

Data Story:

Children and Youth Cabinet (Roger Williams MS)



Essential Question: What are the primary factors that affect student attendance in Middle School?

Description:

Part two of the working data story for and with the Providence Mayor's Children and Youth Cabinet. The primary goal of this part of the story is to understand factors affecting attendance in middle school. Our focus school is Roger Williams Middle School.

Data Sources: Rhode Island Department of Education

URL: <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/children-and-youth-cabinet-ms>

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Introduction

The following story is the second part of the attendance series with the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet. The first story focused on understanding factors affecting attendance at the elementary school level, with a particular focus on Bailey Elementary school.

This story focuses on attendance at the **middle** school level, and our focus school is Roger Williams Middle school. We continue to examine the available data through the Social Ecology framework.

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Introduction

The goals of the data story include:

1. Use data to increase our understanding of what strategies we need to focus on to improve outcomes;
2. Understand the issues we will need to focus on to create an integrated data system at the individual level, including data gaps, confidentiality issues, and technical issues;
3. Understand factors affecting attendance at three grade levels and use data story to inform work on attendance.

Our second focus school is Roger Williams Middle School.

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Social Ecology Model



Public source image

We continue to frame the attendance data story, such as our examination of Bailey Elementary, using the Social Ecology Model, which promotes the use of research to extend beyond **individual** characteristics to encompass **family, peer, school, and community** factors. In this way, the story portrays all the realms in which a child's well being is influenced, and paints a more accurate picture of the intertwining factors affecting attendance.

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Middle School Attendance Factors

In the Bailey story, we identified some priority indicators of attendance, rooted in current research, and spanning across the social ecology framework:

- Prior attendance (by grade, in preschool programs)
- Prior academic performance (by grade, IEP status)
- Family stressors (poverty, mobility, transportation)
- Health

While many of these factors also affect middle school students, there are some characteristics that are particularly salient for students in grades 6-8:

- Grade retention¹ affects students' relations with peers and teachers
- School belongingness² can affect a student's engagement
- Suspensions³ affect attendance and may reflect behavioral or other issues
- Truancy⁴ emerges as students become more independent from family life and peer groups become more influential.

1 Student repetition of the same grade for the purpose of remediation or development of skills, for which the decision is often determined by parents, teachers, or school policies (Rodderick, 1994)

2 A student's need of sense of connection to the school community, and the perception of the school community as caring, supportive, and welcoming (Osterman, 2000).

3 The number of infractions and disciplinary actions per 100 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade in Rhode Island public schools. Disciplinary actions include in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and alternative program placements (RI Kids Count, 2010)

4 The U.S. Department of Education and the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education define truancy as 10 or more unexcused absences in a school year. Truant students in Rhode Island may be referred by school administrators to the Rhode Island Truancy Court. The number of Rhode Island students charged with truancy more than quadrupled between 1997 and 2008, from 365 students to 1,214 students (RI Kids Count, 2010)

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Priority Indicators of Middle School Attendance

	Prioritized Indicators (Middle School)	
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Prior attendance * Special education or IEP * English Language Learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Academic performance * Health status
Interpersonal - Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Poverty status (free/reduced lunch) * Family mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Into new school/district - Into new home/homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Family crisis * Transportation
Interpersonal - Peer Interactions (at home, school, & community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bullying * Peer relations 	
Organizational - School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Grade retention * Truancy * Family involvement in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Suspensions * Teacher engagement with student * Academic expectations
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Access to, participation in out-of school programs * Safety 	

Here we summarize the indicators of highest priority for middle school attendance. As with the elementary data, there are indicators that we cannot currently examine, including peer relations, school belongingness, and truancy as differentiated from other unexcused absences. Although these are identified as important indicators, the indicators we do examine in this story (identified in **bold** in the chart above) provide a preliminary picture of factors affecting middle school attendance, focusing particularly on Roger Williams.

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Roger Williams in Context

Roger Williams in Context

The next several pages provide snapshot data on absenteeism at Roger Williams, and at other public schools with grades 6, 7, or 8.

