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REPORT

2025-26 Midyear Attendance Trends

2025-26 Midyear Attendance Trends

Chronic absenteeism is still a national crisis, but the data tells different stories depending on how districts are responding. The SchoolStatus *2025-26 Midyear Attendance Report* examined data from 146 partner districts serving 1.17 million PK-12 students across three consecutive school years, 2023-24 through 2025-26.

Data from the first half of the 2025-26 school year shows continued progress, even as the national landscape remains challenging. Nationally, progress on chronic absenteeism is stalling. After encouraging declines in the two years following the pandemic, the average chronic absenteeism rate across 39 states held at roughly 23% in 2024-25, about 50% higher than pre-pandemic levels, according to new research from the American Enterprise Institute. A separate August 2025 RAND study puts the national estimate at approximately 22%. Either way, the picture is the same: for most of the country, as AEI Senior Fellow Nat Malkus notes, "the easy progress is over."

This year, we also examined attendance data for socio-economically disadvantaged students (SED), who made some of the strongest attendance gains, helping to narrow long-standing gaps. However, these students are still far more likely to be absent than peers, showing there is ongoing work to be done.

The districts in this analysis are a different story. This report examines districts that chose to act early, act consistently, and act on data—and what three years of that approach produces.

146 districts

1,178,328
PK-12 Students

48%
Socio-economic disadvantaged (SED)

52%
Non-SED

Definitions:

Attendance Rate = Percentage of students attending versus total instructional days

Chronic Absenteeism Rate = Percentage of students missing 10% or more of the school year

Average Number of Absences = Extrapolated to a standard 90-day mid-year period for year-over-year comparison

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Average Attendance Rate

Attendance is improving, and the gains are holding.

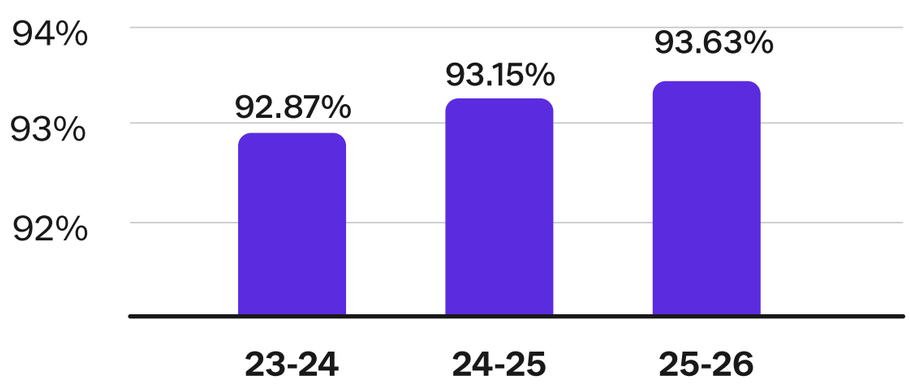
Looking at data from partner districts from the start of the 2025-26 school year through January 30, 2026, the average daily attendance rate for grades PK-12 is 93.63%, approaching pre-pandemic norms (94%).

Overall attendance has improved across grades PK-12 for the third consecutive year, continuing the progress seen since 2023-24.

KEY INSIGHT:

These results demonstrate that districts using proactive strategies and attendance interventions are seeing more sustained improvements compared to the national average.

Average Attendance Rate (3 years)
by Grade Level



Average Attendance Rate by Grade Level

Grade	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
PK	90.84%	91.75%	92.25%
TK	91.67%	92.33%	93.13%
KG	92.47%	92.98%	93.62%
1	93.43%	93.86%	94.37%
2	93.87%	94.32%	94.78%
3	94.11%	94.47%	94.97%
4	94.24%	94.50%	94.99%
5	94.30%	94.55%	94.90%
6	93.98%	94.15%	94.55%
7	92.99%	93.35%	93.79%
8	92.73%	92.90%	93.43%
9	92.20%	92.36%	92.79%
10	91.48%	91.54%	91.92%
11	91.27%	91.26%	91.74%
12	90.93%	90.93%	91.35%
Overall	92.87%	93.15%	93.63%

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Average Chronic Absenteeism Rate

Chronic absenteeism has dropped significantly, and these districts are outpacing the country.

Over the past three years, chronic absenteeism has dropped from 22.44% to 18.98% across partner districts. That's a 3.46 percentage-point improvement, representing 27,000 fewer chronically absent students compared to two years ago.

