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## **Purpose**

The Board requires that school age students enrolled in district schools attend school regularly, in accordance with state laws. The educational program offered by the district is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress. All children between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18) must be enrolled in and attend school on a regular basis. If a parent/guardian begins a child's education prior to the age of six (6), the child must remain in school as prescribed by law.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)

## **Authority**

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in district schools during the days and hours that school is in session, except that a principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence from a practitioner of the healing arts for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may cause the student's absence. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[7\]](#)

The parent/guardian of a school-age child is responsible to provide an explanation in writing for the student's absence from school. The mere fact that a parent/guardian has sent a written explanation to the district's administration does not necessarily mean that the absence is excused.

If a student is excessively absent from school, five (5) days per semester or ten (10) days per year, the parent/guardian shall be required to verify each additional illness/injury with a written excuse from a practitioner of the healing arts. The administration has the right to excuse other absences as urgent conditions arise.

Any student who is absent, whatever the reason, shall be responsible to submit to the district a written explanation for his/her absence from the parent/guardian. All absences from school must be substantiated with a note signed by a parent/guardian. A student must provide a written excuse for an absence within three (3) school days of his/her return to school.

## **Definitions**

**Compulsory school age** shall mean the period of a student's life from the time the student's person in parental relation elects to have the student enter school, which shall be no later than six (6) years of age, until the student reaches eighteen (18) years of age. The term does not

include a student who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)

**Habitually truant** shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.[\[9\]](#)

**Truant** shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.[\[9\]](#)

**Person in parental relation** shall mean a:[\[9\]](#)

1. Custodial biological or adoptive parent.
2. Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.
3. Guardian of the person of a student.
4. Person with whom a student lives and who is acting in a parental role of a student.

This term shall not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child as defined by law.[\[11\]](#)

**School-based or community-based attendance improvement program** shall mean a program designed to improve school attendance by seeking to identify and address the underlying reasons for a student's absences. The term may include an educational assignment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth established pursuant to Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.[\[9\]](#)

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations for the attendance of students which:

1. Ensure a school session that conforms with requirements of state law and regulations.
2. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with law.[\[12\]](#)[\[13\]](#)
3. Distribute annually to staff, students, and parents/guardians Board policies and school rules and regulations governing student attendance, absences and excusals.[\[6\]](#)[\[14\]](#)
4. Impose on truant students appropriate incremental disciplinary measures for infractions of school rules, but no penalty may have an irredeemably negative effect on the student's record beyond that which naturally follows absence from classroom learning experiences.
5. Identify the habitual truant student, investigate the causes of truant behavior, and consider modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs and interests.
6. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

A central attendance office in each of the two (2) schools maintains attendance records for that school. The official attendance record for all elementary students shall be maintained in an office located in the Dassa McKinney Elementary School. The official attendance record for all secondary students shall be maintained in an office located in the Moniteau Junior-Senior High School. Final reports to the Board and the state shall be prepared by the administration and signed by the Superintendent.

## **Guidelines**

The Board considers the following conditions to constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

1. Illness.[\[2\]](#)[\[5\]](#)
2. Quarantine.
3. Required court attendance.
4. Death of immediate family member as specified in School Code.
5. Inclement weather/impassable roads.
6. Other requests approved by the building principal.

Unlawful absence is the unexcused absence of all students of compulsory school age for one (1) or more of the following reasons:

1. Absence through parental neglect.
2. Illegally employed.
3. Truancy.

The school district does not recognize any day as a senior skip day. Absences on such days are considered unlawful and make-up privileges are not granted.

