

## COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular school attendance is a fundamental component of academic success. Additionally, attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The Harpursville Central Schools is an active partner with students and parents in accomplishing the task of all students meeting or exceeding the New York State Learning Standards. Students who attend school regularly are more successful than those who do not. Thus, the attendance policy delineates the manner in which the District will monitor, encourage, and reward student attendance to promote the academic, social, and emotional growth and achievement of all students. The goal of this policy is to maintain an educational community that is proactive, student-centered and achievement-focused.

### A. Objectives

Through the implementation of this Comprehensive Attendance Policy, the District expects to:

1. Encourage consistent attendance by all students through positive interventions;
2. To accurately track and identify patterns of attendance, absence, tardiness to school, and early departure of students to and from the school;
3. To develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance and to promote students' academic success;
4. To ensure sufficient pupil attendance of classes so that pupils may achieve State mandated education standards;
5. To track student location for safety reasons and to account to parents regarding the location of children during school hours.

Whenever used in this policy, the term "Parent" or "Parents" is understood to mean a student's parent(s), guardian(s), caregiver(s), or person(s) in parental relation.

### B. Strategies to Meet Objectives

In order to encourage student attendance, the following strategies shall apply:

1. A copy of the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be sent to parents at the beginning of each school year.
2. The Comprehensive Attendance Policy will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year or upon their enrollment during the school year.
3. Each teacher will be provided with a copy of the policy and any amendments thereto as soon as practicable following initial adoption or amendment of the policy. New teachers will be provided with a copy of the policy upon their employment.

4. School newsletters and publications may also provide periodic reminders of the components contained within this policy.
5. Create and maintain a positive school culture and climate by fostering a nurturing physical and psychological environment focused on achievement, self-esteem, emotional well-being, healthy relationships with school personnel, and strong school connections.
6. Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness, or early departure of each student.

### C. Definitions

Whenever used within the Comprehensive Attendance Policy, the following terms shall mean:

1. Scheduled instruction: Every period that a pupil is scheduled to attend instructional or supervised study activities during the course of a school day during the school year.
2. Absent: The pupil is not present for the entire period of the pupil's scheduled instruction.
3. Tardy: The pupil arrives later than the starting time of the pupil's scheduled instruction.
4. Early Departure: The pupil leaves prior to the end of the pupil's scheduled instruction.
5. Excused: Any absence, tardiness, or early departure for which the pupil has a valid school approved excuse. Such excused non appearance shall include: personal illness, illness or death in the family, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics or other medical visits, approved college visits, participation in a school-sponsored activity, military obligations, absences approved in advance by the Principal, and other reasons as may be approved by the Commissioner of Education.
6. Unexcused: Any absence, tardiness or early departure for which the pupil has no valid school approved excuse. Such unexcused non-appearance shall include shopping trips to the local mall, family vacation, oversleeping, skipping class, and any other absence that is not excused.

*The reason for a student's absence, regardless of parental consent or not, is the sole determinant in whether the absence is classified as excused or unexcused.*

7. Valid School Approved Excuse: Parents are expected to assist the school in accounting for absences by sending a note within 3 school days of the student's return to include:
  - a. Date of absence
  - b. Reason for absence
  - c. Student's name
  - d. And parent's signature

Parents should expect that a random audit of excuses be performed to insure the integrity of the excuse.

- NOTES:**
1. **After 3 school days, without a note a student's absence will automatically be considered unexcused, at which point the code of unexcused becomes permanent.**
  2. **After 5 consecutive days of absence, a student and his/her parent must provide the school with a valid physician's note in order to excuse the absences.**

**D. Coding System**

The following coding system is currently used within the District to indicate the nature and reason for a pupil's missing all or part of scheduled instruction:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>
AE	Absent Excused	HT	Home Taught
AU	Absent Unexcused	L	Lessons
AEMO	Extended Medical Absence	MOV	Main Office Visit
ASI	After School Instruction	O	Other
BAD	BOCES All Day	R	Return
BPM	BOCES PM	SA	School Activity
D	Dismissed	SE	Suspended External (out of school)
ELC	Endicott Learning Center	SI	Suspended Internal (in school)
FT	Field Trip	TC	Tardy to Class
GOV	Guidance Office Visit	TE	Tardy Excused to School
HO	Health Office Dismissal	TU	Tardy Unexcused to School
HOV	Health Office Visit	TST	Testing

The time that the pupil arrived or departed will be recorded next to the entry code describing the nature and reason for the student missing all or part of scheduled instruction.

**E. Notification and Intervention Strategies**

The overarching goal of the policy is to establish clear guidelines for communication about attendance and to promote student success with the learning standards. Accomplishing these requires a strong home-school connection and appropriate, timely dialogue between both parties.

Teachers are responsible for keeping their own record of students' attendance in their class and should notify the Guidance Office and Principal when students have accumulated absences as indicated below.

