

REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION #21 STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Regional Office of Education #21 has established the following rules and regulations regarding attendance, absences and excuses for students attending Project ECHO Alternative School and STARQuest Academy Regional Safe School. These rules and regulations are intended to comply with Illinois School Code and District Policy. **Illinois Law** requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school).

Students are expected to attend every class. The school has an obligation to inform both students and parents/guardians of the student's progress and attendance in all classes.

When you make school attendance a priority, you help your child get better grades, develop healthy life habits, avoid dangerous behavior, and have a better chance of graduating from high school. When students are here 95% or more of the school year, their grades, reading levels, and math skills will improve—even among those students who are struggling in school. Students who attend school regularly also feel more connected to their community, develop important social skills and friendships, and are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, setting them up for a strong future. But when kids are absent for an average of just two days of school per month—even when the absences are excused— it can have a negative impact.

By figuring out the reasons for your child's absences—whether they're physical or emotional—and taking advantage of support services—such as school social work services, on-site counseling, conferencing, etc—you can help set your child on the path to success.

In case of any absence, **it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school and provide a reason for the absence(s).**

- If the parent/guardian does not contact the school to report the absence, the school will attempt to contact by phone to inform the parent of the absence.
- The parent/guardian will be made aware of the student's attendance and school district policy/regulations.

Mental Health Excused Absence: [PA 102-321](#) (effective August 6, 2021) permits students to have up to 5 excused absences for the mental or behavioral health of the child for which the child need not provide a medical note. The child shall be given the opportunity to make up any school work missed during the mental or behavioral health absence and, after the second mental health day used, may be referred to the appropriate school support personnel.

Excusable absences include:

- Illness of the student (a physician's statement will be requested)

- Days of religious observance (a written note from the parent must be submitted at least 5 days in advance of the absence)
- Death in the family
- Doctor and dental appointments (notes will be required for them to be marked as excused--parents are encouraged to make appointments outside of school hours)
- Court appearances (a note from the court is required upon return)
- A student will be excused for up to 5 days in cases where the student's parent/guardian is an active-duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat-support postings. The Board of Education, in its discretion, may excuse a student for additional days relative to such leave or deployment.
- A student and the student's parent/guardian are responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teachers prior to any excused absences and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school.
- Other absences to be considered at discretion of administration on an individual basis.
- If a student's absence is excused or if a student is suspended from school, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work for equivalent academic credit.

In the case of **pre-planned absences**, the principal has the authority to grant excused absences for the following types of pre-planned requests. Please notify the school prior to scheduling a pre-planned absence.

- College visit (documentation required)
- Career education visit (documentation required)
- Although not recommended, Family trips/Vacation (approval form must be submitted two weeks in advance)
- Participation in regional and/or national contests or special awards not endorsed by the IESA or IHSA.

The administration has the authority to deny a student's request for a pre-planned absence. The student's attendance pattern, academic performance, and/or behavior history as documented by referrals to the principal's office will provide the basis for the decision.

All other absences not listed above, or pre-approved by the building administrator, will be considered unexcused.

Attendance patterns for all students will be monitored. The principal and/or staff will take appropriate action to investigate absences that are not excusable. The following procedures will be implemented once a student is absent.

For any student absence:

- If the school is not notified in advance or on the day of absence, the school will attempt to contact a parent/guardian to inquire about the absence.
- If a note or call is not received within **48 hours** of the absence, the absence will be marked unexcused and will remain as unexcused.
- The school will require documentation (i.e., physician, counselor, dentist, obituary, etc.) explaining the reason for the student's absence for the absence to be excused.

After Five (5) days of absences:

- The school will send a letter of concern, which will include the attendance policy/regulations and information regarding the student's absences.
- Possible conference call between school administration and parent/guardian regarding students' attendance.
- Referral to appropriate school-based teams may be made.
- The student's attendance patterns will be identified and discussed.
- Develop or revise plans to improve attendance.
- If absences continue, parents may be informed of possible referrals to outside agencies.

The school will maintain the following documentation and/or data.

- Document the dates of letters, policies, and regulations that are sent to parent
- Document phone calls and parental responses
- Document conference dates and parental responses
- Document attendance plans and any revisions
- Maintain student attendance records

The district's inadvertent failure to comply with any procedure set forth in this regulation, including but not limited to the notice provisions, will not protect the student from the consequences for excessive absence as provided in this policy.

Student attendance is critical to the learning process. **Truancy** is therefore a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and district.

Students who miss 5% or more (9 or more days) of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause (unexcused absences) are considered chronic truants. Students who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue.

If truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district will take further action, including:

- Step 1- Referral to the Regional Office of Education #21 Partners Against Chronic Truancy Intervention Team
- Step 2- Meeting with School Personnel and Truancy Interventionist at the School
- Step 3- A Truancy Review Board meeting with School Personnel, Truancy Interventionist and States Attorney's Office.
- Step 4- Petition will be filed with the States Attorney's Office and Parent/Student will have to appear in Court.

A parent or guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law and may be convicted of a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty days in jail and/or a monetary fine. **Students in grades 7th-12th are subject to juvenile action.**

Late Arrival:

- If the student will be arriving late to school, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the School Attendance Office. If a student drives to school, and is tardy more than 3 times, he/she will be required to make up time after school each time he/she arrives late. If late arrivals are not corrected, he/she may lose driving privileges.

