



Board Agenda Item #	Agenda # II A- Consent Item
Date:	June 14, 2018
To:	Magnolia Board of Directors
From:	Caprice Young, Ed.D., CEO & Superintendent
Staff Lead:	David Yilmaz, Chief Accountability Officer
RE:	Approval of Student Attendance Policy

Proposed Board Recommendation

I move that the board approve the Student Attendance Policy.

Background

It is MPS' intent to ensure that students attend school every day on time. Consistent school attendance is critical to school success. Being present for classroom instructional time is essential for students to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. Chronic absenteeism has been linked to an increased likelihood of poor academic performance, disengagement from school and behavior problems.

MPS has always had guidelines for student attendance in the Student/Parent Handbook, but we did not have a standalone attendance policy that addresses all aspects of student attendance. Over the years we have been discussing attendance related questions and possible solutions, such as what happens if a student does not show up on the first few days of school or is absent for ten days in a row without a valid excuse; how do we address habitual truancy issues; can we form a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) to address chronic absenteeism, etc. This comprehensive policy addresses our questions and provides important guidelines to the schools.

During 2017-18 we received feedback and many questions from our office staff and school administrators which initiated the need for a more comprehensive policy and we worked closely with our legal counsel in finalizing the attached policy. The Attendance Policy is inserted into the 2018-19 Student/Parent Handbook in its entirety. We have also created sample documents (truancy letter, SART agreement, etc.) that go along with the policy which are not included in the handbook but will be shared with our school administrators.

Budget Implications

N/A

How Does This Action Relate/Affect/Benefit All MSAs?

We believe that this policy will clarify most attendance related issues and support our schools in reducing truancy/chronic absenteeism.

Name of Staff Originator:

David Yilmaz, Chief Accountability Officer

Attachments

- Student Policies - Attendance Policy

MAGNOLIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MPS) ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is the intent of the Governing Board of the Magnolia Educational and Research Foundation, doing business as Magnolia Public Schools ("MPS") to ensure that students attend school every day on time. Consistent school attendance is critical to school success. Being present for classroom instructional time is essential for students to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. Chronic absenteeism has been linked to an increased likelihood of poor academic performance, disengagement from school and behavior problems.

Excused Absences/Tardies for Classroom Based Attendance

Absence from school shall be excused only for health reasons, family emergencies and justifiable personal reasons, as permitted by law or Board policy.

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness;
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer;
3. Professional appointments such as medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointments:
 - a. Insofar as class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, parents/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours.
4. Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family:
 - a. Excused absence in this instance shall be limited to one (1) day if the service is conducted in California or three (3) days if the service is conducted out of state.
 - b. "Immediate family" shall be defined as mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, spouse, son/son-in-law, daughter/daughter-in-law, brother, sister or any relative living in the student's immediate household.
5. Participation in religious instruction or exercises in accordance with MPS policy:
 - a. The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four school days per month.

In addition, a student's absence shall be excused for justifiable personal reasons such as:

1. Appearance in court;
2. Attendance at a funeral;
3. Observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion;
4. Attendance at religious retreats for no more than four hours during a semester;
5. Attendance at the pupil's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen;
6. Attendance at an employment conference;
7. Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day.

Other reasons will be considered that are requested in writing and approved by MPS. If the excuse is not one of the valid excuses listed above, the MPS administrators are authorized to excuse school absences due to the pupil's circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Unexcused Absences/Tardies for Classroom Based Attendance

Students will be marked unexcused if they:

1. Do not bring a written note within two (2) school days following an absence;
2. Leave school without signing out at the school office;
3. Are absent from class without teacher permission, including walking out of class;
4. Are absent from class without parent permission, (except students in 7-12 grade who are being excused to receive confidential medical services without parental permission);
5. Get a pass to go to a certain place but do not report there; and/or
6. Are absent/tardy for reasons **not acceptable** to the administration including but not limited to:
 - Not waking up on time
 - Transportation problems (missing the bus, traffic, car trouble, etc.)
 - Inclement weather
 - Running errands for family
 - Work
 - Babysitting
 - Hair appointment
 - Needed at home
 - Vacations or trips
 - Athletic workout
 - Socializing/Lingering in the hallway

Method of Verification

A parent/guardian must inform the MPS main office via phone of their child's absence/tardy the morning of the absence/tardy. When students who have been absent return to school, they must present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence/tardy within two (2) school days of the excused absence and/or upon the student's return. If a satisfactory explanation is not provided within two (2) school days of the absence/return, the absence will be marked as "unexcused." The following methods may be used to verify student absences/tardies:

