

# **California's New Focus on Chronic Absence: Exploring the Characteristics and Outcomes of Chronically Absent Students in a San Francisco Bay Area Community**

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Research has shown that students with low attendance are at heightened risk of potentially deleterious outcomes. Although there is an extensive body of research in the area of truancy, chronic absenteeism is not generally measured or tracked and is therefore not well understood. In 2010, the State of California incorporated a definition of chronic absence into the Education Code. This analysis examines the characteristics of chronic absentees in one San Francisco Bay Area community, investigating the link between chronic absence and academic achievement. We find that chronically absent students differ from students who are not chronically absent in demographics and other background characteristics and that chronic absence contributes to a portion of the gap in standardized test scores between chronically absent students and their peers. Improving attendance represents an area where administrators and school staff can intervene in order to play a role in raising student academic achievement.

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