



POLICY: JE
SUBJECT: STUDENT PRESENCE & ENGAGEMENT
APPROVAL DATE: June 20, 1989
REVISION DATE: March 4, 1997, September 12, 2011,
June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 1 of 6

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 The Winnipeg School Division (WSD) believes that regular and punctual attendance enhances the chances for success by assuring that the student receives the maximum instructional time and has opportunities for participation in the learning process.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Public Schools Act (PSA), a person who is seven (7) years of age or older before December 31 of that year has the right to attend school from the beginning of the fall term of that year until they attain the age of 18.
- 1.3 The Public Schools Act directs that where a child is absent from school the teacher or the employee recording school attendance shall, in writing, report the matter, including the name of the child, to the principal of the school. A principal who receives a report of an absence must, if satisfied that the child is in fact absent:
- a) Report the absence to the child's parent; and
 - b) Inform them of their obligation to ensure that the child:
 - Attends school; or
 - If the child is at least 15 years old, participates in an activity or program provided for in the regulations made under section 262.2.

A principal must report a child's absence to the local school attendance officer if the principal is satisfied that;

- a) The child continues to be absent from school after the child's parent has been informed of the absence; and
 - b) The parent has had a reasonable opportunity to comply with their obligations under this Act.
- 1.4 In accordance with the Public Schools Act, parents or legal guardian of a child who is of compulsory school age must ensure that the child attends school. Any person who fails or refuses to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence.
- 1.5 WSD shall make all reasonable efforts to support students experiencing attendance problems and will ensure that reasonable alternatives have been attempted prior to referral of a student with chronic absenteeism to the Attendance Services.
- 1.6 Each school shall develop and implement preventative practices that supports student engagement when possible.
- 1.7 A student over the age of 18 years of age is subject to the rules of the school board in matters pertaining to school attendance.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 Presence

Presence means when a student is present when they attend and participate in a school or classroom activity on days in which they are required. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.



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June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 2 of 6

2.2 Engagement

Engagement means students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in school promotes student engagement. Engagement is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities.

2.3 Regular Attendance

Regular attendance means coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.

2.4 Student-Specific Plan (SSP)

Student-specific plan is planning, record-keeping and communication document, as outlined in Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba. Student-specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students; it may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.

2.5 Absence

Absence means any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion will result in:

- a) Excused Absence – refers to any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, with a valid excuse and the mutual consent of a parent/guardian and the school principal. In practice, this has also been referred to as a verified absence; or
- b) Unexcused Absence – refers to any time a student is not in class or not participating in school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, without a valid excuse, with or without parent/guardian approval.

2.6 Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism means being absent for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

2.7 Severe Chronic Absenteeism

Severe chronic absenteeism means being absent for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.



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June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 3 of 6

2.8 Absence for Medical Reasons

Absences for medical reasons shall be taken into consideration when determining the loss of a credit or the withdrawal from a course or courses at the senior high level. The following factors should be considered:

- a) Length of absence:
 - short term - note from parent/guardian;
 - long term - availability of tutoring services;
- b) Frequency of absences for medical reasons;
- c) Overall student performance in course(s).

2.9 Absence for Vacations

The possible consequences to the student for extended absence due to vacations shall be outlined to the student and the parent/guardian.

The student shall be expected to obtain and complete the work required for the courses that may be missed due to absence for a vacation.

3. PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES

3.1 WSD will respond immediately and proceed with a personal outreach to students/families where there are absences resulting in a cause for concern as follows:

- a) the Principal may notify parents/guardians via voicemail/automated system;
- b) If absence persists, a personal contact from the teacher or designate to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.

4. PREVENTATIVE PRACTICES TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

4.1 WSD is committed to creating a safe, welcoming and culturally responsive school environment for students as follows:

- a) Addressing gaps in nutrition and identify basic needs that supports student's health and well-being;
- b) Enhancing student engagement by providing opportunities for families to connect with school;
- c) Enhancing visibility of staff at transition times. This will include through the school day as well as when students move from one grade to another or to different schools;
- d) Creating and implement a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum to ensure that students are engaged in and positive about school as they see their cultures reflected in the curriculum;
- e) Implementing restorative practices in resolving incidents involving students, when appropriate;
- f) Expanding the implementation of anti-racism and anti-discrimination education for all students.

5. ADDRESSING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

5.1 WSD will respond to student absenteeism based on the age, grade and development of the student, the professional judgement of teachers and principals and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or division-based supports and/or with outside agencies, if needed.



