

Waterford-Halfmoon UFSD Attendance Policy
Updated March 2011

Students

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Waterford-Halfmoon USFD recognizes that student attendance in school is an important component of student success. Student interaction with teachers and other students in class helps to enhance the academic learning experience and provide a basis by which students can demonstrate mastery.

Pursuant to Section 104.1 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the comprehensive attendance policy contains the following elements:

- I. Rationale (statement of objectives of the policy);
- II. Reporting System (strategies to meet objectives; excused & unexcused absences, tardies and early departures);
- III. Coding System for Absences
- IV. Attendance and Course Credit
- V. Interventions (incentives and/or sanctions);
- VI. Analysis of Attendance Data; and
- VII. Dissemination and Policy Review

I. Rationale

Every student has a right to educational opportunities that will enable the student to develop to his or her fullest potential. Each year an increased number of students accumulate an excessive number of absences from school. In some cases, verified illness is the cause, and in other cases, the absences are a direct result of disinterest or lack of concern for school. High rates of absenteeism have a negative impact on the entire school population.

Numerous studies link attendance with student achievement, therefore Increased student attendance will result in improved student achievement. Given this research we believe that by improving student attendance the following will occur:

- Improved student attitude
- Improved teacher attitude
- Improved student achievement
- Improved teacher productivity, which creates an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

An effective attendance policy is crucial to a good education. Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with his or her teachers and peers, and is a major component of academic success.

Improved school attendance procedures that provide for the early Identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address them are most likely to succeed.

Every class will have a percentage of its grade allocated for daily "class participation." The percentage is determined by each instructor for each class.

The purpose of a comprehensive attendance policy is:

- To ensure that the District maintains adequate attendance records on each of its compulsory school age pupils;
- To inform students and parents of the consequences of unexcused absences;
- To be able to keep track of pupils throughout the school day;
- To be able to tell parents where their enrolled children are throughout the school day;
- To identify patterns of behavior that may require school/parental attention; and
- To maximize the achievement of academic standards.

Successful implementation of any attendance procedure requires cooperation among members of the education community, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

II. Reporting System

A. Strategies to meet objectives

The system of pupil attendance record keeping in each school shall provide an accurate record of each pupil's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure. The register of attendance shall set forth the following for each pupil:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Full names of parent(s) or person(s) in parental relation;
- Address where the pupil resides;
- Phone number(s) where the parent(s) or person(s) in parental relation may be contacted;
- Date of the pupil's enrollment; and
- A record of the pupil's attendance on each day of scheduled instruction.

Each teacher must record and report attendance daily and maintain a register of attendance. All entries in the register of attendance shall be made by the teacher of the class in which the pupil is enrolled.

The entries in the register of attendance shall be verified by the oath or affirmation of the individual making the entries in the register of attendance.

The administrator of each school shall have the responsibility of supervising the keeping of the register of attendance. The program administrator shall also be charged with reviewing pupil attendance records periodically for the purpose of initiating appropriate action to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness, and early departure.

Process

Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year:

- Attendance shall include a student's presence/absence, tardiness, and early departure.
- Attendance is to be taken daily at the K-6 level for non-departmentalized (self-contained) secondary classes.
- Attendance is to be taken daily as well as period by period for grades 7-12

- Presence/Absence: 7-12 attendance is to be taken no later than 8:05am and K-6 attendance is to be taken by 9:30am. Students who are not present at those times will be marked absent.
- Tardiness and early departure: A student shall be regarded as being absent from class under this section of the policy if he or she misses more than 15 minutes of class due to tardiness or early departure.
- Late passes: All students K-12 must sign in at the attendance office. They will be issued a pass to class and marked accordingly in the attendance register by the attendance officer.

Once attendance is taken, the office creates a list of absences, and distributes the list to all teachers. This will be done electronically and or by paper. If a student is not on the list and is not in class, the teacher must contact the office immediately.

B. Excused vs. unexcused absences, tardiness and early departure

Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused. In the event that a pupil at any instructional level arrives (after the official start of the school day) or arrives late to class without a pass, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused.

It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to notify the office by telephone or in writing anytime there is an absence or tardy. If this does not occur, such absences or tardy shall be recorded as unexcused. A parental note with telephone number must accompany any early departure request. Without said note, the student shall not be released.

A student who departs early may leave the building early (excused) with written permission by a parent or guardian. A note must contain the date and time to be excused with parent or guardian signature and a contact phone number. Parents must sign out their K-6 students in the Elementary Office, 7-9 students sign out in the Junior High Office, and 10-12 students sign out in the High School Office. Only those names listed on the emergency card are able to sign a student out of school. If a student is walking/driving to their destination it must be indicated in the note.

