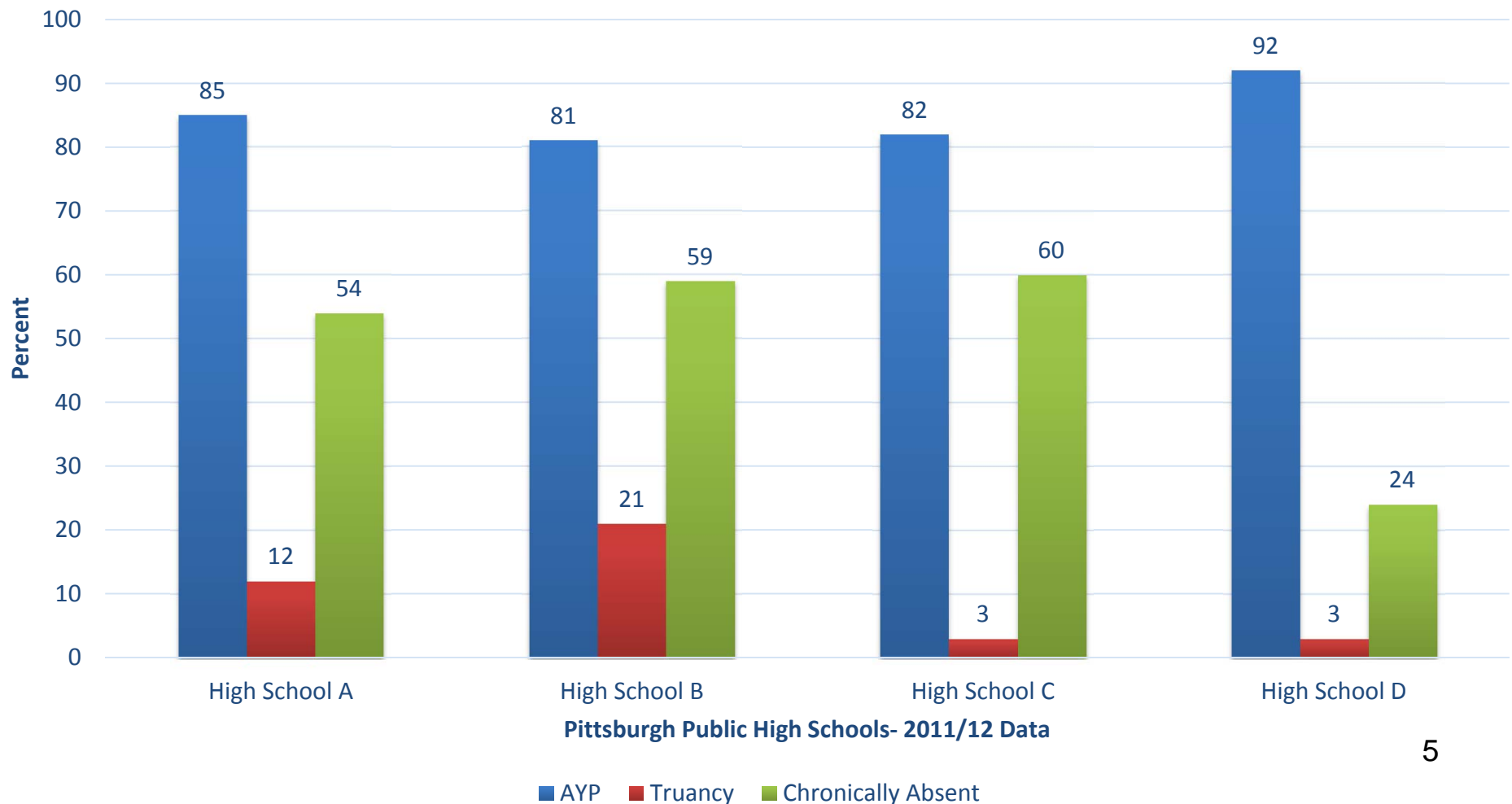
“...chronic absenteeism got my attention particularly because of all the work we’re doing with effective teaching. That goes for nought if the kids aren’t there.”

~Dr. Linda Lane

Chronic Absenteeism- A Better Measure

Our schools look “fine” when only measured by AYP or truancy rates, but drastically different when measured by rates of chronic absenteeism

Comparing Truancy, AYP, and Chronic Absenteeism



Chronic Absenteeism and Our Students

9th Grade Attendance is Critical

Student A

95% Attendance Rate

- 2.6 GPA
- **93%** Chance of Graduating
- **48%** Chance of Persisting to Year 2 of College

Student B

90% Attendance Rate

- 2.1 GPA
- **89%** Chance of Graduating
- **40%** Chance of Persisting to Year 2 of College

Student C

85% Attendance Rate

- 1.7 GPA
- **79%** Chance of Graduating
- **30%** Chance of Persisting to Year 2 of College

...But so is Kindergarten!

90%+ Kindergarten Attendance Rate

- **74%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Reading
- **66%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Math

80-89% Kindergarten Attendance Rate

- **52%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Reading
- **49%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Math

<80% Kindergarten Attendance Rate

- **45%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Reading
- **46%** Proficient on 3rd Grade Math

How We Think Influences How We Act

Truancy

- Compliance
- Punitive
- Reactive
- Narrow set of strategies, implemented by small subset of actors



Absenteeism

- Improvement
- Preventive
- Broad set of strategies, implemented by diverse set of actors



Best Practice:

Monitoring Attendance Data

- New reports for school and central staff to identify students and schools with high rates of absenteeism, trends over time
 - Goal is to share with community partners as well
- Professional development and best practice sharing between school staff for ensuring procedures and practices for data capture and compliance are consistent across and within schools
- Classroom attendance tracking for students
- Plans to improve notifications to parents (call when absent, include information in parent information viewer, etc.)

Best Practice:

Engage Students and Parents

- Clarifying and stressing the importance of attendance to parents using back-to-school mailers and videos, 9th Grade Nation events
 - Effort to ensure that parents and students understand the impact of attendance and that all seat time matters
- Leveraging community partners through the county-wide “Be There!” attendance awareness initiative





Best Practice:

Develop Programmatic Responses to Barriers

- Ongoing monitoring of school attendance patterns by School Performance teams; intervention as needed
- Schools are including attendance improvement plans in School Improvement Plans
- October 9th: Full-day conference for PPS staff to work with national experts on improving attendance
- October 10th: “Be There! School Attendance Matters”
 - County-wide conference hosted by UWAC and OCD
 - Representatives from PPS’ central office, schools and community partners will be in attendance



Best Practice:

Provide Personalized Early Outreach

- Schools able to review attendance patterns of students in previous years to identify at-risk students
- Reinforcing responsibility of each individual at the school to make personal contact with every student and family
- Schools able to create plans with students (focusing on those with unhealthy attendance habits in prior years) at the beginning of the year
 - Tie to other goals (academic or incentive)



Best Practice:

Work with Community Partners

- “Be There!” initiative of the United Way, A+ Schools, Pittsburgh Promise, Connect, AIU, DHS
- Expansion of *Ready Freddy* program
- Year two of *Focus on Attendance*

The Impact of “Being There”

