

Concord School District Policy #514
Attendance, Absenteeism and Truancy

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the School District when school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for temporary absences.

An “unexcused absence” is an absence that is not occasioned by one of the following circumstances:

1. Personal illness or serious health condition;
2. Medical or dental appointments;
3. Family emergencies (such as the death of an immediate family member);
4. Religious holidays;
5. Required court attendance;
6. Absences resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension;
7. Authorized school activities with prior administrative approval.

Unexcused absences fall into two categories:

1. Submitting a written or telephonic excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously; or
2. Failing to submit any type of written or telephonic excuse by a parent, guardian or adult student.

In the event of an illness, parents must call the school and inform the District of the student’s illness and absence. For other absences, parents must provide written notice or a written excuse that states one of these reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may require parents to provide additional documentation in support of their written notice.

It is essential that students attend school as many days as possible. Generally, absences other than the seven categories identified above will not be approved. However, if parents wish 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 student will be absent. The Principal will make a determination whether the stated reason for the student’s absence constitutes good cause and will notify the parents of his/her decision. The Principal’s decision shall be final.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above will be considered an unexcused absence.

Ten half-days of unexcused absence during a school year constitute habitual truancy.

A *half-day* absence is defined as a student missing:

1. more than two hours of instructional time; and
2. fewer than three and one-half hours of instructional time.

Any absence of more than three and one-half hours of instructional time shall be considered a full-day absence and shall be counted as two half days.

The Principal or Truant Officer is hereby designated as the District employee responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy

When the Principal identifies a student who is *habitually truant* or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, the Principal shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents or guardians, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention may include the following steps:

1. An investigation of the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
2. Involvement of the student's parents or guardians in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;
3. Modification, where appropriate, of the student's educational program to address the issues that may be causing the absences; or
4. Alternative disciplinary measures, while retaining the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline; and
5. Determination of the effect of school record-keeping practices, and parental notification of the student's absences, on the student's attendance.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student reaches or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Principal shall communicate this situation with the student's parents or guardians. The communication shall include the following:

1. A statement that the student is 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 to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

Consequences of Habitually Truant Designation

If a student continues to be habitually truant despite the implementation of the intervention strategies listed above, the District's truant officer may file a petition with the Court alleging the child is in need of services (CHINS) pursuant to **RSA 169-D:2, II(a)**.

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. These guidelines shall be advisory only

and 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 and early involvement of parents or guardians in the prevention and intervention process.
2. 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.

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

Legal References:

RSA 189:34, Appointment

RSA 189:35-a, Truancy Defined

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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Corresponds to NHSBA Policy JH