Repeated infractions of Board policy requiring the attendance of enrolled students may constitute such misconduct and disobedience as to warrant the suspension or expulsion of the student from the regular school program.[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)

The Board or its designee shall report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of eighteen (18). The Board shall issue notice to those parents/guardians who fail to comply with the requirements of compulsory attendance that such infractions will be prosecuted according to law.[\[7\]](#)[\[17\]](#)

Attendance need not always be within school facilities. A student will be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board; the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.[\[1\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#)[\[20\]](#)[\[21\]](#)[\[22\]](#)[\[23\]](#)[\[24\]](#)

Upon written request by a parent/guardian, an absence occasioned by observance of a student's religion on a day approved by the Board as a religious holiday shall be excused. A penalty shall not be attached to an absence for a religious holiday.[\[25\]](#)

The Board or its designee may, upon written request of the parents/guardians, release from attendance a student participating in a religious instruction program acknowledged by the Board. Such instruction shall not require the child's absence from school for more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year, and its organizers must inform the Board of the child's attendance record. The Board shall not provide transportation to religious instruction. A penalty shall not be attached to an absence for religious instruction.[\[25\]](#)[\[26\]](#)

The Board may permit a student to be excused for participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group upon written request from the parent/guardian prior to the event.[\[2\]](#)[\[6\]](#)

The Board will recognize other justifiable absences for part of the school day. These shall include:

1. Medical or dental appointments. However, such excuses should be infrequent, and a sincere attempt should be made by the child's parents/guardians to make such appointments during after-school hours or on Saturdays. If a student has a medical or dental appointment in the morning, the student shall be in afternoon classes. If a student has a medical or dental appointment in the afternoon, the student shall be in morning classes.[\[2\]](#)
2. Court appearances.

The Board shall excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at the schools of this district:

1. On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[27\]](#)
2. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught, except that such students and students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in the district schools shall be counted as being in part-time attendance in this district.[\[1\]](#)[\[28\]](#)[\[29\]](#)
3. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.[\[1\]](#)
4. Students fifteen (15) years of age, and fourteen (14) years of age who have completed the highest elementary grade, who are engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly issued permits.[\[3\]](#)
5. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly engaged in useful and lawful employment during the school session and holding a valid employment certificate. Regularly engages means thirty-five (35) or more hours per week of employment.[\[3\]](#)[\[19\]](#)
6. Homebound children unable to attend school on the recommendation of the school physician, the personal physician or a licensed psychiatrist and with the approval of the Secretary of Education.
7. Students enrolled in special schools conducted by the Intermediate Unit or the Department of Education.
8. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in district schools.[\[28\]](#)
9. Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.[\[1\]](#)[\[22\]](#)[\[30\]](#)[\[31\]](#)[\[32\]](#)[\[33\]](#)

#### Educational Tours And Trips

Parents/Guardians may make application for a waiver of compulsory attendance regulations when they desire their children to enjoy vacation experiences which are educational in nature and also when parents/guardians must travel for other purposes and it would constitute a

hardship to make arrangements to leave children at home or to curtail their trip because of the compulsory attendance laws. Applications for an exception to compulsory attendance requirements are available in each building principal's office. Prior notification, application, and approval by the building principal are required. Final approval rests with the Superintendent. The Board may limit the number and duration of educational tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school term. Preapproved vacation experiences; which are educational in nature, will count against a student's ten (10) days of absence per year. Vacation experiences that are not preapproved and/or that exceed the ten (10) day limit per year will be considered unexcused and/or illegal.[\[2\]](#)[\[34\]](#)

A student will be excused for two (2) preapproved postsecondary visits per school year. A student must provide the district documentation from the postsecondary institution visited upon return from such a visit. Upon return, the student has three (3) days to provide such documentation to school officials. Postsecondary visits do not count against a student's ten (10) days of absence.

### Tardiness To School

Every student should be in his/her classroom before the tardy bell rings. A tardy commences with the absence of a student at the time a given day and/or half day of attendance begins. Students arriving at school more than thirty (30) minutes from the start of school will be considered absent for one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) day; students leaving school prior to thirty (30) minutes before dismissal will be considered absent for one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) day. Students arriving at school more than thirty (30) minutes after the beginning of the second half of the school day will be considered absent from school for that day.

