

Adopted: July 16, 1985
Revised: September 25, 1990
September 13, 2004
July 12, 2010
School Board Revised: January 27, 2020 [Routine Review]
School Board Revised: August 10, 2020 [Routine Review]
Contact Person: Assistant Superintendent

POLICY 503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

To positively encourage regular school attendance and ensure compliance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

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 Superintendent will establish a system to ensure compliance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law. Students of the school district are required to attend all assigned classes and/or other school activities every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

This policy recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, staff, and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.

A. Responsibilities

1. Student's Responsibility

It is the student's right to a free public education. It is also the student's responsibility to:

- attend all assigned classes and other school activities every day that school is in session;
- be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or other school activity; and
- 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;
- inform the school in the event of a student absence; and
- work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

3. Staff's Responsibility

It is the staff's responsibility to:

- take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and other school activities;
- be familiar with all policies and procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to assure consistency and equity;
- meet the needs of individual students by using a range of strategies and interventions, and to provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request; and
- communicate attendance expectations to families, and work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

4. Administrator's Responsibility

It is the administrator's responsibility to:

- require students to attend all assigned classes and other school activities;
- be familiar with all policies and procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to assure consistency and equity;
- ensure all teachers properly account for student attendance in a timely manner;
- maintain accurate records on student attendance, and to prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each;
- 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; and
- work collaboratively with the staff to develop and implement uniform attendance procedures

III. PREKINDERGARTEN / KINDERGARTEN ATTENDANCE

- A. Once a student has been enrolled in kindergarten, regardless of the age of the student at that time, attendance is compulsory unless and until the child is properly withdrawn from enrollment. In the event a child under the age of seven enrolled prior to their seventh birthday is properly withdrawn from enrollment, attendance is no longer compulsory until the earlier of the following is reached: 1) re-enrollment of the child as a student, or 2) the child's seventh birthday.
- B. Students who are enrolled in the pre-kindergarten programs of the district are not subject to the compulsory attendance law, but their continued enrollment shall be subject to their meeting the district expectations for attendance Kindergarten through grade 12. Pre-kindergarten students who do not meet the attendance requirements will be dropped from enrollment, and their space offered to students who may be on a waiting list for the program. Pre-kindergarten students may be excused from attendance on the same basis as is permitted for a student enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12.

IV. ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

A. Expectations

1. Because daily attendance is critical to academic achievement, the District expects every student to attend school and be to class on time every day. Ninety-five (95) percent attendance is set as the minimum standard.
2. Each school will establish tardy rules that emphasize positivity and are consistent with the District's attendance policy. Suspension or removal from instruction must not be used as a consequence for tardiness.

B. Students with Individualized Programs

Students who have an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan may have modified attendance expectations, incentives, recognitions, and interventions. Such modification must be part of the written plan or program in order to supersede the general attendance guidelines for students of a similar age and grade.

C. Excused Absences:

1. **Illness**, an absence due to illness may be excused by the following means: written verification from a healthcare professional; verification from the school nurse; or a note or call from the student's parent/guardian, or the student (if eighteen or more years of age).
 - a. A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a health diagnosis will be excused providing there is a statement to this effect from a health professional.
 - b. Excessive absences due to a chronic illness or a medical condition will be reviewed on a case by case basis and the school may require a statement from a physician for absences to be considered excused.
2. **Family emergency**, for up to three (3) days within a school year, however, with notice by a family in extraordinary circumstances a principal or site administrator, or designee, may grant a longer period. Family emergency due to relocation or moving is not an extraordinary circumstance, and should be limited whenever possible to one day's absence.
3. **Funeral attendance**, for up to four (4) days within a school year; however, the principal or site administrator, or designee, may grant a longer period.
4. **Student appointments**, with health care providers or other professionals when unable to schedule outside school hours.
5. **Student appearances**, in a judicial or quasi-judicial meeting ordered by a court when unable to schedule outside school hours and when school is notified by the parent or guardian, the court or the adult student.
6. **Religious instruction**, when a school is notified and religious instruction does not to exceed 3 hours in any week.
7. **District recognized cultural or religious observance.**

8. **School authorized absences**, to include but not limited to, approved field trips, interscholastic athletic and fine arts competitions and events, student recognition/award ceremonies, **suspension** from class or school, other activities as approved by the school.
9. **Non-District competitions or events**, up to two (2) days within the school year when a parent or guardian, or an adult student, request an excused absence for participation in a non-district sponsored event.
 - a. The request must be in advance of the first absence;
 - b. Documentation from the sponsor must be provided along with the request identifying the location, dates and time of the event;
 - c. Missed schoolwork must be assigned by the student's teacher or teachers, and the parent or guardian or adult student agrees that schoolwork will be completed.
10. **College visits**, up to two (2) days within the school year when requested.
11. **Active duty**, in any military branch of the United States.
12. **Approved family activity**, for up to five (5) days within one school year,
 - a. Families will inform principal or site administrator prior to the first absence;
 - b. Missed schoolwork is assigned by the student's teacher or teachers, and the parent or guardian agrees that school work will be completed.
13. **Transportation problems**, confirmed by the District Transportation Department.
14. **Transportation interruptions**, caused by:
 - a. Student change of address within the school attendance boundaries when:
 - i. The parent or guardian has completed a change of address form;
 - ii. The parent or guardian is not able to transport the student prior to the institution of the new stop for the student;
 - iii. The existing bus stop is deemed unsafe (as defined by the Transportation Department) for students in Preschool through fifth grade.
 - b. Student change of address outside of the school attendance boundaries when:
 - i. The student is properly identified as meeting the definition of homeless or highly mobile or foster care; and
 - ii. The parent or guardian is not able to transport the student prior to the institution of the new stop for the student.

