



# Board Policy Equity Lens Tool

**Title of board policy being reviewed:**

JE-Attendance

**Describe the purpose of this policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to promote regular attendance as a foundation for academic success, graduation attainment, and life skills development. It establishes shared responsibility between students, families, and the district, and ensures timely parent notification of unplanned absences.

**What is your experience with this policy:**

Attendance policies are foundational to academic success. Experience shows that equitable outcomes depend on shifting from compliance-focused enforcement to supportive, barrier-reduction strategies that address the root causes of absenteeism while maintaining high expectations for student engagement.



**What is the plan to communicate this policy to staff, students, and/or families?**

**What is the plan to communicate this policy to linguistically diverse students and their families?**

**Is this policy:**

Easy to locate for staff?

This policy and a summary of this policy will be available on the MESD web page. The summary of this policy is also available on the MESD website in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese and, upon request, the summary and/or policy may be translated into other languages.

Accessible to students and families?

This policy and a summary of this policy will be available on the MESD web page. The summary of this policy is also available on the MESD website in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese and, upon request, the summary and/or policy may be translated into other languages.

Included in onboarding, intake, or other training?

This policy will be communicated to staff through inclusion in the student and employee handbook. The policy will also be posted on the district website for easy access.



Clear and easy to understand?

Yes. The policy clearly outlines the goals of attendance requirements and specifies notification procedures. It establishes expectations for families and delegates implementation details to administrative regulations.

## People

How are people affected positively or negatively by the policy? What potential barriers might people encounter? What barriers might be reduced by this policy?

The policy positively reinforces the importance of consistent attendance and strengthens communication between schools and families. Early notification can help families address barriers before attendance issues escalate.

Potential negative impacts may arise if attendance expectations are enforced without consideration of structural barriers such as illness, disability, housing instability, transportation challenges, caregiving responsibilities, or mental health needs.

The notification requirement reduces communication barriers and can support early intervention when implemented with a supportive, rather than punitive, approach.



Can you identify the racial or ethnic groups affected by this policy, program, practice, or decision? Do you know the potential impacts to these populations? If you don't know, how will you find out?

Chronic absenteeism disproportionately affects students of color, students from low-income households, students with disabilities, migrant students, and students experiencing housing instability. Strict or punitive attendance enforcement may unintentionally exacerbate disparities if root causes are not addressed.

Disaggregated attendance data should be reviewed regularly to monitor patterns and ensure interventions are equitable and supportive.

Were these populations involved in any way, at any point in the development, implementation, and evaluation of this policy? If so, when and how?

The policy reflects state attendance and graduation requirements. Ongoing implementation should include family engagement, student voice, and collaboration with community partners to better understand barriers contributing to absenteeism.

What priorities and commitments are communicated by this policy?

The policy communicates priorities of academic achievement, graduation completion, accountability, and family engagement. It emphasizes that regular attendance is both an academic expectation and a life skill.

To advance equity, implementation must also reflect a commitment to understanding and addressing systemic barriers to attendance.



## Place

What kind of positive or negative environment are we creating?

What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial)

The policy creates an environment that values accountability and regular participation. If implemented supportively, it can foster partnership with families.

Barriers to equitable outcomes include poverty, limited transportation, health disparities, mental health challenges, language barriers, housing instability, and inconsistent access to healthcare. A punitive approach could create additional stress for already marginalized families.

## Power

How is the power of decision-making shared with those it affects?

How have you intentionally involved the communities affected by this policy, program, practice, or decision?

The policy emphasizes shared responsibility between students and families and requires timely communication of absences. Power-sharing can be strengthened by involving families in developing attendance improvement strategies and ensuring communication methods are culturally and linguistically accessible.



## Process

Does the policy, program, or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities?

Does it create other unintended consequences?

The policy has the potential to improve disparities if attendance interventions focus on removing barriers and providing support. However, if enforcement becomes punitive or linked to exclusionary discipline, it may worsen disparities for vulnerable student populations.

Unintended consequences could include increased family stress or disengagement if communication is perceived as accusatory rather than supportive.

## Plan

How will you reduce the negative impacts and address the barriers?

Negative impacts can be reduced by:

- Using restorative and supportive attendance interventions.
- Partnering with community agencies to address health, housing, and transportation barriers.
- Providing multilingual and culturally responsive communication.
- Monitoring attendance data for disparities.
- Offering flexible solutions when feasible.