

5100 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Policy Goal

It is the goal of the Poughkeepsie City School District for every student to be present in his or her assigned classroom from the beginning of the school day until the end of the school day to the furthest extent possible.

Legal Overview

New York State has a compulsory school attendance law. Daily attendance for school-aged children is mandatory, not optional. To enforce this law, each school district in New York State is required to adopt a comprehensive attendance policy. Additionally, under New York State law, a parent or guardian who does not ensure that his or her child attends school regularly can be found to have neglected his or her child. As mandated reporters, school personnel who have a reasonable cause to suspect educational neglect must report such suspected educational neglect to the Office of Children and Family Services. Parents or guardians found guilty of educational neglect may face fines and/or jail time. If a chronically absent student is found to be beyond his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) control, the student may come under court supervision as a minor “in need of supervision.”

Purpose and Summary of this Policy

Good attendance and class participation are essential ingredients for academic success. Any absence from class is detrimental to the learning process. Classroom lessons foster and require social interaction, development of effective communication skills, and critical thinking in addition to subject mastery. Textbook or make-up assignments are not an adequate substitute for classroom attendance and participation. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement and reduces the dropout rate.

In order to achieve educational goals and to maintain a true academic environment, students must attend their classes and make up all work from any missed classes. Students who miss class for unexcused reasons or who do not make up missed work may lose participation points in addition to points for any work that is not made up. Students enrolled in credit-bearing courses (high school students and some middle school students) who fail to meet the minimum attendance and course work requirements for a course will receive no credit for that course.

1. Specific Attendance Requirements for Credit Bearing Classes

A. Minimum Attendance Rule. All registered students are expected to attend all classes as scheduled. The District has determined that students failing to attend a minimum number of classes should not receive credit in credit bearing courses (high school courses and some middle school courses). Specifically, each student must attend 85% of all classes per course. If a student is absent, whether excused or unexcused, for more than 15% of the classes in a course, that student falls below the District’s minimum attendance policy. Any student who fails to maintain a minimum of 85% attendance in a credit-bearing course must satisfactorily make up ALL graded

class work in that course within ten (10) school days of returning from each absence, as clarified below, in order to receive credit for that course.

B. Consequences for Exceeding Absences without Making up Class work

1. Any student who does not maintain a minimum of 85% attendance in a credit-bearing course and who does not make up ALL graded class work within the ten (10) school days established in this Policy:
 - a. Receives a NC (Not Eligible for Credit) grade for the course;
 - b. Is not eligible to take any local or state final exam for the course; and
 - c. Receives no credit for the course.
2. If a student receives credit no credit for the course he/she may request a meeting with his/her guidance counselor to discuss all remaining options.
3. Parents/guardians shall be notified of denial of credit in writing and by phone.

2. Definitions of Absences, Non-Absences, Excused Absences and Unexcused Absences

A. Absences. Absences (which are further defined below as excused or unexcused) include:

1. All absences from school or class not excluded below;
2. For middle and high school students that change classrooms between class periods:
 - Lateness to class of more than 10 minutes or leaving class more than 10 minutes early; and
3. Any period of Out-of-School Suspension ("OSS") during which the school provides alternative instruction and the student does not participate.

B. Non-Absences. The following should NOT be counted as absences under the attendance policy:

1. In-School Suspension ("ISS") should it be available;
2. Any period of OSS where the student participates in alternative instruction;
3. Attendance at a special education program or service offered by a public school or an approved private school or facility when a student is homeless, disabled or incarcerated (See section 175.6 of the regulations of the NYS Commissioner of Education);
4. Lateness to class of more than 10 minutes or leaving class more than 10 minutes early when approved by a school staff member; and
5. Field trips, assemblies, or other approved school activities (e.g. band lessons, school sporting events).

C. Excused Absences. For an absence to be considered excused the student must provide a written explanation from his/her parent or guardian within five (5) school days of his/her return to school. An absence will be considered excused only upon receipt of a timely written explanation signed by the student's parent/guardian with

the date of the absence and stating that the absence occurred for one of the following reasons:

1. Personal illness;
2. Illness or death in the family;
3. Disability;
4. Religious observance;
5. Required court appearance;
6. Approved college visits;
7. Military obligations;
8. Doctor appointment;
9. Dentist appointment; or
10. Such other reasons as may be approved by the Commissioner of Education.

D. Unexcused Absences. An absence that does not meet any of the above criteria.

3. Early Dismissal

Requests for an early dismissal shall be in writing, shall be signed by the student's parent/guardian, and shall state the reason for the early dismissal. In exceptional circumstances, a student may be dismissed early pursuant to a phone call from the student's parent or guardian. In such circumstances, the student must bring a signed note stating the reason for the early dismissal upon returning to school. Students may be dismissed from school early for one of the following reasons:

1. Personal illness;
2. Illness or death in the family;
3. Disability;
4. Religious observance;
5. Required court appearance;
6. Approved college visits;
7. Military obligations;
8. Doctor appointment;
9. Dentist appointment; or
10. Such other reasons as may be approved by the Commissioner of Education.

