

Council Bill 25-0002

Study and Report – Absences in Baltimore City Schools

MARCH 6, 2025





Updates

- Recent Progress
- Attendance & Enrollment
- Blueprint Impact



City Schools showed greater improvement than Maryland and the country on the latest Education Recovery Scorecard:

- City Schools students have the **second largest growth in reading nationally** since 2022 among large urban school districts.
- City Schools is **one of five** large urban school districts that are performing better in reading than before the pandemic.
- We are among the nation's leaders in math recovery. Since 2022, City Schools is in the **top 25 percent** of large urban school districts nationwide.
- City Schools has the second largest growth in reading in Maryland. We are **one of two Maryland school districts** that are performing better than before the pandemic, even with the highest rate of economically disadvantaged students.

City Schools' 4th graders saw the third largest math growth among school districts in large cities on the Nation's Report Card (NAEP):

- City Schools' fourth-graders approximately doubled the growth of their peers in large-city school districts and **quadrupled the growth of national public students.**
- Fourth-grade economically-disadvantaged students increased their math performance by 10 points.
- Fourth-grade African-American students increased their math performance by 8 points.

City Schools' Kindergarten Readiness is its highest in nine years

Between the 2021-22 and 2023-24 school years, City Schools kindergarten readiness improved by 16 percent, four times greater than the state during that same period.

53.4% of City Schools students who attended City Schools PreK demonstrated readiness on the state's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) in the 2024-25 school year. In the 2023-24 school year, the comparable percentage for Maryland overall was 44%.

Students in a City Schools Judy Center PreK are 28.1% more likely to demonstrate readiness for kindergarten than comparable students in other prior care settings.



Attendance and Enrollment



Enrollment Increase

Preliminary numbers show the **PK-12 enrollment for this school year is 76,842 – an increase of 1,031 students over last year.**

This trend is extremely positive at a time when Baltimore City is losing population and many districts across the state and country are losing enrollment.

Latino student enrollment continued to accelerate in the past year, while the decrease in Black students was significantly below the average decreases over the past eight years as Black families left the city.



Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

City Schools decreased the number of chronically absent students by 5.4 percentage points last year, while every other large Maryland school district experienced an increase.

Thanks to a yearlong focus on attendance, year-to-year districtwide attendance increased by 1.8 percentage points over the previous year.

This means more than 30,000 students improved their attendance. The attendance campaign will continue in SY24-25.

City Schools' chronic absenteeism rate is falling while other large Maryland districts increased their numbers.

| LEA | % Difference 2022 to 2023 | Difference by students 2022 to 2023 |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| City Schools | - 4.0 % | - 4,021 students |
| Baltimore Co. | + 1.5 % | + 1,405 students |
| Mont. Co. | + 2.1 % | + 3,565 students |
| Prince George's | + 3.3 % | + 4,479 students |
| Anne Arundel | + 1.1 % | + 1,094 students |

Source: Maryland Report Card - <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov>

Reducing Chronic Absenteeism Through Research-Based Strategies for School Attendance Teams

***ESTABLISH** an attendance team that meets weekly to review and take action on data and keeps school's School Family and Community Council apprised of challenges and next steps.

***CREATE** and put in motion a plan to call all families of students who are not at school by a designated time in the morning and/or throughout the school day.

***IDENTIFY** and **ALIGN** resources that address the most common attendance concerns within the school and address root causes of individual student's absenteeism.

***DEVELOP** incentives at the school, grade, classroom and/or student level to encourage and celebrate strong and most improved attendance.

***IMPLEMENT** a system of matching students who are chronically absent with resources and supports (i.e., check-in/check-out, a mentor) that can be monitored for effectiveness of improving outcomes.

***ENGAGE** families through back-to-school celebrations and other events throughout the year.

Additional Factors Contributing to Improvement in Chronic Absenteeism

- * **Creation of an Onsite Support Model to 96 schools**

The onsite support model includes 3 teams from the district's Attendance Team that go into schools to provide in-person support on chronic absenteeism, barriers to attendance and truancy related issues and concerns. Each support team works collaboratively with schools on case management, attendance strategy, data, incentive programs in order to improve outcomes.

- * **Implementation of additional opportunities for schools to receive peer support** as well as support from the district's attendance team through weekly office hours, tech support sessions, and individualized school support sessions.

