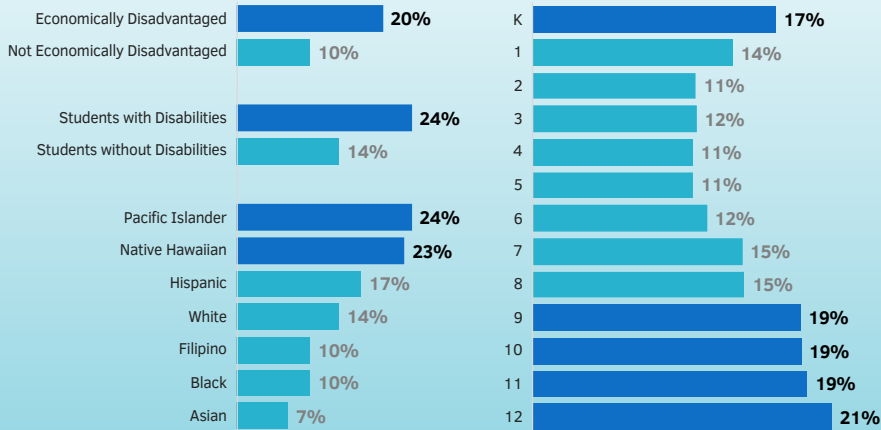


## ATTENDANCE MATTERS

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) identifies students who miss 15 or more days of school for any reason as chronically absent. Economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students have higher rates of absenteeism, which may contribute to widening the achievement gap for these groups.<sup>1</sup> Higher rates of chronic absenteeism also occur in kindergarten as well as in high school.



Prior research has found that chronic absenteeism is associated with lower rates of academic achievement, social engagement, high school graduation, and college enrollment.<sup>2</sup> HIDOE recognizes that regular school attendance is a key factor to ensuring that students can fully engage in high-quality educational opportunities. One objective in the HIDOE/Board of Education Strategic Plan is to cultivate a community and school culture where attendance is valued, encouraged, and supported. Chronic absenteeism is one of HIDOE's Strategic Plan student success indicators and is a Strive HI school accountability measure.

School Year 2017-2018 Strive HI results

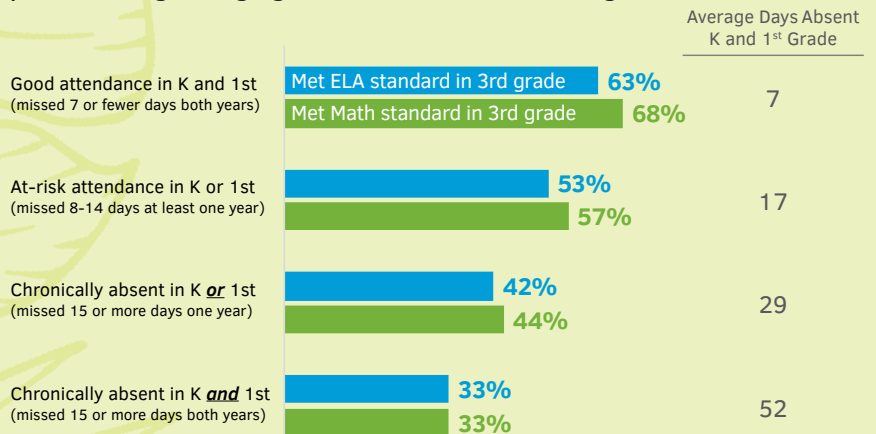
<sup>1</sup> HIDOE. (2019). Strategic Plan Dynamic Report: Chronic Absenteeism. <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/AdvancingEducation/StrategicPlan/Pages/SPDR-1ca.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Lara, J., Noble, K., Pelika, S., & Coons, A. (2018). Chronic Absenteeism, NEA Research Brief. National Education Association <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Chronic%20Absenteeism%20NBI%2057-2017.pdf>

## Real-Time and Longitudinal Data to Support Decision-Making

To support the work of educators across the state, HIDOE has also adopted a strategic objective to provide timely and user-friendly data to assist with strategic decision-making and accountability for Student Success. Starting in 2009, HIDOE developed a longitudinal data system (LDS) to provide timely and user-friendly reports and dashboards for teachers and administrators. The LDS combines data from multiple data systems so that users can access a consolidated view of student academic progress and performance.

