**The Importance of Regular School Attendance**

Regular school attendance is essential for student success, even beginning in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Early chronic absence can leave children unable to read well by the end of third grade. It can establish patterns of poor attendance and academic failure for older students, and increases the percentages of children who drop out of high school. Parents and families are essential partners with their child’s school in promoting good attendance because they, ultimately, have the “bottom-line” responsibility for making sure their child gets to school every day. Families often do not realize that attendance is important in Kindergarten, as it is in the higher grades. It is important that patterns of non-attendance do not develop, and that families build a healthy habit of daily school attendance right from the beginning. Children can quickly fall behind with their learning with frequent absences. Kindergartners who miss 10% or more of the school year, often have lower achievement in first grade, and for some, throughout elementary school. Even missing a day or two every few weeks can cause children to fall behind. Children do not do as well in school when they frequently miss part of or an entire school day. You can help your child succeed by understanding how schools define absences and learning ways to support your child’s school attendance. An unexcused absence is when a child misses school for reasons not accepted by the school district. (The list of excused and unexcused absences is available in the Student Code of Conduct and is also available online. Parents and Guardians can help their child to be academically successful by ensuring regular school attendance and that their child is at school on time, every day.

**Strategies for Parents to Encourage Attendance:**

1. Let your child know that your family values education. Tell your child that you believe he/she can make academic progress. Make education a family priority.
2. Insist that your child goes to school on time every day.
3. Talk with your child about school. Listen to your child’s concerns. Ask how you can help.
4. Help your child develop personal interests and strengths. Connect those interests and strengths to what your child is doing in school.
5. Support your child’s efforts with studying, completing homework, and working on academic skills and responsibilities.
6. Check your child’s backpack and agenda daily.
7. Discuss concerns with your child’s teacher and work together to support your child’s school success. Attend Parent/Teacher conferences and other school meetings that are scheduled.
8. Be sure that your child knows that you do not approve of his/her being late for school.
9. Attend school functions, PTA meetings, and activities, etc. Be involved with your child’s school.
10. Set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Lay out clothes and backpacks the night before.
11. Have your child relax before bedtime with a story, instead of the stimulation of television, video games, etc.
12. Have schoolwork and lunch ready and laid out and create a special folder for completed assignments. Provide regular study times and a quiet, clean area for doing homework.
13. Don’t allow your child to stay home unless he/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.
14. If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, members of the school’s Student Services Team (school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, behavior specialists, school nurses) or other parents for advice on how to help/him/her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
15. Do not let your child persuade you into making excuses for him/her.

