

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Statement of Overall Objectives

Every student has a right to educational opportunities that will enable the student to develop his or her fullest potential. Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with his or her teachers and peers and is a major component of academic success. Improved school attendance and peers and is a major component of academic success. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement. Therefore, attendance policies that provide for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address them are most likely to succeed. Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents / persons in parental relation, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

## Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

St. Andrew's Country Day School will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Maintain accurate record keeping via a Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- c) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- d) Develop early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

## Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures

Based upon our school's education and community needs, values and priorities, St. Andrew's Country Day School has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

- a) **Excused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance and education, quarantine, required court appearances, incarceration, approved field trip, "Student to Work" Day, suspension (formal and informal), attendance at health clinics, approved High School visits, approved cooperative work programs, or other such reasons as may be approved by the principal.
- b) **Unexcused:** An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories (e.g., lack of required immunization without a religious or medical exemption, family vacation, babysitting, unlawful employment, expressing solidarity with a cause, illegally detained by parent, no transportation, illegal pickup by a parent, missed bus, lack of proper clothing, truant [out of school without parental consent] (oversleeping).

## Student Attendance Record Keeping / Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the code for the reason.

*Attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:*

- a) The Attendance Policy begins upon the first day of formal Enrollment in each class begins when a teacher is notified of placement. Attendance is marked beginning the first day of school.
- b) Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.
- c) If a student is absent for more than 50% of a given class period, it will be considered an absence.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202 (1-a).

### **Student Attendance / Course Credit**

The school believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For Purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period a certain percentage of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and / or classroom teacher.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

As a requisite part of course attendance and in order to gain admission to final examinations, students must not fall below the 85% attendance level for their course(s).

For courses meeting ½ year, the same policy will apply and a calculation of the absences will be prorated accordingly.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

In order to ensure that parents / persons in parental relation and students are informed of the school's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed prior to the denial of course credit to the student for insufficient attendance, the following guidelines shall be followed:

### ***Student Notification***

1. The District will provide a copy of the Attendance Policy to each student in Pre-K through Grade 8 through the initial school calendar.
2. The policy will also be included in the Student Handbook.
3. Classroom / subject area teachers are required to complete a form letter to be mailed to parents / guardians after a student has three (3) absences from class within a marking period.

### ***Parent(s) / Person(s) in Parental Relation Notice***

1. The Principal will present the policy at an “Open House / Home School Association” event held during the first weeks of each school year. The presentation will stress the importance of student attendance, as well as parental responsibility for their children’s attendance.
2. Students’, parent(s) or person(s) in parental relation will be afforded several other opportunities to learn of the attendance policy, such as at parent-teacher conferences, open houses, new-student orientations, telephone conferences, or home visits.
3. School newsletters and website will include periodic reminders of the Attendance Policy.

### ***Faculty / Staff Notice***

1. The Principal will provide copies of the Attendance Policy to all Teachers at the beginning of each school year.
2. All faculty and staff will meet with the Principal at the beginning of each school year to review the Attendance Policy and to clarify individual roles in its implementation.
3. The school will develop and provide letters for parent notification of student absences.
4. The Attendance Policy will be posted in ALL CLASSROOMS.

### **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy, or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

The school staff will be responsible for notifying the parent/person in parental relation for a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. If the parent/person in

parental relation cannot be reached, the staff member will provide such notification by mail. Further, the School’s Attendance Policy will be mailed to the parent /person in parental relation to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with policy.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student’s attendance. The student may also be requested to attend this conference in order to address appropriate intervention strategies that best meet the needs of the student.

### **Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, St. Andrew’s Country Day School will develop and implement grade-appropriate / building-level strategies and programs: for example, classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards).

### **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions. Consequences may include, but are not limited to, detention and denial of participation in interscholastic sports and extracurricular activities. Parents / person in parental relation will be notified by designated school personnel at periodic intervals to discuss their child’s absences, tardiness or early departures and the importance of class attendance and appropriate interventions.

### **Intervention Strategy Process**

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated school personnel will pursue the following:

- a) Identify root causes of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departure);
- b) Contact the staff most closely associated with the root causes. In specific cases where the pattern involves an individual student, the student and parent / person in parental relation will be contacted;
- c) Discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific pattern(s);
- d) Implement changes, as approved by appropriate administration;
- e) Utilize appropriate community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures;
- f) Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention.

### **Appeal Process (Examination)**

Parents may exercise the right to the appeal process.

Under the Attendance Policy, parent(s) / person(s) in parental relation may request a building level review of the decision to exclude a student from taking a final examination. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) / person(s) in parental relation to request an appeal by completing the Appeal Process Form.

### ***Parents may appeal to the principal to:***

1. Challenge the number of absences on record.
2. Determine if any procedures listed in the policy have not been followed.
3. Ensure that no violation of state or federal law has occurred.

### ***Appeal Process:***

1. Parents / persons in parental relation may request an Attendance Appeal at the building level. Appeals will be heard during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of each month, November through May. All Appeals received prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> week will be heard that month.
2. The principal or designee will notify the parent(s) / person(s) in parental relation in writing of the date and time of the Appeal, and will meet with the student and parent(s) / person(s) in parental relation at the designated time.
3. A decision by the principal / designee will be made within five days of the Appeal hearing.
4. Parent(s) / person(s) in parental relation will be notified of the principal / designee's ruling by mail. The decision of the Principal will be final.

### **Building Review of Attendance Records**

The Building Principal will work in conjunction with the building attendance clerk and other designated staff in reviewing attendance record at the end of each term. This review is conducted to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

