
Minnesota Student Attendance Pilot Report: July 1, 2026

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 20, subdivision 4

July 1, 2026

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Legislative Charge

Minnesota Session Laws 2024, section 20, subdivision 4. reporting. (a) The lead school district must submit reports to the chairs and minority leaders of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education by December 31, 2024; July 1, 2025; July 1, 2026; and September 1, 2027. Each report must include each participating district's individual reports.

(b) The first report must identify the goals and strategies each district plans to implement during the pilot program, and how each district counts and reports latenesses and absences. The other reports must identify each district's goals, strategies, challenges in meeting goals or implementing planned strategies, promising practices and practices that were not effective, and attendance data for the school year preceding the pilot program and the three school years of the pilot program. The attendance data must include attendance data for students that were absent up to 10% of classes or school days, between 10% and 29% percent of classes or school days, between 30% and 49% of classes or school days, and 50% or more of classes or school days; and for students who are homeless or highly mobile. The fourth report must also include recommendations for funding and statutory changes that would facilitate district efforts to implement local solutions to improve attendance.

Executive Summary

Pilot District Activities

Representatives from each Attendance Pilot District meet virtually on the third Wednesday of every month. These meetings focus on continuous improvement of attendance strategies, sharing promising practices, and strengthening collaboration through common challenges and goals.

A recurring topic of discussion has been partnerships with county agencies regarding educational neglect and truancy reporting. While a few pilot districts report strong collaboration and effective responses from county agencies, most districts indicate that they receive little to no response or ineffective interventions related to educational neglect and truancy concerns.

The following speakers presented during monthly Pilot District meetings to share research, resources, and best practices:

November 19, 2025: Nat Malkus and Sam Hollon, authors of *Need Not Be a Surprise: Early-Warning Systems for Chronic Absenteeism*, published by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), presented on the use of early-warning systems to identify and address chronic absenteeism. Malkus serves as Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of Education Policy at AEI and is affiliated with AEI's James Q. Wilson Program in K-12 Education Studies. He is also the creator of AEI's Return to Learn Tracker, which monitored pandemic-related school closures and masking policies and now tracks post-pandemic chronic absenteeism. Hollon is a Data Analyst in Education Policy Studies at AEI.

December 17, 2025: Jen LoPiccolo, Director of School and District Partnerships for the Partnership for Student Success, presented on nationwide efforts to provide evidence-based, people-powered support to students. The Partnership for Student Success, based at the Johns Hopkins University Everyone Graduates Center, works with local and state communities across the country to expand student support systems and improve educational outcomes.

During the 2025-26 school year, Pilot Districts had the opportunity to gather in person to participate in shared learning opportunities:

July 31, 2025: Pilot Districts were invited to attend the Be at School Conference, hosted by the Hennepin County Attorney's Office and the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development. The conference brought together educators from across Minnesota to address barriers to K-12 school attendance through collaborative, family-centered, and early intervention strategies.

October 2, 2025: Pilot Districts partnered with the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development to host a day-long K-12 Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism Discussion, sponsored by the Minneapolis Foundation. Attendees included Pilot District representatives, County partners, and members of the Minnesota House and Senate K-12 education committees. The keynote speaker was Sarah Winchell Lenhoff, whose research focuses on district and school systems that support school improvement, as well as the causes and consequences of student absenteeism. Lenhoff is the author of *Rethinking Chronic Absenteeism: Why Schools Can't Solve It Alone*.

Attendance Pilot Updates

Representatives from pilot districts presented updates to the following committees: Senate Education Finance Committee, February 24, 2026 and House Education Finance Committee, February 26, 2026.

Attendance Coding and Counting Subcommittee

A dedicated subcommittee of seven pilot districts was established to refine statewide coding and counting practices. This group consists of representatives from seven pilot districts, a Minnesota Department of Education Data Practices and Analytics Division representative, and Collaborative Partnerships to Advance Student Success representatives. The subcommittee identified several areas where clearer statewide guidance is needed, including:

- Appropriate use of “exempt” absences, especially for school-supervised or district-approved activities
- Definitions of absence, tardy, and exempt status
- Distinctions between half-day and full-day absences
- Criteria for coding missed instructional time

Variation in district-level definitions and coding practices currently limits the comparability and equity of statewide attendance reporting. The subcommittee is developing a state model policy to standardize coding practices and will gather input from additional districts before finalizing recommendations.

Common Challenges:

Pilot districts identified several common barriers to addressing chronic absenteeism.

- Effective intervention is hindered by inconsistent and inefficient attendance data systems, which require significant staff time to maintain and often provide delayed or incomplete information. As a result, schools may not identify at-risk students quickly enough to provide timely support.
- While most districts have Attendance or Support Teams in place, chronic staffing shortages limit their ability to meet consistently, engage key stakeholders, and provide intensive interventions. Staffing constraints also contribute to delays in truancy reporting and follow-up actions.
- Transportation remains a significant obstacle, particularly for students in walk zones, those affected by unreliable bus service, behavior-related transportation restrictions, and those needing transportation outside regular school hours.

- Districts also highlighted the need for stronger family engagement and communication. Many families lack a clear understanding of attendance policies, illness-related absences, reporting procedures, and the cumulative academic impact of missed school days, including excused absences.
- Districts reported concerns about the effectiveness of county truancy responses. Delays in filing referrals, combined with limited county follow-up and interventions that often fail to address underlying causes of absenteeism, reduce the impact of the truancy process and limit opportunities to improve student attendance outcomes.

Lessons Learned

Several key lessons have come from district pilot implementation activities. These lessons will drive Year 3 of implementation.

- Identifying and implementing evidence-based practices across all tiers of support requires considerable time and effort, particularly for students experiencing chronic absenteeism. Access to a vetted repository of tiered interventions would help districts more efficiently match support to student needs.
- Many attendance improvement strategies are resource-intensive, requiring substantial staff capacity to coordinate, implement, monitor, and evaluate interventions. Sustaining successful initiatives often requires resources beyond the scope of pilot funding.
- Building strong partnerships with families remains both challenging and essential. Consistent, proactive, and persistent communication is critical to fostering family engagement and supporting improved attendance outcomes.
- Student voice is a valuable component of attendance improvement efforts. Districts would benefit from identifying innovative ways to engage students in shaping school climate and developing solutions to address absenteeism.
- Most absences are excused rather than unexcused, highlighting the need for prevention and intervention strategies that address all forms of absenteeism, not solely truancy.
- Districts report a need for greater clarity and consistency in attendance definitions, including what constitutes a tardy, half-day absence, full-day absence, or exempt absence.

Through the first two years of the pilot, collaboration with districts across Minnesota has revealed a powerful truth: Attendance is not an isolated task; it is a core component of student success.

Districts have seen tremendous success in aligning attendance efforts with Minnesota Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). To scale this success, we believe a state-level inventory of evidence-based interventions—categorized by Tiers 1, 2, and 3—is essential.

While pilot funding has been a vital catalyst, we must be candid about the human cost. Pilot initiatives often outgrow pilot dollars. Moving the needle on chronic absenteeism requires significant 'person-power' to organize, implement, and evaluate these interventions. Without sustained funding for dedicated staff, districts risk losing the momentum these pilots have generated.

Districts are shifting from reactive 'truancy' models to proactive family engagement. However, these positive outreach efforts are labor-intensive and require a specialized skill set beyond traditional administrative roles.

Student voices must be prioritized to gain the perspective necessary to foster a healthy school climate. By engaging students directly, processes and practices are strengthened. When students feel they belong, they show up.

Currently, districts are navigating a significant mismatch between data and reality. Many districts report that excused absence codes are the highest percentage of missed school days. However, state statutes and county

requirements focus almost exclusively on *unexcused* absences. While we are overwhelmed by the paperwork of truancy, the more accurate predictor of student outcomes is chronic absenteeism. As a state, we need a collaborative system that allows schools and counties to track and respond to lost instructional time, rather than just legal non-compliance.

With the existing variance across the state in interpretation and use of tardy, half-day absence, full day absence and exempt, pilot districts are prioritizing the creation of definitions to ensure data equity and accurate statewide reporting. In addition, it would be valuable for state statutes to consider the percentage of instruction missed rather than aggregate full-day absences. Seven absences in October represent a much higher risk to foundational learning than seven absences in April. Measuring the percentage of the school year missed allows for a "weighted" approach to intervention, prioritizing students based on their actual risk of academic failure.

Overall, the pilot has demonstrated that improving attendance outcomes requires consistent statewide definitions and reliable data systems. Standardizing attendance coding and counting practices will strengthen data equity, improve accountability, and better position districts to identify and support students at risk of chronic absenteeism.

Introduction

This report will summarize Year 2 of implementation of the Minnesota Student Attendance Pilot. The report will cover a summary of all Year 2 activities, provide the framework for understanding attendance trends statewide and some of the statewide research on attendance challenges, and summarize the progress of each district.

Summary of activities

District monthly professional development

The twelve pilot districts and representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) Collaborative Minnesota Partnerships to Advance Student Success (COMPASS) and Data Practices and Analytics (DPA) division gather on the third Wednesday of each month 1:30-2:30 p.m. to discuss program implementation, related policies or proposed policies, reporting requirements, and other relevant topics. While every Local Education Agency (LEA) has had a different experience within the attendance pilot due to local contexts, several themes developed across pilot sites have been illuminated through these monthly meetings:

- **Districts continue to improve relationships with county partners.** In some districts, counties are very active in truancy mitigation and in other districts counties are not very active. The legislative focus on attendance and the push from the pilot districts has been helpful in involving counties in supporting attendance.
- **Attendance coding has been improving in consistency across district systems.** Some districts have also been implementing attendance tracking codes for "missed instructional time" (frequently referred to as an "M" code) as a way of internally tracking and mitigating student time absence from the classroom. While this tracking may not change the days a student is present or absent it can inform interventions.
- **Districts are focusing resources to both intervention and prevention:** To support this pivot, districts were privileged to learn from Nat Malkus and Sam Hollon from the American Enterprise Institute and authors of *Need to be a Surprise: Early Warning Systems for Chronic Absenteeism* in November 2025 and Jen LoPiccolo, Director of School and District Partnerships at the Partnership for Student Success in December of 2025 on methods to create an early warning system for students in danger of becoming Chronically Absent.

Attendance coding and counting subcommittee

Minnesota Session Laws 2024, chapter 115, section 20, subdivision 4: The fourth report must also include recommendations for funding and statutory changes that would facilitate district efforts to implement local solutions to improve attendance. To address this objective, the pilot districts formed a subcommittee of 8 districts and MDE and COMPASS representation to design the recommendation to the legislature.

As a problem statement, the subcommittee articulated:

- 1) Districts have options for recording and implementing attendance procedures as it pertains to a) The classification of absences as excused, unexcused, and exempt; and b) The recording and reporting of missed instructional time.
- 2) For accountability at the state level, attendance is coded as present or absent without accounting for variations in district-level attendance accounting practices. This invalidates comparability of attendance results between districts and undermines the validity, reliability, and equity of attendance as an accountability indicator.

The group has been meeting monthly starting in August 2025, and as a first task the group examined absence coding between the pilot districts. The comparisons revealed that the coding between districts was not

standardized or uniform. For example, what one district might code as an “excused absence” another might code as an “unexcused absence.” Also, absence categories were also not uniform. For example, some districts might have “cultural or religious holiday” as an absence category while other district might not have that category as a possible absence category.

