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Who Is Newly Absent? Racial Inequities in Post-Pandemic Transitions into Chronic and Severe Absence in Georgia

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Jerome Graham is an Assistant Professor of K-12 Educational Administration at Michigan State University. His research evaluates the implementation and effects of educational policies and practices that have the potential to make schools more humanizing for Black children. Jerome's work explores the question, **"How would schooling look differently if it were structured in a way that equitably facilitated the social and emotional learning (SEL) and wellbeing of all—and especially Black—students?"** He anchors this work through interdisciplinary, mixed-method scholarship that highlights three areas that would look radically different if policies and practices nurtured students' wellbeing: school climate, school discipline, and mental health. His research draws attention to these areas by: (1) problematizing, analyzing, and documenting the disparities that often make school a 'site of suffering' for Black students and (2) investigating the implementation and effects of policies and practices offering alternatives to current schooling approaches that would center, improve, and affirm wellbeing.

Abstract

Chronic absenteeism rose sharply following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has declined only modestly since, yet most evidence remains cross-sectional and cannot distinguish persistence from redistribution in absence behavior. Using a cohort transition framework, the analysis compares students' typical absence profiles across pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods. The results show substantial redistribution toward higher-absence profiles. Nearly 10% of students with historically very low absence transitioned into chronic or severe absence post-pandemic. Black and Hispanic students face higher probabilities of entering chronic and severe absence than White students, even when starting from comparable pre-pandemic absence profiles. These findings indicate that post-pandemic absenteeism reflects both persistence and redistribution, with implications for equitable prevention and re-engagement strategies.

Keywords: Chronic Absenteeism, Student attendance, Longitudinal analysis, and Attendance disparities

Introduction

Student absences have increased substantially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chronic absenteeism—commonly defined as missing 10 percent or more of enrolled school days—rose sharply relative to pre-pandemic levels and has declined only modestly since (Dee, 2024; Malkus, 2024a, 2024b). Such elevated absence rates have been observed across states, school contexts, student subgroups, and across the full attendance distribution (Dee, 2024; Malkus, 2024a). Given that absenteeism is associated with lower achievement, compounds when sustained across years, and is disparately experienced by students (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Fuller et al., 2025; Gee, 2018; Gottfried, 2011), post-pandemic attendance challenges may slow academic recovery and deepen existing disparities.

While there is growing consensus that absenteeism remains elevated in the post-pandemic period, much of what we know about the rise in absenteeism comes from cross-sectional studies documenting year-to-year changes in chronic absenteeism rates across schools, districts, and demographic subgroups (Choi et al., forthcoming; Dee, 2024; Graham et al., forthcoming). Such studies are essential for quantifying the magnitude of the increase in absenteeism, but they are limited in their capacity to diagnose how attendance behavior has shifted within students over time. Recent scholarship has begun to examine student attendance longitudinally, documenting that sustained absenteeism across multiple years carries cumulative consequences for achievement and engagement (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Wei, 2024). Further, Swiderski and colleagues (2025) examined the persistence of absenteeism by tracking the number of years individual students were chronically absent, finding that 9.6 percent of students were chronically absent in all three post-pandemic years examined—a substantial increase relative to the pre-pandemic period. While this work establishes the prevalence of persistent

chronic absence, an important dimension yet to be explored is the compositional dynamics underlying these aggregate trends.

Cross-sectional chronic absence rates aggregate students moving into chronic absence and those moving out, thereby masking how the risk of chronic absenteeism is distributed and redistributed across the student population. As such, these studies leave unanswered questions about the extent to which elevated post-pandemic absenteeism reflects continued absence among students who were chronically absent pre-pandemic versus newly chronically absent students who previously attended regularly. Clarifying this distinction has direct implications for how policymakers and practitioners seek to redress post-pandemic absenteeism. If the post-pandemic rise in absenteeism is primarily driven by persistence among students who were already chronically absent before the pandemic, then the extant literature provides useful guidance on the practice, policies, and interventions education systems can leverage to support those students (Childs & Scanlon, 2022; Liu & Lee, 2022; Singer, 2025). If elevated absenteeism reflects redistribution, however—wherein students with traditionally strong attendance have shifted into and remained in chronic absence, particularly if such patterns exhibit disparities across groups—then a broader array of interventions is likely necessary to redress high rates of chronic absence in the post-pandemic era.

