



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Truancy Data and Outcomes

2024

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28.A.225.151

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As required under statute [RCW 28A.225.151](#), this report provides a summary of truancy data reported to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). The report highlights data and trends from the 2023–24 school year.

Attendance is a critical focus of OSPI's state education efforts; chronic absenteeism is included in Washington's ESSA plan as one of the School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) measures. Research shows that when students miss 10% or more of their school days for any reason, they are less likely to read at grade level and to graduate from high school.

The number of students who were truant (those that met thresholds of absences that would require a truancy petition to be filed) increased in the last year to 9.6% of the student population, up from 8.7% in the previous year. The percentage of those students that had petitions filed with the local juvenile court was only 5.4%, a decrease from the previous year.

Unaccompanied youth, students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care experience the highest rates of truancy (meeting the truancy thresholds) at 40%, 27% and 21% respectively. The data also shows that students of color are more likely to be truant than their peers.

5.4% of all students who met the definition of truant had a petition filed. American Indian/Alaskan Native students, unaccompanied youth and youth in foster care had the highest rate of petitions filed at 10%, 10% and 9% respectively. Asian students had the lowest at 2%. It's evident that these student groups are disproportionately experiencing the court process through a truancy petition compared to their peers.

This report provides a summary of OSPI's programmatic efforts to support schools, districts, communities, youth and families to increase attendance. Additionally, the report highlights known gaps and opportunities for addressing them.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of data and trends reported to OSPI on student unexcused absences and subsequent truancy actions taken by school districts, as reported to CEDARS throughout the 2023–24 school year. It also summarizes OSPI’s programmatic efforts to support schools, districts, and communities in aiding youth and families to increase attendance and, hence, access to education. Finally, this report highlights known gaps and opportunities for addressing them. This report is required under statute RCW 28A.225.151 and will address the truancy portion of the Becca Bill, not the other status offense petitions, including At-Risk Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS).

BACKGROUND

Over twenty years ago, the Washington State Legislature enacted the Becca Bill in response to the tragic death of Becca Hedman. Becca’s chronic truancy and running away from home contributed to her murder at the age of 12. One intent of the law was to unite schools, courts, communities, and families to overcome the barriers that prevent school attendance. Over the last several years, the pandemic and policy changes have dramatically shifted the landscape of student absences and the education system’s response to those absences.

It is important to remember that the impetus for our truancy laws was the safety of youth in our state. Much can be said about whether those laws were effective or harmful, but what remains true is that our schools are a core institution in our society. They can complement and supplement the resources of a student’s family and community, including supporting children’s safety both in and out of school. Absences are a research-based early warning indicator, or screener, for students that may need more support or intervention.

OSPI Attendance Guiding Principles

OSPI has developed the following guiding principles which guide its work on Attendance:

- Attendance and engagement are foundational to student learning.
- Absences tell us when a student has not accessed or had the opportunity to engage in instruction, and therefore all absences matter.
- Absences are a critical early warning indicator that:
 - can reflect inequities that are caused by or perpetuated by our systems or
 - when a student and family might need more support.
- We have an opportunity to get curious about why students aren’t attending.
- Students and families are our best partners to understand the barriers to attendance.
- The purpose of attendance and truancy interventions are to reduce barriers to attendance and support students to engage; not to punish.

- Schools and districts have lots of opportunities for prevention and intervention before involving the Court.

Interventions Required Before and After Truancy Petition

Policy changes starting in 2016 shifted practice from a primarily punitive model to a support-driven model. These interventions are essential for understanding the context of truancy today. On July 1, 2021, Washington state eliminated the use of the valid court order (VCO) for all students with status offenses, including students that are truant. The VCO allowed juvenile court judges to place a student who is truant in juvenile detention for truancy. This policy change ([SB 5290](#)) is indicative of the broader shift surrounding the state’s laws and approach toward truancy.

Schools are required to send a letter to parents¹ at the beginning of the school year, highlighting the importance of attendance, the impacts of not attending (including excused and unexcused), the support available to parents to assist with attendance concerns, and the role and responsibility of the school².

- Elementary schools are to hold a parent conference for students who have accumulated five or more excused absences³.
- Schools are to hold a parent conference for students after their third unexcused absence.
- Schools are to take data-informed steps between the second and seventh unexcused absences. This includes administering a screener, such as the Washington Assessment of Risks and Needs (WARNS),⁴ and providing best practice interventions to support better attendance. If the student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, reconvening of the IEP or 504 team is required⁵.
- A truancy petition shall be filed after seven unexcused absences in a month or after fifteen unexcused absences in a school year.

Attendance Guidance

OSPI provides summaries of the legally required attendance & truancy steps:

- [Elementary](#)
- [Secondary](#)

All OSPI attendance Guidance can be found here: Attendance [Policies, Guidance, and Data Reporting](#)

¹ [RCW 28A.225.010\(2\)](#) defines “parent” as: a parent, guardian, or person having legal custody of a child

² [RCW 28A.225.005](#)

³ [RCW 28A.225.018](#)

⁴ [RCW 28A.225.020 \(1\)\(c\)\(ii\)](#)

⁵ [RCW 28A.225.020 \(1\)\(c\)\(ii\)](#)

- After a school district files a petition with the juvenile court, the petition must be stayed (placed on hold while the district and court continue interventions), and the student shall be referred to a Community Engagement Board (CEB). The intent of the CEB is to understand the root causes of the absences and leverage community resources and relationships to provide wrap around support to the student and family, helping them to address barriers and increase their engagement and attendance.

OSPI has compiled these steps into these reference documents for [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) Schools. Additional guidance that addresses specific scenarios or related questions to these requirements can be found in [OSPI's Attendance & Truancy FAQ](#).

STUDENT-LEVEL DATA COLLECTION

OSPI began collecting student-level absence data through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) for both excused and unexcused absences in the 2012–13 school year. Prior to that, districts reported a total number at the end of the year. Districts now report when a student is absent for a full day (50% or more of the school day) or a partial day (anything less than 50% of the school day), and whether it was excused or unexcused. In the 2018–19 school year, OSPI began collecting additional student-level data on truancy actions, as outlined in [RCW.28A.225.151](#).

