

Comprehensive Attendance Policy

A. Objectives

Attendance is a critical factor in school success for students. Consistent and punctual attendance promotes a greater chance of achievement in the academic world and in the students' future employment.

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility in New York State. Children have the right to attend school between the ages of 5 and 21, and are required to attend between the ages of 6 and 16.

The Board of Education believes that it is the shared responsibility of the school and the home to develop desirable habits of punctuality and attendance to help students meet the state learning standards for graduation from high school. Parents and/or guardians are both responsible and legally obligated to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis.

B. Definition

For the purposes of this policy, the term "absence" shall refer generically to any and all of the following circumstances:

1. A student's failure to attend any or all of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities for the full duration of said period(s) of instruction or activity;
2. A student's late arrival to one or more of his or her any of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities during the course of a school day; and/or
3. A student's departure from and failure to return to any of his or her scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities prior to the official dismissal of said period of instruction or activity.

C. Classifying Absences

1. Excused and Unexcused Absences – Student absences, late arrivals, and early departures shall be classified as either excused or unexcused.

- a. Excused absences are those attributable to:

Sickness
Religious observance
Impassable roads or weather
Critical illness or death in the family
Quarantine
Required attendance in court
Approved educational visits

- b. Unexcused Absences
An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories.
- c. The building principal shall have the discretion to designate an absence, late arrival or early departure as “excused,” if the cause of the absence is not among those enumerated in part (b) of this section, upon a determination that the absence was unavoidable and/or otherwise not the fault of the student or the student’s parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

2. Attendance Register Codes - Commencing in the 2003-2004 school year, the following codes shall be employed in recording absences in the pupil attendance record:

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Description</u>
AE	Absent Excused
AU	Absent Unexcused
OSS	Out of School Suspension
T	Tardy
TU	Tardy Unexcused
D	Dismissal
FT	Field Trip
R	Return
ISS	In School Suspension

D. Strategies for Improving Student Attendance and Discouraging Unexcused Absences

1. Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, each school will develop and implement grade appropriate/building level strategies and programs.

2. Non-Disciplinary Intervention to Address Patterns of Unexcused Absences

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

- a. Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b. Contact the District staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relations will be contacted;
- c. Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- d. Recommend intervention to Superintendent or his/her designee if it relates to change in District policy or procedure;

- e. Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- f. Utilize appropriate District and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures;
- g. Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention;
- h. A doctor's note must be provided for students absent in excess of 5 consecutive school days.

3. Disciplinary Action

- a. In order to discourage student unexcused absences, tardiness and early departure, each school will develop and implement grade appropriate/building level sanctions.
- b. The range of disciplinary sanctions to discourage unexcused absences will be distributed to students at the beginning of each school year.
- c. Any student absent from school must bring a written note signed by his/her parent/guardian that explains the reason for the absence. The student must present the note, in person, to the attendance office or designated representative at the school main office before the start of classes on the school day that the student returns. The clerk or designee will issue an admission slip which will include the date(s) and reason(s) for absence. Absence will be classified as excused and unexcused, and action taken in accordance with the provision of this Attendance Policy.
- d. Any disciplinary action imposed on students classified as eligible for special education procedures shall comply with state and federal laws, including but not limited to requirements pertaining to CSE notification, manifestation determinations, and limitations on program removals.

E. Policy Distribution

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

- a. Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation 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;
- b. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
- c. Providing copies of the policy to any other member to the community upon request.

F. Annual Review

The Board of Education shall annually review the building level pupil attendance records, and if such records show a decline in pupil attendance, shall revise this policy as necessary to improve such attendance.

Amended: August 29, 2002

UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE TARRYTOWNS