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May 3, 2010

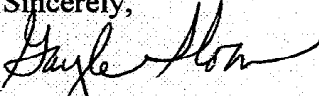
Dear Parents and Caregivers,

With the start of the 2010-2011 school year, there will be some changes to the state attendance guidelines of which you should be aware before classes start in the fall. The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted this spring to revise several of the attendance policies. Previously, students were allowed 20 absences each school year. Beginning in the fall, students will be allowed five absences per semester for high school students and ten absences each school year for elementary students. There are also new rules that apply to these absences. Absences of two or fewer consecutive school days incurred due to personal illness or serious illness in the family may be validated by a parent or caregiver written excuse note. If a student is absent for three or more consecutive days or for other types of absences, a student must present a note from a physician, nurse practitioner, or dentist to be excused.

These new rules are restrictive, and you need to understand that these guidelines will not allow students to be excused for vacations or other family trips. You will need to make an effort to schedule vacations and necessary appointments during school breaks. Our 2010-2011 calendar is posted on our website at www.stpsb.org and includes ample breaks for travel plans.

Extenuating circumstances will be considered but must be approved by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance. Students may be temporarily excused from the attendance regulations because of extended physical or emotional illness, an extended hospital stay, extended recuperation from an accident, or an extended contagious disease within a family. These extenuating circumstances must be verified by a physician, nurse practitioner, or dentist in order to be considered as an official excuse from the attendance regulation. State law will also allow for an exception to the attendance regulation for the observance of special and recognized holidays of a student's faith. The only other exception to the law will be absences that are verified by the principal for the purposes of school system approved travel for education, a death in the family, or a natural catastrophe or disaster. Students who are participating in school-approved field trips and other instructional activities such as College Spring Testing and approved college visits will be considered present at school.

The new regulations represent some big changes for all of the students across the state of Louisiana and are intended to send a clear message that education is a priority for all students. I appreciate your attention to the matter. If you have any questions, please contact your child's school principal.

Sincerely,

 GAYLE SLOAN
 Superintendent

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