This letter is being sent to all parents to explain the effect of a new law. The law, SB 1317, provides for criminal prosecution of parents or legal guardians of a child when the child has excessive unexcused school absences and is deemed a “chronic truant.”

School attendance every day is critical. Studies prove that children who do not regularly attend school are more likely to fall behind on class work and can become disruptive to the learning environment for their classmates.

Moreover, chronic absenteeism often leads to school dropout. Statistics clearly show that school dropouts have significantly fewer job prospects, earn lower salaries, are more likely to commit crimes, and are more likely to become victims of crimes.

For the 2015-2016 school year, LBUSD and the Long Beach Police Department will be reviewing cases where children Kindergarten-8th grade are absent from school 10% or more of days without an excuse. Where children are found to be “chronic truants,” cases may be referred to the City Prosecutor’s Office for consideration of criminal charges.

Fortunately, very few LBUSD students, less than 3%, will be affected by SB 1317. LBUSD will also continue to actively monitor school absences and take cases to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB). School officials will notify parents or guardians when children have unexcused absences and complete the SARB process before cases may be referred for consideration of criminal charges.

With SB 1317, now more than ever it is important that parents and guardians ensure regular school attendance by their children. If you have any questions regarding LBUSD’s truancy program, please contact LBUSD’s Director of Student Support Services, Dr. Erin Simon at (562) 986-6870.

Sincerely,

Douglas P. Haubert
Long Beach City Prosecutor