

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

I. Purpose

Regular school attendance is essential to academic achievement, student well-being, and long-term success. The District is committed to promoting consistent attendance through proactive support, family partnership, and early intervention. Attendance is a shared responsibility among students, parents/guardians, and the District.

II. Legal Framework

Generally, children aged five through eighteen are required by law to attend school regularly. Consistent attendance is essential for academic progress, skill development, and long-term success.

III. Definitions

Excused Absences. An absence will be considered excused, and does not count towards truancy, when reported by a parent/guardian within 24 hours of the absence, and when it falls within one of the limited categories listed below:

- Student illness or illness in the student's immediate family (medical documentation is required for ten (10) or more consecutive absences)
- Medical appointment or treatment
- South Dakota Department of Health exclusion
- Working as an election official (if the student is 18)
- Cultural or religious observance
- Bereavement
- Military obligations
- Inclement weather impacting transportation
- Family emergency
- Family leave, which may consist of weddings, vacation, and any non-District sponsored club/ sporting event (maximum 5 days per academic year)
- Students participating in events of state or nationally recognized youth programs of educational value (maximum 5 days per academic year)

The District reserves the right to require documentation to substantiate the reason for any absence and retains sole discretion to determine whether an absence qualifies as excused.

Unexcused absences. An absence not reported within 24 hours of the absence or an absence not meeting the definition of “Excused Absence” or “Exempt Absence”.

Exempt Absences. An absence that is not counted toward truancy or chronic absenteeism due to the nature of the circumstance, which may include:

- Individual school closure due to emergency, weather, or operational issues.
- School-Sponsored events.

Only the Superintendent (or designee) may record absences as exempt.

Tardy. A student is considered tardy when arriving after the scheduled start time or leaving early without proper authorization.

Truancy Referral. The District’s truancy officer, or designee, will file a referral with the State’s Attorney’s office when a student has accumulated eight (8) cumulative unexcused absences in an academic year.

Chronic Absenteeism. Missing 10% or more of school days for any reason, whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Make-up Work. Students are responsible for completing assignments missed due to an absence. Expectations for make-up work are detailed in District Policy IEA.

Reporting Absences. If a student will be absent for all or part of a school day, a parent or guardian must notify the school by 9:30 a.m. on the day of the absence, or no later than one (1) full school day after the absence. When possible, families are encouraged to notify the school in advance of planned absences.

Absences may be reported by phone, through Skyward, or by submitting a written note. The notification should include the reason for the absence, as outlined in excused absences.

Failure to provide timely notification will result in the absence being recorded as unexcused.

IV. Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

Students play an important role in maintaining regular attendance and staying engaged in their learning. Students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Avoid unexcused absences, including skipping classes, arriving late, leaving school early without permission, or remaining on District property but not attending scheduled classes.
- Communicate with teachers regarding missed assignments or instruction due to an excused or unexcused absence.
- Take responsibility for their learning by staying informed about class expectations, assignments, and deadlines.
- Participate in attendance interventions when attendance becomes a concern, including complying with attendance plans developed to improve attendance.
- Complete missed assignments or make-up work in accordance with District Policy IKEA.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians play an important role in supporting regular attendance and student engagement. Parents/guardians are expected to:

- Ensure their student attends school regularly.
- Prevent unexcused absences by ensuring the student arrives on time, remains at school for the full day unless excused, and attends all scheduled classes.
- Timely report absences.
- Communicate with school staff regarding missed assignments or instruction due to an excused or unexcused absence.
- Support their student in staying informed about class expectations, assignments, and deadlines.
- Participate in attendance interventions when attendance becomes a concern, including supporting attendance plans developed to improve attendance.
- Monitor student attendance on Skyward.

District Responsibilities

The District plays an important role in promoting regular attendance and supporting student success. The District will:

- Set District-wide attendance goals.

- Establish a District-wide attendance committee.
- Create attendance teams at each building, led by the building principal.
- Create and communicate clear attendance expectations to students and parents/guardians.
- Create and maintain accurate attendance records.
- Notify parents/guardians of absences and attendance concerns.
- Provide students with access to missed instruction and reasonable opportunities to complete make-up work.
- Work proactively with students to complete assignments before an unexcused or excused absence.
- Monitor attendance data to identify patterns of concern and respond appropriately.
- Implement appropriate attendance interventions when attendance becomes a concern.
- Work collaboratively with students and families to identify and address barriers to attendance.
- Apply attendance policies consistently across all students.
- Comply with South Dakota's compulsory school attendance laws.
- Refer truant students to the State's Attorney's Office.

V. Truancy

The District is committed to working collaboratively with students and parent(s)/guardian(s) to support regular school attendance and address barriers impacting attendance through utilization of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Exhibit 1). In addition, the District will implement Truancy Interventions and Supports, as detailed in JED-P.

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Rapid City Area School District No. 51-4, Rapid City, South Dakota