

DJ Editorial
October 5, 2014
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Superintendent

Strong schools require strong funding.

Did you know that parents, grandparents and students play a significant role in how much funding our schools receive each year? Unfortunately, our district forfeited \$220,000 last year because students were not in class for the majority of the school day. That's equivalent to four teacher salaries. This is the new reality.

A state law was passed in the last legislative session saying students must be present for 63% of the instructional day (excluding lunch and recess) in order for schools to receive the daily rate of \$25 for each student. One third of our annual budget - \$29 million – is based on student attendance. That is about one-third of our overall revenues. These revenues, combined with local dollars, pay our teaching staff, provide students with instructional resources and help us to keep our buildings safe and properly maintained.

Soon, our district will once again be promoting our attendance campaign, "Make Every Day Count". You will see signs in front of schools or at the front offices as reminders of how important this is. By ensuring that our children are in school for 63% of the day, we ensure that the most equitable distribution of state funds is made available to our students.

Our teacher-to-student ratios are some of the best in the state. But like many districts, we have had to trim expenses over the last five years. Our schools have experienced state funding cuts to the tune of \$20 million, making strong daily student attendance vital.

October and November are particularly important as the Mississippi Department of Education conducts its official student count by determining the number of students considered present during these months and then calculating an average.

We have listened to your concerns since this law was implemented and have made some adjustments to better accommodate family needs including doctors' appointments and college visits. You will see these changes reflected in the new check-in and check-out times at our schools.

Of course, illnesses cannot be avoided and attending to your child's health is always a priority. And since this is flu season, I hope you and your family can take advantage of the flu vaccination.

No one can deny that having robust student and teacher attendance is correlated to high levels of student learning. We know strong attendance means elementary students read well by the end of third grade, middle school students pass important course work and high school students stay on track for graduation. Too many absences derail students and impact achievement.

As we settle into this new semester, we know our students and teachers have enormously important work to do and every day matters. Now we know that in very practical terms, every day also counts in determining the level of resources we provide to students.

Please visit www.tupeloschools.com to learn more about your school's check-in and check-out times.