

ATTENDANCE

A high correlation exists between good attendance and good grades. Acceptable reasons for absence are personal illness and a death in the family. Unacceptable reasons are shopping, caring for younger children, visiting friends or relatives, and minor aches and pains. Each school in the district has established its own attendance policy based upon state guidelines and building schedules. This policy provides specific information regarding tardiness and absences. Parents/guardians should refer to the individual school informational booklets for information concerning attendance procedures. These guidelines meet the minimum time requirements established by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Any student who arrives at school after 8:10 a.m. will be considered tardy. Any students who arrive after 9:00 a.m. and before the afternoon classes begin will be counted absent for one half day for the morning classes. Any student who is signed out between 11:00 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. during the regular school day will be counted absent for one half day. Any student who signs out before 11:00 a.m. and does not return for the afternoon classes will be counted absent for one full day. These guidelines meet the minimum time requirements as established by the State Board of Education.

Students who violate the attendance policy will not be dismissed early for extra-curricular activities, sports, or field trips. Any student that misses the entire day of school or afternoon classes due to illness or an unexpected absence will not be allowed to attend any extra-curricular activity on that day. All absences are reported to the State's Attorney office. All make up work and the time allotted for such will be at the teacher's discretion, but in all cases within the grade period missed.

Definitions of Truancy: Truant – a "truant" is a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for more than 1% but less than 5% of the past 180 days. Valid cause for absence – A child may be absent from school because of illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency situations, situations beyond the student's control as determined by the building principal or such other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the student's safety or health. Chronic or habitual truant – A "chronic or habitual truant" is a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 5 percent or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days. Any student identified as a chronic or habitual truant may be subject to involvement in the State's Attorney's Act Now program. Truant minor – A child to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy or have been offered and refused.

In the event a student will be absent, the parent or guardian is required to call the school by 10:00 a.m. each day. If the call is not received, the school will attempt to contact the parent. If contact is not made, a written excuse must be presented when the student returns to school. The student will be given an unexcused absence until the school has received a written excuse. If it is necessary for the student to be absent for an extended period, please contact the school to make arrangements for the student to stay current with class work.

If an excuse for dental or medical appointments is necessary, a student must give the

school a signed, dated note stating: (1) the reason for being excused; (2) the time the student will be picked up; and (3) the time the student will return to class. The principal may request a physician's verification for frequent or extended student illness. This requirement may be waived at the building principal's discretion if other appropriate documentation is provided.

At the secondary level, there are additional regulations concerning attendance. These are explained in the junior high and high school information booklets.

Religious Observance: A student shall be released from school, as an excused absence, because of religious reasons, to observe a religious holiday, or because the student's religion forbids secular activity on a particular day(s) or time of day. The parent(s)/guardian(s) must give written notice to the district five days before the student's anticipated absence.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and distribute to teachers appropriate procedures regarding student absences for religious reasons, including how teachers are notified of a student's impending absence, and the state law requirement that teachers provide the student an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirement.

775 ILCS 35/, Religious Freedom Restoration Act Religious Instruction: A student shall be released from school for a day or portion of a day for the purpose of religious instruction.

A letter, requesting the student's absence and written by the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), must be given to the building principal at least five days before the day the student is to be absent.

Compulsory School Attendance

This policy applies to individuals who have custody or control of a child: (a) between the ages of six (on or before September 1) and 17 years (unless the child has graduated from high school), or (b) who is enrolled in any of grades kindergarten through 12 in the public school regardless of age. Subject to specific requirements in State law, the following children are not required to attend public school: (1) any child attending a private school (including a home school) or parochial school, (2) any child who is physically or mentally unable to attend school (including a pregnant student suffering medical complications as certified by her physician), (3) any child lawfully and necessarily employed, (4) any child over 12 and under 14 years of age while in confirmation classes, (5) any child absent because of religious reasons including to observe a religious holiday, for religious instruction, or because his or her religion forbids secular activity on a particular day(s) or time of day, and (6) any child 16 years of age or older who is employed and is enrolled in a graduation incentives program.

The parent/guardian of a student who is enrolled must authorize all absences from school and notify the school in advance or at the time of the student's absence. A valid cause for absence includes illness (including mental or behavioral health of the student), observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, other situations beyond the control of the student, other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the student's mental, emotional, or physical health or safety, or other reason as approved by the Superintendent or designee. Students absent for a valid cause may make up missed homework and classwork assignments in a reasonable timeframe.

Absenteeism and Truancy Program

The Superintendent or designee shall manage an absenteeism and truancy program in

accordance with the School Code and Board policy. The program shall include but not be limited to:

1. A protocol for excusing a student from attendance who is necessarily and lawfully employed. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to determine when the student's absence is justified.
2. A protocol for excusing a student in grades 6 through 12 from attendance to sound Taps at a military honors funeral held in Illinois for a deceased veteran.
3. A protocol for excusing a student from attendance on a particular day(s) or at a particular time of day when his/her parent/guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat- support posting
4. A process to telephone, within two hours after the first class, the parents/guardians of students in grade 8 or below who are absent without prior parent/guardian notification.
5. A process to identify and track students who are truants, chronic or habitual truants, or truant minors as defined in the School Code, Section 26-2a.
6. A description of diagnostic procedures for identifying the cause(s) of a student's unexcused absenteeism, including interviews with the student, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s), and staff members or other people who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem.
7. The identification of supportive services that may be offered to truant or chronically absent students, including parent-teacher conferences, student and/or family counseling, or information about community agency services. See Board policy 6:110, Programs for Students At-Risk of Academic Failure and/or Dropping Out of School and Graduation Incentives Program.
8. A process for the collection and review of chronic absence data and to
 - a. Determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage chronically absent student and their families, and
 - b. Encourage the habit of daily attendance and promote success.
9. A process for a 17 or 18-year-old resident to participate in the District's various programs and resources for truants. The student must provide documentation of his/her dropout status for the previous 6 months. A request from an individual 19 years of age or older to re-enroll after having dropped out of school is handled according to provisions in 7:50, *Students School Admissions and Student Transfers To and From Non-District Schools*.
10. Reasonable efforts to provide ongoing professional development to teachers, administrators, Board members, school resource officers, and staff on the appropriate and available supportive services for the promotion of student attendance and engagement.
11. A process to request the assistance and resources of outside agencies, such as, the juvenile officer of the local police department or the truant office of the appropriate Regional Office of Education, if truancy continues after supportive services have been offered.
12. A protocol for cooperating with non-District agencies including County or municipal authorities, the Regional Superintendent, truant officers, the Community Truancy Review Board, and a comprehensive community based youth service agency. Any disclosure of school student records must be consistent with Board policy 7:340, Student Records, as well as State and federal law concerning school student records.

13. An acknowledgement that no punitive action, including out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, or court action, shall be taken against a chronic truant for his or her truancy unless available supportive services and other school resources have been provided to the student.

14. The criteria to determine whether a student's non-attendance is due to extraordinary circumstances shall include economic or medical necessity or family hardship and such other criteria that the Superintendent believes qualifies.

15. A process for the temporary exclusion of a student 17 years of age or older for failing to meet minimum academic or attendance standards according to provisions in State law. A parent/guardian has the right to appeal a decision to exclude a student.

Policy 7:70