



# Absence/Truancy Policy

Attendance plays a critical role in a student's academic success. In Moving Everest Charter School, we believe that attendance is an integral part of the educational process. In addition, we believe that classroom activities and experiences cannot be replicated outside of the designated school sessions in the school environment or through make-up work. As a result, we believe that scholars and staff need to miss as few class sessions as possible. We expect the parents of scholars at Moving Everest Charter School, through partnerships with the school, to support the instilling of responsibility and reliability which regular daily on-time attendance fosters and impacts all areas of life.

## **ATTENDANCE MATTERS**

Research on school attendance shows that a scholar's regular attendance may be the greatest factor influencing academic success. Scholars who attend school regularly are more likely to pass reading and math assessments than their peers with poor attendance. Scholars who are chronically absent in Kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for scholars at risk of dropping out of school. Research has demonstrated that the attendance habits established in the early grades have lasting effects on scholars throughout their education. Scholars with high attendance in the early grades continue to have good attendance and scholars with low attendance in the early grades are more likely to have low attendance and lower academic performance throughout their elementary and middle school years. Every day counts!

## **SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE**

To support your child's attendance please consider the following things:

- Make sure your scholar keeps a regular bedtime and establishes a morning routine
- Lay out the scholar's school uniform and pack the scholar's bookbag/backpack the night before
- Ensure your scholar goes to school every day unless the scholar is truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session

## **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**

According to Illinois law, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure the regular attendance of their children. Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1st) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session. MECS expects parents/guardians to make responsible efforts to ensure the regular attendance of their students and to inform the school of any absence and the reason for the absence.

## **ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION**

At Moving Everest Charter School, scholars are expected to be in school and on time to class sessions unless a scholar's parent/guardian notifies the school that the scholar is or will be absent for a valid cause. Scholars absent for a valid cause may make up missed homework and class assignments in a reasonable timeframe.

## **Definition of a Valid Cause for an Absence:**

- A.** Section 26-2a of the Illinois School Code, considers **VALID CAUSE** for a student's absence to be:

- 1) Illness; including the mental or behavioral health of the student;
- 2) Observance of a religious holiday
- 3) Death in the immediate family
- 4) Family emergency
- 5) Other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the principal, or
- 6) principal's designee, on a case-by-case basis.
- 7) Other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent or legal guardian for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student (the reasonableness of the parent's or legal guardian's concern is subject to evaluation by the principal, principal's designee, or other Board officials, on a case-by-case basis);
- 8) a student's parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat-support postings.

**B. "Excused Absence"** means an absence for which there is a valid cause for absence, that is attested by a communication stating the cause for absence, and is approved by the principal or the principal's designee after the date of the absence, or is known to the principal or principal's designees, including suspensions issued under the District Student Code of Conduct.

Medical documentation does not need to be provided as part of the communication to excuse absence. Communication needs to meet specific criteria in order for it to be reviewed for consideration. The cause for absence may come in the form of:

- 1) a letter (or note) dated and signed by the parent or legal guardian explaining the reason for absence, and approved by the principal or principal's designee either before or after the date of absence; or
- 2) a direct phone call/voicemail to the school that communicates the date of the absence, the reason for absence, the absent student's name, the name of the caller, and the caller's relationship to the student. The school is required to maintain a designated log and document this call.
- 3) a District designated and secured system that collects absence reason  
Communication

**C. "Unexcused Absence"** means an absence for which there is no valid cause either:

- 1) known to the principal or principal's designee; or
- 2) no communication is provided as outlined in Section B.

**D. "Communication"** means intentional contact that provides information that enables a school to understand the reason for a student's non-attendance. Communication does not automatically mean an absence is excused, but it provides information that allows a school to review, and determine if the information aligns with ISBE requirements for Valid Reasons for Absence.

**E. "Immediate Family"** means parents, legal guardians, spouse, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and uncles.

**F. "Truant"** means: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for a school day or portion of the school day.

**G. "Chronic Truant"** shall mean: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent from such attendance without valid cause for 5% or more days at any time of the school year.

H. **“Chronically Absent”** shall mean: a student subject to compulsory attendance that is absent from such attendance 10% or more at any time of the school year.

I. **“Tardy”** shall mean arriving after the designated start time of a school day or period.

### **Absence Notification**

Consistent with the requirements of State law, if any scholar in grades K – 8<sup>th</sup> is absent from school, and there is no record that the absence has been authorized for valid cause, the school will, within 2 hours after the first class session in which the scholar is enrolled, make a reasonable attempt to contact the parent/guardian regarding the scholar’s absence.

The primary responsibility for notifying the school when a scholar will be absent lies with the scholar’s parent/guardian. Therefore, it is the expectation that a parent/guardian will notify the scholar’s school in advance whenever possible or between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. for grades K through 8<sup>th</sup> if the child is to be absent from school on any given day. The following information must be provided to excuse the absence for valid cause: the parents/guardians must identify themselves, provide the scholar’s name, and the reason for the scholar’s absence. The school may require documentation explaining the reason for the scholar’s absence.

