

SKIPPING A DAY OF SCHOOL

Question:

My fifth grade son works very hard at school. He leaves the house at eight o'clock in the morning and doesn't arrive home until after six. He is at school on Sunday until after three. I am wondering if it would be so terrible for him to very occasionally skip a day and enjoy a morning where he doesn't have to rush out of the house and when he just gets to spend quality time with Mommy- and not because he is suffering through strep or fever. I would not allow my son to make a habit of it. Don't we adults occasionally take a day off? My daughters are home by four o'clock each day and have Sunday's off and my son looks at it as unfair. I would really like to allow him this once or twice a year, but I need your guidance. My husband feels that it is sending him the wrong message and is irresponsible parenting. How would you advise us?

Answer:

I am in full agreement with your husband that keeping your son out of school “is irresponsible parenting” that would probably lead to actions which will have a negative impact on your children. What will your son tell the office regarding his absence? What will your son tell his Rebbe and teachers regarding his absence? What will he tell his friends and his peers? Will each receive a different story, some of which will border on outright falsehood? If, by chance, you do get permission from the administration to keep him at home for a morning or a day, would he feel privileged as compared to the other students? Will he boast to them of the great time he had? Will this privilege he received, which was not extended to the other students, affect him negatively? What happens to the *chashivos* of learning? I am sorry to say that I have encountered countless parents who fibbed in many ways to keep the children home. What sort of *chinuch* is that? Clearly, the answers to these questions are quite evident regarding the negative effect on your son's character, education and *eirlichkeit*.

If the school administration allowed everyone to take off a day here or there, without a globally accepted reason, it would result in chaos and a loss of importance to the learning process, even if you don't “make a habit of it”.

As a former high school principal, we allowed a certain amount of excused absences. Unexcused absences resulted in the loss of marks. A student once approached me asking for time off to visit with a grandmother in New York, who had come from Israel, and whom she had not seen for many years. We gave her three days off, which included a weekend. However, to extend the extra time she was asking for was not in keeping with school policy. I spent much time explaining that the marks she would lose were certainly worth the bonding, and *mitzvah* of *kovod* and honor she would be showing her grandmother, even though her stay would be longer than a week. It was important that her priorities be in place even though they were in conflict with school rules. She heeded my advice, took the extra time off and did not regret the loss of marks. More important, she understood the necessity for a school to function with clearly defined rules and regulations while she exercised her priorities that were fully understood by the administration. Her peers comprehended her special circumstances and the reason for making that decision

There are 365 days in a year. Schools meet approximately 200 days a year. It certainly allows you ample time for your son to “spend quality time with Mommy”. You obviously don't have

the time during the 165 days that he is not attending school. But, you should not have to resort to keeping your son out of school. The loss of learning could also impact him by throwing him off track, which will take much more than a day to correct. *“Im ta’azveyni yom, yomayim azveko”*.

All in all, I think parents should respect the school’s calendar, and taking off one day here and there, leads to adding to vacations, going to unnecessary functions, etc. etc. Help the school to educate your children instead of making it harder for them to do their job for you.

Dear Mommy. Did you really expect a Menahel to answer any differently?

Gut Shabbos.