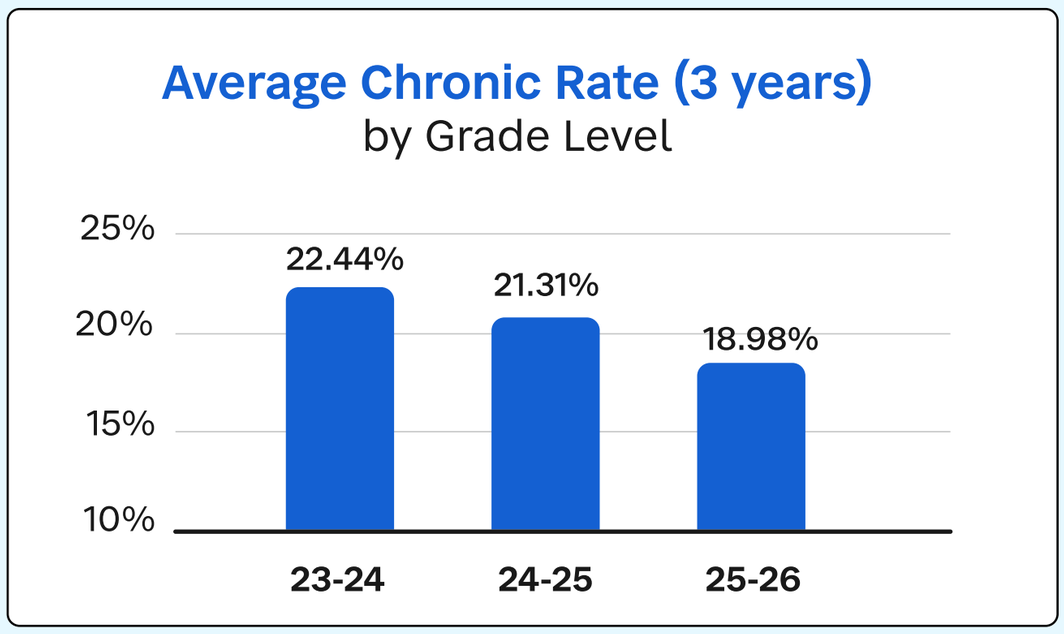
Nationally, RAND estimates the chronic absenteeism rate was approximately 22% in 2024-25, still well above pre-pandemic norms. These districts are running more than 3 points lower, a gap that reflects three years of deliberate, data-driven attendance work.

KEY INSIGHT:

Chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of whether a student will read at grade level, stay enrolled, and graduate. Every percentage point of improvement in these districts represents thousands of students with a stronger shot at all three. Three years of sustained effort is producing results that go well beyond the attendance data

Average Chronic Rate by Grade Level

Grade	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
PK	31.56%	31.41%	28.00%
TK	32.03%	27.85%	23.08%
KG	26.39%	23.79%	20.14%
1	20.95%	18.46%	15.88%
2	18.31%	16.09%	14.17%
3	17.44%	15.57%	13.27%
4	17.17%	15.66%	13.27%
5	16.59%	15.35%	13.93%
6	18.18%	17.29%	15.52%
7	22.37%	20.78%	18.64%
8	22.98%	22.65%	19.89%
9	24.64%	24.21%	22.24%
10	27.39%	27.48%	25.24%
11	27.77%	28.64%	26.20%
12	29.40%	29.34%	28.21%
Total	22.44%	21.31%	18.98%



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Average Number of Absences

Translating percentages to actual days missed.

Overall, students in grades PK-12 have been absent an average of 5.74 days through the first half of the 2025-26 school year. That's a 0.43-day improvement over last year, roughly 503,000 fewer days of missed instruction across 1.17 million students. Over three years, the improvement is 0.68 days per student.

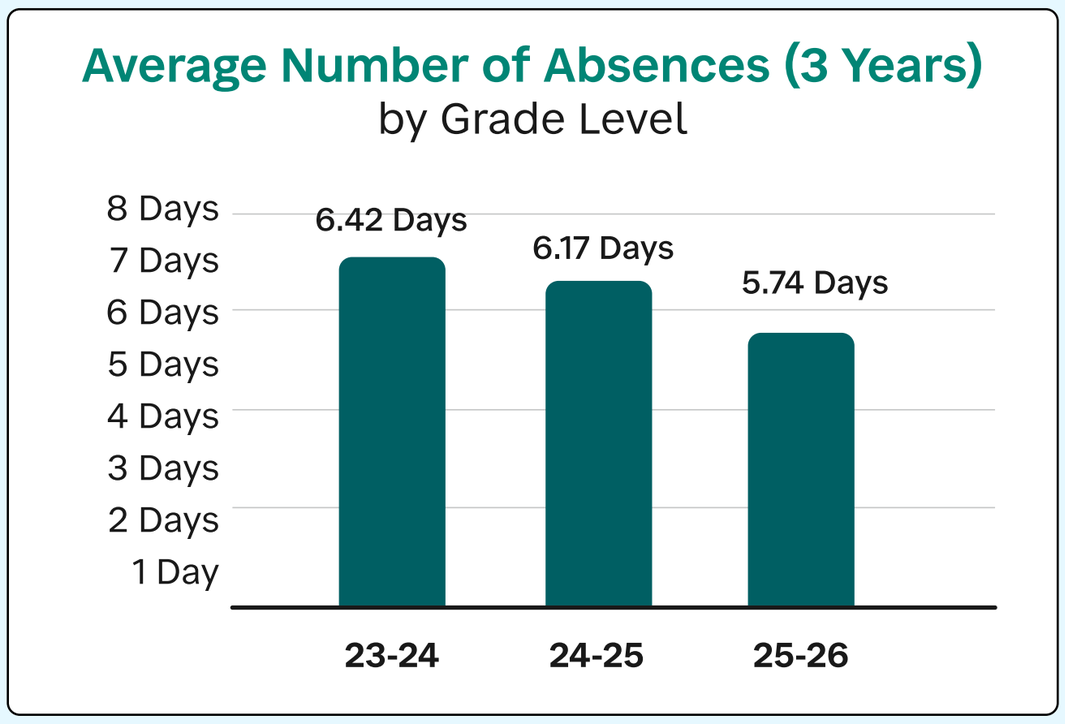
Every grade level improved year-over-year. Pre-K and kindergarten continue to show the strongest gains. High school grades are also improving, a sign that intervention strategies built over the past three years are beginning to reach older students as well.

