

COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Board of Education recognizes that regular school attendance is a major component of academic success. Consistent school attendance, improved academic performance and school completion have a positive correlation. It is the goal of the Catskill Central School District to assure that each student attends school on time and for the maximum number of days to support his/her efforts to reach the high standards established by the Board of Regents. This Comprehensive Attendance Policy provides the regulatory structure to achieve this goal.

Through implementation of this policy, the Board expects to reduce the current level of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures (referred to in this policy as "ATEDs"), encourage full attendance by all students, maintain an adequate attendance record keeping system, identify patterns of student ATEDs and develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

Notification

A successful attendance policy requires that all members of the school community are aware of this policy, its purpose, procedures and the consequences of non-compliance. The following procedures shall be implemented to ensure that students, parents, teachers and administrators are notified of and understand this policy:

- The attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.
- Parents/guardians (hereinafter "parents") will receive a plain language summary of this policy by mail at the start of the school year. Parents will be asked to sign and return a statement indicating that they have read and understand the policy.
- When a student is absent, tardy, or leaves early from class or school without an acceptable excuse, as set forth in this policy, designated staff member(s) will notify the student's parent(s) by telephone, mail or electronic mail of the specific ATED, remind them of the attendance policy, and review ATED intervention procedures with them.
- A back-to-school event will be held at the beginning of each school year to explain this policy and stress the parents' responsibility for ensuring their children's attendance.
- School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of this policy.
- The district will provide a copy of the attendance policy and any amendments thereto to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy upon their employment.
- All faculty and staff will meet at the beginning of each school year to review the attendance policy to clarify individual roles in its implementation.
- Copies of this policy will also be made available to any community member, upon request, and will be on the district's website

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(Continued)*Excused and Unexcused Absences*

The Board recognizes the following as legal excuses for student absence, each of which must be verified by the student's parent/guardian or school personnel, where applicable:

1. Personal illness
2. Death in the immediate family
3. Religious observance
4. Required attendance in court
5. Approved school-sponsored activities, including field trips, interscholastic athletics, musical and other competitions
6. Directed or authorized presence at the Administrative Offices or Nurse's Office.
7. Quarantine
8. Emergency dental and medical appointments
9. Military obligations
10. Approved cooperative/work study program
11. College visitations [only for juniors and seniors], with the prior knowledge and approval of parents and counselors, so long as it does not exceed 4 days in a school year.

Any absence not provided for on the excused list shall be deemed an unexcused absence.

Tardiness is defined as entering the classroom after the final bell has rung.

All ATEDs must be accounted for. Parents must call the district on the morning of the absence and must provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school. Failure to provide a written excuse will result in the ATED being recorded as an unexcused ATED.

Medical Appointments

The following additional requirements apply to ATEDs due to medical appointments:

1. Students and their families are encouraged to schedule medical appointments after school or at the beginning or end of the school day.
2. Parents must provide a written note informing the school of a medical appointment in advance, if possible, and no later than the morning of the appointment.

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3. Parents must sign out a student going to a medical appointment; however, the principal or his/her designee may make exceptions for Catskill High School students. If this is the case, the attendance officer will contact the parent to confirm the appointment date and time. Confirmation is required to classify the absence as “excused.”
4. The district may request a note from a health care provider if a pattern of abuse of this policy is indicated.

Approved College Visits

Parents must provide documentation of a scheduled appointment or schedule of planned activities for a college campus visit during school hours in order for the visit to be considered excused.

General Procedures/Data Collection

- Attendance will be taken daily in grades K-6.
- Attendance will be taken during each class period in grades 7-12.
- In Grades K-12, any absence for a school day or part of a school day shall be recorded as excused or unexcused as provided for in this policy.
- In Grades K-12, events of [late arrival] tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused as provided for in this policy.

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated staff member(s) responsible for attendance.

The nature of an ATED shall be coded on a student's record.

Student ATED data shall be available to and should be reviewed by the designated school personnel in an expeditious manner. Each Building Principal or designee will analyze attendance data weekly to identify patterns or trends in student absences and for the purpose of initiating appropriate actions to address unexcused student absences, tardiness and early departures.

