

**Series 4000 Students**

**Section 4500 Student Attendance**

**Policy 4501 Elementary School Attendance**

4501.1 Rationale

The fundamental right to attend the public school places upon students the accompanying responsibility to be faithful in attendance. Excellent attendance is essential for a student's successful progress in the instructional program, in proper contribution in citizenship, and in the workplace. Harrison County Schools will encourage, instruct toward, and recognize excellent attendance. Harrison County Schools will also create a positive, safe environment conducive to learning and committed to helping students develop responsibility, self-discipline, and other good work habits. Students who attend school regularly learn more, achieve higher grades, and enjoy school experiences more; resulting in fewer disciplinary problems, fewer dropouts, and a more comprehensively educated and responsible adult. Learning that is lost due to absence can never be adequately replaced.

- 4501.1.1 Review of county attendance policy will be done yearly with input from a committee of teachers, principals, attendance director, parents, and community leaders. This committee will also review current incentives to promote attendance as well as other incentives for the school year.
- 4501.1.2 If a revision to the Harrison County attendance policy is made, it will be submitted to the West Virginia Department of Education for approval.
- 4501.1.3 An annual attendance evaluation will be done to determine the effectiveness of the policy. A monthly review of school attendance percentages will be submitted to county superintendent. At the end of the school year, an attendance percentage report will be submitted to the West Virginia Department of Education. This report will reflect the allowable deductions as defined by the West Virginia Department of Education.

## 4501.2 Procedures

- 4501.2.1 All parents shall notify the school on the day of a child's absence.
- 4501.2.2 A written note of explanation must be sent when the child returns to school. Failure to send a note will result in an unexcused absence.
- 4501.2.3 Each school principal, or his/her designee, shall make all appropriate referrals to the county attendance director.
- 4501.2.4 The principal or designee shall hold a meeting with the parent, guardian, or custodian of a child when the child has five (5) unexcused absences in a semester. At this meeting, an attendance appeal can be made by parent and student.
- 4501.2.5 The attendance director shall serve written notice to the parent when a child has five (5) unexcused absences in a year.
- 4501.2.6 The attendance director shall make contact with the home to ascertain the true reason for absence, to evaluate the home situation and the need for the student to be absent.
- 4501.2.7 At the beginning of each school year, the school shall provide parents and students with a copy of the county attendance policy. Any student enrolling during the school term shall also be provided a copy of the policy.
- 4501.2.8 Each principal shall establish a school-based attendance committee for those purposes deemed necessary for the improvement of student attendance.
- 4501.2.9 Uniform record keeping will be used in all schools for the purpose of maintaining an accurate account of attendance for every student in every class through the WVEIS system. The attendance record shall accompany any student who transfers from one Harrison County school to another during the course of the school year.

## 4501.3 Definitions

- 4501.3.1 The following absences shall be considered excused absences, provided that in each instance written parental confirmation has been received where applicable:

- 4501.3.1.1 Student illness

- 4501.3.1.2 School sponsored activities which have prior administrative approval. Upon return to next class meeting, student must be prepared for that day (test, quiz, homework, ready to participate, etc.). Documented injuries incurred through participation in a school activity shall not penalize the student.
- 4501.3.1.3 Late or non-running buses with verification from the bus driver upon student's return to school.
- 4501.3.1.4 Religious holidays (requires prior administrative approval).
- 4501.3.1.5 Death in family (mother, father, brother, sister, grandparent, child, spouse, and/or legal guardian).
- 4501.3.1.6 Life-threatening circumstances.
- 4501.3.2 The principal shall investigate and declare any absence or absences unexcused when circumstances dictate.
- 4501.3.3 Excessive absences will be one of the considerations for retention of the student at his/her present grade level.
- 4501.3.4 Students may not be suspended out of school solely for failure to attend class.
- 4501.3.5 A student who is suspended from school for a disciplinary problem shall have the absence recorded as unexcused.
- 4501.3.6 Students shall not be permitted to leave school before the regular closing hour except for reasons approved by the principal and under circumstances which are necessary.
  - 4501.3.6.1 Upon presentation of an appointment card from a physician or dentist, and a request signed by the parent, a child may be dismissed from school for medical or dental appointments for such time as the specific appointment shall require. However, dental and doctor appointments during school time are discouraged.
  - 4501.3.6.2 All requests to leave the building while school is in session, including the lunch period, must be cleared through the principal's office. Leaving school without permission is classified as truancy and shall be handled as prescribed under Harrison County Schools' Discipline Policy.

