



Presence and Engagement Administrative Procedure 1.B.40

1.0 School Administration
1.B Students

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: 1, 2, 3, 16

Legal Reference: Public Schools Act

Date Adopted: October 1999

Date Amended: September 2006; June 2008; September 2009; September 2014; July 2017; November 2018; January 2019; September 2019, October 2023

Reviewed by Committee: TBD

Legislative Reference: *The Public Schools Act, The Education Administration Act, The Human Rights Code, The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act, and The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

Policy statement

In accordance with the [Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement](#) (Manitoba Education 2023), all school divisions are responsible to create / amend, implement, and monitor student attendance policies. Policies must be responsive to the contexts and needs of their students and be based on the guiding principles and focus areas described in the Safe and Caring Schools policy.

Evergreen School Division believes that regular and punctual attendance enhances opportunities to learn by ensuring that students receive maximum instructional time.

Definitions and Terminology

Presence: When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. This is an entry point to being able to engage students in the process of learning. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.

Engagement: Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in school. Engagement is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities (OECD, 2003).

Regular Attendance: Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.

Absence: Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.

Excused Absence: Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) with the mutual consent of a parent and the school principal.

Unexcused Absence: Any time a student is not in class or not participating in school activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) without the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

Chronic Absenteeism: When unexcused absences account for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

Severe Chronic Absenteeism: When unexcused absences account for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

Student-Specific Plan (SSP): A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in [Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba](#) (MEECL, 2022). Student-specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students. It may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.

Guiding Principles

Proactive and Prevention Attendance Practices

The primary means of increasing attendance is through proactive measures. Proactive practices to enhance student engagement, well-being, and success are early interventions that will help students establish the practice of attending and engaging in the classroom.

Recording and reporting absences

In accordance with the ⁱⁱPublic Schools Act (PSA) and the Evergreen School Division policies, the parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring that each child attends school regularly and punctually. Students 18 years of age or older are responsible for their own attendance.

As per the PSA, when a student is absent, the employee recording attendance will, in writing, report the absence to the school principal. The principal is responsible for ensuring that all student absences are reported to the parent/guardian. Absence do not need to be reported if:

- A parent/guardian has called the school in advance to explain the nature of the child's absence
- The student is over the age of 18 years of age and has made a written application to no longer have the parent/guardian contacted by the school

Response to Student Absences

Evergreen School Division believes that all absences have the potential to negatively affect learning, and thus all absences are concerning. The response to any absence must be non-punitive, fair, and predictable for all students. Suspensions, expulsions, and withdrawals will not be used as a response to absenteeism.

When a student no longer meets the definition of 'regular attender' (missing no more than five days for the entire school year), the school must make contact with the parent/guardian (at early/middle years) and the student and parent/guardian (at high school) to stress the importance of regular attendance and its impact on learning. A form letter may also be sent to the parent/guardian.

Excused absences

If the absence is for medical reasons or vacation, students are encouraged to continue learning while away from school, when possible. If possible, teachers will provide learning materials to students. Upon their return, students should talk to their teacher(s) to determine any meaningful work that was missed and needs to be completed.

For longer medical absences, arrangements for ongoing support and/or an alternate program may be provided.

For longer vacations, parents/caregivers, teachers, and students should determine the possible consequences of the extended absence. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrange extended vacations during the summer, winter, and spring school breaks.

Unexcused absences

Response to chronic absenteeism

When a student reaches the number of absences defined as chronic absenteeism (10 unexcused absences in the reporting period for early/middle years; 10% of classes in a single course for high school), the core team (including the parent) will meet to develop a response that is appropriate to the age, grade, development, and circumstances of the student. Responses may include a student specific plan and/or connecting the student/their parent/guardian to additional supports. School will send a summary letter to the parent/guardian and copy to the pupil file.