Definitions Impacting Data Collection

The Washington state compulsory attendance statute ([RCW 28A.225](#)), OSPI administrative rule ([Chapter 392-401 WAC](#)) and [OSPI CEDARS Manual and Guidance](#) all contribute to shaping the absence data reported to OSPI.

Definition of Absence

The definition of absence can be found in [Chapter 392-401 WAC](#).

Definition of absence from in-person instruction.

A student is absent from in-person instruction when the student is:

- (1) Not physically present on school grounds; and
- (2) Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
 - (a) Instruction; or
 - (b) Any instruction-related activity; or
 - (c) Any other district or school approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district sponsored sports.

Definition of absence from synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

- (1) A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting/class.
- (2) A student is absent from asynchronous instruction when there is no evidence that the student accessed the planned asynchronous activity.

Excused Absences

[WAC 392-401-020](#), revised in 2021, outlines the types of absences that must be excused. In addition, school districts may define additional reasons that absences may be excused in their local board policy.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are defined in Washington state statute as well as in district board policy. [RCW 28A.225.020\(2\)](#) defines an unexcused absence as when a child:

- Has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day or has failed to comply with a more restrictive school district policy; and
- Has failed to meet the school district’s policy for excused absences; or
- Has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirements as described by the superintendent of public instruction.

School district policies will include greater detail and potentially have additional categories of what is considered excused, as well as policies and procedures that address excessive excused absences.

Truancy

In this report, truancy refers to a student who has accumulated seven or more unexcused absences in a month or fifteen or more excused absences in a year. This is the threshold that requires school districts to file a truancy petition. As these thresholds have shifted over the past several years, the table below lists the legal thresholds for being considered truant and having a petition filed by school year.

Table 1: Unexcused Absence thresholds for Filing a Truancy Petition by Year

School year	Thresholds for Filing a Truancy Petition
2018–19	5+ or 7+ or more unexcused in a month; 10 or more in a school year
2019–20	5+ or 7+ or more unexcused in a month; 10 or more in a school year
2020–21	Beginning of school year through April 26, 2021: 5+ or 7+ or more unexcused in a month; 10 or more in a school year April 26, 2021, through end of SY 2021: 7 or more unexcused in a month; 15 or more in a school year
2021–Current	7 or more unexcused in a month; 15 or more in a school year

Full-Day Absence

A full-day absence, as defined in the OSPI CEDARS Manual - File N, is when a student misses 50% or more of the school day. The absence data in this report includes only full-day absences, as reported to CEDARS.

Truancy Actions as Reported to CEDARS

With the legislative changes to truancy passed in 2016, OSPI was required to begin collecting from school districts in CEDARS when students were assigned or experienced key points in the truancy process. These are collectively referred to in this report as Truancy Actions. These are in addition to the previously collected filing of a truancy petition. Reporting guidance can be found in the [CEDARS Appendix F-Students Attributes & Programs 2023–24](#). They are:

Truancy petition

When a student has reached the unexcused absence thresholds in [RCW 28A.225.030](#) (seven unexcused absences in a month or fifteen unexcused absences in a school year), the school district has attempted the [legally required interventions](#) and the absences have not improved, the district must file a truancy petition with the local juvenile court and the petitions must be stayed.

Referral to a community engagement board

The statute specifically states “referral,” and this element collects the number of students that were **referred** to a CEB, regardless of if they attend or not.

Other coordinated means of intervention

As detailed in [RCW 28A.225.026](#), districts with fewer than 300 students must provide access to a CEB or through other coordinated means of intervention aimed at identifying barriers to school attendance, connecting students and their families with community services, etc.; and may do this cooperatively with other school districts and their educational service districts.

A hearing in juvenile court

This element identifies if a student received a hearing in juvenile court.

Other less restrictive disposition

This is reported when assigned as an alternative to the student being placed in juvenile detention when the student is found to be in contempt of a court order (e.g., change of placement, home school, alternative learning experience, residential treatment, etc.).

Detention for failure to comply with a court order

Each instance of the imposition of detention for failure to comply with a court order under [RCW 28A.225.090](#) is to be reported.

Referral to juvenile court

Identifies students with unexcused absences that have been referred to juvenile court before or without filing a truancy petition. This action is authorized under [SB 5290](#) (2021).

Data Caveats

Data Quality

District submission of accurate and complete absence and truancy action data is a work in progress. We know through data analysis that not all districts submit truancy action data. OSPI's Attendance team is working on improving our communication to districts through training, reminders, and reinforcement of the importance of accurately reporting truancy filing to increase the data quality we receive.

What Data Are We Missing?

Truancy is an early warning indicator of the likelihood of a student's success in school and in their community. We are still focusing on answering the questions of who is missing from our education system, and therefore missing out on their right to an education. The following data are critical to our understanding and identification of who is missing their educational opportunities, and why.

Students Withdrawn for Non-Attendance

One of the most critical pieces of data to complete the picture of "who is missing from our education system?" is information on students who are withdrawn from their school district.

Previously, it was common practice for school districts to involuntarily withdraw students for non-attendance without confirmation that students are enrolled in an approved educational program to comply with apportionment rules or CEDARS reporting. These rules dictate that school districts may not claim funding for students who have been absent for 20 consecutive days prior to count day. OSPI has clarified and provided the following guidance to districts:

"The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) does not require districts to withdraw students for either apportionment purposes or CEDARS reporting."

OSPI strongly encourages districts to follow the steps in the truancy intervention process before withdrawing a student from enrollment ([State Requirements that Impact Student Enrollment and Withdrawal Guidance](#)). Anecdotally, we hear that many districts have changed their practice in the last couple of years and are reducing the instances when they withdraw students for absences.

The data below will show which students accumulated unexcused absences while enrolled in school, however, it does not indicate how many and which students are no longer enrolled in the K-12 education system or are not engaged in any educational program.

