

Every Day Counts

There's a relationship between how much your child attends school and their overall academic achievement. Regular school attendance is strongly correlated with academic success, and chronic absenteeism, or prolonged periods of school absence, can have a negative impact on a child's educational attainment.

There is also a relationship between attending school and social and emotional outcomes. On average, we see that regular interaction with peers and teachers fosters social skills, emotional intelligence, and a sense of belonging. Children who consistently miss school may experience feelings of isolation, struggle with forming positive relationships, and face challenges in developing essential life skills. School is often a place where students receive emotional support from educators and peers.

Additionally, completing education is often associated with better employment prospects, higher earning potential, and an improved overall quality of life. Children who miss substantial amounts of school may face difficulties transitioning to higher education or entering the workforce. This can limit their options and hinder their ability to pursue fulfilling and rewarding careers.

Based on research from around the country and the world, most Australian states have a mantra (and a marketing message) that every day counts. QLD Education, for example, states on their website that:

“Every Day Counts is a state-wide initiative that aims to assist in improving student attendance at school through a shared commitment by students, parents, caregivers, schools, and the community.”

Multiple days of absence from school, especially consecutive days, can be problematic for students. But a day here or there is less about impacting learning outcomes for kids and more about:

- Making life harder for teachers who have to continually repeat work and try to help students catch up on missed content.
- Helping students with consistency.

- Allowing parents to complete their responsibilities, which can often be completed only when kids are at school.

So, when the kids are asking for days off, what's the best way forward?

Understand Root Causes

If kids are pulling a “sickie,” understanding what’s really going on is vital. It’s obvious, but often we miss the mark on this. Sometimes kids choose not to tell us what’s really going on. This is where we **get curious, not furious**.

Do they need your attention because things aren’t good at home? Do they need your attention because things aren’t good at school? Are they saying they’re “sick,” but they’re struggling with a teacher, a peer, or a bully? Are they complaining about school, but they’re on their period and feel nervous about being at school at a sensitive time?

Pausing to really explore and understand is key.

Explore, Explain, Empower

When faced with the dilemma of kids wanting a day off, explore, explain, and empower. Discerning the underlying reasons, communicating a clear rationale for what you’re asking, and developing solutions together will usually be the best way forward. And if it’s something deeper (that could lead to school refusal), this process will generally help you discover that issue faster.

In doing these things we gain perspective, and we open a dialogue with our child that is more likely to lead to productive conversation and resolution.



AUTHOR

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