Capital School District
Board of Education Policy

Section: Student
Title: Student Attendance Regulations
Policy #: 700-02
Date Approved: 3/20/2024
Date Revised: 3/7/2024

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to ensure regular attendance in school. This policy complies with Delaware State Law regarding student attendance and further defines types of absenteeism, guidelines, and consequences for parents and students.

At the beginning of a school year each school district or public school shall notify each student and the parent of each student of the school attendance requirements of this Code, including the procedures and penalties applicable to truancy. The school district or school may determine the form of the notification.

Delaware State Law, Title 14, Chapter 27, which pertains to Compulsory Attendance, requires regular attendance for school age children. Consistent with said policy, the Board of Education of the Capital School District requires regular and consistent attendance for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 who reside within its school boundaries. Students aged 16 to 22 who are enrolled in district schools are also required to follow these attendance policies. Delaware State Law, Title 14, Chapter 27, further states:

> "Every student who is enrolled in a public school of this State shall attend the school each day of the minimum school term and any academic improvement activities required by §153 of this same title. A student who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for more than 3 school days in a school year is considered truant. A truant and the parent of a truant are subject to the administrative procedures and court proceeding set out in subchapter II of this Chapter."

Elementary, Middle and High school teachers are responsible for maintaining high standards of attendance for their respective groups. Teachers are responsible for notifying the administration of students with whom they are having attendance difficulties.

The school administration, upon notification of unsatisfactory attendance, should investigate and take such action as they deem necessary to obtain satisfactory attendance. If action does not obtain satisfactory results, the case should be referred to the Visiting Teacher for further action. Court action may become necessary should the Visiting Teacher be unsuccessful in remedying the attendance issue with the student and their parent/guardian.

Absenteeism (Time out of School)
It is recognized that occasionally students may need to be absent during school hours. Every minute of instructional time is important. Each minute lost cannot be regained. Parents/guardians are reminded to limit absences, late arrivals and early dismissals.

1. Official instructional time for each school:
    a. All K-4 schools: 8:50 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
    b. William Henry Campus: 8:10 a.m.-2:52 p.m.
    c. Middle School of Excellence/Middle School of Innovation: 8:10 a.m.-2:52 p.m.
    d. Dover High School: 7:25 a.m.-2:20 p.m.
    e. Kent County Community School (Main Site): 8:15 a.m.-3:15 p.m.
    f. Kent County Secondary ILC: 7:40 a.m.-2:20 p.m.

2. Types of missed time addressed in this policy
    a. Absent the entire school day
        - Students are considered absent for the entire day if they do not attend school at all for the day. Students in grades 6-12 are also considered absent for the day if they are marked absent for 3 or more classes in a day.
        - Students with seven (7) or more unexcused days absent per marking period will not be allowed to attend or participate in extracurricular activities as a participant or a spectator. These activities include sporting events, musical or theatrical performances, prom, homecoming or other special events. Excessive unexcused absences may also jeopardize school choice status.

    b. Late arrival to school
        - Students are considered tardy to school or class when they report after the official start of the instructional day or the assigned class.
        - Schools are to keep a detailed record of all tardiness.
        - The process for addressing unexcused tardiness shall be worked out by each school and included in each school's student handbook. Teachers are instructed to report all cases of excessive unexcused tardiness to the principal. Excessive unexcused tardiness is defined as being late to school or class without a valid excuse for more than three (3) days during one marking period.

    c. Early dismissal from school
        - Early dismissals are when a student leaves school prior to the end of the instructional day.
        - Schools are to keep detailed record of all early dismissals.
        - The process for addressing unexcused early dismissals shall be worked out by each school and included in each school's student handbook.

3. Excused time away from school. Absences, late arrivals, and early dismissals may be excused for each of the following:
    a. Any professional appointment (ie: doctor, dentist, counselor, court), excused with a professional note submitted to the school within 3 school days of the child's return.

b. Any illness or hospitalization of a student as verified by a health professional with a professional note submitted to the school within 3 school days of the child's return.
c. Religious holidays with a written note or email from parent/guardian and sanctioned religious mission trips with a letter from the organization that is sponsoring the trip submitted to the school prior to the absence or within 3 school days of the child's return.
d. Exclusion by school nurse due to health reasons. School nurses will supply documentation to the school office and parent/guardian advising the earliest date the student may return to school. A note from a medical professional or personal note from the parent/guardian will be required within 3 school days of the student's return if the student is absent for more days than excluded by the school nurse.
e. Bereavement for a student's family member with documentation (obituary, death notice, funeral program, etc.) supplied to the school within 3 school days of the child's return.
    i. Up to five (5) days excused for the death of an immediate family member. Immediate family is defined as the student's parent, student's custodial guardian, student's sibling, or a student's grandparent, that the student lives with.
    ii. Up to two (2) days excused for the death of a near family member. Near family members are defined as the student's cousin, student's aunt, student's uncle, student's niece, or student's nephew.
f. Mental health days to support House Bill No. 3, an amendment to Chapter 27, §2702 (j), Title 14 of the Delaware Code states, "A pupil's absence from school for a mental or behavioral health reason is a necessary and excused absence."
   The Capital School Board recognizes the importance of students' mental, behavioral, and social wellbeing. Up to three (3) absences per school year will be excused with a note from the parent/guardian that states the absence is due to the student's mental health. Notes must be submitted to the school within 3 school days of the child's return to school. Students will not be penalized for an excused absence related to their mental health and students will be given the opportunity to make up any schoolwork missed during such excused absences.
    i. In accordance with the amendment to Chapter 27, §2702 (j), Title 14 of the Delaware Code, "After a student's second and subsequent excused absence for the mental or behavioral health of the student, the student must be referred to a behavioral health specialist."
g. Up to 12 personal days per school year, at parent/guardian discretion, excused with a written note or email from parent/guardian submitted to the school within 3 school days of the child's return.
h. Any student who is a volunteer firefighter of a Delaware volunteer fire department, as certified by the Delaware State Fire Prevention Commission, shall be excused from being tardy up to 12 times per year, assuming that all work for missed classes is made up, each tardy was directly associated with a fire call for the volunteer fire department in which the student is a member, the student arrives at school within 30 minutes of being excused from the scene of the fire call, and an adult member of the fire department in which the student is a member submits written documentation substantiating that the tardy was associated with a fire call.

