



Be Pine Tree Present

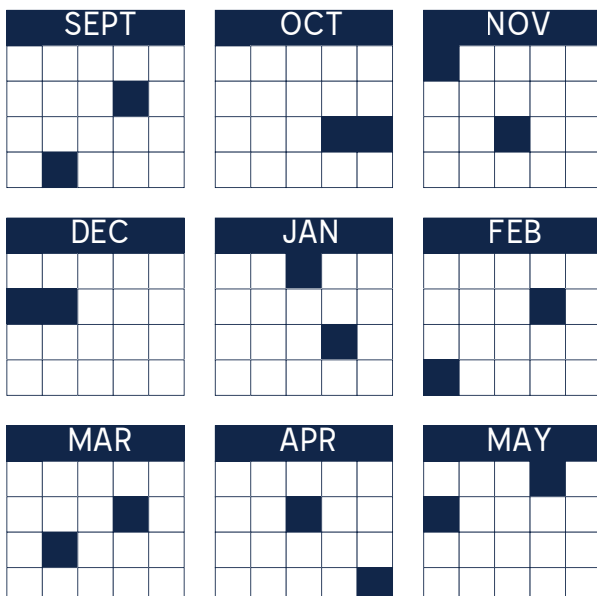
Attendance Fact Sheet



THE CHALLENGE

Nearly **1 in 4 Maine students** missed enough school last year to put learning at risk. For some students, barriers to attendance are even greater. Students experiencing homelessness, academic challenges, or economic hardship are often at higher risk of chronic absenteeism, reminding us to look beyond the absence and understand what may impact attendance and engagement.

Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or more of school days for any reason, whether excused, unexcused, or disciplinary, is a growing concern in Maine and across the nation.



ROOTED IN LEARNING, GROWING EVERY DAY

Every day is a chance to learn, connect, and contribute. Lessons build from one day to the next, and being present helps students keep up, participate in hands-on learning, and be there for their teams and classmates. You matter to the learning happening every day.

Missing 2 days a month can add up to 18 days over a school year... nearly 4 weeks of opportunities to learn, connect, and grow.

EVERY DAY ATTENDANCE SUPPORTS FUTURE SUCCESS.

K and 1st Grade

GOOD ATTENDANCE →

More likely to read well by the end of 3rd grade.

9th Grade

REGULAR ATTENDANCE →

A better predictor of graduation than 8th-grade test scores.



CAREER SUCCESS

Showing up every day is a life skill that supports finding and keeping a job.

In 2025, workers with a high school diploma earned a median of \$966 per week, compared with \$770 for those without a diploma; a difference of nearly \$200 per week.



WHY DO STUDENTS MISS SO MUCH SCHOOL?

- Illness and Health-Related
- Family Issues and Emergencies
- Mental Health Challenges
- Work-related issues
- Transportation Issues

SCHOOL STAFF CAN HELP

Schools can connect families to resources for food and social services, transportation, health care, counseling and more. There is always a caring adult at school who can help families and students with the challenges that may keep a student from attending school. Families and students can speak to a school administrator, school counselor, teacher, coach, school psychologist or social worker if they need help.

Every teacher wants to see ALL their students in class every day.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER SO STUDENTS ARE GROWING EVERY DAY

1. Remove Barriers to Showing Up

HOW?

Make it easier for students to attend by identifying and reducing the logistical, basic-needs, and emotional barriers that can get in the way. Provide supports such as breakfast, transportation assistance, clothing and hygiene items, afterschool programs, and opportunities to build self-regulation and coping skills.

2. Create a Safe, Welcoming School

HOW?

Build a school environment where every student feels known, respected, and physically and emotionally safe. Strengthen relationships through consistent greetings, trusted adults, culturally responsive environments, and restorative approaches that prioritize connection over punishment.

3. Build Predictable Routines & Engaging Learning

HOW?

Use consistent routines, schedules, and transitions so students know what to expect and feel ready to participate. Make learning relevant by incorporating student interests, real-world connections, culturally responsive content, and opportunities for student voice and inquiry.

4. Monitor Attendance in Real Time

HOW?

Review attendance frequently enough to notice changes before patterns become chronic. Use classroom, grade-level, and schoolwide data to identify students and patterns needing attention, with clear thresholds that prompt supportive outreach after early signs of absence.

5. Partner With Families for Attendance Success

HOW?

Make families partners in understanding and supporting regular attendance rather than contacting them only when there is a problem. Communicate early and often using accessible, culturally responsive, and nonjudgmental language, and work together to identify barriers and develop practical solutions.

6. Use Clear, Consistent Attendance Messages

HOW?

How: Make attendance expectations easy to understand and reinforce the message that every day matters. Use consistent, positive, growth-oriented language across classrooms, programs, and communications, focusing on encouragement and next steps rather than shame or punishment.

7. Recognize Progress & Celebrate Showing Up

HOW?

Notice and reinforce attendance efforts, improvement, and progress, not just perfect attendance. Use specific praise, classroom or grade-level celebrations, student voice, and meaningful non-material incentives to help students see that their effort and presence matter.

8. Reach Out Early & Build Connection

HOW?

How: Respond to early signs of disengagement with a warm, personal connection rather than waiting for absences to accumulate. Reach out to students and families to listen, understand what is getting in the way, identify strengths, and connect them with the right support before the concern escalates.

For further information and questions, please visit the [Maine DOE MEAC webpage](#) or reach out to Sarah Nelson, Maine DOE Attendance and Engagement Specialist at Sarah.Nelson@maine.gov.