

Mount Vernon Schools Message on Regular Attendance and Truancy

In support of our 100% Graduation Goal, Mount Vernon Schools is continuing efforts to support students in attending school regularly so they can access and benefit from their education to the fullest extent. We know this effort requires strong family and community partnerships, as well as clear communication regarding student attendance records and the benefits of regular school attendance.

Regular attendance is important to Mount Vernon Schools because regular attendance at school contributes to social-emotional health, leading students to feel better about school and themselves. Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school. By ninth grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than eighth grade test scores. We want children to learn about the importance of regular attendance as early as possible so they are prepared for success in school and in post-secondary careers, education, and life.

What You Can Do

- Establish a regular bedtime and morning routine. Lay out clothes and backpacks the night before.
- Ensure that your child doesn't miss school unless they are truly sick. If a child must stay home due to illness, ask the teacher for resources and ideas to continue learning at home.
- Avoid scheduling extended trips or well-child medical appointments while school is in session.
- Develop a back-up plan for getting to school with a family member, neighbor, or friend.
- If your child seems anxious about school, contact the school to work together to provide support.

Our Promise to You

Just as our message around regular attendance is that **Every Day Counts**, our commitment to you is to ensure that every day counts in regard to the quality of your child's educational experience. We know there are many reasons for school absences. There are people at your child's school prepared to help if you or your child face challenges getting to school regularly and/or on time. We promise to notice if your child is absent, to communicate with you to understand the reason for the absence, and to work with you to remove barriers and identify resources to support your child in attending school regularly.

District Policies and State Law

As we work together, it is important that you understand the district's policies, as well as state law for mandatory attendance. Washington State requires children ages 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Children 6 or 7 years old are not required to enroll in school-if enrolled, they must attend.

All schools are required to take daily attendance and to notify families when their child has an unexcused absence. If your child has 3 unexcused absences in 1 month, state law requires that we schedule a conference with you and your child to remove barriers and identify resources to ensure regular attendance. In elementary school, after 5 excused absences in any month, or 10 or more excused absences in the school year, the district is required to contact you to schedule a conference. A conference is not required if you have pre-arranged the absences in writing or a doctor's note has been provided, and an academic plan is in place. If your child has an IEP or a 504 Plan, the team that created the plan must reconvene.

Before a child reaches 7 unexcused absences in 1 month, the district will enter into an agreement with the child and family to establish attendance requirements. If your child has 7 unexcused absences in any month or 15 unexcused absences within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.030, the mandatory attendance law. The petition will be automatically stayed, and your child and family will be referred to a Community Engagement Board or other coordinated means of intervention. If truancy continues, you may need to go to court.

As we strive to work in partnership with you, we want to communicate the following information:

- Families are asked to contact the school office by phone, e-mail, or written note the morning of the absence to excuse/document the absence-excused absences will only be accepted up to 2 days following the absence.
- If your child has a significant number of days out ill, the school will partner with your child's medical provider and/or school nurse to implement a plan to improve attendance to support learning and school success.
- Only five Family Approved Absences will be eligible to be excused during the school year.

We hope that partnering with you to foster regular attendance and consistent access to classroom learning will lead to your child's success in school, and to the receipt of their high school diploma. Thank you for joining us in sending the message that **Every Day Counts**. Please let us know how we can best support your child in being at school all day, every day

Acknowledgement of Information

I am the parent/guardian of the child named below, and have received and read the Regular Attendance and Truancy information provided by Mount Vernon Schools regarding excused and unexcused absences and the truancy law.

Student Name

School

Grade

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date