

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

### I. Philosophy

The Board of Education, in accordance with Section 104.1 (i) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, establishes this comprehensive attendance policy. The objectives of this policy are to ensure the maintenance of an adequate record verifying the attendance of all children, to establish a mechanism to examine patterns of pupil absence and to develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

### II. Policy

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

- A. To accurately track the attendance, absence, tardiness, and early departure of students to and from the schools;
- B. To ensure sufficient pupil attendance of classes so that pupils may achieve State mandated education standards;
- C. To increase school completion for all students;
- D. To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- E. To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- F. To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- G. To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance; and
- H. To determine the BOCES average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

### III. Expectations for Good Attendance

- A. Students are expected to attend scheduled classes. The insistence on good attendance serves as a clear and constant reminder of the importance of attendance in instruction, enabling the student to:
  - Learn subject matter and earn good grades
  - Develop responsible work and study habits; and
  - Prepare for post secondary pursuits.

Under New York State Education Law Section 3205, parents/guardians are responsible for the regular attendance of their children for instruction.

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B. Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives:

1. Create and maintain a positive school 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. Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
3. Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student problems.
4. Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

IV. Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Based upon BOCES education and community needs, values and priorities, the BOCES has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

A. Excused

“Excused absences/tardy” include personal illness, serious illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to weather conditions, religious observance, quarantine, court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved cooperative work programs, approved educational field trips, approved college visits, military obligations, disciplinary detention of an incarcerated youth, out-of-school suspension or any other reason approved by the Commissioner.

All instances of excused absence/tardy require a written or verbal parent/guardian excuse within three (3) school days of absence/tardiness. The excuse must identify the date/time of absence, reason for absence, tardiness or early departure and parent/guardian signature. Students failing to present an excuse prior to an early departure or upon reporting back to BOCES following an absence or tardiness will be subject to a consequence. An absence will count as unexcused if documentation is not provided. Subsequent offenses will result in progressive discipline.

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B. Unexcused

Absences not mentioned above are interpreted under the law as “unexcused absences” including but not limited to vacation, shopping, baby-sitting, haircut, obtaining a learner’s permit, driver’s road test, oversleeping, needed at home, cold weather or missing the bus. Any reason not listed as excused shall be deemed unexcused unless the building principal determines otherwise. The two categories of unexcused absence/tardy are:

1. Unlawful Detention: Unlawful detention occurs when the pupil is absent with the knowledge and consent of his/her parent/guardian for other than an excused absence.
2. Truancy: A student who is absent from school without the consent of a parent/guardian is considered to be truant.

V. Responsibility for Good Attendance

Successful implementation of this policy requires cooperation among all members of the educational community, including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators and all staff members.

A. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.
2. When a student is absent or tardy from school, parents/guardians must contact the BOCES to report the absence and/or provide appropriate excuses when required (ie. doctor’s verification).
3. Parents/guardians must provide an explanation of the absence/tardy for their child to be turned into their designated attendance officer or homeroom upon the student’s return/arrival.
4. Parents/guardians are required to provide their current home address, telephone number, emergency number(s), work number and a list of adults to contact in the event of an emergency.

B. Student Responsibilities

1. Students must attend BOCES programs daily and be on time.

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2. Students must attend all classes and participate fully.
3. Students are expected to make timely arrangements with their teachers to make up assignments and class work they have missed during their absence.

#### C. Teacher/Staff Responsibilities

1. Teachers are responsible for maintaining and reporting accurate attendance for each daily class section. This attendance record will be recorded and available at the request of the Building Administrator or designee.
2. Teachers and other appropriate staff members (e.g. the school nurse, social worker, counselor, career development specialist, and attendance officer) shall be responsible for preliminary contact with parents/guardians, students and the home school district to assess a situation of absenteeism and develop an improvement plan.
3. Teachers and BOCES personnel will continually stress to students the importance of promptness and regular attendance in all of their classes. Early intervention strategies can make a difference in the attendance habits of most students. (Communication concerning student attendance to parents or guardians is required).

#### D. Administrative Responsibilities

1. The Building Administrator or designee is responsible for implementing the attendance policy.
2. The Building Administrator or designee is responsible for identifying students who require alternative services and/or programs for absences or tardiness.
3. The Building Administrator or designee is responsible for providing written notices to parents/guardians, and the home school district regarding a pattern of absences or tardiness.

