

COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

Objectives to be Accomplished

Educational success demands consistent school attendance. The Patchogue-Medford School District seeks to ensure that all of its students receive an education, which maximizes opportunities for each pupil to realize his/her potential. Studies have shown that consistent school attendance, academic success, and graduation from high school have a positive correlation.

The purpose of the Attendance Policy is:

- To confirm that students are meeting compulsory attendance requirements;
- To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and school management reasons;
- To identify individual and group attendance patterns;
- To provide data to develop interventions to help close the gap in student performance, given the high correlation between attendance and achievement;
- To determine the district's average daily attendance for State Aid purposes;
- To ensure the maintenance of an adequate record verifying the attendance of all children at instruction in accordance with Education law, Section 3205;
- To establish a mechanism to account for the whereabouts of students throughout each school day; and
- To ensure sufficient pupil attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities to permit pupils to succeed at meeting the New York State Learning Standards.

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility in New York State. Children who turn six years old on or before December 1st in any school year must receive full-time instruction from the first day school is in session in September of that school year. Children who turn six years old after December 1st of a school year must receive full-time instruction from the first day of school in the following September. All children must remain in attendance until the last day of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The Patchogue-Medford School District will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. Parents/Guardians are expected to make sure that their children attend school on a regular basis. To implement a successful attendance policy, the cooperation of all members of the educational community, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff is needed.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

Strategies Employed to Accomplish Objectives

The administration and support staff would like to work closely with parents/guardians to ensure regular attendance for all students. The Patchogue-Medford School District will implement the following strategies to ensure the effectiveness of this attendance policy.

Increase awareness of the policy among parents/guardians by:

- Providing a plain language summary of this policy at the start of the school year.
- Discussing the policy at Open School Night or sending out electronic reminders annually.
- Including references of the components of this policy in the school newsletters and publications if a school utilizes these.
- Including a summary of attendance requirements in the district calendar.
- Reminding parents/guardians of attendance requirements when daily phone calls are made to verify student absence.
- Including a copy of the policy on the District's Web site.
(www.pmschools.org/district.cfm)

Increase awareness of the policy among students by:

- Including a copy in the parent/student handbook for grades 6 – 12.
- Secondary level students will be asked to read the District's Attendance Policy, as well as the goals and consequences established for them in the District's Attendance Policy.
- Discussing attendance requirements at grade level assemblies at the beginning of each school year.
- Including electronic reminders of attendance expectations throughout the school year.
- Including a copy of the policy on the District's Web site.
(www.pmschools.org/district.cfm)

Increase awareness of the policy among staff by:

- Including a copy of the policy in each teacher's handbook.
- Explaining the policy at new teacher orientation.
- Reviewing the policy at the beginning of the school year with all faculty and staff to clarify individual roles in its implementation.
- Re-emphasizing policy specifics at grade level and departmental meetings throughout the year.

The district's comprehensive attendance policy will be made available to any member of the community upon request

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Each absence, late, and early dismissal will be recorded as excused or unexcused along with a code noting the specific reason for absence. The student will be deemed present if an absence is not noted in the District's electronic database. Excused absences are defined as:

- An absence due to personal illness;
- Illness or death in the family;
- Medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside the school day;
- Religious observance;
- Quarantine;
- Required court appearances;
- Pre-approved college visits (by Administration);
- Pre-approved cooperative work programs (by Administration), or
- Pre-approved military obligations (by Administration).

All other absences, lateness, or early dismissals will be considered unexcused. Building principals will review attendance data monthly to identify patterns/trends.

Unexcused absences are considered a violation by a student of the compulsory attendance provisions of Article 65 of the Education Law, which require students to attend school on a regular and punctual basis. Unexcused absences are defined as all absences other than excused absences; for example, without limitation, lateness to school without a note, absence from school without parent/guardian knowledge, family vacations, oversleeping, class cuts, and unapproved early leaves are some of the most common, but not all inclusive unexcused absences from school.

1. All absences must be accounted for. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the school attendance office on the morning of the absence or tardiness **AND** to provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school. Students with absences will be encouraged to make up tests, quizzes, complete assignments, and submit homework within a reasonable amount of time. A reasonable amount of time is defined for each class session missed. A "reasonable amount of time" is defined as two days for each class session missed due to an excused absence, and one day for each session missed due to an unexcused absence. (Reference Policy 5132 – Grading Systems.)
 - For example, if a student has an excused absence on Monday and returns to school on Tuesday, assignment(s) are due by the start of class on Thursday.
 - For example, if a student is absent for excused reasons on both Monday and Tuesday and returns on Wednesday, the assignments are due the following Tuesday. Teachers may extend these deadlines if they see that the student is making progress towards completing the assignments. Students should meet with their teachers to arrange for missed work.
 - If work is not completed before the close of the marking quarter, a student may receive an incomplete.

