

MONONA GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Rule 431

STUDENT ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

A. School Attendance Officer

The building principal or his/her designee shall serve as the school attendance officer for each school in the district. The school attendance officer shall deal with all matters relating to school attendance and truancy.

B. Student Absences and Excuses

The responsibility for regular school attendance rests upon the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).

1. Absences Authorized Solely by Parent/Guardian – A student is excused from school attendance if his/her parent/guardian submits a written excuse to the school prior to the student's absence from school. A student may be excused under this provision for not more than 10 days in the school year.
2. School-Approved Absences – The school attendance officer or designee is empowered to approve a legal excuse for any student for the following reasons:
 - a. The student is not in proper physical or mental condition to attend school or an educational program. The district may request the parent/guardian to obtain a written statement from a physician, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist or psychologist or Christian Science practitioner living and residing in this state who is listed in the Christian Science Journal as proof of the physical or mental condition of the student. Such excuse shall be made in writing and shall state the period of time for which it is valid, not to exceed 30 school days.
 - b. An emergency in the family or other crisis which requires the absence of the student because of family responsibilities.
 - c. A death in the immediate family or a funeral for a relative or close friend.
 - d. A religious holiday.
 - e. A quarantine imposed by a public health officer.
 - f. A suspension from school.
 - g. Attendance at special events of educational value as approved by the school attendance officer or designee.
 - h. Approved school activities during class time.
 - i. Special circumstances that show good cause which is approved by the school attendance officer or designee.

- j. Family trips that can be taken only during the normal school term. The intent of this statement is to provide an opportunity for students to accompany their parent(s)/guardian(s) on a trip that cannot be scheduled when school is not in session. A student may be excused for not more than 10 days. A parent/guardian shall be required to notify the school attendance officer or designee prior to leaving on the trip of the pending absence for the purpose of reviewing the student's attendance record and overall performance record and to receive assignments, etc. Student trips without parent/guardian accompaniment are not excused absences unless approved through point (i) above.

When a student is absent, his/her parent/guardian shall contact the school by 9:30 a.m. on the day of the student's absence. Failure to contact the school may result in a telephone call to the parent's/guardian's home or workplace during school hours.

In the case of anticipated absences, the parent/guardian is required to provide a written explanation of the absence at least three days prior to the absence.

3. Unexcused Absences – Students who are absent from school with or without the consent of their parent/guardian, but whose absence does not fall under point #1 or #2 above shall be considered unexcused.

C. Tardiness

A pattern of tardiness on the part of any student shall be brought to the attention of the student's parent/guardian. If it appears that the student is negligent, appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken.

D. Attendance Records

Attendance records shall be maintained for all students enrolled in the district. Procedures related to the maintenance and retention of attendance records shall be established.

E. Make Up of Assignments and Examinations

All students with absences shall be given the opportunity to make up work and examinations missed, in accordance with the guidelines below.

Excused Absences

1. A student who is excused from school attendance solely by his/her parent/guardian must make up work missed during the absence. A student who was absent from school for reasons that are determined to be excused by the school attendance officer or designee shall be given the opportunity to make up work missed when he/she returns to school.

2. It is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher(s) to make arrangements for making up work missed during an absence from school. The respective teacher shall identify make-up work. If any question arises as to the appropriateness and/or feasibility of making up a particular assignment, the teacher shall discuss the situation with the school attendance officer or designee as to the extent to which make-up work and/or substitute assignments are possible.
3. Examinations missed during an excused absence shall be permitted to be taken at a time mutually agreed upon by the student and the teachers but within the number of days absent plus one day.

Unexcused Absences

All students with unexcused absences shall be given the opportunity to make up work and examinations missed in accordance with the following guidelines.

