

ATTENDANCE POLICY / TARDY POLICY

POLICY ON STUDENT TRUANCY

It is important to note that GSAA feels that school attendance is critical to the successful school performance of all students. A true educational experience requires that a student participate actively in all aspects of the academic and co-curricular activities offered by the school. This active participation and all that it offers experientially can rarely be duplicated by any other means. The parent(s) and guardian(s) of our students have a moral and legal obligation to see to it that their sons and daughters attend school for the entire school year. In fact, this is a requirement under New Hampshire State Law RSA 193:1.

Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil: A parent of any child at least 6 years of age and under 18 years of age shall cause such child to attend the public school (charter school) to which the child is assigned during all times that the school is in session.

Definitions

- 1. Tardiness:** To be successful in life, it is necessary to be able to arrive at school or work on time. Students learn that positive trait, first in school and then in other areas of their life. Tardiness which is excessive, chronic or extremely late in arrival at school puts a student at a disadvantage in every area of school life. Tardiness disrupts the educational process not only for the tardy student but to other students and teachers in school. In fact, students and teachers often see it as a sign of disrespect. Parents need to work with GSAA to ensure that their sons and daughters arrive to school on time. They should also not be a cause for students to be late for school.

Rules regarding tardiness -- Tardiness is determined by the school. Parents may not excuse school tardies; the school administration makes the determination.

- All tardies require a reason or an explanation to the school.
- Five (5) tardies (arriving after 8:01 a.m.) will trigger a 45 minute after school detention assignment. Not attending a school detention without permission of the Head of School may result in the assignment of a Saturday detention.
- Ten (10) school tardies (arriving after 8:01 a.m.) will result in the assignment of one student absence, and a student/parent warning from the Head of School.
- Excessive or chronic student tardiness as determined by the Head of School will require a meeting between the Head of School and the parents. Generally more than ten tardies is considered excessive in one school year.
- If a student is significantly late on a school day (after 11:00 a.m.) the school may assign a ½ day absence.
- If a student is significantly late on a school day (after 12:00 p.m.) the school may assign a full-day absence.

2. Absenteeism: It is the requirement of all parent(s) and guardian(s) to validate the absence of their son or daughter. This must be done by 9:30 a.m. on the day of the absence. Validation is done by a phone call, or email. On the rare occasion that this is not followed, on the first day after the absence, a written note, signed by the parent, must be turned in to the school for a student to return. Only the school administration will determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.

- Only contact between school and the parent(s) and guardian(s) can validate an absence.
- Possible absences that may be excused by the school with the proper documentation:
 - Personal illness (may require a note from a medical professional)
 - A death in the family.
 - Professional appointment. (Please note that professional appointments should be attempted after school hours or in such a way as to allow a student to spend some time in school.)
 - Religious holidays.
 - Subpoenas and court orders
 - Extreme and dangerous weather conditions.
 - School related functions
 - Visits to colleges (with prior guidance department approval)
 - Suspension from school.
- Unexcused absences:
 - Excessive absences that occur without a meeting with the Head of School.
 - Absences assigned from tardiness.

3. Truancy: Truancy is a serious legal issue. The Head of School is the acting Truant Officer at GSAA for the State of NH. Truancy reports are filed with the SAU superintendent in which the student resides, the local police of that town, and an appropriate court. Also, truancy may require a report to the NH DCYF for negligence. Any student who is absent from school and/or class without the knowledge of the parent(s), guardian(s), or school administration is considered truant. A student can still be determined to be truant even if the parent(s) or guardian(s) are aware of the absence. This is true because even though parent(s)

or guardian(s) may have the right to excuse the absence, not all absences may be approved by the school's administration. That is why a dialogue on excessive and chronic tardiness is required. The consequences of school-approved absences and non-school approved absences may well differ. When there is a conflict, the school administration's ruling will prevail—especially if the absences interfere with the student's educational program. A student may be declared habitually truant when he/she has had 20 half-days of non-approved absences in one school year. A half-day absence is defined as missing up to half of the total minutes of a school day. Missing more than half of the total minutes of a school day constitutes a full day's absence.

Requirements and responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian, GSAA, and Students; and the New Hampshire Department of Education's Rules and Regulations on attendance.

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Students:

- Should notify the school in advance wherever possible of a student's absence.
- Students are responsible for making up all school work missed due to absences. The missed work and the method of making it up is left up to the discretion of the teacher with approval from the Head of the School. Normally the time period allowed to make up work is commensurate with the time missed by the student. For example, absence of a week would allow a one week period to make up the missed work.

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) should contact the school if there is a physiological, psychological or social reason for a student to have excessive absences. In that case, with the prior documentation of a medical professional, the school, student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will enter into a 504 agreement to create a medical plan with appropriate accommodations for the student. A 504 plan is generally not a blank check for student absence. It creates a medically appropriate educational plan for the student which must address their attendance.
- So that students can stay current with their class responsibilities and assignments, the school is presently researching methods for students who are medically required to stay home. In the medical plan the methods must be those that are approved by the New Hampshire Department of Education. Those methods could include: virtual education, Google Classroom and video conferencing when it is practical and appropriate.
- ***Please note below the academic and extracurricular ramifications for extended or chronic student absences.***

2. Head of School

- Shall determine if an absence has a valid reason.
- When not contacted by the parent(s)/guardian(s), will contact them to confirm and/or determine the cause of the absence. To reiterate, it is the parent(s)/guardian(s) responsibility to contact the school. When that is not done it could result in an unexcused absence.

