

503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

- A. The school board believes 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 among 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 responsibility to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from class. 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 an 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. 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 a 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 class. 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 any attendance problems that may arise.
- b. In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, the students of the school district are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the Executive Director from attendance because the student has already withdrawn 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. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the student cannot attend school is a valid excuse.
- b. The following non-exhaustive list of reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
 - (1) Illness.
 - (2) Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
 - (3) A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
 - (4) Medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment, or a counseling appointment.
 - (5) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
 - (6) Religious instruction.

- (7) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- (8) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
- (9) 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.
- (10) Family emergencies.
- (11) A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.
- (12) Vacations with family that have been approved by administration.
- (13) Personal trips to schools or colleges that have been approved by administration.

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 within 2 days from the date of the student's return to school. Any work not completed within this period shall result in "no credit" for the missed assignment. However, the Executive Director or classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.
- (3) A student who misses a class more than 10 times in a term may face a grade reduction in her/his term grade.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. Unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student that 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) Vacations with family that have not been approved by administration.
- (4) Personal trips to schools or colleges that have not been approved by administration.
- (5) Absences resulting from cumulated unexcused tardies (3 tardies equal one unexcused absence).
- (6) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences

- (1) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minn. Stat. §§ 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 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 in the following manner:
 - (a) Student is not allowed to make-up missed work due to an unexcused absence.
 - (b) After 3 cumulated unexcused absences in a term, a student's parent or guardian will be notified.
 - (c) After such notification, the student or his or her parent or guardian may, within a reasonable time, request a conference with school officials regarding the student's absences and the prescribed discipline. The notification will state that the school strongly urges the student's parent or guardian to request such a conference.
 - (d) After 9 cumulated unexcused absences in a term, the administration may impose the loss of academic credit in the class or classes from which the student

has been absent. The student/parent can appeal the loss of credit to the attendance committee.

- (e) If the result of a grade reduction or loss of credit has the effect of an expulsion, the school district will follow the procedures set forth in the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56.

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 include but are not limited to:

 - 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 includes but is not limited to failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
 - b. Consequences of tardiness may include detention after 3 unexcused tardies. In addition 3 unexcused tardies are equivalent to one unexcused absence.

D. Participation in Extracurricular Activities

1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day.
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 administration for approval before the student participates in the activity or program.

III. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

Copies of this policy shall be made available in the Student Handbook 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.

IV. 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. § 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 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 on three days if the child is in middle 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 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.

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.28 (School Boards and Teachers, Duties)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.30 (Attendance Officers)
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 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*,

Cross References: 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)