

Student Attendance

As we prepare for the start of the new school year, we want to share an important update regarding changes to Ohio state law regarding student attendance and our attendance policy.

Ohio's recently approved House Bill 96 (HB96) which introduced a new statewide standard for tracking student attendance and addressing chronic absenteeism which is now part of Ohio Revised Code Section 3321.191 - Student Absence Policies.

What's Changed with HB96?

The primary goal of Ohio's updated attendance law is early support and intervention. Key updates include:

- **All Missed Hours Count:** Under the new state guidelines, **all absences**, whether excused, unexcused, religious or medical, are included when calculating chronic absenteeism.
- **Earlier Family Outreach:** School districts are now required to notify parents and guardians earlier, specifically **when a student misses 5% of annual instructional hours (about 8-9 school days)**.
- **Partnering with Families:** HB96 emphasizes school-family collaboration. Referral to juvenile court for truancy will be used strictly as a last resort if a student is habitually absent and no progress is made on a collaborative intervention plan.

To comply with state law while supporting our families, OLA's updated policy includes the following:

When your child is absent, parents/guardians are asked to:

- **Call the school attendance office on the day the child is absent by 9:00am.**
If we do not hear from you, we will contact you to verify your child's absence; if we are unable to reach you, a message will be left, if possible. Please return our call when you receive the message.
- **Provide a doctor's note for absences of 3 days or more.**
If a child has a chronic condition or illness that causes regular absences, please provide a doctor's note explaining the situation and arrangements will be made for your child.
- **Require your child to complete his/her assignments in a timely manner.**
School assignments missed during the period of absence must be completed and submitted to the teacher. Work missed for one or two days will be given to a student upon his/her return to school. For extended absences, please contact the school office and the homeroom teacher for instructions.

If a child is absent **70 hours or more** within one semester (without medical documentation supporting days absent), the parent and/or guardian will receive written notification of the **time** absent. If the child is absent **98 hours** or more within one semester (without medical documentation supporting days absent) **families will receive a written notification and families and students must attend an attendance intervention meeting with a school attendance team in which an improvement plan will be determined. If attempted interventions for attendance are not successful, the school may require families to withdraw their child from school and complete his/her education via online classes or alternative methods.** Extended illnesses must be documented by medical professionals; such documentation becomes part of a student's permanent record.

PLANNED ABSENCES

- Whenever possible, medical or dental appointments should be made outside of school hours. In the event that a child must be taken out of school for a medical or dental appointment, the school office must be informed 24 hours prior to the appointment. The child **must be signed out and picked up by an authorized adult. No child is permitted to leave the school building alone.**
- Family vacation days during the school term are discouraged due to the loss of instructional time and the likelihood of a child falling behind academically. When requesting that your children be excused for vacations during the school year, please be advised that it is not the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that your children meet assignment deadlines for completing missed work.

TARDIES

If a child is tardy 5 times in one academic quarter without prior contact of the school office, a demerit will be issued for this tardy and each tardy thereafter. If a student reaches 10 tardies in one academic quarter, a referral for an attendance meeting with the school counselor will be issued and a letter will be sent to parents/guardians to notify the number of tardies. The school's counselor's role will be to work with the student and family on reducing subsequent tardies. If a student reaches 20 tardies in one academic quarter, a meeting will be scheduled with the student, the student's family, and the attendance team.

Why Attendance Matters

Consistent attendance is vital to student achievement. National research indicates that missing just 5-12 days of school during the year can put a student at risk of falling behind in reading and math proficiency.