

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The Education Law requires that the students enrolled in the schools of this District attend school on every school day unless legally excused. The educational program offered by this District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. Absences other than legal absences as defined by State regulations have a highly adverse effect on the student as well as the entire educational program. Therefore, the Board of Education urges all parents to make every effort for their children to be in attendance.

Statement of Overall Objectives

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The Massena Central School District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. Because the District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the District will develop, review and, if necessary, revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

1. To reduce the current level of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures;
2. To encourage full attendance by all students;
3. To increase school completion for all students;
4. To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
5. To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
6. To maintain an accurate attendance recordkeeping system;
7. To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
8. To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
9. To determine the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

1. Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
2. Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
3. Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
4. Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
5. Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Based upon our District's educational and community needs, values and priorities, the School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

1. **Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, road test, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.
2. **Unexcused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g. family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, obtaining learner's permit, oversleeping, work, missing a ride, appointment other than medical or legal, sporting competitions)

Any type of student absence can have a negative impact on learning and should be avoided, if possible.

Written requests from the parent/legal guardian for the release of students will generally be honored. The appropriate time and reason for absence shall be recorded on the attendance record using the procedures mandated by the state. Whenever possible, the written request should be received in the school office 24 hours in advance of the scheduled release. Unverified phone contacts will not be honored. Unless an emergency, parents should refrain from contacting the school within the last hour before dismissal to release their child early or to make alternate transportation arrangements. Such contacts are disruptive to the classroom and create the risk of a communication failure in regard to student transportation.

Student Attendance Record Keeping/Data Collection

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

Attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following regulations:

1. For students in non-departmentalized Pre-kindergarten through grade six (i.e. self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.) 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 during a lunch period. Where students are dismissed for lunch, their presence or absence shall also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the student's return from lunch.
2. For students in grades seven through twelve or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.
3. Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
4. In the event that a student at any instructional level from Pre-kindergarten through grade twelve arrives

POLICY

2017

7110
3 of 5

Students

late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District/building procedures.

NOTE: All absences must be recorded for accountability purposes. It is the parents' responsibility to provide an excuse upon the student's return to school. Parents may send in a written note or email the principal, nurse or attendance officer of the reason for the absence.

Student Attendance/Course Credit

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Per the District's Grading Policy 8445, grades will reflect student academic achievement and only assess criteria clearly established in the New York State learning Standards. Additional criteria, such as participation, attitude and effort, may be reported using a coded scale but will not be factored into a student's numerical grade. Attendance will not be considered in grade determination unless otherwise regulated by State Education Department guidelines or college level expectations, e.g. students who are required to participate in mandated science labs in order to receive course credit. Students who take courses for college credit will be required to adhere to the attendance expectations of those institutions.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

1. Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
2. Working pursuant to an approved independent study program; or
3. Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests.

Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse

A designated staff member shall notify by telephone the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. The staff member shall explain the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy, and the District's/building-level intervention procedures, If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled

between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, each school in the district will develop and implement a grade appropriate/building-level strategies and programs that may include, but are not limited to:

1. Attendance honor rolls to be posted in prominent places in District buildings and included in District newsletters and, with parent/person in parental relation consent, in community publications;
2. Monthly drawings for prizes at each grade level to reward perfect attendance;
3. Special events (e.g. assemblies, guest speakers, field days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g. Mondays, Fridays, day before vacation);
4. Grade-level rewards at each building for best attendance;
5. Classroom acknowledgement of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards);
6. Annual poster/essay contest on importance of good attendance;
7. Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by student council, administration, PTA/PTO and other community groups to promote good attendance.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures may result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings/grade-levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

Appeal Process

A parent/person in parental relation may request a building-level review of their child's attendance record.

Three-Tiered Attendance Support System.

Three-tiered Systems of Support are the way schools support students by systematically delivering a range of interventions based on demonstrated levels of need. Each level (K-6), and (7-12) will develop a coordinated tiered system. Firm cut offs and specific actions should be associated with each Tier. These coordinated plans should be included in each individual school's Building Level Attendance Plans

Building Attendance Teams and Attendance Plans.

Commencing with the 2017-18 school year, the building principal will form an attendance team. Building level Attendance Teams will review attendance records at least monthly. These reviews are conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of absences, tardiness and early departures.

Each Building team will develop a written Building Level Attendance Plan that will include standardized parental notification letters, attendance incentives, notification to parents about the attendance policy, and an outline of the

POLICY

2017

7110
5 of 5

Students

tiered system and actions taken at each of the tiers. Building Level Attendance Plans need to be submitted yearly to the Superintendent of Schools for review, no later than September 15th.

Annual Review by the Board of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review the building-level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Community Awareness

The Board of Education shall promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

1. Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents/persons in parental relation and to students at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/persons in parental relation;
2. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
3. Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205

3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213

8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR)

Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

Adopted: 7/5/17