

Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

The District believes that consistent school attendance leads to the greatest learning opportunities for students. Students who are present in school and engaged, active learners take greater ownership over their educational outcomes. For this reason, it is the priority of the District to foster regular student attendance throughout the school year and partner with families to reduce barriers.

Chronic absenteeism, as defined in Iowa Code 299.1, means missing more than ten (10) percent of the scheduled school days (elementary schools) or instructional hours (middle and high schools) in the grading period. Truancy, as defined in Iowa Code 299.8, means a child of compulsory attendance age who is absent from school for any reason for at least twenty (20) percent of the days (elementary schools) or hours (middle and high schools) grading period. Student absences that are determined to be exempt are not used to determine truancy. Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy does not apply to students who have been exempted for any of the following:

- have completed the requirements for graduation;
- for sufficient reason by any court of record or judge;
- are attending religious services or receiving religious instruction;
- are unable to attend school due to legitimate medical reasons, such as hospitalization or receiving treatment or care by a licensed physician;
- have an Individualized Education Program that specifically addresses a disability-related impact on attendance and requires possible modification to attendance requirements;
- have a plan under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act, 29, U.S.C 794, that specifically addresses a disability-related impact on attendance and requires possible modification to attendance requirements;
- are excused under Iowa Code 299.22; or
- are exempt under Iowa Code 299.24.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent, in conjunction with the designated school officials, to develop administrative regulations regarding this policy. The administrative guidelines will

indicate supportive measures and disciplinary actions to address truancy, as well as guidance on local exemptions.

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Daily, punctual attendance is an integral part of the learning experience. The learning that goes on in the classroom builds from day to day and absences can cause disruption in the educational progress of the absent student. Irregular attendance or tardiness by students not only limits their own studies, but also interferes with the progress of those students who are regular and prompt in attendance. Attendance is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation and communication among students, parents and the school.

This regulation is divided into two sections: Section I addresses legal requirements related to chronic absenteeism and truancy and Section II addresses additional academic, disciplinary and extracurricular consequences students face due to chronic absenteeism and truancy. It is important for students to recognize that chronic absenteeism and truancy impacts all these facets of their educational experience.

SECTION I – Legal Requirements

Chronic Absenteeism

When a student meets the threshold, as required by Iowa Code 229.1-229.5, to be considered chronically absent the school official will send notice by mail or e-mail to the Dubuque County attorney's office. The school official will also notify the student, or if a minor, the student's parent, guardian or legal or actual custodian via certified mail that includes information related to the student's absences from school and the policies and disciplinary processes associated with additional absences.

School Engagement Meeting

If a student is absent from school for at least fifteen (15) percent of the days (elementary schools) or hours (middle and high schools) in the grading period, the school official will attempt to find the cause of the absences and organize, hold and participate in a school engagement meeting. The following individuals must participate in the school engagement meeting:

- The student;
- The student's parent, guardian or legal or actual custodian if the student is an unemancipated minor; and

- A school official.

The purpose of the meeting is to understand the reasons for the student's absences, to attempt to remove barriers to the student's ongoing absences, and to create and sign an absenteeism prevention plan.

Absenteeism Prevention Plan

The absenteeism prevention plan will identify the causes of the student's absences and the future responsibilities of each participant. The school official will contact the student and student's parent/guardian at least once per week for the remainder of the school year to monitor the performance of the student and the student's parent/guardian under the plan. If the student and student's parent/guardian do not attend the meeting, do not enter into a plan or violate the terms of the plan, the school official will notify the county attorney.

SECTION II – Academic and Disciplinary Requirements

Students are required to be in attendance, pursuant to Board policy, in alignment with the District calendar for the school year unless their absences are considered “exempt”. Student-level consequences will not apply to exempt absences.

In addition to the reasons listed which are exempt as outlined in Iowa Code 299.1 – 299.5, and outlined in this policy, parents/guardians or emancipated minor may contact school administration or designee to discuss the reason for an absence and request a consideration of an exemption. In collaboration with District officials, school administrators will consider the following guidelines when determining if a student's absence qualifies to be exempt.

- Absences where the student, if an emancipated minor, or otherwise his/her parent or guardian, has not contacted the school regarding the reason for the absence will not be considered exempt.
- Regular and ongoing absences and tardies that interfere with a student's ability to receive their required education will not be considered exempt.
- Absences due to a student meeting the District's illness and exclusion criteria will be exempt. The document outlining the criteria is located in each building's health office.
- Requests for family trips or vacations will be considered. Students must complete all required make-up work within a reasonable time upon returning to school.

- Requests for family reasons, such as funerals, family emergencies, or college visits will be considered. Students must complete all required make-up work within a reasonable time upon returning to school.

Academic Accountability

Students who are absent from school miss instruction, which could negatively impact the student's grades. Students are required to do make-up work within a reasonable amount of time for all absences. Teachers will provide full credit for work submitted in a timely fashion. Additionally, no student will be dropped from classes based exclusively on attendance. However, it is the responsibility of the student to follow the instructions of the teacher(s) to complete and hand in the work necessary. Students who fail to attend make-up sessions, as assigned, and fail to complete and submit assignments satisfactorily will have an impact on their grade(s).

The administration will make reasonable efforts to advise and counsel and may impose disciplinary steps upon students exhibiting excessive absences that are not deemed "exempt". Such advice, discipline and counseling is in addition to the requirements listed in Section 1 of this regulation and includes, but is not limited to, oral or written notices to the student and his or her parents/guardians, conferences with the student and parents/guardians, written contracts, mediation, or loss of non-academic privileges such as extracurricular activities.