

Bellwood School District 88

Attendance and Truancy

ATTENDANCE PHILOSOPHY

In Bellwood School District 88, we believe that attendance is an integral part of the educational process. In addition, we believe that classroom activities and experiences cannot be replicated outside of the designated school sessions in the school environment or through make-up work. As a result, we believe that scholars and staff need to miss as few class sessions as possible. We also believe that absences hamper course progress because absences lead to increased work for scholars and teachers in their efforts to make up for lost classroom experiences. Likewise, we believe that scholars who are tardy miss the entry activities and check ins with the teacher as well as the review of daily activities and learning objectives. We believe that every classroom experience emphasizes the participation of scholars and requires their committed, regular presence to allow for the greatest educational success. We expect the parents of scholars in Bellwood School District 88, through partnerships with the schools, to support the instilling of responsibility and reliability which regular daily on-time attendance fosters and impacts all areas of life.

ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Research on school attendance shows that a scholar's regular attendance may be the greatest factor influencing academic success. Scholars who attend school regularly are more likely to pass reading and math assessments than their peers with poor attendance. Scholars who are chronically absent in Kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. By 6th grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for scholars at risk of dropping out of school. Research has demonstrated that the attendance habits established in the early grades have lasting effects on scholars throughout their education. Scholars with high attendance in the early grades continue to have good attendance and scholars with low attendance in the early grades are more likely to have low attendance and lower academic performance throughout their elementary and middle school years. Every day counts!

SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE

To support your child's attendance please consider the following things:

- Make sure your scholar keeps a regular bedtime and establishes a morning routine
- Lay out the scholar's school uniform and pack the scholar's bookbag/backpack the night before
- Ensure your scholar goes to school every day unless the scholar is truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

According to Illinois law, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure the regular attendance of their children. Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in

which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school).

Subject to specific requirements in State law, the following children are not required to attend public school:

- (1) any child attending a private school (including home school) or parochial school
- (2) any child who is physically or mentally unable to attend school (including a pregnant student suffering medical complications as certified by a physician)
- (3) any child lawfully and necessarily employed
- (4) any child over twelve and under fourteen years of age while in confirmation classes
- (5) any child who is absent for religious reasons, including to observe a religious holiday, for religious instruction, or because the child's religion forbids secular activity on a particular day (days) or time of day (times of day).

ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION

In Bellwood School District 88, scholars are expected to be in school and on time to class sessions unless a scholar's parent/guardian notifies the school that the scholar is or will be absent for a valid cause. Scholars absent for a valid cause may make up missed homework and class assignments in a reasonable timeframe.

Definition of a Valid Cause for an Absence:

- a. Illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the scholar
- b. Observance of a religious holiday
- c. Death in the immediate family or family emergency
- d. Other situations beyond the control of the scholar, as determined by the Board of Education
- e. Other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the scholar
- f. Other reason as approved by the Superintendent or designee

Absence Notification

Consistent with the requirements of State law, if any scholar in grades K – 8th is absent from school, and there is no record that the absence has been authorized for valid cause, the school will, within 2 hours after the first class session in which the scholar is enrolled, make a reasonable attempt to contact the parent/guardian regarding the scholar's absence.

The primary responsibility for notifying the school when a scholar will be absent lies with the scholar's parent/guardian. Therefore, it is the expectation that a parent/guardian will notify the scholar's school in advance whenever possible or by 7:30 a.m. for grades 6th – 8th and 8:00 a.m. for grades Pre-K through 5th if the child is to be absent from school on any given day. The following information must be provided to excuse the absence for valid cause: the parents/guardians must identify themselves, provide the scholar's name, and the reason for the scholar's absence. The school may require documentation explaining the reason for the scholar's absence.

If a parent/legal guardian anticipates being out of town and unable to provide official notification of a scholar's absence, the parent/legal guardian must provide written

documentation of a designated adult authorized to approve absences. This written notification must be submitted to the Main Office of the school prior to the parent/legal guardian leaving town.

The school considers the following reasons as examples of absences without valid cause, thereby resulting in an unexcused absence: oversleeping, car trouble, missing the bus, babysitting, shopping, personal vacation, and a message on school voicemail with no reason given for absence. The above list is used for illustrative purposes only and is not to be considered all-inclusive.

