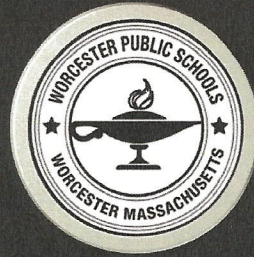


# Towards Better Understanding Chronic Absenteeism in the Worcester Public Schools



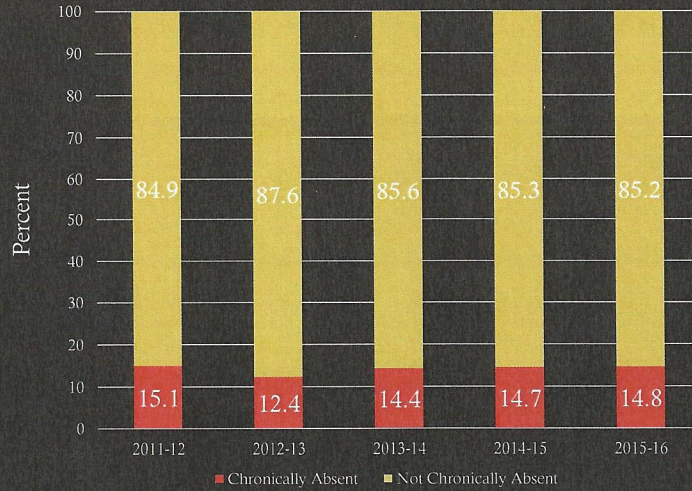
Report of the Superintendent  
Maureen Binienda  
February 16, 2017

Standard I, Indicator I-B, E  
Standard II, Indicator II-A, C  
Standard III, Indicator III-A, B, C, D  
Standard IV, Indicator IV-A, B, C, D

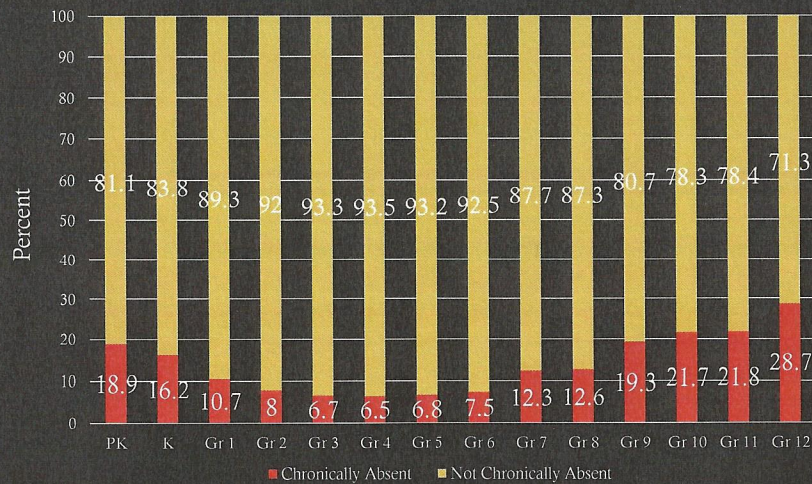
## What do we mean by “chronically absent?”

- ◆ Chronically absent: Students who are absent from school greater than 10 percent of the time
  - ◆ Example: For students enrolled for the entire 180 day school year, a student would be identified as chronically absent if he/she is absent for more than 10 days
- ◆ A rate of chronic absenteeism is computed for the district, school, student subgroup, grade level, etc. by dividing the number of chronically absent students for a particular group by membership in that group and then multiplying by 100.
- ◆ Both excused (religious holidays, death in family, court appearances, hospitalizations, and illness) and unexcused absences are included in the calculation.

### What proportion of students in the WPS are chronically absent and how has it changed over time?



### How did the chronically absent rates vary by grade level in 2015-16?

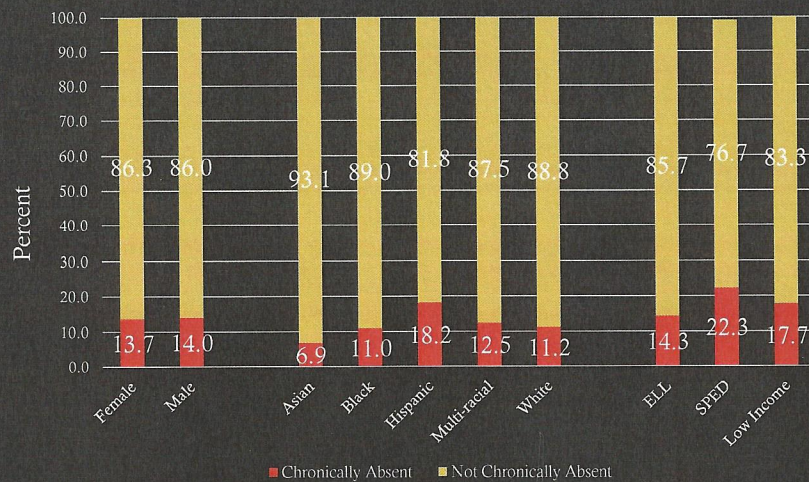


## How do school chronic absenteeism rates vary by level\* in 2015-16?

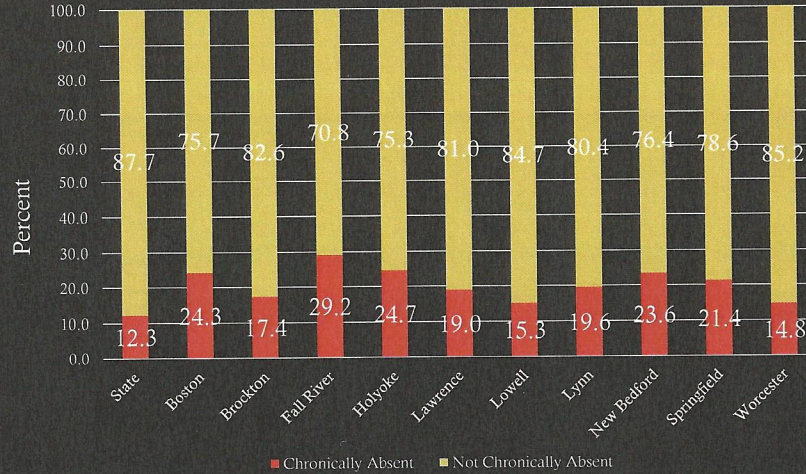
Level	Lowest Rate	Highest Rate
Elementary	2.6%	21.1%
Middle	8.0%	17.1%
High	6.8%	30.9%