A record shall be maintained of each scheduled day of instruction during which school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather, failure of the heating system or water supply, fuel supply shortage or structural damage to the building, etc.

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A record shall be made of the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with §3202(3-a) of the Education Law.

All entries in the register of attendance shall be made by a teacher or another employee designated by the Board of Education. Any individual authorized to make entries in the register of attendance must be able to, by oath or affirmation, verify the contents of the entries.

The register of attendance shall consist of any written or electronic record to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of a student. The register shall be maintained for every period that a student is scheduled to attend actual instruction or supervised study during the course of the school day during the school year, from July 1st through June 30th. The register at every school building shall include separate notations regarding student presence, absence, tardiness and early departure. The contents of the register for each student shall contain the information prescribed in regulations of the Commissioner of Education (Part 104).

Encouraging Student Attendance

The Board of Education directs the Superintendent to oversee a system of incentives and rewards to encourage, maintain, and improve attendance. Rewards and incentives should be established for students with “perfect attendance” (no absences, either unexcused or excused) and students with “excellent attendance” (no more than two [2] excused absences and no unexcused absences). These incentives/rewards should be awarded quarterly. The following are examples of the incentives/rewards that might be implemented:

- Free tickets for school dances
- Free “make-your-own-sundaes”
- Novelty rewards (key chains, pencils, erasers, small toys)
- Certificates of merit
- An attendance honor roll published quarterly [subject to parental consent and applicable confidentiality rules.]
- Quarterly awards

At the building and classroom levels, Building Principals and teachers are encouraged to schedule special events (quizzes, game days, debates, etc.) for days of chronically high absenteeism, like Mondays and Fridays and pre- and post-vacation.

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At the classroom levels, teachers are encouraged to assign special responsibilities (distribute and collect materials, lead groups, assist the teacher, etc.) to students who may need extra motivation to come to school.

At the secondary level, eligibility for extra- and co-curricular activities, interscholastic sports and attendance at school sponsored activities shall be restricted to those students whose attendance supports course credit in each of their academic subjects.

In grades K-12, class cutting and truancy shall be deemed infractions of the Code of Conduct in the nature of insubordination to the teacher and school administration. The Code shall prescribe a range of disciplinary interventions to address class cutting and truancy.

Whenever a student exhibits a pattern of unexcused absence, tardiness or early departure, notice will be given to the parents, in writing and/or by telephone communication. In addition, the student shall be conferred with by the classroom teacher and/or a guidance counselor regarding the pattern in an effort to remediate the underlying problem. Notice shall also be given to the Building Principal who may address the matter with the student and/or his/her parent(s).

In the event that the school level interventions have not improved the student's attendance, the Principal or designee (i.e., school social worker) may recommend interventions such as a Person In Need of Supervision (PINS) petition to the Family Court and/or contact with the appropriate social services agency to initiate a neglect petition.

Make-up Opportunities

All students who are absent from school or class, whether excused or unexcused, must make up all class assignments to remain current with their coursework. Students are expected upon their return to consult with their teachers regarding missed work and complete all work by the date specified by the student's teacher for the class in question (generally within one week).

Students who are unable to attend school or a class due to an excused ATED may arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed and receive assignments in advance if requested two days or more prior to the absence.

Teachers are not required to provide assignments in advance for students who anticipate an unexcused ATED (e.g., family vacations).

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Only those students with excused ATEDs will be given the opportunity to make up a test or quiz.

Attendance and Grading

Grade K-6 Attendance/Grade Policy

Class attendance is a critical component of the K-6 learning process. Students must be present in the classroom to learn. Students must maintain a 90% attendance rate (no more than 21 excused or unexcused absences in the school year). The Building Principal may convene a meeting with the Nurse, School Social Worker, the student's teacher and other appropriate school personnel for any student who has five (5) or more absences during one quarter to evaluate the need to develop intervention strategies. The Principal must convene the same group when a student has accumulated ten (10) absences at any point in the school year.