The group then considered how this variety in coding translates as “present” or “absent” once it is used for accountability. The classification of absences as excused or unexcused (although having truancy implications) is counted toward accountability in the same way, therefore the subcommittee decided not to pursue any recommendations about these codes. Instead, the group noticed that when districts use the “exempt” code for situations like 1 and 2 listed below, some districts were counting the exemption as present and others as absent. The committee decided to leave excused or unexcused to local control since the absences appear the same way for accountability and focus on standardizing the exempt situations described below.

The full recommendation from the subcommittee is not yet final, however, the group has agreed to formally recommend that a student is exempt when they are not present in their regular scheduled instructional setting and instead are:

The committee recommends that a student will also be exempt when they are not present in their regular instruction but instead are:

1. In an off-site location that is supervised by district staff (i.e. school nurse, school counselor, field trip, athletic event, cultural event, testing, etc.), and/or
2. participating in a district pre-approved alternative schedule (i.e. partial day treatment, reduced schedules, hybrid schedules, etc.)

All exempt absences that meet this definition should generate membership days and students should be counted as in attendance when reporting to MDE. These circumstances do not represent disengagement, truancy, or lost instructional time; therefore, coding them as absences distorts district-to-district comparability and undermines the validity and reliability of statewide attendance indicators.

The committee originally considered to recommending that absences for “cultural or religious purposes” be classified as exempt and be counted as present also. However, these absences do indicate lost instructional time and may be activities where district is not involved. Instead of classifying these as exempt the group is recommending that districts should consider adopting the school calendar to accommodate these absences.

Future plans include implementing and testing this definition within our 12 pilot districts. While the 12 pilot districts have provided input on how the recommendation would function in their districts, the committee would like to expand gathering feedback from several partner districts that may have different coding procedures and student populations. The committee is also working on definitions for missed instructional time and considering defining a new role at the MDE that would oversee implementation of these attendance changes.

Be at School Conference July 25, 2025

Districts were able to attend the Be At School conference July 31, 2025. The conference focused on reducing chronic absenteeism in K-12 through early intervention, family engagement, and cross-sector partnerships. The keynote delivered by Dr. Sara Lenhoff addressed the systematic and community causes of chronic absenteeism and offered practical solutions for promoting attendance. Breakout sessions covered a variety of topics including systems building as preventative measures, family and relation strategies, the use of data, and intersections with the county and legal frameworks.

Chronic Absenteeism Conference October 2, 2025

Districts were invited, through the University of Minnesota’s College of Education and Human Development, to participate in a one day gathering to further explore community partnerships in addressing chronic absenteeism. Dr. Sara Lenhoff returned to offer more direct ideas for addressing attendance barriers, and Assistant Commissioner at MDE, Angela Mansfield, offered an overview of MDE’s available support. Districts were also able to have focused discussions in small groups and across all groups.

- Districts emphasized that chronic absenteeism is driven by complex social, economic, and relational factors, and that improving attendance requires strong, trusted partnerships among schools, families, community agencies, and counties.
- Districts are using a mix of communication tools, outreach strategies, mental health supports, and culturally responsive engagement
- Districts face consistent challenges: limited staffing, inconsistent attendance coding, unclear policies, transportation barriers, funding instability, and low family trust—especially among multilingual, Indigenous, unhoused, and marginalized communities.
- Leaders called for clearer statewide guidance on attendance tracking, standardized data systems, sustainable funding, more proactive and empathetic practices, stronger student voice, and collaborative approaches that address root causes rather than relying on punitive systems.

Senate and House Education Finance Committee

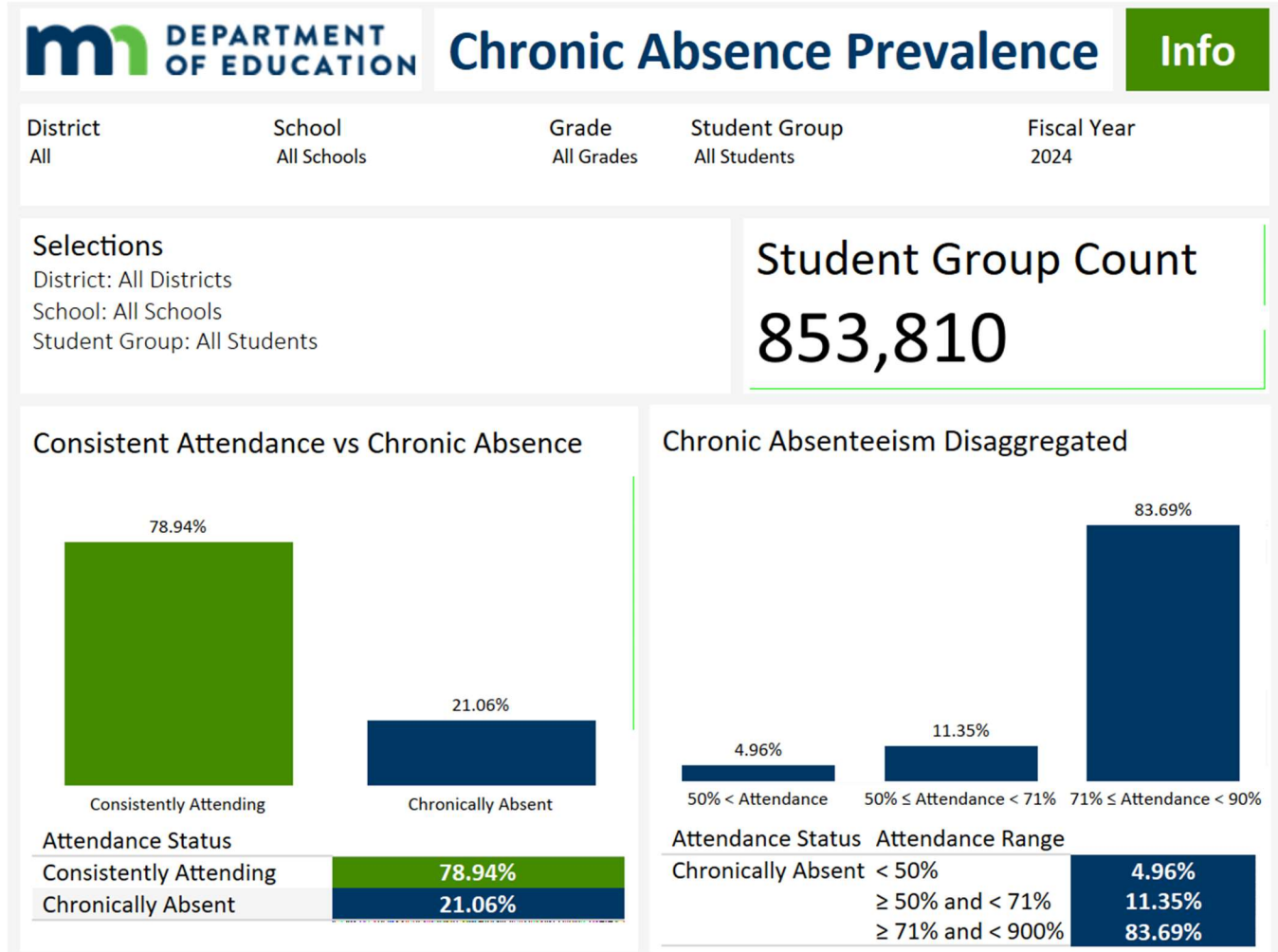
An update on the pilot districts’ progress was given at the Senate Education Finance Committee on February 24, 2026 and the House Education Finance Committee on February 26, 2026. Highlights include:

- Districts are implementing shared strategies: mentoring, family communication, student-led teams, community partnerships, and aligned attendance procedures.
- Promising practice tiers include universal supports (communication, campaigns), targeted supports (outreach, tardy tracking, transportation help), and intensive interventions (individual plans, multi-agency coordination).
- Significant implementation challenges include staffing shortages, complexity of chronic absenteeism, inconsistent coding, transportation barriers, and limited county action on truancy referrals.
- Most absences are excused, emphasizing the need for improved family communication, early identification, and clearer state guidance.
- A statewide Attendance Coding & Counting Subcommittee is drafting policy to ensure accuracy, reliability, comparability, and equity in attendance data statewide.
- Developing a statewide intervention bank and consistent coding standards are key next-step recommendations.

Statewide Attendance Trends

Through pilot funding, the Minnesota Department of Education has developed new attendance data dashboards that will soon be published on the website. The most recent final attendance trends for school year 2023-24 can give some insight into attendance at the statewide level as context for the pilot attendance results. Statewide, 21% of students were chronically absent. Further breaking down the data for students that were chronically absent, 84% had between 71% and 90% attendance rates, with smaller proportions having attendance rates between 50% and 71% (11% of students) and less than 50% attendance rate (5% of students).

Figure 1. Chronic Absence Prevalence Dashboard



Note. The graphic above is from a forthcoming student attendance dashboard from the Minnesota Department of Education.

Many of the strategies employed by pilot district (e.g. frequent communication, mentoring, Check and Connect, incentives, etc.) attempt to increase students’ sense of belonging as a catalyst for improving attendance, and the Minnesota Student Survey adds some context to school attendance and explores some of the reasons students are missing school. Last administered in 2025, the survey is administered to districts who opt into the survey in grades fifth, eighth, 9th and 11th. The survey uses seven different items to create a Sense of Belonging scale that measures students’ perception of being valued and appreciated by important others in their environment (see full

technical report: <https://conservancy.umn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a120eb50-f49a-4a6b-ba78-4c6c13bc97f0/content>). As detailed in the table below, Minnesota Student Survey survey-takers who reported not feeling a sense of belonging were more likely, compared to those who reported feeling a sense of belonging, to report missing school due to various internal reasons. The top three disparities between belonging and not belonging were “didn’t feel like I belonged at school,” “didn’t feel safe at school,” and “feeling sad, hopeless, anxious, or stressed.”

Table 1. Minnesota Student Survey Attendance and Belonging Results

Reason for missing School	Belonging	Not belonging	Difference	Not belonging to belonging ratio
Didn’t feel belonged at school	1%	4%	-3%	4.0x
Didn’t feel safe at school	1%	4%	-3%	4.0x
Sad, hopeless, anxious, stressed, or angry	6%	21%	-15%	3.5x

Attendance Pilot District Summaries

While a report on each district’s progress can be found in Appendix A, below is an aggregate summary of themes across all districts.

A district-specific progress update can be found in Appendix A that highlights specific strategies, outcomes, and contextual information for each local education agency pilot site. While the participating districts represent different geographic locations, student populations, and local control contexts, there are many commonalities that are present for a majority or group of participating pilot districts:

Goals

- Improving overall or consistent attendance is a goal in all districts.
- Increasing or standardizing attendance policies or manuals is a goal for six districts.
- Strengthening family engagement is a goal in seven districts.
- Improving attendance data systems or consistency is a goal in six districts.

Strategies

- Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) aligned or tiered supports are used in six districts.
- Enhanced family communication or engagement strategies are used in seven districts.
- Mentoring or Check and Connect style supports are used in five districts.
- Early identification systems, dashboards, or structured reviews are used in five districts.
- Community partnerships with counties, health agencies, or tribal entities were emphasized in seven districts.
- Restorative practices were implemented in three districts.
- Transportation supports or problem-solving around transportation are supported in three districts.