KEY INSIGHT:

Every day of school a student attends is a day of instruction, connection, and routine. Across 1.17 million students, 503,000 fewer days missed in a single year is more than an attendance statistic. It is learning recovered, relationships maintained, and students staying connected to school.

Average Number of Absences by Grade Level

Grade	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
PK	8.25	7.43	6.98
TK	7.49	6.90	6.18
KG	6.78	6.32	5.74
1	5.91	5.53	5.06
2	5.51	5.11	4.69
3	5.30	4.98	4.52
4	5.19	4.95	4.51
5	5.13	4.91	4.59
6	5.42	5.27	4.9
7	6.31	5.99	5.59
8	6.54	6.39	5.91
9	7.02	6.88	6.49
10	7.67	7.61	7.27
11	7.85	7.86	7.44
12	8.17	8.17	7.78
Total	6.42	6.17	5.74



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A Closer Look: Historically At-Risk Students Are Leading the Gains

Overall attendance improved across all student groups, and historically underserved students are showing the strongest momentum. Students from low-income or migrant families and foster youth, categorized here as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged* (SED) students, improved their attendance rates more than any other group this year.

Student Group	Avg Absences: First 90 days 2023-24	Avg Absences: First 90 days 2024-25	Avg Absences: First 90 days 2025-26	Change Over 2 Years
All Students	6.42	6.17	5.74	0.68 days fewer
Homeless Students	10.17	9.30	9.43	0.74 days fewer
Non-Homeless Students	6.48	6.20	5.87	0.61 days fewer
Socio-Economically Disadvantaged	7.10	6.74	6.39	0.71 days fewer
Non-SED Students	5.65	5.43	5.33	0.32 days fewer

SED students, who make up 48% of the total population studied, improved by 0.71 days in the first 90 days, a 10% increase over two years, versus a 5.67% improvement for non-SED students. The gap between SED and non-SED students has narrowed from 1.45 days to 1.06 days over three years. That kind of gap-closing reflects what deliberate, focused attendance work produces when schools know which students need support and reach families early.

These gains happened because districts invested in three specific capabilities:

- Knowing which students need support before problems compound
- Reaching families proactively rather than reactively
- Sustaining that effort year-over-year

This data points to an opportunity. Absenteeism is an ongoing challenge across many different student populations. The same strategies producing gains for SED students work across all populations. Districts that extend these practices universally are well-positioned to keep improving.

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*Definition: In this report, Socio-Economic Disadvantaged (SED) students include those in one or more of the following categories:

- the student is eligible for or participating in the Free Meal program or Reduced-Price Meal program AND/OR
- the student is Title I Part C Migrant AND/OR
- the student was considered Homeless AND/OR
- the student was Foster Program Eligible

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The Link Between Attendance and Academic Achievement

The stakes of chronic absenteeism extend well beyond attendance rates. Research from the University of Delaware shows that chronic absenteeism directly undermines reading achievement as early as kindergarten, with impact on both reading and math compounding over time. Chronic absence in elementary school sets the stage for lower literacy outcomes and eventually graduation risk.

A recent study published by the Annenberg Institute following nearly 9,000 students from Pre-K through eighth grade found that students with higher rates of absenteeism were significantly more likely to score below expectations in English Language Arts assessments. That pattern shows up in national data as well: according to research by Alan Ginsburg, fourth graders who missed three or more days in the previous month scored 17 points lower on the NAEP reading assessment than those who missed no days.

When families have clear, timely insight into their child's attendance and how it connects to learning, they are better equipped to act before absences become chronic. That connection between information and action is where attendance work and family engagement meet.

The Opportunity: Building Trust & Identifying Patterns Early

The sooner districts know when a student is struggling with attendance, the more proactive their outreach can be. In the 2024-25 school year, attendance improved by 34% after just one mailed intervention. Rather than waiting until a student becomes chronically absent (defined as missing 10% or approximately 18 days of school), the districts in this study have started using predictive analytics based on attendance and tardy patterns within the first 60 days of school to identify students at significant risk of ending the year chronically absent, so they can intervene even earlier.

For 2025-26, 18.32% of students, over 200,000 across 146 districts, were flagged as at risk of becoming chronically absent at the 60-day mark. This helps shine a light on students across all groups, not just students or demographics that are already on educators' radar. Identifying one in five students by Thanksgiving gives districts the rest of the first semester to act instead of playing catch-up midway through the year.

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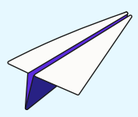
Action Plan

Based on these findings, here are evidence-backed approaches you can implement now:

Universal early warning. Every student flagged at the 60-day mark should receive proactive outreach, not just those in traditional at-risk categories. All populations struggle with attendance — and timing matters.

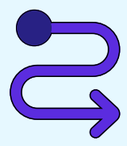
Action step: Send outreach during school hours, when families are already online. Families are most responsive at 8 AM and again from 2–4 PM on weekdays, Monday through Thursday.

Positive first contact. Families trust schools more when outreach starts before there is a problem. Don’t wait to reach out until there is an attendance problem. Families who responded to even one message in August or September were more than twice as likely to stay engaged throughout the year compared to families who didn't connect early.



