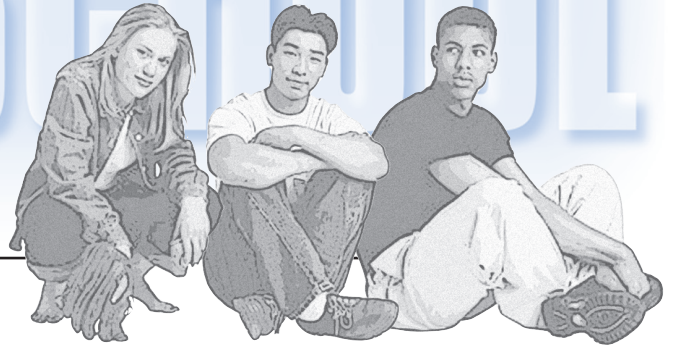


# HIGH SCHOOL PARENT



Picturing high school success:

## Why attendance matters most

Eastman Kodak couldn't find enough skilled workers to make its line of digital cameras, so the upstate New York photography giant recently announced it is sending this production to a manufacturing firm in Singapore—marking the first time in more than a century that the company would completely outsource the labor and manufacture of a product.

Fellow New York manufacturing giants IBM and Xerox, along with other businesses large and small, are also turning to companies overseas where employees are geared for creative design and technical production.

## What this trend means for our students

Workers require more academic and technical education than ever before. And employers are looking for their new hires to come to them job-ready. In fact, most of today's jobs—from auto mechanics to Internet Web design—require additional training beyond high school, if not a two-year or four-year college education. Of the 30 fastest-growing occupations in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2006-07 Occupational Outlook Handbook, only three list short-term, on-the-job training as the most significant source of post-secondary education or training.

### Attendance is not a school elective

To help better prepare teens for the world of higher education and work, the high school curriculum has become more challenging and varied.

Additionally, the way teens learn is changing so it better reflects the work world they'll soon enter. High school students are being asked to collaborate on long-term projects with their classmates both at school and electronically with their peers in other locations. They are also learning while using many of the same types of technologies (e.g., Powerpoint presentation software and desktop publishing) currently used in the workplace.

This type of learning takes dedication. And, unlike simple memorizations of facts, which can be done just about anywhere, teens need to be at school and on-task each day to get the most from hands-on learning.

### Unfortunately, a lot of teens have yet to get this message.

School administrators say that many teens are not making regular attendance a priority. And, unless teens are at school and ready to learn, there's not much that teachers can do to help prepare them for the world they are moving toward.

During the 2006 Union Pacific/Principals' Partnership summer leadership institute, nearly 350 public high school

principals were asked, "As the 2006-07 school year begins, what are the three most important actions a family should take to assure success for its high school student?" School attendance was one of the most important factors in school success that respondents noted.

"Attendance is directly related to successfully completing high school. You can't drop in occasionally and think that you can keep

## Helping teens make school their TOP priority

Along with strong reading, writing, mathematics and thinking skills, employers say they value work habits such as attendance, timeliness and dedication. Regular school attendance — especially when they'd rather not make the effort — is one means of teaching teens these all-important life skills.

Even though teens are moving toward young adulthood, parents still have the ability to influence their attitudes and behaviors. Here are some ways you can help instill an ethic for attendance and school performance:

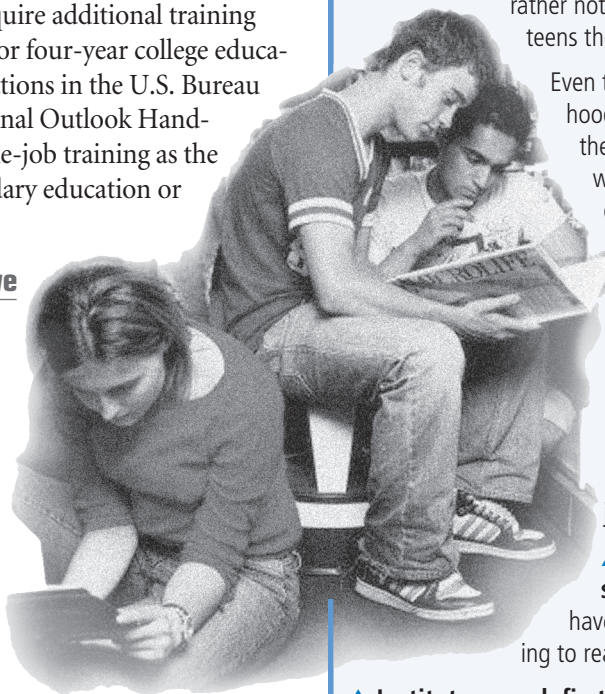
▲ Help teens understand that the attitudes they develop now are the ones they will carry into adulthood and can limit or expand their personal and professional options (e.g., If they repeatedly skip classes in college they'll fail out and waste **a lot** of your family's money. In a competitive workforce, frequently skipping work can cost them their jobs.)

