



Dear Parent/Guardian,

This year, Bethel School District is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Consistent attendance will help your child(ren) do well in Bethel Schools and beyond.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to reteach.
- By **6<sup>th</sup> grade**, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By **9<sup>th</sup> grade**, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than **8<sup>th</sup> grade** test scores.

### WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

- Ensure your student attends daily and is successful in school.
  - Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
  - Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
  - Develop a backup plan for getting to school (i.e., call on family member, neighbor, friend).
- If your student is going to be absent, please submit an absence request via ParentVUE or contact your building's attendance clerk.

### OUR PROMISE TO YOU

There are many staff members in our building that are prepared to help you. We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school.

### STATE LAWS AND SCHOOL POLICIES

It is vital that you understand Bethel School District Policies and Procedures, as well as Washington State Law. The Becca Bill requires children ages 8 to 17 attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved homeschool program. Children that are 6 or 7 years old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6 or 7 year old, the student must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet specific requirements (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>).

We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence.

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- **Three** unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020), requires a scheduled conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.
  - **Five** excused absences in any month, **ten or more** excused absences in a school year, requires the school district to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your student. A meeting is not required if your student has provided a doctor's note, a pre-arranged absence in writing, or the parent, student and school have made a plan, so your student does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan, the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.
  - **Seven** unexcused absences in any month or **ten** unexcused absences within the school year, requires a petition to be filed with Pierce County Juvenile Court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. If your student continues to be truant, you may be required to appear in court.

#### **EXCUSED ABSENCES – BOARD POLICY 3122**

Be sure your student attends school unless the absence meets one of the following criteria:

- Participation in a district or school approved activity or instruction program;
- Illness, health condition, or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental, or optometry) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible;
- Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
- Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
- Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation or scholarship interview;
- State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 29A.225.055;
- Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;
- Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
- Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity.

Thank you so much for your support and helping ensure your student is successful in Bethel Schools.