

**SUBJECT: BOLTON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Statement of Overall Objectives

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The School District is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. The School District recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation; the School District has developed, and, if necessary, will revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- a) Increase school completion for all students;
- b) Raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) Identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) Know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e) Verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) Determine the District's average daily attendance for state aid purposes.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School District will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted District Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board of Education, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the community. The District will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.

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- c) Maintain accurate recordkeeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- d) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- e) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Based upon our District's education and community needs, values and priorities, the School District has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

- a) **Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits with advanced notice and documentation (not to exceed three visits), approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education. * Doctor's note may be required at the discretion of District administration.
- b) **No Fault Absences (Excused)** are for school related activities (field trips, standardized testing, athletic events, appointments scheduled by staff, and assemblies); and do not count toward loss of credit. Students are allowed to make up missed work and apply it to their grade in class.
- c) **Unexcused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping, missing bus).

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Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure will be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the District code for the reason.

Attendance will be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a) For students in non-departmentalized Pre-K through grade five (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), such student's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day. For purposes of APPR and Teacher-Student Data Linkages (TSDL), classroom attendance for all students K-12 must be recorded on a subject-by-subject basis for Teacher of Record Determinations.
- b) For students in grades 6 through 12, each student's presence or absence will be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from grades Pre-K through 12 arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record will be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records will also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1a).

All absences will be reflected as unexcused until a note is received. A note is required for your child's absence when they return. A doctor's note may be required at the discretion of District administration.

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information will be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure will be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established District procedures.

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Student Attendance/Course Credit

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

At the middle school/senior high school level, any student with more than 18 absences in a course may not receive credit for the course. However, students with properly excused absences, tardiness and early departures for which the student has performed any assigned make-up work, assignments and/or tests will not be counted as an absence for the purpose of determining the student's eligibility for course credit. As a general rule, students will be expected to make up academic work within one day for each excused absence. For example, a student with two consecutive days absent (excused) would be expected to make up academic work within two school days after returning unless other arrangements are made with a specific teacher.

For courses that meet for 1/2 year or 1/4 year, the same policy will apply and a calculation of the absences will be prorated accordingly.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working under an approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

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Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school-sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction, which was missed, will be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it will be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher. All absences will be recorded as unexcused until proper documentation is received. Documentation is expected upon the students return to school and may not be accepted beyond two weeks of the students return.

Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies Prior to the Denial Of Course Credit

In order to ensure that parents/persons in parental relation and students are informed of the District's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed **prior to the denial of course credit to the student for insufficient attendance**, the following guidelines will be followed:

- a) Copies of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be mailed to parents/persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the District.
- b) The School website will include periodic reminders of the components of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/student handbooks.
- c) At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone and letter, the parent/persons in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his/her ability to receive course credit.
- d) A designated staff member will review the District's Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services/personnel within the District, as well as the possible collaboration/referral to community support services and agencies, will be implemented prior to the denial of course credit for insufficient attendance by the student.

Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse

A designated staff member will notify by telephone the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. The staff member will explain the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, the District's intervention procedures, and, if appropriate, the relationship between student attendance and course credit. If the parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached by

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telephone, the staff member will provide such notification by mail. Further, the District's Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent/person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference will be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

Attendance Incentives

In order to encourage student attendance, the District will develop and implement grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

- a) Attendance honor rolls to be posted in prominent places in District buildings.
- b) Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, field days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before vacation):
- c) Certificate/Award presented at Award Night Ceremonies.

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Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's *Code of Conduct*. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention and denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual grade levels will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

Tardies: Should a student accumulate 3 (three) instances of unexcused tardiness in a quarter, each ensuing tardy during that quarter will result in detention being assigned. A letter to parents/persons in parental relation will be sent when a student accumulates three unexcused tardies in a quarter

Please refer to page 2, letter "C" for the definition of tardies.

Intervention Strategy Process

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated District personnel will pursue the following:

- a) Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, excused, unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b) Contact the District staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relation will be contacted;
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- d) Recommend intervention to Superintendent or his/her designee if it relates to change in District policy or procedure;
- e) Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- f) Utilize appropriate District and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures;
- g) Monitor and report short and long-term effects of intervention.
- h) Prior to an Attendance Review Board (ARB) meeting, a letter to alert parents that a child has accumulated 8 absences will be sent. Students will also meet with the Principal to discuss the issue.

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Attendance Review Board (ARB)

ARB will consist of: Principal
 School Nurse
 School Counselor(s)
 Teacher(s), if needed

ARB can meet at:

- 1) ten absences from an academic period (Grades 6-12)
- 2) five absences for a half-year course (Grades 6-12)
- 3) five tardies to school/semester (Grades 1-12)
- 4) ten absences from school

ARB will follow intervention strategy process in meetings.

ARB will meet to make a determination on credit denial for courses that a student passes, but has exceeded the allowable number of absences as defined in the attendance policy.

Student and parent will be invited and encouraged to attend all meetings of the ARB both by phone and in writing by Principal or designee.

Appeal Process

A parent/person in parental relation may request a building level review of their child's attendance record.

Building Review of Attendance Records

The Building Principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

Annual Review by the Board of Education

The Board of Education will annually review the District student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board will make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Community Awareness

The Board of Education will promote necessary community awareness of the District's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

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- a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/persons in parental relation;
- b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
- c) Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211 and 3213
8 NYCRR Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

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