Every School Day Counts

Attend today, achieve for a lifetime!

Toolkit

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
OFFICE of EDUCATION

Special Acknowlegements:

The Contra Costa County Office of Education would like to thank Attendance Works, Oakland Education Cabinet, and Solano County Office of Education for permission to adapt these materials for our use.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE of EDUCATION

Joseph A. Ovick, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

77 Santa Barbara Road • Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 • (925) 942-3388

Dear Contra Costa County Educator,

The Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) is proud to partner with your local school district in coordinating a comprehensive effort to boost student attendance by addressing chronic absences.

Why is chronic absence so important?

- Chronic absences occur when a student misses 10% or more total school days, about 18 days per year, for any reason including excused absences.
- Research proves that students who are chronically absent in Kindergarten and 1st grade are far less likely to read proficiently by 3rd grade.
- For every day of school missed, it takes three days to make up what was taught.
- By the 6th grade, if a student continues to be chronically absent, it is a leading indicator of whether he or she will drop out of high school.
- In the 9th grade, chronic absences are a better indicator than test scores of a student's likelihood to graduate from high school.

Today we, the Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joseph A. Ovick, and the District Attorney Mark Peterson, are embarking on an awareness campaign entitled ***Every School Day Counts: Attend today, achieve for a lifetime!*** This campaign is designed to provide communication resources to schools, engage school communities, and boost student attendance as soon as children enter school.

The Every School Day Counts communication toolkit includes hard copies and digital files of:

- Parent flyers in English and Spanish
- Talking points about attendance for multiple audiences
- Tips for getting in touch with hard-to-reach parents
- Guidelines for establishing school-wide attendance incentives
- Attendance certificates to incentivize and reward good attendance
- School self-assessments
- Posters in English and Spanish

Chronic absence is a problem that can be solved when schools, parents, and communities come together to develop solutions. Please use the resources found in this toolkit to help boost attendance at your school. The toolkit can also be found online http://www.cocoschools.org/attendance.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Ovick, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Contra Costa County

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Mark A. Peterson
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Dear Contra Costa County Educators,

Our state and county are facing a truancy crisis that impacts not only children who do not receive the benefit of a complete education, but our community as a whole. One of the most alarming effects of truancy and chronic absenteeism is its staggering link to criminality, both present and future. This is why, as the District Attorney of Contra Costa County, I am committed to supporting every effort to increase attendance by partnering with our local educators, families and law enforcement agencies.

What makes chronic absenteeism an issue of public safety?

- Chronic absenteeism is the *most* powerful predictor of delinquent behavior; high-school dropouts are twice as likely to commit crime as high school graduates and three and a half times more likely to be arrested than their peers with diplomas;
- Californians who do not earn high school diplomas are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than those who do; 75% of prison inmates and 69% of inmates in county jail are drop outs;
- In Contra Costa County, 60% of juvenile crime occurs between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. on weekdays, when children *should* be in school;
- The economic cost of juvenile crime in California is approximately $8.9 billion per year.

Studies show that if as a community we can increase graduation rates by 10 percent we will see a decrease in violent crime such as murder and assault by 20 percent. In this county, that equates to 19 fewer murders and 479 fewer aggravated assaults per year.

As District Attorney my primary objectives are to keep our residents safe and to enforce the law, including California's compulsory education law. My office has been working with Contra Costa County's school districts to enforce this law and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with our local schools and families to meet those objectives. We all—schools, law enforcement and parents—have a duty to keep our children enrolled in and regularly attending school.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I hope we can move forward together to improve attendance in Contra Costa County.

Sincerely,

MARK A. PETERSON
District Attorney

District Attorney Administration
900 Ward Street, Fourth Floor
Martinez, California 94553

(925) 957-8604
Fax (925) 646-4683

Every School Day Counts

Attend today, achieve for a lifetime!

Every School Day Counts: Attend today, achieve for a lifetime!

A toolkit to reduce early chronic absence from the Contra Costa County Office of Education and Attendance Works

Why is reducing chronic absence so important?

