

## **BARNSTEAD SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **Attendance, Absenteeism and Truancy**

#### **Absences**

The Board requires that school aged children enrolled in Barnstead attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and Board policies. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in Barnstead during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of conditions or reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.

The Board considers the following to be excused absences:

1. Illness
2. Recovery from an accident
3. Required court attendance
4. Medical and dental appointments
5. Death in the immediate family
6. Observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
7. Such other good cause as may be acceptable to the Principal or permitted by law

Any absence that has not been excused for any reasons will be considered an unexcused absence.

In the event of an illness, parents must call the school and inform the District of the student's illness and absence. For other absences, parents must provide written notice or a written excuse that states one of these reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may require parents to provide additional documentation in support of their written notice, including but not limited to doctor's notes, court documents, obituaries, or other documents supporting the claimed reason for non-attendance.

If parents wish for their child to be absent for a reason not listed above, the parent must provide a written explanation of the reason for such absence, including why the student will be absent and for how long the student will be absent. The Principal will make determination as to whether the stated reason for the student's absence constitutes good cause. If the Principal determines that good cause does not exist, the parents may request a conference with the Principal to again explain the reasons for non-attendance. The Principal may then reconsider his initial determination. However, at this juncture, the Principal's decision shall be final.

#### **Family Vacations/Educational Opportunities**

Generally, absences other than for illness during the school year are discouraged. The school principal or his/her designee may, however, grant special approval of absence for family vacations, provided written approval is given in advance. Parents are asked to write a note to their child's teacher at least two weeks before the trip. This advance planning will allow the teacher enough time to work with parents and the student regarding homework completion.

## **Excessive Absence**

If a student is absent from school for more than **ten (10) half-days** it will be the responsibility of the Guidance Counselors to contact the parent/guardian in writing regarding the detrimental effects of school absence on learning. At **ten (10) absences**, a phone call followed by a second letter will be sent home and a meeting will be scheduled with a Guidance Counselor to discuss strategies to improve the situation. At **thirty (30) half-day** absences, a phone call followed by a third letter will be sent home to schedule a meeting with a Guidance Counselor and the Assistant Principal to discuss the excessive absenteeism and put in place a plan to curtail the absences from continuing.

At **forty (40) half-day** absences, a phone call followed by a fourth letter will be sent home and a meeting scheduled with the Principal and Barnstead's Truancy Officer to put in place a plan to curtail the absences from continuing. The school may also engage the court system and/or DCYF to help resolve the problem (House Bill 154- Relating to Student Truancy can be located at:<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2010/HB0154.html>).

At **fifty (50) half-day** absences, a phone call followed by a fifth letter will be sent home and a meeting will be scheduled with the Superintendent of Schools to discuss the circumstances for the extended absences.

The Superintendent may present to the school board the circumstances that caused the extended absences. The school board may elect to meet with the parents/guardians to discuss whether credit for the academic year will be granted. If the parents/guardians wish to have the requirement to meet with the Board waived, they must submit a letter to the superintendent and the principal setting forth the specific information they wish to have the board consider in determining whether credit for the academic year will be granted; this letter must be sent to the Superintendent and the Principal within **five (5) days** of receipt of notification of the **fiftieth (50) half-day** absence.

## **Truancy**

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above will be considered an unexcused absence.

Ten half-days of unexcused absence during the school year constitutes habitual truancy.

A half-day absence is defined as missing up to half of the total minutes in a school day. Missing more than half the total minutes in a school day is two half-day absences.

The Principal or Truant Officer is hereby designated as the District employee responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

## **Intervention Process to Address Truancy**

The Principal shall ensure that the administrative guidelines on attendance properly address the matter of truancy by including a process that identifies students who are habitually truant, as defined above.

When the Principal identifies a student who is habitually truant or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, he/she shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention shall include processes including, but not limited to:

1. Investigates the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
2. Considers, when appropriate, modifications of his/her educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;
3. Involves the parents in the development of a plan designed to reduce the truancy;

4. Seeks alternative disciplinary measures, but still retains the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline;
5. *Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the child's attendance.*

## **Consequences**

Students with excessive unexcused absences, as determined by the Principal, may be prohibited from any extracurricular activities.

The District reserves the right to pursue legal action with parents who fail to meet their legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school on a daily basis.

## **Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention**

When a student reaches habitual truancy status or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for a meeting between parents and the Principal to discuss the student's truancy to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

## **Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction**

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the recommendations listed below. However, these guidelines shall be advisory only. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing truancy.

1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parents.
2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, referral procedures
3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

Prior to adopting this policy, the Board will place the item on the agenda of a public school board meeting and will allow two weeks for public input as to the policy's provisions. Any public input shall be advisory only and final adoption as to the policy's provisions will remain solely with the Board.

Additionally, the Superintendent shall also ensure that this policy is included in or referenced in the student handbook and is mailed to parents annually at the beginning of the school year.

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