To shed light on this conversation, this study answers three research questions: 1) To what extent did students maintain versus change their typical attendance profiles?; 2) How frequently did students with historically low-absence profiles transition into chronic or severe absence?; and 3) Do these transition patterns differ by race and ethnicity among students who began with comparable pre-pandemic attendance profiles? To answer these questions, this study uses student-level, longitudinal data from Georgia, leveraging cohort transition matrices to

compare students' typical absenteeism profiles from 2014-2018 (pre-pandemic) to their profiles post the pandemic 2020-2023. Rather than only centering a binary chronic absence threshold, this paper treats absenteeism as a graded outcome, distinguishing moderate chronic absence (18-<30 days) from severe absence (≥30 days). The results suggest that a large share of students, especially Black and Hispanic students, with strong attendance profiles in the pre-pandemic period (<6 days absent on average) became chronically and severely absent after the pandemic. I also find evidence of differential recovery patterns, wherein post-pandemic absenteeism rates show little evidence of rebounding, especially for students of color. This suggests the need for interventions that redress high rates for traditionally and newly chronically absent students.

Data & Method

I use student-level administrative records from Georgia traditional public schools spanning school years 2014–15 through 2023–24. The data include annual days absent, total possible days of attendance, grade level, and student demographic indicators. Supplemental Appendix A0 provides additional details on all data preparation procedures, including sample restrictions, absence standardization, typical attendance operationalization, and race coding. The analytic sample is restricted to students enrolled in grades 1–12 who appear in at least one year of both the pre- (2014–15 through 2018–19) and post-pandemic periods (2020–21 through 2023–24). The 2019–20 school year is excluded due to mixed pandemic exposure and instructional modality changes. Georgia is among the states that experienced sustained elevation in chronic absenteeism following the pandemic (Dee, 2024; Malkus, 2024a), making it a relevant setting for examining post-pandemic attendance transitions. The final cohort includes approximately 1.32 million students, and additional analyses suggest these students are qualitatively similar to the

full population of students in our data on observable characteristics, suggesting sample selection is not a major concern (results available upon request).

I begin by constructing absences bands for each student in every year before exploring these bands across the pre- and post-pandemic periods. Mirroring Swiderski's and colleagues (2025) work, I normalized absence counts to a 180-day school year (i.e., multiplied a student's absence rate by 180 each year) since students can be observed for different numbers of days enrolled. Standardized absences are classified into five attendance categories, which were determined based on the distribution of total days missed: 1-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18-29, and 30 or more days absent. The fourth category (18 to <30 days) corresponds to chronic absenteeism under the conventional 10 percent threshold, while the fifth category (≥30 days) captures severe absence (I replicate these analyses using raw attendance bands in Appendix Table A1). Using these bands and within each period, I defined a student's "typical" attendance profile by using the rounded mean of their annual attendance category values, though I replicate these analyses using their modal group—breaking ties by selecting the lower (better attendance) category as shown in supplemental Appendix Table A2.

The analysis uses a cohort transition framework to describe how students' typical attendance profiles change from the pre-pandemic to the post-pandemic period. Transition matrices show how outcomes in one period map onto outcomes in a subsequent period, conditional on initial status. Applied to attendance, this framework reveals whether elevated post-pandemic chronic absence reflects the same students remaining in high-absence categories (persistence) or different students moving into those categories (redistribution). To distinguish sustained cohort-level trends from single-year volatility, Supplemental Appendix Table A3 presents year-to-year transition matrices for all consecutive school year pairs across the full

panel. The analyses draw particular attention to the chronically and severely chronically absent bands to understand transitions into and outside of these groups. These categories allow examination of shifts both below and above the chronic absence threshold and distinguish moderate from extreme attendance problems. While the 18-day or 10% of days missed is common for measuring chronic absence, I use supplemental Appendix Table A4 to test sensitivity to alternative chronic absence thresholds. Since dropout might undermine absence rates, I also disaggregate the main analyses by schooling level (See Appendix Table A5).

Methodologically, I conduct a descriptive analysis with the aim of deepening understanding of the scale and magnitude of post-pandemic attendance problems by measuring them longitudinally rather than cross-sectionally. I employ transition matrix analyses to track individual students' movement across absence categories between the pre- and post-pandemic periods, revealing both the stability and variability in absenteeism patterns that aggregate rates obscure. Findings report the percentage of students who remained in, transitioned into, or transitioned out of each category, quantifying the extent to which post-pandemic chronic absenteeism represents persistence versus redistribution. Importantly, this is not a causal analysis; thus, the observed changes might not be solely attributable to the pandemic. However, this descriptive analysis remains relevant for documenting newly chronically absent students, regardless of the underlying causes of their transitions.

