

## Counselor's Corner

### Attendance Matters!

Studies show that school attendance is linked to school achievement. Learning builds day by day. If your child is not in school, he or she misses valuable building blocks to the concepts being taught. Disregarding school attendance policies in elementary school can lead to problems later on. One research study reports that sixth graders who miss just one day of school a week have a 75 percent chance of never graduating.

Good habits begin early. Start today by:

- Show interest in your child's learning.
- Remind students of the policy that school is every day unless they are sick.
- Try not to interrupt the school day with doctor's appointments and vacations during school hours.
- Help your child get enough rest so he/she can be fresh for school each day.

Tardies are just as serious absences. It is your child's responsibility to arrive at school prepared and on time every day. Missing the bus is not a good excuse. Missing the first few minutes of class affects your child and also disrupts the classmates' learning time. Here are some things you can do to ease morning stress:

The night before....

- Make bedtime earlier. Children need nine to ten hours of sleep. Set a time, announce it, and enforce it.
- Lay out tomorrow's clothes before bedtime.
- Have your child help with the lunch box/bag and leave it in the refrigerator.

- Make sure your child has packed his/her backpack with completed homework, signed papers, library books, and everything he/she will need for school.
- Establish a “launch pad” by the door where your child can place his/her items for school and anything else he/she will need in the morning.

In the morning...

- Use a timer to help with the countdown. Most kids enjoy playing “beat the clock”. Set the timer to ring when its’ time to be out of the bathroom, get dressed, and eat breakfast.
- Allow time for a good breakfast. Be prepared with nutritious foods on hand that child can prepare easily.
- Don’t simply say “Hurry UP!” Instead, state the specific task your child needs to complete next. “Time to brush your teeth.”
- Don’t forget to send your child off on a positive note. Be positive.

School avoidance effects up to five percent of students. It can occur for a number of reasons, including anxiety about:

riding the bus, using the school bathroom, reading aloud in class, being separated from parents, something terrible happening at home.

Once you have ruled out a medical condition that could keep your child from attending school, try to determine the specific reason for his/her anxiety. Your child may feel a sense of relief to be able to talk about what’s troubling him/her. Talk to the teacher/counselor about developing a plan to solve the problem. You might start having another family member bring your child to school. Be sure to keep your child in school. If you “rescue” your child by allowing him to stay home, you will only reinforce the anxiety. If you decide to keep him/her home... no TV, fun snacks, or extra attention.

Remember: Learning builds day by day. A child who misses a day of school also misses a day of learning. Make school a top priority. By building the habit of daily attendance, you'll help your child see that school is serious and chances are you'll also see an improvement in attitude and grades.