

OYSTER RIVER COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD	Policy Code: JH
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JH- ATTENDANCE, ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

The Board requires that school-aged children enrolled in the District 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 standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the District 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.

Definition of Excused Absence:

A person's absence from school is excused when the absence is for one of the following reasons, as documented by parent notification:

- A. Personal illness. Absences beyond 3 consecutive days at the middle and high school level, or 5 consecutive days at the elementary level, require a note from a licensed medical professional;
- B. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
- C. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
- D. A family emergency;
- E. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose which has been approved; or
- F. Scheduled Court appearance.

Any absence that has not been excused for any of these reasons will be considered an unexcused absence. A student or parent may appeal to the principal/designee for reconsideration of absences otherwise not excused.

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 a determination as to whether the stated reason for the student's absence constitutes good cause and will notify the parents via telephone and writing of his/her decision. 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. At this juncture, the Principal's decision shall be final. However, parents may appeal this decision in writing to the Superintendent within 5 days. This decision can be appealed to the school board.

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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

Truancy Procedure

Definition

1. 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.
 2. Ten half-days of unexcused absence during a school year constitute habitual truancy.
 3. A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more than two hours of instructional time and less than three and one-half hours of instructional time.
 4. Any absence of more than three and one-half hours of instructional time shall be considered a full-day absence.
- A. If the principal and the attendance coordinator determine that the student is truant (one unexcused absence), the principal/designee shall contact the parent and follow any school disciplinary policies.

When a student is truant for 6 half-days, the principal/designee shall first try to correct the problem informally. Informal attempts to correct the problem may include interventions such as:

1. Frequent communication between the teacher and the family;
2. Changes in the learning environment;
3. Mentoring;
4. Student counseling;
5. Tutoring, including peer tutoring;
6. Placement into different classes;
7. Evaluation for alternative education programs;
8. Attendance contracts;

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9. Referral to other agencies for family services; and
 10. Other interventions including but not limited to referral to the truant officer, school attendance coordinator, student assistance team, or dropout prevention committee.
- B. If the principal/designee is unable to correct the student's habitual truancy (defined as 10 half-days of unexcused absences per HB 154), the principal/designee shall inform the superintendent and the truant officer and shall serve or cause to be served upon the parent in-hand or by registered mail a written notice that the student's attendance at school is required by law. The notice shall:
1. State that the student is required to attend school pursuant to HB 154;
 2. Explain the parent's right to inspect the student's attendance records, attendance coordinator's reports, and principal's reports;
 3. Explain that the failure to send the student to school and maintain the student in regular attendance is a civil violation in accordance with ***RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil*** and explain the possible penalties; ***RSA 193:7 Penalty***
 4. State that the Superintendent/designee or truant officer may notify the Department of Health and Human Services; and
 5. Outline the plan developed to address the student's habitual truancy and the steps that have been taken to implement that plan.
- C. After 15 cumulative days of absence during a given school year, a parent meeting will be required. Failure of the student or the student's parents to appear at scheduled meetings does not preclude school administrators from implementing a plan to address a student's absence.

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 and reducing 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, and 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.