Information Regarding Vacations

Regular classroom attendance is one of the most effective ways to ensure student academic success. Requests from parents/guardians to excuse students from school for vacations are discouraged. If necessary, these requests will be considered by the administration on an individual basis. Parents/Guardians should call the Main Office at the school far enough in advance to support scholars as they work on arrangements to complete missed classwork and homework in a timely manner. Scholars who are absent because of an approved, pre-arranged vacation are expected to make up missed homework and classwork assignments in a reasonable timeframe. These absences will be counted in the student's total absence record.

Activity Participation

Any scholar who is too ill to attend school is generally considered too ill to participate in other activities or athletics during that day or evening.

Attendance Codes

Code	Title	Definition
*P	Present	A full-day of attendance for students in grades K – 1 st is 240 minutes and in grades 2 nd through 8 th 300 minutes
T	Tardy	Primary/Elementary - after a 15-minute grace period, 8:35 a.m. is tardy Middle School - after a 15-minute grace period, 8:00 a.m. is tardy
ET	Excused Tardy	Doctor's note Parent note explaining the illness Bereavement
*AE	Absent - Excused	Absent with cause (see valid causes for absence)
*AU	Absent – Unexcused	Absent without cause
AAM	Absent AM (Half day)	Present at least 120 minutes in the afternoon in grades K – 1 st and 150 minutes in grades 2 nd – 8 th
APM	Absent PM (Half day)	Present at least 120 minutes in the morning in grades K – 1 st and 150 minutes in grades 2 nd – 8 th

*R-LD	Remote Learning Days	Remote learning due to a disaster proclamation
R-EP	Remote Education Program	Remote instruction provided when there is a determination by the school district and the parent/guardian that the program will best serve the scholar's individual learning needs and the scholar meets the criteria for participation
*E-L	e-Learning	Electronic Instruction (e-Learning) used in lieu of scheduled emergency days
*MHB	Medically Homebound	Receiving home/hospital instructional services
*H	Hospitalized	Absence due to medical emergency or procedures or participation in residential treatment program
*MH	Mental Health	No more than 5 mental or behavioral health days per year as an excused absence
S	Suspension	Infraction of the school/District disciplinary code resulting in time out of school (this is an absence)
ISS	In School Suspension	Infraction of the school/District disciplinary code resulting in time out of the classroom (this is not an absence)
*X	Truant	A "truant" is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause, as defined under this Section, from such attendance for more than 1% but less than 5% of school days.
*CX	Chronic Truant	A Chronic Truant is a school-age child who is absent without valid causes for 5% of school days.

*Used for State attendance reporting

Tardiness (provided the tardy does not impact the required minutes for full day attendance), Remote Learning, Remote Education Program, e-Learning, Medically Homebound, and In School Suspension are days marked as "Present" by the teachers, supervising adults, and/or the building secretaries.

TARDINESS

Scholars are expected to be in class on time to maximize all learning opportunities. Teachers and Principals/Assistant Principals will monitor scholars' tardiness. Scholars may be considered tardy if they arrive at or after 8:35 a.m. in Primary/Elementary and at or after 8:00 a.m. in Middle School. Scholars may receive consequences for excessive tardiness. If a late arrival results in a scholar failing to meet the minimum attendance full day credit time (full-day of attendance for students in grades K – 1st is 240 minutes and in grades 2nd through 8th is 300 minutes), then the scholar will be marked as absent (having a half day) for that part of the school day.

TARDY PROCEDURES

- If a scholar is tardy 5 days, the Main Office staff will contact the parents/guardians to inform the family that the scholar was tardy 5 days.
- If a scholar accumulates 10 days of tardiness, the parent/guardian will receive a letter from the Principal/Assistant Principal which would note that further tardiness will require a conference with the parent/guardian.
- If a scholar is tardy 15 days, a conference with the Principal/Assistant Principal, parent/guardian, Teacher, and Social Worker is required.
- If a scholar is tardy 20 days, a letter from the District office will be sent to the parent/guardian and a referral to truancy services through our Regional Office of Education (West 40) will be submitted.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Scholars who need to leave school early for medical purposes (doctor or dental appointments) need prior parent/guardian notice whenever possible. The prior notice should include: (1) the requested dismissal time, (2) the reason the student needs to leave early, and (3) a parent signature or phone contact in Email correspondences.

Parents are encouraged to communicate any dismissal changes no later than 2:30 p.m. for Primary/Elementary and 2:00 p.m. for Middle School.

If a student is ill during the day, the scholar must check out in the Nurse's Office before leaving the building. When the Nurse is not in the building, scholars who are ill should report to the Main Office and check out in the Main Office before leaving the building.

