

Elementary SCHOOL
Maine School Administrative District No.

Your Name, Principal

January , 2014

Happy New Year!

This is a good time of year for reflection about those things that will *make a positive difference*. You all have HOPE for a bright future for your children and every day you try to make sure that they are on the right track. We share that HOPE and work to do everything that we can to help your child succeed. Some of the information I'm sharing in this letter may surprise you! I know it surprised me!

In schools, we are always talking about how to increase student achievement and we spend a lot of time working at this. Recently, I attended a very powerful conference in Portland where the presenter, Hedy Chang, Director of *Attendance Works*, shared some pretty compelling information. I know that if you knew a simple way to make a positive difference for YOUR child, you would!

- If I told you that you could help your child do better in school and in his or her future work place, would you do it? *Of course!*
- If I told you that ignoring this information, may put your child in peril and that potentially he or she will "pay" for it later, would you heed this warning? *Of course!*
- If I told you that we can tell in Kindergarten whether or not your child may be at risk in first grade and beyond, would you want to know HOW? *Of course!*
- If I told you that by MODELING one simple thing, you will teach your child a critical skill for success in his or her future job? *Of course!*

Research shows that without question children who repeatedly miss school fall behind. ALL absences matter, NOT just days in a row.

- When your child is late, *he or she has to scurry to catch up*. The teacher has to slow down or interrupt instruction to bring your child up to speed - so others are affected and the quality of instruction in a quick make up session will not be equal to the instruction that the other students had.
- When your child is absent, *learning is missed* that can't easily be reproduced. Students miss the richness of the classroom instruction, guided practice and/or learning with peers.
- When your child leaves early, he or she misses one of the most important parts of the day: review, guided practice and directions for homework assignments.

Nationwide, as many as 10% to 15 % of students miss one month of school every year. Here is last year's data from **Fill in Your School**:

Last year (2012-2013):

- ___ students missed more than 10 days of school. (This is ___ % of our students!)
- Of those, ___ missed 11-15 days of school.
- ___ students missed 16-20 days of school.
- ___ students missed over 20 days of school. This is over a month of school.

I know that every parent has HOPE for a bright future for his/her child and that every day we try to make sure that our children are on the right track. This is very compelling information! Of course some absences are unavoidable, but high absences like these are a RED alert. If your child has a high rate of absence, please help us turn this around for him or her by making sure he/she is at school *every possible day*. It really matters.

Thank You!

Your Name, Principal