

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 330

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# Student Attendance Management

## Background

Administrative Procedure 140 of the Renfrew County District School Board sets expectations for student attendance. Moreover, regular attendance at school is a key element linked to improved student achievement.

Under the *Education Act*, the compulsory attendance requirements exist for pupils 6 years of age to 18 years of age. Schools have a duty to monitor and review student absenteeism. As well, the *Act* and Ministry guidelines require schools to report pupil absences to parents and, in cases of excessive or chronic student absenteeism, to report these developments to external agencies for follow-up.

Consequently, when a student is absent from school, there is a responsibility to investigate why a student is absent and to make every effort to have the student return to school. Our first response is based on a “safe arrival” approach coupled with a school’s daily attendance procedures, as outlined in Administrative Procedure 331. What is outlined below compliments this approach, offering a series of steps that schools within the Renfrew County District School Board are to follow as students accumulate absences. This procedure draws a distinction between excused absences under the *Education Act* (including absences for medical reasons, supported by appropriate documentation), unexcused absences and/or chronic student absenteeism.

## Procedure

### 1. Stage 1 - School Level Intervention

- 1.1 In this stage, the emphasis is on school-based action in response to student absenteeism patterns. The daily absenteeism patterns at the school - defined by recording and monitoring student attendance by the classroom teacher and the school office - provides the basis for activity within this stage.
- 1.2 Early intervention, especially in cases when students have consecutive days from school, is a key element in this stage of activity. Principals are expected to define the early intervention approach for their teaching and support staff at their school. Included in this approach is the protocol for contacting parents. Underlining this approach is the intention to support students to meet the expectations outlined in the Board’s Code of Conduct that students “come to school prepared, on time, and ready to learn”.

- 1.3 Contact with students is a critical aspect of any early intervention strategy. This interaction is guided by a disposition of care and concern, reflecting the “caring adult” approach that has been identified as an essential characteristic for engaging students in educational settings.
- 1.4 The principal’s review of student attendance patterns will determine whether or not additional actions are required, including those outlined under the Board’s Code of Conduct, progressive discipline, or other administrative procedures.
- 1.5 When the 15<sup>th</sup> absence from school has been recorded, the principal will refer the student to the school support counsellor as part of an attendance management support strategy. Through this referral it will be determined whether or not the student’s enrolment status is “active” or “inactive”. The latter has implications for record keeping as per Ministry of Education guidelines.
- 1.6 When it has been determined that the student’s enrolment status is “active”, an attendance support plan will be developed. This plan will identify strategies and supports available to improve attendance and is to be developed in consultation with the student, teachers, school administration, and the student’s parent/guardian. The design of the plan is short-term and intervention based, ranging from one to three weeks in scope with specific goals or outcomes identified.
- 1.7 In the event that the student continues to accumulate absences beyond the 15<sup>th</sup> day of absence, the school’s principal will request a meeting with the student’s parent/guardian to discuss the student’s attendance history, to assess the impact that the absences have/potentially have on achievement and to identify next steps as part of a revised attendance support plan. These steps may include:
  - continuation of the strategies identified in the plan,
  - implementation of an “equivalent learning program”,
  - re-direction of the student to an alternative education program,
  - referral to a community-based agency for support,
  - referral to SALEP meeting, or
  - referral to a case conference for development of an IEP.
- 1.8 Notwithstanding the actions outlined as part of stage 1, staff will report to Family and Children’s Services when they believe that there are grounds that the student’s pattern of absences relates to suspect child abuse/neglect. Staff should reference Administrative Procedure 341 for further details.