Results

Cohort transitions: Overall and by Race and School Level

Figure 1 presents overall transition patterns pooled across race and ethnicity. Among students whose typical pre-pandemic profile was fewer than six standardized absences, only 40.2% remained in that lowest-absence category post-pandemic (Figure 1), while this number

was above 70% in each of the pre-pandemic years (See Appendix A3). Nearly 60% experienced sustained deterioration, with 35.9% moving into the 6–<12 band, 14.3% moving into the 12–<18 band, 6.2% moving into the 18–<30 band, and 3.3% moving into the ≥30 band. In total, 9.5% of students who historically maintained very low absence transitioned into chronic or severe absence post-pandemic.

Deterioration extended across all pre-pandemic attendance categories. Among students with 6-<12 absences pre-pandemic, only one-third remained in that category, with substantial upward movement. Among students with 12-<18 absences pre-pandemic, only 26.5% remained in that band and 44.4% transitioned into chronic or severe categories. At the same time, Figure 1 shows persistence among students who were chronically or severely absent prior to the pandemic, with many remaining in high-absence categories post-pandemic. Together, these patterns indicate that elevated post-pandemic absenteeism reflects both persistence and redistribution across the attendance distribution.

Table 1 presents race-disaggregated transition matrices, allowing direct comparison of post-pandemic attendance outcomes among students with comparable pre-pandemic attendance profiles. Across nearly all pre-pandemic attendance categories, Black and Hispanic students face higher probabilities of transitioning into chronic and severe absence than White students. Among students who averaged fewer than six absences pre-pandemic, 7.13% of White students transitioned into chronic or severe absence post-pandemic, compared with 11.40% of Black students and 12.33% of Hispanic students—disparities of 60% and 73%, respectively. Using raw (unstandardized) absence counts yields nearly identical transition rates, with 10.74% of Black students with <6 days pre-pandemic becoming chronically absent compared to 11.40% using standardized counts (Supplemental Appendix Table A1). Among students with 6–<12 absences

pre-pandemic, 20.36% of White students transitioned into chronic absence compared with 28.74% of Black students and 26.19% of Hispanic students. Similar gaps are evident across higher pre-pandemic attendance categories, including among students who were near—but still below—the chronic absence threshold prior to the pandemic. Among students with 12–<18 absences pre-pandemic, 41.89% of White students transitioned into chronic absence compared with 48.40% of Black students and 44.25% of Hispanic students. These patterns are robust to alternative operationalizations of attendance, as results also hold when defining typical attendance using the modal rather than mean category within each period (Supplemental Appendix Table A2).

Patterns of attendance deterioration differed systematically by students' pre-pandemic grade level (Supplemental Appendix Table A5). Among students with very low absence pre-pandemic (<6 days), 5.21% of students in elementary grades (1-5) became chronically absent post-pandemic, compared to 11.32% of students in middle school grades (6-8) and 16.32% of students in high school grades (9-12). High school students were more than three times as likely as elementary students to transition into chronic absence. This gradient persisted across all pre-pandemic attendance categories: among students with 6–<12 days pre-pandemic, 15.80% of elementary students became chronically absent compared to 31.67% of middle school students and 36.35% of high school students. Movement into severe absence (≥30 days) followed similar patterns, reaching 38.23% among high school students who had 12–<18 days absent pre-pandemic. Racial disparities in attendance transitions persisted across all grade levels.

Newly entering chronic and severe absence

Table 2 summarizes post-pandemic deterioration as conditional risks of newly entering chronic and severe absence, stratified by race and students' pre-pandemic attendance profiles.

Panel A reports outcomes for students who were not chronically absent prior to the pandemic. Among these students, 17.52% of White students became chronically absence post-pandemic, compared with 22.70% of Black students and 21.38% of Hispanic students. Movement into severe absence follows a similar pattern, with 6.55% of White students becoming severely absent post-pandemic, compared with 9.74% of Black students and 8.82% of Hispanic students.

These racial disparities are remarkably consistent across alternative chronic absence definitions (Supplemental Appendix Table A4). Using a more conservative threshold (≥15 days), 27.62% of Black students and 26.22% of Hispanic students newly entered chronic absence compared to 21.36% of White students—disparities of 29% and 23%, respectively. Using a more liberal threshold (≥20 days) yields nearly identical relative gaps: 20.52% of Black students and 19.29% of Hispanic students compared to 15.92% of White students. This consistency indicates that observed racial inequities are not artifacts of the conventional 10% threshold but reflect genuine differences in post-pandemic attendance trajectories.

