

# Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guide

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

## Introduction

The Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guide is intended to provide guidelines and examples to assist teachers, principals, and school boards in implementing the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy. This guide and the policy are to be used together to assist principals and teachers in responding to student absences.

Teachers and principals are in the best position to understand the individual needs and circumstances of their students and have the professional judgement required to make decisions which best support the needs of the student. Attendance is also a shared responsibility. The operational guide expands on key elements of the policy, outlining how various partners can work together to promote and strengthen good attendance habits, while also addressing concerns related to absenteeism and lateness.

This operational guide is a working document. As new best and promising practices are identified, they may be added to this guide. Similarly, as the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions, Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), and other partners explore pilot projects to support attendance, the document may be updated.

Feedback from students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and others will be vital in determining what aspects of the policy and operational document are working well and what aspects need adjustment. Stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the policy and its implementation at any time throughout the year by emailing [attendance@novascotia.ca](mailto:attendance@novascotia.ca). Feedback will be monitored regularly throughout the year.

Government will review the first iteration of the policy and operational guide at the end of the 2017-18 school year, and will make adjustments based on lessons learned and feedback received.

The guide includes information on:

- Monitoring and recording attendance
- Providing materials for absent students
- Responding to absences and chronic lateness (early and targeted interventions, incentives, and accountability, including loss of credit)
- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Communicating policy changes and promoting the value of attendance

## Monitoring and Recording Attendance

Students are expected to attend school every day, arriving on time and ready to learn. Regular attendance is important and supports student success. It builds good habits and a sense of responsibility that will continue to serve the student as they transition to further studies and/or the workforce. As such, efforts should be made to build good attendance habits early in a student's academic career. Promoting the importance of attendance to students and parents/guardians early, and intervening quickly when attendance issues emerge, will help build good habits that students will carry with them in later grades.

Promoting good attendance habits is a shared responsibility, particularly for younger students. Parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and other school staff must work to emphasize the importance of regular attendance and to foster a positive relationship between the student and the school.

### Recording Attendance

Teachers must record student attendance every day, in accordance with school practice. As per the policy, schools should develop a standard process for monitoring attendance, outlining when contact with the student and/or parent/guardian should be made.

Recording attendance helps teachers identify students who are at-risk of developing an issue with their attendance. It is also important to have accurate attendance records for health and safety reasons (e.g. principals and other school staff need to know when students are present at school in the event of a school emergency).

### Late Arrivals/Early Departures

Students are expected to be present and prepared for the beginning of class. Schools should develop consistent practices for addressing late arrivals. Students arriving late should be required to report to the office to have their arrival recorded. Similarly, students that need to leave early should be required to sign out at the office. In the earlier grades, the parent/guardian is required to sign the student in or out, while at the high school level, the student could sign in themselves and could sign out with a note or prior communication from a parent/guardian. School staff should work together to develop a procedure that meets the needs of their school.

In order to limit disruptions to the instructional day, parents/guardians who wish to inquire about their child(ren)'s attendance should contact the office.

#### Suggested Procedures

Schools can base their process for monitoring attendance on the following guidelines. They may also develop their own process. What is most important is that a school-wide practice is in place and that it is used consistently by teachers and any other school staff responsible for monitoring and recording attendance.

As per the policy, parents/guardians are responsible for communicating the reason for the student's absence to the school.

**Grades primary to 6** – the classroom teacher will record student attendance on a daily basis and will work with the office, or applicable staff, to note any student absences that may occur throughout the day.

**Grades 7 to 9** – the teacher for each class/course will record student attendance, with the information entered into PowerSchool by the end of the school day. The homeroom teacher, where applicable, will record student attendance on a daily basis and will work with the office to note any student absences that may occur throughout the day.

**Grades 10 to 12** – the teacher for each class/course will record student attendance, with the information entered into PowerSchool by the end of the school day.

**Arriving Late** – Any student arriving late must sign in at the office prior to joining their class

**Early Departure** – Any student who must leave prior to the end of the instructional day must be signed out at the office by a parent/guardian, or other approved adult, prior to leaving the school premises. In high school, students may sign out themselves provided there has been communication from the parent/guardian to the satisfaction of the school administration.

