



The Buzz



*A Message from
our Principal -
Kolby Snellenberger*

Thank you to the parents who joined me for our first Family Advisory Group Meeting last week.

If you were unable to make the meeting, there's still time to join. Our next meeting will be held on **December 1st at 8:00** am in room **111B** and last about an hour. This committee will brainstorm, bring existing and emerging issues to my attention and give the family perspective on topics impacting your child's school.

Please give Trish Palmer a call at 802-864-8473 if you're interested in being a part of this exciting Committee.

In partnership,

Kolby Snellenberger

IMPORTANT DATES

November 10 - Family Traditions Night
November 17 - Reports Card Sent Home
November 20 - 21 - Parent/Teacher Conferences
November 22 - 24 - Thanksgiving Recess - NO SCHOOL
December 1 - Family Advisory Group Meeting 8:00 AM

Family Traditions Night is Here!

Join us on tonight as we celebrate and share our diverse traditions that enrich our EES community. The potluck will begin at 6:00 pm, and performances begin at 6:30! All EES community members are welcome to attend! **There is no need to share anything to participate in the evening.**



Holiday Help

Soon, many families will come together and enjoy a Thanksgiving meal. For many of us, Thanksgiving wouldn't be complete without turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and other festive sides. If you are concerned about food security for your family during the upcoming Thanksgiving break, please reach out to our school counselor, Melissa Hathaway or our school services clinician, Veronica Zutic for information about local resources. **[Melissa Hathaway mhathawa@bsdvt.org](mailto:Melissa.Hathaway@bsdvt.org) (802) 864-8473 x42010** or **[Veronica Zutic vzutic@bsdvt.org](mailto:Veronica.Zutic@bsdvt.org) (802) 307-2284**

Winter Gear!

As the weather changes and winter arrives, please be sure to send your child to school with winter gear. **We will be going outside for recess EVERY day that the temperature is above 0 degrees.** Children are coming to our spare clothing area expecting that we can supply them with snow pants, gloves and boots. We have some spares, but we are not in the position to have sufficient supplies for every student who forgets their clothing at home or in the car. A natural consequence is to miss sledding with their friends because we don't let students go sledding if they don't have appropriate clothing. They get too wet. That said, children are forgetful, and need to have help checking their "equipment" before leaving the house or the car. PLEASE, help us help them!

New 23-24 Attendance & Truancy Policy for BSD

In 23/24 BSD is changing what counts as an excused absence. We are discontinuing the practice of accepting parental communication as the primary determinant of excused absences and using the guidance from the AOE regarding when an absence is considered excusable.

Excused Absences

From the AOE Website: An absence is considered excusable when it is the result of:

- Personal illness;
- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside of the regular school day;
- Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during a regular school day;
- Emergency family situations such as a death in the family;
- Planned absences for personal or educational purposes which have been approved.
- Absences due to suspension or expulsion

All other absences will be marked as Absence Unexcused. This includes absences such as those that occur when a student needs more sleep, family is in town for a visit, the student is attending a non-AOE approved alternative programming, there is an event that the family wishes to attend with the student, etc.

Planned Absences

In cases of planned absences, families must submit a Planned Absence Request Form alerting us to planned absences of three to nine days. If a planned absence will extend beyond nine consecutive days, a 10+ Days Planned Absence Request Form must be filled out by the family and signed by the principal and teachers. Unless a planned absence of three to nine days is approved, it will be considered an unexcused absence.

Truancy

In terms of truancy, we are moving to a more restorative approach focused on understanding why a student has been absent, the impacts on their schooling, and how the school can work with the family to have improved engagement with school. A truancy notification letter will be sent to any student who has five or more absences from school whether they are excused (such as illness) or unexcused. All families will receive the truancy letter regardless of the reason for the absences. Missing multiple days of school can impact a student's academic progress including meeting State Standards and/or their IEP goals. In circumstances where a student attends outside programming one day per week, this constitutes them missing 20% of the year's curriculum and families should be aware that such absences can impact learning.

Questions and Answers for Families Regarding Changes

Q: What if a student regularly attends an alternative program determined by their family instead of going to school?

A: If a parent chooses to keep their child out of school to attend a part-time educational program (like Crow's Path, Davis Studios, etc.) the family should let the school know in writing and their child will be marked EDU (Alternate Education Program – Unapproved). As BSD cannot approve enrollment in programs unless they are taught by educators licensed by the Vermont Agency of Education, this attendance code will show up as an unexcused absence. Participation in these programs will continue to require students to make up missed work where appropriate, however, being absent for this reason will not prevent students from participating in any activities during or after school. Additionally, though families will still receive letters notifying them of their student's accumulated absences, these absences will not be factored into conversations regarding truancy with the legal system. Missing a day of school every week may impact a student's academic progress including meeting State Standards and/or their IEP goals.

Q: What should I do if a child is sick for more than three consecutive days or has 10 or more health-related absences?

A: The administrative assistant or principal should connect with the school nurse and consider asking the parent for confirmation of illnesses from the child's primary care provider (doctor).

Q: Can absences be excused?

A: Schools can excuse absences when a student is absent from school for religious, health, or emergency reasons. Excused absences are a legal part of the student's record; a student who does not attend school must be marked absent, even if the absence is excused.

Q: Do I have to contact the school if my student will not be coming to school, will be late, or needs to leave early?

A: Yes, please call the school on the day of any unplanned absence and in advance of any planned absences. Families must provide a reason for absences. For late arrivals and needing to leave school early, students who arrive after the start of the school day must check into the main office. If your child is going to be late or absent, please call the school to let us know. Students must remain on school grounds during school hours. Students who have parental permission to leave during the school day must be dismissed by the administrative assistant in the main office and released to the pre-approved adult unless the school has permission to allow the student to leave school on their own.

Q: Does your student want to miss school and you are not sure why?

A: Talk with them about what is happening in school. Reach out to your student's teacher or school counselor so that together you can figure out what it is the student is struggling with and whether it's for academic, social-emotional, or health-related reasons.

Q: Are there other ways schools can help families with student attendance?

A: Yes. We can:

Set up a "contract" with your student with goals for attendance, and rewards, and consequences.

Set up a time to talk with a teacher, school counselor, or school administrator about attendance and any concerns.

Look at any potential counseling services or mentoring for your student.

Consider after-school or extra-curricular programs to help keep your student interested in school.

Look at the class schedule and see if a change could help.

Share other resources for families. Let your school know what your family and student needs (housing, healthcare, school supplies, clothes, toiletries); we are here to help your student be comfortable coming to school and being successful!

Q: Does your student want to miss school because of school work?

A: Meet with the teacher or counselor and ask about the student's classwork. Ask about possible tutoring or homework help after school.