



## Talking Points for Principals

### ***Attendance – what everyone should know:***

- School attendance is a serious issue for children throughout the country and military children are no exception.
- Many families — both military and non-military — underestimate the importance of regular school attendance for young children (kindergarten and first grade) but even missing just 5% of kindergarten — that's just nine days — can be an indicator that a child will fall behind by the fifth grade.
- Regular school attendance has a cumulative effect of establishing life-long positive traits — responsibility, determination, respect for rules of society -- that are critical for developing career readiness skills, success in college and in life.
- Regular school attendance correlates directly with success in academic work, improves social interaction with adults and peers and provides opportunities for important communication between teachers and students.
- DoDEA has an attendance policy that is consistent with attendance policies in many U.S. public schools.
- DoDEA's attendance policy is founded on the principle that regular student attendance promotes higher levels of student achievement, school connectedness, and readiness for colleges and careers.
- Key components of the policy include:
  - A requirement for students to attend school for 180 instructional days per school year (subject to specific exceptions noted in the policy).
  - A requirement for students to complete an educational plan consistent with regularly planned school work during absences.
  - Increased communication with parents about the effects of absences on student performance.
  - Referral of students with five days of absences to the Student Support Team.
  - Referral of students with seven days of absences to the local Command for appropriate intervention and support.
  - A Student Educational Monitoring Plan to lessen the impact of a student missing classroom instruction if they need to be out for more than five days.
  - Daily attendance record-keeping, review, and analysis.

- Excused absences can include:
  - Personal illness
  - A medical, dental, or mental health appointment
  - Serious illness in the student's immediate family
  - A death in the student's immediate family or of a relative
  - A religious holiday
  - Emergency conditions such as fire, flood, or storm
  - Unique family circumstances warranting absence and coordinated with school administration.
  - College visits that cannot be scheduled on non-school days
  - Reasonable amounts of time surrounding deployments and reintegration providing missed schoolwork is obtained in advance and completed upon return.

■ Academic penalties will not be imposed for excused absences.

■ We have and will continue to be as flexible as possible in accommodating the precious time families have together but flexibilities and accommodations have limitations, especially when they impact on student performance and attendance at school.

### ***Attendance – what parents should know***

■ Parents can team up with teachers to make sure students are in school and ready to learn.

■ How parents can help:

- Schedule medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- Schedule vacations during school breaks.
- Schedule Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves to coincide with summer breaks or other scheduled school breaks.
- When moving, check school calendars to be aware of important school dates (beginning/ending of school year; testing dates, breaks, etc.).
- Make it a habit to contact their child's teachers/principals to arrange to pick up missed school work, either in advance if the absence is known, or the same day their child is absent.