

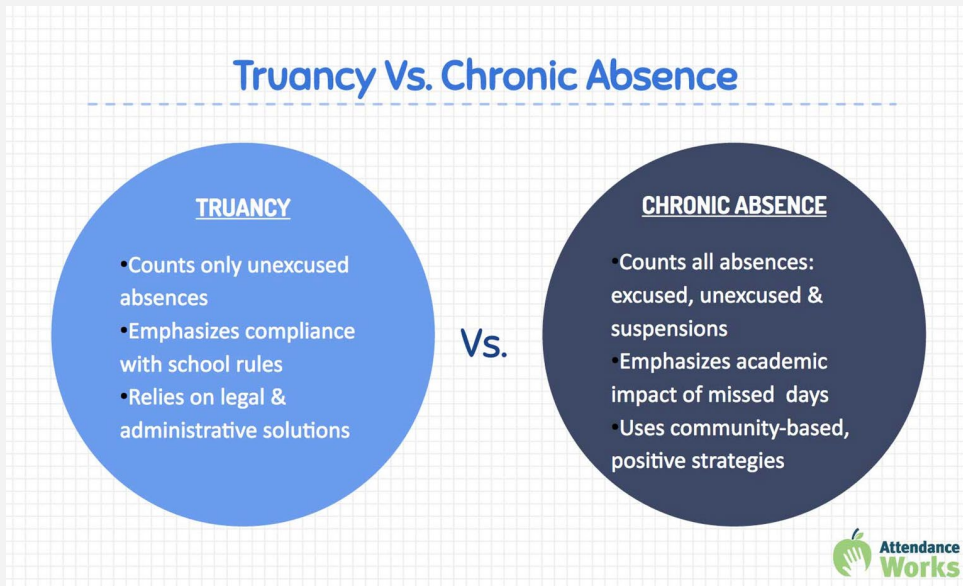
Chronic Absenteeism

Canton Public Schools
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2025-2026 SY

What is chronic absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism, a primary cause of poor academic achievement, is defined as missing at least 10 percent of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences.



- ❖ Chronic absenteeism is linked to health disparities and the achievement gap

https://public-edsight.ct.gov/students/attendance-dashboard?language=en_US

What is the vision of Canton Public Schools?

We envision a public school system where every student feels seen, supported, and empowered to attend school consistently. By addressing the root causes of chronic absenteeism through community collaboration, compassionate outreach, and equitable access to resources, we strive to create an environment where all students can thrive, engage in learning, and realize their full potential.



Absentee Rates in Canton

My first goal is to identify the absentee rates in Canton Public Schools. Below is a chart that shares the chronic absentee rates of all students versus students in special education.

**SY 2020-
2021**

**SY 2021-
2022**

**SY
2022-
2023**

**SY
2023-
2024**

All Students	13%	13.1%	10.9%	9.9%
Special Education	17.7%	31.1%	33%	21.7%
Canton Intermediate School		10.9%	12.1%	6.6%

Committee Development

The first step in addressing chronic absenteeism within our district is to form a committee of educators from each of the 4 schools. This team should consist of mental health professionals: social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, administrators, our CREC liaison, and special education teachers.

You need a team to craft a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to attendance and engagement. Having a team ensures you have access to the insights and resources needed to design and implement meaningful activities and interventions. **One person can't do it all.**

District and school leaders are positioned to ensure a team exists to support the work. If you are just starting this process, you can begin with a small group, and invite other stakeholders over time.

The team will recognize that as we progress, we can add more members to the committee, especially those who have connections with students we are trying to bring back to school.

Why we built a district committee?

1. **Capacity Building:** Build the capacity of school leaders, staff and teams to implement a multi-tiered approach to support a culture of high attendance.
1. **Actionable Data:** Provide accurate, timely (ideally weekly), actionable attendance and absenteeism data to district and school leaders.
1. **Positive Engagement:** Equip schools with evidence-based strategies to positively engage students and families.
1. **Strategic Partnerships:** Mobilize community partners to address barriers to attendance.
2. **Adequate, Equitable Resources:** Ensure resources are sufficient and equitably allocated to schools with the greatest needs.
1. **Shared Accountability:** Establish systems to hold district and school staff accountable for doing their part to reduce chronic absence.

Because we are a small district in Canton, I believe a district committee is the most important to get the resources and team trained to be able to implement change. School based teams will also be important once the district committee has everything set in place.

