



McGowan Park Elementary School

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VACATION OR HOLIDAYS DURING SCHOOL

Every year we are approached by an increasing number of parents who wish to take their child out of school for extended periods of time. Usually this is associated with family plans or family business. We do not have a procedure for granting students a "leave of absence."

Rather it is assumed that parents will make decisions in the best interest of their own child.

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

- Malcolm X



We are respectful of the fact that many of our families have family members far away, and spending time with them is important. We are also respectful of the fact that many families want to provide their children with broader experiences and opportunities that may not be available in a school setting.

Difficulties arise, however, when parents wish to have some sort of reassurance that their child will not be behind in their work when they return. If your child misses school for extended periods of time, he or she will be behind in the classroom work. Students may well have other cultural and travel experiences that contribute to their overall development, but the many varied daily classroom activities they will miss can not be duplicated through worksheets or workbooks.

We are not in the position to provide assignments for children who have extended absences due to family plans. It is your right to take your child out of school due to family circumstances, but once you have exercised that privilege, you must also accept the responsibility of your child's education during that absence. We will be happy to see what your child has accomplished upon his or her return, but will not be evaluating or marking these activities.

If you are planning an extended absence for you child, here are some tips and suggestions you may want to use or consider to assist you.

1. Meet with Teacher(s) Before Hand

- Before you even plan your trip, take some time to meet with your child(s) teacher. Let your teacher know what your intended plans are, and ask how you can both work together to make the transition as seamless as possible. Your child's teacher may provide you with some ideas to help while they are gone. However, keep in mind that they are not required to provide a program for non-emergency absences. Teachers spend a lot of time planning

the program for children in attendance, and any planning outside of that is extra volunteer time and effort on their part.

2. Provide Advance Notice

- No one likes unnecessary surprises. Let teachers know as far in advance as possible about your trip. Also, remind them again as it gets closer. This will also give you a chance to find out specifics of what your child may be missing in class or school that may impact them. It will also give you a chance to find out if your child is caught up in the work they are supposed to have completed before you leave, and they are not leaving any unfinished work that was due.

3. Time the Trip Wisely

- If possible, schedule your trip around key times of the year.
 - Go later rather than earlier – the first month or two of the school year is an adjustment, no matter what your child's age. Routines are established and relationships are made during this time.
 - Schedule it around assessment times. These are critical times teachers use to evaluate your child's progress and to be able to assess their learning needs.
 - If possible, don't schedule it before reporting periods. Teachers are evaluating where students are at during this time so they can report it in the report card. They require time to gather evidence of learning, report on it, submit it to the office for final approval before it goes home. Give your child's teacher lots of time (and evidence) to be able to make an assessment of your child's abilities.

4. Make it an Educational Vacation

- Here are a few activities you might want to consider to help with your child's educational needs while traveling:
 - Set aside time each day for reading.
 - Give your child keep a reading response journal in which he or she records this reading activity and thoughts about what has been read that day.
 - Keep a scrapbook of special places or sightseeing.
 - Have your child keep a 'math journal' or ledger, dealing with changes in time and currency, distances traveled, cost of fuel and materials, etc
 - You may wish to purchase a math workbook that will help your child keep in daily practice with basic math skills.