SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE SCHOLAR ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mission Statement and Objectives:

The goal of the Enlarged City School District of Middletown is to ensure that each scholar attends school at a minimum attendance rate of **95%** in order to afford the opportunity to meet each scholar's potential.

Philosophy

Good attendance is an essential ingredient for academic success. Any absence from class is detrimental to the learning process. Classroom lessons foster and require social interaction, development of effective communication skills, critical thinking, and subject mastery.

To achieve educational goals and to maintain a true academic environment, scholars must attend their classes at least the required number of times. Scholars who fail to meet the minimum attendance and course work requirements are at serious risk for failing the course and receiving no credit.

The Board of Education, in accordance with New York State Education Law, requires that each minor from age six to the end of the school year in which the scholar turns 16 years of age shall regularly attend school full time, unless the scholar has completed a four-year high school course of study. The scholar may attend a school other than a public school or receive home instruction, provided the instruction is equivalent to that offered in the public schools.

Statement of Overall Objectives

The District is an active partner with scholars and parents/guardians in the task of ensuring that all scholars meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. The District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation, and therefore has developed, and , if necessary, will revise a Comprehensive Scholar Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

a) Implement a Comprehensive Scholar Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board, administrators, teachers, scholars, parents/guardians, and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Scholar Attendance Policy.
b) Increase daily attendance rate for all scholars;
c) Decrease chronic absenteeism rate for all scholars;
d) Increase school completion for all scholars;
e) Identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
f) Maintain accuracy for all attendance taking practices;

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g) Utilize attendance data for determining scholar whereabout during the school day;
h) Monitor scholar attendance patterns for compliance with scholar education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
i) Report consistently a daily attendance document to be analyzed and implemented for attendance improvement;
j) Maintain the District daily average attendance for state aid purposes.

Strategies to Meet Objectives

The District will:

a) 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 scholars. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of scholar bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
b) Maintain accurate daily record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each scholar.
c) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual scholar attendance and individual and group trends in scholar attendance problems.
d) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all scholars.
e) Contact parents/guardians for all scholar absences, even one-day absences. Notification is not necessary if the parent/guardian contacts the school. A reasonable attempt must be made to reach the child's parent/guardian.
f) Monitor quarterly data reports with the Comprehensive Attendance team.

Definitions

Chronic Absenteeism:

Chronic absenteeism is defined as a scholar missing at least 10% of enrolled school days in a year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism differs from truancy because it emphasizes missed instructional time rather than unexcused absences. Missed instructional time can increase a scholar's risk for disengagement, low achievement, and dropping out, among other things.

Scholars who miss at least 5% of enrolled school days in a year are at risk of becoming chronically absent. In light of this, the District will implement intervention strategies for scholars who miss 5% or more of the enrolled school days in a year.

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Absence:

An absence is defined as the failure of a scholar to be physically present in school/class or at a school approved activity.

Excused Absence:

An absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, school approved activity such as a field trip or sports event, family emergency, In School Suspension (ISS) and Out of School Suspension (OSS) required court appearances, attendance at health clinics or in school counseling session,

Unexcused Absence:

An absence, tardiness, or early departure is considered unexcused if the reasons for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories. Examples include: cutting class, family vacation, babysitting, working, obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping, missing the bus, inclement weather with passable roads.

Early Departure:

Departure from the school building more than one hour, or one class period, before the scheduled end of the school day.

Tardiness:

The failure of a scholar to be physically present in the building at the designated start of the school day, or the designated start of a class period at the middle and secondary levels.

Documentation Following an Absence:

A written excuse, signed by a parent or person in parental relation should be presented by the scholar when returning to school following each absence within five (5) days. Examples include a handwritten note or an email.

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Compulsory and Non-Compulsory Age Scholars:

All scholar attendance will be closely monitored by the building staff in accordance with the District's attendance policy and attendance protocols. Parents/guardians of scholars will be notified in writing, phone call or other notification when a scholar has been absent even for one (1) day. Consecutive absences of three (3) days or more will result in a personalized conversation with the parent/guardian and written notification from the building staff. Cumulative absences of five (5) or more days with five (5) day increments, will be the guideline for continued communication with the parent/guardian by written notification, phone call or other form of communication. The Federal guidelines for chronic absenteeism will be monitored for all scholars.

Compulsory Age: New York State Education Law Section § 3205- Title IV, Article 65, Part I regarding the attendance of minors upon full time instruction requires that in each school district of NYS, each minor from six (6) to sixteen (16) years of age shall attend upon full time instruction.

For scholars who stop attending school for twenty (20) consecutive days, while they are still of compulsory school age and a resident of the district, the scholar will have an ending exit code identified as "compulsory age scholar, stopped attending" with a subsequent code of "compulsory age student, not attending."

