Heard in the Education
Interim Committee
meeting on 10-15-25.

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Internal Audit Department

Audit Brief

Attendance Audit (25-01)

What We Found

The Public Education System

The public education system (System), and other taxpayer funded education options, specific to student enrollment, attendance, and membership, are outlined in complex state laws and local policies. The laws and policies include varying roles and responsibilities for multiple parties. The result of current laws and policies—and the implementation or unwillingness to implement and enforce them—is a System rife with inconsistency, contradictions, confusion, and noncompliance.

Without accountability for responsibilities at each level, casualties of the System may include:

- students and parents—as the ones engaging with the System to support achievement, future opportunity, and success,
- taxpayers—as the ones funding the educational services with an expectation of student success that benefits both the individual and the state, and
- other parties (e.g., policymakers, administrators, educators)—as the ones providing oversight of the System, facilitating System operations, or providing services.

Impacts to the System may include, but are not limited to:

- fraud, waste, abuse, and misuse of resources, including time and effort,
- increased risk and liability (e.g., political, reputational, legal),
- heightened stress with deteriorating morale, and
- an unequal or inappropriate allocation of funds based on unreliable and invalid data.

Student Participation in Education

Although the student participation rate within the System has remained relatively flat over the last decade, 51% of parents responding to a survey have considered alternatives to public education, with the most common reasons for considering alternatives being student safety, the quality of education, and personalized education.

Students, at a sample of 16 LEAs for school year 2024, had an average of 11 excused or unexcused absences, according to state data. However, when compared to local education agency (LEA) data that adds student activities and other school-scheduled events as absences, the average absences over the school year increased to 16, an average difference of 45%, and just two days short of being chronically absent.

Finally, a review of multiple statewide assessments, grade point average, and graduation indicates attendance is likely a factor in overall student performance. However, the amount of absenteeism that impacts performance may depend on the student, their age, and their environment among other things, and may not align with the current definition of chronic absenteeism.

Factors potentially impacting student attendance, include:

- School Days: Not all school days are equal with respect to length, learning, and instruction (e.g., parties, testing, field trips/activities, athletic/activity competitions, legal reallocations, late start/early out); therefore, students and parents decipher—and in some cases, are told—when attendance matters and when it does not.
- Continuity of Instruction: Educator absenteeism is on par if not slightly higher than student absenteeism. Removing a high-quality educator from a classroom may impact students' perceived need or desire to attend.
- Extracurricular Activities: For students who engage in extracurricular activities, 42% of surveyed parents reported that extracurricular activities impact their students' attendance.
- Parent Sentiment/Motivation: Only 54% of parents responding to the survey reported their students enjoy public education "completely" or "quite a bit". And both parents and students responding to the survey reported "friends" as the biggest motivator for student attendance.

Recommendations

Policy

The Board should prioritize a comprehensive review of R277-419 to address the terminology, policy, and other items identified throughout the report that indicate misalignment, mixed messaging and incentivizing behavior that does not support objectives related to attendance. Additionally, the Board, conferring with the Legislature, should deliberate if attendance-based allocation of taxpayer funds for public education is prudent given the evolution of public education to include concepts like competency-based education that challenge the need for attendance to achieve stated objectives.

Personnel

The USBE should prioritize building competencies in positions (existing or new) related to student participation to ensure comprehensive and aligned understanding, rulemaking, and system development to support achievement of objectives. LEA governing boards and administration should also review state law related to student enrollment, attendance and membership and revise policies and procedures, as well as evaluate data systems, to ensure compliance.

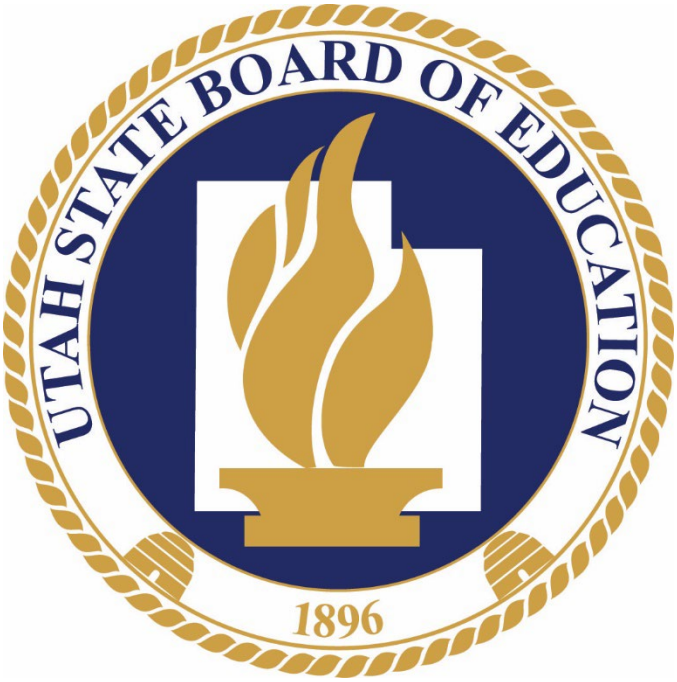
Data and Funding

The Board and USBE staff should evaluate the data needed to support compliance with provisions in state law and design and implement information systems to support data collection needs. Additionally, USBE should increase the monitoring of LEA student participation related data to ensure 1) methodologies and processes employed by LEAs are consistent, comparable, reliable and valid, and 2) allocation of taxpayer funds based on membership is accurate.

Accountability and Parent Involvement

Accountability at all levels should be strengthened, including use and enforcement of existing state law related to compulsory education. This may require new performance metrics that track use of tools in law related to attendance notifications, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as considering attendance correlations based on use of those tools. LEAs may also need to reevaluate programs and policies intended to increase flexibility that potentially reduce accountability.

Given the significance of parental involvement to success in education—in theory, practice, and as indicated by survey responses from 75% of educators—LEAs should address barriers to attendance, including those that parents identified in survey responses.



Utah State Board of Education

Internal Audit Department

Attendance Audit

25-01

Report No. 25-01

Attendance Audit

May 1, 2025

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General Information and Disclosures

Authority and Direction

In accordance with Board Bylaws and Board Policy 2005, the Utah State Board of Education (Board):

- authorizes the Internal Audit Department (IAD) to perform internal audits, and
- prioritizes the internal audits to be completed.

Once approved by the Board, audits are included on an Audit Plan. IAD performs internal audits in priority order as resources are available.

Laws and Standards

Internal audits are conducted in conformance with the current Global Internal Audit Standards (Standards), consistent with Utah Code Annotated (Utah Code) and Utah Administrative Code (Board Rule). Laws and regulations of particular note specific to audit processes include:

- Utah Code 63I-5 *Utah Internal Audit Act*
- Board Rule R277-116 *Audit Procedure*

Records Classification and Distribution

The Board is a governmental entity and thus is subject to Utah Code 63G-2 *Government Records Access Management Act* (GRAMA). Pursuant to GRAMA, audit records that are in-process are protected records; however, once complete, audit records are generally public; thus, distribution is not limited.

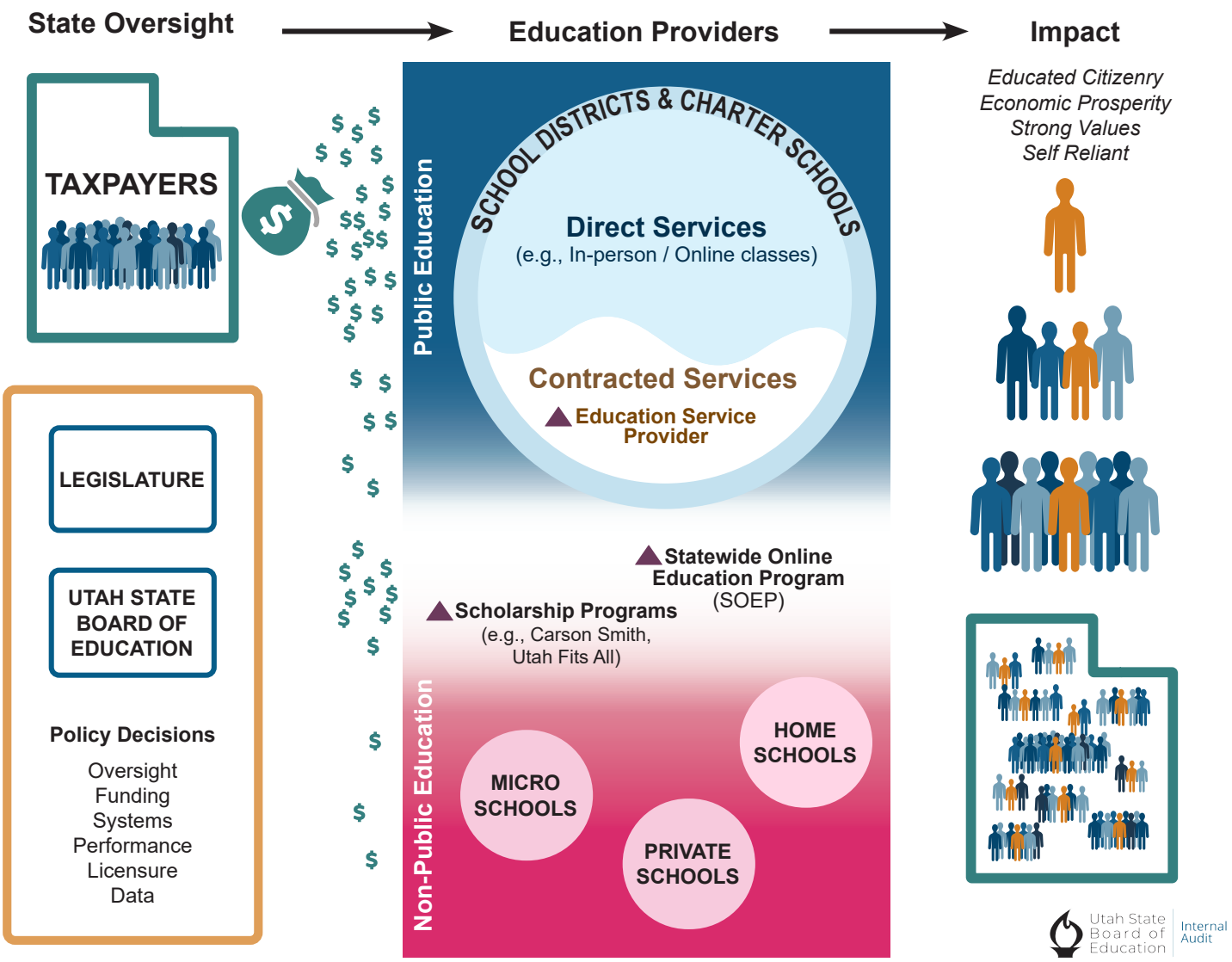
Introduction

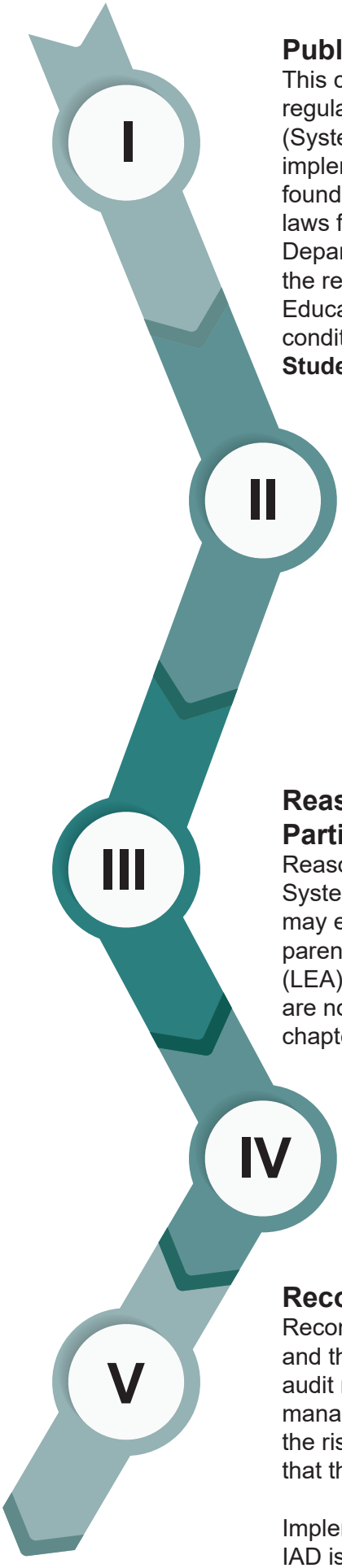
The **Introduction** briefly explains the format and presentation of the audit report. Observations made throughout the audit are reported in five chapters, including:

- The Public Education System (System)
- Student Participation in Education
- Reasons for the Current Conditions of the System and Student Participation
- Why it Matters
- Recommendations

For clarity and brevity, each chapter is comprised of parts, sections, and as applicable, subsections. Additionally, supplemental resources in **Appendices A – D** provide clarity related to the audit process, terminology, criteria, and sample and survey populations.

Utah's Education System





Public Education System

This chapter considers roles and responsibilities, as well as laws and regulations, related to student attendance in the public education system (System). Each part of the chapter is divided into three sections: design, implementation, and conclusion. Design outlines the relevant requirements found in state law, implementation provides examples of how the designed laws function in practice, and the conclusion is the opinion of the Internal Audit Department (IAD) based on observations from the prior sections and throughout the report. Subsequent chapters of the report under sections titled "Public Education System," provide additional insight about reasons for the current condition of the System and why it matters. It is also important to note that **II. Student Participation in Education** is the direct effect of the System.

Student Participation in Education

The second chapter is comprised of observations from various analyses that relate to student participation within the System. The chapter is divided into two parts, student enrollment and student attendance, which are the two components of student participation. **II. A. Student Enrollment** provides observations related to students' and parents' choice to enroll in the System. Whereas **II. B. Student Attendance** focuses on trends and observations related to students who are currently enrolled in the System. As in the previous chapter, subsequent chapters of the report under sections titled "Student Participation," provide additional insight about reasons for the current conditions of Student Participation and why it matters.

Reasons for the Current Conditions of the System and Student Participation

Reasons are provided to help policy makers and management within the System understand why the observations made in the previous two chapters may exist. Insights offered within the chapter are the result of surveys of parents, educators, and students; comments made by local education agencies (LEA) administrators, and observations made by the IAD. The reasons provided are not exhaustive and may relate to one or more observations in the previous chapters.

Why it Matters

This chapter is provided to help policymakers, and management within the System, understand why the identified observations and reasons for the current conditions of the System and Student Participation are important and what the implications are to taxpayers, policymakers, parents, and the System (e.g., student, educators, LEAs).

Recommendations

Recommendations consist of suggestions to mitigate the current conditions and the reasons for the current conditions (i.e., risks) noted throughout the audit report. Although recommendations are provided, it is the responsibility of management and the Board to understand the risks, assess the significance of the risks, and respond to the risks sufficiently to provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of the System will be achieved.

Implementing recommendations is not an internal audit requirement; however, IAD is required to follow-up and consider how risks have been addressed.

Data Disclaimer

Context

The two examples below reflect pervasive and egregious concerns with the reliability and validity of data in the public education system in recent years.

Example 1

The Data Reliability – Graduation and Student Data Internal Audit, released on November 2, 2023, noted:

> *III. F. Known Risks Associated with Data*
> *A scan of internal audits completed since 2018 reflects that* ***every audit completed has identified concerns with data/documentation*** *and internal control system components. For each audit, corrective action takes place to address the identified concerns.* ***However, the prevalence of data concerns and internal control system weaknesses is a significant risk.***

Section IV.B.2 of this report noted unreliable or invalid data for several fields related to attendance (e.g., days attended, student exit dates, excused absences, unexcused absences) at rates exceeding 50% for a significant majority of LEAs included in the sample.

Example 2

On September 6, 2024, the Board held a Study Session on Internal and External Audit Trends and Themes. The presentation indicated the following, based on a review of 92 internal and external audits:

> *A review of the audits from the past five years identified several recurring themes that influence how public education is being perceived, three of the most common include:*
> *1. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (i.e., Competency)*
> *2. Policies, Procedures, Processes*
> ***3. Quality Information (e.g., Data)***

Consideration of Known Data Concerns During the Attendance Audit

The aforementioned Data Reliability audit noted extremely significant rates of unreliable and invalid data related to attendance related data fields (e.g., days attended, absences); the degree of unreliability or invalidity for a data point depends on the data point in question. Therefore, to achieve the stated objective of the Attendance audit, auditor judgment was required to determine if and when data was sufficiently reliable to perform analyses. For example:

- Sampled data was typically normed to minimize inconsistencies between participating LEAs. In many instances data issues that were considered immaterial were eliminated from the analysis per auditor judgment.

- In other instances, data reported by LEAs that did not reconcile to data retained by the USBE was also eliminated.

- Finally, in instances where data was not machine readable, the Internal Audit Department (IAD) converted the data to a usable format where feasible; however, not all instances were reasonable given the limited resources of the IAD.

Thus, throughout the audit report, references to populations and samples are frequently made to ensure transparency. Specific to survey results, **Appendix D** is also included to increase transparency through accurate and complete respondent populations and rates.

In summary, considerable effort was made to increase the likelihood that all analyses reported herein are reliable; however, given the problematic nature of the data, not all students or LEAs are included in all analyses, populations or samples. Furthermore, even with great care, there is a probability that inaccuracies or inconsistences exist.

However, given the nature of this audit is to provide persuasive—not necessarily conclusive—analyses for policy-making consideration, it is our opinion that work performed for this audit and the results included in this report, are adequate to meet the objective. Regardless, the use of education data related to student attendance is questionable, the use of it without additional considerations is potentially negligent.

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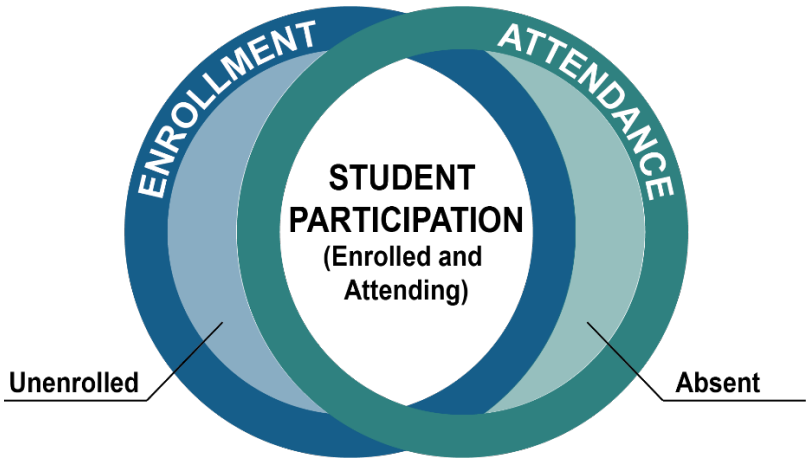
I. The Public Education System

The factors below are related to student attendance, which provide necessary context prior to discussing student participation within the public education system (System). The following diagram illustrates what is meant by student participation, which for purposes of this report, is the consideration of both student enrollment in a program and student attendance to that enrollment.



A. Roles and Responsibilities

The System is comprised of several parties, all reliant upon each other, each with responsibilities to ensure the System achieves the vision and mission (Utah Code 53E-2-301) outlined for the taxpayers who subsidize it.

1. Design

(a) Legislature

The Utah constitution establishes the basis for the System. According to Article X, "The Legislature (i.e., representatives of the People) shall provide for the establishment and maintenance of the state's education systems including: (a) the public education system, which shall be open to all children of the state." Article X, Section 2 continues that "The public education system shall include all public elementary and secondary schools and such other schools and programs as the Legislature may designate." Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Legislature to establish, maintain, and in some cases designate, what constitutes the System. The Legislature does this by establishing expectations within Utah Code and by appropriating funds to support schools and programs of the System. In general, expectations related to public education are contained within three titles of Utah Code, 1) Public Education System -- State Administration (53E), 2) Public Education System – Funding (53F), and 3) Public Education System -- Local Administration (53G).

(b) State Board of Education

Although the Legislature possesses a responsibility related to the design of the System, it does not have sole responsibility. Article X, Section 3 of the Utah Constitution creates the

establishment of the State Board of Education (Board) and vests “general control and supervision of the public education system” therein. The Board provides general control and supervision by:

- complying with state administration requirements in Utah Code,
- establishing additional clarifying expectations within Board Rule, as necessary,
- allocating and distributing funds to public education entities (e.g., Local Education Agencies (LEAs)) and supporting entities, and
- providing oversight of the System.

The Board is supported by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) agency, which carries out the daily requirements of state administration.

(c) Local Education Agencies

As noted above, the final title in Utah Code related to the System is local administration wherein LEAs are created. Traditionally, LEAs were limited to brick-and-mortar schools within school districts; however, over the last few decades other alternatives have been established. For example, public charter schools were introduced in 1998 to “enhance school choice, meet unique needs of Utah families, and encourage innovation within the public education system” (Utah Code 53G-5-104). As innovation has been encouraged, other alternatives have emerged to provide education locally and statewide, including:

- educational service provides (ESPs),
- statewide online schools (e.g., Statewide Online Education Program [SOEP]), and
- publicly funded options for homeschool and private school (e.g., Carson Smith, Utah Fits All).

LEAs are tasked with working directly with Utah families in delivering the anticipated outcomes of the System. To carry out its responsibilities, local administration creates policies and procedures as required by Utah Code and Board Rule; however, according to Utah Code, local administrations are guaranteed “autonomy, flexibility, and client choice”, while being held accountable for results (Utah Code 53E-2-301).

(d) Parents and Students

Although a System has been created and roles and responsibilities have been assigned, it is ultimately the responsibility of the student and the parent to choose whether they will engage in the System. Both the Legislature and the Board have clarified that a parent is “primarily responsible for a child's education and has the constitutional right to determine which aspects of public education the child participates in...” (Board Rule R277-404-7(2)(a) and Utah Code 53E-2-301(3)). When a parent and student choose to engage in the System, students are encouraged to be adequately prepared to learn (Utah Code 53E-2-301(3)).

2. Implementation

(a) State Board of Education

The Board implements the System designed in Utah Code passed by the Legislature, by enacting Board Rules. One Board Rule corresponding to student attendance is R277-419 *Pupil Accounting*. To better understand these requirements, a comprehensive review of R277-419 *Pupil Accounting* was completed and the following concerns with defined terms and policy points were found.

(i) Defined terms

- Defined terms are confusing. For example,
    - “learner validated enrollment measurement” applies to both an “attendance validated program” and a “learner validated program;” however, the use of “learner validated” as a program as well as an enrollment measurement may be misinterpreted as not applying to an attendance validated program, and
    - “learner validated enrollment measurement” as used in R277-419 is a measurement of membership, not enrollment as the name suggests.
- Defined terms are not always used consistently throughout the Board Rule; instead, synonymous expressions or related words are used. For example,
    - “school” vs “public school,” or
    - ““school day” means a day where an LEA provides educational services to students subject to the requirements described in R277-419-4.” Additionally, students likely should be referred to as “eligible students;” consistent with the defined term, not just students.
- Defined terms are not always used consistently with definitions in R277-100 *Definitions for Utah State Board of Education (Board) Rules.* For example, R277-419 also defines the terms “program” and “school;” however, the terms are inconsistent with R277-100.
- Defined terms are not always used in alignment with the body of the Board Rule or vice versa. For example:
    - ““Eligible student” means a student who satisfies the criteria for enrollment in an LEA, set forth in R277-419-5”; however, R277-419-5 does not specify criteria for enrollment—it specifies requirements to “generate membership”.
    - R277-419-5(3)(c) indicates that a requirement to generate membership is that a student “does not have unexcused absences, which are determined using one of the learner validated enrollment measurements…”. However, based on the definition of “unexcused absence,” this term can only apply to attendance validated programs given the student must not be “physically present at school” to be considered “unexcused.”
    - R277-419-3(1)(c) is unnecessary and appears contradictory given that to meet the definition of “school” as defined in R277-419-2, you must have educators and at least one administrator.
    - R277-419-5(4)(b)(i)-(iii) outlines learner validated enrollment measurement requirements for a learner validated program. However, R277-419-5(4)(c) does not align membership in a learner validated program with the aforementioned learner validated enrollment membership requirement. Instead, membership in a learner validated program is based on “if the LEA has engaged with the student during the prior ten days.”
- Defined terms sometimes include unnecessary language. For example, in the definition of “attendance validated program”: “Program within an LEA” is redundant, since a "Program" has to be in a "school" and a “school” has to be governed by an "LEA."
- Some terms are not defined and should either be defined for clarity or not used. For example:
    - What does “enrolled” mean? (R277-419-2(3) and R277-419-3(2)(a))
    - What are “minimum standards”? (R277-419-4(4))
    - What is a “full” school day? (R277-419-4(6)(b) and R277-419-2(30)

- What is “instructional time” and how is it calculated; is it the same as time (e.g., “total clock hours”) providing “educational services”? (R277-419-4(6)(e) and R277-419-2(7))
- What is “learner validated membership” and “enrollment status”; and are these the same? (R277-419-5(4)(b)(i))

(ii) Policy Points

The purpose of R277-419 *Pupil Accounting*, as outlined in R277-419-2(2) is: “…to specify pupil accounting procedures used in apportioning and distributing state funds for education.” Apportioning and distributing state funds is done based on generated membership, which is a product of eligible student enrollment and attendance related data. The purpose of this Board Rule is not to designate requirements related to enrollment or attendance, including related data.

While membership, enrollment, and attendance have points of intersection, they are not the same. Including these concepts in one Board Rule, without sufficient purpose, organization, and principles of style (i.e., consistency, simplicity, and clarity) may be confusing. Therefore, discussion and consideration of policymaking related to attendance from information derived from R277-419 (e.g., absenteeism, including chronic absenteeism), may be inappropriately based on membership (i.e., funding) data, not attendance data.

With the exception of Career and Technical Education, if R277-419 was followed with fidelity, it appears only students in grades 9-12 in a public-school program can generate membership (R277-419-2(29)(e)), eliminating from membership students who participate in grades K-8, as well as third-party programs (e.g., Educational Service Providers (ESPs)). Additionally, funding based on membership may also be unequal because attendance validated program and learner validated program requirements are not necessarily equivalent.

Finally, by design, LEAs have a financial incentive to retain students, not necessarily to educate them; in other words, LEAs get paid for membership, not student learning or student participation.

(b) <u>Local Education Agencies</u>

LEAs implement the designed System by complying with state law passed by the Legislature and enacted by the Board. Within a sample of 16 LEAs, we noted several examples of confusion, contradictions, or noncompliance. For example,

- District school boards are required to issue annual certificates to excuse students from compulsory education attendance after certain provisions are met (Utah Code 53G-6-204). Only one (17%) district provided annual certificates for review, which review showed the district sent the certificates a month after the deadline. Although the requirement to send certificates only pertains to districts, 30% of charters in the sample expressed confusion regarding their responsibility to exit students from the System and to send certificates.
- LEA policies lack, or do not properly define, terms related to student participation at the following rates:
    - absent (50%),
    - a valid excuse (50%),

    - truancy (19%),
    - chronic absenteeism (81%), and
    - suspension (44%).
- LEA policies are outdated; 63% of sampled LEAs had attendance and discipline policies and procedures that still referenced Utah Code 53A, which has been superseded for over five years.
- Thirteen percent of LEA policies contained internal inconsistencies.
- Finally, 25% of sampled LEA policies required documentation from a medical professional to validate an excused absence for an illness at the time of review, which is contrary to Utah Code.
    - Additionally, during conversations with LEAs, one individual stated their LEA requires a doctor's note even though LEA policy cites to Utah Code 53G-6-201 that specifically states an illness may be excused regardless of whether a parent provides documentation from a medical professional.

(c) Parents and Students

Parents and students engage in the designed System by participating in and with implemented state law passed by the Legislature and enacted by the Board, and policies and procedures developed and implemented by LEAs.

That said, many parents do not understand what is included in public education. For example, out of 484 parents who indicated they unenrolled their student(s) from public education, 30% identified a charter school as the non-public education entity they chose as an alternative to public education, even though charter schools are public schools. Examples of parent confusion regarding the publicness of nontraditional schools include:

- *"We did 2 years of [a public] online school while the covid virus was still a worry for us, but have been back to public education for the last 2 1/2 years."*
- *"One of my children is in charter school and has never attended public school. One of my children in public school plans to attend a charter school next year. Which will mean I am no longer affiliated with public school after this year."*
- *"We pulled one of our kids to attend a charter school and they still attend. We never enrolled them again in public education."*
- *"Both children were in charter. This was the wrong fit. Public school has been awesome after the charter experience."*

Within a sample of 16 LEAs, 19% of LEA contacts made unsolicited comments consistent with the observation above.

- One charter school contact stated, *"Many of our parents state their reasons for enrolling at [our LEA] were to get away from 'public education.' They don't realize we ARE a public school."*
- One district contact stated, *"Many families do not understand that the Charter School in which they attend is still a 'public' school…"*
- One other district contact stated, *"I do not think parents really understand what homeschool is: Online instruction received at home from the local school is not homeschool; Online charter schooling taken at home is not homeschool…"*

3. Conclusion

Confusion, contradictions, and lack of clarity are becoming the hallmarks of the evolving System. As the System become more complex, implementation becomes more challenging, and confusion, dysfunction, and noncompliance become more common. One LEA contact commented that their staff was not allowed to seek clarification from the USBE without prior approval for fear noncompliance would be discovered in the process.

The more dysfunctional the System becomes, the more likely taxpayers who fund the System in pursuit of the goal of an “educated citizenry” (Utah Code 53E-2-301), and parents and students who participate in the System will grow dissatisfied.

B. Education Program Types

1. Design

State law is designed to incentivize LEAs to provide both traditional and nontraditional programs (e.g., Utah Code 53F-5-502 (2)). Traditional programs are brick-and-mortar schools where students physically attend in classrooms and receive direct instruction from an educator (R277-419-5). Nontraditional programs include distance or online learning, blended learning (i.e., combination of a traditional and nontraditional program), competency-based learning, or other formats that do not meet the definition of a traditional program. Board Rule refers to the two different programs as “attendance validated program” (i.e., traditional) and “learner validated program” (i.e., nontraditional) (see definitions in R277-419-2).

The major difference between the two programs is student control of learning. In an attendance validated program, the program is provided, and students are generally expected to attend and participate as directed. In the case of learner validated programs, students generally have more control over the “time, place, path, and pace” with which the program is completed. Nontraditional programs can be available “anywhere” or “anytime” and “students are empowered daily to make important decisions about the student’s learning experiences (Utah Code 53F-5-501).” The level and type of control the student or parent has, depends on the learner validated program.

To ensure proper oversight, including distribution of funds, LEAs are required to:

- identify which programs they offer and establish an associated learner validated enrollment measurement (i.e., the methodology used to establish student enrollment and used to measure student participation),
- communicate clear expectations to students interested in participating in their programs,
- include the enrollment status of all students by program type (e.g., attendance validated program) in their student information system (SIS), and
- provide the enrollment status by program type to the USBE.

This process ensures clear expectations are also created, implemented, and communicated to all parties involved in the oversight of the student.

2. Implementation

To consider LEA implementation of the designed education program types, information at a sample of LEAs was reviewed. Within the sample of 16 LEAs, 15 LEAs reported providing attendance validated programs, while one provided a learner validated program. Of the 15, one (6%) LEA reported that 100% of their students have an attendance-validated enrollment status; however, upon reviewing the data and inquiring with LEA administration, 267 of 724 (37%) students have at least one day where the student participates from the student’s home, and 217 (30%) students participate from home at least half their time.

In contrast, a separate LEA in the sample reported using an “online attendance” code to designate when students cannot attend school (e.g., bad asthma) but log into Google Meet to

complete coursework. If the LEA makes contact with the student, the student is marked as present, otherwise it is marked as an absence. The school is also listed as having 100% of its students with an attendance-validated enrollment status.

3. Conclusion

State law incentivizes LEAs to provide both traditional and nontraditional programs and how LEAs implement the requirements varies drastically. LEA's level of compliance with the complex requirements related to education program types also varies.

For example, in the first scenario above, the LEA is clearly enrolling students in blended learning programs, but incorrectly reporting the enrollment status, as attendance validated. Whereas in the second scenario, the LEA is enrolling students in an attendance validated program. Although the attendance validated program allows for online learning for the occasional sickness, the LEA is still verifying the student's status through attendance and appropriately reporting the enrollment status as attendance validated.

C. School Year

1. Design

The school year is the product of policy decisions made at the Legislative, Board, and LEA levels. The Legislature requires that the minimum school program for districts and charters must "include the equivalent of a school term of nine months" (Utah Code 53F-2-102) (i.e., approximately 187 business days, not including federal holidays); however, the Legislature defers to the Board to determine what the equivalent of nine months means. The Board defines the "equivalent" in terms of school days (i.e., a day wherein an LEA provides educational services to students). Currently, LEAs are required to provide educational services over a minimum of 180 school days (R277-419-4(1)(a)). However, the following state law allow LEAs to reallocate school days included in the 180-day count:

- 53F-2-102(4)(d) allows a reallocation of up to 32 instructional hours or four school days for educator preparation time or educator professional development days, and
- R277-419-4(6)(b) allows a reallocation of the equivalent of three full school days for parent/educator conferences.

To comply with the requirements, LEAs must offer no less than 180 school days with a minimum of 173 student instructional days. LEAs then have the flexibility to choose how they will implement the established expectations, including the calendar day that the school year begins, whether or not to reallocate school days as allowed in state law, when to include breaks, and so forth. LEAs are also required to include adequate contingency school days in the LEA's school year to "avoid the necessity of requesting a waiver except in the most extreme circumstances" (R277-419-4(5)).

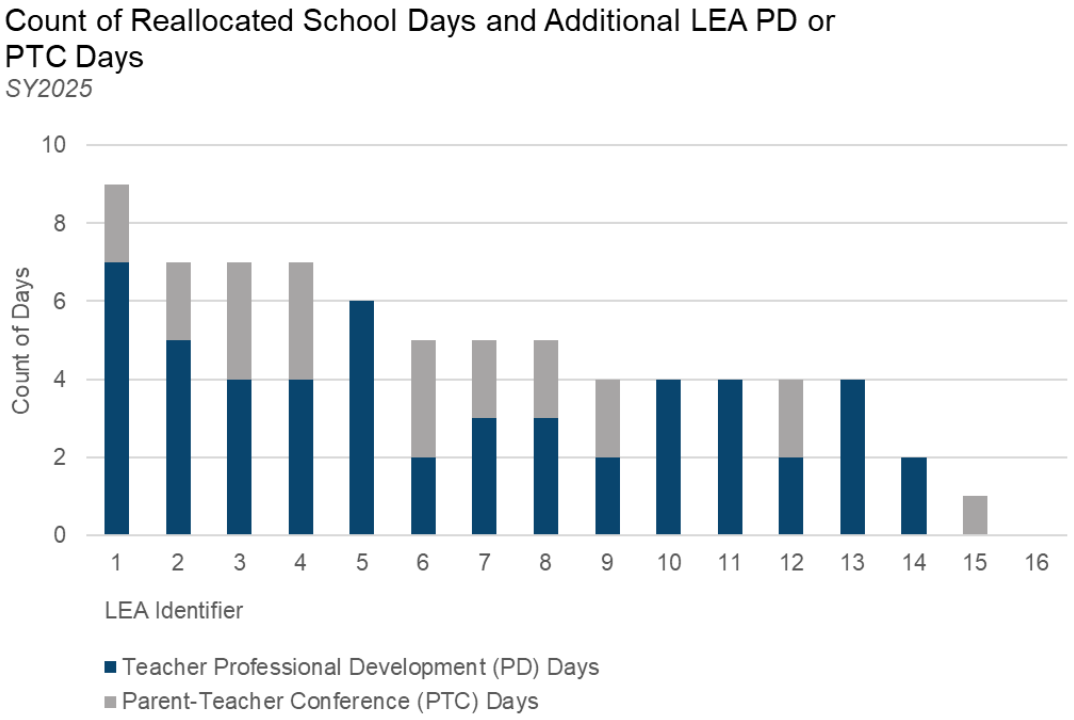
2. Implementation

(a) <u>180-Day Compliance</u>

Sixteen LEA school calendars were reviewed to analyze compliance with the designed school year requirements. Of the 16 LEAs, 25% did not schedule the minimum 180 school days in SY2024; in SY2025, 38% did not, an increase from the prior year.

Similarly, several LEAs in the sample also did not provide the minimum 173 required student instructional days. Of the 16 LEAs, 13% did not provide the 173 instructional days; in SY2025, 19% did not, an increase from the prior year.

LEAs account for the reallocation of educator development days and parent/educator conference days differently. Combined, these provisions entitle LEAs to reallocate up to seven student days. However, not all LEAs take advantage of the opportunity to reallocate all seven days and some LEAs schedule additional educator development and parent/educator conference days, though those days cannot be counted toward the 180-day requirement. The chart below identifies the differences in the LEA allocation of professional development and parent/educator conference days for SY2025.



While reviewing the school calendars of LEAs in the sample, other concerns were identified. For example:

- For one LEA that did not meet the 180-day requirement for both school years, the LEA identified on its school calendar a “Last day for seniors” that occurred a week prior to the last school day for the rest of the students.
- In a sample of 15 LEAs who serve school meals, 6 (40%) held modified school days (i.e., early out) that released students prior to regularly scheduled lunch times. This practice may comply with federal National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provisions but does not meet meal provision requirements in R277-419-4(1)(b), which may impact the count of school days to meet the 180-day requirement and disproportionately impact students of a lower socio-economic status. For example, one LEA in SY2024 had a total of 176 school days; however, the LEA did not serve lunch on 46 days, therefore potentially decreasing the total number of school days to 130, which is 50 days short of the 180-day requirement.

(b) Exceptions

Another example of an impact on the provision of educational services during the school year, is the use of contingency days and waivers. Although Board Rule allows for waivers of Board Rule, waivers are considered the exception, not the standard.

(i) Contingency Days

LEAs are required to include contingency days within their school calendar to mitigate the need for a waiver of the 180-day requirement due to emergencies (e.g., snow day). However, for SY2025, 10 (62%) LEAs in the sample indicated they consider contingency days optional and do not schedule contingency days on their school calendar. Seven (70%) of these LEAs consider online learning an adequate replacement; however, this does not take into

consideration specific student populations like students with special needs, nor events that may impact a students' ability to use remote learning such as internet outages, earthquakes, data breaches, or other man-made or natural disasters. In addition, students may not have equal access to the internet during emergency closures, especially students of a lower socio-economic status.

Because contingency days are not always included in the school year calendar, some LEAs request waivers that impact the number of school days offered. For example, in May of 2022, one LEA requested a waiver of the 180-day requirement due to an emergency weather-related closure that occurred at the beginning of the school year (i.e., August). The weather-related closure lasted for only one day. Although waivers are allowed, in this case the USBE did not retain any evidence demonstrating that a waiver was necessary instead of using a required contingency day, nor was there evidence the waiver was ever approved by the Superintendent.

(ii) Waivers

During SY2021 through SY2025, 15 LEAs received a combined total of 27 waivers of the 180-day requirement for at least one school within the LEA; 26 (96%) waivers spanned multiple years. In SY2021, all seven approved waivers had at least one alternative compliance requirement considering equivalency with the 180-day (e.g., 990 instructional hour) requirement to minimize the potential negative impact on the educational process caused by the waiver. Whereas, in SY2025, none of the seven approved waivers identified an alternate compliance requirement considering equivalency with the 180-day requirement.

Therefore, when reviewing the differences in school days provided by LEAs in consideration of waivers for SY2025, students may receive as few as 147 school days each school year, a difference of 33 school days from the required 180 school days, with potentially no assurance that the impact on the education process has been mitigated. If waivers are not considered, the difference between the minimum and maximum number of school days in the sample of 16 LEAs for SY2025 was nine school days or approximately two-weeks of educational services.

3. Conclusion

Although a standard school year is established to ensure students receive adequate instruction over the school year, in practice this does not always occur. Instead, as identified above, the required number of school days for students are being lost to legal definitions, legal reallocations for purposes other than student learning, LEA noncompliance, or the potential misuse or overuse of contingencies and waivers. Providing educational services over fewer school days may result in disproportionately overfunding LEAs and under educating students, which may also disproportionately impact students of lower socioeconomic status.

D. School Day

1. Design

Utah Code defines a school day as, “the portion of a day that school is in session in which a school-age child is required to be in school for purposes of receiving instruction (Utah Code 53G-6-201(8)). Board Rule defines a school day as, “a day where an LEA provides educational services to students (R277-419-2(30)). As noted above, Board Rule stipulates that an LEA must provide a minimum of 180 school days; however, neither definition creates a standard for how long a school day must be to count toward the 180-day requirement.

Historically, a school day for a student in grades 1-12 was defined as “a minimum of four hours per day” (R277-419-2 (30), superseded on 9/25/2020). To achieve the previously required 990 instructional hours within the 180-day requirement, which is also no longer required, LEAs had to average providing services over five hours per day. Previous regulations allowed for the inclusion of recess in their count of instructional hours, but not lunch or class transitions. LEAs are still required to approve total instructional time in an open meeting (R277-419-4(8)), though the purpose is not clear considering instructional time is not a requirement for a school day. Instead, for an LEA to count a school day toward the 180-day requirement, a school day must contain two things (with the exception of reallocated school days discussed above):

- educational services (R277-419-2(30)), and
- school meals (i.e., breakfast and lunch), provided the LEA participates in the NSLP (R277-419-4(b)(i) and (Utah Code53G-9-205)).

Educational services are defined as “learning opportunities and services designed to support a student to be prepared to succeed and lead by having the knowledge and skills to learn, engage civically, and lead meaningful lives…” (R277-419-2(7)). Although all school days are required to include educational services, not all educational services are equal, meaning under the current definition a day spent at an amusement park or athletic event and a day spent learning traditional academic subjects are the same.

2. Implementation

Sixteen LEAs were sampled to gain a better understanding of what may constitute a school day using current standards. To analyze current standards, the use of historical metrics was used, which provides a simple way to identify what changes may have occurred over time. Given attendance validated and learner validated programs are different, analysis of the two program types were conducted separately.

(a) <u>Attendance Validated Program</u>

In the sample, 15 LEAs operated attendance validated programs; of these LEAs, eight (53%) calculated instructional hours on an annual basis, the remaining only tracked membership days. Based on bell schedules for the 15 sampled LEAs, the following average length of a school day

(i.e., hours from start of school to end of school) was identified. Due to the differences between schools, the minimum and maximum length of each type of school day were also identified:

School Day	Regular schedule	Early Out schedule	Other alternate schedule (e.g., late start, half day)
Average Length	6:41	4:41	4:46
Minimum Length	6:00	1:19	2:58
Maximum Length	7:40	5:55	6:10

While on average, most school days within the attendance validated programs ranged between four hours and 41 minutes to six hours and 41 minutes, some school days lasted no more than an hour and 19 minutes—this was not for kindergarten.

How much of the scheduled school day was spent in a classroom depends on the school type; however, in general, schools require time to transition students between classrooms and providing lunch and recess. The following tables represent how some of the school day is spent other than classroom time. In the case of class transitions and recess, multiple events (i.e., two recesses), are consolidated to calculate the overall average.