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APPROVAL DATE: June 20, 1989
REVISION DATE: March 4, 1997, September 12, 2011,
June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 4 of 6

- 5.2 Students who are chronically absent shall have a student-specific plan in place to identify the student-specific barriers affect attendance and the strategies in place to respond to these barriers. This includes initiating a meeting of the core team, including the parent/guardian.
- 5.3 Student-specific planning to respond to attendance issues may include appropriate alternative educational programming, which provides options such as flexible timetabling, a variety of assessment methods/options, opportunities for credit acquisition and credit recovery and ways to ensure learning is accessible to the student based on their current level of performance.
- 5.4 When a student reaches the number of absences defined as chronic absenteeism, a meeting of the core team is required, including the parent/guardian. If a student reaches the number of absences defined as severe chronic absenteeism, an in-school intervention will be required and may include other members of the school support team and external agencies, if applicable.
- 5.5 If the school has been unsuccessful in addressing severe chronic absenteeism for a student, the Superintendent/CEO must notify the department's School and Community Support Unit in writing, as well as notify Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being. The unit will connect with the school division and support broader system planning through consultation and collaboration with interdepartmental contacts and community service agencies.
6. COORDINATED SERVICES
- 6.1 WSD believes that reducing barriers to student presence requires personalized assessment, planning, coordination and monitoring of students. A case management approach to facilitate this process is required to coordinate the complexity of supports and to provide a stable point of contact to establish relationships with chronically absent students and their parents/guardians.
- 6.2 The school will designate a case manager to respond to and work with the student and their parents/guardians.
- 6.3 The focus will be on inviting students back and finding the necessary resources to support attendance.
- 6.4 WSD will implement restorative practices to reengage the student/family in the school environment.
- 6.5 Restorative practices shall provide opportunities to make amends and repair relationships and they reduce the likelihood of future harms while holding individuals accountable. These approaches allow students to understand the impact of negative behavior on others and to develop empathy.
- 6.6 When the school is aware of an external agency involvement with a student who is chronically absent, this agency will be included as part of the student-specific planning process.
- 6.7 The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act supports collaborative and timely intervention efforts by enabling information sharing about supported children and their parents/guardians by service providers for the purposes of providing services or benefits to children.
- 6.8 WSD will obtain informed consent for information sharing from parents in compliance with the Manitoba Pupil File Guidelines, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, The Personal Health Information Act and The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act.



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APPROVAL DATE: June 20, 1989
REVISION DATE: March 4, 1997, September 12, 2011,
June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 5 of 6

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Students

Students are responsible for:

- a) Attending school and classes regularly and punctually;
- b) Complying with the school's code of conduct;
- c) Completing assignments and other related work required by teachers or other staff;
- d) Participating in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate;
- e) Respecting school property and the property of others.

7.2 Parents/Legal Guardians

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- a) Taking all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly;
- b) Ensuring that students under the age of 18 are informed of the attendance, behaviour and academic achievement of their child in school;
- c) Participate in planning regarding attendance concerns related to their child/children;
- d) Cooperating fully with the child's teachers and other staff to ensure the child complies with the school's code of conduct.

7.3 Teachers

The teacher is responsible for:

- a) Keeping a consistent, daily record of attendance, including whether absences are excused or unexcused;
- b) Timely communication to the principal and parent/guardian;
- c) Identifying potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism;
- d) Promoting and support regular attendance;
- e) Communicating (verbally and in writing, if needed) with students and parents/guardians when concerns related to attendance arise;
- f) Documenting steps taken to communicate with students, parents and outside agencies when concerns related to attendance arise;
- g) Participating in the student-specific planning;
- h) Maintaining order and discipline in the school;

7.4 Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- a) Reporting the absence to the student's parent/guardian and informing them of their obligation to ensure the student attends school or if the child is 15 years of age participates in an activity or program as stated in the Public Schools Act;
- b) The Principal shall ensure that procedures and expectations for student attendance reporting are reviewed annually at the beginning of the school year;
- c) Are responsible to work with teachers, students, parents and others, as needed, to promote regular attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences;
- d) Monitoring and reviewing student's attendance data and oversee the student-specific planning



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REVISION DATE: March 4, 1997, September 12, 2011,
June 24, 2019, December 18, 2023
PAGE: 6 of 6

process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism;

- e) Reporting chronic/severe absenteeism to the Assistant Superintendent;
- f) Inviting community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities and regional health and children's services authorities to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming and planning for students;
- g) Leading school-based initiatives that promote student engagement.

7.5 Assistant Superintendents

Assistant Superintendents are responsible for:

- a) Monitoring enrolment data to ensure that all students expected to be present are in school. This includes comparing enrolment registers year over year, as well as reviewing unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports from the department;
- b) Regularly monitoring and analyzing of division-wide ad school enrollment and attendance data;
- c) Implementing procedures for investigating and identifying the causes of student absences and determining the appropriate supports that are required to promote regular attendance;
- d) Implementing an early warning system and non-punitive outreach protocols to identify students who are likely to experience chronic absenteeism by monitoring, disaggregating and responding to student presence and absence data trends at all levels;
- e) Ensuring that students' attendance is a standing agenda item at administration meetings and school-based support team meetings;
- f) Ensuring students who are eligible for enrolment with WSD receive regular and appropriate educational programming;
- g) Working within schools, parents/guardians, community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present;
- h) Ensuring that schools track student attendance accurately, document any students who are chronically absent and take immediate, sustained action to address causes of chronic absenteeism until the student is regularly present;
- i) Working with schools and agencies to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families to ensure regular school attendance, such as through coordinated services; and
- j) Ensuring culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among all staff.