



## STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

S 20.0

<i>Policy Section</i> <b>Students</b>	<i>Original Approval Date</i> <b>August 29, 2018</b>	<i>Revision Date(s)</i> <b>n/a</b>	<i>Review Date(s)</i> <b>n/a</b>
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### INTRODUCTION

The *Student Attendance Protocol* for the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board has been designed and developed to ensure that all students entrusted to our care can fully participate in the mission of our Board to:

- Reach their full potential
- Be a contributing member of society
- Live the richness of their faith
- Embrace lifelong learning

It has also been designed to promote a sense of accountability and responsibility among parents/guardians and school/board personnel regarding respective obligations associated with student attendance at school. Additionally, the *Student Attendance Protocol* has been developed to establish strategies to address both cumulative and consecutive absences and to provide guidance to staff regarding reporting, tracking and monitoring of student attendance. The Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board is committed to nurturing and welcoming learning environments rooted in the values of our faith. In light of this commitment, all attendance concerns are addressed in a manner that promotes equity, inclusion and student well-being.

### RATIONALE

1. The *Student Attendance Protocol* presents strategies to ensure that all students benefit from a Catholic education;
2. Regular attendance promotes effective learning and Catholic values, which forms the foundation to future quality of life;
3. Regular attendance is linked to stronger student engagement and higher student achievement;
4. Regular attendance is critical to the process of learning and well-being;
5. Early intervention with attendance concerns is critical to student success. Efforts to support proactive measures with student absences prior to the 10-day threshold is a shared responsibility;
6. A systemic approach to attendance in compliance with the *Education Act* will assist students, parents/guardians and school/board personnel in ensuring the regular attendance of all of our students.

7. Non-attendance should be considered serious and detrimental when:
- The absence is unexplained.
  - A pattern is evident with either cumulative attendance concerns or prolonged consecutive absence.
  - There is a history of previous attendance concerns with the student or siblings.
  - The absence negatively impacts upon the student's academic success.
  - The absence is 10 cumulative days per term or 20 school days a year and/or 15 consecutive days.

## DEFINITIONS AS PER *THE EDUCATION ACT*

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

#### Compulsory Attendance

Section 21. (1) **Compulsory attendance** – unless excused under this section,

- every child who attains the age of six year on or before the first school day in September in any year shall attend an elementary or secondary school on every school day from the first school day in September in that year until the child attains the age of eighteen years;
- every child who attains the age of six years after the first school day in September in any year shall attend an elementary or secondary school on every school day from the first school day in September in the next succeeding year until the last school day in June in which the child attains the age of eighteen years.

(2) **When attendance is excused** – A child is excused from attendance at school if,

- the child is receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere;
- the child is unable to attend school by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause;
- transportation is not provided by a board for the child and there is not school that the child has a right to attend situated,
  - within 1.6 kilometers from the child's residence measured by the nearest road if the child has not attained the age of seven years or before the first school day in September in the year in question; or
  - within 3.2 kilometers from the child's residence measured by the nearest road if the child has attained the age of seven years but not the age of ten years on or before the first school day in September in the year in question, or

- iii. within 4.8 kilometers from the child's residence measured by the nearest road if the child has attained the age of ten years on or before the first school day in September in the year in question.
- d. the child has obtained a secondary school graduation diploma or has completed a course that gives equivalent standing;
- e. the child is absent from school for the purpose of receiving instruction in music and the period of absence does not exceed one half-day in any weeks;
- f. the child is suspended, expelled or excluded from attendance at school under any Act or under the regulations;
- g. the child is absent on a day regarded as a holy day by the church or religious denomination to which the child belongs; or
- h. the child is absent or excused as authorized under this Act and the regulations.

(See also \* below)

### **Addressing School Attendance Concerns Roles and Responsibilities:**

Section 21(5) **Duty of parent** – The parent or guardian of a child who is required to attend school under this section shall cause the child to attend school as required by this section.

The parent/guardian will inform the school about student absences when there are valid reasons under these regulations.

The parent/guardian will maintain regular and on-going communication with the school to discuss student attendance concerns and be an active part of the strategies agreed upon to re-engage.

## **PART II – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

### **Duties of Principals**

Section 28(1) **Reports and Information** – The principal of every elementary and secondary school shall,

- a. report to the board attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance the names, ages and residences of all pupils compulsory school age who have not attended school as required;
- b. furnish the board attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance with such other information required for the enforcement of compulsory school attendance.

