

<b>School Administration</b>
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Administrative Procedure: Student Presence and Engagement			
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 25, 2005	R E F E R E N C E S	ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE CODE: 1.A.150	
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The Border Land School Division understand that students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have an opportunity to access school and community resources, feel a sense of belonging, and have greater success in achieving academic success. Children are legally required to attend school from age seven to age eighteen. Parents/guardians must take all reasonable measures to ensure their school age children attend school regularly.

School absenteeism is a serious impediment to a student's educational performance and well-being. Absenteeism can have lasting negative impacts on student achievement, graduation rates, transition to post-secondary education, employment, and social inclusion, as well as the community at large.

Attendance issues are often a first sign that a student is experiencing life challenges, and there are a multitude of contributing factors, ranging from academic, social, economic, and psychological. These include but are not limited to:

- Poor health
- Poor mental health
- Family and work responsibilities
- Transportation
- Bullying
- Homelessness
- Undiagnosed cognitive vulnerabilities
- Death of a loved one

BLSD commits to working across systems to enhance student presence and engagement. Presence and engagement begins with reciprocal and respectful relationships. Collectively we share responsibility to facilitate and promote student presence and engagement with a focus on early identification of barriers and assisting with their removal.

## DEFINITIONS

**Presence:** When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. This is an entry point to being able to engage students in the process of learning. Students may be present even if they are not physically within the classroom, depending on the student specific plan.

**Engagement:** Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in schools. Engagement is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities (OECD, 2003).

**Regular Attendance:** Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.

**Late:** When a student does not arrive on time for class.

**Absence:** Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.

- **Excused Absence** refers to any time that a student is not in class or not participating in school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, with the mutual consent of a parent/care giver and the school principal.
- **Unexcused Absence** refers to any time a student is not in class or not participating in school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, without the mutual consent of a parent/care giver and the school principal.

### Chronic Absenteeism:

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 – unexcused absences for **10% of instructional days in a reporting period**. For example, 4 full day absences in term 1, 8 full day absences in term 2 or 12 term 1 and 2 cumulative, 6 full day absences in term 3 or 18 cumulative in all three terms.
- Grade 9 to Grade 12 – Unexcused absences for **10 or more classes in a single high school course**.

### Severe Chronic Absenteeism

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 – unexcused absences for **20% of instructional days in a reporting period**. For example, 8 full day absences in term 1, 16 full day absences in term 2 or 24 full day cumulative term 1 and 2, 12 full day absences in term 3 or 36 full day absences cumulative in all three terms.
- Grade 9 to Grade 12 – **unexcused absences for 20 or more classes in a single high school course**.

## **Student-Specific Plan (SSP)**

- A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in the Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (MEECL, 2022)
- Student-specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students; it may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.
- The BLSD PowerSchool Presence and Engagement Form documents the SSP process to address chronic or severe chronic absenteeism.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Supporting children with presence and engagement is a team effort. Students, parents/caregivers, teachers and principals/designates all play vital roles.

### **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 aged students are more dependent on their parents/caregivers to help them attend school regularly.

### **Parents/Guardians**

- 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/caregiver.
- Identify potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism.
- Promote and support regular attendance.
- Communicate (verbally and in writing if needed) with student and parents/caregivers when concerns related to attendance arise.
- Document steps taken to communicate with students, parents/caregivers, 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/caregivers, 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 division.
- Invite community agencies, organization 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 Divisions:**

- Ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming.
- Work with schools, parents/care givers, and community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present.
- Senior admin monitor student attendance reports.
- 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.

#### **ENHANCING PROACTIVE AND PREVENTATIVE ATTENDANCE PRACTICES**

Schools must provide immediate, personal outreach to students/families whose absence is unexcused or a cause for concern. They will do this in the following ways:

- School will notify parent/caregiver via voicemail/automated system; and
- If absence persists, a personal contact from the teacher to the student and family to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers. (phone, in person, email, SeeSaw, Teams); and
- Once the student reaches chronic absenteeism, a designate will make another personal contact.

Preventative practices to enhance student engagement, well-being, and success can include the following:

- Creating a safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive school environment for students.
- Addressing gaps in nutrition and basic needs.
- Improving student and parent/care giver engagement with school.
- Enhance visibility of staff at transition times, both within the day and between grades and schools.

