

**COLOGNE ACADEMY
MANUAL OF SCHOOL POLICIES APPROVED BY THE BOARD**

503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

The School Board believes that regular attendance in school and punctuality are important factors in a student's success in academic work, including success in meeting state and local requirements for graduation. Students who attend school consistently and are on time develop better socially, establish better communication with their teachers, and acquire important lifetime habits such as dependability, self-sufficiency, and responsibility. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to positively encourage regular school attendance and punctuality.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The Minnesota Compulsory Attendance Law requires that every child between 7 and 16 years of age attend school.
- B. Student academic achievement is the primary goal of Cologne Academy. Although learning occurs in a variety of settings, time in class is essential to learning so that students can receive instruction and contribute as members of the community of learners.
- C. The schools of District 4188 - recognize that daily attendance is critical to the academic success of students and therefore expects every student to attend school on time, every day.
- D. Whenever possible we encourage parents/guardians to schedule doctor and dental appointments, family vacations, and special events on days when school is not in session.
- E. School staff, students, families and the community share responsibility for student attendance. Families have the responsibility for making decisions about their children's schooling. School staff have the responsibility for communicating with families about student attendance.
- F. All students should receive equitable opportunity and treatment. Students have individual needs that must be considered.
- G. Once a pupil under the age of seven is enrolled in kindergarten or a higher grade in a public school, the pupil is subject to compulsory attendance. The parent, guardian, or any other individual having charge of any person that is of compulsory age must send such person to school unless he/she meets the legitimate exemptions as defined in statute.

III. ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Attendance procedures are approved administratively and the attendance procedures are included in student handbooks.

A. Excused Absences. A parent/guardian can call or contact the school regarding the absence via phone, email or in person. 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. If a child has been absent from school for three (3) consecutive days, a doctor's note will be required to return.

1. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
 - a) Family events for example but not limited to wedding, graduation, funeral, moving, religious events
 - b) Legal/court appearances or appointments
 - c) Co-Curricular activities not sponsored by school including sports clubs
 - d) Doctor, Dentist, or other medical professional appointments
 - e) Environmental emergencies like fire or weather
 - f) Student Illness
 - g) Medical documentation
 - h) Religious instruction (up to 3 hours per week)
 - i) Religious holidays
 - j) Family matters necessitating absence from school with advanced notice
 - k) Special talent/club activities – prior building approval required
 - l) Suspension
 - m) Family vacation
 - n) Issues outside of the student's control (car trouble, late bus, etc.)

2. Excused Absence Procedures

- a) Excused absences occur when a parent/guardian calls or contacts the school or the school reaches the parent/guardian to confirm the absence.
- b) Students who accumulate excessive absences, even when excused, will work with the school staff and parents to develop a plan to assure attendance at school daily.
- c) Excessive Excused Absences: Parent-approved absences that are excessive and/or interfere with the student's education program may be interpreted as truancy and follow up procedures may be implemented. As a general guideline, 10 excused absences in a school year will be viewed as excessive.

Parents/guardians need to be aware that if students are absent 15 or more consecutive days, students must be withdrawn from school

(1) Elementary excused absence, tardy or left early.

(a) 6 cumulative absences- After 6 cumulative half or full day absences, the school will send a first notification letter to parent/guardian with the intent of alerting to the amount of time missed out of possible attendance days (unless the school staff is aware of special circumstances and a phone contact is made instead). This does not include school exempt absences.

(b) 12 cumulative absences- After 12 cumulative half or full day absences the school sends a second notification letter to parent/guardian (unless the school staff is aware of special circumstances and a phone contact is made instead). This does not include school exempt absences. The school may set up a meeting to discuss a plan at 12 cumulative absences.

(c) 18 cumulative absences – After 18 cumulative half or full day absences, the school sets up a meeting to discuss a plan to support student attendance and success in school. This meeting may include the school nurse, school social worker or other support staff that may provide input into the plan. This does not include school exempt absences.

