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ABSTRACT

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. This brief highlights data on the student absentee rate for 1990-91. The data were extracted from "The Condition of Education, 1995," U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Findings indicate that in 1991, the student absentee rate increased with school level and was generally greater in public central city schools. An average of 8 percent of the students in public high schools were absent on a typical day; the average was 12 percent for central-city high schools. Second, 44 percent of central-city public high school teachers reported that student absenteeism was a serious problem in their schools. Third, public high schools with more than 40 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced lunches had a higher absentee rate (10 percent) than those with lower percentages of eligible students, which had absentee rates of 7 to 8 percent. Fourth, in central-city public high schools with more than 40 percent of the students eligible for free or reduced lunches, 55 percent of the teachers thought that absenteeism was a serious problem in their school, and 49 percent thought that tardiness was a serious problem. Thirty-six percent considered cutting class a serious problem. Two tables and three figures are included. (LMI)

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**INDICATOR
OF THE MONTH**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

June 1996

**Student absenteeism and
tardiness**

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school, arrive late, or cut class, they forgo opportunities to learn. Furthermore, when students disrupt classes by being late or frequently absent, they interfere with other students' opportunities to learn. And, maybe most importantly, the habits of consistent and on-time attendance are habits that will serve young people well in their future work lives.

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Student absenteeism and tardiness

An important aspect of students' access to education is the amount of time actually spent in the classroom. When students are absent from school, arrive late, or cut class, they forgo opportunities to learn. Furthermore, when students disrupt classes by being late or frequently absent, they interfere with other students' opportunities to learn. And, maybe most importantly, the habits of consistent and on-time attendance are habits that will serve young people well in their future work lives.

- ◆ In 1991, the student absentee rate increased with school level and was generally greater in public central city schools.
- ◆ An average of 8 percent of the students in public high schools were absent on a typical day (12 percent in central cities). Forty-four percent of central city public high school teachers reported that student absenteeism was a serious problem in their schools.
- ◆ Public high schools with more than 40 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced lunches had a higher absentee rate (10 percent) than those with lower percentages of eligible students, which had absentee rates of 7 to 8 percent.
- ◆ In central city public high schools with more than 40 percent of the students eligible for free or reduced lunches, 53 percent of the teachers thought that absenteeism was a serious problem in their school, and 49 percent thought that tardiness was a serious problem. Thirty-six percent considered cutting class a serious problem.

Average percentage of students absent, by selected school characteristics: 1990-91

Urbanicity	Total	Control of school		Public school level				Public high school % of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch			
		Public	Private	Elementary	Middle	High	Combined el/sec	0-5	6-20	21-40	41-100
Total	5.9	6.1	4.9	5.3	6.6	8.2	7.5	7.0	7.4	7.8	9.6
Central city	6.6	7.3	5.1	6.0	8.0	11.5	12.2	10.7	8.7	12.8	14.4
Urban fringe/ large town	6.0	6.2	5.4	5.4	6.6	8.8	7.9	7.4	9.2	8.3	10.6
Rural/small town	5.3	5.5	4.2	4.7	5.8	7.1	6.1	5.8	6.4	6.6	7.4

Percentage of teachers who reported that absenteeism and tardiness were serious problems in their schools, by selected school characteristics: 1990-91

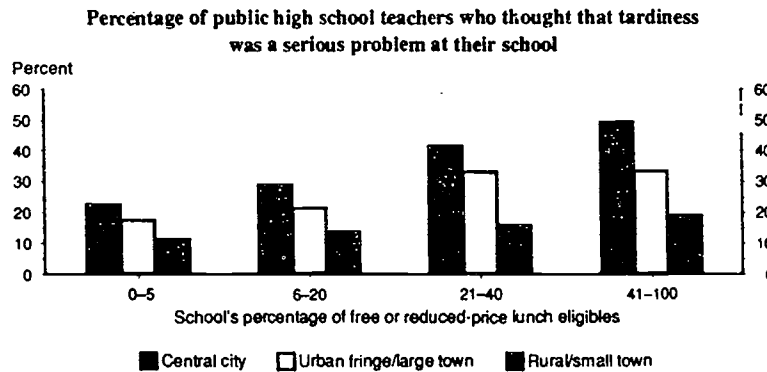
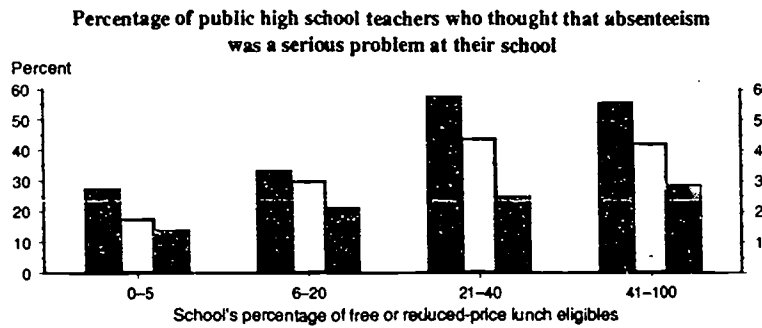
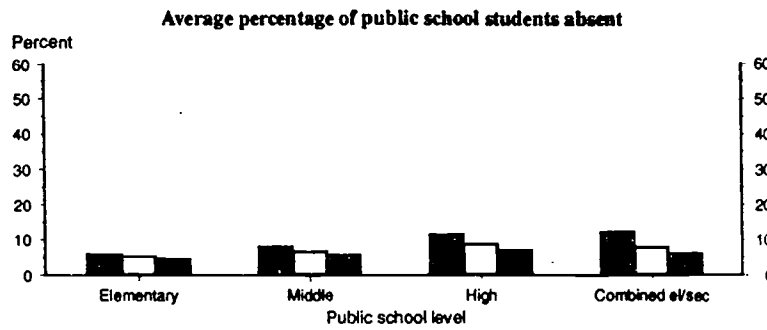
Urbanicity	Total	Control of school		Public school level				Public high school % of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch			
		Public	Private	Elementary	Middle	High	Combined el/sec	0-5	6-20	21-40	41-100
Absenteeism											
Total	12.7	14.1	2.6	6.1	12.7	28.8	13.3	17.2	26.3	38.1	40.1
Central city	17.5	20.7	2.9	10.5	19.1	44.4	20.9	27.4	33.2	57.6	55.4
Urban fringe/ large town	11.6	13.0	2.3	4.9	11.1	27.5	12.8	17.4	29.7	43.8	42.0
Rural/small town	10.1	10.6	2.8	3.7	8.9	21.9	11.4	13.8	21.0	24.6	28.4
Tardiness											
Total	10.2	11.2	3.4	4.6	12.2	21.7	10.6	15.8	19.3	26.8	32.0
Central city	15.5	18.1	3.7	8.9	21.8	35.7	14.6	22.7	28.9	41.6	49.2
Urban fringe/ large town	9.5	10.5	2.6	4.2	8.9	21.6	13.6	17.4	21.4	33.1	33.2
Rural/small town	6.9	7.1	3.3	2.0	7.3	14.7	8.5	11.3	13.9	15.8	19.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher and School Questionnaires).

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Student absenteeism and tardiness, by selected school characteristics: 1990-91



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91 (Teacher and School Questionnaires).

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