1. A student with an unexcused absence may be permitted to make up assignments missed. Credit may be given for the completion of make-up work. The extent to which credit is given shall be determined on an individual basis. Credit for make-up work can only be given after the student has satisfied the consequences imposed for unexcused absences. The school attendance officer or designee and respective teachers are to use professional discretion as to make-up work assigned and the degree of credit and/or the grades given.
2. Students with unexcused absences shall be permitted to make up major examinations (unit, quarter, semester or grading period) missed. Examination make-up date(s) shall be determined by the administrator or teacher. Students with an unexcused absence on the day of an examination shall make up the exam on the day of return.

Credit in a course or subject shall not be denied solely because of a student's unexcused absence or suspension from school.

F. Responsibilities for Attendance

1. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
 - a. When a student is absent, his/her parent/guardian shall contact the school as specified in section B above. Failure to contact the school may result in a telephone call to the parent's/guardian's home or workplace during school hours.
 - b. The parent/guardian is required to provide a written explanation of an absence as specified in section B above.

2. Student Responsibilities

- a. Students are required to attend all of their scheduled classes and study halls, unless they have obtained parent/guardian permission and a pass approved by the school attendance officer or designee.
- b. A student who has been absent, or is anticipating being absent, shall be expected to provide a written explanation of the absence signed by his/her parent/guardian.
- c. Students must always check in at the school building office when they leave and check in at the office when they return to school during the day. except for high school students participating in a work study program or program or curriculum modification away from school, students attending another public school on a part-time basis under the open enrollment law or students who are approved for open campus.

3. Teacher Responsibilities

- a. Teachers are required to emphasize the importance and necessity of good attendance. Classroom procedures and grading requirements shall be developed that reflect the importance of daily assignments, classroom discussions and participation and examinations in grading students.
- b. Teachers are required by law to take daily attendance (period by period) in their classes, maintain a record of absences, and submit attendance reports to the attendance officer in an accurate and timely manner.

4. Principal Responsibilities

- a. Building principals need to emphasize that grading systems throughout the school district reflect the importance of daily, assignments and classroom discussion in evaluating students.
- b. Building principals shall maintain office records for all excused and unexcused absences that occur in their school building.

5. School District Responsibilities

- a. The district has a responsibility to stress, on a routine basis, the importance of regular school attendance to students, parents/guardians, employers and the community.
- b. The district shall promote activities within the school that enhance attendance. This shall be done by:
 - (1) Annual distribution of these guidelines and procedures to students and parents/guardians.

- (2) Recognizing students for good attendance.
 - (3) Reviewing the truancy plan procedures during faculty in-service and student assemblies or homerooms at the beginning of the year.
- c. The district shall promote activities that increase community awareness of school attendance issues and regulations. This shall be done through:
 - (1) Disseminating pertinent information through school newsletters, at parent-teacher organization meetings, at back-to-school nights and through the local newspaper printing of the school calendar in August.
 - (2) Having school personnel available to speak at local service club programs and other public platforms.
 - (3) Encouraging employers to establish work schedules that are compatible with state law and promote regular school attendance.
- d. The district shall promote home-school cooperation in the implementation of the district's attendance policy, guidelines and procedures. This shall be done by providing information relative to the district's attendance policy, guidelines and procedures, along with the rationale, to parents/guardians and students each year.

G. Responses to Absences

1. Excessive Absences – Any pattern of excessive absence (whether excused, unexcused, or a combination) inhibits the learning process. Such a pattern is often an indication of a developing truancy problem. The district needs to address patterns of absences and attitudes devaluing school attendance as soon as possible in a child's academic career. Despite the inherent difficulty of when a parent/guardian of an elementary or middle school student repeatedly excuses his/her child from school for non-legitimate reasons, the reality is that intervention is more successful when undertaken for a younger child.

