

# Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ



HEATHER MORSE  
JUDGE

August 18, 2014

1 Second Street  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
Phone (831) 786-7200

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.

Truancy is often considered an "early warning sign" that a young person will become involved with criminal behavior. According to the latest research from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 82% of prisoners are high school dropouts.

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.

Research shows that children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!! Kindergarten counts. It is important in establishing good habits. 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. **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:

- **H**elp your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- **E**nsure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick.
- **A**void scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session.
- **L**ay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- **T**alk to teachers and counselors for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- **H**ave a backup plan for getting to school if something comes up.

Please, 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 can help if you have issues around food, clothing, or school supplies. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information please contact me or your child's counselor.

Sincerely,  
Honorable Heather D. Morse,  
Santa Cruz County Superior Court