

Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy  
2008-09  
*East Greenbush Central School District*



**1. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

Every student has a right to educational opportunities that maximize personal academic, physical and social growth. Attendance is an important factor in school success for students. The educational program offered by the East Greenbush Central School District is predicated upon student presence and requires continuity of instruction and active classroom participation. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement and reduces drop-out rates. School attendance is a right, obligation and responsibility in New York State. The goal of our attendance policy is to require and encourage students to come to school each day, ready to learn and perform at their highest level.

This attendance policy has been developed and implemented to ensure the maintenance of an appropriate record that verifies the attendance of all students at instruction in accordance with Education Law 3205 and 3210. It also establishes a mechanism by which patterns of student absence can be examined for the purpose of effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance and academic performance. Successful implementation of this attendance policy requires the cooperation of all school community members: students, parents, guardians, teachers, support staff and administrators.

**2. STRATEGIES TO BE EMPLOYED**

- A. Development of this policy and appropriate record-keeping mechanisms to ensure that the attendance of all students is tracked and analyzed
- B. Development of mechanisms for intervention when an individual student's attendance record demonstrates a pattern requiring a need for improvement
- C. Development of a district-wide program to encourage regular attendance, including the use of appropriate incentives

**3. EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCE/TARDINESS**

The student and parent/guardian are responsible for providing credible written notification of the reason for any absence upon the student's return to school. A note from a medical professional is required should a student be absent for five (5) consecutive school days. In addition, the parent/guardian should contact school personnel on the date of the student's absence.

- A. The following represents absences or tardiness of such a nature that will be considered as excused:
  - 1. Personal illness up to 10 days\*
  - 2. Academic activity/program recognized or required by the school or district (e.g. music lesson)
  - 3. Activity recognized by the school district to be an educationally equivalent experience (e.g. participation in NYSTI)
  - 4. Recognized religious Observance
  - 5. Serious Illness/Death in family
  - 6. Court Appearance/Legal Obligation
  - 7. Impassable roads
  - 8. Military obligation
  - 9. Pre-Approved College Visit (signed guidance office form needed)
  - 10. Medical Appointment

B. The following represent absences or tardiness of such a nature that will be considered as unexcused:

1. Truancy
2. Personal illness beyond 10 days\*
3. Personal and/or family vacation
4. Absences for which a note is not provided within five (5) school days of student's return
5. Activity not recognized by the school district to be an educationally equivalent experience (e.g. participation in Take Your Child to Work Day)
6. Other absences not listed in A ("Excused") above

\*For incidents of student illness beyond 10 days, medical documentation will be provided to the building principal so as to determine that extenuating circumstances exist.

#### 4. CODING SYSTEM/RECORD KEEPING

A. Attendance will be taken according to the following procedures:

1. In elementary buildings (non-departmentalized) attendance will be taken each morning at the beginning of the school day. Each classroom teacher shall record the students' presence or absence in a classroom record and shall report all absence or tardiness to the building office on an attendance record. If any students are dismissed from the school building for lunch, attendance will be taken in the same manner at the start of the afternoon classes.
2. In middle school and high school buildings (departmentalized) attendance will be taken at the beginning of the school day during an attendance room period. Each teacher responsible for an attendance room at the beginning of the day shall record the students' presence or absence in an attendance record and shall report all student absences or tardiness to the building office either electronically or on an attendance card. In addition, attendance shall be taken at the beginning of each period of scheduled instruction. Each classroom teacher shall record the presence or absence of students in a classroom record and shall report all absences or tardiness to the building office either electronically or in paper form during the instructional period.

B. The content/form of district attendance records shall be as follows:

The district will maintain a permanent record of attendance for all students enrolled in instruction. Each student's attendance record will be prepared by the classroom teacher and maintained either electronically or in paper form by the building principal or another employee designated by the Board of Education. A district-wide record, based on building records, shall also be compiled and maintained by the Superintendent (or a designee). The record shall include the following information for each student: name, date of birth, names of parents or persons in parental relation, address where student resides, phone numbers where parents or person in parental relation can be contacted, date of enrollment, a record of the student's attendance on each day of scheduled instruction, and a record of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day due to extraordinary circumstances.

