

Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual

Title: ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY

Section: 703.1

Board Report: 06-0222-PO2

Date Adopted: February 22, 2006

Policy:

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

Amend the Comprehensive Policy on Absenteeism and Truancy, Board Report 05-0126-PO2 as follows:

POLICY TEXT:

I. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

A. “Valid Cause For Absence” shall mean:

- (i) illness;
- (ii) observance of a religious holiday;
- (iii) death in the immediate family;
- (iv) family emergency;
- (v) circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent or legal guardian for the safety or health of the student (the reasonableness of the parent’s or legal guardian’s concern is subject to evaluation by the principal, principal’s designee, or other Board officials, on a case-by-case basis);
- (vi) other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the principal, or principal’s designee, on a case-by-case basis, including, but not limited to, homelessness and its attendant difficulties. (Students who may be homeless should be referred to the Homeless Education Department of the Office of Specialized Services for additional assistance.)

B. “Excused Absence” shall mean: an absence for which there is a valid cause either:

- (i) known to the principal or principal’s designee, including suspensions issued pursuant to the Uniform Discipline Code; or
- (ii) attested by a letter (or note) signed by the parent or legal guardian setting forth such cause and approved by the principal or the principal’s designee either before or after the date of the absence.

C. “Unexcused Absence” shall mean: an absence for which there is no valid cause either:

- (i) known to the principal or principal’s designee; or
- (ii) attested by a letter (or note) signed by the parent or legal guardian setting forth such cause and approved by the principal or the principal’s designee either before or after the date of the absence.

D. “Immediate Family” shall mean: parents, legal guardians, spouse, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and uncles.

E. “Truant” shall mean: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for a school day or portion thereof.

- F. **“Chronic Truant”** shall mean: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent from such attendance without valid cause for 10% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

II. ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT

A. SCHOOL-BASED INITIATIVES

All schools whose overall attendance rate is below 95% shall develop an “Attendance Improvement Plan” (“Plan”) to be implemented during the next school year. The Plan shall be included in, and made a part of, the school’s School Improvement Plan for Advancing Academic Achievement for the next school year. The goals of the Plan shall be to:

- (i) reduce the number of student absences;
- (ii) increase student academic achievement;
- (iii) reduce the number of chronic truants/potential dropouts;
- (iv) increase parental and community involvement in these objectives; and
- (v) increase the use of alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, such as before- or after-school detention; Saturday detention; before- or after-school service; and student peer juries.

The Plan may identify improved curriculum, expanded vocational educational programs, increased extracurricular activities, appropriate services to address the needs of homeless students, and other systemic changes to achieve the goals of the Plan. Principals are to refer to the Student Attendance Improvement Plan information guidelines, available from the Department of Instruction and School Management, for the development of their Student Attendance Improvement Plans, the identification of personnel to implement the plans, and the annual evaluation of the Plan. Attendance Improvement Plans may also incorporate references to the initiatives set forth in Parts II through V of this policy.

B. SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

The Board shall implement system-wide initiatives to support the schools’ Student Attendance Improvement Plans. Such initiatives shall include the following:

1. **COMPUTERIZED ATTENDANCE:** All schools have the capability to report daily attendance on the CPS mainframe computer. Attendance shall be reported daily and monitored centrally.
2. **ABSENTEE OUTCALLING SYSTEM:** The Absentee Outcalling System is an automated telephone system which may be programmed to call the home telephone numbers of absent students or other telephone numbers submitted by the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s). (Schools should also place personal phone calls to absent students’ homes if feasible.) A supplemental postcard mailing system may also be established to notify homes without telephones and homes that cannot be reached by the Absentee Outcalling System. Schools should also utilize the CPS mainframe system to generate five (5) and ten (10) day “unexcused absence” letters.
3. **TRUANCY HOTLINE:** The Board has established a Truancy Hotline (773/553-4000) to give individual citizens and businesses a convenient means of reporting school-aged students who are on the streets or at home during school hours, 24 hours a day. The hotline shall forward this information to central office for processing.

