

COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

Philosophy Statement

To be successful, students must actively participate in learning activities. To maintain academic standards, encourage progress and ensure student participation in the school experience, the Administration with the support of the Board of Education of Mount Sinai recognizes this attendance policy for the school district (high school and accelerated middle school students). The policy will ensure that students who receive credit for a course have attended 85% of the classes and have participated in the classroom. The policy affirms that classroom activities cannot be duplicated in an extra help session or by independent remediation. Even when specific work is made up, the valuable “time-on-task” is missed. Attendance is a critically important factor contributing to success in school.

By encouraging attendance and promptness through the policy, two essential components of self-discipline and responsibility will prepare our students for the demands of the future. It affirms that students will be aware that tardiness, cutting, excessive absence and/or truancy will jeopardize their successful completion of a course of instruction and/or their graduation. This value is one that society views as essential for success.

Objectives

The objectives of the Comprehensive Attendance Policy are:

1. To accurately track the attendance, absence, tardiness and early departure of students to and from the school;
2. To ensure sufficient pupil attendance of classes so that pupils may achieve State mandated education standards;
3. To track student location for safety reasons and to account to parents regarding the location of children during school hours.

Definitions

Whenever used within the Comprehensive Attendance Policy, the following terms shall mean:

1. **Scheduled instruction**: Every period that a pupil is scheduled to attend instructional or supervised study activities during the course of a school day during the school year.
2. **Absent**: The pupil is not present for at least half of the pupil’s scheduled class period instruction.
3. **Tardy**: The pupil arrives later than the starting time of the student’s scheduled instruction.
4. **Early departure**: The pupil leaves prior to the end of the pupil’s scheduled instruction.
5. **Excused Absences**: Any absence, tardiness, or early departure may be excused if the reason is due to illness, a death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearance, attendance at a health clinic or other medical visit, approved college visit, approved cooperative work program, military obligation, or other such reason as may be approved by the Board of Education.
6. **Unexcused Absences**: An absence, tardiness, or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for lack of attendance does not fall within the aforementioned categories (as noted in point 5). Family vacation, hunting, babysitting (except in the case of emergencies within a family situation), haircut, oversleeping, shopping trips, are examples of circumstances not to be considered as excused absences.

Note: It will be the determination of the School District as to whether or not an absence is to be considered as excused or unexcused; the District will consider, inter alia, explanatory notes written by parents or guardians setting forth the reasons for absence with the District reserving to itself the prerogative to verify the circumstances/reasons for an absence or absences; such verification may include the authority of the District to require medical verification as to illness.

7. Unlawful detention: When a parent or guardian consents to a child being absent from school for a reason that is not excusable. This is an illegal absence.
8. Truant: A student is absent from school without parent or prior school approval. This is an illegal absence.

PLEASE NOTE: The policy for the purpose of receiving course credit does not distinguish between an excused and unexcused absence.

Coding System

The following coding system shall be used to indicate the nature and reason for a pupil missing all or part of scheduled instruction:

ATTENDANCE OFFICE CODES

A=Absent	U=Unlawful Detention	P=Appointment
T=Tardy	S=Suspended	C=Court appt.
N=Truant	H=Home tutored	F=Family
V=Educ/College Visit	I=In-school suspension	R=Religious

TEACHER CODES

A=Absent T=Tardy *Z=Pre-Approved absence

*Pre-Approved absences include:

- Field trip
- Music lesson
- Guidance appointment
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Assembly/class meeting
- Co-curricular activity
- Health office appointment
- “Pull out” program

Strategies and Incentives

1. Minimum Attendance for Course Credit

- A. A student must be noted as present at 85% of a course’s scheduled classes in order to earn credit for the course.

- For purposes of minimum attendance requirements, **a student shall not be counted as present for a class if the student misses more than 15 minutes of a class**, whether through tardiness or early departure.
- Students suspended from school instruction may not be marked as absent unless they fail to fulfill the scheduled alternative education on that day.

B. In order to prevent loss of credit for failure to attend, the district will take the following steps:

- When a student has been marked as absent for 10% of a course's classes, the district shall notify the student and his parent(s) or persons in parental relation that the student is approaching the limit of absences for losing course credit for failure to attend class. The notice will include the school's attendance for credit policy, the actual number of classes the student may miss before forfeiting the right to earn credit, and the actual number of classes missed to date;
- A student and his parent(s) or persons in parental relation will be advised one month before the completion of the course if the student is in jeopardy of losing credit for failure to attend. The notice will include the school's attendance for credit policy, the actual number of classes the student may miss before forfeiting the right to earn credit, and the actual number of classes missed to date.

