

Attendance Matters
Richland School District Two
Middle School

Good attendance is a habit that children need to learn and practice throughout their years in school. Attendance is related to a child's ability to be successful in all areas of school: academics, behavioral and social. When a student misses school, regardless of the reason, they are missing instruction and opportunities to learn. An excessive amount of these missed opportunities could impact their ability to pass the class.

Attendance in the middle school years is extremely important. Once students are in high school, attendance will directly impact a student's academic success. In high school, if a student accumulates too many absences, they will not meet the required amount of "seat time" to gain credit for a class. Failure to receive credit for a class will require that the student retakes the class.

Your child's attendance is critical to their success. There are two attendance issues that you must be mindful of at all times: chronic absenteeism and truancy.

- Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent of school days. Students can accumulate excessive absences and be considered chronically absent by only missing a few days of school per month. Research has shown chronic absenteeism can have a negative impact on a student's ability to be successful. Regardless of the reason why a child missing school, they are still missing instruction and opportunities to learn.
- South Carolina truancy is defined as an accumulation three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences. Written excuses for all absences must be provided within 5 days of the absence. Failure to provide written excuses (medical or parent excuse) for absences could result in student being considered truant.

School attendance is one of the most important factors related to school success and graduation. The research below provides information.

- Chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy are important predictors of school performance, including high school graduation.
- Chronic absenteeism can reduce the likelihood of post-secondary enrollment. (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012)
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school. (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012)
- By middle and high school, chronic absence is a leading warning sign that a student will drop out. (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012)
- Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school. (Olson, 2014)
- Students who are routinely absent are also more likely to drop out of high school prior to earning their high school diploma. (Spradlin, Stephanie, Chen, Shi, Chen, Han, & Cierniak, 2012)
- Researchers have found that students who are chronically absent from school or truant are more likely to engage in risky behaviors (e.g., sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, etc.) or experience serious mental health challenges. (Lochmiller, 2013)
- Students who are chronically absent from school face an increase chance of future unemployment. (Lochmiller, 2013)

Resources:

Robert Balfanz & Vaughn Byrnes, May 2012, "The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nations' Public Schools" http://new.every1graduates.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FINALChronicAbsenteeismReport_May16.pdf

Spradlin, T., Shi, D., Cierniak, K. Chen, M., & Han, J. (2012). Attendance and chronic absenteeism in Indiana: Descriptive data analysis. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy.

Lochmiller, Chad. (2013) "Improving Student Attendance in Indiana's Schools: Synthesis of Existing Research related to Student Absenteeism and Effective, Research-Based Interventions". <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Improving-Student-Attendance-in-Indianas-Schools-CEEP-Indiana-DOE-Oct-2013.pdf>

Olson, Linda (July 2014). "Why September Matters: Improving Student Attendance" <http://baltimore-berc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SeptemberAttendanceBriefJuly2014.pdf>