

Administrative Procedure JED-AP(2): STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES - (Grades 9-12)

Status: DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: 05/20/2010 | Last Revised Date: 08/01/2010

24D UPDATE EXPLANATION

MSBA has amended this procedure for clarity and to align with new legislation.

Senate Bill 727 (2024) requires districts to excuse students from attendance requirements if the child is unable to attend school due to mental or behavioral health concerns, provided that the school receives documentation from a licensed mental health professional that the child is not able to attend.

Senate Bill 727 also prohibits school districts from disciplining a student for failure to comply with the district's attendance policy when the child is honoring a subpoena to testify in a criminal proceeding, attending a criminal proceeding, or participating in the preparation of such a proceeding. While attendance consequences are not technically discipline—particularly for elementary students—MSBA believes the intent of this language is to protect these absences and has added this to the excused absence category.

In addition, MSBA has added the requirements of § 167.019, RSMo., that protect absences of foster care students and prohibit the student's grade from being lowered due to these absences.

MSBA has also amended the language describing the legal standard that requires the school district to report educational neglect from "reasonable suspicion" to "reasonable cause to suspect," which is more consistent with state statute.

MSBA encourages districts to take the time to review this procedure against actual district practices and modify this procedure as needed to reflect the district's actual process. For example, the written documentation required under this procedure's "Attendance Standards" section is optional except for #9. Districts that are no longer requiring written documentation should adjust this procedure accordingly.

As directed by the board, the following procedures will be used to implement the district's attendance policy.

Definitions

Attendance – A student is considered to be in attendance if the student is physically present in a class; participating in a district-sponsored or district-approved activity; participating in a class through alternative methods or media as allowed by board policy; receiving homebound services; or receiving services at another location pursuant to law or by arrangement of the district.

Parent – A parent, guardian, or person acting as a parent in the absence of the parent or guardian if the student is under 18. If the student is 18 or otherwise emancipated, the student will serve as the parent for purposes of this procedure.

Tardy – A student is tardy if the student arrives after the expected time class or school begins, as determined by the district. Tardiness will be counted as an absence in situations where the student arrives too late to have meaningful participation in the class, lesson, or activity.

Truancy – A student is truant if the student is absent from class or school without the knowledge and consent of the parents and the administration. A student is also considered truant if the student leaves school without the consent of the principal or accumulates excessive unjustifiable absences, even with parental consent. Truancy is a type of unexcused absence.

Attendance Standards

The following absences will be excused. Documentation must be provided as indicated.

1. Illness or injury of the student, with written excuse from parent.
2. Illness or injury of a member of the student's family when the student's presence is necessary or expected, with written excuse from parent.

3. Medical appointments, with written appointment confirmation by medical provider.
4. Funeral, with written excuse from parent. The principal may require a program or other evidence of attendance as additional verification.
5. Religious observances, with written excuse from parent.
6. Other appointments that cannot be scheduled outside attendance hours, such as court appearances, with written excuse from parent.
7. Out-of-School suspension.
8. Absence of a student in foster care due to a decision by a court or child-placing agency to change the student's placement or due to a verified court appearance or related court-ordered activity.
9. Absence due to mental or behavioral health concerns, with written documentation from a licensed mental health professional stating that the student is not able to attend school due to such concerns.
10. Visits with a parent or legal guardian who is an active-duty member of the military who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or is immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, with permission of the superintendent or designee.
11. Complying with a subpoena to testify in a criminal proceeding, attending a criminal proceeding, or participating in the preparation of a criminal proceeding.

All other absences and any absence for which required documentation is not provided are unexcused.