Each school shall review and, if necessary, formally respond when a student has four absences of any kind in a semester. In situations where parent/guardian notice and/or specific action is not otherwise required by state law or these guidelines or procedures, the following action shall be taken:

- a. The school attendance officer or designee shall be notified upon the fourth absence in a semester.
- b. The school attendance officer or designee shall contact the parent/guardian and discuss the reasons for the absences, unless there is a known acceptable explanation for the absences. For elementary students, this contact should be made by the student's teacher.
- c. If problems are suspected, conduct a staffing of the student to discuss and document any social, health, learning or emotional problems contributing

to the pattern of absence. Develop a plan to address whatever problems are identified, which may include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Methods of verification of “excused absence.”
- (2) Disciplinary action or outside agency referral.
- (3) Change in academic program.
- (4) Counseling to aid parent(s)/guardian(s) to gain child’s compliance with acceptable attendance standards.
- (5) Possible referral for at-risk programming or individualized education program (IEP) team evaluation.

In situations where parent/guardian notice and/or specific action is not otherwise required by state law or these guidelines or procedures, parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified in writing when the student has accumulated five absences per semester, unless the student is under a physician’s, dentist’s, chiropractor’s, optometrist’s or psychologist’s care or the care of a Christian Science practitioner living and residing in this state who is listed in the Christian Science Journal as proof of the physical or mental condition of the student and a written statement from the physician or practitioner is on file.

The student shall be removed from special monitoring when he/she has two consecutive grading periods without four or more absences.

2. Truancies – Truancy is defined as an absence from school for part or all of one or more school days during which the school attendance officer, principal or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent/guardian of the absent student and also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the intent of the state’s compulsory school attendance law.

Except as provided in point #5 below, the parent/guardian of truant student shall be contacted personally within 24 hours. Failure to make direct contact may result in confusion and miscommunication between the school and parent(s)/guardian(s). If telephone contact is not made, a letter shall be sent to the parent/guardian before the end of the second day after receiving the report of the truancy. The telephone call/letter shall:

- a. Direct the parent/guardian to return the child to school no later than the next day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse.
- b. Encourage the parent/guardian to seek assistance from the school in dealing with his/her child’s truancy;
- c. Provide the parent/guardian with the name and telephone number of school staff available to help with problems contributing to the child’s truancy; and
- d. Indicate the consequences that may result from the truancy. Consequences for truancy shall be determined by the building principal.

3. Response to Third Unexcused Absence – The school shall send a letter to the parent/guardian on or before the third unexcused absence. This letter shall include:
 - a. A request to meet with the parent/guardian to discuss the factors contributing to the child’s unexcused absences;
 - b. A clear statement of school policy on unexcused absences, including disciplinary procedures; and
 - c. A summary of the state statutes defining and describing penalties for habitual truancy.

4. Response to Fourth Unexcused Absence – When a student has four unexcused absences in a school year, the school shall arrange a meeting that includes appropriate school staff, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student. At this meeting, participants shall determine the factors contributing to the unexcused absences. Educational options and support services, such as curriculum modifications, alternative school programs, special education referral and special counseling shall be explored. The parent(s)/guardian(s) and student shall receive information describing the various educational options available within the district. The goal of this meeting shall be to provide all parties involved with the opportunity to engage in creative problemsolving. If problems and needs beyond the scope of the district are identified, school staff shall provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) with information on appropriate community resources. If out-of-school resources appear needed, the parent(s)/guardian(s) should be encouraged to give written permission allowing school personnel to share information with appropriate outside agencies. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) wish, school staff could assist in contacting appropriate agencies and participate as needed.

The end result of the meeting shall be the development of a mutually agreed upon plan to deal with the issues identified. The school shall provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student with the name and telephone number of the staff person who will monitor and follow up. The school shall provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student written copies of the agreed upon plan, including a description of any curriculum modifications or alternative programming being considered.

In addition, the school shall inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the penalties for not cooperating in efforts to address the attendance problem. All parties should receive written information that explains possible school and legal consequences for habitual truancy under Chapters 118 and 948 of the state statutes.

