

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. Statement of Policy

The Board of Education (the Board), in accordance with Section 104.1 (c) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, establishes this comprehensive attendance policy. The objectives of this policy are to promote a positive school environment that encourages and supports regular attendance, maintain an adequate record verifying student attendance and develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

II. Attendance Expectations

The Board, administration, and staff of the Waterville Central School District (the District) recognizes that regular school attendance is essential for student success. A positive school culture that fosters engagement and positive relationships is key to encouraging regular student attendance. The District is committed to ensuring that students feel safe, supported, and valued in their learning environment.

A. Students are expected to attend scheduled classes. A supportive approach to attendance promotes student engagement and ensures that students:

1. Develop academic, social, and emotional skills needed for success
2. Form positive relationships with peers and adults, and
3. Establish habits of responsibility and time management.

B. Absences

Regular school attendance is vital to academic success, social development and future opportunities. The district reinforces the importance of attendance to parents/persons in parental relation, stressing that students miss out on critical learning experiences, regardless if absences are excused or unexcused.

1. Excused

Section 175.6 of the Commissioner's regulations define the following as "excused absences:" 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, military obligations, disciplinary detention of an incarcerated youth or any other reason approved by the Commissioner.

2. Unexcused

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Most absences not mentioned above are interpreted under the law as “unexcused absences” including but not limited to vacation, shopping, baby-sitting, oversleeping, needed at home, or missing the bus. Any reason not listed as excused shall be deemed unexcused unless the Building Principal determines otherwise. The two categories of unexcused absence are:

- a. **Unlawful:** An unlawful absence occurs when the student absent with the knowledge and consent of their parent/guardian for other than an excused absence.
 - b. **Truancy:** A student who is absent from school without the consent of a parent/guardian is considered to be truant.
3. All instances of absences require a signed, written excuse which can also be in the form of an email or through Parent Square from a parent or person in parental relation within one (1) week of the absence or tardiness. Daily automated communications will be pushed out to parents/guardians when their students are absent. Parents may also respond to the automated message to provide the written excuse. The excuse must identify the date and time of the absence and the reason for absence, tardiness or early departure. Students failing to present an excuse prior to an early departure or upon reporting back to school following an absence or tardiness will be subject to a warning. Subsequent offenses may result in progressive discipline.

III. Multi-Tiered System of Student Support (MTSS)

Successful implementation of this policy requires cooperation among all members of the educational community, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and all staff members. The District follows a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to address attendance concerns proactively. This framework ensures that interventions are matched to the needs of individual students and include:

- A. **Tier 1 (Universal Supports):** School-wide strategies to promote attendance, including relationship-building, positive reinforcement, and family engagement.
- B. **Tier 2 (Targeted Supports):** Tier 2 includes early interventions for students with emerging attendance concerns, such as check-ins with a mentor, parent communication, and small group interventions.
- C. **Tier 3 (Intensive Supports):** Tier 3 includes individualized interventions for students with chronic absenteeism, including personalized attendance plans, counseling, and coordination with external support services.

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IV. Responsibility for Good Attendance

A. Responsibilities of Parents/Persons in Parental Relation

1. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.
2. When a student is absent from school, parents/guardians must contact the school to report the absence and/or provide appropriate excuses when required (doctor's verification).
3. Parents/Guardians must provide a written explanation of the absence for their child upon the student's return to school.
4. Parents are required to provide their current home address, telephone number, emergency number(s), and a list of adults to contact in the event of an emergency.

B. Student Responsibilities

1. Students must attend school daily and be on time.
2. Students must attend all classes and are expected to participate fully.
3. Students are expected to make timely arrangements with their teachers to make up assignments and class work they have missed during their absence.

C. Teacher/Staff Responsibilities

1. Teachers are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance reports and for referring chronic absentees for review by the building principal or designee.
2. School office staff shall be responsible for coordinating the daily contact with parents and students to notify them of the absence and to assess a situation of absenteeism.
3. Teachers and school personnel will continually stress to students the importance of promptness and regular attendance in all of their classes. Teachers can make a difference in the attendance habits of their students. Teacher contact to parents or guardians is expected as it serves as a critical part of the District's MTSS plan.

