

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE**Statement of Overall Objectives**

Southern Westchester BOCES (“SWBOCES”) 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. SWBOCES recognizes that consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation, and therefore has developed this policy and will revise it as needed, to meet the following objectives:

- a) Increase school completion for all students;
- b) Raise student achievement and close gaps in student performance;
- c) Identify student attendance patterns in order to design attendance improvement efforts;
- d) Know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons;
- e) Verify that individual students are complying with education laws relating to compulsory attendance;
- f) Determine SWBOCES' student average daily attendance for state aid purposes.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

SWBOCES will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical, psychological, and social-emotional 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, with the objective of increased attendance.
- b) Periodically review the policy and make changes based upon the recommendations of a multifaceted SWBOCES Policy Development Team that includes representation from the Board, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. SWBOCES will hold at least one public hearing prior to the adoption of any collaboratively developed revisions to this policy.
- c) Maintain accurate recordkeeping 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.

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SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE (Cont'd.)**Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness, and Early Departures**

Based upon SWBOCES' education and community needs, values, and priorities, SWBOCES has determined that absences, tardiness, and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards:

- a) **Excused:** An absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if due to 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 college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, home school district excused, or other reasons as may be approved by the Board.
- 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.

SWBOCES students attending programs in a school district operated building will follow the host building's school district attendance policy for excused and unexcused absences. All other SWBOCES students' absences will be classified as listed above.

A written excuse, signed by a parent or person in parental relation should be presented by the student when returning to school following each absence.

Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness, and early departure will 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 SWBOCES code for the reason.

Attendance will be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:

- a) For students in non-departmentalized Kindergarten- Grade 8 classrooms (i.e., self-contained classrooms and supervised group movement to other scheduled school activities such as physical education in the gym, assembly, etc.), the student's presence or absence will 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 will also be recorded after the taking of attendance a second time upon the student's return from lunch. For purposes of APPR and Teacher-Student Data Linkages (TSDL), classroom attendance for all students in grades K through 12 must be recorded on a subject-by-subject basis for Teacher of Record Determinations.
- b) For students in grades 9 through 12 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 will be recorded after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction.

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- c) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof will 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 grades K through 12 arrives late for, or departs early from, scheduled instruction, the tardiness or early departure will be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

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

Attendance records will 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 will be compiled and provided to the designated school personnel who are responsible for attendance. The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure will be coded on a student's record in accordance with the established SWBOCES or building procedures.

Student Attendance and Course Credit

SWBOCES 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 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, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

Middle and High School students who miss more than six sessions of an individual class per quarter and fail to make up missing work, may be at risk for failing for the marking period and not receiving course credit. However, students with properly excused absences, tardiness, and early departures for which the student has performed any assigned make-up work, assignments, and/or tests will not be counted as an absence for the purpose of determining the student's eligibility for course credit. SWBOCES procedures will specify how student absences, tardiness, and early departures will be calculated and factored into the SWBOCES' minimum attendance standard. These procedures will be communicated to students and families annually and will be published in a student handbook and/or posted on the school's web site.

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However, SWBOCES may not deny course credit to a student who has exceeded the allowable number of absences but taken all tests, completed missed class work, and secured a passing grade.

For summer school and courses meeting 1/2 year or 1/4 year, the same policy will apply, and a calculation of the absences will be prorated accordingly.

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 under an approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

Students who are absent from class due to their participation in a school-sponsored activity must 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 will be counted as the equivalent of regular attendance in class, as determined by the classroom teacher and in consultation with the principal or program administrator.

Upon returning to school following a properly excused absence, tardiness, or early departure, it will be the responsibility of the student to consult with his or 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 or persons in parental relation and students are informed of the SWBOCES' policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed prior to the denial of course credit to the student for insufficient attendance, the following guidelines will be followed:

- a) Copies of the SWBOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy will be available to parents or persons in parental relation and provided to students at the beginning of each school year or at the time of enrollment in the SWBOCES.
- b) School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the SWBOCES Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. Copies of the Attendance Policy will also be included in parent or student handbooks or posted on the SWBOCES website.

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- c) Prior to the student reaching the attendance threshold and/or if a pattern of poor attendance is noted, a designated staff member(s) will notify, by telephone, the parent or person in parental relation of the student's absence, tardiness, or early departure and explain the relationship of the student's attendance to his or her ability to receive course credit. If the parent or person in parental relation cannot be reached by telephone, a letter will be sent detailing this information.
- d) A designated staff member will review the SWBOCES Attendance Policy with students who have excessive and/or unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures. Further, appropriate student support services within SWBOCES, as well as the possible collaboration or referral to community support services and agencies, will be implemented prior to the denial of course credit for insufficient attendance by the student.

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

A designated staff member will notify the parent or person in parental relation to a student who is absent, tardy, or departs early without proper excuse as soon as practicable.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent or person in parental relation, a school conference will be scheduled between the parent or 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.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10% of enrolled school days in a year for any reason, excused or unexcused. Chronic absenteeism differs from truancy because it emphasizes missed instructional time rather than unexcused absences. Missed instructional time can increase a student's risk for disengagement, low achievement, and dropping out, among other things.

Students who miss at least 5% of enrolled school days in a year are at risk of becoming chronically absent. In light of this, SWBOCES will implement intervention strategies appropriate to grade level and program for students who miss 5% or more of the enrolled school days in a year.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the SWBOCES *Code of Conduct*. Negative consequences will not be imposed, however, where the absence, tardiness, or early departure is related to homelessness. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, in-school suspension, detention, and denial of participation in extracurricular activities. Parents or persons in parental relation will be notified by designated SWBOCES personnel prior to the student reaching the attendance threshold and/or if a pattern of poor attendance is noted to discuss their child's absences, tardiness, or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. Individual buildings and grade levels will develop procedures to implement the notification process to the parent or person in parental relation.

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SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE (Cont'd.)**Intervention Strategy Process**

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

- a) Identify specific **element(s)** of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, timeframe, type of excused absences, unexcused absences, tardiness, or early departures).
- b) Contact the SWBOCES staff most closely associated with the **element(s)** identified. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent or person in parental relation will be contacted.
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with the specific **element(s)**.
- d) Recommend intervention to the District Superintendent or designee if it relates to change in SWBOCES policy or procedure.
- e) Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration.
- f) Utilize appropriate SWBOCES 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 to SWBOCES staff, administration, and the Board as appropriate.

Appeal Process

A parent or person in parental relation may request a building level review of his or her child's attendance record.

Building Review of Attendance Records

The building principal 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

The Board will annually review the building level student attendance records and if those records show a decline in student attendance, the Board will make any revisions to the Policy and plan deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

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SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE (Cont'd.)**Community Awareness**

The Board will promote necessary community awareness of the SWBOCES 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 this policy to students and their parents or persons in parental relation; and
- 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 §§ 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213
8 NYCRR §§ 104.1, 109.2, and 175.6

NOTE: Refer also to Policy #7131 -- Education of Students in Temporary Housing

Adoption Date