**Talking Points for Use with Families:
Why Every Day Matters**

Helping families understand why attendance matters is an important part of improving attendance. Refer to these talking points to have productive conversations about a child’s attendance. Keep all attendance discussions helpful, constructive and focused on finding solutions.

**Good attendance is a habit that will help your children do well in school.**

* Children can suffer academically if they miss 10% of the school year. (That’s 14 days for districts on a four-day schedule and 18 days for districts on a five-day schedule.) That can happen before you know it—even by missing just one day every two weeks.
* It doesn’t matter if these absences are excused or unexcused. They all represent lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.
* Preschool is a great time to start building a habit of good attendance. In fact, studies show that poor attendance in preschool can predict absenteeism in later grades.
* Attendance matters as much in kindergarten as later years. Studies show many children who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can struggle academically in later years. They often have trouble mastering reading by the end of third grade.
* By middle and high school, chronic absence is a strong warning sign that without support, a student is at risk of dropping out.
* Too many absent students can affect the whole classroom, slowing down instruction.

**Tips to improve your child’s attendance:**

* Avoid extended vacations that require your children to miss school. Try to vacation during school breaks only.
* Try to schedule preventative health care appointments for days off of school, or afternoons.
* For younger children, set a regular bedtime and morning routine. They need 9 to 11 hours of sleep.
* It helps to lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
* For older children, help set homework and bedtime routines that allow for 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep. Make sure that when the lights go out, so do the cell phones, video games and computers. Consider keeping technology in another room at night.
* Get to know the teachers and administrators. With younger children, introduce your child to teachers before school starts and keep in touch with the teachers. For older students, school officials can help you stay on top of academic progress and social contacts to make sure your child is staying on track.
* Set clear guidelines. Show that attendance matters to you and that you won’t allow an absence unless someone is truly sick.
* Don’t ask older students to help with daycare and household errands that will interfere with school.
* You can turn to the school for help. Schools can connect you with community resources and help you troubleshoot.
* Visit 211info.org to discover community resources.
* Use the Attendance Tracker provided on the Every Day Matters website.