

Policy JED: STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Status: DRAFT

Original Adopted Date: 04/21/2010

24D UPDATE EXPLANATION

MSBA has updated this policy to align with new legislation.

MSBA has 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.

The board recognizes the importance of regular student attendance to a successful learning experience. Research supports the fact that attendance is crucial to improving student achievement. At least one study identified attendance as the single greatest indicator of student achievement. The board further recognizes that:

1. Frequent absences of students from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process.
2. The benefits of classroom instruction, once lost, cannot be entirely regained.
3. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to meet the district's student achievement goals.
4. Holding students and their parents/guardians responsible for attendance is part of the district's larger mission to train students to be productive citizens and employees.
5. State law reflects the importance of regular attendance by establishing compulsory school attendance and charging this board to enforce that law.
6. State law authorizes school boards to make all needful rules for organization and government in the district.

Therefore, regular and punctual patterns of attendance will be expected of each student enrolled in the district.

Development of Rules and Procedures

The superintendent, with the assistance of building-level administrators and other administrative and professional staff, shall establish rules and procedures for student attendance within the district. The primary purpose of the district's attendance rules and procedures shall be to change behavior, not to punish students. Such rules and procedures shall be published on the district's website and in appropriate handbooks and shall be subject to review by the board of education. The administration will develop rules and procedures that minimally include:

1. Clear and reasonable attendance standards with consistently enforced consequences for violating those standards.
2. Early intervention strategies for students in primary and elementary grades.
3. Targeted intervention strategies.
4. Strategies to increase engagement with students and families.

In developing these rules and procedures, the administration will collect data to determine why students are absent. Data collected will include, but not be limited to:

1. Reasons for student absences.
2. Family attitudes toward school attendance.
3. The extent to which frequently absent students feel engaged with the school.
4. The extent to which family members of students who are frequently absent feel engaged in student learning.

5. Academic needs of frequently absent students.
6. Nonacademic service needs of frequently absent students.

In response to the data collected, the superintendent or designee will implement one or more of the following strategies:

1. Academic support programs for students and families.
2. Use of alternative educational methods, such as distance learning and homebound instruction.
3. Use of available, appropriate community resources.
4. Staff-Student advisory or mentoring programs designed to increase student engagement with the school.
5. Procedures for student and family contact when students are absent.

No rule or procedure will preclude a student from making up work missed due to any type of absence, including absences due to suspension. Procedures and rules must include a due process component that includes notice before consequences are imposed and that allows students and their parents/guardians to appeal any imposed consequence to the superintendent. The board will not hear appeals of consequences for excessive absences.

The district will maintain a comprehensive system of attendance records for each student. Each teacher is responsible for the accurate reporting of daily attendance in the classroom. The building principal is responsible for supplying information to parents/guardians about student absences and for submitting attendance information to the superintendent's office.

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/guardians or that parents/guardians 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.

If a student in foster care is absent from school 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, the grades and credit of the student will be calculated as of the date the student left school, and no lowering of the student's grades shall occur as a result of the absence under these circumstances.

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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

CC-2

DB-1

TL-1

TL-10

TL-7

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