If a parent/legal guardian anticipates being out of town and unable to provide official notification of a scholar’s absence, the parent/legal guardian must provide written documentation of a designated adult authorized to approve absences. This written notification must be submitted to the Main Office of the school prior to the parent/legal guardian leaving town.

The school considers the following reasons as examples of absences without valid cause, thereby resulting in an unexcused absence: oversleeping, car trouble, missing the bus, babysitting, shopping, personal vacation, and a message on school voicemail with no reason given for absence. The above list is used for illustrative purposes only and is not to be considered all-inclusive.

### **ABSENT NOTIFICATION TO PARENT/GUARDIAN**

It is the legal obligation of the parent(s), guardian(s), or caregiver(s) to ensure their student’s daily attendance. The following steps will be taken to notify parents/caregivers of increasing absences and to remind parents/guardians of attendance expectations:

- **Daily** outgoing calls are made for all unreported absent students to notify families of absence, for the purpose of the child’s safety.
- **Five (5) Unexcused Absences:** The parents/guardians will receive a written notice of warning. A letter will be sent to the parent(s)/ guardian(s) communicating the student’s truancy and the consequences for non-compliance with attendance requirements.
- **Ten (10) Unexcused Absences:** A letter will be sent to the parent(s)/caregiver(s) via certified mail. The parents/caregivers will be required to attend a mandatory meeting with the Principal or Assistant Principal, the student’s teacher, and the student. The meeting will be held to discuss a plan for improved attendance and how the student can be supported.
- **Eleven to Twenty (10 and more) Unexcused Absences:** Certified Letters will continue to be sent home and parents/caregivers will continue to be required to meet with the Principal or Assistant Principal. Chicago Public Schools and the proper authorities will be contacted. A home visit by school personnel will be required. The high number of unexcused absences could result in the failure of a course or courses, students will not be promoted to the next grade and will be excluded from participation in graduation exercises and/or other student privileges. A certified letter will be sent to the student’s parents/caregivers.

\*\* Excessive Excused Absences will also result in the above actions being taken and a scholar is required to attend mandatory summer school, exclusion from graduation, other activities/privileges, or possible retention.

### Information Regarding Vacations

Regular classroom attendance is one of the most effective ways to ensure student academic success. Requests from parents/guardians to excuse students from school for vacations are discouraged. If necessary, these requests will be considered by the administration on an individual basis. Parents/Guardians should call the Main Office at the school far enough in advance to support scholars as they work on arrangements to complete missed classwork and homework in a timely manner. Scholars who are absent because of an approved, pre-arranged vacation are expected to make up missed homework and classwork assignments in a reasonable timeframe. These absences will be counted in the student's total absence record.

### Activity Participation

Any scholar who is too ill to attend school is generally considered too ill to participate in other activities or athletics during that day or evening.

### Attendance Codes

Code	Title	Definition
(Blank)	Present	A full-day of attendance for K-8th grade
U	Unexcused Absence	Absent without cause
EX	Excused Absence	Absent with cause (see valid causes for absence)
T	Tardy	Elementary - after a 15- minute grace period, 8:15 a.m. is tardy Middle School - after a 15-minute grace period, 8:00 a.m. is tardy
HDE	Half Day Present Excused AM	Present at least 120 minutes in the afternoon with valid cause
Y	Unexcused Tardy	Tardy without cause
HD	Half Day Present Excused PM	Present at least 120 minutes in the morning with valid cause
HDU	Half Day UnExcused Am	Present at least 120 minutes in the afternoon without a valid cause
I	In-School Suspension	Infraction of the school/District disciplinary code resulting in time out of the classroom (this is not an absence)
UHD	Half Day Present Unexcused PM	Present at least 120 minutes in the morning without a valid cause
DL	Distance Learning	Remote instruction provided when there is a determination by the school district and the parent/guardian that the program will best serve the scholar's individual learning needs and the scholar

		meets the criteria for participation
S	Out of School Suspension	Infraction of the school/District disciplinary code resulting in time out of school (this is an absence)
H	Home Hospital	Absence due to medical emergency or procedures or participation in residential treatment program

### **TARDINESS**

If a student arrives after classes have started, they must report to the main office before proceeding to class. Students arriving late must be accompanied by a parent/caregiver. If a student arrives late without a parent/caregiver, the school will contact the parent/caregiver upon arrival. The following interventions will be taken in response to tardiness: Four to Eight (4-8) Late Arrivals/ Tardiness: Parents/Caregivers will be contacted to discuss the student’s tardiness and develop a plan to support the student in arriving on time to school. Multiple Late Arrivals/Tardiness: A meeting between the parents/caregivers and the Principal/Assistant Principal will be required. At this meeting, student support and potential consequences will be discussed for continued tardiness without a valid reason and appropriate documentation. The team will discuss a plan for improvement and how students can be supported. The student may receive disciplinary consequences and/or loss of privileges and may be assigned to before/after school or Saturday school.

