

Attendance Matters

Toolkit 2019-2020

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Key Messages

Talk Mail/Newsletter

“ Did you know that students can suffer academically if they miss just 10% of the school year? That’s only 2 or 3 days a month. And

that can add up without you even realizing it. We want to remind our families that you are key to making sure your child gets to school safely and on time every day. Some absences, such as sick days, are unavoidable, but as parents and guardians you can ensure your child does not miss time for unnecessary travelling or appointments, and that if they are kept home due to illness, they are truly sick. If you struggle to get your child to attend, or to arrive on time, we encourage you to reach out to their teacher or myself. We can offer support and guidance to get your child back on the right track.

Please support our Attendance Matters initiative and make good attendance a habit. ”

Mid-Year Talk Mail/Newsletter A

“ Students who miss 18 days a year can notice a negative impact on their academics. That’s just 2 or 3 days a month, and that can add up without you even realizing it. Missing days equals lost time in the classroom and learning happens every single day, including the days around winter and spring break. You never know what you might miss! Try to line up vacations, activities, and appointments with our school calendar. If you struggle to get your child to attend, or to arrive on time, we encourage you to reach out to their teacher or myself. We can offer support and guidance to get your child back on the right track! ”

Mid-Year Talk Mail/Newsletter B

“ District data shows that the average high school student loses 1.2% off of their class average each day they miss. That’s a 6% loss from their expected grade after missing just 5 days of school. This can add up! Sometimes missed days can be the result of academic or social anxiety, but missing time only makes this worse. If you struggle to get your child to attend, or to arrive on time, we encourage you to reach out to their teacher or myself. We can offer support and guidance to get your child back on the right track! ”

Parent/Guardian Letter

[School Letterhead]

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This year, and every year, our goal is to ensure that all of our students are attending class regularly and arriving on time.

Attendance has a huge impact on a student's social and academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Absenteeism is linked to lower academic achievement in early years which can be difficult to catch-up from, and our own data shows that the average high school student loses 1.2% off of their class average each day they miss. That's a 6% loss from their expected grade after missing just 5 days of school. This can add up!

Families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely and on time every day. Our schools monitor attendance carefully and will be reaching out to you if they see irregular attendance. If you require support and advice about attendance, teachers and school administrators want to help you. Schools care about each child and want them to do their best and feel they belong.

Some absences, such as sick days, are unavoidable but we hope you recognize the importance of regular attendance to your student's success and support us in our initiative. You can find more information about "Attendance Matters" on the Anglophone South [website](#), including our campaign materials and parent resources. This initiative is part of our School Improvement Plan and it is supported by the District Education Council.

As parents and guardians, you hold the greatest influence with your children. Help us make good attendance a habit!

[Signature]

Principal

Attendance Matters – Tweets/Key Messages

- Children can suffer academically if they miss 10 percent of school days (about 18 days). That can be just one day every two weeks! #AttendanceMatters
- Each day absent is a lost opportunity to learn. You never know what you might miss! #AttendanceMatters
- Attendance matters even in the early years. Studies show that children who are frequently absent in kindergarten and first grade may struggle academically in later years and often have trouble reading by the end of third grade. #AttendanceMatters
- Elementary is the time to start building a habit of good attendance. Studies show that poor attendance in the first years can predict absenteeism in later grades. #AttendanceMatters
- Amongst middle and high school students, chronic absenteeism is a leading warning sign that a student will drop out. #AttendanceMatters
- When students are late or absent it can affect the whole classroom, creating disruption and slowing down instruction. Make good attendance a habit! #AttendanceMatters
- Try to line up vacations and doctors' appointments with the school's schedule whenever possible. You can find the school calendar at <https://bit.ly/2ZsJDTg> #AttendanceMatters
- School absences spike in the weeks before and after winter break. It's tempting to extend your vacation by a few days, but remember, those days count as absences and learning happens every day. #AttendanceMatters
- Find you're running late in the morning? Set a regular bedtime and morning routine and aim for 9 to 11 hours of sleep for little ones. Try to lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before. #AttendanceMatters
- Find you're running late in the morning? Help your teen set homework and bedtime routines that allow for 8 ½ to 9 ½ hours of sleep. And when the lights go out, so should the cell phone, computer and television. #AttendanceMatters