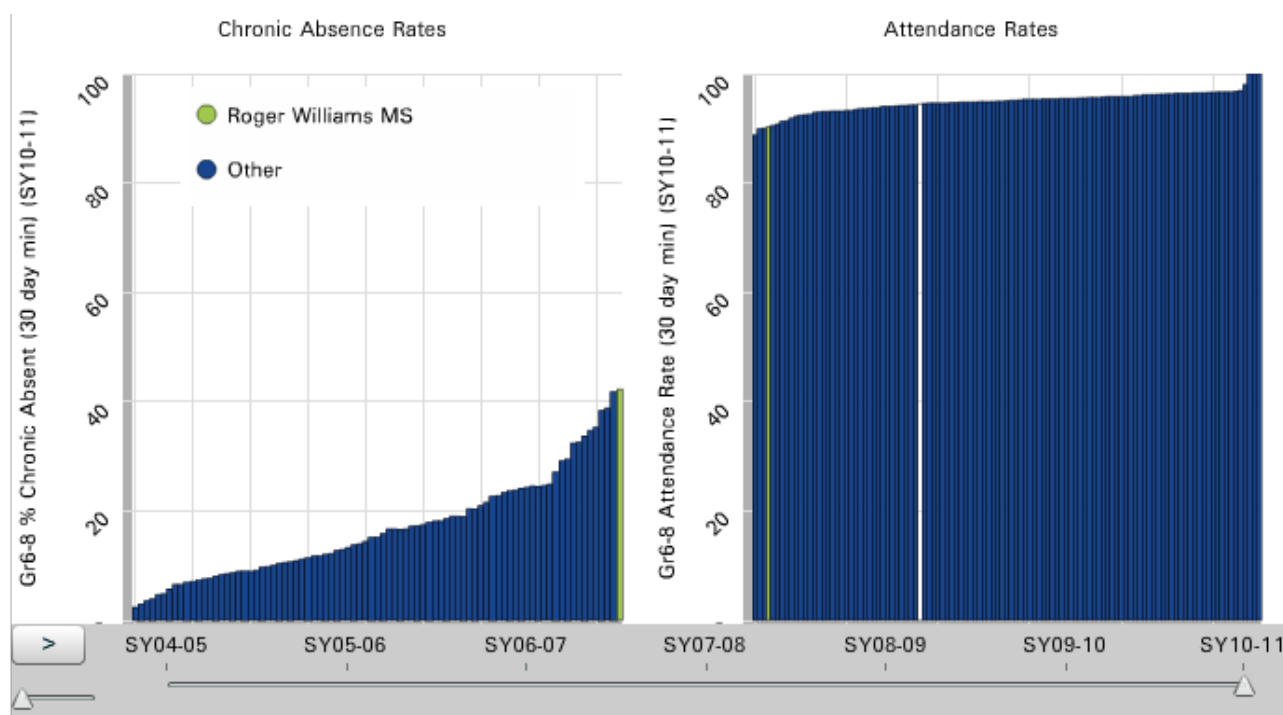
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Chronic Absenteeism and Attendance Rate of All Middle Schools



Roger Williams consistently has one of the highest rates of chronic absenteeism and one of the lowest attendance rates when compared to other middle schools in the state.

Above are all of the public schools with grades 6, 7, or 8 in the state of Rhode Island. Roger Williams MS is represented by the green bar. The chart on the left shows chronic absenteeism rates. The chart on the right shows attendance rates. As you can see, Roger Williams has exceptionally high rates of chronic absence compared to other middle schools, and therefore makes a good school to examine absenteeism. It is also evident that attendance rates often mask high rates of absenteeism.

Absenteeism is often examined in the following four categories: **Low**=0% to 5%, **Moderate**=5% to 10%, **Chronic**= 10% to 20%, and **Excessive**= 20%+

For this story, we have collapsed low and moderate into one category (<10% absent, or *not* chronically absent) and chronic and excessive into a second category (10%+ or *chronic*). Therefore, our definition of chronic absenteeism includes **students who are absent at least 10% of the days they are enrolled in school.**

Note: Because students with very short enrollment periods may skew chronic absenteeism statistics unfairly, the percentages will be based on students with a minimum enrollment of 30 days or more at a school throughout this story.

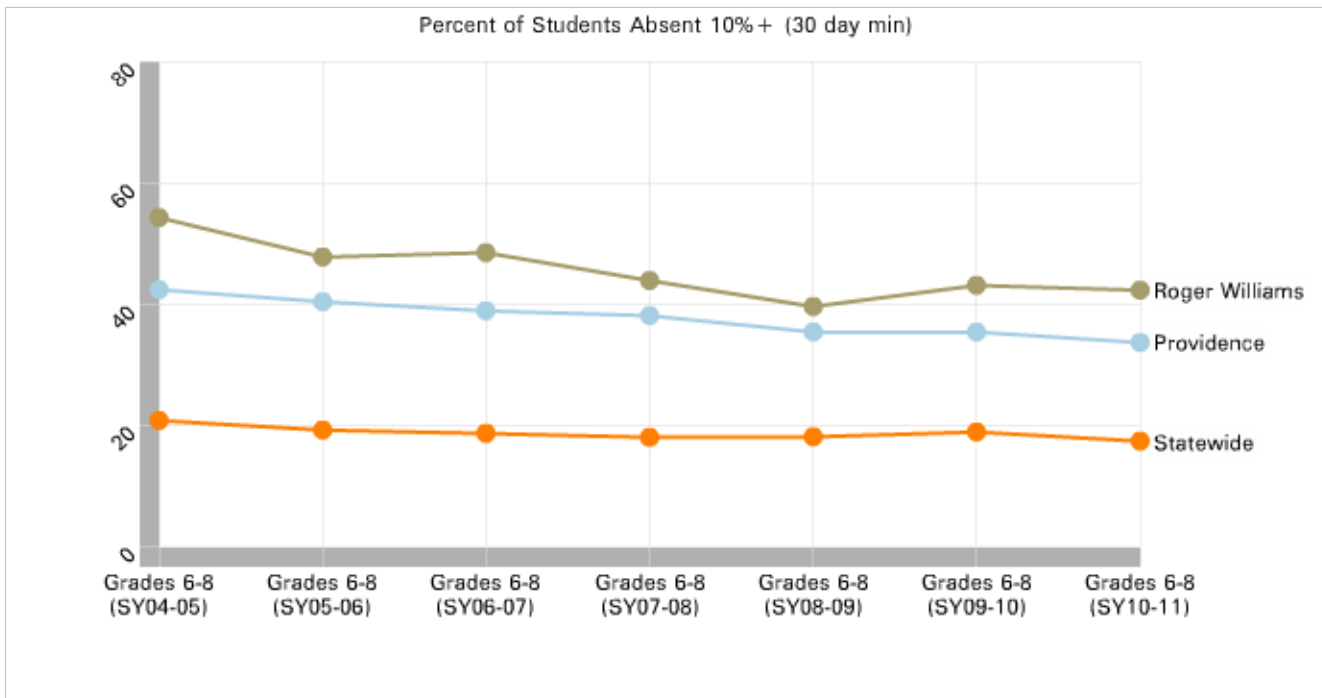
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Chronic Absenteeism Over Time