Thus, notification and intervention will occur as follows:

1. Where a pupil has not been marked as present for the first period of scheduled instruction and the school has not been previously notified of the absence, the district shall attempt to contact the pupil's parent(s) or person in parental relation to learn the nature of the pupil's absence and notify the parent that the pupil has not arrived at school. In addition, at any other period

- during the school day when attendance is taken and where the pupil has not attended scheduled instruction and the school has not been previously notified by the parent, a designated staff member may attempt to notify the student's parent by phone. Further, the parent will be reminded of the attendance policy.
2. At any time, if deemed necessary by appropriate school personnel, or if requested by the parent, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent and the appropriate school personnel in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to develop appropriate, mutually agreed upon intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.
  3. For every 5 unexcused absences, tardy to school, early departures, or any combination thereof, the pupil's parent(s) or persons in parental relation shall receive a letter documenting the absences and reminding them of the policy. Further, a designated staff member will review the attendance policy with the student and will discuss possible interventions to aid the student in changing their behavior. The aforementioned procedure will repeat after 10 incidents. Such notices will be supplied by the Principal or his/her designee.
  4. Upon exceeding 10 days of unexcused absence, the parents will be contacted for a conference with school officials. The Principal or his/her designee may commence the PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) and/or DSS (Department of Social Services) Hotline process, in accordance with New York State Education Law Part I, Article 65. A letter to the parents and a request for a conference with school officials will commence for every five instances of untimely or non-attendance thereafter.
  5. For circumstances that have been determined to be extenuating, it will be the Principal's responsibility to deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis.

#### **F. Student Attendance and Grades**

The District believes that classroom attendance, participation, and timely completion of related coursework affect a student's performance and understanding of the subject matter, and is properly reflected in a student's daily, marking period, and final grade. Attendance will not be used as a measure of student learning; rather course credit is recommended based on student performance related to learning outcomes.

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes, unless their absence is excused as defined in this policy. Consistent with the importance of attendance and classroom participation, unexcused absences and unexcused tardies, as well as excessive excused absences or excused tardies are likely to have a negative affect on a student's grade for the day, marking period, and/or course.

Make up work for excused absences will be available for students and must be completed in a timely manner in order to keep students current with the learning objectives of the course. As a maximum,

students will have the same number of days as their legal absence to make up the work missed, unless a later, alternative date is specified by the student's teacher for the class in question. Upon their return to school, it is the student's responsibility to consult with their teacher regarding arrangements for making up missed work, quizzes, or tests.

Teachers have no obligation to provide make up work or instruction for material covered during a class for which a student was unexcused absent, tardy, or early departure. Therefore, students should not have an expectation that make up work will be accepted for unexcused absences, unexcused tardies, or unexcused early departures. Teachers may provide opportunities for students with such non-attendance the opportunity to make up work, but there is no requirement on the part of a teacher to do so. Thus, for any unexcused absence, unexcused tardy or unexcused early departure students should expect to receive a grade of zero for any work collected during the class period, as well as a grade of zero for any quizzes or tests given. Teachers may preclude students from receiving credit for assignments given during the period of unexcused non-attendance that will be collected the next time the class meets.

## **G. Incentives and Disciplinary Sanctions**

### 1. Incentives

The District shall create and implement grade-appropriate, school-based incentive programs for exemplary attendance and significant attendance improvement. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Attendance honor rolls to be displayed in prominent places and included in District newsletters;
- Grade-level rewards for best attendance;
- Classroom acknowledgement of the importance of good attendance through the use of certificates or other appropriate means.
- Incentives to attend on days that have historically high absenteeism (beginning/end of week, before/after a vacation, etc).

### 2. Disciplinary Sanctions

The pupil may be subject to disciplinary procedures for unexcused absence, tardiness, or early departure, including verbal and written warnings, detentions, in-school suspensions, and loss of extra-curricular privileges, as described in the Code of Conduct. In addition, excessive absence could result in the denial of participation in interscholastic athletics and other extracurricular activities.

In order to participate in after-school, extra-curricular activities, students must be present in school for at least one-half of the school day and attend all required classes. Students who

are absent from school with an excused absence, as defined in this policy, and **other than illness or suspension** will be allowed to participate in after-school activities.

#### **H. Intervention Strategy Development**

The Building Principal shall meet periodically with the Attendance Supervision Officer and other administrators and teachers as the Principal determines necessary to review student attendance records, address identified patterns of unexcused pupil absence, tardiness and early departure, and review current intervention methods. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the attendance issues.

Where the Principal determines that existing intervention policies or practices are insufficient, the Principal shall notify the Superintendent who will in turn notify the Board of Education prior to its annual review of the building's attendance records, of both insufficient practices and any proposed changes needing Board approval to implement.

#### **I. Counseling**

The District shall provide consistent counseling to students with chronic attendance problems. Such counseling may include a Student Service Team (SST) meeting attended by district employees knowledgeable about the student. Parents should expect to be invited to attend all SST meetings.

#### **J. Attendance Supervision Officer**

The Board shall designate a person as the Attendance Supervision Officer. The Attendance Supervision Officer is responsible for reviewing pupil attendance records and initiating appropriate action to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness and early departure consistent with the Comprehensive Attendance policy.

**Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the appropriate Principal or Superintendent.**

First Reading: April 22, 2002  
Second Reading & Adoption: May 13, 2002  
Amendment-First Reading: August 17, 2009  
Second Reading & Adoption: August 16, 2010