

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Secondary Students

Every student who is enrolled in school shall be in attendance for all hours school is in session. The Elkhart Community Schools expects all secondary students to comply with the law and attend school regularly.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for their student's school attendance.

All high school students who abide by the secondary students' attendance policies and other rules and regulations shall be guaranteed the opportunity to work toward and to earn credit for the courses in which they are enrolled.

A. ENROLLMENT (high school only)

1. Students presently attending an Elkhart Community Schools high school will be permitted to enroll
 - for credit in high school classes or
 - when entry is court-ordered.
2. Students 17 and under who are new to the district may enroll at any time so long as they are eligible to attend, pursuant to state law and applicable policies and regulations of Elkhart Community Schools. The opportunity to earn credit for courses will be dependent upon the date of enrollment and the ability to transfer credit for work already completed pursuant to the district's transfer of credit policy.
3. Students 18 and older who have not enrolled in Elkhart Community Schools or any other accredited educational institution within three weeks of the start of a term will be considered for alternative educational options until the start of the following term.

B. STUDENT AND PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A student must have official permission from the building principal or designee to leave the building at any time during the school day. The attendance office must verify the need to leave by a parent note or phone call. School-related activities, including field trips and athletic contests, will be handled by the sponsor and do not count as an absence.
2. A student arriving at school 5 minutes or later after the official start of the school day shall SIGN IN in the attendance office.
3. A student who comes to school and is not in attendance in an assigned class or study hall is considered to have an unexcused absence even though he or she remains in the building or on school grounds, unless such absence is previously excused by the principal or designee.
4. A student on released time shall leave the school premises immediately following dismissal of his or her last class. Failure to do so shall be cause for canceling released time privileges and/or suspension from school.

5. When a student must be absent from school, the parent/guardian is strongly encouraged to call the attendance office by noon on the day of the absence. Parents/guardians who do not have access to a telephone must write a note explaining the reason for the absence and the date(s) of absence. If a parent/guardian has not telephoned the attendance office by the end of the school day, a computerized call will be made notifying the parent/guardian of the absence and requesting that the parent call the attendance office. Legitimate excused absences that are not verified by a telephone call from the parent/guardian within two school days or by a note written by the parent/guardian within two days of the student's return to school will be considered as truancies. Students who are absent from school for medical appointments are required to bring a note from the doctor or dentist upon return.
- C. The Building Principal shall designate a primary point of contact in the office (e.g. Assistant Principal, Social Worker, Secretary, etc.) to be responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and regular reporting of the school district's attendance policies. The building principal shall report the name and position of the individual serving as the building point of contact for attendance annually to the Director of Student Services and the District Attendance Officer.

D. ABSENCES

1. EXCUSED ABSENCES

An excused absence is an absence which has been verified by the parent/guardian. Examples of excused absences include

- a. personal illness or injury;
- b. serious illness of a member of the immediate family;
- c. death of a member of the immediate family or relative;
- d. medical or dental appointments, which cannot be cared for other than during school hours, should be limited to one-half day when possible and require a note from the physician's or dentist's office for verification;
- e. religious observance;
- f. required military examinations; and
- g. other reasons excused by the principal.

The student will have the right to receive make-up work from his/her teacher, but the teacher has the discretion to determine the nature of the make-up work and the grades for the student.

2. NEITHER EXCUSED NOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

- a. Suspension
- b. Expulsion
- c. Exclusion pursuant to Board Policy JGF
 - 1) The County Health Officer's exclusion of a student who has a communicable disease.
 - 2) The Superintendent's exclusion of a student who is physically or mentally unfit to attend school, with the approval of the State Board.

3. PARENT REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL TO REMOVE STUDENT FOR FAMILY TRIP (JE-4(b) Administrative Regulation)

The Building Principal shall have the authority to determine whether a family trip is excused or unexcused based upon, but not limited to, the following considerations:

- a. Student's attendance
- b. Student's grades
- c. Timing of trip
- d. Length of trip
- e. Impact of absence on student's academic growth

4. ATTENDANCE EXCEPTIONS

A student who leaves school under an allowed exception will not be counted absent. Examples of exceptions include

- a. service as a page for or as an honoree of the general assembly;
- b. service on a precinct election board or for political candidates or a political party on the date of each general, county, city, or town, special or primary election;
- c. witness in judicial proceeding;
- d. duty in Indiana National Guard;
- e. duty in Indiana wing of civil air patrol;
- f. school sponsored educationally related non-classroom activity approved by the principal; and
- g. required attendance at service club meetings.

A student will have the right to receive make-up work from his/her teacher without penalty, but the teacher has the discretion to determine the nature of the make-up work and the grades for the student.

5. STUDENTS SENT HOME ILL WITH A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE OR PARASITE INFESTATION

- a. The principal or the school nurse, as the principal's designee, may send the student home. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of the nature of the illness or infestation.
- b. The student will be readmitted to school under the following conditions:
 - 1) School nurse determines the student no longer has the illness or infestation
 - 2) Certification from a physician that the student no longer has the illness or infestation or that the disease is not transmissible through normal school contact
 - 3) Certification from a Christian Science practitioner's observation that the student no longer has the illness or infestation
- c. Student absences for parasite infestation will be excused for two (2) days absence. Any subsequent absences will be unexcused.

