

# **AGAWAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY GRADES 1 – 8**

The outside workplace is an environment that expects individuals to be punctual and demonstrate commitment. The Agawam Public Schools district Attendance Policy is dedicated to preparing students for both the workplace and life's environment. We encourage good school attendance, since only through regular attendance can a student take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered. We believe in a direct and positive correlation between good school attendance and academic success. Furthermore, attendance in school is mandated by Massachusetts General Laws, specifically Chapter 76 sections 1, 2, 4, and 19.

### **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGES**

Massachusetts law establishes the state Board of Education as the agent, which determines mandatory and permissible school attendance ages, with exceptions listed in law. Generally, the State Board requires that all children be enrolled in school beginning in September of the calendar year in which they attain the age of 6 and that they attend school regularly until they reach age 16.

Under law, the School Committee of each city must enforce the school attendance of all children of compulsory school age residing therein. File: JCA/JG-1 Legal Refs: M.G.L. 15:1G and 76:1

### **DUTY OF PARENT – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF CHILD – PUNISHABLE**

(C. 76 § 2 Duties of Parents – Attendance of Children)

Every person in control of a child shall cause him/her to attend school as therein required, and, if he/she fails to do so for 7 day sessions or 14 half-day sessions within any period of 6 months, he/she *shall, on complaint by a supervisor of attendance, be punished by a fine of not more than twenty dollars*. No physical or mental condition capable of correction, or rendering the child fit subject for special instruction at public charge in institutions other than public day schools, shall avail as a defense unless it appears that the defendant has employed all reasonable measures for the correction of the condition and the suitable instruction of the child.

### **INDUCING ABSENCES**

(C. 76 § 4 Inducing Absences – Penalty)

Whoever induces or attempts to induce a minor to absent him/herself unlawfully from school, or unlawfully employs him/her or harbors a minor who, while school is in session, is absent unlawfully there from, shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars (\$200.00).

### **Absences and Excuses**

It is expected that students will not be absent from school unless conditions or circumstances render them otherwise unable to attend. A student must be at school or at a school-related activity (e.g. field trip) for at least half (3 hours) of the school day in order to be counted as present.

1. For every instance of student absence, the parent/guardian must provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school. Parents/guardians are required to contact the school the morning of an illness and to notify the school in advance of any planned absences. This note must be signed by a parent/guardian and must include the exact dates and reason. The note must arrive in the school office within 2 days of the absence or the absence is considered unexcused. If the child is out for more than 5 days sequentially or 8 days cumulatively in a 30 day time period, a note from a doctor's office is required. Students are eligible for a tutor if they have a medical excuse stating they will be absent for 14 or more days sequentially or cumulatively. Parents/guardians should contact their child's building principal. The school reserves the right to contact the doctor to verify the note.

Using forged notes or making unauthorized telephone calls to clear absences will be cause for disciplinary action.

The following are legitimate reasons for absence from school:

- a. Personal illness of the student
  - b. Bereavement
  - a. Family or catastrophic emergency (e.g. flood, fire)
  - b. Observation of religious holiday
  - c. Necessary court appearance
  - d. DSS placement
  - e. DYS confinement
  - f. Any other reason Administration deems appropriate
2. Students who exceed 24 absences in a school year may be considered for non-promotion. The intent of this policy is not to say that a certain number of absences are acceptable or allowable, rather that sequential attendance is necessary. Days absent from school should be reserved for illness or emergency. Parent/guardians are encouraged to make vacation plans that coincide with the scheduled school vacations. Family trips/vacations are considered unexcused absences.
  3. Parents/guardians who support or enable a chronic pattern of unnecessary absences may be subject to agency or court action. The Attendance Officer will file a report with the Department of Social Services for Educational Neglect and/or file a "Failure to Cause" at Springfield Juvenile Court on said parent or guardian if warranted.
  4. Students who appear in school or on school grounds while marked absent or dismissed from school are considered truant and trespassing. In addition, students absent without legal reason/parent knowledge are also truant. Students are not allowed to make up work if determined to be truant. Chronic truancy and excessive absenteeism will result in the Attendance Officer filing a "Child in Need of Services" (CHINS) petition with the Springfield Juvenile Court.
  5. Students who have an absence from school will not be allowed to participate in any after school activity on the day of absence. In extenuating circumstances, the Administration has the discretion to override this provision of the policy.

### **Tardies**

Every pupil who is not present in the school room at the start of opening session will be marked tardy. Tardy students need to report to the office. Parents/guardians must provide an excuse in person or by telephone followed by a written note to excuse the student's tardiness. The Principal may take appropriate disciplinary action if it is determined that a student has had excessive tardies, which have impacted the student's learning and education. In addition, the Department of Social Services may be contacted for educational neglect.

### **Dismissals**

No pupil shall be dismissed from school without a request from his or her parent/guardian in person or in writing. All cases of dismissal shall be recorded. Students may not leave the building until the person receiving them has been properly identified (please provide a picture ID). The school nurse may dismiss students for illness with permission from the parent/guardian.