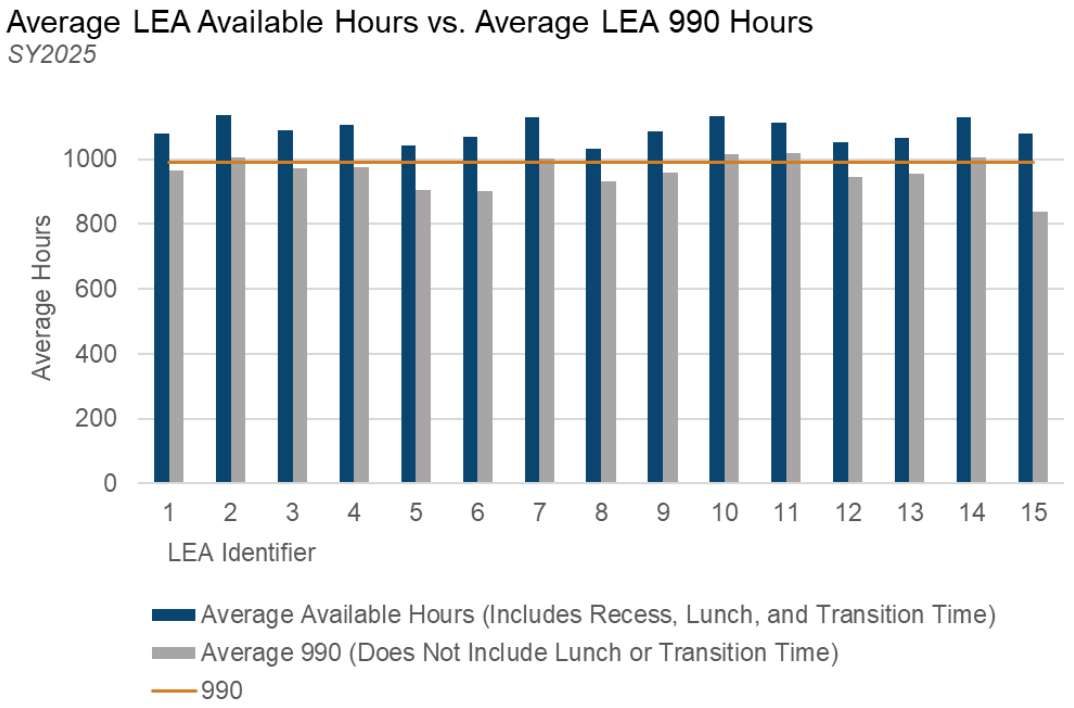
Lunch	Regular schedule	Early Out schedule	Other alternate schedule (e.g., late start, half day)
Average Length	0:35	0:34	0:32
Minimum Length	0:20	0:10	0:20
Maximum Length	1:10	1:10	0:55

Class Transitions	Regular schedule	Early Out schedule	Other alternate schedule (e.g., late start, half day)
Average Length	0:21	0:20	0:16
Minimum Length	0:10	0:12	0:10
Maximum Length	0:40	0:30	0:24

Recess	Regular schedule	Early Out schedule
Average Length	0:22	0:16
Minimum Length	0:10	0:10
Maximum Length	1:15	1:15

For LEAs who still calculate instructional hours, how instructional hours is calculated varies. For example, out of 15 LEAs, 33% reported including all breaks (i.e., class transitions, recess, and lunch) in instructional hours, whereas 40% included none of the breaks in instructional hours.

If only recess breaks are included in a calculation of instructional hours, as was previously allowed in R277-419, only 33% of the LEAs in the sample would currently be providing an average of 990 instructional hours or more.



The educational services a student engages in may vary as well. For example:

- One LEA allows students to engage with their families in a “parent educational activity.” The activity is not supervised or approved by the school or the student’s educators in advance; however, the LEA considers the activity a school day.
- Another LEA excused students in grades 10 and 12, asking them to stay home, on the day the ACT was administered to grade 11 students. The day the ACT was administered was included on the school calendar and counted toward the 180-day requirement, even though the LEA knew many students would receive no educational services on that school day.

Whether spending an unapproved day with parents or not going to school at all, students who did not receive educational services were marked present.

Furthermore, there are days filled with educational services that may be perceived as entertainment at the expense of the taxpayer as opposed to instruction. One school administrator commented that the pressure to keep Lagoon Day is so great they could lose their job if they stopped it.

LEAs with attendance validated programs are also likely to participate in the NSLP. Thirteen of the 15 (87%) sampled LEAs participate in the NSLP and are required by R277-419 to serve school meals for each day that contributes to the 180 school days. Of those that participate, 31% did not provide lunch on at least one of the days during SY2024 and SY2025. Within the four (31%) LEAs, 11 of 182 (6%) schools offered lunch at the end of the day, after all classes had been released, on early out Fridays or minimum school day schedules.

(b) Learner Validated Program

One LEA in the sample provided a learner validated program. The LEA maintains a policy that states that the school will provide 990 instructional hours over the course of each school year as required by Board Rule. However, as previously noted, the 990 instructional hour requirement was removed.

The policy also states that the LEA is not subject to the 180-day requirement; instead, it requires students to "log in regularly and at a minimum of once a week." Students who log in once a week are considered present for the week (i.e., one log in can equal five school days). Because students are allowed to work at their own pace, and everyone's pace is different, instructional hours are tracked by the course. If a course is anticipated to take 100 hours to complete, a student is awarded 100 hours upon completion, even if it took fewer (e.g., 50) hours.

3. Conclusion

With the recent removal of instructional hour standards related to school days, LEAs have ultimate flexibility in scheduling for school days; however, with ultimate flexibility comes ultimate inconsistency.

Although many LEAs are still providing a school day similar to historical precedent, precedent is slowly being replaced with shorter days, fewer instructional hours, and questionable or even no educational services. Parties, yearbook signing, competitive athletics, and activities like Lagoon Day are so entrenched in public education that many schools feel immense pressure to include them as "educational services." Given every school day, whether an hour long or eight hours long, is considered equal, the 180-day requirement has been rendered ineffective in determining whether students are being provided high quality instruction to meet standards established to achieve the student and System objectives of public education funded by taxpayers.

E. Participation Metrics

1. Design

Board Rule requires LEAs to track student participation, which includes a "minimum of one attendance check each school day" (R277-419-8(5)). This is typically done by tracking student presence or absence in enrolled programs or courses by school day; however, what constitutes an attendance check and how LEAs track student participation may vary depending on the program type.

(a) Enrollment Measurements

R277-419 requires LEAs to identify and specify learner validated enrollment measurements for all program types; see **I.A.2 Defined Terms** and **Policy Points** related to these measurements. The purpose of these measurements is to identify student membership for funding purposes.

- Attendance Validated Program: The learner validated enrollment measure for LEAs with attendance validated programs is typically to track student participation by the course, meaning classroom educators track student absences and tardies.
- Learner Validated Program: Membership for LEAs with a learner validated program is based on LEA engagement "with the student during the prior ten consecutive school days." However, Board rule also requires LEAs who establish a learner validated program to "adopt a written policy that designates a learner validated enrollment measurement" and to "document each student's continued enrollment status in compliance with the … policy at least once every 10 consecutive school days (R277-419-5(4)). Although a learner validated enrollment measurement can be anything, Board Rule provides some examples, including a minimum student login, required periodic contact with an educator, a minimum hourly requirement, or required timelines to complete assignments (R277-419-5(6)).

Regardless of the program type or learner validated enrollment measurement used, all LEAs are required to report absences, with and without a valid excuse, separately to the Superintendent (R277-607-3 (2)). Reported absences are reported to the USBE by the day, not by the course, which is in part to support membership and the distribution of funds.

LEAs utilize their student information systems (SIS) to record student attendance (e.g., excused and unexcused absences) on a student-by-student basis. In general, LEAs pre-program their SIS with the school days within the school year. By default, some SISs mark the student as present, and absences are then manually entered in the SIS. For LEAs who do more than one attendance check per day, daily attendance is representative of the majority of the student's attendance. For example, if a student is enrolled in seven courses and attends four, the student is considered present for the day (Utah Code 53G-6-201(11)).

(b) Excused and Unexcused absences

To determine whether an absence was valid (i.e., excused) or not (i.e., unexcused), Utah Code provides some clarification. Examples of valid excuses include illness, mental or behavioral health, family death, an approved school activity, a scheduled family event, or a proactive visit to a health care provider (Utah Code 53G-6-201(13)). However, in the event of a scheduled family event or a proactive visit to a health care provider, the parent must submit a request at least one

school day before the scheduled absence, and the student agrees to make up the missed work (Utah Code 53G-6-83). LEAs also have discretion to establish any other excuse (e.g., extended absence (Utah Code 53G-6-205) as valid (Utah Code 53G-6-201(13)(a)(vii)).

Utah Code also provides clarification on what a valid excuse is not. A valid excuse "does not mean a parent acknowledgment of an absence for a reason other than a reason described in [law]," unless an LEA establishes parent acknowledgement as a valid excuse. Days where absences are recorded but a valid excuse is not provided are marked as unexcused absences in the SIS; otherwise, it is just an absence. A student who is absent 10 consecutive days is removed from the LEAs membership (R277-419-45 (4)), which is not to say that a student is unenrolled. Generally, a student who misses 10% or more of days enrolled, for any reason (i.e., valid or invalid) is considered chronically absent (R277-607-2(1)).

R277-419-2 (38)) requires "evidence of a legitimate or valid excuse in accordance with local board policy …" to substantiate a valid excused absence, though the Board Rule does not clarify the level of evidence required and which absences require evidence. However, Utah Code does not permit LEAs to require documentation (i.e., evidence) in the case of mental or physical illness (Utah Code 53G-6-205).

Finally, the definition of being tardy appears to be left to LEA discretion, as it is not defined in state law.

2. Implementation:

To consider how state law related to student participation was implemented, absence data from 16 LEAs was reviewed, the following observations were made.

One LEA within the sample selected offers a learner validated program. To meet the daily attendance-check requirement, the LEA performs a login review each week (i.e., their learner validated enrollment measurement). If a student did not log in during the weekly review (i.e., not making any course progress or any contact with the LEA), the LEA starts tracking the non-attendance. Once the student returns to participate, the LEA manually calculates how many school days the student was absent for and provides the number to the USBE as unexcused absences. No documentation exists to support the final determination made and reported to the USBE.

Other practices that raised questions related to data validity were also identified. Of the 16 sampled LEAs in SY2024:

- 11 (69%) reported student absences on calendar days that, per the LEA school calendar, school was not in session (i.e., not a school day [breaks]).
- 2 (13%) overstated their attendance by not properly programming their SIS to exclude holidays and other non-school days, which resulted in one LEA reporting students being absent on the weekend.
- 1 (6%) reported course enrollment and attendance for the full year in their SIS, regardless of whether a student dropped a course mid-year. For example, if a student registered for seven courses for semester one and dropped the seventh course in semester two, the SIS reports the student as in-attendance for the seventh course

throughout semester two. This concern may apply to as many as 11 of 292 (4%) students in grades 7-9.

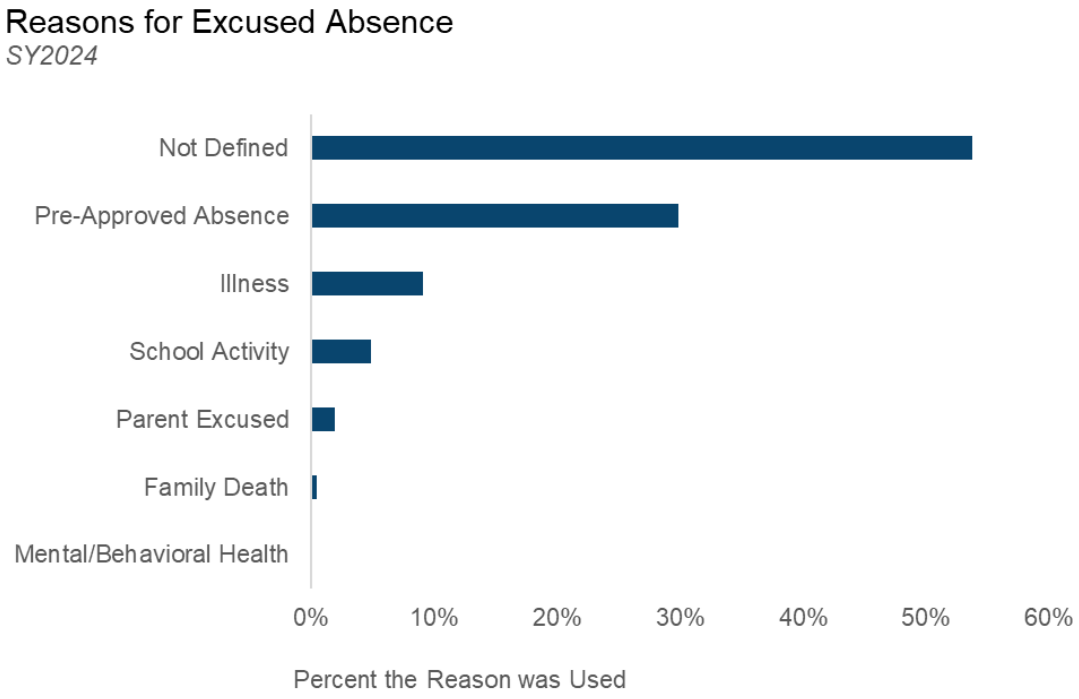
- 11 (69%) do not consider school activities an excused absence; instead, students are marked as present or in-attendance while participating in school activities. This may be questionable depending on the school activity (i.e., field trips vs. athletics (participant vs. spectator)).
- 1 (6%) was unable to provide an accurate report of enrollment (i.e., the programs or courses the student signed up for) or attendance (i.e., what the student actually participated in) for each student. The LEA reported that they offer thirteen class periods to students throughout the day, however, as the SIS they currently use has a class period limitation of 10 classes, this does not allow them to accurately track student enrollment or attendance in their SIS.

When absences are tracked, the reason for the absence may not be well documented. For 54% (615,380) of documented absences reviewed, LEAs did not document any reason; instead, only choosing to indicate that the absence is excused. Four of 16 (25%) LEAs do not require parents to provide any reason to excuse an absence and instead accept parents' acknowledgment. Of the LEAs included in the sample, 100% did not include all the valid reasons why an absence may be excused within their data. Specifically, LEAs do not track exact reasons for excused absences at the rates shown below:

- illness, either mental or physical (63%),
- mental or behavioral health (94%),
- family death (88%),
- individualized education program or Section 504 accommodation (88%),
- pre-approved absence (e.g., family vacation) (31%), and
- approved school activity (25%).

LEAs did track some additional reasons for absences not specifically listed as a valid excuse in state law but subject to their purview (e.g., religious events, court-required absences, cleared by the LEA).

When a reason for an absence was documented, the most (30%) commonly used reason for absence was pre-approved absences (e.g., vacations, family events, etc.).



LEAs interpretation and implementation of policies and procedures for tardies also lack clarity and consistency. Thirteen of 16 (81%) LEA policies do not define what it means to be tardy. However, those that do include a definition in LEA policy refer to a “tardy bell,” and students who are not in their assigned classroom or seat will be marked as tardy. One LEA bluntly stated they do not track student tardies with fidelity.

3. Conclusion

LEAs are exercising the legal authority granted to them by the Legislature and the Board to determine if an absence is valid or not and how an absence is documented. However, in many cases the result is an inability to verify or validate whether the absence data reported is accurate or reliable. Given the notable discrepancies, and variations from LEA to LEA included in their policies and practices, any analysis of existing absence data is suspect. Any determination or decision based on aggregate student participation data should be questioned.

F. Compulsory Education

1. Design

Policy, program types, school years, school days, and metrics do not have great meaning without students. One major component of the taxpayer funded System is a requirement for school aged (i.e., 5-17 years of age) students to participate (Utah Code 53G-6-203(1)), unless they are excused from public education for a different education alternative by parents. The requirement for school aged students to participate is referred to as compulsory education.

The primary purpose of compulsory education is to ensure all students receive a basic education, which promotes economic prosperity, social cohesion, citizenship, and accountability to taxpayers. For these reasons, parents and students, are strongly encouraged to participate in the System or, if not excused according to Utah Code, to face criminal or administrative penalties (Utah Code 53G-6 Part 2).

As the main provider of public education, LEAs are responsible to ensure compulsory education is implemented with fidelity. For purposes of compulsory education:

- in an attendance validated program, truancy is equal to being absent without a valid excuse for “half the school day;” and
- in a learner validated program, truancy is the relevant amount of time under the LEA’s policy regarding their continuing enrollment measure (Utah Code 53G-6-201).

Thus, Utah Code refers to a student with an unexcused absence, subject to the mentioned provisions, as “truant”; in practice these terms are used interchangeably. In the case of a student in seventh grade and above who fails to cooperate with the LEA to resolve attendance problems or is truant at least 20 school days, the student is considered habitually truant (Utah Code 53G-8-211).

LEAs must make efforts to promote regular attendance and resolve school absenteeism and truancy issues (Utah Code 53G-6-206). Utah Code provides examples of efforts that should be reasonably feasible for LEAs and parents, including counseling, adjustments to the curriculum and schedule, alternatives, and truancy mediation. Certain individuals at LEAs may even take truant students into temporary custody and within a district truancy center provide educational guidance and counseling (Utah Code 53G-6-208). If a student establishes a pattern of truancy (i.e., has been absent at least 5 days or more during the school year) the LEA may issue a Notice of Compulsory Education Violation (NCEV) or Notice of Truancy (NoT), depending on the student’s grade level (i.e., NCEV is for students in grades 1-6; NoT is for students in grades 7-12). When notices are issued, the notice must meet specific requirements outlined in Utah Code (Utah Code 53G-5-202 and 203).

After receiving a NCEV as required by Utah Code and with required elements, if parents fail to make a good faith effort to resolve issues of truancy or enrollment for a student in grades 1-6, an LEA must report it to the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) as appropriate (Utah Code 53G-6-202); violations of Utah Code must also be reported to the appropriate county or district attorney. For students in grades 7 or above, failure to resolve truancy issues may result in alternative interventions and administrative penalties (Utah Code 53G-6-203).

2. Implementation

To comprehend LEAs' understanding and likely implementation of the designed compulsory education requirement, a review of documentation (i.e., policies and notice templates) provided by a sample of 16 LEAs was conducted. Not all LEAs served all grade levels or provided documentation for every request; additionally, requirements related to compulsory education are grade specific so populations will vary.

(a) General Understanding, Potential Population 16 LEAs

As of August 2024, 16 of 16 (100%) LEA attendance and discipline policies, as posted on LEA websites, failed to include "reasonably feasible" effort to promote regular attendance and resolve truancy issues outlined in Utah Code 53G-6-206(3), at the following rates:

- incorporating attendance into scores or grades (100%),
- offering voluntary truancy mediation (69%),
- considering parental alternatives (50%),
- providing resources to parents upon request (44%),
- adjusting curriculum or schedule of students (38%),
- counseling of students (31%),
- monitoring school attendance (25%), and
- sending either NCEVs or NoTs (6%).

However, 15 of 16 (94%) LEAs included other efforts not specifically outlined in Utah Code, such as parent meetings and home visits.

As of August 2024, four of six (67%) district policies did mention the use of a truancy support center. In practice, none of the districts or charter schools sampled use a truancy support center.

Three of 13 (23%) LEAs who provided a definition of truancy in their policy had an incorrect definition. One LEA policy stated that a student would be marked truant after five days absent, the other two stated that a student would be marked truant after 10 days absent.

(b) Grades 1-6, Potential Population 13 LEAs

As of August 2024, eight of 13 (62%) LEA attendance and discipline policies, as posted on the LEAs' websites, did not include all requirements for issuing NCEVs. For example, of the eight LEAs policies:

- 7 (88%) did not correctly identify when to send (i.e., age/grade level, number of truancies) NCEVs; one LEA allowed for this notice to be sent out to students beyond age 12,
- 6 (75%) did not include that the NCEV will only be served on the parent by personal service or certified mail,
- 4 (50%) did not state the NCEV will direct parents to meet with school authorities and cooperate with them to correct attendance issues,
- 4 (50%) did not state the NCEV will designate the school authorities with whom the parent will meet, and

- 4 (50%) did not state the NCEV will state it is a class B misdemeanor for a parent to intentionally fail to meet with school authorities or prevent five additional truancies during the remainder of the school year.

Additionally, 11 of 13 (85%) LEA attendance and discipline policies, did not include requirements to send reports to the county or district attorney and DCFS as required in Utah Code. For example, of the 11 LEAs' policies:

- 10 (91%) did not mention reporting violations to DCFS if a parent fails to ensure their student receives an education after receiving an NCEV; two (20%) of these LEAs stated the violations are reported to juvenile court instead of DCFS, and
- 7 (64%) did not mention reporting violations to a county or district attorney.

When asked to provide examples of NCEV documents (e.g., templates), two of 12 (17%) LEAs provided documents that clearly did not fulfill NCEV requirements found in Utah Code. Of the 10 LEAs' documents that did resemble a NCEVs as described in Utah Code:

- 5 (50%) did not state that it is a class B misdemeanor for a parent to fail to meet with designated school authorities or failing to prevent an additional five truancies, and
- 3 (30%) NCEVs conflated the terms absences with truancies (i.e., unexcused absences) and one LEA's NCEVs inaccurately defined chronic absenteeism as "missing 10 or more days."

(c) Grades 7 or above, Potential Population 13 LEAs

As of August 2024, 10 of 13 (77%) LEA attendance and discipline policies, as posted on the LEAs' websites, do not define "habitual truancy." Of the three LEAs that defined habitual truancy in policy, one (33%) did not mention referring habitually truant students to evidence-based alternative interventions or prevention and early intervention youth services if the student refuses to participate in an evidence-based alternative intervention.

As of August 2024, 10 of 13 (77%) LEA attendance and discipline policies, as posted on the LEAs' websites, failed to include all NoT requirements. For example, of the 10 LEAs' policies:

- 9 (90%) did not include that the notice of truancy will be served on the parent by personal service or "certified" mail,
- 4 (40%) did not correctly identify when (i.e., age/grade level, number of truancies) to send notices of truancy,
- 4 (40%) did not include a procedure to contest a notice of truancy,
- 3 (30%) did not state the notice of truancy will direct parents to meet with school authorities and cooperate with them to correct attendance issues, and
- 1 (10%) did not have any detail about their notices of truancy beyond that they will issue them.

However, four of 13 (31%) LEAs included other information to increase transparency and accountability, including the dates and/or classes when a student was truant.

There was one LEA that had a policy for issuing NoTs despite only serving students in grades 1-6.

When asked to provide examples of NoT documents (e.g., templates), five of 12 (42%) LEAs with students in grades 7-12 provided documents that clearly did not fulfill NoT requirements found in Utah Code. Of the seven LEAs' documents that did resemble a NoT as described in Utah Code,

- 3 (43%) did not include direction for both parents and students to meet with school authorities to discuss their child's unexcused absences, even though all three required it in their own policies, and
- 2 (29%) conflated the term absences with truancies (i.e., unexcused absences).

3. Conclusion

Although the review was limited to the policies and templates LEAs rely on to enforce compulsory education rather than actual notices sent, the inconsistencies and misalignment with Utah Code are concerning. If templates are used to enforce compulsory education—though some evidence exists to suggest LEAs do not necessarily follow their own policies — excluding critical information limits the effectiveness and strength of Utah's compulsory education requirements. However, whether LEAs agree compulsory education in Utah even exists is questionable. For example, an individual at one LEA stated, "Utah no longer has a Compulsory Education requirement."

G. Suspend and Expel

1. Design

The Legislature recognizes that all students in the System "should have the opportunity to learn in an environment which is safe, conducive of the learning process, and free from unnecessary disruption (Utah Code 53G-8-202(1)). To foster such an environment, LEA governing boards are tasked with establishing conduct and discipline plans that emphasize that certain unacceptable behavior that will result in disciplinary action (Utah Code 53G-8-202(2)). LEAs are required to enforce the plans to ensure that students exhibiting unacceptable behavior, and their parents, understand such behavior will not be tolerated (Utah Code 53G-8-202(3)), which may impact student participation in the System.

Conduct and discipline plans are publicly available and provide guidance as it relates to Utah Code, including:

- suspension and expulsion procedures, including notice to parents (Utah Code 53G-8-204),
- grounds for suspension or expulsion for a public school (Utah Code 53G-8-205),
- authority to suspend or expel (Utah Code 53G-8-206),
- alternatives to suspension or expulsion to implement prior to suspending or expelling, in an effort to allow the student to remain in school (Utah Code 53G-8-207), and
- responses to school-based behavior (Utah Code 53G-8-211)

The System is designed to implement alternatives prior to suspension and expulsion where possible. Suspension and expulsion are typically last resorts; however, they are vital tools to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment.

2. Implementation

To understand implementation of the designed requirements related to suspensions and expulsions, conduct and discipline plans from a sample of 16 LEAs were reviewed. The following was noted.

As of August 2024, seven of 16 (44%) LEA plans do not define expulsion, nor is expulsion defined within state law. Therefore, when LEAs do define expulsion it varies, including:

- formal process of dismissing a student from school,
- disciplinary removal from school by the School Board for more than 10 school days without an offer of alternative educational service,
- long-term or permanent removal of a student from the school and/or the denial of meaningful services to a student, or
- student's removal from the school setting, including all extracurricular activities and events, for the current school year or a period designated in the disciplinary process.

As of August 2024, nine of 16 (56%) LEA plans, as posted on the LEAs' websites, either did not identify the authorized individual who can suspend or expel students or inappropriately authorized an individual other than the local school board to expel students. Of the nine LEAs:

- 6 (67%) delegate power to expel students to LEA staff, such as executive directors or case management teams,
- 3 (33%) did not identify who can expel students, and
- 2 (22%) did not identify who can suspend students.

As of August 2024, 12 of 16 (75%) LEA plans, as posted on the LEAs' website, did not include the list of violations that mandate a student be suspended or expelled. Of the 12 LEAs, the following violations were not included:

- 12 (100%) false report of an emergency,
- 11 (92%) violence or sexual misconduct,
- 4 (33%) act involving force that would be a felony or class A misdemeanor if committed by an adult,
- 3 (25%) use of a look-alike weapon to intimidate, and
- 1 (8%) involvement of a weapon or explosive.

As of August 2024, eight of 16 (50%) LEA plans, as posted on the LEAs' websites, did not list each allowable reason to suspend or expel a student. Of the eight LEAs:

- 5 (63%) did not list possession/use of pornography on school property,
- 4 (50%) did not list behavior which threatens or does harm to school, school property, or person associated with the school, regardless of where it occurs, and
- 1 (13%) did not mention any of the reasons listed in Utah Code.

However, 14 of 16 (88%) LEA plans listed additional reasons to suspend or expel a student beyond what is listed in Utah Code, including gang activity, cheating, and truancy.

As of August 2024, six of 16 (38%) LEA plans, as posted on the LEAs' website, did not include all required elements of parent notification of student suspension. Of the six LEAs:

- 6 (100%) did not mention the grounds for suspension,
- 6 (100%) did not mention the period of time of the suspension,
- 3 (50%) did not mention setting a time and place for the parent to meet with school officials to review the suspension, and
- 1 (17%) did not mention notifying the parent of the suspension.

As of August 2024, four of 16 (25%) LEA plans, as posted on the LEAs' websites, did not list either in-school suspension or allowing a parent to attend class with the student as required alternatives to suspension as outlined in Utah Code 53G-8-207(1). However, 16 of 16 (100%) LEA plans listed other alternatives to suspension, including change of placement, detention, community service, and home-based instruction.

Finally, in the sample of 16 LEAs, two (13%) of the LEAs expelled students between SFY2021 – SFY2024. Both LEAs authorized student expulsions without board approval; and in the case of one LEA, it was contrary to its own internal policies.

3. Conclusion

LEAs have the authority to expel and suspend students, but with that authority comes the responsibility to clearly communicate expectations and requirements for students and parents. Without transparent and well documented processes, students can be, and have been, subjected to unauthorized, inconsistent, and inappropriate processes.

H. Summary

The System, as it relates to student participation, is rife with contradictions, confusion, noncompliance, and can even be deceptive. The System is complex, with many factors that define what it means to participate; however, most factors—if not all—as noted herein, are subjective, inconsistently defined, and inconsistently applied in an effort to guarantee LEAs "autonomy, flexibility, and client choice" (Utah Code 53E-2-301).

The way in which the System is accessed, or what the System potentially offers to students, varies drastically from one LEA to the next; however, design of state law and policies, and implementation of those state law and policies, do not always reconcile. Although measures are designed to provide accountability, the measures are primarily used to ensure a continued distribution of funds to the system. The casualties of weaknesses in the System, it appears, are the taxpayer and the student.

The remainder of the report provides additional supporting evidence of the prior statements.

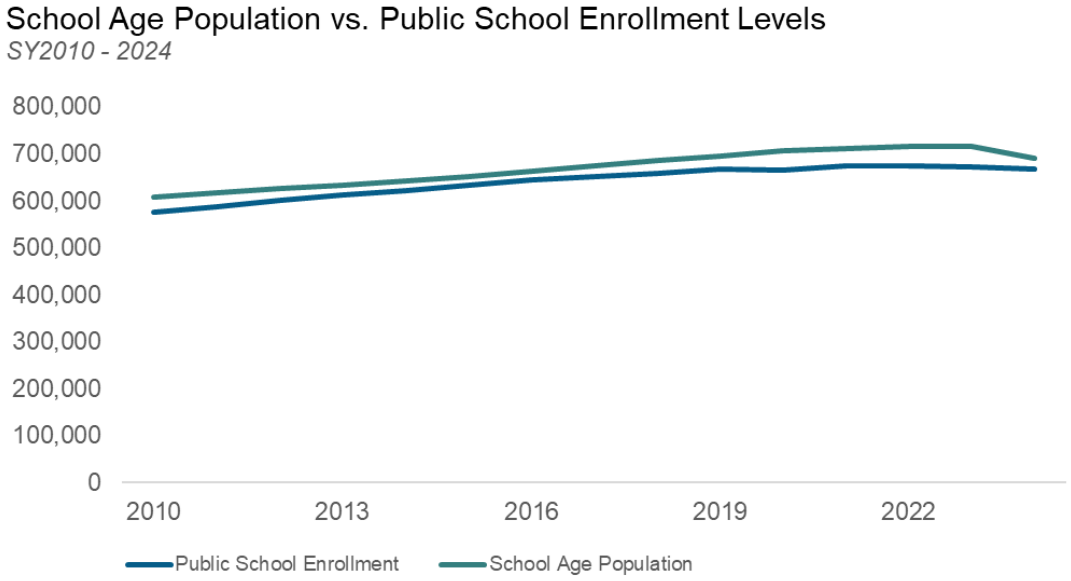
II. Student Participation in Education

The observations below are drawn based on enrollment and attendance data from a sample of 16 LEAs, data retained by the USBE, and through parent, student, and educator surveys.

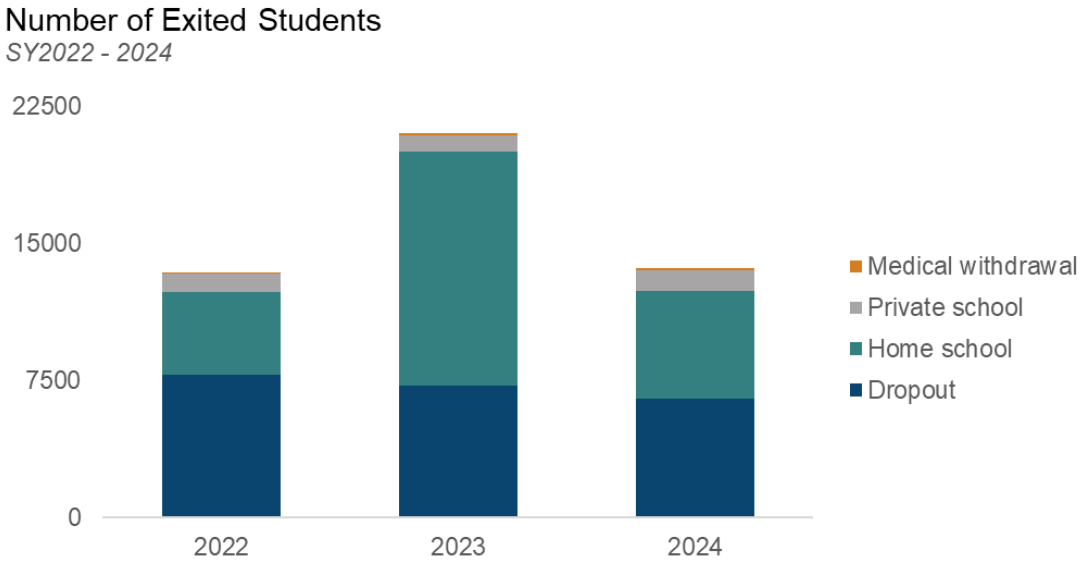
A. Student Enrollment

1. Trends Based on Data

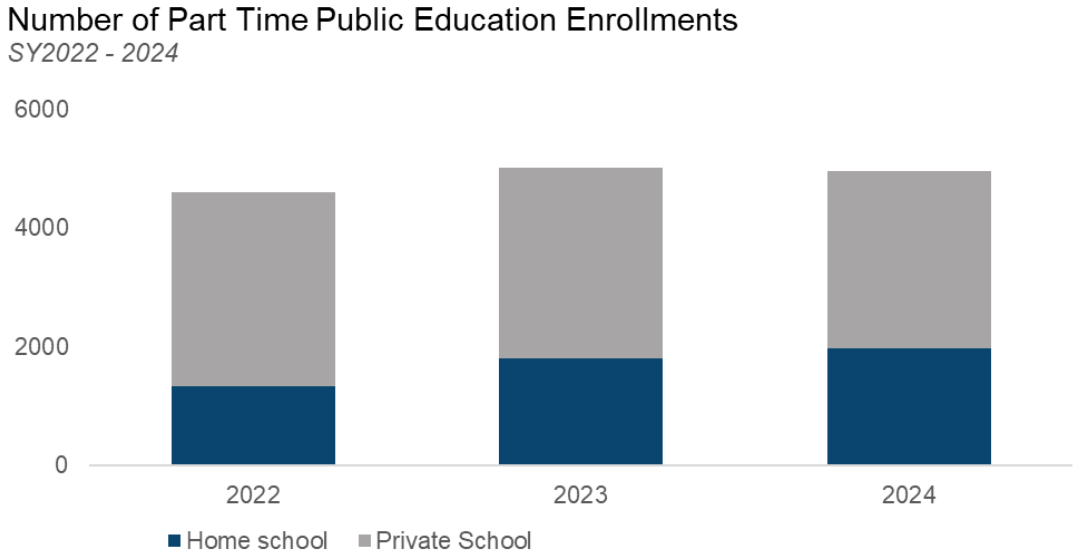
Annually, the Common Data Committee (Committee) publishes a snapshot of the number of students enrolled in public school and total school age population. According to the Committee's data, the percent of school age students enrolled in public education has remained relatively flat, with the exception of COVID, as illustrated below. Recently (i.e., 2024), enrollment rates have increased to levels similar to 2019.



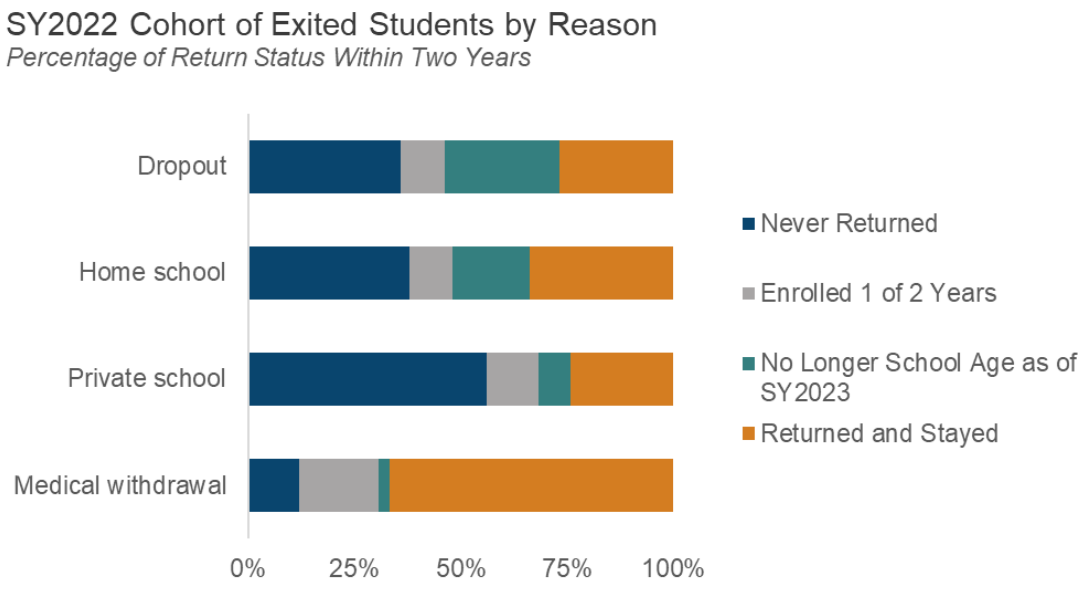
Between SY2022 and SY2024, there were 694,407 to 695,032 students enrolled in public education each year. Each of those years, between 13,452 to 21,039 (2%-3%) students exited to homeschool, exited to private school, dropped out, or withdrew for medical reasons as evidenced by student exit data and as illustrated in the chart below. In SY2023, students who exited increased, primarily due to an increased number of students exiting to homeschool—especially among elementary students (i.e., grades K-6). However, the number of students who dropped out gradually decreased in both SY2023 and SY2024.



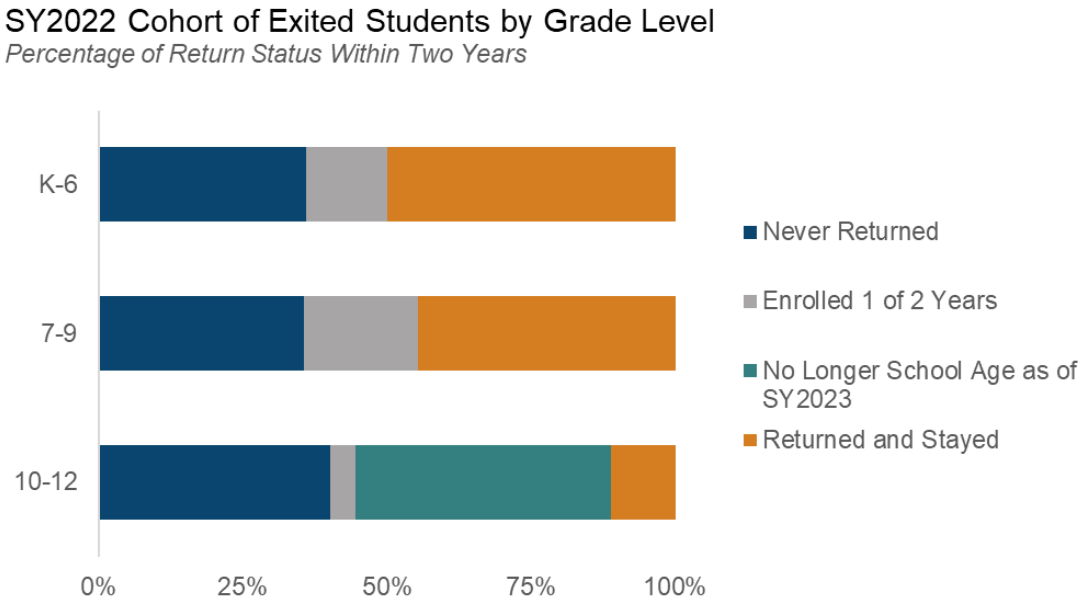
Not all students exit public education completely. For example, the chart below demonstrates that annually thousands of students choose to dual enroll, meaning they participate part-time in both public education as well as homeschool or private school.



Students who exit may return, though this may depend on their reason for leaving or the student's age at withdrawal. In SY2022, there were a total of 13,452 students who exited public education to homeschool or private school, dropped out, or withdrew for medical reasons. Of the 108 students who withdrew for medical reasons, 86% returned to continue their public education within the next two years; whereas of the 1,013 students who exited to private school in SY2022, 56% have yet to return.

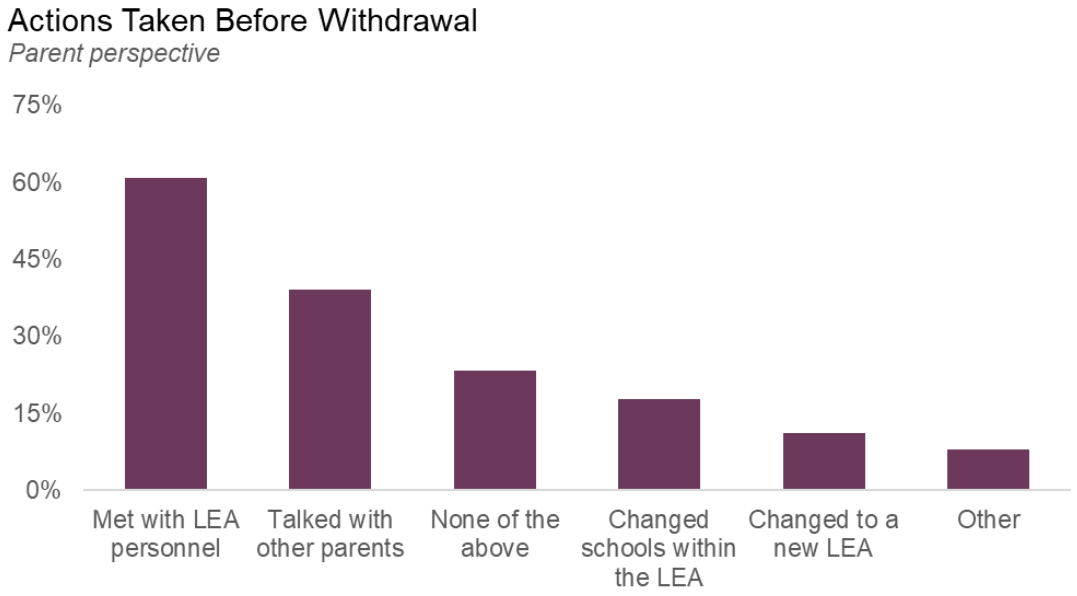


Broken down by grade level, roughly two-thirds of students in grades K-6 and grades 7-9 returned to public education for at least one of the two following years. Many students in grades 10-12 aged out of school and therefore did not return to public education.



2. Survey: Steps Taken Prior to Unenrolling

In many cases, unenrolling students from public education is not the parents first option. Five-hundred twenty-one parents who withdrew at least one of their students from public education identified actions they took before exiting their students from public education. Most parents met with LEA personnel, which includes educators, principals, counselors, and LEA board members. About a quarter of parents did none of these things. The chart below reflects parental actions taken before exiting their students.



Other actions included researching alternatives to public education, changing the student's schedule, meeting with a mental health professional, increasing involvement in the LEA, discussing with the child, and others.

The following comments illustrate some of the additional actions parents took:

- *"I taught his 4th and 5th grade classes for a few months and agreed with him that his time wasn't being used efficiently"*
- *"Changed classes, met with the counselor several times, changed schedule to be partly in person and partly online"*
- *"Went to the School Board about concerns. Volunteered within the school, classrooms and PTA."*

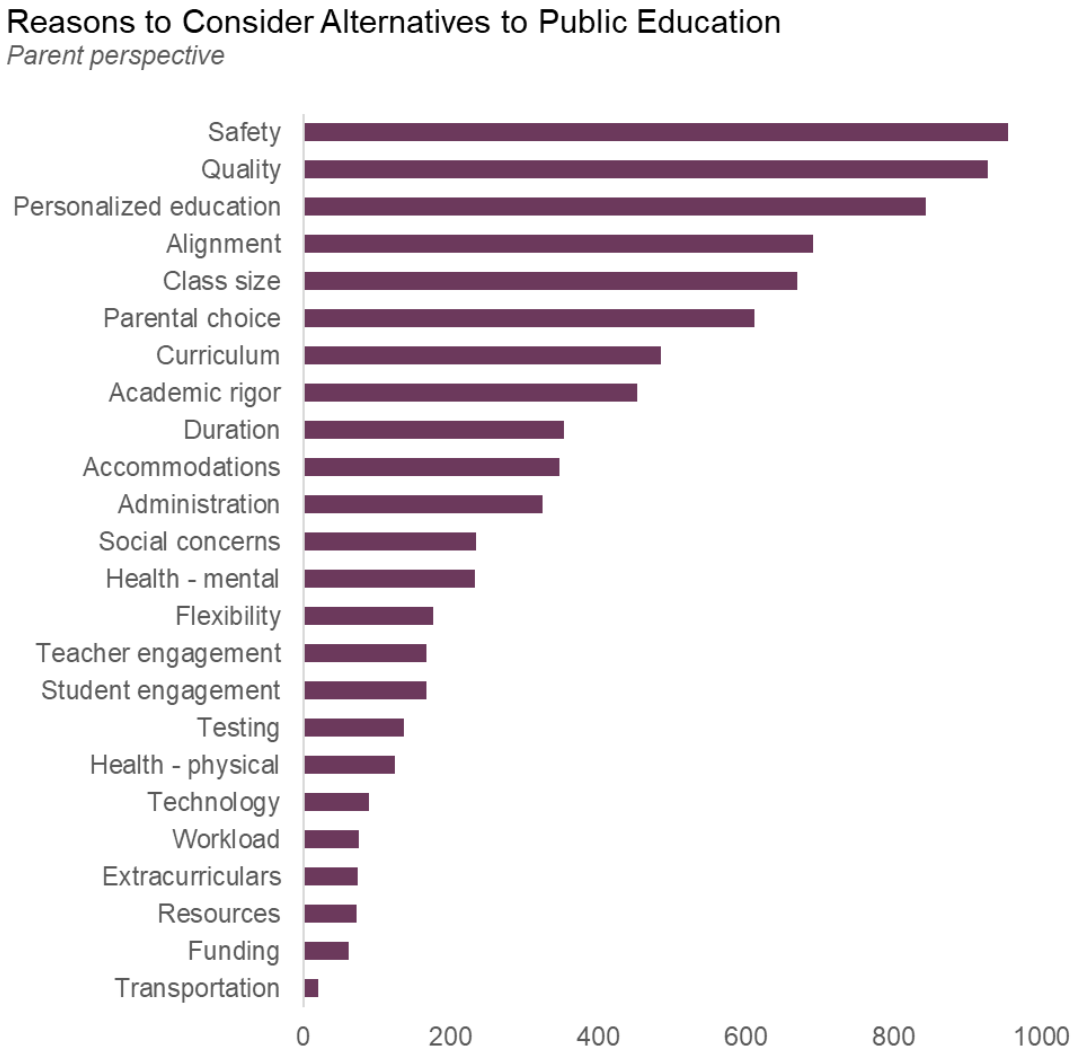
3. Survey: Alternatives Considered

As evidenced above, there is some data to measure student enrollment and withdrawal from public education; however, not much data exists regarding parent consideration of alternatives to public education. Therefore, parents, in the sample of 16 LEAs, were asked whether they

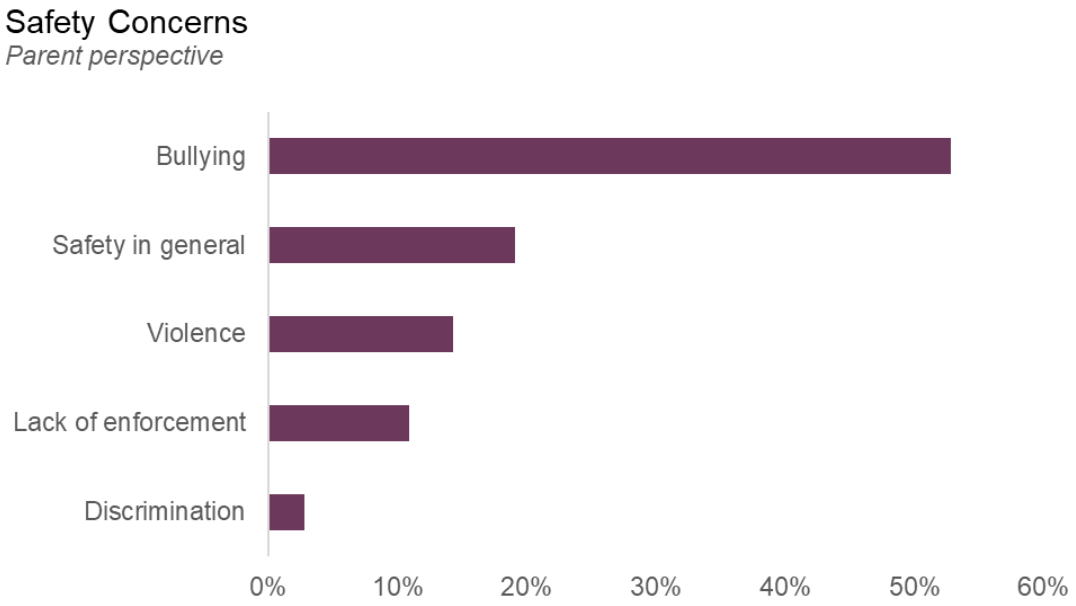
have considered alternatives to public education. As outlined in the table below, the majority (51%) of parents who responded to the survey, have considered, or are considering, one or more alternatives to public education.

