



## STRATEGIC PLAN

### three ACTIVE LEARNERS:

#### Engaged, Empowered Critical Thinkers

Every scholar will be empowered with ownership of their education and be fully engaged in becoming critical and creative thinkers.

*Attendance is a predictor of scholar success, and can impact scholars' academic progress as early as kindergarten.*

*Scholars are at risk academically if they miss 10 percent of the school year, or about 18 days. Once too many absences have occurred, they can affect learning, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.*

- *Attending school on-time, all day, every day will give your child the best chance of graduating from high school.*
- *Starting in kindergarten, missing on average just two days a month, whether excused or unexcused, makes it more likely that your child will not meet academic standards in math and reading by 3rd grade.*
- *By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a scholar may drop out of high school.*
- *Absences can be a sign that a scholar is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.*
- *By 9th grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of high school graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.*

## Attendance Matters

### Every Day and Every Grade Level Counts!

Federal Way Public Schools believes daily class attendance is one of the most critical indicators for scholar success. Each school is committed to providing counseling services to assist with scholars' and families' social and emotional needs. Additionally, our district provides targeted supports for scholars in homeless situations. **Policy and Procedures 3121, 3122, 3122P**

- Preschool is a great time to start building a habit of good attendance. Young children with poor attendance in preschool also lose out on valuable learning time and, if chronic absence continues into kindergarten, it can pull down academic achievement.
- Studies show many children who miss too many days in kindergarten and 1st grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of 3rd grade.
- By middle and high school, chronic absence is a leading warning sign that a scholar will drop out.
- If your child has three unexcused absences in one month, state law (**RCW 28A.225.020**) requires we schedule a conference with you and your child.
- In elementary school, after five excused absences in any month, or 10 or more excused absences in the school year, the school district is required to contact you to schedule a conference. A conference is not required if your child has provided a doctor's note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and plans are in place so your child does not fall behind academically.

After seven unexcused absences in a month, or 10 unexcused absences in an academic year, the school district may file truancy petitions with the juvenile court.

The following are valid excuses for absences:

- Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
- Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible;
- Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
- Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity or jury service;
- Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
- State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with **RCW 28A.225.055**;
- Absence directly related to the scholar's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
- Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion imposed pursuant to **Chapter 392-400 WAC** if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in **WAC 392-121-107**);
- Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
- Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity, consistent with district policy.

## Attendance Matters *(Continued)*

### Good Attendance Strategies

Scholars who have good attendance are sure to do the following:

- Stay healthy, get plenty of sleep, eat a balanced diet, wash your hands regularly, and make sure you are up to date on your immunizations.
- Make a plan for good attendance. Keep a copy of your school calendar accessible.
- Ask your parents to make appointments outside of the school day or on non-school days.
- Know the time you need to arrive at your bus stop.
- Keep up on your school work. Scholars will often be anxious and tempted to miss school if they have not done their homework or studied for a test. Approach each day with confidence.
- "Report-It." If you are not attending because someone is harassing, intimidating or bullying you, it has become a serious issue and it is time to enlist the assistance of an adult.

### Washington State's Attendance Law

It is mandatory that all children eight years of age and under 18 years of age attend school. The child will have the responsibility to attend for the full time when school may be in session, unless the child is enrolled in an approved private school or is receiving home-based instruction. Once a child who is six or seven years old is in a public school, the child is then required to attend and that parent has the responsibility to ensure that the child attends school while it is in session. Exceptions may be granted by the superintendent for children who are 15 years of age or older if the child has specific circumstances. The list is available at <http://bit.ly/2tuSOj2>.

### Vacation & Extended Absences

- Pre-planned absences of more than two days require prior notice in writing and approval by an administrator at least three days prior to the absence. Requesting make-up work from the scholar's teachers at least three days in advance, and following established timelines to return the completed work, is the best way to ensure the scholar does not fall behind. Elementary level prearranged absences must be requested using the Elementary Prearranged Absence Form, available at every elementary school and online. Please work directly with the school office to ensure the scholar's absence is recorded correctly and requests are submitted according to district procedure.
- For pre-planned absences extending to or beyond 20 days, scholars and/or parent/guardians are required to make an appointment with an administrator at the school prior to the absences occurring. A scholar with 20 or more consecutive days of absences may be withdrawn from the school and may not be able to be placed back in the class or even the school in which they were previously enrolled. Please talk with your school administrator if you have additional questions or circumstances.
- Please try to schedule extended trips during scheduled school vacation periods (summer, winter, mid-winter and spring breaks).

*Starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, chronic absence—missing 10 percent of the academic year—can leave third graders unable to read proficiently, sixth graders struggling with coursework, and high school scholars off track for graduation.*

*Attendance Works*

### Parent Strategies

- Only keep your child home if they are truly sick, such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or a contagious rash.
- Avoid appointments and travel when school is in session.
- Keep track of your child's attendance. Missing more than 9 days, excused or unexcused, could put your child at risk of falling behind.
- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine; finish homework and pack backpacks the night before.
- Have a back-up plan in place with family members, neighbors, or other parents for getting your child to school in case something comes up.