Schools with different or multiple grade configurations will need to define a standard practice to address their specific situation. Regardless of the practice implemented at the site, attendance must be recorded on a daily basis.

## Reasons for Being Absent from School

Students are expected to be in school on time and ready to learn every day. The Education Act and regulations require students to attend school each day. There are limited circumstances where it is acceptable for a student to miss a day of school. The intent of the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, and this accompanying document, is to reinforce the importance of attendance.

The Education Act and accompanying regulations provide for a temporary absence from school for unavoidable reasons, such as illness, injury or observance of a cultural or religious holiday/event. Any absence from school requires notification from the parent/guardian. There is not a defined list of circumstances which may result in a student being absent from school, recognizing that students can face a variety of situations that prevent them from coming to school. However, absences from school should be a rare occurrence.

When considering the reason for a student's absence from school teachers and administrators can use the guiding questions below to assist them in determining what response may be required. This list is not exhaustive. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the student and the professional judgment of the teacher and principal.

- What is the impact of the absence on the student (e.g., academic impact, social-emotional impacts, etc.)?
- Are there social issues that need to be addressed in order to help improve the student's attendance?

- What is the impact of the absence on other students, the teacher, and classroom routines?
- Was the absence unavoidable or out of the student's control?
- Was there a medical reason for the absence?
- Could the reason for the absence have been accommodated outside of the school day?
- Is an educational plan in place for the student and is it being followed?
- Has the reason for the absence been communicated to the school by the student's parent/guardian?
- When in the year was the student absent? For example, did the absence fall during an important evaluation/assessment time?
- How many school days were missed?
- What is the student's overall attendance record?

## Communication

Communication is an important part of managing student attendance. Recognizing that there are instances where parents/guardians are unable to provide the school with prior notification of a student absence (e.g., illness, injury, etc.), parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate any planned absences with the school well in advance of the absence occurring.

## Other Absences

There are times when a student is not in class but is engaged in an activity that directly relates to their learning, such as participating in a co-op placement or meeting with Student Services, the principal, or the guidance counsellor. These instances should not be recorded as absences, but instead should be recorded using the appropriate codes under PowerSchool.

Students participating in school sponsored activities, such as student council, debate teams, or school sports, should not be considered absent. In order to participate in school activities, students must maintain good academic standing. They must also adhere to school rules related to behaviour. These requirements help ensure that students participating in school sponsored activities keep up with their studies and adhere to the expectations set for all students.

### Student Activities Outside of School

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work with the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation (NSSAF) to reinforce the importance of daily attendance and to encourage NSSAF to schedule student activities outside of the school day so as to minimize absences from school.

## Providing Materials for Absent Students

The policy states that teachers are not required to prepare additional materials or release test/examination materials prior to their release to the class and that, in accordance with provisions set out in the Teachers' Professional Agreement, teachers will provide students with the materials that were distributed in class during the student's absence, if requested **by the principal**.

For greater certainty, teachers are **not** required to prepare a physical package of materials where students have access to online tools (e.g. Google Classroom) that can provide any materials that may have been missed.

Students are strongly encouraged to **communicate** with their teacher in advance of a planned absence to discuss steps that they can take to mitigate the risk of falling behind in their coursework.

## Responding to Absences and Chronic Lateness

The Student Attendance and Engagement Policy promotes a staged approach to addressing attendance issues. The approach includes:

- A universal focus on attendance and fostering good habits
- Early interventions
- Targeted interventions
- Incentives
- Accountability

The professional judgement of teachers and principals is vital in ensuring that the incentives, supports, and accountability mechanisms put in place to address attendance issues, such as frequent absenteeism and chronic lateness, take into account equity and the individual circumstances of the student. For example, responses to student attendance will need to vary based on the student's age, grade level, and development. A student in grade 2 cannot be expected to take the same level of ownership and personal responsibility for their attendance as a student in grade 11. However, the individual circumstances of each student must also be considered when addressing attendance issues. That is, the effective responses for an individual grade 2 student may not be the most appropriate response for another student in the same grade or even the same class.