Considerations	Count	Percent
Another alternative	2304	20%
Private school	3190	27%
Home school	3453	30%
None of the above	5642	49%

Many (4,802) parents provided a reason as to why they have considered alternatives to public education. The reason most often indicated was safety, with 955 (20%) of parents detailing their concerns. The following chart outlines additional reasons parents considered alternatives.



As safety was the number one reason for considering an alternative, safety concerns were reviewed and broken down into five categories: bullying, discrimination, lack of enforcement, violence, and general safety. Out of 955 responses, 505 (53%) indicated bullying as their biggest concern.



The above information related to safety aligns with data the Internal Audit Department has specific to the Public Education Hotline, which it maintains. Safety related allegations represent the area with the highest percentage (i.e., 36% for state fiscal year 2025) of allegations received.

Parents were given an opportunity to provide comments regarding why they were or are considering alternatives. The following are representative comments provided by parents specifically regarding safety concerns.

- *"My sons have mental health issues. Teachers don't always have patience for their needs. The 504 they're on isn't always adhered to, we have to remind Teachers or have another meeting or get demanding about it. Charter schools do better with 504 and IEP accommodations. And bullying is not controlled like it should be. My boys have been bullied by Teachers as well as students. I've had to call Safe UT for help so my boys can learn their rights to stand up for themselves so they won't have suicidal thoughts."*
- *"Gun violence being prevalent across the United States is terrifying as a parent, and makes me question whether public school is the best for my child's safety."*
- *"Concern about the safety of my children at school is another reason. There is currently a policy at the school to allow a violent or disruptive child to engage in violent and disruptive behavior while all other children must be removed from the classroom while the disruptive child calms down. Personal and classroom items have been destroyed while teachers wait for disruptive and violent children to calm down because teachers are not allowed to touch the disruptive child or remove them from the classroom. This disrupts the learning of 26 or more other children in the class and is a faulty policy that creates a chaotic learning environment for non-disruptive children and is emotionally taxing for teachers and children involved."*

- *“The bullying that my kids have experienced that was never resolved by the admin or teachers. It has been to the point my children have been suicidal.”*
- *“Issues with bullying and the school not doing anything about it. My child has been assaulted twice since started school once in kindergarten and once in second grade”*

Representative comments related to other reasons why alternatives were or are considered are as follows:

- *“There is so much fluff and things that don’t matter. Do I care if my kid can memorize the counties in Utah? No, but I do care if they understand what APR is and how to manage money. The forced curriculum is killing their drive. They have to be there for a set number of hours so it’s looked at quantity over quality. Plus, 40 kids in a classroom and a school with 4X the student population that it is made for is absurd. Half the teachers don’t actually teach as well. They show slide deck presentations and the expect the kids to learn. Public school is a joke. They could accomplish the same amount of learning in 3.5 hours and instead it’s made to last all day. Kids aren’t meant to be sitting for 6-7 hours a day. They are kids.”*
- *“If you fit the USBE model, you fit in. Meaning that you have to be within one standard deviation of the mean for academics, language, and compliance in order to survive. There need to be better options for student education due to internal politics, staffing and generally disdain for any struggling student (i.e. no compassion “just doing my job”)”*
- *“There is a huge gap between teachers and their skill level sometimes. In the corporate world, employees are regularly measured on their performance and rewarded or disciplined based on that performance. Teachers and their performance vary widely, and can make or break a school year for a child. When unskilled or uncaring teachers are allowed to maintain their positions without being measured on performance, there is no motivation to improve or produce better students. We have had both GREAT teachers and TERRIBLE teachers- which comes with the territory. However, there does not seem to be much means in place for removing the terrible teachers and that has a cost on the students who basically lose a year or "survive" with a teacher rather than thrive.*
  We have poured more and more money into the school system through the years and always hear that there is not enough funding available to effectively run schools. Companies in the corporate world are doing more with less these days, and employees are accountable to improve performance and produce good results. Until teachers are measured on their performance, we will continue to see status quo or worse results in education.
  Show us properly trained teachers who are rewarded or removed based on GOOD PERFORMANCE - then we will see our student outcomes improve. You must remove the bad oranges from the good, or eventually the whole bowl of fruit spoils.”
- *“Quality of public education is a joke. I don't feel like students are learning anything. Teachers have no say or control in the classroom, everyone is on their phone. There's no expectations, no consequences, no engagement. You throw these kids on a laptop or tablet and they spend the day in front a screen. Then they have to do all their homework on the computer. Most HS kids can't even write a paper or read a book. They can pass a class with almost zero effort or participation. It's a circus. My child has 2 years left. If I had younger children I would never put them in Public school.”*
- *“I am increasingly concerned about the state of our education system. Mostly I am concerned about curriculum and the straying from teaching the basics of reading, math, history, and science. The kids need a real strong basis in these core subjects and I just don’t know that it is happening. I have been really disappointed in the constant time spent testing and testing again, over and over. Wouldn’t some of that time be better*

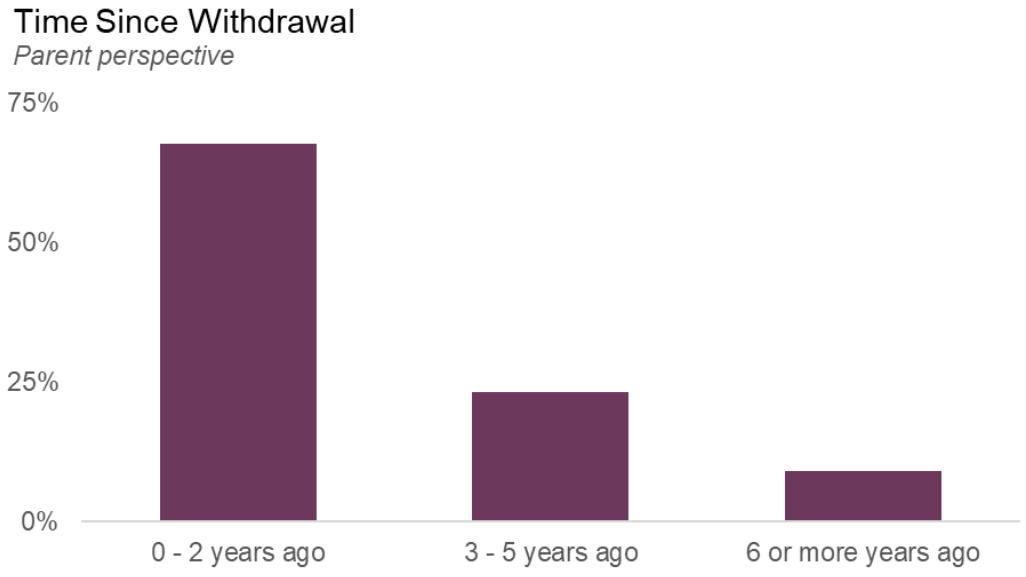
spent in instruction and learning? In the elementary schools the joy of reading has nearly been lost. It is so sad! Unless it is from their homes, the kids are just not learning to love reading and to become a lifelong learner. It is tragic! The individuals, and society, are going to reap the consequences of this someday."

- *"I have serious concerns about the future of public education. It seems as though our state legislature does not value public education and the quality of public education is declining despite teacher's best efforts. Public education puts too much emphasis on state testing to the detriment of learning and does not give teachers enough autonomy nor enough resources to meet the demands placed on them. I value public education as a necessity to the health of a society as a whole but am concerned that my children are not being challenged and not learning and growing to the degree that they are capable because of large class sizes and an overfocus on standardized testing at a district and state level."*

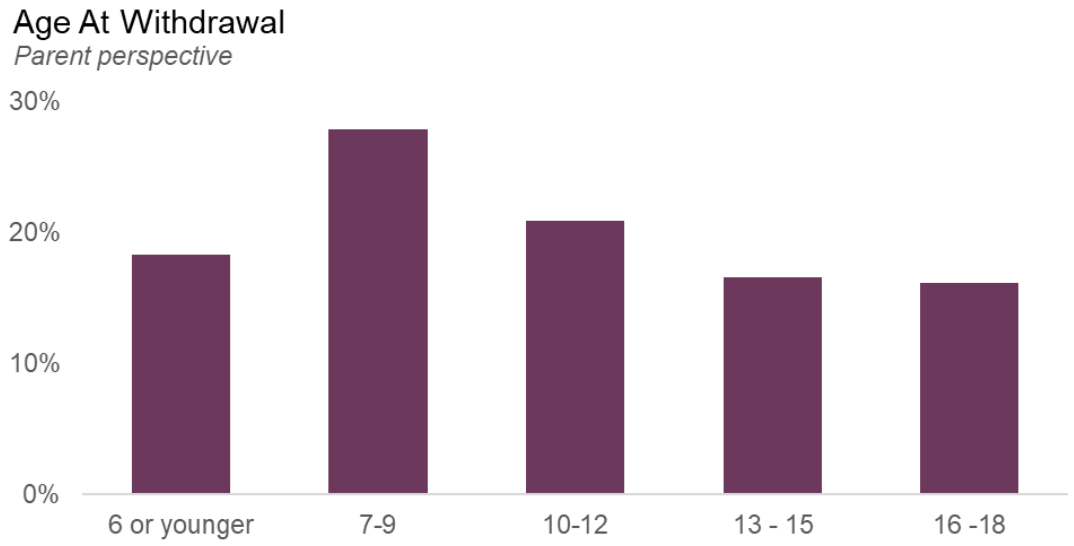
4. Survey: Withdrawn Students

To gain additional perspective from parents who unenrolled their student(s), in October 2024, a survey was distributed to parents of students who exited public education within the sample of 16 LEAs, 798 parents participated in the survey.

Of the 578 parents who affirmed that they withdrew a student from public education and answered the question "How long ago did you withdraw your [student] from public schools (i.e., districts and charters)?", most (68%) withdrew their students within the last two years (i.e., post COVID). Remaining time frames are indicated in the chart below.



The most (28%) common age when a student was withdrawn was between seven and nine years old. See chart below for distribution of age at withdrawal.



Most (74%) parents withdrew their students from a district, which is not surprising given the majority of students attend district schools. Even though parents have withdrawn students, when asked, about half still have at least one student enrolled in public education.

When asked where their students are currently receiving their education, most (56%) indicated their student receives at least some of their education through homeschool. Eighteen percent said their student receives education from more than one source (e.g., homeschool and part time public education) and 8% selected part-time public education without indicating any other provider of education, indicating they left public education but have returned part-time.

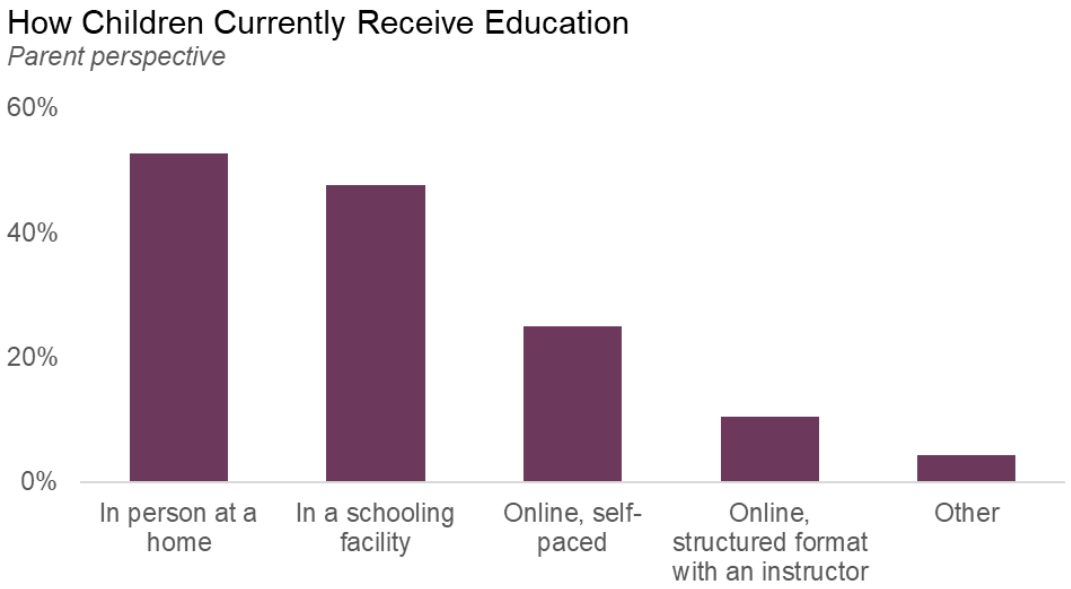
The following table provides a breakdown of the providers of services to students that left full-time public education and if a provider was the sole source of education for the student, according to parents.

Education Provider	Total Responses	Percent of Total Responses	Sole Selection	Percent Sole Selection
Home school	312	56%	225	72%
Private school	141	25%	114	81%
Part-time public school	96	17%	43	45%
Other	78	14%	53	68%
Higher education or technical college	26	5%	9	35%
Adult education	17	3%	13	76%
Trade school	8	1%	5	63%

“Other” responses included the following, with the most common responses indicating a public education provider or their student already completing their education (e.g., graduated early or earned their GED).

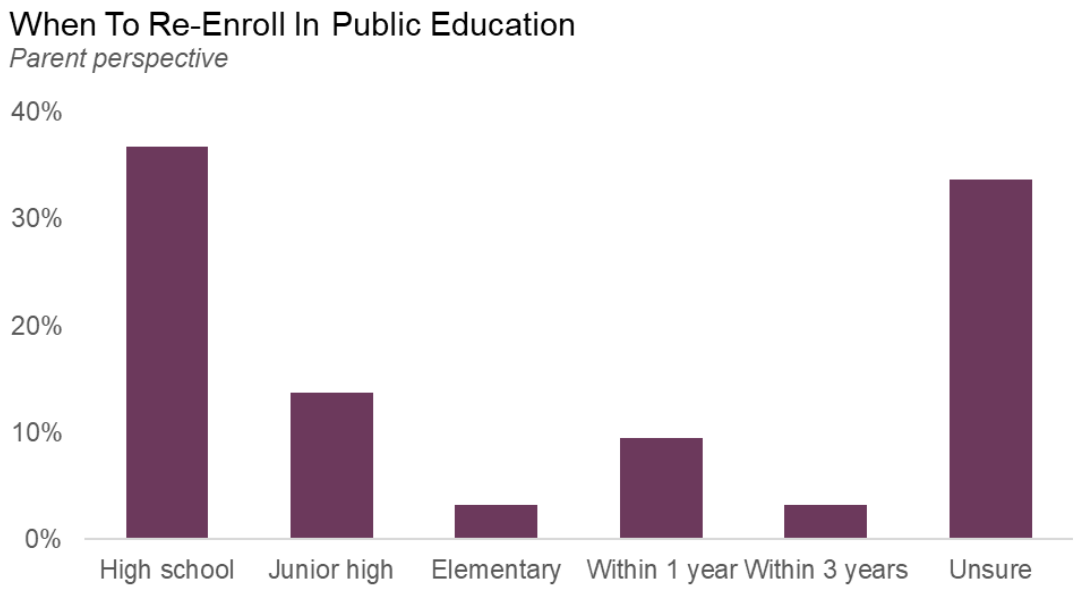
Education Provider	Count	Percent
Public education	15	19%
Completed education	13	17%
Out of state	11	14%
None	10	13%
Non-traditional education provider	8	10%
Online provider	8	10%
Undefined multiple	4	5%
Private lessons	4	5%
GED program	4	5%
Exchange program	1	1%
Grand Total	78	100%

For the 539 parents who answered in what format their students now receive education, the most (53%) common response was “in person at a home”. Distribution of formats is shown in the chart below; responses of “Other” included co-ops, sites outside home or schooling facilities, and self-study.



Some parents who withdrew students from public education are considering re-enrolling them in public education, though the majority (77%) are not. Of the 23% that do plan on re-enrolling their students in public education, 95 enumerated when they plan on re-enrolling their students,

which is shown in the chart below. Most parents that had a specific plan to re-enroll their student in public education expected to do so when their student is high-school age. Many parents were also unsure of when they would re-enroll their student in public education.

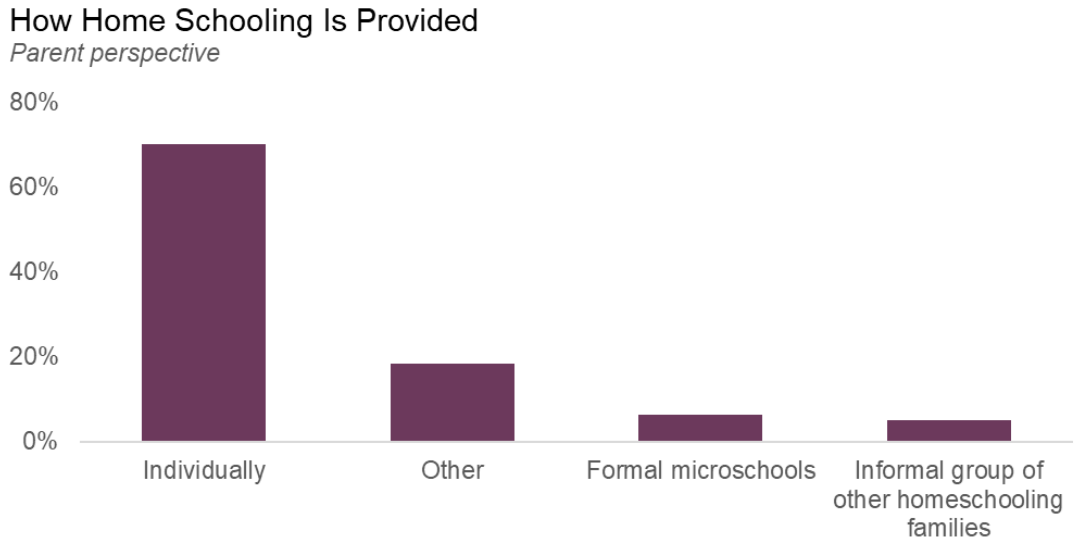


Representative comments on the two most common responses are provided below:

- High school
  - *"I plan to do some part time enrollment to transition to high school and I plan to enroll my children in high school for access to concurrent enrollment and AP classes"*
  - *"In high school, depending on what my child is wanting to pursue. If it makes sense for their long term educational and career goals, I will re-enroll them to get the experience and prerequisites that will help them along that path"*
- Unsure
  - *"When I feel my child is ready and safe"*
  - *"When she learns core values and won't be afraid to speak for herself."*

5. Survey: Homeschool

Additional questions were asked specifically to parents who chose to homeschool their students. A clear majority of students are taught individually, not as part of a group. When parents selected “Other,” it was typically due to a mix of being taught both individually and in groups. See chart below for additional details.



When students met in groups, the most common group size reported was six to 10 students. Groups greater than 10 were more than twice as common as groups smaller than six.

6. Survey: Utah Fits All

In August 2024, parents who exited their students from public education were also asked about the Utah Fits All scholarship to better understand parents’ awareness and interest in the program and how it may impact public education enrollment.

Of 560 parents who answered the question “Are you aware of the Utah Fits All Scholarship (UFA)?”, 330 (59%) were aware of the program. Fifty-seven percent of those who were aware of the program applied for the scholarship and nearly half (46%) of those applicants were awarded a scholarship.

Parents who were supportive of the scholarship and had a student receiving a scholarship provided the comments below:

- *“UFA made a huge difference in the quality and variety of resources I am now able to offer my kids, but I would homeschool without it too. I’m super grateful for Utah expanding our educational options!”*
- *“But concerning UFA - more people need to be able to get the funding so they have options for their children, and the funding policies need to keep FAMILIES in mind. There are weird rules right now where we are forced to buy things individually for each child where it would make more sense financially to buy things for the entire family. Like a*

family pass to Thanksgiving point is cheaper than four individual kid passes with a partnering adult. I have seven children, four of which have the scholarship. I reuse a ton of material for the younger children because I'm trying to save money where I can. This is the first year I've ever had any money for schooling, I've always paid for everything myself. I realize they want the scholarship money to be used for the scholarship child, but there needs to be an understanding that in families there is overlap."

Parents who are not supportive of the scholarship as it exists provided the comments below:

- *"The UFA scholarship shouldn't be $8,000 per child. You could help so many more families if you didn't give that much to just one child."*
- *"I don't encourage parents to withdraw their children unless they feel like they can provide them with better educational opportunities. I think creating the Utah Fits All for those who are financially struggling might have awarded B when you wanted to award A. It was my understanding that you were trying to help parents give their children the best possible educational outcomes (award A), which is commendable. Instead I have seen lots of parents unenroll their children so they can have the money, and they aren't able to provide better basic educational opportunities (math, LA. science, etc...) for their children (award B)."*

Eighty parents answered the question "How likely are you to recommend UFA Scholarships to other families?". Using a standard customer satisfaction metric (i.e., Net Promoter Score or NPS), the following was identified regarding UFA:

- 65 (81%) are promoters,
- 14 (18%) are passive, and
- 1 (1%) is a detractor of the UFA.

Per NPS's methodology, 80% of parents who have received UFA funds for their students are supportive of the program and would recommend it to others.

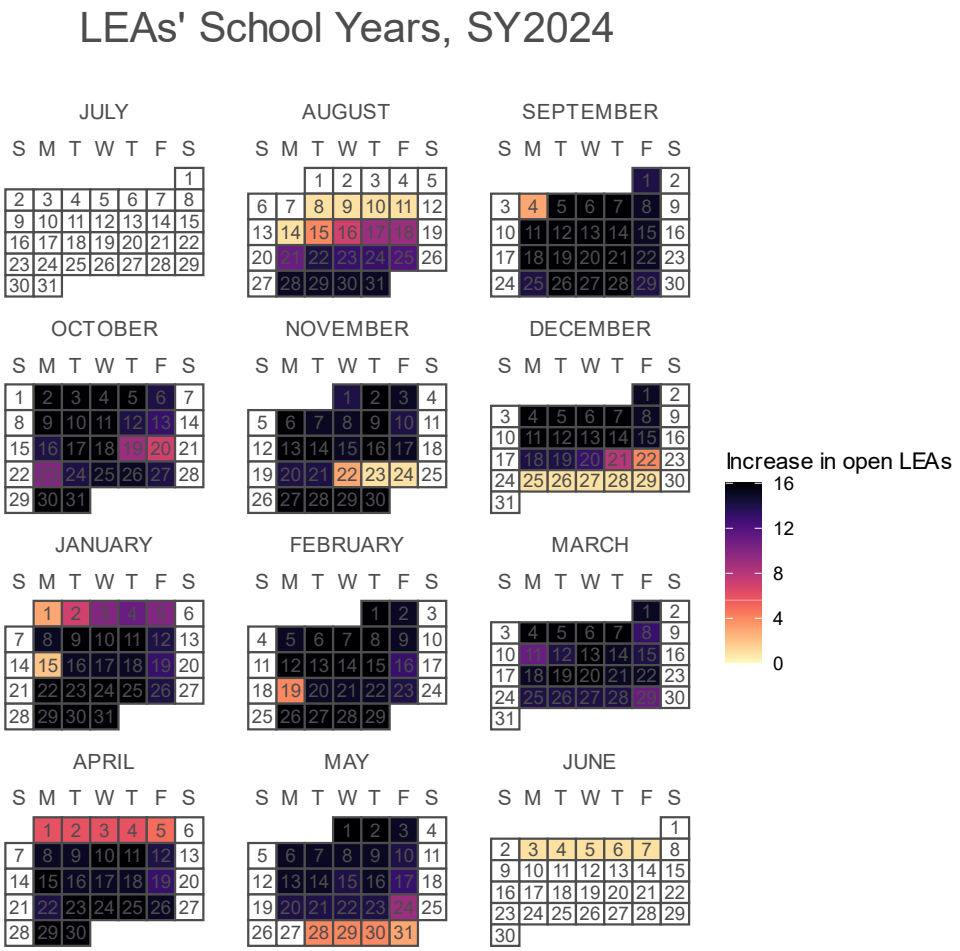
B. Student Attendance

1. Attendance Trends

Data collected from the SISs of the 16 LEAs in the sample for SY2024 shows the patterns related to student absences. To better understand student absence patterns, the three following heatmaps can be used in conjunction; however, each provides relevant information related to student attendance data.

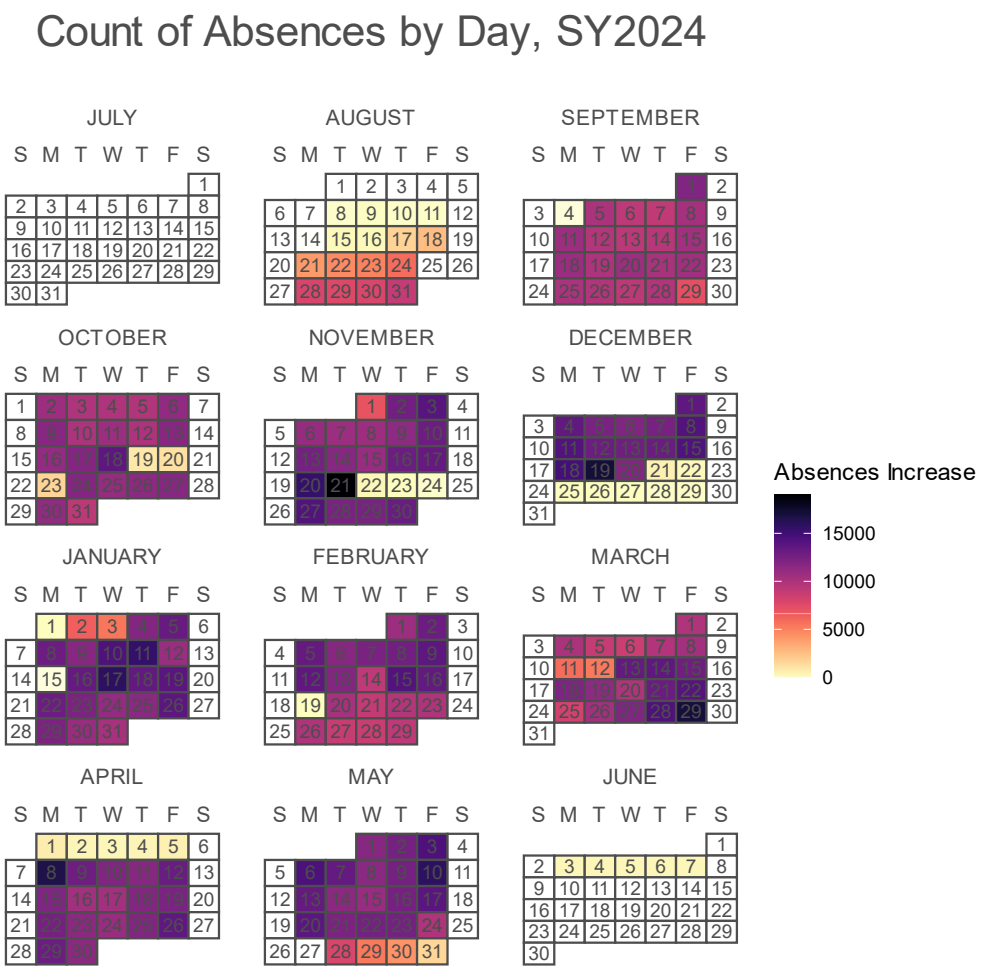
The first heatmap illustrates the sampled LEAs' school years, meaning the school days where educational services are being provided. Days shaded black indicate all 16 LEAs were in session (i.e., providing educational services) as evidenced by school calendars. The lighter the color, the fewer LEAs who reported being in session on that calendar day.

The heatmap can also help identify questionable data submissions. For example, given schools do not operate on December 25th, the fact that school days are reported on that holiday is concerning. However, given December 25th is a light shade of yellow, it indicates that the data submission error is likely related to one or two LEAs and not a larger System-wide issue.

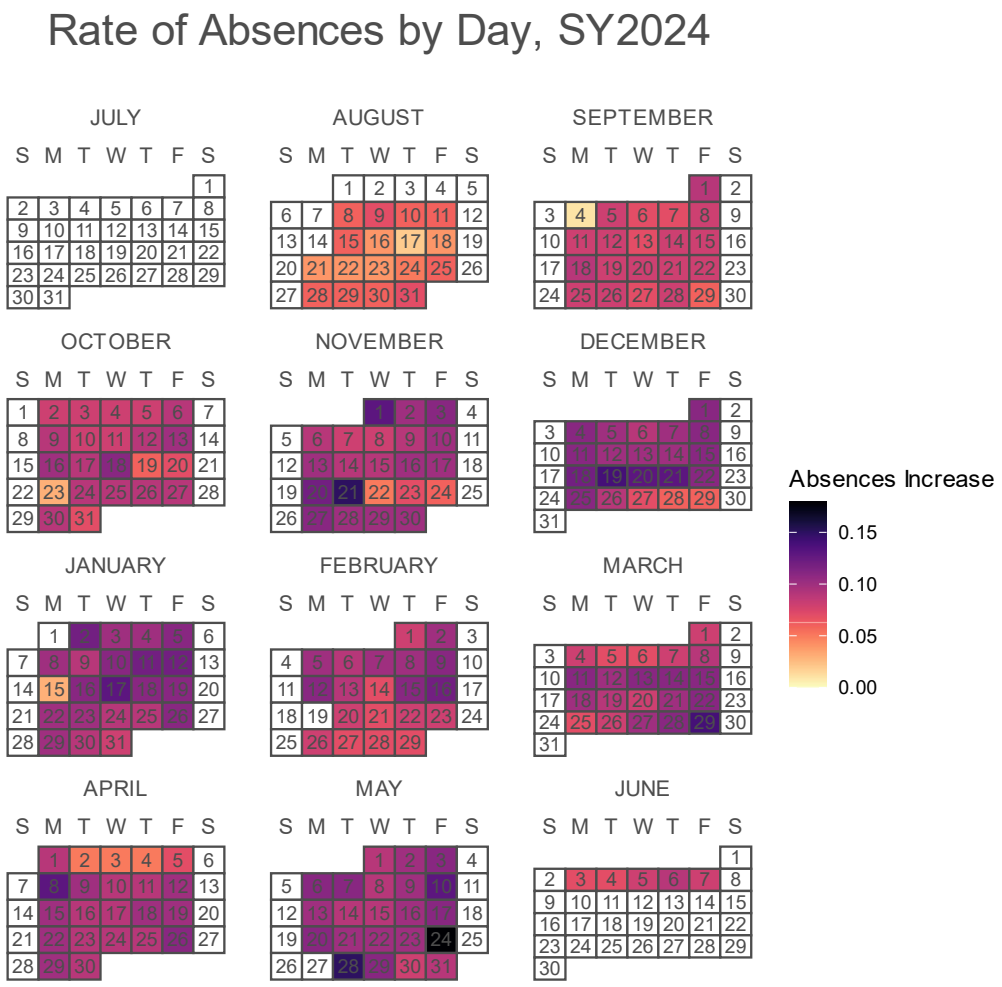


The next heatmap illustrates the total number of absences recorded by the sampled LEAs, without respect to LEA size or location. This heatmap identifies the calendar days students are absent most frequently during the year. Given larger LEAs have more students, and therefore potentially more absences, a heatmap based on counts of absences alone can over-represent larger LEAs, which may skew the data if not used with caution.

Just like in the previous heatmap, higher volume is illustrated with darker colors (i.e., calendar days in black represent the highest volume of student absences).

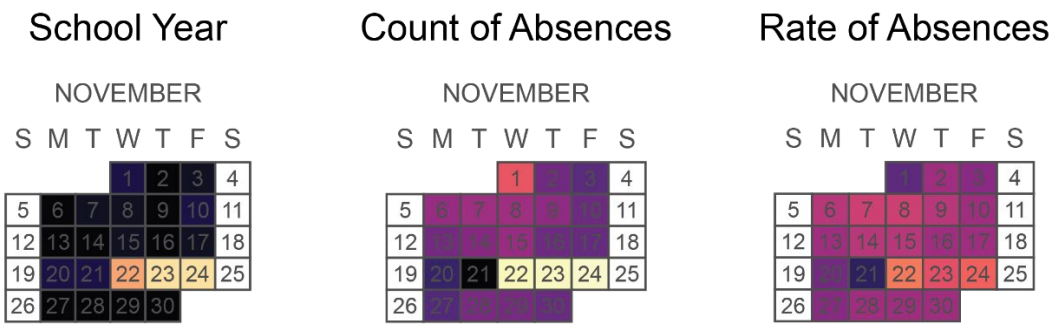


To account for LEA size, the last heatmap depicts absences as a ratio of LEA membership. In other words, the heatmap illustrates which calendar days, within the school year have more absences based on the total proportion of student membership. This enables LEAs with alternative schedules (e.g., starting school earlier in the year than other LEAs) to be represented at a proportional level. This also allows calendar days with high absences based on schools in session to carry similar weight to calendar days where all schools in the sample were in session. Calendar days with high volumes of absences that would otherwise be lost are highly visible.

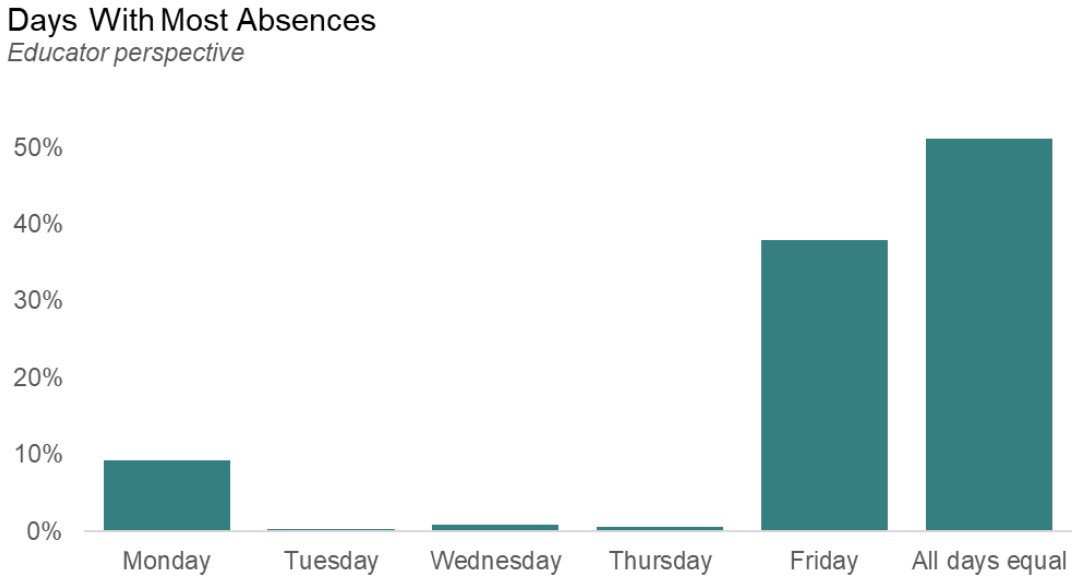


When used together, the three heatmaps provide insight into student attendance patterns across the sample of LEAs. For example, compare November 2023 in the illustration below.

- The School Year heatmap indicates, with school days that gradually get lighter in color, that some LEAs have begun to close school in preparation for Thanksgiving break.
- The Count of Absences heatmap indicates that those LEAs who held school on November 21, 2023, experienced a significant increase in student absences (i.e., a day just before a break, black color).
- Finally, the Rate of Absences heatmap, shows evidence that although November 21, 2023, was not the calendar day with the highest volume of absences, in light of LEAs with schools in session, the absence rate is one of the highest of calendar days of the school year.

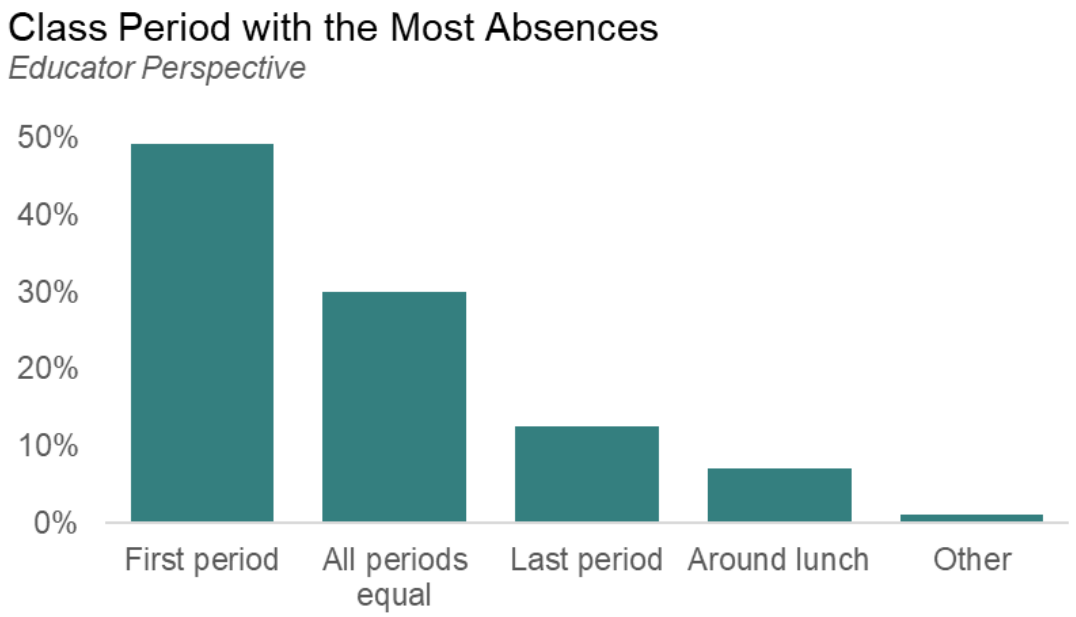


When educators were asked what day of the week students miss most often, 952 of the 1,860 (51%) educators indicated that all days were equal when considering the number of absences they encountered. Many (38%) educators indicated Friday was the most missed day of the week by students as shown in the chart below.



Based the data collected from the 16 LEAs sampled, educators had a relatively accurate sense of student attendance. Overall, student absences are relatively evenly distributed throughout the week, with a daily average of 20% (±2%); however, Friday was the day most often missed (21%) and Monday the least (19%), a slight deviation from educator perspective.

Forty-nine percent of educators reported that their first period of the day was the most missed class. Additional responses are indicated in the chart below.



According to USBE data, the average number of absences per student across the state in SY2024, was 12. Students at 16 sampled LEAs for SY2024 had an average of 11 excused or unexcused absences, according to USBE data. However, when compared to LEA SIS data that adds student activities and other school-scheduled events as absences, the average absences over the year increased to 16, an average difference of 45%, and just two days short of being chronically absent. If adjusted for school days where educational services are provided (i.e., 173 school days) and not days enrolled, the SIS average absence over a year is just one day away, of the chronically absent rate.

During SY2024 for the sample of 16 LEAs, 9% of students on average were absent per school day. Prior to a break (e.g., Thanksgiving break), absences increased an average of 3%. Following a break, average absences remained 1% higher than the yearly average.

Looking at each specific LEA provides additional insight. Of the 16 sampled LEAs, 88% had higher absences immediately prior to a break; the only two LEAs who did not were non-traditional programs.

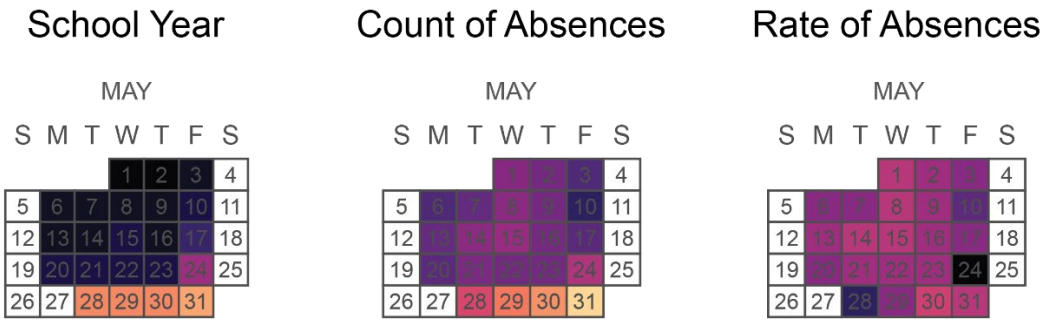
When comparing the last 10 days of the school year with all previous days, there appears to be almost no noticeable difference (<1%). However, differences in the final two weeks emerge when viewed separately. In the second to last week, it appears there is a slight increase (<1%)

in the average number of absences, followed by a more significant decrease (1%) in absences the last week, which is materially impacted by the last day (i.e., a 3% decrease in the number of absences).

School Calendar	Average % of Student Absences
Full School Year	9%
Before a Break	12%
After a Break	10%
2nd to Last Week of School	10%
Last Week of School	8%
Last Day of School	6%

When educators were asked whether attendance increases or decreases the last week of the school year, a majority (52%) of educators reported a decrease. Only 21% of educators reported a perceived increase.

Looking at the heatmaps again given the information provided above, it makes sense why May 24th is the day with the highest absence rate (i.e., Rate of Absences heatmap is black for May 24th). As illustrated below, in 2023, May 24th fell on a Friday, prior to a break (i.e., the 27th is white on the School Year heatmap indicating school was out for all LEAs), on the second to last week of school—where assessments have finished and there are fewer incentives to attend school.

