

dodeca



ATTENDANCE

be here!





DODEA WANTS STUDENTS TO “BE HERE”

“Be Here.” These two words have a significant impact on a child’s educational journey. School attendance is a key indicator of how successful a student is likely to be in school.

Children of military families face many unique challenges that most students never have to experience. Frequent moves, new communities, new schools; and separation from a parent because of deployments or military training are just some of the adjustments these students cope with every day. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) realizes these challenges affect military families’ lives and impact school attendance.

Like our public school counterparts, we have a firm belief that regular school attendance:

- correlates directly with success in academic work;
- improves social interaction with adults and peers;
- provides opportunities for important communication between teachers and students; and
- provides a cumulative effect of establishing life-long positive habits that are critical for developing career readiness skills and success in college.

DoDEA has instituted an Attendance Policy to support our belief in the critical importance of school attendance. This policy balances the need for some flexibility in accommodating military students and families to the greatest possible extent and the expectation that students need to be in school.

The entire school community – parents, students, teachers, administrators, and military leaders – must work together to ensure that discretionary absences are kept to a minimum, and when there is a choice, that Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves be planned so students can begin, continue, and end the school year with no disruptions.

The information contained in this booklet will help familiarize you with our school attendance policy and with the need for students to “Be Here.” DoDEA’s attendance policy is very similar to those of public schools across the country which serve students of military families. The entire policy and Frequently Asked Questions are on the DoDEA website at (<http://www.dodea.edu/attendance/index.cfm>).

We need your help in making this policy work for our schools. Helping and supporting children for their benefit is everyone’s job and there is no better source of help and commitment than from the people in our school communities. I know we can count on each other to succeed. Together we can make a difference for our children and ensure their educational journey a smooth and successful one.

Marilee Fitzgerald

Director

Department of Defense Education Activity

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – THE BOTTOM LINE

FACTS AND STATISTICS

- Family involvement in a child's educational program can improve school attendance (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).
- Early identification of students with attendance problems and targeted interventions to support students increases attendance rates (Chang & Romero, 2008).



- Nationally, nearly 1 in 10 kindergarten and first grade students miss a month of school every year. Even at this early age, absences start to affect student performance. (Attendance Works).
- Students with poor kindergarten attendance rates, missing 10 days or more, gained roughly 14 percent fewer literacy skills than their peers with average attendance rates (Read, 2010).
- Students who are chronically absent from school score an average of 15-20 percent lower on state assessments than students who attend school more regularly (Baltimore Education Research Consortium, 2009).
- 90 percent of youth in juvenile detention have a history of chronic absenteeism (Colorado Foundation for Families and Children Study, 2002).

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

- Research has shown that there is a high correlation among school attendance, academic performance and success.
- School attendance impacts the likelihood of students graduating from high school.
- School absence is the greatest cause of poor academic achievement.
- Learning is progressive. Students who miss school miss out on carefully planned sequences of instruction. New lessons build on the previous day's instruction.
- Lectures, discussions, learning activities, and social interactions cannot be made up.
- Regular school attendance fosters the development of student independent behaviors and responsibility.

- Absenteeism hurts all students in the class. Students who are absent require more of the teacher's time and attention which takes away from regular instruction.
- In some states, the financial support for schools is directly linked to student attendance. When students are absent, the school loses tax revenue which negatively impacts instruction and the availability of educational resources.



RISKS OF FREQUENT ABSENCES

- Decreased academic and social/emotional achievement.
- Disconnection from the school community.
- Increased risk of dropping out of school.
- Failure to keep up with schoolwork.
- Reduced opportunities for social interaction with both peers and adults.
- Fewer opportunities to develop important social skills that are important to employers.
- Reduced opportunities for selection into institutions of higher learning and/or higher wage earning jobs.



DODEA'S ATTENDANCE POLICY

The DoDEA Attendance Policy is outlined in DoDEA Regulation 2095.01, "School Attendance," September 1, 2011 (<http://www.dodea.edu/attendance/docs/AttendancePolicy.pdf>).

