

Top 10 Things to Consider When Talking to Parents About Attendance

- 1. Approach the issue of absences out of concern, rather than compliance**

Make parents feel supported, rather than guilty and in trouble
- 2. Refer to absences by month, rather than by year.**

Point out that just “2 days missed per month” has consequences, instead of “18 days missed per year”
- 3. Use simple, easy-to-understand language**

Avoid complicated statistics, hyperboles, or metaphors
- 4. Be realistic about what you are asking parents to do**

Avoid implying that parents should send children to school when they’re sick
- 5. Frame the discussion around “absences” rather than “attendance”**

Talking about “attendance” validates what parents already believe they do; talking about “absence” focuses their attention on what they’re missing
- 6. Describe how elementary school builds a foundation for future success**

Help parents understand that learning is sequential—an absence is a missed opportunity to learn something their child will need in order to understand more difficult material later
- 7. Give parents specific reasons why absences matter, rather than making vague statements**

Say things like...
“You cannot make up for too many absences with homework or take-home assignments”
“Too many absences will allow them to fall behind in reading, writing and math”
“Too many absences now can actually make them less likely to graduate high school”
- 8. Connect parents to the class curriculum to help them understand what their child may be missing**

Say things like...
“We are learning to identify numerators and denominators this week. Please make sure your child does not miss school because his/her understanding of this lesson will make him better prepared for next week’s lesson on adding fractions with common denominators”
- 9. Encourage parents to do everything they can to ensure their child does not miss school**

Ask for reasons why the child was out and connect them to appropriate resources (e.g. transportation issues, child care, etc.)
- 10. Use text messages to communicate with parents about absences, as one component of ongoing and regular school-to-parent communications.**

The vast majority of parents said that they trust teachers most when it comes to communicating about absences. Since many parents rely on text messages more than any other form of communication (including phone calls and emails), it can be used to help build trust and regular communication between parents and the school. If you’re considering this approach, take into account these [tips for texting parents](#).