Challenges and Learnings

- Family communication challenges were reported in five districts.
- Unclear or inconsistent statewide attendance definitions were reported in four districts.
- Increased mental health related absenteeism were reported in four districts.
- Limited county or cross-agency support was noted in five districts.
- Budget or resource constraints affecting sustainability occurred in five districts.
- Transportation barriers affected attendance in six districts.
- Staffing shortages or turnover affected attendance progress in four districts.

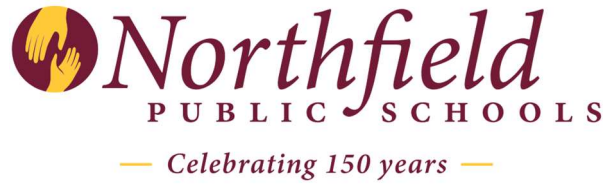
Evidence of Effective Strategies

- Improved consistent attendance or reduced chronic absenteeism was reported in seven districts.
- Early identification systems or tiered supports showed positive effects in five districts.
- Increased family communication correlated with attendance improvement in six districts.
- Mentoring approaches showed positive effects in four districts.
- Incentive programs contributed positively in two districts.

Year 2 Policy Changes

- Updates to attendance codes, definitions, or policies were reported by five districts.
- Increased expectations for communication or transparency were noted in three districts.
- Expanded or more accurate attendance-tracking practices appeared in three districts.

Appendix A: Northfield Public Schools Progress Report

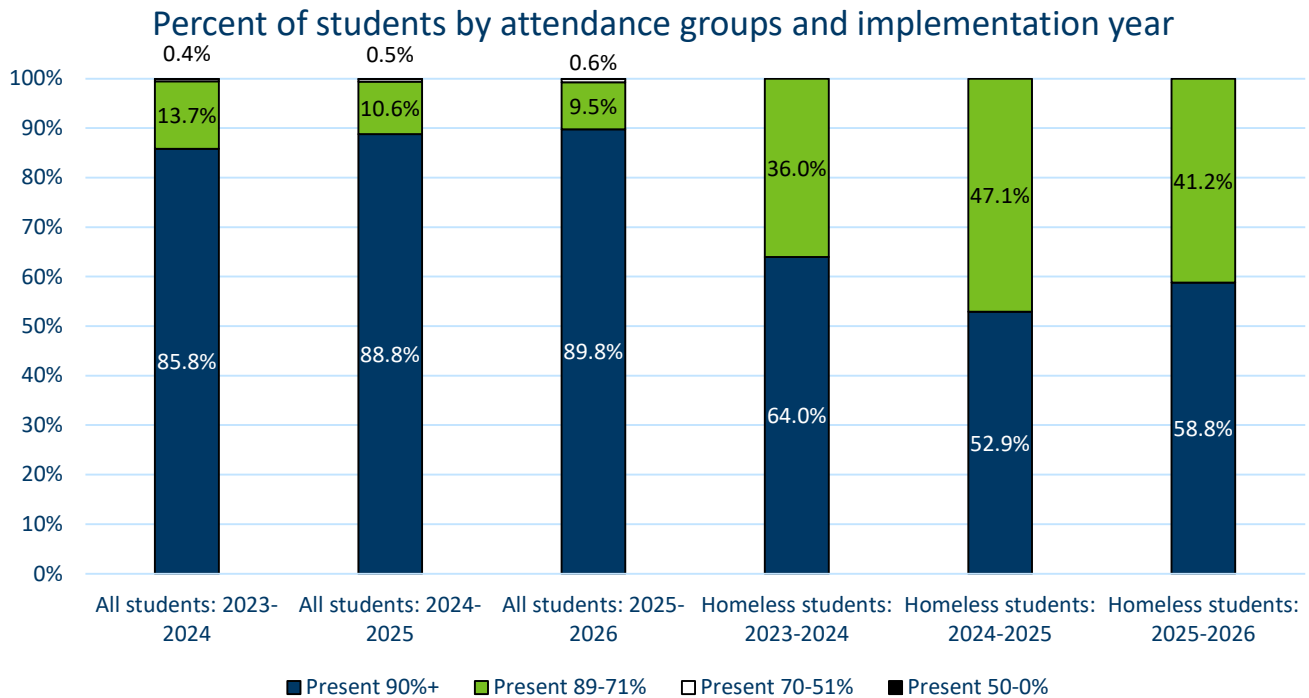


District student demographics



Goals

- $\geq 90\%$ of students present
- $\geq 90\%$ of students attend consistently



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Clarify definitions
 - Align district practices on tracking attendance
 - Target the right students with valid and reliable data
 - Measure and scale what's working
- Communication

- Well-defined expectations for attendance
- Key data points used by attendance teams
- Aligned strategies district-wide
- Collaborate
 - Build county support
 - Partner with the Health Community Initiative
 - Build support with mental and chemical health partners
- Support families
 - Make connections
 - Share strategies
 - Give and receive information

Effective strategy highlight: High school Attendance Mentors

- Are assigned to one student to support
- Monitor the student’s attendance and grades
- Check in with the students frequently
- Communicate regularly with the family about attendance concerns or praise or provide useful information

Evidence of effective strategies

- 87.3% of Northfield students are attending consistently.
- High school and middle school chronic absenteeism rates are dropping:
 - Northfield High School shows a reduction in chronically absent students by nearly 10%, improving from 23.5% in 2024-25 to 13.7% in 2025-26.
 - Northfield Middle School shows a reduction in chronically absent students by about 5%, improving from 15.6% in 2024-25 to 10.1% in 2025-26.
- A survey of staff shows that:
 - District consistency has greatly improved – all schools now follow the same procedures, benefitting families with students in multiple buildings.
 - Attendance coding has been simplified significantly, with fewer codes making data cleaner and staff training easier.
 - Centralized attendance management is widely praised for keeping schools consistent, responsive, and focused. 100% of elementary survey participants requested continuation of tardy letter support from the attendance manager.
 - Attendance awareness has increased districtwide. Letters and data-driven outreach have improved family accountability.
 - New intervention strategies – including more parent meetings, SARB referrals, teacher feedback via Google Forms, and root-cause conversations – are showing results, with secondary chronic absenteeism rates decreasing.

Year 2 policy changes

- Letters of concern are sent after eight total days of absence, after 10 illness-related absences, and after five days of absence for personal reasons.
- Absence coding has been reduced significantly. By consolidating these options into a single, more general code for excused illness, the process has become more efficient, consistent, and less subjective.
- Attendance monitoring practices for elementary students were updated to align with those used at the secondary level. Rather than recording attendance in two broad segments (morning and afternoon), attendance is now tracked across seven class periods throughout the day. This change provides a more precise and detailed account of student attendance, allowing for a clearer understanding of how much instructional time elementary students may be missing.

- The shift from tracking elementary attendance in two periods to seven periods per day has provided a more accurate measure of student attendance. Following this change, the chronic absenteeism rate at all three elementary schools has increased year over year, while rates at the secondary level have decreased. This trend suggests that the previous method of tracking attendance in only two periods was underreporting the extent of chronic absenteeism among elementary students, and that the updated approach offers a more accurate representation of student attendance patterns.

Challenges and learnings

- Family communication remains difficult. Attendance letters can feel threatening to families; some parents have expressed fear of county reporting. Teams note the message needs to be compassionate and sent in multiple formats.
- Medical documentation requirements create barriers for uninsured or lower-income families.
- Threshold gaps allow students to reach chronic absenteeism (18+ days missed) without triggering any single threshold. Students below individual illness and personal day limits can still be chronically absent.
- School refusal and mental health challenges are increasing, particularly at the middle school level. Special education students remain the most chronically absent population.
- Limited county support and enforcement capacity, and difficulty formalizing standards with local health offices and external partners.

Appendix B: Mankato Area Public Schools Progress Report



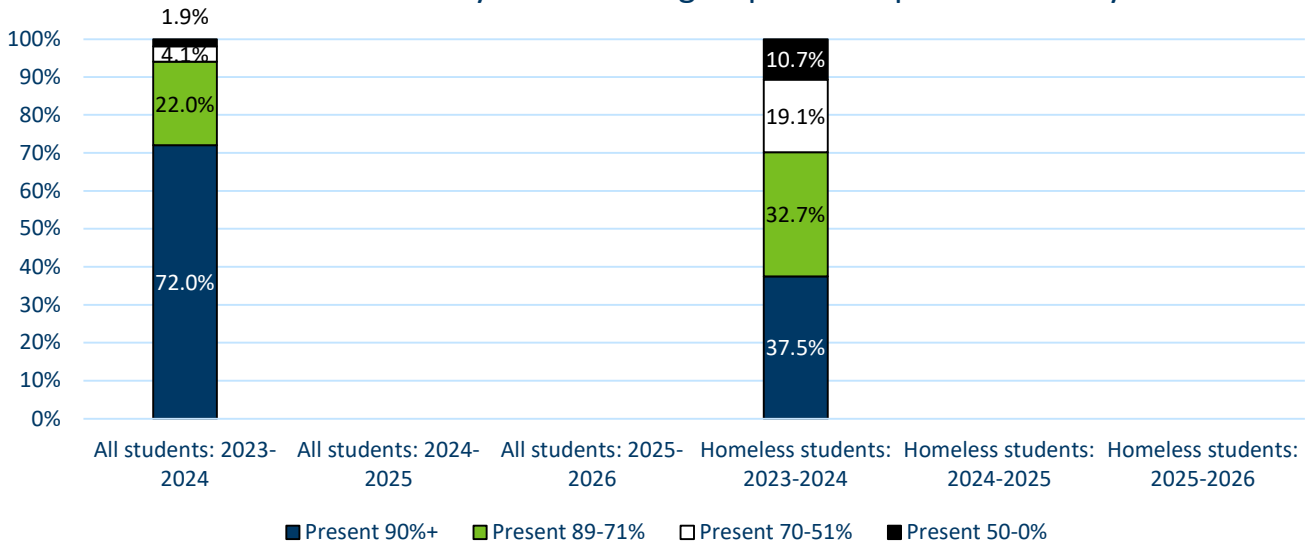
District student demographics



Goals

- $\geq 90\%$ district-wide attendance rate
- Develop and implement district-wide attendance manual
- Utilize a Parent Engagement Specialist to support attendance

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report. The attendance data will be updated in Year 3 of implementation.

Strategies

- Strengthen school connectedness
 - Implement restorative practices, relationship-building routines, and student-voice activities to increase belonging and engagement
- Increase family engagement

- Expand two-way communication and utilize the Parent Engagement Specialist to connect families with supports.
- Early identification and intervention
 - Conduct monthly attendance data reviews and use dashboards to flag concerns earlier
- Tiered supports
 - Use Early Warning Systems, PBIS, and mentoring programs (e.g., Check and Connect, Success Coaches).
- Health and wellness support
 - Provide mental health services, school-linked therapy, and individualized health plans to reduce attendance-related barriers.