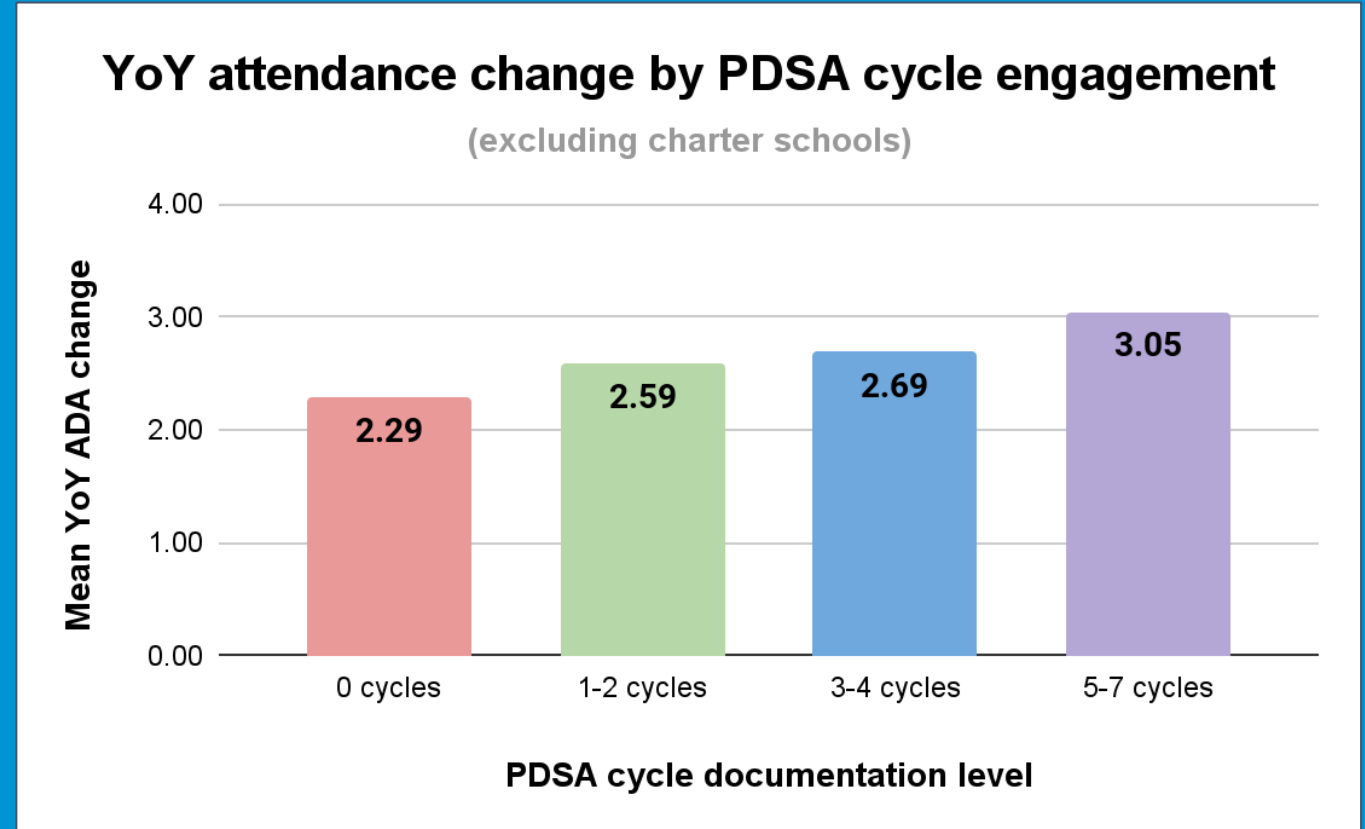
- * **Increased collaboration with internal and external partners on attendance strategy**, data, progress monitoring outcomes, and incentives.

- * **Re-imagining the District Court Process for Truant Students** by transforming the truancy court process from a solely punitive approach to a restorative one by identifying barriers to student attendance and directly connecting parents and students to community resources and partners.

- * **Citywide initiative to combat chronic absenteeism between Baltimore City Public Schools and the Mayor's Office** to emphasize the critical importance of daily school attendance. At the end of each quarter, Mayor Brandon Scott presents a trophy to the school that shows the greatest reduction in chronic absenteeism.

