

Adopted: July 22, 1996

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Review Date: May 2009

503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

- A. The school board believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, teacher and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. Responsibilities.

1. Student's Responsibility.

It is the student's right to be in school. It is also the student's responsibility to attend all assigned classes and study halls every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or study hall. Finally, it is the student's responsibility to request any missed assignments due to an absence.

2. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility.

It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to ensure the student is attending school, to inform the school in the event of a student absence, and to work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

3. Teacher's Responsibility.

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and study hall. It is also the teacher's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly. It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide any student who has been absent with any missed

assignments upon request. Finally, it is the teacher's responsibility to work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

4. Administrator's Responsibility.

- a. It is the administrator's (or their designee's) responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes and study halls. It is also the administrator's (or their designee's) responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to all students, to maintain accurate records on student attendance and to prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the administrator's responsibility to inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and to work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems.
- b. In accordance with the regulations of the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, the students of the school district are **REQUIRED** to attend all assigned classes and/or study halls every day school is in session, unless the student has completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

B. Attendance Procedures

Attendance procedures shall be presented to the school board for review and approval. When approved by the school board, the attendance procedures will be included as an addendum to this policy.

1. Elementary School

a. Absence

School attendance laws of Minnesota require that children must attend school regularly. Children are required to be in school every day unless they are ill or there is an emergency in the family. If your child is absent from school, please call 644-2627 any time before 9:30 a.m. and leave a message or give the secretary the following information:

Name of student, grade, name of teacher, length of and reason of absence, whether or not you want to pick up homework for your child.

If you are not able to call, a written note must accompany the child when he or she returns to school.

A student will be marked tardy if he/she arrives any time within one hour of the start of the school day, between 8:25 a.m.-9:25 a.m. If arrival is after 9:25 a.m. a student will be marked absent ½ day. If the student leaves before 1:30 p.m. for the remainder of the day the student will be marked absent ½ day.

If a student has three (3) or more unexcused absences (non-school activities) for the school year, the following steps will take place:

1. A letter will be sent home notifying the parent of the school's concern. An excessive number of excused absences may also be cause for notice to be sent to parents/guardians.
2. If absences continue parents will be asked to meet with our school attendance committee composed of school personnel, nursing staff, and county social service personnel. Additional absences will require authoritative proof (doctor, counselor, etc.) that the absence was necessary.
3. Failure to show for a meeting will result in a referral being made to county social services addressing educational neglect.

In the event the school receives excessive excused absences from a parent, school officials are required by law to state whether a child's absences are lawful.

1. Clarification of Absences

- a. Excused Absences – These need to be verified at the time of absence. Make-up work is required. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school.

These absences include:

1. Weather-related school absences when rural buses do not run.
2. Official religious holiday
3. Death of immediate family member (parent, step-parent, guardian, sibling, grandparent)
4. Medical, dental or orthodontic treatment, or counseling appointment that cannot be made outside of school time.
5. Illness
 - a. Short term
 - b. Long term/chronic illness – if a student is suffering from a long term or chronic illness, the school office should be contacted. They will notify the student's

teacher and request homework assignments. A report from the physician/doctor will be required.

6. Family emergency
7. Court-ordered appearances
8. Pre-arranged travel with family requires advanced, written notice to the teacher/office whenever possible and make-up work will be assigned.
9. Suspensions from school (in-school and out-of-school)
10. Head lice – if a student is sent home due to head lice, they will be excused for one (1) day of absence only
11. School activities which are authorized and/or supervised by school personnel
12. Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week
13. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.

- b. Unexcused Absences – All absences NOT school authorized and/or school personnel supervised and NOT excused are considered unexcused. Oversleeping, missing the bus, etc. will not be considered excused. Parents will have TWO (2) SCHOOL DAYS to excuse absences either by telephone or a written note. After two (2) school days the absences will be recorded as unexcused.

If a parent/guardian does not contact the school by 9:30 a.m. the day their child is absent, school personnel will make an attempt to reach you at home or your place of work.

