



Book	Policy Manual
Section	7000: Students
Title	Comprehensive Student Attendance
Code	7110
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## **SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

### **Statement of Overall Objectives**

The District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. The District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation, and therefore has developed, and, if necessary, will revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- a. Increase school completion for all students;
- b. Raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c. Identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d. Know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e. Verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f. Determine the District's average daily attendance for state aid purposes.

### **Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives**

The District will:

- a. Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b. Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of key stakeholders. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- c. Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness, or early departure of each student.
- d. Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.

- e. Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

### **Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness, and Early Departures**

Based upon the District's education and community needs, values, and priorities, the District has determined that absences, tardiness, and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

#### **Excused**

An absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if due to:

- a. Personal illness, illness or death in the family, documented quarantine, attendance at health clinics or doctor's office;
- b. Impassable roads due to inclement weather;
- c. Religious observance;
- d. Required court appearances;
- e. Learner's Permit or Road Test;
- f. Business that can not be conducted beyond the school day (social service appointments). A note from the respective organization will be required for this absence;
- g. Approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, or other reasons as may be approved by the building principal or house principal.

#### **Return to School**

A written excuse for an absence that meets the criteria for an excused absence, which may be provided electronically, signed by a parent or person in parental relation should be presented by the student when returning to school following each absence in order for the absence to be excused. Notes excusing an absence will not be accepted after 10 school days from the date of the absence. Such absence(s) will be considered unexcused if no note is received.

#### **Unexcused**

An absence, tardiness, or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, oversleeping).

The following should NOT be counted as absences under the attendance policy:

- a. In-School Suspension ("ISS");
- b. Any period of OSS where student accepts alternative instruction;
- c. Attendance at a special education program or service, including home tutoring, offered by a public school or an approved private school or facility when a student is homeless, disabled or incarcerated. (See Section 175.6 of the Regulations of the NYS Commissioner of Education.)

### **Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection**

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure will be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's regulations. An absence, tardiness, or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

Attendance will be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a. For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade 8 (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), the student's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day.

- b. For students in grades 6 through 12 or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction.
- c. Any absence for a school day or portion thereof will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d. Students must provide appropriate documentation to support their reason for the absence in order for it to be excused (See list of acceptable Excused absences on page 2). For example: a confirmation letter regarding the scheduled college visit, appointment from DMV, etc. Failure to provide that documentation may result in the absence being considered unexcused.
- e. In the event that a student at any instructional level from grades K through 12 arrives late for, or departs early from, scheduled instruction, the tardiness or early departure will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record will be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records will also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information will be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure will be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District or building procedures

### **Student Attendance and Course Credit**

The District believes that classroom participation is related to, and affects, a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period, a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc., as determined by the building administrator or classroom teacher.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures may result in students not being permitted to make up missed assignments or exams. Regular communication between the classroom teacher and the family is strongly encouraged to ensure that parents are aware of their child's progress in class.

### **Interventions**

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a. Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b. Working under an approved independent study program; or
- c. Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity must arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school-sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed will be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness, or early departure, it will be the responsibility of the student to consult with his or her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments, and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

### Attendance Intervention Teams

Every school will identify a team that may include: Principal or other administrator in charge of attendance, counselors, nurse, teacher, and additional personnel as designated by the principal to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to record, monitor, improve and maintain student attendance.

- a. Attendance team should meet regularly throughout the school year.
- b. The team should use attendance data to guide its decisions.
- c. At the beginning of every school year (or time of enrollment), students, parents, and staff should be notified of the school-wide attendance policies.

A three tiered approach to attendance will be used to:

- a. Assist with organization
- b. Provide a systematic approach to student intervention
- c. Track and monitor interventions
- d. Document what has been attempted
- e. Data driven decision making

### **Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies**

In order to ensure that parents or persons in parental relation and students are informed of the District's policy regarding attendance requirements and the implementation of specific intervention strategies the following guidelines will be followed:

- a. Copies of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be available to parents or persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District.
- b. School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent or student handbooks or posted on the District website.
- c. At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone, the parent or person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his or her ability to receive course credit. If the parent or person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, a letter will be sent detailing this information.
- d. A designated staff member will review the District's Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services within the District, as well as the possible collaboration or referral to community support services and agencies, will be offered to students and their families as appropriate.

### **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy, or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

A school will notify the parent or person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy, or departs early without proper excuse. The staff member will explain the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, the District's or building level intervention procedures, and, if appropriate, the relationship between student attendance and course credit. If the parent or person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, the staff member will provide the notification by email and/or traditional mail. Further, the District's Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent or person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

A school conference will be scheduled between the parent or person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10% of enrolled school days in a year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism differs from truancy because it emphasizes missed instructional time rather than unexcused absences. Missed instructional time can increase a student's risk for disengagement, low achievement, and dropping out, among other things.

Students who miss at least 5% of enrolled school days in a year are at risk of becoming chronically absent. In light of this, the District will implement intervention strategies for students who miss 5% or more of the enrolled school days in a year. Medical documentation may be requested for students who are chronically absent due to illnesses.

Each school will convene a building based Attendance committee and develop an Intervention Plan aligned to the building. The building based Intervention Plan will be communicated to the school community at the beginning of each school year.

### **Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement grade-appropriate or building-level strategies and programs. Each building will implement an attendance incentive program to promote high student attendance. Schools may implement incentives like:

- a. Check and Connect program for students deemed chronically absent.
- b. Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, field days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before vacation);
- c. Classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards);
- d. Annual poster or essay contest on importance of good attendance;
- e. Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by student council, administration, PTSA, and other community groups to promote good attendance.

### **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, unexcused tardiness, and unexcused early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Negative consequences will not be imposed, however, where the absence, tardiness, or early departure is related to homelessness. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention, and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Parents or persons in parental relation will be notified by designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness, or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings and grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent or person in parental relation.

### **Intervention Strategy Process**

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of excused absences, unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

- a. Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of excused absences, unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures);
- b. Contact the District staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent or person in parental relation will be contacted;
- c. Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- d. Recommend intervention to Superintendent or designee if it relates to change in District policy or procedure;
- e. Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- f. Utilize appropriate District and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures;

- g. Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention.

### **Appeal Process**

A parent or person in parental relation may request a building level review of his or her child's attendance record.

### **Building Review of Attendance Records**

The building principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures.

### **Annual Review by the Board**

The Board will annually review the building level student attendance records and if those records show a decline in student attendance, the Board will make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

### **Community Awareness**

The Board will promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

- a. Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of this policy to students and their parents or persons in parental relation;
- b. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
- c. Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213  
8 NYCRR Sections 104.1, 109.2, and 175.6

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