

Myths and Facts About Attendance

Myth 1. "Missing school is not habit forming."

Fact. Students with attendance problems in elementary grades show the lowest levels of attendance five years later.

Fact. Children chronically absent in kindergarten become the same students with low achievement levels in sixth grade.

Myth 2. "My child will be able to catch up."

Fact. Most elementary age students who miss more than 4 or 5 days of school a year tend to always be trying to "catch up" rather than "keep up."

Fact. Absenteeism causes learning gaps at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Fact. Reading skills are learned in the early grades, so if a child misses too much school, they lag behind classmates in reading.

Fact. Teachers provide instruction that builds on the previous day's instruction; the learning experience is appropriate developmentally. This process begins in Kindergarten.

Myths and Facts (continued)

Myth 3. "Elementary school attendance is not as important as high school."

Fact. As early as sixth grade, absenteeism can predict the likelihood that a student will dropout.

Fact. Attendance in the early grades is critical to sustaining school readiness skills.

Fact. Good attendance is the most reliable predictor of graduation from high school.

Fact. Students with poor attendance have a greater risk of dropping out of school, having behavioral and social problems.

Myth 4. "It is my right to keep my student out of school."

Fact. It is against the law (class B misdemeanor) for the parent of a school-aged child to fail to prevent the child from being absent without a valid excuse five or more times. (Utah Code 53A-11-101.5 Compulsory Education)

What the courts are saying about elementary school attendance...

"More than any other time in history, a child needs to be in school and receiving an education... Education is vital to the Court, even if the student hates every minute of it."

Commissioner Joshua K. Faulker, Utah 4th District Juvenile Court

What Parents Can Do

Ultimately, YOU will make the difference in the future success of your child. Parent commitment to school attendance sends a message to your child that education is a priority for your family.

- **Help** your child get into the habit and learn the value of regular routines of attendance.
- **Teach** your child that attending school is non-negotiable unless they are truly sick.
- **Build** relationships with other families and discuss how you can help each other out (e.g., drop off or pick up children, babysit, translation assistance) in times of need or emergencies.
- **Identify** non-academic activities (drama, art, music, sports, etc.) that can help motivate your child's interest in school and learning.