## When to Intervene

The purpose of the provincial attendance policy is to promote and increase student attendance. In order to support this, teachers and principals need to monitor attendance regularly to determine when they may need to intervene with a student or with the student's parents/guardians.

The Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy sets a staged approach to responding to student absenteeism and chronic lateness. The policy states that ongoing communication between the school and home is important to promoting regular attendance and that:

- Increased connections will be made after 10 per cent of class time is missed
- Early interventions are required when between 10 and 15 per cent of missed
- Targeted interventions will be provided when a student has missed more than 15 per cent of class time

Missed time includes both absences and chronic lateness. Lateness can be a problem at any grade, including at the elementary level. Principals and teachers should strongly consider communicating with a student's parents/guardians as soon as they notice a pattern related to the student's attendance and/or if the student is frequently late. Addressing chronic lateness early in a student's academic career and/or early in the school year will help reinforce the importance of regular, on-time attendance for both the student and their family.

## Calculating Missed Time

Determining how the percentage of class time missed equates to a number of days can be difficult, particularly given that the length of classes may vary from school to school. The tables in Appendix A are intended to assist principals and teachers in determining when they may wish to make interventions based on fairly standard length of classes.

Schools could also use the thresholds to determine when to contact home for cases where students are late to school or class. If a student is late to school nine times, the school may wish to make an initial contact home, particularly if there is a noticeable pattern to the incidents lateness or if they occur in close proximity to one another.

## Universal/Prevention Strategies

### Communications and Public Awareness

All partners in education must work collaboratively to promote the importance of regular attendance. This can start by developing a clear and consistent message, to be delivered by all partners, that attendance matters. This message should be communicated to students, families, and members of the public in a variety of ways.

For example, EECD will work to communicate a broad message to all Nova Scotians that attendance matters and that it has a positive impact on student success, both academically and socially (e.g., Every Day Counts).

School boards will work to communicate the same message to key stakeholders in their region and communities, reinforcing the provincial message closer to home. Principals and schools can set clear expectations for parents/guardians and students around attendance and can promote a positive school environment that welcomes students. Teachers can reaffirm the importance of attendance with each student in their classroom.

Schools and teachers could include a note about the importance of attendance in their newsletters and communications home.

## Safe and Supportive School Environment

Having schools as a safe space can be the difference in a student choosing to attend school or choosing to be absent. In creating and fostering a safe, welcoming, and engaging environment, principals, teachers, and school staff should work with students, whenever possible, to identify potential barriers and to develop solutions. For example, a gender-neutral washroom may be needed to help a student feel comfortable in school.

### Incentives

A school may determine that incentives help encourage stronger attendance among students; however, the use of incentives should not become the reason that students attend school, rather, they should be used to motivate and reinforce expected behaviour.

In developing an incentive program, schools and school boards should:

- Consider equity in using incentives
- Reward students for improved attendance, not just perfect records
- Reward timeliness, not just showing up to school
- Work with students to determine what they consider meaningful incentives

School boards should strongly consider developing board-wide incentive guidelines, to help ensure that incentives are similar from school to school.

**Grades P-6** – positive comments from teachers and/or positive notes home to parents/guardians

**Grades 7-9** – extra time at the computer or a certificate for the best record or most improved record

**Grades 10-12** – opportunity to “buy back days” with improved attendance (i.e., recognition of improved attendance by teacher and principal when nearing the threshold that could lead to loss of credit)

School boards should strongly consider developing board-wide incentive guidelines, to help ensure that incentives are similar from school to school.

## Accountability

Accountability for student attendance transitions from the parents/guardians in the elementary grades, to the student as they progress into junior and senior high. When late arrivals or absences become frequent, holding students, particularly those in high school, accountable may help them learn about how their actions affect their own learning and the learning of others. Consequences can extend to loss of a high school credit or credits, as described in the section below.

