

FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

COMPREHENSIVE

ATTENDANCE

POLICY

**Adopted by the Board of Education on
June 21, 2006**

COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

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FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Board of Education of the Fort Plain Central School District recognizes that student attendance in school is an important component of student success. Student interaction with teachers and other students in class helps to enhance the academic learning experience and provides a basis by which students can demonstrate mastery of subject matter.

In this regard and pursuant to Section 104.1 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Education adopts this Comprehensive Attendance Policy, containing the following components:

1. overall objectives of the policy
2. specific strategies to accomplish these objectives
3. excused vs. unexcused student absences and tardiness
4. coding system identifying reasons for absence or tardiness
5. student attendance and course credit
6. incentives and disciplinary sanctions
7. notice to parents or persons in parental relation
8. intervention strategies to identify patterns of student absence or tardiness
9. parties responsible for student attendance in each school; and
10. annual review of policy by the board.

All staff will be provided with a copy of the Comprehensive Attendance Policy and any amendment to such policy within five (5) school days following initial adoption or amendment of the policy. New staff members shall receive a copy of the Comprehensive Attendance Policy upon commencement of employment with the District.

The Board of Education shall promote community awareness of this District Comprehensive Attendance Policy by providing a plain language summary of the policy to the parents/guardians of students at the beginning of each school year or upon each student's entrance into the district, and taking such other steps deemed necessary to promote the understanding of such policy by students and their parents/guardians. Copies of the complete Comprehensive Attendance Policy shall be available in the District central office and in each school building and will be provided to any member of the community upon request.

1. Overall Objectives of the Policy

The major objectives of the Comprehensive Attendance Policy in the Fort Plain Central School District are to:

- a. ensure sufficient pupil attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities to permit such pupils to succeed at meeting the State learning standards;

- b. to establish a healthy learning environment which teaches a strong work ethic through regular attendance;
- c. ensure the maintenance of an adequate record verifying the attendance of all children at instruction in accordance with Education Law;
- d. establish a practical mechanism for each school in the District to account to the parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school for the whereabouts of such children throughout each school day.

2. Specific Strategies to Accomplish These Objectives

The Board of Education charges the Superintendent or designee to develop a system of pupil attendance record keeping in each school in a register of attendance that shall provide an accurate record of each pupil's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure. The register of attendance shall set forth the following for each pupil: name, date of birth, full names of parents/guardians, address where the pupil resides, phone numbers where the parents/guardians may be contacted, date of the pupil's enrollment, and a record of the pupil's attendance on each day of scheduled instruction.

The teacher of the class in which the pupil is enrolled shall make all entries in the register of attendance. The entries in the register of attendance shall be verified by the oath or affirmation of the individual making the entries in the register of attendance. The building principals shall have the responsibility of supervising the keeping of the register of attendance. The building principal shall also be charged with reviewing pupil attendance records periodically for the purpose of initiating appropriate action pursuant to Section 9 of this policy to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness and early departure.

Beginning in the 2002-2003 school year, attendance in each school building shall be recorded as follows:

- a. in grades Kindergarten through Grade 4, after the taking of attendance once per school day; and
- b. in Grades 5 through 12, after the taking of attendance in each period of scheduled instruction.

Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in Section 3 of this policy. In the event that a pupil at any instructional level arrives late for or departs early from scheduled instruction, such tardiness or early departure shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in Section 3 of this policy.

3. Excused vs. Unexcused Absences and Tardiness

The following reasons for pupil absences, tardiness and early departure shall be considered by the Board of Education to be excused:

- a. Illness
- b. Death in the immediate family
- c. Religious observance
- d. Medical appointments
- e. Quarantine
- f. Required court appearances
- g. Participation in a school-sponsored activity
- h. Pre-approved individual education trip

Any other pupil absence, tardiness or early departure is considered by the Board of Education to be unexcused. Each absence, tardiness and early departure will be accounted for by the teacher in the register of attendance and shall be entered as excused or unexcused.

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to notify the office by telephone on the morning of the absence or tardiness or at the time of early departure as to the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure. As a follow-up to any oral notification, parents /guardians must provide a written excuse within five (5) school days containing the date of the absence, tardiness or early departure and reason for such.

