

**SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## Objectives

Attendance is a critical factor for student success in schools. Consistent school attendance, improved academic performance and school completion have a positive correlation and will contribute to our efforts to assure that all of our students reach the higher standards established by the Board of Regents.

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility in New York State. Parents are responsible and legally obligated to ensure that their children attend school during the ages of compulsory attendance.

The Ogdensburg City School District has developed and if necessary, will review and revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- To increase school completion for all students,
- To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance,
- To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts,
  - d) To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
  - e) To verify that individual students are complying with education laws related to compulsory attendance,
  - f) To determine the District's daily attendance for State aid purposes.

## Strategies To Meet Objectives

The Ogdensburg City School District will:

- a) Use the automated dialer in grades 7-12 to place calls to the homes of students who are absent, tardy, or depart early; (The calls will state the importance of good attendance, whether the student was tardy, absent, or departed early and invite the parent to contact the principal.)
- b) Maintain accurate record keeping via electronic methods and a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure;
- c) Develop a make-up work policy UPK-12;
- d) Maintain a testing center in grades 9-12 for make-up exams.
- e) Use disciplinary sanctions for unexcused absences as outlined in the student code of conduct;
- f) Utilize student counseling and intervention services;
- g) Provide parents with written notifications regarding individual student attendance;
- h) Develop an attendance honor roll each marking period for students who achieve perfect attendance;
- i) Analyze attendance patterns to review and revise the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.

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j) Provide the Attendance Request Form to document student tardiness, early departure and absence. The Attendance Request Form will contain: student name, date, time excused/arrived, reason, who is picking the student up (if applicable), doctor/dentist name and phone number (if applicable), homeroom teacher name and phone number, and parent signature and phone number.

## Definition Of Excused And Unexcused Absences

A full or part day absence is considered excused for the following reasons:

- a) personal illness;
- b) family illness that necessitates the student's absence;
- c) death in the family;
- d) religious observance;
- e) required court appearances;
- f) quarantine;
- g) medical appointment;
- h) road test;
- i) approved college visits;
- j) military obligations;
- k) approved cooperative work programs;
- l) approved school programs;
- m) (impassable roads) inclement weather;
- n) bus tardiness
- o) educational family trips (A petition describing the trip and activities that will be completed must receive the approval of the administration prior to the trip);
- p) other justifiable reasons that meet with the approval of the principal.

An Attendance Request Form signed by the parent which details the absence must be presented to the homeroom or classroom teacher the day the student returns to school. The Form will document: the date the form was completed, the student's full name, date of absence, reason for absence, and the signature of a parent or guardian. Students will not receive credit for make up work until the completed Attendance Request Form is received. If an Attendance Request Form is not returned within two days of an absence, the absence will be recorded as unexcused. Absences due to extenuating circumstances will be addressed by the principal.

Most absences not mentioned in the paragraph above will be interpreted as unexcused. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:

- a) truancy (parents expect the students to be in school);
- b) working;
- c) vacation, visiting, away, going out of town, shopping, etc.;

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- d) needed at home, caring for baby, personal family business, helping at home, etc.;
- e) overslept, ride was late, missed ride, ride did not show, etc.;
- f) appointment, other than medical, legal, or administratively approved;
- g) hunting, fishing, skiing, or other recreational interests;
- h) non-educational trips;
- i) only has study halls;
- j) routine probation appointments that can be done after school hours;
- k) it is my fault, not my child's;
- l) any other absence not related to illness or an emergency situation.

The school district is free to act upon valid and legally competent evidence (not hearsay statements) to substantiate acts of misconduct, even if it is controverted by the parent(s). It is up to the school district to determine the credibility of the competing versions of the facts.

### **Tardiness And Signing In**

Students arriving late to school or to class for any reason, excused or unexcused, disrupt the educational process not only for themselves, but for their classmates as well. Students arriving late to school must report to the office with a completed Attendance Request Form. The Form should include the date the note was written, the student's full name, date of absence, reason for absence, and the signature of a parent or guardian. A principal will review the Attendance Request Form to determine whether the lateness is excused or unexcused. Students without a completed Attendance Request Form will be considered unexcused. When circumstances preclude the student from providing a completed Attendance Request Form, the parent/guardian will be contacted for a completed Attendance Request Form to be submitted prior to the start of the next school day. Failure to sign in an unexcused tardiness will be addressed via the guideline in the student code of conduct.

### **Early Departure**

Education is everyone's priority. Therefore a request to depart early to conduct business that could be done after 2:55 will not be granted. Study halls are considered an integral part of the school day. Having one does not constitute an appropriate reason to depart early.

The school day for each student begins as soon as he/she arrives on school property. Once on school grounds, a student needs the permission of a principal to leave the school grounds. Students who do not comply will be considered truant.

To be released from any portion of the school day, a completed Attendance Request Form must be provided prior to the start of the school day. Appropriate school personnel will review the request to ensure that it meets the criteria of an excused absence. If it does not, the student and the parent will be notified and the missed item will be classified as unexcused. If a situation precludes a student from presenting a completed Attendance Request Form, the principal will contact the parent to verify the appointment. In UPK-6, the parent must provide a completed Attendance Request Form when picking up the student. In grades 7-12, the parent must provide the written note prior to the start of the next school day.