## 2. **Stage 2 - System Level Intervention**

- 2.1 As the student's attendance pattern approaches the 35<sup>th</sup> consecutive or accumulated absence from school, the principal and school support counsellor will report the event to the area superintendent. This report will provide a chronology of contact and support offered to the student.
- 2.2 Upon receipt of the aforementioned report, the superintendent will request an attendance review meeting with the student and the parent/guardian.
- 2.3 The Attendance Review Committee is a formal meeting called and chaired by the appropriate supervisory officer. The meeting is called after "Stage 1 interventions" have been implemented and proven unsuccessful in achieving a resolution relating to a student's refusal to attend school, or habitual absence from school, or refusal to participate in an alternative/equivalent learning program. The attendance counsellor, the student, parents/guardians and representatives of community agencies - as appropriate - shall be invited to this meeting. The Attendance Review Committee may recommend the following actions:
  - referral of matter to Family and Children's Services for follow-up with the student and/or parent/guardian;
  - recommendations flowing from the aforementioned meetings include a referral to a SALEP Committee meeting (where applicable);
  - identification of an "equivalent learning program";
  - make an immediate referral to the provincial attendance counsellor.

The recommendation of the Committee would be confirmed in writing and directed to the attention of the student, parent/guardian and school principal. A copy of this recommendation is to be placed within the student's Ontario Student Record file.

## 3. **Stage 3 - Attendance History Review**

- 3.1 In cases of habitual absence from school, the area superintendent in consultation with the principal and school support counsellor may determine that intervention by the courts is necessary. Should this be the determination, the school support counsellor will be directed to provide notice of this pending action to the parent/guardian of the student.

4. Table “A” provides a summary of this action and activity associated with this Administrative Procedure.

Legal References:

*Education Act, s. 21, 25; s. 265*






*Ontario Regulation 298 - Operation of Schools, s. 23*

*Ontario Regulation 308 - Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils*

*Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128 - The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct*

*Guidelines - Ontario Schools Code of Conduct*

**Table “A”**  
**Chronic Student Absenteeism\*/Truancy: Intervention and Response Strategy**  
 (\*For Absences Not Documented as “Medical”)

FOCUS	School-Level Intervention	Notice Sent to Parent/Guardian	System-Level Intervention	Attendance History Review	Referral to the Office of the Provincial Attendance Counsellor	
ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action is defined by a combination of professional interventions including: Contact with student’s parent or guardian by teacher, as directed by school’s protocol. Concern expressed about student’s attendance pattern as per the “caring adults” approach (Ferguson, et al., 2006).  </li> <li>Administrative follow-up and support by school principal/ vice-principal.  </li> <li>School support counsellor personnel may be assigned in response to student attendance patterns.</li> <li>Principal establishes a Student Action Plan to support improved attendance after the 15<sup>th</sup> absence from school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On or before the 25<sup>th</sup> day recorded as an absence from school, the school’s principal will send a notice to the student’s parent or guardian requesting to meet so to discuss student attendance patterns.</li> <li>In the meeting with parent/ guardian, principal reviews the Student Action Plan to support improved attendance.</li> <li>Possible outcomes of the Student Action Plan include continuation of the strategies identified in the Plan, re-direction of the student to an alternative education program, referral to a community-based agency for support, referral to SALEP meeting, or referral to a case conference for development of an IEP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On or after the 35<sup>th</sup> absence from school, principal informs area superintendent of student attendance issue. Principal will provide a chronology of contact and support provided to the student.</li> <li>Area superintendent may:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- hold an attendance review meeting with student, parent/ guardian; or</li> <li>- refer matter to Family and Children’s Services for follow-up with the student and/or parent/ guardian; or</li> <li>- recommend a referral to a SALEP Committee meeting (where applicable); or</li> <li>- make an immediate referral to the Provincial Attendance Counsellor.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting to review Student Action Plan with principal, school support counsellor and area superintendent to determine whether or not grounds exist for reporting absenteeism to the Provincial Attendance Counsellor.</li> <li>School support counsellor will be directed to send notice to parent/guardian of the student.</li> <li>Notice of truancy may be filed with the Provincial Attendance Counsellor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A notice of truancy will be filed with the Provincial Attendance Counsellor, Ministry of Education. This notice may recommend prosecution for truancy, as per the Education Act.</li> </ul>	
TIMELINES	1 Day to 25 Days Absent from School 		35 Days to 40 Days Absent from School 		40 Days to 45 Days Absent from School 	In Excess of 45 Days Absent from School