

# Family Attendance Pledge Letter

*PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM*

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, **Renton School District** is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

## **WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU**

We miss your student when they are gone and we value their contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that your student attends regularly and is successful in school. If your student is going to be absent, please contact your child's school. **A new state law requires that we get your signature to verify that you have received attendance information from the school district.**

## **OUR PROMISE TO YOU**

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. Please contact the attendance office, school nurse, counselor, or your child's teacher if you need support. We will track attendance daily, communicate with you to understand the absence, and identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school.

## **SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS**

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Children that are 6- or 7-years-old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6- or 7-year-old, the student must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements.

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>

Renton School District Policy and Procedure 3122 on excused and unexcused absences can be found on the district website: <http://go.boarddocs.com/wa/rpswa/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=AFSU647A496D>

This information is also included in the student handbook for your school.

**We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence.**

If your student has **two unexcused absences in one month**, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. We will develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

In elementary school after **five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences** in the school year, the school district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your student. A conference is not required if your student has provided a doctor's note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and the parent, student and school have made a plan so your student does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

If your student has **seven unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences** within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the Juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. You and your student may need to appear in Juvenile Court if your student continues to be truant.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are 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.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.

#### **Please return this to your child's school:**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Print**

**Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in Renton School District:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_