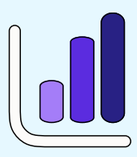
Action step: Reach out before the school year starts or within the first two weeks. A welcoming personalized message in the first weeks of school, not a warning letter, is what builds the relationship that makes later conversations productive.

Consistent follow-through. The three-year trend in SED students is the result of sustained effort, not a single intervention. Attendance improvement compounds when districts commit to it year over year.



Action step: Act on the first signal. More than half of students who receive a first attendance intervention don't need a second one.

Attendance data as an academic indicator. Unlike reading assessments, attendance data updates daily, providing the first visible sign that a student is disconnecting. Students who miss school early in the year are more likely to fall behind in reading and math. Treat attendance as an academic indicator, not a compliance metric.



Action step: Don't wait for assessment time. Send early, personalized attendance interventions and proactive literacy resources so students don’t miss important learning opportunities.

What Districts Can Do Next

What's working: Early identification, proactive family outreach, and consistent intervention for students showing warning signs are driving real results. The improvement among historically underserved students reflects what happens when districts invest in knowing which students need support and reaching out before problems compound.

What's next: The strategies producing gains for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students can work across all populations. Districts that extend early warning, proactive communication, and family partnership universally, not just to students who fit traditional at-risk profiles, are building the kind of system where every student gets the attention they need.

Stay tuned for the full 2025-26 school year attendance report coming this summer. In the meantime, check out *How to Engage K-12 Families to Improve Student Attendance* for a deeper dive into attendance strategies and the impact of building family partnerships.

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About This Data

This report analyzes attendance data from 146 school districts that have continuously used SchoolStatus Attend since the 2023-24 school year. Together, these districts serve 1.17 million students. Data was pulled on February 6, 2026, and represents attendance patterns from the beginning of the school year through January 30 in 2024, 2025, and 2026.

How we measure attendance: This data is based on period-level attendance tracking, not whole-day attendance. For secondary grades, this approach captures partial-day absences that state accountability systems may not count, so absence rates for middle and high school students will appear higher in this data than in state reports. Importantly, even with this more sensitive measurement, these districts show lower chronic absenteeism rates than the national average.

Important context: These districts have prioritized attendance for three consecutive years and are not a representative sample of all U.S. schools. Their outcomes reflect what's possible with sustained, data-driven attendance work.

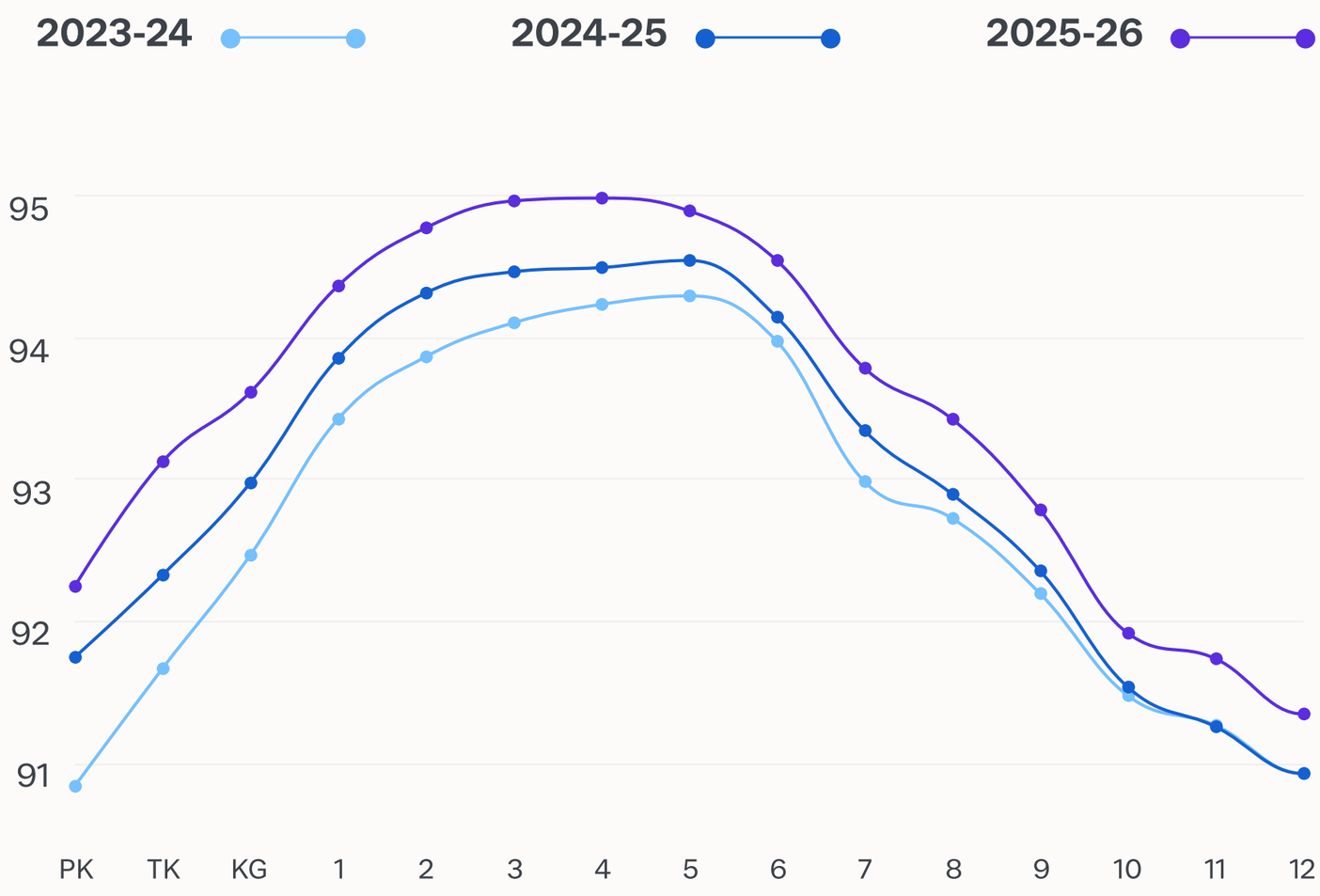
Predictive analytics: Early warning identification uses attendance and tardy patterns from the first 60 instructional days of school, developed through analysis of millions of student records over more than two decades. Accuracy reflects the percentage of flagged students who were chronically absent by the mid-year data pull date.

