The primary responsibility for good attendance rests with the parents. Parents are required, under § 20-5-103, MCA, to assure that their children attend school regularly. The District recognizes the importance of monitoring the parental responsibility for their child’s attendance. Further, the District is committed to taking whatever action is necessary, up to and including legal action, to assure that students attend school regularly.

A telephone call or a note from either parent or guardian is necessary, when a student is absent or late for any reason. Notes must be given immediately to the attendance secretary. When a student arrives late or after an absence, the student is required to report directly to the office. All absences and tardies will be recorded on the report card.

The principal or designee will attempt to contact, by the end of the school day, any parent, guardian, or legal custodian whose child is absent from school, but who has not reported the child absent for the school day, to determine whether the parent, guardian, or legal custodian is aware of the child’s absence from school.

A copy of the attendance policy will be mailed to the parents or guardians of all students by September 15 of each school year. Personal contact will be made with parents of students who have excessive unexcused absences, tardies, or instances of skipped classes as defined in the “Excessive Absences” section below. A parent conference may also be required. Attendance letters will be mailed to parents or guardians, if the unexcused absences are of a continual nature.

Reporting Absences

When a student must be absent, parents must inform the school 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 11:00 a.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. In the event the parent was unable to contact the school, a parent note or call upon the student’s return to school will verify the absence. The school secretary will maintain a permanent record of student absences and tardies.

Activities or Preplanned Absences

It is the parent’s responsibility to notify teachers prior to a student being absent. Teachers may require the work to be completed and turned in prior to departure. If not requested by a teacher, students will have a minimum of one (1) day to make up work for each day missed, upon return.

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 be in school during the afternoon of the date of the event or in the afternoon on the last school day prior to the activity if the activity falls on a non-school day. Exceptions may be made by the administration.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are defined as the following:

1. Illness;
2. Bereavement;
3. Parental request for cultural or religious activities;
4. Parental requests for extended family activities;
5. Other unforeseen absences approved by the principal.

School work missed during an excused absence may be made up at full credit. Students shall have a minimum of one (1) day to make up work for each day missed.

Unexcused Absences

As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused shall experience the consequences of his/her absences. A student’s academic grade or credit in a particular subject or course may be adversely affected by reason of excessive tardiness or absence, and disciplinary action consistent with the District discipline policy and building-level discipline procedures may be imposed. Excessive absences may be reported to the authorities at any time. Excessive tardiness and absences are defined below.

Excessive Absences

Excessive absences are defined as follows:

1. Skipping a class;
2. Continual unexcused absences;
3. Continual tardies to school or a class;
4. Ten (10) or more absences of any kind during a semester, unless prior approval is given by the principal for special circumstances.
Continual excused absences called in to the school or given over the phone by parents or guardians exceeding the ten (10) days per semester limit may require a parent/guardian conference and an attendance plan to be enacted. The District may require a medical excuse from a doctor.

When appropriate, the Board shall, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, consider expulsion for chronic absenteeism.

Incentives

Individual schools may put into place a recognition plan for those students who exhibit successful efforts to have excellent attendance.

Tardies

Classroom tardies should be handled by the teacher. Excessive tardies may be referred to the building administrator’s office.

Legal Reference: § 44-2-507, MCA Notice to parents of children absent from school

Procedure History:
Promulgated on: 4/12/1999