



Attendance

Administrative Procedure 1.B.040

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference:

Legal Reference: Public Schools Act/Policy Directive & Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence & Engagement

Date Adopted: June, 2012

Date Amended: September, 2012; January, 2024; February, 2024

Date Reviewed: February, 2019; November, 2020; March, 2022

Preamble

When determining what course of action to take with regards to the following attendance initiative, please keep in mind that this Administrative Procedure is to act as a guideline. School Administration should consider the student's attendance history, academic standing and personal circumstances and use their discretion when determining the appropriate intervention needed.

Background

Students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have a greater opportunity to access school and community resources, have a greater sense of belonging, and are more likely to reach their full potential. Student presence and engagement is required for success. Student absence is a serious impediment to a student's educational performance and well-being. Absenteeism can have lasting negative impacts on student achievement, graduation rates, transition to post-secondary education, employment, and social inclusion, as well as on the community at large. Attendance issues are often a first sign that a student is experiencing life challenges, and there is a multitude of contributing factors, ranging from academic, social, economic and psychological.

Definitions

Presence

- When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. This is an entry point to being able to engage students in the process of learning. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.

Engagement

- Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with

others in school. Engagement is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities (OECD, 2003)

Regular attendance

- Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.

Absence

- Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.

Excused absence

- Refers to any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) **with** the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

Unexcused absence

- Refers to any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) **without** the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

Chronic Absenteeism

- Where unexcused absences account for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10% or more of instructional days in kindergarten to grade 8 in a reporting period.

Severe Chronic Absenteeism

- Where unexcused absences account for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20% or more of instructional days in kindergarten to grade 8 in a reporting period.

Late

- Any time that a student is not in class or participating in a school activity at the beginning of the instructional time but is in class or participating in a school activity prior to the conclusion of the instructional time in which they are required. Lates can be excused or unexcused. While a late does not constitute an absence, multiple occurrences of unexcused lates may require similar responses as unexcused absences.

Student Specific Plans (SSP)

- A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (MEECL, 2022). Student-Specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students; it may range from

short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.

A child is of **compulsory school age** if he or she is, at the beginning of the fall term, seven years of age or older, or is six years of age, but will turn seven on or before December 31 of that year; and is younger than 18 years of age.

Children are required to attend school from the time they reach compulsory school age until they attain the age of 18.

Every parent or legal guardian of a child of compulsory school age is legally responsible for sending his/her child to school.

Every student is responsible for attending school and classes regularly and on time and completing assignments and other related work as required.

The **exceptions** to compulsory attendance under the Public Schools Act are:

- a child attending a private school within the District's boundaries,
- a child registered and receiving home schooling that has been approved by the Home Schooling Office of Education Manitoba,
- a child unable to attend by reason of sickness or other unavoidable causes,
- a child absent from school on any day regarded as a Holy day by the church or religious denomination with which the child is affiliated,
- a child who is 16 years of age or older that is enrolled in an adult learning center registered under The Adult Learning Centres Act and is taking a program leading to a high school diploma,
- a child who is currently suspended by the principal,
- a child who has been expelled and has not been permitted to enroll in another school,
- a child who has received, or has completed the necessary requirements to receive, a graduation diploma or certificate of completion,
- a child who is at least 15 years of age and is participating in an activity or program provided for in the Public Schools Act.

The School District of Mystery Lake believes that regular and punctual attendance enhances opportunities to learn by assuring that students receive maximum instructional time.

- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that each child attend school regularly and punctually in accordance with the provisions of The Public Schools Act and policies of the School District of Mystery Lake.
- Students 18 years of age and older shall be responsible for their own attendance.

- The Principal is responsible for ensuring the regular reporting of attendance to parent/guardian, or to student if student is 18 years of age or older.
 - ✓ **Every** student absence will be reported to parents/guardians.
 - ✓ **Exception:** Parents have called the school in advance to explain the nature of the child's absence from school.
 - ✓ **Exception:** The student is over the age of 18 and has made written application to no longer have the parents contacted by the school.
- When attendance is taken a student is either **absent** (not physically present) or **present** (physically present).
- All student absenteeism (Kindergarten to Grade 12) must be verified by an explanation from the parent/guardian or designated adult. Reasons for absence must be recorded.
- If absence is for medical reasons or vacation, wherever possible, students are encouraged to continue learning while away from school. As possible, teachers may provide learning materials to students if requested and as per procedure **1.B.045-Extended Student Absences**. Upon return, students need to talk to their teacher(s) to determine any work missed that needs to be completed.

For longer medical absences, arrangements for ongoing support may be provided, and/or alternate program arrangements may be considered. The possible consequences to the student's education for extended absence due to vacation needs to be reviewed with the student's parents/guardians. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrange extended vacations during the summer, winter and spring school breaks. Please see procedure **1.B.045-Extended Student Absences**.

- Truancy is a serious concern and breach of the Public Schools Act. The School District of Mystery Lake will respond to truancy as per procedure **1.B.210 Truancy**.

Proactive and Preventative Attendance Practices

Taking a proactive response to even a day of absence creates opportunities to provide supports and intervention before absenteeism becomes persistent. This includes and is not limited to the following:

- School notifying parent/guardian via synervoice; and
- If absence persists, a personal contact from the school designate (Family Outreach Coordinator, school counsellor, or administrator) to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.

Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing and Reporting on Student Presence and Absence

Documentation, monitoring, analyzing and reporting on student presence and absence occur at the school and divisional level and include the following:

- Consistent, daily recording procedures and common metrics on student presence and absence, including whether absences are excused or unexcused.
- Monitoring enrolment data to ensure that all students expected to be present are in school. This includes comparing enrolment registers year over year, as well as reviewing unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports from the Department.
- Regular monitoring and analyzing of division-wide and school enrollment and attendance data.
- Procedures for investigating and identifying the causes of student absences and determining the appropriate supports required to promote regular attendance.
- An early warning system and non-punitive outreach protocols to identify students who are likely to experience chronic absenteeism by monitoring, disaggregating, and responding to student presence and absence data trends at all levels.
- Ensuring that student attendance is a standing agenda item at senior administration meetings and school-based support team meetings.

Response to Chronic Absenteeism

Responses to absences must be non-punitive, fair and predictable for all students. Suspension, expulsion and withdrawal are inappropriate and counterproductive responses to absenteeism. In grades 9 – 12 inclusive, credits will not be withheld or removed due to unexcused absences. Students are to remain in registered courses.

Students who are chronically absent must have a student-specific plan in place to identify the student-specific barriers. This includes initiating a meeting of the core team, including the parent/guardian. Student-specific planning processes are detailed in the Manitoba Education Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming. The school must designate a case manager to respond to and work with the student and their parents/guardians. When the school is aware of an external agency involvement with a student who is chronically absent, this agency must be included as part of the student-specific planning process.

Responses to student absenteeism will vary based on the age, grade and development of the student, the professional judgment of teachers and principals, and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or division-based supports and/or with outside agencies, if needed.

Student-specific planning to respond to attendance issues may include appropriate alternative educational programming, which provides options such as flexible

timetabling, a variety of assessment methods/options, opportunities for credit acquisition and credit recovery, and ways to ensure learning is accessible to the student based on their current level of performance.

If a student reaches the number of absences defined as Severe Chronic absenteeism, an in-school intervention is needed along with other members of the school support team and external agencies, if applicable.

If the school has been unsuccessful in addressing Severe Chronic absenteeism for a student, the division must notify the department's School and Community Support Unit in writing, as well as notify Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being.

At Early and Middle Years:	
<p>If a student has 2 or more unexcused absences within a two week period.</p>	<p>Classroom teacher will contact parent/guardian to have a discussion about their child’s attendance, set improvement target and document on file.</p>
<p>If attendance does not improve within 2 weeks.</p>	<p>Teacher will make second contact reminding parent of plan and document in student’s profile.</p>
<p>If a student has 2 or more unexcused absences within the month (10% of the school year), they are identified as having Chronic Attendance concerns and will require an SSP (Student-Specific Plan).</p>	<p>Classroom teacher will consult with the counsellor to review attendance patterns and inform principal of concerns.</p> <p>Classroom teacher, counsellor (and other staff if desired) will meet with parent/guardian to create an SSP and document in student’s profile.</p>
<p>If a student has 4 or more unexcused absences within the month (20% of the school year), they are now identified as having Severe Chronic Attendance concerns.</p>	<p>The classroom teacher and counsellor will meet with principal to plan next steps.</p> <p>Steps may include a letter home from the principal,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documenting all actions to date • sharing data re: impact of non – attendance • referencing parents’ responsibility around attendance • referencing the SSP <p>A copy will be placed in the student’s cumulative file and attached to the student’s profile.</p> <p>Steps could also include a phone call from the principal, meeting with parent/guardian, conducting a home visit and involving the district Family Outreach Coordinators.</p> <p>All steps will be documented in the student’s profile.</p>
<p>If the school has been unsuccessful in addressing Severe Chronic absenteeism for a student, the division must notify the department’s School and Community Support Unit in writing, as well as notify Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being.</p>	

<p>At Senior Years: (NOTE: the following is based on the semester system)</p>	
<p>If a student has between 5 to 8 absences in a single course</p>	<p>The teacher of that course will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a conversation with the student • contact parent/guardian to open a discussion on their child’s attendance, stressing the importance of regular attendance and its impact on learning • document actions taken.
<p>If a student has 10 absences cumulatively in a single course, they are identified as having Chronic Attendance concerns and will require an SSP (Student-Specific Plan).</p>	<p>The teacher of that course will consult with the counsellor to review attendance patterns and inform principal of concerns.</p> <p>The teacher, counsellor (and other staff if desired) will meet with parent/guardian to create an SSP and document in student’s profile.</p>
<p>If a student has 20 absences cumulatively in a single course, they are identified as having Severe Chronic Attendance concerns</p>	<p>The classroom teacher will inform counsellor and/or administrator.</p> <p>There will be a review of student’s attendance patterns, reasons behind absenteeism, course completion, current grades, age, etc.</p> <p>Steps may include a letter home from the principal,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documenting all actions to date • sharing data re: impact of non – attendance • referencing parents’ responsibility around attendance • referencing the SSP <p>Steps could also include a phone call from the principal, meeting with parent/guardian, conducting a home visit and involving the district Family Outreach Coordinators.</p> <p>A copy will be placed in the student’s cumulative file and attached to the student’s profile.</p>
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