

I. PURPOSE

- A. The District 831 school board believes that 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 of all school aged children in the district.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by 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 and study halls every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or study hall. Finally, 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 a student 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 in each assigned class. 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 any 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.

B. Administrator's Office Responsibility.

1. It is the administrator's responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes and study halls. 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 attendance problems.
2. In accordance with the regulations of the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statutes, section 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 already completed state and district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse.
3. School administrators have the discretion to decide on a case by case basis whether an absence or tardy should be excused or unexcused.

C. Attendance Procedures.

The secondary and elementary operational attendance procedures shall be publicized on all schools' websites.

1. Excused Absences or Tardies: Acceptable absences (tardies) from school or class for the following reasons which are recognized by the school as legitimate. These are supported by the three counties (Anoka, Chisago, and Washington) which serve our district. The following are examples of acceptable excuses for absences (or tardies):

Parent/doctor verified illness: illness verified by parent. Note: The School District, at its own discretion, may request a doctor's statement instead of parent verification.

Family emergencies: serious illness, injury, or death of immediate family member.

Scheduled appointments: appointments that cannot be arranged after school or when school is not in session and has prior approval by the school and parent.

Religious holidays: refer to Policy #603.

Medical/dental appointments: appointments that cannot be arranged after school or when school is not in session. Excuse shall be written by parent or medical professional

School directed activities: field trips, athletic trips, fine arts trips, or other activities planned by the school district, approved by the parent.

Prearranged family vacations: only for exceptional circumstances which requires families to take vacation during school days. A parent or guardian must accompany the student.

Suspensions: as defined by the school board.

Court appearances: absences for mandatory court appearances, to be prearranged.

Exceptional circumstances: circumstances where permission may or may not be granted by the school, for reasons not previously outlined, to prearranged.

Weather: extreme weather conditions preventing students from getting to school safely.

Transportation problems: problems related to transportation provided by the school district.

The validity of any excused absence must be to the satisfaction of the Superintendent or his/her designee. The Superintendent or his/her respective designee shall be the final judge of the acceptability of any such excuse submitted. Where an excuse submitted by a parent or guardian is not accepted, the absence corresponding thereto shall be considered an unexcused absence.

Consequences of Excused Absences

- (a) 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 upon returning to school.
- (b) Work missed because of absence generally must be made up within a period of 2 times the length of the absences(s). Any work not completed within this period shall result in “no credit” for the missed assignment. However, the building principal or the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.
- (c) Even if absences fall under one or more of the ‘Excused’ categories, excessive absences are also problematic for a student’s educational continuity, and may be handled as ‘Unexcused’ dependent upon the specific circumstances.
- (d) School administrators have discretion to assess circumstances without a note from a parent or medical provider, as appropriate and as needed for specific student circumstances.

2. Unexcused Absences

Unexcused Absences or Tardies: absences (tardies) which are not recognized by the school as legitimate. These are supported by the three counties (Anoka,

Chisago, and Washington) which serve our district. The following are examples of reasons for absences (or tardies) which will not be excused:

Car trouble
Visiting
Overslept or alarm didn't work
Shopping
Driver's training
Needed at home
Leaving school during the day without permission from school
Babysitting
Missed bus
Work
No call or note from parent/guardian verifying the absence
Personal (no reason given)
Truancy
Personal grooming needs
Any other absences included in the attendance procedures of the individual schools

Consequences of Unexcused Absences

- (a) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.40-121A.56.
- (b) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.
- (c) Students with unexcused absences may be subject to consequences, including, but not limited to:
 - (1) Detention, In School Restriction, suspension, or referral to the Lakes Area Center for Youth & Families or other appropriate organization.
 - (2) Student conference which will occur following unexcused absences to determine consequences.
 - (3) Parent conference (phone or otherwise) which will occur when consequence is suspension.
 - (4) At the secondary level, grade reduction may occur for unexcused absences as it may not be possible or reasonable for work to be made up.

- (5) If progressive interventions do not help, a conference between school, parents, and student will occur to determine additional consequences or strategies may include contracts or a change in the educational placement of the student.
- (6) If the results of the additional consequences do not succeed, the school district may follow the procedures set forth in the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes section 121A.40-121A.56.
- (7) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may initiate truancy procedures as delineated by state statutes.