Students tardy to school must arrive with a note from a parent/guardian. A parent/guardian note will be accepted for the first two (2) tardies of each semester, and students will be permitted to make up work missed for the first two (2) tardies. A student is not permitted to make up work when tardy three (3) or more times in a semester. After administrative investigation, the consequence for being tardy three (3) or more times in a semester will be determined by the levels of progressive discipline. Unless accompanied by a legal excuse, students must be in attendance for a minimum of one half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) day to participate in athletic events. Students, in regard to their first two (2) tardies, must arrive prior to 9:15 a.m. at the secondary level to participate in any extracurricular or school-sponsored activity, such as dances, plays, concerts, athletic events, et cetera. Students, who are illegally tardy (arrive without a doctor's/medical excuse, arrive without legal verification of a court appointment, or arrive when not excused by the administration for another reason) three (3) or more times in a semester, will not be permitted to participate in any after school or extracurricular activity that same day. Building administration reserves the right to determine as student's eligibility status. If the third or more tardy occurs on a Friday (or any last day of the week), building administration reserves the right to revoke a student's eligibility to participate in any activity until the next official day of school.

School time missed due to chronic tardiness to school without a written legal excuse may be accumulated and converted to an equivalent number of days of unexcused absence. Upon the approval of the building principal, a citation may be issued to those parents/guardians who fail to comply with the statutory requirements of compulsory attendance through their children's chronic, unexcused tardiness to school.

### Truancy, Unexcused Or Unlawful Absence

**Truancy or unlawful absence** is defined as a student who is absent from school without permission from a parent/guardian or school official.

### Penalty For Truancy Or Unlawful Absence

### *First Unlawful Absence–*

A student will have the opportunity to make up work. A letter will be sent home to the parent/guardian informing them of the first unlawful absence.

### *Second Unlawful Absence–*

A student will not have the opportunity to make up work. A letter will be sent home to the parent/guardian informing them of the second unlawful absence.

### *Third Unlawful Absence–*

A student will not have the opportunity to make up work. A letter will be sent home by mail to the parent/guardian informing them of the third unlawful absence. This letter or official notice will also inform the parent/guardian that on the sixth unlawful absence, the district will file a citation with the magistrate for truancy.

### *Subsequent Unlawful Absence–*

The administration will coordinate a school/family conference to discuss the cause of the student's truancy and to develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) to resolve truant behavior. At the end of the conference, all parties will sign a comprehensive SAIP. In addition to the construction of a Student Attendance Improvement Plan, the district will reserve the right to refer the student to a county approved attendance improvement program.

When a student is truant or cuts class, s/he is not permitted to make up any assessments administered during the period of truancy or class cuts.

Students kindergarten through grade six (6) can be excluded from detention/suspension and academic consequences but are required to make up all work.

### Student Excusals

A student who reports to school must attend all classes during the school day and may only be excused from class(es) by the building administration. This can only be done through established building procedures. A student, if permitted by the building administration, can have two (2) excusals per semester. These student excusals are permitted for medical or dental appointments, required court appearances, or other requests approved by the building administration. Student excusals will not be granted for the following reasons: shopping; hunting, fishing, attending ball games or sporting events; birthday or other celebrations; employment; inefficient transportation or automobile breakdowns; haircut appointments; or any other reason not listed as being legal in the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949. After administrative investigation, the consequence will be determined by the levels of progressive discipline. Students, who are illegally excused (leave without a doctor's/medical excuse, leave without legal verification of a court appointment, leave without the approval of the administration) three (3) or more times in a semester, will not be able to participate in any after school or extracurricular activity that same day. If the third or more tardy occurs on a Friday (or any last day of the week), building administration reserves the right to revoke a student's eligibility to participate in any activity until the next official day of school. The student is also not permitted to make up work when illegally excused to leave school early three (3) or more times.

### Class Cuts

Illness is the only acceptable excuse for not reporting to class. If a student becomes ill, s/he must report to the school nurse with a properly signed pass. Spending the class period in the restroom is inexcusable. After administrative investigation, the consequences for cutting class

will be determined by the levels of progressive discipline. As the result of a class cut, the student may not make up assignments, class work, or other assessments.

