



Moraga School District

1540 School Street

Moraga, CA 94556

Bruce K. Burns, Superintendent

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, the Moraga School District 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 transitional kindergarten or kindergarten so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in middle school, 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 he/she is gone and we value his/her contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that your student attends regularly and is successful in school. If your student is going to be absent, please contact your student's teacher or principal.

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 schools prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. 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 California State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance requires children from age 6 to 18 to attend a public school, private school, or a home school program. There are exemptions for students age 16-18. For more information, see the California Education Code, §§48200, et seq.; 48400; 48293.

Moraga School District has responsibilities related to monitoring attendance and notifying families of absences at certain thresholds:

- California Education Code §48260 defines a *truant* as any student who is absent from school without a valid excuse **three** full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than a 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on **three** occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. The Moraga School District is required to notify families upon a student's initial classification as a truant (§48260.5).
- California Education Code §48263.6 defines a *chronic truant* as a student who is absent from school without a valid excuse for **ten percent or more of the school days in one school year**, from the date of enrollment to the current date. The District is required to hold at least one conference with the student's parent or guardian (§48262).
- After a student has been reported as a **truant three or more times in one school year** and after the District has held at least one meeting with the family, the student is deemed a *habitual truant* (§48262). At this time, the student may be referred to a School Attendance Review Board (SARB).

IF YOUR CHILD IS ABSENT

- Please call your student's School Attendance Line every time your child is tardy or absent. Please call the attendance line even if you have already informed your student's teacher.
- Excused absences include: illness, quarantine under the direction of a health officer, medical appointment, funeral services for a member of the immediate family (limited to 1 day in state and 3 days out of state); court appearances, observance of a religious holiday, up to 5 absences for employment in the entertain industry, religious retreat (4 hours per semester)
- Trips and vacations are not deemed to be excused absences.
- If your student's school does not hear from you, we call to let you know your child is absent and to determine the reason for the absence.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Do not let your student stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomachache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid appointments and vacation/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 2 days a month could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your students' teachers 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,

Bruce K. Burns
Superintendent