COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

A. **Objectives** – The Somers School District believes that the maintenance of adequate student records is critical to its educational mission. Accordingly, the District adopts this policy to ensure that effective strategies are in place to maximize pupil attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities, so that the District's students have the greatest opportunity to succeed at meeting the State Learning Standards. Further, the District will strive to identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school and intervene in a manner that will encourage student attendance and discourage unexcused absences.

B. **Definition** – For the purposes of this policy, the term "absence" shall refer generically to any and all of the following circumstances:

1) a student's failure to attend any or all of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities for the full duration of said period(s) of instruction or activity;
2) a student's late arrival to one or more of his or her any of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities during the course of a school day; and/or
3) a student's departure from and failure to return to any of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities prior to the official dismissal of said period of instruction or activity.

C. Classifying Absences:[i]

1) Excused and Unexcused Absences – Student absences, late arrivals, and early departures shall be classified as either excused or unexcused.

a. Excused absences are those absences attributable to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads or weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, or such other reasons as may be approved, including, but not limited to, absences due to circumstances related to homelessness.

b. Parents are encouraged to set appointments for students outside of school hours to avoid lost instructional time. In instances where an appointment during school hours is unavoidable, parents must provide verification of the visit, including the time of the visit in order for any class absence(s) to be documented as excused.

c. For full day absences due to illness of five consecutive days or longer, or ten full school days over a two-month period, a medical note must be provided to excuse such illness. Medically excused absences of this nature will be referred to the student's school counselor to determine eligibility for homebound instruction. Medically excused absences may be subject to review by the school district physician.

d. Unexcused absences shall be absences other than those identified as excused including but not limited to family vacations.

e. Under extraordinary circumstances, the building principal shall have the discretion to designate an absence, late arrival or early departure as "excused," if the cause of the absence is not among those enumerated in part (b) of this section, upon a determination that the absence was unavoidable and/or otherwise not the fault of the student or the student's parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

2) Attendance Register Codes – Commencing in the 2003-2004 school year, a consistent series of codes as designated by District office.

D. Strategies for Improving Student Attendance and Discouraging Unexcused Absences.

1) Attendance Incentives

a. Each school will design and implement systems to acknowledge a student's efforts to maintain and improve school attendance. With the approval of the Building Administration, and in consultation with student services personnel, teachers shall utilize attendance incentives (addressing not only attendance but also tardiness and early departure as well).

2) Non-Disciplinary Intervention to Address Patterns of Unexcused Absences

a. When a student is absent, tardy, or leaves early (ATED) from class or school and the parent has not notified the school of the absence, designated staff members(s) will notify the students' parent(s) by phone or mail of the specific ATED, remind them of the attendance policy, and review ATED intervention procedures with them.

b. At the conclusion of each class (secondary level) or school day (elementary level), all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated staff member(s) responsible for attendance.

c. The nature of an ATED shall be coded on a student's record.

d. Attendance data will be analyzed periodically to identify patterns or trends in student absences which are of concern.

e. Student ATED data shall be available to and should be reviewed by the designated school personnel in an expeditious manner.

f. Where additional information is received that requires corrections to be made to a student's attendance records, such correction will be made immediately. Notice of such a change will be sent to appropriate school personnel subject to applicable confidentiality rules.

3) Disciplinary Action

a. Unexcused ATEDs will result in disciplinary action consistent with the District's Code of Conduct. Those penalties may include but not be limited to: a) detention; b) in-school suspension; c) exclusion from participation in or

attending interscholastic and extracurricular events. However, absences related to homelessness shall not result in negative consequences where the district determines that it would be in the best interests of the student in retaining the student in school.

b. In addition, designated staff member(s) will contact the student's parent(s) and the student's guidance counselor. Such staff member(s) shall remind parent(s) of the attendance policy, explain the ramifications of unexcused ATEDs, stress the importance of class attendance and discuss appropriate intervention strategies to correct the situation.

c. All ATEDs must be accounted for. It is a parental responsibility to notify the school office within 24 hours of the ATED and to provide a written explanation of the absence upon the student's return to school. If a student's parent was unaware of his/her absence, the student will be considered truant. In the case of truancy, students will not receive credit for any work missed. For homeless students, the McKinney-Vento liaison will assist the student in providing or obtaining documentation if needed.

d. Any disciplinary action imposed on students classified as eligible for special education shall comply with state and federal laws, including but not limited to requirements pertaining to CSE notification, manifestation determinations, and limitations on program removals.

4) Attendance/Grade Policy

The Board of Education recognizes the important relationship between class attendance and student performance. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused ATEDs will affect a student's class participation grade for the marking period. Consequently, for each marking period, a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation as well as student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. Students who miss class are expected to make-up work missed, regardless of the reason for the absence.

For credit-bearing courses:

a. Any student with more than 9 unexcused absences for one half-year course or 18 unexcused absences for a full-year course may be denied credit for that course. Only students with excused absences will be permitted to make-up missing work without penalty and within a reasonable time frame established by the teacher beyond the end of a learning unit. Students with unexcused absences may only complete assigned work up until the end of that learning unit, with penalty to their self-management grade.

b. To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implications of this minimum attendance requirement, the teacher or other designated staff member(s) will advise the student and contact the parent(s) by telephone or mail at appropriate intervals prior to the student reaching 9 unexcused absences for one half-year course or 18 unexcused absences.

c. Appeals of the policy and special circumstances will be reviewed by the building principal, with input from assistant principals, teachers and school counselors.

E. Policy Distribution

1) Distribution of Policy

a. Copies of the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy shall be distributed to teaching staff members as soon as is practicable following the adoption and, if applicable amendment, of the policy.

b. Copies of this policy shall be retained at each school office and the district office, and shall be available for review by members of the community at that location upon request.

2) Policy Summary – Each principal shall prepare a summary of this policy, stated in plain language, to facilitate student and parent awareness of the policy and its terms. This summary shall be distributed as follows:

a. To students at the beginning of each school year, as appropriate to the age of the students served by each school. Those students enrolling in District schools mid-year will be provided a copy of this policy at the time of registration.

b. The District will provide a copy of the attendance policy and any amendments thereto to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy upon their employment.

c. All faculty and staff will meet at the beginning of each school year to review the attendance polity to clarify individual roles in its implementation.

d. School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of this policy. The policy will be explained to students as appropriate for each age level.

e. Copies of this policy will also be made available to any community member, upon request.

F. Annual Review

The Board shall request that the superintendent annually review building-level student attendance records, and, if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall revise this comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions it deems necessary to improve student attendance.

[i] SED has determined that it is up to the individual District to determine which pupil absence, lateness or early departure is excused or not excused. The only exception is that absences for religious

observance or education during school hours are excused, as long as the parents submit a signed written request.

Cross-ref: 1741, Relations with "Home Schools"
4321, Programs for Students with Disabilities
4327, Homebound Instruction
4710, Grading Systems
5151, Homeless Children

Ref: 42 USC §11432(g)(1)(I) (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)
Education Law §§1709; 3024; 3025; 3202; 3205-3213; 3225
8 NYCRR §§ 104.1; 175.6
Social Service Law §34-a

Adoption Date: November 22; 1993
Revised: May 27, 2003
Revised: September 12, 2017
Reviewed: May 25, 2021
Revised: October 21, 2025