

Dear Partners:

September marks the beginning of the school year and **Attendance Awareness Month**, a period dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of school attendance, the negative impact of chronic absence, and strategies to engage students in school. “Chronic absence” is defined as missing at least 10% of the school days for which a student is enrolled over the course of an academic year for any reason. It serves as an early warning sign that children may be falling behind academically and are at risk of academic failure.

In New York, more than 1 in 4 (26%) elementary and middle school students and 34% of high school students were chronically absent in school year 2022-2023, with even higher rates for high school Black (46%) and Hispanic (44%) students and students with disabilities (45%).<sup>1</sup>

The vision of the NYS Council of Children and Families and the New York State Education Department’s mission are that every child and young person in New York State realizes their optimal potential. In alignment with our shared vision, CCF and NYSED are promoting Attendance Awareness Month, and we are asking you to join us in amplifying the message that attendance matters, so that every student can be successful.

This is a call to action, a pressing issue we must collectively address now!

**How does Chronic Absenteeism Impact New York Students:** The detrimental effects of chronic absenteeism are far-reaching, impacting students' educational achievements, emotional well-being, and prospects for future success. Recent data on student performance in reading and math proficiency scores further underscore the urgent need to address this issue in New York State. Shockingly, only 49% of fourth-grade students in New York State are proficient in reading, while 54% demonstrate proficiency in math.<sup>2</sup> Governor Hochul has responded to learning needs with her *Back to Basics’ Initiative* to improve reading proficiency. Yet, education can only fulfill its promise when students are in school.

**Promoting a Culture of Attendance:** A culture of attendance is the cultivation of an environment where regular participation and presence are valued and encouraged. This means emphasizing the importance and benefits of school attendance. Here are a few suggestions from Attendance Works as to how to promote a culture of attendance:

1. Supportive environment: Create a welcoming atmosphere that motivates individuals to children to attend regularly through positive reinforcement and community building.
2. Clear Expectations: Establish and clearly communicate policies and expectations regarding attendance so everyone understands its importance.

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Education Department School Report Card Data for School Year 2022-23. <https://data.nysed.gov/>

<sup>2</sup> New York State Education Department School Report Card Data for School Year 2022-23

<https://data.nysed.gov/essa.php?instid=800000081568&year=2023&createreport=1&38ELA=1&38MATH=1>

3. Incentives and Recognition: Implement reward systems or recognition programs that celebrate consistent attendance and encourage participation.
4. Open Communication: Encourage dialogue about attendance challenges and provide support to address barriers preventing children from attending school.

Please help us spread the word by sharing on your social media channels the following:

[Attendance Works: Bringing Attendance Home Video](#)

[Attendance Works: Take Action](#)

[Every Student Present: Chronic Absence Fact Sheet](#)

[FutureEd and Attendance Works: Attendance Playbook](#)

[National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center](#)

[Student Engagement and Attendance Center: Action Planner for Reengaging Students to Support Everyday Attendance](#)