

Chicago and Illinois Truants, Chronic Truants and Dropouts

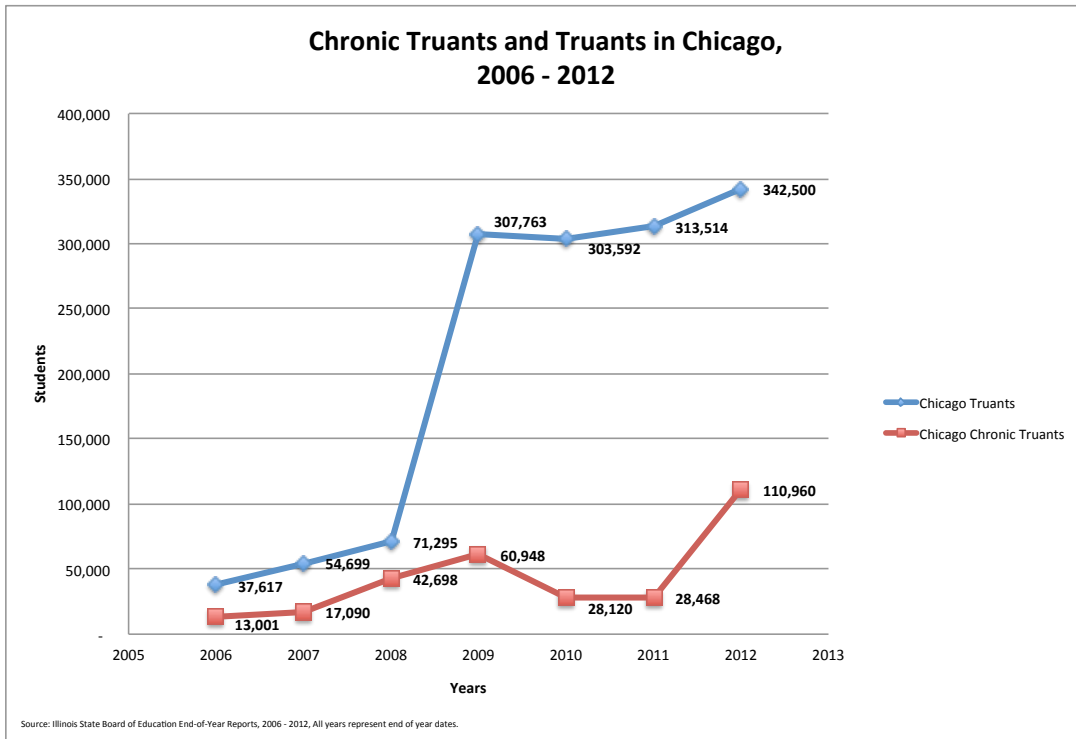
Presentation compiled by Alternative Schools Network

Source: Illinois State Board of Education End of Year Reports, 2006 – 2012

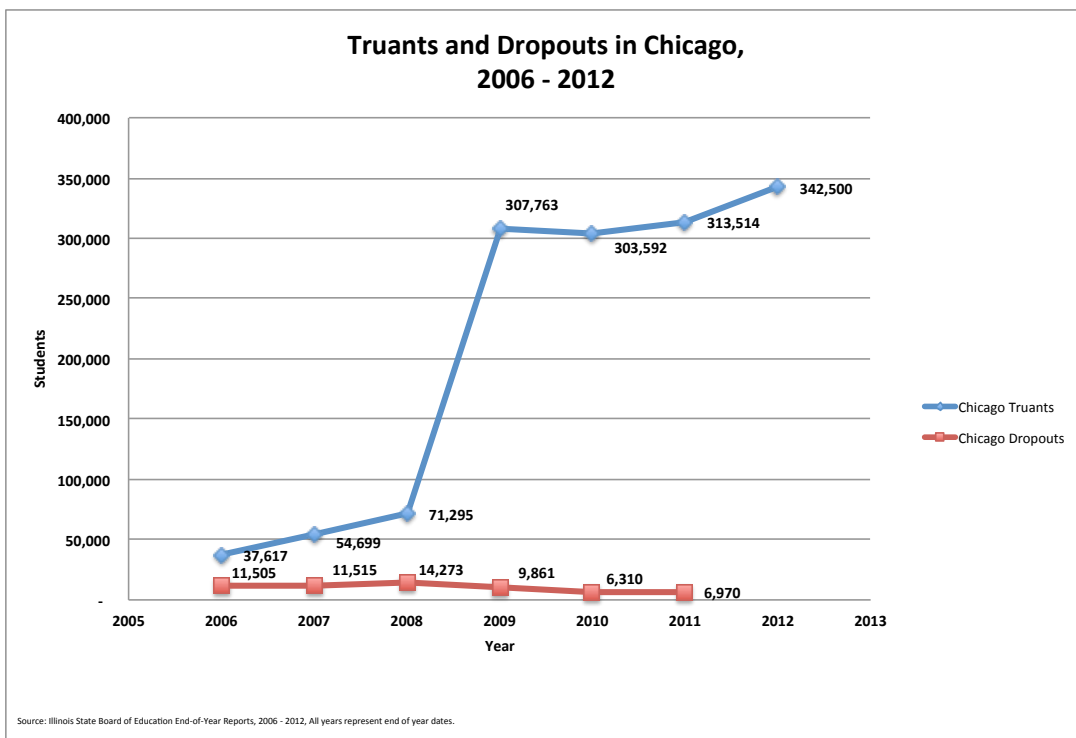
For several years now, Alternative Schools Network has tracked the data compiled by Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) on Dropouts and Truants in Chicago and Illinois. These reports were, until 2012, annually published on the ISBE website for public viewing. Since 2012, however, the data is no longer published online due to reported concerns surrounding the privacy of individuals and the display of small data sets online.

