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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the new school year! As you know, providing your child with the opportunity to receive the best education possible is one of the greatest and most significant gifts a parent can give their child. A good education serves as the foundation for a child to grow to become a happy, healthy, and productive adult. As such, society recognizes this importance and puts safeguards in place to ensure that each child benefits fully from their educational opportunities. With that said, I want to share with you some important information regarding those safeguards that require school attendance.

Education Code §48200 requires all children between the ages of 6 and 18 to attend a full-time education program as designated by the governing board of the school district in which the parent or legal guardian resides.

Education Code §48260(a) defines a “truant” as a student who three times during the school year either misses more than 30 minutes of instruction or is absent from school for three full days without a valid excuse. Because society recognizes the importance of regular school attendance, Education Code §48205 defines when a student may be validly excused from school.

All parents of school-aged children should know that compulsory education is the law in the State of California, and the law provides that truant students may be detained or arrested during school hours. The law also provides that parents of students are responsible for ensuring school attendance and can be held accountable with legal sanctions amounting to an infraction and/or a misdemeanor when the case is aggravated.

As both a mother of four sons as well as your district attorney, I know that often children who do not attend school run the very real risk of either committing crimes or becoming crime victims. Additionally, research has proven that those students who do not graduate from high school will face more challenges in finding meaningful work and succeeding in life.

Your school is here to help your child become well educated. Truancy can result from many causes and your school district is ready to assist you as a parent in obtaining help from government- and community-based organizations to address issues that may be associated with truancy. With support and encouragement your child can thrive and reap the rewards from developing successful organizational skills, engaging in arts, sports, and sciences, solidifying strong school-oriented friendships, and appreciating the value of academics, hard work, and studying.

Your school district and I are committed to keeping the children of Santa Barbara County in school and doing all we can to ensure their individual joy and success. I hope that you have found this information useful and I wish you and your child a safe and productive school year.

Sincerely,

Joyce E. Dudley  
District Attorney

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