

**SECTION 3000 - STUDENTS
STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Student Presence and Engagement

The policy and principles included in this document build on those found in current provincial legislation, policies, and reports.

Provincial Legislation

- The Public Schools Act
- The Education Administration Act
- The Human Rights Code
- The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act
- The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Common Terminology

Presence

When a student attends and participates in the school or classroom on the days in which they are required. This is an entry point to being able to engage students in the process of learning. 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 in class or not participating in school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, with a valid excuse and the mutual consent of a parent/guardian and the school principal. In practice, this has also been referred to as a verified absence.

Unexcused Absence

Refers to any time a student is not in class or not participating in school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion, without a valid excuse, with or without parental approval.

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Chronic Absenteeism

Being absent 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

Being absent for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20 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.

Enhancing Proactive and Preventative Attendance Practices

LSSD will seek proactive approaches that support students by identifying and solving barriers to student presence and engagement to prevent further absences and to limit and reduce the risk of chronic absenteeism. This includes and is not limited to the following:

- creating a safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive school environment for students;
- continuing to focus on developing and maintaining positive, collaborative, and respectful relationships with students and their families;
- expanding implementation of anti-racism and anti-discrimination education;
- continuing to prioritize enhanced student and parent engagement with our schools;
- continuing to ensure the visibility of staff at transition times;
- establishing and implementing restorative practice, including restorative justice approaches; and
- ensuring that student attendance is a standing agenda item at senior administration meetings and school-based support team meetings.

Documenting, Monitoring, Analyzing and Reporting

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are asked to inform the school in advance, if they know their child will be absent.

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When a child is absent from school, the following will occur:

- The school will notify a parent/guardian of their child’s absence(s) on a daily basis through either a phone call, or through a voicemail/automated system.
- If absences persist, the teacher (or designate) will contact the parent/guardian and have a conversation to better understand the nature of the absence and proactively identify strategies in response to barriers.
- If concerns still exist about a student’s attendance, and a student has reached the number of absences defined as chronic absenteeism, the principal (or designate) will contact the parent/guardian, invite the parent/guardian to meet with the school team (ie. classroom teacher, learning support teacher, administration, guidance counselor), consider the appropriate supports which may be required and formulate a plan for moving forward.
- In situations involving severe chronic absenteeism, a Student Specific Plan will be developed which documents the plan and identifies who will be involved, strategies and timeline.
- Responses to student absenteeism will vary based on the age, grade, and development of the student, the professional judgment of teachers and principals, and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or division-based supports and/or with outside agencies. In situations where there are concerns about student safety and well-being, Child and Family Services (CFS) must be notified.
- If the school has made attempts to address severe chronic absenteeism for a student but has been unsuccessful, senior administration must be notified. The division will then notify the department’s School and Community Support Unit in writing.

Coordinated Services

- For students who are having issues with chronic absenteeism, schools must designate a case manager to respond to and work with a student and their parents. This process is outlined in the Case Management section of Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Resource Teachers in Manitoba Schools (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning).
- The focus should always be on inviting students back and finding the necessary resources to support attendance. Disengaged students benefit from restorative practices to reengage with the school environment.

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- Conflict in the school environment may be a barrier to student presence. Restorative practices can reduce conflict, bullying, and absenteeism and strengthen relationships. Restorative practices provide opportunities to make amends and repair relationships, and they reduce the likelihood of future harms while holding individuals accountable.
- When the school is aware of an external agency involvement with a student who is chronically absent, this agency must be included as part of the student-specific planning process.

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; and
- participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate; it is recognized that elementary-age students are more dependent on their parents to help them attend school regularly.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

- 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; and
- 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; and
- participate in the student-specific planning process.

Principals/designates:

- 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;

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- 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; and
- 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; and 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, parent(s)/guardian(s), 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 through coordinated services; and ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among all staff.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning:

- monitors and supports implementation of the Attendance Policy Directive in school divisions and reviews its effectiveness;
- assists divisions through consultation and collaboration with interdepartmental contacts and community service agencies, as necessary;
- collects, monitors, analyzes, and reports provincial attendance data through the provincial attendance index;
- establishes and maintains connections with inter-sectoral partners to support student presence and engagement in schools;
- creates a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum;
- supports the implementation of attendance strategies, including restorative practice;
- expands implementation of anti-racism and anti-discrimination education;
- supports culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence;
- reviews and updates the policy directive on a three-year cycle Government service providers and community partners;
- reinforce the importance of school attendance in all interactions with family and students;
- share relevant information with schools and work collaboratively with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), schools and school divisions;

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- provide supports and services that encourage regular attendance and help decrease any barriers that may be affecting a student's ability to attend school; and
- participate in coordinated case management and responsive planning for those who are chronically absent.

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