3. GSAA

- Will annually document the cumulative absences of each student. The cumulative statistics will determine if student and/or family interventions are required. This data is sent yearly to the New Hampshire Department of Education. (NHDOE)

- State Law is very strict regarding the taking and recording of student absences. The NHDOE determines State funding to SAU's and Charter Schools from this data.
- All teachers are required to take daily attendance at the beginning of each class.
- Students who leave a class and do not return are noted for the record. Leaving school without permission results in a truancy.
- Emancipated who are attending GSAA are required to attend all classes and are subject to the same rules and restrictions as non-emancipated students at GSAA. Emancipation does not allow a student to leave school without permission of the Head of School.
- The names of students who are not present or who leave class and do not return are recorded by the Main Office of GSAA and reviewed by the Head of School regularly.
- The Head of School in all cases determines excused absences for students.
- Parent(s) and guardian(s) must give their consent to GSAA for all student absences.
- Will allow an appeal to the Head of School to revisit his/her decision on attendance.

New Hampshire Department of Education Rules and Regulations regarding attendance:

1. **10 or more half-days (or 5 full days) of unexcused absences:** The school administration must review the student attendance record and determine possible action. Possible action may include one or more of the following:
 - Contact by the Head of School with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

- A letter reviewing the school policy is sent to parent(s) or guardian(s) advising them that they must meet with the Head of School to remedy the issue.
 - A meeting between the Head of School, Guidance staff, and Special Education Coordinator (if appropriate), parent(s), guardian(s) and student to create a plan for addressing an absence issue.
 - Possible special education referral or a 504 referral.
 - A referral to the police, superintendent of the SAU of student's residence, an appropriate court or DCYF.
2. **20 or more half-days (or 10 full days) of unexcused absences:** The school administration must review the students and determine possible actions. Possible action may include one or more of the following:
- All of the above in #1
 - A CHINS (Child in Need of Service) petition/affidavit written by the Head of School to the appropriate court.

SCHOOL, ACADEMIC AND EXTRACURRICULAR RAMIFICATIONS OF EXTENDED OR CHRONIC ABSENCE; AND OTHER REGULATIONS GOVERNING ABSENCES OR SCHOOL DISMISSALS

1. Please consult the previous pages for all information on school regulations regarding student absence.
2. In general, when a student returns from an absence, all notes and medical documentation should arrive at school within a three-day grace period.
3. Students who are absent on a particular school day may not participate in school academic or extracurricular activities after school without the permission of the Head of School.

4. If a parent absents their students for a family vacation that occurs when school is in session, they need to seek approval for such absences from the Head of School. The Head of School will determine if these absences are excused. Students have full responsibilities to contact their teachers and make up all work covered and assigned during this period. The time period to submit this work is equal to the number of days missed at GSAA.
5. For an absence to be excused, all medical documentation must be in the form of a note presented exactly as it is issued by a medical practitioner. It should preferably be on the medical professional's stationary and at the very least from the medical prescription pad. It should include the diagnosis and the extent of absence. Any alteration disqualifies the note and results in an unexcused absence and other possible consequences. Any absence for more than 20 school days will generally require a medical educational plan created by the school, teachers, parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student.
6. Without a medical educational plan, a student who misses more than 26 days during the school year (or 13 days during a semester) cannot receive academic credit for their course work regardless of the grade. In extenuating circumstances, this may be appealed to the Head of School.
7. When a student has excessive or chronic absences, they must be approved by the Head of School to participate in GSAA extracurricular activities.
8. Absences/tardies during mid-term and final exams:
 - Students arriving late to an exam must get a pass from the main office to get into the exam room. If the reason for the tardiness is valid, students will receive the appropriate time to finish the exam.
 - If a student misses an exam due to absence, the classroom teacher and Head of School will determine how much time the student will have to make up their exam. If the absence is the result of truancy the exam may not be made up. In all cases all exams that can be made up must be must be completed within 10 calendar days (not school days). Students needing

more time should consult with Guidance or the Special Needs Coordinator. Exams not made up within the time limits require a zero to be listed as the exam grade.

9. Student dismissals from school:

- Whenever possible, all appointments should be made outside of the school day.
- All dismissals require a parent note to be presented by 8:15 a.m. on the day of dismissal to the main office. The note should contain the specific reason for the dismissal, when and where the appointment is scheduled. GSAA reserves the right to verify appointments. If a note is not presented on time, the parent may call the school's main office by 8:30 a.m. to explain the appointment.
- All students must check in with the main office to be officially dismissed. Students who violate this rule are subject to being charged with an unexcused absence or a possible truancy. Students may not be dismissed to anyone other than to a parent or guardian who has an appropriate ID. If someone other than a parent or guardian is picking up the student, it will not be allowed without the approval in advance of the Head of the School. This requires a phone call from the parent or guardian to the Head of School.

10. Emancipated students who are attending GSAA are required to attend all classes and are subject to the same rules and restrictions as non-emancipated students at GSAA. ***Emancipation does not allow a student to leave school without permission of the Head of School.***