

Attendance Bright Spots

Learning from schools reducing chronic absenteeism



*State Board of Education
September 2026*

Dr. Shaun Kellogg, *Office of Research & Promising Practices*
Principal Taimak Willis, *Northwest Elementary, Pitt County*
Principal Elenia Riddick, *Hertford County Middle School*
Principal Torrey Hines, *Washington County High School*

“

**When students are not here,
it is difficult to achieve academic growth...**
Missing roughly a month of school is a long time.
Instruction builds from one foundation to the next.
If students miss the first foundation, they miss
the next one and the one after that, and then
we are constantly playing catch-up.

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Principal Opie Stinson
Bearfield Primary School, Hertford County Schools



Chronic Absenteeism in North Carolina



10%+
of enrolled school days missed
Defines chronic absenteeism



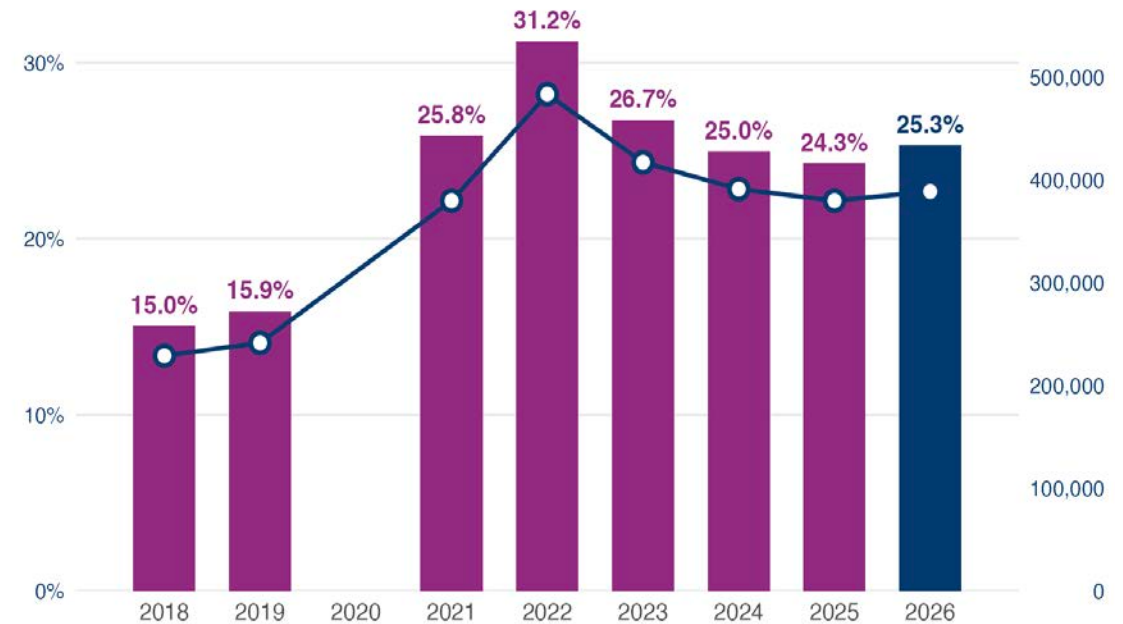
≈ 400,000
students chronically absent
Approximately 1 in 4 students



≈ 30 days
missed on average
among chronically absent students

Statewide Chronic Absenteeism Rate Over Time

Percentage of students missing 10% or more of enrolled school days



* 2025–26 data are preliminary.



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

How We're Responding

Connecting research and practice to reduce chronic absenteeism 50% by 2030.



Research & Resources

Evidence reviews, planning guides, and practical implementation supports for schools and districts.



Data & Analytics

Reports, dashboards, and early-warning tools to understand patterns and track progress.



AttendNC Bright Spots

Statewide identification followed by interviews, school reports, and cross-school patterns that reveal what may be working.



Learning Networks

Peer learning to test, adapt, and spread promising practices across schools and districts in similar contexts.



Schools in the Spotlight

Northeast Bright Spots show improvement across elementary, middle, high school, and lab-school settings.

Bright Spot School	Rate Change 2022 → 2025	Promising Attendance Practices
ECU Community School	40% → 15%	immediate parent contacts + follow-through
Northwest Elementary (Pitt)	36% → 19%	team-based response + interpreter
Farmville Middle (Pitt)	24% → 16%	staged intervention process + weekly tracker
Hertford County Middle	65% → 41%	daily check-ins + recognition for improvement
Bearfield Primary (Hertford)	53% → 27%	daily check-ins + weekly team meetings
Washington County High	75% → 45%	schedule redesign + engagement
Bertie County High School	55% → 33%	relevant pathways + personal connection



Meet Our Bright Spot Panelists



Taimak Willis

Principal

Northwest Elementary School

Pitt County Schools

Relationship-centered, team-based support that identifies barriers early and connects families with practical assistance.

TEAM-BASED SUPPORT



Elenia Riddick

Principal

Hertford County Middle School

Hertford County Public Schools

Early identification, caring adult check-ins, family outreach, barrier removal, and recognition for improvement.

CHECK-INS & RECOGNITION



Torrey Hines

Principal

Washington County High School

Washington County Schools

Relationships, relevant opportunities, and schoolwide engagement that give students more reasons to attend.

ENGAGEMENT & RELEVANCE





Making School Worth Attending

“It really isn’t a secret... it’s about relationships, relationships, relationships. Meeting children where they are, caring about kids, and knowing how to assist them.”

Principal William Peele
Bertie High School
Bertie County Schools

Panel Question

How have stronger relationships helped improve attendance?
What have you learned about the kinds of activities or experiences that make students want to attend?

Relationships & Relevance





Notice Early, Act Together

“We don’t wait until the numbers are up... We try to be a school of action... and if we say we’re going to do something, then we follow through.”

Dr. Tracy Cole
Executive Director
ECU Community School

Panel Question

When a student begins missing school, what happens?
Who notices, who responds, and how do you make sure students don’t fall through the cracks?

Data, Teams & Follow-Through





Look Beyond the Numbers

“We meet with these students... we have conversations with them. We try to understand where they’re coming from because their situations can be very unique.”

Principal Jeremiah Miller
Farmville Middle School
Pitt County Schools

Panel Question

How do your teams understand what is actually keeping a student from school, and how does that shape your response?

Match Response to Reason



What We're Learning from AttendNC Bright Spots

Different schools. Different strategies. Several consistent ways of working.



The common thread is not a single program. It is a consistent way of noticing, understanding, responding, and following through.

Relationships & Relevance
Make school worth attending

Data, Teams & Follow-Through
Notice early and act together

Match Response to Reason
Understand before intervening

A Final Piece of Advice

If another North Carolina principal asked where to start tomorrow, what is one thing you would tell them to do?

Questions and Discussion

