



SECTION IV

ATTENDANCE

Student Attendance (Policy 5500.05)

(Elementary School, Middle School, High School, Dual Enrollment)

Philosophical Basis and Purpose:

The classroom experience is of unique value and cannot be duplicated by make-up work. The purpose of this attendance policy is to foster responsibility and reliability on the part of district students to attend all classes. Students will acknowledge greater emphasis on attendance at school because credit in their classes will be contingent upon their presence.

Definitions

I. Compulsory School Attendance

- A. All children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year, or who are older than six years of age but who have not yet attained the age of 16 years, except as hereinafter provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. (F.S. §1003.21) (1) (a))
- B. A student who attains the age of 16 years during the school year is not subject to compulsory school attendance and may withdraw from school only if the student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the School Board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential and must be signed by the child and parent. A student who attains the age of 18 years during the school year is not subject to the legal sanctions for compulsory school attendance. (F.S. §1003.21 (2) (c)) An exit interview must be conducted by school personnel to determine the reasons for the student's decision to terminate school enrollment and actions taken to keep the student in school. (F.S. §1003.21(2) (c))
- C. Students under 16 years of age may not be withdrawn from school for any reason unless expelled through Board action or covered by an exemption allowed by Florida Statute. (F.S. §1002.20 (2)(b))
- D. Compulsory school attendance requirements may be met by attendance in a home education program. A "home education program" means the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent in order to satisfy the attendance requirements of Florida law. (F.S. §1002.01(1))
- E. For students enrolled in Department of Juvenile Justice Programs, the compulsory school attendance requirement is governed by state law and regulations and includes a longer term. (F.S. §§1003.01(11), 1003.52)

II. Absences

A. Absence Defined

A student who is not present in class at least one half of the class period shall be counted absent from that class. To be counted present for the school day, a student must be in attendance for at least one half of the class periods during the school day.

B. Excused Absences

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed in paragraph V below.

C. Unexcused Absences

Any absence which does not meet the criteria of an excused absence is an unexcused absence. The following are examples of unexcused absences:

1. out-of-school suspensions
2. family vacations
3. Students without a completed Certificate of Immunization indicating compliance with the current required schedule of immunizations will not be allowed to attend classes until this document is provided or a waiver is obtained. Absences due to non-compliance with immunization requirements shall be considered unexcused. However, students transferring into Pinellas County, including foster care students, or homeless students, a temporary 30-day waiver of both health examination documents and certificates of immunization will be granted. (F.S. 1003.22(1) (5) (e))

III. Tardies

A student is tardy when the student is not in his or her assigned seat or station when the bell rings.

A. Excused Tardy

A tardy is excused only if the student is late for one of the reasons described in section V.

B. Unexcused Tardy

A tardy is not excused unless it is caused by reasons set forth in section V. Examples of unexcused tardies include:

1. oversleeping
2. missing the school bus
3. shopping trips
4. pleasure trips
5. car problems (ex: flat tire, no gas, car won't start, student getting a parking decal)
6. heavy traffic
7. returned for forgotten items

Habitual tardiness is unacceptable and unfair to other students because instruction is interrupted every time a late student arrives. Individual schools may develop school-based consequences for tardy students.

IV. Early Sign Out

Once students arrive on campus, they may not leave without permission from an administrator. Students who must leave school during school hours must have their parent request this release by phone or in person to the office in order to obtain pre-approval. Schools will establish procedures for early release that ensure a secure campus for dismissal.

Students' academic performance may be negatively impacted by early sign out. Signing out early repeatedly may count toward a pattern of non-attendance (see section VII, below) that may indicate early signs of truancy. Repeated early sign outs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance.

A. Excused Early Sign Out

The same criteria used to determine an excused absence and an excused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is excused.

B. An Unexcused Early Sign Out Includes:

The same criteria used to determine an unexcused absence and an unexcused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is unexcused.

Numerous incidents of early release are unacceptable and unfair to the other students whose instruction is interrupted each time a student leaves early.

V. Reasons Why An Absence, A Tardy Or An Early Sign Out Will Be Excused

An absence, a tardy or early sign out will be excused if caused by one of the following reasons:

- A. The student is ill or injured.
- B. There is a major illness in the student's immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, or others living in the home).
- C. There is a death in the immediate family.
- D. The student attends religious instruction or there is a religious holiday in the student's own faith.
- E. The student is required by summons, subpoena or court order to appear in court. A copy of the subpoena or court order must be given to the principal.
- F. Special event. Examples of special events include important public functions, conferences, state/national competitions, as well as exceptional cases of family need. The student must get permission from the principal at least five days prior to the absence.
- G. The student has a scheduled medical or dental appointment. It is recommended, when possible, to schedule appointments outside of school hours, so students do not miss instruction.
- H. Students having, or suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard (F.S. 1003.22). Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo and scabies. Students are allowed a maximum of three (3) excused days for each infestation of head lice unless extended by principal. Students on field trips and students who attend alternative to suspension programs are not considered absent.