Panels B through D condition further on students' pre-pandemic attendance profiles. Among students with very low pre-pandemic absence (fewer than six days), 7.13% of White students newly entered chronic absence, compared with 11.40% of Black students and 12.33% of Hispanic students. Even within this historically low-risk group, Black and Hispanic students were approximately twice as likely as White students to transition into severe absence (4.18% and 4.45% compared to 2.17%). Risk increases sharply as students' pre-pandemic attendance approaches the chronic threshold. Among students with 6–<12 absences pre-pandemic, 20.36% of White students transitioned into chronic absence post-pandemic, compared with 28.74% of Black students and 26.19% of Hispanic students. Among students with 12–<18 absences pre-pandemic, 41.89% of White students transitioned into chronic absence, compared with 48.40%

of Black students and 44.25% of Hispanic students. Movement into severe absence reached 24% for Black students and 21.17% for Hispanic students in this near-threshold group, compared to 18.54% for White students.

Discussion

This study provides a student-level, longitudinal descriptive account of how attendance profiles shifted in Georgia following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicate that elevated post-pandemic absenteeism reflects both persistence among students with longstanding attendance challenges and substantial redistribution that draws additional students into chronic and severe absence categories, including students who previously maintained low-absence attendance profiles. These patterns suggest that the post-pandemic attendance challenge is broader than a continuation of pre-pandemic chronic absenteeism among the same students and that systems may need to adjust both how they identify attendance risk and how they allocate resources across prevention and intervention tiers.

These findings have three implications for attendance systems. First, identification strategies should expand beyond absolute absence thresholds to include change-based indicators. Students whose attendance deteriorates may need support even if they do not yet meet chronic absence definitions. Early warning systems calibrated exclusively to pre-pandemic chronic absence histories may systematically miss students whose risk emerged post-pandemic. Second, resource allocation should reflect the breadth of need documented here. Approximately 7–12% of previously excellent attenders transitioned into chronic absence, suggesting that prevention and early intervention tiers require expansion to reach students whose attendance histories would not have previously triggered concern. Third, racial equity analyses should move beyond comparing overall chronic absence rates to examining conditional transition probabilities—

whether Black and Hispanic students experience higher rates of deterioration when starting from the same pre-pandemic attendance levels. Our transition matrices reveal persistent racial disparities even among students with comparable pre-pandemic profiles, indicating that equity gaps cannot be explained solely by differences in baseline attendance.

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SUPPLEMENTAL APPENDIX A0: ADDITIONAL METHODS DETAILS

Absence Standardization

Students are enrolled for different numbers of possible attendance days across districts and school years due to variation in calendar length, late enrollment, early withdrawal, and other factors. To ensure comparability, absences are standardized to a 180-day school year using the formula: Standardized absences = (days absent / total possible days) × 180. This standardization preserves interpretability under conventional chronic absenteeism thresholds because 10 percent of a 180-day year corresponds to 18 days absent. Student-year records with zero or missing total possible days are excluded from analyses that rely on standardized absences. To verify that results are not artifacts of this standardization procedure, Supplemental Appendix Table A1 replicates the main transition analysis using raw (unstandardized) absence counts.

Typical Attendance Operationalization

Within each period, a student's "typical" attendance profile is summarized using the rounded mean of their annual attendance category values. Each student-year is assigned a numeric category from 1 to 5 based on standardized absences. For each student and period, the mean of these category values is computed across all observed years and rounded to the nearest integer category, with values bounded to remain within the defined range (1-5). This approach emphasizes stable, multi-year attendance patterns rather than single-year volatility or measurement error. A student with one atypical year (e.g., 18 days absent in one year but <6 days in four other years) would have a rounded mean near their modal category, smoothing the influence of the outlier year. For example, a student with annual categories of [1, 1, 1, 1, 4] would have a mean of 1.6, which rounds to 2, placing them in the 6-<12 day category despite one year of chronic absence.

To verify that results are not sensitive to this operationalization, Supplemental Appendix Table A2 replicates all analyses using the modal (most common) category instead of the rounded mean. When students had multiple modes within a period, ties were broken by selecting the lower (better attendance) category. Results are substantively similar across both approaches, confirming that findings reflect sustained multi-year changes rather than measurement artifacts.

Race and Ethnicity Coding

Given that I am also interested in transitions by race, I use binary measures for White, Black, Hispanic, and Other race students. For race-disaggregated analyses, a student-level race variable is constructed using pre-period race when available, post-period race when pre-period race is missing, and coding students as Other when race classifications differ across periods. Race and ethnicity are represented using mutually exclusive categories: White, Black, Hispanic, and Other. Categories are constructed from district-reported indicator variables (e.g., binary indicators for White, Black, Hispanic, and other/multiple races).