Effective strategy highlight: Monthly attendance data reviews and early identification system

- Monthly reviews and the warning system have facilitated:
 - Interventions happen before a pattern becomes chronic
 - District-wide use of consistent, real-time data
 - Monthly review cycles improved intervention fidelity
 - Early identification has strengthened collaboration between administration, student support teams, and families

Evidence of effective strategies

- Panorama survey participation and student connectedness data indicate positive trends in students’ perceptions of belonging, adult support, and school climate.
- Increased frequency of attendance data reviews from quarterly to monthly.
- Reduction in the number of students reaching chronic absenteeism thresholds in targeted intervention groups.
- Increased family communication and engagement contacts documented by schools and the Parent Engagement Specialist.
- Improved consistency in attendance procedures and intervention documentation through the development of the District Attendance Manual.
- Increased student participation in school-based supports, counseling services, extracurricular activities, and intervention programs.
- Several success stories have emerged throughout the implementation process. Schools have reported examples of students with historically poor attendance demonstrating improved consistency after receiving targeted supports, mentorship, counseling services, and increased family communication. In some cases, students who were chronically absent became more engaged through participation in extracurricular activities, relationship-building opportunities with staff, or individualized attendance support plans.
- Building leaders have also shared that the development of more consistent attendance procedures across the district has improved staff confidence in addressing attendance concerns and created clearer systems for intervention and support. Overall, qualitative feedback suggests that students and families are experiencing stronger connections to schools, increased support, and improved communication, all of which contribute to improved attendance outcomes and a more positive school environment.
- Strengthened coordination with county and community agencies to align attendance procedures and improve intervention processes.
- Expanded access to wraparound supports, including mental health services, case management, and youth programs.

Year 2 policy changes

- Updated District Attendance Policy (Policy 503) and Creation of a District Attendance Manual: Mankato revised Policy 503 to improve clarity and consistency by replacing school-specific handbook procedures with a districtwide Attendance Manual. The manual standardizes attendance expectations, coding, communication protocols, and intervention processes across all schools, and is now linked directly within the policy for public access.
- Increased Accountability and Consistency Across Schools: With shared procedures and clearer expectations, schools now follow more uniform attendance practices, reducing building-level variability.
- Strengthened Family Communication Expectations: Policy updates reinforce the need for timely, clear, and consistent outreach to families, aligning communication practices across the district.
- Collaborative Implementation and Ongoing Refinement: Following the policy revision, the district worked with school leaders, county partners, and community agencies to review the manual, align procedures, and support staff training ensuring consistent application and continuous improvement as the new system is implemented.

Challenges and learnings

- Mankato increased home visits and outreach, but some families felt the amount of communication or intervention was excessive, highlighting the need to balance accountability with supportive, relationship-centered practices.
- Root cause analysis shows persistent barriers—including mental health, physical health, family/home issues, transportation, and student motivation—which vary widely by grade level and student group. These overlapping factors require multi-layered interventions.
- The district found that addressing chronic absenteeism effectively requires strong cross-agency coordination (county, mental health providers, community partners) rather than relying solely on school-based interventions.
- Before the Attendance Manual, schools applied attendance procedures inconsistently. Developing and implementing the manual helped, but it also revealed the scale of training and systems development still needed.
- Attendance teams and student support staff faced challenges managing intensive communication, documentation, and intervention processes while maintaining fidelity. The district identified the need for more structured systems and shared tools to reduce workload strain.

Appendix C: Rochester Public Schools Progress Report



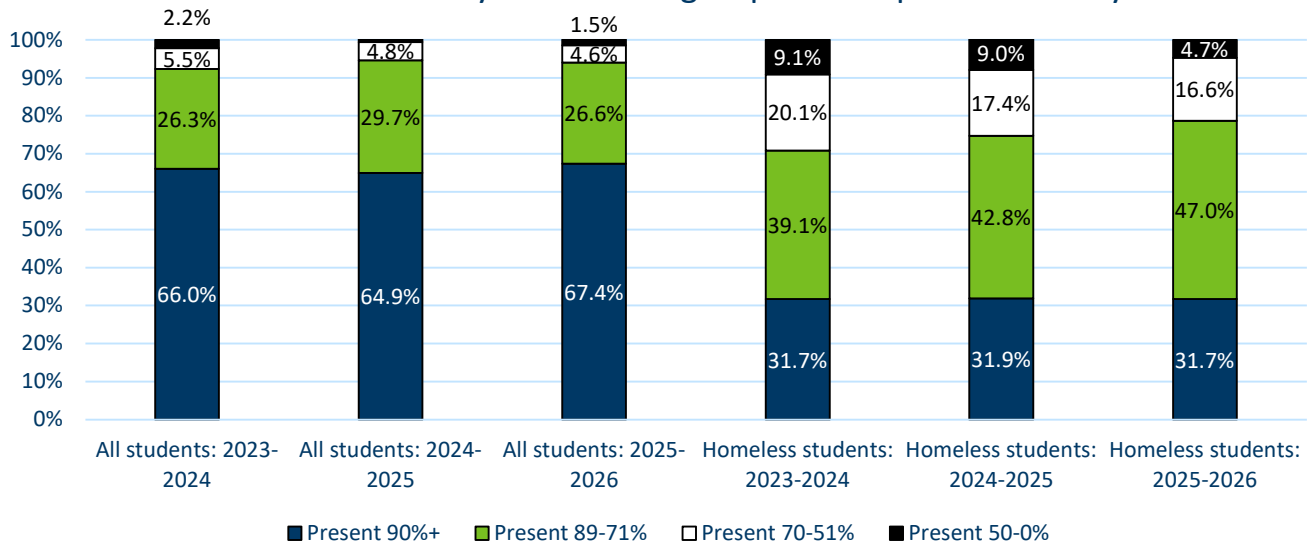
District student demographics



Goals

- Increase consistent attendance rate for all students
- Close the attendance gap for all students
- Consistent and effective processes for responding to Teir I and Tier II needs
- Prevent students from reaching the 15-day drop

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Strengthen consistency and alignment
 - The district created a comprehensive attendance handbook to ensure consistent practices across schools. The handbook provides standardized procedures, communication tools, and intervention guidance.
- Enhance family engagement and communication

- The district implemented individualized communication systems to better engage families. Staff use a two-way texting platform with automatic translation to reduce communication barriers. The district expanded outreach through campaigns, newsletters, texts, and updated website resources.
- Actionable attendance data
 - The district developed a real-time attendance dashboard that updates daily from the SIS. The dashboard helps schools quickly identify trends, prioritize students, and monitor interventions.
- Promote early intervention and prevention
 - The district emphasizes early, prevention focused support when attendance concerns first appear. Early intervention helps prevent chronic absenteeism from becoming a larger barrier.
- Implementing Freshman On Track
 - The district adopted the Freshman On Track framework to identify and support students at risk of falling off track for graduation.
- Expanding restorative and relationship-based approaches
 - One middle school is implementing the UPLIFT restorative truancy program focused on relationships and problem-solving. The district expanded Tier 1 communication to improve consistency and reduce family barriers.

Effective strategy highlight: Advanced Early Warning System “Attendance Dashboard,” Freshman On Track, and UPLIFT

- The district created a customized, advanced early warning system “attendance dashboard” that integrates directly with the student information system that provides schools with immediate visibility into daily attendance and trends.
 - This tool has to be maintained and checked on weekly by our Attendance and Truancy Coordinator, in collaboration with our data department, to ensure its accuracy and be able to address minor bugs throughout the year.
 - This system helps school attendance teams identify chronic absenteeism faster, monitor trends among student groups, respond quicker, and allows our staff more capacity to offer support for families instead of analyzing long, inefficient PDF reports that come from the student information system to identify students who need support.
- Developed and implemented a districtwide attendance handbook and multilingual two-way family communication system to increase consistent practices across schools, strengthen family engagement, and improve access to attendance supports.
- Created a real-time attendance dashboard and early intervention framework that enables schools to identify attendance concerns quickly, monitor student progress, and provide timely, data-informed support.
- Implemented the evidence-based Freshman On Track framework across all comprehensive high schools and the Alternative Learning Center (ALC) to identify students at risk of falling off track for graduation and provide targeted attendance, academic, and engagement interventions.
- Expanded evidence-based attendance supports through restorative truancy interventions, summer and back-to-school attendance campaigns, monthly attendance outreach, individualized family messaging, and enhanced attendance resources to strengthen prevention and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Evidence of effective strategies

- Rochester Public Schools increased its consistent attendance rate by 2.5%, from 64.9% in 2024-25 to 67.4% in 2025-26.

- The Kellogg Middle School truancy pilot, implemented in partnership with Three Rivers Restorative Justice, yielded promising results, with 58% of participating students improving their attendance rates by the end of the school year. Through a restorative approach, trained facilitators served as neutral third parties, working alongside students, families, and school staff to identify barriers to attendance, rebuild relationships, and develop collaborative solutions.
- Freshman On Track: At the end of the 2025-26 school year, 59% of ninth grade students met the district's Freshman On Track benchmark, which includes earning at least six credits, maintaining consistent attendance, and avoiding Level 2 behavior incidents. Attendance is a critical component of the measure, as students who attend school regularly are more likely to earn credits, stay engaged, and graduate on time, while even modest increases in absenteeism during ninth grade are associated with significantly lower graduation rates. Through the State Attendance Pilot investment, the Freshman On Track initiative has focused on improving student attendance as a key driver of academic success. From spring 2025 to spring 2026, the average number of credits earned by ninth grade students increased from 6.0 to 6.4 credits, while the percentage of students meeting the district's On Track benchmark increased from 80% to 82%, demonstrating that improved attendance and engagement are helping more students stay on pace for graduation.
- Communication strategies: The Attendance and Truancy Coordinator position, funded through the Student Attendance Pilot, developed and implemented a districtwide family communication strategy that emphasized communication with families in their preferred language and expanded opportunities for two-way engagement through TalkingPoints. Following implementation of this strategy, staff-to-family communication increased substantially. Messages sent by staff increased from 153,651 in the 2024-25 school year to 429,944 in the 2025-26 school year. Messages sent by families increased from 146,213 to 233,727, and district announcements increased from 15,646 to 36,973. The Attendance and Truancy Coordinator (State Attendance Pilot-funded position) also implemented a districtwide attendance nudge strategy using personalized SMS text messages delivered in each family's preferred language. Messages included monthly updates on each student's attendance rate and number of absences, along with schoolwide attendance averages to leverage social norm theory by highlighting positive attendance patterns among peers and reinforcing positive attendance behaviors. During the 2025-26 school year, more than 260,000 attendance-related text messages were sent to families, expanding proactive outreach and engagement across the district.
- UPLIFT Truancy Pilot with Three Rivers Restorative Justice: The Kellogg Middle School truancy pilot, implemented in partnership with Three Rivers Restorative Justice, yielded promising results, with 58% of participating students improving their attendance rates by the end of the school year. Through a restorative approach, trained facilitators served as neutral third parties, working alongside students, families, and school staff to identify barriers to attendance, rebuild relationships, and develop collaborative solutions. This growth reflects meaningful progress for students who had previously experienced significant attendance challenges and demonstrates the potential of restorative, family-centered interventions to improve school engagement and attendance outcomes.

Year 2 policy changes

- Rochester Public Schools made minor attendance policy adjustments to align with recent legislative changes.
- Prior policy and practice changes related to excessive excused absences, missing significant instructional time, and attendance intervention processes had already been implemented.

Challenges and learnings

- Collaboration with county, restorative justice programs, and other youth serving partners became more intentional and data-driven, creating stronger alignment across systems.
- Conducted book studies, summer summits, and quarterly data reviews with Olmsted County and Three Rivers Restorative Justice.

- It became more evident that year 3 needs to focus on engagement as belonging and relationships are key to improving attendance which yielded the creation of a one-year Special Advisor position centered around student engagement.

