CLARK COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT
DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION
JUVENILE SECTION

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Judge
Katrine M. Lancaster
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Nichol R. Smith
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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year! I hope you and your child are looking forward to new learning opportunities, connecting with new friends and old, and meeting schoolteachers. As your child begins a new school year, I want to encourage you to make your child's education a priority by ensuring they attend school every day.

Education is one of the greatest opportunities we can provide for our children. Every school day offers more than academic instruction. Students learn responsibility, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and the skills they need to become successful adults. Consistent attendance also helps children build positive relationships with teachers and classmates while developing confidence and healthy routines.

The numbers tell an important story. In Ohio, **more than one in four students miss enough school to be considered chronically absent**, meaning they miss **10% or more of the school year,** which is approximately **18 days**, or just **two days each month**. Chronic absenteeism makes it more difficult to keep up with lessons, complete assignments, and stay connected with peers. Every day your child is present at school is an investment in their success.

Research consistently shows that attendance matters. Students with good attendance are:

- **Three times more likely to become proficient readers;**
- **Nearly four times more likely to become proficient in mathematics; and**
- **Almost twelve times more likely to graduate from high school on time** than students who are chronically absent.

Ohio law requires children of compulsory school age to attend school regularly. While the court has a responsibility to enforce these laws, when necessary, our goal is to support families and not to punish them. We recognize that many families face challenges such as illness, transportation, housing instability, mental health, or other circumstances that can make regular attendance difficult. If your family is experiencing obstacles, I encourage you to reach out to your child's school. School staff, community agencies, and the court work together to connect families with resources and services that can help.

As a parent or guardian, you have one of the greatest influences on your child's success. Establishing a consistent bedtime and morning routine, scheduling appointments outside of school hours whenever possible, communicating with teachers, and making school attendance a daily expectation all send a powerful message that education matters.

Thank you for your partnership in helping your child achieve their full potential.

Sincerely,

Katrine M. Lancaster

Judge Katrine M. Lancaster