Response to severe chronic absenteeism

When a student reaches the number of absences defined as severe chronic absenteeism (20 unexcused absences in a single reporting period for early/middle years; 20% of classes in a single course for high school), members of the school support team, along with external agencies if required, will conduct an in-school intervention. A summary letter will be sent the parent/guardian, and if the parents has not engaged in planning with the school, reminding them of the provisions of the *Public Schools Act*. The letter will be copied to the pupil file.

Response to beyond severe chronic absenteeism

If an in-school intervention is not successful, the school must inform the Learning Coordinator. The Learning Coordinator must notify the School Support Unit in writing and Child and Family Services where there are concerns about the students' safety and well-being. A letter to the parent may be sent if communication by phone or email does not yield a response.

Specific Plans

Student-Specific Plans (SSP) focus on restorative practices that encourage attendance. A case manager will respond to and work with the student and their parents to find the necessary resources to support attendance. Student-Specific Plans may include:

- Alternative education programming
- Flexible timetabling

- A variety of assessment methods/options
- Opportunities for credit acquisition and credit recovery
- Ways to ensure learning is accessible to the student based on their current level of performance
- Connecting the student and/or their caregiver with school-based or Division-based support and/or outside agencies

Student Specific Plans must not include suspensions, expulsions, and withdrawals as a response to absenteeism.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

- Are responsible to attend school and classes regularly and punctually
 - We recognize that elementary-age students are more dependent on their parents to help them attend school regularly
- Must comply with the school's code of conduct and complete assignments and other related work required by teachers
- Participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate
- Students 18 years of age and older are responsible for their own attendance

Parents

- Have the right to be informed regularly of the attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement of their child in school, and to participate in planning
- Are responsible for cooperating with the child's teachers and other employees of the school division or school district to ensure the child complies with the school's code of conduct
- Must take all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly

Teachers

- Are responsible for monitoring and recording student attendance within their class
- Are responsible for timely communication to the principal and the parent
- Identify potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism
- Promote and support regular attendance
- Communicate (verbally and in writing when needed) with students and parents when concerns related to attendance arise
- Document steps taken to communicate with students, parents, and outside agencies when concerns related to attendance arise
- Participate in the student-specific planning process

Principals (or designates)

- Notify the parent/caregiver of any unexcused absence
- Must work with teachers, students, parents, and others as needed, to promote regular attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences
- Ensure teachers maintain accurate attendance records
- Monitor and review student attendance data
- Oversee the student-specific planning process and the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism
- Report chronic/severe absenteeism to the school division

- Include where appropriate: community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children’s services authorities to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming and planning for students
- Lead school-based attendance initiatives

School divisions

- Ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming
- Work with schools, parents, and community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present
- Ensure that schools track student attendance accurately, document any students who are chronically absent, and take immediate, sustained action to address causes of chronic absenteeism until the student is regularly present
- Work with schools and agencies to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families to ensure regular school attendance, such as through coordinated services
- Ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among all staff

Documentation

Designated staff will use the Division-wide Student Information System (SIS) daily to record attendance. The staff using this system will be trained to ensure they input the data accurately and consistently.

Monitoring and Review

The Division will:

- Monitor enrolment data to ensure that all students expected to be present are in school. This includes comparing enrolment registers year over year, as well as reviewing unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports from the department
- Monitor and analyze Division-wide and school enrollment and attendance data
- Review procedures for investigating and identifying the causes of student absences and determining the appropriate supports that are required to promote regular attendance
- Ensure that there is an early warning system and non-punitive outreach protocols to identify students who are likely to experience chronic absenteeism by monitoring, disaggregating, and responding to student presence and absence data trends at all levels
- Ensure that student attendance is a standing agenda item at senior administration meetings and school-based support team meetings

References

ⁱ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation Results from PISA 2000. OECD, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264018938-en>

ⁱⁱ Province of Manitoba, Public Schools, C.C.S.M c. P250, Part XIV: School Attendance, 266(1), 266(2), 2023, <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/pdf.php?cap=p250>