TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School #4095

503 STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

A. The purpose of this policy is to define student attendance and to provide structure for the procedures regarding student attendance, truancy, and enrollment. Because of the nature of being an online charter school, the definition of student attendance is not based entirely on seat time in a physical location but rather on the percentage of work completed by the student toward successful completion of coursework. Historically, students who consistently complete work also successfully finish courses and earn credit toward graduation.

B. This policy also recognizes that student attendance and course completion are a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, Learning Manager and administrators. This policy will provide the structure and policy in order to support all parties in this joint venture. In accordance with Minnesota state laws concerning student attendance, the policy includes truancy intervention processes.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Attendance, defined in Section III as work completion, is required of all students enrolled in the charter school. In accordance with MN state law, students who are not in attendance for 15 consecutive school days will be dropped from school enrollment. How attendance is tracked, how the school intervenes when absence is excessive, and to which other agencies the school must report depends upon the age of the particular student in question. See Section IV for these procedures.

The charter school recognizes that the responsibility for student attendance belongs to the students, their parents/guardians, and their Learning Managers (LMs) in a partnership for overall communication and learning. The different responsibilities are as follows:

1. Students' Responsibilities

   a. Students consistently log 20-25 hours/week of documented learning on the computer.
   b. Students make adequate weekly progress (21-25% overall completion per week).
   c. Students communicate questions, computer problems, and school struggles with their Learning Managers immediately so as to be able to make adequate weekly progress.
   d. Students attend lab for the recommended five hours at the school's physical location or work adequately from home.

2. Parents/Guardians' Responsibilities

    a. Parents/guardians ensure that the student is making adequate weekly progress.
    b. Parents/guardians provide the student with access to the necessary tools for student success.
    c. Parents/guardians inform the school in the event of a student absence.
    d. Parents/guardians work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise and take an active role in supporting the student in course completion.

3. Learning Managers' Responsibilities

    a. Learning Managers (LMs) monitor attendance, maintain accurate attendance records, and apply attendance policies uniformly.
    b. LMs provide reports to parents and students concerning weekly progress and inform students and parents/guardians of any attendance issues.
    c. LMs work cooperatively with students and their parents/guardians to solve any attendance problems that may arise.
    d. LMs are required to report students' attendance issues to the truancy coordinator in compliance with the attendance/truancy procedures of the charter school.

III. DEFINITIONS

Please note that the foundation for these definitions have come from the Chisago County Protocol document; however, they have been adjusted to fit the online/hybrid model at the charter school.

Absence – The failure of a student to attend lab physically, the failure to attend school virtually via one of the charter school's course delivery systems, and/or the failure to complete coursework. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused (as defined below), students are required to make up all work and continue toward successful completion of coursework. Students can avoid having absences (whether excused or unexcused) tracked by making adequate weekly progress in their assigned coursework.

Attendance – Attendance at the charter school is calculated based on work completion or the amount of work completed each week that a student is enrolled in the charter school. The charter school **recommends** that students physically attend lab for five hours each week; however, this recommendation could be increased based on need or decreased/eliminated based on successful course completion. Attendance hours are not awarded for being physically present in lab but

rather the amount of work a student completes while in lab would determine lab attendance. Wolf Creek students are required to attend all testing sessions at the school's physical location at 10363 Liberty Lane in Chisago City, MN as required under MN law. This testing can include grade level assessment testing, or Special Education testing and evaluation procedures, or other academic testing for intervention purposes.

Days of attendance – Days of attendance are determined by work completion percentages. The charter school has determined that students must increase their course percentages by a total of 20% - 25% each week in order to be considered in attendance for 5 days in a school week. School weeks at the charter school start on Friday and end on Thursday. The 21% - 25% overall completion increase can include work completed any hour of any day within the seven day period including work completed on weekends. Students may accomplish this in a flexible model within each week and should consult their Learning Managers if they have any questions about the different models available to them.

