

## Foster-Glocester Regional School Department

### Glocester, Rhode Island Student Attendance Policy

#### **PURPOSE:**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential to the overall academic, social and emotional development of students. There is a joint responsibility by the parents/guardians and teachers/administrators to ensure regular and punctual student attendance. School districts are required by law to monitor daily student attendance and submit reports for school accountability and district and state comparisons. The purpose of the Foster-Glocester Regional School District Attendance Policy is to improve attendance when students are not regularly attending school.

#### **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE:**

[RI General Law §16-19-1](#) requires every child to attend public school during all the days and hours that the public schools are in session in the city or town in which the child resides. Students are, therefore, expected to be present each day of the school year unless officially excused. (Refer to the complete list of excused absences below).

An absence occurs when a student is **not** present at school or at a school-endorsed activity. Tardiness occurs when a student arrives after the official, documented start time of school. Early dismissal occurs when a student leaves before the documented official end time of the school day. According to the Rhode Island Department of Education, the following are the excused reasons for an absence, tardy or dismissal from school:

- Illness or injury – medical or dental appointments which are unable to be scheduled after regular school hours (verified by a doctor’s note and/or receipt provided the day the student returns to school.)
- Official, verified court appearance
- Military deployment event
- Death in the family
- Religious holiday
- Dismissal by certified school nurse teacher or principal or designee
- School approved field trips, academic contests, athletic events, suspensions from school, etc.
- School approved out-of-school learning opportunities (job-shadowing, mentoring, externships, college courses, college visits, etc.)
- Serious family matter or circumstances deemed extenuating by the administration

#### **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, TARDIES AND DISMISSALS:**

- Parental and/or personal family matters (e.g., car trouble, missing the bus, etc.)
- Family vacation
- Undocumented illness or injury
- Appointments for haircuts, prom preparation, appointments of a non-medical nature, etc.

Students’ attendance data will be regularly reviewed by the building level team. Progressive discipline will be practiced for students with repeated attendance issues. For excessive attendance issues, the student support team will work through a plan to address the issues. The building principal and/or designee will also contact the parent or guardian to ensure attendance of the student at school in the future. It is the intent of the School Committee that the building principal or designee have the ability to use his/her discretion and professional judgment to exempt / excuse an absence resulting from extenuating circumstances not explicitly covered above.

## **COLLABORATION EFFORTS**

### **APPEALS:**

All appeals must be received in writing within ten (10) school days to the building principal. Appeals shall follow the normal administrative route from principal, to superintendent, to school committee.

### **School District Responsibility**

It shall be the responsibility of the school district to establish procedures governing tardiness, early dismissal from school, excused absences, unexcused absences, and truancy including:

1. Reporting procedures;
2. Recording, tracking and investigating attendance and attendance issues;
3. Reporting of student attendance information to state and federal authorities in accordance with state and federal law, mandates, and school department regulations;
4. Establishing a system of criteria, consequences, and referral for investigating and addressing excessive absences, truancy, tardiness and dismissals and the failure to notify the school of the reason for the absence/tardiness/dismissal;
5. Establishing guidelines (by school) that provide reasonable opportunity for the student to make up work.

### **Parents/Guardians and the Student Responsibility**

Parents/guardians and students are ultimately responsible for regular and punctual school attendance. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to:

1. Abide by the law and mandates governing attendance;
2. Stress the importance of regular and punctual school attendance with their child;
3. Provide the school with accurate and current daytime telephone numbers where they can be reached;
4. Call the school on the day of their child's absence to provide a clearly-stated reason for the absence;
5. Make every effort to schedule personal appointments for their child outside of school hours; provide a doctor's note when conflicts are unavoidable
6. Plan family vacations when school is not in session;
7. Arrange for make-up work in a timely manner;
8. In cases of long-term illness, notify the school (school nurse **and** principal) as soon as possible so that provisions may be made for appropriate instruction.

If a child is absent for three (3) or more consecutive days due to illness, a doctor's note and a visit to the school nurse are required upon the student's return.

School personnel may distinguish between students who rarely have an unexcused absence and students who have a persistent or chronic pattern of absences. Truancy is not a single event, but is a pattern of incidents of unexcused absence from school and/or any abuse of excused absences.

### **Notification and Intervention**

Chronic absence is defined as 10% or more of days absent, regardless of whether or not the absence is excused. Chronically absent students shall be provided with levels of support and intervention to improve their attendance.

A student support team at each building shall review attendance data monthly. If the team determines that an intervention is required, a written plan will be devised and followed over the next 30 days. Whether or not a plan is warranted, the parent/guardian of any child who is chronically absent for five (5) or more excused and/or unexcused absences in any given grading term may be notified in writing of this occurrence by the building principal/assistant principal.

If the pattern of absenteeism, tardiness, or early dismissals continues the following month, a review by the team will occur and additional interventions may be suggested. Parents/guardians will be notified in writing and resources within the

school, such as involvement of the school counselor or social worker, will be utilized to improve the attendance. Parents/guardians and student may be required to meet with the building principal/designee and other professionals, as needed, to develop a clear plan of action to address chronic absenteeism.

If homelessness is the cause, the social worker and the district liaison to homeless families and youth will provide the necessary supports to reduce barriers to the student's education. When a student with an IEP has attendance concerns, the IEP team may be convened to determine next steps if school efforts to improve attendance have been unsuccessful.

**References**

RI Gen. Laws § 16-19-1 & § 16-19-6

National Forum on Education Statistics. (2009). *Every School Day Counts: The Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Attendance Data* (NFES 2009–804), U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

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