Appendix D: Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Area Public Schools Progress Report



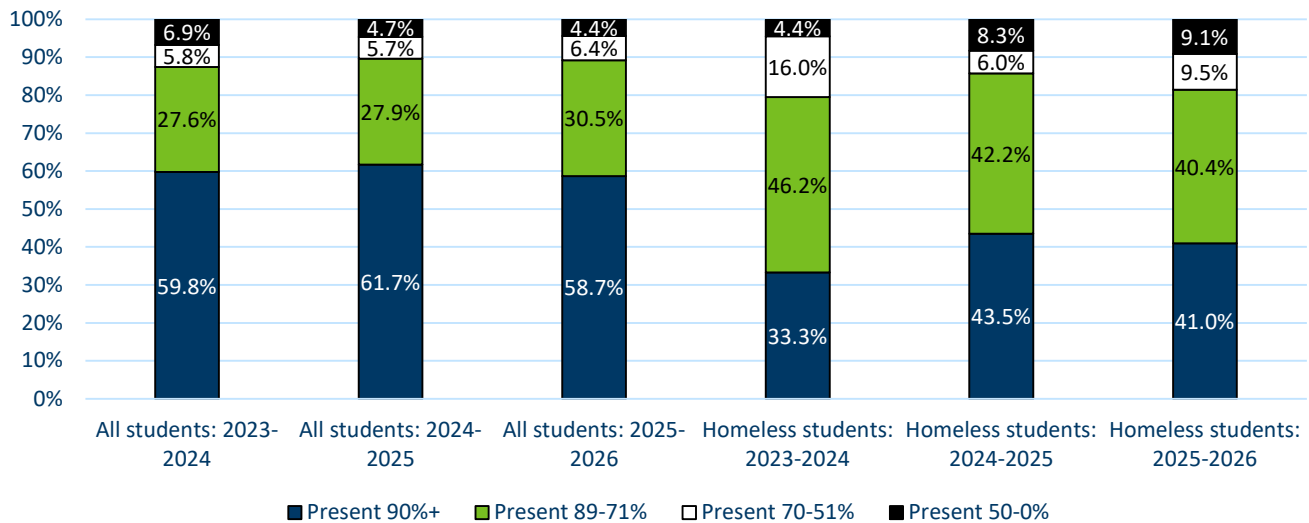
District student demographics



Goals

- Reduce chronic absenteeism
- Implement the District 191 Attendance Handbook
- Form effective school attendance teams
- Increase family engagement
- Implement the Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) in the 9th Grade Academy

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Systematic structures
 - A unified District Attendance Team, School Attendance Teams to monitor attendance and implement evidence-based practices, and MnMTSS framework.
- Community and county partnerships

- The district collaborates with Dakota and Scott Counties to provide proactive, aligned supports for students and families.
- Evidence-based attendance practices
 - Personalized text “nudges” based on Nudge Theory and the BARR model for 9th Grade Academy.
- Student engagement
 - Burnsville High School uses the BARR model in the 9th Grade Academy to strengthen engagement and support a successful transition into high school.
- Effective strategy highlight: Nudge Theory
- The district is using Nudge Theory through personalized text messages that help families better understand how many days their students have missed—addressing the common tendency to underestimate absences.
- Early pilot implementation showed improved attendance rates, leading the district to expand text nudges districtwide in 2025-26.

Year 2 policy changes

- Policy 503 was revised in September 2025 to allow up to five excused days for family vacations, acknowledging diverse family needs while maintaining instructional expectations.
- In May 2026, the district proposed replacing “Family Vacation” with the more inclusive term “Approved Family Activity” and added guidance for monitoring students who leave class or school early.

Evidence of effective strategies

- The district’s consistent attendance rate increased from 59.8% to 61.7%, alongside higher volumes of family communication and absence reporting.
- Personalized text nudges showed promise in 2024-25 leading to district-wide expansion of the nudges.
- Staff engagement rose significantly, including a 98% teacher outreach rate at one elementary school and broad staff agreement that attendance is receiving greater attention this year.
- School Attendance Teams report that regular meetings help them understand individual family circumstances and intervene earlier and more effectively.
- Schools are seeing positive outcomes from targeted supports such as Lunch Bunches, Friendship Groups, and incentive systems that motivate students to improve attendance.
- Strengthened partnerships with Dakota and Scott Counties have clarified processes and improved alignment across agencies.
- Fidelity checks showed two School Attendance Teams achieving full fidelity in best practices.

Challenges and learnings

- Partnerships with counties and community organizations strengthened during the pilot and continues to be an opportunity for growth.
- County practices and interpretations of attendance statutes create inequitable student experiences, with similar cases receiving different levels of support depending on county jurisdiction.
- Community safety concerns - including ICE activity - disrupted student stability, contributing to a drop in consistent attendance and triggering numerous 15-day withdrawals despite district advocacy and mitigation efforts.
- Lack of statewide clarity on absence, tardy, exempt status, and half- vs. full-day definitions makes accurate tracking and equitable reporting difficult across districts.
- The district addressed budget limitations by building sustainable internal systems, including developing its own text-based nudge tools instead of purchasing costly external platforms.

Appendix E: Cook County ISD 166 Progress Report



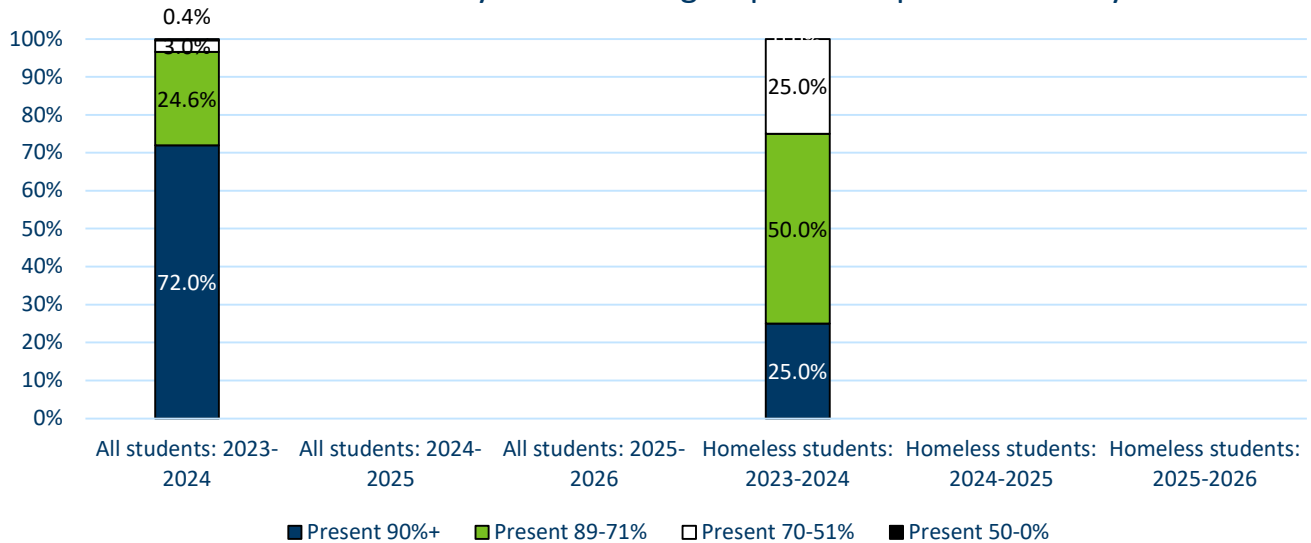
District student demographics



Goals

- Every child in Cook County has access to education
- Build and strengthen relationships between Cook County and families and the ISD 166 community
- Bridge gaps for students based on challenges and differences rooted in culture, mental health, and socio-economic disparities
- Systematize and improve coding of attendance and staff training to ensure reliability district-wide
- Increase focus on the MTSS process and utilize this system with consistency and fidelity

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report. The attendance data will be updated in Year 3 of implementation.

Strategies

- Check and Connect
 - Mentoring of students where staff regularly monitor attendance and connect with students and families to address barriers early. Cook County employs a full-time Check and Connect staff member.
- Restorative Justice

- Utilizing county support for relationship-focused methods that uses restorative conversations to understand attendance barriers and rebuild connection instead of using punishment.
- Tiered Support
 - Utilize different tiers of support from universal support to targeted and intensive interventions.
- Early Intervention
 - Respond to attendance warnings and potential issues to prevent patterns from becoming chronic. Education and communication for families about attendance, truancy, and expectations.

Effective strategy highlight: Early intervention process

- The district’s early intervention system intersects with all our attendance strategies. The process identifies potential attendance patterns in danger of becoming chronic and, using a tiered system, engages the student and family with letters, supportive phone calls, referrals to restorative justice and/or Check and Connect. This can lead to weekly meetings to provide support and rewards for when attendance improves.

Year 2 policy changes

- Adjustments were made to the student handbook to articulate that attendance standards will affect certain district privileges (e.g. formal dances).
- Changes in practices, such as being more attentive, timelier with attendance matters and more collaborative with community resources, have been effective and have not necessitated policy changes.

Evidence of effective strategies

- Attendance percentages are increasing from the 2023-24 school year to the 2025-26 school year.
 - Sawtooth Mountain Elementary increased 1.5% to achieve an 89.7% attendance rate.
 - Cook County Middle School increased 2.1% to achieve 99.9% attendance rate.
 - Cook County High School increased 2% to achieve a 88.2% attendance rate.
- A few case studies highlight the district’s progress:
 - RBA: Previously disengaged with high absenteeism, RBA and guardians reconnected with the school through Diversion meetings and weekly restorative justice lunches. Communication improved, supports were used consistently, and RBA is entering high school in 2026 with stronger habits and engagement.
 - MMH: After referrals to Diversion, mental health services, and Check and Connect, MMH made major attendance gains and continued academic progress. Systems are now in place to support MMH entering eighth grade in 2026.
 - TY: Despite initial non-response to Diversion outreach, TY connected with Check and Connect, uses the Anishinabe Academic Center for tutoring, and has supportive relationships at school. As TY enters 11th grade in 2026, work continues on building independence through goals like obtaining a driver’s permit and bank account.

Appendix F: Windom Area Schools Progress Report



Windom Area Schools
Learning. Leading. Excelling. Together.

