



# Policy: Student Presence and Engagement

## Policy Number: JI

### Policy Type: Students

Hanover School Division believes that student presence and engagement is essential to a student's success, and that respectful and reciprocal relationships between the students, parents, and community contribute to a student's presence and engagement. Students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have a greater opportunity to access school and community resources, and have a greater sense of belonging.

## Policy

Hanover School Division commits to creating a warm, welcoming, and inclusive environment to motivate both presence and engagement. Daily recording of attendance, and monitoring of enrolment and attendance data will occur to provide timely and accurate data. In cases where a student is absent from the school without justifiable cause, the school will contact the parent or guardian and appropriate action will be taken.

A proactive approach to absenteeism is taken within the Division, as attendance issues may be the first sign that a student is experiencing challenges. Reasonable accommodations will be made to support a student experiencing chronic absenteeism, including the generation of a student-specific plan. If absenteeism continues to the level of severe chronic absenteeism, and school attempts are unsuccessful in mitigating it, the division will notify Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. The school may assign a case manager to work with cases of severe chronic absenteeism and restorative practices will be assessed.

## Guidelines

### 1. Terminology

**Presence:** When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.

**Engagement:** Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in school. Engagement is expressed in students' feelings that they belong at school, and in their participation in school activities (OECD, 2003).

**Regular Attendance:** Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.

**Absence:** Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.

- Excused Absence refers to any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) with the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.
- Unexcused Absence refers to any time a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/ expulsion) without the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.

**Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

**Severe Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.

**Student-Specific Plan (SSP):** A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (MEECL, 2022). Student-specific planning is a process through which members of student support teams meet the unique needs of individual students; it may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming.

## **2. Attendance Practices**

Hanover School Division requires that attendance be recorded in the division-wide Student Information System on a daily basis at all schools. The respective school will notify parent(s) when a student's absence is unexcused and will follow HSD's Intervention and Response strategy should absenteeism patterns continue.

Hanover School Division has designated an Attendance (Truancy) Officer.

## **3. Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing, and Reporting**

Division and School-based Administrators will monitor and analyze enrollment data, including year-over-year comparisons, as well as review unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports to ensure students are present. Concerns and correspondence regarding attendance will be documented.

## **4. Response to Chronic Absenteeism**

Hanover School Division will respond to absences in a non-punitive, fair and predictable manner, eliminating suspensions, expulsions and withdrawals in these instances. HSD's Intervention and Response strategy will be followed, taking student specific needs and circumstances into consideration, and requiring collaboration with principals, teachers, parents/legal guardians, and, if needed, the division truancy officer.

Should severe chronic absenteeism occur despite on-going efforts, the division will notify Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning in writing, as well as Child Family Services if there are concerns about student safety and well-being.

## **5. Coordinated Services**

A case management approach will be taken by the division when chronic absenteeism is present, and when aware, any external agencies will be involved in determining restorative practices.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Students**

- are responsible to attend school and classes regularly and punctually
- must comply with the school's code of conduct, and complete assignments and other related work required by teachers
- participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate

### **Parents/Legal Guardians**

- have the right to be informed regularly of the attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement of their child in school, and to participate in planning
- are responsible for cooperating fully with the child's teachers and other employees of the school division or school district to ensure the child complies with the school's code of conduct
- must take all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly

## Teachers

- are responsible for monitoring and recording student attendance
- are responsible for timely communication to the principal and the parent
- identify potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism
- promote and support regular attendance
- communicate (verbally and in writing, if needed) with students and parents when concerns related to attendance arise
- document steps taken to communicate with students, parents, and outside agencies when concerns related to attendance arise
- participate in the student-specific planning process

## Principals

- are responsible to work with teachers, students, parents, and others, as needed, to promote regular attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences
- ensure teachers maintain accurate attendance records
- monitor and review student attendance data and oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism
- report chronic/severe absenteeism to the school division
- invite community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children's services authorities to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming and planning for students
- lead school-based attendance initiatives

## School divisions

- ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming
- work with schools, parents, and community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present
- ensure that schools track student attendance accurately, document any students who are chronically absent, and take immediate, sustained action to address causes of chronic absenteeism until the student is regularly present
- work with schools and agencies to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families to ensure regular school attendance, such as through coordinated services
- ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among all staff

Date Policy Created:	November 7, 2023
Date of last Review:	
Reference(s):	Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement / 2023 The Public Schools Act
Related Forms:	Administrative Procedure