For each student-year observation, I create a summary indicator equal to the sum of all race indicators. Student-year records where this sum does not equal 1 (indicating ambiguous or multiple race classifications) are coded as Other. For race-disaggregated analyses, I construct a student-level race variable using the following priority:

1. Use the student's race classification from the pre-pandemic period if available
2. If pre-pandemic race is missing, use the student's race classification from the post-pandemic period
3. If the student's race classification differs between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods, code the student as Other

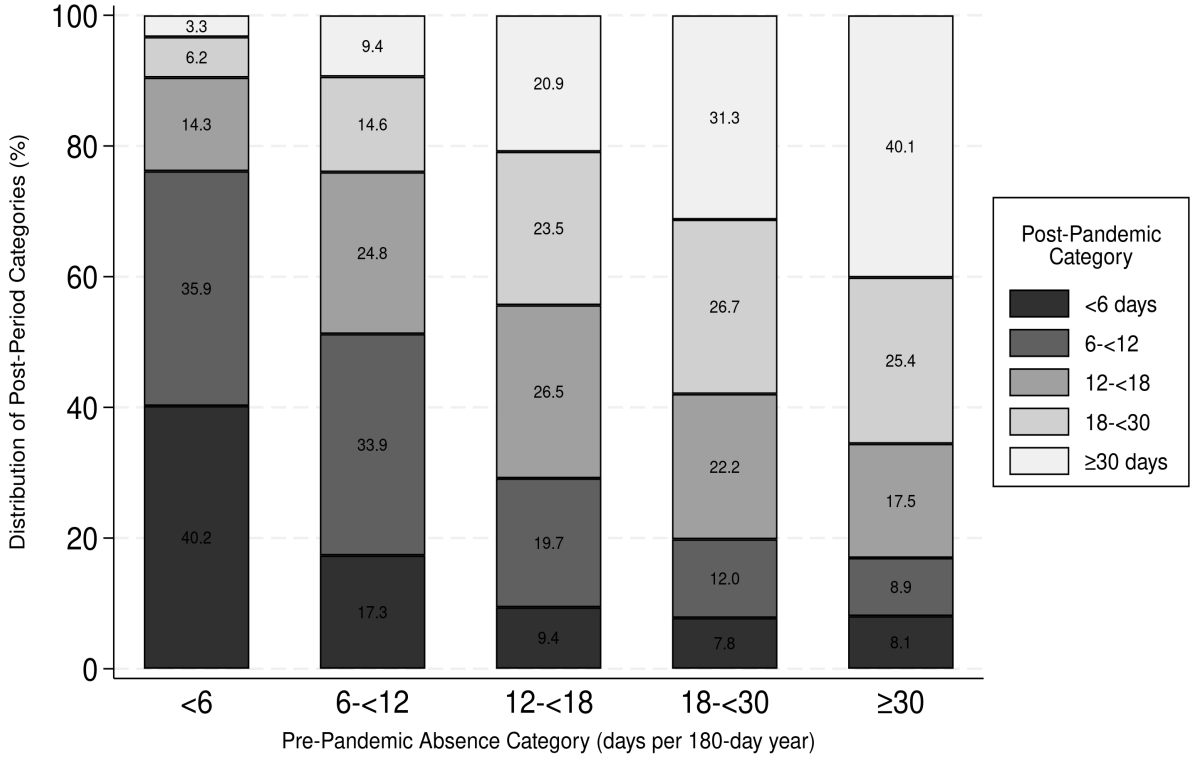
This approach prioritizes consistency within students over time while accommodating students who may enter the data only in one period or whose reported race changes across periods.

Sample Restrictions

The 2019–20 school year is excluded from all analyses for two reasons. First, it is analytically mixed relative to the onset of COVID-19, with schools operating normally for part of the year and shifting to remote or hybrid instruction following spring 2020 closures. Second, attendance recording practices during school closures and rapid shifts in instructional modality may not be comparable to typical in-person schooling, as districts implemented varied policies regarding how to count absences during remote instruction.

The cohort transition design requires students to be observed in at least one year of both the pre-pandemic period (2014–15 through 2018–19) and the post-pandemic period (2020–21 through 2023–24). Students who enrolled after 2018–19, exited before 2020–21, or attended only virtual schools are not included in the cohort. This restriction ensures that I am tracking attendance transitions for the same students across both periods. Supplemental Appendix Table A1 shows that students in the final cohort sample are similar to the full student population on observable demographic characteristics, suggesting that sample selection does not substantially threaten the validity of our descriptive findings.

Figure 1: Transitions in Student Absence Categories from Pre- to Post-Pandemic



Note. Bars show the distribution of post-period absence categories for students within each pre-period category. Each pre-period bar sums to 100 percent. Sample includes N=1,316,958 students observed in both pre-pandemic (2014–2018) and post-pandemic (2020–2023) periods. Absence categories are based on days absent standardized to a 180-day school year.

