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OFFICE OF
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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. A strong educational foundation enables a child to grow into a successful, fulfilled, and productive adult. To ensure that all children within our community benefit fully from their educational opportunities, educators have placed a particular emphasis on school attendance. In recognition of the importance of school attendance, the month of September marks **Attendance Awareness Month**, a nationwide movement focused on raising awareness of the connection between school attendance and academic achievement.

As a father, the first to graduate from college in my family, and your District Attorney, I know that often children who do not attend school run the very real risk of either committing crimes or becoming victims of crime. Research has shown that students who do not graduate high school will face more challenges in finding meaningful work and succeeding in life. In addition to the educational benefits that your student will receive from consistent attendance, I would like to share with you some important information regarding state law which requires school attendance.

All parents or legal guardians of school-aged children should know that compulsory education is the law in the State of California. Education Code section 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. The law also provides that students who fail to attend school are truant and may be detained or arrested during school hours. Education Code section 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. (Education Code section 48205 defines when a student may be validly excused from school.) Finally, in an effort to control truancy, the law provides that parents of school age students are responsible for ensuring school attendance and can be held accountable with legal sanctions amounting to an infraction or a misdemeanor when the case is aggravated.

The school district is aware that truancy can result from many causes and your school district stands ready to assist you in fulfilling your obligations to your child's educational success. Should the issue of truancy arise, your school district is available to help you obtain assistance from government and community-based organizations that aid parents in addressing issues associated with truancy. With support and encouragement, your child can thrive and will reap the rewards of their education by developing successful organizational skills, engaging in the 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 supporting the children of Riverside County by ensuring that they remain in school and receive an education full of individual achievement that will prepare them for a bright future. I wish you and your child a safe and productive school year.

Very truly yours,

MICHAEL A. HESTRIN
District Attorney