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*White Bear Lake Area
School District #624 Policy 503*

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503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

- A. The school board believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, teacher, and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. Responsibilities

1. Student's Responsibility

In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, the students of the school district are required to attend all assigned classes and/or study halls every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence. It is also the student's responsibility to request and complete any missed assignments due to an absence.

2. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to ensure the student is attending school, to inform the school in the event of a student absence, and to work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

3. Teacher's Responsibility

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and study hall. It is also the teacher's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly. It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request. Finally, it is

the teacher's responsibility to work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

4. Administrator's Responsibility

- a. It is the administrator's responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes and study halls. It is also the administrator's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to all students, to maintain accurate records on student attendance, and to prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the administrator's responsibility to inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and to work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems.

B. Attendance Policies

Attendance procedures shall be presented to the school board for review and approval. When approved by the school board, the attendance procedures will be included as an addendum to this policy.

1. Excused Absences

- a. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the student cannot attend school is a valid excuse.
- b. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
 - (1) Illness.
 - (2) Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
 - (3) A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
 - (4) Medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment, or a counseling appointment.
 - (5) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
 - (6) Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week.
 - (7) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
 - (8) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
 - (9) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.

- (10) Family emergencies.
- (11) Active duty in any military branch of the United States.
- (12) A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.
- (13) Individual need as approved by school principal.

c. Consequences of Excused Absences

- (1) Students whose absences are excused are expected to request any work assigned while absent and required to make up all of this work or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
- (2) Student work assigned during the absence must be completed within two (2) days per day of absence from the date of the student's return to school. Any work not completed within this period will be considered late and will be handled consistent with the teacher's late work practices. The building principal or the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.
- (3) Students are encouraged to use available technology, including web based communication, to stay current while absent.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent/guardian and/or the school district.
- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district's attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) Vacations with family, personal trips to schools or colleges (If the student and parent/guardian have been warned of an attendance issue or the absence has not been pre-approved by a school administrator.)
- (6) Absences resulting from cumulated unexcused tardies (3 tardies equals one-half day unexcused absence).

- (7) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences:

- (1) Completing work missed during the absence within a similar time frame and for the same credit as defined for excused absences. This work will be for credit unless the circumstances surrounding the absence warrant a grade reduction or no credit.
- (2) Appropriate discipline from the following list, based on the severity of the issue:
 - (i) Detention
 - (ii) Loss of student privileges
 - (iii) Placement on a supervised attendance program
 - (iv) Truancy petition to juvenile court for those under age 16
 - (v) Other appropriate consequences as determined by parent/guardian and school personnel.
 - (vi) Loss of parking privileges at secondary level
 - (vii) Restriction from participation in extracurricular activities
 - (viii) Saturday School
 - (ix) Make up time missed from school
 - (x) Out of school suspension
- (3) Agreed upon goals/plans as determined by the parent/guardian, student and school personnel.
- (4) Other appropriate consequences
 - (a) After three (3) cumulated unexcused absences in a school year, a student will be considered “continuing truant” and parent or guardian will be notified.
 - (b) After five (5) cumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the administration may impose the loss of academic credit in the class or classes from which the student has been absent.
- (5) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56.
- (6) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes.

c. Excessive Absences:

1. Definition: Students who are absent more than ten percent of student contact days at any time during the school year or any grading period may be considered to have excessive absences.
2. Procedures for addressing students with excessive absences

- a. School calls parent/guardian to communicate attendance concerns
- b. School will communicate with parents/guardians in writing concerning attendance concerns
- c. School will schedule a meeting with parents/guardians and other appropriate school staff to create a plan to address attendance concerns.
- d. If the student continues to have excessive absences, the school may choose to take the following steps:
 - (i) Consider the absences unexcused according the Minn. Stat. 120A.22, subd 12.
 - (ii) Refer the student to a truancy intervention program.

D. Tardiness

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.
 - a. Elementary: Students who arrive late and within 45 minutes after the start of the school day are considered tardy. After 45 minutes, it is considered a half-day absence.
 - b. Secondary: Students are considered tardy if they are late and miss less than ten minutes of any class. If they miss more than ten minutes of class, they are considered absent.
2. Procedures for Reporting Tardiness
 - a. Students tardy at the start of school must report to the school office for an admission slip.
 - b. Tardiness between periods will be handled by the teacher.
3. Excused Tardiness.

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

- a. illness;
- b. serious illness in the student's immediate family;
- c. a death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative;
- d. medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointment;
- e. court appearances occasioned by family or personal action;
- f. physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.;
- g. any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or faculty member;

- h. family emergencies;
 - i. individual need as approved by school principal.
3. Unexcused Tardiness.
- a. An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
 - b. Examples of unexcused tardiness include but are not limited to:
 - (i) not approved by parent/guardian
 - (ii) Failure to comply with reporting requirements of the school district attendance procedures
 - (iii) work at home
 - (iv) work at a business
 - (v) missed bus
 - (vi) overslept
 - (vii) car trouble
 - (viii) doing homework
 - c. Consequences of tardiness may include:
 - (i) Detention
 - (ii) Saturday School
 - (iii) Loss of parking
 - (iv) Suspension
 - (v) Other consequences as determined by parent/guardian and school personnel
 - (vi) Combining unexcused tardies into an unexcused absence and enforcing consequences accordingly. The district considers three (3) unexcused tardies are equivalent to one half-day unexcused absence.

E. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-the-Job Training Program

This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school-sponsored on-the-job training programs.

- 1. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
- 2. When students participate in any co-curricular and/or sports activity, they are required to be in attendance at school the entire day of the event, unless they are absent for one of the following reasons:
 - a. School related activity
 - b. Medical appointment (requires verification by the school office or attendance secretary)
 - c. One period (or less) in the school Health Office
 - d. Funeral or family medical/legal emergency (requires parent/guardian excuse)
 - e. Student safety issues (to be reviewed by the WBL administrators)

If the absence is due to any other reason, the student will be declared ineligible for that day's event. The administration retains the right to request verification of any absences presented by a student or parent/guardian.

3. Students must not incur any unexcused absence (as outlined in the student attendance policy) the day after an event if the day is the next consecutive school day of the same week. If an unexcused absence is incurred for this next consecutive school day of the same week, the student will not participate in the next scheduled co-curricular and/or sports event.

IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students, parents/guardians, and staff at the commencement of each school year. This policy shall also be available upon request in each principal's office.

V. REQUIRED REPORTING

A. Continuing Truant

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

1. three days if the child is in elementary school; or
2. three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minn. Stat. § 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 Minn. Stat. §120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minn. Stat. §120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minn. Stat. §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/guardian and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minn. Stat. Ch. 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 Minn. Stat. § 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. Habitual Truant

1. 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 in a school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days in a school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. 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 Minn. Stat. Ch. 260A.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120A.05 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.30 (Attendance Officers)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)
Minn. Stat. § 121A.40 – 121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is Continuing Truancy)
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)
Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565, 95 S.Ct. 729 (1975)
Slocum v. Holton Board of Education, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)
Campbell v. Board of Education of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)
Hamer v. Board of Education of Township High School District No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d 7, 383 N.E. 2d 231 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School District R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)
Knight v. Board of Education, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)