The number of students at Roger Williams who are chronically absent has decreased by 10% since the 2004-05 school year.

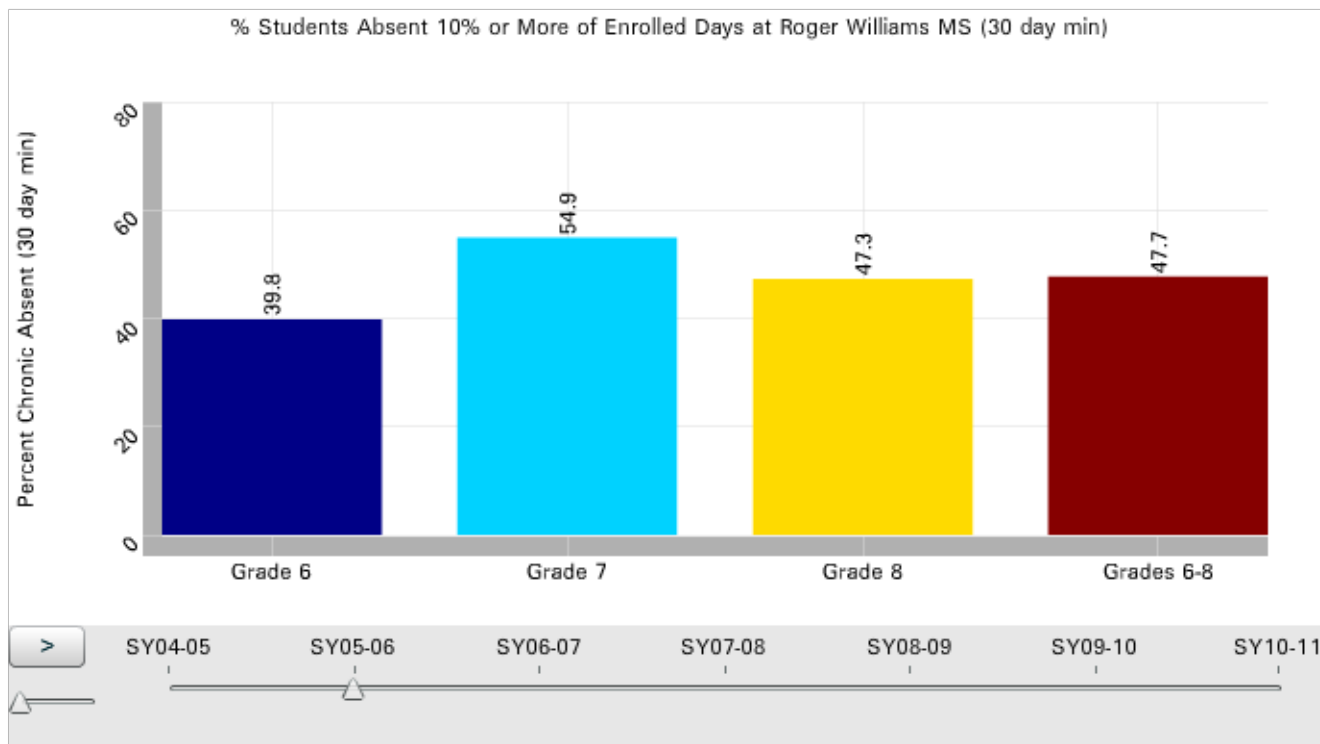
This chart shows chronic absenteeism over time for 6th through 8th graders in Roger Williams MS, the district of Providence, and the state as whole (public schools only) for students who were enrolled at least 30 days in that school. Here we see that chronic absenteeism is decreasing across the city, the state, and specifically at Roger Williams Middle School.

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Chronic Absenteeism By Grade Levels



Sixth graders at Rodger Williams are less likely to be chronically absent than are students in seventh or eighth grade.