Code	Title	Status	Excused
U	Unexcused Absence	Absent	No
EX	Excused Absence	Absent	Yes
UT/IT	Unexcused Tardy	Tardy	No
T	Excused Tardy	Tardy	Yes
R	Religious Observance	Absent	Yes
SD	Special Day	Absent	Yes
FT	Field Trip	Absent	Yes
O/OSS/S	Out of School Suspension	Absent	Yes
ISS	In School Suspension	Absent	Yes
HP	Home Instruction - Present	Absent	Yes
HX	Home Instruction - Absent	Absent	No
ML	Music Lesson	Absent	Yes
GO	Guidance Office	Absent/Tardy	Yes
HO	Health Office	Absent/Tardy	Yes
AP	Assistant Principal	Absent/Tardy	Yes

Entries on the attendance record will be made only by a teacher, building principal, or employee designated by the Board of Education and shall be verified as accurate under oath or affirmation.

C. In the event that a student is absent from school without notification to school personnel, school personnel will contact the student's home to confirm the student's absence. If no contact with a parent or person in parental relation is made at the home, such contact will be made at the place of employment of the parent or person in parental relation. If, in either situation, no contact is made, a message will be left requesting that the parent or person in parental relation call the school to verify the student absence. Following any absence from school, the student is required to bring a written note from a parent/guardian within five (5) school days of the student's return from the absence. The note should provide the reason for the student's absence from school. Should the note not be submitted within five (5) school days of the student's return from the absence, the absence will be deemed unexcused. An absence note will not be accepted after the fifth day following an absence. In such a situation, the parent/guardian of the student may meet with the building principal who may consider any extenuating circumstances which may have caused the parent/guardian not to submit a note within five (5) school days of a student's return.

### **5. PROCEDURES TO ADDRESS UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

An attendance record for each student will be prepared and maintained. The building principal will monitor the attendance record of students in the building and will initiate appropriate actions to address patterns of persistent, unexcused absences or tardiness. Since regular attendance in school correlates with higher achievement, and since student attendance in school is required, patterns of absence or tardiness are not tolerated.

The following procedures will be followed to address excessive unexcused absenteeism.

#### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

- i. Student is absent (unexcused) 7 days – letter of notification sent to parent/guardian; meeting with student, parent/guardian, building principal, and other school support staff as necessary
- ii. Student is absent (unexcused) 15 days – letter of notification to parent/guardian; meeting with student, parent/guardian, building principal, and other school support staff as necessary (Child Study Team, social worker, school nurse, school resource officer, psychologist, etc.)
- iii. Student is absent (unexcused) 20 days – letter of notification to parent/guardian that PINS diversion may be filed; additional meeting as directed by principal
- iv. Student is absent (unexcused) 26 days – letter of notification to parent/guardian that PINS diversion will be filed; DELETE: grade promotion for school year will be denied

**Tardiness and Early Departure:** A student shall not arrive late to or depart early from school except in cases where such is deemed "excused". In cases when a student arrives ten (10) minutes after the start of the school day, or departs ten (10) minutes prior to the end of the school day, and such lateness or departure is deemed unexcused, the following procedure will be followed:

- a. Student is tardy or leaves school early (unexcused) a combined total of 15 times - letter of notification to parent/guardian; meeting with student, parent/guardian, building principal, and other school support staff as necessary (Child Study Team, social worker, school nurse, school resource officer, psychologist, etc.)
- b. Student is tardy or leaves school early (unexcused) a combined total of 20 times - letter of notification to parent/guardian that PINS diversion may be filed; additional meeting as directed by principal

**NOTE:** Unexcused absences in excess of 25 may be considered, along with other factors, in determining the potential for denial of grade promotion. Excessive unexcused absences will not be the sole criterion to be considered when determining the potential for denial of grade promotion.

**NOTE:** At either the middle school or high school if a student misses more than ten (10) minutes of an instructional period the student will be considered "absent" from that period of instruction. As with other absences, the classroom teacher must determine whether such an absence is excused or unexcused.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

(absence as related to EITHER full day absence or any portion thereof that causes a student to miss more than ten (10) minutes of any instructional period)

- a. Student is absent (unexcused) 10 occasions – letter of notification to parent/guardian
- b. Student is absent (unexcused) 15 occasions – letter of notification to parent/guardian; meeting with student, parent/guardian, building administrator, and other school support staff as necessary (Child Study Team, social worker, school nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist, school resource officer, etc.); notification that PINS diversion may be filed
- c. Student is absent (unexcused) 20 occasions – letter of notification to parent/guardian; letter of notification to parent/guardian that PINS diversion will be filed if absence total is greater than 25
- d. Student is absent (unexcused) 26 occasions – registered letter sent to parent/guardian; PINS diversion will be filed; DELETE: course credit/grade promotion will be denied
- e. For “quarter” courses, the number of unexcused absences is modified as follows:  
In section (a) 5; in section (b) 8; in section (c) 10; in section (d) 13

NOTE: Unexcused absences in excess of 25 may be considered, along with other factors, in determining the potential for denial of course credit or grade promotion. Excessive unexcused absences will not be the sole criterion to be considered when determining the potential for denial of course credit or grade promotion.