4. **HOMELESS EDUCATION LIAISONS:** Homeless Education Liaisons in each of the CPS clusters and each school shall assist in identifying and serving the needs of homeless students that may adversely affect their attendance.
5. **STUDENT ATTENDANCE AUDITS:** Schools shall be subject to annual audits to determine whether they are in compliance with their Attendance Improvement Plans and are accurately reporting student attendance.
6. **INTERVENTION:** Schools should employ the truancy intervention techniques, strategies, and procedures set forth in the Uniform Attendance Guidelines to maintain and improve their average daily attendance.

III. INTERVENTION

In order to identify and address the cause(s) of unexcused absenteeism, a principal shall, as necessary: interview the student; meet with his or her parent(s) or guardian(s); meet with other Board officials or employees, including Area School Homeless Education Liaisons, or other parties who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem. Schools may employ a variety of means to identify truant and chronically truant students and students at risk of becoming truant or chronically truant including, but not limited to, the School Police Patrol, Chicago Police Department School Absentee Reports, the Truancy Hotline, and other means as set forth in the Uniform Attendance Guidelines.

IV. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Schools may make available a variety of supportive services to students identified as at risk of becoming truants or chronic truants, including, but not limited to, Early Childhood Cradle-to-Classroom. Except for violations which subject the student to the possibility of expulsion, schools may also impose sanctions other than out-of-school suspensions to address violations of the Uniform Discipline Code by students at risk of becoming truants or chronic truants. Those sanctions may include: in-school detention; before- or after-school detention; Saturday detention; before- or after-school service; student peer juries and truancy violation/prevention workshops.

Schools shall make the following supportive services available to truant or chronically truant students and/or their parents, as appropriate:

- (i) parent conferences;
- (ii) student counseling;
- (iii) family counseling and other social services;
- (iv) information about existing community services which are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs;
- (v) intensive academic remediation, including, but not limited to, the summer bridge program;
- (vi) informing students and their parents of the enrollment rights of homeless students and the transportation services that may be available to assist homeless students in attending school.

V. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

To assist the efforts of the Chicago Public Schools to improve school attendance rates and reduce truancy and chronic truancy rates, the Board and its schools may, as appropriate, request the assistance and cooperation of other governmental agencies, including: the Chicago Housing Authority (by including provisions in its leases requiring regular school attendance by school-age students); the Illinois Department of Public Aid (by redirecting to social service agencies, or withholding a portion of, the assistance it provides to parents of truant students, as allowed by statute); the Office of the State's Attorney of Cook County and the Circuit Court of Cook County, Juvenile Division (by requesting the expedited processing of truants on probation and the prosecution of chronic truants and their parents or legal guardians, as appropriate, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5); and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (by ensuring that its wards attend school regularly). The Board shall explore, and implement to the greatest extent feasible, opportunities for such interagency collaboration.

VI. CHRONIC TRUANCY ADJUDICATION

Pursuant to Section 34-4.5 of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5, there is hereby established within the Board of Education a Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication, which shall be responsible for administratively adjudicating cases of chronic truancy and imposing appropriate sanctions. Also pursuant to Section 34-4.5, the Board shall appoint and employ hearing officers to perform the adjudicatory functions of the Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication. Principals and other appropriate personnel may refer students suspected of being chronic truants, as defined in this policy, to the Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication. The Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication shall adopt and disseminate, as appropriate, procedures to fulfill the requirements of Section 34-4.5.

VII. WITHDRAWAL/REMOVAL FROM ENROLLMENT

Students may be removed from enrollment under the following guidelines.

- A. All students are to be removed from enrollment when they transfer to a different school (including home school) or graduate.
- B. All students are to be removed from enrollment if their whereabouts cannot be determined after a school has completed all of the following:
 1. calling all phone numbers on file for the student, including emergency contacts;
 2. sending a letter addressed to the student's last known address asking the parents to call or come to the school to discuss the student's absenteeism; and
 3. visiting the student's last known address without finding the student or the student's family.
- C. No student under 17 years of age shall be permitted to withdraw from enrollment. Students 17 years of age require the express, written, and informed consent of their parent or guardian to withdraw from enrollment. Specific provisions for informed consent shall include, but not be limited to:
 1. an accommodation for limited English speaking populations;
 2. a general description of the rights to educational services being waived as a result of dropping out;