Non Compulsory Age: In accordance with New York State Commissioner's Regulations § 3202.1(a) provides that any pupil over the compulsory age, shall be dropped from enrollment if they have been absent twenty (20) consecutive school days and the District follows procedure as stated below.

The procedure requires the principal or Designee to schedule and notify the scholar and the parent/guardian, in writing and at the last known address, of an informal conference. At the conference, the principal or Designee shall determine the reasons for the absence and if any reasonable changes would encourage the scholar to attend. At this meeting, the scholar and parent/guardian shall be notified of the scholar's right to re-enroll at any time. If the scholar and parent/guardian do not attend the informal conference, the scholar may be dropped from enrollment and the parent/guardian must be notified in writing of the right for the scholar to re-enter at any time.

This regulation does not provide any exceptions for scholars receiving special education.

Delayed Opening/Early Dismissal:

When school has a delayed opening or early dismissal, all scholars are expected to attend school.

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Scholar Attendance Record Keeping/Data Collection

The record of each scholar's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure will be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with the Commissioner's regulations. An absence, tardiness, or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

Middletown teachers will maintain classroom attendance in the District Scholar Management System (SMS). Other building staff (attendance officers, Office Managers, nurses, scholar support staff, etc.) will maintain non-classroom attendance including tardy and early departures in the SMS.

Attendance will be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

a) For scholars in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade 5 (i.e., self- contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), the scholar's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day, provided that scholars are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period.
b) For scholars in grades 6 through 12 or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., scholars pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each scholar's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction.
c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
d) In the event that a scholar at any instructional level from grades K through 12 arrives late for, or departs early from, scheduled instruction, the tardiness or early departure will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record will 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 other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records will also indicate the date when a scholar withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a). The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure will be coded on a scholar's record in accordance with the established District or building procedures.

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Record Keeping Codes

1 - Unexcused Absence
2 - Tardy to Class Without Note
T - Tardy to Class With Note
3 - Out of School Suspension (OSS) with Hearing
4 - In School Suspension (ISS)
5 - Out of School Suspension (OSS)
6 - Early Departure
7 - Excused Absence
8 - Home Instruction
10 - Religious Observance
C - Nurse/Medical
E- 15 Minutes Late to Class
G - Guidance
HS - Health and Safety
J - Time Out
L - Library
M - Music
LE - Late to School With Note
LU - Late to School Without Note
O - Office
OR - Other Reason
P - Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy
S - Speech
V - Field Trip/Activities
VI - Vision Intervention Services
X - Testing Outside of Classroom

Attendance Requirements

The District believes that classroom attendance is related to, and affects, a scholar's performance and grasp of the subject matter. Scholars are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Scholars who miss school or class more than five percent (5%) are considered to be at risk with their academic progress. Consistent with the District philosophy, scholar attendance is essential to academic success. Unexcused school absences, tardiness, and early departures can affect a scholar's grade and/or class credit.

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Scholars will be considered in attendance if the scholar is:

a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time;or
b) Working under an approved independent study program; or
c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Parents/Guardians of scholars who are denied credit for lack of attendance will be notified in writing, by telephone and/or other communication methods. High School scholars who are denied credit due to poor attendance may go to summer school. At the secondary level, lateness or early departure in excess of fifteen minutes to any class will be deemed an absence for those appropriated minutes. Determination of excused/unexcused to be based on the conditions listed above.

Scholars who have been absent from either a class or from school must present written documentation from either the parent/guardian or a school official that provides the reason(s) for the absence. Failure to provide such documentation within 5 days of the scholar's return to class or school may be deemed by the School Principal as an unexcused absence.

Scholars who are attending school-sponsored field trips, assemblies, rotating music lessons, or who are involved in mandatory testing or counseling, will not be considered absent as part of this attendance policy since they are participating in activities that are an extension of the District's academic program. This paragraph is not intended to preclude the need for timely communication between and among the scholar and the staff members consistent with the parameters of the previous paragraph of this policy.

Scholars who are absent from class due to In School Suspension (ISS), or Out of School Suspension (OSS), will not be penalized by the attendance parameters of this policy.

Eligible scholars whose absences are due to illness or accident may be placed on home tutoring. Scholars who are on home tutoring are credited with attendance for their participation. Typically, eligibility is established in writing by a physician for scholars. Cases involving unusual or extraordinary circumstances may be referred for consideration to the building principal.

District procedures will specify how grades K-12 scholar tardiness and early departures will be calculated and factored into the District's minimum attendance standard.

