

MINNETONKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Policy #502 ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

I. PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The School Board believes that regular attendance in school and punctuality in being at school and in class on time are important factors in determining a student's success in academic work, including success in meeting state and local requirements for graduation. Students who attend school consistently and are on time develop better socially, establish better communication with their teachers, acquire important lifetime habits such as dependability, self-sufficiency, and responsibility and have more success academically. Each child who is between seven (7) and eighteen (18) years of age shall be enrolled and attend school. This policy recognizes that school attendance is the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian, supported by the teachers and administration. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance and punctuality so that learning can take place. It is intended to be positive and not punitive, and all measures taken will be in the students' best interest. This policy will assist families and school personnel in making attendance decisions.

II. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The School Board recognizes that class attendance is a responsibility shared by the student, parent or guardian, and the school. This policy is intended to involve all parties in promoting regular school attendance.

A. Student's Responsibility: It is the student's responsibility to:

1. attend all assigned classes and other instructional activities on time every day that school is in session;
2. be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or other instructional activity;
3. request any missed assignments due to an absence; and
4. complete assigned work in a timely manner.

B. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to:

1. ensure the student is attending school;
2. inform the school in the event of a student absence;
3. be aware of and follow the correct procedures for reporting student absence; and

4. work cooperatively with the school and the student to resolve any attendance issues that may arise.

C. Teacher's Responsibility: It is the teacher's responsibility to:

1. take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and other instructional activities;
2. be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly in classroom assignments and for all assigned students;
3. provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request;
4. work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to resolve any attendance issues that may arise; and
5. work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian when the student's attendance record impacts academic performance.

D. Administrator's Responsibility It is the administrator's responsibility to:

1. require students to attend all assigned classes and other instructional activities;
2. be familiar with statutes, policies and procedures governing attendance and apply them uniformly to all students;
3. ensure that all teachers properly account for student attendance in a timely manner;
4. maintain accurate records on student attendance and prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each;
5. inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems; and
6. work collaboratively with the teaching staff to develop and implement uniform attendance procedures.

III. ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with the regulations of the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. 120A.22, students are required to attend all assigned classes and/or other instructional activities every day school is in session, unless the student has completed the studies ordinarily required in the tenth grade and has elected not to enroll or has a valid excuse for absence, as determined by the School Board.

A. Excused Absences: These include family authorized absences and school authorized absences. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

1. Family authorized excused absences:
 - a. Personal illness
 - b. Family emergency or death in the family

- c. Medical or dental treatment
 - d. Prearranged college visits
 - e. Religious instruction not to exceed three hours any week and major religious holidays
 - f. Legal matters including court appearances
 - g. Other activities as approved by the school
- 2. School authorized excused absences
 - a. Approved field trips
 - b. Interscholastic athletic and fine arts competitions and events
 - c. Student recognition/awards ceremonies
 - d. Suspension from class or school
 - e. Other activities as approved by the school

B. Unexcused Absences: - These are absences which are not authorized by the parent or guardian or the school. The following absences are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- 1. Class “cuts” or skips”.
- 2. Leaving school premises without authorization from the nurse, the attendance office or the principals’ offices.
- 3. Family trips/vacations for which no prior arrangement have been made with the school.
- 4. Other absences not authorized by the school or parent/guardian.

IV. TRUANCY

A. Definitions

- 1. Continuing Truant

Minnesota Statute §260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statute §120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statute §120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

- a. three days if the child is in elementary school; or
 - b. three or more class periods or three days if the child is in middle school, or high school.
- 2. Habitual Truant

- a. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, or high school.
- b. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statute Chapter 260A.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statute §260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

1. that the child is truant;
2. that the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
3. that the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statute §120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statute §120A.34;
4. that this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statute §120A.34;
5. that alternative educational programs and services may be available in the district;
6. that the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;
7. that if the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minnesota Statute Chapter. 260;
8. that if the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to Minnesota Statute §260C.201; and
9. that it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

C. Resources and Supportive Services

The school district may cooperate with other community-based agencies and groups to provide variety of intervention, prevention, and educational services for truant students and their families. Services may include:

1. assessment for underlying issues that are contributing to the child's truant behavior;

2. individual or family counseling, educational testing, psychological evaluations, tutoring, mentoring, and mediation;
3. transition services to integrate the child back into school and to help the child succeed once there;
4. culturally sensitive programming and staffing;
5. increased school response, including in-school suspension, closer attendance monitoring and enforcement, after school study programs, and in-service training for teachers and staff; and
6. services may include referral to the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB).

D. School Attendance Review Board (SARB)

Pursuant to Minnesota Statute §260A.05, the School District has formed the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) to promote interagency and community cooperation and reduce duplication of services for students with school attendance problems.

1. SARB Membership

The school board shall appoint the members of the School Attendance Review Board. Members may include:

- a. The superintendent or designee;
- b. a principal and one or more other school officials;
- c. parent representatives;
- d. representatives from community agencies that provide services for truant students and their families;
- e. a juvenile probation officer;
- f. school counselors and attendance officers; and
- g. law enforcement officers.

2. General Powers and Duties

- a. The SARB shall prepare an annual plan to promote interagency and community cooperation and to reduce duplication of services for students with attendance problems. The plan shall include a description of truancy procedures and services currently in operation within the board's jurisdiction, including the programs and services listed in Section III.C of this policy.
- b. The SARB shall oversee referrals of truant students; meet with referred students and their parents or legal guardians; and provide appropriate intervention and services listed in Section III.C. of this policy.
- c. The SARB may provide consultant services to, and coordinate activities of, truancy programs and services.

- d. The SARB may develop an agreement with a referred student and parent or guardian that specifies actions to be taken and requires evidence of participation in available community services and compliance with the agreement.
- e. If the SARB determines that available community services cannot resolve the attendance problems of the truant student or if the student or the parent or guardian has failed to comply with any referrals or agreements or to otherwise cooperate with the board, the SARB may refer the matter to the county attorney.

V. IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY REVIEW

- A. The Superintendent or designee is directed to develop the necessary guidelines for the implementation of this policy.

Legal References: Minnesota Statute §260A.02
Minnesota Statute §120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minnesota Statute §120A.05
Minnesota Statute §127.26-127.39 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)

Approved January 27, 2005