5. Response to Fifth Unexcused Absence (Habitual Truancy) – A habitual truant means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester. The parent/guardian of a student who is a habitual truant shall be notified by certified

or registered mail when the student initially becomes a habitual truant. The notice shall include the following:

- a. A statement of the parent's/guardian's responsibility under state law to cause the child to attend school regularly;
- b. A statement that the parent/guardian or child may request program or curriculum modifications for the child and that the child may be eligible for the district's children-at-risk programming;
- c. A request that the parent/guardian meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy. The notice shall include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent/guardian should meet, a date, time and place for the meeting and the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time or place. The date for the meeting must be within five school days after the date that the habitual truancy notice has been sent to the student's parent/guardian. The date for the meeting may be extended for an additional five school days, with the consent of the student's parent/guardian; and
- d. A statement of the penalties under state law and city ordinance that may be imposed on the parent/guardian if he/she fails to cause the child to attend school regularly as required by state law.

At the meeting referred to in point (c) above:

- a. All prior actions shall be reviewed and the school personnel, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student shall be encouraged to present their views on the reasons for the truancy;
- b. All educational programs, including both in-school and out-of-school options, shall be explored;
- c. The child and parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be informed of services and programs available through municipal and juvenile court;
- d. A written contract shall be negotiated that includes the specific rights and responsibilities of the child, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and school. This contract shall include a specific educational plan; and
- e. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be informed of the penalties under state law that may be imposed.

The district's truancy plan shall be followed when dealing with an habitual truant.

H. Legal Referral

A truancy referral may be initiated for habitual truancy, an ordinance violation or failure to cause a child to attend school regularly if the school attendance officer provides evidence that appropriate school personnel have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, done all of the following:

1. Met with the child's parent/guardian to discuss the child's truancy or attempted to meet with the child's parent/guardian and received no response or were refused. If a meeting between the parent/guardian and appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy is not held within 10 school days after the date that the habitual truancy notice is sent, court proceedings may be initiated without the required meeting.
2. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the child to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's truancy and have considered curriculum modifications.
 - a. Such counseling should review the compulsory school attendance policy, procedures and guidelines and the specific state truancy statutes regarding curriculum modification options.
 - b. Such counseling may be done by regular counselors, the building principal or an assistant principal. An IEP team evaluation is not required unless there is a suspected disability.
 - c. The educational placement of the student should be reviewed in the school year of the problem. A review conducted outside the school year (June to August) should not be used.
 - d. Data previously acquired during the school year may be used to determine educational counseling in situations involving special education students. Student IEPs should be reviewed and adjusted if necessary to reflect changes.
3. Evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems may be a cause of the child's truancy and, if so, have taken steps to overcome the learning problems, except that the child need not be evaluated if tests administered to the child within the previous year indicate that the child is performing at his/her grade level.
 - a. If there is a suspected disability, an evaluation referral should be made to the IEP team.
 - b. The evaluation must include a review of the records, communication with the student, the student's teacher(s) and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and, if appropriate, classroom observation.
 - c. Learning problems should be looked at carefully for classic multi-disciplinary needs, or lack thereof, as well as other types of contributing problems (e.g., physical).
4. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be a cause of the child's truancy and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.
 - a. A "Social Problem Report" may be completed; or
 - b. Assistance from Dane County Social Services may be requested.

Points two, three and four above do not apply if the school attendance officer provides evidence that appropriate school personnel were unable to carry out the activity due to the child's absences from school.

Specific documentation and the completion of the required referral form are mandatory before any legal action can be taken. This form should be submitted to the juvenile intake officer.

State law does not stipulate quantitative data, however, the more evidence presented in court, the more likely there will be equitable consequences. Telephone calls, letters, referrals and meetings should be documented. This is a critical part of the truancy procedures as it is necessary to establish that the student in question is habitually truant.

I. Return of Truant to School

When a truant student returns or is returned to school, school personnel should immediately welcome him/her back. All truants, whether occasional or habitual, need intervention. The degree of attention may vary, however, depending upon the age of the student and the pattern of truancy.

