FLORIDA GRADE-LEVEL READING CAMPAIGN

AN INITIATIVE OF FACCT

FLORIDA PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Through the Florida Grade-Level Reading Campaign, the Florida Alliance of Children's Councils and Trusts conducted a comprehensive analysis of attendance policies and procedures across Florida's 67 public school districts from October 21, 2024 through November 29, 2024. The study aimed to uncover discrepancies in the classification of excused versus unexcused absences and to evaluate the consistency of policy implementation within each district, providing critical insights into attendance management practices statewide.

School attendance records impact a student's education, as well as his or her ability to participate in extracurricular activities offered by the school, school-sponsored activities, eligibility to obtain and maintain learner's permits and driver's licenses, and potential impacts to post-secondary education opportunities.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

- 25 out of 67 school districts have discrepancies between the school district's School Board policies, Student Code of Conduct, Student/Parent Handbook, or attendance policy document, and at least one school website within the school district.
- 59 out of 67 school districts accept parent documentation to excuse an absence due to student illness.
  - 17 of the 59 school districts do not indicate how many days can be excused before medical professional documentation is needed to excuse the absence(s).
  - Of the 42 school districts that accept parent or guardian documentation, parents or guardians are permitted to excuse between 5 and 20 school days per academic year. The mode is 12 days per academic year.
- 5 school districts do not accept parent/guardian documentation to excuse an illness-related absence.
- 3 school districts did not indicate if parent/guardian documentation would excuse an absence due to student illness.
- There are discrepancies on how school districts handle the following scenarios which impact student attendance records:
  - In and out of school suspension
  - Unexcused tardies and early checkouts
  - Participation in school-sponsored activities
- Research shows varying attendance policies and definitions for excused and unexcused absences for Elementary, Middle, High School, and/or K-8 schools across the 67 school districts.
  - Some school districts give authority to principal or designee to determine if an absence is excused or unexcused.

For more information on the research summarized above or to request a copy of the full brief and accompanying data, please contact Michele Watson, CEO of FACCT, at mwatson@facct.com or 850-320-2388.