

Draft Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Discussion Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for key stakeholders in reviewing and discussing the draft Student Attendance and Engagement Policy. Stakeholders should not feel limited in their responses and/or feedback on the policy to the question asked below.

In addition to providing feedback on the policy through this discussion guide, feedback can also be sent in by email or mail.

The response form attached to this document may help you in providing your responses to the questions listed below (form also available here: <https://goo.gl/forms/E3SutRM4wPsmqD2x1>).

Email: Attendance@novascotia.ca

Mail: Student Attendance Policy – Feedback
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Strategic Policy and Research Branch
2021 Brunswick Street
P.O. Box 578
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2S9

Please ensure that all feedback is provided to Education and Early Childhood Development by May 9, 2017.

Policy Overview

Section 1: Introduction

This section provides an introduction to the policy, outlining the importance of attendance and the objective of setting clear, consistent expectations, supports, and accountability for regular and punctual student attendance at all grade levels.

Section 2: Guiding Principles

The policy is built on four guiding principles:

- Student Success and Achievement
- Equity and Fairness
- Shared Responsibility
- Flexibility

The policy recognizes that student absenteeism and chronic lateness can be complex issues, requiring a staged and multi-faceted response, that includes incentives, supports, and accountability. Under the policy, responses to attendance issues will vary based on the age, grade, and development of the student.

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Section 3: Monitoring Attendance

The policy includes a clear expectation that all students must attend school as required by the *Education Act*. Excused and unexcused absences are defined, communication between home and school about absences is addressed, and how absences will be recorded is outlined. This section also addresses late arrivals at school.

The policy allows school administrators, in consultation with teachers, to use discretion in recording an absence as a *special circumstance* in cases where a student is circumstances preventing them from attending school.

This section also outlines what is required of teachers in the preparation of make-up materials for students.

Section 4: Addressing Student Absences and Chronic Lateness

This section of the policy outlines an approach to addressing student absences and chronic lateness that is based on providing a progressive continuum of supports, incentives, and accountability (Universal/Prevention Strategies, Increasing Connections, Early Intervention, and Targeted Interventions).

The approach focuses on promoting regular attendance for all students and then increasing efforts in response to increasing absenteeism.

Responses include, incentives, communication between home and school, convening an attendance support team (school-based), and in severe cases at the high school level loss of credit may occur.

Section 5: Incentives, Support, Accountability

This section provides further information on the incentives, supports, and accountabilities covered in the staged approach outlined in section 4. This includes additional information on how and what incentives for attendance may be used at a school, details on the composition and duties of an attendance support team, how an attendance improvement contract may be used, and accountability for absences such as loss of school privileges and course credit.

Section 6: Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlined the roles and responsibilities for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, school boards, principals, teachers, students, parents/guardians, and community partners.

Section 7: Definitions

Provides key definitions to understand the policy.

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Response Form

1. Did you find the draft Student Attendance and Engagement Policy clear and easy to understand? If no, could you please provide examples and/or references to specific sections of the policy that you felt were unclear.

2. Overall, did you feel that the policy would help improve student attendance and engagement?

3. Did you feel that there are sections in the policy that could be or should be strengthened?

4. Are there any other comments that you would like to provide on the draft Student Attendance and Engagement Policy?