About SchoolStatus

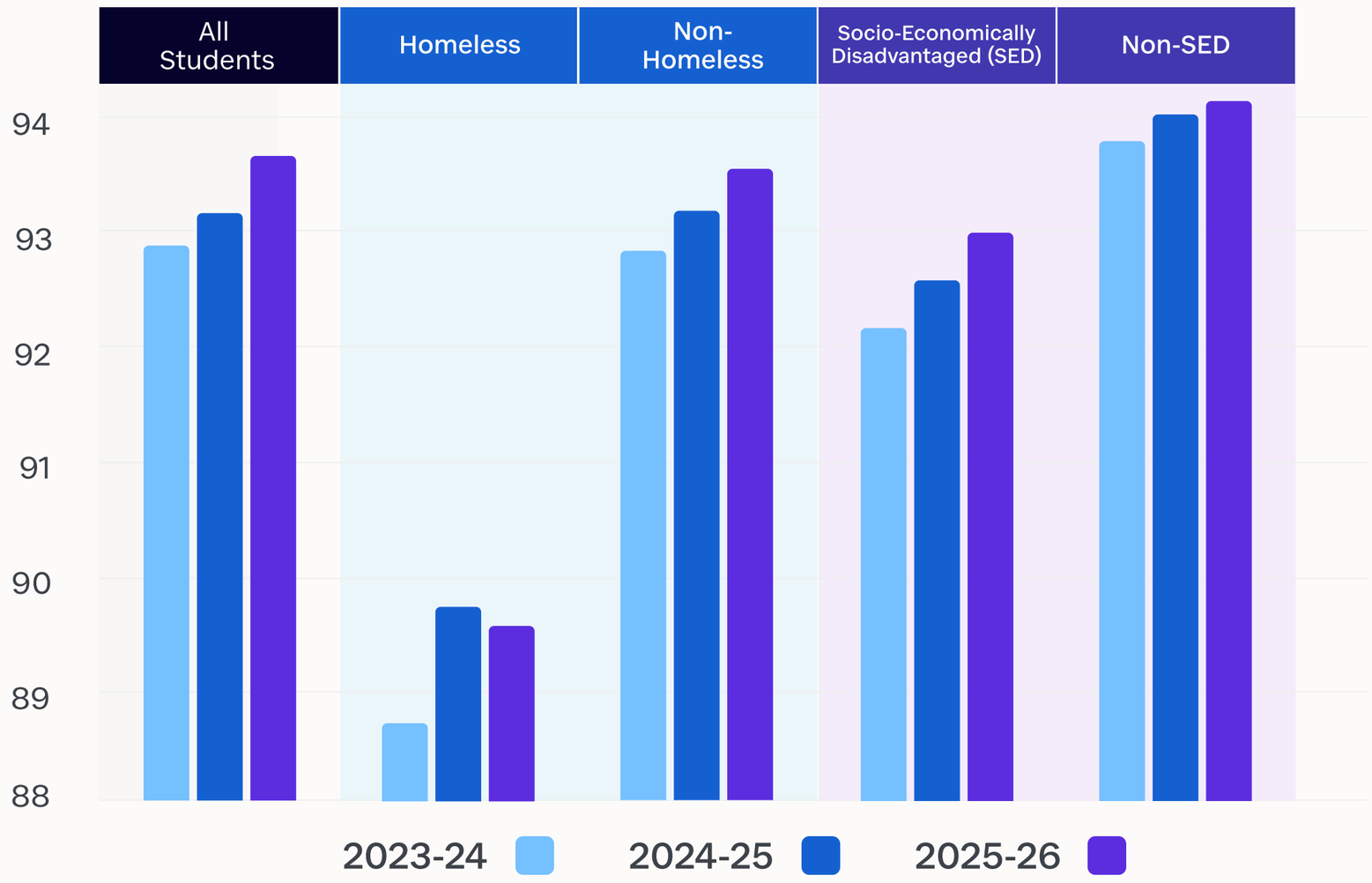
SchoolStatus connects educators and families around the topics that matter most. The company partners with K–12 districts to improve attendance, engage families, and build trust so students can succeed. A recognized leader in data-driven attendance and family engagement solutions, SchoolStatus enables districts and educators to move from noisy, reactive messages to proactive support on important topics including attendance, literacy progress, and overall student readiness. SchoolStatus supports districts in all 50 states and serves more than 22 million students nationwide.