Chronic Absence & Severe Chronic Absence

Over the last decade, a growing research base⁶ demonstrates that all absences, including excused and unexcused absences (i.e., truancy), significantly impact students' educational outcomes. The research shows that missing 10 percent of the school year, or just two days a month, can greatly impact students' chances of reading at grade level by third grade⁷ and significantly reduce the likelihood of graduating from high school⁸. OSPI includes chronic absence, reported as its inverse, Regular Attendance, on the OSPI Report card and is in our state's accountability framework. Regular attendance is typically released annually in January of the following school year along with other School Quality and Student Success (SQSS) measures (9th Grade on Track and Dual Credit Completion).

Therefore, to answer the question 'who is missing from our education system?', we should also look at regular attendance, which includes excused absences, in addition to students who are withdrawn or no longer enrolled, and truancy. With 30% of Washington students experiencing chronic absence in 2022–23, schools and districts are now facing a Tier 1 attendance problem. Increasing messaging to families regarding the importance of attendance, and clear concise messaging of attendance policies and procedures are key. To better understand student absences, we would benefit from looking at multiple thresholds including students missing 20% and 30%.

Washington's absence rates are in line with the national trend. Prior to the pandemic approximately 15% of students in public schools were chronically absent. In 2022, chronic absence rates nearly doubled nationwide and have only decreased by an estimated 2% in the 2022–23 school year. Washington state has signed on with 14 other states with the goal to cut chronic absenteeism in schools by 50% in 5 years⁹.

Contributing Factors or Reasons for Absences

OSPI does not collect any information about why students are absent. Absences are a critical early warning indicator, however, without further exploration, they tell us little about what is causing them. The following data must be interpreted with that lens in mind.

UPDATE STATUS

In 2024, overall truancy rates increased from 8.7% in 2022–23 to 9.6% in 2023–24 an increase of .9 percentage points, this impacted 110,494 students and was an increase from 99,951 students in the previous school year. Given what we know about the rise of chronic absence rates in Washington, higher truancy rates also make sense, as unexcused absences are included in chronic absence (which captures both excused and unexcused). Table 2 includes data from [2018–19](#), [2021–22](#), [2022–23](#), and 2023–24. The percentage of students that were truant (met the thresholds for truancy) was at its highest in 2023–24 compared to the other years.

⁶ Compilation of Research, Attendance Works <https://www.attendanceworks.org/research/>

⁷ [Attendance in the Early Grades: Why it Matters for Reading](#)

⁸ [Research Brief: Chronic Absenteeism](#)

⁹ [The Hill, 50 states one goal: Cut chronic absenteeism in schools by 50 percent in 5 years](#)

Table 2: K–12 Statewide Truancy Totals

	2018–19 (5+ or 10+)	2021–22 (7+ or 15+)	2022–23 (7+ or 15+)	2023–24 (7+ or 15+)
Enrolled at Any Point During the School Year	1,058,200	1,144,079	1,145,539	1,148,636
Number of Unexcused Absences	3,174,111	4,736,405	4,826,461	5,429,810
Number of Students with 5+ or 7+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	65,107	85,564	82,359	88,061
Percentage of Students with 5+ or 7+ Unexcused Absences within 30 Days	6.2%	7.5%	7.2%	7.7%
Number of Students with 10+ or 15+ Unexcused Absences in a School Year	77,104	87,419	87,653	97,910
Percentage of Students with 10+ or 15+ Unexcused Absences in a School Year	7.3%	7.6%	7.7%	8.5%
Total Number of Students Who Met Truancy Thresholds (5+ or 7+ in a month or 10+ or 15+ in the year)	85,769	101,469	99,951	110,494
Percentage of Students Who Met Truancy Thresholds (5+ or 7+ in a month or 10+ or 15+ in the year)	8.1%	8.9%	8.7%	9.6%

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Table 3 below shows the number of students with a truancy petition and the percentage of students that met the truancy thresholds who have a petition filed on them over several years. Prior to the pandemic, this percentage ranged between 11–12% (See [2019 Truancy Legislative Report](#)).

The number of petitions increased from 5,702 (2022–23) to 5,997 (2023–24). However, the percentage of students who met the truancy thresholds that also had a petition filed decreased in 2023–24 from the previous year.

Table 3: Trends in Truancy Petitions

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Number of Students with a Truancy Petition	9,562	4,054	5,702	5,997
Percentage of Students that Met Truancy Thresholds that had a Petition Filed	11.1%	4.0%	5.7%	5.4%

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

What could explain these low rates of filing petitions?

The low percentages of truancy petitions filed suggest that school districts remain committed to addressing student absences without involving the court. Districts are focusing on Tier 1 interventions which support increased attendance for all students by establishing a return to normal school attendance. Some Tier 1 attendance strategies include attendance campaigns, proactive nudge letters, and family engagement strategies.

Due to budget constraints, many schools have reduced or eliminated district truancy liaison positions leading to errors in reporting. Staff may not be aware of the legal reporting requirements when providing interventions for truancy. Staff turnover, and lack of capacity to support the number of students who need additional support, and intensive interventions remain barriers to filing petitions. Schools may also withdraw students with too many consecutive absences before filing a petition, believing they do not have the standing, capacity, or directive to file a petition because the student is no longer enrolled. OSPI continues to work with Apportionment and CEDARS to offer guidance regarding withdrawing students. Local court jurisdictions approach this differently, adding to the complexity when drawing conclusions.

Students who qualify but do not have a petition filed may be accessing support from schools and other community programs; however, OSPI does not collect that data.

Table 4: Truancy Actions Once Truancy Petition is Filed by Court

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Number of Students with a Truancy Petition	9,562	4,054	5,792	5,997
Number of Students who were Referred to a Community Engagement Board	5,077	1,842	4,012	3,320
Number of Students who Received Coordinated Means of Intervention	1,395	810	1,949	2,741
Number of Students with a Hearing in Juvenile Court	1,342	447	766	768
Number of Students Ordered a Less Restrictive Disposition	472	86	96	201
Number of Students who were Detained for Failure to Comply with Court Order	69	1	3	13
Number of Students Referred to Juvenile Court (No Petition)	N/A	142	461	1452

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

The data presented in Table 4 above and Table 5 below show that 55% of students eligible for a Community Engagement Board were referred in the last year, showing a decrease from the previous year by 14%.

