



Why Kindergarten Attendance Matters

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Key Findings:

There is a strong relationship between Kindergarten attendance and student reading performance.

Kindergarteners who attend school consistently are more likely to read on grade level by the end of Kindergarten. This trend continues in first grade.

Kindergarteners who are chronically absent in Kindergarten are likely to continue to be chronically absent in later grades.

While other factors affect a student's ability to read, consistent attendance increases the likelihood a student will read at grade level.

A child entering first grade on a lower reading level is more likely to continue to read below grade level without significant intervention and extra support outside of school.

Reading Performance and Attendance

When students miss school, it can negatively affect their ability to learn to read, which can then disrupt their ability to learn new things throughout the rest of their education. During Kindergarten, children learn foundational skills. They learn how to recognize words and letters, how to read sentences, and how to write. The more days a child comes to school in Kindergarten, the more likely they are to read on grade level at the end of Kindergarten and even into first grade.

Students who attend school consistently in grades K-2 are more likely to read on grade level and test proficient on the PSSA exams in third grade. Kindergarten is a very important year in a child's educational journey.

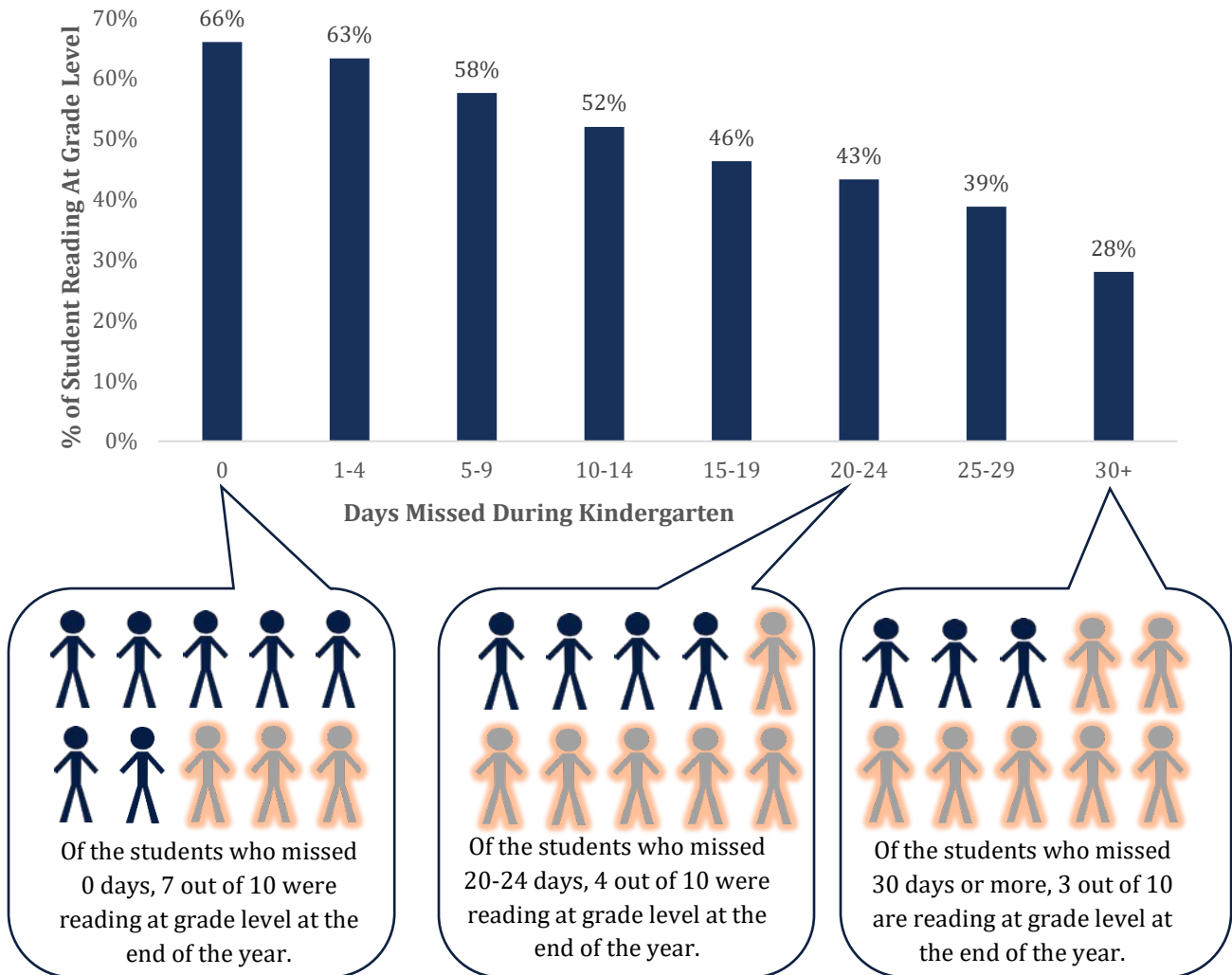
Kindergarten Absences in the School District of Philadelphia

Every day of school is important. Children learn to read by building upon skills they learned the day before. Kindergarten attendance is a pressing issue in The School District of Philadelphia. During the 2015-2016 school year, 78% of Kindergarteners missed five or more days of school and 56% missed 10 or more days, classifying them as "chronically absent."

Missing school is not the only reason that students may struggle to read. For example, if the child has an IEP, does not speak English as their first language, or is already

struggling with reading at the beginning of the school year, they may have lower reading levels at the end of the school year. However, good attendance contributes to the reading performance of these students, too. The bar chart below shows the relationship between attendance and reading levels at the end of Kindergarten. **The fewer days of school a child misses, the more likely they will read on grade level at the end of the year.**

Figure 1. There is a relationship between Kindergarten attendance and reading on grade level.*



What Happened in First Grade?

Students who were chronically absent in Kindergarten were more likely to perform below grade level in Kindergarten and in later grades.

- 71% of chronically absent Kindergarteners in the 2015-2016 school year were also chronically absent in first grade
- 70% of Kindergarteners reading below grade level in the end of the 2015-2016 were also reading below grade level at the end of first grade

*Analyses and statistics were conducted using administrative data for kindergarten students that were enrolled in an SDP school by October of the 2015-16 school year and had completed the reading assessment in fall 2015 and spring 2016 (n=11,219). First grade analyses and statistics were conducted using administrative data for kindergarten students enrolled in an SDP school in SY 2015 – 2016 who enrolled as a 1st grade student in an SDP school by October of the 2016 -2017 school year and had completed the reading assessment in fall 2016 and spring 2017 (n=9,124).