▲ **Familiarize yourself with the high school attendance policy.** It can help to have the letter of the law on your side when trying to reason with teens.

▲ **Institute a work first/play later policy.** School attendance and schoolwork need to come before friends, extracurriculars and part-time jobs. Sometimes, the real reason teens are reluctant to go to school is that they haven't finished assignments or presentations or prepared well for tests.

▲ **Encourage reasonable bedtimes.** On average, teens need eight to nine hours of sleep to be healthy and alert. As they move into the high school years, teens' brains begin to signal them to stay up later—and to sleep in later the next day. Also the draw of the Internet and online conversations with friends can have teens burning the midnight oil, making early morning wake-ups and school start times difficult.

▲ **Schedule medical and other appointments during non-school hours whenever possible.** Arrange family vacations during school holidays or the summer recess so that students aren't missing important lessons and struggling to make up for lost time.





## Parents need to help with student attendance

It is essential that parents understand the importance of good attendance, and that if students are constantly late or absent, it will negatively affect the learning process.

From left, Monticello High School Principal Arlene Siegel-Lerner congratulates 11th grade student Daniel Cunningham on his perfect attendance for the year.



According to Monticello High School's official *Attendance Policy*, "all students are expected to attend school regularly and to be on time for classes." This policy is enforced so that students can "benefit from the instructional program and develop habits of punctuality and self-discipline."

Many students don't want to miss school because it means making up class work in addition to their homework. It also could mean a decline in their overall grades. For 11th grade student Daniel Cunningham, it's a no-brainer. "I haven't missed a day of school since the beginning of the year," explained Daniel. "As a matter of fact, I haven't been absent once since 3rd grade!" Though that may sound like a remarkable attendance record, it is not as hard as it sounds.

For Daniel, his incentives are staying ahead in his class work, seeing his friends, reading the morning announcements, and being rewarded for his positive behavior. Parents who get involved and help enforce the attendance policy are finding that their child is getting more out of his/her school experience. For more information about how you can help your child, please call High School Principal Arlene Siegel-Lerner at 794-8840.

The *Attendance Policy* is as follows:

- Attendance will be taken within the first fifteen minutes of each class;
- A phone call home will be made for each absent student during periods 1 and 2;
- A call log will be kept and patterns will be noted, with administrators being advised of irregularities;
- Attendance officer will contact home, and if the situation warrants, PINS, DSS and appropriate referrals will be made;
- Teachers will contact family regarding missed schoolwork;
- All students who are late to first period will be marked late to school and will need to get a white pass from the attendance office;
- After three (3) late arrivals, student will get an In-House Suspension;
- After four (4) late arrivals, student will get an Out-of-School Suspension and a mandatory parent meeting will be held with the assistant principal and attendance officer.

## Positive behavior is catching on

In September, Monticello High School kicked off its PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) initiative, spear-headed by Assistant Principal Douglas Murphy and his team of teachers. The program's aim is to reinforce positive behavior in students by letting them earn rewards for doing the right thing and acting respectfully.

With preliminary data being calculated from the first quarter marking period, High School Principal Arlene Siegel-Lerner, is finding a significant decline in overall negative behavior in the school. "Students are responding wonderfully to this program and we are very proud of them," stated Siegel-Lerner. "They're really trying to make the right choices!"

And if they do – all students who don't get any referrals for a full marking period are invited to come out for a night of fun, games, music and refreshments – on the house! The well-behaved can also win gift certificates to the Galleria Mall in a monthly raffle drawing.

According to PBIS co-chair and teacher Christopher Zottola, another great thing that has come out of this program is a renewed enthusiasm in

school spirit. So much so, the PBIS crew decided to use some of their budget money to purchase a mascot costume. So far the distinctive black panther has been seen at basketball games and wrestling events – worn, of course, by a well-behaved student!



PBIS co-chair Debi Fasce (left) and Assistant Principal Douglas Murphy (right) with some PBIS student representatives. High school senior LaShawn Moorer, is pictured in the panther mascot costume.