

Just Be Present!!!

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Berea High School is off to a great start in the 2023-24 school year! Having all our students back in the classroom and learning after the summer is lovely.

As we get into the school year, we want to remind you of the importance of good attendance for all students. Every day a student is absent is a lost opportunity for learning. Too many absences can affect achievement for the absent student and disrupt learning for the entire class.

Research shows that students who consistently miss school are at risk of lower academic achievement, failure, and even dropping out of school altogether.

Bringing awareness to the issue of chronic absenteeism and providing information and resources to parents can help improve student attendance and, consequently, student achievement. We saw during the pandemic how important it is for all students to learn in person from their teachers and alongside their classmates.

### **Just be Present**

We have an attendance initiative called **“Just be Present”** to heighten awareness of the importance of attending school each day and improving attendance in our schools. If your child is healthy, they should be in school.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

Most children miss a few days of school each year without long-term consequences. However, the effects are almost always adverse when they miss many days. The [South Carolina State Education Department](#) classifies a student as “chronically absent” when they miss 10 percent of school days, and it is different from truancy, which counts only unexcused absences.

In the [Greenville County School District](#), students are considered chronically absent when they miss 18 school days a year for any reason (10% of our 180 school day calendar). That works out to less than two days per month.

Over a student’s high school career, missing 10 percent of school days would equate to missing almost an entire semester of school.

### **What Can Families Do?**

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. All students should attend school every day, so they learn immediately that attending school on time every day is essential. Good attendance will help children succeed in high school, college, and careers.

What you can do:

- **Avoid scheduling vacations when school is in session.** They are considered unexcused absences.
- **Build regular routines** for bedtime and the morning.

- **Lay out clothes and pack backpacks** the night before.
- **Talk about the importance of regular attendance** and how your child feels about school.
- **Don't permit missing school** unless your child is genuinely sick. Use a thermometer to check for a fever. Remember that stomach aches and headaches may be signs of anxiety.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, **talk to teachers, school counselors, or other parents** for advice on making them feel comfortable and excited about learning.
- **Avoid medical appointments when school is in session.**
- **Keep a chart** recording your child's attendance at home. At the end of the week, talk with your child about what you see.
- **Develop backup plans** for getting to school if something comes up. Ask a family member, neighbor, or another parent for help.
- **Seek support** from school staff or community groups to help with transportation, health problems, or a safe path to school.

### **Attendance Notifications**

The Greenville County School System sends automated Attendance Notifications to parents whose children are marked "Unexcused Absent" or "Unexcused Tardy" on a given school day. Parents receive an email, a phone call and a text message via School Messenger to notify them of the absence or late arrival.

School Messenger will assist the school in communicating with parents regarding student attendance.

We also realize that there are several excused reasons why your child may be late to school. Please send a note or call [Berea High School](#) in advance if you know your child will be out of school ahead of time.

I appreciate your support.

### Resources:

- [Attendance Policy](#)  
(<https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/Departments/main.asp?titleid=persattend2>)
- [Just be Present](#)  
(<https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/student-intervention-services/chronic-absenteeism/>)
- [AttendanceWorks.org](#) (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/>)