

News Release: SEPTEMBER IS ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH

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For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Office of Communications

301-952-6001

communications@pgcps.org (<mailto:communications@pgcps.org>)

UPPER MARLBORO, MD – Any student thinking of skipping school, should think again. Days after welcoming 129,000 students back to school, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) prepares to recognize the month of September as Attendance Awareness Month.

During the month of September, the Office of Pupil Personnel Services and schools across the district will promote the importance of daily attendance, and raise awareness about the prevention of chronic absenteeism. School achievement begins with regular attendance. PGCPS expects all students to come to school everyday, on time, and prepared for academic success.

"Attendance is essential to school success because everyday counts, and everyday matters," said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer, PGCPS. "Students who are chronically absent are more likely to suffer academically. It is the responsibility of our schools, administrators, parents and care providers to ensure that every student is present each day," added Maxwell.

By law, parents and guardians must ensure regular attendance for their school-aged children who are enrolled in a public school. In the state of Maryland, the compulsory school age has increased from 5 -16 to ages 5 - 17. As of July 1, 2016 the compulsory school age will increase again from 17 to 18 years of age. This age refers to the minimum and maximum age required by a state in which a student must be enrolled in and attending public school, or an equivalent education program as defined by the law.

If a child has excessive unexcused absences, the parent/ guardian may be convicted of a misdemeanor and imprisoned, or fined by the courts. Additionally, any other adult who persuades, or attempts to persuade a student to be unlawfully absent, or who harbors a child who is unlawfully absent, may also be convicted of a misdemeanor and imprisoned and or fined.

PGCPS guidelines say absence from school is classified as a lawful absence or an unlawful absence. Absence from school, including absence for any portion of the school day, shall be considered lawful only for the following reasons:

- Illness of the student (The principal shall require a physician's certificate from the parent/guardian of a student reported continuously absent for illness)
- Hazardous weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student
- Work approved or sponsored by the school, PGCPS, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the CEO, principal or their designees as reason for excusing the student

- Death in the immediate family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Lack of authorized transportation
- Other emergency or set of circumstances approved by the CEO or his designee
- State of emergency
- Suspension
- Court summons
- Health exclusion

Unlawful absence is defined as the act of a student being absent from school for a day, or any portion of a day from an individual class, or any portion of a class for any reason other than those defined as lawful. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work for students when absences are unlawful.

For helpful tips in building the habit of good attendance in elementary students, click **here** (http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Attendance_ESP1PG_English_062614.pdf).

To view the helpful tips for elementary students in Spanish, click **here** (http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/Attendance_ESP1PG_Spanish_070114.pdf).

For helpful parent tips in keeping the attendance of middle and high school students on track, click **here** (http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/AW_HS-flyer-1-pager.pdf).

To view the helpful tips for middle and high school students in Spanish, click **here** (http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/AW_HS-flyer_Spanish.pdf).

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Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), one of the nation's 20th largest school districts, has 201 schools and centers, more than 133,000 students and nearly 20,000 employees. The school system serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in the Washington, DC suburbs. PGCPS is nationally recognized for college and career-readiness programs that provide students with unique learning opportunities, including dual enrollment and language immersion.