

STUDENT ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

A. Types of Absences

1. Absences Authorized Solely by Parent/Guardian – A student is excused from school attendance if his/her parent/guardian submits a written excuse to the school at least one day prior to the student’s absence from school. A student may be excused under this provision for not more than 10 days in the school year.
2. School-Excused Absences – Except as noted in item (1) above, the school, not the parent/guardian, excuses student absences from school. The School Attendance Officer is empowered to approve an absence for the following reasons:
 - a. Bona fide religious holiday. Parents/guardians are asked to provide written notice of such absence before the absence.
 - b. The child is not in proper physical or mental condition to attend school or an educational program. If the student is absent from school for three or more consecutive days due to illness, the parent/guardian may be required to obtain a written statement from a physician, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist or psychologist or Christian Science practitioner living and residing in this state who is listed in the Christian Science Journal as sufficient proof of the physical or mental condition of the child. An excuse under this provision shall be in writing and shall state the time period for which it is valid, not to exceed 30 days.
 - c. A death in the immediate family.
 - d. An illness in the immediate family which requires the attendance of the student. The student may be absent from school only during the period of time in which his/her attendance at home or elsewhere is needed.
 - e. A quarantine as imposed by the public health officer.
 - f. Transportation delay beyond the control of the student.
 - g. Inclement weather in situations when schools are not closed.
 - h. Other emergency which prevents attendance which is generally defined as an act of God or other circumstance beyond the control of the student which prevents school attendance, at the discretion of the School Attendance Officer.
 - i. Suspension/expulsion from school.

In order for an absence to be excused by the School Attendance Officer:

- a. The student’s parent/guardian must call the school in the morning. This does not apply when an absence has been arranged in advance; or

- b. The student must bring a written excuse from his/her parent/guardian before the absence or upon his/her return to school. If a written excuse is not presented before an absence or within two days of the absence, the absence shall be recorded as unexcused.
3. Unexcused Absences – These are absences from school for reasons other than those listed in (1) and (2) above.
4. Truancy – “Truancy” means any absence of part or all of one or more days from school during which the School Attendance Officer has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence by the parent/guardian of the absent student and also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the state’s compulsory school attendance law.
5. Habitual Truancy – “Habitual truant” is defined as a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester.

B. Attendance Accounting

1. Students are considered not in attendance on holidays when schools are not in session on such holidays.
2. Unless otherwise arranged, when schools are in session for only one-half day, students who are present during the full time schools are in session shall be considered present the whole day.
3. To be counted present, a student must actually be in his/her classroom, unless otherwise provided.

C. Make-Up Work

1. A student whose absence is authorized solely by his/her parent/guardian is expected to complete any course work missed during the absence.
2. Students who are absent from school due to suspension shall be permitted to take any quarterly, semester or grading period examinations and complete any course work missed during the period of suspension.
3. Students with unexcused absences or school-excused absences other than absences due to suspension shall be given the opportunity to make up examinations and work missed. Make-up work missed by students who are absent shall be determined by the teacher.
4. Make-up work should be turned in to the teacher within a reasonable amount of time after the absence.

D. Truancy Procedures

1. No later than the end of the second day after receiving a report of an unexcused absence, the School Attendance Officer shall contact the parent/guardian of a child who has been truant by personal contact, mail or telephone call of which a written record is kept, except that notice by personal contact or telephone call shall be attempted before notice by mail may be given. The parent/guardian shall be notified of the child's truancy and directed to return the child to school no later than the next day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse.
2. The School Attendance Officer shall notify the parent/guardian of a child who is a habitual truant, by registered or certified mail, when the child initially becomes a habitual truant. The notice shall include all of the following:
 - a. A statement of the parent's/guardian's responsibility to cause the child to attend school regularly;
 - b. A statement that the parent/guardian or child may request program or curriculum modifications for the child and that the child may be eligible for enrollment in a program for children at risk under section 118.153(3) of the state statutes;
 - c. A request that the parent/guardian meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy. The notice shall include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent/guardian should meet, a date, time and place for the meeting and the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time or place. The date for the meeting shall be within five school days after the date that the notice is sent, except that with the consent of the child's parent/guardian, the date for the meeting may be extended for an additional five school days; and
 - d. A statement of the penalties that may be imposed under state law on the parent/guardian if he/she fails to cause the child to attend school regularly as required by the state's compulsory school attendance law.
3. If the above has failed to alleviate the problem, a referral to the Iola Police Department is appropriate. Also, a decision shall be made at this time whether or not the district attorney's office should proceed against the parent/guardian for failure to meet the school attendance requirement, to proceed against the child for truancy or to proceed against both the parent/guardian and the child at the same time.
4. Except as otherwise provided, before any proceeding may be brought against a child for habitual truancy or a violation of an ordinance or against the child's parent/guardian for failure to cause the child to attend school regularly, the School Attendance Officer shall provide evidence that appropriate school personnel in the school or district in which the child is enrolled have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, done all of the following:

- a. Met with the child's parent/guardian to discuss the child's truancy or attempted to meet with the child's parent/guardian and received no response or were refused. If a meeting between the parent/guardian and appropriate school personnel to discuss the child's truancy is not held within 10 school days after the date that the habitual truancy notice is sent, court proceedings may be initiated without the required meeting;
- b. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the child to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's truancy and have considered curriculum modifications;
- c. Evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems may be a cause of the child's truancy and, if so, have taken steps to overcome the learning problems, except that the child need not be evaluated if tests administered to the child within the previous year indicate that the child is performing at his/her grade level; and
- d. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be a cause of the child's truancy and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.

Points (b), (c) and (d) above do not apply if the School Attendance Officer provides evidence that appropriate school personnel were unable to carry out the activity due to the child's absences from school.

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