At the middle school/senior high school level, any scholar with excessive absences in a course may not receive credit for the course. However, the District may not deny course credit to a scholar who has excessive absences but took all tests, completed missed class work, and secured a passing grade. Scholars with properly excused absences, tardiness, and early departures for which the scholar has performed any assigned make-up work, assignments, and/or tests will not be counted as an absence

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for the purpose of determining the scholar's eligibility for course credit.

Section 104 of the Commissioner's regulations concerning attendance applies to all scholars enrolled in scheduled instruction during the school year from July 1 - June 30, including summer school. Districts and BOCES must use the same board-approved attendance policy for summer school that is used during the regular school year. Summer school attendance requirements are based on a proportion of the regular year attendance requirements. Every public elementary, middle, and secondary school must maintain a record of each pupil's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure in a manner that complies with §104.1 of the Commissioner's regulations.

Transfer scholars and scholars re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Scholars who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity must arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the scholar's teacher. Attendance at school-sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed will be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Make-up Policy

Upon returning to school following any absence, tardiness, or early departure, it will be the responsibility of the scholar to consult with his or her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments, and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher. The teacher shall provide the scholar sufficient time in which to make up missed assignments or examinations.

Intervention Strategies

In order to ensure that parents or persons in parental relation and scholars are informed of the District's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed for insufficient attendance, the following guidelines will be used:

a) Copies of the District's scholar Attendance Policy will be provided to parents/persons in parental relation and to scholars at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District, and will be available in each building as well.
b) School Management System (SMS) attendance reports such as the Daily Attendance Summary Report and Classroom Monitor Report will be used as a basis for data collection.
c) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive scholar Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/scholar handbooks.

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d) At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone, the parent or person in parental relation of the scholar's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the scholar's attendance to his or her ability to receive course credit. If the parent or person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, a letter will be sent detailing this information. Other communications can include home visits, conferences, community organization pamphlets/support, referrals to Orange County community agencies.
e) A designated staff member will review the District's Attendance Policy with scholars who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures. Further, appropriate scholar support services within the District, as well as the possible collaboration or referral to community support services and agencies.

It is the responsibility of every District building to track attendance communications with parents/guardians in the District Student Management System (SMS).

Each building and program will establish appropriate intervention strategies in alignment with the District's Attendance Policy that will seek to improve and reinforce school and class attendance.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent or person in parental relation, a school conference will be scheduled between the parent or person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the scholar's attendance. The scholar may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the scholar.

Attendance Incentives*

In order to encourage scholar attendance, the District will develop and implement consistently aligned grade-appropriate or building level strategies and programs which may include but not be limited to:

a) Attendance Ambassadors;
b) Attendance recognition will be posted in prominent places in District buildings and included in District newsletters and, with parent or person in parental relation consent, in community publications;
c) Monthly drawings for prizes at each grade level to reward good and improved attendance;
d) Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, field days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before vacation);
e) Classroom acknowledgment and interclass competition of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards);
f) Annual poster or essay contest on importance of good attendance;
g) Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by scholar council, administration, PTA/PTO, and other community groups to promote good attendance;

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h) Extra time at the computer, PE or recess;
i) Special recognition with the principal, superintendent, board of education member or local official/celebrity.

To ensure equity, food or money can not be used as an incentive. Incentives must be positive in nature; not punitive.

*Adapted from Attendance Works a national and state initiative working to improve policy and practice around attendance.

Disciplinary Consequences

A 95% minimum attendance rate will be required. Unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures will be monitored in accordance with attendance protocols for grades K-12.

Negative consequences will not be imposed, however, where the absence, tardiness, or early departure is related to homelessness. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension or detention. Parents or 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 and grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent or person in parental relation.

Parent/Guardian Notification

Where required, written notification of potential attendance policy violation (unexcused absence) will include the number of days school has been in session and the number of absences the scholar has had to date. Additional information may include incidents of tardiness and early departure, request for a parent conference and contact person, and prior attempts to notify the parent/guardian by phone.

Development of Intervention Strategies

Each building and program will establish appropriate intervention strategies that will seek to improve and reinforce school and class attendance.

Building Review of Attendance Records

The building principal or designee will work in conjunction with the building attendance designated staff in reviewing attendance records monthly or more frequently as needed. This review

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will be conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address problems of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures.

Appeal Process

A parent or person in parental relation may request a building level review of their scholar's attendance record by subsequently submitting a written request (i.e., letter or email) to the building principal.

Annual Review by the Board

The Board will annually review the building level scholar attendance records and if those records show a decline in scholar attendance, the Board will make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve scholar attendance.

Community Awareness

The District will promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Scholar Attendance Policy by:

a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to scholars at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of this policy to scholars and their parents or persons in parental relation;
b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
c) Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211 and 3213
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

Resources https://ccf.ny.gov/every-student-present/

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