



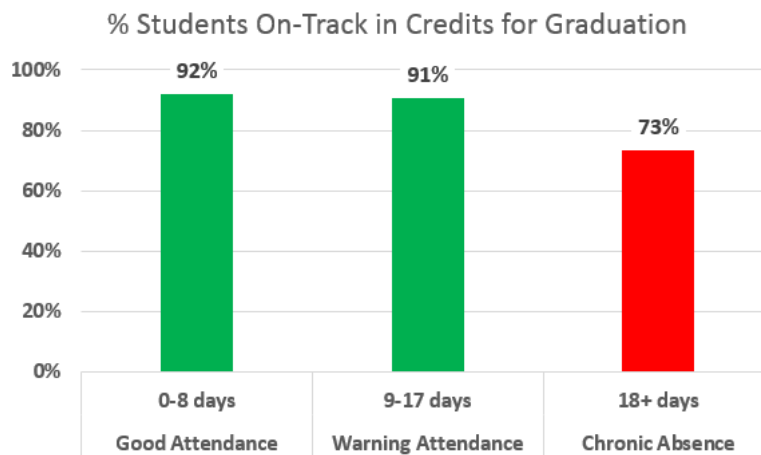
August 30, 2016

Dear Tahoma Family:

Welcome back to another great year in Tahoma schools. We are excited about the work we are doing to support high quality learning and want to reach out to our families on an important issue with which we need your help. School attendance is critically important. Simply put, if students aren't here we can't teach them.

Frequent absences are an issue at many other school districts in Washington, which has the second-highest rate of absenteeism in the nation. Unfortunately, Tahoma is experiencing a higher percentage of chronically absent students than most districts. While not all of the reasons for frequent absences are clear, it is apparent that school attendance must become a higher priority for many of our students so that they have the best chance to be successful.

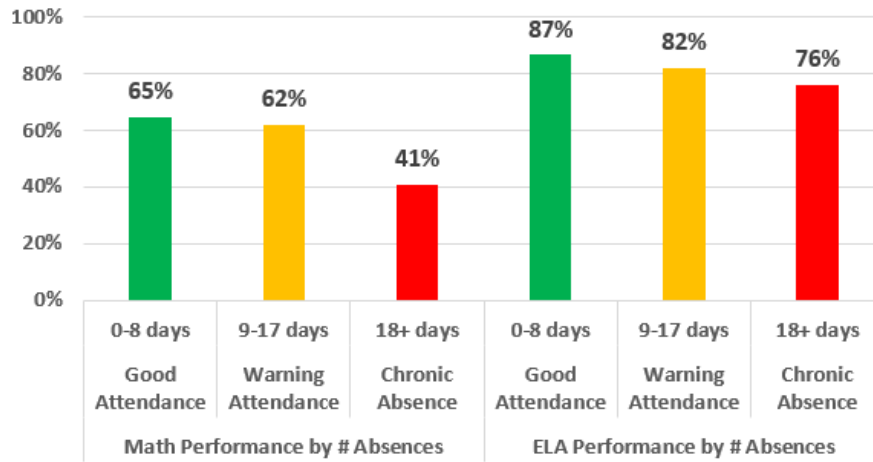
When students are not in school they miss important learning opportunities that can't be made up by simply trying to catch up on assignments. In a 180-day school year, a 10 percent absentee rate equals two days a month, on average, that a student is not in school. It doesn't seem like much but the negative impact on a student's learning is easily seen:



Tahoma 2015-2016 Data for Students in Grades 9-12

The problem is not isolated to a particular grade level or group. Similar impacts are seen across all grade levels and in all core subjects. When students miss more than nine days of school, their learning and grades begin to suffer. As that increases upward toward 18 days (10%) the impact on learning increases significantly.

Attendance Impacts Achievement



Tahoma 2015-16 Data for Students in Grades 10-11

This year, Tahoma School District is placing special emphasis on attendance. Parents will receive information throughout the year that promotes good attendance. Parents can also expect to be contacted if their child is frequently absent. The state is requiring that we look at total student absences and take action, whether excused or unexcused. School board policy also is changing to encourage improved attendance and to follow state law, which reduces what qualifies as an excused absence. In Tahoma we see this as being an important part of our Future Ready initiative. Regular school attendance and a commitment to learning carry over into future education and career opportunities.

“We need the help of parents and students if we are going to reduce absenteeism,” Rob Morrow, superintendent, said. “We want students to be present every day. We understand that there will be times when students must miss school due to illness or other legitimate reasons. But we also believe that school must be the top priority for students so that they will have the best chance to succeed now and in their adult lives.”

We hope you will join us in working to ensure that our students understand the importance of good attendance. Together, we can help our students prepare for their future by having good school attendance.

Sincerely,

Dawn Wakeley

Executive Director of Teaching and Learning