

## 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 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.

This policy shall apply to all Middleburgh Central School District students. Students attending classes at other facilities, such as a BOCES center, shall also be subject to the attendance policy of Middleburgh Central School District unless the attendance policy of the other educational facility is more stringent than the policy of Middleburgh Central School District.

### **Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives**

The 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. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- c. Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- d. Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- e. Develop 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 District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused, unexcused or truancy 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, legal and/or criminal matters involving the student, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, approved volunteer firefighter or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.
- b. **Unexcused**
  - a. **Verified:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered verified if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories **and** is sanctioned by a parent or guardian. (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, oversleeping)
  - b. **Unverified/Truancy:** Unverified is an unexcused absence that is not sanctioned by a parent or guardian.

When a student is absent for two or more consecutive days due to a single illness or injury, such absence shall be counted as a single absence (occurrence) provided the student supplies a doctor's note that indicates the physician recommended the student remain out of school for a defined period of time. A parent's note will not suffice.

Written excuses for absences are required by New York State Law. An absence, tardiness or early departure shall be assumed to be unexcused until the designated school attendance personnel has received written notification. Failure to produce a written excuse within two school days shall result in the absence being permanently designated as unexcused.

## **Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection**

The register of attendance shall set forth at least the following for each pupil”

1. Name
2. Date of birth
3. Full name of parent(s)/guardian(s)
4. Address where pupil resides
5. Phone number(s) where parent(s)/guardian(s) may be contacted
6. Date of pupil's enrollment
7. A record of the pupil's attendance on each day of scheduled instruction.

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. (See attached Appendix A for District's Coding System).

Attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a. For students in grades K through 4, attendance is recorded for the entire day. For students in grades 5-12 who attend departmentalized classes (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. For purposes of Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and Teacher-Student Data Linkages (TSDL), classroom attendance for all students K-12 must be recorded on a subject-by-subject basis for Teacher of Record Determinations.
- b. 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.
- c. In the event that a student at any instructional level from grades K through 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.

### **Yearly Absence Maximums**

For Kindergarten through sixth grade, a student may have no more than (25) unexcused absences per year. A student may be denied grade advancement.

For students in grades seven and eight, a student may have no more than (22) unexcused full day absences per year. A student may be denied grade advancement at the 23rd absence.

Full-year high school : A student may have no more than (22) unexcused full day absences per year. A student may be denied all course credit on the (23rd)absence.

Half-year/credit high school course: A student may have no more than (12) unexcused absences per half year. A student may be denied course credit on the(13th) absence.

## **Individual Course Absence Maximums**

For students in grades six, seven, and eight, a student may have no more than (22) unexcused absences per course. A student will need to attend a summer school program to obtain course credit.

Full-year high school courses: A student may have no more than (22) unexcused absences per course. A student may be denied course credit on the (23rd) absence.

Half-year high school courses: A student may have no more than (12) unexcused absences per half-year course. A student may be denied course credit on the (13th) absence.

Lateness: Tardiness to a class of more than (15) minutes will be considered an unexcused absence.

The following class absences will not count toward the absence maximum:

- Out-of-school suspension
- Home instruction
- School mandated testing, including but not limited to, Advanced Placement testing (test period only), and psycho-educational testing
- School sanctioned meetings or events (i.e.: field trips or pre-scheduled music sessions).
- Illness or death in the family,
- Religious observance,
- Legal and/or criminal matters involving the student,
- Documented attendance at health clinics,
- Approved college visits,
- Approved cooperative work programs,
- Military obligations
- Approved volunteer firefighter
- Other such reasons as approved by the Board of Education

New students to Middleburgh Central School District shall have all the allowable number of absences prorated to reflect the portion of their courses that remain after they have entered the District.

Students who have failed to meet the attendance requirements for a course may be denied academic credit.