4. Coding System Identifying Reasons for Absence or Tardiness

The Board of Education will charge the Superintendent or designee to design a coding system that will be used by all teachers in recording pupil absences, tardiness or early departure in their registers of attendance.

For any absence, tardiness or early departure that is excused, the coding system will identify the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be assumed to be unexcused until the teacher receives confirmation that such absence, tardiness or early departure is in fact excused with appropriate reason.

Along with coding for whether an absence, tardiness or early departure is excused or unexcused and, if excused, the reason for such, the teacher will record the time of entry of a student due to tardiness and the time of exit of a student due to early departure.

All teachers in the District shall consistently use the Attendance Codes (please see Appendix).

5. Student Attendance Procedure

The Board of Education recognizes that regular attendance in classes is essential to the total learning process. Although some class absence may be unavoidable, each student is expected to make every effort to attend each assigned class. The underlying rationale for an attendance policy that denies course credit for non-attendance is based on recognition of the vital role classroom attendance and participation plays in academic achievement.

A. Attendance Policy for Students in Grades 5-12

Any student absent from a class more than 30 days for a forty week course and 15 days for a twenty week course for any reason, including legal and illegal absences, will be denied the opportunity to take examinations for that course, as determined by the Attendance Review Committee.

Implementation of this attendance policy will be as follows:

- a. The attendance aide will provide the building principal and school counselor with weekly updates of students who have accumulated 5, 10, 15, 20 or 30 absences.
- b. After the 10th absence from school in a forty-week course or 5th absence from school in a twenty-week course, the building principal will send a letter home advising the parent/guardian of the situation, and of the need to make up missed work. The building principal's office will attempt to verify that the letter was received by the parent/guardian.
- c. After the 20th absence in a forty-week course or 10th absence in a twenty-week course, the building principal will send a letter home notifying the parent/guardian of the situation. The building principal will schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian, student and the school counselor. The discussion will include the poor attendance pattern with the student and indicate the possible loss of opportunity to take examinations in that course should absence continue. The building principal's office will attempt to verify that the letter was received by the parent/guardian.
- d. After the 30th absence in a forty-week course and 15th absence in a twenty-week course, the building principal will ask the student's teacher to submit a **"Student Attendance Report"** form, which lists the specific dates of absences from each class (See Appendix B). Parents will be notified by registered mail. The Attendance Review Committee will convene within ten (10) school days from the date the letter was sent to review the student's complete attendance record. The parent/guardian and student will be invited to the meeting.

- e. If the Attendance Review Committee decides to deny credit, the parent/guardian will be contacted directly by the building principal, followed by written documentation.
- f. The Attendance Review Committee, in conjunction with the student's teachers, may offer the student the opportunity to enter into an "**Attendance Improvement Contract.**" (See Function of the Committee below).
- g. After the Attendance Review Committee has made a determination, the student or parent/guardian can appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Schools, in writing.

A student will be regarded as being absent from class under this section of the policy if he/she misses more than fifteen (15) minutes of class due to tardiness or early departure.

In-school suspension, during which the student is doing work related to his/her particular classes, and out-of-school suspension, when the student takes advantage of alternate educational services provided by the District, will not count as absences from class under this section of the policy.

B. Attendance Policy for Students Taking Courses for College Credit while in FPCS

Any student taking a college credit-bearing class in Fort Plain will be subject to the following criteria for attendance. This policy is for **college credit**. High school credit is subject to the same provisions as all other courses in the school district.

- a. In a full year course, the student is allowed twenty (20) absences, for any reason. In a half-year course, the student is allowed ten (10).
- b. The parent/guardian will be informed of this policy in writing by the teachers of the college course at the beginning of the school year.
- c. After the 10th and 15th absence in a full year course, and the 3rd and 7th absence in a half-year course, the teacher will inform the attendance aide and the building principal of the total number of absences for that student, and a letter will be sent home to the parent/guardian. The building principal will request a conference with the student and parent/guardian after the fifteenth (15th) absence for a full year course or the seventh (7th) absence for a half-year course.
- d. Upon reaching the 21st absence for a full year course, or the 11th absence for a half-year course, college credit may be denied for the course, at the teacher's discretion.

