



REPORT TO PARENTS

RP 25:3

Attendance

It's really pretty simple: The more school a child misses, the more likely he or she is to fall behind academically. Although most teachers allow students to make up the work they missed, nothing can make up for losing a valuable day of instruction. Therefore, it's your responsibility, as parents and caregivers, to minimize the number of days your child misses school. Here are some tips that can help:

When They Don't Want to Go to School

Virtually every parent has heard, "I just don't want to go to school today." If your child says this occasionally, firmly insist that attending school is a responsibility and that he or she must go. If complaints become more frequent, you need to discover the cause. One or more of the following situations may apply:

- **"The dog ate my homework."** Many times children will resist going to school if they have neglected to study for a test, complete homework, or finish a project. First, explain to them that staying home won't solve the problem. Then, working with your child, set up a system to keep track of tests and assignments.

- **Fear of bullies.** If your child actually seems afraid to go to school, encourage him or her to open up and share why they are scared. Tell your child that you will get help and immediately notify the principal, the child's teacher, and a counselor.

- **Falling behind.** Sometimes, children don't want to go to school because they feel "stupid." Meet with the teacher to find out how your child is doing. If necessary, explore tests your child can take to track his or her learning and ask about special help that may be available.

- **"My teacher hates me."** In this situation, it's best to overcome your reluctance and schedule a conference with the teacher. The key is to have an open and honest discussion of the reasons for the child's feelings, and ways to improve the teacher-child relationship.

- **Set a good example.** Parents who are habitually late to work, or take "sick days" when they aren't really sick, set a wrong example for their children.

When It's Your Fault

Whether it's to avoid crowds, get cheaper airfares, or coattail on a parent's business trip, a disturbing number of families take their children out of school to go on vacations. It's a trend that is very disruptive to their children's education. If possible, try to schedule vacations, doctors' appointments, and other commitments during school breaks. If you must pull your kids out of class, do the following:

- **Give plenty of notice.** It's difficult, and sometimes impossible, for a teacher to prepare assignments and make-up work on short notice. Let the teacher know at least two weeks in advance if your child will be missing class.

- **Take responsibility.** Simply having the assignments isn't good enough. Make sure your child thoroughly completes the assignments instead of rushing through them at the last minute.

- **Don't do the work.** While it may be tempting to "help" your child with his or her assignments, make sure that the work they turn in is their own.

Attendance is an extremely important part of your child's education. By minimizing the instruction your child misses, you can ensure that he or she gets the most out of school.

