



Address Chronic Absenteeism With Wayfinder

Join educators nationwide using Wayfinder to take on chronic absenteeism at its source with resources to ensure well-being, build belonging, and guide students to develop purpose.



The Problem Is Pervasive + Costly

The US Department of Education declared chronic absenteeism a [national crisis](#) in 2016, and the situation has only grown worse. Some states and school districts have successfully improved attendance rates using a number of creative strategies. However, chronic absenteeism remains a widespread, [major contributor to declines in academic proficiency](#).

Read Case Studies: Chronic Absenteeism Today

26%

of students

[were chronically absent](#) in the 2022–2023 school year. This is down from an [estimated 33% the previous year](#) but still well above the ~15% recorded pre-pandemic.

63%

of superintendents

surveyed by *District Administration* reported [increased chronic absenteeism or no improvement in 2023–2024](#) compared to the prior school year.

Absences Cost Districts Millions

Attendance-based funding makes chronic absenteeism an issue for the entire school community

At an approximate cost of \$25–50 per student, per day, absences add up to [significant funding losses](#) to schools every year

The average Wayfinder school pays only

\$7500/year

Wayfinder partners who successfully reduce chronic absenteeism see a huge return on their investment by way of restored funding

Addressing Root Causes of Chronic Absenteeism: Mental Health, Belonging + Purpose

[Family engagement is critical](#) for addressing attendance issues in younger grades. Once students reach high school and have much more control over their attendance, they need guidance to build healthy habits. A program evaluation by Stanford University education researcher Dr. Heather Malin shows that [successful Wayfinder implementation can produce positive outcomes that can impact several root causes of absenteeism](#): mental + behavioral health, belonging, and purpose.

The New York Times recently asked for high school students' thoughts on the reasons behind the startling rates of absenteeism. Their responses reaffirm research-backed causes and provide insight for addressing the issue.

The New York Times

What Students Are Saying About Why School Absences Have 'Exploded'

Chronic absenteeism has increased in American schools since the Covid-19 pandemic. We asked teenagers what they make of the trend.

"Nowadays, I'm more lenient on myself when it comes to taking a mental health day because the process can be overwhelming. School is very important, so of course I try to always come in, but sometimes it can be hard."

—Anisha, NJ

"The pandemic had heightened anxiety levels in students, specifically social anxiety, making them less likely to show up."

—Emma, OR

Mental Health + Social Behaviors

Recent years have seen a [20% rise in anxiety disorders](#) and a [37% rise in clinical depression](#) diagnoses among children and adolescents.

Address Mental Health Needs with Wayfinder Collections

Students who completed Wayfinder saw a

104%

improvement in social awareness and positive social behaviors

[Download a Free Sample Activity](#)

Wayfinder's Mental Health + Well-Being Collections feature activities and lessons that support students to identify their feelings, access necessary resources, and self-regulate so that they can make informed and responsible choices. Topics covered include:

- Stress + anxiety
- Self-care + wellness
- Boundaries + consent
- Grief + trauma
- And more!

Belonging

A [positive school climate](#)—one promoting safety and strong relationships—can improve attendance, and the inverse is also true.

Improve Belonging + Build Positive School Culture

58%

of students who completed Wayfinder experienced stronger measures of Belonging

[Download a Free Sample Activity](#)

“[The] online learning time period got a lot of people into the routine of not having a routine.”

—Madison, PA

Disengagement + Purposelessness

[Low school involvement](#), stemming from a lack of purpose, interest, or motivation, is associated with absenteeism and long-term negative impacts.

Guide Students to Live Purposefully

Students who completed Wayfinder saw a

1.5x

Increase in key measures of purpose

[Download a Free Sample Activity](#)

“I think it’s important to attend school as we did before COVID—because as well as learning the curriculum, it is crucial to socialize with your friends and classmates, which is good for your mental health.”

—Alexandre, London, UK

Wayfinder offers resources on belonging and community-building, including multiple years of belonging-focused Core Curriculum and hundreds of community-building activities. These help develop multiple facts of belonging:

- Promoting inclusion
- Creating connection
- Finding support
- Navigating friendships
- And more!

“With senior year approaching, everything’s purpose is college, and the fact that colleges aren’t able to see how many absences a student has when they apply does play a role in the increasing number of absences.”

—Ava, FL

Wayfinder was founded with a mission to help students find meaning and purpose in their education. Our purpose-focused high school curriculum, standalone Purposeful Leadership course, and multiple Collections on purpose help students identify their interests and values and make thoughtful daily choices aligned with their personal goals. Topics include:

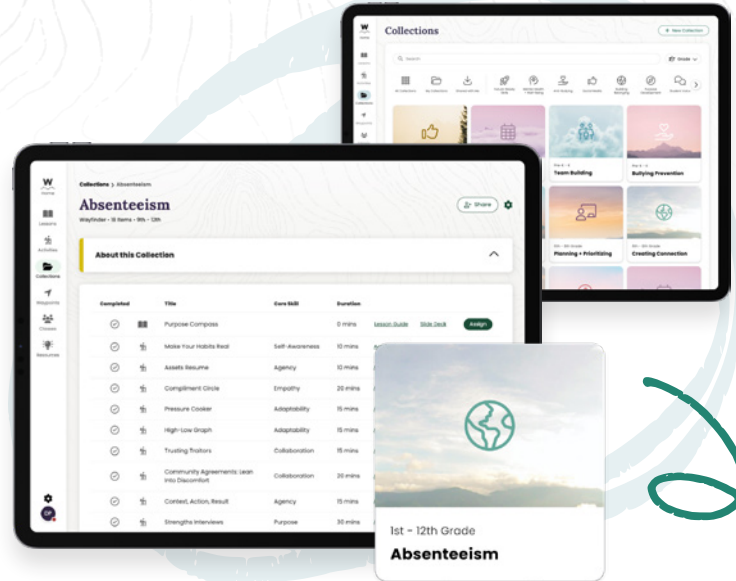
- Goal setting
- Confident decision making
- Understanding strengths
- Paths to purpose
- And more!

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NEW

Wayfinder's Absenteeism Collection

Use Wayfinder's Absenteeism Collection to help improve attendance in your school or district. This Collection offers Wayfinder partners our best lessons and activities for building belonging + community on campus, making purpose-driven choices, and following through on goals. With the Absenteeism Collection, you can help students develop positive behaviors that support responsible decision making and good attendance.



Already a Wayfinder partner? 

Download a Free Sample Lesson

Use the Collection now!



Further Reading + Resources

- [What Students Are Saying About Why School Absences Have 'Exploded'](#) (*The New York Times*)
- [What superintendents agree is the greatest barrier to progress in 2024](#) (*District Administration*)
- [The Hidden Impact of Absenteeism: Enrollment and School Funding](#) (PowerSchool)
- [School Pulse Panel: Responses to the pandemic and efforts toward recovery](#) (National Center for Education Statistics)
- [The Urgent Need to Avoid Punitive Responses to Poor Attendance](#) (Attendance Works)

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