

I. OVERVIEW

There is a direct relationship between good attendance and student achievement. Studies have proven that students who have good attendance generally achieve higher grades, learn more, enjoy school more, and are more employable after leaving school.

In order to benefit from the instructional programs of Dugan-Tarango Middle School and Lordsburg High School, all students are expected to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Be on time for classes.
- Develop habits of punctuality, self-discipline, responsibility, and classroom behavior.

II. EARLY CHILDHOOD ATTENDANCE (PK & Half-day K)

- A. An absence from school is defined as missing more than one hour of the school day.
- B. All absences from school will be considered full-day absences.
- C. Class attendance shall be taken and maintained for each student for every instructional day.

III. ELEMENTARY ATTENDANCE (K-6)

- A. An absence from school is defined as missing more than one hour of the school day.
- B. A half-day absence from school is defined as being absent from school one hour or more, but less than three hours, on any given day.
- C. A full-day absence from school is defined as being absent from school three hours or more on any given day.
- D. Class attendance shall be taken and maintained for each student for every instructional day, for both morning and afternoon sessions.

IV. SECONDARY ATTENDANCE (7-12)

- A. An absence from a particular class is defined as missing more than ten minutes of the instructional time required for that class.
- B. A half-day absence from school is defined as being absent from 2 or more, but less than 5, class periods on a given day.
- C. A full-day absence from school is defined as being absent from 5 or more class periods on a given day.

- D. Class attendance shall be taken and maintained by class period for every instructional day for each student.**

V. GENERAL ATTENDANCE PROVISIONS

- A. Each student absence shall be classified by the school principal as either excused, unexcused, or activity. Activity absences (those for school-sponsored extra-curricular activities) are limited to fifteen times per semester in any given class (22-12-2.1.B NMSA 1978).**
- B. A signed note from a parent/guardian or a licensed physician, providing the reason for the student's absence, must be provided within two days following the date of the absence, even if consecutive absences continue to occur, in order for an absence to be considered for classification as excused. Verbal messages shall not be accepted. Further verification of the provided reason may be requested by the principal.**
- C. Absences are only excused for extenuating circumstances, which include:**
- 1. Serious illness or serious injury of the student.**
 - 2. Death of a family member.**
 - 3. Funeral of a family member.**
 - 4. Medical and dental appointments of the student.**
 - 5. Appearances and appointments of the student that are ordered by the Court.**
 - 6. Other similarly serious and unavoidable reasons directly relevant to the student, at the discretion of the principal.**

For purposes of this section, "family member" is defined as the spouse, child, parent, sister, brother, grandparent, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, aunt, uncle, first cousin, a person who has served as the guardian for the student, and others who reside in the same household with the student. This defined group also includes those so named when "step-" is applied.

- D. Any student's absence, beyond his/her first ten absences within a school year, shall only be excused if its necessity is verified in writing by a licensed physician.**
- E. Students on school-approved "home-bound" status shall not be considered absent unless the student is unavailable for home-bound direct services on a given day, in which case the student shall be considered entirely absent for that particular day.**
- F. Student absences due to suspension and/or expulsion from school are considered unexcused for the purposes of this policy.**

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

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- G. A student whose absence is an excused or activity absence may make up work missed and receive full credit. All make-up work shall be completed and turned in to the teacher within the same number of days as the length of absence. If the student is absent one day, he/she shall have one day to make it up following his/her return to class. If the student is absent two days, he/she shall have two days following his/her return. It is the responsibility of the student to find out what work was missed and get it turned in. The teacher will not be expected to seek out the student to assign make-up work.
- H. Students' receipt of credit for makeup work in the case of unexcused absences is according to the procedures of the individual school, which allows the discretion of the principal.
- I. Disciplinary consequences may be assigned for any unexcused absence. Neither out-of-school suspension nor expulsion shall be used as consequences for either unexcused absences or habitual truancy.
- J. A student residing within the district, who has missed ten consecutive days of school, may only be withdrawn, as provided in 22-8-2 NMSA 1978, if all intervention efforts called for below have failed to keep the student in the educational setting. A student withdrawn per these guidelines, if known to still reside within the district, shall be reported to the Juvenile Probation Office, Children Youth & Families Department, and the Office of the District Attorney in an effort to have the student and his/her family provided any additionally available services that may enable his/her re-enrollment in school.

