



STUDENT ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

I. Student Attendance Officer

- A. The principal will serve as the school attendance officer for each school in the district and deal with all matters relating to school attendance and truancy.
- B. Each school attendance officer shall determine daily which students enrolled in the school are absent from school and whether that absence is excused in accordance with the Board policy and established procedures.
- C. Annually, on or before August 1, the school attendance officer shall determine how many students enrolled in each school in the district were absent in the previous year and whether the absences were excused. This information will be submitted to the District Administrator who shall notify the State Superintendent of Public Instruction of the determination.
- D. The school attendance officer or designee shall notify the parent or guardian of a child who has been truant of the child's truancy and direct the parent or guardian to return the child to school no later than the next day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse. The notice under this paragraph must be given before the end of the second school day after receiving a report of an unexcused absence and may be made by personal service, mail or telephone call on which a written record is kept except that notice by personal contact or telephone call shall be attempted before notice by mail may be given.

"Truancy" means any absence of part or all of one or more school days during which the school attendance officer or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent or guardian of the absent student and also mean intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the intent of the compulsory attendance law. .

Policy Rule 431-Rule Continued:

- E. The school attendance officer shall notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a habitual truant in accordance with procedures outlined in Section VI – Procedure Toward Legal Referral. “Habitual truant” means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester.
- F. The district administrator in cooperation with each school attendance officer will visit any place of employment in the school district to ascertain whether any minors are employed there contrary to state law. The attendance officer shall require that school certificates and lists of minors who are employed there to be produced for inspection and shall report all cases of illegal employment to the department of workforce development.
- G. The school attendance officer may contact home-based private educational programs to attempt to discover whether such programs meet the program criteria established by law. All such contacts shall be documented.
- H. The school attendance officer shall release student attendance record information to the appropriate agencies as requested for implementation of Wisconsin’s Learnfare Program as well as other purposes outlined by state law and the Board’s student records policy/procedures. Student attendance information shall only be released if appropriate “release of confidentiality” forms have been filed with the district in accordance with provisions of state law and the district’s student records policy. The school attendance officer shall have access to information regarding the attendance of any child between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18) who is a resident of the school district or who claims or is claimed to be in attendance at a private school located in the school district.

Students enrolled in the district and their parent(s)/guardians must be notified annually of their right to request program or curriculum modifications, the types of modifications available, the procedures used in requesting and approving modifications, their right to request the School Board to review any decision made in response to a request, and the time lines and procedures for the school board to take action. (Is this a duty of the school attendance officer?)

II. Student Absence and Excuses

- A. The responsibility for regular school attendance of a student rests upon the student's parent(s) or guardian.
- B. There are two types of excused absences. Absences authorized solely by the student's parent/guardian and school excused absences. Written verification is required by the parent/guardian which is to be submitted to the school attendance officer or designee in advance of the absence or prior to re admittance to the school.

1. Absences Authorized Solely by the Parent/Guardian

Any child may be excused in writing by his/her parent/guardian before the absence for any or no reason. These absences are in addition to any absences that the School Board has authorized the school attendance officer to excuse. A child may not be excused under this provision of state law for more than ten (10) days in a school year. The School Board must require a child excused under this exemption to complete any course work missed during the absence.

2. School Excused Absences

The school attendance officer is empowered to approve a legal excuse to any student, the reason for the absence must be acceptable according to the policy and the absence must have the written approval of the child's parent or guardian. Excused absences may be made for the following reasons:

- a. Personal illness or incapacitation of the student. Evidence that the student is not in proper physical or mental condition to attend school or an educational program. The district may request the parent/guardian to obtain a written statement from a licensed physician, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist or psychologist or Christian Science practitioner living and residing in this state who is listed in the Christian Science Journal as proof of the physical or mental condition of the student.
- b. Critical illness, death or a funeral in the student's immediate family or close friends.