Consequences for Violations

Students will be expected to make up all assignments from missed classes regardless of whether an absence is excused or unexcused. Each teacher may set reasonable limits regarding the timeframe in which missed work may be completed. Attendance and participation are part of a successful learning experience. Except in certain situations with foster care children in accordance with law, students with more than nine excused absences or any unexcused absences in any class in a semester will be issued an academic penalty in the form of grade reductions as follows:

Excused Absences	Grade Reduction	Unexcused Absences	Grade Reduction
10	2%	1	4%
11	4%	2	8%
12	8%	3	16%
13	16%	4	32%
14	32%	5 +	50%
15 +	50%		

This academic penalty represents the participation portion of the student's grade and is intended as a deterrent to excessive absences. Academic consequences accumulate more quickly for unexcused absences, since they are completely avoidable. Penalties are cumulative so that a student with ten excused absences and one unexcused absence would be penalized six percent. Unexcused absences will not count in the excused total, so a student with nine excused absences and one unexcused absence would only receive a four percent penalty.

Any student may reduce accrued absences by attending make-up study or counseling sessions scheduled by the principal during noninstructional times. The students must notify the principal that he or she wishes to make up attendance days, and the principal will provide the students information on the next available session. Make-up sessions do not match the educational value of actual class attendance, so no student will be allowed to make up more than five absences by attending make-up sessions.

The district will contact the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services or the local prosecutor in

cases where the district has a reasonable suspicion cause to suspect that a student's lack of attendance constitutes educational neglect on the part of the parents or that parents are in violation of the compulsory attendance law. No such action will be taken unless other strategies and interventions have been implemented and proven ineffective.

Notice and Due Process

A summary of the board-adopted attendance policy and related procedures will be published in student and other handbooks and posted on the district's website. In addition, students and their parents will be notified prior to the imposition of any consequence and given the opportunity to appeal the imposition of the consequence to the superintendent. On appeal, the students and his or her their parents may present evidence that the student has missed fewer days than the district's records show or that an absence recorded as unexcused should have been recorded as excused. An appeal will not be taken based on whether the reason for the absence justifies an exception to this rule.

Intervention and Engagement Strategies

The district will utilize the following intervention and engagement strategies as part of the district's overall approach to improve student attendance and achievement. The superintendent or designee will:

1. Conduct community-wide public relations efforts that stress the importance of school attendance.
2. Collaborate with community groups and other organizations that engage youth in activities to create a consistent message about the importance of education.

Building-level administrators and staff will:

1. Contact the family any time a student is absent.
2. Assign truant students to academic support, detention, or in-school suspension rather than out-of-school suspension.
3. Assign students who are frequently absent to a staff mentor or participation in a group advisory program.
4. Assign students to tutoring outside of the regular academic day.
5. Provide access to behavioral counseling, including information about community resources.
6. Facilitate family counseling sessions focusing on the power of the family to provide solutions.
7. Conduct in-home visits.
8. Post attendance numbers and percentages each day to make students and staff aware of the attendance rate. Create friendly competition by posting attendance rates by grade level or class. Individual student attendance information will not be publicly posted.

Evaluation

Principals, with the assistance of building staff, will conduct annual evaluations of all strategies used to improve student attendance. The evaluations will include:

1. A summary of which strategies are being implemented.
2. The number of participants.
3. Records of targeted interventions for particular students.
4. Changes in overall attendance rates.
5. Changes in attendance rates and academic achievement of students participating in the various strategies.
6. Changes in attendance rates and academic achievement of individual students receiving targeted intervention.

7. Any other data that can be used to assess the effectiveness of strategies and interventions.

Strategies found to be ineffective will be modified or replaced. The principal will provide evaluation information to the superintendent.

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Policy Reference Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State References

	Description
§ 160.2000, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 167.018, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 167.019, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 167.031, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 171.011, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 171.053, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 171.151, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 210.115, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 452.375, RSMo.	State Statute
§ 595.209, RSMo.	State Statute
§§ 167.031-.111, RSMo.	State Statute

MSIP References

	Description
CC-2	MSIP STANDARDS
DB-1	MSIP STANDARDS
TL-1	MSIP STANDARDS
TL-10	MSIP STANDARDS
TL-7	MSIP STANDARDS

Cross References

	Description
IC	ACADEMIC CALENDAR
IGBD	AT-RISK STUDENTS
IGBE-1	STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE
IGBE-1-AP(1)	STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE - (Dispute Resolution Process)
IGCDA	FULL-TIME MOCAP VIRTUAL COURSES