STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

The Board of Education believes that regular and punctual attendance contributes strongly to student academic success and builds habits that are required in the world of work. Frequent tardiness or absence disrupts the continuity of learning; often the work missed cannot be made up adequately. No other single factor is as closely linked with failing grades and dropping out of school. Students with good attendance generally achieve higher grades, enjoy school more and are more employable after leaving school.

State law makes parents/guardians responsible for seeing that their children attend school regularly or receive equivalent instruction. The Board is required to designate an attendance officer to enforce the provisions of the compulsory attendance law, counsel students and parents/guardians, investigate the causes of nonattendance and report findings to the Board. State law also allows the Board by resolution to authorize one or more school employees to represent the school district in judicial proceedings to enforce compulsory attendance. This report will be made during the fourth quarter of the year.

Each school in the district shall develop a policy/procedure regarding absences and tardies in accordance with the provisions of this policy, the accompanying regulation, and procedures adopted by the Board on December 6, 2000, and communicate them to its school community. The school attendance policy will be determined by students, staff and parents/guardians of the school under the leadership of the principal. It must include procedures for recording and monitoring attendance and notifying parents/guardians of nonattendance, limits on number of excused absences and tardies, incentives for regular attendance, and consequences for unexcused absences or excessive excused absences.

The school attendance policy should be designed as a teaching tool. Students should develop positive attitudes about attendance and punctuality; learn that getting to school regularly and on time builds important skills for later life, accept responsibility for their actions, and understand the negative consequences of poor attendance. Each school policy shall clarify the intent, systems and procedures for all concerned; be perceived as fair and just; be as efficient as possible while accomplishing its purposes; and include options for keeping students in school, such as behavior modification strategies for repeat or frequent offenders. Excessive absences are normally a symptom of other problems and attempts should be made to deal with whatever the other problem might be.

Special Considerations

Because of the close ties between elementary children and their families, elementary schools should respond to unexcused absences with a family focus and the goal of finding and dealing with the underlying causes for the absences. The school should provide helpful, non-threatening assistance if needed. Elementary students and their parents/guardians need to think of the school as a friendly place and that learning is useful and desirable. As much as possible, the attendance procedure should reinforce these attitudes and not be punitive or authoritarian.

Middle school policies should attempt to be corrective with an emphasis on individual responsibility and needs. The consequences of repeated truancies or unexcused absences should be made clear. Consequences should be progressive, beginning by emphasizing the seriousness of the behavior and moving to loss of credit and referral to outside authority.