

# It Matters: Attendance

## Make school attendance a family priority



One of the most vital parts of your child's education is also one that's easy to overlook. It's attendance! Study

after study shows that when kids regularly miss school, their learning, and especially their literacy skills, take a serious hit. Not only that, but young students with poor attendance tend to turn into older students with poor attendance.

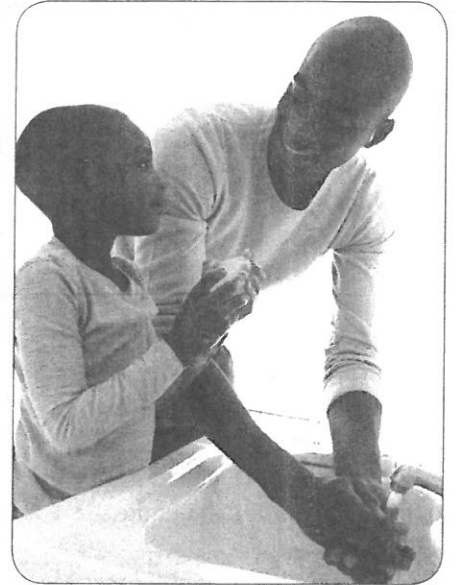
Don't let your child become one of them! To keep her on the road to school success:

- **Take attendance seriously.** As the parent, *you* set the tone. So be sure your child understands how much you value school and learning. If attendance is a priority for you, it will be a priority for her.
- **Prepare at night.** In the evening, help your child set out everything she needs to take to school the next day—her backpack, completed homework, gym shoes, signed papers, etc. She should also pick out her outfit and decide what she'll have for breakfast.
- **Respect the school calendar.** When possible, avoid scheduling appointments or family vacations that conflict with school. It will remind your child that there's nowhere more important for her to be during the week than in school!
- **Talk to your child's teacher** if you are experiencing problems that often result in school absences. Many families face challenges with health, child care, transportation and other issues. Community programs may be able to help.

## Frequent hand washing can reduce school absences

Scientists estimate that up to 80% of infections are spread through poor hand hygiene. That means a simple step—hand washing—is the top way to stay healthy and avoid missing school. Teach your child to:

- **Wash properly.** He should wet his hands, lather with soap and wash for 20 seconds. It takes about this long to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- **Include all parts of his hands**—front, back, fingernails, between fingers, etc. After washing, he should use a clean paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the bathroom door.
- **Wash his hands often,** especially before eating. Soap and water work best. If they aren't available, he can use a hand sanitizer. To be effective, a sanitizer should have at least 60% alcohol.



- **Sneeze or cough** into his elbow instead of his hand to reduce the spread of germs to others.

Source: P. Boshell, "Hand Hygiene at Home and School," [InfectionControl.tips](http://InfectionControl.tips), [niswc.com/elem\\_hands](http://niswc.com/elem_hands).

## Understand what's at stake when your child misses school



"Does it really matter if my child misses school?" parents sometimes wonder. "Yes!" say experts.

Research shows that regular attendance is linked to current and future school success.

Excused and unexcused absences take a toll on learning. And not everything students miss can be made up with homework. The class discussion about the book they are reading can't be captured in homework. Neither can the

science demonstration or the group project for history. In some subjects, like math, missing even a few days is a problem because learning builds on what students already know.

In addition to missing out on daily lessons, students who are absent miss the chance to build social and academic foundations that help with future learning.

So, support your child's school attendance today and watch him reap the benefits for years to come.

Source: "The Importance of School Attendance," [AbsencesAddUp.Org](http://AbsencesAddUp.Org), [niswc.com/elem\\_absence](http://niswc.com/elem_absence).