This bar graph shows chronic absenteeism by grade levels 6th, 7th, and 8th at Roger Williams Middle School, for students who were enrolled at least 30 days in that school year. We can see here that the percentage of students who miss 10% or more of school varies from year to year, but that sixth graders tend to have the lowest rates of chronic absenteeism.

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Roger Williams by Student Characteristics

The previous several pages provided a snapshot of chronic absenteeism at the middle school level. The next few will focus on individual and family & peer contexts **specifically at Roger Williams Middle School**, including

- Prior attendance
- Suspensions
- Prior grade retention
- Prior academic performance
- Family poverty
- Prior mobility

As school and community indicators become available that are relevant to attendance, they will be added to the story.

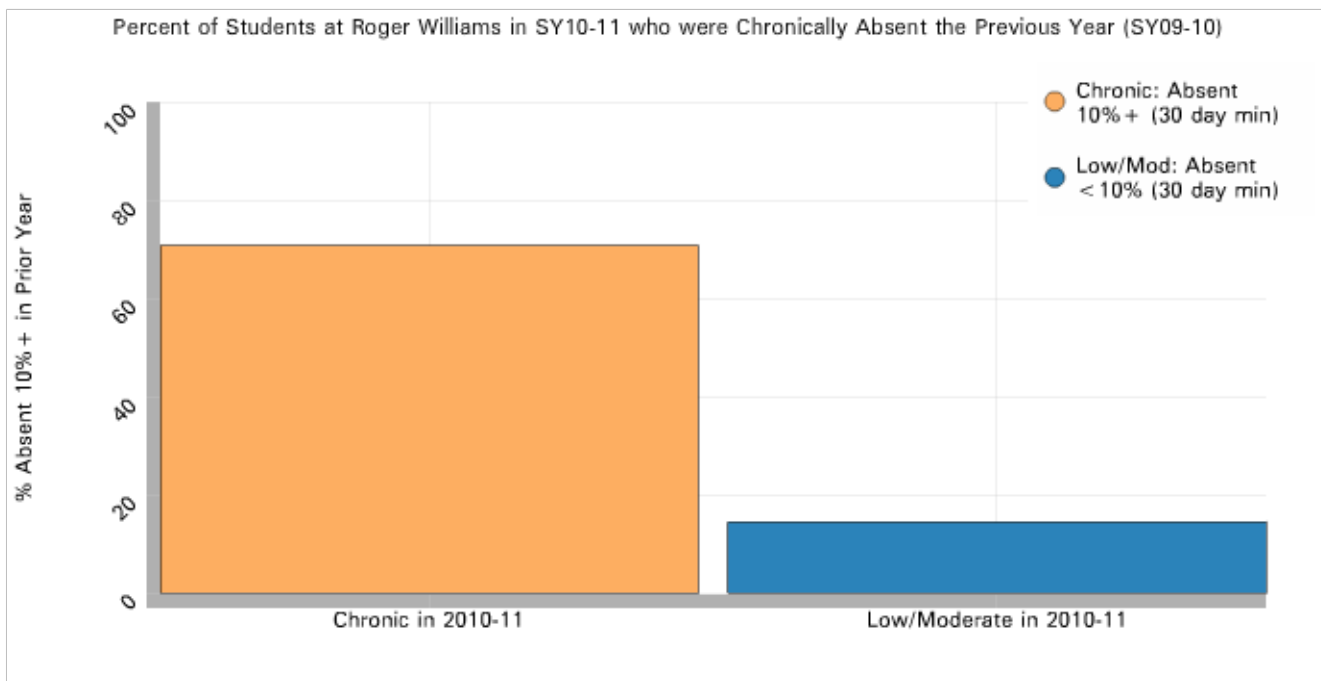
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Individual Indicator: Prior Attendance



More than 2/3 of students who were chronically absent in 2010-11 had also been chronically absent the year prior.