- #AttendanceMatters Absences can be the result of academic or social anxiety but missing time only makes this worse. If you struggle to get your child to attend, or to arrive on time, reach out to school staff. We can offer support and guidance to get your child back on track!
- Struggling to get your student to school on time or motivated to attend at all? Reach out to one of our teachers or administrators for help and strategies for good attendance. #AttendanceMatters
- The average high school student loses 1.2% off their class average each day they miss. That's a 6% loss from their expected grade after missing just 5 days! If you struggle to get your child to attend, reach out to school staff. We can offer support to get them back on track!
- #AttendanceMatters Many thanks to our families who set a great example for our students by helping them be on time each and every morning!
- Students with good attendance are more likely to feel connected academically and socially. Help your child be to school on time, every day. #AttendanceMatters
- Good attendance, including being on time, is an important life skill that students will need beyond school. Let's make it a habit! #AttendanceMatters

WHEN IS SICK TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL?



Send me to school if...

- I have a runny nose or just a little cough, but no other symptoms.
- I haven't taken any fever reducing medicine for 24 hours, and I haven't had a fever during that time.
- I haven't thrown up or had any diarrhea for 24 hours.



Keep me at home if...

- I have a temperature higher than 100 degrees even after taking medicine.
- I'm throwing up or have diarrhea.
- My eyes are pink and crusty.
- I have an undiagnosed rash.



Call the doctor if...

- I have a temperature higher than 100 degrees for more than two days.
- I've been throwing up or have diarrhea for more than two days.
- I've had the sniffles for more than a week, and they aren't getting better.
- I still have asthma symptoms after using my asthma medicine (and call 911 if I'm having trouble breathing after using an inhaler).



Adapted with permission from Baltimore City Public Schools. Used with permission from Attendance Works.

Right click to save graphic.



WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS



Being present and on time has a positive impact on learning from K-12.

Stay on Track

It is difficult to "catch up" when time is missed. Starting the day late can impact your child's entire day and affects the whole classroom.



Reduce Anxiety

Your child will feel connected academically and socially when they have good attendance.



Build Confidence

Good school attendance helps to build habits that will last a lifetime and transfer to life beyond public school.



Did you know?



Absenteeism is associated with lower academic achievement in reading, math, and general knowledge in the early school years, which can cause students to struggle in later years.



When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Chronic Absence
18+ days

Worrying
10-17 days

Very Good
9 or fewer days

What Can You Do?

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Get clothes and backpacks ready the night before.
- Only let your child stay home if they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache may be signs of school anxiety.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to their teacher, school counselor, or principal for advice on how to make them feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Avoid appointments and vacations when school is in session.
- Have a back-up plan for getting to school if something comes up.



ASD
Anglophone South School District

Establishing School-wide Attendance Incentives

One strategy for improving attendance is engaging students and parents in a campaign that offers positive recognition for good attendance and getting to school on-time.

About Incentives:

- Attendance incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach that includes addressing the barriers to good attendance that your families encounter (transportation, clothing, anxiety, *etc.*) Incentives should be part a school-wide culture of attendance and student engagement.
- Incentives don't need to be costly. Simple rewards – recognition from classmates and the school through certificates or assemblies, extra recess time, homework passes or even dancing in the hallways – go a long way toward motivating students. Ask students what they consider a meaningful incentive.
- Interclass competition is a powerful motivator. The sense of competition between classes (with rewards like a party for the class with the best monthly attendance) encourages students to feel accountable to each other.
- Perfect attendance is not always the goal since it may encourage children to come to school when they are sick and penalize those who truly are sick. Students should be recognized for good and improved attendance, as well. Offering weekly perfect attendance awards can allow students to still have a chance to succeed the next week if they are absent.
- Reward timeliness as well, not just showing up to school.
- Ensure families know about the incentive program and the importance of attendance for academic success.
- Make sure attendance incentives are aligned with Policy 711. Food should not be used as a reward.

Incentive Ideas:

- Positive comments to children
- Positive notes home to parents that appreciate their efforts to get their children to school on time
- Extra time at the computer, PE, or recess
- First-in-line privileges for lunch or dismissal
- Pencils, pens, stickers, posters, book marks, etc.
- Team certificates for the best record or most improved record
- Name on the “Attendance Wall” in the classroom
- Chance to act as teacher's helper
- Recognition during morning announcements
- Certificate/award at student assembly
- Traveling trophy for grade-level homeroom with best monthly attendance

Adapted from Attendance Works.

