



Community Unit School District #205

Galesburg, Illinois

.....*Helping Students Achieve Their Dreams*.....

Attendance Plan

PART I OVERVIEW and RATIONALE

It is the commitment of the Galesburg Board of Education, Administration and Staff to ensure each student in our District is successful in reaching his/her full academic and personal potential. Through education, this outcome can be achieved. However, it requires children to be **at school every day, on time and ready to learn.**

The Galesburg Board of Education and Administration have established a goal of raising the fall 2010 Average Daily Attendance Rate (an average of attendance rates for August, September, and October) by one (1) percent over the fall 2009 rate. This will be accomplished through the implementation of the District-Wide Attendance Plan in which all stakeholders will be held accountable.

Through a framework which provides three (3) tiers of support to our students and families (prevention, early intervention and more intense intervention strategies), the 2010-11 Attendance Plan will assist our students in being successful. We cannot do it alone however. It will take the entire community to support the importance of education and the need for students to be at school every day. Commitment to the plan is expected from school personnel, parents, students and the community.

Through the use of *prevention strategies*, each school will strive to achieve a target of 80-90% of their students having no more than five (5) absences during the school year. With *early intervention strategies* in place, 5-10% of our student will have no more than 10 absences. Less than 5% of our students with over 10 absences will require targeted and *intensive intervention strategies*. The following plan will be implemented beginning August 2010 by all Galesburg Public Schools. Data reporting processes will be included to provide feedback and accountability for this plan.

This document outlines Community Unit School District 205's Attendance Policy. This policy has been established in concert with Illinois state law. The law states that whoever has custody or control of any child enrolled in school must cause such child to attend public school in the district where the child resides the entire time it is in session during the regular school term, except as otherwise provided by law. Our district takes student attendance very seriously, and we are committed to seeing that every child is in school, unless there is an excused reason for absence or tardiness. "Helping Students Achieve Their Dreams" is our district's mission. Studies have shown that when students are consistently at school, they are more likely to achieve their dreams.

DREAM BIG... Every Day! SCHOOL

Part II EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for School Personnel

- Provide a safe, nurturing and engaging learning environment.
- Develop a positive relationship with parents and families; let them know we care.
- Implement the plan accurately, consistently and fairly (i.e. with integrity).
- Designate one person at each school who will be responsible for monitoring and carrying out the attendance plan.
- Communicate daily attendance expectations to students, to parents, and to the community
- Provide personal contact to parents/guardians when students are absent.
- Maintain flexibility in scheduling calls and meetings with parents/guardians. Accommodate their schedules as much as possible.
- Educate the medical community on the attendance plan and specifically to changes regarding the acceptance of a doctor's notes for excused absences, which now require confirmation of an office visit and/or doctor stating the student was too ill to attend school.

Expectations of Students

- Come to school every day ready to learn. Eat a well-balanced breakfast. Be dressed appropriately. Have the necessary school supplies.
- Report to school on time.
- Plan appointments outside of school time.
- For minor health issues, come to school rather than stay home.
- If problems occur, ask school personnel or a parent for help; come to us with problems. Communicate.
- Understand and follow the attendance plan.
- Update parents'/guardians' contact information regularly, and make corrections, as necessary.

Expectations of Parents

- Help your children get adequate sleep (8-10 hours depending upon age).
- Make sure your children come to school every day ready to learn with a well-balanced breakfast, school supplies and appropriate dress.
- Make sure your children arrive at school every day on time.
- Plan appointments for children outside of the school day.
- Plan vacations outside of school days. Parents/guardians must obtain approval at least ten (10) days prior to the absence, must have the principal or designee's approval and must not exceed the allowed 5 days total of vacation days for a school year, to be an excused absence.
- Understand and follow the attendance plan. The school will provide copies in Spanish.
- **Call the school office no later than one (1) hour after the start of the school day when a child is absent or unavoidably late. Failure to contact the school office regarding the nature of the student's absence will result in the absence being marked "unexcused".**
- Provide a valid doctor's note when required in the attendance plan.
- Attend all required meetings.
- Communicate with school personnel. Seek support and assistance when problems arise.

Expectations of Community (employers, citizens, friends and neighbors)

- Value and visibly support education.
- Understand, communicate, and support the attendance plan.
- Schedule appointments for students and families outside of school hours.
- Report suspected truants by calling (309) 343-9151.
- Respect high school students early school hours when scheduling late work hours.
- Support interventions necessary to insure student success--including interventions from the court system.
- Employers: maintain an attendance expectation for student employees by requiring school attendance records as a part of the job interview.
- Assist with providing incentives for good attendance, e.g. iPods, bicycles, etc.
- Help promote the Attendance Plan by advertising on marquees, preview ads in theaters, TV/radio ads, etc.
- Help to eliminate obstacles to daily attendance by providing small stocks of clothing and supplies for students.
- Volunteer to participate in activities that support the plan.

Part III

DEFINITIONS and EXAMPLES

Absence Defined

ALL students, ages 7 - 17 are subject to compulsory school attendance. A student's parent/guardian must (1) upon the child's enrollment, provide telephone numbers to the building principal and update them, as necessary, and (2) authorize all absences and notify the school in advance or at the time of the child's absence.

