

## 503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

***[Note: The provisions of this policy substantially reflect statutory requirements.]***

### 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 responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes and study halls. It is also the administrator'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 Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statutes, section 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 been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already 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.

1. Excused Absences

- a. A parent, guardian, or other person having control of a child may apply to a school district to have the child excused from attendance for the whole or any part of the time school is in session during any school year. Application may be made to ~~any member of the board,~~ a truant officer, ~~or the school official designated by the~~ a principal, ~~or the superintendent.~~ A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the child cannot attend school is a valid excuse.

~~[NOTE: This paragraph quotes Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22.]~~

**[NOTE: The 2025 Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 as indicated above.]**

- b. 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.
- c. The board of the district in which the child resides may approve the application under subparagraph (a) above upon a legitimate exception being demonstrated to the satisfaction of that board.
- d. Legitimate Exceptions

The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

- (1) that the child's physical or mental health is such as to prevent attendance at school or application to study for the period required, which includes:
  - (a) Child illness, medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment, or a counseling appointments; including appointments conducted through telehealth.;
  - (b) Family emergencies;
  - (c) The death or serious illness or funeral of an immediate family member;
  - (d) Active duty in any military branch of the United States;
  - (e) The child has a condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis; or

- (f) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- (g) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- (h) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
- (i) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.

Other exemptions included in this attendance policy:

- (i) Family vacations with prior Principal approval
  - (ii) Personal trips to schools or colleges with prior Principal approval
  - (iii) The Building Principal can make exceptions for unexcused circumstances.
- (2). that the child has already completed state and district standards required for graduation from high school; or
  - (3). that it is the wish of the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child, that the child attend for a period or periods not exceeding in the aggregate three hours in any week, instruction conducted by a Tribal spiritual or cultural advisor, or a school for religious instruction conducted and maintained by a church, or association of churches, or any Sunday school association incorporated under the laws of this state, or any auxiliary thereof. This instruction must be conducted and maintained in a place other than a public school building, and it must not, in whole or in part, be conducted and maintained at public expense. A child may be absent from school on days that the child attends upon instruction according to this clause.

[NOTE: Subparagraph 3 above incorporates the 2024 amendment to Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12.]

[Note: In 2024, the Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12. The legitimate exceptions set forth above quote this statute. Minnesota law provides that a school board may include other exemptions in the school district's attendance policy. When considering whether to add other exemptions, school boards should consider the intent of the compulsory attendance law, which recognizes the educational value of regular attendance and class participation, and whether the proposed exemption is consistent with the intent of the law.]

c. Consequences of Excused Absences

- (1) Students whose absences are excused are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
- (2) Work missed because of absence must be made up as

indicated in each School's handbook. However, the building principal or the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent and/or the school district.
- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.
- (6) The building Principal can make exceptions for unusual situations.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences

- (1) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.40-121A.56.
- (2) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.
- (3) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota statutes.

C. Tardiness

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.

2. Procedures for Reporting Tardiness

- a. Students tardy at the start of school must report to the school office for an admission slip.
- b. Tardiness between periods will be handled by the teacher.

3. Excused Tardiness

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

- a. Illness.
- b. Serious illness in the student's immediate family.

- c. A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
- d. Medical, dental, orthodontic, or mental health treatment.
- e. Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- f. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- g. Any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or faculty member.

4. Unexcused Tardiness

- a. An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
- b. Parents/guardians of students with excessive tardiness will be notified and an individual behavior plan will be developed with the student support team. Failure to meet these plans may result in disciplinary action

D. 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. In order to participate in co-curricular activities, students must be in attendance at school the full day of the event/practice unless excused by a doctor's note. Individuals with unexcused absences on the day of the event/practice may not participate.
- 3. School-initiated absences will be accepted and participation permitted.
- 4. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
- 5. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
- 6. 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. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable efforts will be made by the school district to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance. Requests for accommodations should be directed to the building principal.

**IV. 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.

## V. REQUIRED REPORTING

### A. Continuing Truant

Minnesota Statutes, section 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 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 in three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

### 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 child's enrolling or resident 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.

***[Note: When services and procedures under Minn. Stat. Ch. 260A are available within the school district, the following provisions should also be included in the policy.]***

### C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on

seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year 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.05 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is a Continuing Truant)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)  
*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, 383 N.E.2d 231 (1978)  
*Gutierrez v. School District R-1*, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)  
*Knight v. Board of Education*, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)  
*Dorsey v. Bale*, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

**Cross References:**

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)