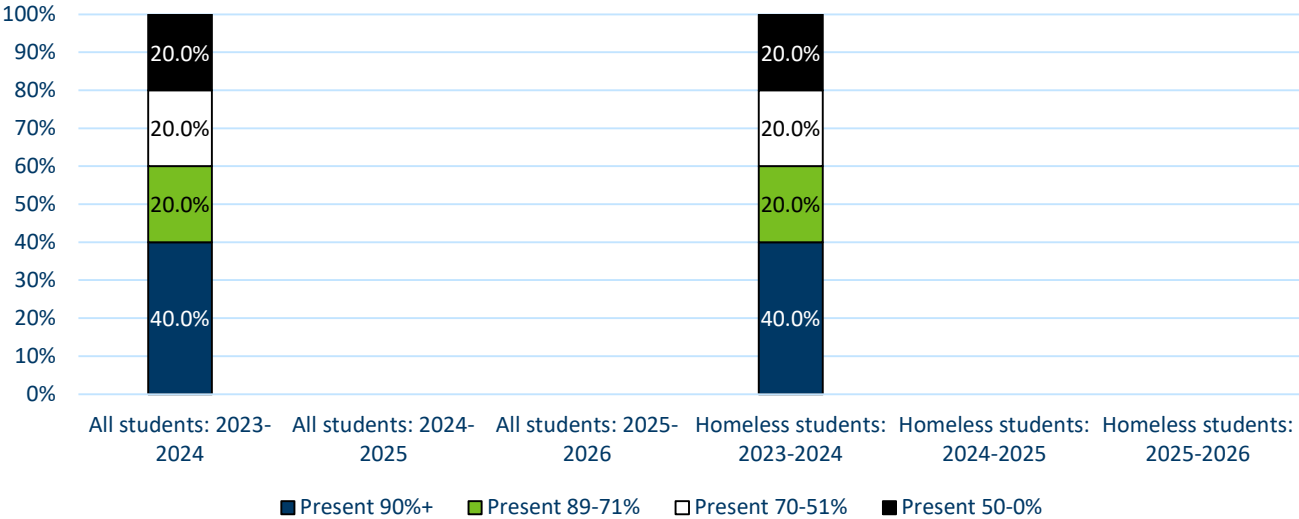
District student demographics



Goals

- Decrease federal chronically absence totals by 0.25% per year for all students.
- Increase family engagement using our learning management system to identify students in need of interventions and creating direct, timely messaging via the system to inform families of attendance needs (absences, tardies, etc.).
- Help students create connections to school and form a sense of belonging by increasing the number of students involved in extracurricular activities by 2% over the course of the pilot.

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report. The attendance data will be updated in Year 3 of implementation.

Strategies

- Attendance Coordinator
- The district Attendance Coordinator serves as a hub for all district attendance support efforts by:
 - Providing transportation
 - Daily attendance rounds at each site including coordinating with each site
 - Student support activities
 - Communicating and connecting with families
 - Coordinating with the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator

Year 2 policy changes

- Windom updated the attendance policy in the handbook regarding percentage of seat time missed to lose credit in a course. We have attendance appeals meetings when a student exceeds 10 absences in a semester and consider whether credit is warranted should a student not meet the minimum seat time requirements without documentation of a verifiable medical condition.
- Evidence of effective strategies
- Windom has increased our non-habitually absent rate from 81% in 2023-24 to 87% for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Challenges and learnings

- The central hub of the attendance improvements is the Attendance Coordinator position. The position is funded solely through the grant and while Windom would like this to be a permanent position the budget may not accommodate.
- Tardiness to class at the high school dropped from an average per student tardiness rate each semester of over 3 per student in 2024-25 to an average of 1.13 per student in the 2025-26 school year.

Appendix G: Chisholm Public Schools Progress Report



CHISHOLM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

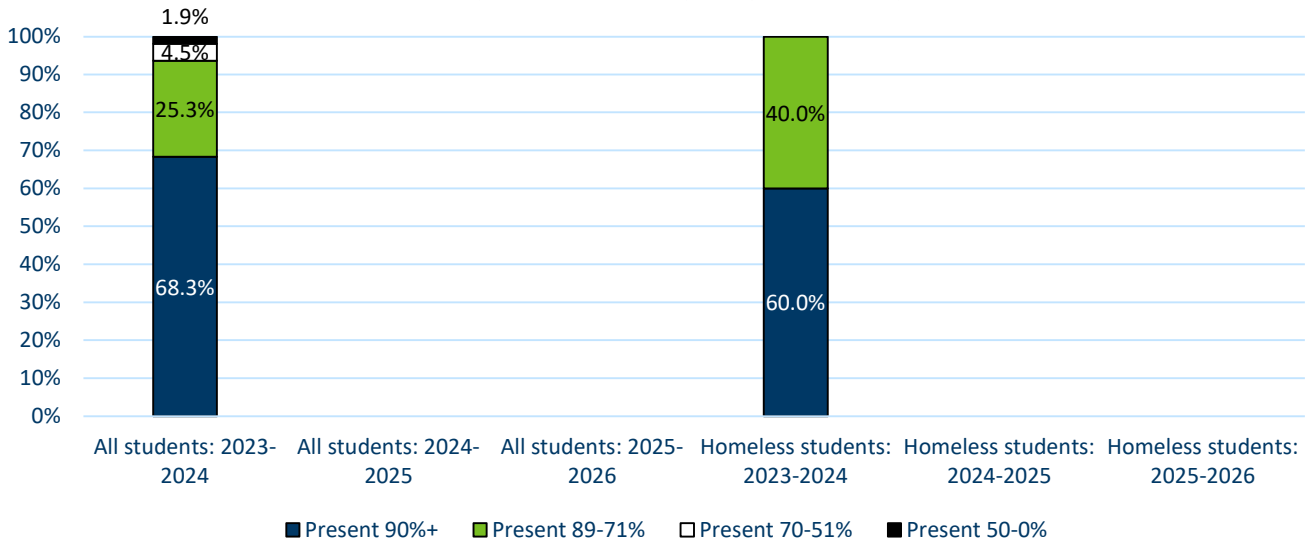
District student demographics



Goals

- Update policies and procedures to create consistency across the district
- Continue to build family engagement: build relationships using other school functions and community engagements. Engage families in our tiered response.
- Identify barriers for students and families
- Improve consistent attendance year by year

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report. Attendance data will be updated in Year 3 of implementation.

Strategies

- Attendance communication
 - Attendance nudges (reminders, progress updates, resources) and informational letters sent to families.
- Check and Connect
 - Regular monitoring, relationship-building, and targeted support to keep students connected through a sense of belonging at school.
- MTSS Student Review Team

- Identifying students in need of intervention, supporting and assisting interventions, maximizing student engagement and progress.
- Indian Education Mentoring
 - Culturally grounded support for American Indian students to bolster success academically, socially, and emotionally.

Effective strategy highlight: School-Based Community Resource Center

- In June 2026 Chisholm Public Schools launched a School-Based Community Resource Center to help remove the day-to-day barriers that keep students from attending school, offering families direct access to essential supports such as basic needs, crisis assistance, and community referrals. Built from a blend of creative funding and strong community partnerships, this center strengthens the district’s ability to respond quickly to family needs, especially in a region where outside resources are scarce. By meeting families where they are and reducing the stressors that often lead to chronic absence, the Resource Center has become an extension of Chisholm’s commitment to keeping students connected, supported, and ready to learn.

Evidence of effective strategies

- The district’s consistent attendance rate increased year to year from 2022-23 (before the pilot) through 2025-26, improving by 7.9%.
- District policies were revised to be more supportive and less punitive, helping families feel respected rather than alienated during attendance challenges.
- A cultural shift occurred across schools, with greater emphasis on celebrating growth instead of perfection—highlighted by Attendance Award Celebrations that recognize students for 5-10% improvement.
- Students facing significant life barriers showed strong progress when supported through relationship-based approaches like Check and Connect and access to basic resources.
- A middle school student experiencing housing instability improved attendance to over 80% after receiving consistent mentoring, resource support, and family transportation coordination.
- The pilot fostered a more positive, connection-focused climate where students and families engage more openly with staff and supports.

Challenges and learnings

- Limited staffing made it difficult to meet the high demand for mentoring and support, requiring creative use of pilot funds and existing resources.
- Geographic isolation and scarce regional services meant even small family crises caused significant attendance disruptions, prompting the creation of a school-based Community Resource Center.
- Sustainability depends on breaking traditional silos and braiding funding streams; aligning the attendance pilot with the Family Service Collaborative grant allowed the district to expand supports more quickly.
- The district fears losing key grants simultaneously, which would significantly reduce the capacity to support families and maintain the progress achieved.

Appendix H: Red Lake Schools Progress Report



Red Lake Schools
Home of the Warriors

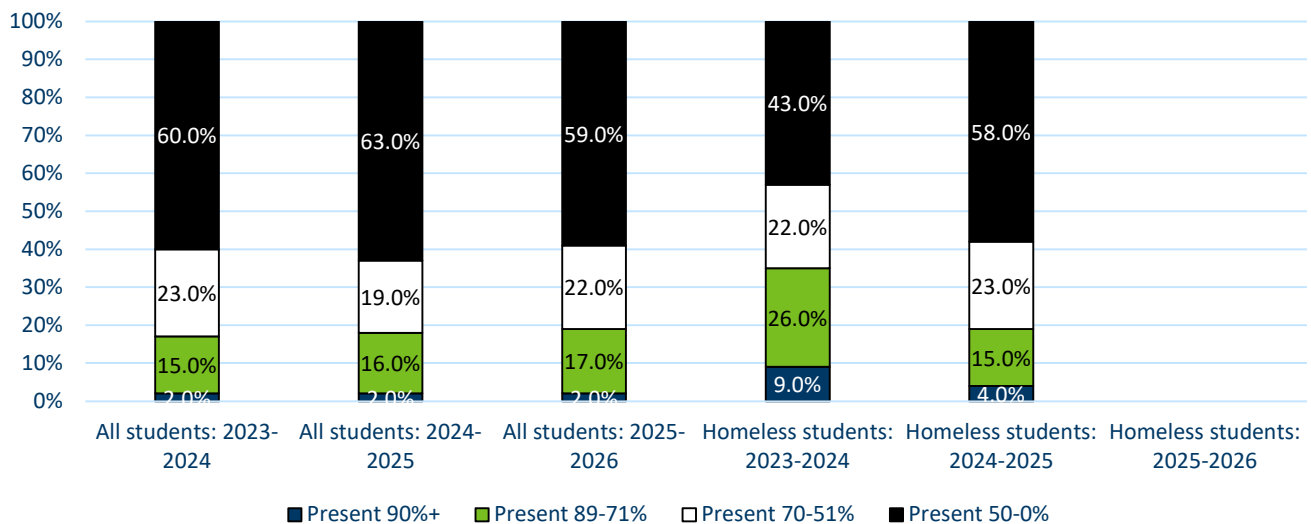
District student demographics



Goals

- Improve attendance for all students at Red Lake Schools

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report. Homeless student data will be updated Year 3 of implementation.

Strategies

- Home school liaison
 - Liaison to address attendance and truancy issues in the home school environment.
- District-wide standardized attendance procedures
 - Standardized attendance tracking across the entire district.
- Truancy prevention
 - In coordination with Tribal Court and the broader community, implement a truancy prevention program.
- Integration of other programs and with the charter school
 - Integrate the various programs being implemented across the district (PBIS, MTSS, RLES Attendance, etc.) and coordinate with the charter school to create one cohesive plan to serve students.

Evidence of effective strategies

- This year Red Lake Implemented the RISE Ticket rewards program for students that attend school 80% or greater in each week in the Secondary Complex building. Over a 12 week span Red Lake was able to issue 1,143 RISE Tickets in the middle school and 948 RISE Tickets in the high school.

Challenges and learnings

- Required per the legislation, coordinating with the Charter School has proven to be a continued challenge. Staff turnover, including changes in leadership, has required revisioning how coordination could best happen and planning for future implementation.

