

**From the Office of Dr. George Parker, III, Ph.D.
Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools**

Proclamation of September as Attendance Awareness Month

WHEREAS good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation, and we are committed to dedicating our resources and attention to reducing chronic absenteeism rates, with a focus starting as early as kindergarten,

WHEREAS chronic absence – missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason including excused and unexcused absences, or just two of three days a month – is a proven predictor of academic trouble and dropout rates,

WHEREAS improving attendance and reducing chronic absence takes commitment, collaboration and tailored approaches to particular challenges and strengths in each community,

WHEREAS chronic absence predicts lower third-grade reading proficiency, course failure and eventual dropout, it weakens our communities and our local economy,

WHEREAS the impact of chronic absence hits low-income students and children of color particularly hard if they don't have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom and are more likely to face systemic barriers to getting to school – such as unreliable transportation, lack of access to health care, unstable or unaffordable housing,

WHEREAS, chronic absence exacerbates the achievement gap that separates low-income students from their peers, since students from low-income families are both more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to be affected academically by missing school. Absenteeism also undermines efforts to improve struggling schools, since it's hard to measure improvement in classroom instruction if students are not in class to benefit from them,

WHEREAS schools and community partners can reach out more frequently to absent students to determine why they are missing school and what would help them attend more regularly,

WHEREAS schools and districts must do more to track, calculate and share the data on how many students are chronically absent so that we can deliver the right interventions to the right students,

WHEREAS all students – even those who show up regularly – are affected by chronic absence because teachers must spend time reviewing for students who missed lessons,

WHEREAS chronic absence can be significantly reduced when schools, parents and communities work together to monitor and promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that as the Superintendent of Caroline County Public Schools, I proclaim that our schools will stand with the nation in recognizing September

as “Attendance Awareness Month.” We hereby commit to focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism to give all children an equitable opportunity to learn, grow and thrive academically, emotional and socially.

Specifically we will:

1. Make clear that improved student attendance is one of our school district’s top priorities among all of our teachers and school leaders.
2. Use data to raise awareness, establish targets and goals, track progress and assure accountability.
3. Engage parents and the community –to help us spread the message that good attendance matters and help us come up with solutions to ensure all children are in school as much as possible.