

Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District

Attendance Report

October 5, 2021

The 2020-2021 school year started with us in Distance Learning and transitioning to Hybrid on March 22, 2021. During the year, our District staff gathers attendance data, analyzes it carefully, identifies areas of strength and weakness, and develops a plan to address the areas in which we note our greatest challenges. While the plan is often modified throughout the year, our ongoing commitment is to provide the support necessary to ensure that each student will attend school on a regular basis. While the importance of student attendance may seem like a given, the extent to which it is connected to student achievement may be underestimated. This report will note some of the important facts about student attendance, as well as data about attendance in the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, and how it compares to other districts.

Importance of Attendance

Ongoing research confirms the value of high-quality early childhood experience for developing the cognitive, social, and emotional skills that children need. However, despite the efforts of staff to create and modify excellent programs, unless children attend and participate in these programs on a regular basis, they are not likely to benefit fully. Unless we pay attention to attendance even among young children, we are missing the opportunity to use early educational experiences to build an essential skill: showing up to participate on time, every day to school, and eventually work.

What the National Research Shows

- ✓ Absenteeism starts early
Nationally, one in ten kindergarten and first grade students misses 10 percent of the school year in excused and unexcused absences; in some cities across the nation, the number is as high as one in four. The limited data on preschool attendance show even greater rates of chronic absenteeism.
- ✓ Early attendance can predict attendance in the later years
Good attendance is a habit that children need to form. If they don't do so early, attendance suffers later. An Oregon study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade had the lowest levels of attendance five years later. We have noticed this same correlation in our students.
- ✓ Early attendance can help children learn to read
Literacy instruction is frontloaded in the early grades, so if children miss too much school, they lag behind in reading. A study of 640 children in California found only 17 percent of students chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade were reading on grade level by third grade. This compares to 64 percent of those who attended regularly.
- ✓ Some children are more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to be affected
Given the challenges that poverty can create for getting to school, children from low-income families are four times more likely to be chronically absent. Unfortunately, because they are more likely to depend upon school to learn to read, the adverse impact on literacy development is 75 percent greater for a socioeconomically disadvantaged child than for a more affluent family. The pandemic laid bare and exacerbated existing economic and social inequities, resulting in unequal access to distance learning opportunities. This is particularly true nationwide for students of color (i.e. Black Americans, Latinx, Native Americans) and students with disabilities.

To achieve college and career readiness and ensure that all students graduate with the skills needed to contribute and thrive, a focus on maintaining a high level of school attendance is critical.

LVJUSD Data and Analysis

For the past several years, LVJUSD has prioritized its focus on attendance, especially at the early years. Our schools have worked to create an expectation of high achievement, starting with promoting a culture of “showing up and being present.” The objective is to increase learning time and build connections between students, families, and their schools. Ultimately, this leads to improved student success.

LVJUSD Attendance Rate

	LVJUSD 2018-2019	LVJUSD 2019-2020	LVJUSD 2020-2021
Elementary Schools	96.54%	96.32%	97.5%
Middle Schools	96.60%	96.62%	97.29%
High Schools	95.43%	96.30%	97.23%
District Total	96.28%	96.45 %	97.34%

Analysis:

Our daily attendance has been strong throughout our District over the past three years. To put this increase in perspective, a District-wide improvement of just a quarter of one percent represents an increase of nearly 6,000 days of instruction. Further, an understanding of how the attendance rates in Livermore compare to the “average” is helpful in determining the work that remains. According to the University of Utah, a child can be expected to get, on average, between 4-6 colds per year, and would likely miss between four and five days of school as a result. Additionally, the “average” student will miss an additional four days for various reasons. These nine days of absence would result in an attendance rate of 95%. So, generally, a daily attendance rate of above 95% would be considered to be better than average and anything over 96% is very good, especially at the high school level, where students are more likely to miss school for reasons other than illness. Therefore, our District attendance rate of 97.34% is well above what would be a national average. These high rates are an indication that the work being done to convey the importance of daily attendance has produced positive outcomes.

It is worth noting that the positive attendance rates for the 2020-2021 school year were impacted significantly by COVID-19. Our distance-learning model that was in place through March allowed students, who were not feeling well and would have typically stayed home, the ability to attend class in the virtual environment. Now that we have returned to in-person instruction, we should expect the rates to decrease a bit.

District-wide Efforts to Improve Attendance

- ✓ We pay attention to the data
We are tracking attendance data with an eye on how many students are missing too many days, not just how many are present every day. Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists (CWAs) look for patterns among students and in times of the week or year.
- ✓ We use the data to identify at-risk children and their families
Once we identify which children are chronically absent, we reach out to the families about our concerns and offer support. Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists find out if they face any

barriers to attendance, such as illness, transportation problems, or housing instability. Through our School Attendance Review Team/School Attendance Review Board (SART/SARB) process, we support the creation of an Attendance Improvement Action Plan for children with too many absences, which has reduced the proportion of chronically absent kindergarteners. The SART process provides an ideal opportunity for collaborating with community agencies that have the staff and resources to support families.

- ✓ We educate parents about what children learn in the early years and why attendance matters
We make sure parents understand what children are learning in early education programs. Beginning with Kindergarten, we help them understand the need for time in that high-quality learning experience and also recognize their responsibility for ensuring regular attendance.
- ✓ We make children part of the solution
We have integrated school, grade level, and District incentives to encourage children to maximize their learning time. The Attendance Award encourages children to attend school regularly and gives them an opportunity to understand the importance of their attendance and overall progress so they succeed in school.

Moving Forward

Our District follows a consistent process for notifying parents, in their primary language, when their children are not present or engaged in school. We are building a culture of success, and our staff is at the forefront of changing behaviors and attitudes around pupil engagement.

The efforts made by our school sites, Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists, Nurses, staff, and families allow us to work together as a unified team to increase attendance, student engagement, and student success.

- We gather and focus on the data
- We use the data to identify at-risk children and their families
- We contact families to increase support
- We educate parents about why engagement matters
- We create a team to develop a solution

Reducing chronic absences and increasing engagement fits nicely into our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework, to reduce chronic absenteeism in our schools. Tier 1 represents universal strategies to encourage good attendance/engagement for all students. Tier 2 provides early intervention for students who need more support for engagement and to avoid chronic absence. Tier 3 offers intensive support for students facing the greatest challenges.

Conclusions

Our District provides significant levels of individual and site support through our Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists, our Child Welfare and Attendance Aides, community partners, and other outside organizations to ensure that families receive the support they need. Some families may need help identifying resources available to them, while others need emotional support and a better understanding of the importance of instructional time. The success of these supports is proven by the data gathered, which indicates that our District is performing very well in the major categories of measurement: truancies, excessive excused absences, and chronic absences. We will continue celebrating the hard work of our staff, review our end-of-year results, and adjust and update our practices to build upon our foundation of success.