This data raises the question: If only 5.43% of students who met the criteria for a truancy petition had one filed, what do we know about the remaining 94.57% of students who met the truancy thresholds but had no petition filed? This report will later address data on the population of students who had a petition filed.

This analysis does not clarify if the students referred to a Community Engagement Board necessarily had a truancy petition filed. However, based on the law and statewide conversations with districts and courts, we know anecdotally that districts largely provide Community Engagement Boards only after a petition is filed.

There has been an increase in data from the year before for both number of students who were detained for failure to comply with court order, and number of students referred to juvenile court

(no petition). We are in contact with school districts to understand if these numbers reflect reality (e.g. are students actually being placed in juvenile detention for truancy despite it being against the law) or are they data anomalies. This will be part of OSPI’s data campaign for increased accuracy in data collection in the next year.

Table 5: Truancy Actions While Under a Truancy Petition by Percentage

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Percent of Students with a Truancy Petition that were Referred to a Community Engagement Board	53%	45%	69%	55%
Percent of Students with a Petition who Received Coordinated Means of Intervention	15%	20%	36%	46%
Percent of Students with a Truancy Petition who had a Hearing in Juvenile Court	14%	11%	13%	13%
Percent of Students Referred to Community Engagement Board who had a Hearing in Juvenile Court	26%	24%	19%	23%
Percent of Students with a Truancy Petition who were Ordered a Less Restrictive Disposition	5%	2%	2%	3%
Percent of Students who had a Hearing in Juvenile Court who were Ordered a Less Restrictive Disposition	35%	19%	13%	26%
Percent of Students with a Truancy Petition who were Detained for Failure to Comply with Court Order	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Percent of Students who had a Hearing in Juvenile Court who were Detained for Failure to Comply with Court Order	5%	<1%	<1%	1.7%

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

EQUITY ANALYSIS: DISAGGREGATION & DISPROPORTIONALITY

OSPI is committed to supporting the work that schools and districts do to make more equitable systems that serve all students. By identifying and examining disproportionality between student groups that experience truancy and the truancy process, this report can support that work.

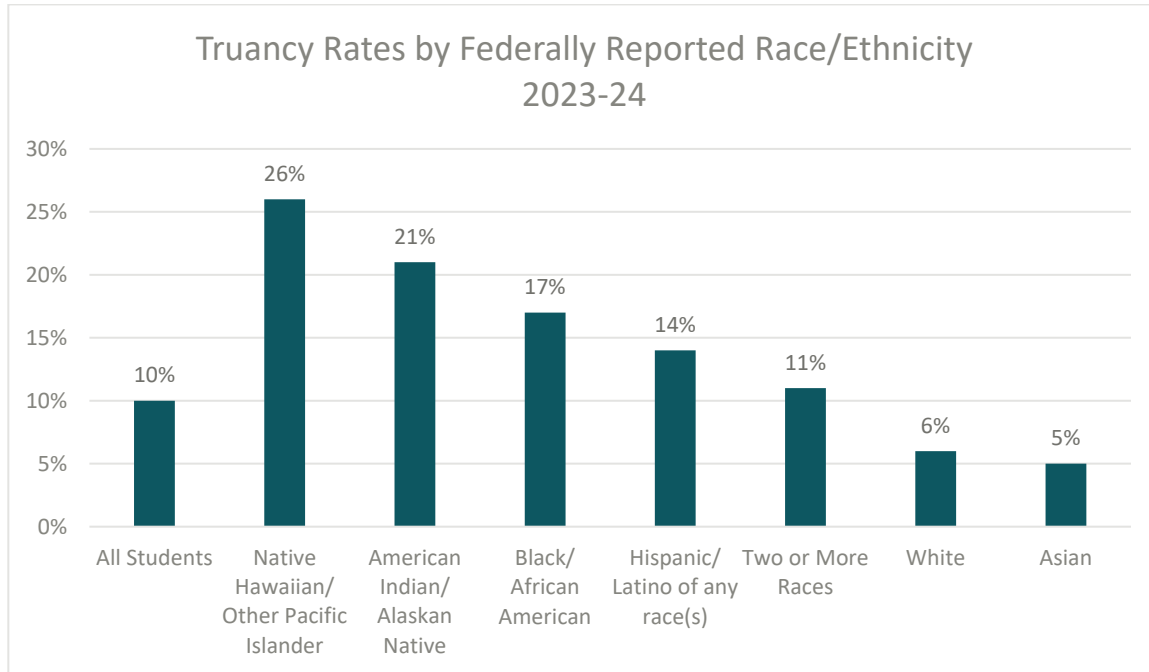
Drawing conclusions from gaps between students around attendance-related issues is complex, particularly at the state level. Gaps may be present in one jurisdiction that are offset in another. While certain gaps are apparent, interpreting the underlying causes and potential solutions is challenging.

The following analyses explore the equity implications of and disproportionality among student groups in key areas of truancy. We focus on these key areas:

- Which student groups had higher truancy rates?
- Which student groups are over-represented among youth who are truant?
- Which student groups have more petitions filed with the Juvenile Court?

Which Student Groups Had Higher Truancy Rates?

Chart 1: Truancy Rates by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity (2023–24)



Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Chart 1 above illustrates the truancy rates among students, categorized by federally reported race/ethnicity for the 2023–24 school year. The chart identifies that 10% of all students met the definition of truancy (7 or more unexcused absences in a month or 15 or more unexcused absences in a year) during the 2023–24 school year. The data includes that Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students have the highest truancy rate at 26% followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native at 21%, Black/African American at 17% and Hispanic/Latino students at 14%.

