

Adopted: 2005
Reviewed: 1.19.21

Student Attendance Policy

I. Purpose

- A. The Swan River Montessori Charter School (SRMCS) Board believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, teacher, and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.

II. General Statement of Policy

A. Responsibilities

1. **Student's Responsibility.** It is the student's right to be in school. It is also the student's responsibility to attend all assigned classes every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class. Finally, it is the student's responsibility to request any missed assignments due to an absence.
2. **Parent or Guardian's Responsibilities.** It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to ensure the student is attending school, to inform the school in the event of a student absence, and to work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance issues that may arise.
3. **Teacher's Responsibilities.** It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance records in each assigned class. It is also the teacher's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly. It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request. Finally, it is the teacher's responsibility to work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance issues that may arise.

4. School Director's Responsibilities. It is the School Director, or designee's, responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes. It is also School Director's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly to all students, to maintain accurate records on student attendance, and to prepare a list of previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the School Director, or designee's, responsibility to inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and to work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems.

In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22, the students of SRMCS are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the SRMCS School Board from attendance because the student has already completed state and school district standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

B. Attendance Procedures

1. Excused Absences. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the student cannot attend school is a valid excuse and must be provided after three consecutive days of absenteeism. Consequences of unexcused absenteeism are written below.

The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

- Illness.
- Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
- A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
- Medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointment.
- Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week.
- Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
- Vacation with family.
- Family emergencies.
- A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.

2. Consequences of Excused Absences. Students whose absences are excused are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.

Work missed because of absence must be made up by the due date assigned by the child's primary teacher. Any work not completed within this period shall result in "no credit" for the missed assignment. However, the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.

3. Unexcused Absences. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent and/or SRMCS.
- Any student absence in which the parent/guardian failed to comply with any reporting requirements of SRMCS' attendance procedures.
- Excessive vacation time during the school year. This will be addressed at the discretion of the School Director on a case by case basis.
- Absences resulting from cumulated unexcused tardies. Three (3) tardies equal one (1) unexcused absence.
- Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.
- Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.
- Babysitting, shopping, hair appointments, working at home, oversleeping, missing the bus, running late, and other incidences as determined by administration.

4. Consequences of Unexcused Absences. Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minn. Stat. § 121A.40-121A.56.

Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.

In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota's statutes.

Students with unexcused absences shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:

- Work missed because of unexcused absence must be made up within the assigned timeframe as provided by the child's primary teacher.
- After the third cumulated unexcused absence, SRMCS will notify the parent/guardian by email or phone and may refer the student to the appropriate Human Services Agency.
- After such notification, the student or his/her parent or guardian may, within five (5) business days, request a conference with school officials regarding the student's absences and the prescribed discipline. The notification will state that the school strongly urges the student's parent/guardian to request such a conference.

C. **Tardiness**

1. **Definition.** Students are expected to be in their assigned classroom at designated times. Failures to do so constitute tardiness.

2. **Procedures for Reporting Tardiness.**

- A student is considered tardy if s/he arrives after the start of the school day until 10:15 a.m.
- A student is considered absent for half a day if s/he arrives at school any time after 10:15 a.m. OR if s/he leaves school before 1:15 p.m.
- A student is considered absent for a full day if s/he misses three or more hours of the school day.

3. **Excused Tardiness.** Valid excuses for tardiness are:

- Illness.
- Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
- A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
- Medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointment.
- Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- Any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or staff member.

4. **Unexcused Tardiness.** Unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned classroom at the designated time the class commences without a valid excuse. Three (3) unexcused tardies are equivalent to one unexcused absence. SRMCS will send a letter/email home to the parents/guardians indicating three unexcused tardies have turned into one unexcused absence.

III. **Dissemination of Policy**

Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year via the SRMCS at www.swanrivermontessori.org. This policy shall also be available upon request.

IV. **Required Reporting**

A. **Continuing Truant.** Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minn. Stat. § 120A.05 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minn. Stat. § 120.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for three days if the child is in elementary school.

B. **Reporting Responsibility.** When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minn. Stat. §260A.03 provides that the school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

1. The child is truant;
2. That the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absence;
3. That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minn. Stat. §120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minn. Stat. §120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minn. Stat. §120A.34;
5. That alternative educational programs and services may be available in the district;
6. That the parent/guardian has the right to meet with appropriate SRMCS personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;
7. That if the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minn. Ch. 260;

8. That it is recommended that the parent/guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

- C. **Habitual Truant.** A habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven (7) school days if the child is in elementary school. SRMCS shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parents or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures as stated under Minn. Ch. 260A.

NOTE: The School Director reserves the right to address student attendance at any time for any reason. Any attendance issues/concerns that arise and do not fit within the policy guidelines as stated above will be dealt with on a case by case basis, if deemed necessary by the Director.