Excessive reports of illness will result in a request to meet with school officials and our nursing staff so we can work on a plan to improve your child's well-being.

b. Tardiness

Students who are late to school must be brought into the office and signed in by a parent/guardian. A student who is tardy for an excessive number of days may be dealt with in the same manner as truancy.

1. Truancy

Truancy is an unexcused absence from a class or from school. A student who develops a pattern of unexcused absences may be referred to the legal system through the use of an Educational Neglect Report filed by the school. Minnesota Statute 260A.02 mandates that if a student has three (3) or more unexcused absences, the student will be classified as a 'continuing truant', in which case the parents/guardians

will be notified by a school official. If the student reaches seven (7) unexcused absences from all or part of a school day, a school official shall file an Educational Neglect Report to the county of residence.

2. Appointments

A written request from the parent/guardian must be presented by a child needing to be excused from school for any reason. The request must be given to the classroom teacher immediately in the morning. The note should indicate the reason and specific times the student will be absent from school. A student needs to be signed out at the office before they will be allowed to leave the school building during the school day. Medical, dental, personal appointments, and counseling sessions should be scheduled outside of school time, if possible. If an appointment is scheduled during school time, a notice from the doctor, etc. needs to be presented to the teacher when they return.

3. Vacations with the family during the school year

Several school vacations are scheduled throughout the school year: MEA weekend, Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring breaks. Part of your child's responsibility is to attend school, knowing that the classroom provides the best opportunity for the student to learn. If a family vacation must be scheduled during the school days, a parent/guardian note is requested in advance indicating the days your child will be missing school. All work is to be completed within the framework designated by the teacher.

2. Middle School

If your child will be absent from school, a parent/guardian is to call the Middle School Office (644-3521) between 7:15 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. each and every day your child is absent or a written note from the parent/guardian is requested upon the return of your child to school. The specific nature for the absence should be stated.

Students returning to school after an absence must report to the Middle School Office before attending. You will receive an admit slip signed by the principal or the attendance secretary. Please take care of the admit slip as it is your responsibility to present the admit slip to each teacher at the beginning of each class. Also, the admit slip will be required by your teachers before admitting you to class. It is the responsibility of each student to contact teachers concerning makeup work as a result of your absence. If the student has been absent more than ten days, a letter will be sent home that will require a parent/guardian signature. This is to inform the parent/guardian of the detrimental effects attendance can have on the student's progress.

a. Tardiness

Students who are late to school must present a written parental excuse and obtain a tardy admit slip from the middle school principal's office. The student should present this tardy slip to the teacher of the class in which the tardy occurred. Students who are tardy between classes must report to the teacher of the present class. If the student has no legitimate excuse for between class tardiness, he/she will be recorded as unexcused tardy. The student's teacher will record the tardy on their daily attendance slip. On the second and beyond tardy for the same class period (per quarter), the student will receive detention after school for 35 minutes with the teacher who assigned the detention, or otherwise arranged. This process starts over at the beginning of each quarter. It is the responsibility of the teacher (or team) to communicate to the students their definition of tardiness so no misinterpretation will result. Excessive tardiness is detrimental to the efficiency of the educational program, and those students who are having difficulty should be reported to the middle school principal.

b. Truancy

Truancy is an unexcused absence from a class or from school. A student who develops a pattern of unexcused absences may be referred to the legal system through the use of a truancy citation filed by the middle school principal. It is the philosophy in the middle school that the student make up the time missed from classes (e.g: a missed day of school results in six hours detention). Minnesota Statute mandates that in all cases, the school administrator shall issue a truancy citation for any student who has accumulated seven truancies.

A student who is absent from school without full knowledge or consent of his/her parent/guardian is unexcused if he/she:

- 1) Leaves school without obtaining permission (a pass) from the middle school office.
- 2) Is absent from school without proper verification from his/her parent/guardian.
- 3) Is absent from class without permission.
- 4) Obtains a pass to go to a certain place and does not report there.
- 5) Becomes ill and goes home or stays in the restroom instead of reporting to the nurse's office.

Consequences for truancy are:

- 1) Parent contact
- 2) Student conference with principal
- 3) Detention to make up time missed (not less than an hour)

- 4) Referral to school social worker
- 5) Truancy citation filed with County Attorney (on receiving the seventh truancy)

c. Clarification of Absences

1. Excused Absences – These need to be verified at the time of absence. Make-up work is required. To be considered an excused absence, the student’s parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student’s absence from school.

