

More than Meets the Eye: Educational Research on the Connection Between Attendance and Student Outcomes



Introduction



Macmillan Learning has compiled educational research on the connection between attendance and student outcomes that can help guide student success initiatives.

Attendance as a Formative Indicator of Student Success

In an often complex student success ecosystem, it may seem impossible to identify the levers that most significantly impact student success. However, across institutions, state lines and student populations one indicator of student engagement and success is attendance, both in and outside of the classroom. Attendance does more than facilitate the transfer of content knowledge within a course or activity, it also connects students with their peers, provides noncontent-specific contextual information, and helps to provide access to resources and relationships that can positively impact their knowledge and sense of belonging. Following are key trends identified in recent educational research on the impact of attendance on student outcomes.



Attendance is an early indicator of student engagement. Attendance may be a proxy for whether or not a learner is engaged in learning events and opportunities on campus which could also be a latent effect of student academic motivation.

Credé, M., Roch. S.G., and Kieszczyńska, U.M. (2010). Class attendance in college: A meta-analytic review of the relationship of class attendance with grades and student characteristics. *Review of Educational Research* (80)2, 272–295. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0034654310362998>

Moore, S., Armstrong, C., and Pearson, J. (2008). Lecture absenteeism among students in higher education: A valuable route to understanding student motivation. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* (30)1, 15–24. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249002906_Lecture_absenteeism_among_students_in_higher_education_A_valuable_route_to_understanding_student_motivation

Simpson, O. (2013). Student retention in distance education: Are we failing our students? *Open Learning* (28)2, 105–119. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259384509_Student_retention_in_distance_education_are_we_failing_our_students



Course attendance is a strong predictor of college grades & GPA. When students regularly attend class, they gain access to other, noncontent-specific contextual information, resources and relationships that can positively impact their knowledge and sense of belonging.

Alexander, V., Hicks, R. (2016). Does class attendance predict academic performance in first year psychology tutorials? *International Journal of Psychological Studies* (8)1, 28–32. <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijps/article/view/55746> (open access)

Gump, S.E. (2005). The cost of cutting class: Attendance as a predictor of success. *College Teaching* (53)1, 21–26. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3200/CTCH.53.1.21-26>

Attendance as a Formative Indicator of Student Success



Attendance can be a highly effective tool in helping to close the achievement gap. The relationship between attendance and academic performance is strongest for nontraditional and/or underperforming students.

Harackiewicz, J.M., Canning, E.A., Tibbetts, Y., Priniski, S.J. and Hyde, J.S. (2015). Closing achievement gaps with a utility-value intervention: Disentangling race and social class. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1–21. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4853302/> (open access)



Class attendance may have a stronger effect on test scores than tutorial attendance, particularly for underperforming or less academically-prepared students.

Kwak, D.W., Sherwood, C. and Tang, K.K. (2018). Class attendance and learning outcomes. *Empirical Economist*, 1434–7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325388969_Class_attendance_and_learning_outcome



Mandatory attendance policies can provide guidance, set expectations, and support students in developing self-regulated learning strategies. By reinforcing and encouraging behaviors that support learning goals, students can better align their behavior with their self-identified goals for college success.

Gerald, J. and Brady, B. (2019). Time to make your mandatory attendance policy optional? *Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Time-to-Make-Your/245455> (open access)

Despite intuition, experiences and educational research supporting the importance of tracking and encouraging attendance, many institutions of higher education opt to forgo consistent attendance tracking because methods have been too laborious or expensive. However, mobile technologies that inform easy-to-understand analytics (with intervention recommendations) like Cirque by Macmillan Learning can alleviate each of these barriers.

For information on free and low-cost attendance and student success insights offered by Macmillan Learning visit cirque.macmillanlearning.com.

