

August 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Regular school attendance is vital to your student's success. At Spiritridge, our goal is to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by getting to school **on time (in class by 9:05)** and **attending school regularly**. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. You can help your student learn that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

Below are the times we expect students to be at school:

- Students arrive no earlier than 8:40 am
- The warning bell rings at 9:00 am
- The final bell rings and instruction begins at 9:05 am. Attendance is taken in class.

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.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are late or absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. 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.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Have your child ride the bus as this assures your child will get to school on time. If you have to drive your child to school, leave yourself extra time in case of traffic or inclement weather. Our doors open at 8:40, so you can drop your child off starting then.

An unexcused tardy means your child arrived in class late (after 9:05) because of sleeping in, traffic, missing the bus, running late, etc. Examples of excused tardies are illness, health condition, medical appointment, and family emergency. If you're not signing your child in, please contact our attendance office at (425) 456-5901 or email spiritridgeattendance@bsd405.org with the reason why your child was tardy.

Arriving late to school/class impacts a student's learning as well as the classroom atmosphere. Being on time for school/class is a positive goal for each of our students. Research has shown that your child's attendance record may be the biggest factor influencing his/her academic success.

If your student is going to be absent or late, please contact attendance office at (425) 456-5901 or email spiritridgeattendance@bsd405.org.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school 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 certain 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.

If your student has **three unexcused absences in one month**, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a 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 best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

In elementary school after **five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year**, the school district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your student. **A conference is not required if your student has provided a doctor’s note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and the parent, student and school have made plans 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.

If your student has **seven unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the Juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws.** The petition may be automatically stayed and your student and family may be referred to a Community Truancy Board, or you and your student may need to appear in Juvenile Court. If your student continues to be truant, you may need to go to court.

Our district and school policy states that, at elementary, every **three unexcused tardies will be converted to one unexcused absence.** Once a student reaches five unexcused absences in a month, the school will enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements. No later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year, the school year, a [BECCA](#) case will be initiated to ensure school attendance requirements are being met.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night’s sleep.
- Don’t let your student stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student’s attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance and getting to school on time.
- Talk to your students’ teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,

Susan Webster
Assistant Principal
Spiritridge Elementary

Please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter to Spiritridge by **Friday, September 8**, and your child will receive a Spiritridge PRIDE pencil!

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Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures of Spiritridge Elementary and the Bellevue School District.

Student Name: _____ Teacher: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date _____