

## Polk County Schools Attendance Policy

The Polk County School District takes pride in offering quality education to all students, and believes that regular school attendance is an important part of educational success.

Florida Law requires all children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school regularly. Students between 16 and 18 years of age must regularly attend school unless the parent and the student have formally terminated school by completing the *Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment* form and participated in an exit interview. Legal actions may be taken against the parent and/or the student for non-attendance.

### Polk County Schools Attendance Procedures:

Attendance Expectation	Consequences
Daily attendance	Maximum instructional time Increased opportunity to learn Increased opportunity for academic success/graduation Increased opportunity for social engagement

Excused Absences	Expectations for absences to be excused
Personal Illness	Parent note &/or call for days absent
Family death/illness	Parent note &/or call for days absent
Chronic/long-term illness	Medical documentation
Parent trips	Pre-approved by principal
Educational trips	Pre-approved by principal
School sponsored activity	Pre-arranged w/administration Student to be marked present
Judicial action	Copy of subpoena or summons Notice of juvenile detention
Military dependents visits in time of combat duty	Approved by principal
Religious holidays	Prior written notice to principal or teacher

Excessive Absences	Interventions/Consequences
Parent notes accepted for the first 10 absences. (After 10 absences, a doctor's note is required)	Letter sent to parent requiring doctor's note for additional absences to be excused
5 unexcused absences in a 30 calendar day period	Letter sent to parent to contact school about reason for absences Parent meeting may be scheduled with Problem Solving Team

	Attendance contract
10 excused absences	Letter sent to parent requiring doctor's note for additional absences to be excused Possible meeting with Problem Solving Team Attendance contract
10 unexcused absences in a 90 calendar day period	Letter sent to parent scheduling a meeting with the Problem Solving Team Attendance contract
15 unexcused absences in a 90 calendar day period (truancy)	Letter sent to the parent scheduling a meeting with the Problem Solving Team Attendance Contract Possible referral to Youth and Family Alternatives for truancy Possible pursuit of parental prosecution for non-attendance Possible suspension of driver license privileges
50% or more of day absent unexcused	Counted as one day absent unexcused for secondary student truancy reports
3 unexcused tardy/early check-out days	Equal one day absent unexcused for elementary student truancy purposes

An excellent website for attendance information is [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org). Scroll down this page for some great samples.



## Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early

School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool 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.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your child to her teachers and classmates before school starts to help her transition.
- Don't let your child stay home unless 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 her 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.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

### When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

For more on school readiness, visit [attendanceworks.org](http://attendanceworks.org) and [reachoutandread.org](http://reachoutandread.org)



## Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in Middle and High School

*Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and on the job.*

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Students should miss no more than 9 days of school each year to stay engaged, successful and on track to graduation.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Missing 10 percent, or about 18 days, of the school year can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- Students can be chronically absent even if they only miss a day or two every few weeks.
- Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from college and keep a job.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

#### **Make school attendance a priority**

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school everyday, make that the expectation.
- Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day.
- Don't let your child stay home unless truly sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.

#### **Help your teen stay engaged**

- Find out if your child feels engaged by his classes and feels safe from bullies and other threats. Make sure he/she is not missing class because of behavioral issues and school discipline policies. If any of these are problems, work with your school.
- Stay on top of academic progress and seek help from teachers or tutors if necessary. Make sure teachers know how to contact you.
- Stay on top of your child's social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

#### **Communicate with the school**

- Know the school's attendance policy – incentives and penalties
- Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Check on your child's attendance to be sure absences are not piling up.
- Ask for help from school officials, afterschool programs, other parents or community agencies if you're having trouble getting your child to school.

