

# Comprehensive Attendance Policy

## Statement of Overall Objectives

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The Stillwater Central School District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. Because the School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the School District will develop, review and if necessary, revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- To increase school completion for all students;
- To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts.
- To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- To determine the District's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.

## Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The Stillwater Central School District will:

- Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and **social** environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student **connection** to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- Utilize **computerized** systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.
- To strongly encourage families to plan their vacations on periods when school is not in session, thereby avoiding situations in which students miss extended periods of direct instruction.

### **Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departure**

**For purposes of clarification the following definitions will apply:**

**Early release** – refers to a student who leaves the high school before the official end of school day.

**Tardy** – refers to any student who arrives to the high school after the official beginning of school day.

Based upon our District's educational and community needs, values and priorities, the School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

### Excused Absence

1. An absence may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, visits with a health care provider, approved cooperative work programs or military obligations, approved educational opportunities outside of the regular school day: such as college entrance exams, school sponsored field trips and pre-approved educational opportunities.) All college visits must be pre-approved by the administration prior to the visit.
2. Tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, required court appearances, visits with a health care provider, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the BOE. (refer to definitions for tardiness and early release)

### Unexcused Absence

An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g. family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping, etc. - refer to definitions for tardiness and early release.

### Legal Absences

An absence is recognized as legal if a parent/guardian calls the school by telephone or faxes in an excuse by 10:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. A parent must provide a written note for an absence. This note must be submitted to the attendance office within three days of the student's absence from school. Notes will not be accepted after three days. When an absence occurs for three consecutive days due to illness, a physician's note will be required.

**Students who demonstrate a pattern of absences in which sickness is reported by a parent may be required to submit a doctor's note to excuse an absence.**

### Illegal Absences

Lack of verification for any absence from school, via written note, telephone or fax would result in an illegal absence.

### Tardiness

Two unexcused tardies to school per semester, with a parent note will be accepted, including personal illness. The third late, per semester and any tardiness to school thereafter, must be accompanied by a note from a health care provider or lawyer/court official. After four unexcused lates, a referral will be generated to an administrator. (refer to page 6 – disciplinary consequences)

Disciplinary consequences (per semester/half year)

- 4 unexcused lates = early detention 2:20 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.
- 5 unexcused lates = early detention 2:20 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.
- 6 unexcused lates = late detention 2:20 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. (loss of parking privilege)
- 7 unexcused lates = administrative judgement (detention, ALE, suspension pending a parent conference, etc.

## Early Release

All requests for early release shall be accompanied by a written request by a parent/guardian. The written request will be presented to the attendance office no later than 10:00 a.m. on the date of the requested early release. The third early release, per semester and early releases thereafter must be accompanied by a note from a health care provider or lawyer/court official. (refer to page 6 – disciplinary consequences)

## Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

- a) For students in grades nine through twelve or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence shall be recorded and reported after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.
- b) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded and reported as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- c) In the event that a student at any instructional level from grade nine through grade twelve arrives late for, or departs early from, scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded and reported as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District/building procedures.

## **Student Attendance/Course Credit**

Grading will not be used for disciplinary purposes, except that students who exceed 15 unexcused absences in a full year course and 7 in a half year course. Students who do not satisfactorily make up assigned class work in a timely fashion will not receive credit for the course and will not be able to take a local or state final examination for the course. Students who are found guilty of academic misconduct as identified in the Code of Conduct may have their grades modified by the classroom teacher to reflect cheating or plagiarism.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working pursuant to an approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school-sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

## **Notice of Attendance Concerns**

- a) Copies of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be mailed to parents/persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District.
- b) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/student handbooks.
- c) At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone, the parent/person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure.
- d) After 5 unexcused absences for a full year course, and 3 unexcused absences for a half year course, written notification, which stresses the importance of the attendance policy will be sent to the parent/person in parental relation.
- e) A designated staff member will review the District's Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures. Further, appropriate student/parent/guardian support services/personnel within the District, as well as the possible collaboration/referral to community support services, including the filing of a Person In Need of Supervision (PINS) petition or notification to the Office of the District Attorney may be initiated.

## **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

A designated staff member shall notify by telephone the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

### **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities, and filing of a Person In Need of Supervision (PINS) petition.

### **Intervention Strategy Process**

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occurs, designated District personnel will identify reasons, discuss strategies, recommend interventions, and implement changes to improve individual student attendance.

### **Appeal Process**

A parent/person in parental relation may request a building level review of their child's attendance record.

### **Building Review of Attendance Records**

The building principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

### **Community Awareness**

The Board of Education shall promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

- a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of the each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/persons in parental relation; and
- b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
- c) Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.
- d) **Provide a copy of the policy on the District website, [www.scsd.org](http://www.scsd.org).**

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205,  
3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213  
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations  
(NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6