Attendance/ Truancy/ Absenteeism/Missed Class Assignments Due to Absences

Attendance/Absentees:
The Board requires that school-aged children enrolled in the District attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and Board policies. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the District during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of conditions or reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.

The Board considers the following to be excused absences:

1. Illness
2. Recovery from an accident
3. Required court attendance
4. Medical and dental appointments
5. Death in the immediate family
6. Observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
7. Such other good cause as may be acceptable to the Principal or permitted by law

Any absence that has not been excused for any of these reasons will be considered an unexcused absence.

In the event of an illness, parents must call the school and inform the District of the student's illness and absence. For other absences, parents must provide written notice or a written excuse that states one of these reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may require parents to provide additional documentation in support of their written notice, including but not limited to doctor's notes, court documents, obituaries, or other documents supporting the claimed reason for non-attendance.

If parents wish for their child to be absent for a reason not listed above, the parent must provide a written explanation of the reason for such absence, including why the student will be absent and for how long the student will be absent. The Principal will make a determination as to whether the stated reason for the student's absence constitutes good cause and will notify the parents via telephone and writing of his/her decision. If the Principal determines that good cause does not exist, the parents may request a conference with the Principal to again explain the reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may then reconsider his initial determination. However, at this juncture, the Principal's decision shall be final.

Family Vacations/Educational Opportunities

Generally, absences other than for illness during the school year are discouraged. The school principal or his/her designee may, however, grant special approval of absence for family vacations, provided written approval is given in advance. Parents are asked to write a note to their child's teacher at least two weeks before the trip. This advance planning will allow the teacher enough time to work with parents and the student regarding homework completion.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused will be considered an unexcused absence.

Ten half days of unexcused absences during the school year constitutes habitual truancy.

A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more two hours of instructional time and less than three and one-half hours of instructional time.

Any absence of more than three and one-half hours of instructional time shall be considered a full-day absence.

The Principal or Truant Officer, at the discretion of the Principal, is the Inter-Lakes School District representative responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy:
The Principal shall ensure that the administrative guidelines on attendance properly address the matter of truancy by including a process that identifies students who are habitually truant, as defined above.

When the Principal identifies a student who is habitually truant or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, he/she shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention shall include processes including, but not limited to:

1. Investigates the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;

2. Considers, when appropriate, modification of his/her educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;

3. Involves the parents in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;

4. Seeks alternative disciplinary measures, but still retains the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline; and

5. Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the child's attendance.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student reaches habitual truancy status or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;

2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and

3. A request for a meeting between the parents and the Principal to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the recommendations listed below. However, these guidelines shall be advisory only. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing and reducing truancy.

1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as

prompt notification of absences to parents.

2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures.

3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

Intervention Options:
School district personnel are expected to work to develop and implement strategies focusing on the prevention and/or reduction of excessive absences including truancy. Although not limited to, examples of such strategies shall include:

- Changes in the student's classroom assignments;
- Modifications of the student's class and/or daily schedule;
- Personalization of the student's program of study;
- Involvement of the School District truant officer;
- Involvement of the court system when it is deemed necessary;
- Attendance in extended day or extended year programming; or
- Contact with the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF).

Missed Class Assignments Due to Absences:
Students are responsible for the missed learning opportunities that occur in their absence, no matter the reason for the absences, except for reasonable modifications as required in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. School Principals will develop guidelines for missed work and will communicate these guidelines to students and families through student/parent handbooks. Additionally, classroom teachers will reinforce these guidelines within their classrooms.

Parental Notification of Truancy Policy:
Prior to adopting this policy, the Board will place the item on the agenda of a public school board meeting and will allow two weeks for public input as to the policy's provisions. Any public input shall be advisory only and final adoption as to the policy's provisions will remain solely with the Board.

Additionally, the Superintendent shall also ensure that this policy is included in or referenced in the student handbook and is mailed to parents annually at the beginning of each school year.

Legal References:
RSA 189:34, Appointment
RSA 189:35-a, Truancy Defined
RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil
RSA 193:7 Penalty
RSA 193:8, Notice Requirements
RSA 193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (a)(1), Attendance and Absenteeism
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (c), Policy Relative to Attendance and Absenteeism

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