### Pre-Planning and Ongoing Communication

Ongoing communication between the student and the school is important. Students and parents/guardians should contact the school whenever there is an absence and provide the reason for the absence. Special effort should be made to communicate to teachers and/or the principal when there is a planned absence from school for an extended period. The reasons for an extended absence may vary, but could include participation in events, such as the Forum for Young Canadians or Canada Games. Extended absences could also stem from illness or injury, or treatments related to illness or injury.

In cases where the student and/or parents/guardians know in advance that they will experience an extended absence, students can submit an educational plan outlining, in detail, their plan to continue their learning during their planned absence. Where the absence is linked to an activity, the educational plan must be endorsed by the person leading the activity (e.g., coach, leader). The plan must be submitted to the principal, who in consultation with the student's teacher, will review and approve the plan. Teachers are not required to prepare materials for students in advance of their absence. Educational plans are not appropriate for extended absences related to vacations.

The policy and operational guide recognize that there are situations where pre-planning for an absence may not be possible. Students and parents/guardians are still expected to maintain ongoing communication with the school regarding the reason and duration of the absence. This will help ensure that the teacher and principal are aware of the student's unique situation and are able to respond to the absence in an appropriate manner.

## Monitoring Attendance Regionally

The Education Act requires that each school board establish an Attendance Committee. The role of the committee is to monitor attendance and carry out school board policies with respect to absenteeism. Through their Attendance Committees, school boards will work with schools to monitor and analyze board-wide student attendance rates. Using this information, school boards should work with schools to target resources to schools with the highest absentee rates. This will promote consistent and regular attendance tracking and will enable the school board to offer support to schools struggling with non-attenders.

## Early Interventions

Early intervention is important in addressing potential attendance issues before they become major concerns. Early intervention should focus primarily on ongoing communication and collaboration among partners to help address concerns related to absenteeism and to promote good attendance habits. Early contact home can also allow the teacher/principal to communicate the risk of losing school privileges and/or the danger of losing credit in a course at the high school level.

**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.

A focus on increasing connections and developing personal relationships with students and families is particularly important. These relationships can help teachers, principals, and other professionals determine the supports and interventions that have the best chance of improving an individual student's attendance.

Interventions may be as simple as a personal call home or greeting a student by name and letting them know that it is good to see them. Interventions can also be more complex, requiring a continuum of supports ranging from breakfast programs to targeted interventions from outside agencies. Interventions should become more focused in cases where attendance continues to be an issue and a student has missed more than 10 per cent of class time. Early interventions can begin sooner if either the principal or teacher feels that they are necessary to help improve a student's attendance.

After identifying an ongoing concern related to attendance, a teacher, or appropriate staff person, should reach out to the student and his/her family to better understand any issues that may be having a direct or indirect impact on that student's attendance. During this conversation, the teacher or principal may wish to consider working with the student/family to develop an attendance plan, which may include an attendance improvement contract. If the student and/or parent/guardian has maintained regular, ongoing communication with the school regarding the reason and duration of the absence(s), then it may not be necessary for an intervention to be initiated, as the purpose of the intervention is to foster greater communication between the home and school.

Early interventions should focus on connecting the student and/or family with appropriate school-based or board-based supports to help improve attendance, such as guidance counsellors, school psychologists, RCH coordinators, SchoolsPlus, and mental health clinicians. It is recommended that the teacher or principal work collaboratively with other school staff to identify the appropriate supports for each student. This work could be done through an existing school team or teams, such as a program planning team.

### Implementation Required

Currently, a gap exists between the services offered by schools and those offered by other agencies and service providers. This can make it difficult for teachers and principals to connect students and their families to the supports they may need that are offered through partners in health, community and social services, and/or the justice system. As a result, there are cases where the needs of a student go beyond the capacity of the education system, but where that student has not yet been connected to other service providers.

Some jurisdictions employ attendance counsellors or attendance workers to help address this gap. Unlike attendance officers (i.e., truancy officers), which also exist in other jurisdictions, attendance workers do not act in an enforcement role, but rather in an advocacy role. Attendance workers often work directly with schools, families, and students to build positive relationships and make connections to school-based, board-based, and outside agency supports. In this way, the attendance workers help support attendance by closing the gap between service providers and connecting students/families to the services and programs they need.

