



Administrative Procedure 6055

Student Presence and Engagement

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: [1](#), [12](#)

Administrative Procedures Cross Reference:

Form Cross Reference:

Legal/Regulatory Reference:

[The Public Schools Act](#)

[The Education Administration Act](#)

[The Human Rights Code](#)

[The Protecting Children \(Information Sharing\) Act](#)

[The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

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Amended: November 2023

Background

Students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have a greater opportunity to access school and community resources, have a greater sense of belonging, and are more likely to reach their full potential. Student presence and engagement is required for success. Student absence is a serious impediment to a student's educational performance and well-being. Absenteeism can have lasting negative impacts on student achievement, graduation rates, transition to post-secondary education, employment, and social inclusion, as well as on the community at large. Attendance issues are often a first sign that a student is experiencing life challenges, and there is a multitude of contributing factors, ranging from academic, social, economic, and psychological.

Definitions

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:

- refers to any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) with the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

Unexcused Absence:

- refers to any time a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) without the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

Chronic Absenteeism:

- Where 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:

- Where 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.

Late:

- Any time that a student is not in class or participating in a school activity at the beginning of the instructional time but is in class or participating in a school activity prior to the conclusion of the instructional time in which they are required. Lates can be excused or unexcused. While a Late does not constitute an absence, multiple occurrences of unexcused Lates may require similar responses as unexcused absences.

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.

Proactive and Preventative Attendance Practices

Taking a proactive response to even a day of absence creates opportunities to provide supports and intervention before absenteeism becomes persistent. This includes and is not limited to the following:

- School notifying parent(s) via voicemail/automated system; and
- If absence persists, a personal contact from the school designate (Home School Liaison, School Counsellor, Social Worker, or School Administrator) to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.

Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing and Reporting on Student Presence and Absence

Documentation, monitoring, analyzing and reporting on student presence and absence occur at the school and divisional level and include the following:

- Consistent, daily recording procedures and common metrics on student presence and absence, including whether absences are excused or unexcused.

- Monitoring 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.
- Regular monitoring and analyzing of division-wide and school enrollment and attendance data.
- Procedures for investigating and identifying the causes of student absences and determining the appropriate supports that are required to promote regular attendance.
- 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.
- Ensuring that student attendance is a standing agenda item at senior administration meetings and school-based support team meetings.

Response to Chronic Absenteeism

Responses to absences must be non-punitive, fair, and predictable for all students. Suspension, expulsion, and withdrawal are inappropriate and counterproductive responses to absenteeism. In Grades 9 to 12 inclusive, credits will not be withheld or removed due to unexcused absences. Students are to remain in their registered courses.

Students who are chronically absent must have a student-specific plan in place to identify the student-specific barriers affecting attendance and the strategies in place to respond to these barriers. This includes initiating a meeting of the core team, including the parent. Student-specific planning processes are detailed in the Manitoba Education Standards for Appropriate Educational Programing. The school must designate a case manager to respond to and work with the student and their parents. When the school is aware of an external agency involvement with a student who is chronically absent, this agency must be included as part of the student-specific planning process.

Responses to student absenteeism will vary based on the age, grade, and development of the student, the professional judgment of teachers and principals, and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or division-based supports and/or with outside agencies, if needed.

Student-specific planning to respond to attendance issues may include appropriate alternative educational programming, which provides options such as flexible timetabling, a variety of assessment methods/options, opportunities for credit acquisition and credit recovery, and ways to ensure learning is accessible to the student based on their current level of performance.

If a student reaches the number of absences defined as severe chronic absenteeism, an in-school intervention is needed along with other members of the school support team and external agencies, if applicable.

If the school has been unsuccessful in addressing severe chronic absenteeism for a student, the division must notify the Department's School and Community Support Unit in writing, as well as notify Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students:

- are responsible to attend school and classes regularly and punctually.
- 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. Note: It is recognized that elementary-age students are more dependent on their parents to help them attend school regularly.

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 fully with the child's teachers and other employees of the school division 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.
- 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, if 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.

Home School Liaisons:

- communicate (verbally and in writing, if needed) with students and parents when concerns related to attendance arise.
- communicate student and parent information to classroom teacher, administration and case manager in a timely manner.
- document steps taken to communicate with students, parents, and outside agencies when concerns related to attendance arise.
- submit required attendance reports.

Principals/designates:

- are responsible to 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 and oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism.

- report chronic/severe absenteeism to the school division.
- invite 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 in the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming.
- work with schools, parents, 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.