2. Parental/Guardian Notification of Absences:

The pupil's parent(s) or person in parental relation shall be notified of a pupil's absence, tardiness or early departure according to the following:

Where a pupil has not been marked as present for the first period of scheduled instruction and the school has not been previously notified of the absence, the district shall attempt to contact the pupil's parent(s) or person in parental relation to learn the nature of the pupil's absence and notify the parent that the pupil has not arrived at school.

3. Disciplinary Consequences

Truancy, unlawful detention, class cuts, unauthorized tardiness or early departures are unexcused absences that will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the District's Code of Conduct. Consequences may include, but not be limited to, out of school suspension, in-school suspension, detention, and denial of participation in interscholastic and extra-curricular activities. Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified by the designated District personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child's absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions. The principals in each building establish attendance notification procedures.

4. Incentives:

District teachers shall work with the Building Principal and Attendance Supervision Officer to create and implement classroom-based incentive programs for excellent attendance.

5. Intervention Strategy Development:

The Building Principal shall meet each marking period with the Attendance Supervision Officer and other administrators and teachers as the Principal determines necessary to review student attendance records, address identified patterns of unexcused pupil absence, tardiness and early departure, and review current intervention methods. Where the Principal determines that existing intervention policies or practices are insufficient, the Principal shall notify the Board of Education prior to its annual review of the building's attendance records, of both insufficient practices and any proposed changes needing Board approval to implement.

6. Counseling:

The District shall provide consistent counseling to students with chronic attendance problems.

Attendance Supervision Officer

The Board shall designate a person as the Attendance Supervision Officer. The Attendance Supervision Officer is responsible for reviewing pupil attendance records and initiating appropriate action to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness, and early departure consistent with the Comprehensive Attendance Policy.

Attendance Requirements

1. Students must attend each class a minimum or 85% of the time.

FULL YEAR COURSE – the minimum attendance shall be 85% or 153 days per year (.85 x 180 = 153); therefore, a student may be absent not more than 27 times per year per class. A student will be in violation on the 28th absence.

HALF-YEAR COURSE AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS – The minimum attendance shall be 85% or 77 days (.85 x 90 = 76.5 days); thus, a student may be absent no more than 13 times per semester per class. A student will be in violation on the 14th absence.

LAB SCIENCE COURSE – The minimum attendance shall be 85% or 229 periods per year (.85 x 270 = 229.5 periods); thus, a student may be absent no more than 40 times per year per lab science class. A student will be in violation on the 41st absence.

BOCES – The district reserves the right to withdraw students from vocational courses at BOCES at any time that they fail to maintain a minimum attendance rate of 85%.

2. Three latenesses to class equal one absence. Students shall be considered absent from a class if they are absent from a class for more than 15 minutes of the class period.
3. Students attending approved alternative educational activities that include attendance at a school-sponsored activity, home instruction (whether due to illness or suspension, serving in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension) are considered to be “in attendance” and shall not be considered absent.
4. Teachers will provide make-up work ONLY for those students whose absences are excused or where said students are attending school-authorized activities such as meetings, music lessons, conferences with school personnel, field trips, out-of-district athletic trips, testing, in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension.
5. For each course, when a student reaches the maximum number of absences, the student's work will no longer be evaluated. The report card will show a CD to indicate “Credit-Denied” for all subsequent reporting periods and exams.

6. A student who does not meet the minimum attendance requirement in a course or courses will not be permitted to take class exams, tests, complete projects or papers and the like. A student eligible to take Regents exams (or RCTs), pursuant to Commissioner's Regulations, will have result(s) recorded on the student's permanent record.
7. Once a student is denied credit, he/she must attend class regularly and maintain appropriate behavior. Failure to continue to attend classes on a regular basis and maintain appropriate behavior will result in disciplinary action and may result in the student being permanently removed from the class.
8. **Summer School Eligibility Requirement:** Any student who fails to continue to attend classes on a regular basis will not be eligible to attend summer school. Summer school requires previous and continuous seat time.
9. The attendance requirement for course credit shall apply to all students enrolled in Mount Sinai High School in grades nine through twelve and middle school students in accelerated classes, except those students whose IEP (individualized educational plan) states otherwise. Students entering the school after the first day will have their attendance prorated. If a student enters a class after the first day, the number of days of attendance will be prorated using 85% as the minimum required.
10. The attendance record of a student making a schedule change in the same subject area will be forwarded to the new teacher. In other cases, attendance will be prorated based upon the entrance date into the new class.

Notification Sequence

Students, parents, and teachers shall be notified annually, in writing, of the attendance policy and administrative regulations.