Please note, any early dismissal that fails to meet the minimum attendance full day credit time (full-day of attendance for students in grades K – 1st is 240 minutes and in grades 2nd through 8th is 300 minutes), will incur an absence (having a half day) for that part of the school day.

All schools have early release days on designated 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month and are indicated on the District calendar. Schools will provide parents/guardians with notice of early release days through school correspondences particularly on the Monday prior to the early release day.

TRUANCY

If a scholar's absence is not reported in a timely manner, it may be considered school truancy.

A “truant” is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for more than 1% but less than 5% of school attendance days. A “chronic truant” is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for 5% or more of school attendance days.

Student attendance is critical to the learning process and school absences affect a scholar’s academic performance. Any scholar who is truant from school will be expected to complete missed homework and classwork in a reasonable timeframe. Incomplete work or failure to do the work may result in a lowering of grades.

DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR TRUANT OR CHRONICALLY TRUANT STUDENTS

Truancy is a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and the District. Scholars who have absences that total 10% or more of school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause, and out-of-school suspensions are considered chronic truants. Scholars who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue. The Principal will report chronic truants to the Superintendent. The Superintendent or designee shall manage an absenteeism and truancy program in accordance with the School Code and School Board policy.

The following will be utilized to assist with determining potential barriers to consistent school attendance and concerns with truancy and chronic truancy:

- Main Office staff will contact the families of scholars who have absences without valid cause daily to express concern and to document the reason the scholar is absent
- Teachers will call parents/guardians after 3 absences to explore what help may be needed
- Principal/Assistant Principal will call parents/guardians after 5 absences to explore what help may be needed
- Principal/Assistant Principal will send a letter to the parents/guardians to alert the family of attendance concerns after 7 absences and explore what help may be needed
- interviews with the student
- interviews with parents/guardians
- meetings with school officials and/or school staff who may have information about the reasons for a scholar’s attendance problem

The Principal/Assistant Principal shall meet with the family, the Teacher(s), the Social Worker, and/or the Nurse to determine the most effective individual course of action for scholars experiencing chronic truancy after 9 absences have been accumulated. At this collaborative meeting, the potential effect of the appropriate resources available for the scholar will be addressed. School resources could include but are not limited to:

- monitoring by health services
- an in-house behavior modification program
- social work services
- a behavior management system
- review the potential implications of a referral for a special education evaluation and/or placement

Additional resources could include but are not limited to:

- regularly scheduled parent conferences at the school
- counseling for scholars outside of the school setting
- family counseling
- the exploration of community resources that are available to truant and chronically truant scholars relevant to their individual needs (i.e., a medical referral from health services)

The Principal/Assistant Principal and Social Worker will work together to monitor absences after the most effective course of action, an individualized intervention plan designed to remediate the attendance pattern, is established with the parent/guardian. The Student Services Department will provide support on a consultative and remedial basis in truancy matters. Families and scholars seeking help with truancy may be referred to the Student Services Department after the collaborative meeting with the Principal/Assistant Principal, the family, the Teacher(s), the Social Worker, and/or the Nurse.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and District will take further action including a referral to truancy services through the Regional Office of Education (West 40) and/or sanctioning appropriate school disciplinary action. Appropriate school disciplinary action could include:

- exclusion from school sponsored activities
- lunch detention
- in school suspension
- home visits by law enforcement

A parent/guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law. A parent/guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant may be convicted of a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$1500.00.

Any person who induces or attempts to induce any child to be absent from school unlawfully or knowingly employs or harbors any child while school is in session and causes a child to be absent from school, is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM MANAGEMENT AND DATA REVIEW

Each day teachers take attendance utilizing the Power School system. When a scholar is marked absent, the Main Office staff checks the absence in Power School against the list of scholars who have absences for a valid cause provided by parents/guardians. When the school has not heard from a parent/guardian, the Main Office staff contacts the parents/guardians to express concern and to document the reason scholars are absent. At the end of each school year, as mandated by the Illinois School Code, absences from Power School are totaled and reported electronically to the State.

To support determining what systems of support and resources are needed to engage truant and chronically truant scholars and their families and to encourage the habit of daily attendance to promote academic success, the school will collect and review its chronic absence data. The review shall include an analysis of chronic absence data from each attendance center (school) in the District. The school and District reviews of the chronic attendance data will include weekly, bimonthly, quarterly, and yearly attendance reviews of chronically absent and/or at risk of chronically absent scholars and an evaluation of whether scholars with persistent chronic absences require services and/or supports.