

SUBJECT: ATTENDANCE

The South Huntington School District firmly upholds that consistent school attendance is essential to a successful learning experience. Regular attendance, beginning in kindergarten is a determining factor for academic success and ultimately, high school graduation. Students are mandated to attend school. The South Huntington Schools will work with parents to assure that all students are in school daily.

Objectives:

1. That all students attend school daily.
2. That accurate recording of each child's attendance be made daily.
3. That all parents have access to their child's attendance each day.

Strategies:

1. To assure that all students attend school daily, a system of incentives and consequences will be utilized. Responsibilities of students, parents and the school will be clearly defined.
2. A daily attendance system at the K- 5 grade levels and a period by period attendance system at the 6 - 12 grade levels will be implemented by September 2003.
3. A system of communication with parents will be established so that they will be informed of their child's absence, tardiness or early departure from school on the day of occurrence. Telephone contact and letters sent home will be utilized. Social workers will contact parents whenever a pattern of absence, tardiness or early departure is noted.

Compulsory Age of Attendance

New York State requires that:

- Children who turn five (5) before December 1st of a school year are eligible to attend kindergarten. There are no exceptions to this regulation.
- Children who turn six (6) during the school year must attend school from the September start date. (The school year begins July 1st and ends June 30th)
- Children who turn 17 during the school year must remain in school until the end of that school year. South Huntington requires that children remain in school until the age of 18.

Students

Responsibilities of Students

It is the responsibility of students to:

- Attend school daily
- Be in class and scheduled school assignments and activities on time, therefore:
 1. It is expected that all students be in attendance in all scheduled classes in accordance with school procedures.
 2. Non-school activities and appointments should be scheduled outside of the school day.
 3. Student participation in extra and co-curricular activities is contingent on adherence to the school attendance policy.
 4. Students should be on time for class.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to support school attendance by cooperating with school administration and reinforcing school attendance policies by:

- Assuring that your child attends school
- Assuring that your child comes to school on time
- Assuring that your child has a legitimate/documented excuse when absent, therefore:
 1. At elementary school level, parents must call the school whenever their child will not be in attendance and give the reason for the absence.
 2. At all grade levels, parents must send in a note explaining the reason for each absence on the day the child returns to school.

Responsibilities of the School

The school will actively support student attendance by:

- Positive reinforcement of students' compliance with the district's attendance policy
- Monitoring students to insure their attendance
- Keeping accurate records of student's attendance in all classes and activities during the day
- Working in partnership with parents to insure students attendance
- Notifying parents promptly when a child has an unexcused absence, cut, late arrival or early departure.

Students

Recording Attendance

In accordance with New York State attendance regulations, the South Huntington School District will utilize a system of attendance record keeping on a daily basis for grades K to 5, and on a period-by-period basis for grades 6 to 12. Parents will have access to the attendance files by requesting this from the administration. The district firmly believes that cooperation and communication between parents and the schools are essential to assure that students develop good attendance habits at an early age. Attendance is as important in the elementary grades as it is in middle school and high school.

Register of attendance will be made by either a teacher or employee of the district designated by the Board of Education. Persons who record the attendance will be required to sign an oath or affirmation declaring the accuracy of the attendance records each year. This oath will be administered at the beginning of each school year and will be kept by the principal in each building.

The attendance register will be supervised by a secretary in each building and by the Data Processing Department in the District Office. The daily pupil attendance shall be reviewed by the principal of every school, as well as the designated administrator or employee for the purpose of initiating the appropriate action required to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness, cuts and early departure from school. The administrators in conjunction with the attendance teacher and social workers will assure that parents are notified of any attendance violation that occurs. Notification to parents will be made by telephone and by mail.

Records of Attendance will be kept on file in the District Office for 6 years. The district's average daily attendance will be reported to the State Education Department each year.

Tardiness and Early Departures

Students may enter the building approximately ten (10) minutes before the start of any session. Students should not be sent to school too early, since play areas are supervised only at specific times.

A note explaining the cause of an excused tardiness is required. Parents are urged to confine medical and dental appointments to a period preferably at the end of a daily session if they are unable to secure the appointment outside of school hours.

