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September is Attendance Month

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Mon, Sep 16, 2019 at 8:00 AM

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Principal's Bulletin

September 2019

Attendance Awareness Month

Dear Heather Families,

September is Attendance Awareness Month, and we are partnering with the San Mateo County Office of Education and the San Carlos School District to highlight important information about why we need your child at school learning as much as possible. 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. The state has begun to monitor chronic absenteeism as a performance indicator on the [CA School Dashboard](#) and has asked each school to engage its community in an effort to build awareness about attendance.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. [Here is a guide](#) to help you decide when to keep your child home due to illness. 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—which means missing 18 or more days over the course of an entire school year.

Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- 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.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!

Clearly going to school regularly matters! Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- Select clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick.
- Try to avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session. (There are 185 days in the year when school is NOT in session.)

- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- Develop back up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

At Heather School, we are here to support your family so that your child can show up for school on time every day. We share your interest in your child being successful in school! If you have any questions or [need more information](#), please let us know. As a clarification, absences due to family travel are considered **unexcused** absences as this reason does not meet the state's criteria for **excused absences**. It is a requirement that I notify families of unexcused absences or tardies in **excess of three days**. This notice is meant to build awareness and offer support if there are obstacles in the way of your child getting to school that we can address collaboratively.

Many thanks for your partnership with this effort to increase school attendance at Heather School!

Pam Jasso
Principal

ATTENDANCE
in the early grades

Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence
www.attendanceworks.org

Many of our youngest students miss 10 percent of the school year – about 18 days a year or just two days every month. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten, and even pre-K, can predict lower test scores, poor attendance and retention in later grades, especially if the problem persists for more than a year. Do you know how many young children are chronically absent in your school or community?

Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids
in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.

2 in 10 low-income kids miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.

2.5 in 10 homeless kids are chronically absent.

4 in 10 transient kids miss too much school when families move.

Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?*

- 64% of kids with good attendance in K and 1st (missed 9 or fewer days both years)
- 43% of kids with at-risk attendance (missed more than 9 days both years)
- 41% of kids chronically absent in K or 1st (missed 18 or more days one year)
- 19% of kids chronically absent in K and 1st (missed 18 or more days both years)

What We Can Do

Engage Families
Many parents and students don't realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.

Fix Transportation
The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.

Address Health Needs
Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.

Track the Right Data
Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.

*There are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

*Cheng, Kelly. Economic Mobility, Parent, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, NY, NY, September 2008.
*Chronic Absence in 2016, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2017.
*Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Absences and Third Grade Outcomes, Ipsos Survey Research, May 2011.

To download a copy of this infographic, please visit www.attendanceworks.org

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