Additional responses to be made by school personnel regarding truant students returning to school may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Assessment of factors contributing to truancy.
2. Discussion of alternative educational options and limitations.
3. Referral considerations.
4. Development of a plan for consequences to truancy.
5. Guided re-entry to classes/programs.
6. Discussion of student's commitment and responsibility to assist in returning to regular programming.
7. Follow up on obligations of student and parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding attendance (commitment to joint cooperation).
8. Promotion of staff awareness of the problem(s) the student is encountering.

J. Students Excused from Regular School Attendance

1. A student who has reached the age of 16 and is a child at risk as defined in section 118.153(1)(a) of the state statutes may attend, in lieu of high school or on a part-time basis, a technical college if written approval of the student's parent/guardian is received and the student and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the student shall participate in a program leading to the student's high school graduation.

2. A student who has reached the age of 16 may be excused by the school board from regular school attendance if written approval of the student's parent/guardian is received and the student and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the student shall participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the student's high school graduation. Program or curriculum modifications include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Modifications within the student's current academic program.
 - b. A school work training or work study program.
 - c. Enrollment in any alternative public school or program located in the school district in which the child resides.
 - d. Enrollment in any nonsectarian private school or program, located in the school district in which the child resides, which complies with the requirements of 42 USC 2000d (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act).
 - e. Home-bound study, including nonsectarian correspondence courses or other courses of study approved by the Board or nonsectarian tutoring provided by the school in which the child is enrolled.
 - f. Enrollment in any public educational program located outside the school district in which the child resides.

3. A student who is 17 years of age or over may be excused from regular school attendance if written approval of the student's parent/guardian is received and the student and his/her parent/guardian agree, in writing, that the student shall participate in a program or curriculum modification leading to the student's high school graduation or a high school equivalency diploma. Modifications include those listed in points (a) through (f) above.

4. Procedures
 - a. The school attendance officer shall discuss the program or curriculum modification options with the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - b. The school attendance officer shall inform the Superintendent, in writing, of the request and of the program or curriculum modification(s) leading to high school graduation or a high school equivalency diploma tentatively agreed upon by the student and his/her parent(s)/ guardian(s).
 - c. The Superintendent shall present the request and high school graduation or equivalency program proposal to the Board for approval.
 - d. A written agreement must be signed by the student, his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), the Board and a representative of the program leading to the student's high school graduation or high school equivalency diploma. This agreement must be signed prior to the student's admission to such program.
 - e. At least once each semester, the school attendance officer shall review compliance with each student's agreement. If it is determined that a student is not complying with the agreement, the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and the program leading to high school graduation or

a high school equivalency diploma shall be notified that the agreement may be modified or suspended in 30 days.

- f. If the agreement is suspended, the student shall be expected to attend school on a regular basis in accordance with state law, Board policy and established guidelines and procedures. Failure to attend school shall result in forfeiture for truancy in accordance with county ordinances.
5. A student who is 17 years of age or over shall be excused by the Board from regular school attendance if the student began a program leading to a high school equivalency diploma in a secured correctional facility, a secured child caring institution, a secure detention facility or a juvenile portion of a county jail if approval of the student's parent/guardian is received and the student and his/her parent/guardian agree that the student shall continue to participate in such a program.

Prior to the admission of a student to such a program, the student, his/her parent/guardian, the Board and a representative of the agency providing the program shall enter into a written agreement as specified in state law. If the agency providing the program determines that the student is not making progress toward completion of the program, the agency shall notify the student and his/her parent/guardian that the agreement may be suspended within 30 days. If the agency suspends the agreement, the agency shall notify the student, his/her parent/guardian and the Board.

CROSS REFERENCE: Board Rule 347, Guidelines for the Maintenance and
 Confidentiality of Student Records
 Board Policy 347, Student Records
 WI State Statutes Section 118.15(3)(c)
 School Handbooks

BOARD APPROVAL: October 13, 2004