All incidents of early departure from school must also have a note explaining the need for this action. Unexcused early departure will be recorded on students' attendance records.

Students

Excused Absences

Absences that are permitted by the State Education Department and the South Huntington School District are:

- Illness of the student
- Death or illness in the family
- Impassible roads
- Required court appearances
- Quarantine
- Health treatments or clinic visits
- Approved college visits
- Approved cooperative work programs
- Military obligations
- Emergency housing needs
- Religious observance

All other incidents will be considered and recorded as unexcused absences, even with a note from the parent explaining the circumstances. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school within 24 hours of an absence and to provide a written note upon the student's return to school. Absence notes regarding illness of the student must specify the nature of the illness.

Notes from parents after five days of the child's return to school may not be accepted, and the student may not be able to make up the missed class work required.

Doctors' Notes

Students who are absent for more than ten consecutive days will require a note from a doctor explaining the nature of the illness.

Home Instruction

Students who are seriously ill or injured may apply for home instruction if the illness or injury is projected to last for more than 10 consecutive days of school. Home tutoring can be arranged by providing the Student Services Department with a letter from a physician clearly indicating the nature of the illness or injury and the expected date that the student will return to school. The doctor's note should also include a statement that the child is well enough to be instructed and that the teacher's health would not be endangered by a communicable disease.

Students

Students who are out for an extended period will provide the Student Services Department with a new doctor's note after every two-month period to review the child's progress and projected return to school. While on Home Tutoring, attendance with tutors will be kept for each child.

Summary of Attendance Codes

Attendance can be viewed via the internet on the South Huntington website. Each code is fully explained. In the Infinite Campus software system, the codes for attendance are:

Absent unknown reason	ABS
Assisting AP	ADAP
Administration office	ADMI
Assisting in Office	ADOF
AP Testing	AP
Attendance Review	ATTR
Career Center	CCTR
College Visit	COLV
Court Appearance	CRT
CSE Attendance	CSE
Cutting	CUT
Discipline Office	DISC
Family Trip	FAMT
Family Death/Bereavement	FD
Family Emergency	FEMR
Family Sick	FS
Field Trip	FTRP
Guidance	GUID
Homebound	HOME
Hospitalization/Medical	HOSP
Home Instruction	HSCH
Illegal Absence	ILLE
In School Suspension	ISS
Late Excused	LATE
Left from Discipline Office	LFDO
Left from Health Office	LFHO
Left from Main Office	LFMO
Library	LIBR
Medical Exclusion	MDEX
Music Lessons	MUSI

Students

Nurse	NURS
Out of Country	OOO
Out of School Suspension	OSS
PE Medical Excuse	PEME
Pass out of School	POS
Pass out of School (bomb threat)	POSB
Religious	RELI
Resource Room	RRM
Related Services	RSVC
Sick	SICK
Student Services	SSER
Excused Tardy	TARE
Tardy	TARU
Testing	TEST
Truant	TRNT
Unprocessed/Unknown	UNPR
Unexcused late	ULAT

Communication of Attendance Policy

The Attendance Policy will be printed in each student handbook. Teachers will review the Attendance Policy at the start of each school year. Parents will be sent a copy of the Attendance Policy each year in the school calendar and in a separate letter. Parents will need to sign and return a statement that they have read and understand the policy. Back-to-school events and open houses will include an explanation of the Attendance Policy, stressing the parent's crucial responsibility for ensuring children's attendance.

All staff will be provided with the Attendance Policy. They will be made aware of the procedures necessary for the accurate attendance recording for each class they teach. Staff will discuss this policy and their role in its implementation at the beginning of each school year.

The South Huntington School District's Attendance Policy will be sent to each family with students attending our schools. A parent will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they had received the policy and reviewed it with their child. All secondary students will be given the policy and their teachers will review it with them at the beginning of each school year.

Attendance Incentives

The district will design and implement systems to acknowledge a student's efforts to maintain or improve

school attendance. For example:

- Each school will maintain an attendance honor roll and publish it quarterly identifying those students with perfect attendance, as well as those students whose attendance has improved significantly, subject to parental consent and applicable confidentiality rules.
- At the building and classroom levels, building principals and teachers are encouraged to schedule special events for days of chronically high absenteeism, like Mondays and Fridays.