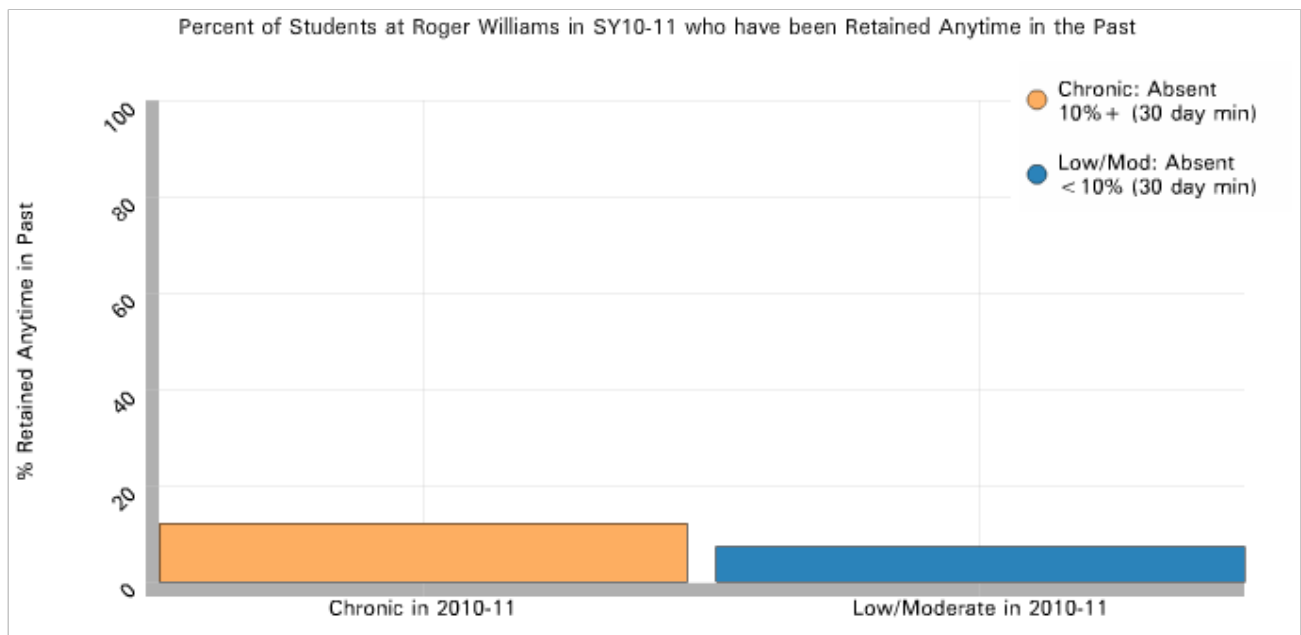
Prior absenteeism does appear to be a strong predictor of future absenteeism. Of the chronically absent students at Roger Williams in 2010-11, 71% were chronically absent the previous school year (2009-10). In contrast, just 14% of students who had low chronic absenteeism in SY10-11 were chronically absent the previous school year.

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Individual Indicator: Grade Retention



Over 12% of students who were chronically absent in 2010-11 had been retained at some point in the past compared to only 7% of students with a lower absence rate.

This bar graph shows the percent of students at Roger Williams in the 2010-11 school year who have ever been retained a grade level in any previous year since 2004-05. While only 7% of students with low or moderate absenteeism in 2010-11 were ever retained, this number increases for students with chronic absenteeism, for a percentage of over 12%.

Grade retention is often determined locally, at the school or district level. Although we don't have any information on Roger Williams' retention policy nor information on the retention policies of the elementary schools that RW students formerly attended, it still appears as a relevant indicator of attendance, as indicated by the graph.

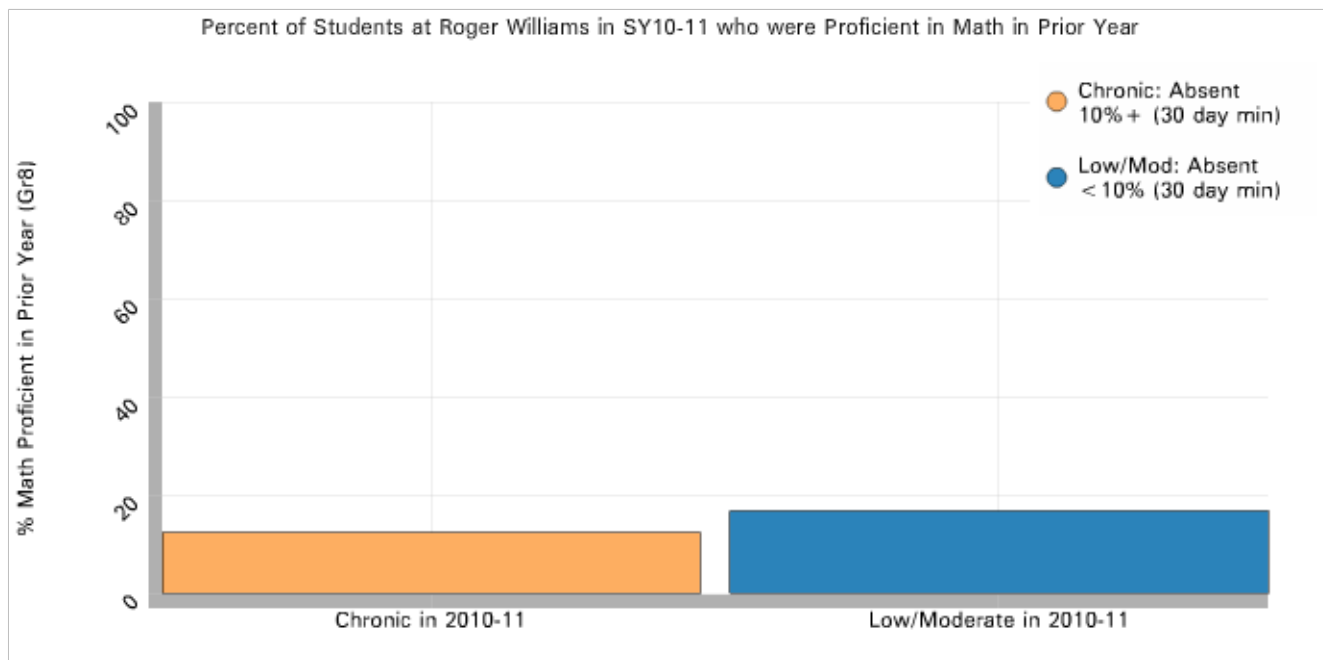
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Individual Indicator: Prior Academic Performance



Of students who were chronically absent in 2010-11, only 12% were proficient in Math in the previous year compared to 17% of students with low or moderate absenteeism.

