

STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT, AND TRUANCY PREVENTION POLICY

The Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District Board of School Trustees believes that presence in the classroom enables the student to participate in instruction, class discussions, and other related activities. As such, regular attendance and classroom participation are integral to instilling incentives for the student to excel. Students are bound by the requirements of Indiana's compulsory attendance law. Attendance shall mean to be physically present in a school or at another location where the school's educational program is being conducted during regular school hours on a day in which the educational program in which the student is enrolled is being offered (including a mandatory videoconference, phone conference, or other virtual environment during e-learning days or as part of a virtual learning program). Academic engagement is the quality of students' participation or connection with the schooling endeavor and hence with activities, values, people, goals, and places that comprise it, and encompasses the academic, behavioral, and emotional enrichment of each student.

Attendance shall be required of all Corporation students, except those exempted under other provisions of State law, during the days and hours that the school is in session. Daily attendance will be appropriately recorded, and reports will be submitted to the IDOE in accordance with IDOE guidance and formatting/submission requirements.

Content may be delivered onsite in person or off-site during instructional days in the academic school year. If the Corporation conducts more than three (3) virtual days when at least 50% of the Corporation's in-person enrolled students attend virtually or online, at least 50% of instructional time on any subsequent virtual days will consist of teacher directed synchronous instruction. Where instruction is less than 100% teacher directed synchronous instruction, the remainder of instruction will be asynchronous.

Exceptions to compulsory attendance are established in IC 20-33-2 and shall be recognized by the Corporation. For any of these exceptions a student shall be recorded as excused absent from school.

The Superintendent shall require, from the parent of each student or from an emancipated student who has been absent for any reason, a written statement of the cause for such absence. The Board reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the cause of each:

- A. prolonged absence;
- B. absence of more than three (3) days duration;
- C. repeated unexplained absence and tardiness.

At a minimum, in accordance with Indiana law, the Board considers the following as exceptions to compulsory attendance, and may not be recorded as absences or penalized by the school in any manner:

- A. Service as a page for or as an honoree of the general assembly (not recorded as absence)
- B. Serve on a precinct election board or as a helper to a political candidate or to a political party on the date of each general, city, or town, special, and primary election at which the student works
- C. Subpoena to appear in court as a witness in a judicial proceeding
- D. Ordered to active duty with the armed forces of the United States, including their reserve components, or the Indiana National Guard for not more than fifteen (15) days in a school year, if the student is not a habitual truant (although the Corporation may authorize additional excused absences in this circumstance)
- E. Participation as a member of the Indiana wing of the civil air patrol who is participating in a civil air patrol international air cadet exchange program for the length of the program or emergency service operation for not more than five (5) days in a school year
- F. Participation in an “educationally related nonclassroom activity” organized or facilitated by the school, so long as the parent of the student receives a written notification at least one day in advance that includes a description of the activity and the anticipated date and time when the activity is scheduled to occur, but only if the student is in good academic standing, as determined by the Corporation
- G. Student participates or exhibits in the Indiana State Fair for educational purposes, for not more than five (5) days in a school year, if student is in good academic standing, as determined by the school corporation
- H. If a student is in good academic standing as determined by BHMSD, up to six (6) instructional days in a school year for student participation in a scheduled competition, exhibition, or event offered by the National or Indiana FFA or a 4-H club for educational purposes as evidenced in writing by the student’s parent and as approved in writing by the student’s school principal

These absences shall be considered excused and categorized as follows:

- A. Medical – This includes:
 - a. Illness verified by a note from the parent
 - b. Illness verified by a note from a physician
 - c. Recovery from accident
 - d. Professional appointments – Parents are encouraged to schedule medical, dental, legal, and other necessary appointments other than during school hours. When appointments are necessary during the school day, the student shall report back to school immediately after the appointment with a signed statement from the doctor, dentist, lawyer, counselor, etc.
- B. Funeral/Bereavement – Death in the immediate family or of a relative

- C. Religious – Observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday, practice, or event that is significant to a student's faith
- D. Family Choice Planned – Planned absences due to maternity, military connected families' absences related to deployment and return, or other reasons pre-arranged by the student's family and approved by the Superintendent or designee
- E. Family Choice Unplanned – Unplanned absences due to maternity, military connected families' absences related to deployment and return, or other reasons that occur unexpectedly due to unforeseen family circumstances or decisions and approved by the Superintendent or designee
- F. Administrator Approved – Such other good cause as may be acceptable to the Superintendent or his or her designee or permitted by law, except family choice absences, will be categorized pursuant to D. and E. above
- G. Providing Education for Students with Long-Term Medical Conditions – 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 over the course of the school year. The school will provide instruction to students under these circumstances if the parent provides documentation from a licensed healthcare provider with prescriptive authority indicating the student will meet the 20-day criteria due to a medical condition. This long-term medical documentation provides the information necessary for a school to create a plan for meeting the student's educational needs during these absences. Further consultation with the licensed healthcare provider may be necessary to determine the student's ability to engage in educational activities and instruction during these absences. If the student has a Section 504 Plan relating to the absences or the condition causing the absences, the plan under this policy must be consistent with the 504 Plan. If the student is also an eligible student with a disability, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) case conference committee will determine services during these absences in accordance with the law.