- d. Repeated chronic infestations may be considered as absences of concern under paragraph D of this regulation.

6. TRUANCY

A student will be considered truant whenever he/she is absent from school, class, study hall, or an assigned activity and the absence is not excused or exempt. Unexplained absences will be recorded as truanancies. A student will also be considered truant if he/she leaves a class, a school sponsored activity and/or the school without the permission of school authorities. Once a student has crossed the school's threshold, verification of an absence must be made from a nurse or administrator. Prior to a student leaving the building, he/she must have parental verification of the reason for leaving school and must sign out in the attendance office. Failure to do so will result in a truancy. A pattern of ten (10) unexcused absences will result in a student being declared a habitual truant. Habitual truants, as defined in paragraph G-1, will be reported to the appropriate state agencies, including the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

7. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Any absence that is neither excused nor an attendance exception shall be considered a truancy. The term truancy applies to the following:

- a. Unexplained absence from school
- b. Unexplained absence from a class, study hall, or assigned activity
- c. Leaving a class, study hall, or assigned activity without permission from school authorities
- d. Leaving the building without parental verification of reason for leaving school or signing out in the attendance office

Once a student reenters the school building, verification of an absence must be made by a nurse or administrator.

A student will have the right to receive make-up work from his/her teacher without penalty, but the teacher has the discretion to determine the nature of the make-up work and the grades for the student.

8. TARDINESS

- a. Students without a pass signed by appropriate school personnel, who arrive to class after the starting time or leave prior to the ending time, will be considered tardy. The individual school will define when the length of the class period missed is no longer a tardy, but considered to be a period absence.
- b. Students accumulating two (2) incidences of tardiness for any course may be subject to disciplinary action.

E. ABSENCES OF CONCERN FOR STUDENTS 17 ½ YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER

“Absences of concern” include all truancies, non-verified absences, unexcused absences, and absences that are a concern to the school principal/designee.

Students who accumulate absences of concern in a 12 month period in any Elkhart County School will proceed through the following levels and may also be subjected to disciplinary consequences. All changes in levels shall be subject to prior approval by a building administrator.

LEVEL 1. FORMAL NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS

If, a student accumulates four (4) absences of concern, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be formally notified by letter. Upon receipt of this letter, the parent(s)/guardian(s) become responsible for contacting the school to discuss the attendance of his/her student. In the event there is no response from the parent(s)/guardian(s), the school will attempt to contact them by telephone or in person.

LEVEL 2. LEGAL NOTICE

If, subsequent to the completion of Level 1 notification, the student accumulates a total of seven (7) absences of concern, a legal notice will be sent by registered mail to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and copied to Juvenile Probation or the Department of Child Services (DCS).

LEVEL 3. CONTINUING ABSENCES OF CONCERN

If, subsequent to the completion of Level 2 notification, the student accumulates continuing absences of concern, an Attendance Hearing will be scheduled with the parent(s)/guardian(s), student, hearing officer, school administrator, and any other concerned individual. The hearing officer will review the concerns, identify the factors interfering with regular attendance, and develop interventions to resolve the problem. The hearing officer will submit a written summary with recommendations to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and school administrator. He/she will also notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student that continued absences will result in a referral to Juvenile Probation, Department of Child Services, or the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. Failure by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student to attend the attendance hearing will result in advancement to Level 4.

LEVEL 4. INTERVENTION/REFERRAL TO JUVENILE PROBATION/DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES/PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

If parent(s)/guardian(s) and student fail to attend the Level 3 Attendance Hearing or, if subsequent to the completion of the Level 3 Attendance Hearing, the student continues to accumulate absences of concern, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to attend a meeting with the Attendance Officer/designee who will assign mandatory interventions. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and school representative(s) will receive written notification of interventions. Failure to comply with interventions and/or to improve school attendance will result in a direct referral to Juvenile Probation, the Department of Child Services, or the Prosecutor's Office. Outcomes could include an assessment by the Department of Child

Services, a meeting with Juvenile Probation regarding the compulsory attendance laws, or interventions recommended by the Prosecutor's Office to defer prosecution.

LEVEL 5. COURT

If, subsequent to the completion of the Level 4 process, the student continues to accumulate absences of concern, the school will notify Juvenile Probation, the Department of Child Services, or the Prosecutor's Office for further action. The Prosecutor has the option of charging the student with truancy or the parent(s)/guardian(s) with educational neglect.

F. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information on attendance matters will be communicated through the use of letters to parents, newsletters, meetings, phone contacts, meetings with students, and other appropriate measures.

G. DRIVING LICENSE INELIGIBILITY

1. Under the terms of Indiana Code 20-33-2-11, a habitually truant student (more than ten (10) unexcused absences in a school year), who is between the ages of thirteen (13) and seventeen (17), may not be issued a learner's permit or a driver's license until the student is eighteen (18) years of age.
2. A learner's permit or driver's license may be invalidated if a student is a habitual truant under eighteen (18) years of age. The student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given notice of the potential for invalidation.
3. A principal may recommend revalidation for a student under the following circumstances:
 - a. Student has demonstrated a pattern of good school attendance for 90 school days
 - b. Student can demonstrate a hardship need
 - c. Student is attending a program for GED and has demonstrated good attendance

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