



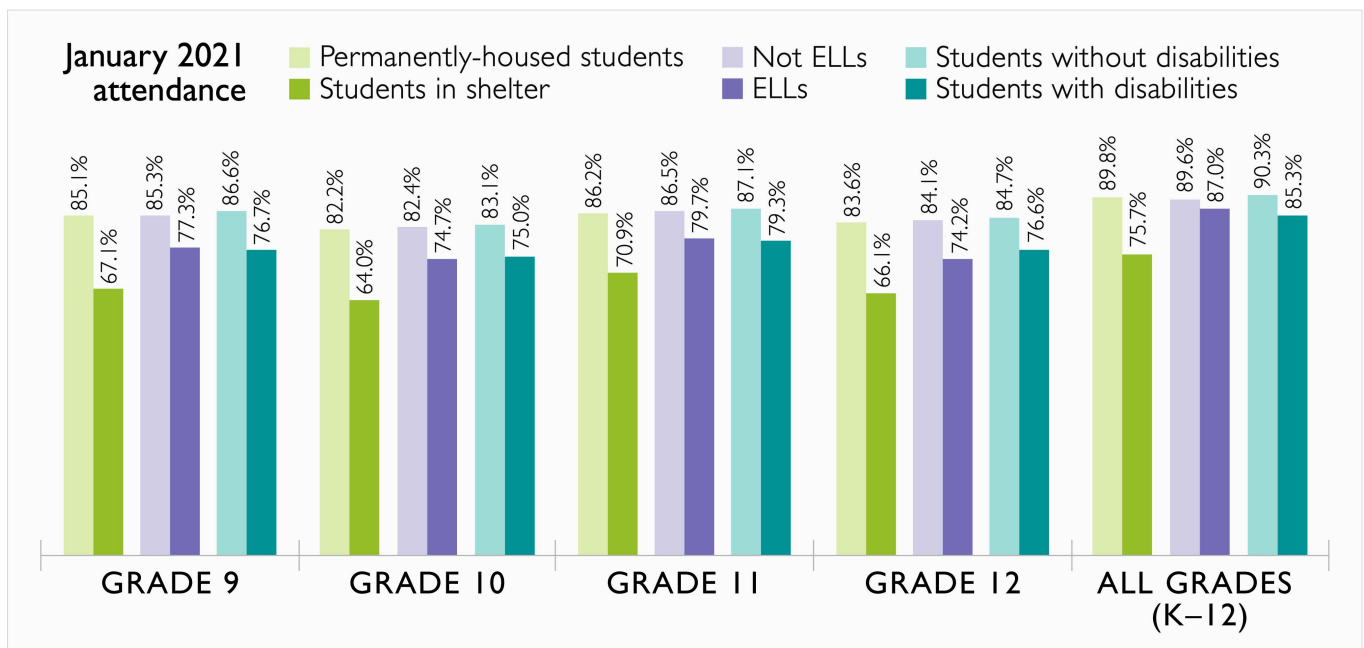
Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

DISPARITIES IN ATTENDANCE DURING COVID-19

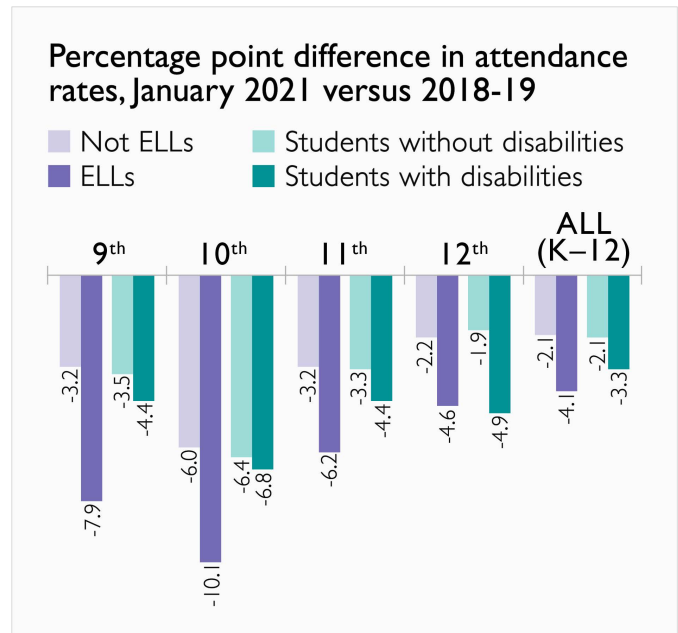
January 2021 attendance data recently released by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) show that there are particularly high rates of absenteeism among marginalized student populations. For example:

- » In January 2021, students living in shelter had by far the lowest attendance rate of any student group: **75.7%**, 14.1 percentage points lower than the rate for their permanently-housed peers.¹
- » While attendance rates for students in shelter were low at every grade level, high schools are having particular difficulty engaging students this year. **Tenth graders in shelter had an attendance rate of just 64%** in January, meaning they missed more than one out of every three school days. For both ninth and tenth graders, there was an 18-point gap in attendance rates between students in shelter and their peers in permanent housing.
- » Similarly, English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities had lower attendance in January 2021 than their English-proficient and non-disabled peers, particularly at the high school level. **ELLs and students with disabilities in grade 10, along with ELL twelfth graders—roughly 30,000 students in all—missed about one out of every four school days.**



¹ January is the first month of the 2020-21 school year for which the DOE posted disaggregated attendance data, as required by Local Law 10 of 2021. Overall rates include both remote and in-person attendance; for remote learning, students are marked “present” if they participate in synchronous or asynchronous instruction. Asynchronous instruction may consist of a range of activities including video lessons, assignments, discussion boards, and email communication.

- » While these student populations were already absent more frequently than their peers prior to the pandemic, **disparities have grown even worse this year**, as ELLs and students with disabilities have seen greater declines in attendance, relative to attendance during the 2018-19 school year, than non-ELLs and students without disabilities.
- » The **January 2021 attendance rate for ELL tenth graders was 10.1 percentage points lower than the 2018-19 attendance rate for ELLs in tenth grade**, while the attendance rate for ELL ninth graders fell 7.9 percentage points. This dramatic change in attendance is especially concerning given that that ELLs have the highest dropout rate of any student group, while only 46% graduate on time.



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With the New York City Department of Education poised to get billions of dollars in COVID-19 relief funding, the City must invest in ambitious and equitable education initiatives that address the disparate impact of the pandemic and enable all students to attend class with the academic and social-emotional support they need.

- » The City should **invest in a corps of professionals**, including bilingual staff, to focus on academic support, social-emotional support, and outreach to students and families.
- » The City should engage in intentional, proactive planning and outreach to **ensure that the new Summer Rising program benefits all students**—including students with disabilities, ELLs, and students experiencing homelessness—and provides the specialized supports these populations need.
- » The City should fund **targeted academic and mental health supports**; for example, one-on-one or small group tutoring, evidence-based literacy curricula, and staff such as social workers and behavior specialists who can provide direct services to students.
- » The City should invest in **intensive, targeted outreach to re-engage students and families who are currently disconnected** from school.
- » The City should provide **make-up services and specialized support for students with disabilities and ELLs** who did not receive their legally mandated instruction during the pandemic.
- » Given the particularly low attendance rates for high school students, the City should **allow 21-year-old students who would otherwise age out of school this year to return** to school next year so they can finish their diploma requirements or meet transition goals.

AFC's full recommendations for COVID-19 education recovery and the FY 2022 City budget are available at www.advocatesforchildren.org/node/1741.