\* or to respect cultural traditional activities.

## Board Attendance Counsellor

Section 25(5) **Jurisdiction and responsibility of school attendance counsellor** – A school attendance counsellor appointed by a board has jurisdiction and is responsible for the enforcement of compulsory school attendance in respect of every child who is required to attend school and who,

- (a) is qualified to be a resident of the board; or
- \* (b) is or has been enrolled during the current school year in a school operated by the board.

Section 26(1) **Powers and duties of counsellors** – Where a school attendance counsellor has reasonable and probable grounds for believing that a child is illegally absent from schools, he or she may, at the written request of the parent or guardian of the child or of the principal the school that the child is required to attend, take the child to the child's parent or guardian or to the school from which the child is absent provided that, if exception is taken to the school attendance counsellor entering a dwelling place, he or she shall not enter therein.

- (2) **Reports** – A school attendance counsellor shall report to the board that appointed him or her as required by the board.
- (3) **To act under appropriate supervisory officer and provincial counsellor** – A school attendance counsellor is responsible to the appropriate supervisory officer, and shall carry out the instructions and directions of the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor.
- (4) **Inquiry by counsellor and notice** – A school attendance counsellor shall Inquire into every case of failure to attend school within his or her knowledge or when requested to do so by the appropriate supervisory officer of the principal of such failure to the parent or guardian of a child who is not attending school as required, and shall also give written notice to the parent or guardian to cause the child to attend school forthwith, and shall advise the parent or guardian in writing of the provisions of subsection 24(2).

## PROCESS FOR CONCERNING ABSENCES

*(Refer to Appendix C and D of the Ministry of Education Enrollment Register Instructions for a visual representation of this process.)*

Concerning absences are any unexcused, unexplained absences that cause concern for the student's academic, social, emotional, spiritual and physical development and overall well-being. Please note that concerning absences documentation must be completed at each step in the student administration system.

## **Step 1 – Teacher Contact**

### **Elementary**

- The teacher and/or secretary raises a concern regarding a student's attendance.
- The teacher makes the initial contact with the parents/guardians.
- Contact with parents/guardians is documented in the student administration system.

### **Secondary**

- The teacher(s) and or attendance secretary raises a concern regarding a student's attendance.
- The teacher or vice-principal makes initial contact with the parents/guardians.
- Contact with parents/guardians is documented in the student administration system.

*\*Prior to 2014 there would have been an exception for school aged children who would be covered under the Indian Act, section 119. This section of the act has since been repealed (2014).*

**If attendance concerns persist, proceed to Step 2.**

## **Step 2 – Principal/Vice-Principal Contact**

### **Elementary and Secondary**

- The principal/vice-principal contacts the parents/guardians either in a person-to-person phone call (not voice mail) and/or arranges a meeting with the parents/guardians and teaching staff. The principal/vice-principal monitors the attendance pattern. Contact is recorded in the student administration system and meeting notes are kept as a record by the principal.

## **Step 3 – Letter to Parents/Guardians & Staff Intervention**

### **Elementary and Secondary**

- Where attendance continues to be a chronic problem the principal will send a letter (Appendix A) to the parents/guardians outlining the seriousness of the problem and requesting a meeting with them. This letter will indicate a need to work closely together to assist the student in attaining success at school by improving daily attendance.
- Principal/vice-principal is to advise the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance of the situation.

## **Step 4 – School Based Team Meeting/Case Conference**

### **Elementary and Secondary**

- Where no improvement in attendance has been noticed through the first three steps, a school based team meeting will occur to discuss the situation. The parents/ guardians will be invited to a case conference. Student Support Services' personnel such as the behaviour management consultant, social worker, classroom resource teacher and/or other appropriate personnel should be in attendance at these meetings.

- The dates of the school based team meeting and case conference meetings will be documented when appropriate, as two-way communication in the student administration system and meeting notes kept as a record by the Principal.

## **Step 5 – Mandatory Referral to Attendance Counsellor/Second Letter to Parents/Guardians**

### **Elementary/Secondary**

- Principals must inform the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance on the 15th consecutive day of an absence of a student. Where attendance continues to be a problem and a student has been absent for fifteen (15) consecutive school days without supporting documentation, a second letter (Appendix B) will be sent to the parents/guardians to inform them that the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance will become involved in the case. This may lead to outside agencies being contacted, and will describe the legal responsibilities of parents/guardians to cause their child to attend school.
- The principal will refer the case to the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance using the *Attendance Counsellor Referral Form* (Appendix C).
- Ongoing monitoring by appropriate school personnel continues, including the documentation of all two-way contact in the student administration system.

