



Westwood Middle School

Erika Burden
Principal

Tami Skillingstad
Assistant Principal
Athletic Director

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year Westwood Middle School is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school – and themselves. Your student can start building this habit early so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance helps children do well in middle school, college, and at work.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- 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 to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- 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 9th grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

We miss your children when they are gone, and we value their contributions to our school. We ask for your help to ensure that your student attends regularly and is successful in school. If your student must be absent, please contact the attendance secretary at 509-559-4152. We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people prepared to help you if your student faces challenges getting to school regularly or on time. Please contact one of our counselors, Ms. April Phillips at 509-559-4157 or Ms. Marie Hyde at 509-559-4158 for assistance.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires school-age children to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements. <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>

We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence. If your student has two unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

If your student has seven unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences in the school year, we are required to file a petition with the Juvenile Court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory



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attendance law. The petition may be stayed and your student and family may be referred to a Community Truancy Board, or you and your student may need to appear in Juvenile Court.

For further information about school procedures regarding attendance, please review the student handbook.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine for your student.
- Ensure they prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.
- Don't let your student 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.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your student's teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,

Erika Burden
Principal

This student absence information is available on the school website under "Student Resources." Ideas for how you can help your child maintain good attendance are also included.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in the Cheney Public Schools.

Student Name

Classroom/Home Room Teacher

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Portions of this letter are attributable to Attendance Works <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

Form No. 600A