..

Sweet Home Central School District Comprehensive Student Attendance Procedures

2026-27

"Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future."

Table of Contents:

Introduction – Page 3

New York State Attendance Regulations – Page 3

Statement of Overall Objectives – Page 4

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives – Page 5

Determination of Excused/Unexcused Absences, Tardiness & Early Departures – Page 6

Student Attendance, Recordkeeping/Data Collection – Page 7

Student Attendance, Process To Address Excessive Absences – Page 8

District Wide Daily School Attendance Interventions – Page 9

Middle/High School Period to Period Interventions – Page 9

Summer School Interventions – Page 10

Notification of Students who are Absent/Tardy Without Proper Excuse – Page 10

Attendance Incentives – Page 10

Disciplinary Consequences – Page 10

Building Intervention Strategy Process – Page 11

Appeal Process – Page 11

Building Review of Attendance Records – Page 12

Annual Review by the Board of Education – Page 12

Community Awareness – Page 12

Appendix A - Amendment of the Commissioner's Regulations Section 104.1

Appendix B - Compulsory Education Laws

Appendix C – PowerSchool Reporting Codes and Sample Reports

Appendix D – Sample Absence / Excuse Parent Form

Introduction:

Regular school attendance is a critical factor in student success. Research indicates a high positive correlation between consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion. Realizing that one district may have very different needs than another district, the New York State Education Department developed new regulations on pupil attendance that allows school districts to address the needs of their school community while meeting the reporting requirements of the State Education Department.

The purpose of the legislation is to support school districts in their effort to raise student achievement to higher levels based on the New York State Standards. Districts need to close gaps in student performance based on poverty, race, location of residence and other demographic and socioeconomic factors. This can be accomplished through accurate record keeping, an analysis of attendance data, and the development and implementation of improvement strategies.

School attendance is a right and a responsibility of all students. For students to want to fulfill their responsibility, each school building must strive to provide a positive environment so students will want to attend school. This occurs in schools where there is a presence of strong adult role models who engage in respectful and nurturing interactions with students. When students experience a high level of bonding to their school, they attend school regularly. A positive school climate is a critical factor in student attendance.

New York State Attendance Regulations:

At the October, 2001 meeting, the Board of Regents amended Commissioner's Regulation 104.1 (see appendix A) concerning pupil attendance. This amendment was the product of over two years of work with various stakeholder groups throughout the state.

The revised regulation affects three general areas:

- Content and responsibility for the record of pupil attendance.
- Review of attendance data by school building administrators for the purpose of identifying pupil attendance problems and initiating appropriate action to improve pupil attendance.
- Development of a Comprehensive Attendance Policy by each school district.

The Sweet Home Comprehensive Attendance Policy was adopted by the Board of Education by June 30, 2002. The 2002-2003 school year was used to pilot the policy. Our District annually:

- Reviews the regulation and shares the regulation with school board members, building administrators and all others who have responsibility for student attendance.

- Convenes the Health and Wellness Committee, including all stakeholders,
- Examines current attendance practices.

The Sweet Home Comprehensive Attendance Policy must reflect the local values and needs of the Sweet Home community.

Nine elements must be addressed by the policy:
- Statement of local objectives
- Description of strategies to meet objectives
- A determination of which absences are and are not excused
- A description of the coding system for absences
- A description of school policy regarding attendance and course credit
- A description of incentives/sanctions
- A description of notification of "parents"
- A description of the development process for intervention strategies
- Identification of the people to review attendance records and initiate action

Statement of Overall Objectives:

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The Sweet Home Central School District is an active partner with parents and students in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. Because the school district recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation; the Sweet Home Central School District will develop, review, and, if necessary, revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

1.) To determine the district's average daily attendance for New York State Aid purposes.

2.) To verify that individual students are in compliance with compulsory education laws (see appendix B).

3.) To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons.

4.) To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement strategies.

5.) To maintain the excellent attendance patterns that currently exist.

6.) To identify and eliminate chronic absence patterns.

7.) To increase school completion for all students.

8.) To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance.

9.) To provide students with the opportunity to develop the life skills of punctuality and positive daily attendance habits to ensure their future success.

10.) To provide a wide variety of school sponsored activities so that all students will have an opportunity to bond with members of the Sweet Home community and want to attend school.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives:

The Sweet Home Central School District will:

1.) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.

2.) Develop and review the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of the Health and Wellness Committee that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community. The committee will annually present their recommendations for revisions to the Board of Education.

3.) Maintain accurate record keeping electronically to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student on a daily basis for grades PreK-8 and on a period basis for grades 6-12, including attendance for student virtual learning, if necessary.

4.) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in students' attendance problems.

5.) Utilize data analysis systems for comparison of student attendance trends and trends in student achievement.

6.) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

7.) Develop programs for adults and students that enable students to form strong bonding relationships with adults through respectful, nurturing interactions.

Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures:

Definitions:
Absent – The student is not in the school building for the entire day or does not attend the assigned class during the entire period of time allotted for that class.
Remote Absent – The student is not in the virtual school building for the entire day or does not attend the assigned virtual class during the entire period of time allotted for that class. ***If remote only learning is an option***
Tardy – A student enters the building after the designated arrival time or a student enters a class after the designated start time.
Remote Tardy – A student enters the virtual school building after the designated arrival time or a student enters a virtual class after the designated start time. ****If remote only learning is an option***
Early Departure – A student leaves the building prior to the designated dismissal time or a student leaves a class prior to the designated dismissal time.

Reporting of Attendance: Attendance codes in the student management system, PowerSchool, should reflect the categories below. Categories should be: Absent Excused, Absent Unexcused, Tardy Excused, Tardy Unexcused, ***(Remote Absent Excused , Remote Absent Unexcused, Remote Tardy Excused, Remote Tardy Unexcused)***. The District will explore the possibility of color coding attendance reporting in PowerSchool.

Based on the District's education and community needs, values and priorities, the Sweet Home Central School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

a) School Excused: Parent/guardian provides documentation that verifies the following circumstances/criteria:

1. Student illness
2. Family illness
3. Health examination/Diagnostic/Treatment Appointment
4. Death in family (family bereavement)
5. Religious observation – a day set aside for religious observance by the religious organization to which the student and/or parents/guardians participate
6. Quarantine
7. Court appearance
8. College visit
9. Road test
10. Approved cooperative work program
11. Military obligation
12. Special occasions with pre-approval at the discretion of the administration (i.e. pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling)
13. Work experience pre-approved at the discretion of the administration (early dismissal)

b) Unexcused: Parent/guardian fails to provide documentation that verifies an excused absence or when any of the following circumstances/criteria occur:

1. Truancy (willful violation by a student of compulsory attendance provisions in Article 65 of Education Law, which requires minors from age six to sixteen years of age to attend full-time school.)
2. Overslept
3. An issue concerning transportation other than that provided by the district
4. Vacation
5. Student stays home to mind house or to supervise siblings
6. Any other occurrence other than an excused absence

c) Grades 9-12 Class Excused: An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to illness, death in the family, medical appointment, health office visit, religious holiday, court appointment, counseling appointment, road test or college exploration, field trip, honor colloquia, CSE meeting, test modifications that extend time, music lesson, or any other school sponsored activity.

d) Grades 9-12 Class Unexcused: An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, oversleeping, missing the bus, class cuts, and working).

Any time a student is absent, tardy or departs early from school, the parent/guardian must submit a signed, written reason for the absence/tardiness/early dismissal, specifying the date(s) and time, to the school district. Parents are requested to e-mail or call in their child's absence. A signed written excuse is required upon return to school after an absence or tardiness or prior to an early release. To excuse an absence, notes must be received within 3 days of the absence. Notes received after this date will not be accepted unless from a medical professional. Students absent due to illness for more than two consecutive days **may be** required to provide documentation from a medical professional.

Student Attendance, Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be recorded daily electronically consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the district code for the reason.

Commencing July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

a) For students in non-departmentalized pre-kindergarten through grade eight, such student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per day (including remote option if necessary), provided that students are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period.

b) For students in grades nine through twelve, each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled

instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.

c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with standards articulated in this policy.

d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student enters and withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District/building procedures.

Student Attendance, Processes To Address Excessive Absences/Tardies

At the start of each school year, parents/guardians will be informed of the district attendance policy and the importance of regular school attendance. Students with a history of frequent absences in the previous school year will also receive a letter summarizing last year's attendance and encouraging improved attendance for the upcoming school year. In addition to the letter, those students with a history of attendance problems will meet with a building staff member to communicate the importance of good attendance as a "future ready" habit.

The following process will be followed in all buildings throughout the Sweet Home School District:

The person responsible for recording attendance records in each building will generate a report on a **monthly** basis and a building based team will meet regularly to discuss trends and strategies. Remote attendance is monitored daily, if needed. Any student who reaches 5 days of absences in the first ten weeks of school, or 8 days of absences in the first twenty weeks of school, or 12 days of absences in the first thirty weeks of school will be flagged as a possible attendance problem and the first intervention will be implemented. The second intervention will be implemented when a student reaches 8 days of absences in the first ten weeks of school, or 12 days of absences in the first

twenty weeks of school, or 15 days of absences in the first thirty weeks of school. Excessive early dismissals may be addressed as well.

For remote learners, buildings call and check when not logging on to remote classroom. First intervention would be a text to parents through Schoology, followed by a phone call home. If contact is not made with a parent, a home visit is immediately planned.

When it is determined that intervention is necessary, the following steps will be taken.

District Wide Daily School Attendance Interventions

Where appropriate, the student will be present / involved in levels of intervention. The District also reserves the right to conduct a home visit as a method of intervention at any time.