- Students suffer academically if they miss 10% or more of school days.
- Studies show that children who miss too many days in kindergarten and 1st grade often have trouble mastering reading by the end of 3rd grade. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves.
- When children are absent, schools get fewer resources from the state, resulting in less funding to pay for teachers and books. Chronic absence in kindergarten predicts chronic absence the following year, so even the attendance patterns of our youngest students affect funding down the road.
- For every day of missed school, it takes three days to make up what was missed.
- By the 6th grade, if a student continues to be chronically absent, it is a leading indicator of whether he or she will drop out of high school.
- In the 9th grade, chronic absences are a better indicator than test scores of a student's likelihood to graduate from high school.

What is in the toolkit?

Chronic absence is a problem that can be solved when schools, parents, and communities come together to develop solutions. This toolkit helps schools and community partners get started in taking steps toward those solutions. It contains:

- Parent flyers in English and Spanish
- Talking points about attendance for multiple audiences
- Tips for getting in touch with hard-to-reach parents
- Guidelines for establishing school-wide attendance incentives
- Attendance certificates to incentivize and reward good attendance
- School self-assessments
- Posters in English and Spanish

How will I get a toolkit?

The complete toolkit is available online at http://www.cocoschools.org/attendance

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE of EDUCATION

Every School Day Counts

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Help Your Child Succeed in School:

Build the habit of good attendance early – school success goes hand-in-hand with good attendance!

DID YOU KNOW?

Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.

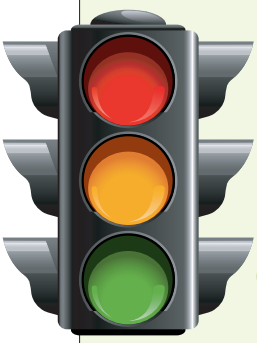
- Missing 10% (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school – and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they can learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

What You Can Do

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your child to her teachers and classmates before school starts to help her transition.
- Don't let your child stay home unless he is truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Chronic Adsence
18 or more days

Warning Signs
10 to 17 days

Good Attendance
9 or fewer absences

Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

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Good attendance is important in kindergarten and first grade because:

- Children learn to read and write in kindergarten and first grade
- These grades provide the building blocks to understand math
- Children learn how to be good students in the early years
- Students have fun and make friends when they are in school

Speak to your child's teacher if:

- You think they've been mistakenly marked absent or late
- Your child doesn't want to go to school because he or she is struggling socially or academically
- You have a family emergency that causes your child to miss school and you would like to know how to make up the work

Speak to the front office staff if:

- You need to clear an absence or report an absence
- Your child must be absent for a medical appointment or was too sick to be in school.
- Remember to always bring a copy of the doctor's note to the school.

Speak to your principal if:

- You want to find out if your child is at risk due to poor attendance

If your family is struggling, ( ) can help!

- Health issues:
- No Place to Live:
- Lack of Transportation:

For more information, visit
www.cocoschools.org/attendance

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Keep Your Child on Track in Middle and High School

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and on the job. For more information, visit www.cocoschools.org/attendance.

Did You Know?

- Students should miss no more than 9 days of school each year to stay engaged, successful and on track to graduation.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Missing 10%, or about 18 days, of the school year can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- Students can be chronically absent even if they only miss a day or two every few weeks.
- Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from college and keep a job.

If your family is struggling, ( ) can help!

- Health issues:
- No Place to Live:
- Lack of Transportation:

For more information, visit
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~More~

Every School Day Counts

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What You Can Do

Make school attendance a priority

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school every day, and make that the expectation.
- Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day.
- Don't let your child stay home unless truly sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.

Help your teen stay engaged

- Find out if your child feels engaged by his classes and feels safe from bullies and other threats.
- Make sure he/she is not missing class because of behavioral issues and school discipline policies. If any of these are problems, work with your school.
- Stay on top of academic progress and seek help from teachers or tutors if necessary. Make sure teachers know how to contact you.
- Stay on top of your child's social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.

Cada Día en la Escuela Cuenta

Asiste hoy y gana logros para toda una vida.

Ayude a su hijo a tener éxito en la escuela

Crear el hábito de una buena asistencia desde comienzos - tener éxito en la escuela va de la mano con una buena asistencia!

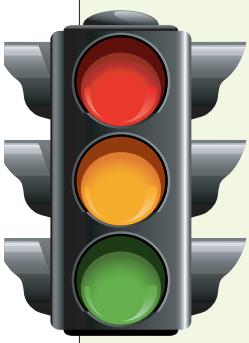
¿SABÍA USTED?