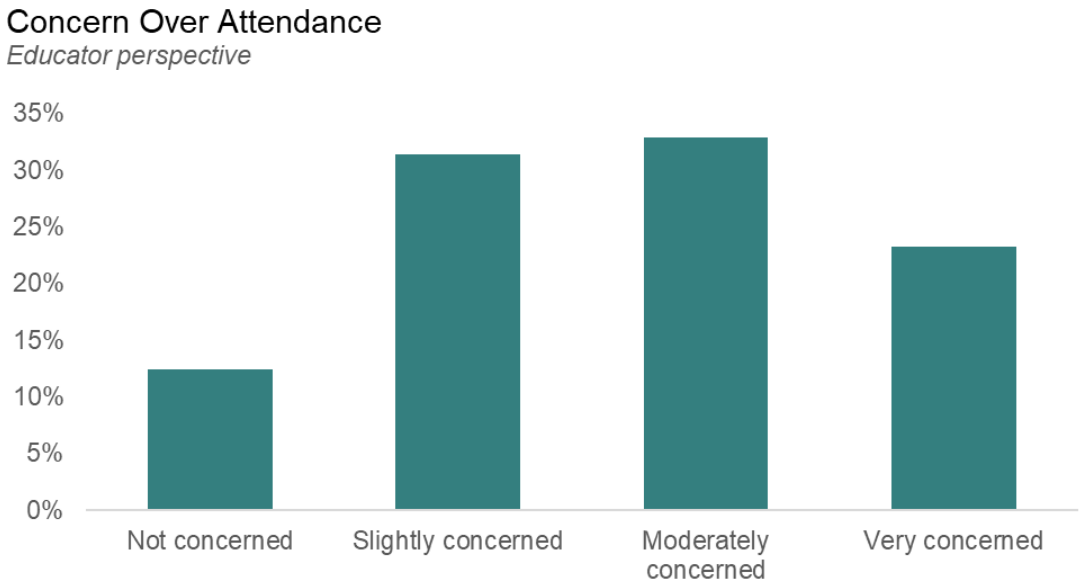


2. Survey: Attendance

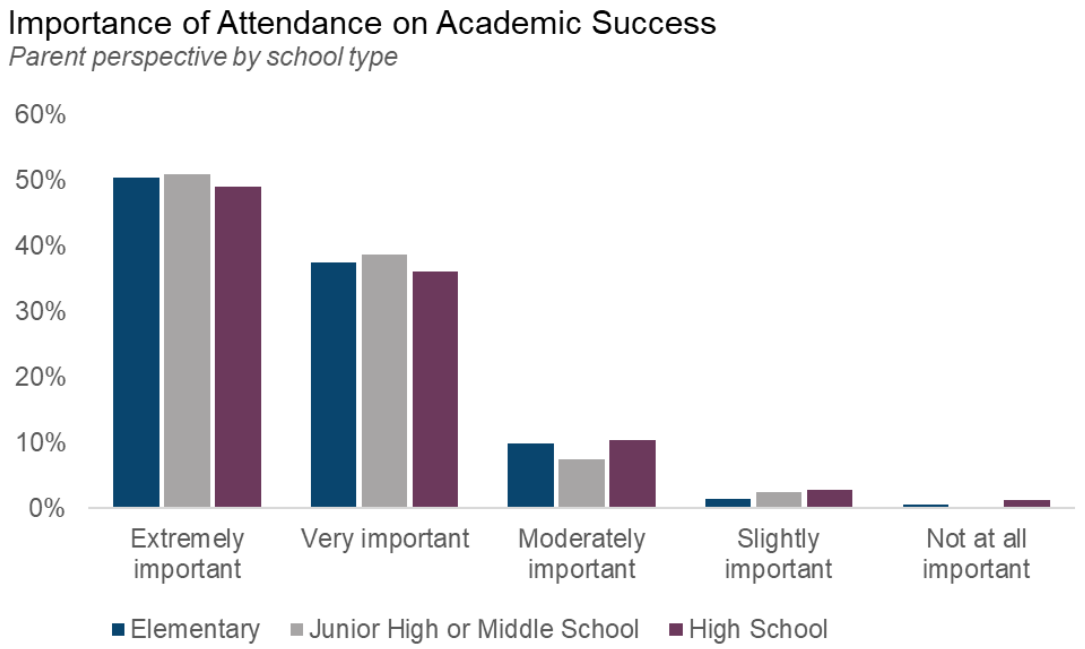
To gain additional understanding on student attendance, perspective from educators and parents with students attending the 16 LEAs in the sample was sought.

First, educators were asked how concerned they currently are with student attendance. Of the 2,119 educators that responded, 23% indicated that they were very concerned about student

attendance, whereas 33% indicated they were moderately concerned over attendance. Overall, educators are more concerned than not as illustrated in the chart below.

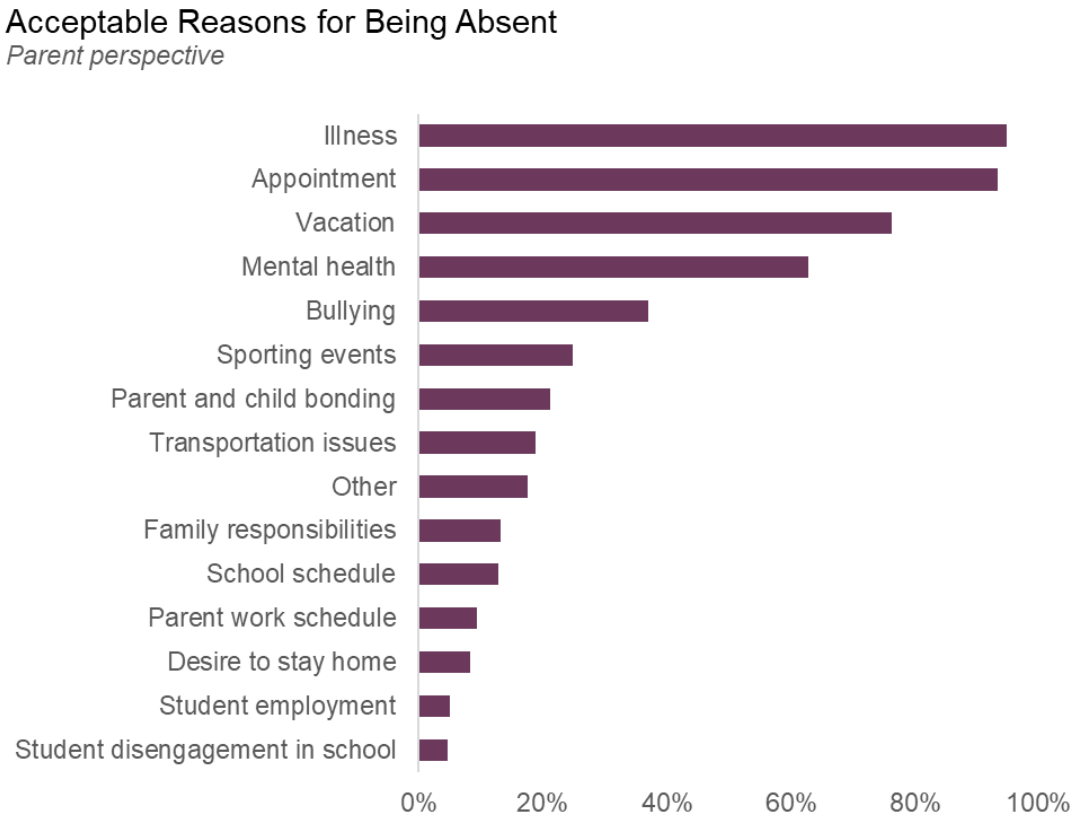


The vast majority (88%) of parents who responded (12,232 responses) reported that regular attendance is “extremely important” or “very important” for their child’s academic success, regardless of whether the student attended elementary, junior high or middle school, or high school.



When asked for reasons why it would be appropriate to miss school, parents identified illnesses and appointments as the most common answers. However, 76% also identified a vacation as an

appropriate reason for missing school and 63% identified mental health as an appropriate reason for missing school (see the chart below for detailed results).



Survey responses indicated not all parents believe the school has a right to know why the student attends, as illustrated by the comments below.

- *"My child was sick once and I was told by the school that the reason wasn't an accepted reason for absence. I have never tried to get an absence excused again. As far as I'm concerned, as her parent, me knowing that she is home is reason enough, and I don't care what's the school's computer thinks about it."*
- *"I get to decide what an excused absence is for my child. The school does not."*

When asked if the school contacts them when their student is absent, the vast majority (91% of 12,378 responses) of parents indicated yes. When asked whether the school ever denied a request to excuse an absence, several (5%) parents reported yes. The main reason provided by 38% of parents for denying the request was because the parent did not contact the school quickly enough after the absence being documented (i.e., Timeline). For example, a request was denied if the LEA policy required parents to excuse an absence within one day, yet the parent called to excuse the absence two days after the absence.

Parents raised other frustrations related to the tracking of absences, including:

- administrative issues,
- erroneously marking the student absent when the student was present,
- the absence being excused by the school (e.g., school sports) but was never updated from unexcused to excused, and
- valid excuse was not marked as an excused absence because a doctor's note was required by the LEA but not provided by the parent.

Overall, parents do not seem to understand what an excused absence entails and are confused by the inconsistent practices from educator to educator and school to school. Even when an absence is excused, 9% of parents reported that there is still some form of penalty or accountability the school imposes on the student, which could appear in the form of the student (instead of the parent) needing to work with the educator to excuse the absence, grades being docked, citizenship grades lowered, etc.

Examples of survey feedback outlining the concerns excusing absences as reported by parents are provided below:

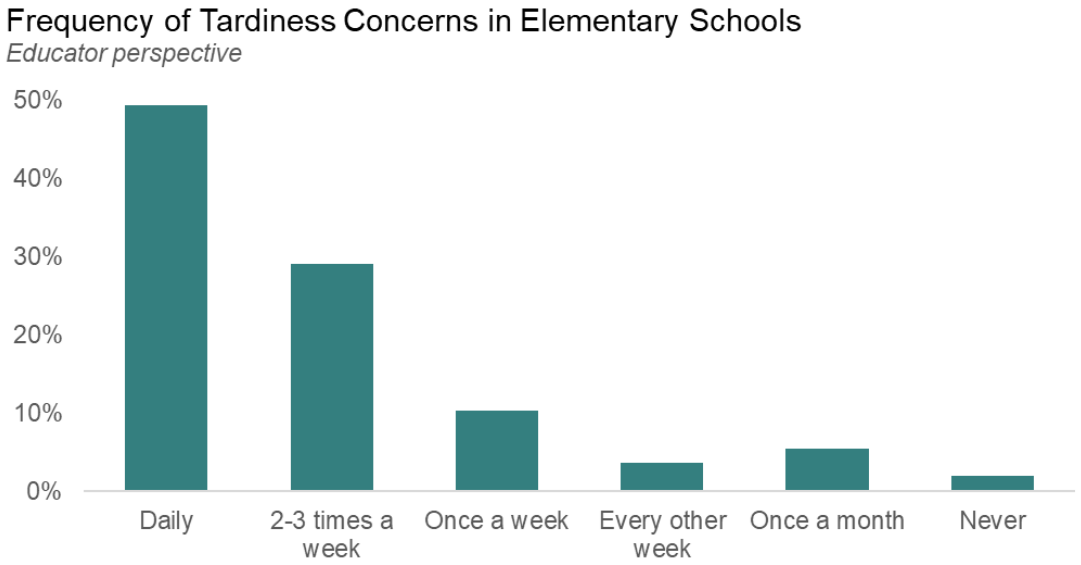
- *"The attendance process is an insulting experience based off the subjective mood of the attendance personnel rather than following school policy."*
- *"Everytime [sic] I let them know my child will be absent prior to the absence, it still goes as an unexcused absence. I have called, left voicemails, and even let them know in person. Always ahead of time. And it's still unexcused. And I still get a phone call and text about it. I have given up on excusing absences, as nothing gets done."*
- *"When you call the school, they say you need to talk to the teacher. I am not sure what an "excused absence" really is."*
- *"The attendance line is never answered & never communicates back on messages left. It makes excusing an absence seem useless."*

3. Survey: Student Tardies

Although student absences are the primary metric used when discussing student participation, tardies are another less commonly discussed measure.

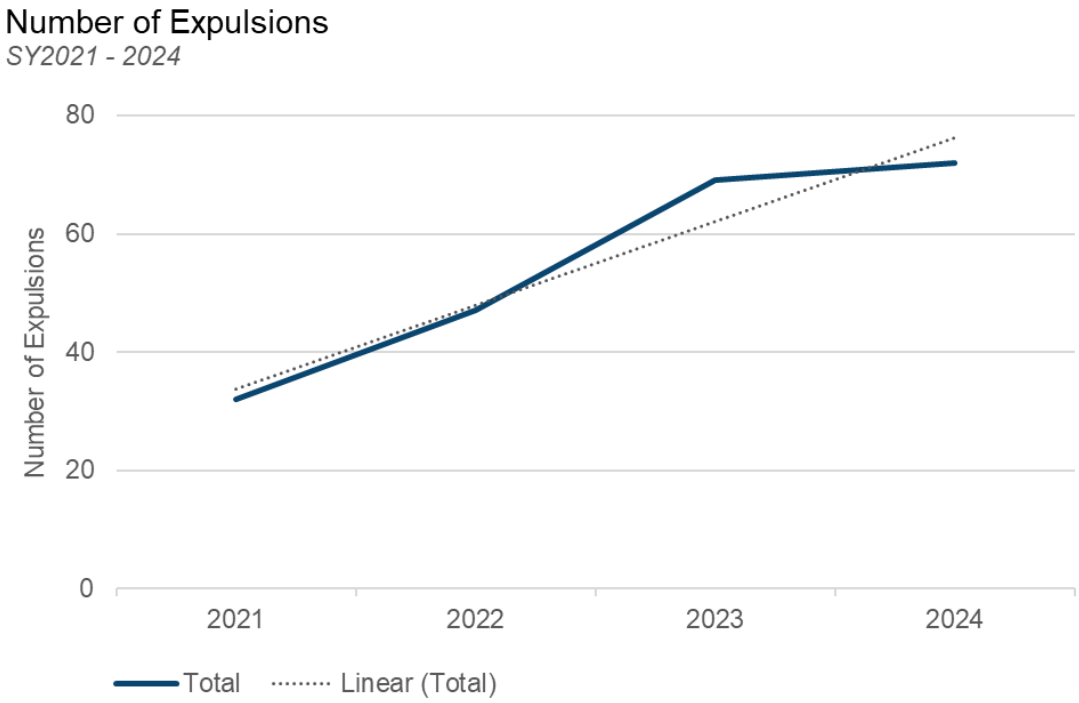
To gain an understanding of how frequently students may be tardy, a survey question was administered to educators in the sample of 16 LEAs and the following was identified.

- 41% percent of junior high and high school educators who responded reported that tardiness is frequently a concern in their class.
- 49% of elementary school educators reported that tardiness is a daily occurrence.

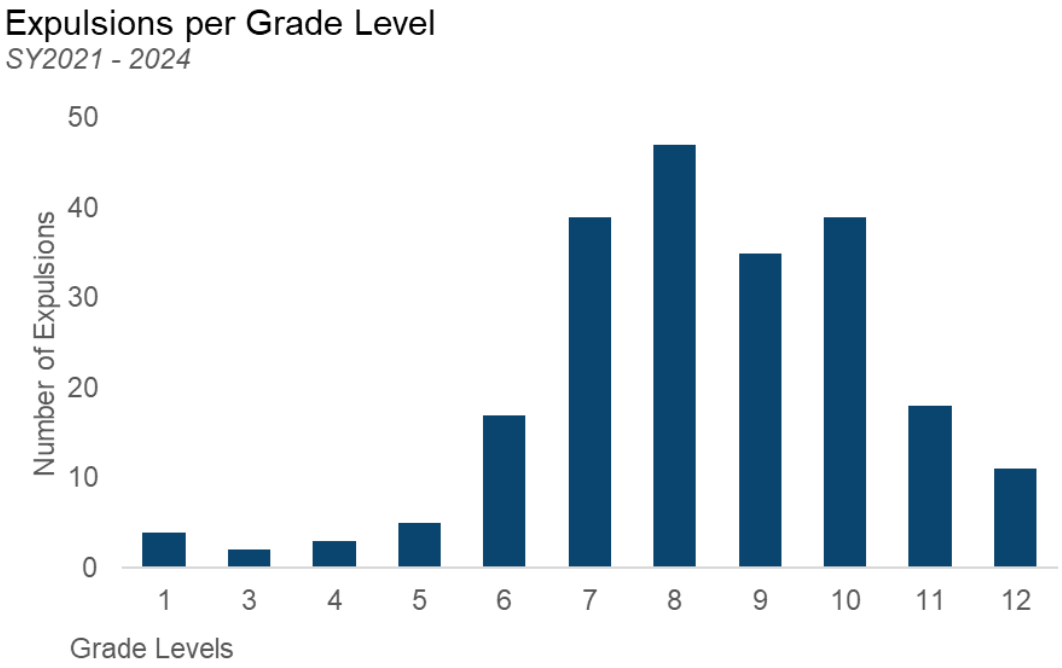


4. Expulsion

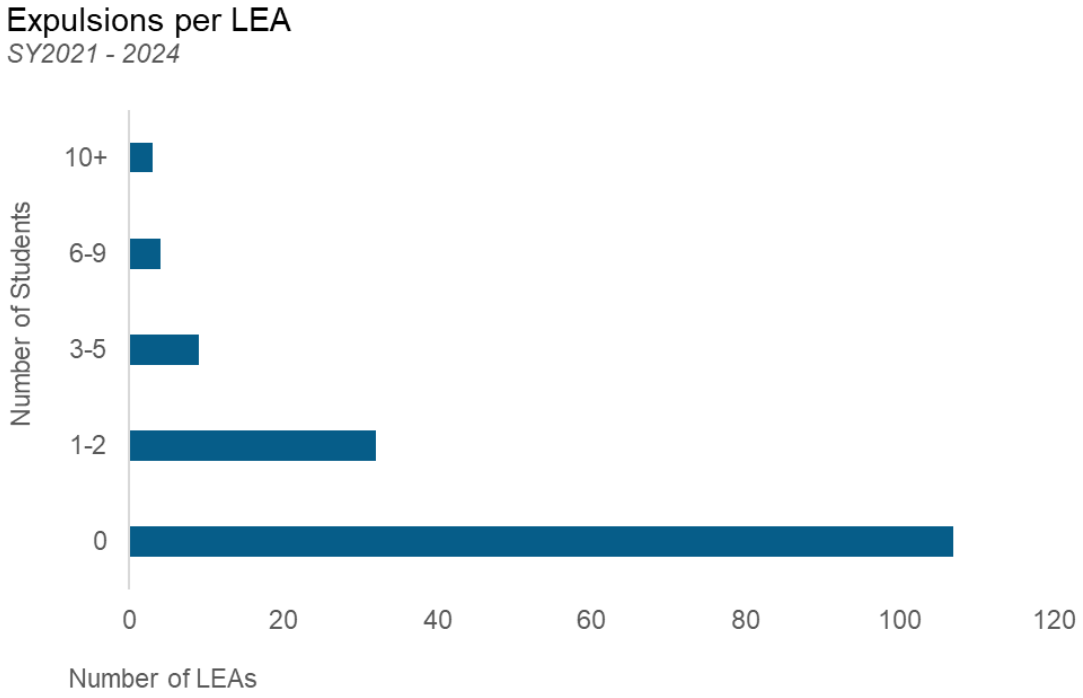
Expulsions affect relatively few students each year, although they have been rising. Between SY2021 and SY2024, there were a total of 220 expulsions reported.



Between SY2021and SY2024, most students expelled were between grades 7-10, as represented in the chart below.



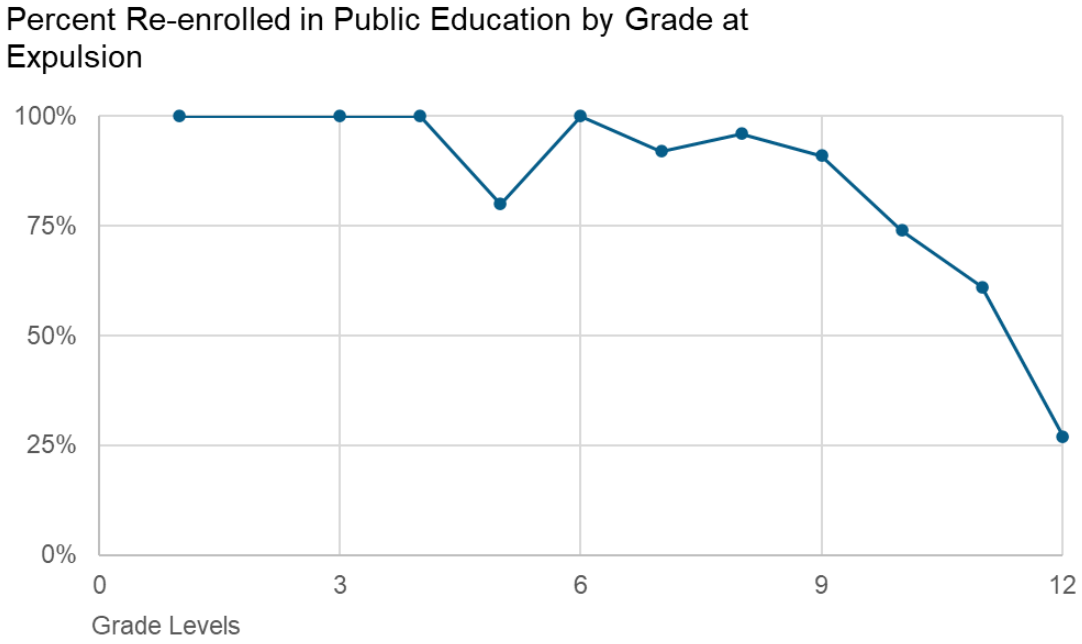
A total of 48 LEAs expelled students between SY2021 and SY2024; whereas 107 (69%) of LEAs did not expel any students over a four-year period. Of those that did expel students, most expelled only one or two students over a four-year period. However, one LEA was responsible for 38% of all expulsions for the period reviewed.



Charters expelled more students than districts. Of the 220 students who were expelled:

- 166 (75%) were expelled from charters, and
- 54 (25%) were expelled from districts.

The rate at which expelled students re-enroll in public education is most closely tied to what grade a student was in when they were expelled. Students expelled at an early grade almost always return to public education; however, as the grade goes up, so too does the rate at which students do not return.



Of the 220 students expelled between SY2021 and SY2024, 34 (15%) students did not re-enroll in public education. Of the 186 students who re-enrolled in public education:

- 114 (61%) re-enrolled within the same school year, and
- 145 (78%) re-enrolled at a different LEA.

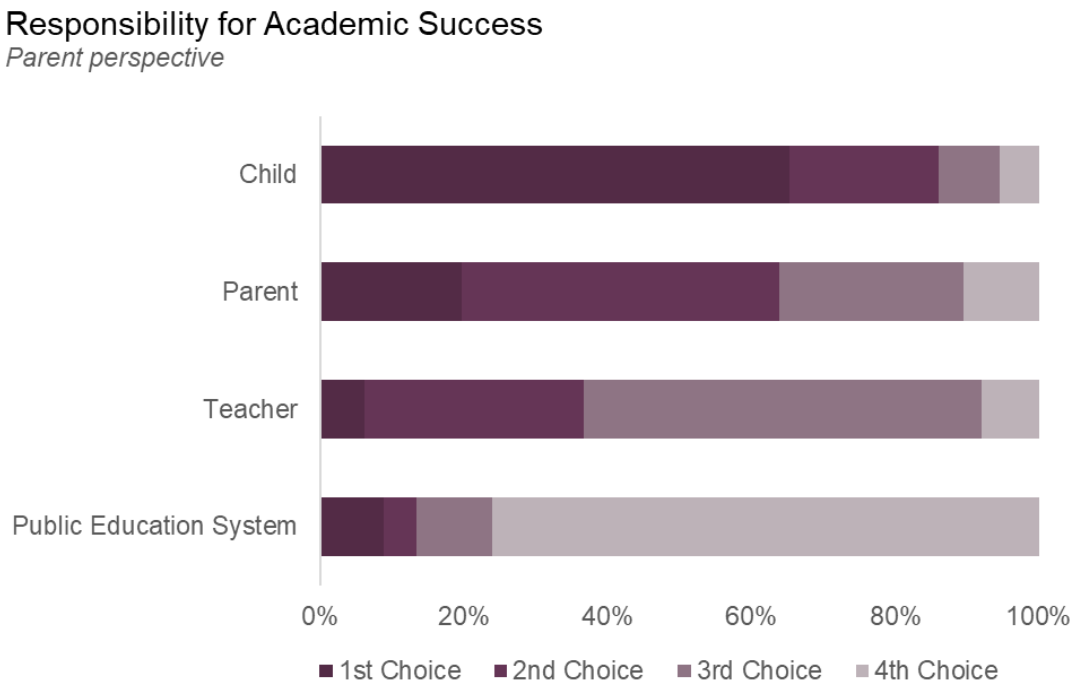
Eleven students re-enrolled within the same LEA within two weeks of being expelled, raising questions why the student was expelled as opposed to suspended or some alternative action. Twelve students were able to enroll in another LEA before they had been formally expelled from their original LEA according to USBE records.

Two of 16 (13%) LEAs included in the sample expelled a total of 16 students between SFY2021 and SFY2024. In a review of the justification for the expulsions:

- 88% were expelled due to truancy, 57% of which re-enrolled in public education, and
- 12% were expelled due to repeated behavior incidents, both of which re-enrolled in public education.

5. Accountability

Parents were asked who they felt was most responsible for their child's academic success, and out of 11,631 parents, when weighted by rank order voting, parents cited the student as being most responsible for ensuring their success. Additional responses are shown in the graph below.



When responses were limited to parents with only elementary or high school students and then separated by school type, the same is true; however, a notable gap emerges.

- In the case of elementary students, the difference between the student and parent being most accountable for the student's success was only 5%, which means parents believe that parents and students are almost equally accountable to ensure the student's success.
- In the case of high school students, the difference favors the high school student by 44%, meaning the student is nearly 1.5 times more responsible for their personal success than their parent. This is an indication that as students age, parents perceive them as more independent.

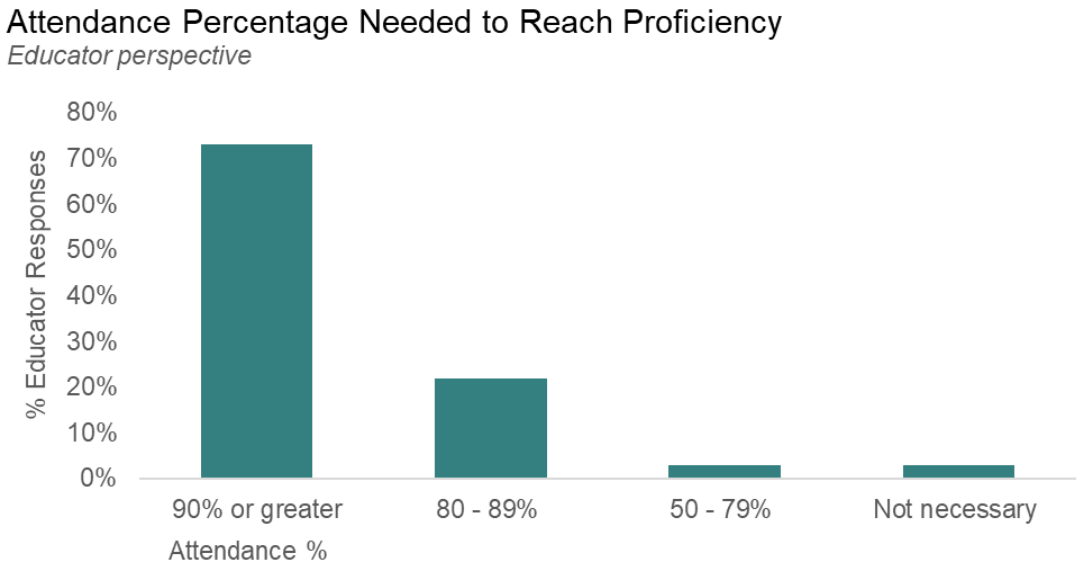
In both situations, parents also identified educators as the next most accountable party for their elementary and high school student's success with a difference of 29% and 66%, respectively. Again, this demonstrates the importance of students in ensuring their own personal success as they age.

6. Student Outcomes

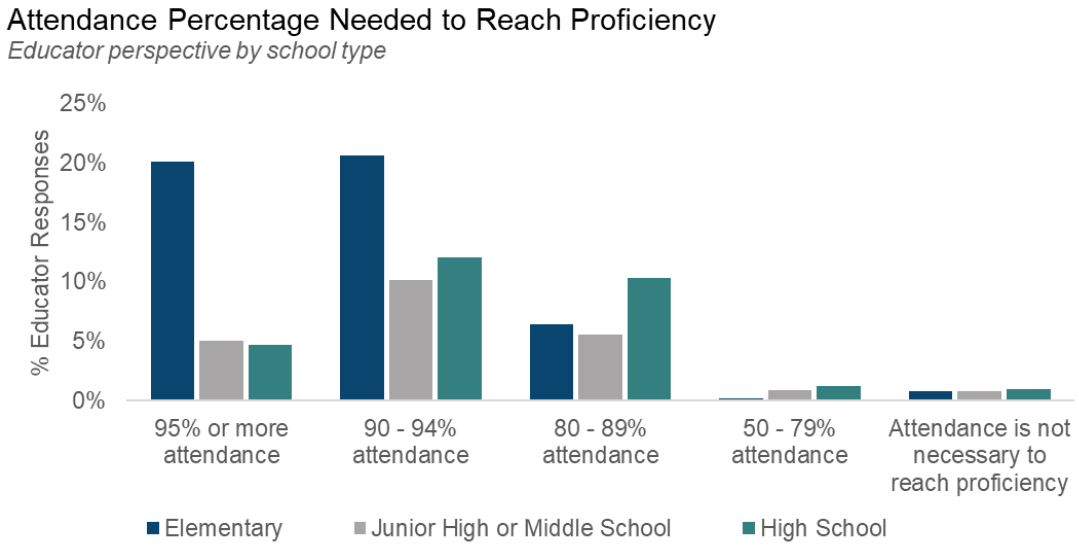
To understand the impact of student attendance on student performance and outcomes, several analyses were performed, including a survey of educator sentiment and data analyses on student attendance in relationship to Acadience Reading, RISE assessments, grade point average (GPA), and graduation. To conduct several of the following analyses, LEA data housed by the USBE, was used. Where necessary, steps were taken (e.g., eliminating questionable data points) to try to mitigate inaccuracies. Where feasible, multiple methodologies were employed to strengthen conclusions drawn.

(a) Attendance and Educator's Perspective

Within the sample of 16 LEAs, educators were asked what percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards. Seventy-three percent of educators indicated that they believe students would need to attend at least 90% (i.e., not chronically absent) of the school year, as illustrated below.



When separated by school type, more elementary educators (41%) identified 90% or better attendance as necessary, versus junior high (15%) and high school (17%). Three percent of educators indicated that attendance is not necessary for a student to reach proficiency in the core standards. Additional educator perspectives are shown in the chart below.



(b) Attendance and Acadience Reading

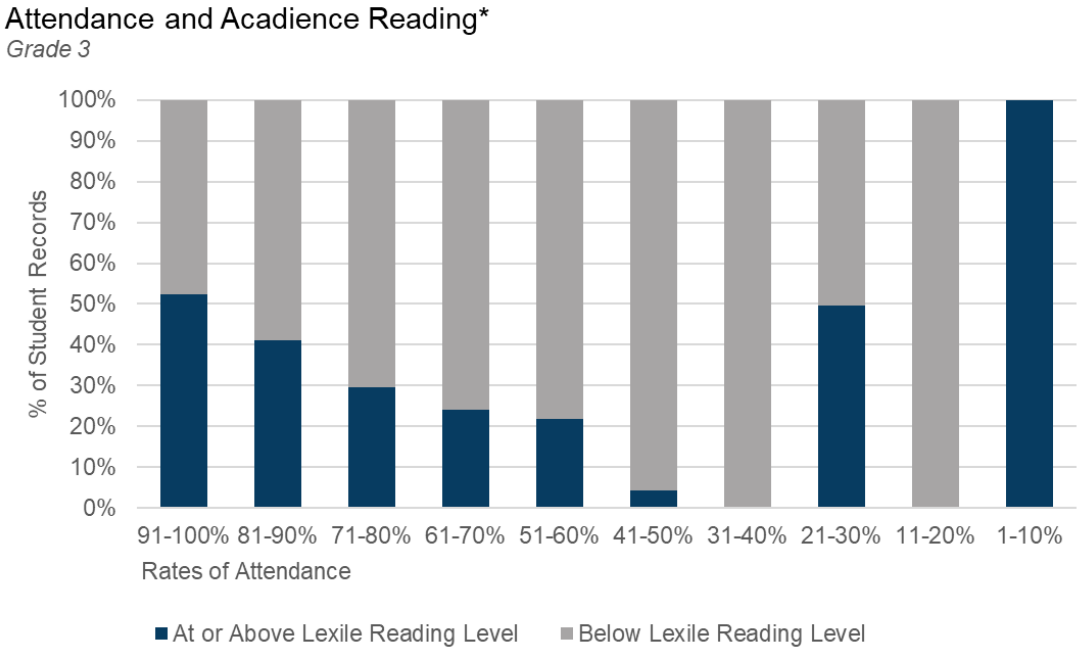
The Acadience Reading assessment establishes benchmarks to help educators determine if a student in grades K-6 will achieve the grade level Lexile reading proficiency by the end of the year, or if they need more support. To understand how attendance may impact a student's performance on both the Acadience Reading benchmark assessments and achievement of the grade level Lexile reading proficiency, grade 3 Acadience Reading benchmark scores and Lexile reading proficiency scores were reviewed for SY2024.

The following table details the count of grade 3 students' Acadience records reviewed per attendance rate as used for this analysis. (Note that an individual student may have taken the Acadience reading assessment up to three times throughout the year, at the beginning, middle and end of the year, and therefore could have three records.) As shown in the table below, the majority (78%) of students are within the 91-100% attendance bracket.

Rate of Attendance	Student Records*	Percent
91-100%	34401	78%
81-90%	8182	19%
71-80%	1176	3%
61-70%	260	1%
51-60%	82	>1%
41-50%	23	>1%
31-40%	4	>1%
21-30%	2	>1%
11-20%	1	>1%
1-10%	1	>1%
Total	44132	100%

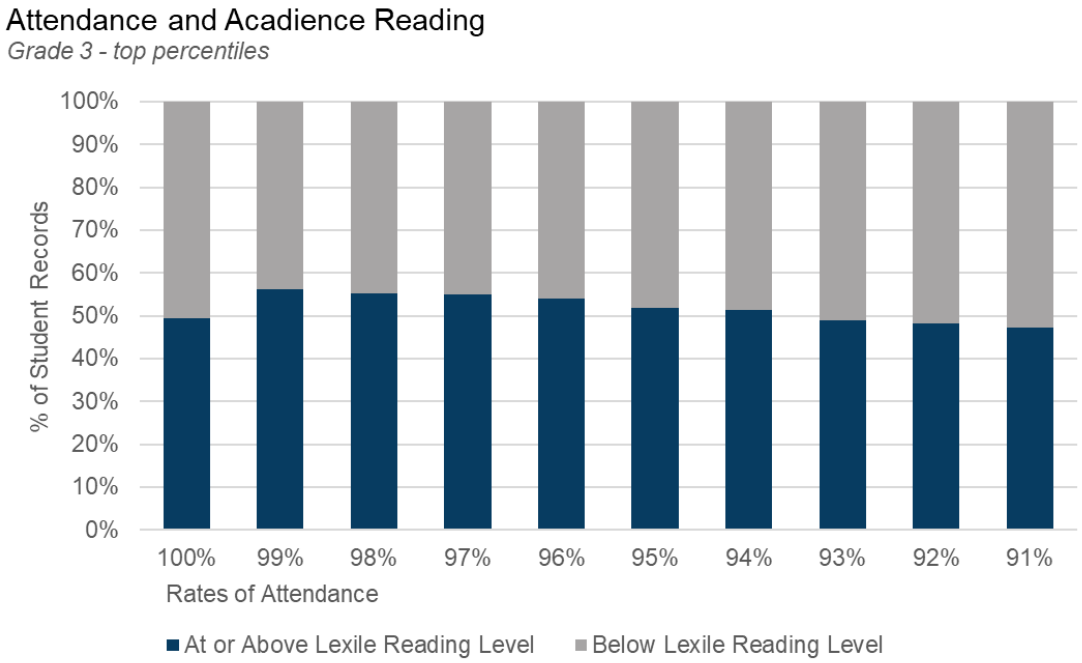
* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

As illustrated in the chart below, in SY2024, 52% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled achieved a grade 3 Lexile reading proficiency by the end of the year. Whereas 41% of students who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled achieved a grade 3 Lexile reading proficiency by the end of the year.



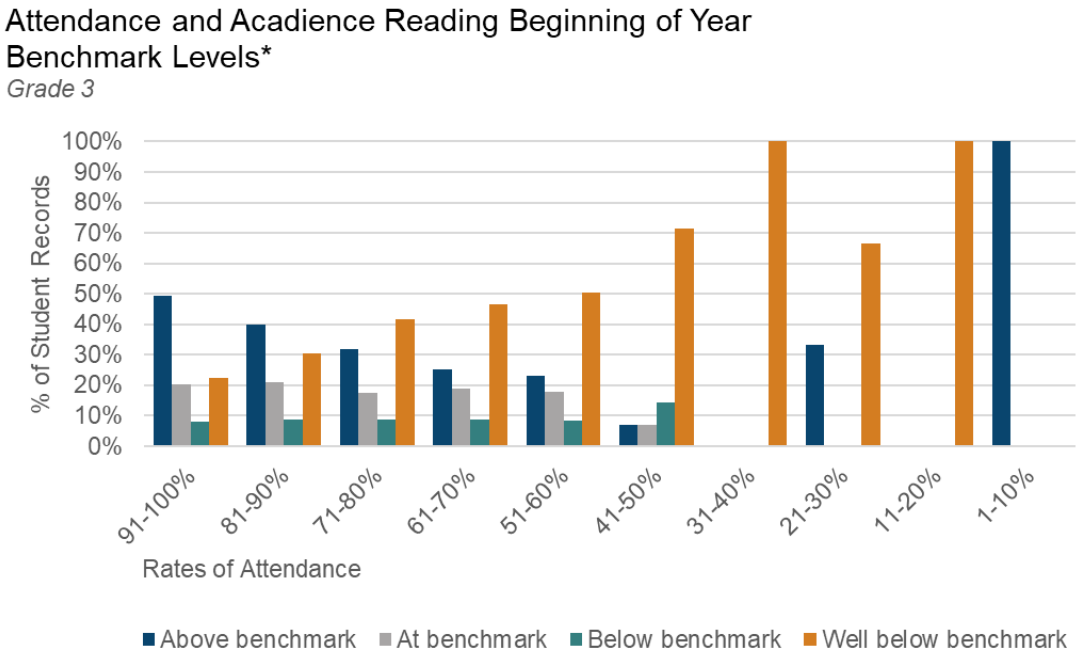
In general, each 10% drop in the rate of attendance (i.e., approximately 18 days) resulted in an average 5% decrease in the number of student benchmark scores that met the grade 3 Lexile reading proficiency level by the end of the year.

As most (78%) grade 3 student records were in the top rate of attendance (i.e., 91 – 100%), changes in Lexile reading proficiencies due to attendance were reviewed for these records. For each percentage decrease in attendance (approximately two school days) there was, on average, less than a 1% change in proficiency results, as illustrated below.



In other words, absenteeism in large quantities (i.e., absences greater than 16 days (9% of 180) may be a factor in grade 3 students' Lexile Reading level. However, for the average student with absenteeism of less than 10% of the time, which is most (78%) students, the impact may be minimal. This may contradict sentiments of some elementary educators who felt like attendance over 95% was necessary to achieve proficiency. However, factors such as school interventions to help students who may be struggling may help improve performance regardless of attendance.

As the Acadience Reading assessment is administered three times a year (i.e., Beginning of Year (BOY), Middle of Year (MOY), and End of Year (EOY)), results from the BOY and EOY benchmark assessments were compared. The chart below illustrates the distribution of grade 3 students' Acadience benchmark levels (i.e., prior to attendance is measured for the SY) in SY2024 by their eventual attendance percentage.

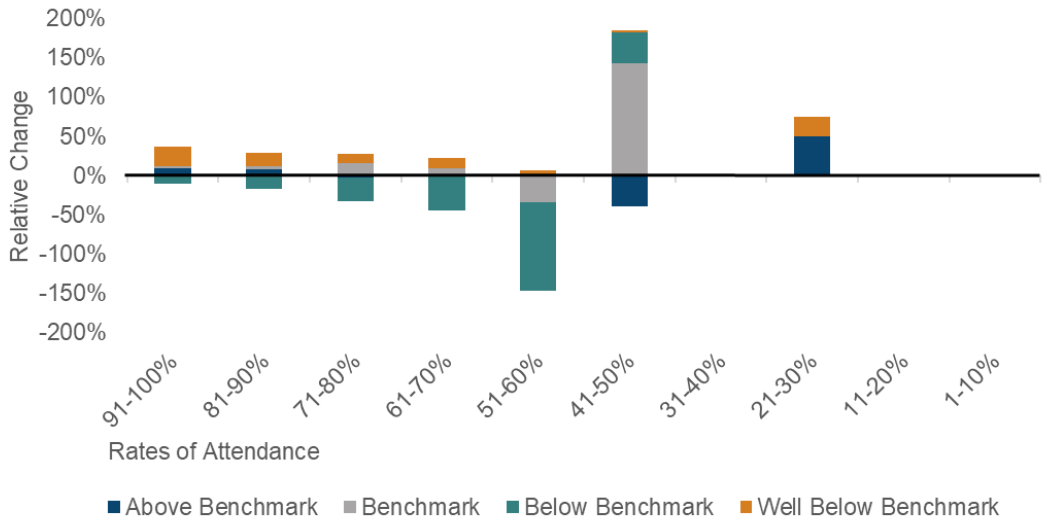


* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

When looking at increments of 10% attendance, higher rates of attendance resulted in a higher likelihood that grade 3 students will be at or above benchmark in Acadience Reading levels. When considering attendance and relevant change (i.e., the percentage of change from beginning of year to end of year), there is also more improvement in the groups with higher attendance than those with lower attendance (note: groups with very low attendance rates have a low student count and therefore anomalies are evident) as shown in the chart below.

Attendance and Acadience Reading by End of Year Benchmark Levels*

Grade 3

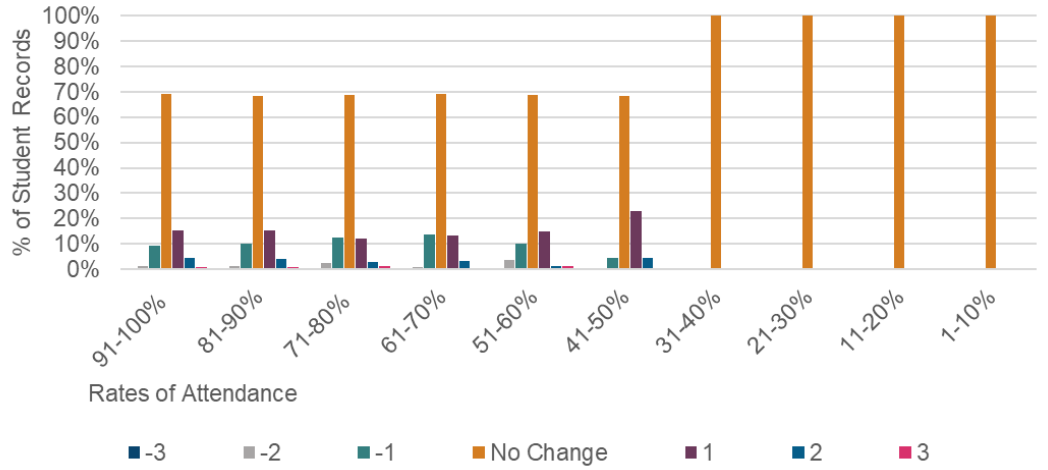


* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

For the majority (69%) of grade 3 students, benchmark Acadience Reading levels remained the same (i.e., the student entered and exited with the same benchmark level) regardless of their rate of attendance throughout SY2024, as illustrated below.