(2) Middle School excused absence.

(a) 6 cumulative absences- When a student has 6 or more cumulative absences from class periods from 6 different days, the school will send a first notification letter to parent/guardian with the intent of alerting the parent to the amount of time missed out of possible attendance days (unless the school staff is aware of special circumstances and a phone contact is made instead). This does not include school exempt absences.

(b) 12 cumulative absences- After 12 or more cumulative absences from class periods from 12 different days, the school sends a second notification letter to

parent/guardian and may set up a meeting to discuss a plan (unless the school staff is aware of special circumstances and a phone contact is made instead). This does not include school exempt absences.

- (c) 18 cumulative absences – After 18 or more cumulative absences from class periods from 18 different days, the school sets up a meeting to discuss a plan to support student attendance and success in school. This meeting may include the school nurse, school social worker or other support staff that may provide input into the plan. This does not include school exempt absences.

B. Unexcused Absences. When no call or contact is made by a parent/guardian regarding the absence via phone, email, or in person and the absence is not excused, it counts toward truancy.

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

- a) Truancy/skipping
- b) Oversleeping/sleeping in
- c) Missing the bus

2. Unexcused Absence Procedures

- a) School district staff will work with the parent/guardian, student, and the proper county truancy office to follow with necessary legal action to ensure attendance at school.

(1) Parents/guardians will receive notice regarding excessive unexcused or excused absences. Additional notice(s) will be sent out if absences continue. Parents/guardians will then be asked to meet with the school counselor, dean, and/or principal to discuss school attendance.

(2) Unreported absences are considered unexcused and excessive unexcused absences will trigger the involvement of county services and a truancy case may be opened.

(3) After 15 consecutive days absent, state law requires that we withdraw the student from our enrollment.

(4) Elementary unexcused absence, tardy, left early. No call or contact from parent/guardian; school could not reach parent/guardian; OR absence is not excused.

- (a) 3 unexcused absences- When a student has 3 or more unexcused half or full day absences, the school will send a first notification email/letter to parent/guardian. This communication will remind parents/guardians of school notification procedures.
 - (b) 5 unexcused absences- When a student has 5 or more unexcused half or full day absences, the school will send a second notification letter/email home to parent/guardian and a pre-diversion meeting will be set up with parent/guardian, administration, other school personnel and county truancy services.
 - (c) 7 unexcused absences- When a student has 7 or more half or full day unexcused absences and the school has made efforts to address the situation without success, the school files the truancy paperwork with the appropriate county.
- (5) Middle School Unexcused Absence. No call or contact from parent/guardian; school could not reach parent/guardian; OR absence is not excused.
- (a) 3 unexcused absences- When a student has 3 or more unexcused absences from class periods from 3 different days, the school will send a first notification letter/email to parent/guardian. This communication will remind parents/guardians of school notification procedures.
 - (b) 5 unexcused absences- When a student has 5 or more unexcused absences from class periods from 5 different days, the school will send a second notification letter/email home to parent/guardian and a pre-diversion meeting will be set up with parent/guardian, administration, other school personnel and county truancy services.
 - (c) 7 unexcused absences- When a student has 7 or more unexcused absences from class periods from 7 different days and the school has made efforts to address the situation without success, the school files the truancy paperwork with the appropriate county.

C. Participation in Extracurricular Activities

1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day
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.
6. Students who will miss school regularly due to enrichment activities must seek prior approval in order for those absences to be excused. Families to whom this applies may contact the building principal for further information.

IV. 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.

V. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

- A. Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year through the family handbook. This policy shall also be available upon request in the front office.
- B. 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.

VI. 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 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..

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 Statutes section 120A.34;
5. That alternative educational programs and services may be available in the child's enrolling or resident 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. 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 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year 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 Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260A.

VII. WITHDRAWAL

Students not required by Minnesota Law to attend school may withdraw as follows:

- 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 in writing that the withdrawal is due to the immaturity of the child.

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)