Table 6: Truancy Rate Trends by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
All Students	8%	9%	9%	10%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	19%	23%	24%	26%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	20%	24%	20%	21%
Black/African American	15%	15%	15%	17%
Hispanic/Latino of Any Race(s)	12%	13%	13%	14%
Two or More Races	9%	10%	10%	11%
White	6%	6%	6%	6%
Asian	4%	4%	4%	5%

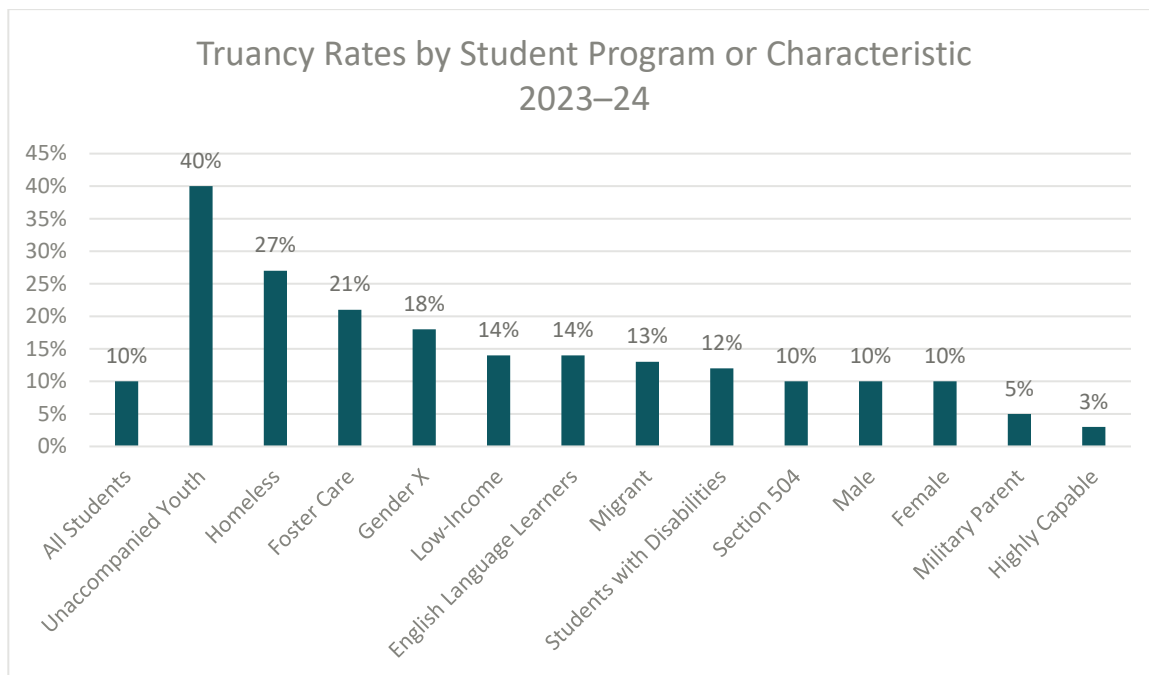
Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

The state average truancy rate increased 1 percentage point from 9% in 2022–23 to 10% in 2023–24 school year for all student groups. Several different race/ethnicity groups experienced an increase in truancy rates in 2023–24 school year, with Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students and Black/African American students experiencing a 2-percentage point increase (24% to 26% and 15% to 17% respectively). Notably, the rate for White students did not change.

Equity Implications

Chronic absenteeism which encompasses truancy can be a key indicator of disparities that school districts may face in engaging, educating and supporting all students. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, Unaccompanied Youth, students who are experiencing homelessness, are more likely to have their absences marked unexcused compared to their White, and Asian peers. This bias can lead to more punitive responses, such as denial of credit for missed work and exclusion from extracurricular activities, which do not effectively address the underlying causes of absenteeism. Punitive measures can exacerbate educational inequities and hinder efforts to support students and families in overcoming barriers to attendance¹⁰.

Chart 2: Truancy Rates by Student Program or Characteristic 2023–24



Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Many student groups continue to experience higher rates of truancy in the 2023–24 school year compared to pre-pandemic percentages. The data indicates that the students in these programs are among our most vulnerable populations, facing ongoing barriers to attendance.

¹⁰ [Disparities in Unexcused Absences Across California Schools](#)

- Unaccompanied Youth: Truancy Rates increased an additional 1%-point increase from 39% in the 2022–23 school year to 40% in the 2024 school year.
- Students who are experiencing homelessness: Truancy Rates increased an additional 1%-point increase from 26% in the 2022–23 school year to 27% in the 2024 school year.
- Gender X Students: Truancy rates rose 5% from previous reporting in the 2021–22 school year to 18% in the 2022–23 school year and have remained the same for the 2023–24 school year.

Table 7: Truancy Rate Trends by Program and Characteristics

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
All Students	8%	9%	9%	10%
Unaccompanied Youth	N/A	38%	39%	40%
Homeless	N/A	26%	26%	27%
Foster Care	N/A	18%	18%	21%
Gender X	N/A	13%	18%	18%
Low-Income	13%	14%	13%	14%
English Language Learners	11%	13%	12%	14%
Migrant	13%	13%	13%	13%
Students with Disabilities	12%	11%	11%	12%
Section 504	8%	9%	9%	10%
Male	N/A	9%	9%	10%
Female	N/A	9%	9%	10%
Military Parent	N/A	5%	5%	5%
Highly Capable	N/A	3%	3%	3%

Source: CEDARS Extracted on 10/15/2024

There has been a 1%-point increase from the previous year in truancy rates from the previous year for the following student groups: All students, unaccompanied youth, students experiencing homelessness, low-income students, students with disabilities, Section 504 students, male students, and female students.

Students in foster care placements have experienced a 3%-point increase in truancy rates. Students identifying as Gender X maintained a truancy rate of 18%, the same as the previous year. Students with a parent in the military (5%) and those in highly capable programs (3%) remained consistent.

Data was not collected for all programs and characteristics in the 2018–19 school year. However, it is evident that most programs and characteristic categories have not returned to pre-pandemic truancy rates. Currently, all programs and characteristic categories except for military and highly capable are experiencing higher truancy rates.