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Students who are late for or need to depart early from classes held at Northwest Tech must have the approval of an OFA principal prior to attending classes or exiting the building at Northwest Tech.

### **Students Late For Class**

Teachers in grades 7-12 will take attendance at the beginning of each class, record the students who are absent, and send the names of the same to the office. If a student in grades 7-12 arrives late for class without a pass for an excused reason, he/she will sign the green "late" sheet available in each classroom. Teachers will send the "late" sheets to the office after taking attendance in period 9. If a student is more than fifteen (15) minutes late for a class, then the lateness will be counted as an absence.

### **Coding System For Absences**

Present = P Absent, Excused Absent, Unexcused Absent, Unknown Reason Tardy, Excused Tardy, Unexcused Tardy, Unknown Reason Daily Present (In School Suspension or Home Tutor)
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### **Attendance And Course Credit**

The District believes that classroom participation affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade.

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For each marking period in grades 7-12, two-thirds of a student's grade will be based on quizzes, papers, projects, homework, and class participation. To earn class participation points, the student must be in class and prepared. Students are required to attend all scheduled classes, including those scheduled during midterm and final examinations.

In grades 7-12, any student with more than twenty-four (24) absences in a full-credit course, twelve (12) absences in a half -credit course, or eight (8) absences in a quarter-credit course may not receive credit for the course. Guidance counselors will hold preliminary attendance hearings as an intervention for students who exhibit attendance concerns throughout the school year. An administrative attendance hearing will be conducted with the student, parent, counselor, and teacher(s) at approximately absence #18 for a full-year course and #9 for a ½ year course

Students who are denied credit due to attendance reasons will be advised at their attendance hearing of the option of the attending summer school. To qualify for summer school, the student must earn a recommendation from the teacher based on participation and behavior. Administrative approval is required.

With the permission of the classroom teacher, a student may complete make up work for an excused absence, tardiness, or early departure. The method and time requirement to make up work for a short-term absence is at teacher discretion. Some lessons require class participation and may not be able to be made up. Any student who misses a class must take the responsibility to check with the teacher regarding what work must be completed.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of scheduled class meetings during this enrollment.

If a student reaches the maximum number of absences, the classroom teacher will complete an attendance form and notify the building principal. A copy of the attendance form will be sent to the parent/guardian. Students will not be given credit for work until completion of a hearing.

Students who believe that special consideration should be given may appeal in writing to the principal within five (5) school days from the date of notification. The written appeal should contain the student's attendance record and any supporting data such as hospitalization records. The student, parent, principal, and teacher may meet to hear the appeal and determine whether an exception and extended make-up time is warranted. Otherwise, course credit will not be given.

A suspension is not counted as an absence. To receive credit for the class, a student must complete the class work.

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## Incentives And Sanctions

To encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement grade appropriate/building level strategies and programs that may include, but are not limited to:

attendance honor rolls;

perfect attendance awards;

special events;

grade level awards;

classroom rewards;

- f) assemblies to reward and promote good attendance.

Unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the code of conduct for each school. Consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- a) In school suspension;
- b) Extended detention;
- c) Denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities;

Perfect attendance means no tardiness, early departures, class cuts, or absences.

## Notification Of Parents

Parents will be notified of excessive student absence, tardiness, or early departures through the following means:

- a) Report card comments to report individual class attendance;
- b) In grades UPK-6, principals will use attendance forms to notify parents of the 8th, 16th, and 24th occurrence in any combination;
- (c) Beyond the 24<sup>th</sup> incident, principals will notify the proper agency to bring parents in compliance with the district attendance policy, in accordance with NYS Law.
- (d) Additionally, at this level, the Elementary Summer program will be highly recommended to fill the gaps in the student's education.
- (e) In grades 7-12, teachers will complete an Attendance Request Form. The principal will send it along with a letter to the students' parents/guardians at the 6<sup>th</sup> of 8 total absences for a quarter-unit course on the 9<sup>th</sup> of 12 total absences for a half-unit course, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of 24 absences for a full-unit course;
- (f) Auto dialer notification on a daily basis in grades 7-12.

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## **Development Process For Intervention Strategies**

To effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

- Identify specific elements of the pattern;
- Contact the District staff closely associated with the elements;
- Discuss strategies to directly intervene with the specific element;
- Recommend intervention;
- Implement changes;
- Utilize appropriate District and/or community resources to address and help curtail student unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departure;
- Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention;
- Review and revise the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy;
- Notify parents on a continuous basis.

## **Person Who Reviews Attendance Records and Initiates Action**

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept on a register of attendance card in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness, or early departure will be entered as "excused" or unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

For students in non-departmentalized UPK-6, 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. For students in grades 7-12, each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction. Attendance shall be taken as in sentence one of this paragraph.

Attendance secretaries will place the symbol for absence, tardiness or early departure on each attendance card or in E-School Data, as appropriate. Absences will be indicated as excused or unexcused as soon as a completed attendance request form is received.

Education Law Sections 3205-3213

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7/1/2010