

## September is Attendance Awareness Month!

**Parents and Families** are essential partners in promoting good attendance because they have the bottom-line responsibility for making sure their children get to school every day.

Attendance is essential to school success, but absences — excused and unexcused — can quickly add up to academic trouble. Chronic absence —defined as missing 10% of the school year (about 18 days per year), or just 2-3 days every month—can translate into 3rd graders unable to master reading, 6th graders failing courses and 9th graders dropping out of high school. Low-income students, who most depend on school for opportunities to learn, are especially harmed when they miss too much instruction.

In order to monitor and support positive attendance for all students, the following letters will be sent home for the following reasons (California Education Code 48260):

**3 Unexcused Absences: 1st truancy letter** - This serves as a reminder to the parent/guardian to address the student's attendance issues and to take steps to avoid possible future truancy. (Student conference at middle and high school)

**6 Unexcused Absences: 2nd truancy letter** - A Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting is conducted to address ongoing attendance issues with Principal or Assistant Principal, Counselor, Parent, and Student. (An Attendance Contract is created.)

**9 Unexcused Absences: 3rd truancy letter** - A Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) meeting is held at the District Office. This is a truancy mediation program mediated by the County's District Attorney or probation officer, and/or juvenile court. Also in attendance are the Student Resource Officer (SRO), District Personnel, School Administrator, Parent and Student.

**Excessive Excused Absences** - after 11 excused absences, a doctor's note is required for every subsequent absence. When there is no doctor's note, the absence becomes unexcused and truancy letters will be generated.

**Tardy arrival** - three unexcused tardies equal one day of truancy. Excessive tardies (excused or unexcused) will also generate truancy letters.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Missing **10 % (or about 18 days)** can make it harder to learn to read.
- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- 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.

### WHY POSITIVE ATTENDANCE MATTERS:

Who can read at Grade Level after 3rd grade?

- 64% of kids with good attendance in Kindergarten and 1st (Missed 9 or fewer days both years). *Compared with...*
- 17% of chronically absent in K and 1st (These kids missed 18 or more days both years!)

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Everybody plays a role in ensuring children attend school on time and regularly. Below are strategies for parents/guardians.

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Depending on the ages, most kids need roughly 9-11 hours of sleep per night.
- Choose clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- When lights go out, that includes cell phones, video games and computers.
- Make getting students to school on time every day a top priority.
- Don't let your child stay home unless she is truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and can not be a reason to stay home.
- Avoid medical appointments or extended trips when school is in session.

If you are concerned about your child's frequent school absences, please contact Arlene Cristobal at 247-0665, ext. 7003.

For more on school readiness tips and info, visit: **[AttendanceWorks.org](http://AttendanceWorks.org)**