Appendix I: Sauk Rapids-Rice Public Schools Progress Report



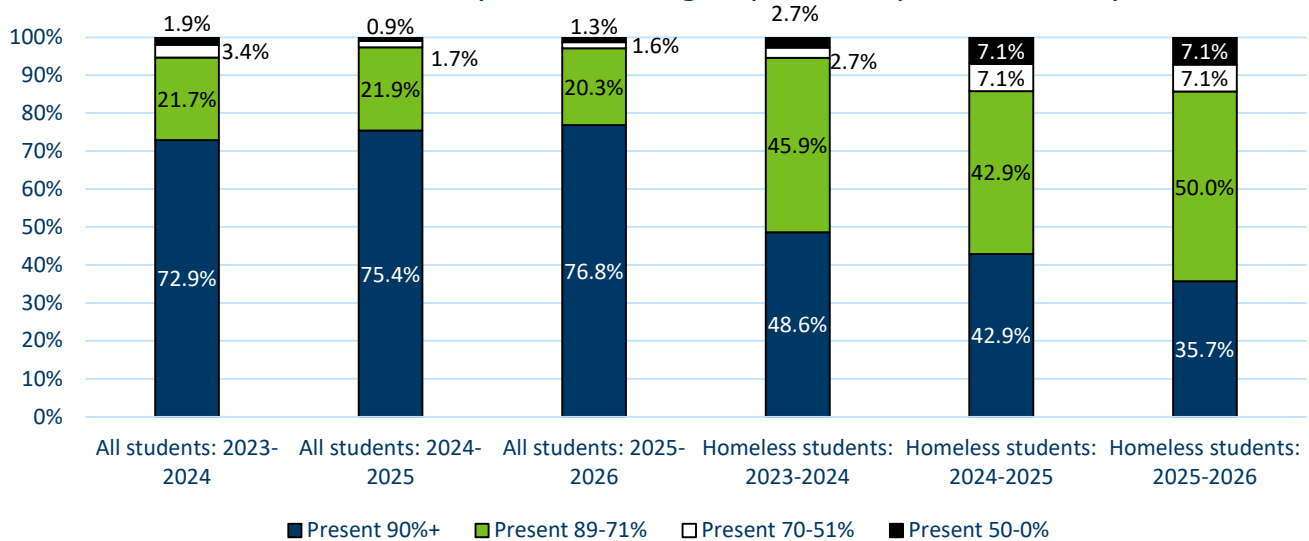
District student demographics



Goals

- By June 2027, Sauk Rapids-Rice Public Schools will achieve a consistent district-wide attendance rate of 90% or greater.

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Attendance tracking standardization
 - Consistent attendance data will allow the district to analyze data and provide appropriate interventions and support.
- Building-level attendance teams
 - Teams at each building equipped and trained in reviewing attendance data to identify absence trends within groups or with individual students and respond accordingly.
- MTSS implementation
 - Implement MTSS attendance procedures through trained social workers and counselors.
- Understand and mitigate transportation barriers
 - Research the various transportation barriers that cause students and families to miss school and discover ways to mitigate these barriers.

- Utilize community partnerships
 - Partner with community resources to expand the districts' support for removing attendance barriers and supporting families.

Evidence of effective strategies

- At the secondary level, attendance teams consistently meet with county human services teams to discuss students who are chronically absent and develop plans to best support them.
- Began conversations with county partners to provide a second chance bus route to support students who missed the bus during the morning route, addressing transportation barriers for the 2026-27 school year.
- Increased communication to families about the importance of consistent school attendance, shared resources and tools to empower them to enforce school attendance expectations at home.

Year 2 policy changes

- Attendance absence codes and reasons have been trimmed down and standardized across the district.
- A “school exempt” absence code and reason was added to the space of possible codes and reasons.

Challenges and learnings

- There are many variables when it comes to barriers for families and students. Providing supports can be complex and some things remain outside of the district’s influence.
- Empowering parents to support school attendance expectations can be challenging if there isn’t shared buy-in on the importance of attendance.

Appendix J: Columbia Heights Public Schools Progress Report

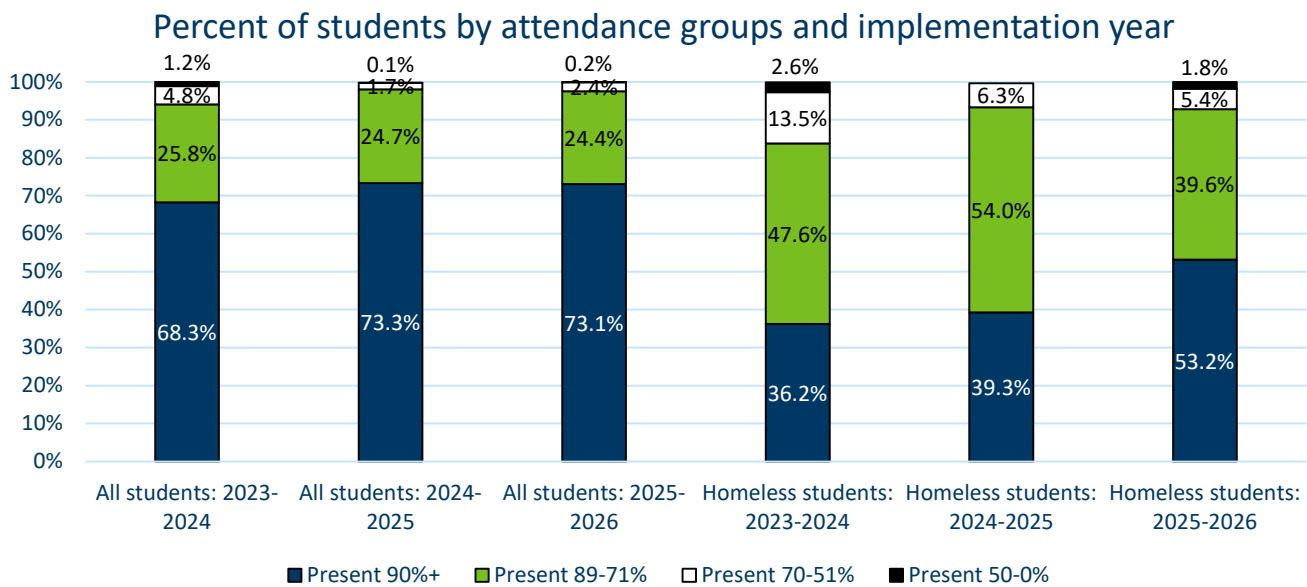


District student demographics



Goals

- Increase the percentage of students who are consistently attending school from 68% in 2024 to 80% in 2026 district wide.



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Family communication and engagement
 - Workshops and other events for families. Weekly communication with families about attendance.
- Early intervention
 - Early warning systems use attendance to target students with preventative early interventions.
- Attendance teams
 - Attendance teams review and act on data bi-monthly.
- School climate and student engagement
 - Creating motivation and connection to school for students through extracurricular activities.

Evidence of effective strategies

- The number of open enrolled students we are uninviting from our school district due to truancy. This number has decreased from 117 students in 2024, 64 students in 2025, and 24 students in 2026.
- The number of students with 10% or less absences has increased from 2,576 students in 2025 to 2,705 in 2026.
- 68% of families have received any messages from TalkingPoints.
- 45% of families have received one or more direct messages from TalkingPoints.
- 30% of families are engaged in two-way communication using the text feature.
- Students who met with Promise Fellows during Operation Metro Surge expressed a desire to return to school before the end of the quarter. These students demonstrated renewed motivation to attend and improve their grades.
- Meetings between teachers and students, aimed at building understanding, helped increase class attendance. Students shared with Promise Fellows their academic improvements, noting that their grades in classes A, B, and C were improving. They realized that consistent class attendance enabled their progress. When Promise Fellows escorted students to class, students recognized the benefit.
- When families receive three-day phone calls or letters, student behavior often improves and absences decrease.

Year 2 policy changes

- No major policy changes have been implemented this reporting period.

Challenges and learnings

- Despite strong gains in 2024-25, chronic absenteeism increased in 2026 due to Operation Metro Surge, illness, and medical-related absences—highlighting ongoing vulnerability to external factors.
- Families with limited technology literacy often miss email communication, reinforcing the need for reliable, multilingual text-based outreach. Positive text messaging increased belonging and engagement, showing that trust-based communication is more effective than formal notifications alone.
- Students frequently stay home after parents leave for work, leaving limited adult supervision during morning routines.
- Students skipping classes while on campus remains a persistent issue.
- Parent focus groups revealed differences between family expectations and actual student behavior.
- Promise Fellows play a crucial role in supporting chronically absent students, but staffing expansion was interrupted by Operation Metro Surge.
- Hall pass monitoring at the high school had inconsistent implementation and mixed effectiveness.
- More consistent and intentional monitoring systems are still needed.
- Hiring an attendance specialist strengthened school attendance teams and support for Homeless/Highly Mobile students.
- The initiative highlighted long-standing staffing gaps affecting attendance work.
- Communication tools like TalkingPoints, postcards, and magnets improved outreach efforts but exposed lingering gaps in family understanding of attendance policies.
- Newly arrived families reported receiving attendance information but not reading or understanding it due to language barriers and format. Families suggested video-based explanations in home languages to improve comprehension.
- Providing meals, childcare, and small incentives reduced participation barriers and increased valuable family input during focus groups.

Appendix K: Moorhead Area Public Schools Progress Report



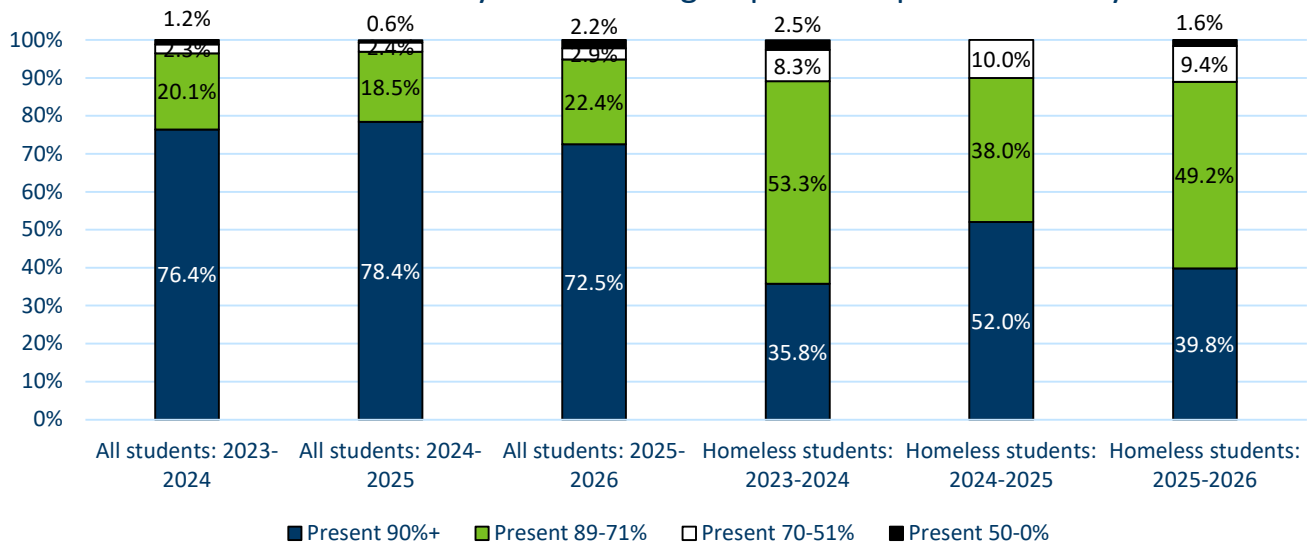
District student demographics



Goals

- By June 2027, establish an improved attendance rate from 67% to 85% or better.
- Initiate and collaborate with the county and community about the attendance review board
- Sub goals: 1) Integrate attendance review into SST/MTSS-B meetings to address attendance as part of a broader student support. 2) Automate statutory attendance processes by generating 3-day letters and 7-day CAMP referrals with standardized approval workflows. 3) Sustain and expand re-engagement efforts for high school students near the attendance threshold.