- Que demasiadas faltas de asistencia al comenzar el kindergarten pueden hacer que los niños se atrasen en la escuela.
- Faltar el 10% (o cerca de 18 días) puede dificultar el aprendizaje de la lectura.
- Los estudiantes se pueden atrasar incluso si sólo faltan uno o dos días cada pocas semanas.
- Llegar tarde a la escuela puede implicar pobre asistencia.
- Las faltas de asistencia pueden afectar a toda la clase si el maestro tiene que retrasar la enseñanza para ayudar a los niños a ponerse al día.

LO QUE USTED PUEDE HACER

- Establezca una hora regular para que el niño se acueste y una rutina en la mañana.
- Deje lista la ropa y empaque la mochila la noche anterior.
- Averigüe qué día empieza la escuela y asegúrese de que su niño tenga las vacunas requeridas.
- Presente su hijo a los maestros y compañeros de clase antes de que empiecen las clases para ayudarle en su transición.
- No permita que su hijo se quede en casa a menos que esté realmente enfermo. Tenga en cuenta que las quejas de dolor de estómago o de dolor de cabeza pueden ser un signo de ansiedad y no una razón para quedarse en casa.
- Si su niño parece ansioso por ir a la escuela, hable con los maestros, consejeros escolares, u otros padres para que le aconsejen sobre la forma de hacer que se sienta cómodo y entusiasmado con el aprendizaje.
- Establezca planes de contingencia para ir a la escuela si surge alguna dificultad. Llame a un miembro de la familia, un vecino u otro padre de familia.
- Evite las citas médicas y los viajes prolongados cuando la escuela esté en sesión.

¿Cuándo las faltas de asistencia se convierten en un problema?



AUSENCIAS RECURRENTES
18 o más días

SEÑALES DE PELIGRO
de 10 a 17 días

BUENA ASISTENCIA
9 o menos faltas de asistencia

Nota: Estas cifras se basan en un año escolar de 180 días.

Para más información, visite nuestra página en Internet:
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Cada Día en la Escuela Cuenta

Asiste hoy y gana logros para toda una vida.

La buena asistencia es importante en los grados kínder y primero porque:

- Los niños aprenden a leer y a escribir en los grados kínder y primero.
- Estos grados proporcionan los elementos básicos para entender las matemáticas.
- Los niños aprenden ?omo ser buenos estudiantes en los primeros años.
- Los estudiantes se divierten y hacen amigos cuando están en la escuela.

Hable con el maestro de su niño si:

- Usted piensa que erróneamente le han marcado falta de asistencia o llegada tarde;
- Su hijo no quiere ir a la escuela porque él o ella está luchando social o académicamente;
- Tiene una emergencia familiar que obliga a su hijo a faltar a la escuela, y
- Usted quiere saber cómo colocarse al día en los deberes escolares.

Hable con el personal de la oficina si:

- Usted necesita aclarar una falta de asistencia o reportar una ausencia;
- Su hijo debe faltar por una cita médica o estaba demasiado enfermo para asistir a la escuela. Recuerde presentar siempre una nota del médico a la escuela.

Hable con el Director si:

Si usted desea saber si su niño se encuentra en riesgo debido a su escasa asistencia

¡Si tiene dificultades en su familia ( ) puede ayudar!

Cuestiones de salud:

No tiene donde vivir:

Carece de transporte:

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE of EDUCATION

Cada Día en la Escuela Cuenta

Asiste hoy y gana logros para toda una vida.

Manténgase informado sobre la educación de su hijo en la escuela intermedia y secundaria

Visitar la institución tiene un gran impacto en el éxito académico de un estudiante desde kindergarten y durante toda la escuela secundaria. Incluso cuando los niños crecen y son más independientes, las familias juegan un papel clave para hacer que los estudiantes lleguen a la escuela en forma segura todos los días y para

que comprendan por qué la asistencia es tan importante para lograr el éxito en la escuela y en el trabajo.

¿Sabía usted?