These absences include:

- a. Weather-related school absences when rural buses do not run.
- b. Official religious holiday
- c. Death of immediate family member (parent, step-parent, guardian, sibling, grandparent)
- d. Medical, dental or orthodontic treatment, or counseling appointment that cannot be made outside of school time.
- e. Illness
 1. Short term
 2. Long term/chronic illness – if a student is suffering from a long term or chronic illness, the school office should be contacted. They will notify the student’s teacher and request homework assignments. A report from the physician/doctor will be required.
- f. Family emergency
- g. Court-ordered appearances
- h. Pre-arranged travel with family requires advanced, written notice to the teacher/office whenever possible and make-up work will be assigned.
- i. Suspensions from school (in-school and out-of-school)
- j. Head lice – if a student is sent home due to head lice, they will be excused for one (1) day of absence only
- k. School activities which are authorized and/or supervised by school personnel
- l. Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week
- m. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.

d. Appointments

A written request from the parent/guardian must be presented by a child needing to be excused from school for any reason. The request must be brought to the office immediately in the morning. The note should indicate the reason and specific times the student will be absent

from classes. Medical and dental appointments and counseling sessions should be scheduled outside of school time, if possible.

- e. Several vacations are scheduled throughout the school year: MEA weekend, Thanksgiving, and winter and spring breaks. Part of your child's responsibility is to attend school, knowing that the classroom provides the best opportunity for the student to learn. If a family vacation must be scheduled during school days, a parental/guardian note is requested in advance, indicating the days your child will be missing school. An advance makeup slip will be issued so your child can personally contact all of his/her teachers to arrange for makeup work. This note needs to be returned to the middle school office before the child leaves. All work is to be completed within the framework designated by the teacher.

3. High School

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to **CALL THE HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE** on the day of the absence between 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. or prior to the absence explaining why the student will be absent. **Written notes, admits, and calls are required for all students, regardless of age.**

a. Classification of Absences

1. Excused absences*

These need to be verified at the time of absence. Advanced written notification of the absence to the teacher is required whenever possible. Make-up work is also required. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. These absences include:

- a. School activities which are school authorized and/or supervised by school personnel.
- b. Weather related school absences when rural buses do not run.
- c. Official religious holidays.
- d. Death of immediate family members (parent, step-parent, guardian, sibling, grandparent).
- e. Medical, dental or orthodontic treatment, or counseling appointment that cannot be made outside of school time.
- f. Post-secondary planning visits scheduled through the high school counselor's office (including in-school and out-of-school college/technical school visits).
- g. Illness
 - i. Short term

- ii. Long term/chronic illness - If a student is suffering from a long term or chronic illness, the high school principal's office should be contacted. They will notify the student's teachers and request homework assignments.
- h. Family emergency.
- i. Court-ordered appearances.
- j. Pre-arranged absences such as travel with family.
- k. Suspensions from school (in-school and out-of-school).
- l. Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week
- m. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm
- n. Active duty in any military branch of the United States

2. Unexcused Absences

All absences NOT school authorized and/or school personnel supervised and NOT excused are considered unexcused. Unexcused absences will negatively influence the student's grade as described below.

Absences will be checked daily by the office. Students will have TWO (2) SCHOOL DAYS to excuse absences. After two (2) school days they will be counted as UNEXCUSED. **Students and parents will be notified through personal conversation or by letter that the absence was unexcused.**

- a. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL PROGRAMS will result in detention or other penalties being assigned, as determined by the principal.
- b. UNEXCUSED TARDIES TO A REGULAR CLASS. The bell (tone) indicates the beginning of class. Students entering class without a pass after the bell, will be considered tardy. Unexcused tardies totaling three (3) will result in one (1) unexcused absence.**

**In an effort to clearly communicate classroom regulations, teachers will provide written tardy regulations to each student at the beginning of the class.

