



Jasper School District Wellness Newsletter September 2017

Did you know that September is Attendance Awareness Month? Why is this important? Does it really matter that much if our students are at school or not?

Attendance is critical to school success, but far too often students, parents and schools do not realize how quickly absences can add up to academic trouble. Chronic absence — missing 10 percent of the school year, or just 2-3 days every month—can translate into third-graders unable to master reading, sixth-graders failing courses and ninth-graders dropping out of high school. Low-income students, who most depend on school for opportunities to learn, are especially harmed when they miss too much instruction. Additionally, they are missing out on school breakfast and lunches that many rely on for hunger needs.

Teachers play an essential role in reducing chronic absence by teaching children the importance of attendance. Teachers witness how absences can disrupt learning, not just for the absent student but also for the entire classroom. They can emphasize attendance from Day One, use parent teacher conferences to talk about attendance and promote a culture of attendance

Every day a student is absent is a lost opportunity for learning. Too many absences not only can affect achievement for the absent student but also can disrupt learning for the entire class. While teachers play a key role, everyone - from the principal to the front office to the cafeteria can teach attendance!

What does it mean to teach attendance? More than simply taking roll each day. Teaching attendance involves building awareness about how many absences are too many, encouraging students to come to school every day even when it is hard and engaging them once they are in the school building.

It can also involve helping children and families get assistance to solve a significant barrier to getting to school. Educators can't solve the problem of chronic absence alone. When educators review student attendance data and notice absences adding up, they can encourage families to partner with other school staff, such as social workers or nurses, as well as community agencies to get needed supports.

*******Below are essential messages that everyone —schools, preschools, public agencies, community – can use to spread the word about this important issue. What can you do to help get these messages out?**

1. Good attendance helps children do well in school and ultimately in the workplace. Attendance matters, starting as early as prekindergarten and throughout elementary school. By middle and high school, poor attendance is a leading indicator of school dropout. Developing the habit of attendance prepares students for success on the job and in life.
2. Excused and unexcused absences easily add up to too much lost classroom time. Students are at risk academically if they miss 10 percent of the school year, or about 2 days each month. Absences can affect learning, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. Avoid unnecessary absences. Some absences are unavoidable. Sometimes children get sick and need to stay home. What is important is getting children to school as often as possible.
3. Chronic absence does not only affect the students who miss school. If too many students are chronically absent, it slows down instruction for other students, who must wait while the teacher repeats material for absentee students. This makes it harder for students to learn and teachers to teach.
4. Schools should monitor how many days each student misses school for any reason—excused, unexcused or suspensions— for early intervention. Districts and schools should use data to identify how many and which students are chronically absent so they can target extra supports that can improve attendance and interrupt a pattern of chronic absence. Families should track how many days their children have missed so they are aware of when they should be concerned and take action.
5. Chronic absence is a problem we can solve when the whole community, along with to parents and schools, get involved in improving attendance. All of us can make a difference by helping students and families feel engaged in learning and their schools, setting the expectation that school attendance matters and working together to identify and help families overcome barriers to getting to school.
6. Relationship building is fundamental to any strategy for improving student attendance. Students are more likely to go to school if they know someone cares whether they show up. Trusting relationships – whether with teachers, mentors, coaches or other caring adults – are critical to encouraging families and students to seek out help to overcome barriers to attendance.
7. Reducing chronic absence can help close achievement gaps. Chronic absence especially affects achievement for low-income students who depend more on school for opportunities to learn. Because they are more likely to face systemic barriers to getting to school, low-income children, many of whom are children of color, have higher levels of chronic absence starting as early as prekindergarten. Chronic absence data can be used to trigger interventions so high-risk student populations receive the supports they need, ideally before they fall behind academically.

Resources:

www.attendanceworks.org

www.k12teacherstaffdevelopment.com