The following reasons for pupil absences, tardiness, and early departure shall be considered by this policy to be excused:

- Personal illness, doctor/dentist, physical therapy and/or hospital appointment
- Extended illness (three consecutive days or more) or chronic health condition as documented by a physician's note. (All medical excuses written by the doctor shall be submitted within three days of the students return to school in order to be considered as an excused absence. The note should include the date and time of the appointment and whether a school absence is warranted. Otherwise they will remain unexcused absences).
- Family illness
- Death in the immediate family
- In-school disciplinary actions
- Religious observance (Holidays only)
- Required court appearance with note from court
- Military obligations
- School-sponsored trips (e.g. college visits), activities, or athletic events
- Take Your Child to Work Day (usually held in March)

Unexcused Absences, Tardies and Early Departures

Any other pupil absence, tardiness or early departure is considered to be unexcused.

Examples of unexcused include, but are not limited to:

- Out of school suspension
- Overslept
- Missed the bus
- Running late
- Family vacation
- Getting your hair & nails done
- An appointment
- Skip day
- Shopping
- Going home during school day to pick up items (e.g. homework, uniform, lunches)

It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to notify the attendance office by telephone or in writing on the morning of the absence, tardiness or at the time of early departure as to the reason for each excused absence, tardiness or early departure. As a follow-up to any oral notification, parents or guardians should provide a written excuse containing the date of the absence, tardiness, or early departure and the reason for such.

These notes should arrive no later than 24 hours after the absence/tardy. They must arrive before the early departure. All notes must be handed in to the attendance office.

III. Coding System Identifying Reasons for Absence or Tardiness

For any absence, tardiness or early departure that is excused, the coding system shall identify the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure. An absence tardiness or early departure shall be assumed to be unexcused until the attendance office receives either oral or written confirmation that such absence, tardiness or early departure is in fact excused with appropriate reason.

Along with coding for whether an absence, tardiness or early departure is excused or unexcused and, if excused, the reason for such, the attendance officer shall record the time of entry of a student due to tardiness and the time of exit of a student due to early departure.

Absence Codes:

- Excused Absence
- Unexcused Absence
- Excused Absence with Dr. Note
- Late - Unexcused
- Late - Excused
- Out-of-School Suspension - Not Tutored
- In-School Suspension
- Dentist Appointment
- Bereavement
- Vacation
- Court Appointment
- Education Related
- Other

- Truancy
- Field Trip
- Home Tutored
- Doctor Appointment
- Excused Early by Nurse
- Early dismissal
- College Visit

IV. Junior/Senior High School Class Attendance Policy

The Board recognizes that regular attendance in class is essential to the total learning process. Although some class absences may be unavoidable, each student is expected to make every effort to attend each assigned class. The underlying rationale for an attendance policy is based on a recognition of the vital role classroom attendance and participation plays in academic achievement.

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade.

Studies have shown the importance of the relationship between attendance at school and achievement. Daily attendance creates an environment, which fosters subject competency, continuity of learning and responsibility, which are all integral to the educational process.

School attendance and class participation lead to student competency and are essential to a comprehensive educational component. For this reason the Waterford-Halfmoon High School Attendance Policy takes into consideration participation as a component of the student's grade. It is the philosophy of the faculty, administration and Board of Education that active participation is an integral part of every course offered in the high school. Class participation shall be evaluated according to guidelines, which will be clearly stated to students, by teachers, at the beginning of each course.

Legal absences include death in the family, illness with a signed doctor's medical excuse, court appearances with appropriate documentation and school provided homebound instruction due to illness or extended discipline. Examples of **illegal absences** include: family vacations, missed bus, oversleeping, shopping, no specified reason. **[Note: When absent, legally or illegally, a student will have two days from their return to school to see their teachers to make arrangements to complete work/tests missed. This is the student's responsibility.] Parents will be notified of class absences.**

School sponsored events will be considered legal absences until such time as a student's class absences result in a Stage II letter. Once a student has received a Stage II letter, the student will be excluded from class pull-out time for: field trips, club or civic activity sessions, school-sponsored college orientation/visitation programs, other school-sponsored extracurricular activities including (but not limited to) sporting events, rewards/incentives activities, and dramatic/choral performances during the school day. Class pull-out sessions for students enrolled in instrumental and/or choral instruction will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Once a student has received a Stage III letter, other privileges may be rescinded in a case by case basis-privileges may include (but not limited to) early dismissal for work, parking, honor society membership, hall passes, field trips, and restriction of extra-curricular activities.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out of school will be expected to attend 85% of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment. The procedures followed will be prorated according to their possible number of class meetings.

The attendance policy/procedure will be implemented in a three-stage process.

Stage I

When a student is identified as having an attendance problem according to the following Stage I table, the teacher will complete a Stage I letter on the appropriate form. A copy will be sent to the student's parent/guardian, appropriate school counselor and Principal.

Stage I Criteria are:

Science Lab Courses	20 absences
Full Year Courses	14 absences
Semester Courses	7 absences
Quarter Courses (PE)	3 absences

* For all courses, arrival to the class fifteen or more minutes late will constitute a class absence.
* Five unexcused tardies to a class will constitute one class absence.