At the High School, an unauthorized tardiness of twenty minutes or more will be considered an absence for that class.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

General Procedures/Data Collection

Attendance data at the building level can be used to:

- Identify absent students, particularly for safety reasons;
- Identify individual and group attendance patterns (the consistent absence of a group from a particular period, e.g., first period, the period after lunch, last period of the day); and
- Identify and initiate strategies to improve the attendance of individuals, targeted groups or the student body as a whole.
- Used to determine eligibility for The Academy (BOCES & CTE) Programs;
- Used to determine if a student has met the New York State seat time requirements for class/course credit; and
- Used to determine summer school eligibility.

On the secondary level attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. On the elementary level students will be accounted for on a daily basis as per New York State requirements for the collection and reporting of student attendance data. At the conclusion of each class period all attendance will be compiled in a central location within each school.

Each day a child is absent, a phone call from the parent is requested; however, all absences will be recorded as unexcused if a note is not received upon the student's return to school. The written note should include the student's name, date of absence, reason for the absence, and the parent's signature. On the elementary level, this note should be given to the child's teacher. On the secondary level, this note should be submitted to the Attendance Office when he/she returns back to school.

When a student is out of school for five (5) or more consecutive days or is hospitalized for any period of time, the parent/guardian must contact the school counselor prior to the student returning to school to schedule a re-entry interview. The parent/guardian must submit a doctor's note detailing the nature of the illness. If the student has been hospitalized, a physician should provide medical clearance for the student to return to school.

Parents will be notified by phone or mail if their child is absent or late. Students in grades 9-12, who enter school late with an unexcused reason, may be assigned detention.

Minimum Attendance Requirement for Students Grade K through 5

The Elementary Schools' attendance requirement is consistent with the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy. All students must attend class a minimum of 85% of the time unless stated otherwise on an individual student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan. Students who arrive at school more than ten (10) minutes after the start of the official school day shall be considered tardy. The school staff will discuss the importance of school attendance and offer assistance to parents/guardians of students who are excessively absent.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

Notification Sequence (K-5)

- As soon as possible after the fifth day (5) of absence and/or tardiness, the school administrator shall send written notification of the number of absences to the student's parents/guardians reminding them of the importance of regular attendance.
- As soon as possible after the tenth day (10) of absence and/or tardiness, the school administrator shall send written notification of the number of absences to the student's parents/guardians reminding them of the importance of regular attendance. The school social worker shall call the student's parents/guardians to discuss the student's attendance pattern.
- As soon as possible after the twentieth day (20) of absence and/or tardiness, the school administrator shall send written notification of the number of absences to the student's parents/guardians expressing concern about the impact of excessive absences on the student's education and request a conference.
- As soon as possible after the twenty-fifth day (25) of absence and/or tardiness, the school administrator shall arrange for a conference with the parents/guardians and shall consider contacting outside agencies to protect the interests of the child.

Consequences of Excessive Absenteeism at the Elementary Level (K-5):

- A doctor's note may be required;
- Referral to the Instructional Support Team (IST) to review student profile and develop specific interventions; and
- Referrals will be made to outside agencies for additional support towards attendance problem.

Minimum Attendance Requirements for Students Grades 6-12

The secondary attendance requirement is consistent with the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy. All secondary students must attend each class a minimum of 85% of the time and earn a passing grade in the course.

Absences

- All absences from class will be covered by this policy. No distinction will be made between the classifications of excused or unexcused when determining the total number of days absent from each course.
- Students shall not be considered absent when they are authorized by school officials to be somewhere other than in their regularly scheduled class. For example, if school personnel expect a student to report elsewhere during the student's regularly scheduled class time for such activities as meetings, conferences with school personnel, testing, physical exams, music lessons, or field trips, the student shall not be considered absent.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)
Minimum Attendance Requirements for Students Grades 6-12 (Continued)

It is the responsibility of the student and/or the designated staff member to provide the classroom teacher with written documentation to attend these sessions before the student is permitted to leave the class.

- Absences resulting from the student being assigned to In-School Suspension (I.S.S.) will not count as a class absence if the student is in attendance on the date(s) assigned by school administration.
- Absences resulting from the student being assigned to out of school suspension in the Positive Alternative to Student Suspension Program (P.A.S.S.) will not count as a class absence if the student is in attendance on the date(s) assigned by school administration.
- Students who, for any reason, are removed from the Regular Attendance Register and placed on Homebound Instruction, shall not be considered absent from their regular classes during that time.
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Notification Sequence and Consequences for Grades 6-8

After the 5th absence: The principal shall send written notification of the student's absences and schedule a meeting with the student, the student's parent/guardian, and a guidance counselor or assistant principal.

