

Viewpoints

Chronic Absenteeism: An Important Issue in Iowa and Beyond



Even as we move further away from the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact on school attendance is still a significant challenge. Chronic absenteeism, where students miss at least 10% of school days, continues to be a major issue in Iowa and across the country. This problem not only affects students' learning but also has long lasting consequences for the community as a whole.

A recent report highlights just how persistent the issue is, particularly within Des Moines Public Schools. During the 2020-2021 school year, 52% of students were chronically absent. While that number has improved, it still stands at 39% as of the last school year. Across Iowa, chronic absenteeism is still elevated, with statewide averages hitting 21% last year.

Des Moines has made efforts to tackle this, but the issue persists. Rebuilding attendance and re-engaging students will require ongoing effort and creative solutions. Chronic absenteeism isn't just a challenge for the



affected students – it's a problem that impacts all of us, as it has the potential to hinder Iowa's workforce and economic growth in the years to come.

It is clear that addressing chronic absenteeism should remain a top priority for educators, parents, and policymakers. The long-term effects of missing school are significant, but educators across the state are working tirelessly to support students and create environments that encourage consistent attendance.

Educators across Iowa are wrestling with a lingering aftereffect of the COVID-19 pandemic: School attendance still hasn't returned to pre-pandemic levels.

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