



Book	Policy Manual
Section	Students
Title	Comprehensive Attendance Policy and Procedures
Code	7110
Status	Active
Adopted	July 11, 2006

Statement of Overall Objectives

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The Southwestern School District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. The School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation. In this spirit the School District (parents, teachers, administrators, and students) have developed, reviewed and revised a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- a) To increase school completion for all students;
- b) To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) To know the whereabouts of every student within the school day;
- e) To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) To determine the District's Average Daily Attendance for state aid purposes.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

- a) Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendation of the multifaceted District Policy Development Team. The team includes representation from the community, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the Board of Education. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- b) Maintain accurate record keeping via a register of attendance to record attendance, absences, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- c) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- d) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

Student Attendance Record Keeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered using a District code.

Commencing on July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a) For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade eight (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.) such student's presence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day, provided that students are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period. Where students are dismissed for lunch, their presence or absence shall also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the students' return from lunch.
- b) For students in grades nine through twelve, or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph above.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law section 3202(I-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designation school personnel responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure shall be coded on the student's record in accordance with the District/Building Policy.

Student Attendance/Course Credit

In order for students to be eligible to take tests and submit papers, homework, projects, etc., for grades required to receive credit for any course, students must be in attendance a minimum of 85% of the total days a course is scheduled to be in session. Any student who is absent more than 15% of the time, regardless of the reason (excused or unexcused), may not receive credit for the course. Assuming a 180 day school year, a student who exceeds 27 absences for a full-year course or 14 absences for a 1-semester course may lose credit for the course.

Where a student earns a passing grade, credit will not be denied for the course. When a student misses 50% or more of a class period (20 minutes), this will be considered a full class absence. Transfer students and students reenrolling after dropping out of school will be expected to attend 85% of the scheduled classes during their time of enrollment.

Once a student exceeds the maximum number of allowable absences as specified, the student will not be permitted to take any remaining exams/tests, or submit papers/projects, etc., for grades necessary to receive credit for that course. Students who violate the minimum attendance standards and do not have a passing grade, nonetheless, will be expected to attend class. In accordance with New York State standards, however, all students participating in a science lab and failing to meet the required number of labs will not be allowed to attend summer school.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working pursuant to an approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following an absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments, and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher(s). The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasps of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.

At the middle/high school level, any student with more than the specified number of days absent in correlation to the duration of the course taken may NOT receive credit.

Number of Absences	Length of Course in Weeks	Number of Times Meeting per Week
7	10	5
7	20	2.5
14	20	5
27	40	5

It is the District's policy that any student who reaches the maximum number of days absent and has a properly excused absence, tardiness, and/or early departure for which the student has performed any assigned make-up work, assignments, and/or tests shall not be counted as an absence for the purpose of determining the student's eligibility for course credit. District procedures will specify how student tardiness and early departures will be calculated and factored into the District's minimum attendance standards.

Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Where and when applicable, the District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused to include but not be limited to the following standards:

Excused: An absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, pre-approved college visits, pre-approved cooperative work programs, obtaining learner's permit, road tests, military obligations, pre-approved educational trips, emergency situations, late bus arrival, required medical attention for other family members who rely on the student for medical treatment, to attend a funeral of a family member, friend or staff member, or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education. *Trips requiring pre-approval need to be approved by the building principal.

Unexcused: An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (i.e. family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, fishing, oversleeping, missing the bus, needed at home for non-emergency purposes, personal reasons non-specific, recreational activities not related to school sponsored events, shopping, truancy, visiting relatives or friends, work).

Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies Prior to the Denial of Course Credit

The District will take the following steps to ensure students and parents/persons in parental relation are informed of the District's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit:

- a) Copies of the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy and Procedures will be mailed to a parent/persons in parental relation and given to students at the beginning of each school year or when enrolling.
- b) School newsletters and publications will periodically have reminders of the policy.
- c) At periodic intervals, a designated staff member will notify, by telephone, the parent/person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness or early departure and will explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his/her ability to receive course credit. If a parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached by phone, a letter will be sent out.
- d) The District will provide a copy of the attendance policy to any community member who requests one.

e) During the course of a given year, a student's parent/person in parental relation will be notified on the following schedule when a student is absent:

- *After 5 days absent
- *After 10 days absent
- *After 15 days absent
- *After 20 days absent

When the maximum number of days absent total 10 days for 1/2 year classes and 20 days for a full year class, a scheduling meeting will take place with the parent/person in parental relation, the student, administrator, principal and any other person deemed by the principal.

When it is believed that a student had an unexcused absence, tardy or early departure, the parent/person in parental relation will be notified by an attendance officer, who will also notify the building principal.

Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement strategies at building levels. Some of these strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- a) Monthly drawings at each grade level for perfect attendance;
- b) Special events during days with historically high absenteeism;
- c) Classroom acknowledgement and reminders;
- d) Annual poster/essay contest on importance of good attendance;
- e) Attendance honor rolls to be posted in prominent places.

Tutoring

New York School Law 24:34 states: Homebound instruction is provided on a temporary basis by the public school district when a student is unable to attend school because of a short-term disability or discipline.

If tutoring is requested by the student's physician due to a medical condition or in the event of a court order, the following criteria must be met:

- a) A written request for tutoring from the physician on letterhead or prescription form must be provided to the school. The request MUST include the start date and end date for the tutoring and the medical diagnosis requiring tutoring.
- b) Tutoring is only provided if the medical condition will require the student to miss school for an extended period of time (5 or more consecutive days of absence) or when the length of illness will put a student in jeopardy of not meeting class attendance requirements.
- c) The student will provide the school with a signed reciprocal release of information form identifying all parties involved in a treatment plan. This release will allow the school to obtain and release information pertinent to the student's diagnosis.
- d) The physician requesting tutoring for a student will provide the school with a written treatment plan. The treatment plan will include the name of any referrals made, document any prescription or over-the-counter medication recommended, and will define the follow-up treatment required upon return to school.

Truancy

Students of any age who are registered in school are truant if they are absent without their parents'/person in parental relation's knowledge or consent. Students may be considered truant if they miss a portion of a class, the entire class, portion of the day, or an entire day.

Disciplinary Consequences

If an absence, tardiness or early departure has been deemed unexcused, disciplinary sanctions may result as per the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to: detention, suspension, denial of interscholastic and extracurricular activities, denial of classroom credit for all assigned work, quizzes, and tests for the days unexcused.

Building Review of Attendance Records

Commencing with the 2003-2004 school year, the building principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designed staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

Annual Review by the Board of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review the building level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board of Education shall make any revisions to the policy deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Parent Responsibility

- a) Middle and high school parents call in before 7:45 a.m. on the day of absence if the student is in the middle or high school.
- b) Elementary parents call in before 9 a.m. on the day of the absence if the student is in the elementary school.
- c) A written excuse from a parent/person in parental relation is required for each absence or tardiness. The excuse must:
 - 1. Specify date of absence or tardiness;
 - 2. Reason for absence or tardiness;
 - 3. Be signed and dated by the parent/person in parental relation
 - 4. Be returned the day the student returns to class.

School Responsibility

- a) Record period by period attendance and daily attendance;
- b) Attendance officer will call parents when a parent fails to call in on the morning of the absence;
- c) Keep parents and students informed of absences and clearly communicate expectations.
- d) Clearly administer attendance policy to all students