

Hamilton County Schools Attendance Program Project ACES – Attending Class Equals Success

In addition to the Westfield-Washington Schools trimester attendance procedures, all students are subject to the Hamilton County Schools Project ACES Attendance Program which runs in collaboration with the Hamilton County Juvenile Prosecutor's Office. The goal of Project ACES is to ensure that every child attends school as required by Indiana Law so that each child will receive the necessary guidance and knowledge to become a productive member of the community. **Absences to school are accumulative throughout the school year and do not reset at any point during the school year.**

Target Group 1: Students with Excessive Excused/Unexcused Absences

Excused absences **not** included in Project ACES are:

- Religious holidays
- Death in the immediate family
- Court appearances, Jury duty
- Serving as a page for the State Legislature
- College visitation – High School
- Driver license examination – High School
- Immigration, passports

Step 1: When a student misses 7 excused/unexcused days of school (vacation or illness, no doctor's notes provided), the parent, student, school administration, and counselor will meet to discuss the student's attendance at school. The meeting will attempt to discern the issues behind the student missing school and devise a plan to assist the student in improving their attendance. At the meeting, an attendance letter will be handed to the parents, as well as information regarding the Westfield Youth Assistance Program. Documentation of the meeting will be kept in the school file.

Step 2: When the student misses 10 excused/unexcused days of school (vacation or illness, no doctor's note provided), a Letter of Incapacity and a Physician's Certificate, which requires a doctor's note for any further absences, will be mailed to parent by certified mail.

Step 3: When student misses 12 excused/unexcused days of school (vacation or illness, no doctor's note provided), the student and parent are referred to the Project ACES program. The school administration will fill out and submit an ACES referral form to a representative of the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecutor's Office will then contact the parents both by mail and phone to inform the parent and child of a required meeting to be held to discuss the continued absences of the student.

Step 4: At the meeting, a Hamilton County Deputy Prosecutor will present a presentation to the parents and students on how truancy leads to delinquency, increases the chances for becoming a dropout, reviewing Indiana law on school attendance and educational neglect, define excused and unexcused absences and discuss the consequences of further absences from school. If appropriate, the child will be referred to the Westfield Youth Assistance Program to assist the student and parent in correcting their school attendance issues.

Step 5: If students and grades 1-6 are still missing school, educational neglect charges will be filed. If students in grade 7-12 are still missing school, truancy charges will be filed and pick up order will be requested.

Target Group 2: Students who are Truant

A student is truant when neither his/her parents/guardians nor school officials know the reason for a student's absence at the time of the absence or the "willful refusal to attend school in defiance of parental/guardian authority." (Indiana Court of Appeals: Simmons v. State of Indiana.) Skipping a class or leaving school without permission is an example of truancy. Truancies accumulate throughout the school year and do not reset at any time.

Step 1: When a student is truant for 1 day of school, the parent, student, school administration and counselor will meet. At the meeting, an attendance letter will be handed to the parent, as well as information on the Westfield Youth Assistance Program. When appropriate, the student will be assigned a Thursday School. Documentation of the meeting will be kept in the school file.

Step 2: When a student is truant for 2 days for school, student and parent are referred to Project ACES. The school administration will fill out and submit a Project ACES referral form to a representative of the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecutor's Office will then contact the parents both by mail and phone to inform the parent and child of a required meeting to be held to discuss the continued absences of the student.

Step 3: At the meeting, a Hamilton County Deputy Prosecutor will present a presentation to the parents and students on how truancy leads to delinquency, increases the chances for becoming a dropout, reviewing Indiana law on school attendance and educational neglect, define excused and unexcused absences and discuss the consequences of further absences from school. If appropriate, the child will be referred to the Westfield Youth Assistance Program to assist the student and parent in correcting their school attendance issues.

Step 4: When a student is truant for 3 days of school, when appropriate they will be assigned to Out of School Suspension which will be served in Saturday School (grades 5-12 only).

Step 5: When a student is truant 4 or more days of school, a truancy petition will be filed. In addition, a pick up order will be requested for students in grades 7-12.

If a student is truant, work will not be credited and progressive discipline will ensue. Truancy will count toward the absence limit.

Project ACES is a collaboration between the school, parent, student, Westfield Youth Assistance Program, and the Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office. In working together and through early intervention, we believe that attending class will equal success for each and every student.