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## **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 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 regulations of the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. § 120.101, 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 the studies ordinarily required in the tenth grade and has elected not to enroll 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. 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 a principal. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the child cannot attend school is a valid excuse.

b. The building principal in which the child attends may approve the application under subparagraph (a) above upon a legitimate exception being demonstrated to the satisfaction of that board.

c. 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, orthodontic, or counseling appointments; including appointments conducted through telehealth;
- (b) family emergencies and approved vacations;
- (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) other exemptions included in this attendance policy.

(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 per 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.

d. 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 within an appropriate timeframe given the length of the absence and the nature of each assignment, as determined by the classroom teacher and building principal.

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) Unauthorized trips to schools or colleges.
- (6) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy and in the student handbook of the child's school.
- (7) Any absence occurring after the prescribed limits in a school's student handbook.

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.
- (4) Students with unexcused absences shall be subject to discipline outlined in the student handbook.

C. Tardiness.

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.
2. Procedures 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. Consequences of Tardiness: Each school will establish procedures and consequences for both excused and unexcused tardiness which will be published annually in the student handbook.

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. 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. 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 accommodation should be directed to the building principal.

**IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY**

Copies of this policy shall be accessible online 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

Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minn. Stat. § 120.101 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 120.05, 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, 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, notification of the student's parent or legal guardian will be made in accordance with Minn. Stat. § 260A.03. Additionally, the building principal will make a report to the appropriate county services according to the student's county of residence.

C. Habitual Truant

1. An 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. § 120.101 (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120.102 (Reporting)  
Minn. Stat. § 120.103 (Enforcement and Prosecution)  
Minn. Stat. § 120.11 (School Boards and Teachers, Duties)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 127.26-127.39 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian when Child is 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)  
Gross 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. 2d231 (1978)  
Gutierrez v. School District R-I, 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. 1957)

***Cross References:*** MSBA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)