1. Signed, written note from parent/guardian, parent representative;
2. Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:

- a. Name of student;
 - b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative;
 - c. Name of verifying employee;
 - d. Date or dates of absence; and
 - e. Reason for absence.
3. Visit to the student's home by the verifying employee, or any other reasonable method, which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. A written recording shall be made, including information outlined above.
 4. Healthcare provider verification
 - a. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, MPS staff shall not ask the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.
 - b. A healthcare provider's note of illness will be accepted for any reported absence. When a student has had twenty (20) absences in the school year verified by methods listed in #1-#3 above without a healthcare provider's note, any further absences for illness must be verified by a healthcare provider.

Students should not be absent from school without their parents/guardians' knowledge or consent except in cases of medical emergency. Student absence for religious instruction or participation in religious exercises away from school property may be considered excused subject to administrative regulations and law.

Students the arrive to school late must report to the main office when he or she arrives. If the student fails to do this, he or she will receive an unexcused tardy. If the student fails to present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the tardy, he or she will receive an unexcused tardy. The student will be given a "late slip" from office staff to be admitted to class.

Extracurricular Activities

When a student misses ten (10) full unexcused days in a semester, he or she may not be allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities in that semester. Special circumstances with documented explanations should be reviewed with the administration. After twenty (20) unexcused absences/tardies, the student will not be allowed to walk on stage for promotion/graduation.

Make up Work for Excused Absences

An absence from school, even for several days, does not excuse students from responsibilities in the classroom. On the day of return, it is the students' responsibility to find out what work is required and when the work needs to be completed. Students will be given the same number of days they were absent to make up missed work. For students with excused absences, make-up tests will be scheduled at a time designated by the teacher or as outlined in the teacher's syllabus. It is the students' responsibility to take the test at that time. If the student fails to do this, the teacher is not obligated to set another time for make-up. Please check teacher's syllabus and make sure for their individual policy.

Independent Study Policy

Students with a legitimate need for an extended absence can enroll in independent study. Please see the main office of your MPS school for the independent study policy.

Unexcused Absences/Truancy for Classroom Based Attendance

Each person between the ages of 6 and 18 years old is subject to compulsory full-time education. (Education Code sections 48200 and 48410). Students shall be classified as “truant” if the student is absent from school without a valid excuse three (3) full days in one school year, or if the student is tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. (Education Code section 48260). Such students shall be reported to the MPS Principal or designee.

In addition, students shall be classified as a “chronic truant” if the student is absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 percent or more of the school days in one school, from the date of enrollment to the current date. (Education Code section 48263.6).

The MPS Principal or designee, shall implement positive steps to reduce truancy, including working with the family in an attempt to resolve the attendance problem. A student's progress and learning may be affected by excessive unexcused absences. In addition, MPS is fiscally dependent on student attendance and is negatively impacted by excessive unexcused absences. If all attempts to resolve the student's attendance problem are unsuccessful, MPS will implement the processes described below.

PROCESS FOR UPHOLDING THE ATTENDANCE POLICY**First Day of School Process:**

When students are not in attendance on the first five (5) consecutive days of school, MPS will attempt to reach the parent/guardian on a daily basis for each of the first five days to determine whether the student has an excused absence, consistent with the process outlined in this policy. If the student has a basis for an excused absence, parents must notify MPS of the absence and provide documentation consistent with this policy. However, consistent with process below, students who are not in attendance due to an unexcused absence by the fifth day of school will be voluntarily disenrolled from the MPS roster, as it will be assumed that the student has voluntarily chosen another school option.

1. Students who are not in attendance on the first day of school will be contacted by phone to ensure their intent to enroll.
2. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the third day will receive a letter indicating the student will be disenrolled after the fifth day of school if the student has not attended school without valid excuse.
3. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the fifth day will receive a phone call reiterating the content of the letter.
4. Students who have not attended by the sixth day, and do not have an excused absence as defined above for not being in attendance will be disenrolled from the roster.
5. MPS will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet.

