

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**Statement of Overall Objectives**

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The School District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. Because the School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the School District has developed, and, if necessary, will revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- a) To increase school completion for all students;
- b) To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e) To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) To determine the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- c) Maintain accurate recordkeeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

- d) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- e) Maintain early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Based upon our District's education and community needs, values and priorities, the School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

- a) **Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.
- b) **Unexcused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, hair cut, obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping).
- c) For absences or instances of tardiness to be considered under paragraph (a) above, proper documentation must be presented to the designated attendance person **within three school days** upon the student's return to school. Documentation should be provided by the person in the parental role or other official designees (e.g., physician, court, etc.)

NOTE: Please ensure that the above listed "excused" and "unexcused" absences reflect your District standards and modify accordingly. Also ensure that religious observance is classified as "excused."

Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

Commencing July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

- a) For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade five (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), such student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day.
- b) For students in grades six through twelve or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from kindergarten through grade 12 arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District/building procedures.

Student Attendance/Course Credit

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

With regard to credit bearing courses at the Middle/High School, students will not be granted credit if they exceed the following:

- More than **eight** unexcused absences in a one credit course
- More than **four** unexcused absences in a half credit course
- More than **two** unexcused in a quarter credit course

Teachers are not required to make up work with students for unexcused absences.

At the elementary/middle school level should a child be absent for 45 or more instructional days (both excused and unexcused absences) the building child study or student services team reserves the right to deny promotion to the next grade level.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working pursuant to an approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

For summer school more than three excused or unexcused absences will result in denial of course credit.

Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies Prior to the Denial of Course Credit

Parent/persons in parental relation and students will be informed of the District's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit. The implementation of specific intervention strategies will be employed prior to the denial of course credit to the student for insufficient attendance. The following guidelines shall be followed:

- a) Copies of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be mailed to parents/persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District. A copy of the policy will be available on the Amherst web site: <http://www.amherst.k12.ny.us>.
- b) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/student handbooks.
- c) At specified intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone, the parent/person in parental relation of the student's unexcused absence(s), and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his/her ability to receive course credit. If the parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, a letter or e-mail shall be sent detailing this information.
- d) A designated staff member will review the District's Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services/personnel within the District, as well as the possible collaboration/referral to community support services and agencies, will be implemented prior to the denial of course credit for insufficient attendance by the student.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)**Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

- a) Attendance honor rolls to be posted in prominent places in District buildings and included in District newsletters and, with parent/person in parental relation consent, in community publications;
- b) Monthly drawings for prizes at each grade level to reward perfect attendance;
- c) Grade-level rewards at each building for best attendance;
- d) Classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards);
- e) Annual poster/essay contest on importance of good attendance;
- f) Assemblies collaboratively developed and promoted by student council, administration, PTA/PTO and other community groups to promote good attendance.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Individual buildings/grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation. *In order to participate in after school activities, students must be in attendance by noon on that given day. Students in Out of School Suspension are not eligible to participate in or attend any after school activities for the duration of the suspension.*

Intervention Strategy Process

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 patterns (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

- b) In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relation 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 or instances of tardiness;
- g) Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention to building principals or designees.

Review Process

A parent/person in parental relation may request a building level review of their child's attendance record.

Building Review of Attendance Records

Commencing with the 2003-04 school year, the building principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences or instances of tardiness.

Annual Review by the Board of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review the building level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Community Awareness

Commencing with 2003-2004 school year, the Board of Education shall promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

(Continued)

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY (Cont'd.)

- 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 of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206,
3210, 3211, and 3213
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations
(NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6