### **Role of Attendance Counsellor and Removal of Student from Register**

- If the protocol has not been implemented in this case, and appropriate supporting documentation has not been recorded by the school, the principal must follow the instructions as prescribed by the Ministry of Education in the *Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools*.
- **If the Principal, has not received supporting documentation they shall consult with the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance prior to any changes to the enrollment register, to discuss next steps.**
- If the protocol has been implemented and appropriate supporting documentation has been recorded by the school, a pupil of compulsory school age may remain on the register for sixteen (16) to sixty (60) consecutive days of absence, if the principal has referred the case in writing to the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance (Appendix C).

### **Responsibilities of the Principal**

- It is the principal's responsibility to contact the parent(s) of the pupil – or the pupil, if the pupil is an adult – to find out why the pupil has not been in attendance.
- The school **MUST** retain a record of the contacts between the parent(s) or pupil and the school, including written communication to and from the attendance counsellor and superintendent in charge of attendance, as well as any applicable medical documentation.

- The removal of a pupil's name from the register for absenteeism does not mean that the pupil need not attend school. Attendance for pupils of compulsory school age is required under the *Education Act* and the principal **MUST** ensure that the attendance counsellor and superintendent in charge of attendance are advised of the removal of the names of such pupils from the register. **Additionally, an updated list of students removed from the register must be kept as part of the school's record retention.**

### **Student remains on register Elementary and Secondary**

- If a pupil is to remain on the register for one or more subsequent fifteen-day periods, the principal must receive at the beginning of each subsequent fifteen-day period a report from the attendance counsellor indicating that the pupils' file is still active (Appendix D). Where, for any reason, the attendance counsellor and/or superintendent in charge of attendance indicates that the pupil's file has become inactive, the pupil shall be shown as a retirement on the day following the last fifteen-day period (e.g., the thirty-first day, the forty-sixth day). The Principal is to maintain regular contact with the attendance counsellor/superintendent in charge of attendance throughout the process.
- The principal may refer the case to the attendance counsellor and the superintendent in charge of attendance for further intervention as required.
- The school will continue with its efforts to encourage regular attendance. Principals/vice-principals, teachers, guidance personnel, chaplains, behaviour management personnel, social workers, mental health team and educational resource teachers will continue to support the student and encourage regular attendance.

### **Step 6 – Excused Pupils**

- Pupil attendance is excused by the principal in accordance with subsection 23 (3) of Regulation 298. The parent and guardian must submit a letter to the principal requesting that the student be excused for a specific amount of time. The time-frame must be explicit and cannot be indefinite or until further notice. For the pupil to remain on the register the school must provide a program of study for the pupil. Appropriate documentation and the certification by the principal that the program of study was provided must be kept as part of the student record for audit purposes. (Appendix E)
- In the case of a pupil who is seriously ill, the pupil's name shall be retained on the register and appropriate medical documentation kept on file. Appropriate medical documentation requires a beginning and end date for the absence and must not be open-ended.

### **Step 7- Consecutive Absences From a Course (Secondary only)**

- If a student has been absent from a course for 15 consecutive days without supporting documentation, the pupil will be deemed, for funding purposes, to have withdrawn from the course on the day immediately after the last day of attendance. If the student no longer meets the criteria for full-time pupil their status must be changed to part-time. The principal will alert the appropriate board personnel if this is the case prior to making the change.



Student Attendance Protocol for  
Elementary and Secondary Schools  
Policy S 20.0

**REFERENCES**

*Education Act, (Learning to Age 18) S.O. 2006, c.28-Bill 52*

*Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2018–19*

*Indian Act, R.S.C., 1985, s.119, repealed 2014*

**POLICY REVIEW CYCLE**

The Board will review this policy every three years.

**“Initial Concerns” (see Step 3)**

**SAMPLE FIRST LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL/VICE-PRINCIPAL  
TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

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[Date]

Dear

It has been brought to my attention that your son/daughter, \_\_\_\_\_ has been frequently absent from school. His/Her attendance records indicate that he/she has missed \_\_\_\_\_ days of school since \_\_\_\_\_ [date].

As the principal/vice-principal of the school, I wanted to share with you that regular school attendance is critical to effective learning and well-being.

Please contact the school to arrange an appointment to discuss this issue. Together, I hope that we can develop a course of action that will assist your son/daughter.

