



Chester–East Lincoln CCSD #61

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The Importance of School Attendance

Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school). Illinois law also requires that whoever has custody or control of a child who is enrolled in the school, regardless of the child's age, shall assure that the child attends school during the entire time school is in session.

Studies have shown that student attendance data shows that regular school attendance from Kindergarten on is essential to successful learning:

- Your child's regular attendance may be the greatest factor influencing his/her school (academic and social/emotional) success.
- Students who attend school regularly are more likely to pass reading and math assessments than students who do not.
- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade.
- By sixth grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much but absences add up. When a student misses 2 days per month...

- They will miss 20 days of school per year.
- They will miss 30 hours of math instruction.
- They will miss up to 40 hours but as much as 60 hours of reading and writing instruction.
- They will miss over ONE YEAR of school by the time they graduate from CEL.

Here is how you can support your child's 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 students go to school every day unless they are truly sick.
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session.
- Talk to teachers and counselors for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

Excused Absenses

According to School Code Section 26-2a, the following are considered excused absences:

- Illness, including mental or behavioral health
- Observance of a religious holiday (school must be notified at least 5 calendar days prior to missing school)
- Death in the immediate family or family emergency
- Other situations beyond the control of the student, as determined by the Board of Education
- Such other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student

Attendance Procedures

Each day, teachers take attendance in their classes using a Google Doc and entered into Skyward by office staff. The office staff then checks the students marked absent against the list of students who have been called in absent by their parents/guardians. When the school has not heard from a parent/guardian, then the office contacts the parents to determine where the student is on that day. School officials may also interview student upon return to determine the cause for the absence.

At the end of each month, the absences are totaled up in Skyward and reported electronically to the State of Illinois as mandated by the Illinois School Code.

Interventions/Support Services for Truant Students

In cases when students become chronically truant (including both excused and unexcused), the school will provide supports through letters, parent conferences, student interviews, student counseling, family counseling, and information about existing community services that are available to truant and chronically truant students relevant to their needs.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district will take further action, including:

- Referral to the truancy officer

- Referral to the State's Attorney
- Appropriate school discipline

A student who misses 15 consecutive days of school without valid cause and who cannot be located or, after exhausting all available support services, cannot be compelled to return to school is subject to expulsion from school. A parent or guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law.

Truancy/Chronic Absenteeism Procedures

The State of Illinois has updated their definition of Chronic Absenteeism. Chronically absent students are defined as:

“Absences that total 10% or more of school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause.”

What this means is that absences (regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused) totalling up to 10% or more of a student's school year may warrant additional supports and interventions from the school administrative teams, the school district, and the Regional Office of Education. The number of students who are chronically absent are publicly reported each school year and are used for accountability purposes.

At the end of each month, the attendance report will be reviewed by administration to determine those that have an attendance rate lower than 90% (including excused and unexcused).

The following are the procedures for those students identified at any time throughout the school year as having a truancy concern:

- “Friendly” letter to guardians (mailed)
- 2nd letter to guardians (mailed)
- Conference with student to see if he/she has any input into what the issue may be
- Conference with guardian(s)
- Referral to truancy officer through the Regional Office of Education

The district will also work with students individually (when appropriate) to determine if a contract between the student and an administrator would be appropriate to celebrate attendance.

Make-Up Work

If a student's absence is excused or if a student is suspended from school, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for equivalent academic credit. Students who are unexcused from school will not be allowed to make up missed work.