**Students chronically absent in kindergarten and/or 1st grade were less likely to be proficient in English language arts and math at the end of 3rd grade.**



Attendance reports are some of the most viewed reports within the LDS. In 2016, educators noted that while existing reports of chronically absent students were helpful, they needed a report that could identify students at risk for being chronically absent before they reached that status. Based on user feedback, the Data Governance and Analysis (DGA) Branch developed an Early Alert Absence Report. This report takes student attendance history and identifies whether students are at low, moderate, or high risk of becoming chronically absent if their year-to-date absence rate continued at the same pace. The LDS makes information readily accessible so educators can focus on creating targeted interventions for students instead of manually combing through data from multiple sources.

# Waipahu Elementary School

## “ELIMINATING ALL EXCUSES”

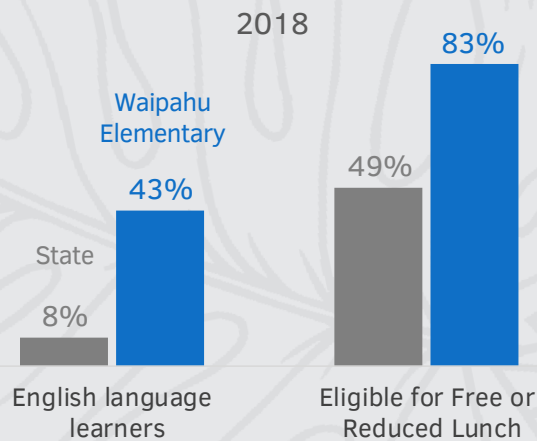
Waipahu Elementary has adopted a “no excuses” approach to attendance. Prior to SY2017-2018, the school sent a letter home when students missed 3 days of school. Letters would again be sent when students missed 5, 10, 15, and 20 days, but this approach wasn’t working to engage families. As a school with high proportions of English learners and economically disadvantaged families, staff recognized that there were many community factors that impacted attendance.

In fall 2017 Vice Principal James Suster learned about different ways to access LDS reports and dashboards and immediately recognized how the school could use this information to support new positive behavioral interventions to improve attendance. Starting in SY2017-2018, Waipahu Elementary began to improve attendance using a three-pronged approach. LDS dashboards and reports now serve as the starting point for school staff’s daily attendance-related activities.



Before last school year we didn’t think we could make a big change with attendance, but we knew that something had to change. Getting into our community and making that person-to-person contact, particularly through our home visits, has been key to improving attendance at our school. The LDS allows us to identify which students and families we need to focus on.”

*James Suster, Vice Principal, Waipahu Elem. School*



### Parent Contact

On a daily basis, school staff call home to check-in on every student who was absent. For those who cannot be reached by phone, staff conduct home visits to get in touch with these families.

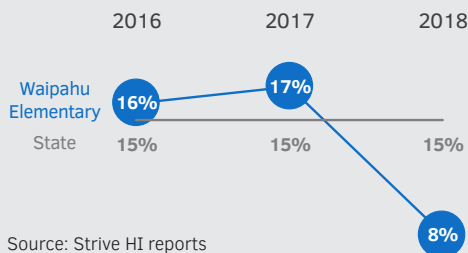
### Attendance Mentors

All students in grades 4-6 chronically absent in the prior year are assigned an attendance mentor. Having another adult at the school build a caring relationship with the student and maintain open lines of communication, helps the school to understand each student’s context and need. In SY2018-2019 this initiative was expanded to grade 3.

### Student Challenges

Students who match or improve their attendance from previous weeks are entered into a drawing for rewards. Winners are announced during lunch and students can choose their reward (extra recess, snacks, games). Perfect attendance contests in the weeks before and after school breaks also help to combat periods of higher absences.

Waipahu Elementary’s percentage of students missing 15 or more days of school decreased significantly in 2018.



Source: Strive HI reports

By reaching out to families to understand their reasons for missing school, staff can brainstorm solutions to address their specific needs. This approach has resulted in decreased chronic absenteeism rates and increased perfect attendance rates.

