

# Whitehall-Coplay School District

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Dear Parent and Guardians:

With the 2020-2021 school year underway, we wish to share new and important information with regard to attendance and Compulsory School Age changes.

**Beginning this year, the definition of Compulsory School Age has changed as per PA School Code. Compulsory School Age refers to the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents elect to have the child enter school, which shall be no later than six (6) years of age until the child reaches 18 years of age.**

**This change requires children to start their education two years earlier and remain in school one year longer than previously mandated. As such, we continue to encourage your cooperation with school attendance.**

To make sure the hopes and dreams of your child(ren) are realized, we want to ask for your commitment to making sure your child attends school every day possible. The evidence is clear: **children with good attendance are more likely to be successful in school.** High attendance rates are linked to high student achievement. This is true for every grade – elementary, middle, and high school students.

**Every day counts. Every minute counts.** Missing school even 10% of the time has a significant negative impact on reading and math achievement as children progress through school.

**GOOD ATTENDANCE FOR SUCCESS**  
**Every Minute**  
**in School Counts**



**New Attendance Requirements for ALL Pennsylvania Schools**

**Each day absent = 450 minutes of lost instruction time with a teacher**  
**Each day absent = 27,000 seconds of lost instruction time with a teacher**

**As you plan your vacations for next year, please consider the School District calendar to minimize absences from school.**



The Whitehall-Coplay School District, an equal opportunity employer, will not discriminate in employment, educational programs or activities, based on race, sex, handicap or because a person is a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam Era. This policy of non-discrimination extends to all other legally protected classifications. Publication of this policy in this document is in accordance with State and Federal laws including Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We further affirm that all curriculum offerings and student enrollment practices will be handled without discrimination based on sex, race, religion, national origin, or non-job related handicaps or disabilities.

- **Good attendance starts early.** Research has shown that the attendance habits established Kindergarten through Grade 2 have lasting effects on students throughout their education: children with high attendance in the early grades continue to have good attendance; and students with low attendance in the early grades are more likely to have low attendance—and lower academic performance—throughout their elementary and middle school years.
- Students with good attendance performed better in math and reading. Children who had good attendance in Kindergarten through Grade 2 were **more than twice as likely to score proficient** on state tests by the time they reached Grade 8 as their peers who missed more school.
- **Students who are chronically absent do not perform on grade level.** In fact, only 17% of chronically absent students in grades K and 1 read at grade level by Grade 3. Students who are not reading on grade level by Grade 3 are 13 times more likely to drop out of school.
- If a student misses 10% of each school year (or 18 days per year), by the end of 9th grade, the student will have missed the equivalent of one full school year of school.

During the 20-21 school year the Federal Government's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Pennsylvania's Future Ready Index (FRI) will define 10% absence in a school year as "chronically absent." Beginning with next school year, all absences, including medical appointments, illness, and educational trips/vacations are all included toward your child's absences from school. All absences from school count for *your child* and count *for us as a District*. We are asking for you to review the 2019-2020 school calendar and plan for medical appointments and educational trips/vacations on days that are scheduled off from school on the calendar.

As your child's most influential teacher, we are asking for your support in helping your child get to school each day on time next year. Your child needs to be in school and engaged in learning to reach his or her full potential. Yet, we realize that every family faces challenges. **Please let your child's teacher or your child's principal know if your family needs help dealing with a challenge to your child's good school attendance.** We will do our best to help you and your family ensure that your child's school attendance stays on track.

Thank you for all you do to support your child's school success and well-being, as well as our School District. We look forward to working with you next year!

Educationally Yours,

WCSD – Administration



## Help Your Child Succeed in School: Build the Habit of Good Attendance Early

School success goes hand in hand with good attendance!

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) can make it harder to learn to read.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Introduce your child to her teachers and classmates before school starts to help her transition.
- Don't let your child stay home unless she is truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents for advice on how to make her feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session.

### When Do Absences Become a Problem?



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

For more on school readiness, visit [attendanceworks.org](http://attendanceworks.org) and [reachoutandread.org](http://reachoutandread.org)

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