Attendance and Acadience Reading by End of Year Benchmark Levels*

Grade 3



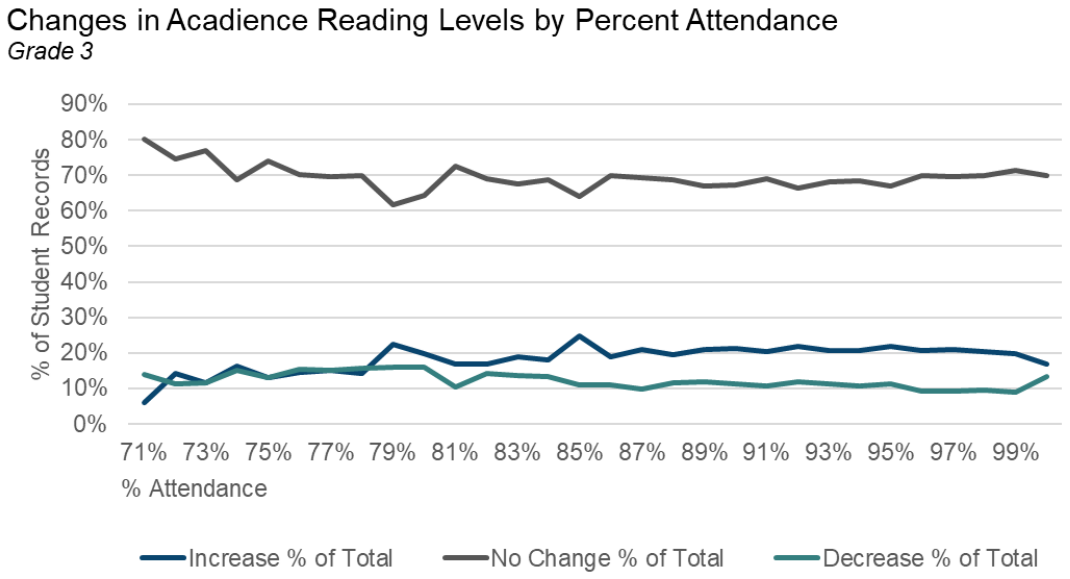
* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

This is in part because many students in grade 3 achieved a level of “Above Benchmark” and can no longer improve; however, many students in grade 3 still have room for improvement. For example, a closer look at students in grade 3 with attendance levels of 91% or greater reveal that 63% achieved and maintained an Acadience Reading Level of “Above Benchmark;” however, 25% are still “Below” or “Well Below” benchmark, (see the table below) and retained their Acadience Reading Level even though they attended school 91-100% of the time.

Benchmark Level	Count of 3rd Graders with Attendance between 91% - 100%	Percentage of Total
Well Below Benchmark	5105	22%
Below Benchmark	707	3%
Benchmark	3023	13%
Above Benchmark	14871	63%
Grand Total	23706	100%

Grade 3 students who attend between 71% - 100% of the time, are more likely (69%) to maintain (i.e., have no change to) their Acadience Reading Level by the end of the year then they are to increase or decrease their Acadience Reading Level.

For those who do experience a change, a student in grade 3 has roughly 50/50 odds of increasing (14%) or decreasing (15%) their Acadience Reading Level if they attend school approximately 71-80% of the time. However, a student in grade 3 who attends school 81-100% of the time has greater odds of increasing their Acadience Reading Level (approximately 5%). Students in grade 3 who attend school 81-90% of the time and students in grade 3 who attend school 91-100% of the time have nearly the same odds of either increasing or decreasing their Acadience Reading Level as illustrated below.



(c) Attendance and RISE Assessment

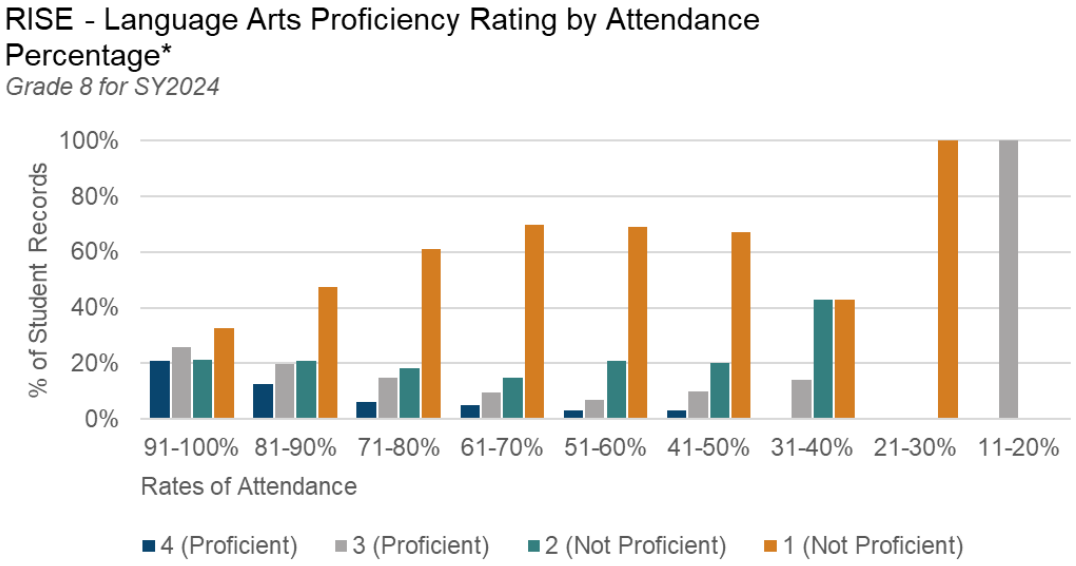
The RISE assessment has three parts: Language Arts, Math, and Science. The following table details the count of grade 8 RISE student records in SY2024 per attendance rate for students who took any one of the RISE assessments.

Rate of Attendance	Language Arts		Math		Science		Total Student Records*	Total Percent
	Student Records	Percent	Student Records	Percent	Student Records	Percent		
91-100%	36662	81%	34313	81%	36665	81%	107640	81%
81-90%	6755	15%	6484	15%	6768	15%	20007	15%
71-80%	1392	3%	1326	3%	1407	3%	4125	3%
61-70%	359	1%	338	1%	367	1%	1064	1%
51-60%	116	<1%	107	<1%	131	<1%	354	<1%
41-50%	30	<1%	22	<1%	35	<1%	87	<1%
31-40%	7	<1%	5	<1%	8	<1%	20	<1%
21-30%	1	<1%	1	<1%	2	<1%	4	<1%
11-20%	1	<1%	1	<1%	1	<1%	3	<1%
Total	45323	100%	42597	100%	45384	100%	133304	100%

* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Proficiency scores are rated on a scale of one to four for each RISE assessment. A student must score a three or four to be considered proficient. Therefore, to understand the impact attendance may have on RISE proficiency, results within this scale were reviewed.

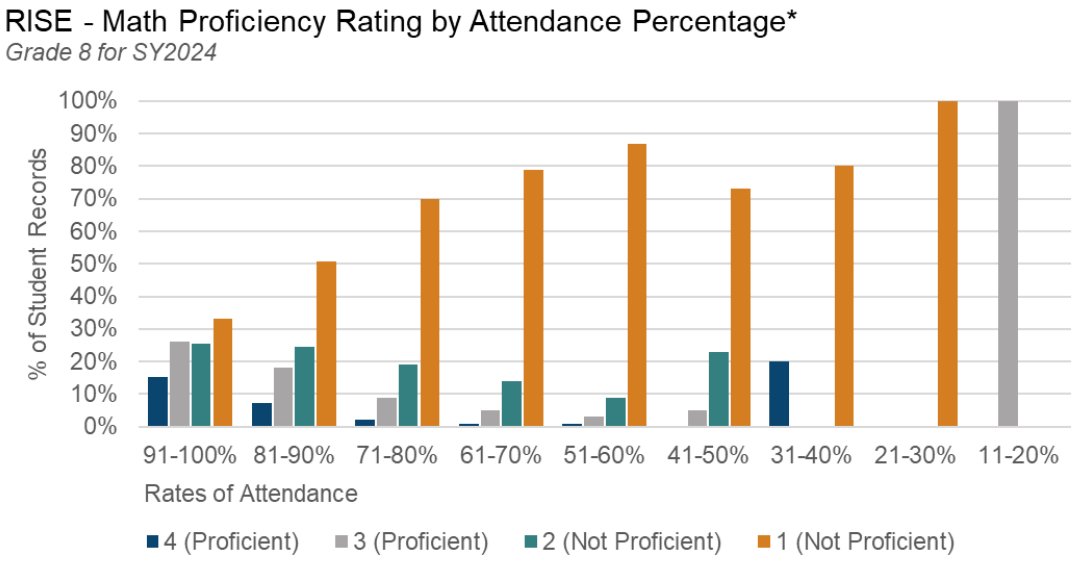
As illustrated in the chart below, in SY2024, 46% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient in Language Arts. Of those proficient, 21% scored a four and 26% scored a three. In contrast, only 32% of students who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient in Language Arts. Of those proficient, 12% scored a four, and 20% scored a three; see the chart below for additional information.



* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Each 10% drop in the rate of attendance (i.e., approximately 18 days) resulted in an average 7% decrease in the number of students in grade 8 who were proficient in Language Arts.

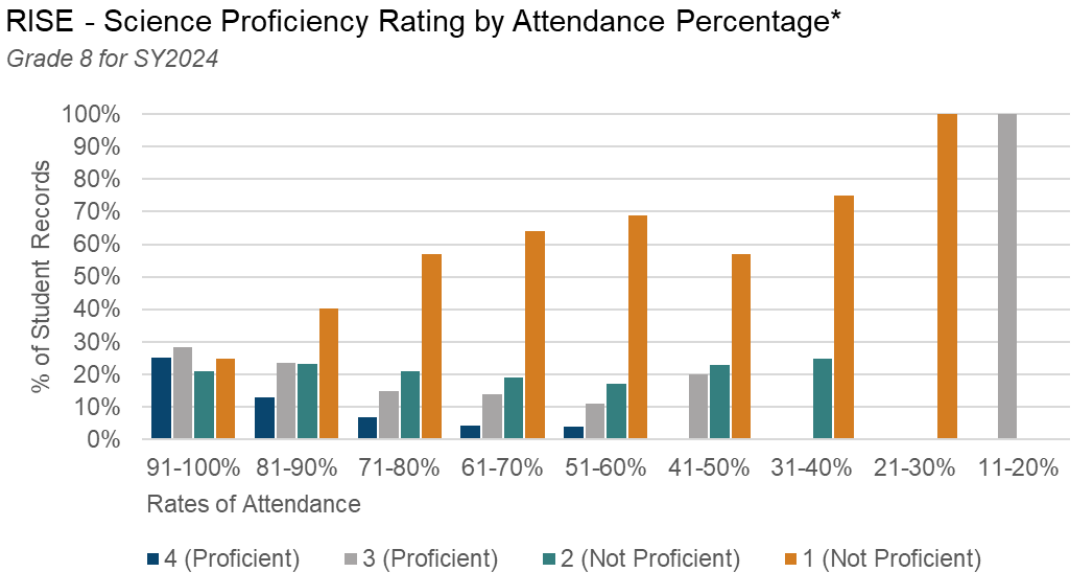
As illustrated in the chart below, in SY2024, 41% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient in Math. Of those proficient, 15% scored a four and 26% scored a three. Whereas only 25% of students who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient. Of those proficient, 7% scored a four and 18% scored a three. See the chart below for additional information.



* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Each 10% drop in the rate of attendance (i.e., approximately 18 days) resulted in an average 7% decrease in the number of students in grade 8 who were proficient in Math.

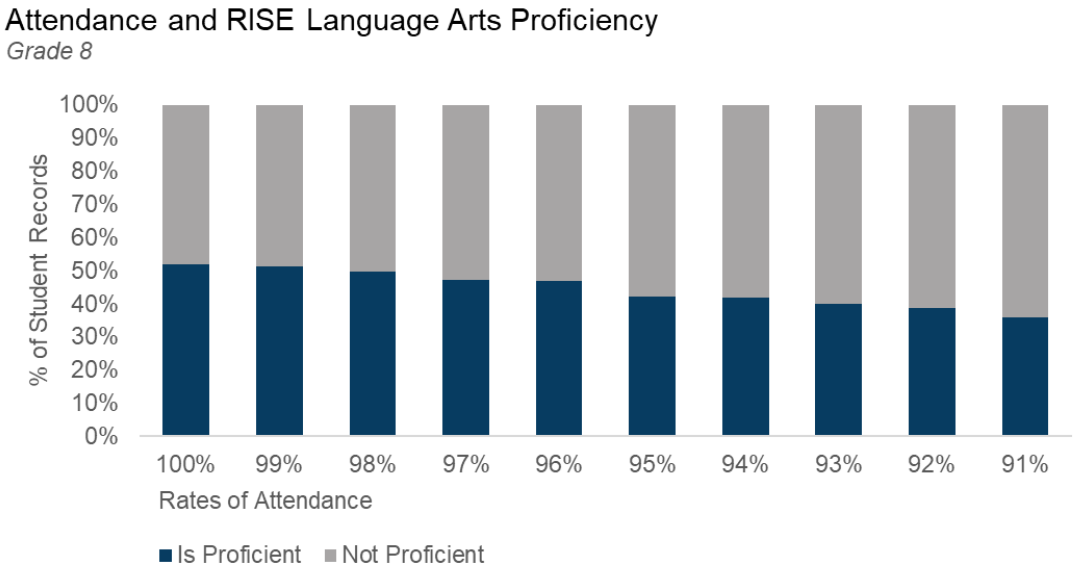
As illustrated in the chart below, in SY2024, 53% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient in Science. Of those proficient, 25% scored a four and 28% scored a three. Whereas only 37% of students who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled were considered proficient. Of those proficient, 13% scored a four and 24% scored a three. See the chart below for additional information.

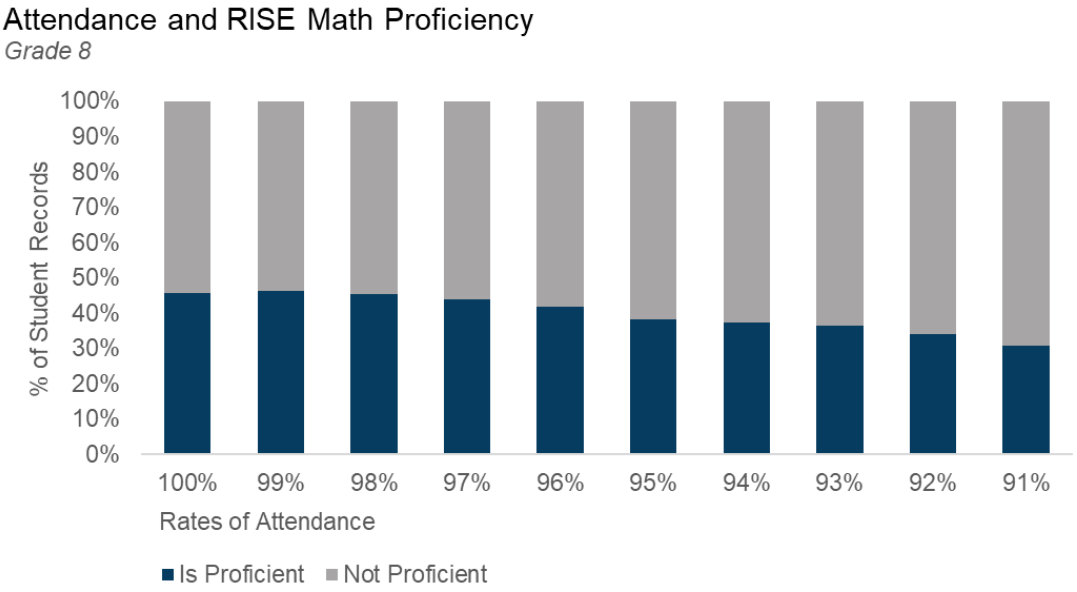


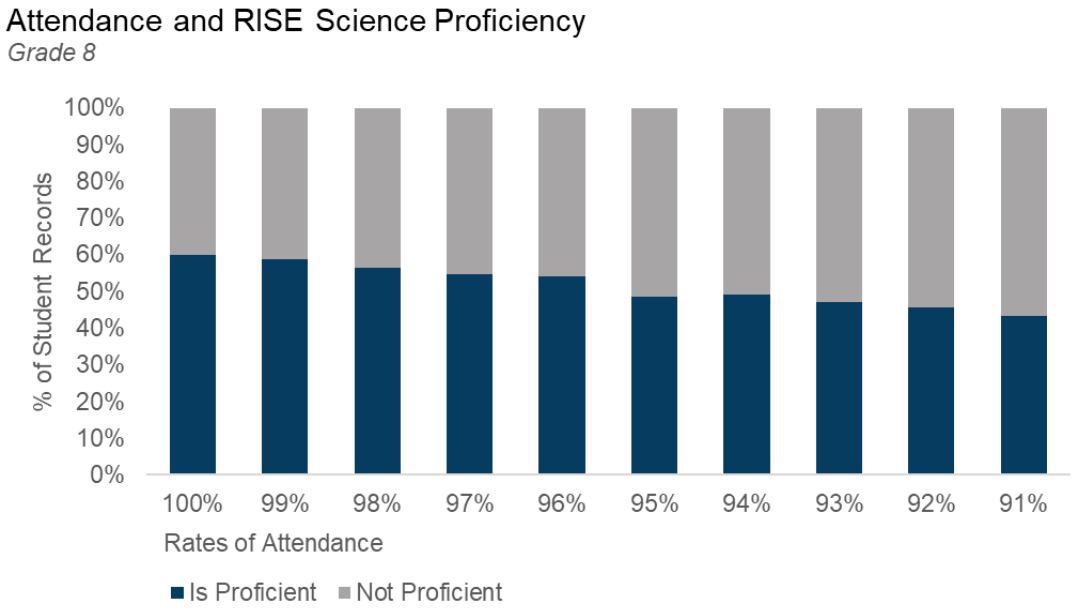
* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Each 10% drop in the rate of attendance (i.e., approximately 18 days) resulted in an average 6% decrease in the number of students in grade 8 who were proficient in Science.

As most (81%) students in grade 8 were in the top rate of attendance (i.e., 91 – 100%), changes in RISE proficiencies for Language Arts, Math, and Science were reviewed for these records. For each percentage decrease in attendance (approximately two school days) there was on average, a 2% decrease in proficiency results for each assessment, as illustrated below.





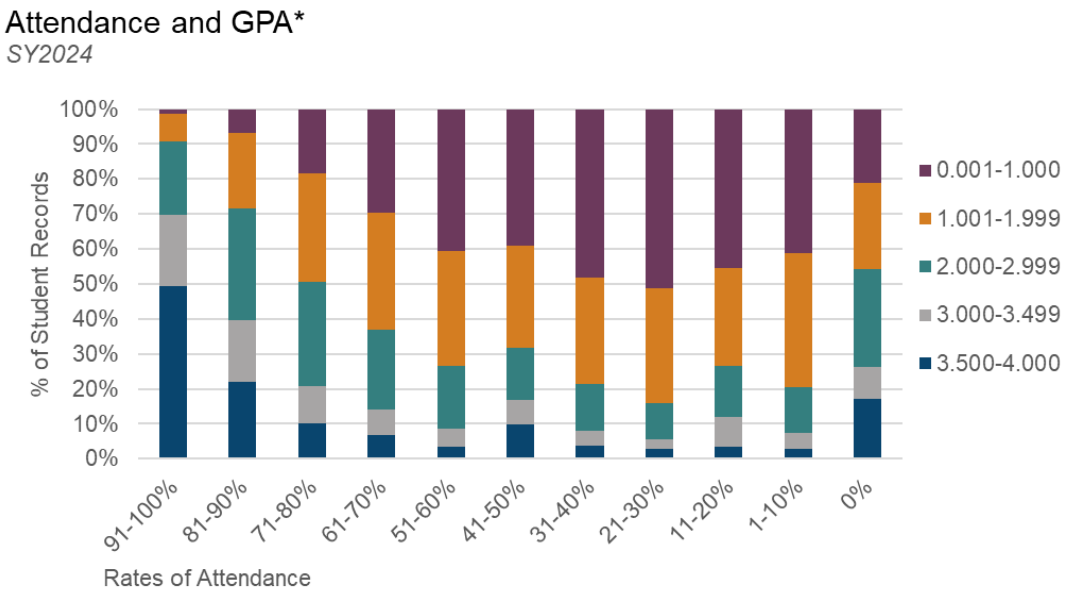


In other words, absenteeism appears to be a factor in grade 8 students' RISE assessment scores, regardless of the type of assessment (i.e., Language Arts, Math, Science), though not necessarily the only factor.

(d) Attendance and Grade Point Average (GPA)

To understand how attendance may impact a student's overall GPA, cumulative GPAs for students in grades 9-12 were reviewed. In SY2023 and SY2024, approximately 70% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.00, while only 40% of students who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.00.

As illustrated in the chart below, students with higher rates of attendance increase their odds of obtaining a higher cumulative GPA. However, high attendance rates are not the only contributing factor as evidenced by the fact that students with high rates of attendance still receive low GPAs, while students with lower rates of attendance generally have lower GPAs overall.



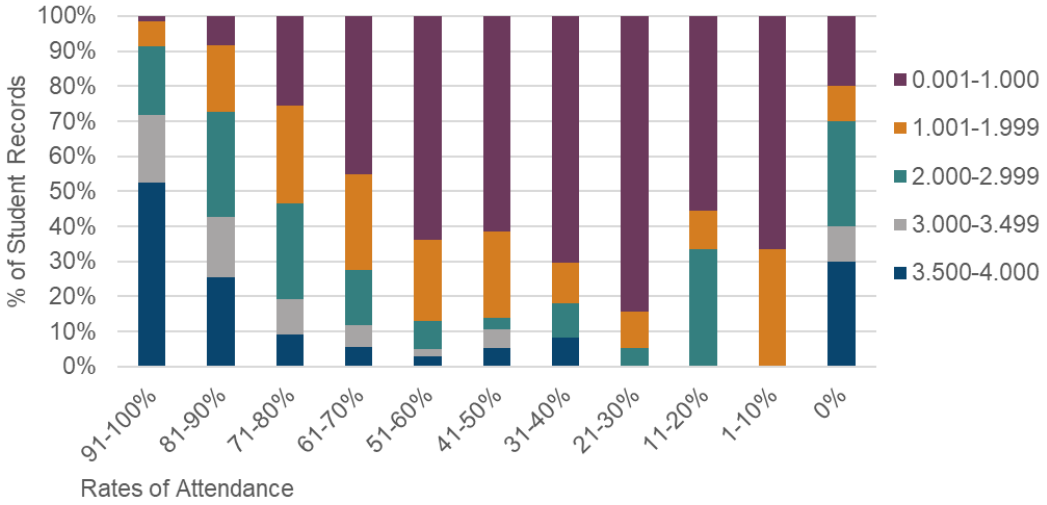
* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Recognizing that the cumulative GPA for students is determined over multiple school years, further analysis was completed looking only at students in grade 9, as grade 9 is the first year that a GPA is required to be reported to the USBE. Results were similar to those found with the full population, as illustrated in the chart below. In SY2024, for students in grade 9:

- 72% who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.0,
- 43% who attended school between 81-90% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.00, and
- 0% that attended school between 1-30% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of 3.00 or higher.

Attendance and GPA*

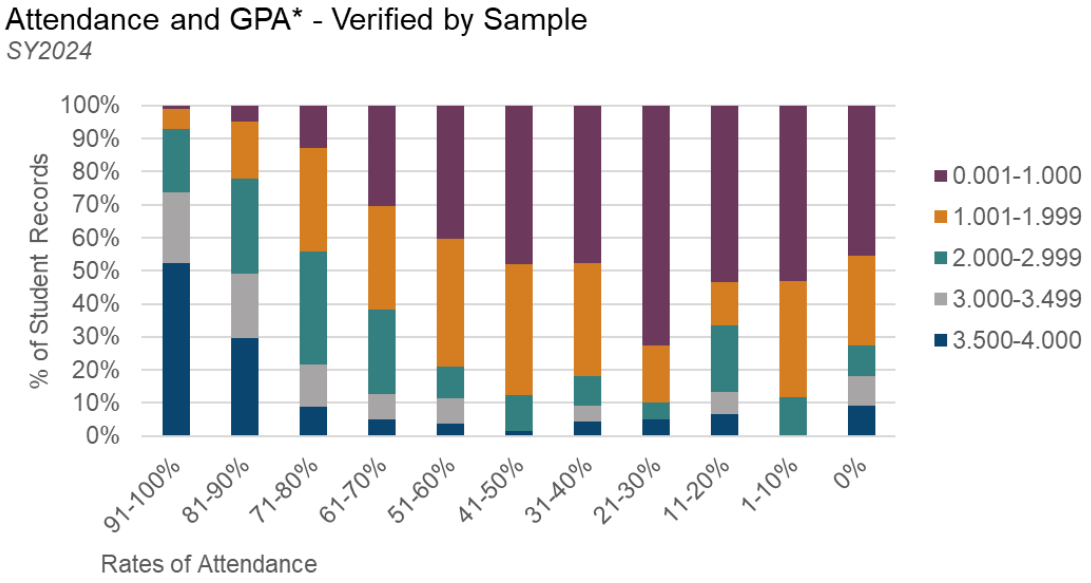
Grade 9 for SY2024



* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Using the same methodology, the same test was performed using available data provided by LEAs in the audit sample, which data had been audited. The results of the sample data were similar to the full population, though not exact. As illustrated below, in SY2024:

- 74% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.00, and
- 49% of students who attended school between 81%-90% of the days they were enrolled had a GPA of at least 3.00.



* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

Most (79%) students in the population analyzed had attendance rates of 91%-100% (i.e., less than 16 absences for a 180-day school year). Further analysis of the students with attendance rates of 91-100% indicated that a higher attendance rate indicated a higher likelihood of a student obtaining a GPA between 3.50-4.00 (see table below).

Each percentage decrease in attendance (approximately two school days) resulted in an average 2% decrease in the count of students receiving a 3.50-4.00 GPA, with the most common change being a 3% decrease. This correlation did not change when looking at the verified attendance from the sample LEAs.

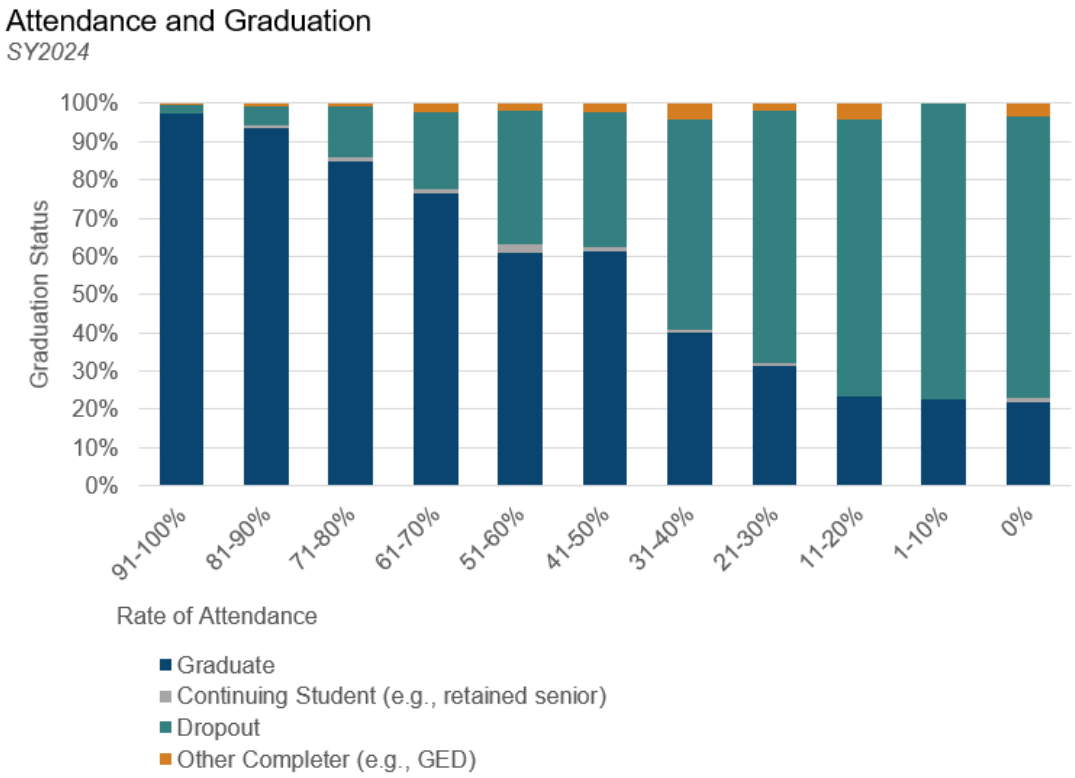
Rate of Attendance	Percent of Students with GPA of 3.50-4.00
91%	33%
92%	36%
93%	40%
94%	43%
95%	46%
96%	49%
97%	52%
98%	55%
99%	59%
100%	51%

(e) Attendance and Graduation

Finally, to better understand the impact of attendance on graduation, graduation rates were reviewed. In SY2023 and SY2024:

- approximately 97% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled, graduated, and
- students who attended school between 81% - 90% (i.e., up to 16 additional days of absences, or 32 total absences) had a 3% lower graduation rate.

As illustrated in the chart below, students with higher rates of attendance increase their odds of graduating. High attendance rates are not the only contributing factor as evidenced by the fact that students with high rates of attendance still do not graduate (e.g., they dropout, obtain their GED, etc.), though students with lower rates of attendance have a higher chance of dropping out.



* Low Student Record counts within groups may result in highly visible outliers in the data charts.

However, as noted in the table below, the graduation rate takes a notable drop when the attendance rate drops to the 71 - 80% group.

Rate of Attendance	Percent Graduated	Percent Dropped Out
91-100%	97%	2%
81-90%	94%	5%
71-80%	85%	13%
61-70%	77%	20%
51-60%	61%	35%
41-50%	61%	35%
31-40%	40%	55%
21-30%	31%	66%
11-20%	23%	72%
1-10%	23%	77%
0%	22%	74%

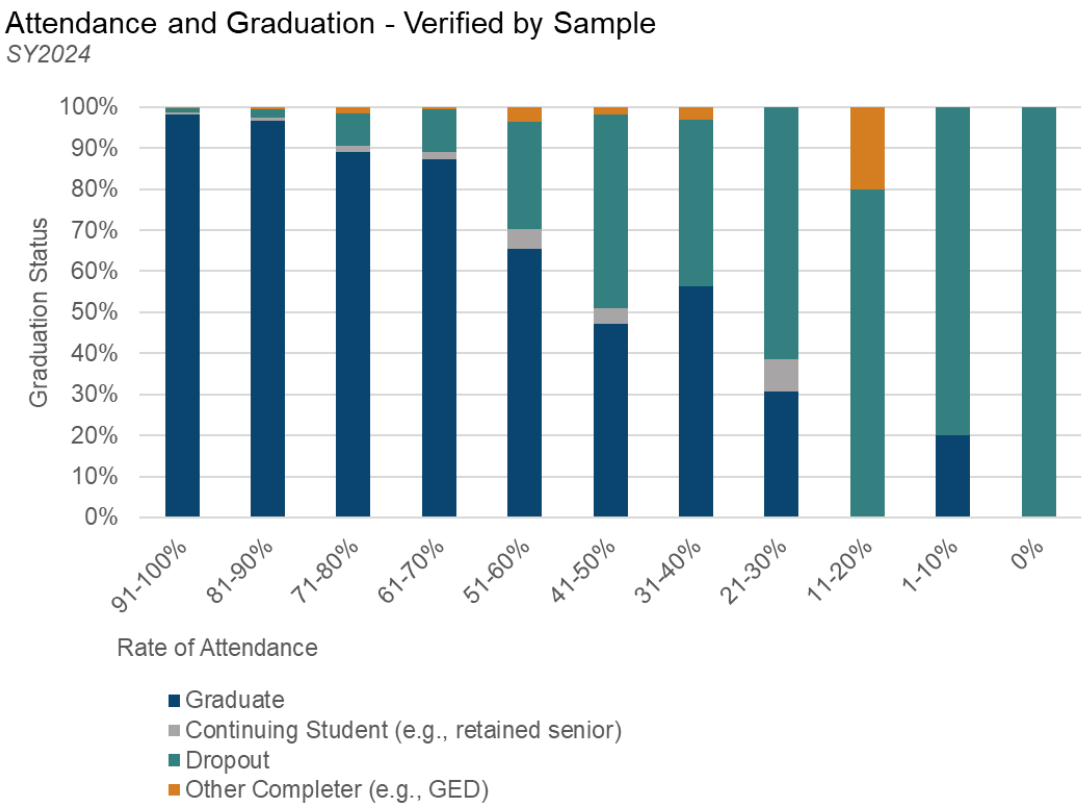
Using the same methodology, the same test was performed using available data provided by LEAs in the audit sample, which had been audited. Population counts by attendance groups are provided for clarity.

Rate of Attendance	Count of Students*	Percent of Students
91-100%	4132	70%
81-90%	1044	18%
71-80%	344	6%
61-70%	174	3%
51-60%	81	1%
41-50%	53	1%
31-40%	32	1%
21-30%	13	>1%
11-20%	5	>1%
1-10%	5	>1%
0%	2	>1%
Grand Total	5885	100%

*Low student counts can lead to visual outliers.

The results of the sample data were similar to the full population, though not exact. As illustrated below, in SY2023 and SY2024:

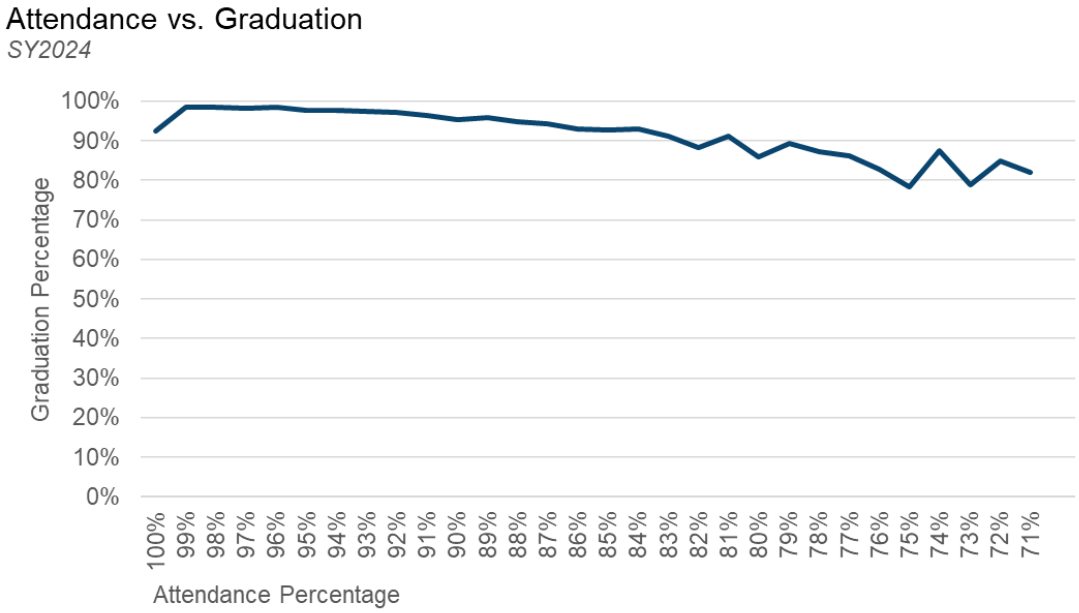
- approximately 98% of students who attended school for at least 91% of the days they were enrolled graduated, and
- students who attended school for at least 81% of the days they were enrolled graduated 97%, only a 1% difference.



Most (76%) students in the population analyzed had attendance rates of 91%-100% (i.e., less than 16 absences for a 180-day school year). Further analysis of the students with attendance rates of 91-100% indicated that a higher attendance rate had minimal effects on graduation rates, though the relationship was overall positive (i.e., as attendance rates go down, so do graduation rates).

However, when compared to the verified attendance of LEAs in the sample, the relationship was overall negative (i.e., as attendance goes down, graduation goes up). In both cases, the average reported change year-to-year was less than 1% (i.e., basically flat).

To better understand when the rate of attendance may have the most notable impact on graduation, the top 95% of students were closely examined. Based on the average rate of change for each 3-percentage block (e.g., 98%-100%, 95-97%), the impact of the rate of attendance on graduation becomes more pronounced around the 85% attendance mark.



III. Reasons for the Current Conditions of the System and Student Participation

One of the most valuable aspects of any audit is to identify why things are the way they are. To help identify potential reasons regarding current trends related to student participation in public education or other education alternatives, surveys were administered to parents, students, and educators.

A. Public Education System

1. State Board of Education

(a) Policy

The USBE Administrative Rules webpage for R277-419 Pupil Accounting reflects that the Board Rule has been updated at least 11 times since December 8, 2017. As Board Rules must be reviewed for continuation at least every 5 years, updates at that interval are not unexpected. Other updates to the Board Rule in recent years were necessitated due to the pandemic.

Frequent and urgent updates to policy increase risk, meaning the likelihood and impact of updates not being fully vetted or having unintended consequences is high. As R277-419 underlies data tracking that informs 1) how LEAs are funded for the Minimum School Program (i.e., billions of dollars) and 2) calculations of chronic absenteeism (considered a systemic concern by the USBE and the Legislature) via concepts of enrollment and attendance, the anticipated risk associated with updates to this Board Rule is extremely high.

Based on both design and implementation findings in **I. Public Education System** related to defined terms, policy points, education program types, school year, school days, data, etc. the extremely high anticipated risk is an extremely high realized risk.

(b) Personnel Development

Additionally, while it is unknown which staff provided input for the 11 or more updates to the Board Rule, current staff listed as the contacts for this Board Rule are personnel in the USBE School Finance and Data and Statistics sections. USBE attendance specialists are not listed as contacts for this Board Rule and may not have provided input on amendments to the Board Rule, despite the Board Rule including provisions related to student attendance and enrollment, which may in part explain the inconsistent or confusing use of terms such as “school day” and “learner validated enrollment measure,” as well as the absence of definitions for terms such as “tardy” and “expulsion.” Thus, it does not appear that USBE has prioritized within its organizational structure positions or teams with comprehensive understanding of student participation in education, inclusive of attendance, enrollment, and membership.

(c) Monitoring

Although the USBE establishes the number of school days that must be provided, it does not verify compliance with the 180-day Board Rule. USBE staff review LEA-submitted data at the end of the year for anomalies (i.e., data is only reviewed if unusual amounts are identified); however, there is no other monitoring being conducted to verify that the LEA held school for the

180-days. Likewise, when waivers to the 180-day requirement are granted, USBE staff do not monitor to ensure waiver agreements are fulfilled, and data requests and reports are rarely requested, if at all.

2. Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

Frequent and urgent changes to state law, as indicated above, as well as inconsistency within and between Utah Code and Board Rule, increase risk at the local level as well. As separate, legal entities with governance and operational responsibilities, it is incumbent upon LEA boards and administration to stay informed of changes to state law, and to comply accordingly.

Obsolete policies, unreliable data, lack of compliance, in addition to an unwillingness to exercise statutory authority given related to attendance, reflect a knowledge gap or lack of priority at the local level.

Regarding LEAs unwillingness to exercise statutory authority, of the 16 LEAs sampled, five (31%) LEAs expressed opinions that the regulatory environment has weakened LEAs' ability to hold students and parents accountable, and nine (56%) felt that the importance of attendance in the parent perspective is weakening. Additionally, LEAs stated that law enforcement and the court system are less willing to process students for violations of compulsory education.

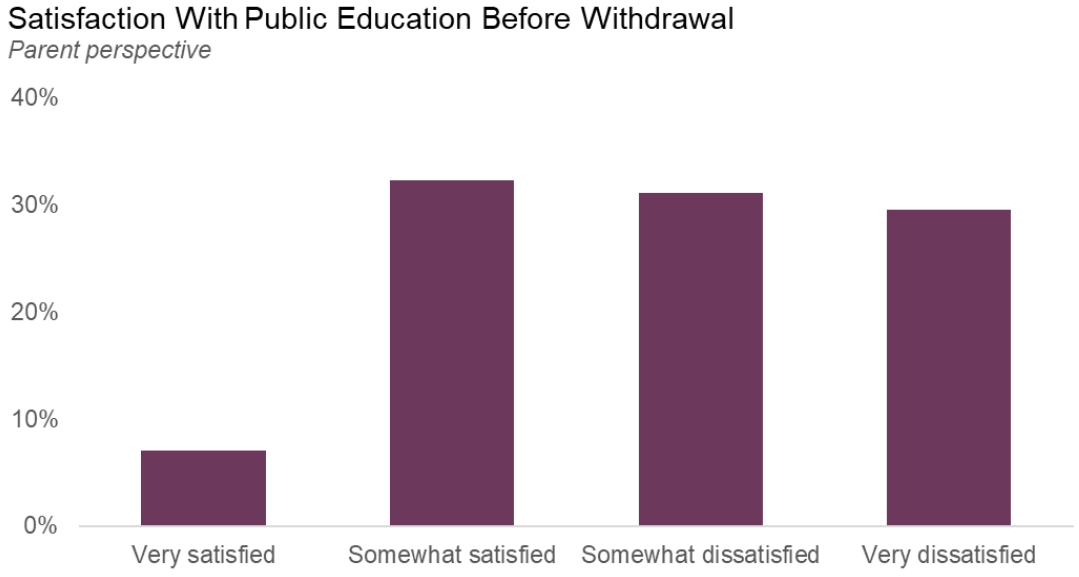
B. Student Participation

1. Enrollment

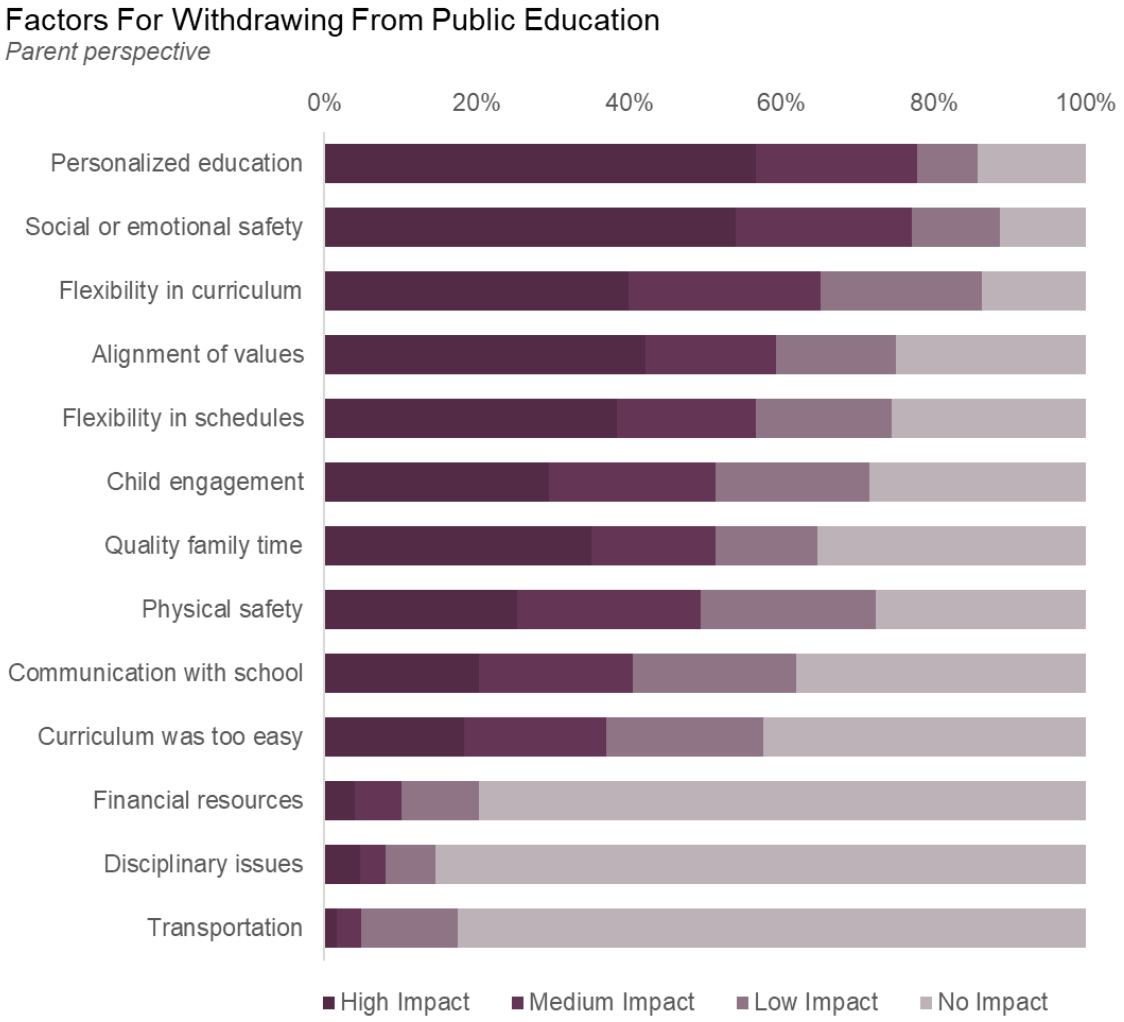
(a) Reasons for Leaving

(i) Satisfaction

Parents who withdrew at least one of their students from public education were asked how satisfied they were with public education prior to unenrolling their student and 511 responded. Most (61%) were somewhat or very dissatisfied with public education, whereas a third were somewhat satisfied with public education before they withdrew their student. Results are displayed in the chart below.