Any student whose parent/guardian provides State-accepted proof of enrollment in a home school program or State-accredited private school is exempt from these reporting requirements.

VI. TRUANCY IDENTIFICATION & INTERVENTION

A. Schools will take defined action as follows for unexcused absences:

Days of Unexcused Absence	Classification	Response(s)
3	Excessive UX Absences	Letter to parent/guardian; Notify JPO; Parent contact by Principal
5	In Need of Early Intervention	Letter to parent/guardian; Notify JPO; Intervention plan developed
10	Habitually Truant	Letter to parent/guardian; Notify JPO; Placed on intensive contract
Over 10	Criminally Absent	Criminal complaint filed; Notify JPO

None of the actions identified within the "Truancy Identification & Intervention" section will be taken for students who have not yet reached the age of 5 years as of September 1 of the school year, and none of the actions will be taken for students who are legally considered as adults, whether due to reaching the age of 18 or due to emancipation by a court of legal jurisdiction.

- B. Notifications to, and contacts and meetings with, the parents/guardians shall be respectful and in a language and manner understandable to the students and to the parents/guardians.**
- C. Letters to parents/guardians shall be delivered by personal service whenever possible. Notification of the JPO shall be in writing. The principal's contact with the parent/guardian may be either verbally or in writing, and shall be documented.**
- D. An intervention plan shall be developed in a meeting set (date, time, location) within the notification letter to the parent/guardian following the fifth unexcused absence. Those expected to participate include the truancy officer, principal, parent/guardian, student, and others designated by the principal. Interventions shall be determined individually, based upon the causes of the student's unexcused absences, the actions that can be taken that might prevent further unexcused absences, possible resources to address the causes of the absences, to meet each student's unique needs. Each of these corrective action plans shall have documented follow-up action by the principal and/or his/her designee(s).**
- E. An intensive contract shall be developed in a meeting set (date, time, location) within the notification letter to the parent/guardian following the tenth unexcused absence. Those expected to participate include the truancy officer, parent, student, and others designated by the truancy officer. As a component of the intensive contract meeting, the intervention plan developed formerly may be modified to improve its likelihood of success, but it may not be wholly discarded without replacement interventions.**
- F. Upon the eleventh (and additional) unexcused absence within the school year, the JPO shall be notified within seven (7) days. The criminal complaint shall also be filed in a timely manner, and shall include the following documentation:**
- **attempts of the school to notify the parent that the student had unexcused absences;**
 - **attempts of the school to meet with the parent to discuss intervention strategies; and**
 - **intervention strategies implemented to support keeping the student in school.**

G. The Superintendent shall designate the truancy officer for each district campus (i.e., individual(s) responsible for generation and delivery of letters, notification of JPO, participation in development of the intervention plan, development of the intensive contract, the filing of criminal complaints, and collection/compilation of all documentation).

VI. DITCHING

When a student is absent from school without approval of the parent/guardian and without approval of the school, the absence is considered "ditching." Ditching is not tolerated and will be dealt with according to local and state attendance laws. Additional procedures for dealing with ditching are as indicated within each school's discipline procedures. All ditching absences are considered unexcused absences.

No student, regardless of age, may leave school without being signed out by a parent/guardian or by a designee presenting written permission from the parent/guardian. Such leaves will be treated as ditching.

VII. TARDINESS

Tardiness is defined as missing less time from class than is classified as an absence. Procedures used to determine whether a student's tardiness is excused, to assign disciplinary consequences for tardiness, etc., are to be developed annually by each school's principal and submitted to the superintendent for approval prior to implementation.

Students exhibiting chronic tardiness may be referred to law enforcement and/or other agencies for assistance, at the discretion of the principal.

VIII. VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT

The principal shall obtain from the parent/guardian of each student, upon the student's initial enrollment and again at the beginning of each school year, signed verification that the parent/guardian has received a copy of this policy and had an opportunity to have any questions about its contents clarified. Said verification shall be stored securely with the student's educational records for a period of at least three years.