



Book	Policy
Section	7000 Students
Title	Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy
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**SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Statement of Overall Objectives**

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The West Seneca Central School District believes an active partnership with students and parents is essential to the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. The West Seneca Central School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, has a correlation to academic success, school completion, and post-secondary work or study. The West Seneca Central School District believes that a tiered Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy that encapsulates varied levels of intervention and support for all students and families will assist in meeting the following objectives:

- a. To launch a district-wide campaign that increases the West Seneca Central School community's awareness and understanding of the importance of daily student attendance;
- b. To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- c. To calculate the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.
- d. To verify that individual students and parents/guardians are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- e. To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- f. To closely monitor attendance for student safety.

**Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives**

The West Seneca Central School 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 helping students to make connections to school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b. Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a variety of stakeholders which includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, pupil services staff, 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 recordkeeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- d. Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual attendance and trends in irregular student attendance.
- e. Develop a tiered approach to early and varied intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

### **Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures**

Based upon West Seneca's education and community needs, values and priorities, the West Seneca Central School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

- a. Excused. Parent/person in parental relation provides documentation that verifies the following circumstances/criteria:
  1. Student illness;
  2. Family illness;
  3. Health examination/Diagnostic/Treatment appointment;
  4. Death in family (family bereavement);
  5. Religious observation - a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious organization to which the pupil and/or parents/persons in parental relation participate;
  6. Quarantine;
  7. Court appearance;
  8. College visit;
  9. Approved cooperative work program;
  10. Military obligation;
  11. School-approved field trips;
  12. Special occasions with preapproval at the discretion of the administration (i.e., pupil is attending the graduation of an older sibling);
  13. Work experience preapproved at the discretion of the administration (early departure).
- b. Unexcused. Parent/person in parental relation fails to provide documentation that verifies an excused absence or when any of the following circumstances/criteria occur:
  1. Truancy (willful violation by a student of the compulsory attendance provisions in Article 65 of the Educational Law, which requires minors from age six to 16 years of age to attend full-time school.);
  2. Overslept;
  3. An issue concerning transportation other than that provided by the District; i.e., car trouble;
  4. Student stays at home to mind the house or to supervise siblings;
  5. Vacations;
  6. Any other occurrences other than an excused absence.

A written excuse, signed by a parent/person in parental relation should be presented by the student when returning to school following each absence.

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

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a student management system 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.

Commencing July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a. For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade eight (i.e., classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), such student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day, provided that students are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period. Where students are dismissed for lunch, their presence or absence shall also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the student's return from lunch. For purposes of APPR and Teacher-Student Data Linkages (TSDL), classroom attendance for all students K through 12 must be recorded on a subject by subject basis for Teacher of Record Determinations.
- b. For students in grades 6 through 12 or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (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.
- c. 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.
- d. In the event that a student at any instructional level from kindergarten through grade 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.

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(I-a).

## **Student Attendance/Course Credit**

The West Seneca Central School District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter 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 up to 20% of a student's final grade or the current grading procedure may be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on major assessments, reports, graded homework, labs, quizzes, special projects, notebooks, ungraded homework, etc. in accordance with the existing student evaluation guidelines.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and make up any missed work following an absence. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures may negatively impact a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

At senior high school level, a student whose absence from scheduled instruction exceeds 15% of the possible days of attendance in a course will be subject to review by a building-based attendance committee and ultimately may not receive credit for the course. For the purpose of this policy, every three tardies and/or early departures will constitute one day of absence. For example, three tardies/early departures equals one day absence, six tardies/early departures equals two days absence, etc.

Students who are denied credit(s) as noted in the previous paragraphs may not be eligible to participate in credit recovery.

The Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy applies to the West Seneca Central School District summer program.

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

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a. Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or

- b. Working pursuant to an approved independent study program; or
- c. Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are not present in class due to their participation in a school and/or District sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school and/or District sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following an absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

#### 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 minimum attendance and course credit, the following intervention strategies will be implemented:

- a. Copies of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy and supporting resources will be available to parents/persons in parental relation, posted on the District web site, and provided to and reviewed with students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District.
- b. School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/student handbooks or posted on the District website.
- c. At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify the parent/person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his/her ability to receive course credit.
- d. A designated staff member will review the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy with students having excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services/personnel within the District, as well as the possible collaboration/referral to community support services and agencies, will be implemented.

#### **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

The District shall notify, via telephone, the parent/person in parental relation to the student who is absent, tardy or departs.

If deemed necessary by the principal or principal's designee, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be arranged between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. A staff member shall, as circumstances dictate, explain the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, the District's/building level intervention procedures, and, if appropriate, the relationship between student attendance and course credit. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

#### **Chronic Absenteeism**

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.

#### **Attendance Strategies, Interventions, and Programs**

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will implement a tiered system of interventions and supports for students and families. Specifically:

##### Tier 1

Tier 1 places a strong emphasis on creating awareness of the importance of regular school attendance. The goal of Tier 1 is to work collaboratively with our students and families to develop a strong understanding of how critical school attendance is in relation to academic success in school and life beyond. As such, we look to communicate our high priority on attendance to all through the distribution of our policy, school and district publications, and a strong school culture that is supportive and recognizes regular and improved attendance for all students.

### Tier 2

Tier 2 strives to implement supports for students and families who need assistance in addressing challenges and barriers to regular attendance that reach beyond those provided in Tier 1. The goal in Tier 2 is to help students and families feel connected to the school community and work to remove any potential barriers for regular school attendance. As such, frequent school-to-home contacts are made, student and family meetings with school personnel are conducted, and personalized action plans are developed to help create the conditions for students to be successful in achieving regular attendance.

### Tier 3

Tier 3 focuses on individualized interventions and provisions for students and families that need extensive supports that reach beyond those provided in Tier 2. These Tier 3 supports may extend beyond the school community, such as with public agencies, and legal intervention as a last resort. The goal of Tier 3 is to find a way to reconnect the student and his or her family to the school. Student and family cooperation is essential in helping to re-establish this connection.

In addition, grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs will be established to encourage consistent student attendance.

## **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Remediation;
- b. Detention;
- c. Extended detention;
- d. In-school suspension;
- e. Denial of participation in extracurricular, intramural, and interscholastic activities;
- f. Denial or revocation of student's employment certificate or permit;
- g. Denial or revocation of a student's early dismissal/late arrival privilege;
- h. Referral to public agencies and legal interventions as available and appropriate (Families Can and Family Keys programs, Family Services Team, Erie County Probation - Person in Need of Supervision, Child Protection Services, Youth Court, etc.).

## **Building Review of Attendance Records**

The principal will work in conjunction with designated staff in regularly reviewing attendance records. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of absences, tardiness and early departures.

A parent/guardian may request a building level review of their child's attendance record to the principal or principal's designee.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213  
8 NYCRR Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

NOTE: Refer also to Policy #7131 -- [Education of Students in Temporary Housing](#).

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