4. Notification Methods for Excused Time Away from School

   The following methods are accepted:
    a. Parent/guardian note, including a phone number for school staff to call and confirm if there are questions/concerns.
    b. Professional note from dentist, health care provider, court, or other licensed professional service provider.

- Blanket medical notes covering an extended or undefined period of time may require additional verification.

c. Email to school's attendance clerk (listed below) from parent/guardian, including a phone number for school staff to call and confirm if there are questions/concerns.

East Dover Elementary School at eastattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Fairview Elementary School at fvattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Hartly Elementary School at hartlyattendance@capital.k12.de.us
North Dover Elementary School at northattendance@capital.k12.de.us
South Dover Elementary School at southattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Towne Point Elementary School at tpattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Booker T. Washington Elementary School at btwattendance@capital.k12.de.us
William Henry Campus at whmsattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Middle School of Innovation at msiattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Middle School of Excellence at mseattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Dover High School at dhsattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Kent County Community School (Main Site) at kccsattendance@capital.k12.de.us
Kent County Secondary ILC at kcsilcattendance@capital.k12.de.us

5. Unexcused times away from school are:

a. Conditions or situations in which a student deliberately chooses to be absent, such as leaving school during the day without permission (skipping school or cutting class).
b. Absences that are not supported by parent/guardian or other acceptable notes.

6. Absences and missed school work

Time away from school shall be excused without penalty should the reason meet the aforementioned criteria.

- A maximum of 12 (entire day) excused absences, and
- A maximum of 12 excused early dismissals, and
- A maximum of 12 excused late arrivals

per year will be granted with the support of a parent/guardian note or email.

Notes regarding absences must be turned in within three (3) school days of the student's return to school. Excuse notes explaining a late arrival must be presented at the time that the student arrives to school. Parent/guardian explanations regarding early dismissals must be noted on the student sign out log at the time of dismissal. Should a parent/guardian wish to submit a health care provider or other professional to excuse the absence, the note from the professional's office (on letterhead) must be submitted no later than the day that the student returns to school.

Students who are absent, whether excused or unexcused, will be given the opportunity to make up work or tests missed within a reasonable amount of time. A reasonable amount of time for the completion of homework is defined as two class sessions for every one session absent. A teacher will extend this time if the student is making progress towards completing assignments. The principal will have final discretion in determining the extension of extra time for students to complete assignments.

Truancy Response Guidelines

The school administration, upon notification of more than 3 unexcused absences, late arrivals, and/or early dismissals, should investigate and take such actions as they deem necessary within the confines of the law to obtain satisfactory attendance. The actions should include:

1. A referral to the school's MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) team for intervention.
2. A referral to the Visiting Teacher after seven (7) unexcused absences to assess familial needs/strengths and assist the family as needed to ensure compliance with the district's attendance policy.
3. Participating in an Attendance Review Committee Hearing with the Visiting Teacher, School Principal (or principal designee), parent/guardian, and student (as appropriate).
4. Develop a contract to delineate parent/guardian and/or student responsibilities.
5. Filing of truancy charges against parent/guardian and/or students who are 12 years of age or older.

Below are district guidelines to be used to help ensure overall continuity and consistency of services. It should be noted that these actions are in line with Delaware Law.

Unexcused Days Absent	School Response
3-5	Contact with families will be made by the teacher to discuss the unexcused absences and plan a course of remediation.
6-9	Notice of meeting requesting parent/guardian and student participate in an Attendance Review Committee Hearing with school officials and Visiting Teacher will be held. The conference will include the development of a plan to improve attendance based on concerns presented in the meeting. Students may be included in the conference, as appropriate. Students age 12 and older should conference with school officials and Visiting Teacher alone if parent/guardian does not attend the pre-scheduled conference. At the time of the conference, the student and/or parent/guardian will be asked to sign an attendance contract that states they will make every effort to improve their attendance in school.
10	A home visit will occur if there has been no successful contact made with parent/guardian via phone, text, email, Zoom, and/or attendance hearing.
15	Attendance letter sent via Certified Mail to parent/guardian by the school requesting parent/guardian participate in an Attendance Review Committee Hearing within ten (10) days if they have not done so already.
20	Following the 20th day of unexcused absence by a student, the school and Visiting Teacher may file charges in Justice of Peace Court, at the discretion of the Visiting Teacher.

The Capital School District may require any student identified as truant to participate in academic improvement activities specified for the student as district policy. Any student who refuses to comply with the district's requirement for participation in academic improvement activities may be subject to the same disciplinary actions as for other acts of absenteeism or truancy.