Intervention Needs identified

Just like our tiered supports of academic intervention, we need to create a tiered system of attendance support.

Foundational Support: Physical and emotional support to all students, sense of belonging, academic challenge and engagement, crucial to build relationships.

Tier 1: Setting expectations when students show up to class and recognize improvements in attendance.

Tier 2: Interventions designed to remove barriers for students already missing 10% of the school year. Give more personal attention to students and families.

Tier 3: Intensive support to students and families, may require case management to each student, can involve health, housing, and social services agencies.

Tier 3

Intensive Intervention-Missing 20% or more school days

Tier 2

Early Intervention- 10%-19%

Tier 1

Universal Prevention of absenteeism

**Foundational
Support**

Promote positive conditions for learning for all students

Focus Areas of Improvement

Some areas that we can improve on at the foundational level is engaging with families early on. More direct and personalized outreach to families through letters, emails, or texts can reduce absenteeism. Districts should be more direct with the families on how many days their child/children have missed.

In Canton, we should come up with a better way to reach parents/guardians when the number of absences rises. Texting was found to be more effective in some communities.

One way we can improve is early communication with case managers. Depending on the needs of the student and families the case manager may have to call multiple times a week

- Focus on empathy-how can the school help the family? You should not make the family feel like they are to blame.
- Include personalized postcards, letters, or texts.
- Provide precise personalized information rather than generic messaging. The generic messaging can get lost, especially if there are multiple things being shared.
- Send repeated communications throughout the year. Find what works best for the families.

CREATE A HOME VISIT PROTOCOL/PROCESS

After identifying the needs in the district and more specifically which students and families need our help, we would then create a home visit contract.

This process will include:

- The purpose/need of the contract for the family.
- Attendance data
- Concerns
- Action steps for parents/guardians
- Action steps for the student
- Home to school partnership strategies
- Signatures of parents/guardians and school team member/administrator

Example of what a contract could look like:

<https://www.schoolstatus.com/wp-content/uploads/Attendance-Contract-Template-from-SchoolStatus.pdf>

Review protocol with collaborative team members.

Questions to ask:

- How do we make sure the school isn't liable for anything that could happen at the house?
- What happens if a family does not agree to the contract? In what other way can we help?
- Do we need a police officer with us?
- Can we provide transportation?
- What community resources can we provide to the family?

Professional Development for other educators

Before anyone goes on the home visit, they need to be trained. The mental health staff in each school is a critical part of the team. With their knowledge on how best to support the social emotional well being of a child, they are the best staff to train the educators.

The best staff to do the home visit should be a staff member who has a relationship with that student.

Home visits

Once the contract is signed, the home visits begin. The home visits can look like a teacher, mental health staff, administrator, etc calling the parents and setting up a time to come to the home.

- Promote equity
- Honoring parents/guardians/families is critical
- Schools/Districts have a responsibility to help all students
- Everyone is capable of change
- Relationships between schools and home is necessary to transform systems, communities, and schools.
- Improve communication between school and home.
- Build trust.

Home visits should:

1. Be voluntary. You can not force your way to someone's house. You should set up a time with the families beforehand. Do not just show up.
2. Teachers are trained. They are prepared for whatever may come.
3. Relationship building is crucial.
4. No targeting-you may not get that child back to school on the first few visits, do not place blame on anyone.
5. Educators always conduct the visit in at least pairs.

Resources for families and school staff

- [Elementary Handout](#)
- [Toolkits for families](#)
- [Community Partners](#)

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/chronic-absence/chronic-absence>

*Data and interventions from Attendanceworks.org

Align Interventions to Reasons for Absences

Reason for Absence	Possible Interventions	Potential Partner
Anxiety About In-Person School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enlist trusted messengers (e.g. doctors) to talk with families• Review health and safety protocols• Hold a virtual open house to answer questions and address concerns• Make school counselors available for consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local pediatriciansCommunity health workers (<i>Promotoras</i>)Public health clinic
Not understanding the impact of absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an education campaign that connects academic achievement with attendance• When working with individual families, explore their hopes for their child and help connect them to school and attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mayor's officeUnited WayFamily resource center
Schedules Out-of-Sync	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer before or after school programming• Provide a modified schedule that aligns school and family schedules• Partner with community colleges to offer courses for working teens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Parks & Rec programBoys & Girls Club
Transportation Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize a walking school bus• Offer free and reduced price bus or subway pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Faith-based organizationsGov't transportation office

Thank You!