A. **Prior to the Start of School –** A letter will be sent home to all students, including those that had attendance issues the school year prior, promoting regular school attendance as well as an excuse form that parents/guardians can fill out and sign in the instance of absence and/or tardiness. This form will be also available on the District website and the District will provide ways to make the form available for translation purposes.

Commented [1]: This should be put on the website and shared with buildings; Anne has a copy of it.

B. **First Intervention** - The first intervention is a letter sent to the parent/person in parental relation requesting more information about the student absences and/or tardiness. The letter will encourage the parent/person in parental relation to promote regular school attendance, to monitor future absences, and indicate that additional interventions may occur. The school attendance policy and a copy of the student's attendance record will be included in the mailing.

C. **Second Intervention** – The second intervention is a letter sent to the parent/person in parental relation requesting that the parent/person in parental relation contact the school to set up a meeting/conference. A copy of the student's attendance record will be included with the letter. If the parent/person in parental relation does not schedule the meeting, school personnel will reach out to schedule the meeting.

D. **Third Intervention** – This is a conference between the parent/person in parental relation and school personnel. The purpose of the conference is to determine a course of action that will improve the student's attendance. A copy of the student's attendance record will be included during the meeting. In the conference, the committee will create a plan to improve attendance which includes offering the parent assistance to address any issues that may be impacting the child's ability to attend school. This may include actions such as referral to the Family Support Center, referral community support services, or a re-evaluation of appropriate school placement (if the student receives special education services). The parent will also be informed of possible building actions

should the attendance issue continue including home visits or a referral to Child Protective Services for educational neglect.

E. **Additional interventions** - If attempts to reach the parent/guardian through phone calls, letter and request for a conference have been unsuccessful, or if the student continues to be absent from school **(10 days absent in first ten weeks; 20 days absent in first twenty weeks; 30 days absent in first thirty weeks),** the district will conduct a home visit as a further attempt to reach the parent/ address the issue. When a family has received three interventions, and exceeds the total number of days allowable absences by the District plan, school officials will pursue formal sanctions such as referral to CSE for a re-evaluation of appropriate placement, or referral to Child Protective Services for educational neglect, if appropriate.

Middle/High School Period to Period Attendance Interventions

A. **First Intervention** - The first intervention may be a phone call and/or email from the student's teacher sent to the parent/person in parental relation notifying about the student absences and/or tardiness. The communication will encourage the parent/person in parental relation to promote regular school attendance and to monitor future absences.

B. **Second Intervention** - If there is no response to the communication sent to the parent and/or if the attendance patterns do not show improvement and the teacher decides that further intervention is necessary, a letter requesting a conference with the parents/persons in parental relation may be sent by school personnel. The purpose of the conference is to determine a course of action that will improve the student's attendance.
C. Third Intervention - If attempts to reach the parent/guardian through phone calls, letter and request for a conference have been unsuccessful, or if the student continues to be absent from class periods, a building level administrator will contact the home in a further attempt to reach the parent/ address the issue.

Summer School:
Sweet Home Central School District requires that all students enrolled in summer school attend classes every day the programs are offered.

Elementary Middle and High School:
Attendance issues should be discussed with the building principal.

Notice of Students Who Are Absent, Tardy, or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse

All parents/persons in parental relation should notify the school by phone when their child is absent from school. A designated staff person shall notify by telephone the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse unless a phone call is received. The staff member shall explain the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, and the District's/building level

intervention procedures. If the parent/person in parental control cannot be reached by telephone, the staff member shall provide such notification by mail. Further, the District's Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent/person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement grade appropriate/building-level strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

a) Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, field days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before vacation).
b) Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by student council, administration, PTA and other community groups to promote good attendance.
c) Students will be given the opportunity to participate in after-school activities when in attendance a minimum of 1/2 the school day, including those students in remote learning, if applicable.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, denial of participation in interscholastic athletics and/or extra-curricular activities, detention or community service.

Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings/grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

Building Intervention Strategy Process

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departure occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

a) Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures).
b) Contact the District staff most closely associated with the element. In some specific cases, where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and the parent/person in parental relation will be contacted.
c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element(s).
d) Recommend intervention to the Superintendent or his/her designee if it relates to change in district policy or procedure.

e) Implement changes, as approved by the appropriate administration.
f) Utilize appropriate District and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures.
g) Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention.
h) School may choose to send Absence / Excuse Parent Form (Appendix D) with the student to further monitor attendance.

Appeal Process

A parent/person in parental relation may request a building level review of his/her child's attendance record.

Appeals about the records should be made to the building principal.

Building Review of Attendance Records

Commencing with the 2003-2004 school year, the building principal will work in conjunction with the attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures. The review of attendance will be shared with teachers most closely associated with affected students.

Annual Review by the Board of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review the building level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Community Awareness

The Board of Education shall promote necessary community awareness of the District's Student Attendance Policy by:

a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/persons in parental relation.

b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the Policy.

c) Providing copies of the Policy to any other member of the community upon request.

d) Including an abbreviated version of the Attendance Policy on the School District Calendar.