



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

September 25, 2025

Helios Education Foundation found that grades one through eight in Arizona have a chronic absentee rate of 28.1% and grades nine through 12 have a chronic absentee rate of 37%. Chronic absenteeism is defined as nine absences in a semester or 18 absences in a year.

This is catastrophic. We cannot teach students who are not in school. The high school student who misses more than one third of his classes is facing a bleak future.

The next question is: what has proven by data to be the best solution to this problem?

The best data supported solution that we have found is the Dysart School District.

Their chronic absenteeism for grades one through eight is 9% compared to the Arizona average of 28.1%. Their chronic absenteeism rate for grades nine through 12 is 8.69% compared to Arizona's rate of 37%.

How did they get there?

Grades one through eight: A student who is absent for 18 days in one year must repeat the grade. Numerous meetings with parents every second year or so as absenteeism becomes evident are required.

A high school student who misses nine days in a semester cannot get credit for the courses the student has been taking.

The success of this method makes sense. The principal factor for students going to school daily is the parents. During Covid, some parents got used to students missing school as not that big a deal, as it was before Covid.

As a former member of a school board for 24 years, I can testify that it is very important to parents that their children graduate on time. Once parents know that chronic absenteeism can interfere with timely graduation, they become highly motivated to be sure their children get to school daily.

The Dysart method is what schools mostly did in the past, before our culture got so much more permissive. Academic loss is the price we have paid for that permissiveness. The result for some students has been catastrophic.

The Dysart method is the most effective way significantly to reduce chronic absenteeism.
At least that is what the data shows.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Horne".

Tom Horne, Esq.
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Arizona Department of Education



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EDUCATION



*We are a service organization committed to raising
academic outcomes and empowering parents.*