

Student Attendance Policy

I. Introduction

The White Plains Board of Education recognizes that regular school attendance is a major component of students' academic success. Through implementation of this policy, the Board of Education expects to encourage full attendance by all students, and to reduce the level of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures. In order to accomplish these objectives, it is recognized that:

- ◆ Regular school attendance is essential to a successful teaching and learning environment. Students' academic achievement and performance in school is directly related to their full participation in the educational process.
- ◆ Parents, school staff, and the students themselves (especially at the secondary level), all have a responsibility to contribute to a pattern of regular attendance.
 - Parents must ensure that their child(ren) arrive at school each day on time, remain in school for the full day and attend school consistently throughout the year.
 - School staff must effectively communicate with parents and students regarding attendance patterns, especially when those patterns relate to ongoing absences, tardiness or early departures.
 - Students, especially those attending secondary schools, must ensure that they attend school every day (except for a legal absence), arrive on time, attend each of their classes on time, and not leave the school building and/or grounds without permission.
- ◆ Unexcused absences from school will result in disciplinary consequences that are intended to increase the likelihood of attendance and serve as a deterrent to future absenteeism, tardiness or early departure from school.

II. Definition of Terms

Excused absences, also known as legal absences, are defined as absences, tardiness and early departures from school or specific class(es) due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, emergency medical or dental appointments, impassable roads or weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, school-sponsored activities (including field trips, interscholastic athletics, musical and other competitions), approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, or such other reasons as may be approved by the district.

Unexcused absences, also known as illegal absences, are all absences, tardiness and early departures from school or specific class(es), other than those listed above as excused (or legal).

III. General Procedures/Data Collection

Since there must be accountability for all student absences, the following procedures must be followed:

- ◆ Parents must notify the appropriate school office by telephone on the morning of the student's absence. If no such call is received for students in grades K-8 who are determined absent from school, the parents will be contacted.
- ◆ Parents must provide written documentation immediately upon the student's return to school. The documentation must be signed by the parent and provide the reason for the absence.
- ◆ Student attendance will be taken each day at the elementary level and during each class period at the secondary level.
- ◆ Student attendance information shall be compiled daily and provided to the designated staff member(s) responsible for attendance.
- ◆ The nature of all absences, tardiness or early departures shall be coded on a student's record.
- ◆ When additional information is received that requires corrections to be made to a student's attendance records, such correction will be made in a timely fashion. Notice of such a change will be sent to the appropriate school personnel subject to applicable confidentiality rules.
- ◆ Continuous monitoring will be conducted to identify students who are absent, tardy, or leave school or class early.
- ◆ Student attendance data shall be available and reviewed by the designated school personnel in an expeditious manner, as well as periodically analyzed to identify patterns or trends.

IV. Attendance Incentives

The district will design and implement systems to encourage and maintain regular attendance. Examples include:

- ◆ Communicating to all parents and students the importance of good and timely attendance.
- ◆ Acknowledging students who demonstrate excellent attendance.
- ◆ Scheduling special events, whenever possible, on Mondays and Fridays or other school days where the potential for absenteeism may be high.
- ◆ Recognizing students who demonstrate progress in reducing their absenteeism or tardiness.

V. Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness or early departure will result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's Code of Conduct. Such disciplinary consequences could include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Verbal/written notifications of attendance problems to parents and students.
- ◆ Parent/student conferences with building and/or central office administrators related to attendance problems.
- ◆ In-school or after-school detention.
- ◆ Denial of privileges to participate in extracurricular activities including sports, clubs, rehearsals, performances, etc.
- ◆ Denial of participation in summer school programs.

It is understood that all discipline related to attendance problems will be “progressive” - that is, disciplinary action will move from less severe penalties to more severe penalties as patterns of behavior warrant.

In serious situations where patterns of poor attendance are not effectively addressed, the district may seek to have the student adjudicated by Family Court as a person in need of supervision (PINS) and/or file educational neglect charges with Child Protective Services (CPS) as warranted against the parents.

VI. Attendance and Grading

Each marking period, a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures will affect a student's class participation grade for the marking period and could result in the student's failure and/or retention in his or her current grade level.

At the high school level, students are expected to attend each of their assigned classes for at least 90% of the course. Furthermore, high school students may be denied credit for courses when they exceed, in total, the following numbers of (A) unexcused absences and/or (B) excused absences for which make-up assignments were not submitted in a timely manner:

- 7 absences in a ½ credit course
- 14 absences in a one credit course
- 21 absences in a one credit lab course

Each situation will be evaluated by the House Administrator in consultation with the subject area teacher. To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implications of this attendance requirement, the teacher or other designated staff member(s) will advise the student and contact the parent by telephone and/or mail at appropriate intervals prior to the student reaching 7, 14 or 21 absences as applicable.

Further absences could disqualify high school students from attending summer school.

The decision to deny course credit to a student will be made by the House Administrator. If dissatisfied, the student and/or parent may appeal the House Administrator's decision to the High School Principal within five school days after the date of the decision. Any student and/or parent who wishes to obtain review of the High School Principal's decision must do so by filing an appeal in writing to the Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services within five school days after the date of the decision.

All students with an excused absence are expected, upon their return, to consult with their teachers regarding missed work. Any student who is absent, tardy or leaves early from school or a class due to illness or any other excused reason will be afforded the opportunity to make up a test or other missed work. Make-up assignments must be completed by a date specified by the student's teacher for the class in question.

VII. Dissemination and Notice

To be successful in implementing this policy, it is critically important that all members of the school community are aware of its purpose and procedures, as well as the consequences for non-compliance. To ensure that students, parents, teachers and administrators are notified of and understand this policy, the following procedures shall be implemented.

- ◆ A summary of the attendance policy will be included in all student handbooks and in the district calendar.
- ◆ The attendance policy will be reviewed with staff and students at the start of each school year.
- ◆ Parents will receive a plain language summary of this policy by mail at the start of each school year.
- ◆ When a student is repeatedly absent, tardy, or leaves early from class or school without an excuse, designated staff member(s) will notify the student's parent(s) by phone and mail of the specific problem, and remind them of the attendance policy and procedures.
- ◆ School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of this policy.
- ◆ The district will provide a copy of the attendance policy to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy as part of their orientation process.
- ◆ Copies of this policy will also be made available to any community member, upon request.

VIII. Annual Review

- ◆ A districtwide committee will review this policy and accompanying attendance procedures on a yearly basis and may propose revisions.
- ◆ The Board of Education shall annually review the building-level student attendance records and make revisions, as needed, to this policy if such records show a decline in attendance.

Board approved June 24, 2002