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## STUDENT PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

The following guidelines are in accordance with *Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2023):

### Proactive & Preventative Attendance Practices

The St. James-Assiniboia School Division seeks a proactive approach that supports students by identifying and solving barriers to student presence and engagement early to prevent further absences and to limit and reduce the risk of chronic absenteeism. Building good habits in the early years has a positive impact on a child's education throughout their later school years.

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

- a. School notifying parent(s) via voicemail/automated system; and if absence persists, a personal contact from the teacher or designate to better understand the nature of the absences and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.
- b. Preventative practices to enhance student engagement, well-being, and success shall include creating a safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive school environment for students. Student engagement with school is strengthened when students experience school as a safe and welcoming environment that recognizes and supports their cultural needs. Refer to the "The Circle of Courage" model, referenced in *Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, 2023), as a strong example of a preventative practice.

### Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing and Reporting

Daily attendance recording procedures, as prescribed shall include common metrics on student presence and absence, including whether absences are excused or unexcused.

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Teachers and staff members are required to maintain daily attendance records for each student in their classes. Attendance records must be taken at the beginning of each class period and recorded accurately in the student information system.

The school shall notify the legal guardian of student absences.

The school shall notify the legal guardian regarding the procedures for addressing unexcused absences.

The school division shall ensure that all attendance data is kept confidential and secure, and only accessible to authorized personnel. All attendance data and related documents must be reported regularly to the appropriate authorities, as required by law or regulation.

At intervals prescribed by Senior Administration, the school shall regularly review and analyze attendance data to identify trends and areas for improvement. This may include:

- identifying patterns of absences
- potential interventions to support students who are chronically absent
- communicating with students and their families to determine the reasons for absences
- conducting home visits or other outreach to students who are chronically absent or at risk of dropping out.

In accordance with the division's attendance protocol, a non-punitive outreach approach is used to identify students who are likely to experience or are experiencing chronic or severe chronic absenteeism by monitoring, disaggregating, and responding to student presence and absence data trends at all levels.

Student chronic and severe absence shall be an agenda item at Senior Administration biannual meetings and standing student services team meetings. Meetings must address the following:

- a) Reviewing attendance data at the school, grade, and individual student level.
- b) Identifying trends in attendance and potential areas for improvement.
- c) Discussing strategies and interventions to promote regular attendance for all students.
- d) Developing and implementing individualized plans (AIP) to support regular attendance for all students.

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**Response to Absenteeism**

The responses to absences must be fair, predictable and non-punitive for all students.

Responses must consider age, grade, and development of the student and that suspension, expulsion, and withdrawals due to absenteeism is prohibited.

The Student Support Team is responsible for the development and implementation of student-specific plans to address absenteeism which includes addressing student-specific barriers affecting attendance, causal factors, implement the attached Attendance Protocol which includes monitoring, roles and responsibilities and timelines. This includes a communication plan with parents, teachers and outside agencies, where appropriate.

**Chronic and Severe Absenteeism**

Chronically absent students must have an attendance improvement plan (AIP) 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/guardian. Student-specific planning processes are detailed in Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programing*.

Chronic Absenteeism: Unexcused absence of 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: Unexcused absence of 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.

If the school has been unsuccessful in addressing severe chronic absenteeism for a student, Senior Administration must notify the provincial School and Community Support Unit, as well as notify Child and Family Services if there are concerns about student safety and well-being.

**Coordinated Services**

The school must designate a case manager to respond to and work with a student and their legal guardian. Reducing barriers to student presence requires personalized assessment planning, coordination and monitoring of students. A case management approach to facilitate this process is required to coordinate

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the complexity of supports and to provide a stable point of contact to establish relationships with chronically absent students and their legal guardians.

## **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

### **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

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- 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 division**

- ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming
- work with schools, parents, and 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

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