After the 10th absence: The principal shall send written notification of the student's absences and schedule a meeting with the student, the student's parent/guardian, and a guidance counselor or assistant principal. If the parent/guardian reports six (6) or more absences as personal illness, a doctor's note will be required.

After the 15th absence: The principal shall send written notification of the student's absences and shall mandate a meeting with the parent/guardian and the student. The student will be referred to the Instructional Support Team (IST).

After the 20th absence: The principal shall send written notification of the student's absences. The parent/guardian and student will be required to meet with the principal. A Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) petition will be considered as well as a referral to an outside agency.

After the 25th absence: The principal shall send written notification. The parent/guardian and student will be required to meet with the principal. A PINS petition will be filed if no medical documentation is provided. An outside agency will be contacted if no medical documentation is provided.

After the 28th absence: The principal shall send written notification of the student's absences. The principal will determine if the student should be retained regardless of academic standing.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

Additional Attendance Requirements for Students Grades 9–12

Absences

- At the high school level any student with more than twenty-eight (28) absences for a full year course or more than fourteen (14) absences for a half-year course will be assigned to “AUDIT” status and may not receive course credit. Attendance requirement states, in part, that to be granted academic credit for any course, a student must earn a passing grade in the course and attend each class a minimum of 85% of the time.
- In each course, when a student accumulates more than twenty-eight (28) absences for a full year course or more than fourteen (14) absences for a half year course a notation of “AUDIT” for all subsequent reporting periods will be entered in the comments section on both the progress report and report card.
- While in “AUDIT” status students are still obligated to attend school, and complete all work and assignments for the course, as their work will continue to be evaluated/graded by the teacher. Students will also still receive teacher comments/feedback on both their progress report and quarterly report card and numerical grade on report cards. At the conclusion of the school year if the student has maintained a passing grade they will receive the numerical grade of record for the final course average and successfully pass the course. However, the student will attend summer school for seat time requirements if the student falls below 60% or 73 days of cumulative attendance for a full year course and/or 60% or 37 days for a half year course. Failure to meet the attendance requirement outlined in Policy 5113.2 will be reprogrammed to take the course in credit recovery.
- If the student has not maintained a passing grade for the course the student will not receive credit for the course. This notation will appear on the report card and student transcript thereafter until the student successfully completes the course.
- Any student who has failed a course may still have the opportunity to attend summer school if their cumulative attendance for the specific course is at least 60% for the school year.
- Appeals concerning the application of this policy, including the minimum attendance standards required to earn course credit, may be made to the principal within seven (7) days of receipt of written notification of the student’s absence(s).
- Summer school is a remediation program based on continuous and previous seat time requirements. There are approximately twenty (20) instructional days in summer school. If the student attends summer school and passes a course they will successfully have met the New York State seat time requirement and earn credit for that specific course. Please be reminded that in summer school the maximum number of absences for any course is three absences.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)
Additional Attendance Requirements for Students Grades 9-12 (Continued)
Absences (Continued)

- A Parent/Guardian may file a written appeal to the Principal to attend summer school if they have exceeded the 60% cumulative attendance for a specific catastrophic or extenuating circumstance(s). This written appeal must be filed no later than two (2) business days after the school year has ended, which is the last day of school in June as summer school registration typically commences three (3) business days after the last day of school in June. If no appeal is filed or granted, the student will be reprogrammed for the course in the next school year at the Extended Day Program. If the course is not offered during the Extended Day Program or if the Extended Day Program is not being offered, students will be reprogrammed during the school day.
- Applicants to The Academy (BOCES CTE) must meet the attendance requirement of no more than fifteen (15) unexcused absences (period or full day). If the student has more than fifteen (15) unexcused absences, they will be ineligible. Additional requirements of applicants to The Academy include that:
 - the applicant must maintain a minimum overall academic average of 70, no more than one (1) course failure, and no out-of-school suspensions.
 - the applicant must meet the criteria established by The Academy
 - a seat at The Academy must be available in the selected CTE program of choice.

Refer to the Program of Studies for additional information.

Applicability

- This policy shall apply to students in grades 9-12 and for accelerated 8th grade students enrolled in courses where they earn high school credit.
- This policy shall apply to each course independently.
- This policy shall apply to classified students unless otherwise noted in their Individualized Educational Program or 504 Accommodation Plan.
- Students attending classes at other facilities, such as a BOCES center, shall be subject to the attendance policies at those other facilities.
- If the student attends Patchogue-Medford High School on a part-time basis, this policy shall apply to the portion of the student's program that requires his/her attendance at Patchogue-Medford High School.
- New students to the high school, who enroll after the first semester, shall be entitled to half the number of allowable absences for each scheduled course.
- Students who transfer from one (1) class to another during the school year will have their class attendance transferred to the new class.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)

Notification Sequence and Consequences for Grades 9-12

The following refers to the notification process pertaining to the number of unexcused absences in a single course. A parent/guardian/student may be notified several different times if excessive absences exist in more than one class.

