

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The Public Schools Act of Manitoba and its attendant Regulations are explicit about each school-age student's requirement to be in compulsory attendance at school, except when excused under those exemptions permitted by law. Parents/caregivers are responsible for ensuring that school attendance requirements are fulfilled as prescribed.

The Pembina Trails Board of Trustees believes that daily school attendance and punctuality in class enhance personal growth and develop life-long habits essential to the future of our citizens and our community.

To this end the Board expects administrators, as part of their supervisory responsibilities, to work closely with parents//caregivers, students, and teachers in establishing school attendance procedures and expectations in keeping with the School Act, the Regulation, the [Presence and Engagement Policy Directive](#), and Board policy. (Policy JE)

The Board accepts responsibility to support regular attendance and learning through its policies supported by the following beliefs:

- Our primary purpose in school is to foster student learning. (Policy JE)
- Presence and engagement begin with relationships. Reciprocal and respectful relationships with students, families, parents/caregivers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, communities, organizations, and the school need to be established and cared for.
- Student success and well-being is the collective responsibility of all who work with children.
- Putting students at the center is the driver of all planning and responses.
- Safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments are foundational to student presence and engagement.
- Regular and punctual attendance enhances successful student learning. (Policy JE)
- Student absence requires consistent attention and collective action. Ensuring student presence requires continuity of effort and resources over time. Parents/caregivers have a primary support role in maintaining regular attendance. Teachers and administrators also have a role to play in supporting students. (Policy JE)

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- Absenteeism has a range of root causes and effects that cross sectors, government departments, and jurisdictions. Policies and procedures must work in collective coordination and partnership with schools, organizations, parents/caregivers, and communities, and across government agencies to support and improve regular daily presence and engagement for all students.

The Pembina Trails School Division takes collective responsibility to foster student [Presence and Engagement](#) (2023). This responsibility is carried out in accordance with the requirement for managing and protecting information as outlined in The Education Administration Act (EAA), The Public Schools Act (PSA), the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), the Human Rights Code, and the Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act. To enhance presence and engagement in Pembina Trails School Division schools, educators will:

- Use consistent, common terminology (definitions for presence, engagement, regular attendance, absence, excused absence, unexcused absence, chronic absenteeism, severe chronic absenteeism, and student specific plan attached) (p.7 and 8)
- Seek proactive approaches to supporting students by identifying and solving barriers to presence and engagement early by notifying parents/caregivers and having personal contact from the teacher or designate (p.8)
- Keep consistent, daily records on student presence and absence, including whether absences are excused or unexcused (p.11)
- Include monitoring and analyzing division-wide and school attendance data as standing agenda items at school-based support team meetings and senior administration meetings. (p.11)
- Respond to absenteeism with non-punitive, fair, and predictable responses including creating Student Specific Plans for students who are chronic and/or severe chronic absent with a focus on inviting the students back and finding the necessary resources to support attendance (p.12)
- Establish relationships with parents/caregivers and external agencies for the purpose of supporting the return of students to school (p.13)

The role of student, parents/caregivers, teachers and administrators in supporting students' attendance is as follows:

1.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

- Maintain regular and punctual attendance.
- Participate fully in the learning activities of the classroom.
- Comply with the Divisional Standard of Behaviour, and be an engaged, active, self-determined learner.
- If a pattern of poor attendance develops, participate in the development of a Student Specific Plan by identifying barriers to attendance and engagement and actively partnering with the school team in overcoming these challenges.
- Participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate.
- When appropriate, advise teacher(s) in advance of any planned absence, e.g., field trip, medical appointment.

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2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- Encourage and support their child's regular attendance.
- Notify the school prior to or on the day of their child's absence.
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly.
- Contact the administration at least two weeks in advance of any planned, extended period of absence.
- Monitor the student's attendance pattern and when a concern arises, contact the teacher to cooperatively develop an improvement plan with the students.
- Participate in the development of a Student Specific Plan by identifying barriers to attendance and engagement and actively partner with the school team in overcoming these challenges.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS

- Use consistent, common terminology (definitions for presence, engagement, regular attendance, absence, excused absence, unexcused absence, chronic absenteeism, severe chronic absenteeism, and student specific plan attached) p.8
- Monitor and record student attendance identifying potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism and communicate these concerns to the principal.
- Contact the student and parent/caregivers when unexcused absences occur. (p.8)
- Employ preventative and proactive strategies to enhance student engagement, well-being, and success. (p.8)
- Participate in the development of a Student Specific Plan by identifying barriers to attendance and engagement and actively partnering with the student, parent/caregivers and school team in overcoming these challenges.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Use consistent, common terminology (definitions for presence, engagement, regular attendance, absence, excused absence, unexcused absence, chronic absenteeism, severe chronic absenteeism, and Student Specific Plan attached) (p.8)
- Communicate the attendance policy to teachers, students and parents/caregivers (e.g. student handbook, school newsletter, website).
- Ensure teachers maintain accurate attendance records and report absences to parents/caregivers via voicemail/automated system. (p.8)
- Lead school-based attendance initiatives to promote regular attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences.
- Ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among staff. (p.15)
- Monitor and review student attendance data and oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism.
- Ensure that responses to absenteeism are non-punitive, fair, and predictable with a focus on restorative practices to reengage with the school environment (p.13). Suspensions, expulsions, and withdrawals are not to be used as responses to absenteeism. (p.12)
- Report severe chronic absenteeism to the school division's Attendance Officer.

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- Initiate a Student Specific Plan when a student reaches the threshold of chronic absenteeism and severe chronic absenteeism. Participate in the development of the plan by identifying barriers to attendance and engagement and actively partnering with the student, parent/caregivers and school team in overcoming these challenges.
- Invite community agencies, organizations and associations, other education authorities, and regional health and children's services authorities to plan collaboratively in support of appropriate educational programming and planning for students.
- Establish a school-based attendance committee to regularly review school attendance data, causes of absenteeism, and appropriate supports (p.11). The school-based attendance committee should include, but not be limited to, the administrative secretary responsible for attendance, members of the Student Services team, and an administrator.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL DIVISIONS

- Use consistent, common terminology (definitions for presence, engagement, regular attendance, absence, excused absence, unexcused absence, chronic absenteeism, severe chronic absenteeism, and student specific plan attached). (p.8)
- Ensure students who are eligible for enrolment with the division receive regular and appropriate educational programming.
- Work with schools, parents/caregivers, and community and other partners to ensure that students are regularly present.
- Ensure that schools track students' attendance accurately, document any students who are chronically absent, and that schools take immediate, sustained action to address causes of chronic absenteeism until the student is regularly present.
- Work with schools and agencies to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families to ensure regular school attendance, such as through coordinated services.
- Ensure culturally safe educational environments and cultural competence among staff. (p.15)
- Ensure that student attendance is a standing agenda item at school-based team meetings and senior administration meetings. (p.11)
- Notify the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learnings' School and Community Support Unit in writing, as well as notify Child and Family Services (CFS) if there are concerns about student safety and well-being. (p.12)

[Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning in Safe and Caring Schools: Presence and Engagement](#)

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