Policy Title: Truancy – Unexcused Absences – Chronic Absence

Code Number: AR501.10

Unexcused Absences:

1. For purposes of this policy a student will be considered truant when the student is absent from school or an assigned class or classes without school permission. Truancy includes, but is not limited to, the following:
   a. Skipped classes
   b. Falsely informing the school about the reason(s) for the absence
   c. Absences that have not been pre-arranged and pre-approved as excused
   d. Excessive requested parental absences without a reasonable excuse

2. School work missed because of truancy must be made up the same as work for all other absences in order to be counted for credit.

3. Incidents of truancy will be recorded as part of a student’s attendance record and will count toward the absences per semester. The number of truant days will determine what, if any, disciplinary action is appropriate including, but not limited to, warning, detention, in-school suspension or administrative referral.

4. Although not treated as an unexcused absence, a student will be considered tardy when the student appears in the assigned area any time after the designated starting time. Teachers will emphasize the importance of being on time and explain the classroom rules and procedures for when a student is tardy. Tardy sanctions may include, but are not limited to, warning, detention, parent contact or referral to the Building Administrator for other action.

Process for Addressing Truancies:

If a student is truant, school officials shall attempt to find the cause for the student’s absence and use every means available to the school to assure that student’s attendance at school. The District will use the following process to address truancy:

Level I hearing: A Level I fact-finding hearing among the parent/guardian (including a legal or actual custodian), student, and school official(s) shall be conducted when there are approximately 1-3 unexcused absences and/or when the Building Administrator believes that chronic absenteeism is evident. The Level I hearing should be viewed as an opportunity to learn how the school and the family can work together to improve school attendance. A copy of the Level I hearing summary, which includes possible interventions, will be maintained in the student’s cumulative folder and a copy provided to the parent/guardian.
The Building Administrator will make two attempts to schedule a Level I hearing and if the parent/guardian fails to attend, a Level II hearing will be held.

**Level II hearing:** A Level II hearing will be held when a student has 3-6 days of unexcused absences or when the Building Administrator determines the student has chronic absenteeism, without reasonable excuse. A Level I hearing should have been held or attempted prior to a Level II hearing. Appropriate documentation will be filed in the student’s cumulative folder. The Building Administrator will contact the parent/guardian to arrange a Level II hearing and will conduct the Level II hearing. For a student who has not completed the sixth grade, the Level II process will serve as the “attendance cooperation meeting” required by the truancy statute, which meeting may also include other school officials, a designee of the juvenile court, the county attorney/designee, or other persons deemed appropriate to participate.

If a family needs an interpreter, the Building Administrator will arrange for an interpreter from the ESL office to attend the hearing as well as send a letter to the home in the language spoken in the home to confirm the hearing date and time. During a Level II hearing, a written agreement stating the cause of the student’s nonattendance, outlining any discipline and addressing the responsibilities of all parties will be developed. A copy of the written agreement will be given to the parent and student, and a copy will be held in the student’s cumulative folder. If the parties determine that a monitor would improve compliance with the agreement, a monitor may be designated. The monitor shall be the Building Administrator or his/her designee or a volunteer approved by all parties. If the monitor is a volunteer, any such volunteer must have written authorization from the parent/guardian to access student information and perform such monitoring activities. If the parent/guardian does not attend the Level II hearing as scheduled, or if the parent/guardian or student refuses to accept the school’s attempt to assure the student’s attendance, or the school’s attempts to assure attendance are otherwise unsuccessful, the Building Administrator will notify the Director of Elementary or Secondary Education for referral to the County Attorney for mediation or prosecution.

**Mediation:** The mediation process is directed by the County Attorney’s office and the District will cooperate with that process. The mediator appointed by the County Attorney will decide what action to take to address the student’s nonattendance. The mediator will work with the parent/guardian to develop another intervention plan in order to prevent legal action from occurring. Any mediation agreement will be signed by a school officer, the parent/guardian and the student. A copy will be given to the parent as well as put into the student’s cumulative folder. Upon completion of the mediation agreement, the Building Administrator and the attendance team will continue to monitor student attendance. The Building Administrator will be responsible for monitoring and notifying the Director of Elementary or Secondary Education of noncompliance with the mediation agreement. If a parent/guardian refuses to engage in mediation or violates a term of the agreement, the matter shall be referred to the County Attorney for prosecution.

**Policy Development**
First Adoption: December 12, 1995
Reviewed Date: October 21, 2019/November 18, 2019
December 9, 2019
Legal Reference: Iowa Code §§ 294.4; 299
281 I.A.C. 12.3(4), (6)