Table 1. Cohort transitions in attendance patterns by race/ethnicity

Pre-period typical band	Post-period typical band				
	<6	6-<12	12-<18	18-<30	>=30
Panel 1. White					
<6	40.42	38.93	13.51	4.96	2.17
6-<12	17.84	36.58	25.22	13.20	7.16
12-<18	9.89	20.57	27.66	23.34	18.54
18-<30	8.56	11.94	22.61	26.52	30.38
>=30	9.37	9.02	17.34	24.33	39.94
N (students) = 494,676					
Panel 2. Black					
<6	38.89	34.45	15.26	7.22	4.18
6-<12	15.68	30.36	25.22	16.65	12.09
12-<18	8.35	17.67	25.58	24.40	24.00
18-<30	6.68	11.60	21.49	27.34	32.89
>=30	6.82	8.31	17.04	26.07	41.77
N (students) = 480,771					
Panel 3. Hispanic					
<6	35.09	36.11	16.46	7.88	4.45
6-<12	15.48	33.43	24.90	15.47	10.72
12-<18	8.91	20.19	26.66	23.08	21.17
18-<30	7.72	11.95	23.29	26.00	31.04
>=30	9.43	9.09	18.46	25.86	37.15
N (students) = 212,409					
Panel 4. Other					
<6	51.89	31.24	10.45	4.18	2.24
6-<12	24.76	35.86	20.81	11.56	7.01
12-<18	12.51	24.10	24.80	20.95	17.64
18-<30	9.92	14.76	22.63	25.38	27.31
>=30	8.21	11.46	18.86	25.28	36.18
N (students) = 129,102					

Note. The table shows transitions in students' absence categories from the pre-pandemic period (2014–2018) to the post-pandemic period (school years 2020–21 through 2023–24), separately by race/ethnicity. Rows indicate students' typical pre-period absence category, and columns indicate their typical post-period category. Students' typical category within each period is the rounded mean of their annual absence categories across years in that period. Absence categories are based on days absent standardized to a 180-day school year (<6, 6–<12, 12–<18, 18–<30, and ≥30 days). Race/ethnicity is defined using mutually exclusive indicators; students with inconsistent race classifications across periods are coded as Other.

Table 2. Transitions Into Chronic and Severe Absence, by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	% Newly Chronically Absent	% Newly Severely Absent	N (students)
Panel A. Post-Pandemic Chronic and Severe Absence Among Previously Non-Chronic Students			
White	17.52	6.55	468,095
Black	22.70	9.74	448,761
Hispanic	21.38	8.82	202,514
Other	14.30	5.66	122,750
Panel B. Students with Very Low Absence Before the Pandemic (<6 Days)			
White	7.13	2.17	208,946
Black	11.40	4.18	226,726
Hispanic	12.33	4.45	101,862
Other	6.42	2.24	66,729
Panel C. Students with Low Absence Before the Pandemic (6–<12 Days)			
White	20.36	7.16	192,503
Black	28.74	12.09	159,986
Hispanic	26.19	10.72	76,392
Other	18.58	7.01	41,726
Panel D. Students with Moderate Absence Before the Pandemic (12–<18 Days)			
White	41.89	18.54	66,646
Black	48.40	24.00	62,049
Hispanic	44.25	21.17	24,260
Other	38.59	17.64	14,295

Note. The table shows the share of students who newly entered chronic or severe absence in the post-pandemic period, by race/ethnicity. Panel A reports outcomes for students who were not chronically absent in the pre-pandemic period (typical pre-period absence category below 18 days). Panels B–D report the same outcomes separately for students whose typical pre-period absence category was <6 days, 6–<12 days, or 12–<18 days. Chronic absence is defined as a typical post-period absence category of 18–<30 or ≥30 standardized absence days, and severe absence is defined as ≥30 days. The pre-period is 2014–2018, and the post-period corresponds to school years 2020–21 through 2023–24. Absence categories are based on days absent standardized to a 180-day school year.