Which Student Groups are Over-Represented Among Youth Who Are Truant?

The following analyses identify which student groups are over-represented as truant given their proportion of the population, highlighting disproportionality. The table compares the proportion of students meeting truancy thresholds to their proportion of the student population.

For instance, in Table 8, which examines race/ethnicity, American Indian/Alaskan Native students make up 1.2% of the student population but account for 2.6% of all truant students. When a student group's proportion of truants exceeds their proportion of the total population, it indicates disproportionality.

The magnitude of disproportionality is calculated by dividing the proportion of truant students by the proportion of the total student population. If the magnitude is greater than 1, the students are over-represented and hence more impacted or overly identified as meeting the truancy thresholds. If the magnitude is less than 1, the student group is under-represented among students who meet the truancy thresholds.

The data shows that Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders have the highest disproportionality, with their proportion of truant students being 2.7 times their proportion of the total population. American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino and students of two or more races are also over-represented among students experiencing truancy. Conversely, White and Asian students are under-represented, with disproportionality magnitudes below 1.

Table 8: Magnitude of Disproportionality: Students that are Truant Compared to Proportion of Student Population by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity (2023–24)

	Proportion of Total Student Population	Proportion of Students that are Truant	Magnitude of Disproportionality
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.2%	2.6%	2.2
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1.5%	4.1%	2.7
Black/African American	4.9%	8.5%	1.7
Hispanic/Latino of Any Race(s)	26.3%	37.4%	1.7
Two or More Races	9.2%	10.6%	1.1
White	47.9%	32.1%	0.7
Asian	8.9%	4.7%	0.5

Source: CEDARS Extracted on 10/15/2024

Table 9 shows the disproportionality in meeting the truancy thresholds based on student program or characteristic. The highest magnitudes of disproportionality are observed among unaccompanied youth (4.2), youth experiencing homelessness (2.8), and students in foster care (2.2). Conversely, students identifying as male or female (1.0), Section 504 (1.0), those with a parent in the military (0.5), and students in highly capable programs (0.3) show no disproportionality or are under-represented among those meeting truancy thresholds.

A key finding is that students who are from low-income households, who make up just over 50% of the total student population, account for 75.9% of the students meeting truancy thresholds, affecting approximately 84,000 students. This trend has persisted over several years, as noted in the [2019](#) and [2022](#) Legislative reports.

Table 9: Magnitude of Disproportionality: Students that are Truant Compared to Proportion of Student Population by Student Program/Characteristic (2023–24)

	Proportion of Total Student Population	Proportion of Students that are Truant	Magnitude of Disproportionality
Unaccompanied Youth	0.6%	2.7%	4.2
Homeless	4.3%	12.1%	2.8
Foster Care	0.3%	0.7%	2.2
Gender X	0.5%	0.8%	1.8
Low-Income	50.5%	75.9%	1.5
Migrant	2.2%	3.0%	1.4
English Language Learners	14.8%	21.0%	1.4
Students with Disabilities	15.8%	19.7%	1.2
Section 504	5.4%	5.3%	1.0
Female	47.9%	47.5%	1.0
Male	51.7%	51.7%	1.0
Military Parent	2.9%	1.5%	0.5
Highly Capable	7.3%	2.4%	0.3

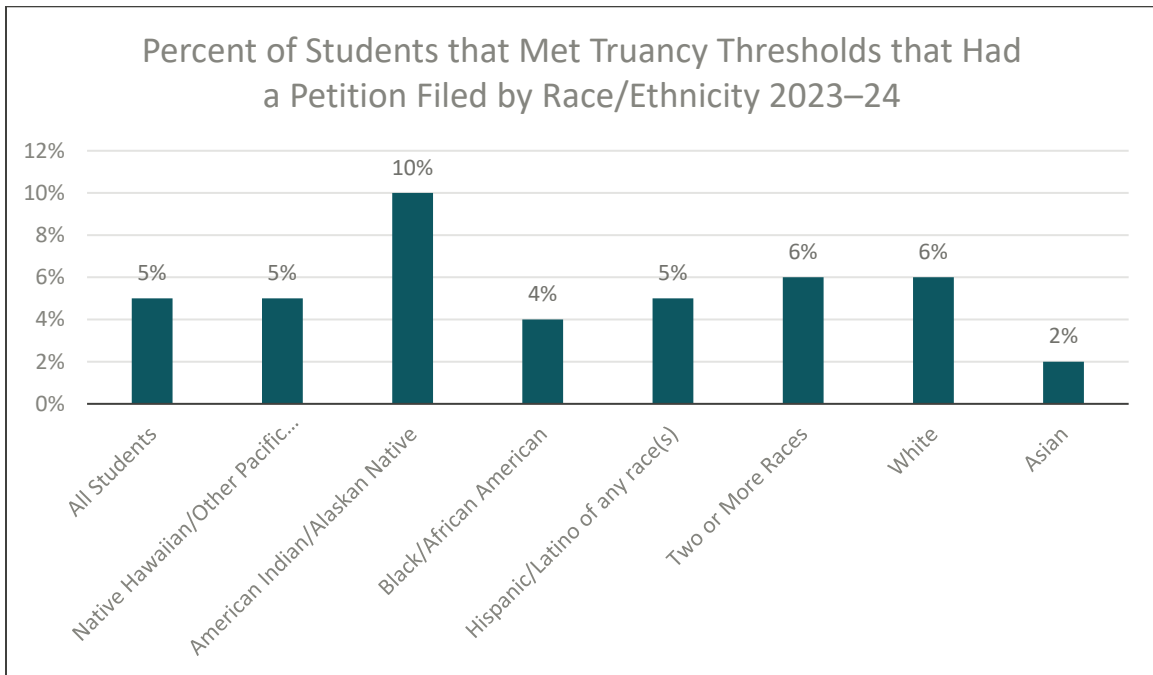
Source: CEDARS Extracted on 10/15/2024

Which Student Groups Have More Petitions Filed with the Juvenile Court?

