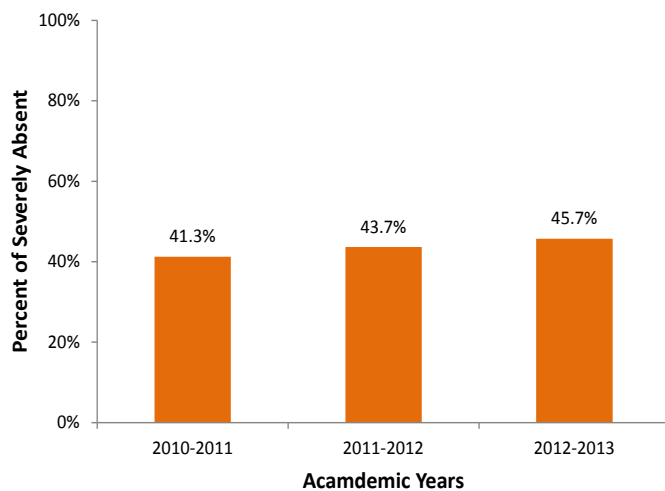


Poor school attendance has high costs in terms of young people's academic learning, connection to peers, teachers and schools, health, high school graduation, and future employment.¹ Chronic absence—missing at least 10% of school—is an important benchmark of poor attendance. From 2010 through 2013, over 1 in 10 SCUSD students were chronically absent each academic year: 5020 student in 2010-2011, 6223 students in 2011-2012 and 5205 students in 2012-2013.² This brief summarizes patterns among these students who were considered severely chronically absent from school because they missed 15% or more school days.

A substantial and increasing proportion of chronically absent students met the “severe chronic absence” threshold from 2010 to 2013.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, 45.7% of chronically absent students missed at least 15% of school, up from 43.7% in 2011-2012 and 41.3% in 2010-2011.

Figure 1. Percentage of SCUSD Chronic Absentees Missing at Least 15% of School (2010-2013)

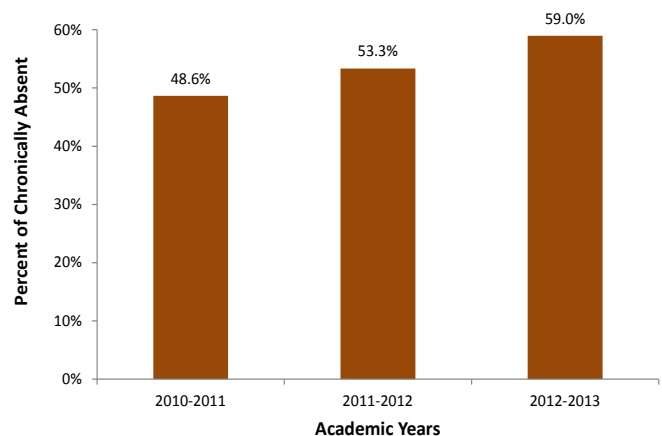


Severe chronic absence increased most at the high school level from 2010-2013.

Breaking down the figures for the severely chronically absent student population into three grade-level cohorts reveals that from 2010-2012, the percentage of students

missing at least 15% of school increased slightly from year to year in grades K-3; severe chronic absence increased slightly in grades 4-8 in 2011-12, and then decreased to just below the 2010-2011 level. However, the percentage of chronically absent students in grades 9-12 who missed at least 15% of school increased substantially.

