

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, Richard Gordon Elementary is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school – and themselves. Your student can start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- 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.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

We miss your student when they are gone and we value their contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that your student arrives promptly, attends regularly and is successful in school.

Please read this letter carefully, sign and return to school with your child.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. If you need support, please contact our School Counselor, Rick Goudzwaard, or our Academic/Behavior Interventionist, Kelly Rosenbach. We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent, and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State Law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Children 6- or 7-years-old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6- or 7-year-old, the student, must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements.

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>

We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence.

If your student has two unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

In elementary school after five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year, the district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your student. A conference is not required if your student has provided a doctor's note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and the parent, student and school have made a plan so your student does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

If your student has seven unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the Juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. You and your student may need to appear in Juvenile Court.

At Richard Gordon Elementary, we have established the following rules on attendance that will help you ensure your student is attending regularly:

1. If your student is going to be absent, please contact the school and inform us as to the reason for the absence. You may send a note with the student or call the school the morning of the absence. If there is no note or call received, your child will be given an unexcused tardy or absence. If no notification has been received within 48 hours, the absence is recorded as unexcused.
2. The following are valid excuses for absences: illness, doctor/dental appointments, religious observance and emergencies. Traffic difficulties, family care obligations, and sleeping late are not considered reasons for excused tardy or absence.
3. The school day for students is 9:20am to 3:50pm. Students may enter the building at 9:10am when school opens, or 9:05am when eating breakfast. Students arriving after 9:25am are to report to the office to sign in and receive a tardy slip. Late arrival documentation from parents is required within 48 hours.
4. If a student leaves after 2:30pm and before 3:50pm dismissal, it is recorded as a tardy.

Portions of this letter are attributable to Attendance Works <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

5. After five tardies in a month, a family conference will be required, especially if a consistent pattern of missing portions of the day develops.

For more information, go to our website and refer to the Student Handbook.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are 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.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your students' teacher if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Tollefson, Principal

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in North Kitsap School District.

_____ Date: _____

Parent Signature

Student Name

Teacher