The analysis below digs deeper into the group of students who had a petition filed (5.4% of all students that met the truancy thresholds, or 5,997 students).

Chart 3 below displays the proportion of students that met the truancy thresholds who also had a petition filed by each race/ethnicity category. The chart shows that 5.4% of all students who met the definition of truant had a petition filed. American Indian/Alaskan Native students had the highest rate of petitions filed at 10%, while Asian students had the lowest at 2%

Chart 3: Percent of Students that Met Truancy Thresholds that Had a Petition Filed by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity 2023–24



Source: CEDARS Extracted on 10/15/2024

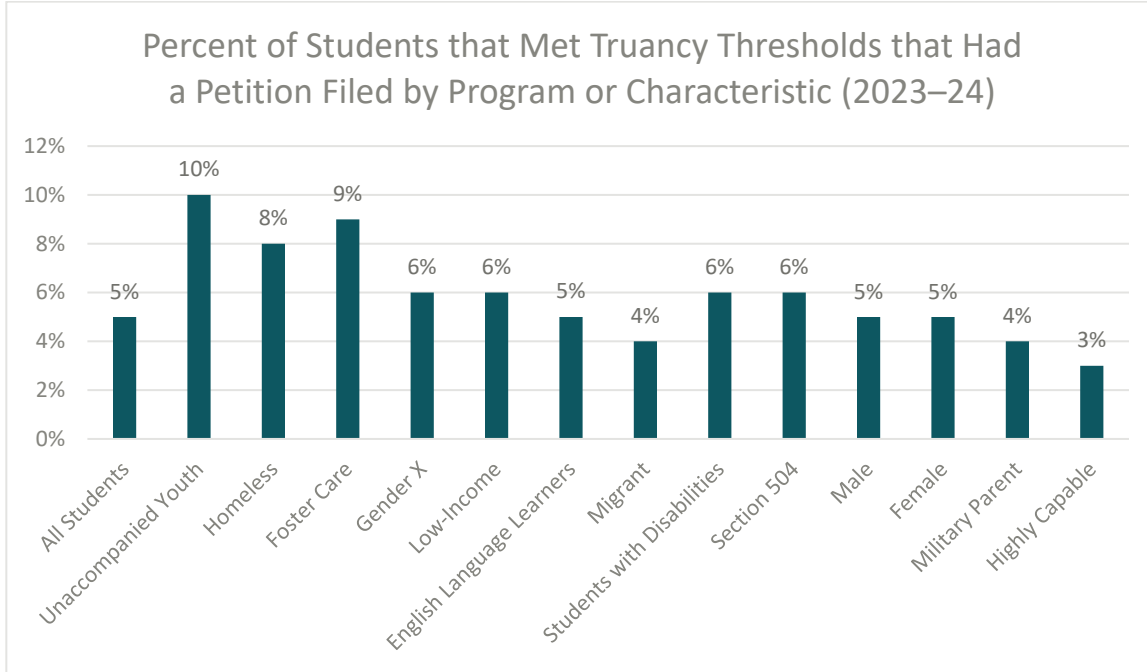
Table 10: Trends in Percentage of Students that Met Truancy Thresholds that had a Petition Filed by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
All Students	11%	4%	6%	5.4%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	12%	5%	7%	5.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	10%	5%	9%	10.0%
Black/African American	7%	4%	4%	3.6%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	10%	4%	5%	4.7%
Two or More Races	14%	4%	7%	6.4%
White	13%	2%	6%	6.4%
Asian	5%	2%	3%	2.4%

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Chart 4 below shows data for students served by special programs or by characteristics. The data shows that unaccompanied youth and youth in foster care have higher rates of petitions filed (10% and 9% respectively) compared to other programs or characteristics, such as students with a military parent, students that are migratory, or students in Highly Capable Program.

Chart 4. Percent of Students that Met Truancy Thresholds that had a Petition Filed by Program or Characteristic 2023–24



Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/25/2024

Table 11 below illustrates the trends in petition filing rates among students meeting truancy thresholds, categorized by program or characteristic. Most student groups either maintained their rates or showed a decline, except for the Highly Capable Program which experienced a 1 percentage point increase from the previous year.

Table 11: Trends in Percentage of Students that Met Truancy Thresholds that had a Petition Filed by Program or Characteristic

	2018–19	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
All Students	11%	4%	6%	5.4%
Unaccompanied Youth	N/A	5%	14%	9.5%
Homeless	N/A	5%	8%	7.7%
Foster Care	N/A	6%	11%	9.0%
Gender X	N/A	5%	14%	6.2%
Low-Income	13%	5%	7%	6.1%
English Language Learners	10%	3%	6%	4.6%
Migrant	8%	2%	4%	4.1%
Students with Disabilities	13%	5%	6%	6.2%
Section 504	13%	4%	6%	6.2%
Male	N/A	4%	6%	5.3%
Female	N/A	4%	6%	5.5%
Military Parent	N/A	2%	4%	4.3%
Highly Capable	N/A	1%	2%	2.7%

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/25/2024

Which Student Groups are Disproportionately Filed On?

The following analyses address which student groups disproportionately have truancy petitions filed with the juvenile court. This is determined by comparing the proportion of students meeting truancy thresholds to the proportion of petitions filed.

Table 12: Magnitude of Disproportionality: Proportion of All Students that Met Truancy Thresholds Compared to Proportion of Petitions Filed by Federally Reported Race/Ethnicity

Student Group	Proportion of all Students that Met Truancy Thresholds	Proportion of Students that had a Petition Filed	Magnitude of Disproportionality
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	4.1%	4.1%	1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	2.6%	4.9%	1.84
Black/African American	8.5%	5.7%	0.67
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	37.4%	32.6%	0.87
Two or More Races	10.6%	12.5%	1.18
White	32.1%	38.1%	1.19
Asian	4.7%	2.1%	0.44

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Table 12 shows that American Indian/Alaskan Native students have the highest disproportionality at 1.84, meaning their proportion of petitions filed is 1.84 times higher than their proportion of

students meeting truancy thresholds. Students that are White have a disproportionality of 1.19 with students who are Two or More Races at 1.18. Whereas students who are Asian experience the lowest disproportionality at 0.44.