### HIGH SCHOOL

(absence as related to EITHER full day absence or any portion thereof that causes a student to miss more than ten (10) minutes of any instructional period)

- a. Student is absent (unexcused) 10 occasions – letter of notification to parent/guardian
- b. Student is absent (unexcused) 15 occasions – letter of notification to parent/guardian; meeting with student, parent/guardian, building administrator, and other school support staff as necessary (social worker, school nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist, school resource officer, etc.); notification that PINS diversion may be filed
- c. Student is absent (unexcused) 20 occasions – registered letter of notification to parent/guardian, DELETE: including advisement of potential for denial of credit; letter of notification to parent/guardian that PINS diversion will be filed if student is of mandatory age and if absence total is greater than 25
- d. Student is absent (unexcused) 26 occasions – PINS diversion will be filed; DELETE: course credit will be denied; student will referred to Child Study Team
- e. For courses bearing one-half credit, the number of unexcused absences is modified as follows: in section (a) 5; in section (b) 8; in section (c) 10; in section (d) 13

NOTE: Unexcused absences in excess of 25 may be considered, along with other factors, in determining the potential for denial of course credit or grade promotion. Excessive unexcused absences will not be the sole criterion to be considered when determining the potential for denial of course credit or grade promotion.

NOTE: At either the middle school or high school if a student misses more than ten (10) minutes of an instructional period the student will be considered “absent” from that period of instruction. As with other absences, the classroom teacher must determine whether such an absence is excused or unexcused.

Each notice sent to a parent/guardian shall indicate the student’s name, grade, and dates of absences/tardiness, including the names of specific courses affected by the absences/tardiness. Such notice will provide for a way in which the parent/guardian may discuss the with school personnel any matters related the student’s absences.

The school district retains the discretion as to whether or not a PINS diversion or petition shall be filed. PINS diversion or petitions may also be filed at stages earlier than those described in the above procedures should the situation warrant such action.

## **6. INCENTIVES/DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS**

- A. Unexcused absences/tardiness are subject to the procedures specified in the district Code of Conduct.
- B. In addition to the likelihood of enhanced educational progress, good attendance will be the basis for student recognition awards. The rewards for good attendance will be determined by building principals. These awards may include, but are not limited to:
- certificates for outstanding or improved attendance
  - monthly and annual “lottery” drawings to award prizes to students with outstanding or improved attendance
  - special recognition in the building (bulletin board, public address announcements) or via building newsletters
  - recognition in the district-wide newsletter or local public media.

## **7 .POLICY REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT**

This policy will be annually reviewed by the Board of Education. Simultaneous review of the building level attendance records will also occur. Revisions to this policy (based on attendance records) will be made upon recommendation to Board of Education from the Attendance Policy Committee, especially in the event that records show a decline in student attendance.

## **8. DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

- a. This policy shall be adopted only after it has been presented at a public meeting of the Board of Education, duly noticed, that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, students, and any other interested persons.
- b. The Superintendent shall create a plain language summary of this policy which shall be distributed to parents and persons in parental relationship to all district students at the beginning of each school year.
- c. Each teacher and administrator shall be provided a copy of this policy upon its adoption or subsequent amendment. Each new teacher or administrator will be provided a copy of this policy upon employment.
- d. This policy shall be made available to any member of the community upon request.



## MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Angela Guptill  
From: Timothy P. Lange  
Date: May 22, 2008  
Re: Student Attendance Policy

cc: Mr. Lyons

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Attached is the draft version of the proposed 2008-09 Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy. The committee met earlier this month to review student attendance data and to review the current policy. As a result of committee discussion, one change has been suggested for the 2008-09 school year. That change, highlighted in yellow, addresses an ongoing problem at the K-5 level with students arriving to school late and departing from school early. The change provides steps for intervention in these cases.

As previously discussed, the policy should be presented to the board for adoption. I have given Amy LeGare a copy of the policy for amendment purposes. If additional information is needed, please advise.

On behalf of the Student Attendance Policy Committee, I thank you in advance.