When parents were asked why they left public education, of the 533 who responded, the most important factors for parents withdrawing their student from public education were a lack of personalized education, concerns with their child's social or emotional safety, lack of flexibility in curriculum, and lack of alignment between their values and those in public education. See chart below for the level of impact for each factor, with responses weighted by impact level to show which items were most impactful.



Parents provided additional details on the above factors; representative comments are included for additional parental perspective:

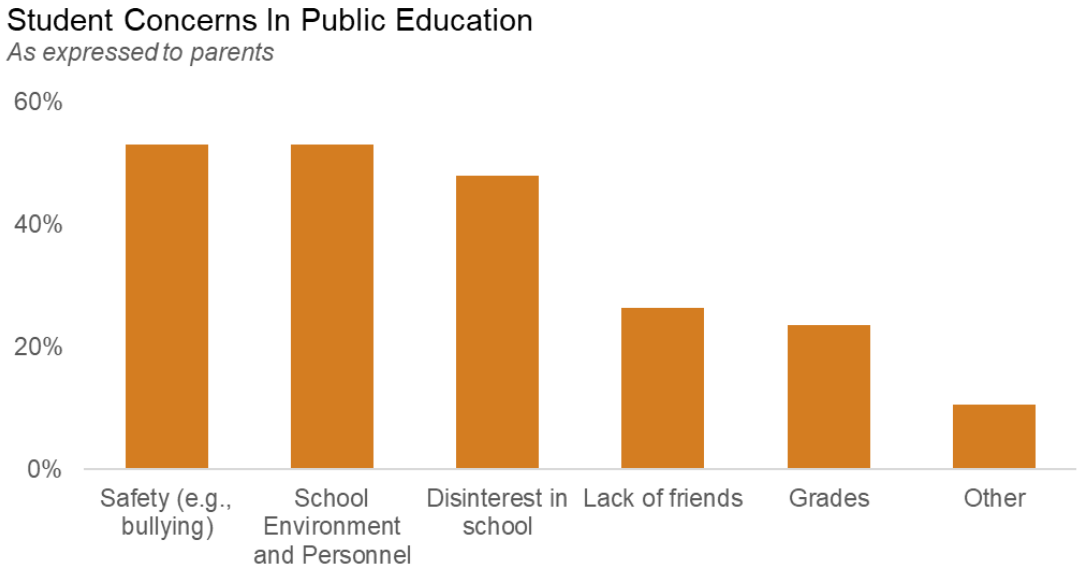
- *"Public school was a social nightmare for my son. The kids at [school] were unwelcoming and he was emotionally bullied. He tried to fit in but could not, and stress of it precipitated an emotional break."*
- *"The whole "No child left behind" campaign is hurting individuals who need more time learning. The school just pushes students along, like a factory. There is no care for the individual anymore. Utah used to be one of the best states regarding education. Such a shame. The school system is broken, and you guys know that!"*

- *“Don’t want my kid learning woke ideologies. Want my kids to learn basics of what schools should teach not all this other indoctrination.”*
- *“My daughter is a full time snowboard athlete in middle school. She needed more flexibility to complete school work on a different schedule in the winter and spring months. She travels and would miss too many days to be solely in person. We wanted a high quality academic experience that could allow her to meet her athletic potential.”*
- *“My students were complaining daily of the peer environment in the high schools and about what seemed to amount to "busywork" in the classrooms. They didn't like being there and felt like it was a waste of time.”*
- *“Very poor experiences with educators and school board members and the various open expressions that they did not want parent feedback. Poor school culture and volatile environment at times. Also, a general direction that put less and less emphases on core educational principles.”*

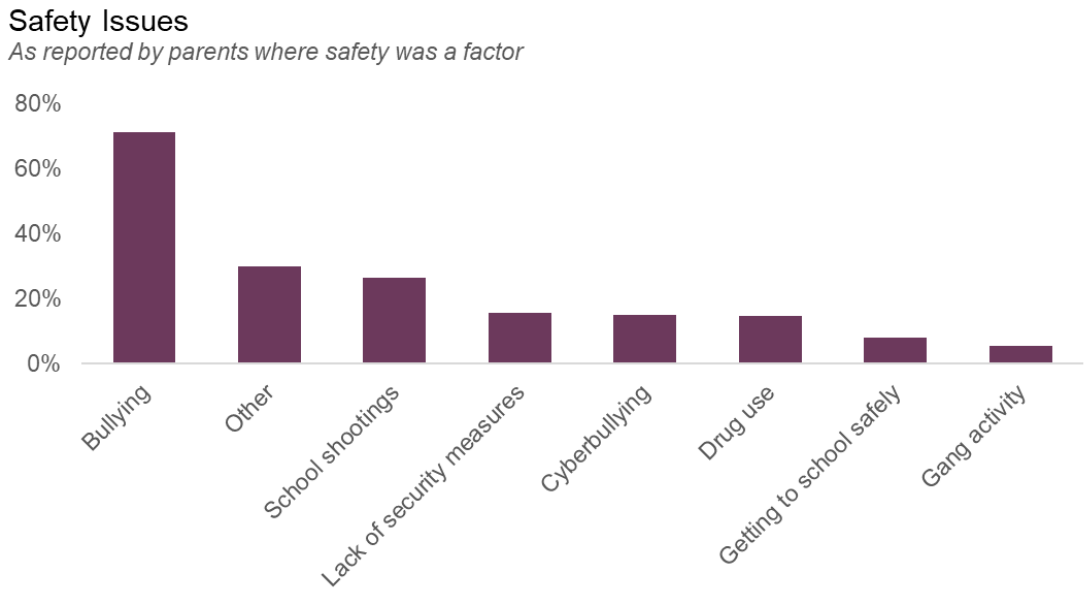
When reported factors leading to unenrollment were analyzed against reported satisfaction, using a statistical analysis (i.e., regression), the analysis found that parents’ satisfaction with the quality of their student’s public education was most closely related to their sense of alignment between their values and their child’s education (i.e., the analysis explains 27% of the variation based on 511 responses). The less perceived alignment between family values and their child’s education, the less parents were satisfied with the quality of their child’s public education. Other potentially related factors were individualized education, communication between school and parents, and student engagement in school.

(ii) Student Sentiment

Parents were also given an opportunity to allow their student(s) to provide personal perspective as well regarding concerns with staying in public education, and 422 parents provided feedback. The primary concerns that were expressed were regarding safety and the student’s disinterest in school. See chart below for all responses to the concerns presented to them; responses of “Other” are generally related to curriculum, accommodations, and values.

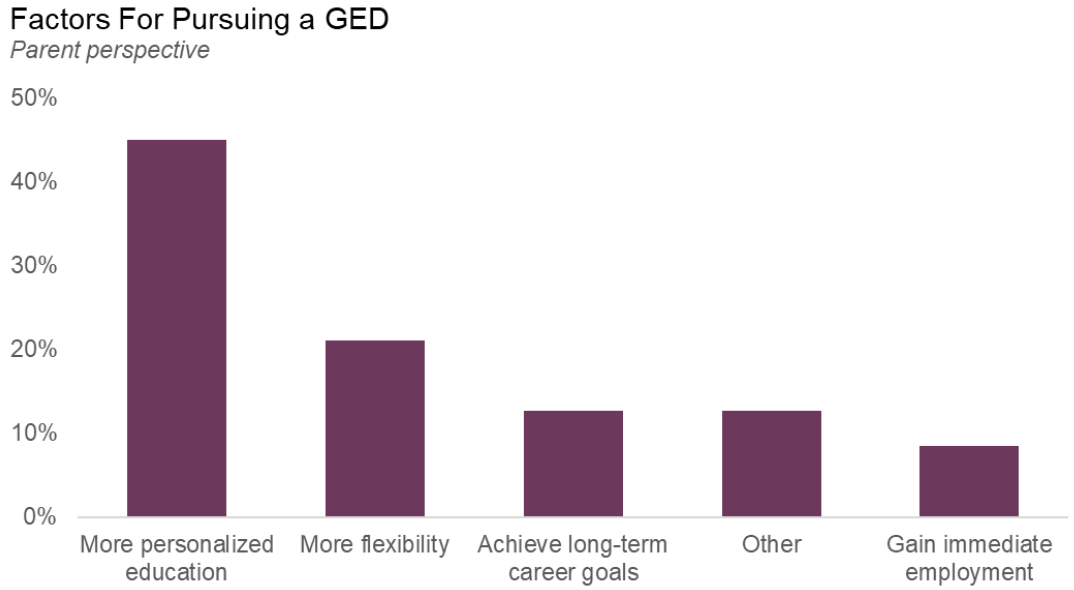


A closer look at safety as a contributing cause revealed that bullying was the most (71%) common safety concerned expressed by student and parents. The chart below illustrates other common safety-related themes; responses of “Other” included mental health, hostile environment, values, and staff misconduct.



(iii) Alternatives

Parents were surveyed regarding why they unenrolled their student and chose to pursue a GED, and 71 parents responded. The primary reason was for their student to receive a more personalized education. See chart below for all identified reasons; responses of “Other” included mental health reasons and disliking public and non-public education options.



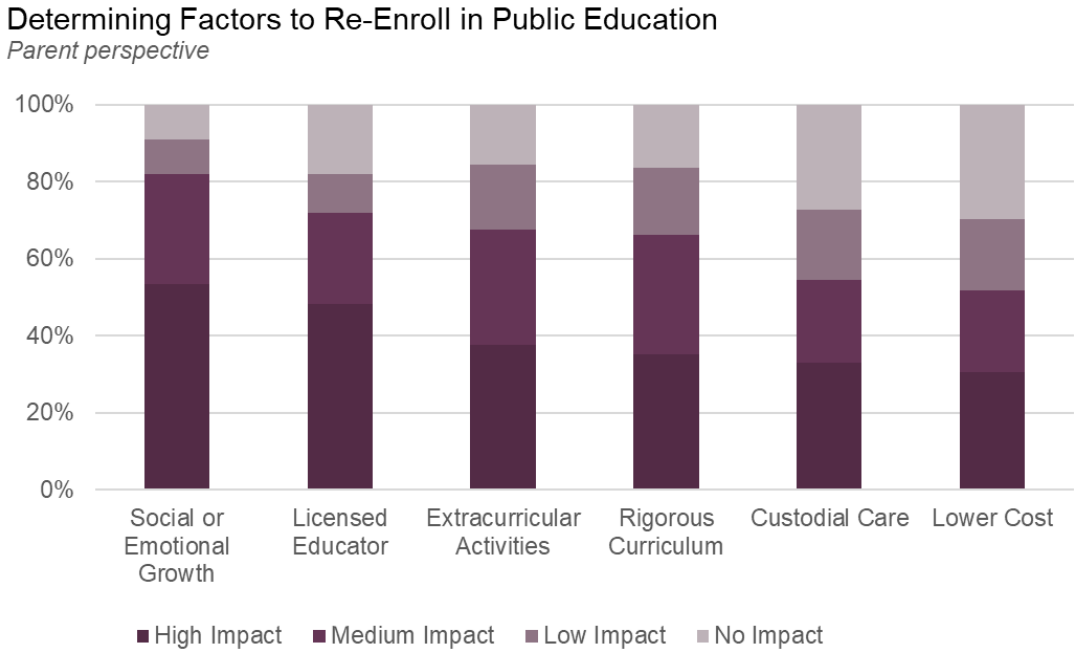
(iv) Finances

Although not specifically asked, several parents provided comments related to the cost of a "free and public education," which may impact a parents decision related to enrolling in public education. For example,

- *"Public education has so far been significantly more expensive than homeschooling," and*
- *"Lower cost? I pay less at the private school for one of my children. Public schools nickel and dime the public. Registration fees than random class fees AFTER THE FACT of starting."*

(b) Reasons for Returning

In a survey administered to parents who had unenrolled their students, who indicated they then had students who returned to public education, 1600 parents indicated the factor most (54%) often marked as high impact when considering whether to re-enroll in public education was social and emotional growth by interacting with others at school. Other common answers included licensed educators (48%) and extracurricular activities (38%), as shown in the chart below.



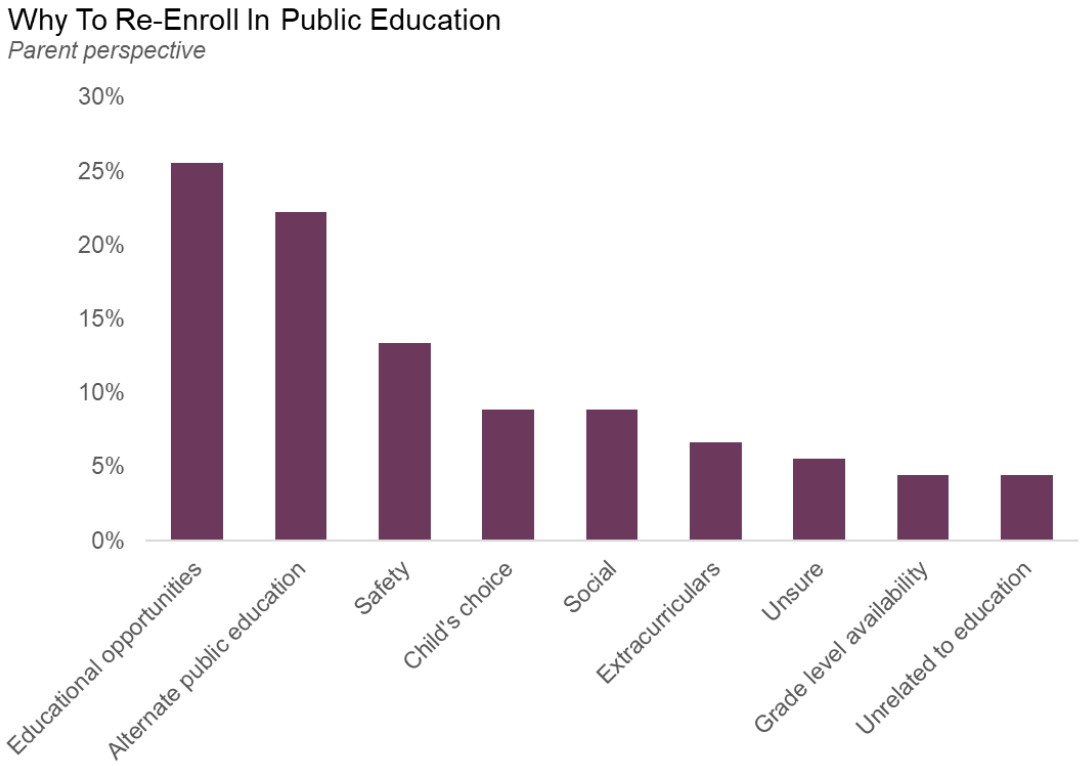
Parents also indicated several other considerations not included in the response options, such as course offerings (13%) and accommodations for learning difficulties (10%).

As noted in the chart above, many parents also indicated that a licensed educator would be better able to help their students learn. Of the subjects identified in the survey, math was the subject most (81%) frequently indicated where parents thought a licensed educator would be better able to help their students.

Subject	Count	Percent
Math	294	81%
Science	234	64%
English	181	50%
Foreign Language	150	41%
Social Studies	120	33%
Digital Studies	106	29%
Financial Literacy	98	27%
Fine Arts	93	25%
CTE	80	22%
Physical Fitness	51	14%

The survey also included responses from parents who, in this case, have students that have not returned to public education. However, these parents also provided insight as to why they may re-enroll their students in public education.

In a survey administered to parents who had unenrolled their child, 117 (23%) parents planned on re-enrolling them, of which 93 (79%) provided reasons why. The most common reasons given were wanting access to education opportunities (e.g., specific courses in high school or parent not being able to teach past a certain grade) and alternate public education options (e.g., avoiding their current district of residence or being able to enroll in a specific charter school).

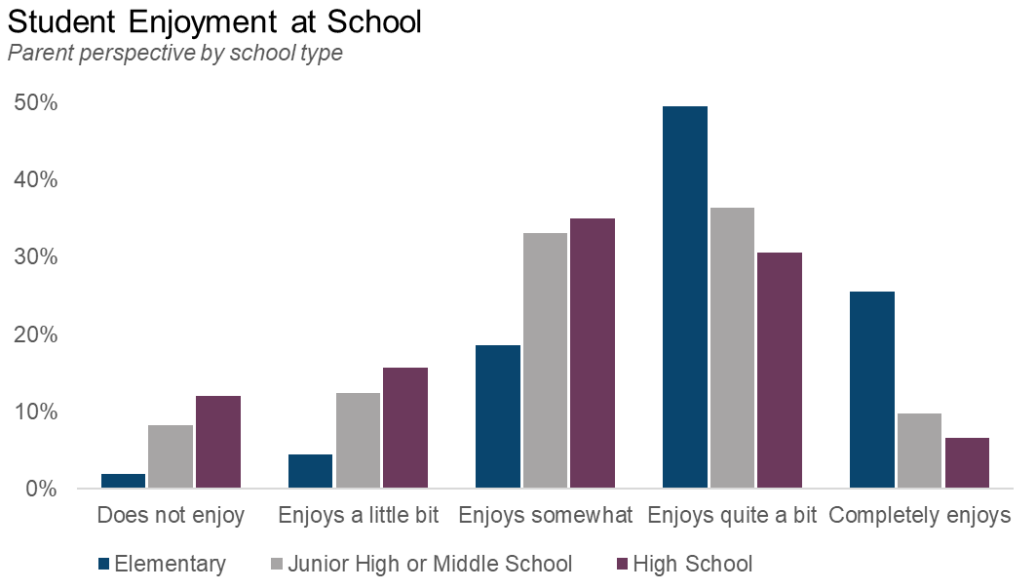


2. Attendance

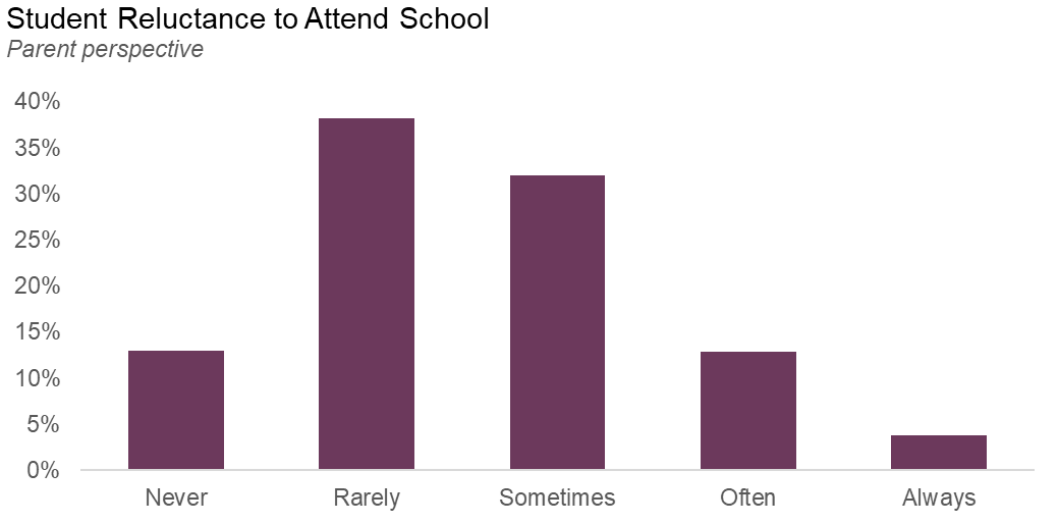
(a) Parental Sentiment

As outlined in **II. Student Participation in Education**, most students attend their programs regularly (i.e., 90% or better). The next several charts may provide a reason why, while also providing insight into why regular attendance is not universal.

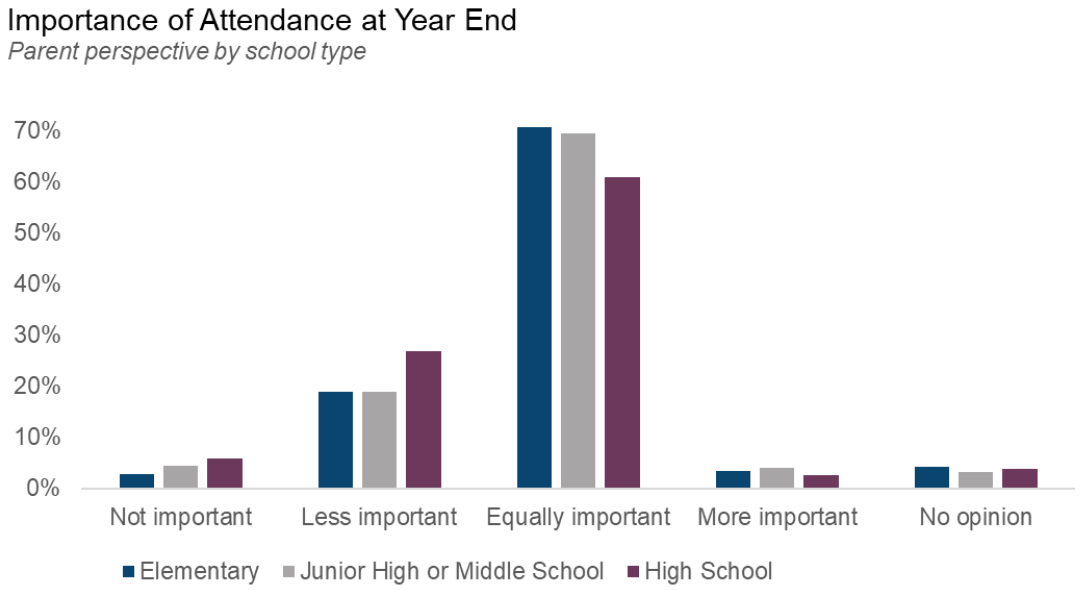
Survey responses from 12,682 parents report that overall, students enjoy public education (i.e., 54% either "completely enjoys" or "enjoys quite a bit" being at school). Parents of elementary students reported their students having a higher rate of enjoyment than junior high or high school students, as shown in the chart below.



Given most students enjoy public education, it is not surprising that 51% of parents reported that their student(s) either never or rarely express a reluctance to go to school. An additional 32% of parents stated that their students only sometimes expressed a reluctance. See chart below for details.



When asked whether it was important to attend public education at the end of the school year, 64% of parents indicated that attendance at the end of the school year is equally as important as attendance during the rest of the school year, a feeling shared by parents regardless of the school type.



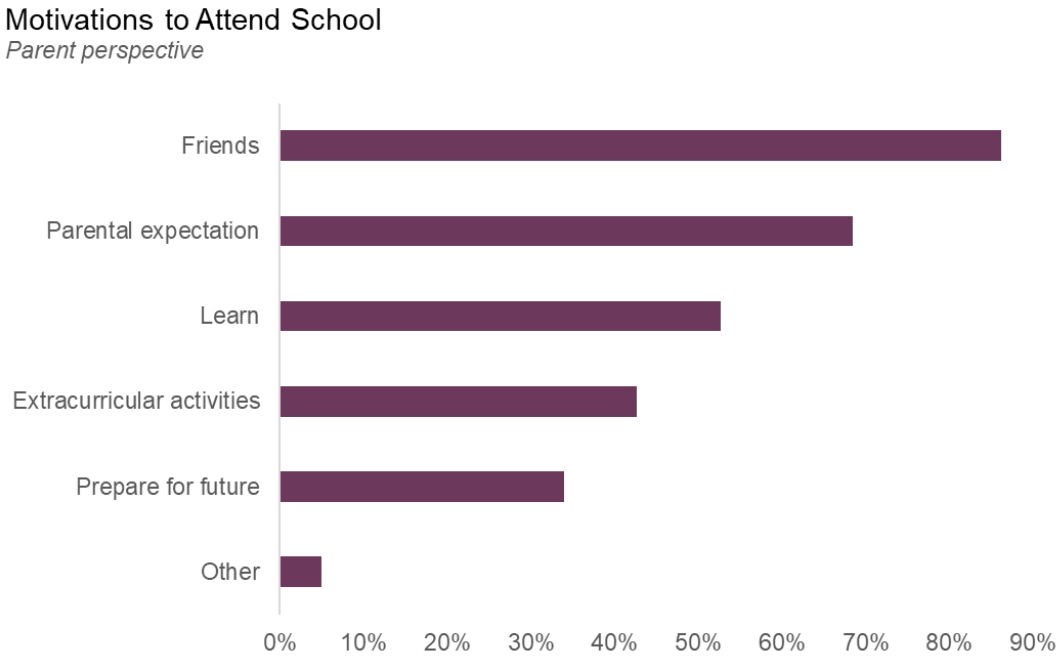
Although the majority of parents reported students who enjoyed school, infrequently demonstrated reluctance to attend, and valued education throughout the school year, there were those who felt differently. As shown in the three charts above, 6% of students do not enjoy public education, not even a little; 17% of students are always or often reluctant to go to school; and 5% do not feel attending school at the end of the school year is important. All of these perspectives likely impact student attendance.

When provided an opportunity to share their thoughts about the last week of school, some parents voiced their frustration. For example:

- *"After statewide testing in May, it seems almost worthless to attend school other than for social engagement. No new learning takes place and students watch meaningless videos to fill the time in the school day."*
- *"End of school is ridiculous. The educators hold end of year test 2 weeks before school is out. The students turn in materials One week before the end of school. The last week of school, the educators use the kids to clean down the classroom. Completely unacceptable. Use class time for instruction. Have statewide testing the very last week of school. If you create the expectation for them to be in class and learning, they will do it. The public school system has set up the expectation that nothing is expected the last 2 weeks. I have had educators tell my kids don't come to school next week (last week of school). If you come you will be cleaning the classroom."*
- *"End the school year once Statewide testing is completed. Use the extra time to provide PD opportunities to faculty and staff."*

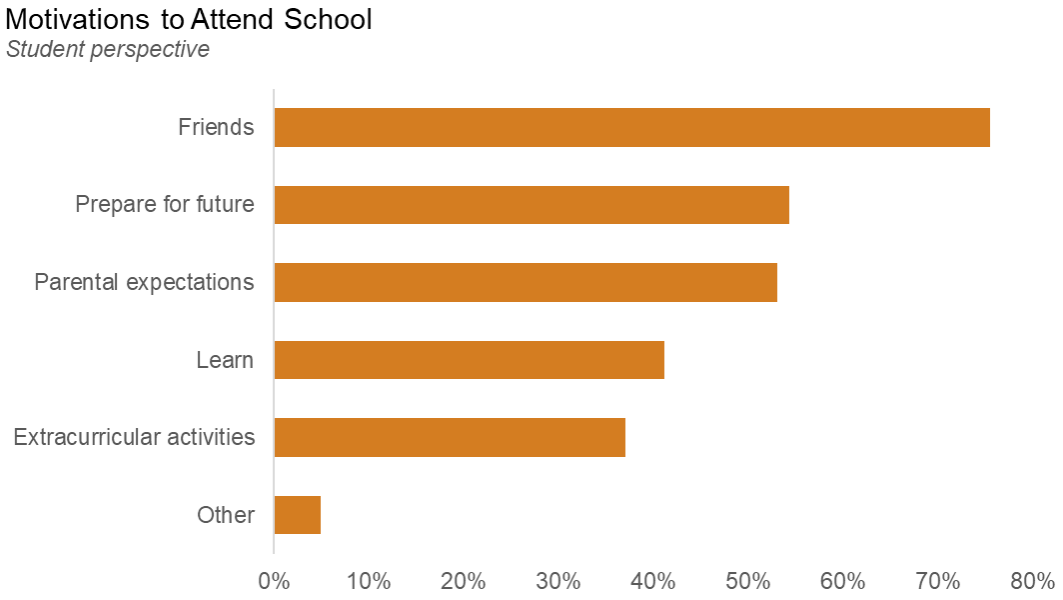
(b) Motivation

When asked about the motivation behind their child's attendance at school, 86% of parents indicated that friends are the biggest motivator. The second most prevalent motivation was parental expectation at 68%. Additional motivators are shown below.



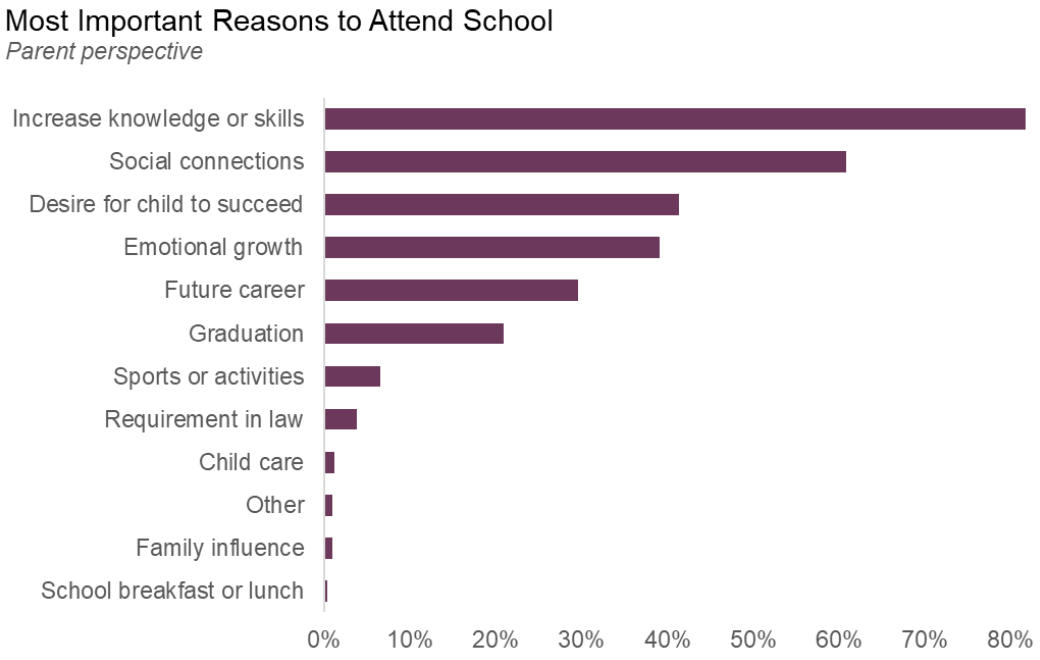
Parents indicated "Other" motivators included students connecting with their educator, pressure (internally and externally) to maintain their grades, and their own personal drive to do well.

At the end of the survey, parents were asked if they would like their student(s) over the age of 13 to share their motivation for attending school. When students responded, 75% reported the most common motivation was also friends.



Students indicated other motivators to attend school, such as students connecting with their educator, pressure to maintain their grades, and their own personal drive to do well; conversely, some students indicated that nothing motivates them.

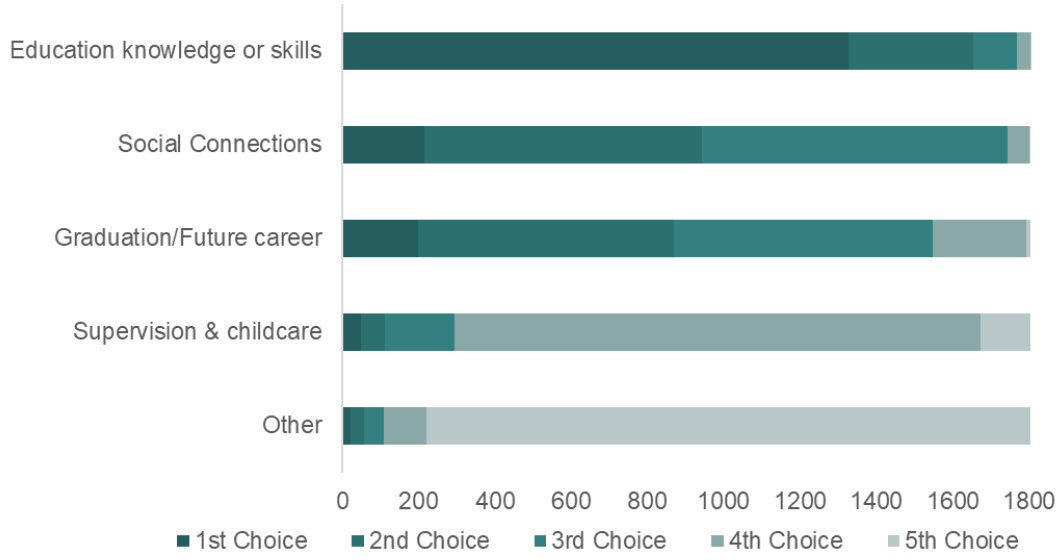
Both students and parents indicated that parental expectations were high motivators to attend school. Parents were asked what they believe are the most important reasons for their student to attend school; in response, parents indicated graduation and a future career as less important than increasing knowledge or skills and social connections.



When educators were asked to rank the reason for a student to attend school from most valuable to least valuable, educators' responses nearly mirrored those of parents, as illustrated in chart below. Responses of "Other" included learning life skills, becoming an informed citizen, parental involvement, mental health wellness, and the legal requirement to attend.

Rankings of Most Important Reason Students Attend School

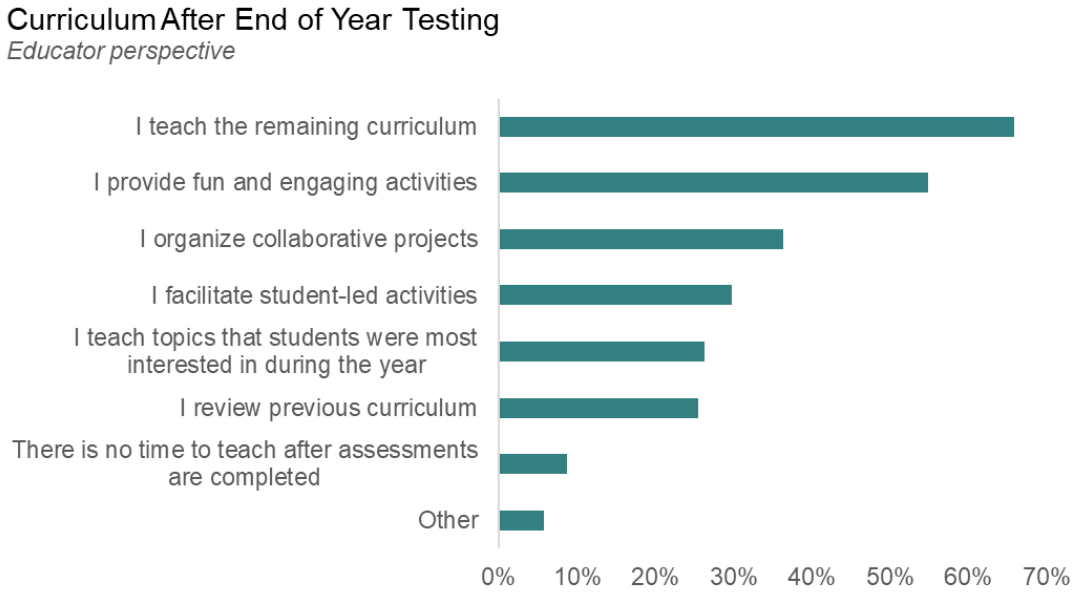
Educator perspective



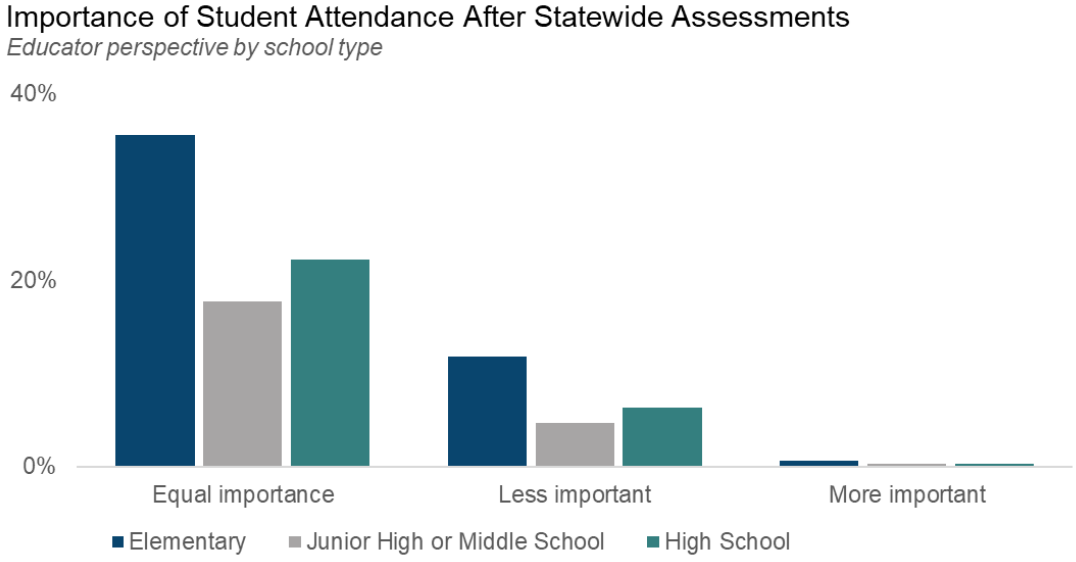
(c) End of Year

To gain a better understanding of whether the curriculum being taught after statewide assessments was a factor for continued student attendance, parents and educators were asked questions related to the rigor of the curriculum following end-of-year assessments.

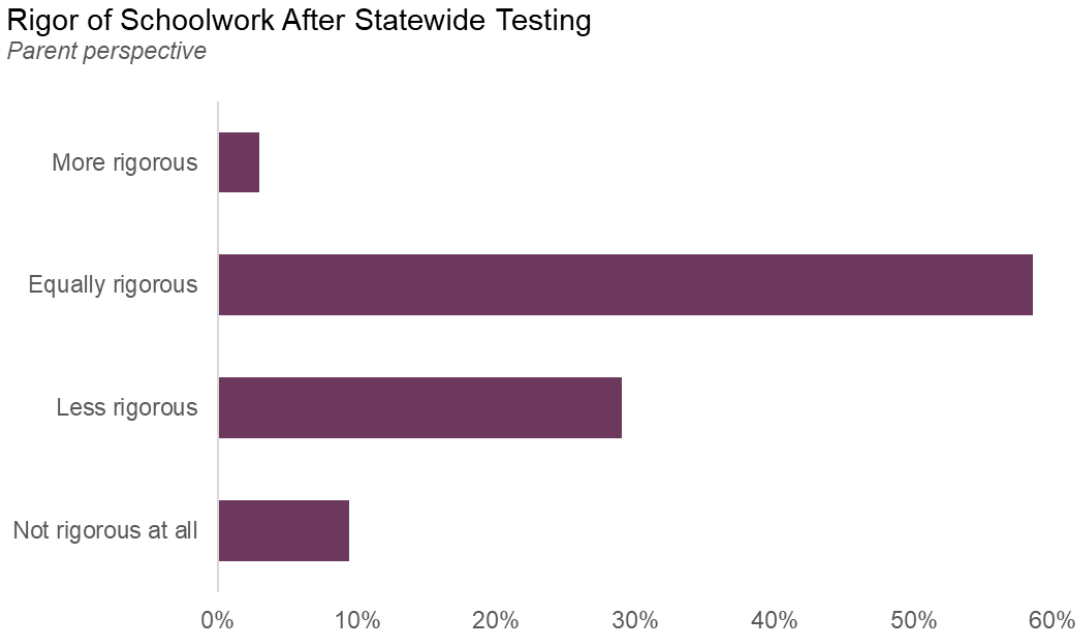
First, educators were asked what they do in the classroom after end-of-year assessments are completed. Sixty-six percent of educators responded that they teach the remaining curriculum. The second most common answer was "I provide fun and engaging activities." Additional responses are shown in the chart below.



When educators were asked whether student attendance was equally as important after end-of-year assessments, 23% replied no. Of educators who said attendance of 90% or more is necessary, 16% admitted that it is less important after statewide assessments.



Parents were asked whether they felt the schoolwork provided after statewide testing was as rigorous as before statewide testing. Fifty-nine percent of parents indicated that the schoolwork was equally rigorous. However, 29% of parents indicated it was less rigorous than before statewide testing and 9% indicated it was not rigorous at all.



(d) Transportation

Another potential cause for tardies and absences may include transportation. Ten percent of parents indicated that transportation issues affected their child's attendance. Although most (85%) parents report their student is late less than once per week, for a small percentage (3%), their student(s) may be late almost every day.

(e) Tardy Policies

Several parents responded that strict tardy policies may encourage students to miss the entire class of instruction rather than show up late and receive partial instruction, particularly because tardies may not be excused and therefore count against a student's citizenship grade whereas absences may be excused. Comments from the survey include:

- *"Currently, there is a very strict, attendance and citizenship grade policy that I do not agree with. Sometimes my kids have a hard time getting to school and unfortunately are a few minutes late. You cannot excuse tardiness which directly ties to citizenship which ultimately affects sports with the school. If you obtain a U based off of attendance, then you can get kicked off of a team or benched and this is unfair when getting to school on time is out of their control. so in order to fix that, rather than show up late, my kids just won't show up to that class at all to avoid having a tardy since it's easier to excuse an absence. Ultimately this affects them because they missed the work for the whole class, but at least they aren't getting a tardy. I think that you should allow tardy to be excused parents, or they should not be tied to citizenship grades as closely as they are"*
- *"All of my children would rather be absent than tardy, because the policy on being absent is more lenient than the tardy policy. My children do not want to disrupt classroom learning and have high motivation and anxiety about their grades and doing well. If anything happened to make them tardy, they would stay home instead of*

attending class that day. Once in a while they would have to stay home all day, because no one could get them to school later. This happened on average three-five times a year, with the increased likelihood of it happening more in high school."

- *"At my son's jr high the penalty for being late is more severe than an absence. Some students feel that if they're going to be late to class they are better off to skip class entirely than to be tardy. I understand the importance of being on time, but it seems to me that it's better that a student show up for some of the class than to not show up at all due to tardiness."*
- *"My daughter had a chiropractor appointment before school that ran late, when I called in to excuse her form the first half of class, I was told that she couldn't be excused for a "tardy." She either had to take an unexcused tardy or miss the whole class period and get checked in for 2nd period."*

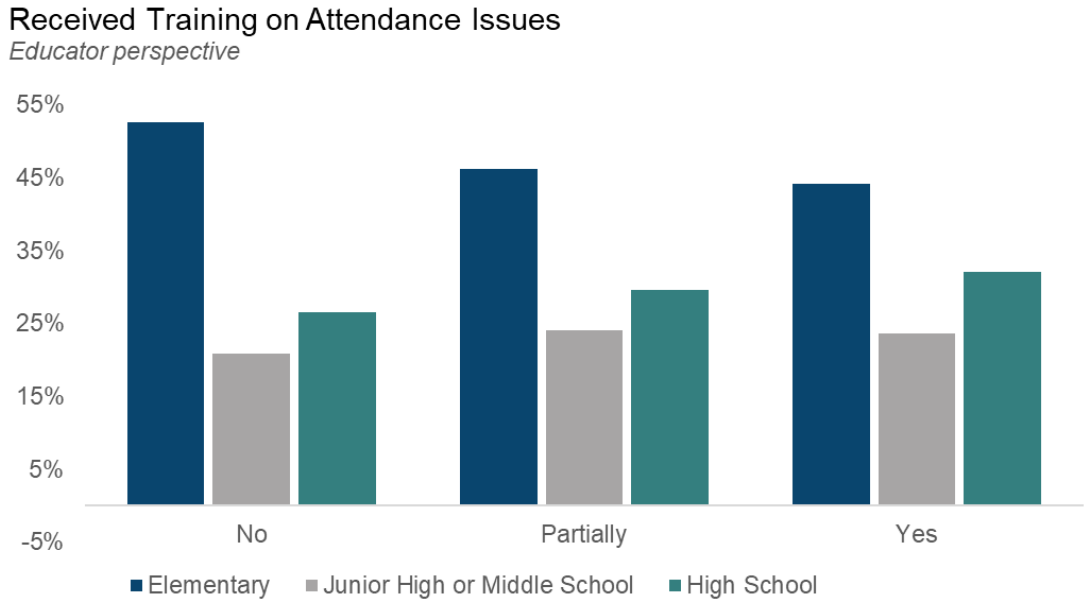
Comments in the educator survey included a similar sentiment:

- *"Tardies affect citizenship grade, absences do not. Some students will skip class rather than come late to keep their citizenship grade up."*
- *"…if a student is late to a class three times, this will affect their citizenship grade, which then impacts their ability to participate in athletics. Therefore, to be able to participate in athletics, the student will opt to miss the class instead of showing up part way through."*

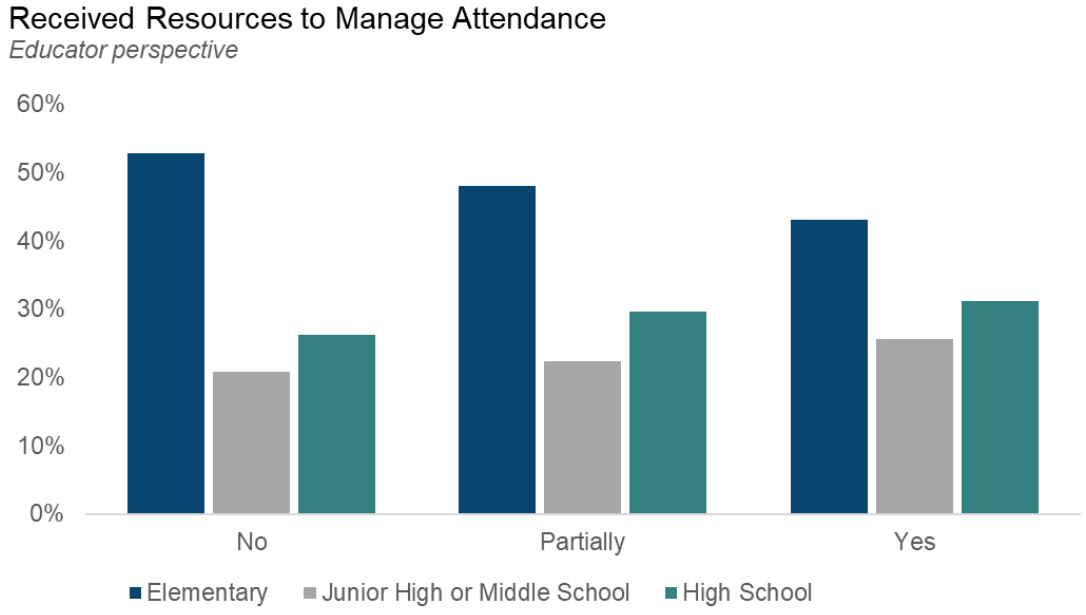
(f) Training, Resources, and Oversight

Although educator training, resources, and administrative oversight may not be primary reasons for student absenteeism, the lack of any of these items may limit the System's ability to mitigate absenteeism.

