

Western New York Maritime Charter School
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1 August 2011

From: Commandant

Subj: **COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR WNY
MARITIME CHARTER SCHOOL (CH-4)**

Ref: (a) Education Law Sections 3024, 3025, 3202, 3205, 3206, 3210, 3211, and 3213
(b) New York Code of Rules and Regulations (NYCRR) Sections 104.1, 109.2
and 175.6

Encl: (1) List of Student Attendance Codes

1. **Purpose.** Every student has a right to educational opportunities that will enable the student to develop his or her fullest potential. Attendance policies are based on the principle that regular school attendance maximizes the student's interaction with his or her teachers and peers and is a major component of academic success. Improved school attendance generally increases student achievement. Therefore, attendance policies that provide for the early identification of attendance problems and effective methods to address them are most likely to succeed. Successful implementation of any attendance policy requires cooperation among all members of the education community, including parents/guardians, students, teachers, administrators, and support staff. **The purpose of this directive is to implement an effective attendance policy in accordance references (a) and (b).**

2. **Specific Strategies.** The school will:

- a) Create and maintain a positive school building culture by fostering a positive physical and psychological environment where the presence of strong adult role models encourages respectful and nurturing interactions between adults and students. This positive school culture is aimed at encouraging a high level of student bonding to the school, which in turn should lead to increased attendance.
- b) Maintain accurate record keeping via an **electronic** Register of Attendance to record attendance, absence, tardiness or early departure of each student.
- c) Utilize data analysis systems for tracking individual student attendance and individual and group trends in student attendance problems.
- d) Utilize early intervention strategies to improve school attendance for all students.

3. **Determination of Excused and Unexcused Absences, Tardiness and Early Departures.**

Based upon WNY Maritime Charter School's education and community needs, values and priorities, the School has determined that absences, tardiness and early departures will be considered excused or unexcused according to the following standards.

a) **Excused**

An absence, tardiness or early departure may be excused if due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance and education, quarantine, required court appearances, incarceration, approved field trip, "Student to Work" Day, suspension (formal and informal, in or out of school), attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Trustees. **A note indicating the circumstances of the absence must be provided by the parent or guardian for excused absences within 72 hours of the student's return to school. Instances where chronic illness results in greater than 5 absences in a semester must be explained in a letter obtained from a health care provider on office letterhead. The excuse should indicate the type of condition or illness causing the absences and the long-term impact on attendance the condition may have.**

b) **Unexcused**

An absence, tardiness or early departure is considered unexcused if the reason for the lack of attendance does not fall into the above categories [e.g., lack of required immunization without a religious or medical exemption, family vacation, babysitting, unlawful employment, expressing solidarity with a cause, illegally detained by parent, no transportation, illegal pickup by a parent, missed bus, lack of proper clothing, truant (out of school without parental consent) obtaining learner's permit, road test, oversleeping, **illness without proper documentation by parent or guardian.**

4. **Student Attendance Recordkeeping/Data Collection**

The record of each student's presence, absence, tardiness and early departure shall be kept **in an automated database** in a manner consistent with Commissioner's Regulations. An absence, tardiness or early departure will be entered as "excused" or "unexcused" along with the school code for the reason. The appropriate codes are listed in enclosure (1).

a) ***Attendance shall be taken and recorded in accordance with the following:***

The Attendance Policy begins upon the first day of formal enrollment in each class. Enrollment in class begins when a teacher is notified of placement. Attendance is marked beginning the first day of school.

Any absence for a school day or portion thereof shall be recorded as excused or unexcused in accordance with the standards articulated in this policy.

A record shall be kept of each scheduled day of instruction during which the school is closed for all or part of the day because of extraordinary circumstances including adverse weather conditions, impairment of heating facilities, insufficiency of water supply, shortage of fuel, destruction of or damage to a school building, or such other cause as may be found satisfactory to the Commissioner of Education.

