

Tips for Talking with Parents About Attendance

Parents respond better to positive messaging.

- Frame the discussion around “absences” rather than “attendance”
 - Talking about “attendance” validates what parents already believe they do; talking about “absence” focuses their attention on what they’re missing.
- Approach the issue of absences out of concern; make them feel supported, rather than guilty.
- Refer to absences by month, rather than by year.
 - Point out that just “2 days missed per month” has consequences, instead of “18 days missed per year.”
- Stress how school helps children develop their whole self – not just academically
 - Students build relationships, develop social and emotional skills, and make critical connections.
- Use simple, easy-to-understand language. Avoid complicated statistics or metaphors.
- Be realistic about what you are asking parents to do. Encourage them to send their child as often as possible, and recognize that perfect attendance isn’t always an option.
 - Avoid implying that parents should send children to school when they’re sick.
- Remind parents that both sporadic absences and excused absences can still result in children missing too much time in the classroom.
- Help parents understand that learning is sequential—an absence is a missed opportunity to learn something their child will need in order to understand more difficult material later.