Stage II

When a student's attendance continues to be problematic according to the following table, the teacher will complete a Stage II letter, a copy of which will be sent to the student's parent/guardian, appropriate counselor and principal. The Stage II letter is a notification that the student is in danger of losing credit for the course; additionally, it will clearly delineate the disciplinary measures to be meted out if the attendance problem progresses to Stage III (see paragraph four of this policy). An administrative meeting may be arranged. In this case the principal will make contact with the parent/guardian, student counselor and teachers to review the situation. The counselor will meet with the student to review reasons for the absences and to assist the student to initiate strategies to improve class attendance. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, individual counseling sessions, group counseling, psychological referral and the PINS diversion program.

Stage II Criteria are:

Science Lab Courses	29 absences
Full Year Courses	20 absences
Semester Courses	10 absences
Quarter Courses (PE)	5 absences

* For all courses, arrival to the class fifteen or more minutes late will constitute a class absence.
* Five unexcused tardies to a class will constitute one class absence.

Stage III

When a student's attendance continues to be problematic according to the following table, the teacher will complete a Stage III letter. A copy will be sent to the student's parent/guardian, appropriate counselor and principal. The parent/guardian, student, principal, counselor and teacher(s) may meet to review the grade and the possible failure and loss of credit.

Stage III Criteria are:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Science Lab Courses | 40 absences |
| Full Year Courses | 27 absences |
| Semester Courses | 14 absences |
| Quarter Courses | 7 absences |
- * For all courses, arrival to the class fifteen or more minutes late will constitute a class absence.
* Five unexcused tardies to a class will constitute one class absence.

Parent - Student Notification

School officials will strive to notify parents/guardians and students on a timely basis as required by this policy, but in the event that a student is not notified, the consequences prescribed by the policy will be effective immediately upon the accumulation of the designated number of absences.

Appeal Process

Parents and students have the opportunity to:

- a. Challenge the number of absences on record.
- b. Request that the maximum allowable absence limit be waived as the result of extenuating circumstances.

Parents and students may appeal the above by requesting a meeting with the High School Principal or Superintendent of Schools. All appeal decisions will be administered in a neutral manner and will comply with applicable law and regulations and decisions of the Commissioner of Education.

V. Interventions

A. Intervention Procedures

- When a student is absent from school a call will be made home from the office that day. After each ten days of absence, a notification letter will be sent from the attendance office to the parent or guardian notifying them of the absences.
- A letter will be sent after the first and subsequent 10 day periods (i.e. 10,20,30, etc) of absences by the attendance office.
- For students K-12, an Intervention Process meeting will be held to recommend primary intervention strategies by the Child Study Team/Student Support Team. The Child Study Team/Student Support Team is made up of the principal, social worker, psychologist, guidance, nurse and prevention counselor at the appropriate grade levels.

Intervention strategies that may be recommended are:

- Parent call/ meeting
- Parent/teacher meeting
- Counseling of student
- Other placement
- Restriction of privileges
- Person in need of supervision (PINS) through court
- Hotline call for educational neglect
- District Attorney Truancy Program

B. Sanctions

Where it is determined that disciplinary sanctions are necessary to Discourage pupil absence, tardies or early departures by a student, sanctions shall be available for use by the school according to the Code of Conduct.

VI. Analysis of Attendance Data

In order to increase student attendance in the school, it is important to identify patterns of pupil absences, tardiness or early departure. Then, specific intervention strategies can be employed in an attempt to change such patterns.

The administrator of each school is charged by the Board to be the person responsible for reviewing pupil attendance records and initiating appropriate actions at the building and program level to address unexcused pupil absence, tardies or early departure.

VII. Dissemination and Policy Review

A. Notice to parents or guardians

Any pupil absence, tardiness or early departure other than those specified in the policy is considered by the Board to be unexcused. It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to excuse such absence, tardiness or early departure by notifying the attendance office by telephone on the morning of the absence or tardiness or at the time of early departure as the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure.

As a follow-up to any oral notification, parents or guardians shall provide a written excuse, which shall include the following: date of absence, tardiness or early departure and reason for such.

If proper written excuse for the pupil absence, tardiness or early departure is not received by the school from the parent or guardian after 24 hours, a telephone call may be made to the parent or guardian notifying him/her of the need for proper excuse of their child's absence, tardiness or early departure. In addition, without a note a child's absence, tardiness or early dismissal will be left as unexcused and may face further disciplinary action.

B. Dissemination

All staff will be provided with a copy of the comprehensive attendance policy and any amendment to such policy following the initial adoption or amendment of the policy. New staff members shall receive a copy of the comprehensive attendance policy upon commencement of employment with the District. The policy will also be available in the Employee Handbook.

The Board shall provide a plain language summary of the policy to the parents or guardian at the beginning of each school year and take other steps to promote the understanding of such policy by students and their parents or guardians. Copies of the comprehensive attendance policy shall be available in the office of the District Superintendent and in each school building, on the school website, and will be provided to any member of the community upon request.

C. Annual review by the Board

The Board shall annually review the overall pupil attendance and the pupil attendance records for the school. Should such records demonstrate a decline in pupil attendance, the Board shall have an opportunity to amend the comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the policy deemed necessary to improve pupil attendance. Any such amendment to the comprehensive attendance policy shall be provided in writing to each staff member after adoption of the amendment by the Board.

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