

September 4, 2009

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS-PLEASE READ!!

Dear Parents,

As we announced last Spring, the school district has adopted a new attendance policy effective this 2009-2010 school year. We felt that it was critical to explain this policy fully to parents.

We do support a strict and consistent attendance policy. If there is one thing that researchers agree on, it is that attendance has a significant role as it relates to student success. Students who are absent or late on an ongoing basis are at a disadvantage when it comes to school achievement and success.

Because this is now district policy, we have no “wobble room” for exceptions—we must follow the district procedure.

In looking through the district policy, there were a few items that we thought we would explain here because they might be a departure from our current way of doing business.

1. Please know that 3 unexcused tardies now (leaving early is considered a tardy) equals a half day unexcused absence.
2. Letters must be generated at 3 unexcused absences, 6 unexcused absences, 9 Absences (excused and/or unexcused), and 13 absences (excused and/or unexcused) and be sent home. This year, after 13 absences a doctor’s note must be submitted to school with every absence after hitting the 13 absence threshold.
3. Parents MUST give a reason for taking children out early, bringing in late, or missing school. This must be done within one day of the tardy/absence or it is considered unexcused and cannot be changed. Please “don’t kill the messenger” when we ask for the reason that your child is late or absent and please remember to call in absences every day (unless you have let us know the student will be gone multiple days). Remember, if the child arrives after 8:40, they MUST check in at the office.
4. The new policy involves the truancy officer at a much lower threshold. I have attended court proceedings with this truancy officer and can tell you that the judge is very tough about school attendance. An attendance plan is established at the court date and the court can issue a “bench warrant” for your arrest if a parent does not fully abide by this agreement.
5. Things such as “sleeping in late”, “had trouble getting dressed”, “didn’t feel like going to school” etc. will be counted as unexcused. The court sees it as the parent’s responsibility to plan for potential setbacks and expects children to be at school on time.
6. I am going to strongly encourage parents to obtain doctor’s notes for extended absences or illness-related tardies. This is about the only thing that the court accepts when it comes to justified absences. Parents should get a note from the doctor or dentist EVERY time a child goes to the doctor or dentist and give this to the attendance clerk. This will be kept in their file and noted. After 12 absences (in a year) a child MUST have a doctor’s excuse for EVERY absence thereafter.

Our goal is to work together as “partners” when it comes to educating your child. We value our relationship with parents and we try very hard to understand the difficult circumstances that crop up in Frederick households.

Hopefully, our parents will read through this attendance policy and will fully understand it’s implications. Our hope is that we can work together this year to make attendance a priority!

Please give us a call if you have any questions or concerns.

Karen Musick
Principal

