

SUBJECT: ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR GRADES K-6 AND 7-12

Philosophy

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. Education Law requires that the students enrolled in the Belfast Central School District attend school on every school day unless legally excused. The District believes that the presence of the student and classroom participation are critical to the educational program offered and, as such, are properly reflected in a student's final grade. The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom, and their participation in a well planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher, are vital to this purpose. Absences have a highly adverse affect upon the student as well as the entire educational program. The Board of Education urges all parents to make every effort for their children to be in attendance.

Therefore, regular, punctual attendance and cooperative participation in school is expected of all students. Any student who is absent from school will be required to make up work missed in assigned classes.

Finally, the 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. Because the School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the School District has developed and will review and, if necessary, revise this Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

Attendance Policy 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 for safety and other reasons;
- e) To verify that individual students are complying with Education Laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) To have students aspire to positive expectations for productive citizenship;
- g) To determine the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

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Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- c) Maintain accurate recordkeeping via a Registrar of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student. (More than 20 minutes late to class will be considered an absence from that class.)
- d) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- e) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.
- f) Inform staff, students and parents regarding expectations and procedures associated with the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- g) The District will do everything within its power to support a positive academic environment that promotes and recognizes academic success.

Excused Absences/Tardiness

The reasons listed below are considered acceptable (i.e, excused) reasons for students to be tardy and/or absent from school. Please keep in mind that a note explaining each absence or incident of tardiness must be handed in within 24 hours of returning to school.

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- a) Students who are legitimately sick or incapacitated will be excused from school.
- b) Students 16 years of age or older will be excused to take a New York State Drivers Exam.
- c) Students will be excused for medical, dental, counseling, or legal appointments. A note from the parent must verify all appointments.
- d) Students will be excused for college visits. All visits must be pre-approved and verified by a note from the college admissions office.
- e) Students on in-school suspension and those on out-of-school suspension whom take advantage of a 9th period tutor(s) will receive an excused absence from school.
- f) Students who are absent from school due to impassable roads will be excused from school.
- g) Students fulfilling legitimate military obligations will be excused from school. Absences in this category must be pre-approved and verified by a note from appropriate military personnel.
- h) Students on school sponsored field trips will be excused from school.
- i) Students who attend funerals of close friends or family members will be excused for their absence. Pre-approval for absences should be obtained from the principal.
- j) Students may be given an excused absence for family emergencies. Frozen pipes, sickness of a family member and emergencies with pets or farm animals constitute examples of family emergencies.
- k) School sponsored sporting events.
- l) Religious observances.

Student Attendance Recordkeeping/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 as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

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Description of the Coding System for Absences

The current attendance system we use the following codes for absences:

- A-Absent unexcused
- C-Administrative detained
- D-Early dismissal
- E-Absent excused
- F-Field trip
- G-Guidance
- H-Home tutoring
- I-ISS (In-school suspension)
- J-OSS tutored
- L-Tardy excused
- M-Music
- N-Nurse
- O-OSS (Out-of-school suspension)
- R-Truant
- T-Tardy
- X-Exam

The following are reason codes for absences, tardiness, or early departures:

- Excused
- 00-School-sponsored event
- 01-Illness
- 02-Dentist's appointment
- 03-Doctor' s appointment
- 06-Impassable roads/weather
- 07-Family emergency
- 09-College visit
- IO-Counseling appointment
- 11-Religious observance
- 12-Legal counsel
- 14-Military obligation
- 23-Attendance in court
- 28-Orthodontist appointment
- 31-In the hospital
- 33-Attending a funeral
- 41-Road test

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

- a) For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade four (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 or absence 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 student's return from lunch.
- b) For students in grades five 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 "a" above.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from kindergarten through grade twelve arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused 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, electric power outage, 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 Educational Law Section 3202(1-a).

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

Student Attendance/Course Credit

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp 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.

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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.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

Appeal Process

Only in the event of an unforeseen circumstance may a student or parent request a review of this policy. A committee made up of the building principal and two teachers appointed by the Superintendent will have the authority to permit additional make up days if warranted.