In exceptional circumstances, the building principal or another administrator may approve a request for an early dismissal for a reason not listed above.

Students who leave school early without a signed parental note stating a reason listed above or a signed parental note for another reason that has been approved by an administrator will be subject to discipline in accordance with the District Code of Conduct.

4. Make-up Work Required

A. Procedures for Make-up Work. When a student misses a class or school day, he/she is required upon his/her return to provide a written explanation from his/her parent or

guardian. Moreover, it is the student's responsibility to consult with his/her teachers regarding making up missed work. Reasonable make-up opportunities will be given to all absent students, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused, except as provided below. Students must make up missed work within ten (10) school days of their return to school in order to receive credit for missed work. With administrative approval this ten-day period may be extended to accommodate extenuating circumstances.

B. Make-up Work to be Graded Without Penalty. A student will not receive a reduced grade on a graded assignment solely due to completing the assignment on a make-up basis following an excused absence. However, work submitted following an unexcused absence may be penalized by a reduction in grade. In addition, an absent student may receive a reduction in participation points.

5. Make-up Work Not Available for Students Who Cut Class

Make-up work shall not be provided to a student if the teacher is aware that such student's absence is the result of:

- (1) the student cutting class while being present on District premises; or
- (2) the student leaving school early in violation of Section 3 of this Policy.

In such instances, the teacher will file a discipline referral, which will be addressed in accordance with the District Code of Conduct.

***Note: A student who cuts class in a credit-bearing course, even once, on a day when a graded assignment is completed in class, will therefore not be able to receive credit in that class if he or she subsequently fails to attend 85% of the classes in that course, as this will necessarily prevent the student from completing all graded work. However, under extenuating circumstances an exception may be granted by the building administrator and teachers. See Minimum Attendance Rule above, Section 1.A.

6. Responsibilities of the School Community

Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

A. District Responsibilities

This District will:

1. Provide notice of this attendance policy to students, parents, guardians, teachers, and staff.
2. Notify a student's parents/guardians by phone and/or mail as set forth in the schedule below (see Section 7[b][4], above).
3. Ensure suspected cases of educational neglect are reported to the Office of Children and Family Services.

4. Maintain accurate records of student attendance.
5. Work with students, parents/guardians, teachers, school counselors, and District staff to encourage regular attendance to the furthest extent practicable.

B. Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

1. Attend all classes each day and work to meet the academic, behavioral, and attendance expectations of the Poughkeepsie City School District.
2. To attend school and all classes on time and to not leave school early other than for an approved reason.
3. In the event of an absence from school or a particular class, provide the attendance office or in buildings without an attendance office, the main office, with a note, signed by a parent/guardian, explaining the absence no later than five (5) school days after returning to school. (Absences for which there is no timely note on file in the attendance office will be considered unexcused.)
4. Make up any classwork, homework or tests missed due to an absence no later than ten (10) school days after returning to school.

C. Parent and Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and Guardians are expected to:

1. Discuss this Attendance Policy with your child. Explain that research shows that children who attend school regularly are more likely to succeed in school.
2. Send your child to school with a note explaining the reason your child was absent when he/she returns to school.
3. Notify the school counselor or administrator if your child is having attendance problems. A conference will be arranged to assist you and your child.
4. Respond to all communications that the school sends to you regarding attendance. Ask your child to make up any work missed due to an absence from school. Making up work is important, even though it is not a replacement for attending school.
5. Only arrange for your child to leave school early for approved reasons for early dismissal.

6. Utilize the Infinite Campus portal for updated information regarding your child's attendance.

7. Notice

Effective implementation of any Attendance Policy requires all participants to be informed and to fully understand its purpose, procedures, and the consequences of noncompliance. Copies of this policy will be made available to any member of the community upon request. Additionally, to ensure that students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators are notified of, and understand, this policy, the following procedures will be implemented:

A. Student Notification

1. At the beginning of each school year, the District will ensure that all students are educated about this Policy and informed of the consequences for absenteeism. Students enrolling after the first day of school are to be given a copy of the District Attendance Policy by their School Counselor or an administrator along with an orientation regarding the policy. All students will be asked to sign a form indicating they have been educated about this Policy and informed of the consequences for absenteeism.
2. Students requiring intervention because of excessive absenteeism will receive further instruction on this Policy and the consequences for absenteeism, as provided for in Section 11 of this Policy.

B. Parent/Guardian Notification

1. Principals will present the policy to parents/guardians at an "Open House" or "Back-to-School" event held during the first weeks of each school year. The presentation will stress the importance of student attendance, as well as parental responsibility for their children's attendance. This presentation will also explain the distinctions between excused and unexcused absences.
2. The District will provide each student's parent(s)/guardian(s) with a plain language summary of this policy at the beginning of each school year (See Exhibit 5100-E). Each parent/guardian will be asked to sign and return a statement indicating that they have read the policy and understand it. This signed statement will be filed in the student's folder.
3. Each parent/guardian who is unable to attend the "Open House" or "Back-to-School" event will be afforded other opportunities to discuss the Attendance Policy upon request.

4. When students cut class, or are absent from school, the school will inform parent(s)/guardian(s) by phone or mail in accordance with the system established in Section 11 of this Policy.

