

# COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Harpursville Central Schools

### Plain Language Version

#### Objectives

Through applying 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.

#### 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.**

**Coding System**

A 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. 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.

**Notification and Intervention Strategies**

A strong home-school connection and appropriate, timely communication between both parties supports regular attendance by students. Therefore:

1. If a student is not present for first class of the school day and the school has not been previously notified of the absence by the parent, the district shall attempt to contact the pupil's parent to learn the nature of the pupil's absence and notify the parent that the pupil has not arrived at school. Also, at any other period during the school day when attendance is taken and where the pupil has not attended scheduled instruction, 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. When needed, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent and the appropriate school personnel in order to address the student's attendance and to develop appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student. The student should plan to attend this conference.
3. For every 5 unexcused absences, unexcused tardy to school, and/or unexcused early departure, the pupil's parent shall receive a letter, supplied by the Principal or his/her designee, 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. This procedure will repeat after 10 incidents.

4. If a student exceeds 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. 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 extenuating circumstances, the Principal will deal with the situation on a case-by-case basis.

### **Student Attendance and Grades**

A student's grade is affected by classroom attendance, participation, and timely completion of related coursework. Attendance will not be used as a measure of student learning; rather course credit is recommended based on student performance related to learning outcomes. Thus:

- Students are required to attend all scheduled classes, unless their absence is excused.
- 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
  - As a maximum, students will have the same number of days as their legal, excused 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, unexcused tardy, or unexcused early departure. Therefore:
  - Students should not expect make up work to be accepted for unexcused absences, unexcused tardies, or unexcused early departures.
  - 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 during that class period.
  - Teachers do not have to allow students to receive credit for assignments given during the period of unexcused non-attendance that will be collected the next time the class meets.

### **Incentives and Disciplinary Sanctions**

#### 1. Incentives

The District shall recognize students for exemplary attendance and significant attendance improvement through items such as attendance honor rolls, grade-level rewards, classroom acknowledgement or 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, unexcused tardiness, or unexcused early departure, 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.

### **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. 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.

### **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.

### **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.

**A full-text version of the Comprehensive Attendance Policy is available for your review upon request.**