

## **STAPLES MOTLEY ISD #2170 POLICY #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. Parents and guardians are encouraged to keep school day absences to a minimum and prior notice of absence (with the exception of illness) is expected. An absence will be marked as unexcused if there has been no communication from the parent or guardian to excuse the absence.

##### 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 day's 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 from 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. **15-day maximum rule**

If a student is absent from a class more than fifteen (15) times per school year, it is considered to be excessive. fifteen (15), will require medical documentation or they will be recorded as unexcused.

- a. Parents will receive notification by mail or phone call with regards to attendance concerns.
- b. Unexcused absenteeism from school may result in a referral to county services.
- c. Staples-Motley School District values good attendance as part of being in "Good Standing" as a MSHSL participant. Failure to attend courses may result in a loss of eligibility as determined by the Activities director and/or Principal.

2. **Excused Absences**

- a. A parent, guardian, or other person having control of a child may apply to a school district to have the child excused from attendance for the whole or any part of the time school is in session during any school year.

Application may be made to a truant officer, a principal, or the superintendent. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the child cannot attend school is a valid excuse.

- b. 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.

[NOTE: This paragraph quotes Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22.]

c. **Legitimate Exceptions**

The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

- 1. That the child's physical or mental health is such as to prevent attendance at school or application to study for the period required, which includes:
  - a. Child illness, medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointments; including appointments conducted through telehealth;
  - b. Family emergencies;
  - c. The death or serious illness or funeral of an immediate family member;
  - d. Active duty in any military branch of the United States;
  - e. The child has a condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis; or
  - f. Other exemptions including in this attendance policy.
- 2. That the child has already completed state and district standards required for graduation from high school; or
- 3. That it is the wish of the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child, that the child attend for a period or periods not exceeding in the aggregate three hours in any week, instruction conducted by a Tribal spiritual or cultural advisor, or a school for religious instruction conducted and maintained by a church, or association of churches, or any Sunday school association incorporated under the laws of this state, or any auxiliary thereof. This instruction must be conducted and maintained in a place other than a public school building, and it must not, in whole or in part, be conducted and maintained at public expense. A child may be absent from school on days that the child attends upon instruction according to this clause.

**[NOTE: Subparagraph 3 above incorporates the 2024 amendment to Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12.]**

**[Note: In 2024, the Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12. The legitimate exceptions set forth above quote this statute. Minnesota law provides that a school board may include other exemptions in the school district's attendance policy. 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.]**

d. 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 school 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. **Unexcused Absences/Skipping**

1. Absences will be unexcused if they exceed the fifteen (15) day maximum, and/or if we have not had parent/guardian communication to excuse the absence within 2 days of the absence. Exceptions are medically verified absences, school related activities, religious observations, and 2 college visits for juniors and seniors in good standing.
2. Parents are encouraged to keep school day absences to a minimum and prior notice of absence (with the exception of illness) is expected.
3. "Skipping" of classes is an unexcused absence.
4. Students coming late to class without an excuse are considered to be tardy. After 5 unexcused tardies, the tardies become an unexcused absence. Students leaving school grounds without an out of building pass will also be deemed as skipping.

The following are examples of unacceptable reasons for absence:

- |                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Oversleeping                     | 6. Babysitting |
| 2. Missing the bus                  | 7. Shopping    |
| 3. Running errands                  | 8. Working     |
| 4. Hair/salon appointments          |                |
| 5. Lunch off campus (grades 5-11) * |                |

\*Lunch off campus is not an excused absence unless picked up by a parent or guardian or as an approved privilege for Seniors. Leaving campus for lunch will be an absence that is counted toward an unexcused absence and truancy.

**C. Excused Absences/ Make- Up Work**

1. Students whose absences are excused (this includes absences due to athletics, arts and activities) are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher. Students will have two days to complete missing work upon their return. Any work not completed within this time period shall result in “no credit” for the missed assignment. Teachers are allowed limited discretion in the application of this policy.
2. Parents requesting advance make-up work for students who are or will be absent and not returning to school for several days must allow one full school day for work to be accumulated from the teaching staff and may be picked up the following morning.

**Possible Consequences of Unexcused Absences and Skipping**

1. Students may not be allowed to make up missing work due to unexcused absences
2. Grades may be adjusted if absences are excessive (grades 9-12)
3. Students may not be allowed to participate in co-curricular activities
4. Detention may be assigned for skipped class periods
5. Referral to your respective County Truancy/Diversion programs will be initiated at 3 or 4 unexcused absences (per their guidelines)
6. A truancy referral will be made after seven (7) **unexcused absences.**

**\*\* Final determination of excused and unexcused absences are at the discretion of administration.**

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 tardy is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time a class period commences without a valid excuse.
  - b. Once a student has had five (5) total tardies in any or all classes, they will receive consequences (detention) for that and for every five tardies thereafter.

### **III. 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 accommodation should be directed to the building principal.

#### **IV. 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.

#### **V. 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 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes 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, Minnesota Statutes 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 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statutes 120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statutes 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 Minnesota Statutes 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 17 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 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.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 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 Sch. 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)