D. Tardiness

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.
2. Reporting Tardiness.
 - a. Students tardy at the start of school must report to the appropriate person as is designated in each building.
 - b. The teacher will handle tardiness between periods.
3. Excused tardiness. Acceptable absences (tardies) from school or class for the following reasons which are recognized by the school as legitimate. These are supported by the 3 counties (Anoka, Chisago, and Washington) which serve our district. The following are examples of acceptable excuses for absences (or tardies):
 - a. Parent/doctor verified illness: illness verified by parent. Note: The School District, at its own discretion, may request a doctor's statement instead of parent verification.
 - b. Family emergencies: serious illness, injury, or death of immediate family member.
 - c. Scheduled appointments: appointments that cannot be arranged after school or when school is not in session and is prior approved by the school and parent.
 - d. Religious holidays: refer to Policy #603.
 - e. Medical/dental appointments: appointments that cannot be arranged after school or when school is not in session. Excuse shall be written by parent or medical professional.
 - f. School directed activities: field trips, athletic trips, fine arts trips, or other activities planned by the school district, approved by the parent.

- g. Prearranged family vacations: only for exceptional circumstances which requires families to take vacation during school days. A parent or guardian must accompany the student.
- h. Suspensions: as defined by the school board.
- i. Court appearances: absences for mandatory court appearances, to be pre-arranged. Exceptional circumstances: circumstances where permission may or may not be granted by the school, for reasons not previously outlined, to be prearranged.
- j. Weather: extreme weather conditions preventing students from getting to school safely.
- k. Transportation problems: problems related to transportation provided by the school district.

The validity of any excused absence must be to the satisfaction of the Superintendent or his/her designee. The Superintendent or his/her respective designee shall be the final judge of the acceptability of any such excuse submitted. Where an excuse submitted by a parent or guardian is not accepted, the absence corresponding thereto shall be considered an unexcused absence.

4. Unexcused Tardies

Definition: An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse. The following are reasons for absences (or tardies) which will not be excused:

- a. Car trouble
- b. Visiting
- c. Overslept or alarm didn't work
- d. Shopping
- e. Driver's training
- f. Needed at home
- g. Leaving school during the day without permission from school
- h. Babysitting
- i. Missed bus
- j. Work
- k. No call or note from parent/guardian verifying the absence
- l. Personal (no reason given)
- m. Truancy
- n. Personal grooming needs
- o. Any other absences included in the attendance procedures of the individual schools

Consequences for unexcused tardiness may include, but are not limited to, detention, In School Suspension, or at the secondary level, suspension.

E. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-The-Job Training Programs

1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school-sponsored on-the-job training programs.
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 for any period of time 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 the coach or advisor before the student participates in the activity or program.

III. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable efforts will be made by the school district to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance. Requests for accommodations should be directed to the building principal.

IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

1. Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the beginning of each school year. This policy shall also be available upon request in each principal's office.
2. The school district will provide annual notice to parents of the school district's policy relating to a student's absence from school for religious observance.

V. REQUIRED REPORTING

A. Continuing Truant

Minnesota Statutes section 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, and is absent from instruction in a school as defined in

Minnesota Statutes section 120.05 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, junior high school, or high school.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statutes section 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 Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statutes section 120A.34;
4. that this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statute section 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 Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260C;
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 Statutes section 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.
10. That a failure on the part of the parent/guardian to ensure the student's attendance may constitute neglect under the Child Abuse Reporting Act,

Minn. Stat. § 626.556, which the School District would be required to report.

C. 260C.007 Subd. 19 Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 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 period(s) on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for 1 or more class period(s) on 7 school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. A school district representative shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260A.

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.34 (Violations; Penalties)
 Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School for Religious Observance)
 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 a 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 (1975)
Slocum v. Holton Bd of Educ. 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)
Campbell v. Bd of Educ of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)
Hamer v. Bd of Educ of Tw High Sch. Dist. No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d 7, 383 N.E.2d 231 (1978)
Gutierrez v. Sch. Dist. R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)
Knight v. Bd. of Educ. 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References:

Student Discipline Policy 515

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