Excused absence – An acceptable absence as determined by the school. The burden of proof for a student being excused from school is placed on the parent/guardian of the student. Determination of the excused nature of the absence is left to director discretion. ***Students who maintain their adequate work completion percentages on a weekly basis may not be required to provide documentation except in the case of a pre-approved absence (family vacation, etc.).*** The following reasons are examples which are recognized by the school as legitimate:

a. **Parent/doctor verified illness**: an absence verified by a parent/guardian or doctor, in writing within **three days of the absence**. The excuse must specify the health condition and why it prevents attendance at school. Please note that students may attend school virtually from their home while ill. Should the illness prevent them from attending school virtually from their home, a doctor's note may be required to verify the severity of the illness.
b. **Family emergencies**: an absence resulting from a serious illness, injury or death of an immediate family member.
c. **Scheduled appointments approved by parent**: an appointment for which written documentation from medical/dental/mental health professional has been obtained and provided to the school within three days of the absence.
d. **Religious instruction**: not to exceed three hours in any week.
e. **School directed activities**: absences for field trips, athletic trips, music trips or other school activities planned by the charter school and approved by the parent/guardian.
f. **Suspension**: as defined by the school board.
g. **Discipline issues**: an absence resulting from a student being sent home during the school day for a behavioral/discipline problem.
h. **Court appearances**: an absence by a student who has been court ordered to appear and the absence has been previously arranged by the parent/guardian with the school. Proof of court order and of actual appearance is required to verify this

type of absence.

i. **Computer problems**: an absence by a student whose computer access is not working. This problem must be reported immediately so that alternate assignments or arrangements can be made. **A maximum of 2 days can be excused for this reason.** School equipment can be checked out for this purpose.
j. **Exceptional circumstances**: any other circumstances where permission may be granted at the discretion of the school official, which is coordinated by the student with the school, in advance or as the occasion arises. Examples would be childbirth, hospitalization, detention center, etc.

Note: In almost all cases, online work and adequate progress toward course completion is expected while lab hours may not be expected.

Unexcused absence - An absence for reasons that are not recognized by the school authorities as legitimate. Unexcused absences are tracked for truancy and enrollment purposes. After any unexcused absence occurs, students are expected to return to successful completion of coursework in order to avoid truancy consequences and/or losing their enrollment in the charter school. It should also be noted that to be enrolled as a student at Wolf Creek, state statute clearly states that a student must be domiciled or physically present in the state, students cannot enroll and travel outside of the state and continue to receive educational services. The following are examples of **unacceptable** reasons for absence:

a. Car trouble
b. Visiting
c. Overslept; alarm did not work
d. Shopping
e. Needed at home
f. Family vacation
g. Babysitting
h. Missed bus; no ride to school
i. Work
j. No call or note from the parent/guardian verifying the absence
k. Personal (no reason given)
l. Truancy, as defined in this document
m. Other absences as determined on a case by case basis

Extended absences – An absence of more than five consecutive school days. Students who accrue more than **five** consecutive absences may be asked to provide documentation for the absences to be considered excused absences. Students who are unable to provide this documentation are subject to attendance and truancy policies. Students who accrue **ten** consecutive absences will be warned that they are jeopardizing their enrollment in the charter school. Students who accrue **fifteen** consecutive unexcused absences will be dropped from the enrollment of the charter school, and, thereafter, would need to complete the enrollment application in order to be admitted back into school. No credit is earned in the time the student is

not enrolled. If a student has suffered an extended long term illness and required work has not been completed, the student may request an extension by completing the extension request form seven days prior to the end of the term. The Director has the authority to grant or to deny the extension based on individual student circumstance. The charter school's homebound curriculum is available 24 hours a day/seven days a week from any computer.

Truancy – Not making adequate weekly progress in assigned coursework and providing documentation of an excused nature of an absence. Truancy does not apply to students 18 years old or older. Students under the age of 18 are truant if they:

a. Do not successfully achieve an overall course percentage increase of 20%-25% in a school week and do not provide documentation if an absence is excused.
b. Attend lab but do not complete any coursework while there.
c. Sign into online course delivery system but do not complete any coursework.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. In order to make the online system work alongside traditional school attendance policies, a conversion from work completion over to days absent must occur. Attendance calculations are made each week by all LMs for all students. This is done by determining the sum of percentage of change for all classes to determine a total overall completion percentage increase for each student.

