

STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND TRUANCY

A. Absences

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. Health care appointments
5. Death of a loved one
6. Visits to incarcerated parents
7. Observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
8. 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.

B. Procedure for Excused Absences

In the event of an absence, parents/guardians must call to inform the school of the reason for the student's absence. The principal may require parents/guardians to provide additional documentation in support of their notice, including but not limited to doctor's notes, court documents, obituaries, or other documents supporting the claimed reason for non-attendance.

If parents/guardians wish for their child to be absent for a reason not identified above, the parents/guardians 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 their decision. If the principal determines that good cause does not exist, the parents/guardians may request a conference with the principal to further explain the reasons for non-attendance. The principal may then reconsider their final determination.

C. Procedure for Family Vacations

If a student's family plans to take a vacation during the academic year, the student must bring a note signed by parents/guardians pertaining to the vacation. This note must be brought to the office at least one week or five school days in advance to receive a vacation request form, which must be completed and returned to the principal for consideration and disposition.

Students granted approval for vacation time are responsible for making up all missed assignments. It should be noted that absences for vacation could have a negative effect on grades and/or course credit.

D. Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above will be considered an unexcused absence.

Ten half-days of unexcused absence or its equivalent during a school year constitutes habitual truancy.

A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more than 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 is hereby designated as the District employee responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

E. Intervention Process to Address Truancy

The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing and reducing 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, they shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents/guardians, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. Notifying the parents/guardians of unexcused absences;
2. Investigating the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
3. Involving the parents/guardians in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;
4. Considering, when appropriate, modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;

5. Seeking alternative disciplinary measures, but still retaining the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline.

F. 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 parents/guardians a letter including:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parents'/guardians' responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for a meeting between the parents/guardians and the principal to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

In addition to the above, once intervention plans have been exhausted, the principal may include a statement indicating that if the truancy problem is not resolved, the school will file a petition with the court alleging that the child is in need of services pursuant to RSA 169-D:2(a).

G. Parental Notification of Truancy Policy

The Superintendent shall also ensure that this policy is included in or referenced in the student handbook and is available on the district website.

H. Truant Officer Authority

Truant officers shall have authority without a warrant to take and place in school any children violating laws relating to compulsory attendance. A truant officer or school official shall not file a petition alleging that a child is in need of services pursuant to RSA 169-D:2(a) until all steps in the school district's intervention process have been followed.

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/ Absenteeism

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