Students must make up all class assignments when absent to remain current with their coursework.

Grade 6-12 Attendance/Grade Policy

The Board of Education recognizes an important relationship between class attendance and student performance. Consequently, each marking period a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to make up all class assignments when absent to remain current with their coursework. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused ATEDs will affect a student's class participation grade for the marking period.

Any student who has been determined to have more than 11 absences for a half-year course and more than 21 absences for a full year course, for which required make-up assignments (for excused and unexcused absences) were not timely submitted and/or seat time (for unexcused absences) was not made up, shall be ineligible for course credit. Any such student shall be ineligible to submit any paper, homework or other work to be graded by their teacher(s), and shall not be permitted to take any quizzes or examinations in the course. In departmentalized classes, the course credit standard shall be applied separately for each course of instruction.

Make-up assignments shall generally be required for all absences, whether excused or unexcused, within one week of the student's return to class. In addition, students with unexcused absences

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shall be required to make up the “seat time” for the class he or she missed in the PM School in order for the absence not to be counted toward the course credit standard. With the approval of the Building Principal, make-up assignments may be waived in exceptional circumstances or where a §504 accommodation is warranted.

Parents shall be notified, by telephone and/or in writing, by the classroom teacher, whenever a student has unexcused absences or absences for which the student has not made up the class assignments in excess of six per semester, regardless of whether the course is a semester or full year course. Notifications will include instructions to the parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding criteria and procedures for challenging the designation of an absence.

The Guidance Department or Principal’s Office shall be responsible for making a personal contact with a student who is in jeopardy of course credit denial for the purpose of determining what reason or reasons are contributing to the student’s poor attendance. Reasonable efforts shall be made to assist the student in addressing the causes of the attendance problem. Such efforts may include:

- Discussions with the student’s teacher or teachers.
- Discussions and/or meetings with the student and/or his/her parent(s).
- Discussions with the student’s guidance counselor.
- Recommendation to the appropriate authorities for the suspension of extra-and co-curricular activity privileges.
- Developing an Attendance Improvement Plan for the student.

Notification Procedures

Parents of students in grades K-12 will be notified at regular intervals during the school year regarding their child’s attendance record. In grades K-5, this notification schedule will count both excused and unexcused absences. In grades 6-12, only unexcused absences or excused absences which have not been made up will be counted toward the notification process.

A student or his/her parent(s) will have the right to appeal to the Principal or designee as to the accuracy of the number or type of absences for any class.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused ATEDs will result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's Code of Conduct. In addition, the following penalties will apply:

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- Students must be in school by the end of the first hour to be considered present and eligible to participate in ANY after-school or extracurricular activities/events such as concerts, games, practices, dances, etc.
- If an emergency exists that prevents a student from coming to school on time or if the absence is an excused ATED, the student may request a waiver of the above penalty from the Building Principal or his/her designee. The Principal (or designee) will inform the coach or advisor of the approval to enable the student to participate.
- Students who go home ill are ineligible to participate in any after-school activities that day.
- Penalties for tardiness are as follows:
 - CMS students who are tardy to class may be subject to a same-day lunchtime detention at the discretion of the teacher. After 9 tardies to any class, they will be assigned to In-School Suspension on the 10th day.
 - CHS students who are tardy to class may be subject to a same-day after-school detention at the discretion of the teacher. Students who fail to report for the assigned detentions or who are chronically tardy will be referred to the Building Principal for further disciplinary action according to the Code of Conduct.

Chronic Illness

Students who have been designated as chronically ill and are receiving medical home instruction shall be considered exempt from this attendance policy for the duration of the designation.

Annual Review

The Board shall annually review building-level student attendance records. If such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board will direct the Superintendent to convene a committee of teachers, parents, and school administrators to develop an attendance intervention strategy consistent with this policy. The Board will also revise this comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the plan it deems necessary to improve student attendance.

Cross-ref: 4750, Promotion and Retention of Students

Ref: Education Law §§1709; 3024; 3025; 3202; 3205-3213; 3225
8 NYCRR §§104.1; 175.6

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