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- D. Administrative Responsibilities
 - 1. The District shall maintain a register of attendance for each student which includes the student's name, date of birth, home address, names of parents/guardians, telephone numbers to contact parents/guardians, date of enrollment, record of student's attendance on days of instruction, the date of withdrawal or date dropped from enrollment, and a record of when school was closed due to extraordinary weather conditions or school building emergencies.
 - 2. The Principal or designee is responsible for implementing the attendance Policy.
 - 3. The Principal or designee is responsible for implementing the MTSS plan and identifying students who require alternative services and/or programs for absences or tardiness.
 - 4. The Principal or designee is responsible for making preliminary contact with students and parents or persons in parental relation to assess a situation of absenteeism and devise a plan of improvement.

- V. Activities to Support Good Attendance
 - A. The implementation of an effective and efficient student attendance system that is accurately recorded, consistently maintained and fairly administered.
 - B. The provision of prompt service to students in need of help as soon as a need is suspected.
 - C. The establishment of cooperative relationships between parents/persons in parental relation and other.
 - D. The establishment of cooperative relationships with other community agencies which serve families of students with attendance challenges.
 - E. Maintaining an effective policy in compliance with the Commissioner's regulations and rulings that encourages student attendance.

- VI. Intervention
 - A. The District will follow its Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model and work collaboratively to identify the underlying causes of absenteeism and implement individualized support plans. The objective of intervention strategies is to identify the cause(s) of absenteeism, to reduce absenteeism, and to circumvent the need for action in the courts (PINS petitions).

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- B. The Student Success Team (SST), led by the building principal, shall be responsible for implementing the District's MTSS plan. As part of the District's MTSS plan, the SST will meet regularly to review attendance data and devise a plan of improvement.
- C. The Student Success Team, shall identify intervention strategies. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Personal outreach to families
 - 2. Counseling and other support services;
 - 3. School-based mentoring and check ins;
 - 4. Detentions
 - 5. Referral to community-based agencies and services.
 - 6. Social-emotional learning programs
 - 7. Development of personalized attendance improvement plans
 - 8. Referral to the Probation Department's Initial Response Team (IRT)

VII. Incentives

The Commissioner has recommended that all Districts implement an incentive program to improve attendance. Such incentives are as follows:

- A. Attendance certificates
- B. Recognition at award reception/ceremony or on the District's website
- C. End of the year field trips
- D. Special privileges or rewards

VIII. Disciplinary Sanctions

- A. When other forms of intervention fail, nonacademic sanctions, including the loss of privileges (e.g. participation on interscholastic sports or in extracurricular activities, attendance at school sponsored events), may be imposed.
- B. Excessive or unreasonable absences and tardiness may properly be the basis for disciplinary action. The use of detentions related to unexcused absence from school is authorized.

IX. Coding System for Absences

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- A. The coding of student absences, tardiness, and early departures enables consistent documentation, facilitates analysis of attendance trends, and supports timely intervention through the District's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).
- B. The following codes are used in SchoolTool to track student attendance.
1. AE: Excused Absence (eg. illness, bereavement, religious observance, medical appointment (with note), inclement weather)
 2. AU: Unexcused Absence (eg. vacation, overslept, missed bus)
 3. TE: Excused Tardy (with valid excuse, eg. medical appointment)
 4. TU: Unexcused Tardy
 5. EE: Excused Early Dismissal
 6. UE: Unexcused Early Dismissal
 7. OSS: Out of School Suspension
 8. ISS: In School Suspension
 9. FT: Field Trip or Athletic Contest (School Sponsored)
 10. COL: College Visit (Pre-approved)
 11. TRU: Truancy
 12. HHC: Home or Hospital Instruction
 13. (DCP): Detention Center Placement
- C. Parents/guardians are encouraged to submit timely written documentation for all absences, tardies and early dismissals via ParentSquare, emails or written notes.
- D. When students are marked with codes that result in absences, interventions are based on thresholds defined in the District's MTSS framework (5-9%=At Risk, 10%+=Chronic)
- X. Notification
- Written notification of student absences, tardiness, or early departures will be sent to parents/guardians at prescribed intervals and will include available supports and resources.
- XI. Implementation and Review
- A. The Board shall annually review building level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions deemed necessary to improve student attendance.
- B. The Superintendent shall establish a means to provide a plain language summary of this Policy to parents/persons in parental relation at the beginning of each school year and include it in each school's student handbook and take other steps to promote the understanding of this Policy.

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- C. The Superintendent shall provide each teacher with a copy of this Policy after approval and amendment.
- D. Copies of this Policy shall be posted on the District's website.

Waterville Central School District

Legal Ref: 8 NYCRR §§ 104.1, 109.2, 175.6; NYS Education Law §3205

Adopted: 07/23/96

Revised: 10/28/97, 05/27/03, 08/26/25