



every day counts

ATTEND TODAY -
ACHIEVE TOMORROW!

Talking Points Adults to Parents

If you have direct contact with parents – whether you are a teacher, an after-school provider, a clergy member, or school volunteer, you can make a difference by helping parents understand the critical importance of regular school attendance and by encouraging families to do everything in their power to make sure they build the habit of attendance starting as early as possible.

A Start by conveying why each parent should care. Below are possible points to cover.

- Your children can suffer academically if they miss 10 percent of school days. This can be just one day every two weeks and can happen before you know it.
- Attendance matters as early as kindergarten. Studies show children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.
- Excused and unexcused absences represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit early so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day, is important.
- Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.
- Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom, creating commotion and slowing down instruction.
- When children are absent, the state reduces school funding and resources toward pay for teachers and books. We all are negatively affected when a child is not in school.

B Follow-up by encouraging parents to be actively involved in helping improve attendance. You may suggest these methods:

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine. Put out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers.
- For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines. Stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track. Encourage meaningful afterschool activities that will help your child feel more engaged in school.
- Avoid scheduling medical appointments and vacations when school is in session.
- Don't let your child stay home unless he or she is 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.





- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Turn to the school if you need help. Oakland schools offer services for the whole family.
- Remember, it is never too early to start to build the habit of attendance. You can start by enrolling your younger child in preschool and making sure they attend every day, unless they are truly sick.

Talking Points Adults to the Media/Policy Makers

If you are in a position to talk with the media or policy makers, you might consider conveying these ideas:

Emphasize why **attendance is so important**, starting in the early grades:

- As early as kindergarten, too many absences can start to chip away at a child's academic success. Missing 10 percent of school days—or about one day every two weeks—can lead to lower performance and reading problems in the years ahead.
- By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes one of the leading warning signs that a student will drop out of high school. By 9th grade, it's a better indicator than 8th grade test scores.
- When it comes to a child's education, it doesn't matter if these absences are excused or unexcused. They all represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
- Too many absent students can cause problems for the whole classroom, creating commotion and slowing down instruction.
- Better attendance rates mean more state aid for Oakland schools

Emphasize how the **community can play a role**:

- Instead of blaming parents, we need to help them get their children to school.
- We need to use community resources—mental and medical health providers, social workers and others—to address the problems contributing to chronic absence.
- We need to provide the right incentives and an engaging curriculum that will bring students to school.
- We need to make sure that every child has an opportunity to learn, which means making sure they come to school regularly.

For more information, visit our website at: atschool.alcoda.org

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