

Policy 5001

Compulsory Attendance and Excessive Absenteeism

Required Attendance

Every person residing in the school district who has legal or actual charge or control of any child who is of mandatory attendance age shall cause that child to attend a public or private school regularly unless the child has graduated from high school or has been allowed to dis-enroll pursuant to this policy.

For purposes of the 2020-2021 school year only, “attendance” shall also include online instruction consistent with the expectations of the school district’s COVID-19 reopening plan. The school district plans to operate a hybrid system, where parents of students may request for the student to attend classes remotely, or the student may be placed into a remote learning setting by the student’s education team.

To “attend” virtually, students will be given a schedule from the administration with the classes the student must complete and the start and ending times of those classes. Generally, these will be consistent with the starting and ending times of the in-person class. Students must be logged into the online interface for the class no later than the scheduled start time and must remain logged in through the completion of the scheduled ending time for the class. Classes with less or no formal instruction will be monitored, and attendance taken, as established by the administration consistent with the expectations of the class.

Missing some or all of the assigned class period by failing to be logged into the interface for the class will result in the student being counted as absent if the student would otherwise be counted as absent under this policy

Mandatory Attendance Age

All children who are or will turn six years old before January 1 of the current school year are of mandatory attendance age. Children who have not turned eighteen years of age are of mandatory attendance age.

Exceptions

This policy does not apply when temporary illness or severe weather conditions make attendance impossible or impracticable.

A child who will not reach age 7 before January 1 of the current school year may be excused from mandatory attendance if the child’s parent or guardian completes an affidavit affirming that alternative educational arrangements have been made for the child. A copy of the required affidavit is attached to this policy.

Discontinuing Enrollment – 5 Year Old Students

The person seeking to discontinue the enrollment of a student who will not reach six years of age prior to January 1 of the current school year shall submit a signed, written request to the superintendent using the form which is attached to this policy. The school district may request written verification or documentation that the person signing the form has legal or actual charge or control of the student. The school district shall discontinue the enrollment of any student who satisfies these requirements. Any student whose enrollment is discontinued under this subsection shall not be eligible to re-enroll in this school district until the beginning of the following school year unless otherwise required by law.

Discontinuing Enrollment – 16 and 17 Year Old Students

Only children who are at least 16 years of age may be dis-enrolled from the district. The person seeking to discontinue the child’s enrollment shall submit a signed, written request and submit it to the superintendent using

the form attached to this policy. The district will follow the procedures outlined on the attached form in considering requests to dis-enroll.

Only children dis-enrolling to attend a non-accredited school may be exempt from this policy. The person with legal or actual charge or control of the child must provide the superintendent with a copy of the signed request submitted to the State Department of Education for attending non-accredited schools. The superintendent may confirm the validity of the submission with the State Department of Education.

Attendance Officer

Each building principal is designated as an attendance officer for the district. Each building principal, at his or her discretion, may delegate these responsibilities to any other qualified individual. The attendance officer is responsible for enforcing the provisions of state law relating to compulsory attendance. This responsibility includes but is not limited to filing a report with the county attorney of the county in which a student resides.

Expectations for Regular Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class, every day. Anticipated absences should be confirmed by the student's parents or guardians at least two days prior to the student's absence. Unanticipated absences must be confirmed by the student's parent or guardian by 9 am the day of the absence. A member of the district staff will contact the parent via telephone for every absence if the parent has not contacted the school in advance or contacted the school by 9:00 a.m. Current phone numbers must be on record with the school.

Students must not be absent from any course more than seven days in any given quarter in order to earn academic credit for that course for that quarter. Students who lose credit in any given course due to absences may appeal that loss of credit to his/her building principal.

The following absences will be considered excused if they are confirmed by communication to the school from the student's parent/guardian.

1. Physical or mental illness of the student (a physician's verification is required after four (3) consecutive days of absence for illness)
2. Severe weather
3. Medical appointments for the student
4. Death or serious illness of the student's family member
5. Attending a funeral, wedding or graduation
6. Appearance at court or for other legal matters
7. Observance of religious holidays of the student's own faith
8. College planning visits
9. Personal or family vacations in which student accompanies parents/legal guardians
10. Student has been suspended or expelled from school by the school district
11. Absences required by law enforcement, child protective services or a court of competent jurisdiction, confirmed in writing to the school district
12. Other absences which have received prior approval from the building principal
13. Technological failure for students attending virtually during any portion of the 20-21 school year, so long as the student or student's parent calls the school secretary to report the technology issue prior to the conclusion of the scheduled class time

Excessive Absenteeism

When a student receives 5 absences or the hourly equivalent in any semester, the Attendance Officer will submit a letter of concern to the parents and subsequent letters will be sent after 10, 15 & 20 absences. When the number of absences reaches 10, the Attendance Officer may schedule an Attendance Barriers meeting with the family and will include the Truancy representative and will follow the procedure for addressing barriers to the student's attendance. The school district officials participating in the Attendance Barriers meeting may remove the parents' and student's ability to attend virtually if, in their opinion, the virtual attendance is a barrier to the student's attendance.

When a student has excessive absences, any of the following procedures may be implemented:

1. A meeting or meetings between the attendance officer, the student's parent/guardian and the student (if necessary) to solve the excessive absenteeism problem. If the parent/guardian refuses to participate in such meeting, the attendance officer shall place documentation of such refusal in the child's attendance records and the county attorney may be notified.
2. Educational counseling to explore curriculum changes, such as but not limited to, enrolling the child in an alternative educational program to solve the excessive absenteeism problem.
3. Educational evaluation to assist in determining the specific condition(s) contributing to the excessive absenteeism problem, supplemented by specific efforts by the school to help remedy any condition diagnosed.
4. Investigation of the problem by the attendance officer to identify conditions contributing to the excessive absenteeism problem. If services for the student and student's family are determined to be needed, the investigator shall meet with the parent/guardian and child to discuss any referral to appropriate agencies to remedy the conditions.
5. Refer student and parents/guardians to the Seward County Truancy Prevention Program.

Reporting Excessive Absenteeism to the County Attorney

When a student is absent more than twenty days per year or the hourly equivalent and any portion of the absences is unexcused, the Attendance Officer may file a report with the county attorney of the county in which the student resides. For example, if the student accumulates 20 days of excused absences due to documented illness and is tardy one time, the Attendance Officer may file a report with the appropriate county attorney.

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