

Attendance Policy

At Breakthrough Academy, we seek to understand our students rather than punish them as a first response to issues of absenteeism. However, continued enrollment in the Breakthrough Academy Chartered Public School community depends on our students' attendance and participation in our program. We ask parents to support the school in this primary responsibility to our students.

Breakthrough Academy requires that enrolled school-aged children attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and administrative rules. The educational program offered at BACS is predicated on the student's presence and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation for students to achieve academic standards, competencies, and consistent educational progress. Attendance is required of all students enrolled in Breakthrough Academy during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Director may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of conditions or reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.

1. Notification of Absence or Tardiness

Parents/guardians are required to call and/or email the school with the following information when a student is absent:

- The student's name
- The parent/guardian's name
- The reason for the absence
- The phone number where the parent/guardian can be reached that day

If no email is received, the school will send an email to the parent/guardian, which will require an immediate response.

2. Excused Absences

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below, which may require documentation. The following are considered excused absences:

- School-sponsored activities with administrative approval
- Classes missed due to Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan
- Extreme weather conditions as determined by the Administration
- Illness of a student or illness of an immediate family member

- Death in the family
- Religious holidays
- Required court appearance or subpoena
- Scheduled medical/dental appointments if such cannot be scheduled outside of normal school hours
- College visits (as approved by Administration)
- Chronic illness registered with the school nurse and verified by a physician's note
- Students who are suspended externally; these students are entitled to make-up work
- The Director shall determine if an absence is excused for good cause for any other reason not listed above

In the case of a prolonged illness, a detailed note from a doctor is required, including dates of illness and recommendations for further care.

In the case of absences not related to illness, the parent/guardian will provide a written explanation of the reason for such absence at the Director's discretion.

3. Unexcused Absences

Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above will be considered an unexcused absence. Excessive unexcused absences shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:

- Family vacations outside of the established school calendar
- Non-medical appointments unauthorized by the Administration
- Leaving school grounds without permission during normal school hours
- Absences determined by the Director to be unexcused in accordance with the section above

4. Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must verify all absences. While the parent/guardian maintains the right to excuse their child from school, not all absences are approved by the school administration, and the consequences for school-approved absences and non-school-approved absences may differ. When questions arise about whether an absence is excused or non-excused, the decision will be made by the school administration.

Absences, even with the parent/guardian's approval, that are excessive and/or interfere with the student's educational program will be interpreted as truancy, and follow-up procedures may be instituted.

5. Habitual Truancy

Ten half-days of unexcused absence during a school year constitute habitual truancy. A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more than two hours of instructional time and less than three and one-half hours of instructional time. Any absence of more than three and one-half hours of instructional time shall be considered a full-day absence.

The building Director or designee shall contact the parents/guardians if a student develops a pattern of absences. This correspondence shall provide the parents with documentation outlining the unexcused absences and a copy of the BACS Attendance Policy regarding attendance, and a date, time, and location for a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s), student, school staff, and applicable youth serving agencies to develop an attendance plan. The administration or designee shall confirm parent receipt of this correspondence.

The Breakthrough Academy regulations in relation to attendance, absenteeism, and truancy are based on the following New Hampshire statutes and administrative rules, as well as additional rules as needed:

Legal References Related to Attendance:

RSA 189:34 Appointment

RSA 189:35 Truancy Defined

RSA 193:1 Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil

RSA 193:7 Penalty

RSA 193:8 Notice Requirements

RSA 193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (a)(1), Attendance and Absenteeism

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section ED 306.04 (C), Policy Relative to Attendance

Attendance Plan & Interventions to Address Truancy

Attendance Plans should be utilized by school staff when a student has five (5) or more unexcused absences. Meetings to develop Attendance Plans shall be convened by the Director or his/her designee with the parent/guardian, the student, and appropriate youth-serving agencies (if required) immediately following a student's fifth (5th) full-day unexcused absence from school.

Attendance Plans should provide appropriate interventions for students and their families, and ensure communication among students, parents/guardians, representatives from social service agencies working with the student and family, and school staff. It is highly desirable to establish this communication prior to disciplinary measures or withdrawal/suspension actions by the school. Attendance Plans should provide proactive interventions that will benefit students. The Attendance Plan shall include, in addition to proactive interventions to benefit the student, the consequences if those interventions fail to improve attendance. Such consequences may include, but are not limited to, referral to the Truancy Officer, the Department of Health and Human Services, and/or loss of course credit. Each plan should outline a schedule for regular review by the school and parents to monitor student's progress.

Intervention Plan to Address Habitual Truancy

The Director shall regularly review attendance records to identify students who are, or may soon become, habitually truant. When the Director identifies a student who is habitually truant or is in danger of becoming habitually truant, they shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents, and other staff members as deemed necessary. The intervention shall include processes, including, but not limited to:

1. Investigation of the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior and exploration of supports that may address the identified cause of the truant behavior
2. Consideration of potential modifications to the student's educational program to meet their needs that may be causing the truancy
3. Involving parents in the development of a plan designed to reduce truancy
4. Seeking alternative disciplinary measures as practicable
5. Determination as to whether school record-keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences impact the child's attendance
6. Notification to the Office of Student Services for any student with an identified or suspected disability.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student reaches habitual truancy status or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Director will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school

3. A request for a meeting between the parents and the Director to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for reducing the student's truancy.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the lines of those listed below. The Director is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines, and programs aimed at preventing and reducing truancy, such as:

1. Coordinating truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parents
2. Assisting school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures
3. Encouraging the involvement of community partners to support the child and/or the family to reduce unexcused absences
4. Encouraging and coordinating the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance

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