- Que los estudiantes no deben faltar más de 9 días lectivos cada año para mantener su dedicación y lograr el éxito en sus estudios y enfocarse en su graduación.
- Las ausencias pueden ser una señal de que un estudiante está perdiendo el interés en la escuela, tiene dificultades con sus deberes escolares, está siendo acosado o enfrenta alguna otra dificultad que puede ser potencialmente grave.
- En 6° grado, el absentismo es uno de los tres signos de que un estudiante puede abandonar la escuela secundaria.
- La asistencia regular y puntual en noveno grado es mejor indicador de las tasas de graduación que los resultados de los exámenes de 8° grado.
- Faltar el 10% o cerca de 18 días, del año lectivo puede afectar drásticamente el éxito académico de un estudiante.
- Los estudiantes pueden incurrir en faltas de asistencia recurrentes incluso si sólo pierden un día o dos de cada pocas semanas.
- La asistencia es una habilidad vital importante que le ayudará a su hijo a graduarse de la universidad y a conservar un trabajo.

¡Si tiene dificultades en su familia ( ) puede ayudar!

Cuestiones de salud:

No tiene donde vivir:

Carece de transporte:

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~Más~

Cada Día en la Escuela Cuenta

Asiste hoy y gana logros para toda una vida.

¿Cómo puede ayudar?

Haga que la asistencia escolar sea una prioridad

- Hable acerca de la importancia de asistir a la escuela todos los días, haga de ello una expectativa.
- Ayude a su hijo a mantener las rutinas diarias, tales como terminar sus deberes y lograr una noche de sueño reparador.
- Trate de no programar citas médicas y odontológicas durante el día escolar.
- No permita que su hijo se quede en casa a menos que realmente esté enfermo. Las quejas de dolores de cabeza o de dolores de estómago pueden ser signos de ansiedad.

Ayude a su hijo a seguir comprometido

- Averigüe si su hijo se siente comprometido con sus clases y si se siente a salvo del matoneo de las amenazas. Asegúrese de que él / ella no esté faltando a clases debido a problemas de conducta y políticas de disciplina escolar. Si ocurre alguno de estos problemas, trabaje con su escuela.
- Esté al tanto del progreso académico y busque ayuda de los profesores o tutores si es necesario. Asegúrese de que los maestros sepan cómo comunicarse con usted.
- Esté al tanto de los contactos sociales de su hijo. La presión de grupo puede llevarlo a faltar a la escuela, mientras que los estudiantes sin muchos amigos pueden sentirse aislados.
- Fomente actividades significativas después de la escuela, como deportes y clubes.

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Every School Day Counts

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School to Home Elementary Newsletter Messages in English and Spanish

MESSAGE 1

Attendance matters as early as kindergarten. Studies show children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. Students can suffer academically if they miss 10% of school days. This can be just one day every two weeks and can happen before you know it. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

How can you help?

- Plan vacations during non-school days
- Schedule your child's medical and dental appointments at the end of the school day
- Make sure they go to school every day unless they are ill

MESSAGE 1 Spanish

La asistencia a la escuela es importante desde la edad preescolar. Los estudios demuestran que los niños que pierden muchos días de kindergarten y de primer grado pueden tener dificultades académicas en

los últimos años escolares. Los estudiantes pueden sufrir académicamente si faltan el 10% de los días escolares. Esto puede ser tan sólo un día cada dos semanas y puede ocurrir antes de que se den cuenta. La buena asistencia ayudará a los niños a tener éxito en la escuela secundaria, en la universidad, y en el trabajo.

¿Cómo puede ayudarlos?

- Planeé sus vacaciones en los días no lectivos.
- Programe las citas médicas y odontológicas de su hijo al final del día escolar.
- Asegúrese de que vayan a la escuela todos los días a menos que estén enfermos.

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MESSAGE 2

Did you know that starting in Kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school?

- Missing 10% (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

What you can do:

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

MESSAGE 2 Spanish

- ¿Sabía usted que demasiadas faltas de asistencia al comenzar el kindergarten pueden hacer que los niños se atrasen en la escuela?
- Faltar el 10% (o cerca de 18 días) puede dificultar el aprendizaje de la lectura.
- Los estudiantes se pueden atrasar incluso si sólo faltan uno o dos días cada pocas semanas.
- Llegar tarde a la escuela puede implicar pobre asistencia.
- Las faltas de asistencia pueden afectar a toda la clase si el maestro tiene que retrasar la enseñanza para ayudar a los niños a ponerse al día.

¿Qué puede hacer usted?

