

## News Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 30, 2016

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### **District schools strive to fight frequent student absences**

ARLINGTON- Students in Arlington Public Schools are striving for great school attendance so they can succeed academically. September was declared Attendance Awareness Month by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. For 2015-16, chronic absences in the district were at nearly 15 percent. While not a direct comparison, since the start of this school year the absence rate has been around 3.5 percent.

Staff at Kent-Prairie Elementary have used the “Strive for Five” program which encourages no more than five absences in a school year. Families can track absences by using a postcard that was sent home with students. At the school, a target is used to track absences. The inner green color is for students who miss five or fewer days; the next ring is yellow and indicates average attendance of 5-10 absences per year; the outer ring is red and warns that a student is at risk of chronic absenteeism with 11-17 or more absences. Being absent 18 days is missing 10 percent of the school year and negatively affects a student’s academic performance. There’s an incentive program of special recess if students meet their goal.

“The goal for our school is 95 percent student attendance,” said Kent Prairie’s assistant principal Colleen Van Belle. “If a student isn’t here at school, they can’t be learning. We work individually with certain families whose children are frequently absent to see how we can help their children attend school.”

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# ARLINGTON

## Public Schools

*Educating all students, preparing & inspiring them to achieve their full potential*

Eagle Creek Elementary also uses the Strive for Five program but uses a castle theme to keep students excited about attending school. A student can write their name on a castle poster in the front hallway if they have perfect attendance for the month. Another dragon poster with 180 scales is also used. When the school hits 95 percent attendance for the day, students get to color in a scale. Students also track their attendance daily using a calendar so they can visually see their attendance patterns.

“The students’ ‘quest’ is to attend eagerly,” said Eagle Creek’s assistant principal Bethany Belisle. “Research shows that when students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating. The earlier they can start good school attendance, the better it will serve them as they progress through their educational career.”

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Cutline: Kent Prairie fifth-graders Xander Ipsen and Jaydin Van Winkle – who have perfect attendance – show off the “Strive for Five” target which helps students attend school.