Chicago

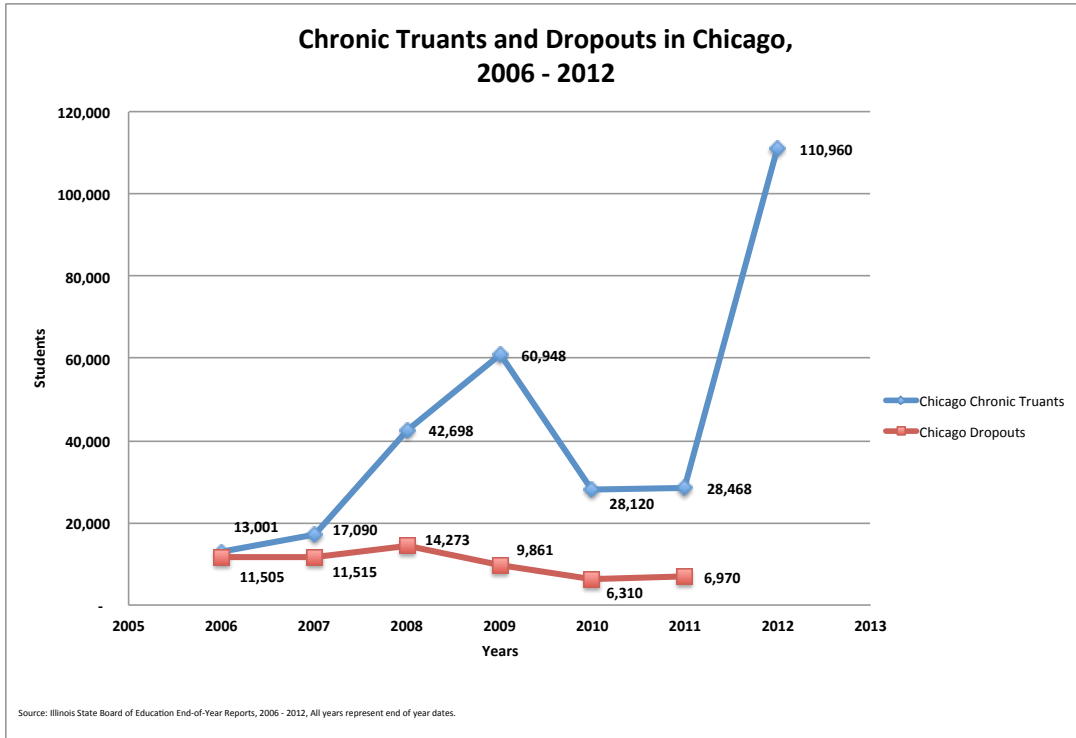
Since 2006, the number of truants in Illinois has been climbing. The number of truant students has climbed from 37,617 in 2006 to 342,500 in 2012. Likewise, the number of chronic truants has risen dramatically in the same period.



During the period in which truant numbers climbed, the number of dropouts reported by ISBE fell. In Chicago the number of dropouts fell from 11,505 to just 6,970 in 2011.