3. a description of the rights to educational services withdrawing students retain under the law, including the right of dropouts to return to school and to a due process appeal if the right to return to school is challenged by the local school;
 4. information regarding adult and alternative educational services available in the community; and
 5. information provided to the student as well as the parent or guardian summarizing the likely adverse consequences that result from dropping out of school.
- D. School administrators must comply with the following provisions regarding removing students from enrollment:
1. Students may not be removed from enrollment solely because of excessive unexcused absences, i.e., truancy, (for example, 20 consecutive unexcused absences).
 2. Students with excessive absences may be removed from enrollment only if, following the procedures set forth above, their whereabouts cannot be determined.
 3. Schools must complete a Lost Child Report for every student who cannot be located and is removed from enrollment after following the procedures set forth above.
 4. For students who wish to withdraw from enrollment, the principal must complete all of the following before a student can be removed from enrollment at a CPS school: (a) verify that the student meets the age criteria for withdrawing, (b) verify that the student and, where applicable, the parent have completed and signed the Consent to Withdraw form, (c) sign the Consent to Withdraw form, and (d) immediately forward the fully-signed Consent to Withdraw form to the Department of Drop-Out Prevention and Recovery.
 5. Unless a student can be properly removed from enrollment as transferred (including to home school), graduated, lost or dropped out, they should be treated as truant.
 - a. The school must make efforts to address and remedy the child's truancy.
 - b. If the efforts of school officials are unsuccessful, the child must be referred for adjudication as a chronic truant.
- E. Pursuant to the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/26-2, CPS shall not deny reenrollment to a student who is 19 years of age or above who seeks reenrollment after dropping out of school unless the student, due to age and a lack of credits, is unlikely to attend classes during the normal school year and graduate before his or her twenty-first birthday. Such students shall be counseled regarding educational options that may best meet their individual needs. No student covered by this paragraph shall be denied reenrollment unless he or she first is offered due process as required in cases of expulsion under 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6.

VIII. TARDINESS

Schools must accept all enrolled students who have not been suspended or expelled who present themselves for daily attendance. All schools must develop and adopt a tardy policy prior to the beginning of each school year. Students are not to be sent home or refused admission to school due to tardiness. Students who arrive late for any class period must be allowed to proceed to their classes after obtaining

proper documentation of their tardiness. Schools must ensure their admittance to class. Schools may impose disciplinary sanctions pursuant to the Uniform Discipline Code for persistent tardiness to school or class. Out-of-School suspensions for persistent tardiness are prohibited.

IX. SCHOOL UNIFORM OR DRESS CODE VIOLATIONS

Schools cannot bar students from daily attendance or send them home for violations of a uniform policy or dress code. Schools may impose disciplinary sanctions pursuant to the Uniform Discipline Code for uniform policy or dress code violations. Out-of-school suspensions for uniform or dress code violations are prohibited.

X. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Schools may not refuse enrollment to students with disabilities or other special needs on the basis that the school does not have the resources to service such students. Schools must contact the Office of Specialized Services for assistance in providing such services if they do not have pre-existing programs or resources to do so. Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Plans (“IEPs”) require services to address truancy may not be referred for chronic truancy adjudication unless they have received all the services called for in their IEPs to address their truant behavior.

Amends/Rescinds:	Amends 05-0126-PO2
Cross References:	81-114-7; 81-201-2; 83-216-26; 83-216-27; 84-0411-ED7; 84-0718-RS3; 85-0925-ED5; 88-0309-ED7; 88-1026-ED13; 89-0222-PO1; 90-0716-RS3; 95-0222-RS3; 94-0323-PO1; 96-0327-PO1; 96-0828-PO3; 96-0828-PO4; 96-0925-PO1; 96-1120-PO3; 01-1128-PO3; 04-0128-PO3; 04-0225-PO4
Legal References:	105 ILCS 5/26-2; 105 ILCS 5/26-2a; 105 ILCS 5/26-13; 23 Ill. Admin. Code §1.290; 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5; 105 ILCS 45/1-1 et seq.