

## ATTENDANCE POLICY GRADES K – 8

The outside workplace is an environment that expects individuals to be punctual and demonstrate commitment. The Agawam Public Schools district Attendance Policy is dedicated to preparing students for both the workplace and life's environment. We encourage good school attendance, since only through regular attendance can a student take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered. We believe in a direct and positive correlation between good school attendance and academic success. Furthermore, attendance in school is mandated by Massachusetts General Laws, specifically Chapter 76 sections 1, 2, and 4.

### COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGES

Massachusetts law establishes the state Board of Education as the agent, which determines mandatory and permissible school attendance ages, with exceptions listed. Generally, the State Board requires that all children be enrolled in school beginning in September of the calendar year in which they attain the age of 6 and that they attend school regularly until they reach age 16.

Under law, the School Committee of each city must enforce the school attendance of all children of compulsory school age residing therein. File: JCA/JG-1 Legal Refs: M.G.L., c. 76, § 1.

### DUTY OF PARENT – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF CHILD

Every person in control of a child shall cause him/her to attend school as therein required, and, if he/she fails to do so for 7 day sessions or 14 half-day sessions within any period of 6 months, the parent or guardian who supports or enables a chronic pattern of unnecessary absences may be subject to agency or court action. The Assistant Superintendent or designee will file a report with the Department of Children and Families for educational neglect and/or file an "Application for Child Requiring Assistance" (CRA) at Springfield Juvenile Court on said parent or guardian if warranted.

### ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

It is expected that students will not be absent from school unless conditions or circumstances render them otherwise unable to attend. A student must be at school or at a school-related activity (e.g. field trip) for at least half (3 hours) of the school day in order to be counted as present.

1. For every instance of student absence, the parent/guardian must provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school. Parents/guardians are required to contact the school the morning of an illness and to notify the school in advance of any planned absences. This note must be signed by a parent/guardian and must include the exact dates of and reason for the absence. The note must arrive in the school office. If the child is out for more than 5 days sequentially or 8 days cumulatively in a 30-day time period, a note from a doctor's office is required. Students may be eligible for a tutor if they have a medical excuse stating they will be absent for 14 or more days. Parents/guardians should contact the main office of their child's school.

The following are legitimate reasons for an excused absence from school:

- a. Personal illness of the student with a doctor's note
  - b. Bereavement
  - c. Emergency (e.g. flood, fire)
  - d. Observation of religious holiday
  - e. Legal (with documentation from state agencies, court, lawyer, etc.)
  - f. Any other reason Administration deems appropriate
2. Students who exceed 18 absences in a school year may be considered for non-promotion. The intent of this policy is not to say that a certain number of absences are acceptable or allowable; rather, that sequential attendance is necessary. Days absent from school should be reserved for illness or emergency (see above). Parent/guardians are

encouraged to make vacation plans that coincide with the scheduled school vacations. Family trips/vacations are considered unexcused absences.

3. Students who appear in school or on school grounds while marked absent or dismissed from school are considered truant and trespassing. In addition, students absent without legal reason/parent knowledge are also truant. Students are not allowed to make up work if determined to be truant. Chronic truancy and excessive absenteeism will result in the Assistant Superintendent or designee filing a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) petition or a 51A with the Springfield Juvenile Court.
4. Students who are absent from school will not be allowed to participate in any after school activity on the day of absence. In extenuating circumstances, the Administration has the discretion to override this provision of the policy.
5. Students whose absences exceed fifteen (15) consecutive or twenty (20) cumulative days shall receive written notice that they will be administratively withdrawn from the Agawam Public Schools on the twentieth (20<sup>th</sup>) consecutive or twenty-fifth (25<sup>th</sup>) cumulative day of nonattendance. This notice shall include a statement of their rights under state and federal law and be copied to the Department of Special Services. For students with disabilities, a Team Meeting invitation shall accompany this notice.

### **TARDIES**

Every pupil who is not present in his/her class or homeroom at the start of opening session will be marked tardy. Tardy students need to report to the office. Parents/guardians must provide a reason for the student's tardiness by telephone or electronically. The Principal may take appropriate disciplinary action if it is determined that a student has had excessive tardies, which have impacted the student's learning and education. In addition, the Department of Children and Family may be contacted for educational neglect.

### **DISMISSALS**

No pupil shall be dismissed from school without a request from his or her parent/guardian in person or in writing. All dismissals shall be recorded. Students may not leave the building until the person receiving them has been properly identified (please provide a picture ID).

### **REVIEW/APPEAL**

In cases where a student in grade K through 8 receives no credit or is not promoted as directed by this policy or whenever a student's total number of school absences exceeds 18 cumulative days in any school year, an automatic review will occur at the school level. A response by the Principal or his/her designee will be made in writing by the last day of school in June. The student or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may appeal the decision on the school review level to the Superintendent of Schools. The appeal must be submitted in writing within ten (10) days of receipt of the review decision. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools is final and cannot be appealed to the School Committee.