

# ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES OF THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

---

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 8.14 T R U A N C Y

### **(1) GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

(a) State law defines truancy as any absence of part or all of one or more days from school when the parent or guardian has not notified the school of a legal excuse for the student's absence (see Administrative Policy 8.13). Truancy includes intermittent attendance carried on for the purposes of defeating the intent of the compulsory school-attendance law, such as unexcused morning or afternoon absences [Wis. Stat., §118.16(1)(c)].

(b) State law defines habitual truancy as any absence from school without a legal excuse for part or all of five (5) or more accumulated days on which school is held during a school semester [Wis. Stat., §118.16(1)(a)].

(c) All student absences shall be reported daily to the school attendance officer. In the event that the student's absence is not an excused absence, the student's parent or guardian shall be notified as required by state statutes [Wis. Stat., §118.16(2)(c)]. Further, the school shall seek police cooperation in the apprehension and detention of truant students until their parents call for them [Wis. Stat., §938.19(1m)].

(d) The Board wishes that every effort be made to use available alternatives for students experiencing attendance problems. The Administration shall implement a process for student evaluation and services as described in district's truancy plan (see Administrative Procedure 8.14). If, after all existing services have been exhausted, the truancy continues, the school may take the necessary steps to institute proceedings, as detailed in the state statutes and municipal codes, against the parent or guardian who fails to cause the student to attend school regularly and against the student who continues to be truant [Wis. Stat., §118.163].

(e) Any organized student truancy shall be treated as individual truancy (unexcused absences) for the students involved.

(f) No pupil enrolled in a school district operating under Chapter 119, such as Milwaukee Public Schools, may be suspended or expelled from school for truancy [Wis. Stat., §120.13(1)(d)].

### **(2) PARENTAL NOTIFICATION**

(a) At the start of each school day, the school shall determine which students enrolled in the school are absent from school and whether each absence is excused. It is the responsibility of each school to attempt to contact the parents or guardians, by phone, within two hours after it has been determined that their children are absent from school without any notification to the school by the parents or guardians.

(b) If there has been no success contacting the parents or guardians by phone, it is the additional responsibility of each school to attempt to contact the parents or guardians by another means before the end of the second day after receiving a report of an unexcused absence.

(c) The principal or designee shall mail a habitual-truancy letter to the parent or guardian of a student who is a habitual truant when the child has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences within the school semester. The parent/guardian can also be simultaneously notified by an electronic communication. The letter shall:

1. be sent by registered or certified mail or first class mail
2. include a statement of the parent's or guardian's responsibility under Wis. Stat., §118.15(1)(a), to cause the child to attend school regularly;

3. include a statement that the parent, guardian, or child may request program or curricular modifications for the child under Wis. Stat., §118.15(1)(d), and that the child may be eligible for enrollment in a program for children at risk under Wis. Stat., §118.153(3);
4. request that the parent or guardian meet with school personnel within five (5) school days of the date of the notice, to discuss the student's truancy. The date for the meeting can be extended for an additional five (5) days, with the consent of the parent or guardian;
5. include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent or guardian should meet; a date, time, and place for the meeting; and the name, address, and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time, or place; and
6. include a statement of the penalties under Wis. Stat., §118.15(5) that may be imposed on the parent or guardian if he or she fails to cause the child to attend school regularly as required under Wis. Stat., §118.15(1)(a).

(d) If the school has not scheduled the habitual-truancy meeting with the parent or guardian within (5) five days after the date on which the notice was sent, or, with the consent of the parent or guardian, within (10) ten days after the date on which the notice was sent, any subsequent legal referrals regarding the student's truancy cannot be made, per Wis. Stat., §118.16(5)(a).

(e) If the certified habitual truancy letter is returned to the school unclaimed by the parent or guardian, the school must make diligent efforts to notify the parent or guardian by alternative means, including, but not limited to:

1. first-class mail;
2. phone attempts (including attempts to locate parent or guardian by calling emergency contacts on file with the school);
3. a letter sent home with the student, if deemed appropriate; and
4. home visit by designated school staff.

(f) If the parent or guardian does not attend the scheduled habitual truancy meeting within ten (10) school days after the letter has been sent, the school shall implement the process for student evaluation and services as detailed in the district's truancy plan, per Wis. Stat., §118.16(5).

### **(3) DISPUTING STUDENT TRUANCY**

A parent or guardian who disagrees that his or her child's absence is a truancy (unexcused) should request a meeting, within five (5) days of notification of the truancy (unexcused absence), with the building principal or designee to discuss the reason for determination that the absence was truancy.

### **(4) MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMINATIONS — WIS. STAT., §118.16(4)(b)**

(a) No public school may deny a student credit in a course or subject solely because of the student's unexcused absence or suspension from school. In all instances of excused and unexcused absences or suspensions, students are expected to complete a reasonable amount of make-up class work without penalty.

(b) Students shall be given the opportunity to make up work missed during an absence or suspension when they return to school. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her parent or guardian to contact the teacher(s) to make arrangements for making up work missed during an absence or suspension from school.

(c) The respective teacher(s) shall identify make-up work and a reasonable time frame for its completion. If any question arises as to the appropriateness and/or feasibility of making up a particular assignment, the teacher shall confer with the building principal to discuss the extent to which make-up work and/or substitute assignments are possible.

(d) Students shall be permitted to take any examinations missed during an absence or suspension. It is the responsibility of the student and his/her parent or guardian to contact the teacher(s) to make arrangements for making up examinations missed during an absence or suspension from school.

**(5) TRUANCY PREVENTION/INTERVENTIONS**

(a) The building principal or designee will use his or her professional judgment and discretion in implementing interventions to resolve student truancy. The following are examples of counseling and intervention strategies that may be implemented to return the truant student to regular school attendance:

- restorative practices/classroom community building;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step;
- school-based, multi-level system of support that incorporates attendance, such as RtI/PBIS;
- check-in/check-out;
- social academic instructional group
- individualized planning/support such as wrap-around or RENEW;
- curriculum review and modification;
- administrative conference and counseling with student;
- required conference with parents/guardians;
- in-school interventions, including detentions [Wis. Stat., §118.16(4)(c)];
- referral to school-based supportive services and programs;
- referral to community-based supportive services and programs, e.g., Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression Program (TABS).

(b) The district’s truancy plan will be implemented to resolve the problem of truancy for students who are identified as habitual truants.

History: Adopted 6-30-75; revised 2-6-79; reaffirmed 3-29-95; amended 5-30-02; revised 1-29-10, 04-23-15  
Previous Coding: Admin. Policy JEDA, prior to May 1995; Admin. Policy 10.14, May 1995-August 1996  
Legal Ref: W.S. 118.15, 118.16

— ♦ —