

Analysis of Student Attendance After the Second Year of *Attendance Matters*[®]

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Students must attend school to have academic success and to graduate. United Way's *Attendance Matters*[®] is a community-wide initiative that focuses on the importance of school attendance. The goal of this initiative is to increase the number of students who graduate from high school.

Attendance Matters[®] launched in 2013 when United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties joined with the Kennewick, Pasco and Richland School Districts, and local businesses to increase student attendance. Now, nearly 11,500 students from 15 middle schools in the Tri-Cities region participate in *Attendance Matters*[®].

Student attendance data for the Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco School Districts showed the following:

- **More students had great attendance.** 366 students missed no days of school in 2014-15. 304 students missed no days in the 2013-14 school year.
- **Students miss more days of school as they progress through middle school.** Students in 6th grade missed an average of 10 days. 7th graders missed an average of 11.5 days. 8th graders missed an average of 12.5 days of school. The 2014-15 average was 11 days of absence across all three grades.
- **Chronically absent students are still our greatest challenge.** In 2014-15, 45% of students missed more than 10 days. That is up from 2013-14, when 34% of students missed more than 10 days.
- **Higher absences = lower grades.** Students with less than eight absences typically earned "A" grades. Students who missed 20 or more days of school usually received failing grades
- **A student's ethnicity has influence on absences and grades.** The lowest average number of absences and highest grades are achieved by Asian students (7.2 days, 3.4 GPA) and Caucasian students (11 days, 3.2 GPA). The highest number of absences are experienced by students who identify as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (15.2 days, 2.9 GPA), Native American (12.5 days, 2.8 GPA) and Hispanic (12 days, 2.8 GPA).
- **Students from low income families miss more days of school.** A student's lunch status is an indication of the income level of the student's family. Nearly 57% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The 5,700 students who received free or reduced cost lunch averaged 13 days of absence as compared to an average of 9.6 days absence for students whose families paid for their lunches. This was consistent across nearly all ethnic groups. For example, low income white students had 40% more days absent than white students from non-low income families. Low income Hispanic students had 20% more days absent than did Hispanic students from non-low income families.

This analysis assists United Way's *Attendance Matters*[®] planning group, including the Superintendents and Principals, in developing strategies to continue to improve student attendance.