

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

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STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Students and parents/guardians who desire to obtain the greatest benefit from public education must recognize that regular attendance is essential. Further, students enrolled in the Aurora Public Schools are required to attend classes, unless excused for good reason, in accordance with the Colorado School Attendance Law (C.R.S. 22-33-101 and Article IX, Section 2 of the Colorado Constitution).

Good attendance is of paramount importance to academic performance and overall success of students. Absences, whether excused or unexcused, are detrimental to the learning process. Work made up outside of class is not as effective as the actual classroom experience. Class discussions, lab work, simulations, student-to-student interaction and student-teacher interaction cannot be replicated outside the classroom or at a later time. Regular attendance develops habits that are essential for success in the working world.

It is the joint responsibility of students, parents/guardians and schools to ensure regular attendance. Excessive student absences may be symptomatic of problems which necessitate joint efforts of the school, student, home and community agencies. Therefore, in cases of excessive absences, the district will utilize community agencies, as well as the courts, in order to enforce regular attendance when student or parental/guardian responsibility has not been met.

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The Board of Education shall authorize the Superintendent or designee to designate an attendance officer for the district to develop procedures to enforce the provisions of the School Attendance Law.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGES

All schools shall comply with the compulsory attendance age requirements as defined in the Colorado State Attendance Law.

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Attendance Expectations and Procedures

According to state law, it is the obligation of parents to ensure that every child under their care and supervision receives adequate education and, of compulsory attendance age, attends school.

Parents/guardians shall be provided written attendance expectations and procedures for district and for the building in which their child is enrolled. This information shall be located in newsletters, student handbooks, the school Web site, or other means of written communication at the beginning of the school year or as students enroll during the school year.

Notifying the School

Parents/guardians are to notify the school attendance office in a timely manner regarding a student's absence. After-hours school phone recorders are available to take this information.

District Attendance Officer

The attendance officer for Aurora Public Schools shall provide training and ongoing support for building personnel on attendance and truancy processes and issues. The attendance officer may facilitate attendance review board meetings to address attendance and truancy concerns, access community resources as appropriate, and assist the student and parent/guardian in developing strategies to improve the student's school attendance.

Building Procedures

All school sites are expected to follow district policy, regulations, procedures and the truancy reduction program protocols to accurately document student attendance.

All teachers are expected to record accurate daily attendance for their students. Teachers shall enter unverified absences and tardies into the district student information system. The school attendance office will also utilize the student information system to indicate those absences for which parents/guardians have called to verify that the student will not be in school. When a parent/guardian has not made the required contact with the school, the school shall notify the parent/guardian by a recorded phone message or a personal phone call of the student's absence. If the school is unable to reach the parent by phone a letter shall be sent.

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Teachers and attendance personnel will monitor the student's excused and unexcused absences and/or tardies. When a pattern of unexcused absences and/or unexcused tardies occurs, the student will be identified as habitually truant, based on district protocol and state law. Colorado State Law 22-33-107 defines the habitual truant as a student of compulsory attendance age who has "four unexcused absences in any one month or 10 unexcused absences during any school year." The teacher or school attendance office shall contact the parents/guardians to discuss issues related to attendance. Excessive excused absences or tardies will also result in parent/guardian contact.

If the student's school attendance does not improve, school personnel will make every effort to schedule a conference with the student and the parent/guardian to develop an attendance improvement plan. An attendance improvement plan shall be developed for a student who has been declared or who is at risk of being declared habitually truant, the goal of which is to assist the student to remain in school, maintain regular attendance, and obtain a quality education. This plan will also develop improvement goals, with the expectation that all parties will work together to assist the student in meeting attendance requirements.

If the student's school attendance continues to be a concern, the school may refer the student to an attendance review board or file a truancy petition in court. One outcome of the attendance review board is to complete an attendance contract which defines the expectations and responsibilities for the student, parent/guardian and school. If the parent/guardian and/or student fails to attend the attendance review board meeting or attendance does not improve after the meeting, proceedings may begin for filing the truancy case in Arapahoe or Adams County Truancy Court.