- c. Family trips that can be taken only during the normal school term. The intent of this statement is to provide opportunity for students to accompany the parent(s) or guardian on a vacation which cannot be scheduled when school is in session. A parent/guardian shall be required to notify the school attendance officer or designee prior to leaving on vacation of the pending absence for the purpose of reviewing the student's attendance record and overall performance record. Student vacations or trips without parent/guardian accompaniment are not excused absences.
- d. Medical, dental, chiropractic, optometric appointments. Parents or guardians are requested to make their appointments during non-school hours.
- e. Students taking state driver's license test.
- f. A court appearance or other legal procedure which requires the attendance of the student.
- g. School directed absences (field trips, homebound instruction, etc.)
- h. Impassable roads and extreme weather conditions endangering the student's safety.
- i. Religious holidays or other religious reasons.
- j. Special circumstances that show good cause which are approved in advance by the school attendance officer or designee. Good cause may not be based upon exceptional educational needs, truancy, discipline or school achievement problems.
- k. Family responsibilities where planning for a non-school day is not possible (such as family-operated business work).*

C. All students with excused absences and students who are suspended from school will be given the opportunity to make up work missed in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. It is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher(s) to make arrangements for making up work missed during an absence from school.

2. Students with excused absences or who are suspended from school will be given the opportunity, whenever possible, to make up work missed when they return to school.
3. Teachers will be asked to grant the number of days absent plus one for make-up time. This provision applies to all work assigned during absence(s).
4. Examinations missed during an excused absence or a school suspension will be permitted to be taken at a time mutually agreed upon by the student and the teacher.

III. Unexcused Absences

A student who is absent from school with no approved reason or excuse is truant and will be considered unexcused. Students have the obligation to understand, retain for future reference and use all materials presented during their unexcused absence. Truant students will be assigned detention time from zero to twice the amount of time missed or assigned to a supervised, directed study program. Credit will be given for work completed during the period of detention or assignment to a supervised, directed study program. At the elementary level (K-4), students may be deprived of daily recess as detention time. All make-up work and detention time must be completed by the end of each quarter or the student's grade may be lowered as a result of incomplete work, failure to serve detention or both. Students may not participate in extra-curricular activities should they fail to serve assigned detention or complete make-up as a result of an unexcused absence.

All students with an unexcused absence will be permitted to make up any examinations missed during an absence.

IV. Tardiness

Students who are late to school in the morning or after lunch will be required to have a tardy slip issued by the school office. During each semester after the third tardiness students will be assigned one detention for each tardiness.

V. Responsibilities for Attendance

A. Parent(s)/Guardian Responsibility

1. When a student is absent, his/her parent(s) or guardian shall contact the school during the day by 9:00 a.m. at each school. Failure to contact the school may result in a telephone call to the home or work place of the parent/guardian.
2. Parents or guardians are required to provide a written explanation of absences at the time the student returns to school or in the case of anticipated absences, prior to the absence.

B. Student Responsibility

1. Students are required to attend all of their scheduled classes, study halls and lunch periods unless they have obtained parental permission and a pass approved by the student attendance officer or designee.
2. A student who has been absent or is anticipating to be absent shall be expected to provide a written explanation of the absence signed by his/her parent(s) or guardian.
3. Students should always check in and out at the school building office when they leave and return to school.
4. Students may not participate or practice after school hours if the student is absent for more than one-half of the school day for an illness reason. If the student's absence is for a non-illness reason, the student is ineligible for practice or competition unless the parent has requested permission for the student from the principal prior to 9:00 a.m. that day and such reason is excused.

C. Teacher Responsibility

1. Teachers are required to emphasize the importance and necessity of good attendance. Classroom procedures and grading requirements will be developed which reflect the importance of daily assignments, classroom discussion and examinations in grading students.

2. Teachers are required by law to take daily attendance (period by period) in their classes and maintain a record of absences.

D. Principal Responsibility

1. Principals shall request from each teacher, the procedures used for grading students. All grading systems throughout the school district should reflect the importance of daily assignments and classroom discussion in grading students.
2. Principals shall maintain office records for all excused and unexcused absences that occur in their school building.
3. Principals of individual schools within the district may develop attendance programs to encourage students to develop better attendance and punctuality. (i.e. attendance contracts, 210 plan etc).