Course Credit/Interventions: Grades 7-12

- a) Students who have more than 22 absences for a full credit course (11 for a half credit course) for any reason (excused or unexcused) may not receive credit for the affected course unless days have been made up.
- b) For a full-credit course students may not have more than five absences from a full credit or half-credit half-year course (three for half-credit courses that run the full year) during each marking period. If a student has more than five absences (three for half-credit courses) during a marking period he/she will receive an incomplete for a grade until such time he/she has made up any absences in excess of five (three for half-credit courses). For the first three marking . periods the student will have two weeks after the Attendance Officer hands paperwork to him/her to make up days and receive a grade in the class. Failure to make up the time in 10 days will result in a detention for every two days past the deadline. For the last marking period the student will have until graduation to make up days in excess of five (three for half-credit courses).
- c) The Attendance Officer will review attendance records for each student around the 15th and 30th of each month, and the Principal will inform the family when a student accumulates the following number of absences from their courses.
 - Stage 1: On or near the 5th day of absence from a full-credit course or half-credit half- year course (3rd absence from a half-credit course).
 - Stage 2: On or near the 10th day of absence from a full-credit course or half-credit half-year course (6th absence from a half-credit course).
 - Stage 3: On or near the 15th day of absence from a full-credit course or half-credit, half-year course (9th absence from a half-credit course).

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- d) On or near the student's 23rd day of absence from a full-credit course (12 absences from a half- credit course), the Superintendent will send a certified letter to the parent stating that the student may no longer take exams in this course and outlining the process for making up days.
- e) Students will have the opportunity to make up four days of absence from each class. Students will make up this time through extended school hours. All make-up days must be completed by the final exam time in either January or June and must be verified in writing using the Attendance Policy Make-up Day form. If the student loses the Make-up Day form, the student could serve a detention or begin the process again.
- f) On or near the 2th day of absence, (14th absence from a half-credit course), the Superintendent will send out a letter explaining that the student has lost credit for the course. The letter will also notify the family that they may bring the matter to the Appeal's Committee.

Course Credit Interventions: Grades K-6

Students in grades K-6 who miss more than 22 days will be referred to the retention committee. The Attendance Officer will review attendance records for each student around the 15th and 30th of each month, and the Principal will inform the family when a student accumulates the following number of absences from school.

- Stage 1: On or near the ⁱh day of absence.
- Stage 2: On or near the 12th day of absence.
- Stage 3: On or near the 23rd day of absence.

On the 23rd day of absence, the student will be referred to the retention committee or one or more of the listed intervention strategies will be implemented

Attendance Intervention Strategies: Grades K-6

After referral from the Attendance Officer, attendance data will be reviewed regularly by the principal. When students in grades K-6 are identified as having patterns of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures, the principal will do one or more of the following:

- a) Letters of notification will be sent at the appropriate intervals.
- b) Hold a formal conference with parents.
- c) Refer the student for counseling.
- d) After school detentions.
- e) Possible suspensions for repeated tardinesses.
- f) Report the child's situation to Child Protective Services and/or placement of the child on a PINS.

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Good Attendance Incentives

At the end of the year awards assembly, those individual students having perfect attendance (perfect attendance is defined as not being tardy for school or absent for more than a half a day while school is in attendance) will be awarded a certificate.

Community Involvement

Belfast Central School acknowledges that community support of our programs is critical to the success of all. A Building Level Committee, composed of administration, teachers, staff, parents, and students have attempted to make this policy concise yet comprehensive. It is our hope that the community will encourage the students to adhere to the procedures outlined in this document. Finally, copies of the policies will be placed in the Belfast Town Hall and Town Library for the community to borrow and review.

A committee of administration and teachers review and update this policy annually for students in grades K-12.

Annual Review

Attendance regulations require that the Board of Education review the attendance records each year and, if attendance significantly declines, direct the Building Level Committee to make revisions to this policy.

Belfast Central School enjoys an approximate 95% attendance rate. For the purposes of this policy, a significant decline shall be defined as attendance of 93% or less during any given school year.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206,
3210, 3211, and 3213

8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations
(NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

Adopted: 5/11/04

Revised: 8/14/07; 8/14/12; 10/14/14

Rev. 12/11/18