Pay Attention to Attendance:
Keep Your Child On Track from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Showing up for school has a huge impact on your child’s academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. It’s also a key part of earning the Pittsburgh Promise® – students must attend 90% of school days from 9-12 grade in order to receive the scholarship. Even as your children grow older and more independent, you play a key role in making sure they get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and on the job.

Did You Know?

• Students that have good attendance in Kindergarten and 1st grade are 4 times as likely to be proficient or advanced in Reading and 50% more likely to be proficient or advanced in math when they reach 3rd grade.
• Students with good attendance through grade 6 are more likely to stay in school and not drop out.
• By 9th grade, attendance is a better predictor of high school graduation than 8th grade test scores.
• To keep students engaged, success and on track for success, they should miss no more than 9 days of school each year.

What You Can Do.

Make school attendance a priority
• Talk about the importance of showing up to school every day, and make that the expectation.
• Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night’s sleep.
• Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day. Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
• Don’t let your child stay home unless he/she is truly sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.

Help your teen stay engaged
• Find out if your child feels engaged by his classes and feels safe from bullies and other threats. Make sure he/she is not missing class because of behavioral issues and school discipline policies. If any of these are problems, work with your school to find solutions.
• Stay on top of academic progress and seek help from teachers or tutors if necessary. Make sure teachers know how to contact you.
• Stay on top of your child’s social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
• Encourage meaningful and engaging after-school activities, including sports and clubs.

Communicate with the school
• Know the school’s attendance policy, both incentives and penalties.
• Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school that may affect their attendance.
• Check on your child’s attendance to be sure absences are not piling up by asking your school staff for updates or using the Parent Internet Viewer.
• Ask for help from school officials, after-school programs, other parents or community agencies if you’re having trouble getting your child to school.

Adapted from www.attendanceworks.org
An absence is defined as non-attendance in school in an individual class, the entire school day, or a combination of both. Absence includes tardiness to class and/or school as well as early dismissals.

Make sure that your student returns to school with a written excuse within three (3) days of the absence detailing why the student missed school. Learn more about Excused and Unexcused absences below:

**Illness or other urgent reasons** – Parents can write an excuse for a student’s absence if the absence is due to mental or physical health or other urgent reasons. Students can miss a maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative absences with a parent’s excuse. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days require an excuse from a physician.

**Health Care** – A student may be excused during school hours to obtain non-school professional health care, including emergency care, hospitalization and/or quarantine, but the treating licensed health care professional must provide documentation the school.

**Bereavement** – A student may be temporarily excused from school for bereavement and/or to attend the funeral of a family member. Parents should submit an excuse to the school for such an absence.

**Religious Holidays and Religious Instruction** – A student shall be excused from school for absences occasioned by the observance of the student’s religion recognized by the Board of Education as a bonafide religious holiday.

**Weather Emergency** – If a decision is made for schools to remain open, parents/guardians have the option to keep their children home for health and safety reasons. Parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for making this decision. If you decide to keep your child home in any situation, including inclement weather, you should call the school to report your child’s absence. A written explanation of the absence must be provided to the homeroom teacher upon return to the school within three (3) days. Failure to provide a written explanation of the absence within three (3) days will result in an unlawful or unexcused absence. The School Principal or his/her designee determines whether a student’s absence will be excused for these reasons.

**Involuntary Exclusions** – A student who is absent from school or class due to involuntary exclusion (such as in-school and out of school suspensions, temporary alternative placements, or incarceration) are excused.

**School-Approved Activities** – A student absent from class or school due to participation in a school, Principal or teacher approved activity, including, but not limited to field trips, service learning, assemblies, support groups, counseling, mentoring, or tutoring are considered excused absences.

**Other Principal-Approved Excusals** – A School Principal or his/her designee may excuse a student from attendance for lawful reasons. Administrator – Approved Excusals are: educational vacations, college visitation, counseling or support groups, or social service agency appointments including, but not limited to Children, Youth and Families.

If your student misses school for any reason other than those listed above, it is considered to be Unlawful and Unexcused.

Remember, attending school regularly helps children to feel better about school from pre-school through high school. Help your child build this habit so they learn that going to school on time, every day is important. **Good attendance will not only help your child do well in school, but it will also put them on the Pathway to the Promise toward success, both when in college and in the workforce.**