- 4501.3.6.3 A student who is physically absent from school is recorded absent.
- 4501.3.7 Excused Student Absences - Absences that result from school-approved curricular/co-curricular activities; failure of the bus to run/hazardous conditions, SAT Plan, IEP or 504 Plan and other county board approved excused absences.
- 4501.3.8 “Documented chronic medical condition” means any physical or mental condition that may require multiple or regular absences. This condition must be documented annually with a valid physician’s note that explains the condition and anticipated impact on attendance. The necessity for the absences must be approved and reviewed quarterly by the SAT, IEP or 504 team (See §5.3.3.d). Such absence(s) shall be considered an allowable deduction for purposes of §126-81-5.2 of this policy.
- 4501.3.9 “Documented disability” means any mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities and is documented annually with a valid physician’s note that explains the disability and anticipated impact on attendance. The necessity for the absences must be approved and reviewed quarterly by the SAT, IEP, or 504 team (See §5.3.3.d). Such absence(s) shall be considered an allowable deduction for purposes of §126-81-5.2 of this policy.
- 4501.4 Make-up Work
  - 4501.4.1 Any student absent from school shall be given the opportunity to complete or make up all work missed.
    - 4501.4.1.1 Students shall be given a day for each day absent to make up assignments.
    - 4501.4.1.2 Any time a student is absent, the teacher may either provide written assignments or an outline of the work that will be missed.
- 4501.5 Corrective Measures

- 4501.5.1 In those situations where chronic absenteeism occurs, the school shall explore available resources to develop corrective measures based on the developmental needs of the student. These may include:
  - 4501.5.1.1 Frequent notification and communication between the parent and school.
  - 4501.5.1.2 Use of counseling procedures within the school or from outside agencies.
  - 4501.5.1.3 Confirm correct academic placement through Special Education Services.
  - 4501.5.1.4 Involvement of the Department of Human Services or other appropriate agency.
  - 4501.5.1.5 Referral to student assistant teams/programs.
- 4501.6 Rewards
  - 4501.6.1 Elementary student rewards will be used to maintain and improve attendance and will include, but not be limited to:
    - 4501.6.1.1 Attendance Certificate Awards - Students who have achieved a perfect attendance record during the course of each instructional year shall be awarded a Perfect Attendance Certificate. Students who have been absent five (5) days or less during the course of each instructional year shall be awarded a Faithful Attendance Certificate.
    - 4501.6.1.2 The county shall offer incentives to promote attendance.
  - 4501.6.2 In lieu of first semester exams, every student in kindergarten through second grade shall take diagnostic tests. Results will be utilized to improve deficiencies.
  - 4501.6.3 Every student in grades three through five will take skills tests consistent with the county adopted aptitude test. Results will be utilized to improve areas of deficiencies.
  - 4501.6.4 Any student who has a 2.0 GPA at the end of the second semester in the class and who has not missed more than ten (10) days of a class per year, regardless of excused reason(s), shall have the option of not taking second semester exam(s).

- 4501.6.5 Determination of the existence of an excessive illness or other extraordinary circumstances shall be left to the discretion of the principal.
- 4501.7 Semester Exams
- 4501.7.1 Tardiness shall be defined as failure by the student to be on time for the beginning of school or class. Three (3) instances of tardiness shall equal one (1) day of absence.
- 4501.7.2 Students who have missed more than ten (10) days shall be required to take second semester exams in the following subjects:
- Language Arts (reading, English, spelling)
  - Math
  - Science and social studies
- 4501.7.3 All exams shall be given within the semester exam schedule of the school calendar.
- 4501.8 Homeless Definitions
- 4501.8.1 Awaiting Foster Care Placement – Any child or youth who 1) is in the custody of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, 2) has been placed in out-of-home care, and 3) is not in a permanent placement. This includes, but is not limited to, children and youth in family foster care, kinship care, emergency shelter care or in a residential group home.
- 4501.9 Homeless Liaison
- 4501.9.1 The attendance director shall serve as the liaison for homeless children and youth as defined in W.Va. Code §18-8-4. As defined in McKinney-Vento Act, as the liaison for homeless children and youth, the attendance director is required to:
- 4501.9.2 ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youths receive services.
- 4501.9.3 ensure that parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.

- 4501.9.4 ensure that parents or guardians are informed of, and assisted in accessing all transportation services for their children, including to the school of origin.
- 4501.9.5 help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes, and provide the youth with notice of his or her right to appeal the school district's decision.
- 4501.9.6 immediately assist in obtaining immunizations or record of immunizations or other medical records for those students who do not have them, and assure that students are enrolled in school while the records are being obtained.
- 4501.9.7 ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- 4501.9.8 ensure that homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity, to success in schools of that local educational agency.
- 4501.9.9 ensure that homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start Programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency, and referrals to health services, and other appropriate services.
- 4501.9.10 ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated as outlined in paragraph (3) (E) of the McKinney-Vento Act.

Approved by Harrison County Board of Education

Effective Date: June 3, 2003

Revised: June 16, 2009, September 1, 2009, June 1, 2010