

## **STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays.

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his or her character. Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly.

Accordingly, parents will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

### **Chronic or Irregular Absence:**

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

### **Student Absence Notification Program**

Each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

### **Truancy, Suspension & Non-School Vacations:**

It is also recognized that absence from school will occur under conditions such as truancy, suspension and non-school vacations.

Truancy:

- A student who is absent from school without the knowledge and permission of his/her parents or guardians or school authorities is truant.
- A student who skips or leaves a class without permission after reporting to school is truant.
- Absences which are excessive and/or which interfere with the student's educational program may be interpreted as truancy.
- Truancy may result in legal action by the school system against the truant or his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

#### Non-School Vacations:

- Taking vacation time, other than during school vacations, is strongly discouraged. In deciding on an absence from school for a vacation, other than a regular school vacation, parents and school personnel shall consider the potential positive and negative educational effects on the student, and the impact on their peers and staff.

#### **Dropout Prevention**

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for fifteen (15) consecutive days of unexcused absence. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 15 days.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

#### **Establishment of Procedures:**

- **Attendance Record Keeping:**  
The administration will develop procedures to support student attendance and appropriately monitor and limit absenteeism, including a comprehensive system of attendance record keeping.
- **Compensating For Absences:**  
Each school will develop an appropriate procedure to support students in preparation for and upon returning from an absence which is considerate of the needs of the students, their peers and the staff. It is recognized that needs and accommodations may be unique to a specific, grade level, program and/ or the student.

SOURCE: MASC October 2014

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); [76:1B](#); [76:16](#); [76:18](#); [76:20](#)