

## **SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Statement of Overall Objectives**

School attendance is both a right and a responsibility. The St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES is an active partner with students and parents in the task of ensuring that all students meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards. Because the BOCES recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success and school completion have a positive correlation, the BOCES has developed, will review and, if necessary, revise a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy to meet the following objectives:

- a) To increase school completion for all students;
- b) To raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) To identify attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e) To verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;

### **Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives**

The BOCES will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Develop a Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy based upon the recommendations of a BOCES Policy Development Team. The BOCES will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of this collaboratively developed comprehensive Student Attendance Policy.
- c) Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- d) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- e) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

### **Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures**

Based upon our educational and community needs, values and priorities, the BOCES has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

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- a) **Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to documented personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved educational/college visits, job interviews, learner's permit or road test appointments which cannot be scheduled outside the school day, military obligations, approved component school activities, or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.
- b) **Unexcused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., family vacation, hunting, babysitting, haircut, oversleeping).

### **Student Attendance Record Keeping/Data Collection**

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the BOCES code for the reason.

*Commencing July 1, 2003, attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:*

- a) For students in non-departmentalized kindergarten through grade eight (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), such student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance once per school day, provided that students are not dismissed from school grounds during a lunch period. Where students are dismissed for lunch, their presence or absence shall also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the student's return from lunch.
- b) For students in grades nine through twelve or in departmentalized schools at any grade level (i.e., students pass individually to different classes throughout the day), each student's presence or absence shall be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction except that where students do not change classrooms for each period of scheduled instruction, attendance shall be taken in accordance with paragraph "a" above.
- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- d) In the event that a student at any instructional level from kindergarten through grade twelve arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse

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weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other case as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness or early departure shall be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established program/building procedures.

Teachers of BOCES Special Education classes located in component BOCES buildings shall provide all attendance information to the designated host BOCES personnel according to agreed upon procedures in each building. Attendance data for BOCES Special Education students shall be made available to BOCES teachers or administrators on request for review of individual student records and/or classroom records in order to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to report such patterns to the BOCES Board of Education. BOCES Special Education teachers shall also enter attendance data into the Special Education data collection system.

**Student Attendance/Course Credit**

The BOCES believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.

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

However, where a student earns a passing grade, including the classroom participation component, credit will be recommended to the student's home district for the course(s).

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The above policy applies to students in BOCES Special Education classes earning credit for courses taken within the Special Education classroom. Students in mainstream classes in the host district will follow the host district's policy on attendance and grading in order to earn credit in the course. Attendance may also be a component of determining whether a student has met his or her Individual Education Program goals in order to earn an IEP diploma.

The above policy also applies to students in BOCES Alternative Education programs. However, additional criteria for attendance in Alternative Education programs will be reviewed no later than January 2003 and may be recommended for inclusion in this policy at a later date.

The above policy applies to BOCES Regional Summer School programs. The Summer School guidelines define "participation" according to a participation rubric and specify the extent to which participation affects a student's grade.

At the Career and Technical Education centers, Certificates of Completion are awarded to students for successful completion of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, in addition to course credit awarded by the component districts. In addition, the BOCES may recommend a Technical Endorsement on a Regents diploma for students in certified CTE courses. Any CTE student with more than ten (10) absences per year in a course may not receive a Certificate of Completion for the course or a Technical Endorsement recommendation. However, it is BOCES policy that up to five (5) additional days of properly excused absences, tardiness and/or early departures, above and beyond the ten (10) allowed absences, will be allowed, provided the student has performed any assigned make-up work assignments and/or tests, for the purpose of determining the student's eligibility for a Certificate of Completion or recommendation for a Technical Endorsement.

BOCES procedures will specify how student tardiness and early departures will be calculated and factored into the BOCES minimum attendance standard.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working pursuant to an approved independent study, shadowing or work experience program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

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Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school sponsored activity are to arrange with their teachers to make up any work missed in a timely manner as determined by the student's teacher. Attendance at school sponsored events where instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction which was missed shall be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness or early departure, it shall be the responsibility of the student to consult with his/her teacher(s) regarding arrangements to make up missed work, assignments and/or tests in accordance with the time schedule specified by the teacher.

### Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies Prior to the Denial of Course Credit

In order to ensure that parents/persons in parental relation and students are informed of the BOCES policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, Certificates of Completion and/or Technical Endorsements and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed **prior to the denial of course credit, Certificates of Completion and/or Technical Endorsements to the student for insufficient attendance**, the following guidelines shall be followed:

- a) Copies of the BOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be mailed to parents/persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the BOCES.
- b) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the BOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent/student handbooks.
- c) At periodic intervals, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone or letter, the parent/person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his/her ability to receive course credit, a Certificate of Completion and/or a Technical Endorsement on a Regents diploma. The student's home school district will also be notified.
- d) A designated staff member will review the BOCES Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services/personnel within the BOCES, as well as the possible collaboration/referral to community support services and agencies, will be implemented prior to the denial of course credit, Certificates of Completion and/or Technical Endorsements for insufficient attendance by the student.

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## **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

A designated staff member shall notify by telephone or letter the parent/person in parental relation to a student who is chronically absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. The staff member shall explain the BOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, the program/building level intervention procedures, and, if appropriate, the relationship between student attendance and course credit, Certificates of Completion and/or Technical Endorsements. Further, the BOCES Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent/person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

## **Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, the BOCES will develop and implement grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

- a) Student-of-the-month selection using attendance as one criteria for selection.
- b) Certificates awarded at the end of each quarter for perfect attendance.
- c) End-of-year recognition for perfect attendance at awards ceremonies.
- d) Incentives for good attendance as part of classroom management plans.

## **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the BOCES Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention and recommendation to the home district for denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by designated BOCES personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings/programs will address procedures to implement the notification process to the parent/person in parental relation.

## **Intervention Strategy Process**

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated BOCES personnel will pursue the following:

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- a) Identify specific element(s) of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b) Contact the BOCES staff most closely associated with the element. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent/person in parental relation will be contacted;
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific element;
- d) Recommend intervention to the District Superintendent or his/her designee if it relates to change in BOCES policy or procedure;
- e) Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- f) Utilize appropriate BOCES and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures.
- g) Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention.

**Appeal Process**

A student or parent/person in parental relation may request a review of their child's attendance record. The appeal process will be specified in Student/Parent handbooks.

**Building Review of Attendance Records**

Commencing with the 2003-2004 school year, the building principal or program administrator will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance records at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

**Annual Review by the Board of Education**

The BOCES shall annually review the building level and/or program level student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

**Community Awareness**

The BOCES shall promote necessary community awareness of the BOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

- a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents or persons in parental relation to students at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/persons in parental relation;

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- b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and
- c) Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205,  
3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213  
8 New York Code of Rules and Regulations  
(NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2 and 175.6

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