

West Buffalo Charter School

Attendance Policy

Statement of Overall Objectives

Every student has a right to educational opportunities that will enable the student to develop his or her fullest potential. Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with his or her teachers and peers and is a major component of academic success. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement. Therefore, attendance policies that provide for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address them are most likely to succeed. Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents/ persons in parental relation, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff.

Compulsory Education under New York State Law

School age minors age 6-16 must attend school regularly as prescribed where the student resides. The student must attend school the entire time classes are in session (NYS Education Law 3205). The compulsory education law is designed to require school attendance and insure that no child is denied the opportunity to receive an education. New York State compulsory education laws specify that each minor child from 6 to 16 years of age, mentally and physically fit, will be in regular attendance for the entire time school is in session. At the West Buffalo Charter School a child who becomes 6 years of age on or before January 1 during a school year is required to attend school beginning in August. According to State law, the school year begins July 1.

Description of Strategies to Meet Objectives

The School will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Maintain accurate record keeping to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- c) Develop strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

Attendance/Participation Regulations

- a) The attendance policy begins upon the first day of formal enrollment in each class. Enrollment in class begins when a teacher is notified of placement.
- b) It is the responsibility of students to contact their teachers regarding missed tests and class assignments.
- c) If a student is absent for more than 50% of a given class period, it will be considered an absence.
- d) Three "illegal" instances of tardiness or early departure will constitute an "illegal" absence.
- e) Students who do not attend classes do not participate in the learning that takes place. Students and families should be aware that a lack of class participation is a factor that can be considered in the course grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

f) Each classroom teacher will compare the day's student absence list against the class register of each period to verify the correctness of each source of information and alert the proper personnel as to conflicting data.

g) Classroom teachers are required to complete a form letter to be mailed to parents/guardians after a student has three (3) absences from class within a marking period.

Excuses:

- Within five days of a student's return to school from an absence, a written excuse from a parent or legal guardian must be received or the school must consider the absence "illegal".
- Tardiness or early departure must be explained with a note from the parent/guardian on the day of the event.
- If an excessive pattern of legal absences is identified by the School Leader or his/her designee, the office will investigate the validity of the excuses and reasons for absences. If the absences are found to be illegal, then they will be recorded as such.

Parent and Student Notification

1. The school will provide a copy of the Attendance Policy to each parent and student at the beginning of the school year and upon registration of new students.
2. The policy will also be included in the Student Handbook.
3. The parents or guardians will be afforded several opportunities to learn of the attendance policy, such as at parent/teacher conferences, open houses, new student orientations or telephone conferences.
4. Periodic reminders of the attendance policy will be provided throughout the year.

Faculty/Staff Notice

1. The school will provide copies of the attendance policy to all staff at the beginning of each school year.
2. All staff will meet with the School Leader at the beginning of each school year to review the attendance policy.
3. The school will develop and provide letters for parent notification of student absences.
4. The attendance policy will be posted in the school.

Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept in a register of attendance in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "legal" or "illegal".

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education Law Section 3202(1-a).

Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy, or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse

The school staff will be responsible for notifying the parent/person in parental relation for a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. If the parent/person in parental relation cannot be reached, the staff member will provide such notification by mail.

If deemed necessary by appropriate school officials, or if requested by the parent/person in parental relation, a school conference shall be scheduled between the parent/person in parental relation and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance.

Call-In Procedure

In the event your child is absent, please call the school at 923-1534. If we do not hear from you and your child is absent for two consecutive days, a phone call will be made on the second day of absence to check on the child. Parents are requested to send a written excuse upon the child's return to school explaining the reason for the absence.

In the event that we are unable to verify the student's absence by phone or a written excuse was not sent in with the student, the absence will be marked as unexcused.

Recording Attendance

Attendance is recorded each the morning at 8:30 am. Teachers mark students as either present, absent, or tardy.

The school day begins at 8:00 am. Students are expected to be in their classrooms and ready to begin the day by 8:10 am. Students are marked tardy if they are not in the classroom within this specified time.

Excessive Absences

Excessive absence from school is defined as missing more than ten percent of school (excused or unexcused) within a marking period.

1. At the completion of a marking period, parents/guardian of students who have missed more than ten percent of school will receive a letter from the school. The letter will include the total days absent and encourage regular attendance for the remainder of the school year.
2. If the student's attendance is not improved at the completion of the following marking period, parents/guardians will receive a second letter. This letter will include the total days absent and request a meeting with the School Leader to discuss the reason for the absences and to determine if resources or assistance from the school is needed to improve attendance.
3. After the second letter has been sent and a meeting to discuss the student's attendance has been conducted, if the student's attendance fails to improve, the School Leader will determine if further action is deemed necessary.

Appeal Process

Students and/or parents may exercise the right to appeal to School Leader on the grounds that there are extenuating circumstances that warrant special consideration. All rulings on such appeals will be communicated in writing to the student and parents/guardians. A further appeal may be made to the Board of Trustees.