An unexcused absence is any absence not covered under the definition of excused absence or an exception to compulsory attendance. An out-of-school suspension shall not be considered an unexcused absence.

A habitually truant student may not participate in extra-curricular or cocurricular activities, unless in accordance with an IEP, Section 504 Plan, Service Plan, or other comparable plan created to meet legal duty to a student with a disability under federal or state law.

Truancy Prevention Policy

Repeated instances of unexcused absences may result in disciplinary action up to suspension or expulsion of a student, except in the case of a virtual education program, a student will not be expelled or suspended solely because the student is chronically absent or a habitual truant.

Truancy is defined as willful refusal to attend school as required by the compulsory attendance law.

The Board shall consider each student assigned to a program of other guided learning experiences, to be in regular attendance for the program provided that they report to such staff member they are assigned for guidance at the place or in the manner in which they are conducting study, and regularly demonstrate progress toward the objectives of the course of study.

Absent student – A student is an “absent student” if the student is **enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12** and is absent five (5) days within a ten (10) week period without being excused or being absent in conformity with a note on file from the student’s doctor, therapist, or other professional requesting frequent absences be excused under the student’s IEP, Service Plan (developed under 511 IAC 7-34), Choice Scholarship Plan (developed under 511 IAC 7-49), or a plan developed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794.

Parent Notice – The Corporation will immediately provide the following written notifications to the parent of an absent student:

1. The student is an “absent student” under the definition above.
2. The parent is responsible for monitoring the absent student’s attendance and ensuring the absent student attends school in accordance with compulsory attendance laws.
3. The Corporation will be initiating truancy prevention measures regarding the absent student.
4. The parent is required to attend an attendance conference regarding such truancy prevention measures.
5. If the absent student meets the requirements of a habitual truant, the Superintendent or attendance officer of the school is required to report the student to an intake officer of the juvenile court or the department of child services in accordance with IC 20-33-2-25. The juvenile court may determine that the student is committing a delinquent act as provided under IC 31-37-2-3. And the parent of the student may be subject to prosecution under IC 35-46-1-4.

Attendance Conference –The Corporation shall hold an attendance conference to discuss the absent student’s absences and establish a plan for the student to prevent future absences. At least the following individuals must be present:

- 1) Representative of the school
- 2) Teacher of the absent student
- 3) Absent student’s parent
- 4) Representative chosen by the absent student’s parent who may provide insight into the student’s absenteeism *if* the student’s parent makes a request to the school that the representative attend and provides notice to the school regarding the identification of the representative at least forty-eight (48) hours before the attendance conference.

This attendance conference shall be held no more than ten (10) instructional days after the absent student’s fifth absence, regardless of whether the absent student’s parent or representative in (4) above is able to attend. The Corporation shall make all reasonable efforts to hold such conference on a date and time that works for the schedule of the absent student’s parent.

Absent Student Attendance Plan – Such plan may include:

- 1) wraparound services that are able to be provided to the absent student to ensure the absent student attends school;
- 2) a specific description of the behavior that is required or prohibited for the student;
- 3) any additional disciplinary action the school will take if the absent student does not comply with the plan;
- 4) if applicable, a referral to counseling, mentoring, or other services for the student;
- 5) if applicable, whether a parent is expected to attend the “additional services” described below;
- 6) to the extent possible, the signature of the parent of the absent student agreeing to comply with the plan; and
- 7) the period for which the plan is effective, not to exceed forty-five (45) instructional days after the plan was established.

Additional Services – The Corporation will offer additional counseling or services to an absent student if the school determines that the absent student's absences are related to any of the following:

- 1) the absent student's pregnancy;
- 2) that the absent student is in foster care (as defined in IC 31-9-2-46.7);
- 3) that the absent student is homeless; or
- 4) that the absent student has a severe or life threatening illness or related treatment.

The Superintendent is authorized to develop administrative guidelines for student attendance, e-learning, and truancy.

The Superintendent or an attendance officer having jurisdiction shall report a child who is habitually truant from school to the prosecuting attorney and to an intake officer of the juvenile court or the Department of Child Services.

The Superintendent shall ensure that the Board's policy on attendance and the Corporation's administrative guidelines are made available to all parents and emancipated students.

I.C. 9-24-2-1, -4

I.C. 20-33-2-3.2

I.C. 20-33-2-17.7

I.C. 20-33-2-17.8

I.C. 20-33-2-4 et seq.

I.C. 20-33-2-14 through 17.8

I.C. 20-33-2.5

511 IAC 1-3-1

511 IAC 4-1.5-9

IDOE Guidance: Updates to Indiana Attendance Guidelines (issued by Indiana Attendance Officer Catherine Danyluk, June 2025)

Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District

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