Attendance records shall also indicate the date when a student withdraws from enrollment or is dropped from enrollment in accordance with Education

Law Section 3202(1-a).

5. Student Attendance/Course Credit

Compulsory education requirement is 18 years of age. Students *must complete* the school year in which they become 18 years old.

The school believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of the subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade. For purposes of this policy, classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Consequently, for each marking period, a certain portion of a student's final grade will be based on classroom participation as well as the student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. as determined by the building administrator and/or classroom teacher.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused student absences, tardiness, and early departures will affect a student's grade, including credit for classroom participation, for the marking period.

As a requisite part of course completion in order to obtain credit and gain admission to final examinations, students must not miss more than 12 days of class in a semester course or 24 days of class in the school year due to absence, either excused or unexcused. Students who exceed the maximum allowed absences in any class per this policy will be referred to a hearing, chaired by the Attendance Officer and the student's parent or guardian. If there are no mitigating circumstances which resulted in the accumulated absences, the student will be removed from the affected class(es) and assigned a "no credit".

If a student exceeds the maximum allowed class absences for full-days, they will be managed in accordance with the school discipline policy, being referred directly to a Commandant's Formal Hearing. If there are no mitigating circumstances which resulted in the accrued absences, the student may be expelled from school, since they will not receive academic credit for any of their assigned classes.

For a summer school course, credit for course completion and participation in the final exam will not be granted when a student has more than 3 absences, excuse or unexcused.

Transfer students and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend a prorated minimum number of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment.

6. Notice of Minimum Attendance Standard/Intervention Strategies Prior to the Denial of Course Credit

In order to ensure that parents/persons in parental relation and students are informed of the school's policy regarding minimum attendance and course credit, and the implementation of specific intervention strategies to be employed **prior to the denial of course credit to the student for insufficient attendance**, the following guidelines shall be followed:

a. *Student Notification*

The Attendance Officer or an Administrator will present the attendance policy at Basic Leadership Training for new cadets each summer.

The school will provide a copy of the Attendance Policy to each student in grades 9 through grade 12 on their first day of school, **for those cadets who**

did not get a copy of the policy at Basic Leadership Training.

A synopsis of the policy will be included in the **Cadet Handbook**.

b. ***Parent(s)/Person(s) in Parental Relation Notification***

Students' parents or guardians will be afforded opportunities to learn of the attendance policy, including parent-teacher conferences, open houses, new-student orientations, or telephone conferences.

School newsletters and electronic publications will include periodic reminders of the Attendance Policy.

Parents or Guardians will be notified by an automated phone system if their student is marked absent – unexcused (AU) from their first period class. They will receive a follow-up phone call at the end of the day if the student remained in an “AU” status in their 8th period class.

The school will provide letters for parent notification of accrued student absences of 6, 12, 18 and 24 days in a school year. A record of absences is also provided on the student progress report and report card.

A school conference may be scheduled between the parent or guardian and appropriate staff members in order to address the student's attendance at any time. **When accrued absences exceed 6 days in one quarter or 12 days in the school year, a mandatory conference with the responsible parent or guardian will be scheduled.** This conference will address appropriate intervention strategies that meet the needs of the student. **The student may be required to attend remediation for classes when they exceed 6 absences, regardless of current grade in the class.**

7. **Notice of Students who are Absent, Tardy or Depart Early Without Proper Excuse**

The school staff will notify the parent or guardian for a student who is absent, tardy or departs early without proper excuse. A copy of the WNY Maritime Charter School's Attendance Policy will be mailed with each written notification to promote awareness and help ensure compliance with the policy.

8. **Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, the school will utilize grade-appropriate/building-level strategies and programs, for example, classroom acknowledgment of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, bulletin boards) and individual rewards (“dress down days”, etc).

9. **Disciplinary Consequences**

Unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures will result in disciplinary sanctions as described in the school's **discipline policy**. Consequences may include, but are not limited to detention, assignment to Extra-Military Instruction, suspension, denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities and finally, expulsion from school.