#### Reasons for not attending school

#### Solutions

|                   |                                                                |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| No ride to school | Staff provide students rides to school                         |
| No clean uniform  | School created a uniform loan program                          |
| No footwear       | Shoes and slippers donated to the school are provided for free |
| Head lice         | Health room staff will help comb out lice                      |



Our school has committed to eliminating excuses by making attendance a collective responsibility rather than leaving it up to parents. Much of our success is due to staff and students also taking ownership of attendance, and employing positive, solutions-focused approaches to the problem.

Using the data in conjunction with establishing personal connections with families has made the biggest difference.”

*- Aaron Tominaga, Principal, Waipahu Elementary School*

Waipahu Elementary staff agreed from the outset to focus on improving attendance for three years. If the school can consistently maintain high levels of attendance, the school’s next step will be to examine the influence of improved attendance on academic outcomes. By eliminating absences as a factor affecting academics, the school hopes to concentrate on what other changes may be needed to improve learning.

# Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

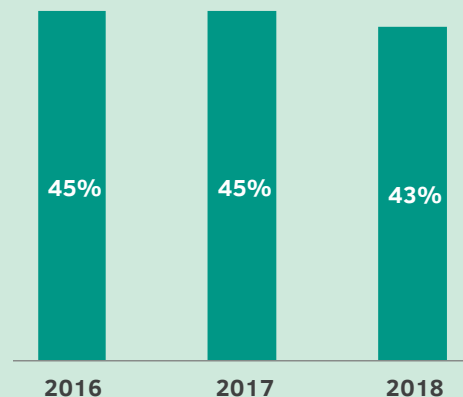
## “YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW”

Attendance is important for all students, but students experiencing homelessness are more likely to miss more days of school compared to their peers with stable housing. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program provides statewide support to schools and complex areas so HIDOE can better serve homeless students. However, prior to the LDS, the EHCY had to work directly with each school to manually get the information to support homeless students. School staff had to look up individual student records, and the EHCY managed multiple lists — an inefficient process for monitoring approximately 3,000 students every year. The LDS now houses the data they need to provide services.

In SY2017-2018 EHCY staff worked with multiple departments in HIDOE to streamline this process. Now, the student information system identifies students experiencing homelessness and the LDS regularly generates reports to monitor student progress. These changes allow the EHCY to monitor state trends and identify barriers to address a sub-population of students who were previously “invisible” within the data system.

Beginning SY2018-2019, complex areas have full-time Community Homeless Concerns Liaison dedicated to supporting students experiencing homelessness. The ECHY recognized that all liaisons needed access to appropriate data, but was also cognizant of the need to protect student privacy. Data use training was rolled out in three phases.

Nearly half of students experiencing homelessness miss 15 or more days of school.



Before we were able to track students within the LDS, Liaisons didn't know about a particular student's needs until emergencies arose. It was frustrating

to plan supports for schools and students with limited data; you can't know how to help if you don't know what's going on. Now, student-level data allows us to be proactive rather than reactive. It lets us find situations where we can offer assistance, and facilitates dialogue with school staff around helping students. We are just beginning the data use journey across the state. Our goal is to make looking at and using data a daily habit.”

*Toby Portner, Educational Specialist, Education for Homeless Children and Youth program*

### 1 - Intro to LDS

At the start of the school year, an interactive training session introduced liaisons to aggregate school-level data in the LDS. Users explored the available data, connected multiple risk factors, and generated questions from the information. Liaisons learned how they could generate reports and started thinking about what the data meant.

### 2 - Privacy Training

Given the special needs of this student population and the sensitive nature of this information, liaisons were trained on how to protect student privacy.

### 3 - Student Data

Liaisons were provided access to student-level information in the LDS and follow-up training on the system's student dashboards.

Attendance is one of multiple measures regularly monitored to understand the progress of students experiencing homelessness. The LDS allows liaisons to identify students early on so they can focus on reaching out to students and families, understanding each student's individual situation, and identifying what would help students to attend school. Strategies ranged from providing an alarm clock to help a student wake up in time for school or arranging after school homework assistance because the student's home environment was not conducive to completing homework. EHCY staff regularly monitor attendance in the LDS and provide support to the liaisons, including identifying solutions or providing directions on how to leverage resources to meet the particular needs of students and families in transition.