5. School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the Attendance Policy.

C. Faculty/Staff Notification

Copies of the District's Attendance Policy shall be distributed to teaching staff members as soon as is practicable following the adoption of the policy. Newly hired teaching staff members shall be provided a copy of the policy upon their employment.

D. Community Notification

Copies of this policy shall be retained at the District Office and school libraries, and shall be available for review by members of the community at those locations upon request, and on the District web site: <http://www.poughkeepsieschools.org>

8. Attendance Taking Procedures

A. Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 5. Attendance shall be recorded once during homeroom and once for each instructional period: ELA, math, science, social studies, and specials. Elementary students who arrive after the official beginning of the school day will be marked tardy.

B. Grades 6-12. Attendance shall be recorded during each period of scheduled instruction [including instructional or supervised study activities].

9. Maintenance of the Electronic Attendance Register

A. Information to be Recorded. For each student, the register of attendance must include:

1. Name;
2. Date of Birth;
3. Date of Enrollment;
4. Parent/Guardian's Full Name;
5. Address where student resides;
6. Phone number(s) where Parent/Guardian may be contacted;
7. ALL absences, tardiness, or early departures during any school day, in whole or in part, excused or unexcused;
8. Appropriate coding to identify the nature of the absence (full day, class cut);
9. Dates of school closings for all or part of the day of scheduled instruction due to extraordinary circumstances, including: adverse weather conditions, heating problems, lack of water or fuel, or destruction or damage to a school building;
10. Date a student withdraws from, or is dropped from enrollment.

B. Designation of Individuals to Make Attendance Entries. Teachers or district employees designated by the Board of Education will make entries on the Attendance Register.

C. Corrections to Attendance Records. When additional information is received from a student during a student/staff conference that requires corrections to be made to a student's attendance records, appropriate personnel will promptly make such corrections.

10. Attendance Incentives

The district may design and implement incentives to acknowledge efforts to maintain or improve school attendance.

11. Interventions

A. Incremental Intervention for Students. The District will maintain a system of specific incremental intervention strategies to identify and remediate attendance problems in their early stages. This system will take into account the total number of absences a student has accumulated, and the rate at which a student has accumulated these absences. This system will also take into account the age of the student involved. The Superintendent will designate one member of the administration to oversee the development and enforcement of this system of specific incremental intervention strategies. A written plan detailing the District's system of incremental intervention strategies will be provided to every teacher, administrator, and guidance counselor along with a copy of this attendance policy before September 15 each year. If the system is modified at any time during the course of the year, an updated written plan will be provided to the same individuals as soon as practicable.

Such a system of incremental intervention strategies may include, but is not limited to, the following intervention and other similar interventions:

1. Implement multi-tiered systems of support.
2. Prior to sending a cut slip to the office, the teacher will speak with the student to verify the reason for absence.
3. Teacher will meet with student to review the attendance policy.
4. School Counselor will meet with the student to review the attendance policy.
5. Designee will notify the parent or guardian of the student's absence by phone.
6. Designee will notify the parent or guardian of the student's absence by mail.
7. Detention will be assigned.
8. School official will conduct a conference with the student and other necessary parties.
9. School official will conduct a conference with the student's parent or guardian and other necessary parties.
10. Extracurricular suspension.
11. Athletic suspension.

12. Suspension.
13. Referral to external agencies.

Disciplinary consequences will only be imposed as a result of unexcused absences. Any disciplinary consequences imposed as a result of unexcused absences shall be consistent with the District's Code of Conduct.

B. Educational Neglect. Teachers and other mandated reporters must report suspected instances of educational neglect to the Office of Children and Family Services. The District will develop procedures to monitor suspected instances of educational neglect. These procedures will provide for a District staff member to contact a student's parent/guardian after certain thresholds of absences are reached, and consult with the Instructional Support Team, in order to ascertain whether educational neglect may be occurring and/or whether it is appropriate to pursue court supervision of the student as a minor "in need of supervision."

12. Appeals for Denials of Credit

A. Individual to Whom Appeals are Made. All appeals will be made directly to the principal or other designated administrator who will make the final decision regarding the withholding of credit.

B. Reasons for Appeals. Appeals may be made to:

1. Challenge the number of absences on record;
2. Challenge an absence that has been designated "unexcused;"
3. Ascertain whether there has been a denial of credit which would be inconsistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") or section 504 Plan and, if appropriate, refer to the Committee on Special Education ("CSE") or section 504 Team for an appropriate determination; or
4. Consider "extenuating circumstances."

C. Time Requirements for Appeals. Parent/Guardian will have twenty (20) school days from the issuance of the written Notification of Denial of Credit to appeal in writing. When necessary, the Attendance Register will be changed to reflect the outcome of an Appeal.

13. Returns to District/New Registrants

A. Prior Absences of Returning Students are Counted. Students who leave the District and subsequently return must still honor the attendance policy. All previous class absences will still count for that academic year.

B. New Registrants Subject to Attendance Policy. Students who enter after the start of the school year will be subject to the Poughkeepsie City School District attendance policy.