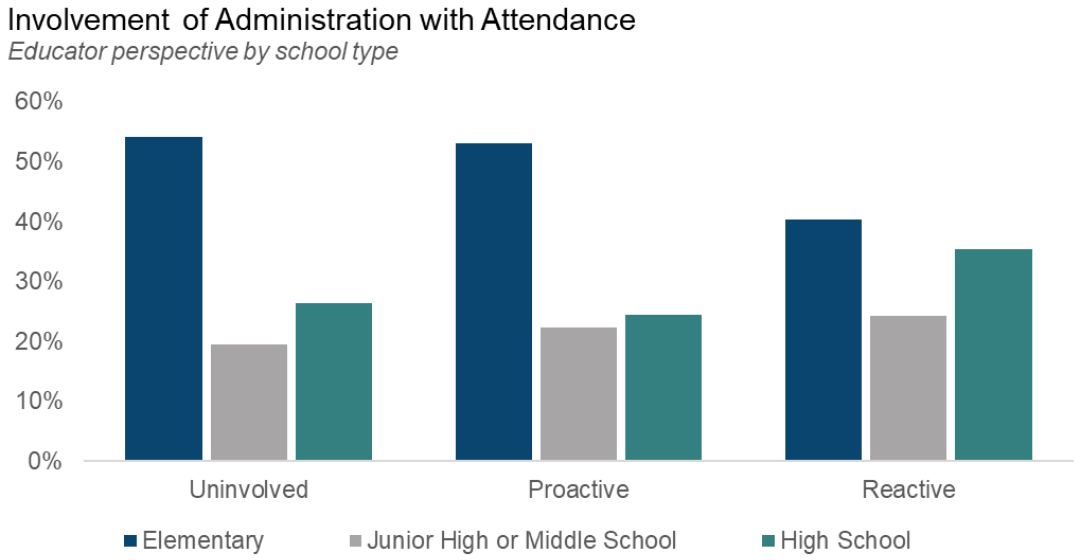
When educators were asked if they had received training on handling student attendance issues, 78% felt they have not received, or have only partially received, the training needed to address student attendance.



Educators were also asked if they believe they have adequate resources to manage student absences effectively. Seventy-five percent felt they do not, or only partially, have adequate resources to address student absences.



Finally, when educators were asked whether their administration was involved in helping handle student absences, 14% responded no. The chart below provides additional perspective.



(g) Continuity of Instruction

Another possible cause of issues with student attendance in public education may be related to the continuity of instruction. Otherwise stated, if the presence of a high-quality educator in a

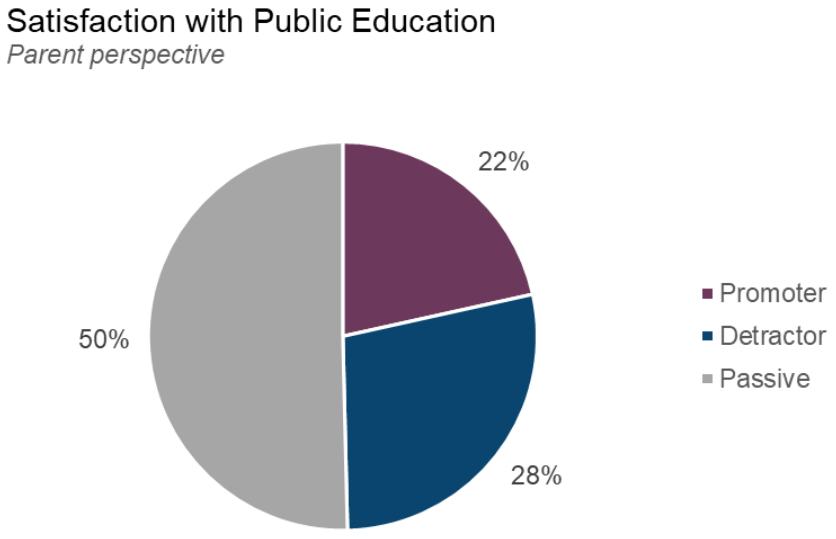
classroom is considered essential, the absence of that educator can be nothing less than impactful to students. The impact may include influencing a student's decision to attend. From a sample of 16 LEAs, 69% provided educator absence data for SY2022 through SY2024. The average number of educator absences per LEA per school year ranged from 2% - 8%. An LEA with a 4-day waiver and thus fewer contract days had educator absence rates that ranged between 5% - 6%.

For SY2024, compared to students, four (36%) LEAs who provided educator absence data had educator absence rates greater than their student absence rates (i.e., educators missed more contract days than students missed school days). The most common difference in absence rates between educators and students was ±1%, which applies to five (45%) LEAs which provided data; this absence rate represents two days in a typical 180-day school year. In other words, student and educator absence trends are closely connected. Educators do not limit time away to scheduled breaks and neither do students.

The concept is not limited to an educator's presence in the classroom, but the educator's presence outside of the classroom as well. Based on discussions with sampled LEAs, 100% of the LEAs allow students to complete missed assignments due to absences, though one LEA sampled restricts it to excused absences. Given the majority of LEAs allow make-up work regardless of the reason for missing their programs, there may be little to no academic incentive for students to attend every school day.

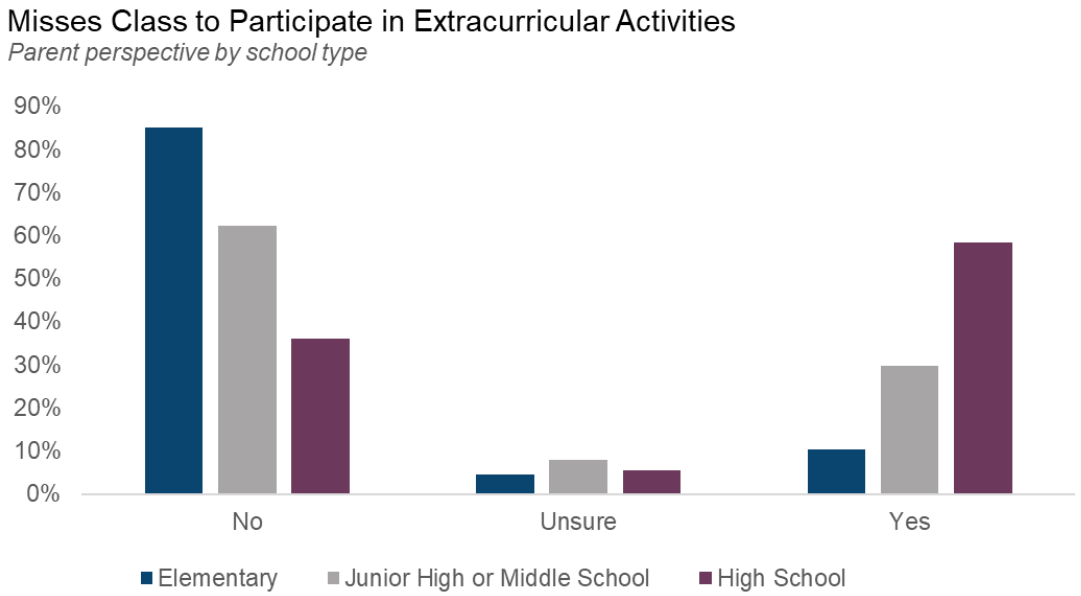
(h) In-system Satisfaction

Most (79%) educators surveyed believe that parents views on the value of education have decreased (i.e., parents are less satisfied) since they started teaching. Although no attempt was made to validate the statement, one question was asked of parents within the sample of 16 LEAs regarding how satisfied they were with their student's overall experience in public education. Using the Net Promoter Score (NPS) question, which is a key metric for measuring loyalty, only 22% of parents are considered "promoters". As shown in the chart below, the majority of parents would be considered "passive," and more parents would be classified as "detractors" than "promoters."



(i) Extracurricular Activities

Fifty-eight percent of parents reported that their student(s) participates in school activities (i.e., sports, clubs, teams, or other organizations). When asked whether extracurricular activities negatively impacted their student(s) attendance, 42% said yes. As illustrated below, the impact affects students at all grade levels, but primarily high school students.



One LEA reported that sporting events are so prevalent in Utah that nothing can be done to change it. While students who participate in sports may be a minority, their academics and attendance may suffer due to missing so much school.

(j) School Days

Parents and students can, and do, decipher between when a school day matters (i.e., helps them achieve their own objectives) and when a school day does not matter. When parents or students identify days that are not perceived to matter, they may choose to participate in an activity they place higher value on (e.g., family time, health) and not to attend school.

Even 63% of educators reported that attendance does not impact a student's grade during that last week of school, especially for elementary students. Such a perspective inevitably impacts student attendance.

(k) Alternatives

Related specifically to in-person attendance, students are potentially receiving mixed messages over the importance of in-person attendance. As identified in the survey, educators are required to provide both in-person and online curriculum, which may lead to student apathy over in-person attendance. Examples of comments from educators include:

- *"Since Covid, students don't see the need to attend. They feel they can do the work online."*
- *"Parents not supportive of education, everything "has" to be online, students can just do it at home."*

- *“Being required to have all course content online. Students can access everything at home that takes place in class.”*
- *“I think a big hit to student attendance is the availability of classroom content online. Students know that they can miss class and still get all the content online.”*

(I) Personalized Education

Survey responses, data analysis, and shifts in Utah Code reflect the desire for personalized education. This desire has led parents and students to pick and choose their preferred options, which may come from a variety of sources both within the System and from external providers.

Regarding personalized variations to education, parents shared the following perspectives:

- *“We want the Bible to be taught to our children.”*
- *“… Too much LDS Church influence in the school system.”*
- *“Public schools teach atheism which does not align with my religion.*
- *“marxist, socialist ideas being taught in public schools, schools becoming social service centers instead of high quality academic learning centers …”*
- *“Don’t want my kid learning woke ideologies.”*
- *“I HATE the citizenship stuff. It’s overdone and biased …”*
- *“Concerns over gun control and increased encouragement for adults to carry firearms at school”*

IV. Why it Matters

Identified effects in an audit help assess the impact of the current condition or environment and potential impacts in the future. This assessment also helps inform suggestions to address what is happening and why it really matters.

A. Public Education System

1. Design and Implementation

A complex system, which includes multiple parties with varying roles and responsibilities, must ensure accountability. Without accountability at each level, casualties of designing complex laws, confusing and inconsistent implementation of those laws, and System noncompliance may include:

- the student and parent—as the ones engaging with the System and other educational options to support achievement, future opportunity and success, and
- the taxpayer—as the one funding the educational services with an expectation of student success that benefits the state (see **IV.A.2 Funding** below).

Other parties (e.g., policymakers, administrators, educators) are also significantly impacted by the complexity, confusion, inconsistency, and noncompliance in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- fraud, waste, abuse, and misuse of resources, including time and effort,
- increased risk and liability (e.g., political, reputational, legal), and
- heightened stress with deteriorating morale.

See **IV.B Student Participation** for additional impacts to educators.

2. Funding

Taxpayer funds, particularly for the programs in the Minimum School Program (i.e., the main vehicle for funding public education), are generally distributed to LEAs based on membership. Membership is, in large part, a product of enrollment and attendance data housed in SISs and then relayed to the USBE.

As demonstrated in this report, and as outlined in the **Data Disclaimer**, funding may be unequally or inappropriately allocated to LEAs based on unreliable, invalid, and noncompliant membership data housed in various information systems.

Given policy design and implementation concerns identified in this report, funding may also be directed towards state and local attendance initiatives and policymaking based on unreliable, invalid, and noncompliant membership and attendance data.

Finally, there is other use of funds based on events that occur during school days that may influence taxpayer perceptions of the value proposition of public education (i.e., funding what students want vs what society needs). For example, public education (118 LEAs) spent over $4

million (annual average of approximately $340,000) at Lagoon between state fiscal year 2014 and 2025 to-date, not inclusive of transportation and other related financial and non-financial costs.

B. Student Participation

1. Student Outcomes

A significant potential effect, is of course, to the student. As clearly demonstrated in **II.B Student Attendance**, when students do not attend their program, it has the potential to impact their outcomes (e.g., GPA, graduation). However, as also clearly demonstrated in the same chapter, the impact is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship. There are students who can miss substantial amounts of work and achieve success by educational standards (e.g., high test scores, GPA, graduation); however, there are other students who have flawless attendance and struggle to be proficient.

2. Classroom Impact

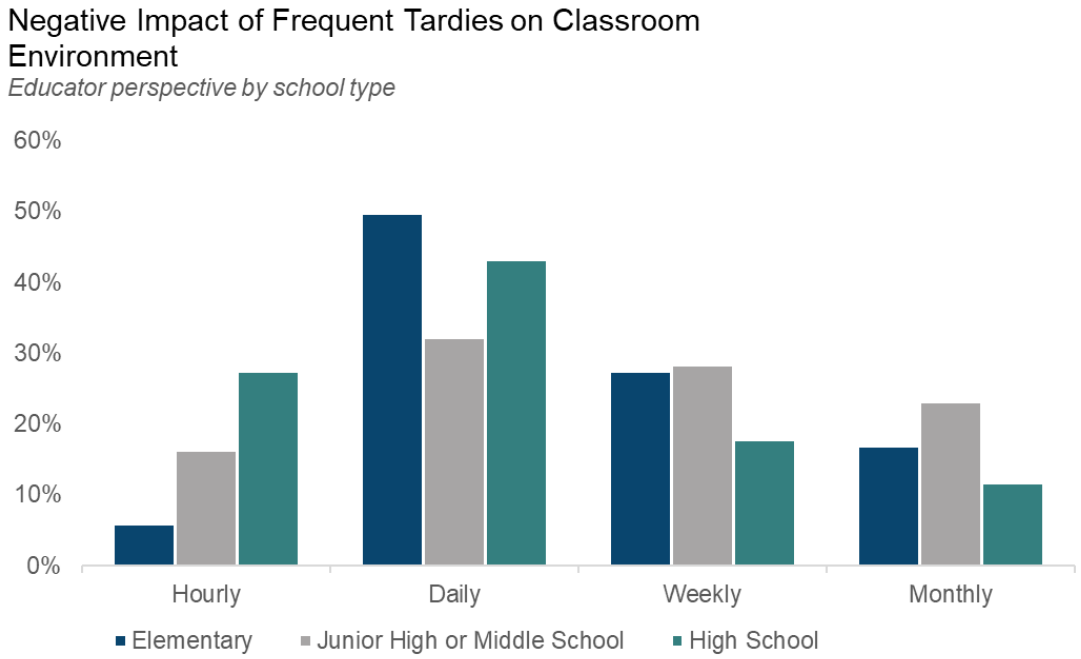
(a) Tardies

Educators were asked how often tardies had a negative impact on their classroom environment. Forty-four percent of educators indicated that tardies negatively impact the classroom environment daily.

Specifically, between elementary and secondary schools:

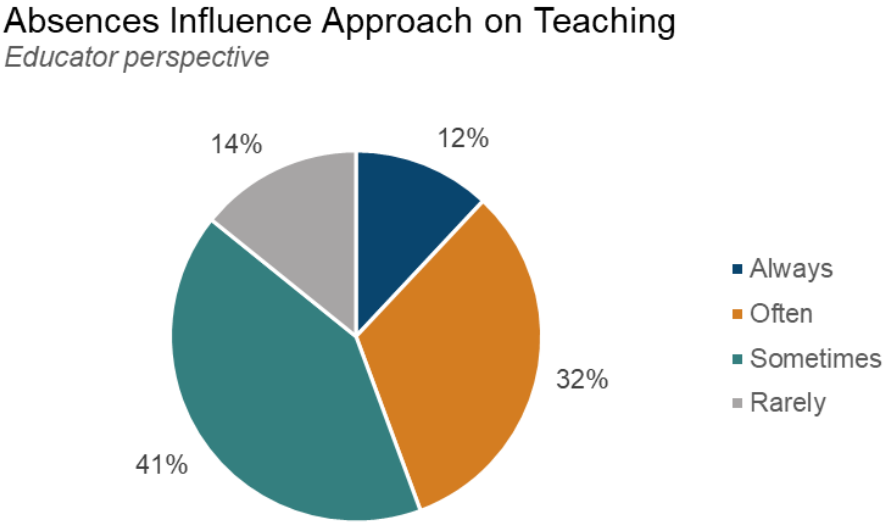
- 50% of elementary educators are impacted daily,
- 32% of junior high or middle school educators are impacted daily, and
- 43% of high school educators are impacted daily.

Additional responses are shown in the chart below:

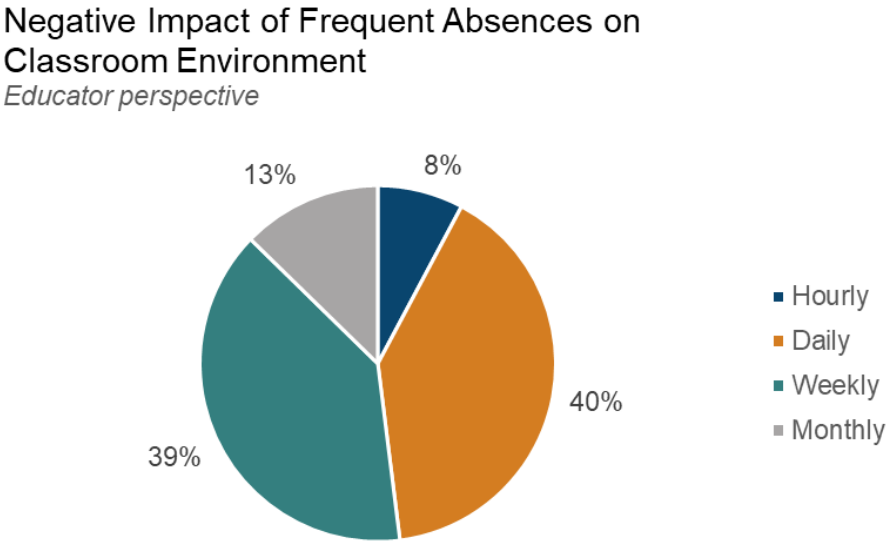


(b) Absences

Educators were also asked several questions regarding the impact frequent absences have on their teaching and their classroom environment. Forty-four percent of educators indicated that absences always or often influence their approach to teaching.



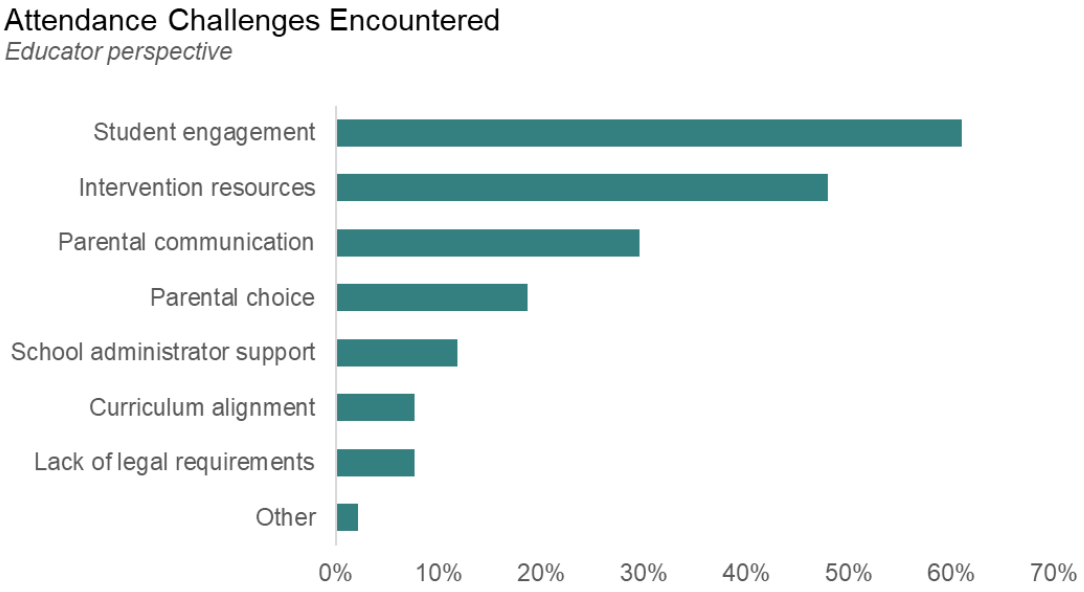
Forty percent of educators indicated that frequent absences negatively impact their classroom environment daily, and 39% indicated absences have a negative impact every week.



Regarding the impact of absences, educators made the following comments:

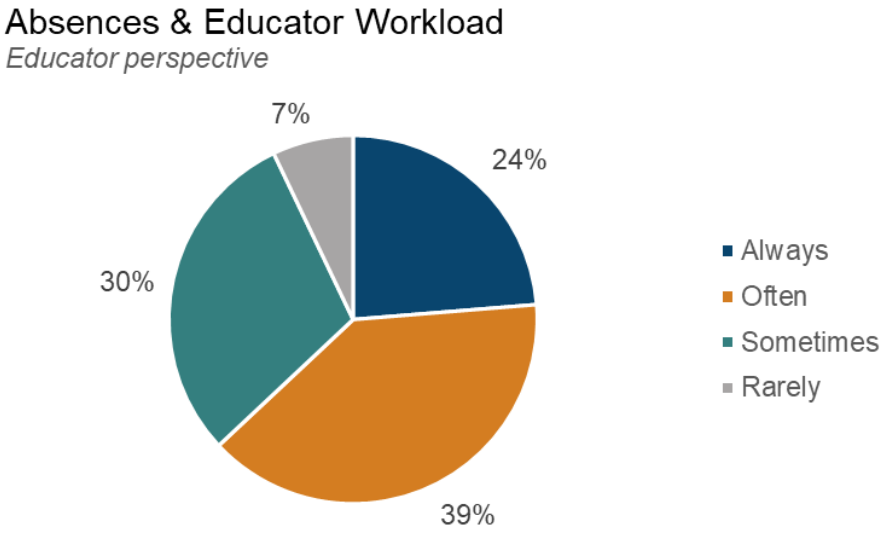
- *"I have to make time within the day to reteach that student. My other students have to put a hold on learning new material while I do this. It affects everyone."*
- *"I have to spend one-on-one time with these students which takes me away from students who need help. I also spend hours preparing work for absent kids."*

When educators were asked about the types of challenges they face in addressing student absences, 61% indicated that lack of student engagement was their biggest challenge, followed by 48% reporting a lack of intervention resources. The chart below provides a breakdown of the challenges educators reported (note: educators could select multiple answers).

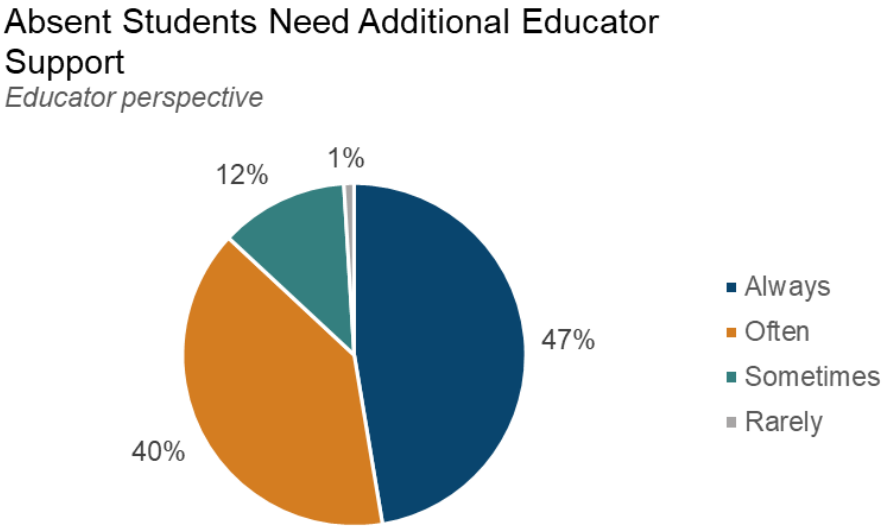


3. Workload

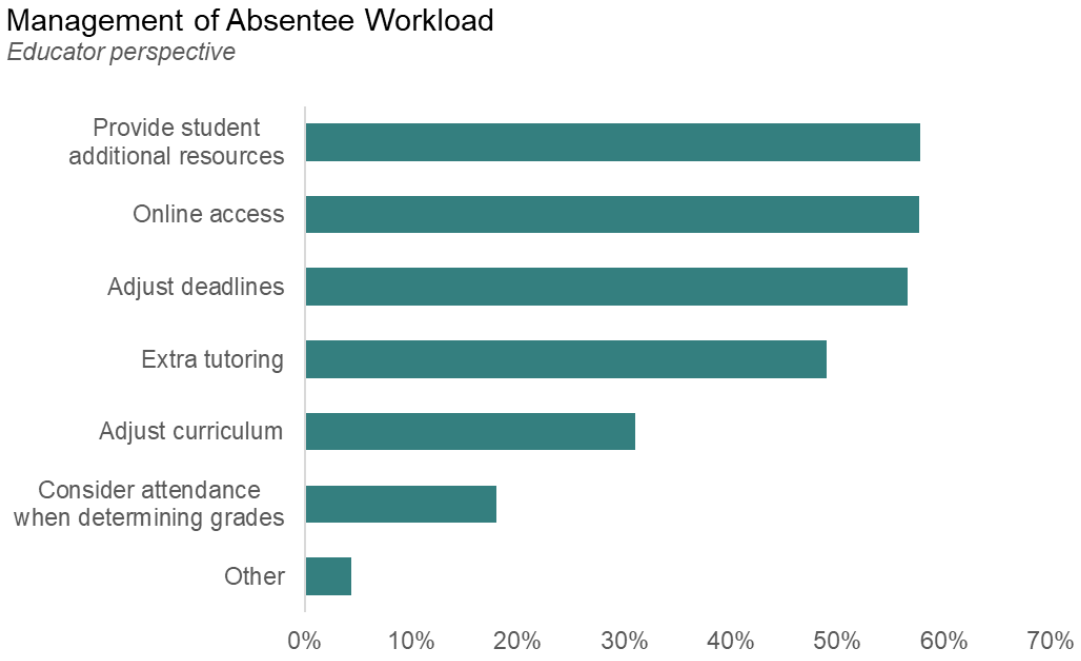
Sixty-three percent of educators indicated that student absences always or often increase their workload.



Eighty-seven percent of educators indicated that absent students always or often need additional support.



Fifty-eight percent of educators indicated they provide students with additional resources to assist in managing student workloads. Fifty-eight percent of educators also allowed online access to materials, and 57% of educators adjusted homework deadlines to manage the workload. Additional responses were provided as shown in the following chart.

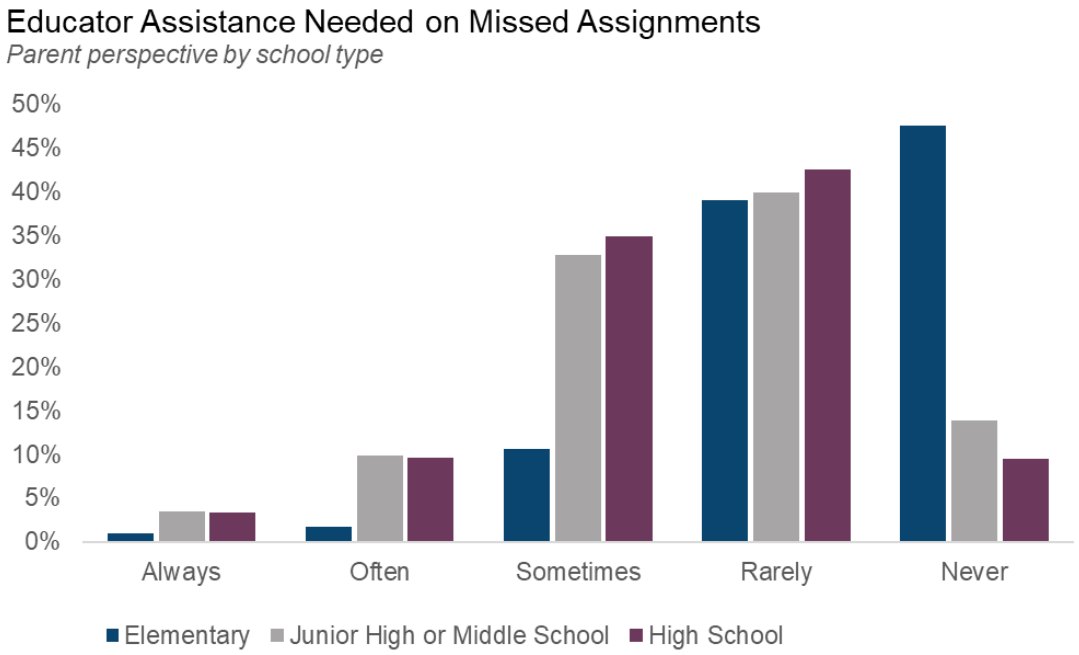


Regarding impact on workload, educators made the following comments:

- *"I feel backed into a corner, like I have no choice but to let them do whatever the heck they want"*
- *"I spend countless hours recording lessons for students who struggle with attendance, but they cannot even be bothered to watch the lesson video when they miss. I offer to help them after school/during intervention time, but they will not come. A typical absent student just does nothing to make up their absence."*
- *"For excused absences I provide additional resources and online access. For absences that are chosen by parents I do not provide anything."*
- *"There's not much I can do that would be effective or reasonable within the scope of my contract so I let it go."*

The above stands contrary to the 92% of parents who responded to the survey that their student(s) only sometimes to never need help from their educator to catch up on missed work.

When reviewed by school type, parents of junior high or middle school and high school students said they needed assistance from the educator more than those in elementary school. See the chart below for additional details.



When asked what challenges their student faces when trying to catch up on missed work, most (40%) parents reported unclear instructions as the main contributor.

Challenges in Completing Missed Work	Count	Percent
Unclear Instructions	4896	40%
Lack of Motivation	4176	34%
Distractions	4120	34%
None	3508	29%
Strict Deadlines	2183	18%
Other	1242	10%
Health Issues	946	8%
Internet Connection	401	3%
Total	12232	100%

According to parents, the other challenges students face, include:

- administrative concerns (351 of 1,242, 28%), which include difficulties like getting access to make-up work, seeing grades infrequently updated (which further complicates understanding whether assignments are complete, missing, or failed) or navigating educator-specific online courses, and
- workload (171 of 1,242, 14%), which includes difficulties for students trying to complete make-up work while also staying current with new assignments.

When considering workload for LEAs, the following use of LEA resources was also noted by parents who provided information on homeschooling (i.e., parents leaving public education, but continuing to use LEA resources). Of 285 parents:

- 14% use curriculum provided by a school district to assist in homeschooling, and
- 27% use standardized testing to test their child's achievement.

V. Recommendations

Before providing suggestions to address the findings of this report, we acknowledge work that has been done, and that is in-process, to address concerns related to student participation in education, including:

- approval of amendments to related Board Rule (e.g., January 2025 R277-606),
- discussions during various legislative meetings (e.g., HB399, HB455, HB206), and
- USBE and LEA Initiatives (e.g., webinars, newsletters, toolkit).

Recommendations that follow are suggestions to address:

- student participation related concerns and trends identified in this report (**I. Public Education System and II. Student Participation**),
- why these concerns and trends are or may be occurring (**III. Reasons for the Current Conditions…**), and
- current, and possible future, impacts associated with what was found (**IV. Why it Matters**).

Finally, the suggestions below—or alternative actions determined by the Board and the USBE, to address the findings of this report—should be undertaken in a timely manner and in consideration of the likelihood and impact to identified individuals and parties, including as outlined in **IV. Why it Matters**.

A. Policy

Student participation is inclusive of enrollment, attendance, and membership as supported by policy, data, funding, and systems. The Board should prioritize a comprehensive review of R277-419 to make amendments to address the terminology and policy items identified in **I.A.2 (b) State Board of Education**, as well as other items identified throughout the report that indicate mixed messaging and incentivizing, through policy, behavior that does not support objectives related to attendance.

Particular care should be given when reviewing various terms and their implications, including: “school year,” “school day,” “educational services,” “tardy,” and “chronic absenteeism” given:

- under current state law school days within the school year for students are being lost to legal definitions and legal reallocations for purposes other than student learning,
- not all school days are equal with respect to length, learning, and instruction (e.g., parties, yearbook signing, fieldtrips/activities, athletic/activity tournaments, competitions, and support) but for purposes of funding are treated equally,
- the impact of attendance on student achievement may not align with the current definition for chronic absenteeism,
- activities occurring under the guise of a school day, may not further achievement of the vision of public education (e.g., academic excellence), and
- adverse consequences of LEA tardy policies may incentivize absenteeism despite the negative impacts of an absence outweighing those of a tardy.

The Board, conferring with the Legislature, should deliberate if attendance-based allocation of taxpayer funds is prudent given the evolution of education to include concepts like competency-based education that challenge the need for attendance to achieve public education's stated objectives. To promote clarity, and to assist with data-driven decision making, it may be appropriate to relocate enrollment and attendance portions of R277-419 to a separate but potentially related Board Rule. The remaining provisions of R277-419 could address how funds are distributed, whether based on membership or a different factor such as performance.

Amending Board Rule could include redefining what it means to be absent for attendance validated programs. Learner validated programs have already redefined the term and, in many cases, it is unreconcilable to attendance validated programs but considered equivalent when calculating membership. As most LEAs offer curriculum online, for a student who does not attend in-person, but accesses the material online and completes the required work, consider whether that is the same as a student who does nothing. As one educator said, *"I think if a student accesses and completes assignments on Canvas during their absence, they should have some recognition of attendance."*

Finally, policies related to student membership must be regularly monitored to ensure effectiveness. The USBE should identify which issues discovered during monitoring are serious enough to require further investigation or corrective action.

B. Personnel

Student participation is inclusive of enrollment, attendance, and membership as supported by policy, data, funding, and systems. The USBE should prioritize building competencies in positions (existing or new) related to these areas to ensure comprehensive and aligned understanding, rulemaking, system development to support achievement of objectives. If there is not a specific team with expertise in all related student participation elements, the USBE should ensure convergence with these positions for policy and system (e.g., data, financial) design and monitoring of the designed and implemented policy and systems to ensure compliance and operating effectiveness.

LEA governing boards and administration should also review state law related to student enrollment, attendance and membership and revise policies and procedures, as well as evaluate data systems, to ensure compliance. Training on roles and responsibilities of boards and personnel at LEAs should also be completed to ensure alignment specific to state law related to attendance and membership. For example, only local governing boards can approve expulsion of a student.

Finally, LEAs should also review, and revise policies related to educator absenteeism; adequate tracking and analysis of this data may inform efforts related to student attendance and membership.

C. Data and Funding

In alignment with the two previous recommendations, the Board and USBE staff should consider the data needed to support compliance with provisions in Utah Code and Board Rule. Specifically, the amounts and type of data (e.g., course attendance, hours of instruction by student, notices to parents) collected related to student attendance and the information systems used to collect the data.

Additionally, the USBE should increase the monitoring of student participation related data to ensure methodologies and processes employed by LEAs are consistent, comparable, reliable and valid. It is recognized that programming for, and monitoring of, various local data and information systems requires more resources than if there were one shared information system.

Improved data should then be used to research and better understand the issue of student attendance to inform policy decisions including how taxpayer funds should be allocated and what costs are allowable.

Regarding current allocations of taxpayer funds to LEAs that may be disproportionate, or unequal, based on unreliable and invalid data, the Board and USBE staff should:

- review and update the Data Clearinghouse File Specification manual to ensure codes align with law (e.g., enrollment validation type “mixed”), ensure codes are not confusing (e.g., exit code CH), codes that may only be used by one entity are restricted to that entity (e.g., use of TH exit code only by districts), and remove obsolete language (e.g., references to Agreed-Upon Procedures),
- enact corrective actions for LEAs submitting data with errors that are not being addressed in a timely manner, and
- engage with LEAs regarding the importance of accurate records, exiting and enrolling students in a timely manner with accurate coding.

D. Accountability and Parental Involvement

Accountability at all levels should be strengthened, including use and enforcement of existing state law related to compulsory education. This may require new performance metrics that track use of tools in law related to attendance notifications, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as considering attendance correlations based on use of those tools. LEAs may also need to reevaluate programs and policies that are intended to increase flexibility that potentially reduce accountability.

Educators shared the following suggestions related to accountability at the parent and student level:

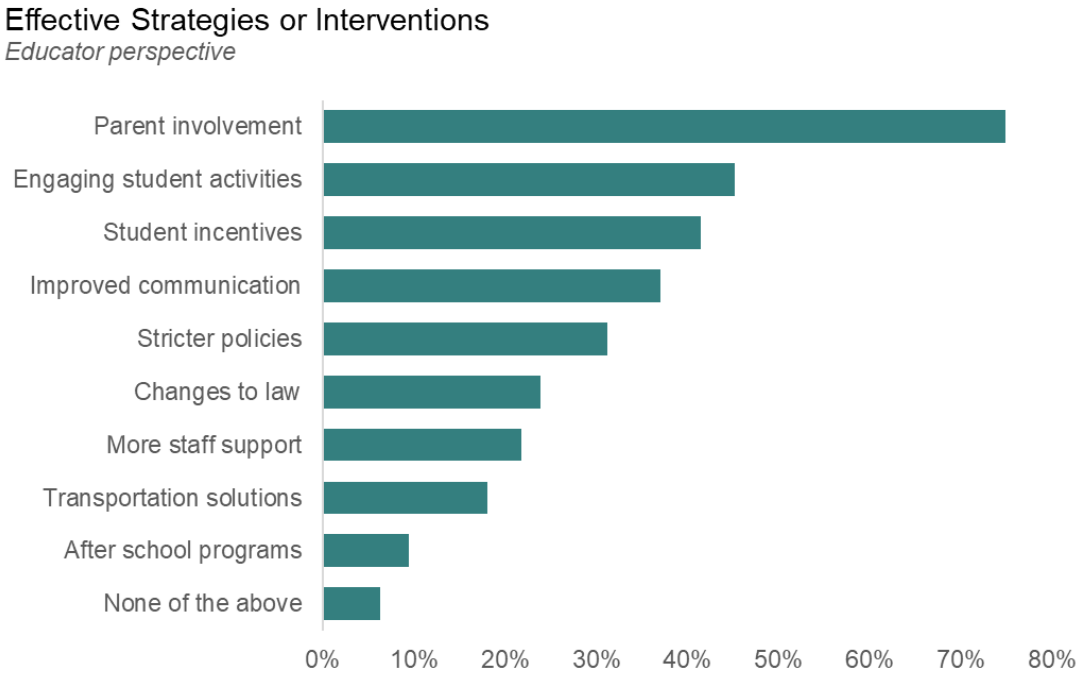
- *“Enforceable attendance policies that provide real consequences and sufficient funding for resources and interventions for tardy or absent students (again these do not need to be punitive consequences, but if a student is gone frequently, there may be something in their life where going to science may not be what they need and instead should be going to see social workers, skills educators, specialists, etc) and these require funding.”*
- *“I am piloting a program at an alternative high school with a strict attendance policy. All the kids that go through the program love how strict the attendance policy is because,*

and I quote, "I would not have attended your classes without the strict attendance policy. It held me accountable". Students want clear, direct consequences/boundaries, not ones that are vague and misleading."

- *"Hard line on school options. If a student cannot attend school for any reason they should be moved to online option. After 50% of term is missed, student should be moved to online option. There should be a hard line drawn between in person educator or online educator...doing both is not fair to students who do come."*
- *"There need to be real consequences for missing school. Everything should not be online. Looking at my assignments online is not the same value as being in my class, and it is offensive that many parents and current leadership see it that way. If there were consequences to student academics, less retakes, less opportunity to just "stay home" or have extended vacations, parents and students might feel that school isn't as easy to just skip."*

It is the position of the Legislature and the Board that a parent is "primarily responsible for a child's education and has the constitutional right to determine which aspects of public education the child participates in..." (Board Rule R277-404-7(2)(a) and Utah Code 53E-2-301(3)).

In addition, 75% percent of educators responding to a survey question about strategies to improve student attendance indicated that getting parents involved in dealing with their child's attendance was effective in improving student attendance, more than any other strategy or intervention. The chart below provides a breakdown of educator responses.



Given the significance of parental involvement to success in education in both theory and observed practice, LEAs should address barriers, including those that parents identified in survey responses. Investment in the following priorities may spark significant dividends:

- timely, accurate, and responsive communication, particularly regarding expectations, absences, suspensions, and expulsions,

- reliable data that is updated in a timely manner, particularly regarding attendance, and absences, and
- updated, clear, concise, and comprehensively designed policies and procedures that are implemented consistently and that are easily accessible.

The USBE, or another entity not specific to one LEA, may be able to provide value by creating and providing accessible and relevant educational material regarding options available to students within public education (e.g., charter schools with various emphases, dual enrollment, enrollment options outside a student's district of residence, fully online districts and charters, etc.)

VI. Appendices

- A. Scope, Objective, Methodology
- B. Glossary
- C. Criteria
- D. Survey Question Response Rates

Appendix A – Scope, Objective, and Methodology

1. Scope and Objective

On March 7, 2024, the Utah State Board of Education (Board), approved and prioritized an audit of student attendance; the Board reprioritized the audit on June 6, 2024, and the audit was started in July 2024.

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate factors impacting the choice to attend a public education entity or participate in alternative education options and evaluate attendance within public education, inclusive of stakeholder perspectives and academic achievement. To achieve this purpose, school years 2024 and 2025 were selected to complete the review; however, in instances where trend data was required or sufficient information was not readily available in the selected years, additional years were selected. In the event trend analyses were necessary, historical data for several years was considered.

2. Methodology

To ensure an accurate and efficient audit, the Internal Audit Department (IAD) used various approaches to gather information and draw conclusions.

Data
Data related to student attendance was identified and obtain from the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and local education agencies (LEAs). To obtain data from LEAs, and due to limited audit resources, a 10% sample was chosen. The sample represented both districts (i.e., six districts) and charters (i.e., 10 charters). See **Data Disclaimer** for additional information related to the data quality.

Criteria
To ensure a sound understanding of the requirements related to student attendance, Utah Code and Board Rule were reviewed. To consider alignment of practice with criteria, internal policies and procedures and associated documents (e.g., school calendars, daily schedules) were obtained and reviewed from the sample of 16 LEAs.

Surveys
Several surveys were administered in the fall of 2024 to collect information from various public education stakeholders.