E. District Administrator Responsibility

The district administrator shall present student requests to the Board for approval. High school equivalency or high school graduation program proposals shall be presented along with such requests.

F. School District Responsibility

1. The school district has a responsibility to stress a routine basis, the importance of regular school attendance to students, parents, employers, and the community.
2. The school district shall promote activities within the school that enhances attendance. This will be done by:
 - a. Recognizing students for good attendance.
 - b. Reviewing the truancy plan and procedures during faculty in service and student assemblies or home-rooms at the beginning of the year.
3. The school district shall promote activities that increase the community awareness of school attendance issues and regulations. This will be done by:

- a. Annually publishing the district's attendance policy and state attendance law in the local newspaper prior to the start of the school year.
- b. Providing speaking opportunities for local service club programs and public service radio programming.
- c. Encouraging employers to establish work schedules which reduce interference with school attendance and scheduled detentions.

VI. Procedure Toward Legal Referral

The legal referral may be initiated if a poor attendance pattern exists. A certified letter should be sent to the student's parent or guardian after the third unexcused absence within a school semester and if the school attendance officer has completed the following:

- A. Met with the student's parent(s) or guardian to discuss the student's truancy or has attempted to meet with the student's parent or guardian and received no response or were refused. The school attendance officer will send a certified letter that will specify a specific date, time and place when scheduling a meeting with the student's parent or guardian. The notice should also include:
 1. A statement of the parent's/guardian's responsibility to cause the child to attend school regularly.
 2. A statement that the parent/guardian or child may request program or curriculum modifications and that the child may be eligible for enrollment in a program for children at risk under section 118.153 (4) of the state statutes.
 3. A request that the parent/guardian meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy. This notice will include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent/guardian should meet, the date, time, and place for the meeting, the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time or place. The date for the meeting shall be within five (5) school days after the date that the notice is sent, except that with the consent of the child's parent/guardian the date for the meeting may be extended for an additional five (5) school days.

4. A statement of the penalties that may be imposed under state law on the parent/guardian if he/she fails to cause the child to attend school regularly as required by the state's compulsory attendance law.

B. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the student to determine whether a change in the student's curriculum would resolve the student's truancy and has considered curriculum modifications.

1. The school attendance officer should specifically review the compulsory school attendance and truancy laws regarding curriculum modification options.

2. Education counseling may be done by regular counselors, principals, teachers etc. An individualized education program team evaluation is not required unless there is a suspected disability.

3. The educational placement of the student should be reviewed in the school year of the problem. A review conducted outside the school year (August to May) should not be used.

4. Data previously acquired during the school year may be used to determine educational counseling in situations involving students with disabilities. The IEP should be reviewed and adjusted if necessary. The school psychologist should review the educational placement of students with disabilities. The reviewer must talk to the student, parent or guardian and the teacher if they will agree. If they do not, the refusal should be documented.

C. Evaluated the student to determine whether learning problems may be a cause of the student's truancy and if so, has taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals. After the third unexcused absence during a school semester, a letter should be sent to the student's parent or guardian by certified mail.

1. If there is a suspected disability, a referral should be made to the IEP team.

2. The evaluation must include a review of the records, communication with the student, the student's teacher(s) and the student's parent(s)/guardian, and observation if appropriate.

3. Learning problems should be looked at carefully for classic disability or lack thereof, as well as other types of contributing problems (e.g. physical).

D. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be a cause of the student's truancy and if so, has taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals. A letter should be sent to the student's parent or guardian by certified mail which identifies the student as a habitual truant. An "habitual truant" as defined by state statutes is a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester.

1. A referral to Iowa County Social Services may be requested by the school.

2. A referral to the Iowa County Juvenile intake officer may be requested by the school.

Point A does not apply if a meeting with the student's parent/guardian is not held within ten (10) school days after the date the notice of habitual truancy was sent. Points B, C and D do not apply if the school attendance officer provides evidence that appropriate school personnel were unable to carry out the activity due to the child's absences from school.