### Unexcused Absence

An unexcused absence occurs when a student does not provide a written excuse for an absence within three (3) school days of his/her return to school.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.[\[9\]](#)

### *School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) -*

District staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the SAIC.[\[17\]](#)

The purpose of the SAIC is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.[\[9\]](#)

The following individuals shall be invited to the SAIC:[\[9\]](#)

1. The student.
2. The student's person in parental relation.
3. Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource.
4. Appropriate school personnel.
5. Recommended service providers.

Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the SAIC shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.[\[17\]](#)

The outcome of the SAIC shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the student's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the person in parental relation, the student and appropriate district staff.[\[17\]](#)

The district may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until the scheduled SAIC has been held and the student has incurred six (6) or more days of unexcused absences.[\[17\]](#)

### Proceedings And Penalties For Violation Of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

#### *Student is Habitually Truant-*

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, district staff:[\[35\]](#)

1. Shall refer the student to:
  - a. A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
  - b. The local children and youth agency.
2. May file a citation in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.[\[35\]](#)



When a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, district staff shall: [\[35\]](#)

1. Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
2. File a citation in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

District staff may refer a student who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency, if the student continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the student refuses to participate in such program. [\[35\]](#)

Regardless of age, when district staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate magisterial district judge, district staff shall provide verification that the school held a SAIC. [\[35\]](#)

Every parent/guardian of any child of compulsory school age is subject to penalties if compulsory school-age attendance requirements are not met. The district will give three (3) days' written notice of violation of compulsory attendance prior to proceeding against the offending party and will attempt to develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) in cooperation with the parent/guardian. If compulsory attendance violations continue, the district will proceed with the filing of a citation with the local magisterial district judge. The district will also refer student to local or county approved attendance program as an additional step for support. [\[17\]](#)

Possible sentences for parents/guardians found to be in violation of compulsory attendance law:

1. Paying a fine up to the amount allowed by law for each offense and court costs.
2. Completing a parenting education program.
3. In cases where the party convicted fails to pay the fine or complete the parenting education program, a subsequent sentencing to the county jail for no more than five (5) days.
4. Completing in lieu of, or in addition to the previous penalties, community service within the school district for a period of no more than six (6) months.

The Board may bring a student before the court. Possible dispositions for children found in violation of compulsory attendance law:

1. If the parent/guardian is not convicted by the magisterial district judge because the parent/guardian took every reasonable step to ensure the child's attendance at school and the child has attained the age of thirteen (13), the child may be:
  - a. Subject to a fine of no more than the amount allowed by law for each offense.
  - b. Assigned to an adjudication alternative program.
  - c. Alleged to be dependent by the magisterial district judge if the child fails to pay the fine or comply with the adjudication program.
  - d. Referred by the school district for services or possible disposition as a dependent child, in lieu of prosecution or assignment to an adjudication alternative program, if the child fails to comply with compulsory attendance provisions and is habitually



truant.

2. Any child who has not attained the age of thirteen (13) who fails to comply with the compulsory attendance requirements and is habitually truant shall be:
  - a. Referred by the school district for services or possible adjudication as a dependent child.
3. For children convicted of violation of compulsory attendance requirements by the magisterial district judge, the court, including a court not of record, must send a certified record of the conviction or other disposition to the Department of Transportation.
  - a. Upon first conviction, the child's operating privilege for operating an automobile will be suspended for ninety (90) days.
  - b. Upon the second or subsequent conviction, the child's operating privileges will be suspended for six (6) months.
  - c. Children who do not yet have a driver's license will be ineligible to apply for a license for the time periods of ninety (90) days for the first conviction and six (6) months for the second and any subsequent conviction.
4. If a student of compulsory school age cannot be kept in school on account of truancy, the school district may proceed against the student before the juvenile court.

