

Bigfork School District No. 38

STUDENT

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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General Provisions

Regular attendance is essential in order for students to receive maximum educational benefit from instructional activities. Parents are encouraged to limit their child's absences to those that are absolutely necessary. Excused absences are defined by statute and identified in this policy. All other absences are to be considered unexcused. Excessive unexcused absences or an excessive accumulation of excused and unexcused absences may result in a loss of course credit. Chronic absenteeism is disruptive to the classroom and may result in disciplinary action or reassignment from a current class. The Superintendent is authorized to establish procedures for the implementation of this policy.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are those permitted by statute or identified as appropriate by the Board of Trustees. Students are eligible to receive credit as earned for school work missed during the period of absence. The Building Principal is authorized to determine the validity of excused absences as defined in this section as follows:

- Illness
- Bereavement
- Family emergencies
- Medical appointments
- Participation in school activities
- Any other reason prescribed by policy adopted by the Board of Trustees

Truancy/Unexcused Absences

Absences which do not fall within the categories listed above are to be considered unexcused and constitute truancy. Truancy is also defined as any absence from school without prior knowledge or approval of the parent or Building Principal. Students are not eligible to receive credit for work missed during the period of unexcused absence unless prior arrangements are made and approved by the Building Principal.

In addition, truancy is further defined as any absence from school of a non-enrolled child subject to compulsory attendance under §20-5-102, MCA, Compulsory Enrollment and Excuses. Chronic truants will be reported to legal authorities as prescribed by law.

The Board will, upon recommendation from the Superintendent, consider an expulsion for chronic truants. The Building Principal is the designated attendance officer and authorized to enforce compulsory attendance requirements under the provisions of §20-5-104, MCA Attendance Officer; §20-5-105, MCA, Attendance Officer – Power and Duties; and §20-5-106, MCA, Truancy.

Parent (or Guardian) Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to assure their student attends school. When a student must be absent for illness or other unforeseeable emergencies, parents must inform the school during the morning of the absence that their student will not be in attendance. If a student is not present and the parent has not notified the school of the absence, the school will attempt to call the parent during that school day. If the school is not notified within forty-eight (48) hours of the last absent day, the absence will be considered truancy. The principal may excuse the absence, after consideration of the circumstances related to the failure to notify and to the frequency of the student's absence. In all cases where the validity of an excuse is in question, the administration may require verification from other sources.

Advanced Makeup of School Assignments

Students will make prior arrangements for planned absences and all work missed must be made up within the time specified by the individual teacher.

Students are responsible for having their teacher complete the advanced makeup form. Once completed, this form must be returned to the office prior to absence. When students are absent due to participation in school-related activities, an advanced makeup form may be required by the school administration. The sponsor or coach of the activity will provide the office and each teacher with a list of students who will be attending the activity, including the student name and duration of the absence. This list should be distributed at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of the first day of absence. Teachers who have concerns regarding students on the list must communicate them to the sponsor or coach at the earliest time prior to the absence.

Limit on Total Absences K-8

When a student is absent from any class for more than ten (10) days, the principal or designee will send a letter to the parent. The letter will call to the parent's attention the importance of good school attendance on student achievement. When a student is absent for more than fifteen (15) days, the principal will send a second letter to the parent expressing concern with the student's poor attendance and will request a meeting with the parent and teacher. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss with the parent the student's poor attendance, and if the absenteeism is unavoidable, to

develop a plan to make sure the absenteeism has minimal effect on the student's academic success. Excessive absenteeism or chronic truancy may subject the student to disciplinary action or grade retention. Chronic truants will be reported to legal authorities as prescribed by law.

Limit on Total Absences 9-12

A student who is absent from any class for a total of ten (10) days or more will be referred to the Attendance review Committee (ARC). The ten (10) day total includes both excused and unexcused absences; absences due to school activities are not counted.

The Attendance Review Committee will meet with the student and student's parent to review the circumstances of the absences. The Attendance Review Committee will formulate recommendations to assist the student in maintaining regular attendance and in making up credit lost due to unexcused absences. Recommendations regarding making up credit may include but are not limited to the following:

- Alternative Learning Center (ALC)
- Morning study sessions
- In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Teacher assignments
- Drop class and assignment to Study Hall
- Modified Class Schedule

The school administration and the ARC will continue to monitor the student's attendance and compliance with the improvement recommendations. Failure by the student to comply with the recommendations of the ARC may result in loss of course credit or disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from school. A recommendation for expulsion will be referred to the Board of Trustees for a due process discipline hearing.

All recommendations of the ARC are subject to approval and modification by the Building Principal. A decision to not allow course credit may be appealed to the Superintendent. A decision by the Superintendent may be appealed to the Board of Trustees who may decide whether or not to hear the appeal.

Checking Out of School

When a student finds it necessary to leave after the start of the school day, the student shall follow the office procedures for checking out of school. Failure to follow this procedure may be considered truancy and subjects the student to disciplinary action.

Legal Reference: §20-5-102, MCA Compulsory Enrollment and Excuses
§20-5-103(2), MCA Compulsory Attendance and Excuses
§20-5-105, MCA Attendance Officer – Powers and Duties
§20-5-106, MCA Truancy
§20-5-107, MCA Incapacitated and Indigent Child Attendance
§20-1-308, MCA Religious Instruction Released Time Program

Policy History:

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