



"Home of
the Vikings"

SIUSLAW SCHOOL DISTRICT 97J

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Motivating and Preparing All Students to Reach Their Greatest Potential

Siuslaw Elementary School ♦ Siuslaw Middle School ♦ Siuslaw High School

Dear New Siuslaw School District family,

I'd like to start by saying first and foremost: welcome to Siuslaw School District! I hope you are filled with the same excitement and anticipation we feel. As always, our goal is to improve student readiness—meaning we want to ensure that our students are prepared to succeed at every grade-level— but this year we're doing something a little different to help accomplish this goal.

We've implemented a new attendance tracking system that will help us keep a more accurate, up-to-date tally of how often students miss school, and more importantly, help families keep track as well. The program, Attention2Attendance, will quickly send out letters to families when their children miss school. Automating this part of the process will free up our office staff more to work with you to identify the barriers that keep students away from class, and keep kids on track toward academic success.

For years, studies have shown that when students regularly attend school they are far more likely to graduate, more likely to attend college, and more likely to have a successful career.

The demands of our students in school today are much different than when most of us went to school. When I graduated from high school, for instance, students needed 20 credits and there was no state testing requirement. Today, students need 24 credits and have higher demands for academic coursework in addition to state testing. Another example of this is that the high school graduation requirement for math used to be the completion of Algebra. Now, the beginning point for high school math is Algebra, and students must take an additional two years of math on top of that. The demands placed on kids now to prepare them for 21st Century careers is drastically different than what we faced at their age. In essence, five years' worth of high school is now condensed into four years.

Therefore, when students miss even one day, they have more catching up to do than we ever did. If all things were the same, maybe missing a few days here and there wouldn't be as big a deal, but when you've got 30 percent more work to do, you can't afford to miss that many days—and currently, even our students with relatively good attendance are missing too much school.

Especially in those early grades, missing more than just a couple days can have serious consequences. The fundamentals they learn at the elementary level, whether it be in math, reading, or writing, are the pieces that ripple through the entire K-12 education experience for children.

The impact of missed school days goes beyond academic performance. As students miss days, they fall out of step with the social rhythms of their class and peers. This can compound learning challenges by adding interpersonal stress to lost learning time. School attendance is a habit. We are hoping to support students in developing productive habits that can last even beyond the school years.

I hope that by adopting this new attendance program we can all work together to prevent students from falling behind. We at Siuslaw School District believe this will help our staff, families, and students themselves quickly identify when a child is trending toward poor attendance and subsequently come up with a successful plan to keep them on track toward meeting their academic goals.

Andrew S. Grzeskowiak, Superintendent