15. **Extreme weather conditions**, considered by the parent/guardian to be too dangerous for the student to attend school.
 16. **Administrative decisions**, the site administrator or principal may excuse an absence due to an activity or event, which due to its confidential nature will not be otherwise identified, to protect the privacy interests of the student or family.
- D. Opportunity to make up missed work due to absences
1. Teachers will provide an opportunity for students to make up work, provide an alternative assignment or excuse missed assignments due to absences;
 2. Students whose absences are excused assume the major responsibility for obtaining assignments and completing make-up work within the time specified by the teachers;
 3. Building administrator will share the process for making up assignments with families so they may assist their student; and
 4. Failure to complete the assignments may affect a secondary student's grade and assessment of progress toward achievement of graduation standards.
- E. Unexcused Absences
1. The following are examples of absences, which will not be excused:
 - a. **Truancy**, an absence by a student, of all or part of the school day, which was not approved by the parent and/or the school.
 - b. **Failure to report**, an absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures.
 - c. **Work at home**.
 - d. **Work at a business**, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
 - e. **Family trips/vacations**, for which no prior arrangement has been made with the school.
 - f. **Any other absence**, not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.
 2. Consequences of Unexcused Absences
 - a. Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act.
 - b. Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.

- c. 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 statute.
- d. Students with unexcused absences may be subject to discipline.

F. Tardiness

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at the times designated. 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 and or school administrator.
3. Excused Tardiness

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

- 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 by an administrator or faculty member.

4. Unexcused Tardiness

An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time without a valid excuse.

G. Absences for co-curricular activities, extracurricular activities, and school-sponsored on-the-job-training programs.

Definition: Co-curricular activities are activities that take place outside the classroom but reinforce or supplement classroom curriculum in some way. They are ungraded and do not offer any form of academic credit, but they do provide complementary learning of some form.

Definition: Extracurricular activities are nonacademic activities beyond academic courses such as sports, creative arts, and performing arts.

For students involved in any district-approved activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school sponsored on-the-job training programs the following shall apply:

1. School-initiated absences will be excused and participation permitted.
2. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
3. If a student is suspended from any class, they may not participate in any school activity or program during the suspension.
4. If a student is absent from school due to medical reasons, they 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.

V. NOTIFICATION OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- A. A summary of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year.
- B. This policy shall also be available upon request in each principal's office.
- C. Schools shall communicate expectations to students and families regarding State Truancy Laws and District policies.
- D. Schools shall use a consistent method to inform families of student absences and missed student work due to absence.
- E. Schools shall have a system for making contact with the family of every student with an unaccounted-for absence, on the day of the absence.
- F. Principals shall send a letter of information to families after three (3) unexcused absences within school year.

VI. REQUIRED REPORTING

A. Continuing Truant

Minnesota statute provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota statute 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, junior high school, or high school.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota statute provides that the building principal or designee 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 Minnesota statute and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution.
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota statute.
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 Minnesota statute.
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 Minnesota statute; 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.

C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. A habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian shall be referred to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota statute.

VII. WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

A parent or guardian may withdraw the student from enrollment in school for good cause by notifying the district. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, enrollment of the student in another school, or the immaturity of the child.

- A. Any student under age seven (7) may be withdrawn by the parent or guardian if:

1. the student is enrolled in another school; or
 2. the student is registered or enrolled in a home school; or
 3. the parent or guardian declares that the withdrawal is due to the immaturity of the child.
- B. Any student between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years old, who seek to discontinue secondary education, and the student's parent or guardian, must:
1. Meet with school personnel to discuss educational opportunities available to the student, including alternative educational opportunities; and
 2. Sign a written election to withdraw from school (form 541-DSE, attached)
- C. In accordance with Minnesota Statute, the school district will classify a student as withdrawn for funding purposes after 15 consecutive missed school days during the school year or five consecutive school days during summer school or intersession.

VIII. ONLINE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The following statements apply for students enrolled in online school and/or an online course.

A. Definitions

1. Online Attendance - is defined as either 1) logging in to the online course delivery platform by the assigned time and following prescribed procedures or 2) participating in mandatory synchronous learning at the assigned time and following the prescribed procedures.
2. Online Absence - Failure to log in to the online course delivery platform by the assigned time, or failure to follow prescribed procedures for recording your attendance, or failing to participate in any mandatory synchronous learning sessions at the assigned time.
3. Online Tardy - is defined as either 1) logging in to the online course delivery platform after the assigned time or 2) participating in the mandatory synchronous learning activity after the assigned time.

B. Excused Absences

Technology Problems: Students absences due to technology failures, including internet, hardware, or software issues, may be marked excused if the technology issue is reported using the identified procedure within 1 hour of the issue. This problem must be reported immediately so that alternate assignments or arrangements may be made.

Cross Reference:
Policy 506 (Student Discipline)