I look forward to meeting with you in the very near future.

Sincerely

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Principal/Vice-Principal

**“15 Consecutive Days” (see step 5)**

**SAMPLE SECOND LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL/VICE-PRINCIPAL  
TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

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[Date]

Dear

The attendance records for your son/daughter indicate that he/she has missed \_\_\_\_\_ days of school, including \_\_\_\_\_ consecutive days to date.

At this time, the Board’s Attendance Counsellor and Superintendent in charge of attendance have been advised and wish to assist with this situation.

Regular school attendance is closely linked to academic success and student well-being. It would be advantageous to meet as soon as possible in an effort to resolve this situation in a mutually agreeable fashion.

Thank you for your interest and anticipated cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely

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Principal/Vice-Principal

- c. Attendance Counsellor  
Superintendent in charge of attendance

## ATTENDANCE COUNSELLOR REFERRAL FORM

Referral Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Information:

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

### Telephone Numbers:

Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

- Nature of Attendance Concern:**  15 consecutive days unexplained/inappropriate absence  
 10 cumulative days per term or 20 days in the school year absent

**\*\*Please attach Attendance Print-Out**

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***Please Indicate the Interventions that have been attempted at the school level to address the attendance concern:***

- Initial Concerns shared via conversation with Parent/Guardian by Teacher (see step 1):

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Initial Concerns shared via Letter to Parent/Guardian by Vice Principal or Principal (see step 3):

**Date Letter Sent:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Meeting with Parent/Guardian and Student arranged (see step 3):

**Date of Meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Alternative Program/timetable initiated, including modified day, Co-Op etc.  
 Student Referred to Resource for academic support  
 Student referred to Student Support Services i.e. Social Work Services  
 Student has been offered SAL (**secondary only**)  
 Student has been offered e-learning opportunities (**secondary only**)

**Comments/Recommendations:**

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Signature of Principal/VP

## ATTENDANCE COUNSELLOR: CONSECUTIVE ABSENCE REPORT

**Attention:** Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

\*This report is a mandatory notification for every 15 day consecutive unexplained absence up to the 61<sup>st</sup> day of consecutive absences. Please keep this document for tracking purposes.

**From: Attendance Counsellor**

RE: Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ D:O:B: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Initial Referral (see step 5): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note: Since the above noted referral date, the Board's Student Support Services team have been working with the above named student and are aware of the consecutive unexplained absences. At this time my recommendation is as follows:**

**15 Days** \_\_\_\_\_

- We are currently working on re-engagement and have been able to maintain two-way communication satisfactorily. Please keep the student on the enrolment register.
- We have not been able to effectively maintain two-way communication and the student has not engaged with the plan for school attendance. At this time, my recommendation is to remove the above named student from your school's enrolment register.

**30 Days** \_\_\_\_\_

- We are currently working on re-engagement and have been able to maintain two-way communication satisfactorily. Please keep the student on the enrolment register.
- We have not been able to effectively maintain two-way communication and the student has not engaged with the plan for school attendance. At this time, my recommendation is to remove the above named student from your school's enrolment register.

**45 Days** \_\_\_\_\_

- We are currently working on re-engagement and have been able to maintain two-way communication satisfactorily. Please keep the student on the enrolment register.
- We have not been able to effectively maintain two-way communication and the student has not engaged with the plan for school attendance. At this time, my recommendation is to remove the above named student from your school's enrolment register.

**60 Days** \_\_\_\_\_

- We are currently working on re-engagement and have been able to maintain two-way communication satisfactorily. Please keep the student on the enrolment register.
- We have not been able to effectively maintain two-way communication and the student has not engaged with the plan for school attendance. At this time, my recommendation is to remove the above named student from your school's enrolment register.

**Signature Attendance Counsellor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**“Parental Request for Student Absence”**

***Sample Documentation for Parental Request for Prolonged Excusal***

(Date)

I hereby request that \_\_\_\_\_ be excused from school from \_\_\_\_\_ [date] to \_\_\_\_\_ [date] inclusive for the following reason:

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I understand that he/she is responsible for all regular school work missed during the period of absence. I understand that only in exceptional circumstances will a request for absence during a period of term tests or formal examinations receive consent. Scheduled tests and examinations will take precedence over family travel plans as teachers cannot be expected to offer special tests and exams for these cases.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_



- I approve the request and certify that a program of study has been provided.
- I do not approve the request for the following reasons:

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Signature of Principal/Vice-Principal: \_\_\_\_\_