

## Chronic Absenteeism at Gustavus School

### **What is chronic absenteeism?**

Chronic absenteeism is defined by the U.S. Department of Education and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development as students missing 10% or more of student contact days. (Our school had 160 student contact days this year, so if a student misses 16 days they are considered chronically absent.)

### **What is the rate of chronic absenteeism at the Gustavus School?**

60% of Gustavus School students have been chronically absent during the 2025-26 school year, to date.

In 2023-24, 43% of Alaska's students were identified as chronically absent.

### **Why does it matter?**

Studies show that students who are not chronically absent:

1. Have higher reading proficiency by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
2. Have better middle school achievement
3. Have increased rates of high school graduation

Schoolwide Chronic Absences Affect ALL Students—even those who aren't absent

1. Higher levels of chronic absenteeism in a school are associated with major decreases in Math and ELA scores for *all* students.
2. High chronic absenteeism in a classroom negatively impacts individual student performance in both academics and executive functioning.
3. Chronic absenteeism has negative impacts on social emotional learning, especially in elementary and middle school.

## **Gustavus School Data (2025-26 School Year)**

- **60%** of Gustavus School students are chronically absent
- Only **20%** of students, K-12, have fewer than 10 absences
- 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: **67%** are chronically absent
- 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade: **50%** are chronically absent
- Middle School: **50%** are chronically absent (these numbers DO NOT include sports travel)
- High School: **68%** are chronically absent (these numbers DO NOT include sports travel)
- **95%** of middle school/high school students are chronically absent when sports travel is counted

### At the Gustavus School:

1. High school students have been absent an average of 25 days this year (not including sports travel) or 35 days (including sports travel).
2. Middle school students have been absent an average of 16 days this year (not including sports travel) or 19 days (including sports travel).
3. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders have been absent an average of 14 days this year.
4. 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders have been absent an average of 17 days this year.

### Sources

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism, AK DEED: <https://education.alaska.gov/attendance>

Chronic Absenteeism, US Dept. of Ed: <https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism>

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<https://www.attendanceworks.org/new-research-schoolwide-chronic-absence-affects-all-students/>

**7 insights about chronic absenteeism, a new normal for American schools, Aug. 24, 2025:**

<https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-7-insights-chronic-absenteeism/>

**The Effects of Absenteeism on Academic and Social-Emotional Outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19, Oct. 13,**

**2021:** <https://seis.ucla.edu/news/the-effects-of-absenteeism-on-academic-and-social-emotional/>