The following refers to absences in a single course; therefore, a student may very well be notified by several different teachers for different courses. The teacher and/or Assistant Principal will send written notification of student absences to the student's parents at the following intervals:

Full Year Classes

First notice at 7 absences
 *Second notice at 14 absences
 Third notice at 20 absences
 LOSS OF CREDIT at 28 absences
 DENIAL OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SUMMER SCHOOL AT 35 ABSENCES

Semester classes and Physical Education Classes

First notice at 7 absences
 *Second notice at 10 absences
 LOSS OF CREDIT at 14 absences
 DENIAL OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SUMMER SCHOOL AT 18 ABSENCES

Lab Science Classes

First notice at 15 absences
 *Second notice at 25 absences
 Third notice at 35 absences
 LOSS OF CREDIT at 41 absences
 DENIAL OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SUMMER SCHOOL AT 52 ABSENCES

*guidance counselors will meet with students and contact parents to discuss strategies to improve attendance.

Please Note: Beginning of 3rd marking period, notification for absences will begin only when a student reaches his/her 14th absence for a full-year course (lab science classes on the 25th absence). The prime responsibility for the student's attendance in class rests squarely with the student.

Appeal Process

- A student who has accumulated 28 or more absences (14 in semester and physical education courses, 41 in a science lab course) and has been notified of loss of course credit due to absenteeism, has the right to appeal the decision and request a hearing before the Appeals Committee. S/he must do so in writing to the Appeals Committee Chairperson within 10 school days of the date of loss of credit notice. The student and parent(s) or guardian(s) may be asked to appear at this meeting with appropriate, verifiable documentation to present to the committee. The committee determines whether the student will continue as a regular student or be placed on a credit denied audit condition.
- The Appeals Committee will meet as needed because the review process is ongoing.
- The Appeals Committee is made up of one administrator, one guidance counselor, and two teachers.
- Guidance counselors will also become involved with students who experience chronic attendance problems.

*Note: To facilitate the appeals process and provide the committee with information that will allow them to make an appropriate determination, it is strongly advised that when medical circumstances are at the root of at least some absences, that parents request health care providers (physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner) detail the necessary medical explanations (in writing) to the extent that it allows the committee to make the most informed decision possible. Parents are again reminded that notes, even from health care providers (physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner) are **notes of explanation and not notes of excuse**. It remains the parent's choice as to what information is to be provided, but limited information without sufficient understanding will not aid in the review and appeal.*

Second Note: When a student is absent from school for reasons of illness or medical necessity, a note of explanation (including health care provider documentation as appropriate) should be submitted to the attendance office within a short period of time, but in no instance more than three (3) weeks from the point of return to school. This is important. If, later, the student exceeds the course credit, absent limit and the student initiates an appeal for credit reinstatement, medical documentation not submitted in a timely manner as noted herein will not be accepted at the later date for explanation and appeal.

Absence from School

Parents should call 473-1991, Ext. 164, (High School), Ext. 221 (Middle School) in the event of their child's absence or tardiness. The attendance office in the high school opens at 7:05 a.m. and in the Middle School at 7:30 a.m. New York State Law requires that each student's attendance be verified daily. Any student who is absent from school must bring a note explaining the reason for his/her absence from his/her parents to their homeroom teacher upon his/her return to school. As described earlier and under the circumstances noted in Attendance Requirements, point 4), a student is responsible for completing any

work missed. **No student may participate or attend any school or after-school activity on a day he/she is absent from school.**

Lateness to School

Student should be in their homerooms on time. If a student is late to school, he/she should report to the attendance office for an admittance slip. Students who arrive late to school must bring a note of explanation from a parent, or guardian, on that day. The note should include a telephone number where the parent may be reached. Failure to comply with this procedure will result in detention.

PLEASE NOTE: No student may participate in any after school activity (athletics, clubs) on a day in which he/she signs in after 2nd period. In addition, any student leaving school for reasons other than medical, legal, or educational/school related will not be allowed to participate in any after-school activities regardless of the time that he/she returns to school. Students leaving for medical, legal, or educational/school related reasons must bring a note from their health care professional, attorney, or educational institution and submit it to the principal, upon return, in order to be permitted to participate in any after-school activity. Students who are unable to return by the end of the school day but do so prior to the start of the after school activity may participate provided they show their “note” to the coach, advisor, etc. and then give it to the principal the subsequent day.

For the purposes of this section, students will be allowed the scheduling of one driver’s test to be considered as an “educational” reason. Subsequent driver’s tests will not apply.

Oversleeping or missing the bus is not considered a valid excuse. Detention will be assigned when a student is late and it will be served the next day. Failure to serve the detention will result in either additional days of detention or assignment to in-school suspension. Participation in extra-curricular activities or a job is not considered valid reasons for missing detention. Emergencies that are verified with a parent will be taken into consideration.

Lateness to Class

Students are expected to be in their assigned classes on time. Habitual lateness will result in administrative action. If students are detained, they must have a late pass from the faculty/staff member they were with.