



## Annual Attendance Letter

2022 - 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

The South Kitsap School District is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Students who attend regularly feel better about school and themselves by not falling behind. You and your student can start building the habit of good attendance beginning in preschool. Learning right from the start that going to school on time, each and every day is not only important and beneficial, but builds good habits of participation, learning, and accountability for future success while in high school, college, and career opportunities.

### **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 being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with schoolwork, dealing with a bully, or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- 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 school's attendance office**.

### **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. We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent, and to 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 Homeschool 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. We are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence.

### **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

If your student has one **unexcused** absence in any given month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you. Three within any month requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify barriers and help with supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

Students with seven unexcused absences in any given month or fifteen unexcused absences or more within a school year, we are required by law to take a range of actions including filing a truancy petition with the juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 the mandatory attendance laws.

The petition may be automatically stayed, and your student and family may be referred to a Community Engagement Board, or you and your student may need to appear in juvenile court. If your student continues to be truant, you may need to go to court.

### **EXCUSED ABSENCES**

In elementary school, after five **excused** absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year, the district will contact you to schedule a conference. At least one district employee will attend the conference to help identify barriers and provide supports available to you and your student. A conference will not be required if a doctor's note has been provided or the absence has been pre-arranged in writing, and the parent, student, and school have plan in place to ensure your student does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan, the team that created the plan will need to reconvene.

The South Kitsap School District has established rules on attendance that will help you ensure your student is attending regularly. Please refer to the [Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#) located on our website. [www.skschools.org](http://www.skschools.org).

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomachache 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.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your student's teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

**The South Kitsap School District requires annually this signed attendance agreement stating that you agree with the importance of daily attendance.**

*Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in South Kitsap School District.*

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