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503 - STUDENT ATTENDANCE

PHILOSOPHY

School attendance is the combined responsibility of the student, the parents, and the school. A student can readily make up missed assignments, but missed time in the classroom cannot be replaced. Therefore, for a student to realize their full potential, daily class attendance is important.

DEFINITION

Excused Absence

An absence from school for reasons recognized by the State of Minnesota, the Detroit Lakes Public Schools or those deemed legitimate by administration of the school. The State of Minnesota recognizes the following reasons for absence: Personal illness, death or medical emergency in the immediate family, and inclement weather. Other reasons that could be acknowledged as excused include those that are requested in advance such as medical or legal appointments, religious activities, travel, essential work at home, and family vacations.

Any absence for participation in a school sponsored activity shall be considered an excused absence.

Unexcused Absence

Absent from school without a valid excuse.

Common examples of unexcused absences include: oversleeping, shopping, hair appointments, missing bus, non-essential work at home, and part or full time work.

Continuing Truant

A child who is subject to the compulsory attendance laws of Minnesota Statute §120.101 and is absent from instruction in school without a 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 senior high school.

PROCEDURES

Absence Reporting Procedures

Whenever possible, the school should be contacted the day of the absence. If it is not possible to contact the school on the day of the absence, a note signed by a parent/guardian or

phone call from the parent/guardian indicating the reason for the absence is required upon the return of the child to school. The building administrator/dean of students shall determine if the absence will be excused or unexcused. If the school does not receive a note or phone call when the child returns to school, the absence shall be classified as unexcused until a note or phone call is received. The district also reserves the right to require a signed note from a doctor or other appropriate medical personnel for absences due to illness or other medical reasons.

If a student has been absent due to participation in a school-sponsored activity, no note or phone call from parent/guardian is required.

Advance Notice

If a family knows that a child will be absent in advance for reasons such as dental or medical appointments, the district requests that the parent/guardian notify the school in writing or phone call in advance with the reason for the absence. The building administrator shall determine if the absence will be excused or unexcused.

Continued Truancy

Upon classification as a continuing truant, the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the child'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 absence;
- (3) that the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statute §120.01 and parents and guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statute §127.20;
- (4) that this notification serves as notification required by Minnesota Statute §127.20;
- (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;
- (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 privileges; 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.

A copy of this letter shall also be sent to county social services.

On the seventh unexcused absence the county attorney will be notified, requesting a petition of truancy be filed for those students required to be in school by the laws of the State of Minnesota.

Make Up Work

Students who are absent for any reason will be required to make up work missed in each class. It is the student's responsibility to make up work missed. Teachers will encourage and assist the students in this process. The student is responsible for finding out what work needs to be made up. Individual buildings shall determine how much time the child will have to make up work missed. Procedures for make up work will be explained in each building's student handbook.

If a child will miss more than one day the parent is encouraged to contact the teacher to obtain assignments for their child.

Absence Following a School Activity

There are occasions when students return home late in the evening from participation in school sponsored activities. An absence the day following a school-sponsored activity with an excuse of sleeping in will be considered unexcused without approval of the building administrator/dean of students prior to the absence.

Consequences for Unexcused Absences

All unexcused absences are subject to disciplinary action by the school. Consequences will be set by each building and described in student handbooks.

Consequences for Unexcused Tardies

Being on time is an important lesson all people must learn. Students are expected to be on time for school and for class. Students late to school or class without a valid excuse shall receive an unexcused tardy and shall be subject to disciplinary action by the school.

- Legal References:***
- 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. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
 - Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant defined)
 - Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)
 - Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian when Child is Continuing Truant).
 - 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 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School District R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)
Knight v. Board of Education, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References: MSBA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)