



ATTENDANCE THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS IN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT

COLLABORATIVE POLICY RESEARCH

This research is the result of a collaboration between Wayne State University's College of Education and a constellation of community partners interested in improving Detroit schools, called the Detroit Education Research Partnership. We orient our work around the pressing policy needs of the Detroit education community, and we seek to inform the design of local educational reforms. We believe that education reform in other places has important lessons for our collective work in Detroit, but that any solution for Detroit will have to respond to the unique strengths and needs of our community.

ATTENDANCE THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS IN DPSCD

Detroit has the highest rate of chronic absence of any large city in the U.S. As the seasons change, how do attendance patterns change? What do those patterns suggest about how policymakers and educators can better address absenteeism? We view attendance ecologically: a variety of individual and contextual factors can affect a student's attendance. As schools and districts decide how to design interventions and direct resources, they may need to adjust their efforts over time and respond to particular barriers in different seasons. Using daily attendance data from the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) in 2018-19, we describe how attendance patterns vary across the seasons, and we examine the relationship between weather and attendance for each season.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- The probability that a student will miss school was lowest in the Fall, higher in Winter and Spring, and the highest in Summer (June), with exceptionally high rates of absence in the last two weeks of school.
- Nearly 4,000 DPSCD students (about 7%) reached the threshold for chronic absence in the last two weeks of the school year.
- Heavy precipitation in the Winter was associated with a 5% increase in the probability that a student would be absent, but the effect of precipitation in the Fall and Spring was minimal.
- Weather had a stronger affect on chronically absent students than non-chronically absent students.

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