



## REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

College and Career Readiness, Postsecondary  
May 2018

### Question:

Are high school attendance rates associated with college enrollment, persistence, and completion?

### Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about high school attendance and college outcomes. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on high school attendance. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the association between high school attendance and college enrollment, persistence, and completion. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

### References

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). *The importance of being in school: A report on absenteeism in the nation's public schools*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools. Retrieved from [https://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport\\_May16.pdf](https://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf)

*From the executive summary:* “Because it is not measured, chronic absenteeism is not acted upon. Like bacteria in a hospital, chronic absenteeism can wreak havoc long before it is discovered. If the evidence in this report is borne out through more systematic data collection and analysis, that havoc may have already undermined school reform efforts of the past quarter century and negated the positive impact of future efforts. Students need to attend school daily to succeed. The good news of this report is that being in school leads to succeeding in school. Achievement, especially in math, is very sensitive to attendance, and absence of even two weeks during one school year matters. Attendance also strongly affects standardized test scores and graduation and dropout rates. Educators and policymakers cannot truly understand achievement gaps or efforts to close them without considering chronic absenteeism.”

Connolly, F., Olson, L. S., Durham, R. E., & Plank, S. B. (2014). *Indicators of college readiness: A comparison of high school and college measures*. Baltimore, MD: Baltimore Education Research Consortium. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED553163>

*From the executive summary:* “This report compares high school indicators of college readiness for the Baltimore City Schools Class of 2011 with actual readiness as determined by Maryland colleges. Each Maryland college determines its own criteria for entering credit bearing courses or taking developmental courses. As a result, findings are reported separately by college rather than the district or high school...This analysis focuses on the four colleges in which most graduates enrolled, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), Morgan State, and Coppin State Universities... This report provides: (1) A brief look at *all members of the City Schools Class of 2011* including a description of their high school and middle school indicators, demographic characteristics, and college enrollment rates; (2) A look at *the graduates who went to Maryland colleges* focusing on the colleges that enrolled at least 10 members of the City Schools Class of 2011; (3) A look at *the graduates who, upon enrolling, were assessed for developmental course need*, and then were *deemed as needing developmental courses*, with a special focus on the match or mismatch between high school indicators of readiness and the colleges’ assessment of students who needed developmental courses; and (4) A look at *the graduates who, upon enrolling, were not assessed for developmental course need*, again with a special focus on the match or mismatch between high school indicators of readiness and colleges’ judgments about readiness.”

Reyes, P., Alexander, C., & Giani, M. (2012). *Postsecondary access, persistence, and completion of Houston-area youth*. Austin, TX: Texas Education Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved from [https://research.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/03/HISD\\_Report.pdf](https://research.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/03/HISD_Report.pdf)

*From the introduction:* “The primary purpose of the current report is to investigate the relationship between the district that a student attends during high school and his or her chances of gaining access to, persisting through, and earning a degree or certificate from a postsecondary institution. The report will focus primarily on students from Houston Independent School District (HISD) but will also analyze the performance of a number of

other districts in Region IV (the educational region in which HISD is located), Region IV as a whole, and the state. To better isolate the influence of districts on postsecondary outcomes we will also control for a number of student-level variables, from demographic characteristics to academic aptitudes.”

RI DataHUB. (2015a). *Data story: High school chronic absenteeism & college persistence: Linking K–12 data to post-secondary outcomes*. Providence, RI: Author. Retrieved from <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/high-school-absenteeism-college-persistence/1/>

*Example from the data story:* “Of the 1,843 chronically absent high school graduates from the class of 2009, the majority (1,162 or 63%) did not immediately enroll in postsecondary education. However, 681 (37%) of chronically absent high school graduates enrolled either full- or part-time in postsecondary education in Fall 2009.” (p. 7).

RI DataHUB. (2015b). *High school absenteeism and college persistence*. Providence, RI: Author. Retrieved from <http://ridatahub.org/datamart/high-school-absenteeism-college-persistence/>

*Example from data visualization tool:* This data visualization tool tracks three cohorts of 9th grade students: those exhibiting ‘low absence,’ ‘moderate absence,’ and ‘chronic absence’ through high school. Of the 159 chronically absent students who enrolled in a full-time Rhode Island public institution in the fall 2009 semester, only 39 percent remained enrolled by fall 2010, compared with 68 percent of students from the low absence cohort who enrolled at the same type of institution at the same time. By the fall of 2011, 19 percent of chronically absent students who had enrolled in 2009 remained enrolled, compared with 49 percent of low absence students. By fall of 2012, 12 percent of students from the chronically absent cohort remained enrolled, and 36 percent of the low absence cohort remained enrolled (p. 6).

### **Additional Organizations to Consult**

Attendance Works: <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

*From the website:* “The mission of Attendance Works is to advance student success and reduce equity gaps by reducing chronic absence.”

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center:  
<http://new.every1graduates.org/nsaesc/>

*From the website:* “The mission of the center is to disseminate the evidence based practices and build and facilitate communities of practice to help students attend every day, be engaged in school, and succeed academically, so that they graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and civil life.”

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (“high school attendance” OR “high school absenteeism”) AND (college OR post-secondary) AND (attendance OR readiness OR enrollment OR persistence OR completion)

### Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

### Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover the most current information (i.e., within the last ten years), except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Search priorities of reference sources: Search priorities include IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on May 30, 2018. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Appalachia region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) at SRI International. This Ask A REL response was developed by REL AP under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0004 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.