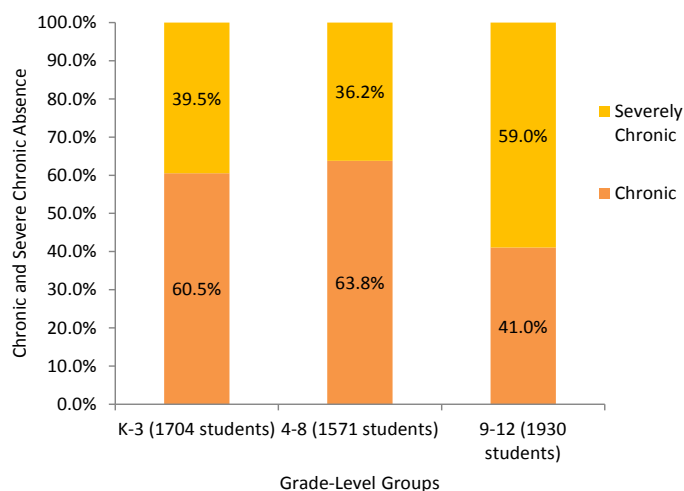
Figure 2. Percentage of Grades 9-12 Chronic Absentees Missing at Least 15% of School (2010-2013)



Severe chronic absence is more prevalent in high school

High school students were over-represented among SCUSD severely chronically absent students. Of all chronically absent 9th-12th graders in 2012-2013, more than half of them, or 1138 students, met the “severe” threshold.

Figure 3. Chronic and Severe Chronic Absence by Grade-Level Group in SCUSD (2012-2013)



In 2010-2013, some student populations were more likely to be severely chronically absent than might be expected given their representation in the overall student population.

- Males were slightly overrepresented. Among students who missed at least 15% of school, a greater percentage were male than female each year.
- The greatest number of severely chronically absent students each year were identified as Latino/a. Black/African American students were overrepresented in all three years. Native American students were overrepresented in 2011-12 and 2012-13.
- Students who transferred to a different school within the district two or more times during the academic year were overrepresented among severely chronically absent students. Among chronically absent students with multiple transfers, two-thirds missed at least 15% of school.

- Students identified as being in foster care were overrepresented among severely chronically absent students from 2010-2013. Among all chronically absent students in foster care, almost two-thirds were severely chronically absent.
- Students identified as homeless at the time of registration were also overrepresented. Each year among all chronically absent homeless students, slightly over half were severely chronically absent. In 2012-2013, this meant that 231 students missed at least 15% of school.

Available data do not enable us to assess why these students disproportionately missed many days of school. However, these analyses suggest the importance of intensive and tailored outreach to these sub-groups within the chronically absent student population.

Although overall district chronic absence rates decreased in 2012-13 from a peak in 2011-2012, more chronically absent students are now meeting the benchmark for severe chronic absence.

These findings suggest the importance of implementing “early warning” inquiry and support systems focused on school absenteeism (regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused). Monitoring chronically absent students after implementing strategies to improve their attendance will be key to ensuring positive outcomes. Students who miss many days of school potentially face more than one barrier to attendance. Their educational success depends on the ability of schools, relevant agency staff and community networks to proactively reach out, reduce barriers and rally to provide tailored support.

Author: Nancy Erbstein (UC Davis Department of Human Ecology) with Teri Greenfield (UC Davis Center for Regional Change). For more information, please contact Dr. Erbstein at nerbstein@ucdavis.edu.

This brief and others are available at regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/projects/chronic-absence-in-the-sacramento-unified-school-district. These briefs were created through a collaboration with SCUSD and Community Link, with generous support from The California Endowment.

Endnotes:

¹ See Brief #2: *The Cost of Chronic Absence in the Sacramento City Unified School District Chronic Absence Issue Brief Series* at regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/projects/chronic-absence-in-the-sacramento-unified-school-district

² See *Chronic Absenteeism in Sacramento City Unified School District: 3-Year Trend Overview (February 2014)* at regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/ourwork/projects/chronic-absence-in-the-sacramento-unified-school-district for more information on chronic absenteeism in SCUSD. Students enrolled in SCUSD for at least one month were included in this analysis. However, for the purpose of this calculation we excluded attendance data for students in Grade 13 and with School code = “Home/Hospital.” We were unable to include data for students attending John Morse Therapeutic Center, Yav Pem Suab Academy, Success Academy, Language Academy, The Academy, Sacramento Accelerated, Capital City, and sites coded “Non-public school,” and “Special Education Independent.”