Appendix Table A1. Cohort transitions using unstandardized absences

Pre-period typical band	Post-period typical band				
	<6	6-<12	12-<18	18-<30	>=30
Panel 1. White					
<6	40.91	39.20	13.45	4.75	1.70
6-<12	18.52	37.36	25.60	12.83	5.69
12-<18	10.84	21.84	28.97	23.88	14.46
18-<30	9.58	13.57	24.88	28.57	23.40
>=30	10.08	9.47	20.94	27.72	31.80
N (students) = 495,504					
Panel 2. Black					
<6	39.27	34.73	15.26	7.13	3.61
6-<12	16.17	31.07	25.75	16.78	10.23
12-<18	8.97	18.63	27.30	25.08	20.01
18-<30	7.26	12.87	23.49	29.39	26.98
>=30	7.23	8.64	19.03	30.77	34.33
N (students) = 482,660					
Panel 3. Hispanic					
<6	35.35	36.35	16.65	7.86	3.78
6-<12	16.07	33.87	25.39	15.72	8.94
12-<18	9.45	20.97	27.78	24.21	17.59
18-<30	8.53	12.80	24.88	28.09	25.70
>=30	8.64	11.36	20.75	29.01	30.23
N (students) = 212,596					
Panel 4. Other					
<6	52.06	31.47	10.53	4.15	1.78
6-<12	25.19	36.41	21.28	11.46	5.65
12-<18	13.15	24.98	26.28	21.59	13.99
18-<30	10.62	15.90	24.99	27.55	20.93
>=30	8.15	13.06	22.05	29.35	27.39
N (students) = 129,406					

Note. This table replicates Table 1 using raw (unstandardized) absence counts rather than absences standardized to a 180-day school year. Students' typical category within each period is the rounded mean of their annual raw absence categories. The sample is slightly larger (N = 1,320,166 vs. 1,316,958) because standardization requires valid enrollment day counts, which are not needed for raw absence analyses. All other methods match Table 1.

Appendix Table A2. Cohort transitions using modal typical band

Pre-period typical band	Post-period typical band				
	<6	6-<12	12-<18	18-<30	>=30
Panel 1. White					
<6	46.19	28.65	10.53	8.11	6.52
6-<12	23.92	29.34	16.54	16.19	14.01
12-<18	15.39	19.88	16.70	22.45	25.59
18-<30	13.05	11.85	12.45	22.11	40.55
>=30	14.92	7.45	6.86	14.54	56.24
N (students) = 494,472					
Panel 2. Black					
<6	45.98	22.93	9.23	9.48	12.38
6-<12	23.37	23.21	13.52	16.51	23.40
12-<18	15.08	16.52	13.36	20.27	34.76
18-<30	11.80	10.67	10.09	19.35	48.09
>=30	12.64	6.58	6.10	13.29	61.39
N (students) = 480,349					
Panel 3. Hispanic					
<6	42.63	25.11	9.95	9.91	12.40
6-<12	22.75	26.51	14.35	16.04	20.35
12-<18	14.65	19.40	14.84	21.37	29.73
18-<30	11.85	11.38	11.60	21.08	44.08
>=30	14.52	7.53	6.29	14.07	57.59
N (students) = 213,616					
Panel 4. Other					
<6	58.58	20.74	7.25	6.43	7.00
6-<12	33.34	25.77	12.87	13.23	14.80
12-<18	22.08	20.18	13.97	19.06	24.71
18-<30	16.28	12.92	11.10	20.42	39.28
>=30	14.57	7.48	7.02	14.67	56.26
N (students) = 128,521					
Panel 5. Overall					
<6	46.85	25.03	9.59	8.75	9.78
6-<12	24.37	26.55	14.87	16.01	18.20
12-<18	15.74	18.66	15.02	21.23	29.35
18-<30	12.66	11.40	11.26	20.70	43.97
>=30	13.76	7.05	6.44	13.90	58.84

Note. This table replicates Table 1 using the modal absence category within each period instead of the rounded mean. When students had multiple modes within a period, ties were broken by selecting the lower absence category. Absence categories are based on days absent standardized to a 180-day school year (<6, 6–<12, 12–<18, 18–<30, and ≥30 days). All other methods match Table 1.