- Establezca una hora regular para que el niño se acueste y una rutina en la mañana.
- Deje lista la ropa que va a usar y empaque la mochila la noche anterior.
- Establezca planes de contingencia para ir a la escuela si surge algún contratiempo. Llame a un miembro de la familia, a un vecino u otro padre de familia.
- Evite las citas médicas y los viajes prolongados cuando la escuela esté sesionando.

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What to Say to Students

Beyond the talking points for parents, you should add in some messages targeted to students of all ages. As they grow older, they need to hear this message from peers, as well as teachers and parents.

- **School is your first and most important job**. You're learning about more than math and reading. You're learning how to show up for school on time every day, so that when you graduate and get a job, you'll know how to show up for work on time every day.
- **Students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate and find good jobs**. In fact, a high school graduate makes, on average, a million dollars more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- **School only gets harder when you stay home too much**. Sometimes it's tempting to stay home because you've got too much work or you don't understand what's going on in class. But missing a day only makes that worse.

For more information, visit our website at: www.cocoschools.org/attendance

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What to Say to Parents

Stress that good attendance will help your children do well in high school, college and at work.

- **Your children can suffer academically** if they miss 10% of school days or about 18 days. That can be just one day every two weeks, and that can happen before you know it.
- **It doesn't matter if these absences are excused or unexcused**. They all represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- **Attendance matters as early as kindergarten**. Studies show many children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.
- **Preschool is a great time to start building a habit** of good attendance. Studies show that poor attendance in preschool can predict absenteeism in later grades.
- **By middle and high school, chronic absence is a leading warning sign** that a student will drop out.
- **Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom**, creating commotion and slowing down instruction.

Stress that families can make a difference.

- **Families should avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school**. Try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. The same goes for doctor's appointments.
- **For younger children, you can set a regular bedtime and morning routine**. Make sure they get 9 to 11 hours of sleep. You can lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- **For older children, you can help set homework and bedtime routines** that allow for 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers.
- **Get to know the teachers and administrators**. With younger children, make sure you introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.
- **Above all, set an example for your child**. Show him or her that attendance matters to you and that you won't allow an absence unless someone is truly sick. Don't ask older students to help with daycare and household errands.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE of EDUCATION

~More~

Every School Day Counts

Attend today, achieve for a lifetime!

- **You can turn to the school for help**. Many schools offer services for the whole family.
- **You can ask your principal to calculate chronic absence rates for the whole school**. Even if your child attends regularly, it's important to know how many students in your child's school are missing 10% or more of the school year.

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Talking Points Adults to Parents

If you have direct contact with parents – whether you are a teacher, an after-school provider, a clergy member, or school volunteer, you can make a difference by helping parents understand the critical importance of regular school attendance and by encouraging families to do everything in their power to make sure they build the habit of attendance starting as early as possible.

Start by conveying why each parent should care. Below are possible points to cover.

- Your children can suffer academically if they miss 10% of school days. This can be just one day every two weeks and can happen before you know it.
- Attendance matters as early as kindergarten. Studies show children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.
- Excused and unexcused absences represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves.
- Start building this habit early so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day, is important.
- Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.
- Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom, creating commotion and slowing down instruction.
- When children are absent, the state reduces school funding and resources toward pay for teachers and books. We all are negatively affected when a child is not in school.

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Follow-up by encouraging parents to be actively involved in helping improve attendance. You may suggest these methods:

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Put out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers.
- For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines. Stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track. Encourage meaningful afterschool activities that will help your child feel more engaged in school.
- Avoid scheduling medical appointments and vacations when school is in session.
- Don't let your child stay home unless he or she is truly sick. Keep in mind, complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Turn to the school if you need help. This school district offer services for the whole family.
- Remember, it is never too early to start to build the habit of attendance. You can start by enrolling your younger child in preschool and making sure they attend every day, unless they are truly sick.

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Getting in Touch with Hard to Reach Parents

Is your school having trouble getting contact information for parents or guardians of chronically absent kids? Check out these tried and true tips from teachers, advocates and school officials from around the country.

START WITH THE BASICS

- ✓ Ask students for their home phone number, as well as any relevant cell phone numbers.
- ✓ Talk to a chronically absent student's siblings if you can't reach the actual student.
- ✓ Look at school forms – accurate phone numbers are often on forms for free and reduced lunches.

