

Public
Education &
the 87th Session

children at Risk



House Bill 823 (González)

Defining Chronic Absenteeism and Utilizing Data to Reduce It

Chronic absenteeism is an early warning sign for educators. A student who is chronically absent in any year between eighth and twelfth grade is seven times more likely to drop out of school. For high school students, lack of attendance is a better indicator of dropping out than test scores.



Before the pandemic, Texas had a problem with chronic absenteeism in its schools.

- Statewide, chronic absenteeism averages at 12.5% pre-COVID and varies dramatically by region. More than 740,000 students missed at least one-tenth of their instruction in 2019.
- The San Antonio and Lubbock regions had some of the highest rates of chronic absenteeism, while Dallas and Amarillo area schools had some of the lowest rates.



- Disaggregated by race and ethnicity, Black and white students are both above the state average (14 and 13.5 % respectively).
- The overall average rate of chronic absenteeism for special education students was 17%.

The pandemic will likely exacerbate chronic absenteeism for at least the upcoming biennium as more students face new challenges and educational disruptions. Chronic absenteeism negatively impacts a student's ability to learn and decreases the likelihood that student will graduate on time, which hinders Texas's ability to meet the goals laid out in the 60x30TX strategic plan. **Texas does not currently define chronic absenteeism.**



POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- Define chronic absenteeism in the Texas Education Code as a student who misses 10% or more of instructional time within an academic year for any reason.
- Add chronic absenteeism to the "at risk" category to better support students who are chronically absent and therefore at risk of dropping out.
- Require EA report chronic absenteeism to increase transparency and better target student supports.

Texas needs better data about chronic absenteeism in public schools and public charter schools. With better and clearer data, we can address the causes of chronic absenteeism and adequately support at-risk students.



Public Education & the 87th Session

children at Risk



The following organizations and invividuals are signed on in support.

Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Coalition

CitySquare

Dallas Early Education Alliance

Dillon Joyce Ltd

Doctors for Change

Dominican Sisters of Houston

Early Learning Alliance

Educate Midland

Educational First Steps

Emergence Health Network

Family Association of San Antoino, Inc.

Ivy Kids - Hobbs

Kids Kountry Learning Center

Kids R Kids #5 Texas

Kids R Kids Learning Academy Westpointe

Kids R Kids of Lakeshore

Momentous Institute

Onjaleke Brown

Rhonda Parker

Sabrin Kinslow, LMSW

Texas Association for the Education of Young Children

Texas CASA

TXPOST

United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

Vanguard Academy

YMCA of Greater Houston