

POLICY

2002

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Students

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy

According to Education Law, a student who becomes six years of age on or before the first of December in any school year shall be required to attend full-time instruction from the first day that the District schools are in session in September of such school year, and a student who becomes six years of age after the first of December in any school year shall be required to attend full-time instruction from the first day of session in the following September. Except as otherwise provided in Education Law Section 3205(3), a student shall be required to remain in attendance until the last day of session in the school year in which the student becomes sixteen years of age.

The impact of attendance upon instruction on a regular and continuing basis is an important element in an effective teaching/learning program. Each and every student should attend classes on a regular basis and be a participant in the classroom programs, activities, and discussions in order to benefit from presentations made by instructors. Because of the information being disseminated and because of the expectation of student participation, class attendance is important. Students' prolonged absences will result in loss of instruction; therefore, attendance is imperative.

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. At such time as a student's lack of attendance is identified as a problem, effort should be made to address the problem, utilizing the resources of the school and involving the student and his or her parents or guardians to discuss the attendance problem. The school resources include both teaching and administrative staff as well as guidance staff. When attendance patterns have not sufficiently improved, other outside sources, including family court, may be appropriate in an attempt to correct the problem.

Statement of Overall Objectives

In recognition that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the School District has developed the following objectives:

- a) To maximize school completion for all students;
- b) To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e) To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) To determine the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

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Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School 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) Maintain accurate recordkeeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness, or early departure of each student.
- c) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- d) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.
- e) Review and revise attendance policy and procedures as necessary.

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

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

- a) Excused: An absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, or military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the principal on a case-by-case
- b) 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, obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping).

Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure shall 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. Written excuses are required from parents/guardians for all absences, early departures, or tardiness.

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Commencing July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a) For elementary students, each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day.
- b) For students in grades five through twelve, each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from kindergarten through grade twelve arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall 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 such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

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

All attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District/building procedures.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity are to 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 shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

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Upon returning to school following an absence, tardiness, or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments, and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher. An excused absence, tardiness, or early departure may result in exclusion from interscholastic and/or other extracurricular activities.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. However, where a student earns a passing grade, credit will not be denied due to failure to attend the course.

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

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a designated staff member shall notify the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy, or departs early without proper excuse. If the parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, the staff member will provide such notification by mail.

A school conference may be scheduled between the parent/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.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention, and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Parents/ 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/grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

Intervention Strategy Process

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

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- a) Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of 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/person in parental relation will be contacted;
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- d) Recommend intervention to Superintendent or his/her 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/person in parental relation may request a building review of his/her child's attendance record.

Building Review of Attendance Records

Commencing with the 2003-04 school year, the building principal will work in conjunction with appropriate building 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 of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review the building-level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

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Community Awareness

The Board of Education shall 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 such a policy to students and their parents/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 New York Code of Rules and Regulations
(NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2, and 175.6

Adopted: 06/17/02