Non-Food Incentives



The following is a list of ideas to reward students' achievements with non-food rewards. This list is meant to act as a resource to help your team develop new ideas around rewarding and motivating children. It is divided into sections for the different grade levels.

Kindergarten to Grade 5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Featured on a photo recognition board</i> • <i>be recognized during morning announcements</i> • <i>teachers helper</i> • <i>extra recess time</i> • <i>work outside</i> • <i>eat lunch outside</i> • <i>dance in classroom to favourite songs</i> • <i>teacher makes special phone call home</i> • <i>bring stuffed animal to school and sit on desk</i> • <i>read to younger students</i> • <i>take home a class game for the night to play with family</i> • <i>write with special pen or pencil for the day</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>sit at teachers desk for a day</i> • <i>listen to music in class</i> • <i>be recognized during monthly assemblies</i> • <i>extra computer time</i> • <i>time to socialize at the end of the class</i> • <i>no homework pass</i> • <i>pajama day</i> • <i>sit by friends during class /switch seats</i> • <i>make a film of the school</i> • <i>read the morning announcements</i> • <i>lunch time dance party or karaoke</i> • <i>getting a special certificate or postcard sent home</i> • <i>learning how to do something of interest on the computer</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Choose what assignments the class does for homework</i> • <i>free entrance into the school dance, sporting events, school drama production etc.</i> • <i>Work with school staff to decide ideas for school events</i> • <i>no homework pass</i> • <i>reserved sitting at school cafeteria</i> • <i>allowing student and 5 friends to sit in classroom for lunch by themselves</i> • <i>Students pick which problem the teacher will make a freebie answer on homework, assignment, test or examine.</i>

Absenteeism Root Cause Worksheet

Use these questions to help you identify the likely causes of absenteeism for a student who is chronically absent in your class. Understanding the root causes for missing too much school can help you determine the best course of action.

Academic Conditions	
Is the student struggling academically? Consider what skills and content the student has missed as a result of his or her absences as well as other instructional needs.	Y / N
Does the student need accommodations to benefit from classroom instructions? (e.g. peer support, access to computer, breaks, material presented in different ways)	Y / N
Does the student have language or communication challenges?	Y / N
Does the student struggle with organizational tasks?	Y / N
Are there barriers to homework completion?	Y / N
Do you suspect that the student has an unidentified learning issue?	Y / N
Are the instructional and behavioral supports the rights ones?	Y / N
Safety Concerns	
Have there been any reports of bullying?	Y / N
Is the student exposed to race, disability, cultural or LGBTQ biases?	Y / N
Social Dynamics	
Does the student get to avoid difficult social or academic situations by staying away from school?	Y / N
Are transitions difficult for the student? (e.g. entering the school building, moving from class to class)	Y / N
Home Situation	
Do the parents/guardians recognize the importance of and support regular school attendance?	Y / N
Are there problems in the home that contribute to frequent absences? (e.g., parental illness, homelessness, joblessness, child care, needed health or mental health services for parent/caregiver)	Y / N
Health Status	
Are there conditions in the classroom, cafeteria or other school areas that affect the student's health or safety? (e.g. mold or other asthma triggers, animal dander, food allergens)	Y / N
Does the student exhibit anxiety due to separation from parent / caregiver?	Y / N
Does the student require health or mental health-related treatment that interferes with attendance?	Y / N
School Culture	
Are there any clubs, programs or resources during the school day and after school that might help engage the student?	Y / N
Is there a caring adult at the school that could mentor the student?	Y / N
Student Voice	
Has the student identified the reasons for missing school?	Y / N
Parent Voice	
Have you met with the parent/caregiver to discuss attendance concerns?	Y / N
Has the parent/caregiver identified specific barriers to attendance?	Y / N
Are there cultural, language, or other types of barriers that require extra effort on the part of the school to work with the parent/caregiver?	Y / N

Adapted from Attendance Works.

Walking School Bus

Transportation can be a barrier to good attendance for some students. Setting a routine and structure for walkers may help reduce lateness and absenteeism for students who live within walking distance. It adds an additional layer of safety and also support for those parents/guardians who may struggle to get their children out on time.



WalkingSchoolBus.Org

What is a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school, or a more structured program of routes with meeting points, a timetable and a rotating schedule of volunteers.

For more information on creating a Walking School Bus visit:

http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/WalkingSchoolBus_pdf.pdf .

A step-by-step guide to creating a walking school bus can be found here:

https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/step-by-step-walking-school-bus-2017.pdf