

Revised: \_\_\_\_\_

## **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 every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class. 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. Parents have five school days to verify any absence. After a period of five school days, all unverified absences will remain un-excused absences.

##### **3. Teacher's Responsibility**

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class. 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. 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, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, the students of the school district are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

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.

1. Excused Absences

- a. 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.
- b. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
  - (1) Illness.
  - (2) Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
  - (3) A death in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.

- (4) Medical, dental or orthodontic treatment, or counseling appointment.
- (5) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- (6) Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week.
- (7) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- (8) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
- (9) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.
- (10) Family emergencies and pre-arranged family vacations.
- (11) Active duty in any military branch of the United States.
- (12) College visits will be limited to one (1) during the student's senior year unless the parent will accompany the student.

c. 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) For every day of absences, student shall have two school days to make up class assignments. Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.
- (3) Students will also lose credit, in any class, if they have been absent from that class more than nine times during a trimester. Exemptions to the attendance regulations include:
  - a. School sponsored activities, e.g. field trips, team events or verification by a coach or advisor
  - b. Extended illnesses of more than five (5) days with written verification by a medical provider.
  - c. Extenuating circumstances approved by the high school administration.

2. Unexcused Absences

- a. The following are examples of absences which will not be unexcused:
- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which 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) Any unexcused tardy or misuse of corridor pass in excess of fifteen (15) minutes.
  - (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, Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56.
- (2) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated 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) Students with unexcused absences shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:
  - (a) From the first through the third cumulated unexcused absence in a trimester the student will not be allowed to make up work missed due to such absence.
  - (b) After the third cumulated unexcused absence in a trimester, a student's parent or guardian will be notified by certified mail that his or her child is

nearing a total of six unexcused absences and that, after the sixth unexcused absence, the student's grade shall 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) Student will lose credit following the sixth unexcused absence.
- (e) 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, Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56.

### III. NOTIFICATION OF EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

Following the student's tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) absence, a letter will be sent to inform parents/guardians of excessive absence.

### IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

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.

### V. REQUIRED REPORTING

#### A. Continuing Truant

Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. Three days if the child is in elementary school; or
2. Three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

#### B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minn. Stat. § 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 Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minn. Stat. § 120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minn. Stat. § 120A.34;
5. That alternative educational programs and services may be available in the 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 Minn. Stat. Ch. 260;
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 Minn. Stat. § 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 day.

C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
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 Minn. Stat. Ch. 260A.

- Legal References:**
- Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
  - Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)
  - Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)
  - Minn. Stat. § 120A.28 (School Boards and Teachers, Duties)
  - Minn. Stat. § 120A.30 (Attendance Officers)
  - Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)
  - 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. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)
  - Goss v. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565, 95 S.Ct. 729 (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 (1978)
  - Gutierrez v. School District R-1*, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)
  - Knight v. Board of Education*, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
  - Dorsey v. Bale*, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

- Cross References:** MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)