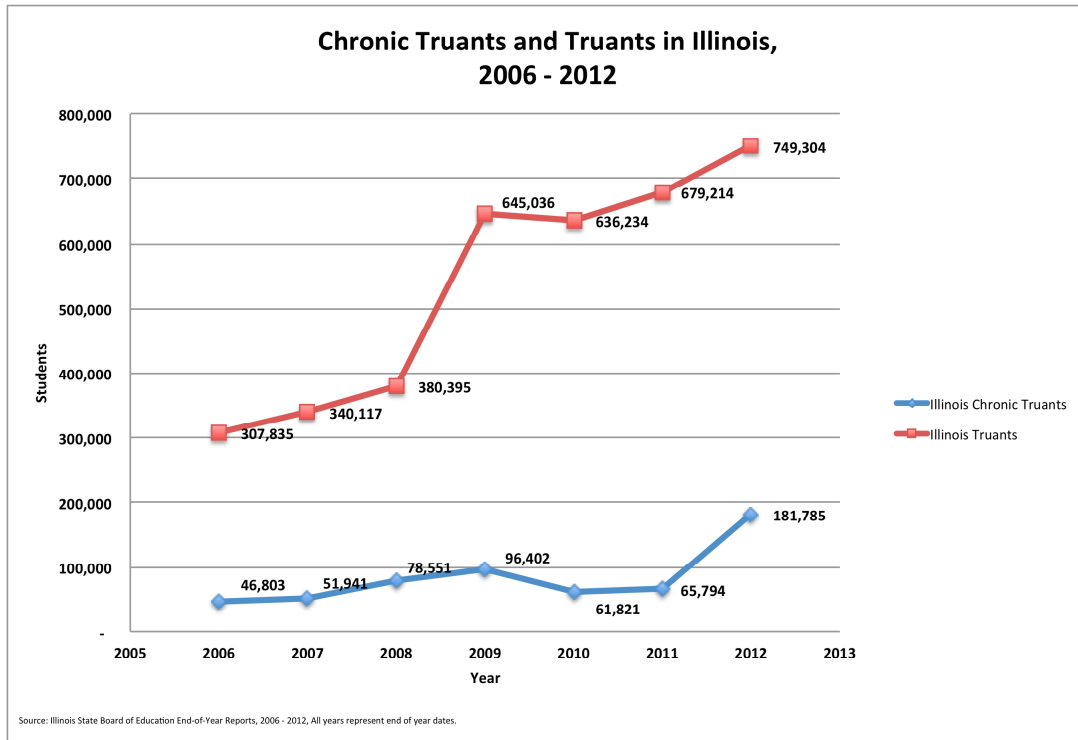


Likewise, during the period in which the number of truants was on the rise, the number of chronic truants also rose – in contrast with falling numbers of dropouts in Chicago.

