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Attendance Policy - Truancy

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers shall keep a record of absence and tardiness. Before the end of the school day, each school shall attempt to contact every parent, guardian, or custodian whose child is absent from school but who has not reported the child as absent for the school day, to determine whether the parent, guardian, or custodian is aware of the child's absence from school.

For the purpose of this policy "truant" or "truancy" means the persistent non-attendance without excuse, as defined by this policy, for all or any part of a school day equivalent to the length of one class period of a child required to attend a school under 20-5-103. "Habitual truancy" means recorded unexcused absences of 9 or more days or 54 or more parts of a day, whichever is less, in 1 school year.

Truancy is defined as absences which take place without the approval of the parent and/or the Principal or Board Designee.

The Pine Creek School District has appointed the Principal or Board Designee as the attendance officer. If the district does not appoint an attendance officer, the County Superintendent must be the attendance officer.

Upon the board designating one or more of its staff as the attendance officer(s), the attendance officer(s) shall have the powers and duties as stated in 20-5-105(1) (Section 2), MCA.

Attendance Policy - Grades K-8

The District is committed to the tenet that every student should attend school every day; and that poor attendance results, not only in a loss of valuable instruction time, but creates lifelong behavior patterns which could dramatically influence a student's career success. Regular attendance and promptness are expected and essential for success in school. The law of the State of Montana, Section 20-5-103, MCA, specifies the requirements for compulsory attendance in school. It requires parents and guardians who are responsible for the care of school-age children to enforce attendance to the school in which the child is enrolled. The District believes that regular attendance is primarily the responsibility of parents and, to a lesser extent, students, depending on their age. The District recognizes the importance of monitoring all children's attendance and is committed to taking whatever action is necessary, up to and including legal action, to assure that students attend school regularly.

Activities or Preplanned Absences

It is the responsibility of the parent, legal guardian, custodian or student to notify teachers prior to being absent. They must give the teacher one (1) day notice for each day of **preplanned** absence. Teachers may require the work to be completed and turned in prior to departure. If the teacher does not request the work to be handed in prior to the absence, students will have one (1)

day to make up work for each day missed (up to one (1) week).

Absences for school-sponsored activities are excused, but students are held responsible for the work missed. In order to participate in an extracurricular activity, including practice, students must attend school the entire day on the day of the event or if Saturday event, must be in school the entire day on Friday. Exceptions may be made by the administration in some circumstances.

Definitions

Excused Absence - Generally, absences will be considered excused in cases of illness, bereavement, family vacations, and unforeseen emergencies, which are verified by a parent or guardian.

Unexcused Absence: All absences not meeting the requirements of an excused absence are unexcused. In cases where doubt occurs concerning the validity of an excuse, the Principal or Board designee may require verification of conditions contributing to the absence. In the event the Principal or Board designee determines an absence is unnecessary, the absence will be considered unexcused.

Excessive Absences - Students who accumulate 10 days of unexcused absents per academic year are considered excessively absent.

Tardiness – A student is tardy five (5) minutes after the beginning of the morning or afternoon session. All tardies that extend beyond 9:00 a.m. or 1:02 p.m. will be considered a half-day (.5) absence.

Reporting Student Absences

When a student must be absent for illness or other unforeseen emergencies, parents must inform the school of the reasons for the student's absence by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. If the student is not present, and the parent has not notified the school of the absence, the school will attempt to call the parent by 12:30 p.m. the same day. The fact that the school will attempt to call the parent does not relieve the parent of the responsibility to call the school to report the child's absence.

Excused Absences and Tardiness

A note signed by the parents or guardians is required when the child returns to school stating the reason for every absence or tardy when the student returns to school. In cases where doubt occurs concerning the validity of an excuse, the Principal or Board designee may require verification of medical conditions contributing to the absence or tardiness. In the event the Principal or board designee determines an absence or tardiness is unnecessary, the absence will be considered unexcused. Absences and tardies are maintained in students' permanent records.

Excessive Absences

On the eighth absence (not counting approved medical, bereavement, or school activity related) the Principal or Board designee will send a warning letter to the parents notifying them that their student is approaching the 10th day excessive absence limit. On the tenth (10) counted absence, a letter will be sent to the parents calling attention to the consequences of poor attendance on school achievement. The letter will include a copy of the district attendance policy and a copy of the student's attendance record. The letter will also explain that the attendance officer will notify the Department of Family Services as required by law. Upon the 15th absence, the Attendance Officer will file truancy charges with the County Attorney against the parents.

A student may be expelled by the Board for chronic absenteeism.

Absence/Student Performance

Once the teacher observes that the student's absences or tardiness are having an adverse effect on the student's progress, he/she will make parental contact to express concern and to explain the problem. If the absences have been unavoidable because of illness, bereavement or other reasons, the teacher will request a meeting to develop a plan so that the absenteeism has minimal effect on the student's academic success.

In the event that reasons for absences have been determined to be unexcused, the teacher will explain that the student will not get credit for work missed during those unexcused absences. Additionally, the teacher will not be required to provide make-up work.

Excessive absences and tardiness may be a significant factor in decision of retention and/or approval of Out-of-District applications and annual Out-of-District Attendance Agreements.

Summary of Responsibilities

1) Students:

- a) to attend class regularly, only missing a class when a parent is aware that the absence is due to illness or other emergency;
- b) to notify the teacher of planned absences – school activities, family vacations, medical appointment, etc.;
- c) to be in class when the tardy bell rings;
- d) to be knowledgeable of the make-up policy in his/her classes;
- e) to obtain the make-up work and needed instructional help upon returning after an absence;
- f) to schedule all medical and other appointments outside of school time whenever possible;

2) Parents or Legal Guardians

- a) to instill in their child the importance of attendance

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- b) to insure to the best of their ability that their child is in attendance regularly
- c) to avoid taking their student out of school for appointments, trips and vacations
- d) to notify the teacher of any preplanned activities for which their child will be absent
- e) to call the school by 9:00 a.m. on the day that their child is absent
- f) to work with teachers to promote good attendance patterns for their child

3) Teachers

- a) to keep daily records of absences and tardies;
- b) to make parental contacts regarding excessive absences or tardies;
- c) to refer the student to the Principal or Board designee if the parental contact does not solve the problem;
- d) to communicate in writing to the student, parent or legal guardian (a) the make-up procedure for the class and (b) the manner in which the grade for the class will be earned;
- e) to provide opportunities for make-up work when the student is absent unless the absence is due to suspension or truancy or other unexcused absence.

4) Principal or Board Designee

- a) to take appropriate disciplinary measures when a student with excessive absences or tardies has been reported by a teacher;
- b) to monitor attendance reports identifying and conferencing with students and parents when attendance patterns are cause for concern
- c) to work closely with teachers and parents to help the student to develop positive attendance patterns
- d) to notify the attendance officer when necessary

Legal Reference:	§ 20-5-103, MCA	Compulsory attendance and excuses
	§ 20-5-104, MCA	Attendance officer
	§ 20-5-105, MCA	Attendance officer – powers and duties
	§ 20-5-106, MCA	Truancy
	§ 20-5-107, MCA	Incapacitated and indigent child attendance
	§ 41-5-103(22), MCA	Definitions

Policy History:

Adopted on: February 9, 2016