C. Attendance Policy for Students in Grades K-4

The implementation of the attendance policy will be as follows:

- a. The attendance aide will provide the building principal and the school counselor with weekly updates of students who have accumulated 5, 10, 15, 20 or 30 absences.
- b. After the 10th absence from school, the building principal will send a letter home to advise the parent/guardian of the situation, with a copy forwarded to the teacher.
- c. After the 20th absence from school, the building principal will telephone the parent/guardian and meet with the student, if appropriate, to discuss the record of absences. A letter will be sent to follow-up on the conversation, copy of which will be sent to the teachers.
- d. After the 30th absence from school, the building principal will request a meeting with the parent/guardian and the student, if appropriate, to discuss this issue. The classroom teacher will be invited to attend this meeting. A letter will be sent to summarize and reinforce the concerns.
- e. A student, who continues to be absent from school, may at this time be referred to the court system.
- f. The issue of attendance will be weighed in the determination of grade level placement for the following school year.
- g. This attendance policy is not intended to encourage students to come to school when they are sick. Parents/guardians are asked to use their judgment in determining attendance at the time of their child's illness.

6. Incentives and Disciplinary Sanctions

The Board of Education recognizes that pupil attendance may be positively affected by the use of incentives to encourage pupil attendance and disciplinary sanctions to discourage unexcused pupil absences, tardiness and early departures from school.

In this regard, each school shall make available to pupils the following incentives to promote pupil attendance:

- Free homework pass
- Lunch day with building principal, teacher or superintendent
- Free ice cream, pizza, etc.
- Certificate by various businesses
- Movie day for perfect attendance
- PTA recognition day for perfect attendance

- Incentives may be subject to change and/or availability

Where it is determined by the school that disciplinary sanctions are necessary to discourage a specific instance of an unexcused pupil absence, tardiness or early departure or a pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures by a pupil, the following sanctions shall be available for use by the school:

- Parent conference
- Detention program
- According to athletic code
- In-school suspension program
- Program alternative to school suspension (PASS)
- Additional sanctions as outlined in Section 9B, Function of Committee

7. Notice to Parents/Guardians

As noted in Section 3 of this policy, any pupil absence, tardiness or early departure other than those specified in the policy is considered by the Board of Education to be unexcused. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to excuse such absence, tardiness or early departure by notifying the office by telephone on the morning of the absence or tardiness or at the time of early departure as to the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure.

As a follow-up to any oral notification, parents/guardians will provide a written excuse within five (5) school days, which will include the following: date of the absence, tardiness, or early departure and reason for such. The Board of Education will charge the Superintendent or designee with developing a form to be provided to pupils upon their return to school or return to class that will allow parents/guardians to indicate the date(s) of the absence, tardiness or early departure, the reason for such absence, tardiness or early departure, and the signature of the parent/guardian.

The school may accept the form completed by the parent/guardian or a handwritten note from the parent/guardian containing information about the pupil absence, tardiness or early departure similar to that found on the District form.

If proper written excuse for the pupil absence, tardiness or early departure is not received by the school from the parent/guardian after three (3) school days, a telephone call will be made from the school to the parent/guardian notifying him/her of the need for proper excuse of their pupil's absence, tardiness or early departure. The pupil will also be given an absence form to take home to be completed by parent/guardian.

8. Intervention Strategies to Identify Patterns of Student Absence or Tardiness

The Board of Education understands that in order to increase overall District attendance and pupil attendance in each school building, it is important to develop a process by which teachers and other school employees can readily identify patterns of unexcused pupil absence, tardiness or early departure and can employ specific intervention strategies in an attempt to change such patterns.

The school District will establish an Attendance Review Committee, which will be charged with monitoring overall pupil attendance and determining and addressing specific patterns of unexcused pupil absence, tardiness or early departure.