VII. Legal Referral

A. Specific documentation and the completion of the required referral form is mandatory before any legal action can be taken. A form should be submitted to the juvenile intake officer. The statute does not stipulate quantitative data however, the more evidence presented in court, the more likely equitable consequences. Phone calls, letters, referrals, and meetings should be documented. This is a critical part of the truancy procedures as it is necessary to establish that the student in question is "habitually truant."

B. The juvenile intake officer will review the truancy case.

C. The case will then be submitted to the district attorney who will act. The district attorney acknowledges that expedience shall be of primary interest and will limit his/her time deadlines from the time the action, if filed (or determination of non-filed) and services rendered.

VIII. Return of a Truant Student to School

A. When a transfer student returns or is returned to school, school personnel should immediately welcome him/her back. All truants, whether occasional or habitual, need attention. The degree of attention may vary however, depending upon the age of the student and the pattern of truancy.

B. Additional responses to be made by school personnel regarding truant students returning to school may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Assessment of factors contributing to truancy
2. Discussion of alternative educational options and limitations
3. Referral considerations
4. Development of a plan for consequences to truancy
5. Counseling guided re-entry to classes/programs
6. Tailor-made options for programming students at Southwest Technical College
7. High school exploratory classes at Southwest Technical College
8. Structured work experience programs
9. Discussion of a student's commitment and responsibility to assist in returning to regular programming
10. Follow-up on obligations of students and parents/guardians regarding attendance (commitment to joint counseling)
11. Promotion of staff awareness of the problem(s) the student is encountering
12. Review of requirements necessary for students 17 years of age or older to earn a general equivalency diploma
13. Assignment of detention time or other special conditions

IX. Students Excused from Regular School Attendance

A. A student who has reached the age of 16 may be excused from school attendance under the following conditions:

1. The student has requested permission to be excused from regular school attendance and has the written approval of his/her parent or guardian
2. The student and his/her parent or guardian, agree in writing, that the student will participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the student's high school graduation. Program or curriculum modifications include the following:
 - a. Modifications within the student's current academic program
 - b. A school work training or work study program
 - c. Enrollment in any alternative public school or program located in the school district.
 - d. Enrollment in any nonsectarian private school or program located in the school district which complies with federal nondiscrimination requirements (Title VI or Civil Rights Act)
 - e. Home-bound style study, including nonsectarian correspondence courses or other courses of study approved by the Board or nonsectarian tutoring provided by the school district
 - f. Enrollment in any public educational program outside of the school district.

B. A student who is 17 years of age or over may be excused from school attendance under the following conditions:

1. The student has requested permission to be excused from regular school attendance and has written approval of his./her parent or guardian.
2. The student and his/her parent or guardian agree, in writing, that the student will participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the student's high school graduation or leading to a high school equivalency diploma. Program or curriculum modification, include those identified above.

D. Withdrawal Procedures

1. Prior to being excused from regular school attendance, the student attendance officer will discuss the program or curriculum modification options with the student and his/her parent or guardian.
2. The student attendance officer will inform the district administrator in writing, of the request and of the program or curriculum modification(s) leading to high school graduation or a high school equivalency diploma tentatively agreed upon by the student and his/her parent or guardian.
3. The district administrator will present the request and high school equivalency or high school graduation program proposal to the Board for approval.
4. A written agreement must be signed by the student, his/her parent or guardian, the Board, and a representative of the high school equivalency program or program leading to the student's high school graduation. This agreement must be signed prior to the student's admission to such program.
5. At least once each semester, the school attendance officer will review compliance with each student's agreement. If it is determined that a student is not complying with the agreement, the student and his/her parent or guardian and the high school equivalency program or program leading to the high school graduation will be notified that the agreement may be modified or suspended in thirty (30) days.
6. If the agreement is suspended, the student will be expected to attend school on a regular basis in accordance with state law, Board policy and established procedures. Failure to attend school will result in forfeiture for truancy in accordance with established county ordinances.

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