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*MSBA/MASA Model Policy 503*

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## **503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

### **I. PURPOSE**

- A. The school board believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, teacher, and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

#### **A. Responsibilities**

##### **1. Student's Responsibility**

It is the student's right to be in school. It is also the student's responsibility to attend all assigned classes and study halls every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or study hall. Finally, it is the student's responsibility to request any missed assignments due to an absence.

##### **2. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to ensure the student is attending school, to inform the school in the event of a student absence, and to work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

##### **3. Teacher's Responsibility**

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and study hall. It is also the teacher's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures

governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly. It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request. Finally, it is the teacher's responsibility to work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

4. Administrator's Responsibility

- a. It is the administrator's responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes and study halls. It is also the administrator's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to all students, to maintain accurate records on student attendance, and to prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the administrator's responsibility to inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and to work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems.
- b. In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statutes Section 120A.22, the students of the school district are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes and/or study halls every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

B. Attendance Procedures

Attendance procedures shall be presented to the school board for review and approval. When approved by the school board, the attendance procedures will be included as an addendum to this policy.

1. Excused Absences

- a. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the student cannot attend school is a valid excuse.
- b. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
  - (1) Illness for up to 3 days consecutively or 10 days cumulative

with documentation from a licensed health care provider.

- (2) Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
- (3) A death or funeral in the student's immediate family.
- (4) Medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment, or a counseling appointment.
- (5) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- (6) Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week.
- (7) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
- (8) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.
- (9) Active duty in any military branch of the United States.
- (10) A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.
- (11) School transportation issues such as a canceled bus.
- (12) Up to 10 cumulative days of absences for guardian requests will be considered excused for reasons including but not limited to vacation, fishing, hunting, college visits, cultural or religious observances, non-district related competitions or events, weather-related events when school is still in session, family emergencies, physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, and funerals for individuals not in the student's immediate family. Any absences in this category after 10 days will be considered unexcused.

c. Consequences of Excused Absences

- (1) Students whose absences are excused are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
- (2) Work missed because of absence must be made up within 5 days from the date of the student's return to school. Any work not completed within this period shall result in "no

credit” for the missed assignment. However, the building principal or the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent and/or the school district.
- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school district’s attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home, including babysitting a younger sibling.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) Arriving to class late will be considered an absence (the number of minutes late will be determined by building policy)
- (6) Skipping school.
- (7) Oversleeping or need to sleep.
- (8) Keeping a lonely parent company.
- (9) School refusal.
- (10) Missed bus, family vehicle issue, car trouble.
- (11) Illnesses for more than 3 consecutive days or more than 10 cumulative days without documentation from a licensed health care provider.
- (12) Guardian request absences for more than 10 cumulative days for reasons including but not limited to vacation, fishing, hunting, college visits, cultural or religious observances, non-district related competitions or events, weather-related events when school is still in session, family emergencies, physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, and funerals for individuals not in the

student's immediate family.

- (13) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences

- (1) The school will attempt to contact parents after every unexcused absence. Students with unexcused absences (occurring in one school year) shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:
- a. In the event of an unexcused absence the school district administration will notify the student's parent/guardian, by mail or phone, of the student's unexcused absence. A copy of the district's attendance policy will be sent home. The student may be assigned 1 day of detention (either before school or after school).
  - b. After numerous unexcused absences and/or failures to complete detentions, a meeting with the student, their parents, school administrator or designee, the family service worker, and a County Social Worker may occur. At this meeting, solutions to the student's unexcused absences may be discussed further and an intervention plan may be identified and put into action. Examples of such intervention plans may include, but are not limited to: In-School Suspension, grade reduction, loss of credit, mental health evaluation, chemical use assessment, and mentoring. Reference the Student Handbook for specific detail per building site.
  - c. After the child has been absent without lawful excuse one or more class periods on seven school days, the 503-5 school district administration will file truancy and request the county attorney to file a petition with juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 260C.007 sub. 6(14).
- (2) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.40-121A.56.
- (3) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.

- (4) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota statutes.

C. Tardiness

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness. It is the responsibility of school district staff to document the time of the student's arrival.
2. Procedures for Reporting Tardiness
  - a. Students tardy at the start of school must report to the school office for an admission slip.
  - b. Tardiness between periods will be handled by the teacher.
3. Excused Tardiness

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

  - a. Illness.
  - b. Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
  - c. A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
  - d. Medical, dental, orthodontic, or mental health treatment.
  - e. Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
  - f. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
  - g. Any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or faculty member.
4. Unexcused Tardiness
  - a. An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
  - b. Arriving at class late will be considered an absence (the number of minutes late will be determined by building policy).

D. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-the-Job Training Programs

This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity schedule either during or outside the school day and any school-sponsored on-the-job training programs.

1. School-initiated absences will be accepted and participation permitted.
2. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
3. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
4. If a student is absent from school due to medical reasons, he or she must present a physician's statement or a statement from the student's parent or guardian clearing the student for participation that day. The note must be presented to the coach or advisor before the student participates in the activity or program.
5. A student, who has been withheld from participation by a medical professional due to a medical condition or injury must present a physician's clearance before resuming participation.
6. Exceptions can be made by the building administrator.

**III. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATION**

Reasonable efforts will be made by the school district to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious observance. Requests for accommodations should be directed to the building principal.

**IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY**

1. Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year. This policy shall also be available upon request in each principal's office.
2. The school district will provide annual notice to parents of the school district's policy relating to a student's absence from school for religious observance.

## V. **REQUIRED REPORTING**

### A. Continuing Truant

Minnesota Statutes section 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. Three days if the child is in elementary school; or
2. Three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

### B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statutes section 260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

1. That the child is truant;
2. That the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
3. That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statutes- section 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota- Statutes- section 120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statutes section 120A.34;
5. That alternative educational programs and services may be available in the child's enrolling or resident district;
6. That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;
7. That if the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260C;
8. That if the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 260C.201; and

9. That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260A.

**Legal References:** Minn. Stat. § 120A.05 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School for Religious Observance)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is a Continuing Truant)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)  
*Goss v. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565 (1975)  
*Slocum v. Holton Bd. of Educ.*, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)  
*Campbell v. Bd. of Educ. of New Milford*, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)  
*Hamer v. Bd. of Educ. of Twp. High Sch. Dist. No. 113*, 66 Ill. App.3d 7, 383 N.E.2d 231 (1978)  
*Gutierrez v. Sch. Dist R-1*, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)  
*Knight v. Bd. of Educ.*, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)  
*Dorsey v. Bale*, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

**Cross References:** MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)