There are a few examples of similar programs in Nova Scotia, often connected with SchoolsPlus. EECD is exploring a pilot project that focuses on using attendance workers to help address issues related to absenteeism by working directly with families and all service providers.

An attendance worker would be well positioned to help students at both the Early Interventions and Targeted Interventions stages.

### Targeted Interventions

Students with greater attendance challenges (e.g., absences in excess of 15 per cent) will likely require more targeted interventions. These interventions should build on the work already done at the Early Interventions stages. For example:

**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.

- Developing/amending a student attendance plan and/or attendance contract
- Identifying and connecting the student and family with new/additional school-based, board-based, and/or outside agency supports, as needed
- Restating the danger of losing credit in a course at the high school level

As students approach and enter the targeted interventions stage, principals and school board staff may wish to consider the benefit of alternative programming and/or alternative education settings in the school, if these options are available. Alternate programming and/or settings should be based on the individual needs of the student, recognizing that resources and/or space may not be available at every school.

By offering programming in a different setting or through a different delivery method, such as time with a resource teacher, the school and/or school board may be able to re-engage the student, helping them to complete their courses and earn their credits. In turn, this encouragement may also result in a more positive relationship between the student and the school, helping to facilitate a transition back to the regular classroom setting.

## Loss of Credit for Grades 10 to 12

As stated in the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, students are expected to be present for at least 80 per cent of class time. Loss of credit may occur if a student misses 20 per cent or more of class time due to any absences. The 20 per cent threshold includes all absences; however, teachers and principals should use their professional judgement in assessing each case individually before proceeding with the loss of credit option.

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.

The principal is ultimately responsible for the final decision around loss of credit. The principal will make this decision in consultation with the student's teachers. This should only be done after a student has missed 20 per cent of class time and where strong efforts have been made and documented to improve the student's attendance. This decision should not be made lightly and should be based on ongoing attendance concerns despite documented interventions and supports.

The principal's decision around loss of credit will be considered final and cannot be altered. The school board will support the principal in his/her decision regarding loss of credit. For greater clarity, parents/guardians who are unhappy with a principal's decision may still raise their concerns through the school board's parent concern protocol, however the decision made at the school level cannot be altered.

The principal is also responsible for ensuring that the teachers in his/her school are applying the policy and operational document in a consistent manner. In order to help with this, principals are encouraged to run attendance reports from PowerSchool. This will help identify which students are at different thresholds and which students need contact. Principals can then follow up with individual teachers to ensure that they are following the school procedure for contacting home, and that they are properly documenting this process.

## Professional Judgement

Principals need to be able to use their professional judgment to determine when loss of credit is appropriate. As stated above, principals should work in consultation with teachers to review the individual case of each student before proceeding with a decision to remove that student's credit in a course. The guiding questions below have been developed to support principals in reviewing each case. This list is not exhaustive. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the student and the professional judgment of the teacher and principal.

- What were the reasons for the student's absence(s)?
- Were appropriate interventions made in an attempt to address the student's attendance issues?
  - Were these interventions properly documented?
  - Who met with the student and when?
  - Were the parents/guardians contacted and made aware of the situation?
  - Was an attendance contract put in place?
- Was an educational plan in place for the student and was it followed?
- What is the student's academic record?
- What was the impact of the absence on other students, the teacher and classroom routines?
- Were the absences unavoidable or out of the student's control?
- Are there social circumstances that have affected the student's attendance?
- Has the reason for the absence(s) been communicated to the school by the student's parent/guardian?
- When in the year was the student absent? For example, did the absence(s) fall during an important evaluation/assessment time?
- How many school days were missed?
- What is the student's overall attendance record?

Principals and teachers should take into account all of these questions when making a decision related to loss of credit.

## Timing of Decision

Decisions around student loss of credit must be made well in advance of final examinations. No student will lose credit due to attendance issues within three weeks prior to their first examination.

## Minimum Number of Courses

If a student has exceeded the 20 per cent threshold in more than two courses during the same semester, the principal may wish to examine options to ensure that the student remains productive while at the school.

