

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

## 1. Purpose/Statement of Objectives

Good attendance is a central component of the educational process. The educational program offered by the Wynantskill Union Free School District is predicated upon student presence and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. This Board of Education attendance policy has been developed and implemented to ensure the maintenance of an adequate record verifying the attendance of all children at instruction in accordance with Education Law sections 3205 and 3210 and establish a mechanism by which the patterns of pupil absence can be examined to develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

## 2. Strategies to be Employed

The district will employ the following strategies to ensure good attendance of all of its students:

- A. Development of this policy and appropriate record-keeping mechanisms to ensure that the attendance of all students is tracked and analyzed.
- B. Development of mechanisms to intervene on the individual student level when a student's attendance record demonstrates a need for improvement.
- C. Development of a district-wide program to encourage good attendance and improve the attendance of all district students.

## 3. Excused and Unexcused Absences

- A. Appropriated Grounds for Excused Absences or Tardiness. The student and his/her parent or person in parental relation are responsible for providing written notification of the reason for such absences upon the student's return to school. Whenever possible, parents or persons in parental relation are encouraged to contact the school in writing or by telephone prior to the absence. The following list represents excused absences or tardiness:
  1. Personal Illness
  2. Sickness or death in family
  3. Medical Appointments
  4. Court Appearances
  5. Religious Observance
  6. Quarantine
  7. Approved Education with Purpose
  8. Work Study (Middle School)
  9. Any other absence excused in the discretion of the Superintendent.
  10. Impassable roads or weather Students whose parent or legal guardian has been called for military deployment, is on leave from, or is returning from a combat zone or combat support may be excused an additional five [5] days, but work must be made up.

11. It is strongly encouraged that parents notify the Principal no less than three 3] days before the intended absences unless circumstances arise and each case will be approved on a case by case basis by the Principal.”
- B. Grounds for Unexcused Absences or Tardiness. Absence for any reason not included in the list set forth in section 3.A. above is an unexcused absence. Absences for reasons set forth in section 3.A. for which a student does not have pre-approval from the district or for which the student does not provide an appropriate note or documentation within three (3) school days of his/her return to school will also be recorded as an unexcused absence. Parental requests excusing their child from school for reasons not included above (i.e., to get a haircut, to go shopping, to go on a family trip, or not stating a specific reason) are unexcused absences under state law. Excuses that a student “overslept” or parent had “car trouble” are also unacceptable and will constitute an unexcused absence or tardy.
4. Record Keeping
- A. When Attendance will be Taken
1. Elementary School. Attendance will be taken each morning at the beginning of the school day. Each classroom teacher will record the students' presence or absence using the school automated attendance program. Main Office staff will track student tardiness (entrance and exit) during the school day.
  2. Middle School. Attendance will be taken in first period at the beginning of each day and all absence or tardiness will be reported using the school automated attendance program. Attendance will also be taken at the beginning of each period of scheduled instruction.
- B. Content/Form of District Attendance Records. The district maintains a permanent record of attendance for all students enrolled in instruction. The attendance record will be prepared by teachers and maintained electronically and in paper form on a building-level basis by the principal or another employee designated by the Board of Education. A district-wide record shall also be compiled by the Superintendent from the building-level records. Each student record will include the following information: name, date of birth, names of parents or persons in parental relation; address where student resides, phone numbers where parents of persons in parental relation can be reached, date of enrollment, a record of the student's attendance on each day of scheduled instruction recorded in conformity with the chart below, a record of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day due to extraordinary circumstances.

Code	Title	Status	Excused
a	unexcused absence	absence	no
l	unexcused tardy	tardiness	no
A	excused absence	absence	yes
L	excused tardy	tardiness	yes
+	out-of-school suspension	absence	yes
s	in-school suspension	present	yes

Entries on the attendance record shall be made only by a teacher, the principal, or an employee designated by the Board of Education and shall be verified as accurate under oath or affirmation.

