



# School Absences Add Up

Encourage and support families so our children are able to attend school regularly

Being absent even two days a month can be enough to affect our children's future success

## Why is this important?

1. Starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, chronic absence (missing 10 % of the school year for any reason), makes students more likely to fall behind in school and less likely to graduate from high school.
2. In Multnomah County, nearly one in five students is chronically absent, putting their academic success at risk.
3. If we work together with children and families we can ensure all our children succeed.

## Common Misconceptions

### → Attendance doesn't really matter.

**Fact: Attendance is a significant indicator of student success at all grade levels.** Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are less likely to read proficiently by the end of third grade and are more likely to have poor attendance in later grades. By middle and high school, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign that a student will drop out.

### → Attendance isn't very important until high school.

**Fact: Too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.** Of kindergarten and first grade students who are gone 2 or more days per month (chronically absent), fewer than one in five students will read proficiently by third grade.

### → An absence is okay if it is excused.

**Fact: For academic success, it doesn't matter whether the absences are excused or unexcused.**

Missing school for any amount of time—a day, a week or for a longer stretch—can have an impact on a child's learning and lifelong gains.

# What You Can Do

## Share Information with Parents

Raise awareness about the issue of chronic absence. Recognize that parents know the most about their children and what will work for their family. Understand that there are many different reasons that children may be absent.

- One approach is to frame the information as follows:

### Did You Know?

- \* Students of any age who miss just two days of school a month (or 17 days a year) are more likely to fall behind and less likely to graduate.
  - \* It doesn't matter if the absences are excused or unexcused, or if they are occasional or all in a row.
  - \* School attendance matters even for young children. Children who miss too many days in kindergarten or first grade can struggle in learning how to read.
- Use an "Ask, Offer, Ask" model to have a conversation with parents about their child's attendance. Finding out what parents already know about the causes and possible consequences of missed days can help you support them in identifying solutions that work for their family. By asking if they want information or support before offering it you respect their wishes and allow them to determine the direction they want to go .
  - Offer the parent informational sheet, *Working Together to Ensure Your Child's Success*, available at [www.multco.us/sun/attendance](http://www.multco.us/sun/attendance). The sheet includes steps parents can take to ensure their child's success.

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## Offer Support and Connect Families with Other Resources to Address Their Needs

There are many reasons that children miss school—illness, bullying, homelessness, mental health issues, sense of safety and belonging and more. Support you can offer families with resources and problem solving can assist their children attend school regularly.

Parents can check with their child's teacher or main office to learn how their child's attendance is. In addition to teachers, other folks who can offer support at the school include: school counselors, SUN Community School site managers, School Based Health Clinics.

The Absences Add Up website also has information on resources that will address specific needs. [www.absencesaddup.org](http://www.absencesaddup.org)

For more information and support around attendance:

Local:       Multnomah County SUN - [www.multco.us/sun/attendance](http://www.multco.us/sun/attendance)  
              Portland Public Schools - [www.pps.net/Page/1081](http://www.pps.net/Page/1081)

National:   Absences Add Up - [www.absencesaddup.org](http://www.absencesaddup.org)  
              Attendance Works - [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org)