

Least likely to come to class

Attendance at GJHS

story and photo by brady ancell

Attendance at Grand Junction High School is always fluctuating, but COVID-19 and a year-long transition to remote learning caused more irregularities than normal. The global pandemic, whether due to fear from the virus or an easy excuse to ditch, has led to reduced attendance rates in recent years.

According to school data, from the 2019-2020 school year to the current school year, overall attendance has dropped from 88.27% to 78.84%. It is a notable drop of nearly 10% in just two years.

“We had been working to see an upward swing [in attendance]” when COVID-19 forced an extra long spring break, said GJHS Principal Meghan Roenicke. More students were showing up to class than previous years before COVID disrupted school, she said.

Roenicke added that the year COVID hit “was [GJHS’s] highest year of attendance” in all the years she has worked here. Remote learning has made education and participating in class more difficult for many students.

“With online learning, [school] has been more complex,” said GJHS freshman Madelyn Woodring.

The transition from middle school to high school is hard enough for many students. Coming into high school after the effects of COVID was expected to be difficult for many students. That would explain lower attendance rates for freshmen.

However, that is not the whole story. In fact, seniors and sophomores have attendance percentages of 82.55% and 84.00% percent respectively, while the percent for freshmen is

nearly 85%.

“Our sophomores and our seniors struggle [coming to class],” said Roenicke. She believes the solution is creating a school culture that values attendance.

“If you really want to succeed in school, you have to be there both physically and mentally,” said GJHS senior Joel Daugherty.

Though some students understand the consequences of missing class, many do not. Roenicke and many school staff members are working on techniques to attempt to raise

attendance among all students.

“A lot of students are just ill and we don’t want them here at school,” said Yaneth Gutierrez, Spanish teacher at GJHS. Many of Gutierrez’s students miss class because of sports games or because of being sick.

This creates a difficult situation for GJHS staff. They want good attendance, yet they also want students to participate in sports and to stay home if they are sick.

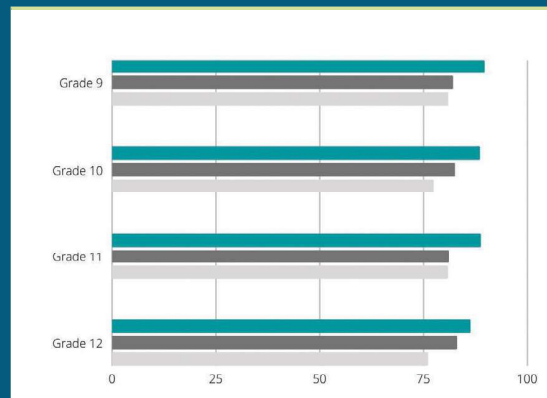
Roenicke and other teachers are working to show the value of coming to class. Now that COVID-19 is hopefully coming to an end, GJHS

students and staff should be hopeful for the future.

Roenicke is also optimistic about the effects an all-new building will have on students and attendance. Roenicke visited a school with a similar design to the plans in the works for GJHS.

“Even when kids were on release, kids would choose to stay at the school and work,” said Roenicke. In the future, Roenicke hopes for a school with students of all ages working together to get the best education possible.

“Attending is a lot more than just being there in person. Make sure you’re giving your entire self to what you’re learning,” said Daugherty.



Attendance by school year, separated by grade

2019-2020

2020-2021

2021-2022