VI. Make-Up Work For Absences (Excused, Unexcused Or Suspension).

Make-up work for full credit and without a grade penalty is allowed for all absences. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the missed work. The number of days allowed to make up the work shall be equal to the number of days the student was absent. In cases where the grading period ends before make-up work can be completed due to absences, an "I" may be recorded for the grading period grade. The "I" can be converted to a letter grade once the number of make-up days allowable in policy have been granted for the completion of make-up work.

In accordance with F.S. 1003.01, if a student is supplied with make-up work during a suspension, the student is expected to complete the work during the suspension period and submit it upon their return to school.

VII. Responsibility Of Parents And Students To Attend School

Parents and students must do the following in connection with school attendance:

- A. Ensure the attendance of a child of compulsory school attendance age, as required by law. (F.S. 1003.24)
- B. Notify school personnel of their child's absence prior to the end of the school day of the absence, if possible and provide written notification within 48 hours of the child's return to school. Otherwise, the absence will be unexcused.
- C. If requested, provide documentation of illness from a physician or public health unit within 48 hours. The maximum number of days that a student may be absent without acceptable documentation justifying the absence is five (5) consecutive days.
- D. Notify the school of any change of address, phone numbers and emergency contact numbers.
- E. Obtain application from currently assigned school if a student is eligible for homebound instruction.
- F. Notify school personnel if the family is moving out of town or out of the school's attendance boundary.
- G. Be aware of school district calendar and coordinate trips, vacations and personal business to support attendance on school days.
- H. Notify the school and request a copy of the Hospital/Homebound referral packet if a student is expected to miss at least 15 consecutive school days due to illness, medical condition, or social/emotional reasons, or may miss excessive days intermittently throughout the school year for the same reasons.

VIII. Responsibility Of School District Regarding Student Attendance

A. Patterns Of Non-Attendance

Non-attendance for instructional activities is established by an accumulation of tardies, early sign outs, or absences (excused and unexcused) from school. A pattern of non-attendance may indicate early signs of truancy.

1. Each principal must make the necessary provisions to ensure that all school attendance reports are accurate and timely and must provide the necessary training opportunities for staff to accurately report attendance (F.S.1003.23 (1)). Principals are required to maintain an attendance record which shows the absence or attendance of each child enrolled for each school day of the year. (F.S.1003.23 (2))
2. When a student accumulates five (5) absences during a grading period, other than out-of-school suspensions, whether excused or unexcused, school personnel shall make a good faith effort to contact the parent by telephone to discuss the reasons for the absences and shall document such contact.
3. A letter shall be sent to the parent or guardian and a referral will be made to the school's Child Study Team for a student who has had at least five unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month, or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a 90 calendar day period.
4. If the parent or guardian of a child who has been identified as exhibiting a pattern of non-attendance enrolls the child in a home education program, the Superintendent shall refer the parent to a home education review committee composed of the district contact person for home education and at least two home educators selected by the parent from a district list of all home educators who have conducted a home education program for at least three years and have indicated a willingness to serve on the committee.
5. If a child subject to compulsory school attendance will not comply with attempts to enforce school attendance, the Superintendent may file a truancy petition pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section §984.12, Florida Statutes. The superintendent may also refer the case to the case staffing committee which may file a child-in-need-of-services petition. The superintendent may also take such steps as are necessary to bring criminal prosecution against the parent. (F.S. §1003.26)
6. Pursuant to Florida Statute §322.091 and §1003.27, the district is required to report to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) the names, dates of birth, sex and social security numbers of minor students who accumulate fifteen (15) unexcused absences in a period of 90 calendar days. These students may not be issued a driver's license or learner's driver's permit and further, the DHSMV will suspend any previously issued driver's license or learner's driver's permit. In order to have a driver's license reinstated, the student must attend school regularly for thirty (30) days with no unexcused absences and pay the appropriate reinstatement fee.

The minor, or the parent or guardian of the minor, may request a hardship waiver of the suspension if they request the waiver within 15 days of receiving the notice of intent to suspend. The principal must conduct the hardship waiver hearing within 30 days of receiving the request. The principal may grant the waiver if it is demonstrated that a driver's license is required for the student or the student's family's employment or medical care. If the waiver is granted, the principal or designee shall notify the DHSMV.

High School Grading and Attendance:

Guidelines for high school grading and attendance can be found in Policy 5440 Credit Defined and Policy 5420.03 Final Exam Requirement.