Appendix Table A3. Year-to-year transitions in absence bands

Year t → t+1	Pre band	<6	6-<12	12-<18	18-<30	>=30
2014 → 2015	<6	74.28	20.07	3.69	1.35	0.60
2014 → 2015	6-<12	39.50	39.33	13.69	5.63	1.84
2014 → 2015	12-<18	17.79	34.12	25.38	16.43	6.28
2014 → 2015	18-<30	10.62	18.70	22.64	28.60	19.44
2014 → 2015	>=30	10.91	7.20	9.78	20.49	51.62
2015 → 2016	<6	71.48	22.22	4.19	1.50	0.60
2015 → 2016	6-<12	34.93	40.91	15.52	6.59	2.06
2015 → 2016	12-<18	15.30	32.14	26.52	18.66	7.37
2015 → 2016	18-<30	8.78	16.72	21.97	30.18	22.36
2015 → 2016	>=30	8.85	6.59	8.70	19.85	56.01
2016 → 2017	<6	70.54	22.99	4.37	1.50	0.61
2016 → 2017	6-<12	35.36	40.47	15.76	6.42	1.99
2016 → 2017	12-<18	15.62	32.05	26.56	18.65	7.12
2016 → 2017	18-<30	8.93	16.71	21.99	30.10	22.27
2016 → 2017	>=30	9.53	6.53	8.58	19.29	56.07
2017 → 2018	<6	72.67	21.32	3.98	1.42	0.60
2017 → 2018	6-<12	37.73	40.04	14.53	5.82	1.88
2017 → 2018	12-<18	16.54	33.57	25.97	17.42	6.49
2017 → 2018	18-<30	8.85	17.62	23.04	30.28	20.21
2017 → 2018	>=30	8.05	6.31	9.16	20.74	55.73
2020 → 2021	<6	49.41	29.19	11.51	6.57	3.33
2020 → 2021	6-<12	25.07	34.79	20.70	13.82	5.62
2020 → 2021	12-<18	15.52	26.77	23.83	22.32	11.56
2020 → 2021	18-<30	10.65	18.77	20.17	27.71	22.70
2020 → 2021	>=30	7.56	10.24	12.14	22.08	47.97
2021 → 2022	<6	59.70	28.80	7.35	2.89	1.26
2021 → 2022	6-<12	29.97	40.53	18.62	8.46	2.42
2021 → 2022	12-<18	14.62	32.21	26.89	19.45	6.82
2021 → 2022	18-<30	7.55	17.86	23.54	31.46	19.58
2021 → 2022	>=30	6.07	5.97	9.61	23.00	55.35
2022 → 2023	<6	62.95	27.39	6.20	2.39	1.08
2022 → 2023	6-<12	31.31	41.72	17.55	7.35	2.07
2022 → 2023	12-<18	13.56	32.75	27.87	19.39	6.44
2022 → 2023	18-<30	6.50	16.46	23.85	33.10	20.08
2022 → 2023	>=30	5.43	5.03	8.37	22.18	58.99

Note. Each panel shows year-to-year transitions for consecutive school years. Rows indicate absence category in year t, columns indicate category in year t+1. Cells show row percentages. Absence categories based on days absent standardized to 180-day year. Years 2014-2018 are pre-pandemic; 2020-2023 are post-pandemic (2019 excluded).

Appendix Table A4. Sensitivity to chronic absence threshold

Threshold	Race/ethnicity	% Newly Chronic	% Newly Severe (≥30)	N (students)
≥15 days	White	23.69	7.44	444,442
≥15 days	Black	30.57	12.25	423,471
≥15 days	Hispanic	29.31	11.30	193,951
≥15 days	Other	19.53	6.97	117,474
≥18 days	White	19.23	8.30	463,781
≥18 days	Black	26.29	13.30	442,761
≥18 days	Hispanic	24.43	11.98	200,954
≥18 days	Other	16.52	7.65	121,800
≥20 days	White	16.90	8.73	471,839
≥20 days	Black	23.85	13.82	451,465
≥20 days	Hispanic	21.86	12.35	203,879
≥20 days	Other	14.75	8.02	123,579

Note. This table tests sensitivity to alternative chronic absence thresholds. Each panel conditions on students below the specified threshold in the pre-pandemic period (2014–2018) and reports the percentage who became chronically absent (≥threshold) or severely absent (≥30 days) in the post-pandemic period (2020–2023). The standard definition (≥18 days, approximately 10% of a 180-day year) is shown alongside more conservative (≥15 days) and liberal (≥20 days) alternatives. Absences are standardized to a 180-day school year.

Appendix Table A5. Transitions Into Chronic and Severe Absence by School Level

School Level / Pre-Period Category	% Newly Chronically Absent	% Newly Severely Absent	N (students)
Panel 1. Elementary (Grades 1-5)			
<6 days	5.21	1.12	279,378
6-<12 days	15.80	3.91	251,697
12-<18 days	35.93	11.51	91,191
Panel 2. Middle (Grades 6-8)			
<6 days	11.32	3.51	199,489
6-<12 days	31.67	12.51	137,246
12-<18 days	54.86	28.05	45,830
Panel 3. High (Grades 9-12)			
<6 days	16.32	7.91	125,396
6-<12 days	36.35	21.09	81,664
12-<18 days	53.88	38.23	30,229

Note. This table shows the percentage of students who newly entered chronic or severe absence in the post-pandemic period (2020–21 through 2023–24), by school level and pre-pandemic attendance profile. School level is determined by students' modal (most common) grade during the pre-pandemic period (2014-2018), capturing their developmental stage when pre-pandemic attendance patterns were established. Each panel reports outcomes for students whose typical pre-period absence category was <6 days, 6–<12 days, or 12–<18 days. Chronic absence is defined as a typical post-period absence category of 18–<30 or ≥30 standardized absence days; severe absence is defined as ≥30 days. Absence categories are based on days absent standardized to a 180-day school year.