KEY FEATURES

- Mandates school attendance and requires 180 instructional days per academic school year.
- Provides specific guidance on attendance and absences.
- Recognizes the reality of unavoidable absences such as illness and emergency situations.
- Places a priority on monitoring daily student attendance, the need to establish healthy communication between home and school and the critical role regular communication plays in monitoring student attendance.
- Identifies support services for students at risk for not fulfilling grade or course requirements.
- Provides assistance and support for students who are at-risk for attendance problems.
- Aligns with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children standard that school systems respect the unique needs of military families when considering requests for excused absences.



EXCUSED ABSENCES ARE DEFINED AS

- Personal illness.
- Medical, dental, or mental health appointment.
- Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
- A death in the student's immediate family or of a relative.
- Religious holiday.
- Emergency conditions such as fire, flood, or storm.
- Unique family circumstances warranting absence and coordinated with school administration.
- College visits that cannot be scheduled on non-school days.
- Reasonable amounts of time surrounding deployments and reintegration providing missed schoolwork is obtained in advance and completed upon return.
- The school administrator may request Command assistance for students with chronic absenteeism and/or tardiness.

INTERVENTION

- Regular communication between the school and families regarding students' attendance records.
- Immediate communication between the school and families regarding students who are "absent unexcused."
- Student Educational Monitoring Plans that identify all assignments to be completed during any extended absence from school.

- Student Support Teams that involve the entire school community – teachers, administrators, parents, and military commanders – in identifying support and intervention plans for students with attendance issues.

CONSEQUENCES OF FREQUENT ABSENCES

- Negative impact on placement as students transfer out of or into DoDEA schools.
- Loss of course credit or jeopardize graduation for secondary school students.
- School disciplinary actions (detention, in-school suspension, or expulsion).



HOW STUDENTS CAN HELP THEMSELVES

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTENDANCE

- Get to school on time every day.
- Take ownership – know how many absences you have.
- Discuss absences with teachers.
- Reflect on the impact absences have on your performance in school.
- Obtain homework or notes for classes that were missed.
- Turn in homework missed due to absences as soon as possible.

POSITION YOURSELF FOR ATTENDANCE SUCCESS

- Complete homework the night before.
- Place homework and school books in backpack and put shoes, jacket, and backpack in the same spot every night.
- Get up each morning early enough without having to rush.
- Eat a good breakfast.
- Plan what to wear the night before and set out clothes where they can be found in the morning.



HOW PARENTS CAN HELP STUDENTS

TAKE ACTION

- Know the DoDEA attendance policy.
- Report absences immediately.
- Model the value of education and stress the importance of attendance.
- Send your child to school every day, starting in kindergarten.
- Instill in your child that attendance is non-negotiable, unless they are truly sick.
- Ask teachers or the principal for missed school work, arrange to pick it up, and make sure your child completes the work.
- Contact the school if you become aware of an absence.

SCHEDULE

- Medical and dental appointments outside of school hours when possible.
- PCS moves to coincide with summer breaks or other scheduled school breaks when possible.
- Family vacations during holidays or school breaks.

STAY INVOLVED

- Take an interest in your child's school work and be involved in the school as much as possible.
- Check each night to ensure your child understands and completes the day's homework assignments.

- Ask questions about your child's day at school:
 - "What was your favorite part of the day?"
 - "What was your least favorite part of the day?"
 - "What was the most interesting thing you learned today?"
 - "Who did you eat lunch with today?"
 - "What are you most proud of today?"
- Locate potential sources of anxiety.
- If your child frequently appears upset or reluctant to go to school and cannot tell you why, schedule an appointment with their teacher or school counselor to talk about possible sources of the anxiety.
- Keep updated on school events and announcements such as back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences.

PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- Make sure your child eats a balanced diet and have opportunities to exercise daily.
- Ensure your child gets enough quality sleep - ideal amounts range from 8 to 12 hours.
- Encourage extra-curricular activities. These tend to increase school attendance and foster friendships.
- Make sure your child stays connected to the parent who is deployed or away by involving them in schoolwork. Have children write or talk with parents about what they are learning.



