



Re: Importance of Student Attendance

Dear MMCA Families,

During the past few years, I have noticed a disturbing trend that our absenteeism rate has been increasing. This concerns me for several reasons, including:

- Too many absences causes students to fall behind in school;
- Too many student absences disrupts the routine of the overall classroom; and
- Since schools are funded on actual attendance, too many student absences affect programming.

Did you know that:

- Even in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing school increases the chance a 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.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- 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.

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Public schools in California are mostly funded based on “average daily attendance” (“ADA”). Any day a student is absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the school does not receiving any ADA funding for that student. Student ADA funding is approximately \$60 per day. As an example, let’s say we average 50 students absent per day for a week – that is **\$15,000** in lost funding that could otherwise be used to enhance the educational experience of your child.

What can you as parents do to help with attendance:

- If you know your child is going to miss school, set up an Independent Study Agreement. From the student perspective, I.S. Agreements help keep the students on track and minimize the amount of make-up work they need to complete when they get back from school. Denise Thorman (dthorman@mmcharter.org) coordinates Independent Study – if you have questions about the program, please contact her.
- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Have your child prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- 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 kids to school if something comes up. 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.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs. ¹

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me at brent@mmcharter.org.

Sincerely,



Brent Boothby, Executive Director
Maria Montessori Charter Academy

¹ Portions of this letter are attributable to *AttendanceWorks.org*