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- At the classroom levels, teachers are encouraged to assign special responsibilities (distribute and collect materials, lead groups, assist the teacher, etc.) to students who may need extra motivation to come to school.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness, cuts and early departures will result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's code of conduct. Those penalties may include, for example, detention or in-school suspension. Students may also be denied the privilege of participating in or attending extracurricular events.

In addition, designated staff member(s) will contact the student's parents and the student's guidance counselor. Such staff member(s) shall remind parents of the attendance policy, explain the ramifications of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures, stress the importance of class attendance and discuss appropriate intervention strategies to correct the situation.

A cut will be recorded whenever a student is in attendance in school, but not in attendance in a particular class. Each period in the secondary level will have attendance taken, which will be recorded in a timely manner.

Cutting class is counter to the district's philosophy that attendance in class is essential to school success. Disciplinary actions, therefore, will be utilized in order to encourage compliance with this attendance policy.

A system of incremental interventions is in place in each school. For example, at the high school the following procedures will be followed:

- a. First unexcused absence, cut or early departure, the teacher will speak to the student and notify parents in writing or by phone.
- b. Second unexcused absence, cut or early departure, parents will be notified in writing and by phone.
- c. Third unexcused absence, cut or early departure, parents and student will be called to meet with a

building administrator. The student will become ineligible for participation in or attending extra curricular activities and may be dropped from the class.

Appeals may be made to the eligibility committee in the building or to the principal.

All students who accumulate 10 or more unexcused absences or cuts from class will be referred to the guidance counselor, attendance officer or social worker in the school for consultation.

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- If the investigation finds that the student has willfully and deliberately absented themselves from school or class, the absences will be considered truant. Legal action, such as filing a PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) Petition may be made in Suffolk County Family Court.
- If the investigation finds that the parent was willful and deliberate in causing their child to be absent, the absences will be considered neglectful. Legal action such as filing an Educational Neglect report with New York State Child Protective Services may be filed.
- Excessive absences may affect promotion to the next grade.

Attendance/Grade Policy

The Board of Education recognizes the important relationship between class attendance and student performance. Consequently, each marking period a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation, as well as student's performance on homework, tests, papers, project, etc.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused absences from a class will affect a student's class participation grade for the marking period.

At the secondary level, any student enrolled in a credit-bearing course with more than nine unexcused absences for one-half year or 18 unexcused for a full year will receive an F for class participation, which is a weighted part of the total grade for a class. These students may be denied credit for the course if their attendance does not improve. Exceptions to these rules must be appealed to the building eligibility committee or to the principal. However, students with properly excused absences may make up the work for each absence, and those absences will not count toward the minimum attendance standard.

To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implications of this minimum attendance requirement, the teacher or other designated staff member(s) will advise the student and contact the parent(s) by telephone and mail at appropriate intervals prior to the student reaching nine or 18 unexcused absences, tardiness.

In implementing the policy set forth above, students who are unable to attend school or a class on a given day due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity (i.e., music, field trips), may arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed. This also applies to any student who is absent, tardy or leaves

early from school or a class due to illness or any other excused reason.

All students with an excused absence are expected upon their return to consult with their teachers regarding missed work.

Only those students with excused absences will be given the opportunity to make up a test or other

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missed work and/or turn in a late assignment for inclusion in their final grade. Make up opportunities must be completed by a date specified by the student's teacher for the class in question. Students who are suspended will be expected to make up the test and missed class work.

Developing Intervention Strategies

In addition to the communication of the responsibilities of the students, parents and school, the implementation of incentives and the enforcement of consequences, each building administration will meet on a yearly basis to evaluate the effectiveness of their intervention programs. New interventions will be discussed and implemented with approval from the principal. All strategies utilized by each school will be summarized and sent to the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services who will maintain a current list of all strategies used throughout the district.

Weekly Review

In addition to the daily review, the principal in each building will review the attendance of students on a weekly basis. Patterns of absences, tardiness or early departures will be noted and referred to the appropriate personnel for intervention.

Annual Review

The Board shall annually review building-level student attendance records and, if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall revise this comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the plan it deems necessary to improve student attendance.

Amended: 8/18/04

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