

ATTENDANCE, ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

The School Board requires that school-aged children enrolled in the District, attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and Board policies. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Regular and punctual attendance will be required of each student enrolled in the District during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of conditions or reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence. The Building Principals are responsible for developing student handbooks which will include rules regarding student absences, excuses and truancy. The Building Principals or designee, are responsible for attendance and truancy issues.

The Board recognizes two kinds of absences: excused absence and truancy. Excused absences are absences due to:

- Illness,
- Absence for participation in school activities
- Medical and dental appointments
- Family emergencies
- Recovery from an accident
- Required court attendance
- Death in the immediate family
- Observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
- Such other good cause as may be acceptable to the Principal or permitted by law

Any absence that has not been excused for any of these reasons will be considered an unexcused absence.

In the event of an illness, the parent must call the school and inform the District of the student's illness and absence. Pursuant to RSA 193:1, III, parent means a parent, guardian or person having legal custody of a child. For other absences, the parent must provide written notice or a written excuse that states one of these reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may require the parent to provide additional documentation in support of the written notice, including but not limited to doctor's notes, court documents, obituaries, or other documents supporting the claimed reason for non-attendance.

If the parent wishes for the student to be absent for a reason not listed above, the parent must provide a written explanation of the reason for such absence, including why the student will be absent and for how long the student will be absent. The Principal will determine whether the stated reason for the student's absence constitutes good cause and will notify the parent via telephone and in writing of the decision. If the Principal determines that good cause does not

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exist, the parent may request a conference with the Principal to again explain the reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may then reconsider the initial determination. However, at this juncture, the Principal's decision will be final.

Family Vacations/Educational Opportunities

Generally, absences other than for illness during the school year are discouraged. The Principal, or designee may however, grant special approval of absence for family vacations, provided written approval is given in advance. The parent is asked to write a note to the student's teacher at least 2 weeks before the trip. This advance planning will allow the teacher enough time to work with the parent and the student regarding homework completion.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above, will be considered an unexcused absence.

10 half-days of unexcused absences during a school year, constitutes habitual truancy.

A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more than 2 hours of instructional time and less than 3½ hours of instructional time.

Any absence of more than 3½ hours of instructional time will be considered a full-day absence.

- **Instructional time** is defined as the time during which a school is responsible for a student and the student is required or expected to be actively engaged in a learning activity.

Any staff member aware of a student leaving a class or the school grounds without permission, will report the departure immediately to the Principal or designee.

Students identified as being truant will be contacted by either a school, juvenile officer, police officer, or police volunteer and may be brought to school by a juvenile officer or police officer.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy

The Principal will ensure that the administrative guidelines on attendance properly address the matter of truancy by including a process that identifies students who are habitually truant, as defined above.

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When the Principal identifies a student who is habitually truant, or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, an intervention will commence with the student, the student's parent, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention will include processes including, but not limited to:

1. Investigation of the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
2. Consideration, when appropriate, of modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;
3. Involvement of the parent in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;
4. Consideration of alternative disciplinary measures, while preserving the right to impose discipline in accordance with District policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline; and
5. Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the student's attendance.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student has been truant for a total of 7 half days, the Principal or designee from the school where the student is enrolled, will contact the parent and a meeting will be held to discuss the truancy. The Principal or designee will work with the parent to develop a plan to prevent and/or reduce future truancy. If the truancy persists and reaches a total of 10 half days, the Principal or designee will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for a meeting between the parent and the Principal to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy; and
4. A copy of RSA 193:1 Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil.

The letter will be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

If necessary, a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition will be filed in conjunction with local law enforcement with the local district court.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the recommendations listed below. However, these guidelines will be advisory only. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing and reducing truancy.

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1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parent.
2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures.
3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

Parental Notification of Truancy Policy

Prior to adopting this policy, the Board will place the item on the agenda of a School Board meeting and will allow 2 weeks for public input as to the policy's provisions. Any public input will be advisory only and final adoption as to the policy's provisions will remain solely with the Board.

Additionally, the Superintendent will also ensure that this policy is included in or referenced in the student handbook and is mailed to the parent annually at the beginning of each school year.

Legal References:

RSA 189:34, Appointment

RSA 189:35-a, Truancy Defined

RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil

RSA 193:7, Penalty

RSA 193:8 Notice Requirements

RSA 193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance

RSA 169D Children in Need of Services

NH Code of Administrative Rules Sec. Ed. 306.04(a)(1) Attendance and Absenteeism

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Sec. Ed. 306.04(c), Policy Relative to Attendance and Absenteeism

Proposed: 10/16/2000

Adopted: 11/01/2010

Adopted: 11/06/2000

Proposed: 05/21/2018

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Adopted: 03/16/2009

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