Excused Absence Examples

- illness
- professional health service appointments
- family emergency
- observance of religious holiday
- death in immediate family
- approved educational purpose
- planned vacations with 10 days prior approval to trip, not to exceed 5 total vacation days for a school year
- other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student

Unexcused Absence Examples

- no phone call or note to explain student's absence
- missing the bus
- returning to school after three (3) or more consecutive absences without a valid doctor's note
- oversleeping/alarm problems
- no clean clothes
- car trouble/transportation issues
- unapproved planned vacations
- hair appointments & similar activities
- other absences classified as unexcused by principal or designee

Excused Absences

The school administration may require a doctor's excuse or other official documentation for truants. The following guidelines are established to determine if a doctor's note is mandatory:

- Students must return with a doctor's note, if absent for three (3) or more consecutive days. All doctor's notes must confirm an office visit and/or specific language the student was too ill to attend school. Without a valid doctor's note the absences will be unexcused. In order to be considered valid, a doctor's note must indicate the date and time of the office visit, and it must state that the student was unable to attend school due to the medical issue.
- At the 7th parent-excused absence, a warning letter will be sent to the parents.
- A student having ten (10) absences (excused and/or unexcused) will be required to bring a valid doctor's note for subsequent absences in order for those absences to be considered excused. In order to be considered valid, a doctor's note must indicate the date and time of the office visit, and it must state that the student was unable to attend school due to the medical issue.
- Parents will be notified, and the appropriate truancy authorities will be alerted.
- Each case will be considered individually.

Unexcused Absences

The school administration will initiate the interventions below, with respect to unexcused absences. These steps will be initiated, as well as other interventions that the principal, designee, or Outreach Worker feels would benefit the individual student or family. Please refer to the chart below for information regarding excused vs. unexcused absences.

- Parents will be notified of unexcused absences by mail.
- At three (3) unexcused absences, a school representative will contact the student and family.
- At five (5) unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home requesting a contact or meeting.
- At seven (7) excused and/or unexcused absences, notification will be sent to parents, and a meeting will be requested, if not already held.
- At ten (10) unexcused absences, the child and/or guardian will be subject to a citation. According to Illinois State Statute, fines of up to \$500, plus court costs and/or jail time of up to 30 days may be incurred, if a parent/guardian is found negligent.

Chronic/Habitual Truancy

The District considers a student to be a chronic or habitual truant if he or she is absent without valid cause for ten (10) percent or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

Tardy Policy

Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Requiring a child to arrive on time promotes responsible behavior. Tardy arrival results in disruption to both the classroom and to the individual learning process. Tardiness is categorized as excused or unexcused. The only reasons recognized by District #205 for excused tardiness are medical appointments, funeral attendance, and illness. All other causes of tardiness are considered unexcused.

Part IV ACTION STEPS

When absences occur:

For Each Absence:

- A personal phone call will be made to the parents.
- Office personnel, principals, support personnel, and teachers must reach out to (i.e. welcome back & re-integrate) the student upon his/her return to school.
- Teachers are encouraged to contact home every time a student is absent.
- Parents have 48 hours to provide a note to school after a student has returned from an absence.
- Accurate attendance documentation will be made in official school records.

3rd Unexcused Absence:

- Designated school personnel will contact the student and/or parent/guardian to discuss absence(s) and to plan for improved attendance.

5th Unexcused Absence:

- Computer-generated letter sent requesting parent to schedule meeting to discuss attendance problems, interventions, and future consequences.
- Appropriate truancy authorities will be alerted.
- Meet with student and/or parent/guardian to discuss absences.

7th Absence (combined excused/unexcused):

- Warning letter sent to parent(s)/guardian(s), notifying them of absences and requesting a meeting (unless that had a meeting with parents on the 5th absence)

10th Absence (combined excused/unexcused):

- Mail or hand deliver a letter to parents requesting they schedule a meeting to discuss these absences within 5 days.
- Meeting and/or discussion held with parent/guardian, student, school officials and/or community support to develop action plan to identify reasons for absences and specific interventions to resolve issues.
- Any further absences will require a valid doctor's note.
- Students should be referred to school support groups focused on students with 10 or more absences.
- Students ages 7-17 are referred to the appropriate community authorities (could include the ROE Truancy Program or the Police Department).
- A truancy citation will be issued to the student and/or parent(s)/guardian(s), beginning with the 10th unexcused absence and any subsequent unexcused absences. According to State of Illinois Statute, fines of up to \$500.00, plus court costs and/or jail time of up to 30 days may be incurred, if a parent/guardian is found negligent.
- Connecting with student and family for 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th absence is strongly recommended.

15th Absence (combined excused/unexcused):

- Computer-generated letter sent to parent requiring a parent signature acknowledging consequences for future absences.
- Parent and student meeting is required.
- For the 15th, 16th and 17th absences, a parent contact is required informing them of future consequences and request for support of action plan.
- Student will be referred for individual counseling and/or intervention at the school level.

18th Absence (combined excused/unexcused):

- Computer-generated letter sent to parent, requiring a signature on an attendance action plan and reiterating further consequences for future absences.
- Students over the age of 16 with 18 unexcused absences may be dropped from school.

20th Absence (combined excused/unexcused):

- Parents of students aged 11 and younger may be reported to the State's Attorney's Office for neglect in providing an education for their child.
- Students in grades 9-12 with 20+ unexcused absences may be dropped.