The funding of this report reflects SchoolStatus' ongoing commitment to tackling chronic absenteeism in partnership with districts throughout the U.S.

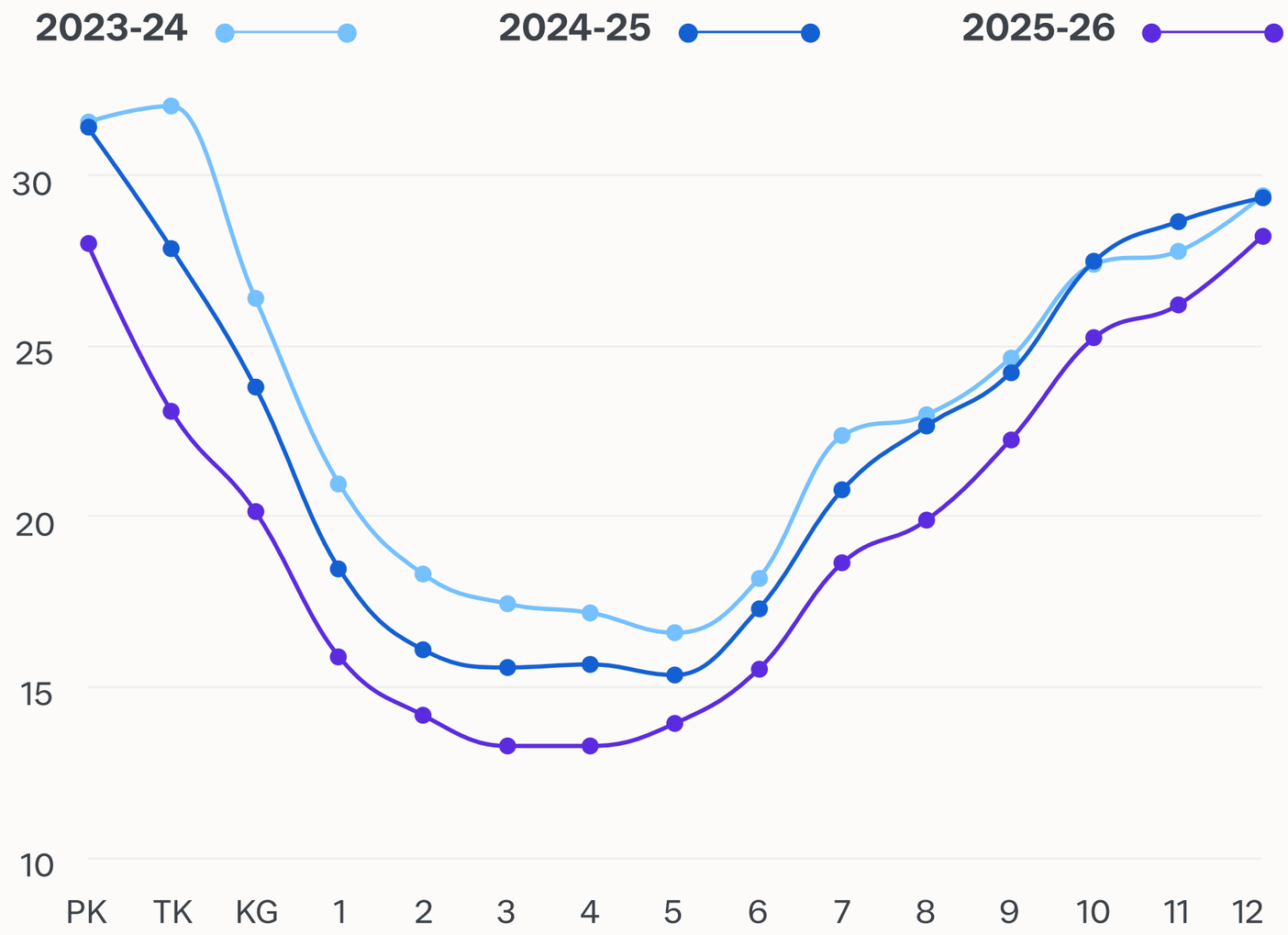