1. Adequate progress each week is 21-25% total overall completion percentage increase each 5 day school week. It should be noted that some shorter school weeks will be adjusted accordingly for attendance expectations.
2. Completion percentages are then converted into the number of days:
   a. 0% = 5 days absent.
   b. 1-5% =4 days absent.
   c. 6-10%=3 days absent.
   d. 11-15%=2 days absent
   e. 16-20%=1 day absent

B. For students who are **18 years of age and older**, truancy does not apply; however, attendance is still monitored in order to comply with the Minnesota Statute concerning enrollment in the charter school. Students who accrue 15 consecutive unexcused absences are dropped from the charter school enrollment.

1. When a student has accrued **five days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school sends notification to the students of the absences along with the warning that continued absence totaling 15 consecutive schools days will result in loss of enrollment in the charter school.

2. When a student has accrued **ten days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school sends notification to the student of the absences along with the warning that continued absence totaling 15 consecutive schools days will result in their loss of enrollment in the charter school.
3. When a student has accrued **15 days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school drops the students from enrollment and sends notification to the student of that fact.

C. For students who are under **18 years of age**, the truancy laws apply. The charter school must comply with the truancy procedures of each individual county from which students come; however, because a large portion of the charter school's students currently come from Chisago and Washington counties, the procedures of the charter school most resemble the policies of those counties. For truancy, absences are totaled; the absences do not need to be consecutive school days for truancy to be in effect. In addition, LMs track consecutive absences in order to comply with the Minnesota statutes concerning enrollment.

1. When a student has accrued **three total days of unexcused absences**, the charter school notifies the student and parents/guardians with a warning letter concerning the absences, compulsory education laws, and truancy.
2. When a student has accrued **four total days of unexcused absences**, the charter school would require that the student and parents/guardians meet with a school official in person or via conference call in order to discuss the student's attendance issues.
3. When a student has accrued **five total days of unexcused absences**, the charter school notifies the student and parents/guardians with a warning letter concerning the absences, compulsory education laws, and truancy. In addition, at this point, the student's name is given to the county for a voluntary attendance intervention meeting (AIM).
4. When a student has accrued **seven total days of unexcused absences**, the student is considered truant. The charter school notifies the student and parents/guardians that the charter school has filed a truancy offense report. The charter school cooperates with the county from this point forward, and a school official attends court should the need arise.
5. When a student has accrued **ten days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school sends notification to student/parent of their absences along with the warning that continued absence totaling 15 consecutive schools days will result in their loss of enrollment in the charter school. In addition, the charter school will notify the student's county worker of the student's jeopardized enrollment.
6. When a student has accrued **15 days of consecutive unexcused absences**, the charter school is required by Minnesota statute to drop the student from enrollment and sends notification to student/parent of that fact. In

addition, the charter school will notify the student's county worker of the student's change in enrollment status.

V. DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

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 Learning Managers' offices. Should the policy be changed in the middle of a school year, students and parents will be notified in a timely manner.

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. 121A.40 – 121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)
Minn. Stat. 260C.007, Subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)
Minn. Stat. 260A.02 (Definitions)
Minn. Stat. 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is Continuing Truant)
Minn. Stat. 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)
Goss v. Lopez, 419U.S. 565, 95 S. Ct. 729 (1975)
Slocum v. Holtan Board of Education, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. Ap. Ct. 1988)
Campbell v. Board of Education of New Milford, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)
Hamer v. Board of Education of Township high School District No. 113, 66 Ill. App.3d7 (1978)
Gutierrez v. School District R-1, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App 1978)
Knight v. Board of Education, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E. 2d 299 (1976)
Dorsey v. Bale, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)
TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School Truancy Procedure

Cross References: Policy 506 (Student Discipline)