TEACHERS' ROLE IN ATTENDANCE SUCCESS

- Teachers take daily attendance in elementary school at the beginning of each period in secondary school to help principals monitor attendance patterns and allow action to be taken quickly if a problem is identified.
- Teachers talk with students and parents about attendance and the impact of frequent absences on academic and social/emotional progress.
- Teachers are active participants in the Student Support Team, to discuss academic and social/emotional growth and progress and help with finding solutions and interventions.
- Teachers can provide parents with assignments that need to be completed if students are absent to ensure they don't fall behind.



PRINCIPALS' ROLE IN ATTENDANCE SUCCESS

- Principals monitor daily student attendance rates to identify patterns needing immediate attention.
- Principals make sure that all parents, sponsors, students and community members are aware of and understand the DoDEA Attendance Policy.
- Principals maintain open lines of communication between school and home and contact the parents of every student who is “absent unexcused” from school.
- Principals ensure that students who will be on extended absences from school and their parents receive a Student Educational Monitoring Plan that identifies all assignments to be completed during the absence.
- Principals work with parents, teachers, and military commanders to coordinate a Student Support Team to review and monitor the educational progress for students with 7 or more absences or who are excessively tardy.
- The principal may request Command assistance for students with chronic absenteeism and/or tardiness.

MILITARY LEADERS

Installation commanders and military leaders are partners with DoDEA in ensuring that children are ready to learn. Coordination and communication are the keys to helping all members of installation community be aware of and understand DoDEA's Attendance Policy.

WHAT MILITARY LEADERS CAN DO TO HELP

- Assist school principals in planning and developing the school calendar to ensure that to the extent possible, family-centered events on the installation are scheduled for times when school is not in session.
 - Notify school principals about block leave schedules for pre-deployment and reintegration so principals can plan ahead. Be mindful of school testing schedules as well.
 - Set the expectation for all Servicemembers that school attendance is a priority. This expectation can be communicated through:
 - Commander's Calls
 - All-hands messages
 - Plan of the week
 - Base newspaper article by the installation commander
 - Pre-deployment and reintegration briefings
 - Tenant command meetings
 - Letter to Servicemembers
 - PSA's and slides in base movie theaters prior to movies
 - Allow time for Servicemembers to attend school meetings and events. Encourage all Servicemembers to participate in their child's education.
- Encourage parents to share with their child's teacher information about deployment schedules or important events that might impact student performance or behavior in school.
 - "Adopt-A-School" to build connections between the school and the community and show the installation's support for education.
 - Work with military treatment facilities to offer medical appointments for children during non-school hours if possible.
 - Engage with your School Liaison Officer to create a task force that brings together senior leadership from the military, school and community to develop a community approach to improving a student's attendance in school.
 - Be responsive to principals who need help when school interventions are unsuccessful.



RESOURCES

DODEA WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES USED IN DEVELOPING THIS BOOKLET:

1. Military Child Education Coalition, Military-Connected Students and Public School Attendance Policies (On the Move, Official Magazine, 2010, Vol 6 (1); available at www.MilitaryChild.org)
2. Interstate compact on educational opportunities for military children: Absence related to deployment activities. Article written by the Department of Defense-State Liaison Office in collaboration with the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission. Available at www.mic3.net)
3. The San Diego Unified School District's "Every Day Counts" planning resource.
4. The Defense Centers of Excellence Blog, "Frontline Psych with Doctor Bender: Military Children and School," <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/blog/article.aspx?id=1&postid=120>
5. The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
6. Marana, Arizona Unified School District, <http://www.maranausd.org/>, "The Importance of School Attendance."
7. Characteristics of High Performing Schools and Attendance Policies of top 10 U.S. Schools (Source: U.S. News & World Report, 2011)
8. School Attendance Policies: Characteristics of Exceptional Policies and Schools (Source: "Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data", National Forum on Education Statistics (2009).
9. Student Advocacy Group, "Strengthening School Attendance Policies/practices to Address Educational Neglect and Truancy" (Source: Student Advocacy (2008), Elmsford, NY: Policy brief, available at www.studentadvocacy.net)
10. "Education, Quality Counts." (Source: EPE Research Center Analysis of Data for Recovery. gov, 2011; available at: www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2011/QualityCounts2011_PressRelease.pdf)