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- Family communication and engagement
 - Attendance communication campaigns that include family education and clarification of attendance procedures and norms across the district.
- Promise Fellows Mentoring

- Promise Fellow Mentors to serve as a trusted advocate and support academic engagement, attendance, and social-emotional well-being.
- Student communication and engagement
 - Implement phone communication and home visit protocols as preventative and mitigation of attendance issues.

Evidence of effective strategies

- The district continues to center attendance within its MTSS-B framework, using it as a key indicator for identifying students needing wraparound support.
- Evidence-based interventions remain central, including Check and Connect, which expanded at Moorhead High School through a Truancy Support Facilitator and an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow, serving roughly 50-60 students—primarily ninth and 10th graders in the 50-75% attendance band—with mixed results reflecting the varied reasons students miss school.
- BARR is supported through pilot-funded secondary staffing. Systemwide infrastructure strengthened in 2025-26 as all buildings implemented a common weekly attendance-meeting format and used consistent data, supported further by the addition of an MTSS-B supervisory position. Operational processes include statutory attendance interventions, CAMP mediation with Clay County, and PowerSchool Insights intervention tracking, with attendance-coding standardization underway.
- CAMP continued to show strong impact: of 70 attendees, 77% improved attendance within 45 days, with a median 36% reduction in absent days; at MHS, 88% of 41 attendees improved, with a median 50% reduction. By comparison, students who only received a 3-Day letter showed lower improvement rates. The district piloted an Attendance Action System to identify students at statutory thresholds and is progressing toward automated generation of 3-Day letters and 7-Day CAMP referrals.
- The SARB pilot launched in 2024-25 showed limited impact on a small sample and required significant staff time, leading the district to discontinue it and redirect that capacity to higher-volume county collaboration through monthly problem-solving meetings and CAMP.
- Work continues to address data-consistency issues between MDE’s ADA reporting and SIS-calculated attendance, with improvements expected as reporting, tracking, and coding become more aligned.
- Strengthened collaboration with Clay County to streamline processes and reduce redundancy, and a more reliable system for tracking interventions so their effectiveness can be evaluated.

Year 2 policy changes

- No major policy changes have been implemented this reporting period. The district has clarified attendance and absence definitions, and policy changes may come after implementation of these definitions.

Challenges and learnings

- Pilot funds were devoted to (1) purchase of a data visualizer to streamline attendance data analysis and (2) staffing support for the BARR process. The district also leveraged external resources: the Truancy Support Facilitator and Check and Connect scaling were funded through a county attorney's office grant, and the Promise Fellow through AmeriCorps in partnership with MN Alliance for Youth, extending evidence-based support to 50-60 high school students at minimal district cost.
- Rather than purchasing a vendor case-management system, the district built its attendance tracking system in-house on existing PowerSchool and data-warehouse infrastructure. Workflows were piloted and designed for reliability over sophistication. In some cases, redundant meeting times were reallocated toward direct family outreach, and Check and Connect was delivered through grant-funded and AmeriCorps staffing rather than significant general funded means.
- The central constraint was that the district had to build a consistent system (coding, data, teams, and roles) before it could implement or measure specific strategies (SARB, Promise Fellows, intervention initiatives). Data fragmentation across systems, inconsistent implementation of codes, and the new

variable of MAPS online students all complicated the work. Relationship-based interventions also produced varied results, since added support cannot resolve every reason a student miss school.

Appendix L: Minneapolis Public Schools Progress Report

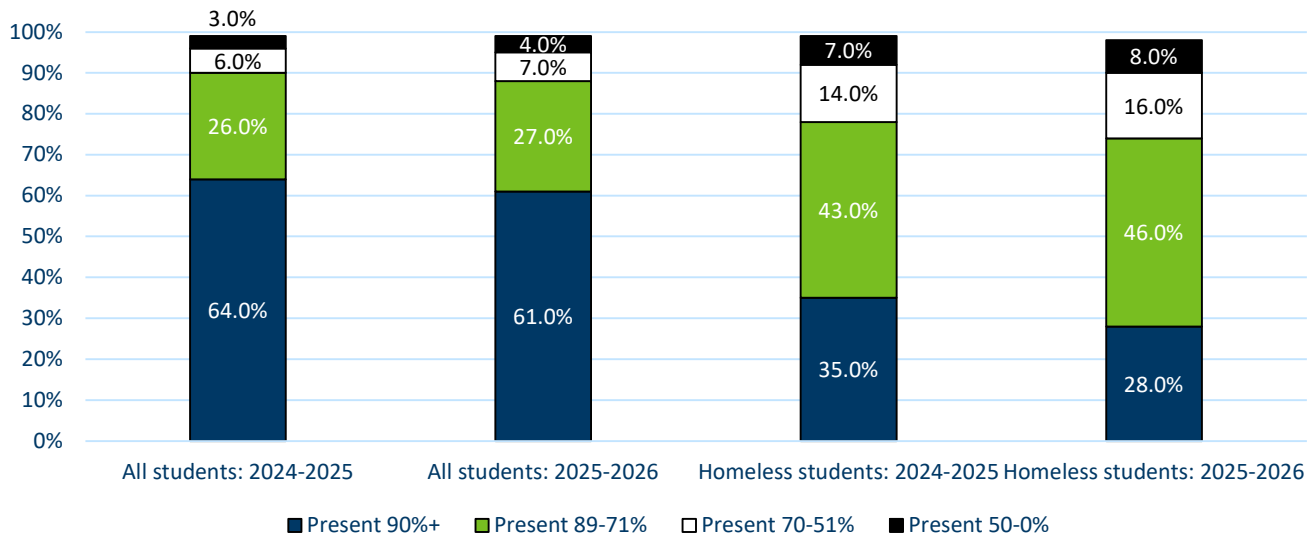


8% Homeless	64% Students of Color	54% Eligible for education benefits	21% English Learner	23% Special Education	30,156 Students
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Goal

- Ensure every student has the opportunity to overcome barriers to attendance, and experience the support, connection, and resources needed to succeed in school.

Percent of students by attendance groups and implementation year



Note: This data was provided by the district for this report.

Strategies

- A Prevention and Engagement Approach to Chronic Absenteeism
 - The Minneapolis Public Schools Attendance Pilot shifts attendance work from a "failure-first" compliance model to a proactive, problem-solving approach that recognizes attendance as a reflection of student engagement, belonging, and well-being. The initiative focuses on preventing absences, identifying attendance concerns early, and addressing barriers through strong partnerships among students, families, schools, and community organizations.
 - Using a multi-tiered system of support, the pilot provides increasingly intensive interventions based on student need:
- Tier 1: Student-Led Attendance Teams
 - Students take an active role in improving school culture, identifying attendance barriers, and developing peer-driven solutions that foster belonging, engagement, and regular attendance.
- Tier 2: Check, Connect, and Expect

- Existing school staff serve as mentors to disengaged students, building meaningful relationships, increasing students' sense of belonging, identifying barriers to attendance, and supporting strength-based growth.
- Tier 3: Student Engagement Specialists and School Counselor
 - For students experiencing chronic absenteeism, Student Engagement Specialists and a Licensed School Counselor were put in place at the district level to provide intensive mentoring, advocacy, case management to students, partner with families, and coordinate with county agencies and community providers. Students and families receive sustained support throughout the school year and will continue to be served in school year 2027, following research-based knowledge that a minimum of two years of support is needed to make sustained change.
 - A central component of the pilot is addressing the underlying causes of absenteeism, including anxiety, depression, trauma, school refusal, and other unmet mental health needs. The initiative recognizes that students who miss school are often struggling rather than being defiant and that punitive responses can undermine trust and engagement. By providing early intervention, social and emotional support, staff training, and family-centered services, the pilot seeks to improve attendance while supporting the whole child.

Evidence of effective strategies

- Student Outcomes
 - Stronger sense of belonging and connection to school.
 - Increased student voice through participation in Student-Led Attendance Teams.
 - Improved relationships with trusted adults.
 - Increased confidence, self-advocacy, and leadership skills.
- Family Outcomes
 - Stronger partnerships between families and schools.
 - Increased trust in school staff and attendance processes.
 - Greater family engagement in problem-solving around attendance barriers.
 - Reduced feelings of blame, isolation, or stigma.
 - Improved awareness of available school and community resources.
- School Climate and Culture Outcomes
 - Increased staff understanding of the root causes of absenteeism.
 - Stronger culture of belonging, inclusion, and student engagement.
 - Collaboration among teachers, administrators, and support staff to build relationships through mentoring.
 - Development of effective practices that can be replicated across additional schools at no too low cost.
- Tier-Specific Successes
 - Tier 1: Student-Led Attendance Teams:
 - Students develop meaningful attendance initiatives that resonate with peers.
 - Increased peer-to-peer support and school connectedness.
 - Student-driven solutions identify barriers adults may overlook.
 - Tier 2: Check, Connect, and Expect
 - More students can identify at least one caring adult at school.
 - Improved attendance among students with emerging attendance concerns.
 - Increased student engagement through consistent mentoring relationships.
 - Tier 3: Student Engagement Specialists and Counselor
 - Significant improvements among students with the most severe attendance challenges.
 - Reduced school avoidance and school refusal behaviors.
 - Increased access to mental health and community support.
 - Improved family-school communication and coordinated care plans.

Year 2 policy changes

- No major policy changes have been implemented this reporting period.

Challenges and learnings

- Student and Family Engagement Challenges
 - Lack of trust in schools: Families with prior negative experiences at times expressed hesitancy to engage with school staff or attendance interventions at the start of intervention.
 - Stigma surrounding attendance and mental health: Students and families were not initially willing to share root causes due to fearing judgment, blame, or consequences for discussing underlying challenges.
 - Complex family circumstances: Housing instability, transportation issues, caregiving responsibilities, poverty, health concerns, or family crises interrupted participation.
 - Inconsistent participation: Students who were already severely disengaged could be difficult to reach consistently, especially when attendance was highly sporadic.
- School Capacity Challenges
 - Staff time and workload: Teachers, counselors, and support staff voiced that they struggle to add attendance interventions to existing responsibilities.
 - Limited mental health resources: Demand for counseling and support services continue to exceed available capacity.
 - Staff turnover: Changes in personnel disrupt the sustainability of interventions and continuity of relationships that are critical for success.
 - Training needs: Some staff require ongoing professional development to shift from compliance-based attendance practices to relationship-centered approaches.
- System and Coordination Challenges
 - Data identification and monitoring: School staff expressed that they need reliable data in systems that they can easily navigate to identify attendance concerns early and track intervention effectiveness.
 - Cross-agency coordination: Collaboration among schools, families, community organizations, county services, and healthcare providers could be difficult to coordinate.
 - Consistency across schools: Implementation quality may vary depending on leadership, resources, and school culture.
- Cultural and Mindset Challenges
 - Resistance to shifting from compliance to support: Some staff, families, or community members may continue to view absenteeism primarily as a discipline issue.
 - Balancing accountability and support: Schools must maintain attendance expectations while fostering trust and understanding.
 - Changing School culture: Building a district-wide belief that "behind every chronically absent student is a story" requires time, leadership, and ongoing reinforcement.