

ASPEN ACADEMY

Adopted: _____

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 503 Charter
Orig. 1995 (as ISD Policy)
Orig. 2022 (as Charter Policy)
Rev. 2025

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503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

- A. The charter school 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 and study halls every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class or study hall. Finally, it is the student's responsibility to request any missed assignments due to an absence.

2. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility

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 problems that may arise.

3. Teacher's Responsibility

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class and study hall. 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 problems that may arise.

4. Administrator's Responsibility

- a. It is the administrator's responsibility to require students to attend all

assigned classes and study halls. It is also the administrator'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 the previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the administrator'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.

- b. In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, the students of the charter school are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes and/or study halls every day school is in session, unless the student has been excused by the school board from attendance because the student has already completed state and charter school standards required to graduate from high school, has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

B. Attendance Procedures

Attendance procedures shall be presented to the charter school board for review and approval. When approved by the school board, the attendance procedures will be included as an addendum to this policy.

1. Excused Absences

- a. A parent, guardian, or other person having control of a child may apply to a charter school to have the child excused from attendance for the whole or any part of the time school is in session during any school year. Application may be made to a truant officer or the school official designated by the principal. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the child cannot attend school is a valid excuse.
- b. 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.

c. Legitimate Exceptions

The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:

- (1) that the child's physical or mental health is such as to prevent attendance at school or application to study for the period required, which includes:
 - (a) child illness, medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling appointments; including appointments conducted through telehealth;
 - (b) family emergencies;
 - (c) the death or serious illness or funeral of an immediate family member;

- (d) active duty in any military branch of the United States;
 - (e) the child has a condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis; or
 - (f) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action; or
 - (g) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, et.; or
 - (h) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing; or
 - (i) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and student will be permitted to complete make-up work; or
 - (j) Up to 3 days of vacation; or
 - (k) other exemptions included in this attendance policy.
- (2) that the child has already completed state and charter school standards required for graduation from high school; or
 - (3) that it is the wish of the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child, that the child attend for a period or periods not exceeding in the aggregate three hours in any week, instruction conducted by a Tribal spiritual or cultural advisor, or a school for religious instruction conducted and maintained by a church, or association of churches, or any Sunday school association incorporated under the laws of this state, or any auxiliary thereof. This instruction must be conducted and maintained in a place other than a public school building, and it must not, in whole or in part, be conducted and maintained at public expense. A child may be absent from school on days that the child attends upon instruction according to this clause.

c. Consequences of Excused Absences

- (1) 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.
- (2) Notification regarding reason for excused absence may be required upon return.

2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent and/or the charter school.

- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the charter school's attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home, including providing childcare of siblings.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) Vacations with family, over 3 days.
- (6) Personal trips to schools or colleges.
- (7) Absences resulting from cumulated unexcused tardies (3 tardies equal one unexcused absence).
- (8) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Educational Neglect, Truancy, and Suspension

- (1) Minn. Stat. §§ 260 C defines educational neglect as the child's absence from school without lawful excuse due to the parent's, guardian's, or custodian's failure to comply with compulsory instruction laws if the child is under 12 years old and the school has made appropriate efforts to resolve the child's attendance problems. This presumption may be rebutted based on showing clear and convincing evidence that the child is habitually truant. Parents or guardians of students who are absent for extended periods of time, due to serious injury or illness that is medically documented, shall not be considered responsible for educational neglect. The school reserves the right to ask for verification of said illness or injury from the student's doctor(s). If the student has more than 7 days of unexcused absences, Aspen Academy, to be in compliance with County of residence educational neglect reporting procedures and MN Compulsory Instruction Stat. §§ 120A.22, may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court. Before making such a report, however, Aspen Academy will do the following:
 - (a) document that the absences were unexcused and the school attempted to contact the family to verify reason for absence
 - (b) a doctor's letter may be requested upon the student's return if the student has been ill for three or more days
 - (c) after three days of absences, whether consecutive or not, the parent will be contacted in regards to student attendance.
 - (d) after five days of absences, whether consecutive or not, the parent will be contacted again to set up an attendance plan.
 - (e) county of residence timeline and requirements will be followed. Referrals for educational neglect will be made as required.
 - (f) The Director or a designee may, at their discretion, contact the county of the student's residence to report the student's absences pursuant to MN Statute.

Minn. Stat. §§ 260 C defines truancy as the child's absence from school without lawful excuse, due to the child's intent to be absent from school.