- C. Contacting parents. In the event that a student is absent from school without a previous notification to the teacher or principal, the school will call the student's home to confirm the student's absence. If no parent or person in parental relation is home, the District will contact a parent or person in parental relationship at their place of employment or number listed on the student's emergency contact form. In both situations, if contact is not made with a parent or person in parental relation a message will be left for the parent or person in parental relation to call the school immediately.
  - D. The principal will review the attendance report at the end of each marking period and determine appropriate action that may need to be taken regarding specific students to address unexcused absence, tardiness and early departure patterns.
5. Student's Attendance Requirements for Discipline and Receipt of Course Credit
- A. Poor Attendance. Chronic absences and tardiness, whether excused or unexcused, are disruptive to the educational process. Make up work will be assigned for excused and unexcused absences. A student will be considered chronically absent if they miss ten percent or more of the school year. Satisfactory attendance is missing five percent or less of school over the course of the year. Students identified as chronically absent will be considered for a mentor program. Any student who is absent 10 or more days during a semester will be reviewed by the Principal, School Counselor and Attendance Staff to determine whether or not intervention is necessary. Intervention strategies may include, but not be limited to, a home visit, a letter to parents, a parent conference or filing a Court Diversion or PINS petition. The District retains discretion whether or not to file a PINS petition. PINS petitions may be filed earlier than these guidelines if the situation warrants such action. Additionally, a designated staff member will contact local Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect that the child is being educationally neglected. The designated staff member will provide CPS with the information necessary to initiate a report. If other staff members suspect education neglect, they must follow the procedures outlined in Board policy and regulation 5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting, and advise the principal.
  - B. Course Credit. Attendance will not be the sole criteria for denial of course credit or a promotion determination. Attendance will be factored into the class participation component of the grading system.
  - C. Consequences. Unexcused tardiness and absences will also subject a student to the range of penalties specified in the District's Code of Conduct. Those penalties may include, for example, detention or denial of the privilege of participating in or attending extracurricular events. However, absences related to homelessness shall not result in negative consequences where the district determines that it would be in the best interests of the student in retaining the student in school.

Unexcused ATEDs may result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's code of conduct. Those penalties may include, for example, detention or denial of the privilege of participating in or attending extracurricular events. However, absences related to homelessness will not result in negative consequences where the district determines that it would be in the best interests of the student in retaining the student in school.

In addition, the designated staff member will contact local Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect that the child is being educationally neglected. The designated staff member will provide CPS with the information necessary to initiate a report. If other staff members suspect education neglect, they must follow the procedures outlined in Board policy and regulation 5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting, and advise the Superintendent.

D. Attendance Incentives. The district will design and implement systems to acknowledge a student's efforts to maintain or improve school attendance. For example:

- At the classroom levels, teachers are encouraged to assign special responsibilities (distribute and collect materials, lead groups, assist the teacher, etc.) to students who may need extra motivation to come to school.
- At the building and classroom levels, Principal and teachers are encouraged to schedule special events (quizzes, game days, debates, etc.) for days of chronically high absenteeism, like Mondays and Fridays.
- In elementary grades, an attendance honor roll shall be maintained and published monthly identifying those students with perfect attendance as well as those students whose attendance has improved significantly, subject to parental consent and applicable confidentiality rules.
- In elementary grades, weekly certificates or other small rewards (including fun activities) recognizing perfect or improved attendance (not counting absences due to illness/injury). In elementary grades, monthly lottery drawings to award prizes for weekly perfect or improved attendance (not counting absences due to illness/injury). Three prizes will be awarded each month at each grade level. Names of students with perfect or improved attendance (not counting absences due to illness/injury) will be placed in the drawing by grade and three names will be drawn for the award of prizes each month, subject to parental consent and applicable confidentiality rules.
- At all grade levels, improving the school climate through student surveys in order to provide a safe, supportive school environment and engage students in school.
- Engaging students and families, determine whether systemic barriers to attendance exist for students, and develop solutions to remove those barriers.

6. Development of an Attendance Intervention Strategy. The Superintendent or her designee, through a committee of teachers, school nurse, school consular, parents, and school administrators, will develop an attendance intervention strategy consistent with this policy in the event that regular review of the District's attendance record suggests that overall student attendance is declining or should be improved.
7. Policy Review and Assessment. This policy shall be periodically reviewed by the Board of Education at the same time that the building level attendance records are reviewed. If the attendance records show a decline in attendance, the Board shall revise this policy as is necessary to improve attendance.
8. Distribution and Public Awareness
  - A. Public Meeting. This Policy shall be adopted only after it has been presented at a public meeting of the Board of Education, duly noticed, that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, students, and any other interested persons.
  - B. Plain Language Summary. The Superintendent shall create a plain language summary of this Policy which shall be distributed to parents and persons in parental relationship to all District students at the beginning of each school year.
  - C. Distribution to staff. Each teacher and administrator shall be provided with a copy of this policy upon adoption or subsequent amendment. Each new teacher or administration shall be provided a copy of this policy upon employment.
  - D. This policy shall be made available to any member of the community upon request.
  - E. Educational Neglect. The district will share this policy with local Child Protective Services (CPS) to ensure a common understanding of excused and unexcused ATED's and to work toward identifying and addressing cases of educational neglect.

Cross ref: 4710, Grading Systems  
5151, Homeless Children  
5300, Code of Conduct  
5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting

Ref: 42 USC §11432(g)(1)(I) (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act)  
Education Law §§1709; 3024; 3025; 3202; 3205-3213; 3225  
8 NYCRR §§104.1; 175.6  
Social Service Law §34-a

Adoption date: February 17, 2005  
1<sup>st</sup> Revision: September 21, 2017  
2<sup>nd</sup> Revision: May 21, 2020