

JH - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Category: Priority/Required by Law

Students between the ages stated in RSA 193:1 are required to maintain regular and punctual patterns of attendance. Each building principal is responsible for overseeing attendance procedures and for ensuring that:

1. Attendance is accurately checked, recorded, and reported to the school office each day for each class.
2. All student absences are recorded.
3. All permanent records of student attendance are maintained at either the school district or SAU central office.

The Board considers the following to be excused absences when accompanied by a phone call or written/evidence is provided by the parent/guardian:

1. Illness
2. Recovery from an accident
3. Required court attendance
4. Medical and Dental appointments
5. Death of an immediate family member
6. Observance or celebration of a bona-fide religious holiday
7. Such other good causes deemed acceptable by the principal or permitted by law.

If a parent or legal guardian wishes for their child to be absent for a reason not listed above, the parent must provide a written explanation of the reason for such absence, including why the student will be absent and for how long the students will be absent.

The principal will make a determination as to whether the stated reason for the student constitutes good cause and will notify the parents of the decision. If the principal determines that good cause does not exist, the parents may request a conference with the principal to explain the reasoning further. The Principal may then reconsider the initial decision. However, at this point the Principal's decision will be final.

Family Vacations/Educational Opportunities

Generally, absences other than those listed above are discouraged. The school principal or designee may however grant special approval of absence for family vacations, provided written approval is given in advance. Parents are asked to write a note to the school principal at least two weeks before the trip. The advance planning will allow enough time to work with parents and the student(s) regarding assignment completion.

An unauthorized absence is considered truancy and will be treated as such. Truant students may be subject to school disciplinary measures in line with applicable Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative School Board policies.

Truancy

- a. Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Ten half-days of unexcused absences during the school year constitutes habitual truancy.
- b. A half-day absence is defined as the student missing more than two hours of instructional time and less than 3.5 hours of instructional time.
- c. Any absence of more than 3.5 hours of instructional time will be considered a full-day absence.
- d. The Principal is hereby designated as the District employee responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

When a student is absent more than ten half-days, the school may require parents/guardians to contact their provider by phone. If the student does not need to be seen in the office, the provider will indicate this in writing and notify the school. It is understood that a child with a documented chronic illness may have period where they are not able to fully participate in the academic setting and may need to stay home and rest. The principal will ensure accommodations are in place on a case by case basis to excuse necessary absences for students with chronic illnesses.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy

The Principal shall ensure that the administrative guidelines on attendance properly address the matter of truancy by including a process that identifies students who are habitually truant, as defined above.

When the Principal identifies a student who is habitually truant or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, he/she shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention shall include processes including, but not limited to:

1. Investigating the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
2. Considering, when appropriate, modification of his/her educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;
3. Involving the parents in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;
4. Seeking alternative disciplinary measures, but still retains the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline;
5. Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the child's attendance.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student reaches habitual truancy status or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter, which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for a meeting between the parents and the Principal or Principal's designee to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the recommendations listed below. However, these guidelines shall be advisory only. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing and reducing truancy.

1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parents.
2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures.
3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

Additionally, the Superintendent shall ensure that this policy is included or referenced in the student handbook and is mailed to parents annually at the beginning of each school year.

Legal References:

RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil

RSA 193:7 Penalty RSA 193:8, Notice Requirements

RSA 193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (a)(1), Attendance and Absenteeism

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (c), Policy Relative to Attendance and Absenteeism

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