

# Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Effective Date: October 1, 2017

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## 1. Introduction

This policy recognizes that regular attendance at school supports greater **student success and achievement**. Attendance supports student learning and promotes a sense of responsibility that students will need as they transition from the school system to post-secondary studies and/or the workforce.

Promoting and supporting regular student attendance is a **shared responsibility**. All partners, including students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, school boards, and community partners must work together.

This policy is to be applied in a **fair and equitable** way and is not intended to punish or marginalize students for circumstances beyond their control. The policy provides **flexibility** by allowing teachers and principals to use their professional judgment to determine when there may be extenuating circumstances affecting a student's attendance. In these cases, the school will work with the student and/or their family to respond with the appropriate incentives and supports, and/or to develop accountability mechanisms that recognize the student's unique situation.

## 2. Objective

The objective of the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy is to set clear, consistent expectations for regular and punctual student attendance at all grade levels and provide a consistent approach in responding to student absences and chronic lateness.

## 3. Definitions

"Absence" refers to any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity.

"Late arrival" means a student arriving to class at any point beyond the scheduled start time.

"Parent/guardian" includes a parent, guardian, and a person acting in the place of a parent (*loco parentis*).

## 4. Monitoring Attendance

As per the [Education Act](#), students are required to attend school regularly and punctually. All students are expected to be present and prepared for the beginning of class. Schools will develop and implement consistent, school-wide practices for responding to late arrivals.

Teachers will record student attendance every day, in accordance with school practice.

All reasons for absences from school must be communicated by the student's parent/guardian, as per the school communication procedure.

## 5. Responses to Absences and Chronic Lateness

### 5.1 Responses

Responses to student absenteeism and chronic lateness will vary based on the age, grade, and development of the student, the professional judgment of teachers and principals, and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or board-based supports and/or with outside agencies, if needed.

**i. Universal/prevention strategies** will focus on promoting regular attendance for all students. This may include school-based use of incentives, as appropriate.

**ii. Increasing connections** will be made when the reason for an absence is not communicated to the school by the parent/guardian or when the frequency of total absences or chronic lateness has reached 10 per cent of class time.

**iii. Early intervention responses** will be used when an issue with attendance has been identified and/or the frequency of total absences or chronic lateness is between 10 and 15 per cent of class time, or earlier if advised by the student's teacher.

**iv. Targeted interventions** will be provided for students facing greater attendance challenges, often when the frequency of total absences or chronic lateness has gone over 15 per cent of class time.

### 5.2 School Board Attendance Committees

As per the [Education Act](#), school boards will establish school board attendance committees to monitor and analyze board-wide student attendance rates and take steps to reduce student absenteeism and promote regular attendance.

### 5.3 Materials for Absent Students

Teachers are not required to prepare additional materials or release test/examination materials prior to their release to the class.

In accordance with the [Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements \(2017\) Act](#) (section 11.02 (iii)), teachers will provide students with the materials that were distributed in class during the student's absence at the request of the principal. Teachers may use their professional judgment in determining whether or not to provide a student who has missed class time with additional material beyond what was distributed in class.

### 5.4 Loss of Credit for Grades 10 to 12

In order to earn a course credit in high school, students are expected to be present for at least 80 per cent of class time. A teacher can recommend loss of credit when a student has missed 20 per cent of class time due to any absences, and strong efforts have been made to improve the student's attendance, but no improvement has been demonstrated by the student.

Upon receiving the recommendation of a teacher, and working in consultation with the teacher and other school staff as appropriate, the principal will make the final decision around loss of credit. The principal is responsible for communicating the decision to the student and family. Students who lose credit(s) due to absenteeism are not eligible for credit recovery for that course.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

**Students** are responsible for maintaining regular attendance and arriving at school on time and ready to learn, recognizing that younger students (P–6) rely more heavily on parent/guardian support to maintain regular attendance. Students are also responsible for catching up on any work missed as a result of an absence or absences.

**Parents/guardians** are responsible for monitoring and ensuring that their children maintain regular attendance and arrive at school on time, and for communicating with the school regarding their child(ren)'s attendance.

**Teachers** are responsible for monitoring and recording student attendance and for identifying potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism. Teachers will take reasonable steps to promote and support regular attendance and will communicate with students and/or parents/guardians when concerns related to attendance arise.

**Principals** are responsible for working with teachers, students, parents/guardians, and others as needed, to take reasonable steps to support attendance, including identifying supports in response to student absences and to promote regular attendance. Principals will work with teachers to maintain accurate attendance records. Principals are also responsible for the final decision around loss of credit due to absenteeism and for communicating the decision to the student and their family.

**School boards** are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy in schools and for working with schools and other partners to identify supports and interventions to help meet both the educational and non-educational needs of students and families. School boards will support the decisions made at a school-level regarding attendance issues and will establish attendance committees to monitor and analyze board-wide attendance data.

**The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** is responsible for establishing a provincial attendance policy and monitoring the implementation of the policy and reviewing its effectiveness.

**Community partners** are responsible for working collaboratively with students, parents/guardians, schools, and school boards to provide supports and services that encourage regular attendance and help decrease any barriers that may be affecting a student's ability to attend school.

Roles and responsibilities with respect to student attendance for other government departments, (e.g., Justice, Health and Wellness, Community Services) will be outlined in this policy, pending the release of recommendations by the Commission on Inclusive Education.

## 7. References

Nova Scotia. Education Act. S.N.S. 1995-1996, ch. 1. <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/education.pdf>.

Nova Scotia. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2017. *Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy Operational Guide*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.