

White Plains City School District

Regular School Attendance

- *Essential to a successful learning experience* ▪
- *Major component of a student's academic success* ▪

It's a fact. Students with good attendance – including students who arrive at school on time and who stay through the closing bell – benefit from participation in the lessons, the continuity of classroom instruction, and the valuable class interactions that take place in school every day. That is why school districts all over the country have strict attendance policies to encourage regular, on time attendance at school. We are no different. In June 2002, the White Plains Board of Education adopted a comprehensive **Student Attendance Policy** that describes its expectations for school staff, for students – and for their parents.

While regular attendance is a major component leading to students' academic success, it is understood that sometimes students need to be absent from school. Some of the important reasons for a student's absence, tardiness, or early departure from school are personal illness, family death or illness, religious observance, school-sponsored activity (e.g., field trip or interscholastic sport), college visit, or an emergency medical/dental appointment. These reasons are **excused or legal**. Most other absences fall into the **unexcused or illegal** category. Coming late to school or classes, leaving school early to bypass dismissal bus congestion, or skipping a class or two for a regular or non-emergency doctor/dentist visit are inappropriate practices and result in loss of valuable classroom time.

Responsibilities. Each member of the White Plains school community has specific responsibilities related to the district's **Student Attendance Policy** as follows:

Parents

- Parents must make sure that their child attends school every day.
- Parents must call their child's school in the morning if their child will be absent that day.
- Parents must write a note stating the reason for their child's absence. It must be signed and sent into school when their child returns.
- Parents of high school-age students must have written permission from the high school prior to their child being absent for a college visit so that the absence can be considered "legal."

School Staff

- School attendance must be taken daily in all our schools.
- Elementary and middle school staff must contact a parent once a student is determined to be absent.
- School staff is expected to give a student with an excused or legal absence the opportunity to make up a test or other missed work.
- School staff must communicate with parents in a timely manner when a student's attendance pattern is of concern.
- Administrators must review the Board policy with staff and students every year to make sure that everyone is clear about its essential components.

Students

- Students, particularly those attending our secondary schools, must make sure that they attend school every day and that they do not leave school without permission.
- Secondary school students must not cut classes.
- Students must hand in a note, properly signed by their parent, upon their return to school.
- Students with an excused or legal absence are expected to find out if there are any assignments that they need to complete and to finish them by the date specified by the teacher.

Consequences. Students who demonstrate good attendance or who show progress in reducing their absenteeism will be acknowledged in a positive way by school staff. In addition, the Board of Education's policy outlines a progressive series of consequences for students with excessive absences, tardiness, or early departures. They include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Parent/student notification of the specifics of the attendance problem and a possible conference with the parent, student, and school representative.
- ◆ Student in-school or after-school detentions.
- ◆ Denial of student privileges to participate in extracurricular activities.
- ◆ Of course, the most important consequence of poor attendance at the secondary level is loss of credit for a particular course(s) and/or retention.

High school students may be denied course credit and/or determined ineligible for summer school when they exceed a specified number of unexcused absences and/or excused absences for which make-up assignments were not submitted on time. That a parent/student may take advantage if course credit is denied of a very specific, time-driven appeals process. Complete details can be found in Section VI of the **Student Attendance Policy**.

The school is obliged to advise students and contact parents by telephone and/or mail at appropriate intervals prior to students reaching the total number of absences that put them in jeopardy, so that students may change their attendance patterns.

- ◆ As a last resort, in serious situations where poor attendance has not improved satisfactorily, the school may have to go to Family Court or call Child Protective Services.



Note: This document is meant only as a brief summary of the most significant elements of the **Student Attendance Policy**, which is available in its entirety in school offices, at Education House, at the Family Information Center, and on the district's website.



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