10. Intervention Strategy Process

In order to effectively intervene when an identified pattern of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures occur, designated school personnel will pursue the following:

- a) Attempt to identify root causes of the pattern (e.g., grade level, building, time frame, type of unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures);
- b) In specific, individual cases, the student and parent/guardian in parental relation will be contacted to discuss strategies to directly intervene with specific pattern(s);
- c) Recommend intervention to Commandant or his/her designee if it relates to change in school policy or procedure;
- d) Implement changes, as approved by administration;
- e) Utilize appropriate school and/or community resources to address and help remediate student unexcused absences, tardiness or early departures;
- f) Monitor and report short and long term effects of intervention.

11. Appeal Process

Students may exercise the right to the appeal process.

Parents or guardians may request a review of the decision to **deny class credit and** exclude a student from taking a final examination. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to request an appeal in writing, addressed to the Commandant. An appeal may be filed for the following reasons:

- a) Challenge the number of absences on record.
- b) Determine if any procedures listed in the policy have not been followed.
- c) Ensure that no violation of state or federal law has occurred.

12. Level I Appeal:

- a) Parents or guardians may request an Attendance Appeal. Appeals will be heard during the 2nd week of each month, October through May. All Appeals received prior to the second week will be heard that month.
- b) The Attendance Officer will notify the parents or guardians by phone and in writing of the date and time of the Level I Appeal.
- c) A decision by the Attendance Officer will be made within five days of the Level I Appeal hearing. Notification of the decision will be made by mail.
- d) If the parents/or guardians are not satisfied with the Attendance Officer's decision, the parent or guardian may request a Level II Appeal in writing, addressed to the Commandant. The letter should include the reason for dissatisfaction.

13. Level II Appeal:

- a) The Commandant or Commandant's designee will hold the Level II Attendance Appeal within five days of receipt of a request.
- b) Parents or guardians will be notified by phone and in writing of the date, time and location of the Level II hearing.
- c) At this hearing, attendance records along with the Attendance Officer's reason for denying the Level I Appeal will be examined.
- d) A decision by the Commandant will be made within five days of the Level II Appeal. Notification of the decision will be made by mail.
- e) Parents or Guardians may appeal the Commandant's decision to the Board of Trustees in writing. Appeals to the Board must be in writing, addressed to:

President, Board of Trustees
WNY Maritime Charter School
266 Genesee Street
Buffalo, NY 14204

14. Building Review of Attendance Records

The Commandant will designate an attendance clerk responsible for reviewing pupil attendance records and initiating appropriate action to address unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures consistent with this policy. The Attendance Officer and the Vice Commandant for Academics will conduct periodic reviews with the attendance clerk to identify individual and group attendance patterns and to initiate appropriate action to address the problem of unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures.

15. Annual Review by the Board of Trustees

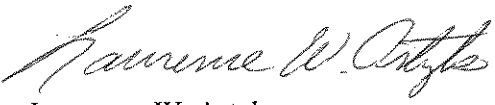
The Board of Trustees shall annually review student attendance reports and if such reports show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall make any revisions to the Policy and plan determined to be necessary to improve student attendance.

16. Community Awareness

The Board of Trustees shall promote necessary community awareness of WNY Maritime Charter School's Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy by:

- a) Providing a plain language summary of the policy to parents/guardians to students at the beginning of the each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to students and their parents/guardians;
- b) Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the policy; and

- c) Providing copies of the policy to any other member of the community upon request.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lawrence W. Astyk".

Lawrence W. Astyk
LtCol, USMC (Ret)

Student Attendance Codes

Excused Absence – AE

Unexcused Absence – AU

Dr. Appointment – DR

Death – DT

Formal Suspension – FOR

Hospital Stay – HOS

Illness – ILL

Skipping Class – SK

Suspension – SUS

Excused Tardy – TE

Unexcused Tardy – TU