Parents with School-Aged Children (Students) Currently Attending Public Education

One survey was administered to the parents of students currently attending public education in the sample of 16 LEAs. Of the 122,287 parents that received the survey, 13,857 (11%) responded. As the survey was anonymous, parents were asked to identify which LEA their student(s) attended. Of those who responded, 4,728 (34%) chose not to identify their associated LEA(s); however, of the parents who did associate themselves with an LEA, they were associated with 75 of the 155 (48%) LEAs. At the end of the survey, parents were asked if they

would like their student(s), if they were over the age of 13, to provide their perspective on attending school; 4,135 (38%) parents said yes, resulting in 2,481 student responses.

Parents with Students Who Exited Public Education

Within the sample of 16 LEAs, another survey was administered to the parents of students who had exited (e.g., homeschool, private school, GED) public education. 798 of 4,804 (17%) parents participated in the exit survey and responses represented participation from 58 of 155 (37%) LEAs.

Educators

The final survey was administered to educators at the sample of 16 LEAs. Of the 8,807 educators that received the survey:

- 2,188 (25%) responded, and
- 399 (18%) did not complete the survey.

For all three surveys, partial responses are included in the results. Not all respondents saw all questions, so total responses vary from question to question; however, **Appendix D** is included to ensure transparency and accuracy in populations and response rates. In the case of the parent surveys, although the response rates were lower than desired, it is important to note that a household may have received multiple requests to participate in the surveys (i.e., multiple parents with multiple contact emails, from the same household, at the LEA), artificially increasing the parent population and subsequently artificially lowering the response rate.

Based on the results of the reviewed criteria, data, and survey responses, IAD drew conclusions specific to the stated audit objective.

Appendix B – Glossary

Term or Acronym	Term or Acronym Description
Absence	"The failure of a school-age child assigned to a class or class period to attend a class or class period. (53G-6-201(1))"
Attendance	Student participation for programs they are enrolled in (i.e., did they come or not)
Attendance Validated Program	"A program within an LEA that consists of eligible, enrolled public school students who physically attend school in a brick-and-mortar school. (R277-419-2(3))"
Board	The constitutionally established and elected body of 15 members of Utah State Board of Education.
Board Rule	Utah Administrative Code promulgated by the Board
CY	Calendar Year (i.e., January 1 – December 31)
Chronic Absenteeism	"A student misses 10% or more of days enrolled, for any reason, and makes a school aware that a beginning of tiered supports may be needed. R277-607-2(1))"
Common Data Committee	A group of individuals from USBE, the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, the Governor's Office, and the State Tax Commission that meet annually to determine the number of children estimated to be enrolled in public education and the total school age population.
Design	A plan to achieve established objectives (i.e., to show the look and function or workings of a system before it is implemented); should be comprehensive and documented, including identification of necessary forms, personnel, tools, etc. Plans may be documented as rules, policies, procedures, processes, forms, etc.
Enrollment	Programs, courses, or classes the student signed up to participate.
Excused Absence (Valid Excuse)	An acceptable reason in state law or LEA policy for a school-age child's absence from school. See Utah Code 53G-6-201(13).

Term or Acronym	Term or Acronym Description
Implementation	Putting a designed plan into effect; execute the previously designed plan.
LEA	Local education agencies, which are comprised of both school districts and charter schools.
Learner Validated Program	“A program within an LEA that consists of eligible, enrolled public education students where the student receives instruction through: (a) an online learning program, (b) a blended program; or (c) a personalized, competency-based learning program. (R277-419-2(16))”
Membership	A measurement of attendance or absence as it relates to the programs that students are enrolled in that is used to distribute funds to LEAs (e.g., 4 of 7 periods = 4/7ths of 180 or 103 membership days).
Notice of Compulsory Education Violation	See Utah Code 53G-6-202
Notice of Truancy	See Utah Code 53G-6-203
Parent	"Parent" means a parent or guardian who has established residency of a child under Section 53G-6-302, 53G-6-303, or 53G-6-402, or another applicable Utah guardianship provision. (R277-100(21))”
Program	“A course of instruction within a school that is designed to accomplish a predetermined curricular objective or set of standards (R277-419-2(22)).” Synonymous with course or class.
Risk Assessment	“Assesses the risks facing the entity as it seeks to achieve its objectives. This assessment provides the basis for developing appropriate risk responses.” *The Green Book OV2.04*
School Day	“A day where an LEA provides educational services to students subject to the requirements described in Section R277-419-4. (R277-419-2(30))”
School Year	The collection of “school day(s)” that fall within a single “SY,” which generally is equivalent to 180 school days.

Term or Acronym	Term or Acronym Description
SFY	State Fiscal Year (i.e., July 1 – June 30)
State Law	Inclusive of Utah Code and Board Rule
Student	A school-aged child (approx. 5-17 years of age), whether currently enrolled in public education or not, at the time of the analysis.
Student Participation	Attendance or absence as it relates to the programs that students are enrolled in.
SY	The 12-month period from July 1 through June 30
Tardy	A student arriving late for a program, course, or class late.
Truancy	For an attendance validated program: when a student misses "half of the school day" (Utah Code 53G-6-201(11)(a)(i)). For a learner validated program: when a student misses "the relevant amount of time under the LEA's policy regarding continued enrollment…" (Utah Code 53G-6-201(11)(a)(ii).
Unexcused Absence	"An absence charged to a student when: (a) The student was not physically present at school at any of the times attendance checks were made in accordance with R277-419-8(5); and The student's absence could not be accounted for by evidence of a legitimate or valid excuse in accordance with local board policy on truancy as defined in Section 53G-5-201 R277-419-2(38)"
USBE	Utah State Board of Education, the agency

Appendix C – Criteria

General Note: The most current reference for each criterion is shown below. However, there is historical criterion that was also effective during the scope of this audit that was reviewed. Historical criterion is not included herein; however, criteria with relevant historical criteria is designated with an asterisk (*).

1. Utah Code Annotated

- **53E-2-301** Public education's vision and mission. (*Effective 5/14/2019*)
  (3) The Legislature:
  (a) recognizes that parents are a child's first teachers and are responsible for the education of their children;

- **53F-2-102** State Funding – Minimum School Program. (*Effective 2/22/2022*)
  (4)
  (a) "Minimum School Program" means the state-supported public school programs for kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools as described in this Subsection (4).
  (b) The Minimum School Program established in school districts and charter schools shall include the equivalent of a school term of nine months as determined by the state board.
  (c)
  (i) The state board shall establish the number of days or equivalent instructional hours that school is held for an academic year.
  (d)
  (i) An LEA governing board may reallocate up to 32 instructional hours or four school days established under Subsection (4)(c) for teacher preparation time or teacher professional development.
  (ii) A reallocation of instructional hours or school days under Subsection (4)(d)(i) is subject to the approval of two-thirds of the members of an LEA governing board voting in a regularly scheduled meeting:
  (C) At which a quorum of the LEA governing board is present; and
  (D) Held in compliance with Title 52, Chapter 4, Open and Public Meetings Act.
  (iii) If an LEA governing board reallocates instructional hours or school days as provided by this Subsection (4)(d), the school district or charter school shall notify students' parents of the school calendar at least:
  (B) 90 days before the beginning of the school year;
  (iv) Instructional hours or school days reallocated for teacher preparation time or teacher professional development pursuant to this Subsection (4)(d) is considered part of a school term referred to in Subsection (4)(b).

- **53G-6-201** Definitions. *(Effective 5/1/2024)*
  (1)
    (a) "Absence" or "absent" means the failure of a school-age child assigned to a class or class period to attend a class or class period.
    (b) "Absence" or "absent" does not mean multiple tardies used to calculate an absence for the sake of a truancy.

  (11) A notice of compulsory education violation issued to a parent:
    (a) "Truant" means a condition in which a school-age child, without a valid excuse, and subject to Subsection (11)(b), is absent for at least:
    (i) half of the school day; or
    (ii) if the school-age child is enrolled in a learner verified program, as that term is defined by the state board, the relevant amount of time under the LEA's policy regarding the LEA's continuing enrollment measure as it relates to truancy.
    (b) A school-age child may not be considered truant under this part more than one time during one day.

  (13)
    (a) "Valid excuse" means:
      (i) an illness, which may be either mental or physical, regardless of whether the school-age child or parent provides documentation from a medical professional;
      (ii) mental or behavioral health of the school-age child;
      (iii) a family death;
      (iv) an approved school activity;
      (v) an absence permitted by a school-age child's:
        (A) individualized education program; or
        (B) Section 504 accommodation plan;
      (vi) an absence permitted in accordance with Subsection 53G-6-803(5); or
      (vii) any other excuse established as valid by a local school board, charter school governing board, or school district.
    (b) "Valid excuse" does not mean a parent acknowledgment of an absence for a reason other than a reason described in Subsections (13)(a)(i) through (vi), unless specifically permitted by the local school board, charter school governing board, or school district under Subsection (13)(a)(vi).

- **53G-6-202** Compulsory education (*Effective 3/17/2021*)
  (3) A school administrator, a designee of a school administrator, a law enforcement officer acting as a school resource officer, or a truancy specialist may only issue a notice of compulsory education violation to a parent of a school-age child if the school-age child is:
    (a) in grade 1 through 6; and
    (b) truant at least five times during the school year.
  (4) A notice of compulsory education violation issued to a parent:
    (a) shall direct the parent to:

(i) meet with school authorities to discuss the school-age child's school attendance problems; and
(ii) cooperate with the local school board, charter school governing board, or school district in securing regular attendance by the school-age child;
(b) shall designate the school authorities with whom the parent is required to meet;
(c) shall state that it is a class B misdemeanor for the parent to intentionally or without good cause:
(i) fail to meet with the designated school authorities to discuss the school-age child's school attendance problems; or
(ii) fail to prevent the school-age child from being truant five or more times during the remainder of the school year;
(d) shall be served on the parent by personal service or certified mail; and
(e) may not be issued unless the school-age child has been truant at least five times during the school year.

(7) Except during the period described in Subsections (5) and (6), a local school board, charter school governing board, or school district shall report violations of this section to the appropriate county or district attorney.
(8) Except during the period described in Subsections (5) and (6), if school personnel have reason to believe that, after a notice of compulsory education violation is issued, the parent has failed to make a good faith effort to ensure that the school-age child receives an appropriate education, the issuer of the compulsory education violation shall report to the Division of Child and Family Services:
(a) identifying information of the school-age child and the parent who received the notice of compulsory education violation;
(b) information regarding the longest number of consecutive school days the school-age child has been absent or truant from school and the percentage of school days the school-age child has been absent or truant during each relevant school term;
(c) whether the school-age child has made adequate educational progress;
(d) whether the requirements of Section 53G-6-206 have been met;
(e) whether the school-age child is two or more years behind the local public school's age group expectations in one or more basic skills; and
(f) whether the school-age child is receiving special education services or systematic remediation efforts.

- **53G-6-203** Truancy -- Notice of truancy -- Failure to cooperate with school authorities. (*Effective 5/3/2023*)
(3) A local school board or charter school governing board:
(a) may authorize a school administrator, a designee of a school administrator, a law enforcement officer acting as a school resource officer, or a truancy specialist to issue a notice of truancy in accordance with Subsection (4); and
(b) shall establish a procedure for a school-age child, or the school-age child's parents, to contest a notice of truancy.

(4) A notice of truancy described in Subsection (3):
  (a) may not be issued until a school-age child has been truant at least five times during the school year;
  (b) may not be issued to a school-age child who is less than 12 years old or in a grade below grade 7;
  (c) may not be issued to a school-age child exempt from school attendance as provided in Section 53G-6-204 or 53G-6-702;
  (d) shall direct the school-age child who receives the notice of truancy and the parent of the school-age child to:
    (i) meet with school authorities to discuss the school-age child's truancies; and
    (ii) cooperate with the local school board, charter school governing board, or school district in securing regular attendance by the school-age child; and
  (e) shall be mailed to, or served on, the school-age child's parent.

- **53G-6-204** School-age children exempt from school attendance. (*Effective 5/1/2024*)
(2)
  (f) A local school board that excuses a school-age child from attendance under this Subsection (2) shall annually issue a certificate stating that the school-age child is excused from attendance for the specified school year.
  (g) A local school board shall issue a certificate excusing a school-age child from attendance:
    (i) within 30 days after receipt of a signed affidavit filed by the school-age child's parent or legal guardian under this Subsection (2); and
    (ii) on or before August 1 each year thereafter unless:
      (A) the school-age child enrolls in a school within the school district;
      (B) the school-age child's parent or legal guardian notifies the school district that the school-age child no longer attends a home school; or
      (C) the school-age child's parent or legal guardian notifies the school district that the school-age child's school district of residence has changed.

- **53G-6-205** Approval Absences. *(Effective 5/5/2021)*
(1) In determining whether to preapprove an extended absence of a school-age child as a valid excuse, a local school board, charter school governing board, or school district shall approve the absence if the local school board, charter school governing board, or school district determines that the extended absence will not adversely impact the school-age child's education.
(2) A local school board, charter school governing board, or school district may not require documentation from a medical professional to substantiate a valid excuse that is a mental or physical illness.

- **53G-6-206** Duties of a local school board, charter school governing board, or school district in promoting regular attendance -- Parental involvement -- Liability not imposed -- Report to state board. *(Effective 7/1/2024)*
  (3) The efforts described in Subsection (2) shall include, as reasonably feasible:
    (a) counseling of the school-age child by school authorities;
    (b)
      (i) issuing a notice of truancy to the school-age child in accordance with Section 53G-6-203; or
      (ii) issuing a notice of compulsory education violation to the school-age child's parent in accordance with Section 53G-6-202;
    (c) making any necessary adjustment to the curriculum and schedule to meet special needs of the school-age child;
    (d) considering alternatives proposed by the school-age child's parent;
    (e) incorporating attendance in the school-age child's course score or grade if:
      (i) incorporation is determined appropriate through an individualized plan the school-age child's parent and teacher develops;
      (ii) parental written consent is obtained for the individualized plan; and
      (iii) the parent retains the ability to revoke the parent's consent described in Subsection (3)(e)(ii) at any time.
    (f) monitoring school attendance of the school-age child;
    (g) voluntary participation in truancy mediation, if available; and
    (h) providing the school-age child's parent, upon request, with a list of resources available to assist the parent in resolving the school-age child's attendance problems.

- **53G-6-209** Truancy support centers. (*Effective 5/14/2019*)
  (1) A school district may establish one or more truancy support centers for:
    (a) truant minors taken into custody under Section 53G-6-208; or
    (b) students suspended or expelled from school.

- **53G-6-803** Parental right to academic accommodations. *(Effective 5/12/2020)*
  (5) Notwithstanding Part 2, Compulsory Education, an LEA shall record an excused absence for a scheduled family event or a scheduled proactive visit to a health care provider if:
    (a) the parent submits a written statement at least one school day before the scheduled absence; and
    (b) the student agrees to make up course work for school days missed for the scheduled absence in accordance with LEA policy.

- **53G-8-205** Grounds for suspension or expulsion from a public school. *(Effective 7/1/2024)*
  (1) A student may be suspended or expelled from a public school for the following reasons:

(a) frequent or flagrant willful disobedience, defiance of proper authority, or disruptive behavior, including the use of foul, profane, vulgar, or abusive language;
(b) willful destruction or defacing of school property;
(c) behavior or threatened behavior which poses an immediate and significant threat to the welfare, safety, or morals of other students or school personnel or to the operation of the school;
(d) possession, control, or use of an alcoholic beverage as defined in Section 32B-1-102;
(e) behavior proscribed under Subsection (2) which threatens harm or does harm to the school or school property, to a person associated with the school, or property associated with that person, regardless of where it occurs; or
(f) possession or use of pornographic material on school property.

(2)
(a) A student shall be suspended or expelled from a public school for the following reasons:
(i) a serious violation affecting another student or a staff member, or a serious violation occurring in a school building, in or on school property, or in conjunction with a school activity, including:
(A) the possession, control, or actual or threatened use of a real weapon, explosive, or noxious or flammable material;
(B) the actual use of violence or sexual misconduct;
(C) the actual or threatened use of a look alike weapon with intent to intimidate another person or to disrupt normal school activities; or
(D) the sale, control, or distribution of a drug or controlled substance as defined in Section 58-37-2, an imitation controlled substance defined in Section 58-37b-2, or drug paraphernalia as defined in Section 58-37a-3;
(ii) the commission of an act involving the use of force or the threatened use of force which if committed by an adult would be a felony or class A misdemeanor; or
(iii) making a false report of an emergency at a school under Subsection 76-9-202(2)(d).
(b) A student who commits a violation of Subsection (2)(a) involving a real or look alike weapon, explosive, or flammable material shall be expelled from school for a period of not less than one year subject to the following:
(i) within 45 days after the expulsion the student shall appear before the student's superintendent, the superintendent's designee, chief administrative officer of a charter school, or the chief administrative officer's designee, accompanied by a parent; and
(ii) the superintendent, chief administrator, or designee shall determine:
(A) what conditions must be met by the student and the student's parent for the student to return to school, including any provided for in the policies described in Section 53G-8-203;
(B) if the student should be placed on probation in a regular or alternative school setting consistent with Section 53G-8-208, and what conditions

must be met by the student in order to ensure the safety of students and faculty at the school the student is placed in; and

(C) if it would be in the best interest of both the LEA, and the student, to modify the expulsion term to less than a year, conditioned on approval by the local governing board and giving highest priority to providing a safe school environment for all students.

(3) A student may be denied admission to a public school on the basis of having been expelled from that or any other school during the preceding 12 months.

- **53G-8-206** Delegation of authority to suspend or expel a student -- Procedure for suspension -- Readmission. (*Effective 5/14/2019*)
  (1)
    (a) A local school board may delegate to any school principal or assistant principal within the school district the power to suspend a student in the principal's school for up to 10 school days.
    (b) A charter school governing board may delegate to the chief administrative officer of the charter school the power to suspend a student in the charter school for up to 10 school days.
  (2) The local school board or charter school governing board may suspend a student for up to one school year or delegate that power to the district superintendent, the superintendent's designee, or chief administrative officer of a charter school.
  (3) The local school board may expel a student for a fixed or indefinite period, provided that the expulsion shall be reviewed by the district superintendent or the superintendent's designee and the conclusions reported to the local school board, at least once each year.
  (4) If a student is suspended, a designated school official shall notify the parent of the student of the following without delay:
    (a) that the student has been suspended;
    (b) the grounds for the suspension;
    (c) the period of time for which the student is suspended; and
    (d) the time and place for the parent to meet with a designated school official to review the suspension.

- **53G-8-207** Alternatives to suspension or expulsion. (*Effective 5/14/2019*)
  (1) Each local school board or charter school governing board shall establish:
    (a) policies providing that prior to suspending or expelling a student for repeated acts of willful disobedience, defiance of authority, or disruptive behavior which are not of such a violent or extreme nature that immediate removal is required, good faith efforts shall be made to implement a remedial discipline plan that would allow the student to remain in school; and
    (b) alternatives to suspension, including policies that allow a student to remain in school under an in-school suspension program or under a program allowing the parent, with the consent of the student's teacher or teachers, to attend

class with the student for a period of time specified by a designated school official.

- **53G-8-211*** Responses to school-based behavior. (*Effective 5/1/2024*)
  (1) As used in this section:
    (b) "Habitual truant" means a school-age child who:
      (i) is in grade 7 or above, unless the school-age child is under 12 years old;
      (ii) is subject to the requirements of Section 53G-6-202; and
      (iii)
        (A) is truant at least 20 days during one school year; or
        (B) fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of school authorities to resolve the school-age child's attendance problem as required under Section 53G-6-206.

  (3) If a minor is alleged to have committed an offense on school property that is a class C misdemeanor, an infraction, or a status offense, or a minor is alleged to be a habitual truant, the school administrator, the school administrator's designee, or a school resource officer shall refer the minor:
    (a) to an evidence-based alternative intervention, including:
      (i) a mobile crisis outreach team;
      (ii) a youth services center, as defined in Section 80-5-102;
      (iii) a certified youth court, as defined in Section 80-6-901, or comparable restorative justice program;
      (iv) an evidence-based alternative intervention created and developed by the school or school district;
      (v) an evidence-based alternative intervention that is jointly created and developed by a local education agency, the state board, the juvenile court, local counties and municipalities, the Department of Health and Human Services;
      (vi) a tobacco cessation or education program if the offense is a violation of Section 76-10-105; or
      (vii) truancy mediation; or
    (b) for prevention and early intervention youth services, as described in Section 80-5-201, by the Division of Juvenile Justice and Youth Services if the minor refuses to participate in an evidence-based alternative intervention described in Subsection (3)(a).

- **53G-9-205.1** Start Smart Utah Program. (*Effective 5/5/2021*)
  (1)
    (b) “National School Lunch Program” means the same as that term is defined in 7 C.F.R. Sec. 210.0.
  (2)
    (a) There is created the Start Smart Utah Program.

(b) Except as provided in Subsection (3), a public school that participates in the National School Lunch Program shall participate in the School Breakfast Program.

(3)

(a) A public school may apply to the state board for a waiver of the requirements described in Subsection (2), if the requirements cause undue hardship.

- **53G-9-802** Dropout prevention and recovery -- Flexible enrollment options -- Contracting -- Reporting. (*Effective 5/3/2023*)

  (7) An LEA shall annually submit a report to the state board on dropout prevention and recovery services provided under this section, including:

  (a) the methods the LEA or third party uses to engage with or attempt to recover designated students under Subsection (1)(a)(i);

  (b) the number of designated students who enroll in a program described in Subsection (2) as a result of the efforts described in Subsection (7)(a);

  (c) the number of designated students who reach the designated students' attainment goals identified under Subsection (1)(a)(ii)(B); and

  (d) funding allocated to provide dropout prevention and recovery services.

- **53G-11-501** Definitions (*Effective 7/1/2024*)

  (4) "Chronically absent" means a student who:

  (a) was enrolled in an LEA for at least 60 calendar days; and

  (b) missed 10% or more days of instruction, whether the absence was excused or not.

2. Utah Administrative Code (Rule)

- **R277-100-2** Definitions. *(Effective: 3/11/2024)*

  (33) "Suspension" means:

  (a) an in-school suspension that is a temporary removal of a student from the student's regular classroom for disciplinary reasons for at least half a school day but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel; or

  (b) an out-of-school suspension that is the removal of a student from school grounds for disciplinary reasons unless the student removed is:

  (i) served solely under a Section 504 plan, where an out-of-school suspension is the excluding of the student from school for disciplinary purposes for one day or longer; or

  (ii) a student with disabilities under IDEA, where an out-of-school suspension is the temporary removal of the student from the student's regular school for disciplinary reasons to another setting.

- **R277-121-5** Snow, Inclement Weather, or Other Emergency School Closure Dates (*Effective 8/14/2022*)
  (3) An LEA may seek a waiver directly from the Superintendent from the 180 day requirement described in Subsection R277-419-4(1) if:

    (a) The LEA closes a school due to excessive snow, inclement weather, or an other emergency; and

    (b) The school closure will result in the LEA not meeting the 180 day requirement described in Section R277-419-4

  (4) The Superintendent may grant a waiver due to excessive snow, inclement weather, or other emergency without Board approval if the LEA has provided contingency school days and hours into the LEA's calendar as required in Subsection R277-419-4(5), or has another plan in place to minimize the negative impact on the educational process caused by the waiver.

- **R277-404-7** Student and Parent Participation in Student Assessments in Public Schools; Parental Exclusion from Testing and Safe Harbor Provisions. (*Effective: 6/7/2024*)
  (2)
    (a) A parent is primarily responsible for a child's education and has the constitutional right to determine which aspects of public education the child participates in, including assessment systems.

- **R277-419** Pupil Accounting. (Effective: 11/7/2023)

R277-419-2 Definitions.

(7) "Educational services" means providing learning opportunities and services designed to support a student to be prepared to succeed and lead by having the knowledge and skills to learn, engage civically, and lead meaningful lives, including by providing:
  (a) high quality instruction for each student;
  (b) personalized learning supports for each student;
  (c) implementation of evidence-based student health and wellness practices.

(30) "School day" means a day where an LEA provides educational services to students subject to the requirements described in Section R277-419-4.

(33) "School year" means the 12-month period from July 1 through June 30.

(38) "Unexcused absence" means an absence charged to a student when:
  (a) the student was not physically present at school at any of the times attendance checks were made in accordance with Subsection R277-419-8(5); and

(b) the student's absence could not be accounted for by evidence of a legitimate or valid excuse in accordance with local board policy on truancy as defined in Section 53G-6-201.

R277-419-4 Minimum School Days.

(1)

(a) Except as provided in Subsection 53F-2-102(4), an LEA shall provide educational services over a minimum of 180 school days each school year.

(b)

(i) Except as provided in Subsection (1)(b)(ii), an LEA that participates in the National School Lunch Program shall provide school meals on each day that the LEA schedules toward the LEA's 180 educational service days described in Subsection (1)(a).

(ii) The requirement to provide school meals described in Subsection (1)(b)(i) does not apply to:

(A) an unplanned school closure or unplanned learn from home day due to snow, inclement weather, or other emergency;

(B) a day that an LEA governing board reallocates as a teacher preparation or teacher professional development day as described in Subsection 53F-2-102(4)(d);

(C) a day that an LEA counts in student membership for professional development or parent-teacher conference days as described in Subsection (6); or

(D) a day where the LEA provides educational services while all the LEA's students engage in distance learning.

(5) An LEA's governing board shall provide adequate contingency school days in the LEA's yearly calendar to avoid the necessity of requesting a waiver except in the most extreme circumstances.

(6)

(a) A school may conduct parent-teacher and student Plan for College and Career Readiness conferences during the school day.

(b) Parent-teacher and college and career readiness conferences may only be held for a total of the equivalent of three full school days for the school year.

(c) Student membership for professional development or parent-teacher conference days shall be counted as that of the previous school day.

(d) The final decision and approval regarding planning time, parent-teacher and Student Plan for College and Career Readiness conferences rests with an LEA, consistent with Utah Code and Board administrative rules.

(e) Total instructional time and school calendars shall be approved by an LEA in an open meeting.

R277-419-5 Student Membership Eligibility and Learner Validated Enrollment Measurements.

(3) To generate membership for funding through the Minimum School Program on any school day, an LEA shall ensure that a student being counted by the LEA in membership:
   (c) does not have unexcused absences, which are determined using one of the learner validated enrollment measurements described in Subsection (4);

(4) An LEA shall use one of the following learner validated enrollment measures:
   (b) For a student enrolled in a learner validated program, an LEA shall:
      (i) adopt a written policy that designates a learner validated enrollment measurement to document the learner validated membership or enrollment status for each student enrolled in the learner validated program consistent with this section;
      (ii) document each student's continued enrollment status in compliance with the learner validated enrollment policy at least once every ten consecutive school days; and
      (iii) appropriately adjust and update student membership records in the student information system for students that did not meet the learner validated enrollment measurement, consistent with this section.
   (c) For a student enrolled in a learner validated program, the LEA may not count a student as an eligible student if the LEA has not engaged with the student during the prior ten consecutive school days.

R277-419-6 Student Membership Calculations.

(1)
   (a) Except as provided in Subsection (1)(b) or (1)(c), a student enrolled in only one LEA during a school year is eligible for no more than 180 days of regular membership per school year.

(4) If a student was enrolled for only part of the school day or only part of the school year, an LEA shall prorate the student's membership according to the number of hours, periods or credits for which the student actually was enrolled in relation to the number of hours, periods or credits for which a full-time student normally would have been enrolled, for example:
   (a) if the student was enrolled for four periods each day in a seven period school day for 180 school days, the student's aggregate membership would be 4/7 of 180 days or 103 days; or
   (b) if the student was enrolled for seven periods each day in a seven period school day for 103 school days, the student's membership would also be 103 days.

(5)
   (a) An LEA shall calculate the days in membership for all students using a method equivalent to the following: total clock hours of educational services for which the student was enrolled during the school year divided by 990 hours and then multiplied by 180 days and finally rounded up to the nearest whole day.

(b) For example, if a student was enrolled for only 900 hours during the school year, the student's aggregate membership would be (900/990)*180, and the LEA would report 164 days.

R277-419-8 Reporting Requirements and LEA Records.

(5) An LEA shall ensure that each school within the LEA completes a minimum of one attendance check each school day.

- **R277-462-4** School Counseling Program Approval and Qualifying Criteria. (*Effective: 6/7/2024)*

(1) To qualify for funding distribution outlined in Subsection (2), an LEA shall:

(i) submit an annual school-based data project demonstrating program or intervention effectiveness.

- **R277-484** Data Standards. (Effective: 11/7/2023 & 8/7/2024)

R277-484-4 Deadlines for Data Submission

(1) An LEA shall submit student level data to the Board through UTREx.

(3) An LEA shall, by 5 p.m. Mountain Standard Time on the date specified in the Board Reporting Deadline Table, submit reports in the format specified by the Superintendent.

R277-484-6 Official Data Source and Required LEA Compatibility.

(1) The Superintendent shall load operational data collections into the Data Warehouse as of the submission deadlines specified

(4)

(a) An LEA shall use an SIS approved by the Superintendent to ensure compatibility with Board data collection systems.

R277-484-7 Adjustments to Summary Statistics Based on Compliance Audits.

(1) To allocate MSP funds and projecting enrollment, the Superintendent may modify LEA level aggregate membership and fall enrollment counts on the basis of the values in the Membership and Enrollment audit reports, respectively, when an audit report review team agrees that an adjustment is warranted by the evidence of an audit.

(2) An audit report review team shall make a determination under Subsection (1) within 60 working days of the authorized audit report deadline.

(3) The Superintendent may only adjust values downward if an audit report is received after an authorized deadline.

- **R277-606** Dropout Prevention and Recovery Program. *(Date of Last Change: 7/22/2022)*

R277-606-3 LEA Dropout Prevention and Recovery Programs.

(3) An LEA that enrolls a designated student in a dropout prevention and

recovery program shall:

(b) indicate that the designated student is enrolling in the LEA's dropout prevention and recovery program in accordance with current UTREx specifications.

R277-606-4 Reporting Requirements and Audits.

(1)

(a) An LEA shall submit an annual report to the Superintendent on the LEA's dropout prevention and recovery services by October 30.

(b) The report described in Subsection (1)(a) shall include:

(i) the information described in Section 53G-9-802;

(ii) the total number of designated students in the LEA; and

(iii) if applicable, the name of a third party the LEA is contracting with to provide dropout prevention and recovery services

- **R277-607** Absenteeism and Truancy Prevention (*Effective 8/8/2023*)

R277-607-2 Definitions.

(1) "Chronic absenteeism" means a student misses 10% or more of days enrolled, for any reason, and makes a school aware that a beginning of tiered supports may be needed.

R277-607-3 Promotion of Regular Attendance.

(2) An LEA shall annually report the following data separately to the Superintendent:

(a) absences with a valid excuse; and

(b) absences without a valid excuse.

3. USBE Policy

- **Board Policy 1002** (*Effective: 8/4/2022*)

II.1. Board staff shall follow the rulewriting guidelines established by the Office of Administrative Rules (OAR) and described in the “Rulewriting Manual for Utah Rulewriters” published by the OAR.

4. Office of Administrative Rules (OAR)

- **Rulewriting Manual for Utah** – Rulewriters (*version 1.1.0*)

Chapter 1. Rulewriting Style

Good Drafting – Organization:

Before composing an administrative rule, a rulewriter should identify the authority for the rule; determine the purpose, intended results, or objectives of the rule; define the words to be used; and outline the organization of the

rule… Good organization often makes a difficult rule comprehensible, and preparing a complete outline will facilitate good organization.

Good Drafting – Purpose:

Fully understanding the intended results of the rule is critical to its effective composition.

Good Drafting – Principles of Style:

Following the principles of drafting enables a rulewriter to avoid ambiguity and to write in “plain English.” The three basic principles of drafting are:

- consistency;
- simplicity; and
- clarity.

Consistency requires that the same form be used throughout an agency's rules to avoid varying interpretations that may result from divergent styles and construction. Unlike literary composition, a rulewriter avoids unnecessary variation in sentence form, even to the point of monotony. Similarly, a word, especially if the word is included in a definition section, should be used with the same meaning throughout an agency's rules. Avoid synonyms or synonymous expressions.

The principle of simplicity is reflected in dignified but simple and direct regulatory language. Clarity similarly requires a rulewriter to avoid abstract or vague language so that courts and others implementing a rule can understand the directives of the agency. All three principles require common terminology and simple phrasing.

Good Drafting – Careful Choice of Language:

Use short words and sentences.

- When possible, keep sentences brief using words of three syllables or fewer.

If it is possible to omit a word and retain the desired meaning, omit the word.

5. UTREx Data Clearinghouse

- **File Specification 2024-25** Exit Code Notes. (*Effective 7/1/2024)*

15. CH versus TH transfer to homeschool codes: Districts should use the ‘TH’ exit code and Charters should use ‘CH’. Documentation is required. Information on transfer student documentation can be found in the Agreed-Upon Procedures (AUP) Guide – LEAs & CBOs on pp. 10-12 (June 2019 guide), found here: https://resources.auditor.utah.gov/s/article/Forms-Manuals-Guides
    a. Home Schooling: Normally, a situation in which a student leaves a charter school for home schooling should be handled in this way: The charter school exits the student as a transfer to another LEA within the state (TS), notifies the other LEA in which the student resides of the student’s change in

enrollment status, provides the other LEA with the student's records and parental contact information, and urges the parent to submit to the other LEA the "signed affidavit" required by Utah Code 53G-6-202. In turn, the other LEA enrolls the student, follows up with the parent to obtain the affidavit, and, finally exits the student to home schooling (TH). In this case, the independent accountant engaged by the charter school should contact the other LEA to verify that a signed affidavit is on file.

b. In cases where an affidavit is not on file, the charter school may have exited the student directly to home schooling and may choose to use the transfer code 'CH' for transferred from Charter to Home School. Charters must verify the student has registered as a home school student with their district of residence and should be able to produce written evidence of a good faith effort to do its part in properly accounting for the student.

6. Code of Federal Regulations

- **2 CFR 200.303** Internal controls. *(Effective 8/13/2020)*
  The non-Federal entity must:
  (a) Establish and maintain effective internal control over the Federal award that provides reasonable assurance that the non-Federal entity is managing the Federal award in compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award. These internal controls should be in compliance with guidance in "Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government" issued by the Comptroller General of the United States or the "Internal Control Integrated Framework", issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO).

- **7 CFR 210.10** Meal Requirements for lunches and requirements for afterschool snacks. (*Effective 8/25/2022*)
  (l) Requirements for lunch periods –
  (1) Timing. Schools must offer lunches meeting the requirements of this section during the period the school has designated as the lunch period. Schools must offer lunches between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Schools may request an exemption from these times from the State agency. With State agency approval, schools may serve lunches to children under age 5 over two service periods. School may divide quantities and food items offered each time any way they wish.

- **7 CFR 220.8** Meal Requirements for breakfasts. (*Effective 8/25/2022*)
  (l) Requirements for breakfast period –
  (1) Timing. Schools must offer breakfast meeting the requirements of this section at or near the beginning of the school day.

Appendix D – Survey Questions

1. Attendance Survey Questions and Responses

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
I.A.2(c)	In the last 3 years, did you withdraw any of your children from public education to attend home school, private school, or another alternative before re-enrolling them in public education? Select any response that matches your situation: [Yes, other (please specify):]	Charter school	144	484	30%
III.B.1(b)	To what extent have each of the following impacted your decision to enroll in public education?	Increased social and emotional growth by interacting with others at school.	856	1600	54%
III.B.1(b)	To what extent have each of the following impacted your decision to enroll in public education?	Having a licensed teacher oversee education.	772	1600	48%
III.B.1(b)	To what extent have each of the following impacted your decision to enroll in public education?	Availability of extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, clubs).	601	1600	38%
III.B.1(b)	To what extent have each of the following impacted your decision to enroll in public education? [Other]	Course offerings	49	364	13%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Math	294	365	81%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Science	234	365	64%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	English	181	365	50%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Foreign Language	150	365	41%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Social Studies	120	365	33%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Digital Studies	106	365	29%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Financial Literacy	98	365	27%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Fine Arts	93	365	25%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	CTE	80	365	22%
III.B.1(b)	Which subjects did you want a licensed teacher to teach? Select all that apply	Physical Fitness	51	365	14%
III.B.2(a)	How much does your child enjoy being at school?	Completely enjoys or Enjoys quite a bit	6889	12682	54%
III.B.2(i)	Does your child participate in school sports, clubs, teams, or other student organizations?	Yes	7328	12682	58%
III.B.2(i)	Does your child miss any classes to participate in these school activities?	Yes	3055	7237	42%
III.B.2(d)	Have transportation issues affected your childs attendance?	Yes	1243	12562	10%
III.B.2(d)	About how often is your child late to school?	Less than 1 time per week	6635	7774	85%
III.B.2(d)	About how often is your child late to school?	Almost every day	227	7774	3%
II.B.2	Does the school notify you if your child is absent?	Yes	11313	12378	91%
II.B.2	Has the school ever denied your request for an excused absence?	Yes	656	12378	5%
II.B.2	Has the school ever denied your request for an excused absence? - Yes, please explain:	Timeline	210	550	38%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
II.B.2	Has the school ever denied your request for an excused absence? - Yes, please explain:	Penalties and Accountability	50	550	9%
II.B.2	What reasons do you see as acceptable for your child to miss school? Select all that apply:	Illness	11733	12378	95%
II.B.2	What reasons do you see as acceptable for your child to miss school? Select all that apply:	Vacation	9430	12378	76%
II.B.2	What reasons do you see as acceptable for your child to miss school? Select all that apply:	Mental health	7776	12378	63%
II.B.2	How important is regular attendance for your child's academic success?	Extremely important or very important	10719	12232	88%
IV.B.3	How frequently does your child need help from their teacher to catch up on work missed due to absences?	Never or Rarely or Sometime	11154	12232	91%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Unclear Instructions	4896	12232	40%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Lack of Motivation	4176	12232	34%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Distractions	4120	12232	34%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	None	3508	12232	29%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Strict Deadlines	2183	12232	18%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Other	1242	12232	10%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Health Issues	946	12232	8%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply:	Internet Connection	401	12232	3%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply: [Other]	Administrative concerns	351	1242	28%
IV.B.3	What challenges does your child face when trying to catch up on missed work? Select all that apply: [Other]	Workload	171	1242	14%

2. Educator Survey Questions and Responses

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
II.B.2	How concerned are you about the overall attendance rate in your class(es)?	Very concerned	493	2119	23%
II.B.2	How concerned are you about the overall attendance rate in your class(es)?	Moderately concerned	698	2119	33%
II.B.6(a)	What percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards?	95% or more attendance or 90 - 94% attendance	1386	1912	72%
II.B.6(a)	What percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards? + Please select the type of school where you currently teach. Select all that apply:	95% or more attendance or 90 - 94% attendance + Elementary school	760	1863	41%
II.B.6(a)	What percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards? + Please select the type of school where you currently teach. Select all that apply:	95% or more attendance or 90 - 94% attendance + Junior High or Middle School	284	1863	15%
II.B.6(a)	What percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards? + Please select the type of school where you currently teach. Select all that apply:	95% or more attendance or 90 - 94% attendance + High school	313	1863	17%
II.B.1	Does student attendance increase, decrease, or stay the same during the last week of school?	Decrease	911	1759	52%
II.B.1	Does student attendance increase, decrease, or stay the same during the last week of school?	Increase	366	1759	21%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
III.B.2(j)	Does student attendance the last week of school affect a student's grade?	No	1112	1759	63%
III.B.2(c)	What percentage of attendance is necessary for an average student to reach proficiency with core standards? + How important is student attendance after statewide assessments are complete?	95% or more attendance or 90 - 94% attendance + Less important	287	1804	16%
II.B.1	Which day of the week do you see the most absences in your class(es)?	All days of the week are about the same	952	1860	51%
II.B.1	Which day of the week do you see the most absences in your class(es)?	Friday	705	1860	38%
II.B.1	Is there a class period that students tend to have more absences?	First period	477	969	49%
II.B.3	How frequently is tardiness a problem for any of your classes? + Please select the type of school where you currently teach. Select all that apply:	Always or Often + High School or Junior High or Middle School	432	1049	41%
II.B.3	How frequently do the following negatively impact the classroom environment: - Tardies + Please select the type of school where you currently teach. Select all that apply:	Daily + Elementary School	478	966	49%
III.B.2(c)	What do you typically do when end of year testing is complete? Select all that apply	I teach the remaining curriculum	1259	1912	66%
III.B.2(c)	What do you typically do when end of year testing is complete? Select all that apply	I provide fun and engaging activities	1049	1912	55%

3. Withdraw Survey Questions and Responses

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
II.A.2	Prior to unenrolling, what actions did you pursue? Select all that apply:	Met with Lea personnel	317	521	61%
II.A.2	Prior to unenrolling, what actions did you pursue? Select all that apply:	None of the above	122	521	23%
II.A.4	How long ago did you withdraw your child from public schools (i.e., districts and charters)?	0 - 2 years ago	392	578	68%
II.A.4	What age range was your child when you withdrew them from public education?	7-9	140	501	28%
II.A.4	What was the most recent district or charter school your child attended? - Group	District	292	394	74%
II.A.4	Do you have any children still enrolled in public education?	Yes	276	578	48%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply: [Part-time public school]	[No other selection]	43	560	8%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	Home school	312	560	56%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	[multiple selections]	98	560	18%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	Part-time public school	96	560	17%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	Private school	141	560	25%
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	Other	78	560	14%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
II.A.4	Where does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply: [Other]	Exchange program	1	78	1%
II.A.4	In what format does your child(ren) now receive their education? Select all that apply:	In person at a home	284	539	53%
II.A.4	Do you plan on re-enrolling your child in public school in the future?	No	394	511	77%
II.A.4	Do you plan on re-enrolling your child in public school in the future?	Yes	117	511	23%
II.A.4	When and why are you planning on re-enrolling in public school?	[Provided when in response]	95	117	81%
II.A.4	When and why are you planning on re-enrolling in public school?	High school	35	63	56%
II.A.5	How do you provide homeschooling instruction?	Individually	199	283	70%
II.A.5	How many other children meet together?	6-10	11	27	41%
II.A.5	How many other children meet together?	1-5	4	27	15%
II.A.5	How many other children meet together?	11-15 or 16 or more	8	27	30%
II.A.6	Are you aware of the Utah Fits All Scholarship (UFA)?	Yes	330	560	59%
II.A.6	Did you apply for the UFA?	Yes	189	330	57%
II.A.6	Has your child been awarded the UFA?	Yes	87	189	46%
II.A.6	How likely are you to recommend UFA Scholarships to other families?	9 or 10	65	80	81%
II.A.6	How likely are you to recommend UFA Scholarships to other families?	7 or 8	14	80	18%
II.A.6	How likely are you to recommend UFA Scholarships to other families?	6 or below	1	80	1%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent were you satisfied with the quality of education your child received in public school prior to unenrollment?	Somewhat dissatisfied or Very dissatisfied	310	511	61%
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent were you satisfied with the quality of education your child received in public school prior to unenrollment?	Somewhat satisfied	165	511	32%
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent did the following impact your decision to unenroll your child(ren) from public education:	Lack of individualized education	1707	NA	NA
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent did the following impact your decision to unenroll your child(ren) from public education:	Concern with social or emotional safety	1705	NA	NA
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent did the following impact your decision to unenroll your child(ren) from public education:	Lack of flexibility in curriculum	1553	NA	NA
III.B.1(a)(i)	To what extent did the following impact your decision to unenroll your child(ren) from public education:	Lack of alignment between family values and my child's education	1474	NA	NA
III.B.1(a)(ii)	Leading up to your decision to unenroll, did your child express any concerns with the following? Select all that apply:	Safety (e.g., bullying)	235	442	53%
III.B.1(a)(ii)	Leading up to your decision to unenroll, did your child express any concerns with the following? Select all that apply:	Disinterest in school	212	442	48%
III.B.1(a)(ii)	Which of the following safety issues influenced your decision to unenroll your child? Select all that apply	Bullying	243	340	71%

Report Location	Question	Response	Numerator	Denominator	Percent
III.B.1(a)(iii)	Why did your child choose to pursue a GED instead of earning a high school diploma? Select all that apply	More personalized education	32	71	45%
III.B.1(b)	When and why are you planning on re-enrolling in public school?	[Provided why in response]	93	117	79%
III.B.1(b)	When and why are you planning on re-enrolling in public school?	Educational opportunities	23	93	25%
III.B.1(b)	When and why are you planning on re-enrolling in public school?	Alternate public education	20	93	22%
IV.B.3	Do you use curriculum provided by a school district to assist in homeschooling?	Yes	40	285	14%
IV.B.3	Do you use any standardized testing to test your child's achievement?	Yes	77	285	27%