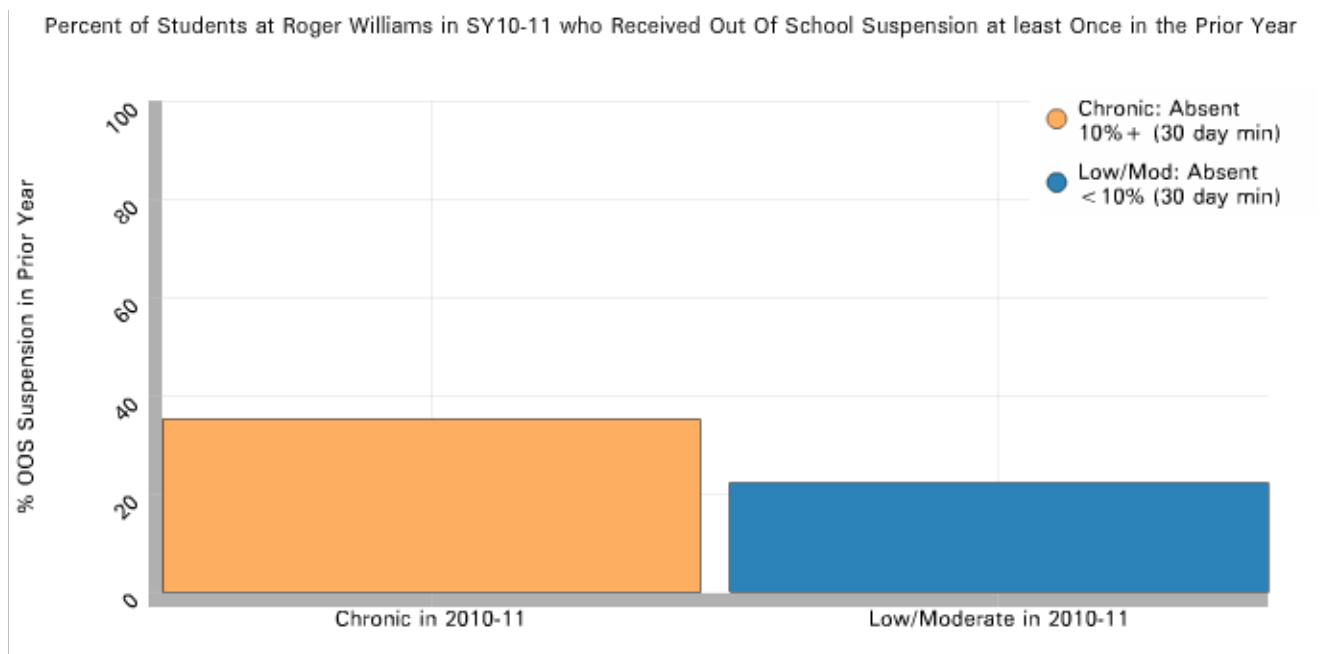
This bar graph shows the percent of 8th graders at Roger Williams in the 2010-11 school year who achieved Proficient or Proficient with Distinction on NECAP Math exam in the previous school year (2009-10). 17% of students with low or moderate absenteeism (less than 10%) in 2010-11 earned proficient Math NECAP scores in 2009-10. Only 12% of students at Roger Williams who were chronically absent in 2010-11 had proficient NECAP Math scores in 2009-10.

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Interpersonal Indicator: Suspensions In Prior Year



Over 35% of students who were chronically absent in 2010-11 were suspended, out of school, at least once in the prior year.

Over 1/3 (35%) of chronically absent students at Roger Williams MS in 2010-11 received at least one out-of-school suspension during the previous school year (2009-10). In contrast, about 22% of students with low or moderate absenteeism during the 2010-11 school year received an out-of-school suspension the previous school year.