SEEK OUT THE PARENTS

- ✓ For younger children, use drop off or pick up as an opportunity to reach out to parents or relatives and ask them to complete forms with contact information.
- ✓ Send a formal letter home informing parents of their legal obligation to provide up to date emergency numbers and contact information.
- ✓ Schedule a home visit to obtain accurate contact information.

GET CREATIVE

- ✓ If an event is coming up that parents are likely to call about, such as school picture day, be sure to alert office workers to ask parents for their contact information.
- ✓ Use address information to find and get in touch with families who live near chronically absent kids whose parents you're having a hard time reaching.
- ✓ Leverage existing community resources to establish attendance outreach workers who can make personal contact with families through telephone calls and home visits. In Chicago, for example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds attendance workers. Other communities use trained America Corps volunteers.

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CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE of EDUCATION

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our goal this year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly.

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school– regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent–which means missing 18 or more days over the course of an entire school year. Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9th grade good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8th grade test scores.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!!

Clearly going to school regularly matters!

We don't want your child to fall behind in school and get discouraged. Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session.
- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- Develop back up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

Let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school on time every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information please contact your child's school.

Sincerely,

Open Tools, Content, Edit Object
Click here and then right click.
Select Place Image...
Navigate to your District Logo on your hard drive.
Once placed, scale and move where you want it to appear.

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Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives

School attendance is a simple, easily understood measure of student performance. One strategy for improving attendance is engaging students, parents, educators and community members in a campaign that offers positive rewards for getting to school on-time.

What to Remember:

- Attendance incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance. Incentives should be part of creating a school-wide culture of attendance and accompanied by a deep commitment to ensuring students are engaged in the classroom once they show up.
- Incentives don't need to be costly. Simple rewards—recognition from peers and the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time, homework passes or even dancing in the hallways—go a long way toward motivating students. Ask students what they consider a meaningful incentive.
- Interclass competition is a powerful motivator. The sense of competition between classes (with rewards like a party for the class with the best monthly attendance) can be a powerful motivator. Such strategies encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class.
- Avoid recognizing only perfect attendance. Perfect attendance is not always the goal since it is not wise to encourage children to come to school when they're sick. Students should be rewarded for improved attendance, not just perfect records. Offering weekly perfect attendance awards can allow students to still have a chance to succeed the next week if they are absent.
- Reward timeliness not just showing up to school. Since tardiness also has an adverse impact on learning, many schools only count on-time attendance toward rewards.
- Send home information highlighting both the value of attendance and incentives and the consequences of poor attendance. Ensure families know about the incentive program and the importance of attendance for academic success, as well as school policies in which poor attendance can result in failing a course or being retained. Sanctions should never be used without incentives.
- Offer incentives for families, not just students. Often, families appreciate access to resources such as food baskets, transportation passes, etc.
- Implement incentives school wide. To foster a culture of attendance, every classroom needs to participate!

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Ideas for Incentives

Teachers can offer:

- Positive comments to children
- Positive notes home to parents
- Extra time at the computer or PE
- Free homework pass
- First-in-line privileges for lunch or dismissal
- Pencils, pens, stickers, posters, book covers, bookmarks, etc.
- Team certificates for the best record or most improved record
- Name on the "Attendance Wall" in the classroom
- Chance to act as teacher's assistant

Administrations, PTAs, and Boosters can provide:

- Recognition during morning announcements
- Certificate/award at student assembly
- Breakfast/lunch with the principal, superintendent, school board president, mayor, etc.
- School supplies, i.e. pencil with logo
- Food coupons redeemable in school cafeteria
- Smoothie/pizza party for class with best attendance
- "School money" for the school store
- Choice of donated product (movie, tickets, gift certificate)
- Traveling trophy for grade-level homeroom with best monthly attendance
- Attendance T-shirts/hats/buttons
- Age-appropriate rewards for most improved attendance
- Parking space near building

Good attendance helps kids succeed in school and bolster their self-esteem. Improving attendance requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond sanctions and includes incentives.

Here are some steps schools are taking:

When students at Michigan elementary school achieve perfect attendance for a month, they become a STAR (Studious, Thoughtful, Accountable, and Respectful) student. They earn a gold T-shirt saying "I am a STAR student." Their picture is displayed on the television in the school lobby.

