

Adopted: May 15, 2000  
Revised: July 1, 2002  
Revised: April 18, 2006  
Revised: 2006-07  
Revised: December, 2009  
Revised: November, 2010  
Reviewed: July, 2014  
Revised: January 2020

## **503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

### **I. PURPOSE**

- A. The 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. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- 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 right to be in school. It is also 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 and study hall. 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.

4. Administrator's Responsibility

- a. 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 days 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.
- 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 and/or study halls 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 high school, has 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 legal 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 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 not to exceed three hours in any week.
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. Active duty in any military branch of the United States.
12. A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.
13. Family vacations, if pre-approved by the principal a minimum of two weeks in advance of said absence. However, the principal may extend the time allowed for approval in extenuating circumstances.
14. Work at home, if pre-approved by the principal a minimum of two days in advance. However, the principal may extend the time allowed for approval in extenuating circumstances.
15. Personal trips to colleges, if pre-approved by the principal a minimum of two weeks in advance of said absence.
16. Students aged 18 and over who are not emancipated may not act as parent/guardian for the purposes of attendance and may not provide their own approval for absences.

*(Note: State law provides that a school board may include other exemptions in the school district's attendance policy. See Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, Subd. 12. When considering whether to add other exemptions, school boards should consider the intent of the compulsory attendance law, which recognizes the educational value of regular attendance and class participation, and whether the proposed exemption is consistent with the intent of the law.)*

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 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.
3. When any non-pre-approved absences exceed 5 excused absences per grading period, the principal may initiate a meeting between the parent, student, and the principal/designee to discuss the student's absences.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

1. Truancy. An absence by a student which 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. Work at home, if not pre-approved.
4. Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
5. Vacations with family, if not pre-approved.
6. Personal trips to schools or colleges, if not pre-approved.
7. 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 also 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. 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.

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 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 in writing by an administrator or faculty member.

4. Unexcused Tardiness

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

D. 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 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.

E. Perfect Attendance

Any student who attends each and every day of school will be eligible for a "Perfect Attendance" designation. If a child is ill or out with family, this will count as being absent; and therefore, the child will not be eligible for "Perfect Attendance." However, students who attend school sponsored activities and field trips and as a result are not in school, will still be eligible for the "Perfect Attendance" designation.

**III. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY**

Copies of this policy shall be made available 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, junior high school, or high 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.

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 school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minn. Stat. Ch. 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.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, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)
- Cross References:
- MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)