In each course, when a student exceeds the maximum number of absences a notation of "WF" (Withdrawn/Failing) for all subsequent reporting periods and exams may be entered on the report card. Students who have failed to meet the attendance requirements may be denied academic credit, but will be responsible to continue to audit the course. The purpose of auditing a course is so that a student receives seat time qualifying that student for summer school if applicable. Where summer school is not available, the student may be required to retake the course the following year if that course is required for graduation.

If a student is auditing a course and becomes a discipline problem, that student will be removed from the course and will become ineligible for that course in summer school.

### **Attendance Hearing**

Based on the outcome of an attendance hearing, students may be allowed to make-up missed class assignments up to the maximum number of absences. Otherwise, no make-up work will be given and the student will receive no credit (NC) for the course.

### **Class Absences and Tardiness**

This policy addresses all absences from school as well as all absences from a class. Students who arrive late for a class will be permitted to enter the classroom but will be marked as late when classroom attendance is taken. A student shall be regarded as being absent from class if he or she misses more than fifteen (15) minutes of class including tardiness or early dismissal.

Students shall not be considered absent when school officials authorize them to be somewhere other than in their regularly scheduled class. For example, suppose school personnel expects students to report somewhere other than their regularly scheduled class for such activities as meetings, music lessons, conferences with school personnel, field trips, out-of-district athletic trips, testing, and in-school/out-of-school suspension. In that case, the students shall not be considered absent.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

For the purposes of state reporting, chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10% of enrolled school days in a year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism differs from truancy because it emphasizes missed instructional time rather than unexcused absences. Missed instructional time can increase a student's risk for disengagement, low achievement, and dropping out, among other things.

Students who miss at least 5% of enrolled school days in a year are at risk of becoming chronically absent. In light of this, the District will implement intervention strategies for students who miss 5% or more of the enrolled school days in a year.

### **Incentives and Sanctions**

Appropriate incentives that will promote consistent pupil attendance will be developed and implemented. Such incentives may include, but shall not be limited to, school recognition for perfect attendance, and course credit/kindergarten through eighth grade advancement through attendance.

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will be subject to the penalties set out in the Code of Conduct. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to denying privileges to student events and activities.

## **Attendance Notification Procedures**

### Step 1

When a student has missed a total of eight (8) full days (kindergarten through sixth), five (5) full days (seventh, eighth or full-year high school course) or three (3) days day (half year course), the teacher will complete the Attendance Policy Referral Form and make parental contact (via email or telephone).

### Step 2

When a student has missed a total of sixteen days (kindergarten through sixth) sixteen (16) full days (seventh or eighth or full-year high school course) or ten (10) days (half-year high school course), the teacher will complete the Attendance Policy Referral Form and make parental contact (via email or telephone) and a meeting may be arranged to include the student, parent/guardian, principal and guidance counselor to advise that grade advancement or course credit is in jeopardy. At this meeting the attendance policy will be reviewed and the following steps may be utilized to address the attendance concerns:

- a. Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of excused, unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b. Contact the District staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/guardian 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, tardiness or early departures;
- g. Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention;
- h. Establish a mentoring program to monitor students with attendance concerns

### Step 3

When a student has exceeded the twenty-two (22) (unexcused/excused)absence in a full-year course, or the excused absences, unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

## **Appeal Process**

A parent/guardian has the right to file an appeal for review by the school appeals committee. The appeals committee will consist of one administrator, the student's guidance counselor, the school nurse and one teacher.

The appeal must be initiated by the parent/guardian and student and submitted in writing to the Principal or his/her designee no later than five school-days after the student and parent/guardian have been notified of the denial of grade advancement or loss of credit .

The hearing will be scheduled within five school days of the receipt of the written appeal.

The student and parent/guardian must attend this meeting.

Only extenuating circumstances regarding excessive (unexcused/excused) absences will be considered.

The committee will rule on whether the student will continue as a regular student in the course or be placed on audit with a grade designation of WF (Withdrawn/Failing). Any further absences during the appeals process may result in the dismissal of the appeal.

### **Building Review of Attendance Records**

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, tardiness and early departures.

### **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**

The Board of Education shall promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

- 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) Sections104.1, 109.2 and 175.6