#### General Protective Services

**General protective services** are services to prevent the potential for harm to a child. Children who are habitually and without justification truant from school while subject to compulsory school attendance are subject to an assessment to determine if there is a need for general protective services. Children shall not be referred to the Butler County Children and Youth Agency for assessment as possibly needing services until after the school district has made a formal effort to involve the family and child in resolving the cause of the truant behavior.

#### The Penalty For Students Who Are Of Noncompulsory Age And Violate The Attendance Policy

Students who are eighteen (18) years old or older do not come under the compulsory attendance law. Therefore, after ten (10) absences, students will meet with the building administration and their parent/guardian between the student's eleventh to fifteenth absence to address the student's excessive absenteeism. At this meeting, the administration will state that parent/guardian notes for absences for the student will not be accepted after the formal notices have been issued and disciplinary measures have been instituted. After the meeting, the building administration will send a formal notice to the parent/guardian of the student stating that the student must provide a physician's excuse for all future absenteeism. If the student continues not to attend school, the building administration will initiate disciplinary measures. If the student, after appropriate disciplinary measures have been taken, continues not to attend school, the building administration will refer the student to the Superintendent. The Superintendent, then, will arrange for a formal meeting with the student and his/her parent/guardian. At this meeting, the Superintendent will recommend the student for expulsion and recommend that the student be brought before the Board of School Directors.

#### Virtual Academy Attendance Requirements

All students enrolled in courses through the Moniteau Virtual Academy program in accordance with the following requirements will be considered in attendance for purposes of this policy and compulsory education requirements.

Student attendance in Moniteau Virtual Academy courses will be monitored by the Virtual Academy Administrator, guidance counselors and teacher(s) using an Internet-based system. To be considered in attendance during the school year, a student enrolled in the Virtual Academy program must actively participate in on-line instruction not less than twenty-eight (28) hours per week (5.6 hours or 336 minutes per day). A student will not be granted credit for any semester course if absences from that course total more than seven (7) hours per semester or for any full year courses that total more than fourteen (14) hours for the year. A student is not considered absent from class if s/he has logged into the virtual academy program and remained active during the minimum period required.

Except to the extent required by an individualized education program, Moniteau Virtual Academy instruction will not be provided by the school district prior to the beginning of or subsequent to the end of the school year as annually approved by the Board of School Directors.

Students enrolled full-time in the Moniteau Virtual Academy program must be actively engaged in their on-line courses a minimum of 2.6 hours (156 minutes) to qualify for participation in extracurricular activities or practices on that day.

Legal

- [1. 24 P.S. 1327](#)
- [2. 24 P.S. 1329](#)
- [3. 24 P.S. 1330](#)
- [4. 22 PA Code 11.23](#)
- [5. 22 PA Code 11.25](#)
- [6. 22 PA Code 11.41](#)
- [7. 22 PA Code 12.1](#)
8. Pol. 200
- [9. 24 P.S. 1326](#)
- [10. 22 PA Code 11.13](#)
- [11. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6302](#)
- [12. 24 P.S. 1332](#)
- [13. 24 P.S. 1339](#)
- [14. 24 P.S. 510.2](#)
15. Pol. 218
16. Pol. 233
- [17. 24 P.S. 1333](#)
- [18. 22 PA Code 11.22](#)
- [19. 22 PA Code 11.28](#)
20. Pol. 113
21. Pol. 115
22. Pol. 116
23. Pol. 117
24. Pol. 118
- [25. 22 PA Code 11.21](#)
- [26. 24 P.S. 1546](#)

[27. 22 PA Code 11.34](#)

[28. 22 PA Code 11.5](#)

[29. 22 PA Code 11.32](#)

[30. 22 PA Code 11.31](#)

[31. 22 PA Code 11.31a](#)

[32. 24 P.S. 1327.1](#)

33. Pol. 137

[34. 22 PA Code 11.26](#)

[35. 24 P.S. 1333.1](#)

[22 PA Code 11.24](#)

[22 PA Code 11.8](#)

[24 P.S. 1333.2](#)

[24 P.S. 1333.3](#)

Pol. 103.1

Pol. 113.3

Pol. 251