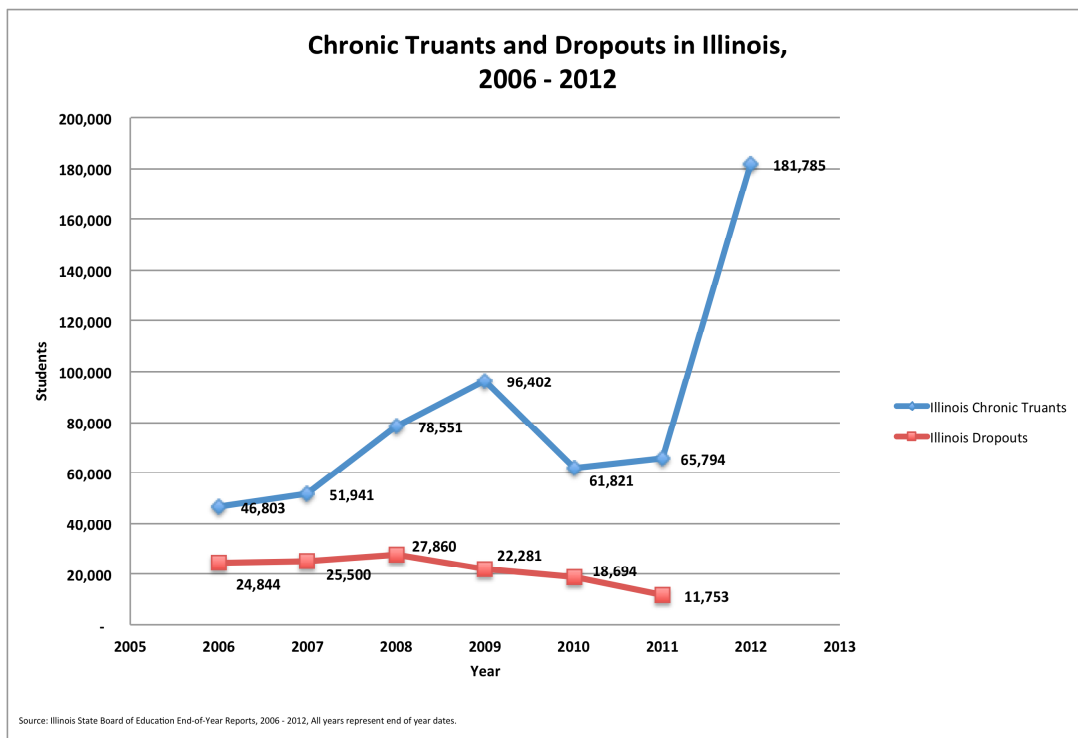


Illinois

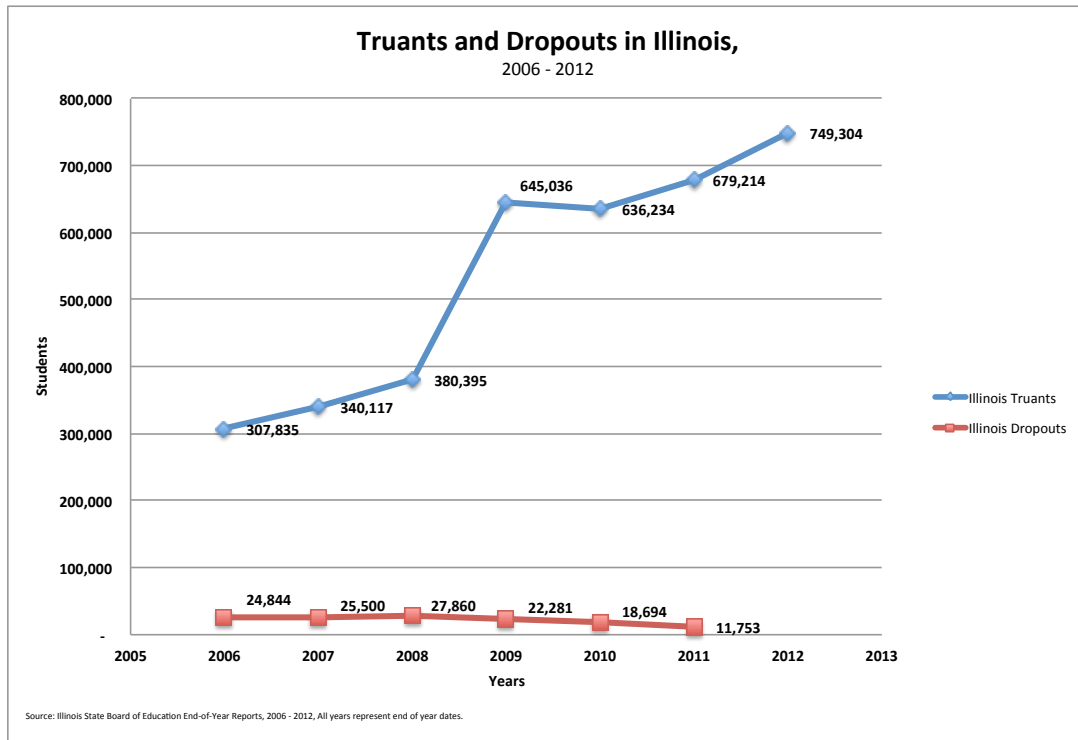
The number of truants in Illinois has also risen since 2006.



The rising number of truants is contrasted with a falling number of dropouts as published by ISBE. From 2006 to 2009, the number of chronic truants in Illinois more than doubled. After falling, the number shot up almost threefold in 2012 to 181,785. This second spike may be accounted for in part by a new definition implemented for determining “chronic truancy”, shifting from 18 unexcused absences to 9. Meanwhile, statewide the number of dropouts has fallen from 24,844 to 11,753 in 2011.



The contrast is similar between dropouts and truants in Illinois, with the number of truants rising from 307,835 to 749,304. Part of this rise may be explained due to 2009 changes in methods of recording absences, but even accounting for this change, the number has risen steadily since at least 2006.



Possible Explanations

At different points in the period from 2006 – 2012, wide variation has can be seen in the number of truants, chronic truants and dropouts in Illinois and Chicago. Some possible explanations are provided below:

- In 2009 the district moved to a new attendance information system that resulted in a more sensitive measure of attendance. In short, CPS went from taking attendance in high school from once a day to taking attendance every period and reporting attendance based on minutes. The district started giving half-day absences for students with between 300 and 150 minutes of attendance and a full day absence to students with less than 150 minutes. As a result, more students were classified at truant.
- The spike in chronic truancy from 2011 to 2012 resulted in a change in classification. ISBE changed the definition of chronic truancy to nine unexcused absences instead of 18.
- Finally, ISBE changed its definition of “dropout” from k-12 to 9-12 grade only. That would have resulted in a decrease in reported dropouts.

We think that these data warrant further research and analysis to understand the trends in dropout and truant numbers in Chicago and Illinois.