Average Attendance Rate by Grade Level



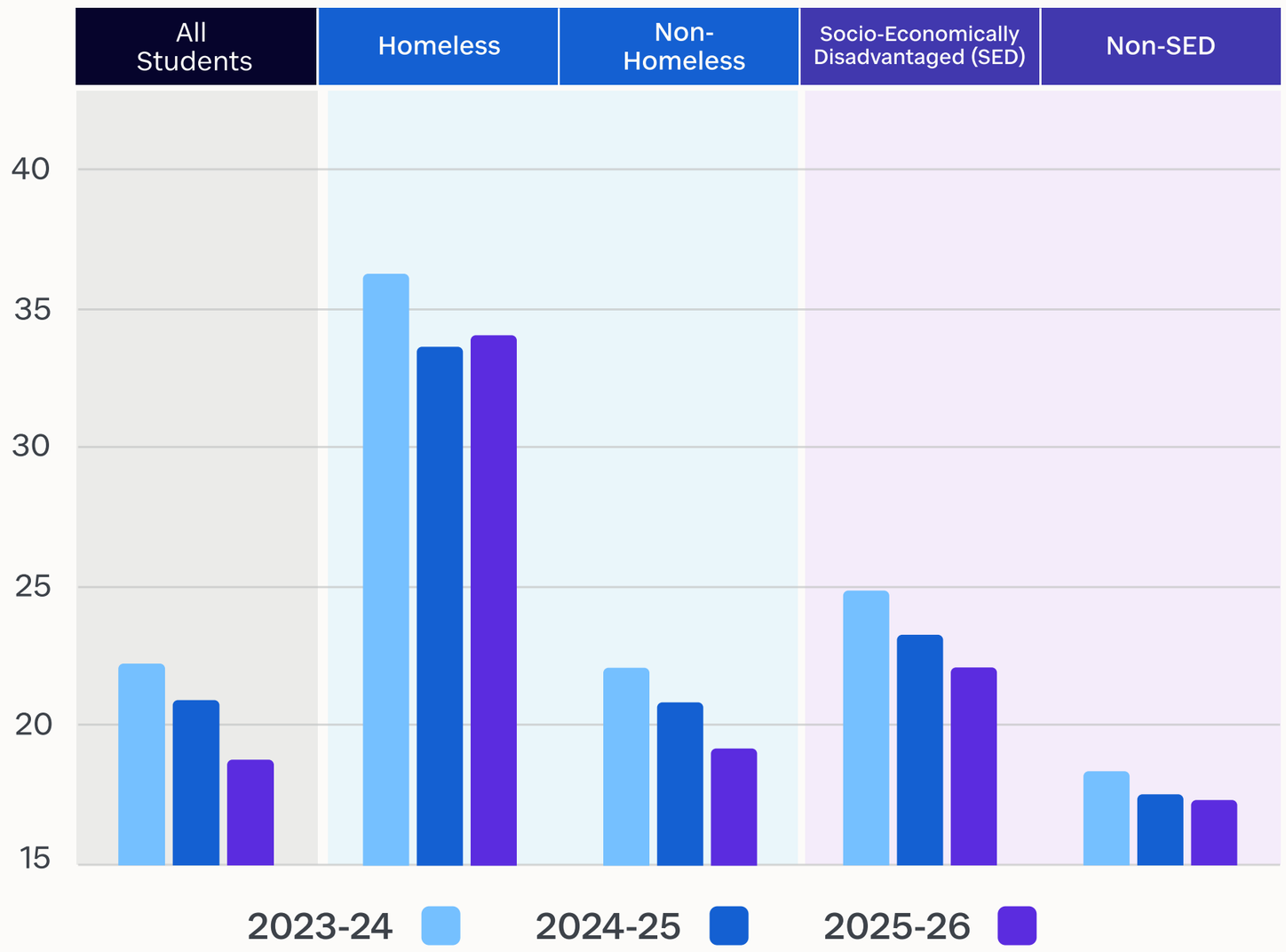
Average Attendance Rate by Group



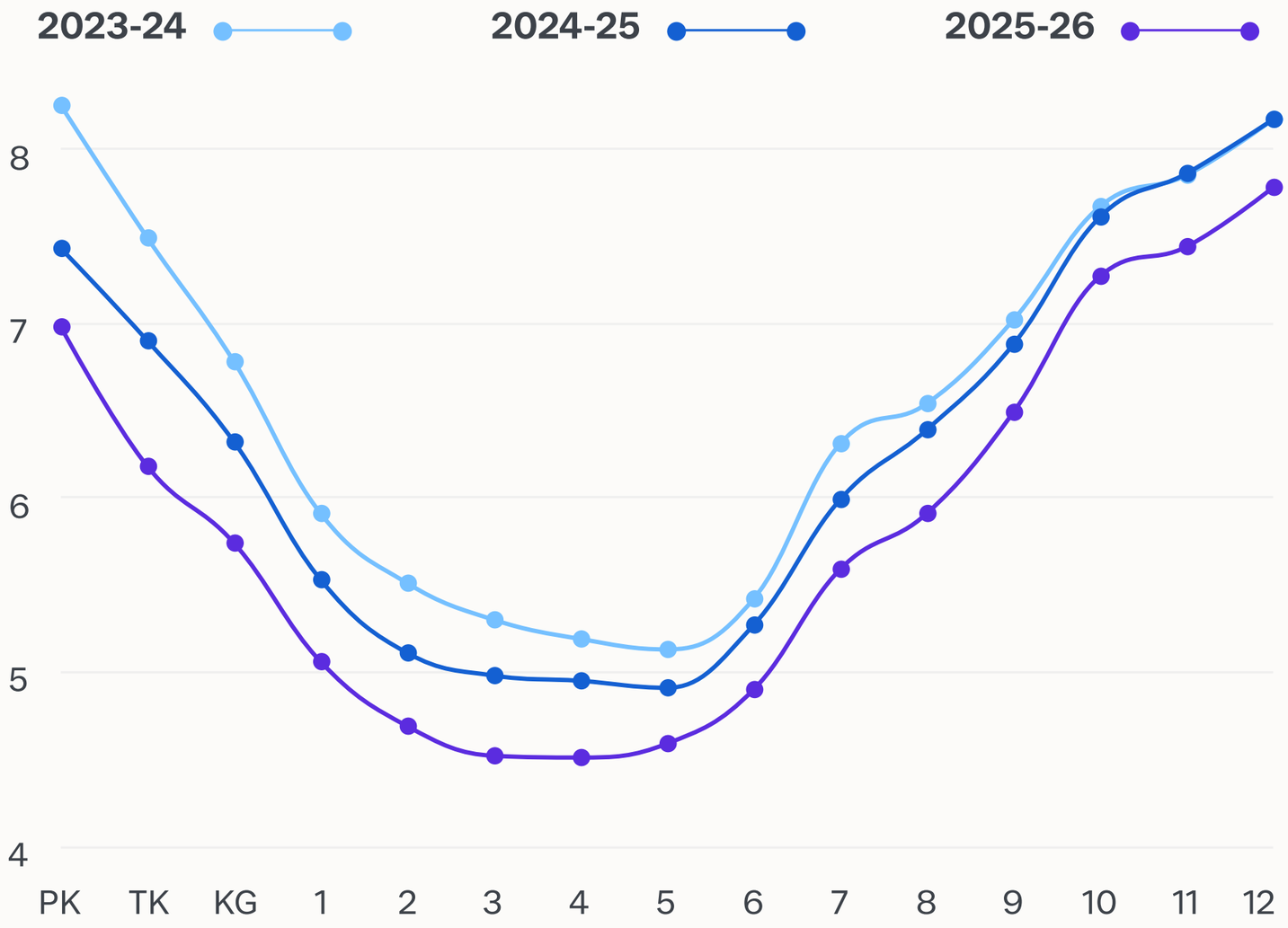
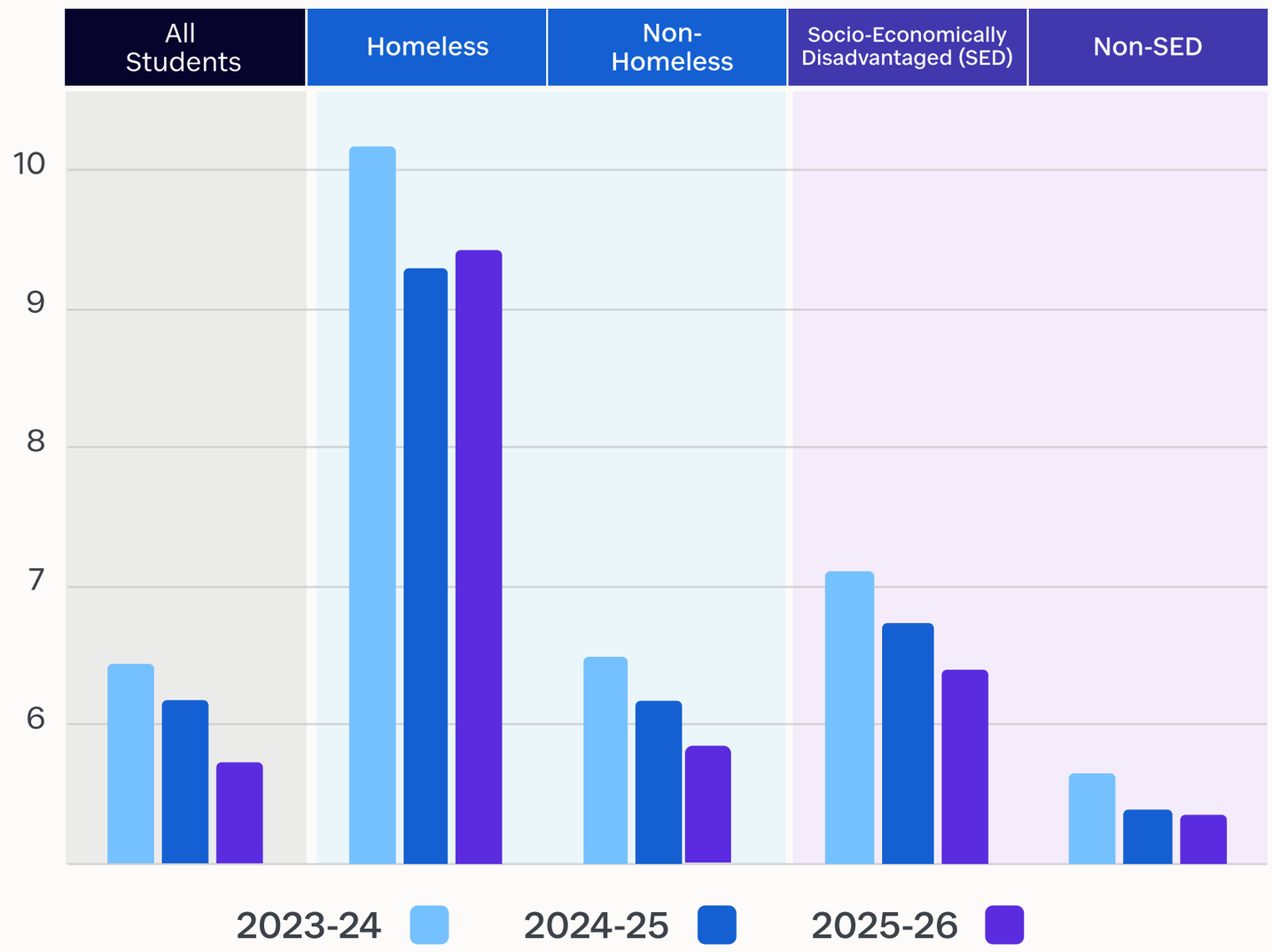
Average Chronic Rate by Grade Level



Average Chronic Absenteeism Rate by Group



Average Number of Absences by Grade Level



Average Number of Absences by Student Group