

School Attendance- Did You Know?

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF CURRITUCK COUNTY SCHOOLS



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- One in 10 kindergarten and first-grade students nationally are chronically absent, missing nearly a month of school. Emerging research shows even higher rates among preschoolers.
 - These early absences correlate with reading difficulties and poor attendance patterns in later years. One national study found that only 17 percent of students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade were reading proficiently in third grade, compared to 64 percent of those with good attendance.
 - Students can begin to reverse their academic difficulties if they improve their attendance.
 - Parents are often unaware of the corrosive effects of absenteeism and how quickly absences add up to academic trouble in the early grades. Some face challenges with health, transportation or housing that contribute to absences.
 - Attendance rates are better in schools where parents feel welcomed and engaged and where they trust their children are safe.

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Chronic absence refers to students missing an extended period of school when both excused and unexcused absences are taken into account. Given the critical importance of time devoted to learning, especially in the early years, we believe it is important to count all absences.

Chronic absence can be defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year (equivalent to 18 days out of a 180 day school year) regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. If children miss this much school while in grades K-3, it is chronic early absence. It was found that this level of school absence in the first years of school was associated with lower academic performance in subsequent grades.

A missed school day is a lost opportunity for students to learn. In this era of increased accountability for states, districts, and schools, the connection between student attendance and learning is being studied more than ever before.

Any absence, whether excused or not, denies students the opportunity to learn in accordance with the school's instructional program. Schools provide hands-on, guided approach to learning that requires active student involvement. This cannot be achieved by a worksheet that is sent in place of missing school days.

If a student is 10 minutes late to school each day, this adds up to missing more than 33 hours of class time. A student with a 90 percent attendance average for Kindergarten through 12th grade will miss over a year of accumulated time in the classroom. This is the same for picking students up early.

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You can help your child succeed and improve attendance rates:

- *Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- *Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- *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 not a reason to stay home.
- *If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- *Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- *Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- *Recognize the importance of attendance beginning in Kindergarten- the expectations set by NCDPI for Kindergarten are high. If you bring them, we will grow them.
- *Get your child to school on time and allow them to stay all day. A child arriving late or leaving early takes away valuable learning for every student in that classroom.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Start building this habit in kindergarten so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.