Depending on the location of the school and/or the transportation options available to the student, the principal may choose to work with the student to develop a plan that would allow the student to continue working to earn credit in their remaining course(s). This plan could include correspondence studies or coming to school for the courses that they are pursuing, but not during any other times.

Other options available include:

**In-school Suspension** – depending on available space and/or staff, the principal may choose to place the student on an in-school suspension during the periods that they are not pursuing a course.

**Out of School Suspension** – if no other options are available and the student has lost credit in all but one course, the principal may decide to suspend that student from school.

Regardless of the option chosen by the principal, they must work with the student and their family to make reasonable efforts to provide alternative arrangements for the education of the student.

### Suggested Procedures

It is important that a school-wide practice be in place and that it speak to the importance of making a concerted effort to reach out to the student and their family to try and address any issues around absenteeism. Schools are encouraged to continue to use any processes that have proven to be effective in promoting attendance and responding to absenteeism. Schools may wish to base their standard process for making interventions related to absenteeism on the following guidelines. They may develop their own process.

**Intervention 1** – after a set number of absences (e.g., 5 per cent of missed days/classes) a teacher will contact home to check on the reason for the absence and to initiate a conversation around what supports, if any, would help improve the student's attendance. If the reason for the student's absence has already been communicated to the school, the teacher may note that they have already been in conversation with the parents/guardians.

**Intervention 2** – if attendance continues to be a concern after a set number of absences (e.g., 10 per cent of missed days/classes), and once the teacher has contacted the home (at the Intervention 1 stage), the principal or vice-principal meets with the student. The student’s parents/guardians should be invited to participate in this meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to build on the first intervention and to further explore ways in which attendance can be supported.

The principal/vice-principal may wish to use an attendance improvement contract, depending on the developmental level of the student, to clearly identify:

- Reasons for the absences
- Supports for the student/family
- Actions and accountability for all partners in the plan, including student incentives/consequences

Please see Appendix B for a template for the attendance improvement contract. Schools should adapt the contract to fit their needs.

**Intervention 3** – if attendance continues to be a concern after a set number of absences (e.g., 15 per cent of missed days/classes) the principal will schedule a second meeting with the student. The student’s parents/guardians should be invited to participate in this meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to identify any additional supports or interventions that may help address the ongoing attendance issues. At the high school level, the second meeting will also be to inform the student that they are in danger of losing credit.

**Loss of Credit** – as per the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, loss of credit may occur at the high school level when a student has missed 20 per cent of class time as a result of any absence. The final decision around loss of credit rests with the principal and must be communicated to the student and family.

In schools where students typically have a number of teachers (e.g., junior high and high school), it is recommended that the school administration work with teachers to identify one teacher to be the initial point of contact regarding the first attendance intervention. This will help ensure that the student/family receives one point of contact outlining all the attendance concerns, rather than multiple emails or calls home. It will also help reduce duplication of efforts among school staff in terms of calling home on attendance issues. The process will likely be less complex at the elementary level, where the student’s teacher can serve as the primary point of contact for the initial intervention.

## Credit Recovery

The Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy states that high school students who lose a credit or multiple credits due to absenteeism are not eligible for credit recovery for those courses. That is, if a student lost credit for a course after missing 20 per cent of class time, that student will not be able to pursue credit recovery for that course. They may, however, engage in credit recovery programs related to other courses for which they have not lost credit due to absenteeism, in keeping with existing credit recovery procedures at the school.

## Defining Roles and Responsibilities

The following Roles and Responsibilities are intended to complement and build on the Roles and Responsibilities listed in the policy document

### **Students in grades primary to 6 are responsible for:**

- attending school regularly and on time, to the best of their abilities;
- understanding that regular, punctual attendance is expected, and that absences without a reason and late arrivals are not acceptable;
- attending meetings to address attendance issues, as appropriate; and
- catching up on school-work missed because of any absences, as appropriate.

### **Students in grades 7 to 12 are responsible for:**

- attending school regularly and on time;
- understanding that regular, punctual attendance is expected, and that absences without a reason and late arrivals are not acceptable;
- explaining the reason for their absence to the best of their ability;
- taking increasing responsibility for improving attendance as they age;
- attending meetings to address attendance issues, as appropriate; and
- catching up on school-work missed because of any absences.