Impact of the PDSA Cycle tool and routine on attendance

- 42 schools with no documented cycles
- 48 schools with 1-2 documented cycles
- 21 schools with 3-4 documented cycles
- 15 schools with 5-7 documented cycles



Blueprint Impact



Wraparound Supports:

Enhancing student enrichment experiences, including educational field trips, partnerships, and more.



Small group tutoring at Midtown Academy with Elev8 Baltimore



CAW to Action with the Ravens at James McHenry

Strategic Budgeting of Concentration of Poverty Funds

Districtwide Examples of CPG Funding Include:

- Ensuring all traditional schools have at least one full-time social worker (\$4.6M)
- Funding one of two staff positions at the pre-kindergarten Judy Centers (\$2.3M)
- Supporting attendance and positive school climates by funding district-level attendance positions, school-based wholeness specialists, and vendors providing mentoring support (\$3.4M)
- Supporting CPG schools with filling teacher vacancies by funding the Teach for America and Baltimore City Teacher Residency programs (\$1.6M)

CPG funds also helped provide critical supports for tutoring and summer expanded learning.

The braiding of CPG and ESSER funds ensured City Schools offered 168 summer programs, providing 19,000 students with learning opportunities.



Investment Area: Arts Programming

Blueprint passage has resulted in significant increases in the number of fine art teachers, growing from 174 in 2017-18 to 309 in 2024-25.

City Schools set aside a minimum of \$100 per student in CPG funded for the past three years to support the creation of new fine arts positions, expanding student access to a wider variety of fine arts disciplines and experiences.

Additionally, schools leveraged CPG funding to invest in musical instruments and fine arts supplies.

Investment Area: Gifted and Advanced Learning

Every school in Baltimore City has been a Gifted and Advanced Learner (GAL) site since SY2020-2021.

The number of Black/African American students enrolled in an AP class that sat for the AP exam increased from 62% in 2021 to 90% in SY2023.

The number of Hispanic/Latinx students enrolled in an AP class that sat for the AP exam increased from 57% in 2021 to 91% in SY2023

In 2024, 3,379 students of color enrolled in an AP course -- more than have ever been enrolled in the past.



Access to International Baccalaureate

International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum is available at four K-8 schools, one PreK-5 school, and one citywide high school.

The number of IB exams administered to Black/Non-Hispanic (BNH) students rose to 225, the highest ever and a 5% increase over 2023. The number of successful Black candidates increased by 10%.



Investment Area: Athletics

City Schools has intentionally focused on building a pipeline for high school sports for both boys and girls.

By braiding CPG funds with other funding sources, in the last year, middle school athletics saw a 114% increase in team participation (79-169) and 105% increase in registered athletes.

To protect the health and wellbeing of our high school athletes, we are investing \$1.7M of our CPG funds for 15 high school athletic trainers.

BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

Robert Salley, *Chair*
Ashiah Parker, *Vice Chair*
Emily Ames-Messinger
Andrew Coy
Ashley Esposito
Kwame' Jamal Kenyatta-Bey
Mujahid Muhammad
Dr. Stefan Redding-Lallinger
Khalilah Slater Harrington
Dylan Rooks, *Student Commissioner*
Dr. Jennifer Judkins, *Board Executive Officer*

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises, *Chief Executive Officer*
Angela D. Alvarez, *Senior Executive Director - Office of New Initiatives*
Joshua I. Civin, *Chief Legal Officer*
Dr. Joan Dabrowski, *Chief Academic Officer*
Dr. Stacy Place Tosé, *Chief of Schools*
Christopher Doherty, *Chief Financial Officer*
Dr. Tracey L. Durant, *Senior Executive Director - Equity*
Tina Hike-Hubbard, *Chief of Communications, Engagement, and Enrollment*
Theresa D. Jones, *Chief Achievement and Accountability Officer*
Thomas T. Jones, *Chief Information Technology Officer*
Emily Nielson, *Chief Human Capital Officer*
Alison Perkins-Cohen, *Chief of Staff*
Dr. Lynette Washington, *Chief Operating Officer*
Dr. Jennie Wu, *Executive Director - Strategy and Continuous Improvement*