

POLICY

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Students

SUBJECT: PreK – 12 COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Overall Objectives

Every student has a right to educational opportunities that will enable them to develop his or her fullest potential. Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with his or her teachers and peers and is a major component of academic success. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement. Therefore, attendance policies that provide for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address them are most likely to succeed. Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents/persons in parental relation, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building climate by creating the conditions most conducive for student learning.
- b) Maintain a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy with biennial reviews and modifications based upon the recommendations of a the District Student Attendance Advisory Committee that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents/persons in parental relation and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed 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 categorical trends in student attendance problems.
- e) Implement early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.
- f) Ensure there is an attendance designee in every school.
- g) Provide timely and multiple notices regarding student absences to parents/guardians.
- h) Provide annual training to all staff on attendance policies and procedures.
- i) Perform semiannual school climate walkthroughs at each school.

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Parents/Guardians/Family members will:

- a) Create home conditions that support student success that include daily routines such as homework completion, restful night's sleep, etc.
- b) Communicate challenges regarding daily attendance to their respective school in a timely fashion.
- c) Encourage their child to attend school every day and report non-attendance to school staff.
- d) Schedule student appointments (dental, medical, driver license, etc.) outside of regular school hours.

Students will:

- a) Attend school on a daily basis, be on-time and be prepared to learn.
- b) Be aware of the expectation regarding daily attendance (school start and end time, holidays, etc.).
- c) Share challenges regarding attendance with teachers, administrators, or other school staff.
- d) Maintain satisfactory attendance or be at risk for course failure, removal from extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, dances, etc.

Teachers will:

- a) Record actual, real-time daily attendance on a period-by-period basis.
- b) Establish first, personal contact with a parent/guardian to share and discuss student attendance challenges and successes.
- c) Offer guidance to students and parents/guardians about the importance of daily attendance.
- d) Encourage student daily attendance and create a positive climate in their classroom that supports student success.

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Types of Absences

The Buffalo Public School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

Excused Absence:

An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused when written documentation is provided for the below reasons: personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance and education, quarantine, attendance at health clinics, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.

Unexcused Absence:

An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above.

Exempt Absences

An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered exempt if documentation is provided for the following reasons: incarceration, suspension, court appearance, college visits, medical leave, and approved field trips.

Student Attendance Recordkeeping

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.

- a) Attendance Recordkeeping begins upon the first day student appears on a teacher's roster.
- b) Absences shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance of this policy.
- c) If a student is absent for more than fifty percent (50%) of a given class period, it will be considered an absence.
- d) Absences shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance in this policy.

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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).

Compulsory Age and Attendance

The Buffalo Board of Education is committed to all students being provided every opportunity to achieve a high school diploma. Consequently, the Board has adopted a school compulsory attendance age policy that exceeds State requirements and ensures that students attend full time instruction until the student completes the school year in which he/she turns 17 years of age.

At the same time as promoting attainment of the high school diploma, the Board also realizes that for certain students and their parents or guardians other educational avenues may be considered once the State requirement, that all children must remain in attendance until the last day of the school year in which they turn 16 years of age, has been reached.

Therefore, the Board amends its policy to allow a minor child who attains 16 years of age prior to commencing high school or accruing high school credit, to be exempt from the policy provided they are enrolled in an approved high school equivalency program of the school district. The minor child may enter such a program, with authorization from a parent or natural guardian, at the conclusion of the school year in which the minor turns 16 years of age.

Student Attendance and Course Grading

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation in addition to the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.

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Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies

In order to ensure that parents/persons in parental relation and students are informed of the District's policy regarding attendance and course grading, the following guidelines shall be followed:

Student Notification

- a) The District will provide a copy of the Attendance Policy to each student in Pre-K through grade 12.
- b) The policy will also be included in the Student Handbook.
- c) An orientation session for students will take place at the beginning of each school year and/or upon registration of new students.
- d) Classroom/subject area teachers are required to complete a personal telephone call and form letter to be mailed to parents/guardians after a student has three (3) absences from class within a marking period.

Parent(s)/Person(s) in Parental Relation Notice

- a) District Attendance Teachers will present the policy at a building level "back-to-school" events. The presentation will stress the importance of student attendance, as well as parental responsibility for their children's attendance. Students' parent(s) or person(s) in parental relation will be afforded several other opportunities to learn the attendance policy, such as at parent-teacher conferences, open houses, new-student orientations, or telephone conferences.
- b) School newsletters and district publications will include periodic reminders of the Attendance Policy.
- c) District and school level automated telephone calls may be completed as well.
- d) The District will develop and provide letters for parent notification of student absences in the top 6 languages.

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Faculty/Staff Notice

- a) The District will provide copies of the Attendance Policy to all District staff at the beginning of each school year.
- b) Faculty and staff will meet with the Principal and the Attendance Teacher at each faculty meeting-to review the Attendance Policy and to clarify individual roles in its implementation.
- c) The Attendance Policy will be posted in all schools.

Notice of Students who are Excessively Absent, Tardy or Depart Early without Proper Excuse

The school staff will be responsible for notifying the parent/person in parental relation for a student who is excessively absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. If the parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached at any of the contact telephone numbers provided, the staff member will provide such notification by mail. Further, the District's Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent/person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student ~~may also~~ will be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, each school will develop and implement grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs that encourage regular, daily attendance. For example, classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards), student award ceremonies, student recognition, etc.

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Intervention Strategy Process

The District will employ a tiered approach to Attendance improvement. This tiered approach is based on the philosophy of identifying personalized interventions and strategies as a student's absenteeism increases. In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

- a) Identify root causes of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b) Contact the District staff most closely associated with the root causes. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relation will be contacted ;
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific pattern(s);
- 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.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in student consequences. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, detention, denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities, the development of individual attendance contracts, and attendance hearings. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings/grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

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Attendance Record Review Process

Under the BPS District Attendance Policy, parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation may request a building level review of their child' absences. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation to request an appeal by contacting the school principal. Reviews may be requested for:

- a) Challenge the number of absences on record.
- b) Ensure that no violation of state or federal law has occurred.

Level I Review:

- a) Parents/persons in parental relation may request an Attendance Review at the building level.
- b) The principal or designee will coordinate a date and time of the review with the parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation in writing.
- c) A decision by the principal/designee will be made within five days of the Level I Review hearing.
- d) Parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation will be notified of the principal's/designee's ruling by mail.
- e) If the parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation are not satisfied with the principal's/designee's decision, the parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation may request a Level II Review by calling the Buffalo Public Schools, Attendance Office, 428 City Hall, Buffalo, NY 14202.

Level II Review:

- a) The **Attendance Office** will hold the Level II **Review** within five days of **request**.
- b) Parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation will be contacted to arrange the date, time and location of the Level II hearing.
- c) At this meeting, documentation from the student's school along with principal's reason for denying the Level I Review will be examined.

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- d) A ruling on this appeal will be communicated to the parent(s)/person(s) in parental relation in writing within five days.

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 reports and if such reports 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/persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of the 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) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

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