

Dear Parent/Guardian:

One of our educational goals this year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. However, we also know that when students miss too much school, regardless of the reason, it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent—which means missing 15 or more days over the course of an entire school year. Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9<sup>th</sup> grade, good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8<sup>th</sup> grade test scores.
- Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!

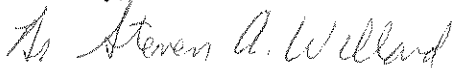
**Clearly, going to school regularly matters!** Recently, South Dakota Governor, Kristi Noem, proclaimed September as our state's Attendance Awareness Month. She encouraged school leaders, parents, and communities to spread the message that good attendance matters and to develop solutions to ensure all children are in school as much as possible and engaged in their own learning. You can find resources, including parent handouts, while following the national Attendance Awareness Campaign at [attendanceworks.org](http://attendanceworks.org).

We do not want your child to fall behind in school and get discouraged. Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick
- If possible, avoid scheduling vacations or any appointments when school is in session.
- Develop back up plans for getting your children to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.
- If your children have any anxiety concerning going to school please let your child's teacher know.

Let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school on time every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions, need help or need more information, please contact your child's school principal. Elementary- Julie Hatling 723-3382, Middle School Kevin Smidt 723-3367, and High School Mathew Raba 723-3350.

Sincerely,



Dr. Steven A. Willard  
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