Pay Attention to Attendance:
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.

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 and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
• Missing 10 percent, 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.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make school attendance a priority
• Talk about the importance of showing up to school everyday, 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.
• Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Communicate with the school
• Know the school’s attendance policy – incentives and penalties
• Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
• Check on your child’s attendance to be sure absences are not piling up.
• Ask for help from school officials, afterschool programs, other parents or community agencies if you’re having trouble getting your child to school.