The Committee will meet monthly and will identify specific pupils with patterns of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departure and the intervention strategies to be employed by teachers and other school staff to address these patterns. Minutes of each meeting of this committee shall be kept by the building principal or designee and shall be sent to the Superintendent for his/her information and review, and such information shall be summarized and provided to the Board as part of the Superintendent's written quarterly report on attendance.

9. Parties Responsible for Student Attendance in Each School

The building principal shall be charged by the Board of Education to be the person responsible for reviewing pupil attendance records and initiating appropriate actions at the building level to address unexcused pupil absence, tardiness and early departure consistent with the comprehensive attendance policy of the District.

A. Make-up of the Committee

The Attendance Review Committee is composed of the building principal, school counselor, school nurse, student's teachers and three (3) teachers (one representative for each level, i.e., K-4, 5-8, 9-12), selected by the Teachers' Association. It will establish a regular meeting schedule so that absences and course credit issues can be dealt with in a timely fashion.

B. Function of the Committee

The purpose of the Attendance Review Committee shall be to chart a course of action that will lead to improved attendance on an individual basis. This action may be any or all, but not limited to, the following:

- Recommend elimination of the right to take examinations
- Recommend guidance counseling

- Recommend administrative intervention via letter, telephone call, etc.
- Recommend to parents outside services available
- Recommend filing of P.I.N.S. petition
- Recommend involvement of local police agency
- Invite student to meet with Committee
- Invite parents to meet with Committee
- Use any other options available
- Implement Attendance Improvement Contract

When the student reaches 15 absences in a half-year course or 30 absences in a full year course, the Committee will invite the parent/guardian to an attendance review meeting. The student will be offered the opportunity to complete an **“Attendance Improvement Contract.”** This contract will reduce the total absence of the student by two (2) days. To fulfill the contract, the student must meet with the teacher and complete course work that is **equivalent to two (2) class periods.** The teacher will be notified in writing of the contract. When the contract between the teacher and student is completed the building principal will be notified. The opportunity to enter into an **“Attendance Improvement Contract”** will be offered only **one time per course.**

10. Annual Review of Policy by the Board of Education

The Board of Education shall annually review overall District pupil attendance and the pupil attendance records for each school building. Should such records demonstrate a decline in pupil attendance, the Board shall have the opportunity to amend the comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the plan deemed necessary to improve pupil attendance. The Board shall provide any such amendment to the Comprehensive Attendance Policy in writing to each staff member on the opening day Superintendent’s meeting or within five (5) school days after adoption of the amendment.

11. Additional Information

- Students ill for an extended period of time shall receive home tutoring upon a request by the parent/guardian along with a doctor’s notification of duration of illness and need for the homebound situation.
- Teachers are responsible for reporting individual class absences to the building principal in accordance with the aforementioned format (i.e., after 5, 10, 15, 20 days, etc.; 5, 10, etc., in half-year courses)
- After review of the facts by the Attendance Committee, they will make a determination. The determination may be:

- No cause for action;
- Disciplinary action from reprimand to dropping the student from the class (if student is above the age of compulsory attendance).
- Offer opportunity for an “Attendance Improvement Contract” between student, parents and class teacher to gain two days of attendance credit by completion of course work agreed upon by instructor and additional before or after school work time with the teacher of the course.
- The Attendance Committee when making a final review of student’s attendance record will consider the following:
 1. Student within the age of compulsory attendance will not be removed from the class or school attendance. (The students above compulsory attendance may be removed from class or school attendance based upon their disruptive behavior to the class and/or school environment).
 2. The student’s academic average in the class.
 3. Teacher recommendation as to the final disposition of the matter.

APPENDIXES

- Attendance Codes
- Absence Form for Parent/Guardians
- Report of Attendance Review Committee
- Student Attendance Report
- Sample Letters for K-4, 5-8, 9-12

Attendance Codes

Suspended	Suspend
Absent	Ab
Sick Early Dismiss	SKED
Hlth. Appt. Late Entry	HALA
Illegal Absence	IA
Court	Co
Court Late Entry	COLA
Court Early Dismiss	COED
Family	F
Field Trips	FT
Personal	PE
Religion (All Day)	R
Tardy	T
Tardy Excused	TE
Weather	WEA
Educ. Trip	ET
Hlth. Appt. Early Dismiss	HAED
Sickness	S
Tardy Relig. Hol.	Rla
In-Sch. Susp.	ISS
Susp/Tutored	SUTU
PASS	P
Home Tutored	HT
Truancy	TR

**FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL
25 HIGH STREET
FORT PLAIN, NY 13339**

Date

Dear _____,

It has come to my attention that _____ was absent on _____. This absence has been recorded as illegal because we have not received a written excuse. If we do not receive a written excuse by _____, this absence will be permanently recorded as illegal. You may use the form below to provide an appropriate written excuse. Please have your child return the excuse immediately to the attendance officer.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Deborah Larrabee
Jr. Sr. High School Principal

Date

_____ was absent on _____
Student's Name Date

because of _____.

Parent's Signature

FORT PLAIN CENTRAL SCHOOL
25 HIGH STREET

FORT PLAIN, NY 13339

REPORT OF ATTENDANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date _____

Name of Student _____

In Attendance _____

Matters Discussed _____

Action to be Taken _____

Signature of Principal _____

Cc: Student File

All Teachers Involved

FIRST LETTER

RE: <NAME>

[DATE]

[PARENTS]
[ADDRESS]
CITY & ZIP]

Dear Mr./Mrs. [PARENTS' NAME]:

This is to inform you that [FIRST NAME] has been absent from [COURSE TITLE] class [NUMBER OF ABSENCES] times this year to date.

It is very important that [STUDENT'S NAME] make up the work missed during these absences. Please contact [TEACHER'S NAME] at 993-4000 during school hours to discuss this matter and get assignments missed.

According to school district policy, a student may be denied the opportunity to take a school final exam if he/she is absent thirty (30) times in a full year course or fifteen (15) times in a one semester (1/2 year) course. This policy applies to both legal and illegal absences.

Regular attendance is essential to success in school. It is very important that a pattern of non-attendance not be allowed to develop. If any of these absences were for illegal reason, please speak to [STUDENT'S NAME] about the importance of attending all classes. It is important that we work together to improve his/her attendance.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Deborah Larrabee
Jr. Sr. High School Principal

SECOND LETTER

RE: <NAME>

[DATE]

[PARENTS]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY & ZIP]

Dear Mr./Mrs. [PARENT'S NAME]:

This is to inform you that [FIRST NAME] has been absent from [COURSE TITLE] class [NUMBER OF ABSENCES] times this year to date.

It is very important that [STUDENT'S NAME] make up the work missed during these absences. Please contact [TEACHER'S NAME] at 993-4463 during school hours to discuss this matter and get assignments missed.

As outlined in my previous letter, school district policy says a student may be denied the opportunity to take a school final exam if he/she is absent thirty (30) times in a full year course or fifteen (15) times in a one semester (1/2 year) course. This policy applies to both legal and illegal absences.

I have scheduled a meeting for you, [STUDENT'S NAME], a member of our guidance staff and me so that we can discuss this matter on [DATE] and [TIME] in my office. Please call the school at 993-4000 if you are unable to attend the meeting on this date and/or at this time. A new meeting will be scheduled.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Deborah Larrabee
Jr. Sr. High School Principal

THIRD LETTER
RE: <NAME>

[DATE]

[PARENTS]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY & ZIP]

Dear Mr./Mrs. [PARENT'S NAME]:

This is to inform you that [FIRST NAME] has been absent from [COURSE TITLE] class [NUMBER OF ABSENCES] times this year to date.

As outlined in previous letters, school district policy says that a student may be denied the opportunity to take a school final exam if he/she is absent thirty (30) times in a full year course or fifteen (15) times in a one semester (1/2 year) course. This policy applies to both legal and illegal absences.

Enclosed is a **Student Attendance Report**. This document provides specific dates of absences from class.

I have scheduled a meeting of the **Attendance Review Committee** on [DATE] at [TIME]. Please call the school at 993-4000 if you are unable to attend the meeting on this date and/or at this time. A new meeting will be scheduled.

Should you have any other questions, please feel free to call me at the school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Deborah Larrabee
Jr. Sr. High School Principal