#### VI. Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, the BOCES will develop and implement appropriate divisional strategies, which may include but not limited to the following activities:

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- A. Attendance honor rolls to be posted in prominent places in BOCES buildings and included in BOCES newsletters and, with parent/person in parental relation consent, in community publications;
- B. Classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards);
- C. Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by student organizations such as student council and SkillsUSA, administration, businesses and other community groups to promote good attendance.

#### VII. Intervention

- A. The objective of intervention strategies is to identify the cause(s) of absenteeism, to reduce absenteeism and to circumvent the need for action in the courts (PINS petitions).
- B. Teachers and other appropriate staff members (e.g. the school nurse, social worker, counselor, and attendance officer) shall be responsible for preliminary contact with parents/guardians and students to assess a situation of absenteeism and devise a plan of improvement.
- C. The Building Administrator or his/her designee, based upon the referrals of teachers/social workers and the established attendance records, shall identify intervention strategies. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to:
  - communication with the parent/guardian
  - counseling and other support services
  - mentoring
  - progressive intervention action
  - related community agencies services; and
  - PINS diversion/petition

#### VIII. Disciplinary Sanctions

Unexcused absences and tardiness may properly be the basis for disciplinary action pursuant to Section 3214 of the Education Law. The use of detentions, in-school suspension and denial of participation in extracurricular activities related to unexcused absence/tardy from school is authorized by the BOCES' Code of Conduct. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated BOCES 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

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levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

#### IX. Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the BOCES reason designation. Attendance Codes will also reflect students who are not physically present in their designated classroom, but are considered not absent because of classroom activities such as internship or preapproved commitments at their home school.

Whenever used within the Comprehensive Attendance Policy, the following terms shall mean:

- A. Scheduled instruction: Every period that a pupil is scheduled to attend instructional or supervised study activities during the course of a school day during the school year.
- B. Absent: The pupil is not present for scheduled instruction.
- C. Tardy: The pupil arrives after the scheduled starting time.
- D. Early departure: The pupil leaves prior to the end of the pupil's scheduled instruction.

#### X. Student Attendance Data/Data Collection

- A. The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the BOCES reason designation. Attendance codes will also reflect students who are not physically present in their designated classroom, but are considered not absent because of classroom activities such as internships or preapproved commitments at their home school.
- B. For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade eight (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), such student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day, provided that students are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period. Where students are dismissed for lunch, their presence or absence

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shall also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the student's return from lunch.

- C. For students in grades nine through twelve or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), 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.
  - D. Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
  - E. In the event that a student at any instructional level from 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.
  - F. 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.
  - G. Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).
  - H. 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 BOCES/building procedures.
- XI. Student Attendance/Course Completion
- A. The BOCES believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

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- B. Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.
- C. Attendance will not be used as a measure of student learning, Course credit is recommended based on student performance related to learning outcomes. Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:
  - 1. Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time;
  - 2. Working pursuant to an approved independent study program;
  - 3. Receiving approved alternative instruction.  
Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school-sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction, which was missed, shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.
- D. Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

### XII. Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies

In order to ensure that parents/persons in parental relation and students are informed of the BOCES policy regarding minimum attendance and course completion and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed for the student with insufficient attendance, the following guidelines shall be followed:

- a) Copies of the BOCES's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be mailed to parents/persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the BOCES.
- b) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the BOCES's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in student handbooks.

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#### XIII. Notification

Written notification to parents/guardians and the home school district concerning students' absences, tardiness or early departures, will regularly take place in a timely fashion and will include information that resource/support personnel are available.

#### XIV. Intervention Strategy Process

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated BOCES 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 BOCES staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relation will be contacted;
- C. Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- D. Recommend intervention to Superintendent or his/her designee if it relates to change in BOCES policy or procedure;
- E. Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- F. Utilize appropriate BOCES 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.

#### XV. Appeal Process

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

#### XVI. Implementation and Review

- A. The District Superintendent or designee shall review building level pupil attendance records and make recommendations to the Board for any revisions deemed necessary to improve pupil attendance.

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- B. The District Superintendent or designee shall provide a plain language summary included in the Code of Conduct of this policy to parents/persons in parental relation at the beginning of each school year and take other steps to promote the understanding of such policy.
- C. The District Superintendent or designee shall provide each teacher with a copy of this policy which will be included in the Code of Conduct after approval/amendment and provide new teachers with a copy upon employment.
- D. Copies of this policy shall be made available upon request to any member of the community.

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Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego Board of Cooperative Educational Services

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