\*Excludes Claremont Academy and University Park Campus School

## How did the chronically absent rates for 2015-16 vary by student subgroup?



### How did the 2015-16 chronically absent rates in the WPS compare to other urban districts in Massachusetts?



### What is the relationship between chronic absenteeism and student achievement?

	2016 MCAS/PARCC ELA - % Proficient or Above		2016 MCAS/PARCC Math - % Proficient or Above	
	Not Chronically Absent	Chronically Absent	Not Chronically Absent	Chronically Absent
Grade 3	43.4	23.1	52.3	26.9
Grade 4	38.1	14.8	32.7	7.5
Grade 5	57.7	39.6	40.4	11.5
Grade 6	61.5	37.1	44.6	21.5
Grade 7	58.4	32.6	35.6	19.1
Grade 8	73.0	40.7	45.1	12.0
Grade 10	84.6	73.5	66.0	40.0

## To what extent does chronic absenteeism persist from year to year?

An examination of chronic absenteeism over a 3 year period from 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16  
(Students not in the WPS for all 3 years were excluded from the analysis)

Grade in 2015-16	Percent Chr. Abs. 0 of 3 years	Percent Chr. Abs. 1 of 3 years	Percent Chr. Abs. 2 of 3 years	Percent Chr. Abs. 3 of 3 years
2	80.6	11.8	5.3	2.3
3	84.5	10.5	3.7	1.3
4	87.5	8.1	3.1	1.3
5	87.2	8.7	2.9	1.2
6	88.2	8.0	2.5	1.3
7	83.2	11.2	3.3	2.2
8	82.0	11.1	4.9	2.0
9	73.9	11.7	7.5	6.9
10	71.0	12.1	9.6	7.4
11	70.9	13.6	7.9	7.6
12	61.2	17.5	12.1	9.1

## Addressing Chronic Absenteeism in the WPS

- ◆ Creation of Attendance Intervention Task Force charged with developing a system-wide action plan for reducing chronic absenteeism

Maureen Binienda, Superintendent	Deb McGovern, Nursing Coordinator
Jean Conway, Department Head, School Adjustment Counselors	John Monfredo, School Committee
Iliana D'limas, Liaison School Adjustment Counselors	Beverly Nazarian, MD, UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center
Karen Dobson, School Adjustment Counselor/Court Liaison	Sue O'Neil, Manager for Instruction & School Leadership
Lisa Houlihan, Principal, Burncoat Middle School	David Perda, Chief Research & Accountability Officer
Laurie Kuczka, Head Start & Early Childhood Director	Bertha-Elena Rojas, Manager of English Learners
Maura Mahoney, Manager of Social Emotional Learning	Kay Seale, Manager of Special Education & Intervention Services

## Addressing Chronic Absenteeism in the WPS

- ◇ Using data
  - ◇ School principals provided with 5 year school-level trends in chronic absenteeism for different subgroups of students (gender, race, English learners, Special education, and grade level)
  - ◇ School principals provided with student-level reports that display year-to-date absenteeism rates
- ◇ Identification of existing school-based practices used to increase attendance
- ◇ Gathering of suggestions from building principals on ways the district could support the improvement of attendance.

## Some examples of existing interventions

- ◇ Daily review of attendance. Monthly and quarterly review of data by CS administration
- ◇ Outreach - school contacts parents via phone calls(daily) all levels
- ◇ Student meetings as appropriate, individual and group
- ◇ Letters to parents outlining absences and tardies in count and percentage
- ◇ "Attendance Matters" campaign
- ◇ Home visits to connect with parents
- ◇ School meetings - Fresh Start (84 meetings scheduled) with school staff and Parent Resource Staff, Attendance Intervention Meetings (15 since 1/17) with school staff including nursing staff, Child Study Staff, other WPS resources (clinician, wraparound staff, behavioral clinicians in Health Centers, community resources and DCF)
- ◇ Attendance Information Sessions for parents and students at Middle Schools
- ◇ School wide "Perfect Attendance" celebrations
- ◇ Increased awareness with Pre-k /Kindergarten students in partnership with Head Start
- ◇ Communication between schools when students transfer or during transition to next school
- ◇ Referral to community services including Court for ADF/CRA when necessary
- ◇ Efforts to improve communications between nursing staff and physicians
- ◇ Full-time Adjustment Counselor devoted to dealing with attendance issues

## Some examples of suggestions for system-wide improvement

- ◇ Intervention meetings with high school students - Child Study, Guidance staff
- ◇ “Kinder Counts” outreach targeted for younger students
- ◇ Outreach to community partners-medical, churches, cultural groups to support attendance
- ◇ MTSS implementation- Focus on universal attendance support, with protocols for Tier II, Tier III students
- ◇ Quarterly reports to schools
- ◇ District-wide letter to parents of chronically absent students at the beginning of 2017-18 school year