

# MATHEWS COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Nancy B. Welch, Ed.S.  
Division Superintendent

Lesley R. Hunley, M.Ed.  
Assistant Superintendent

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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely, every day, and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

The Virginia Board of Education has revised its accreditation standards to provide a more comprehensive view of school quality. School accreditation ratings for the 2018-2019 school year will be the **first** to reflect this new approach to accountability which now includes **Absenteeism** as one of the indicators.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances (like hurricanes). But, we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent. So, what is the difference between average daily attendance, truancy and chronic absence?

## What is the difference?

- ❖ Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is a measure of how many students typically show up to school each day.
- ❖ Truancy means unexcused absence from school. However, there is an important distinction between truants and chronic truants. A student displays truant behavior with a single unexcused absence from school, but a student needs to reach or surpass a certain number of unexcused absences to be considered a chronic truant. In the case of a chronic truant student, this typically occurs without parental awareness and support. Virginia law defines a child who is habitually and without justification absent from school as a 'child in need of supervision' when certain other conditions are met.
- ❖ Chronic Absenteeism is when a student is absent for any reason (excused, unexcused, suspensions, tardiness, early dismissal), commonly defined as missing 10% or more of school days over the course of the school year. The focus is on the academic consequences of this lost instructional time and on preventing absences before students miss so much school that they fall behind.



## Why it matters....

Frequent absences from school can be devastating to a child's future. The effects start early and spiral dramatically over time.

- ❖ Children who are chronically absent in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade are much less likely to read on grade level by the third grade.
- ❖ Students who can't read at grade level by the third grade are **four** times more likely to drop out of high school.
- ❖ By high school, regular attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores.
- ❖ A student who is chronically absent in any year between the eighth and twelfth grade is **seven** times more likely to drop out of school.\*

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month!!

Any student who is on track to missing ten percent of the school year (just two days a month) is cause for concern in our school division. Principals, counselors and teachers will be in touch with you if your child has a pattern of missing too many days.

As parents, you have a responsibility to ensure your child is in school so that he or she will have the best possible opportunity to succeed academically, socially and emotionally. As a school division, we have the responsibility to work with you throughout the year to help overcome any reasons for chronic absenteeism. Let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school, on time, every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information please contact your child's school principal.

Sincerely,

Nancy B. Welch, Ed.S.  
Division Superintendent

\*<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/every-student-every-day-obama-administration-launches-first-ever-national-cross-sector-initiative-eliminate-chronic-absenteeism-our-nations-schools>