

## COLUMBUS ACADEMY LOWER SCHOOL ABSENCE POLICY

It is the intent of this policy to insure that children know their parents respect the importance of their children's "job" – being at school and working hard when school is in session. Thus, the policy's intent is to insure that parents know how important we believe it is for them to plan well in advance so that trips and vacations occur in the four-plus months of vacation time. This is so that the many rich experiences which are part of each school day and which simply cannot be duplicated by "making up work" – classroom discussions, group projects, orientation to new concepts, work with librarians, music and art teachers, science, technology, participation in what will become the shared history of a child and his classmates – are protected experiences for children.

**The school excuses children** (no absence request form required):

- **when they are ill** (PARENTS NOTIFY THE LOWER SCHOOL OFFICE BEFORE 8:30 ON ANY DAY THE CHILD WILL NOT BE IN. This notification is essential. If we do not hear from the parent and the child is not at school, it is necessary for us to try to reach parents to know where the child is).
- **when there is a family emergency** (PARENTS NOTIFY THE TEACHER OR THE OFFICE AS SOON AS THE PARENTS KNOW AN ABSENCE WILL BE NECESSARY).
- **when a child's medical appointment cannot be scheduled outside of school hours** (PARENTS NOTIFY THE CLASSROOM TEACHER AT LEAST A DAY IN ADVANCE. It is essential that the teacher know ahead of time that a child is going to be missing school for an hour or two. Sometimes the schedule on a particular day may make it possible for a teacher to shift a planned schedule so that the child does not miss introduction of new material, etc., but advance notice is needed).
- **when they celebrate a religious holiday when school is in session** (PARENTS NOTIFY THE CLASSROOM TEACHER AT LEAST A DAY IN ADVANCE OR THE LOWER SCHOOL OFFICE BEFORE 8:30 ON THE DAY OF THE ABSENCE. This notification is essential. If we do not hear from the parent and the child is not at school, it is necessary for us to try to reach parents to know where the child is).

**The school does not excuse children** (absence request form required):

- **for "vacations" during school time.** This includes ski trips, beach trips, recreational trips to destinations such as Disney World, family reunions, etc. The school does not excuse children **to leave for vacation on the days before or after school holidays.** Columbus Academy has over four months of school vacation time in each calendar year. We recognize and support the need for families to have time to play together and know that the synchronizing of parent work demands and the requirements of the school schedule usually requires conscientious planning-ahead. The four month time and additional long weekends provides ample opportunities for coordination, and the school's

expectation is that parents will plan family trips during days when school is not in session, will purchase plane tickets well in advance so that children do not miss school days at either end of school vacation times, etc.

- **from events considered to be part of the culture of the school and listed in the full version of the school calendar.** These events, including activities such as the December winter program, Closing Ceremony on the last day of school, the Fourth Grade Musical (for fourth-graders), Third Grade Wax Museum (for third-graders), etc., are important for bonding and building a common history. Children who miss participation in important community events experience feelings of disconnection, or are seen by peers as disconnected. The importance of participation in special programs, school trips and other scheduled events needs to be honored by parents. The importance of children knowing that their parents appreciate and support their involvement in the Columbus Academy community is a fundamental component of the total lower school experience.

### **PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING A PREPLANNED FULL-DAY ABSENCE:**

1. A parent needs to request a full-day absence form **at least two weeks** before the parents need a decision and two weeks before the absence occurs.
2. The division head and your child's classroom teacher will review the request.
3. A recommendation from the division will be made to the Head of School based on whether the proposed absence fits within the school's guidelines for excused absences, the child's ability to maintain academic and social progress while missing the proposed school time and on the unique nature of the situation. The Head of School will make the final determination of whether the absence can be excused. Parents need to make sure that their initial request gives the school at least two weeks for the decision-making discussions.

**When an absence is excused through the process outlined above, make-up work will be assigned and a reasonable date will be set for completion and evaluation of the work.** The pace of a classroom day is often more flexible, due to individual needs, enrichment that may grow out of planned lessons, etc. If presentation of new concepts has been missed, parents may need to seek additional tutorial support. Parents will certainly need to make special accommodations in the family schedule to allow for academic follow-through of the curriculum that is missed during an absence.

### **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:**

All absences that are not due to a child's illness, a family emergency, or have been excused ahead of time through the process stated above will be unexcused and will be recorded as such in the child's records. Children whose absence is unexcused may receive failing grades for missed work. Deadlines for assigned work will not be extended. At the discretion of the Head, excessive unexcused absences may result in non-renewal of contract.