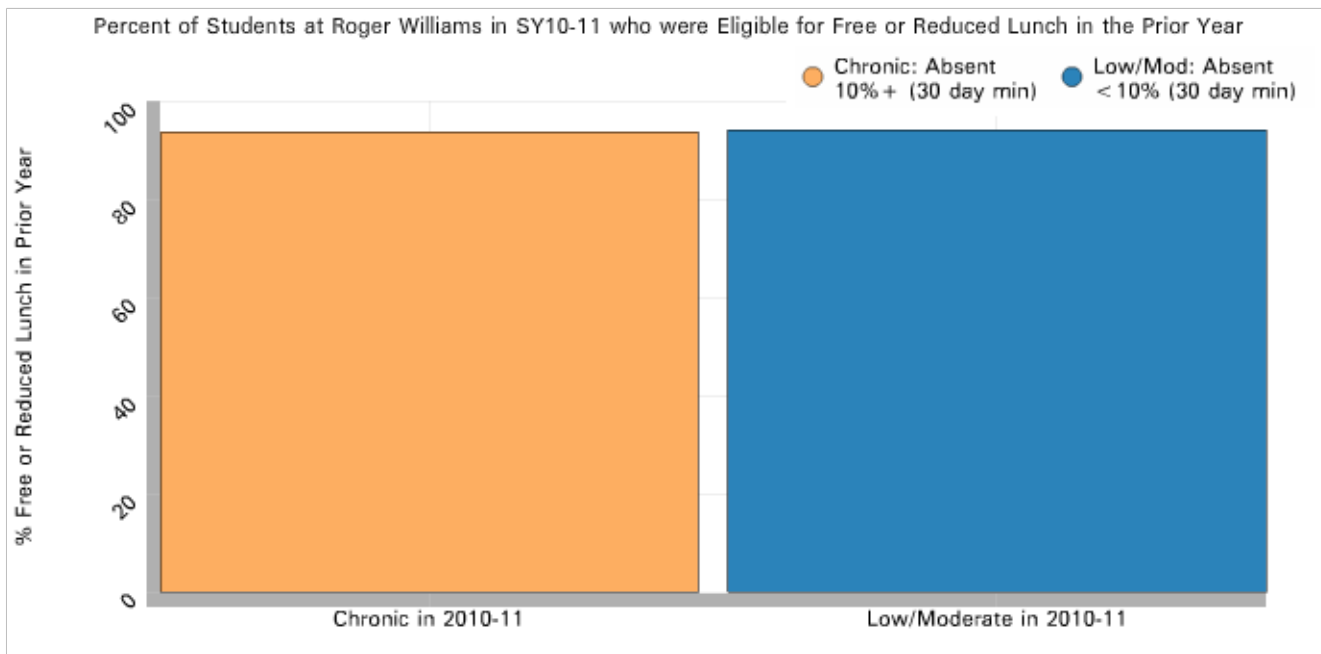
Interestingly, attendance-related infractions for reasons such as cutting/skipping class, skipping detention, and leaving school grounds are a big proportion of all suspensions. In 2009-10, roughly 11% of all infractions leading to out-of-school suspensions in middle schools were for attendance-related infractions ([InfoWorks Live!](#)).

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Interpersonal Indicator: Poverty Status



Regardless of their absence rate in 2010-11, nearly all students at Roger Williams qualified for free or reduced lunch the previous year.

This bar graph shows the percent of students at Roger Williams who were eligible for free or reduced price lunch in 2009-10. Of students who were chronically absent in 2010-11, just *under* 94% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches; of students with low or moderate absences, just *over* 94% were eligible.

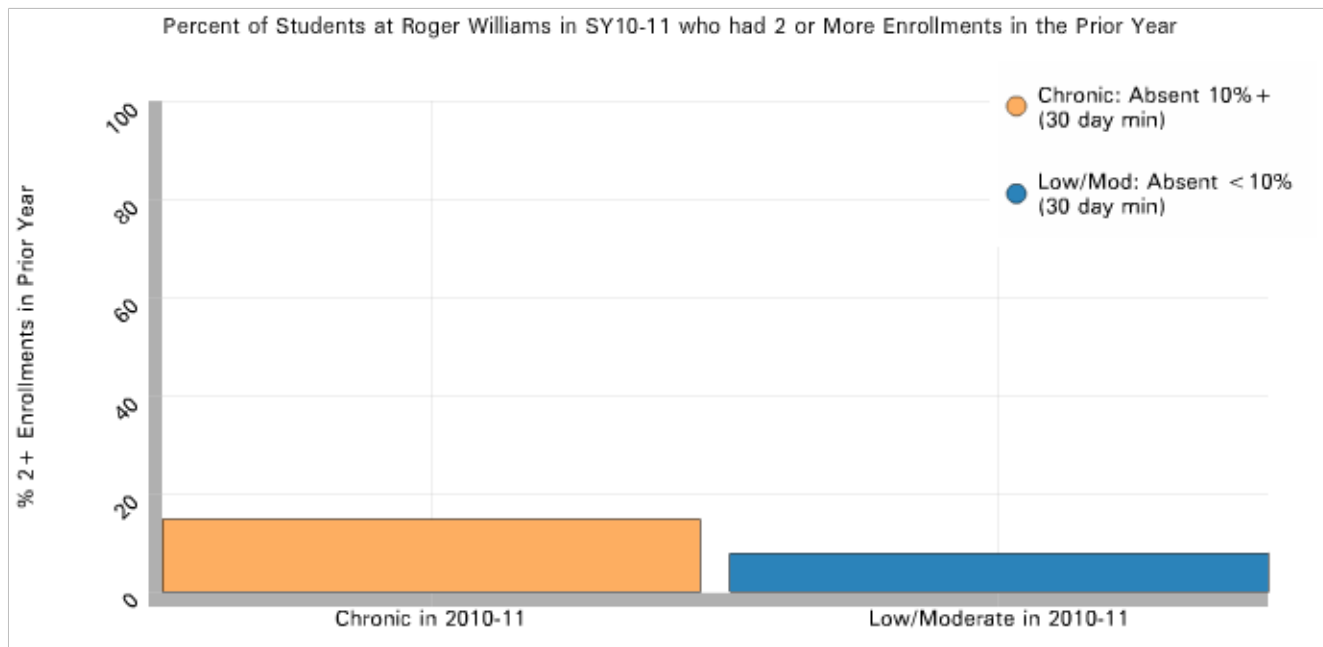
There is an overall high percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch at Roger Williams. Therefore, in the case of Roger Williams, poverty may not be a relevant or useful indicator for distinguishing regular attendees from chronically absent students.