If the student has unexcused absences in one or more classes for 7 days, Aspen Academy, to be in compliance with County of residence educational neglect reporting procedures and MN Compulsory Instruction Stat. §§ 120A.22 may, at the Director's discretion, request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court. Before making such a report, however, Aspen Academy will do the following:

- (a) document that the absences were unexcused and the school attempted to contact the family to verify reason for absence
 - (b) after three days of absences, whether consecutive or not, the parent will be contacted in regards to student attendance.
 - (c) after five days of absences, whether consecutive or not, the parent will be contacted again to set up an attendance plan.
 - (d) county of residence timeline and requirements will be followed. Referrals for truancy will be made as required.
 - (e) The Director or a designee may, at their discretion, contact the county of the student's residence to report the student's absences pursuant to MN Statute.
- (2) 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.

c. Discipline for Truancy

- (1) Truant students shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:
- (a) From the first through the third truancy, the parent or guardian will be notified that the student had an unexcused absence (truancy).
 - (b) After the third cumulated unexcused absence (truancy), a student's parent or guardian will be notified by mail that his or her child has more than three truanies. The letter will also warn parents that after seven such truanies, the child may be referred to County of residence Social Services for truancy. In this notification, parents will be urged to meet with school officials to create an attendance contract. (See Required Reporting section IV below.)
 - (c) After such notification, the student or his or her parent or guardian may, within 15 school days, request a conference with school officials regarding the student's absences. The above notification will state that the school strongly urges the student's parent or guardian to request such a conference.

C. Tardiness and Early Departures

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.
2. All students are expected to stay until the end of the school day. Failure to do so constitutes an unexcused absence.
3. Procedures for Reporting Tardiness or Early Departures
 - a. Students tardy at the start of the school day must be accompanied into the building by an adult and must report to the school office for an

admission slip. Tardies between periods will be handled by the teacher. Tardies will be noted on the student's report card and in the student's file.

- b. Early departures must meet the standards of excused absences (e.g. illness or medical appointment). If it does not, the departure will be considered an unexcused absence.

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4. Excused Tardiness

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

- a. Illness.
- b. Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
- c. A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
- d. Medical, dental, orthodontic, or mental health treatment.
- e. Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
- f. Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- g. Any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or faculty member.

4. Unexcused Tardiness

- a. An unexcused tardie is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
- b. Consequences of tardiness may include detention after 3 unexcused tardies, at the discretion of the director. In addition, 3 unexcused tardies are equivalent to one unexcused absence.

D. Student Withdrawal and Wait List Admittance

- 1. Parents may choose to withdraw their student at any time.
- 2. Students who are voluntarily or involuntarily withdrawn will not have their place held for them. When class size drops below 22 students in K-5 or 25 students in 6-8, the next student on the wait list shall be given that space. Students who are voluntarily or involuntarily withdrawn and wish to return shall be placed at the bottom of the waitlist. This does not include students who may qualify for homebound instruction due to medical reasons.
- 3. Parents or guardians who withdraw their student to avoid disciplinary action (e.g. suspension or sitting out an extra-curricular activity) and then want to re-enroll the student will still have to have the student receive the disciplinary action as part of the re-enrollment criteria.

E. Participation in Extracurricular Activities and School-Sponsored On-the-Job Training

Programs

1. This policy applies to all students involved in any extracurricular activity scheduled either during or outside the school day and any school-sponsored on-the-job training programs.
2. School-initiated absences will be accepted and participation permitted.
3. A student may not participate in any activity or program if he or she has an unexcused absence from any class during the day.
4. If a student is suspended from any class, he or she may not participate in any activity or program that day.
5. If a student is absent from school due to medical reasons, he or she must present a physician's statement or a statement from the student's parent or guardian clearing the student for participation that day. The note must be presented to the coach or advisor before the student participates in the activity or program.

III. RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable efforts will be made by the charter school to accommodate any student who wishes to be excused from a curricular activity for a religious or cultural observance as provided under Policy 609. Requests for accommodation should be directed to the building principal.

IV. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

- A. Copies of this policy shall be made available to all students and parents at the commencement of each school year. This policy shall also be available upon request in the office.
- B. The charter school will provide annual notice to parents of the charter school's policy relating to a student's absence from school for religious observance.

V. REQUIRED REPORTING

A. Continuing Truant

Minnesota Statutes, section 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. Three days if the child is in elementary school; or
2. Three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school.

B. Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statutes, section 260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable

means, of the following:

1. That the child is truant;
2. That the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
3. That the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.34;
4. That this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.34;
5. That alternative educational programs and services may be available in the child's enrolling or resident district;
6. That the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school 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 Minnesota Statutes, chapter 260C;
8. That if the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.201; and
9. That it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

C. Habitual Truant

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
2. A charter school attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 260A.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120A.05 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School for Religious Observance)
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. § 124E.03, Subd. 2(g) and (j) (Applicable Law)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is a Continuing

Truant)

Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)

Minn. Stat. § 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)

Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565 (1975)

Slocum v. Holton Bd. of Educ., 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)

Campbell v. Bd. of Educ. of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)

Hamer v. Bd. of Educ. of Twp. High Sch. Dist. No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d 7, 383 N.E.2d 231 (1978)

Gutierrez v. Sch. Dist. R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)

Knight v. Bd. of Educ., 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)

Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)