### **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Scholars who need to leave school early for medical purposes (doctor or dental appointments) need prior parent/guardian notice whenever possible. The prior notice should include: (1) the requested dismissal time, (2) the reason the student needs to leave early, and (3) a parent signature or phone contact in Email correspondences. Parents are encouraged to communicate any dismissal changes no later than 2:30 p.m.on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and no later than 12:30 pm on Wednesdays. If a student is ill during the day, the scholar must check out in the Nurse’s Office before leaving the building. When the Nurse is not in the building, scholars who are ill should report to the Main Office and check out in the Main Office before leaving the building. Please note, any early dismissal that fails to meet the minimum attendance full day credit time (full-day of attendance for students in grades K through 8<sup>th</sup> is 450 minutes), will incur an absence (having a half day) for that part of the school day.

### **TRUANCY**

If a scholar's absence is not reported in a timely manner, it may be considered school truancy.

A “truant” is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for more than 1% but less than 5% of school attendance days. A “chronic truant” is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for 5% or more of school attendance days.

Student attendance is critical to the learning process and school absences affect a scholar’s academic performance. Any scholar who is truant from school will be expected to complete missed homework and classwork in a reasonable timeframe. Incomplete work or failure to do the work may result in a lowering of grades.

### **DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR TRUANT OR CHRONICALLY TRUANT STUDENTS**

Truancy is a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school. Scholars who have absences that total 10% or more of school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause, and out-of-school suspensions are considered chronic truants. Scholars who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue.

The following will be utilized to assist with determining potential barriers to consistent school attendance and concerns with truancy and chronic truancy:

- Main Office staff will contact the families of scholars who have absences without valid cause daily to express concern and to document the reason the scholar is absent
- Teachers will call parents/guardians after 3 absences to explore what help may be needed
- Principal/Assistant Principal will call parents/guardians after 5 absences to explore what help may be needed
- Principal/Assistant Principal will send a letter to the parents/guardians to alert the family of attendance concerns after 7 absences and explore what help may be needed
- interviews with the student
- interviews with parents/guardians
- meetings with school officials and/or school staff who may have information about the reasons for a scholar's attendance problem

The Principal/Assistant Principal shall meet with the family, the Teacher(s), the Social Worker, and/or the Nurse to determine the most effective individual course of action for scholars experiencing chronic truancy after 9 absences have been accumulated. At this collaborative meeting, the potential effect of the appropriate resources available for the scholar will be addressed. School resources could include but are not limited to:

- monitoring by health services
- an in-house behavior modification program
- social work services
- a behavior management system
- review the potential implications of a referral for a special education evaluation and/or placement

Additional resources could include but are not limited to:

- regularly scheduled parent conferences at the school
- counseling for scholars outside of the school setting
- family counseling
- the exploration of community resources that are available to truant and chronically truant scholars relevant to their individual needs (i.e., a medical referral from health services)

The Principal/Assistant Principal and Social Worker will work together to monitor absences after the most effective course of action, an individualized intervention plan designed to remediate the attendance pattern, is established with the parent/guardian. The Student Services Department will provide support on a consultative and remedial basis in truancy matters. Families and scholars seeking help with truancy may be referred to the Student Services Department after the collaborative meeting with the Principal/Assistant Principal, the family, the Teacher(s), the Social Worker, and/or the Nurse.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school will take further action including a referral to truancy services and/or sanctioning appropriate school disciplinary action. Appropriate school disciplinary action could include:

- exclusion from school sponsored activities
- lunch detention
- in school suspension
- home visits by law enforcement

A parent/guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law. A parent/guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant may be convicted of a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$1500.00.

Any person who induces or attempts to induce any child to be absent from school unlawfully or knowingly employs or harbors any child while school is in session and causes a child to be absent from school, is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor.

## **CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM MANAGEMENT AND DATA REVIEW**

Each day teachers take attendance utilizing the Power School system. When a scholar is marked absent, the Main Office staff checks the absence in Power School against the list of scholars who have absences for a valid cause provided by parents/guardians. When the school has not heard from a parent/guardian, the Main Office staff contacts the parents/guardians to express concern and to document the reason scholars are absent. At the end of each school year, as mandated by the Illinois School Code, absences from Power School are totaled and reported electronically to the State.

To support determining what systems of support and resources are needed to engage truant and chronically truant scholars and their families and to encourage the habit of daily attendance to promote academic success, the school will collect and review its chronic absence data. The review shall include an analysis of chronic absence data from the school. The school review of the chronic attendance data will include weekly, bimonthly, quarterly, and yearly attendance of chronically absent and/or at risk of chronically absent scholars and an evaluation of whether scholars with persistent chronic absences require services and/or supports.