- c. **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM STUDY HALLS OR THREE (3) TARDIES EQUALING ONE UNEXCUSED ABSENCE WILL RESULT IN DETENTION OR POSSIBLE ON-CAMPUS ASSIGNMENT.**

3. **PENALTIES FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM CLASS(ES).**

- a. **FIRST UNEXCUSED ABSENCE** - The student's quarter grade in class will be lowered one (1) grade on a 1 to 12 scale, i.e.: C+ to C, etc.
- b. **SECOND AND SUCCEEDING UNEXCUSED ABSENCES** - The student's quarter grade in class will be lowered two (2) more grades on a 1 to 12 scale FOR EACH ADDITIONAL unexcused absence.

******* IMPORTANT NOTICE *******

STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 16 ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND SCHOOL AS REQUIRED BY MINNESOTA'S COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW.

Failure to attend due to excessive unexcused absences or trancies will result in a TRUANCY CITATION being filed with the County Attorney and a resulting court appearance being scheduled.

CONTINUING TRUANT

Students are considered a "continuing truant" if absent for three or more class periods on three days without valid excuse. Parents or guardians will be notified by letter by the school administrator. If the student continues to be truant, both the parent and student may be subject to juvenile court proceedings pursuant to Chapter 260. These proceedings may result in the suspension, restriction or delay of a child's driving privilege pursuant to Minn. Statute 260.191. The parent/guardian is also recommended to accompany the child to school and attend classes for one day.

c. Make-up Policy

ALL absences will require a student to make up work missed.

- 1. Daily work must be made up within a reasonable period of time which will be determined by the instructor.
- 2. The student is responsible for seeing the teachers to initiate make-up work.
- 3. If the long-term illness occurs at the end of the school year, an "I" can be given until the following fall.

d. Attendance Appeals Committee

A committee of four (4) teachers, the student's counselor, and an administrator will consider the challenges regarding the attendance policy. A minimum of four (4) members must be present at each hearing.

e. Attendance Challenge Process

A student who believes/she/he has a valid reason to question an unexcused absence and wishes to challenge the unexcused absence, must follow the procedure described below.

1. Go to the high school office.
2. The secretary will give the student a form to be completed by either the student or the parent/guardian. Any written information such as a physician's statement, notice of court appearance, etc., that may be helpful for the attendance committee to consider, should be attached to this form.
3. The challenge form should be completed and returned to the high school secretary within two (2) days.
4. The challenge will then be sent to the attendance appeals committee with a copy of the student's attendance record and report card if applicable.
5. The student will be notified within FIVE (5) SCHOOL DAYS if the challenge has been approved or denied.

C. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-the-Job Training Programs.

1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school-sponsored on-the-job training programs.
2. School-initiated absences will be accepted and participation permitted.
3. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
4. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
5. If a student is absent from school due to medical reasons, he or she must present a physician's statement or a statement from the student's parent or guardian clearing the student for participation that day. The note must be presented to the coach or advisor before the student participates in the activity or program.

III. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year. This policy shall also be available upon request in each principal's office.

IV. REQUIRED REPORTING

A. Continuing Truant

Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. three days if the child is in elementary school; or
2. three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

A student is not continuing truant if the child is withdrawn from school by the child's parents because of a dispute with the school concerning the provision of special education services under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act or accommodations and modifications under the Americans with Disabilities Act, if the parent makes good faith efforts to provide the child educational services from any other source.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

1. that the child is truant;
2. that the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
3. that the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minn. Stat. § 120A.34;
4. that this notification serves as the notification required by Minn. Stat. § 120A.34;
5. that alternative educational programs and services may be available in the district;

6. that the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;
7. that if the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minn. Stat. Ch. 260;
8. that if the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 260C.201; and
9. that it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

C. Habitual Truant

1. An habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school or a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minn. Stat. Ch. 260A.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.28 (School Boards and Teachers, Duties)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.30 (Attendance Officers)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant defined)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian when Child is Continuing Truant).
Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565, 95 S.Ct. 729 (1975)
Slocum v. Holton Board of Education, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)
Campbell v. Board of Education of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)
Hamer v. Board of Education of Township High School District No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d 7 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School District R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)

Knight v. Board of Education, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References: Policy 506 (Student Discipline)