

Over 11% of Students Who Received “Nudge” Communication No Longer Chronically Absent

Intervention less effective in concluding months of school.

In May 2023, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) published an [Edsight covering the topic of chronic absenteeism](#) in the District and how one intervention aimed to reduce it. Since then, SY22-23 has concluded, and we have a better idea of how effective the intervention was at reducing chronic absenteeism, a persistent problem in Washington, DC schools.

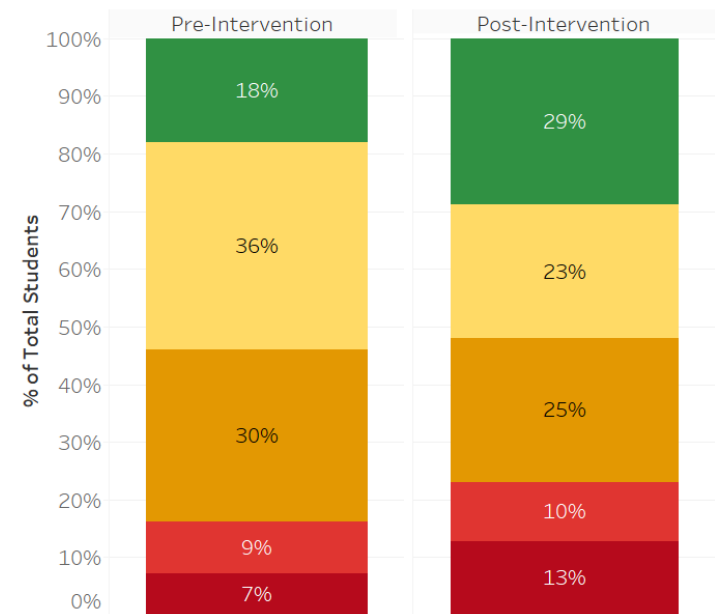
As shared in that Edsight, in SY22-23, DME expanded its partnership with EveryDay Labs (EDL) to offer every public school serving K-12 students access to an intervention that has proven to be effective at reducing chronic absenteeism in other localities. Across both DCPS and charter LEAs, 177 schools opted in to working with the DME and EDL to implement this intervention that uses attendance data to target text message and mail communication to families of students who are either chronically absent or at risk of becoming chronically absent.

Pre- and Post-Treatment Outcomes

Of the 51,075 K-12 students that received the intervention, 48% improved their attendance rate, including 11% of students who went from being chronically absent before the intervention to not being chronically absent after the treatment. When we observed attendance outcomes in the previous Edsight, of the 43,629 K-12 students that received the intervention, 58% improved their attendance rate, including 16% of students who went from being chronically absent before the intervention to not being chronically absent after the treatment.

Figure 1 illustrates which attendance tier the student was in prior to the intervention in the left column, and which attendance tier the

Figure 1: Pre- and Post-Treatment Attendance



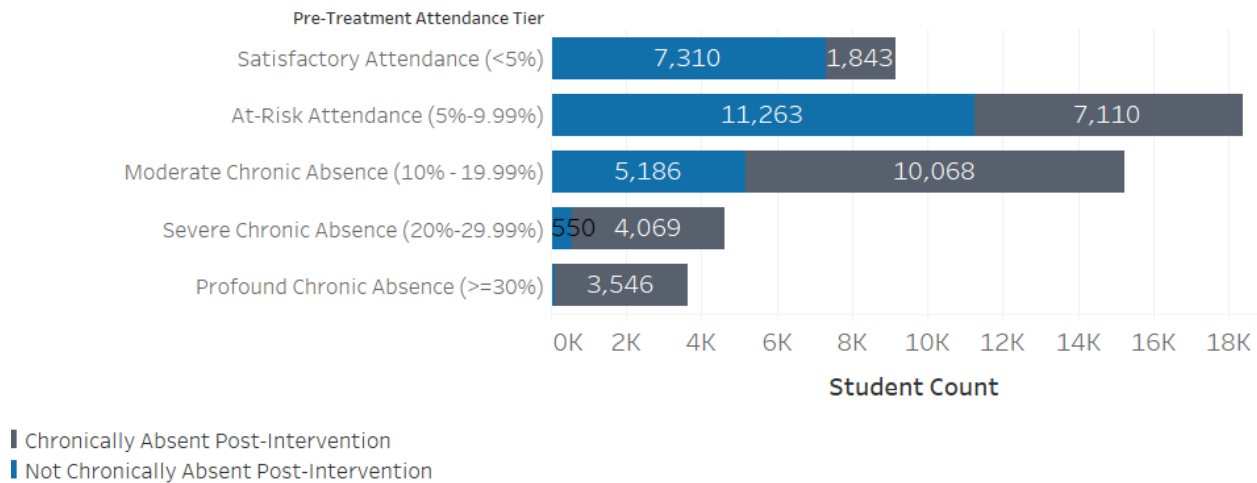
Attendance Tier (n= 51,075)

- Satisfactory Attendance (<5%)
- At-Risk Attendance (5%-9.99%)
- Moderate Chronic Absence (10% - 19.99%)
- Severe Chronic Absence (20%-29.99%)
- Profound Chronic Absence (>=30%)

student was in when the data was pulled at the end of the school year in the right column. The number of students who achieved satisfactory attendance grew from 18% before the intervention to 29% after the intervention. The number of students who were either at risk of becoming chronically absent, or experiencing moderate or severe chronic absenteeism (missing between 5% and 30% of school days) shrunk from 75% prior to the intervention to 58% after the intervention. Conversely, the number of students experiencing profound chronic absenteeism also grew from 7% to 13%, with most of the increase resulting from students who were either moderately or severely chronically absent (missing between

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Figure 2: Chronic Absenteeism Outcome by Pre-Treatment Attendance Tier



10% and 30% of school days) slipping into the profound chronic absent category. It is important to note, however, that in previous school years, the number of chronically absent students increased in the concluding weeks of school, so the increase likely would have happened whether or not the intervention was implemented.

In a previous iteration of this Edsight, the data suggested, at the time, that the intervention worked best for students who had missed between 5% and 30% of school days prior to the intervention. By the end of the school year, however, that finding does not appear to be true. Instead it appears to have worked for about half of the students in this category, and not work for half of them, not so dissimilar from students who had already missed 30% or more school days at the start of the intervention. Figure 2 shows the number of students who were chronically absent post-intervention by their pre-intervention attendance tier.

Attendance Outcomes by Grade Band

While 48% of all students improved their attendance between the start of the intervention and the end of the school year, there was variation across grade band. Of the 25,685 elementary school students who received the treatment, 56% improved their attendance rate between the start of the

intervention and the end of the end of the school year. On the other hand, only 31% of the 13,465 high school students improved their attendance between the two points of observation. While it is not possible to claim that these improved outcomes are the direct result of the intervention, they are consistent with other studies of the intervention that found EDL to be more effective with younger students.

Reimagining the End of the School Year

Collectively, this Edsight and the previous Edsight published on the impact of EDL highlight a need to reimagine the concluding weeks of school. While attendance outcomes at the end of the school year still indicate that there may be a reduction in chronic absenteeism associated with the intervention, they pale in comparison to the attendance outcomes observed earlier in the school year. In their [SY2018-19 annual attendance report](#), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education found that one quarter of all truant students in that school year became truant during the final month of school. That finding and apparent reduction in the effectiveness of the EDL intervention in the concluding months of SY22-23 raise the question: how else can we ensure that the conclusion of the school year is engaging and meaningful to the success of our students?

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