Excused Absences

To excuse a student, a parent shall notify the school in a timely manner via telephone, written notification or through other verifiable documentation as required by the school administration.

The district may require suitable proof regarding excused absences, including written statements from medical sources. When a student has excessive excused absences due to reported illness, the building administrator may require a written medical excuse from the family physician. If a family indicates they have no physician or medical source available for this purpose, the school nurse is authorized to make a determination if a student is, indeed, ill. The school nurse may also refer families to appropriate medical resources when needed to substantiate the illness.

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The following absences shall be considered excused:

- A. **Illness/injury**
Absences by a student who is temporarily ill or injured are excused if such illness/injury is documented by the student's parent/guardian.

- B. **Appointments/serious circumstances**
Absences shall be excused on a case-by-case basis if a student has an appointment or a circumstance of a *serious nature*, which cannot be resolved before or after school hours. To the extent possible, the parent/guardian is encouraged to notify the school in advance regarding appointments/serious circumstances.

- C. **Extracurricular experiences which have been approved by the school**
A student's request to participate in extracurricular experiences outside of the school building may be approved for up to five days under certain circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. Any absences beyond the five days shall be treated as unexcused. Approval shall be left to the discretion of the school's principal. The principal may use any of the following criteria or any combination of the following criteria in determining whether a student is permitted to engage in said extracurricular experiences.
 - 1. The student meets CHSAA general eligibility standards;
 - 2. The student is in good academic standing (passing all classes with a grade of C);
 - 3. The student has no unexcused absences;
 - 4. The student has five or fewer excused absences in a semester or nine or fewer excused absences for the school year;
 - 5. The student is attending any school-sponsored activity or activities of an educational nature with advance approval by the administration.

- D. **Family business/family vacation days which have been approved by the school**
A student's parent/guardian may request approval for an excused absence to attend to family business/family vacation (e.g. wedding, family trip). Approval shall be left to the discretion of the school's principal. This excused absence is not to exceed three days per year if the following conditions are met:

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1. Student is in good academic standing (passing all classes with a grade of C);
2. Student has no unexcused absences; or
3. Student has four or fewer excused absences in a semester or seven or fewer excused absences for the school year.

E. Funerals

A student's parent/guardian may request approval for an absence to be excused to attend a funeral. This excused absence shall not exceed three days. Additional time may be requested on a case-by-case basis. Approval shall be left to the discretion of the principal.

Absences due to suspension are considered to be excused for the purposes of truancy.

Unexcused absences

An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not covered in the excused absence section. "Prank" days, "sneak" days and similar activities are not sanctioned, supported or sponsored by the district or individual schools and shall be considered unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence shall be entered on the student's record. The parent or guardian of the student receiving an unexcused absence shall be notified orally or in writing by the district of each unexcused absence. Minutes of unexcused tardies shall be combined with unexcused absences to determine the total amount of unexcused absences.

In accordance with district policy, the administration may impose penalties which relate directly to classes missed while unexcused. The administration shall also develop appropriate intervention strategies for students who have unexcused absences. The school administration shall develop appropriate intervention strategies to assist the student in changing his/her truancy behaviors. The school shall request a sanction letter be sent to the family by the truancy attorney according to district protocol when the student is at risk of becoming habitually truant or has been determined to be habitually truant.

A court petition may be filed when the student has been deemed to be habitually truant and when interventions have been unsuccessful at changing the student's behavior. A judicial officer will take action as he/she deems appropriate. All petitions shall be accompanied by a sworn affidavit by a school person knowledgeable of the child's record. This affidavit shall inform the court in separate categories of the number of unexcused absences, unexcused tardies, excused absences and excused

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tardies. All subsequent affidavits shall be broken down in the same manner.

At any truancy hearing the school involved shall have a person present who is knowledgeable about the child in regard to the current unexcused/excused absences, unexcused/excused tardies, grades and behaviors in all classes taken during the school year and a copy of the child's attendance plan.