

HAVERHILL PROMISE

The Campaign for
Grade Level Reading

Haverhill Promise
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Haverhill Promise Sparks Excitement in Support of Attendance Awareness Campaign

Haverhill Promise and its partners pledge to engage community, families, and students in concerted effort to reduce chronic absenteeism

HAVERHILL, MA – Haverhill Promise has joined an effort to celebrate the 11th annual national [Attendance Awareness Campaign](#) in September, pledging with community partners to focus on reducing chronic absenteeism in Haverhill's schools.

Haverhill Promise has partnered with elected officials (see list below), the Haverhill Public Schools, and others to spread the word about Attendance Awareness Month. The campaign's theme this year is "Showing Up Together!"

Haverhill Public Schools recognizes that good attendance is essential to academic success, and far too many students are at risk academically because they are chronically absent. Chronic absence is described as missing 10 percent of the school year—or 18 days— for any reason.

Our country faces a school attendance crisis. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 8 million students were chronically absent. Data from states indicates that it has doubled, affecting nearly 16 million students nationwide by the end of the 2021–22 school year.

Starting as early as kindergarten or even preschool, chronic absence predicts lower 3rd grade reading scores. Research shows that by middle school, it's a warning sign that students will fail key classes and drop out of high school.

Chronic absence disproportionately affects children from low-income families and communities of color, creating attendance gaps that exacerbate achievement gaps in local schools. This is not just a matter of truancy. Many children, especially in the early grades, miss too much school because of chronic health problems, unreliable transportation or housing moves—barriers that city agencies and community partners can help families address.

“School attendance is not just an investment in a child’s future. It’s an investment in our community’s future. Improving student attendance affects everyone, not just individuals with school-age children,” Dr. Jessica Kallin, Executive Director of Haverhill Promise, said. “Reading proficiency is the cornerstone of education, and regular attendance ensures that students develop the necessary skills to become proficient readers. Let's advocate for school attendance community-wide and give all students the gift of a brighter future.”

“Every school day counts and attendance matters significantly in student learning. While missing two school days per month may seem insignificant, the days quickly add up to twenty missed days in a year,” Dr. Margaret Marotta, Superintendent of Schools, said. “Chronic absenteeism affects a student's academic progress and personal development. We believe every child deserves the best chance at success, and regularly attending school is a crucial part of that journey. Enhancing our community-wide effort to support and educate families about the importance of consistent attendance provides all students with the best opportunities for success.”

Hedy Chang, Executive Director of Attendance Works, a national nonprofit initiative dedicated to improving school attendance, said “Research shows that students who miss two to four days in the first month of school are more likely to become chronically absent during the school year. By paying attention to absences early in the school year and early in a child’s academic career, we can turn around attendance and achievement.”

For the Attendance Awareness Campaign, we are asking school leaders, community advocates, parents, and students to act upon these critical first steps to help stem chronic absenteeism:

- Build a habit and a culture of regular attendance
- Identify and address barriers to getting children to school
- Get involved and support local efforts to address chronic absenteeism

People in Support

Mayor James J. Fiorentini,
City of Haverhill

Dr. Jessica Kallin, Executive Director,
Haverhill Promise

Barry Finegold, State Senator,
2nd Essex and Middlesex District

Pavel M. Payano, State Senator,
1st Essex District

Ryan M. Hamilton, State Representative,
15th Essex District

Andy X. Vargas, State Representative,
3rd Essex District

Dr. Margaret Marotta, Superintendent,
Haverhill Public Schools

Timothy J. Jordan, Council President,
Haverhill City Council

Melinda Barrett,
Haverhill City Council

Michael McGonagle,
Haverhill City Council

John A. Michitson,
Haverhill City Council

Thomas J. Sullivan, Esq.,
Haverhill City Council

Joseph Bevilacqua,
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Melissa Lewandoski,
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Shaun Toohey,
Haverhill City Council

Catherine Rogers,
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Gail Sullivan,
Haverhill School Committee

Atty. Rich Rosa,
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Paul A. Magliocchetti, Esq.,
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Scott Wood,
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