A California elementary school improved its on-time attendance with an interclass competition that promised a pizza party to the first class with enough days of perfect attendance to spell out the words "Perfect Punctuality."

Another California elementary school awards the class with the best attendance an extra 15 minute recess on Fridays supervised by the principal. The students enjoy the attention from their principal and the teacher gets an extra-long lunch break.

An Oklahoma elementary school issues "school dollars" to students with good and improved attendance. Students can use the dollars at the school store to buy Christmas presents for family.

A Georgia middle school recognizes good attendance on a weekly, monthly and semester basis. Students who attend for a full week receive popcorn passes. The homeroom class in each grade level with the best attendance each month receives milk and doughnuts. Students with fewer than two absences can enter end-of-semester drawings for prizes.

A Georgia high school comes down hard on students who skip school: Seven unexcused absences a semester can mean course failure. But the high school also offers incentives: Those with fewer than two excused absences can receive ten extra points on final exams.

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Certificate of Achievement

This certificate is awarded to:

in recognition of

GOOD AND/OR IMPROVED ATTENDANCE THIS SEMESTER

Open Tools, Content, Edit Object
Click here and then right click.
Select Place Image...
Navigate to your District Logo
on your hard drive.
Once placed, scale and move
where you want it to appear.

Reset Form

Print Form

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Does Attendance Really Count in Our School? A Tool for Self-Assessment

	Strength	Ok for Now	Could be Better	Urgent Gap	Don't Know	How Do You Know?
1	Attendance is accurately taken and entered daily into the district data system in all classrooms.					
2	Our school has a clear and widely understood attendance policy.					
3	A team including the site administrator reviews attendance data on a regular basis to identify chronically absent students and monitor attendance patterns by grade, student sub-groups and classroom.					
4	Our school offers rich and engaging learning activities, keeping students from not wanting to miss school.					
5	Our school recognizes and appreciates good and improved attendance.					
6	Our school informs parents about the importance of attendance and encourages parents to help each other get their children to school.					
7	Our school identifies and reaches out to chronically absent students and their families in a caring manner to see how attendance could be improved.					
8	Our school partners with community agencies that offer resources (pre-K, afterschool, health services, volunteer mentors, transportation) that can help engage students and their families and remove barriers to getting to school.					
9	Individual learning plans are developed for high-risk students that address poor attendance along with low academic performance.					
10	Our strategies for supporting student attendance are reflected in our school improvement plan.					

(Note: Chronic Absence is missing= > 10% of school over a year including any type of absence; Satisfactory Attendance is missing= < 5% of school over a year)

School Name_____

Reset Form

Print Form

Instructions for Conducting Self-Assessment with a Team

This self-assessment tool can be used by an individual to help gain a deeper understanding of what is and could be happening to improve attendance at their school. It is also an excellent tool for laying the foundation for a team of key stakeholders to begin working together to reduce student absences. Below are suggested guidelines for engaging a team. If possible, identify one person who will assume responsibility for facilitating this process and dialogue.

1. Bring together a team of key stakeholders in your school to complete this self-assessment. Participants should include the principal, attendance personnel, classroom teachers, staff from partnering community agencies, and if possible, active parents. Feel free to expand this list to include others that you think might have valuable insights to offer about student attendance in your school.
2. Ask each participant to spend 10 minutes completing the tool.
3. Hand out an extra copy of the tool and ask participants to add in their responses with a hatch mark. Make copies of the version with everyone's responses. (An alternative option is to put up an enlarged copy of the tool on the wall and ask participants to add their responses using a marker. This approach allows everyone to see the collective responses without the need for additional copies.)
4. As a group, review the collective results. Encourage participants to identify and explore where there appear to be differences in how stakeholders have ranked a particular element. Use this as an opportunity to find out why the other person might have different perspectives. Keep in mind that the goal is to deepen understanding of why the differences of opinion might exist; agreeing upon a rating is not essential.
5. After comparing results, participants should discuss what they see as the biggest gaps or priorities to address in the near future. If needed, use dots or take a hand vote to agree upon the top three next steps. For each one, discuss who needs to be involved in advancing this priority? What are immediate next steps? Who can take responsibility for ensuring follow-up occurs? Determine how to stay in communication with each other about progress on the next steps and decide whether a follow-up meeting is needed.

School Name: _____

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