

## **Saugus High School Attendance Policy**

Consistent attendance is critical for students to achieve in the classroom. The attendance policy is designed to promote the development of responsible, dependable, and punctual students, recognize the role of the student, family, and school in maintaining appropriate attendance, and enforce Massachusetts Laws with respect to school attendance. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 76, Section 2 states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen are required to attend school regularly. The statute defines regularly as not more than seven absences in any six-month period. The following policy outlines definitions for excused and unexcused absences, protocols for reporting absences, and potential consequences for failure to adhere to the policy or follow school protocols.

### **Excused Absences:**

The School Committee recognizes that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law. The state statute further points out that good attendance is the joint responsibility of the student, the parent/guardian, and the school. Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school for the following reasons:

1. Illness, quarantine or other medical condition with verifiable medical documentation
2. Bereavement or serious illness in family.
3. Observance of major religious holidays.
4. Court appearance/subpoena
5. College or military recruiter visits, limited to two, with previous approval from the administration. – seniors only
6. School sponsored activities, which were approved by the administration.

### **Unexcused Absences:**

Examples of unexcused absences and/or tardiness include oversleeping, missing the bus, car problems, family vacations, restrictions from a field trip (students are still expected to report to school), and caring for siblings. While students are strongly encouraged to make-up work for any absence, teachers are not required to give academic credit for make-up work completed following an unexcused absence.

Every three tardies to class, which are less than half of the class time, will constitute an absence toward the class. For all classes, any tardy which constitutes missing more than half of the class time will result in an absence from the class.

A student must be present in class for at least one half (1/2) the class time to receive attendance credit for that class.

Repeated unexcused absences are unacceptable and can have serious academic consequences. If a student accumulates any of the following number of class or complete day absences:

1. 5 unexcused for a semester course
2. 10 combined unexcused or excused absences for a semester course
3. 9 unexcused absences in a given academic year for a year long course
4. 20 combined of unexcused or excused absences for a year long course

**The student will not receive academic credit towards graduation even if they earn a passing grade. Students may be eligible to attend summer school to regain their credit.**

### **Protocol for Reporting an Absence:**

The school will contact homes of students who are absence on a daily basis through our automated announcement system. The parent is urged to contact the appropriate Administrative Office upon receipt of this call if they are unaware of this absence. Students and parents may access the class and daily attendance through our administrative software.

All notes documenting absences must be taken in to the respective Administrator for approval within 48 hours of an absence. Documents received after the 48-hour period may be determined to be unacceptable.

### **Chronic Absenteeism:**

If a student under the age of sixteen accumulates seven (7) absences for the year, either excused or unexcused, a letter will be sent out addressed to the parent/guardian outlining the school's attendance concerns and arrange for a mandatory meeting with administration to come up with a plan to address the absenteeism discuss the reasons for the absences, and plan for improved attendance going forward.

If the student reaches 15 absences for the year, the Vice-Principal or Principal may choose to involve the Department of Children and Families and/or the Juvenile Court by filing a CHINS or 51a as appropriate.

If a student over sixteen accumulates 15 cumulative absences, a Notice of Withdrawal will be sent to notify the parents that their student will be removed from the student register. Include in this notice the Administration will impose General Law Chapter 71B, Chapter 766 Regulations, Paragraph 315, which states "any child who has been absent without medical excuse more than fifteen school days in any quarter must receive a letter indicating whether a referral for IDEA services is appropriate at that time". The administration will hold a mandatory meeting with the parent/guardian regarding possible re-enrollment for the next academic school year.

### **Make-up Work:**

Students will be given a reasonable number of days to make up work following an absence. The general time frame will be equal to the number of school days missed, unless prior arrangements are made with a teacher for an extra help session after school. For example, if a student is absent for three (3) consecutive days, they will

have three (3) school days to make up the work missed for full credit. This rule will hold, unless a student has made prior arrangements to meet with a teacher after school to make up an assignment.

### **Faculty Review Board**

To insure fairness, a Review Board of faculty members will meet to evaluate extenuating circumstances pertaining to absences prior to final marks being recorded. A student must submit a completed appeal form in writing to his/her Assistant Principal by the Friday before the year/semester ends. Upon doing so, the Faculty Attendance Review Board will be convened. A parent must accompany the student to the Review Board hearing to explain the extenuating circumstance. The Board's decision will be reported to the student and the parent after the Principal approves the appeal.

Amended

Approved 11/18/10

SC First Reading: 10/28/10