### **Parents/guardians and families are responsible for:**

- communicating with their child about the importance of attending school;
- ensuring and monitoring their child's regular and punctual attendance;
- avoiding making commitments for their children during school hours;
- supporting their child's teachers in their efforts to provide an education for their child;
- providing schools with a timely explanation of a student's absence;
- attending meetings and working with the school if their child's absenteeism needs to be addressed; and
- reaching out to the school for support when the student's attendance is an issue.

### **Teachers are responsible for:**

- reinforcing, as appropriate, to parents/guardians and students the value of regular school attendance (e.g., class discussion, course outlines, communication plan, etc.);
- taking steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students under their supervision;
- maintaining accurate attendance records;
- continuing regular communication with parents/guardians; and
- working with students and families to support students' continued learning when they are absent from school.

**Principals are responsible for:**

- leading a school-wide approach to promote regular and punctual student attendance;
- establishing a school communication procedure related to absences from school;
- communicating with teachers, families and students of the provincial attendance policy;
- taking reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students enrolled in the school;
- keeping attendance records respecting every student enrolled at the school;
- helping to identify, understand, and address systemic barriers for attendance; and
- providing leadership in developing a team approach to responding to issues of serious absenteeism, including building partnerships that enhance community and school-based supports to students and families to reduce any barriers in getting to school.

**School boards are responsible for:**

- communicating the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy including the importance of attendance, to all schools;
- supporting the decisions made at a school-level regarding attendance issues;
- ensuring that all principals and teachers have a process for monitoring student attendance, such as PowerSchool;
- establishing and ensuring the regular operation of a School Board Attendance Committee;
- delivering professional development to support student engagement and policy implementation; and
- sharing and supporting best practices on student engagement and attendance improvement among schools.

**The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for:**

- establishing the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy in consultation with school boards, principals, teachers, and other partners;
- communicating the policy to school boards and ensuring schools boards support decisions made at a school-level regarding attendance issues;
- promoting public awareness on the expectation and importance of student attendance;
- raising awareness among other government departments on their role in addressing attendance issues;
- collecting and reporting on provincial attendance data; and
- monitoring and evaluating implementation of the policy with input from school boards, teachers, principals, other school community members, and the public.

## Appendix A – Calculating Missed Time

Determining how percentage of class time missed equates to a number of days can be difficult, particularly given that the length of classes may vary from school to school. The tables below are intended to assist principals and teachers in determining when they may wish to make interventions based on fairly standard length of classes.

### Elementary School

Full Year				
Total # of possible school days	5%	10%	15%	20%
187	9	19	28	37

Schools could also use the thresholds to determine when to contact home for cases where students are late to school or class. If a student is late to school nine times, the school may wish to make an initial contact home, particularly if there is a noticeable pattern to the incidents of lateness or if they occur in close proximity to one another.

## Junior High School

Determining thresholds for junior high schools is complicated. Junior high schools have a different number of days per cycle and different numbers of classes per cycle. This makes it very difficult to develop a standard table, or even a number of possible tables to show what the number of classes would be for a percentage of total absences.

The following table is meant to help schools calculate the various thresholds at the junior high level. In order to determine the thresholds, each school will need to enter numeric values in the blue coloured cells in the Table 1. As values are entered, thresholds will be automatically calculated in Table 2.

Double-click anywhere in the table to begin editing. To exit edit mode, single-click anywhere outside the table.

**Table 1**

School Timetable	
Total number of days per cycle	
Total number of exam days per year	
Subject	Total # classes per cycle
English	
French Immersion	
Mathematics	
Science	
Social Studies	
Core French	
Healthy Living	
Physical Education	
Elective/s	

**Table 2**

Subject	Total # possible classes	5%	10%	15%	20%
English	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
French Immersion	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mathematics	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Science	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Social Studies	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Core French	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Healthy Living	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Physical Education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Elective/s	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

NOTE: If any of your junior high courses are semestered courses, the totals in table 2 will need to be reduced by one-half. If you have courses that are offered for only one-third of the school year, then the totals will be need to be reduced by one-third.

