

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Education is a cooperative venture to which the student, the teacher and the parent/guardian contribute. Prompt, regular attendance in school is an important factor in determining a student's academic success, including success in meeting state and local requirements for graduation. Students who attend school consistently develop better socially, establish better communication with their teachers, acquire important lifetime habits such as dependability, self-sufficiency, and responsibility and have greater success academically. Missoula County Public Schools recognizes that school attendance is the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian, supported by the teachers and administration. The following procedures are designed to encourage regular and punctual school attendance so that learning can take place. It is intended to be positive and not punitive, and all measures taken will be in the students' best interest. These practices and procedures will assist families and school personnel in making attendance decisions.

A. Student's Responsibility: It is the student's responsibility to:

1. attend all assigned classes and other instructional activities on time every day that school is in session;
2. be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or other instructional activity;
3. request any missed assignments due to an absence; and
4. complete assigned work in a timely manner.

B. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the student's parent/guardian to:

1. ensure the student is attending school;
2. inform the school in the event of a student absence;
3. be aware of and follow the correct procedures for reporting student absence; and
4. work cooperatively with the school and the student to resolve any attendance issues that may arise.

C. Teacher's Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the teacher to:

1. take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and other instructional activities;
2. be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly in classroom assignments and for all assigned students;
3. provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request;
4. work cooperatively with the student's parent/guardian and the student to resolve any attendance issues that may arise; and
5. work cooperatively with the student's parent/guardian when the student's attendance record impacts academic performance.

D. Administrator's Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the administrator to:

1. require students to attend all assigned classes and other instructional activities;
2. be familiar with statutes, policies and procedures governing attendance and apply them uniformly to all students;
3. ensure that all teachers properly account for student attendance in a timely manner;
4. maintain accurate records on student attendance and respond to the previous day's absences by determining the status of each;
5. inform the student's parent/guardian of the student's attendance and work cooperatively with the student and parent/guardian to solve attendance problems;
6. work collaboratively with the teaching staff to develop and implement uniformly administered attendance procedures; and
7. work with students and parents/guardians to develop and implement a plan for recovery of credit.

Students are required to attend all assigned classes and/or other instructional activities every day school is in session, unless the student has a valid excuse for absence, in accordance with Section 20-5-103, MCA.

A. Excused Absences: These include family authorized absences and school authorized absences. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

1. Family authorized excused absences:
 - i. Personal illness
 - ii. Family emergency or death in the family
 - iii. Medical or dental treatment
 - iv. Other activities as approved by the school
2. School authorized excused absences
 - i. Approved field trips

- ii. Interscholastic competitions and events
- iii. Other activities as approved by the school

B. Unexcused Absences: These are absences which are not authorized by the parent/guardian or the school. The following absences are examples of absences which will not be excused:

1. leaving school premises without authorization from the nurse, the attendance office or the principals' offices;
2. failing to attend class (while remaining on the premises) without advanced permission;
3. family trips/vacations for which no prior arrangement have been made with the school;
4. other absences not authorized by the school or parent/guardian.

Reporting Student Absences

When a student must be absent from school, the parent/guardian is requested to notify the school's attendance office, whenever possible, in advance of the absence. If the school attendance office does not receive advance notice, the school will make a reasonable effort to contact a parent/guardian to verify the student absence. If the school is unable to contact a student's parent/guardian after a reasonable effort has been made, the absence will be recorded as unexcused. Single or multiple absences that are not verified by a parent/guardian, or which have been recorded as unexcused, may be handled as part of the disciplinary process.

Whenever possible, students are to request make-up work in advance of the absence and to complete work according to the timelines established by the individual teacher.

Absences necessitated by student participation in field trips or extra-curricular activities must be excused in advance. The participating student is responsible to secure each teacher's signature on a pre-arranged absence slip and request homework assignments prior to the date of the absence.

Attendance Intervention

Each school will develop an attendance intervention committee. At the beginning of each school year, the attendance intervention committee will confer regarding students who have had attendance issues in the past. This will provide an opportunity for proactive intervention by the school and the family of the student.

Students accruing six (6) or more absences in a semester will be considered at-risk for developing chronic absenteeism. A sixth absence in a semester will result in an attendance letter to the parent and a referral to the attendance intervention committee for review. Unexcused absences may result in a referral to the attendance intervention team prior to the sixth absence. The attendance intervention committee may, at any time, intervene on behalf of a student considered to be at-risk as a result of attendance issues.

A student accruing ten (10) or more absences in a semester will be considered chronically absent. The school principal or designee will contact the student's parent/guardian to confer regarding attendance interventions. High school students accruing excessive absences may have class credit placed on hold until an appropriate attendance intervention plan has been developed and implemented. Chronic absenteeism may result in a referral to Child and Family Services or to the Missoula County Attorney as a child truant from school in accordance with Section 20-5-106, MCA.