STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The M.S.D. Wabash County School Board recognizes that regular and punctual student attendance is essential to student achievement and future opportunity. Promptness and dependability are important values in our society and it is appropriate that they be stressed in school. All students are expected to attend school regularly and to be on time for classes in order to receive maximum benefit from the instructional program and to develop habits of punctuality, self-discipline, and responsibility. We do understand that there are legitimate reasons for students to miss school. It is reasonable and proper for the district to set time limits of controllable absences. In alignment with Indiana Law, the district is committed to supporting students and families through clearly defined attendance policies, effective interventions, and proactive truancy prevention strategies.

Definitions:

- Attend (IC 20-33-2-3.2): To be physically present at school or an approved off-site educational program. A child is required to attend school beginning with the school year in which the child becomes 7 years of age (IC 20-33-2-6).

- Chronically Absent (IC 20-18-2-2.4): A student who misses 10% or more of the school year for any excused or unexcused absence.

- Habitual Truant (IC 20-18-2-6.5): A student with 10 or more unexcused absences during a school year.

- Absent Student (IC 20-33-2.5): A K–12 student with 5 unexcused absences in a 10-week period.

- Excused Absence: An absence meeting district or legal criteria with appropriate documentation and notification.

- Unexcused Absence: Any absence not meeting the criteria for excused absences or lacking proper documentation and notification.

Reporting an Absence

In order to report an excused absence, a student's parent/guardian must contact the school and provide an explanation for the absence. Each school has an established procedure for reporting absences. Absences shall not be excused unless the contact is made and meets the appropriate absence category. If the parent or guardian does not call, the school will attempt to call the parent or guardian that day to document the appropriate absence type.

Categories of Absences:

A. Exempt Absences (Counted as Present)

The following absences are authorized by statute and will not be counted against the student's attendance record:

- Service as a page in the Indiana Legislature (IC 20-33-2-14)
- Serving as a poll worker on election day or helper to a political party or candidate (IC 20-33-2-15)

- Court appearances with a subpoena (IC 20-33-2-16)
- Active duty with the Indiana National Guard, the United States Armed Forces, or their reserve components (IC 20-33-2-17)
- Civil Air Patrol participation (up to 5 days) (IC 20-33-2-17.2)
- Educationally Related Non-Classroom Activity (IC 20-33-2-17.5)
    - School Field Trips
    - College visits (2 per year)
- Exhibiting at or participating in the Indiana State Fair or member of the student's household (up to 5 days and if the student is in good academic standing) (IC 20-33-2-17.7)
- Participating in a scheduled competition, exhibition, or event for educational purposes offered by the national or Indiana FFA organization or a 4-H club approved in writing by the principal (up to 6 days and if the student is in good academic standing) (IC 20-33-2-17.8)

B. Excused Absences (Counted as Absent)

Excused absences will be reported but not considered truancy when proper notification and documentation are provided. Planned absences must use the prearranged absence form and submit 2 full days before the first of such absence to enable proper authorization. They include:

- **Administrator Approved (Planned):** Absence has been prearranged and authorized by a school administrator. The decision to approve is at the discretion of the school administrator, ensuring that the absence meets the criteria set forth by school policies.

- **Family Choice (Planned):** Pre-arranged absence for vacations or family events. (Up to 5 days for Planned)

- **Family Choice (Unplanned):** Unforeseen circumstances such as unexpected emergencies, weather issues, or transportation problems. (Up to 5 days for Unplanned)

- **Funeral/Bereavement:** Death of a close family member or loved one.

- **Medical:** Doctor appointments, school nurse request, illness, injury, or treatment with appropriate documentation.
    - Subsequent medical absences beyond 10 days without a medical provider's note will require a medical provider's note stating the student was seen by a provider to be medically excused.
    - A long term provider note is necessary when a student has been injured or suffers from an illness and is anticipated to be absent for a minimum of 20 instructional days. This provides the necessary information for the school to create a plan for meeting the student's educational needs during these absences.

- **Religious:** Observance of recognized religious events, practices, or holidays.

C. Unexcused Absences

- All absences not designated as Excused shall be considered as an Unexcused absence. All Unexcused absences will count toward the 10 day limit.

Make-up Work

Students must make up all work missed due to an absence. Upon request of the student, make-up work will be offered for all student absences. The type of make-up work shall be at the discretion of the teacher and may be equivalent, but not necessarily identical, to the instruction presented in class. As a rule, the student will have the same number of days to make up the work missed as the length of the absence. In the case of a planned absence, the arrangements to determine when the work will be due should be made before the absence. Extended absences shall be handled on an individual basis.

Tardies

A student is tardy when the student is late for the beginning of the school day or late for any class during the school day. Policies to handle tardies shall be established in each school's handbook.

Truant

A student will be considered truant when the absence from school is without the knowledge and approval of a school official or parent/guardian. It is considered an unexcused absence.

For the 2025-2026 school year a student will not be suspended or expelled solely for being a habitual truant (missing 10 or more unexcused absences in a school year) or being chronically absent (missing 18 or more days during a school year).

Attendance Limits:

If a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences from school during a school year, the student and a parent/guardian will be referred to the Attendance Officer for appropriate action. Absences due to a disciplinary suspension will **not** count toward the 10 day limit.

Truancy Prevention Procedures:

The following procedures apply to students enrolled in Kindergarten through Twelfth Grades who have five (5) unexcused absences in a 10-week period:

1. The school shall upon the student's fifth unexcused absence in the 10-week period immediately provide a written notice to the parents/guardians. Such written notice shall include:

    A) the student is an absent student based upon having five unexcused absences within a 10-week period;
    B) the parent/guardian is responsible for monitoring the school attendance of the student and ensuring the student attends school;
    C) the school will be initiating truancy prevention measures in regards to the absent student;
    D) the parent/guardian is required to attend an attendance conference concerning the truancy measures the school will be implementing and such conference will be held not more than ten instructional days after the fifth unexcused absence occurred; and
    E) the superintendent or the attendance officer are required to report if the student is a habitual truant to juvenile court or the department of child services, wherein the juvenile court may determine the student is committing a delinquent act

under state law and the parent/guardian may be prosecuted for educational neglect.

2. The school shall hold an attendance conference to discuss the student's absences and establish an attendance plan. The conference will be with the following people:

   A) School Representative
   B) A teacher of the student
   C) The parent/guardian of the student
   D) Parent's Representative if parent gives 48 hours' notice of the representative's attendance and the name of the representative

3. The school shall establish an attendance plan that may include:

   A) Wraparound services to ensure school attendance for the student.
   B) A description of the behavior required and/or prohibited for the student.
   C) The effective time period for the plan, but not to exceed 45 instructional days.
   D) Disciplinary actions the school will take if the student does not comply with the plan.
   E) A referral to counseling, mentoring or other services for the student as appropriate.
   F) Whether the parent/guardian is required or expected to attend the services assigned to the student.
   G) The signature of the student and the parent/guardian agreeing to the plan.