## High School

Semester Full Credit course (110 hours, 6,600 minutes):					
Length of classes	Total # possible classes	5%	10%	15%	20%
75 minutes	88	4	9	13	18
70 minutes	94	5	9	14	19
60 minutes	110	6	11	17	22
55 minutes	120	6	12	18	24

Semester Half Credit course (55 hours, 3,300 minutes):					
Length of classes	Total # possible classes	5%	10%	15%	20%
75 minutes	44	2	4	7	9
70 minutes	47	2	5	7	9
60 minutes	55	3	6	8	11
55 minutes	60	3	6	9	12

Full Year Course (220 hours, 13,200 minutes):					
Length of classes	Total # possible classes	5%	10%	15%	20%
75 minutes	176	9	18	26	35
70 minutes	188	9	19	28	38
60 minutes	220	11	22	33	44
55 minutes	240	12	24	36	48

## Appendix B – Sample Attendance Contract

Student Name	Student Age/DOB	Student Grade
Student Address	School	
Parent/Guardian Name	Parent/Guardian Phone Number(s)	
Number of times late to class	Number of classes/days absent out of number of possible days	

In accordance with the Provincial Student Attendance Policy, [SCHOOL NAME] expects all students to attend school every day and on time.

### Reason(s) for student absences

- |   |  |  |                                      |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Late to school | <input type="checkbox"/> Late to class   | <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping school | <input type="checkbox"/> Missing bus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bus suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer conflicts  | <input type="checkbox"/> School anxiety  | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor grades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needed at home | <input type="checkbox"/> Tired/oversleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Illness         | <input type="checkbox"/> Work/job    |

### Recommended plan of action

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### In-school support(s) to be provided

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### External support(s) to be provided

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By signing this contract, **the student agrees to:**

- Attend all classes on time
- Follow all school rules every day
- Meet regularly with teachers, administrator, and other school staff as required
- Complete all class assignments and homework
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this contract, **the parent/guardian agrees to:**

- Discuss with my child the importance of attending school
- Support my child's regular and punctual attendance
- Avoid making commitments for my child during school hours
- Provide the school with a timely explanation of my child's absence
- Attend meetings and work with the school to address attendance issues
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional comments / student concerns:**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator's Signature Date

## Appendix C – Supporting Documents for Schools

The following sample documents have been provided to assist teachers, principals, and other school staff in the implementation of the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy. The documents are also intended to help provide consistent messaging related to the policy and the importance of attendance:

- Attendance Policy Checklist for Principals (sample)
- Late Slip Template (sample)
- Script for teachers making initial contact home regarding attendance issues (sample)

## Appendix C – Supporting Documents for Schools Sample Only

- Supply all staff with the Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy and Operational Guide.
  
- Design school based attendance policy document in keeping with Policy. Review with staff.  
  
School based document MUST include:
  - Contact information for the school (phone/email/other)
  - Expectations for student attendance
  - Procedures for reporting student absences
  - Procedures for students arriving late/leaving early  
School based document MAY include:
  - Procedures for planned absences (e.g. Surgery)
  - Definitions
  - Responsibilities of education partners
  
- Review the importance of timely and accurate attendance taking with teaching staff.
  
- Review any changes from previous procedures (e.g., use of late slips).
  
- Review non-attendance consequences with teaching staff.
  
- Designate person responsible for overseeing implementation of policy.

## Late Slip Template

(Name of school)

# Late Slip

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's attendance code has been modified in Power School.

Staff completing late slip: \_\_\_\_\_

## Script for teachers making initial contact home regarding attendance issues

*Hello, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling because I see that \_\_\_ has been absent from school for \_\_\_ classes/days. I am wondering if there is anything that the school could be doing to support \_\_\_'s attendance?*

*Is there is anything that is preventing \_\_\_'s being able to get to school?*

*Is there anything we can do to help?*

*Do you have a copy of the school's contact information? (Offer to send it out if not).*

*Please feel free to contact the school at any time if you have questions or concerns.*