6. The District of Residence will be notified of the student's failure to attend MPS and the voluntary disenrollment.

Truancy Process:

1. Each of the first two (2) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes will result in a call home to the parent/guardian by the MPS Principal or designee. The student's classroom teacher may also call home.
2. Each of the third (3rd) and fourth (4th) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes will result in a call home to the parent/guardian by the MPS Principal or designee. In addition, the student's classroom teacher may also call home and/or MPS may send the parent an e-mail notification. In addition, upon reaching three (3) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes in a school year, the parent/guardian will receive "Truancy Letter #1" from MPS. This letter must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to MPS. This letter shall also be accompanied by a copy of this Attendance Policy. This letter, and all subsequent letter(s) sent home, shall be sent by Certified Mail, return receipt requested, or some other form of mail that can be tracked.
3. Upon reaching seven (7) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes, the parent/guardian will receive "Truancy Letter #2 – Conference Request," and a parent/guardian conference will be scheduled to review the student's records and develop an intervention plan/contract. In addition, MPS will consult with a school counselor regarding the appropriateness of a home visitation and/or case management.
4. Upon reaching ten (10) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes, the student will be referred to a Student Success Team (SST) and the MPS Attendance Review Team (SART). In addition, the parent/guardian will receive a "Habitual Truancy Re-classification Letter #3," and will be asked/invited to attend an evening assembly for parents/guardians of chronically absent students.
5. The SART panel can include, but is not limited to, the following school members: School Administrators, School Psychologist, Counselor, Nurse, Psychiatric Social Worker, Attendance Clerk, Intervention Teacher(s), MPS Director of Student Services or designee, PSAC or designee. The panel may be composed of any individual who is working with the family and has a viable interest in the student's school attendance. The SART panel will discuss the absence problem with the Parent/Guardian to work on solutions, develop strategies, discuss appropriate support services for the student and his/her family, and establish a plan to resolve the attendance issue.
 - a. The SART panel shall direct the parent/guardian that no further unexcused absences or tardies can be tolerated.
 - b. The parent shall be required to sign a contract formalizing the agreement by the parents to improve the child's attendance or face additional administrative action. The contract will identify the corrective actions required in the future, and indicate that the SART panel shall have the authority to order one or more of the following consequences for non-compliance with the terms of the contract:

- i. Parent/guardian to attend school with the child for one (1) day
 - ii. Student retention
 - iii. After school detention program
 - iv. Required school counseling
 - v. Loss of field trip privileges
 - vi. Loss of school store privileges
 - vii. Loss of school event privileges
 - viii. Required remediation plan as set by the SART
 - ix. Notification to the District Attorney
 - c. The SART panel may discuss other school placement options.
 - d. Notice of action recommended by the SART will be provided in writing to the parent/guardian.
6. If the conditions of the SART contract are not met, the student may incur additional administrative action up to and including disenrollment from MPS and notification of the disenrollment sent to the student's district of residence.
7. For all communications set forth in this process, MPS will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to update MPS with any new contact information.
8. If student is absent ten (10) or more consecutive school days without valid excuse and parent/guardian cannot be reached at the number or address provided in the registration packet and does not otherwise respond to MPS' communication attempts, as set forth above, the student will be in violation of the SART contract, and the SART panel will recommend that the student be deemed to have voluntarily disenrolled and notification of the disenrollment be sent to the student's district of residence.

Removal from Charter School

If, after the above procedures have been followed, the student continues to have unexcused absences or tardies, the parent/guardian may receive notice that the student is in violation of the SART contract. The student will then be required to appear before the SART panel again to discuss the unexcused absences or tardies. After such meeting, or after reasonable attempts by the SART panel to schedule the meeting if the parent/guardian is nonresponsive, the SART panel may recommend that the student be deemed to have voluntarily disenrolled from MPS. The parent will receive written notice of the SART panel's recommendation.

The SART panel shall then forward its recommendation to the MPS CEO or designee for review of the matter and final decision. If the MPS CEO or designee makes the decision to disenroll, notice will be sent to the student's district of residence within thirty (30) days. The MPS CEO or designee decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent the SART panel from making a similar recommendation in the future.

Referral to Appropriate Agencies or County District Attorney:

It is MPS' intent to identify and remove all barriers to the student's success, and MPS will explore every possible option to address student attendance issues with the family. For any unexcused absence, MPS may refer the family to appropriate school-based and/or social service agencies.

If a child's attendance does not improve after a SART contract has been developed according to the procedures above, or if the parents fail to attend a required SART meeting, MPS shall notify the District's Attorney's office, which then may refer the matter for prosecution through the court system. Students 12 years of age and older may be referred to the juvenile court for adjudication.

These policies will be enforced fairly, uniformly, and consistently without regard to the characteristics listed in Education Code Section 220 (actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics).

Reports

The MPS Principal, or designee, shall gather and report to the Board the number of absences both excused and unexcused as well as students who are truant, and the steps taken to remedy the problem.