As soon as possible after the fourteenth, twenty-first, twenty-fifth, and twenty-eighth absence from a **full year course**, the high school administration shall send written notification to the student's parents/guardians and guidance counselor. The letters shall notify the parents/guardians as follows:

- **After the 14th absence:** The student has been absent half the number of maximum allowable absences and may be assigned to "AUDIT" status for the remainder of the school year and/or may also lose course credit if absences continue and/or may lose the opportunity to attend summer school if not successful in the final course grade. The student will be referred to the Instructional Support Team (IST).
- **After the 21st absence:** The student has been absent three quarters of the maximum allowable absences and may be assigned to "AUDIT" status for the remainder of the school year and/or may also lose course credit if absences continue and/or may lose the opportunity to attend summer school if not successful in a passing final course grade. A Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) petition will be considered as well as a referral to an outside agency.
- **After the 25th absence:** The principal shall send written notification. The parent/guardian and student will be required to meet with the principal. A PINS petition will be filed if no medical documentation is provided. An outside agency will be contacted if no medical documentation is provided.
- **After the 28th absence:** The student will be assigned to "AUDIT" status for the specific course for the remainder of the school year. All subsequent progress and report card comments will have this notation. The student will still receive a numerical report card grade, but may lose course credit if a final passing grade has not been achieved and the student has not met the required 60% cumulative attendance criteria. Students will be encouraged to continue their academics and improve their attendance to be eligible to attend summer school.

Similarly, as soon as possible after the seventh, eleventh, and fourteenth absence from a **half-year course**, the high school administration shall send written notification to the student's parents/guardians and guidance counselor. The letters shall notify the parents/guardians as follows:

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)
Notification Sequence and Consequences for Grades 9-12 (Continued)

- **After the 7th absence:** The student has been absent half the number of maximum allowable absences and may be assigned to “AUDIT” status for the remainder of the school year/semester and/or may also lose course credit if absences continue and/or may lose the opportunity to attend summer school if not successful in the final course grade.
- **After the 11th absence:** The student has been absent three quarters of the maximum allowable absences and may be assigned to “AUDIT” status for the remainder of the school year/semester and/or may also lose course credit if absences continue and/or may lose the opportunity to attend summer school if not successful in a passing final course grade.
- **After the 14th absence:** The student will be assigned to “AUDIT” status for the specific course for the remainder of the school year/semester. All subsequent progress and report card comments will have this notation. The student will still receive a numerical report card grade, but may lose course credit if a final passing grade has not been achieved and the student has not met the required 60% cumulative attendance criteria. Students will be encouraged to continue their academics and improve their attendance to be eligible to attend summer school.

In every letter to a student’s parents/guardians, a request will be made for the parents/guardians to meet with the child’s guidance counselor and/or school attendance teacher. The impact of excessive absences on the student’s education, possible intervention strategies to eliminate the problem, and the consequences associated with the student’s absenteeism will be discussed. If contact between the parents/guardians and school personnel is not made, school personnel may contact outside agencies for additional support in addressing the attendance problem. The parents/guardians will have an opportunity to confer with the school staff; however, a conference with the parents/guardians is not a prerequisite to denying academic credit to a student who has failed to meet the attendance requirements. The prime responsibility for the student’s attendance in class rests with the student.

Incentives and Consequences for Attendance Patterns

Each school, where the administration deems appropriate, may use incentive programs to encourage good attendance.

Each school, where the administration deems appropriate, may use the following list of sanctions to discourage poor attendance:

- Loss of the right to play sports.
- Loss of the right to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Loss of the right to attend school-related field trips.
- Loss of parking privileges.
- Attendance at meetings with parents, administration, and counselors to discuss the impact of excessive absences.
- Repetition of course or grade level due to excessive absences.

Comprehensive Attendance Policy (Continued)**Procedure Review**

Each building principal or designee will initiate appropriate action to address excused and unexcused absence patterns. Personnel should have a good understanding of the intent of the District's Comprehensive Attendance Policy and knowledge of successful strategies to overcome negative attendance patterns and encourage positive attendance, learning, and achievement.

The High School Principal and Middle School Principals will provide the Superintendent and the Board of Education with evaluation data and statistics on the implementation of this procedure at the end of each school year.

The Student Support Services Committee will meet each year to review attendance data and the attendance policy.

The Board of Education shall annually review building-level student attendance records, and, if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board of Education shall revise the district's comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the plan it deems necessary to improve student attendance.

Policy Adopted:

August 12, 2002

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