Table 13: Magnitude of Disproportionality: Proportion of All Students that Met Truancy Thresholds Compared to Proportion of Petitions Filed by Program or Characteristic

	Proportion of All Students that Met Truancy	Proportion of Students that had a Petition Filed	Magnitude of Disproportionality
Unaccompanied Youth	2.7%	4.7%	1.76
Homeless	12.1%	17.3%	1.42
Foster Care	0.7%	1.2%	1.67
Gender X	0.8%	1.0%	1.15
Low-Income	75.9%	85.6%	1.13
English Language Learners	21.0%	17.7%	0.85
Migrant	3.0%	2.2%	0.75
Students with Disabilities	19.7%	22.5%	1.14
Section 504	5.3%	6.1%	1.13
Male	51.7%	51.0%	0.99
Female	47.5%	48%	1.01
Military Parent	1.5%	1.2%	.80
Highly Capable	2.4%	1.2%	0.49

Source: CEDARS extracted on 10/15/2024

Table 13 above shows that the student groups with the highest disproportionality are students reported as unaccompanied youth (1.76), youth in foster care (1.67), and students who are experiencing homelessness (1.42). English Language Learners, student that are migrant, students who have a parent in the military, and students that are in Highly Capable Program are under-represented in the population of students that had a truancy petition filed.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Washington students are continuing to experience higher absences than prior to the pandemic, including both truancy rates and chronic absence rates. Nationally, chronic absence is a key priority to addressing academic outcomes that have not returned to [pre-pandemic levels](#).

What Conclusions Can We Draw from the Data?

Schools are implementing interventions and prevention efforts for absent students, addressing chronic absenteeism by seeking ways to support students with excused and unexcused absences. Our guidance has focused on Tier 1 efforts, attendance messaging, and fostering a culture of attendance and belonging. School districts are forming attendance teams to review data and implement Tier 1 interventions, resulting in improved attendance. Although we have not yet

returned to pre-pandemic attendance rates, a recent study by the Ad Council¹¹ reveals that families want their students in school for reasons beyond academics; they seek a holistic focus on their students.

We have identified that when there is a concerted effort to foster a culture of attendance and a robust Tier 1 attendance system is in place, the number of students who need Tier 2 and Tier 3 support are fewer. Courts and schools report that when a student needs Tier 3 support, the level of intervention that is needed is more intense and time-consuming. Families are experiencing financial hardship, mental health, and other barriers that necessitate a wraparound team approach.

A strong Tier 1 attendance system supports all students by increasing attendance and identifying those who need one-to-one support. It also prevents the system from being overloaded with students who need clear communication about the importance of attendance for social needs, motivation to engage in school activities, and an understanding of the connection between attendance and student wellbeing.

We continue to recommend a proactive response to student absences at Tier 1, such as:

- Attendance awareness campaigns.
- Proactive, supportive, translated communication about absences (including research-based nudge letters).
- Access to visual data that includes the early warning indicators of attendance, behavior and academics.
- Team approach to data and interventions.
- Community partners.
- Tiered interventions/best practices.

OSPI's Attendance Program has also learned that there is a need for statewide resources to support staff who are transitioning or accepting roles that have a district truancy liaison lens. OSPI is working to offer supports such as templates that can be modified to support school district's needs, spaces to provide peer learning and professional development, as well as information regarding the importance of reporting truancy actions.

¹¹ Ad Council Chronic Student Absenteeism [full report](#) and [executive summary](#)

Learning from Current Projects to Inform System Opportunities & Gaps

OSPI's Attendance Program is currently overseeing two projects that aim to provide insights to OSPI and state leaders about the existing opportunities and gaps within the attendance and truancy systems. Regional Attendance Breakthrough Networks (which evolved from learnings of the [ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project](#)) and the [Re-envisioning Truancy Policy and Practices Project](#). These are unique opportunities to continue to gain insight from grantees, partners, communities, and youth and families with lived experience.

Re-Envisioning Truancy Policy & Practice

OSPI collaborated with American Institutes for Research (AIR), Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), Educational Service District's (ESD's), PSESD Evaluation Team, school districts, court partners, other state agencies, community partners and members, students and their families with lived experience to understand the impact and perspectives on truancy policy and practice.

The findings from this research will inform the Attendance & Truancy workgroup which will report to the Graduation A Team Effort (GATE) Advisory¹² Committee for further review and action recommendations. The workgroup will advise OSPI on possible legislative recommendations and strategies for OSPI and state agencies to better support public schools to reduce truancy and absenteeism.

For more information about the Re-envisioning Truancy Policy & Practice Project, read the Project Overview¹³.

ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project

OSPI invested \$19.3 million of its discretionary ESSER dollars into supporting the following bodies of work:

- Regional supports (through Educational Service Districts) to district and schools to build early warning systems that focused on attendance. This includes building teams for attendance, accessing actionable data, building a continuum of tiered supports, integrating with other initiatives, partnering with community organizations and centering student voice to understand barriers to attendance and engagement.
- Direct outreach and reengagement support for students at-risk of disengaging or who have already disengaged. This includes working with individual students to support them to reengage with school and remain engaged through barrier reduction, wrap around supports and being a safe and supportive adult.

¹² [GATE Partnership Advisory Committee](#)

¹³ [ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project](#)

This project ended June 30, 2024. There were significant improvements in attendance and reengagement in the participating districts. The preliminary evaluation results can be found [here](#). The final evaluation results will be available in December 2024 and will be found on [OSPI's website](#).

Regional Attendance Improvement Networks

Building on the learnings of the ESSER Attendance & Reengagement Project, OSPI is joining in on improving attendance in partnership with three ESDs to run regional networks using Improvement Science. OSPI and the ESD's will use the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the Carnegie Foundation's Improvement Science framework, developing a theory of action and road map for participating schools. This work will support the on the ground implementation and testing of attendance strategies and interventions and serve as learning for the whole state.

Contact

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