How common is chronic absence in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD)? Looking across the district we found that 11.7% of enrolled students, more than 1 in 10 young people, were chronically absent or severely chronically absent in the 2010-2011 school year. These 5020 students missed school at least 10% of the days they were enrolled — that is, at least 9 days per semester in a full school year of 179 days.

Chronic absence rates varied by grade level as shown in Figure 1. In particular, kindergarteners and 12th graders had especially high rates of chronic absence: almost 1 in 5 students missed at least 10% of school. This one year of data suggests that chronic absence might decrease during elementary school and again increase through middle school and high school. Additional data analysis would help determine whether this is indeed a pattern.

In addition, approximately 24% of students’ attendance records are considered “unsatisfactory,” meaning they have missed 5-9.9% of their enrolled days of school. As shown in Figure 2, only slightly more than half of kindergarten and 12th grade students have “satisfactory” attendance; this rate increases but remains under 70% in grades 1 through 11.

While this set of issue briefs focuses on the specific issue of chronic absence, these data suggest that increasing rates of satisfactory attendance is also an important area of work.

Endnotes:

1For the purpose of this calculation we excluded attendance data for students in Grade 13 and with School code = “Home/Hospital; we were unable to include data for students attending John Morse Therapeutic Center. Information about school level chronic absence rates for John Morse is included in point maps generated for Brief #3. Students taking an additional year to complete high school have very low rates of chronic absence and the highest rates of satisfactory attendance, at approximately 74%. 

Figure 1. 2010-2011 District-wide Chronic and Severe Absence rates by Grade level

Figure 2. 2010-2011 District-wide Satisfactory Attendance rates by Grade level