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Interpersonal Indicator: School Mobility



Nearly 15% of all students who were chronically absent in 2010-11 had at least two school enrollments the previous year.

This graph shows the percent of students that had two or more school enrollments in the 2009-10 school year. The number of enrollments is used as a proxy for mobility in schools. For the 2010-11 year, nearly 15% of students who were chronically absent had two or more school enrollments in the previous year; 8% of students with low or moderate absences had been enrolled in two or more schools.

Although only 15% of chronically absent students in 2010-2011 had high mobility, it is nearly twice the rate at which low/moderate attenders had high mobility (15% vs. 8%).

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Summary of Findings

The preceding slides confirm much of what research has suggested on the relevant indicators for attendance in middle school. For Roger Williams Middle School students:

- **Prior chronic absenteeism precedes almost 71%** of students who were chronically absent in the 2010-11 school year
- **Only 12% of students chronically absent students are proficient on Math NECAP.**
- **35% of chronically absent students at Roger Williams had received one or more suspensions**
- Chronically absent students had **experienced high mobility at nearly twice the rate** of their better attending peers.

Some of the prioritized indicators from the Bailey story, however, didn't apply as well to students at Roger Williams. With a high overall percentage of students receiving free-or reduced lunch, poverty status was not able to accurately distinguish absentee students from regular attendees.

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Conclusion & Next Steps

The data story is a work-in-progress. As missing data points become available, the data story will more accurately illustrate what factors are important influences on middle school attendance, and where strategies should focus to improve outcomes.

Another important step in the data story is the continuing effort to gain access to individual student-level data, which will further our knowledge of attendance-related factors.

The final part of the data story of attendance will focus on student attendance in high school, with a specific focus at William B. Cooley, Sr. High School and Providence Academy of International Studies (PAIS).

Next Steps

1. Collect the missing data, engage other stakeholders, implement data sharing and/or parent permissions as needed, and round out the story;
2. Bring Roger Williams attendance data story back to Roger Williams for feedback and possible development of strategies to address attendance;
3. Begin constructing an attendance data story for Cooley and PAIS, including identifying community organizational data;
4. Finalize story in order to prepare to present to Mayor-elect.

To view the working data story on Cooley and PAIS, click [here](#).

Combined Data Story Pages Children and Youth Cabinet (MS): Pages 18 and 19 of 19

APPENDIX

Children and Youth Cabinet (Roger Williams MS)

story link: <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/children-and-youth-cabinet-ms>

Data Sources



Rhode Island Department of Education

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/>

Related Terms

- **INDICATORS**

- # Students Fall Support = % Chronically Absent (120day min)
 - Short Definition: % Students Chronically Absent (10% or More of a Minimum 120 Days Enrolled)
 - Agency Source(s): RIDE
 - Found on pages: 6
 - Indicator card: <http://ridatahub.org/dictionary/indicator/attdchronicabsent120/popup/>
- # Students Fall Support = % Chronically Absent (30day min)
 - Short Definition: % Students Chronically Absent (10% or More of a Minimum 30 Days Enrolled)
 - Agency Source(s): RIDE
 - Found on pages: 6, 7
 - Indicator card: <http://ridatahub.org/dictionary/indicator/attdchronicabsent30/popup/>
- # Students Fall Support = % Chronically Absent [10%+] (no min)
 - Short Definition: % students who were absent from school 10% or more of days enrolled
 - Agency Source(s): RIDE
 - Found on pages: 6
 - Indicator card: <http://ridatahub.org/dictionary/indicator/attdchronicabsent/popup/>

- **KEYWORDS**

- Education, Early-Warning, Children & Youth Cabinet

- **Tags**

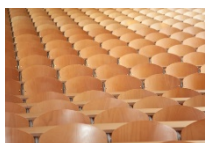
- Roger Williams, Chronic Absenteeism, Education, Attendance
-

Related Data Stories



[Chronic Absenteeism Among Kindergarten Students](http://ridatahub.org/datastories/chronic-absenteeism-in-kindergarten/1/)

<http://ridatahub.org/datastories/chronic-absenteeism-in-kindergarten/1/>



[High School Chronic Absenteeism & College Persistence: Linking K-12 data to Post-secondary outcomes](http://ridatahub.org/datastories/high-school-absenteeism-college-persistence/1/)

<http://ridatahub.org/datastories/high-school-absenteeism-college-persistence/1/>