## DCOUMENTING, MONITORING, ANALYZING, AND REPORTING

Every school must:

- Record daily student attendance including whether absences are excused or unexcused.
- Monitor enrolment data including comparing enrolment data and reviewing unclaimed pupil files. An unclaimed pupil file is one that belongs to a student who a school believes should have returned to school and did not show up to register or attend. Once attempts are made to connect with a family and are not met with success, the unclaimed pupil file form can be completed.
- Discuss attendance at in-school support team meetings.
- Have an early warning system:
  - For Kindergarten to Grade 8
    - The school admin assistant will make contact daily for unexcused absences. The phone call will be made within 30 minutes of the start of the am and pm sessions of classes. If the automatic dialer is used, it is to be used with the expectation that a call back will occur from the family.
    - The classroom teacher will contact home whenever an attendance concern arises but must contact home when a student reaches 10% unexcused absences. They will document contact home via the school presence and engagement form in PowerSchool.
    - The classroom teacher will notify the principal when a student is at 10% unexcused absences in a report period (10% on instructional days). The school principal will ensure the presence and engagement form has been completed by the classroom teacher.
  - For Grade 9 – Grade 12
    - First contact will occur via the automatic dialler at 10:00 am for students who have not reported for their first period class.
    - The automatic dialer will also alert parents/guardians at the end of the school day to advise of daily class absences.
    - The classroom teacher will contact home whenever an attendance concern arises but must contact home at 10 unexcused absences. They will document contact home via the school presence and engagement form in PowerSchool.
    - The classroom teacher will notify the principal when a student is at 10 absences. The school principal will ensure the presence and engagement form has been completed by the classroom teacher.
  - The Principal will:
    - Analyse school enrolment and attendance data.
    - Designate a case manager to investigate and identify the causes of student absences and determine the appropriate supports that are required to promote regular attendance.

## RESPONSE TO CHRONIC AND SEVERE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

BLSD will not use suspensions, expulsions, and withdrawal as a response to student presence and engagement. Rather, the Student Specific Plan (BLSD PowerSchool Presence and Engagement Form), will be created to document barriers to attendance as well as support from the school, division, and/or outside agencies.

When the school is aware of external agency involvement with a student who is chronically absent, this agency **MUST** be included as part of the student specific planning process.

School divisions must provide staff with direction on informed consent for information sharing from parents/caregivers in compliance with the Manitoba Pupil File Guidelines, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Personal Health Information Act, and the Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act.

When a student experiences **chronic absenteeism**:

- The Principal will:
  - Review the BLSD PowerSchool Presence and Engagement Form to determine the next steps in the planning process.
  - Notify the school team of the students who are chronically absent.
- If necessary:
  - Designate a case manager (Classroom Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Resource Teacher, Administrator) to update the SSP for students who are experiencing chronic absenteeism.
  - Determine who will contact home to plan a meeting to elicit parental engagement and update the SSP.
- The Case Manager will:
  - Lead and document the SSP process.
  - Monitor student presence and engagement.
  - Follow up with other parties as needed.

When absenteeism persists and students reach the level of **severe chronic absenteeism** (20 or more unexcused classes in single high school course or 20% or more of instructional days in K-8):

- The Case Manager will invite the parent/guardians to attend a meeting to review, evaluate and update the SSP.
- The Case Manager will create/assess in school interventions to determine possible next steps. This may involve other members of the school support team.
- The Principal will notify the school team of the students who are severely chronically absent.

If **severe chronic absenteeism** persists (interventions are not resulting in a change in attendance patterns):

- The Case Manager will contact CFS if there are concerns for the student's safety and well being.
- The school Principal will provide the following to the divisional Truancy Officer and the Student Services Manager when the severely chronic absenteeism reaches 30%:
  - the school presence and engagement contact form
  - the SSP
- The divisional Truancy Officer will:
  - Compile the data on severe chronic absenteeism as submitted by BLSD schools.
  - Contact MEECL School and Community Support Unit via formal written notification.

## **SYSTEMIC CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

Divisional presence and engagement committees may be considered as a mechanism to ensure that student absenteeism is monitored, and that responsive planning is in place. Committees at the school level are also recommended where feasible.

- The focus should always be on inviting students back and finding the necessary resources to support attendance.
- Conflict in the school environment may be a barrier to student presence. Restorative practices, such as restitution, can reduce conflict, bullying, and absenteeism and strengthen relationships. Restorative practices provide opportunities to make amends and repair relationships, and they reduce the likelihood of future harm while holding individuals accountable. These approaches allow students to understand the impact of negative behaviour on others and to develop empathy.