STUDENT ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES/TARDINESS and TRUANCY

The MSAD #27 Board of Education believes that regular school attendance is essential to academic success. Because the process of education depends upon exposure to subject matter, continuity of instruction and class participation, absence from class is detrimental to student learning. The interaction of students with the teacher and with other students contributes to mastery of content, critical thinking, and development of effective communication and social skills. Therefore, each student should attend school every day. Further, the Board recognizes that educational success depends on a partnership between home and school, however the primary responsibility for regular attendance resides with the parents/guardians and the individual student.

The MSAD #27 Board of Education shall adhere to Maine State laws pertaining to the student attendance except to the extent that this policy imposes stricter regulations. Furthermore, the Board is committed to the implementation of a student attendance policy that prohibits discrimination, discourages dropouts, and encourages regular attendance.

Compulsory Attendance:
See policy JEA: Compulsory Attendance

Under Maine State Law, full-time attendance is required of all children from their 7th to their 17th
birthday except a student who has:

1. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade;
2. Permission to leave school from that person's parent;
3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;
4. Permission to leave school from the Board or its designee; and
5. Agreed in writing with that person's parent and the Board or its designee to meet annually until that person's 17th birthday to review that person's educational needs.

When the request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student's parent may appeal to the Commissioner.

Legitimate Absence:

Maine Law stipulates the following legitimate reasons for being absent from school:

1. Personal illness;
2. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
3. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
4. A family emergency;

5. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose that has been approved.

In addition, MSAD #27 considers the following reasons for being absent to be legitimate:

1. Participation in school or school sponsored events or activities;
2. Legal appointments that cannot be scheduled outside the school day;
3. College visits that cannot be scheduled during school vacations for up to five days when approved in advance by the principal;
4. Students who are sixteen years of age or older may be excused to work on the harvest beyond the regularly scheduled break for up to five days with written verification from the farmer who employs them prior to the absence. (Children of potato farmers may be extended beyond 5 days with permission from the building administrator.)

Because attendance is so important, the District has established the following policies and procedures to promote attendance and to provide support for students who are absent an excessive number of days.

Prolonged Legitimate Absences:

The Board understands that there may be circumstance where a student cannot avoid being absent for more than 10 days such as chronic or acute illnesses. Therefore, the parent/guardian is required to make arrangements with the building administrator to provide the appropriate medical documentation when this occurs.

In the event that prolonged absences due to legitimate reasons, the student will be referred to the Student Support Team so that a plan is put in place to ensure that the student is meeting their learning goals. The Student Support Team will work with the building administrator and the student's teachers to provide the necessary support to help the student make up work missed or appropriate replacement work.

Unexcused Absences:

An unexcused absence would be any absence not listed as a Legitimate Absence above. Consecutive or accumulated unexcused absences will be handled through the district procedures pertaining to student truancy.

Excessive Absences:

Excessive absence is defined as an absence in excess of ten (10) days per school year or 1 credit course and five (days) for a half year or 0.5 credit course.

Procedure for Attendance Communication:
See Policy JEAA-R

The Board believes that good communication between home and school will result in improved attendance. The following procedures are intended to improve communication.

1. Attendance will be taken in PowerSchool daily and every period.
2. If a student is absent from school without notification by a parent/guardian, an automated phone call will go home at 9:00 am as a reminder to the parent/guardian to notify the school about the absence. If the parent/guardian is unable to call school about the absence, a note stating the reason for the absence must be sent the first day the student is back in school.

3. If absent for:
    a. 3 consecutive days a staff member will call the parent/guardian to ascertain the reason for the absence and provide information on the attendance policy
    b. 5 cumulative days the principal (or designee) will call the parent/guardian to provide information on the possibility of retention/credit loss and recommendation ways to make up instructional time.
    c. 10 cumulative days the principal will send an Attendance Letter to the parent/guardian identifying the number of days absent and the possible retention or loss of credit consequence. (See Truancy below).

Consequence for Excessive Absence:

1. Any student who is absent for 10 days or classes will receive an Attendance Letter that will be sent to home informing parent/guardian of the cumulative absence, the district attendance policy, and the need to meet with the school's , Building Administrator, and the Student Support Team to design an attendance plan/contract to help resolve the issue(s) that led to the excessive absence, to make up missed instructional time, and to avoid retention or to regain lost credit.

2. Any student who does not fulfill the Attendance Contract, and their parent/guardian, will be required to meet with the Building Administrator and the Attendance Coordinator to discuss retention or loss of credit and further possible actions including those listed under truancy.

Tardiness:

A student who arrives to school or class late without an appointment note or school pass will be considered "Tardy Unexcused". Once a student accumulates two tardy unexcused per trimester, a warning will be issued and the parent/guardian will be notified. Once the student accumulates

more than 3 tardy unexcused per trimester, an office detention will be issued with a phone call to the parent/guardian for each occurrence.

Truancy:

A student is habitually truant if the student:

1. Is subject to the compulsory attendance law; and
2. Has attained the equivalent of :
    a. For Elementary Students age 7 to grade 6: Seven (7) full days of unexcused absences or Five (5) consecutive days of unexcused absences during the school year.
    b. For Middle/High School Students grade 7 to age 17: Ten (10) full days of unexcused absences or seven (7) consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year.

The Board shall appoint one or more attendance coordinators in accordance with State law. The following statutory provisions shall be followed when a student is habitually truant:

A. If the building administrator and the attendance coordinator determine that a student is habitually truant, the following shall be implemented:

1. The building administrator must notify the parent(s) of the student, the attendance coordinator, Special Education Director, and the Superintendent of Schools in writing of the truancy within 5 days of the student exceeding the truancy definitions listed above.

2. Upon notification of truancy, the attendance coordinator must refer the student to the Student Support Team (SST). (IEP students will be referred to their IEP team and, in the case of 504 students, the building administrator will be notified of the referral to the SST).

3. The Student Support Team, (or IEP Team for Special Education students) will work in cooperation with the attendance coordinator to assess the effect of the student's absences, the cause of the truancy, and the impact of accrued and future absences and will meet with the family to develop an intervention plan to address the student's' truancy problem. *(See policy JEAA-R for a sample Truancy Intervention Plan)*

B. If documented interventions do not work and the truancy continues, the attendance coordinator will notify the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent will issue a letter explaining: (1) the parent's obligation to send their child to school, (2) the risks of failing to do so, (3) the steps taken to address the student's truancy; and (4) that the school unit may be required to notify local law enforcement officials or DHHS. *(See policy JEAA-R for sample letter)*

C. When a student is determined to be habitually truant and in violation of the compulsory attendance law and the Superintendent has made a good faith attempt to meet the requirements of paragraph A.1-3 above, the Superintendent shall notify the local law enforcement department of the decision. After this notification, a local law enforcement officer who sees a truant may offer to transport the truant to the appropriate school as provided by the truancy law.

D. Having control of a student who is habitually truant and being primarily responsible for that truancy constitutes a civil violation under Maine law.

(Service of the petition on the parent will be in accordance with the Maine Rules of Civil Procedures)

LEGAL REFERENCE: 20-A MSRS 5001-A, 5052 5054

Cross Reference: JEA: Compulsory Attendance
JFC: Dropout Prevention/Student Withdrawal from School
JEAA-R: Attendance/Truancy Procedures

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