

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students:

Welcome to the beginning of another school year. We hope you had an enjoyable summer break from school and that you have begun another productive school year. This letter is written to stress to you the importance of attending school.

We take compulsory school attendance very seriously. Tennessee law requires that children under age eighteen attend school. It is the parent and/or guardian's responsibility to insist that the child attend school. Truancy is defined as an absence for an entire school day, a major portion of the school day or the major portion of any class, study hall or activity during the school day for which the student is scheduled. Make-up work should be completed within three (3) days after the absence. Even authorized absences may become excessive, and if the child is not in school regularly, he or she is missing valuable instruction time.

Annually, the Director of Schools/designee will provide written notice to parent(s)/guardian(s) that attendance at school is required. Students shall be present at least fifty percent (50%) of the scheduled school day in order to be counted present. Students may attend part-time days, alternating days, or for a specific amount of time as indicated in their Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan and shall be considered present for school attendance purposes.<sup>8</sup> If a student is required to participate in a remedial instruction program outside of the regular school day where there is no cost to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school system provides transportation, unexcused absences from these programs shall be reported in the same manner.<sup>9</sup>

One absence shall be recorded for unauthorized tardies or unauthorized leave earlies or any combination of unauthorized tardies or unauthorized leave earlies equaling three (3) that the student receives.

When the school contact the parent, the secretaries can greatly assist in viewing the attendance page and questioning the parent as to whether they have excuses they have not provided. If they have not used their 5 parent notes, encourage them to provide them at this time but also advise them to use them wisely in case they are needed later. If the parent does not turn in parent notes or cannot be reached, the school will use the five parent notes before referring them to the Tier I part of the plan

A student who is absent five (5) days without adequate excuse shall be reported to the Director of Schools/designee who will, in turn, provide written notice to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student's absence. If a parent does not provide documentation within adequate time excusing those absences, or request an attendance hearing, then the Director of Schools/designee shall implement the progressive truancy intervention plan described below prior to referral to juvenile court.

#### *Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan*<sup>10</sup>

Prior to referral to juvenile court, the following progressive truancy intervention plan will be implemented.

#### **Tier I**

Tier I of the progressive truancy intervention plan shall include the following:

At the fifth unexcused absence, the attendance clerk calls student into office to talk to student about absences and gives them three (3) days to have parent, guardian, or other person in parental relation to contact school to set up a parental conference, or a conference call meeting in which the parent and student are able to meaningfully participate.

1. A conference with the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s);
2. An attendance contract, based on the conference, signed by the student, the parent(s)/guardian(s), and an attendance supervisor or designee. The contract shall include:
  - a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student;
  - b. The period for which the contract is effective; and
  - c. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court; and
  - d. Give parent a copy of the contract and attendance report
3. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to discuss the student's progress.
4. **If a student or parent does not show up for the conference, or conference call meeting:**  
**After at least two attempts to meet with the student or parent the school may document that the student's parent or guardian is unwilling to cooperate in the truancy intervention plan. The director of schools or designee may report the student's absences to the appropriate judge**

## **Tier II**

If a student accumulates additional unexcused absences in violation of the attendance contract in Tier I, the student will be subject to Tier II.

Under this tier, a school employee shall conduct an individualized assessment detailing the reasons a student has been absent from school. The employee may refer the student to counseling, community-based services, or other services to address the student's attendance problems.

(Family Resource, Coordinated Health School Nurse, RTI, etc.)

5. **If a student does not show up for the conference:**
6. **After at least two attempts to meet with the student the student will be subject to Tier III**

## **Tier III**

This tier shall be implemented if the truancy interventions under Tier II are unsuccessful.

Truancy Board referral

These interventions shall be determined by a team, (Truancy Board) formed by the district. The interventions shall address student needs in an age-appropriate manner. Finalized plans shall be (Truancy Board), approved by the Director of Schools/designee.

Truancy Board will examine any available information and afford the student and parent/guardian the opportunity to enter an attendance contract with them.

Make referral to TN Dept. of Children's Services FCIP (if needed).

Make referral to any other community-based services (if needed).

Contract will be aimed at addressing student's attendance problems.

**7. If a student or parent does not show up for the Truancy Board:**

**After at least two attempts to meet with the student or parent the school may document that the student's parent or guardian is unwilling to cooperate in the truancy intervention plan. The director of schools or designee may report the student's absences to the appropriate judge.**

**If student, parent/guardian fails to comply with Tier Three :**

**Referral to Juvenile court**

**Accompanied by a statement from the student's school certifying that**

**The school applied the progressive truancy interventions adapted to the student, and**

**The progressive truancy interventions failed to meaningfully address the student's school attendance.**

If your child is expelled from school for any reason, your child is still subject to the compulsory school attendance law, if under the age of eighteen. It becomes the parent's obligation to obtain an educational program for the child. If this is not done, the child may be placed into state custody.

This letter is not intended to single out any person and is not for the majority of parents or their children. It is a reminder to those who do not see the importance of attending school and behaving appropriately while there.

If you begin to experience a problem with your child attending school, please contact the Attendance Supervisor, Dennis Balch or your Juvenile Court Youth Services Officers, Jennifer Shelton or Martha Newman. They have resources and advice that may be beneficial. It is our goal for children and parents to not be petitioned to court or arrested. We believe in utilizing preventive measures before the matter goes too far.

May each of you have a safe and productive school year.

Sincerely,

Dennis Balch  
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