

CORNERSTONE  
DAY SCHOOL

# Parents Matter

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## Regular School Attendance: A Critical Ingredient in Your Child's Recipe for Success

Every school presents one or more students each year with a perfect attendance award. In thinking about other typical academic awards, some might ask "Why reward someone for just showing up?"

As it turns out, research shows that students who "show up" and miss as little classroom time as possible have better academic achievement, perform better on standardized tests, display more appropriate behavior in school, are more likely to graduate, and have access to more life opportunities both during school and after graduation. Missing just 2 days per month equates to missing 10% of a school year and can have consequences for both individual students and for the community. And while teacher effectiveness is closely related to student success, even the best teachers cannot work their magic on absent students.

The negative effects of absenteeism often carry far into adulthood. Irregular attendance is an important predictor of student outcomes, including whether a student will drop out of school altogether. Students who drop out of high school are more likely to live in poverty, to suffer poor health, and to become involved in the criminal justice system. Some students are at higher risk for these poor outcomes: students of color, those who live in poverty, and those who have chronic medical, developmental, or mental health conditions tend to have higher absence rates than their peers.

### What Contributes to School Absences?

Several factors contribute to poor school attendance:

- Students who struggle academically are more likely to disengage from school and this can lead to chronic absenteeism and a vicious cycle of learning loss.
- Exposure to bullying can lead to school avoidance. Sadly, research suggests that approximately 20% of students aged 12-18 in the US have experienced bullying at some point.
- Physical health issues, including asthma, diabetes, and obesity can lead to poor attendance. Asthma is a leading cause of school absenteeism, accounting for a third of all missed days.
- Children whose families are experiencing severe financial hardship are more likely to miss school due to difficulties with transportation, unstable housing or homelessness, or food insecurity.

- Students with learning disabilities, developmental disorders, mental health conditions, or trauma histories are more likely than other students to be chronically absent.

### What Remedies Exist for Chronic Absenteeism?

Research consistently shows that parent involvement powerfully affects all aspects of a student's educational success, including attendance and graduation rates.

- Talk with your child to understand the root causes of his/her absenteeism and to work toward solutions. Help your child understand the importance of daily attendance.
- Work closely with teachers and your child's clinical team to create both in school and home-based incentives for attendance and to reduce barriers to regular attendance.
- Set clear expectations about attendance and specify the consequences for missing school; recognize success while also validating your child's struggles.

Parents must also recognize their own struggles and successes: motivating a reluctant child to attend school is hard work. When discouraged it might be helpful to remember that students who regularly attend school will perform better academically, are more likely to graduate from high school, will have greater opportunities for higher education, will have more work options and a greater lifetime earning potential, and will enjoy better health and overall community engagement.

### Resources:

<http://www.psychiatrytimes.com/child-adolescent-psychiatry/strategies-improve-medication-adherence-youths>

Strategies to Improve Medication Adherence in Youths <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2528818/#lpo=40.1961>

Adherence to treatment in adolescents Danielle Taddeo, MD, Maud Egedy, MD, and Jean-Yves Frappier

Help Your Teen Comply with Medication Regimens <https://www.chla.org/blog/rn-remedies/help-your-teen-comply-medication-regimens>



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*Parents Matter is published regularly throughout the school year as a service to the parents of students enrolled at Cornerstone Day School. Each issue highlights an important topic for parents with practical suggestions for helping their child continue to grow and overcome their emotional challenges.*