

WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENTS ADMISSIONS/ATTENDANCE School Attendance

5125

PHILOSOPHY

The Board of Education acknowledges research indicating regular attendance at school is an essential and basic component for students to attain learning, achievement, and success during their school career. Additionally, regular school attendance translates to college, career, and life readiness.

When students are routinely and habitually absent from class, they miss integral and essential components of the learning process. Certain classroom activities, such as discussions, viewing of films, and exposure to and participation with guest speakers can often never be repeated or duplicated. Student's bear the responsibility to participate and contribute in the classroom learning process.

Chronic absenteeism, whether excused or not, has a significant and detrimental effect on other students, as well as on the process of instruction. Absences do harm the educational process by placing greater demands on the time of teachers to create makeup assignments and to provide support and assistance to truant or absent students. This demand creates an infringement upon the rights of other students for the equal attention of the teacher.

Beginning at the elementary school level, consistent and regular school attendance, when supported and encouraged by parents/guardians constitutes a vital part of a child's development of a positive attitude towards school and to their ultimate success. Conversely, when parents/guardians are not supportive of regular school attendance, a child may begin to view school as having minimal importance, and consequently, devalue the need or desire for important instructional time . Both of these elements significantly increase the risk of an unsuccessful school experience and directly relate to a student not fulfilling graduation requirements and/or dropping out of school. The Board also values our community members as partners in addressing barriers to attendance, including the fulfilling of basic needs of our students.

The Wausau School District will work cooperatively with parents/guardians and other responsible adults to teach our students the importance of daily and timely school and class attendance. The primary legal and moral responsibility for student attendance, however, is an obligation that rests with parents/guardians and the student.

A. DEFINITIONS

1. Student Attendance

In accordance with State law, all children between six (6) and eighteen (18) years of age must attend school full-time until the end of the term, quarter or semester in which they become eighteen (18) years of age unless they have a legal excuse.

In addition, any person having under his or her control a child who is enrolled in 5-year-old Kindergarten shall cause the child to attend school regularly unless they have a legal excuse.

Any student who has reached the age of sixteen (16) may be excused from school attendance with the consent of his/her parent/guardian and the approval of the Board. The Board shall not excuse a student who is sixteen (16) years of age or over from school attendance unless an alternative educational program has been made available to the student, and the student and his/her parent/guardian have rejected the alternative program. A student who withdraws from school under the law has the right to be readmitted to school upon request so long as the student remains of school age. The Board shall specifically inform the student who withdraws from school of this right for readmittance. A student requesting readmittance must wait until the beginning of the next semester to return to school.

2. Truancy

Any absences of part or all of one or more days from school during which the school attendance officer, principal, or teacher has not been notified of the legal cause of such absence in writing or by personal phone call from the parent/guardian of the absent pupil, and it also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the intent of Wisconsin Statute 118.15. Tardiness, especially if it becomes chronic, will be considered as part of a day.

Habitually Truant refers to a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse under Wisconsin Statute 118.15 for part or all of five (5) or more days on which school is held during a school semester.

3. One-Half Day of School Absence

Arriving at or leaving school and missing thirty (30) minutes or more of either the morning or the afternoon session at the elementary level and missing 50% of the instructional day at the secondary level. Attendance at the secondary level is taken by class period. Missing ten (10) minutes of a class period constitutes an absence for that class period.

4. Full Day of School Absence

Three-fourths (3/4) of the instructional day at the secondary and elementary level is considered a full day absence.

5. Home-Based Instruction

a. Parents/Guardians who choose to absent their child from the public schools because of enrollment in a private home-based instructional program shall cause said absence to be treated as an unexcused absence as per Wisconsin Statute

118.15, unless the Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction has determined the private home-based instructional program meets the definition of a private school.

- b. The principal or his/her designee will count students not attending public school because of being enrolled in a private home-based instructional program as truant and will serve truancy notices to parents/guardians per Wisconsin Statute 118.16 unless the Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction has determined the private home-based instructional program meets the definition of a private school per Wisconsin Statute 118.165.

B. Excused from School

1. Students may be excused from school for the following reasons:
 - a. Personal illness.
 - b. Funerals and religious services as requested by the parents/guardians.
 - c. Professional appointments that could not be scheduled outside of the regular school day.
 - d. Serious personal or family crisis.
 - e. Student is not in proper physical and/or mental condition to attend school in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 118.15(3)(a).
 - f. Suspension from school.
2. Students will be excused for the above reasons only when a parent's/guardian's explanation of the cause for the absence is given during the days of the absences or on the day the student returns to school. The school will not excuse any absences for any reason other than those listed above. **Designated school personnel, and not the parent/guardian, determine whether absences are excused or unexcused.**

Family vacations or activities must be prearranged through the school office as many days prior to leaving as the length of the vacation. The Wausau School District does not encourage absences of this nature because of the loss of instructional time. In such cases, a parent/guardian may request in writing prior to the absence, that the student be absent from school for an activity which is important to the family. In such cases, it is the student's responsibility to overcome the loss of learning and not expect the school to alter its program for such an absence. Under this provision a child may be excused by the parent/guardian for not more than ten (10) days during a school year.

3. Examinations or credit in a course or subject may not be denied solely because of a student's excused or unexcused absence(s) from school. Teachers will emphasize the importance and necessity of regular attendance and must develop procedures and grading requirements which reflect the effect class attendance has on student progress.

4. Each building principal, or his/her designee, shall develop incentives and/or opportunities for recognition for outstanding attendance.
5. Students who are truant as defined by Wisconsin Statute 118.16(1)(a) will be subject to disciplinary action. "Habitual Truant" means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part of all of five (5) or more days on which school is held during a school semester.

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall cause development of administrative rules relating to this policy and inclusive of all pertinent definitions. LEGAL REFERENCE: Wisconsin Statute 118.

C. Procedures - Elementary

1. At the elementary level, attendance shall be taken daily in the morning and afternoon with absences being recorded in the student data management system.
2. Parents/guardians shall notify their child's school of any absence on the day of the absence. In cases where the school is not notified, the school will attempt to contact the parent/guardian about the absence.
3. Additional elementary school attendance procedures should follow established administrative guidelines.

D. Procedures - Secondary

1. Attendance shall be taken daily each period or mod in all secondary schools and the absence will be recorded in the student data management system .
2. All secondary schools shall prepare and keep a listing of all absences for each class period or mod.
3. Parents/guardians shall notify their student's school of any absence on the day of the absence. .
4. Additional secondary school attendance procedures should follow established administrative guidelines.
5. In the event of truancy, the building principal or his/her designee shall notify the parent/guardian either by phone or written notice.

E. Truancy

1. Building administration and Pupil Services staff will attempt to work with the student and the parent/guardian to address any truancy concerns.
2. Prior to any proceeding against the student or parents/guardians, the following conditions must be addressed by the school:
 - a. Met or attempted to meet with the child's parent or guardian to discuss truancy (has to be within ten (10) days of notice)
 - b. Provided an opportunity of educational counseling to determine if curriculum modifications or changes would affect truancy
 - c. Evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems are affecting truancy and if so steps taken (unless tests from previous year indicate that the child is performing at his or her grade level)
 - d. Evaluated for social problems with appropriate referrals

Legal Ref: Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118
Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118.15
Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118.15(3)(a)
Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118.16
Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118.16(1)(a)
Wisconsin Statutes, Section 118.165

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