

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 111
WATERTOWN-MAYER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION 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.

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, Minnesota Statutes section 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 the state and school district standards ordinarily required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.
- c. The district must count a student as in attendance on each day the student receives supervision, instruction, or services from school staff during scheduled school hours. Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 does not remove the school district's responsibility to continue to comply with reporting requirements in Minnesota Statutes, section 126C.05 for the purposes of funding.
- d. The principal must issue and keep a record of attendance, under rules established by the school board

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. See Policy 503A for Watertown-Mayer Attendance Procedures

1. Authority

The principal determines if an absence is excused or unexcused.

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 or the school official designated by the principal. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the child cannot attend school is a valid excuse.

[NOTE: The 2025 Minnesota legislature amended Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 as indicated above.]

- 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.
- c. The school board of the district in which the child resides may approve the application under subparagraph (a) above upon a legitimate exception being demonstrated to the satisfaction of that board.
- d. 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, or orthodontic treatment, or a 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 included 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 (3) 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.]

- (4). If pre-approved by the principal and all work made up, family vacations, college/university visits, and MSHSL-sponsored state tournaments when Watertown-Mayer student-athletes are participating.

[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.]

e. 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) The classroom teacher shall determine how many days a student has to make up assignments, but the building principal may extend the time allowed in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances. A student may receive reduced credit for all unfinished work not completed by the established due date. This may have a negative impact on academic grades.

3. Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence occurs when a student is absent from a class without parent and/or school permission, leaves a class without permission, or arrives more than ten minutes late without permission or valid excuse.

- a. The following are examples of absences that will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student that was not approved by the parent and/or the school district.
- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) If not pre approved, absences due to family vacation, college/university visits, and MSHSL-sponsored state tournaments when Watertown-Mayer student athletes are participating will be considered unexcused unless waived by the principal.
- (6) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences:

- (1) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes sections 121A.40-121A.56.
- (2) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total accumulated unexcused absences.
- (3) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota statutes.
- (4) Per Minnesota Statutes section 260A.02, school personnel will notify parent(s) or guardian(s) if a student becomes continuing truant, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:
 - a. three days if the child is in elementary school (K-5); or
 - b. three or more class periods over three or more days if the child is in middle school or high school (6-12).
- (5) Students with unexcused absences shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:

- (a) Students may receive reduced credit for work turned in late due to unexcused absences.
- (b) After the 3rd cumulated unexcused absence in a [quarter], a student's parent or guardian may be notified by certified mail that his or her child is nearing a total of 5 unexcused absences and that, after the 5th unexcused absence, the student's grade may be reduced by one increment for each unexcused absence thereafter.
- (c) After such notification, the student or his or her parent or guardian may, within a reasonable time, request a conference with school officials regarding the student's absences and the prescribed discipline. The notification will state that the school strongly urges the student's parent or guardian to request such a conference.
- (d) After the 5th cumulative unexcused absences in a [quarter] the teacher may reduce the student's letter grade by one increment for each unexcused absence thereafter (i.e. A to A-). However, prior to reducing the student's grade, an administrative conference must be held among the principal, student, and parent.
- (e) After the 7th cumulated unexcused absences in a [quarter], the administration may impose the loss of academic credit in the class or classes from which the student has been absent. However, prior to loss of credit, an administrative conference must be held among the principal, student, and parent.
- (f) If the result of a grade reduction or loss of credit has the effect of an expulsion, the school district will follow the procedures set forth in the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes sections 121A.40-121A.56.

C. 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 tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
 - b. Consequences of tardiness may include detention after 3 unexcused tardies. In addition, 3 unexcused tardies are equivalent to one (1) unexcused absence.

D. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-the-Job Training Programs

- 1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school sponsored on-the-job training programs.
- 2. School-initiated absences will be accepted and participation permitted.
- 3. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
- 4. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
- 5. If a student is absent from school due to medical reasons, he or she must

present a physician's statement or a statement from the student's parent or guardian clearing the student for participation that day. The note must be presented to the coach or advisor before the student participates in the activity or program.

III. RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCES 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 or American Indian cultural practice, observance, or ceremony. Requests for accommodations should be directed to the building principal.

IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

- A. 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.
- B. The school district will provide annual notice to parents of the school district's policy relating to a student's absence from school for a religious or cultural observance.

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, section 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. Three (3) days if the child is in elementary school (K-4); or
2. Three (3) or more class periods on three (3) days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school (5-12).

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statutes section 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, section 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.34;
4. that this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.34;
5. that alternative educational programs and services may be available in the child's enrolling or resident 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 Minnesota Statutes, Chapter. 260C;
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, section 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 (1) day.

[NOTE: When truancy services and programs under Minnesota Statutes chapter 260A are available within the school district, the following provisions should also be included in the policy.]

C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child who is at least twelve (12) years old and less than eighteen (18) years old who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven (7) school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school (5-12), or a child who is seventeen (17) years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one (1) or more class periods on seven (7) school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 8.

Pursuant to section 260C.163, subdivision 11, habitual truant also means a child under age twelve (12) who has been absent from school for seven (7) school days without lawful excuse, based on a showing by clear and convincing evidence that the child's absence is not due to the failure of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian to comply with compulsory instruction laws.

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 Minnesota Statutes chapter 260A.

Adopted/Revised/Reviewed:

Adopted: August 20, 2001
Revised: July 26, 2010
Revised: August 21, 2014
Revised: August 24, 2015
Revised: April 23, 2018
Revised: April 26, 2021
Revised: December 18, 2023
Revised: July 22, 2024
Revised: December 16, 2024
Revised: September 22, 2025
Revised: March 23, 2026

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 and Cultural Observances)
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. § 260a.05 (School Attendance Review Boards)
 Minn. Stat. § 260A.06 (Referral of Truant Students to School Attendance Review Board)
 Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is a 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(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 School District No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d 7,383 N.E.2d23 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School District R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)
Knight v. Board of Education, 38 Ill. App. 3 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References:

Independent School District #111 Policy 506 (Student Discipline)