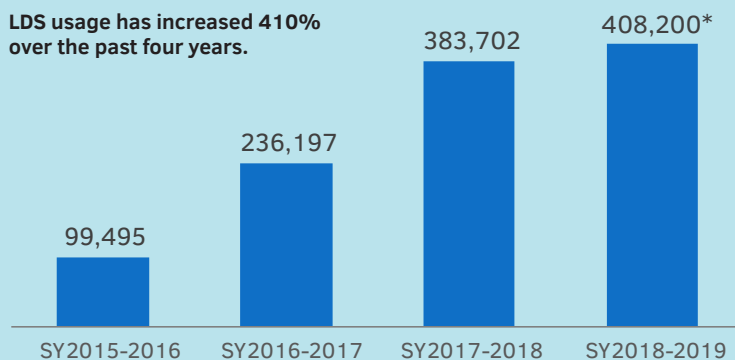
# Data Governance and Analysis Branch

## USING DATA TO INFORM ACTION

In SY2015-2016, HIDOE was awarded a third US Department of Education Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant to increase use of the LDS to support instruction across the state. The grant afforded HIDOE an opportunity to develop a robust training program closely integrated with existing instructional initiatives to assist every educator in using data effectively. HIDOE's goal for the SLDS grant is to provide educators with the skills to use data from the LDS to: 1) identify learning gaps and establish baseline student needs; 2) identify appropriate personalized instructional and behavioral supports; and 3) evaluate the success of these interventions.

Over the past four years, HIDOE has worked to increase data use by educators through trainings, improving data quality, and continuously improving LDS dashboards and reports. Trainings have expanded from basic site navigation and introductions to dashboards and reports, to ways users can customize results, and deeper dives using interactive activities to guide meaningful discussions about the data. HIDOE has worked to improve the quality of data within the LDS to ensure that users feel confident in the accuracy, consistency, completeness, and timeliness of the data. Regularly gathered user feedback informs the creation of new reports, dashboards, and site functionality, as well as the inclusion of new data sources.

Since SY2015-2016, LDS usage has quadrupled, and the average number of users has increased nearly ten-fold from 137 to 1,300 users per month. In SY2018-2019 alone, DGA has conducted over 95 LDS training sessions, introduced new reports for supporting English Learners, enhanced existing reports for chronic absenteeism and multiple measures for student screening, and added new student data for schools using learning and assessment solutions such as Imagine Learning, DIBELS, and Achieve 3000.



\*SY2018-2019 partial year usage through April 2019

## LONGITUDINAL EDUCATION INFORMATION SYSTEM

Over the next few years HIDOE will create the Longitudinal Education Information (LEI) system, a single shared repository of validated data that will include all of the information in the current LDS, as well as information from the financial reporting system. This will improve data standardization and create efficiencies by consolidating data for operational, State, and Federal reporting which are currently hosted in separate databases and websites. The LEI system will improve HIDOE's ability to use data for decision-making, facilitate research to improve student learning and reduce achievement gaps, and support continuous improvement.



“Educators previously used the LDS for information to find out what was happening at schools, which inevitably moved to drilling down on

the numbers to identify which students were falling behind. The data helped to spark rich conversations at schools or within programs to better understand the whys and the context for the inter-related outcomes we were seeing. Now educators are increasingly moving toward using the LDS to take action and create custom interventions to better serve students.”

*Diane Yoshimura, Institutional Analyst,  
Data Governance and Analysis Branch*



“The LDS is only valuable when it can meet the needs of its users, so our job is to work closely with educators and programs to understand what

information they need to make decisions or take action. Partnering across offices at all levels within HIDOE helps us to understand how data is used throughout the department and drives the development of the data system and informs our trainings. We want to be sure that all staff have access to information appropriate for their roles and responsibilities so they can better support students and schools.”

*Shane Hedani, Institutional Analyst,  
Data Governance and Analysis Branch*



“To be an effective Learning Organization, educators need access to meaningful data to monitor and understand the practices that

contribute to student success. Ensuring that staff have the capacity to analyze and use data to improve practice and sharing high-impact strategies will help to transform our classrooms.”

*Rodney Luke, Assistant Superintendent  
for the Office of Strategy, Innovation and  
Performance*

What questions can Hawai'i DXP help answer for you?

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